

Kathleen's Reads—December 2023

Fiction

Out of the Rain by Elizabeth Cadell

One of those surprises from the past that linger on our shelves, this charming, gentle read centers on the developing romance between a solicitor and widow in 1980s-ish England. Recommended for fans of Maeve Binchy and Rosamunde Pilcher.

The End of Drum-time by Hanna Pylvainen

A charismatic pastor helps bring about the spiritual awakening of a Sami reindeer herder in this unusual novel, set in the mid-nineteenth century in a remote Scandinavian village. He also unwittingly launches a series of events that irrevocably change the lives of the village's inhabitants, including his two eldest daughters. The book's leisurely opening pace is not something we frequently find in the digital age, but I found it a perfect read for dark, cold winter nights, and loved learning about the Sami herders' way of life.

Audiobooks—available on cloudLibrary (all are also available in hardcover in our collection)

Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking by Susan Cain

Any introvert knows that modern life is not geared toward their preferences. Cain examines our society's fixation on extroversion, and argues powerfully for accommodating introverts, who require a quiet environment to really shine. Introverts who have chafed against group projects and open office environments will feel justified, and extroverts will learn how to handle the mystifying needs of those who prefer alone time.

Sam by Allegra Goodman

Sam has one constant in her life: a love of, and need for, climbing. This remarkable coming of age novel follows Sam from early childhood to early adulthood as she struggles to avoid the pitfalls experienced by her parents and pull herself out of the precarious existence engendered by her dysfunctional family life. Goodman's exquisite writing, which changes in fluency as Sam matures, is the draw here; her characters are fully developed and presented without judgment, and the climbing metaphor, while powerful, is never overdone.

The Queen of Dirt Island by Donal Ryan

The enduring relationships between four generations of Irish women form the framework of this lovely novel. Men come and go, but are not to be relied upon in this female-centric world. Saoirse, daughter of Eileen, grows up under the watchful eye of both Eileen and Mary, Eileen's mother-in-law and Saoirse's grandmother, and most of the novel follows the relationship between these three. A celebration of the strength of family and Irish life.

The Northern Reach by W.S. Winslow

The tragedies and small triumphs of life in a coastal Maine town are the subject of this impressive debut novel. Told in linked, non-chronological stories, the comparison that immediately comes to mind is with the Pulitzer Prize-winning *Olive Kitteridge*; this work certainly holds its own, and offers its own tender portrayal of Mainers struggling to make a life amidst limited opportunities.