



**Staff Picks Digital and Print Edition**

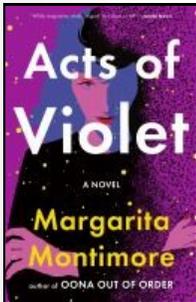
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**FICTION**

**ACTS OF VIOLET BY MARGARITA MONTIMORE**

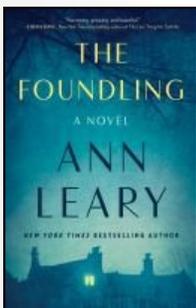
**(PICKED BY BS)**



Nearly a decade ago, iconic magician Violet Volk performed her greatest trick yet: vanishing mid-act. Though she hasn't been seen since, her hold on the public hasn't wavered. While Violet sought out the spotlight, her sister Sasha, ever the responsible one, built a quiet life for her daughter, Quinn. But Sasha can never seem to escape her memories of their unresolved, tumultuous relationship. Then there's Cameron Frank, determined to finally get his big break hosting a podcast devoted to all things Violet—though keeping his job hinges on an exclusive interview with Sasha, the last person who wants to talk to him. As the ten-year anniversary approaches, Cameron's pursuit of Sasha becomes increasingly intrusive. Quinn, loyal to the aunt she always idolized, is doing her own investigating. Meanwhile, Sasha begins to experience an unsettling series of sleepwalking episodes and coincidences, which all lead back to Violet. Pushed to her emotional limits, Sasha must finally confront the most painful truths about her sister, and herself, even at the risk of losing everything. (336 pgs)

**THE FOUNDLING BY ANN LEARY**

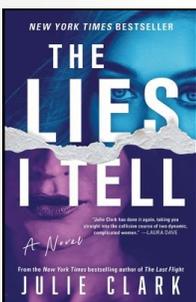
**(PICKED BY SM)**



It's 1927 and 18 year-old Mary Engle is hired to work as a secretary at a remote but scenic institution for mentally disabled women called the Nettleton State Village for Feebleminded Women of Childbearing Age. She's immediately in awe of her employer—brilliant Dr. Agnes Vogel - had been the only woman in her class in medical school. As a young psychiatrist she was an outspoken crusader for women's suffrage. Now, at age forty, Dr. Vogel runs one of the largest and most self-sufficient public asylums for women in the country. Soon after she's hired, Mary learns that a girl from her childhood orphanage is one of the inmates. Mary remembers Lillian as a beautiful free spirit with a sometimes-tempestuous side. Could she be mentally disabled? When Lillian begs Mary to help her escape, alleging the asylum is not what it seems, Mary is faced with a terrible choice. Should she trust her troubled friend with whom she shares a dark childhood secret? Mary's decision triggers a hair-raising sequence of events with life-altering consequences for all. (336 pgs)

**THE LIES I TELL BY JULIE CLARK**

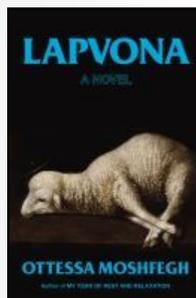
**(PICKED BY SLS/SM)**



Meg Williams. Maggie Littleton. Melody Wilde. Different names for the same person, depending on the town, depending on the job. She's a con artist who erases herself to become whoever you need her to be—a college student. A life coach. A real estate agent. Nothing about her is real. She slides alongside you and tells you exactly what you need to hear, and by the time she's done, you've likely lost everything. Kat Roberts has been waiting ten years for the woman who upended her life to return. And now that she has, Kat is determined to be the one to expose her. But as the two women grow closer, Kat's long-held assumptions begin to crumble, leaving Kat to wonder who Meg's true target is. (302 pgs)

**LAPVONA BY OTTESSA MOSHFEGH**

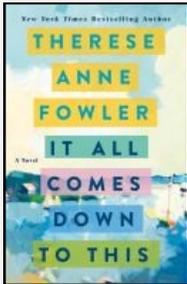
**(PICKED BY TA)**



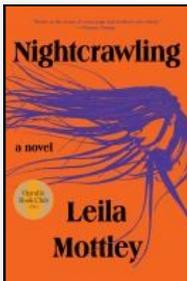
Little Marek, the abused and delusional son of the village shepherd, never knew his mother; his father told him she died in childbirth. One of life's few consolations for Marek is his enduring bond with the blind village midwife, Ina, who suckled him when he was a baby. Ina's gifts extend beyond childcare: she possesses a unique ability to communicate with the natural world. For some people, Ina's home in the woods outside the village is a godless place. Among their number is Father Barnabas, the town priest and lackey for the depraved lord and governor, Villiam, whose hilltop manor contains a secret embarrassment of riches. The people's desperate need to believe that there are powers that be who have their best interests at heart is put to a cruel test by Villiam and the priest, especially in this year of record drought and famine. But when fate brings Marek into violent proximity to the lord's family, new and occult forces upset the old order. The veil between blindness and sight, life and death, the natural world and the spirit world will prove to be very thin. (320 pgs)


**MY SWEET GIRL BY AMANDA JAYATISSA**
**(PICKED BY SP)**

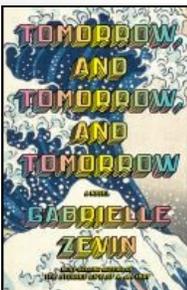
Ever since she was adopted from a Sri Lankan orphanage, Paloma has had the best of everything—schools, money, and parents so perfect that she fears she'll never live up to them. Now at thirty years old and recently cut off from her parents' funds, she decides to sublet the second bedroom of her overpriced San Francisco apartment to Arun, who recently moved from India. Paloma has to admit, it feels good helping someone find their way in America—that is until Arun discovers Paloma's darkest secret, one that could jeopardize her own fragile place in this country. Before Paloma can pay Arun off, she finds him face down in a pool of blood. She flees the apartment but by the time the police arrive, there's no body—and no evidence that Arun ever even existed in the first place. Paloma is terrified this is all somehow tangled up in the desperate actions she took to escape Sri Lanka so many years ago. Did Paloma's secret die with Arun or is she now in greater danger than ever before? (384 pgs)


**IT ALL COMES DOWN TO THIS BY THERESE ANNE FOWLER**
**(PICKED BY KT/SM)**

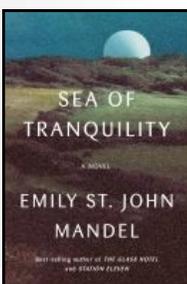
Meet the Geller sisters: Beck, Claire, and Sophie, a trio of strong-minded women whose mother, Marti, will be dying soon. Marti has ensured that her modest estate is easy for her family once she's gone—including a provision that the family's summer cottage on Mount Desert Island, Maine, must be sold, the proceeds split equally between the three girls. Beck, the eldest, is a freelance journalist whose marriage looks more like a sibling bond than a passionate partnership. Despite her accomplishments as a pediatric cardiologist, Claire, the middle daughter, has always felt like the Geller misfit. Youngest daughter Sophie appears to live an Instagram-ready life. When C.J. Reynolds, an enigmatic southerner with his own hidden past enters the picture, the future of the Maine cottage—and of the sisters themselves—will take on an entirely new dimension. (352 pgs)


**NIGHTCRAWLING BY LEILA MOTTLEY**
**(PICKED BY SLS)**

Kiara and her brother, Marcus, are scraping by in an East Oakland apartment complex optimistically called the Regal-Hi. Both have dropped out of high school, their family fractured by death and prison. But while Marcus clings to his dream of rap stardom, Kiara hunts for work to pay their rent—which has more than doubled—and to keep the nine-year-old boy next door, abandoned by his mother, safe and fed. One night, what begins as a drunken misunderstanding with a stranger turns into the job Kiara never imagined wanting but now desperately needs: nightcrawling. Her world breaks open even further when her name surfaces in an investigation that exposes her as a key witness in a massive scandal within the Oakland Police Department. (288 pgs)


**TOMORROW AND TOMORROW AND TOMORROW BY GABRIELLE ZEVIN**
**(PICKED BY MG/KT/BS)**

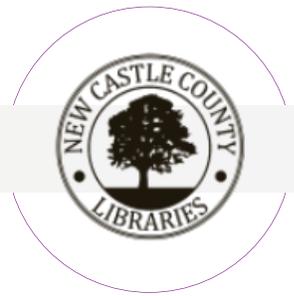
On a bitter-cold day, in the December of his junior year at Harvard, Sam Masur exits a subway car and sees, amid the hordes of people waiting on the platform, Sadie Green. He calls her name. For a moment, she pretends she hasn't heard him, but then, she turns, and a game begins: a legendary collaboration that will launch them to stardom. These friends, intimates since childhood, borrow money, beg favors, and, before even graduating college, have created their first blockbuster, *Ichigo*. Not even twenty-five years old, Sam and Sadie are brilliant, successful, and rich, but these qualities won't protect them from their own creative ambitions or the betrayals of their hearts. Spanning thirty years, from Cambridge, Massachusetts, to Venice Beach, California *Tomorrow, and Tomorrow, and Tomorrow* is a dazzling novel that examines the multifarious nature of identity, disability, failure, the redemptive possibilities in play, and above all, our need to connect. (416 pgs)


**SEA OF TRANQUILITY BY EMILY ST. JOHN MANDEL**
**(PICKED BY MG)**

Edwin St. Andrew is eighteen years old when he crosses the Atlantic by steamship, exiled from polite society. He enters the forest, spellbound by the beauty of the Canadian wilderness, and suddenly hears the notes of a violin echoing in an airship terminal. Two centuries later a famous writer named Olive Llewellyn is on a book tour. She's traveling all over Earth, but her home is the second moon colony. Within the text of Olive's bestselling pandemic novel lies a strange passage: a man plays his violin for change in the echoing corridor of an airship terminal as the trees of a forest rise around him. When Gaspéry-Jacques Roberts, a detective in the Night City, is hired to investigate an anomaly in the North American wilderness, he uncovers a series of lives upended: The exiled son of driven to madness, a writer trapped far from home as a pandemic ravages Earth, and a childhood friend who has glimpsed the chance to do something extraordinary that will disrupt the timeline of the universe. (255 pgs)

# STAFF PICKS

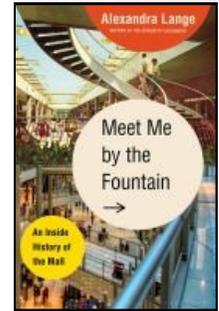
AUGUST 2022



## NON-FICTION

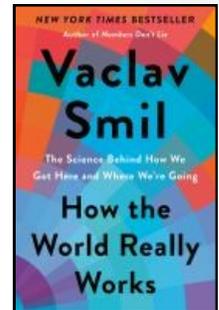
### **MEET ME BY THE FOUNTAIN BY ALEXANDRA LANGE (PICKED BY TA/SLH)**

Few places have been as nostalgized, or as maligned, as malls. Since their birth in the 1950s, they have loomed large as temples of commerce, the agora of the suburbs. Yet today, amid the aftershocks of financial crises and a global pandemic, as well as the rise of online retail, the dystopian husk of an abandoned shopping center has become one of our era's defining images. Conventional wisdom holds that the mall is dead. But what was the mall, really? And have rumors of its demise been greatly exaggerated? Alexandra Lange chronicles postwar architects' and merchants' invention of the mall, revealing how the design of these marketplaces played an integral role in their cultural ascent. *Meet Me by the Fountain* is a highly entertaining promenade through the mall's story of rise, fall, and ongoing reinvention. (320 pgs)



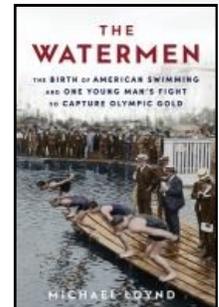
### **HOW THE WORLD REALLY WORKS BY VACLAV SMIL (PICKED BY SLS)**

We have never had so much information at our fingertips and yet most of us don't know how the world really works. This book explains seven of the most fundamental realities governing our survival and prosperity. From energy and food production, through our material world and its globalization, to risks, our environment and its future, *How the World Really Works* offers a much-needed reality check—because before we can tackle problems effectively, we must understand the facts. For example, our societies have been steadily *increasing* their dependence on fossil fuels, such that any promises of decarbonization by 2050 are a fairy tale. Each greenhouse-grown supermarket-bought tomato has the equivalent of five tablespoons of diesel embedded in its production. Ultimately, Smil answers the most profound question of our age: are we irrevocably doomed or is a brighter utopia ahead? (384 pgs)



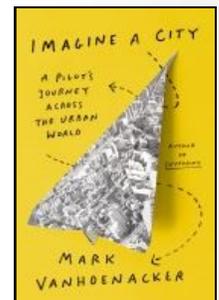
### **THE WATERMEN BY MICHAEL LOYND (PICKED BY SM)**

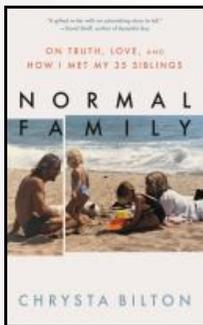
In the early twentieth century, few Americans knew how to swim; as a competitive sport, it was almost unheard of. Until Charles Daniels took to the water. On the surface, young Charles had it all. But the scrawny teenager suffered from extreme anxiety and a sadistic father who mired the family in bankruptcy and scandal before abandoning Charles and his mother altogether. Charles's only source of joy was swimming. But with no one to teach him, he struggled with technique—until he caught the eye of two immigrant coaches hell-bent on building a U.S. swim program to rival the British Empire's seventy-year domination of the sport. Interwoven with the story of Charles's struggle to overcome his family's disgrace is the compelling history of the struggle to establish the modern Olympics in an era when competitive sports were still in their infancy. *The Watermen*—a term used at the time to describe men skilled in water sports—tells an engrossing story of grit, of the growth of a major new sport in which Americans would prevail, and of a young man's determination to excel. (416 pgs)



### **IMAGINE A CITY BY MARK VANHOENACKER (PICKED BY SLH)**

In his small New England hometown, Mark Vanhoenacker spent his childhood dreaming of elsewhere—of the distant, real cities he found on the illuminated globe in his bedroom, and of one perfect metropolis that existed only in his imagination. Now, as a commercial airline pilot, Mark has spent nearly two decades crossing the skies of our planet and touching down in dozens of the cities he imagined as a child. He experiences these destinations during brief stays that he repeats month after month and year after year, giving him an unconventional and uniquely vivid perspective on the places that form our urban world. In this intimate yet expansive work that weaves travelogue with memoir, Mark celebrates the cities he has come to know and to love, through the lens of the hometown his heart has never quite left. (416 pgs)

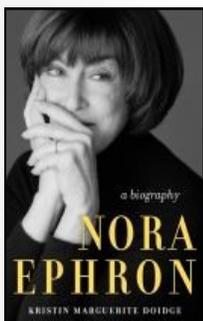




**NORMAL FAMILY BY CHRYSTA BILTON**

**(PICKED BY BS)**

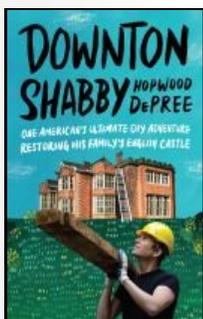
What is a “normal family,” and how do you go about making one? Chrysta Bilton’s magnetic mother, Debra, yearned to have a child, but as a single gay woman in 1980s California, she had few options. Until one day, she met a man and instantly knew he was the one she’d been looking for. A verbal agreement, a couple of thousand in cash, and a few squirts of a turkey baster later, and Chrysta was conceived. Over the years, Jeffrey would make regular appearances at the family home, which grew to include Chrysta’s baby sister. But how much did Debra really know about the man she’d chosen to father her daughters? And as a single mother torn between ferocious independence and abject dependence—on other women, alcohol, drugs, and the adrenaline of get-rich-quick schemes—what secrets of her own was she keeping? It wasn’t until Chrysta was a young adult that she discovered just how much her parents had hidden from their daughters—and each other. After a lifetime of longing for a “normal family,” can Chrysta face the reality of her own, in all its complexity? (288 pgs)



**NORA EPHRON BY KRISTIN DOIDGE**

**(PICKED BY SM)**

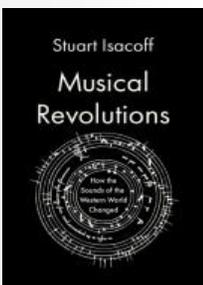
*Nora Ephron: A Biography* is the first comprehensive portrait of the Manhattan-born girl who forged a path of her own, earning accolades from critics and fans alike. Kristin Doidge explores the successes and failures Ephron sustained in her career as a popular essayist turned screenwriter turned film director. She redefined the modern rom-com genre with bestselling books such as *Heartburn* and hit movies including *When Harry Met Sally*, *Sleepless in Seattle*, and *Julie & Julia*. Doidge also examines the private life Ephron tried to keep in balance with her insatiable ambition. Based on rare archival research and numerous interviews with some of Ephron’s closest friends, collaborators, colleagues and lifelong friends from Wellesley to New York to Hollywood—as well as interviews Ephron herself gave throughout her career, Doidge has written a captivating story of the life of a creative writer whose passion for the perfect one-liner and ferocious drive to succeed revolutionized journalism, comedy, and film. (288 pgs)



**DOWNTON SHABBY BY HOPWOOD DEPREE**

**(PICKED BY SLH)**

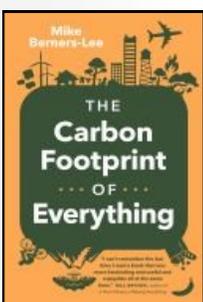
Hollywood producer Hopwood DePree had been told as a boy that an ancestor—who he was named for—had left his family’s English castle in the 1700s to come to America. One night after some wine and a visit to Ancestry.com, Hopwood discovered a photograph of a magnificent English estate with a familiar name: Hopwood Hall, a 60-room, 600-year-old grand manor on 5,000 acres. And with that, Hopwood DePree’s life took an almost fairytale turn. The Hall had fallen gradually into disrepair and was close to collapse when Hopwood visited. *Downton Shabby*—the name Hopwood coined for the ruin—traces Hopwood DePree’s adventures as he gives up his life in Hollywood and moves permanently to England to save Hopwood Hall from ruin. (320 pgs)



**MUSICAL REVOLUTIONS BY STUART ISACOFF**

**(PICKED BY SLH)**

The invention of music notation by a skittish Italian monk in the eleventh century. The introduction of multilayered hymns in the Middle Ages. The birth of opera in a Venice rebelling against the church’s pious restraints. Baroque, Romantic, and atonal music; bebop and cool jazz; Bach and Liszt; Miles Davis and John Coltrane. In telling the exciting story of Western music’s evolution, Stuart Isacoff explains how music became entangled in politics, culture, and economics, giving rise to new eruptions at every turn, from the early church’s attempts to bind its followers by teaching them to sing in unison to the global spread of American jazz through the Black platoons of the First World War. (320 pgs)



**THE CARBON FOOTPRINT OF EVERYTHING BY MIKE BERNERS-LEE (PICKED BY SLS)**

*The Carbon Footprint of Everything* breaks items down by the amount of carbon they produce, creating a calorie guide for the carbon-conscious. With engaging writing, leading carbon expert Mike Berners-Lee shares new carbon calculations based on recent research. He considers the impact of the pandemic on the carbon battle—especially the embattled global supply chain—and adds items we didn’t consider a decade ago, like bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies. Supported by solid research, cross-referenced with other expert sources, illustrated with easy-to-follow charts and graphs, and written with Berners-Lee’s trademark sense of humor. (312 pgs)