



Staff Picks Digital and Print Edition

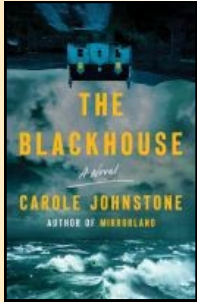
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FICTION

THE BLACKHOUSE BY CAROLE JOHNSTONE

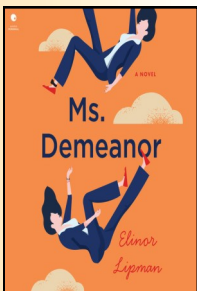
(PICKED BY BS)



Robert Reid moved his family to Scotland's Outer Hebrides in the 1990s, driven by hope, craving safety and community, and hiding a terrible secret. But despite his best efforts to fit in, Robert is always seen as an outsider. And as the legendary and violent Hebridean storms rage around him, he begins to unravel, believing his fate on the remote island of Kilmeray cannot be escaped. For her entire life, Maggie MacKay has sensed something was wrong with her. When Maggie was five years old, she announced that a man on Kilmeray—a place she'd never visited—had been murdered. Her unfounded claim drew media attention and turned the locals against each other, creating rifts that never mended. Nearly twenty years later, Maggie is determined to find out what really happened, and what the islanders are hiding. But when she begins to receive ominous threats, Maggie is forced to consider how much she is willing to risk to discover the horrifying truth. (332 pgs)

MS. Demeanor BY ELINOR LIPMAN

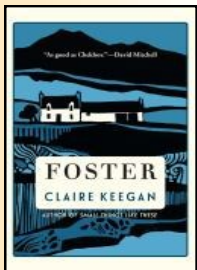
(PICKED BY KT & SM)



Jane Morgan is a valued member of her law firm—or was, until a prudish neighbor, binoculars poised, observes her having sex on the roof of her NYC apartment building. Police are summoned, and a punishing judge sentences her to six months of home confinement. With Jane now jobless and rootless, trapped at home, life looks bleak. Yes, her twin sister provides support and advice, but mostly of the unwelcome kind. When a doorman lets slip that Jane isn't the only resident wearing an ankle monitor, she strikes up a friendship with fellow white-collar felon Perry Salisbury. As she tries to adapt to life within her apartment walls, she discovers she hasn't heard the end of that tattletale neighbor—whose past isn't as decorous as her 9-1-1 snitching would suggest. Why are police knocking on Jane's door *again*? Can her house arrest have a silver lining? Can two wrongs make a right? (304 pgs)

FOSTER BY CLAIRE KEEGAN

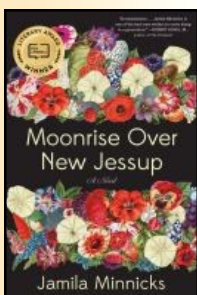
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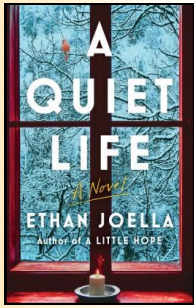
It is a hot summer in rural Ireland. A child is taken by her father to live with relatives on a farm, not knowing when or if she will be brought home again. In the Kinsellas' house, she finds an affection and warmth she has not known and slowly, in their care, begins to blossom. But there is something unspoken in this new household—where everything is so well tended to—and this summer must soon come to an end. (128 pgs)

MOONRISE OVER NEW JESSUP BY JAMILA MINNICKS

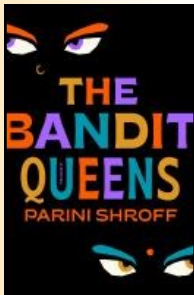
(PICKED BY SM)



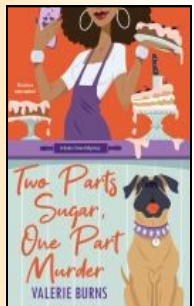
It's 1957, and after leaving the only home she has ever known, Alice Young steps off the bus into the all-Black town of New Jessup, Alabama, where residents have largely rejected integration as the means for Black social advancement. Instead, they seek to maintain, and fortify, the community they cherish on their "side of the woods." In this place, Alice falls in love with Raymond Campbell, whose clandestine organizing activities challenge New Jessup's longstanding status quo and could lead to the young couple's expulsion—or worse—from the home they both hold dear. But as Raymond continues to push alternatives for enhancing New Jessup's political power, Alice must find a way to balance her undying support for his underground work with her desire to protect New Jessup from the rising pressure of upheaval from inside, and outside, their side of town. (336 pgs)

**A QUIET LIFE BY ETHAN JOELLA****(PICKED BY SM)**

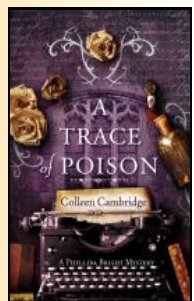
Chuck Ayers used to look forward to nothing so much as his annual trip to Hilton Head with his wife, Cat. Now, just months after Cat's death, Chuck finds that he can't let go of her belongings as he struggles to pack for a trip he can't imagine taking without her. Ella Burke delivers morning newspapers and works at a bridal shop to fill her days while she anxiously awaits news about her missing daughter. Ella adjusts to life in a new apartment and answers every call on her phone, hoping her daughter will reach out. After the sudden death of her father, Kirsten Bonato set aside her veterinary school aspirations, finding comfort in the steady routine of working at an animal shelter. But as time passes, old dreams and new romantic interests begin to surface—and Kirsten finds herself at another crossroads. Three parallel narratives converge in poignant and unexpected ways, as each character bravely presses onward, trying to recover something they have lost. (294 pgs)

**THE BANDIT QUEENS BY PARINI SHROFF****(PICKED BY SLS)**

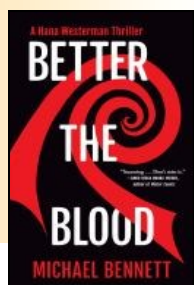
Geeta's no-good husband disappeared five years ago. She didn't kill him, but everyone thinks she did—no matter how much she protests. But she soon discovers that being known as a "self-made" widow has some surprising perks. No one messes with her, no one threatens her, and no one tries to control (ahem, *marry*) her. It's even been good for her business; no one wants to risk getting on her bad side by *not* buying her jewelry. Freedom must look good on Geeta, because other women in the village have started asking for her help to get rid of their own no-good husbands...but not all of them are asking nicely. Now that Geeta's fearsome reputation has become a double-edged sword, she must decide how far to go to protect it, along with the life she's built. Because even the best-laid plans of would-be widows tend to go awry. (352 pgs)

**TWO PARTS SUGAR, ONE PART MURDER BY VALERIE BURNS****(PICKED BY SP)**

When Maddy Montgomery's groom is a no-show to their livestream wedding, it's a disaster that no amount of filtering can fix. But a surprise inheritance offers a chance to regroup and rebrand—as long as Maddy is willing to live in her late, great Aunt Octavia's house in New Bison, Michigan, for a year, running her bakery and caring for a 200-pound English Mastiff named Baby. Maddy doesn't bake, and her Louboutins aren't made for walking giant dogs around Lake Michigan, but the locals are friendly and the scenery is beautiful. With help from her aunt's loyal friends, aka The Baker Street Irregulars, Maddy feels ready to tackle any challenge, including Octavia's award-winning cake recipes. That is, until New Bison's mayor is fatally stabbed, and Maddy's fingerprints are found on the knife . . . Something strange is going on in New Bison. It seems Aunt Octavia had her suspicions too. But Maddy's going to need a whole lot more than a trending hashtag to save her reputation—and her life. (266 pgs)

**A TRACE POISON BY COLLEEN CAMBRIDGE****(PICKED BY SLS)**

In England's stately manor houses, murder is not generally a topic for polite conversation. Mallowan Hall, home to Agatha Christie and her husband, Max, is the exception. And housekeeper Phyllida Bright delights in discussing gory plot details with her friend and employer. The neighboring village of Lisleigh has also become a hub of grisly goings-on, thanks to a Murder Fête organized to benefit a local orphanage. Members of The Detection Club will congregate for charitable events, including a writing contest for aspiring authors. The winner gets an international publishing contract, and entrants have gathered for a cocktail party—managed by Phyllida—when murder strikes too close even for her comfort. It's a mystery too intriguing for Phyllida to resist, but one fraught with duplicity and danger, for every guest is an expert in murder—and how to get away with it. (304 pgs)

**BETTER THE BLOOD BY MICHAEL BENNETT****(PICKED BY FC)**

A tenacious Māori detective, Hana Westerman juggles single motherhood, endemic prejudice, and the pressures of her career in Auckland CIB. Led to a crime scene by a mysterious video, she discovers a man ritualistically hanging in a secret room and a puzzling inward-curving inscription. Delving into the investigation after a second, apparently unrelated, death, she uncovers a chilling connection to an historic crime: 160 years before, during the brutal and bloody British colonization of New Zealand, a troop of colonial soldiers unjustly executed a Māori Chief. Hana realizes that the murders are *utu*—the Māori tradition of rebalancing for the crime committed eight generations ago. A genealogical link to the British soldiers brings the case terrifyingly close to Hana's own family. (325 pgs)

STAFF PICKS

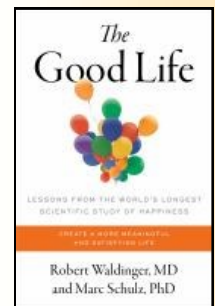
MARCH 2023



NON-FICTION

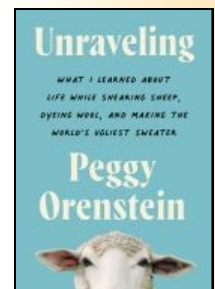
THE GOOD LIFE BY ROBERT WALDINGER & MARC SCHULZ (PICKED BY SLS)

What makes a life fulfilling and meaningful? The simple answer is relationships. The stronger our relationships, the more likely we are to live happy, satisfying, and overall healthier lives. The Harvard Study of Adult Development reveals that the strength of our connections with others can predict the health of both our bodies and our brains as we go through life. The invaluable insights in this book emerge from the revealing personal stories of hundreds of participants in the Harvard Study as they were followed year after year for their entire adult lives, and this wisdom is bolstered by research findings from this and many other studies. Relationships in all their forms all contribute to a happier, healthier life. It's also never too late to strengthen the relationships you have, and never too late to build new ones. (352 pgs)



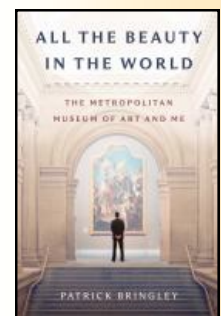
UNRAVELING BY PEGGY ORENSTEIN (PICKED BY FC)

The Covid pandemic propelled many people to change their lives in ways large and small. Some adopted puppies. Others stress-baked. Peggy Orenstein, a lifelong knitter, went just a little further. To keep herself engaged and cope with a series of seismic shifts in family life, she set out to make a garment from the ground up: learning to shear sheep, spin and dye yarn, then knitting herself a sweater. Orenstein hoped the project would help her process not just wool but her grief over the recent death of her mother, the decline of her dad, the impending departure of her college-bound daughter. What she didn't expect was a journey into some of the major issues of our time: climate anxiety, racial justice, women's rights, the impact of technology, sustainability, and, ultimately, the meaning of home. (224 pgs)



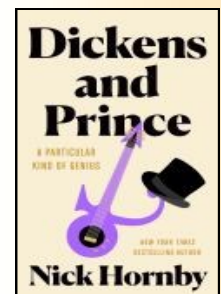
ALL THE BEAUTY IN THE WORLD BY PATRICK BRINGLEY (PICKED BY TA)

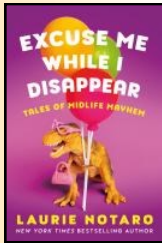
Millions of people visit the Metropolitan Museum of Art every year. But only a select few have unrestricted access to every nook and cranny. They're the guards who roam unobtrusively in dark blue suits, keeping a watchful eye on the two million square foot treasure house. Caught up in his glamorous fledgling career at *The New Yorker*, Patrick Bringley never thought he'd be one of them. Then his older brother was diagnosed with fatal cancer and he found himself needing to escape the mundane clamor of daily life. He quit *The New Yorker* and sought solace in the most beautiful place he knew. This temporary refuge becomes Bringley's home away from home for a decade. We follow him as he guards delicate treasures, wears out nine pairs of company shoes, and marvels at the beautiful works in his care. As his bonds with his colleagues and the art grow, he comes to understand how fortunate he is to be walled off in this little world, and how much it resembles the best aspects of the larger world to which he gradually, gratefully returns. (240 pgs)



DICKENS AND PRINCE BY NICK HORNBY (PICKED BY LW)

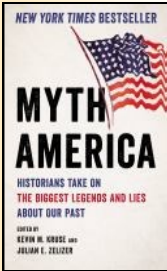
Every so often, a pairing comes along that seems completely unlikely—until it's not. Nick Hornby invites us into his latest obsession: the cosmic link between two unlikely artists, geniuses in their own rights, spanning race, class, and centuries—each of whom electrified their different disciplines and whose legacy resounded far beyond their own time. When Prince's 1987 record *Sign o' the Times* was rereleased in 2020, the album now came with dozens of songs that weren't on the original. In awe, Hornby began to wonder, *who else ever produced this much? Who else ever worked that way?* He soon found his answer in Victorian novelist and social critic Charles Dickens, who died more than a hundred years before Prince began making music. Examining the two artists' personal tragedies, social statuses, boundless productivity, and other parallels, Hornby shows how these two unlikely men from different centuries "lit up the world". In the process, he creates a lively, stimulating rumination on the creativity, flamboyance, discipline, and soul it takes to produce great art. (192 pgs)





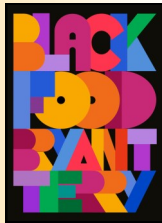
EXCUSE ME WHILE I DISAPPEAR BY LAURIE NOTARO (PICKED BY SM)

Laurie Notaro has proved everyone wrong: she didn't end up in rehab, prison, or cremated at a tender age. She just went gray. At past fifty, every hair's root is a symbol of knowledge (she knows how to use a landline), experience (she rode in a car with no seat belts), and superpowers (a gray-haired lady can get away with anything). Though navigating midlife is initially upsetting, Laurie accepts it. And then some. With unintentional abandon, she shoplifts a bag of russet potatoes. Heckles a rude driver from her beat-up Prius. And engages in epic trolling on Nextdoor.com. That, says Laurie, is the brilliance of growing older. With each passing day, you lose an equivalent amount of fear. (256 pgs)



MYTH AMERICA KEVIN KRUSE & JULIAN ZELIZER, ED. (PICKED BY SLS)

The United States is in the grip of a crisis of bad history. Distortions of the past promoted in the media have led large numbers of Americans to believe in fictions over facts, making constructive dialogue impossible and imperiling our democracy. In *Myth America*, Kevin M. Kruse and Julian E. Zelizer have assembled an all-star team of fellow historians to push back against this misinformation. The contributors debunk narratives that portray the New Deal and Great Society as failures, immigrants as hostile invaders, and feminists as anti-family warriors. Based on a firm foundation of historical scholarship, their findings revitalize our understanding of American history. Replacing myths with research and reality, *Myth America* is essential reading amid today's heated debates about our nation's past. (400 pgs)



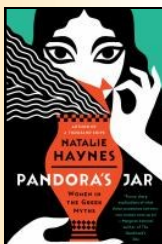
BLACK FOOD TERRY BRYANT, ED. (PICKED BY KT)

In this stunning and deeply heartfelt tribute to Black culinary ingenuity, Bryant Terry captures the broad and divergent voices of the African Diaspora through the prism of food. With contributions from more than 100 Black cultural luminaries from around the globe, the book moves through chapters exploring parts of the Black experience, from Homeland to Migration, Spirituality to Black Future, offering delicious recipes, moving essays, and arresting artwork. The book also includes a signature musical playlist curated by Bryant. (300 pgs)



B.F.F. BY CHRISTINE TATE (PICKED BY BS)

After more than a decade of dead-end dates and dysfunctional relationships, Christie Tate has reclaimed her voice and settled down. Her days of agonizing in group therapy over guys who won't commit are over, the grueling emotional work required to attach to another person tucked neatly into the past. Or so she thought. Christie receives a gift from a friend. Meredith, twenty years older and always impeccably accessorized, gives Christie a box of holiday-themed scarves as well as a gentle suggestion: maybe now is the perfect time to examine why friendships give her trouble. She soon realizes that the feeling of "apartness" that has plagued her since childhood isn't magically going away now that she's in a healthy romantic relationship. With Meredith by her side, she embarks on a brutally honest exploration of her friendships past and present, sorting through the ways that debilitating shame and jealousy have kept the lasting bonds she craves out of reach—and how she can overcome a history of letting go too soon. But when Meredith becomes ill and Christie's baggage threatens to muddy their final days, she's forced to face her deepest fears in honor of the woman who finally showed her how to be a friend. (299 pgs)



PANDORA'S JAR BY NATALIE HAYNES (PICKED BY SLS)

Stories of gods and monsters are the mainstay of epic poetry and Greek tragedy, from Homer to Virgil to from Aeschylus to Sophocles and Euripides. Modern tellers of Greek myth have usually been men, and have routinely shown little interest in telling women's stories. In *Pandora's Jar*, Natalie Haynes redresses this imbalance. Taking Greek creation myths as her starting point and then retelling the four great mythic sagas: the Trojan War, the Royal House of Thebes, Jason and the Argonauts, Heracles, she puts the female characters on equal footing with their menfolk. The result is a vivid and powerful account of the deeds – and misdeeds - of Hera, Aphrodite, Athene and Circe. And away from the goddesses of Mount Olympus it is Helen, Clytemnestra, Jocasta, Antigone and Medea who sing from these pages, not Paris, Agamemnon, Orestes or Jason. (320 pgs)