

Amy James, Kirkland Town Library staff

Nothing - aside from family - brings more joy into my life than friends and, next to that, reading, watching, or listening to stories about friendships that have been transformative. Especially in this time of isolation, when many of us have been stripped of the activities and distractions that keep us busy from morning until night, spending time (in whatever way possible) with your tribe, your posse...yes, your pod...inspires hope, humor, and healing.

Ann Patchett's *Truth and Beauty* is a chronicle of her long friendship with fellow author, Lucy Grealy. As a result of a disfiguring childhood illness, Grealy's path through life is complicated and difficult, and likewise the women's friendship can be complicated and difficult as well. But their commitment to each other as friends and creative sounding boards is steadfast. Patchett is an adept storyteller as well as an elegant writer, and this sensitive and occasionally wry memoir is a beacon for anyone who has struggled to understand and love another person who may be simultaneously wonderful and completely confounding. The value of a cherished friendship is beyond measure.

For something just a bit lighter and in the fiction realm, we can look to Gail Honeyman's *Eleanor Oliphant is Completely Fine*. The protagonist is an eccentric to say the least; a young woman who endured a difficult childhood, is unable to read social cues, and arranges her life so as to almost completely eliminate human interaction. Friends are not on her radar screen. Then chance brings her Raymond, a somewhat awkward but kind computer geek. He sets about trying to befriend Eleanor - whose understanding of friendship is nonexistent - and initially she is mystified by Raymond's intrusion into her small, safe world. But, as time goes on, an unlikely friendship blossoms and Eleanor finds her connection with Raymond and others brings a newfound pleasure and knowledge of herself and her humanity.

If you're looking for a story of a merry crew of friends, or for some rousing music, I'd turn to *Fisherman's Friends*. This 2019 film tells the story of ten sea-shanty-singing Cornish fishermen who are discovered by an executive from a London record label who is in their tiny town on holiday. To make this rollicking, hopeful, sometimes poignant tale even more compelling, *Fisherman's Friends* is based on a true story. The setting is gorgeous, the voices are rich and resonant (each one so different from the other), and the characters well played. *Fisherman's Friends* illustrates that anything can happen, anytime in life, especially with the support and fellowship of old and dear friends. Plus, in case you didn't know, sea shanties are very big on TikTok these days!.

For long walks and listening, *This Tender Land* by William Kent Krueger is the kind of story that will make you want to pull on your boots and Yaktrax, grab your headphones, and hike out into the tundra just to see what happens next. This novel, set in Minnesota in 1932, focuses on the plight of two brothers who flee from the Lincoln Indian Training School where they had been deposited years prior and embark on an epic journey down the Mississippi to find a long-lost aunt. They bring two friends with them; the mute Mose and the recently-orphaned Emmy.

Together, this rag-tag band braves wild weather, some even wilder people, and learns what it really means to be true to each other and to themselves.

All items are available in various forms from MidYork. Call us! We're happy to help you keep reading, listening, watching, and treasuring friends during these dark (but slowly brightening) days.