



## Staff Picks Digital and Print Edition

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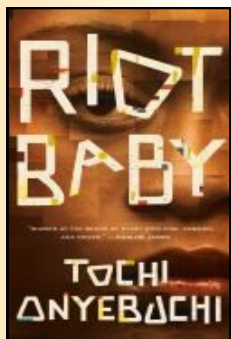
### FICTION



#### **SORROW AND BLISS BY MEG MASON**

(PICKED BY SM)

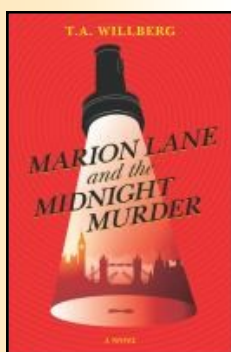
Martha Friel just turned forty. Once, she worked at *Vogue* and now she creates internet content. She used to live in Paris. Now she lives in a gated community in Oxford, the only person she knows without a PhD, a baby or both, in a house she hates but cannot bear to leave. But she must leave, now that her husband Patrick—the kind who cooks, throws her birthday parties, and has only ever wanted her to be happy—has just moved out. Because there's something wrong with Martha, and has been for a long time. When she was seventeen, a little bomb went off in her brain and she was never the same. But countless doctors, therapy, every kind of drug later, she still doesn't know what's wrong, why she spends days unable to get out of bed or alienates both strangers and her loved ones with casually cruel remarks. And she has nowhere to go except her childhood home and try to survive without the devoted, potty-mouthed sister who made all the chaos bearable back then, and is now too fed up to deal with her. But maybe, by starting over, Martha will get to write a better ending for herself—and she'll find out that she's not quite finished after all. (352 pgs)



#### **RIOT BABY BY TOCHI ONYEBUCHI**

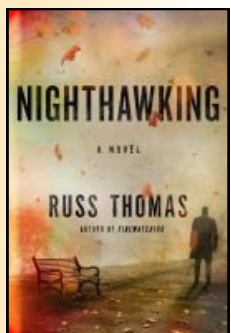
(PICKED BY KT)

Ella has a Thing. She sees a classmate grow up to become a caring nurse. A neighbor's son murdered in a drive-by shooting. Things that haven't happened yet. Kev, born while Los Angeles burned around them, wants to protect his sister from a power that could destroy her. But when Kev is incarcerated, Ella must decide what it means to watch her brother suffer while holding the ability to wreck cities in her hands. Rooted in the hope that can live in anger, *Riot Baby* is as much an intimate family story as a global dystopian narrative. It burns fearlessly toward revolution and has quietly devastating things to say about love, fury, and the black American experience. Ella and Kev are both shockingly human and immeasurably powerful. Their childhoods are defined and destroyed by racism. Their futures might alter the world. (176 pgs)



#### **MARION LANE AND THE MIDNIGHT MURDER BY T.A. WILLBERG (PICKED BY SLS)**

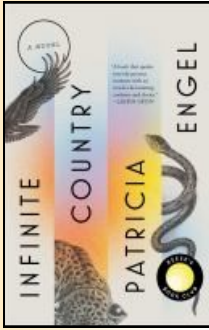
*Marion Lane and the Midnight Murder* plunges readers into the heart of London, to the secret tunnels that exist far beneath the city streets. There, a group of detectives recruited for Miss Brickett's Investigations & Inquiries use their cunning and gadgets to solve crimes that have stumped Scotland Yard. Late one night in April 1958, a filing assistant for Miss Brickett's receives a letter warning her that a heinous act is about to occur. She goes to investigate but finds the room empty. At the stroke of midnight, she is murdered by a killer she can't see—her death the only sign she wasn't alone. It becomes chillingly clear that the person responsible must also work for Miss Brickett's, making everyone a suspect. Marion Lane, a first-year Inquirer-in-training, finds herself being drawn ever deeper into the investigation. When her friend and mentor is framed for the crime, to clear his name she must sort through the hidden alliances at Miss Brickett's and secrets dating back to WWII. (336 pgs)



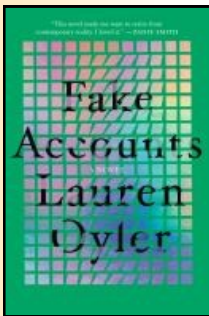
#### **NIGHTHAWKING BY RUSS THOMAS**

(PICKED BY BS)

Under the dark cover of night, a figure climbs over the wall of the Botanical Garden with a bag and a metal detector. It's a dicey location in the city center and while most of what they find will be worthless, it takes only one big reward to justify the risk. Only this time, the nighthawker unearths a body. . . Detective Sergeant Adam Tyler and his newly promoted protege, Detective Constable Amina Rabbani, are both shunted onto the murder investigation—and when the victim is identified as a Chinese national from a wealthy family, in the UK on a student visa, the case takes on new urgency to prevent an international incident. As Tyler and Rabbani dig further into the victim's life, it's becomes clear there's more to her studies and relationships than meets the eye, and that the original investigation into her disappearance was shoddy at best. Meanwhile, someone else is watching these events . . . someone who knew the victim, and might hold the key to what happened the night she vanished. (383 pgs)

**INFINITE COUNTRY BY PATRICIA ENGEL****(PICKED BY MG)**

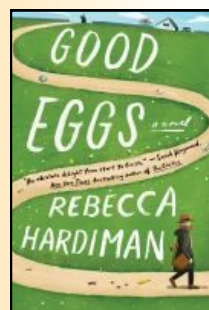
At the dawn of the new millennium, Colombia is a country devastated by half a century of violence. Elena and Mauro are teenagers when they meet, their blooming love an antidote to the mounting brutality of life in Bogotá. Once their first daughter is born, and facing grim economic prospects, they set their sights on the United States. They travel to Houston and send wages back to Elena's mother, all the while weighing whether to risk overstaying their tourist visas or to return to Bogotá. As their family expands, and they move again and again, their decision to ignore their exit dates plunges the young family into the precariousness of undocumented status, the threat of discovery menacing a life already strained. When Mauro is deported, Elena, now tasked with caring for their three small children, makes a difficult choice that will ease her burdens but splinter the family even further. (208 pgs)

**FAKE ACCOUNTS BY LAUREN OYLER****(PICKED BY TA)**

On the eve of Donald Trump's inauguration, a young woman snoops through her boyfriend's phone and makes a startling discovery: he's an anonymous internet conspiracy theorist, and a popular one at that. Already fluent in internet fakery, irony, and outrage, she's not exactly shocked by the revelation. Actually, she's relieved and she plots to end their floundering relationship while on a trip to the Women's March in DC. Suddenly left with no reason to stay in New York and increasingly alienated from her friends and colleagues, our unnamed narrator flees to Berlin, embarking on her own cycles of manipulation in the deceptive spaces of her daily life, from dating apps to expat meetups, open-plan offices to bureaucratic waiting rooms. She begins to think she can't trust anyone—shouldn't the feeling be mutual? (272 pgs)

**BENITA RENEE JENKINS: DIVA SECRET AGENT BY LORISA BATES** **(PICKED BY SP)**

Growing up in "Do or Die Bed Stuy" Brooklyn, Benita Renee Jenkins has everything going for her—a great job, loving family, loads of friends, and the hope of one day becoming a crime scene investigator. However, things change when she unknowingly crosses paths with Miguel Perkins, a hot secret agent working for a clandestine agency created to throw the book at the most untouchable of bad guys. He is hell-bent on recruiting Benita to infiltrate the life of an ex-gangbanger who has built his music empire on corruption. When Benita is set up for a crime she didn't commit, Perkins gives her a choice: go to jail or come work for him. She knows she must give up her old life to keep the ones she loves safe. With combat training and a full-fledged makeover, this former hairstylist turned secret agent plans to take down the bad guys one thug at a time. (320 pgs)

**GOOD EGGS BY REBECCA HARDIMAN****(PICKED BY BS)**

When Kevin Gogarty's irrepressible eighty-three-year-old mother, Millie, is caught shoplifting yet again, he has no choice but to hire a caretaker to keep an eye on her. Kevin, recently unemployed, is already at his wits' end tending to a full house while his wife travels to exotic locales for work, leaving him solo with his sulky, misbehaved teenaged daughter, Aideen, whose troubles escalate when she befriends the campus rebel at her new boarding school. Into the Gogarty fray steps Sylvia, Millie's upbeat American home aide, who appears at first to be their saving grace—until she catapults the Gogarty clan into their greatest crisis yet. (336 pgs)

**THE KITCHEN FRONT BY JENNIFER RYAN****(PICKED BY SLH)**

Two years into WW2, Britain is feeling her losses; the Blitz has destroyed cities, and U-boats have cut off the supply of food. In an effort to help housewives with food rationing, a BBC radio program called The Kitchen Front is putting on a cooking contest—and the grand prize is a job as the program's first-ever female co-host. For four very different women, winning the contest presents a crucial chance to change their lives. For a young widow, it's a chance to pay off her husband's debts and keep a roof over her children's heads. For a kitchen maid, it's a chance to leave servitude and find freedom. For the lady of the manor, it's a chance to escape her wealthy husband's increasingly hostile behavior. And for a trained chef, it's a chance to challenge the men at the top of her profession. These four women are giving the competition their all—even if that sometimes means bending the rules. But with so much at stake, will the contest that aims to bring the community together serve only to break it apart? (416pgs)



# STAFF PICKS

APRIL 2021

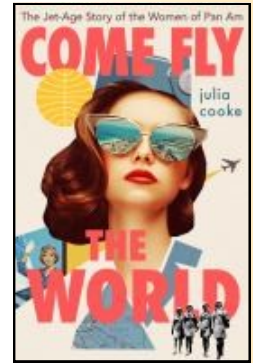


## NON-FICTION

### **COME FLY THE WORLD BY JULIA COOKE**

**(PICKED BY SLH & BS)**

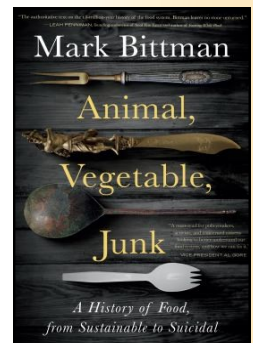
Required to have a college degree, speak two languages, and possess the political savvy of a Foreign Service officer, a jet-age stewardess serving on iconic Pan Am between 1966 and 1975 also had to be between 5'3" and 5'9", between 105 and 140 pounds, and under 26 years of age at the time of hire. Julia Cooke's intimate storytelling weaves together the real-life stories of a memorable cast of characters, from Lynne Totten, a science major who decided life in a lab was not for her, to Hazel Bowie, one of the relatively few black stewardesses of the era, as they embraced the liberation of their new jet-set life. Cooke brings to life the story of Pan Am stewardesses' role in the Vietnam War, as the airline added runs from Saigon to Hong Kong for planeloads of weary young soldiers straight from the battlefields, who were off for five days of R&R, and then flown back to war. Finally, with Operation Babylift—the dramatic evacuation of 2,000 children during the fall of Saigon—the book's special cast of stewardesses unites to play an extraordinary role on the world stage. (288 pgs)



### **ANIMAL, VEGETABLE, JUNK BY MARK BITTMAN**

**(PICKED BY SLH & SLS)**

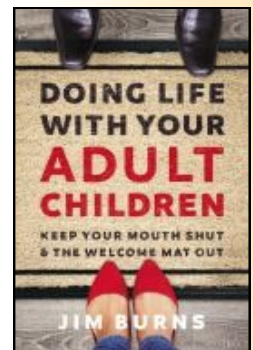
The story of humankind is usually told as one of technological innovation and economic influence—of arrowheads and atomic bombs, settlers and stock markets. But behind it all, there is an even more fundamental driver: Food. In *Animal, Vegetable, Junk*, trusted food authority Mark Bittman offers a panoramic view of how the frenzy for food has driven human history to some of its most catastrophic moments, from slavery and colonialism to famine and genocide—and to our current moment, wherein Big Food exacerbates climate change, plunders our planet, and sickens its people. Even still, Bittman refuses to concede that the battle is lost, pointing to activists, workers, and governments around the world who are choosing well-being over corporate greed and gluttony, and fighting to free society from Big Food's grip. (384 pgs)



### **DOING LIFE WITH YOUR ADULT CHILDREN BY JIM BURNS**

**(PICKED BY BS)**

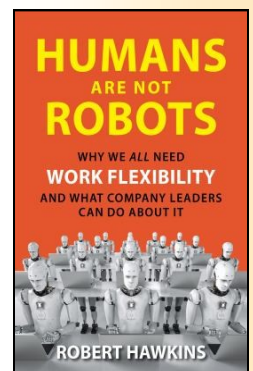
If you have an adult child, you know that parenting doesn't stop when a child reaches the age of eighteen. In many ways, it gets more complicated. Both your heart and your head are as involved as ever, whether your child lives under your roof or rarely stays in contact. Parenting expert Jim Burns helps you navigate one of the richest and most challenging seasons of parenting. Speaking from his own personal and professional experience, Burns offers practical answers to questions such as these: Is it OK to give advice to my grown child? What's the difference between enabling and helping? What boundaries should I have if my child moves back home? How do I relate to my grown child's significant other? How can I support my grown children when I don't support their values? *Doing Life with Your Adult Children* is a unique book on your changing role in a calling that never ends. (192 pgs)



### **HUMANS ARE NOT ROBOTS BY ROBERT HAWKINS**

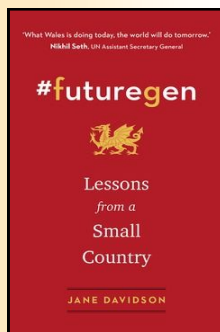
**(PICKED BY SM)**

In-office, nine-to-five jobs may be regarded as the standard, but Robert Hawkins's *Humans Are Not Robots* argues that the traditional workday causes serious damage to employees while also preventing them from working as productively and efficiently as they otherwise could. Hawkins makes a convincing case that a more flexible approach to work would benefit everyone, if companies are open to it. Covering various approaches to workplace flexibility, including condensing the same hours into fewer days, the book weighs the pros and cons of each. Its diagnosis is that these approaches still force employees to work longer than they need to; create deficits in other parts of employees' lives, including health and family time; and build inefficiencies into the system. He argues for a new approach in which workers have the flexibility to design their workdays in the ways that work best for them, provided they get their work done. It predicts that employees will finish the same tasks in shorter amounts of time if they don't need to fill forty hours, and that options like working from home or at different hours of the day allow workers to be their most productive. Hawkins also explores some of the side benefits of a new approach to work, including reduced traffic and pollution. (318 pgs)

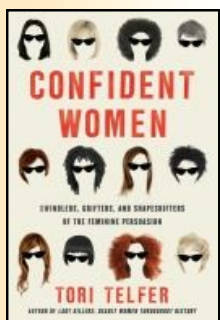


**FAIREST BY MEREDITH TALUSAN****(PICKED BY KT)**

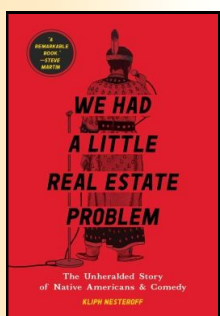
*Fairest* is a memoir about a precocious boy with albinism, a "sun child" from a rural Philippine village, who would grow up to become a woman in America. Coping with the strain of parental neglect and the elusive promise of U.S. citizenship, Talusan found childhood comfort from her devoted grandmother. As an immigrant to the United States, Talusan came to be perceived as white. An academic scholarship to Harvard provided access to elite circles of privilege but required Talusan to navigate through the complex spheres of race, class, sexuality, and her place within the gay community. She emerged as an artist and an activist questioning the boundaries of gender. Talusan realized she did not want to be confined to a prescribed role as a man, and transitioned to become a woman, despite the risk of losing a man she deeply loved. Her evocative reflections will shift our own perceptions of love, identity, gender, and the fairness of life. (310pgs)

**#FUTUREGEN BY JANE DAVIDSON****(PICKED BY SM & SMC)**

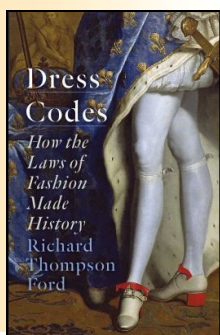
In *#futuregen*, Jane Davidson explains how, as Minister for Environment, Sustainability and Housing in Wales, she proposed the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015—the first piece of legislation on earth to place regenerative and sustainable practice at the heart of government. The Act connects environmental and social health and looks to solve complex issues such as poverty, education and unemployment. Davidson reveals how and why such groundbreaking legislation was forged in Wales—once reliant on its coal, iron and steel industries—and explores how the shift from economic growth to sustainable growth is creating new opportunities for communities and governments all over the world. It's a living, breathing prototype for local and global leaders as proof of what is possible in the fight for a sustainable future. (144 pgs)

**CONFIDENT WOMEN BY TORI TELFER****(PICKED BY MG)**

The art of the con has a long and venerable tradition, and its female practitioners are some of the best—or worst. In the 1700s in Paris, Jeanne de Saint-Rémy scammed the royal jewelers out of a necklace made from 647 diamonds by pretending she was best friends with Queen Marie Antoinette. Cassie Chadwick was forging paperwork and getting banks to loan her upwards of \$40,000 by telling people she was Andrew Carnegie's illegitimate daughter. Since the death of the Romanovs, women claiming to be Anastasia have been selling their stories to magazines. What about today? These "artists" are still conning. *Confident Women* asks the provocative question: Where does chutzpah intersect with a uniquely female pathology—and how were these notorious women able to so spectacularly dupe and swindle their victims? (352 pgs)

**WE HAD A LITTLE REAL ESTATE PROBLEM BY KLIPH NESTEROFF (PICKED BY SMC)**

In *We Had a Little Real Estate Problem*, acclaimed comedy historian Kliph Nesteroff focuses on one of comedy's most significant and little-known stories: how, despite having been denied representation in the entertainment industry, Native Americans have influenced and advanced the art form. The account begins in the late 1880s, when Native Americans were forced to tour in wild west shows as an alternative to prison. This is followed by a detailed look at the life and work of seminal figures such as Cherokee humorist Will Rogers. Also profiled are several contemporary comedians, including Ryan Red Corn, the Osage member of the 1491s, who says: "The American narrative dictates that Indians are supposed to be sad. It's not really true and it's not indicative of the community experience itself...laughter and joy is very much a part of Native culture." (336 pgs)

**DRESS CODES BY RICHARD FORD****(PICKED BY SLH)**

Dress codes are as old as clothing itself. For centuries, clothing has been a wearable status symbol; fashion, a weapon in struggles for social change; and dress codes, a way to maintain political control. Dress codes evolved along with the social and political ideals of the day, but they always reflected struggles for power and status. Even in today's more informal world, dress codes still determine what we wear, when we wear it—and what our clothing means. Even when there are no written rules, implicit dress codes still influence opportunities and social mobility. In *Dress Codes*, law professor and cultural critic Richard Thompson Ford presents an insightful and entertaining history of the laws of fashion from the middle ages to the present day, a walk down history's red carpet to uncover and examine the canons, mores, and customs of clothing—rules that we often take for granted. (464 pgs)