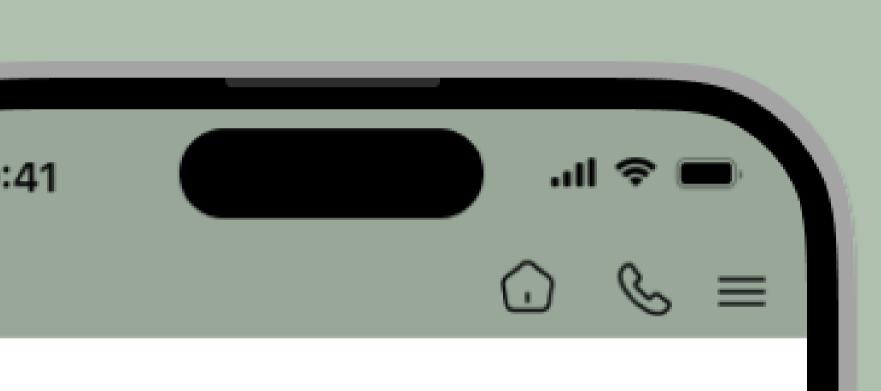
BOOK Cafe Connecting loved ones through the joy of reading, from the comfort of your home.

But when Kya ran to the porch, she saw her mother in a long brown skirt, kick pleats nipping at her ankles, as she walked down the sandy lane in high heels. The stubby-nosed shoes were fake alligator skin. Her only going-out pair. Kya wanted to holler out but knew not to rouse Pa, so opened the door and stood on the brick-'n'-board steps. From there she saw the blue train case Ma carried. Usually, with the confidence of a pup, Kya knew her mother would return with meat wrapped in greasy brown paper or with a chicken, head dangling down. But she never wore the gator heels, never took a case.

to wait.

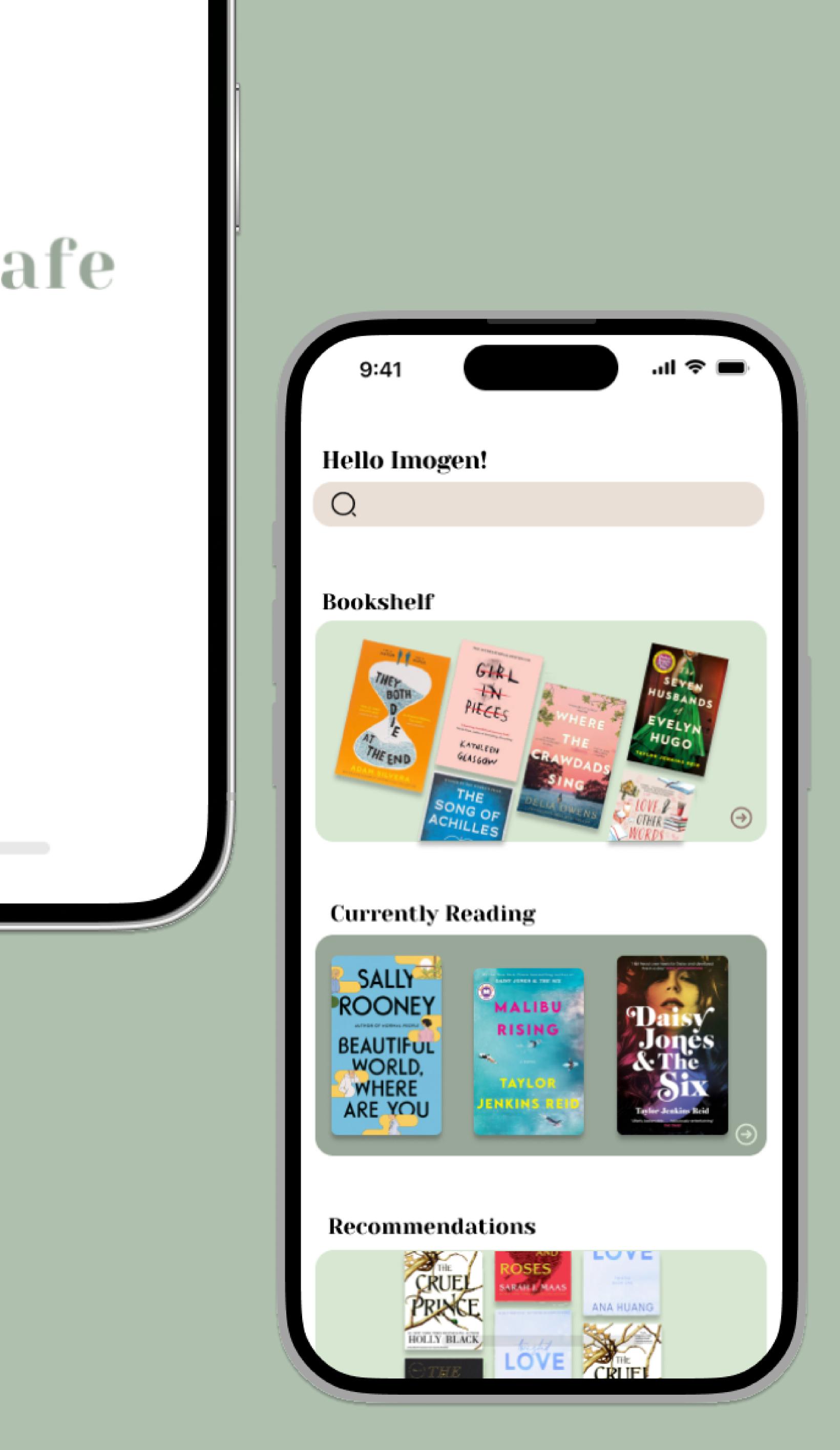


The morning burned so August-hot, the marsh's moist breath hung the oaks and pines with fog. The palmetto patches stood unusually quiet except for the low, slow flap of the heron's wings lifting from the lagoon. And then, Kya, only six at the time, heard the screen door slap. Standing on the stool, she stopped scrubbing grits from the pot and lowered it into the basin of worn-out suds. No sounds now but her own breathing. Who had left the shack? Not Ma. She never let the door slam.

Ma always looked back where the foot lane met the road, one arm held high, white palm waving, as she turned onto the track, which wove through bog forests, cattail lagoons, and maybe-if the tide obliged-eventually into town. But today she walked on, unsteady in the ruts. Her tall figure emerged now and then through the holes of the forest until only swatches of white scarf flashed between the leaves. Kya sprinted to the spot she knew would bare the road; surely Ma would wave from there, but she arrived only in time to glimpse the blue case-the color so wrong for the woods--as it disappeared. A heaviness, thick as black-cotton mud, pushed her chest as she returned to the steps

9:41 Book Cafe

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Problem:

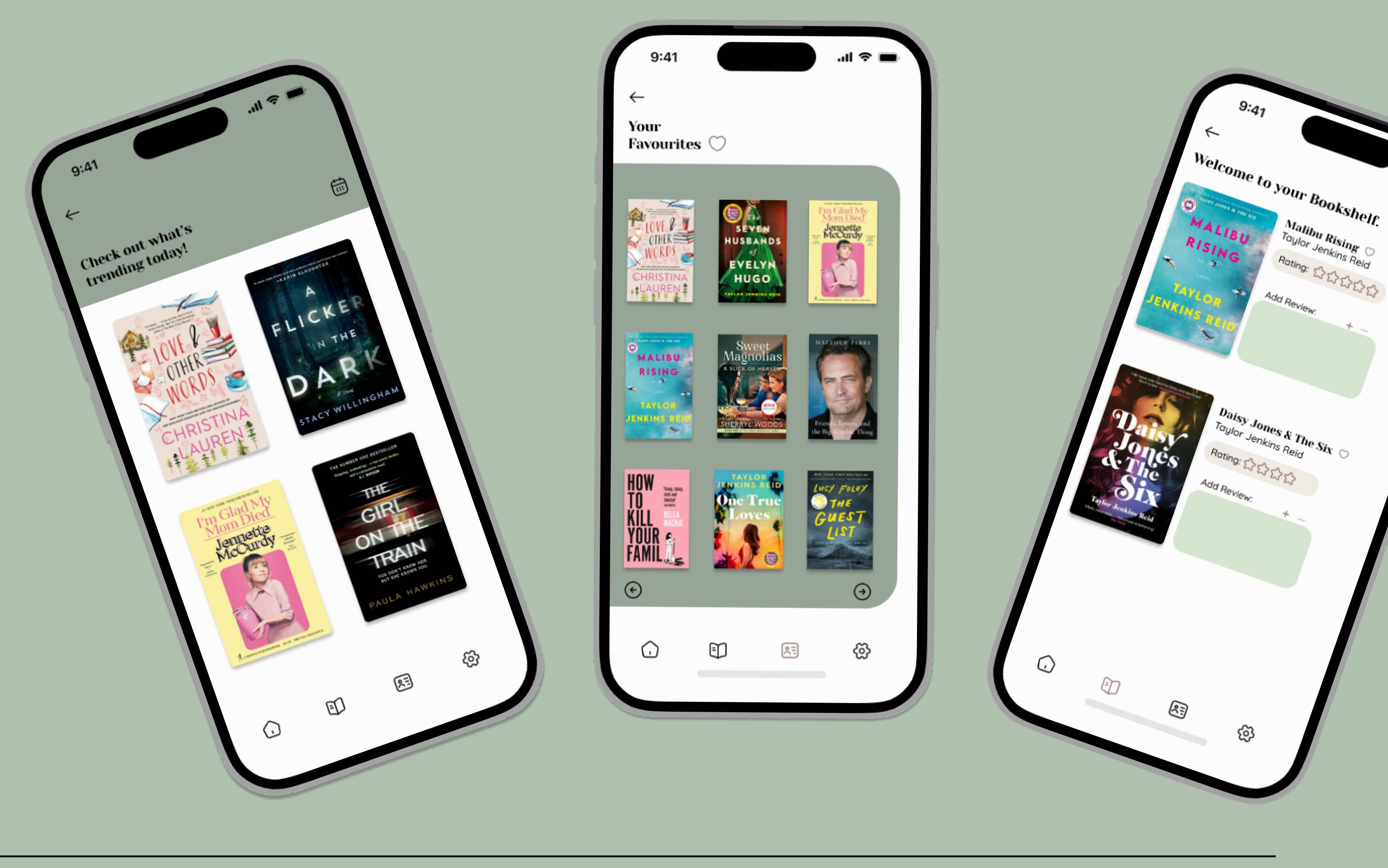
Loneliness is a continuing issue around the globe. The younger generations are now at a higher risk of loneliness than the elderly due to a variety of reasons, such as the use of social media and the rise of mental health issues. Without a solution, loneliness can cause further issues for individuals.

Proposal:

The Book Cafe is an app aimed for individuals to read digitally with their loved ones, with the microphone of their device. This app aims to tackle loneliness by giving users the joy of being able to read with their friends and family digitally, while still being in the comfort of their own home.

Process:

From my research, I discovered that loneliness is often caused by social isolation, which has increased since the coronavirus pandemic. I also discovered that reading is a common hobby among those who struggle with loneliness. Therefore, design has the ability to connect those with loved ones through the joy and benefits of reading.





Social and Environmental Impact:

Social:

The Book Cafe aims to benefit people by connecting them with loved ones online, through the fun of reading books together. This will be beneficial as it can allow users to feel less lonely, by communicating with fellow readers and also being given the option to stay in the comfort of their own homes.

This app is suitable for all people and generations, as reading is a universal hobby. All individuals are able to use this app, as I want it to be a safe space for people to come and relax and read a book.

Environmental:

This proposal aims to make a positive difference within the natural world, as The Book Cafe provides digital books. This helps to save the amount of trees needed to be cut down in order to make paper for books. Therefore, this should have a positive impact on the planet long term as it will help in reducing the amount of tree cutting.



Research Process:

Secondary **Research**:

I began my research by looking into current reading applications and their features, to see if my proposal was already created. This research allowed me to finalise my proposal and discover the benefits of these reading applications, such as being able to read anywhere at anytime.

When researching, I also discovered that reading books has a large variety of advantages. Reading can reduce stress by up to 68%, as well as reading for as little as 30 minutes a week can cause a greater life satisfaction.

Primary **Research**:

For my primary research, I sent out a survey regarding loneliness and technology. This survey allowed me analyse the links between these two aspects, and to see if the use of technology can improve lives.

My survey shows that 88.5% of responses have felt lonely during their life, and that 47.4% believe that the use of technology has improved their lives.



Systems **Thinking:**

After completing my research, I began to define my proposal. I wanted to design an app that will be beneficial for individuals, while being able to connect with others.

This is how I decided on my idea for The Book Cafe, as this proposal offers the benefits of reading books, as well as reading them with friends and family which can help to combat loneliness.

Viability:

I believe that this proposal would work in the real world because it is a unique idea that has not yet been developed. Reading has become more and more popular over the past couple of years due to the coronavirus and the rise of book readers on platforms such as TikTok and YouTube. The Book Cafe would also be successful as it allows users to connect with friends and family through enjoying a hobby together, instead of just communicating through any social media platform.

Funding & Finance:

For funding. there may be a few options available for The Book Cafe. For example, having a set price for the application itself, or having sponsored advertisements within the app. Funding may also be achievable through investors or start up sites too.

Measuring Success:

I would measure success through the number of application downloads, or by the number of books read on the app. This will show me how popular the app is and how many users it has attracted.

Potential Barriers:

Potential barriers may be that not everyone has access to a device that will be able to run the app. The app will also require a strong internet connection to ensure no lagging or lost connections when reading with another user. This may be a barrier for users as not all individuals has access to a stable wifi connection.

Adaptations:

Over time, my proposal could develop further features, such as being able to follow authors, or creating book groups with other users. I believe that The Book Cafe has a lot of further potential when it comes to designing more suitable features.



The Book Cafe is different from other existing interventions because the app allows users to read books along with fellow users. Currently, there are no other reading applications that offer this unique selling point. This aspect of the app would also be the surprising element of my proposal, as it has not yet been developed before.

This proposal is a hopeful alternative for the future because it brings people together through a unique way online, instead of through an average social media application. It will bring more people to the book reading community where they will receive the large number of benefits that reading brings. Users will be able to strengthen their personal connections with their loved ones on an entirely new level, where they can bond over their love of books together.





