



# Season 4, Episode 18: Books We Both Read + Reading Your Shelves

Mon, 11/29 • 46:09

**Kaytee Cobb 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 already know, we do not shy away from having strong opinions. So get ready.

**Mary Heim 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.

**Kaytee Cobb 00:34**

I'm Kaytee Cobb, a homeschooling mom of four living in New Mexico and I am a sucker for a great book sale.

**Mary Heim 00:40**

And I'm Mary Heim, a working mom of one and my deep dark secret is that I can be kind of ruthless when I am culling my bookshelves. This is episode number 18 of season four and we are so glad you're here.

**Kaytee Cobb 00:53**

We are so glad you're here. And we're so glad Mary is here today. We are going to have a great episode for you guys today. I want to let you know right up at the top that our deep dive for this episode is about reading your shelves. A lot of us are looking at the end of the year. Maybe we have a few too many books on our TBR. So how do we move those books from your TBR shelf to your read shelf? But before we get started with that, and all the other goodies, Mary we're going to get started with our bookish moments. So what do you have for us?

**Mary Heim 01:20**

Okay, Kaytee, I may be a little bit premature on this. But we recently started letting a few wintry decorations eke their way out of our basement and up into our home. And one of those categories that we let slide before Thanksgiving has been Christmas books. And it has brought me so much joy. So this past weekend, we brought up a giant tub of holiday kids books, and even some of my holiday themed books that I didn't get around to reading last year. I just kind of snuck them in there for this season surprise. So last year, Mary, thank you so much for doing that because it was just delightful. It was so much fun putting those kids books on Charlotte's shelf. She's so much more aware of all of that this

year. She's always been a little reader but now she's like requesting favorites. We have plenty of like fun new ones that we've picked up for her. But there's also a bunch of books on there from Jeremy's childhood, from my childhood. So it has been a great way to wind down at the end of the night and start to kind of bring some of those holiday Christmassy vibes into our house. It's just been so much fun, highly recommend stashing some holiday books for yourself away in your tub of holiday books as well. It's just such a fun way to kick off the season. I loved it. Loved it.

**Kaytee Cobb** 02:38

Okay, do you have any from that stack that you're especially excited for for your TBR because that's what people are looking for right now.

**Mary Heim** 02:45

For my TBR? So one of them is actually a book that Meredith has been teasing this year, *The Afterlife of Holly Chase*, which is a kind of dickinsonian play. I've had that one for a year or two at least and never gotten around to it. Another one I really love is in *Anne of Green Gables Christmas*, like mini story compendium, it is really fun to read a story or two at a time. And I actually haven't finished it. I happen to just read like two or three stories a year. So I think I'm finally going to give that one to finish this year. But I am going to add them to my stack of already growing current holiday Christmas books because I am all for the cozy vibes already.

**Kaytee Cobb** 03:27

I love that and I'm so glad that even though I'm not a super seasonal mood reader that my quote "job" is to get to chat with all of you that are very seasonal mood readers and that you can bring some of that Christmas spirit to my own somewhat grinchy reading because I'm like "Yeah, it's Christmas, whatever. I'm just gonna keep reading what I'm reading."

**Mary Heim** 03:46

We will holiday vibe enough for all of us.

**Kaytee Cobb** 03:48

I love that perfect. Okay, so my bookish moment this week actually has to do with my dentist appointment which does not sound very bookish. But on Monday of this week, I had my regular dental checkup, my every six months appointment. And I have a very uncomplicated mouth which is lucky genes, good mouth bacteria, whatever it is. So the hygienist and I spent a lot of time chatting together at my checkup. Her name is Quiana. She goes by Q and I've had the same hygienist for two and a half years now. So we've really like she's like watched Onalee grow up and we've gone through COVID together and elections and all kinds of stuff. And every time we hug each other hello and goodbye. Fun and bookish part of this, though, is that she listens to the podcast and she always ribs me about being a celebrity, which is hilarious to me. Because I don't know if you get those ever Mary but like even responding to DMS people are like, "Oh my gosh," then I'm like "Yeah, I'm just a regular human friend, don't you worry about it." So this week she really wanted to talk to me about her recent read which was *The Other Black Girl* by Zakiya Delila Harris, which I brought to the show on episode one of season four. I really enjoyed it but I told everybody at the time that it's not going to be for every reader. Well, Q

hated it. She hated it. It was a Rattatouille book for her. She was mad at the end, she was mad at the girl's decisions. She was mad about all of it. And so I just loved that even though the dentist isn't necessarily something that we all would look forward to, it was a great experience for me and I even got to make it bookish. So that was my bookish moment of the week.

**Mary Heim** 05:23

I love that way to find joy in all of the small places and hi Q That's so fun. I love that she's a listener.

**Kaytee Cobb** 05:29

That's awesome. Yeah, it's super fun. All right, let's get into our current reads. What do you have for us this week, Mary?

**Mary Heim** 05:36

Okay, Kaytee, I am so excited about this first book that I have. It was put on my radar by our friend Amy Allen Clark of MomAdvice and the Book Gang podcast. I have seen it nowhere else. And I am hoping that me bringing it to the show, gets some of our bookish friends and listeners to read so that I can talk about it with all of you. This book is *The Kingdom* by Jess Rothenburg. So this book set in a futuristic theme park. So kind of think Disney meets *Westworld*, right and you've got a pretty good idea of what we're working with here. This story revolves around one of seven Fantasists, which are kind of a complex humanlike princess robot that exists only within the park and only to make visitors and guests happy. The theme park is state of the art. It's set in what we're to believe is kind of a not too distant future that's just a touch apocalyptic. So we're seeing these, you know, previously extinct species being brought back to life in the park, entire ecosystems being replicated. It's serious business. No fantasist has ever left the park except for one who didn't live to tell the tale. So as we get more into the story, we see our main fantasist protagonist, Ana begin to become more and more self aware. She and one of her sisters, another fantasist start to question some of the darker kind of more seemingly sinister parts of the park. And then when she meets park employee Owen, Ana begins to experience emotions beyond her programming, including for the first time, love. The plot takes off from there and I will say it takes off. I read this one coming out of a pretty serious slump. And it was exactly the slump buster that I needed. This book is technically YA and it does show in some places. The characters were sometimes a little bit underdeveloped. But honestly Kaytee, the plot was so breakneck and unputdownable for me that I almost just didn't care. It is a story that is absolutely going to grab you. If this premise sounds even the slightest bit interesting to you, I would love to lovingly bossy press this book into your hands. It was just so fun from start to finish. Note that there are some content warnings for triggers that are kind of both explicit and implied. So just know yourself. But overall, I flew through it. That is *The Kingdom* by Jess Rothenberg.

**Mary Heim** 05:40

That sounds excellent. Did you watch all of *Westworld*? Like is it a good comp for that?

**Mary Heim** 08:12

It's it's a comp light for *Westworld* for sure. So I did watch *Westworld*. And as a little bit of a sensitive viewer, sometimes I would watch some of it out of like side eye. This book you can totally handle it is

nothing it's not nearly as like kind of gory or explicit as Westworld can get. But it has some of those vibes if you are really interested in this kind of man versus machine in a slightly lighter fun kind of Disney tinged way. Highly recommend.

**Kaytee Cobb** 08:41

Yeah, it sounds really good. Definitely going on my TBR.

**Mary Heim** 08:44

I think you'd like it.

**Kaytee Cobb** 08:46

Alright, my first one this week is called *This is Going to Hurt* by Adam Kay. And I have had so many people press this directly into my hands. I don't even know who to thank for it. It's just a general thank you all around listeners, I guess. Adam Kay was a medical resident in the NHS. They call him Junior doctors over there, that's the National Health Service in the UK, for years while he wrote this memoir, it's subtitled as "the secret diaries of a junior doctor". And he's really in the trenches stealing time in the on call bunks in order to write this. You can tell just by the like, the fast clip of everything he's writing for us. Some stories in this memoir are tough, my darlings, especially when you get to the end. For me it was tough on a whole different level and that's because I mentioned before on the show and the COVIDeos and such that my husband is a doctor and he's also a really burnt out doctor. He's not like a doctor that's like "but the good news is I love my job and hi-ho off to work we go" right? Like he every day he comes home from work, exhausted and often cranky, because he's being stretched so thin and that means that his job is stressing him out in the way that this story was also stressing out our protagonist. I mean, it's a memoir, right? Having this memoir that's billed as funny, often made me feel like I was going to laugh until I cried. So, young doctors and experienced ones, my husband is about to hit 10 years being done with residency, no longer a junior doctor, right, go through a full spectrum of emotions every workday. The blurb for this says it's hilarious and horrifying and heartbreaking. And I agree with all those H words, Adam Kay now makes his living as an award winning comedian. So he's doing okay, but that means he did leave medicine. I really like this book a lot. But I also wanted to hug Adam and then hug my husband and say, "I'm so sorry that medicine is like this and that it was like this for you. And I see you and I feel for you." And that's the overwhelming feeling that I got from this collection. Hilarious, heartwarming, horrifying essays that being a doctor is hard work. That's the other H word that goes with this. And it's often undervalued. Mary, you see this in your own job, right? You're working with medical students and they're about to enter this exact same thing. It's stressful. Doctors are understaffed the world over. So although it was funny, and it made me laugh at times, it also left me often on the verge of tears, and made me want to just like stand on a small soapbox and say hug a doctor, thank a resident, be kind to a nurse and let's value physicians and their support staff in the way that they deserve. Because it's not easy work. And it's not often well valued, but it's important. So this is *This is Going to Hurt* by Adam Kay.

**Mary Heim** 11:37

Man, that title feels apt, right? Like, you're making me want to read it and you're making me want it particularly like you said, Kaytee in the work that I do like in empathizing with anybody even peripherally

connected to the medical profession but woof, like, now is the time particularly where I feel like all of everything that's already been breaking feels really broken. I mean, it sounds great and also so hard. Yeah, really hard, man.

**Kaytee Cobb** 12:07

Alright, are you gonna bring us up? What's your second?

**Mary Heim** 12:09

Nope, I'm not let's, I'm gonna keep us right down here. Maybe I will a little bit. So, Kaytee, you I am ready to talk. This one with you. The next book I am bringing is *The Anthropocene Reviewed* by John Green. So listen, I enjoy John Green's fiction, but I love his quote unquote "nonfiction", which he doesn't have much of. I'm talking about when he just shows up as himself on his YouTube channel, on social media and now 100% I think the best of his best is this book. *The Anthropocene Reviewed* is John's take in essay on our current geological age, the Anthropocene broken down into Yelp style reviews of things like Piggly Wiggly and sunsets and CNN, right? But it goes so much deeper than that. This is a reflection on the hard and the beautiful shared human experience of our current age, discussion of our human impact on the planet, a reflection of life and grief and loss and love. It is irreverent and devastating and hopeful all at once. John is a spectacular storyteller and somehow he takes this impossible topic of the tenuousness of the lives that we are all living and just gives them incredible meaning through these stories. I will say I started this novel in July, I had a chance to listen to an advanced listener copy in July and I started it and set it down because the discussion of the pandemic just was too much for the season that I was in. But I came back to it and I am so so glad I did. He doesn't shy away from his own struggles which somehow humanizes this story even more. And it really made it feel okay for me to acknowledge my own struggles, my very current struggles with all that we are still just experiencing in the world. The number of times that I had to stop this audiobook Kaytee and shout to my husband that he had to read it like right now is innumerable. I am on that same point I will be book bossy about this one and say that you must must must listen on audio. John reads it himself, which just truly brings the words to life but you also get these really magical little snippets of hearing him sing a song or his voice break when he's telling a really impactful story or listen to the last recorded tune of the now extinct Kaua'i 'ō'ō bird, which was just heartbreakingly awesome. I loved it. That is *The Anthropocene Reviewed* by John Green and Kaytee, I know you read this one and I'm dying to hear your thoughts.

**Kaytee Cobb** 14:42

Okay, so I came at this one from a different side. I don't watch John Green on YouTube. I've read *The Fault in Our Stars* and maybe one or two others by him but I'm not a super fan. And I loved it. I gave it five stars. Katie Proctor and I read it together. We read two essays a day, which they're like what three to four pages. I did read it on paper, not on audio. I'm sorry, Mary, I did not come through on that section. But I also pressed it directly into Jason's hands when I finished because, you know, as a doctor, he doesn't have a ton of time to read a four page essay is the perfect amount of reading time for him. So I put it on my Christmas list for a number of people that may or may not listen to the podcast. So I'm not going to say who it is. But I'm very excited to gift it to them. Because I do think there's a universal human experience here. There were essays that made me laugh and cry in the same one,

which I think is pretty amazing to be able to take us all the way through. And yeah, I really liked it. I also liked that he... Okay, so here's my tiny soapbox on this one. John Green's a white guy. And sometimes I try to make sure that my reading is quite a bit more diverse than that. So this one, I was really struck by the fact that he acknowledged its privilege, he made sure to bring in quotes from Black writers on occasion, he was really making sure that he wasn't just saying, "This is my experience and it's the universal experience." He really pulled in other sources and topics in a really wonderful way. So I thought that that really added to the experience in a way that that made me happy to read it.

**Mary Heim 16:13**

That's a really good point, Kaytee. And I think that's maybe one of the reasons that it felt so impactful for me is because you're not just hearing him say, "This is how I experienced the world." I think that he was mindful in his writing of making it a book that spoke to the human experience and not just his experience, and he did a pretty good job. I would say pretty good job. Yeah. I love it.

**Kaytee Cobb 16:35**

It was five stars for me. I loved it

**Mary Heim 16:36**

Same. Yay. I love it. Okay. Well, Kaytee, maybe you will bring us up now. What's your next read?

**Kaytee Cobb 16:42**

Well, kind of I actually have another book that I know you've read, Mary. So this is we're doing this again today. My next book is *The Astonishing Color of After* by Emily X.R. Pan. So I went to check on Goodreads and see if you had read it and we wholeheartedly agree with each other on this one. So we meet our protagonist, her name is Leigh Chen Sanders. She's half Asian, half white. She has synesthesia, where moments and memories and emotions are certain colors for her. Her greatest moment in life to date is when she finally got to kiss her guy bestie, Axel, for the first time. However, that moment was forever clouded when she found out that her mother died by suicide on the same day, possibly the same moment of said kiss. Now she's grieving and depressed. She's pushed Axel away. Her father is rarely around. And she's 100% certain that her mother has turned into a large red bird. A large, colorful bird that only Leigh can see, which essentially leads her on a quest to find her maternal grandparents and learn about her late mother's life. This journey through Leigh's grief and her mother's mental illness is raw and difficult and often stunning, like breathtaking, right? I picked this one up because I had seen it on a list of books that will make you cry. And I was trying to nurse myself back from a book hangover. So I thought a good cry might do it for me. It didn't make me cry. I think that's because I was so book hungover. But that doesn't mean it's not poignant and emotional. What I did find here, though, and Mary, you said the same in your review, was that the first half of this book is very slow going. It's so internal, not much happens. And if you're interested in reading it, and seeing Leigh's journey back toward life and lightness, you have to be able to push through that first part. I just wasn't connecting with the characters when we were getting going. So it's a good thing I had it on audio because otherwise I'm sure I would have set it aside. The way it comes together at the end, is what I really think hits a lot of reviewers in the fields. Has a 4.1 star ratings on Goodreads overall, and I'm glad

but for me it was about a three and a half, which is more than fine but not stellar. It's *The Astonishing Color of After* by Emily XR Pon.

**Mary Heim 18:53**

We totally share the same opinion on that one Kaytee. Yeah, I do. I love it for the mental health representation. I loved seeing an Asian American family represented and discussion around mental health in the Asian American community but agreed with you. You got to be prepared for a slow start for sure.

**Kaytee Cobb 19:12**

Yeah. All right. What's your third one, Mary?

**Mary Heim 19:15**

All right, Kaytee. My third book today is *The Brightest Star in Paris* by Diana Biller. You may be hearing a bell ring when I say Diana Biller. This is the sophomore novel of the author of *The Widow of Rose House*, which I loved when I read it last October. I did bring it to the show. I will admit I first picked this one up not because the synopsis necessarily interested me but because I just felt so connected to her as an author. And happily this one totally surprised me. So let's get into that. So here's the setup. We have Emily St. James, prima ballerina of the Paris Ballet and beloved public figure for the way that her dancing has brought her community members through the aftermath of The siege of Paris. She is raising her kid sister on her own after the tragic loss of her mother, and in order to avoid destitution has had to compromise just so much of herself just to keep them afloat. Parallel to her in the story, we have Dr. Benedict Moore, who you'll recognize from the periphery of *Rose House* if you've read it. He is her first love returned to Paris after years apart. And in the interim, he's gone through the perils of war himself and is just trying to find the joy in life again after having almost lost his. So the two cross paths again, but under some really strange circumstances, suddenly, we're not just contending with their heartbreaking past, but murder and ghosts, sisterhood and grief family. It was a total genre bender, Kaytee, nothing like I expected and it was such a win for me. This novel totally solidified my love for Diana Biller. I am here to tell you though, if you haven't picked up her novels yet, they are the perfect underrated gems to cozy up with this winter and just get lost in her writing. Now, note that this is not a series, but I am going to fully step into my Meredith today and say that you absolutely must read *Rose House* first. There's enough crossover that in order to fully enjoy the story, you just need the context. You could do it. I am not here to give you permission to do that though. I think you need to pick them both up. But you won't be disappointed. I promise. I loved it. I will read whatever she writes next. It was a total win for me. That is *The Brightest Star in Paris* by Diana Biller.

**Kaytee Cobb 21:39**

I like that when you're bossyness comes out a little bit. Alright, my third book this week is *The Making of Biblical Womanhood* by Beth Allison Barr. This is my five star book of this episode, and it's a doozy. Apparently, I've read a lot of books in October that were excellent, but also made me a little bit mad. So here's another one of those. Beth Allison Barr is the wife of a pastor and a biblical scholar. So note for the audio, this is a book firmly steeped in Christianity, right? This book comes hard for Christianity, especially evangelical Christianity, and the belief that God designed women to be submissive wives,

virtuous mothers and joyful homemakers. As a scholar, and a woman in the church, Beth takes us through not just Greek and Hebrew translations of biblical texts, and the ways that they are commonly misread, but also through church history, giving her readers the chance to understand how the human power structures surrounding the church have corrupted the message inherent to the Bible that women are valuable and beloved and powerful, and important. This book is a walking book. And by that, I mean that you can't just sit still, and page through it or sit still and listen to it. I wanted to pace. I wanted to kickbox. I wanted to get up and roar loudly. It made me angry and anxious. And it made me feel powerful. And it made me yell a little bit, right? It doesn't claim to have all the solutions. We're left and a little bit of the messy middle of things. Beth by herself cannot upend the entire church power structure, right? But she can give us history and translations and tools to unmake some of our own assumptions. So it's not a book of solutions. It's more a book of "Here's my journey, and I'm still working through it. And I'm inviting you into it with me." And not every reader loves that. Not every reader loves to be in the messy middle of things. But I sure shooting did love being in that place. And I've been sitting here now for years in that messy middle, unsure about my relationship with the church, and the way I feel as a woman in that space. And this book met me there in the unsurity and for that reason, I really loved it. It's *The Making of Biblical Womanhood* by Beth Allison Barr. Okay, so our deep dive today now that we've done our six current reads is we want to talk about reading our shelves and moving those books from your TBR shelf, wherever that exists in your head or life, to your read shelf or your little free library on the street. Right? So how do you organize your TBR first of all, Mary.

#### **Mary Heim 24:19**

My TBR, I'm getting a little vulnerable here everybody. My TBR is a little bit of a mess. I will say probably on Goodreads I've got something like 600- 700 plus books in my "to be read" category. Many of them could use a culling I'm sure. But for what is on my shelf right now, it is a mix of books that I have read and loved and then also books that have found themselves to me, either by way of a friend kind of pressing them into my hands, gifts, a trip out to the bookstore. If there's something I am really excited about, but I'm not sure if I'm going to totally love it, that is usually what I'll grab on audio or from the library. So my physical bookshelf is a little bit tidier than my TBR. But I will say, and this is something we've talked about before, Kaytee, you know that I'm a mood reader. You know that I'm a seasonal reader. So something that's big for me, and I'm jumping ahead a little bit, because I want to hear about your TBR, too, but something that's significant for me, and probably the tidiest piece of my TBR is that I do set myself a seasonal shelf on my bookshelf, every kind of three or four months to kind of get me started in that season. So that's probably the cleanest or the most intentional, I get about what's coming next, aside from just a gut feeling, but it's a little all over the place, that's for sure. What about you?

#### **Kaytee Cobb 25:44**

You know, you could have read some of my notes for what you just said. I said, I used to keep really good track of my TBR using Goodreads. And by really good track, I mean, actually, it was a terrible dumpster fire. I added stuff over there willy nilly. And it just, it didn't mean anything to me. It was like click "want to read", nothing would happen from it. So now I've realized that about myself, I don't even go to Goodreads to look at my TBR. In order to find my next read, what I do instead is I buy and borrow the books that I want to read so I can physically see them in my house. And that doesn't mean that I'm



going to read them in paper. It means that I want to see them somewhere in front of me physically. So even if I have the book on audio, if I already own it, I will borrow it from the library so that physically I can see it in my house and say, "Don't forget, Kaytee, this one was important to you, and you wanted to read it," because otherwise I'm just kind of flailing around in the dark. You know, like, it feels like there are so many books that we all want to read, right? But I wasn't able to use a digital solution to keep track of those TBR books. And yeah, I do use indie bookstores. Of course, we love indie bookstores around here. But I use Thriftbooks, I use Savers, or used book sales. If I can get a book for 50 cents that's on my TBR, so that I then have that visual representation, all the better for me. And going hand in hand with that is that I do cull pretty ruthlessly. Roughly every three months, like you mentioned, I will go through my physical TBR shelf and look at things that you know, maybe they've been there for five years, and I every single one I pick up and I say, "Do you still belong here?" Maybe this was for past Kaytee, but it's not for this Kaytee, and I let them go. And then I have to worry about the next step in our deep dive here, which is how do I then get them read after they've been on my TBR shelf for so long? Because some of them again, have been there for years, in an embarrassing turn of events, where I'm like, "Oh, no, there's dust on these books. This is not good at all."

### **Mary Heim 26:12**

Well, and Kaytee, I think you bring up a really good point. So this is something that I really kind of reflected on in prepping for this episode too. And you'll notice from my bite size intro that I do get ruthless with what I will cull and I do it, it's kind of willy nilly. It's whenever I'm feeling it. But I will take a look at my bookshelves. I have to be read books interspersed with read books, Jeremy's books interspersed with mine in the bookshelf. So it's nice to take a look at our giant shelf as a whole and say, "What do I have in here that maybe has been here for could be five years could be five minutes that I'm really excited about and I know I'll get to it at some point?" versus "What has been on here again, from five minutes to five years, that maybe I bought it impulsively, or maybe I was given it as a gift or maybe I'm a very different reader than I was when this book came into my life." And I really do feel like in culling your bookshelves, it's a gut feeling. You know, "Is there excitement for me still in this book? Am I looking forward to it? Will it find me in the right season, but maybe right now just isn't that perfect season?" then it stays. But if I have lost that excitement, or know that it just doesn't feel like what I'm ever gonna want to reach for, goodbye. It can go to a little free library. It can go to a friend. It can go to Half Price Books. It can get off my shelves, because we have a big shelf, but we have a small house. So if I want to make room for more, I got to clean out what's on there for sure.

### **Kaytee Cobb 29:23**

I think that's a really good point. And that's part of why we wanted to have this conversation is by reading your shelves or culling your shelves, you're making room for more friends to come into your house, more book friends to come into your house, right? So one of the things that I really like to do I use my library with abandon, especially for audio books, I read about 60% of my books on audio. And so I will again I go to that physical TBR shelf which mine is separated. I don't know I might not be able to handle being at your house Mary and having all the books together. I would be like wait, how do you know whats on the TBR? Yeah, but mine are separate. I have my TBR shelf, my TBR piano and I looked through that and I make like a monthly tentative stack. And I will go through towards the end of the month or the beginning of the following month, and request things from my library on audio that are

accessible and easy for me to get my hands on. And then as I read them, I decide for each of those books, okay, either this one's staying on my permanent shelf, or it's going to the little free library or the bookstore or wherever, where I can get some credit and get some more books into my hands. But that is one of my very favorite ways to knock books off of that TBR shelf and put them elsewhere in my home is to get the audio for the book I want to read. So for example, I have this month we're reading *The Seed Keeper* as the currently reading bookish friends buddy read, I grabbed the audio from hoopla even though I have the book on my shelf. Because it's character driven, I knew that was a good way for me to slowly sink into that story and get invested enough in it. Now I'm about 30% in and I can pick up the paper book and totally enjoy myself. But I knew that if I tried picking it up on paper, it wasn't gonna happen for me, I was gonna be bored. And instead, I'm really excited to read about *Rosalie Iron Wink*, she has a great character. So getting those audio books from the library that match the TBR books on my shelf, I try to do that every other title. So I can absolutely fill my TBR with books that I don't own that are from the library, that somebody sent me a DM on Instagram or a friend read it and they gushed about it and I'm excited to read it too, put that on hold. And then I really want to knock out a TBR book the next time. So I try and go back and forth. So how do you actually move them out of your home or off of the to be read pile?

**Mary Heim 31:44**

Okay, so I'll backpedal a little bit, because I really do think my seasonal shelf is a key piece of this puzzle for me. So once a quarter and I actually just before this episode did it for the winter. I cleaned off my fall shelf that I had set. And I took a look at what I had on my shelves and I thought "What do I think I'm going to be in the mood for?" and sure, maybe it could be a Christmas book. But also in the winter, I'm looking for more literary books, I'm looking for something more character driven a little bit slower. *A Gentleman in Moscow* is like the epitome of a winter book for me, right? So I'm looking on my shelves, what are these books that maybe didn't feel like they were a good fit for the beach bag this summer but they are going to be a perfect fit for my cozy reading chair in front of the fire this winter. And I like to put those in one place. So maybe Kaytee, that is where I would save you a little bit of a heart attack is if you came to my house and saw my one shelf my one portion, we've got cube bookshelves, and my one portion that has my seasonal TBR. And admittedly, I do not get through all of those books in a season. But it gives me focus. Because the width of my books kind of scattered everywhere else within the shelves. It would be really difficult when I'm looking to pick up another book to say, "Oh, man, what the heck am I going to read" I just need like my eyes would be darting everywhere. But I can focus in on the shelf I've already kind of past Mary again has set me up for success in saying, "Hey, I think this is the kind of book I'm going to enjoy. So pull from these." And it not only helps me to focus on that, but it also you know my reading can be like a pendulum. Sometimes I'm all about what's new and grabby and what did I hear and what was on the Indie Press List this month and what did somebody you know, press into my hands or a library hold that came through. But like with anything, I noticed myself wanting to swing in the other direction when I read too much of what's new and grabby and exciting. I feel a little bit of that quietness of like, "Okay, now it's time to pick something up from my shelves." And it probably happens, that pendulum swings back and forth within a month. But I can be like, "Okay, now it's time to grab something from my shelves." For example, I just finished a great book on audio and a great book on paper. Today, it's one of those magical days where they both happen at once. Yes, so it was a perfect I don't have anything waiting for me from the library. It was the perfect day to go take a look and

say like what feels right what feels like fun and honestly, that feels like shopping my shelves. There are books there that I've forgotten about. It feels like going into a bookstore and discovering something new. But I don't have to pay any money for it. It like gives me that same jolt of serotonin of like, Oh, I get to discover something from my shelf. So I think like making it feel a little bit more like a ritual and like setting some intention around it makes it feel a little bit more fun and special and replicates that experience of the library and the bookstore for sure.

**Mary Heim 31:44**

Okay, we did not say that we were going to talk about this so you can tell me "No Kaytee, I have nothing to add here." But you finished your paper book and your audio book today. Will you by the end of today already have chosen a new audio and a new paper? Or do you let it sit at all in between?

**Mary Heim 35:09**

I can't handle not having at least one book going at any given time. And it's hard because sometimes it takes me a while and I get like antsy of like, No, I can't find that next right fit. What the heck is it going to be and I will book flight, try a couple things on, pick out a couple books off my shelf and start and see what's going to fit. I have a feeling I'm probably going to latch on to a paper or Kindle book before my next audiobook just because my reading is probably flipped. It's maybe 70, 60 to 70% paper Kindle and then 30 to 40% audio so I can handle if it takes me another day or two to find my next audiobook. But whoo, I can't wind down without a book I can't like I need something to fill that, that space in my life that I've given to reading.

**Kaytee Cobb 35:58**

And the same for me with an audiobook. If I'm finishing an audiobook at lunchtime, I have to have chosen a new one by dinner, because that's how I make dinner. I pop my earbuds in my ears. I'm pattering in the kitchen. I'm getting stuff onto the stove, but I can't, I can't just be sitting there doing nothing. What I mean what, that's just wasted time. I know we're supposed to be like pursuing silence and stillness. But that's not how my brain works. I have to have something at dinnertime. And then paper I'm a little more likely to take a breath and say, Okay, well, what should be next? What am I interested in? Look through that stack that I've maybe chosen for the month and said, "Are any of these really grabbing me? Do I need to look a little further afield? What am I going to do with myself in the paper book realm?" So it's a little of both for me as well.

**Mary Heim 36:50**

Yeah, well, and you know, you made me realize that's very much my process with paper books and even with audio is to kind of see what I have available to me from the library, from Scribd from my own my Libro account. But when it comes to Kindle books, I'm a lot likelier to forget what I have. I used to have a great spreadsheet, having a child pushed that straight out the window. But I will say recently coming off of a slump having a hard time trying to decide what was next, I logged on to my Kindle account on the computer because I feel like it's a lot more visual, you can see a lot better what's in your library. And I just perused. I was feeling like nothing felt good after finishing a book that I really loved and was like, "Let's just see what kind of free Kindle Deal of the Day whatever I've amassed here." And that's how I found The Kingdom. I had picked it up on a deal a couple of months ago. And I thought,

"Hey, this one has been rumbling around my head for a while, let's pick it up and give it a shot." So that works really well for me for my eBook shelves, is to look at it on a desktop rather than trying to look at it on my Kindle and kind of treat that almost a little bit like perusing or shopping my shelves as well, to say like, "Let's visually see what do we have here? What seems like fun?" and kind of dip my toes into that as well. It's certainly not as well organized as my paper books are. But if you're struggling with amassing a bunch of Kindle books and feeling like you never get those off of your TBR and to your read shelf. Maybe try it on a desktop that I'm as a really visual person that really does it for me as being able to see those covers in full color right in front of me.

**Kaytee Cobb** 38:34

That's a really good tip, man. Because I think a lot of Kindle readers have that exact same problem where you've purchased 99 cent or 2.99 deals or free on Kindle for whatever reason. And then you just have no idea what's in there. And it's embarrassing. Like thankfully, you can't hold a Kindle upside down and let all the books shake out because that would be messy. Right? Yes, I can imagine. All right, anything else we need to touch on for moving books from your TBR shelf to your read shelf.

**Mary Heim** 39:06

I mean, I think the biggest thing for me as I was thinking about this was like this is not to say that you have to have a plan for every single book on your shelf within a year or something intense like that. And obviously those challenges exist on the internet if you want them. This isn't to say that you can't buy books, that you can't impulsively pick something up from the library because that's such a joy bringer. But I do think that like it has also been a joy bringer for me in being more intentional about reading the books that I have brought into my home for whatever reason, and balancing that in with the other kind of reading I'm doing. So I certainly think that there is a middle place to exist between buying and Libraring and just seeing what feels good next. Like I think that there's a way to read your shelves that is uncomplicated and supportive of your reading life and not dogmatic at all in how you have to do it. I think that's the last thing I would say about it.

**Kaytee Cobb** 40:03

Yeah, we can put a little dose of intentionality in there and still not have it turned into a chore.

**Mary Heim** 40:08

Totally, totally.

**Kaytee Cobb** 40:10

Yeah. Love it. All right. So let's go ahead and press some books into our listener hands this week. Mary, what do you want to press?

**Mary Heim** 40:22

Kaytee, this is a book as I was thinking about this, I was like, alright, let's choose one that maybe languished on my shelf for a little while before I picked it up and read it that I loved. So this was one that had been on my TBR for a while and finally got moved to my read shelf a couple years ago. It is The Blue Castle by LM Montgomery. So this is one of LM Montgomery's lesser known works. And I

think it's one of my favorites. Of course we all love Anne, right? But this one is such a hidden gem and it had been talked about on the internet for a while. I think I picked it up because I was book influenced, and then just kind of let it sit there. I wasn't like excited about picking up an older like a backlist title from LM Montgomery. I didn't grow up in the Anne of Green Gables world. So I was a little bit less excited to pick it up, but thought I would give it a shot. So let's talk about that setup. We have Valancy Stirling is our protagonist. She is 29. She has never been in love. Gasp, right? She is living with her mother and her aunt. Her prospects seem really thin. Her life is fairly small and just kind of unhappy. When she receives some shocking news from a doctor, she decides to go ahead and live the life she's always dreamed, right? That's all I'm gonna say about the plot of this book because I think the magic is in reading the story itself. The beginning of the story is a bit woe is me though. So I'm just going to caution you that you have to power through that to get to the latter half, but it is so so worth it. We've got love. We've got this late bloomer coming of age, these gorgeous wintry descriptions, this sense of place it is truly just going to plunk you right down in LM. Montgomery's world. If you are a mood reader or a seasonal reader like me, I think this is kind of an unusual but a really fun choice for the winter. If you haven't yet read this one or perhaps you want a heroine that's a little bit more wisened than Anne, I highly recommend it, really fun. Take this one off your TBR and finally give it a read this winter. That was *The Blue Castle* by LM Montgomery.

**Kaytee Cobb** 42:24

I love that. I think that's a great press. It throws back to Episode One of currently reading when I brought *The Blue Castle* as a current read. That is such a fun tie together. I adore that. Okay, mine is also a "If you have this book sitting on your TBR please, please put it in your hands." I am going to press this week Sweep: *The Story of a Girl and Her Monster* by Jonathan Auxier. Have you read this one Mary?

**Mary Heim** 42:51

No, but Kaytee literally this week, I saw it on my Goodreads TBR and I was like "I should bump this one up to the top." We are vibing right this week. I love it.

**Kaytee Cobb** 43:02

So I sat down to write up notes for this book to press it into yalls hands and I sighed audibly with a smile on my face. So that's how this is going to go. When I went into this book in March of 2019, I really didn't know what to expect and I don't want to spoil anything for any of you. So here's what you need to know. Our main character is Nan Sparrow, she's a chimney sweep in Victorian England. Chimney sweeping is a job for tiny people because they have to fit into very small spaces. So children are the ones who do the chimney sweeping. And of course, it's dangerous. Nan used to be under the care of The Sweep, but he left one night, leaving behind only his hat and a little bit of char like charcoal right? On cold nights, Nan holds the char in her hands, because it's always warm in a magical way and it keeps her fingers from freezing. This is a great winter book. Mary, you have to read this. Very early on in the story, the char gets an extra jolt of magic through a dangerous situation and we get to meet Charlie. That's all you need to know to go into this. Let this book take you on a journey to the rooftops of Victorian London. Let Jonathan Auxier give you a bit of found family and magic and middle grade fantasy. Go along with Nan on her journey to overcome her fears and find her footing as a warrior for

justice and melt your heart with the warmth of her story. The reviews on this book will totally blow you away and for good reason as I scrolled through Goodreads today and noticed it was on your TBR shelf. I found person after person of the people that I go to for wonderful middle grade recommendations giving this book five stars and I think that you will too and I think you all listeners will as well so pick it up. Its Sweep: The Story of a Girl and Her Monster by Jonathan Auxier.

**Mary Heim** 44:50

Done I'm sold. I love that Kaytee.

**Kaytee Cobb** 44:53

All right, put it in your cubby. Do it. Alright, that is it for this week readers. As a reminder, here's where you can connect with us. You can find me Kaytee at @notesonbookmarks on Instagram, and Meredith is at @Meredith.reads

**Mary Heim** 45:06

and you can find me at @Maryreadsandsips on Instagram.

**Kaytee Cobb** 45:11

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

**Mary Heim** 45:21

You can also contact us directly at @currentlyreadingpodcast on Instagram, or via email at [currentlyreadingpodcast@gmail.com](mailto:currentlyreadingpodcast@gmail.com).

**Kaytee Cobb** 45:30

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**Mary Heim** 45:48

Yes, a recommendation from you to your bookish friends is the best way to pass along your love of this podcast to others and help us grow.

**Kaytee Cobb** 45:56

Thanks for doing that guys. Until next week. Happy reading Mary.

**Mary Heim** 45:59

Happy reading Kaytee.