

Friends Read

Booklist

February 13, 2025

Boston Girl by Anita Diamant

The *Boston Girl* is told through the eyes of Jewish woman growing up in Boston in the early twentieth century. It is a coming-of-age story about family ties and values, about immigration and generational change, about friendship and feminism.

Addie Baum is The *Boston Girl*, born in 1900 to immigrant parents who were unprepared for the effect that America would have on three daughters. Growing up in the North End—at the time a teeming multicultural neighborhood—Addie’s intelligence and curiosity lead her to a world her parents can’t imagine, a world of short skirts, movies, celebrity culture and new opportunities for women. Addie wants to finish high school and dreams of going to college. She wants a career and to find true love.

Eighty-five-year-old Addie tells the story of her life to her twenty-two-year-old granddaughter, who has asked her “How did you get to be the woman you are today.” She begins in 1915, the year she found her voice and made friends who would help shape the course of her life. From the one-room tenement apartment she shared with her parents and two sisters, to the library group for girls she joins at a neighborhood settlement house, to her first, disastrous love affair, Addie recalls her adventures with compassion for the naïve girl she was.

She remembers staying at Rockport Lodge, a sort of “fresh air fund” resort located in a seaside town north of Boston, where she makes friends, who are part of a life that spans World War I, the influenza epidemic, and the Great Depression.

The *Boston Girl* is a moving portrait of one woman’s complicated life in twentieth century America, and a how a generation of women found their place in a changing world.

The Department of Sensitive Crimes by Alexander McCall Smith

In the Swedish criminal justice system, certain cases are considered especially strange and difficult, in Malmö, the dedicated detectives who investigate these crimes are members of an elite squad known as the Sensitive Crimes Division.

These are their stories.

The first case: the small matter of a man stabbed in the back of the knee. Who would perpetrate such a crime and why? Next: a young woman’s imaginary boyfriend goes missing. But how on earth do you search for someone who doesn’t exist? And in the final investigation: eerie secrets that are revealed under a full moon may not seem so supernatural in the light of day. No case is too unusual, too complicated, or too, well insignificant for this squad to solve.

The team: Ulf “the Wolf” Varg, the top dog, thoughtful and diligent; Anna Bengsdotter, who’s in love with Varg’s car (and possibly Varg too); Carl Holgersson, who likes nothing more than filling out paperwork; and Erik Nykvist, who is deeply committed to fly fishing.

With the help of a rather verbose local police officer, this crack team gets to the bottom of cases other detectives can’t or won’t bother to handle. Equal parts hilarious and heartening, *The Department of Sensitive Crimes* is a tour de farce from a true master.

Mirrors by Nora Roberts (series)

When Sonya MacTavish inherits the huge Victorian mansion on the coast of Maine, she has no idea that the house is haunted. The footsteps she hears at night, the doors slamming, the music playing, are not figments of her imagination. In her dreams she sees glimpses of the past. In the present she finds portraits of brides. And when she has visions of an antique mirror, she is drawn to it, sensing it holds dark family secrets.

Then one night the mirror appears and Sonya glides through this looking glass, into the past—and sees a bride murdered on her wedding day, the circle of gold torn from her finger. It is a scene that will play out again and again—a centuries-old curse that must be broken—and a puzzle she must solve if there is any hope of breaking the curse.

More or Less Maddy by Lisa Genova

A breathless, riveting novel about a young woman diagnosed with bipolar disorder who rejects the stability and approval found in a traditionally “normal” life for a career in stand-up comedy.

Maddy Banks is just like any other stressed-out freshman at NYU. Between schoolwork, exams, navigating life in the city, and a recent breakup, it’s normal to be feeling overwhelmed. It doesn’t help that she’s always felt like the odd one out in her picture-perfect Connecticut family. But Maddy’s latest low is devastatingly low, and she goes on an antidepressant. She begins to feel good, dazzling in fact, and she soon spirals high into a wild and terrifying mania that culminates in a diagnosis of bipolar disorder.

As she struggles to find her way in this new reality, navigating the complex effects bipolar has on her identity, her relationships, and her life dreams, Maddy will have to figure out how to manage being both too much and not enough.

The Tattooist of Auschwitz by Heather Morris

Lale Sokolov is well-dressed, a charmer, a ladies’ man. He is also a Jew. On the first transport from Slovakia to Auschwitz in 1942, Lale immediately stands out to his fellow prisoners. In the camp, he is looked up to, looked out for, and put to work in the privileged position of Tätowierer – the tattooist – to

mark his fellow prisoners, forever. One of them is a young woman, Gita, who steals his heart at first glance.

His life given new purpose, Lale does his best through the struggle and suffering to use his position for good.

This story, full of beauty and hope, is based on years of interviews author Heather Morris conducted with real-life Holocaust survivor and Auschwitz-Birkenau tattooist Ludwig (Lale) Sokolov. It is heart-wrenching, illuminating, and unforgettable.