

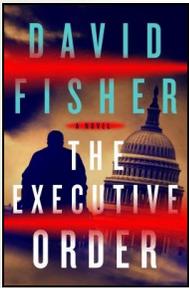


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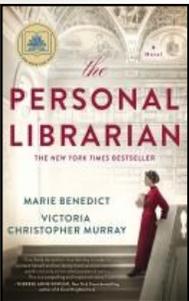
### FICTION



#### ***THE EXECUTIVE ORDER* BY DAVID FISHER**

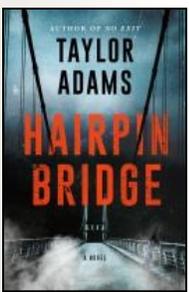
**(PICKED BY SLS)**

In a post-Trump and Biden world, an independent senator is elected president to heal a nation frayed by extreme partisanship. Digital journalist Rollie Stone and his colleagues embrace the normalcy. But after the country is rocked by a series of devastating terrorist attacks, the new administration begins rolling out executive orders that claim to protect the American people—while slowly chipping away at their constitutional freedoms. Rollie Stone is a wounded warrior whose hi-tech Mighty Chair serves as his unique assistant in investigations. When he uncovers evidence that the terrorist attacks are being coordinated much closer to home, he knows he needs to get this information into safe hands—but the president has declared war, and through his new executive powers is rounding up journalists, dissenters, and anyone else who gets in his way. Forced on the run, Rollie finds himself in a race for his life to reveal the truth. (384 pgs)



#### ***THE PERSONAL LIBRARIAN* BY MARIE BENEDICT & V.C. MURRAY** (PICKED BY SLH/SM)

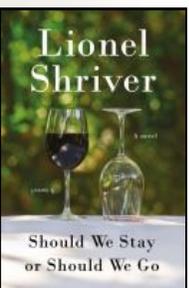
In her twenties, Belle da Costa Greene is hired by J. P. Morgan to curate a collection of rare manuscripts, books, and artwork for his newly built Pierpont Morgan Library. Belle becomes a fixture on the New York society scene and one of the most powerful people in the art and book world, known for her impeccable taste and shrewd negotiating for critical works as she helps build a world-class collection. But Belle has a secret, one she must protect at all costs. She was born not Belle da Costa Greene but Belle Marion Greener. She is the daughter of Richard Greener, the first Black graduate of Harvard and a well-known advocate for equality. *The Personal Librarian* tells the story of an extraordinary woman, famous for her intellect, style, and wit, and shares the lengths to which she must go—for the protection of her family and her legacy—to preserve her carefully crafted white identity in the racist world in which she lives. (341 pgs)



#### ***HAIRPIN BRIDGE* BY TAYLOR ADAMS**

**(PICKED BY MG)**

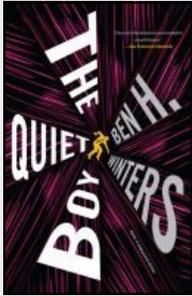
Three months ago, Lena Nguyen's estranged twin sister, Cambry, drove to a remote bridge sixty miles outside of Missoula, Montana, and jumped two hundred feet to her death. At least, that is the official police version. But Lena isn't buying it. Now she's come to that very bridge, driving her dead twin's car and armed with a cassette recorder, determined to find out what really happened by interviewing the highway patrolman who allegedly discovered her sister's body. Corporal Raymond Raycevic is sympathetic and professional. But his story doesn't add up. But perhaps most troubling of all, the state trooper is referred to by name in Cambry's final enigmatic text to her sister: *Please Forgive Me. I couldn't live with it. Hopefully you can, Officer Raycevic.* Lena will do anything to uncover the truth. But as her twin's final hours come into focus, Lena's search turns into a harrowing, tooth-and-nail fight for her own survival. (306 pgs)



#### ***SHOULD WE STAY OR SHOULD WE GO* BY LIONEL SHRIVER**

**(PICKED BY SM)**

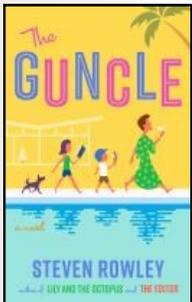
When her father dies, Kay Wilkinson can't cry. Over ten years, Alzheimer's had steadily eroded this erudite man into a paranoid lunatic. Surely one's own father passing should never come as such a relief. Both medical professionals, Kay and her husband Cyril have seen too many elderly patients in similar states of decay. Although healthy and vital in their early fifties, the couple fears what may lie ahead. Determined to die with dignity, Cyril makes a modest proposal. To spare themselves and their loved ones such a humiliating and protracted decline, they should agree to commit suicide together once they've both turned eighty. When their deal is sealed, the spouses are blithely looking forward to another three decades together. But then they turn eighty. *Should We Stay or Should We Go* portrays twelve parallel universes, each exploring a possible future for Kay and Cyril. (288 pgs)



### ***THE QUIET BOY BY BEN WINTERS***

**(PICKED BY SLS)**

Wesley Keener lies in bed: not dead, not alive, not in a coma or vegetative state, but simply frozen at an unchanging 16 years old, the forward course of his existence having simply stopped midway through sophomore year. His condition is the result of something called Syndrome J, an extraordinarily rare neurological event, at least according to the brilliant young neurologist Anna Pileggi. When Wes was first hospitalized, his father, David Keener hired acclaimed PI Jay Shenk to help find answers about the illness that befell their beloved son. Now, years later, when David is accused of murdering the brilliant young doctor who served as expert witness in the hospital case, Shenk and his son Ruben discover that this standard malpractice suit is part of something more sinister than anyone imagined. (448 pgs)



### ***THE GUNCLE BY STEVEN ROWLEY***

**(PICKED SLS)**

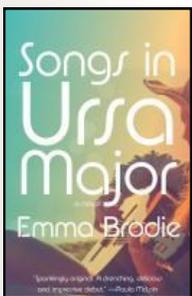
Patrick, or Gay Uncle Patrick (GUP, for short), has always loved his niece, Maisie, and nephew, Grant. That is, he loves spending time with them when they come out to Palm Springs for week-long visits, or when he heads home to Connecticut for the holidays. But in terms of caretaking and relating to two children, Patrick is honestly a bit out of his league. So when tragedy strikes and Maisie and Grant lose their mother and Patrick's brother has a health crisis of his own, Patrick finds himself suddenly taking on the role of primary guardian. Despite having a set of "Guncle Rules" ready to go, Patrick has no idea what to expect, having spent years barely holding on after the loss of his great love, a somewhat-stalled career, and a lifestyle not-so-suited to a six- and a nine-year-old. Quickly realizing that parenting—even if temporary—isn't solved with treats and jokes, Patrick's eyes are opened to a new sense of responsibility, and the realization that even being larger than life means you're unfailingly human. (336 pgs)



### ***A TIP FOR THE HANGMAN BY ALLISON EPSTEIN***

**(PICKED BY KT)**

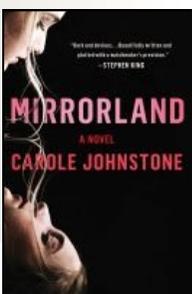
England, 1585. In Kit Marlowe's last year at Cambridge, he receives a visit from Queen Elizabeth's spymaster, who has come with a career opportunity. Her Majesty's spies are in need of new recruits, and Kit's flexible moral compass has drawn their attention. Kit, a scholarship student without money or prospects, accepts the offer. He is dispatched to the manor where Mary, Queen of Scots is under house arrest, to act as a servant in her household and keep his ear to the ground for a Catholic plot to put Mary on the throne. The ripple effects of his service to the Crown are far-reaching and leave Kit a changed man. But the salary he earns through his spy work allows him to mount his first play, and over the following years, he becomes the toast of London's raucous theatre scene. But when Kit finds himself reluctantly drawn back into the world of espionage, he realizes everything he's worked so hard to attain—including the trust of the man he loves—could vanish before his very eyes. (384 pgs)



### ***SONGS IN URSA MAJOR BY EMMA BRODIE***

**(PICKED BY SM)**

It is 1969, and the Bayleen Island Folk Fest is abuzz with one name - Jesse Reid. He is poised to tip from fame to legend with this one headlining performance, until his motorcycle crashes on the way to the show. Jane Quinn is a Bayleen Island local whose music flows as naturally as her long blond hair. When she and her bandmates are asked to play in Jesse Reid's place at the festival, Jane delivers the performance of a lifetime, stopping Jesse's disappointed fans in their tracks: A star is born. As Jane contends with the music industry's sexism, Jesse becomes her advocate, and what starts as a shared calling soon becomes a passionate love affair. On tour with Jesse, Jane is so captivated by the giant stadiums, the wild parties, and the media attention, that she is blind-sided when she stumbles on the dark secret beneath Jesse's music. With nowhere to turn, Jane must reckon with the shadows of her own past; what follows is the birth of one of most iconic albums of all time. (336 pgs)



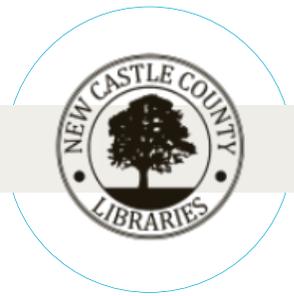
### ***MIRRORLAND BY CAROLE JOHNSTONE***

**(PICKED BY SP)**

Cat lives in Los Angeles, far away from the imposing gothic house in Edinburgh where she and her estranged twin sister, El, grew up. As girls, they invented Mirrorland, a dark, imaginary place under the pantry stairs full of pirates, witches, and clowns. These days Cat rarely thinks about their childhood home, or the fact that El now lives there with her husband Ross. But when El mysteriously disappears after going out on her sailboat, Cat is forced to return to the house, which has scarcely changed in twenty years. It is still full of shadowy corners, and at every turn Cat finds herself stumbling on long-held secrets and terrifying ghosts from the past. Because someone—El?—has left Cat clues in almost every room: a treasure hunt that leads right back to Mirrorland, where she knows the truth lies crouched and waiting... (320 pgs)

# STAFF PICKS

AUGUST 2021

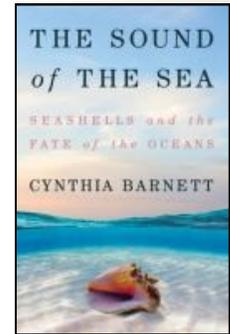


## NON-FICTION

### ***THE SOUND OF THE SEA* BY CYNTHIA BARNETT**

**(PICKED BY SLS)**

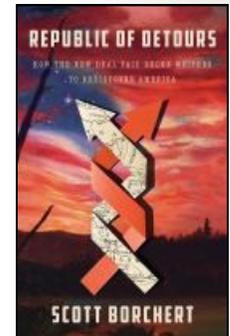
In *The Sound of the Sea*, environmental author Cynthia Barnett blends cultural history and science to trace our long love affair with seashells and the hidden lives of the mollusks that make them. Spiraling out from the great cities of shell that once rose in North America to the warming waters of the Maldives and the slave castles of Ghana, Barnett has created an unforgettable account of the world's most iconic seashells. She begins with their childhood wonder, unwinds surprising histories like the origin of Shell Oil as a family business importing exotic shells, and charts what shells and the soft animals that build them are telling scientists about our warming, acidifying seas. From the eerie calls of early shell trumpets to the evolutionary miracle of spines and spires and the modern science of carbon capture inspired by shell, Barnett circles to her central point of listening to nature's wisdom—and acting on what seashells have to say about taking care of each other and our world. (432 pgs)



### ***REPUBLIC OF DETOURS* BY SCOTT BORCHERT**

**(PICKED BY SLH)**

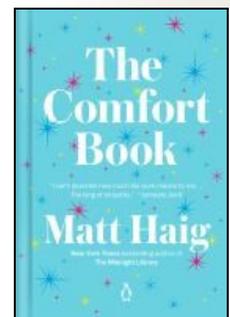
Take thousands of hard-up writers and put them to work charting a country on the brink of social and economic collapse, with the aim of producing a series of guidebooks to the then forty-eight states. This was the singular purview of the Federal Writers' Project, a division of the Works Progress Administration founded in 1935 to employ jobless writers. The FWP took up the lofty goal of rediscovering America in words and soon found itself embroiled in the day's most heated arguments regarding radical politics, racial inclusion, and the purpose of writing—forcing it to reckon with the promises and failures of both the New Deal and the American experiment itself. *Republic of Detours* tells the story of this undertaking by delving into the experiences of key figures and tracing the FWP from its optimistic early days to its dismemberment by the House Committee on Un-American Activities. Ralph Ellison, Studs Terkel, John Cheever, and other future literary stars found encouragement and security on the FWP payroll. (400 pgs)



### ***THE COMFORT BOOK* BY MATT HAIG**

**(PICKED BY MG)**

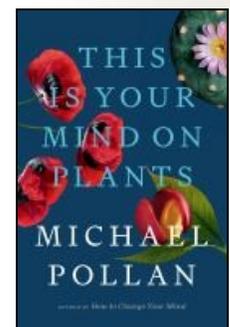
Years ago, Matt Haig began writing notes to his future self. These notes were meant as gifts to his future self: offerings of hope to help himself through anything from the darkest periods of his life to a not-so-great day. As time went on, he added new thoughts and stories, and he turned them into *The Comfort Book* so that everyone could draw on this well of reassurance and encouragement. Each of its short meditations gives a new perspective on life and all of its highs and lows—small islands of hope for anyone looking for a more fulfilling, more uplifting way through life. Incorporating a diverse array of sources from across the world, history, science, and his own experiences, Haig offers warmth and reassurance, reminding us to slow down and appreciate the beauty and unpredictability of existence. (272 pgs)

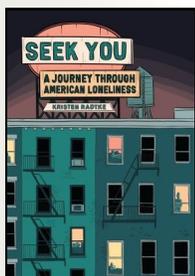


### ***THIS IS YOUR MIND ON PLANTS* BY MICHAEL POLLAN**

**(PICKED BY KT)**

Of all the things humans rely on plants for - sustenance, beauty, medicine, fragrance, flavor - surely the most curious is our use of them to change consciousness: to stimulate or calm, fiddle with or completely alter, the qualities of our mental experience. Take coffee and tea: People around the world rely on caffeine to sharpen their minds. But we do not usually think of caffeine as a drug, or our daily use as an addiction, because it is legal and socially acceptable. So, then, what is a "drug"? And why, for example, is making tea from the leaves of a tea plant acceptable, but making tea from a seed head of an opium poppy a federal crime? Michael Pollan dives deep into three plant drugs - opium, caffeine, and mescaline - and throws the fundamental strangeness, and arbitrariness, of our thinking about them into sharp relief. Pollan examines and experiences these plants from several very different angles and contexts, and shines a fresh light on a subject that is all too often treated reductively - as a drug, whether licit or illicit. (288 pgs)

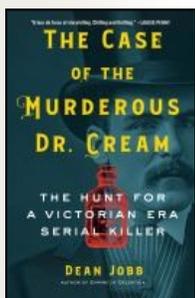




### **SEEK YOU BY KRISTEN RADTKE**

**(PICKED BY TA)**

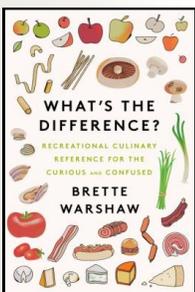
In *Seek You*, Kristen Radtke's wide-ranging exploration of our inner lives and public selves, Radtke digs into the ways in which we attempt to feel closer to one another, and the distance that remains. Through the lenses of gender and violence, technology and art, Radtke ushers us through a history of loneliness and longing, and shares what feels impossible to share. Ranging from the invention of the laugh-track to the rise of Instagram, the bootstrap-pulling cowboy to the brutal experiments of Harry Harlow, Radtke investigates why we engage with each other, and what we risk when we turn away. With her distinctive, emotionally charged drawings and deeply empathetic prose, Kristen Radtke masterfully shines a light on some of our most vulnerable and sublime moments, and asks how we might keep the spaces between us from splitting entirely. (352 pgs)



### **THE CASE OF THE MURDEROUS DR. CREAM BY DEAN JOBB**

**(PICKED BY MG)**

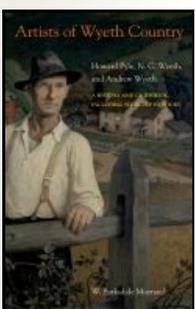
"When a doctor does go wrong he is the first of criminals," Sherlock Holmes observed during one of his most baffling investigations. "He has nerve and he has knowledge." In the span of fifteen years, Dr. Thomas Neill Cream poisoned at least ten people in the United States, Britain, and Canada, a death toll with almost no precedents. Structured around Cream's London murder trial in 1892, when he was finally brought to justice, *The Case of the Murderous Dr. Cream* exposes the blind trust given to medical practitioners, as well as the flawed detection methods, bungled investigations, corrupt officials, and stifling morality of Victorian society that allowed Cream to prey on vulnerable and desperate women, many of whom had turned to him for medical help. Dean Jobb vividly re-creates this largely forgotten historical account against the backdrop of the birth of modern policing and newly adopted forensic methods. (432 pgs)



### **WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE? BY BRETTE WARSHAW**

**(PICKED BY SM)**

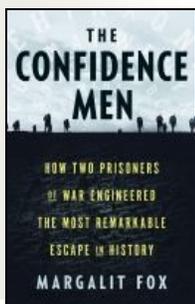
Do you know the difference between sweet potatoes and yams? Bourbon and rye? Crumbles, cobblers, and crisps? Most people don't, even a number of home cooks. This irreverent yet informative reference makes clear the differences between things that are often confused in the kitchen, on the plate, behind the bar, and everywhere in between. *What's the Difference?* covers more than 100 culinary topics, including: All-purpose flour vs. bread flour vs. pastry flour, broccolini vs. broccoli vs. broccoli rabe, caramel vs. butterscotch vs. dulce de leche vs. cajeta. *What's the Difference?* is essential for anyone who wants to feel more confident in the kitchen and at the table. (240 pgs)



### **ARTISTS OF WYETH COUNTRY BY W. BARKSDALE MAYNARD**

**(PICKED BY SLS)**

*Artists of Wyeth Country* presents an unauthorized and unbiased biographical portrait of Wyeth, based on interviews with family, friends, neighbors. Journalist W. Barksdale Maynard shines new light on the reclusive artist, emphasizing Wyeth's artistic debt to Howard Pyle as well as his surprising interest in surrealism. The book is filled with brand-new information and fresh interpretations. *Artists of Wyeth Country* also comprises the first-ever guidebook to the artistic world of Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania, center of the Brandywine Tradition begun by Howard Pyle. Six in-depth tours for walking or driving allow the reader to stand exactly where N. C. and Andrew Wyeth stood, as has never been fully possible before. As Maynard explains, Andrew Wyeth's artistic process was influenced by Henry David Thoreau's nature-worship and by his habit of walking daily. Newly commissioned maps, rare aerial photographs, as well as glorious full-color images and artworks of the landscape (many never reproduced before) illustrate the text. (192 pgs)



### **THE CONFIDENCE MEN BY MARGALIT FOX**

**(PICKED BY SLH)**

Imprisoned in a remote Turkish prison camp during World War I, having survived a two-month forced march and a terrifying shootout in the desert, two British officers, Harry Jones and Cedric Hill, join forces to bamboozle their iron-fisted captors. To stave off despair and boredom, Jones takes a handmade Ouija board and fakes elaborate séances for his fellow prisoners. Word gets around camp, and one day, a Turkish officer approaches Jones with a query: Could Jones contact the spirit world to find a vast treasure rumored to be buried nearby? Jones, a trained lawyer, and Hill, a brilliant magician, use the Ouija board—and their keen understanding of the psychology of deception—to build a trap for the Turkish officers that will ultimately lead them to freedom. *The Confidence Men* is the story of the only known con game played for a good cause—and of a profound but unlikely friendship. (352 pgs)