

The New York Times

Book Review

JUNE 4, 2023

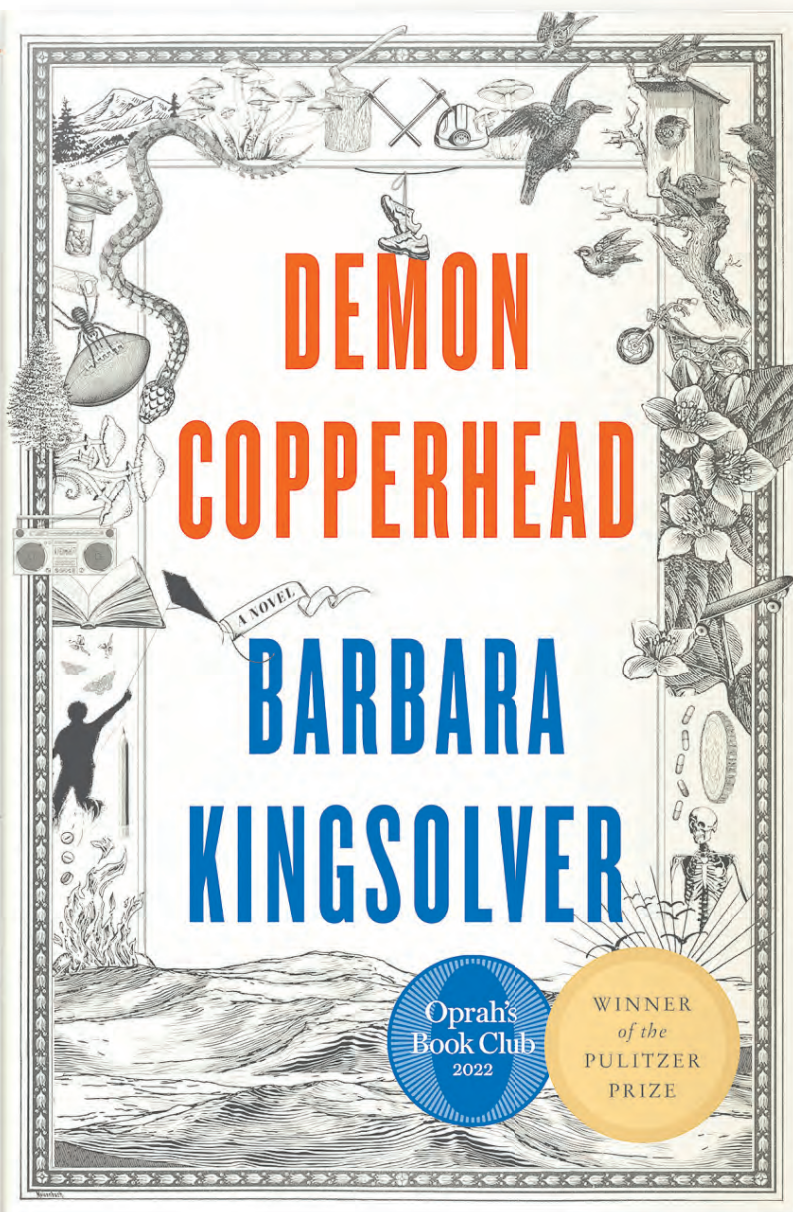
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**“A page-turner
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—*Beth Macy, author of Dopesick*

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—*Ron Charles, Washington Post*

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—*San Francisco Chronicle*



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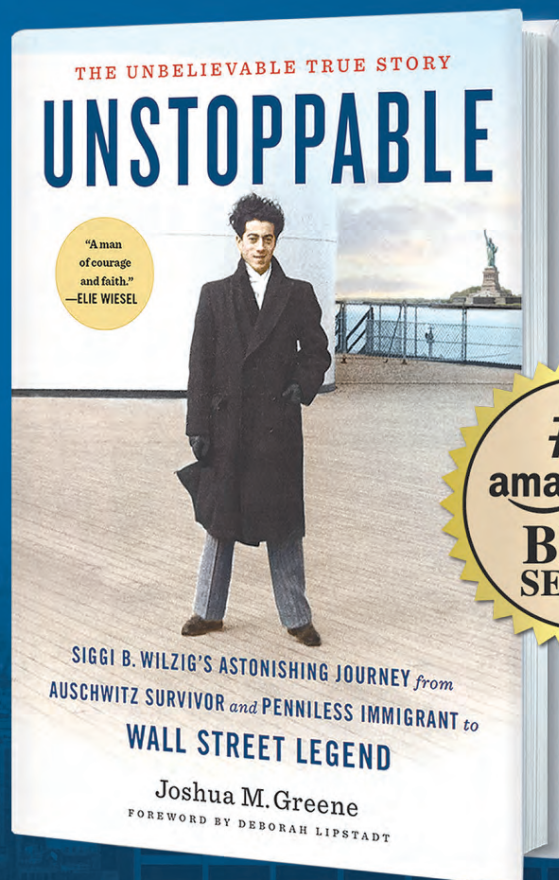
—*Library Journal*

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—Best of Los Angeles Awards

“BEST BUSINESS HISTORY BOOK of 2021”

—*strategy+business*, a pwc publication



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THE MAN IN THE MCINTOSH SUIT, by Rina Ayuyang. (Drawn & Quarterly, \$24.95.) Ayuyang evokes the hardship and racism experienced by Filipino immigrants in this Depression-era noir, in which a migrant worker abandons the strawberry fields of rural California in search of his estranged wife in San Francisco.



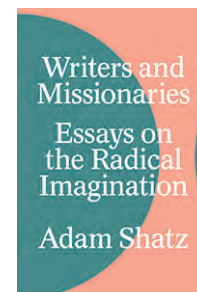
BOYS WEEKEND, by Mattie Lubchansky. (Pantheon, \$28.) Set at a bachelor party on a floating party island, this dystopian satire follows Sammie, the groom's trans femme “best man,” as they navigate awkward silences and misgendering comments from their hetero, crypto-obsessed college friends.

SALOME'S LAST DANCE, by Daria Tessler. (Fantagraphics, \$19.99.) Magnus the magician seeks aid for his alienation while his dancing dog attracts ominous elements in this absurdist fantasy, rendered in hallucinatory ink drawings and collage.

GIRL JUICE, by Benji Nate. (Drawn & Quarterly, paperback, \$24.95.) Tallulah, Sadie, Nana and Bunny live together in the chaotic, colorful, maybe-haunted Girl Juice House, where they learn that “U don't have to seek approval from ur roomies to make big silly life decisions” — but sometimes you do.

...Also Out Now

RAW DOG: The Naked Truth About Hot Dogs, by Jamie Loftus. (Forge, \$26.99.) Loftus blends hot dog history with savory travelogue in this vibrant account chronicling the food's footprint on American life, from the horrors of factory farms to Joey Chestnut's exploits and the fall of the Dodger Dog.



WRITERS AND MISSIONARIES: Essays on the Radical Imagination, by Adam Shatz. (Verso, \$34.95.) This collection examines the lives of writers including Richard Wright, Claude Lévi-Strauss and Edward Said to reveal how their environments and experiences shaped their work.

THE QUEER FILM GUIDE: 100 Great Movies That Tell LGBTQIA+ Stories, by Kyle Turner. (Smith Street Books, \$19.95.) This compilation spans the history of queer cinema, from classics like Hitchcock's “Rope” to acclaimed contemporary films like “Moonlight.”

THE LAST HONEST MAN: The CIA, the FBI, the Mafia, and the Kennedys — and One Senator's Fight to Save Democracy, by James Risen with Thomas Risen. (Little, Brown, \$32.) The former Idaho senator Frank Church led congressional opposition to the Vietnam War and investigated intelligence agencies after Watergate. His overlooked political legacy is restored here.



DONIELLE INGERSOLL

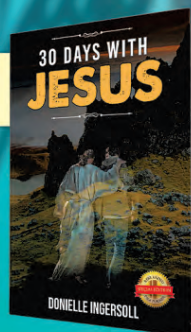
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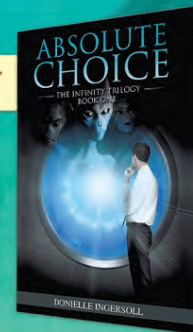
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Donielle Ingersoll is no ordinary masters of art degree holder. In fact, his relentless pursuit for all things creative led him to be one of the most prolific wordsmiths in PageTurner's roster of authors. Drawing upon his personal experiences and his creativity, he wrote books that are both entertaining and raise awareness about certain social ills.

And his creativity knows no bounds as he writes in different genres: from devotionals, to romance, to fantasy, to science fiction, to young adult fiction. Grab a copy of his PageTurner best sellers: *The CUBE*, *30 Days with Jesus*, *A Little Taste of Heaven*, *Patti Cake*, and *Absolute Choice*. Be on the lookout as well for his upcoming titles: *The Song of the Grape*, *A Glimmer of Gold in the Fog*, *One Drop of Forever*, *The Rising Tide of Omicron*, *The Secret of His Bounty*, *The World Within*, and *Time Locker*.



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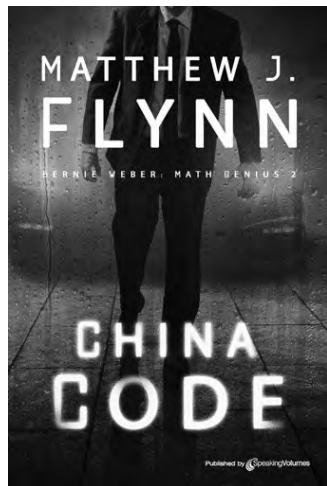


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Royal Wedding

BY CAROLINE WEBER

WHILE THE coronation of Charles III was meant to usher in a glorious new chapter for the House of Windsor, the obsessive tabloid attention it has garnered has merely aggravated a growing case of collective royal fatigue. In these turbulent times do we not, after all, have better things to think about than the latest bit of pageantry or pettiness, splendor or scandal, emanating from the world's most famous surviving monarchy? And when we consider the key players in this narrative, what lessons do they really have to teach us, except that royal privilege seldom makes better people of those who have, crave or lose it?

Sally Bedell Smith's latest book, "George VI and Elizabeth," offers a different lesson. The author of such works as "Diana in Search of Herself," "Prince Charles" and "Elizabeth the Queen,"

GEORGE VI AND ELIZABETH The Marriage That Saved the Monarchy

By Sally Bedell Smith

Illustrated. 703 pp. Random House. \$40.

Smith avoids the murky waters of Megxit. Instead, she makes the refreshing choice to focus on an earlier Windsor "spare," Bertie, Duke of York — the second son of George V — and his Scottish-born wife, née Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon. This pair, the parents of Elizabeth II, stand as an inspiring, if unlikely, counterpoint to their present-day descendants. The throne to which they unexpectedly acceded brought out their most, rather than their least, admirable traits: "qualities of duty and service," as the author puts it, "in the most challenging circumstances."

While the couple's story has been told many times before, it assumes newfound freshness against the backdrop of today's relentless press coverage of the Windsor dramas. Smith's lively account reminds readers that at its finest hour — whatever the historic sins or abiding iniquities of the British Empire itself — the crown managed to stand for selfless leadership, resilience and compassion for its people.

Bertie's and Elizabeth's love story had improbable beginnings: She turned him down twice before finally agreeing to marry him. But Bertie persisted, and they

CAROLINE WEBER is the Alliance visiting professor on the history faculty at the Université de Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne. She is working on a book about royal families on the eve of World War I.

wed in 1923. The deep and lasting mutual devotion they came to feel for each other helped them weather the many difficulties they faced throughout their marriage — starting with the constitutional crisis occasioned by Edward VIII's abdication in 1936.

Known within the royal family as David, the latter was a charismatic but spoiled playboy with a weakness for Nazi politics and married women. Given the king's capacity as titular head of the Church of England, it had been clear from the outset that Wallis Simpson's status as a soon-to-be two-time divorcée disqualified her for mar-

throne sent shock waves through the United Kingdom and the House of Windsor. It dealt a particularly shattering blow to Bertie, a painfully shy, earnest family man who lacked his brother's natural star power and blithe self-assurance, and who so dreaded the prospect of succeeding him as king that when he finally learned he must do so he broke down and sobbed on his mother's shoulder. The fact that he stammered when nervous, making public speaking an agony, further heightened his angst.

Yet Bertie did not, in contrast to his older brother, view the obligations of his high position as inseparable from its privileges. Reluctantly but bravely he committed, as he put it in a letter to David, to "taking on a rocking throne and trying to make it steady again." His wife — outwardly sweet but steely — was crucial to this effort: a tireless supporter of her husband, his primary confidante and a protective bastion of normalcy in a world gone mad.

George VI's commitment to duty assumed heroic proportions with the outbreak of World War II, when England stood alone in Europe against the Nazi menace. Like their compatriots, he and his consort endured the hardships of wartime: bombings, blackouts, food shortages and separation from their daughters (who were dispatched to the relative safety of rural Windsor). With their stalwart presence in London throughout the Blitz, and their tire-

less visits to and palpable empathy for the individuals hit hardest by the German war machine, the royal couple earned the respect and affection of their subjects, who, according to one journalist, came to see them as friends "whom they know to be one with them not in heart only but also in experience and in toil."

For their part, the king and queen found unexpected fulfillment in their effort to support their people and lead by example. When considering a group of Britons whose towns the Luftwaffe had razed, Elizabeth reflected: "If one can help those gallant people, everything is worthwhile." Although she is said to have privately blamed the stress of the unexpected burden of kingship for her beloved husband's premature death — and resented David and Wallis to the end of her very long days — this selfless ethos became her daughter Elizabeth II's watchword and the key to her enduring popularity. To what extent her own children and grandchildren choose to honor or ignore this legacy remains to be seen. □



The Duke of York with Lady Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon, posing for their official engagement photograph in 1923.

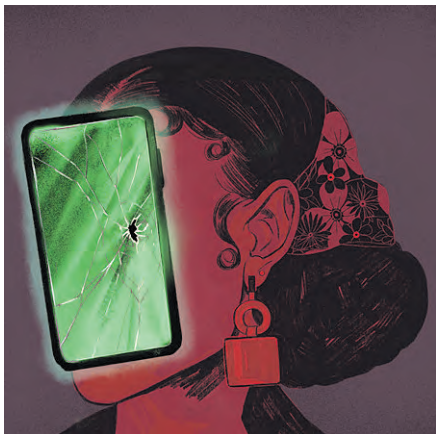
riage under the constitution. Yet David spent his 326 days as monarch attempting to ignore, contravene or circumvent this rule, only to conclude in his infamous radio address that he was unwilling to sacrifice "the woman I love" for duty's sake. Indeed, his decades of coddled leisure as heir apparent (one courtier speculated that "certain cells in his brain have never grown up") seemingly left him unwilling to sacrifice anything for duty's sake.

Smith describes how during his short rule, 42-year-old David balked at the simplest "routines of kingship — audiences with officials, signing government documents in his daily dispatch boxes" — and performed them cavalierly, if at all. He complained about being "cooped up in Buckingham Palace all the time within the iron bars" and railed against the "artificial nonsense" of ceremonial royal engagements. Wallis emerges as more a symptom than a cause of the king's discontent, though she would bear much of the blame for his defection.

Edward VIII's renunciation of the

Do Over

BY SARAH THANKAM MATHEWS



NOA DENMON

IN HER SHARP, charming and passionate debut, “Homebodies,” Tembe Denton-Hurst showcases an eye for the details that matter. Fashion girls are “Midwest Christian-types born-again in fuzzy pink cardigans and Dries boots.” A girlfriend’s painstaking domestic labors are described with equal parts unease and grateful relief. The impatient lunch-break Slack ping from a peevish white boss perfectly sets up the doom of the meeting that follows. It is this eye for the rhythms and textures of life — of millennial digital media, of the death by a thousand cuts offered by workplace racism, of Maryland suburbia — that makes this novel vivid and inviting. “Homebodies” is the story of a young Black wom-

HOMEBOODIES

By Tembe Denton-Hurst

307 pp. Harper/HarperCollins Publishers \$30.

an’s quarter-life crisis as she wonders what her place in the world will be.

The novel opens on a well-calibrated set piece of suspense and disquiet. Mickey Hayward is a writer at Wave, a Manhattan-based magazine for young women that was recently acquired by a digital media conglomerate. At an industry event, she is pulled aside in a moment of perfunctory solidarity from Chelsea, one of the few other Black women at the company, who delivers bad news: Mickey’s job is in jeopardy. Nina, Mickey’s mercurial white boss, has been trying to hire Chelsea’s friend, another Black writer, to replace her. Mickey, a striver with dreams to make it big, is crushed.

Social and emotional descent follows. Mickey is fired; lashes out at her nurturing partner, Lex; spirals into an unemployment-fueled depression; and posts a barn-burning letter to Twitter calling out the entrenched racism of the media industry. The

SARAH THANKAM MATHEWS is the author of “All This Could Be Different,” which was short-listed for the 2022 National Book Award in fiction.

letter is met with less of a bang than a whimper (only four likes, and complete silence from her industry-girlies group chat). Conflict with Lex explodes. And Mickey, spiraling, impetuously moves out of the cozy Astoria apartment she and Lex and their cat share. Halfway through the novel, she is now the “single-ish girl sitting alone on the Amtrak,” Kelela in her headphones, fleeing to the Maryland suburbs she had abandoned for the promise of a flashy New York life.

Questions abound. Should Mickey open the Pandora’s box that is her hometown ex, Tee? How long can she hide out at her grandparents’ house, out of sight of her father, whom Mickey feels wounded by and cannot bear to disappoint with news of her firing? What should she do about Lex, fu-

‘Homebodies’ juggles the many things that make a life.

ture employment, the letter discarded into Twitter’s void?

“Homebodies” juggles the many things that make a life, from work to romance to family to one’s position in the world. It calls to mind the archetypal hero’s journey: the ancient narrative template of a character who leaves home, goes on a perilous adventure, matures and, after tribulation and growth, returns transformed.

This narrative shape canonically has been the domain of men and those otherwise privileged by their societies, but “Homebodies” is concerned, from its dedication page onward, with the “girls who look and love like” Denton-Hurst: queer Black women. Denton-Hurst writes the Maryland scenes with tenderness and insight. Tee, an erstwhile high school basketball star who now works at Safeway while stunting online with a rotating cast of petite femmes, is particularly well imagined. And Mickey is a beautifully drawn protagonist: a complex young woman who wishes to be notable if not extraordinary, who lights up simply because her messy ex calls her “superstar,” who is revealed, over the course of the book, to be, well, human. Which is to say impulsive, insecure, fragile, desirous and — when it counts most — brave.

“Homebodies” contemporizes the hero’s journey, giving us a novel of love, work and becoming for the digital age. Throughout, Denton-Hurst captures the meaning of online communication, whether it be Instagram analysis, the sting of a group chat’s nonresponse or the swarm of Twitter. Mickey is attuned to all of these things, and the novel’s closing, in some ways, is a contemporary innovation — Mickey may or may not get the girl, the ending intimates, but what she will end up with is a voice that people will listen to. □

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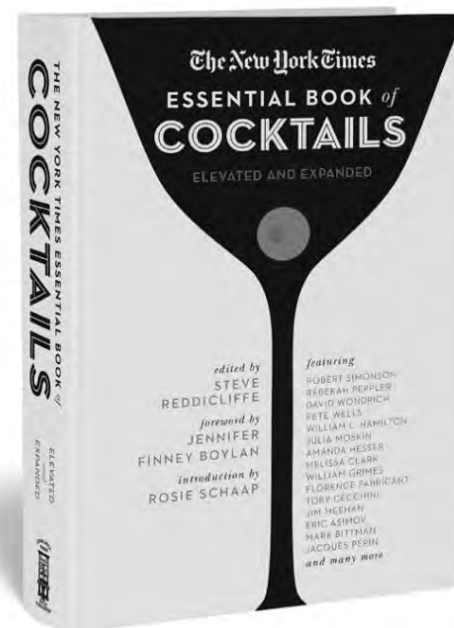


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