

The Book Rack Newsletter

It just makes sense to buy your books at The Book Rack!

Vol 9, #12
December 2016

4764 Elmore Ave, Davenport
563-355-2310

Store Hours: 10:00 - 6:00 Monday - Sunday

<http://www.thebookrackqc.com/>
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Gift Certificates from The Book Rack

Don't forget to pick up Gift Certificates for the readers on your gift list (including yourself). They never expire and don't lose value if not used quickly!

Trivia for December

What was the house in the background of Grant Wood's classic painting *American Gothic*?

Did you know?

Victor Hugo was exiled from France by Napoleon III in 1851. He lived in Germany for 19 years during which time he wrote Les Miserables.

December Holidays and Events at The Book Rack:

December 3 – Tom McKay, Local Author, 11-1:00
3 – Advent Begins

7 – Pearl Harbor Day

10 – Jim Pransky, Local Author, 11-1:00

10 - Rob Erwin, Local Author, 2-4:00

11 – Kurt Wagner, Local Author, 11-1:00

14 – International Monkey Day

17 – Sean Leary, Local Author, 11-1:00

21 – Winter Solstice – The outlook gets brighter after this!

24 – Rob Erwin, Local Author, 11-1:00

24 – Channukah – The Book Rack will close at 4:00 PM.

25 – Christmas Day – The Book Rack will be closed all day.

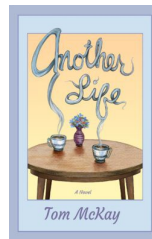
31 – New Year's Eve - The Book Rack will close at 4:00 PM.

Jan 1 – New Year's Day - The Book Rack will be closed all day.

Featured Authors for December:

We are fortunate in the QCA to have a large group of talented authors. These 5 will be at **The Book Rack** in December to visit with you and sign copies of their books. Please make an effort to stop in and meet them and consider their books for your gift lists.

Tom McKay will be at The Book Rack Saturday, December 3, 11-1:00 with his latest book, Another Life.



How long does a high school crush last? One year? Ten? Twenty? Forty? Small-college basketball coach Matt Cooper is about to find out as he is faced with an unexpected reunion with Kim Gustafson, the cutest girl from high school.

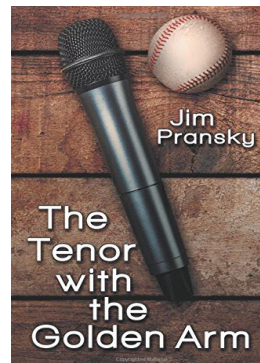
“With warm humor and a light touch, *Another Life* probes the weighty matters of love, loss, and the passage of time, raising poignant questions about how well we know ourselves or the people we live with, and what we’d do if offered a lost opportunity, all these years later. This is a sweet, soulful story that will leave you thinking about your own what-ifs.” ~ Misty Urban, author of *A Lesson in Manners*

“*Another Life* is a nuanced and poignant exploration of family, loyalty, and the possibility of second chances. Tom McKay writes about the intricacies of the human heart, and life’s unexpected challenges and opportunities, with deft assurance. A story that is highly recommended.” ~ Kathleen Ernst, author of the Chloe Ellefson Mysteries

Tom McKay is an historian and museum consultant who lives in his hometown of Hampton, Illinois. His debut novel, *West Fork*, was published by East Hall Press at Augustana College in 2014. His short stories have appeared in the *Wapsipinicon Almanac*, *Vermont Ink*, *Downstate Story*, the *Wisconsin River Valley Journal*, the *Book Rack Newsletter*, and the *Out Loud* Anthology series of the Midwest Writing Center.

Jim Pransky will be at The Book Rack, Saturday, December 10, 11-1:00.

A Colorado Rockies’ scout, Jim's most recent book is *The Tenor with the Golden Arm*.



Tommy Bauer is a popular, free-spirited and athletic high school senior with two uncanny abilities. One is public knowledge- he can throw a baseball ninety miles an hour. The second is private with only a few people aware-he is a fine piano player and despite hiding it for it for years, a singer with an astonishing, stop you in your tracks voice.

This dramatic story follows Tommy through one calendar year culminating in the June amateur baseball free agent draft. The story follows the independent thinking, competitive, long haired teenager as he attracts the constant and sometimes overbearing attention of professional baseball scouts, college recruiters and people connected to the music world.

Tommy is forced to face not only the typical dilemmas of a seventeen year old, but a countless number of outsiders vying for his attention.

His parents, sister (Tracey) and girlfriend (Kenzie) form a loving support staff that enables him to endure tragedy and disappointment during the year's course.

His distinct and unique talents allow him to thrive in an environment of pressure, ultimately allowing him to make decisions that will put him on a path of success.

Jim was a collegiate coach at Saint Bonaventure (N.Y.), George Washington (D.C.) and Quincy (Il.) before starting his scouting career in 1992.

He has written a five book sports fictional series on the exploits of high school athlete, Mickey Baker and biographies on former major league players, Josh Rabe and Josh Kinney (dual biography), John Flaherty and Neal Cotts. He is a native of Eldred, Pennsylvania and resides in

Davenport, Iowa with his wife Grace.

**Local Author Kurt Wagner will be at The Book Rack
Sunday, Dec 11, 11-1:00.**



The Mouse Who Stirred at Christmas is a delightfully written and beautifully illustrated childrens' book that captures the magic of the holiday season. Written by Kurt Wagner and illustrated by Tyler Fewell.

Meet Anthony, an adorable little mouse whose favorite holiday is Christmas. He has been a good mouse all year and this year is determined to stay awake and see Santa when he visits his house. Will this be the year? Will Anthony finally see Santa?



Kurt and his wife, Tina, live in Bellevue, Iowa. They are the parents of Alec, Jake, Ciarra, and Kole. Christmas has always been their favorite holiday, full of special family traditions.

Kurt has dreamed of writing children's books for years, and decided to pursue his dream. He has included many of his own family traditions in writing *The Mouse Who Stirred at Christmas*. Kurt incorporated the magic and excitement of the holidays and aimed to write his book through the eyes of a child.

As the book evolved, so did the creation of Kurt's main character, Anthony. Anthony is an adorable little mouse that lives with a loving family who also cherish family traditions and the magic of the holidays.

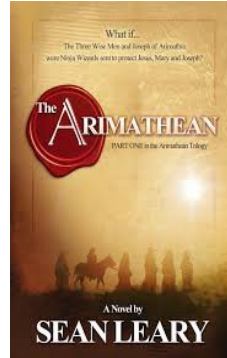
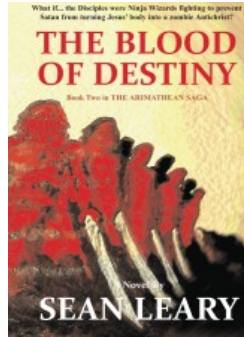
Sean Leary, one of the QCA's most popular local authors, will be at The Book Rack Saturday, December 17, 11-1:00



SEAN LEARY'S BOOK 'THE BLOOD OF DESTINY' OFFERS "THE GREATEST STORY NEVER BEFORE TOLD"

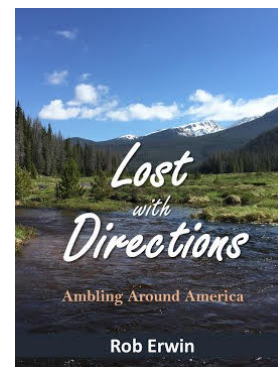
What if the disciples were ninja wizards fighting to prevent Satan from turning Jesus' body into a zombie Antichrist? Find out in THE BLOOD OF DESTINY!

Pulitzer Prize-winning author Geraldine Brooks said of THE ARIMATHEAN , “It’s fantastic! What a wonderfully imaginative idea!” Best-selling crime fiction author Matthew Clemens raved “This book rocks!” And Yahoo! News Chicago wrote “It’s got ninja wizards, zombies, vampires, demons, monsters and Jesus – this is the most fun book I’ve read in a long time!”



Rob Erwin, Bettendorf author, will be at The Book Rack Saturday, December 10, 2-4:00 and Christmas Eve, Saturday, December 24, 11-1:00 for your last minute shopping opportunity.

After a career of coaching small-college football that took him across the country, Rob Erwin now writes full time about his travels through America’s eclectic small towns and remote wild places. Born and raised in rural Illinois, he currently lives in Bettendorf, Iowa, with his wife, Kellie. Rob's first book is LOST WITH DIRECTIONS



With a rough plan, a shoestring budget, and little to no experience, Rob Erwin sets out on a modern-day adventure to the remote back country of America’s most iconic national parks.

Aside from the bipolar hillbillies, unfriendly wild animals, run-ins with the law, a mental breakdown, a bad first date, and a near-death experience . . . things actually went pretty well.

Taking plenty of detours along the way, Rob's contagious and hilarious sense of wanderlust carries him on a whirlwind road trip from the Smoky Mountains in the East, to Yellowstone, the Tetons, and Colorado's snow-covered peaks in the West. In a refreshing style that brings these incredible wild places to life like no travel guide ever could, on seemingly every page we're reminded of the one universal truth of travel . . . the best parts of any journey are the adventures we least expect.

Free Verse is a regular, monthly, feature by one of our wonderful Quad Cities area local authors. Each month we enjoy writing by a different talent. These articles and poems are on a variety of topics bound to be of interest to many of our readers. Please help spread the word by forwarding the newsletter to others. Give these folks as wide an audience as possible, please.

I love imagining stories from small incidents I've come across. This little Christmas story is a combination of two such incidents: a "singing" mouse my father heard many years ago when he was a boy growing up in the English countryside, and a more recent experience of a friend. May the blessings of those small things which are miracles be with you all!

Ann Boaden

NOT A CREATURE WAS STIRRING, NOT EVEN...

Mouse!

It ran like a black bullet across Gerda's mint-green carpet with the vacuum cleaner marks.

Gerda stood paralyzed.

A mouse! In her house!

Dirty people in ill-kept houses had mice.

But she was a perfect housekeeper. Everybody said so.

Maybe she wasn't the best looking or the smartest. Maybe she wasn't

important like her beautiful, brilliant older sister. Maybe she wasn't even a very great clerk at Hy-Vee. Maybe she sometimes blundered and said too much or not enough but—She was a perfect housekeeper. Always that.

And especially on Christmas Eve. She'd just checked out the loops of evergreen swagged perfectly from the mantle...the fairy lights and the glittering fall of tinsel on the perfectly symmetrical tree...the perfectly balanced wise men and shepherds around the stable in the nativity scene....

And across this perfection, this night, had run a mouse. Other women would have sworn. Or cried. But for what this meant to Gerda, those reactions would've been too shallow. For Gerda the presence of this mouse was a violation—of her whole life, her whole sense of who she was. A perfect housekeeper would never have a mouse in her house.

When she moved she bumped into her dust-free coffee table.

That evening she felt disorientated in the church she knew so well, in the service she always enjoyed so much. The candles, the carols, the noisy excited children, the wreaths draped from the pew ends (that weren't quite perfectly symmetrical)—all seemed distant, alien, as if they belonged to another life or another person. Maybe that's why the children's sermon caught her attention—because she felt different.

The sermon was about a Christmas legend. On the first Christmas Eve, according to that story, just at midnight, the animals spoke, donkey and ox and cow and sheep. And if you listen carefully, the minister said to the wide-eyed or squirming children, the animals still may do so. Only on Christmas Eve. Because that's a special time that makes things different. That makes us different.

Gerda thought of the mouse in her perfect house. And shuddered.

She eased open the door when she got home, glanced quickly, fearfully around. All was calm, the tree was bright. She didn't pause, as she usually did, to look with wondering pride on her handiwork. The work of ordinary, unimportant Gerda!

But not tonight. She went up the stairs quickly, hardly noticing the railing under hand, made into a sweet silken flow by lemon polish. When she got into bed, she pulled up the covers and curled into a ball. She was trembling like a small animal.

It was a high-pitched steady humming that woke her. She thought it was the alarm clock and rolled over and reached out a hand to silence it.

Her groping fingers touched something soft. Softer than velvet. Like the very softest down. And just under the softness, something small and hard and angular. The softness and the hardness were vibrating.

A second. And then it was gone, the sound and the softness and the hardness, and her fingers lay on empty air. Yet not quite empty. The air seemed to hold the sound and the shape and the softness, the incredible softness.

She knew what it was. And jerked back her hand. Revulsion rose like vomit into her throat. The mouse. The dirty, vermin mouse. The mouse that had ruined her perfect house, made her something other than she was....

And yet at the same time the touch on her finger was unlike anything she'd ever known. Like—it sounded crazy—like a touch from some place she'd never been but somehow recognized...and—loved....

It was odd that the alarm clock should have woken her just when the mouse was sitting by it. Or—wait—that high sweet little hum—that wasn't the alarm clock. That was—could it have been? The mouse.

The mouse singing.

She peered quickly at the illuminated dial of the clock.

12:00.

They speak only on Christmas Eve. Because it's a special time when that makes things different. That makes us different.

Gerda stretched out on her bed. Stretched and stretched and breathed and breathed. It seemed to her as if she'd never stretched and breathed like that before.

She lifted a hand to her face. Her cheeks were wet. They'd mess up her nice clean pillow case.

She smiled.

Ann Boaden

Book Reviews

Read a good or bad book lately? Send us a book review and we may include it in the next newsletter!

Untamed by Elizabeth Lowell (1993)



A hero of the crusades, Dominic i.e. Sabre has returned to Scotland in glory and triumph to claim his reward: the beautiful Saxon bride awarded to him as conqueror king. But Lady Margaret of Blackthorne cannot yield to the bold Norman invader.

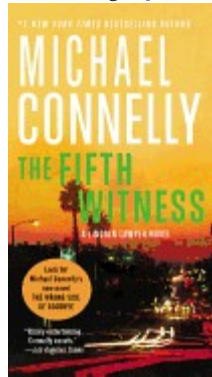
The beloved daughter of a sacred tribe of Celtic mystics, she fears an ancient curse that could bring further turmoil to her battle-scarred land...and sorrow to her marriage bed. With a word, the lady could turn her wedding into war.

But there awaits in the noble knight's embrace a promise of passion unbound—and a love that neither violence nor treachery can tear asunder, a love both invincible and Untamed.

OK. Historical Romance it not my main fare! However, I picked up Untamed in and audio book and decided to give it a shot. I'm glad I did. It was a fast, engaging book with characters to like, hate, respect, distrust and generally an interesting mix. Meg & Dominic are central and both are exceptionally strong willed making for a potential explosive relationship. There is enough romance, sex, violence and deceit to sate the hunger of most readers. I enjoyed it and give it a B. Not an historical romance fan?? Maybe it's just because you don't want to be seen in that section of The Book Rack or with that kind of book in your hand. Just ask us to double bag it. And, we won't tell. However, you may

find a new genre to occasionally sample. I did.

The Fifth Witness by Michael Connelly (2011)



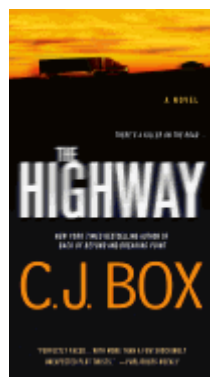
Attorney Mickey Haller has fallen on tough times. He expands his business into foreclosure defense, only to see one of his clients accused of killing the banker she blames for trying to take away her home.

Mickey puts his team into high gear to exonerate Lisa Trammel, even though the evidence and his own suspicions tell him his client is guilty. Soon after he learns that the victim had black market dealings of his own, Haller is assaulted, too-- and he's certain he's on the right trail.

Despite the danger and uncertainty, Haller mounts the best defense of his career in a trial where the last surprise comes after the verdict is in.

Connelly has always been a good seller for us and I'd read one of his Harry Bosch series several years ago, but not picked up another of his books to read since then. Not because I didn't enjoy him, but just because there are so many other authors I knew nothing about. On the spur of the moment I grabbed The Fifth Witness and tore through it. It was very exciting and kept me fully engaged from the first page. I give it an A- and strong recommendation. If you like David Baldacci, Harlan Coben or Scott Turow, and haven't read Connelly, pick up a few of his books the next time you're in The Book Rack.

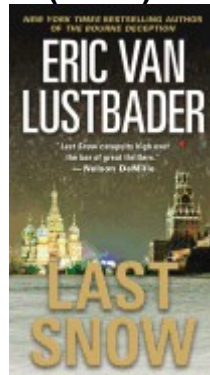
The Highway by CJ Box (2014)



When two sisters set out across a remote stretch of Montana road to visit their friend, little do they know it will be the last time anyone might ever hear from them again. The girls and their car simply vanish. Former police investigator Cody Hoyt has just lost his job and has fallen off the wagon after a long stretch of sobriety. Convinced by his son and his former rookie partner, Cassie Dewell, he begins the drive south to the girls' last known location. As Cody makes his way to the lonely stretch of Montana highway where they went missing, Cassie discovers that Gracie and Danielle Sullivan aren't the first girls who have disappeared in this area. This majestic landscape is the hunting ground for a killer whose viciousness is outmatched only by his intelligence. And he might not be working alone. Time is running out for Gracie and Danielle Can Cassie overcome her doubts and lack of experience and use her innate skill? Can Cody Hoyt battle his own demons and find this killer before another victim vanishes on the highway?

Have you read CJ Box?? If not, you should add him to your must read authors, if you like William Kent Krueger, Steve Hamilton, Margaret Coel or JA Jance! The Highway is a “grab you by the lapels and drag you in until the last page” book. It starts quickly and keeps building until the climax, I give it a B+. The quality of writing and the creativity of the plot both are top drawer.

Last Snow by Eric Van Lustbader (2010)



Jack McClure, Special Adviser and closest friend to the new President of the United States, interprets the world very differently from the rest of us. It's his greatest liability, and his greatest asset.

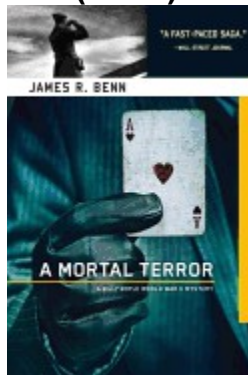
An American senator, supposedly on a political trip to the Ukraine, turns up dead on the island of Capri. When the President asks him to find out how and why, Jack sets out from Moscow across Eastern Europe, following a perilous trail of diplomats, criminals, and corrupt politicians. Thrust into the midst of a global jigsaw puzzle, Jack's unique dyslexic mind allows him to put together the pieces

that others can't even see.

Still unreconciled to the recent death of his daughter and the dissolution of his marriage, Jack takes on a personal mission along with his official one: keeping safe from harm his two unlikely, unexpected, and incompatible companions—Annika Dementieva, a rogue Russian FSB agent, and Alli Carson, the President's daughter. As he struggles to keep both young women safe and unearth the answers he seeks, hunted by everyone from the Russian mafia to the Ukrainian police to his own NSA, Jack learns just how far up the American and Russian political ladders corruption and treachery has reached.

On par with his Bourne books and similar books by Jason Matthews and Tom Clancy, Last Snow is gripping and seemingly plausible! Fast paced and in the top echelon of thrillers. I give it an A- and strong recommendation.

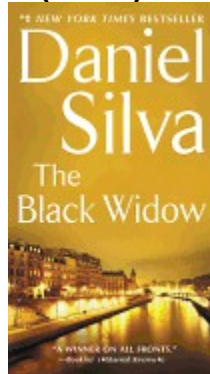
A Mortal Terror by James R. Benn (2011)



In 1943 in the midst of World War II Lieutenant Billy Boyle finds himself in pursuit of a serial killer with a particularly frightening agenda. Billy is sent to Caserta, Italy, to investigate the murders of two American officers stationed there. The MOs are completely different, and it seems like the officers had no connection to each other, but one frightening fact links the murders: each body was discovered with a single playing card: the Lieutenant, the ten of hearts; the Captain, the jack of hearts. The message seems to be clear if the murderer isn't apprehended, the higher ranks will be next. As the invasion at Anzio begins, Billy needs to keep a cool head amidst fear and terror as the killer calculates his next moves.

This is a SOHO Crime novel and typically well done and a bit different than the top selling mystery and crime authors. The setting is very well depicted, with pervasive mud and cold of the Italian winter and the violence and death of war forming the backdrop for a well conceived story. I give it a B+ and solid recommendation. Benn has written several Billy Boyle novels, so when you read and enjoy one, you'll have more to sate your appetite!

The Black Widow by Daniel Silva (2016)



Legendary spy and art restorer Gabriel Allon is poised to become the chief of Israel's secret intelligence service. But on the eve of his promotion, events conspire to lure him into the field for one final operation. ISIS has detonated a massive bomb in the Marais district of Paris, and a desperate French government wants Gabriel to eliminate the man responsible before he can strike again.

They call him Saladin . . .

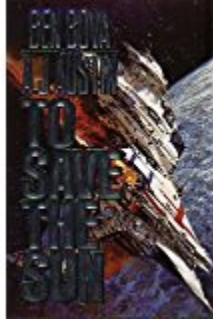
He is a terrorist mastermind whose ambition is as grandiose as his nom de guerre, a man so elusive that even his nationality is not known. Shielded by sophisticated encryption software, his network communicates in total secrecy, leaving the West blind to his planning and leaving Gabriel no choice but to insert an agent into the most dangerous terrorist group the world has ever known. She is an extraordinary young doctor, as brave as she is beautiful. At Gabriel's behest, she will pose as an ISIS recruit in waiting, a ticking time bomb, a black widow out for blood.

Her perilous mission will take her from the restive suburbs of Paris to the island of Santorini and the brutal world of the Islamic State's new caliphate, and eventually to Washington, DC, where the ruthless Saladin is plotting an apocalyptic night of terror that will alter the course of history. "The Black Widow" is a riveting thriller of shocking prescience. But it is also a thoughtful journey into the new heart of darkness that will haunt readers long after they have turned the final page.

What more need I say than Silva is a master and you should read him every chance he gives you. This book is as timely as tomorrow's headlines, but far more readable! Gabriel Allon is at worst one of the top 3 protagonists in the

thriller genre. I give it an A+ as a must read!

To Save the Sun by Ben Bova (1992)



Ancient Earth Is Doomed! Its sun will explode, not millions of years hence, but in mere lifetimes – violently enough to scour Earth clean and leave the Empire of the Hundred Worlds adrift. For the handful of “primitives” left on Earth are the baseline for humanity's ever-diversifying genetic stock. Every other human world sends regular delegations to check their own genetic pool against “Earth normal.” Now the center will hold no longer. The Empire's scientists deem that nothing can be done. The age of heroism is past; this is the long, stagnant afternoon of the human race. Until – over massive opposition – a single young woman makes her way to the Emperor with that rarity, a new scientific insight... and a plan, flowing from its implications, to mobilize humanity's slumbering energies toward a millennium-long effort of applied astrophysics. Of engineering carried out on the hearts of stars. A plan to save the Earth. A plan to save the Sun.

I enjoyed this book. It covered not only the astrophysics (superficially), but mostly, human dynamics. While the empire had developed means of extending human life well over a hundred years, the Emperor was prohibited from benefiting from the technology to insure transition. They could prolong the life of the scientist by employing cryogenics while she traveled between planets. She had to use diplomacy to resolve a planet threatening civil war that would prevent the saving of the sun. I give it a B and recommend it to you. If you like Isaac Asimov, Gregory Brin or Arthur C. Clarke, make sure and pick up one of Ben Bova's titles.

Reading Trivia for December

What was the house in the background of Grant Wood's

classic painting American Gothic?

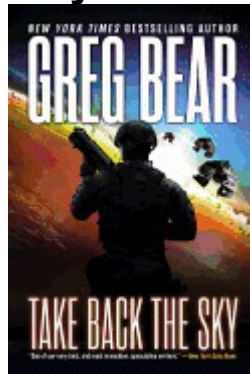
Answer: A Brothel in Eldon, Iowa.

Upcoming New Releases:

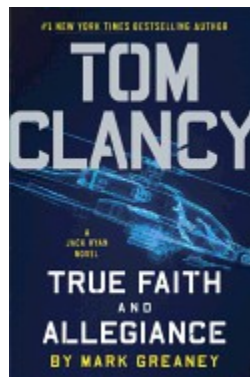
Check out the prices following the title of the book. The price is the publisher's price. The **The Book Rack** price is normally 20% lower. When you pick it at the store there is no shipping cost, though we can also ship it to you. Order now by calling one of the stores or stopping in. We do ask for prepayment on all special orders. **You can also add any of these titles to your request list.** Some will come in soon and others may take a while, but most will get to you eventually. The genre follows the price.

Hardcover and Trade Paperback

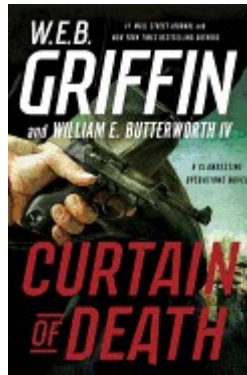
Greg Bear – Take Back the Sky – 28.00



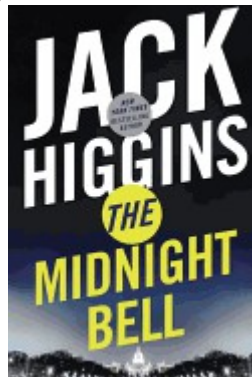
Tom Clancy by Mark Greaney – True Faith and Allegiance: A Jack Ryan Novel – 29.95



WEB Griffin – Curtain of Death – 29.00



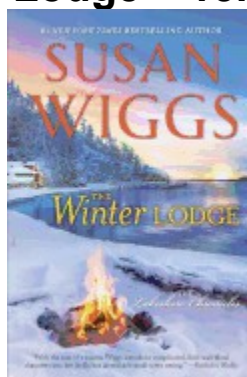
Jack Higgins – The Midnight Bell – 28.00



Ian Rankin – Even Dogs in the Wild – 25.00



Susan Wiggs – The Winter Lodge – 15.99



Paperback

Linda Castillo – Her Last Breath – 7.99

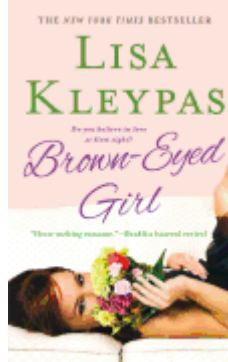


Robert Crais – The Promise – 9.99

Joanne Fluke – Deadly Memories – 7.99

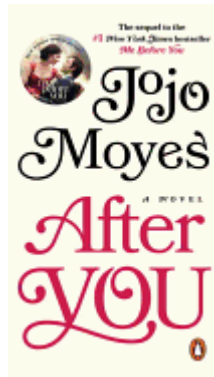


Lisa Jackson – If She Only
Linda Kleypas – Brown-



Knew – 7.99
eyed Girl – 8.99

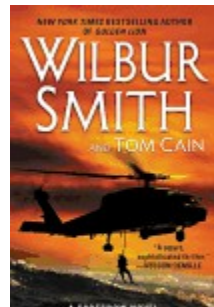
Jojo Moyes – After You – 9.99



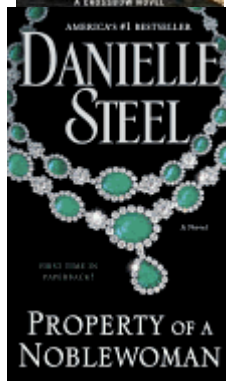
James Patterson – Merry Christmas Alex Cross – 7.99



Wilbur Smith & Tom Cain – Predator: A Crossbow Novel – 9.99



Danielle Steel – Property



of a Noblewoman – 8.99

Stuart Woods – Family Jewels – 9.99

