

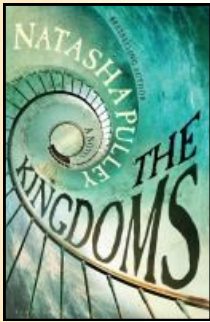


## Staff Picks Digital and Print Edition

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### FICTION



#### **THE KINGDOMS BY NATASHA PULLEY**

**(PICKED BY MG)**

Joe Tournier has a bad case of amnesia. His first memory is of stepping off a train in the nineteenth-century French colony of England. The only clue Joe has about his identity is a century-old postcard of a Scottish lighthouse that arrives in London the same month he does. Written in illegal English—instead of French—the postcard is signed only with the letter “M,” but Joe is certain whoever wrote it knows him far better than he currently knows himself, and he's determined to find the writer. The search for M, though, will drive Joe from French-ruled London to rebel-owned Scotland and finally onto the battle ships of a lost empire's Royal Navy. In the process, Joe will remake history, and himself. (448 pgs)



#### **BURNT SUGAR BY AVNI DOSHI**

**(PICKED BY SLS)**

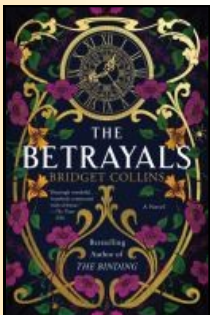
In her youth, Tara was wild. She abandoned her loveless marriage to join an ashram, endured a brief stint as a beggar (mostly to spite her affluent parents), and spent years chasing after a dishevelled, homeless 'artist' - all with her young child in tow. Now she is forgetting things, mixing up her maid's wages and leaving the gas on all night, and her grown-up daughter is faced with the task of caring for a woman who never cared for her. This is a love story and a story about betrayal. But not between lovers - between mother and daughter. Sharp as a blade and laced with caustic wit, *Burnt Sugar* unpicks the slippery, choking cord of memory and myth that binds two women together, making and unmaking them endlessly. (240 pgs)



#### **THE SUMMER SEEKERS BY SARAH MORGAN**

**(PICKED BY SM)**

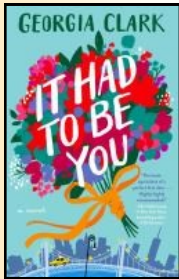
Kathleen is eighty years old. After she has a run-in with an intruder, her daughter wants her to move in to a residential home. But she's not having any of it. What she craves—what she needs—is adventure. Liza is drowning under the daily stress of family life. The last thing she needs is her mother jetting off on a wild holiday, making Liza long for a solo summer of her own. Martha is having a quarter-life crisis. Unemployed, unloved and uninspired, she just can't get her life together. But she knows something has to change. When Martha sees Kathleen's advertisement for a driver and companion to share an epic road trip across America with, she decides this job might be the answer to her prayers. She's not the world's best driver, but anything has to be better than living with her parents. And traveling with a stranger? No problem. Anyway, how much trouble can one eighty-year-old woman be? As these women embark on the journey of a lifetime, they all discover it's never too late to start over (432 pgs)



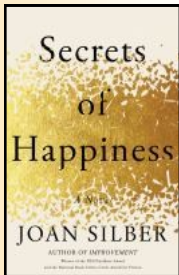
#### **THE BETRAYALS BY BRIDGET COLLINS**

**(PICKED BY MG)**

At Montverre, an ancient and elite academy hidden high in the mountains, society's best and brightest are trained for excellence in the *grand jeu*—the great game—an arcane and mysterious competition that combines music, art, math, poetry, and philosophy. Léo Martin once excelled at Montverre but lost his passion for scholarly pursuits after a violent tragedy. He turned to politics instead and became a rising star in the ruling party, until a small act of conscience cost him his career. Now he has been exiled back to Montverre, his fate uncertain. But this rarified world of learning Léo once loved is not the same place he remembers. Once the exclusive bastion of men, Montverre's most prestigious post is now held by a woman: Claire Dryden, also known as the Magister Ludi, the head of the great game. At first, Léo feels an odd attraction to the magister—a mysterious, eerily familiar connection—though he's sure they've never met before. As the legendary Midsummer Game approaches—the climax of the academy's year—long-buried secrets rise to the surface and centuries-old traditions are shockingly overturned. (416 pgs)

**IT HAD TO BE YOU BY GEORGIA CLARK****(PICKED BY SM)**

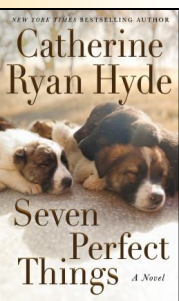
For the past twenty years, Liv and Eliot Goldenhorn have run In Love in New York, Brooklyn's beloved wedding-planning business. When Eliot dies unexpectedly, he even more unexpectedly leaves half of the business to his younger, blonder girlfriend, Savannah. Liv and Savannah are not a match made in heaven, to say the least. But what starts as a personal and professional nightmare transforms into something even savvy, cynical Liv Goldenhorn couldn't begin to imagine. *It Had to Be You* cleverly unites Liv, Savannah, and couples as diverse and unique as New York City itself, in a joyous *Love-Actually*-style braided narrative. (384 pgs)

**SECRETS OF HAPPINESS BY JOAN SILBER****(PICKED SLS)**

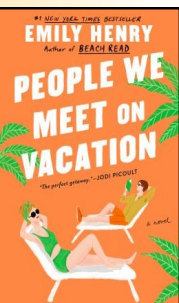
Ethan, a young lawyer in New York, learns that his father has long kept a second family—a Thai wife and two kids living in Queens. In the aftermath of this revelation, Ethan's mother spends a year working abroad, returning much changed, and events introduce her to the other wife. Across town, Ethan's half brothers are caught in their own complicated journeys: one brother's penchant for minor delinquency has escalated, and the other must travel to Bangkok to bail him out, while the bargains their mother has struck about love and money continue to shape their lives. As Ethan finds himself caught in a love triangle of his own, the interwoven fates of these two households elegantly unfurl to encompass a woman rallying to help an ill brother with an unreliable lover and a filmmaker with a girlhood spent in Nepal. (288 pgs)

**HER THREE LIVES BY CATE HOLAHAN****(PICKED BY SP)**

Jade Thompson has it all. She's an up-and-coming social media influencer, has a beautiful new home and a successful architect for a fiancé. But there's trouble behind the scenes. To Greg's children, his divorce from their mother and his new life can only mean a big mid-life crisis. To Jade, his suburban Connecticut upbringing isn't an easy match with her Caribbean roots. A savage home invasion leaves Greg house-bound with a traumatic brain injury and glued to the live feeds from his ubiquitous security cameras. As the police investigate the crime and Greg's frustration and rage grows, Jade begins to wonder what he may know about their attackers. And whether they are coming back. As Greg watches Jade's comings and goings, he becomes convinced that her behavior is suspicious and that she's hiding a big secret. The more he sees, the more he wonders whether the break-in was really a random burglary. And whether he's worth more to Jade if he were dead than alive. (339 pgs)

**SEVEN PERFECT THINGS BY CATHERINE RYAN HYDE****(PICKED BY SM)**

Thirteen-year-old Abby Hubble lives in an unhappy home in the Sierra Nevada foothills where her father makes life miserable for her and her mother. One day Abby witnesses a man dump a litter of puppies into the nearby river. Diving in to rescue all seven, she knows she won't be able to bring them home. Afraid for their fate at the pound, she takes them to an abandoned cabin, where all she can offer is a promise that she'll be back the next day. To grieving widower Elliot Colvin, life has lost meaning. Looking for solace, he retreats to the hunting cabin he last visited years ago, before his wife's illness. What he discovers is seven puppies and one determined girl with an indomitable heart. As Abby and Elliot's friendship deepens, Abby imagines how much better her life—and the puppies' lives—would be if her mother were married to Elliot instead of her father. But when Abby's father moves the family hundreds of miles away, Abby and her mother must decide how long they're willing to defer happiness. (320 pgs)

**PEOPLE WE MEET ON VACATION BY EMILY HENRY****(PICKED BY KT)**

Poppy and Alex have nothing in common. She's a wild child; he wears khakis. She has insatiable wanderlust; he prefers to stay home with a book. Yet somehow, ever since a fateful car share home from college many years ago, they are the very best of friends. For most of the year they live far apart—she's in New York City, and he's in their small hometown—but every summer, for a decade, they have taken one glorious week of vacation together. Until two years ago, when they ruined everything. They haven't spoken since. Poppy has everything she should want, but she's stuck in a rut. When someone asks when she was last truly happy, she knows it was on that ill-fated, final trip with Alex. She decides to convince her best friend to take one more vacation together—lay everything on the table, make it all right. Miraculously, he agrees. Now she has a week to fix everything. If only she can get around the one big truth that has always stood quietly in the middle of their seemingly perfect relationship. What could possibly go wrong? (384 pgs)

# STAFF PICKS

JULY 2021



## NON-FICTION

### **WHY PEACOCKS? BY SEAN FLYNN**

**(PICKED BY SLH)**

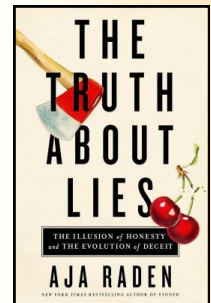
In *Why Peacocks?*, Flynn chronicles his hilarious and heartwarming first year as a peacock owner, from struggling to build a pen to assisting the local bird doctor in surgery to triumphantly watching a peahen lay her first egg. He also examines the history of peacocks, from their appearance in the Garden of Eden to their befuddling Charles Darwin to their bewitching the likes of Flannery O'Connor and Martha Stewart. And fueled by a reporter's curiosity, he travels across the globe to learn more about the birds firsthand, with stops including a Scottish castle where peacocks have resided for centuries, a southern California community tormented by a serial killer of peacocks, and a Kansas City airport hotel hosting an annual gathering of true peafowl aficionados. (272 pgs)



### **THE TRUTH ABOUT LIES BY AJA RADEN**

**(PICKED BY MG)**

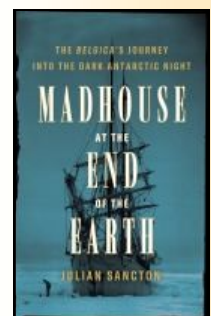
You've been lied to. Probably a lot. We're always stunned when we realize we've been deceived. What was I thinking? How could I have believed that? We always wonder why we believed the lie. But have you ever wondered why you believe the truth? People tell you the truth all the time, and you believe them; and if, at some later point, you're confronted with evidence that the story you believed was indeed true, you never wonder why you believed it in the first place. In this incisive and insightful taxonomy of lies and liars, New York Times bestselling author Aja Raden makes the surprising claim that maybe you should. Buttressed by history, psychology, and science, *The Truth About Lies* is both an eye-opening primer on con-artistry—from pyramid schemes to shell games, forgery to hoaxes—and also a telescopic view of society through the mechanics of belief: why we lie, why we believe, and how, if at all, the acts differ. (320 pgs)



### **MADHOUSE AT THE END OF THE EARTH BY JULIAN SANCTON**

**(PICKED BY MG)**

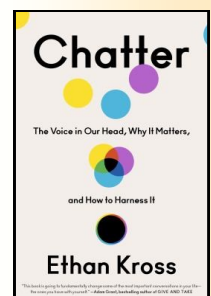
In August 1897, thirty-one-year-old commandant Adrien de Gerlache set sail aboard the Belgica. His destination was the icy continent of Antarctica. But the commandant's plans for a three-year expedition to reach the magnetic South Pole would be thwarted at each turn. Before the ship cleared South America, it had already broken down, run aground, and lost several key crew members, leaving behind a group with dubious experience for such an ambitious voyage. As the ship progressed into the freezing waters, the Belgica soon found itself stuck fast in the icy hold of the Antarctic continent. The ship would winter on the ice. Plagued by a mysterious, debilitating illness and besieged by the monotony of their days, the crew deteriorated as their confinement in suffocating close quarters wore on and their hope of escape dwindled daily. Drawing on firsthand accounts of the Belgica's voyage and exclusive access to the ship's logbook, Sancton tells the tale of its long, isolated imprisonment on the ice—a story that NASA studies today in its research on isolation for missions to Mars. (384 pgs)



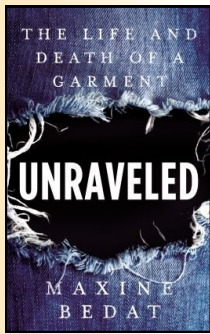
### **CHATTER BY ETHAN KROSS**

**(PICKED BY SLS)**

Tell a stranger that you talk to yourself, and you're likely to get written off as eccentric. When we talk to ourselves, we often hope to tap into our inner coach but find our inner critic instead. In *Chatter*, Ethan Kross explores the silent conversations we have with ourselves. Interweaving groundbreaking behavioral and brain research from his own lab with real-world case studies, Kross explains how these conversations shape our lives, work, and relationships. He warns that giving in to negative and disorienting self-talk—what he calls "chatter"—can tank our health, sink our moods, strain our social connections, and cause us to fold under pressure. But the good news is that we're already equipped with the tools we need to make our inner voice work in our favor. These tools are often hidden in plain sight—in the words we use to think about ourselves, the technologies we embrace, the diaries we keep in our drawers, the conversations we have with our loved ones, and the cultures we create in our schools and workplaces. *Chatter* gives us the power to change the most important conversation we have each day: the one we have with ourselves. (272 pgs)



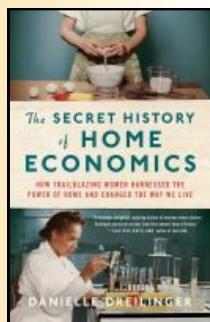




**UNRAVELED BY MAXINE BEDAT**

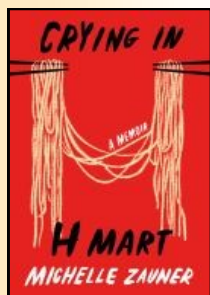
**(PICKED BY SM)**

In *Unraveled*, Maxine Bedat follows the life of a pair of jeans to reveal what really happens to give us our clothes. We visit a Texas cotton farm figuring out how to thrive without relying on fertilizers that poison the earth. Inside dyeing and weaving factories in China, where chemicals that are banned in the West drain into waterways used to irrigate local family farms. Sewing floors in Bangladesh are crammed with women working for illegally low wages to produce garments as efficiently as machines. Back in America, our jeans get shipped out by Amazon warehouse workers pressed to be as quick as the robots primed to replace them. Finally, those jeans we had to have get sent to landfills—or, if they've been donated, shipped back around the world to Africa, where they're sold for pennies in secondhand markets or buried and burned in mountains of garbage. *Unraveled* is not just the story of a pair of pants, but also the story of our global economy and our role in it. *Unraveled* challenges us to use our relationship with all that we wear—to reclaim our central role as citizens to refashion a society in which all people can thrive and preserve the planet for generations to come. (336 pgs)



**THE SECRET HISTORY OF HOME ECONOMICS BY DANIELLE DREILINGER (PICKED BY SLH)**

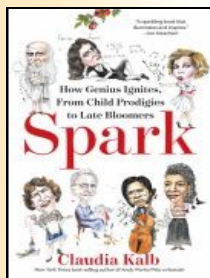
In *The Secret History of Home Economics*, Danielle Dreilinger traces the field's history from Black colleges to Eleanor Roosevelt to Okinawa, from a Betty Crocker brigade to DIY techies. These women—and they were mostly women—became chemists and marketers, studied nutrition, health, and exercise, tested parachutes, created astronaut food, and took bold steps in childhood development and education. Dreilinger brings forward the racism within the movement along with the strides taken by women of color who were influential leaders and innovators. She also looks at the personal lives of home economics' women, as they chose to be single, share lives with other women, or try for egalitarian marriages. This engaging history restores a denigrated subject to its rightful importance, as it reminds us that everyone should learn how to cook a meal, balance their account, and fight for a better world. (368 pgs)



**CRYING IN H MART BY MICHELLE ZAUNER**

**(PICKED BY SLS)**

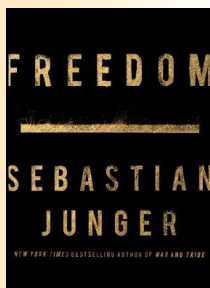
Michelle Zauner proves herself far more than just a singer, songwriter, and guitarist. She tells of growing up the only Asian American kid at her school in Eugene, Oregon; of struggling with her mother's particular high expectations of her, of treasured months spent in her grandmother's tiny apartment in Seoul, where she and her mother would bond, late at night, over heaping plates of food. As she grew up, moving to the East Coast for college, finding work in the restaurant industry, and performing gigs with her fledgling band—and meeting the man who would become her husband—her Koreanness began to feel ever more distant, even as she found the life she wanted to live. It was her mother's diagnosis of terminal pancreatic cancer, when Michelle was twenty-five, that forced a reckoning with her identity and brought her to reclaim the gifts of taste, language, and history her mother had given her. (256 pgs)



**SPARK BY CLAUDIA KALB**

**(PICKED BY SLH)**

What propels some individuals to reach extraordinary creative heights in the earliest years of life while others discover their passions decades later? Are prodigies imbued with innate talent? How often are midlife inspirations triggered by propitious events? Do late bloomers reveal their talents because their skills require life experience and contemplation? Claudia Kalb explores these questions to uncover what makes a prodigy and what drives a late bloomer. In this series of linked biographies, Kalb follows the journeys of thirteen remarkable individuals to discover the secrets behind their talents. (368 pgs)



**FREEDOM BY SEBASTIAN JUNGER**

**(PICKED BY SM)**

Throughout history, humans have been driven by the quest for two cherished ideals: community and freedom. Sebastian Junger examines the tension that lies at the heart of what it means to be human. For much of a year, Junger and three friends—a conflict photographer and two Afghan War vets—walked the railroad lines of the East Coast. It was an experiment in personal autonomy, but also in interdependence. Dodging railroad cops, sleeping under bridges, cooking over fires, and drinking from creeks and rivers, the four men forged a unique reliance on one another. Junger weaves his account of this journey together with primatology and boxing strategy, the history of labor strikes and Apache raiders, the role of women in resistance movements, and the brutal reality of life on the Pennsylvania frontier. (160 pgs)