



## White Pine 2024 Nominee List – Annotations and Content



### ***As Long as the Lemon Trees Grow***

Written by Zoulfa Katouh

Published by Little, Brown Books for Young Readers

An epic, emotional, breathtaking story of love and loss set amid the Syrian revolution. Burning with the fires of hope and possibility, *As Long as the Lemon Trees Grow* will sweep you up and never let you go.

A year ago, before the revolution, Salama watched her brother marry her best friend, Layla and wondered when her own love story might begin. Now she works at the hospital – helping those she can, closing the eyes of those she can't. Layla and her unborn baby are all Salama has left.

Unless you count Khawf. But he's a hallucination; a symptom of the horrors she's seen. Every day he urges Salama to leave. Every day she refuses.

Until she crosses paths with Kenan, the boy with the vivid green eyes, who wants to stay and risk his life for everything Syria could be...

#### **Content/Discussion Themes**

Contemporary, War and Conflict (Syria), Romance, Magical Realism, refugees, medical, Syrian Civil War, including graphic depictions of violence, such as bombings, sniper attacks, chemical attacks, war, and other mass casualty events, on page death; blood and some graphic gore; graphic depictions of war, violence, death, illness; sexual assault (on page), deaths of parents (on page), murder, gore, child abuse and death, torture, starvation, PTSD, grief and loss, hallucinations, gun violence, trauma, refugee experiences.

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### ***Dragging Mason County***

Written by Curtis Campbell

Published by Annick Press

A laugh-out-loud YA debut that examines the realities of small-town queer life and celebrates the transformative power of drag—perfect for fans of *RuPaul's Drag Race* and *Pumpkin*.

Peter Thompkin needs a public image overhaul. After a tense confrontation with one of the few other queer kids in his small-town high school, rumours about him are becoming more elaborate by the day. Meanwhile, his best friend Alan (aka teen drag queen Aggie Culture) is throwing Mason County's debut Drag Extravaganza. Although Peter is a self-described "dragnostic," he decides to help produce the show, hoping to prove that he isn't a self-hating gay. In the process, he finds himself facing down angry guard dogs, angrier bigots, and a very high-strung church lady. As backlash grows, Peter begins to wonder whether he's setting fire to his already damaged reputation and if his friendship with Alan will survive past the curtain call.

At turns touching, sharply funny, and a little absurd, *Dragging Mason County* explores the pains and pleasures of the queer community through one teen's journey to self-acceptance.

**Content/Discussion Themes**

LGBTQ2S+, Friendship, Theatre, Performing Arts, Drag, Activism, Social Media, negative self-talk, suicide, hate-motivated actions/homophobia/anti-trans, substance use, alcohol use

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***Funeral Songs for Dying Girls***

Written by Cherie Dimaline

Published by Tundra Books

After inadvertently starting rumours of a haunted cemetery, a teen befriends a ghost in this brand-new young adult novel exploring grief and belonging by the critically acclaimed and bestselling author of *The Marrow Thieves* series.

Winifred has lived in the apartment above the cemetery office with her father, who has worked in the crematorium, all her life, close to her mother's grave. With her sixteenth birthday only days away, Winifred has settled into a lazy summer schedule, lugging her obese Chihuahua around the grounds in a squeaky red wagon to visit the neglected gravesides and nursing a serious crush on her best friend, Jack.

Her habit of wandering the graveyard at all hours has started a rumour that Winterson Cemetery might be haunted. It's welcome news since the crematorium is on the verge of closure and her father's job is being outsourced. Now that the ghost tours have started, Winifred just might be able to save her father's job and the only home she's ever known, not to mention being able to stay close to where her mother is buried. All she has to do is get help from her con artist cousin to keep up the rouse and somehow manage to stop her father from believing his wife has returned from the grave. But when Phil, an actual ghost of a teen girl who lived and died in the ravine next to the cemetery, starts showing up, Winifred begins to question everything she believes about life, love and death. Especially love.

**Content/Discussion Themes**

Coming of Age, Death and Dying, Grief and Bereavement, Ghosts, Paranormal, Romance, references to abduction, drug inducement, assault, Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women, sex

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***Iz The Apocalypse***

Written by Susan Currie

Published by Common Deer

A fierce voice longs to break free.

A spark ignites inside fourteen-year-old Iz Beaufort when she hears the school music group Manifesto perform. Even though she hasn't written a song since *That Place*, she recognizes herself in the moving performance and longs to be part of the group, certain that they might

actually understand her. But *Manifesto* is based at the prestigious Métier School, and Iz has bounced through twenty-six foster homes. Plus, there's no way Dominion Children's Care would ever send a foster kid to a private school when a public option is available.

So Iz does what any passionate, broken, off-the-chart wunderkind might and takes matters into her own hands. Iz fakes her way in only to face a new set of challenges: tuition fees, tough classwork, and new classmates she can't immediately identify as friends or foes. And if she can't handle all this while keeping how she got into Métier a secret, she could get kicked out of both school and her current home. But a life with music—a life where Iz gets to have a voice—might be worth risking everything.

**Content/Discussion Themes**

Contemporary, Music, Foster care, High School, Found Family, abuse, anxiety, panic, mental illness, trauma, PTSD

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***Mall Goth***

Written and illustrated by Kate Leth  
Published by Simon & Schuster Canada

*Laura Dean Keeps Breaking Up with Me* gets a Y2K twist in this coming-of-age young adult graphic novel from acclaimed comic artist Kate Leth about a 2000s goth teen whose favourite part of her new town is the mall.

Liv Holme is not exactly thrilled to be moving to a new town with her mother. After all, high school can be brutal, even more so when you're a fifteen-year-old, bisexual goth. But Liv is determined to be who she is, bullies or not. Still, being the new kid and the only out student brings her a lot of unwelcome attention, and Liv flounders in her search for community. The only person who makes time for her is one of the teachers, but Liv isn't sure how to feel about the way he behaves toward her.

Thankfully, she's found the perfect escape: the mall. Under its fluorescent lights, Liv feels far away from her parents' strained marriage and her peers who don't understand her. Amid the bright storefronts, food court smell, and anonymous shoppers, Liv is safely one of the crowd and can enjoy the feeling of calling the shots in her own life for once.

With the help of her suburban refuge, Liv sets off on a journey of self-acceptance and learns to navigate the ups and downs of high school and recognize true friendship.

**Content/Discussion Themes**

Coming of age, Friendship, LGBTQ2S+, Self-esteem, Self-reliance, New Experiences, Romance, Gaming, grooming (by teacher), bullying

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## ***Of Light and Shadow***

Written by Tanaz Bhathena

Published by Penguin Teen Canada

A standalone novel of magic, mayhem, love, and betrayal set in the Wrath of Ambar universe, this is the story of a bandit and a prince who change each other in unexpected ways. For readers of Sabaa Tahir and Marie Lu.

*When they don't give us our birthright, we steal it.*

Roshan Chaya is out for justice. Abandoned by her parents at birth and adopted by the kingdom of Jwala's most notorious bandit before his brutal murder, she is now leader of the Shadow Clan, a gang of farmers-turned-bandits impoverished by the provincial governor's atrocities and corruption. Roshan's goal: to avenge her adoptive father and earn back rights and dignity for her people.

Prince Navin has always felt like an outcast. Second in line for the throne, he has never been close to his grandmother, Queen Bhairavi of Jwala. When a night out drinking with friends leads to his capture by the infamous Shadow Clan, Navin schemes to befriend Roshan and use her as a means to escape. His ploy, however, brings Navin closer to the corruption and poverty at the heart of Roshan's province, raising questions about its governor and Navin's own family.

To further complicate things, the closer Roshan and Navin get, the harder it becomes to fight their growing attraction. But how can they trust each other when the world as they know it starts to fall apart?

Set in a magical world inspired by the badlands of 17th century India, this standalone epic fantasy novel by Tanaz Bhathena is packed with political tensions, dangerous schemes, and swoon-worthy romance that asks the age-old question: can love conquer all?

### **Content/Discussion Themes**

Historical fantasy, Romance, Class Differences, Mythology, fantasy violence, gore, intoxication, sex, kidnapping

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## ***Only This Beautiful Moment***

Written by Abdi Nazemian

Published by Balzer + Bray, imprint of HarperCollins Publishers Ltd.

From the Stonewall Honour-winning author of *Like a Love Story* comes a sweeping story of three generations of boys in the same Iranian family. Perfect for fans of *Last Night at the Telegraph Club* and *Darius the Great Is Not Okay*.

2019. Moud is an out gay teen living in Los Angeles with his distant father, Saeed. When Moud gets the news that his grandfather in Iran is dying, he accompanies his dad to Tehran, where the

revelation of family secrets will force Moud into a new understanding of his history, his culture, and himself.

1978. Saeed is an engineering student with a promising future ahead of him in Tehran. But when his parents discover his involvement in the country's burgeoning revolution, they send him to safety in America, a country Saeed despises. And even worse—he's forced to live with the American grandmother he never knew existed.

1939. Bobby, the son of a calculating Hollywood stage mother, lands a coveted MGM studio contract. But the fairy-tale world of glamour he's thrust into has a dark side.

Set against the backdrop of Tehran and Los Angeles, this tale of intergenerational trauma and love is an ode to the fragile bonds of family, the hidden secrets of history, and all the beautiful moments that make us who we are today

#### **Content/Discussion Themes**

LGBTQ2S+ joy, Middle Eastern (Iranian) Culture, Emigration and Immigration, Multigenerational, Prejudice, Racism, Hollywood, Family, Political Activism, homophobia, police brutality, hate crime, racism, violence, drug use, emotional abuse, toxic relationships, institutionalized bigotry, political violence, bombs

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#### ***Pieces of Me***

Written by Kate McLaughlin

Published by MacMillan, St. Martin Press

The next gut-punching, compulsively readable Kate McLaughlin novel, is about a girl finding strength in not being alone.

When eighteen-year-old Dylan wakes up, she's in an apartment she doesn't recognize. The other people there seem to know her, but she doesn't know them – not even the pretty, chiseled boy who tells her his name is Connor. A voice inside her head keeps saying that everything is okay, but Dylan can't help but freak out. Especially when she borrows Connor's phone to call home and realizes she's been missing for three days.

Dylan has lost time before, but never like this.

Soon after, Dylan is diagnosed with Dissociative Identity Disorder and must grapple not only with the many people currently crammed inside her head but that a secret from her past so terrible she's blocked it out has put them there. Her only distraction is a budding new relationship with Connor. But as she gets closer to finding out the truth, Dylan wonders: will it heal her or fracture her further?

Kate McLaughlin's *Pieces of Me* is raw, intimate, and surprisingly hopeful.

#### **Content/Discussion Themes**

Contemporary, Family, Mental Health, Mystery, Thriller, Romance, Mental Health, suicide/suicide attempts, Dissociative Identity Disorder, references to the term "crazy" as a descriptor, hospitalization,

sexual abuse, childhood abuse, childhood sexual abuse, pedophilia, incest, consensual sex, alcohol abuse, vaping/smoking, dissociation

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### ***Then Everything Happens at Once***

Written by M-E Girard

Published by HarperTeen, imprint of HarperCollins Publishers Ltd.

From the Lambda Award-winning author of *Girl Mans Up* comes an empowering, sex-positive coming-of-age story about a teen exploring first love and desire, as her rocky relationship with her own body and a pandemic threaten to sabotage everything. Perfect for fans of *Fat Chance*, *Charlie Vega* and *Cool for the Summer*.

Baylee has never been kissed but she wants to do way more than that. She's had a huge crush on her gorgeous best friend and neighbour Freddie for years, but since she doesn't look like his usual type, the judgmental voice in her head tells her he'll never see her as more than a friend. It feels like she'll spend the rest of high school fantasizing on the sidelines while everyone else dates and hooks up.

Then Baylee meets Alex online and she starts to fall for this sweet, funny barista who likes her just as she is. It's new, electric, and all-consuming to be around Alex. But when Freddie makes a move on Baylee and a virus shuts the world down, Baylee finds herself torn.

Everything is happening at once, and she is left navigating the messy waters of love and desire. It helps that she's observed her friends' relationship drama, so she knows exactly what mistakes not to make . . . right?

This sophomore novel from M-E Girard centers a fat, confident girl going after what she wants and learning to love herself along the way.

#### **Content/Discussion Themes**

Contemporary, Dating and Sex, LGBTQ2S+, New experiences, Body image, COVID, negative self-talk, fatphobia, ableism, consensual sex, COVID, misgendering, bullying

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### ***Those Pink Mountain Nights***

Written by Jen Ferguson

Published by Heartdrum, imprint of HarperCollins Publishers Ltd.

In her remarkable second novel following her Governor General's Award-winning debut, *The Summer of Bitter and Sweet*, Jen Ferguson writes about the hurt of a life stuck in the past tense, the hum of connections that cannot be severed, and one week in a small, snowy town that changes everything.

Overachievement isn't a bad word—for Berlin, it's the goal. She's securing excellent grades, planning her future, and working a part-time job at Pink Mountain Pizza, a legendary local business. Who says she needs a best friend by her side?

Dropping out of high school wasn't smart—but it was necessary for Cameron. Since his cousin Kiki's disappearance, it's hard enough to find the funny side of life, especially when the whole town has forgotten Kiki. To them, she's just another missing Native girl.

People at school label Jessie a tease, a rich girl—and honestly, she's both. But Jessie knows she contains multitudes. Maybe her new job crafting pizzas will give her the high-energy outlet she desperately wants.

When the weekend at Pink Mountain Pizza takes several unexpected turns, all three teens will have to acknowledge the various ways they've been hurt—and how much they need each other to hold it all together.

**Content/Discussion Themes**

Friendship, Activism, Social Justice, Coming of Age, Mental Health, hate/racism/anti-Indigenous words and actions, sexual abuse (adult and minor), Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, depression, street harassment, child abuse, bullying, abusive relationships, some bias against someone with a learning disability, capitalism