



**Staff Picks Digital and Print Edition**

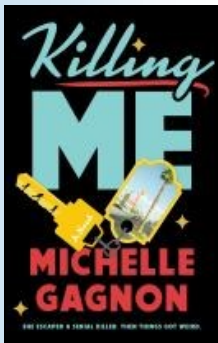
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**FICTION**

***KILLING ME BY MICHELLE GAGNON***

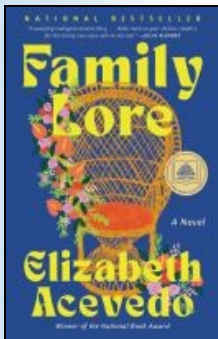
**(PICKED BY KT)**



Amber Jamison cannot believe she's about to become the latest victim of a serial killer—she's savvy and street smart, so when she gets pushed into a white windowless van, she's more angry than afraid. Things get even weirder when she's miraculously saved by a mysterious woman...who promptly disappears. Who was she? And why is she hunting serial killers? You'd think escaping one psychopath would be enough, but Amber's problems are just beginning. Her close call has law enforcement circling a past she's tried to outrun. So she flees across the country, ending up at a seedy motel in Las Vegas with a noir-obsessed manager and a sex worker as her unlikely companions...and danger right behind. She's landed in the crosshairs of the world's most prolific killer, caught up in a deadly game that's been going on for years. To survive, she's forced to dust off her old playbook and partner with someone she can't trust. The odds are against her, but sometimes you just have to roll the dice. (336 pgs)

***FAMILY LORE BY ELIZABETH ACEVEDO***

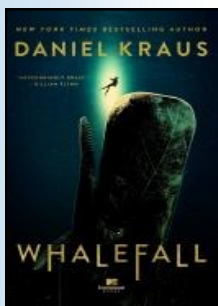
**(PICKED BY SLS)**



Flor has a gift: she can predict, to the day, when someone will die. When she decides she wants a living wake—a party to bring her family and community together to celebrate the long life she's led—her sisters are surprised. Has Flor foreseen her own death, or someone else's? Does she have other motives? She refuses to tell her sisters, Matilde, Pastora, and Camila. But Flor isn't the only person with secrets. Matilde has tried for decades to cover the extent of her husband's infidelity, but she must now confront the true state of her marriage. Pastora is typically the most reserved sister, but Flor's wake motivates this driven woman to solve her sibling's problems. Camila is the youngest sibling, and often the forgotten one, but she's decided she no longer wants to be taken for granted. Spanning the three days prior to the wake, *Family Lore* traces the lives of each of the Marte women, weaving together past and present, Santo Domingo and New York City. (384 pgs)

***WHALEFALL BY DANIEL KRAUS***

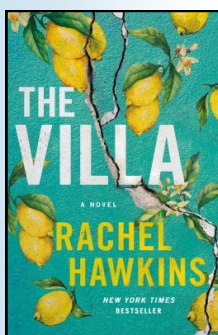
**(PICKED BY BS)**



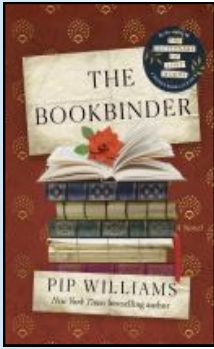
Jay Gardiner has given himself a fool's errand—to find the remains of his deceased father in the Pacific Ocean off the coast of Monastery Beach. He knows it's a long shot, but Jay feels it's the only way for him to lift the weight of guilt he has carried since his dad's death by suicide the previous year. The dive begins well enough, but the sudden appearance of a giant squid puts Jay in very real jeopardy, made infinitely worse by the arrival of a sperm whale looking to feed. Suddenly, Jay is caught in the squid's tentacles and drawn into the whale's mouth where he is pulled into the first of its four stomachs. He quickly realizes he has only one hour before his oxygen tanks run out—one hour to defeat his demons and escape the belly of a whale. (336 pgs)

***THE VILLA BY RACHEL HAWKINS***

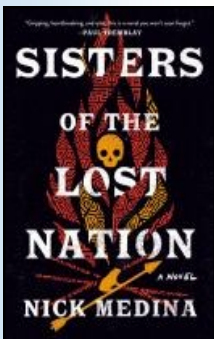
**(PICKED BY LW)**



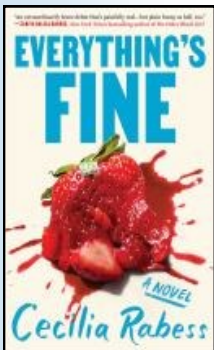
As kids, Emily and Chess were inseparable. But by their 30s, their bond has been strained by the demands of their adult lives. When Chess suggests a girls trip to Italy, Emily jumps at the chance to reconnect with her best friend. Villa Aestas in Orvieto is a high-end holiday home now, but in 1974, it was known as Villa Rosato, and rented for the summer by a notorious rock star, Noel Gordon. In an attempt to reignite his creative spark, Noel invites up-and-coming musician, Pierce Sheldon to join him, as well as Pierce's girlfriend, Mari, and her stepsister, Lara. But he also sets in motion a chain of events that leads to Mari writing one of the greatest horror novels of all time, Lara composing a platinum album—and ends in Pierce's brutal murder. As Emily digs into the villa's history, she begins to think there might be more to the story of that fateful summer. Yet the closer that Emily gets to the truth, the more tension she feels developing between her and Chess. As secrets from the past come to light, equally dangerous betrayals from the present also emerge—and it begins to look like the villa will claim another victim before the summer ends. (279 pgs)

**THE BOOKBINDER BY PIP WILLIAMS****(PICKED BY SLS)**

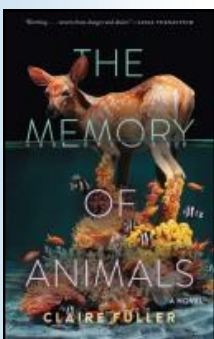
It is 1914, and as the war draws the young men of Britain away to fight, women must keep the nation running. Two of those women are Peggy and Maude, twin sisters who work in the bindery at the university press. Ambitious, intelligent Peggy has been told for most of her life that her job is to bind the books, not read them—but her mind wanders to the opposite side of Walton Street, where the female students of Oxford's Somerville College have a whole library at their fingertips. Maude, meanwhile, wants nothing more than to spend her days folding the pages of books in the company of the other bindery girls. Then refugees arrive from the war-torn cities of Belgium, sending ripples through the Oxford community and the sisters' lives. Peggy begins to see the possibility of another future where she can educate herself and use her intellect, not just her hands. But as war and illness reshape her world, her love for a Belgian soldier—and the responsibility that comes with it—threaten to hold her back. (448 pgs)

**SISTERS OF THE LOST NATION BY NICK MEDINA****(PICKED BY KT)**

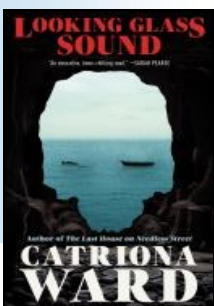
Anna Horn is always looking over her shoulder. For the bullies who torment her, for the entitled visitors at the reservation's casino...and for the nameless, disembodied entity that stalks her every step—an ancient tribal myth come-to-life, one that's intent on devouring her whole. With strange and sinister happenings occurring around the casino, Anna starts to suspect that not all the horrors on the reservation are old. As girls begin to go missing and the tribe scrambles to find answers, Anna struggles with her place on the rez, desperately searching for the key she's sure lies in the legends of her tribe's past. When Anna's own little sister also disappears, she'll do anything to bring Grace home. But the demons plaguing the reservation are strong, and sometimes, it's the stories that never get told that are the most important. (352 pgs)

**EVERYTHING'S FINE BY CECILIA RABESS****(PICKED BY SM)**

When Jess lands a job as an analyst at Goldman Sachs, she's less than thrilled to learn she'll be on the same team as Josh, her preppy, white, conservative sparring partner from college. But when Jess finds herself the sole Black woman on the floor, overlooked and underestimated, it's Josh who shows up for her in surprising—if imperfect—ways. Before long, an unlikely friendship—one tinged with undeniable chemistry—forms between the two. A friendship that gradually, and then suddenly, turns into an electrifying romance that shocks them both. Despite their differences, the force of their attraction propels the relationship forwards, and Jess begins to question whether it's more important to be happy than right. But then it's 2016, and the cultural and political landscape shifts underneath them. And Jess, who is just beginning to discover who she is and who she has the right to be, is forced to ask herself what she's willing to compromise for love and whether, in fact, everything's fine. (336 pgs)

**THE MEMORY OF ANIMALS BY CLAIRE FULLER****(PICKED BY SP)**

In the face of a pandemic, an unprepared world scrambles to escape the mysterious disease's devastating symptoms. Neffy, a disgraced and indebted twenty-seven-year-old marine biologist, registers for an experimental vaccine trial in London. Though isolated from the chaos outside, she and the other volunteers—Rachel, Leon, Yahiko, and Piper—cannot hide from the mistakes that led them there. As London descends into chaos outside the hospital windows, Neffy befriends Leon, who before the pandemic had been working on a controversial technology that allows users to revisit their memories. She withdraws into projections of her past—a childhood bisected by divorce; a recent love affair; her obsessive research with octopuses and the one mistake that ended her career. The lines between past, present, and future begin to blur, and Neffy is left with defining questions: Who can she trust? Why can't she forgive herself? How should she live, if she survives? (278 pgs)

**LOOKING GLASS SOUND BY CATRIONA WARD****(PICKED BY FC)**

In a lonely cottage overlooking the windswept Maine coast, Wilder Harlow begins the last book he will ever write. It is the story of his childhood summer companions and the killer that stalked the small New England town. Of the body they found, and the horror of that discovery echoing down the decades. And of Sky, Wilder's one-time best friend, who stole his unfinished memoir and turned it into a lurid bestselling novel, *Looking Glass Sound*. But as Wilder writes, the lines between memory and fiction blur. He fears he's losing his grip on reality when he finds notes hidden around the cottage written in Sky's signature green ink. (342 pgs)

# STAFF PICKS

SEPTEMBER 2023

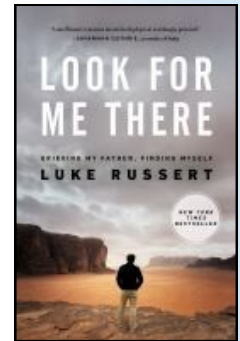


## NON-FICTION

### **LOOK FOR ME THERE BY LUKE RUSSERT**

**(PICKED BY KT)**

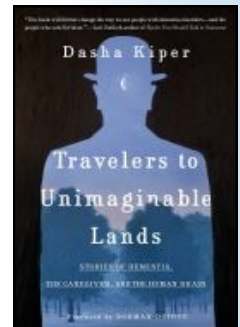
“Look for me there,” news legend Tim Russert would tell his son, Luke, when confirming a pickup spot at an airport, sporting event, or rock concert. After Tim died unexpectedly, Luke kept looking for his father, following in Tim’s footsteps and carving out a highly successful career at NBC News. After eight years covering politics on television, Luke realized he had no good answer as to why he was chasing his father’s legacy, suddenly deciding to leave the familiar path behind. Luke set out on his own to find answers. What began as several open-ended months of travel to decompress and reassess morphed into a three-plus-year odyssey across six continents to discover the world and, ultimately, to find himself. *Look for Me There* is both the vivid narrative of that journey and the emotional story of a young man taking charge of his life, reexamining his relationship with his parents, and finally grieving his larger-than-life father. (272 pgs)



### **TRAVELERS TO UNIMAGINABLE LANDS BY DASHA KIPER**

**(PICKED BY SLS)**

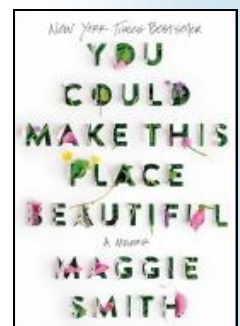
After getting a master’s degree in clinical psychology, Dasha Kiper became the live-in caregiver for a Holocaust survivor with Alzheimer’s disease. Inspired by her own experience and her work counseling caregivers in the subsequent decade, Kiper offers an entirely new way to understand the symbiotic relationship between patients and those tending to them. Her book is the first to examine how the workings of the “healthy” brain prevent us from adapting to and truly understanding the cognitively impaired one. Why do caregivers succumb to behaviors—arguing, blaming, insisting, taking symptoms personally—they know are counterproductive? Exploring the healthy brain’s intuitions and proclivities, *Travelers to Unimaginable Lands* reveals the neurological obstacles to caregiving, enumerating not only the terrible pressures the disease exerts on our closest relationships but offering solace and perspective as well. (272 pgs)



### **YOU COULD MAKE THIS PLACE BEAUTIFUL BY MAGGIE SMITH**

**(PICKED BY SM)**

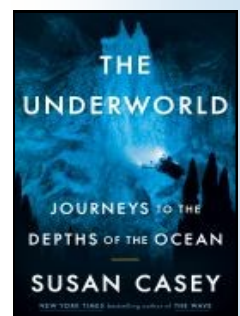
In her memoir *You Could Make This Place Beautiful*, poet Maggie Smith explores the disintegration of her marriage and her renewed commitment to herself in lyrical vignettes. The book begins with one woman’s personal, particular heartbreak, but its circles widen into a reckoning with contemporary womanhood, traditional gender roles, and the power dynamics that persist even in many progressive homes. With the spirit of self-inquiry and empathy she’s known for, Smith interweaves snapshots of a life with meditations on secrets, anger, forgiveness, and narrative itself. The power of these pieces is cumulative: page after page, they build into a larger interrogation of family, work, and patriarchy. *You Could Make This Place Beautiful* is an unflinching look at what it means to live and write our own lives. It is a story about a mother’s fierce and constant love for her children, and a woman’s love and regard for herself. Above all, this memoir is an argument for possibility. (320 pgs)



### **THE UNDERWORLD BY SUSAN CASEY**

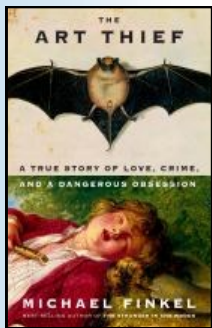
**(PICKED BY SLS & BS)**

For all of human history, the deep ocean has been an unknown realm that evoked a singular, compelling question: *What’s down there?* But now, cutting-edge technologies allow scientists and explorers to dive miles beneath the surface, and we are beginning to understand this strange and exotic underworld. The deep is a vibrant realm that’s home to pink gelatinous predators and shimmering creatures a hundred feet long and ancient animals with glass skeletons and sharks that live for half a millennium. For *The Underworld* Susan Casey traversed the globe, joining scientists and explorers on dives to the deepest places on the planet, interviewing the marine geologists, marine biologists, and oceanographers who are searching for knowledge in this vast unseen realm. She learned how vital the deep is to the future of the planet, and how urgent it is that we understand it in a time of increasing threats from climate change, industrial fishing, pollution, and the mining companies that are also exploring its depths. (352 pgs)





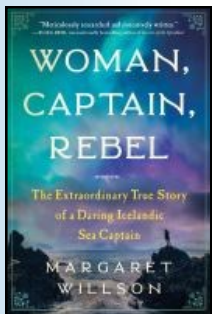
# STAFF PICKS NON-FICTION



## **THE ART THIEF BY MICHAEL FINKEL**

**(PICKED BY LW)**

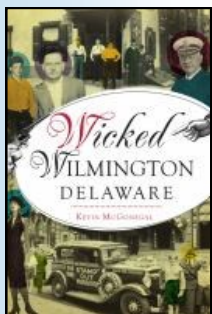
For centuries, works of art have been stolen in countless ways from all over the world, but no one has been quite as successful at it as the master thief Stéphane Breitwieser. Carrying out more than two hundred heists over nearly ten years—in museums and cathedrals all over Europe—Breitwieser, along with his girlfriend who worked as his lookout, stole more than three hundred objects. Unlike most thieves, he never stole for money, keeping all his treasures in a single room where he could admire them to his heart's content. Possessed of a remarkable athleticism and an innate ability to assess practically any security system, Breitwieser managed to pull off audacious thefts. Yet these strange talents bred a growing disregard for risk and an addict's need to score, leading Breitwieser to ignore his girlfriend's pleas to stop—until one final act of hubris brought everything crashing down. (240 pgs)



## **WOMAN, CAPTAIN, REBEL BY MARGARET WILLSON**

**(PICKED BY BS)**

History would have us believe the sea has always been a male realm, the idea of female captains almost unthinkable. But there is one exception so notable she defies any expectation. Captain Thurídur Einarsdóttir was born in Iceland in 1777. Her first time fishing, on the open unprotected rowboats of her time, was at age 11. Soon after, she audaciously began wearing trousers. She later became an acclaimed fishing captain brilliant at weather-reading and seacraft and consistently brought in the largest catches. In the Arctic seas where drownings occurred with terrifying regularity, she never lost a single crewmember. Renowned for her acute powers of observation, she also solved a notorious crime. In this extremely unequal society, she used the courts to fight for justice for the abused, and in her sixties, embarked on perilous journeys over trackless mountains. (416 pgs)



## **WICKED WILMINGTON DELAWARE BY KEVIN MCGONEGAL**

**(PICKED BY SM)**

Take a journey through crime and vice in twentieth-century Wilmington, from a Tatnall Street bawdy house to the corporate boardrooms of the DuPont Company. Visit the old New Castle County Workhouse, scene of a break-in by a lynch mob and the daring escape of a notorious murderer. A police chief trying to keep his corrupt practices under wraps, agents raiding political headquarters and a detective murdered on the street were all part of city life in the early twentieth century. In later years, stories of a professional killer pleading self-defense, hiding his connections to a mobbed-up Teamsters boss, and runaway lovers caught up in an international extortion scheme show the city's darker side. Local historian Kevin McGonegal chronicles tales of Wilmington's infamous past. (160 pgs)



## **CONGRATULATIONS, THE BEST IS OVER! BY R. ERIC THOMAS**

**(PICKED BY FC)**

In this collection of insightful and hilarious essays, Thomas finds himself doing things completely out of character, starting with moving back to his perpetually misunderstood hometown of Baltimore. They say you can't go home again, but what if you and home have changed beyond recognition? From attending his twenty-year high school reunion and discovering another person's face on his name badge, to splattering an urgent care room with blood à la *The Shining*, to being terrorized by a plague of gay frogs who've overtaken his backyard, Thomas shares the nitty, and sometimes gritty, details of wrestling with your past life while in the middle of a new one. With wit, heart, and hope for the future, *Congratulations, The Best Is Over!* is the not-so-gentle reminder we all need that even when life doesn't go according to plan, we can still find our way back home. (240 pgs)



## **THE EXORCIST LEGACY BY NAT SEGALOFF**

**(PICKED BY KT)**

Since 1973, *The Exorcist* and its progeny have scared half a century of filmgoers. Now, on the 50th anniversary of the original movie release, this is the definitive story of the scariest movie ever made. On December 26, 1973, *The Exorcist* was released. Moviegoers braved hours-long lines in winter weather to see it. Some audience members fainted or vomited. Fifty years later, the movie that both inspired and transcends the modern horror genre has lost none of its power to terrify and unsettle. *The Exorcist Legacy* reveals the complete story of this cultural phenomenon, from the real-life exorcism in 1949 Maryland that inspired William Peter Blatty's bestselling novel on which the movie is based, to its many sequels, TV series, and homages. Segaloff also examines the keys to the movie's enduring appeal. The goal was far more ambitious than making a scary movie; the aim was to make people "think about the concept of good and evil." (304 pgs)