



The Next Chapter: September 2021 Book Recommendations

***A Calling for Charlie Barnes* by Joshua Ferris**

Little, Brown and Company (September 28, 2021)

“Someone is telling the story of the life of Charlie Barnes, and it doesn't appear to be going well. Too often divorced, discontent with life's compromises and in a house, he hates, this lifelong schemer and eternal romantic would like out of his present circumstances and into the American dream. But when the twin calamities of the Great Recession and a cancer scare come along to compound his troubles, his dreams dwindle further, and an infinite past full of forking paths quickly tapers to a black dot. Then, against all odds, something goes right for a change: Charlie is granted a second act. With help from his storyteller son, he surveys the facts of his life and finds his true calling where he least expects it—in a sacrifice that redounds with selflessness and love—at last becoming the man his son always knew he could be. *A Calling for Charlie Barnes* is a profound and tender portrait of a man whose desperate need to be loved is his downfall, and a brutally funny account of how that love is ultimately earned.”

***Apples Never Fall* by Liane Moriarty**

Henry Holt and Co. (September 14, 2021)

“If your mother was missing, would you tell the police? Even if the most obvious suspect was your father? This is the dilemma facing the four grown Delaney siblings. The Delaneys are fixtures in their community. The parents, Stan and Joy, are the envy of all of their friends. They're killers on the tennis court, and off it their chemistry is palpable. But after fifty years of marriage, they've finally sold their famed tennis academy and are ready to start what should be the golden years of their lives. So why are Stan and Joy so miserable? The four Delaney children--Amy, Logan, Troy, and Brooke--were tennis stars in their own right, yet as their father will tell you, none of them had what it took to go all the way. But that's okay, now that they're all successful grown-ups and there is the wonderful possibility of grandchildren on the horizon. One night a stranger named Savannah knocks on Stan and Joy's door, bleeding after a fight with her boyfriend. The Delaneys are more than happy to give her the small kindness she sorely needs. If only that was all she wanted. Later, when Joy goes missing, and Savannah is nowhere to be found, the police question the one person who remains: Stan. But for someone who claims to be innocent, he, like many spouses, seems to have a lot to hide. Two of the Delaney children think their father is innocent, two are not so sure--but as the two sides square off against each other in perhaps their biggest match ever, all of the Delaneys will start to reexamine their shared family history in a very new light.”

***Fuzz: When Nature Breaks the Law* by Mary Roach**

W. W. Norton & Company (September 14, 2021)

“What's to be done about a jaywalking moose? A bear caught breaking and entering? A murderous tree? Three hundred years ago, animals that broke the law would be assigned legal representation and put on trial. These days, as New York Times best-selling author Mary Roach discovers, the answers are best found not in jurisprudence but in science: the curious science of human-wildlife conflict, a discipline

at the crossroads of human behavior and wildlife biology. Roach tags along with animal-attack forensics investigators, human-elephant conflict specialists, bear managers, and "danger tree" faller blasters. Intrepid as ever, she travels from leopard-terrorized hamlets in the Indian Himalaya to St. Peter's Square in the early hours before the pope arrives for Easter Mass, when vandal gulls swoop in to destroy the elaborate floral display. She taste-tests rat bait, learns how to install a vulture effigy, and gets mugged by a macaque. Combining little-known forensic science and conservation genetics with a motley cast of laser scarecrows, langur impersonators, and trespassing squirrels, Roach reveals as much about humanity as about nature's lawbreakers. When it comes to "problem" wildlife, she finds, humans are more often the problem—and the solution. Fascinating, witty, and humane, *Fuzz* offers hope for compassionate coexistence in our ever-expanding human habitat."

***Go West, Young Man: A Father and Son Rediscover America on the Oregon Trail* by B.J. Hollars
Bison Books (September 1, 2021)**

"At the sound of the bell on the last day of kindergarten, B.J. Hollars and his six-year-old son, Henry, hop in the car to strike out on a 2,500-mile road trip retracing the Oregon Trail. Their mission: to rediscover America, and Americans, along the way. Throughout their two-week adventure, they endure the usual setbacks (car trouble, inclement weather, and father-son fatigue), but their most compelling drama involves people, privilege, and their attempt to find common ground in an all-too-fractured country. Writing in the footsteps of John Steinbeck's *Travels with Charley*, Hollars picks up the trail with his son more than half a century later. Together they sidle up to a stool at every truck stop, camp by every creek, and roam the West. They encounter not only the beauty and heartbreak of America, but also the beauty and heartbreak of a father and son eager to make the most of their time together. From Chimney Rock to Independence Rock to the rocky coast of Oregon, they learn and relearn the devastating truth of America's exploitative past, as well as their role within it. *Go West, Young Man* recounts the author's effort to teach his son the difficult realities of our nation's founding while also reaffirming his faith in America today."

***L.A. Weather: A Novel* by María Amparo Escandón
Flatiron Books (September 7, 2021)**

"L.A. is parched, dry as a bone, and all Oscar, the weather-obsessed patriarch of the Alvarado family, desperately wants is a little rain. He's harboring a costly secret that distracts him from everything else. His wife, Keila, desperate for a life with a little more intimacy and a little less Weather Channel, feels she has no choice but to end their marriage. Their three daughters—Claudia, a television chef with a hard-hearted attitude; Olivia, a successful architect who suffers from gentrification guilt; and Patricia, a social media wizard who has an uncanny knack for connecting with audiences but not with her lovers—are blindsided and left questioning everything they know. Each will have to take a critical look at her own relationships and make some tough decisions along the way. With quick-wit and humor, María Amparo Escandón follows the Alvarado family as they wrestle with impending evacuations, secrets, deception, and betrayal, and their toughest decision yet: whether to stick together or burn it all down."

***Light From Uncommon Stars* by Ryka Aoki
Tor Books (September 28, 2021)**

"*Good Omens* meets *The Long Way to a Small, Angry Planet* in Ryka Aoki's *Light from Uncommon Stars*, a defiantly joyful adventure set in California's San Gabriel Valley, with cursed violins, Faustian bargains, and queer alien courtship over fresh-made donuts. Shizuka Satomi made a deal with the devil: to escape

damnation, she must entice seven other violin prodigies to trade their souls for success. She has already delivered six. When Katrina Nguyen, a young transgender runaway, catches Shizuka's ear with her wild talent, Shizuka can almost feel the curse lifting. She's found her final candidate. But in a donut shop off a bustling highway in the San Gabriel Valley, Shizuka meets Lan Tran, retired starship captain, interstellar refugee, and mother of four. Shizuka doesn't have time for crushes or coffee dates, what with her very soul on the line, but Lan's kind smile and eyes like stars might just redefine a soul's worth. And maybe something as small as a warm donut is powerful enough to break a curse as vast as the California coastline. As the lives of these three women become entangled by chance and fate, a story of magic, identity, curses, and hope begins, and a family worth crossing the universe for is found."

***Personal Effects: What Recovering the Dead Teaches Me About Caring for the Living* by Robert A. Jensen St. Martin's Press (September 28, 2021)**

"The owner of the world's leading disaster management company chronicles the unseen world behind the yellow tape, and explores what it means to be human after a lifetime of caring for the dead. You have seen Robert A. Jensen—you just never knew it. As the owner of the world's largest disaster management company, he has spent most of his adult life responding to tragedy. From the Oklahoma City bombing, 9/11, and the Bali bombings, to the 2004 South Asian Tsunami, Hurricane Katrina, the 2010 Haitian Earthquake, and the Grenfell Tower Fire, Jensen has been at the practical level of international incidents, assisting with the recovery of bodies, identifying victims, and repatriating and returning their personal effects to the surviving family members. He is also, crucially, involved in the emotional recovery that comes after a disaster: helping guide the families, governments, and companies involved, telling them what to expect and managing the unmanageable. A rare glimpse into a world we all see but many know nothing about, *Personal Effects* is an inspiring and heartwarming story of survival and the importance of moving forward, Jensen allows his readers to see over his shoulder as he responds to disaster sites, uncovers the deceased, and cares for families to show how a strong will and desire to do good can become a path through the worst the world can throw at us."

***Summer Light, and Then Comes the Night* by Jon Kalman Stefansson & Philip Roughton (Translator) HarperVia (September 7, 2021)**

"Sometimes, in small places, life becomes bigger. *Summer Light and Then Comes the Night* is a profound and playful masterwork from one of Iceland's most beloved authors that explores the dreams and desires of ordinary people in a rural town. In a village of only four hundred inhabitants, life could seem unremarkable. Yet in this remote town, a new road to the city has change on everyone's minds. There is the beautiful, elusive Elisabet who cuts a surprisingly svelte path at The Knitting Company. Neighbors Kristin and Kjartan who seem...normal, but for their explosive passion that bewilders even themselves (and ignites the spectacular revenge of Kjartan's wife). And then the most successful businessman in town decides to ditch his Range Rover and glamorous wife in exchange for Latin books and stargazing. Unexpected, warm, and humorous, Stefansson explores the dreams and desires of these everyday people, and reveals the magic of life in all of its progress, its complacency, its ugliness and, ultimately, beauty."

***The Inheritance of Orquídea Divina* by Zoraida Córdova Atria Books (September 7, 2021)**

"The Montoyas are used to a life without explanations. They know better than to ask why the pantry never seems to run low or empty, or why their matriarch won't ever leave their home in Four Rivers—

even for graduations, weddings, or baptisms. But when Orquídea Divina invites them to her funeral and to collect their inheritance, they hope to learn the secrets that she has held onto so tightly their whole lives. Instead, Orquídea is transformed, leaving them with more questions than answers. Seven years later, her gifts have manifested in different ways for Marimar, Rey, and Tatinelly's daughter, Rhiannon, granting them unexpected blessings. But soon, a hidden figure begins to tear through their family tree, picking them off one by one as it seeks to destroy Orquídea's line. Determined to save what's left of their family and uncover the truth behind their inheritance, the four descendants travel to Ecuador—to the place where Orquídea buried her secrets and broken promises and never looked back. Alternating between Orquídea's past and her descendants' present, *The Inheritance of Orquídea Divina* is an enchanting novel about what we knowingly and unknowingly inherit from our ancestors, the ties that bind, and reclaiming your power."

***Three Girls from Bronzeville: A Uniquely American Memoir of Race, Fate, and Sisterhood* by Dawn Turner Simon & Schuster (September 7, 2021)**

"They were three Black girls. Dawn, tall and studious; her sister, Kim, younger by three years and headstrong as they come; and her best friend, Debra, already prom-queen pretty by third grade. They bonded—fervently and intensely in that unique way of little girls—as they roamed the concrete landscape of Bronzeville, a historic neighborhood on Chicago's South Side, the destination of hundreds of thousands of Black folks who fled the ravages of the Jim Crow South. These third-generation daughters of the Great Migration come of age in the 1970s, in the warm glow of the recent civil rights movement. It has offered them a promise, albeit nascent and fragile, that they will have more opportunities, rights, and freedoms than any generation of Black Americans in history. Their working-class, striving parents are eager for them to realize this hard-fought potential. But the girls have much more immediate concerns: hiding under the dining room table and eavesdropping on grown folks' business; collecting secret treasures; and daydreaming about their futures—Dawn and Debra, doctors, Kim a teacher. For a brief, wondrous moment the girls are all giggles and dreams and promises of "friends forever." And then fate intervenes, first slowly and then dramatically, sending them careening in wildly different directions. There's heartbreak, loss, displacement, and even murder. Dawn struggles to make sense of the shocking turns that consume her sister and her best friend, all the while asking herself a simple but profound question: Why?"

***You Got Anything Stronger? Stories* by Gabrielle Union
Dey Street Books (September 14, 2021)**

"Remember when we hit it off so well that we decided *We're Going to Need More Wine*? Well, this time you and I are going to turn to our friend the bartender and ask, *You Got Anything Stronger?* I promise to continue to make you laugh, but with this round, the stakes get higher as the conversation goes deeper. *We're Going to Need More Wine...* plus a few shots-acclaimed activist, actress, and New York Times bestselling author Gabrielle Union is back with an even more intimate, revealing, and powerful collection of essays."



Book descriptions provided by publishers.
Neenah Public Library
920-886-6315
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