

Fendrick Library Book Group
2018/2019
Female Friendship

Astrid & Veronika by Linda Olsson. (2007) 259 p.

With extraordinary emotional power, Linda Olsson's stunningly well-crafted debut novel recounts the unusual and unexpected friendship that develops between two women. Veronika, a young writer from New Zealand, rents a house in a small Swedish village as she tries to come to terms with a recent tragedy while also finishing a novel. Her arrival is silently observed by Astrid, an older, reclusive neighbor who slowly becomes a presence in Veronika's life, offering comfort in the form of companionship and lovingly prepared home-cooked meals. Set against a haunting Swedish landscape, *Astrid & Veronika* is a lyrical and meditative novel of love and loss, and a story that will remain with readers long after the characters' secrets are revealed.

Calling Me Home by Julie Kibler. (2013) 352 p.

Eighty-nine-year-old Isabelle McAllister has a favor to ask her hairdresser Dorrie Curtis. It's a big one. Isabelle wants Dorrie, a black single mom in her thirties, to drop everything to drive Isabelle from her home in Arlington, Texas, to a funeral in Cincinnati. With no clear explanation why. Over the years, Dorrie and Isabelle have developed more than just a business relationship. They are friends. But Dorrie, fretting over the new man in her life and her teenage son's irresponsible choices, still wonders why Isabelle chose her. Isabelle confesses that, as a willful teen in 1930s Kentucky, she fell deeply in love with Robert Prewitt, a would-be doctor and the black son of her family's housekeeper. The tale of their forbidden relationship and its tragic consequences makes it clear Dorrie and Isabelle are headed for a gathering of the utmost importance and that the history of Isabelle's first and greatest love just might help Dorrie find her own way.

Firefly Lane by Kristin Hannah. (2008) 528 p.

In the turbulent summer of 1974, Kate Mularkey has accepted her place at the bottom of the eighth-grade social food chain. Then, to her amazement, the "coolest girl in the world" moves in across the street and wants to be her friend. Tully Hart seems to have it all---beauty, brains, ambition. On the surface they are as opposite as two people can be: Kate, doomed to be forever uncool, with a loving family who mortifies her at every turn. Tully, steeped in glamour and mystery, but with a secret that is destroying her. They make a pact to be best friends forever; by summer's end they've become *Tully and Kate*. Inseparable. So begins Kristin Hannah's magnificent new novel. Spanning more than three decades and playing out across the ever-changing face of the Pacific Northwest, *Firefly Lane* is the poignant, powerful story of two women and the friendship that becomes the bulkhead of their lives.

Grace Hopper: admiral of the cyber sea by Kathleen Broome Williams. (2004) 240 p. NON-FICTION

When Grace Hopper retired as a rear admiral from the U.S. Navy in 1986, she was the first woman restricted line officer to reach flag rank and, at the age of seventy-nine, the oldest serving officer in the Navy. A mathematician by training who became a computer scientist, the eccentric and outspoken Hopper helped propel the Navy into the computer age. Kathleen Broome Williams looks at Hopper's entire naval career, from the time she joined the WAVES and was sent in 1943 to work on the Mark I computer at Harvard, where she became one of the country's first computer programmers. Thanks to this early Navy introduction to computing, the author explains, Hopper had a distinguished civilian career in commercial computing after the war, gaining fame for her part in the creation of COBOL. The admiral's Navy days were far from over, however, and Williams tells how Hopper--already past retirement age--was recalled to active duty at the Pentagon in 1967 to standardize computer programming languages for Navy computers. Her temporary appointment lasted for nineteen years while she standardized COBOL for the entire department of defense. Based on extensive interviews with colleagues and family and on archival material never before examined, this biography not only illuminates Hopper's pioneering accomplishments in a field that came to be dominated by men, but provides a fascinating overview of computing from its beginnings in World War II to the late 1980s.

If You Could Be Mine by Sara Farizan. (2013) 272 p.

In this multi-award-winning novel, seventeen-year-old Sahar has been in love with her best friend, Nasrin, since they were six. They've shared stolen kisses and romantic promises. But Iran is a dangerous place for two girls in love--Sahar and Nasrin could be beaten, imprisoned, even executed. So they carry on in secret until Nasrin's parents suddenly announce that they've arranged for her marriage. Then Sahar discovers what seems like the perfect solution: homosexuality may be a crime, but to be a man trapped in a woman's body is seen as nature's mistake, and sex reassignment is legal and accessible. Sahar will never be able to love Nasrin in the body she wants to be loved in without risking their lives, but is saving their love worth sacrificing her true self?

The Knitting Circle by Ann Hood. (2007) 352 p.

After the sudden loss of her only child, Mary Baxter joins a knitting circle in Providence, Rhode Island, as a way to fill the empty hours and lonely days. The women welcome her, each teaching Mary a new knitting technique and, as they do, revealing their own personal stories of loss, love, and hope. Eventually Mary is able to tell her own story of grief and in so doing reclaims her love for her husband, faces the hard truths about her relationship with her mother, and finds the spark of life again.

Little Fires Everywhere by Celeste Ng. (2017) 352 p.

In Shaker Heights, a placid, progressive suburb of Cleveland, everything is planned – from the layout of the winding roads, to the colors of the houses, to the successful lives its residents will go on to lead. And no one embodies this spirit more than Elena Richardson, whose guiding principle is playing by the rules. Enter Mia Warren – an enigmatic artist and single mother – who arrives in this idyllic bubble with her teenaged daughter Pearl, and rents a house from the Richardsons. Soon Mia and Pearl become more than tenants: all four Richardson children are drawn to the mother-daughter pair. But Mia carries with her a mysterious past and a disregard for the status quo that threatens to upend this carefully ordered community. When old family friends of the Richardsons attempt to adopt a Chinese-American baby, a custody battle erupts that dramatically divides the town--and puts Mia and Elena on opposing sides. Suspicious of Mia and her motives, Elena is determined to uncover the secrets in Mia's past. But her obsession will come at unexpected and devastating costs. *Little Fires Everywhere* explores the weight of secrets, the nature of art and identity, and the ferocious pull of motherhood – and the danger of believing that following the rules can avert disaster.

Remarkable Creatures by Tracy Chevalier. (2010) 312 p.

On the windswept, fossil-strewn beaches of the English coast, poor and uneducated Mary Anning learns that she has a unique gift: "the eye" to spot fossils no one else can see. When she uncovers an unusual fossilized skeleton in the cliffs near her home, she sets the religious community on edge, the townspeople to gossip, and the scientific world alight. After enduring bitter cold, thunderstorms, and landslips, her challenges only grow when she falls in love with an impossible man. Mary soon finds an unlikely champion in prickly Elizabeth Philpot, a middle-class spinster who shares her passion for scouring the beaches. Their relationship strikes a delicate balance between fierce loyalty, mutual appreciation, and barely suppressed envy, but ultimately turns out to be their greatest asset. *Remarkable Creatures* is a stunning historical novel that follows the story of two extraordinary 19th century fossil hunters who changed the scientific world forever.

Sula by Toni Morrison. (2002) 192 p.

Two girls who grow up to become women. Two friends who become something worse than enemies. In this brilliantly imagined novel, Toni Morrison tells the story of Nel Wright and Sula Peace, who meet as children in the small town of Medallion, Ohio. Their devotion is fierce enough to withstand bullies and the burden of a dreadful secret. It endures even after Nel has grown up to be a pillar of the black community and Sula has become a pariah. But their friendship ends in an unforgivable betrayal—or does it end? Terrifying, comic, ribald and tragic, ***Sula*** is a work that overflows with life.