



Season 5, Episode 29: Bookish Discoveries + Fictional Travel Destinations

Mon, Feb 20, 2023 • 49:56

Meredith Monday Schwartz 00:10

Hey readers. Welcome to the currently reading podcast. We are bookish best friends who spend time every week talking about the books that we've read recently. And as you know, we won't shy away from having strong opinions. So get ready.

Kaytee Cobb 00:24

We are light on the chit chat. Have you on a book talk and our descriptions will always be spoiler free. Today we'll discuss our current reads a bookish deep dive, and then we'll visit the fountain.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 00:33

I'm Meredith Monday, Schwartz, a mom of four and full time CEO living in Austin, Texas. And sometimes I just need my books to play well together.

Kaytee Cobb 00:41

And I'm Kaytee Cobb, a homeschooling mom of four living in New Mexico. And I love fully immersing myself in a book. This is episode number 29 of season five. And we are so glad you're here.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 00:52

Yes, fully immersing ourselves, there are worlds that we can immerse ourselves in and I love it.

Kaytee Cobb 00:57

It kind of goes with your mini bite size intro to Meredith, like having books that play well together means it feels more like your entire world is taken up by those books, right?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 01:06

Exactly. Yes, yes, we are going to jump into all those things in a little bit more detail. But first one will let you guys know that we are going to do our deep dive today kind of a part two, because last week, we talked about books and travel books that make you want to go to certain places. And as we were preparing for that and talking about that we got inspired. And now we're going to talk about books that make you want to travel into some fictional worlds, because we have lots of those. So I'm very much looking forward to that deep dive. Before we do that. Let's get into our bookish moments of the week. Kaytee, what's your bookish moment?

Kaytee Cobb 01:43

Okay, so my bookish moment kind of pairs with yours from last week, Meredith last week, you told us about the light of your reading life, this adwick lamp that you can fold up in which absolutely I did order for myself, Oh, mama needs a treat sometimes. Yeah, so I'm going to bring a light as well. I briefly mentioned this when Mary and I recorded a few weeks ago, but I got a new book light for Christmas, and it's a neck light. And I wasn't sure if I was gonna like that or not. But I love it. So now I want to tell you about it. This is a reading light that goes around your neck instead of clipping to the cover or the pages of your book, which is super because it doesn't move. When you move your hands to turn the page, you don't have to maybe mess up the corners of your pages. If you're a little precious about your books like me, you don't have to unclip it in order to turn the page and clip it back together or like pick a random spot to insert it. It's rechargeable via USB, so you plug it in when you need to juice it up. And I use it regularly and have only had to recharge at once since Christmas. It also has a ton of settings. So you can change the color from warm to medium to cool. And there are three light levels and two lights. So there's like what is that something like 24 permutations of light that you can do with this single book light makes it really easy to adjust to whatever reading experience is the perfect amount of light for you. So I pop in my noise cancelling earbuds I grabbed my book and my neck light. And I snuggle up with a real paper book next to husband on the couch while he watches something. Although right now we're both watching together, that's fine. This is the ideal immersive reading experience that involves me being able to see and focus while also being able to be with my people. So again, we'll put the link in show notes. But this is the globe who send led neck reading like I love it.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 03:23

Yes, I have thought about getting another one of those I read with a book light that hangs from my headboard behind me. And that's nice because again, I can't stand the book lights that you clipped to the book for all the reasons that you talked about. But sometimes I wish that the light was a little bit closer. Sometimes I bang my head on it when I you know get up too fast all that so I've been thinking. I know a lot of knitters really like those snack like you can use it for all kinds of stuff. You can use it for all kinds of stuff I eat when I was a knitter I had a lot of knitting friends and they would go to movies and they would wear that and then they could knit in the movies. Yeah, it's a thing. So I'm glad that you gave us a link to a good one because that's been something that I've been wanting to do too. So that's excellent. Okay, well my bookish moment of the week is all about a blank slate and Kaytee we talked about blank slates before in our reading right when you finish a book or more than one book at one time. Yeah, many of us of course have different slots in our reading. So for me that's a print book, a Kindle book, an audio book and a slow but steady yes same All right, right the other day I had all four of those clear in just a few hours time it almost never happens that way

Kaytee Cobb 04:37

right magic

Meredith Monday Schwartz 04:38

yes the slow but steady with the audiobook but it almost never happens. So as I was getting actually getting ready to record with Elizabeth I realized I didn't have a single book going I was just in that moment in between I had a blank slate

Kaytee Cobb 04:52

right so you had no currently reading you were not currently reading anything for those

Meredith Monday Schwartz 04:57

few couple of hours where we were recording I was not currently reading any Think but as soon as we finished, I hightailed my booty into my library, and I sat there. And I mean, when I do this kind of thing I really speak I talk out loud. And like, okay, you've got all the options here. Schwartz, what are you going to do? Because what I have found, it's a pep talk, because you know, I get wrapped up in Okay, each one of those slots has to be filled with the perfect book. And when they all have to be filled, then I feel like those four things have to play together. Okay, I can't have two thrillers going, I can't have two English, whatever's going I have to have to play well together. I enjoyed so much the more than two hours it took me to decide on all four. I mean, I was absolutely firing on all cylinders. I was pulling out my TBR I was going through my library, I might libro FM, you know, I was listening to things out loud. I was booked flighting, I was making piles, I finally came up with my four books. And I was very, very happy with how those four books were playing together, because I read those different ways during different times of the day. But if you have two that don't play together, or they get muddled up in your mind, you know how that goes. So a blank slate is a lot of fun. But it's also a very heavy responsibility. And I was glad to have shone brightly in that moment.

Kaytee Cobb 06:21

I'm glad you're actually circling back on this because I remember this happening in real time when you were kind of floating some audiobooks by me as is this something you're interested in bringing to the show? And I was like, What is going on here, Meredith? Clear her reading with me what's happening? So now it feels like I've connected the dots on that?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 06:37

Because that's exactly what was happening. I was filling up those slots. But when I pick out especially my slow but steady and my audiobooks, they're going to be more of an investment of my time. I definitely don't want to invest if you're like, Oh, well, yeah, I actually just finished that. I was gonna bring it next week. I'll be like, Oh my gosh, okay. So yeah, I like to clear that stuff with you. Just to be sure.

Kaytee Cobb 06:58

Okay. Yeah. But just to be clear, if Meredith ever claims a book, I always like mark it off for her because, as we know, Meredith brings everything she reads to the show. So I'm absolutely fine like marking that off as this one is going to be for Meredith and you can pause and wait on your thoughts until she brings it and that is just some little behind the scenes info about that. Right.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 07:18

You do. You're very kind to me that way. And I but at the same time, I don't. I would never say that about a book that I knew was like one of your favorite authors or your favorite, you know what I mean? So you're you are kind to me that way, but I yeah, I just was like, am I cleared for takeoff on this and then I switched right and went with a different book. Anyway. So lots of behind the scenes there. Okay, let's get to what the people came here for. Let's talk about current reads. Kaytee, what's your first one this week?

Kaytee Cobb 07:43

Okay. My first one is nonfiction. It's called dinners with Ruth by Nina Totenberg. Have you seen this Meredith?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 07:49

I haven't.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 07:50

I love Nina Totenberg and Ruth Ginsburg, so I'm so glad you're bringing it.

Kaytee Cobb 07:54

Oh, I love her too. Okay, so this was I think it was my very last book of 2022 and it was a great way to end the year. Nina Totenberg, if you don't know is an NPR correspondent, and many millions of listeners probably billions of listeners have had her words and her voice in their ears for decades now. This book chronicles the nearly 50 year friendship between Nina and Ruth Bader Ginsburg, the Supreme Court Justice their friendship started with a phone call. Years before Nina was part of NPR years before Ruth was on the Supreme Court. They were just plugging away in their respective fields. And Nina needed roots comment on a legal brief she had written and then they became friends and they had dinner together. So this book is part memoir and that we get a bit of behind the scenes info on Nina Totenberg is rise to prominence at NPR and the way that her reporting evolved over the years along with her personal life and her family. So more about Nina Totenberg than I expected, which is great, yeah, but mostly it's about this extraordinary friendship between two women who really pushed boundaries and their own fields. Over the course of their many years of friendship. Both Nina and Ruth became widows and walked that road together, holding hands and pulling each other out of their grief. More than a decade apart. They treaded the waters of illness and recovery, cancer and chemotherapy. They shared a love of good meals eaten around a table and Ruth case very, very slowly. She eats slower than Noah, and I thought nobody ate slower than my six year old. They also shared a love of opera and shopping and trying to balance that femininity in the workplace with being respected and being looked at as a person who is not just a dress, which I thought was so interesting. There were a few times as I listened to this audiobook narrated by Nina Totenberg, of course, whose voice is iconic, that I teared up, but the most emotional moment for me was really unexpected. And I'm not going to spoil it, but it takes place toward the end of the book. So even though I loved this story about their friendship as women, it was really Nina's nuclear family, and an heirloom that really got me in the fields. I didn't take away a lot from this book. It wasn't like a now i have grown as a human. I wouldn't put it in my memoirs that really helped me learn something category. Instead, it felt like a little peek into the personal lives of two women that really impacted the news media and the Justice landscape of this country. For decades. It felt like a glimpse into the normalcy of their lives that seems so far outside of our normal. It was a five star read for me, even though I would maybe even call it a quiet book, a reflective little gem of a book. And for that I loved it. So this was dinners with Ruth by Nina Totenberg.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 10:31

Well, don't you think you probably did take from it an inspiration to lean even more fully into your voice, Kaytee,

Kaytee Cobb 10:40

in some ways, because both of these women had to plow their own road, right. They were so at the forefront of a lot of things. I mean, Nina Totenberg broke news about Anita Hill, and Clarence Thomas. And that was revolutionary. And I mean, we talked about me too now. But that was decades before that. And who was talking about sexual assault on the pages of a newspaper or on NPR? Nobody is the answer. Right? So they both said, you know, this is something I believe in. And this is something that's worth sticking my reputation on. And we're willing to stand firm in that, which I think is really great. Yeah,

Meredith Monday Schwartz 11:16

it sounds like a great book. It's one that I've definitely thought about reading because I just love both of those women. Okay, my first book is also nonfiction. Kaytee, looking at it, which is I know that's not something we always do. I read a book called Zero fail by Carol Leonnig, it's nonfiction. So the setup is not difficult. This book is an exhaustive account of the history and the rise and the fall of the Secret Service, from the Kennedy assassination, to the alarming events of both the Obama and Trump administrations, and right up to the insurrection at the Capitol on January 6. And all of this incredibly expertly researched by Leon ik, who is a Pulitzer Prize winning journalist, this book was so interesting and total catnip for me, you know, one of my weird places of interest is everything related to the security around America's first family. I don't know why this is the case. But the idea of having a secret service detail, and codename is something that has appealed to me in my entire life, like since I was tiny, I've been fascinated. He wants a sort of self. Well, I don't want to be president, I would never not enough money in the world to make me want to enter politics in that way. But the idea of having a secret service detail and a codename Yes, but they

Kaytee Cobb 12:41

would like they would be around you all the time. This feels so antithetical to what I know about Meredith

Meredith Monday Schwartz 12:46

they don't talk to you, they just protect you. That's fine. All right. This is not only expertly researched nonfiction, this is narrative nonfiction that 100%. Throughout three quarters of the book reads like the best kind of political thriller, Leona's writing style is excellent. It's well researched and unbiased, but also not afraid to point out the truth of a dicey situation. And that is a really hard needle to thread. And this book is littered with a history of dicey situations. From the beginning, the Secret Service has had a difficult past. The fight for budgets, staffing and resources started in the late 1800s, when the Secret Service came into being, and it continues to this day, and it's fascinating to watch as technologies and strategies and needs change. But the fundamentals that being human nature do not because human nature is deeply at play in the story of the Secret Service. They are a force designed to protect our democracy in many ways. But the reality is they are protecting people, powerful people, the most powerful people in the whole world. And they have to walk the line between saying no to the one man in the world that no one says no to for his own good. They sought to get along with them. The moral and societal awkwardness in this book is staggering. I loved the history. I loved the inside, look into what it takes to protect the president. But I loved loved loved the juicy nuggets that are throughout. If you like

political tea being spilled, you will love this. It's all there on both sides of the aisle. By the way, everyone gets equal treatment. The husband wife drama, the little squabbles, the day to day details, the idiot children of President having affairs with their agents, the Presidential Affairs that were so out in the open that it is honestly a shock that they weren't headline news. The agents see it all and they have to protect around it. The standout sections are on the Kennedy assassination and the tin years of protection that the Obamas got, which by the way, was much longer years of protection than normal. And the threat that they were under daily and the changes then that the Secret Service made under the Trump administration, but really the entire book, even going back to those early early days is absolutely interesting. By the way, did you know that Michelle Obama's code name was Renaissance? Isn't that so good? I do love that. It's so good. I love that so much. All right. The Secret Service agents themselves are treated with respect and also an unvarnished telling of the truth. Like regular humans, Secret Service agents are a cross section of the good, the bad, and the stupid. scary as that is, they are not the gorgeous mountains of men with perfect ethics that we always want them to be. But many, many of them are incredibly brave and bravely, principled, you can tell the author has a lot of respect for them. And she lets us know without bringing us over the head that there are a lot of changes that need to be made to make the Secret Service the organization it needs and wants to be. We need to get the more resources and staffing or we're headed for more tragedy the author and I hope it doesn't take that kind of tragedy for us to make these changes. This is zero fail by Carol Leon IK.

Kaytee Cobb 16:25

Oh, that sounds really interesting. You said at the beginning that it was robust. I think it's the word you use. Is this a chunker of a book?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 16:33

Yeah, maybe four 450 pages. Yeah, it's not it's not like a textbook, but it's definitely there. But the pages fly by because it's so juicy.

Kaytee Cobb 16:42

All right. Yeah, that sounds really good. I am ready for my second book. I'm going to talk about My Darkest Prayer by S A Cosby. So a few weeks ago, we talked about authors that were complete as for or want to be complete. As for this is the last of SA Cosby's current works that I hadn't already read. So after that episode, I picked it up because I want to be a completest going 17:94 forward as a reminder, I loved Razorblade Tears. It was one of my top books of the year. I read it in July of 2021. In August of that year, I went back to his previous released and read Blacktop Wasteland, which was excellent and got four stars for me, but I found it really compelling. So this year when his debut novel was released, which is kind of weird because it came out in 2019, and then was released in December of 2022. He was so unknown.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 17:28

He's such a huge author. Now it speaks to how many books he sold. That's what it speaks to

Kaytee Cobb 17:32

true, I would expect a reprinting, maybe, but it was like fully, I think it was purchased by a different publisher. It's very strange to me. So our main character is named Nathan waymaker. He works at a

local funeral home, he loves to hang out with the local bar, he stays in shape, which is great for when he gets into trouble. This could be the kind of trouble that involves starting fights at the bar, or it could be a bit more deadly. Either way, he's comfortable handling bodies both dead and alive. Nathan is a former Marine and a former sheriff's deputy. And both skill sets come in handy and all those connections come in handy. When a beloved local minister is found dead. The older ladies that serve as part of the board of His Church are sure that it is not the suicide that it appears to be. And that the cops say that it is so they asked Nathan to use his connections and do some digging. He thinks it's gonna be an easy job. As expected, Nathan gets himself in pretty deep when his off the books investigation starts to pull in the local gangsters, crime lords and even a porn star. He also finds himself going up against the police officers that kicked him off the force when he suggested that they may be corrupt. It's a full mess and this beloved preacher who turned his life from drugs and crime and encouraged his parishioners to do the same. Well, let's just say he's got a lot of dirt under his rugs and waymaker shakes them out on the front porch. So this book is a mess. This book was propulsive and you can absolutely see the gritty bones of the writer that essay Cosby became just a few years later in his later books, but I did not like and here's well, it felt to me like Cosby was trying to prove himself as like a dudes dude writer, the objectification of women feels like something you may have read in a gritty 1940s detective novel those pulp fiction mass market paperbacks. But when every single woman is described using the dimensions and shape of her body, and the things that Nathan is thinking in his head that he might want to do to her in bed, it is hard to read, it's yucky, yuck. Add an adult film star to the mix someone he has seen on video acting for a camera, and that objectification ramps up to 11. I read about half of this one on my Kindle and then switched over to audio for two reasons. One essay, Cosby's books are all narrated by Adam Lazar white, he has the most perfect voice to bring these characters and settings to light. But mostly I needed to be done with having these words go into my eyeballs. If they're coming at me on audio, even really fast. I can kind of skim right by them, and they don't lodge themselves in my brain the same way way that they do when I'm reading them on the page, and then I can move to the action egoriy sequences which Cosby is so good at Super, actually super gory. As per usual, I'm glad to have read this because now I can see how much he's grown as a writer in just a few years. And I'm very much looking forward to more from him, which his next release is called all the sinners bleed. It's due out in June of 2023. But really, I'm just glad that he's moved past this style of writing into acne and gory books that have more nuanced than this yucky talk about women's bodies. So this was my darkest prayer by s. A Cosby.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 20:34

I wonder if anyone's interviewed him about that specifically about that holding his first book and it not being in the other one. I haven't read anything of his I very much want to thank you. Now, I won't go back and start the beginning of his career. I will not feel the need to read that one, but his others and so I just thought it would be interesting to see what he has to say no, like, I wonder if he's also like, oh, yeah, that was my newness, or

Kaytee Cobb 20:57

here's what I wanted to try. And I decided I didn't like it. Yeah, I would be super interested to hear about it.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 21:03

All right, Kaytee, when I pulled together my books for today's show, I was I'm always delighted when I bring three really different books, all of which I really liked, because I contain multitudes as we all do, right? Yes. And so I prepared for the show. And Okay, this next book, I'm going to need for little ears to not need you to turn this down for the next little bit. And then I realized Mindy is editing our show this week. So she's going to have to listen to me talk to I'm sorry, Mindy. I'm sorry. You're gonna have to, you're not gonna be able to tune your little ears out. You're gonna have to tune in. I'm going to try to keep it clean. I know. Here we go. Here we go. Okay, because I capital I loved this book. It's the Never King by Nicky think crow. Do you read this too? You didn't or you didn't dip into it? Oh, you should. You should. It's on Kindle Unlimited. It's an it's short. Here we go. Here's the setup. Oh, I love this book. I'm not able to stop smiling. I love this

Kaytee Cobb 22:00

book so much. Okay, this whole this is like a journey, how you got to this book to so that's the whole thing. I'm

Meredith Monday Schwartz 22:09

going to tell you the whole thing. But again, I'm being serious when I say I do need for you guys to make sure that little ears are not listening. I want you to pay attention to me saying that because you're going to have some splainin to do if you don't turn me off for this next little bit. I don't want that on my conscience. Here we go. All the little ones are gone. Okay. The tagline and the cover this book sucked me in because here's the tagline. The stories were all wrong. Hook was never the villain. Oh my god. I love this so much. This is Peter Pan. This is NAUGHTY Peter Pan. Here's our setup. For the last two centuries, all of the Darling women have disappeared on their 18th birthday. Sometimes they're gone for only a day, sometimes a week, sometimes a month. But they always return different and some would say broken now. On the afternoon of her 18th birthday. Winnie Darlene. Mother is running around the house like a mad person trying to make sure that all the windows are locked and the doors are locked in. Absolutely no one can get in. But it is not going to matter. It is pointless folks, because when night falls, he comes for her. And this time the never King and the Lost Boys aren't willing to let this darling girl go. I love this book. All right. Here's thriller romance. Yes. Okay. So it will mean Yeah, okay. That's why I'm saying this is why we don't have any children of the many here listening. Okay, here's how I found this. I'm bringing this book because I want to normalize somebody's reading. And that's what this is. And it is good and healthy to read somebody's books. Okay, I was listening to The Popcast, and they were talking about the Nos of Books. That's a great episode. Everyone should listen to that episode. It's very, very good. And one of the things that they were talking about when they were somehow talking about romance, someone threw out the notion that there was something called a reverse harem. And I was like, What is a reverse harem? I got so fascinated by this concept. And so then, as one does, who's a bookish friend of currently reading, I went to my most trusted source, and that is the bookish friends group on Facebook, over 2000 of you are there. It's a very safe space to say things like, Hey, does anyone know what reverse harem romance is? And do you have any recommendations for it? I thought this was the most niche thing I could ask for. Not 10 minutes later, there were literally 18 different recommendations for reverse harem

Kaytee Cobb 24:43

and that was just the start. Like that

Meredith Monday Schwartz 24:45

was just the start explosive. I'm gonna let you all go find out what a reverse harem is on your own time. Luckily, several of them sounded really great and I downloaded but this one was recommended by bookish friend Breck Frey and I am so thankful to her For this recommendation, I don't love the Peter Pan story right historically, that's just not the whole I don't want to grow up think everything about Peter Pan just irritates me. So I'm not a big fan of Peter Pan retellings or any of that I don't get into darling girl any of that stuff. But this one was so good in this story, Peter Pan is just called pan. I loved him so much. I loved the Lost Boys and man, the lost boys. They are a spicy group. In this book, I loved the plotline about pan needing the Darling girls to find a certain thing. He's trying to get them to help him find a certain thing. And then I loved how we found out why he needed that. And all the other stuff that's going on on the island and why pan needs to keep his power and magic which are slowly being drained away. There was just so much interesting backstory much more than I thought that I would get in a somebody's reverse harem. But I will say that the Winnie darlin character I didn't love so much because she's awfully damaged from the start. And I wanted her to really live into her power in a way that's not sex based. And I have really high hopes further in this series. Yes, this is a series that that that will happen. But in this first book, I really want to be clear that she is immature and is not living into her power in the way that I would want her to as a grown woman, but her reverse harem is pan and the Lost Boys and good night shirt. The sex in this book is very, very, very, very open door very, I didn't find it to be cringy with naming a bunch of body parts in weird ways. That's what I can't stand about sexting, I can't stand. I don't mind a great sex scene. I just don't want it to be cringy it is not cringy here it is just well written sex. And that is definitely a thing for me. This is a Peter Pan retelling that I am all about here is to reading what is weird and crazy and just for us something just for you. Whatever that weird thing is download that smut onto your Kindle and stay up late reading it live your journey whatever that journey is. For me, I'm heading back to naughty Neverland. This is the never king by Nikki St Crow.

Kaytee Cobb 27:18

The whole journey, the whole bookish friends journey and having heard that podcast episode and knowing exactly how we got to this journey. It just delighted me no end. So I'm very glad to hear the tag at the end.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 27:30

I like it so much. And it's all on Kindle Unlimited. So it's great. I loved it.

Kaytee Cobb 27:37

Well, we're gonna tie a bow on that and turn the other direction. My third book this week is historical fiction. It's called Under a Painted Sky by Stacey Lee. This book was first released in 2015. And I don't know if I was living under a rock at the time, or if I didn't pay attention, but it was essentially perfect for me. I'm so glad my friend Stephanie brought it to my TBR earlier this year. We started in 1849 in Missouri. Samantha is a young girl whose father manages a general store, but chapter one and this is all chapter one. We are hoping for a swing up already. A tragic accident burns the store to the ground with her father inside and the owner of the store assumes he can take his frustrations about the last of

his merchandise. Out on Samantha herself. We've got the death of a parent, a sexual assault. And then the murder of said store owner at Samantha's hands all in chapter one buckle up folks, she connects with a girl who ran away from a plantation where she was enslaved named autonomy and leaves town heading west on the Oregon Trail. The girls soon discover that the trail is not a safe place for two young women. So they disguise themselves and go by Sam and Andy. Two boys who want to try and make their fortune in the California gold rush after a number of close calls the girls dressed as and passing as boys cross paths with a band of cowboys, they have to find a way to contribute to the group if they want to remain safe in the larger numbers and be armed with the skills of the cowboy troop. These three men captured my heart. They take salmon and Andy under their wings, teaching them to lasso and ride horses and throw knives all while the girls attempt to hide their secret identities and evade the law that's looking for a Chinese girl and a woman runaway slave. Will the men connect them to the wanted posters and turn them in for the very large reward? Will they make it out west and possibly find the family connections that enable the swing up that we're really hoping for? This book kept me turning the pages as fast as I possibly could in order to find out what happens to our heroines. Now Meredith, I'm trying to sneak this in here. But it's definitely part of the story that Sam and Andy are older teens in this book. It doesn't read like ya to me though, because we aren't talking about angsty teens that are lying to their parents. But it certainly is tagged that way on Goodreads. Instead, these girls are facing life and death situations in a time when teenagers were often expected to work and wed and bear children just like adults were so lest anyone think I'm trying to pull the wool over your eyes. I'm admitting that This is why a novel that doesn't read like when there's a whole generation of adults now that we're affectionately termed the Oregon Trail generation, the ones that grew up without computers in their homes, but then started taking typing classes in school and looked forward to seeing if anyone would die of dysentery that day on the computer. I am firmly part of that generation. And that's why this book was such a hit. For me. We've got river forwarding, we've got oxen, we've got communicable diseases, we've got hunting for bison and cooking snakes over the fire. It's like my favorite childhood game come to life on the page. I loved it. I gave it five stars. It's under a Painted Sky by Stacey Lee.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 30:37

I think it actually sounds really good. It's so good. And there are definitely books who have protagonists that are in that age range, but the book itself is not written in that way.

Kaytee Cobb 30:48

Yeah, the girls that I was reading it with, I was like, What do you guys call this way? We've like I mean, yes, but this is for adults. This is a great adult book too. So

Meredith Monday Schwartz 30:57

good. Well, my third book is not coming out for another few weeks, but I really wanted to talk about it now because I think it's going to be huge and I am so excited for you guys to get to read it. I read the soul mate by Sally Hepworth. This is out on April 4 2023. And again I want you to get your holds in at the library because there's going to be a long list for this and get your pre orders in at your Indie. Remember, that's a great place where you can place your pre order. Here's the setup of the soulmate. There's a cottage on a cliff and our lead characters Gabe and Pippa they buy it. This is their dream home in their dream sleepy coastal town. But their perfect house is a little bit sinister because the tall cliffs that it's next to that make it so awesome also have become a popular spot for people to end their

lives. So night after night, Gabe comes to their rescue literally talking people off of the ledge until one night he doesn't when Pippa discovers that her husband gave knew this latest victim the questions begin. Did the victim jump? Or was she pushed and would gave the love of pipis life her soulmate? ever lied to her? Yes, as the perfect facade of their marriage begins to crack. The deepest and darkest secrets begin to unravel. Oh my gosh, five star thriller alert. Doesn't happen all the time. But Sally Hepworth is back. You guys know I love Sally Hepworth. I loved The Mother in Law. It's one of my favorite domestic thrillers of all time. And I love Sally herself. She's one of my favorite follows on Instagram. But the good sister was good, the younger wife was not. So I was bummed when I read both of those books, they just didn't come up to the pleasure that it was to read the mother in law. But the soul mate does this is back to the crisp plotting of that first book. But even more, it's back to the character development of that book, this book makes you care about each one of these individual characters that and element in that first story is the mother in law. The and element here is the deep dive into two marriages, two marriages of good people who love each other, and that made it so much more interesting. I really, really loved it. Also, there's a very interesting construct in the way that she wrote this book that I'm not going to tell you about. But it really added to my enjoyment of the book. It was really really smart. Kind of reminded me of a Katherine Ryan Howard kind of construct the plot grabs you right from the start and plays out perfectly. Yes, there are thriller elements. I'm calling it what it is this thriller, it's got short chapters, it's got a couple of good size twists, but nothing that's out of the realm, or unbelievable. It's just enough to keep you flying through the pages. Of course, trigger warnings for issues with mental health, suicide, and especially bipolar disorder. Tread carefully, but I do think that it's handled well here. I'm so glad this one was good. I'm so excited that Sally is back. So go and preorder the soulmate by Sally Hepworth.

Kaytee Cobb 34:14

And as we always say, make sure you're following Sally because she and her husband are

Meredith Monday Schwartz 34:19

fantastic. They are so they are so good and so good together. And yes, I just adore her. All right, Kaytee. So those are recurrent reads. So let's talk a little bit about our deep dive. As I said at the top of the show. Last week, we talked about books that made us want to travel to particular locales in the real world. Yeah. But as we were going through preparing for that, I know I and then I double checked with you and you were having the same experience. We were like, Oh, I love that. Oh, but that's not a real place. So we decided that we wanted to take a little bit of time and talk today about a few books that are our favorite fictional worlds that we would buy a plane ticket to if they existed, so Okay. What is the first fictional world that you knew you wanted to jump into?

Kaytee Cobb 35:04

Okay, the one that came to mind first is not the one I'm going to talk about first, because I really want to talk about House in the Cereulean Sea TJ Klune, I want to visit an orphanage for magical youth. I want to meet Lucy, and aware Pomeranian in order to rethink all the ways I've made suppositions about creatures that are different from me, because the house in the civilian sea is so cozy and lovely. And I don't necessarily want to live there. So that's kind of how I framed this deep dive for me. Like there's a lot of places I want to visit that I'm like, and now I will go back home to my bed.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 35:39

Definitely. I mean, I very much was like, okay, yeah, not a place that I want to live all the time. Not a place where I necessarily want to jump into this. What's happening in the story, I would sort of like to go to this other area where that story is not happening, right. So yes, absolutely. And that's a great one. I hadn't thought about that one. But that would be a wonderful world to visit.

Kaytee Cobb 36:02

I just got a special edition of that one for my shelves that has sprayed edges because I love that book. And so when I went and looked at my shelves, and I was like, which other worlds would you like to jump into? That was the one that kind of stuck out to me first.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 36:14

The first mean obviously, obviously, we all want to go to Narnia. I mean, we just I just feel like we have to stay Narnia, Hogwarts. These just feel like ones that are like gimmies Yeah, they're a complete gimme Nevermore, the world of Nevermore is

Kaytee Cobb 36:31

to stay at the hotel right and to ride the barley rail to get from one place to the other like to stay

Meredith Monday Schwartz 36:38

at the hotel and go into the room what did they call the room in Nevermore? Where you go in and it fit the room fills with the scent that you need at that particular moment. They call it the smoking room but it's not smoking I think so. Yeah. And it's like it fills with some sort of like Justin not fills like overwhelmingly but like just enough of the right scent for you at that moment to really optimize your mood or calm you down or you know and then in the the room becomes what you need to become. Yeah, I love. I just love I would just love and all the people with the interesting hair, the gigantic cat and just all of that I would never more definitely was one of the first that pops into mind. And of course, I think the other that's really pretty much a gimme in our community is A Court of Thorns and Roses. Right? Parthian Of course, all the different courts of that series. If I had to choose one Nerf gun to my head, I would live in the Night Court.

Kaytee Cobb 37:35

Obviously, there's not really another option. Well, I mean, the autumn court

Meredith Monday Schwartz 37:39

is, is really moody and interesting spring court, I mean, agreed that the nikecourt would be where I would want to live. But all the different worlds that you visit when you read that series. It's my number one favorite thing about that series. Yes. What's another one for you?

Kaytee Cobb 37:54

I want to visit a small town that's ruled by a nefarious mayor and regularly visited by an egregious that lives in the forest and brings the townspeople baked goods like in the Ogress and the Orphans. But those baked goods could also come from the cafe of our friendly local orc, who used to be a mercenary and hired a rat to run her kitchen. Like in Legends and lattes. I would be fine visiting either of those

places. I just want to sit in the cafe. I want to eat the baked goods. I want to see the library want to hang out and I want that nefarious mayor to be causing trouble in both worlds that I'm great with it.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 38:27

I definitely would jump into the world of legends and lattes in a hot minute, if anything just for the cinnamon rolls. Yeah, in the coffee. Right? Yeah, no, absolutely. That's a really, really good one. Another book that I thought about, this is a weird one. And it's especially weird. I shouldn't even say it because once I came up with my list, I realized that this is what I was really excited to talk about. And then I was like, Uh, wait, this is a real place. Opened in my mind. I read the book when I was so young. It's so the book is Heidi. And it's about a little girl who's raised in the Swiss Alps. And I swear I've slotted it in my head. Everything about that book in my head is slotted into fantasy. Like it's so fantastical and perfect. But of course you can actually

Kaytee Cobb 39:12

sort of break I went that's a bucket list trip for me actual like meadows with goats and bells. But is

Meredith Monday Schwartz 39:20

there a grumpy grandpa? That's what I want to know cuz he's the best part of that story is the grumpy grandpa.

Kaytee Cobb 39:25

Probably if anybody out there is in Switzerland and has a grumpy grandpa, please do let us know. And a place for me to stay. Right. Please let me know. Ideally, something with very pitched roofs, you know, so the snow can slide off. Right? Be great. Right? Okay. I have one dark one. And this is where I was really like, just to be clear. We're only visiting these places, right? I want to visit the world of Magic for Liars, kind of like when Finley Donovan goes to the police academy like I just talked about last week and the newest installment of that story. I want to visit Sara Gailius world and investigate a magical Murder, then I want to leave and not have anybody magically murder me because those two things seem to go hand in hand.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 40:07

Yes, I would be very nervous about being in that world for for very long because think of all the amazing ways you could get murdered.

Kaytee Cobb 40:14

Yeah, exactly. And even the starting murder in that book is like horrifying. So but I want to see it. I want to check it out. Oh, yeah.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 40:22

And another one I thought about was the world of American Royals, which is the Katharine McGee book. And so my idea here is I'm just in the palace and I'm just dressed like a visiting queen. Okay, I'm not a princess, right? I'm too old to be Princess so I'm visiting queen with all the everything that goes with that and seeing how this American court of royals, how opulently palaces, how wonderfully they dress, how they eat all of that. I just think that would be a world that would be fun to jump into.

Kaytee Cobb 40:51

Okay, isn't wasn't Camilla still a princess until like a month ago. That's her turn an age range on princesses are

Meredith Monday Schwartz 40:57

there again, I'm jumping into a fictional world.

Kaytee Cobb 41:00

So you're a queen? Got it?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 41:02

Right? Why would I possibly jump into a fictional world and make myself a princess?

Kaytee Cobb 41:06

Okay, fair enough. I actually have a book that I did not love The Book Eaters by Sunyi Dean, but I do want to visit but not live in a world where you can taste the stories you read, were fairy tales taste saccharine, sweet and dictionaries are dry and dusty and graphic novels are rich on your tongue with like ink Enos like I like the idea of having that extra sense, you know, and I've made fountain wishes about this. So this is not surprising, that extra sense play into it and where you can like consume something and then it gives you knowledge, which is kind of like Alice in Wonderland, like eat me and drink me and then like having that idea of you eat something and it changes you internally. I like that idea. So I want to visit there I don't want to live in a place where I have to eat books, but I want to visit right

Meredith Monday Schwartz 41:53

Well speaking of that Alice in Wonderland is a place I would not want to visit because I just don't like weird and unexpected and but where I would. This is like the most this is like such a niche title but the Susan Wittig Albert writes a series that starts with The Tale of Hilltop Farm based on it's based on Beatrix Potter and in this book, The woodland creatures can talk. Oh, not unlike what is it? Shady hollow,

Kaytee Cobb 42:22

right? Do you know Dawson?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 42:24

Yeah, that's another word that I would like to I love the idea of talking animals. Yes.

Kaytee Cobb 42:27

Yes. I would love a talking animal vacation where I can just go hang out with them and chat with them for a little while. I think that'd be great.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 42:35

I love that. All right, my final pick is the magical island that was featured in the book *Cersei* Oh, right. See ya. Again don't don't want to live there forever. Don't want to take part in a lot of things that happen on that island but from a really good magical island theater. There are naughty Neverland one of those to take me to either one of those places.

Kaytee Cobb 42:59

Oh no. Meredith I don't know if you'd come back from naughty Neverland?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 43:03

I would not I would not okay,

Kaytee Cobb 43:06

we're going to bring the kids back now. The last place I would like to is Tilly and the book wanders pages and CO the bookstore where you can I mean that's what we're doing here right that's what this entire deep dive is is getting into books and getting to pop back out again. And if you like that idea, you have to read Tilly in the book wonders because that's what they do in those stories. They get to go visit the crazy people in *Alice in Wonderland* and then they get to jump out and they get to go see and and Diana get accidentally drunk on road is very cordial and all of it that idea of jumping into a story and coming back out. I love it so much.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 43:39

Yeah, that's a really really good one. I love that too. All right, so that is our deep dive into fictional worlds we would like to jump into so of course we need to find out from you guys. What was the first one you thought about when we were talking about this? What is the fictional world that you want to jump into? All right kaytee let us go into the garden and make a wish at the fountain What's your wish this week? Okay,

Kaytee Cobb 44:03

I'm gonna get a little sappy this week Meredith So this week I'm going to make a wish for our Megan so we welcomed the newest member of the currently reading team this week Megan who does our editing and show notes and social media and keeps our heads twisted on correctly is on maternity leave right now because she just had a brand new sweet baby those details are hers to share. So I'm going to keep a lot of this intentionally vague but this little nugget is part of our team now one of the currently reading babies like we had we had honestly right and we have Charlotte Mary's baby. These are all like born into the currently reading family. So my wish this week is to speak some words of hope over Megan and her baby and other mamas and babies that the two of them and the rest of the family would bond over books that Megan would find joy and delight even in the hard because there will be plenty of heart that the board books and the picture books and the early readers and the chapter books would pave the way for a child who loves reading the way that Megan does that Megan as a mama finds time to pray or ties herself and her favorite things in order to raise up a child who does the same that this baby helps all of us adults to grow a world of empathy and compassion and joy, which for many of us are found in the pages of our books and that the invitation to adventure and to growth will continue to nurture this baby for all the days of its life. So that's my sappy, lovey poetry. That's everything that I've

gotten signed me thank you for coming to open mic night with Kaytee, you can snap I guess because it's poetry time. That is my wish. We love you, Megan.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 45:29

We do we do I cosign on that wish completely. That was really beautifully said, Kaytee. And I know that she is going to love hearing those words from you. And I know that we are all so happy to welcome her little one into the currently reading family. Yes, I was wishing that we would stop having ice storms first of all, because here in Texas ice storms are a real problem. This is a storm where it just everything freezes and all the trees crack and fall to the ground. Not all obviously that's an overstatement. But you can't go outside you can't drive anywhere because we're none of us ready to drive in the ice and we don't have salt and we don't have it's a it's a complete an absolute mess for days on end. We didn't have school for almost an entire week. It's a mess. But as we were going through that week, I was reminded of a book that I think about all the time that I read actually in February of 2021 the last time that we had a terrible ice storm which we call Snowmageddon. So this is a book called We are unprepared by Meg Little Riley, the setup ash and Pa moved from Brooklyn to the bucolic hills of Vermont, which of course, is something that I would love to do, and they buy a picture perfect farm house but then a devastating superstorm is expected all of a sudden, all the weather people start talking about the fact that there's this superstorm the likes of which have never hit the world. And there's there's a line of them getting ready to come. So everyone knows they have like three months before these copters like we have a heads up right. And so they fear of course is everywhere in the town and ash in PA will ash seeks common ground with those who believe in working together for the common good. And pa teams up with the preppers who want to go off the grid and war with the rest of the locals over who to trust and how to protect themselves. And then the storms begin to come. I think so much about this whenever we have these storms that literally make us all cower in our homes. And it's like we get a Shelter In Place order because what would happen if you ran out of food? If you needed medical care and an ambulance couldn't get to you? You would have to rely on the people who are within walking distance of your home. What would that look like? How close are you to your neighbors? Do you know your neighbors? Can you trust your neighbors? Which side would I fall on? Would I be about the common good? Or would I be about protecting myself on my own? I don't know for sure, really. But what I do know is after Snowmageddon two years ago and reading this book, I was a lot more prepared coming into this latest ice storm because the first one scared the bejesus out of me. So I wish that if you're interested in this kind of storm related CLI fi you would pick up we are unprepared by mag little Riley perfect.

Kaytee Cobb 48:16

I wasn't sure if it was gonna be that one or The Children's Blizzard, which is the other one that I think of where I'm like terrifying storms coming out of nowhere.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 48:24

Yes, exactly. And that is you know, again, if you like a scary storm and also of course, Elizabeth Barnhill at Waco reads on Instagram, follow her for all the weather related fiction and nonfiction because she is a font of recommendations for that. All right, that is it for this week. As a reminder, here's where you can connect with us. You can find me I'm Meredith at Meredith dot reads on Instagram.

Kaytee Cobb 48:47

And you can find me, Kaytee at notes on bookmarks on Instagram.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 48:51

Full show notes with the title of every book we mentioned in the episode and timestamps. So you can zoom right to where we talked about it can be found on our website at [currently reading podcast.com](https://currentlyreadingpodcast.com).

Kaytee Cobb 49:01

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Meredith Monday Schwartz 49:08

And if you just can't wait for more content, become a bookish friend, because there is hours and hours and days of content there. It's only \$5 a month and it's a great way for you to support us. You can also support us by rating and reviewing us positively on Apple podcasts. And you can shout us out on social media. Every one of those things helps us to find our perfect audience.

Kaytee Cobb 49:31

Yes, folkish friends are the best friends. Thank you for helping us grow and get

Meredith Monday Schwartz 49:34

closer to our goals. All right, until next week, may your coffee be hot

Kaytee Cobb 49:39

and your book be unputdownable

Meredith Monday Schwartz 49:40

Happy reading Kaytee

Kaytee Cobb 49:41

Happy reading Meredith