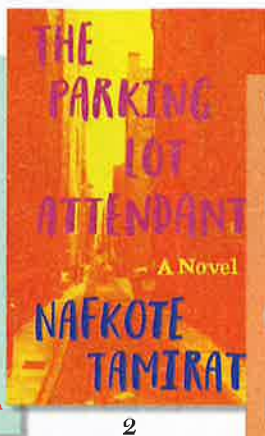
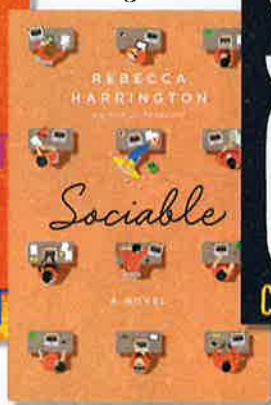


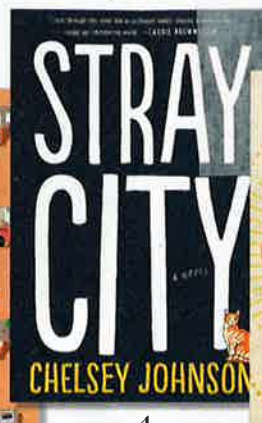
1



2



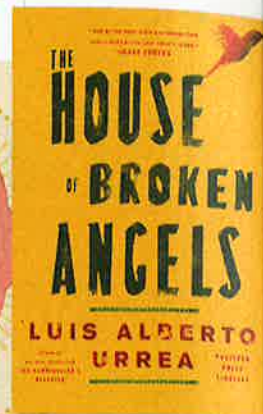
3



4



5



6

BOOKS What We're READING

Our roundup of the must-reads hitting our bookshelves this month *By* SAMANTHA IRBY

1. EVERY NOTE PLAYED

by Lisa Genova (Gallery/Scout Press)

Ow, my delicate feelings! The author of *Still Alice* is back to harrowing form with this gutting story of Richard, a famed pianist whose arms, his livelihood, become paralyzed due to ALS. His reluctant caretaker, Karina—his recent ex-wife—is mired in her own form of career paralysis and emotional stagnation. An expertly written depiction of the toll a ravaging disease takes on both the body and the heart.

2. THE PARKING LOT ATTENDANT

by Nafkote Tamirat (Henry Holt and Co.)

In this captivating coming-of-age debut, our narrator is a whip-smart 15-year-old girl who's grown up in Boston's tight-knit Ethiopian community. When she becomes smitten with a man who uses his job as a parking lot attendant as a front for his more nefarious hustles, she faces terrifying consequences.

3. SOCIABLE

by Rebecca Harrington (Doubleday)

Elinor is stuck in a thankless nanny gig. Her actual destiny was supposed to have been taking over New York City with her journalism degree—and that dream sort of comes true when she lands a digital-media job. Then she goes viral and loses the things she thought she wanted. *Sociable* is a delicious, sardonic send-up of Millennial romance and tech culture.

4. STRAY CITY

by Chelsey Johnson (Custom House/William Morrow)

This novel has everything: the circa-'99 lesbian indie-rock scene! Zines! Answering machines! And Andrea, a lesbian artist who hooks up with a dude and, drumroll, winds up pregnant. And decides to keep the baby. Our '90s nostalgia is hella high these days, and this tender, funny story made our aging hipster hearts sing.

5. LAURA & EMMA

by Kate Greathead (Simon & Schuster)

A suddenly single mother decides to raise her daughter amid the high-society trappings she was born into, with sometimes painful results. Their story told in yearly vignettes, we watch as Laura and Emma navigate their fraught relationship. A deft exploration of conflict, both class and interfamilial, in 1980s blue-blood New York.

6. THE HOUSE OF BROKEN ANGELS

by Luis Alberto Urrea (Little, Brown and Co.)

This is the story of the de la Cruzes: a Mexican-American family whose ill patriarch has beckoned them to his home to celebrate his last remaining birthday. But then his mother dies, and the party turns into a weekend commemorating both lives. This is the kind of sweeping family saga you lose yourself in—big and warm, and rich with history and love and culture.

STORYTELLERS

HAPPILY EVER AFTER?

With *The Merry Spinster* (Henry Holt and Co.), writer Mallory Ortberg remixes fairy tales, kids' books, and Christian theology into a collection of cleverly, creepily unsettling feminist fables. (Spoiler: Prepare to see *Frog and Toad* in a very new light) *By* JULIA FELSENTH



MARIE CLAIRE: Why fairy tales?

MALLORY ORTBERG: There are also biblical stories in there and old poems. It's more than just: *Remember "Cinderella"?* *What if it were more upsetting?* But there are certainly ways in which retelling familiar stories does become important in times of heightened stress or anxiety.

MC: You tinker a lot with gender roles and with what pronouns mean.

MO: G.K. Chesterton [the early-20th-century critic] writes about the arbitrary but severe rules of fairyland. That felt really important in writing about gender. So many of the rules we consider ourselves bound by are arbitrary and severe. There are recurring themes in fairy tales: What are a daughter's responsibilities? What does that have to say about inheritance? It felt like a natural way to ask questions: What would it

look like if "husband" and "wife" were jobs that a person of any gender could take? What would those power dynamics look like?

MC: This is less lighthearted than your last book, *Texts From Jane Eyre* (a series of imagined text exchanges between literary characters). Is it a sign of the times?

MO: I've found myself gravitating toward stories about how abuse of power can masquerade as love, in which solitude is desirable but not always possible. Part of it is simply that the world has become much *more* in every sense of the word.

