POZ Picks

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PICK OF THE LITTER

Prison Writing in 20th-Century America
Edited by H. Bruce Franklin
Penguin Books

This collection by imprisoned writers shatters stereotypes in a barrage of complex truths. Some names will surprise: What did Jack London and Robert Lowell learn behind bars? A lesson not unlike that of scribe Patricia McConnel, who wore "jailface," an expressionless mask to convince guards "by your look that you're already dead, so there's no challenge, nothin' in there to kill." AIDS activist Kathy Boudin sends out "The Call," a poem about her son that captures the longing of every prisoner to see their beloved. Of interest, too, is Dannie Martin's 1986 essay, "AIDS: The View From a Prison Cell." It was this *San Francisco Chronicle* article that, sadly, inspired Title 28 of the Code of Federal Regulations barring prisoners from publishing under a byline, a loss to which this great book testifies.

—Kevin O'Leary

BOOKS

The Same Embrace
Michael Lowenthal
Dutton Books

The Same Embrace opens as a tale of two sissies, in this case Jewish identical twins. Jacob, a twentysomething gay activist, tries to rescue brother Jonathan, who skipped off to Jerusalem to join a religious order. The quest fails and Jacob heads back to Boston, but not before engaging in a bit of risky sex with a Yeshiva student. Oy vey! The drama unfolds back in Beantown, when Jacob stitches a friend's AIDS quilt panel and wonders what he's gotten into.
Deftly mixing past and present, Lowenthal shows Jacob's modern-day plight and its origins in a turbulent childhood. Then, the late-stage intro of a 17-year-old love interest, the appearance of strange Aunt Ingrid and the revelation of Jacob's HIV test results all combine to bring the novel to a dizzying peak. I finished the book in tears, yearning for another chapter and wondering if there

was an all-night Yeshiva in the ’hood.

—Scott Hess

Dining With the Stars
Edited by Paul Kent Dorn
Pocket Books

I’m a sucker for celebrity-stuffed charity cookbooks. Of all AIDS merchandising schemes, these must be the cheesiest. The recipes herein provide an all-you-can-eat of fun. Angela Lansbury’s Famous Power Loaf is just the bread for that get-up-and-go feeling. And who knew that Chicken à la Gaynor wasn’t just a hot club kid dancing to “I Will Survive.” But as always, leave it to Nancy Reagan to be the wackiest: Sample her recipe for Monkey Bread…if you dare! (Maybe it really was bedtime for Bonzo.) A portion of the proceeds are earmarked for AIDS Project Los Angeles, but the real winners are the stars of yesteryear who get to see their names in print again. They’re still big, it’s the portions that got smaller.
—Kevin O’Leary

MOVIES

Posi TV
Directed by Patrick Scully

Who knew chilly Minneapolis was a cauldron of AIDS culture? Patrick Scully and his band of merry men have produced a how-to video for newly diagnosed gay guys that hits the mark with a sense of humor and humility. Be warned, a painfully staged drag sequence and a stiff Mr. International Leather 1997 get things off to a bumpy start, but this “not quite an hour” film is soon flying with skits, monologues and eavesdropping on private chats. What’s most compelling about the conversations is their authenticity. The four men are truly interested in one another’s tales of love, pills and the side effects of both.

—Kevin O’Leary

RECOMMENDED DOSE

Mike Barr, Editor, TAGline: “F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Crack-Up*. I’m convinced we’re reliving the Jazz Age—only sans the charm and innocence. I’m just waiting for the big bust.”

Louise Binder, Chair, Voices of Positive Women: “To prepare for a trip to Ireland, I read Frank McCourt’s memoir *Angela’s Ashes*. It was wonderful, and so was Ireland.”

Rebecca Denison, Executive Director, WORLD: “I love the *Boys on the Side* soundtrack. I listen to it in those rare moments when I’m cleaning my room and the kids are sleeping.”

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