



Season 3, Episode 23: Book Flights + Goals for Reading and Business

Mon, 1/18/21 • 48:05

Meredith Monday Schwartz 00:10

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

Kaytee Cobb 00:23

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

Meredith Monday Schwartz 00:34

I'm Meredith Monday Schwartz, a mom of four and full time CEO living in Austin, Texas. And I am goal-oriented in my life, and in my reading.

Kaytee Cobb 00:44

And I'm Kaytee Cobb, a homeschooling mom of four living in New Mexico. And I am a book nerd of the highest order. This is episode number 23 of season three, and we're so glad you're here.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 00:54

All right, Kaytee, our first real episode of the year, real normal episode of the year, I'm looking forward to getting back into our normal format. It's been a few weeks since we've done it. So that feels really, really good. All right, so we want to let everyone know right up top that we are going to be doing our deep dive. This week, we're going to touch on our reading goals for the year we'll find out do we even make reading goals? Is that even a good idea. And we're also going to talk a little bit about some goals that we have for the podcast for the year. So we're gonna get a little bit behind the scenes as we go into our deep dive this week. I'm excited about that. All right, Kaytee. But before we deep dive, what is your bookish moment of the week this week, your first one of 2021?

Kaytee Cobb 01:39

My bookish moment of the week this week has to do with Christmas. Because you know, that just passed a little while ago. And also with my bite-sized intro, I am a book nerd of the highest order. But I'm also just a plain old nerd. So this this year for Christmas, my husband and kids got me the Lego Bookstore. And we're a pretty Lego-obsessed family. But for me to have my own giant set that my kids were not allowed to build with me, and then to get to like delight in all the little tiny pieces that Lego puts into their sets to make it come to life. Just so fun. There's birds and trees and a little espresso machine like all these little tiny details that just completely delighted me. I loved building the bookshelves. I love getting to decide who was going to run my bookstore, the whole thing. And I realized that is completely nerdy. And I'm totally fine with it. I am embracing my nerdiness. And I'm happy about it.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 02:33

I loved the story that you did on that because it was so much more detailed than I thought it was going to be. But I actually don't think that this is nerdy. I actually think that for Lego as a business, this is kind of a brilliant move, and they should double down on it. Because if we can get into adult coloring, right, if we can get so into puzzles, that puzzle companies can't keep up with the demand. Why not adult Lego building, especially leaning hard towards women who they could like do like a home design element, do like a little garden, that just seems like a lot of things that they could do that could really open up a whole new segment of their business. So the business part of me is very interested in how much you were how excited you were to do that particular project.

Kaytee Cobb 03:19

It was really fun. And you know, it reminded me a lot of puzzling, except it comes with instructions. So you still have to find the right pieces. But it's telling you every one instead of you being like, well, I'll just try this piece here and see what happens. So I feel like it's a good medium spot for the person that wants to puzzle but is like, this makes my brain hurt.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 03:37

All right, well, my bookish moment of the week is I am trying have said that I kind of feel my reading switching a little bit. Right. We talked about this in the last couple of episodes. And I think that that's a really good thing I'm really interested in the kinds of things that my brain is is able to concentrate on and in fact, I was listening to Sarah's Bookshelves Live the winter or I guess the beginning of the year preview episode where she was talking with Katherine at @gilmoresguidetobooks. And Katherine was saying that she felt like, for some reason, all of a sudden, in this first part of the year, her brain had been able to quiet enough that she was able to read some books that earlier in 2020, she hadn't been able to read. And I had this lightbulb moment when she said that been feeling like before this last week, which was, you know, back to Doom scrolling hell. But before that point, I had very much been in a couple week period of time, where I felt like my brain could quiet to the point where I could dip into a bigger, more serious, more densely written, beautifully written book. And I hadn't felt that way in a really, really long time. And what I realized, Kaytee, is actually since we've been doing the podcast, I had this like the first year we were doing the podcast, I was very public about the fact that I was going through a really hard sort of depressive year, never experienced that before, it was really hard for me, then I kind of came out of that as we moved to Austin. And then we went into this last, you know, to 2020. So in the time we've been doing the podcast, I haven't actually been in this headspace of my brain being able to be quiet enough that I could get into some of these bigger, harder, slower kinds of books, but ones that really make me feel like a reader in a lot of ways that reading, for example, a popcorn thriller doesn't. So I'm interested to see if that comes back after this last week that we've just experienced. And I'm interested to see how I can continue to double down on that part of my reading, because again, it feels new and fresh to me. And that feels really, really good.

Kaytee Cobb 05:47

That's good. I'm excited about that development for you.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 05:51

Okay, so let's talk a little bit about our current reads. Kaytee, what's your first read that you want to bring us this week?

Kaytee Cobb 05:58

Okay, my first read this week is one that I spun into my own pile. So it's *The Space Between Worlds* by Micaiah Johnson, which I already had on my shelves, but it just kind of sat there. And then Sara, not from Sarah's Bookshelves, but from Fiction Matters, does personalized reading recommendations for her patrons, and we are patrons of her Patreon account. And we were able to submit or each of us is able to submit requests for book recommendations. So I decided to use Sara and her very lovely knowledge to ask for recommendations for my husband for Christmas. She suggested *The Space Between Worlds* and kind of billed it as a readalike for some books that I really liked. So I was like, well, in the interest of being a very good recommender myself, I'll just go ahead and read it myself and make sure that it would be a good fit for him.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 06:50

You had to. You had to do that.

Kaytee Cobb 06:52

Right. We make sacrifices, but it's what we have to do. So this recommendation was fantastic. It was spot on, I could not put it down. This is I kind of set it up at one point because it was mentioned as my Book of the Month pick. But our main character is named Cara. And she lives in a world where technology has advanced to the point that people can travel to parallel worlds. So kind of like *Dark Matter*, where we learn about parallel universes and timelines that kind of split off. There are 372 Earths on this world where somebody made a different decision at some point. And they, these scientists can travel between them. The catch is, you can only travel to another world, if you have died on that world, if you don't exist on that world. Since Cara is really good at dying and really good at getting into trouble, she can travel to 360 of the 372 worlds. So she gets in a lot of trouble basically, is what we know about her from the beginning. While she's there, she's supposed to briefly access a data port that gives them information about how things work on that world, their technology, their weather, all this random info. But every once in a while, Cara decides to go exploring get in a little trouble. And of course, that's where the novel really starts. Because we get to meet other people on other worlds, we get to see what it's like to travel from one world to the next. It's really, it's really a great book. It's a hero that you love to root for. Even though she's flawed. She's bucking the system, she's kicking butt left and right. She's falling in love. She's getting hurt. And she's walking between worlds. And I loved it so much. I could not put it down. I was so glad that Sara recommended it for my husband so that I could then read it. It's *The Space Between Worlds* by Micaiah Johnson.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 08:38

Okay, now that you read it, do you think Jason will like it?

Kaytee Cobb 08:41

I think Jason would like it, he is definitely back out of his reading mojo. So I don't know if I'm gonna be able to get it into his hands. But I think he would, if he did pick it up, he would like it.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 08:54

All right. So my first book is actually one that I think is the very beginning of what I was just talking about in my bookish moment of the week. So what I read was *The Essex Serpent* by Sarah Perry. Have you read this one?

Kaytee Cobb 09:11

No, it's been sitting on my shelf forever.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 09:14

Okay, don't. Alright, so this book has a gorgeous, gorgeous cover. And I was really interested in the setup. So let me tell you a little bit about it. Although you've probably seen it. If you're like me, you probably feel like you've seen it a million places, which I definitely had. And I was like, I've got to finally pick this book up. Okay. So our book is set in 1893. And our lead character, who I really really loved is Cora Seaborne. In the first few scenes of the book, which are very, very gripping, we meet her and we meet her domineering husband, who's really just like really unlikable. Well, he's dying in the first few scenes of the book. But we quickly realized that Cora is really not all that broken up about the fact that her husband is dying. He's pretty awful, and their marriage was definitely not a happy one. They got married when she was just 19. But honestly, she was just too smart and too academically inclined to be the kind of wife that he was looking for. So her husband was very disappointed and he never missed a chance to let her know. So the very beginning of the book, he dies, we go to his funeral. We're all happy. We take a deep breath. Okay, so after he dies, Cora and her son Francis, who, today we would immediately recognize as being fairly seriously autistic. They travel with Francis's nanny, who is also Cora's closest female confidant, Martha, and they go to coastal Essex. They're gonna take some time, they're gonna take a deep breath, they're gonna get out of stuffy London. And also, Cora, who is very interested in all things scientific and naturalistic has heard that in this town. There's a myth that there for 300 years, the mythical Essex serpent is said to have been roaming the coast. And just recently, on New Year's Eve, just a couple of months before they get there, a death has occurred that is being attributed to this Essex serpent. So Cora is very interested, she absolutely does not believe in this myth, but she wants to find out what's really happening. She developed a relationship with the local Vicar, who plays heavily into our story. He's also suspicious with rumors but for different reasons. And our story goes from there, it's about their relationship. It's about their investigation. It's, it's a great setup. But I will say that this is one of those books that is simultaneously and I really, really mean it. When I say simultaneously this book was excellent and excruciatingly slow. So I sort of went into it thinking it was going to be much faster-paced than it was. It has beautiful, beautiful, lyrical writing that you have to stop and appreciate. But all the characters are very melancholy, the setting is very, very foggy and melancholy. And the whole story is very quiet. Not a lot happens. So I have to be very clear about that. In fact, my notes say, "but so little happens, oy." That's what my notes say. Really, really the case. It did remind me if you like this period of time, and you like a very quiet story with excellent lyrical writing. If you read *The Crimson Petal in the White* by Michael Faber back in the day. I'm dating myself by giving you that book. But if you read that back in the day, and you loved it, you would absolutely love *The Essex Serpent* by Sarah Perry.

Kaytee Cobb 12:57

My second book this week came from Anne Bogle's daily Kindle deal email, and she really highly recommended this book. And even though I know that we are not book twins, it sounded interesting. So I went ahead and picked it up.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 13:10

Ah she got you. She got you, Kaytee!

Kaytee Cobb 13:13

Rude. It's the cover to Gosh, this cover too. It's just, mm. Okay, so the book is called Sharks in the Time of Saviors by Kawai Strong Washburn. The premise for this book, like I said in her email, she made it sound so good. So let me tell you about it and see if you don't want to pick it up. We've got a Hawaiian family struggling to make ends meet, they decide that they're going to move because they just cannot make it happen on the island that they're living on. And they decide to sell pretty much everything they own, and end up with this tiny little cushion for their move. So the dad says I finally want to do something nice for my kids. And he takes them on a glass bottom boat tour. Great fun. They're out on the ocean. Little Noa who is seven years old falls into the ocean. And sharks start swarming the water. Right? Your adrenaline goes straight up. But guess what? The sharks gently grab him in their mouth, not a scratch on him, deliver him back to the boat. That is the very first like setup for this book. I was like, I have to read it. This sounds amazing. I cannot wait cannot wait. Right.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 14:14

That's a good premise.

Kaytee Cobb 14:15

Yes, exactly. So it turns out that Noa is his nickname. Nainoa goes by Noa. He has some mythical legendary abilities that connect him to people and animals in crazy ways. We get to follow the family forward from that fateful event and see where the lives of Noa, his older brother Dean, and his younger sister Kauai lead. This sounds amazing. It sounds so good, right? Little magical realism. Hawaiian culture. Family drama. Sweet. Excellent. The problem for me is that Noa, that central person that had the most amazing origin story is almost like a side character. And a lot of the book, he doesn't get to sit center-stage even with this amazing backstory, like he should be in a suit. Superhero. And instead it's kind of like, oh, when Noa was off in his own town doing his own thing, and I was like, No, no, no, no. We need more Noa. This whole book could have been about Noa. It could have been like, sometimes we hear from Dean and Kauai. I wanted a book about Noah. And that's not what I got. And so every time we switched away from his storyline, I was like, Oh, geez, here we go, again, bored with these other two characters, bored with the family in general, really wanting to focus back in on his story. So it wasn't a hit for me. I felt cheated as I read it. But I do think there are some people who would really love this book. And again, the cover is just bold, graphic yellow, gorgeous with this huge shark on it. It's stunning. I love the cover. I love the premise. But the book itself fell flat. So it was Sharks in the Time of Saviors by Kawai Strong Washburn.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 15:52

So you realize that we basically just had two identical first books for this for this year. We both said gorgeous covers, great premise, fell largely flat. There are a lot of people who probably really would love it.

Kaytee Cobb 16:05

Right. Right. Okay, that was an unintentional book flight from us. You're welcome. Exactly.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 16:10

Books that might put you to sleep by Meredith and Kaytee. I'm going to take us up with this next book, because I have been really looking forward to talking about this book on the show. It is a five star, 10 star book for me. Middle grade, but it is absolutely one that I want all of you guys to get. It's The Unadoptables by Hannah Tooke. I loved this book. Alright, so I heard about this book on the Diving In Podcast, which you guys know the Australian book podcast that I adore, I get so many great book recommendations from them. This is a perfect example. I feel like I otherwise wouldn't have heard about this book. Although now I've seen it a couple of other places. Okay, here's the setup. In all the years that Eleonora Gasbeak has been the matron of the Little Tulip Orphanage, not once have the rules for baby abandonment been broken. And these rules are very important to the matron until the autumn of 1886 when five babies are left outside her orphanage, each one in outrageously wrong circumstances. One is left in a tin toolbox, one is in a coal bucket. One is in a picnic hamper. One is in a wheat sack. And finally, one is in a coffin-shaped basket. I cannot tell you how wrong and irritating these sets of events are for poor Eleanor Gasbeak. Hello, you're not going to feel pity for her very long. All right, these babies are Lotta, Egg, Fenna, Sim, and Milleiu. And they were immediately because of their very wrong leaving at the orphanage deemed unadoptable by Eleanor Gasbeak, who is truly horrible. So our story starts 12 years later, these five have become absolutely inseparable to each other. They are treated horribly at the orphanage, which of course is my sweet spot for middle grade. They are just treated absolutely horribly in that fun, middle grade way, right? They don't have enough food. It's very cold. There are rats where they sleep. Till they're 12. Right. And one fateful night, a horrible man, a sinister gentleman appears and basically wants to, quote unquote, adopt them. But we all know that he's not got anything good in mind for them. Right? You know, Eleanor concoct a plan. They're going to take the kids, the kids are going to go to this next horrible place. And that's where adventure starts. You guys, this book is absolute middle grade perfection. I got it from the library. I immediately bought it for my middle grade shelf, because I have to have I have to have this to read to my grandchildren. It is adventure and orphans and villainous villains, absolutely great villains in this story, and found family and puppet shows and clues to their biological families and more and more and more elements without ever feeling like too much. This book is perfectly paced. Every character you will want to just hug to your bosom, your motherly bosom. This book is excellent. This is The Unadoptables by Hannah Tooke, I would recommend it for any adult who loves middle grade. Certainly if you liked The House in the Cerulean Sea and we know for a fact that many of you did. You've got to grab this book and a really really sweet read aloud for your kids. I would I would highly recommend it. For all of those reasons I loved this book.

Kaytee Cobb 19:49

I put it on hold while you were talking. I did get some Despicable Me vibes because in the first Despicable Me movie, Gru goes and adopts the girls just so they can sell Girl Scout cookies to his arch enemy. So I love the premise.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 20:02

There's Yes, there's Despicable Me vibes there is. There's definitely the Series of Unfortunate Event vibes. It's never, it's a completely original story. So you don't feel like Oh, let me just take a little bit of this and a little bit of that, which I'm very sensitive to in my middle grade because I feel like there's a lot of middle grade that's very much those like, well, this seems to work. Let's take this ingredient, this ingredient, this book is wholly original, and it feels very, perfectly formed. But yes, if you liked, you know, the Series of Unfortunate Events, this falls right into that perfect sweet spot where it's like, there's some funny parts and there's some, you know, quote unquote, horrifying parts, but it's, it's never truly horror. It's not like it's anything really hard or dark. Right?

Kaytee Cobb 20:48

Yeah. As you described it, I kept leaning further and further forward, because I just wanted more and more, so I'm very excited to pick it up. Thank you, Meredith. From all the middle grade lovers out there, I think you.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 20:59

Yes. All right. What's your your final current read?

Kaytee Cobb 21:03

Okay, my last one this week is very much in my sweet spot because it's memoir. And we know how much I love memoir. So it's called Tomorrow Will Be Different: Love, Loss, and the Fight for Trans Equality by Sarah McBride. This one was sent directly to me by bookish friend Angela. She is a fierce ally for trans rights, and has been holding my hand as I walk through the transition of one of my loved ones. So when she asked if I wanted to read the memoir of the first trans state senator who had just got elected, like the day before she sent this to me, I answered with an emphatic Yes. Sarah, the author has been a prominent activist for her entire life. And this memoir, she takes us through her young life, her college years, her goals, her aspirations, her coming out story, we get to see the heartbreak and redemption of her parents, as they have a really, really hard time with her transition, which is depicted in this very, like, you know, illuminating heartbreaking, wonderful way, we get to see what it looks like for her to have friends and family members step alongside her and love her well and embrace her. And then she really gets going in 2016. She was the first trans woman to have a platform at a national convention because she spoke when Hillary Clinton accepted the nomination for president. So she just like she lit up the entire internet. This memoir, it's political in that Sara really outlines the work she's done for trans rights and trans equality. She has risen in a huge way even since the publication of this of this book, like I said, she just got elected as the first trans state senator. And she has an inspiring and incredible story. I want to put a trigger warning in here. And I don't feel like it's a spoiler that the subtitle is love loss and the fight for trans equality. The foreword, written by Joe Biden mentions that Sarah loses her husband to cancer at a very young age, like they have just gotten married, and she loses him to cancer. So it's, and that part is heart breaking, like sobbing on the floor heartbreaking. So

know that going in, especially if you have any kind of trigger warnings for yourself around cancer or losing a spouse or anything like that, because that part of the book is really difficult. Otherwise, though, I just loved it from beginning to end. And you guys know, I like a good cry. So that didn't turn me away from it at all. The book is called *Tomorrow Will Be Different: Love, Loss and the Fight for Trans Equality* by Sarah McBride.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 23:30

All right, my third book is also squarely in my wheelhouse. So we've just been tracking. So similarly today, Kaytee, okay. I read *The Thursday Murder Club* by Richard Osman. You guys have probably seen this everywhere. It's been all over bookstagram. It's been really, really, really hyped. And so of course, I opened it with a lot of trepidation. Apparently, it's also written... Well, it's written by Richard Osman. It's his debut novel, but apparently he's very famous in the UK for being some sort of TV host, like he's very famous. And that also made me go Hmm, sometimes I'm not sure about books written by famous people. But this one delivers on the hype. I absolutely loved it. So you've probably heard a lot about this. But just to refresh your memory, we have our story set in a really nice, upscale, very peaceful retirement village in the UK. And four very unlikely sweet old people who live in this retirement village, they're unlikely friends because they don't seem like they would naturally come together but they do every Thursday in the jigsaw room, and they come together to discuss unsolved crimes and they call themselves the Thursday murder club. These four are adorable, you will love every one of them and their backstories so it's very this this book is really well done because it's not surface at all. It very much goes into each of these people. So of course in our story we have they're looking into unsolved crimes, it's not going to surprise anyone that a crime actually lands on their doorstep when a local developer is found dead, and he has a mysterious photograph next left next to his body. And so all of a sudden they jump in and they have to help solve this crime. This book is a very interesting mix of a lot of people are calling it a cozy, which I can understand it being called a cozy. But it's more than that, in that there are some people Lord help them who call Louise Penny books cozies kind of because of the cozy setting, right? But like those books, this one is much more than that. Like I said, it goes a lot deeper into various issues. I felt like this book was a combination of like Anthony Horowitz, *Magpie Murders*, kind of writing as far as a really well plotted mystery. There was also elements of coziness. So like an Ellery Adams Cozy Mystery, a smart cozy, which is that's a that's a thing. And not every cozy is smart. And then there was also really strong to me, Fredrick Backman, *Ove* style vibes here, in that you would be reading along, kind of laughing, charmed by the, you know, charmed by our four lead characters. And then Osman would like hit you with something that was like a little gut punch, like Backman does in his writing where you're like, I did not expect to have that, that like emotional gut punch right there. And then the very next paragraph, you're off in laughing again, all of this within the bounds of a really, really, as I said, smart, well plotted mystery. Now, I don't often say this, but they let this book fully resolved. It's completely standalone, it's, you know, it's complete. I really hope he writes a series with these four characters, because I want to spend more time with them. Like right now I would buy the next book. So that's *The Thursday Murder Club* by Richard Osman.

Kaytee Cobb 26:58

I like that I was going to ask about *A Man Called Ove* because I got some beloved curmudgeon kind of vibes in there too, with older people solving mysteries together. So I'm glad you mentioned that.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 27:12

Yeah, I'm so glad that we're seeing so many more stories being written with 65 and older protagonists. I feel like that's really a thing that we're seeing much more often. And I am here for it, because these characters had so much more to offer than some silly 22 year old just beginning her life. I mean, these characters are ones that I'm not going to forget for a long time. really well done mystery.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 27:36

All right, Kaytee, let's talk a little bit then in our deep dive about reading goals. It's the beginning of the year, we are. This is our first, you know, regular format episode. And so as we were looking to talk about this, we were talking about goals for ourselves in our reading. And then also you and I had a kind of state of the business meeting where we talked about and set goals for the podcast, because you and I both believe that if you don't have goals, you can't you don't know. You're just kind of flailing you're wandering around in the dark. So first, let's talk a little bit about our reading. Do you set goals for yourself in your reading? And if so what do those look like?

Kaytee Cobb 28:19

I do I lately, I have been choosing not to set a book number goal that is a stretch in any way, I want to be able to hit it and not worry about it, I do not want to get to the end of the year and be like, Oh my gosh, I need five books that are 50 pages or less, because I haven't hit my whatever goal. So last year, like we talked about, I read 316 books, I actually don't want to read as many books this coming year. And right now I'm on track to not read as many. But I set my goal at 200. Because to me, that's a pretty regular pace without feeling like I ever have to rush through a title. This coming year, I would also like for more of them to end up being paper books than last year. Because I did a lot on audio. I did some on my Kindle. But only 26% of my reads from last year, were physically sitting down with paper turning in my hands. And that is my favorite reading experience. So I want to lean harder that direction, because I like that the most for reading.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 29:15

Well, as we've talked about a little bit, I do not ever set a number goal for my reading because I am just wholly and completely against number goals of any kind because I think for me, it gets me it's not helping me get to the result that I'm looking for, which is to have the most satisfying reading life possible. So for me, just some, so I don't actually set hard and fast goals as much as I take stock of where I am and what I'm being drawn to and I try to embrace the healthiest parts of that. So as I said, I'm being drawn toward books that are a little bit slower. Really what I would say is I want to spend more time with books that ask a little more of me. And I want to find a way to adjust my reading life. One of the struggles that I that I've had, and I mentioned this in our bookish friends group for our Patreon supporters, is that sometimes I realized that I'm trying to read while, for example, Johnny's watching TV in the background. And what I realized is there are certain kinds of books that I just can't read that way, I have to be in quiet, I have to not have words in the background. So I can have other I could have. I don't listen to music, but I guess I get up music, I have ASMR rooms, or just plain quiet, those things are better for me. So I want to put myself in situations more often, where I can sink deeper into those kinds of books that asked more me, I also would love it. If it doesn't happen, that's fine. But I would love to read more really riveting nonfiction. This year, I want to read more narrative nonfiction, because I really enjoy that. And last year, it was a very, very, very small part of my reading, smaller

than ever before. So I want to read, I want to read some more of that. And then the other thing that I'm finding kind of like you a year ago, Kaytee, I'm finding that I'm really, because of the podcast, I'm gonna lay it squarely at the foot of the podcast. I am shying away from bricks. Now for me, and largely for you, it's that's a book over 600-650 pages of brick. I'm shying away from those because I feel like I get stuck behind it. But then there's a lot of really good books that fall into that category. And I actually really like long books. So one of my goals is to figure out how to incorporate those kinds of books back into my reading, but not have it slow me down to the point where I can't keep up with podcasts because the podcast is very important to me, and I love it so much. So I'm trying to reignite my desire for the slow but steady now my desire for it, my my habit of the slow but steady. I've been finding that I feel like if I'm reading a certain book, if I have another book going, I almost feel like I'm cheating on that first book. And I don't want to feel that way anymore. I want to just remove that and say, No, you as the slow but steady is perfectly fine. So I'm I'm working on some ways to build that kind of reading back. So the bricks might be the slower books, those two things might not at all be the same thing. But those are the things that are top of mind for me as to different parts of my reading that I want to embrace this year. Right. So I don't know if I would call them goals. Because if I call them goals, then I'm so goal-oriented, that I then everything else falls to the wayside in order to meet the goals. And that's what I don't want to do with my reading.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 32:48

But in my business, my day job. And in our business, our podcast, we are setting goals, because I firmly believe as Do you, Kaytee, that it's impossible to get anywhere in a business if you don't have really clear objectives that you're working toward. So we had a meeting this year. And we talked for a long time on a Saturday afternoon, not recording, we just talked business. And we said to ourselves, what are the things? What are a couple because there really can only be if you're going to, if you're going to meet your goals, I believe that there have to be very few, you have to be very focused. What are a couple goals that we really, really want to meet? So do you want to talk a little bit about what we landed upon?

Kaytee Cobb 33:34

Yeah, so we we only tried to narrow it down to three goals. Because again, like you said, we really want to be able to focus in and do these three things really well, right, and really put our energies toward the thing that matters for us and for the podcast. So the first one, which was actually it's been a goal of mine for a while, but now we're both on the same page is that I would really like to pass 10,000 followers on Instagram, that is a threshold for Instagram that kind of indicates success, and that they give you swipe up in your stories. So you can, you know, link directly to articles or pages or whatever. And we are almost there. We're gonna I'm pretty sure we're gonna hit it this year. But I'm just really excited to be able to provide more and better and more robust stories for our followers over on Instagram, if we hit that 10,000 Mark, and you guys can help us do that. You know how you do it? You share the podcast!

Meredith Monday Schwartz 34:26

I mean, okay, so a couple things on that when you mentioned that in when we were having our goals discussion. I first was like, you know, does it really matter if how many followers we have, but then you really explained it to me what we could do with the swipe up that would be helpful to the people who

follow us on Instagram and to our supporters who follow us on Instagram. And that swipe up really does matter. So I went from I went from you know, honestly being like, I don't know how I feel about this goal to being like, "No, this matters. Because it leads to our other, the other things that we want to do, which is always underlied, with this desire to provide really great content for the people who listen to the show." And for the people who follow us on Patreon, so you turned me around on that one. And yeah, so with all of these, so, and then just kind of larger, bigger picture, we wanted to talk about these, these things with you guys, because you are a huge part of how we succeed. And we want you guys to know, what we are working towards, so that we can have your help, but also, so you can hear our hearts on the why behind it, you know, so we don't just want to get to 10,000 followers, because that's a cool number. And oh, we get the swipe up. And that's, you know, makes us look successful. I think neither of us really care about that kind of metric of success. But what can we do with it?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 35:51

Which leads us to our second goal, which has to do so with our second goal, we kind of had to decide what direction do we want to go with the money making elements of currently reading, because we had some choices to make, right? So one big choice that you can make as a podcast, which is, of course completely a laudable choice is to go after sponsors, we have no problem with podcasts that do that. It is absolutely a great form of income and support for podcasts. And I honestly think none of us should complain when a podcast that we love has sponsorships in it. Because guess what, this is a business. Podcasters need to be supported in this way. So so we completely support that way of making money. And where we are right now wasn't the direction that we wanted to go this year. Instead, we really wanted to focus on growing our Patron supporter number, that is a way for us to make money. And it also is allows us to be much more creative than we can be, for example, when we take on a sponsor, when we decide that we're instead going to double down on growing our patron supporter number, that means that we can decide, okay, what cool content can we create, that brings more and more value to the people who do support us through Patreon. And that just honestly, what this came down to is, that's just more fun. For us. We love creating content for you guys. We love the creative elements of it. We love talking books, we love working together in those ways. So again, when we came down to this decision, you know, double down on sponsorships double down on patron support. It doesn't mean one is better than the other. It just means that this was the one that was more fun for us right now might not always be that way. But right now, so Kaytee, what are some ways that we talked about kind of doing that growing this base of Patreon supporters.

Kaytee Cobb 37:57

So we as the as of the time of this recording, we're a little over 750 patrons, I think we're at like 762 or so. And we set a goal for ourselves for this next year to hit 1000, 1200 at a stretch, is really where we would like to be by the end of the year. And that means that if you are a bookish friend listening right now, we would love your help in that you share about how much you love being a bookish friend, and why you love it and what kind of content you're getting over there. And if you're not a bookish friend, you could tell us, what would you be interested in seeing what would make it worth it, to jump on board with us, because we are constantly constantly messaging each other, emailing each other with ideas, and suggestions. And you know, just like word vomiting all over each other with all these great ideas and things we really want to do. And the more Patreon support we have, the more time and energy we can commit to making those things happen. And that's where the sparkle happens behind the scenes.

That's how we make the podcast happen. That's how we're able to spend time working on it. And that's how we get to...

Meredith Monday Schwartz 39:00

Right. That's how we really get to pour ourselves into it. And again, at the you know, we want to have fun doing this, we want to be creative doing it. And we want to bring a ton of value. We don't ever, ever want to look at the overall picture of what we're offering and feel like it's just not worth \$5 a month, we want to feel like the people who support us are getting quadruple that value, right? You know, for every dollar that they spend with us just because, you know we care a lot about this community. And so that's that's a huge goal of ours.

Kaytee Cobb 39:32

Yes. Our third goal for 2021 is that we really want to focus on when we reach out to other podcasts and other guests that we're doing it really with good and solid business intentions. So we are going to try and make sure that at least quarterly we're doing a big giveaway. Some of you, that's the reason you're here because somebody tagged you in a giveaway. And that's how you found Currently Reading. It really helps us grow our audience. And then we are bringing other podcasters, authors that kind of thing onto the podcast with us at least once a quarter as well, because that gives both of us access to each other's audience if we're able to share with each other, the audience that we've each grown individually. So we really like, we love our guest co-hosts, of course, we love Mary and Mindy. But we also want to lean hard into people outside of the Currently Reading team, and making sure that we're really putting ourselves out there into new audience spaces. So the way you guys can help with that is by either tagging us in people's posts, or tagging other people in our posts, when you think of somebody that you think would be a really good fit to be on the podcast with us. And letting both of us know, "Hey, you guys would probably be friends, maybe you should hang out."

Meredith Monday Schwartz 40:48

So we will, we are looking forward to having some pretty big guests coming on to the show in the not-too-distant future that we are beyond excited to share with you guys and to get a chance to talk to these fantastic people. So look forward to that. And yeah, it is a part of our growth strategy, and we're gonna continue to do lots of normal format episodes, do not worry. We hear you when you say that the normal format with Kaytee and I is really, really important, we are not going to be going away from that. But we are going to be sprinkling in, as we always have, this really isn't going to be that big of you know, this really not gonna be a difference. But it's something that we're being really strategic about in order to grow our audience. So those were the goals that we had, I think you guys are going to be really happy with some of the new content that we're adding for our Patreon supporters. And yeah, we definitely you if you're invested in currently reading a lot of you have been with us from the very beginning, make sure that you're following us on Instagram, help us get that swipe up. That's such an easy way for you to support us, tag your friends. And and that that would be really, really huge for us, but also against we can bring better content to you. If you've been wondering if you should become a supporter, now is a fantastic time to do that we have more great content than ever going into your feet. In fact, Kaytee, I think that you just were telling me that this week, our Patreon supporters are effectively getting three podcast episodes in a single week. So it's a lot if you like currently reading and you want more. There's a lot of value there. And then yeah, also, you know, be excited with us when we have some great

guests quarterly because we're excited about that too. You guys are the reason that we can set any of these goals at all the fact that you come every week and you download and that you're okay when we take a little bit of a break. You're there when we come back, we so appreciate you. And we continue to have a really good time. I think this probably is the most fun business endeavor I've ever been involved in Kaytee, I absolutely love it.

Kaytee Cobb 42:54

Absolutely true for me.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 42:56

All right. So part of what we love always about doing the show is that we get to press books into readers hands. So Kaytee, what is your first press of 2021?

Kaytee Cobb 43:07

My first press of 2021 goes all the way back to 2019. But it's one that you brought to the podcast Meredith today I'm going to press Finding Dorothy by Elizabeth Letts. And I was thinking about this book, because we talked about on one of our bonus Patreon episodes, books that you like to buy for somebody else as a gift. And in December of 2019, I bought this book as a gift for my mom, and my aunt's all on my mom's side of the family. And so over the course of 2020, they all read it and they all came back to me and said, Kaytee, this was so lovely and wonderful. And I just I can't stop thinking about it. So as we know from the many times that we've mentioned it on the podcast, this is the story of Maud Gage, the wife of L. Frank Baum, who wrote The Wizard of Oz. It's historical fiction. It's also dual timeline. We are in the earliest early 20th century fighting for women's rights and the rights to vote. And we are also 50 years later, when the Wizard of Oz movie is being filmed, and Maud elbows, her way into the production to form a friendship with Judy Garland. It's fiction but impeccably researched, very transportative, you feel like you are in the Dakotas when you're reading this. And then you are in Hollywood when you're reading this. It's excellently done. I loved it. It's Finding Dorothy by Elizabeth Letts.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 44:28

That book is the definition of a crowd-pleaser book, a book that you can put into almost everyone's hands and they're gonna love it. I don't even necessarily love all kinds of especially recent historical fiction, right? I loved this book. It was so good. The pages just flew and I recommended it to my mom and my sister and so many people and they loved it too. That's a great press, Kaytee. Okay, well, my press is a little bit different just because with all the conversations that we've been having here about currently reading and with my job, but Here Comes the Guide. We've been in a very business mindset. And so I have been thinking about the books that I have read that have really helped me make sure that I'm getting done as much in a day as possible. And one of those books is called What the Most Successful People Do Before Breakfast. And this is by Laura Vanderkam, who is one of my favorite sort of time management gurus. I've read everything Laura has written. This one is one of my favorites, because it pulls together actually three ebooks that she wrote, but pulls together in a really seamless way. Those three books are What Most Successful People Do Before Breakfast. So ways that you can jumpstart your day productively, and then what those people do on the weekend to recharge and prepare for a week, and then also what most successful people do at work to accomplish more in less

time. So she takes those three ebooks This is it's all in one paperback book, my copy has notes and highlights and flags everywhere. I've read it multiple times, I've gotten so many important life hacks out of it. And I think now more than ever, as a lot of us continue to be in a pandemic schedule where we're working from home, and our kids are still home, distance learning. We're gonna be doing this for several months more, it's really important to have a book like this that can that you can read just in short bursts. As you you know, maybe establish a morning routine where you're kind of reading just a little bit to to level set yourself and some really actionable things that you can put into play that make your life with all the different plates that you have spinning, feel more manageable. This is one of my favorites and absolutely in my top three kind of productivity and time management books that I recommend. So that's What The Most Successful People Do Before Breakfast by Laura Vanderkam.

Kaytee Cobb 46:47

I love a productivity press at the beginning of the year. I think that's just the perfect time.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 46:52

Exactly. Doesn't it feel like the right time to be doubling down on that kind of stuff? 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 47:06

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

Meredith Monday Schwartz 47:09

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 at our website, which is currentlyreadingpodcast.com.

Kaytee Cobb 47:21

You can also follow us and contact us directly at currentlyreadingpodcast on Instagram. Help us get that 10,000 swipe up! Via email at currently reading podcast@gmail.com.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 47:31

And if you really want to help us, rate and review us on Apple podcasts, and give us a shout out on social media that makes a huge difference toward us meeting all those goals that we just talked about on the show.

Kaytee Cobb 47:44

Yes, we want your help with all those goals, you guys, that makes you our bookish best friends. Thanks for doing that.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 47:50

Alright, until next week. Happy reading, Kaytee.

Kaytee Cobb 47:53
Happy reading, Meredith.