

# 50 in 60 Book Blast

MLA Conference 2011

## Barb Pierce- Nordic Mysteries and Thrillers

### The Boy in the Suitcase by Lene Kaaberbol and Agnete Friis.

Doing a favor for an old friend, Nurse Nina Borg picks up a suitcase in a train station locker and finds a three year old boy in it. Yikes. It's a race against time as she struggles to figure out whose boy he is before his kidnapper catches up with the two of them. Meanwhile, her husband Morten sits at home with their two children and stews. Apparently, Nina pulls this type of stunt often enough for Morten to threaten divorce if Nina doesn't shape up. Happily, Nina is home stroking Morten's face before it comes to that. This novel features engaging characters and a twisting and ultimately satisfying plot. It is the first in a series I look forward to reading. It is also the only book of my 10 that is set during the summer; Nina and the boy have ice cream and go for a swim in water that isn't frozen over.

### The Leopard by Jo Nesbø.

After the trauma of the Snowman episode, during which he lost his girlfriend Rakel, emotionally, and his middle finger, actually, Harry Hole has left the Oslo police force and moved to Hong Kong, where he has been able to defeat his problem with alcohol using opium as a substitute. But there is a new serial killer at work in Norway and Harry's father is at death's door, so Harry reluctantly returns to Oslo and his old job with the Crime Squad. This new killer uses an unusual murder method, and investigating some of the forensic evidence involved requires Harry and his new, young and very attractive, partner, Kaja Solness, to travel to the Congo in their efforts to figure it all out. The two also spend some time in the snowy Norwegian countryside as they race Harry's new nemesis, Mikael Bellman of Kripas, to see who can be first to crack the case. Strong characters and a tight plot make this 8th in the Harry Hole series a nerve-wracking page turner.

### Headhunters by Jo Nesbø

Headhunters is Nesbø "light." Instead of 700 some pages, this fast-paced thriller is only 265 pages long so can be read in a night or two. This standalone features Roger Brown, a short and successful headhunter in Oslo whose lovely wife, Diana, runs a successful art gallery. But things start to go very wrong for Roger and Diana when Clas Greve shows up. There are some very nasty situations in this book, involving, among other things, farm equipment and an outhouse hole. In spite of a satisfying end to the many plot twists in Headhunters, the puzzle I couldn't solve was why Roger Brown doesn't have a Norwegian name.



Please use for RA purposes only  
do not distribute. Thank you.



### **Fear Not by Anne Holt.**

This is the fourth in the Johanne Vik-Adam Stubo series. As Johanne's special daughter Kristiane is nearly hit by a streetcar in the opening scene, Johanne's nerves are shot for most of the book. Although Johanne is now working as a college professor and on a special "hate" project, she still gets involved in solving several gruesome murders taking place around Oslo during the holidays, where it is very cold and snowy. Adam is on assignment in Bergen for most of the book, so he is not able to calm Johanne and the girls down. These characters are well-drawn and so believable and the plot is so complex--I couldn't wait to finish the book to find out who the murderer was.

### **1222 by Anne Holt.**

This homage to Agatha Christie features retired paraplegic police detective and curmudgeon Hannah Wilhelmsen, who is stuck in a remote mountain hotel after a train crash. Along with her fellow train passengers and some hardy outdoorspeople, Hannah is facing a big snow storm and a murder. Her fellow hotel guests somehow know she is a detective, so expect her to solve the crime. 1222 refers to how many meters above sea level everyone is stranded. Holt says she used this device to isolate Hannah and prevent her from using modern detective methods--she has to rely on her "gray cells" to find the murderer. Written in the first person, this is Anne Holt's "other" series, actually her first, although this is the only one I have found that's been translated into English. The characters are well-developed and even Hannah is loveable once you get to know her. Holt's convoluted plot is fun to untangle and her descriptions of Norway in the mountains in the winter are well done.

### **The Hand That Trembles by Kjell Eriksson.**

A well-known Swedish politician, Sven-Arne Persson, who'd disappeared years before, suddenly turns up back in Uppsala, surprising his wife and his elderly uncle. Meanwhile a foot has surfaced in a lake. Uppsala police detective Ann Lindell and her colleagues need to try to figure out who the foot belongs to and how it ended up in the lake. They also want to know why Sven-Arne has suddenly reappeared. The suspects in the foot case include four Swedish bachelors who live in an isolated area near the lake and whose chainsaws are brought in to the police station for testing. Ann Lindell is feeling melancholy as she is alone for the holiday season. By the end of the book, Lindell and her colleagues have solved two murders. The hand that trembles includes lots of lovely descriptions of the wintery Swedish countryside.

### **Frozen Moment by Camilla Ceder.**

Aspiring journalist Seja Lundberg is living out in the woods in an old cottage with her horse Lucas (he's in a barn) when she is invited by her retired neighbor to a murder scene. The victim has not only been



Please use for RA purposes only  
do not distribute. Thank you.



shot, but also run over by a truck several times. Here Seja meets brooding ash blond Police Inspector Christian Tell, whose “finely chiseled face, straight slender nose and thick eyelashes” would make him look feminine except for his bushy eyebrows. Thank goodness for those bushy eyebrows! Seja is sure she has met him somewhere before. . . . Except for his boss and the younger single members of staff, Tell and his colleagues on the police force are all either separated or in dysfunctional relationships. So will Tell and Seja be able to establish a connection in the process of solving the murder?

### **Until Thy Wrath Be Past by Åsa Larsson.**

This is the fourth book in the Rebecka Martinsson series. What sets it apart from previous books is a murdered narrator, red-haired Wilma Persson. Rebecka is now living and working as the county prosecutor in northern Sweden. She is in a long-distance relationship with her old boss in Stockholm, Måns Wenngren. Rebecka’s colleague in the police department, Inspector Anna-Maria Mella, is on the outs with her partner, but in the course of solving the murders in Until Thy Wrath Be Past, he begins the process of forgiveness. Two young people are missing after a SCUBA diving expedition to visit an old German plane at the bottom of a local lake. Rebecka and Anna-Maria need to solve the mystery, as other local folks are starting to die mysteriously. These characters are well constructed and manage to do their best although Anna-Maria has a busy family and professional life, and Rebecka is still a bit shell-shocked from her stay in a mental institution in the previous book in the series. An added bonus for dog lovers--there are lots of great dog characters in this mystery as well, one of them has puppies, and none of them die.

### **Raid and the Blackest Sheep by Harri Nykänen.**

Affable career criminal Nygren is out of prison and making his way through Finland in an old Mercedes, settling old scores with the help of young thug Raid. The police who aren’t on sick leave are hot on Nygren and Raid’s trail but can’t seem to catch them. Part of the problem is that two of the cops, Jansson and Huusko are at a health farm trying to get back in shape for duty. This process includes hitting on their good-looking therapist and heading out to the bar for drinks and dancing. With the exception of Nygren’s enemies and the head of the police investigation, the characters in this novel are likeable and fun to read about. I enjoyed learning about life in Finland. It will be great if more of Harri Nykänen’s Raid series is translated into English and if the Raid movie and t.v. series become available with English subtitles—they are really quite charming.

### **Frozen Assets by Quentin Bates.**

Likeable widow Gunna is large and in charge of the Hvalvik police force, which consists of Gunna and Haddi, who enjoys driving the newer Volvo around town, stopping for donuts and coffee when the urge strikes. So when a dead body is found in the harbor, extra manpower has to be called in from Reykjavik. Thrown into the mix are an anonymous blogger who keeps posting nasty gossip about local VIPs and a cub reporter who is doing a story on Gunna. The characters are entertainingly believable and



Please use for RA purposes only  
do not distribute. Thank you.



descriptions of Iceland and its inhabitants are engagingly portrayed. This is the first in a projected series. Author Quentin Bates is Scottish but has lived in Iceland, is married to an Iclander, and has several friends in the Reykjavik p.d.

### **Joan Ennis - Contemporary Women Writers**

#### **The Postmistress. Blake, Sara**

In 1940, France has fallen. Bombs are dropping on London. Female American radio announcer Frankie Bard has the opportunity to announce war news from London to American listeners, and warns them to pay attention. Nazis are bombing London, and Jewish refugees are being rounded up across Europe. She encourages America to join the fight. Meanwhile, Iris James, the Postmistress of Franklin, a small town on Cape Cod, hears the broadcasts and is certain that war will come to her town. Will Fitch, the town doctor and his new wife Emma listen faithfully to the broadcasts. Will enlists when the draft begins to serve as a physician. Emma's worst fear is realized – she has been abandoned. Frankie later comes to Franklin to tell Emma what happened to Will. Iris determines when is the best time to deliver war news. The lives of the three women become intertwined, and some secrets are kept forever, and some revealed. A good historical novel revealing different aspects of the war – a woman radio announcer and a woman postmistress. I can see this novel becoming a movie.

#### **Once Upon a Time There Was You. Berg, Elizabeth**

John and Irene divorced when Sadie was 8 years old. John stayed in St. Paul, and Irene and Sadie moved to San Francisco. Right before leaving for college, Sadie lies to her parents and says she is going rock climbing for the weekend with friends. Her real plan is to go away with her boyfriend. When Sadie doesn't return as scheduled, Irene realizes something is wrong. It turns out that Sadie has been kidnapped, and Irene and John must come together to find her. When she is back home, she marries her boyfriend before starting college. John and Irene need to accept their daughter and her plans, which are not the ones they had for her. A divorced couple must come together for an emergency, and use their history and familiar territory to help their daughter.

#### **Miss Timmins School for Girls. Currimbhoy, Nayana**

In 1974, three weeks before her 21<sup>st</sup> birthday, Charlu Apte arrives at Miss Timmins School in India. Shy, sheltered, and running from a scandal that disgraced her Brahmin family, Charu teaches Shakespeare to rich, Indian girls at the boarding school. She is drawn to charismatic teacher Moria Prince, who introduces her to pot, hippies, rock and roll and sex. One night Moira's body is found at the bottom of the nearby cliff. Charu is implicated in the murder as is the principal, Miss Nelson. A love story, a mystery, and a coming of age story told against the turbulence of the 1970's in a small area in India. A wonderfully written debut novel.



Please use for RA purposes only  
do not distribute. Thank you.



### **Left Neglected. Genova, Lisa**

Sarah Nickerson is a high powered career woman, a two time Harvard graduate, with a husband and three children. Her husband also has a high powered career. They live in wealthy Welmont, MA, with a second home for skiing home in Vermont. One day, driving to work, Sarah looks down for a second and is hit by a car. Her head injury results in “Left Neglect.” Her brain can’t recognize her left side. Her mother, whom she hasn’t seen in years, and with whom she has had a turbulent relationship, comes to help with her children. It becomes clear that she will never be able to go to work at her former job. Predictably, she realizes that her career, her constant texts, emails and cell phone calls were taking over her life. The story ends perhaps a little too neatly when Sarah is offered a job helping other disabled adults learn to use props to relearn how to ski and participate in other sports. However, the author’s knowledge and research of this disease makes up for her tidy ending. Genova, who wrote *Still Alice*, has a PhD in neuroscience from Harvard, and has clearly researched the brain diseases and injuries she writes about.

### **Faith. Haigh, Jennifer**

Sheila McGann’s older brother, Art Breen, a priest in a large suburban parish in Boston’s South Shore, has been accused of molesting a young boy and has been put on leave from his parish. Sheila believes her older brother is innocent. Their mother, a strict Irish Catholic woman, is in angry denial about Art being accused. Sheila tries to be supportive of Art, who is unprepared to live a life outside the church and priesthood. Only after Art’s death from cancer does Sheila learn the truth about Art. Art had innocently shown kindness to the housekeeper’s grandson. The boy’s mother’s boyfriend thought up the accusation of abuse as a good way to make money for his drug habit during a time when the Catholic Church was being accused of abuse by many people. Sheila describes the events up to the accusations, revealing some of the family secrets that caused family problems for years. A good look inside the life of a priest, the Church, and a Catholic family.

### **Last Train from Liguria. Hickey, Christina**

Bella leaves England in 1933 to become governess to a young boy, Alec, in Italy. His parents are physically and emotionally absent. Bella teaches and raises Alec with the help of the music teacher, Edward. After Alec’s elderly father dies unexpectedly, Alec’s mother leaves for an extended vacation and returns with a new husband, and soon has a baby girl. His mother is a beautiful, wealthy, Jewish woman who gets caught in the throes of Nazism and Fascism. Right before the Jews are rounded up in Italy, Bella and Edward escape with Alec and the baby girl, planning to go to England. Edward and Alec are caught with false papers and Edward is sent to prison. When Bella returns to England, she decides to keep the baby as her own, with the false papers she has acquired. We assume she never learns the fate of the Senora, Alec, or Edward. In the 1990’s, her granddaughter Anna is with her as she is dying. She finds mementos and false papers from the past but can’t figure out how her grandmother is



Please use for RA purposes only  
do not distribute. Thank you.



connected to people named Edward and Alec. Through various incidents, she discovers Bella is not her biological grandmother. A beautifully written story that pulls on the reader's heartstrings, especially at the end.

### **The Red Garden. Hoffman, Alice**

The book traces the multi-generational families in the town of Blackwell, Massachusetts for over 300 years, revealing dark secrets, passion, and loyalty through a number of related stories. The town is founded by a brave young woman from England who is not afraid of blizzards and bears, and saves the lives of her companions. At the center of every story is a red garden, where only red plants grow. The stories are about different people over generations, most connected in some way to the early settlers. The stories are written with beautiful prose and characterizations. I didn't want the stories to end.

### **The Heart Specialist. Rothman, Claire Holden**

Set at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> century, the story of Agnes White, a lonely orphan girl in Quebec, was inspired by the career of Maude Abbott, one of Canada's first female physicians. Agnes is fascinated by the "Wrong Things" -- microscopes, dissections, and anatomy instead of more ladylike pursuits. Her father was a physician and disappeared after being accused of murdering his wife. Agnes and her sister Laura are raised by their grandmother and tutored by Miss Skerry, who understands Agnes' desire to pursue her father's interests. She attends McGill University, but is not allowed to go to the Medical School. She attends medical school elsewhere and returns to McGill to work in the Pathology Museum. She finds a misshapen heart in a jar and realizes the heart had been worked on by her father. She spends much of her life trying to locate her father. When she discovers him in a small town in France he denies who he is, and wants nothing to do with her. He is not interested or impressed with all the research she has accomplished and all the papers she has written. Very well written with an excellent historical setting. This would make a great movie.

### **Dreams of Joy. See, Lisa**

This book is a sequel to *Shanghai Girls*, the story of May and Pearl, forced to leave Shanghai when their father sells them to California suitors during the 1930's. They live in Los Angeles while still bound to old customs, as they face discrimination. At the beginning of *Dreams of Joy*, Joy is distraught and upset with her mother and Aunt May, after her father commits suicide and she discovers that Aunt May, not Pearl, is her real mothers. Her father was not her biological father. She sneaks away and travels to Communist China to find her biological father. She has studied Communist China in college, and idealizes the concepts. When she arrives in China and finds her artist father, she is fooled for a while and doesn't realize what is really happening in the country. She falls in love with a peasant, Tao, and marries him. Once married, she immediately realizes her mistake, and discovers that what she learned



Please use for RA purposes only  
do not distribute. Thank you.



about China in class is not a reality. She shares a house with Tao's entire family, sleeps on a dirt floor, the family eventually starving when the rulers do not allow the workers to eat their share. She sees the lies and hypocrisy of the system. She gives birth to a baby girl, Samantha, and struggles to keep her alive while her husband has turned against her. Pearl and May come to China to find her and help her escape China and return to the United States with her baby. The author did extensive research to write these books.

### **My Dear I Wanted to Tell You. Young, Louise**

The novel is set in England, and begins in 1907. Eleven year old Riley meets Nadine, the daughter of a well-known orchestra conductor. He is attracted to her even though he knows she belongs to the upper class. They get to know each other well when Sir Alfred, an artist, hires Riley to do errands for him, and also teaches him art while he teaches Nadine. Sir Alfred recognizes Riley's potential, and takes him into his home so he can get an education. Riley and Nadine build up a relationship during the years of art lessons. At the beginning of the Great War, Riley enlists in the army partly because he feels he is not good enough for Nadine. Meanwhile, Riley's commander, Peter, has left behind his beautiful wife, Julia. Julia lives only to be beautiful and attractive to her husband. By the end of the war, Peter is physically unharmed but emotionally damaged from horrors he has experienced. When part of Riley's face is blown off, he goes to a specialized hospital to have facial reconstruction. He does not want Nadine to see him because he worries she will love him out of pity. Eventually, Riley's, Peter's Nadine's and Julie's lives intersect when Riley tries to help Peter return to his prewar life. Riley and Nadine overcome their class differences and the difficulty of his disfigurement. Riley is a contrast to Julia, who ironically has burned her face trying treatments to remain beautiful for Peter. This book has amazing descriptions of medical treatments for facial reconstruction during and after World War I.

Science fiction and fantasy are often over-looked genres. It's a guilty pleasure, kind of like romance, but those of us who read are assumed to be geeks. I'm not saying that some of us aren't geeks, just that the genre has much more to offer than many frequently think it does.

### **Stephanie Hall - Fantasy & Science Fiction**

Fantasy frequently involves magic, swords, and fantastic beasts, though that isn't always the case. It provides an escape from the cares of the world and places you somewhere you can care about the characters, but it isn't usually a stressful read, since the setting is far from our normal world.

### **A Game of Thrones. George R.R. Martin**

This is possibly one of the most intricate stories I have ever read, with a cast of characters that is incredibly detailed and developed. Political intrigue abounds, not to mention magic, shapechanging, and



Please use for RA purposes only  
do not distribute. Thank you.



the reanimation of the dead. This is not sunshine and daisies fantasy. Martin is not afraid to kill his characters and you might find yourself invested in one person only to have them die in the following chapter. Taking all of that into account, this is one of the best books I have ever experienced. The characters are so human that I found one that I didn't like at the beginning of the first book, became a favorite in the second, and became hated again in the third. The setting ranges from the wide grasslands of Vaes Dothrak to the frozen wastes beyond the Wall, a vast construction of ice that keeps the wildlings, wooly mammoths, and giants out of the Seven Kingdoms. All in all, definitely something to keep you engrossed and thoroughly satisfied. This book became a lauded series on HBO this spring.

### **The Eye of the World. Robert Jordan**

Though this book is technically fantasy, some observant readers will pick up references to the possibility that it takes place far, far into our future. Legends told to children speak of a man going to the moon in the belly of a giant eagle, but that is beside the point. The story is a classic battle of good versus evil, but will good have a chance? Their champion is a hero from another era, reborn into the body of a shepherd, and that shepherd is slowly going insane with the power and the memories of another man's life. The characters are believable and you will find yourself rooting for them to succeed, even if their success will mean failure for another. Will Rand survive long enough to trap the Dark One back into his prison? This series, the Wheel of Time, is still going, though the next book, which will be number fourteen, is the end.

### **Ship of Magic. Robin Hobb**

What would happen if the figurehead of a ship was alive? The Liveships, built from a special wood harvested from the Rain Wilds and accessed only by an acidic river, take on a spirit of their own once several family members have died and bled onto their decks. Althea Vestrit, the only child of a wealthy trading family, took it for granted that when the Vivacia came alive, she would be the Captain. Unfortunately, that wasn't the way things turned out and the new Captain, Althea's brother-in-law, is making terrible decisions. On top of that, the fate of the ship and the family may be in the hands of a pirate who is determined to bend a Liveship to his will and Vivacia becomes his target.

This is the first book in a trilogy of excellent stories. What happens when one of these ships goes rogue? Why are the ships so afraid of the sea serpents? And what else has to die to give these ships their souls?

### **Kushiel's Dart. Jacqueline Carey**

Historical fantasy at its finest. Jesus had a brother and that brother, more human than divine, chose to walk the earth instead of go to his father in Heaven. Angels chose to walk with him and they found a land they loved and settled, taking human women as mates and siring a race of humans so beautiful, they're as close to perfect as they can be. Terre d'Ange is the fictional name of the country styled after medieval France and the heroine, Pheadra, is a courtesan and a spy, struck by the power of one of the



Please use for RA purposes only  
do not distribute. Thank you.



angels to be able to withstand incredible amounts of pain and enjoy doing so. Someone is trying to undermine the crown and Phaedra is the only person who can stop the threat. She is protected by a Casseline Brother, a priest sworn to protect with his own life if necessary, but how long can he remain aloof from his charge?

These stories are so intricate, both in their political intrigue and the research that has gone into the creation of the world, that readers will be caught up within only a few pages and will devour the books very quickly. There is an original series of three, followed by at least two more series, one still under way. These books are excellent, though if you have a problem with sex, you might want to leave them alone.

**Science Fiction:** Science fiction often doubles as social commentary, with the author using the future as a place to iron out, call attention to, or expand upon problems that are occurring in the present. In the future, things can be either much worse or much better than they are today, depending on the actions of the human race.

### **Boneshaker. Cherie Priest**

Steampunk is a genre that falls loosely under science fiction and the stories take place in an earlier time, usually Victorian, with far more technology than actually existed. This particular story takes place in Seattle, Washington, in the 1860s before Washington became a state. A terrible accident occurred when an inventor's machine went haywire and a gas has been unleashed into the city that is causing people to turn into the walking dead. The city government has built a wall around the affected area, sending those still alive into the outskirts, to eke out what living they can. But the inventor's son knows nothing of his father and wants to see where the Boneshaker went crazy, so he makes his way into the city with a gasmask through a sewage tunnel. And his mother, fearing the worst for her son, must follow. Are there still living people in the city itself? Tales say there are, but tales and reality are two different things. Will the son learn the truth of the father? Will the mother find the son before it's too late? And what has become of the people inside the walls of Seattle?

### **Santiago. Mike Resnik**

There are few books that can truly be called Space Westerns, but Santiago is definitely one of them. Taking place in the outer reaches of the galaxy, the story follows a classic western plot, that of a bounty hunter searching for a notorious villain. What makes the story special is the pattern of its telling. Each chapter begins with a four-line poetic stanza, the stanzas together shaping an epic saga written by a man called Black Orpheus, a poet determined to chronicle the lives of the villains and hunters of the Outer Rim of galaxies. The story centers around Sebastian Nightingale Cain, the "Songbird," as he searches for the notorious villain Santiago and the bounty he will get from the other man's head. What he finds is something entirely different.



Please use for RA purposes only  
do not distribute. Thank you.



### **Grass. Sherri S. Tepper**

A plague has infected every human colony of the known universe, save for one planet: Grass. Sanctity, the religious organization in charge of most of the infected planets, sends an ambassador and his wife to Grass to see why the plague has not infected any of the inhabitants. Indeed, there are rumors that the infected who travel there are even cured.

Majorie Westriding, Olympic equestrian and philanthropist, wife of the Ambassador, finds herself mixed into a whole sea of trouble she never saw coming when her husband accepted this position. The families of aristocrats on Grass ride in something similar to an Old Earth Hunt, complete with mounts, hounds, and foxen. But the mounts aren't what they seem and the hunters are so lost in the hunt they often don't remember what happened and some never come back at all. What is the purpose of the hunt? And what is the nature of that being hunted?

Everything comes back to the plague and to the particular puzzle that Grass becomes for Marjorie.

### **Trading in Danger (Vatta's War). Elizabeth Moon**

Kylara Vatta, the only daughter in a rich trading family full of boys, defies tradition when she chooses a career in the military over a career in inter-stellar trading. Unfortunately for her, she makes a terrible mistake in her last year and is expelled from the Slotter Key Space Academy, sent home in disgrace. Her father, wanting to find her something to do as well as make her scarce for the media, gives her a Captaincy, sending her off on a ship destined for scrap with a cargo to deliver on the way. But what Kylara chooses to do with her ship is not exactly what was requested of her. She takes a contract which delays her route and takes her to a planet about to be embroiled in war and things go downhill from there. Mercenaries, mutiny, and defiance color this story with an exciting plot. This is the first in a series that could easily be read by teenagers and adults alike. Very enjoyable.

### **The Windup Girl. Paolo Bacigalupi**

The world is no longer dependant on oil. If you need your computer to work, you use a treadle like an old sewing machine. If you want to power a factory, you hitch up megadonts, genetically altered elephants. The new currency is calories and the more you have, the better off you are. Plants and animals have been so changed that nothing exists in its original form and genetic plagues have wiped out nearly everything. Not only have plants and animals been mutated, but also humans. They are called wind-ups and are viewed the same way we would view trash on the street. Sub-human, without a soul. Or are they? Emiko, the wind-up girl, would beg to differ. Is there really a place she can go to get rid of the degradation forced on her in the Thai slums? The cast of characters is so developed and the world is so intricate, it's no wonder this book is both a Nebula and a Hugo Award winner.

### **The City & the City. China Mieville**



Please use for RA purposes only  
do not distribute. Thank you.



Inspector Tyador Borlu of the Extreme Crime Squad in the city of Beszel has a problem. He has a murdered woman on his hands and the investigation will be difficult to say the least. Beszel has a topolganger – a city that exists in the almost the same exact space, called Ul Qoma. Citizens of both towns cross paths daily, the buildings are right next to each other, and yet they need to pretend they don't. The residents of the two cities go out of their way to “unsee” anything that occurs in the other. Sound confusing? It starts out that way, but understanding comes quickly. Anyone caught interacting with citizens of the other city without officially travelling there is guilty of a Breach, which mostly causes people to disappear. So what is the good Inspector to do? They find proof that their corpse was murdered in Ul Qoma but her body dropped in Beszel, so the two cities must work together to solve the crime and not bring down the Breach by accident. And if you throw a possible third city into the mix?

This story is engaging, though it requires a lot of thought and is not something you can put down and pick up easily. Once you start, you need to have the time to finish.

### **Angie Noyes- Things that go bump in the night...**

#### **The Night Country: a Novel by Stewart O’Nan**

New England, Halloween night, five teenagers are in a car that veers off the road and three of them lose their lives. The three come back a year later to finish what was started that night.

The story is told from the point of view of one of the teens, Marco, who was killed. The language is like poetry in some cases making Marco seem older than his years and then fresh and modern reminding the reader he is a teen. Forever a teenager but reflective beyond his years when he died. It's not only the spirits of those who died we get a glance of, but we also get a distressing glimpse of those that were left to keep living.

Remorse of all kinds moves this book, as does the impact of one's actions.

#### **Discovery of Witches: A Novel by Deborah Harkness**

I love, love, love this story. Harkness weaves a narrative around an academic named Diana Bishop. Diana just happens to come from a long line of witches- Salem enters into her ancestry.

She is just one kind of being that inhabits this world, in which there are four types: humans, witches, vampires and daemons. The latter three refer to themselves as “creatures” and though they live among



Please use for RA purposes only  
do not distribute. Thank you.



the humans they try not to draw unneeded attention to themselves. We learn that the creatures are not to inter mix with each other based on a long, long established code of creature ethics enforced by their governing body, The Congregation.

Things go from cold and calm, to hot and eruptive when Diana requests a manuscript she needs for her research. Only thing is this manuscript has been lost for over 150 years. Did the manuscript summon her? In trying to solve the mystery of the event, with the aid of the sexy vampire Matthew Clairmont, Diana's life is turned inside out and upside down.

Did I mention I love this story and it will be part of trilogy entitled "All Souls."

### **What Alice Knew: A Most Curious Tale of Henry James and Jack the Ripper by Paula Marantz Cohen**

This book is pleasurable read that takes you back to 1880's London. Cohen, an English professor of course, does a wonderful job of taking you there, from dining on succulent food, to the grime and stench of the streets.

She brings to life all her characters, especially the three James siblings: Henry, William and Alice. Henry the famous writer, William the pre-cursor to a psychologist, and Alice the bedridden clever sister. All come together in London when William has been asked to assist the police in the serial murder case. Once the other siblings find out, they want in to catch the killer. Can they do it? Or will the notorious Jack the Ripper evade them also?

### **City of Masks: a Cree Black Thriller by Daniel Hecht**

Lucretia Black, or Cree as she goes go by, is a psychologist working as a parapsychologist in Seattle. She works for a small firm that investigates hauntings by using scientific and metaphysical methods. While Cree's business partner Edgar, is on a case in Philadelphia, she agrees to take a case in The Big Easy.

But this haunting isn't easy. Cree needs to gain the trust of the deeply southern Beauforte clan if she is going to help one of its members, Lila Beauforte. Lila is being terrorized by ghost and her family thinks she's going mad. Some of what Lila is going through touches close to home for Cree. Can she help Lila before it is too late? And will Cree face her own ghosts or keep running?

(The author does a good job in sharing the complex and interesting history and flavor of New Orleans. I also appreciated his understanding of parapsychology, but some might get bogged down in the facts and theories. This is the first in *The Cree Black* series that Daniel Hecht has penned, and I hope the other two are as good. )



Please use for RA purposes only  
do not distribute. Thank you.



### **The Dead Fathers Club by Matt Haig**

When I can, I try to listen to my titles as I seem to get through them quicker. When I started the audio of the dead fathers club I wasn't sure I would like it, as the voice of the young boy narrating the story got on my nerves. But, I was intrigued and kept listening.

Phillip Noble is an eleven year old who has recently lost his father in a car accident. During the funeral his father's ghost appears to him. His dad tells him what life is like for him on the "otherside" and tells him about the "dead fathers club." He also starts pushing Phillip to do deeds Phillip is uncomfortable with.

This is a coming of age story, of right and wrong, and love and hate. If you or reader's liked the novel "Incredibly Loud and Extremely Close" then give this title a try, and find out how Phillip does with his dead father.

### **Spooky Little Girl: A Novel by Laurie Notaro**

Quote:

"You're dead.

You're all dead.

Welcome to Sudden Death – or as I like to call it, Surprise Demise- room 1118....

My dears you're in Ghost School"

In *Spooky Little Girl* we get to share in the sad yet hilarious tale of the late Lucy Fisher. Lucy had just endured a terrible vacation, being dumped by her fiancé, and then fired from her job, when she is suddenly killed. Can it get any worse? Well of course it can. Lucy has to learn how to be a ghost, which isn't easy. If you want a light, fun, fast story of a ghost then *Spooky Little Girl* is for you.

### **The Witch's Daughter by Paula Brackston**

Bess has settled in a small village in England. She is hoping for a peaceful time there, just selling her oils and soaps when Tegan, a young neighbor, inserts herself into Bess's life. Tegan seems to think Bess is a witch. This catches Bess off guard and she is swayed into telling the story of what it means to be a witch. At first Bess means for the recollections to just be stories, but Tegan knows better, and Bess finds herself schooling Tegan as a novice witch.

The novel moves back in forth between the present and Bess's past. We come to understand Bess's talents and fears through these memories which start in the early 1600's then to Victorian England and WWI France. The question is, after hearing the accounts will Tegan become the next "witch's daughter?"



Please use for RA purposes only  
do not distribute. Thank you.



### **Miss Peregrines Home for Peculiar Children by Ransom Riggs**

From an early age, 16 year old Jacob Portman had listened to his grandfather's stories of being sent away from his war torn home in Poland. He went to live at home for children on an island in the UK he said "to escape the monsters".

As Jacob get older these "fairytale" like stories and the peculiar photographs that accompany them began to seem absurd. The absurdity grows the night Jacob's grandfather is killed and Jacob sees what murdered him. This event sends Jacob into a tailspin, having terrible nightmares and regret.

To alleviate these feelings Jacob thinks it would be a good idea to travel to the island and visit the home were grandfather once lived. Jacob's psychiatrist agrees the trip could be therapeutic. Will the trip pull Jacob's mind free or will it push him deeper into his neurosis?

This is an intriguing and unique book, not to be missed.

### **A Dark Dividing by Sarah Rayne**

This is the author's U.S. debut and what a debut novel it is.

Broken down, shamed journalist Harry Fitzglen is asked by his editor to cover the opening of a new art gallery in Bloomsbury. Reluctantly he goes, this isn't his type of venue, nor his cup of tea for reporting.

Harry is to uncover inside dirt on the artist, photographer Simone Anderson whose work is being featured and whose family's past is full of speculation and possible conspiracies. At this society event Harry discovers he is intrigued by Simone, which makes her secret past even more tantalizing, like, what did happen to her twin sister? Will Harry be able to uncover the truths, or will Simone's ghosts, real or imaginary, keep him off track?

### **A Certain Slant of Light by Laura Whitcomb**

This novel will go down as was one my favorite books. We start out by getting to know Helen, a ghost who has been trapped here in the human realm for over 130 years. We learn how she maneuvers through her after life by "clinging" to various hosts- not really haunting them actually, but she can gently persuade them.

Her latest host in an English teacher and one day at school Helen realizes that one of his students can see her. We find out that this student, Billy, is actually inhabited by ghost named James. James convinces Helen to "move into" a vacant human so they can be together, which Helen does- she moves into Jenny. From there James and Helen's love deepens.



Please use for RA purposes only  
do not distribute. Thank you.



What I appreciated about this story is how gracefully the author has Helen tell her story of her ghostly world and what the rules are for that existence. The reader can imagine what being a ghostly might be like, especially for someone so out of time from the present. At one point Helen tells James she can't drive, as cars had not yet been invented when she lived

Discover Helen's story and find out what happens to her and James, read this gem.

### **Jennifer Larson- YA Titles**

#### **The Girl Who Circumnavigated Fairy Land in a Ship of her Own Making by Catherynne M. Valente**

- Originally a free web series
- Billed as juvenile or young adult novel
- Andre Norton Award
- The story of September, a girl who flees from her dreary and sad life in Nebraska to Fairyland on the Green Wind.
- Lyrical, imaginative, strange, scary and wonderful. Unlike anything I've read before.

#### **Shine by Lauren Myracle**

- A tragic hate crime, drug use, sexual assault, high school drop-outs, violence, depression-- what more could you ask for out of a young adult novel?
- Cat's friend is hospitalized after he was attacked for being gay in their small-town mountain community.
- She's determined to find out who did it. Her search leads her to find out more than she bargained for when she uncovers secret after secret in her community. And someone wants to stop her.
- Part mystery, part drama.
- 

#### **Anya's Ghost by Vera Brosgol**

- Graphic novel – good crossover for adults.
- Anya is a typical high school teenager, trying to fit in as best she can at her private school and appear as American as possible despite her immigrant Russian family.
- Obsesses about her weight, boys, and being popular; she's basically an outsider.
- Then one day Anya falls into a well and befriends a ghost who helps her cheat on tests, nab her crush, and look great—but is her supernatural friend everything she appears to be?



Please use for RA purposes only  
do not distribute. Thank you.



### **Level Up by Gene Yang**

- Dennis's destiny, as decreed by his late, Chinese-immigrant father, is to become a gastroenterologist.
- Except he's flunked out of college and wastes all his time playing video games—until four creepy little angels arrive to whip him into shape—and force him to give up his gaming system.
- They clean, cook, and do his laundry so Dennis can study. He ends up in achieving his dream of going to med school and studying gastroenterology. But he's still unhappy. Now what?
- To find out, read this great coming-of-age story, Level Up.

### **Ruby Red by Kerstein Gier**

- First published in Germany, Gier's trilogy--Sapphire Blue and Emerald Green will follow--is very popular in Europe.
- Gwyneth Shepherd, the protagonist, comes from an eccentric English family that is part of a secret society that carries a time traveling gene.
- Gwyneth's cousin, Charlotte is supposed to be the next in the lineage to time travel, so she's been preparing all her life to survive jumps backward in time.
- But then, mysteriously, Gwyneth is the to start traveling back in time. And this changes everything.
- Find out how she handles it in Ruby Red, by Kerstein Gier.

### **Everyone Sees the Ants by A.S. King**

- Printz honor-winner for last YA novel published
- Having a rough time in school with a particular bully. And though he brings his misery to the attention of adults, they are too busy with their own lives to take him seriously.
- Starts having dreams about rescuing his MIA soldier grandfather from Vietnam. But are they only dreams? To find out, read Everyone Sees the Ants, by A.S. King.

### **Perfect by Ellen Hopkins**

- Companion to earlier novel, Impulse – but can stand alone.
- Four teenage protagonists alternately narrate their struggles with perfection in verse poetry
- Great for teens who like reading or writing poetry.

### **Goliath by Scott Westerfeld**

- Leviathan trilogy-ender.



Please use for RA purposes only  
do not distribute. Thank you.



- Alternative-history-steampunk-adventure
- The title of this final volume in the trilogy refers to a device created by the mad inventor Nikola Tesla, which he claims can lay waste to entire cities.
- Keith Thompson illustrates.
- Great for bookclubs.

### **Divergent by Veronica Roth**

- In a future Chicago, sixteen-year-old Beatrice Prior must choose among five predetermined factions to define her identity for the rest of her life.
- She discovers that she is an anomaly—a Divergent-- who does not fit into any one group, so she must choose a group on her own.
- What will become of Beatrice? Which faction will she choose? Find out in Divergent by Veronica Roth.



Please use for RA purposes only  
do not distribute. Thank you.

