

Reading is the Best Medicine

By Laura Stoll, Assistant to the Director

In mid-February, I took a bad fall, broke my ankle, and had surgery that required many weeks of recovery. During that time, my friends, family, and coworkers all suggested a variety of books that would distract and entertain me during my convalescence. They ranged from mysteries to historical fiction to contemporary stories and each one kept me engaged enough to forget about what was happening in reality. Maybe you will find some of the same comforts in these titles.

I happened to grab “Love and Saffron” by Kim Fay from the Kirkland Town Library shelves the night before my accident. The author did an interview on “Satellite Sisters,” one of my favorite podcasts, and after listening to that, I wanted to read the book. The story is set in the 1960s and is told through a series of letters between twenty-seven-year-old Joan Bergstrom and fifty-nine-year-old Imogen Fortier. Although their relationship begins over a common love of good food, it blossoms into a true friendship. It was a quick and easy read and warmed my heart.

My husband got me “The Thursday Murder Club” by Richard Osman for Christmas and I finally had time to read it. In fact, I liked it so much that I borrowed the second book in the series, “The Man Who Died Twice” and I have the third, “The Bullet that Missed,” waiting to be picked up at the library. The series is about a quartet of senior citizens who live in an assisted living facility in England. Aided by their friends from the local police department, MI6, and even a shady hitman, they solve a series of murders. The characters are funny and charming and none of the crimes are gory or disturbing. The books are a little bit like the Mitford series by Jan Karon rewritten as mysteries for the new millennium.

“West With Giraffes” by Lynda Rutledge appeared in the bag with my curbside pickups with a sticky note from Anne saying it was a book she was recommending to everyone. Not surprisingly, the KTL Director knows what people like to read! This historical fiction tale tells of a pair of giraffes who survived a trans-Atlantic boat voyage and a devastating hurricane only to travel cross-country in a custom-fitted truck to the San Diego Zoo. Typically I don’t like animal stories but this book was actually about how the human characters weathered the Dust Bowl, loved the giraffes, and the journey that transported them to their new home.

“Lessons in Chemistry” by Bonnie Garmus came recommended by my Aunt Cathy. Another story that takes place in recent history, it tells the story of chemist Elizabeth Zott. In the early 1960s, she faced rampant sexism in her job at Hastings Lab but somehow managed to fall in love with a fellow chemist who accepted her for who she really was. Years later, she finds herself as a single mother and the reluctant star of “Supper at Six,” a cooking show that doubles as chemistry lessons and feminist inspiration for its viewers. This book was laugh-out-loud funny, inspirational, and heartbreaking, a combination that can’t be beat.

Now that I'm back at work, I'm still making my way through my list of recommended books, which includes "Just The Nicest Couple" by Mary Kubica (thank you, Nina) and "The Farm" by Joanne Ramos (hi, Alyssa). If you're unfortunate enough to need a stack of books to distract you during recovery of some kind, I highly recommend asking your friends, family, and the staff of the Kirkland Town Library to suggest some good books. As Haruki Murakami said, "What happens when people open their hearts? They get better."