

# The Reader



at Literary Leftovers Bookstore

Issue 2

Sept./Oct. 2024

## Stewardshop: An Anniversary Reflection

Heather Erwin, proprietress

I'm in the chair at Parlour73 while Andrea works her magic on my hair, and it dawns on me: our third bookstore anniversary is coming up on October 18th! Jewell Foederer opened the shop in January 2001, who handed it over to Steve Tommerups after about two years. Steve carried the torch the longest of any of us, before handing off to Candi, who passed to Kelsey, who passed to me, though I'd never seen myself owning a bookshop. But dedication to community and culture means that sometimes you have to step in and carry the torch yourself, and our belief in the necessity of this shop is why we've been its stewards for the last three unbelievable years. We've weathered our challenges by returning to this commitment.

We have to thank each and every one of you who shops here,

donates here, joins us for all of our community events and activities; those who share their love of the shop with friends and family; who volunteer time to help us shelve, tutor, and move books; each of you who shares our vision of a strong, connected community. Even if you just stop by to pet the cat. Our doors close the day we lose your support, so we thank you for keeping us around.



### LOCAL AUTHOR

## Accomplishing the Dream

An Interview with Caren Hahn

### How did you begin writing? How old were you?

I think at some point most prolific readers develop an itch to write stories of their own. I won my first writing competition at the age of nine. I wrote short stories and poetry throughout my teenage years and studied the forms more in depth in college. I'd always wanted to write a novel, but couldn't stick with a project long enough to get more than a few chapters down. (It probably didn't help that I was writing longhand in whatever notebook was handy.) About fifteen years later, I found myself a busy mom of six kids with a new baby. The Kindle revolution was underway. With the advent of ebooks, the whole publishing industry was changing. With a little encouragement from my sister, I began exercising my creative muscles again. I started with a short story, and then decided to see if I could flesh it out into a full novel. Apparently having a little more life experience helped, because by the time I was finished, I'd written a full trilogy! Since then, I've written eight more novels, and each time I grow as a writer. But there's something special about that first time, when I finally accomplished the dream I'd had since I was a little girl.

### Describe your writing process.

I would describe my routine right now as chaotic! I work part time and have four teenagers at home, so there are a lot of demands for my attention. I work best uninterrupted, so my most productive time usually falls during school hours. Listening to soundtracks that reflect the mood of whatever I'm working on really helps me get in the zone.

### You primarily write mysteries, as well as fantasy. How did you start writing in these genres? What most attracts you to them?

I've always loved the escapism of fantasy, so that was a natural choice for my first project. But I read widely and didn't want to limit myself solely to fantasy, so I intentionally chose something very different for my next book. What I've found is that switching back and forth between genres serves as a palette cleanser that keeps me excited about the next project. When I've been living in a medieval setting with end-of-the-world stakes, there's something refreshing about getting into a contemporary suspense where the stakes are relatable and realistic. And when I've been writing an emotional, gritty thriller, there's something freeing about shaking off the confines of today's world and escaping into an imaginative setting with fantastic elements.

### Do you ever see yourself writing outside your typical genres, in this case mystery and fantasy?

I'm certainly open to it, but right now there are so many subgenres to explore within mystery and fantasy that I'm happy hanging out there for the foreseeable future.

### You have one collection of light-hearted short fiction, written during the pandemic. Do you see yourself doing something like that again?

That was such a unique project that helped me get through 2020 when I was struggling to write anything substantial.

I suspect a unique set of circumstances could inspire another collection like that, but let's hope we never have another year like 2020!

### How has self-publishing treated you? Why put your work out yourself?

Whew! This is a big question with lots of facets to it. I explored the traditional route early on, but I knew that it would be hard to find a market as a debut author. So while I was querying traditional agents for two mainstream mystery manuscripts, I went ahead and self-published my *Wallkeeper* trilogy—making lots of mistakes and learning a ton. I did eventually secure a contract with an agent whose vision aligned with mine. She tried to sell *Smoke Over Owl Creek* to big imprints. But this was 2020. We got favorable responses, but editors were wary of taking on a debut author, unless they could speak to the social climate of the time. And after my experience self-publishing, I knew that most small presses couldn't offer me much more than I could do myself. After a year, my agent and I amicably parted ways. I've been self-publishing ever since. To her credit, it's because of a conversation she and I had that I ended up turning *Smoke Over Owl Creek* into a series. There are days when I wish I had a big publisher to run my business for me, but that's a dream very few authors can live these days. The reality is that most authors work other jobs to earn a living wage. At the same time, self-published authors are finding success on their own terms. I appreciate the avenues open to me now that I couldn't have dreamed of twenty years ago.

### How do you handle a writer's block?

I'm a discovery writer, so I don't do much planning before writing a story. Sometimes that means a scene or a character isn't working, or I'm struggling to know where to go. If I leave it and work on a different part of the story that I'm excited about, the creative juices start flowing again and eventually I can get back to the part that was giving me trouble. That kind of temporary block is nothing compared to the very real burnout some writers experience. Fortunately, I haven't experienced burnout. It's a constant struggle to find a good work-life balance, and my husband would be the first to agree that I'm not always very good at it!

### What is the best writing advice you've gotten?

One of the most misunderstood pieces of writing advice is to "write what you know." I see that misinterpreted to mean that a middle-aged mom of six kids shouldn't be writing stories about dragon farmers or small town detectives or crime-solving ghosts. But "write what you know" doesn't mean "write stories about your own life." It means to write what you feel, what you fear, what gives you a sense of wonder, what makes you question your world view, what you experience as a human being living in a messy world where relationships can be complicated, painful, and joyful. It means letting your imagination carry you outside your own lived experience, weaving your emotional experience through it so no matter what, the story feels grounded and relatable. That's what "write what you know" means to me, and I believe it's a critical part of telling good stories.

### Can you say anything about what you're working on now?

I have another PNW mystery in the works, and I'm really excited about it. It will be my first that takes place in Washington. It's in the early stages, and it might end up going a different direction than I expect—but it will feature a very familiar landmark in our area!

### BOOKSELLER'S COLUMN

## In Defense of Used Bookstores

Eily McIlvain, bookseller



When I was a teenager, I worked as a waitress, and then as the short-term editor of a college literary journal, and then a waitress again. I had basically no tangible career ambitions, except as a writer, generally treated as the most imaginary job a person could wish for. I put in a few applications at bookshops over the years but was turned away. One day in 2021, after quitting my job at a Thai restaurant, I was in the shower and thought to call the number of a small secondhand bookshop in Battle Ground. Did they need any help with the shop? I asked. I was willing to do literally anything.

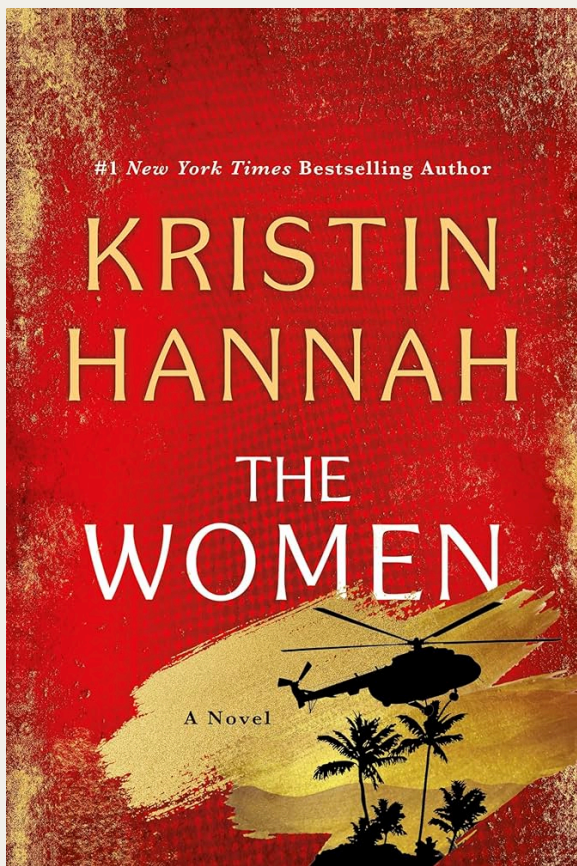
Well, reader, they did. (Three years later, improbably, I sell books and write for a living.) While I would have done any kind of work, in a bookshop of any kind, I'm pleased and proud to work in a secondhand shop. I feel protective of this shop and others like it. The attitude towards used books and their retailers can sometimes tend towards dismissive. Used bookstores are treated as separate from the sphere of relevant stores, which typically means stores selling new titles.

In his book *How to Protect Bookstores and Why* (2023), Danny Caine covers 12 bookstores, but writes fleetingly about secondhand shops; "...Athens didn't have a bookstore [like Avid] yet. There was a dusty old used shop downtown, and a Barnes & Noble on the highway out of town, but there was no cozy shop selling new books with clever booksellers and author events and all that good stuff." I don't think Caine means to be degrading so much as he may be under a misapprehension about what secondhand shops can be, and in fact, are. We are different from new-only, or predominantly-new, bookstores. (Shaun Bythell, a Scottish bookseller, has written a book that does a lot of justice to the life of secondhand bookselling, *Diary of a Bookseller* (2017), which depicts some obvious differences between that life and the life of the new bookseller, who acquires her books surfing online and hearing from publishing representatives about their seasonal offerings, rather than sorting out gems from old boxes that have been in basements or garages or sheds—to grossly simplify things.) As a used shop, we can't stock everything we'd like to stock—though we do our best to acquire what we can't live without—but the idea that a used bookstore is a haphazard collection of odds and ends without purpose is false. Curation is as much a subject for us as any shop. And we're not the exception to the rule; I know of many wonderfully curated and well-cared-for secondhand shops, in our area and beyond.

And though booksellers in general and used booksellers particularly have achieved a reputation for being curmudgeons, we actually can be 'clever', and pleasant. Because we've curated it all ourselves, we know what we have, and we relish guiding patrons through our horde (though we respect those discerning visitors who'd rather discover it themselves, quietly, privately).

Additionally, secondhand books haven't lost their cultural potency. If anything, they acquire more flavor as they age. The intensity focused on new books represents something exciting and worrying about our industry. The idea that writers and their work is ever-emerging is undeniably positive, but even if these books can be read as representative of our current cultural moment and climate, we shouldn't risk emphasizing 'relevancy' over quality. The freshness of a book relative to its release date doesn't have a thing to do with the impact it will have on a reader. On the shelves of used bookshops are not only books that have been discarded without moving their reader, but also books that have impacted readers for years, decades, sometimes centuries.

Interestingly, despite everything I've just said, in the shop we've recently decided to drop the 'used' from our name. The reason for this was partly aesthetic—really, it was a mouthful to say—but it was also because, while we'd like to defend the dignity of our secondhand method, the most important thing remains that we sell books, and most are used, but some are not. Anyone who sells books, or gives them away for free, or loans them out, is in some sense in the same boat as we are; new bookstores are not faring much better in the grip of Amazon, situated as we all are in a landscape that doesn't value the book or the bookseller (as a source of specialized information as well as general knowledge) the way it apparently used to. But bookstores, used bookshops included, are not a lost cause. Just in Clark County, we have more than doubled our regional bookstores in the last five years. A rising tide will, hopefully, raise all ships—and if not, the storm will sunder us all.



REVIEW

*The Women*  
by Kristin Hannah

reviewed by Heather Finley

Kristin Hannah proves again that when it comes to historical fiction, she is rightfully one of the top authors out there. *The Women* introduces us to Frankie, a young nurse who follows her brother to the Vietnam War. From the war hospitals to the aftermath of returning to an unsupportive country, we see Frankie at her best and worst, and she navigates it all with fellow nurses Barb and Ethel. The research done for this novel shines through. The locations, the historic events, the organizations. Hannah skillfully weaves Frankie's life with true stories. In particular, the use of letters to show different perspectives was brilliant. The reader not only sees Frankie cover up the horror of war when writing to her mother, but also her mother's view of anti-war protests, and Barb's mother's perspective as a Black woman in the U.S. There were also great small details like what clamps the nurses learned to carry themselves because supplies were lacking. Frankie is a strong, compelling, complicated lead. Hannah is great at making readers question what their own morals would be in gray situations. It is absolutely heartbreaking to see a character told time and time again that nurses were not veterans, so did not need help recovering from all that happened to them while serving overseas. This novel felt like a story that absolutely needed to be told. Even if you are not usually a historical fiction reader, Hannah truly makes extremely readable novels. The fast pace and lovable characters in *The Women* will have you up all night trying to finish just one more chapter. Don't forget to have a tissue box near!

POETRY

Writing Again  
E.laine Fawkes

A poem is not intuitive to me.  
A form of speech I balance  
on top of my head like a plate.  
I deceive outsiders and frustrate  
native speakers. It would be hard  
to call this speaker a poet,  
when all I really care about  
is meeting my word count,  
so I can go to bed. By go to bed,  
I mean lie awake on the mattress.  
Sometime in the night,  
a little man creeps in and sweeps  
the room clean of the day  
before him. I am going to catch him.  
He is going to give me the key  
to this poem.

 Little Reader

*"You, dear child, can create worlds that don't exist. You can. Amazing, incredible worlds, full of vivid detail, and characters whose emotions you can actually feel. You create these worlds using the superpower that is called your imagination. You dream, you ponder, you play, and...there it is! Does it have castles? Dragons? Crazy-beautiful robots dancing on the billowing purple sands of a distant planet? Only you know."*

--Chris Anderson

LETTER FROM THIS EDITOR

Finding Your Secret Garden

Corrie Albertson, bookseller

Dear little readers and parents,

When I was 10 years old I was a bit of a daydreamer, not very good at school, with zero athletic ability. I was a sick kid, and the amount of days I'd been absent had definitely caught up with me. Needless to say, my self esteem was pretty low as I entered my 4th grade year. But it was also the year that would change everything, because along came Mrs. Porter. She taught English, and for reasons I'll never know, she saw something special in me. Instead of singling me out as someone who wasn't very bright, she introduced me to Emily Dickinson, Jane Austen, and the Brontë sisters—literature that everyone else would have thought was too advanced for a poor student like me. I loved it! I wanted her to be right about me, so I pushed myself to be better. She encouraged me to harness my daydreams, wrestle them into words, and put the words on paper. By the end of the school year, the girl who'd never been recognized for anything received the Outstanding Creative Writer Award. The award wasn't a piece of paper, plaque or a ribbon. It was a beautiful copy of *The Secret Garden* by Frances Hodgson Burnett.

When Heather, the owner of Literary Leftovers, asked me to be the children's program manager, she told me to dream bigger, to build a free program that would invest in the community. I knew exactly what I wanted to do. I wanted to be Mrs. Porter; I wanted to invest in kids and help them to see their natural gifting. I'm sharing this because I want you to understand the heart behind what we're doing here at the shop. It's not just a calendar, an art show, or a poetry contest. It's not just a book report. It's us giving kids the opportunity to be seen, to discover what they're good at and what brings them joy, and a big part of that is receiving affirmation.

All this prefaces the news that we will be accepting submissions to our 2025 Community Calendar Sept. 1st through Oct. 14th. Every entry will be featured in our 2nd Annual Community Art and Poetry Exhibit on Thursday, Nov. 7th from 6-7. All art entries should fit on a 8 1/2 by 11 in. horizontal sheet of paper. Please remember, we aren't necessarily looking for the best artist. We're looking for submissions from all ages and skill levels. We're looking for creativity, variety, and special consideration will be given to those who incorporate literary themes.

We're also accepting book reports and poetry from all ages, to be featured here in *The Little Reader*, or on the front page in *The Reader*. We would love to be the first to publish our younger readers and aspiring writers. If you have any questions, please call me at 971-400-7991.

Sincerely,  
Miss Corrie

CHILDREN'S POETRY

Cobweb Runner

C. Mason

Webs draped across my torso  
Announcing my first place win  
First feet to hit the ground running  
Sending spiders into a tailspin

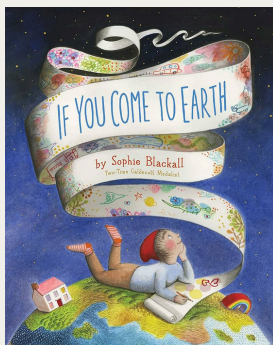
First to greet the morning  
To breathe in the fresh scent of dew laden pine  
A race against my shadow  
To cross the silver threaded finish line

PARENT RECOMMENDATION

*If You Come to Earth*

Written by Sophie Blackall

recommended by Jenna Thompson



This beautiful book does what often seems impossible: complicated things are suddenly simple, invisible things are suddenly visible, and the things we have in common are suddenly bigger and brighter than the things we don't.

The book is written like a letter to a visitor from outer space, using the vocabulary and straightforward observations of a kid.

***"We live in all kinds of homes. In all kinds of families. There are more than seven billion people on earth. We all have bodies. But every body is different."***

Each page is a wonder of gentle attentiveness: the sentences are simple and direct; the illustrations are so detailed and lovely that you never run out of things to look at and notice. This is a book to savor, reread, think about, and talk about. It doesn't matter how old your kids are...or how old you are. My kids are out of the house and I have been reading this book to myself everyday! It reminds me to take joy in the mere fact of being alive and being human. Thank goodness author and illustrator Sophie Blackall helps us remember.

ACTIVITIES

Word Scramble

What is black, white & red  
all over?



Unscramble the answer.

PNAPESWRE

Schedule

LEGO CLUB

at 10am Tuesdays & 4pm Thursdays.

STORYTIME WITH CORRIE

at 11am Tuesdays, right after Lego Club.

ALLAGES CHESS CLUB

at 4-5pm, 2nd & 4th Fridays of the month.

*All programs are free.*

Upcoming

**K-12 Art & Poetry Community Calendar**  
submissions are now being accepted Sept. 1st through Oct. 14th

**Mouse House Craft with Allana**  
Tues., Oct. 8th at 11:30am

**Annual Community Calendar Art Exhibit**  
Nov. 7th at 6-7pm

*Come visit or get in touch!*

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