

Recent Reads

April Ide, Assistant Library Director

We've added some great new titles at New Ulm Public Library in the past few months. Here are a few I've enjoyed.

Nora, Wes, and Iris are hostages in a bank robbery. The two robbers are searching for keys to the bank's safe deposit boxes. The robbers are violent and unmasked, which worries Nora. But what the criminals don't know is that "Nora" is a secret identity. Nora has been a lot of girls. A lot of girls who have seen much worse. A lot of girls who have had to build survival skills. And Nora isn't going to give up until her friends are safe, no matter how bad things get. "The Girls I've Been" by Tess Sharpe is a fast-paced story of how a girl can emerge from the ashes of a violent and traumatic past to become a dangerous and resilient young woman. Sharpe is great at building tension and complex characters. This young adult book contains depictions of domestic abuse and sexual violence.

Recently divorced Finlay Donovan is struggling to finish writing her next romantic suspense novel while juggling two young children and a household. When Finlay is overheard discussing the plot of her next novel over lunch with her agent, she is mistaken for a contract killer by a woman at the next table and inadvertently accepts a job to dispose of the woman's abusive husband. Finlay is horrified by the idea, but can't stop herself from investigating the husband's misdeeds, leading her into a much more complex and dangerous situation than she originally expected. "Finlay Donovan Is Killing It" by Elle Cosimano was a suspenseful and funny romp and I look forward to more books featuring these characters!

Mab, Osla, and Beth are eager to do their part for the British war effort during WWII. They end up rooming together and working as code breakers at Bletchley Park, a secretive estate outside of London where Britain's finest work non-stop to decode German military communications. The three quickly become close and their bond seems unbreakable until one of them betrays her friends. The betrayal changes one of their lives irretrievably and the betrayer disappears. Four years later, the remaining two women suddenly receive a message that throws all they thought they knew into question. They must unravel the mystery of what happened to their friend and break one final code. "The Rose Code" was another great example of Kate Quinn's ability to create characters who feel real. You'll be rooting for these characters to repair their friendship and overcome the odds.

Sloane, Grace, and Ardie have worked together for years in the Truviv Inc. legal department. They've helped each other navigate office politics and keep each other's secrets. Their boss, Ames, seems poised to take over as CEO. But there are whispers about Ames, and when his name appears on an anonymously-sourced list of Bad Men, none of the women in the office are surprised. So when Ames begins to pay special attention to Katherine, the newest lawyer in their department, the women decide to take

action to protect her. But none of them will leave Truviv unscathed. This was a complex look at the ways that power and harassment collide in the workplace. I am still thinking about the very last secret revealed in Chandler Baker's "Whisper Network" and what it meant for those involved.

Gabrielle Korn became editor in chief of *Nylon* magazine at the age of 28, ushering in a new age for the magazine and becoming a respected voice on topics from gay rights to body positivity. Her success hid a darker truth: Korn was struggling with anorexia and body image issues of her own. Her relationship to her body was deeply complicated by her close work with the fashion industry and the impossible beauty standards it upholds. I appreciated Korn's candid recounting of her experiences in her memoir, "Everybody Else Is Perfect: How I Survived Hypocrisy, Beauty, Clicks, and Likes." Although it has become common knowledge that the fashion industry contributes to body dysmorphia, I had no idea just how deeply it has manipulated the ideals of the body positivity movement.

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