FICTION

**THINGS YOU SAVE IN A FIRE** by Katherine Center  
*(Picked by SM)*

Cassie Hanwell was born for emergencies. As one of the only female firefighters in her Texas firehouse, she's seen her fair share of them, and she's a total pro at other people's tragedies. But when her estranged and ailing mother asks her to give up her whole life and move to Boston, Cassie suddenly has an emergency of her own. The tough, old-school Boston firehouse is as different from Cassie's old job as it could possibly be. Hazing, a lack of funding, and poor facilities mean that the firemen aren't exactly thrilled to have a "lady" on the crew—even one as competent and smart as Cassie. The infatuation-inspiring rookie, however, doesn't seem to mind having Cassie around. But she can't think about that. Because love is girly, and it's not her thing. And don't forget the advice her old captain gave her: *Never date firefighters.* Cassie can feel her resolve slipping...and it means risking it all—the only job she's ever loved, and the hero she's worked like hell to become. *(320 pgs)*

**THE PERFECT PLAN** by Bryan Reardon  
*(Picked by SM)*

Liam Brennan teeters on the edge. Early one morning, he snaps, kidnapping a young woman who works for Drew Brennan, Liam's older brother and the upstart candidate in a heated Delaware election. This sudden, vicious attack appears to be the beginning of an unthinkable spiral. But when it comes to the Brennan brothers, nothing is what it seems. To the rest of the world, Liam is the troubled problem child who grew up to be his brother's enforcer, while Drew has always been the perfect son and a charismatic leader who has his sights set on the governor's mansion with his charming and beautiful wife, Patsy, by his side. Now, as Liam tries to stay one step ahead of the authorities and his brother, every passing minute provides a deeper glimpse into the brothers' past, long hidden behind a picture-perfect suburban veneer. With the threat of the truth surfacing, Liam and Drew are driven toward one final, desperate act... *(339 pgs)*

**BIG SKY** by Kate Atkinson  
*(Picked by SH)*

Jackson Brodie has relocated to a quiet seaside village, in the occasional company of his recalcitrant teenage son and an aging Labrador, both at the discretion of his ex-partner Julia. It's picturesque, but there's something darker lurking behind the scenes. Jackson's current job, gathering proof of an unfaithful husband for his suspicious wife, is fairly standard-issue, but a chance encounter with a desperate man on a crumbling cliff leads him into a sinister network and back across the path of his old friend Reggie. Old secrets and new lies intersect in this breathtaking novel. *(352 pgs)*

**ONE NIGHT IN GEORGIA** by Celeste Norfleet  
*(Picked by KT)*

At the end of a sweltering summer shaped by assassinations, race riots, and political protests, three coeds from New York City—Zelda, Veronica, and Daphne—pack into Veronica's new Ford Fairlane convertible, bound for Atlanta and their last year at Spelman College. Unlike friends from vastly different backgrounds, the trio has been inseparable since freshman year. Because they will be going their separate ways after graduation, they intend to make lasting memories on this special trip. Though they are young and carefree, they aren't foolish. Joined by Veronica’s family friend Daniel, they rely on the *Motorist Green Book* to find racially friendly locations for gas, rest, and food. As the miles fly by, taking them closer to the Mason-Dixon line, tension begins to rise and the conversation turns serious when Daphne shares a horrifying secret about her life. In Virginia they barely escape a desperate situation when prison guards mistake Daniel for an escapee. Further south they barely make it through a sundown town. When the car breaks down in Georgia they are caught up in a racially hostile situation that leaves a white person dead and one of the girls holding the gun. *(304 pgs)*
**The Capital by Robert Menasse**  
(Picked by BS & SLS)  
The Capital transports readers to the cobbled streets of twenty-first-century Brussels. We meet, among others, Fenia Xenopoulou, a Greek Cypriot recently “promoted” to the Directorate-General for Culture. When tasked with revamping the boring image of the European Commission with the Big Jubilee Project, she endorses her Austrian assistant Martin Sussman’s idea to proclaim Auschwitz as its birthplace—of course, to the horror of the other nation states. Meanwhile, Inspector Emile Brunfaut attempts to solve a gritty murder being suppressed at the highest level; Matek, a Polish hitman who regrets having never become a priest, scrambles after taking out the wrong man; and outraged pig farmers protest trade restrictions as a brave escapee squeals through the streets. These narratives and more are masterfully woven, revealing the absurdities—and real dangers—of a fracturing Europe. (368 pgs)

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**Travelers by Helon Habila**  
(Picked by BS & SLS)  
A Nigerian graduate student who has made his home in America knows what it means to strike out for new shores. When his wife proposes that he accompany her to Berlin, where she has been awarded a prestigious arts fellowship, he has his reservations: “I knew every departure is a death, every return a rebirth. Most changes happen unplanned, and they always leave a scar.” In Berlin, Habila’s central character finds himself thrown into contact with a community of African immigrants and refugees whose lives previously seemed distant from his own, but to which he is increasingly drawn. The walls between his privileged, secure existence and the stories of these other Africans on the move soon crumble, and his sense of identity begins to dissolve as he finds that he can no longer separate himself from others’ horrors, or from Africa. (288 pgs)

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**Costalegre by Courtney Maum**  
(Picked by KT)  
It is 1937, and Europe is on the brink of war. In the haute-bohemian circles of Austria, Germany, and Paris, Hitler is circulating a most-wanted list of “cultural degenerates”. To prevent the destruction of her favorite art (and artists), the American heiress and modern art collector, Leonora Calaway, begins chartering boats and planes for an elite group of surrealists to Costalegre, a mysterious resort in the Mexican jungle, where she has a home. The story of what happens to these artists when they reach their destination is told from the point of view of Lara, Leonora’s neglected 15-year-old daughter, who has been pulled out of school to follow her mother to Mexico. When she meets the outcast Dadaist sculptor Jack Klinger, a much older man who has already been living in Costalegre for some time, Lara thinks she might have found the love and understanding she so badly craves. Costalegre is heavily inspired by the real-life relationship between the heiress Peggy Guggenheim and her daughter, Pegeen. (240 pgs)

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**Call Your Daughter Home by Deb Spera**  
(Picked by SM)  
It's 1924 South Carolina and the region is still recovering from the infamous boll weevil infestation that devastated the land and the economy. Gertrude, a mother of four, must make an unconscionable decision to save her daughters from starvation or die at the hands of an abusive husband. Retta is navigating a harsh world as a first-generation freed slave, still employed by the Coles, influential plantation proprietors who once owned her family. Annie is the matriarch of the Coles family and must come to terms with the terrible truth that has ripped her family apart. These three women seemingly have nothing in common, yet as they unite to stand up to the terrible injustices that have long plagued the small town, they find strength in the bond that ties women together. (352 pgs)

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**The Book Woman of Troublesome Creek by Kim Richardson**  
(Picked by SH)  
In 1936, tucked deep into the woods of Troublesome Creek, KY, lives blue-skinned 19-year-old Cussy Carter, the last living female of the rare Blue People ancestry. The lonely young Appalachian woman joins the historical Pack Horse Library Project of Kentucky and becomes a librarian, riding across slippery creek beds and up treacherous mountains on her faithful mule to deliver books and other reading material to the impoverished hill people of eastern Kentucky. Along her dangerous route, Cussy, known to the mountain folk as Bluet, confronts those suspicious of her damselfly-blue skin and the government’s new book program. She befriends hardscrabble and complex fellow Kentuckians, and is fiercely determined to bring comfort and joy, instill literacy, and give to those who have nothing, a bookish respite, a fleeting retreat to faraway lands. A story of fierce strength and one woman’s belief that books can carry us anywhere—even back home. (308 pgs)
NON-FICTION

A Beginner’s Guide to the End by B.J. Miller (Picked by SLS)

“Our ultimate purpose here isn’t so much to help you die as it is to free up as much life as possible until you do.” Theirs is a clear-eyed and big-hearted action plan for approaching the end of life, written to help readers feel more in control of an experience that so often seems anything but controllable. Their book offers everything from step-by-step instructions for how to do your paperwork and navigate the healthcare system to answers to questions you might be afraid to ask your doctor, like whether or not sex is still okay when you’re sick. You’ll be walked through how to break the news to your employer, whether to share old secrets with your family, how to face friends who might not be as empathetic as you’d hoped, and to how to talk to your children about your will. There are also lessons for survivors, like how to shut down a loved one’s social media accounts, clean out the house, and write a great eulogy. (576 pgs)

The Ardlamont Mystery by Daniel Smith (Picked by SMC)

December 1893. Arthur Conan Doyle shocks his legions of fans by killing off the world’s favorite fictional detective, Sherlock Holmes. Meanwhile, in Scotland, a sensational real-life murder trial is playing out. Alfred Monson, a scion of the aristocracy, is charged with killing a young army lieutenant, Cecil Hambrough, on the sprawling Ardlamont estate. Among the key prosecution witnesses that the Ardlamont case brought together were two esteemed Edinburgh doctors, Joseph Bell and Henry Littlejohn. Bell - Doyle’s tutor when the author studied medicine in the 1870s - had recently been unmasked as the inspiration behind the creation of Sherlock Holmes. But what was not known was that Bell and Littlejohn - a pioneer in the emerging field of forensic detection - had actually been investigating crimes together for more than twenty years. Largely unacknowledged, Littlejohn deserves equal billing as the prototype of Baker Street’s most famous resident. Daniel Smith re-examines the evidence of the case that gripped Victorian Britain, putting forward his own theory as to why Cecil Hambrough was murdered. Smith explores the real-world origins of Sherlock Holmes through the prism of a mystery as engrossing as any case the Great Detective ever tackled. (256 pgs)

Normal Sucks by Jonathan Mooney (Picked by LD)

Jonathan Mooney blends anecdote, expertise, and memoir to present a new mode of thinking about how we live and learn—individually, uniquely, and with advantages and upshots to every type of brain and body. As a neuro-diverse kid diagnosed with dyslexia and ADHD who didn't learn to read until he was twelve, the realization that he wasn't the problem—the system and the concept of normal were—saved Mooney’s life and fundamentally changed his outlook. Here he explores the toll that being not normal takes on kids and adults when they're trapped in environments that label them, shame them, and tell them, even in subtle ways, that they are the problem. But, he argues, if we can reorient the ways in which we think about diversity, abilities, and disabilities, we can start a revolution. (256 pgs)

Barnum by Robert Wilson (Picked by SLH)

P. T. Barnum was the greatest showman the world has ever seen: the co-creator of the Barnum & Bailey Circus and the man who made worldwide sensations of Jumbo the Elephant, General Tom Thumb, and the “Swedish Nightingale,” Jenny Lind. He was the champion of wonder, joy, trickery, and “humbug.” He was, as Barnum argues, one of the most important Americans of the nineteenth century. From birth to death, Phineas Taylor Barnum repeatedly reinvented himself. He learned as a young man how to wow crowds, and built a fortune that placed him among the first millionaires in the United States. He also suffered tragedy, bankruptcy, and fires that destroyed his life’s work, yet willed himself to rebuild and succeed again. As an entertainer, Barnum courted controversy time and again throughout his life—yet he was also a man of strong convictions, guided in his work not by a desire to deceive but an eagerness to thrill and bring joy to his audiences. (352 pgs)

Reviews excerpted from amazon.com and goodreads.com
**Wild and Crazy Guys by Nick De Semlyen** *(Picked by BS)*

Wild and Crazy Guys opens in 1978 with Chevy Chase and Bill Murray taking bad-tempered (and slightly pathetic) swings at each other backstage at Saturday Night Live, and closes 21 years later with the two doing a skit in the same venue. In between, Nick de Semlyen takes us on a trip through the tumultuous '80s, delving behind the scenes of movies such as Ghostbusters, Beverly Hills Cop, The Blues Brothers, and Trading Places. Chronicling the off-screen, larger-than-life antics of Bill Murray, Eddie Murphy, Chevy Chase, Steve Martin, John Belushi, et al, it's got drugs, sex, punch-ups, and webbed toes. Based on candid interviews from the stars themselves, as well as those in their immediate orbit, Wild and Crazy Guys is a fantastic insider account of the friendships, feuds, triumphs, and disasters experienced by these iconic funnymen. (336 pgs)

**The Ghosts of Eden Park by Karen Abbott** *(Picked by SMC)*

In the early days of Prohibition, a German immigrant named George Remus quits practicing law and starts trafficking whiskey. Within two years he's a multimillionaire. The press calls him "King of the Bootleggers," writing stories about the Gatsby-esque events he and his glamorous second wife, Imogene, host at their Cincinnati mansion. By the summer of 1921, Remus owns 35 percent of all the liquor in the United States. Pioneering prosecutor Mabel Walker Willebrandt is determined to bring him down. Willebrandt's bosses at the U.S. Attorney's office hired her right out of law school, assuming she'd pose no real threat to the cozy relationship they maintain with Remus. Eager to prove them wrong, she dispatches her best investigator, Franklin Dodge, to look into his empire. It's a decision with deadly consequences: With Remus behind bars, Dodge and Imogene begin an affair and plot to ruin him, sparking a bitter feud that soon reaches the highest levels of government—and that can only end in murder. (432 pgs)

**Tiny but Mighty by Hannah Shaw** *(Picked by SLS)*

Hannah Shaw, better known as Kitten Lady, has dedicated her life to saving the tiniest felines, but one doesn't have to be a professional kitten rescuer to change—and save—lives. In Tiny but Mighty, Hannah not only outlines the dangers newborn kittens face and how she combats them, but how you can help every step of the way, from fighting feline overpopulation on the streets to fostering unweaned kittens, from combating illness to combating compassion fatigue, from finding a vet to finding the purrfect forever home. Filled with information on animal welfare, instructional guides, and personal rescue stories—not to mention hundreds of adorable kitten photos—Tiny but Mighty is the must-have kitten book for cat lovers, current-and-future rescuers, foster parents, activists, and advocates. (304 pgs)

**Best. Movie. Year. Ever by Brian Raftery** *(Picked by BS)*

In 1999, Hollywood as we know it exploded: Fight Club. The Matrix. Office Space. Election. The Blair Witch Project. The Sixth Sense. Being John Malkovich. Star Wars: The Phantom Menace. American Beauty. The Virgin Suicides. Boys Don’t Cry. The Best Man. Three Kings. Magnolia. Those are just some of the landmark titles released in a dizzying movie year, one in which a group of daring filmmakers and performers pushed cinema to new limits—and took audiences along for the ride. Freed from the restraints of budget, technology (or even taste), they produced a slew of classics that took on every topic imaginable. The result was a highly unruly, deeply influential set of films that would not only change filmmaking, but also give us our first glimpse of the coming twenty-first century. It was a watershed moment that also produced The Sopranos, Wi-Fi, and Netflix’s unlimited DVD rentals. (416 pgs)

**Burn the Ice by Kevin Alexander** *(Picked by SM)*

Over the past decade, Kevin Alexander saw American dining turned on its head. Starting in 2006, the food world underwent a transformation as the established gatekeepers of American culinary creativity in New York City and the Bay Area were forced to contend with Portland, Oregon. Its no-holds-barred, casual fine-dining style became a template for other cities, and a culinary revolution swept across America... ramen shops, craft cocktails, poke bowls... At the same time, new media companies such as Eater and Serious Eats launched to chronicle and cater to this developing scene. Emerging culinary television hosts like Anthony Bourdain inspired a generation to use food as the lens for different cultures. It seemed like a glorious belle epoque of eating and drinking in America. And then it was over. To tell this story, Alexander journeys through the travails and triumphs of a number of key chefs, bartenders, and activists including Gabriel Rucker, an originator of the 2006 Portland restaurant scene and Tom Colicchio of Gramercy Tavern and Top Chef fame. (384 pgs)