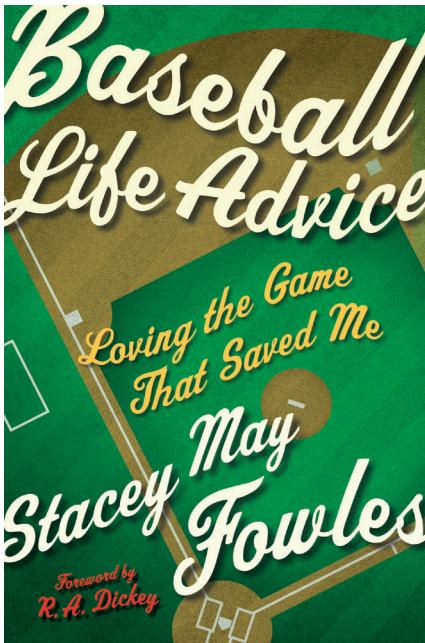


# LADIES FIRST

This month's page-turners celebrate women, and they include revealing memoirs, a nostalgic sci-fi read, a fast-paced thriller and a trio of books featuring literary antiheroines.



Baseball Life Advice: Loving the Game That Saved Me (McClelland & Stewart) by Stacey May Fowles, \$25.

## GAME THEORY

**Stacey May Fowles loves baseball**, but she never meant to be a sportswriter. The novelist and essayist started “curating baseball feelings”—that is, compiling an e-newsletter of happenings from across the league—in 2015. Her smart and self-described gleeful dispatches found a devoted audience and led to a new collection of essays about what might be her favourite thing in the world (family and friends notwithstanding...we think). Fowles chatted with us about what the game means to her, covering the tough stuff and the player she's rooting for the most. — *Stacy Lee Kong*

### What do you love most about baseball?

It's reliable. It happens every day—maybe not your team, but there's a game every day for a set period of time—and you can use your love of it as a tool, so if you want to go to a game and completely escape, you can do that.

### There's been a lot of talk recently about “sticking to the game,” but your book addresses quite a bit more. Why?

There are so many people who love baseball because it helps them through the more difficult parts of their lives. And I don't think that's a thing we talk a great deal about. We talk about stats and projections and who's going to what team, but we don't talk about what this game means to people in their everyday lives.

### You also talk about serious issues in baseball, such as doping, racism and sexism. Why is that important?

Because I love it. If you see value in a space, it's worth investing your time in making that space welcoming for everyone. Baseball has done so much good

for me, and my impulse is to share that with as many people as possible, not keep them out. Often, when I criticize how exclusionary baseball culture can be, people get defensive about it. But the reason I do it is because I love it so much, not because I think it's awful.

### What's it like to be one of the few women writing about sports in mainstream media?

It's a difficult thing to navigate, and it's important to talk about it, but we also have to understand that fan experiences are very personal. There isn't a woman's and a man's fan experience; there are a lot of different experiences. That's where many MLB teams get it wrong; they think that marketing toward women by giving them a feather boa is the way to go. That's why I think it's important to acknowledge that women are still consistently excluded from baseball culture, *and* that a woman's experience in this game is not universal.

### Who's your favourite baseball player?

That's hard to say! I have such an incredible affinity for [former Blue Jay and current Atlanta Braves pitcher] R.A. Dickey as a person, so I feel the need to eliminate him from the list, because I actually talked to him, human to human. I have a lot of incredible feelings for [Blue Jay third baseman] Josh Donaldson. But I'm really Team [Jose] Bautista lately; I became so annoyed with people who criticized him that, somewhere along the way, he became my favourite. Which is actually really strange because I was always sort of an underdog person, and all of a sudden, I'm rooting for the legend.



### SPACE CADET

Debbie Biondi is an alternate-dimension-hopping, time-travelling heroine who saved the Earth from nuclear war when she came to our world. Or, wait, Debbie Biondi is actually the author of the acclaimed comic book series *Sputnik Chick: Girl With No Past*, whose main character saves the world from nuclear war. As unlikely as it seems, Debbie might be both—but she can't convince her friends and family of her unbelievable sci-fi past (and, frankly, doesn't want to try). It might be a little

hard to keep timelines straight in *Sputnik's Children*, but you'll love weaving your way through Debbie's lorazepam- and martini-induced memories in this genre-bending ode to the unreliable narrator, with a touch of Cold War-era nostalgia thrown in for good measure. — *Alexandra Donaldson*  
*Sputnik's Children (ECW Press) by Terri Favro, \$20.*



### LADY LUCK

It's hard to picture Peggy Bundy as a dark-haired chanteuse, but if Katey Sagal had stuck with her original career choice (she was a backup singer for Bette Midler and Bob Dylan), we may have had a different esthetic to associate with the actor. That gravity-defying red wig—and her priceless portrayal of the *Married... With Children* matriarch—turned Sagal into a household name. Her recollections offer much more than just Peg, including the impact of her parents' deaths, her

struggle with addiction and the fame she found on *8 Simple Rules* and *Sons of Anarchy*, where she played Gemma Teller Morrow, a role for which she won a Golden Globe. As interesting as Sagal's story is, it's made even better by her meandering way of telling it and her inclusion of all the gritty details (like a date with Gene Simmons!). — *AD*  
*Grace Notes (Gallery Books) by Katey Sagal, \$35.*



### SECRETS AND LIES

A former TV reporter who suffered an on-air breakdown while reporting in Haiti, Rachel has unrelenting anxiety that has made her world increasingly small—she doesn't even go outside anymore. Within the walls of her condo, though, life isn't so bad. She has plenty to read, a book to write and an understanding husband who has been encouraging her to ease back into the world—and is unfailingly patient when she can't do it. Eventually, Rachel does manage to venture

out, and she promptly has a chance encounter that exposes the fault lines in her life. Are the people she loves who they say they are? Are their jobs, likes and even names real? A fast-paced psychological thriller, Dennis Lehane's latest is a must-read for mystery fans. — *SLK*  
*Since We Fell (HarperCollins) by Dennis Lehane, \$25.*



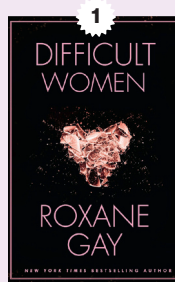
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# INDEPENDENT WOMEN

Three books by, and about, women who don't mind being called complicated

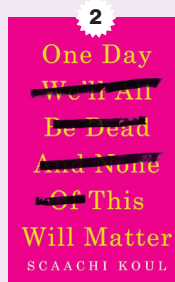
"Difficult" women haven't always been well-represented in pop culture—they're usually the villains of the story, not the protagonists. But antiheroines are having a moment. Whether it's morally flawed characters like *How to Get Away With Murder's* Annalise Keating, raw female comedians like Amy Schumer or musicians who have reclaimed the word "bitch" (ahem, Madonna), we're seeing more stereotype-breaking representations of womanhood—and we like it. Here are three books that are getting in on the trend. — *Lisa van de Geyn*



### 1 PRIVATE LIVES

If you're in the mood for a collection of stories—salacious, gut-wrenching and often as real as a diary entry—about the lives and loves of women, bestselling author Roxane Gay's latest will satisfy your craving. Gay writes about a woman who's married to a twin who swaps identities with his brother; another who strips to put herself through school and must defend

herself; and rich women in Florida who spy on one another. *Difficult Women (Grove Press) by Roxane Gay, \$37.*



### 2 THIS MATTERS

In her first book of essays, BuzzFeed senior writer Scaachi Koul shares hilarious tales about growing up in one of the few nonwhite families in southwest Calgary. They include her run-ins with racism ("In grade eight, Joshua, a guy whose main vocation was eating erasers, called me Osama bin Laden's cousin"), Internet trolls and gender stereotypes. It sounds

heavy, but we promise you'll laugh out loud. *One Day We'll All Be Dead and None of This Will Matter: Essays (Doubleday Canada) by Scaachi Koul, \$25.*



### 3 FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Jen Agg is famously outspoken and a restaurateur to be reckoned with in Canada's male-dominated culinary scene, so it's no surprise that her memoir is both candid and compelling. Funny, honest chapters about her first time getting drunk, her dreams of opening a restaurant and the rampant sexual harassment still present in the industry show Agg's

skill at sharp, tell-it-like-it-is storytelling. *I Hear She's a Real Bitch (Doubleday Canada) by Jen Agg, \$33.*