



# Season 5, Episode 8: Unexpected Book Opinions + Fall Reading Ambience

Mon, 9/19 • 55:14

**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 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 CEO living in Austin, Texas, and I am so excited to be reading outside again.

**Kaytee Cobb** 00:42

And I'm Kaytee Cobb, a homeschooling mom of four living in New Mexico and spending all my money on books makes me a happy shopper. This is episode number eight of season five and we're so glad you're here.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 00:53

Oh Kaytee yes spending the amount of money that we spend on books is crazy.

**Kaytee Cobb** 00:59

I think I'm gonna do a Currently Reading budget at the end of the year and see how much we spent just just for like podcasts official books. I don't even want to touch my personal bank account. That can be a lovely gray area that nobody ever needs to know about.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 01:13

We do not need to put a number on that. Exactly. Correct.

**Kaytee Cobb** 01:17

Okay, so today, y'all we want to let you know right at the top that we are going to be talking about for our deep dive, creating the perfect fall reading ambience, not the perfect fall TBR that was a few episodes ago, Meredith already assigned you homework and you are reporting back in expert

precision. But this week, we're going to we're going to make the environment perfect for fall reading. And I'm excited.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 01:41

Oh, I can't wait to talk about this.

**Kaytee Cobb** 01:44

I knew this was gonna be a good one for you. Okay, but before we do that, we're gonna get started the way we always do, which is with our bookish moment of the week. Meredith, what is your bookish moment?

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 01:53

All right. Well, as I said in my bite size intro, I'm reading outside again, which feels so great, because since really May of this year, weather in Texas has been so hot. And this wasn't true last year. Like I feel like all summer I was able to read outside kind of in fits and starts. The weather has been so hot that unless I absolutely had to be outside like when we first got Blue and I had to be outside for this first two weeks because we were potty training him when we not two weeks straight. But you know what I mean? A lot of time outside.

**Kaytee Cobb** 02:24

You just lived outside in a tent with a puppy.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 02:27

Yeah, yeah, no, I'm not willing to do that. But since then, most of the time, I just don't opt to be outside. Because in the morning, it's not cool in the evening. It's cooler than it was during the day, but you are just beset with mosquitoes. And so you just can't, it's just not comfortable. But now, the temperatures are starting to cool and we are getting cooler mornings. And so I'm trying really hard to set a routine that involves more reading outside, and more concentrated reading because that early morning outside reading for whatever reason, I can concentrate in a way that no other reading kind of session gives me. I can read my most challenging books first thing in the morning when it's cool outside. And so I'm trying to establish this routine. It's kind of hard for me because my computer is calling to me when I first wake up in the morning, right? I have employees on every coast. And so there's always someone who's I feel like it's sort of waiting for a response to something. And so it's hard for me to say I'm going to read for 30 minutes. But I'm really this fall, I'm trying to establish this routine. So I'm kind of putting it out there for some accountability.

**Kaytee Cobb** 03:40

Okay, I want to point out or I want to pull apart something you said there, which is that you have identified the time in your day when you can get your hardest reading and your most concentrated reading done. And I think I'm not going to necessarily assign more homework, but I think it would be useful for all of us to take a look at the rhythms of our days, and figure out when is that time in your day, maybe it's first thing in the morning because it's cold outside and nobody follows you out there. Right? Or maybe it's in the afternoon when your kids have quiet time. Or maybe it's right before bed because

nobody's harassing you, whatever it is. But finding that moment and then like guarding it preciously I think would be really useful for all of us to do.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 04:19

Yeah, no, I totally agree. Because it is a really specific thing. I mean, I, one of the routines that I've talked about is I started going to bed about a half hour before Johnny and that now is a routine. That's pretty set. I get that every day. But by the time I get to that time of day, first of all, I only want to read on my Kindle at that time of day because I don't want to have any light. I just want to read in the dark but just me and the Kindle. Also, I've I've worked all day long, right? My brain is a little, not a little bit, my brain is a lot messier than it was early in the morning. And so yeah, so it requires a different kind of reading. So that first thing in the morning you're right Kaytee, that's a that would go into our big book of reader know thyself. That would be a page in that book. Right. When do I do my best, most concentrated reading or the reading that is maybe I don't know, what do we want to call it challenging? I don't know. Just when am I at my sharpest, most focused. I think those are good, good ways to describe it. So yes, that is a great thing for people to really think through and decide for themselves. You don't necessarily have to do anything with that knowledge, but just kind of keep it in your back pocket.

**Kaytee Cobb** 05:26

Yeah, definitely. And, and protect it. Because I think that's the other part of it is, is knowing that space, then you can be like, "Look, all day long, y'all can interrupt me and you can need the things. And this time is really important to me". Because I feel like we've seen a lot of conversations kind of around that as well lately too... kids and guests and all kinds of things. Okay, that was a whole conversation. We could have deep dive on your bookish moment but my bookish it has to be my trip to Back of Beyond Books in Moab, Utah. We went to Moab for Labor Day, it was God awful hot outside, living now in Santa Fe, it does not hit the hundreds hardly ever. And it was 100 degrees all weekend. Hardly cooled down at night. It was so hot. I was like, Oh, I remember this is what it feels like to be in Texas with Meredith like it was so hot. I was so miserable that the time that I was not miserable was my multiple trips to the bookstore in one afternoon. We visited national parks. It was great because Moab had some amazing outdoor scenery, but it was hot. And then we had kind of a free day on Sunday of Labor Day weekend. So my sister in law and I took the kids downtown to do some shopping, we wanted air conditioning, we wanted to walk 14 feet from one doorway to the next and just let somebody else cool us off. That means I purchased books for myself and my three younger kids because Micah had to go potty while we were on our shopping trip. When he came back, and he realized we had already browsed and checked out. He was so mad.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 07:04

Oh no.

**Kaytee Cobb** 07:05

He was betrayed. It was the worst thing I've ever done as a mother. He was like, I can't believe it.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 07:11

That's like that kid who gets stuck downstairs during the what like the one hour of something in that short story that we all read when we were in school, and it's traumatized us for life. Did you read that short story?

**Kaytee Cobb** 07:22

No, I don't think so. We're gonna have to find that.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 07:25

We're gonna have to find enough to remember who wrote it. But yeah, it's a short story where this, this whole society has lived with rain for like, seven years or something every day all day, 100% of the time. And there's only one hour that it stops and they know when it's going to be. And they lock this little girl down in the basement.

**Kaytee Cobb** 07:42

Oh my gosh,

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 07:42

and she misses the entire thing. Yeah, that we're gonna, I'm gonna think about what that is because that story rocked my second grade world. I was in second grade when I read that story. And I was like, "Whoa, really troubling things can happen in fiction, and I'm kinda into it."

**Kaytee Cobb** 08:00

I had no idea this was a formative part of your fiction reading experience.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 08:04

Yeah, I think about that story all the time. I guess I totally would have been the child locked down in the basement.

**Kaytee Cobb** 08:11

Did she have books?

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 08:12

No, she was just friendless.

**Kaytee Cobb** 08:15

Oh, that's terrible. I know. Micah also did not have books and was friendless, but he was outside in the sun not locked in the basement in the rain so we went shopping and we come back. And we have to go back by the bookstore because he has given me the saddest puppy dog eyes you have ever seen on a nearly 12 year old boy. So we go back through and we sit in front of the middle grade and YA shelf for a solid 15 minutes where he is negotiating with me about how many books he should be allowed to purchase. And I want to like imprint that memory into my head where we talked about different books and ones I've read and ones I haven't and how easy is it to get this one from the library? And would that be better in audio and I just I never want to forget that moment sitting in front of the shelves with Micah

in our second trip of the day to the bookstore. And the lady at the checkout was like, "Back again. I see". Like she knew, she knew I was like, well, the child, the child needed books too my friend. She understood. So two amazing trips to one bookstore in one day. And, and that core memory with Micah, that had to be my bookish moment.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 09:21

That is so great. I love how much he loves reading but did you buy books for your own self?

**Kaytee Cobb** 09:25

I bought three books for my own self to on the first trip and one on the second one. So I just basically you just can't take me in a bookstore.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 09:33

No, no, I mean, I've said before it is I feel it is my civic duty. If I go into a bookstore to buy a book, it is the it is like the right thing to do.

**Kaytee Cobb** 09:42

Exactly. I agree. Especially an indie bookstore. I mean, exactly. Those people are there, and we need to make sure they stay there is the real crux of this situation. Right? Those were we have so much to say about our bookish moments today, but now we get to talk about current reads which I'm sure we have much more to say about Meredith, what is your first current read?

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 10:02

All right, my first current read is actually a book that we mentioned, we did kind of a drive by mention, when you and I recorded two weeks ago talking about books with older protagonists, but I loved this book so much that I wanted to bring it to the show and give it a full treatment. This is *The Old Woman with the Knife* by Gu Byeong-Mo. So here's our setup. At the start of our story, we meet 65 year old lead character Hornclaw and she is starting to slow down. She's got a small little life in a small apartment in which she lives with her aging dog Deadweight, who is a treasure, may be my favorite character in the book. We expect Hornclaw to be slowing down, because that's what people do at that age, right. But she is not like other elderly ladies, my friends. She is an assassin. For the past 40 years, Hornclaw has killed all manner of bad guys with ruthless efficiency. And the less she's known about her targets, the better. But now as usually happens, she's at the very end of her career, and she has slipped up, she gets injured on a job. And that injury leads her to an unexpected visit, and an unexpected connection with a doctor and his family. But emotions for an assassin are dangerous. And in this case, it may mean that she doesn't get that quiet retirement that she had been looking forward to. It may mean that she just gets dead, which isn't actually a very erudite way to say the story goes on from there. Alright, so this was an Indie Press List pick from Cafe Con Libros in July of 2022, just a couple of months ago. And this is a short under 200 page book and translation that is set in South Korea. And so just so you know, as we're getting toward the end of the year, I know we in book challenges, sometimes we have these bingo slots that we need to check off. So this is short, in another country and in translation. So just put that in your back pocket. The our lead character Hornclaw is someone that I was at the exact same time, I sort of pitied her and I was impressed by her very much. And I think that is the magic of this book because it is entirely unexpected in its approach. And then it's

in its plotline and I enjoyed every minute of it. Well, that's not entirely true. I need to say a little bit about the start of this book, in that I started it, and I firmly believe that this is a book that needs to be started in the right way. We've been talking about this recently, right, starting a book right? When I first began this book, I sat down at a time of day where I was too distracted and frenzied to really get into it. And it didn't immediately flow for me. But once I was able to give it the attention that it needed longer periods of time to read it, especially in that just first few pages, then I was really into the story. This is not a book that takes many pages to get into. But those first 10 to 15 pages, you need to concentrate and then you'll then the story will really really get going. By the time I got to the de nwaba story, I was absolutely into it. This is not a beloved curmudgeon story. So don't go into it with that expectation. There are some elements of that here, but at its heart, that's not what it is. This is smart crime fiction with heavy character development. And I also will say it's not a book that I would press into the hands of every single mystery reader. It's just not going to hit right for absolutely everyone. But for the readers for whom it does hit right it is going to be a five star book. And that's what it was for me. I especially will say I think this will work for you if you are a kind of person who will say I would never ever, ever pick up a book described as a popcorn thriller. If that is you this book might be exactly right for you. This is *The Old Woman with the Knife* by Gu Byeong-Mo.

**Kaytee Cobb** 14:16

So fun right after we briefly like breezed by it two weeks ago, I got to have a buddy read discussion with about 15 of our bookish friends on Zoom. So I have an hour and a half conversation that is going out to the bookish friends recorded as well about that book if anybody wants to read it, and then get a whole lot of unpacking done about it.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 14:37

Oh, that's a great idea.

**Kaytee Cobb** 14:38

That's perfect. Yes, for sure. Okay, my first one this week is called *We Could Be Heroes* by Mike Chen. It's not based on the song you're thinking in your head right now. Yes. Okay, so here's the setup. Jamie woke up in an empty apartment with no memory and only a few clues to his identity. Lucky for him though, he has the ability to read and erase other people's memories, a power he uses to hold up banks so that he can get money to buy coffee and cat food and books like you do. Zoe is also searching for her past. There's a blank spot there, and using her abilities of speed and strength to deliver fast food, like a GrubHub driver that uses the roofs of the city to deliver food instead of the streets that are gridlocked with traffic. And she'll occasionally put on a cool suit and beat up bad guys like Jamie when he robs banks, but only if she feels like it. And only if she didn't get too drunk that day. When the arch rivals meet in a memory loss support group, they realize the only way to reveal their hidden paths might be through each other. Maybe Jamie can peel back Zoe's memories, and that will allow them both to figure out what happened to them. They both want to figure out what is behind that wall of gray that encompasses their paths, so they team up as they uncover an ongoing threat suddenly, much more is at stake. And they might end up dead like hornclaw in *The Old Woman with the Knife*. With countless people at risk, Zoe and Jamie have to recognize that sometimes being a hero starts with trusting someone else, or yourself. This is not a YA novel, but it kind of reads like one. The characters don't have memories, and they're understandably a little bit angsty and bristly about that. So

getting close to others, or any other number of things that you might see in a typical YA novel are hard for them. It's hard, right? They're a little whiny about it. There are so many action scenes in this book layered one on top of the other, that it was a little bit like watching Mission Impossible, mixed with the memory loss sequences of Memento where they're trying to figure out what's happening and also kick everybody's butt in the process. What I really loved is that behind the scenes, who is really the bad guy or good guy element to this, as well as the platonic relationship between Zoe and Jamie. Not every book has to have a convoluted will they won't they at the center. And sometimes we just want a guy and a girl to be friends and do things together without wondering if they're going to fall into bed while they do it. This one was well served by leaving that plot point out. The ending of this novel though, yeesh. Every time I finished a chapter toward the end, I thought that has to be it for sure, we're done. Nope, there was another one, and another one, and another one. And if you were annoyed at me saying another one and another one, and another one over and over again, imagine how it feels to keep reading those chapters when you thought you were done with a book. Think of how fun that would be for you. I think this could have been a solid 30 pages shorter, just chopped right off the end and still would have been a four star book, which is what I gave it. I still heartily recommend this one, especially if you are into superheroes, sci fi elements, that urban fantasy idea where we know this city we know the greediness of the alleyways and the apartments and the traffic patterns, and the coffee shops on the corner, where Jamie spends his hard earned cash that he got by wiping people's memories. This novel packs some really traditional superhero tropes into it, and then bucks them by turning them the other way, which I've discovered over the past few years especially I am really into, like in the case of The Extraordinaries by TJ Klune. Or Hench by Natalie Zina Walschots, both fantastic superhero tropes turned on their heads in those novels. In that way, it was a great fit for me, even though I would have done a little thing different with the editing. This one was We Could Be Heroes by Mike Chen.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 18:41

You knew the other book that it put me in mind of was some elements of Addie LaRue.

**Kaytee Cobb** 18:47

A little bit.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 18:49

Right, the kind of like, one person's got one thing going on and the other person has the opposite thing going on. And maybe we can work together.

**Kaytee Cobb** 18:56

And there's elements of memory in Addie LaRue as well. So that's an interesting tie in. Ah, all right, I like it. I picked this one up at Tattered Cover when I went there a couple months ago. I just pulled it off the shelf, which was a very fun little bit of bookish serendipity.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 19:11

I love doing that. In fact, the next book I'm going to talk about, I got the exact same way. I was in Barnes and Noble and I saw this book and I was like, huh, I haven't ever heard about this but the cover interested me. The title is Child Zero by Chris Holm.

**Kaytee Cobb** 19:25

Oh good. Another scary book with children.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 19:28

Well, this it's got a great setup. So hold on your hats. So for years before our story starts, some very disturbing things start to happen. There's a worldwide uptick of bacterial infections, meningitis in Frankfurt. Cholera in Johannesburg, tuberculosis in New Delhi. Although the outbreaks spread aggressively and proved impervious to our drugs of last resort, public health officials initially dismissed them as being unrelated, but they were wrong. Antibiotic resistance soon spreads across the globe, diseases long thought we had beaten come surging back... polio anyone? The death toll skyrockets, then New York City is attacked in the worst act of bioterror that the world has ever seen, which is called the 817 attack, and it's perpetrated by a new brand of extremists bent on pushing humanity to extinction. Our lead character is Detective Jacob Gibson, who lost his wife in the 817 attack, and he is home caring for his sick daughter, which in this new world is not a minor thing, it's a very scary thing when your kid gets sick, when his partner, his police partner asked him to meet her at a sprawling shanty town that has sprung up in Central Park. While at the shanty town, an apparent mass murder has taken place. But here's what's interesting about this mass murder that has taken place, they discovered that although these people were living in abject squalor, all of the victims other than the injury that actually caused their death, were completely healthy. And in this new world, that makes these people very, very interesting. So the only person who escaped to this attack is a 12 year old boy. Detective Gibson is trying to figure out why are all these people healthy when everyone else is dying of random things? And why are very bad people chasing down this 12 year old boy. So it's got a great premise, right? This is that cli-fi kind of, you know, exciting summer blockbuster that I was really, really looking for at the time, and I loved the first third of the book, but the second third, devolved into just like with The Twin Paradox we talked about, all of a sudden, we've got action scene after action scene after action scene, just like an action movie without any substance. I liked several of the characters and I cared I did about whether or not they would have a good outcome. But I never feel felt like I could really grasp onto anything that the author was trying to do. Other than the fact that it was pretty clear to me that he wanted to write a book that would be made into a movie. That's what it felt by the time I got to that last third, I felt like okay, I got your number Chris Holm. So it was a fast read. But one that I won't remember a ton of details about, it ended up being 3.25 stars for me. If, however, you're a reader, or you have a reader in your life, who loves books with a ton of action and not a ton of conversation, this might be a great one to put in their hands. I think a lot of teenage boys would really like this one. This is Child Zero by Chris Holm.

**Kaytee Cobb** 22:41

We're not a music podcast, but I feel like there's a song for that too. Little, little more, a little less conversation and a little more action.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 22:49

Yes, if that's how you're feeling this, this is the book for you that for that mood.



**Kaytee Cobb 22:54**

We've got a song for that. Yeah, for lots of books today. Okay, my second book this week is a novella. It's A Prayer for the Crown-Shy by Becky Chambers. And when I was prepping for this episode, I got all worried and I went and harassed Megan and I said, "Did Mary already bring this book? Because if so she scooped me". And she did not. So now I get to talk about it. Hurray. This is the second in a series. The first one is called A Psalm for the Wild-Built and Mary first brought that one to the big show on season four, Episode 27. In these delightful and charming novellas, much like in Meredith's beloved Legends and Lattes, which I also read and loved. I'm not saying just beloved by Meredith, beloved by everyone, from beginning to end, there are very low stakes, there's there's very little action, very low stakes, everything is just peachy pretty much the whole way through. We have Dex and Mosschap, a human, and a robot, wandering around serving tea in the countryside of a planet that might be ours, or maybe not, many years in the future. Robots have become sentient in this world and aware, and they have wandered out into the wilderness to explore so humans live out in the countryside in small towns without them. Mosschap is a novelty out there. Because there's not robots around to do things for people. He is fulfilling a promise from robots to humankind to check on in on them every once in a while to ask what people need. This book continues that same storyline from book one with Dex and Mosschap traveling from town to town serving tea, meeting people and making connections both practical and personal. The question that Mosschap asks, "What do you need" is interpreted differently by each person that they come across based on their current life circumstances. Sometimes they need their bicycle fixed, or they need a heavy thing moved out of their house. And sometimes they need a friend because they feel lonely. And that question of what do you need can can morph and change depending on our life circumstance. There's no huge plot driver in this story. This is a hugging book, a comfort book, a book to have for your shelves and pull out every once awhile and stare at lovingly, not just because it's beautiful, but because of what you find inside. There's kind conversations. There's interesting ways of looking at the world. There's beautiful scenes in nature, but it's also fun, and quirky and adorable on so many levels. The audio is perfection. And it's, it's so short, it's like 110 pages, and less than four hours on audio. It's an easy afternoon, read or listen. Becky Chambers is also the author of a number of other books in series. And I know Mindy has brought at least one of them to the show before as well. I haven't read any of her other stuff. But I love this world. And I love getting to get back into it. And I've purchased the hard covers of this series of books, and I cannot wait for more of it. Because every time a new one releases, it feels like sinking into a warm bath. Even though I don't like baths, we're going to have to change that it feels like sinking into a perfect temperature pool that cools off your skin, but not makes you overwhelmed or icky sticky feeling. It's just perfect. And I love it so much. So this one is A Prayer for the Crown-Shy the Sci Fi novella of sweetness and light by Becky Chambers.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 26:22**

Kaytee, these two books, I think have two of the best titles out there, period. I mean, huzzah for beautiful, perfect titles, right? And what I will say is I love I've heard so many people talk about the first one. And now the second one and all the things that you're saying about it sounds so wonderful. And I got the first one from the library and started to read it and immediately realized that I knew at some point, it was going to be perfect, but I totally knew that it wasn't that moment. And I remember closing the book and being like, "Oh, I just want to back away from this because I want to save this for when it's exactly right", because I just feel in my bones that there will be that moment. And I didn't want to even

press it when it wasn't that you know what I mean? Like I feel like I'm gonna love it. So I'm tempted to buy them and just have them on my shelf, because I just know that that's going to happen. So I'm so glad that you love those. And I've heard many people describe them as comfort books, emotional support books, that's kind of a kind of book. I think a lot of us are saying like what are those books that when you're when you feel like you can't find a safe space in your brain, which is something that I go through a lot when my anxiety is really flaring, like I feel like I just can't find any place that feels safe in or out of my brain and I that kind of book is just a balm. So I love that. I can't I'm really looking forward to reading this. Okay, I want to talk about a book that I had low expectations of but that I really ended up liking and we did a little bit of a discussion about it on this month's All Things Murderfull. And again, I liked this book so much I just wanted to do a full treatment about it on the big show. This is Daisy Darker by Alice Feeney. Kaytee, have you read this one?

**Kaytee Cobb** 28:10

No, I've read a few of hers but this is her brand new release. Right?

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 28:14

Right, exactly. Just just came out. So in Daisy Darker, we've got all the things that we need for a great fall read. So we have a dying matriarch, Nana celebrating her 80th birthday and like all dying matriarchs, she has summoned her dysfunctional family to her for mysterious reasons. Mysterious because the Darker family doesn't gather together casually at this point. They basically have to be told if they're going to get together. So they all troop out to Nana's crumbling Gothic estate, which is another thing that you need for a great fall read. And it's on a tiny island off the coast of Cornwall. Another thing that you need, right perfect. And of course, everyone there is harboring secrets. So this is the absolute perfect setup. When the tide comes in, they will be in fact trapped on Nana's Island for at least eight hours. At the stroke of midnight, a storm is raging the final ingredient and Nana is found dead and an hour later, the next family member follows. I'd been very much looking forward to this book. Elizabeth from Fabled had been talking about on All Things Murderful she told us about it get our pre orders in a while ago which I did pre ordered it through Fabled. But then when it came out, Kaytee I heard several people say it was kind of meh. So I set it aside and I was like, I'm bummed because I love a locked room or in this case, a locked Island. I love I love that premise. I just I'm an Agatha Christie fan. I absolutely love it. So I went into it with very low expectations, but I you know, because I still wanted to at least give it a try. Something was telling me to at least give it a try. So the weather got cloudy and rainy in Austin even though it's still warm and I wanted a creepy locked room mystery. I ended up liking it and in fact giving it 4.25 stars. So again, we have all the perfect ingredients for that fall read. It sets the tone perfectly. And of course, that raging storm is exactly what we need. I was totally delighted by what we know from the beginning is what I would describe as an homage to And Then There Were None. Some readers said, as they talked about this book, that was the thing that they didn't like that it felt like it was a rip off, or we've been here before. But I didn't see it this way at all. It was different in several ways. And it was made much more modern. But it kept to the heart of that wonderful story in a way that I felt was very much paying tribute to Agatha Christie. And now that I've read the author's note and seen some of what Alice Feeney herself had to say about the book, which is that it she had it in her back pocket for more than five years because it was the book she really wanted to write. That makes sense to me. I will also say, and there's been a lot of discussion about this spoiler free on the bookish friends group, I did not see the ending coming. Several other readers said that they did. It was a

complete shock to me and I was looking for something. I will say that there are parts especially in the first two chapters that I feel are overwritten. It feels like she got very carried away with the metaphors that she uses throughout the book. In parts, the writing felt like it was swimming in metaphors metaphor intended. But that did not at all keep me from enjoying the story. After I started it, all I wanted to do is read it. And I was frustrated that life kept getting in my way. But isn't that also kind of the feeling we're perpetually looking for? When you're reading a book that you really can't wait to get back to? Alice Feeney is an auto buy author for me and this book simply cements that status. I really can't wait to see what she brings to us next. I hope it's as dark and creepy as the story was. This is Daisy Darker by Alice Feeney.

**Kaytee Cobb** 32:07

Sounds so good. I think I'm going to put that one in my fall TBR. Because I like to do homework.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 32:15

Yes, I liked it a lot.

**Kaytee Cobb** 32:17

That's very fun. Okay, so you said right at the beginning there, you said something about this book had low expectations for you, and then delivered in a big way. Yes, that is what happened with my third book. But I'm taking us all the way back to 1940, who I'm going to talk about Native Son by Richard Wright. Holy Hannah. I did not know what to expect with this book. But I will tell you that by 15%, my jaw was on the floor. And I rewound the audio multiple times to make sure I had heard correctly what was going on. Because I could not believe that a book published in 1940, included the kind of content that was coming into my ears. I was it was off the rails in the best way. So Native Son was first published in 1940 by Richard Wright, and I was expecting a dusty classic. This is 82 years ago. That's a long time, right? And I'm not proud to say that I went in with that expectation and had pre judged the cover but I was like, it might be good. It's good to have read this thing to have been to be able to check it off on my TBR. Right, rather than because it might be completely thrilling and terrifying. But here we are. Here's the setup. Bigger Thomas is our main character. He lives in 1930s Chicago. He's never been on the up and up. His mom assumes that someday he's gonna get arrested probably for petty theft, maybe for assault because he has a bit of a temper and he'll just beat up people if he doesn't like the way they look. But when he gets a job driving a nice car for a wealthy white family, maybe he's escaped that fate. Yay. This family, the Dalton family prides themselves on helping out the Black community by providing sustainable employment. The family has a young adult daughter 19, 20 years old, named Mary Dalton. She's flirting with the Communist Party, lying to her family about school meetings and making out with young men after dark. That very first night of his employment, when Biggar is supposed to take Mary to school, she says hey, I have an idea. Take me to a meeting, a communist meeting, a diner out on a date with my current fling. All three of them, Mary, Biggar and her beaux get a little tipsy and Mary needs to be carried up to bed. This is when my jaw dropped. This is the very first part of the book. I'm not going to reveal this plot point because I want everybody else to have the same thing happened to them if they pick up this book because of the setup because I was like, No, I have no idea. Suffice to say by the next morning, Bigger is on the run from law accused of rape and a brutal murder. He knows that he will not be able to exonerate himself no matter what he says, because the law does not look favorably on young Black men, especially in the 1930s. But even

now, giving himself up to the law means certain death. The remainder of this novel, the other 80% is Bigger's run from the law and his trial, both of which are fast paced and scary on a number of levels. This isn't a tidy bow, Happy Ending novel, not that you would be expecting that from the setup. But it had some of my favorite elements of To Kill a Mockingbird in it in the way that the lawyer and courtroom scenes played out especially, I was thoroughly impressed by the way this 500 page novel was so easy to read, despite the dark subject matter. And the classic nature of this work. I'd recommend it if anyone picked up The Street by Ann Petry when I talked about it, probably six months ago. But they read that one and wanted more plot than that one had with their character development. Still lots of character, but this one has way more plot development than that one. It is Native Son, by Richard Wright. Meredith I like watching your eyes get big. Well, I described that. Yeah,

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 36:14

I mean, this falls into the category of who knew I'm doing it's weird. But I'm doing this puzzle right now, which includes the covers of like some of the most famous classics and this is one of them. And I was actually mentioning to Jackson, you know, I could tell him the plot of so many of those books, but I didn't know anything about this one. And so it occurred to me, I should at least find out generally what it's about. It's so weird that you brought it today, and that it is so readable. I mean, this is one that I'm going to suggest that Roxanna and I buddy read together because I think it would be a great a great book for us to read together.

**Kaytee Cobb** 36:49

It's really gruesome in places. I don't know how well does it Roxanna would do it.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 36:55

She doesn't like gruesome. All right. I'll need to find a gruesome book loving buddy reader.

**Kaytee Cobb** 37:01

Yes, maybe Betsie?

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 37:03

Yes, she likes gruesome.

**Kaytee Cobb** 37:05

Okay, those were our six current reads. We've already got some buddy reads planned. It's going great. Let's get into our deep dive. Because now we have fall books on our TBR how do we make the perfect fall reading experience? Meredith, I picture you rubbing your hands together in glee as you prepared for today?

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 37:23

Yes, and I have to say I really do lean into the seasons changing to change you know, I like to decorate my house for fall and you know, so like, I like to decorate for the different seasons. And I really like to kind of zhuzh up my reading areas based on the season. So the first thing that I do when I switch over to fall is I put away my cotton Garnet Hill blanket, which is my summer blanket. So it's lightweight, it's cotton. It doesn't retain a ton of heat. But I still like to have something over me in the summer. I

immediately put it away and I get out my fall blanket which is a Barefoot Dreams throw blanket. It is the only one. It is a taupe color. It is the only one that will do. Jackson had to get his own because he kept trying to steal mine. And that is a gift that I often give to people because it is just nobody doesn't love their barefoot dreams throw blanket for wintertime. So that's the first first thing I do. I also change my mugs out. So I changed to all fall mugs.

**Kaytee Cobb** 38:30

Ah, that's interesting. I never even thought of that. I just use currently reading mugs all year long.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 38:36

I do not. I use seasonal mugs and yes, fall mugs thankful you know, fall leaves, Vermont all the all the stuff that I got in Vermont all comes out this time of year. So those are the first things that I do. What is the first thing that you do?

**Kaytee Cobb** 38:52

Okay, I also I have so many like throw pillows but I change out all the shams for fall because I get very excited about that new color scheme in my house. It feels like a whole different living room especially. And I also have a special blanket but I got it at a random store in Pagosa Springs Colorado it doesn't even have a brand name on it because I went to look because I was like well people are gonna want to know it has buffalo plaid on one side, really soft, silky fuzziness on both sides. And I get the kids try to steal it from me and I can't even get another one so that I can be like this one is yours for your germy faces and your feet. And this one is mine and I never want it to smell like your armpits so please stay away from it. So we just have to argue it over it and I have to wash it a lot but it still has that silkiness to it. You know how some of those cushy blankets they get matted? And they don't after a while they just don't feel good on your skin anymore. So I'm very protective of it the rest of the year even but I don't swap out my mugs. I do get out candles though. And you know much like I'm sure in Austin when it's hot during the summer. You No, I love the light of a flickering candle. I am not interested in having any kind of flames anywhere in my house. I don't even want to turn on the oven. So I'm very excited always to get out my candles. And a lot of them have a lot of fall scent to them because those are my favorite scents.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 40:15

Exactly. And I have to say, well, I don't light candles anymore because it well I mean, I don't light candles anymore because putting them on my mug warmers is a much more efficient way to actually have it fill that the house was sent. So that's happening all year round. But that is definitely something that I changed in the seasons and I now have a favorite candle, which happens to also be Elizabeth Barnhill's favorite candle, and I had to get special permission from her. She said it was okay if I shared it. When I went to her house, I walked into her house and I was like, "Holy Hannah, what is that incredible smell?" And she said it is my favorite candle. It's from Hillhouse Naturals and it's in the harvest scent. And it is a candle she uses all year round. I use it in the fall. I've gotten so many compliments when people come in and they smell it they have it in diffusers, they have it in candles, they have it in really beautiful versions of the candles. And so that is my automatic go to for scent in the fall. The other thing is that I change my beverages. I do a lot of iced beverages, obviously iced tea, iced coffee in the summer, but hot coffee in bolder roasts during the winter. And then also I do a lot more

chai tea. And I really enjoy that in the fall. I do one more thing and I'm about 98% of you guys are gonna think this is gross. But you can all suck my left one because I love it. So here's the thing. I make a Starbucks hot chocolate in the Keurig right so Starbucks makes their their hot hot chocolate for the Keurig and I put toorani hazelnut one, one spoonful of toorani hazelnut syrup in it. And it is so decadent.

**Kaytee Cobb** 42:01

Why would that be gross?

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 42:02

It's hot chocolate with hazelnut because it's just like super sweet. Okay, right. And it's like a kid drink or it's like does hot chocolate needs to be sweeter. Yes, put a syrup in it. So I but every once in a while I just get in a I've had such a day. I'm going to take myself away, I'm going to light my candle, I'm going to make my special drink and then of course to round out the ambiance. You must have a robust play list my friends have fall ASMR rooms or ambiance rooms, whatever you want to call it. We're talking all the fall porches, all the pumpkins all the falling leaves. All the cozy living rooms with with rain coming down or places fireplaces. We will put some of my favorite ones Kaytee's favorite ones in the show notes. But I highly recommend taking an hour exploring on YouTube, the different sounds because some ASMR rooms look really good but their sound might bother you. I'm really sensitive to the balance that some of these different channels have some of them do it really right. There's a channel called RainRider that I think does really really good balanced sounds and their backgrounds. And there's some that I'm like, Oh no, that is terrible. That's making me have to pee. Like that's just no. So you know, you just you have to find the balance that's right for you. But for me an ASMR room or an ambience room that is very fall in the background. Also, I have a whole separate playlist that is just spooky. So I have ASMR fall. I have ASMR spooky. And then I have ASMR spooky with music, which is what Jackson likes for me to play in October. So it's got like, who in the background like that? He knows. Yeah, he likes that. So my spooky doesn't have go sounds in the background but like we're talking you know, go sit crunching but more No, not just leaves crunching, we're talking falling down houses. We're talking. Okay, you know, haunted I mean, we're, I'm not I'm not just talking about like

**Kaytee Cobb** 44:12

Witches hearths and cauldrons,

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 44:14

Witches Yes. Witches flying back and forth all of Yes, bubbling cauldrons, that's that's my vibe.

**Kaytee Cobb** 44:20

Okay, I will admit that I have not fully embraced the ASMR lifestyle year round. But fall is when it happens to me. I very clearly remember last fall spending a lot of time finding the perfect one to go with Cackle by Rachel Harrison. And then and that was like my gateway that I could make that kind of situation happen around the house. For me, It's hard to find the time when my children don't want the TV. And my husband doesn't want the TV. Yeah. So it's hard for me to have one playing regularly but in the fall, I'm willing to like draw a hard line and say listen, I get I get to have this for an hour or I'll go sit in another room and just put it on my laptop instead. I also do change up my beverages in the fall. What I

like is Trader Joe's salted caramel hot chocolate with Bailey's in it. So again, I'm sweetening my hot chocolate. I like that caramel sweetness to it along with the chocolate along with the Irish cream. That is my favorite fall drink. If I get a little scratchy throat like our Meredith has right now, as you can probably hear, I love a hot toddy in the fall. And Jason makes the best one. So I get to like treat him like a bartender during a few months of the year and be like "Jeeves, bring me a hot toddy, please". And I'll just lay there and read. And that makes for a really great reading ambiance for me as well.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 45:41

Oh, man, that reminds me of my parents so much. They were always hot toddies in the fall,

**Kaytee Cobb** 45:46

I don't even like whiskey. But somehow whiskey with honey and lemon. It's my favorite, especially at the scratchy throat. Right? Oh, it's the best. What else? Oh, I got one more thing to say about this, though. We talked about this a little bit at the top of the show. But I cannot help but mention that last year, The Novel Neighbor curated the perfect October spooky stack for us for the Indie Press List. And so my other part of your fall reading ambiance is to go to your local indie and say, I would like to create a foul atmosphere in my home. What do you recommend and let them load you up with books because they are expert at it. And coming up in October again, this year, we've got another great bookstore that has made a fantastic October spooky stack for us that we are just bonkers excited about

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 46:35

oh my gosh, yes.

**Kaytee Cobb** 46:37

I mean, the whole thing. It's an experience, you have to have the whole thing ready to go for fall. And in this way, you will have the best fall ever.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 46:45

Yes, that is a reason to become a patreon subscriber on October 1, because in the press list is always good. But Indie Press List in the fall in October and magic, some kind of dark witchy magic?

**Kaytee Cobb** 46:59

Yes, yes. It's like bubbling caldrons and magic is what it is.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 47:04

It is very good. Well, I think we've got them set up for a really, really good fall reading. I really think that even if you don't, I mean, I've been in a lot of times in my life where I please hear me say I could not afford to redo my house for the fall, right. But even if you can just do a little corner, just where you read a couple of things that make you feel the change in season. I think you will really, really love it and then grab some of those books that make you feel like the season has changed. Reward yourself a little bit. You've been through a lot. You deserve it.

**Kaytee Cobb** 47:40

It's been two years of a pandemic. We all have been through a lot. We all deserve it.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 47:44**

Good Lord, sitting here with COVID as we speak. I am I am ready.

**Kaytee Cobb 47:48**

Two and a half years later, that's the worst. Yeah. Okay, so now we get to make wishes at the fountain. And right off the top, we're all gonna just wish for Meredith to not have COVID anymore. But what is your actual wish at the fountain this week, Meredith?

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 48:03**

Okay. I wish that I had thought of this sooner. This is my wish. I don't know why this was something that was a little aha moment for me, but it may very well be a dull moment for everybody else. But it was such a light bulb above my head that I just had to bring it. You know, we do slow but steady reads like this is something we talked about all the time. But for me, I had never thought about slow but steady, but make it audio. My slow but steady is always a combination of print, and Kindle. But what often happens to me on audio is that I will get done with a book that I've really enjoyed, next week, I'm going to bring to you guys a book that I just finished on audio that I loved, very scary book, and I will lose my momentum because I've finished with it. I love that book. I don't know exactly what I want to go into next. And so I don't go into anything. And then on audio, I can really, really really get stuck. So it occurred to me, I would just dip into David Sedaris's A Carnival of Snackery, which I'm really enjoying, but I never want to read constantly. I don't want to read it as a piece. So it occurred to me, why can't this be my go to audiobook for those in between moments, my bridge book. So I'm making my way through it slowly and steadily. It's always there for me because it's nonfiction, it's essays. It's something that I'm not going to lose the thread on. And I always know that it's there. So as soon as I finished my next audiobook, I go right back into A Carnival of Snackery. And then as soon as the mood strikes, I know exactly what my next audiobook should be. I go right into that and I don't have to feel guilty about setting that book aside. It's waiting for me when I needed just like my slow but steady books that I do in print in real life. So this was a big moment for me because I constantly struggle with my audiobook listening because I do get very either stuck behind a book I don't want to be reading or I don't know what to choose next. And it really is a struggle for me. So I wish that I had thought of this sooner. Roxanna recommended Braiding Sweetgrass as another book that I've been talking about wanting to read, but I haven't jumped into and I think she's right, I think that would be another great audio as slow but steady.

**Kaytee Cobb 50:19**

It would be I absolutely agree with that. I read the first one of David's Sedaris's diaries, Theft by Finding as a slow but steady in the same way as a bridge book. I didn't ever want to like sit down and read big chunks at a time. But when I was in between print books, I would just let myself read a few of his diary entries. And it could be one or it could be 30. But as soon as I was feeling over it, I was ready to go into my next print book. And so I was doing exactly the same thing, also with David's Sedaris.. But with print a few years ago, when that book came out, I think that's a great way to keep your momentum going. Anne Bogel talks about supply side and demand side readers as well. And I think that's kind of what you're struggling with. Like I never have this problem on audio. Because my audio queue is like 800 years long. And I can just go into the next one because I'm a planned reader instead of a mood reader.



**Meredith Monday Schwartz 51:15**

Right? You just go into the next one. But for me, I look at my whole audio I look at Kaytee, you are so generous to share your Libro.fm with me which literally has hundreds of books in it, so many books, and I go in there and I'm like surely I'm gonna find something that's gonna feel right... I spend more time dicking around trying to decide on an audio book, instead of just waiting until the next mood strikes. So I'm going to try this new system.

**Kaytee Cobb 51:41**

Okay, I like it. I think that's a great wish. I don't really know what your wish was. You wish you had figured it out sooner? Okay, my wish is very simple, you can do it in the next 30 seconds. I wish for everyone to follow SparkNotes on Instagram. It's back to school season. I love SparkNotes so much. So SparkNotes for those of us that are geriatric Millennials or older is the new Cliff Notes. Those were the yellow and black books that you could buy to help you figure out the themes, the characters, and the major plot points of the books you were assigned to read in high school and college. SparkNotes on Instagram, though, is that but in hilarious meme format. Whoever is running their social media is a friggin genius. They make me so happy. They use stills from TV shows and movies turned into memes, and then adapted to fit the narrative, or the characters or the plot points of those classic novels that you're getting assigned in high school and college. They never failed to make me laugh, even if I've never read the book or seen the show, although it is of course enhanced by both of those things. I want everyone to get the same raucous joy out of their social media feeds as I do when I see their posts. And this wish gets us one step closer to that goal. So just go right now. It's linked in the show notes. Just click on over clickety click over to Instagram and follow you SparkNotes because they are amazing. It's SparkNotes underscore is their official account.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 53:10**

I love it done and done. That is perfect. Yay.

**Kaytee Cobb 53:14**

Okay, I think that was a great fountain segment and a great episode Meredith.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 53:20**

Absolutely. I was gonna say ping splash but that last week, did you hear how Mary did it? She did like plink. That was her sound. So everyone needs to come up with their own

**Kaytee Cobb 53:29**

I haven't listened to last week's yet because right come out.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 53:32**

Yeah, she did like plink. And it was a good you know, it was a good a good thing. Did you see Kaytee that someone left a review saying that they think our fountain segment is cheesy?

**Kaytee Cobb 53:41**

Well, they're not the podcasters.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 53:43

I like it. I think it's fun.

**Kaytee Cobb** 53:45

I think it's fun, too. I like that we can do anything we want with it.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 53:49

I wish that everyone thought it was fun like we do. Ping splash!

**Kaytee Cobb** 53:52

Piing splash.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 53:55

Alright, that is it for this week. As a reminder, here's where you can connect with us. You can find me I'm Meredith at @Meredith.reads on Instagram.

**Kaytee Cobb** 54:02

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

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 54:06

Full show notes for 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 at [currentlyreadingpodcast.com](https://currentlyreadingpodcast.com).

**Kaytee Cobb** 54:15

You can also follow the show at @currentlyreadingpodcast on Instagram or email us at [currentlyreadingpodcast@gmail.com](mailto:currentlyreadingpodcast@gmail.com).

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 54:21

And if you want more of this kind of content, and you know that you do, become a bookish friend on Patreon for \$5 a month. You get all that great content and you make sure that Currently Reading stays commercial free. You can also help us by reading and reviewing us on Apple podcasts. You can maybe leave a review saying that you liked the fountain segment I don't know

**Kaytee Cobb** 54:41

and our book choices and our voices and everything else because they want a nice things

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 54:45

I can think of a few nice things. And you can also shout us out on social media. All of those things help us to find our perfect audience.

**Kaytee Cobb** 54:53

Bookish friends are the best friends and the ones that leave five star reviews are the bestest of friends Thank you for helping us grow and get closer to our goals

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 55:02  
alright until next week may your coffee be hot

**Kaytee Cobb** 55:05  
and your book be unputdownable

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 55:07  
Happy reading Kaytee.

**Kaytee Cobb** 55:08  
Happy reading Meredith.