Difficult Women
By Roxane Gay
(Grove Press, 9780802127372, $16)
“A difficult woman” has become shorthand for one who questions patriarchal power and who refuses to be defined by a standard of femininity. The women who populate Gay’s story collection are all difficult in their own ways—mothers, sisters, lovers, some married and some single, most of flesh and one of glass—yet they are all searching for understanding, for identity, and for ways to make sense of a sometimes nonsensical, cruel world. Some of Gay’s stories are graphic, some are allegorical, and all are important commentaries on being female in modern America.”

—Becky Gilmer, Bloomsbury Books, Ashland, OR

The Fall Guy: A Novel
By James Lasdun
(W. W. Norton & Company, 9780393354942, $15.95)
“*The Fall Guy* introduces its three main characters as they leave the hustle and bustle of New York City for a calm summer sojourn upstate, but things take a Lychanich turn when Charlie and Chloe’s guest, Charlie’s cousin Matthew, notices what appears to be duplicitious behavior within and outside their home. Lasdun does an incredible job of slowly ratcheting up the suspense, earning the reader’s trust with his spare, pitch-perfect language, and upending expectations on an incredible job of slowly ratcheting up the suspense, earning the reader’s trust with his spare, pitch-perfect language, and upending expectations on the soul of this novel with an agile, monkey heart. This is one of my favorite novels of the year.”

—Melanie McNair, Malaprop’s Bookstore/Café, Asheville, NC

The Glass Universe
By Dava Sobel
(Penguin Books, 978043931344, $10)
“Spectrography is a way of studying stars by taking pictures that separate astral light into different wavelength. The practice was pioneered by Dr. Henry Draper of the Harvard Observatory in the late 1800s, but the long and detailed work of interpreting the images and classifying the stars was done by a group of women. In this long overdue tribute to Harvard’s ‘human computers,’ Sobel, author of *Longitude*, brilliantly interweaves science, history, and biography, charting progress women have made in establishing themselves in a notoriously male-dominated field.”

—Laurie Greer, Politics & Prose Bookstore and Coffeehouse, Washington, DC

History of Wolves: A Novel
By Emily Fridlund
(Grove Press, 9780802127389, $16)
“A lonely teenager in rural northern Minnesota, Linda is desperate for connection—obsessed with both her enigmatic new neighbors and a classmate entangled in a scandalous relationship with a teacher. Narrating these seemingly disparate story threads is the adult Linda, who may have been villain, victim, or bystander in at least one tragedy. Debut author Fridlund weaves a complex, multilayered morality tale rich in metaphor and symbolism. This haunting, meticulously crafted novel is perfect for reading groups!”

—Sharon Flesher, Brilliant Books, Traverse City, MI

Mister Monkey: A Novel
By Francine Prose
(Harper Perennial, 9780062397843, $15.99)
“I came to this book expecting to be entertained, and it is laugh-out-loud funny. But in the wise and observant ways of Prose, *Mister Monkey* is more than just a protracted joke. The story begins in the narrow spaces of a theater soon to be demolished for condos and widens as Prose shifts points of view from actor to costume designer to writer to waiter to Hindu deity and back to the stage. Adolescent rage, loneliness, diversity, the end of the world, the beginning of love, the way we fail to live up to our dreams for ourselves, and the unexpected victories that fill the spaces made by disappointment: these are the soul of this novel with an agile, monkey heart. This is one of my favorite novels of the year.”

—Jamie Thomas, Women & Children First, Chicago, IL

Perfect Little World: A Novel
By Kevin Wilson
(Ecco, 9780062450340, $16.99)
“Izzy Poole is 18, pregnant with her erratic art teacher’s baby, and without any family or money. Dr. Preston Grind has created are truly memorable. A unique and fascinating read.”

—Sherri Gallentine, Vroman’s Bookstore, Pasadena, CA

To Capture What We Cannot Keep: A Novel
By Beatrice Colin
(Flaifron Books, 9781250138774, $15.99)
“Societal constraints and expectations of the time impede the love affair of Cartiromana Wallace and Emile Nougquier from the moment they meet in a hot air balloon above the Champ de Mars in 1888. Emile’s ailing mother is pressuring him to marry and take over the family business even as he is facing both public and professional stress as co-designer of the Eiffel Tower. Cait is a young Scottish widow forced to work as a charmer to a wealthy brother and sister. Cait’s and Émile’s paths cross and crisscross as Colin vividly captures La Belle Époque in this quiet, atmospheric novel.”

—Jennifer Gaydier, Blue Willow Bookshop, Houston, TX

Truelove: Two Brothers, a Kidnapping, and a Mother’s Quest: A True Story of the Jim Crow South
By Beth Macy
(Back Bay Books, 9780316337526, $17.99)
“In the early 20th century, Albinó African American brothers are kidnapped by unscrupulous and racist circus managers. But The Mothers who don’t go down from their work as freak show performers, but tell their mother that they are dead. This occurs during the height of the Jim Crow South, when black lives didn’t matter and lynching was at its peak. Their mother’s persistent and heroic fight through legal channels to recoup her sons’ wages and achieve a better standard of living is at the heart of this true story, an inside look at the historical depths of American racism.”

—Joan Grenier, Odyssey Bookshop, South Hadley, MA

Who Watcheth: An Inspector Irene Huss Investigation
By Helene Tursten, Marlaine Delargy (Trans.)
(Soho Crime, 9781616958657, $15.95)
“Tursten does not disappoint in the ninth installment of her impeccable Inspector Irene Huss Investigation series, moving it forward on a perfect note with Irene and her husband, Krister, beginning a new stage in their lives. One of the things I’ve always admired about this series, in addition to Irene’s strength and intelligence, is the normalcy of her life. I loved this book, but I was so busy racing through it to unravel the various threads that now I need to read it again and savor it. You will, too!”

—Eileen McGever, One More Page Books, Arlington, VA

The Whole Town’s Talking: A Novel
By Fannie Flagg
(Random House Trade Paperbacks, 9780812977189, $17)
“This book will leave you nostalgic for simpler times and craving a homemade piece of pie! Flagg offers an absolutely lovely story about a small Missouri town from its founding in 1889 through the present and beyond, told through narrative, letters, and a gossip column. I will be recommending this charming and wonderful story to all readers!”

—Mary O’Malley, Anderson’s Bookshop, Naperville, IL