

The Reader



25 Years of Literary Leftovers Bookstore

Issue 11

March/April 2026

LETTER FROM THE PROPRIETRESS

Cheers to 25 Years

Heather Erwin, proprietress

The following are my (abbreviated) remarks from our silver jubilee social on January 29th:

"In 1913, Thomas Edison said, 'Books will soon be obsolete in the public schools.' Nearly a hundred years later, tech visionary Nicholas Negroponte declared, 'The physical book will be dead in five years.' Alas, here we are. Stephen Fry offered what might be the best response to all of it when he said, 'Books are no more threatened by Kindle than stairs by elevators.' And I think that's right. Because printed books were never just a format. Brick-and-mortar bookstores were never just retail. Bookstores don't just sell stories—they host them, and become them, they hold and cherish them. John Updike once described bookstores as 'lonely forts, spilling light onto the sidewalk,' and said that they 'civilize their neighborhoods.' I love that image—because it's exactly what this place has done for 25 years. Although I wouldn't call us lonely, because of all of you.

Richard Russo said bookstores are the "physical manifestation of the world's longest, most thrilling conversation." That conversation happens here among readers and writers, with strangers who become regulars, between and among generations. Even in an age of algorithms, John Green reminds us of something essential: "You cannot invent an algorithm that is as good at recommending books as a good bookseller...no algorithm will ever understand readers the way that other readers understand readers." Sociologists call places like this "third spaces"—long before that term existed, bookstores were already doing that work. So when people ask why bookstores still matter, the answer is simple: because people still matter. Because stories still matter. Because literacy and creativity matter. Literary Leftovers has survived every prediction of obsolescence not by racing to the future—but by remaining human, remaining focused on community. To everyone who has supported this store over the last 25 years, thank you for being part of this story. Here's to the last 25 years, and to the next chapter. Thank you."

COMMUNITY THOUGHTS

Longform at L.L.

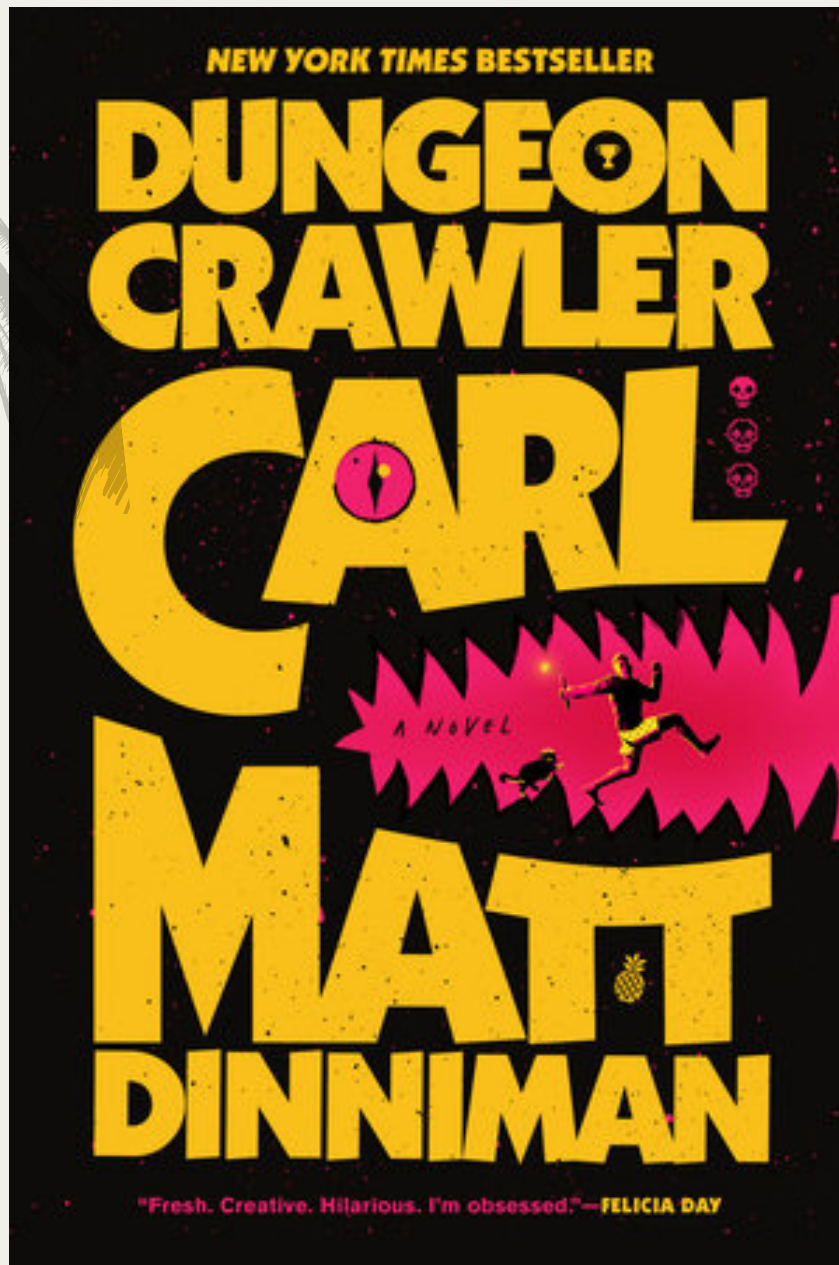
Lynnie McIlvain, InvestigateWest



A week ago, I was lucky enough to sit around a table (or rather, three tables in a trenchcoat) in Literary Leftovers Bookstore. The idea emerged from the foam of a generative conversation with my mentor, Joaquin Alvarado, and further dialogue with my twin sister and bookshop manager, Eily McIlvain. Three of our rockstar reporters at InvestigateWest drove across the bridge to be there. We also had reporters in attendance from *The Seattle Times*, *The Reflector*, and *The Columbian*, as well as other local writers and community members.

For over an hour, we had a conversation entirely about the longform medium, its importance, its integration into the shortform mainstream, and our experience of it all. Easy laughter, thoughtful contributions, considerate silences, and attentive responses. Deep engagement—not just with the sometimes-demanding longform, but also in real dialogue with each other—feels more necessary than ever, and I couldn't be more grateful to those who joined us and did just that. Local reporting, writing, reading, conversating: these activities all have an intuitive, essential relationship with one another. These are the activities of earnest dialogue.

I hope other newsrooms and bookstores will make similar space for dialogue amidst the bustling of the current landscape, so communities can have the experience we all had at Literary Leftovers.



BOOKSELLER'S REVIEW

Dungeon Crawler Carl

by Matt Dinniman

reviewed by Eily McIlvain, bookseller



"You will not break me."

Carl is having a bad night. His ex-girlfriend's prize-winning Persian has leapt from the apartment window into the frigid Seattle weather, and he's out in his boxers and borrowed Crocs trying to retrieve her. In an instant, every building around him utterly collapses, killing everyone inside, and an announcement plays: his planet is, essentially, being scrapped for parts by the alien overlords no one even knew about. Now Carl faces a choice: try to survive in the ravaged overworld, or descend into the alien dungeon that's been established beneath, thus entering a sadistic reality show managed by a (sinister) intergalactic corporation. He enters the dungeon. With the cat, Princess Donut.

As a complete newcomer to the LitRPG genre, everything about *Dungeon Crawler Carl* was a surprise, even though for a few months it has felt like every single person I know has been talking about it or telling me to read it. Not my thing, I thought, and said. Not for me. When I finally broke down, I expected to more or less hate-read the book. But it was funny. Certainly raunchy and often vulgar, it was also...self-aware, even nuanced, and not in a try-hard way. It was thrilling and genuinely poignant; I feel for Carl as he tries to cope with his ridiculous new reality, which involves indiscriminately killing disgusting, dangerous, and pathetic creatures for experience points, always on the verge of being killed for sport himself. While I was shedding actual tears over Carl and his pedigree cat, I had to ask myself: *This is still the book about a guy in boxers with no shoes fighting monsters on an intergalactic reality T.V. program, right?*

If you don't like cussing and blood, this isn't the book for you. If you like blood, cussing, the internet, cats, video games, table-top role-playing games, monsters, worldbuilding, reality T.V., irreverent humor, character development—this really probably *is* the book for you. Even if you're a skeptic, as I once was, it still might be for you. And if you take to this one, you'll like the rest of the series even more.

BOOKSELLER'S COLUMN

On Being Asked to Put My Coffee in the Hallway

Eily McIlvain, bookseller



While north for my birthday in the middle of February, I visited two bookshops. They opposed each other across the main street of a little port town, both at home in hundred-year-old buildings, one a used place, the other selling new books. First we nosed around the used shop and popped out with our stacks safely nestled in nondescript paper sacks. On the corner of the block was a cafe where we lunched and got a takeaway coffee. Then we crossed the road to the new bookshop.

It was smaller than the used place, but obviously curated, with a large collection of political and environmental titles. Bookmarks, postcards, mugs, and other offerings filed along the shelves. I've been spoiled by used prices, but sometimes I will be bad to my bank account and buy something brand new. While preparing to make the rounds, I caught the eye of the bookseller. Oh, she said to the coffee in my hands, you can't have that in here—set it in the hallway. In the hallway, a small table held a trio of identical takeaway coffee cups. I gingerly abandoned mine beside them, hoping I would remember its face. For a few minutes I looked at the shelves, but I was too aware of my coffee, vulnerable and alone in the hallway, and I felt strangely far from home.

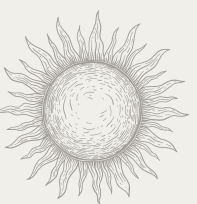
If it isn't obvious, I don't approve of this no-coffee policy. Prohibiting an adult from perusing a bookshop with a hot drink is a crime against god. Books and coffee (or tea) go together like socks and slippers, or dogs and fireplace rugs. A vigilant air of fear for the merchandise transforms a bookshop from a cozy space into a sterile museum of goods for purchase whose value* must not be impinged. My favorite bookshops not only allow you to drink your coffee while it's hot, but sometimes even go so far as to serve you a drink themselves; over the summer, I dropped into Mother Foucault's Bookshop in Portland, and they had set out a pitcher of cold water, with fresh green herbs twisting against the cool, fogged glass. There was no fear of water damage or rings in those admirable booksellers.

*(Those books that, because of rarity or sentimentality, have to be protected should be placed or encased out of reach of spills, oily fingers, and other dangers.)

POETRY CORNER

Genesis

Carol Hayes



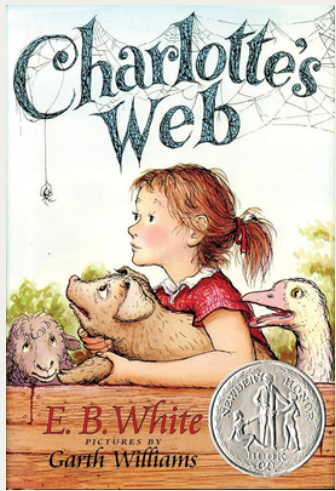
Carol Hayes is a life-long writer and poet. She currently lives in the Pacific Northwest.

From the loamy and expectant dark
Spring emerges,
with shy and shaking fronds
Reaching upward;
To touch the coming light of summer.

The Little Reader

"With the right words you can change the world."
E.B. White

THE LUCY CHRONICLES



Charlotte's Web

by E.B. White

reviewed by Miss Lucy,
as related to,
Corrie Albertson,
Children's Program
manager

Lucy was a bookstore cat beloved by most everyone—the only exception being a rare few who obviously must have some sort of allergy or something. Most people described her as an exceptional feline: beautiful, well-tempered, intuitive, and pleasantly plump. At least, these were some of the words people used when describing her, and she quite agreed. Recently Lucy had begun to discover the power of words and their meanings. Before, she thought words were just squiggly lines and dashes. Then, quite by accident, she fell asleep on a book and found herself inside the story itself. At first it was terrifying, then exhilarating, and now it was one of her favorite pastimes...along with napping, eating, and playing with her toy mouse.

Today was the third Thursday of the month. Lucy knew this because the Junior Book Club was meeting, and they always met at the same time. It was a great day to be a cat; lots of attention was always bestowed upon her, and usually some sort of treat came to her by way of a small hand or fallen crumb. The children were preparing to talk at great length about a book called *Charlotte's Web* when Lucy's eyes began to droop. She so wanted to hear about it, but cats, no matter how hard they try, can't skip their afternoon naps. It is a rule. (It's called a catnap for a reason.) Lucy fell asleep, but not for long. She awoke to the sound of strange music, and the sight of spinning lights. She smelled popcorn and manure. In the distance, there were screams and peals of laughter. It gave Lucy's nervous system quite a jolt. She must have fallen asleep atop one of the books! It had been the middle of the afternoon just moments ago, but now it was late at night. She looked around tentatively. What was this strange place? Where was she?

"Your first time at the fair too, huh?"

Lucy startled and jumped. She recognized this creature, although she'd never met one in person (or in a book) before. "You're...you're...a rat!" she stammered.

"Yeah, and what of it?" replied the rat.

"Well—do you know what I am?" said Lucy indignantly.

The rat smirked. "A...a...cat!" he said, mocking her.

"Maybe no one has informed you," Lucy said, recovering, "but you should be afraid. I am your natural enemy."

The rat burst into laughter, and Lucy began to wonder if maybe she was the one who was misinformed.

"Lady, you must be an indoor cat. Me, I am an outdoor rat. I live on a farm, and I'm used to dodging animals a hundred times bigger than you. There are cows, pigs, horses, sheep, and geese. Where I live, there's a spider that's more intimidating than you."

"Surely I'm of more consequence than a spider," said Lucy, trying not to seem bothered.

"Not this spider," scoffed the rat. "Her name is Charlotte. She has the whole town—no, the whole county—wrapped

up in her web. I'm on one of her errands now."

"And what errand is that?" asked Lucy. Curiosity was getting the better of her, again.

"Charlotte is on a mission to save Wilbur, and she needs words to do it. That's where I come in," boasted the rat.

"Who is Wilbur? How can words help?"

"Wilbur is a pig who's going to be eaten for Christmas dinner. Not worth saving, if you ask me, but Charlotte weaves these words into her web about the pig and everybody *oohs* and *ahhs* like a bunch of schmucks."

"And you...find the words?" asked Lucy. This was hard to believe.

"Sometimes. You know, because I'm such a nice rat," he said sarcastically.

"You don't seem like a nice rat to me. I actually think you're very rude and ill-mannered." That's when Lucy noticed that the rat was, in fact, sitting on top of an old newspaper. "Are those the words you're taking to Charlotte, to help save Wilbur?"

"Yeah, I'm thinking maybe the word 'dinner' or 'bacon.'" The rat laughed menacingly.

Lucy stepped on his tail, pinning him to one spot. "You will not!" she said with authority.

"Agh! Alright! Let me go!" shrieked the rat, wiggling loose.

Lucy twitched her whiskers mischievously. That will teach him to underestimate an indoor bookstore cat, she thought.

At once, Lucy woke up. Bookclub was ending! Oh no! Would she ever find out if Charlotte saved Wilbur?

If you know, please come and tell Lucy. Or, if you'd like to find out, you can read *Charlotte's Web* by E.B. White.

YOUTH REVIEW

Heather & the Highland Pony

by Maggie Taylor Enger

reviewed by A.J. R., age 9.5



The book was about two children who were trying to free their parents because they found some valuable heirlooms in their barn. My favorite part was meeting Captain Angus and my favorite character was Heather. I highly recommend this book

YOUTH POETRY

The House

D. Barbee, age 8

Roof is red, house is green
Door is blue, this is just the house for you.

YOUTH ART & POETRY

In Harmony

Trinity Neira, age 14



O, sweet snow white hare,
Sunny yellow daffodil
Nature's harmony

Schedule

LEGO CLUB

at 10am Tuesdays & 4pm Thursdays.

STORYTIME WITH CORRIE

with special guests once a month
at 11am Tuesdays, right after Lego Club.

Upcoming

THE BOTTLED BOOK CLUB

sign up online to receive address

March 12, 6pm, \$5

April 9, 6pm, \$5

OVERSTACKED BOOK CLUB

March 26, 6pm at the shop, \$5

April 23, 6pm at the shop, \$5

BI-ANNUAL HOMESCHOOL & CHILDREN'S NONFIC SALE

March 21, ALL DAY at the shop
Homeschool curriculum, nonfic chapter books, & other adjacent books & materials will be available at clearance

CELEBRATING NATIONAL POETRY MONTH: POETRY NIGHT

April 30, 6-7pm at the shop,

Bring a poem of your own to read aloud, or read a favorite (with credit to the author!)

Accepting submissions!

Tues.-Fri. 10-6, Sat. 10-5

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