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DECEMBER '20

Wintering: The Power of Rest and Retreat in Difficult Times

By Katherine May

"When we all started our own 'winters' in March, some of us were more prepared than others. May writes delicately of the struggles of life and the ways we may be able to prepare ourselves for such times, something I feel we all need to learn in order to survive the emotional winter that is a worldwide pandemic. Grab a cup of tea, find a cozy blanket, and burrow into this book of thoughtfulness and comfort."

—Emma Warren, Oblong Books & Music, Millerton, NY



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DECEMBER '20

A Wealth of Pigeons: A Cartoon Collection

By Steve Martin, Harry Bliss (Illus.)

"In this hot mess of a year, what we really needed was a bit of Steve Martin's humor. I'm not saying that sarcastically at all: A good laugh cures a lot of ills, and this is full of good laughs. Sharp wit, silly observations, clever art—Martin and Bliss offer up not just the perfect holiday gift, but perhaps the perfect antidote to 2020."

—Melissa Fox, Watermark Books & Café, Wichita, KS



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DECEMBER '20

The Burning God (The Poppy War #3)

By R.F. Kuang

"I knew I was going to be blown away by this book, but I had no idea I was going to be sent into the stratosphere. *The Poppy War* was already a phenomenal debut, but its successors somehow managed to claw themselves to new heights. *The Burning God* is no exception. As usual, Kuang holds no punches when it comes to describing the raw horror and consequences of war, drawing her characters to impossibly dark corners where their only escape is through catastrophic decisions. The ending ripped my heart from my chest, but I can't imagine a more satisfying conclusion for this phenomenal trilogy. A perfect triad of books."

—Ava Tusek, Second Star to the Right, Denver, CO



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DECEMBER '20

Before the Coffee Gets Cold: A Novel

By Toshikazu Kawaguchi

"This was the most interesting and wholesome take on time travel I have ever read. Everything in the world is totally normal, but if you sit in a specific seat in a specific cafe in Tokyo, you can travel back in time. There are some rules in order to time travel, but my favorite one? You can only stay in the past for as long as your coffee is warm. This charming and emotional story of four different women teaches about the importance of making the most with the time you're given."

—Lauren Suideest, Schuler Books, Grand Rapids, MI



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DECEMBER '20

The Star-Crossed Sisters of Tuscany: A Novel

By Lori Nelson Spielman

"Three second-born daughters take a life-changing trip to Italy in hopes of breaking the family curse dooming all second-born daughters in their family to never find love. You will just adore these three main characters, who spend this journey celebrating love and family, and you will become fully invested in their stories. I just loved the wisdom of Aunt Poppy, the beautiful setting of Italy, and the family tales. Just wonderful!"

—Kathy Morrison, Newtown Bookshop, Newtown, PA



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DECEMBER '20

Big Girl, Small Town: A Novel

By Michelle Gallen

"You might fall in love with this rough, bawdy, funny, and heart-wrenching novel because of the skill with which Michelle Gallen gives you the cadences and nuances of English as spoken in small-town Northern Ireland. You might fall in love because Gallen is showing you a working-class setting seldom depicted on either side of the pond, an atmosphere of sweat, grease, and labor, of Friday night pubs and Saturday hangovers, of people bursting with shattered dreams and electric intelligence. But you'll most fall in love with Majella O'Neill, the narrator. She is unapologetically and completely herself, and unlike anyone I've met in fiction before. Through O'Neill, Gallen offers an outlook and experience that I'd happily share with other readers."

—Robert McDonald, The Book Stall, Winnetka, IL



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DECEMBER '20

Oak Flat: A Fight for Sacred Land in the American West

By Lauren Redniss

"*Oak Flat* is simultaneously an object of mesmerizing beauty and an urgent book of complete necessity. Lauren Redniss tells the tale of the struggle to preserve a site sacred to the Apache people from a copper mining project that would destroy it. Her vibrant illustrations and careful curation of competing voices convey the high stakes while honoring the dignity of the people on both sides, and the dignity of the natural world. This book is an astonishing achievement."

—Keith Mosman, Powell's Books, Portland, OR



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DECEMBER '20

Eartheater: A Novel

By Dolores Reyes, Julia Sanches (Transl.)

"This an example of a beautifully translated work with a gripping concept. The main character's compulsion to eat earth felt visceral, the writing enigmatically lyrical. I couldn't put it down, yet I had to force myself to absorb this book painfully slowly, so as to not let it pass me by."

—Tori-Lynn Bell, House of Books, Kent, CT



DECEMBER '20

How to Fail at Flirting: A Novel

By Denise Williams

"A sweet romance about a professor who decides to take a chance when she finds herself out at a bar by herself seated next to an attractive man in town on business. Naya never would have imagined that their one-night stand would turn into a week-long fling with the potential for even more. And because of her toxic past relationships, she is hesitant to trust Jake. I loved reading about a professor as a romance leading lady!"

—Kate Storhoff, Bookmarks, Winston-Salem, NC

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DECEMBER '20

The Thirty Names of Night: A Novel

By Zeyn Joukhadar

"An affecting, multigenerational coming-of-age story about a young Syrian American artist's discovery of self and the truth behind his mother's mysterious passing. Featuring alternating perspectives that weave the past into the present, this novel embodies the epistolary not just in form and address, but in the way it reads like a love letter to New York City, especially the immigrant, working-class, and LGBTQ underground of New York. A book with a heartbeat, despite all its ghosts."

—Serena Morales, Books Are Magic, Brooklyn, NY

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DECEMBER '20

A Certain Hunger: A Novel

By Chelsea G. Summers

"A surprising novel that will lure you in with its delicious writing and leave you hungry (in more ways than one). Food critic Dorothy Daniels wants good food and good sex, and she will go to whatever lengths she needs in order to get them. At once a critique of the food industry and a criminal's account, *A Certain Hunger* is a stunning feminist page-turner. With its devious protagonist and delectable prose, you will devour this novel."

—Marika McCoola, Porter Square Books, Cambridge, MA

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DECEMBER '20

Little Wishes: A Novel

By Michelle Adams

"I loved everything about this book, including the compact size and especially the cover. In this 50-year love story, the two main characters, Elizabeth Davenport and Tom Hale, are apart for almost all of that time period. But every year on the anniversary of their first kiss, Tom leaves a gift for Elizabeth on her doorstep. When his gift fails to arrive in the 50th year, Elizabeth decides that she must find Tom before it is too late."

—Connie Eaton, Three Sisters Books & Gifts, Shelbyville, IN

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DECEMBER '20

How to Catch a Queen: Runaway Royals

By Alyssa Cole

"In a time when Black kings and queens are a much-needed balm to a seeming overflow of anti-Black sentiment, I fell in love with Shanti and Sanyu. Bogged down by tradition, ritual, and grief, Sanyu is trapped in a well of unrealistic expectations. Shanti, a queen searching for her kingdom, is the self-assured heroine we all look for and want to be. This story of their partnership turned love affair is filled with forbidden heat and flames, as well as the promise of a better tomorrow. Complex characters for complex times. I loved it."

—Keiana Mayfield, East City Bookshop, Washington, DC



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DECEMBER '20

Shed No Tears: A Novel

By Caz Frear

"Caz Frear's third installment of Cat Kinsella mysteries doesn't disappoint! Kinsella is whip smart, takes no nonsense, and is a wry one-liner machine. In their newest case, Kinsella and her partner, Luigi Parnell, find a connection to a serial killer. Christopher Masters was arrested for the kidnapping and murder of four women six years ago. His final victim wasn't found until now, so Kinsella may finally have the evidence to close the case once and for all. But as they dive back into a cold case, they find some troubling issues. As they dig deeper, they head into a rabbit hole they may never be able to get out of. Wonderfully twisty and satisfyingly puzzling, the newest mystery by Frear is a must for all thriller fans."

—Scott Lange, The Bookman, Grand Haven, MI



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DECEMBER '20

The Chicken Sisters: A Novel

By KJ Dell'Antonia

"I am charmed by *The Chicken Sisters!* Family fights, fried chicken, a dog and her puppies, mental illness, a shaky marriage, a potential romance, and a reality show taping all combine for a great small-town story. Generations of feuding sisters with competing chicken shack restaurants hash it out for the cameras, their loved ones, and themselves. *The Chicken Sisters* is a delightful read."

—Susan Williams, M. Judson Booksellers & Storytellers, Greenville, SC



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DECEMBER '20

The Orchard: A Novel

By David Hopen

"Evocative of both Donna Tartt and Chaim Potok, *The Orchard* boldly dives into the depth of teen drama and Jewish philosophy and emerges with a heartfelt story of transformation. Ari is entering his senior year when his parents decide to move from their Orthodox Brooklyn community to a more modern enclave in suburban Miami. His surprising acceptance into an elite clique at his new school has him grappling with questions regarding pleasure and spirituality as he attempts to find his way with his new peers. Straying from the teachings of his youth, he is drawn to investigate his religion in increasingly surprising ways, with unforeseen consequences. An impressive debut!"

—Luisa Smith, Book Passage, Corte Madera, CA



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DECEMBER '20

Nights When Nothing Happened: A Novel

By Simon Han

"Most anyone who grows up in a suburb knows these neighborhoods are not always what they purport to be. Simon Han, in his dazzling debut, blows the curtains wide open on the actual lives a onetime model home might conceal. Deftly shifting time frames and points of view, he gives a piercing, often funny, and deeply moving account of a Chinese family's struggle to settle into the lives they think they should be living. It's a coming of age for all of them, each in their own way and time. Far from nothing happening, so much does."

—Rick Simonson, The Elliott Bay Book Company, Seattle, WA



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DECEMBER '20

Dancing in the Mosque: An Afghan Mother's Letter to Her Son

By Homeira Qaderi

"This was a very touching, unique read. It's incredible that this story is true, and reading it reminded me of how vastly different my life is from those of women raised in Afghanistan. I feel so privileged to have been given such a great education and to have been allowed and encouraged to educate myself. I am very appreciative of Homeira Qaderi for having the courage and motivation to persist in publishing her work so that we may be graced with it. Very inspiring."

—Allie Blake, BookPeople, Austin, TX



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DECEMBER '20

The Arctic Fury: A Novel

By Greer Macallister

"Greer Macallister has a proven track record for writing excellent historical fiction. She is at the top of her game in *The Arctic Fury*, in which a dozen women are recruited to journey to the frozen tundra in hopes of finding a lost expedition. Facing a brutal climate, clashing wills, misogyny, and death, these women rise to accept a challenge that no male explorer has been able to accomplish. Macallister has created strong, memorable characters facing unfathomable conditions and choices. Alternating between the arctic journey and a riveting courtroom drama, *The Arctic Fury* is a non-stop thrill."

—Pamela Klinger-Horn, Excelsior Bay Books, Excelsior, MN

DECEMBER '20

Barely Functional Adult: It'll All Make Sense Eventually

By Meichi Ng

"In *Barely Functional Adult*, Meichi Ng seamlessly combines cartoon illustrations with prose to create graphic essays that are hilariously relatable. From moving to a new city to realizing one is enjoying things they previously mocked as old, the character of Barely Functional Adult experiences the changes and terrors of growing up. Ng crafts stories that make the reader feel seen and understood, from imposter syndrome to the nervous stress of starting therapy to an older sister who just doesn't understand why one wouldn't pack for a major move until the day before. I laughed until I cried and then I laughed some more."

—Faith Parke-Dodge, Page 158 Books, Wake Forest, NC

STAFF PICK!

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