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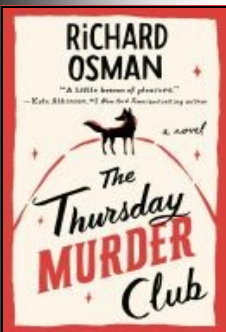
FICTION



A WILD WINTER SWAN BY GREGORY MAGUIRE

(PICKED BY MG)

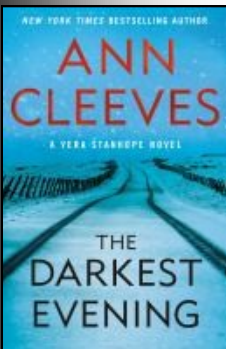
Following her brother's death and her mother's emotional breakdown, Laura now lives on the Upper East Side of Manhattan, in a lonely townhouse she shares with her old-world, strict grandparents. The quiet, awkward teenager has been getting into trouble at home and has been expelled from her high school for throwing a record album at a popular girl who bullied her. When Christmas is over and the new year begins, Laura may find herself at boarding school in Montreal. Nearly unmoored from reality through her panic and submerged grief, Laura is startled when a handsome swan boy with only one wing lands on her roof. Hiding him from her ever-bickering grandparents, Laura tries to build the swan boy a wing so he can fly home. But the task is too difficult to accomplish herself. Little does Laura know that her struggle to find help for her new friend parallels that of her grandparents, who are desperate for a distant relative's financial aid to save the family store. (240 pgs)



THE THURSDAY MURDER CLUB BY RICHARD OSMAN

(PICKED BY SLS)

In a peaceful retirement village, four unlikely friends meet weekly in the Jigsaw Room to discuss unsolved crimes; together they call themselves The Thursday Murder Club. Elizabeth, Joyce, Ibrahim and Ron might be pushing eighty but they still have a few tricks up their sleeves. When a local developer is found dead with a mysterious photograph left next to the body, the Thursday Murder Club suddenly find themselves in the middle of their first live case. As the bodies begin to pile up, can our unorthodox but brilliant gang catch the killer, before it's too late? (368 pgs)



THE DARKEST EVENING BY ANN CLEEVES

(PICKED BY PB)

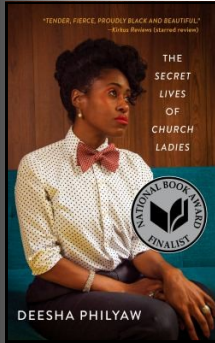
On the first snowy night of winter, Detective Inspector Vera Stanhope sets off for her home in the hills. Though the road is familiar, she misses a turning and soon becomes lost and disorientated. A car has skidded off the narrow road in front of her, its door left open, and she stops to help. There is no driver to be seen, so Vera assumes that the owner has gone to find help. But a cry calls her back: a toddler is strapped in the back seat. Vera takes the child and driving on, she arrives at Brockburn, a large, grand house in the wilds of Northumberland, now a little shabby and run down. It's also where her father grew up. Inside, there's a party in full swing: music, Christmas lights and laughter. Outside, unbeknownst to the revelers, a woman lies dead in the snow. As the blizzard traps the group deep in the freezing Northumberland countryside, Brockburn begins to give up its secrets, and as Vera digs deeper into her investigation, she also begins to uncover her family's complicated past. (384 pgs)



THE ONCE AND FUTURE WITCHES BY ALIX HARROW

(PICKED BY SM)

In 1893, there's no such thing as witches. There used to be, in the wild, dark days before the burnings began, but now witching is nothing but tidy charms and nursery rhymes. If the modern woman wants any measure of power, she must find it at the ballot box. But when the Eastwood sisters—James Juniper, Agnes Amaranth, and Beatrice Belladonna—join the suffragists of New Salem, they begin to pursue the forgotten words and ways that might turn the women's movement into the witch's movement. Stalked by shadows and sickness, hunted by forces who will not suffer a witch to vote—and perhaps not even to live—the sisters will need to delve into the oldest magics, draw new alliances, and heal the bond between them if they want to survive. There's no such thing as witches. But there will be. (528 pgs)



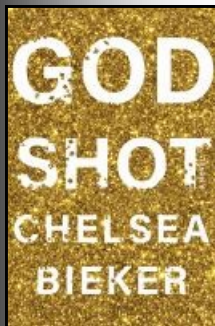
***THE SECRET LIVES OF CHURCH LADIES* BY DEESHA PHILYAW (PICKED BY SP)**

The Secret Lives of Church Ladies explores the raw and tender places where Black women and girls dare to follow their desires and pursue a momentary reprieve from being good. The nine stories in this collection feature four generations of characters grappling with who they want to be in the world, caught as they are between the church's double standards and their own needs and passions. There is fourteen-year-old Jael, who has a crush on the preacher's wife. At forty-two, Lyra realizes that her discomfort with her own body stands between her and a new love. As Y2K looms, Caroletta's "same time next year" arrangement with her childhood best friend is tenuous. A serial mistress lays down the ground rules for her married lovers. In the dark shadows of a hospice parking lot, grieving strangers find comfort in each other. These church ladies are as seductive as they want to be, as vulnerable as they need to be, as unfaithful and unrepentant as they care to be, and as free as they deserve to be. (192 pgs)



***THE LOST ORPHAN* BY STACEY HALLS (PICKED BY MG)**

London, 1754. Six years after leaving her newborn, Clara, at London's Foundling Hospital, young Bess Bright returns to reclaim the illegitimate daughter she has never really known. Dreading the worst—that Clara has died in care—the last thing she expects to hear is that her daughter has already been reclaimed. Her life is turned upside down as she tries to find out who has taken her little girl—and why. Less than a mile from Bess's lodgings in a quiet town house, a wealthy widow barely ventures outside. When her close friend—an ambitious doctor at the Foundling Hospital—persuades her to hire a nursemaid for her young daughter, she is hesitant to welcome someone new into her home and her life. But her past is threatening to catch up with her—and will soon tear her carefully constructed world apart. *The Lost Orphan* explores families and secrets, class and power, and how the pull of motherhood cuts across them all. (352 pgs)



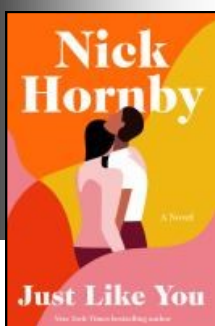
***GODSHOT* BY CHELSEA BIEKER (PICKED BY KT)**

The area of the Central Valley where fourteen-year-old Lacey May and her alcoholic mother live was once an agricultural paradise. Now it's a place of cracked earth and barren raisin farms. In their desperation, residents have turned to a cult leader named Pastor Vern for guidance. He promises, through secret "assignments," to bring the rain everybody is praying for. Lacey has no reason to doubt the pastor. But then her life explodes in a single unimaginable act of abandonment: her mother, exiled from the community for her sins, leaves Lacey and runs off with a man she barely knows. Abandoned and distraught, Lacey May moves in with her widowed grandma, Cherry. As Lacey May endures the increasingly appalling acts of men who want to write all the rules, and begins to uncover the full extent of Pastor Vern's shocking plan to bring fertility back to the land, she decides she must go on a quest to find her mother, no matter what it takes. (336 pgs)



***THE BIG FINISH* BY BROOKE FOSSEY (PICKED BY BS)**

For Duffy Sinclair, life boils down to one simple thing: maintaining his residence at the idyllic Centennial Assisted Living. Without it, he's destined for the roach-infested nursing home down the road—and after wasting the first eighty-eight years of his life, he refuses to waste away for the rest. So, he keeps his shenanigans to the bare minimum with the help of his straight-laced best friend and roommate, Carl Upton. But when Carl's granddaughter Josie climbs through their bedroom window with booze on her breath and a black eye, Duffy's faced with trouble that's sticking around and hard to hide—from Centennial's management and Josie's toxic boyfriend. Before he knows it, he's running a covert operation that includes hitchhiking and barhopping. He might as well write himself a one-way ticket to the nursing home...or the morgue. Yet Duffy's all in. Because thanks to an unlikely friendship that becomes fast family—his life doesn't boil down the same anymore. (336 pgs)



***JUST LIKE YOU* BY NICK HORNBY (PICKED BY BS)**

Lucy used to handle her adult romantic life according to the script she'd been handed. She met a guy just like herself: same age, same background, same hopes and dreams; they got married and started a family. Too bad he made her miserable. Now, two decades later, she's a nearly-divorced, forty-one-year-old schoolteacher with two school-aged sons, and there is no script anymore. So when she meets Joseph, she isn't exactly looking for love—she's more in the market for a babysitter. Joseph is twenty-two, living at home with his mother, and working several jobs, including the butcher counter where he and Lucy meet. It's not a match anyone one could have predicted. He's of a different class, a different culture, and a different generation. But sometimes it turns out that the person who can make you happiest is the one you least expect, though it can take some maneuvering to see it through. (368 pgs)

STAFF PICKS

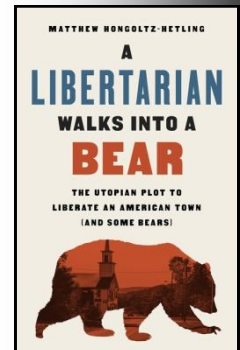
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NON-FICTION

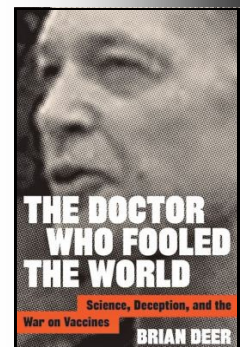
***A LIBERTARIAN WALKS INTO A BEAR* BY MATTHEW HONGOLTZ-HETLING (PICKED BY SLS)**

Once upon a time, a group of libertarians got together and hatched the Free Town Project, a plan to take over an American town and completely eliminate its government. In 2004, they set their sights on Grafton, NH, a barely populated settlement with one paved road. When they descended on Grafton, public funding for pretty much everything shrank: the fire department, the library, the schoolhouse. State and federal laws became meek suggestions, scarcely heard in the town's thick wilderness. The anything-goes atmosphere soon caught the attention of Grafton's neighbors: the bears. Freedom-loving citizens ignored hunting laws and regulations on food disposal. They built a tent city in an effort to get off the grid. The bears smelled food and opportunity. This is the ultimate story of a quintessential American experiment -- to live free or die, perhaps from a bear. (288 pgs)



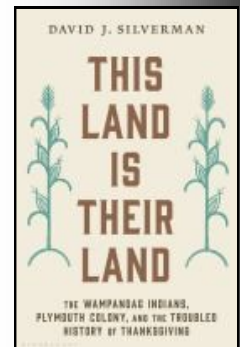
***The Doctor Who Fooled the World* BY BRIAN DEER (PICKED BY SMC)**

As a doctor at a London medical school, in February 1998, Andrew Wakefield published explosive research in the *Lancet* medical journal which terrified a generation of young parents. Claiming that the MMR vaccine given to millions of children caused autism, he triggered a crisis, with sickness and deaths, as immunization rates plummeted. Brian Deer's fifteen-year inquiry for *The Sunday Times*, Channel 4, and the *British Medical Journal* exposed the truth behind the now-ex-doctor's campaign: seeing him struck from the medical register, his research retracted, and his claims dubbed 'an elaborate fraud'. But today Wakefield is back: leading an international anti-vaccine crusade against one of medicine's greatest triumphs. *The Doctor Who Fooled the World* is a riveting detective story that penetrates layers of legal secrecy, medical confidentiality, business schemes, and smear campaigns to expose the scientific deception of our time. (416 pgs)



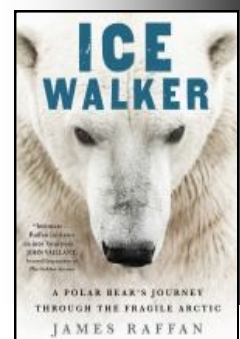
***This Land Is Their Land* BY DAVID SILVERMAN (PICKED BY MG)**

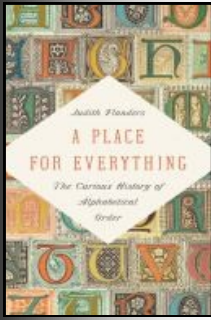
In March 1621, the Wampanoag sachem (or chief), and Plymouth's governor, declared their people's friendship for each other and a commitment to mutual defense. Later that autumn, the English gathered their first successful harvest and lifted the specter of starvation. Ousamequin and 90 of his men then visited Plymouth for the "First Thanksgiving." The treaty remained operative until King Philip's War in 1675, when 50 years of uneasy peace between the two parties would come to an end. Focusing on the Wampanoag Indians, Silverman deepens the narrative to consider tensions that developed well before 1620 and lasted long after the war-tracing the Wampanoags' ongoing struggle for self-determination up to this very day. This history reveals why some modern Native people hold a Day of Mourning on Thanksgiving, a holiday which celebrates a myth of colonialism and white proprietorship of the United States. *This Land Is Their Land* shows that it is time to rethink how we, as a pluralistic nation, tell the history of Thanksgiving. (528 pgs)



***Ice Walker* BY JAMES RAFFAN (PICKED BY SLH)**

From the top of the world, Hudson Bay looks like an enormous paw print on the torso of the continent, and through a vast network of lakes and rivers, this bay connects to oceans across the globe. For millennia, Nanu the polar bear's ancestors have roamed this great expanse, living alongside human beings in one of the most unforgiving habitats on earth. In the Arctic's lands and waters, oil has been extracted—and spilled. As global temperatures have risen, the sea ice that Nanu and her young need to hunt seal and fish has melted, forcing them to wait on land where the delicate balance between them and their two-legged neighbors has now shifted. This is the icescape that Raffan invites us to inhabit in *Ice Walker*. He brings readers inside Nanu's world as she treks uncertainly around the heart of Hudson Bay, searching for food for her children. By focusing his lens on this bear family, Raffan closes the gap between humans and bears, showing us how our existence—and our future—is tied to Nanu's. (192 pgs)





A PLACE FOR EVERYTHING BY JUDITH FLANDERS

(PICKED BY SLH & SMC)

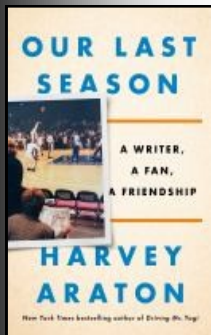
A Place for Everything is the first-ever history of alphabetization, from the Library of Alexandria to Wikipedia. The story of alphabetical order has been shaped by some of history's most compelling characters, such as industrious and enthusiastic early adopter Samuel Pepys and dedicated alphabet champion Denis Diderot. But though even George Washington was a proponent, many others stuck to older forms of classification – Yale listed its students by their family's social status until 1886. And yet, while the order of the alphabet now rules – libraries, phone books, reference books, even the order of entry for the teams at the Olympic Games – it has remained curiously invisible. Judith Flanders traces the triumph of alphabetical order and offers a compendium of Western knowledge, from A to Z. (352 pgs)



JUST US BY CLAUDIA RANKINE

(PICKED BY TA)

As everyday white supremacy becomes increasingly vocalized with no clear answers at hand, how best might we approach one another? Claudia Rankine urges us to begin the discussions that might open pathways through this divisive and stuck moment in American history. *Just Us* is an invitation to discover what it takes to stay in the room together. Rankine's questions disrupt the false comfort of our culture's liminal and private spaces—the airport, the theater, the dinner party, the voting booth—where neutrality and politeness live on the surface of differing commitments, beliefs, and prejudices as our public and private lives intersect. This brilliant arrangement of essays, poems, and images includes the voices and rebuttals of others, all running alongside fact-checked notes and commentary that complements Rankine's own text, complicating notions of authority and who gets the last word. (352 pgs)



OUR LAST SEASON BY HARVEY ARATON

(PICKED BY SMC)

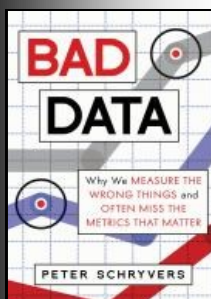
Harvey Araton is one of New York's best-known sports journalists, having covered thousands of Knicks games over the course of a long and distinguished career. But the person at the heart of *Our Last Season*, Michelle Musler, is largely anonymous—except to the players, coaches, and writers who have passed through Madison Square Garden, where she held season tickets behind the Knicks bench for 45 years. In that time, as she juggled a successful career as a corporate executive and single parenthood of five children, she missed only a handful of home games. The Garden was her second home—and the place where an extraordinary friendship between fan and sportswriter was forged. Chock-full of anecdotes from behind the scenes, the story of Harvey and Michelle's nearly four decades of friendship is a delight for basketball fans. But at its core, it is a book offering a poignant and inspiring message about how to live with passion, commitment, and optimism. (256 pgs)



HOW TO FLY BY BARBARA KINGSOLVER

(PICKED BY KT)

In her second poetry collection, Barbara Kingsolver offers reflections on the practical, the spiritual, and the wild. She begins with “how to” poems addressing everyday matters such as being hopeful, married, divorced; shearing a sheep; doing nothing at all; and of course, flying. Next come poems about making peace (or not) with the complicated bonds of friendship and family, and making peace (or not) with death, in the many ways it finds us. Some poems reflect on the redemptive powers of art and poetry itself; others consider where everything begins. Closing the book are poems that celebrate natural wonders—birdsong and ghost-flowers, coral reefs, deadly deserts, and thousand-year-old beech trees—all speaking to the daring project of belonging to an untamed world beyond ourselves. Altogether, these are poems about transcendence: finding breath and lightness in life and the everyday acts of living. (128 pgs)



BAD DATA BY PETER SCHRYVERS

(PICKED BY BS)

The author, an expert in environmental design and city planning, examines the many ways in which we measure ourselves and our world. He dissects the metrics we apply to health, worker productivity, our children's education, the quality of our environment. Among the areas where the wrong metrics have led to poor outcomes, he cites the fee-for-service model of health care, corporate cultures that emphasize time spent on the job while overlooking key productivity measures, overreliance on standardized testing in education to the detriment of authentic learning, and a blinkered focus on carbon emissions. He also examines various communities and systems that have achieved better outcomes by adjusting the ways in which they measure data. The best results are attained by those that have learned not only what to measure and how to measure it, but what it all means. (323 pgs)