

# Fiction News



The Ridgefield Library's Fiction Newsletter

October 2017

## AUTHORS IN THE SPOTLIGHT



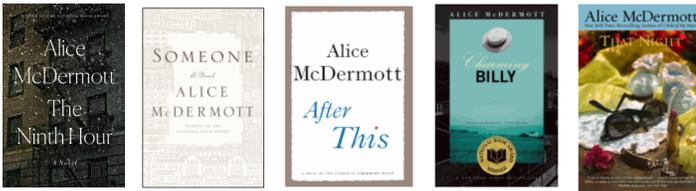
### Alice McDermott

Alice McDermott focuses her work upon common aspects of life such as love, romance, and family relationships. It is McDermott's approach to telling stories that distinguishes her work. Rather than simply spin a tale, McDermott skillfully imbues her characters and plots with descriptive details, emotional energy, and an almost poetic style of narrative writing in which her intensity of writing emerges.



### Jamie Ford

Chinese-American author Jamie Ford writes moving character-driven novels that explore the struggles of ordinary people in extraordinary circumstances. His historical fiction focuses on Asian immigrants in America, showing how racial prejudice combines with socio-political situations to add difficulties to his characters' lives. Ford's intriguing storylines, complex characters that attract the reader's sympathy, and vividly depicted historical settings combine to engage readers of both literary and historical fiction



#### Partial List

#### *The Ninth Hour* (2017)

A portrait of the Irish-American experience is presented through the story of an Irish immigrant's suicide and how it reverberates through innumerable lives in early twentieth-century Catholic Brooklyn.

#### *Someone* (2013)

Chronicles the ordinary life of a woman named Marie, from her childhood to old age, as she experiences the changing world of her Irish-American enclave in Brooklyn, in this novel that speaks of life as it is daily lived.

#### *After This* (2006)

A portrait of an American family during the middle decades of the twentieth century evokes the social, spiritual, and political turmoil of the era as seen through the experiences of a middle-class couple and their children.

#### *Child of My Heart* (2002)

A teenage girl, raised on the east end of Long Island among the country estates of the rich, reflects on her understanding of human nature during a seemingly idyllic summer spent with her eight-year-old cousin Daisy.

#### *Charming Billy* (1998)

When the late Billy Lynch's relatives and friends gather together to keep his memory alive, stories are woven and memories relived detailing his life in the close Irish-American community and the intricate feelings that resurface.

#### *That Night* (1987)

Set on Long Island during the sixties, this novel follows the intense love affair between two teenagers, Rick and Sheryl, as seen through the eyes of a ten-year-old neighbor.

#### *Love and Other Consolation Prizes* (2017)

For twelve-year-old Ernest Young, a charity student at a boarding school, the chance to go to the World's Fair feels like a gift. But only once he's there, amid the exotic exhibits, fireworks, and Ferris wheels, does he discover that *he* is the one who is actually the prize. The half-Chinese orphan is astounded to learn he will be raffled off—a healthy boy "to a good home." Against a rich backdrop of post-Victorian vice, suffrage, and celebration, *Love and Other Consolations* is an enchanting tale about innocence and devotion - in a world where everything, and everyone, is for sale.

#### *Songs of Willow Frost* (2013)

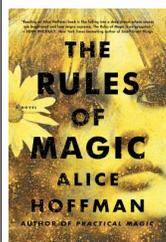
Set against the backdrop of Depression-era Seattle, *Songs of Willow Frost* is a powerful tale of two souls - a boy with dreams for his future and a woman escaping her haunted past--both seeking love, hope, and forgiveness. Jamie Ford's sweeping novel will resonate with anyone who has ever longed for the comforts of family and a place to call home.

#### *Hotel on the Corner of Bitter and Sweet* (2006)

When artifacts from Japanese families sent to internment camps during World War II are uncovered during renovations at a Seattle hotel, Henry Lee embarks on a quest that leads to memories of growing up Chinese in a city rife with anti-Japanese sentiment. Set during one of the most conflicted and volatile times in American history, *Hotel on the Corner of Bitter and Sweet* is an extraordinary story of commitment and enduring hope.

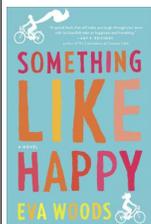
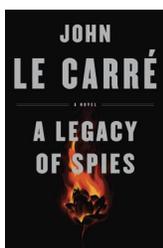
# NEW FICTION

(Annotations from BookLetters)



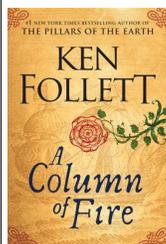
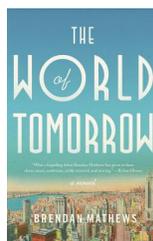
**The Rules of Magic** by Alice Hoffman. This is a prequel to Hoffman's *Practical Magic*. For the Owens family, love is a curse that began in 1620, when Maria Owens was charged with witchery. Hundreds of years later, in New York City at the cusp of the sixties, Susanna Owens knows that her three children are dangerously unique. *The Rules of Magic* is a story about the power of love reminding us that the only remedy for being human is to be true to yourself.

**A Legacy of Spies** by John le Carré. Peter Guillam, staunch colleague and disciple of George Smiley of the British Secret Service, is living out his old age on the family farmstead on the south coast of Brittany when a letter from his old Service summons him to London. His Cold War past has come back to claim him. Intelligence operations that were once the toast of secret London are to be scrutinized under disturbing criteria by a generation with no memory of the Cold War and no patience with its justifications.



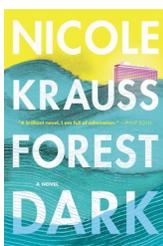
**Something Like Happy** by Eva Woods. Thirty-five-year-old Annie Hebden is stuck in a rut until her bubbly new friend, Polly Leonard, challenges her to try a new way to be happy each day for 100 days.

**The World of Tomorrow** by Brendan Mathews. Three brothers caught up in a whirlwind week of love, blackmail, and betrayal culminating in an assassination plot, set in prewar New York. Brendan Mathews brings prewar New York to vivid, pulsing life, while the sweeping and intricate storytelling of this remarkable debut reveals an America that blithely hoped it could avoid another catastrophic war and focus instead on the promise of the World's Fair: a peaceful, prosperous "World of Tomorrow."



**Column of Fire** by Ken Follett. A half-century love affair between a man in service to Elizabeth I and a woman on the opposing side of England's religious divide is challenged by violent ideological power shifts, torn loyalties and the queen's circle of spies, in a latest entry in the best-selling Kingsbridge series that includes *The Pillars of the Earth*.

**Forest Dark** by Nicole Krauss. The award-winning author of *The History of Love* conjures an achingly beautiful and breathtakingly original novel about personal transformation that interweaves the stories of two disparate individuals, an older lawyer and a young novelist, whose transcendental search leads them to the same Israeli desert.



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## STAFF PICKS

### Elise's Picks

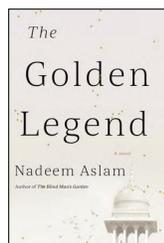
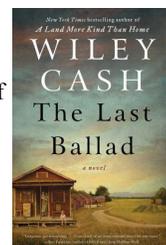
**The Ice-Cream Makers** by Ernest van der Kwast. An international bestseller, this charming novel about a Northern Italian ice-cream making dynasty, centers around the rivalry between two formerly close brothers. Luca, the younger brother, feels abandoned when Giovanni refuses to take up the family business, opting instead to travel the world organizing prestigious poetry festivals. Saddled with helping his father manage their demanding summer seasons, Luca compensates by creating increasingly imaginative new flavors and wins the hand of the enchanting Sophia. Sadly Luca finds that he can't give her the one thing she most desires. An ode to poetry, beautiful women, and the creamy pleasures of hand-churned gelato, this multigenerational novel also ponders the long lasting impact that family members' choices have on each other's lives.



**The Defectors** by Joseph Kanon. At the height of the Cold War, a respected Boston publisher travels to Russia to help his brother, a notorious American defector, write his memoir. Twelve years earlier, Frank Weeks, a former CIA golden boy, fled behind the Iron Curtain when he was about to be exposed as a Soviet spy. Now leading a limbo life with other defectors in "dreary, gray" Moscow, Frank plots to use his upcoming memoir as a double lure. Playing on brotherly bonds of affection and knowing his book will be a publishing sensation, Frank also tempts his former CIA bosses with the tantalizing possibility that he may be ready to defect back to the U.S. and reveal the names of current Soviet agents. Written by one of the most respected espionage novelists, *The Defectors* is a sophisticated, clever thriller that plays out like a three dimensional chess match and features a most fascinating and devious spy.

### Dorothy's Picks

**The Last Ballad** by Wiley Cash. Set in 1929, this historical novel is based on the life of Ella May Wiggins who became involved in the efforts of mill workers to unionize the South's abundant textile factories. Ella is 28, a single mother with four young children, who is compelled to work a 72-hour week night shift to barely scrape by. Ella works in one of the few racially integrated mills and lives in a shantytown along with her fellow workers. Desperate for a better life, she finds herself thrust into the spotlight when union organizers tap her musical talents to highlight the struggles of the mill workers. Told from the viewpoint of multiple characters whose lives cross with Ella's, *The Last Ballad* paints a vivid portrait of the risks taken by those who dared to organize.



**The Golden Legend** by Nadeem Aslam. Nargis and her husband Massud are architects in modern-day Pakistan. When Massud is caught in crossfire on a local street and dies, Nargis finds herself pressured by a military intelligence officer demanding she pardon her husband's American killer. While Nargis harbors a secret about her own past, she also finds herself enmeshed in conflicts arising from a forbidden romance between a Muslim cleric's daughter and her Christian neighbor Lily, whose daughter Helen has been beloved by the childless Nargis and Massud sponsors of her education. While this novel does not shy away from the portrayal of the brutality of terror and prejudice, Aslam has created a beautiful paean to human connections and to the resilience of the human spirit.