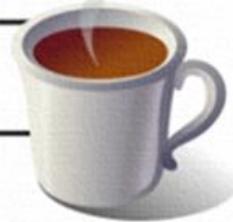


Lindsay Wincherauk

# LINDSAY WINCHERAUK

BOOK THOUGHTS

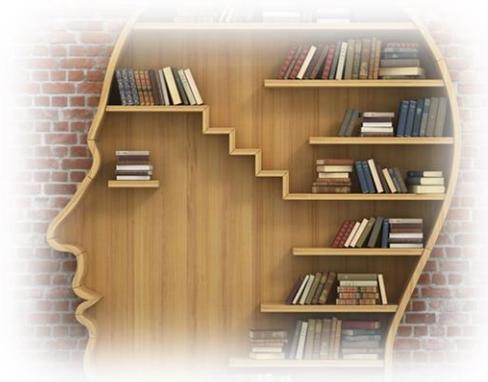
volume 2



Book Thoughts: Volume 2

# BOOK THOUGHTS

## BATCH 28



1. **BOULEVARD WREN - BLINDBOY BOATCLUB**
2. **STRANGE SALLY DIAMOND - LIZ NUGENT**
3. **NINETEEN CLAWS AND A BLACK BIRD - AUGUSTINA BAZETERRICA**
4. **CRYING WOLF - EDEN BOUDREAU**
5. **THE NEXT GIRL - PIP DRYSDALE**
6. **TOMORROW, AND TOMORROW, AND TOMORROW - GABRIELLE ZEVIN**
7. **BIG SHADOW - MARTA BALCEWICZ**
8. **PLACES LIKE THESE - LAUREN CARTER**
9. **CLOSER BY SEA - PETER CHAFE**
10. **BEAUTIFUL BOY - DAVID SHEFF**

1

**BLUE = MEMOIR OR BIOGRAPHICAL**

**BLACK = FICTION**

**DARK RED = EDUCATIONAL**

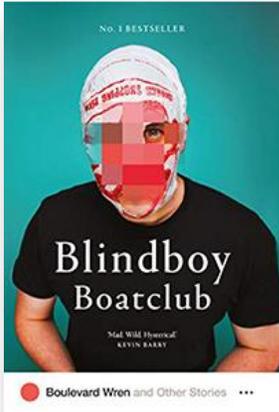
**PURPLE = ESSAY OR STORIES**

**ORANGE = POETRY**

Lindsay Wincherauk

## BOULEVARD WREN + OTHER STORIES

### BLINDBOY BOATCLUB



*A Letter to the Irish Times is the funniest story I've ever read.*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

Crap, why is there a Bee on my arm?

I'm trapped in a fever dream.

I'm stung.

A combine is harvesting my dreams, monetizing them – nothing is to be left untapped. Until...?

I'm on all fours, naked, and being chased by an amped-up bull – I want to be a bull. I think I might be a cow.

I sit in a food court, bite my taco, read a few pages, and laugh out loud.

There's a short form of that. No. I won't.

I take another bite. What am I reading? I cry. Why am I crying when I'm laughing? This is the funniest story I've ever read (A Letter to the Irish Times). Am I okay? Quit looking at me. I suggest you try to laugh occasionally. This book is craic.

I scratch where the Bee stung me. Oh no, the Bee was a Quantum Bee; my body was sucked into the sting hole (a black hole). Rhododendron. So long, purple. I'm inside out. My vital organs are on the outside. Gross. My skin is deep. They say beauty is skin deep. I must be beautiful.

I laugh again, even louder. LOLEL.

I need to reset myself. Pass me a baggy. The one marked Lindsay 1981. Straw me, snort.

That's better. I'm restored.

What am I even talking about?

Boulevard Wren + Other Stories have etched its way into my all-time favourites. It might not be your cup of tea – but if you open your mind – take a sip; you will fall out of your chair cringing with laughter (an abdominal exercise).

Steer clear, of Bees and horny amped up bulls.

Where are we heading? Here?

Inside out is enlightening. And painful. And...

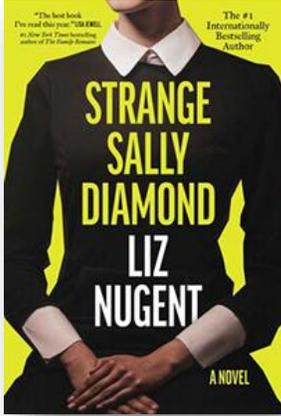
WRITTEN: 12 March 2023

2

Lindsay Wincherauk

## STRANGE SALLY DIAMOND

LIZ NUGENT



*Evocative. At times hilarious. Messing with our perceptions.*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

I crack the cover. What am I diving into?

I break into laughter. I'm laughing at someone's oddity.

Why? Is it okay?

I'm hooked on page 1.

Liz Nugent drops another page, adding layer upon layer.

My heart races.

I shouldn't be laughing.

I'm laughing at the pain.

I cover my mouth.

The story flows between then and now, with the past being written as the present is being lived.

My heart spikes. Nugent adds another layer. The story takes on a feverish bent. I want more. Another page. I laugh. I cringe. This is one bleeping mess. What are humans capable of?

A door slams shut, a shackle is attached, lives are eviscerated; monsters lurk in a delusional pool.

The pace quickens; the past and present are about to collide.

The beat is blasting us to the surface. How can anybody be, okay?

Strange Sally Diamond gives us a glimpse into the grips of evil, deftly allowing us to laugh at distress masked in the fantasy of care through control. Evil is boundless.

Strange Sally Diamond is an all-time favourite.

If, after getting to know Sally, you don't look at everybody sharing air in this world through a softer filter—because we can never know what pain is hiding behind their eyes—you might be a monster yourself.

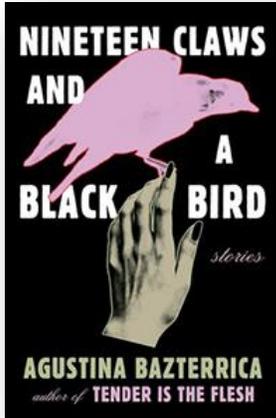
Nugent adds another layer. She lowers the beat allowing us to momentarily catch our breath before Nugent teases us with the possibility of adding another layer. I cringe.

WRITTEN: 8 April 2023

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## NINETEEN CLAWS AND A BLACK BIRD

AUGUSTINA BAZTERRICA



*Sometimes we need to escape into the darkness to remain in the light.*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

Come with me. In here, down this dark tunnel.

I'm scared. No, I'm not. I'm worried about myself?

Why?

I love Nineteen Claws and a Black Bird.

Am I going to be, okay?

My stomach churns.

At first, I think 'Roberto' is a young boy. And then, I read the description, 'Roberto' is female; where is my

comprehension – what tricks have my mind played on me?

Another rumble. Every story is fresh. Served on an unsettling skewer.

What's life about?

Darkness?

Today the answer would be YES, a loud YES – that's the reason for ALLCAPS.

Are these thoughts about Nineteen Claws and a Black Bird?

Probably not; it's hard to tell; I'm now a circle with arms; I need to eat, but my damn arms won't allow me to roll over and get to the food. Darn. Splat. A jumper.

Why am I laughing?

Because.

That will have to do – this is an all-time fave.

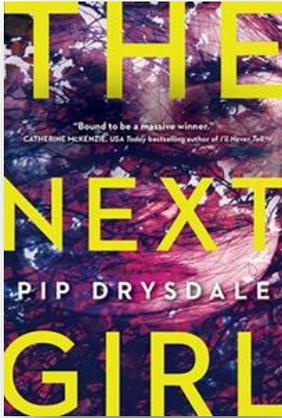
Sometimes we need to escape into the darkness to remain in the light.

WRITTEN: 1 April 2023

Lindsay Wincherauk

## THE NEXT GIRL

PIP DRYSDALE



*Frantic! Exhilarating! Next chapter. Next chapter. Next chapter.*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

Frantic!

What did I do? How did I get here?

I must make things right.

I know. I'll fix things. I have a plan.

I'll do this, and this, and this. There, that should fix things. Vengeance will be grand. Stop. Destroy. I can't leave a trail. So come with me into the next chapter. We'll be safe in there.

Oh my god. Oh my god. Oh my god.

I'm being followed. It's not safe in here. If I'm caught, I'm finished. I will pay for something I haven't done. Who is that? How was I found?

I need allies.

You. You. You.

More vengeance. I've got you. I must destroy the evidence. Vengeance is a fickle beast. I'm only going to peek. One last time. Someone's here. The hairs on my arm are standing on end. I'm doomed. I need an escape.

Next chapter. Next chapter. Next chapter.

More. Run. Take a deep breath. I'm absolved. Oh, no, someone is here. I'm trapped. I'm finished. Fight of flight. Flight.

What are you doing here?

I'm doomed.

Next chapter. Next chapter. Next chapter.

One more hit, a peek; am I living in denial?

Next chapter.

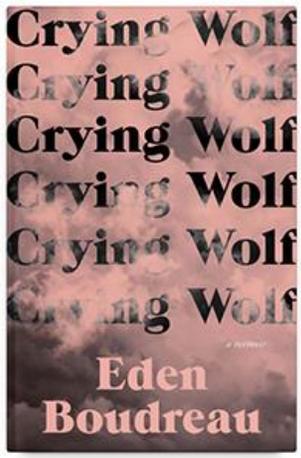
Exhilarating!

WRITTEN: 29 March 2023

Lindsay Wincherauk

## CRYING WOLF

EDEN BOUDREAU



*Within the first ten pages, my perceptions began changing.*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

Eden Boudreau is anything but selfish.

Boudreau was raped, filling her soul with self-doubt as she questioned everything in her life.

Is Boudreau courageous? Absolutely.

Something people who dive into their own vulnerability, often because of the vitriol thrown their way, downplay because, in Boudreau's case, being in a non-monogamous, polyamorous relationship opened her up to venomous barbs from those amongst us who believe they have a right to have opinions about the lives of others which have no impact on their own.

How can any of us know what's right for someone else?

Each of us needs to expose ourselves to reading different experiences.

I crack, *Crying Wolf* open. Greeting me is non-monogamous and polyamorous. I'm ready to judge.

Within the first ten pages, my perceptions began changing. I want to be a better person. Boudreau shares her pain. It's devastating and heart-wrenching. I feel her pain; her suffering. What happened to her is wrong. FULL STOP. For all of those who think otherwise: Get over yourself.

Our only responsibility is to offer support and understanding when atrocities inflict those walking amongst us. FULL STOP.

Why?

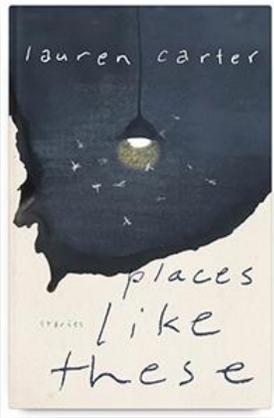
If you have ever suffered a violation, the constant criticism of others can make you withdraw within yourself, causing you to doubt everything and blame yourself, eating away at your core. You, the one judging, are only making the pain worse, even though it has nothing to do with you.

Thank you, Boudreau, for sharing your pain. I have an inkling you've helped countless hurting souls by offering a salve of vulnerability and bravery.

WRITTEN: 5 March 2023

## PLACES LIKE THESE

LAUREN CARTER



*Extraordinary stories decorate the pages.*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

Places like These, reads like a cipher; hidden inside are codes unlocking everything in life that makes us human.

Being Canadian allowed me to slide through the pages visiting familiar landscapes.

I dig deeper into my mind.

Where am I now?

What's happening?

An electric current flows through me—sparking something inside of me.

Is humanity flailing?

Don't judge the homeless. We are all only one trauma away from joining them.

Are we all cloaked with uncertainty?

What is our journey about?

Where do we find meaning, and in what?

The prose is lyrical and unbounded, painting life with broad strokes of a once colourful but now fading brush.

Does anything really matter?

Years pass by with relationships changing—leaving longing in their wake.

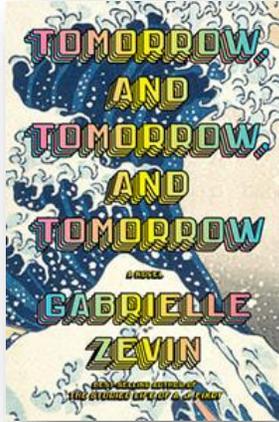
I'm sad. Not a debilitating sadness, but a warm, somehow comfortable one, where understanding is lying in wait.

The extraordinary stories decorating the pages of Places Like These, will challenge life perceptions and deliver readers to a place of wanting to be more, love more, think more, embrace more, and judge less.

WRITTEN: 4 March 2023

# TOMORROW, AND TOMORROW, AND TOMORROW

GABRIELLE ZEVIN



*Someone dies. Hit replay. New game. Wouldn't that be grand?*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

I never knew.

I only knew the scope of video games once I read Tomorrow, Tomorrow, and Tomorrow.

I still don't know. I'm now a neophyte.

I used to love playing Galaga as a kid.

What did you play?

By kid, I mean a procrastinating university student.

I was a simple child, probably not; the games were simple and in tune with the times.

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We all, if not have already, at one point in time, will experience a catastrophic loss.

We all, if not have already, at one point in time, will let petty grievances destroy years of the comfort and friendships.

Are most people who play video games introverted?

Is the question offensive?

Someone dies. Hit replay. New game. Wouldn't that be grand?

But that is not life; catastrophic loss and petty grievance are hiding everywhere. NPCs cannot save us from life.

I learned that video games, much like this fabulous manuscript, create a world we can escape inside for a few moments of calm, and when the inevitable arrives, we can start all over again, damaged but still alive.

Video games have come a long way since I played Galaga — they are rich experiences scripted by storytellers and are no different from what we read.

WRITTEN: 26 March 2023

Lindsay Wincherauk

## **BIG SHADOW** BIG SHADOW

**MARTA BALCEWICZ**



*A dark cloud rolls in, offering an escape into a different realm.*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

I'm young, vulnerable, and impressionable.

Actually, I'm 62.5, vulnerable, and impressionable.

Tell me what I want to hear. I'm pliable.

You love my writing – I love you.

A dark cloud rolls in, offering an escape into a different realm.

A young girl wants to escape and find her place in the world. Creativity will provide the route. She's outgrowing where she is, her friends, and the insanity of an overprotective mother trying to hold on to the only thing she thinks she can control.

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She finds an escape. An older man, a predator? Yes? No?

The man appears daft but finds the precise prose offering a way into the adult world. His comments seem innocent, but they are anything but.

It's easy to control dreamers who are constantly seeking validation.

The young girl learns hard lessons, and then retreats into the looming darkness of the clouds?

Does she survive? Are other realms ephemeral?

Does her mother regain her fleeting control?

Support comes for the girl from an unlikely place.

I'm 62.5, vulnerable, and impressionable. Tell me what I want to hear. I'm pliable.

If that's who I and many of us are, how does a young girl stand a chance when the subtle comments of predators are so ingrained in the subconscious of those preying on the pliable minds of the young?

When will the shadow dissipate?

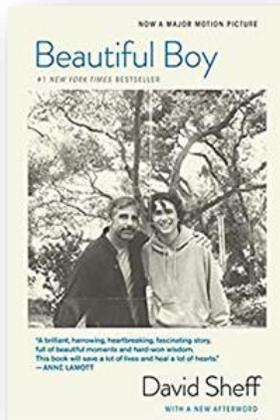
WRITTEN: 4 April 2023

## BEAUTIFUL BOY REVENGE OF BOY

DAVID SHEFF

*A heart-wrenching true story about the insidious battle many of us have with addiction.*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*



Beautiful Boy |David Sheff| is a heart-wrenching true story about the insidious battle many of us have with addiction. I thought it would destroy me. It didn't. It opened my heart to more compassion and empathy. You may be a monster if you read this important story and don't look at humanity through a kinder lens.

It is indescribable when we find the strength to share our darkest and lowest lows. We must applaud Sheff for finding the strength.

WRITTEN: 20 April 2023

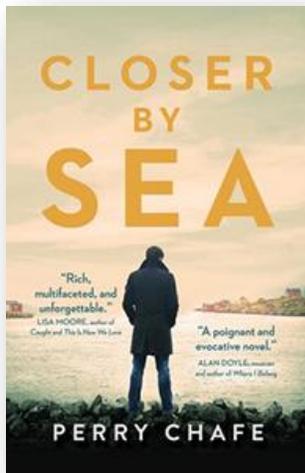
10

## CLOSER BY SEA

PERRY CHAFE

*A ragtag gaggle of misfits tries to navigate their way through life.*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*



Chafe (may have) used *The Goonies* and *Stand By Me* as a reference to create a story of a ragtag gaggle of misfits trying to navigate their ways through life and the mystery of a missing girl, with the main character struggling to accept the loss of his father, who was swallowed by the sea, all set in the idyllic setting of a dying fishing town, on an island, just off the coast of Newfoundland, with the unpredictable ocean lying between the two.

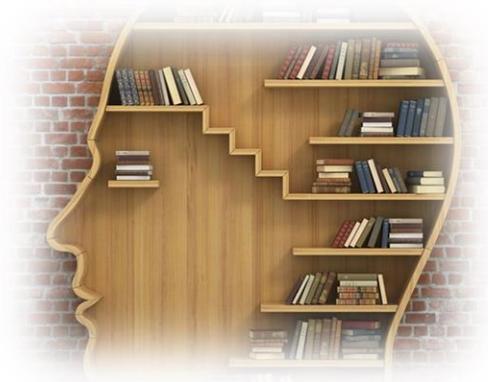
Amp up the mystery with the addition of a curmudgeon newcomer, and the pages almost start turning themselves as ocean swells grip them, rolling over each other until the last page.

Unlike the previous classics (mentioned), Sheff teaches us the perils we all face today. Overfishing is leaving decades of families losing their livelihoods as the world desperately tries to figure out how the bleep are any of us going to survive when capitalism fights with our need for survival. And how can we ask one another to change the course of our lives when we are losing our way of putting food on the table?

WRITTEN: 19 April 2023

# BOOK THOUGHTS

## BATCH 27



11. THE WINNERS - FREDRICK BACKMAN (AT)
12. THE OUTSIDER - ALBERT CAMUS (AT)
13. GONE GIRL - GILLIAN FLYNN (AT)
14. INDELICACY - AMINA CAIN
15. HEATING THE OUTDOORS - MARIE-ANDRÉÉ GILL
16. THE DEVIL OF MISS PRYM - PAULO COELHO
17. DISLOCATIONS - KAREN ENNS
18. SEDATING ELAINE - DAWN WINTER
19. THE WHITENESS OF WEALTH - DOROTHY A. BROWNE
20. A CASTLE IN BROOKLYN - SHIRLEY RUSSAK WACHTEL

12

**BLUE = MEMOIR OR BIOGRAPHICAL**

**BLACK = FICTION**

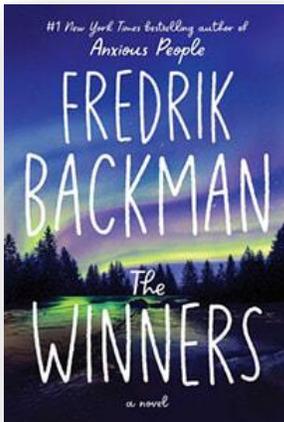
**DARK RED = EDUCATIONAL**

**PURPLE = ESSAY OR STORIES**

**ORANGE = POETRY**

## THE WINNERS

FREDRICK BACKMAN



*Backman is one of my favourite authors.*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

Backman is one of my favourite authors; I started with Ove – a book I never wanted to end.

In the trilogy starting with Beartown and ending with The Winners, Backman doesn't disappoint as he runs through the gamut of social issues plaguing humanity today – with drippings of a sardonic brush.

Backman writes from a place of consciousness, delivering readers easily digestible morsels of insight which are delightfully simple and peel the skin from the onion, revealing a capacity to care about the truth. On every page, Backman deftly throws the lights on for us, allowing the

story to flow smoothly without the burden of trying to disseminate what's going on.

In *The Winners*, readers will recognize the characters in the literal pictures Backman paints for us, stripping away the isolation of trying to cobble his words together piece by piece.

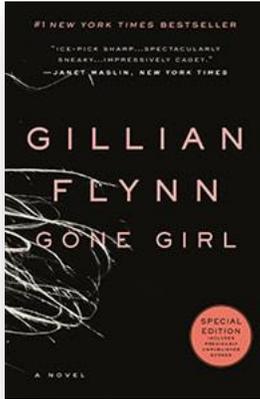
I think what I like most about Backman is his storytelling is accessible to all: When Backman tells a story, he simply tells a story in its simplest and purest form.

Backman has an incredible capacity to warm our souls and leave us feeling less alone.

WRITTEN: 6 March 2023

## GONE GIRL

GILLIAN FLYNN



*Two sociopathic-psycho-narcissistic-megalomaniacs fall in love.*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

Two sociopathic-psycho-narcissistic-megalomaniacs fall in love.

How did the book make me feel/think?

Two sociopathic-psycho-narcissistic-megalomaniacs fall in love.

How did the book make me feel/think?

We're only three months into 2023; it has already been a stellar reading year. I've read 16 books, with 5 of them

making my all-time list; *Gone Girl* (2012) has etched its way onto my list.

I know, I'm late, to the party.

What's not to love?

Two sociopathic-psycho-narcissistic-megalomaniacs fall in love—they are beautiful, perfect, perfect for each other, feeding off each other's entitlement.

I want to hate them, but I don't.

The pages fly by, with this brilliant psychological thriller twisting and turning on every one of them.

I couldn't put this book down. I was out of breath, mouth agape. Wow!

And then, Gillian Flynn does something this reader loves; she makes us part of the story by reminding us; this is a captivating work of fiction, a product of Flynn's vivid imagination. And reminding us to pause to catch our breath.

How does Flynn do this?

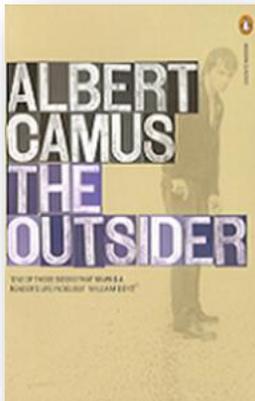
"They say it's important for Nick and me (the correct grammar) to have some time alone and heal."

Enough said.

WRITTEN: 2 April 2023

## THE OUTSIDER

ALBERT CAMUS



*Who are we to judge others?*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

I'm scared. We live in a world where others judge our emotions constantly.

The Outsider was written over 80 years ago.

A mother dies. A man doesn't grieve the way others think is normal. He's ostracized, deemed an outcast, untrustworthy, and sick.

The Outsider was written over 80 years ago. It resonated loudly with me. It is a classic and an all-time favourite for this reader.

15

Who are we to judge others?

The main character will not lie, shy away from opinions, and is trapped in a cycle of deception by befriending someone who sees that he is pliable, a pawn to be used—leading to murder.

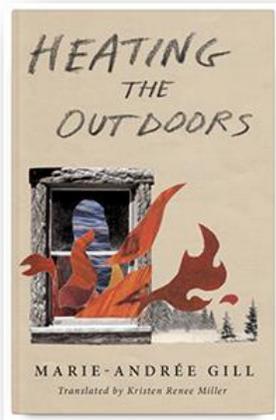
The main character's fatal flaw is being different and walking alone. His downfall is the marginality of those around him and everyone on this spinning rock trying to survive this life while shackled in misguided judgment.

If we do not conform to the masses, we risk living alone or perishing in a violent few of what normal is.

WRITTEN: 23 April 2023

## HEATING THE OUTDOORS

MARIE-ANDRÉE GILL



*We must deal with the accumulation of emptiness.*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

It takes deep thoughts to write thoughts on poetry. It's like trying to crawl inside the mind of the poet.

I crawled inside. I'm moved. Two worlds are colliding: The past and the now. The past needs to be captured before it's gone.

Heating the Outdoors does precisely that.

What do we give up in exchange for progress?

Gill's verses are lyrical, words floating breathtakingly off the pages.

We must escape from the asylum.

We must deal with the accumulation of emptiness.

I can't help but wonder about how much culture and beauty we've lost, trapped inside the rot of assimilation as two divergent worlds collide.

Heating the outdoors captures the beauty of what is drifting into the ether while trying to make sense of what is being left behind as progress.

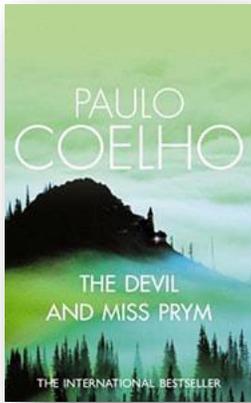
Once the assimilation is complete, what's the point?

Who gets to decide what's right and what's wrong?

WRITTEN: 28 February 2023

## THE DEVIL & MISS PRYM

PAULO COELHO



*The Devil & Miss Prym will have you questioning your morals and...*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

Would you be capable of making a deal with the devil to save your town?

Could you murder one innocent person to provide a dying town life and riches?

Who would you choose to murder?

Could you play God?

The Devil & Miss Prym will have you questioning morals, digging deep into your soul in search of defining how evil you are capable of becoming (but at what cost?), as you cheer for the main character to do the right thing?

Who gets to define what the right thing is?

I don't want to walk with the devil; every day, I want to find a way to bring light and understanding to the world, instead of being swallowed by the diseases, ego, and greed.

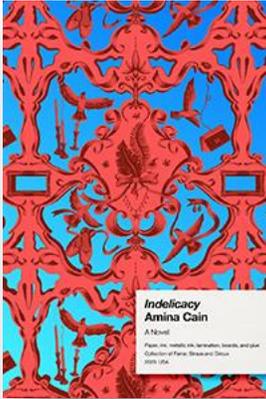
That's how this book made me feel.

I love this book.

WRITTEN: 23 April 2023

## INDELICACY

AMINA CAIN



*You can win when you're poor. You're shunned when you rise. You can't win.*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

A cleaning woman at a museum drinks in the art. She wants more – she wants to write about what she sees by exploring her emotions. She's trapped in her life cards, shunned by those she works with, and looked down on by the elite.

She becomes an object of lust, escaping into the arms of a rich man, the proverbial white knight (of course) – providing her with everything she believed she wanted. But it's not. She's accepted(?) into... a dangerous world

where she is no better than the wealth that has provided her with an escape, leaving behind who she is. She craves warmth and love (another woman?) – instead, she's treated like a chattel. How can she climb when she becomes the oppressor – understanding one of her staff looks at her like a fraud, a grifter?

You can't win when you're poor.

You're shunned when you rise.

You can't win.

I read some of the other comments on this book; I rarely do that; what I can say after reading them, I'm not intelligent enough to understand what the reviewers are saying. I feel like I became like Victoria (the protagonist) – I'm more at home being a cleaner than a pompous aristocrat or reviewer who's only writing to flex their massive vocabularies to niche audiences. I don't think the reviews do *Indelicacy* justice.

*Indelicacy* is a powerful novella, flashing between class, art, sexuality, control, misogyny, and something no man (I'm a man) could understand – what it is like to be a woman living in marginality, vulnerable to want.

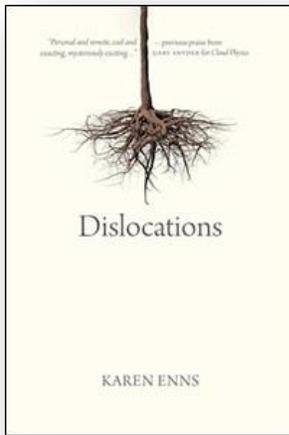
I don't know if anything I've written makes a snippet of sense.

What I can say is *Indelicacy* is an enjoyable read that may expand your view of humanity!

WRITTEN: 5 April 2023

## DISLOCATIONS

KAREN ENNS



*WE MUST DRINK IN YOUR GRANDEUR*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

Eight billion of us,  
only one of you,  
you nourish us,  
provide us with wonder,  
we are not the only living beings,  
but we have the propensity to subtract, destroy, want,  
we need to drink in your grandeur, respectfully,

Are we capable? – I don't know,  
are we racing toward the... line?

The most destructive word is finish.

STOP

We must drink in your grandeur, give you a break, a deer walks by, let it be.

Let's hope tomorrow the sun rises once more.

That's how I'm feeling.

WRITTEN: 30 March 2023

## SEDATING ELAINE

DAWN WINTERS



*Don't buy drugs from drug dealers.*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

Don't buy drugs from drug dealers.

Drug dealers are not your friends.

Am I being Mister obvious?

No.

This is sage advice.

Then where should I get my drugs from?

Nancy Regan?

I suggest staying away from drugs.

20

What about my doctor?

Your doctor will be okay if your doctor is trustable. Wow. Trustable is a word.

Sorry about the break.

Sedating Elaine is a marvellous read about what likeable people sometimes do when their lives are spiralling. Frances is in trouble. Frances lives with the bottle and pills; that is how it is. Frances is emotionally incapable of getting over lost love.

A drug dealer wants his money, the friendship shatters, and Elaine (new love) is an easy solution. A band aid.

If the solution is too good to be true, run, don't use it – it will come crashing down in a fury. Does it? Read for yourself and find out.

And whatever you do, if you still think drug dealers are friends, ask them for ingredient lists.

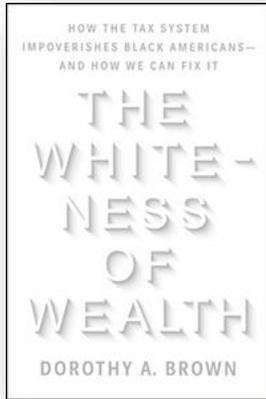
Better yet, stay away.

WRITTEN: 26 March 2023

Lindsay Wincherauk

## THE WHITENESS OF WEALTH

DORTHY A. BROWN



*We will only find solutions when every white person admits they are part of the problem.*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

I know it's hard to admit you've had an unfair advantage, but why don't you try? It won't hurt. Nobody is asking you to do anything except be less of a jerk.

White folk don't want to admit their advantage, often hiding it—a 400-year head start, and wealth built off the sweat of others (slavery), and yet; many of us are deluded, and think we've worked hard for everything we have.

They have stacked the cards in our favour. The system allowed white folk to build, and then, pass on, generational wealth. Black folk had massive hurdles stacked in front of them. Daunting hurdles. Impossible hurdles.

White = Marriage Benefit (One partner works, while the other manages the household, sparing the additional cost of raising kids). And then, the money they saved, could be invested, and grow and grow and grow.

Black often =d both partners working to earn the same as a White family, but no tax break and an added expense to have someone else raise your kids. No wealth building.

The two families earn the same, but only one family gets a break.

It doesn't stop there; the system has benefited white folk and burdened black (and everyone else) in homeownership, the labour market, education, school-to-prison pipelines, healthcare, and environmental racism.

Yet many of us are still stuck on "Everything I have earned through hard work."

Sure, maybe, but with thousands upon thousands of dollars head start, that I understand, why would you ever want to give that up or admit the truth?

And then the angriest white folk appropriated the word 'woke' to change its meaning from be careful out there, to damn it, I think they've figured our scam out so we must stop them.

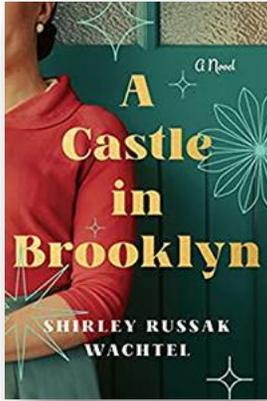
The Whiteness of Wealth is a fascinating read. If you flip the pages with an open mind, a few of us, might finally, start looking at the world through a fairer lens.

FYI: I'm white. I think. I was born in a place unwanted children were born. But at least I can understand if I weren't white, I'd probably not be here now.

WRITTEN: 19 February 2023

## A CASTLE IN BROOKLYN

SHIRLEY RUSSAK WACHTEL



*The first chapter was rivetting.*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

The first chapter was riveting. And then...

They built a house. A family grows. A child dies. Friendships are destroyed.

Infidelity. Racism. Other stuff.

Who are these characters? Why are they here?

Someone from Japan enters the story. People keep dying. Stories lay unresolved. The characters become pedantic.

The house's new tenants rearrange the furniture. A jogger

runs by with water bottles, hugging their thigh (or something like that). A nosey neighbour.

Another page. Introspection. Two vehicles collide.

And then...

It's been 10 years since 9/11 - was mentioned; so is Aids.

Why is 9/11 mentioned?

**BACK TO THE VEHICLES COLLIDING**

The last thing he saw was MERCURY.

If it was the last thing, how do we find out?

Someone smokes weed, or does heroin, or cocaine, or... I'm being mean.

I'm confused. No, I'm not.

I read the acknowledgments.

I rarely read the acknowledgments.

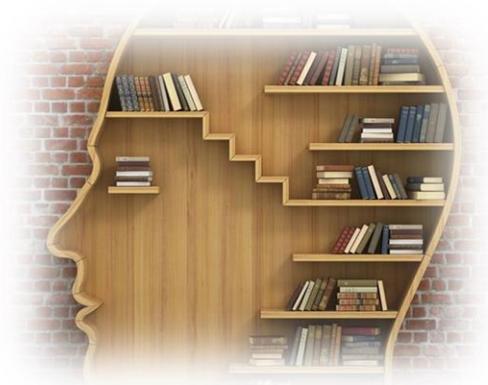
Writing is hard.

The book's layout is good.

WRITTEN: 26 February 2023

# BOOK THOUGHTS

**BATCH 26**  
BATCH 26



23

1. OLIVE AGAIN - ELIZABETH STROUT
2. THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY - OSCAR WILDE

**BLUE = MEMOIR OR BIOGRAPHICAL**

**BLACK = FICTION**

**DARK RED = EDUCATIONAL**

**PURPLE = ESSAY OR STORIES**

**ORANGE = POETRY**

## OLIVE AGAIN

ELIZABETH STROUT



*Strout is a phantasmagorical writer...*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

I picked up Olive Again because Lucy By The Sea by Elizabeth Strout was my favourite read of 2022.

I was unaware this was the continuing story of Olive Kitteridge. It didn't matter. I don't think it would matter if it was the seventh book in the series. It stands alone.

Strout is a phantasmagorical writer, with her creation Olive being a delightfully quirky and sometimes caustic outsider, like many or most of us, who holds no punches but somehow carries a little of each of us in her soul.

We can all be caustic, but few can reveal unbounded compassion and empathy in their seemingly unapproachable demeanour.

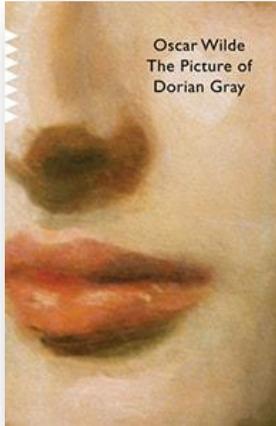
What I find Strout does deftly, like a few authors, is create characters who are polar opposites – but still, somehow, they understand each other, bringing us together in this world where forces are continually trying to tear us apart.

We need more Olive's in this world. Olive understands that a person's life belongs to them and only them and that we cannot blame someone for how they have been conditioned by the 24/7 barrage of noise we face daily.

WRITTEN: 3 March 2023

# THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY

OSCAR WILDE



*What price is too high for immortality?*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

I'm now in my sixties.

I'm now at the stage of life where more people are moving on to whatever is next instead of attending weddings.

I'm scared. Mortality occasionally bangs at my door. A stroke. Other crap, and then other crap.

But even so, I want more life.

I'm confident I have many moons left.

I've decided I want to live till 135.

I don't think I could handle more than that because the pain of loss would eventually become too overwhelming.

At my current age, trying to understand the language those younger than me speak is impossible.

I want to stay relevant. But at what cost?

For me, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, dissects our soul; it's a psychological thriller posing the question: What price is too high for immortality?

Life plays out how life is meant to play out in all its glorious tragedy.

When I reach 135, I wonder who I'll be able to relate to?

What will replace the cell phone – most of us have attached to our right hand?

What language are twenty-year-olds speaking now?

As fascinating as the answers may be, I just want to go for a walk.

I think I may have spent too much time in the sun when I was younger.

WRITTEN: 23 February 2022

# BOOK THOUGHTS

## BATCH 25



26

3. **HOLDEN AFTER + BEFORE - TARA MCGUIRE**
4. **TALES FROM THE CAFÉ - TOSHIKAZU KAWAGUCHI**
5. **ALL THE LIGHT WE CANNOT SEE - ANTHONY DOERR**
6. **ELEANOR OLIPHANT - GAIL HONEYMOON**
7. **THE FIRE NEXT TIME - JAMES BALDWIN**
8. **HEY, GOOD LUCK OUT THERE - GEORGIA TOEWS**
9. **THE NEW ME - HALLE BUTLER**
10. **PARTICIPATION - ANNA MOSCHOVAKIS**
11. **NOT THE APOCALYPSE I WAS HOPING FOR - LESLIE GREENTREE**
12. **CALL ME BY YOUR NAME - ANDRE ACIMAN**

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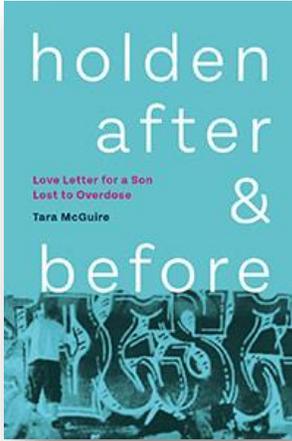
**PURPLE = ESSAY OR STORIES**

**ORANGE = POETRY**

Lindsay Wincherauk

## HOLDEN AFTER & BEFORE

TARA MCGUIRE



*You can never be sure of the pain hiding behind someone's eyes.*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

**holden: after & before**, is an astonishingly beautiful read in the face of immeasurable suffering. The unfathomable loss of a child.

This book is beyond words. Everyone must read it to become kinder. In the first few chapters, I read what might be the most beautiful paragraph I've ever read. The paragraph ends in unbearable silence.

McGuire's phraseology overflows with unwavering love. While McGuire desperately cobbles her life together, her prose sings, bringing everything gloriously to life; the morning sun, a crow... tomorrow.

I read another page; I'm shaking, crying.

Roadmaps to unconditional; are vacant and nonexistent.

Everyone on this spinning rock needs to read this — McGuire's honesty in pain makes the world a better place.

Pain drips from a stranger's glossy eyes as I stroll down the street. I resist judgment. I don't know where he's been or where he's going.

I don't know how to help.

As much as Holden's story is devastatingly heart-wrenching, if Tara hadn't found the unflinching courage to share, Holden's life would have become nothing more than another tragic story.

Holden is infinitely more. I'm glad I got to know him through Tara's never-ending love.

In **holden after & before**, Holden comes to two doors; he makes his choice — maybe the choice he was destined to make. We all think we can control what we don't understand. We suffer the unrelenting pain of what if...?

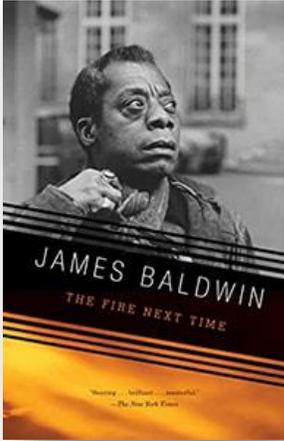
I feel for those cradled in Holden's loss. Holden's pain is gone. Not before he left us with the gift of a beautiful spirit. Letting us know life is complicated. Love never dies. Holden's unwavering energy, coupled with Tara's spectacular writing, helps Holden live on — teaching valuable lessons along the way.

I'm a different person now. I see the world through a softer filter.

WRITTEN: 13 October 2022

## THE FIRE NEXT TIME

JAMES BALDWIN



*I am a white man. Whatever that is?*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

I am a white man. Whatever that is? I never chose my life. At the very least, I'm self-aware enough to understand the previous words.

If there is a God, God doesn't have a plan of superiority for me. I'd have to be delusional to believe a deity floating in the sky created division and hatred and our inability to see each other for what we are: human, flawed, and collectively better.

But no – hate stems from misinterpretations of spirituality. Those who believe they are 'chosen' are willfully ignorant

in assuming they somehow deserve more, a better life.

Baldwin is a gay black man who wrote this plea, undressing the human spirit's flaws. In the 60s. What has changed?

It saddens me that in today's version of the world, not much has changed. Talking heads rail against identity politics, a term they invented to control others and then constantly do everything in their power to strip freedoms from those they disgustingly deem as less – when to really observe less – all they need to do is look in the bleeping mirror.

I'm a white man; when I listen to my kind (I do not have a kind), I often am saddened. I don't enjoy the conversations often placed in front of me. When I speak up. I'm often shunned and told I take things too seriously. I'm told people are only joking. They're not. We need to be better.

Individually, I try to do my part daily.

Humanity, collectively, I'm scared.

Isn't race nothing more than a disease created by whiteness to define itself?

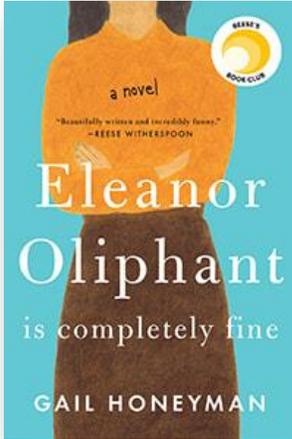
I'll wait for your reply. Right here.

WRITTEN: 23 January 2023

Lindsay Wincherauk

## ELEANOR OLIPHANT (IS COMPLETELY FINE)

GAIL HONEYMAN



*Eleanor Oliphant is not completely fine, but she's okay...*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

I'm odd.

I don't think so.

I fit in everywhere, but in reality, nowhere. Walking alone suits me. It scares me. It defines me.

I'm a man named Lindsay. Who grew up during the era of the Bionic Woman. Challenges appeared from nowhere.

Wit or fists?

I found wit. I think.

Who says that?

I just did.

Eleanor is a kind soul. She's a misfit. A damaged upbringing. A theme of these times. Of all times. Her mother wasn't okay, fit, or capable — she was damaged. Eleanor carried the weight of that burden. Like many of us, Eleanor's life is laden with insecurities instilled by her upbringing. To survive, she cast herself as an outsider, perfecting the role in everything she did: eating, drinking, dreaming, or fantasizing about a life without crippling loneliness. Eleanor's life is empty.

I connected with her. I spend so much time alone I can go for entire days without hearing my voice. When that happens, we must learn to hold our own hands.

But, regardless of who we are, we can all be swallowed in the silence of alone, of not being understood, of dreaming for more, but not being equipped with the tools to bring our dreams to fruition.

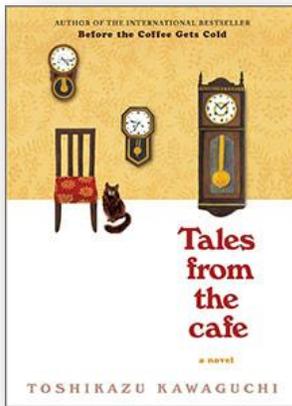
Eleanor Oliphant is not completely fine, but she's okay, delightful... and as readers strip away the pages, maybe they will find a dash of kindness in their hearts as they replace judgment with trying to understand. Few of us walking and travelling down life's roads on this glorious planet are really who we appear to be(?) — because our backstories remain untold and often are left uncovered — simmering in a broth of crippling fear stewing in loneliness.

I hope Eleanor(s) of the world understands the riches they all give us. I'm better for having spent a day or two inside her world. I guarantee you will as well.

WRITTEN: 23 January 2023

## TALES FROM THE CAFE

TOSHICAZU KAWAGUCHI



*When we find the strength to reflect...*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

I needed this. We live in a topsy-turvy world. Depression and suffering are lurking on every corner. We often feel alone and as if we need to eat our emotions. We must remain strong, unflappable, and superhuman.

Are we doing life correctly?

Nobody knows.

I question my every step, breath, and decision.

Teardrops paint my shirt like bloodstains.

I hurt, I want the past to be just that, the past; it haunts me.

What if there was a place you could go to wash away your regrets and allow you to move forward with a fresh view and a bounce to your step?

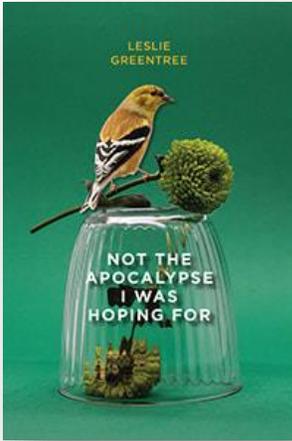
**Tales from the café** by Toshikazu Kawaguchi (and the other books in this series) provide that escape. Only, it's not an escape; it is a salve for the soul. Whether it is unrequited love or a decision you made that alters the course of life, Kawaguchi, with the utmost tenderness, delivers tears of joy as he helps us understand life is best lived and the things that may haunt you the most are manageable.

When we find the strength to reflect, we might find warmth and understanding instead of the heavy burden of what if...

WRITTEN: 24 January 2023

## NOT THE APOCALYPSE I WAS HOPING FOR

LESLIE GREENTREE



*Ripping the band aid off the times we live in...*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

Bold?

Sure.

Disturbing?

Definitely.

Upsetting?

Yes.

Uproarious?

OMFG.

Life. Death. Politics. Fear.

What's next?

A funeral as art?

That was the first story.

Haven't we all loved a pet more than the people we must love?

Don't answer.

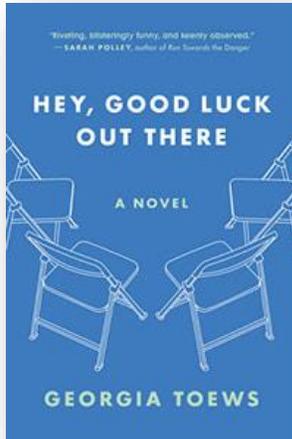
Not The Apocalypse I Was Looking For by Leslie Greentree is a thirty-letter title fearlessly ripping the band-aid off the times we live in as humanity collectively tries to figure out what the heck is going on – maybe we need to slow down a little and breathe.

You will thank Greentree for her active mind after you devour the last word of this darkly poignant, somehow, hilarious gem.

WRITTEN: 24 January 2023

## HEY, GOOD LUCK OUT THERE

### GEORGIA TOEWS



An inmate (person in rehab) is forced to fight demons. How do you survive?

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

What is wrong with rehab?

If you're wealthy: Shower. Rich. Repeat.

If not: Good luck.

Hit bottom; be judged and stereotyped.

We're doing this for you. Not us.

Don't look at me; I didn't do it to him/her. I played no role in your fall. So, I'm here to help you get up.

Sure, you are.

An inmate (person in rehab) is forced to fight demons. How do you survive?

You must laugh at life, yourself, those commissioned to pretend they help, the counsellors, instructors, and motivational speakers.

Cliques form. Trust doesn't exist in the world of recovery.

Addiction = Paranoia = Yourself Against the World.

Sucks to be you.

Thrown back into the world of temptation. Where do you find the strength to go on?

I don't think anybody really knows. I know that people who are crashing into the bottom likely don't want to hear their suffering is not unique.

Hey, Good Luck Out There, is a hilariously subversive ride through the throes and aftermath of addiction, one of the best fiction reads in a long time!

WRITTEN: 10 February 2022

## PARTICIPATION

ANNA MOSCHOVAKIS



*Love or Anti-Love; is there a difference?*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

Fragmented. Subversive. Darkly Humorous. Thought eviscerating.

I love you. You don't know how to love back. We don't share the same pain, dreams, and fantasies.

How do we survive a collapsing world when tragedy strikes close to home?

How do we elevate beacons of hope?

Is life worthy of us?

A deep thought. Another.

I turn the page.

I'm lost.

I need to think.

I find myself on the next page.

Participation is a rapturous ride, twisting and winding your mind into a fraying coil that slowly unravels, allowing you to discover gems of life hidden inside the delicious and somewhat endearing prose.

Love or Anti-Love; is there a difference?

Thanks to Book\*Hug Press, they regularly take readers outside the vapid formulaic world of storytelling into worlds we live in but are often too blind to see.

WRITTEN: 13 February 2023

Lindsay Wincherauk

## THE NEW ME

HALLE BUTLER



*The horrible hand dealt your way has blessed you with individuality.*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

Your life cards have been dealt.

You look at your hand; OMG.

Your Parents = Whatever.

The world awaits you. Good luck. You are not equipped to navigate life. But the horrible hand dealt your way has blessed you with individuality. You stick out. You don't belong. But you are self-aware. You understand limitations. You want more. But, really, are you equipped to chase what you want and need?

Probably not.

You are laughed at.

You are shunned.

You are an outsider to the world. You laugh.

You hide inside yourself.

You're honest.

Someone cracks your shell. Laughter ensues. You chase a fantasy. You know that is all it is. It can't save you. You can't be saved. We can't be saved. We are who we are.

Your shell cracks open more. There is tenderness in your soul. Your oddity makes you vulnerable and loveable. Crack the shell more, and it might surprise you with what you discover inside.

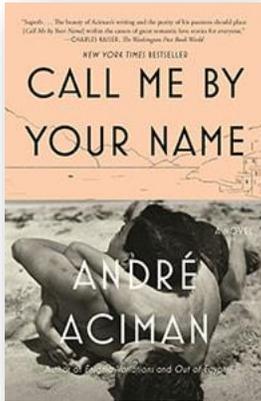
The New Me, is a hilarious and heart-wrenching story about the beauty found in being an outlier in a world moving at an unsustainable pace. Take a moment, read a page or two, and I guarantee you will find a little of yourself inside the main character's soul.

Smile.

WRITTEN: 10 February 2023

## CALL ME BY YOUR NAME

ANDRE ACIMAN



*I wanted to love this book, but I did not.*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

I'm still giving it 5 Stars – does that make me hypocritical?

The movie won an Academy Award.

I'm probably going to burn in the netherworld because of my disdain.

Why didn't I like the book?

Because I struggled to believe these characters were real, I don't think there is a 17-year-old on the planet who feels like the main character. Everything is not so fricken

important, cerebral, intellectual; which for this reader, turned the prose into something stilted... pedantic.

I don't know who this book is for?

A 17-year-old falls for a 22-year-old writer, and he pines and pines and pines.

The story was written for a straight audience (I think), perhaps leaning toward a female audience, tossing in Italy to give it a (romantic) cultural footing. I think readers were supposed to feel they are tripping into a different world, making them more accepting of the lifestyles of others?

I'll stop now; the coals are getting hot.

I didn't get it.

I tried to watch the movie.

I didn't get it.

Perhaps I'm dead inside.

Substitute a 17-year-old female for the protagonist, and this book would never exist.

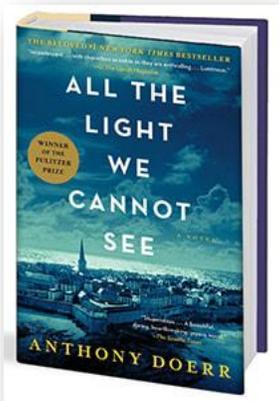
| Full Stop |

Am I dead inside?

WRITTEN: 21 February 2023

## ALL THE LIGHT WE CANNOT SEE

ANTHONY DOERR



*The words sing and dance off of every page.*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

All The Light We Cannot See, is chock full of exquisite metaphors, the words sing and dance off of every page.

Doerr's writing is beyond gorgeous, and his mastery of painting a picture is second to none.

I'm not sure what the last sentence means.

I loved this book.

We cannot outrun our pasts. We must learn to exist together. Atrocities have been chasing humankind forever and likely will always be. We are flawed, passionate, dysfunctional, full of unlimited possibilities, boundless rage, and the insanity of division.

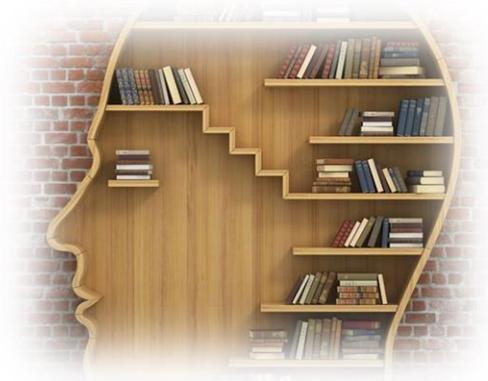
As humankind lives and relives its past, I hope we move forward swaddled in the prose and hope Doerr provides us with on every page.

Will we survive?

WRITTEN: 14 February 2023

# BOOK THOUGHTS

## BATCH 24



13. LUCY BY THE SEA - ELIZABETH STROUD
14. AMY + LAN - SADIE JONES
15. WE WERE DREAMERS - SIMU LIU
16. PEOPLE PERSON - CANDICE CARTY-WILLIAMS
17. OWÓKNAGE - JIM TANNER
18. JUNIE - CHELENE KNIGHT
19. THE EDUCATION OF AUGIE MERASTY - JOSEPH AUGUSTE MERASTY, DAVID CARPENTER
20. STORIES I MIGHT REGRET TELLING YOU - MARTHA WAINWRIGHT
21. SCOUNDREL - SARAH WEINMAN
22. THE LAST ONE TO VANISH - MEGAN MIRANDA

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BLACK = FICTION

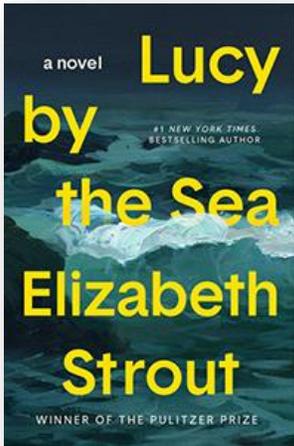
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## LUCY BY THE SEA

ELIZABETH STROUT



*Strout's prose oozes an abundance of love. A definite favourite.*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

**Lucy by the Sea** is an absolutely gorgeous read.

I felt tears welling on every page.

I now look at life through different lenses. Strout's writing is divine. Her words helped me understand the splendour in living different lives and listening. We are not all the same; we must strive to find kindness in our hearts. Many of us are in pain. The world is a confusing place.

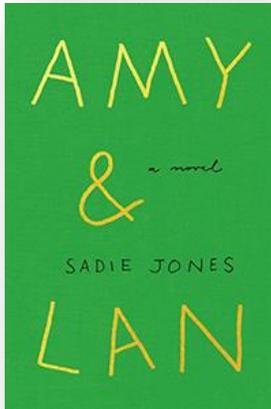
Strout's prose oozes an abundance of love. **Lucy by the Sea** is a beautifully woven tale about what it means to be alive.

38

I absolutely loved this book – it etched a place in my heart, warming my soul!

WRITTEN: 19 September 2022

**AMY & LAN**  
**SADIE JONES**



*Amy & Lan is a heart-wrenching read reminding us of all the beauty found in innocence.*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

I loved this book; therefore, I don't want to impose my will on people with too many thoughts.

**Amy & Lan** are two kids. They're soulmates. They grow up together on a farm their parents dragged them to – to be joined by a collection of outcasts. A move undertaken because life became too hectic, expensive, and unsustainable in a world spinning absurdly out of control.

The adults seek a better life – far outside their comfort zones. They are outsiders in this world. **Amy &**

**Lan** joyfully amble through their lives, eyes wide open, experiencing much, and growing into who they will become. Their parents coddle and protect them from things they deem – “too adult” – for **Amy & Lan** to comprehend and not be scarred from; *the circle of life for farm animals*. The adults battle classism, racism and other isms plaguing societies today.

As much as parents impose their wills on children, they have a propensity to strip away a child's innocence by muddying the waters of living with the weakness of thinking the grass is greener elsewhere – often destroying families with their selfishness.

While reading the last chapter, tears sprouted from my eyes, rolled over my cheeks, and floated gingerly to the floor below. If adults were only self-aware enough to understand, it might be best to learn from the innocence only found in a child's heart – then maybe, they could hear the lessons about love and naivety our children teach daily – that only an adult would see as childish; instead of breaking people apart.

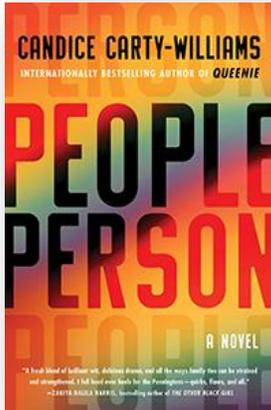
**Amy & Lan** is a heart-wrenching read reminding us of all the beauty found in innocence.

WRITTEN: 9 October 2022

Lindsay Wincherauk

## PEOPLE PERSON

CANDICE CARTY-WILLIAMS



*Who you are; doesn't 'lie' in the choices you've made, but...*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

I'm swimming in murky water. Five children, their absentee father, and their four mothers swim alongside me. I see a hook in the water. I swim toward it. On the hook is a bizarre premise. I bite.

I'm tugged from side to side.

I struggle to break free.

I'm glad I did not.

The children swim up to me. A page turns, a layer is added, and then another. The bait wasn't the premise.

Instead, it was the relationship between the children. They're broken. Angry. Confused. Different. In denial. Scared. Another page turns. I'm in. The line tightens. More layers are added. The children and their mothers threaten to cut the cord. But the more they learn about themselves, the more they understand they are all products of the same dysfunction.

The children are mad at their father.

The mothers' struggle with not being the only one.

The line loosens.

A moment comes where it might be too much to process – but just when everything is about to fall apart, a piece is uncovered that doesn't let the father off the hook but provides an understanding that maybe he didn't have a chance - to begin with.

**In *People Person***, Candice Carty-Williams takes readers on a ride, bringing them to a place where we understand *if you are a product of dysfunction and you are lucky, you might realize who you are; doesn't 'lie' in the choices you've made → but stems from a collection of unknowns*. If you are fortunate enough to collect enough pieces, then maybe, just maybe, who, or whatever you are most angry about, you can let off the hook, take a deep breath, and realize it was just what it was.

When I collected enough pieces of me, I discovered my sister was my mum.

WRITTEN: 7 October 2022

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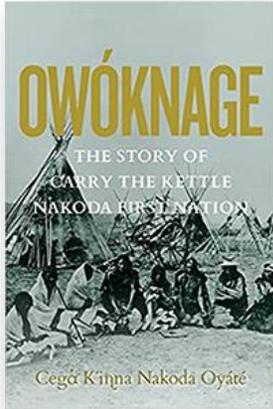
Lindsay Wincherauk

## OWÓKNAGE

JIM TANNER

*I'm not sure Truth & Reconciliation is enough.*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*



Some rich man came and raped the land |...| nobody caught him. (The Last Resort-The Eagles)

Eyes pried wide open.

Dept. of Indian Affairs + Indian Agencies; do we need to know more? Yes.

We came – our ancestors, bringing disease. Our ancestors, mine, yours (?), raped the land of its resources. The Indigenous peoples were unsuspecting, gracious hosts.

Our ancestors were not the best guests. Treaties were signed under the ruse of mutual progress. Our ancestors eradicated what our hosts needed for survival, food, and land. Then, our ancestors ostracised, forcing the Indigenous peoples onto reserves (concentration camps), starved them – and our ancestors took to where if ‘the water doesn’t have insects in it, don’t drink it,’ poisoning the earth with progress. Our ancestors marginalized and criminalized their hosts.

A person I know says the Indigenous people have an advantage; I did nothing to them; they need to ‘get over it.’ His ancestors were responsible for a culture’s ‘attempted’ destruction (genocide). A culture that respected what the earth was providing. His apathy, denial, and verbal cruelty make him (many of us) complicit in ignorance. We want everything. At what cost? Diseasing Mother Earth? Cancer?

A new development springs up, obliterating everything in its path. The very things wildlife needs to thrive. Our fish are covered in sores. If humans are getting cancer at alarming rates, think of the animals.

Owóknage is a riveting account of the ways of life of proud nations of Indigenous peoples. The atrocities they faced by trusting settlers who were only interested in one thing: raping the earth of its resources, stripping away the way of life of Mother Earth’s Shepherds – all in the name of...

No wonder some people are anti-immigration – they know what their ancestors were capable of – and it might be embedded in their DNA.

I want to be a better person.

WRITTEN: 17 September 2022

## JUNIE

CHELENE KNIGHT

*The past pulses to life in this sublime coming-of-age story!*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*



I live in Vancouver. I have walked, driven, across, under, and around the Georgia Viaduct thousands of times, ignorant of the vibrant black community that used to lay where the viaduct is now.

I was introduced to Hogan's alley in the fantastic book, *Becoming Vancouver* (Daniel Francis). Even with the introduction, I remained blind to the thriving community erased by gentrification and the displacement of those who added matchless character to the city.

Systemic racism saw to that. The city's leaders decided moving cars in and out of the city's core was more important than protecting a beating, thriving heart. I'm appalled.

Thanks to Junie, when I walk under the viaduct now, in the now nondescript area once known as Hogan's Alley, the area springs to life. I can hear cheerful souls rejoicing, jazz floating through the air. The fragrance of different tickles the senses.

Chelene Knight is masterful at bringing what once was to life and reminding us of what could have been if we had only evolved. Are we evolving, even today?

In this enchanting coming-of-age story, Knight explores what it is like to be a young black girl growing up in a harsh world where her mother does not relish the role because alcohol and unreachable dreams have muddied her mind. Her mother's unquenchable thirst for the spotlight, coupled with neglecting her daughter's needs – turns Junie into the matriarch by default as she tries to find her way in a racist world.

Knight arouses the enormity facing Junie (including sexuality), as she has to be strong, not only for her mother but also for her best friend, whose mother, the polar opposite of Junie's, also doesn't relish the role of motherhood.

I walk by where Hogan's Alley used to be once more; it pulses to life. I see Junie walk on by, smiling.

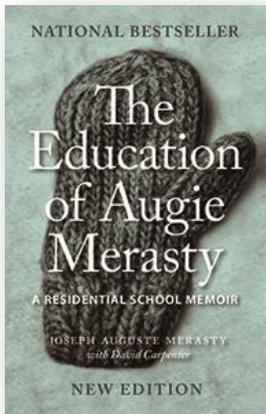
WRITTEN: 15 September 2022

## THE EDUCATION OF AUGIE MERASTY

JOSEPH AUGUSTE MERASTY, DAVID CARPENTER

*Truth + Reconciliation is only the starting point.*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*



The Education of Augie Merasty may be a small tome, but it packs a powerful punch that goes a long way in eradicating ignorance. Some people want to keep their eyes shut, living in denial. However, we'd do the entire world (in this case, Canada) a massive favour by diving into the pages of this important story.

Augie is the definition of heroic. I never knew the evil Indigenous people faced. Like many people, I hid behind the walls of the disgusting attitudes instilled in us all, by a racist society. Some people scream, "get over it" – I didn't

do this to you. But we were all complicit (even if it was through our ancestors), and our willing ignorance only exacerbates the pain and slows the path to an inclusive world.

Augie's courage has made us all better. Educate yourself. You might not like what you discover, but you'll likely be a better, kinder, and more empathetic person – after you've read the last word of this essential read that will linger with you, long after the cover has been closed.

Thanks to heroes like Augie, he has kindly offered us all a salve for our souls.

Powerful. Evocative. Essential. Courageous.

WRITTEN: 28 September 2022

## STORIES I MIGHT REGRET TELLING YOU

MARTHA WAINWRIGHT



*Creative brilliance is rooted in pain...*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

Martha Wainwright and I got together in a pub to talk. We sat down and started sharing horror stories from our lives in search of finding stories of belonging and where love and comfort rest.

We got messed up along the way.

Stories I Might Regret Telling You reads like the scene I started painting above; Martha has lived a celebrity life.

As we shared another pint, the layers of her life started falling away: Insecurity, drugs, love found and lost, and a

child's longing for their parents to assume the role of caregiver instead of being swallowed by their own need to be seen. I learned this is an ongoing struggle for those in the spotlight.

How can you care for yourself when you need the world's validation?

In unflinching honesty, Wainwright shares her vulnerability, letting us all know that just because you're reaching for the stars doesn't mean you are not immune to the perils many, if not all of us, face daily.

Stories I Might Regret Telling you deftly remind us that regardless of life's paths, we are all on the same road together.

Creative brilliance is rooted in pain; thanks, Martha, for taking the time to share yours.

WRITTEN: 6 November 2022

Lindsay Wincherauk

## SCOUNDREL

SARAH WEINMAN



*Psychopathy and extreme wealth are one in the same.*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

What did I learn from Scoundrel?

It is a fascinating read. I never thought I would be into a historical murder story.

I dove in.

What a voyeuristic ride. The writing is captivating. Weinman is a fabulous storyteller. I hope she's okay (after being immersed in this horrendous story).

Edgar Smith was a monster, and William F. Buckley was a monster as well, who walked lockstep with Smith.

I guess what I learned from Scoundrel is that there is a razor-thin line between psychopathy, genius and the utter manipulation of everything and everyone around you for personal gain.

Narcissism, sociopathy, and psychopathy are deadly bedfellows. Extreme wealth is a disease.

I learned those inflicted by extreme wealth care about only one thing: themselves.

I feel a sense of calm. Now, I understand the news better. We all scream about political figures saying insane things and still being loved. I get it now. The shackles attached to those needing validation, the wealthy + deranged mentally ill (1), do not care. We shriek: These people need to listen. They won't.

Because after they've jumped on a cause, their hearing has been muted. The rest of us suffer the noise of not comprehending why those diseased are not as outraged as the rest.

That's how Scoundrel made me feel/think.

You can't change a debilitating illness.

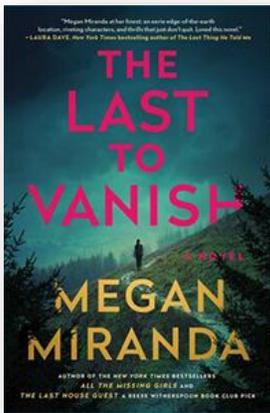
Psychopathy and extreme wealth are the same.

WRITTEN: 12 October 2022

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## THE LAST ONE TO VANISH

MEGAN MIRANDA



*A psychological thriller about the darkness lying in each of us.*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

Where did they go?

A picturesque town. Nestled at the start of Appalachia.

One hiker + another + another + another + one more + another + another + another, vanish. The town is labelled as the most dangerous. Tourism flourishes in the absence of the missing hikers as adventure seekers flock to the town. The townsfolk seem to be genuine, kind, and welcoming. As long as you don't dig too deep.

A page turns. New citizens struggle to be one with the old—to fit in. There is darkness in the souls of the town's inhabitants and in the treacherous hills. You are allowed to fit in if you accept; we are all in this together.

**The Last One to Vanish** is a psychological thriller about the darkness we are all capable of holding inside of us and what the unquenchable thirst for truth and belonging does to one's psyche.

Does every town have a secret?

Are these secrets better left untold?

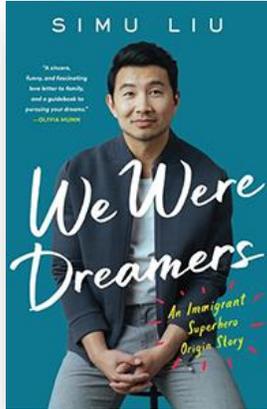
Keep flipping the pages, and when you come to the exhilarating end, decide for yourself.

WRITTEN: 4 October 2022

Lindsay Wincherauk

## WE WERE DREAMERS

SIMU LIU



*Never deviate from your passions...*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

Much like Ronny Chieng, I thought, great, another celebrity memoir. Oh, Joy.

You don't have to read it.

My friend put it in my hands and said, read this next.

I loved Kim's Convenience. After seeing the opening credits, I'm confident I could beat Simu at one-on-one basketball.

You're 62; what are you talking about?

I challenge you, Simu.

You'll lose.

Probably.

What struck me right from the get-go of this memoir is Simu is incredibly likeable. All celebrity memoirists need to read this to learn how to win over an audience. Simu will win you over.

This book came at a great time for me. I'm facing daunting uncertainties since my career ended at the start of Covid. I write. Write. Write. And pursue my passions. Friends in my demographic have been barking at me to 'get a job.' Did I say I'm 62? Depression is lurking; not lurking, it is standing by the sofa.

Where are you going with these thoughts?

In **We Were Dreamers**, Simu not only lessens the cultural divide people face in an ever-evolving (maybe devolving) world. But with the utmost generosity, Simu blasts a powerful light on the necessity of never deviating from your passions if you are lucky enough to discover what they are.

Liu does this with gentleness and understanding, as he reminds us regardless of whether we are a celebrity, we all start close to the same place. Unless of course: you were unlucky to have been born into crippling entitlement. Liu wasn't.

When you dream, there is no Plan B.

Thank you, Simu; at this stage of my life, you gave me the encouragement I desperately need – you are a true superhero.

Next time you're in Vancouver, one-on-one basketball?

WRITTEN: 6 November 2022

# BOOK THOUGHTS

BATCH 23  
BATCH 23



1. WE SPREAD – IAN REID
2. THE ANIMALS – CARY FAGAN
3. WE ARE THE LIGHT – MATTHEW QUICK
4. 10 DAYS THAT SHAPED MODERN CANADA – AARON W. HUGHES
5. GENTRIFICATION IS INEVITABLE – LESLIE KERNS
6. REPUTATION – SARAH VAUGHAN
7. IS THERE BACON IN HEAVEN? – ALI HASSAN
8. NSFW – ISABEL KAPLAN
9. MAKING A SCENE – CONSTANZE WU
10. FOR THE LOVE OF LEARNING – KRISTIN PHILLIPS

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BLUE = MEMOIR OR BIOGRAPHICAL

BLACK = FICTION

DARK RED = EDUCATIONAL

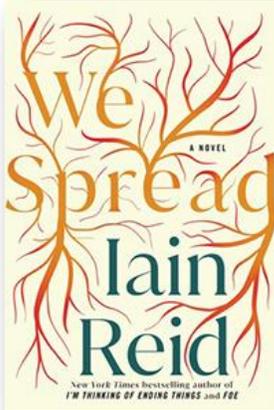
PURPLE = ESSAY OR STORIES

ORANGE = POETRY

Lindsay Wincherauk

## WE SPREAD

IAN REID



*Are we all dying, shackled in routine, long before we fade away?*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

I sit down and read a few pages.

Fear races through my veins.

It's 30 degrees Celsius out (86 Fahrenheit).

The sun is beating down like a tinsmith working his craft. Goose bumps are popping all over my body like dominos rolling in reverse.

I walk three more blocks.

I need to stop and read more.

I don't want to — I can't stop myself.

I walk another three blocks. My spine is tingling. I shiver.

I stop again. I walk three more blocks. Stop. I plop down on a brick wall along the sidewalk. I've never sat here before.

I'm terrified. I want more. Am I living the life of Penny?

What is the point of tomorrow if you can't remember today?

What's worse, losing yourself and your memories or being kept alive to have the last ounces of productivity squeezed from your vanishing life?

*Are we all dying, shackled in routine, long before we fade away?*

**We Spread**, shakes the psyche to the core. It's a non-put-downable ride far more terrifying than any horror story imaginable. There is no wasted word; terror drips from every page — I walk three more blocks and realize: I eat at the same time daily, and I go to sleep at the same time nightly. As much as the dread of facing the end is an inescapable reality; what scared me most in this sublime read is the realization, at least for me, that we need to live life to the fullest because when the end arrives, what's the point of being well rested and fed?

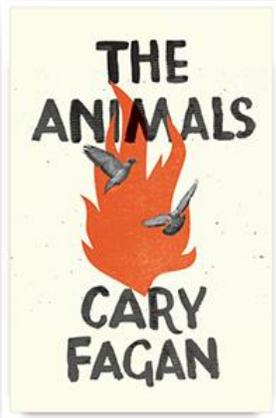
Ian Reid subtly expounds on the vital importance of shaking life up, to live it fully; something I will do — once I stop shaking.

Death may be final, but at least, while we're still here, we must protect our memories; for as long as we can.

WRITTEN: 4 September 2022

## THE ANIMALS

CARY FAGAN



*Sometimes, saving yourself first is the only way to become a superhero.*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

A massive INTERNATIONAL BESTSELLER takes the literary world by storm.

The Animals by Cary Fagan carries a powerful, nuanced punch.

I could barely feel it; a page flips, and I find myself inside the book.

Dorn is dull. The town he lives in is dull. Competitiveness fuels every village in the world, in order to survive.

Tourism is the answer. Can tourism ever be the answer? Or is tourism not the means to devastation and the end of everything?

Dorn simply wants to live. He wants love, but he is far too awkward to bring desires to fruition. He's a simple man. Characters are injected into the plotline. Mixing them all together, the characters become each of us.

Another punch.

I'm feeling it now.

I'm deep inside the book.

I'm absolutely; what's a word more than absolutely? – loving it! An all-time favourite.

Dorn's brother is a selfish jerk, but is he?

A wolf kills a man, but does it?

Stay away from the mink.

Sometimes, saving yourself first is the only way to become a superhero.

And if and when you do, maybe love will catch your fall.

The Animals deftly will draw you in, and by the end, you will be absolutely ecstatic it did as it lingers with you long after you've devoured the last word.

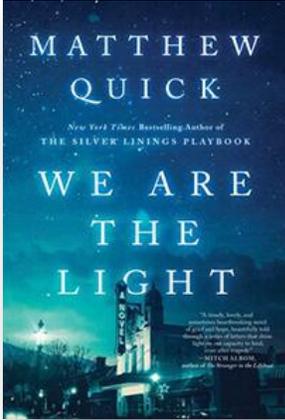
If you only read a small stack of books this year, The Animals should undoubtedly rise to the top.

WRITTEN: 22 August 2022

Lindsay Wincherauk

## WE ARE THE LIGHT

MATTHEW QUICK



*Every page oozes with empathy, compassion, understanding, and kindness.*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

Matthew,

Thank you.

Really, that's all that needs to be said. But I'll expound more.

I'm thanking you because "We Are the Light" is a needed tonic for the heart & soul in this vastly confounding world.

Occasionally, depression kicks in my door. I fight it. I don't know where it's coming from. How deep are the roots? What parts of it are self-inflicted?

I must gain an understanding of what might have been wreaked upon me – through my upbringing.

I don't want to wallow. I must find strength and laughter – I need to be okay.

I go for walks. 20 miles, every day, for a month. I leave my sadness at home.

Why don't you run?

Because I don't want to return to my crippling thoughts, quickly, walking gives them alone time.

How do we survive when a horrific tragedy touches our lives?

Anger is part of the process. And rightfully so. While anger has its place, it's not a place of healing. I don't think.

Hatred springs to mind. But how can we hate when we don't understand the roots of a toxic mind, a desperate mind, a fractured soul?

*Quick* has an intrinsic ability to bring us together, having those who suffered understand we can't paint all with the same brush. A brother of a mass shooter, although he may have been diseased with the same toxicity growing up, as his brother – deserves a chance, and maybe, just maybe, he shouldn't have to hide to survive.

Every page of "We Are the Light" oozes empathy, compassion, understanding, and kindness.

So, Matthew, thanks once more. I am ecstatic you fought through writer's block and personal challenges to find a way to bring us – NO – *being the light* – offering a different outlook on living in a confusing world.

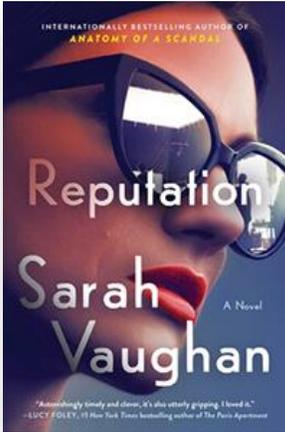
My eyes welled up several times while reading the final chapter – my tears were cleansing.

WRITTEN: 13 August 2022

Lindsay Wincherauk

## REPUTATION

SARAH VAUGHAN



*Engrossing. Exhilarating. Captivating.*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

Engrossing. Exhilarating. Captivating.

Book thoughts complete. It doesn't get better than this.

A favourite!

Sarah Vaughan is a lyrical genius. I would read a book by Sarah describing things and love it. But, of course, this is much more. Our world is changing dramatically with every breath we take.

The illness that is misogyny is fighting for survival; everything it wants is being erased because of its unquenchable thirst. Power requires money.

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It was easy to control when men were the family's sole breadwinners and could lord their power over everyone. But because one income isn't sufficient to survive in today's world—everything is changing. Narcissistic, misogynistic men still want control. They still want to be fed, cleansed, and coddled. However, misogynistic oppression is in crisis as more and more women become politicians and business champions.

Unfortunately, dinosaurs are lurking. They want to hold on to the past, salve their fragile egos and—

How far would you go to protect your reputation?

Would you sacrifice your family?

Would you sacrifice your life?

What price is too high?

*“Reputation”* is a thrill ride from the first page, twisting and turning, helping us understand the battle between man and woman is in its infancy—to the last page.

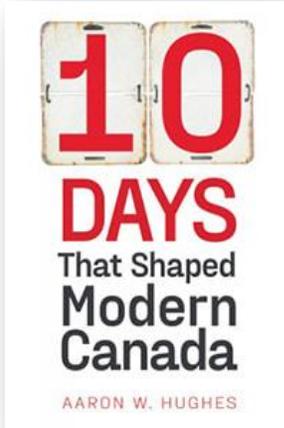
That's how this book made me feel.

P.S. I cheered for Emma Webster on every page.

WRITTEN: 13 August 2022

## 10 DAYS-THAT SHAPED MODERN CANADA

AARON W. HUGHES



*Canada is a cultural mosaic, and despite its flaws, Canadians always seem to unite.*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

Back when I was attending university, if I had a book like Aaron Hughes's **10 Days-That Shaped Modern Canada**, life might have taken a different path.

At the very least, university would have been more interesting.

The world is at a crossroads; we are facing choices affecting who we are (globally and as Canadians). How do we want to live? And who do we want to be?

Hughes addresses these questions with glaring clarity in this fabulous read about the modern-day history of

Canada. Every day mentioned is connected and helped cobble Canada into the vibrant mosaic we've become.

But it is fragile. Forces are trying to pull us apart; our history is littered with complications. Do we move forward together as proud Canadians, or do we trip into the abyss of divisiveness, allowing the evil voices on our shoulders to dismantle what has taken generations to create?

What Hughes helps us understand is as much as Canada is a cultural mosaic – he exposes our flaws; and how, like few nations on this planet, we've come together despite our differences – seemingly insurmountable – at times.

Because if we don't collectively live as one and reckon with the warts of our journey and past, we could come to a place where we surrender our progress and wave our future goodbye.

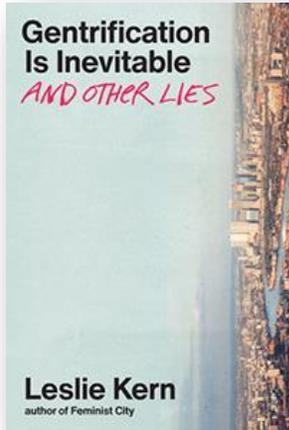
Every Canadian must read **10 Days-That Shaped Modern Canada** – if they want to gain an understanding of who we are.

Each of us could benefit from the inspiration Gord Downie of the Tragically Hip gifted us – a man who showed us what unconditionally loving who we are – means. (Chapter 9).

WRITTEN: 13 September 2022

## GENTRIFICATION IS INEVITABLE – AND OTHER LIES

LESLIE KERN



*Unfettered capitalism and the carnage it leaves in its wake.*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

**Gentrification Is Inevitable, And Other Lies** is an essential read about looking at the perils of unfettered capitalism and the carnage it leaves in its wake.

Kern rips the covers off gentrification and the ugly truths lying within.

Kern unmaskes the direction cities are taking (globally), all battling for the dollars of the entitled, destroying what makes cities sing.

I'm doubtful the fundamental change for all to live harmoniously is possible.

How can we convince someone a mom-and-pop restaurant is as important as the new eatery with 100 beers on tap?

A flight attendant says there are no more favourite cities because they are all the same.

Airbnb owners often have multiple listings, a product of being born into privilege. The rest of us are unaware these listings are forcing families onto the street, all while, a disinterested tourist, snaps photos of a Steam Clock, and then, dares to complain about the homeless.

Poor people buy sodas at fast-food restaurants because they allow you to fill your own cups. The last place where soda conglomerates can create heavy users.

Builders need homeless people for their shiny towers to rise. Buildings the closest they'll come to living in it is beside the dumpster in the laneway.

If you live long enough to be on a fixed income, gentrification screams, you might have made a mistake.

Kern expounds on thinking before you consume, begging the question, what type of city do you want to live in: one only for the privileged, dripping in racist, ageist, misogynistic attitudes – vapid and shiny without a pulse?

Or one teeming with all walks of life, where we understand I am no more important than you?

And being poor, doesn't mean; I shouldn't have a chance.

WRITTEN: 7 September 2022

Lindsay Wincherauk

## NSFW A NOVEL

ISABEL KAPLAN



*Whip-smart, whip-funny, whip...*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

We, men, we sure can be fragile (expletives).

Power is our drug. Lording over others our centuries of advantage – leads us far down a misogynistic rabbit hole.

What does that even mean?

Flex. Neanderthal. Don't grow.

I am stronger than you.

I didn't earn my power.

I took it.

You mustn't play along. *Fight it.* Us. You are more intelligent.

I laugh on almost every page. I gain an understanding of who I don't want to be. On another page, *subtlety* causes my side to split.

We are in control. You must outsmart us.

Why is there a war between us? Why can't we accept our equals?

We're no better. We are just bigger, stronger, and more insecure. You've earned your way up – we need you to know we allowed it – we can break you. If you fight us – futility will be your outcome – we control the eventual outcome. Me too.

### OUR DAYS ON TOP ARE NUMBERED

Why?

Because you are climbing, + some of us don't want to be "that guy" anymore.

Isabel Kaplan is whip-smart, whip-funny, whip... misogyny is a devious beast, but with the covers pulled back, it's pathetic. Kaplan rips the covers off the misogyny of the entertainment industry with flowing dexterity which will leave you gasping, laughing, and most importantly, exposes the frailty of being a man.

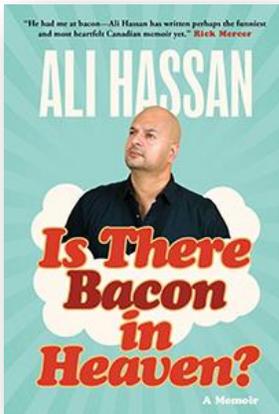
One of the best reads of the year!

WRITTEN: 6 August 2022

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## IS THERE BACON IN HEAVEN

ALI HASSAN



*It's rare to find a book that tickles your funny bone while...*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

I've never sat down with a Muslim friend, had a conversation, and really got to know him/her.

I'm sure I've sat down with a Muslim before, but I can't say for sure — until now.

Until I sat down for two days with Ali Hassan and dove into his memoir; about bacon?

Hassan has been gifted with the uncanny ability to make you laugh on one page — and before you flip to the next, ponder about the state of humanity. I'm 62, lived my entire life in Canada, and shamefully, I don't think I've ever had

an Indian (brown friend).

I'm grateful to Ali for introducing me to a world within our neighbourhoods where we all crave the same things with each passing day.

I was going to list the "things," but I decided against it just in case yours differ from mine.

Thanks, Ali; it's rare to find a book that tickles your funny bone (I think that might be a dated reference) while ruffling the mind, and although we crave the same things, our paths are distinctly our own — hopefully leading to kindness, and understanding, if we only talked with each other, there really is no reason to hate.

I just ordered a BLT, and as I come to the last page, I will look at the world through a slightly different lens from this page forward.

WRITTEN: 3 September 2022

**MAKE A SCENE**  
**MAKE A SCENE**  
**CONSTANZE WU**



*Unflinching beauty can only be found in vulnerability.*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

Yippee—a memoir written by a celebrity. This most certainly will be dreary. Why Constanze? Why?

Fresh Off the Boat was delightful, essential, and groundbreaking.

Crazy Rich Asians, thumbs way up!

Constanze you're a star!!! Why?

Flip the page. You are a star, but you are ordinary. I'm relating with you. I understand what traumatic events and life pressure is like—the insecurity, the questioning of sanity, the brushing aside of one's ghosts to fit in. To live in

denial to protect the future. I know what it is like to take devastating truths, sweep them aside, and then convince yourself the biggest deals in life are nothing to lose sleep over.

Why do we do it?

To try desperately to remain unscathed.

It's impossible.

Constanze Wu's; Making a Scene flips from ordinary to extraordinary because of the unflinching beauty Constanze shares, only found in vulnerability.

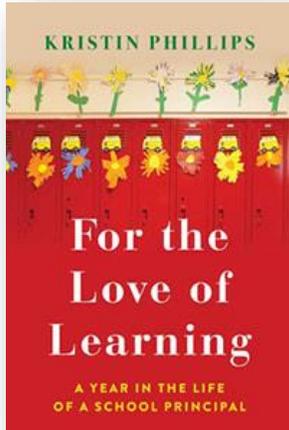
The last chapter left my heart pounding.

As a man, I could never comprehend the unbearable weight of being a rising Asian Star in a misogynistic world controlled mainly by Caucasian males (duh). The burden must be crushing. After reading your story, I must thank you for sharing and letting the rest of us know that being a star doesn't mean you are not human.

WRITTEN: 27 August 2022

## FOR THE LOVE OF LEARNING

KRISTIN PHILLIPS



*Educators genuinely love the kids*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

I'm 62. Want to go back to school?

Not really.

Elementary school?

No.

Why am I in this hallway? I thought I finished here in 1972.

Being a principal must be outrageously challenging and conflicting.

You want control.

You must control.

You are at the top of the pinnacle.

Was I a good kid? A manageable kid?

I think so.

In "For the Love of Learning," Phillips enrolls us back in class, showing us the life of an educator from inside the halls. Leaders (Principals) must navigate a never-ending list of morals and values, egos, and frailty. Principals walk a fine line between total control and an understanding of the diversity of students, families, and teachers, balancing tenuously on the edges of ensuring education reaches everyone and is delivered in such a way to give each one of us a chance to thrive.

Being a Principal is an all-consuming passion—chock-full of love, empathy, and compassion. Where regardless of what's transpiring in a Principals' personal life (some of the best parts of the book).

"For the Love of Learning" helps us understand something I never considered in 1972: educators genuinely love the kids, and their work will never be complete – and as much as we believe them to be rocks – at the end of class, they are human too.

Class dismissed.

WRITTEN: 13 August 2022

# BOOK THOUGHTS

## BATCH 22



11. ANTKIND - CHARLIE KAUFMAN
12. BLUE PORTUGAL - THERESA KISHKAN
13. STORIES FROM THE TENANTS DOWNSTAIRS - SIDIK FOFANA
14. COLD COLD BONES - KATHY REICHS
15. THE IT GIRL - RUTH WARE
16. THE CHAIN - ADRIAN MCKINTY
17. DREAM ON - ANGIE HOCKMAN
18. MOTHER TONGUE - BILL BRYSON
19. A KID CALLED CHATTER - CHRIS KELLY
20. HOOPED - MICHAEL BAINS

BLUE = MEMOIR OR BIOGRAPHICAL

BLACK = FICTION

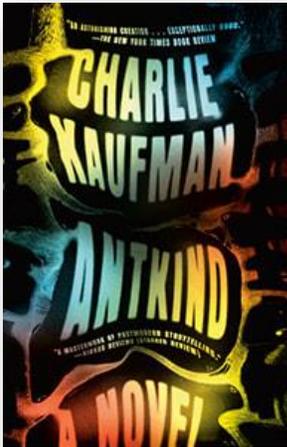
DARK RED = EDUCATIONAL

PURPLE = ESSAY OR STORIES

ORANGE = POETRY

## ANTKIND

CHARLIE KAUFMAN



*A Mouth-watering delicious mess...*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

A mouth-watering delicious mess that had me giggling on every page.

Pick a better word.

Guffawing. No. Shrieking.

It's a book, not a cookbook: Delicious mess makes no sense.

But it does. I ate it. Up. Up. Yum. My trucks on fire. Where am I? In a cave. Okay. I kept eating. First raw. Sushi? No. Then, with mustard. Then, sriracha. Full of fibre?

What are you even saying?

I'm strong. I'm an ant. Pound for pound stronger than →

Anything?

Sure.

The world is crumbling around us. Greed is out of control. Slammy's Burgers. Trunks.

I'm done.

This book (a favourite), what's another word for trunking? Great!

What are you even saying?

I get it. I loved it. Kaufman was writing just for me.

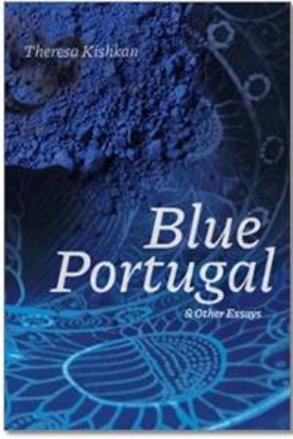
Go on.

Yes.

WRITTEN: 14 July 2022

Lindsay Wincherauk

**BLUE PORTUGAL**  
**REOF BOKLOGVT**  
**THERESA KISHKAN**



*Blue Portugal is a poetically lyrical read that will surprise readers with its undeniable depth.*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

Soon, I might find out who my father is for the third time in my life.

The first time, I watched him take his last breath, the day after I turned 25 (1985).

Eighteen years later (2003), I accidentally discovered he wasn't my birth father, which spiralled me into a search for my identity. I found my birth father. Met him (2006). He welcomed me into his family with open arms. Two weeks passed, and I had to inform him he wasn't my father. My mother had lied on my birth registration.

Recently, after discovering I'm 45% Norwegian, a first cousin popped up in my DNA string – her uncle might be my birth father.

How does this relate to Blue Portugal?

Well, after the first two fathers, not being my birth father, I thought I'd never care, and as I age, why does it even matter, I thought?

That's where Blue Portugal comes in.

First off, it is chock full of poetic lyricism and, for me, at least, highlights the importance of retracing our roots. As Kishkan ages; she thirsts for an understanding of who she is and why (?) and a longing for the comfort only found in the threads of life which make us whole.

Second, in her search for understanding, Kishkan sheds a powerful light on how, as much as the world improves daily, humanity is on a slippery slope, slicked by the limited minds of those who desperately think they need to hold on to the advantages of entitlement.

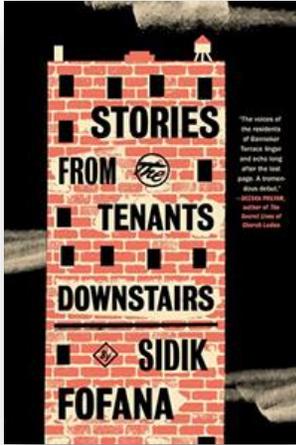
One hundred years ago, corporate greed brought over immigrants to do back-breaking work to build nations – only to deny these working slaves the rights they (the entitled) fought-tooth-and-nail to keep for themselves. When war broke out, Kishkan's ancestors were deemed to be the enemies of the country, denied home ownership, and faced racism because the entitled railed against Immigrant Workers. The same workers' corporations exploited for profit. Does this ring familiar today?

Blue Portugal is a poetically lyrical read that will surprise readers with its undeniable depth.

WRITTEN: 28 June 2022

## STORIES FROM THE TENANTS DOWNSTAIRS

SIDIK FOFANA



*A tender, voyeuristic, nuanced look at cultural inequality.*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

These are complex thoughts to right (write).

**Here goes:**

On the one hand, life dealt me an unfair advantage because of my ancestry DNA.

On the other, they shrouded my family in secrecy, as I was a baby born to an unwed mother—in a horrible place—where women were sent to be fixed. A reality that has haunted me for 62 years.

Despite my less than auspicious beginnings and the flawed cards dealt my family, leading to a lifelong

struggle, it wasn't laced with the outrageous disadvantage of being born black.

**I must quickly shout out:** being born black is not a disadvantage, but for those of my flawed ilk whose shortcomings have them scratching and clawing to keep the unfair advantage do, to, well, disease the world, disgustingly using it to give themselves a leg up.

**Stories from the Tenants Downstairs** is a voyeuristic, nuanced look into a world filled with tenderness, struggle, growth, fear, and the unbelievable willpower of those who've been held down and shackled by the sickness of unfettered capitalism.

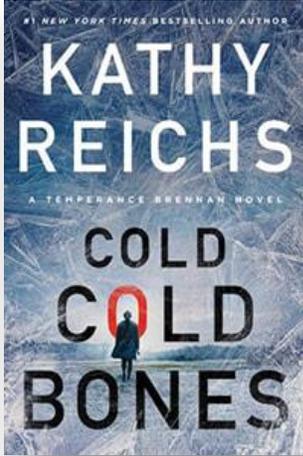
**Fofana** delivers a must-read for anyone willing to step outside their skin and open their hearts + eyes. Just because you may have been dealt a strong hand—its important to understand: most people are doing their best, regardless of what your ancestors have done.

WRITTEN: 21 July 2022

Lindsay Wincherauk

## COLD COLD BONES

KATHY REICHS



*Reichs is a masterful storyteller who will keep you riveted to the page.*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

21. This is the 21st Tempe Brennan novel; it seems like a great place to jump in.

Probably not.

I step into the eye of a hurricane. Tempe Brennan's life has come to a place of calmness. Her daughter has returned from army life. It's time to slow down and smell the roses – but they aren't blooming. Winter is swirling.

Tempe's daughter thirsts to make a difference – while suffering from PTSD. Tempe wants to coddle her, but she can't reach her. The first half of the book layers level after

level of terror as cold cases spring to life.

I know more about the forensic sciences than I ever thought possible. I want to learn more.

At the halfway mark, the literal eye of the storm has passed over us, and the pace of discovery becomes frenzied. Characters drop in and out. Some dull, like real life. Others are flat, like real life. Somehow, all are chilling, sorrowful, pedantic, compelling, like real life; once more layers are revealed.

Evil lurks.

Vengeance is a fickle beast.

I used to believe vengeance could be justified. Maybe it's always misguided?

The story races toward a desperate conclusion.

Will vengeance win?

Will Tempe survive?

Will her daughter Katy...?

Kathy Reichs is a masterful storyteller who keeps readers riveted to the pages as she unravels the horrific, starting with a perfectly extracted eye.

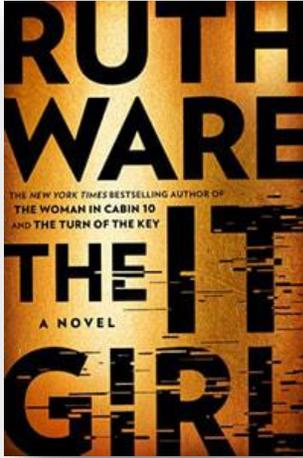
When you think, Tempe may succumb to her demons, Birdie (her cat) plays a massive role in calming the storm.

I now have 20 books to catch up on!

WRITTEN: 17 June 2022

Lindsay Wincherauk

**THE IT GIRL**  
**RUTH WARE**



*The IT GIRL will leave you breathless when you consume the last word.*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

Wealth. Entitlement. Beauty. Popularity. A killer sense of humour. IT.

When is IT enough?

Divergent worlds collide. Youthful ignorance is tossed into a blender. Everything is too bleeping important.

You get on the ride. A murder. Fracturing friendships.

*Did the wrong person get charged?*

Has entitlement swept the truth under the carpet?

It's okay, you're the chosen ones. But you're not.

How can you live with yourself?

You can't sleep.

Who dun it?

A friend? A stranger? A lover?

Stop the insanity.

Don't open a can of worms.

Let sleeping dogs lie. No good can come from the truth.

Sleep escapes you. Your blood pressure spikes. Could your husband be the killer?

No. That's not possible. How could it possibly be? Your doubts threaten to destroy your life.

A group of friends. They're kids. Acquaintances. Ephemeral. Fleeting memories. Guilt through innocence. Do the right thing.

**The IT GIRL** is a soul-stripping roller coaster ride as doing the right thing is trapped in the illusion of being IT. An IT so powerful IT threatens to destroy everyone in ITS wake who suffers from the weight of being less.

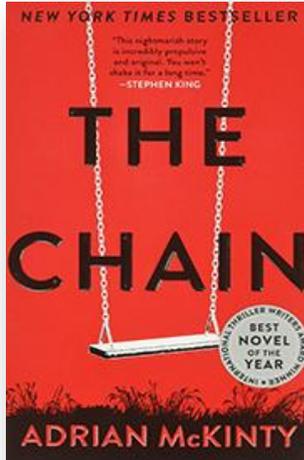
**The IT GIRL** will leave you guessing on every page + examining what is most important in life as you flip through this psychological labyrinth, and IT will leave you breathless when you consume the last word.

WRITTEN: 9 June 2022

Lindsay Wincherauk

## THE CHAIN

ADRIAN MCKINTY



*McKinty's writing is not only terrifying, but it also shakes the core of the world...*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

The Chain is most undoubtedly dark. Imagine being locked in a windowless room that is painted black → without lights.

I loved it. It frightened me.

If my kid, whom I don't have, was kidnapped, what would I be capable of doing?

Could I, if ordered, kidnap and kill another child to get mine back?

Would I burn in hell if I did?

McKinty's writing is not only terrifying → but it also shakes the core of the world by highlighting the evil he portrays in his writing, existing. Does it?

I turn a page, and the hair on my arms stands at attention. What will the mother do? How will she survive? Is she selling her soul to the devil? Are we all the devil?

Another page, I guess the outcome, a twist, a turn → my guess is incorrect.

I can't stop reading.

I need to know if the children are okay.

I need to know evil fails.

We have too many examples that evil walks amongst us in the real world.

I think greed might be the greatest fueler of evil.

I gasp at the end. Relief? Horror?

You must read to find the answer.

I'm glad I don't have children. I have five godchildren, though.

Would I be capable of killing to save them?

I think the answer might be absolutely.

Are we all monsters?

WRITTEN: 26 May 2022

Lindsay Wincherauk

## DREAM ON

ANGIE HOCKMAN



*A delightful romp into a love that can only be found in our dreams.*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

Fun!

My head hits a bunch of fluffy pillows, sinking into the luxurious feathers. I slip into REM.

Am I in a coma?

I'm in love.

Is this the love of my life?

I don't want to wake up.

Oh my, another love interest.

Are the people in my comma dream from my life?

Have I seen you before?

I must find out; I'm, we're, falling.

But I want to kiss someone else; my support network supports me.

I can't stop thinking about you. Fortunately, I have a blessed life. But, more, fortunately, the blessed people in my life are just as enamoured by my fantasy as I am. We kiss.

A sign from the universe tells me this is destiny?

What's destiny?

You lead me to true love, my soulmate, a fever dream. Is that what my comma dream is about?

Beer and flowers. Makes sense.

Dream On is a delightful romp into a love that can only be found in our dreams.

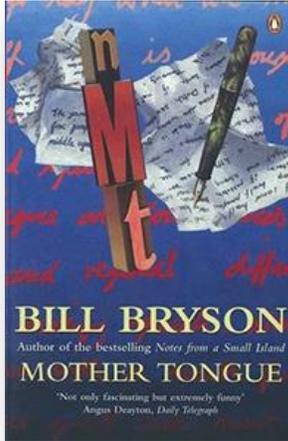
We kiss. Sparks fly, and the world is okay, if only for a moment.

I've now read a romantic comedy.

WRITTEN: 21 June 2022

## MOTHER TONGUE

BILL BRYSON



*A page after page Bryson had me guffawing at the sheer insanity of literacy.*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

I was lounging at home, languishing in exacerbating indolence. I had just finished placing my milk, cola, and water in a trine. The phone rattled, prattled, off the hook. It wasn't on a hook. It was a cellphone wrapped in cellophane. Why? Not an answerable query.

My maudlin mood rendered me sloth-like.

I sprang to my feet, throwing on my kicks and a jumper and dashed to the carport to retrieve my EV SUV vehicular auto. The garage door springs to life, exposing

a spectacularly radiant day. The sidewalk was being toasted like a tinsmith working his craft (or her).

I hit the autobahn, highway, open road → *En route* to the airport for a trip to paradise.

Seat 42D. Seated. The captain tells us to prepare for takeoff. A fly buzzes my head thrice times. I stand. My row mate whispers my fly is hanging low. Zip.

I sit. The plane taxis, Ubers, Lyfts down the runway and then blasts into the welcoming blue sky. Fly. Fly. Fly. Plane. Or do you prefer an aeroplane?

I'm not worried. I know you are malleable; I mean pliable.

I don't remember the day in Grade school when they taught us the diverse possibilities of the simple word fly.

How did we get here? Why do I know what trine means? I do.

Another quip by Bryson and page after page, Bryson has me guffawing at the sheer insanity of literacy. If only the dullards who created our language understood how hilarious they are? If only. I don't know what that implies?

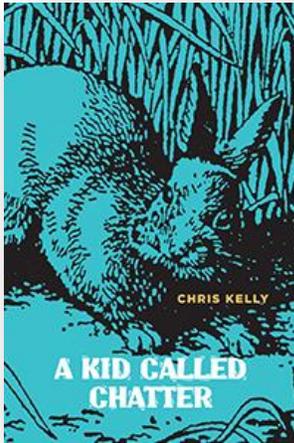
That's how this book made me feel.

Another page. I chortle. I think I earn more words, learn more, as I evolve.

WRITTEN: 21 May 2022

## A KID CALLED CHATTER

CHRIS KELLY



*A KID CALLED CHATTER enters the fray of classic dystopian kid (teen) stories from a fresh perspective.*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

A dying Jackrabbit walks up to an orphan →

There is no punch line.

What happened to unwanted kids 80. 90. 100 years ago → today?

All they'll ever know is a dystopia, regardless of the period.

What happens to kids today from solid homes?

Screen time → they live in dystopia; the only thing is, they don't know it.

What's the difference between the two?

The unwanted must learn to survive, at all costs, regardless of belonging, whereas the wanted flounders in a desperate quest for likes.

The unwanted must grow up, fend for themselves, and try to assign meaning to life while living a savage existence.

As for the wanted, if they're not given precisely what they desire, that's okay; they discard what they don't like and start over fresh and unscathed.

**A KID CALLED CHATTER** enters the fray of classic dystopian kid (teen) story from a fresh perspective. Think: Hunger Games meets Maze Runner wrestles with Divergent → with a twist → the backstory of the kids in **CHATTER** is desperation cloaked in the cruelty of being orphaned. Sure, the kids in the stories mentioned are orphans as well, but **CHATTER** starts out desperate as the kids are forced to search frantically for anything to hold on to → as a dying animal walks up to **CHATTER** looking for the comfort of death.

Like other dystopian stories, there may be a hierarchy, but in **CHATTER** it can only be found in the individual souls of those who've started life in a dystopian world.

That's how **CHATTER** made me feel.

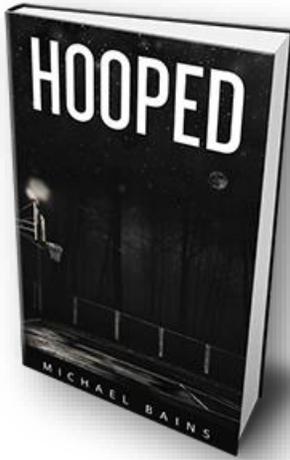
WRITTEN: 17 May 2022

## HOOPED HOOPED

MICHAEL BAINS

*Bains's storytelling is gripping, frantically paced, and relatable.*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*



Hooped is an important book tackling a subject plaguing today's youth in this ever-evolving, desperate, fast-paced world.

Bains's storytelling is gripping, frantically paced, and relatable as he tells the story of Jimmy, a high school basketball star who, like most teenagers, is trying to find his place in the world → as he battles with the directions life is pulling him. Bains's messaging is strong. The parts where Jimmy battles with thoughts meandering through his mind are compelling. And Bains's portrayal of a world where support networks are all around us is vitally important for today's kids to help them navigate life and

understand support is there for them, if only they open their eyes. Bains's message is positive, helping us cheer for Jimmy to find the right voices and overcome the temptation of easy money (drug dealing), hoping he finds a higher purpose to pursue.

But.

Bains's efforts to paint a cultural element into Hoops fails. Readers would never know Jimmy was of Indian descent until Bains tells us. Telling readers Jimmy's mother loved watching his child eat being a cultural thing Caucasians wouldn't understand has a propensity to add to the stereotype Caucasians are happy to glom on → us, Caucasians may have come a long way in stamping down patriarchy, but we are not immune. Just look at the US Supreme Court. A mother loving feeding her children has nothing to do with culture.

Hooped is a good book. It could have been great if only it had avoided the stereotypes and the (fortunately only occasionally) juvenile descriptions of the looks and anatomy of certain characters. If you want to avoid stereotypes, it might be prudent to shy away from perpetuating them.

That's how this book made me feel.

WRITTEN: 13 May 2022

# BOOK THOUGHTS

## BATCH 21



21. **BYSTANDER - MIKE STEEVES**
22. **BOY | IN THE | BLUE HAMMOCK - DARREN GROTH**
23. **UNREST - EMMA Côté**
24. **THIS BRIGHT FUTURE - BOBBY HALL**
25. **HER PRETTY FACE - ROBYN HARDING**
26. **THE PERFECT FAMILY - ROBYN HARDING**
27. **REMNANTS - Céline HUGHYBAERT**
28. **HEROIN (AN ILLUSTRATED HISTORY)**
29. **GOOD MOM ON PAPER**
30. **LOU WHO? - LOUISE JOHNSON**

**BLUE = MEMOIR OR BIOGRAPHICAL**

**BLACK = FICTION**

**DARK RED = EDUCATIONAL**

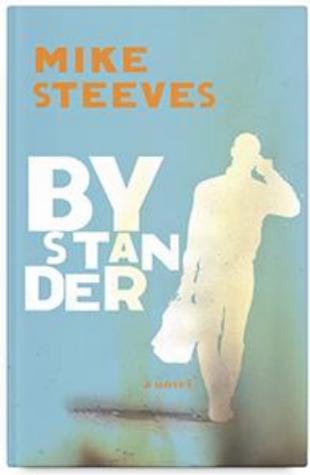
**PURPLE = ESSAY OR STORIES**

**ORANGE = POETRY**

Lindsay Wincherauk

## BYSTANDER

MIKE STEEVES



*This Might be the Best Read of the Year!*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

I crack the book open.

**Page 1:** A smile breaks on my face.

It won't leave me. I haven't felt this joyful in a long time.

Peter Simon is a mess, beyond the messiest of messes. He wants to be a hero, → thinking he'd be more than worthy if the right crisis moment presented.

But in reality, his mind is rioting in disarray. Peter wants to be the star in his life story as his stream-of-consciousness flows, no, blasts through his mind in tsunami after tsunami of what he really is → milquetoast to the nth degree. Plus 1.

We're all conflicted.

On the one hand, we want to get off life's sidelines and make a difference.

On the other, we realize we're not the main character in our own lives, but instead, we have bit parts.

Loners constantly update their Social Media + read long-form articles as they desperately work at nothing but blending in. Gentrification attacks us all, hyperbolic on steroids. Unfortunately, there is no place to hide.

Our minds race.

Why am I laughing at a breaking mind? I'm lonely. Every page I read is about someone I know, or about me, my dreams, hopes, fears, and wondering who wants to sleep with me?

*Is city life about hiding?*

This might be the best read of the year.

**Page 253:** I'm still smiling.

I close the book, I'm spent, in a good way!

We all want to be heroes → but why bother?

Tomorrow brings a new day.

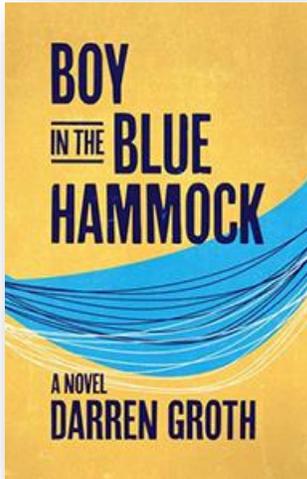
WRITTEN: 19 April 2022

## BOY | IN THE | BLUE HAMMOCK

DARREN GROTH

*Boy | in the | Blue Hammock is worthy of classic status.*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*



The classic book **The Road (Cormac McCarthy)** is one of my favourite books. A boy and father navigate a dystopian landscape. Survival is the only goal.

Switch out the father for Tao (Dog) → and Groth takes us on a heart-wrenching ride through a fracturing world. A world where a failed service dog and an autistic teenager face a gauntlet of division and hatred.

**Slide over The Road;** *there is a new book nudging past you on my favourite list. Groth's writing is extraordinary, heart-eviscerating, and gripping. Tao Dog + Boy (Kasper), fights for survival, after Tao (Dog), discovers Man, Woman, and Girl, had been gruesomely murdered. Kasper is the only human family survivor, hiding in the security of his blue hammock, when Tao finds him.*

**Boy | in the | Blue Hammock** *is worthy of classic status; every page* yanked at my emotions → my tears blending with the chills racing through my veins.

We are all judged. The entitled and privileged, walking amongst us, label us, as they tread in the shallow end of life. *Hindered by denial.* All to make them feel more, by tagging others as less. The judgement is flawed. Groth blasts bright lights on the flaws. Tao and Kasper share the beauty of vulnerability, compassion, and empathy. Along the way through their struggles to be, they share the unlimited powers of unconditional.

**Backing up to the entitled,** in the grand scheme of things, they are lacking because, for many, they cannot understand equal is not something to strive for. If they only opened their hearts, they could learn valuable lessons about being human from Boy and Dog.

I was born in a place where women deemed unfit by society were sent to be fixed. If their children survived, they were sold or adopted out, never to be spoken of again. I have carried the crushing weight of the unwanted label and the darkness of stigma attached to it throughout life. I am not comparing my journey to an autistic child. But I understand vulnerability and the piercing eyes of those often looking down on me.

A friend of mine believes homeless people are lazy. My heart cringes. I know life isn't always easy. Especially if people are holding you down.

I'm lucky. Why?

Somehow, I avoided bitterness; instead, finding compassion + empathy and an understanding each person is capable of unconditional if only given a chance. And despite being deemed expendable, I'm still here.

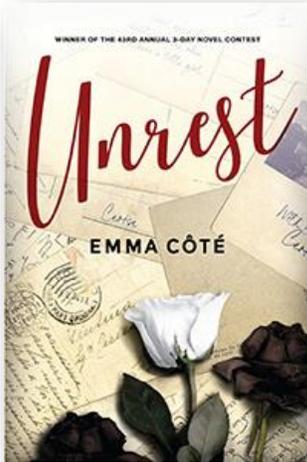
Thanks, Boy, thanks, Dog, you make the world a better place.

WRITTEN: 23 April 2022

Lindsay Wincherauk

## UNREST

EMMA CÔTÉ



*Côté's mordant sense of humour is heartwarming.*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

I feared this book. It's about a woman (mortician) embarking on a trip to find herself and an understanding of her and her mother's frayed relationship → lost in the complexities of living.

How can a small book pack such a powerful punch?

Côté's delicious humour is sprinkled throughout the pages, softening the blow it would deliver to many readers.

I was born in a religion sanctioned home for women deemed wayward, and feeble-minded. If the mothers and babies survived (many didn't—do residential

schools spring to mind?), the babies were usually ripped out of their mother's arms and adopted out to farm families or sold to wealthy couples → never to be spoken of again. A shame to family, community, and religion. I was one of those babies. The night they were coming to take me away (1963), while alongside my mother's deathbed (2016), she confessed she had begged her mother (my mother) to keep me. I was never supposed to know the truth. Confusing? I lived this.

Until I accidentally found out, I watched "my mother" take her last breath, only to find out 16 years later. My life started out as a lie → Hence meeting my real birth mother alongside her deathbed.

The week before her mother died, I had to drive "her mother" to the hospital; we stopped on the steps of our home, and "her mother" looked at me through tear-stained eyes and said, "I'm never going to be home again, am I?"

I lied.

In October 2016, as I walked out of my mother's hospital room, she looked at me through tear-stained eyes and said, "I'm never going to see you again, am I?"

What does any of this have to do with **Unrest**?

**Unrest**, as much as it is a quirky read, it is eons more; it connected profoundly with me, comforted my heart, helping me let go of some of the disdain I have been carrying throughout life toward those who took part in the lie of who I am?

Côté's mordant sense of humour is heartwarming, making this hundred-page book a masterpiece much larger than the page count suggests.

WRITTEN: 30 April 2022

## THIS BRIGHT FUTURE

BOBBY HALL



*Bobby Hall is an exceptional human being who is an exception.*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

A boy walks through his dangerous neighbourhood, asking people if they have children he can play with. I feel a tug at my heartstrings.

I used to hide in a closet in a make-believe world to remain safe and calm.

*"Donna was super-cool except that she was a chain-smoker and a hard-core drug addict and alcoholic. She loved ginger ale, too, but let's not hold that against her."*

How does any child survive in a world where they need to salvage their soul?

I've read two Bobby Hall books → and loved them both. Supermarket is an all-time favourite. The world is better because Bobby found the courage and strength to share his fractured childhood. Hall has an unbelievable capacity for empathy and compassion, somehow understanding the unrelenting weight of mental health problems and addiction. He lived it. Every day. There is no reason for his survival. His greatness. His lyricism. It makes little sense he is still with us. He gets that. We're lucky.

In *This Future is Bright*, every word comes from the heart. Not blaming. Page after page, Hall searches to forgive the unforgiving nature of his childhood, inflicted upon him by those supposed to care for him but couldn't escape their selfishness delivered through the destructive disease they've been cursed with.

Equality does not exist in a world where we are constantly being attacked, labelled, and divided.

I've read two Bobby Hall books → just before typing my thoughts on this one; I listened to my first Logic track (track? did I just date myself?): 1-800-273-8255 (a song about mental health). Tears welled in my eyes. I'm almost 62.

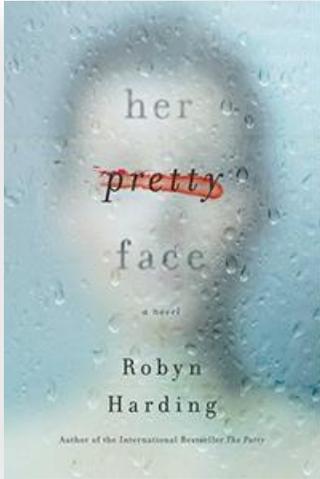
We are lucky; Bobby Hall is an exceptional human being who is an exception. He had no business surviving his upbringing. But despite all the damage it has wreaked upon him, Hall doesn't blame → instead, he simply tries to understand!

WRITTEN: 25 April 2022

Lindsay Wincherauk

## HER PRETTY FACE

ROBYN HARDING



*Harding is an uncanny storyteller who has this insane ability to draw you in word one.*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

This is the second Robyn Harding book I read in the last month. I loved them both. I didn't know what to expect → I thought they both would be light romps suitable for becoming Netflix Productions. They are, but that sells them short.

Harding is an uncanny storyteller who has this insane ability to draw you in word one and keep you engaged until the last word.

It felt like I was driving around the city picking up strangers, and for a block or two, they would share their side of an unravelling story. Then, when one character would get out, another would immediately hop in → layering and layering this tale to the point where what could easily be fluff morphed it into something far more profound with each page turned.

I'm riding with a psychopath, a sociopath, am I (?)

Her best friend hops in, ghosts from her past are chasing her. Her sociopathic friend protects her. They find a love for each other.

Another stop, another character. We are all flawed + damaged. I can relate. Who isn't damaged? I like every character, even the sociopathic psychopath (?)

But that's the thing. Who isn't drawn to madness? A page turns and Harding has us guessing what's next? On every page → *I know what's next?* I'm wrong. I think I know over and over again. Wrong. Wrong. And wrong.

The last word is shared.

The passengers move on.

We're left with deep questions.

Is it okay to be friends with a psychopath? When are debts to society fully paid? Is it our place to judge madness?

Harding is an exceptional storyteller. I read two of her books in a month without being aware she's a friend's sister.

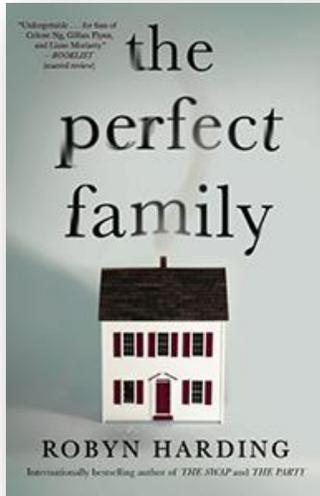
I'm not sure if two Harding books in a month are enough.

WRITTEN: 6 May 2022

Lindsay Wincherauk

## THE PERFECT FAMILY

ROBYN HARDING



*Lies + Secrets rock families to the core.*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

Let's get this out of the way → definitely a favourite!

Twists, turns, terrifying, delightful → pages flipping.

The two things destroying families the most are:

*What to eat?*

*Financial woes?*

Wrong.

*Lies. Secrets.*

This book hit me hard → my entire life.

A father (?) caring too much about image and the thoughts of others, inflicting pain on the family.

A mother (?) burdened by having to shade emotions to not rock the boat.

The pressure to be more → to make the family proud crushes the children. Fuelling them with resentment as the son can't live up to carrying the family torch, and the daughter desperately needs to be loved and noticed. The pain of family deception turns them into outsiders, often walking alone, suffering in individuality. Their every move is watched.

The secrets create division, paranoia → stifling growth.

*Do the right thing?*

Nobody dares to stand up, and the world is out to get them, violently.

*Can you possibly survive? Unite? Overcome?*

I cheer for them.

Perfection is nothing more than a fantasy when the world is against you.

Truth be told, do they get a second chance?

### THE ENDING

Brilliant!

As for my family's secret (me), I'm okay, I think? → But our family is forever fractured.

WRITTEN: 8 April 2022

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REMNANTS  
REMNANTS

Céline HUGHYBAERT



*A compelling journey through grief, emphasizing the importance of protecting our fragile souls.*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

When I was born, my father was 56. Mum was 46. My friend Tony's mother was 26 years younger than mine. I spent most of my time at Tony's house or Chris's house or →

Dad was an old hard man. He drank + smoked despite suffering a collapsed lung, which turned me into the neighbourhood's anti-smoking advocate in my early teens.

In 1978, Cancer (dad) paid our family a visit. The Big C took our family on a seven-year roller coaster ride with a revolving door between the hospital and home. I watched dad die the day after turning 25 (1985), with a brother and my mother at my side.

When dad was in the hospital, I visited him at least 1200 times. I don't remember a single visit or conversation. I don't recall many conversations with my father at all.

In 2003, I discovered he wasn't my birth father. I was born in a place of shame. I met my birth father in 2006 over lunch. Two weeks later, I had to inform him he wasn't my birth father, and my father died (figuratively) a second time.

It doesn't matter how I rearrange my photo albums; I can't find a comforting narrative. I hate that reality.

**REMNANTS** is a compelling journey through grief, emphasizing the importance of protecting our fragile souls, bringing an understanding that no matter what we've gone through → it is humbling and human to understand life is complex. The people who were tasked with nurturing us are only humans themselves.

*"There were happy times, but maybe not enough to make up for the unhappy ones. And I understand him better, as I get older. Life is hard."*

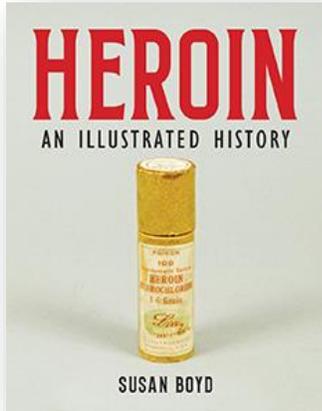
Remnants is a story about forgiveness and framing memories in the best fashion to continue living and hopefully thriving.

I forgive you dad → I just wish I knew who you are?

WRITTEN: 2 May 2022

## HEROIN (AN ILLUSTRATED HISTORY)

SUSAN BOYD



*As long as politicians and “moral” leaders can use suffering for their gain...*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

HEROIN (AN ILLUSTRATED HISTORY) is a gorgeous book.

Susan Boyd is exemplary in tamping down the stigma afflicting not only the usage of Heroin but also all (illegal) substances. This is a vitally important book.

I never thought I would become a neophyte on this controversial subject. But Boyd’s words caused my mind to rattle awake and form thoughts on Heroin, drugs, a racialized legal system, white supremacy, and not to be left out of the mix, the toxicity seeping into the halls of the

morally vapid portions of Christianity. Drug policy is frankly a war on, and against, the poor. From the beginning of time, politicians and religious leaders needed targets to demonize to control their shrinking flocks. An easy target is those suffering in the grips of poverty and not born into birthright. Drug users are not lesser. Life is bleeping hard. All drugs aren’t the same, nor do they affect every user the same way. There is no broad brush.

As long as politicians and religious leaders believe it is a tool in their toolbox to solicit votes of those amongst us on high horses → humanizing those who fall through society’s cracks, don’t have much of a chance.

HEROIN (AN ILLUSTRATED HISTORY) has made me hypersensitive to the hypocritical judgement of people I know. People riding through life on high horses, believing somehow, they are immune to life struggles, believing anyone battling addiction did it to themselves and, therefore, deserves no compassion. That sickens me.

As long as politicians and “moral” leaders can use suffering for their gain, how will we ever be able to stamp out racism, white supremacy, poverty, and the rot of misguided religion?

Page 61 could have been taken right out of the RIGHT-WING POLITICAL PLAYBOOK, sorry about the ALLCAPS.

That’s how this book made me feel.

WRITTEN: 10 May 2022

Lindsay Wincherauk

## GOOD MOM ON PAPER

### A COLLABORATION

*Without our courageous, incredible mothers, I'm not sure we'd be here today.*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

We live in a patriarchal world.

Women have *been dealt an unfair hand* from the beginning of time.

A man and a woman sit down at the card table.

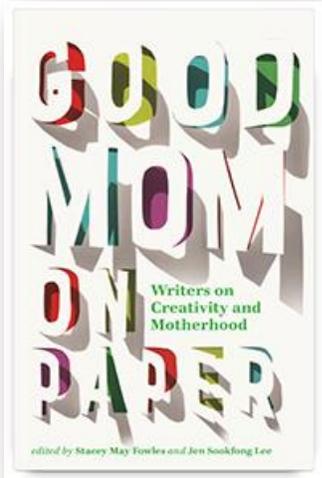
We deal men two cards, 1) be a man; and 2) do whatever you want.

Of course, I am cut a little slack because I'm a man named Lindsay.

We deal women a laundry list of cards, emphasis on, laundry.

**GOOD MOM ON PAPER** is a vital read for any man, man enough to step up and acknowledge the disparity between their worlds and those of women.

Heck, **WORKING MOTHER**, is a label. WTF.



In **GOOD MOM ON PAPER**, we learn about moms. Moms are tasked with an endless list of full-time work: nurturing, child-rearing, cleaning, cooking, working, and on and on and on and on and maybe finding time for writing, all while being forced to hide the fact, they have children. Motherhood is the equivalent of umpteen full-time gigs. Male writers have one task: write, maybe two, get messed up on substances to stoke the creative juices. After all, they say writing comes from suffering.

*But I'm suffering.*

*Keep it down and get back in the kitchen.*

Harsh? Yes. Reality? Mostly.

I met my mother alongside her deathbed, 29 years after I thought I had watched my mother die (a long story).

I have carried anger at the women tasked with raising me throughout my life.

I thought they had failed.

My anger was misdirected.

**GOOD MOM ON PAPER**, makes it abundantly clear, we live in a patriarchal world, and helped me realize the women in my life did the best they could while facing the daunting realities of a patriarchal world.

Without our incredible, courageous mothers, I'm not sure we'd be here today.

Thank you. Keep writing. We need you. I wish you could be dealt fewer cards.

WRITTEN: 4 May 2022

## LOU WHO? FOO MHO?

LOUISE JOHNSON



*I learnt Elton John can never have enough flowers.*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

There is a 50/50 chance those in the dating pool are dancing with the damaged product of divorce. It's likely more like 57.4/42.6.

Most of us are broken and dragging with us a crushing amount of lifetime baggage. *Life is so bleeping fast now.*

Swipe right. Judge. Swipe left. Ewe. Judge. Judge. Judge. It's a battlefield.

**I hop into a time machine**, transporting me back to a locker room. The alpha commands the stage. We listen in awe. Misogyny rules. His conquests are all perfect physical specimens; each is given a pet name. He is the best lover in the world. We listen in awe.

**Flash forward.** Regardless of gender, → it becomes increasingly acceptable (and the right thing) for women to own their sexuality. The labels attached to being sexually active are becoming gender non-specific. *Not quickly enough?*

Back in the locker room, the one commanding the stage loses interest because 'perfect physicality' and 'great in bed' are → the top of the mountain. Down is the only option afterward.

When did dating become so much work? When did the aftermath of 'perfect' and 'great' become: *Let's map out the rest of our lives together?* Can any potential relationship survive the weight of being in your *twenties*, and the person who is supposed to bring comfort → adds nothing but pressure?

How can someone claim not to be confident and continually say everyone they meet is perfect, and the sex is → when they are the common denominator?

**Lou Who?** Reads like a locker room chat with a friend where misogyny isn't being shunned, but it is embraced, only with the shoe on the other foot.

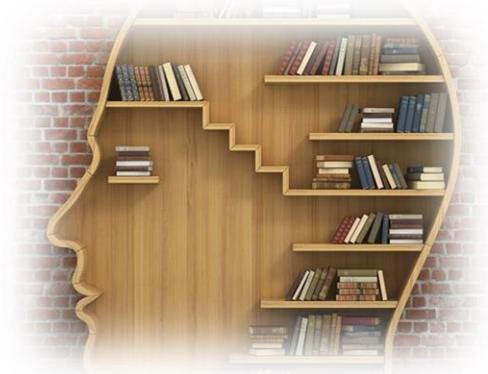
**Lou Who?** Reads like a projection of *will* without understanding the pinnacle—once reached, it's easier to run downhill instead of trying to align values, hopes, and dreams. For example, 57.4% of marriages end in divorce → *if the burden to be* is too significant (in one's twenties); there is only one way for that number to go.

And why, when claiming cultural awareness, would a line about eyebrows, "*at least not a straight guy,*" be in the book? *A cheap laugh? A sweeping generalization?*

WRITTEN: 12 April 2022

# BOOK THOUGHTS

## BATCH 20



1. BLUEBIRD - GENEVIEVE GRAHAM
2. GIRL IN ICE - ERICA FERENCIK
3. THE BOOK OF SMALLER - ROB MCLENNAN
4. THE EMPLOYEES - OLGA RAVN
5. NEVERWHERE - NEIL GAIMAN
6. THE CANDY HOUSE - JENNIFER EGAN
7. A HERO OF OUR TIME - NABEN RUTHNUM
8. NOTICE - DUSTIN COLE
9. I WISH I COULD BE PETER FALK - PAUL ZITS
10. HIGH ACHIEVER - TIFFANY JENKINS

BLUE = MEMOIR OR BIOGRAPHICAL

BLACK = FICTION

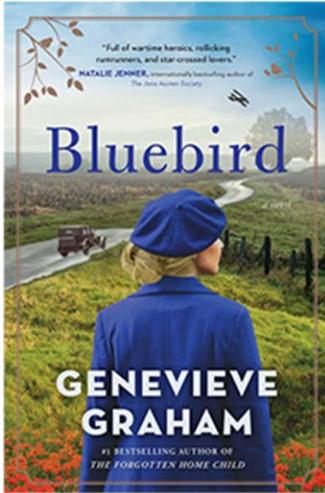
DARK RED = EDUCATIONAL

PURPLE = ESSAY OR STORIES

ORANGE = POETRY

BLUEBIRD  
REOBIRKD

GENEVIEVE GRAHAM



*Destined to be a Best Seller!*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

*Destined to be a Best Seller!*

I dive in, tunnelling my way through the First World War in Belgium.

I'm taken aback. The timing of this release is eerie.

What's the point of war (any war)? Soldiers decide who to kill because of the fabric on their uniforms (deep in the darkness). Seriously.

*Is the point to satiate the egos evil?*

Passion is found in horror.

Time shifts.

A discovery is made in present day.

Emotions run strong with every discovery made.

I'm in. The pages speed up.

Genevieve Graham drops us onto the pages. Readers become part of the story as it sweeps us back and forth, past to present to past. Love blossoms. The horrible truths of war become glaringly apparent as soldiers return, all of them damaged, mentally, physically – many amputees. How do returning soldiers exist in a world they fought so gallantly for its very existence?

Shunned. Damaged. Lost.

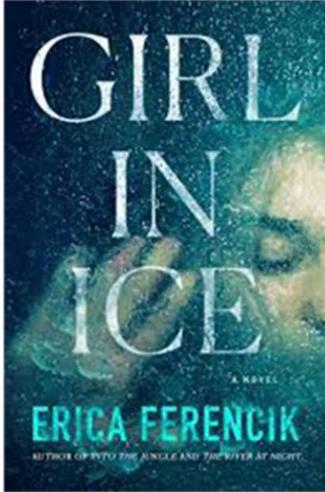
Bluebird is an exhilarating ride, twisting + turning; it left me craving more pages as I cheered for love to blossom, as I tunnelled through the trenches, and as I rode shotgun with the rumrunners of Windsor Ontario during prohibition.

Whether it was in the mind-blowing passages in the past or the enlightening, heart-wrenching discoveries of the present. Bluebird delivered the rarest of combinations: An education of a world I never knew existed, and warmth only found in the comforts of love discovered in the unlikeliest of places.

WRITTEN: 14 March 2022

## GIRL IN ICE

ERICA FERENCIK



*Humans are like vandals being asked to fix our vandalism.*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

Girl in Ice reads like a world-renowned DJ dropping beats, layering their set, inserting elements. Love. Lose. Fear. Sorrow. Deception. Ego. With the bass line thumping, you guess what's coming next. And with your heart about to burst out of your chest, you're taken on an exhilarating free fall. Gasping for air as the layers are uncovered. What you may have thought was coming arcs in a different direction. You are left spent, satisfied, shaking, and wanting another beat at the end of this ride. A ride that is exhilarating + terrifying.

The most horrifying layer in this immensely readable ride is a plastic toy troll found in the belly of a walrus in the Arctic.

I draw a bath; I look around my bathroom. Almost everything is plastic. Noise for decades has bombarded and conditioned us, humans, telling us what to do, how to live, what to buy. We're excellent students. Mostly, we've done what we're told.

A giant finger is being pointed at us, telling us we are destroying the earth. We must get our egos in check and listen to the new message. But the thing is, we humans are like vandals being asked to fix our vandalism. It's overwhelming. We need decades of new conditioning for it to sink in.

How can we fix earth when we debate plastic straws and bags when a plastic troll is found in the belly of a walrus in the Arctic?

Maybe it is too late for us to say sorry?

WRITTEN: 25 March 2022

**THE EMPLOYEES**  
**THE EMPLOYEES?**  
**OLGA RAVN**



*Unfettered capitalism may bring about the destruction of humanity.*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

Greed is a festering disease. Unfettered capitalism may bring about the destruction of humanity. As we Humans race toward, what?

The Employees is supposed to be Sci-Fi. I disagree. It is the thesis of an experiment with the subjects being us.

A ship traverses space the Six-Thousand Ship. Inhabited with Humans and humanoids and, objects, bringing humans hope of a world they've left behind. The humans and humanoids are being studied—how do they work?—productivity is paramount. But they don't seem to produce anything, except

for work. The story is supposed to be about what it is like to be human. I guess it is. But it is much more. It is an experiment created by greed to drain the last drops of blood and energy from the product, humans. The ship soars through the galaxies, drifting further from the earth. The humans' memories wane. Everything they are emotionally attached to floats into the ether—the thinking is, without the cumbersome of humanness, the humans will become more productive. Instead, paranoia and fear take over.

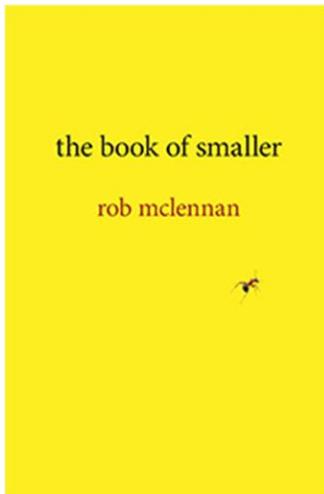
The humanoids are the perfect worker until the AI develops human-like emotions, love, empathy, and compassion. Emotions are infectious, and Humanoid productively wanes—and the experiment fails—with life needing to be destroyed, so greed can try again.

The Employees mirror real life. My career came crashing to a halt at the beginning of the pandemic. With greed dictating, it must keep me away from the younger replacements because greed doesn't want productivity to be infected with compassion and empathy.

WRITTEN: 24 March 2022

the book of smaller  
THE BOOK OF SMALLER

ROB MCLENNAN



*(the book of smaller) deserves a place on your coffee table.*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

**First Word:** Civilization.

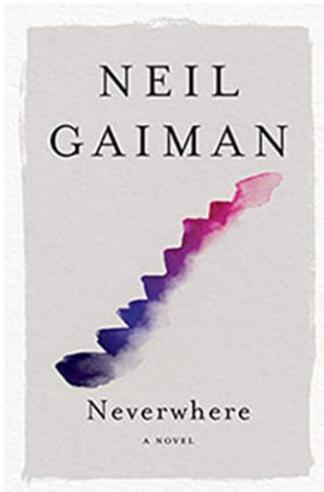
Are we really civilized? Some of the water we drink comes from some factory. Swollen Members? Paraphrased. I don't know what poetry is? Is this poetry? Two children. A scattered existence. Thoughts bombard us. Floating in from the ether. What is this? A light goes on. I get it. I love it. It flows. It speaks to me. The thaw comes. A puddle forms. We must name it. Happy birthday to me. Chicken wings. Eat them up. Yum. Look into the sun Mr. President. Eclipse. Why do I understand? I think you are telling me life is a beautiful mess. I think you are telling me every day is new and we must make the best of what it gifts us. I think? Ten poetry books read. Am I understanding? In the know? Speaking the language. 'History belongs in a museum.' Resist the hate. We don't want yours. (the book of smaller) deserves a place on coffee tables, everywhere. Your guests will thank you. Now, where did I put my reading glasses?

This might be the best book cover of the year. You pick the year!

WRITTEN: 16 March 2022

## NEVERWHERE

NEIL GAIMAN



*Phantasmagorical + Magic + Mystical: Where dreams go for adventure.*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

I am fighting a righteous battle against insomnia, and I'm losing.

A story comes on the news about the importance of sleep. I think lack of sleep is fuelling my creativity—the story says otherwise—apparently, sleep fuels creativity.

Like many people, my life trips into the rudders of mundane routine. Everything seems in place, and then opposing forces rip it apart. So please, sweet slumber, arrest me in your purple cloak.

I can't sleep. I drift into a phantasmagorical dream. My mundane existence falls through the cracks into the depths of despair of another world. Mystical beings are all around. Rat-speakers speak with rats. I want mundane to return. Got to pee. No. I'm in the middle of the dream. I return. The dream is different now. The characters in it are magical, mystical, evil, and even more phantasmagorical. Where am I? Resist. I need to pee. Damn. I return. Luckily, to a new part of the dream: connecting, fear, magic, horror, love. I want to go home. I fight and fight and fight for my existence. I exist. I'm returned to the dullness of living. Everything I wanted, when I was gone, I could have.

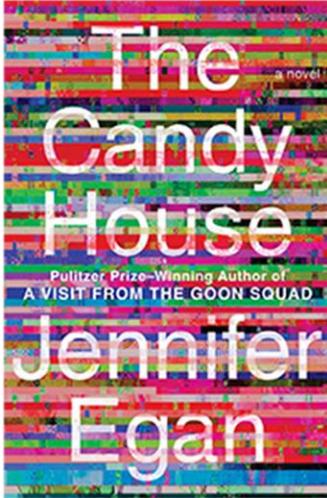
I want to return to slumber; I want to return to the dream; I want to return to phantasmagorical.

*That's how this book made me feel.*

WRITTEN: 16 March 2022

## THE CANDY HOUSE

JENNIFER EGAN



*I needed that (this).*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

When I sat down to write my thoughts on this book, I wanted to write something pithy, intellectual, worthy of being in the Advance Praise.

Stop.

Why?

I often avoid the Advanced Praise because they make me feel less – like if I don't understand the depth of what I'm reading. I don't like feeling that way.

Stop.

For me, AP often comes across as the praise-er is writing to get paid – to flex their intellectual superiority. Probably not. But that is how I feel.

Trying to intellectualize *The Candy House* would come across as stilted, pretentious.

Instead, to do *The Candy House* justice, I suggest picking three or four of your favourite adjectives, thesaurus-ize them (similar to steroids), and that won't even do this book justice.

The world is a mess. We have a war battling with a killer virus for air time. Our left hand is trying to sever our right (and vice versa). I'm choosing to be willfully ignorant about what's happening in the world because I don't want to sound like the taking pundits, cheering for body counts while people suffer. Listen to your friends' conversations. Heck, I'm watching Dick Wolf crime dramas to cheer myself up.

Most people, now sound like the talking heads spinning in shallowness as we sink in the deep end, trying to grasp onto anything to survive.

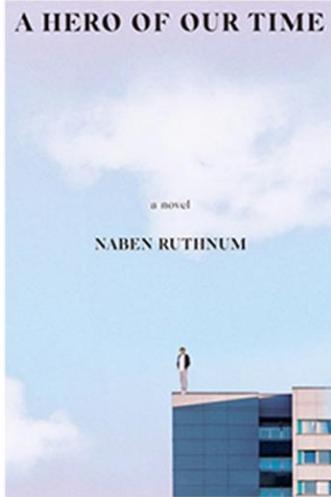
Jennifer Egan has an uncanny talent to talk about a highway or the sky, describing them in such a way they become living parts of the story. Her characters are us, laced with the beauty of our fracturing flawed lives, relatable, struggling, hilarious in our struggle (I want to scream like Alfred) to find out whatever's coming next. So, I reach for something to hold on to – and lucky for me – I read *The Candy House*; just when I needed it most.

I'm not sure I need to read ever again. Maybe I'll read *The Candy House* over and over and over – *I needed that (this)!*

WRITTEN: 10 March 2022

## A HERO OF OUR TIME

NABEN RUTHNUM



*The violence oozing out of the word “pleasant” is duly noted.*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

*“You’re a mediocre, pleasant Indo-Canadian, the perfect hyphenate-union of cultures to elicit zero interest, and you moved to Los Angeles two years ago. That’s the start of you. You’re background – the degree, your father’s transferred academic prestige – those are stats, not story. You made a move that allows you to exist in the world, to make a salary while you think small thoughts to yourself, and that’s your beginning and end...”*

Why am I so fragile to allow you to think or speak of me how you do?

Coming from another world, culture, and existence is too much for me to comprehend. I just want to blend in. You have no right to judge me, use me as a prop, or feign your awakening. You are what you are, a manipulator. A person who climbs over people and destroys them because you are part of a disease, festering in the online world (hiding in a screen), a bastion of illness where you can disparage me. You flex your ignorance, claiming you are not the racist garbage you are. My mother spews unconditional by pushing me out of her life – because she can’t stand me, I mean bear to have me see who she really is.

How could I possibly have a chance to be well-rounded?

I need a drink to cloud the days.

I love you, but I’m so disgusted with myself, I am incapable of intimacy.

I’m broken.

I want to think small thoughts; the violence oozing out of the word “pleasant” is duly noted.

*That’s how this book made me feel.*

WRITTEN: 27 February 2022

## NOTICE

DUSTIN COLE



*Sometimes greed is nothing more than sleaziness...*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

I've spent the last 32 years living in Vancouver. Notice is about a slice of life in Vancouver.

I'm officially worried about millennials. I think the main character, Levett, is a millennial? Are they all so damaged? Worrisome? Dull? Unlikeable?

The story is one of greed. Sometimes, greed is nothing more than sleaziness → Levitt isn't likeable. Nobody in this story is likeable. I wouldn't call them entitled. I would just call them flat, like a broken-down cardboard box.

Dustin Cole has a massive vocabulary. His phraseology is sui generis, placing him on par with the superb storytellers of our time. Through Levett, Cole expresses anger and frustration with a world where many millennials are tripping into lethargy. His stunningly painful descriptions of the downtrodden walking amongst us are heart-wrenching. Dustin is a fabulous writer.

### BUT

The story bogs down a third of the way in because readers must keep cracking open the dictionary paragraph after paragraph. It becomes tedious. Sometimes a tree just needs to be a tree, and the sky is okay just being the sky.

Blade Girl rolls by – if you've spent time in Vancouver, you likely know who she is. Blade Girl is a recurring character, a marker of sorts – but she really marks nothing. Not growth or desperation – she's just there.

"Notice" is like a graffiti artist painting Vancouver with a dystopian brush. Levett is whiney. He's a woe is me, individual. Who has focused on darkness instead of light? The story is about being evicted from home because of greed. At the story's end, I didn't care whether Levett was evicted or not.

I do, however, know what *trine* and *lambent* mean – I'm not sure when I'll find a chance to use them.

WRITTEN: 30 March 2022

## I WISH I COULD BE PETER FALK

PAUL ZITS



*We desperately try to hold onto who we are – who to be.*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

Dan Brown, Shia LaBeouf, Neil Armstrong, Nicolas Cage, Peter Falk.

Who do you want to be?

How quickly we become irrelevant.

What to wear, eat, read, dream?

Conditioning?

We're all conditioned.

We desperately try to hold on to who we are – who to be.

90

Forces tear us apart.

Am I cool, intellectual, hot, desirable?

I want it all.

But how?

Illusiveness.

Don't judge me.

You are doing the same.

Turn on the tube → it will show us the way → it doesn't.

How did we get here?

By listening to the noise...

I want to be me.

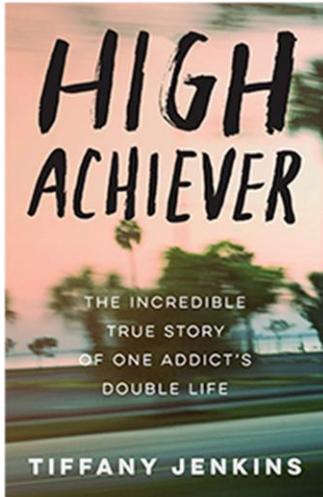
*Where am I hiding?*

WRITTEN: 26 February 2022

Lindsay Wincherauk

## HIGH ACHIEVER

TIFFANY JENKINS



*Not a Starred Review*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

There is not a single five-year-old on this planet who, if asked what they want to be when they grow up? →

Who'd say I want to become a drug-addicted thief, lying and stealing from everyone, including those who still love them.

When I first put this book down, my initial thought was, wow, what a ride – it had kept me engaged – even cheering for the main character. And then a week passed.

At the end of the week, my thoughts changed from enjoyable read to, I doubt this book would have been published if the author wasn't white.

I do not downplay the seriousness and destruction caused to those who fall through the massive societal cracks → those who often become casualties in a world addicted to greed.

What are the roots of addiction? Don't we need to stop pulling people out of the water and instead; go upstream and find the honesty within ourselves to discuss why they are falling in, in the first place? Until we do that, aren't we living in denial like those in the throes of addiction?

I am glad Tiffany survived her ordeal with basically a slap on the wrist. I don't believe her broken-hearted boyfriend was ignorant of her disease (repeated often). Tiffany is boastful about her masterful ability to bend the truth. Maybe she is a master?

If you've ever known anyone struggling with the stigma of addiction, you'd know their lies are transparent. But, like an addicted person desperately trying to hold on to a shred of who they are, the societal stigma of addiction rips apart the souls of those who love them and just don't know what to do, as well.

Tiffany is right. Nobody cares if she was a cheerleader or funny or blah, blah, blah. We all care she survived.

I think the book would have been more honest if she wrote it while high.

Writing it after the fact, comes across as "LOOK AT ME."

**USA:** 26% of Women in Prison are there on Drug Offences. 47% of Women in prison are Black. Tiffany wrote a book.

WRITTEN: 3 April 2022