

From the Stacks

By Julie Orf

Dunklin County Library

The saying "variety is the spice of life" perfectly applies to reading. Exploring different genres, authors, and even formats can significantly enrich the reading experience, preventing monotony and fostering a more engaging and enjoyable journey through literature. By reading different genres I gain diverse perspectives on life, cultures, and experiences, enriching my understanding of the world. Exploring new authors exposes me to various writing styles, new words, and languages, which can ultimately improve my language skills. However, I will always return to my tried and true favorite authors when a new novel is released.

English villages are known for secrets and apparently murders, as the author of *Death at the White Hart*, Chris Chibnall, is also the creator of the British series, *Broadchurch*. Detective Sargent Nicola Bridge moves to a small English coastal town to save her marriage, but a shocking murder pulls her back into her workaholic habits. The victim, a local publican, is found in the middle of the road, tied to a chair, and wearing antlers. With limited resources, Nicola and her team, including a new partner with boy-band good looks, a scene-of-crime officer, and a meticulous cataloger, must navigate a village full of quirky suspects, from a grumpy farmer to a scorned wife. This classic police procedural introduces a delightful cast of misfits who use their humor and dedication to solve a mystery rooted in human emotion.

Laney Katz Becker's powerful novel, *In the Family Way*, is a powerful novel about everything that happens behind the Welcome! Mat. In 1965, a group of suburban housewives navigates the challenges of a society that limits women's rights to finances and divorce. One of them, Lily Berg, discovers she is pregnant with her second child. Following a friend's advice, she takes in Betsy, a pregnant teen from a local home for unwed mothers. The arrangement is simple: Betsy will live with the Bergs, help with chores, have her baby, and then leave without any future contact. The situation quickly becomes complicated. Lily unexpectedly forms a bond with Betsy. Meanwhile, Lily's friend Becca, also pregnant, devises a plan to get a legal abortion, and Lily's sister, Rose, seeks help after discovering her husband's deception.

The three wealthy Bishop sisters grew up in Detroit, but their fortunes declined with the auto industry. The youngest, Harper, is struggling financially when her two older sisters, Pam and Debra, ask her to join a new club called The Wheel. The club promises to help middle-aged women like them, who are facing financial struggles, make their own money. The sisters quickly become addicted to The Wheel's success, taking on greater risks that lead to a shocking crime that threatens to destroy everything. *El Dorado Drive* by Megan Abbott is a simmering novel about a woman-led pyramid scheme.

The Master Jeweler by Weina Dai Randel is an epic story of a brilliant young woman's dangerous rise to fame in the perilous world of jewelry in 1920s Shanghai. After 15-year-old Anyu Zhang finds and returns a priceless Fabergé egg, its owner, master jeweler Isaac Mandelburg, offers her a place to stay in Shanghai. When Anyu later arrives as an orphan, she is determined to master the art of jewelry making. She soon finds herself entangled in a dangerous world of greedy collectors, violent gangsters, and vicious rivals who threaten to destroy everything she holds dear.

James Grady's *American Sky* is a fast-paced story with loveable characters and great dialogue set in 1960s Montana. For teenaged Luc, his days are preoccupied with the daily dramas of high school. President John F. Kennedy's assassination seems a world away. The winds of history find their way to his small Montana town as marijuana clouds rise in the hallways and the notices of neighborhood young men "Killed in Action" in Vietnam keep arriving at an increasing rate. This novel is about social change and blue-collar life depicting the threats to tear Luc's world apart.