

THE CHECKOUT

WINTER 2024/25

ISSUE #11

A REVIEW SOURCE WRITTEN BY LIBRARY
PATRONS FOR LIBRARY PATRONS

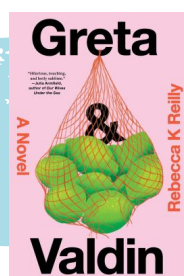


A PUBLICATION
OF THE
KENMORE
BRANCH
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FAMILIES: THE CORE OF YOUR BEING

BY REBECCA K.

To steal from another review of **Greta & Valdin** by Rebecca K. Reilly, "It sort of feels like you're just along for a very entertaining slice of life journey that's not necessarily heading anywhere." This story focuses mainly on two brilliant and unconventional siblings living together in New Zealand near their close, equally intelligent, and unorthodox family. The Vladisavljevs are a Russian immigrant and native Māori eclectic family of academics, each achieving varying degrees of success.



Greta, the youngest, is finding her path in life, and Valdin, the middle, is trying to overcome his mental issues and a broken heart as he starts a new career. So often with stories like these, the characters are achingly dysfunctional and/or damaged and it becomes painful to read but that is not the case in **Greta & Valdin**. The dialogue in the book was so incredibly clever and funny, it made me feel like I knew the characters and made them extremely relatable. The author also deals plainly with self-actualization, mental stability, gender, and race to make you think, possibly, a little deeper than normal. Ultimately this is a delightful book about people, families, and how they are intertwined.

LIBRARY TIP #1

DON'T FORGET THAT AS A NEW YORK STATE RESIDENT, YOU CAN SIGN UP FOR A NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY CARD! EXPAND YOUR LIBBY EBOOK & AUDIO OPTIONS BY GETTING A NYPL CARD TODAY!



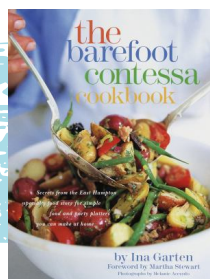
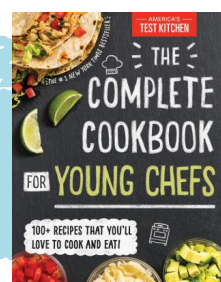
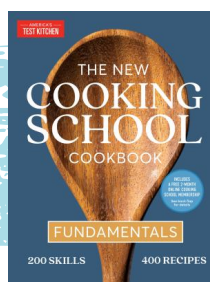
THE CHECKOUT: WINTER 2024/25



WOODCUT BY SUE K

FULL OF FLAVOR

BY CHRISTINA L.



Winter is full of flavor and if you are in a cooking rut (like myself), I recommend checking out some digital copies of cookbooks that will put that spark back in your kitchen. Brush up on fundamentals with **The New Cooking School Cookbook** or make a delicious recipe from the iconic **The Barefoot Contessa Cookbook**. The user friendly **Test Kitchen** collection is always a hit because the cooks already worked out all the recipe kinks for you. No more Google searching and hoping for the best. Also, Test Kitchen published a cookbook for young chefs that has been a huge hit my way (Fudgy Mug Cakes on p. 176 are delish!). Happy foodie season all! Hoping you will be inspired to kick up the heat and share a meal with friends!

YOU CAN FIND THESE TITLES AND MORE ON

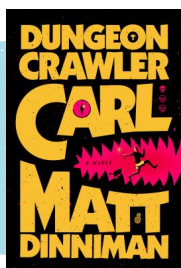


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ISSUE #11

LOOT, LAUGHS, AND LESSONS: ENTER THE WORLD OF DUNGEON CRAWLER CARL

BY MARGARET K.



LitRPG (Literary Role-Playing Game) is a genre of fiction where the story unfolds in a world governed by the rules and mechanics of a role-playing game, much like Dungeons and Dragons. Characters must win battles, level up their skills, and acquire new abilities and magical items along the way. I was curious to see how a story like this would read, and if **Dungeon Crawler Carl** by Matt Dinniman is any indication, it's a lot of fun!

In short, Earth has been destroyed by aliens and transformed into a televised reality game. Carl, along with his ex-girlfriend's cat, Princess Donut, must fight monsters, solve puzzles, and avoid traps to survive each level—and then do it all over again. The story is packed with dark humor, satirical social commentary, eccentric characters, and explosive action. The relationship and banter between Carl and Donut are the heart of the story, providing both its humor and charm. I'm excited to follow their adventures through this six-book series (with more to come)!



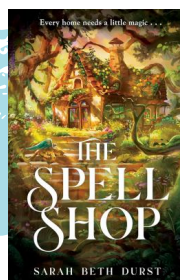
WOODCUT BY SUE K

THE CHECKOUT: WINTER 2024/25

A WARM HUG FANTASY

BY JULIE ANN D.

The Spellshop by Sarah Beth Durst is a delightful cozy cottagecore fantasy that's perfect for a relaxed reading session with a cup of tea and a jam-filled pastry. The story revolves around Kiela, an introverted librarian who is forced to flee her stacks to survive. With the help of her sassy assistant Caz, a sentient spider plant, she saves crates of forbidden spell books and retreats to her abandoned childhood island home. She makes the best of her new life with her resourcefulness, and opens a jam shop with her family's recipes. After listening to the locals talk about how the island environment is suffering, she knows she can do more to help them—with her magical spell books! Selling "remedies" to heal trees, she gains a following. The charming local residents quickly become her found family, adding depth and warmth to the narrative.



The romance in *The Spellshop* is a slow-burn subplot, focusing more on Kiela's personal growth and her journey to embrace her community. While not spicy, it's endearing and complements the main themes of courage and self-acceptance. Durst's world-building is enchanting, with delightful creatures like winged cats, mermaids, and cloud bears populating a vibrant and whimsical setting. Fans of **The House in the Cerulean Sea** by TJ Klune and **Legends and Lattes** by Travis Baldree, or anyone who enjoys the nostalgic charm of 1980s fantasy movies, will find *The Spellshop* to be a warm, comforting read. It's a book that feels like a snug hug, celebrating books, nature, and the magic of community. This book is sure to become "your jam!"

LIBRARY TIP #2

DID YOU KNOW A BUFFALO & ERIE COUNTY LIBRARY CARD IS NOW FREE FOR THOSE WHO LIVE OUT-OF-COUNTY? IF YOU'VE NEVER HAD A CARD BECAUSE YOU LIVE IN NIAGARA OR ANOTHER NEIGHBORING COUNTY, SIGN UP TODAY!



ISSUE #11

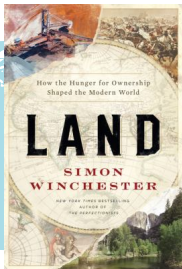
SMALL WORD, BIG CONCEPT

BY KAREN B.

Land: How the Hunger for Ownership Shaped the Modern World

by Simon Winchester

Simon Winchester offers us an encyclopedic overview of what land is and can be conceived to be in a narrative history that ties his personal interests and his life experiences together in this unique book. He begins his thoughts on land ownership with his own property purchase of 123 acres of mainly woodland in Dutchess County, New York. Coming from an English background of generations of non-landowners, his burgeoning thoughts on the subject become both sublime and gritty. He offers scientific insights (from geology, geography, cartography, etc.) that fuse with political insights on power, control, and influence, all buttressed by supporting historical examples from around the world at different periods in time. Prehistoric farmers, ancient astronomers, Enlightenment scientists, and zealous colonizers fill these pages to the brim.



He shares a multitude of details about land use and abuse that are woven into thematic chapters covering topics such as borderlines, stewardship, battlegrounds, and restoration. The good, the bad, and the ugly of human existence can be seen in all the facets of what land is that he examines and muses about. The biggest question of all—why can't we share land?—is the prime driver of the book's content. Although it is a simple question, I can see now why the answer is so complex. Recommended for anyone who likes to browse and ponder some of the bigger questions in life.

AN UNCONVENTIONAL MONSTER LOVE STORY

BY JULIE ANN D.



Someone You Can Build a Nest In is the debut book from John Wiswell, and I would categorize it as “horrorantasy”: both horror and fantasy are juxtaposed perfectly in a sweet romance. The idea of exploring the monster’s perspective, especially in a romantic context, offers a refreshing take on both genres.

The reader is thrown into the world of Shesheshen, the only surviving blob-like creature that absorbs and consumes parts of other life and inorganic pieces to build a body that she can then shape-shift to look human. She’s rudely awoken from early hibernation by a powerful family trying to end a curse. Sadly, she doesn’t know her history or where she came from, but is locally known as the “wurm,” part legend, part myth. Injured in battle, she wakes up to a gentle, warm-hearted, self-sacrificing human woman named Homily, who nurtures and heals her. Shesheshen only knows combative humans, but learns how to trust, recognize feelings, and essentially become more like kind humans. Shesheshen’s attraction to her new girlfriend produces eggs that she eventually needs to plant in a nest, and Homily is the perfect candidate, but there are a few problems. The eggs would devour Homily, Shesheshen hasn’t revealed her monster identity to her girlfriend yet, AND Homily has an even bigger family secret. If you enjoyed the monster and body horror writing in this, also check out **The Salt Grows Heavy** by Cassandra Khaw.

LOOKING AT THE BIG PICTURE

BY SUE K.

For the coming winter days, I highly recommend Richard Powers' books including **The Overstory**, his Pulitzer Prize-winning novel spanning many generations and their relations to and protection of the tree ecosystem. **The Time of our Singing**, follows a mixed race couple and their hugely talented children through the time before and during the Civil Rights era. His latest, **Playground**, takes literal deep dive into the ocean. Powers' books are big, weighty stories spanning many generations and are best read when you can really dig into a long but compelling read. These are not beach reads! **The Time of our Singing** encompasses post-WWII politics and family life, including the Marian Anderson concert at the Lincoln Memorial where the two main characters meet, Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech and assassination, the Chicago convention riots of 1968, and the 1991 assault of Rodney King.



By acknowledging America's troubled past from its early days of revolution through the Vietnam War protests, this book is here to remind us that our greatest moments have been bitterly fought. Even though Powers' books cover some dark subjects (the second chapter of **Playground** has the characters burying an albatross, dead from ingesting large chunks of plastic waste) his books are clear-eyed but deeply hopeful. He reminds us to access our better angels.

JOURNEY OF THE PAST AND FUTURE

BY MELISSA F.



River Sing Me Home
by Eleanor Shearer

"It was the blackest part of the night and Rachel was running." With this opening line, we are immediately pulled into Rachel's desperate, breathless journey through the forests, towns, and ports of the Caribbean as she tracks down her five stolen children. Mary Grace, Micah, Thomas, Cherry Jane, and Mercy were taken and sold years ago as young children. Now, chafing under the illusion of freedom following the Emancipation Act and the "apprenticeships" that take the place of slavery, Rachel makes one first, bold choice and flees the plantation she's worked her entire life.

With dreams haunted by the vague and clouded memories of her own mother, from whom she'd been separated as a toddler, Rachel relies on her indomitable spirit and grows to accept the kindness of both strangers and new friends. Throughout the months of humid and rain-soaked travels from Barbados to Georgetown to Trinidad, Rachel also comes to terms with the bittersweet knowledge that her journey represents a resurgence of will for generations of women who'd had no say in what happened to their families. Rachel forges ahead despite her fears, despite every impediment, and despite knowing that the truth of what happened to each of her five children might be even more painful than the mystery.

This story is beautifully, lyrically told and keeps the reader enthralled with Rachel's emotional and determined journey until the very final page.

Content & Sensitivity: This book is based around the history of formerly enslaved persons in the Caribbean following the Emancipation Act of 1834, and includes descriptions of physical violence, child loss, and racial injustice.

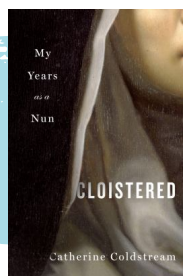
A NUN'S STORY

BY KAREN B.

Cloistered: My Years as a Nun

by Catherine Coldstream

This beautifully-written memoir recounts the author's 12 years of life as a cloistered nun in England. It was written over 20 years after she left that life, so its retelling consists of both descriptions of what happened as well as self-reflections on why events might have occurred the way they did and what they meant to her. Sister Catherine, as she was known while a nun, entered the religious life at age 27 by joining a hermit order dedicated to silence and prayer. This was three years after her beloved father died and one year after her conversion to Catholicism. By her own admission, she was drowning in grief and looking forward to the afterlife where she would see her father again. Growing up in an unstable family, with a mother who was not often present, she was looking for meaning and purpose through sanctuary and silence. She did initially find both and felt that she encountered God there.



What she also encountered was a group of very human women. Her need to find peace through prayer, penance, and other forms of deprivation sustained her for a while. Over time, however, her further needs for emotional support and intellectual stimulation fell short, so she eventually decided to leave. While not a preachy book, this story certainly contains religious and philosophical thoughts about the presence of God, but does so in a way that is gentle and directed toward herself. Its main highlight, in my opinion, lies in the opening of a door to a world that many of us may not be able to imagine, and to see that world in both its beauty and its starkness.

MURDER, SATANIC CULTS, & BLOOD-THIRSTY SPIRITS. BUT IN A CUTE WAY

BY STEPHEN C.



Dwellings

by Jay Stephens

Welcome to Elwich, a small town seemingly cursed right from its founding. Named mysteriously from the lips of a dying man, the town has been full of rumors of hauntings, murders, and mysterious cults ever since.

Dwellings is a collection of interconnected stories all taking place in the small town and illustrated in a 1950s cartoony comic book style, which juxtaposes wonderfully with the dark and often gruesome stories being told. Even though the reader knows to expect dark twists and violence after the first story, it's still jarring (in a fun way) to see it acted out by and against the cute and seemingly-innocent townsfolk. Think Charlie Brown and the rest of the Peanuts gang, only delightfully foul-mouthed with darkness and murder in their hearts.

The author does an excellent job of making Elwich seem like a real town complete with local lore, and you get to know the inhabitants as each story unfolds. It's also fun to look out for the main characters of each story as they pop up in supporting roles in later tales. The volume includes bonus material that further helps build the world in the form of fun mail-away advertisements in the style of old comic books, and the introduction is an excerpt from a fictional town history written by one of the characters.

If you're looking for a unique horror comic that is a delight both visually and in the storytelling, **Dwellings** is hard to beat.

DARK HISTORY

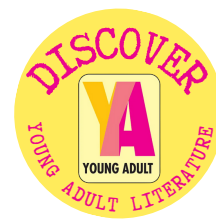
BY SUE K.



The new book **Swift River** by Essie Chambers is a beautifully-written account of a mixed race teen, Diamond, whose African American father goes missing in a New England mill town. Chambers shines a light on an ugly American reality called sundown towns, communities outside the South “from which Black and other marginalized people were systematically excluded- often driven out of the town’s limits–through discriminatory laws, harassment, violence and terrorism” (quote from the author’s note at book’s end). I always read author’s notes when I read a book. They shine so much light on the story and usually help me learn deeper context as well as open my eyes. It is a practice I highly recommend. Without knowledge of our history, are we destined to repeat it?

CHEERS TO THE RESISTANCE

BY MELISSA F.



Love & Resistance

by Kara H.L. Chen

Olivia has become an expert in quietly surviving high school after spending the last several years moving around the country with her military mom. After so much time keeping her head down, especially after experiencing racial injustice at previous schools, Olivia confounds herself by jumping into the middle of a social media war in her new small-town school when she calls out a popular student influencer for their racist comment in class.

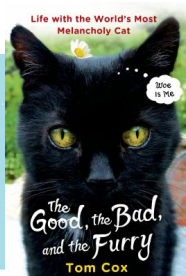


Suddenly Olivia is struggling to figure out how to use her own voice, address her misconceptions about social groups and cliques, and decide what to do about the cute guy at lunch who keeps sharing his french fries. Oh. AND navigate a new group of random friends who also happen to run an underground “Nerd Net” society of hackers and anti-bullying vigilantes. High school is suddenly more interesting–and difficult–than Olivia ever thought possible.

Content & Sensitivity: Includes situations of racism and bullying.

MY PURRR-FECT PALS

BY ADAM P.

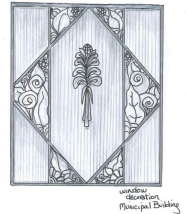
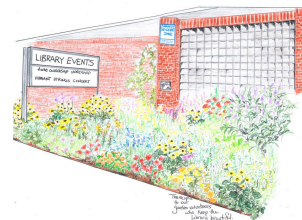
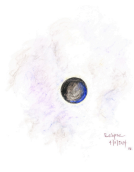
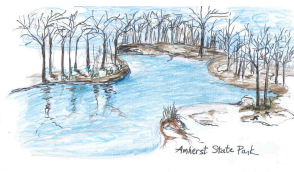
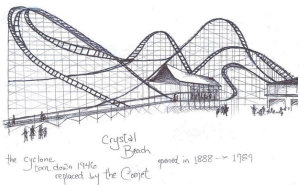
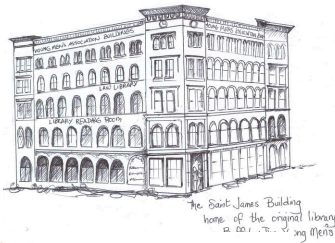
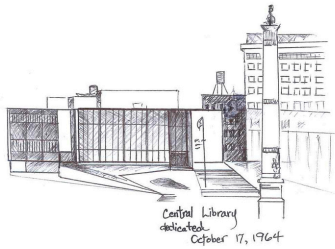
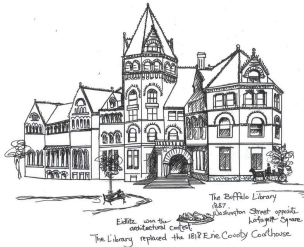


The Good, The Bad, and The Furry written by Tom Cox is quite a heartwarming story about a man with multiple pet cats who influence his life and how each one of them has their own special unique trait. We meet Cox’s three furry companions–The Bear, Janet, and Ralph–who can make his daily life the most exciting or most miserable depending on what kind of mischief they get into. As time goes on, we find out how different they really are from each other. We see what may happen when one is ready to move to the great beyond and what to expect when it happens. The thought of even beginning all over again with a kitten? Would the others approve of a new four-legged friend? How would you treat them when they get ill? So much to think about! If you ever wanted to find out what a special bond with a feline is all about and maybe even compare some similarities in this story to perhaps your own, then this book will absolutely make you smile. Pets will impact your life no matter what.

THE CHECKOUT

ILLUSTRATIONS
SUMMER 2022- FALL 2024

ALL BY SUE K.
(EXCEPT LIGHTHOUSE BY PATTY K.)



HACK YOUR WAY THROUGH THE WINTER GARDEN BLUES AND BEYOND

BY ELIZABETH O.



Garden Hacks by Filip Johansson is an engaging and easy-to-use collection of garden tips for all seasons. This fresh book combines a sturdy and transportable form with a consistent and approachable layout. An inviting green color scheme, attractive and relevant photographs to represent each of the 70 tip “hacks,” and recipe-like organization for each tip engage both experienced and novice gardeners.

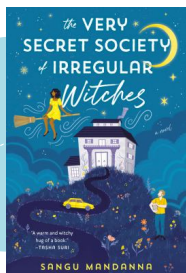
Swede Filip Johansson—the gardener/social media influencer, not the hockey player!—writes with a practical, informational style that enables readers to understand when it’s prudent to spend money on equipment versus the appropriate time to creatively combine found items, such as attaching a toilet brush to a toy shovel to make a gutter-cleaning wand.

Johansson understands the nature of gardeners. We’re content during active gardening season but become disappointed or restless when that’s ended. Johansson offers, in his Winter introduction, “It’s a stark contrast to springtime, when there is plenty to do—almost too much. Then, it’s easy to feel stressed and overwhelmed. But that feeling can be alleviated by using winter to think of clever solutions, tools, contraptions, and other fun things.”

I doubt I’ll ever create a “Combined Bee Hotel and Street Number Sign” because it might scare some human visitors. But I’ll try making my own seed tape, and give my Christmas tree an extended life as a support for spring climbers. I could definitely use a custom-made moss scraper. Check out this practical and innovative book and enjoy following your favorite tips!

MAGICAL MAYHEM & FOUND FAMILY

BY MELISSA F.



The Very Secret Society of Irregular Witches

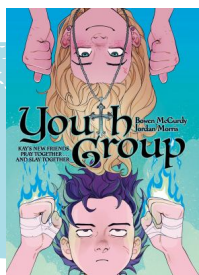
by Sangu Mandanna

It’s lonely being a witch. Mika, one of few witches in England, abides by the expectations of her coven to avoid attention, to keep magic hidden, and to never meet up with other witches outside of their quarterly coven gatherings. It’s an isolating existence, as all witch children are raised separately by nannies and housekeepers under the direction of coven leader Primrose. Mika, too, grew up in isolation after the deaths of her parents, for it is well known within the coven that the powers of multiple witches together could result in catastrophic magical results.

Mika, now 30, rebelliously skirts around the coven rules by posting enchanting “spell” videos on social media, secretly celebrating her skills behind a screen of acting and illusion. It’s all fun and games, until one day Mika receives a message from a mysterious follower who suspects she’s a real witch, and who desperately needs her help. Deep in the woods dwells Nowhere House, home to three very young witches with growing and uncontrollable magic and their gang of guardians determined to keep the girls together and away from Primrose’s strict rules. Uncertain but curious, Mika decides to help train these three little witches, aided by the loveable and sometimes frustrating occupants of Nowhere House—particularly Irish librarian Jamie, whose brooding stares and crotchety attitude make this challenge all the more entertaining.

DON'T GO CHASING DEMONIC PLOTS, PLEASE STICK TO THE LESSER EXORCISMS YOU'RE USED TO

BY STEPHEN C.



Youth Group
by Jordan Morris & Bowen McCurdy

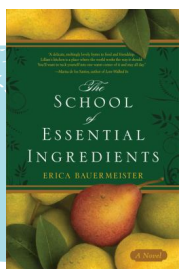
Kay is a teen in the 1990s who's juggling a lot. Her parents are recently divorced and her relationship with her dad is suffering a bit because of it. On top of that, she hasn't found a community to belong to in her Orange County, California town, leaving her yearning to attend a New York City college next year (as long as she can convince her nervous mom that that's a good idea). In an attempt to get her daughter out of her comfort zone, Mom convinces her to join the youth group at their local church. This is definitely not Kay's normal scene but she feels drawn to the two leaders of the group, despite their corny Jesus-ish reworking of 90's pop hits to spread the good word.

Not long after Kay joins the group she discovers that her new friends are in fact more than they seem. They, along with the church's pastor, are elite supernatural warriors that hunt demons and exorcise them back to hell. As if that weren't enough to deal with, they also discover that Kay is a powerful being called a Blight which makes her un-possessable by said demons—a big advantage in their line of work. Soon, the three friends uncover the demonic plot to end all demonic plots and, with the help of other faith-based groups, race to exorcise evil before it's too late.

Youth Group is a fun graphic novel filled with bright, colorful art and clever characters that you can't help falling in love with. It also doesn't shy away from tackling issues of inclusivity, a woman's right to choose, and intolerance among different religious groups. While this young adult graphic novel definitely doesn't solve any of those issues, it was nice that they were addressed at all.

COOKING SCHOOL NIGHTS

BY KEN W.



The School of Essential Ingredients by Erica Bauermeister is one of my all-time favorite books. It follows the lives of eight students enrolled in Monday night cooking classes held at Lillian's Restaurant. They come from many different backgrounds and span a significant age range.

As the students become more and more engrossed in preparing the food, this becomes a backdrop for the issues they are facing in their individual lives. We learn about each of the students and why they entered this environment. Then we see them assembled in class. The work they do in the kitchen seems to have a direct relationship to the issues they face in their lives.

As their personal experience increases, they start to interact with one another in very meaningful ways. The camaraderie that develops is individually enriching but also enhances the group dynamics. They become more complete individuals but the group also becomes a complex entity.

They share the skills they develop in the class and then the experiences they have in their personal lives. The way they live life is compared to a kitchen recipe. The interaction is sharing the discoveries they have made in life experience. What leads to better success and outcomes can often generalize to more than one person's experience.

In Bauermeister's novel, we see the characters discovering personal strengths and successes as well as finding satisfaction in interpersonal relationships. Both are learned skills that provide life enhancement. All the dynamics seemed to flow and mix just like the cooking recipes they follow. The group becomes all the essential ingredients.

THE CAUTION OF CROWS

BY MELISSA F.



If These Wings Could Fly

by Kyrie McCauley

Leighton and her sisters watch the crows from inside the house. A house shadowed by the constant anxiety and fear which accompany the sound of their father's footsteps. A house that mysteriously seems to fix every broken window, shattered vase, and dented wall. Leighton wants nothing more than to escape the small minds and blind eyes of her town, and tries to make a plan to keep her sisters safe when she leaves for college. Things start to spiral as her volatile father loses out on construction jobs and her quiet, forgiving mother desperately attempts to keep the peace.

The crows gathering around the family home in ever-increasing numbers watch cannily from the trees while, night after night, Leighton keeps her younger sisters safe from the harsh words and threats of their father. But as the situation continues to become more unstable and her own frustrations build, Leighton finds herself opening up to her best friend as well as exploring the possibilities of a new relationship with classmate Liam.

As she studies the clever and playful behavior of the crows and finally decides on a dangerous and emotional topic for her scholarship essay, Leighton discovers that the shadowy house of her childhood is about to implode under the weight of all their unspoken secrets.

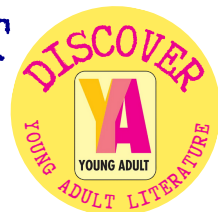
Content & Sensitivity: Domestic violence, emotional trauma, cycles of abuse.



WOODCUT BY SUE K

A FANTASY BOOK HURT MY FEELINGS... AND I LOVED IT

BY EMILY L.



Kingdom of Ash (Throne of Glass #7)

by Sarah J. Maas

I am forever changed as a person because of this book.

Initially, I doubted that **Kingdom of Ash** could possibly topple the sheer range and intensity of emotion invoked from Throne of Glass's previous installments. **Heir of Fire**, **Queen of Shadows**, and **Empire of Storms** had me physically shouting in triumph and sobbing at many points—something I've never felt compelled to ACTUALLY do before while reading. However, as is the case with every other book of hers in the past, Sarah J. Maas proved me wrong by taking the characters I have spent the previous seven books growing attached to, and putting them to the test in a way I didn't anticipate.



As a fantasy reader, I have become very familiar with many of the tropes, expectations and actions that occur within the genre, but Maas surprised me again and again with the choices her characters make and the consequences they have in a way that truly forces me reevaluate many of my own ideals and beliefs in the real world. In style, plot, theme, and character depth, this book has by far exceeded all my expectations and takes the pedestal for my favorite book ever, no contest. A stunning conclusion to an unforgettable story, and one that will undoubtedly stay with me for the rest of my life.

I SWEAR THIS IS A REAL THING THAT EXISTS

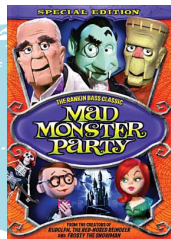
BY STEPHEN C.



Mad Monster Party
(1967, directed by Jules Bass)

Did you know that Arthur Rankin and Jules Bass, the team behind the stop-motion holiday classics **Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer** and **Santa Claus Is Comin' to Town** also released a full-length feature film revolving around classic movie monsters like Dracula, Dr. Jekyll/Mr. Hyde, The Invisible Man and Frankenstein's monster? Of course you didn't! Neither did I! But now I do and so do you. You're welcome.

Our story begins with mad scientist Baron Boris von Frankenstein (voiced by Boris Karloff!) having finally invented the key to the total destruction of humanity. To celebrate his accomplishment, he invites monsters from around the world to join him on his island. While everyone is assembled, the Baron also plans to announce his retirement as head of the Worldwide Organization of Monsters and to formally appoint his successor. We have two candidates: the Baron's human nephew, Felix, who suffers from constant asthma attacks and is super into being a pharmacist, and Francesca, the Baron's longtime human assistant. Dracula, Frankenstein's monster, and his bride (in the movie weirdly called his "mate" and weirder still voiced by Phyllis Diller) align with Francesca and hatch plots to murder the interloping Felix in order to take control of the organization.



Somehow I've come this far without even mentioning the music. Because yes, this is a musical. The soundtrack contains six original songs and though I was skeptical at first, it really grows on you and you'll find yourself singing along.

As a whole, **Mad Monster Party** is a delightful, campy film that pays homage to classic monster movies of a bygone era but with a 1960s flair. As far as my family is concerned, my wife and I thoroughly enjoyed ourselves. Our son did call it "the worst movie he's ever seen" but he's prone to hyperbole and has extremely questionable taste, so don't listen to him.

A SURPRISE I WASN'T EXPECTING

BY CINDY F.



One Life
(2023, directed by James Hawes)

One Life is a movie released in 2023 starring Anthony Hopkins. It is based on the true story of British humanitarian Nicholas Winton. The film alternates between following Winton as a 79-year-old reminiscing about his past as a 29-year-old who successfully helps 669 predominantly Jewish children in German-occupied Czechoslovakia flee to England as the Nazis were approaching the Prague refugee area at the beginning of WWII.

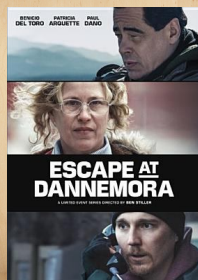
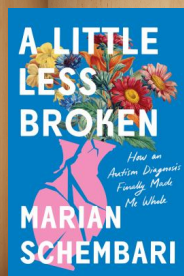
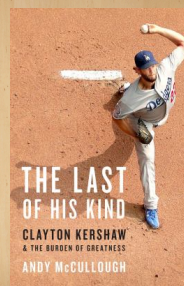
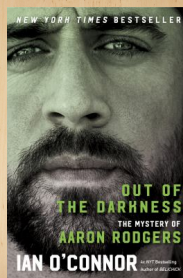
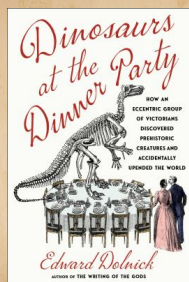
Winton is urged by his wife to clean out his study, leading him to review his documents of the many children he helped save and relocate to England. He is considering donating the documents to a Holocaust museum, but at the same time he wants to draw some attention to the current plight of refugees as he continues working for the underprivileged. The documents eventually end up in the hands of the production team for the BBC TV show "That's Life!"

I don't want to divulge more of the plot as it was a heartwarming and emotional surprise. It's a testament to the efforts of just how one person can change the lives of many.



ILLUSTRATION BY SUE K.

QUICK TAKES



Before the Devil Knows You're Dead

directed by Sidney Lumet

Phillip Seymour Hoffman and Ethan Hawke star as brothers at the end of their ropes who plot a robbery against their own parents' jewelry store that doesn't go to plan.

Dinosaurs at the Dinner Party

An engaging look at the Victorians' discovery of dinosaur fossils and how it impacted science, religion, and society. It's fascinating to think that the concept of animal extinction didn't really exist before the scientific pursuit of dinosaur remains.

Out of the Darkness: The Mystery of Aaron Rodgers

by Ian O'Connor

The Last of His Kind: Clayton Kershaw and the Burden of Greatness

Exceptional new biographies by two acclaimed sports writers.

You don't have to be a die-hard sports fan to enjoy reading about two "All time Greats"—quarterback Aaron Rodgers and pitcher Clayton Kershaw!

A Little Less Broken: How an Autism Diagnosis Finally Made Me Whole

by Marian Schembari

This book was extremely affecting and relatable for me, telling the story of the author's autism diagnosis in her mid-30s and including a discussion of how autism is often ignored or misdiagnosed in girls and women.

Escape at Dannemora (series)

directed by Ben Stiller

A compelling series about the prison break from the Clinton Correctional Facility in 2015. Great performances from Patricia Arquette, Benicio del Toro, and Paul Dano, and an interesting study in what motivates human behavior in the fabricated society prisons create.

Margo's Got Money Troubles

by Rufi Thorpe

This funny and honest story follows a young woman named Margo who ends up pregnant after a brief affair with her college English professor. With no childcare, a dead-end job, and a looming eviction notice, Margo decides to try semi-nude modeling on the online subscription site OnlyFans. Hilarious supporting characters make this unconventional coming-of-age story heartwarming with a side of laugh-out-loud spice.

GOTHIC AUSTRIAN TALE

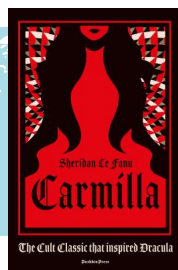
BY CHLOE H.

Carmilla

by J. Sheridan Le Fanu

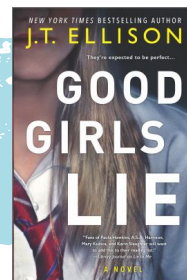
Written 25 years before the infamous **Dracula** in 1872 is **Carmilla**, what could be argued as one of the earliest vampires in literature. Hidden within a forest in Austria is Laura, a lonely woman that only has her father for company in their castle. She wishes desperately for a friend and on one fateful night, a carriage crashes in front of their drawbridge. Laura's father pulls out a woman named Carmilla out of the wreckage, and a feverish friendship starts along with mysterious happenings as Laura's health takes a turn.

A short and thrilling novel that makes a vampire haunting a town seem fresh again!



GOOD GIRLS GOOD BOOK

BY MARY ANNE B.



Good Girls Lie

by J. T. Ellison

When the book started off with the death of one of its main characters, it grabbed my interest. It was the kind of book I had trouble putting down. Each chapter made me wonder what made the main characters act like they do.

With the story taking place at an elite all girl's school in Marchburg, Virginia, you know there will be the backstabbing and whispering. At times, the story does flip to Oxford, England, but it is so you understand the plot of the story. I found the characters to be believable. They are young girls from privileged families, and everyone has their own little secrets. The dean inherited her position from her mother, but it is not what she wants to do at all. Trying to run a school where you want the girls to have freedoms, yet maintain the high standards expected by the families, all while having an outside life can be very difficult.

I was curious from the start to find out what kind of secrets and lies the main characters were keeping, and when and how I would find out.

Some people can be very twisted, as this book will prove. If you like lying and keeping secrets, this book is for you.



WOODCUTS BY SUE K

LIBRARY TIP #3

AUTHOR

MANY LIBRARIES

HAVE STARTED

LIBRARY OF THINGS

COLLECTIONS. MAKE SURE
TO TAKE A LOOK AT WHAT
ITEMS YOU CAN BORROW BY
USING THIS QR CODE OR
GOING TO

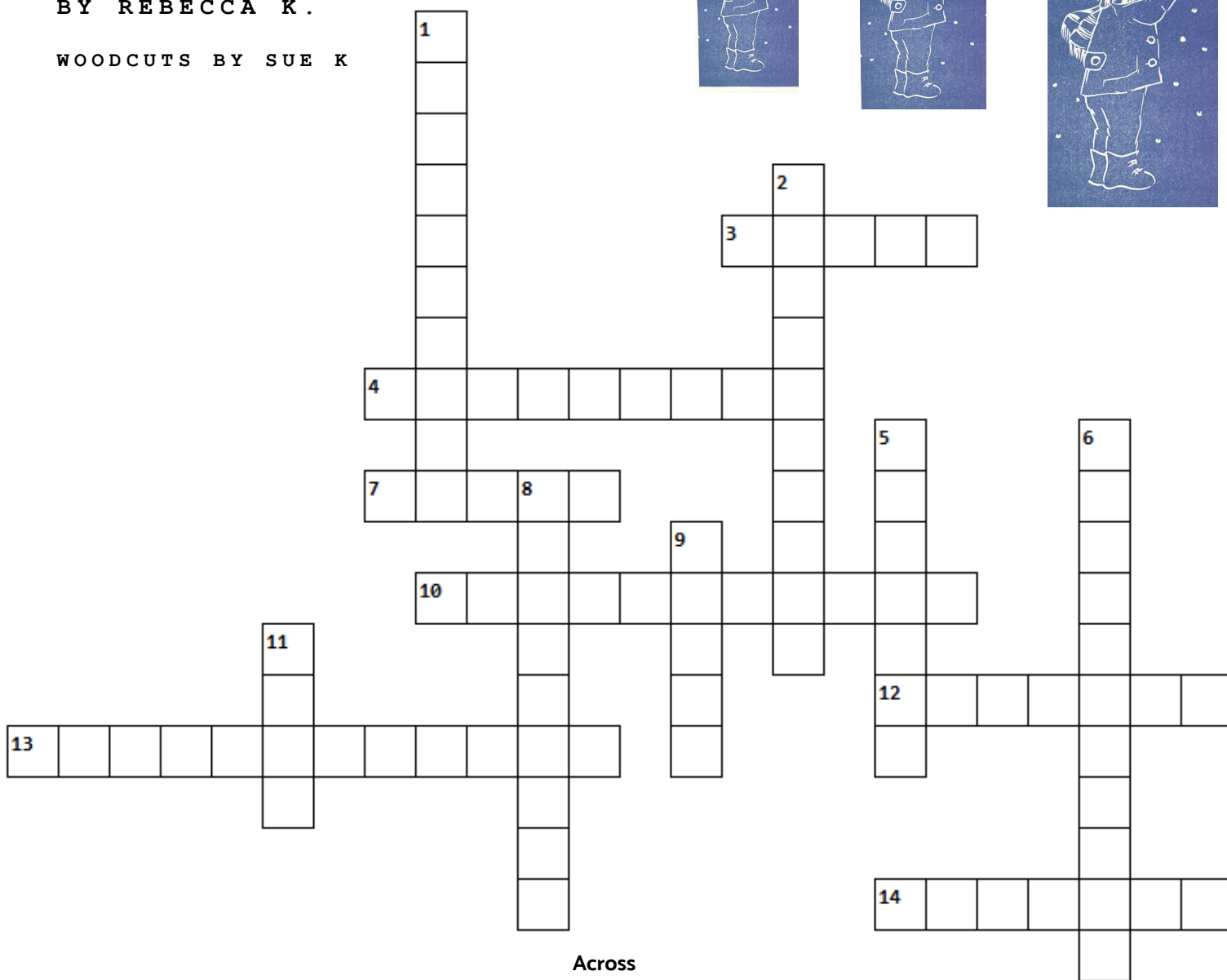
[HTTPS://WWW.BUFFALOLIB.
ORG/LAUNCH-PAD/LIBRARY-
THINGS](https://www.buffalolib.org/launch-pad/library-things)



WINTERTIDE

BY REBECCA K.

WOODCUTS BY SUE K

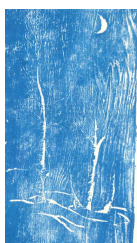
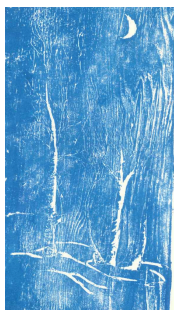
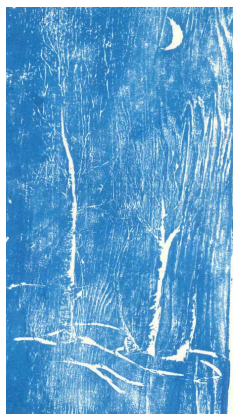


Across

3. poet who recorded "Auld Lang Syne"
4. no two are alike
7. you can't _____ me, I'm the Gingerbread Man
10. a popular Christmas song written for Thanksgiving
12. state with the greatest amount of ski resorts
13. the fear of snow
14. where eggnog originated

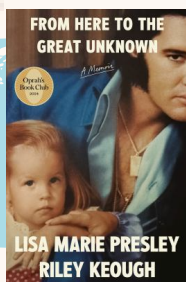
Down

1. the state with the most Winter Olympians
2. the Harry Potter drink that can be served hot or cold
5. place that has the best viewing of the Northern Lights
6. famous Ezra Jack Keats story
8. team with the most Stanley Cups
9. the nickname Jo gives Laurie in Little Women
11. the most common form of winter precipitation



THE KING AND HIS FAMILY

BY CHLOE H.



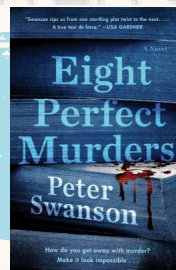
From Here to the Great Unknown
by Lisa Marie Presley and Riley Keough

America may not have Buckingham Palace, but we have Graceland—home of the king Elvis Presley and his family. The prolific musician had an early death, and left behind his daughter Lisa Marie Presley. This memoir was partially-written by her before her own early death in 2023, and finished by her daughter Riley Keough who listened to Lisa's recorded audio tapes recounting how she wreaked havoc in Graceland, cherished time with her father, and had her own music career, family, and struggles with addiction. This is the first time Lisa talks in depth about her father and the family that she fiercely protected. Her life was not an easy one, and the final chapters of the book written by Riley are profoundly sad, but there is also a light that comes through the pages. You can feel the big heart and love Lisa had for everyone in her life. Her musings on motherhood, marriage, loss, and family are something everyone can relate to despite reading about a truly extraordinary celebrity family. Expect to have tears and a new perspective on life after reading this memoir.

PERFECT MYSTERY

BY PAT L.

While waiting for Louise Penny's latest book, I discovered *Eight Perfect Murders* by Peter Swanson. Malcolm Kershaw purchases the Old Devils Bookstore in Boston after the death of his wife, Claire. Malcolm (Mal) has only a few friends including a silent partner and a retired policeman. He manages the bookstore with the help of two part-time employees and a cat named Nero. His life is routine and most often boring—until the day he receives a visit from the FBI. They are interested in the possible connection between a list of eight mystery books about unsolved or perfect murders that Mal posted on the bookstore's blog and a series of current murders. This book had enough twists and turns to keep me reading while the laundry was piling up!



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MEETINGS ARE HELD THE 1ST
THURSDAY OF THE MONTH AT 7PM AT
THE KENMORE LIBRARY

CROSSWORD (ANSWERS)

ACROSS

3. Burns 4. Snowflake 7. Catch 10. Jingle Bells 12. New York
13. Chionophobia 14. England

DOWN

1. California 2. Butterbeer 5. Iceland 6. The Snowy Day
8. Canadiens 9. Teddy 11. Snow

THE CHECKOUT STAFF

Christina L., Chloe H., Jill J., Karen B., Ken W., Lisa S., Nicole B., Rebecca K., Sue K., and Stuart R.

WANT TO SUBMIT A REVIEW?

SUBMISSIONS WILL BE POSTED PER DISCRETION OF THE LIBRARY.
SUBMISSIONS MAY BE EDITED FOR CONTENT OR LENGTH.

