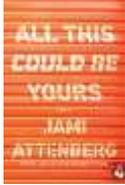


Alison's Best of 2019!

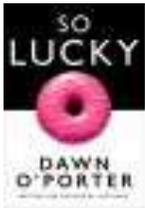
...These are my top reads from the past year

Fiction



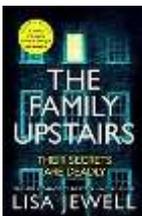
All This Could be Yours by Jami Attenberg. ★★★★★

“If I know why he is the way he is then maybe I can learn why I am the way I am,” says Alex Tuchman, strong-headed lawyer, loving mother, and daughter of Victor Tuchman—a power-hungry real estate developer and, by all accounts, a bad man. Now that Victor is on his deathbed, Alex feels she can finally unearth the secrets of who he is and what he did over the course of his life and career. She travels to New Orleans to be with her family, but mostly to interrogate her tightlipped mother, Barbra. As Barbra fends off Alex’s unrelenting questions, she reflects on her tumultuous life with Victor. Meanwhile Gary, Alex’s brother, is incommunicado, trying to get his movie career off the ground in Los Angeles. And Gary’s wife, Twyla, is having a nervous breakdown, buying up all the lipstick in drug stores around New Orleans and bursting into crying fits. Dysfunction is at its peak. As each family member grapples with Victor’s history, they must figure out a way to move forward—with one another, for themselves, and for the sake of their children. *All This Could Be Yours* is a timely, piercing exploration of what it means to be caught in the web of a toxic man who abused his power; it shows how those webs can tangle a family for generations and what it takes to—maybe, hopefully—break free.



So Lucky Dawn O'Porter ★★★★★

Ruby struggles both with her three-year-old daughter Bonnie, who she finds difficult to manage, and with a physical condition which she finds deeply shaming and isolating. New mother Beth - in a reversal of stereotype - can't deal with her husband's lack of interest in sex (though their problems clearly run deeper). And “social media influencer” Lauren, about to be married to celebrity entrepreneur Gavin, shows off her Instagram-perfect life and body to adoring fans, but the rumours about her fiancé just won't go away. All are involved in different ways in selling images of perfection. Ruby earns her living - well aware of the ironies and dodgy ethics - by digitally altering photographs to make women appear flawless; Lauren portrays a carefully curated image of her perfect life and gorgeous self on social media; Beth and her young assistant, the strangely named Risky, plan perfect weddings for the rich and famous (and Beth has an apparently enviable marriage of her own). Ultimately, it's about accepting and making visible - literally, in some cases - what lies beneath the surface, and ends with the deceptively simple question: “Who are you?”.



The Family Upstairs by Lisa Jewell ★★★★★

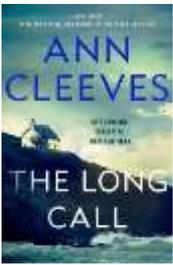
In a large house in London's fashionable Chelsea, a baby is awake in her cot. Well-fed and cared for, she is happily waiting for someone to pick her up. In the kitchen lie three decomposing corpses. Close to them is a hastily scrawled note. They've been dead for several days. Who has been looking after the baby? And where did they go?

Two entangled families.
A house with the darkest of secrets.



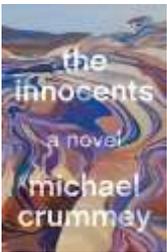
One Night Gone by Tara Laskowski ★★★★★

One sultry summer, Maureen Haddaway arrives in the wealthy town of Opal Beach to start her life anew—to achieve her destiny. There, she finds herself lured by the promise of friendship, love, starry skies, and wild parties. But Maureen’s new life just might be too good to be true, and before the summer is up, she vanishes. It was the perfect place to disappear...One sultry summer, Maureen Haddaway arrives in the wealthy town of Opal Beach to start her life anew—to achieve her destiny. There, she finds herself lured by the promise of friendship, love, starry skies, and wild parties. But Maureen’s new life just might be too good to be true, and before the summer is up, she vanishes. Decades later, when Allison Simpson is offered the opportunity to house-sit in Opal Beach during the off-season, it seems like the perfect chance to begin fresh after a messy divorce. But when she becomes drawn into the mysterious disappearance of a girl thirty years before, Allison realizes the gorgeous homes of Opal Beach hide dark secrets. And the truth of that long-ago summer is not even the most shocking part of all...



The Long Call by Ann Cleaves ★★★★★

In North Devon, where two rivers converge and run into the sea, Detective Matthew Venn stands outside the church as his father’s funeral takes place. Once loved and cherished, the day Matthew left the strict evangelical community he grew up in, he lost his family too. Now, as he turns and walks away again, he receives a call from one of his team. A body has been found on the beach nearby: a man with a tattoo of an albatross on his neck, stabbed to death. The case calls Matthew back into the community he thought he had left behind, as deadly secrets hidden at its heart are revealed, and his past and present collide.



The Innocents by Michael Crummey ★★★★★

A brother and sister are orphaned in an isolated cove on Newfoundland's northern coastline. Their home is a stretch of rocky shore governed by the feral ocean, by a relentless pendulum of abundance and murderous scarcity. Still children with only the barest notion of the outside world, they have nothing but the family's boat and the little knowledge passed on haphazardly by their mother and father to keep them. Muddling through the severe round of the seasons, through years of meagre catches and storms and ravaging illness, it is their fierce loyalty to each other that motivates and sustains them. But as seasons pass and they wade deeper into the mystery of their own natures, even that loyalty will be tested. *The Innocents* is richly imagined and compulsively readable, a riveting story of hardship and survival, and an unflinching exploration of the bond between brother and sister. By turns electrifying

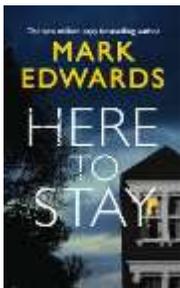
and heartbreaking, it is a testament to the bounty and barbarity of the world, to the wonders and strangeness of our individual selves.



ALEX NORTH

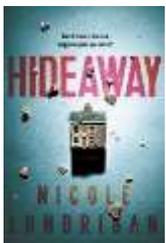
The Whisper Man by Alex North ★★★★★

In this dark, suspenseful thriller, Alex North weaves a multi-generational tale of a father and son caught in the crosshairs of an investigation to catch a serial killer preying on a small town. After the sudden death of his wife, Tom Kennedy believes a fresh start will help him and his young son Jake heal. A new beginning, a new house, a new town. Featherbank. But the town has a dark past. Twenty years ago, a serial killer abducted and murdered five residents. Until Frank Carter was finally caught, he was nicknamed "The Whisper Man," for he would lure his victims out by whispering at their windows at night. Just as Tom and Jake settle into their new home, a young boy vanishes. His disappearance bears an unnerving resemblance to Frank Carter's crimes, reigniting old rumors that he preyed with an accomplice. Now, detectives Amanda Beck and Pete Willis must find the boy before it is too late, even if that means Pete must revisit his great foe in prison: The Whisper Man. And then Jake begins acting strangely. He hears a whispering at his window...



Here to Stay by Mark Edwards ★★★★★

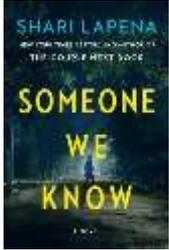
Gemma Robinson comes into Elliot's life like a whirlwind, and they marry and settle into his home. When she asks him if her parents can come to stay for a couple of weeks, he is keen to oblige – he just doesn't quite know what he's signing up for. The Robinsons arrive with Gemma's sister, Chloe, a mysterious young woman who refuses to speak or leave her room. Elliot starts to suspect that the Robinsons are hiding a dark secret. And then there are the scars on his wife's body that she won't talk about . . . As Elliot's in-laws become more comfortable in his home, encroaching on all aspects of his life, it becomes clear that they have no intention of moving out. To protect Gemma, and their marriage, Elliot delves into the Robinsons' past. But is he prepared for the truth?



Hideaway by Nicole Lundigran ★★★★★

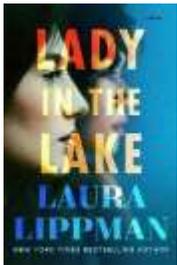
Gloria Janes appears to be a doting suburban mother and loving wife. But beyond her canary-yellow door, Gloria controls her husband, Telly, as well as seven-year-old Maisy and her older brother Rowan, through a disorienting cycle of adoration and banishment.

When Telly leaves, Gloria turns on Rowan. He runs away, finding unlikely refuge with a homeless man named Carl, with whom he forms the kind of bond he has never found with his parents. After they are menaced by strangers, Rowan follows Carl to an isolated cottage, where he accidentally sets off a burst of heightened paranoia in Carl, and their adventure takes a dark turn. Gloria is publicly desperate for the safe return of her son while privately plotting ever wilder ways to lure Telly home for good. Her behaviour grows more erratic and her manipulation of Maisy begins to seem dedicated toward an outcome that only she can see.



Someone we Know by Shari Lapena ★★★★★

"This is a very difficult letter to write. I hope you will not hate us too much. . . My son broke into your home recently while you were out." In a quiet, leafy suburb in upstate New York, a teenager has been sneaking into houses--and into the owners' computers as well--learning their secrets, and maybe sharing some of them, too. Who is he, and what might he have uncovered? After two anonymous letters are received, whispers start to circulate, and suspicion mounts. And when a woman down the street is found murdered, the tension reaches the breaking point. Who killed her? Who knows more than they're telling? And how far will all these very nice people go to protect their own secrets? In this neighborhood, it's not just the husbands and wives who play games. Here, everyone in the family has something to hide . . .



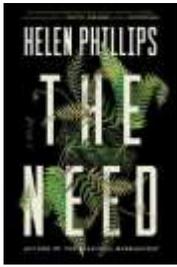
Lady in the Lake by Laura Lippman ★★★★★

In 1966, Baltimore is a city of secrets that everyone seems to know--everyone, that is, except Madeline "Maddie" Schwartz. Last year, she was a happy, even pampered housewife. This year, she's bolted from her marriage of almost twenty years, determined to make good on her youthful ambitions to live a passionate, meaningful life.

Maddie wants to matter, to leave her mark on a swiftly changing world. Drawing on her own secrets, she helps Baltimore police find a murdered girl--assistance that leads to a job at the city's afternoon newspaper, the *Star*. Working at the newspaper offers Maddie the opportunity to make her name, and she has found just the story to do it: a missing woman whose body was discovered in the fountain of a city park lake.

Cleo Sherwood was a young African-American woman who liked to have a good time. No one seems to know or care why she was killed except Maddie--and the dead woman herself. Maddie's going to find the truth about Cleo's life and death. Cleo's ghost, privy to Maddie's poking and prying, wants to be left alone.

Maddie's investigation brings her into contact with people that used to be on the periphery of her life--a jewelry store clerk, a waitress, a rising star on the Baltimore Orioles, a patrol cop, a hardened female reporter, a lonely man in a movie theater. But for all her ambition and drive, Maddie often fails to see the people right in front of her. Her inability to look beyond her own needs will lead to tragedy and turmoil for all sorts of people--including the man who shares her bed, a black police officer who cares for Maddie more than she knows.



The Need by Helen Phillips ★★★★★

When Molly, home alone with her two young children, hears footsteps in the living room, she tries to convince herself it's the sleep deprivation. She's been hearing things these days. Startling at loud noises. Imagining the worst-case scenario. It's what mothers do, she knows.

But then the footsteps come again, and she catches a glimpse of movement.

Suddenly Molly finds herself face-to-face with an intruder who knows far too much about her and her family. As she attempts to protect those she loves most, Molly must also acknowledge her own frailty. Molly slips down an existential rabbit hole where she must confront the dualities of motherhood: the ecstasy and the dread; the languor and the ferocity; the banality and the transcendence as the book hurtles toward a mind-bending conclusion.

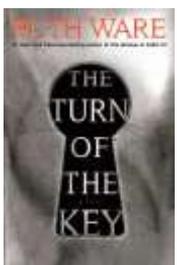


Ask Again, Yes Mary Beth Keane ★★★★★

A profoundly moving novel about two neighboring families in a suburban town, the bond between their children, a tragedy that reverberates over four decades, the daily intimacies of marriage, and the power of forgiveness.

Francis Gleeson and Brian Stanhope, two rookie cops in the NYPD, live next door to each other outside the city. What happens behind closed doors in both houses—the loneliness of Francis's wife, Lena, and the instability of Brian's wife, Anne—sets the stage for the explosive events to come.

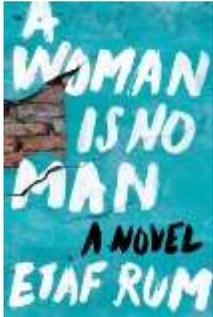
Ask Again, Yes is a deeply affecting exploration of the lifelong friendship and love that blossoms between Francis and Lena's daughter, Kate, and Brian and Anne's son, Peter. Luminous, heartbreaking, and redemptive, Ask Again, Yes reveals the way childhood memories change when viewed from the distance of adulthood—villains lose their menace and those who appeared innocent seem less so. Kate and Peter's love story, while tested by echoes from the past, is marked by tenderness, generosity, and grace.



The Turn of the Key by Ruth Ware ★★★★★

When she stumbles across the ad, she's looking for something else completely. But it seems like too good an opportunity to miss—a live-in nannying post, with a staggeringly generous salary. And when Rowan Caine arrives at Heatherbrae House, she is smitten—by the luxurious “smart” home fitted out with all modern conveniences, by the beautiful Scottish Highlands, and by this picture-perfect family. What she doesn't know is that she's stepping into a nightmare—one that will end with a child dead and herself in

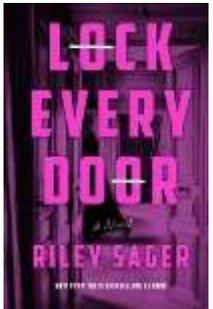
prison awaiting trial for murder. Writing to her lawyer from prison, she struggles to explain the unravelling events that led to her incarceration. It wasn't just the constant surveillance from the cameras installed around the house, or the malfunctioning technology that woke the household with booming music, or turned the lights off at the worst possible time. It wasn't just the girls, who turned out to be a far cry from the immaculately behaved model children she met at her interview. It wasn't even the way she was left alone for weeks at a time, with no adults around apart from the enigmatic handyman, Jack Grant. It was everything. She knows she's made mistakes. She admits that she lied to obtain the post, and that her behavior toward the children wasn't always ideal. She's not innocent, by any means. But, she maintains, she's not guilty—at least not of murder. Which means someone else is.



A Woman is No Man by Etaf Rum ★★★★★

This debut novel by an Arab-American voice takes us inside the lives of conservative Arab women living in America.

In Brooklyn, eighteen-year-old Deya is starting to meet with suitors. Though she doesn't want to get married, her grandparents give her no choice. History is repeating itself: Deya's mother, Isra, also had no choice when she left Palestine as a teenager to marry Adam. Though Deya was raised to believe her parents died in a car accident, a secret note from a mysterious, yet familiar-looking woman makes Deya question everything she was told about her past. As the narrative alternates between the lives of Deya and Isra, she begins to understand the dark, complex secrets behind her community.

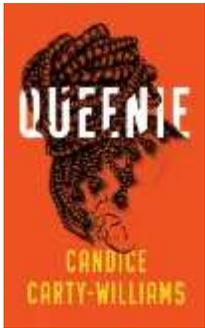


Lock Every Door by Riley Sager ★★★★★

No visitors. No nights spent away from the apartment. No disturbing the other residents, all of whom are rich or famous or both. These are the only rules for Jules Larsen's new job as an apartment sitter at the Bartholomew, one of Manhattan's most high-profile and mysterious buildings. Recently heartbroken and just plain broke, Jules is taken in by the splendor of her surroundings and accepts the terms, ready to leave her past life behind.

As she gets to know the residents and staff of the Bartholomew, Jules finds herself drawn to fellow apartment sitter Ingrid, who comfortingly, disturbingly reminds her of the sister she lost eight years ago. When Ingrid confides that the Bartholomew is not what it seems and the dark history hidden beneath its gleaming facade is starting to frighten her, Jules brushes it off as a harmless ghost story—until the next day, when Ingrid disappears.

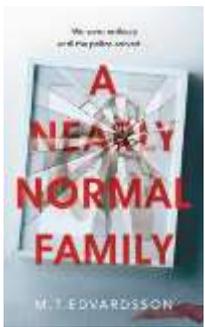
Searching for the truth about Ingrid's disappearance, Jules digs deeper into the Bartholomew's dark past and into the secrets kept within its walls. Her discovery that Ingrid is not the first apartment sitter to go missing at the Bartholomew pits Jules against the clock as she races to unmask a killer, expose the building's hidden past, and escape the Bartholomew before her temporary status becomes permanent.



Queenie by Candice Carty-Williams ★★★★★

Queenie Jenkins is a 25-year-old Jamaican British woman living in London, straddling two cultures and slotting neatly into neither. She works at a national newspaper, where she's constantly forced to compare herself to her white middle class peers. After a messy break up from her long-term white boyfriend, Queenie seeks comfort in all the wrong places...including several hazardous men who do a good job of occupying brain space and a bad job of affirming self-worth.

As Queenie careens from one questionable decision to another, she finds herself wondering, "What are you doing? Why are you doing it? Who do you want to be?"—all of the questions today's woman must face in a world trying to answer them for her.



A Nearly Normal Family by M.T. Edvardsson ★★★★★

Nineteen-year-old Stella stands accused of the brutal murder of a man almost fifteen years her senior. She is an ordinary teenager from an upstanding local family. What reason could she have to know a shady businessman, let alone to kill him?

Stella's father, a pastor, and mother, a criminal defense attorney, find their moral compasses tested as they defend their daughter, while struggling to understand why she is a suspect. Told in an unusual three-part structure, *A Nearly Normal Family* asks the questions: How well do you know your own children? How far would you go to protect them?

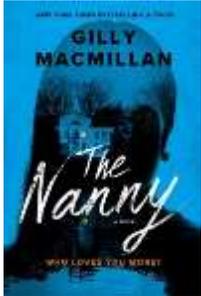


The Hunting Party by Lucy Foley ★★★★★

For fans of Ruth Ware and Tana French, a shivery, atmospheric, page-turning novel of psychological suspense in the tradition of Agatha Christie, in which a group of old college friends are snowed in at a hunting lodge . . . and murder and mayhem ensue. *All of them are friends. One of them is a killer.* During the languid days of the Christmas break, a group of thirtysomething friends from Oxford meet to welcome in the New Year together, a tradition they began as students ten years ago. For this vacation, they've chosen an idyllic and isolated estate in the Scottish

Highlands—the perfect place to get away and unwind by themselves. They arrive on December 30th, just before a historic blizzard seals the lodge off from the outside world. Two days later, on New Year's Day, one of them is dead. The trip began innocently enough: admiring the stunning if foreboding scenery, champagne in front of a crackling fire, and reminiscences about the past. But after a decade, the weight of secret resentments has grown too heavy for the group's tenuous nostalgia to bear. Amid the boisterous revelry of New Year's Eve, the cord holding them together snaps. Now one of them is dead . . . and another of them did it.

In *Maid*, she reveals the dark truth of what it takes to survive and thrive in today's inequitable society. While she worked hard to scratch her way out of poverty as a single parent, scrubbing the toilets of the wealthy, navigating domestic labor jobs, higher education, assisted housing, and a tangled web of government assistance, Stephanie wrote. She wrote the true stories that weren't being told. The stories of overworked and underpaid Americans. Written in honest, heart-rending prose and with great insight, *Maid* explores the underbelly of upper-middle class America and the reality of what it's like to be in service to them. "I'd become a nameless ghost," Stephanie writes. With this book, she gives voice to the "servant" worker, those who fight daily to scramble and scrape by for their own lives and the lives of their children.



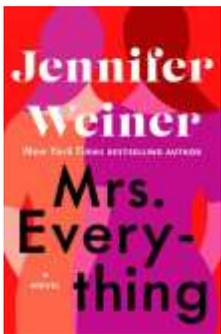
The Nanny by Gilly MacMillan



When her beloved nanny, Hannah, left without a trace in the summer of 1988, seven-year-old Jocelyn Holt was devastated. Haunted by the loss, Jo grew up bitter and distant, and eventually left her parents and Lake Hall, their faded aristocratic home, behind.

Thirty years later, Jo returns to the house and is forced to confront her troubled relationship with her mother. But when human remains are accidentally uncovered in a lake on the estate, Jo begins to question everything she thought she knew.

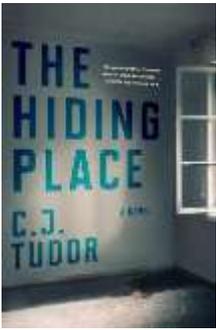
Then an unexpected visitor knocks on the door and Jo's world is destroyed again. Desperate to piece together the gaping holes in her memory, Jo must uncover who her nanny really was, why she left, and if she can trust her own mother...



Mrs. Everything by Jennifer Weiner



From Jennifer Weiner, the #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of *Who Do You Love* and *In Her Shoes*, comes a smart, thoughtful, and timely exploration of two sisters' lives from the 1950s to the present as they struggle to find their places—and be true to themselves—in a rapidly evolving world. *Mrs. Everything* is an ambitious, richly textured journey through history—and herstory—as these two sisters navigate a changing America over the course of their lives.

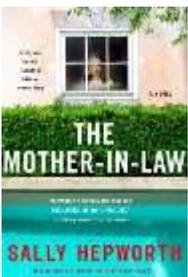


The Hiding Place by C.J. Tudor ★★★★★

Joe never wanted to come back to Arnhill. After the way things ended with his old gang--the betrayal, the suicide, the murder--and after what happened when his sister went missing, the last thing he wanted to do was return to his hometown. But Joe doesn't have a choice. Because judging by what was done to that poor Morton kid, what happened all those years ago to Joe's sister is happening again. And only Joe knows who is *really* at fault.

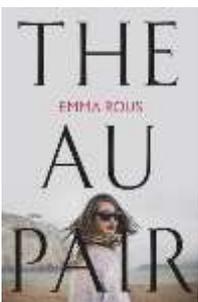
Lying his way into a teaching job at his former high school is the easy part. Facing off with former friends who are none too happy to have him back in town--while avoiding the enemies he's made in the years since--is tougher. But the hardest part of all will be returning to that abandoned mine where it all went wrong and his life changed forever, and finally confronting the shocking, horrifying truth about Arnhill, his sister and himself. Because for Joe, the worst moment of his life wasn't the day his sister went missing.

It was the day she came *back*.



The Mother-in-Law by Sally Hepworth ★★★★★

Someone once told me that you have two families in your life - the one you are born into and the one you choose. Yes, you may get to choose your partner, but you don't choose your mother-in-law. The cackling mercenaries of fate determine it all. From the moment Lucy met Diana, she was kept at arm's length. Diana is exquisitely polite, but Lucy knows, even after marrying Oliver, that they'll never have the closeness she'd been hoping for. But who could fault Diana? She was a pillar of the community, an advocate for social justice, the matriarch of a loving family. Lucy had wanted so much to please her new mother-in-law. That was ten years ago. Now, Diana has been found dead, leaving a suicide note. But the autopsy reveals evidence of suffocation. And everyone in the family is hiding something...

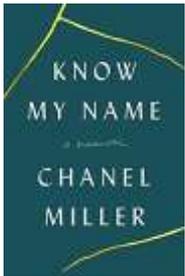


The Au Pair by Emma Rous ★★★★★

Seraphine Mayes and her twin brother Danny were born in the middle of summer at their family's estate on the Norfolk coast. Within hours of their birth, their mother threw herself from the cliffs, the au pair fled, and the village thrilled with whispers of dark cloaks, changelings, and the aloof couple who drew a young nanny into their inner

circle. Now an adult, Seraphine mourns the recent death of her father. While going through his belongings, she uncovers a family photograph that raises dangerous questions. It was taken on the day the twins were born, and in the photo, their mother, surrounded by her husband and her young son, is beautifully dressed, smiling serenely, and holding just one baby. Who is the child and what really happened that day?

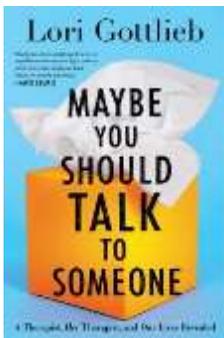
Non-Fiction



Know My Name by Chanel Miller ★★★★★

She was known to the world as Emily Doe when she stunned millions with a letter. Brock Turner had been sentenced to just six months in county jail after he was found sexually assaulting her on Stanford's campus. Her victim impact statement was posted on BuzzFeed, where it instantly went viral—viewed by eleven million people within four days, it was translated globally and read on the floor of Congress; it inspired changes in California law and the recall of the judge in the case. Thousands wrote to say that she had given them the courage to share their own experiences of assault for the first time.

Now she reclaims her identity to tell her story of trauma, transcendence, and the power of words. It was the perfect case, in many ways—there were eyewitnesses, Turner ran away, physical evidence was immediately secured. But her struggles with isolation and shame during the aftermath and the trial reveal the oppression victims face in even the best-case scenarios. Her story illuminates a culture biased to protect perpetrators, indicts a criminal justice system designed to fail the most vulnerable, and, ultimately, shines with the courage required to move through suffering and live a full and beautiful life.

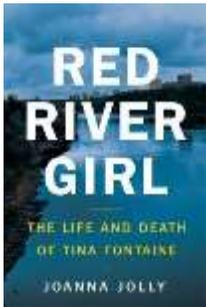


Maybe You Should Talk to Someone by Lori Gottlieb ★★★★★

One day, Lori Gottlieb is a therapist who helps patients in her Los Angeles practice. The next, a crisis causes her world to come crashing down. Enter Wendell, the quirky but seasoned therapist in whose office she suddenly lands. With his balding head, cardigan, and khakis, he seems to have come straight from Therapist Central Casting. Yet he will turn out to be anything but. As Gottlieb explores the inner chambers of her patients' lives -- a self-absorbed Hollywood producer, a young newlywed diagnosed with a terminal illness, a senior citizen threatening to end her life on her birthday if nothing gets better, and a twenty-something who can't stop hooking up with the wrong guys -- she finds that the questions they are struggling with are the very ones she is now bringing to Wendell.

With startling wisdom and humor, Gottlieb invites us into her world as both clinician and patient, examining the truths and fictions we tell ourselves and others as we teeter on the tightrope between love and desire, meaning and mortality, guilt and redemption, terror and courage, hope and change.

Maybe You Should Talk to Someone is revolutionary in its candor, offering a deeply personal yet universal tour of our hearts and minds and providing the rarest of gifts: a boldly revealing portrait of what it means to be human, and a disarmingly funny and illuminating account of our own mysterious lives and our power to transform them.



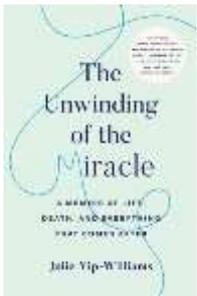
Red River Girl: The Life and Death of Tina Fontaine by Joanna Jolly ★★★★★

On August 17, 2014, the body of fifteen-year old runaway Tina Fontaine was found in Winnipeg's Red River. It was wrapped in material and weighted down with rocks. *Red River Girl* is a gripping account of that murder investigation and the unusual police detective who pursued the killer with every legal means at his disposal. The book, like the movie *Spotlight*, will chronicle the behind-the-scenes stages of a lengthy and meticulously planned investigation. It reveals characters and social tensions that bring vivid life to a story that made national headlines.

Award-winning BBC reporter and documentary maker Joanna Jolly delves into the troubled life of Tina Fontaine, the half-Ojibway, half-Cree murder victim, starting with her childhood on the Sagkeeng First Nation Reserve. Tina's journey to the capital city is a harrowing one, culminating in drug abuse, sexual exploitation, and death.

Aware of the reality of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, Jolly has chronicled Tina Fontaine's life as a reminder that she was more than a statistic. Raised by her father, and then by her great-aunt, Tina was a good student. But the violent death of her father hit Tina hard. She ran away, was found and put into the care of Child and Family Services, which she also sought to escape from. That choice left her in danger.

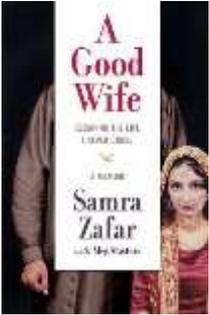
Red River Girl focuses not on the grisly event itself, but on the efforts to seek justice. In December 2015, the police charged Raymond Cormier, a drifter, with second-degree murder. Jolly's book will cover the trial, which resulted in an acquittal. The verdict caused dismay across the country.



The Unwinding of the Miracle by Julie Yip-Williams ★★★★★

That Julie Yip-Williams survived infancy was a miracle. Born blind in Vietnam, she narrowly escaped euthanasia at the hands of her grandmother, only to flee with her family the political upheaval of her country in the late 1970s. Loaded into a rickety boat with three hundred other refugees, Julie made it to Hong Kong and, ultimately, America, where a surgeon at UCLA gave her partial sight. She would go on to become a Harvard-educated lawyer, with a husband, a family, and a life she had once assumed would be impossible. Then, at age thirty-seven, with two little girls at home, Julie was diagnosed with terminal metastatic colon cancer, and a different journey began.

The Unwinding of the Miracle is the story of a vigorous life refracted through the prism of imminent death. When she was first diagnosed, Julie Yip-Williams sought clarity and guidance through the experience and, finding none, began to write her way through it--a chronicle that grew beyond her imagining. Motherhood, marriage, the immigrant experience, ambition, love, wanderlust, tennis, fortune-tellers, grief, reincarnation, jealousy, comfort, pain, the marvel of the body in full rebellion--this book is as sprawling and majestic as the life it records. It is inspiring and instructive, delightful and shattering. It is a book of indelible moments, seared deep--an incomparable guide to living vividly by facing hard truths consciously.



A Good Wife: Escaping a Life I Never Chose by Samra Zafar ★★☆☆

At 15, Samra Zafar had big dreams for herself. She was going to go to university and forge her own path. Then with almost no warning, those dreams were pulled away from her when she was suddenly married to a stranger at 17 and had to leave behind her family in Pakistan to move to Canada. Her new husband and his family promised that the marriage and the move would be a fulfillment of her dream, not a betrayal of it. But as the walls of their home slowly became a prison, Samra realized the promises were empty ones.

Desperate to get out, and refusing to give up, she hatched an escape plan for herself and her two daughters. Somehow she found the strength to not only build a new future, but to walk away from her past, ignoring the pleas of her family and risking cultural isolation by divorcing her husband.

A Good Wife tells her harrowing and inspiring story, following her from a young girl with big dreams, through finding strength in the face of oppression and then finally battling through to empowerment.