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CITY MAGAZINE



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NEXT MONTH'S ISSUE

"In Defense of the Em-Dash"

by Parker Navarro

"Exiting the Asylum: Anna Kavan and Retreat"

by Selina Chan



Dear Reader,

I'm delighted to share my new novel, *Bad Words*, with you!

Bad Words is about a novelist and the critic who destroyed his promising career with her brutal reviews of his books. They strike up a bitter public feud, which becomes increasingly complicated as—behind the scenes—they begin to fall in love.

Bad Words is a story about judging art, judging character, and how the two influence each other. It's about how writing connects us and disconnects us. It's about the pure animal pleasure of watching two sharp people bat insults back and forth—and what it looks like when they just might have to eat their words. It's also a book that I self-indulgently packed full of my favorite things: chaotic group chats, romantically charged emails, volumes of subtext, scenes that feel like Christmas, and the quiet, enormous realization that you don't want to live without somebody.

Best,

Ríoghnach
Robinson

Ríoghnach Robinson

@RíoghnachRobinson

RíoghnachRobinson.com



IN CONVERSATION . . .

A Discussion Question Guide for Bad Words

1. Consider Selina and Parker's relationship over the course of the novel. What ultimately brought them together? Given their related industries, do you think they'd have found their way to each other eventually?

2. Parker is part of a large, boisterous family. What is his role within the dynamics of his family, and how has this affected the way he communicates and presents himself? What are the benefits and pitfalls of his desire to be liked and to avoid conflict? In what ways does this inform his writing?

3. Selina keeps a small circle of trusted friends. Why do you believe that is? What is it about Parker that allows her to trust him despite their history?

4. While Selina's motivation is to prove her parents wrong, Parker's motivation has been to provide for his family and make them proud. What are some similarities that Parker and Selina have despite the differences in their upbringings?

5. Selina cares about the work that is put out into the world; that's why she's a critic. It's said that book reviews are for the readers, but is there a line between criticism and bullying when reviewing books? If there is, where do you think that line falls, and what entices people to cross it?

6. With the rise of social media, public discourse has grown more accessible, leading to a rise in a culture of takedowns and social cancellations. Within *Bad Words* we see these conversations taking place in both public spaces and the seemingly private forums that are part of them. Do you believe these spaces allow for productive discussion? If not, why do you think so many engage with them?

7. How does Parker's experience as a third-generation Filipino American and Selina's as a first-generation Chinese American impact their experiences as creatives, as friends, and as individuals throughout the story?

8. Should books be considered literary masterpieces for them to be worth reading? What makes a book worth reading for you personally?

9. Parker and Selina carefully craft personas for themselves in their writing, in their behavior online, in their workplaces, and in real life. How do these limited personas compare to "the real thing," to the characters as whole people?

10. Even when Parker and Selina still despise each other, they feel hints of envy. Parker envies Selina's clarity and conviction, while Selina envies Parker's likability and relative financial security. How do these feelings of envy first reinforce, then conflict with, their feelings of dislike?

11. Parker and Selina's feud is staked on publicity, but it's also staked on the idea of changing people's minds about their work and their reputations. Has your mind ever been changed by something you saw online, or have you changed somebody else's mind? Why is it difficult for people to change their minds, both online and offline?

12. Even though Selina's reviews are painful to Parker, he finds something true in them, something that shows real understanding of him and his work. Is there something frightening about being understood? How does the idea of good faith play into Parker's relationship with Selina's reviews?

13. Throughout the book, Selina is forced to deal with how the role of the critic has transformed. Do you think professional critics are important? How are critics connected to, and disconnected from, artists?

14. Are you a Selina or a Parker? Why?

When words can make or break us...
how do you stay true to
what matters most?



"A ONCE-IN-A-
LIFETIME READ."
—EMILY HENRY



Bad Words

A Novel

Ríoghnach
Robinson



**"The rare kind
of book I can't
believe doesn't
already exist ...**

a clear, clever voice
and incisive social
commentary elevate
the book's irresistible
will-they-won't-they
romance to a
once-in-a-lifetime
read about truth,
art, vulnerability, and
all the sticky places
they intersect.
***Bad Words* left
me buzzing."**

—EMILY HENRY

**"A triumph...
Utterly fresh."**

—TARAH DeWITT

ON SALE 10·06·26



ST. MARTIN'S
PRESS

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AND
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PARKER
NAVARRO

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HOME
a novel
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AUTHOR OF OUR GODS OUR HEAVENS

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transcendent new release
from beloved author
Juliette Liao.*

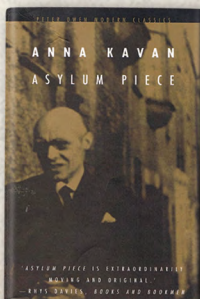
ON SALE AT ALL
MAJOR RETAILERS

PARKER'S READING LIST

Ask me my favorite book, and I'll give you fifteen titles. Ask me for fifteen favorite books, and I'll spend six hours swapping options, wishing I had more room. I want to say that this list has something for everyone—experimental playfulness, real emotion, tender and human strangeness, sentences that hit you like a clarion blast—but maybe it's just a list that has something for every part of me.

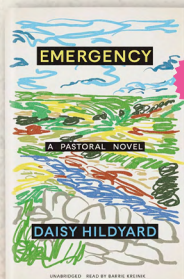
By PARKER NAVARRO

Asylum Piece
by Anna Kavan



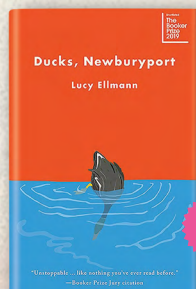
1

Emergency
by Daisy Hildyard



2

Ducks, Newburyport
by Lucy Ellmann



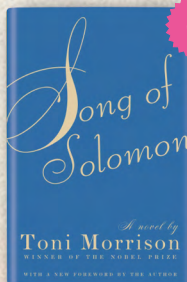
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The Metamorphosis
by Franz Kafka



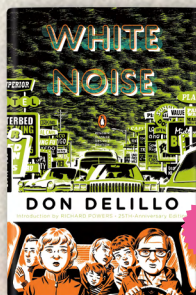
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Song of Solomon
by Toni Morrison



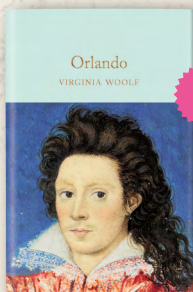
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White Noise
by Don DeLillo



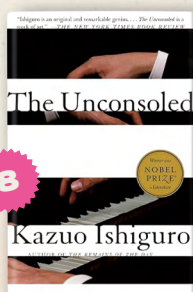
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Orlando
by Virginia Woolf



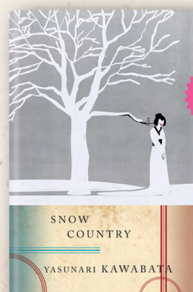
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The Unconsoled
by Kazuo Ishiguro



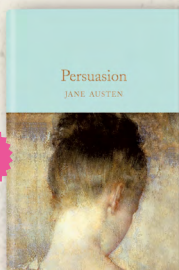
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Snow Country
by Yasunari Kawabata



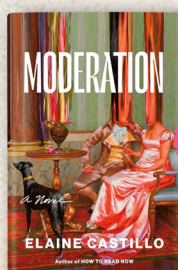
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Persuasion
by Jane Austen



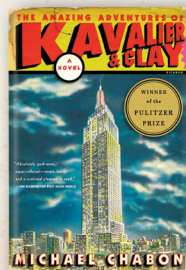
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Moderation
by Elaine Castillo



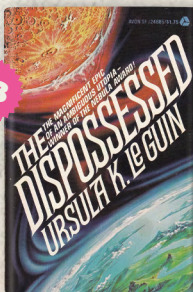
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The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier & Clay
by Michael Chabon



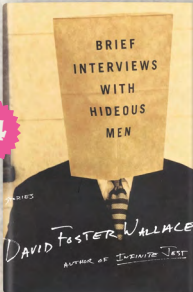
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The Dispossessed
by Ursula K. LeGuin



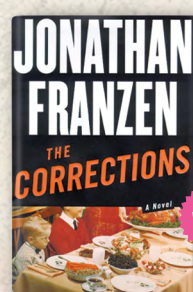
13

Brief Interviews with Hideous Men
by David Foster Wallace



14

The Corrections
by Jonathan Franzen



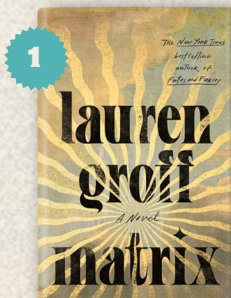
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SELINA'S READING LIST

Relationships are built on timing. First, on the chance timing of an initial meeting. Then, on time spent purposefully together, which nourishes and restores us. The same is true of the relationships between readers and books. Like the hours spent with close friends or loved ones, every hour I spend with the following novels deepens my conviction that I am in the right place, at the right time, doing exactly what I'm meant to be doing.

By SELINA CHAN

Matrix
by Lauren Groff



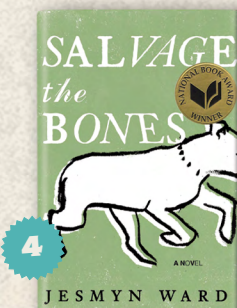
*Pretentiousness:
Why it Matters*
by Dan Fox



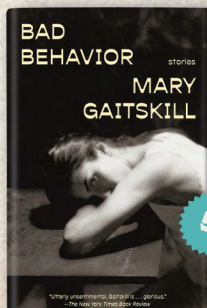
Never Let Me Go
by Kazuo Ishiguro



Salvage the Bones
by Jesmyn Ward



Bad Behavior
by Mary Gaitskill

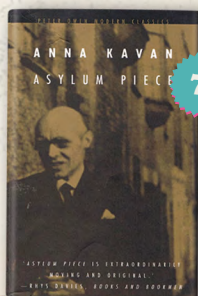


Pale Fire
by Vladimir Nabokov

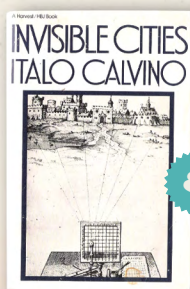


Asylum Piece

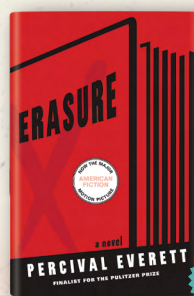
by Anna Kavan

*Invisible Cities*

by Italo Calvinò

*Erasure*

by Percival Everett

*By Night in Chile*

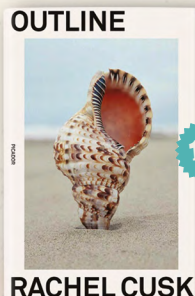
by Roberto Bolaño

*The Vegetarian*

by Han Kang

*Outline*

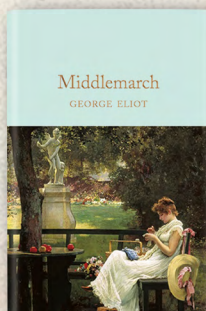
by Rachel Cusk

*A Separation*

by Katie Kitamura

*Middlemarch*

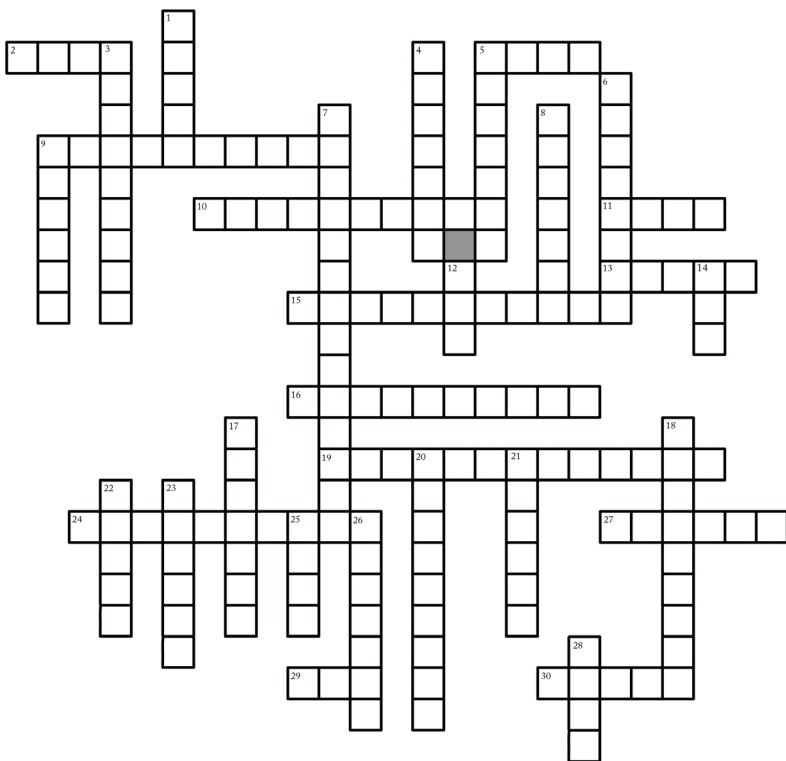
by George Eliot

*Convenience Store Woman*

by Sayaka Murata



CROSSWORD



ACROSS

2. Japanese Pop Music
 5. Author's cry at an editor's overstep
 9. Home to *WORD* Bookstore
 10. *Pulitzer*, *Booker*, *NBA*
 11. Groucho Marx: "Outside of a dog, a book is man's best friend. Inside of a dog, it's too dark to ____"
 13. Filipino Pork Dish
 15. Lover of Books
 16. Through Letters or Emails
 19. *These ____ Times* by Parker Navarro
 24. Magazine employee
 27. Fast Arriving Snowstorm

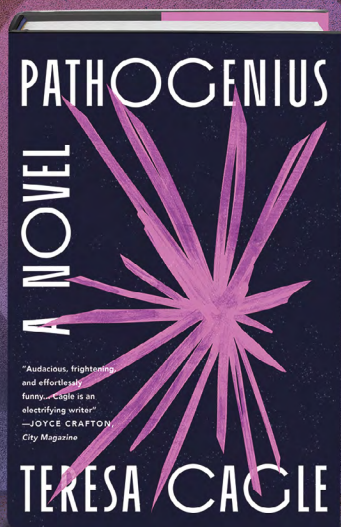
29. Abv. Dec 31
 30. Taylor Swift's First Album

DOWN

1. Author Anna of *Ice* and *Asylum Piece*
 3. Soft cover
 4. Book Lender
 5. Ronan of *Little Women*
 6. Apple Brandy Cocktail
 7. Publisher of *Bad Words*
 8. Chinese stuffed buns
 9. Advanced Copy of Book
 12. What every writer fears losing?
 14. Annoy

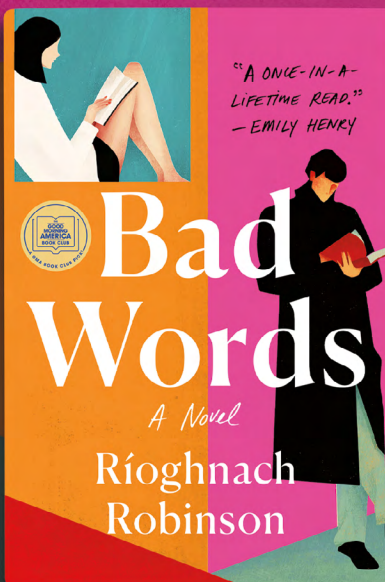
17. ____ Weather
 18. Text chains
 20. Irish version of Regina
 21. ____ to Lovers
 22. New or Unusual
 23. Writer of Reviews
 25. Numeric Identification for Books
 26. An old name for *X*
 28. *Family* ____

SOLUTION ON PAGE 24.



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—CARLEY FORTUNE

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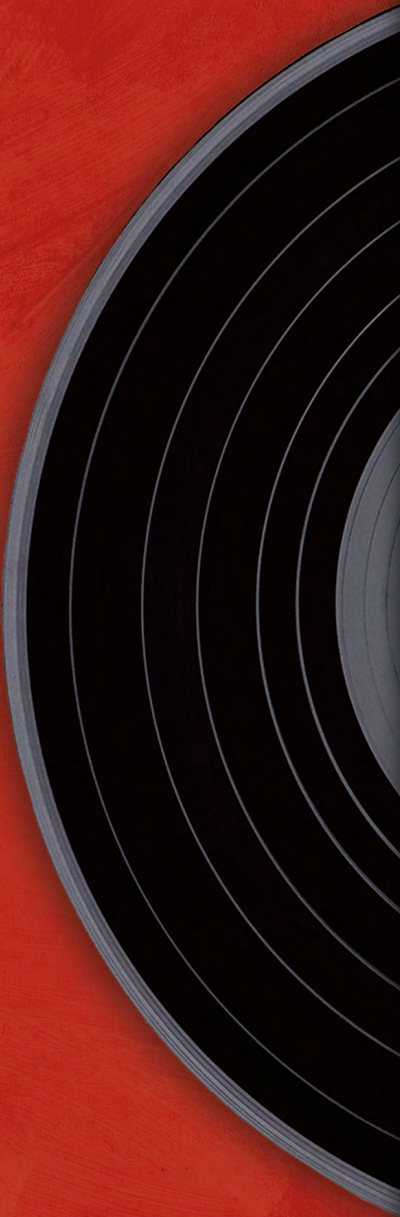
—BETH O'LEARY

"Smart and propulsive."

—MARY H.K. CHOI

ON SALE 10.06.26





SELINA AND PARKER'S CHRISTMAS PLAYLIST

Christmas is, if not quite near, faintly visible on the horizon. From *City* staff writer Selina Chan and guest contributor Parker Navarro comes a playlist for browsing department stores, gliding around your local ice rink, or settling in for the evening to decorate the tree. Stick through to the end for a hint of New Year's promise.

SIDE A

Here Come the Tubular Bells by Japanese Breakfast

Christmas Wrapping by The Waitresses

Christmas in Our Hearts by Jose Mari Chan

White Christmas by The Drifters

A Holly Jolly Christmas by Burl Ives

Silver Bells by Dean Martin

You're a Mean One, Mr. Grinch by Thurl Ravenscroft

The Christmas Song by Nat King Cole

Shchedryk by the Crimean Chamber Choir

SIDE B

Silent Night by Sinead O'Connor

Feliz Navidad by Jose Feliciano

Winter Wonderland by Bing Crosby

I've Got My Love to Keep Me Warm by Ella Fitzgerald and Louis Armstrong

I'll Be Home for Christmas (If Only in My Dreams)
by Frank Sinatra

Season's Feelings by catholique

New Recording 180 (New Year's Eve)
by Sidney Gish

Auld Lang Syne by Guy Lombardo

This Year by the Mountain Goats

THE JACK ROSE



PARKER
NAVARRO'S
FAVORITE
DRINK!

Ingredients

1 ½ ounces applejack or apple brandy *

¾ ounce lemon juice, freshly squeezed

½ ounce grenadine

Garnish: lemon twist

Directions

1. Add the applejack, lemon juice and grenadine into a shaker with ice, and shake until well-chilled.
2. Fine-strain into a coupe glass, and garnish with a lemon twist.

BEHIND THE BAR

*Mocktail version: replace applejack or apple brandy with 1 ½ to 2 ounces clear apple juice or fresh apple cider.

Ingredients

For the dough:

- 2 ½ cups of flour
- 1 teaspoon dried yeast
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- 1 tablespoon cooking oil
- ½ cup of water

For the filling:

- 1 lb of ground pork
- Knob of Ginger, diced
- 8 tablespoons of soy sauce
- 1 cup of chopped scallions
- 4 tablespoons of sesame oil

Dough instructions:

1. Mix flour, yeast, sugar and oil together in mixing bowl. Pour water in slowly and combine.
2. Knead dough until smooth.
3. Cover bowl with damp cloth and leave to rise for about 40 minutes.

Filling instructions:

4. Mix ground pork with soy sauce and let marinate in fridge for at least 20 minutes.
5. Add in ginger, scallions, and sesame oil. Stir until combined.

Make Buns:

1. Remove dough from fridge and knead.
2. Divide into about 12 equal portions and roll out each portion into a small disk.
3. Place dollop of filling in center of disk and pinch dough into bun shape.
4. Let buns rest for 20 minutes.
5. Place buns (with parchment paper underneath) in a steamer basket.
6. With buns in steamer, heat water until boiling and then turn down to medium heat.
7. Cook for 15 minutes.
8. Serve warm.

STEAMED GOUBULI BUNS



CELEBRATING

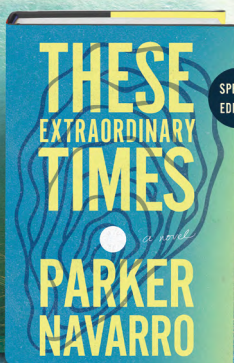
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NOTES

NOTES

*FAVORITE MOMENTS FROM
BAD WORDS*

*FAVORITE MOMENTS FROM
BAD WORDS*

READING LIST

READING LIST

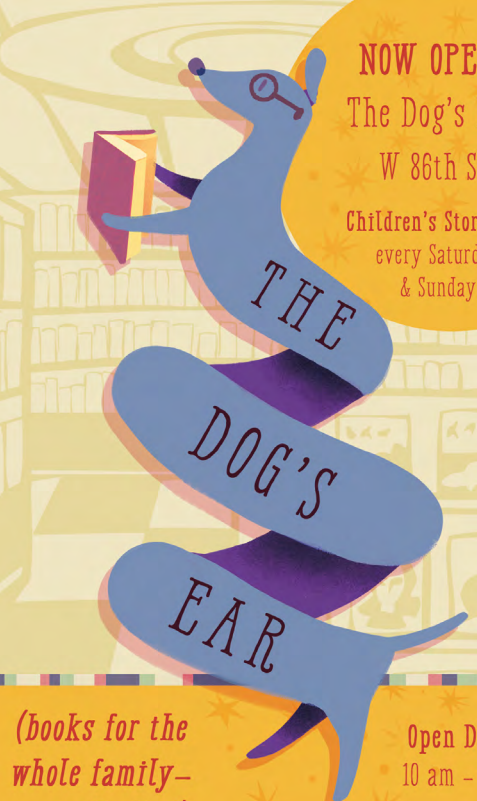
CROSSWORD ANSWER KEY

ACROSS

1. JPOP
5. STET
9. GREENPOINT
10. BOOKAWARDS
11. READ
13. SISIG
15. BIBLIOPHILE
16. EPISTOLARY
19. EXTRAORDINARY
24. JOURNALIST
27. SQUALL
29. NYE
30. DEBUT

DOWN

1. KAVAN
3. PAPERBACK
4. LIBRARY
5. SAOIRSE
6. JACKROSE
7. STMARTINSPRESS
8. GOUBULI
9. GALLEY
12. JOB
14. IRK
17. SWEATHER
18. GROUPCHAT
20. RIOGHNACH
21. RIVALS
22. NOVEL
23. CRITIC
25. ISBN
26. TWITTER
28. FEUD



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“

RÍOGHNACH (pronounced ree-uh-nock) **ROBINSON** grew up in North Carolina, studied economics at Kenyon College, and now lives in New York City. Her books for young readers, including Lambda Award winner *Come Home to My Heart*, are published under the pen name Riley Redgate. She has also written for WEBTOON and *The Onion*, America's Finest News Source. You can find her on Instagram at [@RioghnachRobinson](#). *Bad Words* is her first adult novel.

”

IF I EVER
SAID ANYTHING
THAT
MATTERED,
I SAID IT
TO YOU.