



JANUARY '16

The Readers of Broken Wheel Recommend: A Novel

By Katarina Bivald

"One of the conundrums facing a true bibliophile has always been: books or people? Sara has spent her entire life in Sweden working in a bookshop and her answer has always been obvious: books. An unexpected pen pal relationship with Amy—an older book lover from Iowa—challenges that easy answer. After months of corresponding, Amy invites Sara to come visit her one-stoplight town, Broken Wheel, for a summer of reading in small-town America. However, when Sara arrives, she is greeted by Amy's funeral procession. Thousands of miles from home, Sara is at a loss for what to do. So, naturally, with Amy's collection of books, she opens a bookstore. Bivald's feel-good novel explores that ever-present question: books or people? Enjoy reaching your own conclusions."

—Erin Figel, pages: a bookstore, Manhattan Beach, CA



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Your Heart Is a Muscle the Size of a Fist: A Novel

By Sunil Yapa

"Yapa's debut novel is a raw orchestra of voices needing to be heard. Bringing to life the 1999 World Trade Organization protests in Seattle, all those present are both dedicated and at a loss: the organizers and protesters, the police and their chief, the delegates and politicians, and the young unintended participant who is searching for meaning, purpose, and hope amid the brutality. From the personal to the political, within a single fraught day the whole world is blown wide open. Yapa has captured the chaos—and the beauty—with both fierceness and heart."

—Melinda Powers, Bookshop Santa Cruz, Santa Cruz, CA



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The Song of Hartgrove Hall: A Novel

By Natasha Solomons

"Three brothers return to Hartgrove Hall after World War II to find their beloved home hard-used by military forces and greatly in need of repair. Their efforts are complicated by the introduction of the oldest brother's fiancé, Edie Rose, whose beautiful voice instilled hope in the British citizenry during the darkness of war. Soon, all three brothers are in love with Edie, but only one will ultimately win her hand. Fast-forward to present times and Edie has just passed away, leaving Fox reeling from his wife's death and mired in grief. Called upon to babysit his four-year-old grandson one day, he discovers that the lad is a prodigy at the piano with an uncanny ability to impart through his grandfather's musical compositions the emotions Fox felt when writing them. This novel is a joy to read and fills readers with a hope of restoration in the face of loss."

—Vicki Burger, Wind City Books, Casper, WY



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My Name Is Lucy Barton: A Novel

By Elizabeth Strout

"Strout has the incredible ability to take ordinary, even mundane situations and use them to make acute observations on the human condition. A mother's visit to her daughter in the hospital becomes the vehicle for an astute examination of daily needs, desires, yearnings, wishes, and dreams that become so much of the remembered experience. Using spare, precise, but beautiful language, she has produced another masterpiece in a growing list of impressive work."

—Bill Cusumano, Square Books, Oxford, MS



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Rosalie Lightning: A Graphic Memoir

By Tom Hart

"*Rosalie Lightning* is a haunting and beautiful memoir that lays bare the love parents can have for their children. Hart's simple renditions of his life before and after the death of his young daughter are successful symbols, lucidly conveying the widest range of emotions and thoughts. It would be a disservice to say *Rosalie Lightning* just made me cry—it also burrowed into my heart. Hart describes the most unthinkable, painful event that can happen to a parent, and even more extraordinarily, he describes the love and the life that is still available afterwards. *Rosalie* was a joy to read about, and even on the darkest pages, I am glad he gave this gift of a memoir."

—Lyla Wortham, Whistle-Stop Mercantile, Douglas, WY



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American Housewife: Stories

By Helen Ellis

"*American Housewife* is a little arsenic cupcake of a book: adorable and lethal! Each of the stories features a housewife who does all the usual hausfrau things, but with a homicidal twist. Each of these ladies stand by their man—and sometimes they kill for him. I was spellbound and loved every vicious one of them, from their perfectly coiffed hair and gel-manicured fingers to their coal-black hearts! This is the guiltiest of guilty pleasures!"

—Lauren Peugh, Changing Hands Bookstore, Tempe, AZ



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And Again: A Novel

By Jessica Chiarella

"This intriguing novel explores the age-old body/soul relationship from a fresh angle by introducing us to four participants in a pilot program that gives terminally ill patients new, genetically perfect bodies. Will these four—a beautiful actress, a womanizing congressman, a talented artist, and a beloved mother—simply resume their lives as they were before disease or accident struck? Or will they make new starts, make different choices? Can their new bodies incorporate what they have learned in the past? A fascinating literary debut."

—Ellen Sandmeyer, Sandmeyer's Bookstore, Chicago, IL



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Fallen Land: A Novel

By Taylor Brown

"*Fallen Land* by debut novelist Brown is like a blend of Charles Frazier's *Cold Mountain* and Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*. In the setting of the southern Appalachians and crossing Georgia during Sherman's March to the Sea, Brown shares the beautifully written story of Callum, a young Irish immigrant, and Ava, the orphan daughter of a Carolina doctor who perished in the war. Together they stay one step ahead of a loosely formed band of vicious bounty hunters at the trailing end of Sherman's scorching destruction of the South. Determination, survival, and love all combine to form a thrilling and romantic story set during the final days of the Civil War."

—Doug Robinson, Eagle Eye Book Shop, Decatur, GA



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The Visitors: A Novel

By Simon Sylvester

"Neil Gaiman meets Tana French in this debut thriller that takes place on a remote island off the coast of Scotland. Flora is as independent, vulnerable, and anxious for adulthood yet yearning for magic in all of its guises as any teen you're likely to meet in literature. It is no surprise that she is drawn into the mystery of a man and his daughter moving into the abandoned Dog Cottage next door. The braiding of Scottish myth into this tale of suspicious disappearances adds a compelling twist to the wonderfully evocative setting and great cast of supporting characters."

—Sarah Hinckley, Hudson Booksellers, Marietta, GA



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After the Crash: A Novel

By Michel Bussi

"This old-fashioned crime novel considers the miraculous survival of a three-month-old infant girl in an airplane crash in which all perished—including a second three-month-old baby. An 18-year struggle is unleashed between two rival sets of grandparents on opposite ends of the economic scale, one of which is accorded custody of the child. Does she really belong to that family? Is her brother really her brother? As the age of majority of the survivor approaches, the questions become more urgent and the private detective who has been on the case for 18 years tries to bring some closure."

—Darwin Ellis, Books on the Common, Ridgefield, CT



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The Past: A Novel

By Tessa Hadley

"A novel about a family vacation is often used as a device to bring out the worst flaws of the characters; here, it is used to bring out the best of Hadley's writing talent. She brings the family together, introducing them one by one: Harriet, the outdoorsy one; Alice, the dramatic one; Fran, the motherly one; Roland, the scholarly brother. The siblings, along with assorted children, spouses, and a young friend, spend three weeks in the crumbling house that belonged to their grandparents, trying to decide what must be done with it. Readers who enjoy character-driven stories will welcome this novel."

—Yvette Olson, Magnolia's Bookstore, Seattle, WA



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The Expatriates: A Novel

By Janice Y.K. Lee

"*The Expatriates* focuses on three very different American women whose lives in wealthy and privileged modern-day Hong Kong merge in an astounding way. Margaret, Hilary, and Mercy come from different backgrounds, and as their inner struggles first collide in this glamorous new world and then with each others', tough decisions are made that have a rippling effect. An unthinkable tragedy occurs that makes two women wish they could turn back the clock. Lee writes beautifully, with each woman's story unfolding in sequenced chapters. A fantastic read!"

—Joanne Daggart, Where the Sidewalk Ends, Chatham, MA



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The Guest Room: A Novel

By Chris Bohjalian

"From the explosive beginning all the way to the adrenaline rush of its conclusion, *The Guest Room* packs an emotional punch that will leave the reader gasping. When a bachelor party goes terribly wrong and two Russian mobsters wind up dead in his home, financier Richard Chapman finds himself struggling to save his job and marriage. Intertwined with Richard's story is the tale of Alexandra, a young sex slave with a narrative voice that will break your heart. Nobody does domestic drama quite like Bohjalian. Once again he proves himself a master of page-turning literary fiction."

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



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Only Love Can Break Your Heart: A Novel

By Ed Tarkington

"Tarkington's debut novel feels positively Shakespearean in its sense of family dynamics and the sometimes destructive power of love, but it speaks with the deceptively plain, poignant language of a Neil Young song. Set in the 1980s in a small Virginia town, the book tells the coming-of-age story of Rocky Askew as he copes with fraternal abandonment, dangerous liaisons, caregiving, and one town scandal after another with little help other than his brother Paul's old vinyl collection."

—Andrew Hedglin, Lemuria Bookshop, Jackson, MS



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The Sound of Gravel: A Memoir

By Ruth Wariner

"This is a memoir made extraordinary simply by the fact that the author lived to tell the tale. Wariner grew up in a polygamist cult across the Mexican border, the 39th of her father's 41 children. Surrounded by crushing poverty and repeated tragedy, little Ruth was taught that girls are born to be used by callous men and an angry God. However, she had just enough contact with her maternal grandparents and the outside world to realize the bizarre practices at home didn't match up with the rest of civilization. With quiet persistence, she grew into an adolescent and began to consider the possibility of escape."

—Mary Laura Philpott, Parnassus Books, Nashville, TN



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When Breath Becomes Air

By Paul Kalanithi

"With a message both mournful and life-affirming, *When Breath Becomes Air* chronicles a young doctor's journey from literature student to promising neurosurgeon and finally to a patient in his own hospital after being diagnosed with Stage IV lung cancer. Always profound, never sentimental, this important book refuses to take refuge in platitudes, instead facing mortality with honesty and humility. Lyrical passages of great beauty and vulnerability are deftly balanced by bright, candid moments of joy and even humor. Come prepared with plenty of tissues; over and over again this exquisite book will break your heart."

—Carmen Tracey, Loganberry Books, Shaker Heights, OH



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Mr. Splitfoot: A Novel

By Samantha Hunt

"When Cora's Aunt Ruth, whom she hasn't seen since childhood, shows up on her doorstep, mute yet demanding Cora follow her, Cora makes a split-second decision to do that to escape her dead-end job and the father of the baby she is carrying. The tale of the road trip that follows and the details of Ruth's past are told in alternating chapters until they merge. The cast of characters and settings are mysterious and creepy, like something out of a David Lynch movie. Readers will be compelled to keep the pages turning until the secrets are revealed."

—Kelley Drahushuk, The Spotty Dog Books & Ale, Hudson, NY



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The Gun

By Fuminori Nakamura, Allison Markin Powell (Trans.)

"Alienation and obsession are dissected in this unsettling, spare novel. Nishikawa, a listless college student, happens upon a dead man during a nighttime walk. He inexplicably picks up the pistol lying by the body and brings it to his apartment. Nishikawa finds his tedious reality taking on new meaning through the possibilities of an object that was designed to kill, and yet he must conceal his fetish from his classmates, lovers, and—most importantly—the police, who suspect that he has the gun. This award-winning noir novel, translated from Japanese, is an unflinching, dark story of one man's expanding consciousness—and threat."

—Cindy Pauldine, the river's end bookstore, Oswego, NY



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The Children's Home: A Novel

By Charles Lambert

"Tragically disfigured and reclusive, Morgan lives in a secluded country estate with only his housekeeper, Engel, to keep him company—until the children start to arrive. The first, an infant named Moira, is left in a basket on the doorstep; others soon follow—including the oddly precocious David—the eldest at five years old. But what does the children's enigmatic presence portend for Morgan and the world in which he lives? Through lyrical prose, Lambert creates an absorbing and dream-like narrative that recalls both the pastoral gothic of Shirley Jackson and the dystopic vision of John Wyndham."

—Dan Doody, University Book Store, Seattle, WA



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The Geography of Genius: A Search for the World's Most Creative Places, from Ancient Athens to Silicon Valley

By Eric Weiner

"In his latest quest, acclaimed travel writer Weiner takes readers on a journey to discover creative places that inspire and cultivate geniuses. Time-traveling from ancient Athens to modern Silicon Valley with Hangzhou, Florence, Edinburgh, Calcutta, and Vienna as stops along the way, Weiner conducts a grand tour of those places thought to be conducive to ingenuity. He asks, What was in the air, and can we bottle it? A fascinating and entertaining literary treat connecting culture and creativity."

—Kathleen Dixon, Fair Isle Books, Washington Island, WI



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