

Annabel

Winter, Kathleen. 2010.

Kathleen Winter's luminous debut novel is a deeply affecting portrait of life in an enchanting seaside town and the trials of growing up unique in a restrictive environment.

In 1968, into the devastating, spare atmosphere of Labrador, Canada, a child is born: a baby who appears to be neither fully boy nor fully girl, but both at once. Only three people are privy to the secret—the baby's parents, Jacinta and Treadway, and their trusted neighbor and midwife, Thomasina. Though Treadway makes the difficult decision to raise the child as a boy named Wayne, the women continue to quietly nurture the boy's female side. And as Wayne grows into adulthood within the hypermasculine hunting society of his father, his shadow-self, a girl he thinks of as "Annabel," is never entirely extinguished. When Wayne finally escapes the confines of his hometown and settles in St. John's, the anonymity of the city grants him the freedom to confront his dual identity. His ultimate choice will once again call into question the integrity and allegiance of those he loves most.

Caleb's crossing

Brooks, Geraldine 2011.

READ BY CLUB in December

Coppermine

Leckie, Keith Ross, 1952- 2010.

The story begins when two missionaries disappear in the remote Arctic region known as the Coppermine. North West Mounted Police officer Jack Creed and Angituk, a young Copper Inuit interpreter, are sent on a year-long odyssey to investigate the fate of the lost priests. On the shores of the Arctic Ocean near the mouth of the Coppermine River, they discover their dismembered remains. Two Inuit hunters are tracked and apprehended, and the four begin an arduous journey to Edmonton, to bring the accused to justice.

Instructing the jury to "think like an Eskimo," the defence counsel sets out to prove the Inuit acted in self-defence. They hear how the hunters believed the priests were possessed by demons about to kill them, and how, acting on this belief, they killed the men and ate their livers. The jury finds them not guilty. The hunters become celebrities, a parade is held for them, they visit a movie theatre and an amusement park, and become guests of honour at socialite dinners. They are given new suits, fine cigars, and champagne. But Rome is outraged that the murderers of its martyred priests will go free. As secrets of Jack Creed's past in the trenches of Europe are revealed, Jack tries to save his two friends, and himself.

Half-blood blues

Edugyan, Esi c2011.

The aftermath of the fall of Paris, 1940. Hieronymous Falk, a rising star on the cabaret scene, was arrested in a cafe and never heard from again. He was twenty years old. He was a German citizen. And he was black. Fifty years later, Sid, Hiero's bandmate and the only witness that day, is going back to Berlin. Persuaded by his old friend Chip, Sid discovers there's more to the journey than he thought.

Island beneath the sea

Allende, Isabel, 1942-c2010.

Born a slave on the island of Saint-Domingue, Zarithé -- known as Tété -- is the daughter of an African mother she never knew and one of the white sailors who brought her into bondage. Though her childhood is one of brutality and fear, Tété finds solace in the traditional rhythms of African drums and in the voodoo loas she discovers through her fellow slaves.

When twenty-year-old Toulouse Valmorain arrives on the island in 1770, it's with powdered wigs in his baggage and dreams of financial success in his mind. But running his father's plantation, Saint-Lazare, is neither glamorous nor easy. It will be eight years before he brings home a bride -- but marriage, too, proves more difficult than he imagined. And Valmorain remains dependent on the services of his teenaged slave.

Spanning four decades, *Island Beneath the Sea* is the moving story of the intertwined lives of Tété and Valmorain, and of one woman's determination to find love amid loss, to offer humanity though her own has been battered, and to forge her own identity in the cruellest of circumstances.

The kitchen house

Grissom, Kathleen. 2010.

When a white servant girl violates the order of plantation society, she unleashes a tragedy that exposes the worst and best in the people she has come to call her family. Orphaned while onboard ship from Ireland, seven-year-old Lavinia arrives on the steps of a tobacco plantation where she is to live and work with the slaves of the kitchen house. Under the care of Belle, the master's illegitimate daughter, Lavinia becomes deeply bonded to her adopted family, though she is set apart from them by her white skin.

Eventually, Lavinia is accepted into the world of the big house, where the master is absent and the mistress battles opium addiction. Lavinia finds herself perilously straddling two very different worlds. When she is forced to make a choice, loyalties are brought into question, dangerous truths are laid bare, and lives are put at risk.

The language of flowers

Diffenbaugh, Vanessa. c2011.

A mesmerizing, moving, and elegantly written debut novel, *The Language of Flowers* beautifully weaves past and present, creating a vivid portrait of an unforgettable woman whose gift for flowers helps her change the lives of others even as she struggles to overcome her own troubled past.

The Victorian language of flowers was used to convey romantic expressions: honeysuckle for devotion, asters for patience, and red roses for love. But for Victoria Jones, it's been more useful in communicating grief, mistrust, and solitude. After a childhood spent in the foster-care system, she is unable to get close to anybody, and her only connection to the world is through flowers and their meanings.

Now eighteen and emancipated from the system, Victoria has nowhere to go and sleeps in a public park, where she plants a small garden of her own. Soon a local florist discovers her talents, and Victoria realizes she has a gift for helping others through the flowers she chooses for them. But a mysterious vendor at the flower market has her questioning what's been missing in her life, and when she's forced to confront a painful secret from her past, she must decide whether it's worth risking everything for a second chance at happiness.

Major Pettigrew's last stand

Simonson, Helen. c2010.

READ BY CLUB IN JANUARY

Natural order

Francis, Brian, 1971- c2611.

Joyce Sparks has lived the whole of her 86 years in the small community of Balsden, Ontario. "There isn't anything on earth you can't find your own backyard," her mother used to say, and Joyce has structured her life accordingly. Today, she occupies a bed in what she knows will be her final home, a shared room at Chestnut Park Nursing Home where she contemplates the bland streetscape through her window and tries not to be too gruff with the nurses.

This is not at all how Joyce expected her life to turn out. As a girl, she'd allowed herself to imagine a future of adventure in the arms of her friend Freddy Pender, whose chin bore a Kirk Douglas cleft and who danced the cha-cha divinely. Though troubled by the whispered assertions of her sister and friends that he was "fruity," Joyce adored Freddy for all that was un-Balsden in his flamboyant ways. When Freddy led the homecoming parade down the main street, his expertly twirled baton and outrageous white suit gleaming in the sun, Joyce fell head over heels in unrequited love.

Years later, after Freddy had left Balsden for an acting career in New York, Joyce married Charlie, a kind and reserved man who could hardly be less like Freddy. They married with little fanfare and she bore one son, John. Though she did love Charlie, Joyce often caught herself thinking about Freddy, buying Hollywood gossip magazines in hopes of catching a glimpse of his face. Meanwhile, she was growing increasingly alarmed about John's preference for dolls and kitchen sets.

She concealed the mounting signs that John was not a “normal” boy, even buying him a coveted doll if he promised to keep it a secret from Charlie. News of Freddy finally arrived, and it was horrifying: he had killed himself, throwing himself into the sea from a cruise ship. “A mother always knows when something isn’t right with her son,” was Mrs. Pender’s steely utterance when Joyce paid her respects, cryptically alleging that Freddy’s homosexuality had led to his destruction. That night, Joyce threatened to take away John’s doll if he did not join the softball team. Convinced she had to protect John from himself, she set her small family on a narrow path bounded by secrecy and shame, which ultimately led to unimaginable loss. Today, as her life ebbs away at Chestnut Park, Joyce ponders the terrible choices she made as a mother and wife and doubts that she can be forgiven, or that she deserves to be. Then a young nursing home volunteer named Timothy appears, so much like her long lost John. Might there be some grace ahead in Joyce’s life after all?

The Paris wife

McLain, Paula. 2011

Joyce Sparks has lived the whole of her 86 years in the small community of Balsden, Ontario. “There isn’t anything on earth you can’t find your own backyard,” her mother used to say, and Joyce has structured her life accordingly. Today, she occupies a bed in what she knows will be her final home, a shared room at Chestnut Park Nursing Home where she contemplates the bland streetscape through her window and tries not to be too gruff with the nurses. This is not at all how Joyce expected her life to turn out. As a girl, she’d allowed herself to imagine a future of adventure in the arms of her friend Freddy Pender, whose chin bore a Kirk Douglas cleft and who danced the cha-cha divinely. Though troubled by the whispered assertions of her sister and friends that he was “fruity,” Joyce adored Freddy for all that was un-Balsden in his flamboyant ways. When Freddy led the homecoming parade down the main street, his expertly twirled baton and outrageous white suit gleaming in the sun, Joyce fell head over heels in unrequited love. Years later, after Freddy had left Balsden for an acting career in New York, Joyce married Charlie, a kind and reserved man who could hardly be less like Freddy. They married with little fanfare and she bore one son, John. Though she did love Charlie, Joyce often caught herself thinking about Freddy, buying Hollywood gossip magazines in hopes of catching a glimpse of his face. Meanwhile, she was growing increasingly alarmed about John’s preference for dolls and kitchen sets. She concealed the mounting signs that John was not a “normal” boy, even buying him a coveted doll if he promised to keep it a secret from Charlie. News of Freddy finally arrived, and it was horrifying: he had killed himself, throwing himself into the sea from a cruise ship. “A mother always knows when something isn’t right with her son,” was Mrs. Pender’s steely utterance when Joyce paid her respects, cryptically alleging that Freddy’s homosexuality had led to his destruction. That night, Joyce threatened to take away John’s doll if he did not join the softball team. Convinced she had to protect John from himself, she set her small family on a narrow path bounded by secrecy and shame, which ultimately led to unimaginable loss. Today, as her life ebbs away at Chestnut Park, Joyce ponders the terrible choices she made as a mother and wife and doubts that she can be forgiven, or that she deserves to be. Then a young nursing home volunteer named Timothy appears, so much like her long lost John. Might there be some grace ahead in Joyce’s life after all?

The postmistress

Blake, Sarah, 1960- c2010.

What would happen if someone did the unthinkable-and didn't deliver a letter? Filled with stunning parallels to today, *The Postmistress* is a sweeping novel about the loss of innocence of two extraordinary women-and of two countries torn apart by war.

Room

Donoghue, Emma, 1969- c2010.

To five-year-old Jack, Room is the entire world. It is where he was born and grew up; it's where he lives with his Ma as they learn and read and eat and sleep and play. At night, his Ma shuts him safely in the wardrobe, where he is meant to be asleep when Old Nick visits. Room is home to Jack, but to Ma, it is the prison where Old Nick has held her captive for seven years. Through determination, ingenuity, and fierce motherly love, Ma has created a life for Jack. But she knows it's not enough...not for her or for him. She devises a bold escape plan, one that relies on her young son's bravery and a lot of luck. What she does not realize is just how unprepared she is for the plan to actually work. Told entirely in the language of the energetic, pragmatic five-year-old Jack, ROOM is a celebration of resilience and the limitless bond between parent and child, a brilliantly executed novel about what it means to journey from one world to another

Salmon fishing in the Yemen

Torday, Paul, 1946- 2007.

British businessman and dedicated angler Paul Torday has found a way to combine a novel about fishing and all that it means with a satire involving politics, bureaucrats, the Middle East, the war in Iraq, and a sheikh who is really a mystic. Torday makes it all work in a most convincing way using memos, interviews, e-mails, and letters in clever juxtaposition.

Dr. Alfred Jones is a fisheries scientist in Great Britain who is called upon to find a way to introduce salmon into the desert in Yemen. The Yemeni sheikh will spare no expense to see this happen. He says:

It would be a miracle of God if it happened. I know it... If God wills it, the summer rains will fill the wadis... and the salmon will run the river. And then my countrymen... all classes and manner of men--will stand side by side and fish for the salmon. And their natures, too, will be changed. They will feel the enchantment of this silver fish... and then when talk turns to what this tribe said or that tribe did... then someone will say, "Let us arise, and go fishing."

Such is the sheikh's vision. He tells Alfred: "Without faith, there is no hope. Without faith, there is no love." Alfred has no religious faith and has been mired in a loveless marriage for twenty years, so these words seem fantastic to him.

Alfred and Sheikh Muhammad connect immediately through their mutual love of fishing, despite Alfred's misgivings about the viability of the project. The Prime Minister's flack man tells Alfred that he must persevere and succeed because Great Britain needs some positive connection to the Middle East, something other than a failing, flailing war. These kinds of political alliances are always shaky at best, and when things start to go sideways, allies have a way of disappearing. Alfred soldiers on, with the help of the lovely Harriet, Sheikh Muhammad's land agent, and the project is readied for opening day, when the Sheikh and the Prime Minister will have a 20-minute photo op.

All of the faith and good will in the world cannot overcome the forces ranged against them, bringing tragedy to everyone involved. Despite all, Alfred's interior life is changed immeasurably. He says in the end: "I believe in it, because it is impossible."

The sisters

Jensen, Nancy, 1961- 2011.

In the tradition of Marilynne Robinson’s *Housekeeping* and Elizabeth Strout’s *Olive Kitteridge*, a dazzling debut novel about the family bonds that remain even when they seem irretrievably torn apart

Growing up in hardscrabble Kentucky in the 1920s, with their mother dead and their stepfather an ever-present threat, Bertie Fischer and her older sister Mabel have no one but each other—with perhaps a sweetheart for Bertie waiting in the wings. But on the day that Bertie receives her eighth-grade diploma, good intentions go terribly wrong. A choice made in desperate haste sets off a chain of misunderstandings that will divide the sisters and reverberate through three generations of women.

What happens when nothing turns out as you planned? From the Depression through World War II and Vietnam, and smaller events both tragic and joyful, Bertie and Mabel forge unexpected identities that are shaped by unspeakable secrets. As the sisters have daughters and granddaughters of their own, they discover that both love and betrayal are even more complicated than they seem.

Gorgeously written, with extraordinary insight and emotional truth, Nancy Jensen’s powerful debut novel illuminates the far-reaching power of family and family secrets.

State of wonder

Patchett, Ann. c2011.

Award-winning "New York Times"-bestselling author Ann Patchett (Bel Canto, The Magician's Assistant) returns with a provocative novel of morality and miracles, science and sacrifice set in the Amazon rainforest--a gripping adventure story and a profound look at the difficult choices we make in the name of

discovery and love.

In a narrative replete with poison arrows, devouring snakes, scientific miracles, and spiritual transformations, *State of Wonder* presents a world of stunning surprise and danger, rich in emotional resonance and moral complexity.

As Dr. Marina Singh embarks upon an uncertain odyssey into the insect-infested Amazon, she will be forced to surrender herself to the lush but forbidding world that awaits within the jungle. Charged with finding her former mentor Dr. Annick Swenson, a researcher who has disappeared while working on a valuable new drug, she will have to confront her own memories of tragedy and sacrifice as she journeys into the unforgiving heart of darkness. Stirring and luminous, *State of Wonder* is a world unto itself, where unlikely beauty stands beside unimaginable loss beneath the rain forest's jeweled canopy

The world we found

Umrigar, Thrity N. c2012.

The acclaimed author of *The Space Between Us* and *The Weight of Heaven* returns with a breathtaking, skillfully wrought story of four women and the unbreakable ties they share.

As university students in late 1970s Bombay, Armaiti, Laleh, Kavita, and Nishta were inseparable. Spirited and unconventional, they challenged authority and fought for a better world. But much has changed over the past thirty years. Following different paths, the quartet drifted apart, the day-to-day demands of work and family tempering the revolutionary fervor they once shared.

Then comes devastating news: Armaiti, who moved to America, is gravely ill and wants to see the old friends she left behind. For Laleh, reunion is a bittersweet reminder of unfulfilled dreams and unspoken guilt. For Kavita, it is an admission of forbidden passion. For Nishta, it is the promise of freedom from a bitter fundamentalist husband. And for Armaiti, it is an act of acceptance, of letting go on her own terms even if her ex-husband and daughter do not understand her choices.

In the course of their journey to reconnect, Armaiti, Laleh, Kavita, and Nishta must confront the truths of their lives—acknowledge long-held regrets, face painful secrets and hidden desires, and reconcile their idealistic past and their compromised present. And they will have to decide what matters most, a choice that may just help them reclaim the extraordinary world they once found.

Exploring the enduring bonds of friendship and the power of love to change lives, and offering an unforgettable portrait of modern India—a nation struggling to bridge economic, religious, gender, and generational divides—*The World We Found* is a dazzling masterwork from the remarkable Thrity Umrigar.

The Woefield Poultry Collective

Juby, Susan, 1969- c2011.

Woefield Farm is a sprawling thirty acres of scrub land, complete with dilapidated buildings and one half-sheared, lonely sheep named Bertie. It's "run"—in the loosest possible sense of the word—by Prudence Burns, an energetic, well-intentioned 20-something New Yorker full of back-to-the-land ideals, but without an iota of related skills or experience. Prudence, who inherited the farm from her uncle, soon discovers that the bank is about to foreclose on the property, which means that she has to turn things around, fast. But fear not! She'll be assisted by Earl, a spry 70-something, banjo-playing foreman, with a distrust of newfangled ideas and a substantial family secret; Seth, the alcoholic, celebrity-blogging guy-next-door, who hasn't left the house since a scandal with his high-school drama teacher; and Sara Spratt, a highly organized eleven-year-old looking for a home for her prize-winning chickens, including one particularly randy fellow soon to be christened Alec Baldwin

Why be happy when you could be normal?

VWinterson, Jeanette, 1959- 2011.

Heartbreaking and funny: the true story behind Jeanette's bestselling and most beloved novel, *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*.

In 1985, at twenty-five, Jeanette published *Oranges*, the story of a girl adopted by Pentecostal parents, supposed to grow up to be a missionary. Instead, she falls in love with a woman. Disaster.

Oranges became an international bestseller, inspired an award-winning BBC adaptation, and was semi-autobiographical. Mrs. Winterson, a thwarted giantess, loomed over the novel and the author's life: when Jeanette left home at sixteen because she was in love with a woman, Mrs. Winterson asked her: Why be happy when you could be normal? This is Jeanette's story--acute, fierce, celebratory - of a life's work to find happiness: a search for belonging, love, identity, a home. About a young girl locked out of her home, sitting on the doorstep all night, and a mother waiting for Armageddon with two sets of false teeth and a revolver in the duster drawer; about growing up in a northern industrial town; about the Universe as a Cosmic Dustbin. She thought she had written over the painful past until it returned to haunt her and sent her on a journey into madness and out again, in search of her biological mother. It is also about other people's stories, showing how fiction and poetry can form a string of guiding lights, a life raft that supports us when we are sinking

The virgin cure

McKay, Ami, 1968- c2011.

"I am Moth, a girl from the lowest part of Chrystie Street, born to a slum-house mystic and the man who broke her heart." So begins *The Virgin Cure*, a novel set in the tenements of lower Manhattan in the year 1871. As a young child, Moth's father smiled, tipped his hat and walked away from his wife and daughter forever, and Moth has never stopped imagining that one day they may be reunited – despite knowing in her heart what he chose over them. Her hard mother is barely making a living with her fortune-telling, sometimes for well-heeled clients, yet Moth is all too aware of how she really pays the rent.

Life would be so much better, Moth knows, if fortune had gone the other way - if only she'd had the luxury of a good family and some station in life. The young Moth spends her days wandering the streets of her own and better neighborhoods, imagining what days are like for the wealthy women whose grand yet forbidding gardens she slips through when no one's looking. Yet every night Moth must return to the disease- and grief-ridden tenements she calls home.

The summer Moth turns twelve, her mother puts a halt to her explorations by selling her boots to a local vendor, convinced that Moth was planning to run away. Wanting to make the most of her every asset, she also sells Moth to a wealthy woman as a servant, with no intention of ever seeing her again.

These betrayals lead Moth to the wild, murky world of the Bowery, filled with house-thieves, pickpockets, beggars, sideshow freaks and prostitutes, but also a locale frequented by New York's social elite. Their patronage supports the shadowy undersphere, where businesses can flourish if they truly understand the importance of wealth and social standing - and of keeping secrets. In that world Moth meets Miss Everett, the owner of a brothel simply known as an "infant school." There Moth finds the orderly solace she has always wanted, and begins to imagine herself embarking upon a new path.

Yet salvation does not come without its price: Miss Everett caters to gentlemen who pay dearly for companions who are "willing and clean," and the most desirable of them all are young virgins like Moth. That's not the worst of the situation, though. In a time and place where mysterious illnesses ravage those who haven't been cautious, no matter their social station, diseased men yearn for a "virgin cure" - thinking that deflowering a "fresh maid" can heal the incurable and tainted.

Through the friendship of Dr. Sadie, a female physician who works to help young women like her, Moth learns to question and observe the world around her.

Moth's new friends are falling prey to fates both expected and forced upon them, yet she knows the law will not protect her, and that polite society ignores her. Still she dreams of answering to no one but herself. There's a high price for such independence, though, and no one knows that better than a girl from Chrystie Street.

The light between oceans

Stedman, M. L. 2012.

After four harrowing years on the Western Front, Tom Sherbourne returns to Australia and takes a job as the lighthouse keeper on Janus Rock, nearly half a day's journey from the coast. To this isolated island, where the supply boat comes once a season and shore leaves are granted every other year at best, Tom brings a young, bold, and loving wife, Isabel. Years later, after two miscarriages and one stillbirth, the grieving Isabel hears a baby's cries on the wind. A boat has washed up onshore carrying a dead man and a living baby.

Tom, whose records as a lighthouse keeper are meticulous and whose moral principles have withstood a horrific war, wants to report the man and infant immediately. But Isabel has taken the tiny baby to her breast. Against Tom's judgment, they claim her as their own and name her Lucy. When she is two, Tom and Isabel return to the mainland and are reminded that there are other people in the world. Their choice has devastated one of them.

M. L. Stedman's mesmerizing, beautifully written novel seduces us into accommodating Isabel's decision to keep this "gift from God." And we are swept into a story about extraordinarily compelling characters seeking to find their North Star in a world where there is no right answer, where justice for one person is

another's tragic loss.

The Light Between Oceans is exquisite and unforgettable, a deeply moving novel.

The 100-year-old man who climbed out the window

Jonasson, Jonas, 1961- 2012.

It all starts on the one-hundredth birthday of Allan Karlsson. Sitting quietly in his room in an old people's home, he is waiting for the party he-never-wanted-anyway to begin. The Mayor is going to be there. The press is going to be there. But, as it turns out, Allan is not... Slowly but surely Allan climbs out of his bedroom window, into the flowerbed (in his slippers) and makes his getaway. And so begins his picaresque and unlikely journey involving criminals, several murders, a suitcase full of cash, and incompetent police. As his escapades unfold, we learn something of Allan's earlier life in which – remarkably – he helped to make the atom bomb, became friends with American presidents, Russian tyrants, and Chinese leaders, and was a participant behind the scenes in many key events of the twentieth century. Already a huge bestseller across Europe, The Hundred-Year-Old Man Who Climbed Out of the Window and Disappeared is a fun and feel-good book for all ages.

The immortal life of Henrietta Lacks

Henrietta Lacks, as HeLa, is known to present-day scientists for her cells from cervical cancer. She was a poor Southern tobacco farmer who worked the same land as her slave ancestors, yet her cells were taken without her knowledge and still live decades after her death. Cells descended from her may weigh more than 50M metric tons.

HeLa cells were vital for developing the polio vaccine; uncovered secrets of cancer, viruses, and the atom bomb's effects; helped lead to important advances like in vitro fertilization, cloning, and gene mapping; and have been bought and sold by the billions. Yet Henrietta Lacks was buried in an unmarked grave.

The journey starts in the "colored" ward of Johns Hopkins Hospital in the 1950s, her small, dying hometown of Clover, Virginia — wooden slave quarters, faith healings, and voodoo. Today are stark white laboratories with freezers full of HeLa cells, East Baltimore children and grandchildren live in obscurity, see no profits, and feel violated. The dark history of experimentation on African Americans helped lead to the birth of bioethics, and legal battles over whether we control the stuff we are made of.

Me before you

Moyes, Jojo, 1969- 2012,

Lou Clark knows lots of things. She knows how many footsteps there are between the bus stop and home. She knows she likes working in The Buttered Bun tea shop and she knows she might not love her boyfriend Patrick.

What Lou doesn't know is she's about to lose her job or that knowing what's coming is what keeps her sane.

Will Traynor knows his motorcycle accident took away his desire to live. He knows everything feels very small and rather joyless now and he knows exactly how he's going to put a stop to that.

What Will doesn't know is that Lou is about to burst into his world in a riot of colour. And neither of them knows they're going to change the other for all time.

The night circus

Morgenstern, Erin c2012.

The circus arrives without warning. No announcements precede it. It is simply there, when yesterday it was not. Within the black-and-white striped canvas tents is an utterly unique experience full of breathtaking amazements. It is called Le Cirque des Rêves, and it is only open at night.

But behind the scenes, a fierce competition is underway: a duel between two young magicians, Celia and Marco, who have been trained since childhood expressly for this purpose by their mercurial instructors. Unbeknownst to them both, this is a game in which only one can be left standing. Despite the high stakes, Celia and Marco soon tumble headfirst into love, setting off a domino effect of dangerous consequences, and leaving the lives of everyone, from the performers to the patrons, hanging in the balance.

The orphan master's son

Johnson, Adam, 1967- c2012.

An epic novel and a thrilling literary discovery, The Orphan Master's Son follows a young man's journey through the icy waters, dark tunnels, and eerie spy chambers of the world's most mysterious dictatorship, North Korea.

Pak Jun Do is the haunted son of a lost mother—a singer "stolen" to Pyongyang—and an influential father who runs Long Tomorrows, a work camp for orphans. There the boy is given his first taste of power, picking which orphans eat first and which will be lent out for manual labor. Recognized for his loyalty and keen instincts, Jun Do comes to the attention of superiors in the state, rises in the ranks, and starts on a road from which there will be no return.

Considering himself "a humble citizen of the greatest nation in the world," Jun Do becomes a professional kidnapper who must navigate the shifting rules, arbitrary violence, and baffling demands of his Korean overlords in order to stay alive. Driven to the absolute limit of what any human being could endure, he boldly takes on the treacherous role of rival to Kim Jong Il in an attempt to save the woman he loves, Sun Moon, a legendary actress "so pure, she didn't know what starving people looked like."

Part breathless thriller, part story of innocence lost, part story of romantic love, The Orphan Master's Son is also a riveting portrait of a world heretofore hidden from view: a North Korea rife with hunger, corruption, and casual cruelty but also camaraderie, stolen moments of beauty, and love. A towering literary achievement, The Orphan Master's Son ushers Adam Johnson into the small group of today's greatest writers.

Quiet: the power of introverts in a world that can't stop

Cain, Susan c2012.

At least one-third of the people we know are introverts. They are the ones who prefer listening to speaking, reading to partying; who innovate and create but dislike self-promotion; who favor working on their own over brainstorming in teams. Although they are often labeled "quiet," it is to introverts that we owe many of the great contributions to society--from van Gogh's sunflowers to the invention of the personal computer.

Passionately argued, impressively researched, and filled with indelible stories of real people, Quiet shows how dramatically we undervalue introverts, and how much we lose in doing so. Taking the reader on a journey from Dale Carnegie's birthplace to Harvard Business School, from a Tony Robbins seminar to an evangelical megachurch, Susan Cain charts the rise of the Extrovert Ideal in the twentieth century and explores its far-reaching effects. She talks to Asian-American students who feel alienated from the brash, backslapping atmosphere of American schools. She questions the dominant values of American business culture, where forced collaboration can stand in the way of innovation, and where the leadership potential of introverts is often overlooked. And she draws on cutting-edge research in psychology and neuroscience to reveal the surprising differences between extroverts and introverts.

Perhaps most inspiring, she introduces us to successful introverts--from a witty, high-octane public speaker who recharges in solitude after his talks, to a record-breaking salesman who quietly taps into the power of questions. Finally, she offers invaluable advice on everything from how to better negotiate differences in introvert-extrovert relationships to how to empower an introverted child to when it makes sense to be a "pretend extrovert."

This extraordinary book has the power to permanently change how we see introverts and, equally important, how introverts see themselves.

The snow child

Ivey, Eowyn. 2012.

Alaska, 1920: a brutal place to homestead, and especially tough for recent arrivals Jack and Mabel. Childless, they are drifting apart--he breaking under the weight of the work of the farm; she crumbling from loneliness and despair. In a moment of levity during the season's first snowfall, they build a child out of snow. The next morning the snow child is gone--but they glimpse a young, blonde-haired girl running through the trees. This little girl, who calls herself Faina, seems to be a child of the woods. She hunts with a red fox at her side, skims lightly across the snow, and somehow survives alone in the Alaskan wilderness. As Jack and Mabel struggle to understand this child who could have stepped from the pages of a fairy tale, they come to love her as their own daughter. But in this beautiful, violent place things are rarely as they appear, and what they eventually learn about Faina will transform all of them.

The tiger's wife

Obrecht, Tea. c2011.

April 1941. When bombs fall, a zoo tiger escapes to ridge above the Balkan village of Galina. Natalia is a doctor visiting orphanages. From recalled story fragments, she guesses her grandpa Shere Khan died seeking 'the deathless man', an immortal vagabond. Curious why a man of science would undertake such a quest, she finds a tattered copy of *The Jungle Book*, and story of the tiger's wife.

Beautiful ruins

Walter, Jess, 1965- c2012.

The story begins in 1962. On a rocky patch of the sun-drenched Italian coastline, a young innkeeper, chest-deep in daydreams, looks on over the incandescent waters of the Ligurian Sea and spies an apparition: a tall, thin woman, a vision in white, approaching him on a boat. She is an actress, he soon learns, an American starlet, and she is dying.

And the story begins again today, half a world away, when an elderly Italian man shows up on a movie studio's back lot-searching for the mysterious woman he last saw at his hotel decades earlier.

What unfolds is a dazzling, yet deeply human, roller coaster of a novel, spanning fifty years and nearly as many lives. From the lavish set of Cleopatra to the shabby revelry of the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, Walter introduces us to the tangled lives of a dozen unforgettable characters: the starstruck Italian innkeeper and his long-lost love; the heroically preserved producer who once brought them together and his idealistic young assistant; the army veteran turned fledgling novelist and the rakish Richard Burton himself, whose appetites set the whole story in motion-along with the husbands and wives, lovers and dreamers, superstars and losers, who populate their world in the decades that follow.

Gloriously inventive, constantly surprising, *Beautiful Ruins* is a story of flawed yet fascinating people, navigating the rocky shores of their lives while clinging to their improbable dreams.

Wild: From lost to found on the Pacific Crest Trail

Strayed, Cheryl, 1968- c2012.

A powerful, blazingly honest memoir: the story of an eleven-hundred-mile solo hike that broke down a young woman reeling from catastrophe—and built her back up again.

At twenty-two, Cheryl Strayed thought she had lost everything. In the wake of her mother's death, her family scattered and her own marriage was soon destroyed. Four years later, with nothing more to lose, she made the most impulsive decision of her life: to hike the Pacific Crest Trail from the Mojave Desert through California and Oregon to Washington State—and to do it alone. She had no experience as a long-distance hiker, and the trail was little more than “an idea, vague and outlandish and full of promise.” But it was a promise of piecing back together a life that had come undone.

Strayed faces down rattlesnakes and black bears, intense heat and record snowfalls, and both the beauty and loneliness of the trail. Told with great suspense and style, sparkling with warmth and humor, *Wild* vividly captures the terrors and pleasures of one young woman forging ahead against all odds on a journey that maddened, strengthened, and ultimately healed her.

Where'd you go, Bernadette

Semple, Maria. 2012.

Bernadette Fox is notorious. To her Microsoft-guru husband, she's a fearlessly opinionated partner; to fellow private-school mothers in Seattle, she's a disgrace; to design mavens, she's a revolutionary architect, and to 15-year-old Bee, she is a best friend and, simply, Mom.

Then Bernadette disappears. It began when Bee aced her report card and claimed her promised reward: a family trip to Antarctica. But Bernadette's intensifying allergy to Seattle—and people in general—has made her so agoraphobic that a virtual assistant in India now runs her most basic errands. A trip to the end of the earth is problematic.

To find her mother, Bee compiles email messages, official documents, secret correspondence—creating a compulsively readable and touching novel about misplaced genius and a mother and daughter's role in an absurd world.

The reluctant fundamentalist

Hamid, Mohsin, 1971- c2007.

At a café table in Lahore, a bearded Pakistani man converses with an uneasy American stranger. As dusk deepens to night, he begins the tale that has brought them to this fateful meeting . . .

Changez is living an immigrant's dream of America. At the top of his class at Princeton, he is snapped up by the elite "valuation" firm of Underwood Samson. He thrives on the energy of New York, and his infatuation with elegant, beautiful Erica promises entry into Manhattan society at the same exalted level once occupied by his own family back in Lahore.

But in the wake of September 11, Changez finds his position in his adopted city suddenly overturned, and his budding relationship with Erica eclipsed by the reawakened ghosts of her past. And Changez's own identity is in seismic shift as well, unearthing allegiances more fundamental than money, power, and maybe even love.

The book thief

Zusak, Markus. c2006.

It is 1939. Nazi Germany. The country is holding its breath. Death has never been busier, and will become busier still.

Liesel Meminger is a foster girl living outside of Munich, who scratches out a meager existence for herself by stealing when she encounters something she can't resist—books. With the help of her accordion-playing foster father, she learns to read and shares her stolen books with her neighbors during bombing raids as well as with the Jewish man hidden in her basement.

In superbly crafted writing that burns with intensity, award-winning author Markus Zusak, author of *I Am the Messenger*, has given us one of the most enduring stories of our time.

The painted girls

Buchanan, Cathy Marie, c2012

Paris. 1878. Following their father's sudden death, the van Goethem sisters find their lives upended. Without his wages, and with the small amount their laundress mother earns disappearing into the absinthe bottle, eviction from their lodgings seems imminent. With few options for work, Marie is dispatched to the Paris Opéra, where for a scant seventy francs a month, she will be trained to enter the famous ballet. Her older sister, Antoinette, finds work—and the love of a dangerous

young man—as an extra in a stage adaptation of Émile Zola's naturalist masterpiece *L'Assommoir*.

Marie throws herself into dance and is soon modelling in the studio of Edgar Degas, where her image will forever be immortalized as *Little Dancer*

Aged Fourteen. Antoinette, meanwhile, descends

lower and lower in society, and must make the choice between a life of honest labor and the more profitable avenues open to a young woman of the Parisian demimonde—that is, unless her love affair derails her completely.

Set at a moment of profound artistic, cultural,

and societal change, *The Painted Girls* is a tale of two remarkable sisters rendered uniquely vulnerable to the darker impulses of “civilized society.”