



The Next Chapter: April 2021 Book Recommendations

[The Light of Days: The Untold Story of Women Resistance Fighters in Hitler's Ghettos](#) by Judy Batalion **William Morrow (April 6, 2021)**

“One of the most important stories of World War II, already optioned by Steven Spielberg for a major motion picture: a spectacular, searing history that brings to light the extraordinary accomplishments of brave Jewish women who became resistance fighters—a group of unknown heroes whose exploits have never been chronicled in full, until now. Witnesses to the brutal murder of their families and neighbors and the violent destruction of their communities, a cadre of Jewish women in Poland—some still in their teens—helped transform the Jewish youth groups into resistance cells to fight the Nazis. With courage, guile, and nerves of steel, these “ghetto girls” paid off Gestapo guards, hid revolvers in loaves of bread and jars of marmalade, and helped build systems of underground bunkers. They flirted with German soldiers, bribed them with wine, whiskey, and home cooking, used their Aryan looks to seduce them, and shot and killed them. They bombed German train lines and blew up a town’s water supply. They also nursed the sick and taught children. Yet the exploits of these courageous resistance fighters have remained virtually unknown. As propulsive and thrilling as *Hidden Figures*, *In the Garden of Beasts*, *Band of Brothers*, and *A Train in Winter*, *The Light of Days* at last tells the true story of these incredible women whose courageous yet little-known feats have been eclipsed by time.”

[The Galaxy, and the Ground Within](#) by Becky Chambers *Wayfarers Series, Book 4* **Harper Voyager (April 20, 2021)**

“Return to the sprawling, Hugo Award-winning universe of the Galactic Commons to explore another corner of the cosmos—one often mentioned, but not yet explored—in this absorbing entry in the *Wayfarers* series, which blends heart-warming characters and imaginative adventure. With no water, no air, and no native life, the planet Gora is unremarkable. The only thing it has going for it is a chance proximity to more popular worlds, making it a decent stopover for ships traveling between the wormholes that keep the Galactic Commons connected. If deep space is a highway, Gora is just your average truck stop. At the Five-Hop One-Stop, long-haul spacers can stretch their legs (if they have legs, that is), and get fuel, transit permits, and assorted supplies. The Five-Hop is run by an enterprising alien and her sometimes helpful child, who work hard to provide a little piece of home to everyone passing through. When a freak technological failure halts all traffic to and from Gora, three strangers—all different species with different aims—are thrown together at the Five-Hop. Grounded, with nothing to do but wait, the trio—an exiled artist with an appointment to keep, a cargo runner at a personal crossroads, and a mysterious individual doing her best to help those on the fringes—are compelled to confront where they’ve been, where they might go, and what they are, or could be, to each other.”

[The Funny Thing About Norman Foreman](#) by Julietta Henderson

MIRA (April 13, 2021)

“A triumphant and touching debut about the unlikeliest superstar you’ll ever meet. Twelve-year-old Norman Foreman and his best friend, Jax, are a legendary comedic duo in waiting, with a plan to take their act all the way to the Edinburgh Fringe. But when Jax dies, Norman decides the only fitting tribute is to perform at the festival himself. The problem is, Norman’s not the funny one. Jax was. There’s also another, far more colossal objective on Norman’s new plan that his single mom, Sadie, wasn’t ready for: he wants to find the father he’s never known. Determined to put a smile back on her boy’s face, Sadie resolves to face up to her own messy past, get Norman to the Fringe and help track down a man whose identity is a mystery, even to her. Julietta Henderson’s delightfully funny and tender debut takes us on a road trip with a mother and son who will live in the reader’s heart for a long time to come, and teaches us that—no matter the odds—we must always reach for the stars.”

[Empire of Pain: The Secret History of the Sackler Dynasty](#) by Patrick Radden Keefe

Doubleday (April 13, 2021)

“A grand, devastating portrait of three generations of the Sackler family, famed for their philanthropy, whose fortune was built by Valium and whose reputation was destroyed by OxyContin, by the prize-winning, bestselling author of *Say Nothing*. The Sackler name adorns the walls of many storied institutions—Harvard, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Oxford, the Louvre. They are one of the richest families in the world, known for their lavish donations to the arts and the sciences. The source of the family fortune was vague, however, until it emerged that the Sacklers were responsible for making and marketing a blockbuster painkiller that was the catalyst for the opioid crisis.”

[The Book of Difficult Fruit: Arguments for the Tart, Tender, and Unruly \(with recipes\)](#) by Kate Lebo Farrar, Straus and Giroux (April 6, 2021)

“Inspired by twenty-six fruits, the essayist, poet, and pie lady Kate Lebo expertly blends natural, culinary, medical, and personal history. *A* is for aronia, berry member of the apple family, clothes-stainer, superfruit with reputed healing power. *D* is for durian, endowed with a dramatic rind and a shifting odor—peaches, old garlic. *M* is for medlar, name-checked by Shakespeare for its crude shape, beloved by gardeners for its flowers. *Q* is for quince, which, when fresh, gives off the scent of “roses and citrus and rich women’s perfume,” but if eaten raw is so astringent it wicks the juice from one’s mouth. In a work of unique invention, these and other difficult fruits serve as the central ingredients of twenty-six lyrical essays (with recipes). What makes a fruit difficult? Its cultivation, its harvest, its preparation, the brevity of its moment for ripeness, its tendency toward rot or poison, the way it might overrun your garden. Here, these fruits will take you on unexpected turns and give sideways insights into relationships, self-care, land stewardship, medical and botanical history, and so much more.”

[The Souvenir Museum: Stories](#) by Elizabeth McCracken

Ecco (April 13, 2021)

“Award-winning author Elizabeth McCracken is an undisputed virtuoso of the short story, and this new collection features her most vibrant and heartrending work to date. In these stories, the mysterious bonds of family are tested, transformed, fractured, and fortified. A recent widower and his adult son ferry to a craggy Scottish island in search of puffins. An actress who plays a children’s game-show villainess ushers in the New Year with her deadbeat half brother. A mother, pining for her children, feasts on loaves of challah to fill the void. A new couple navigates a tightrope walk toward love. And on

a trip to a Texas water park with their son, two fathers each confront a personal fear. With sentences that crackle and spark and showcase her trademark wit, McCracken traces how our closely held desires—for intimacy, atonement, comfort—bloom and wither against the indifferent passing of time. Her characters embark on journeys that leave them indelibly changed—and so do her readers. *The Souvenir Museum* showcases the talents of one of our finest contemporary writers as she tenderly takes the pulse of our collective and individual lives.”

[When the Stars Go Dark](#) by Paula McLain

Ballantine Books (April 13, 2021)

“Anna Hart is a seasoned missing persons detective in San Francisco with far too much knowledge of the darkest side of human nature. When tragedy strikes her personal life, Anna, desperate and numb, flees to the Northern California village of Mendocino to grieve. She lived there as a child with her beloved foster parents, and now she believes it might be the only place left for her. Yet the day she arrives, she learns that a local teenage girl has gone missing. The crime feels frighteningly reminiscent of the most crucial time in Anna’s childhood, when the unsolved murder of a young girl touched Mendocino and changed the community forever. As past and present collide, Anna realizes that she has been led to this moment. The most difficult lessons of her life have given her insight into how victims come into contact with violent predators. As Anna becomes obsessed with saving the missing girl, she must accept that true courage means getting out of her own way and learning to let others in. Weaving together actual cases of missing persons, trauma theory, and a hint of the metaphysical, this propulsive and deeply affecting novel tells a story of fate, necessary redemption, and what it takes, when the worst happens, to reclaim our lives—and our faith in one another.”

[Susan, Linda, Nina, and Cokie: The Extraordinary Story of the Founding Mothers of NPR](#) by Lisa Napoli

Harry N. Abrams (April 13, 2021)

“A group biography of four beloved women who fought sexism, covered decades of American news, and whose voices defined NPR. In the years after the Civil Rights Act of 1964, women in the workplace still found themselves relegated to secretarial positions or locked out of jobs entirely. This was especially true in the news business, a backwater of male chauvinism where a woman might be lucky to get a foothold on the “women’s pages.” But when a pioneering nonprofit called National Public Radio came along in the 1970s, and the door to serious journalism opened a crack, four remarkable women came along and blew it off the hinges. *Susan, Linda, Nina, and Cokie* is journalist Lisa Napoli’s captivating account of these four women, their deep and enduring friendships, and the trail they blazed to becoming icons. They had radically different stories. Cokie Roberts was born into a political dynasty, roamed the halls of Congress as a child, and felt a tug toward public service. Susan Stamberg, who had lived in India with her husband who worked for the State Department, was the first woman to anchor a nightly news program and pressed for accommodations to balance work and home life. Linda Wertheimer, the daughter of shopkeepers in New Mexico, fought her way to a scholarship and a spot on-air. And Nina Totenberg, the network’s legal affairs correspondent, invented a new way to cover the Supreme Court. Based on extensive interviews and calling on the author’s deep connections in news and public radio, Susan, Linda, Nina, and Cokie will be as beguiling and sharp as its formidable subjects.”

***The Road Trip* by Beth O’Leary**

Berkley (June 1, 2021)

“Two exes reach a new level of awkward when forced to take a road trip together in this endearing and humorous novel by the author of the international bestseller *The Flatshare*. *What if the end of the road*

is just the beginning? Four years ago, Dylan and Addie fell in love under the Provence sun. Wealthy Oxford student Dylan was staying at his friend Cherry's enormous French villa; wild child Addie was spending her summer as the on-site caretaker. Two years ago, their relationship officially ended. They haven't spoken since. Today, Dylan's and Addie's lives collide again. It's the day before Cherry's wedding, and Addie and Dylan crash cars at the start of the journey there. The car Dylan was driving is wrecked, and the wedding is in rural Scotland—he'll never get there on time by public transport. So, along with Dylan's best friend, Addie's sister, and a random guy on Facebook who needed a ride, they squeeze into a space-challenged Mini and set off across Britain. Cramped into the same space, Dylan and Addie are forced to confront the choices they made that tore them apart—and ask themselves whether that final decision was the right one after all."

[Sure, I'll Be Your Black Friend: Notes from the Other Side of the Fist Bump](#) by Ben Philippe

Harper (April 27, 2021)

"In the biting, hilarious vein of *What Doesn't Kill You Makes You Blacker* and *We Are Never Meeting in Real Life* comes Ben Philippe's candid memoir-in-essays, chronicling a lifetime of being the Black friend (see also: foreign kid, boyfriend, coworker, student, teacher, roommate, enemy) in predominantly white spaces. In an era in which "I have many black friends" is often a medal of Wokeness, Ben hilariously chronicles the experience of being on the receiving end of those fist bumps. He takes us through his immigrant childhood, from wanting nothing more than friends to sit with at lunch, to his awkward teenage years, to college in the age of Obama, and adulthood in the Trump administration—two sides of the same American coin. Ben takes his role as your new black friend seriously, providing original and borrowed wisdom on stereotypes, slurs, the whole "swimming thing," how much Beyoncé is too much Beyoncé, Black Girl Magic, the rise of the Karens, affirmative action, the Black Lives Matter movement, and other conversations you might want to have with your new BBFF. Oscillating between the impulse to be "one of the good ones" and the occasional need to excuse himself to the restrooms, stuff his mouth with toilet paper, and scream, Ben navigates his own Blackness as an "Oreo" with too many opinions for his father's liking, an encyclopedic knowledge of CW teen dramas, and a mouth he can't always control. From cheating his way out of swim tests to discovering stray family members in unlikely places, he finds the punchline in the serious while acknowledging the blunt truths of existing as a Black man in today's world. Extremely timely, *Sure, I'll Be Your Black Friend* is a conversational take on topics both light and heavy, universal and deeply personal, which reveals incisive truths about the need for connection in all of us."

[Pride and Premeditation](#) by Tirzah Price

HarperTeen (April 6, 2021)

"Perfect for fans of the Lady Janies and *Stalking Jack the Ripper*, the first book in the Jane Austen Murder Mysteries series is a clever retelling of *Pride and Prejudice* that reimagines the iconic settings, characters, and romances in a thrilling and high-stakes whodunit. When a scandalous murder shocks London high society, seventeen-year-old aspiring lawyer Lizzie Bennet seizes the opportunity to prove herself, despite the interference of Mr. Fitzwilliam Darcy, the stern young heir to the prestigious firm Pemberley Associates. Convinced the authorities have imprisoned the wrong person, Lizzie vows to solve the murder on her own. But as the case—and her feelings for Darcy—become more complicated, Lizzie discovers that her dream job could make her happy, but it might also get her killed."

[The Kindred Spirits Supper Club](#) by Amy E. Reichert

Berkley (April 20, 2021)

"Jobless and forced home to Wisconsin, journalist Sabrina Monroe can tolerate reunions with frenemies and kisses from old boyfriends, but not the literal ghosts that greet her in this heartwarming tale of the

power of love and connection from acclaimed author Amy E. Reichert. For Sabrina Monroe, moving back home to the Wisconsin Dells--the self-described Waterpark Capital of the World--means returning to the Monroe family curse: the women in her family can see spirits who come to them for help with unfinished business. But Sabrina's always redirected the needy spirits to her mom, who's much better suited for the job. The one exception has always been Molly, a bubbly rom-com loving ghost, who stuck by Sabrina's side all through her lonely childhood. Her personal life starts looking up when Ray, the new local restaurateur, invites Sabrina to his supper club, where he flirts with her over his famous Brandy Old-Fashioneds. He's charming and handsome, but Sabrina tells herself she doesn't have time for romance--she needs to focus on finding a job. Except the longer she's in the Dells, the harder it is to resist her feelings for Ray. Who can turn down a cute guy with a fondness for rescue dogs and an obsession with perfecting his fried cheese curds recipe? When the Dells starts to feel like home for the first time and with Ray in her corner, Sabrina begins to realize that she can make a difference and help others wherever she is."

[Gold Diggers](#) by Sanjena Sathian

Penguin Press (April 6, 2021)

"How far would you go for a piece of the American dream? A magical realist coming-of-age story, *Gold Diggers* skewers the model minority myth to tell a hilarious and moving story about immigrant identity, community, and the underside of ambition. A floundering second-generation teenager growing up in the Bush-era Atlanta suburbs, Neil Narayan is funny and smart but struggles to bear the weight of expectations of his family and their Asian American enclave. He tries to want their version of success, but mostly, Neil just wants his neighbor across the cul-de-sac, Anita Dayal. When he discovers that Anita is the beneficiary of an ancient, alchemical potion made from stolen gold—a "lemonade" that harnesses the ambition of the gold's original owner—Neil sees his chance to get ahead. But events spiral into a tragedy that rips their community apart. Years later in the Bay Area, Neil still bristles against his community's expectations—and finds he might need one more hit of that lemonade, no matter the cost. Sanjena Sathian's astonishing debut offers a fine-grained, profoundly intelligent, and bitingly funny investigation into what's required to make it in America."

[Second First Impressions](#) by Sally Thorne

William Morrow (April 13, 2021)

"Position Vacant: Two ancient old women residing at Providence Retirement Villa seek male assistant for casual exploitation and good-natured humiliation. Duties include boutique shopping, fast-food fetching, and sincerely rendered flattery. Good looks a bonus—but we aren't picky. An advertisement has been placed (again!) by the wealthy and eccentric Parlioni Sisters. The salary is generous and the employers are 90 years old, so how hard could the job be? Well, none have lasted longer than a week. Most boys leave in tears. Ruthie Midona will work in Providence's front office, and be at the Parlioni's beck and call, *forever*. That's sort of her life plan. If Ruthie can run the place in her almost-retired bosses' absence, with no hijinks/hiccups, she has a shot at becoming the new manager. She might also be able to defend her safe little world from Prescott Development, the new buyer of the prime site. Maybe after *all* that, she can find a cute guy to date. All she needs to do is stay serious—and that's what she does best. Until, one day, someone dazzling blows into town. Teddy Prescott devotes his life to sleeping, tattooing, and avoiding seriousness. When Teddy needs a place to crash, he makes a deal with his developer dad. Teddy can stay in one of Providence's on-site maintenance cottages—right next door to an unimpressed Ruthie—but only if he works there and starts to grow up. Ruthie knows how this sweetly selfish rich boy can earn his keep—and be out of her hair in under a week. After all, there is a position vacant..."

[Hummingbird Salamander](#) by Jeff VanderMeer

MCD (April 6, 2021)

“From the author of *Annihilation*, a brilliant speculative thriller of dark conspiracy, endangered species, and the possible end of all things. Security consultant “Jane Smith” receives an envelope with a key to a storage unit that holds a taxidermied hummingbird and clues leading her to a taxidermied salamander. Silvina, the dead woman who left the note, is a reputed ecoterrorist and the daughter of an Argentine industrialist. By taking the hummingbird from the storage unit, Jane sets in motion a series of events that quickly spin beyond her control. Soon, Jane and her family are in danger, with few allies to help her make sense of the true scope of the peril. Is the only way to safety to follow in Silvina’s footsteps? Is it too late to stop? As she desperately seeks answers about why Silvina contacted her, time is running out—for her and possibly for the world. *Hummingbird Salamander* is Jeff VanderMeer at his brilliant, cinematic best, wrapping profound questions about climate change, identity, and the world we live in into a tightly plotted thriller full of unexpected twists and elaborate conspiracy.”

[Crying in H Mart](#) by Michelle Zauner

Knopf (April 20, 2021)

“From the indie rockstar of Japanese Breakfast fame, and author of the viral 2018 New Yorker essay that shares the title of this book, an unflinching, powerful memoir about growing up Korean-American, losing her mother, and forging her own identity. In this exquisite story of family, food, grief, and endurance, Michelle Zauner proves herself far more than a dazzling singer, songwriter, and guitarist. With humor and heart, 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 a painful adolescence (; 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, 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. Vivacious and plainspoken, lyrical and honest, Michelle Zauner's voice is as radiantly alive on the page as it is onstage. Rich with intimate anecdotes that will resonate widely, and complete with family photos, *Crying in H Mart* is a book to cherish, share, and reread.”



Book descriptions provided by publishers.

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