



THE BOOK NOOK

Some “Light” Reading in our collection

Rose Macaulay, *Towers of Trebizond* (pbk fiction)

“Hailed as ‘an utter delight, the most brilliant witty and charming book I have read since I can't remember when’ by *The New York Times* when it was originally published in 1956, Rose Macaulay's *The Towers of Trebizond* tells the gleefully absurd story of Aunt Dot, Father Chantry-Pigg, Aunt Dot's deranged camel, and our narrator, Laurie, who are traveling from Istanbul to legendary Trebizond on a convoluted mission. Along the way they will encounter spies, a Greek sorcerer, a precocious ape, and Billy Graham with a busload of evangelists. Part travelogue, part comedy, it is also a meditation on love, faith, doubt, and the difficulties, moral and intellectual, of being a Christian in the modern world.”

Michael Frayn, *Skios* (pbk fiction)

“The great master of farce turns to an exclusive island retreat for a comedy of mislaid identities, unruly passions, and demented, delicious disorder.”

“*Frayn* deploys his genius for farce in a hilarious novel about a mix-up between a scientist and a socialite on a Greek island.”

“On the private Greek island of Skios, the high-paying guests of a world-renowned foundation prepare for the annual keynote address, to be given this year by Dr. Norman Wilfred, an aging and ponderous authority on the scientific organization of science. He turns out to be surprisingly youthful and charming, and everyone is soon eating out of his hand. Meanwhile, in a remote villa at the other end of the island, the ravishing Georgie has agreed to spend a furtive horizontal weekend with a notorious schemer, who has characteristically failed to turn up. Trapped there with her instead is a pompous, balding individual called Dr. Norman Wilfred, who has lost his whereabouts, his luggage, and his temper—indeed, everything he possesses other than the text of a lecture on the scientific organization of science.”

Christopher Moore, *Sacré Bleu: A Comedy d'Art*

“[Moore's novels] deftly blend surreal, occult, and even science-fiction doings with laugh-out-loud satire of contemporary culture.” (*Washington Post*)

“If there's a funnier writer out there, step forward.” (*Playboy*)

“Absolutely nothing is sacred to Christopher Moore. The phenomenally popular, *New York Times* bestselling satirist whom the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* calls, ‘Stephen King with a whoopee cushion and a double-espresso imagination’ has already lampooned Shakespeare, San Francisco vampires, marine biologists, Death...even Jesus Christ and Santa Claus! Now, in this latest masterpiece, *Sacré Bleu*, the immortal Moore takes on the

Great French Masters. A magnificent 'Comedy d'Art' from the author of *Lamb, Fool*, and *Bite Me*, Moore's *Sacré Bleu* is part mystery, part history (sort of), part love story, and wholly hilarious as it follows a young baker-painter as he joins the dapper Henri Toulouse-Lautrec on a quest to unravel the mystery behind the supposed 'suicide' of Vincent van Gogh.

Lorna Landvik, *Angry Housewives Eating Bon-bons* (pbk fiction)

"It is impossible not to get caught up in the lives of the book group members. . . . Landvik's gift lies in bringing these familiar women to life with insight and humor." (*The Denver Post*)

"The women of Freesia Court are convinced that there is nothing good coffee, delicious desserts, and a strong shoulder can't fix. Laughter is the glue that holds them together—the foundation of a book group they call AHEB (Angry Housewives Eating Bon Bons), an unofficial "club" that becomes much more. It becomes a lifeline. Holding on through forty eventful years, there's Faith, a lonely mother of twins who harbors a terrible secret that has condemned her to living a lie; big, beautiful Audrey, the resident sex queen who knows that with good posture and an attitude you can get away with anything; Merit, the doctor's shy wife with the face of an angel and the private hell of an abusive husband; Kari, a wise woman with a wonderful laugh who knows that the greatest gifts appear after life's fiercest storms; and finally, Slip, a tiny spitfire of a woman who isn't afraid to look trouble straight in the eye.

This stalwart group of friends depicts a special slice of American life, of stay-at-home days and new careers, of children and grandchildren, of bold beginnings and second chances, in which the power of forgiveness, understanding, and the perfectly timed giggle fit is the CPR that mends broken hearts and shattered dreams."

Phaedra Patrick, *The Curious Charms of Arthur Pepper*

"An endearing celebration of life." (RealSimple.com)

"Perfect for fans of *A Man Called Ove*, this curiously charming debut follows a lovable widower and his life-changing adventure of love and self-discovery."

"Sixty-nine-year-old Arthur Pepper lives a simple life. He gets out of bed at precisely 7:30 a.m., just as he did when his wife, Miriam, was alive. He dresses in the same gray slacks and mustard sweater vest, waters his fern, Frederica, and heads out to his garden. But on the one-year anniversary of Miriam's death, something changes. Sorting through Miriam's possessions, Arthur finds an exquisite gold charm bracelet he's never seen before. What follows is a surprising and unforgettable odyssey that takes Arthur from London to Paris and as far as India in an epic quest to find out the truth about his wife's secret life before they met—a journey that leads him to find hope and healing in the most unexpected places."

"Featuring an unforgettable cast of characters with big hearts and irresistible flaws, *The Curious Charms of Arthur Pepper* is a joyous reminder of life's infinite possibilities."

J. Ryan Stradal, *Kitchens of the Great Midwest*

"A sweet and savory treat." (*People*)

"An impressive feat of narrative jujitsu . . . that keeps readers turning the pages too fast to realize just how ingenious they are." (*The New York Times Book Review*, Editor's Pick)

"From the *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Lager Queen of Minnesota*, *Kitchens of the Great Midwest* is a novel about a young woman with a once-in-a-generation palate who becomes the iconic chef behind the country's most coveted dinner reservation.

When Lars Thorvald's wife, Cynthia, falls in love with wine—and a dashing sommelier—he's left to raise their baby, Eva, on his own. He's determined to pass on his love of food to his daughter—starting with puréed pork shoulder. As Eva grows, she finds her solace and salvation in the flavors of her native Minnesota. From Scandinavian lutefisk to hydroponic chocolate habaneros, each ingredient represents one part of Eva's journey as she becomes the star chef behind a legendary and secretive pop-up supper club, culminating in an opulent and emotional feast that's a testament to her spirit and resilience.

Each chapter in J. Ryan Stradal's startlingly original debut tells the story of a single dish and character, at once capturing the zeitgeist of the Midwest, the rise of foodie culture, and delving into the ways food creates community and a sense of identity. By turns quirky, hilarious, and vividly sensory, *Kitchens of the Great Midwest* is an unexpected mother-daughter story about the bittersweet nature of life—its missed opportunities and its joyful surprises."

Helen Simonson, *Major Pettigrew's Last Stand* (pbk fiction)

"Written with a delightfully dry sense of humour and the wisdom of a born storyteller, *Major Pettigrew's Last Stand* explores the risks one takes when pursuing happiness in the face of family obligation and tradition."

"When retired Major Pettigrew strikes up an unlikely friendship with Mrs. Ali, the Pakistani village shopkeeper, he is drawn out of his regimented world and forced to confront the realities of life in the twenty-first century. Brought together by a shared love of literature and the loss of their respective spouses, the Major and Mrs. Ali soon find their friendship on the cusp of blossoming into something more. But although the Major was actually born in Lahore, and Mrs. Ali was born in Cambridge, village society insists on embracing him as the quintessential local and her as a permanent foreigner. The Major has always taken special pride in the village, but will he be forced to choose between the place he calls home and a future with Mrs. Ali?"

Salley Vickers, *The Librarian* (pbk fiction)

"A charmingly subversive novel about a library in 1950s England, by the acclaimed author of *The Cleaner of Chartres*"

"In 1958, Sylvia Blackwell, fresh from one of the new post-war Library Schools, takes up a job as children's librarian in a run down library in the market town of East Mole. Her mission is to fire the enthusiasm of the children of East Mole for reading. But her love affair with the local married GP, and her befriending of his precious daughter, her neighbour's son and her landlady's neglected grandchild, ignite the prejudices of the

town, threatening her job and the very existence of the library with dramatic consequences for them all."

P.G. Wodehouse, Mike and Psmith (pbk fiction)

"An early Wodehouse novel, this is both a sporting story and a tale of friendship between two boys at boarding school. Mike (introduced in *Mike at Wrykyn*) is a seriously good cricketer who forms an unlikely alliance with old Etonian Psmith ('the P is silent') after they both find themselves fish out of water at a new school, Sedleigh. Full of entertainment, the plot reaches a satisfying conclusion as the pair eventually overcome the hostility of others and their own prejudices to become stars. Even readers uninterested in cricket are likely to be gripped by descriptions of matches, but the real meat of the book is to be found in the characters, especially the elegant Psmith, one of Wodehouse's immortal creations, who features in three of his later novels."

"Sir Pelham Grenville Wodehouse, KBE, was a comic writer who enjoyed enormous popular success during a career of more than seventy years and continues to be widely read almost 50 years after his death."

Vikram Seth, The Golden Gate (pbk fiction)

"The great California novel been written, in verse (and why not?): *The Golden Gate* gives great joy." (Gore Vidal)

"One of the most highly regarded novels of 1986, Vikram Seth's story in verse made him a literary household name in both the United States and India."

"John Brown, a successful yuppie living in 1980s San Francisco meets a romantic interest in Liz, after placing a personal ad in the newspaper. From this interaction, John meets a variety of characters, each with their own values and ideas of "self-actualization."

However, Liz begins to fall in love with John's best friend, and John realizes his journey of self-discovery has only just begun."

"A splendid achievement, equally convincing in its exhilaration and its sadness." (*The New York Times*)

"Seth pulls off his feat with spirit, grace and great energy." (*The New Yorker*)

"A marvelous work . . . bold and splendid . . . Locate this book and allow yourself to become caught up, like a kite, in the lifting effects of Seth's sonnets." (*Washington Post Book World*)

Mark Salzman, The Laughing Sutra (pbk fiction)

"The author of the highly praised *Iron and Silk*, the nonfiction account of his years as a teacher in China, debuts with a novel [full of] sincerity, good spirits, and imaginative high jinks"

"A blend of picaresque adventure, guide to China's history, politics and culture, and satire on contemporary life in China and the U.S., the book has an unpretentious charm.

Salzman's protagonist, orphaned Hsun-ching, is rescued from death by a mysterious Colonel Sun, whose great age, brilliant yellow eyes and superhuman strength identify him as the legendary Monkey King. Adopted by a venerable Buddhist monk, Hsun-ching learns of his mentor's lifelong quest for the Laughing Sutra, purported to hold the key to

immortality, which has been taken from China by a San Francisco collector. Forced into servitude during the Cultural Revolution, on his release Hsun-ching decides to go to America and find the text. Colonel Sun joins him, and their adventures, both suspenseful and funny, allow Salzman to turn a satiric eye on misguided revolutionaries, fatuous religious proselytizers, and pretentious artists and bureaucrats in both countries. Salzman manages to convey a great deal of information about China while entertaining readers with a generally suspenseful, often rollicking tale.”

And some great Recent Additions (on the far wall, far right, towards the puzzle table). Mysteries and Thrillers, mostly, replacing some old worn-out things. The Auntie Poldi mystery series, set in Sicily, is very fun, as is the Dandy Gilver series set in Scotland.

