

THE CHECKOUT

WINTER 2025/26

ISSUE #15

A REVIEW SOURCE WRITTEN BY LIBRARY PATRONS FOR LIBRARY PATRONS



A PUBLICATION OF THE
KENMORE BRANCH
LIBRARY

MUSIC IS LIFE

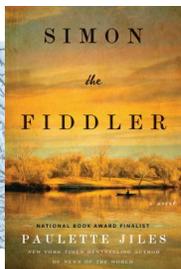
BY KAREN B.

Simon the Fiddler

by Paulette Jiles

In the waning days of the Civil War, the conscription men finally catch Simon the fiddler and force him to join Confederate forces in Texas. As a travelling musician from Kentucky, he has successfully avoided them to this point. Several days of first tedium and then violence end with his ragtag Confederate group overcoming the Federal forces, then immediately surrendering to them. Following this, the musicians from both North and South alike put on a performance at a ceremony signaling the end of the conflict. At this ceremony, Simon is entranced with indentured servant Doris, and he becomes part of a “scratch band” with an Irish bodhran player, a Mexican guitarist, and an enigmatic, poetry-spouting tin whistle player, all of whom are also yearning to live new lives. So begin the adventures of Simon, who breathes music like it is air.

The fluctuating landscapes of Texas from flooding shorelines to arid interiors, combined with the fascinating cast of characters and their vivid interactions, propel the dramatic storyline of survival forward. Music threads throughout all the drama of how decent people can survive in harsh and unforgiving times and places. Music for solace, music for joy, music for remembering, and music for forgetting all figure hugely in this moving story of one man’s journey toward hope. Highly recommended!



LIBRARY TIP #1



UNFORTUNATELY, HOOPLA WILL NOT BE AVAILABLE AFTER 12/31/25. IF YOU USE LIBBY, YOU CAN ADD OTHER LIBRARIES TO YOUR ACCOUNT (I.E. NYPL, BROOKLYN, QUEENS, ETC.) TO BROADEN YOUR COLLECTION!

THE FINAL GIRL...ER, FINAL GRANDMA

BY JULIE ANN D.



As an avid reader of horror, I am always searching for stories that are odd, unhinged, and truly original. Too often, horror novels recycle familiar tropes, but **The Autumn Springs Retirement Home Massacre** by Philip Fracassi breathes new life into the slasher genre. Fracassi cleverly reimagines the “final girl” archetype - the last surviving woman who faces the killer - by setting his slasher story in an unexpected place: a retirement home.

While a deranged psycho stalks the halls, the novel transforms into a gripping whodunit with a colorful cast of residents and caretakers. Just because you’re elderly and retired doesn’t mean you’re dead! The killer initially escapes suspicion precisely because people think death is commonplace in such a setting. With family members too distracted to care and rotating staff, no one questions the deadly “accidents,” until one resident does.

Rose, a tenacious and sharp woman with an abusive past, becomes the novel’s unlikely heroine. Her resilience and watchfulness drive the narrative forward as she begins to suspect foul play after a second death occurs under mysterious circumstances. She’s already been a survivor, and with the help of her friends, Rose uncovers the truth lurking beneath the tranquil community of Autumn Springs.

Fracassi balances suspense and emotion with remarkable skill. Readers quickly grow attached to the residents, making each death a heartbreak. Themes of survival, friendship, and second chances mingle with a cute romance, witches as heroes, and reflections on aging. Fast-paced yet heartfelt, **The Autumn Springs Retirement Home Massacre** delivers a fresh and satisfying conclusion.



ARTWORK BY SUE K.

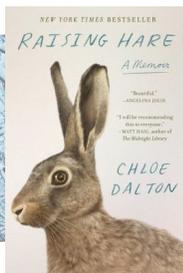
SLOW DOWN & ENJOY

BY MARY M.

Raising Hare: A Memoir

by Chloe Dalton

Political advisor Chloe Dalton found refuge during the pandemic at her cottage in the English countryside. She also made a very unlikely friend, a wild hare. **Raising Hare** is the story of her time with the hare and how it changed her life for the better. When she found the leveret (baby hare) it was just a few days old and had been separated from its mother. Realizing that the tiny creature could not survive on its own, she took it back to her cottage and began the process of nursing it back to health. As the hare grew, so did its boundaries. But the nocturnal hare always returned to the cottage during the day to sleep. The author found herself arranging her life around the schedule of the hare, being very careful not to interact with it too much or limit its freedom to roam. The hare, in turn, gave the author a unique insight into the life of a wild animal – and taught her to slow down and enjoy the little pleasures of nature. As the leveret grows, so does the author’s relationship to her natural surroundings, and she bring the reader along for the beautiful journey.



NOWHERE TO GO

BY NICOLE B.



Every once in a while I come across a non-fiction book that I feel should be required reading. **There is No Place for Us: Working and Homeless in America** by Brian Goldstone is one of those books. In it, the author follows five different families in Atlanta struggling to keep or secure housing while working low-wage jobs. It was eye-opening to see how little affordable housing is actually available in our country, and that the systems in place (such as private equity companies buying up property and a stagnant minimum wage) are only exacerbating the situation. The sheer effort it takes for people who are struggling to obtain any sort of housing assistance seems almost (and often, actually) impossible to manage. Families are torn between staying together in overpriced extended stay hotels, crashing at relatives’ houses, and sleeping in their cars, or being separated by age/gender in shelters in order to qualify for assistance.

Goldstone dispels many of the myths of homelessness by weaving facts and figures throughout the book, but the true teachable moments are the lived experiences of his subjects. With wages continually getting more and more out of sync with the rate of inflation, this book and its situations are probably not so distant from many of us. And while we continue to count on minimum- and low-wage workers to care for our children and elderly, prepare our food, stock our stores, and clean our buildings, our society has ignored the widening gap between the necessity of their jobs and the availability of affordable housing. It seems like change is way past due.

As Goldstone states in his introduction:

“Today there isn’t a single state, metropolitan area, or county in the United States where a full-time worker earning the local minimum wage can afford a two-bedroom apartment. A low-wage job is homelessness waiting to happen.”

WAIT, SOME PEOPLE WERE PRODUCTIVE IN 2020?

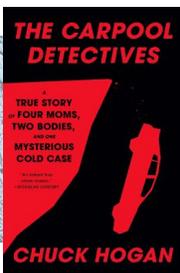
BY STEPHEN C.

The Carpool Detectives: A True Story of Four Moms, Two Bodies, and One Mysterious Cold Case

by Chuck Hogan

Come, travel back with me to a simpler time. Life was lived at a slower pace; some would say so slow it ground to a halt. Everyone baked their own bread and made overly elaborate coffee drinks. Dogs were adopted en masse and the Tiger King was, well, king. While some people, not naming names, spent their time sorting a six-year-old's massive LEGO collection by color, there were four women using their newly-acquired free time more for the greater good.

The Carpool Detectives tells the story of four women who are all drawn to a 15-year-old cold case involving the death of a business owner and his wife. What seems like a simple murder-suicide quickly gets murkier as their sleuthing uncovers financial crimes and a host of shady characters orbiting the deceased, including those from within their own family.

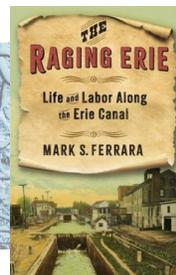


The case at the heart of this true crime book is compelling enough but, when you throw in the backdrop of early pandemic days, it gives the whole endeavor an air of uncertainty and possible danger. As the story unfolds, our amateur detectives, as well as the reader, slowly begin to see how curiosity and a sense of justice can lead to dangerous places and dangerous people.

Chuck Hogan does a wonderful job of describing just how unmoored people were feeling in early 2020 and how four women were able to channel that uncertainty into the solving of a cold case that everyone else had long ago given up on.

A LARGER VIEW OF THE ERIE CANAL

BY KAREN B.



The Raging Erie: Life and Labor Along the Erie Canal

by Mark S. Ferraro

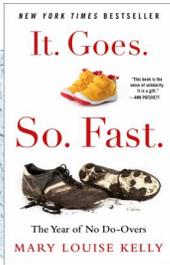
Now that many of the Bicentennial celebrations for the 200th birthday of the Erie Canal are drawing to a close, it may be a good time to end those celebrations on a broader perspective. In this book, the author does not deny that the construction of the Erie Canal ushered in very big changes such as connecting the Great Lakes to the Atlantic Ocean, turning Buffalo into an inland port city, transforming New York State into the Empire State, and conveying thousands of immigrants to the Midwest as new settlers.

In addition to these outsized events, however, the author emphasizes that we should also recognize the people upon whose backs these transformations took place. To that end, he looks at the poor people who performed most of the dangerous work in its construction, the social problems of the underclass who grew up on and around the canal towns, and other marginalized or forgotten people likewise affected by its presence in one way or another. Such people included now-landless Native Americans, homeless orphaned children, women who rejected middle-class lives, escaping enslaved people, religious nonconformists, and the people who inhabited the slums, saloons, and brothels along its path.

Eye-opening to be sure, this wider narrative of the Erie Canal and the changes it wrought is well worth reading by anyone interested in a more expansive view of local history.

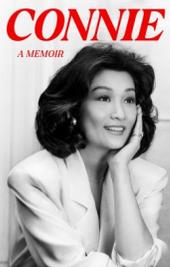
THREE FEMALE JOURNALISTS TELL THEIR STORIES

BY DONNA D.



When she turned 50 and her older son was about to start his last year of high school, Mary Louise Kelly, host of “All Things Considered” on National Public Radio, decided to make some changes to her work/life balance. She thought of all the soccer games, field trips, and science fairs she had missed over the years. With just one year left before her son left for college, she was determined to spend less time at work and more time with family. **It Goes. So. Fast.: The Year of No Do-Overs** is full of heart-felt stories of juggling work and parenting. As she comes to grips with her teenager’s final year at home, Mary Louise shares experiences and insights that anyone striving for a balanced and meaningful life can relate to.

In an industry dominated by white men, Connie Chung broke both the sex and race barriers by being the first Asian woman in the television news industry. Witty and honest, **Connie: A Memoir**, begins with her childhood and takes the reader through the ups and downs of her long career and her personal life, including her marriage to Maury Povich. While she writes in an easy, interesting manner, sharing amusing stories and lots of behind-the-scenes scoops, it is a revealing account of the challenges of being a trailblazer for other women journalists.



Published in 1997 and winner of a Pulitzer Prize the following year, **Personal History** is the candid and detailed autobiography of Katherine Graham, the woman who led her family’s newspaper, The Washington Post, for over two decades, including through the challenging Watergate years. Born into a life of privilege and wealth, Graham overcame her early shyness and insecurity to prove herself in a male-dominated industry. Vast in scope (640 pages - a bit overwhelming at times!), I found the most interesting parts were learning of her personal struggles and being privy to stories of the presidents and other powerful people she befriended along the way.



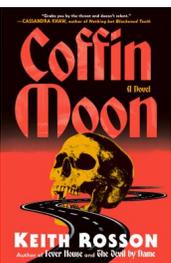
Coffin Moon by Keith Rosson is a gritty and emotional vampire thriller that blends fast-paced violence with deep character development. Duane Minor, a Vietnam War vet struggling with PTSD, works at his in-laws’ bar in the winter of 1975, trying to stay sober and save his troubled marriage. But when a group of bikers causes trouble at the bar, Minor makes a decision that sets off a violent chain of events, changing his life forever. Alongside his scrappy niece, Julia, Minor embarks on a revenge road trip suffering through incredible guilt and Julia’s increasing rage.

Rosson masterfully mixes fast-paced violence and gore with tender emotional moments, creating complex characters that evolve throughout the story. The transition of the characters’ angry bravado to softer raw grief as loved ones are lost is a powerful element rarely seen in vampire fiction.

With thoughtful backstories that will tear at your heart, **Coffin Moon** explores themes of trauma, revenge, and the lasting scars of the past. The relationships between the characters are deep, realistic, and compelling, making the story gripping, devastating, and surprisingly full of humanity. So sit back and enjoy the journey, even the unexpected parts.

GUT WRENCHING READ

BY JULIE ANN D.



MURDER IN THE LIBRARY

BY KAREN B.

Twelve Angry Librarians

by Miranda James

This book is sheer entertainment (and not just for anyone who has ever worked in a library and has surely run across angry librarians). Cats, libraries, and murder abound in this eighth book of the **Cat in the Stacks** series murder mysteries. Set in Athena, Mississippi, it follows the doings of Charlie Harris, who is currently serving as the interim library director at Athena College. His faithful companion, Diesel, is a Maine Coon cat and his partner in the crime-solving business.

The plot unfolds during an academic library conference hosted at the college where a speaker is murdered. The speaker is an old acquaintance of Charlie's from library school, Gavin Fong, who was roundly disliked by most of the librarians at the conference. Besides being an incredibly obnoxious person one-on-one, Gavin also stated publicly from a podium at the conference that librarians would all be out of jobs in the next five years, making himself even more unpopular.



Charlie, always intrigued by a mystery, begins gathering clues on his own in an attempt to discover who killed Gavin before he becomes the prime suspect. In the meantime, Charlie must also make decisions about his own career path and deal with the possible move of family members out of town. Filled with quirky small-town characters, humor and murder side by side, and more than a passing resemblance to some aspects of real library life, this book is sure to please anyone needing a break from their daily routine.

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UNBURYING HISTORY

BY IZZY B.



As the Viola Ford Fletcher, the last survivor of the infamous Tulsa Race Massacre, died on November 24, 2025 at 111 years old, it has become increasingly important in today's society to remember the darker parts of our country's history, to learn from them and hopefully never repeat.

A book published in 2019, whose message and historical depiction still rings true, is **The Nickel Boys** by Colson Whitehead. This novel tells the fictional stories of Elwood Curtis and Turner, two young Black boys sentenced to the Nickel Academy, a reformatory for boys based on a real place, the Dozier School for Boys in Florida. Elwood and Turner, along with all the other boys incarcerated there, are subjected to horrific violence from staff, grueling manual labor, and awful conditions that closely resemble slavery in the segregated South. As the perspective shifts from Elwood's adolescence to an adulthood spent coping with his lingering trauma, the depths of racism in the U.S. are rendered with vivid complexity by Whitehead's writing, and both Elwood and the reader must decide what it really means to confront a past that would rather be forgotten.



ARTWORK BY SUE K.

ISSUE #15

DEATH IS ALWAYS WATCHING



BY ADAM P .



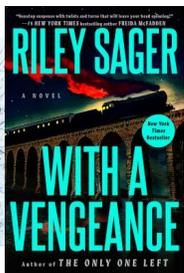
Final Destination Bloodlines, directed by Zach Lipovsky & Adam Stein, is the 6th installment and most recent movie in the **Final Destination** horror film franchise, which features a main character who can see tragic events unfold right before they actually happen, resulting in multiple deaths and mass chaos. With family now involved, how could they cheat death and try to avoid the unimaginable?

Stefani Lewis, the main character in **Bloodlines**, seems to have this horrible dream every night for the past few months, with a vision of a new restaurant called the Sky View (resembling the Seattle Space Needle or Toronto's CN Tower). The building ultimately collapsed due to multiple construction flaws, possibly due to it being completed 5 months ahead of schedule. This happened years ago and now Stefani dreams of a woman who has a vision of the accident. That woman just happens to be her grandmother, Iris, who tried to warn people that they were all going to die if they didn't get off the tower. No one believed her until a crack in the glass dancefloor proved her right. Stefani has never met Iris due to her family claiming she's insane and not keeping in contact with her because of it. So Stefani decides she must meet Iris and confront her about why she's now having this recurring dream. Little did Stefani know, death was watching her and her family. Why? Because Iris cheated death and was supposed to be a victim in that tower accident. If she were to die, death would then go after her family tree and take one member at a time. Would Stefani's family even believe her if she warned them that death was coming? Or would Death's actions speak for themselves? This movie really makes you think about all the little things in life that can go wrong in an instant. So next time when you see those kids playing soccer and the garbage truck coming down the street right next to you, you might want to just head backwards and go home..



ALL ABOARD! AN EXCITING TRAIN RIDE OR NOT?

BY MARY ANNE
B .



With a Vengeance

by Riley Sager

What would you do if you got an invitation to take a train ride, but the invitation also has a message on it just for you? Six people all get the same invitation and board a train, empty except for the conductor who is locked in the front of the train, two people who are there to seek justice for the deaths of family members, and one additional person who says he is very willing to help, but also has a secret agenda.

The time is the early 1940s when traveling by train is still a luxury. Air travel is a newish thing, and trains are built for comfort and relaxation. The six people invited on the train know each other and they have their hands in a plan to destroy a very reputable business man. Why? Because money is the source of all evil and people can be bought for a price. The two people who are out for justice have been planning this for a year, and all they want are answers as to why a tragedy had to happen at all.

Before the train reaches its final destination, things happen that you probably figured would, but the question is by whom? What does that one additional person bring to the group? Is he a good guy or a bad guy?

When you're on a train and lives are at stake, make sure you remember that there are many places to hide; if you can make good choices and do your research, there may be a reward in it for you at the end!

What will you do next time you receive an invitation?

REACHING FOR THE STARS

BY DONNA D.

Atmosphere: A Love Story

by Taylor Jenkins Reid

Taylor Jenkins Reid has written several novels that have landed on best-seller lists, won awards, and even been made into movies or miniseries. I enjoyed reading **Daisy Jones & the Six** and **The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo**, but I think her latest novel is the best one yet.

Atmosphere: A Love Story is set in the 1980s. It pulls you in from the very first pages when an emergency occurs aboard a NASA space shuttle. The story then goes back in time to the events that led up to this disaster, and follows a group of astronaut candidates as they train for space travel.

The main character, Joan Goodwin, was fascinated by the stars as a child, and turned her obsession into a career as a professor of physics and astronomy at the local university. When she sees an advertisement for women scientists to join the space shuttle program at NASA, she applies and is selected from a pool of over a thousand women.

Atmosphere describes the rigorous training at Houston's Johnson Space Center, the ambition and courage of the aspiring astronauts, and the truly nail-biting tense moments during space missions.

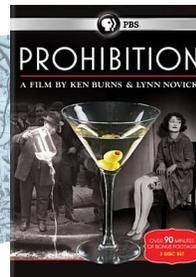


But this isn't just a story about the stars and space exploration. It is about friendships, teamwork, family ties, and self-discovery. When Joan's sister is unable to take on the responsibility to raise her daughter, Joan steps in and forms a close bond with her niece. Their relationship is one of the most heartwarming and inspiring aspects of this novel. As they prepare for their first flights, Joan forges friendships with many of the astronauts in the program. She discovers her connection with fellow astronaut Vanessa is slowly turning into a partnership she never dreamed was possible for her. Set during a time when same-sex relationships were not widely accepted and were grounds for dismissal from the space program, their emotional journey must be kept hidden or it could cost them their dreams.

Atmosphere has it all! Well-written characters, an interesting time period, women who break boundaries, thrilling moments, family bonds, and a story about space that's really a story about love.

HISTORY REPEATS ITSELF

BY SUE K.



On the recommendation of a friend, I watched Ken Burns's documentary on Prohibition, which gives a most revealing look at the country's attempt to add Amendment 18 to the Constitution. The battles between rural and urban America, immigrants versus "native born," crime, and racism are all laid bare in an older version of America. The country struggles today with the same issues, albeit in slightly different forms. The documentary quotes an interesting cast of characters, from Supreme Court Justice Stevens, to writers, to the children of bootleggers. Did you know that the origin of the term "scofflaw" was the result of a nationwide contest to give a name to country's drunkards? (The prize was shared by two people who both thought up the imaginative word.) The last words in the documentary come from Peter Hamill, a writer I highly recommend, who says that the attempts of politicians to legislate morality are doomed to fail over and over; human beings dislike being told what to do.

LIBRARY TIP #2

WINTER'S A GREAT TIME TO UNPLUG AND PLAY GAMES WITH FAMILY & FRIENDS! MAKE SURE TO CHECK OUT THE COLLECTION OF BOARD & CARD GAMES THAT ARE ABLE TO BE BORROWED FROM THE CENTRAL LIBRARY!

Gaming

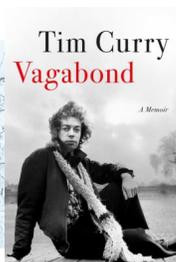
UNPLUGGED



[HTTPS://WWW.BUFFALOLIB.ORG/BOOK-S-MOVIES-MUSIC/GAMING-UNPLUGGED](https://www.buffalolib.org/book-s-movies-music/gaming-unplugged)

DON'T DREAM IT, READ IT

BY NICOLE B.



Vagabond

by Tim Curry

It's strange to think about how influential someone you will never meet can be, but Tim Curry definitely shaped a good part of my teen years. He terrified me as Pennywise in Stephen King's **It**, solidifying a lifelong love of horror movies, and watching **The Rocky Horror Picture Show** (and participating in the Amherst Theater's midnight showings) as a teenager awakened me to a broader world than what my rural upbringing could offer. His new memoir, **Vagabond**, allows a glimpse into this iconic man who I'd idolized all these years, and honestly, it is a pure delight. I listened to the audiobook version (read by Curry), and he comes across as so humble, so absolutely LOVELY, that he truly epitomizes the idea of a proper English gentleman (with a little cheeky flair, of course). Yes, he's done all these amazing roles and had a lot of success, but he easily relays his failures and disappointments too. He's open about his troubled relationship with his mother, roles he lost, a struggle with stage fright, and the stroke he suffered in 2012. He also surprises - the chapter on his work with the Muppets completely solidified my respect for him as a person. As with most icons, underneath all the glitz and glam he's a person much like the rest of us, and he seems just as happy tending a garden as commanding an audience. There's a lot to learn about Curry from this memoir, but the best part is getting to take this journey through his life with him.



WHAT LENGTHS WOULD YOU GO TO TO FIND OUT WHO YOU REALLY ARE?

BY MARY ANNE
B.



The Unraveling of Julia

by Lisa Scottoline

A young woman named Julia has a heartbreaking experience. As she is trying to come to grips with everything - mainly the fact that her whole world was turned upside down and she has hardly any money left - she receives a very interesting email. It seems someone she never knew from Italy has left her a villa and millions of euros. What would you do? Go to Italy to see what this is all about, or just sell everything sight unseen? The only person Julia can discuss this with is her best friend Courtney.

Julia decides to take a chance and see what the email is all about. She flies to Italy and meets with a lawyer who has limited information. When she sees what she has inherited, she is in shock. At the villa Julia is greeted by a married couple who are the caretakers of the villa and its surrounding land. As Julia digs more deeply into her past strange things happen to her, but she has no clue how and why they are happening. Are these things real or just figments of her imagination?

As she tries to unravel everything, she realizes she is being followed by different men. She also manages to find someone who is more than willing to help, but that person does not know their life could be in danger. While dealing with what to do with the villa, Julia is also trying to find out about her past and her ancestors, one of whom was a very powerful woman.

Slowly, as Julia finds more information with the help of Courtney, and with no help from the Polizia Strale (the Italian police), the pieces all fall into place. What starts as a very long journey with a lot of twists and turns ends up with all the answers...and then some!

A PERFECT BOOK FOR OUR TIME

BY MARY ANNE B.

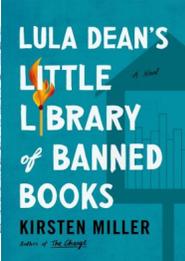
Lula Dean's Little Library of Banned Books

by Kirsten Miller

When I saw the title of this book, I thought this is probably a good book - and you know what, IT WAS!! The setting is a small town in Georgia, the kind of town where everyone knows everyone, and by the end they really do know everyone. It all begins with a group of people who are trying to ban books they feel are inappropriate for young minds. So, a little library of "appropriate" books is opened, and then a simple prank opens up a whole big can of worms.

When people start borrowing the books from the little library, minds are opened and the townspeople start to see neighbors differently, with even their family members seen in a new light. One person's secret comes out while another person pushes that same secret to the back of their mind, never to be relived. The cast of characters include old high school rivals, an elderly lady who has much more wisdom than her family thinks, a mailman, a movie star, the town doctor, the town vet, and of course the many young people who have to show their parents what the world is really about.

The book has parts for you to laugh at and other parts that you need to take seriously - things we have all read or heard about in the news. It is hard to tell you too much without giving the story away, but I can assure you the ending of the book is probably not something you saw coming - at least I didn't!



LULA DEAN'S
LITTLE
LIBRARY
of BANNED
BOOKS
KIRSTEN MILLER
author of The Change



Once you have read the book, take a minute to read a note from the author, containing it is her reasoning as to why she wrote the book and why it is, like the title of my review, a perfect book for our time.

THE CHECKOUT: WINTER 2025/26

DEMON AT YOUR DOOR

BY CHLOE H.



Play Nice

by Rachel Harrison

Clio Barnes takes over the house she briefly grew up in from her mother who just passed away. Neither she nor her sisters have been on speaking terms with their mother for several years after she lost custody of them. Clio's memory of what happened that final night in the house is vague, but she starts piecing it together after she moves back in and finds pages of the book her mother wrote about the the house's alleged possession and the demon that dwells inside. Taking the house as an opportunity to make content for her rising social media career, Clio moves in from the Big Apple to discover ugly truths about her family, herself, and the entity inside the house. This was way more than a surface-level exorcism - Harrison masterfully explores sibling dynamics, the monster that is grief, and what it means to become your true self.

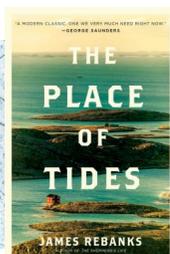


ARTWORK BY SUE K.

ISSUE #15

WHERE DOES EIDERDOWN COME FROM?

BY KEN W.



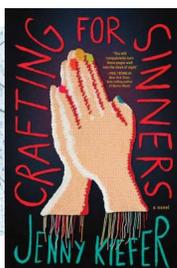
Eiderdown is a unique and premium down that comes from the breasts of the eider duck. This down is plucked from the duck and used as part of the nesting when they raise their eggs.

The Place of Tides by James Rebanks is about Anna Masoy, a woman who has devoted decades of her life to harvesting that down. This is an extremely complicated process because in order to harvest, one must help create nesting sites for these ducks and provide protection from predators. This is all done on very isolated islands that are in the far north in Norway's Vega archipelago. The ducks rely on the human interaction to help them find appropriate shelter in a hardscrabble place. So great is their reliance on this intervention that it is believed that if it didn't happen the ducks would become extinct. Rebanks stays with Anna and her friend as she prepares for the arrival of the ducks on the island. This is a very strenuous process that takes place in a fairly wild environment. Rebanks assists them in their labor and learns about the work that goes into preparing the nesting sites. This is the last year that Anna will assist the ducks. Rebanks is there to describe the process but also to chronicle the story of her life and how she decided that this should be the major focus of her life. We learn about the struggles she encounters and how this vocation has shaped her. In addition to Anna's story we become aware of the personal difficulties the author is sorting out. The help that Rebanks provides Anna in her last season also helps him to understand the struggles he is experiencing in his own life. In this setting, the author comes to terms with some of his problems and finds new direction to help solve those issues.



THOU SHALL NOT BE A HYPOCRITE

BY BECCA N.



Crafting for Sinners

by Jenny Kiefer

If you enjoy reading about cults, religious psychosis, and survival horror, **Crafting for Sinners** should be added to your TBR (To Be Read) list. This book follows Ruth, a woman who gets trapped inside and hunted down in a hyper-religious craft store for a sacrificial ceremony all because she is a lesbian (who may have stolen a few merchandise items over the years). This Hobby Lobby-esque religious psychosis cult believes that barcodes are the devil's mark, all while wearing robes and roaming through these catacombs that act as a museum of souvenirs kept from previous sacrifices. Plus, they have planned to sacrifice her under the Blood Moon...seems like the call is coming from inside the house to me. Anyway, I highly recommend reading this book. You get to follow along as Ruth finds all sorts of creative (and very gruesome) ways to stop her hunters from getting their way. From super glue to the eyes to knitting needles used as a shiv, this book keeps you on your toes all the way until the very end. Personally, this was my first horror book and it was everything I wanted. It had LGBTQIA+ main characters, a religious cult storyline, is loosely based on a wild conspiracy theory, and has diabetes representation. Because what's more scary than being trapped in a craft store with people hunting you down? Being low on blood sugar with no candy. Ruth not only fought off these horrible people, but also was fighting to stay conscious, making the survival horror theme that much more apparent.

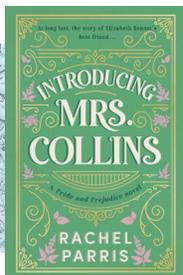
27 YEARS OLD, STILL NO MONEY BUT A WHOLE NEW PROSPECT

BY MELISSA F.

Introducing Mrs. Collins

by Rachel Parris

Charlotte Lucas is not romantic. Not at all, particularly since reaching the decrepit and wizened age of 27 still unmarried. Charlotte, being a practical and definitely unromantic woman, consents to an agreeable if underwhelming match with fireplace enthusiast Mr. Collins and finds that, as expected, married life is calmly content at times and mind-numbingly boring at others. But then. Oh, dear reader, but THEN, an unexpected guest comes striding into Rosings Park with his army regimentals, floppy brown hair, and charming intellect. Despite enjoying the witty conversation and hesitant friendship that follows, Charlotte recognizes that it would be inappropriate to be interested in anything more. She, after all, married for the sake of security and practicality, not romance.



But, reader, this is a tale of love and second chances, tragedy and personal struggle, interfering mothers and billowy-shirted gentlemen. Suddenly unromantic Charlotte becomes the unexpected heroine of her own story. With humorous dialogue, sharp emotion, and wonderfully-imagined scenes and letters between some of **Pride & Prejudice's** most beloved characters, this book will have my fellow Austen fans grinning over their cups of tea and handkerchiefs as they cheer for one of the BEST best friends in classic lit.

Content & Sensitivity:

This book contains scenes involving loss of a pregnancy, war-related PTSD, and sexual harassment.

HEY, YOU GOT ROMANCE IN MY HOCKEY!

BY JILL J.

AVAILABLE ON:



Libby.



It seems an unlikely pairing, but hockey romance is having a huge moment. That's where Canadian author Rachel Reid comes in - she's penned an immensely popular six-novel romance series called **Game Changers**, all of which feature queer hockey players. **Game Changer** is the catalyst for the entire series. It tells the story of closeted hockey superstar Scott and smoothie barista Kip. Scott's pregame superstitions have him visiting Kip for blueberry smoothies (and eventually a lot more). Scott eventually comes out in a very public manner, and that event is the catalyst for the rest of the series.

Following the first book is perhaps the most popular installment in the series, **Heated Rivalry**. It follows the years-long secret romance between rivals Shane and Ilya, whose story is continued in the final book **The Long Game**. **Heated Rivalry** is what started my interest in the books, but reading all of them in order is the best way to see all the ways in which the characters' stories interconnect.

Tough Guy features enforcer Ryan and musician Fabian, who reconnect in adulthood after knowing each other as teens. Ryan's journey with anxiety is truly touching and affecting, while Fabian's experiences as a gender-nonconforming man highlight the oft-toxic hypermasculinity in sports spaces. **Common Goal** tells the story of recently-divorced veteran goalie Eric and grad student Kyle, and how they navigate their relationship while tackling a 15-year age gap.

The sweetest and most redemptive arc is between (not really a) villain-turned-reluctant-hero Troy and team social media guy Harris in **Role Model**. It's positively adorable, but still discusses the way in which professional sports are culpable in a culture that ignores and covers up sexual violence.

You definitely don't need to care about hockey to love these books, as the characters and their complex relationships drive the stories. (Be warned though, sweet as they are, the **Game Changers** series doesn't skimp on spice.)

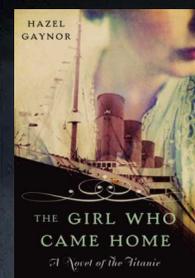
QUICK TAKES



Greenwich Park

by Katherine Faulkner

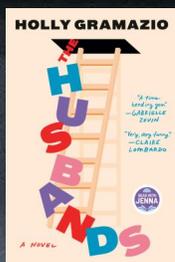
Helen's life seems pretty perfect until she meets Rachel at a prenatal class and things start to unravel. Fans of Ruth Ware and Lisa Jewell will enjoy this debut thriller filled with lots of twists and turns.



The Girl Who Came Home: A Novel of the Titanic

by Hazel Gaynor

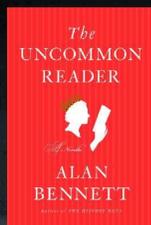
Based on the true story of 14 members of a small Irish village who board the Titanic for a better life in America, this heartfelt novel captures the impact of this unimaginable disaster and follows the life of one survivor who shares her story with her great-granddaughter 70 years later.



The Husbands

by Holly Gramazio

Lauren returns home one evening to find a strange man who claims to be her husband, despite her single status. As she adjusts to this new reality, the husband climbs into the attic to change a light bulb and a new husband emerges. When Lauren realizes the attic can continue to supply husbands, she must make choices in a world of infinite options.



The Uncommon Reader

by Alan Bennett

As Queen Elizabeth follows her wandering corgis, she chances upon a mobile library parked outside the palace and decides to borrow a book. With suggestions from Norman, a cook from the royal kitchen and a frequent library patron, she discovers the pleasures of reading and her view of the world begins to change.

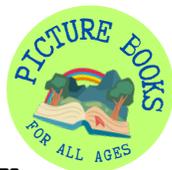


Against Technoableism: Rethinking Who Needs Improvement

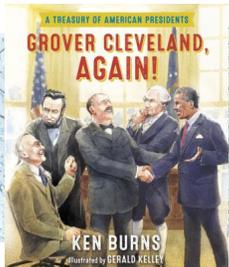
by Ashley Shew

People often think disability can and should be “fixed” with technology (artificial limbs, cochlear implants, etc.), but those who actually live with disabilities are rarely part of the conversation. This book argues that accessibility is something that should be addressed on a societal level, and which should include differing abilities without the expectation of conforming to the able-bodied standard.

NOT JUST FOR KIDS



BY SUE K.



In researching the work of Ken Burns, the groundbreaking documentarian, I accidentally ordered a children's picture book he wrote about the presidents titled **Grover Cleveland, Again!** (At the time of the book's writing, Grover Cleveland was the only president elected to two non-consecutive terms) with beautiful illustrations by Gerald Kelley. When his daughters had trouble falling asleep, they would recite the presidents in order. Burns does a tiny bit of editing on the more scandalous acts of each president but he generally doesn't pull too many punches, showing each president's accomplishments along with their term's major challenges and how successful each was in overcoming them. There are plenty of lighthearted asides about each president, including President Truman's brisk daily two-mile walk at 5 AM in suit and tie! The book is a reminder of how hard-won every milestone made in our country has been with regards to civil rights, poverty, care for veterans and the elderly, and ending wars. Plus, Burns gives us every president's pets and their names! Eisenhower's parakeet Gabby is buried on White House grounds. Who knew?

DC COMICS MEETS HITCHCOCK

BY CHLOE H.



The Human Target

by Tom King

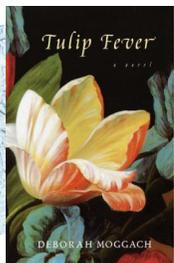
Christopher Chance makes his living in an unusual way - posing as his clients who have been targeted for murder-for-hire plots. His latest client is no other than Lex Luthor, famed archnemesis of Superman. Christopher's job does not go to plan while posing as Lex, and he ends up being poisoned by a mysterious substance that leaves him with 12 days left to live to figure out who did it.

Greg Smallwood's '60s-style panels are beautiful and the detective noir story counting down the days Christopher has left per chapter led to me finishing both volumes in one sitting! Don't be afraid to pick this up if you are unfamiliar with Justice League - no prior knowledge is required to follow along!



MELODRAMA MADNESS

BY CHLOE H.



Tulip Fever

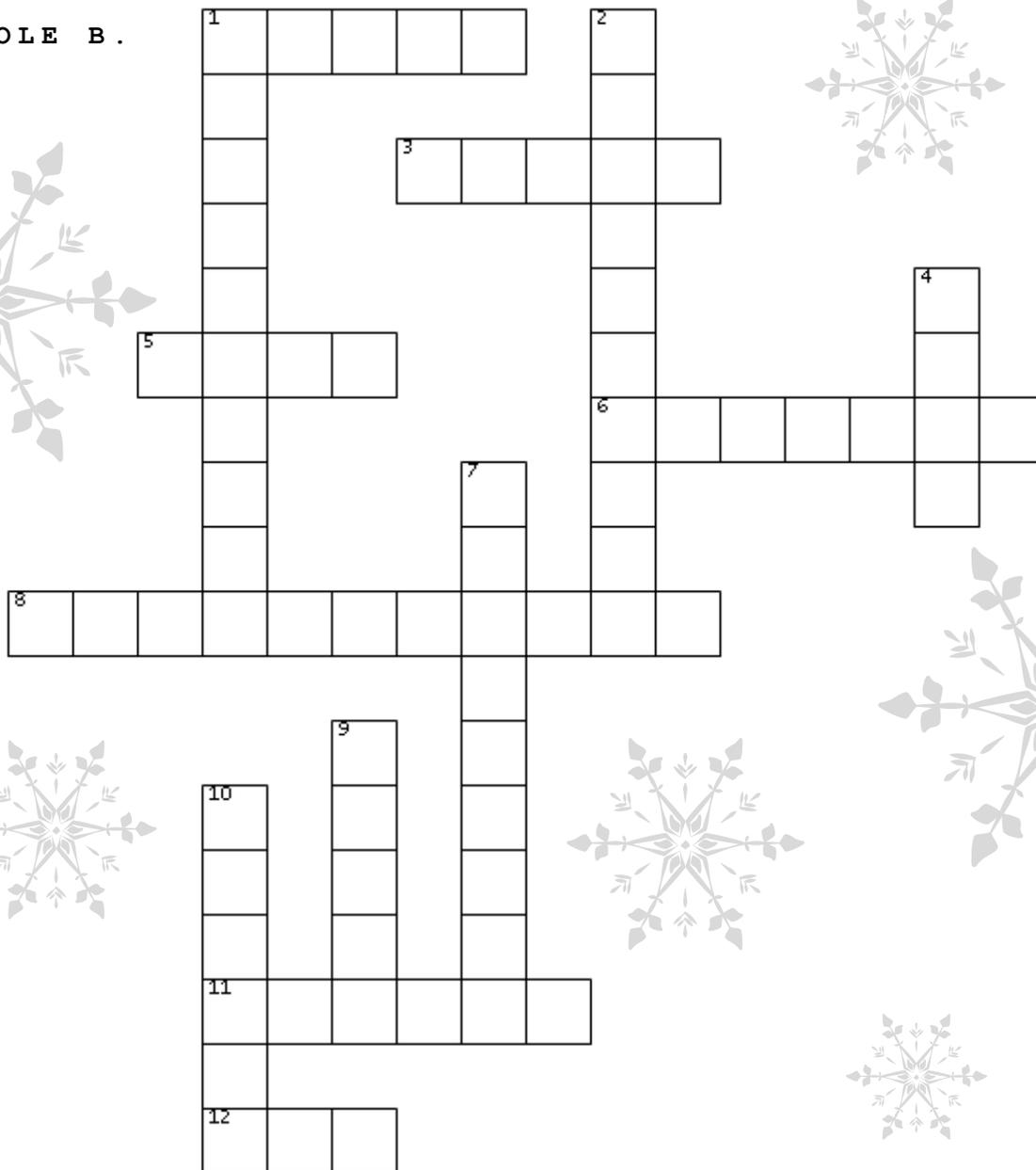
by Deborah Moggach

This twisty turny story is set in 17th century Amsterdam, following Sophia and her husband Cornelius who have commissioned a painting of themselves by a renowned artist. As the painting sessions continue, Sophia and the painter grow closer as she distances herself from Cornelius, and a Wuthering Heights-style story of obsession, greed, and beauty engulfs them all.

If you liked **Girl with a Pearl Earring** by Tracy Chevalier, definitely pick up this art-inspired, drama-filled story.

EASY FREEZY

BY NICOLE B.



Across

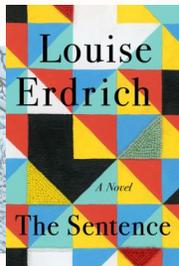
1. of the two poles, this one is the coldest
3. author of *The Snowy Day*
5. this "Excellent" actor has Winter as his last name
6. the tallest and heaviest penguin species in the world
8. the "color" of snow (not white)
11. the percentage of air that makes up snow
12. the amount of sides a snowflake has

Down

1. captain of the ship *Endurance*
2. pink snow common on mountains is named after this summer fruit
4. fear of this is called chionophobia
7. he nips at your nose
9. country that has the snowiest city
10. the planet where winter lasts for 21 years

THE HAUNTING OF COVID-19

BY IZZY B.



If a book starts with a woman kidnapping a dead man to win over her crush by faking a crematory business in order to convince his grieving widow, freezing the body along with a bunch of vegetables, then getting a 60-year jail sentence for it with the decisive evidence against her being a piece of rainbow duct tape, you know it's going to be a good story. Louise Erdrich's *The Sentence* is a profound and fun novel about an Ojibwe woman named Tookie who spends seven years in prison for a crime she didn't commit, becomes reliant on reading to help her escape, and makes a living as a bookseller at a small Indigenous-owned bookstore in Minnesota once she gets out. She spends her days surrounded by her eccentric coworkers, her loving husband who arrested her and then married her, and the ghost of an entitled older white lady who haunts the bookstore and spitefully disorganizes their shelves. This book is a beautifully-detailed reflection on family, community, and culture, and how all of these things that anchor a person adapted to the year of social change and the COVID-19 whirlwind that was 2020. Fair warning: the food descriptions in this novel will make you very hungry.

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ACROSS

1. South 3. Keats 5. Alex 6. Emperor 8. translucent 11. ninety
12. six

DOWN

1. Shackleton 2. watermelon 4. snow 7. Jack Frost 9. Japan
10. Uranus

THE CHECKOUT STAFF

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

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