



The Next Chapter: February 2022 Book Recommendations

[Deconstructed](#) by Liz Talley

Montlake (February 1, 2022)

“Antique-store owner Cricket Crosby’s life is turned upside down when she discovers that the rumors of her husband’s affair aren’t just leisurely southern gossip. Her plan: hire an investigator; find an attorney; enlist the help of her new assistant, Ruby; and make her husband pay. Ruby knows how quickly everything changes. After a dicey past, she’s determined to forge a new future by working for Cricket and reinventing herself as a designer, deconstructing vintage haute couture. If anybody can help mend a few tears in Cricket’s life, she can. But turns out Cricket’s life isn’t just a little torn. It’s wrinkled, stained, and falling apart at the seams. With Ruby and her ragtag relatives—a soused PI and a hunky tow truck driver—Cricket is sleuthing her way to the truth, no matter how dangerous it gets. Sure, Cricket’s life isn’t what she imagined. But she’s embracing change and figuring out what she really wants. And that’s kind of fabulous.”

[Funny Farm: My Unexpected Life with 600 Rescue Animals](#) by Laurie Zaleski

St. Martin's Press (February 22, 2022)

“An inspiring and moving memoir of the author's turbulent life with 600 rescue animals. Laurie Zaleski never aspired to run an animal rescue; that was her mother Annie’s dream. But from girlhood, Laurie was determined to make the dream come true. Thirty years later as a successful businesswoman, she did it, buying a 15-acre farm deep in the Pinelands of South Jersey. She was planning to relocate Annie and her caravan of ragtag rescues—horses and goats, dogs and cats, chickens and pigs—when Annie died, just two weeks before moving day. In her heartbreak, Laurie resolved to make her mother's dream her own. In 2001, she established the Funny Farm Animal Rescue outside Mays Landing, New Jersey. Today, she carries on Annie’s mission to save abused and neglected animals. *Funny Farm* is Laurie’s story: of promises kept, dreams fulfilled, and animals lost and found. It’s the story of Annie McNulty, who fled a nightmarish marriage with few skills, no money and no resources, dragging three kids behind her, and accumulating hundreds of cast-off animals on the way. And lastly, it's the story of the brave, incredible, and adorable animals that were rescued. Although there are some sad parts (as life always is), there are lots of laughs.”

[I Must Betray You](#) by Ruta Sepetys

Philomel Books (February 1, 2022)

“Romania, 1989. Communist regimes are crumbling across Europe. Seventeen-year-old Cristian Florescu dreams of becoming a writer, but Romanians aren’t free to dream; they are bound by rules and force. Amidst the tyrannical dictatorship of Nicolae Ceaușescu in a country governed by isolation and fear, Cristian is blackmailed by the secret police to become an informer. He’s left with only two choices: betray everyone and everything he loves—or use his position to creatively undermine the most notoriously evil dictator in Eastern Europe. Cristian risks everything to unmask the truth behind the regime, give voice to fellow Romanians, and expose to the world what is happening in his country. He eagerly joins the revolution to fight for change when the time arrives. But what is the cost of freedom? Master storyteller Ruta Sepetys is back with a historical thriller that examines the little-known history of a nation defined by silence, pain, and the unwavering conviction of the human spirit.”

[Love & Saffron: A Novel of Friendship, Food, and Love](#) by Kim Fay

G.P. Putnam's Sons (February 8, 2022)

“When twenty-seven-year-old Joan Bergstrom sends a fan letter--as well as a gift of saffron--to fifty-nine-year-old Imogen Fortier, a life-changing friendship begins. Joan lives in Los Angeles and is just starting out as a writer for the newspaper food pages. Imogen lives on Camano Island outside Seattle, writing a monthly column for a Pacific Northwest magazine, and while she can hunt elk and dig for clams, she’s never tasted fresh garlic--exotic fare in the Northwest of the sixties. As the two women commune through their letters, they build a closeness that sustains them through the Cuban Missile Crisis, the assassination of President Kennedy, and the unexpected in their own lives. Food and a good life—they can’t be separated. It is a discovery the women share, not only with each other, but with the men in their lives. Because of her correspondence with Joan, Imogen’s decades-long marriage blossoms into something new and exciting, and in turn, Joan learns that true love does not always come in the form we expect it to. Into this beautiful, intimate world comes the ultimate test of Joan and Imogen’s friendship—a test that summons their unconditional trust in each other.”

[Mickey7: A Novel](#) by Edward Ashton

St. Martin's Press (February 15, 2022)

“Dying isn’t any fun...but at least it’s a living. Mickey7 is an Expendable: a disposable employee on a human expedition sent to colonize the ice world Niflheim. Whenever there’s a mission that’s too dangerous—even suicidal—the crew turns to Mickey. After one iteration dies, a new body is regenerated with most of his memories intact. After six deaths, Mickey7 understands the terms of his deal...and why it was the only colonial position unfilled when he took it. On a fairly routine scouting mission, Mickey7 goes missing and is presumed dead. By the time he returns to the colony base, surprisingly helped back by native life, Mickey7’s fate has been sealed. There’s a new clone, Mickey8, reporting for Expendable duties. The idea of duplicate Expendables is universally loathed, and if caught, they will likely be thrown into the recycler for protein. Mickey7 must keep his double a secret from the rest of the colony. Meanwhile, life on Niflheim is getting worse. The atmosphere is unsuitable for humans, food is in short supply, and terraforming is going poorly. The native species are growing curious about their new neighbors, and that curiosity has Commander Marshall very afraid. Ultimately, the survival of both lifeforms will come down to Mickey7. That is, if he can just keep from dying for good.”

[The Cage: A Novel](#) by Bonnie Kistler

Harper (February 15, 2022)

“On a cold, misty Sunday night, two women are alone in the offices of fashion conglomerate Claudine de Martineau International. One is the company’s human resources director. Impeccably dressed and perfectly coiffed, she sits at her desk and stares somberly out the window. Down the hall, her colleague, one of the company’s lawyers, is buried under a pile of paperwork, frantically rushing to finish. Leaving at the same time, the two women, each preoccupied by her own thoughts, enter the elevator that will take them down from the 30th floor. When they arrive at the lobby, one of the women is dead. Was it murder or suicide? An incredibly original novel that turns the office thriller on its head, *The Cage* is a wild ride that begins with a bang and picks up speed as it races to its dramatic end.”

[The Ex-Boyfriend Yard Sale: Finding a Formula for the Cost of Love](#) by Haley McGee

Doubleday Canada (February 1, 2022)

“In this hilarious and heartfelt memoir, Haley McGee sets out to calculate—with mathematical precision—the exact cost of love, and whether all of her former relationships were worth it. Haley McGee is in debt. The solution? A yard sale of gifts from her ex-boyfriends. But when it comes to pricing, she gets stuck. Surely the ways we invest in our romantic relationships should be reflected in the price. But how? Is the mixtape from your first love worth more than the vintage typewriter from a philanderer? Does sitting on an X-Acto knife wedged between seats on a bus to see the boyfriend you lost your virginity to increase or decrease the value of the necklace he gave you? Should you be compensated for the miserable times or do they render an item worthless? Haley decides to gamble on a larger payout. She interviews her exes and enlists the help of a mathematician to create a formula—with eighty-six variables—for the cost of love. As she's searching for answers, the one that got away reappears with a new proposition. Female desire, heartbreak and the chance for integrity in the aftermath of both are held up in this whip-smart, original and daringly candid memoir. As Haley McGee interrogates her romantic triumphs and failures with unflinching detail and hilarity, her exquisite prose elevates this all too human conundrum: Is love worth it?”

[The Great Mrs. Elias: A Novel Based on a True Story](#) by Barbara Chase-Riboud

Amistad (February 8, 2022)

“A murder and a case of mistaken identity brings the police to Hannah Elias’ glitzy, five-story, twenty-room mansion on Central Park West. This is the beginning of an odyssey that moves back and forth in time and reveals the dangerous secrets of a mysterious woman, the fortune she built, and her precipitous fall. Born in Philadelphia in the late 1800s, Hannah Elias has done things she’s not proud of to survive. Shedding her past, Hannah slips on a new identity before relocating to New York City to become as rich as a robber baron. Hannah quietly invests in the stock market, growing her fortune with the help of businessmen. As the money pours in, Hannah hides her millions across 29 banks. Finally attaining the life she’s always dreamed, she buys a mansion on the Upper West Side and decorates it in gold and first-rate décor, inspired by her idol Cleopatra. The unsolved murder turns Hannah’s world upside-down and threatens to destroy everything she’s built. When the truth of her identity is uncovered, thousands of protestors gather in front of her stately home. Hounded by the salacious press, the very private Mrs. Elias finds herself alone, ensnared in a scandalous trial, and accused of stealing her fortune from whites. Packed with glamour, suspense, and drama, populated with real-life luminaries from the period, *The Great Mrs. Elias* brings a fascinating woman and the age she embodied to glorious, tragic life.”

[The Man Who Tasted Words](#) by Dr. Guy Leschziner

St. Martin's Press (February 22, 2022)

“Vision, hearing, taste, smell, and touch are what we rely on to perceive the reality of our world. Our senses are the conduits that bring us the scent of a freshly brewed cup of coffee or the notes of a favorite song suddenly playing on the radio. But are they really that reliable? *The Man Who Tasted Words* shows that what we perceive to be absolute truths of the world around us is actually a complex internal reconstruction by our minds and nervous systems. The translation into experiences with conscious meaning—the pattern of light and dark on the retina that is transformed into the face of a loved one, for instance—is a process that is invisible, undetected by ourselves and, in most cases, completely out of our control. In *The Man Who Tasted Words*, neurologist Guy Leschziner explores how our nervous systems define our worlds and how we can, in fact, be victims of falsehoods perpetrated by our own brains. In his moving and lyrical chronicles of lives turned upside down by a disruption in one or more of their five senses, he introduces readers to extraordinary individuals, like one man who actually

“tasted” words, and shows us how sensory disruptions like that have played havoc, not only with their view of the world, but with their relationships as well. The cases Leschziner shares in *The Man Who Tasted Words* are extreme, but they are also human, and teach us how our lives and what we perceive as reality are both ultimately defined by the complexities of our nervous systems.”

**[The Method: How the Twentieth Century Learned to Act](#) by Isaac Butler
Bloomsbury Publishing (February 1, 2022)**

“From the coauthor of *The World Only Spins Forward* comes the first cultural history of Method acting--an ebullient account of creative discovery and the birth of classic Hollywood. On stage and screen, we know a great performance when we see it. But how do actors draw from their bodies and minds to turn their selves into art? What is the craft of being an authentic fake? More than a century ago, amid tsarist Russia's crushing repression, one of the most talented actors ever, Konstantin Stanislavski, asked these very questions, reached deep into himself, and emerged with an answer. How his "system" remade itself into the Method and forever transformed American theater and film is an unlikely saga that has never before been fully told. Now, critic and theater director Isaac Butler chronicles the history of the Method in a narrative that transports readers from Moscow to New York to Los Angeles, from *The Seagull* to *A Streetcar Named Desire* to *Raging Bull*. He traces how a cohort of American mavericks--including Stella Adler, Lee Strasberg, and the storied Group Theatre--refashioned Stanislavski's ideas for a Depression-plagued nation that had yet to find its place as an artistic powerhouse.”

**[The Nineties: A Book](#) by Chuck Klosterman
Penguin Press (February 8, 2022)**

“From the bestselling author of *But What if We're Wrong*, a wise and funny reckoning with the decade that gave us slacker/grunge irony about the sin of trying too hard, during the greatest shift in human consciousness of any decade in American history. It was long ago, but not as long as it seems: The Berlin Wall fell and the Twin Towers collapsed. In between, one presidential election was allegedly decided by Ross Perot while another was plausibly decided by Ralph Nader. In the beginning, almost every name and address was listed in a phone book, and everyone answered their landlines because you didn't know who it was. By the end, exposing someone's address was an act of emotional violence, and nobody picked up their new cell phone if they didn't know who it was. The 90s brought about a revolution in the human condition we're still groping to understand. Happily, Chuck Klosterman is more than up to the job. Beyond epiphenomena like "Cop Killer" and Titanic and Zima, there were wholesale shifts in how society was perceived: the rise of the internet, pre-9/11 politics, and the paradoxical belief that nothing was more humiliating than trying too hard. Pop culture accelerated without the aid of a machine that remembered everything, generating an odd comfort in never being certain about anything. On a 90's Thursday night, more people watched any random episode of Seinfeld than the finale of Game of Thrones. But nobody thought that was important; if you missed it, you simply missed it. It was the last era that held to the idea of a true, hegemonic mainstream before it all began to fracture, whether you found a home in it or defined yourself against it.”

**[The Pages: A Novel](#) by Hugo Hamilton
Knopf (February 1, 2022)**

“One old copy of the novel *Rebellion* sits in Lena Knecht’s tote bag, about to accompany her on a journey from New York to Berlin in search of a clue to the hand-drawn map on its last page. It is the brilliantly captivating voice of this novel—a first edition nearly burned by Nazis in May 1933—that is our narrator. Fast-paced and tightly plotted, *The Pages* brings together a multitude of dazzling characters, real and invented, in a sweeping story of survival, chance, and the joys and struggles of love. At its center are Roth, an Austrian Jewish author on the run, and his wife, Friederike, who falls victim to mental illness as Europe descends into war. With vivid evocations of Germany under Nazism and today, *The Pages* dramatically illuminates the connections between past and present as it looks at censorship, oppression, and violence. Here is a propulsive, inspiring tale of literature over a hundred years: a novel for book lovers everywhere that will bring a fresh audience to this acclaimed writer.”

**[The Verifiers](#) by Jane Pek
Vintage (February 22, 2022)**

“Claudia Lin is looking at a cliched post-college future as a chronically underemployed English major—much to the consternation of her mother, who wants her to settle down and start dating a nice Chinese boy already; her brother, who pushes her to follow in his model-minority footsteps; and her sister, who can’t get over Claudia’s privileged place in their mother’s affections. But Claudia is used to keeping secrets from her family. Such as the fact that she prefers girls—and that she’s embarking on an unsuitable but supremely fun career. Veracity, a two-and-a-half-person detective agency that operates out of a Manhattan townhouse and verifies people’s online dating personas, has recruited Claudia via an online murder mystery game. A lifelong reader of mystery novels, Claudia takes to her new job sniffing out cheaters and catfishers like a latter-day lovechild of Elizabeth Bennet and Sherlock Holmes. But when one of her very first clients turns up dead, Claudia breaks with Veracity’s protocols to investigate what happened, unconvinced by the story everyone else believes. The deeper she digs, the more she discovers that nothing—her client, the death, the dating platforms that claim to know us better than we know ourselves, Veracity, even her own family—may be as it seems. Part literary mystery, part family story, *The Verifiers* is a witty and incisive examination of how technology shapes our choices, and what role romantic love plays in the digital age.”

**[The Violin Conspiracy](#) by Brendan Slocumb
Anchor (February 1, 2022)**

“Growing up Black in rural North Carolina, Ray McMillian’s life is already mapped out. If he’s lucky, he’ll get a job at the hospital cafeteria. If he’s extra lucky, he’ll earn more than minimum wage. But Ray has a gift and a dream—he’s determined to become a world-class professional violinist, and nothing will stand in his way. Not his mother, who wants him to stop making such a racket; not the fact that he can’t afford a violin suitable to his talents; not even the racism inherent in the world of classical music. When he discovers that his great-great-grandfather’s beat-up old fiddle is actually a priceless Stradivarius, all his dreams suddenly seem within reach. Together, Ray and his violin take the world by storm. But on the eve of the renowned and cutthroat Tchaikovsky Competition—the Olympics of classical music—the violin is stolen, a ransom note for five million dollars left in its place. Ray will have to piece together the clues to recover his treasured Strad ... before it’s too late. With the descendants of the man who once enslaved Ray’s great-great-grandfather asserting that the instrument is rightfully theirs, and with his family staking their own claim, Ray doesn’t know who he can trust—or whether he will ever see his beloved violin again.”

***This Might Hurt* by Stephanie Wrobel
Berkley (February 22, 2022)**

“Welcome to Wisewood. We’ll keep your secrets if you keep ours. Natalie Collins hasn’t heard from her sister in more than half a year. The last time they spoke, Kit was slogging from mundane workdays to obligatory happy hours to crying in the shower about their dead mother. She told Natalie she was sure there was something more out there. And then she found Wisewood. On a private island off the coast of Maine, Wisewood’s guests commit to six-month stays. During this time, they’re prohibited from contact with the rest of the world—no Internet, no phones, no exceptions. But the rules are for a good reason: to keep guests focused on achieving true fearlessness so they can become their Maximized Selves. Natalie thinks it’s a bad idea, but Kit has had enough of her sister’s cynicism and voluntarily disappears off the grid. Six months later Natalie receives a menacing e-mail from a Wisewood account threatening to reveal the secret she’s been keeping from Kit. Panicked, Natalie hurries north to come clean to her sister and bring her home. But she’s about to learn that Wisewood won’t let either of them go without a fight.”

***When I'm Gone, Look for Me in the East: A Novel* by Quan Barry
Pantheon (February 22, 2022)**

“From the acclaimed author of *We Ride Upon Sticks* comes a luminous novel that moves across a windswept Mongolia, as estranged twin brothers make a journey of duty, conflict, and renewed understanding. Tasked with finding the reincarnation of a great lama—a spiritual teacher who may have been born anywhere in the vast Mongolian landscape—the young monk Chuluun sets out with his identical twin, Mun, who has rejected the monastic life they once shared. Their relationship will be tested on this journey through their homeland as each possesses the ability to hear the other's thoughts. Proving once again that she is a writer of immense range and imagination, Quan Barry carries us across a terrain as unforgiving as it is beautiful and culturally varied, from the western Altai mountains to the eerie starkness of the Gobi Desert to the ancient capital of Chinggis Khaan. As their country stretches before them, questions of faith—along with more earthly matters of love and brotherhood—haunt the twins. Are our lives our own, or do we belong to something larger? *When I'm Gone, Look for Me in the East* is a stunningly far-flung examination of our individual struggle to retain our convictions and discover meaning in a fast-changing world, as well as a meditation on accepting what simply is.”



Book descriptions provided by publishers.
Neenah Public Library
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