



Page Turners

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Monroe Township Library Staff Favorites of 2025

Our Wives Under the Sea – by Armfield, Julia **FIC ARMFIELD**

Leah is changed. Months earlier, she left for a routine expedition, only this time her submarine sank to the sea floor. When she finally surfaces and returns home, her wife Miri knows that something is wrong. Barely eating and lost in her thoughts, Leah rotates between rooms in their apartment, running the taps morning and night. As Miri searches for answers, desperate to understand what happened below the water, she must face the possibility that the woman she loves is slipping from her grasp. By turns elegiac and furious, wry and heartbreaking, *Our Wives Under the Sea* is a genre-bending exploration of the depths of love and grief at the heart of a marriage.

Shady Hollow – by Black, Juneau **MYS BLACK**

In the woodland community of Shady Hollow, you'll discover a secret. Moose and mice, owls and bears live side by side in civilized harmony. Shady Hollow has a coffee shop and a bookshop, a haberdasher and a bank. All is well . . . until the town's querulous toad shows up dead. It's something this village haven't seen before: a murder. Vera Vixen is new in town. She has a nose for news and catches the scent of a story, one that leads her to dark places. As she stirs up the still waters, the fox exposes more than one mystery, and the folks in Shady Hollow learn that some of their neighbours are lying, while others are downright dangerous. It will take all of Vera's cunning and quickness to come out alive.

The Ministry of Time – by Bradley, Kaliane

FIC BRADLEY

In the near future, a civil servant is offered the salary of her dreams and is, shortly afterward, told what project she'll be working on. A recently established government ministry is gathering "expats" from across history to establish whether time travel is feasible--for the body, but also for the fabric of space-time. She is tasked with working as a "bridge": living with, assisting, and monitoring the expat known as "1847" or Commander Graham Gore. As far as history is concerned, Commander Gore died on Sir John Franklin's doomed 1845 expedition to the Arctic, so he's a little disoriented to be living with an unmarried woman who regularly shows her calves, surrounded by outlandish concepts such as "washing machines," "Spotify," and "the collapse of the British Empire." But with an appetite for discovery, a seven-a-day cigarette habit, and the support of a charming and chaotic cast of fellow expats, he soon adjusts. Over the next year, what the bridge initially thought would be, at best, a horrifically uncomfortable roommate dynamic, evolves into something much deeper. By the time the true shape of the Ministry's project comes to light, the bridge has fallen haphazardly, fervently in love, with consequences she never could have imagined. Forced to confront the choices that brought them together, the bridge must finally reckon with how--and whether she believes--what she does next can change the future. An exquisitely original and feverishly fun fusion of genres and ideas, *The Ministry of Time* asks: What does it mean to defy history, when history is living in your house? Kaliane Bradley's answer is a blazing, unforgettable testament to what we owe each other in a changing world.

Once was Willem – by Carey, Mike

SF CAREY

Eleven hundred and some years after the death of Christ, in the kingdom that had but recently begun to call itself England, I, *Once Was Willem*, rose from the dead to defeat a great evil facing the humble village of Cosham. The words enclosed herein are true. I speak of monsters and magic, battle and bloodletting, and the crimes of desperate men. I speak also of secret things, of that which lies beneath us and that which impends above. By the time you come to the end of this account you will know the truth of your own life and death, the path laid out for your immortal soul, your origin and your inevitable end. You will not thank me.

The Sunrise of the Reaping – by Collins, Suzanne

YA SF COLLINS

When you've been set up to lose everything you love, what is there left to fight for? As the day dawns on the fiftieth annual Hunger Games, fear grips the districts of Panem. This year, in honor of the Quarter Quell, twice as many tributes will be taken from their homes. Back in District 12, Haymitch Abernathy is trying not to think too hard about his chances. All he cares about is making it through the day and being with the girl he loves. When Haymitch's name is called, he can feel all his dreams break. He's torn from his family and his love, shuttled to the Capitol with the three other District 12 tributes: a young friend who's nearly a sister to him, a compulsive oddsmaker, and the most stuck-up

girl in town. As the Games begin, Haymitch understands he's been set up to fail. But there's something in him that wants to fight... and have that fight reverberate far beyond the deadly arena.

Daughters of the Bamboo Grove – by Demick, Barbara **362.734 DEM**

On a warm day in September 2000, a twenty-eight-year-old woman named Zanhua gave birth to twin girls in a small hut nestled in bamboo behind her brother's rural home in China's Hunan province. The twins, Fangfang and Shuangjie, were welcome additions to her young family but also not her first children. Hidden in the hut, they were born under the shadow of China's notorious one-child policy. Fearing the ire of family planning officials, Zanhua and her husband decided to leave one twin in the care of relatives, hoping each toddler on their own might stay under the radar. But, in late 2002, Fangfang was violently snatched away from her aunt's care. The family worried they would never see her again, but they didn't imagine she could be sent to the United States. She might as well have been sent to another world. Following her stories written as the Beijing bureau chief for the Los Angeles Times, Barbara Demick, author of National Book Award finalist *Nothing to Envy*, embarks on a journey that encompasses the origins, shocking cruelty, and long term impact of China's one-child rule; the rise of international adoption and the religious currents that buoyed it; and the exceedingly rare phenomenon of twin separation. Today, Esther--formerly Fangfang--is a photographer in Texas, and Demick brings to vivid life the Christian family that felt called to adopt her, having no idea that she was kidnapped. Through Demick's indefatigable reporting and the activist work to find these lost children, will these two long-lost sisters finally find each other, and if they do, will they feel whole again? A remarkable window into the volatile, constantly changing China of the last half century and the long-reaching legacy of the country's most infamous law, *Daughters of the Bamboo Grove* is also the moving story of two sisters torn apart by the forces of history and brought together again by their families' determination and one reporter's dogged work.

Sorcery and Small Magics – by Doocy, Maiga **SF DOOCY**

From debut author Maiga Doocy comes the charming tale of an impulsive sorcerer and his curmudgeonly rival as they venture deep into a magical forest in search of a counterspell that can break the curse between them--only to discover that magic might not be the only thing pulling them together. Leovander Loveage is a master of small magics. He can summon butterflies with a song or turn someone's hair pink by snapping his fingers. Though such minor charms don't earn him much respect, anything more elaborate always blows up in his face, and so Leo vowed long ago never to use powerful magic again. That is, until a mishap with a forbidden spell binds Leo to obey the commands of his longtime rival, Sebastian Grimm. Grimm is Leo's complete opposite--respected, exceptionally talented, and absolutely insufferable. The only thing they can agree on is that revealing the curse between them would mean the end of their

respective magical careers. They need a counterspell, and fast. Chasing rumors of a powerful sorcerer with a knack for undoing curses, Leo and Grimm enter the Unquiet Wood, a forest infested with murderous monsters and dangerous outlaws alike. To break the curse, they will have to uncover the true depths of Leo's magic, set aside their long-standing rivalry, and much to their horror-work together. Even as an odd spark of attraction flares between them.

Becoming Madam Secretary – by Dray, Stephanie

FIC DRAY

Raised on tales of her revolutionary ancestors, Frances Perkins arrives in New York City at the turn of the century, armed with her trusty parasol and an unyielding determination to make a difference. When she's not working with children in the crowded tenements in Hell's Kitchen, Frances throws herself into the social scene in Greenwich Village, befriending an eclectic group of politicians, artists, and activists, including the millionaire socialite Mary Harriman Rumsey, the flirtatious budding author Sinclair Lewis, and the brilliant but troubled reformer Paul Wilson, with whom she falls deeply in love. But when Frances meets a young lawyer named Franklin Delano Roosevelt at a tea dance, sparks fly in all the wrong directions. She thinks he's a rich, arrogant dilettante who gets by on a handsome face and a famous name. He thinks she's a priggish bluestocking and insufferable do-gooder. Neither knows it yet, but over the next twenty years, they will form a historic partnership that will carry them both to the White House. Frances is destined to rise in a political world dominated by men, facing down the Great Depression as FDR's most trusted lieutenant--even as she struggles to balance the demands of a public career with marriage and motherhood. And when vicious political attacks mount and personal tragedies threaten to derail her ambitions, she must decide what she's willing to do--and what she's willing to sacrifice--to save a nation.

The Poppy Fields – by Erlick, Nikki

FIC ERLICK

Welcome to the Poppy Fields, where there's hope for even the most battered hearts to heal. Here, in a remote stretch of the California desert, lies an experimental and controversial treatment center that allows those suffering from the heartache of loss to sleep through their pain...and keep on sleeping. After patients awaken from this prolonged state of slumber, they will finally be healed. But only if they're willing to accept the potential shadowy side effects. On a journey to this mystical destination are four very different strangers and one little dog: Ava, a book illustrator; Ray, a fireman; Sasha, an occupational therapist; Sky, a free spirit; and a friendly pup named PJ. As they attempt to make their way from the Midwest all the way to the Poppy Fields, where they hope to find Ellis, its brilliant, enigmatic founder--each of their past secrets and mysterious motivations threaten to derail their voyage. A high-concept speculative novel about heartache, hope, and human resilience, *The Poppy Fields* explores the path of grief and healing, a journey at once profoundly universal and unique to every person,

posing the questions: How do we heal in the wake of great loss? And how far are we willing to go in order to be healed?

The Echo Wife – by Gailey, Sarah

FIC GAILEY

When they said all happy families are alike, I don't think this is what they meant...! Evelyn Caldwell's husband Nathan has been having an affair - with Evelyn Caldwell. Or, to be exact, with a genetically cloned replica. After a morning that begins with a confrontation and ends with Nathan's body bleeding out on the kitchen floor, the two Caldwell wives will have to think fast--before sharing everything includes sharing a jail cell. The Echo Wife is a non-stop thrill ride of lies, betrayal, and identity, perfect for fans of Big Little Lies and Killing Eve.

Spread Me – by Gailey, Sarah

FIC GAILEY

Kinsey has the perfect job as the team leader in a remote research outpost. She loves the isolation and the way the desert keeps temptations from the civilian world far out of reach. When her crew discovers a mysterious specimen buried deep in the sand, Kinsey breaks quarantine and brings it inside. But the longer it's there, the more her carefully controlled life begins to unravel. Temptation has found her after all, and it can't be ignored any longer. One by one, Kinsey's team realizes the thing they're studying is in search of a new host-and one of them is the perfect candidate...

Before Dorothy – by Gaynor, Hazel

FIC GAYNOR

Long before Dorothy visits Oz, her aunt, Emily Gale, sets off on her own unforgettable adventure . . . Chicago, 1924: Emily and her new husband, Henry, yearn to leave the bustle of Chicago for the promise of their own American dream among the harsh beauty of the prairie. But leaving the city means leaving Emily's beloved sister, Annie, who was once closer to her than anyone in the world. Kansas, 1932: Emily and Henry have established their new home among the warmth of the farming community in Kansas. Aligned to the fickle fortunes of nature, their lives hold a precarious and hopeful purpose, until tragedy strikes and their orphaned niece, Dorothy, lands on their doorstep. The wide-eyed child isn't the only thing to disrupt Emily's world. Drought and devastating dust storms threaten to destroy everything, and her much-loved home becomes a place of uncertainty and danger. When the past catches up with the present and old secrets are exposed, Emily fears she will lose the most cherished thing of all: Dorothy.

The Hands of the Emperor – by Goddard, Victoria

SF GODDARD

An impulsive word can start a war. A timely word can stop one. A simple act of friendship can change the course of history. Cliopher Mdang is the personal secretary of the Last Emperor of Astandalas, the Lord of Rising Stars, the Lord Magus of Zunidh, the Sun-on-Earth, the god. He has spent more time with the Emperor of Astandalas than any other person. He has never once touched his lord. He has never called him by name. He has

never initiated a conversation. One day Cliopher invites the Sun-on-Earth home to the proverbially remote Vangavaye-ve for a holiday. The mere invitation could have seen Cliopher executed for blasphemy. The acceptance upends the world.

Broken Country – by Hall, Clare Leslie

FIC HALL

Beth and her gentle, kind husband Frank are happily married, though their relationship relies on the past staying buried. But when Beth's brother-in-law shoots a dog going after their sheep, Beth doesn't realize that the gunshot will alter the course of their lives. For the dog belonged to none other than Gabriel Wolfe, the man Beth loved as a teenager--the man who broke her heart years ago. Gabriel has returned to the village with his young son Leo, a boy who reminds Beth very much of her own son, who died in a tragic accident. As Beth is pulled back into Gabriel's life, tensions around the village rise and dangerous secrets and jealousies from the past resurface, this time with deadly consequences. Beth is forced to make a choice between the woman she once was, and the woman she has become.

The Women – by Hannah, Kristin

FIC HANNAH

Women can be heroes. When twenty-year-old nursing student Frances "Frankie" McGrath hears these words, it is a revelation. Raised in the sun-drenched, idyllic world of Southern California and sheltered by her conservative parents, she has always prided herself on doing the right thing. But in 1965, the world is changing, and she suddenly dares to imagine a different future for herself. When her brother ships out to serve in Vietnam, she joins the Army Nurse Corps and follows his path. As green and inexperienced as the men sent to Vietnam to fight, Frankie is overwhelmed by the chaos and destruction of war. Each day is a gamble of life and death, hope and betrayal; friendships run deep and can be shattered in an instant. In war, she meets -- and becomes one of -- the lucky, the brave, the broken, and the lost. But war is just the beginning for Frankie and her veteran friends. The real battle lies in coming home to a changed and divided America, to angry protesters, and to a country that wants to forget Vietnam. The Women is the story of one woman gone to war, but it shines a light on all women who put themselves in harm's way and whose sacrifice and commitment to their country has too often been forgotten. A novel about deep friendships and bold patriotism, The Women is a richly drawn story with a memorable heroine whose idealism and courage under fire will come to define an era.

Mad Mabel – by Hepworth, Sally

FIC HEPWORTH

There are two kinds of people no one ever expects to be murderers: little girls and old ladies. Meet Mad Mabel.

Elsie Mabel Fitzpatrick is eighty-one years old. She's lived on her idyllic street, Kenny Lane, for sixty years--longer than anyone else. Aside from being a curmudgeon who minds everyone else's business, few would suspect that Elsie has a past that she has

worked exceedingly hard at concealing. Because when it comes to murder, no one ever suspects little girls or old ladies. And Elsie Mabel Fitzpatrick, once a little girl and now an old lady, has a strange history of people in her life coming to a foul end.

When a new little girl (talkative, curious, nosy) moves into the neighborhood and stops at nothing to befriend Elsie, her carefully-constructed life threatens to come crashing down as the secrets in Elsie's past start coming to light. Who was "Mad Mabel" fifty years ago? Who is Elsie Fitzpatrick today? And if the past has a habit of repeating itself, who has the most to lose?

The Retirement Plan – by Hincenbergs, Sue **FIC HINCENBERGS**

Three middle-aged best friends turn to murder in order to collect on their husbands' life insurance policies...but are unaware that their husbands have a devious plan of their own, in this darkly funny debut perfect for fans of Thursday Murder Club and Everyone in My Family Has Killed Someone.

Godkiller – by Kaner, Hannah **FIC KANER (Available through the Consortium)**

As a child, Kissen saw her family murdered at the whim of a fire god. Now Kissen makes a living killing gods, and she enjoys it. That is until she discovers a god she cannot kill: Skedi, a small god of white lies, has somehow bound his life to that of a young noble girl, and they desperately need Kissen's help. Joined by a disillusioned knight on a secret quest, the trio must travel to the ruined city of Blenraden, where the last of the wild gods reside, to each beg a favor. Pursued by assassins and demons, and in the midst of burgeoning civil war, they will all face a reckoning. Something is rotting at the heart of their world, and they are the only ones who can stop it.

A Sorceress Comes to Call – by Kingfisher, T **SF KINGFISHER**

From New York Times bestselling and Hugo Award-winning author T. Kingfisher comes A Sorceress Comes to Call--a dark reimagining of the Brothers Grimm's "The Goose Girl," rife with secrets, murder, and forbidden magic. (The hardcover edition features a foil stamp on the casing and custom endpapers illustrated by the author.) Cordelia knows her mother is . . . unusual. Their house doesn't have any doors between rooms--there are no secrets in this house--and her mother doesn't allow Cordelia to have a single friend. Unless you count Falada, her mother's beautiful white horse. The only time Cordelia feels truly free is on her daily rides with him. But more than simple eccentricity sets her mother apart. Other mothers don't force their daughters to be silent and motionless for hours, sometimes days, on end. Other mothers aren't evil sorcerers. When her mother unexpectedly moves them into the manor home of a wealthy older Squire and his kind but keen-eyed sister, Hester, Cordelia knows this welcoming pair are to be her mother's next victims. But Cordelia feels at home for the very first time among

these people, and as her mother's plans darken, she must decide how to face the woman who raised her to save the people who have become like family.

Qualityland – by Kling, Marc- Uwe

FIC KLING

Welcome to QualityLand, the best country on Earth. Here, a universal ranking system determines the social advantages and career opportunities of every member of society. An automated matchmaking service knows the best partners for everyone and helps with the break up when your ideal match (frequently) changes. And the foolproof algorithms of the biggest, most successful company in the world, The Shop, know what you want before you do and conveniently deliver to your doorstep before you even order it. In QualityCity, Peter Jobless is a machine scrapper who can't quite bring himself to destroy the imperfect machines sent his way, and has become the unwitting leader of a band of robotic misfits hidden in his home and workplace. One day, Peter receives a product from The Shop that he absolutely, positively knows he does not want, and which he decides, at great personal cost, to return. The only problem: doing so means proving the perfect algorithm of The Shop wrong, calling into question the very foundations of QualityLand itself. Qualityland, Marc-Uwe Kling's first book to be translated into English, is a brilliantly clever, illuminating satire in the tradition of Kurt Vonnegut, Douglas Adams, and George Orwell that offers a visionary, frightening, and all-too funny glimpse at a near future we may be hurtling toward faster than it's at all comfortable to admit. So why delay any longer? The Shop already knows you're going to love this book. You may as well head to the cash register, crack the covers, and see why that is for yourself.

The Names – by Knapp, Florence

FIC KNAPP

The story of one family told three different ways, leading to three different fates--a dazzling debut that asks: Can a name shape the course of a life? In the wake of an enormous, history-making storm, Cora sets off with her nine-year-old daughter, Maia, to register her son's birth. Her husband, Gordon, a local doctor, respected in the community but a terrifying and controlling presence at home, intends for her to name the child after him. But when the registrar asks which name she wants to pick, Cora hesitates . . . What follows are three alternate and alternating versions of both Cora's and her young son's life, shaped by her brave last-minute choice of name. Spanning thirty-five years, the novel draws us in from the first page, as we follow three unforgettable journeys of one young man, but also his mother, grandmother, and sister. In richly layered prose, The Names explores the painful ripple effects of domestic abuse, the messy ties of family, and the possibilities of autonomy and healing. With exceptional sensitivity and depth, Knapp draws us into the story of one family, told through a prism of what-ifs, and shows us what we each can do with the "one precious life" we are given. The Names' brilliantly imaginative structure, its propulsive storytelling, and the emotional, gut-wrenching power of the book itself are certain to make it a modern classic.

The River is Waiting – by Lamb, Wally

FIC LAMB

Corby Ledbetter is struggling. New fatherhood, the loss of his job, and a growing secret addiction have thrown his marriage to his beloved Emily into a tailspin. And that's before he causes the tragedy that tears the family apart. Sentenced to prison, Corby struggles to survive life on the inside, where he bears witness to frightful acts of brutality but also experiences small acts of kindness and elemental kinship with a prison librarian who sees his light and some of his fellow offenders, including a tender-hearted cellmate and a troubled teen desperate for a role model. Buoyed by them and by his mother's enduring faith in him, Corby begins to transcend the boundaries of his confinement, sustained by his hope that mercy and reconciliation might still be possible. Can his crimes ever be forgiven by those he loves?

After Taste – by Lavelle, Daria

FIC LAVELLE

What if you could have one last meal with someone you've loved, someone you've lost? Combining the magic of *Under the Whispering Door* with the high-stakes culinary world of *Sweetbitter*, *Aftertaste* is an epic love story, a dark comedy, and a synesthetic adventure through food and grief.

Who Is Government? : The Untold Story of Public Service – by Lewis, Michael

351 WHO (Available through the Consortium)

The government is a vast, complex system that Americans pay for, rebel against, rely upon, dismiss, and celebrate. It's also our shared resource for addressing the biggest problems of society. And it's made up of people, mostly unrecognized and uncelebrated, doing work that can be deeply consequential and beneficial to everyone.

Michael Lewis invited his favorite writers, including Casey Cep, Dave Eggers, John Lanchester, Geraldine Brooks, Sarah Vowell, and W. Kamau Bell, to join him in finding someone doing an interesting job for the government and writing about them. The stories they found are unexpected, riveting, and inspiring, including a former coal miner devoted to making mine roofs less likely to collapse, saving thousands of lives; an IRS agent straight out of a crime thriller; and the manager who made the National Cemetery Administration the best-run organization, public or private, in the entire country. Each essay shines a spotlight on the essential behind-the-scenes work of exemplary federal employees.

Whether they're digitizing archives, chasing down cybercriminals, or discovering new planets, these public servants are committed to their work and universally reluctant to take credit. Expanding on the *Washington Post* series, the vivid profiles in *Who Is Government?* blow up the stereotype of the irrelevant bureaucrat. They show how the essential business of government makes our lives possible, and how much it matters.

The Scarlet Veil – by Mahurin, Shelby**YA FIC MAHURIN**

Joining the ranks of the Chasseurs as their first vampire huntswoman, Celie is tasked with protecting Belterra and must vanquish a rising new evil - one hiding behind a handsome face and honeyed words - before she falls prey to the darkness herself.

Wild Dark Shore – by McConaghy, Charlotte**FIC MCCONAGHY**

Dominic Salt and his three children are caretakers of Shearwater, a tiny island not far from Antarctica. Home to the world's largest seed bank, Shearwater was once full of researchers, but with sea levels rising, the Salts are now its final inhabitants. Until, during the worst storm the island has ever seen, a woman mysteriously washes ashore. Isolation has taken its toll on the Salts, but as they nurse the woman, Rowan, back to strength, it begins to feel like she might just be what they need. Rowan, long accustomed to protecting herself, starts imagining a future where she could belong to someone again. But Rowan isn't telling the whole truth about why she set out for Shearwater. And when she discovers sabotaged radios and a freshly dug grave, she realizes Dominic is keeping his own secrets. As the storms on Shearwater gather force, they all must decide if they can trust one another enough to protect the precious seeds in their care before it's too late--and if they can finally put the tragedies of the past behind them to create something new, together.

The Bane Witch – by Morgyn, Ava**FIC MORGYN**

Piers Corbin has always had an affinity for poisonous things--plants and men. From the pokeweed berries she consumed at age five that led to the accidental death of a stranger, to the husband whose dark proclivities have become... concerning, poison has been at the heart of her story. But when she fakes her own death in an attempt to escape her volatile marriage and goes to stay with her estranged great aunt in the mountains, she realizes her predilection is more than a hunger--it's a birthright. Piers comes from a long line of poison eaters--bane witches--women who ingest deadly plants and use their magic to rid the world of evil men. Piers sets out to earn her place in her family's gritty but distinguished legacy, all while working at her Aunt Myrtle's cafe and perpetuating a flirtation with the local, well-meaning sheriff to allay his suspicions on the body count she's been leaving in her wake. But soon she catches the attention of someone else, a serial killer operating in the area. And that only means one thing--it's time to feed. In Ava Morgyn's dark, thrilling novel, *The Bane Witch*, a very little poison can do a world of good.

The Lost Apothecary – by Penner, Sarah**FIC PENNER**

Secretly dispensing poisons to liberate women from the men who have wronged them, a London apothecary triggers unintended consequences that shape three lives across multiple centuries.

Briar Club – by Quinn, Kate**FIC QUINN**

The New York Times bestselling author of *The Diamond Eye* and *The Rose Code* returns with a haunting and powerful story of female friendships and secrets in a Washington, DC, boardinghouse during the McCarthy era.

Life and Death and Giants – by Rindo, Ron**FIC RINDO**

"A young Amish woman, attended by the country veterinarian, delivers a baby that's eighteen pounds and twenty-seven inches long, and no one in Lakota, Wisconsin, knows what to make of the boy. Raised by his brother in rural poverty, Gabriel Fisher walks at eight months, communicates with animals, and possesses extraordinary athletic abilities. When his older brother dies by suicide, Gabriel is taken in by devout Amish grandparents, who hide him away from the English world. At age seventeen, and nearly eight feet tall, Gabriel is spotted working in a hay field by the local football coach, and his life changes. In 'Life, and death, and giants,' Gabriel's unique story is told by those whose lives are transformed by him--Doc Kennedy, the veterinarian who delivers him and becomes his mentor; Hannah Fisher, Gabriel's Amish grandmother, haunted by her daughter's death and troubled by deep gaps in her faith; Billy Walton, the salty bar owner and bridge between the Amish and English communities in Lakota; and Trey Beathard, the football coach, who tries to mentor Gabriel as his fame spreads throughout the world. Threaded with the poems of Emily Dickinson, 'Life, and death, and giants' weaves together an unforgettable story of faith, family, buried secrets, and everyday miracles.

The five wishes of Mr. Murray McBride – by Siple, Joe**FIC SIPLE**

With all his family and friends gone, one-hundred-year-old Murray McBride is looking for a reason to live. He finds it in Jason Cashman, a ten-year-old boy with a terminal heart defect and a list of five things he wants to do before he dies. Together, they race against the limited time each has left, ticking off wishes one by one. Along the way, Murray remembers what it's like to be young, and Jason fights for the opportunity to grow old. But when tragedy strikes, their worlds are turned upside-down, and an unexpected gift is the only thing that can make Jason's final wish come true

The Starving Saints – by Starling, Caitlin**FIC STARLING****(Available through the Consortium)**

Aymar Castle has been under siege for six months. Food is running low and there has been no sign of rescue. Then the divine figures of the Constant Lady and her Saints arrive, offering succor in return for adoration. Soon, the entire castle is under the sway of their saviors, partaking in feasts of terrible origin. As the castle descends into bacchanalian madness, three women see their situation for what it is. But they are not immune from the temptations of the castle's new masters, or each other.

Vera Wong's Unsolicited Advice for Murderers – by Sutanto, Jesse Q.

FIC SUTANTO

Vera Wong is a lonely little old lady—ah, lady of a certain age—who lives above her forgotten tea shop in the middle of San Francisco's Chinatown. Despite living alone, Vera is not needy, oh no. She likes nothing more than sipping on a good cup of Wulong and doing some healthy detective work on the Internet about what her Gen-Z son is up to.

Then one morning, Vera trudges downstairs to find a curious thing—a dead man in the middle of her tea shop. In his outstretched hand, a flash drive. Vera doesn't know what comes over her, but after calling the cops like any good citizen would, she sort of . . . swipes the flash drive from the body and tucks it safely into the pocket of her apron. Why? Because Vera is sure she would do a better job than the police possibly could, because nobody sniffs out a wrongdoing quite like a suspicious Chinese mother with time on her hands. Vera knows the killer will be back for the flash drive; all she has to do is watch the increasing number of customers at her shop and figure out which one among them is the killer.

What Vera does not expect is to form friendships with her customers and start to care for each and every one of them. As a protective mother hen, will she end up having to give one of her newfound chicks to the police?

Sipsworth – by Van Booy, Simon

FIC VAN BOOY(Available through the Consortium)

Over the course of a single week in a small English village, a widowed octogenarian who has spent her last years alone, ready to die, discovers an unexpected reason to live. After living abroad for sixty years, Helen Cartwright returns to the English town where she was born. She buys a nondescript suburban house on Westminster Crescent, a nondescript suburban street, and settles into a repetitive, reclusive existence: "Each day was an impersonation of the one before with only a slight shuffle-as though even for death there is a queue." Three uneventful, lonely years later, Helen's life takes a sudden turn when an unexpected guest arrives: a small, good-natured mouse. With his trademark compassion and uncanny attention to detail, Simon Van Booy illuminates not only the sustaining friendship forged between widower and mouse, but the reverberations of goodness that ripple out from acts of kindness.

Remarkably Bright Creatures – by Van Pelt, Shelby

FIC VAN PELT

Staying busy has helped Tova cope ever since her son disappeared decades ago. So, when her husband dies, she takes a job at the aquarium, where she meets Marcellus, an octopus that deduces what happened to her son.

The Afterlife Project – by Weed, Tim

SF WEED

With humanity facing imminent extinction, Centauri Project scientists use technology originally designed for interstellar travel to send a test subject ten millennia into Earth's future. Marooned in an uninhabited wilderness, microbiologist Nicholas Hindman searches for evidence of remnant populations. He has a protocol to follow and is determined to do so to the bitter end-though he knows he's probably searching in vain, stranded on an empty planet silently orbiting the sun. Meanwhile, back in 2068 AD, a devastating hyperpandemic has quelled all talk of interstellar travel and thrown the future of humanity into grave doubt. Four surviving members of the Centauri team board a vintage solar-powered sailing yacht for a harrowing journey in search of a second test subject. Their destination is a small volcanic island north of Sicily rumored to harbor that rarest of creatures: a woman capable of getting pregnant, thereby ensuring this generation of Homo sapiens isn't the last. But first they must make it halfway across the post-apocalyptic globe, risking heatwaves, oceanic megastorms, murderous gangs, deranged cult leaders, a volcanic eruption, and the dangerous microbes that continue to circulate through the planet's atmosphere.

How to Read a Book – by Wood, Monica

FIC WOOD

Violet Powell, a twenty-two-year-old from rural Abbott Falls, Maine, is being released from prison after serving twenty-two months for a drunk-driving crash that killed a local kindergarten teacher. Harriet Larson, a retired English teacher who runs the prison book club, is facing the unsettling prospect of an empty nest. Frank Daigle, a retired machinist, hasn't yet come to grips with the complications of his marriage to the woman Violet killed. When the three encounter each other one morning in a bookstore in Portland-Violet to buy the novel she was reading in the prison book club before her release, Harriet to choose the next title for the women who remain, and Frank to dispatch his duties as the store handyman-their lives begin to intersect in transformative ways. How to Read a Book is an unsparingly honest and profoundly hopeful story about letting go of guilt, seizing second chances, and the power of books to change our lives. With the heart, wit, grace, and depth of understanding that has characterized her work, Monica Wood illuminates the decisions that define a life and the kindness that make life worth living.

