

# Bonaire Dive Trip \* September 13, 2021

Kralendijk, Bonaire

We got together to talk about our favorite books of the past year. Here's what we said....

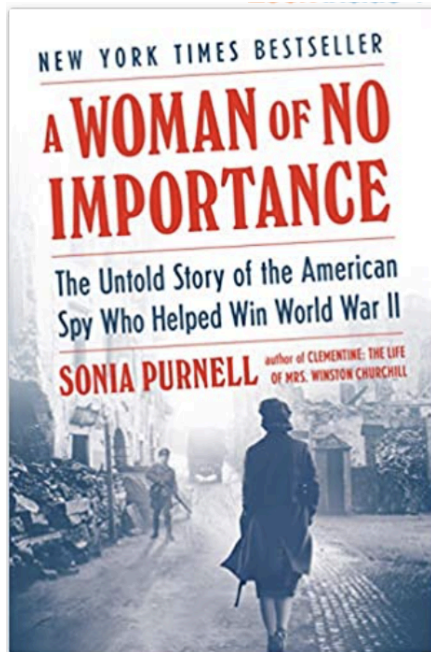


## Bonaire Book Club (2021)

Kathryn, Susan, Dan, Megan, Daryl  
Laurie, Audrey, Harry, Christine

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Susan [A Woman of No Importance: The Untold Story of the American Spy Who Helped Win World War II](#) by Sonia Purnell



n 1942, the Gestapo sent out an urgent transmission: "She is the most dangerous of all Allied spies. We must find and destroy her."

The target in their sights was Virginia Hall, a Baltimore socialite who talked her way into Special Operations Executive, the spy organization dubbed Winston Churchill's "Ministry of Ungentlemanly Warfare." She became the first Allied woman deployed behind enemy lines and--despite her prosthetic leg--helped to light the flame of the French Resistance, revolutionizing secret warfare as we know it.

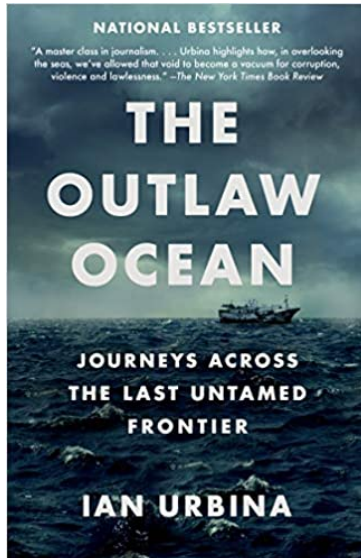
Virginia established vast spy networks throughout France, called weapons and explosives down from the skies, and became a linchpin for the Resistance. Even as her face covered wanted posters and a bounty was placed on her head, Virginia refused order after order to evacuate. She finally escaped through a death-defying hike over the Pyrenees into Spain, her cover blown. But she plunged back in, adamant that she had more lives to save, and led a victorious guerilla campaign, liberating swathes of France from the Nazis after D-Day.

Based on new and extensive research, Sonia Purnell has for the first time uncovered the full secret life of Virginia Hall--an astounding and inspiring story of heroism, spycraft, resistance, and personal triumph over shocking adversity. *A Woman of No*

*Importance* is the breathtaking story of how one woman's fierce persistence helped win the war.

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Audrey [The outlaw ocean: Journeys across the last untamed frontier](#). Ian Urbina.



A riveting, adrenaline-fueled tour of a vast, lawless, and rampantly criminal world that few have ever seen: the high seas.

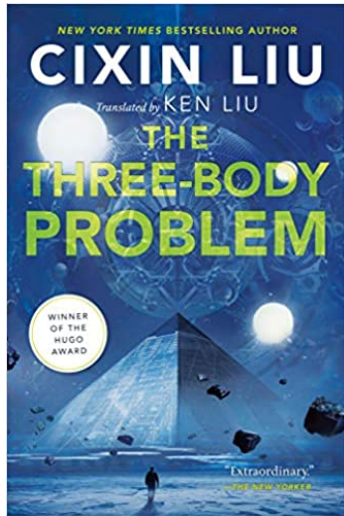
There are few remaining frontiers on our planet. But perhaps the wildest, and least understood, are the world's oceans: too big to police, and under no clear international authority, these immense regions of treacherous water play host to rampant criminality and exploitation.

Traffickers and smugglers, pirates and mercenaries, wreck thieves and repo men, vigilante conservationists and elusive poachers, seabound abortion providers, clandestine oil-dumpers, shackled slaves and cast-adrift stowaways--drawing on five years of perilous and intrepid reporting, often hundreds of miles from shore, Ian Urbina introduces us to the inhabitants of this hidden world. Through their stories of astonishing courage and brutality, survival and tragedy, he uncovers a globe-spanning network of crime and exploitation that emanates from the fishing, oil, and shipping industries, and on which the world's economies rely.

Both a gripping adventure story and a stunning exposé, this unique work of reportage brings fully into view for the first time the disturbing reality of a floating world that connects us all, a place where anyone can do anything because no one is watching.

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Daryl. [The three body problem](#). Cixin Liu



Imagine you have 400 years to get ready for an invasion.

Set against the backdrop of China's Cultural Revolution, a secret military project sends signals into space to establish contact with aliens. An alien civilization on the brink of destruction captures the signal and plans to invade Earth. Meanwhile, on Earth, different camps start forming, planning to either welcome the superior beings and help them take over a world seen as corrupt, or to fight against the invasion. The result is a science fiction masterpiece of enormous scope and vision.

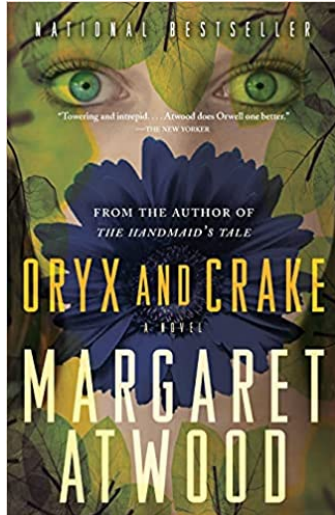
*The Three-Body Problem Series*

1. The Three-Body Problem
2. The Dark Forest (which Audrey didn't care for)
3. Death's End



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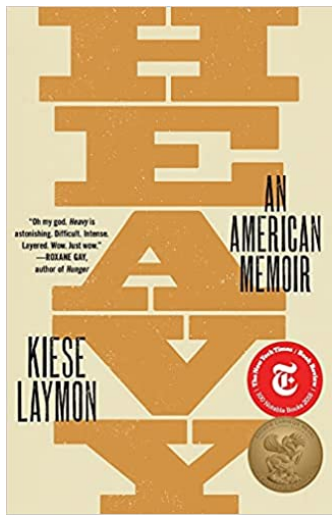
Christine. [Oryx and Crake](#) (The MaddAddam Trilogy). Margaret Atwood.



Oryx and Crake is at once an unforgettable love story and a compelling vision of the future. Snowman, known as Jimmy before mankind was overwhelmed by a plague, is struggling to survive in a world where he may be the last human, and mourning the loss of his best friend, Crake, and the beautiful and elusive Oryx whom they both loved. In search of answers, Snowman embarks on a journey—with the help of the green-eyed Children of Crake—through the lush wilderness that was so recently a great city, until powerful corporations took mankind on an uncontrolled genetic engineering ride. Margaret Atwood projects us into a near future that is both all too familiar and beyond our imagining.

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Harry. [Heavy](#). Kiese Laymon

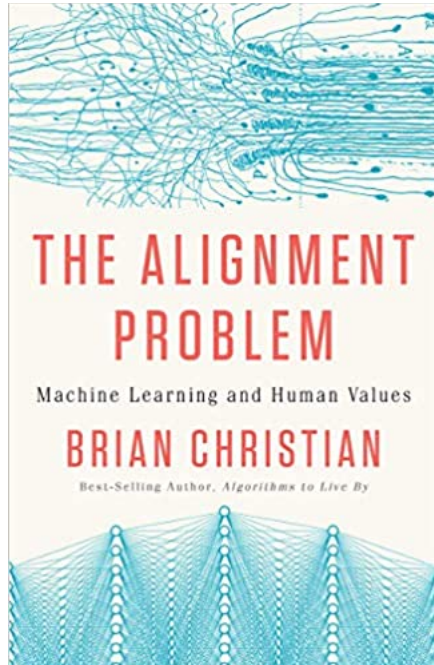


In *Heavy*, Laymon writes eloquently and honestly about growing up a hard-headed black son to a complicated and brilliant black mother in Jackson, Mississippi. From his early experiences of sexual violence, to his suspension from college, to time in New York as a college professor, Laymon charts his complex relationship with his mother, grandmother, anorexia, obesity, sex, writing, and ultimately gambling. *Heavy* is a “gorgeous, gutting...generous” (The New York Times) memoir that combines personal stories with piercing intellect to reflect both on the strife of American society and on Laymon’s experiences with abuse. By attempting to name secrets and lies he and his mother spent a lifetime avoiding, he asks us to confront the terrifying possibility that few in this nation actually know how to responsibly love, and even fewer want to live under the weight of actually becoming free.

“A book for people who appreciated Roxane Gay’s memoir *Hunger*” (Milwaukee Journal Sentinel), *Heavy* is defiant yet vulnerable, an insightful, often comical exploration of weight, identity, art, friendship, and family through years of haunting implosions and long reverberations. “You won’t be able to put [this memoir] down...It is packed with reminders of how black dreams get skewed and deferred, yet are also pregnant with the possibility that a kind of redemption may lie in intimate grappling with black realities” (The Atlantic).

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<Someone suggested this—but who?> [The Alignment Problem](#) Brian Christian



What goes wrong when we build AI systems and the movement to fix them...

Today's ML systems, trained by data, are so effective that we've invited them to see and hear for us—and to make decisions on our behalf. But alarm bells are ringing. Recent years have seen an eruption of concern as the field of machine learning advances. When the systems we attempt to teach will not, in the end, do what we want or what we expect, ethical and potentially existential risks emerge. Researchers call this the alignment problem.

Systems cull résumés until, years later, we discover that they have inherent gender biases. Algorithms decide bail and parole—and appear to assess Black and White defendants differently. We can no longer assume that our mortgage application, or even our medical tests, will be seen by human eyes. And as autonomous vehicles share our streets, we are increasingly putting our lives in their hands.

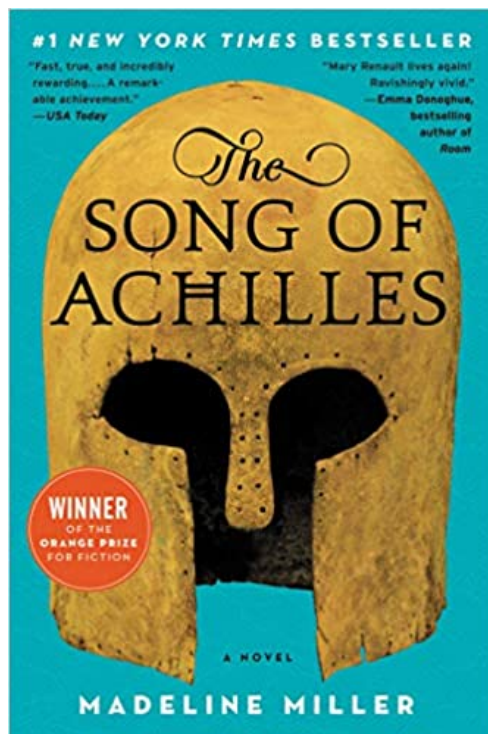
The mathematical and computational models driving these changes range in complexity from something that can fit on a spreadsheet to a complex system that might credibly be called "artificial intelligence." They are steadily replacing both human judgment and explicitly programmed software.

In best-selling author Brian Christian's riveting account, we meet the alignment problem's "first-responders," and learn their ambitious plan to solve it before our hands are completely off the wheel. In a masterful blend of history and on-the-ground reporting, Christian traces the explosive growth in the field of machine learning and surveys its current, sprawling frontier. Readers encounter a discipline finding its legs amid exhilarating and sometimes terrifying progress. Whether they—and we—succeed or fail in solving the alignment problem will be a defining human story.

The Alignment Problem offers an unflinching reckoning with humanity's biases and blind spots, our own unstated assumptions and often contradictory goals. A dazzlingly interdisciplinary work, it takes a hard look not only at our technology but at our culture—and finds a story by turns harrowing and hopeful.

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Kathryn. [Song of Achilles](#). Madeline Miller



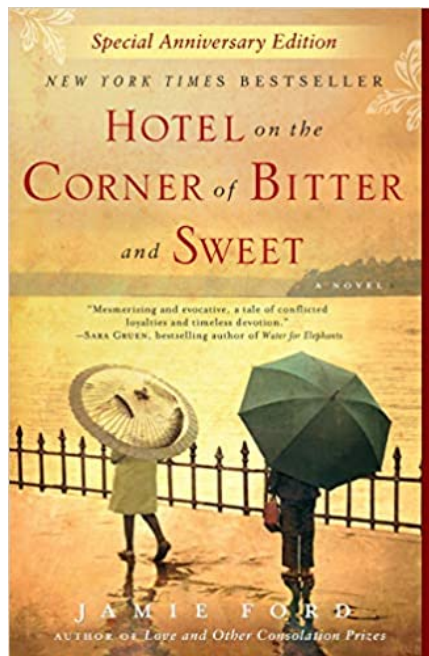
A thrilling, profoundly moving, and utterly unique retelling of the legend of Achilles and the Trojan War from the bestselling author of *Circe*



A tale of gods, kings, immortal fame, and the human heart, *The Song of Achilles* is a dazzling literary feat that brilliantly reimagines Homer's enduring masterwork, *The Iliad*. An action-packed adventure, an epic love story, a marvelously conceived and executed page-turner, Miller's monumental debut novel has already earned resounding acclaim from some of contemporary fiction's brightest lights—and fans of Mary Renault, Bernard Cornwell, Steven Pressfield, and Colleen McCullough's *Masters of Rome* series will delight in this unforgettable journey back to ancient Greece in the Age of Heroes.

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Laurie. [Hotel on the corner of bitter and sweet](#) Jamie Ford



In the opening pages of Jamie Ford's debut novel, *Hotel on the Corner of Bitter and Sweet*, Henry Lee comes upon a crowd gathered outside the Panama Hotel, once the gateway to Seattle's Japantown. It has been boarded up for decades, but now the new owner has made an incredible discovery: the belongings of Japanese families, left when they were rounded up and sent to internment camps during World War II. As Henry looks on, the owner opens a Japanese parasol.

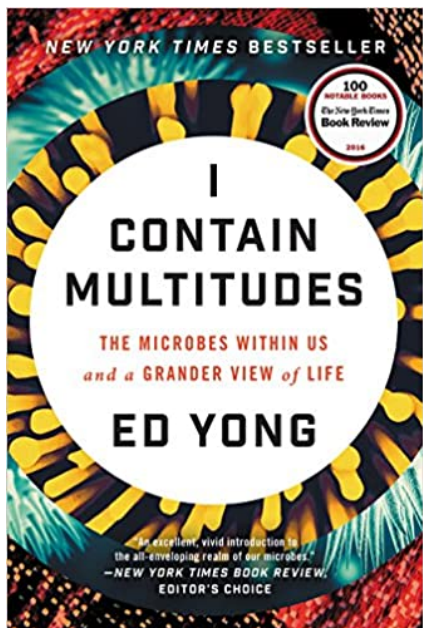
This simple act takes old Henry Lee back to the 1940s, at the height of the war, when young Henry's world is a jumble of confusion and excitement, and to his father, who is obsessed with the war in China and having Henry grow up American. While "scholarshipping" at the exclusive Rainier Elementary, where the white kids ignore him, Henry meets Keiko Okabe, a young Japanese American student. Amid the chaos of blackouts, curfews, and FBI raids, Henry and Keiko forge a bond of friendship—and innocent love—that transcends the long-standing prejudices of their Old World ancestors. And after Keiko and her family are swept up in the evacuations to the internment camps, she and Henry are left only with the hope that the war will end, and that their promise to each other will be kept.

Forty years later, Henry Lee is certain that the parasol belonged to Keiko. In the hotel's dark dusty basement he begins looking for signs of the Okabe family's belongings and for a long-lost object whose value he cannot begin to measure. Now a widower, Henry is still trying to find his voice—words that might explain the actions of his nationalistic father; words that might bridge the gap between him and his modern, Chinese American son; words that might help him confront the choices he made many years ago.

Set during one of the most conflicted and volatile times in American history, *Hotel on the Corner of Bitter and Sweet* is an extraordinary story of commitment and enduring hope. In Henry and Keiko, Jamie Ford has created an unforgettable duo whose story teaches us of the power of forgiveness and the human heart.

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Dan. [I Contain Multitudes: The Microbes Within Us and a Grander View of Life](#). Ed Yong.



A groundbreaking, wondrously informative, and vastly entertaining examination of the most significant revolution in biology since Darwin—a “microbe’s-eye view” of the world that reveals a marvelous, radically reconceived picture of life on earth.

Every animal, whether human, squid, or wasp, is home to millions of bacteria and other microbes. Pulitzer Prize-winning author Ed Yong, whose humor is as evident as his erudition, prompts us to look at ourselves and our animal companions in a new light—less as individuals and more as the interconnected, interdependent multitudes we assuredly are.

The microbes in our bodies are part of our immune systems and protect us from disease. In the deep oceans, mysterious creatures without mouths or guts depend on microbes for all their energy. Bacteria provide squid with invisibility cloaks, help beetles bring down forests, and allow worms to cause diseases that afflict millions of people.

Many people think of microbes as germs to be eradicated, but those that live with us—the microbiome—build our bodies, protect our health, shape our identities, and grant us incredible abilities. In this astonishing book, Ed Yong takes us on a grand tour through our microbial partners, and introduces us to the scientists doing the research. It will change both our view of nature and our sense of where we belong in it. It certainly changed mine.