



# Season 5, Episode 43: Way Past a Book Hangover + All Things Fourth Wing

Mon, Jun 05, 2023 • 1:05:05

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 00:10

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

**Roxanna Kassam Kara** 00:25

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

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 00:36

I'm Meredith Monday, Schwartz, I'm a mom of four and full time CEO living in Austin, Texas, and I am all up in my feelings today.

**Roxanna Kassam Kara** 00:44

And I'm Roxanna Kassam Kara, a mom, a marketer, and a mood reader living in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. And I'm slowly emerging from the world's biggest book coma. This is episode number 43 of season five and we're so glad you're here.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 00:58

Right. You're not just hung over, you've taken it to a new level that you're naming the book coma.

**Roxanna Kassam Kara** 01:04

it's not a hangover. No, it's a coma.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 01:07

It's Yes, you've been in a bad way for sure. Alright, guys. So we want to let you know a couple of things right up front. First of all, our deep dive today is one that I think a lot of you are going to be interested in. Because Roxanna and I, as reading partners are going to be discussing the juggernaut of the summer, and that is the Fourth Wing. Now, what makes that more interesting is that Roxanna and I did not feel the same way about this book. So we have some things we felt the same way about, but some things we didn't. And so we are going to get into that discussion for our deep dive. And we're going to see if we can have a really good conversation that also shows that it's very possible to talk about books even when you don't agree. Yeah. Also, though some business, this is the first episode of the month, you guys know what this means we are going to do a little bit of business for ourselves. And that is to

remind you that the best way you can enjoy more Currently Reading content more Currently Reading community is to join us as a bookish friend on Patreon. It's \$5 a month. And the number one thing that you get when you join is you continue to make sure that Currently Reading stays ad free. The big show's the show that you're listening to now that drops every week, and the new spin off episodes that are dropping every fourth week on Fridays, completely free content to you. And we keep them ad free. And the way we do that is that we concentrate on our bookish friends. So if you love that about Currently Reading and you just want to drop \$5 in the tip jar, becoming a currently reading bookish friend is a great way to do it. And you get all the additional content in the community too. All right, you can do that by going to [patreon.com/currentlyreadingpodcast](https://patreon.com/currentlyreadingpodcast). It's very simple, very easy. Alright, so that is our Mischief Managed. Let's get on to what we want to talk about here. Roxanna. First, we're going to talk about our bookish moment of the week. So what is your bookish moment?

**Roxanna Kassam Kara 03:07**

Well, Meredith, we just talked about that upfront, my bookish moment has to be the book coma that I've literally fallen into over the City of Brass series. So we're going to be talking about the series later in the episode. But honestly, rarely have I fallen so deep into a world like this month, I read the whole trilogy, that is almost 2000 pages. And the last one, which was 800 pages, I read it in like four days. I have never done that. With any series of books, even ACOTAR like I just gobbled it down. I was walking around with my Kindle everywhere. It took me an hour and a half to tidy the kitchen after dinner. I forgot I had children.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 03:47**

I was gonna say you were you were ignoring your children.

**Roxanna Kassam Kara 03:50**

I left you messages like that. Mommy, please play with me. And I was like, maybe next week like I have no time for you, I have no time for you until I finish this book. I was reading two words at a time, putting a glass away coming back reading a paragraph at a time like I couldn't put it down. I finished and now I am bereft. And yes, as I said, like it's not I don't have a book hangover. It's like I woke up from a coma and you know, in the movies, and they wake up and they have amnesia. I feel like I woke up and I have book amnesia. I literally can't remember the book I read before this. I can't remember any book I have on my TBR I just don't know what to do with myself.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 04:26**

Right? That is the huge downside to the huge upside that is falling into a world and being completely happy there and just saying I just you know, I live in The City of Brass now. And I'm so glad that you have loved it. I in our entire reading partnership, which is going on three years now. I have never experienced you falling this deeply into a series and I certainly have never seen you read books as quickly as you have. So that's been a real experience. So you had said to me, you know This can happen to you. And that's almost, you know, part of the reason why you kind of limit starting certain books at certain times because you're like, I'll just and then, but I'd never experienced it until now. And I was like, well, she's, she's telling the truth.

**Roxanna Kassam Kara 05:13**

Yeah, I, you're right. I'm obsessed. There's some books that I can't start because I get obsessed. And this is for sure one of those.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 05:19**

All right, my bookish moment of the week is that I have noticed, and I, Roxanna, you've noticed this too as we're talking about it... all the 2022, I was very regularly reading four books at a time, right? One in every format. Yeah, Kindle print, audio and slow, but steady. Those are my four. All of a sudden, over the course of the last couple of months, I am single tracking, I am finding that for whatever reason, I am wanting to read one book at a time. And the net effect of that, and it's not, my favorite part of the net effect is that what I'm doing is I'm been getting the book on multiple formats, so that as I move through my day, I have it available. And so I might choose a book off of my bookshelf, and then think, okay, you know, I want to read my shelves, but then I'll be like, but then I only like to read my Kindle at night. And so then now I have to have it on my Kindle. And then I'm writing in my car, and I'm like, like, read this other audio book. But I really want to go back. So now I'm reading. It's really It's inefficient.

**Roxanna Kassam Kara 06:22**

Well, is it inefficient though? Are you getting through books faster because you have them on these multiple formats?

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 06:28**

I mean, yes. And I think the other thing that's happening is that I'm feeling very focused, I think that was what I was unconsciously moving away from is this feeling of being fragmented amongst four different worlds. And so just doing one I'm feeling like I can really kind of get into it. So talking about my Kindle. And before we got on mic we were talking just a little bit, and it reminded me, one of the things and this is one of the things that is probably a complete duh moment to every Kindle user, but I hadn't been doing it. So just in case, there's one of you who liked me, hadn't been taking advantage of this feature on your Kindle. And I think all the Kindles have this dark mode.

**Roxanna Kassam Kara 07:08**

I don't use dark mode. No.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 07:10**

Okay. When I went to Hawaii, five of us went, we all had Kindle Oasis. And we were all reading them, of course, all the time, because that's what you can read in the sun. And we were all talking about how much we love them. My friend Jennifer said, Well, my big thing is that you can read in dark mode at night. And I was like, what is that? I remembered seeing it in the settings. You know, when you do that quick flick down, it's one of the easy to grab settings. So it's very easy to switch back and forth. It turns the backlighting off. And so now you have a black background and white text. I'd always loved reading my Kindle at night because it was better than my book light for Johnny. But dark mode, he can't even tell I'm reading Roxanna he can't even tell that I'm reading it is so so great to be able to do that. And it's just as comfortable a reading experience as reading with the backlight on if not more comfortable to my eyes at night. Give dark mode a try tonight. See what you think about that.

**Roxanna Kassam Kara 08:07**

That's honestly an aha for me, Meredith because I read a lot in Kieran's bed. My daughter, she's nine still wants to have me sleep with her sometimes. And then the light is so bright, that sometimes it keeps her up. Right. Or like I said yesterday, I woke up multiple times, I just could not sleep. I can't read a paper book that I can only read a Kindle. But even sometimes, at night, like even that's too bright, right. And I've got it down to the lowest setting. And so I don't know why I done dark mode before, like on other devices. But I hadn't thought of it on my on my Kindle. I'm for sure going to try that

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 08:39**

Dark mode. Give it a try. I'm glad recommended that that could be helpful to you. Because I was like I feel like every other Kindle owner must be using this all the time. And I'm just the slow adopter.

**Roxanna Kassam Kara 08:49**

No, it's honestly, it's these little things. They seem little but even when you told me, you know, you got me the same Kindle case, as you have. And you said that you use just the back stand to keep it up while you eat, which I hadn't been doing or like while you're drying your hair or when you're doing that. And honestly, I'm reading so much more because that silly little stand, but it makes a big difference. The little things make a big difference in your reading.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 09:12**

Yeah, for sure. For sure. Okay, well let me know if you guys try this and you like it. Okay, now we can talk about our current reads. Now we can get into this bookish discussion. What's the first book that you're bringing this week?

**Roxanna Kassam Kara 09:23**

Okay, so my first book today is a five star read for me. It's a middle grade adventure called The Thief Knot by Kate Milford. So for those who don't know Milford is the author of the immensely popular Greenglass House series, which is one of the first books that got me into middle grade reading as an adult. So Milford set the series in the fictional world of Nagspeake, and The Thief Knot is set in the same world. So this is not a sequel to the GreenGlass House books, but it is set in the same world. So here's the setup. The Thief Knot is the story of Marzana Hacklebarend who is a middle grader whose mother who is known as Violet Cross was Nagspeake's most beloved smuggler. When a girl in a neighboring city is kidnapped authorities come to Marzana's parents to ask for behind the scenes help. Marzana who is bored and frustrated to be left out of the action, of course, she decides to assemble her own gang of merry middle graders to do some sleuthing themselves. But is the crime really what they think it is? Or are things just not what they seem? And will they find that out before it's too late? Okay, so that's the setup. But the real star here is the world of Nagspeake. Nagspeake is a fictional town that Milford has made up. It is very intricate. She even has like a Nagspeake Tourism Board website that you can go to that has all the maps and has everything set up.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 10:42**

Oh, I love that.

**Roxanna Kassam Kara 10:43**

It's beautiful. It's a town by Chesapeake Bay, she says and it's full of smugglers and secret alleyways and sort of these rickety tall buildings and an abandoned transit system below ground, and of course, even a few ghosts. So it's just a really unique world. It's got a really almost a Dickensian feel to it. And it's full of like pirates and maps and secret codes. It's a world I love coming back to. And this book in particular has a great twist at the end that makes you kind of go back and reread everything to see okay, wait, how did that happen? You know, he pulls it pulls the mystery through. And it just wraps you up in its magic, like a warm duvet on a chilly night. So I really love this one. And I think for those of you who tried Greenglass house, but were put off by the emphasis on role playing games, I know Meredith, you'd suggested that and I found that too it was kind of bogged down in that detail. This one is not doesn't mention role playing games. It's just more of kind of a straight, middle grade mystery set in this world. It's a great read. Honestly, it was one of my five stars this year. And I would say get the hardback the illustrations. I never say that because you know, I read mostly on my Kindle, but this book is so beautiful. And the illustrations and the maps and the kind of the drawings really add to the mystery of the town of next peak. So that's The Thief Knot by Kate Milford.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 12:00**

Yes, is when you were telling me about this one. I did say that I felt like I loved the world of Greenglass House. But I just felt like all the pretend it just kept taking me out. It just wasn't interesting to me. And so when you said that Thief Knot might be exactly then what I was looking for. I bought the hardcopy, and it's waiting on my shelf to read this summer because I think it'd be a perfect summer book. And I might even see if Jackson and I can do well, I'm going to be doing some reading with him which of course he will not do on his own. He doesn't want to do that. But this might be a good book for us to do a buddy read together.

**Roxanna Kassam Kara 12:33**

I'd love to hear more about that on the show, Meredith because I have the same struggle with Micah. I used to be able to get him to read but now he's 11 and hockey and video games have taken over his life and a book is not making it into his hands unless I shove it in there.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 12:48**

Exactly right and tape it with duct tape. I know our boys are only two weeks apart. And so this is another way that we really understand each other's world because the 11 Almost 12 year old boy is a very specific creature. Okay. All right. My first book that I want to talk about is one of several places in the show that I said I'm all up in my feelings about because I want to talk about The Most Fun We Ever Had by Claire Lombardo.

**Roxanna Kassam Kara 13:13**

Okay, great. I wanted to hear your feelings on this one. Yeah,

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 13:16**

So this is one that's not going to be new to everybody, but it came out a few years ago. So here's the setup. Our story focuses on Marilyn and David Sorensen who meet and fall in love in the 1970s. They get married and spend a lifetime raising their four daughters. By the time our story starts in 2016, they

have four very different daughters and each one is in a state of chaos in one way, shape, or form. All four of them are a mess. We've got Wendy who lost her rich husband at a young age and now self medicates with booze and younger men. We've got Violet, an attorney turned stay at home mom who has massive anxiety and self doubt. Liza is a newly tenured professor who finds herself pregnant with a baby she's not sure she wants by a man she's not sure she shouldn't be with and Grace, the slow to launch youngest daughter who begins living a life that no one in her family even suspects. So yeah, mom and dad are not happy because their daughters are messes. And then there's the unexpected arrival of a new character who upends all their lives and the Sorensen's have a whole lot to reckon with in their pasts, both the happy stuff and the not so happy stuff that they have been long sweeping under the rug. Okay, so this is weird for me to talk about, but I'm going to give it a shot because I think that my experience with this book might resonate with someone. I've wanted to read this book since it came out in 2019. Because you guys know I love good family drama and this one had rave reviews all around and I will say right here up front that this book is very good. And I really understand why people loved it. But two things happened that were not the books fault that very much affected my reading it experience with it. First, talking about book hangovers. I read this right after I read the Fourth Wing. I had given it a couple of days, but my book hangover was stronger than I thought. And really no book that I read when I read this one stood a chance, I made a serious mistake by not choosing a random thriller or a cozy to cleanse my palate. That's what I should have done. Instead, I picked up a book that may have otherwise been a bigger win for me than it was reader know thyself. Okay, that's mistake number one. But the bigger issue is that this book has a part of the plot that is a huge, huge trigger for me, personally, maybe my single biggest trigger, one that really gets me into a funk and affects me emotionally. It's actually this one particular trigger, that makes me have a lot of compassion for people who say that they want trigger warnings like, because I really, this one really makes me understand it. So we do preach, reader Know thyself. So I had done my due diligence here, I'd asked people about adultery triggers, and people said that there were none, which is true. But what those people couldn't know is that my special flavor of adultery trigger is emotional affairs in marriages that are otherwise happy. My childhood traumas come to the fore with that particular subject matter. So when I hit that, in this book, I was far enough into the book that I cared about the characters and I felt I needed and wanted to finish because this is a good book. It's a great, very realistic family drama that fairly paints the messiness and loveliness of a close knit family. It's a book that celebrates the good and bad of a long term marriage. And for that, it's really wonderful. But for this reader, it dredged up some huge issues that I am sure I need to deal with more fully in therapy. So this was a tough read for me. But doesn't this happen, we can be really self reflective readers and still step into landmines every once in a while. I will say that if you love a family drama that reads quickly and easily and gives you memorable characters to root for, please do seek out this backlist gem. This is The Most Fun We Ever Had by Claire Lombardo.

**Roxanna Kassam Kara** 17:18

Wow you're right, Meredith, you were all up in your feelings for that one. And I know that was, that was a tough one for you to get through.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 17:24

That was a tough one. But triggers, I mean, unless your trigger is something very, you know, one of the kind of big five that people know to name, you know, sometimes you're gonna step into something,

sometimes you're gonna meet a character that really closely reflects an experience that you've had in your life, and no one can know when that's going to happen. That's nobody's fault. It's not the author's fault. It's not other readers fault, it just sometimes happens. And so what I needed to do was recognize that it was happening, and then make the decision that was right, for me The responsible decision that was right for me, which was to finish the book and get some sort of closure, which was helpful, instead of just do nothing it because I felt like at that point, it was just going to almost keep me in that place longer than moving all the way through. But I can see situations where the better decision is to say, this is not going to resolve for me, it's just going to get worse, I need to close this book and move on to something else. So I bring all that because I just want to say we all have this kind of thing that bothers us. And sometimes it's really very bespoke, right? It's not a big trigger that everyone has, it may be a weird little small thing. And that's okay. It happens to all of us.

**Roxanna Kassam Kara 18:33**

You know, it's funny, Meredith, as you were talking about this, I was thinking, Well, what's my personal trigger? And yes, like the Big Five, child abuse, you know, those kinds of things, of course. But I think for me, it's characters feeling victimized, and putting the blame on other people. Like, that really makes me angry, like, it makes me physically angry. And I think you had pointed out, I'd left, you know, rage filled message about one of these characters, one of these books, and you had pointed out, well, maybe that's kind of a mark of your privilege, to think because, you know, maybe you had a better childhood, maybe you had better social circumstances, you didn't make these decisions that these characters are making that might be bad decisions, and then blaming it on other people. And that really kind of had me you know, kind of have an aha moment. But I still find it really hard. And I think because partly, it's like, I'm always afraid, I don't want to do that, you know, like when they say, when you're pointing the finger at somebody else, you're kind of pointing it back at you. And I'm, it's like a personal thing that I don't want to be the victim in situations. And so it's, you know, you're I'm not going to find that in a trigger warning that doesn't know, but when it comes up, it really does affect me, and I used to blame it on the book. But like you're saying now, it's not the book, right? It's my own personal issue that I'm dealing with, and I can recognize it and move through it and continue reading or stop reading, but to recognize that it's not the book and it's an issue, I'm dealing with a trigger that really affects me is important,

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 20:01**

right. And I think what I would have done in the past with this is I would have just kind of sat in the funk, but because, again, back to why it's great to have a reading partner in your life, I was able to leave some messages for you, where I could get really in detail about the stuff that it was bringing up for me. And as almost always happens when you speak out loud, even when we're speaking to voice memos not even directly to each other. Just the speaking out loud, was something that lightened me it just occurred to me again, how glad I was to have someone who, of course, is a really good friend. But also this was a place where my reading was very much at the crux of the emotion I was going through, and that's a very specific kind of life partnership. So that was a really feelings feel filled experience for me. So alright, what's your next book?

**Roxanna Kassam Kara** 20:49

Okay, we're gonna take an abrupt left turn here, Meredith. My second book is a different kind of summer read. It's a memoir. It's called Climbing the Mango Trees by Madhur Jaffrey. So have you heard of Madhur Jaffrey Meredith? but

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 21:03

No, but the name of the book sounds familiar to me.

**Roxanna Kassam Kara** 21:05

Okay, because I might have brought it up. I read this not last summer, but maybe the summer before. So I probably left you a message on it. So Madhur Jaffrey was the first person to bring Indian cooking to the West in 19, early 80s. I think she's written numerous cookbooks. She's kind of Beloved, especially in England. And she has been inducted into the James Beard Hall of Fame. She's kind of the first famous I would call her like the Julia Child of Indian cooking. So this book I was interested in I didn't know a lot about her. But I just thought it sounded like an interesting sort of memoir to see, you know, what was her life like, and this book is actually not about her career at all. It's about her childhood growing up in a very privileged household in Delhi in the early 20th century. And it was just perfect for what I was looking for. Then I read it in the middle of a sundrenched summer. And that's exactly the mood a conscious up. It is nostalgic, it's charming. It's like sitting with your grandma, and she takes you through her album of old sepia toned photographs. If your grandma was a you know, high cased Indian woman living in colonial India.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 22:11

My grandmother was not but it's it's so much more interesting.

**Roxanna Kassam Kara** 22:14

My grandma was not that either. That's totally the feeling I got. So I'll read you a part from the beginning of the book. So you know what I mean. "My grandfather had built his house on what was once a thriving orchard of jujubes, mulberries, tamarins, and mangoes. His numerous grandchildren, like hungry flocks of birds attack the mangoes while they were still green and sour. As grownups snored through the hot afternoons and rooms cooled with sweet smelling vetiver curtains, the unsupervised children were on every branch of every mango tree, armed with a ground mixture of salt, pepper, red chilies, and roasted cumin". And she goes on to talk about how they would climb these trees, the older ones would have paring knives, and they would pick these mangoes and cut them, and then pass them down to the younger ones who would kind of dip them in these tins of spice, and then just eat them fresh from the sun while they were still on the tree. Like it's just such a magical moment. Great. It's so great. And that's exactly like the whole book reads like this. She takes you through her whole childhood, which is a world that seems like it doesn't even seem like it's real. You know, she talks about how she had servants come to her school every day at lunch, and they put down a white tablecloth on the lunch table and served her and her cousin's a feast of homemade food every single day. Wow. And for summer holidays, they headed to the Himalayas, they had what was known as a Hill House. And there they had mountain picnics for 50 people, and the family and the servants would prepare for this feast weeks in advance. And they would hike for miles to like this very little known waterfall. And then everybody would lay out these big pots and they'd start cooking and the kids would swim in the waterfall and they'd come



out to this feast that was laid out like it's just delightful and transportative and it's filled with the most delicious food descriptions, it really is just taking you a world away. Now I will say this is not a penetrating look at the effects of colonialism on India, or its effect on the classes you adopt for his ancestors were close employees of the British governor in colonial India, and they enjoyed the kind of privileged existence that very few Indians did. Now she does talk about partition and other difficult in her life with her family. But it's mostly glossed over in the same sort of distanced sepia toned way. But to me, that's kind of what gives it that sort of dreamy quality that makes it perfect for summer. This is the kind of book to read while you're swinging on your porch. And the cicadas are buzzing in the background. It's just interesting. It's romantic, and it has this old world charm that just completely wrapped me up and took me away. So I'd say if you liked *My Life in France*, or *Under the Tuscan Sun*, or *Infused*, which is the book about tea I suggested on an earlier podcast, I would give this one a try. It has that same sort of lyrical way of taking you away and it'd be a perfect summer read. That is *Climbing the Mango Trees* by Madhur Jaffrey.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 25:02

Oh, that sounds so good. And that's the kind of book that I feel like it's such a sweet spot for you to bring to us and that you've brought to me a book that I had no idea about. But when you tell me about it, I'm like, I want to be in that world. I want to know about that. That's very interesting.

**Roxanna Kassam Kara** 25:20

I really loved it. It's super backlist, but just a fun kind of gem that if you're in the right mood, it can really hit well.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 25:26

That's the perfect segue to the next book that I want to talk about. Because after I finished the very hard, very emotional, very dredging up experience that I had with the most fun we ever had, I needed I ran full body ran to a book that was a bomb to my soul, and that is *The Bookshop and the Barbarian* by Morgan Stang. This is cozy fantasy you guys and that is such a sweet balm to my soul. When I am feeling that I need some restfulness some comfort, some sweetness. Here's the setup. Running from war in her homeland, Mirabella Waters becomes the new owner of the fabled Cozy Quill bookstore. She inherits it, but as she arrives to take ownership of the store, she finds squatters on her property, very memorable squatters by the way. And so she hires Asteria Helsdottir, a giant barbarian warrior woman to help her make the store safe and get things tidied up for business. Together, the odd couple must make a success out of the bookshop and survive a dizzying procession of comically bad baddies, who were out to run them off. Along the way, the whole town lends a hand, friendships are forged, and secrets are revealed. And lots and lots of books are sold. All right, we all know that cozy fantasy made its explosive debut into our worlds with *Legends and Lattes*. And since then, I have been chasing that same cozy, warm fantasy feeling through several different novels, some of which were quite good, but none of them really scratched that itch for me until *The Bookshop and the Barbarian* came along. I have to thank my bookish friend Betsie at @bookishbetsie on Instagram for the recommendation, I should say also, that she was the reason that I picked up *Legends and Lattes*. She's she's a very good source for cozy fantasy for me. This one is gentle in every way, just like I need my cozy fantasy to be. It's got a gentle friendship, gentle drama, gentle romance, and even gentle conflict. It's got warm fires and rooms filled with books. It's got the fall and winter seasons, and it's got found family. It also has a really fun

break the fourth wall Narrator kind of in a Princess Bride sort of style. If you like that, if you're in the mood for that this book will really work for you. I should say too, that there are also some very funny easter eggs. If you've read Legends and Lattes, it will make you really smile. There's a wink and a nudge the whole time through. I'm definitely not telling everyone to go out and pick up this book. Because if you do, and you pick it up when you're not in exactly the right mood, it's going to be absolutely silly, but it's available in Kindle Unlimited. So I'm going to recommend that you download it and save it for when you're in one of those moods. When you feel like the world is against you or your heart is hurting, and you need something gentle and sweet. It's just going to make you kind of feel that hand over your heart feeling. And when you're in that kind of mood. This is the book for you. This is The Bookshop and the Barbarian by Morgan Stang.

**Roxanna Kassam Kara** 28:48

That sounds like the perfect book to read on Kindle dark mode when you're up in the middle of the night. Like honestly perfect.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 28:54

If you're troubled in any way and you feel like you need that kind of gentleness. But again, I do want to say this is not you know, this is not Legend and Lattes. Okay, so if you haven't read that one, it would always be my first recommendation this scratch that same sort of itch and it was a lovely companion on a very dark night for me.

**Roxanna Kassam Kara** 29:13

I love that I hadn't heard you bring that and you know, I read Legends and Lattes after Betsie recommended it to you. You recommended it to me. Yeah. And it was such a hit for me. And so I know exactly what mood you're talking about. I'm for sure. Gonna go download it and I'll have it there and ready for when I'm in that mood.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 29:29

Well, I'm going to tell you I was saving this. Well, I read this one very, very quickly. So it was really just like a couple of hours. It's very, it's I think maybe I read it on Kindle was like 225 It's very short. And so when I finished it, I was like, I'm gonna actually save this one as a surprise for Roxanna the next time we record together,

**Roxanna Kassam Kara** 29:46

I was gonna ask, I was like, Yeah, heard of this because I know, so fast. She's reading.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 29:52

I knew you were gonna notice when you were like, wait, I haven't heard of this book. So I was saving this as a little treat for you. I love that.

**Roxanna Kassam Kara** 29:58

That's the perfect treat um, for sure. We're gonna go download it. Maybe it'll get me out of my next book slump. Who knows if you're in the right mood.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 30:05**

Yes. Although with your book coma that you're in, I'm hesitant to recommend anything to you. But okay, let's talk about, let's talk about your third book.

**Roxanna Kassam Kara 30:12**

Yeah. And that's the perfect segue, Meredith, because my third book today is City of Brass by S.A. Chakraborty. Oh my god Meredith, I am so excited to talk about this book. This was a five star read for me. So much so that as I said, I immediately chased it with the next two books in the trilogy, which I have never done in my life. So here's the setup. City of Brass is the first book in a high fantasy trilogy. It opens on Nahri who was just a girl out doing her best to try and get by in Cairo in the 18th century Ottoman Empire. So that's where this book takes place in the 18th century, Ottoman Empire, Cairo and the world surrounding it, which is a world unfamiliar to all of us. I would say to most of us if we're not studying that. And you know, our PhD Nahri is a con artist who delights in swindling the rich. She's practical, she's street smart, and though she has dreams of being a doctor, she knows her place and is content just to get by. Until one day as she's conning someone, she accidentally summons Dara who is a darkly mysterious djinn warrior, and djinns are beings of fire and smoke that Nahri has only heard of in childhood stories and never thought they actually existed. So here Dara shows up, he is dark and mysterious and dangerous and handsome, and he tells her of a city called Daevabad, which is the legendary City of Brass. He tells Nahri that she must travel there to be saved from the ghouls and other evil magical beings who are now pursuing her. So we then follow Nahri and Dara into the city where things really start to get complicated. There are 16 tribes living together amongst centuries of strife and conflict. We meet the King who is trying to rule them all with an iron fist. And we meet his son, Prince Alizayd, who has an idealistic vision of the city where everyone is equal. And then we see Nahri Dara, and Alizayd fates intertwined for decades to come. So in this book, there is political conspiracies, there is palace intrigue, there are class and race tensions. There are magic rings, there are goals, there are mitad mythical creatures of the sea in the air, there are genies that have been trapped in bottles for millennia. It's a world unlike any I've ever read before. And I think that's why I left it because it was so different, but it is not. And I repeat, it is not for everyone. So I'm gonna run down the things that I really loved about this book. And then I'm gonna run down the other things that you need to know, to figure out if this book is for you. So Meredith, we read this book together, we buddy read it. And I know we felt very similar, kind of that first 50% of the book. Yeah, at the end, once it finished, I'll say it was lush, it was atmospheric. It was captivating. It had characters that you don't want to let go. And it was a great mix of plot and character driven. You know, you get lots of character development on the main characters. But then you get a lot of enchanted daggers stabbing undead ghouls and vengeance and sea monsters. That's all great.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 30:50**

And flying carpet and flying carpets.

**Roxanna Kassam Kara 33:13**

Exactly. Yes, exactly. And by the end, you know, you're just completely absorbed. But it is also complex and confusing. And I say borderline inaccessible. You know, the worlds, the tribes. The systems of magic are so complex, they're almost Byzantine. Like, it's almost impossible to understand it all. And you don't know if you're supposed to understand it all. Or if you're supposed to just let some of it go and

follow the story. It's just hard to keep track of. And I think we both found, Meredith that it's pretty unevenly paced. It starts with a bang and you're in it. You're following Nahri and Dara. And then suddenly descends into this plotting world building until almost 50% of the way through the book. Like there were several times between you and I, where we were like, Should we continue meeting like,

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 34:02

yeah, yeah, we were gonna set it down. And I had that it was at 43% that both of us were like, Okay, now we're in

**Roxanna Kassam Kara** 34:08

Yeah, and that for a book this size, like 500 pages or something? Like, that's a significant investment, you know, and I think that was news to both of us, because we had just heard, okay, this is a great series, dive right in, people love it. But I think it's important that people know, upfront like this author, Shannon Chakraborty, she's a huge history buff. And she's taken elements of so many of these Muslim cultures, and woven them together in interesting ways. And that's what makes it magical. Like she's taken the great library of Baghdad and weapons in ancient Persia and ancient Arabic medical practices and mogul art, and she's woven it all together. But she didn't start this as a novel. She started this as an exercise for herself in world building. And once I read that, I was like, Yeah, that's what this feels like, like a passion project in world building, up until that 43% mark And then I think she gets her feet under her and it starts to go. And I will say, once you read it, the second book and the third book go down a lot easier, because now you have the world building. And she gets much better at that pacing, that third one is so tight. Like I said, I read all 300 pages in four days. But tensions between tribes that palace intrigue, that is through the whole book. So if that's not something that you really, really love, and I mean, really love, this is not the series for you. It's, it's got a lot in it. And you've got to love action. But you've also got to love all this world building to really enjoy this book as much as I did.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 35:38

Yes, I mean, I would say that I really ended up liking the first, I read the first book with you, and then you very wisely knew that I wasn't planning on continuing to read it and you took off on your own. I really liked the first book, once I got to the end, I was like this was this was quite good. I stumbled more than you did, in the first part, because there were many descriptions of weapons and clothing and buildings. And like, there were things that I literally couldn't visualize, because I didn't understand the words I didn't. It wasn't calling up images for me. And so I was I was stumbling over that part of it, it felt inaccessible is a really good word to use. And then, by the end, the reason I didn't continue is because by then I was able to say, I really liked the story, it completed enough in that first book for me to feel satisfied. But I also recognize exactly what you brought up, which is the political machinations. That's not enough of a draw for me. But it's something you really, really love. And so it was really a draw a long for you. So I loved being able to experience that with you. And then as you went through the books, because I had read that first book, you were able to I mean, we did what we often do what I do with thrillers for you. And what you do for other books for me is we spoil the books for each other. But I now feel like I've read the entire series, because you were giving me a play by play

**Roxanna Kassam Kara 37:04**

well, and that was so satisfying for me because I would literally like get up in the middle of the night and start reading this book, and then get up in the morning. And everybody's like, off we go. And I was like, I have to talk about what happened in this book. And I was literally like locking myself in my walk in closet and leaving you a really rushed message because it was just bursting out of me all the action and all that everything that had happened in that book.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 37:26**

Well, I think you did a great job of really letting people know all the great things that they can find in the series, but some places where they need to be aware reader know thyself, and so I think that that's really useful. All right. Also in the category of reader know thyself, I'm going to let you know that the third book I'm going to talk about is the new Riley Sager, which comes out June 20. It's *The Only One Left* by Riley Sager. Alright, here's the setup, and it starts out with one of my absolute favorite things, which is a murderous rhyme. Oh, yes. "At 17 Lenora Hope hung her sister with a rope, stabbed her father with a knife and took her mother's happy life. It wasn't me, Leonora said, but she's the only one not dead." Oh, I love her murder rhyme. It's really so satisfying to me. Alright, late one night in 1929, as the rhyme tells us three of the four members of the whole family were violently murdered. The only one left from the title was 17 year old Lenora Hope but the police were never able to prove her involvement. Because, you know, 1929. She long maintained her innocence except now when our story starts in 1983, She's not maintaining anything, because Lenora has had a series of strokes and she can't speak or walk anymore. Also, Lenora hasn't set foot outside of Hopes End the cliffside mansion where the massacre occurred since that fateful night. Enter home health aid Kit McDeere, who was sent in to help care for poor wheelchair bound Lenora and Lenora can only communicate with Kit by tapping out sentences on an old typewriter, which is creepy, and one night Lenora makes Kit an offer. I want to tell you everything about the night when my family was murdered. But then more creepy as things happen, and Kit start to suspect that Lenora might not be telling the truth, and that the seemingly harmless women in her care could be far more dangerous than anyone thought. That's the perfect Riley Sager setup, right? He does premises really, really well. But let me tell you the note that I made the second I closed the book was this. "Oh my Well, that was interesting. Except that it wasn't black. What a mess." That was my first note. Oh, yes. Now after a bit of time, I've gotten some perspective a little bit at least, I definitely see that this was Riley Sager's run at writing a gothic manor house mystery. Clearly his publisher simply It lets him know what the trend is and he turns out whatever's hot at the moment. The problem is, but for nuggets of that core premise, there was nothing about this book that was very interesting, or original in any way. And if it had been interesting, but unoriginal or really original, but written in a clunky way, I think I would have liked either version of that better, but both boring and unoriginal, I don't think I can overlook that. Now we know I've struggled with a book, when in order to review it, I have to go back to the wonderful CAWPILE system of review. That is a sign that I am struggling to talk about a book. So let's do that. The characters from the cawpile system, the characters were thin at best, the atmosphere was uneven. The writing was not impressive in any way. The plot was extraordinarily slow in the first 25%, to the point where I told you Roxanna in a message that if this had been anyone other than Riley Sager, I would have DNFd the book already. Now the plot definitely picked up. But by the end, it was so twisty as to be humorous. It was intriguing, but only because I wanted to figure out actually what happened. I wanted to get to the resolution. And as far as the logic and relationships, well, I'm gonna let you read the book and decide for yourself because going into that

more would be spoiler filled. Finally, overall enjoyment. I can't say I really enjoyed this book. I wasn't angry about it at any point, like I was with *Survive the Night* his book two books ago. And I did want to find out the ultimate resolution, but the whole thing just felt silly. It was almost like a parody of itself. At the end of the day, I just kind of felt sorry for this book. I didn't feel like it was anyone's best effort. And that made me really sad. What I will say is that the House, Hopes End, is a true character in and of itself, and maybe the most interesting character. There were some features of the house that I find myself thinking about all the time. Now. Well, I'm sure that there will be a lot of people who will read and enjoy this book compared to some of his earlier books. This one felt like another effort for a beach house. He just needed to earn the money, or worse, he just needed to put out a book a year, which I think has become the death knell for so many authors. I know that Riley Sager isn't great literature and I don't need him to be, but I do need to at least feel like he's trying. And in this case, I didn't. This is *The Only One Left* by Riley Sager.

**Roxanna Kassam Kara** 42:35

Okay, so let me ask you a question. Meredith. You've given it the good old college try with young Mr. Sager here for a while. Are you going to read his next one?

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 42:45

Yeah, yeah. I will. Because there have been many. So again, I didn't hate this one. I didn't quit reading it. Although in that first one that was a slow burn for Riley Sager. Normally, one of the things he does for you really well even in *Survive the Night* which is just a garbage fire, He at least doesn't bore you in the first 25%. So that was something that I really struggled with in this book, but his premises are great. This has an amazing end theme that is quite quite memorable. And every few books he does something that I really really liked the book that was last summer's book, *The House Across the Lake*, I actually really ended up liking it a lot. So for me, he's kind of like, one book will come out and I love it and then the next book all not love it too much. So he's uneven, but absolutely autobuy and I will continue buying, reading and bringing whatever my opinions are to the book about Riley Sager.

**Roxanna Kassam Kara** 43:39

Okay, okay, I wondered that I thought you and Elizabeth had a great chat on *All Things Murderfull* about whether you should expect authors to keep getting better or whether it's okay for them to do the same thing. But what I heard you say here, it's not that you were expecting him to get better. You're just expecting him to try and sometimes he does try and it's great. And then you can tell when he hasn't tried.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 44:03

Right and that really that's a writerly trigger for me. I mean, I eviscerated Phillip Margolin's new book for that exact reason. Now, don't get me wrong. *The Only One Left* is a much better book than than that. I can't even remember the name of that Phillip Margolin book. We're not anywhere near that same territory here. This is a perfectly fine summer thriller. I just Yeah, I just it's a trigger for me when I feel that writers aren't trying as much. But okay, let's talk about our deep dive which we are going to talk a little bit about today. The book that is my favorite book so far if 2023 I'm almost positive it is going to be my top I will be completely shocked if it's not my top book of the year and that is *The Fourth Wing* by Rebecca Yarros. Now, I brought it to the show already. So I've already set it up on the show. This is

another fantasy, This is not high fantasy like City of Brass That series you properly let us know that that series is high fantasy. This is YA fantasy. This is summer beach reading fantasy. We are in a different place here. Now you read it and I was like, wait no stop stop stop when I found out you were already in it. I literally if we had been in person, I would have grabbed you and wrestled it away from you. Because I was like, No, you're not reading it the right time. You're in a book hangover. You're in a book coma from a series. That was way too, like still in that fantasy realm. So everyone's heard how much I love the Fourth Wing. Let's hear what you thought about the Fourth Wing.

**Roxanna Kassam Kara 45:16**

Yes. Okay, so I will say importantly, you did not push this book upon me. In fact, you tried to pull it away from my hands. You never suggested that I should read it. I just heard about it from you went to Libby and it was available and there was no hold. And I thought, well, if I don't get this now, I won't get it. And so which was a smart move? Right. So then I thought I should read it. But the worst thing I did is exactly what you said. I tend to read it while I was reading City of Brass. So two fantasies, one not accessible and very complex. One super accessible and popcorn. So mistake number one, I'll just say wrong timing. Just because the Libby hold comes in does not mean I am not beholden to Libby's priority. So I should, I should have learned that, but I will just say the things I loved about this book, it's 100%. Fast paced. It is 100% unputdownable. I read it in four days, I listened to it on audio. This was another one I like I've ignored my kids for basically a month straight.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 46:46**

I'm surprised that they're still alive. I mean, it's because of Aziz. They're still alive.

**Roxanna Kassam Kara 46:51**

Hopefully they are I haven't really seen them today hopefully they made it to school. I have no idea what's going on with them. But my reading log is looking great. Let me tell you. So yeah, I read it really quickly. I liked the overall story. And it is I think, super accessible fantasy for people who are not really into fantasy. It is it goes down really easy. And it's fun. And it's thrilling. Yeah, and I'm not I wouldn't say I'm super into fantasy. I just I found the cliches and the tropes too much for me. So you know, it didn't seem like a twist or a play on a trope. It was the exact trope, and it played out exactly how you'd expect it to. And then with sort of the cheesy dialogue and the cheesy descriptions, I just was like cringing. I think I also listened to it on audio, and then you know how that makes the dialogue kind of come to life. And it was literally like, Oh, she didn't just say that. Oh, you know, like guessing where else my mouth has been or something. And I was like, oh my god, like I just I found it difficult to take. And there's you know, the weak girl who's actually stronger than you think there is the bad boy who's named Xaden who has all these tattoos, you know,

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 47:01**

His name is terrible. Xaden with an X A D E N no Xaden is just fire flesh made fire like he is so hot. But his name is terrible. I'm gonna I'm gonna give you that. It's just It's terrible.

**Roxanna Kassam Kara 48:12**

I didn't know it had an X because I listened on audio now you're telling me like, oh my god just made it worse. And he's like, has all these tattoos and everybody says Stay away from him. And then she sees

him and he's just dangerously beautiful, like wonder what's gonna happen. And you know, the protective best friend and I just it was a lot. No, I will say I loved Hunger Games. I loved ACOTAR And you could say many of the same things I just said about the Fourth Wing, you could easily say about both of those series, and they didn't bother me a job in either of them. I will stand up for Sarah J Maas till the day I die. And that has, you know, some of the same things. As I was thinking about why this one particularly had me kind of eye rolling and the others didn't. And we've talked a bit about this. It really helped had me kind of understand myself as a reader. So I like tropes and predictability but in very specific types of books. I like them in romances. I like them in cozy mysteries, and I like them in middle grade mysteries. But everywhere else, I hate it. I hate the idea of readalikes I like all my books to be different. I like the first book I read that is like something and no other so like I read a My Grandmother Asked Me to Tell You She's Sorry by Fredrik Backman, like 10 years ago or whatever that was the only curmudgeon book I read, that I loved. Every other one to me is derivative, even A Man Called Ove because I've like no, I've read that story. I don't need to read that story again. And I think I feel the same way when I read Hunger Games. That was new to me when I read I cantar it was new to me. And of course there were tropes there but there are not tropes that I had read because it hadn't been fantasy before and hadn't read dystopian before. So to me, it was like, This is amazing. I love these characters. And this is what they're going through is so cool. And I just and the names are just as cheesy there I'll say but for some reason because it was new to me. I really loved it. And so I think now I've learned for most genres, if I'm going back to it, I need something different, like, I need a city of brass, which is completely different. Rather than doing the same thing again,

#### **Meredith Monday Schwartz 50:12**

I mean, can I just say, I just had the most massive aha moment about my own reading? Because, yes, I know this about your reading. And it's your forte, your four wing really shows itself in this way where you this is a major, you know, you're a three or a hardcore three, but you've got a strong four wing. And it definitely shows itself with this kind of thing where you're like, I've read that book before. I want to read something new. But then, like you said, but then in your romance, as you'll read, you'll read and reread Yes, yes, totally. Right. And me too, like the sexy Regency romance that, I mean, I will read that over and over again, in my mysteries and thrillers. I'm very weird about trope-iness, like I'll complain all the time about like, oh, my gosh, the friends whose something happened to in high school and somebody died, and now they're all back together. And it's a reunion and they're their secrets. I'm very triggered by tropes in mysteries and thrillers. But I'd never thought about in fantasy. I just had this mind blown emoji moment. Because the tropes that bothered you here were exactly part of the reason why I loved the Fourth Wing. Because, well, first of all, especially the second half of the book, I did not find it to be predictable at all. And the Fourth Wing really does have two fairly distinct halves. Yes, you know, and so but my advice to everyone has always been read the first couple chapters. If you're feeling eye roll-y about it, don't continue, because some of the same things that are going to make you feel that way, we'll continue all the way through. But in that first half, which of course we're not going to spoil anything, the things that were happening, in my mind, it felt like things were Tetris, the locking into place in the right way, like with a satisfying click, and so all the places where it was rubbing against you, where you were like, Oh, my God, oh, my, I was like, yes. And yes, and yes, that's what and do it again, and do it like I was just feeling exactly right about it. And then the other thing, and again, you listen to it or not, you just did everything the way I wouldn't have wanted you to do it. Roxanna, you really, really rebelled in this way, I was gonna pick the perfect time for you to read it. I was gonna pull it out of my



back pocket and be like, You know what you need? You need the Fourth Wing. Okay, you listened to the audio. And as we've said, there are two scenes spicy scenes. So this book is not to hand to your 13 year old, no, the Fourth Wing and I said this when he talked about on the show, there's definite adult content, I gave it a four to five on the spicy scale. So we said really, really, really know that not only are there two very skippable scenes if you want to you can definitely skip those scenes. They don't affect the plotline readers who like who really loved the book really loved those scenes, because there was this build, you know, there's a slow burn romance, and then it has a payoff. So I loved those scenes, but I read them, I did not listen to them. I would not want to listen to them. You guys know how I feel about that? How did you feel about those scenes in in your ears?

**Roxanna Kassam Kara 53:16**

You know, at that point, I was listening at 2.5 speed, which Oh gee, I never do. But I was just like, I gotta make it through this friggin book. I just gotta see what happens. And then I just need to see them get together and then I just need to move on. So it was very, like anticlimactic. I thought the scenes themselves, I'd say written or audio, were well done. Like, you're right, you know, she built the tension up to that pitch, perfect point. And then when those scenes happen, you like, like you said, you are ready for them to happen. And I thought that payoff was really good. And that payoff didn't come to 77% into the book, like she she builds that story. And she builds those characters, you know, in a way that when it comes off, it's a real payoff, which I thought actually was really well done. I just by that point, I was like, I'm kind of done with this.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 54:01**

Okay, so if I tell you, you know, you know that I was reading this the last 40% I had the ability to read on an eight hour flight back from Hawaii, which was just like the most wonderful reading experience that I cried literal tears in the back half of the book, would that surprise you?

**Roxanna Kassam Kara 54:17**

And that actually would really surprise me. Yeah

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 54:20**

I was I was so affected by this book. I mean, really, honestly. Now. So we've talked about the book and how you feel about it. Let's talk a little bit about how you felt you know, again, we talked about everything that we're reading. So how did you feel about telling me how you felt about the fourth meeting after you read it in the absolute wrong time and in the wrong format?

**Roxanna Kassam Kara 54:43**

Honestly, I should have just come to you. And you know, like, we tell each other every single book we're reading I tell you about books I DNF all the time so to not tell you this was killing me because I picked it up and was like, Okay, this Thursday, I'm gonna go for a walk in my favorite place. I'm gonna have this in my ear. Everybody's talking about it, it's going to be the best time ever. I'm going to get myself a croissant like I had this whole day planned. And then I started and was like, What is this, you know, and then I continued to listen. And I'm like cringing, and I really, but I didn't want to tell you, because I know you loved it. I didn't want to yuck your yum. And I just was like, I can't tell her this. So then I randomly secretly like posted it on Instagram and tagged it was like, Oh, my God, let me just hope for the best. I

was like, I can't like, it's a great book in the right way. And I didn't want to come and be like, Why don't want ya. Because that's not what it was. It was just, it was the perfect storm of things that were wrong for me that led to this book not being a hit for me.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 55:41**

Right. And you were when we did talk about I did see that I woke up in the middle of the night and saw that post. And I was like, what, but when we did talk about it, you were very, you know, I mean, the way you always talk about books is with a lot of graciousness, you very rarely, you know, just rip and rip a book to shreds, and certainly hear you were very gentle with my feelings about how but then you also didn't shy away from how it had really landed for you, which I think is important, you know, in a reading partnership that we not be like, Okay, well, that book is a sacred cow. So we just can't speak of it. I think it's really important for us, all of us who buddy read books together who are sort of walking the bookish road together to be able to say, I hear and understand and love all the ways that this book worked for you reading partner or bookish friends in the Facebook community. And I really respect that. And I love how much it worked for you. Here were the things that I struggled with. But I see both sides of it. And I think that's the thing is that it's the the ability to say it didn't work for me. And I'm going to figure out why that was instead of just being like, I hated that book, and everyone who loved it is an idiot, like, who would, you know, I want to say who would ever say that. But the reality is, especially with books that are getting a lot of traction, like big hype ebooks, that can definitely happen. So I'm very, very glad that we were able to have these bookish discussions, I'm very glad that we were able to talk about on the big show, because I know that there are a lot of people who felt exactly the way that you did about it. And they might be feeling a little bit weird in the face of all of the raves and accolades to say, you know, this didn't really work for me. And, you know, we don't necessarily need to yuck anybody, you know, in anyone's yard, unless there's a really specific reason to do it. So we wanted to give voice to an alternate opinion on the show.

**Roxanna Kassam Kara 57:36**

Well, and can I say one more thing that I realized, yeah, and I know this about me, and you know this about me, but it just now is a dominant thing that I'm gonna think about, every time I pick up a book, I am allergic type, I break out into hives, when there is hype, because I am the Special Snowflake four and if you bring me something that I you know, I haven't found, it's never gonna live up to my expectations. I just have really high expectations. And I realized that expectations affect my reading almost more than anything else. Yeah. And so I read Hunger Games 10 years after it came out, because I randomly found it in a little free library. And yeah, that was the best reading experience for me. If I had read it when it came out, I guarantee I would not have liked it, you know? Yeah. And so I have to, it's not that I can't read hype books, I just have to wait for the hype to die down. And a lot of readers have smartly said this, Kaytee said this on the last, you know, on the last show you guys recorded I have to wait particularly myself for like a year. And then I have to go back and look at the Goodreads reviews and read through comments and say, okay, has this book stood the test of time? And will it work for me? And I think that's a case of reader know thyself, like you really have to know, because a lot of people said, well, the hype was like, no, like, the hype was why I picked it up, and I wanted to be doing what everybody else was doing. And I loved it, because the hype was there. And I felt like I was together with people, you know, experiencing this book for the first time. So it can hit very differently. But people like what they like, and like everybody should feel free to like what they like and

just like I don't like when people slam down Sarah J Moss, for example, or calling Hoover or whatever, you know, I think it's important to be reading what you love, and being able to say that unabashedly, whether it's on Instagram, whether it's in the bookish friends group, and not have people, you know, people can say to your point, this is why it didn't work for me. But accepting everybody's really choices I think is really important. A really important part of the meeting life. Right?

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 59:32

Exactly, exactly. I couldn't agree more. Okay, let's make a couple of wishes of the fountain. Okay, what's your wish?

**Roxanna Kassam Kara** 59:38

Okay, so my wish, funnily enough, speaking about tropes. My wish is that everybody goes and reads Happiness for Beginners by Katherine Center. So here is an example of tropes done right. Okay. This is the perfect summer read. When I started this book, though, I will say my eyes were again, rolling in the back of my head because it felt so cliched. Okay, this is about a woman in her mid 30s, who's just going through a divorce. She wants to get over it and start her life anew. So what does she do? She signs up for an outward bound expedition a la, Cheryl Strayed's Wild, and she's gonna go out and do this. And then just as she's about to pull out, who does she see? Well, her younger brothers cute, best friend who's gonna come with her. And so by this point, I was like, Ah, I cannot read a book like this. But this book surprised me so much. So I give you all that setup to say stick with it, because it's not what you expect it to be. This woman goes on this expedition, she thinks it's going to be her Eat, Pray, Love. And it is not her Eat, Pray. It is a bunch of frat kids who've come together and who basically leave her the dust. And she has to figure out how to kind of come to peace with their choices, and work through it. And her relationship with this guy. And her relationship with the people she meets is just really transforms her but not in a cheesy way. She's kind of jaded and sarcastic and older than everybody. And that all comes through like I loved her character. It reminds me actually of the protagonist in search, like a bit more like kind of jaded. And you know, you can see how she's feeling compared to everybody else. And she just learned so much about herself that it was really, really well done. Katherine Center is really good about kind of doing bittersweet romances, I think she calls them. And this book, I wouldn't even call a romance. It's got romance. But that's not the focus of it. It's like a coming of age story for like midlife, I'd say. And she just does it really, really well. And every time I read it three times, now every time I read it, I find something else about it. Like this time I thought, you know, her relationship with her brother was so beautiful. And it made me think about my relationship with my brother. So I just say it's a great book. It's a wonderful summer book to pick up. And you can read it on so many levels. So I know this is currently reading chestnut, a lot of us love this book. But if you haven't picked it up, now's the time. So I'm going to do a pink splash for that.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 1:02:02

Excellent. I love how much you love Katherine Center's books.

**Roxanna Kassam Kara** 1:02:05

I really do. I've read so many of them now. And I love them. That's a place where tropes work for me. You know, I read The Bodyguard and I loved it. And yeah, I love her books.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 1:02:14

All right, well, my wish is going to be short. And it summarizes everything that we've talked about today in the show, which is reader know thyself, read to make you happy. So if there's a book that's getting all the drama, all the FOMO you know, all the hype, and you know that you don't like hate books, and you know that you don't like fantasy. And you know that if there's a dragon, you know, you don't want to read it, know thyself and be okay with not picking it up. Don't pick it up, and then rail about it. In the same way that there's a book that a lot of people are talking about right now, In Memoriam by Alice Wynn. And man, it is making so many people's like, they're saying Best of 2023 for me, and I know what it's about. And I know that it's exactly not right for me. And so I'm not going to pick it up. And I'm not going to pick it up. Because you know what I don't want to do, I don't want to pick it up, knowing it's not for me, but hearing all the hype, not like it, and then bring it to the show to talk about how I didn't like it. Because that doesn't feel like serving me in my reading. But it also doesn't serve the reader Lee community. For me to know a book is not for me, and to put myself in the way of a bad review of it. So my wish is that we would all just really take the time to know ourselves in all the different ways we've talked about today. And then put that into practice, and hold space for everyone being really different. And I think that if we do that, we continue to make this bookish space for currently reading and Bookstagram at large, a really wonderful part of our lives. All right, that is it for this week. As a reminder, here's where you can connect with us. You can find me I'm Meredith at @Meredith.reads on Instagram and Kaytee is at @notesonbookmarks on Instagram.

**Roxanna Kassam Kara** 1:04:01

And I am @Roxannathereader on Instagram, I was locked out on my previous account. So this is my new account Roxannathereader so please come follow me there.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 1:04:10

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](https://currentlyreadingpodcast.com).

**Roxanna Kassam Kara** 1:04:20

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**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 1:04:32

And if you want more of this kind of content, you can join us as a patron subscriber for \$5 a month. You can also rate and review us on Apple podcast and shout us out on social media and all of those things help us to find our perfect audience.

**Roxanna Kassam Kara** 1:04:46

And we especially love those five star reviews. Thank you so much for that.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 1:04:50

All right until next week, May or coffee be hot,

**Roxanna Kassam Kara** 1:04:53  
and your book be unputdownable.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 1:04:55  
Happy reading Roxanna,

**Roxanna Kassam Kara** 1:04:56  
happy reading Meredith