

# THE CHECKOUT

SUMMER 2026

ISSUE #17

A REVIEW SOURCE WRITTEN BY LIBRARY PATRONS FOR LIBRARY PATRONS



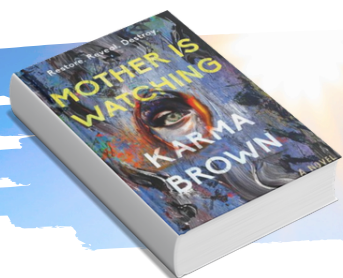
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# THE ART OF MOTHERING IS INSANE

BY JULIE ANN D.

**Mother is Watching** is a chilling dystopian horror debut from bestselling author Karma Brown. Set in the near future, Tilly is an accomplished art conservationist who honed her craft at the Art Gallery of Ontario and now lives in Savannah, Georgia with her family. She is tasked with restoring *The Mother*, a rare, top-secret painting that was damaged by fire. Created by an obscure surgeon-turned-artist who incorporates biological matter into her unsettling work, the painting evokes visions of Tilly's long-dead mother and revives the grief from her past miscarriage.

In this near-future world, a recent pandemic has devastated male fertility rates. Women are pressured to bear children and remain at home, with resources and privileges tied to the number of children they produce. Soon after acquiring the painting, Tilly discovers she is unexpectedly pregnant with her second child. Without her consent, her husband enrolls her in *MotherWise*, a nationwide surveillance program that monitors women's health, strips autonomy, and enforces strict control over reproductive choices.



Despite constant monitoring, Tilly is determined to finish restoring the painting before her baby arrives. But *The Mother* infiltrates her subconscious, driving her into hallucinations, paranoia, and self-harm, putting both her and her unborn child at risk. Will completing the restoration end the haunting, or will it awaken the artist herself?

Perfect for fans of *The Stepford Wives*, *Rosemary's Baby*, and *The Handmaid's Tale*.

# GIVE ME ANYTHING WRITTEN BY NIKITA GILL

BY MELISSA F.



**Hekate: The Witch**  
by Nikita Gill

I would read the back of a cereal box if it were written by this author. Her poetry is ethereally beautiful, and she brings that energy into this poignant and emotional retelling of the Greek myth of the goddess Hekate. Caught in the post-war turmoil between the Olympian gods and the Titans, Hekate is a young child missing her parents and the only world she's ever known. Hidden away in the Underworld, as safe as she can be in the realm of Hades, Hekate grows into a young woman uncertain of her abilities and her place in the universe. As she explores the far reaches of the Underworld in a desperate attempt to uncover her purpose, Hekate finds connections she didn't know she needed and an understanding of the gods she never thought she'd want. This novel in verse is a rich and enraged tribute to the goddess Hekate and the mythical magic of self-discovery.

*Content & Sensitivity: Descriptions of mythology-based war, torture, and violence.*

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# ROMEO & JULIET IN BUFFALO

BY KAREN B. L.

## The Letter Tree by Rachel Fordham

Set in 1924 Buffalo, New York, this story celebrates the power of love. Laura, the daughter of a successful business owner, has been kept secluded from society by her father since her mother's death seven years prior. In particular, she has been separated from Isaac, a childhood friend who is the son of her father's former business partner who now runs a competing business. The feud between the fathers has ramifications for their children who are taught to hate each other.

Against this backdrop, Laura finds solace in a friendship conducted entirely by letters with an unknown friend, exchanging them in a maple tree on the grounds of the Buffalo Zoo. The seven years of Laura's sorrow since her mother's death have been filled with this form of companionship. As the plot progresses through the festering feud, a potential new social life for Laura and a family reckoning for Isaac cause their worlds to collide. Both must make sense of newly-discovered family secrets in order to navigate their futures.

This novel is part romance and part historical fiction. Its characters have been compared to a latter-day version of Romeo and Juliet with good reason, but the storyline encompasses more than the manifestation of young love. It also looks at the social environment of the early 20th century in what was then a wealthy city, considers how the roles of women were changing in the 1920s, and captures a sense of what life was like during Prohibition. Anyone interested in Buffalo history who is up for a sweet read would enjoy this book.



## Empire of Pain: The Secret History of the Sackler Dynasty by Patrick Radden Keefe

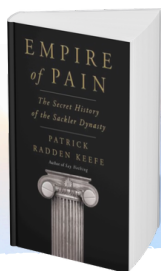
I should start by mentioning that I am not a fervent nonfiction reader. Additionally, I would prefer a book with a nice wrapped-up ending and all the happy rainbows and butterflies. This book, unfortunately, did not give me all those warm feelings - far from it! Covering three generations of the Sackler family, Patrick Radden Keefe takes a deep dive into the Sacklers' rise and purchase of Purdue Pharma, along with the constant manipulation of medical research, marketing, and regulations, leading to the swift rise of their blockbuster drug OxyContin. From their early years of aggressively marketing only the most profitable medicines to the next generation of Sacklers who were born billionaires, this is a story that mimics those of many ultra-rich American dynasties. Starting as a coming-of-age, rags-to-riches story, **Empire of Pain** quickly moved into a horrible crime tale and scandal spanning over decades.

Several screen adaptations depicting the opioid crisis have gained recognition, including the recent Netflix series called **Painkiller**, starring Matthew Broderick as Richard Sackler. **Empire of Pain** was one of the most compelling and important reads I have ever finished. It shook me with anger and sadness, while shedding light on the atrocities of pharmaceutical companies who consistently put profits over safety. Maybe we all should refamiliarize ourselves with "big pharma" and the people who play a role in the production and management of prescription drugs. This one may not leave you with warm and fuzzies, but it is an absolute must-read!



# MUST READ NONFICTION

BY CHRISTINA  
L.



# “OH, JUST ONE MORE THING...”

BY STEPHEN C.

## The Dentist

by Tim Sullivan

George Cross, the star of Tim Sullivan’s series of mystery novels set in modern-day Bristol, England is, like many of his literary peers, a brilliant detective. Cross has another thing in common (probably) with the great sleuths that have come before him: he is on the autism spectrum. Unlike Agatha Christie and Arthur Conan-Doyle, Sullivan shows us how autism shapes both Cross’s work and home life to differing results. What makes him a brilliant detective also paralyzes him when the routine of a regular dinner night with his father is unexpectedly altered. We also gain insight into how his co-workers and family have learned to work with his perceived eccentricities.



In **The Dentist**, the first in an eight-book (and counting) series, we are introduced to Cross and his partner DS Josie Ottey as they begin to investigate the murder of a homeless man. Being that the victim isn’t exactly high society, Cross and Ottey are pressured to close the case and move on as quickly as possible. Unfortunately for the higher-ups, Cross begins to uncover more questions than answers leading to an unlikely identification, a connection with an unsolved murder, and the possibility of corruption involving a well-connected, retired detective. Tim Sullivan’s George Cross series succeeds not only in instantly bringing to life an original, intriguing detective but also presents him with cases to solve that are full of twists, turns, and unexpected conclusions.

# EXISTENTIAL DYSTOPIA

BY CHLOE H.



## I Who Have Never Known Men

by Jacqueline Harpman

A novel with no chapters, no breaks - just straight continuous prose from an unnamed girl who is deep underground alongside 40 women locked in a cage, with no recollection of how they got there, how long they have been there, or what their lives were before. She is the youngest and different from those she is in captivity with - inquisitive and unknowing of the world before, which the others refuse to speak about because it gives them so much pain. She starts to notice the guards, their formations, and their timing. Then in the span of 11 minutes, a siren goes off, keys are dropped, and the guards disappear. As they take their first steps outside, the women are left with a new prison - figuring out where they are, what happened, and how to survive. This was a fascinating, one-sitting read. I was amazed at how I could see the world, understand the characters, and have a vast experience in just over 170 pages. The afterword by Sophie Mackintosh encapsulates the experience perfectly: “There is no sense of who has confined them and for what reason, whether they’re even wandering Earth...Nothing is explained, but nothing needs to be. The beauty and power of the novel is in its ambiguities, it should be unrelentingly bleak; and yet there is shining, searching humanity at its core that carries it through. It’s a puzzle that cannot be solved, isn’t supposed to be solved, because it is in the process of grappling with it that we discover the point for ourselves.”

# SECRET, SECRET, I'VE GOT A SECRET

BY ADAM P.



## Fire Exit by Morgan Talty

As someone who mostly reads based off of curiosity and the uniqueness of novel titles themselves, I have to admit that **Fire Exit** was not what I was expected. Honestly, it may be one of the best stories I've read in a while. It's about Charles Lamosway, a white man who was raised as part of the Penobscot Indian Nation, despite having no ties whatsoever to Native American bloodlines and getting kicked out from living on the reservation after turning 18. After that, he finds a home just across the river from the reservation.

As time goes on, we learn about Charles's life. There are drinking issues, good and bad friendships, his relationship with his stepfather, and the struggles of taking care of a mother who's battling dementia and other health problems. It's also fascinating to read about how he lives his life so close to a culture that he has ties with but is restricted from being a part of. Adding to the complications is his daughter, Elizabeth, who has no idea he exists. She just happens to live right across the river from him and for years, Charles has watched her grow up having no idea who he is.

Elizabeth is able to live on the Penobscot reservation despite being non-Native because her mother deliberately lied about her paternity to keep her part of the tribe. But now, it's time for her to find out who her real family is and why her father was never in the picture.

Secrets are tough to keep, especially when trying to rebuild a family. Or in this case, escaping a fire before it's too late and it burns you to the ground.



# SHIPWRECKED

BY DONNA D.



## A Marriage at Sea: A True Story of Love, Obsession, and Shipwreck by Sophie Elmhirst

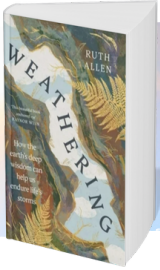
In June 1972, Maurice and Maralyn Bailey left everything behind and sailed away in their 31-foot yacht from England, bound for New Zealand. Without a radio transmitter or motor, they managed to sail for about a year before their boat was struck by a whale and they had to abandon ship. For 118 days, they were stranded with a life raft and a dinghy in the middle of the Pacific Ocean.

Their survival at sea relied on cooperation and hard work, and while Maurice often felt hopeless and ready to give up, Maralyn's optimism and perseverance kept their raft (and their marriage) afloat. Details of daily life came from their diaries: collecting rainwater to drink, fashioning safety pins into hooks to catch fish, scooping up turtles for their meat and sometimes to keep as pets, and trying valiantly to attract passing ships. Finally, the crew of a South Korean fishing boat spotted them and took them on board. The story of their rescue had been broadcast around the world and they became celebrities, slowly regaining their health as they did international tours.

The days adrift at sea and how the Baileys survived are at the center of this gripping tale. However, the author is interested in who they were before and after the shipwreck. In the last chapters, the author examined Maurice's lonely life after Maralyn's death. A fascinating story in spite of a slower ending and well worth a read!

# OUTDOOR THERAPY

BY KEN W.



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**Weathering: How the Earth's Deep Wisdom Can Help Us Endure Life's Storms** is written by Ruth Allen, who has the distinction of being a geologist who became a psychologist. That struck me as an unusual career change, and just knowing this alone attracted me to the book. She also has the unique approach of conducting her therapy sessions outdoors in the UK. She believes the physical world can help us understand the ways in which nature has had to adapt to changes for the entire time this world has existed. There is a resilience about the way the natural world has engaged in this change. Conducting therapy outside offers her the opportunity to be physically immersed in that world. This provides clients with the chance to observe some of the changes and adaptations that have occurred in the landscape where their therapy is being conducted. She guides them through observations that highlight these changes. Then she can draw parallels with their lives and help them see they have various possibilities for dealing with such issues as grieving, life changes, and making decisions about the way their lives can work better for them.

The book is much more complex than I have stated, but that is the distillation of what happens. Additionally, she illustrates how the earth has changed by taking us through various geological formations above and below ground. Each area she discusses has its own character and unique features.

This read provides a unique blend of geological and psychological information I found fascinating. It isn't available from our library but can be requested through the interlibrary loan.



# AND YOU THOUGHT YOU WERE HAVING A BAD WEEK

BY MARY ANNE B.



## Last Seen

by J.T. Ellison

Here it is – Monday morning. The start of another week. Little did you know that it would all come crashing down! You go into work expecting to hear one kind of news, only to get the exact opposite. You go home, but not the home you used to share with your husband. Then to top things off, you get a phone call that your father has had an accident and is in the hospital. I don't know about you, but I would want to go back to bed and see if I could have a redo of Monday! Unfortunately, that isn't an option for Halley.

Halley's first priority is her father, so she goes back to her hometown to look after him. When she gets there, old memories keep filling her mind. When Halley is looking for her father's insurance card, she discovers that he has been keeping a secret from her for the past 15 years.

When Halley confronts her father, she has trouble accepting why he did what he did. On a mission to find out the truth, more memories come flooding in; so do many other bad things. As Halley navigates all the different paths with the help with her (not yet) ex-husband and a trusted sheriff, she gets deeper and deeper into trouble, and any answers lead to more danger. The hardest part is finding who to trust along the way.

I think the only way to sum up this review is to tell you to read the book so you can find out the results of Halley's search for a person who may or may not be alive after being missing for 15 years. Will you have to endure what Halley has in order to get the answers?

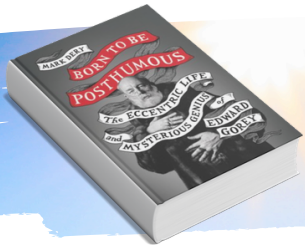
# MORBID YET WHIMSICAL

BY KAREN B.

## Born to be Posthumous: The Eccentric Life and Mysterious Genius of Edward Gorey

by Mark Dery

Edward Gorey, the eccentric writer and illustrator of macabre, nonsensical books for children and devoted adults, deserves a biography like this one. Much like the man himself, this book is brimming with intriguing details and fascinating insights. The biographer begins by declaring who Gorey was not. He was not, in fact, a British Victorian man who doodled and made up nonsense rhymes for children in the 1800s. Instead, he was an extremely talented and intellectual American artist from the Midwest who lived in the 20th century, and who never set foot in England. The imaginative whimsy that Gorey brought to his work is just that - work that came from his own imagination. He was a loner who could seem aloof to some and friendly to others, as well as an avowed asexual person presumed to be gay, and who avoided questions about his personal life. He would probably appreciate the irony of someone having written such a comprehensive biography of his life.



Gorey's silly rhymes and creepy artwork come across as both Victorian (harkening back to an earlier era) and surrealistic (appearing as avant-garde and modernist). They show the absurdity of life and the constant presence of death in ways both charmingly clever and wickedly sinister, which some viewers find repellent and others find hilarious. He apparently meant for readers to find their own meanings, because he refused to give definitive answers on what his work meant. Gorey had an immense impact on children's literature, changing from the sunny Golden Books era of a non-existent ideal world to a worldview marked by irreverence, irony, and twisted humor. Recommended for anyone curious about Gorey's uniquely bizarre work and the creative life that he lived.

# A JAPANESE HAUNTING

BY JULIE ANN D.



In *Japanese Gothic* by Kylie Lee Baker, two stories collide across time. Lee, a college student and unreliable narrator, flees in panic to his father's new home in Japan after killing his roommate. Sen, a female samurai warrior from 1877, ends up sharing a room in the same house. Each begins to glimpse faint visions of the other across their timelines, inexplicably connected. Through a closet door, they reach out, creating a mysterious crossroads between past and present.

For years Lee numbed himself with sedatives to hide the truth of his missing mother, remaining broken. When he finally stops taking the drugs, he decides to use Sen as his ticket to find his mother. She's recently been declared officially dead and he needs to gain closure. In her timeline, Sen endures a brutal life with abusive training from her father who despises her. He's a man unable to face the humiliation of a lost war and takes it out on her.

The house itself is an inconsistent, gothic nightmare, and the connection between Lee and Sen unfolds as a slow-burning supernatural tale steeped in Japanese mythology and explorations of family perception. The narrative bends time, blurring the line between memory, vision, and fantasy.

Baker's prose is poetic and graphic, the story is original and deeply melancholic. Fans of her writing style will also appreciate *Bat Eater and Other Names for Cora Zeng*, which tackles racism during the COVID-19 pandemic.

*Content & Sensitivity: drug abuse and child and spousal abuse.*

# QUICK TAKES

## City Time: On Being Sentenced to Rikers Island

by David Campbell and Jarrod Shanahan

A must-read for anyone interested in learning about the dysfunction of our criminal justice system. Both authors are activists and former inmates at Rikers Island.



## The Perfect Score Project: Uncovering the Secrets of the SAT

by Debbie Stier

Originally, Stier's intention is to help her high-school-aged child prepare for the SAT. Subsequently, she decides to see if she can improve her SAT scores from when she was a teenager. The story is a real page-turner that goes back and forth between the challenges both parties have preparing for the test.



## Nothing Tastes As Good

by Luke Dumas

A modern horror/social commentary on our obsession with body weight. Emmett takes part in a clinical trial of a miracle weight loss drug and suddenly has blackouts and strange cravings. Lo and behold, people go missing. You know what's coming, but the slow build and reflections on weight and culture make it worth the journey.



## The Light We Carry: Overcoming in Uncertain Times

by Michelle Obama

Beautifully written. Obama comes across as highly intelligent, very likeable, well balanced, and a great role model. Definitely one of the best memoirs I've ever read.

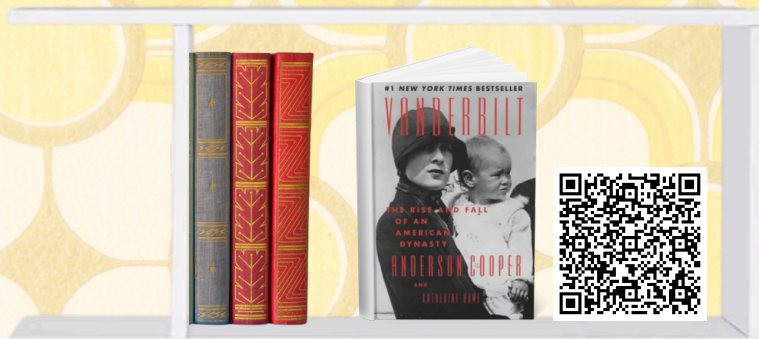


## Anxietyland

by Gemma Correll

An exploration of the author and illustrator's history with anxiety and the many ways she did (and didn't) cope with it. Correll's illustrations are always great, and the look into her mind is funny and relatable.





**Vanderbilt: The Rise and Fall of an American Dynasty**  
by Anderson Cooper and Katherine Howe

Listen to this engaging audiobook about one of America's richest families, narrated by one who grew up removed from it - Anderson Cooper. 11-year-old Cornelius Vanderbilt built wealth to allow his descendants to enjoy from the Gilded Age to present day, yet there is much more than money to the Vanderbilt family. This truly captures the incredible story about a remarkable and sometimes tragic family.



**The Tusks of Extinction**  
by Ray Nayler

A short but engaging sci-fi novel in which mammoths are brought back from extinction, and a dead elephant expert's consciousness has been resurrected to teach them how to become wild again. It's a weird premise that becomes a treatise on ethics, big game hunting, and humanity.



**Under the Same Stars**  
by Libba Bray

Told in three separate timelines, this book tells the story of best friends in Nazi Germany who become part of the resistance, punks and lovers in 1980s West Germany, and high school students dealing with the COVID pandemic in 2020 New York City. The way their stories intertwine is intriguing, and the message of defiance and atonement is timely.



**Strangers: A Memoir of Marriage**  
by Belle Burden

Although sometimes hard to relate to due to the author's privileged background (she has Vanderbilt roots), her unraveling after an unexpected divorce is something many have been through. If you can get past the talk of second homes and country clubs, the basic message is one of hope and resilience.



**The Names**  
by Florence Knapp

What's in a name? Knapp's novel tells three stories about the same man - one for each potential name given to him by his mother.

# STEP INTO ANOTHER TIME

BY CHLOE H.



## The Count of Monte Cristo (2026)

The classic story of revenge against a world that had it out for Edmond Dantes is brought to life with Sam Claflin in this PBS Masterpiece. A sailor falsely accused of treason and sent to prison on the night of his engagement party withstands 15 years of torture, until he meets Abbé Faria (Jeremy Irons) next door. Escaping, finding treasure, and reinventing himself as a count, Edmond is out for revenge, stepping foot into a world unknown to him. While set in France just after Napoleon escapes, the story still feels contemporary, exploring what it means to have a fulfilling, happy life. If you are familiar with the story, this is still worth the watch for the great acting and attention to detail. If you have never read or watched other adaptations, you are in for a treat!



## Small Things Like These (2024)

Another masterclass of acting from Cillian Murphy in this historical drama set in 1985 Ireland. He plays Bill Furlong, a busy father and coal merchant who delivers coal around the town of New Ross, including the local convent. One day during a routine delivery, he sees a girl being forcibly admitted there. What he witnessed triggers memories of his own difficult childhood, and the film goes back and forth between his own upbringing to how he decides to move forward after seeing what he saw. Gripping, authentic, and based on the 2021 novel of the same name by Claire Keegan, this is a must-watch!



# HEARING THEIR STORY ON Libby.

BY NICOLE B.



Are you someone who thinks you could never listen to an audiobook? That you wouldn't pay attention or that it seems odd to have someone read to you when you are perfectly able to hold a book and read it yourself? Well, I am here to convince you to give an audiobook a try! I became an avid audiobook listener a few years ago and they have since become an integral part of my life. Listening to an audiobook while doing the mundane things of life (washing dishes, folding laundry, exercising) is a great way to incorporate reading into every day.

Beyond just being something to entertain you while doing other things, listening to books, and particularly memoirs, adds so much nuance and personal inflection you cannot get from reading the printed copy. To hear an author's voice crack as they recall a particular emotional memory, to hear them laugh as they recount a funny incident, to just truly HEAR the author's voice- it really is a gift. It's such an intimate way to listen to someone's story and I am always thankful the author took the time to read it themselves.

So, since we are unfortunately in a world where a little listening device is constantly on our person (our phones), I would highly recommend utilizing yours to download Libby and start listening to audiobooks (memoir or not). It's a way to truly connect while being constantly connected.

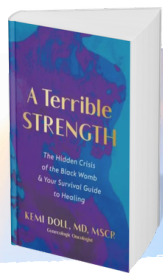
Highly recommended audiobook memoirs read by the author (available in Libby):

- **You With the Sad Eyes** by Christina Applegate
- **Finding My Way** by Malala Yousafzai
- **I'm Glad My Mom Died** by Jannette McCurdy
- **Yearbook** by Seth Rogen
- **Know My Name** by Chanel Miller
- **A Heart That Works** by Rob Delaney
- **Heavy** by Kiese Laymon
- **Pageboy** by Elliot Page
- **Every Day is a Gift** by Tammy Duckworth
- **Vagabond** by Tim Curry



# A POWERFUL GUIDE TO WOMEN'S HEALTH AND HEALING

BY KARA K.



In **A Terrible Strength: The Hidden Crisis of the Black Womb & Your Survival Guide to Healing**, Dr. Kemi Doll, a double board-certified gynecological oncologist and OB/GYN, delivers highly technical information about the body, menstruation, and hormones with unflinching clarity and clear-eyed empathy. The book is a comprehensive guide to endometriosis, uterine cancer, fibroids and heavy/irregular bleeding, and what women need to know about recognizing symptoms early and advocating for their health in a system that is not set up to listen to them. Digging deeper, how many women reading this have hidden tampons while on the way to the bathroom, or curled up with a heating pad and ibuprofen, waiting for cramping to stop? Dr. Doll recognizes the stigma and shame that women shoulder in a society that is designed to work against them. She expands into critique of a society that normalizes the suffering of and bias against Black women. Women's health and health disparities based on race are under-researched, underfunded, and undervalued. She exposes missed medical diagnoses, ineffective treatments, poor quality of life, and preventable poor outcomes. Throughout, she integrates her personal experience in ways that turn this nonfiction masterpiece into a poignant memoir. She also includes personal stories that illustrate common challenges and feats of resilience. Medicine has missed so many opportunities to improve itself at a systemic level. After you read this book, find ways to act in order to make improvements that are lasting and meaningful. She is doing her part as a practicing physician, clinical researcher, advocate, leadership coach, podcaster, and author. We can step up, too. Our society needs to do better for Black women and all women. When I say that this is a book about life and death, that's the absolute truth.

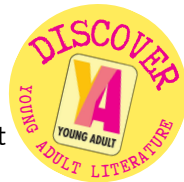
# EMOJI REVIEW

BY MELISSA F.



**The Faraway Inn**  
by Sarah Beth Durst

Fun and cozy YA modern fantasy, perfect for summer.



# SELF-DISCOVERY AND FRIENDSHIP

BY CHLOE H.



**The Book Club for Troublesome Women**  
by Marie Bostwick

In 1960s suburbia, four housewives – Margaret, Charlotte, Viv, and Bitsy – pick **The Feminine Mystique** as their selection for their newly-founded book club. As a result of the book and their new friendships, their lives are transformed as they forge their own paths to self-discovery. From rethinking their roles as wives and challenging the idea that wanting more for themselves is not something to be ashamed of, to realizing that it's never too late to start over, this novel brilliantly depicts strong female friendships. It also shows how gender norms harmed not only women, but men as well (and how it's still happening today, decades later!). No matter what generation you're from, this story will strike a chord with you, ignite your own life ambitions, and will have you adding the books they read in their book club to your own TBR list!

# I WANT TO LIVE INSIDE THIS BOOK AND BE FRIENDS WITH EVERYONE, INCLUDING THE GHOSTS

BY MELISSA F.

## The Keeper of Lonely Spirits

by E.M. Anderson

Peter is an immortal ghost hunter who was cursed by fairies as a young man, stopped aging around 70, and has spent 200 years wandering the world and helping the spirits of the dead move into the great beyond – whatever that may be. Sometimes the extra-crabby ghosts need a little encouragement to leave in the form of either therapeutic conversation or a nasty ghost beat-down. It's a lonely life for an immortal, moving from one place to another in an effort to remain unobtrusive and undetected. Because, as Peter has discovered over the years, making friends or starting relationships only results in more grief when they die and he doesn't. But in pursuing the story of a nasty spirit haunting a small town in Ohio, Peter becomes more and more entangled with the warm, curious, and grieving people he meets there.



This is a lovely, tragic, comforting story featuring nosy ghosts, an overgrown cemetery, found family, charming lock-picking children, town carnivals, and a well-dressed museum curator whose love of history leads him to an interesting entanglement with the aforementioned ghost-hunting immortal. Also, tea. And semi-sentient plants. Enjoy!

*Content & Sensitivity: Descriptions of violence, grief, and the loss of loved ones.*

THE CHECKOUT: SUMMER 2026

# WALKING THROUGH HISTORY

BY KAREN B.



## Eleanor: A 200-Mile Walk in Search of England's Lost Queen

by Alice Loxton

Alice Loxton's exuberance for history shines on every page of this lively and easy-to-read book. A well-known Gen Z history presenter in the UK, she is active on Instagram, TikTok, and other social media platforms as a writer and broadcaster. In this book, she shares with readers her personal quest to walk the 200 miles of the funeral procession for Eleanor of Castile, the Queen of England who died in 1290 and is relatively unknown today. Loxton cheerfully inserts a continuous stream of digestible bits of history in every chapter as she relates her modern day adventures while traveling by foot from Harby in the very north of England down to London. Her walk follows the trail of the "Eleanor crosses" erected by her husband King Edward I as memorials to his beloved wife. Out of the 12 original crosses put up in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, only three remain. Clues about the life of Eleanor, however, can be learned along the entire trail. As Loxton finds these clues, she paints a strong picture of the love between Eleanor and Edward, and his immense grief at her death. History comes alive in this account as does the humanity of ordinary people from centuries past. Recommended for any history buff curious about what life was like for English people 700 years ago.

ISSUE #17

# A LIGHT READ ON A HEAVY TOPIC

BY DONNA D .



## The Department of Lost and Found

by Allison Winn Scotch

I was looking for a light, easy read and stumbled across this 2007 debut novel by Allison Winn Scotch. A book addressing the serious topic of cancer is not usually a "light, easy read," but this story is told with humor and optimism.

When 30-year-old Natalie Miller learns she has breast cancer, she begins treatment and is forced to take time off from her stressful job as an aide to a powerful senator from New York. With time on her hands as she recovers from chemotherapy, followed by radiation and surgery, Natalie decides to track down her past boyfriends to learn why their relationships failed.

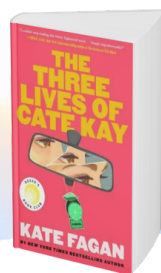
She shares her ups and downs in a diary, reevaluating her life, reconsidering her work commitments, and finally deciding what's really important. In spite of the sensitive subject, the author interjects enough light, heartwarming moments to keep the story from being depressing.

Fast forward to 2026 and Allison Winn Scotch has almost a dozen books under her belt. The most recent, **The Insomniacs**, is about four strangers at an all-night diner who become friends and must solve the mystery when one of them goes missing. While I did notice some mixed reviews, this sounds like a winner to me and I can't wait to read it!



# HIDDEN IDENTITIES

BY CHLOE H .



## The Three Lives of Cate Kay

by Kate Fagan

An author of the hit dystopian series *The Very Last* decides to reveal who she is after using a pseudonym since the start of her career. Not even her agent knows her true identity- and why? **The Three Lives of Cate Kay** reveals the truth of her childhood, a life-altering incident, and the tangled web of relationships that happen as a result of it.

This played out like a movie while reading - drama filled yet realistic with characters that felt like living beings. Queer love, self-discovery, and getting to the root of what matters in life all come together for a story you will likely read in one sitting!



# (INSERT EVIL LAUGH HERE)

BY MELISSA F .



## The Dark Lord's Guide to Dating (and Other War Crimes)

by Tiffany Hunt

*"Getting abducted by the realm's most notorious villain is just another Tuesday."*

In order to access the magic necessary for ultimate domination of the world, Dark Lord Kazimir Blackrose needs a bride born of the bloodline of powerful heroes. Lady Arabella, a gifted healer with magical abilities and a lonely past (due to the whole "locked in a tower by her controlling father" thing), seems to fit the bill.

However, as Lord Kazimir finds, Arabella is no meek damsel in distress. And it seems she was locked in that tower for a reason. AND she has no qualms about making a deal with the most villainous guy in the realm. With witty banter, endearingly sort-of-evil supporting characters, and the ultimate "touch her and die" (literally) trope, this was a fun new romantasy read with an upcoming sequel later this year.

*Content & Sensitivity: Kind of spicy, kind of murder-y.*

# GET IN LOSER, WE'RE GOING TO APPALACHIA



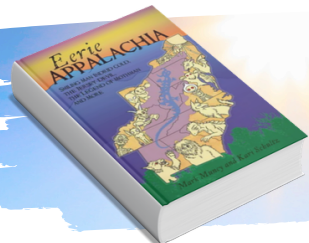
BY STEPHEN C.

**Eerie Appalachia: Smiling Man Indrid Cold, the Jersey Devil, the Legend of Mothman and More**  
by Mark Muncy

Let's travel six hours and around 400 miles south from where we currently sit. Only in our mind though, because that much gas would cripple us financially.

Our destination is a 206,000 square mile loose geographical region known as Appalachia. This area of the U.S., surrounding the mountain range it's named for, is home to a disproportionate amount of some truly weird phenomena. The list of cryptids hailing from here reads like a supergroup akin to the Traveling Wilburys; George Harrison? Mothman! Tom Petty? The Flatwoods Monster! Roy Orbison? The Jersey Devil! Bob Dylan? The Hopkinsville Goblins! Truly, the gang is all here.

On a pre-COVID road trip, author Mark Muncy and illustrator Kari Schultz traveled the backroads (so we don't have to) and collected first- and secondhand accounts of some of the most quintessential encounters that popularized the idea of something unexplainable being out there. Muncy does a good job of distilling what could be (and are) complicated encounters into easily digestible entries without getting too bogged down in details. This allows the reader to spin off and delve into particular cases on their own if desired or, if you get the gist, move on to something else that grabs you a bit more.



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I've read at length on most of these topics (I like weird stuff) and I still found this book enjoyable. There were even a few nuggets I hadn't come across before, most notably about Indrid Cold. Cold is a man-in-black style entity who is usually confined to discussions surrounding the Mothman case, but in their research, Muncy and Schultz uncovered evidence of his involvement in a case in Florida years later. This is extremely exciting possibly only to me; but hey, maybe you like weird stuff too.

THE CHECKOUT: SUMMER 2026

# THE TOP OF THE WORLD

BY SUE K.



**The Last of Earth** is a stunning story of the 19<sup>th</sup> century exploration of Tibet by two alternating groups of English explorers and their colorful cast of bearers. Tibet had already fiercely forbidden outsiders from entering their kingdom, so an English surveyor and a “half-caste” illegitimate daughter of a British lord who was stationed in India entered the region both illegally and in disguise. Including their native porters and guides, both groups faced incredible hardships including death, illness, and near-starvation. The local guides faced huge perils guiding these two highly-prejudiced individuals, but they had no other way to support their families back home. The description of Tibetan landscapes and the people who live there are beautifully-crafted, not to mention the watercolors which grabbed my eye immediately.

A great read and a real eye-opening saga by Deepa Anappara.

## TITLE LIBRARY TIP #2

DID YOU KNOW THAT SOME LIBRARIES (INCLUDING KENMORE) HAVE A NYS PARKS PASS YOU CAN CHECK OUT? SCAN THE QR CODE TO SEE WHICH LIBRARY NEAR YOU HAS ONE!



ISSUE #17

# “SEAS” THE DAY

BY REBECCA K.

W P M C V H E N F U E O D S Z G V R E K  
X K Y I Q K Y Q M Z V J F N U Q V Q P J  
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L T B U Y A K G R E F I S V V D E T K Q  
A S M I D Y F L O H M I E K I I A S X Y  
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**SUMMER**

**CARPE DIEM**

**GRASS**

**FRIENDS**

**BEACH READ**

**SAND**

**LAZY**

**FIREFLIES**

**FROLIC**

**HEAT**

**WATER**

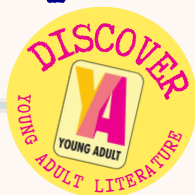
**FIREWORKS**

**FRUIT**

**SUNGLASSES**

# BETH MARCH CAN'T CATCH A BREAK

BY JILL J.



Beth is Dead  
by Katie Bernet

Spoiler alert: Beth March is dead. But in this modern retelling of Little Women, scarlet fever isn't the culprit. It's...murder!

Opening on New Year's Day, the novel follows the three living March sisters as they try to figure out how their sister died - and who may be the culprit. In this version of the classic Louisa May Alcott work, Mr. March is an author who has gained notoriety by using fictionalized versions of his daughters in his recent book without their permission. (Beth dies in that one, too.) After fleeing home to protect his daughters from the backlash of his novel, the girls' relationships are in disarray.

Bernet does an excellent job reimagining the March sisters as contemporary, flawed people: Jo is a writer and influencer who thinks her father can do no wrong; Amy is a party girl who wants her art to be taken seriously; Meg has a huge secret that could put her and her best friend's futures on the line; and Beth wants to know why her father killed her off in his novel and how she can reclaim her individuality.

Told in all the March sisters' voices and jumping around from the past to the present, the narrative style of Beth is Dead takes a little getting used to. But once it clicks, this book is a nonstop thriller with a surprising ending.

# AMERICAN WESTERN

BY CHLOE H.



Lonestar (1996), directed by John Sayles

At a small Texas border town, a neowestern mystery emerges after a skeleton is discovered in the desert.

The son of the local legendary sheriff begins to investigate and uncovers a haunted past amidst the racial tensions still present within the town.

Myths, legends, and violence intersect in this fantastic film, supported by a stacked cast of Chris Cooper, Kris Kristofferson, Elizabeth Peña, and even Matthew McConaughey. Though released 30 years ago, the border issues explored in the film are still relevant in today's climate.



INTERESTED IN JOINING OUR STAFF?  
MEETINGS ARE HELD THE 1ST  
THURSDAY OF THE MONTH AT 7PM AT  
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# 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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