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IT ISN'T EASY, BEINGVOR... Being a Vor lord on the war-torn planetBarrayar wasn't easy. Being an officer in Barrayar's military wasn't easy. Andbeing the leader of a force of spaceborne mercenaries w Presents a new collection of alcohol-induced "fratire" adventures in hedonism that convey the author's experiences of being intoxicated at inappropriate times, seducing a large number of women, and otherwise living in complete disregard of social norms. Investigating the theoretical and empirical relationships between transparency and trust in the context of surveillance, this volume argues that neither transparency nor

trust provides a simple and self-evident path for mitigating the negative political and social consequences of state surveillance practices. Dominant in both the scholarly literature and public debate is the conviction that transparency can promote better-informed decisions, provide greater oversight, and restore trust damaged by the secrecy of surveillance. The contributions to this volume challenge this conventional wisdom by considering how relations of trust and policies of transparency are modulated by underlying power asymmetries, sociohistorical legacies, economic structures, and institutional constraints. They study trust and transparency as embedded in specific sociopolitical contexts to show how, under certain conditions, transparency can become a tool of social control that erodes trust, while mistrust—rather than trust—can sometimes offer the most promising approach to safeguarding rights and freedom in an age of surveillance. The first book addressing the interrelationship of trust, transparency, and surveillance practices, this volume will be of interest to scholars and students of surveillance studies as well as appeal to an interdisciplinary audience given the contributions from political science, sociology, philosophy, law, and civil society. Language has always been central to the meaning and exploitation of photographic images. However, the various types and "styles" of language associated with different photographic genres have been largely overlooked. This book considers the nature of photography, examining the language used in titles, captions and commentaries, particularly as they relate to documentary photography, photojournalism and fashion photography. The Spoken Image addresses the question of how the photograph communicates its message, with or without the aid of language. The book looks at the work of film-makers such as Antonioni and Greenaway to contrast filmic methods of narration with those of photography. Scott concludes that photography has arrived at a level of communicative sophistication equal to that of modern textual narratives, in conjunction with which it often works. #1 National Bestseller "A sprawling, ambitious novel about Los Angeles, written with all the broad-stroke energy that was so irresistible to readers in A Million Little Pieces. By turns satirical, tense, and surprisingly touching, it is a portrait of a city onto which so many millions have projected so many dreams. . . . Compelling, cinematic. . . . It achieves the very essence of Los Angeles's fractured, unpredictable, loopy nature." —Vanity Fair "A captivating urban kaleidoscope. . . . James Frey got another chance. Look what he did with it. He stepped up to the plate and hit one out of the park. . . . He became a furiously good storyteller." —Janet Maslin, New York Times One of the most celebrated and controversial authors in America delivers an extraordinary novel—a sweeping chronicle of contemporary Los Angeles that is bold, exhilarating, and utterly original. Dozens of characters pass through the reader's sight lines—some never to be seen again—but James Frey lingers on a handful of LA's lost souls and captures the dramatic narrative of their lives. A dazzling tour de force, Bright Shiny Morning illuminates the joys, horrors, and unexpected fortunes of life and death in Los Angeles. A thought-provoking and darkly witty novel about freedom, motherhood, greed, and religion—a surprising new direction from the controversial author of Men, Women & Children and The Average American Male. Chad Kultgen has established himself as one of the most honest and candid chroniclers of human relationships working today. Now, in an eye-opening departure, he turns his gaze on the collision between religious values and human freedoms in American society. She found herself thinking how strange it was that although we are all animals with roughly the same mental capacity—and roughly the same access to information, both general and specific—we can come to such radically different conclusions about the nature of reality. She wondered if it would always be like this, or if at some point in the future a general knowledge base would be accepted by the whole of humanity on which every individual would base their view of existence. She hoped this would be the case and wished she could live to see it. Karen Halloway is a philosophy PhD candidate, struggling to find a dissertation topic strong enough to make a mark on the world. When she discovers that she's pregnant, she finds herself at a crossroads: she has always known that she doesn't want to be a mother, and feels her only choice is to have an abortion, though she knows that both her boyfriend and her highly religious best friend will object. Yet on the way to the clinic, Karen has the epiphany she's been looking for—a way to turn her unexpected

situation to her advantage. Fiendishly suspenseful, intellectually provocative, *Strange Animals* is a surprising novel about freedom, choice, and desperate measures. With the publication of *The Average American Male* -- and the release of the shocking viral videos that made it a water-cooler sensation -- Chad Kultgen became one of the most talked-about authors of recent years. Now, with *The Lie*, Kultgen returns with an even more salacious -- yet also more searching -- novel that reaches deeper into the craven inner workings of some of most depraved minds in America: college students. His subjects are Brett, the rich hedonist whose appetite for sex is matched only by his contempt for women; his best friend, Kyle, the brooding science geek whose good intentions lead him to one disastrous decision; and Heather, the social-climbing sorority girl who has the power to destroy them both. As this devil's triangle plows through four years of college, Kultgen offers a astonishing take on the wild and amoral universe of college today: a frathouse world where sex is social currency, status means everything -- and winner takes all. Abandon hope, all ye who enter here. Perfect for fans of Bachelor Nation and *Seinfeld*, an illuminating deep dive into the most successful reality TV franchise of all time--*The Bachelor*. Since its premiere in 2002, ABC's *The Bachelor* has become a staple of American television. Now, discover the fascinating history of the show, uncover the ins and outs of the phenomenon that has become Bachelor Nation, and take a deeper look at what separates the winners from the losers. From how best to exit the limo on Night One, to strategies for making a run for the all-important First Impression Rose, to how to avoid being labeled a villain, this clear-eyed guide illustrates the rules and strategies any would-be contestant should know. The ultimate must-read for every fan, *How to Win the Bachelor* gives you an inside look at the franchise where The Rose holds all the power. On the one hand, nobody wants to be a dick. On the other hand, dicks are everywhere! They cut in line, talk behind our backs, recline into our seats, and even have the power to morph into trolls online. Their powers are impressive, but with a little foresight and thoughtfulness, we can take a stand against dickishness today. *How Not to Be a Dick* is packed with honest and straightforward advice, but it also includes playful illustrations showing two well-meaning (but not always well behaved) young people as they confront moments of potential dickishness in their everyday lives. Sometimes they falter, sometimes they triumph, but they always seek to find a better way. And with their help, you can too. If you were sentenced to death, wouldn't you jump at a chance for life? Even if that reprieve meant leaving Earth to live on a spaceship full of freaks, the hideous survivors of a DNA altering plague? Arlen Rowell took that chance and found the freaks were a finer stock of folks than the ones who shunned them from their home planet. On the ship *Benevolence*, Arlen found integrity, courage, danger, and...love. Then he found a way to contact the other nine Freak Ships with the idea that 50,000 freaks could seek a planet to call home. The critically acclaimed show, *Californication*, is one of Showtime's highest rated programs. Averaging about two million viewers an episode, it is the most successfully rated freshman series in Showtime history. A Golden Globe nominee for Best Television Series (Comedy or Musical), *Californication* features an electric, likeable cast, led by actor David Duchovny, who won a Golden Globe for his performance playing Hank Moody. *God Hates Us All* is the novel written by Duchovny's character, Hank Moody, which in the show is turned into a Hollywood film entitled *A Crazy Little Thing Called Love*. Timed to coincide with the premiere of the Season 3 of the hit series, this will allow fans an extra, backstage look at the concept of the show not available through episodes. Now available in one volume are three of Chad Kultgen's offensive, in-your-face, brutally honest and completely hilarious looks at male inner life and sexual fantasy. This eBook collection includes *The Average American Male*, *The Average American Marriage*, and *The Lie*. The unnamed narrator is in his late twenties, has an unimportant job, plays video games, and hangs out with his friends and his girlfriend. But that's not all. He unabashedly reveals every thought that goes through his head, from his sexual fantasies involving his annoying girlfriend and other women he encounters, his masturbation sessions while watching porn, and his disgust with his annoying girlfriend and a majority of the people he comes across. Every artist is an unhappy lover. And unhappy lovers want to tell their story.' 'A source of wonders and delight' Spectator Ex-tax collector and author of two unpopular novels, Bradley Pearson wishes to devote his retirement to writing a masterpiece. But the doorbell and the phone keep ringing, and every ring brings with it an ex-wife, a friend in need, a sister in trouble or a young woman seeking a teacher, and so dusty, selfish Bradley is plunged into the muddles and mysteries which will end in his doom. Winner of the James Tait Black

Memorial Prize 1973. WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY SOPHIE HANNAH VINTAGE CLASSICS MURDOCH: Funny, subversive, fearless and fiercely intelligent, Iris Murdoch was one of the great writers of the twentieth century. To celebrate her centenary Vintage Classics presents special editions of her greatest and most timeless novels. U.S. foreign policy and the domestic concerns of Middle Eastern states are influencing the pursuit of the global war on terror in the Middle East. A close view of Saudi Arabia reveals the complex interaction of these forces. The U.S. relationship with Saudi Arabia and the global war on terror are important challenges to the U.S. administration that have region-wide ramifications. Saudi Arabia has been facing down Islamist insurgency along with other challenges since September 11, 2001 and with even more urgency since May 2003. The Kingdom clearly remains a major political and economic force in the region. The income from its vast oil resources primarily has funded its strong influence, and the Kingdom has, in turn sponsored poorer developing Arab nations. Furthermore, its Islamic influence has been apparent in the broader Muslim world, and the United States has maintained a strong relationship with the Kingdom for many decades. New York Times bestselling author Eric Jerome Dickey, "one of the most successful Black authors of the last quarter-century"\* explores the depths of desire in this sensual blockbuster. Born in Trinidad and living in Atlanta after a relationship gone bad, Nia Simone Bijou is an ambitious writer who has it all. Except for the one thing that'll give her the control she craves-and the power she deserves: absolute, uninhibited sexual satisfaction. Now, in the sweltering days and nights of summer, the heat is on. Nia's fantasies will become a reality-with man after man after man. She will shatter the limits of erotic love. She will open herself up to experiences she never dared before. And as her fantasies begin to spin out of control, she'll discover the unexpected price of the extreme. \*The New York Times Coming of age in 1940s America, Ramona Smollens takes her cues on female sexuality from Hollywood movie stars. None is more voluptuous than Rita Hayworth, known as a captivating temptress whose image even inspired American pilots on their World War Two missions. Ramona marries young, escaping her mother's house shortly after the death of her father. Into marriage and motherhood she carries a dark family secret and maintains her secret obsession with Hayworth. The story of her struggle with the conventions of her day is bold, energetic, darkly humorous and moving. A non-threatening, female-friendly introduction to the topic of male chastity, ideal for nervous keyholders or as a love-offering from a would-be-chastened male. With the publication of *The Average American Male* -- and the release of the shocking viral videos that made it a water-cooler sensation -- Chad Kultgen became one of the most talked-about authors of recent years. Now, with *The Lie*, Kultgen returns with an even more salacious -- yet also more searching -- novel that reaches deeper into the craven inner workings of some of most depraved minds in America: college students. His subjects are Brett, the rich hedonist whose appetite for sex is matched only by his contempt for women; his best friend, Kyle, the brooding science geek whose good intentions lead him to one disastrous decision; and Heather, the social-climbing sorority girl who has the power to destroy them both. As this devil's triangle plows through four years of college, Kultgen offers a astonishing take on the wild and amoral universe of college today: a frathouse world where sex is social currency, status means everything -- and winner takes all. Abandon hope, all ye who enter here. Brace yourself for the battle of the exes.... Hayden and Nick used to be a hot item, but their brief affair ended with a highly publicized breakup. Now the two are "just friends," excluding the occasional flirtation. When Hayden wins the girls' division of a local snowboarding competition, Nick is unimpressed, claiming that Hayden wouldn't have a chance against a guy. Hayden calls Nick's bluff and challenges him to a head-to-head boarding contest. Their mutual friends quickly take sides, the girls on Hayden's and the boys on Nick's, making for an all-out battle of the sexes. This friendly competition is bound to get heated -- and they might end up igniting some old flames. Now a major motion picture starring Bradley Cooper, Robert DeNiro, and Abbie Cornish. Alan Glynn's *Limitless* is a high-concept thriller for this Adderall age, and a haunting meditation on the allure and the curse of human potential. A burnout at thirty-five, months behind on his book, low on cash, and something of a loser, Eddie Spinola could use a shot in the arm. One day he randomly runs into Vernon, his ex-wife's brother, and his ex-dealer. Now employed by a shadowy pharmaceutical company, Vernon has something that might help: a new designer drug that stimulates brain function. One pill and Eddie is hooked. His book is finished within days; he learns and synthesizes information at a frightening rate; and he can go a long time

without sleep or food. Naturally, he begins to play the stock market. But when Vernon turns up dead, Eddie makes off with the only stash of the drug in existence. Then come the side effects: black-outs, blinding headaches, and violent outbursts he can't seem to remember. The "highly entertaining and thoroughly reprehensible" #1 New York Times bestseller—now with sixteen pages of photos and a new introduction (The New York Times). My name is Tucker Max, and I am an asshole. I get excessively drunk at inappropriate times, disregard social norms, indulge every whim, ignore the consequences of my actions, mock idiots and posers, sleep with more women than is safe or reasonable, and just generally act like a raging dickhead. But, I do contribute to humanity in one very important way: I share my adventures with the world. --from the Introduction Actual reader feedback: "I find it truly appalling that there are people in the world like you. You are a disgusting, vile, repulsive, repugnant, foul creature. Because of you, I don't believe in God anymore. No just God would allow someone like you to exist." "I'll stay with God as my lord, but you are my savior. I just finished reading your brilliant stories, and I laughed so hard I almost vomited. I want to bring that kind of joy to people. You're an artist of the highest order and a true humanitarian to boot. I'm in both shock and awe at how much I want to be you." "I can't figure out if this book is a heart-felt dispatch from the front line in the battle of the sexes or a brilliant send-up of the way in which the male point of view has been misrepresented by militant feminists. I suspect it may be both." --Toby Young, New York Times bestselling author of *How to Lose Friends and Alienate People* An offensive, in-your-face, brutally honest and completely hilarious look at male inner life and sexual fantasy. In the course of this hilariously honest book, our narrator suffers through a relationship with his wannabe-actress girlfriend until he finds the perfect girl. But when he moves into the new relationship, he slowly realizes he thinks that all women are pretty much the same, that his true desires will never be fulfilled, and the decision between living life alone or biting the marriage bullet must be made. "A stimulating book about combating despair and complacency with searching reflection." --Heller McAlpin, NPR.org Named a Best Book of 2018 by NPR. One of Lit Hub's 15 Books You Should Read in September and one of Outside's Best Books of Fall A revelatory Alpine journey in the spirit of the great Romantic thinker Friedrich Nietzsche *Hiking with Nietzsche: Becoming Who You Are* is a tale of two philosophical journeys—one made by John Kaag as an introspective young man of nineteen, the other seventeen years later, in radically different circumstances: he is now a husband and father, and his wife and small child are in tow. Kaag sets off for the Swiss peaks above Sils Maria where Nietzsche wrote his landmark work *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Both of Kaag's journeys are made in search of the wisdom at the core of Nietzsche's philosophy, yet they deliver him to radically different interpretations and, more crucially, revelations about the human condition. Just as Kaag's acclaimed debut, *American Philosophy: A Love Story*, seamlessly wove together his philosophical discoveries with his search for meaning, *Hiking with Nietzsche* is a fascinating exploration not only of Nietzsche's ideals but of how his experience of living relates to us as individuals in the twenty-first century. Bold, intimate, and rich with insight, *Hiking with Nietzsche* is about defeating complacency, balancing sanity and madness, and coming to grips with the unobtainable. As Kaag hikes, alone or with his family, but always with Nietzsche, he recognizes that even slipping can be instructive. It is in the process of climbing, and through the inevitable missteps, that one has the chance, in Nietzsche's words, to "become who you are." In this text, Kathleen Brogan makes the case that the recent preoccupation with ghosts stems not from a lingering interest in Gothic themes, but instead from a whole new genre in American literature that she calls 'the story of cultural haunting'. We poisoned our planet. Sucked it dry of natural resources. Killed one another in the name of gods that never existed, and survived despite it all. Now, at the very edges of the fabric of space-time, the universe itself is starting to decay. Three warring races—the Human Empire, the organic Duron, and the cybernetic Luminids—must band together to stop their mutual destruction, and the future of the galaxy rests on Captain Rhodes and the crew of the H.E. Woden. William, an aspiring twenty-year-old actor, moves to New York to pursue his career, only to begin an obsessive love affair that ends in heartbreak TV writer Winston offers up a witty collection of autobiographical tales about her misadventures in dating—a laugh-out-loud, tell-all in which she sets the record straight for all her exes. A mind-bending novel in which an alternate history of 9/11 and its aftermath uncovers startling truths about America and the Middle East 11/9/2001: Christian fundamentalists hijack four jetliners. They fly two into the Tigris & Euphrates World

Trade Towers in Baghdad, and a third into the Arab Defense Ministry in Riyadh. The fourth plane, believed to be bound for Mecca, is brought down by its passengers. The United Arab States declares a War on Terror. Arabian and Persian troops invade the Eastern Seaboard and establish a Green Zone in Washington, D.C. . . . Summer, 2009: Arab Homeland Security agent Mustafa al Baghdadi interrogates a captured suicide bomber. The prisoner claims that the world they are living in is a mirage—in the real world, America is a superpower, and the Arab states are just a collection of "backward third-world countries." A search of the bomber's apartment turns up a copy of The New York Times, dated September 12, 2001, that appears to support his claim. Other captured terrorists have been telling the same story. The president wants answers, but Mustafa soon discovers he's not the only interested party. The gangster Saddam Hussein is conducting his own investigation. And the head of the Senate Intelligence Committee—a war hero named Osama bin Laden—will stop at nothing to hide the truth. As Mustafa and his colleagues venture deeper into the unsettling world of terrorism, politics, and espionage, they are confronted with questions without any rational answers, and the terrifying possibility that their world is not what it seems. Acclaimed novelist Matt Ruff has created a shadow world that is eerily recognizable but, at the same time, almost unimaginable. Gripping, subversive, and unexpectedly moving, *The Mirage* probes our deepest convictions and most arresting fears. A New York Times Editors' Choice and an Oprah's Book Club Summer Reading Pick In this brilliant new collection, Scotiabank Giller Prize and Rogers Writers' Trust Fiction Prize nominee Alix Ohlin skillfully displays the full range of human emotions through the subtly powerful dramas of everyday life. In "You Are What You Like" a young couple finds their life derailed by the arrival of a hard-partying old friend. In "Robbing the Cradle" Lisette does everything she can to give her husband a baby, committing an act of desperation. In "The Idea Man" Beth, a divorcee, falls in love with a man who lies for fun. And in the incredible title story, Kathleen finds herself sitting at the hospital bedside of a man she had planned to divorce, comforted by the woman she went out of her way to hurt. These characters are divorced and beginning to date again, childless and longing for children, married and aching for more. Often unexpected and unsettling, always fascinating, *Signs and Wonders* showcases a young writer of remarkable range and emotional depth. In the dark days after the events in the book *Gust Front*, but before the primary invasion, the Chancellor of Germany faces a critical decision. The author of *The Average American Male* and *The Lie* returns with a shocking, salacious, and surprisingly subtle new novel of the average American family. Like Neil Strauss and Nick Hornby, Chad Kultgen has the capacity to enthrall and astonish even the most ardent readers of contemporary literary fiction. In *Men, Women, and Children*, his incisive vision, unerring prose, and red-light-district imagination are at their most ambitious and surprising, as he explores the sexual pressures of junior high school students and their parents navigating the internet's shared landscape of pornography, blogs, social networking, and its promise of opportunities, escapes, reinvented identities, and unexpected conflicts. A National Book Award Finalist In this ambitiously multilayered novel from the acclaimed and award-winning writer Jennifer Egan, a fashion model named Charlotte Swenson emerges from a car accident in her Illinois hometown with her face so badly shattered that it takes eighty titanium screws to reassemble it. She returns to New York still beautiful but oddly unrecognizable, a virtual stranger in the world she once effortlessly occupied. With the surreal authority of a David Lynch, Jennifer Egan threads Charlotte's narrative with those of other casualties of our infatuation with the image. There's a deceptively plain teenaged girl embarking on a dangerous secret life, an alcoholic private eye, and an enigmatic stranger who changes names and accents as he prepares an apocalyptic blow against American society. As these narratives inexorably converge, *Look at Me* becomes a coolly mesmerizing intellectual thriller of identity and imposture. A new hard sci-fi epic from novelist Chad Kultgen. We poisoned our planet. Sucked it dry of natural resources, killed one another in the name of gods that never existed, and survived despite it all. But now, at the very edges of the fabric of space-time, the universe itself is starting to decay... Three warring races -- the Human Empire, the organic Duron, and the cybernetic Luminids -- must band together to stop their mutual destruction, and the future of the galaxy rests on Captain Rhodes and the crew of the H.E. Woden. A candid, witty, and inspiring collection of essays from *The Bachelor's* first Black Bachelorette, exploring everything from relationships and love to politics and race "The Bachelor gave me an opportunity, but I created my own happy ending." Rachel Lindsay rose to prominence as *The*

Bachelor's first Black Bachelorette and has since become one of the franchise's most well-known figures—and outspoken critics. But there has always been more to Lindsay than meets the eye, and in this book, she finally tells her own story, in her own words. In wide-ranging essays, Lindsay opens up about her experience on ABC's hit show and reveals everything about her life off-camera, from a childhood growing up in Dallas, Texas, as the daughter of a U.S. District Judge, to her disastrous dating life prior to appearing on *The Bachelor*, to her career in law, and the decision to become a reality-TV contestant. She also brings a sharp wit and keen intellect to weigh in on issues such as the lack of diversity in reality television and the importance of political engagement, protest, and the Black Lives Matter movement. Told in the down-to-earth, no-nonsense voice she's become known for, Lindsay's book of essays provides an intimate look at the life of one of reality TV's most beloved stars, as well as advice and inspiration that will make her a role model for anyone who has ever struggled to find their way in love and life. As she says, "Contrary to popular belief, the best gift I ever received was not a wedding ring. It was the permission I gave myself to be imperfect." And if you don't believe her, you know the saying: Miss me with that.

National Bestseller "A funny, sad, nasty little gem of a novel."—Jay McInerney

In bestselling author Jennifer Belle's debut novel, *Going Down*, Belle introduces readers to Bennington Bloom, a coed working her way through college. As a call girl. With a sharp eye for satire and a keen comic sense, Belle chronicles nineteen-year-old Bennington's high-pressure adventures. Stuck with an ulcer, a father who loves his dog like a daughter, a shrink who is hard of hearing, and New York University tuition to worry about, she's working overtime to keep it all together and doing what she can to survive. Spending the night in an abandoned hotel pool, punching pushy old women on the subway, Bennington is at an all-time low, and things are only going down from there. A witty take on making it in the city, *Going Down* showcases Jennifer Belle's unerring gift for capturing the absurdities of day-to-day life. Funny and intelligent with an endearingly skewed take on life, Belle is the real thing. The true, declassified account of CIA operative Tony Mendez's daring rescue of American hostages from Iran that inspired the critically-acclaimed film directed by and starring Ben Affleck, and co-starring John Goodman, Alan Arkin, and Bryan Cranston. On November 4, 1979, Iranian militants stormed the American embassy in Tehran and captured dozens of American hostages, sparking a 444-day ordeal and a quake in global politics still reverberating today. But there is a little-known drama connected to the crisis: six Americans escaped. And a top-level CIA officer named Antonio Mendez devised an ingenious yet incredibly risky plan to rescue them before they were detected. Disguising himself as a Hollywood producer, and supported by a cast of expert forgers, deep

cover CIA operatives, foreign agents, and Hollywood special effects artists, Mendez traveled to Tehran under the guise of scouting locations for a fake science fiction film called *Argo*. While pretending to find the perfect film backdrops, Mendez and a colleague succeeded in contacting the escapees, and smuggling them out of Iran. Antonio Mendez finally details the extraordinarily complex and dangerous operation he led more than three decades ago. A riveting story of secret identities and international intrigue, *Argo* is the gripping account of the history-making collusion between Hollywood and high-stakes espionage. *The Average American Marriage*, the long-awaited sequel to Chad Kultgen's much debated, always controversial *The Average American Male*, is a matter-of-fact foray into the male mind and sexual fantasy. Now married with children, Kultgen's lewd and sex-obsessed narrator once again offers up his deep (and not so deep) thoughts on love, marriage, kids, and (naturally) sex: from birthday sex to interns to parenting, *The Average American Male* looks upon the institution of marriage with the same deadpan smirk he has brought to the rest of his sex-addled, perennially disaffected life. In this fratboy/ghost story, Conrad Sutton is dead at age 19 and seeks revenge against his murderer. The only problem is that Conrad needs a body to effect any real change in the "meat world," so he learns the dark art of possession. "Why mess around with Catholicism when you can have your own customized religion?" Fed up with his parents' boring old religion, agnostic-going-on-atheist Jason Bock invents a new god -- the town's water tower. He recruits an unlikely group of worshippers: his snail-farming best friend, Shin, cute-as-a-button (whatever that means) Magda Price, and the violent and unpredictable Henry Stagg. As their religion grows, it takes on a life of its own. While Jason struggles to keep the faith pure, Shin obsesses over writing their bible, and the explosive Henry schemes to make the new faith even more exciting -- and dangerous. When the Chutengodians hold their first ceremony high atop the dome of the water tower, things quickly go from merely dangerous to terrifying and deadly. Jason soon realizes that inventing a religion is a lot easier than controlling it, but control it he must, before his creation destroys both his friends and himself. Arthur Nersesian's underground literary treasure is an unforgettable slice of gritty New York City life. This is the darkly hilarious odyssey of an anonymous slacker. He's a perennial couch-surfer, an aspiring writer searching for himself in spite of himself, and he's just trying to survive. But life has other things in store for the fuck-up. From being dumped by his girlfriend to getting fired for asking for a raise, from falling into a robbery to posing as a gay man to keep his job at a porno theater, the fuck-up's tragi-comedy is perfectly realized by Arthur Nersesian, who manages to create humor and suspense out of urban desperation. "Read it and howl," says Bruce Benderson (author of *User*), "and be glad it didn't happen to you."