

THINGS TO DO > BOOKS

Readers and writers: Novels, books for kids and a chance to draw



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We've got an eclectic mix today, from a twisty tale of corruption to two novels inspired by the authors' Minnesota childhoods, one about a strange-looking cat, and a lively new way to stretch kids' imaginations.

"Trafficking U": by D. Greg Scott (Winged Publications, \$24.99 hardcover; \$14.99 paperback)

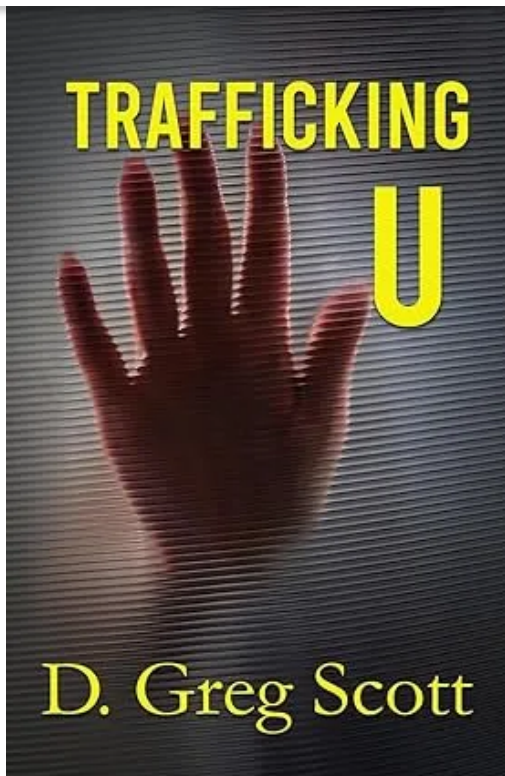
"Jesse chuckled. Inventing Brooke's backstory was almost as fun as playing Teena Fav from Green Bay. Almost. But the creeps she was after this time

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(Courtesy of the author)

Jesse is a bank fraud investigator sipping coffee at her friend's coffee shop when a terrified young woman rushes to her table pretending she knows Jesse. She is Leilani and this encounter sets off a chain of events in Jesse's life that lead her to uncover a vast network of sex traffickers, beginning with her discovery of a strange partnership between her bank and a private college that offers young women a work-study program at a remote resort in northern Minnesota. Jesse is fired when she brings this to the attention of top management at her bank, but she keeps digging, learning of women who have been groomed to work at

the resort as prostitutes. This is a story in which nobody can be trusted. Interspersed with the contemporary story are Jesse's memories of being a teenage thief and seller of fake IDs. There's a lot going on here: a computer nerd who's Jesse's ally, murders, attacks on Jesse and her friends, and a scummy couple who pick out which young woman they will groom, especially those having trouble at home. There's also a fair amount of computer lingo that will interest IT folks. Although the book is described as a Christian novel, the religious theme is subtle. Kirkus Reviews described the novel as "a diverting thriller with thoughtful commentary on a timely issue."

The author wrote for an IT industry publication and was a pioneer in finding online groomers. He earned an MBA from the University of St. Thomas.

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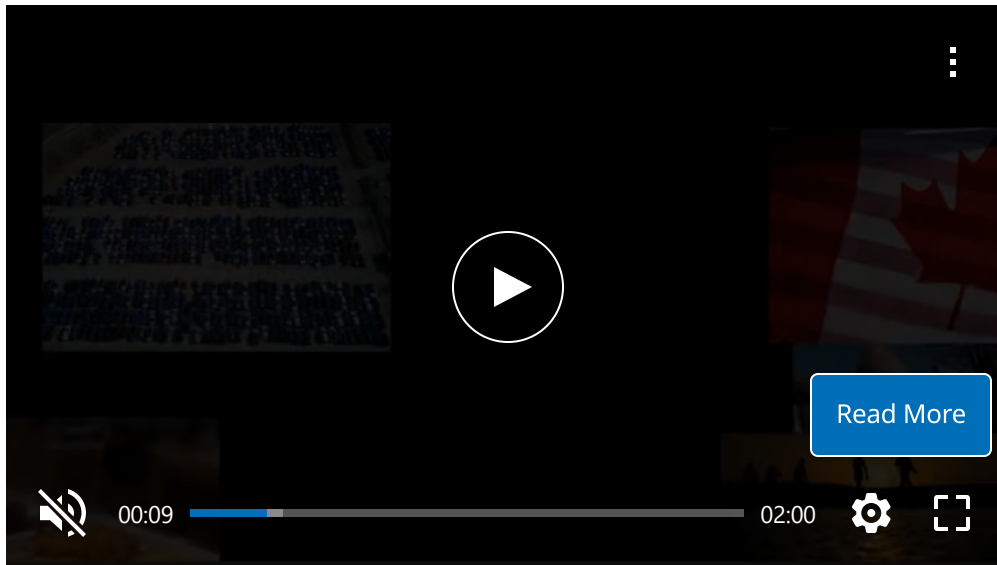
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(Courtesy of the author)

“This Sheep Needs Your Help!” and “This Pirate Needs Your Help!”: by David LaRochelle (Candlewick Press, each \$10.99)



Trust David LaRochelle to come up with new ways to stretch young imaginations. This time the Geisel Award-winning author/illustrator invites youngsters to help a sassy sheep and a pirate out of difficulties by creating

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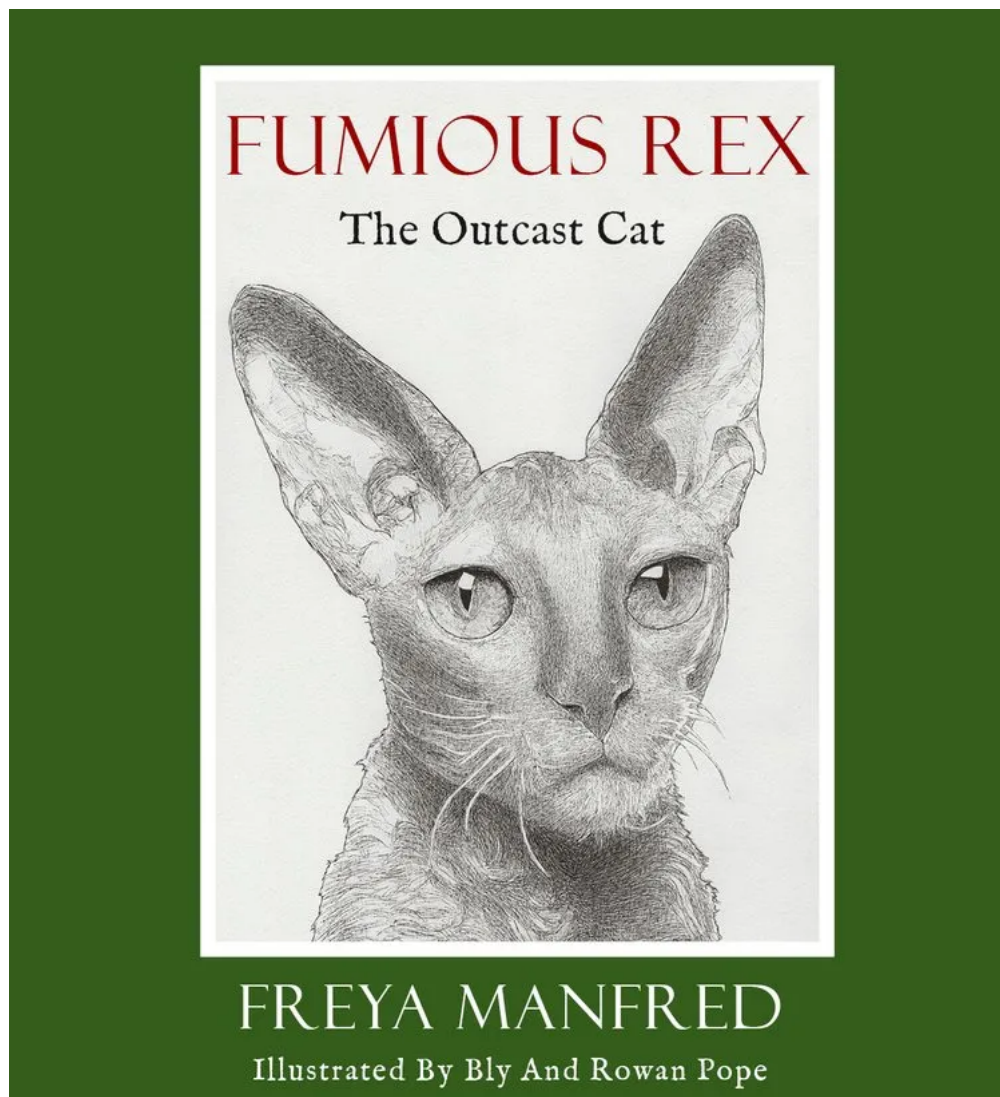
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"Finding ways for the reader to connect with the story is one of the most important elements I consider when making a book," LaRochelle writes in an author's note. "... this is the first time I've tried connecting the reader to the book by having them draw pictures that complete the storyline. My dream is that these books will reach a wide range of readers, from preschoolers just learning to hold a marker to older kids honing their drawing skills. I hope these books will inspire kids to stretch their imaginations and think outside the box, then erase the pages and try new possibilities."

LaRochelle has been busy with recent publication of such popular books as "See the Cat," "Go and Get with Rex," and "Mr. Fox's Game of 'No!'"



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"My mother says I'm the first Minnesota Rex Cat."

"You don't sound very happy about it."

"I'm not. I think she sent me away because I am so different." — from
"Fumious Rex"

Fumious Rex's mother had given birth to a dozen litters but none has looked like Fumious, with his too-big ears, a tail too long and curly hair so short he looks almost hairless. So begins this children's story of Fumious, born in the country home of good-natured Bly Barnacle at Rowan Tree Place. After a spat with his three sisters, his mother feels it's time for the youngster to go into the world. He meets all kinds of cats of many breeds, including big, black mentor Edward S. Heath, as well as a goofy Siamese who keeps changing her name while she leaps and twirls as she talks. Fumious learns there are dangers in the world when he's almost eaten by the hungry fox who lives in Foxtooth Forest. This story is filled with just enough excitement to keep little ones interested but nothing too scary. The cats' names are lots of fun and humans are kind.

"Fumious Rex" is a collaboration between poet Freya Manfred and twin sons Bly Pope and Rowan Pope. (Husband/dad is screenwriter Tom Pope.) Both men graduated from Stanford University, earned MFAs from the University of Minnesota and teach at the Minneapolis College of Art and Design. Their work is in public and private collections, which isn't surprising when you see the cats' expressions and movements in their "Fumious Res" drawings.

Freya is the author of 10 poetry collections, the latest of which is "When I Was Young and Old." She also wrote the memoirs "Raising Twins: True Life Adventure" and "Frederick Manfred: A Daughter Remembers." They will introduce the book Feb. 1 at Red Balloon Bookshop, 891 Grand Ave., St. Paul.

"Stories from the Great River": by Michael N. Felix (The Black Mountain Press, \$16.50)

... I didn't think it right then, but I've often wondered about whether you can live on this earth and over the time be worn so fine by the things that have happened, worn so fine that you're almost translucent, worn so fine that you

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From an old Native American hunter honored by his tribe to boys digging a duck pond for a rich guy and trying to eliminate rats in a barn, to a truck driver who has an encounter with a silent woman, these short stories capture Minnesota and her people. Some of the stories about children free to roam the outdoors were inspired by the author's childhood in a shack with no plumbing in Prior Lake. In other stories men and women try to deal with their lives.

"We live two lives. The life we imagine and the one we really live," the author writes in a forward. "These stories derive from the people and places around the upper reaches of that Great River. They are about people who imagine their lives and struggle to live up to that imagination."

Felix, who lives in Grand Rapids, has given us a book well worth reading, especially if you shared his carefree childhood. He has written seven novels and a science fiction novella. He attended the University of Minnesota and has a master's degree from Mankato State College.

"Sound of a Distant Train": by Dan Goodier (Independently published, \$20)

... we couldn't possibly have predicted the changes coming to my family and to our town, or the amazing occurrences that caused them. Nor could we have predicted how the crushing importance of those events would cause such a massive slipstream effect in our lives, just as the period between 1967 and 1968 shaped the history of our country and the world for all time. — from "Sound of a Distant Train"

In his debut novel Dan Goodier looks back to the turbulent years 1957-68, when assassinations of Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert F. Kennedy rocked the nation. The small town of Bay City, Wis., is rocked too, when three of their own are killed. Protagonist Emmett North tells the story as a teenager living a carefree summer of swimming and talking to pretty girls. After the murders, the town has to pull together to counter the bad publicity and refurbishing their image.

Part fictional memoir, part coming-of-age, part mystery, this novel is for everyone who recalls being young during those hard years in our nation and anyone who hears the sound of a distant train from their past.

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