



PULSEBOOKS:

Heartwarming tales to keep you cozy

BY KIMBERLY DUNBAR

Winter is the best time to curl up with a book. If you're looking for some stories to keep you company on a snow day, here are a couple to consider.

The Girl in the Garden (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt) is a novel by Melanie Wallace that proves the kindness of strangers can heal wounds that exist far below the surface. At the centerpiece of the tale is young June – the girl in the garden – and her infant son, who were abandoned by the child's father in a seaside New England town. Mabel, a widower and owner of the cottage where June was left, helps her find lodging with her friend Iris, a shut-in who closed herself off from the world, and her own daughter, after her husband's peculiar death two decades ago. June, Mabel and Iris are joined by a cast of characters – including two war veterans, one of whom is severely physically and emotionally scarred from Vietnam – each with their own secrets, pasts and inner pain. Though it requires some patience to get through the first half of the book, in which the many characters are introduced, Wallace finds a way to thoughtfully intertwine the characters and the effect they have on each other's lives. The small community becomes home to not just June, but others, as she, and they, find ways to heal and move on from the painful past toward a better future.

They say you can always go home, but for Vance Lake, it's not always a place he's welcomed. *In The News From the End of the World* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt), Emily Jeanne Miller introduces readers to the dysfunctional Lake family, led by twin brothers Vance and Craig. When broke, jobless and recently dumped Vance turns to his hometown on Cape Cod for refuge, he finds himself smack in the middle of a family crisis that is tearing Craig and his family apart. The book takes place across four days, during which Vance must navigate a moody Craig; his wife Gina, who is turning to a male family friend for comfort; and his brooding 17-year-old niece, Amanda, whose abrupt return from a semester-long trip abroad is at the center of the family crisis. She's pregnant, and the family disagrees on how to handle it. Amanda's condition brings back difficult memories of the past for both Craig and Vance, feelings that must be worked out and resolved if the Lakes have any hope of surviving as a family. And if Vance can manage to face his demons, he might discover that home is where the heart really is.

THE GIRL IN THE GARDEN IS AVAILABLE NOW; THE NEWS FROM THE END OF THE WORLD IS OUT FEB. 21.

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