

Kathleen's Recent Reads—April 2023

Non-Fiction

Foodtopia: Communities in Pursuit of Peace, Love & Homegrown Food by Margot Anne Kelley

Maine author Kelley explores the link between utopian societies and the desire for self-sufficiency in this extensively researched book. She traces a line from Henry David Thoreau to the back-to-the-land movement of the 1970s right through to today's organic farmers. If you've ever dreamed of getting away from it all to your own cabin in the woods with some hens and a vegetable garden, this is certainly a book you'll enjoy, and an added plus is the mini-history of organic food in Maine.

Fiction

A Single Thread by Tracy Chevalier

It is 1932 and Violet Speedwell is a “surplus woman” – one of millions of English women unable to marry since World War I decimated a generation of potential spouses. Choosing to leave her cantankerous mother and take up an office job in the cathedral city of Winchester, Violet searches for new friends and a new community. She unexpectedly discovers one in a volunteer group of “broderers” – women who are embroidering cushions and kneelers for the city's magnificent cathedral. While Violet finds friendship, support and creative fulfillment in the group, as an unmarried woman living on her own she also encounters condescension and prejudice. The history explored here, of the broderers, the bell ringers, the cathedral itself, is the big draw. A Book Club selection.

The Candy House by Jennifer Egan

Through linked stories, we meet a variety of characters, all of whom are affected by a new technology that allows people to upload their memories to the cloud, and allows others to examine the memories. The non-chronological plot adds to the off-kilter, unbalanced feel of life when nothing is really private any more, and where capitalism and tech have acquired monstrous power. This follows up to Egan's 2010 Pulitzer Prize-winning novel, *A Visit from the Goon Squad*, is simply dazzling.

Audiobooks (available on cloudLibrary)

Daisy Darker by Alice Feeney

Agatha Christie fans will enjoy this whodunit, set on a tidal island off the coast of Cornwall, where guests at a birthday party are picked off one by one. The time (Halloween night), the circumstances (high tide cutting off access, a missing boat, no means of contacting the outside world) are menacing enough, but somehow the winsome narrator, Daisy, manages to add to the feeling of dread. And there's a whopper of a plot twist!

Maame by Jessica George

After spending years as her father's caregiver, Maddie Wright, a young woman of Ghanaian descent, forges her own path in the London publishing world. Her delayed coming of age makes for a gentle, satisfactory read.

Open and Shut by David Rosenfelt

The first in the popular Andy Carpenter mystery series features the defense attorney uncovering a decades-old scandal when he is called to handle the appeal a man convicted of a brutal murder. Smart dialogue and a lighthearted tone help this stand out from the crowd, and make the series a good choice for fans of Stuart Woods.