



The Next Chapter: June 2022 Book Recommendations

[*A Botanist's Guide to Parties and Poisons*](#) by Kate Khavari

Crooked Lane Books (June 7, 2022) 304 pages.

"Newly minted research assistant Saffron Everleigh is determined to blaze a new trail at the University College London, but with her colleagues' beliefs about women's academic inabilities and not so subtle hints that her deceased father's reputation paved her way into the botany department, she feels stymied at every turn. When she attends a dinner party for the school, she expects to engage in conversations about the university's large expedition to the Amazon. What she doesn't expect is for Mrs. Henry, one of the professors' wives, to drop to the floor, poisoned by an unknown toxin. Dr. Maxwell, Saffron's mentor, is the main suspect and evidence quickly mounts. Joined by fellow researcher--and potential romantic interest--Alexander Ashton, Saffron uses her knowledge of botany as she explores steamy greenhouses, dark gardens, and deadly poisons to clear Maxwell's name. Will she be able to uncover the truth or will her investigation land her on the murderer's list, in this entertaining examination of society's expectations."

[*An Immense World: How Animal Senses Reveal the Hidden Realms Around Us*](#) by Ed Yong

Random House (June 21, 2022) 464 pages.

"The Earth teems with sights and textures, sounds and vibrations, smells and tastes, electric and magnetic fields. But every animal is enclosed within its own unique sensory bubble, perceiving but a tiny sliver of an immense world. This book welcomes us into a previously unfathomable dimension--the world as it is truly perceived by other animals. We encounter beetles that are drawn to fires (and fireworks), songbirds that can see the Earth's magnetic fields, and brainless jellyfish that nonetheless have complex eyes. We discover that a crocodile's scaly face is as sensitive as a lover's fingertips, that the eyes of a giant squid evolved to see sparkling whales, and that even fingernail-sized spiders can make out the craters of the moon. We meet people with unusual senses, from women who can make out extra colors to blind individuals who can navigate using reflected echoes like bats. Yong tells the stories of pivotal discoveries in the field, and also looks ahead at the many mysteries which lie unsolved."

[*Ashton Hall: A Novel*](#) by Lauren Belfer

Ballantine Books (June 7, 2022) 416 pages.

"When a close relative falls ill, Hannah Larson and her young son, Nicky, join him for the summer at Ashton Hall, a historic manor house outside Cambridge, England. A frustrated academic whose ambitions have been subsumed by the challenges of raising her beloved child, Hannah longs to escape her life in New York City, where her marriage has been upended by a recently discovered and devastating betrayal. Soon after their arrival, ever-curious Nicky finds the skeletal remains of a woman walled into a forgotten part of the manor, and Hannah is pulled into an all-consuming quest for answers, Nicky close by her side. Working from clues in centuries-old ledgers showing what the woman's household spent on everything from music to medicine; lists of books checked out of the library; and the

troubling personal papers of the long-departed family, Hannah begins to recreate the Ashton Hall of the Elizabethan era in all its color and conflict. As the multilayered secrets of her own life begin to unravel, Hannah comes to realize that Ashton Hall's women before her had lives not so different from her own, and she confronts what mothers throughout history have had to do to secure their independence and protect their children.”

[Counterfeit: A Novel](#) by Kirstin Chen

William Morrow (June 7, 2022) 288 pages.

“Ava Wong has always played it safe. As a strait-laced, rule-abiding Chinese American lawyer with a successful surgeon as a husband, a young son, and a beautiful home—she’s built the perfect life. But beneath this façade, Ava’s world is crumbling: her marriage is falling apart, her expensive law degree hasn’t been used in years, and her toddler’s tantrums are pushing her to the breaking point. Enter Winnie Fang, Ava’s enigmatic college roommate from Mainland China, who abruptly dropped out under mysterious circumstances. Now, twenty years later, Winnie is looking to reconnect with her old friend. But the shy, awkward girl Ava once knew has been replaced with a confident woman of the world, dripping in luxury goods, including a coveted Birkin in classic orange. The secret to her success? Winnie has developed an ingenious counterfeit scheme that involves importing near-exact replicas of luxury handbags and now she needs someone with a U.S. passport to help manage her business—someone who’d never be suspected of wrongdoing, someone like Ava. But when their spectacular success is threatened and Winnie vanishes once again, Ava is left to face the consequences. Swift, surprising, and sharply comic, a stylish and feminist caper with a strong point of view and an axe to grind.”

[Iona Iverson's Rules for Commuting: A Novel](#) by Clare Pooley

Pamela Dorman Books (June 7, 2022) 352 pages.

“Nobody ever talks to strangers on the train. It’s a rule. But what would happen if they did? Everyday, Iona, a larger-than-life magazine advice columnist, travels the ten stops from Hampton Court to Waterloo Station by train, accompanied by her dog, Lulu. Every day she sees the same people, whom she knows only by nickname: Impossibly-Pretty-Bookworm and Terribly-Lonely-Teenager. Of course, they never speak. Seasoned commuters never do. Then one morning, the man she calls Smart-But-Sexist-Manspreader chokes on a grape right in front of her. He’d have died were it not for the timely intervention of Sanjay, a nurse, who gives him the Heimlich maneuver. This single event starts a chain reaction, and an eclectic group of people with almost nothing in common except their commute discover that a chance encounter can blossom into much more. It turns out that talking to strangers can teach you about the world around you—and even more about yourself.”

[Mother Ocean Father Nation: A Novel](#) by Nishant Batsha

Ecco (June 7, 2022) 336 pages.

“On a small Pacific island, a brother and sister tune in to a breaking news radio bulletin. It is 1985, and an Indian grocer has just been attacked by nativists aligned with the recent military coup. Now, fear and shock are rippling through the island’s deeply-rooted Indian community as racial tensions rise to the brink. Bhumi hears this news from her locked-down dorm room in the capital city. She is the ambitious, intellectual standout of the family—the one destined for success. But when her friendship with the daughter of a prominent government official becomes a liability, she must flee her unstable home for California. Jaipal feels like the unnoticed, unremarkable sibling, always left to fend for himself. He is stuck working in the family store, avoiding their father’s wrath, with nothing but his hidden desires to distract him. Desperate for money and connection, he seizes a sudden opportunity to take his life into his own hands for the first time. But his decision may leave him vulnerable to the island’s escalating volatility. Spanning from the lush terrain of the South Pacific to the golden hills of San Francisco, *Mother*

Ocean Father Nation is an entrancing debut about how one family, at the mercy of a nation broken by legacies of power and oppression, forges a path to find a home once again.”

[Ordinary Monsters: A Novel](#) by J. M. Miro

Flatiron Books (June 7, 2022) 672 pages.

“England, 1882. In Victorian London, two children with mysterious powers are hunted by a figure of darkness—a man made of smoke. Sixteen-year-old Charlie Ovid, despite a brutal childhood in Mississippi, doesn't have a scar on him. His body heals itself, whether he wants it to or not. Marlowe, a foundling from a railway freight car, shines with a strange bluish light. He can melt or mend flesh. When Alice Quicke, a jaded detective with her own troubled past, is recruited to escort them to safety, all three begin a journey into the nature of difference and belonging, and the shadowy edges of the monstrous. What follows is a story of wonder and betrayal, from the gaslit streets of London, and the wooden theaters of Meiji-era Tokyo, to an eerie estate outside Edinburgh where other children with gifts—like Komako, a witch-child and twister of dust, and Ribs, a girl who cloaks herself in invisibility—are forced to combat the forces that threaten their safety. There, the world of the dead and the world of the living threaten to collide. And as secrets within the Institute unfurl, Komako, Marlowe, Charlie, Ribs, and the rest of the talents will discover the truth about their abilities, and the nature of what is stalking them: that the worst monsters sometimes come bearing the sweetest gifts.”

[Rogues: True Stories of Grifters, Killers, Rebels and Crooks](#) by Patrick Radden Keefe

Doubleday (June 28, 2022) 368 pages.

“Patrick Radden Keefe has garnered prizes ranging from the National Magazine Award to the Orwell Prize to the National Book Critics Circle Award for his meticulously-reported, hypnotically-engaging work on the many ways people behave badly. *Rogues* brings together a dozen of his most celebrated articles from *The New Yorker*. Keefe brilliantly explores the intricacies of forging \$150,000 vintage wines, examines whether a whistleblower who dared to expose money laundering at a Swiss bank is a hero or a fabulist, spends time in Vietnam with Anthony Bourdain, chronicles the quest to bring down a cheerful international black market arms merchant, and profiles a passionate death penalty attorney who represents the “worst of the worst,” among other bravura works of literary journalism. The appearance of his byline in *The New Yorker* is always an event, and collected here for the first time readers can see his work forms an always enthralling but deeply human portrait of criminals and rascals, as well as those who stand up against them.”

[Still Alright: A Memoir](#) by Kenny Loggins

Hachette Books (June 14, 2022) 304 pages.

“In a remarkable career, Kenny Loggins has rocked stages worldwide, released ten platinum albums, and landed hits all over the Billboard charts. His place in music history is marked by a unique gift for collaboration combined with the vision to evolve, adapt, and persevere in an industry that loves to eat its own. In *Still Alright*, Kenny Loggins gives fans a candid and entertaining perspective on his life and career as one of the most noteworthy musicians of the 1970s and '80s. He provides an abundance of compelling, insightful, and terrifically amusing behind-the-scenes tales. Loggins draws readers back to the musical eras they've loved, as well as addressing the challenges and obstacles of his life and work—including two marriages that ended in divorce, a difficult but motivating relationship with the older brother for which “Danny's Song” is named, struggles with his addiction to benzodiazepines, and the revelations of turning seventy and looking back at everything that has shaped his music—and coming to terms with his rock-star persona and his true self.”

[The Candid Life of Meena Dave](#) by Namrata Patel

Lake Union Publishing (June 1, 2022) 315 pages.

“A woman embarks on an unexpected journey into her past in an engrossing novel about identity, family secrets, and rediscovering the need to belong. Meena Dave is a photojournalist and a nomad. She has no family, no permanent address, and no long-term attachments, preferring to observe the world at a distance through the lens of her camera. But Meena’s solitary life is turned upside down when she unexpectedly inherits an apartment in a Victorian brownstone in historic Back Bay, Boston. Though Meena’s impulse is to sell it and keep moving, she decides to use her journalistic instinct to follow the story that landed her in the home of a stranger. It’s a mystery that comes with a series of hidden clues, a trio of meddling Indian aunties, and a handsome next-door neighbor. For Meena it’s a chance for newfound friendships, community, and culture she never thought possible. And a window into her past she never expected. Now as everything unknown to Meena comes into focus, she must reconcile who she wants to be with who she really is.”

[The Measure: A Novel](#) by Nikki Erlick

William Morrow (June 28, 2022) 369 pages.

“Eight ordinary people. One extraordinary choice. It seems like any other day. You wake up, pour a cup of coffee, and head out. But today, when you open your front door, waiting for you is a small wooden box. This box holds your fate inside: the answer to the exact number of years you will live. From suburban doorsteps to desert tents, every person on every continent receives the same box. In an instant, the world is thrust into a collective frenzy. Where did these boxes come from? What do they mean? Is there truth to what they promise? As society comes together and pulls apart, everyone faces the same shocking choice: Do they wish to know how long they’ll live? And, if so, what will they do with that knowledge? *The Measure* charts the dawn of this new world through an unforgettable cast of characters whose decisions and fates interweave with one another: best friends whose dreams are forever entwined, pen pals finding refuge in the unknown, a couple who thought they didn’t have to rush, a doctor who cannot save himself, and a politician whose box becomes the powder keg that ultimately changes everything.”

[The Mutual Friend: A Novel](#) by Carter Bays

Dutton (June 7, 2022) 480 pages.

“From the co-creator of *How I Met Your Mother*, a hilarious and thought-provoking debut novel set in New York City, following a sprawling cast of characters as they navigate life, love, loss, ambition, and spirituality—without ever looking up from their phones. It’s the summer of 2015, and Alice Quick needs to get to work. She’s twenty-eight years old, grieving her mother, barely scraping by as a nanny, and freshly kicked out of her apartment. If she can just get her act together and sign up for the MCAT, she can start chasing her dream of becoming a doctor . . . but in the Age of Distraction, the distractions are so distracting. There’s her tech millionaire brother’s religious awakening. His picture-perfect wife’s emotional breakdown. Her chaotic new roommate’s thirst for adventure. And, of course, there’s the biggest distraction of all: Love. From within the story of one summer in one woman’s life, an epic tale is unearthed, spanning continents and featuring a tapestry of characters tied to one another by threads both seen and unseen.”

[The Peacekeeper: A Novel](#) by B.L. Blanchard

47North (June 1, 2022) 317 pages.

“Against the backdrop of a never-colonized North America, a broken Ojibwe detective embarks on an emotional and twisting journey toward solving two murders, rediscovering family, and finding himself. North America was never colonized. The United States and Canada don’t exist. The Great Lakes are

surrounded by an independent Ojibwe nation. And in the village of Baawitigong, a Peacekeeper confronts his devastating past. Twenty years ago to the day, Chibenashi's mother was murdered and his father confessed. Ever since, caring for his still-traumatized younger sister has been Chibenashi's privilege and penance. Now, on the same night of the Manoomin harvest, another woman is slain. His mother's best friend. This leads to a seemingly impossible connection that takes Chibenashi far from the only world he's ever known. The major city of Shikaakwa is home to the victim's cruelly estranged family—and to two people Chibenashi never wanted to see again: his imprisoned father and the lover who broke his heart. As the questions mount, the answers will change his and his sister's lives forever. Because Chibenashi is about to discover that everything about their lives has been a lie."

[The Woman in the Library: A Novel](#) by Sulari Gentill

Poisoned Pen Press (June 7, 2022) 288 pages.

"The ornate reading room at the Boston Public Library is quiet, until the tranquility is shattered by a woman's terrified scream. Security guards take charge immediately, instructing everyone inside to stay put until the threat is identified and contained. While they wait for the all-clear, four strangers, who'd happened to sit at the same table, pass the time in conversation and friendships are struck. Each has his or her own reasons for being in the reading room that morning—it just happens that one is a murderer. An unexpectedly twisty literary adventure that examines the complicated nature of friendship and shows us that words can be the most treacherous weapons of all."

[Woman of Light: A Novel](#) by Kali Fajardo-Anstine

One World (June 7, 2022) 336 pages.

"There is one every generation, a seer who keeps the stories. Luz "Little Light" Lopez, a tea leaf reader and laundress, is left to fend for herself after her older brother, Diego, a snake charmer and factory worker, is run out of town by a violent white mob. As Luz navigates 1930s Denver, she begins to have visions that transport her to her Indigenous homeland in the nearby Lost Territory. Luz recollects her ancestors' origins, how her family flourished, and how they were threatened. She bears witness to the sinister forces that have devastated her people and their homelands for generations. In the end, it is up to Luz to save her family stories from disappearing into oblivion. Written in Kali Fajardo-Anstine's singular voice, the wildly entertaining and complex lives of the Lopez family fill the pages of this multigenerational western saga. *Woman of Light* is a transfixing novel about survival, family secrets, and love—filled with an unforgettable cast of characters, all of whom are just as special, memorable, and complicated as our beloved heroine, Luz."



Book descriptions provided by publishers.

Neenah Public Library

neenahlibrary.org/thenextchapter