



Season 5, Episode 5: Fangirl-Itis + If (Genre) Taught Me Anything

Mon, 8/29 • 51:46

Meredith Monday Schwartz 00:09

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 don't shy away from having those spicy opinions. So get ready.

Kaytee Cobb 00:25

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

Meredith Monday Schwartz 00:36

I'm Meredith Monday Schwartz, a mom of four and full time CEO living in Austin, Texas and all my girl crushes lately seem to be authors.

Kaytee Cobb 00:46

And I'm Kaytee Cobb, a homeschooling mom of four living in New Mexico and sometimes unloading books is the best part of finishing them. This is episode number five of season five and we're so glad you're here. I'm so excited to hear about some girl crushes.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 00:59

Yes, I definitely have a girl. You know, I've had a girl crush for a really long time. But my bookish moment of the week, I'm going to talk a little more about that. So let's get to that. Kaytee, what is your bookish moment of the week?

Kaytee Cobb 01:13

Okay, my bookish moment this week is the discovery of and then use of Pangobooks. So bookish friend Candace told me about Pangobooks a few weeks ago, maybe a month ago, it's an app. And she lists every book that as soon as she's done reading it, if she's not going to keep it. And so I was like, "Well, that seems a little extreme. That seems very productive of you." I usually put my finished books over in a stack by my front door. And if people come visit, or, you know, the postman, you know, is dropping something off, I'll ask, "Do you need any books?" Or "Are you interested in any of these titles?", and I'm just trying to unload them all the time. So I decided to try it out. I was like, it can't be that hard.

Whatever, give it a shot. I've sold three books already, as of today, which is only a few days after I listed my first stack. And I only started with about 20 because I didn't want to spend eight hours listing books, and then have it be like, well, this is going to take the rest of my life to sell all these. So I only started with about 20. It took me about an hour to list 20 books. So about three minutes a book. And it's going

well. So now I'm just gonna, I'm listing the whole stack. They're all going on Pango. And then I get to use that for new books, which I'm very excited about.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 02:26

I've been hearing about Pango all over. But let's talk real money. So let's say what was the last book that you listed? I want to know what you sold it for and how much you like, what do you get? What do you get to keep from that sale?

Kaytee Cobb 02:43

So the one I shipped out this morning was a classic copy of Anna Karenina. It has original illustrations in it, but it doesn't even have an ISBN number or a barcode on it. So that one's kind of a little bit one off because usually you can just scan the barcode on the back of the book and Pango auto populates all kinds of information for you, including the shipping weight, the title, the author, the genre, whether it's a Paperback or hardback, the number of pages, maybe it all kinds of good stuff in there. And they take a 20% cut of whatever you listed as so I sold Anna Karenina for \$9, because it's a hardback, and it's a classic, and it's really pretty. And I got to keep about \$7.20 of that, and the buyer pays shipping. So my shipping does not come out of that.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 02:43

Okay, so that's actually more profitable than I thought it was. The number one thing I think probably keeping everyone from doing it sure as shootin what's keeping me from doing it is this idea of having to run a post office out of my house, you know what I mean? I just that kind of stuff drives me crazy.

Kaytee Cobb 03:49

Yeah, they send you a shipping label as soon as the book sells. So you just print it off, I have like sticky paper that I print it directly onto and then I just stick it on the outside of a bubble mailer or a box if there's enough to fill a box, and it's media mail, and they just say go drop it in the nearest post office box.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 04:08

So the only supplies that you really needed were the sticky paper labels. And then media mail, like the medium mail pouches.

Kaytee Cobb 04:20

Yeah, I just have like a set of bubble mailers that, you know, hold on a standard paperback really easily, and shove them in there.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 04:30

All right, well, Kaytee you might have convinced me to give it a try. Because I really do, you know, we go through a lot of books. I just took a really big stack to Half Price Books, and I was kind of like, "I'm probably not gonna get much of anything." I actually was pretty happy with what with what I got. So yeah, but Pango I think, I think no question, it sounds like you would be making even more money off of it. So good. That's a really, really good option. Well, my bookish moment of the week is about my crush my girl crush, which you guys all know that I have a massive girl crush on Catherine Ryan Howard, my

girl crush my bookish woman of the week is that I got to talk to her about books about her new book Run Time, which I am going to be talking about on the show today. You guys are gonna get to hear my full treatment on it. But I got to talk to her earlier this week and it was so much fun. I was really nervous because I had never done a live interview of an author before. I've done it on, you know, I've done it on a podcast, but on a podcast, you can edit out any foibles or you know, problems that you have. This is all completely live and so I was definitely nervous. But it was silly to be because she is just the easiest person to interview. And it was really, really fun. So that was for sure my bookish moment of the week.

Kaytee Cobb 05:51

And you did such a great job. I love going into an interview like that with somebody that I'm very excited to talk to you but I'm really nervous about and then coming to the end of it and being like nailed it.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 06:02

I don't know if I ever ever think nailed it in my head because I'm always thinking like with this well with this as soon as I got done like within seconds of me getting done Elizabeth Barnhill who, from Fabled because Fabled was hosting this. She got a hold of me. And she was like, Oh, that was so great. And I was like, I totally forgot to have Catherine set up the book right at the start. And I was like, I will never make that mistake again. But it was all I could think about was that I had made that really sizable error right at the beginning. And so I was like, okay, at two o'clock in the morning. I'm like, "Set it aside, you did fine. You won't make that mistake again. You'll be better in the future," like I can be better. And so then I was able to set it aside.

Kaytee Cobb 06:49

This sounds very on brand for you, Meredith.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 06:52

Right, but it's a joy to be able to talk to authors that you love about books. It's just so fantastic. Okay. Kaytee. Let's get into our current reads. What is your first current read?

Kaytee Cobb 07:04

All right. My first current read this week is The School for Good Mothers by Jessamine Chan. So this was an Indie Press List pick from April of 2022 from Tattered Cover Bookstore in Denver, and I drank this book down, mostly with a completely horrified expression on my face. So Frida is our main character. She makes a bad decision, a truly bad decision. She's overwhelmed, and burnt out and leaves her young daughter, about 18 months old in an exersaucer for a few hours, while Frida herself, leaves the house and goes to work. She's just frazzled. She thinks well, at least she'll be safe in this space. And of course, she starts crying, the neighbors hear, it spirals out of control quickly in this near future dystopian society where she lives. The government thinks that they can fix problematic parents by putting them through a rehabilitation program, where they interact with robotic children that match the age and gender of their own children. The robots are programmed to put the parents through myriad parenting situations on repeat, and the mothers are graded on their ability to respond and how quickly they can comfort their robots when they are in pain or if they're upset. Only by completing this program can they get their parental rights restored, and get to be in contact with their human children again. This book is a tough read, and it regularly gets compared to The Handmaid's Tale by Margaret

Atwood. When that book first released in 1998, it was called a scathing satire and a dire warning. Now just over 20 years later, it feels more prescient than ever, and it felt like Margaret Atwood was actually telling the future in those pages. I felt the same way about this debut from Jessamine Chan. Like perhaps she has seen into the future of the United States and it isn't pretty, but by forewarning us, we won't be as surprised when it does come to pass. While I had seen this book and the cover around places, I wasn't being called to it. I wasn't drawn into it. The cover was graphic and striking, but didn't interest me in any way. And I didn't really understand what was inside until Tattered Cover set it up for us. And by then I was so glad that they did. Because I was far more interested in it after the fact. This book is difficult on a number of levels. And I really think the ending could have used some refining for me to get a stronger sense of resolution, not a tidy bow, just that everything happened so fast it felt almost washed out. Ephemeral even. I will say that I was totally invested in Frida's story from just a few chapters in and that if you need likable characters in your books, this one might not be a great fit for you because the complexity of the cast of characters is more noteworthy than having someone you can root for. I think it would make for an incredible book club discussion for anyone looking for a great pick for their own book clubs. And I highly recommend it to be in community with someone when you're reading it. So this was *The School for Good Mothers* by Jessamine Chan.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 10:03

Kaytee, what would you say to a reader like me, and I know you and I have talked about this because we talked about this particular book, who just can't seem to move past that initial portion that you talked about where she leaves the baby in the exersaucer for hours to go to work. And like, I just couldn't, it was over for me before it began, which doesn't mean I don't think it was a good book, but I just felt like, okay, for that reason, I'm out, like, I just couldn't. There was nothing that was going to rehabilitate her to me,

Kaytee Cobb 10:37

because she made the wrong decision?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 10:39

Yes. And it was so wrong.

Kaytee Cobb 10:43

It was so wrong. Yes. So at the School for Good Mothers, there are people that range from being on the phone at their park while their child went on the slide and accidentally hurt themselves, like something that the rest of us would do every day, to someone like Frida, to someone who basically like Harry Pottered her kid and put him into a locked closet and kept him there for very long periods of time in a row. There's a whole swath of what constitutes somebody who needs to attend The School for Good Mothers. And like, nobody is ever like, you don't get to the end and you're like, well, Frida was right, she absolutely did the right thing. Instead, there's a bad guy here and it's the government. It's the idea that somebody outside of a family relationship, that there's some kind of prescription that could make all of a sudden all of us turn into good mothers. And it's by going through these rote drills, which we joke about, right? Like you leave the hospital with a baby and you're all "I can't believe they let me walk out of here with with no training whatsoever, what were they thinking?" But this is the extreme other end of that, and getting to wrap my head around that dystopian idea was really interesting to me. So I don't think it

necessarily will change for you. You're not going to think, Well, I see what Frida was doing. I understand her now. No, you're not going to think that. But it's the rest of the story that makes it interesting.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 12:09

Okay. All right. That makes good sense. Okay, my first book is a book that I enjoyed very, very much by an author that has become autobuy for me across genres, which almost never happens. I read *The Wretched Waterpark* by Kiersten White. This is middle grade, but it's my favorite kind of middle grade. Here's the setup. You guys know that I love nothing more than when a book starts off with parents suddenly dropping their kids off with a relative they've never met for reasons that the parents just don't explain. That is a catnip start for me. And that's what we get at the beginning of *The Wretched Waterpark*. I'm going to read you what the Amazon or what the marketing blurb is because I think again, in this case, they do a good job getting the tone of the book. Meet the Sinister-Winterbottoms, that's hyphenated - Sinister-Winterbottoms.

Kaytee Cobb 13:05

That's ridiculous.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 13:07

We've got brave Theo, her timid twin, Alexander and their older sister Wil. They're stuck for the summer with their aunt Saffronia, who doesn't know how often children need to eat and can't use a smartphone, and whose feet never quite seem to touch the floor when she glides or walks? But when aunt Saffronia suggests a week pass to the Fathoms of Fun waterpark, they quickly agree. But the park is even stranger than aunt Saffronia is. The water slides look like great gargoyle tongues, the employees wear creepy black dresses and deliver ominous messages, those are some of my favorite parts, an impossible figure is at the top of the slide tower, people are disappearing, and a really suspicious goo is seeping into the wave pool. Something mysterious is happening at Fathoms of Fun and it's up to the twins to get to the sinister bottom of it. I love, love, love this book so much. So if Kiersten White, the author sounds familiar to you, you will be interested to know that she is the author of a book that was five stars for me not very long ago and that was *Hide*, which also is set in an amusement park. A very different book, *Wretched Waterpark* is very much middle grade. So this is a book that you can feel very good reading to your kids. Don't read *Hide* to your kids. I am a total Kiersten White fan girl. I just love her writing style, whether she's writing for adults and doing horror like *Hide* or she's doing middle grade like this new series. This book is the first of a new series and there is no question that this series is the one that I would have loved when I was 8, 9 or 10 years old. Little Meredith would have been delighted by the humor in these books. It's got all the elements that I loved. It's got great lead characters, including boy and girl twins, which are my favorite kind of twins. It's got a fabulously gruesome setting with the waterpark, which is so hilariously strange and just exactly opposite of what you would expect a waterpark to be. It's got puzzles to solve and an interesting mystery. And most importantly, it has a narrative style that is both sarcastic and sardonic. And it made me laugh all the way through. I was laughing out loud. She's an absolute genius of hitting the right Gothic yet modern tone. I love the relationship between the siblings and their deeply strange aunt Saffronia. She's a character I won't forget. As we heard in the setup, she seems like she's popped out of an 1800s old fashioned photo. She's completely confused by everything in today's world, and she has no idea what that she has no idea that children need to eat regularly, and she has no idea what they might want to eat. So those

scenes were their first meeting with her are hilarious. The siblings are sweet together, but they're not overly sweet. They hit just the right tone for lead characters that you care very much about. If you're an adult who loves middle grade fiction, especially that of the style of Lemony Snicket, you will love this book. If you loved *The Willoughby's* by Lois Lowry, and it's hilarious narrative style, you will definitely love this book. I also want to say that I think this would be a great series to buddy read with your kids or to read out loud with them. There's nothing overly gruesome, there are some disappearances but each one of those are solved in a way that is both complete and not scary. It ends well and it ends completely but it also leads you right into the next book in the series, which is called *The Vampiric Vacation* and it's out September 27. I am going to be getting all of these for my forever middle grade shelf because I want to share them with my grandkids. I cannot wait to read them out loud. This one is *The Wretched Waterpark* by Kiersten White.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 13:08

Do you think Kiersten White made some kind of deal with the devil or something? She released *Hide* in May of this year, *The Wretched Waterpark* in June, and now you're telling me the sequel is coming out in September? What's happening? What is going on here?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 17:10

Right? I don't know. But I have a feeling some of these have been in the holster for a while and maybe they're kind of coming out like this because a lot of momentum got behind her when *Hide* hits so well.

Kaytee Cobb 17:48

Wow. I mean, that's intense. That's a lot of books in one year.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 17:52

All right, Kaytee, what is your next book?

Kaytee Cobb 17:55

Okay, my next book I'm so excited to tell you about. It's called *Downton Shabby* by Hopwood DePree. This book is right up my alley and let me tell you why. I have four reasons. I bullet pointed them. One, I love shows about renovating a living space from dreary to usable. Two, I love redemption stories. Three, I love learning about ancestry and history and how they intertwine especially if there's a surprise on there somewhere. And four, I love anything and everything that takes place in the UK. This book hit on every level. Let me tell you about Hopwood DePree. Hopwood is a Hollywood producer, but ever since he was little, he has carried the literal weight of his name on his shoulders. The Hopwood family has no more dudes to carry on the family last name, so he gets saddled with it as his first name instead. One night after too much wine and deciding to poke around on ancestry.com he discovers an English estate called Hopwood Hall. It is 600 years old, has more than 60 rooms is situated on 5000 acres of English countryside. And he is the only living heir.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 19:06

Oh my goodness.

Kaytee Cobb 19:07

This is a true story Meredith.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 19:09

I love it.

Kaytee Cobb 19:10

Okay, I love it too. So when he connects with the caretakers of the estate, he finds out it's in terrible disrepair, barely holding together, but walking through the very dangerous halls, sometimes with a floor missing or a mold problem. He also peels back the layers on English history all the way back to the time of the Crusades. Hopwood makes the I would call it a dubious decision to move to England give up his Hollywood career and save the hall from ruin. We meet a fantastic cast of real life characters, like that caretaker I mentioned, learn about ancient construction techniques and restoration woes and dive headfirst into a story that seems fictional, but is legitimately playing out across the pond as we speak. Hopwood wrote this book to bring attention to his story and the hall and hopefully raise a little money for the restoration, but that means it's not done yet. It could be decades or even centuries of work, along with millions of pounds worth of labor and materials to restore it to its former glory. The journey to get to where he is now though starting this arduous task was funny and interesting. And I really enjoyed listening to him tell his story. I listened on Scribd and I took the time to pull up the accompanying PDF with images so I could see what kind of disrepair we were talking about, like what, what does that mean that there were no floors? Are you falling through into another level? Like what's going on here? It really made the book come alive for me. I had the best time listening to this one. It's Downton Shabby by Hopwood DePree.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 20:40

This sounds excellent. I love it, and I can't believe it's a true story. I love it,

Kaytee Cobb 20:46

Doesn't it? It sounds like I just was pulling things out of a hat. Right? Like, let me tell you about this.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 20:51

Oh, my goodness, that is that it's so much fun and that it was good on audio too.

Kaytee Cobb 20:56

Yes, it was great on audio highly recommend.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 20:59

Okay. Well, we are going to continue kind of jump skipping through genres and my next read is The Cruel Prince by Holly Black. So here is the setup of this YA fantasy. We start with a traumatic scene. When Jude, our lead character was just seven years old, her parents were murdered, and she and her two sisters were stolen away from the real world to live in the treacherous High Court of Faerie. 10 years later, as our story starts, Jude wants nothing more than to finally belong, where she's grown up, despite the fact that she is irrevocably human. But many of these fey despise humans, especially Prince Cardan, the youngest and most evil son of the high king. To win a place at the court, Jude must

defy him and face horrible consequences. In doing so she becomes embroiled in endless palace intrigues and deceptions and she discovers that she herself has a capacity for violence. But as civil war threatens to overthrow the courts of Faerie, Jude will need to risk her life in a dangerous alliance to save her sisters and to save Faerie itself. Now, Kaytee, I don't love the setup for this book, because it feels sort of thin to me. Like I don't I don't love the setup. But I thought and thought and thought about other ways to set it up. But every kind of angle that I took took me to a place where I felt like I was giving away too much. And and the discovering in this book, which is part of a series, the first in the series, is something that I just don't want to risk. So we leave it there. When I started this, I was in the mood for a young adult fantasy novel, which I'm want to do. And I had picked up no fewer than three other ones that just weren't working for me. It all felt too complicated or too much world building at the start. I really liked this one it felt perfect from the beginning because I liked the world building here. I loved the focus on the Faerie world, and especially the portrayal of Fey as being mischievous troublemakers, but also people who are kind of constantly teetering on the edge between Are they good? Or are they evil? You really don't know with these fairies.

Kaytee Cobb 23:24

Sometimes I don't know that about myself either.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 23:26

I like the fact that these fairies are strong and magical and immortal and highly unpredictable. I also like the fact that the fairies in this world cannot lie. And that made for some interesting plot machinations because Jude of course our lead character is human. She can lie. I also loved Jude and I do have to say I always, whenever I like a YA fantasy, I will say I liked the lead character. She wasn't annoying. She was an older teenager, but she didn't like she's 17 when the story starts, but she didn't bother me. She's not overly angsty. She's not overly insecure. I liked her. For those reasons, The Cruel Prince would be an especially good recommendation I think for anyone who enjoys the concept of palace intrigue and the politics that go on behind the royal scenes. At least half of the book is extremely focused on which of the seven children of the current high king will be the next high king. So if you love that kind of thing, this will be your jam for sure. There were plot twists upon plot twists, and I continually found myself gasping out loud at the different directions that people's loyalties would take. But I love that. Of course this is the beginning of a series so the ending is not completely an ending, though in this case it wrapped up enough for me to feel satisfied and not feel that I needed to go to the next one to even stop my reading. It was complete enough for me as I do with all fantasy series, I will give at least a year in between to keep the world completely fresh, and one that I'm excited to dive back into. But I will want to dive back into this world. This is the first book in this series called The Cruel Prince by Holly Black.

Kaytee Cobb 25:17

Oh, it sounds very fun. I'm excited to take a peek at that one, at least.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 25:22

Yes. And it's a huge, huge, huge bestseller. So like in the fantasy world, it was one of those books, I need to I needed to check because it's like, well, you've read Cruel Prince, Right? You know what I mean?

Kaytee Cobb 25:31

Of course, that makes sense. Okay, for my third book, this week, I'm doing something that we're not allowed to do, but it's our show, so I'm doing it anyway. So I'm going to talk about two books at once. I want to tell you about Anne of West Philly, and The Secret Garden on 81st Street, both by Ivy Noelle Weir. These are two graphic novels with the same author but different illustrators, so I'm squashing them into one current read spot. They both come from the modern graphic retelling series of classic novels. Last year, I brought Meg Jo Beth and Amy as one of my current reads, and last month, I read the other two that are out now, our first one that I want to talk about is Anne of West Philly. It features our favorite enneagram four, living in present day West Philadelphia, born and raised, with Marilla and Matthew Cuthbert, a brother and sister who just want to foster a young boy to get him back on his feet. They aren't looking to adopt and they definitely don't want to girl, but Anne steals their, and all of our hearts in ways you expect if you've read the original Anne of Green Gables and ones that you don't. Anne has opportunities through school robotics club, she meets Gilbert and gets into trouble immediately afterward, and enjoys too many cherry liqueur chocolates with her bestie Diana. I smiled like an idiot the entire way through this adorable graphic novel. So then, I had to pick up The Secret Garden on 81st Street, where Mary is sent to live with her uncle in New York City after a car accident kills her parents. Her uncle is rarely around because he's still grieving the loss of his husband a few years back. She doesn't realize that she has a cousin living in the same house with her because Collin's anxiety, especially medical anxiety, after the death of his dad is so extreme that he cannot leave the house or usually even his room. Martha, who works in this gorgeous brownstone brings her brother Dickon to meet Mary believing they'll hit it off, and they visit Ben's Bodega down the street when they want to get out of the house. It is so totally of New York City while also feeling like there's a shadow of English moors on these pages as well. Each of these graphic novels and really the entire series of three so far incorporates a lot more diversity on nearly every spectrum into the storyline, and modernizes the narrative while keeping the bones that we love from these classic stories so much, I will admit that I get a little misty, finishing up each of the classic retellings partly because of the nostalgia factor and partly because of the way that I get so wrapped up in the story. And I know that I can hand these graphic novels to my older kids, 9 and almost 12, and they devoured them and fell in love with the characters and story just like I did. What I hope is that any one that's listening right now either picks these ones up for themselves, maybe even for their forever shelves, or hands them to the kids in their lives that love reading, or are reluctant readers even better if they've been recently assigned to the original of any of these classics to read for school, as this will help them love and comprehend the story in a totally new way. So both by Ivy Noelle Weir, this was Anne of West Philly and The Secret Garden on 81st Street.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 28:42

I love that and that is such a good idea to pair the reading of the original with the graphic novel retelling, I think that's really, really smart. I love those.

Kaytee Cobb 28:52

It's a great way to get invested in the characters and to know the main plot points of the of the original story.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 28:58

Well, and there's so much to talk about, then about Shakespeare and how many retellings there have been there. I mean, just like the concept of adaptations and retellings and all of that I can see that being really a useful conversation for older, you know, tweens and early teenagers. Okay, so I am going to talk about the latest release by my girl crush, Catherine Ryan Howard. Yes, Run Time. Alright, so this is my warts and all, as always, completely an absolutely honest opinion of this new book, which I am really happy to say I liked a lot. Anytime your favorite or one of your favorite authors comes out with a new book, you're always sort of filled with trepidation for me. That's Louise Penny and Catherine Ryan Howard. So when I like a book a lot, I'm like, Oh, fantastic. Here's the setup of Run Time. At the core of our story is our lead character, Adele Rafferty. She's had a successful acting career but has hit a very hard time and her career has largely stalled out at this point. She's just about ready to give up the ghost entirely, when she gets a last minute, a very last minute offer to play the lead in an upcoming horror film that is entitled Final Draft. So Adele quickly makes her way to the set of Final Draft, which is deep into the isolated and fully creepy woods of West Cork, Ireland and the set is miles away from the city from any people as far as we can tell. And most importantly, there is no cell service. And of course, so that's a perfect setup, right. And then things in real life start to mirror the events portrayed in the script of Final Draft, and Adele wonders, and we all wonder if the true horrors really lie off the page. Right, that's as much as you're gonna get of the setup, because you really you need to go into it, just let her, let Catherine Ryan Howard do her thing. As far as knowing exactly what's going to happen, I was super looking forward to this book, but then a couple of advanced readers had said they didn't love it as much as they had loved some of her past books. So my expectations started to get a little bit tempered. I went into it not exactly sure what I was going to find. The first time I started it, I'm going to say, I had to set it aside, because I just knew that at that moment, I wasn't in the right mood for the kind of book that I was gonna get. And I think that that's important with this book. You have to be in the right mood, because Catherine Ryan Howard was in a very specific mood when she wrote it. So I think that that's something to know, a few more things. Luckily, the second time I picked it up, I was in that right mode. And I started this book, right? I say that because this is a book that you have to give a good 15% to in order to fully be grounded in what is a fairly complicated plot structure. This is I think, one of those hurdles that readers are gonna have to get over. And so I want to say, if you've decided to pick it up, know that you're going to have to give it three full chapters or about 15% before you're going to really be able to rock and roll into the story. Again, complicated plot structure means we need foundation, in this case on three different levels. So it takes some time. All right. Also, I want to say, if you don't love the screenplay format, or a play format in your reading, if that's something that you struggle with, I think that's going to be a hurdle for you here. I don't mind it at all. But I just want to put that out there that that's going to be a hurdle. Third, I want to say that we know Catherine Ryan Howard is making a name for herself with her interesting constructs and this one does not disappoint. It's clever, and it had me guessing all the way through. But it may be a little bit overly complicated. It almost gets in its own way, at times. I wouldn't have argued with a bit of a stronger edit there in the middle to make this just a little less bumpy. But even with all of that I had fun reading this book. And it's a sizable book, by the way, I think 456 pages. It's not a nothing thing. I kept checking in with myself all the way through and yes, I was loving it. It's exactly the kind of reading I love to do when I'm in a certain mood. It reads super fast, the chapters are short, and the action clips along once you get past that first 15% at a fast pace, creepy things are happening, secrets are being kept and then revealed. And I really liked the screenplay within the book structure. I was interested in both that and with our lead character and everything that was

happening with her. I think that that's key. And I had some real moments of pleasurable spine tingliness and heart poundingness. I also had some serious WTF-ishness which I like in my slasher thrillers. I'm not going to say that it was five stars like *The Nothing Man*, *56 Days* or my favorite of hers *Rewind*. But I will say that this was fun, fast work of crime fiction that was perfect for the mood that I was in when I read it. It's interesting to note that now after having interviewed Catherine Ryan Howard, I know that she herself calls this book a marmite book. She's Irish. So marmite, it's a thing over there. And what we know about Marmite is that not everyone loves it. But if you like it, you probably love it. Right? And that is this book. I don't think that this is going to be everyone's favorite. Neither does she. But I really, really loved it. And for that, I'm grateful. This is *Run Time* by Catherine Ryan Howard.

Kaytee Cobb 34:48

To be fair, I think all of us have parts of our reading where we are marmite readers, right that that we can recognize that there's something about this thing that I really love that Oh, A lot of people are not gonna like that much.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 35:02

Absolutely, yes, absolutely. And this, I mean, don't get me wrong, I do think that this has a wide swath of audience. This isn't like a Piranesi kind of situation, you know, by any means. But I do think when, especially for readers who come to her books on the heels of *The Nothing Man* and *56 Days*, when they find that this is something different, and this is something that we talked about in the interview, sometimes people when they really liked something, they kind of want more of that something that Catherine in her writing is not interested in writing the same book over and over again. And I love that about her, because you don't know what you're gonna get with each subsequent book. So this book is not the same. But it's really, really interesting. And it's just a fun, wild ride. And I really liked it

Kaytee Cobb 35:50

Might be an interesting deep dive someday. What makes What's your reader marmite?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 35:55

Jeeze, it's so it's so hard to say for sure. Let's definitely put that on the list because that would be a good discussion. Today's discussion in our deep dive, which now I'm realizing I did not say at the top of the show ever told anybody it's a mystery, you're just gonna have to listen all the way through is it's a mystery. It's a mystery deep dive in. And so what we're going to talk about is, "If fill in the blank genre has taught me anything, it's this." So Kaytee, we're going to talk about some different genres. And we're going to talk about if we've read a lot in the genre, what is it that we have learned? What lessons can we pull out to live a better, safer life? So what? What was the first genre that popped into your head?

Kaytee Cobb 36:42

Okay, the first one I knew I had to tackle, Meredith was because I knew that you were not going to tackle it and it's romance. So if romance has taught me anything, it is that I will never make the rule, no falling in love out loud, even at the Humane Society, because I will surely leave with a puppy or a boyfriend.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 37:01

Yes, that is a very, very good life lesson, be prepared for that, for sure.

Kaytee Cobb 37:06

You can't say it out loud. You're just asking for it at that point.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 37:09

I feel like romance has taught me that if a guy I'm attracted to says that he never ever wants to date me or marry me, I will end up both dating and marrying him.

Kaytee Cobb 37:22

That is also true.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 37:24

So also be careful about that.

Kaytee Cobb 37:26

What's your first one?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 37:27

The first genre that I thought about was middle grade, because there are just so many great lessons to be learned from middle grade. The first lesson, of course, is if you are lucky enough to be an orphan, something great is about to happen. I've just, I promise.

Kaytee Cobb 37:43

I have a middle grade fantasy lesson that I've learned. And if I ever look at a kid, even my own, and I think they're a little weird. It's probably because they have some kind of powers that I don't know about yet.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 37:54

Right? I mean, absolutely. And if you have a magical power, especially one that your family is trying to hide, you're probably going to have to save all of your society at some point. That's really a lesson from fantasy. But we get that in middle grade fantasy too. Right? You're gonna have to save everyone.

Kaytee Cobb 38:13

Yes, yes. If you if there's anything about you that you have to keep under wraps, eventually, everybody's going to have to know because you'll use it to save the planet.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 38:21

Right? If you go to a magical school, you know, for sure that the world's about to end or a major wars about to be fought.

Kaytee Cobb 38:29

Yes, that is also true. I mean, so anyone going to any magical school anywhere, there's probably going to be a war. That's, that's what we know. Be ready. Get ready,

Meredith Monday Schwartz 38:39

Get ready, right. The other thing that middle grade teaches you is that if your parents all of a sudden drop you off with a relative you've never heard of, your parents are either magical, or they're criminals on the run. And either way, you're about to have a big adventure.

Kaytee Cobb 38:54

Yeah, yeah, that's for sure. True, I can think of quite a few books that have taught me that exact lesson. Indeed. Okay, I know you're gonna have a lot of lessons learned from thrillers. So I'm going to start with mine so that you can, you know, throw the rest of them out there. And my thriller lesson is that I will never be a nanny, no matter how cute the kid because the parents are probably murderers. And I mean, it's just something we have to deal with.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 39:21

I mean, absolutely, no question. My first. I mean, really, like legitimately, I think what I've learned from reading mysteries and thrillers, from the time that I was way too young is that you trust no one. Just trust just you cannot trust your mother. You cannot trust your parents as a unit. You cannot trust your boyfriend. You cannot trust your friend because she's probably going to dye her hair and try to become you. I mean, trust no one.

Kaytee Cobb 39:48

Right, your sister. Yeah.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 39:51

The other thing that I did not learn in my real life, but I have learned through my subsequent reading is that apparently most everyone has either murdered a classmate in high school or early college, or been a party to a murder of a classmate in high school or college. That apparently is just a normal Friday night for a lot of people and 0% of those people were caught at the time. They only get caught 15 to 20 years later,

Kaytee Cobb 40:21

Correct. It was either there were sometimes there was drinking involved. Sometimes they were at summer camp, and you just happen to be there. Well, it happened. But yes, that everybody has a murder in their backstory. I completely agree.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 40:33

Right? They knew that someone was murdered, but they didn't say anything. Like I don't know how I escaped high school and college without having that happen.

Kaytee Cobb 40:41

What boring lives we lead. Just terrible. Good thing we have books.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 40:45

The other thing and I think everyone just everyone needs to know this and it's an important lesson from thrillers. If you are ever offered free room and board in a large apartment building, or manor house, castle, house on an island, if anyone offers you the ability to live for free in a place that looks like it should be expensive, you are definitely about to be killed.

Kaytee Cobb 41:15

Yes. Yes, I can name a lot of books that have taught me that lesson. And I don't know why people keep falling for it.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 41:23

I don't know. I don't know. Then fantasy, of course has taught us the only men really worth our time in or out of bed are fae men because they are the sexiest men in the universe.

Kaytee Cobb 41:35

They have wings, or tails, perhaps or any number of markings on their skin.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 41:42

Exactly. Exactly. It's Fae men or nothing is the lesson that I've learned.

Kaytee Cobb 41:47

Yeah. Where's the Fae match.com? That's what that's what we're missing in this life of ours.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 41:53

Exactly. Right. Sure. And if there's a if there's a fae man who's looking for an almost 50 year old, woman, human woman, I'm your girl.

Kaytee Cobb 42:03

I'm sure that market is out there somewhere. I'm sure. I'm sure that's the thing. Right?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 42:08

All right, how I wasn't in the most, I wasn't in the best mood for coming up with these today. Like I had to really stretch to come up with what I came up with. So I've gone through my well, if you have more, feel free to feel free to do it.

Kaytee Cobb 42:20

Okay, I've got I've got some sci fi, because people are interested in hearing more about sci fi. So if sci fi has taught me anything, we need to immediately stop pursuing artificial intelligence because it will end the demise of the human race. Like just stop it. All of you that are trying to make computers smarter, and robots smarter. You're trying to kill us. That's what's gonna happen here.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 42:44

Right, it is a foregone conclusion. Also, if you are doing any sort of messing with animal genetics and mixing and matching, they are definitely going to turn against you at some point.

Kaytee Cobb 42:57

Yep, no matter how badly I wish I had a pygmy elephant. I know it's not in the cards. Something terrible will happen if I if I make that dream come true.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 43:06

Right. Exactly.

Kaytee Cobb 43:08

Okay. And if classics have taught me anything, I will never have a regular boring life. Because somehow that'll lead to my arrest, being sent to the workhouses or being married off to the guy who annoys me most of everyone in the entire town. Those are the two options. You're not allowed to have a boring life. Yeah, because you have two paths in front of you.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 43:29

We have learned so much from all of our reading, and I feel like we're putting those lessons to really good effect in our regular lives.

Kaytee Cobb 43:37

I think so too. There. There's there's so many situations that I didn't put myself into because of the books I read.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 43:44

Exactly. Like, are you going to get into the car of the creepy guy who puts his name on the board at your college and says, I'll drive you to Utah? No, no, you're not Kaytee. Because you you've learned not that you're definitely going to get killed if you do that.

Kaytee Cobb 44:00

Am I going to drive somewhere in the woods with no service and not check my gas tank beforehand? No, I will not. I know better. I know better.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 44:09

I will not. I will not do that. All right. Well, we want to hear what lessons reading has taught you. So we will open up a thread on this. Tell us what lessons do you take to heart every single day in your reading? I love it. I love it. All right, Kaytee, let's end this episode by visiting the fountain and making a couple of wishes. What is your wish this week?

Kaytee Cobb 44:34

Okay. My wish is that I wish every book came with an interactive experience. So specifically here I'm thinking of author curated playlists for *The Violin Conspiracy*. And *I Take My Coffee Black*, but I just want I want them for every book. So this partially comes from my conversation with Roxanna last week

when I talked about Shine Bright by Danyel Smith. She mentioned that she wanted to read it and that she was just going to go find a Spotify playlist for the book and that. And I was like, Well, I didn't, I didn't know if there was one. And I'm the one who brought the book to the show. She said, Yeah, but I just searched for them. And a lot of times, even the readers will create these playlists, and you just have to search for it. Because other people are doing this work. I, I want all books that lend themselves to this included format to include more stuff. Sometimes there's fun bonuses with pre orders, especially right will get like a PDF printout, or a fan art or a map or whatever. But I want the multimedia experience. For all the books I want the photo PDFs for audiobooks, like I talked about with Downton Shabby, I want maps in the front papers, character lists, and playlists. Sometimes these are free, like anybody can make a playlist, and also totally selfishly, because I'm not a very visual person. And, Meredith, I think we've talked about this in the past that you are also not a very visual person, I would like a character list at the end of the book that also includes defining physical characteristics, so that I can actually attempt to picture a character. So for example, "Hawk is tall with black eyeballs, and he has a scar over his left eye and he walks with a hitch in his step." It could be all the way at the back. So it doesn't do any spoilers, but please, I want to see this person in my head. And I'm not good at reading the book and putting them all into the correct places. So somebody make that happen for me, especially if we're making up people and making up fantasy worlds, I need all this collateral to make my reading experience a reality. That's my wish. Ping, Splash.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 46:38

I think. I think that that is a great wish. I am, so one of the things that we've talked about that Roxanna and I do when we buddy read is we try to kind of crowd source each other, a multimedia experience, and she will often find music, I will often go and try to find photos of the places or the kinds of things that we're reading about. And I am reading Booth by Karen Joy Fowler right now and I found myself wishing that there was a compendium somewhere where I could go and see some of these plays, you know, the cities that they were living in the houses that like those things exist, right? Right. So having those visuals would really I think secure you into the place. Hopefully, we're moving into a place where either the publishers are going to do more of this or where we again, as readers will be able to crowdsource this for each other. I think that that's a really I think that that's really really fun. Well, my wish is that Blackwell's you know, the UK bookstore that makes it really easy for us here in the US to order and receive quickly UK versions of books that we that we want, or, or books that have just come out there. I wish that Blackwell's had a section for all, not all, but the big selling books that have come out that have different covers. Yeah, so like, Booth is a really good example. Like, I wish that there was a place I could go every week and check like what books came out this week and show me the UK cover. Because I probably know what the US cover looks like, show me the ones that I can that I might be really interested in, like Booth has a much better UK cover than it has in the US. And there's countless examples of that. So I wish that Blackwell's would put that together. I would probably spend ridiculous amounts of money even more every single week, I got an email from them saying like, hey, UK covers you might be interested in my American friend. Like, I think that would be great. That's my wish. Ping, splash.

Kaytee Cobb 48:40

I bet we could I bet we could get the bookish friends to do this for us. Curate a list.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 48:46

Right, and we could do it. But as a business person, I wish that Blackwell's, I feel like this is something that they could do and really would increase their sales over here. I just think I just think it would be interesting.

Kaytee Cobb 48:59

Yeah. And here's here's all the covers. Plus, reminder, free shipping over \$10. So just spend away friends.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 49:07

Right, right, exactly. I love because I have so many books that I've searched out and found, that like that I own now that have the UK covers and I just like them, so many times I like them so much more. Okay, Kaytee 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 49:28

And you can find me Kaytee at @notesonbookmarks on Instagram.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 49:31

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 49:42

You can also follow the show at @currentlyreadingpodcast on Instagram or email us at currentlyreadingpodcast@gmail.com

Meredith Monday Schwartz 49:49

And if you really want to help us become a bookish friend, that's a patron subscriber for just \$5 a month and you get so much additional content from us. You can also rate and review us on Apple podcasts and shout us out on social media. Every one of those things makes a huge difference in our finding our perfect audience.

Kaytee Cobb 50:09

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

Meredith Monday Schwartz 50:14

Until next week, may your coffee be hot

Kaytee Cobb 50:17

and your book be unputdownable.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 50:19

Happy reading Kaytee.

Kaytee Cobb 50:20
Happy reading Meredith.