

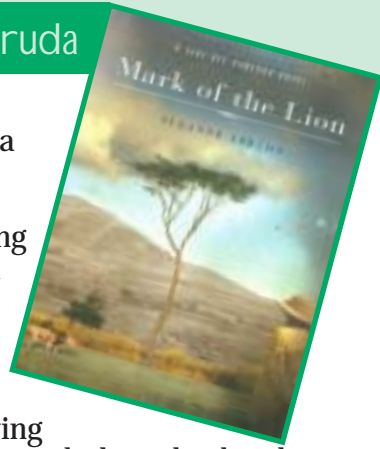
Mark of the Lion by Suzanne Arruda

New American, 2006

Set in 1919, this debut novel introduces a heroine who is no stranger to dangerous situations. American Jade del Cameron was an ambulance driver in France during World War I. After growing up tough on a New Mexico ranch, Jade has become an excellent marksman with a rifle and is handy at keeping various vehicles running. She will get to use all her considerable skills after she promises dying British pilot David Worthy that she will track down his brother.

When Jade visits David's mother in London, Mrs. Worthy insists that David was her only child. Jade figures out that the missing brother must have been born to another woman perhaps during a trip to East Africa made by David's father, Gilbert Worthy. By investigating his life and death in East Africa, Jade hopes to locate David's brother.

Jade gets a job as a writer/photographer for *The Traveler* magazine and sets off for Nairobi. As she settles in she meets many of the colonial settlers who were there when Gilbert Worthy came to East Africa. Along the way she finds drug smuggling, murder, and romance as well as African superstitions. Arruda does an excellent job with the backdrop of East African culture and the geographical landscape of the early 1900s. *Mark of the Lion* introduces a fascinating new heroine. Anyone who reads this book will be hoping to see more of Jade del Cameron's adventures.



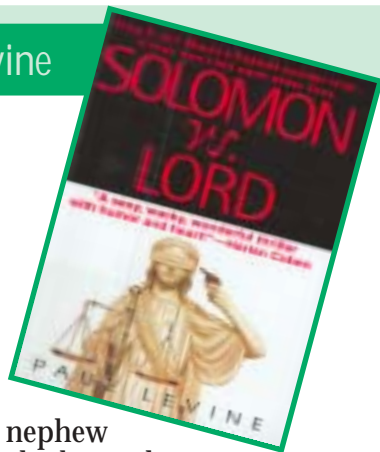
Solomon vs. Lord by Paul Levine

Bantam, 2005

In Levine's first novel since 1988, Steve Solomon wrestles with what is legal vs. what is right. He cannot resist baiting young prosecutor Victoria Lord in the routine trial of a bird smuggler. The judge finally sends them to lockup for a few hours together to cool off.

Solomon is a small-time attorney who is trying to gain permanent custody of his nephew Bobby. He would do anything to protect the boy, who was neglected by his drug-addicted sister. The family court seems determined to prove that Steve is unfit to parent Bobby. Steve's big worry is having enough money to provide Bobby, who is autistic with profound savant syndrome, with special teachers and therapists. When a young, rich widow is accused of her husband's murder, Steve is determined to represent her. Victoria, who is suddenly unemployed, is also determined to get the case. They soon find themselves working together.

It's a fascinating mystery, but the real heart of the book is the struggle against the family court officers who are conspiring to have Bobby committed to an institution in which autistics are the subject of experimentation.



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The Grace That Keeps This World by Tom Bailey

Shaye Areheart Books, 2005

The Hazen family is experiencing growing pains. Their family traditions are being threatened by sons who are finding new interests. Arguments between father Gary and son Kevin are occurring with greater frequency, much to the dismay of wife and mother, Susan.

The year's annual deer hunting trip is just another source of disagreement. Not only is hunting no longer appealing to Kevin, but he has promised his girlfriend that he won't participate. His older brother Gary David will continue to hunt. He is dating the new environmental conservation officer although he is keeping the relationship secret from his parents knowing his father would not approve. The officer intends to enforce the one deer per hunter restriction and will arrest Gary David's father if he uses Susan's name on a license to kill more deer.

The reader is prepared early in the novel that there will be a tragedy in the woods during the hunt. Underlying all of the struggles within this family, it is apparent that they share the same values and value each other.

The author skillfully tells this story by having each chapter focus on the feelings and perceptions of one character. This novel is not about deer hunting; it is about love, honesty, and survival.



"The engine roared, and they drove off - and that was the last I heard from the three of them all together ever again."

Shelf Life

Grace A. Dow Memorial Library

Spring 2006

Original Reviews
of Recommended Books

The Hidden Diary of Marie Antoinette by Carolly Erickson

St. Martin's Press, 2005



Written in a diary format, this novel tells Marie Antoinette's story from a different perspective than the history books would have us understand. At age thirteen, Maria Antonia, Archduchess of the Austrian Hapsburg Empire, is promised to Louis, heir to the French throne in an effort to bring greater peace to Europe. Traveling to France, she embarks on a life journey filled with both the love and glamour of court life as well as the suffering and humiliation of imprisonment during the French Revolution.

From the moment she steps from her carriage into France and meets her husband-to-be, Louis, she recognizes that hers will be an unusual marriage. Louis XVI, much more interested in his hobbies of hunting and locksmithing, has little interest in court functions or kingly responsibilities. Antoinette, on the other hand, enjoys court life and the endless parties, but still finds herself trying to help her husband and to save France from its eventual outcome.

Louis and Antoinette develop a marriage of mutual respect and companionship and become parents of three beloved children. Antoinette is devastated as Louis' fate becomes sealed by events transpiring during the French Revolution and her children are taken from her during her imprisonment.

Her true love, Swedish diplomat Count Axel Fersen, comes to her rescue on several occasions, but even he is not capable of stopping the tide of the revolution which leads to Antoinette's untimely death.

Erickson depicts Marie Antoinette as a woman of great love and compassion, who meets the end of her days with bravery and resilience.

"My eyes have no more tears to cry for my dear children. Farewell, Farewell."

Grace A. Dow Memorial Library

1710 W. St. Andrews Road, Midland, Michigan 48640-2698

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Contributors: Melissa Barnard, Barbara Brennan, Ann Jarvis, Jan Kimmel, Emelia Parker

Editor: Jan Kimmel

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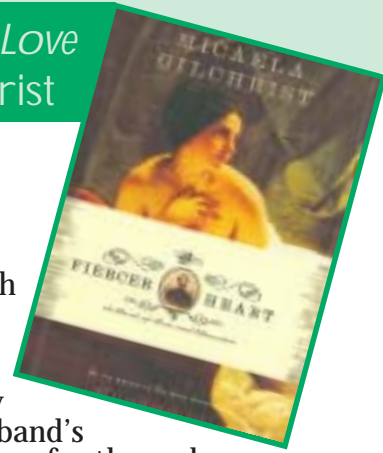
The Fiercer Heart: A Novel of Love and Obsession by Micaela Gilchrist

Simon & Schuster, 2005

In any explosive marriage, the one who survives must have the fiercer heart; at least that is what Diana Bullit Kearny believes as she looks back on her life with General Philip Kearny. Impulsively married in Kentucky in 1841, the couple barely knew each other, but was obsessively drawn together. Diana's fiery and courageous personality and her husband's self-indulgent wandering spirit set the tone for the rocky marriage.

Kearny's military career took him to Fort Leavenworth, the Mexican War, and ultimately to his death as a general in the Civil War. Diana stayed at home with the couple's five children through lengthy periods of her husband's military "desertion" only to find herself further alone through his dalliances and diversions (including another "wife"). Their relationship spiraled toward disaster until the couple realized that the only reasonable course of action was divorce, an almost unthinkable alternative in the 19th century. Always at odds, yet always in love even long after their divorce, the characters remained trapped by their pride, persistence, and passion.

The character-driven story is based on the diaries and correspondence of the real Philip Kearny and his wife, making an unforgettable novel of historic events.

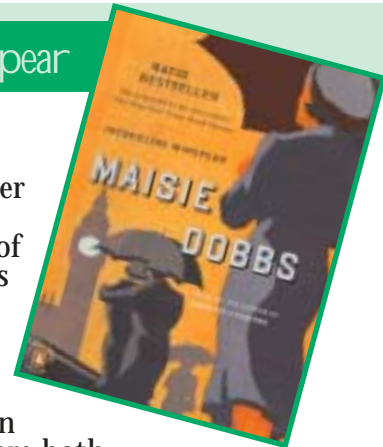


Maisie Dobbs by Jacqueline Winspear

Penguin, 2004

After her mother's death, 14-year-old Maisie Dobbs goes into service to help her father make ends meet. Through her natural intelligence and the patronage of her employer, a suffragette, Maisie works her way into college at Cambridge. During World War I, she trains as a nurse and is sent to a front lines hospital in France. While working at the hospital, Maisie and surgeon Captain Simon Lynch fall in love. In 1917, they are both wounded and lose track of one another.

The novel opens in 1929 with Maisie setting herself up as a private investigator. Her early life is told in flashbacks during her first case. Because of her life experiences, she is a perceptive observer of human nature and understands the motivations driving people in postwar England. Maisie's first case involves suspected infidelity and leads to a trail of war-wounded ex-soldiers lured to a remote convalescent home in Kent from which no one seems to emerge alive. During the investigation, Maisie learns what happened to Simon and begins to come to terms with her war experiences. This debut novel is a poignant and compelling story that explores war's lingering and insidious impact on its survivors.



Fallen by David Maine

St. Martin's Press, 2005

Murderous rivalry between brothers is so strong, so disturbing that the first brothers in the Bible fall victim to it. Maine takes the brief story of Creation, the Fall of Man, and the First Murder and explores the emotions and hardships of the first people.

Beginning with Cain at the end of his life, the story is told in reverse. This provides a more compelling narrative with strong, simple prose expressing the emotions of the people and their struggle to survive in the harsh landscape.

Adam and Eve's first days and weeks after banishment from the Garden are particularly difficult. Everything seems to go wrong at the time of Cain's birth; they are both frightened and have no idea what to expect. As time goes on, they gain experience, find a place to settle and, with the birth of son Abel, their family increases. Soon other people join them (where they came from no one knows). Then, Cain kills Abel and Adam expels him from the community.

Cain wanders through the desert with the mark of God to protect him. Most people respond with hostility when they meet him, until one day, desperate with thirst, he encounters a woman who helps him. They marry, and with their child, wander until they find a place to settle. Cain's family increases. He designs and directs the building of a great city. Ironically, he has a successful life, but as Cain lies dying, he can think of nothing but the event that brought him to this place, far to the east—the murder of his brother, Abel.



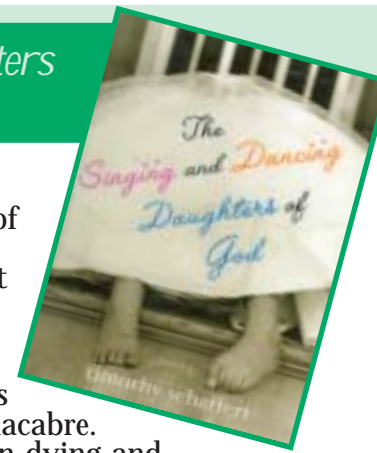
The Singing and Dancing Daughters of God by Timothy Schaffert

Unbridled Books, 2005

It is early September, but the children of Bonnevilla, Nebraska are celebrating Halloween - not exactly celebrating, but commemorating the deaths of two kids who were poisoned on Halloween. It is also the execution day for the murderer, the children's father. To Hud, school bus driver and sometime musician, this is macabre. He is unsettled by the notion of children dying and cannot imagine killing his own child.

That same night, Hud sneaks into his ex-wife's house and steals their daughter Nina away for an excursion. When his wife, Tuesday, wakes in the morning, she is mad but she knows Hud will bring Nina back. Although newly divorced, Hud cannot give up the idea of their marriage, but Tuesday keeps pushing him away, trying to establish an independent life. This is difficult in a town so small that her ex-husband works for her father. However, the two remain drawn together through concern for their daughter, Nina, and their son, who has left home to join a punk rock Christian singing group.

Tuesday, Hud, Nina, and all of their friends and relatives are quirky, earnest, and real. They love each other, but can't always make that love felt - and that is what it is all about.



Music of Falling Water by Julia Oliver

John F. Blair, 2001

World War I is nearly at an end. The Holloway sisters will gather at the old homestead in rural Alabama because of a grisly discovery at the old mill pond on the property. It is a skeleton which the family fears to be that of their sister Rhoda, who at 15 had run away from home, so everyone thought, never to be heard from again.

Gertrude, the eldest, is married to lawyer Jason Howard and resides in Felder - a few hours drive from Hackberry Hill, the family farm on which lusty sister Kathleen still lives with her husband George and their two sons. After the girls' parents died, Gertrude and Jason took younger sister Lola to live with them. It was Lola who most identified with the spirited Rhoda. The Howards and Lola head to the old place to meet with the others and decide what must be done about the remains.

The saga of the Holloways segues from present (1918) to past and back again, as they try to solve and resolve the grim situation. Through expertly rendered narrative and dialogue, the author peels away the sisters' relationships as they developed - or not - over the years. They eventually reach closure, but *the real answer to the mystery is revealed only to the reader.*



Echoes from the Infantry by Frank Nappi

St. Martin's Press, 2005

James McCleary was an infantryman during World War II, finding himself at the Battle of the Bulge, suffering through winter in the Ardennes, and then fighting his way to Germany only to become a POW at end of the war. While he remained uninjured physically, he suffered the torment of his lost innocence, vividly re-living the horror of his wartime experiences for the rest of his life. He married his sweetheart, Maddie, as expected when he returned home and fathered three sons to whom he remains an enigma his whole life.

Fast forward to the present, and the McCleary sons have returned home to attend their mother's funeral and to help in the selling of the family home. Eldest son John takes it upon himself to go through the items in the attic and finds a packet of letters written by James to Maddie during the war. The expectant tone of the letters is so totally different from the father he knows that John fails to recognize the withdrawn and embittered man downstairs. Troubling recollections from John's childhood come to the forefront, only to be resolved through the revelation of the high price of war on their lives.

Many baby boomers will resonate with this story of the "distant" father who cannot speak of his wartime experiences and his children, still struggling to find their place in this world.



"Everything would be great, he thought, if he could find a way to just forget."