



Season 5, Episode 44: Your Homework + Literary Festival Tips and Tricks

Mon, Jun 12, 2023 • 57:03

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 00:23

We are light on the chitchat heavy on the 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 co living in Austin, Texas. And I am trying to raise readers over here.

Kaytee Cobb 00:41

And I'm Kaytee Cobb, a homeschooling mom of four living in New Mexico. And I love when people and authors are just as great as you hoped. This is episode number 44 of season five and we are so glad you're here.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 00:53

Oh, yes, Kaytee, that's the best when authors turn out to be as nice and as charming as you wanted them to be

Kaytee Cobb 00:59

and not a-holes. That's what we're really hoping for non a-holes.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 01:03

Absolutely.

Kaytee Cobb 01:05

I'm excited to hear about raising readers, but we have some business to attend to today, Meredith, we are getting close to the end of season five, it's that time of year, we're in the mid 40s of our episodes for season five. And that means it's time to start preparing for end of year season goodies. As always, we produce an entire episode, which we love of listener presses, which means friends, listeners, it's time for you to tell us about the books you wish you could press into other readers hands or our hands. It's like a secretly selfishly motivated episode.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 01:37

Oh, because it is my favorite episode of the whole year.

Kaytee Cobb 01:41

It's so good. It's fantastic. So we will ask for them this week and next. So you really have just a little time to get that recorded and sent to us. Here's what you're gonna do, you're gonna make a voice memo recording on your phone, try to do it in a quieter place in your home for the best audio, not while you're driving, or in your echoey bathroom, or with your kids knocking on the door outside. Tell us your name, where you're from and the book you want to press including the title and the author. Give us a short setup, you can say Here's the setup, and why you love it. We're looking for three minutes or less for each press. So it's a good idea to write out notes first. And if you have to retake anything, just like every other week, we can edit that out. So don't restart your recording and send us something perfect. It's okay if you fumble and have to start over. We will make you sound excellent and brilliant. Because that's what you are. Email them to us at currentlyreadingpodcast@gmail.com with listener press as the subject line. We cannot wait for that episode.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 02:36

Oh, that is the most fun and I can't believe the end of season five is already upon us.

Kaytee Cobb 02:41

Right. And we have other fun things happening next week. So I really wanted to make sure to like give good instructions this week.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 02:49

Yes, yes. Get those in now. For sure.

Kaytee Cobb 02:53

Okay, michief managed there. Now I'm gonna let you know at the top here that for our deep dive this week, we're gonna talk a little bit about what I was doing last weekend when I missed our recording and Roxanna was here for me, and I was at the Literary Festival. So we're gonna kind of download about that. Talk about what that was like good tips and techniques, planning, etc.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 03:13

I can't wait for that too.

Kaytee Cobb 03:15

But before we do that, we will get started where we always do with our bookish moments of the week. Meredith, what is yours?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 03:20

Well, Kaytee, my bookish moment of the week is the fact that summer vacation is upon us and my youngest Of course, I have three older children who are launched out and making babies of their own. But I've got a little one who's 11 here in my house, and I need to keep him busy over the summer.

That's not difficult to do with Jackson. Sports is such a huge part of his life, sports and friends. And that's fine, but I need to keep his brain from completely atrophying over the summer. And of course, I don't want to teach math. That's not on the table. And so what's on the table is keeping him reading over the summer. But Kaytee, more than ever before, he is an extraordinarily reluctant reader, he's 11 getting ready to turn 12. He's never been my easiest reader like to read on on his own. It's not something that he naturally has ever gravitated toward. And at this point, it is just like wrestling a bear to get... now I can force any issue that I want. Right? That's you know, but that's not my preference, right?

Kaytee Cobb 04:25

We want joy. We want desire, delight. Yeah,

Meredith Monday Schwartz 04:29

exactly. So my question to you, Kaytee is how do you manage summer vacation and reading with your kids? You homeschool them, so do you just kind of keep it going? How do you keep the gears greased for your kids?

Kaytee Cobb 04:45

We do keep it going. I don't usually do as many read alouds in the summer so we won't do like long chapter books where I'm reading aloud to them but especially Micah and Levi. I mean, I've addicted them to audiobooks. So for a while large portion of each day, they're not allowed to be on screens. But they do have an old Kindle Fire that only has audiobook apps on it. And it's all locked down parental controls. So they have access to Libby, Hoopla, Scribd and Audible, of course, and they just audiobook to their heart's content. And that means they're doing a lot of Lego building. We are very big about them contributing with chores in our house. So when they are sorting laundry, or folding laundry, or mowing the lawn all that time, they usually like just stick a Kindle Fire in the back of their pants, which is super sanitary and awesome, of course. And they'll just walk around with earbuds in just like me. And usually I make a rule that they need to leave one out so they can hear me and talk to me if I need to get their attention. But we just audiobook all summer long is what we do.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 05:46

Okay, so audiobooks, you're not saying, hey, 30 minutes of being on your Kindle or 30 minutes of reading a print book?

Kaytee Cobb 05:53

No, but they do, we send all the kids to bed at once, which is at eight o'clock and the boys, their light stays on till 930. So they are allowed to stay in bed and read and they do read a lot on their Kindle after they go to bed. Sometimes I have to go down there and be like, Hey, you're being noisy, please pick something else to do. But usually they choose Kindle reading.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 06:12

So okay, I'm going to continue to push the issue. And the key is, of course, taking away the other options. And so that's what I'm going to do. And that's really that's really the only thing that can be done to make sure that it happens. He's not going to love it. But you know, my summers when I was growing

up, were filled with things that I didn't love, including being shut out of the house into 140 degree heat not being let in all day. So I mean, this is really not a big thing I'm asking about I'm

Kaytee Cobb 06:39

legitimately Yeah, and we all know that you almost got serial killed when you were a child. So

Meredith Monday Schwartz 06:44

gosh, yes. Right. See, I'm keeping my children safe and cool. This is not a big deal. Alright, can you what is your bookish moment of the week?

Kaytee Cobb 06:51

Okay, my bookish moment actually is a fun circle back to one that you had a few months ago. So my bookish moment this week has to be the fun that comes from getting a big package of galley in the mail. This time, it was from Elizabeth Barnhill at @Wacoreads to me, which is very fun. She and I were chatting on Instagram about a galley she had just finished that she knew I would enjoy so she like showed me the cover said you're gonna love this. And I said, Oh fun. Are you gonna send it to me? Because I'm a terrible person. And she did. And not only did she send me that galley, she like poked around in her galley stacks and chose specifically for me curated a stack of six books to send me. So add to that the books that Katie gave me for my birthday this year, which Meredith, you will be glad to know does include Fourth Wing by Rebecca Yarros, good. And a galley that came from a publisher with a bottle of sparkling cider in the package, which I was so excited for. Interesting. I'm just rolling in bookish mail, bookish goodness books to add to the shelves, which is its own problem. But it's the best kind of problem.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 07:55

That is the most fun and Elizabeth does such a good job of regularly sending us or handing like I go up to see her handing us a big pile of books sack of goodness that she's curated. Yeah, she she's just the absolute best. So that is wonderful. All right, good stuff.

Kaytee Cobb 08:13

All right. Let's do some current reads. What are you going to tell us about this week?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 08:17

All right, Kaytee, I have several books that I really enjoyed the talk about this week.

Kaytee Cobb 08:23

Me too. We're gonna have a good episode.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 08:25

Yes, yes. One of them. If you are currently reading bookish friend, you then of course, sort of you support us at \$5 a month. And that means that every month in the first Thursday, you get the Indie Press List. And so you're going to know, this month, the Indie Press List stack was from the fantastic independent bookstore Capital Books on K in Sacramento, California. And they put together a great stack. Now, why am I bringing this up now, because I'm gonna lead off today in a way I don't normally

do. I'm going to lead off with a book from that stack. So this is a freshie. This is a freshie you guys, but I want to talk about it now, because the timing is perfect. Partly just because of what we were just talking about summer reading is upon us. Our kids are home. We need good books to be able to put in their hands. And this one is middle grade, which we don't often do with the Indie Press List stack. But it's so good that we had to have it on the stack. And I'm so glad that Capital Books recommended it. This is *The Swifts* by Beth Lincoln and Kaytee, I know this is a book that both you and I, and so many of our bookish friends already really loved.

Kaytee Cobb 09:33

my gosh, I love this book so much.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 09:34

It's so so good. All right, here's the setup. The first thing that you need to know about the Swift family is this on the day each one of the Swifts are born, every Swift child is brought before the Sacred Family dictionary. Their Mama is then instructed to open the dictionary to a random page and point blindly to a word from that they are given a name and a definition, a definition it is assumed means that they will basically grow up to match with their personality. Now our lead character in *The Swifts* is Shenanigan Swift. She is young, smart and very curious. And she's very willing to do any sleuthing she needs to do to satisfy that curiosity. So she's a girl after my own heart. So Shenanigan is excited because coming up really soon as our book starts is the big Swift family reunion. It'll give her many new relatives to meet and the Swifts are endlessly interesting, and it'll give her cover for her next great scheme hunting for grand uncle Vile's long lost treasure. She's having the time of her life, until one of the Swifts gives Arch-Aunt Schadenfreude a deadly shove down the stairs. So of course, Shenanigan needs to team up with her equally wonderful sisters and cousin to follow the clues and catch the Swift killer.

Kaytee Cobb 09:36

I love this so much.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 10:05

This book is so much fun. So I should tell you the actual name of the book is *The Swifts: A Dictionary of Scoundrels*, which makes it even more fun. And as I said, I've already heard some great buzz about it. Several people whose middle grade tastes I really trusted had already posted saying this is a great one. So I was super excited when we had it on the Indie Press List stack. This book, as I mentioned in that episode makes me realize how much I wish more middle aged people who currently think that middle grade books are not good, would indulge their inner eight year old and pick up really quality children's literature every once in a while. And this book is the perfect one to pick up. It has a delightful narrative style. It has a lovable, smart female main character and plenty of representation in the book that as we discussed in that episode is done in my favorite way. Kaytee the representation is just part of the story. This book has a treasure hunt, a super fun naming structure. More on that in my wish today, a house filled with hidden passages, a dangerous library, and a family who practices their funeral before they're even dead. And my favorite part is that it has all the fun wordplay that you probably loved about some of the smartest books you read when you were young. It really leans hard into how fun vocabulary can be without being boring. It's got lots of action. It's very, very funny, and it has a perfectly resolved morally complete ending. This is the exact kind of book that eight, nine or 10 year old Meredith would

have loved to read. So my early wish is that more women who right now fold their hands and shake their heads at the idea of reading middle grade would give this one a try. This is *The Swifts*, A dictionary of Scoundrels, a debut novel by Beth Lincoln with fantastic illustrations by Claire Powell, who I also love.

Kaytee Cobb 13:02

That was so fantastic. Everything about this book is fantastic. And I completely agree even if you think I am well beyond Middle Grade Level Reading. I should not be picking up middle grade books anymore. This is the gateway back into the joy of middle grade. It's It's perfect. It's perfect. Right?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 13:22

Right. It just reminds you of why you loved reading when you were young, which is why I don't understand why we always we will get complaints today. We always get complaints when we have middle grade on the show. But we love it. It's what we're reading. So we're going to continue to try to convince the naysayers

Kaytee Cobb 13:38

anybody who complaints today, I'm just gonna send them a link to bookshop.org with this book,

Meredith Monday Schwartz 13:43

exactly, or the link to Capital Books. Okay, how about that?

Kaytee Cobb 13:46

That's where I'll send them perfect. All right. I also have an Indie Press List book for my first title this week. Oh, but is from April, and I'm pretty sure you finished it as well. I want to talk about *Mrs. Caliban* by Rachel Ingalls.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 14:01

Yes, yes. Yes, please. I love this one.

Kaytee Cobb 14:04

Okay, so this first book this week was brought to our attention by Parnassus and their amazing owner Anne Patchett, who we love. I think we've mentioned before that their Instagram and Tiktok are amazing. And they do a series called "If you haven't read it, it's new to you." That's where Meredith and I both first heard about this strange little novella, *Mrs. Caliban*. When we started working with them on the April 2023 indie press list, and they gave us this title as one of the options. It was a no brainer, we jumped at the chance. This little book was first published in January of 1982, more than 40 years ago, but if you haven't read it, it's new to you. And I maintain that publishers don't know how to market it or classify it. The cover has had so many iterations over the years, and the newest edition is the only one that's perfect, bright lime green cover with a pair of giant eyeballs and very slight outline of a mouth. That's all you need to get into the story. Here's the setup. Dorothy Caliban is a normal 80s housewife doing chores at home while her husband is off who knows where hypothetically working. She was in her quiet house in the suburbs and waiting for him to get home probably late as usual. While washing the dishes, she hears a strange announcement on the radio about a monster who has just escaped from

the Institute for Oceanographic Research. This monster is billed as extremely dangerous. So of course, when he walks in through her screen door and his extraordinarily tall, lime green glory, it throws her sleepy little regular life for a loop. I dare you not to fall for Larry, the monster like Dorothy does. Is it complicated? Of course it is. Is that a little mind bendy at times, for sure. But Meredith found herself wondering if this could happen to her when we recorded the Indie Press List episode. I did not. I was like, Okay, well, that's a little weird. So it's also transportive. Super, like wonderfully written, and it has one of the finest endings I have ever read. The last sentence of this book is Pitch Perfect. And I love that Parnassus put it on the list so we could all finally move it up our TBR lists. I'm not saying that everyone's going to love this book, my quick perusal of bookish friends on Goodreads that I follow, I saw reviews from four to five stars, and many reviews of one star with only one three star thrown in the middle. So this is a polarizing book. However, it's great for discussion. So if you read it, I'm not guaranteeing that you will enjoy it, but I definitely did. It's Mrs. Caliban, published in 1982 by Rachel Ingalls.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 16:42

You know, the two things that stuck out to me about this book are that even if you don't love it, first of all, it's so short, it takes almost no time to mean so you're not you know, gonna get stuck behind it. And also, you sure as sh are not going to forget it. Right?

Kaytee Cobb 16:57

Right. You'll be like remember that weird book I read?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 16:59

So if that matters to you, it is it's imminently discussable. I liked this one a lot.

Kaytee Cobb 17:04

Oh, good. So good. Okay, what's your second book Meredith?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 17:07

Okay. My second book is a second in a series and this is All the Queen's Men by SJ Bennett. Now this is the second in the Her Majesty the Queen investigate series. I've read the first one and I really really enjoyed it. Here's the setup. As our story opens in 2016, at Buckingham Palace, there is a lot going on between Brexit, a new prime minister, a new controversial American president newly in office, but all of that takes a backseat when a staff member is found dead beside the palace swimming pool. So of course we have to ask ourselves, is it an accident or is it murder. In addition, a couple more things are going on. In our story Queen Elizabeth assistant Rosie is on the trail of a favorite painting of the Queen's once hung outside her bedroom, but appears to have been misappropriated in some way. And then a series of disturbing, disturbing anonymous letters begins to be sent to Palace staffers. Are all these things related? It'll take the Queen's savvy sleuthing mind to get to the bottom of these castle crises. Now, I wrote that last bit and I feel like that totally sounds like it could have been an Amazon, the marketing material on Amazon

Kaytee Cobb 18:24

right? I like savvy sleuthing mind that was very savvy sleuthing.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 18:27

And then the castle crises. Right. I could get a job if I needed to. All right. There is so...

Kaytee Cobb 18:36

You have so many jobs can you not?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 18:39

Know I'm always thinking, Am I employable? Alright, there's so much to like about the second in the series. But I do think you need to know what you're getting before you jump into it that will actually improve your experience with it. Here are the things that I like this is what I would call gentle mystery. We've given this its name as a micro genre that a lot of people really love. And I'm finding more and more books that fall into this category. And I like bringing them to the show because there are a lot of people who just don't go in for the gory stuff that I like including my reading partner Roxanna, who was the one who recommended that I jump into this book. She loves her some gentle mystery. So if you're in the mood for a smart plot with a couple of dead bodies that doesn't get too overly graphic, you will love this. Also if you love all things Royals royal family, you will also find a lot to love here. The queen is wonderful. We get fun Easter eggs about several members of the British family and in this one a really sweet plotline that involves the love between the Queen and Prince Philip. This actually came out just a little bit after Prince Philip died and I have to think that the Queen would very much have enjoyed this story. Also, I love it on audio. The narration is very British, but very listenable. As this is the second in the series I'll remark that I found the plot and the characters of both the Queen and Rosie to be sharper and more in focus than they were in the first book, they just kind of became crystal clear in a way that I really enjoyed. I do think that this book, just like its predecessor, had what I would call a little bit of a mushy middle, it was at least an hour and a half longer than it needed to be. But I loved the royal machinations and all the behind the scenes politics so much that I was totally fine and overlooked a little bit of a lag in the pacing. Don't read this if you're in the mood for a thriller, or a serial killer, but if you want a great mystery that has more teeth in it than a cozy, but you would also love a spot of tea. This book will be for you. This is All the Queen's Men by SJ Bennett.

Kaytee Cobb 20:50

Very fun. So the first one in that one is The Windsor Knot?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 20:55

The Windsor Knot

Kaytee Cobb 20:57

I can picture the cover.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 20:59

Yes. And this one has an equally great, I love the cover treatment on this series. It's really nice.

Kaytee Cobb 21:03

I love that. Okay, I have some nonfiction for my second one today. It's How to Human by Carlos Whittaker. So before I start this whole thing, I need everybody listening to jump over to Instagram and follow @loswhit L O S W H I T on Instagram. He is a delight of a human. And the way he rallies people to good work is a real thing that will get you all up in your humanity doesn't suck as much as I thought affirmation for the day. So if you're like, I just need an affirmation to say into the mirror this morning. Humanity doesn't suck as much as I thought and loswhit will get you there. So love it. Carlos Whittaker is a speaker, a social media personality and an author. He could probably be put in a box adjacent to Joel Olsteen. But that is where their similarities end. Because there's the fact that his message is about love and acceptance and being community for each other and not about using Jesus to reach your personal goals. But Carlos is a Christian. So there is some Jesus stuff in this book, there's not going to be a book for everyone. Every chapter wraps back around to the idea that we as humans were created in an image of a perfect human. But even with that bit of church speak, he leaves room for those who don't believe in a Jesus centered church. How to Human goes through three main ways to human as a verb. Be humans see humans and free humans. The subtitle is three ways to share life beyond what distracts divides and disconnects us. And I'm very into lately, y'all have heard a lot of books about friendship connection community, this is very much like a theme in my reading right now. And this book ended up being part of that even though I didn't expect it. This quote, "Practical Guide" gives us pieces of Carlos's life story, interwoven with the ways that he builds connection with himself internally, and with the people around him. In a world that seems at best disconnected from and at worst, openly hostile toward those who are not the same as us. He talks about disagreement across the political spectrum, spiritual debate, and even the ways that we spend our money. Now I regularly break into tears when watching Carlos love bomb people on Instagram, where he talks to someone that's normally kind of unseen, to share a bit of their story, and then asks what their dream is. He shares this to his instafamilia, and gives them a little info and then says if you feel so inclined, \$1 \$5 via Venmo, or PayPal, or cash app or whatever, he has given millions of dollars over these 24 hour love bomb Story series that he does on his Instagram. And every time it happens, I lose all sense of cool, I just am a puddle on the floor. I'm a mess. All that to say that this book is not my first time crying with Carlos. But he did get me with a few solid punches to the gut while I was reading. I loved getting to know him a little better outside the confines of a screen and social media in a longer format writing. But mostly I loved this reminder that humanity is on the struggle bus, but it doesn't have to be. We all control the ways we interact in the world with each other. And Carlos, his book is a great reminder of how to do that in a very human way. So this was How to Human by Carlos Whittaker.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 21:03

Oh, I love that hadn't heard of him, but I have already followed him. I can't wait to dig into that account a little bit more

Kaytee Cobb 21:20

I love him so much. He's just a good guy. Like he's just a really good guy.

Kaytee Cobb 21:32

I love that. Let's lift up just good people? Right, exactly. I love it. Okay, my third book is squarely in my wheelhouse. And if you were not super excited about me talking about gentle mystery, you're going to want to jump on this next one.

Kaytee Cobb 24:48

We're getting like more and more aggressive from Meredith today.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 24:50

We're darker. We're darker here, but so very good. I want to talk about The Book of Cold Cases by Simone St. James. She is auto-buy for me, absolutely love her. All right, here's the setup. As with all of the Simone St. James's books, or most anyway, we have two timelines that we're following. We started out in 1977 in Clear Lake, Oregon, where the small town was hit by The Lady Killer murders. Two men seemingly randomly were murdered with the same gun with strange notes left behind. Now at the time, Beth Greer was the perfect suspect. She was rich, eccentric, young only in her early 20s. And she was seen leaving one of the crimes but police couldn't put a case together. She was acquitted at trial and she retreated to the isolation of her mansion. Our second timeline is also in Oregon, this time in 2017. Our lead character is Shea Collins, who's a receptionist by day and by night runs a true crime website, which she calls The Book of Cold Cases. It's a side hustle that is her passion. And when she meets Beth Greer by chance, Shea screws up her courage and asks her for an interview. To Shea's complete surprise, Beth agrees. So they meet at Beth's mansion, though Shea is never comfortable there. Because items move when she's not looking. And she could swear that she's seen a girl outside the window. You guys in this house? Seriously, creepy stuff happens. Shea wants to know what really happened 40 years ago, but she quickly begins to wonder if Beth was wrongly accused, or if a murderer escaped justice.

Kaytee Cobb 26:39

And if she's safe in this creepy house

Meredith Monday Schwartz 26:41

what which she most assuredly, by the way is not. Alright, this is a super enjoyable slide slightly supernatural murder mystery. So it's got a little bit of ghostly stuff. But we're also squarely within a murder mystery. I love this genre mashup. It is definitely a ghost story, though. And I'll tell you, I know that because there were two nights in a row where I woke up in the middle of the night needing to use the bathroom. And I actually thought about not getting up, which is silly for an almost 50 year old woman. But that's how scared this book had me

Kaytee Cobb 27:18

like an adult diapers book. Yeah.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 27:21

Right. I was really wishing. I think the reason that I love books by Simone St. James, including The Sun Down Motel is because she doesn't just do ghosts, or just do murder. She weaves it all together in a way that is so readable. This book takes us perfectly back and forth through time. And each point of

view is more interesting and page turning than the other one. It's that great experience where you're like, wait, what? Oh, now I'm back to this other one. And I definitely want to know what's going to happen here where you're just as interested in both timelines. I stayed up way too late finishing this one. And I really don't know why I waited too long to read it. I think it's something about the title, almost making me feel like it was it was like short stories or something. I don't like a collection of cold cases. Yeah, I just for some reason, the title, the compendium nature of it kind of kept me away from it. But I loved all the characters, especially ones in the current timeline. And I was so rooting for Shea, our lead character, her arc of growth in the book is really interesting. I should say that I did this when primarily on audio. And then I realized that I had hardcopy on my shelf and found that I wanted to inhale it every single time I could possibly be reading. So this was actually the book that got me into single tracking, which if you listen to last week's show, you'll know that I had been reading like four books at a time. And now all of a sudden, I'm finding myself reading one book, but on every format, which is inefficient,

Kaytee Cobb 28:52

okay, well, and expensive. You have to well, that for sure. But because you have to find where you are each time?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 28:59

No, just I mean, there's that a little bit, but it's mostly just because like, it's just not, it's expensive to you know, like, you know, so I try to do it as inexpensively as I can. But I'm just like, I want it in print and I want it on my Kindle and I want it on audio and I want I just want to read one book and I'm all in so this book is the one that kind of got me into that groove. The audio narration here is really great and very spine tingling for this particular book. Once you get past that compendium sort of title, this book is excellent. As I said, if you like *The Sun Down motel*, or if you liked *Home Before Dark* by Riley Sager, Riley Sager's best book, you will definitely want to check out *The Book of Cold Cases* by Simone St. James. I loved this one.

Kaytee Cobb 29:44

Sounds good. You definitely bumped it up my TBR I might have to move it to my like, read these maybe soonish shelf.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 29:52

Oh, but there's a scene in a kitchen that I cannot get out of my mind.

Kaytee Cobb 29:57

This is where the adult diapers come in.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 29:59

It's where me not wanting to get up in the middle of the night and I'm like, Johnny, Johnny, I'm gonna get up and go to the bathroom and he's like, Okay, like, why are you wiaking me up?

Kaytee Cobb 30:10

Go away Woman, I love it. Okay, I have something very different from my third book. I'm going to talk about *Happy Place* by Emily Henry, which I finished in mid April. And as we record today, it's June 2. I

had to wait this long to talk about this book, because I was not sure and I still actually right now in my throat. I'm not sure if I'm gonna make it through talking about this without crying about Happy Place, which I hate the irony of that. This book, ripped my heart out of my chest. Let me tell you about it.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 30:42

Okay. I had a different experience. Kaytee, Okay,

Kaytee Cobb 30:45

Excellent. Harriet, and Wyn, our main couple, they started dating after meeting in college, they're part of a tight knit group of friends. The friends gathered together for their annual getaway in a cottage in Maine, and they are truly a group of found family. These friends understand each other in a way that no one else understands them. Which is why when Harriet and Wyn broke up six months ago, they decided not to tell the group, even though it's now pretty far in the past, they haven't wanted to change the group dynamics. So they continue to pretend but that means this year, they're forced to share the big bedroom as an engaged couple. Oops, Nope, we're not engaged. One bed trope, yay. And lie through their teeth about how everything is going for them. But the gathering is happening this year because the parental units that own the cottage have decided to put it up for sale. So it's the last time they'll get together here, their happy place where they eat seafood until they grow fins. So they fake it. And in the meantime, being in close proximity, again, reignites all the flames of the Second Chance romance. Here's the thing. Harriet is a surgical resident. She's finishing up her training. She's been through med school, residency, internship, everything, the whole shebang right. And she has sacrificed over and over again for this career, taken on debt, alienated the people who love her and even pushed when away. But she's not even sure she still loves this job. She has been on this straight path single minded for her entire life, and deviating from it feels impossible. And this is way too close to home for me. There are conversations that happened between Harriet and her parents and Harriet and Wyn, during the course of this novel, that felt directly pulled from my life, and my marriage. When I finished this book, I laid on my reading chair in a ball, dripping tears. And not was very unattractive, folks, when Jason found me and asked me what was going on. I spoiled the whole story for him, including recapping the fictional conversations and told him why it's so profoundly affected me. Well, this is just a bright pink, summery romance for so many readers that I am for that like, put it in your beach bag. It is Emily Henry greatness. It was for me, a book that made me feel more seen in my hurts and my struggles than any book has. In a long time. I was genuinely surprised by how much of "rom com" in quotes could get me in my feels. But this one has now rocketed to the top of my Emily Henry list. And I'm very grateful that she wrote it. This was Happy Place. Don't I sound happy? by Emily Henry.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 33:34

Well, I am really happy to hear that it was so the perfect book for you at the perfect time. And I love we talk about this all the time that books can unexpectedly come to us right when we need them and be unexpectedly impactful. Even a book that doesn't you know that purports to be light and fluffy. A beach read can really be exactly what we need to be. And I absolutely love that. I went to Hawaii and actually, there were five of us who went to Hawaii, we all five read it at the same time, which was super fun. Yes, I convinced. I convinced everybody to... one person was already going to read it. And I was like, Oh, I have it on my Kindle. Let's all read it. And so we all laid on our cabana chairs and read it. It wasn't the right book for me. But I totally can see not even. I mean, I absolutely can see the service that it did for

you. You know exactly how it was perfect for you. And I also can very much see why people loved it. It just wasn't the trope that was my favorite trope. But I really quickly realized that and was grateful to go, you know what, I can step away from this because this isn't a trope that super serves me and I started another romance that has a trope that did serve me and so everyone was happy and the other four who were on that trip ended up really liking it. So I mean, there are many, many, many people who liked it but Kaytee I really We love that you had such a good experience with that.

Kaytee Cobb 35:02

It was very, it was unexpected. Yeah, really unexpected.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 35:07

Sometimes books just come right alongside us and just hold our hands exactly when we need it in the way that we need it. That's such a favorite part of the reading life for sure.

Kaytee Cobb 35:17

Okay, all right, those were our six current reads. Let's get into our deep dive today, which I'm very excited to talk about. Because I had a fantastic time at the Santa Fe international Literary Festival in May this year, and I can't wait to tell you all about it. And after that episode aired, we had all these people say, yes, please talk about literary festivals, meeting authors, what that's like, how do you plan it, etc.

Kaytee Cobb 35:20

Right. How do you get the most out of it so that you have the most fun possible? Yes, I'm very interested to hear about the time that you had

Kaytee Cobb 35:51

for sure. So while I was there, having already recorded that little kind of intro or wish, or whatever I talked about two episodes ago, I tried to pay close attention to what was going on around me what was working for me and what was not. So first, I want to talk a little bit about prep. So you may be somewhere in the world that starts having advertisements and targeted ads for an upcoming festival all over the place, because it's happening in your town. Or you may have to dig a little deeper, maybe this is an opportunity for a reading retreat or a travel weekend, rather than something that happens in your hometown. And I do have tips about that as well. But either way, you need to get on the mailing list. As soon as you know, there's a festival coming. So you can get updates about the author lineup and when the tickets go on sale, because the big author events will sell out and a lot of places. And sometimes you don't even have to pay for tickets, they're all free. But you have to have them so that they don't overpack a tent or whatever is going on. As you start getting that information. You can be a digital planner person, like me or a paper planner person. But you're gonna have to make some kind of representation of some sort visually to figure out which events you want to attend. Because what happens at literary festivals is often there's there's big headliner events, which take up a huge room. And that's the only thing happening at that time. And then there will be smaller breakout rooms. And those events are happening concurrently. So you can't see author a and author see at the same time, because that happens at 2pm. On Saturday, you got to pick one or the other.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 37:27

You got to plan in advance so that you've you've really, really figured out where you want to be at what time

Kaytee Cobb 37:32

Yes, exactly. Yeah, unfortunately, we have not mastered the two places at once situation yet.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 37:38

We need that clock from Harry Potter. What was it? What's it called that you turn

Kaytee Cobb 37:41

the time turner? Yeah, we do need a time turner, that would have been great for the Literary Festival. So for the Santa Fe one I made as you probably expect a spreadsheet. So it would be visually obvious which events overlapped in time. That way, I knew I wasn't double booking myself. And at the very top, they offered these combo tickets where you could say, I want the big events, and everything that happens in room A or everything that happens in room B or whatever. But none of those exactly matched what I wanted to do with my weekend. So I bought all of mine ala carte, you just got to know ahead of time. So after I built out those days. I coordinated with other people who were attending some people from far away some people local and made some dining plans. So we went to a few restaurants local to me that are ones that I really love that I couldn't wait to share with people who were coming to visit my city, which was very fun. This is a good tip for any extroverts that listen to currently reading. I know there's not a ton of you out there. That's me, that's my job on this team. Everybody else is an introvert. But it is a really great way to get together with other listeners, bookish friends, bookish people, if you're willing to give up some of that like recovery, introvert time to go be social at a restaurant together. For the festival itself, even here, in tiny little Santa Fe, there were big stage sessions that easily held over 1000 people. These were large rooms with a lot of people in them. And then there were Breakout Room sessions in which the max was about 200 people. So those were more intimate gatherings. And they were really phenomenal. But the big stage authors are big stage for a reason. And again, those are the ones that sell out. The interviewer is going to make all the difference. And we know this, right? Like when you listen to a podcast, if the person is not asking good questions. They're not interesting to listen to, even if the other person is interesting, right? It's difficult to Yeah, yeah. Some authors are really great interviews. And some authors you have to have really good questions and lead them. So you can have one side or the other not be up to par but not both. It doesn't work out in so hot, right? My favorite event was Ed Yong followed shortly by Nana Kwame Adjei-Brenyah. And that was a big room event, and a small breakout room event and both really excelled. And it was partly the interviewer. Partly the interviewee that made these events really sing. One of them I had read their book before, one of them I had not yet read it. And I really enjoyed both of them. Ed Young, I sat next to Katie. And there were a lot of other readers in the room. Nana Kwame, I sat by myself in a room, nobody worried about what that lonely lady was doing there by herself, it was absolutely fine for me to attend an event by myself and be surrounded by other readers that were also excited to be there. For both of them, those were also the two signing events that I didn't want to miss. So let's talk about actually meeting authors.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 40:47

This is the problem. This is the Dum Dum Dum. I'm so good was sitting in an audience listening, actively listening, I might even take notes like I'm a I'm a profesh on that. It's the meeting and getting your book signed. That's the problem.

Kaytee Cobb 41:01

Actually, that's what I did. I took my copies of the books, and I opened it to the the front papers, if they were blank. And that's where I took notes about the session as they talked about books, which was really smart. Because it's like now I have this cool connection whenever I pick up that book again and be like, Oh, remember when I got to see him live? This was great. So it's a good idea. Yeah. So for Ed Yong, there was an audience q&a at the end. But as I mentioned, interviewers and questions make a difference. So Katie and I bounced out during that. And we went and stood in line for the signing. That means we were second in line, which was before he got burnt out because he signed for two and a half hours that day. Yeah, which is crazy. Since he wasn't burnt out yet, He was happy to talk to us. We mentioned to him that we had buddy read his book together. And he asked about that process. And he had mentioned a potential young readers version coming out soon. So Katie told him that she hoped that that would happen. This detail these like, what? why would why care what you talked about with him is to say that you can easily relate, speaking to an author back to something they said. So he mentioned the young readers version, Katie brought that back up, right? She didn't look like a weirdo. She didn't look like a stalker. Right? Nothing weird happens when you relate to something that they just told you on stage. Or you can give them insight into why you enjoyed their book. Why you're looking forward to it if you haven't read it yet. And even if you just say if you are terrified of meeting, let's say Amor Towles just for fun. Good lord, I promise. I promise that even if you just say, Can you sign this for Meredith, that's all that matters. It's totally okay. If you say, that was a great talk, that's okay, too. Like, you don't have to impress them to the point that they name their next main character after you write or like give them your your firstborn child, you can just be a human that appreciates them. And that's totally okay. It doesn't have to be a stumbling nervous. What will I talk about when he asks me about my thoughts on climate change? Because he won't. He has 800 other people that want his book signed too.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 43:23

Right, right. I mean, I think what I'm most concerned about in that scenario is that I'm either going to say something stupid, or I'm just going to like, make eye contact, and then just collapse, you know, like, literally collapse on the ground. And then now there are people rushing over and he's concerned

Kaytee Cobb 43:46

Maybe then you would get a new character named after you. At this point, you've probably already like, for Ed Yong, I mean, I was sitting there, making like hearts come out of my eyeballs for an hour before he even came to talk to us. And then he was just a human, even though I had looked at him on this huge stage and watched all these people laugh and clap and be so excited about what he was saying and think he was brilliant and amazing, because he is. And then he was like, Oh, tell me about buddy reading. What does that mean? Did you guys have the same copy of the book? Like he he's just a human being a regular person. So if you were like, hey Amor Towles, can't believe I'm even talking to

you. Can you sign this book for Meredith? He would be like, yes, thanks for coming. And that's it. Like, nothing bad happens. It's gonna be okay.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 44:31

But what if I accidentally say, Do you want to get married? Or, you know, like, it's possible, and then it's awkward. And then, you know, maybe there's a temporary restraining order that happens after that. These I can't stop imagining the horrible things that might happen.

Kaytee Cobb 44:49

Right. I just don't think it's that likely having worked with you now for five full years. It just don't find it very likely. That you would be like, Meredith whatever you do. Don't say please marry me. And then that's what would come out of your mouth. I just can't see it happening.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 45:05

You know, it's because Johnny tells this story my husband tells a story about how he was so in love with this girl when he was in sixth grade and he all day like rehearse what he was going to say to her which was you have such nice eyes you have such nice eyes. Anyone up to her and he said you have such nice boobies

Kaytee Cobb 45:26

but kids are dum dums. You're not a dum dums.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 45:29

That is exactly what I'm afraid this mouth would do with Amor Towles or with like Louise Penny, like, same thing, the stakes would be so high. But anyway, this is your story. Go ahead, Kaytee. Um, you you are graceful, wonderful person, and people love to meet you. And so it doesn't surprise me that you handled it all with perfect aplomb.

Kaytee Cobb 45:49

I mean, I was still fan girly and a little giggly. Right? But I guarantee none of them went home and was like, remember that weirdo that giggled too much when she talked to me?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 45:59

No, because you are not weird when you're like that. When I'm like that, when you put that energy plus my resting bitchface it says stalker

Kaytee Cobb 46:09

serial killer. I love it. Okay, but chatting and signing line is very short and sweet. And laying down, the idea of having the perfect words to come out of your mouth is a good thing. And it will be a special memory to say, I remember when I got this author to sign my book, I remember when I got to hear him read aloud to us from the state. I remember that funny story he told. And now this book is even more special to me than it was because of those added experiences. I highly recommend it. It was a fantastic weekend full of amazing authors. Some I had read some I had not all of them were incredible.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 46:51

Now, in some of these talks that you went to, did you have the ability? Let's say you went to a talk an author that you hadn't read their book before the books often available there if you want to, if you want to grab it to buy it?

Kaytee Cobb 47:02

Yes, for sure. And sometimes they are pre signed, and sometimes they're not. And if you didn't grab it before you went in because you didn't even know anything about this book. Oftentimes, there's a festival bookstore, where they will have hundreds of copies of every book that is being discussed that weekend, including like an author's backlist or what have you. And you can buy those and add to your collection. It can get very expensive to go to a literary festival. Yeah, oh,

Meredith Monday Schwartz 47:29

I can imagine.

Kaytee Cobb 47:31

I mean, you're just falling in love with authors left and right. And you're like, well, now I need all six. How many books do you have? 12. Okay, put them in my cart. I don't know, load me up. This is great. I don't even know. So it can get very expensive. But I did bring some books from my shelves at home. And there was no pushback about that. Nobody said Excuse me, ma'am. You can't bring in books from your car, to have people sign them. That's not a thing. It was totally fine for me to bring in my copy of An Immense World because it's the British version, and have him sign that one.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 48:02

Right, which would have been a good thing to talk to him about to like, Who does he have a preference in his version?

Kaytee Cobb 48:06

It has to be that one. It's so I didn't even realize he was British. And so he started talking on stage,

Meredith Monday Schwartz 48:13

I really do need to go to a literary festival, I will not be meeting any author's because I just I like I can't. But everything else that you've talked about, I think would be such a great experience, I would really enjoy it. It really is great. It's worth it. Maybe I can go with extroverted friends and send them up and be like, there's

Kaytee Cobb 48:32

a meme about that. About like how every introvert needs an extrovert to like, have their own house and like, make them do fun things.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 48:43

Yes, that's definitely true.

Kaytee Cobb 48:45

Oh, I also I wanted to mention, there were people that flew in from other places, and they would get VRBO is usually by themselves, although there were a couple couples of women who came together. And then they made it a reading retreat at night. So they had author events all day, sometimes went for a hike sometimes went out to lunch, and then did reading retreats in the evening. And that was a great way to have introverted plus extroverted time for each of them.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 49:11

as far as the working in meals, or you know, for this hardcore introvert, what I usually try to do is to plan the meals to be a little bit on the earlier side, like I like to eat, like around six that way, we can sit around and talk for a couple of hours. And I still know I'm gonna get back to my room with enough time to decompress and read for a while before I need to actually be lights out. So that's a good way to plan for that too.

Kaytee Cobb 49:32

For sure. Yes, definitely.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 49:33

Well, good. I'm so glad that that was fun. It looked like it was fun from the pictures that you were posting.

Kaytee Cobb 49:38

And it was a beautiful weekend. It was just perfect outside. Yeah, Santa Fe. Okay, let's go to the fountain. What would you like to wish for this week? Meredith? I'm so excited about your wish. Already know, and I'm very excited.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 49:49

Right? Well, and if you listen to the indie press list, you probably know what my wish is going to be to but this is just so much fun. I did this when we recorded the indie press list after we talked About The Swifts, I went and got my big gigantic dictionary, my huge, huge dictionary. And we went through the process of choosing our Swift name. You got a fantastic name Unexpected Swift, which I loved. And I got Epicurean Swift. So that was also a great name, right? Like those were those were fantastic. And then when I went out, of course, Jackson was like, Mom, why are you walking around with your big, huge dictionary? We chose names for the family. Do you want to know something that is so weird. So Jackson was doing it. And so he chose name for, for him and for his dad and for all of our other kids. And he's like, Let's do Blue, our our one year old Boston Terrier. And so he did it. And it went to Massachusetts, which we're like, Oh, that's interesting. But then somehow, the dictionary kind of like it's very heavy. And he sort of flubbed it and went on the ground. And he was like, oh, no, no, I need to do to him because clearly that wasn't a good pick. So he puts it closed on the table, opens it up again. And once again, picks Massachusetts. Oh, what? No, that's what it was me Johnny and Jackson in the room. And that happened. So my truth teller husband can he can testify that he picked Massachusetts twice for Blue, which is really weird. All right, but Kaytee, you and I already chose ours so what I thought would be fun. Well, my wish is that everybody would do this with their family. Find out what your Swift name would be if you had been born a Swift so again, he just opened it up randomly. Point to

word randomly and whatever the word is, doesn't matter if it's a noun, adjective, verb, whatever it is. That's your Swift name. So I thought it would be fun Kaytee to choose swift names for Roxanna and Mary.

Kaytee Cobb 51:40

let's do that. Maybe Megan too, since she keeps us sane.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 51:44

Of course. Absolutely. Absolutely. Let's do it. Okay, so let's do Megan first. Okay, so she's our, our producer, editor, manager, manager. All the good things for

Kaytee Cobb 51:54

ducks in a row person cat herder. What else? Right all the things.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 51:58

Alright, here we go. Her name is Cardon Swift. Now, let me tell you a Cardon is a large cactus.

Kaytee Cobb 52:06

Oh, Megan, are you pleased with that? You'll have to let us know in show notes.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 52:11

But they are known for their beautiful white flowers. Oh, well, that's so a really, really pretty Cardon Swift. Alright, that's Megan. Okay, here we go. Who do you want to do next?

Kaytee Cobb 52:20

Let's do Mary. Next. All right,

Meredith Monday Schwartz 52:23

We'll do Mary All right. I'm just randomly randomly closed eyes. Alright, next. Mary is Marketable Swift. Oh, Mary.

Kaytee Cobb 52:34

She's very marketable. She is marketable. I could sell her dimples for sure. On the internet. I could do. We can tell her smile. Yeah, I mean products for her hair her right now.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 52:48

All right, Roxanna. All right. I'm randomly choosing your name will be Shrill, Swift. Oh, shrill. I'm sorry. I'm sorry, Roxanna.

Kaytee Cobb 53:01

Well, the good news about these names is none of them are regular human names, so none of them will be unremarkable. Right? We're not we don't have a hope we don't have a patience, we have some pretty unique names. Right?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 53:13

In the Swift world. Bad. I mean, remember, they have grand uncle Vile, they have this Atrocious they have arch aunt Schrodendfreude So in the Swift world, lots of people have less than nice names. And they can be really, really nice people. So it's part of the what's fun about the book is how that personality type shows how that word affects their personality type. But not always in exactly the way you think. So good old Shriill Swift might surprise you.

Kaytee Cobb 53:43

Yeah. I mean, I agree. Roxanna is a surprising human on many levels. And I think she could live into that in a in a really interesting way.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 53:52

Exactly. So find out your your Swift name, and we will start a thread on that on Instagram. Let us know what your Swift name is.

Kaytee Cobb 53:59

I would love it. Okay. My wish this week is I'm going to wish to win at summer reading. Like I want to be best at it. I want all the gold stars. This week. I'm living my best life and so are you Meredith with a game created by some of our favorite bookish friends. It's been shared on Patreon and the Facebook page but it's a bookish friends bingo game with plenty of free spaces, various challenges, including getting to mark office space for reading a book recommended by each of us and Mary and Roxanna, marking off two spaces for a chunker over 600 pages. A space for different types of diversity in your reading, a book you wouldn't hand to your grandmother, etc. It was lovingly put together and shared with joy by Candice Whitney and Katie Proctor my reading partner, and it's the perfect fit for a mood reader that wants to play at summer reading without being locked into certain books, or a planned reader who loves the category challenge and finding specific books for each prompt. So I'm going to try and win, which means nothing at all. But it's very fun. And I'm very excited to get into it. I'm printing out my copy, I'm actually going to print it out in color. And I'm going to make little notes about each of the books that I read to fill in the prompts because I want to win at summer reading with bookish friends. Bingo. Ping splash.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 55:19

That is very fun. I have mine all printed out. I do feel like it's the perfect kind of fun reading challenge because you're choosing your own bugs. And there's just not that many free until you get bingo. So it's you know, you can you can make yourself get bingo, just by making the right choices.

Kaytee Cobb 55:35

Yeah, almost every row or column, there's a free space. So it's really four bucks to get a bingo for most days.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 55:41

Exactly. It's very fun. And that's another thing that we will keep track of on our socials. So that's a really fun thing to do. Thank you so much, Candace and Katie, for sure. All right, that is it for this week. As a

reminder, here's where you can connect with us. You can find me on Meredith at @Meredith.reads on Instagram,

Kaytee Cobb 55:58

and you can find me Kaytee at @notesonbookmarks on Instagram,

Meredith Monday Schwartz 56:02

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 currentlyreadingpodcast.com.

Kaytee Cobb 56:12

You can also follow the show at @currentlyreadingpodcast on Instagram or email us at currentlyreadingpodcast@gmail.com With your listener presses send them in.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 56:22

And if you want more of this content, you got interested in the indie press list and that we do every month. Join us as a bookish friend. You can do that for \$5 a month on Patreon. You can also help us out by rating and reviewing us on Apple podcasts and shouting us out on social media. All of those things make a huge difference in our finding our perfect audience.

Kaytee Cobb 56:42

Yes, bookish friends are the best friends. Thank you all for helping us grow and get closer to our goals.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 56:48

All right, until next week, may your coffee be hot

Kaytee Cobb 56:51

and your book be unputdownable.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 56:52

Happy reading Kaytee.

Kaytee Cobb 56:54

Happy reading Meredith