

# BOOK THOUGHTS

BATCH 7  
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BY LINDSAY WINCHERAUK  
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BLUE = MEMOIR OR BIOGRAPHICAL

BLACK = FICTION

DARK RED = EDUCATIONAL

PURPLE = ESSAY OR STORIES

ORANGE = POETRY

# BRILLIANT, BRILLIANT, BRILLIANT, BRILLIANT, BRILLIANT

JOEL GOLBY



*Joel's glaring humanity gracing the pages, made me cry.*

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

I can't deny falling out of my seat, filled with laughter. Indubitably | Brilliant, Brilliant, Brilliant, Brilliant, Brilliant | had that sort of cathartic effect. (Last sentence—first time—I used indubitably; I didn't believe it to be a word—it is—indubitably).

"My dad's drinking injuries were always so extreme—the golf ball, the time he fell face-first down some train-station stops and shattered his nose and his camera, that time his liver failed, and he died—so I guess I got off lightly."

1

Read the previous passage several times.

There is a section near the front of the book where Joel describes spreading his parent's ashes - salaciously, hilariously. The part caused my sides to ache, while the same time, tears began teeming in my eyes. I realized the laughter I was surely going to snort page-after-page was likely profoundly rooted in pain and suffering.

Joel is blessed with comic chops. His observational journey through living is littered with delectable morsels of weirdness. The littered pages scream in relatable absurdity: I gurned with British friends when I shared passages, + I read about sex robot brothels in Spain. While learning about the robots, I read Survival Math (by Mitchell Jackson). The particular section I was reading was about the history of pimping in black American culture—sorry about going off tangent—sex robots, pimping; white + black—we are light-years away from one another when it comes to experiences.

**Brilliant, Brilliant, Brilliant, Brilliant, Brilliant** isn't a brilliant must-read because of Joel's comedic acumen. It is brilliant because Joel's glaring humanity, gracing the pages, made me cry.

I need to sit down—thankfully, Joel invented sitting.

# DAISY JONES & THE SIX

TAYLOR JENKINS REID



*A Rock & Roll journey that will leave you spent at the end. In a good way!*

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

I'm one-hundredth in line at the box office. I will score great seats; I'm excited, shaking!

I'm going to read Daisy Jones & The Six.

I've scored floor seats. Row 3.

The lights dim.

The bass-line pulses.

The drums boom.

Billy's voice is achingly beautiful. Daisy's voice balances his out, leading them to perfection. There is anger in their story, passion, love. They invited me backstage + asked me to join them on tour. I flip through the gripping pages, learning what drives the band through the toxicity of rock & roll. Creativity is damaged. The words on the pages pulse much like the music. Survival depends upon addiction and sobriety at the same time.

DAISY JONES & THE SIX is a mesmerizing read. If you open your mind, it will capture your soul and take you on tour with all the love and damage that ensues. At the end of the journey, I need to check myself into rehab.

What a ride it was!

## EVERY LITTLE SCRAP AND WONDER

CARLA FUNK



*Loving, funny as hell, and a beautifully cobbled together gem!*

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

Wonderous!

When I cracked open the book, I never thought I would fall in love with a book about a young Mennonite girl's experience growing up in a rural community in Northern British Columbia – but I did.

The writing is exquisite. The book reads like a stupendous poem that is much grander than any poem I've ever read – I have nothing against poetry – shooting it quickly, like a bladder ball being tossed around, to the top of my favourite list.

What's not to love?

Carla Funk's writing has instilled a desire to head to Vanderhoof and drink in the community where her story lived. And boy, girl, in this case, did it live.

**EVERY LITTLE SCRAP AND WONDER** stitches together a rich tapestry, dropping readers literally into Carla's young life, examining where she came from, swaddling together her Mennonite heritage in creating a lavish quilt. The quilt reminded her of everyone who's shared blood with her. The stories within, in poetic expertise, profoundly and hilariously touch on everyone she's shared blood, draped in the quilt's warmth. Somehow, Carla adroitly splices together a story of a family coming together for the annual butchering of pigs – amazingly, despite being grotesque to the max, it is fall-out-of-you-chair funny, ending in warm hearts and a bladder ball.

**EVERY LITTLE SCRAP AND WONDER** trips into family life, sharing the bond + competition of sibling rivalries. The book speaks volumes about what many of us experience growing up, highlighting all the love and dysfunction in a gloriously relatable fashion that will leave you wanting one more word.

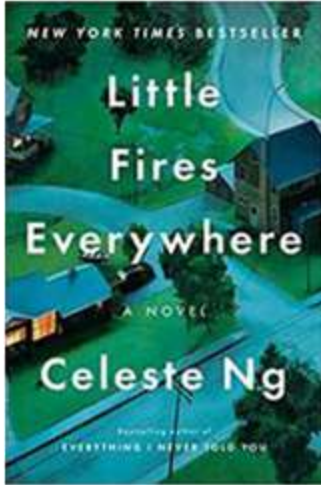
Did I say I love this book?

I love this book.

**EVERY LITTLE SCRAP AND WONDER** is gross, dirty, perhaps disgusting – but without question, it is loving, funny as hell, and a beautifully cobbled-together gem.

## LITTLE FIRES EVERYWHERE

CELESTE NG



*Perfection is a fallacy. Light comes from surprising sources.*

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

One-part perfect family living in a perfectly planned neighbourhood.

Four perfect children, albeit sheltered, dull, oppressed in the warm bath of entitlement.

Perfect Careers.

Perfect futures.

Better than the rest.

Well-adjusted.

Equipped with the privilege.

4

Immune to poor judgment.

Throw in a struggle in childbirth → instead of showering the child with comfort → the child is used as a whipping girl for all the boredom and marginality perfection has trapped the perfect family in. Incapable of realizing the last child born because of her not fitting the mould of perfection. Maybe the only light the perfect family can shine on the world.

### ADD

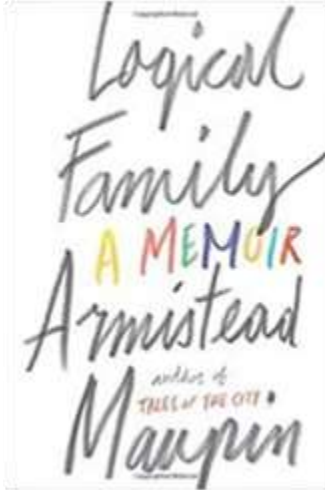
She is a struggling, artistic single mother and her fantastic child who desperately wants to fit in and belong. However, because of her mother's financial challenges creating a life of turmoil as never laying roots, she never does.

Finally, they find comfort in renting a home from the perfect family. With the mixing of perfection and struggle together, readers face wave after wave of confusion and deception as perfect desperately attempts to marginalize → struggle, to remain superior. Life rolls merrily along until a fire makes reality unavoidable.

**LITTLE FIRES EVERYWHERE** does a masterful job of highlighting: hope + happiness is never as they seem.

## LOGICAL FAMILY

### ARMISTEAD MAUPIN



And then, Rock Hudson shows up –

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

WARM  
MAUPIN

At the beginning of **Logical Family** (Armistead was 5), a girl literally fell down as well, and Armistead wanted to craft her a comforting note.

“I’m sorry you fell down the well. Please don’t be sad. I hope they get you out soon.”

They didn’t. Thankfully, Armistead found the unbounded courage to climb his way out from the depths of his mire. And, fortunately for us, he did so delightfully exuberantly.

Most of us face struggles in our lives. If we don’t, we’re not paying attention. To be labelled, repulsed, and to have to live a lie to feel whole, to feel safe – the devastation inflicted is often insurmountable. Being a secret never to be told – crushing.

5 “... I shiver with the memories of how it felt to sit there and listen to people tell the truth about their lives.”

We all need beacons to rise from up from the ashes of fear and hatred to let us know it’s okay to be whoever you are, no matter who that is – as long as who you are isn’t fuelled with misguided hatred and violence.

Armistead, in **Logical Family**, does just that. Raised by a staunch conservative, racist, homophobic father + a mother going along because of the times – Armistead tries to assimilate to be part of the family despite it picking away at the very essence of his core. Until he can’t take it anymore, he escapes and, with cutting honesty + devilishly comedic touches, weaves us on a journey of survival, love, and acceptance. The story is beautiful, riveting, and engrossing.

And then, Rock Hudson shows up – and I imagine being ensconced in a cloud of secrecy until Armistead breaks the seal, allowing reality to rain down instead of fear.

Read this wonderfully satiating gem dripping with pearls of acceptance and wisdom.

*“... life gets so much simpler once you’ve narrowed it to one other person.”*

And, when you allow yourself the freedom to become who you are, you may finally tell the truth about your life!

# VERY NICE

## MARCY DERMANSKY



VERY, VERY, VERY, REALLY VERY, NICE!

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

How would you feel if you were a 19-year-old Caucasian girl, taking a creative writing class, who seduced (or be seduced?) by your shallow Pakistani professor who'd penned an award-winning debut novel, who was floundering in the wake of fame, and had often been a sexual conquest of those craving exotic, but did not deem exotic as dating material, regardless of who he is – you became smitten – and then, he leaves you his dog to take care of after the dalliance, because he needs to travel, home, to see a sick relative; but that's not all, before he goes, he sublets his apartment to his best friend's (his best friend is also a writer) black twin sister, a sister who works for a uber rich man in finance – he's a mess – you trip home in the summer to your families Connecticut home in a lily-white enclave where your mother, who's husband, your uber rich father, left for a younger model, a female pilot; oh yeah, the professor's dog instantly reminds your mother of her dog (a poodle) that had recently died – she falls in love in a heartbeat – so did the dog, in the meantime, the twin subletting the professor's apartment (who is a lesbian) is pining for her once babysitter, anyway, your summer job is working at a camp for youths, one kid is the sister of a guy who your mother (a teacher) had become a semi-hero because her brother (the son of uber rich dysfunctional Trump supporters) brought a loaded gun to school and your mother talked him down, and oh, after the professor returns from Pakistan he drops into the lily-white enclave, not to pick up his dog, but to see if she was okay; perhaps a ruse – but his dog loves your mother more, so, he weasels his way into an extended stay and begins flirting with your mother, and it takes, – you're thrown into a tizzy because you're 19-years old, impressionable, and are smitten with your professor, the story turns into a storybook; no it doesn't – your father is dosed with an STD – he see's the professor and his dog with your mother.

*You need the professor to love you – he's busy,*

*Your dad's jealousy grows. The daughter of the Trump supporters gloms onto you.*

*You are invited for dinner.*

*You eat lobster.*

*You meet the gorgeous, mysterious, dickhead older son,*

*You become his quest.*

*You long for the attention of the professor.*



*Maybe you want more lobster?  
You visit your father.  
His assistant is a black twin lesbian.  
You become her friend.  
Everybody wears purple bathing suits,  
A gun becomes part of the story.  
Everyone comes together.  
Life is turned upside down.  
How would you feel?*

**VERY NICE** is an intoxicating entertaining romp into dysfunction where the adults of the story act like broken, entitled children, and the child desperately wants to be swallowed into adulthood. Unlike the above paragraph, the prose punches you in the solo-plexus with short precise barbs, dropping readers to the floor, leaving them oozing with a desire to take the next punch and read the next page. It's a story about dysfunction and the mess we humans can turn into because we humans are too shallow and damaged to accept the damage we can cause. Flip another page, and a 7-year-old-girl shouts out, maybe just says, her favourite food is lobster – that seems normal – but eating lobster had me dripping in tearful laughter.

7  
**VERY NICE** is really, just, very, very, much more than nice—it's a hilariously complicated trip into intertwined lives, chopped into bite-sized morsels told by a group of deeply damaged, but somehow, distinctive characters!

That's how it made me feel.

## IF YOU SEE ME, DON'T SAY HI

NEEL PATEL

*A wistful trip into the challenges of dating outside of cultural norms.*

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



**If You See Me, Don't Say Hi: Stories** is a gripping look at the unrelenting challenges of Indian descent and dating outside of culture. The book is a collection of real-life stories that drop readers into the realm of what it is like to be Indian in a changing multi-cultural world. The stories are comedy, tragedy, and reality check, and they tear apart the realism of arranged marriages and the caste system. This dissection of reality leads readers to judge – until, and hopefully, we realize all ethnicities partake in some form of arrangements and caste. Rich with the rich. Poor with the poor. Lot with lot. Etcetera. Argue if you must.

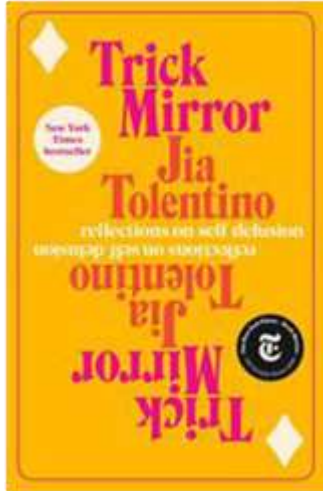
What I found most interesting and pertinent: the more one reads about these diverse experiences of others in this vast world, the more the WALLS are broken down.

Bringing us to understand we're not all that different.

**One last note:** Is every person of Indian descent a doctor, lawyer, or motel owner?

# TRICK MIRROR

JIA TOLENTINO



*It's time to be fairer to the fairer sex.*

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

I am not a woman.

I will never be a woman.

I have a unisex name – that is the closest I will get to being a woman.

I dressed up in a black dress once to be a hot backup guitarist, lip-syncing along to Robert Palmer's "Simply Irresistible."

So, I have firsthand knowledge about what womanhood is all about.

WRONG.

## FULL STOP

9 Until I read Jia Tolentino's **Trick Mirror**, I may have had an idea; but in reality, I did not. **Trick Mirror** reflects the thoughts rattling around in most of our heads daily unless we are sporting blinders. The world is a fast-paced, confusingly + intoxicating beautiful; yet a dreadful mess. Humanity appears to be racing toward a finish line - where finishing the race – I don't want to type NEXT.

In a deftly eloquent way, Jia opens windows to the challenges of femininity in a world that has been less than kind to the "illusion" of the fairer sex. In a lithe fashion, she perceptively wakes the world and highlights "fairer" as a misleading tag to 50% of the population, which has been treated like nothing more than a possession from the beginning of time. Fairer = controlled.

## I'VE OPENED MY EYES

Lately, I've read **Ta-Neshi Coates**, **Between the World and Me**, and **Colson Whitehead**, **The Nickel Boys**, and I found the parallels between racism and the treatment of women to be stunningly similar + stunningly upsetting.

Jia's adroit writing helped rip my blinders off – in all honesty: the blinders were barely hanging on – so it reinforced my thinking toward a kinder path in dealing with everyone is a more apt description; she likely will for you, as well. Jia explains how we live in a day where women are trying to rise in a patriarchal society, trying desperately to hold them down – to keep them in their place. She laments over the rise because it entails changing

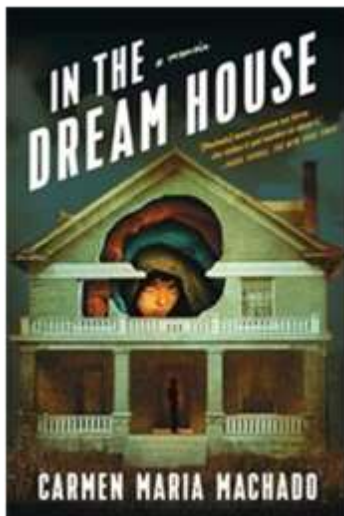
the natural order of things far from the real world. She cries over the brutal reality there is no escape. We all live with the same unstoppable realities of survival – we must play or get trampled. We must use our voices to encourage sublime change.

**Trick Mirror** may not be ground-breaking. It meanders through the veracities of the internet, feeding our inherent narcissism. It tackles reality TV is like slamming a rig into our willing veins. How women need to optimize their beauty to compete. It trips into the delightfulness and devastation of drugs. And it shines a bright light on how, when a man scams the rest of us, he might be revered, whereas when a woman does – well – she must darkly step outside of her DNA. (The scammers include Financial – Social Media – Amazon; The Election + more), and Jia ends with a depressingly honest look at the commercialization and fantasy of happily ever after.

**Trick Mirror** is a must-read for anyone who wants to step out of your beliefs – or at least – if you're a man, help you realize you've had an unfair advantage in the race against the fairer sex. If you open your eyes, only a smidgen; the world will become a slightly better place – the race might not entirely stop – but at least it will become kinder.

## IN THE DREAM HOUSE

CARMEN MARIA MACHADO



*Intrigued turned into troubled turned into anger turned into optimism!*

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

*“Heterosexuals have never known what to do with queer people, if they think of their existence at all.”*

In the Dream House – is simply an enthralling original literary gem, with a powerful message about domestic abuse, with a twist – that led me to be optimistic because it blasts a light on a subsection of society often shunned and condemned. The book is not about a house, doh – it’s about the debilitating world of same-sex relationship abuse, in this case, lesbians. My sanguine nature stems from the fact this book has been published. Twenty years ago, it would likely have been

dumped in the trash by publishers too afraid to rock the boat.

We all dream of the perfect world with the ideal partner, living in our perfect dream houses. We all crave love, touch, belonging. When everything meshes, it can be wonderful. Unfortunately, it doesn’t always mesh; control, anger, insecurity, need, + esteem issues often rear their ugly heads, and love can turn into a noxious beast in a heartbeat, trapping those beaten down in a dangerous, seemingly inescapable reality.

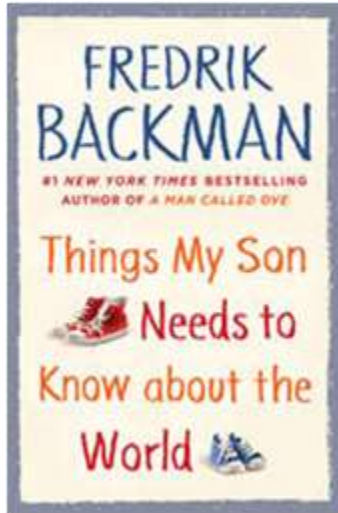
The self-righteous scream out: **GET OUT!**

If trapped, it’s never that easy. It may be easier for those screaming the loudest to deny their realities instead of accepting they do not differ from the people they often spurn.

It doesn’t matter who we love; we all matter, and if it imprisoned you in toxicity, we are lucky to have courageous authors like Carmen to shine a light on the possibility of escape and a path back toward being whole.

# THINGS MY SON NEEDS TO KNOW ABOUT THE WORLD

FREDRIK BACKMAN



*Cute + Light + Light + Light + A Light Batch of Nothingness.*

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

I love Backman's books. *A Man Called Ove* + *Beartown* + *Us Against You* are three of my favourites. *Things My Son Needs...* is not.

I read it just after reading the grippingly enlightening and upsetting *Between the World and Me* + *The Nickel Boys*, books examining in haunting detail what it means to be black. These books opened my eyes to atrocities and made me want to be a better human.

During the first half of *Things My Son Needs...* I wouldn't say I liked it. I started hating my skin because Caucasians have been horrible a-holes for an eternity. So much of the population has had to endure racism, ostracization, imprisonment, torture, and worse. To where a love letter to a child is more about how to stay alive as opposed to "the great life events you'll experience because of IKEA." We privileged have had a 400-year head start allowing us to write fluff about how beautiful life is instead of how difficult it is for those of a different shade.

During the second half of *The Things My Son Needs...* I chuckled a bit at the cuteness of Backman's stories. The man is a consummate storyteller. For a moment, I forgot the book is nothing more than a fluffy cloud of nothingness. Just imagine a gaggle of middle-aged white parents (of means). Sipping Starbucks or eating meatballs. Comparing notes on the harrowing trials + tribulations white middle-class parents must endure. And suddenly, an epiphany, when they realize: "That Felicia's Girl's Mother

I loved the book because it is a beautiful whiny love letter to Backman's wife + child. It's not his fault they had dealt him a high hand. Fredrick even says, "I know I'm still learning about what the word "inequality" really means. Every day. I have to. I'm a white, heterosexual, Western European man with an education and a job. There's not a single organism in the entire universe who knows less about inequality than me."

When I read that paragraph, I thought, GREAT; he's opening the door to writing about how to treat others and become a light instead of perpetuating darkness. My happiness was momentary, and an opportunity missed because the book took the fork in the road back toward fluffy drivel. One paragraph hinted at depth quickly reverted to nothingness.

## DESPITE OF ↑↑↑

I enjoyed this book.

I'm white; I live in Canada.

I have a job.

I'm grateful for my good fortune.

I follow the arrows ↑→↓← at IKEA.