

# reviews

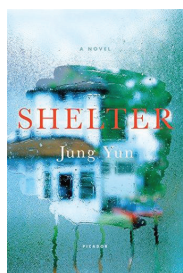
any more than that, because **Lovecraft Country** is a book that's best experienced as it's unfolding.

Matt Ruff, a James Tiptree Jr. Award winner who has written cult classics like *Bad Monkeys*, brilliantly interweaves the racial tensions of the time with the supernatural, creating a world in which his characters must often *literally* grapple with their own second-class status. The juxtaposition is potent. Ruff's steady, self-assured pacing and voice make this all very matter-of-fact, giving more supernatural moments a tactile quality. As with so many great genre novels, **Lovecraft Country** provides a sense of familiarity that makes the unbelievable believable.

Fans of dense supernatural fiction will get happily lost in **Lovecraft Country**, as will anyone who wants a vastly entertaining novel that's also an exploration of the nature of human prejudice.

—MATTHEW JACKSON

## SHELTER



By Jung Yun  
Picador  
\$26, 336 pages  
ISBN 9781250075611  
eBook available

DEBUT FICTION

Jung Yun's debut novel, **Shelter**, opens with a scene all too familiar in every parent's life: a child out of bed way too early. We meet main character Kyung Cho, a first-generation Korean American, as he, annoyed and blurry eyed, tries to gratify the demands of his 4-year-old son, Ethan. Through this mundane encounter, the reader gets a sense of Kyung's unhappy state of mind. The young professor is broke, and things get worse when he learns that his parents have become victims of a violent crime.

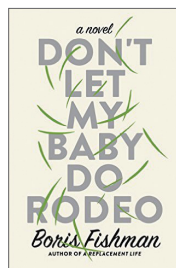
With each page, Yun takes us deeper into Kyung's troubles, caused not only by the criminal acts of strangers but also by his own ineptitude, which he blames on his sadistic and loveless childhood. Gillian, his understanding,

supportive, non-Korean wife, and Mae, his traditional, religious and artistic Korean mother, provide a juxtaposition of female influences in Kyung's life, while his father, the elder Mr. Cho, questions whether Kyung is to blame for his own problems.

As the crime drama unfolds in the background, Yun expertly explores what it means to be an immigrant in America, the true value of tradition, the parent-child bond, what makes a good marriage and the need for forgiveness. Yun introduces us to a man riddled with anger and self-doubt, leaving the reader to judge whether time can truly mend what's broken. The story of **Shelter** is more than just about having a home; it is about finding a refuge in one's own skin.

—CHIKA GUJARATHI

## DON'T LET MY BABY DO RODEO



By Boris Fishman  
Harper  
\$26.99, 336 pages  
ISBN 9780062384362  
Audio, eBook available

POPULAR FICTION

For both parents and child, the subject of adoption is fraught with emotional complications. That's the point of departure for New York writer Boris Fishman's perceptive second novel, **Don't Let My Baby Do Rodeo**. And like his debut novel, *A Replacement Life*, it also deals with the challenges facing immigrants from the former Soviet Union as they adapt to life in the United States.

There's definitely something different about Max Rubin, the adopted 8-year-old son of Alex Rubin, of Belarus, and his wife, Maya, of Ukraine. The blonde-haired, green-eyed boy is fond of sleeping in a tent and has even taken to tasting some of the varieties of grass growing around his New Jersey townhouse. His decision to abandon the school bus and disappear one late spring afternoon throws his family into crisis.

Maya's need to unravel the mys-

tery that is Max eventually leads her to propose a family odyssey to Montana, where Max was born. For the suburbanites, Montana might as well be Mars, a reality Fishman adroitly reveals in describing both its geography and its culture.

At the heart of this family drama is mercurial, deeply sympathetic Maya, who senses disaster lurking around every corner. Fishman patiently uncovers the tensions embedded in the Rubins' relationship that intensify Maya's restlessness. They've reached the midpoint of their lives in an alien land without a clear vision of where life is taking them, and with a vague sense of unease that's exacerbated by their sharp disagreements over how much of Max's history they need to know.

**Don't Let My Baby Do Rodeo**—the plea of Max's young mother as she hands over her child to his adoptive parents—is a ruminative story about the often fragile bonds of family. Even the most comfortable parents and children may someday confront a crisis as unsettling as the one that afflicts the Rubins, a truth that allows this novel to resonate with unexpected force.

—HARVEY FREEDENBERG

## VERSION CONTROL



By Dexter Palmer  
Pantheon  
\$27.95, 512 pages  
ISBN 9780307907592  
eBook available

LITERARY FICTION

Dexter Palmer's second novel, **Version Control**, is the kind of rich, multilayered book that often feels like it is raising more questions than answers. The first is the question of exactly what type of book it is: Is it a deeply personal story of a marriage and the human condition, or is it a cerebral exploration of the world of astrophysics and time travel? Is it science fiction or literary fiction?

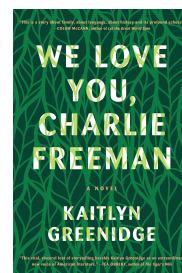
A description does little to clear this matter up. **Version Control**

tells the story of married couple Rebecca and Philip Wright. Rebecca works in customer support for a web-based dating service, while Philip is a scientist who has been toiling on what some might call a time machine (though he adamantly refers to it as a "causality violation device") that has made him a joke in the physics community. Though the two have known heartbreak and disappointment, their life together is generally comfortable. Yet Rebecca can't shake the feeling that the world is "wrong." Could Philip's device be the way to set things right? Or might it actually be the source of Rebecca's anxiety and unease?

Expansive in scope, **Version Control** burrows into issues of science and technology, religion, relationships, racism and free will. It would be easy for issues to overshadow the story, but Palmer—who has a Ph.D. in English from Princeton—defly keeps the many components in harmony. The result is an intellectual novel that feels surprisingly intimate and accessible. Weighty yet emotionally rewarding, **Version Control** will appeal to all curious readers, regardless of their scientific background.

—STEPHENIE HARRISON

## WE LOVE YOU, CHARLIE FREEMAN



By Kaitlyn Greenidge  
Algonquin  
\$25.95, 336 pages  
ISBN 9781616204679  
eBook available

DEBUT FICTION

Charlotte's family is starting over, and she isn't sure what to make of it. Charlotte and her sister, Callie, have long been considered the weird ones in their Boston neighborhood. They speak in sign language as often as anything, a skill acquired from their mother, Laurel. But now that skill is setting them apart in another way: The Toneybee Institute for Ape Research has hired Laurel to teach sign language to a chimpanzee, Charlie—and the rest of the family