

## **Books**

From Page 2B

pected this kind of feathered-fowl love letter from this author, and because I was totally captivated by it so much.

Snarky, snippy, fun, and informative are the hallmarks of 'Concierge Confidential" by Michael Fazio with Michael Malice. This is the true story of a man who became a concierge at a ritzy New York City hotel, and what he does at his job. Not only are the anecdotes stellar and well-told, but the authors' hints and tips for better service are worth wanting this book. If you're a traveler, especially, you'll love it.

I also loved "Little Princes" by Conor Grennan, a memoir of a man who decides to go on a round-the-world hike but, lest his quest seem selfish, he decides to spend a stint at a Tibetan orphanage first. What happens is not only the basis of this charming, bring-a-tissue book, but it also gives readers a few laughs. Whatever you do, though, DO NOT skip to the end of this book. You'll ruin it for yourself. You've been warned.

BONUS: "The Mindset Lists of American History" by Tom McBride and Ron Nief is a lighter, fun-to-read look back over the last century at pop culture, politics, and lifestyles, and it puts a lot of current events into perspective. Loved it. Nuff said

## **CHILDREN'S BOOKS**

So you need something to reward the kiddoes for being good this holiday season. These books will make them smile....

Yes, the holidays are over, but "Thanksgiving Graces" by Mark Kimball Moulton, illustrated by David Wenzel is one of those gracious books you'll want to pull off the shelf really often. This gentle rhyme tells the story of a family dinner with a guest list that keeps growing, and the lesson a little boy learns from it. For ages 3-8.

I was stunned at how much I loved "Small as an Elephant" by Jennifer Richard Jacobson. This is the (fictional) tale of a boy whose mentally-ill mother abandons him in a Maine park, and his resilience and resourcefulness in surviving and getting home. Two things: this is a great story for kids ages 9-13 (and for adults, too!) but it might scare smaller children. Also, I got this book on CD, which I thought made it better; I listen to audiobooks in my car, in fact, and this one made me want to go places.

"Teenie" by Christopher Grant and "Planet Middle School" by Nikki Grimes are both about growing up and enduring those tweenand-early-teen years. I loved the characters in these "girl books" and I loved how their respective authors gave us a chance to see inside their heads. And for boys who are looking for the same kind of book, give them "On the Come Up" by Travis Hunter. These three books are perfect for anyone ages 12 and up.

And there you have it... Fifteen books to reward yourself (or someone else), to take on that mid-winter vacation, for sitting by the fire, or for no reason other than you want to read them because they're great.

Because they are. Happy Reading!

## **Questions**

From Page 8B

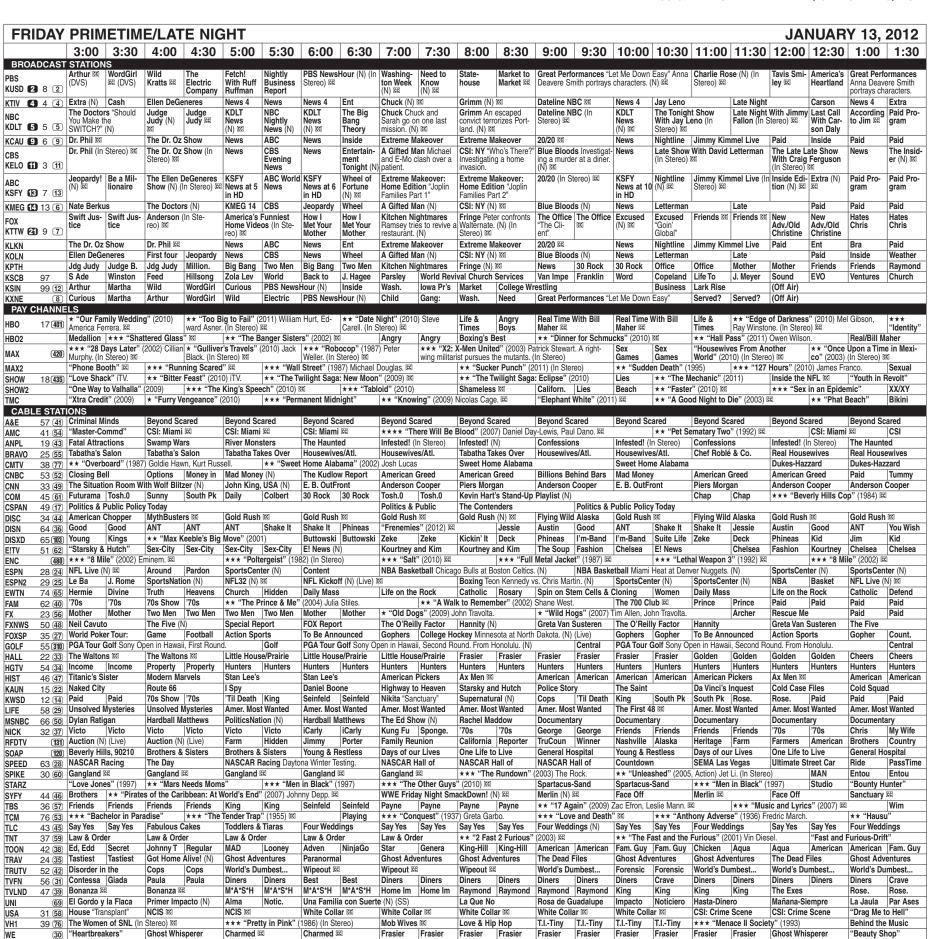
hellish life he leads with Angelina Jolie? Yeah, we don't care if he wins, either.

18. Can Piers Morgan survive the British phone hacking scandal? We haven't hacked into the former tabloid editor's secret text messages, but we suspect that we haven't heard the last of this mat-

19. Will Hollywood smarten up and stop shooting itself in the foot by releasing too many quality movies in the same week next December? No.

20. Is this the year that the media stops covering celebrities so obsessively? We will stop obsessing when you stop obsessing.

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