The Casual Reader

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Michelle Fields and Judy Howell, Editors

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AUTUMN IN OXFORD

I’ve been in a reading slump for the last six weeks, which means that I’ve read very little. This book was exactly what I needed. It ticks off many boxes for me: it starts with a murder mystery, has flashbacks that develop character and deepen a love story, does a great job of crafting an interesting historical setting, and finally, hits the ground running with a corker of a spy story that involves real-life spies on both sides of the Atlantic. This would make a great book club book. There is a lot to talk about. — Michelle Fields


LEFT TO DIE

Grizzly Point, Montana is a small town and very remote. It’s winter time and people are discovering the frozen, naked bodies of women. Looks like Selena Alvarez and Regan Pescoli have a serial killer to track. This killer leaves cryptic notes and there seems to be no rhyme or reason to his methods. This thrilling book by Lisa Jackson is our first introduction to these detectives. Their personalities are different but both women are intelligent investigators who stay focused on the job. Can Pescoli and Alvarez find the serial killer before he murders again? Who will be the final victim? — Judy Howell

Left to Die by Lisa Jackson. (496 pages) Available in Hardcover, Paperback, Kindle, iBook.

THE MARTIAN CHRONICLES

This year I have found myself enjoying some SF classics. Isaac Asimov’s I, Robot made me realize how good interlinked short stories with a SF setting could be, and Bradbury creates a similar feel with twists all his own. All of the stories involve the colonization of Mars by humans, and putting them all together creates a mini-history of the project. There are some excellent stories here. My favorites were probably “Usher II,” and “The Martian”, but there are many other gems to be found here. As great literature often does, the book is less about its supposed subject matter, Mars, and more about humanity in general. — Michelle Fields

Weekend Warriors

I read a Fern Michael's book years ago. This is not what I expected. It was fast paced and I plan to read the next one in the series. The characters are very detailed and I look forward to getting to know them better. This group of women have one thing in common and that is an overwhelming desire for revenge. When the justice system fails this is the only option. — JH

Raven Black

If you are a fan of the British show, Shetland, which can be watched on Netflix, this is the book series they based that project on. I love the setting of the Shetland Islands, north of Scotland. You really get a good sense of their isolation and how it means that everyone tends to know everyone else’s business (and their family’s as well for several generations). When the body of a teenage girl is found on the beach, the investigation into her death reveals scandals past and present. — MF

The Screwtape Letters

I found this to be a very revealing read. Years ago a Professor of history read from these letters during the great American read aloud. I found the book to be a fascinating concept. In this book C.S. Lewis, through Uncle Screwtape, reveals to us our human weaknesses. As I read the book, it reminded me to be patient and loving. — JH