



Season 4, Episode 48: Best of Season 4 + The Listener Press Part Two!

Mon, 7/18 • 55:28

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 don't shy away from strong opinions. So get ready.

Kaytee Cobb 00:23

We are light on the chitchat, heavy on the book talk and our descriptions will always be spoiler free. Today, we have a very special end of season episode for you.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 00:32

I'm Meredith Monday Schwartz, a mom of four and full time CEO living in Austin, Texas, and I am so ready for some summer reading.

Kaytee Cobb 00:41

And I'm Kaytee Cobb, a homeschooling mom of four living in New Mexico. And after four full seasons, this is still my favorite part of the week. This is episode number 48 of season four, and we are so glad you're here.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 00:53

You're right, Kaytee, as I was saying, I'm ready for some summer reading and thinking about us taking our summer break, which we are getting ready to embark upon. As soon as we finish recording this episode, we won't record for five weeks, which is by far the longest break that we take. But I'm always excited about it because it just feels like summer break, right? It always feels like oh, you know, it's like bright, open wide open spaces. But I'm always like, Oh, but I know it's gonna be like, a week and a half until I'm like, When can I get back behind the mic and talk about books again?

Kaytee Cobb 01:23

Every year, it happens every year. We're like, Oh, this is gonna be glorious. And then we're like, hey, what are you reading? What's going on?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 01:30

It seems like a good idea, which I think is good. And it really speaks to the fact that this is why we are ending season four and really looking forward to season five, because we still really love doing this.

Kaytee Cobb 01:40

That's the best. Exactly.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 01:43

Today's episode is different on a couple of levels, right. So first of all, we are going to do what we always do at the end of the season. And we're going to do a short look back on the season. We're not going to make it all over the episode. But we wanted to take some time to just look back on the season, talk a little bit about the things that were that really stick out in our mind. So we're gonna do just a little bit of that. But really quickly, then after that, we are going to move into what I know you guys really want to hear, which is part two of our listener Press book extravaganza, because we have so many more great presses to give you guys and we wanted to end the season in that way, which is really giving the mic over to you guys. Because you guys are the reason that we're here. You're the reason that we are successful. And so we really wanted to make sure we put the focus on you.

Kaytee Cobb 02:33

Perfect. I loved that. Yes, Currently Reading would not exist without all of you. So when you showed up in droves, we want to give that back to you in a big way. We're so excited to share more listener presses with you today. But first we're going to do a little reflecting.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 02:51

We are. Okay. So Kaytee, from this year, what, as our queen of all data, what was our number one? Let me so first of all, we should say that this year, we saw download numbers that we never ever, ever expected we were gonna get to. We also saw the show rise up the book podcast charts. In fact, we cracked the top 10 just in the last week. And this is something that, again, this level of listenership is literally something we never expected. So that's super exciting.

Kaytee Cobb 03:27

It is exciting. And you can set goals and you can set sights, but there's some parts that you just cannot control. And so it's something that we've been paying attention to and hoping for. But when it finally happened, we were both very excited.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 03:41

Exactly. So our number one most downloaded episode was what?

Kaytee Cobb 03:47

Just like in years past, it was our top 10 books of the year, which is the first episode that we do when we come back in January from our very short winter break. So this year, it was our top 10 books of 2021. Podcasters have a number of factors that they look at, though, with regard to episodes. So there's a most in seven days, like which one got the most traction immediately after release versus most in 30 days, and most in 90 days. Which ones had legs that lasted a little longer. So in seven days, the one that got the most downloads was episode 26 of season four, which was our bookish bucket list. Very fun episode. And that means a lot of people in a very short period of time were saying go listen to this episode. In 30 days, a little longer on those legs was episode 34, books that live in our heads rent free. And then in 90 days, again, longer legs on this one was episode 25, which was remembering what

we read. That was when we talked about commonplace notebooks and how we keep track of what we actually put into our brains by the books that we read. That one was really interesting and I can see why people would come back and want to listen to it again later.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 04:56

Right or share it later. Exactly that's interesting and it is true that we always do watch all of those metrics, because we want to know what the things are that you guys want to listen to. And download numbers are one of the things that we can look at to tell us that.

Kaytee Cobb 05:13

Definitely. What about your favorite episode Meredith? Do you have one that sticks out to you as a tippy top of the season?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 05:19

Yes, for a couple, I mean, kind of at two ends of the spectrum, one because it made me because it was the first time that I cried on the show. And that was actually episode one of season four. That was the episode where I brought A Gentleman in Moscow. And it is, you know, the code number one book of all time for me, along with The Count of Monte Cristo. And so talking about it, I had had several months to get ready to talk about it. I was very invested in how I presented that book on the show, because it meant so much to me. And then I, you know, I cried, became very emotional. And that was the first time that that had happened on the show, for sure. So that is a favorite moment. And then also, the moment that made me laugh, both kind of as we were doing it and then later when I listened to the episode was the episode where you and I were talking about your rainbow bookshelves.

Kaytee Cobb 06:19

That's one of my favorite moments,

Meredith Monday Schwartz 06:21

It's one of my favorite moments of all the seasons, because I was so just wanting to understand the concept of why anyone would would organize their books in that way. And you were so trying to understand why I couldn't understand.

Kaytee Cobb 06:37

Oh, so fabulous.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 06:38

It was so so so good. So that was one that really made us laugh.

Kaytee Cobb 06:44

Yes, absolutely. One of my favorite moments as well, I had that on my favorite episode list. And also, I really loved the one where we put, we chose our reading themes, and we put them into buckets, because we were able to see both of the commonalities and the differences and the way that you and I might read the same thing, but put it in a different bucket. Yeah, I think a lot of readers had a really interesting response to that one. I also do want to point out that we only had one guest this entire

season. And it was the lovely Kendra Adachi, she was fantastic. And that's part of why we hit the top 10 on the book charts was because of all the wonderful listeners that she brought over to us. So I want to acknowledge that here's another one of our favorite episodes.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 07:25

Absolutely. And welcome in to all the lazy genius listeners who have joined us over here. We're so glad to have you. Yes, we we've tried, we try really hard to keep our guest episodes to just the tippy top of the bucket list. Yes, because we know that you guys prefer regular episodes. I've been very vocal about that.

Kaytee Cobb 07:44

Truly. All right now we get to not bring it down. But maybe laugh a little at ourselves poke a little fun at ourselves. Do you have a regret from this season Meredith?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 07:55

Okay, well, so I have the mistake that it took me months to get over. And then I have a regret that is actually a point of real happiness for me at this point. So the several months ago, in the middle of this season, for reasons that right now, I can't even remember, I completely forgot to record All Things Murderful, which is the show that I do for our Patreon subscribers that focuses just on mysteries and thrillers. And this is something I do every month. And I'm by nature, you guys know this. I'm such a live and die by my calendar and my to do list kind of girl, that when I realized that I had just completely missed it. I you know, fix it, and I think it went out what a day late, maybe like it wasn't it wasn't the day later a week later. Well, you know, we got it out. Everyone got it, I think it was a week. Yeah. But I kicked myself emotionally for months after that. I just can't even tell you how much it bothered me. Because it's really important to both of us, that not only our big show content, but our Patreon content is high quality and consistent. Like people can be like, Okay, it's the first Thursday of the month. I know I'm getting the Indie Press List episode. It's the second Thursday of the month. I know I'm getting All Things Murderful and on and on with our schedule. So I am just so glad that people really gave me a lot of grace on that. And I was way harder on myself than anybody else was in certainly than you were Kaytee, because you were full of grace on that. My biggest regret is that I didn't start having somebody else edit the show a long time ago.

Kaytee Cobb 09:39

It took some pressure.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 09:41

It took years of pressure on your part. So I had edited the show all the all the content that we did from the very beginning for years and it was something that was really really really important to me, because I just in addition to being highly organized, I'm also highly controlling so this was a piece that was really important to me, but a few we months ago, Kaytee, you and I started talking about different ways that I could sort of gain more time in my schedule, because I'm always fighting, you know, between my two jobs and my family and everything. And so you said, Meredith, you know, we can do X, Y, and Z. But I actually really think the biggest gain for you would be if we had Megan do the editing. And Megan is our, our employee, and our good friend and our incredible partner in this journey. And she is so smart.

She'd been doing our show notes for everything, she'd been helping with social media and doing such a great job. And it was really because of Megan specifically that I was like, you know, she not only is so smart, she really understands our show, and what we're trying to do, and the fact that the editing is an important part of that. We do a really tight edit. And it's really important to all of us that it'd be right, Megan's gotten it right. And so, I just can't even explain to you how just many aggregate hours I have gotten back in my life. And it has been a huge game changer for me and I so my regret is not having done it sooner.

Kaytee Cobb 11:09

But on that same note, there was so much that went into that being the perfect time, right? I joked to Megan that in a totally non predatory way we groomed her into the exact person that would be perfect for that job. But because she had been so closely associated with what we were putting together every week, she knew the quality we expected. She knew exactly what episodes sounded like at the back end of things. She's been listening since forever and a half. She was perfect for the job. And we're so glad that she's part of our team because nobody else could have done it.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 11:41

Exactly. Because I wasn't going to ever be okay with just hiring some random podcast added editor who, you know, we weren't gonna just like try to get things back. I just it's just so much more than that. And so, yes, all the praise hands for Megan and everything that she does to help us make the show work.

Kaytee Cobb 11:58

Yes, we love you, Megan. Okay, my biggest flub I technically I did the same thing that you did in almost three full years of Kaytee Reads too much, one time, completely spaced it and it was like two months after yours with All Things Murderful. I did not do it on purpose to make you feel better if anybody's wondering,

Meredith Monday Schwartz 12:17

I did feel better though. I did.

Kaytee Cobb 12:20

I got to Wednesday afternoon, and I looked at my calendar, and just felt like my head actually exploded realizing that I had done nothing. And my episode was supposed to release the next day, I felt like such an imbecile.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 12:33

It's the worst feeling. It's such a sinking feeling.

Kaytee Cobb 12:36

It's so bad. It's so bad. But of course, we also have regular little flubs. And I wish that we had the capability to cut them all together for you all. So you could see the number of times that we trip over words. And we wonder Do you even speak English Meredith? Can you even speak? Wait, why don't you try that again, from the top because I don't even understand the words that were coming out of your

mouth. They're very funny. Thankfully, we have a great editor. Yes, sometimes it's us. Sometimes it's Megan. It always gets edited out. My regret is it's kind of funny. It's a little funny. Sometimes I forget that some of our favorite authors listen to the podcast. And I called John Marrs, a great one night stand author. And he messaged us that day, that same day, to say that he's honored to be a one night stand author and we'll see himself quietly out. I was embarrassed. I was just dead. And then he was like, also, do you want a copy of like a galley of my next release? And of course I said yes. Because I adore him.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 13:39

He's so good. He's such a great. He's a great author. And, and also great pupae. Exactly.

Kaytee Cobb 13:48

Exactly. So it's it's really fun to be like, Oh, I forgot that you who whose books I really genuinely love are also listening to me talk about you. Every once in a while.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 14:01

Well, yes, this season has been great. I feel like this season, we really really, after four seasons, we're over to like to what 211 episodes 200 And something around there way over 200 episodes, almost two and a half million downloads. We finally feel like we've gotten our feet under us and what we want to do here on the show, and are very much looking forward to doing it again in season five. Kaytee, what are you looking forward to next season?

Kaytee Cobb 14:31

I actually am very excited about a shake up that I'm doing on Kaytee Reads Too Much. Like I mentioned, I've been doing this for three years. That was the one solo episode that we started out our Patreon with because we didn't know what kind of content we wanted to offer over there. I am bringing a new voice to Kaytee Reads Too Much who will be joining me regularly and she has an insider perspective on the publishing industry and will be starting those episodes in August with the start of season five. I could not be more excited, y'all are not ready for this.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 15:02

This is going to be so so great. I absolutely love it I'm I am looking forward to that as much as any listener could possibly look be looking forward to that, that's going to be really great. I am really looking forward to adding Roxanna to the mix of our hosts. We have such a great group of hosts now. And I feel like we have a lot of different combinations that we're excited to get on the mic together. And so I just am really, really looking forward to that mixing up all of those different combinations, because that is going to be really, really fun. Kaytee, I have to say that one thing that we have not been able to figure out, and I'm just going to put it out there and let people weigh in in whatever way they want to weigh in. So over our week of summer break, you can take some time to think about this. This is the conundrum that Kaytee and I've had and we've seen it coming down the road for a long time, which is we do not know what to do with the ending section of the regular shows where we talk about the book that we want to press into readers hands. Y'all after four full seasons, Kaytee and I have scraped the bottom of our collective barrel. And so we have to figure out what to do with that last segment of the show. And so we've had several different ideas, but it can't be anything that takes too much additional work, right? It can't be anything that's like, we're not going to do you know, we don't want to do you know, a bunch of

different editing with it. It needs to be something that we can come up with every week. Why is this so hard? Why are we having such a hard time coming up with a cap segment for the for the show, so we keep pressing books.

Kaytee Cobb 16:44

We do continue to press books, despite the fact that both of us have said to each other, It's it's time to really think about what else we could do in this section. But there is a conundrum there. We we don't want to be asking for listener presses every week, because these episodes are so gold at the end of the season, right? We want to save that's not an option, right? We can't be asking bookstores to press books into our hands every week, because we do that over on Patreon with a really special curated list every month, there's a lot of options we've considered and none of them have played out into exactly what we want to be able to slide into that spot. Right.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 17:22

So I've considered things like a book that I think deserves a reread or, you know,

Kaytee Cobb 17:28

I have, what, two of those?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 17:31

Well, I didn't mean, ever, right? I don't know, it's...

Kaytee Cobb 17:35

This is why it doesn't work.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 17:39

Right, exactly live on air, you've just gotten exactly what happens every time we talk about this. If any of you have a fantastic idea for a cap segment of the show of the regular show, we would be so interested in that idea. So you can send us an email to currentlyreadingpodcast@gmail.com You can hit us up through DMS on Facebook or Instagram at [@currentlyreadingpodcast](https://www.instagram.com/currentlyreadingpodcast). We need your brilliance people.

Kaytee Cobb 18:04

We do. There's somebody out there that has the perfect idea. Don't be scared. Send it our way.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 18:08

Yeah, let us know. Let us know what you want to see in that last last section. Okay, so Kaytee, do you want to talk a little bit about scheduling for these next couple of weeks, and then we will get everybody into our listener press part two?

Kaytee Cobb 18:21

Yes. Through the magic of podcasting, we say this every year, we are doing our crush weekend right now, which means today, it's mid to late July. And you will only have one week of dark weeks, as we fondly call them. So on July 25, there will be a dark week. You can come join us on Patreon. There's tons of content over there. Oh my gosh, back in your earbuds for season five premiere on August 1, so

only one week off. But Meredith and I get to have that full summer break. Five weeks of devil may care. Read whatever we want. Read all the things, pick up the 1000 page book we've been scared of all year.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 19:00

Read into the series that no one wants to hear about book three of blah, blah, blah series.

Kaytee Cobb 19:04

Exactly. So only one week of dark weeks. We will be back on August 1. Send us your ideas for the ending segment of the show. But now we have something else we want to do Meredith.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 19:16

Yes. Now as we said we want to end the season giving the mic back to you guys. And so we have more fantastic listener presses, Kaytee who's first up for this week?

Kaytee Cobb 19:29

This week we are starting with our friend Beth. she is pressing Lacy Eye by Jessica Treadway into our hands. This one is from 2014 So we're starting with a backlist psychological thriller. Let's hear from Beth about it.

Beth Gordon 19:44

Hi, currently reading my name is Beth Gordon and I'm from Tacoma Washington. The book I'm pressing today is Lacy Eye and that's Lacey as in L a c y Lacy Eye by Jessica Treadway. I read this novel about six years ago, and it has stuck with me. I've listened to all the episodes of Currently Reading and I have never heard this book come up so that's why I'm pressing it today. Here's the setup. Hannah and her husband Joe experienced a bludgeoning in their own bed, and Joe ended up dying from his injuries. Hannah did survive but she experienced lasting injuries, including not remembering the night of the incident. Her daughter, Dawn's boyfriend Rod was convicted of killing her husband, Joe. But he is appealing the conviction and there possibly could be a retrial. In this novel, I felt like Hannah was holding out her hand to me as a reader in taking me along with her on her journey of coming back to her life after Joe has died. And after this trauma, as she tries to move on. And also what is interesting in this book is that Dawn moves in with her so she's trying to reconnect with her daughter after the awful night. And everything that happened, given that the person convicted was her daughter's boyfriend. It's a very solid character analysis. However, if you want a fast paced plot, you might want to stay away. But if you're really interested in psychological studies, I really think this is one to read. So thank you again, and I love your podcast,

Kaytee Cobb 21:42

Starting out with a bludgeoning. Meredith.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 21:44

Well, okay, two things. First of all, I need for her to create an anti anxiety app and just read lots of things. And so whenever I get really anxious, I just want to hear her voice. In my case, she is the most calming voice, she just everything about her voice makes me feel like everything's gonna be okay. And I'll tell you what, very few people can say that someone experienced a bludgeoning, which just kills me

every time I hear that phrase, it just absolutely kills me. But the way that she says it, so unironically, it's, it's just gold. I've listened to it five times, it just makes me giggle that she talks about how they experienced bludgeoning, such a perfect way of describing it. But anyway. So this, I've never heard of this book. It's never it's never come across my desk in any way, shape, or form. And there are so many times where a really smart, more character driven crime novel is what I'm looking for. And it sounds like that's exactly what we're getting here.

Kaytee Cobb 22:45

Definitely. I like that there's mother daughter dynamics in here, and kind of the crime in the past. So even for HSPs I'm thinking there'll be a chunk right at the beginning. That's a little tough. And then after that, it's more about getting into these characters and figuring out the aftermath of a situation.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 23:06

Right. Right. It's after they experienced the bludgeoning, after they experienced the bludgeoning. I'm sorry, I think it's the cutest thing I've ever heard in my life. I just absolutely love it.

Kaytee Cobb 23:17

It's fabulous. It's fabulous. Okay, the next one is also fabulous. We are going to hear from our friend Mic, who I could not cut the very beginning of her press because you all are going to love it just like I did. She is pressing *The Rent Collector* by Camron Wright from 2012.

Francis 23:34

Hi, Meredith and Kaytee, this is Mic Minneman from Arlington, Virginia, a longtime listener of *Currently Reading* and the first time voice recorder and a first time press a book. And I would like to press the book *The Rent Collector* by Camron Wright. I read this book a couple years ago, and it's still a terrific read. So here's the setup. Survival for Ki Lim and Sang Ly is a daily battle at Stung Meanchey, the largest municipal waste dump in all of Cambodia. They make their living scavenging recyclables from the trash. Life would be hard enough without the worry of their chronically ill child Nisay and the added expense of medicines that are not working. Add to that the rent collector, Sopeap Sin, a mean drunk woman who threatens eviction, yes, eviction from a garbage dump, when they can't make their rent. Then one day Sang Ly learns the first of Sopeap's many secrets, which brings big changes to Sopeap, Sang Ly and her family. Life was hard in the dump and Sang Ly hated it but this isn't a depressing book. There's an underlying theme of hope and redemption that runs through the entire book. It's also a reminder that everyone has a story, and that beautiful friendships can develop from the ugliest of beginnings. When I finished this book, all I wanted to do was hug it and I hope you will, too. It is easily one of my top five books of all times. It's a great discussion book for any book club and just fabulous to read on your own. I hope you'll give it a try.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 25:17

It sounds like a swing up book, doesn't it? I mean, it really must be if we're starting in the dump.

Kaytee Cobb 25:22

It's got to be a swing up. I mean, there's no way she's hugging it by the end. Nobody's hugging a dump book by the end.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 25:28

Nobody's No, not if especially if you've if you've returned to the dump at the end. No, she's not going to hug that. Gotta swing up from the dump. It sounds really, really good.

Kaytee Cobb 25:39

It does sound excellent. And I love that Mic took the time to learn how to make a voice memo just for us.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 25:46

Yep. And Mic Minneman is such a great name.

Kaytee Cobb 25:50

I know we should put it on our branding. I think,

Meredith Monday Schwartz 25:53

Gosh, life is hard in the dump by Mic Minniman.

Kaytee Cobb 25:58

There was a theater chain in Oregon called McMinnimans and we would go watch movies and go to concerts at McMinnimans. So now I feel like somehow that's connected here.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 26:09

Maybe she owns that.

Kaytee Cobb 26:11

Gosh, man, that'd be amazing. Wow. I'd be thrilled. Yeah. Okay. This one's going off the rails

Meredith Monday Schwartz 26:19

This is what happens when we record too much in one weekend. Because now every single thing is funny to me. Truth. I just, I really I shouldn't be trying not to laugh thinking about a book about these. These people living in this horrible situation. It's just... I'm punchy.

Kaytee Cobb 26:34

You've experienced a bludgeoning with humor. It's a problem. Okay. Book three for this week's episode of presses. We're very excited about another Canadian that we love. It's Francis and she is pressing Five Little Indians by Michelle Good into our hands.

Francis 26:53

Hi, this is Francis from Toronto, Canada. The book I'm pressing is Five Little Indians by Michelle Good, an Indigenous Canadian author. Michelle Good is a Cree writer and lawyer as well as a member of Red Pheasant Cree Nation in Saskatchewan. Five Little Indians is her first book and an incredible debut. So here's the setup. This book follows Kenny, Lucy, Clara, Howie and Maisie. They were all taken from their families as children and forced into residential schools. As soon as they age out of the residential

schools they are released with barely any money, no resources and are left to fend for themselves. Alone and without any skill, support or families, the teens find their way to the seedy and new world of Downtown Eastside Vancouver. The book is told in alternating perspectives, and their stories are woven together as they cross and criss cross into and out of each other's lives. They strive to find a place of safety and belonging in a world that doesn't want them. And as readers, we follow them over the decades as they struggle to overcome, or at least forget the trauma that they endured during their years at the mission. This is a really important and compassionate look at these five children who endure so much trauma. All of the trigger warnings for all of the things, abuse of all kinds, compulsive disorders, substance abuse, language. This is really hard subject matter. But it's also true and not heavy handed. These are the stories of so many people. Michelle Good's mother, grandmother and cousins were all residential school survivors. And she writes from a place of knowledge, experience and compassion. This book has won a bunch of awards and this year when CBC Canada's reads competition, Canada Reads is a literary survivor type competition with celebrities championing books, five books, five celebrities, one book left standing each day the panelists discuss challenge debate and ultimately vote to eliminate one book until a single title is chosen as the title the whole country should read this year. I have made it a personal goal to read more Canadian Indigenous authors. And I hope that you will pick up Five Little Indians by Michelle Good. Thanks and happy reading.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 29:12

This is a book that I feel has sort of been stalking me like I've I've several people have recommended it to me. I got really involved in paying attention to the Canada Reads competition, which I think is just the best thing ever. And then of course, as Francis said it won that and everyone I know whose read it said that it was really, really, really good. So this is one that I feel is just on a must read level.

Kaytee Cobb 29:38

I agree. I know that Mindy read this one. There's, I mean, as Francis mentioned, there's a lot of triggers in this one coming at it from every different direction. But if you're up for a story like that this one is visceral and real and sounds very compelling.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 29:57

Yeah, it sounds like one that would be a great buddy read.

Kaytee Cobb 29:59

Okay, our next one is the only graphic novel on that we received in all the many many presses we received. Nicole is going to tell us about Dragon Hoops by Gene Luen Yang, which is from 2020.

Nicole 30:13

Hi, everyone. My name is Nicole. I am from California and the book I want to press today is called Dragon Hoops by Gene Luen Yang. Now Dragon Hoops is a young adult graphic novel. I met an elementary school librarian and it just breaks my bookish heart when students say that they're not allowed to check out graphic novels. So any chance I get I try to press graphic novels into adult readers hands. Because some of my favorite books or graphic novels. El Deafo, When Stars Are Scattered, and the Newbery winner New Kid. Okay, so here's the setup. Now, this is kind of a autobiographical graphic novel, in that the author puts himself as the lead character. He is a writer of graphic novels, and also a

teacher. And he's looking for his next graphic novel idea. Basketball is all anyone at his high school can talk about. This team has a real chance of winning the national championship and he played basketball as a kid, but he's not super into it. But his curiosity really, you know, kicks in and he learns that, you know, these kids, these students face a lot. They face racism, they face bias, they have injuries, they have things going on at home that some players are reluctant to talk about. But he starts to really develop a relationship and an interest in these kids and the game itself, he starts going to away games. As the team gets closer and closer the championship game, I felt completely invested in these players, these characters. Like I just loved every aspect of this book. I just think it's such a fun read, I learned something, I felt something. And towards the end, I was like turning those pages as fast as I could to find out what happened. It is just a fantastic read. I highly recommend it. It is Dragon Hoops by Gene Luen Yang.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 32:17

I am not one to naturally lean toward graphic novels. But she's absolutely sold me and just underscore what she said about the fact that there are parents who don't want their kids reading graphic novels, and oh my gosh, I really, really wish that parents would stop that. We need to let them read what they want to read especially high quality graphic novels like this one.

Kaytee Cobb 32:41

Exactly. And she mentioned so many of my very favorites in the genre as some of her favorites as well. So I have a feeling that this one is going to be a big hit for me also. Yeah. Okay, our next one I'm very excited about. I'm so glad you put this one on the list Meredith. Katie is going to tell us about Vicious by VE Schwab, which is from 2013

Katie 33:00

Hi, my name is Katie and I live in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. The book I want to press today is Vicious by VE Schwab. Here's the setup. When two university students Eli and Victor learn that near death experiences can lead to extraordinary abilities, they'll go to great lengths to test this thesis. 10 years later, when one has been called a hero by society and the other a villain, they'll once again face each other armed with the memory of betrayal, loss and the desire for revenge. In this comic book style world gaining superpowers don't always lead to heroism. And allegiances can always be called into question. The reason I want to press this book is because it allows an alternate look at the superhero craze that has taken over most media in the last two decades. I read this book for the first time in 2015 and still think about it often. I also proceeded to then read and love everything else that VE Schwab has written. Short chapters told from multiple perspectives allowed me to connect with characters on all sides of the story and question what morality really means to me. This book is the start of a series with two books published so far and at least one more promise to come. That being said, this can totally be read as a standalone with a very satisfying ending.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 34:17

This one sounds so good. VE Schwab doing superhero themes. I mean, I am all over this.

Kaytee Cobb 34:25

Also I love any books that leaves me questioning my morality. I think that's a fantastic way to read a book. So thank you Katie for that one. I mean, ever since ever since both of us read Hench which was pressed into our hands by An Unlikely Story, I'm all about like any alternate look at a superhero.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 34:45

Yep, absolutely. Just such a fresh idea, especially if you're going to concentrate equally on the you know, give equal page time to the villain. I just love it.

Kaytee Cobb 34:55

Definitely. Okay, the next one we have in this episode is from Amanda. She is pressing The Hierarchies by Ros Anderson into our hands from 2020.

Amanda 35:05

Hi, Currently Reading listeners I'm Amanda. Amanda reads it all on Instagram, from Jacksonville, Florida. And I'm so excited because today I'm pressing The Hierarchies by Ros Anderson. Here's the setup. Our Narrator Sylv.ie is an artificially intelligent robot wife, who lives on the top floor of her husband's lavish mansion separate from his human wife and their child, whom she is forbidden to have any contact with. She's programmed to abide by four rules referred to as "the hierarchies", which are as follows: One, love, obey and delight your husband. You exist to serve him. Two, honor his family above yourself and never come between them. Three, you must not harm your husband nor his family, nor any human. Four, make no demands, but meet them and obey every reasonable human request. However, as Sylv.ie gains knowledge and experience her views on how best to obey these rules shifts over time. One day when her husband's human family is in the backyard, she perceives danger and decides to intervene, setting off a chain of events that threaten to disrupt her fragile relationships and the many systems keeping them in place. That's all I can really say without major spoilers, but please trust me this book is a must read. I think anyone who enjoys merit of the Sci Fi presses will love this one. I also think it would make a phenomenal choice for a buddy read or a book club because there's so much to discuss. I can definitely draw a lot of parallels between this book and more well known works of fiction like iRobot The Stepford Wives and Handmaid's Tale. But this book is totally its own story and provides such a fresh and unique perspective on all the themes explored in those books. It has so many fantastic elements, some light sci fi and near future dystopian setting, some romance, LGBTQ plus representation and so much more. Two quick notes. I do think this book will be best enjoyed in print, because the author does some creative things with the texts. But the story is so solid that I think it will hold up really well on audio as well. Also, there is some violence and sex on the page, but nothing particularly graphic. And most of it not involving humans, if that makes it any better for you. But I hope neither of those things discourages you from reading it because it's such an incredible read. Again, this book is called The Hierarchies by Ros Anderson. I really hope you'll pick it up. I think you'll love it.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 37:32

Okay, so remember how to episodes ago Kaytee I said that I love rules of any kind.

Kaytee Cobb 37:37

Yes.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 37:37

I don't like these rules.

Kaytee Cobb 37:38

I don't like these rules either.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 37:41

But I'm very interested in this book. And I thought that that she did a great job setting it up.

Kaytee Cobb 37:47

I think so too. I am getting like she said iRobot vibes, but also even Murderbot which has kind of been sweeping through the bookish friends. I love that like sentience in artificial intelligent beings. Right. I think that's such an interesting thing to explore.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 38:03

Right and Sara Gailey's The Echo Wife also comes to mind. So yes, for sure. This one is ticking a lot of boxes for me.

Kaytee Cobb 38:10

Yeah, that one is a good one. Okay, now, like a huge left turn. We're going to hear from another one of our favorite friends. Tiffany, who is telling us about Beach Music by Pat Conroy from 1995.

Tiffany Beverly 38:25

Hello, Currently Reading. This is Tiffany Beverly from Columbia, South Carolina. I want to press Beach Music by Pat Conroy. While I'd argue that Lords of Discipline is Pat Conroy's best book, Beach Music is the perfect book for the summer. Here's the setup. Jack McCall is living and raising his young daughter in Rome, trying to find peace after his wife's tragic suicide in their hometown of Charleston, South Carolina. His idyllic time in Italy is cut short when circumstances forced him back to Charleston, where he must reluctantly uncover family secrets and learn to heal from the past. This book is perfect for readers who want to travel via the page. Rome with its beautiful Piazza and stately cathedrals and Charleston with its human nights and gorgeous beaches come alive under Pat Conroy is lush, and often surprisingly funny writing. It's also perfect for the reader who wants a page turning novel for the summer, but who also longs for the depth that we all know is sometimes lacking in typical beach reads. This story of how old family secrets can haunt our present lives is rich and powerful. If you like dysfunctional family stories with great writing, Beach Music by Pat Conroy is the book for you.

Kaytee Cobb 39:46

I love Tiffany so much.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 39:49

I always forget that she has that southern accent when I when, right when I read her words on the page I do so that I love what a joy she's she's fantastic and and I love Pat Conroy. I don't care how aged the

books are. I just love Pat Conroy. I love I mean, I love Prince of Tides. Beach Music is fantastic. It's just such a good press.

Kaytee Cobb 40:12

I've only read a few of his. Beach Music is not one that I've read. And I love that she gave us something that has those summer travel vibes, right? Because that is what we want to do during the summer, right? We want to pick up we want to go somewhere new. And I want to go somewhere with Tiffany.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 40:27

Right? No, exactly. Me too. And I'm really thinking that we are I'm discovering we as a group are beginning to discover some of these great late 80s, early 90s kinds of what like what she's talking about these beach reads but with depth. And I feel like in that period of time it was being done really, really well better than what we're seeing today. So I love this. Look way back to finding some of these these different kinds of summer reads.

Kaytee Cobb 41:01

I do too. And I do want to say when I went to South Carolina, I did get to meet up with Tiffany and we had brunch together and she is just as delightful in person as she is on this voice memo so you can all be jealous now.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 41:15

Absolutely. My favorite Enneagram eight or one of my favorite Enneagram eights.

Kaytee Cobb 41:19

Excellent. So our next press is from Avery she is telling us about Answers in the Pages by David Levithan, which is a 2022 release. One of the very few brand new ones that we have in this episode.

Avery G. 41:32

Hi currently reading community. My name is Avery and I'm calling from North Carolina and I am here to press an amazing middle grade book called Answers in the Pages by David Levithan. I am a middle school teacher and so reading middle grade is usually my sweet spot. But since 2020, I just can't get into it. Something about this book called to me and I am so pleased to tell you that I read it in about three hours. I hope that it has broken the cycle. But I have to tell you, here's the setup. This book is about a fifth grade classroom. The kids in this class have an amazing teacher who has assigned a book. You read snippets of this book throughout answers in the pages. I love the beginning of this book, on the very first page, it tells you that that the ending of this assigned book causes quite a stir amongst at least one parent, the mom of one of the narrators of this story. And the sentence that causes quite a stir is at that moment, Rick knew just how deeply he loved Oliver and Oliver knew just how deeply he loved Rick and the understanding of this moment would lead them to much of the happiness and adventure that came next. I am pressing this book, because there's so much talk of book banning. And what should be talked about in classrooms. There is absolutely nothing that can replace the feeling of when a kid sees themselves in the pages of a book for the first time. In this book, you get to see what it feels like to be a student who is reading about something and wondering, is this character gay? Does it even matter? You also see a parent and I think that the way that a parent who is wanting to challenge a

book is presented with care, and actually a lot more empathy than I think I could have done. And I just think this is such a book for right now. In this moment. I hope that everybody has a chance to pick up Answers in the Pages, either for your middle grader for you to read with your middle grader or just so that you understand why these books need to be in classrooms so badly.

Kaytee Cobb 44:01

Okay, that one sounds so good to me. I love a book within a book setup. I feel like I just want to point out that I think Avery is actually holding the book when she talks to us about it because I feel like we can hear a little book fondling happening, which is one of my favorite things that readers do when they talk about a book they love.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 44:17

I love book fondling. I do it myself sometimes when I'm feeling very passionate about talking about a book.

Kaytee Cobb 44:22

Yes. Definitely. I love that. I love the tackling of banning books and how that is a really present topic for us right now. So I think this is going to be a great one for a lot of parents and their kids to pick up.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 44:34

Yeah, I'm glad she gave us that one.

Kaytee Cobb 44:36

Okay, our ninth one today is Afterlife by Julia Alvarez, which is being pressed into her hands by Amy and it's from 2020.

Amy W. 44:45

My name is Amy, and I'm from Alexandria, Virginia. The book I would like to press into everyone's hands is called Afterlife by Julia Alvarez. Here's the setup. Antonia Vega is a woman untethered. The day she retired from the college where she taught English, her beloved husband, Sam suddenly dies. Adjusting to life without him, and then also without one of her sisters who goes missing proves difficult. This is a beautiful story of family, love, immigrants and doing what's right. I consider this heartfelt novel, curmudgeon adjacent, as Antonia tries to become one, but just can't. That's Afterlife by Julia Alvarez.

Kaytee Cobb 45:32

I love the idea of trying to become a curmudgeon, but you just can't.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 45:36

Right. That really spoke to me that spoke to me so completely. I think this book sounds excellent. The idea of someone retiring from a long career and then losing her husband, and then I mean, this poor woman. I mean, I'm interested in how she pulled herself together.

Kaytee Cobb 45:54

Yes, and I mean, we say this all the time, but more books with older protagonists, right? We love to read about those later years, and see what life looks like when you're not an ingenue that, you know, has to solve a mystery.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 46:08

Right? Exactly. Finding out what how do you reinvent yourself when you thought that your life was mostly at the tail end? I think it sounds fascinating.

Kaytee Cobb 46:16

Perfect. Okay, the next one we're going to hear from is from reader Michele, she is pressing *The Bottom of the 33rd* by Dan Berry, which is from 2010. This is sports nonfiction, which I really wanted to put on this list because we get a lot of questions about you know, what should I buy my whoever for Father's Day, birthday, et cetera. And this to me sounds like a perfect dude book. Or honestly, I'm interested too. Take a listen.

Michele 46:45

Hello, currently reading this is Michelle from Washington DC, and I am pressing *The Bottom of the 33rd: Hope, Redemption and Baseball's Longest Game* by Dan Berry. Here's the setup. True to its name, this book follows the longest game in baseball history, a triple A Pawtucket Red Sox game that was played in April 1981. It flashes back and forth between the plays of the actual game and the characters on and off the field and there were many. I do not think that you need to be a Red Sox fan, or a baseball fan even to really enjoy this book. I am personally a Red Sox fan. I loved that many of the characters in the book went on to be big stars for the Red Sox in the mid 80s. And so they were the stars of my childhood. But I think anyone who really enjoys good strong narrative nonfiction, and especially finding out what happens to the characters in their books, there are epilogues all over the place in this one, you'll really get a kick out of this. So I highly recommend *Bottom of the 33rd: Hope, Redemption and Baseball's Longest Game*.

Kaytee Cobb 47:55

That does sound interesting. It does and I you know, I will go to a spring training game. Especially if there's beer to be had.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 48:05

Yep, or cheese fries.

Kaytee Cobb 48:08

Yes, please. Yes, but I'm not there for the game. Really. And I'm so interested in this just like *Boys in the Boat*, which like I don't care about crew and rowing, right? Such an, such an interesting book,

Meredith Monday Schwartz 48:19

Right. The very best books are the ones that you don't have to care about the actual thing, but then you find that you love the book so much. I love that.

Kaytee Cobb 48:29

Yes, great press friend. The next one we have I think is our oldest one on this list. It's from Mary Faith. She is pressing *The Diddakoi* by Rumor Godden which was published in 1968.

Mary Faith 48:45

Mary Faith Roell and I live in a small town outside of Cincinnati called Harrison, Ohio. And the book that I would love to press into your hands is *The Diddakoi* by Rumor Godden. I was given this book on my 11th birthday from my godmother, and I'm now 60 years old. I've probably read it three times. But I can remember vividly so much about this book. It has stayed in my head and my heart forever. *Diddakoi* is another name for gypsy and the central character is a little girl named Kizzy who lives with her great grandmother. And they live on a property in their gypsy wagon of a very wealthy man who has two man servants that live with him and gran dies, and the rest of this story is about who comes to care for Kizzy and become found family and true friendships and dealing with the hard things. It was just such a beautiful book. Even now, when I'm telling you about it. I am getting the feels about how the man servants took care of Kizzy and the people who came into her life and just loved her. It was just such a beautiful book. And if I could make a movie, I could be a producer. This would be the movie that I would produce. I have seen it in film one time. And it was brown and drab and not nearly full the color that the writing was and so I would love to see it come to life because it's so alive in my head.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 50:36

Isn't that so sweet? How passionately she feels about that book that she teared up while she was talking. I just I just think I love it when we have books that makes such an impression on us so early in our reading lives.

Kaytee Cobb 50:50

Yes and it's been part of her life for it sounds like five decades right this point right? And it still brings her that much emotion when she talks about it. What a fantastic press.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 51:01

Yes, absolutely. I am I'm this is one that I am ordering for myself because I'm very interested. And also I have another book by Rumor Godden that's on my TBR so I'm interested in this one.

Kaytee Cobb 51:13

Excellent. Okay, we are going to end with another backlist press sci fi mystery from 1994. Madeline is telling us about *The Memory Police* by Yoko Ogawa.

Madeline 51:26

Hi all. My name is Madeline and I live in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. I'm pressing *The Memory Police* by Yoko Ogawa. This is a 1994 Japanese novel that was translated to English and 2019. The story is set on an unnamed island where things are disappearing. And the people in the community can no longer recall these items to mind. The memory police occupy the island to ensure that any trace of disappeared items be wiped clean. The novel follows a writer as she decides to help her book editor and friend as he's in danger of being seized by the memory police. This is a quiet dreamlike story about community, kindness in the midst of loss and the power of our memories. I wanted to share this story

because it's one of those books that I've continued to think about long after I close the cover. I picked it for my book club earlier this year, and had really wonderful conversations and even some spicy opinions. And I would love for more people to pick it up.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 52:27

Would love a book that engenders a great book club discussion.

Kaytee Cobb 52:31

Always, always that's like one of our very favorite things. I also really love the cover of this one. It looks like the face of a young Japanese woman. But it's being slowly erased and like filled in with drawn in pieces of her face instead. Just really compelling here. I love some mystery mixed with sci fi. Very excited to pick this one up.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 52:54

Yeah, this one sounds really, really good. See, we had so many good presses. And Kaytee, there are so many more that we weren't even able I mean that we wanted to put in these episodes, but we simply couldn't because of time. So Kaytee, what is it that we're doing with the remainder of this goodness?

Kaytee Cobb 53:12

Yes, if you are a bookish friend and you could join today, you will get a bonus episode that has more than 30 additional presses that we wish we could have put into your hands, dropped into your podcast feeds. And we cannot wait to share all these voices, all these fantastic books with you. If we could have put all of them on the big show, we would have friends, but instead, they're going to be living over on Patreon, five bucks a month to get behind that paywall and get all that goodness over there.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 53:40

There are so many reasons at this point for you guys to be becoming a bookish friend if you aren't already. And again, we are going to have next week we will be off. But again, great week for you to join Patreon because there is so many hours and hours and hours, hundreds of hours of content there, including all the Indie Press List episodes, which are more lists of books being pressed into your hands. So so much goodness there for just \$5 a month. So that is it Kaytee, that is it for this season. As always, here's where you can connect with us. You can find me I'm Meredith at @Meredith.reads on Instagram.

Kaytee Cobb 54:20

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

Meredith Monday Schwartz 54:24

Full show notes, including all the books we discussed in the episode and timestamps so you can zoom right to where we talked about them can be found on our website at currentlyreadingpodcast.com.

Kaytee Cobb 54:34

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

Meredith Monday Schwartz 54:41

And as we said, if you want to support us or you want more of our content, become a bookish friend on Patreon. You can also leave us a rating and a review on Apple podcasts or shout us out on social media. Every one of those things helps us to find our perfect listening audience.

Kaytee Cobb 54:57

Yes, bookish friends are the best friends. And thank you so much for helping us grow and get closer to our goals.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 55:04

All right until next season, may your coffee be hot

Kaytee Cobb 55:07

and your book be unputdownable.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 55:10

Happy reading Kaytee.

Kaytee Cobb 55:11

Happy reading Meredith.