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MIS REMEMBERED  
BOOKS



WHEN WE'RE SEARCHING FOR A BOOK  
BUT HAVE FORGOTTEN THE TITLE  
But Are Certain It Was about Dogs,  
and Definitely Blue... or Maybe Red ...

MARINA LUZ

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When We're Searching for a Book  
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*BY MARINA LUZ*

  
CHRONICLE BOOKS  
SAN FRANCISCO

## INTRODUCTION

I remember when I first learned as a child that there were people whose job it was to design book covers. It came not long after a similar revelation, that one could get paid to draw things all day, which sounded impossibly and wonderfully fantastical to my mind (and still does, even as an adult working as an illustrator).

Like so many visual people, I know far too many books in my own library primarily by their covers: The strange slope of an outdated font or a striking color combination on a spine comes to mind far more vividly than a title in some cases. And once in a while, I have to search for a book with little more than a dimly recalled detail about the plot. A few years ago, I found myself wanting to reread a book I had enjoyed ages before. I couldn't remember the title, nor the author. This, in and of itself, was not particularly unusual. Unfortunately, I also couldn't remember any characters' names, the geographic setting, the time period, or any plot points. I dredged through my memory and the single detail I was sure of was that a group of people at a hotel overlooking a bay woke up one morning to find an iceberg had appeared, overnight. Was it funny? Ominous? Magical? I had no idea, and I did not relish the idea of walking into a bookstore (no matter how kind the employees may be) armed with so pathetic a scrap of identifying information.

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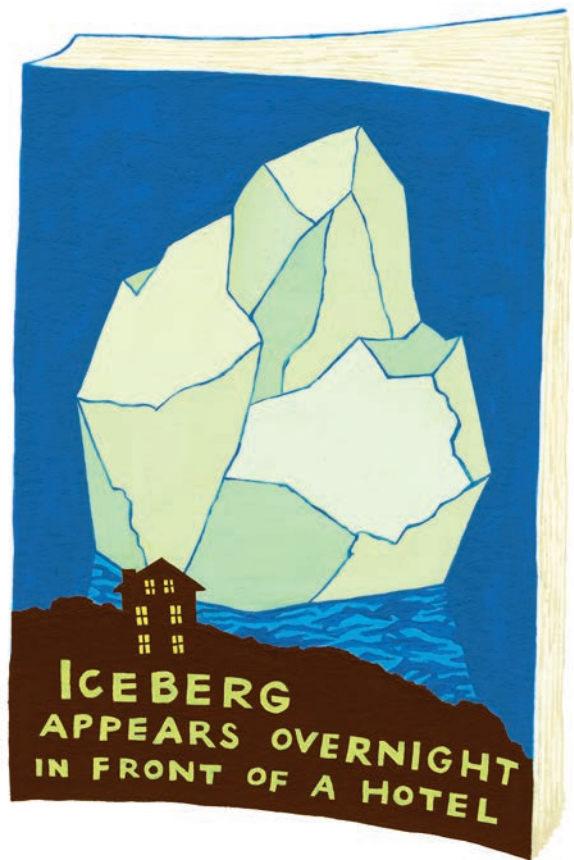


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The art in these pages is an homage to that universal experience of looking for a beloved book. With *A Library of Misremembered Books*, I finally got to indulge my childhood dream of designing covers, albeit for books that don't exist. These covers are based on the way we look for books, as found in the subject lines of internet search forums and in descriptions heard by bookstore employees, when the titles or authors escape us.

Anyone who has worked in a bookstore knows only too well that moment when a customer approaches by saying, "So I don't remember the title, or the author, but—." And we've all been on the other side of the counter, trying to pinpoint something we can't quite describe at a bookstore ("It's a murder mystery, but also quite funny"), or at a video store ("Could be subtitled, but then again, now that I think about it, maybe it wasn't"), or at a mechanic ("The car is kind of going *gu-chunk, gu-chunk*; except on hills, when it's more of a *clickety-tickety*"). We are usually left not only without an answer, but also with the overwhelming sense that we have lost some small piece of our dignity in the attempt.

Internet booklovers' forums offer an alternative. We forgetful types are mercifully spared the imagined, withering contempt of the bookshop clerk, who probably wrote her graduate thesis on Proust, *in French*, but now has to suffer our pained efforts to remember the punny name of the main character in that trashy book we read ten years ago and would *really* like

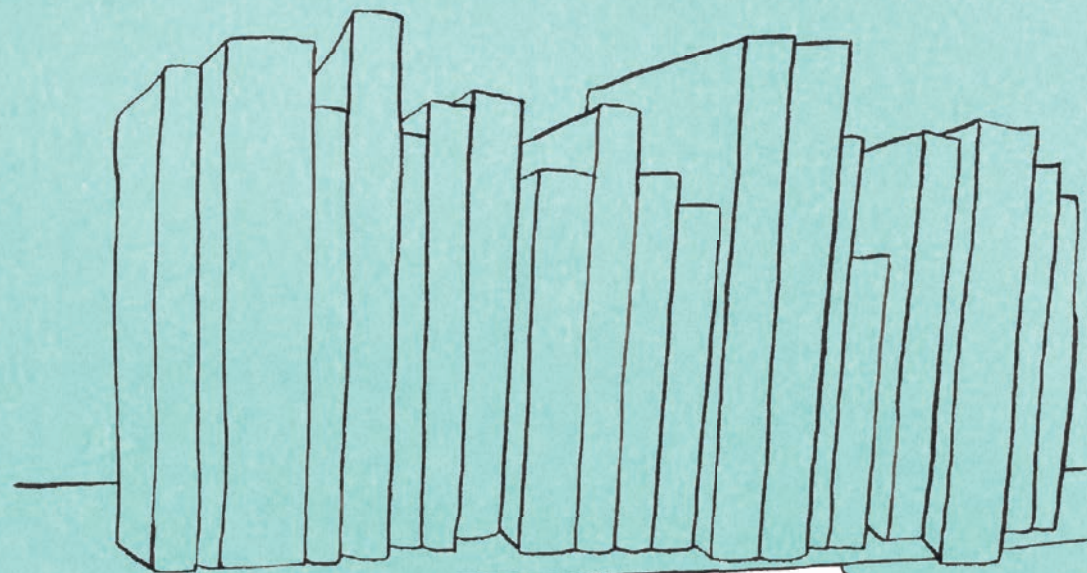
to find again, based on nothing more than remembering that the cover was green. Or maybe turquoise. The forums offer protective veneers of anonymity but still require collapsing random scraps of memory into short headings that we hope will jolt the memory of other readers.

It seems perhaps depressing, if not inevitable, that a book attempting to tackle grand themes of love, loss, mortality, and the very meaning of existence could be boiled down to *Complicated Love Story*; or that a richly imagined world of dystopian future horror might be reduced with devastating efficiency to *Metal Legs Good, Flesh Legs Bad*; or that a moving novel on overcoming adversity is remembered only as *Victorian Prostitute with Dry Skin*.

Some titling mysteries are solved by the community of helpful readers and booksellers. The resulting reveals, however, can be strangely disappointing. Who *wouldn't* want a book titled *Solutions Manual*? Stripped of context, it sounds, in its vagueness, endlessly promising and helpful. To find out that it is a coding textbook slams the door shut on the possibility that this book could solve any problem we could encounter. And why slog through 254 pages of twists and turns, waiting to find out how it ends, when you can just read the title of *Mountain Climber Falls in Love but Dies* and be done with it? Dreaming up the contents of these books can be just as fun as finding the original sought-after book.

The absolute best part of this project was getting to imagine what a book featuring these titles would look like (and most of these queries are never solved, so there's no way to check). I've been inspired by a lifetime of admiring great book-cover design: Romek Marber's seminal work for the green Penguin Crimes series; Glenn Ligon's elegantly curated selection of covers for his book *A People on the Cover*; Peter Buchanan-Smith's use of Todd Hido photographs for the covers of the Raymond Carver collection for Vintage Books; a delightfully pulpy genre ubiquitous in the 1970s that I can categorize only as "Gothic Nightgown Horror"; Coralie Bickford-Smith's beautifully detailed patterns for the Penguin Classics; or any book-cover design, really, by Dick Bruna or Edward Gorey.

It's been a great pleasure to give these "misremembered books" a little place in the world. This imagined library is a humble appreciation of all of those books that affected us more deeply than we understood, or ever expected: the bath-time book with no words that only registers in our earliest memory as a very familiar color combination, or the poetry compilation that we were forced to read in college that we didn't appreciate at the time, but now regret not savoring. Or that one book we didn't even really like very much, but are sure it ended up with an ex and need to replace, on principle alone. I hope you enjoy browsing this library's shelves. I hope it inspires you to be brave and track down that forgotten book you have from your past. Everyone has one.

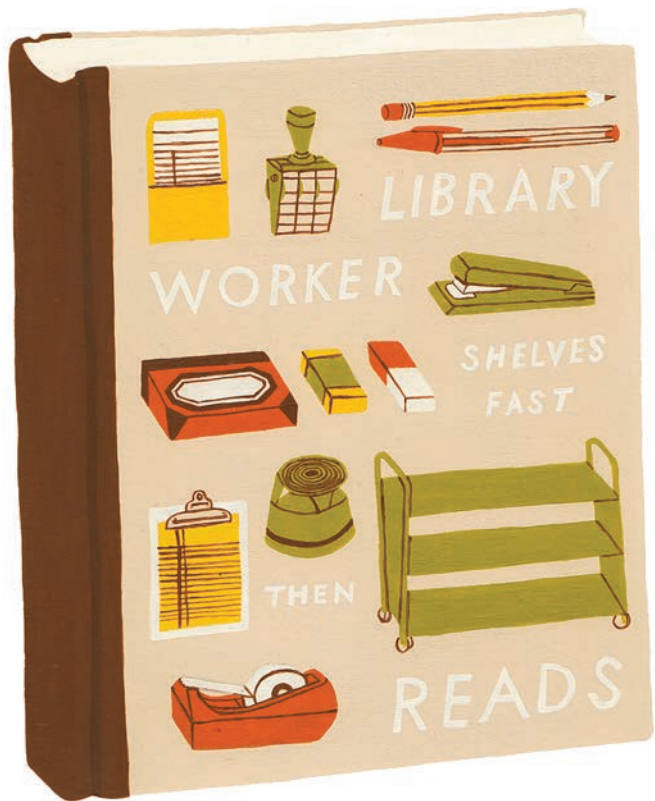


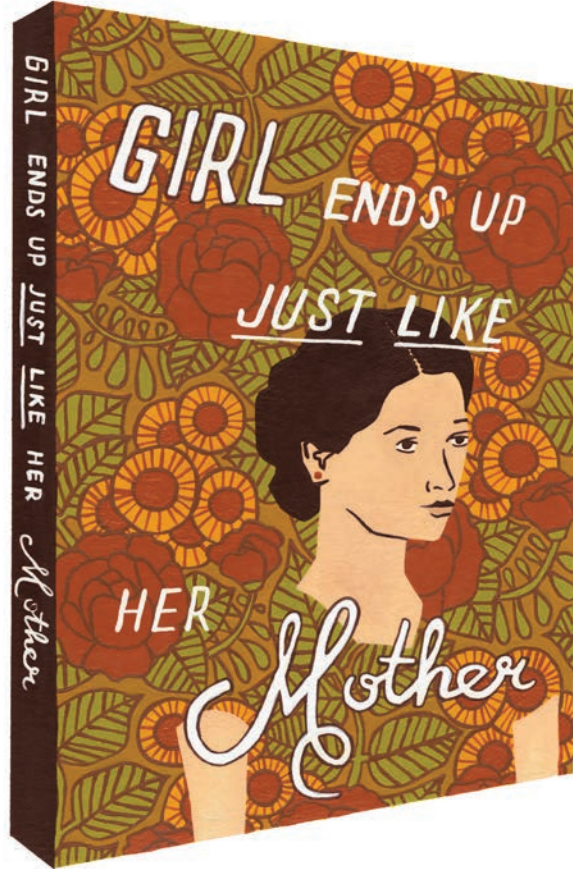
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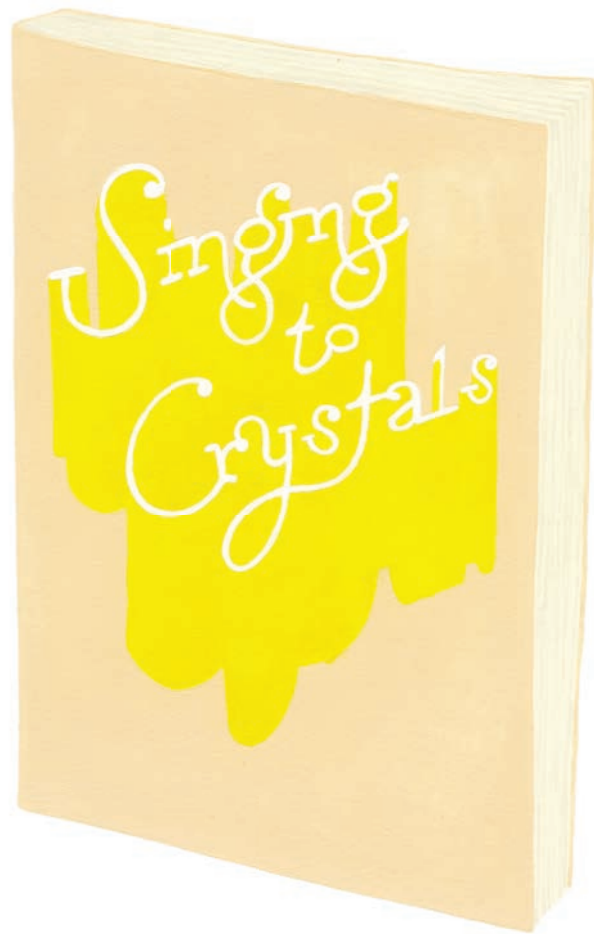
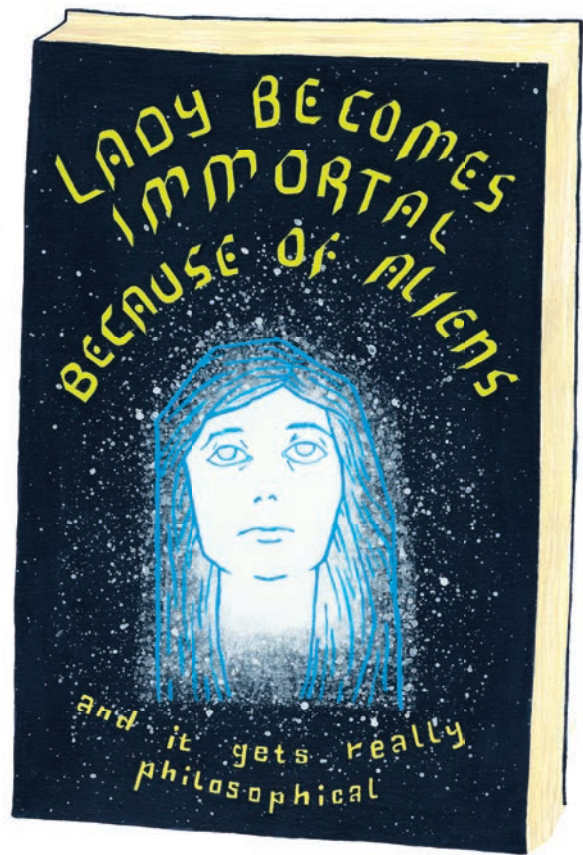




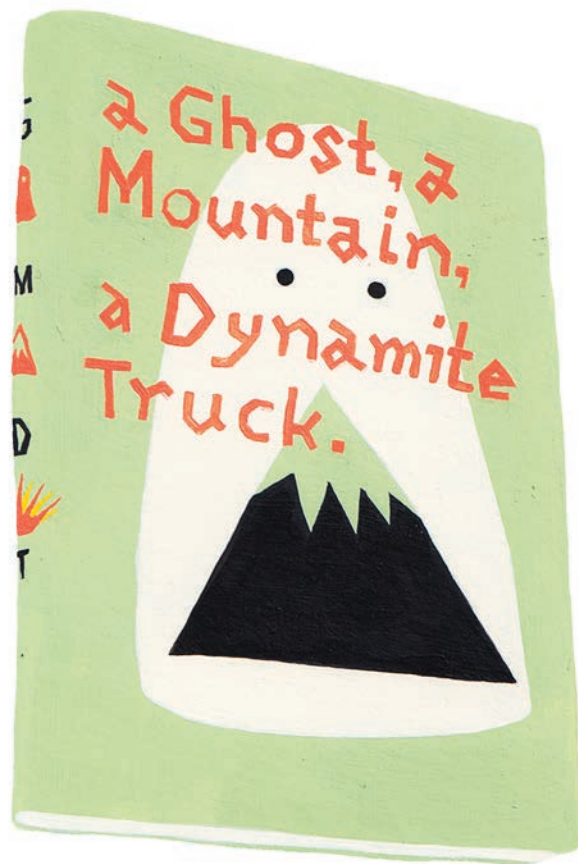
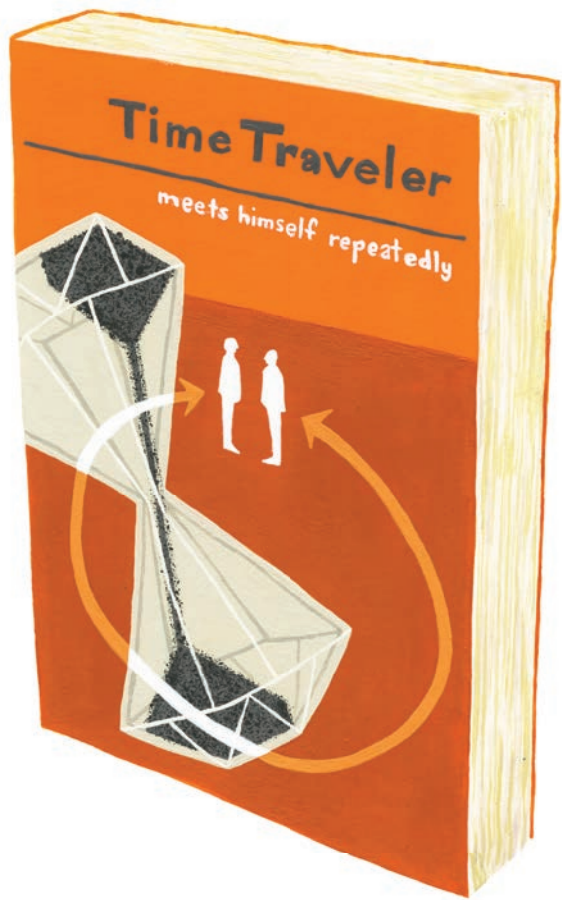








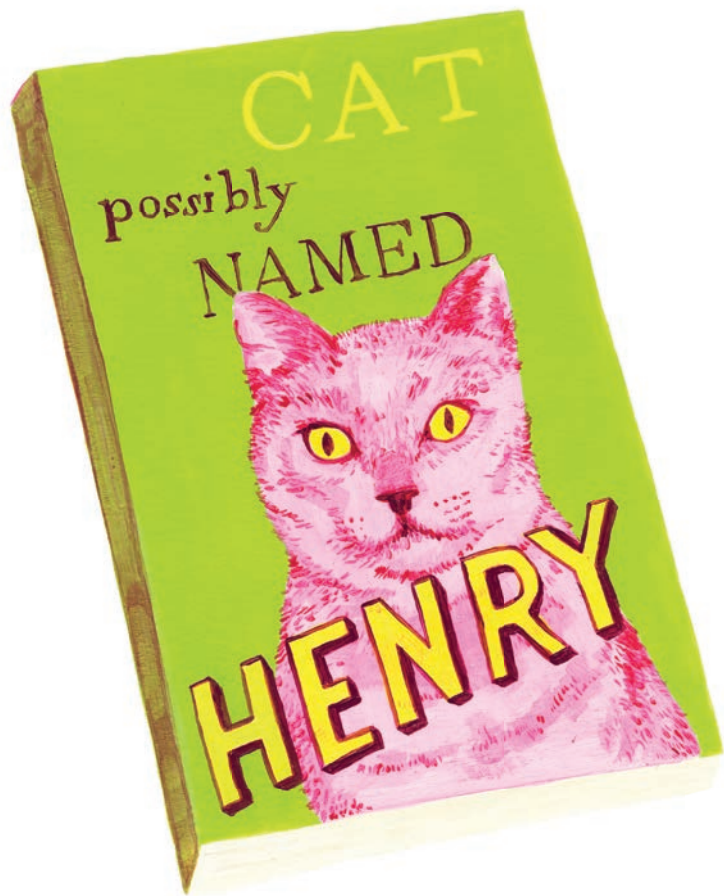




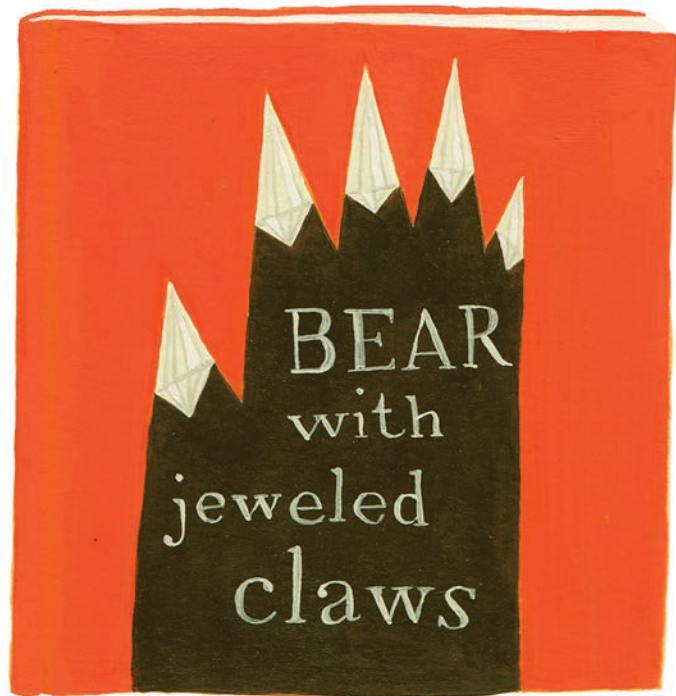


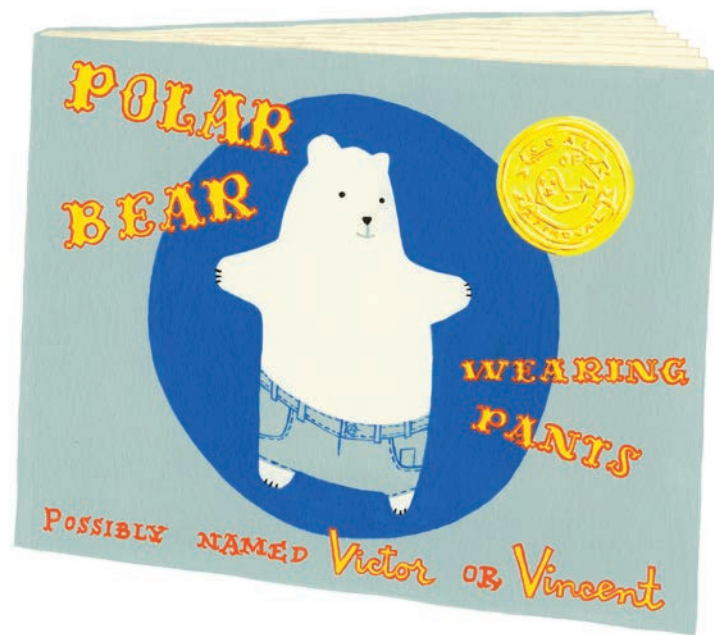
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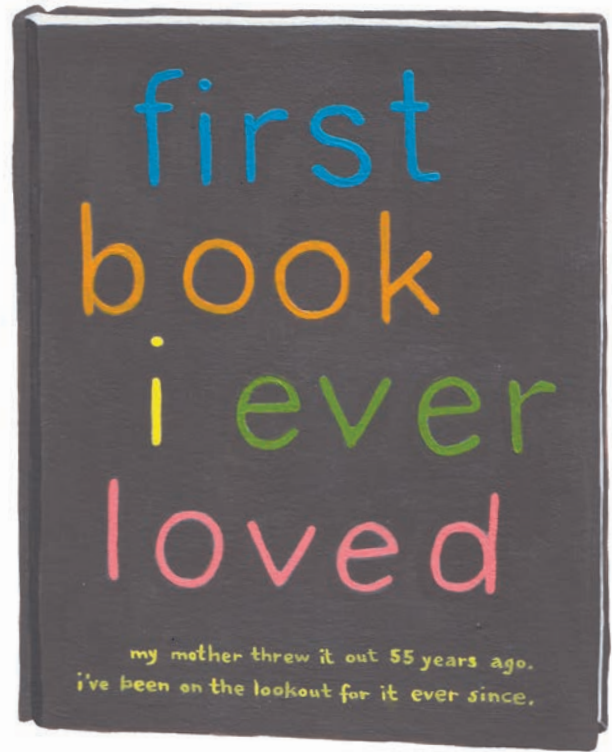
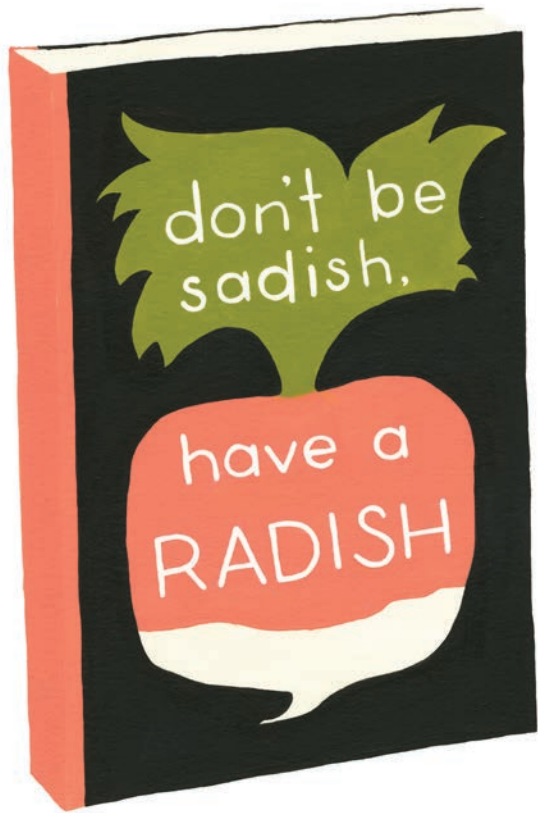


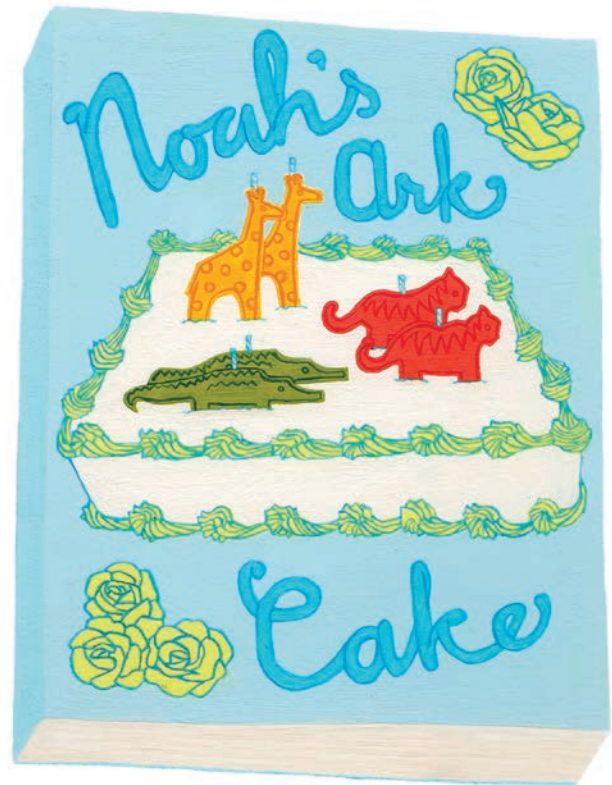




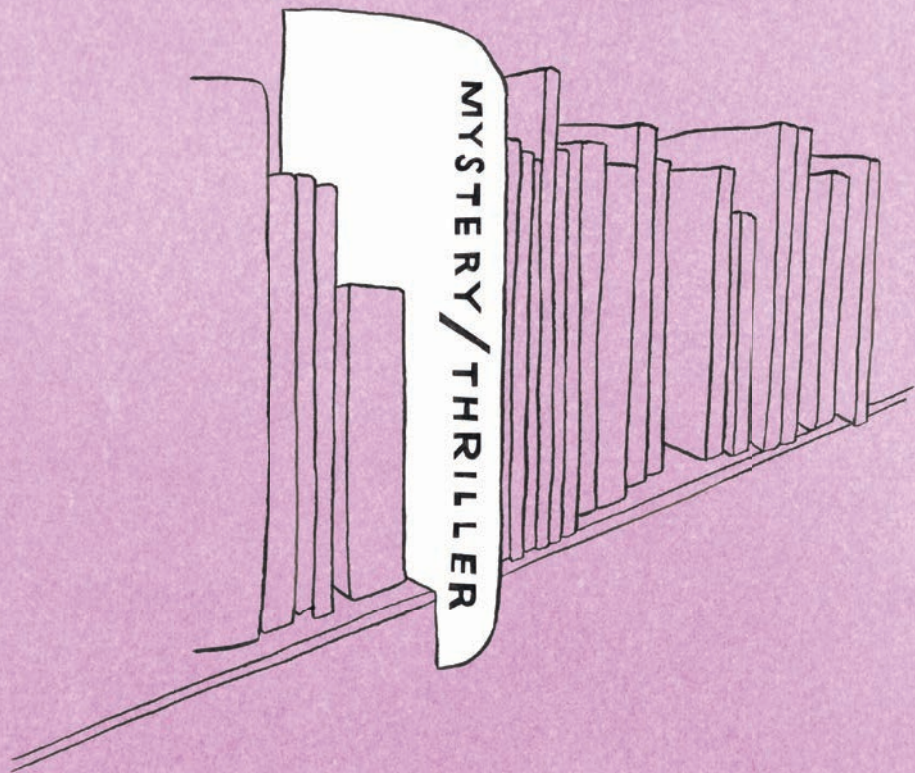






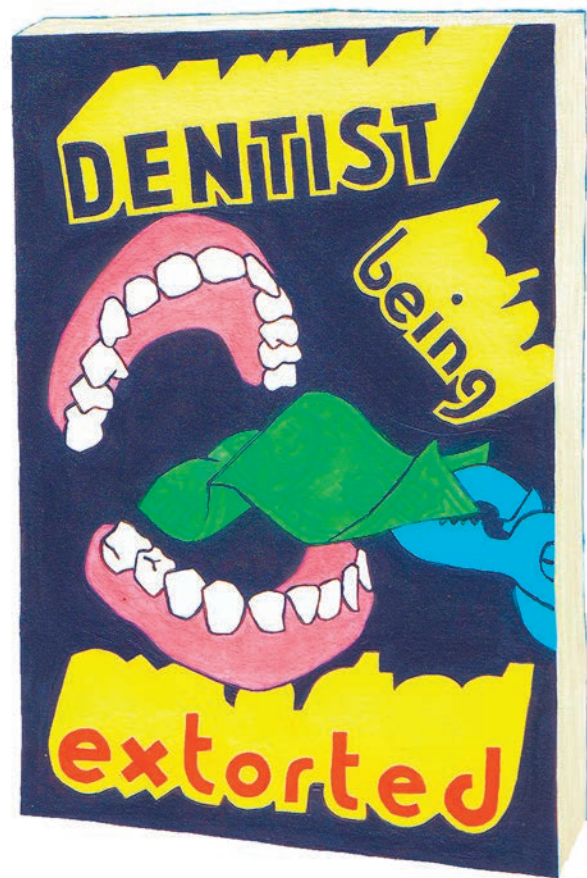


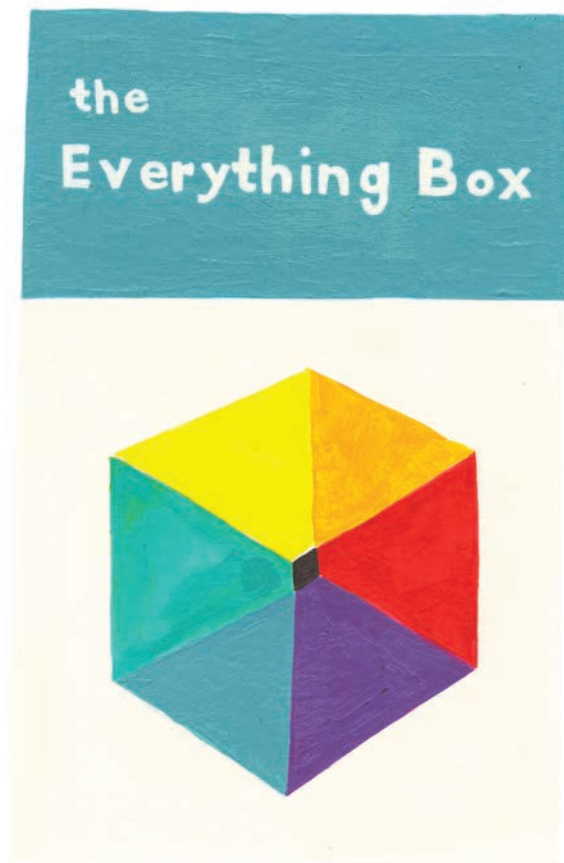
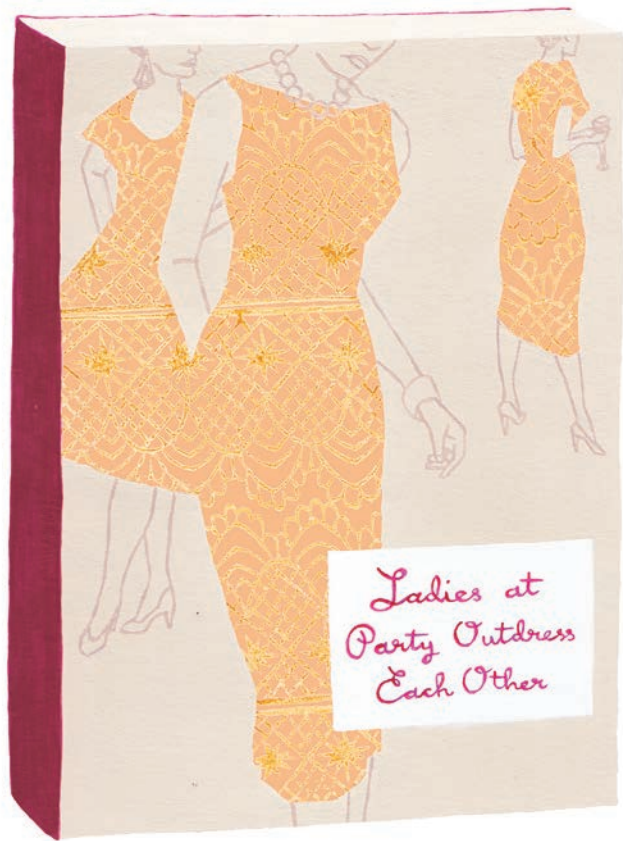




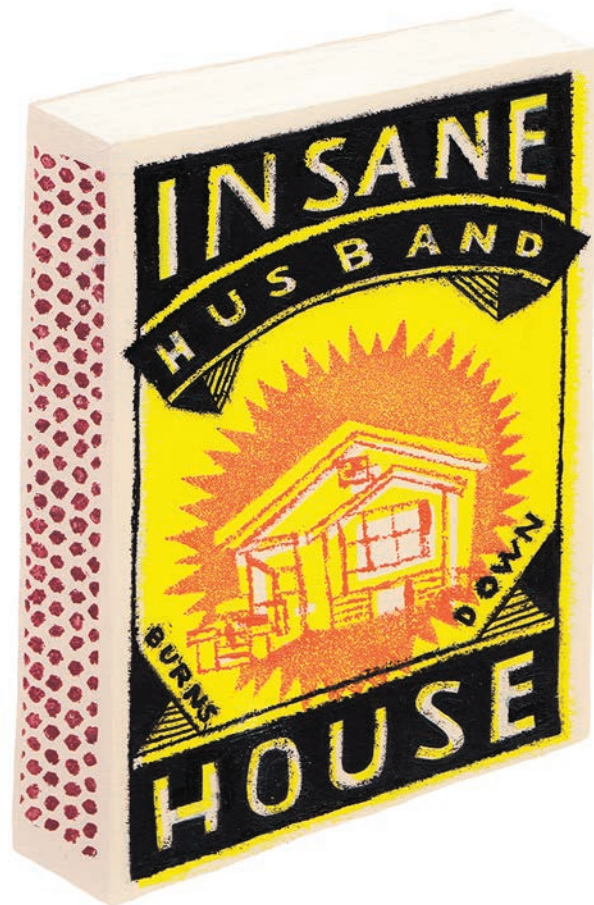
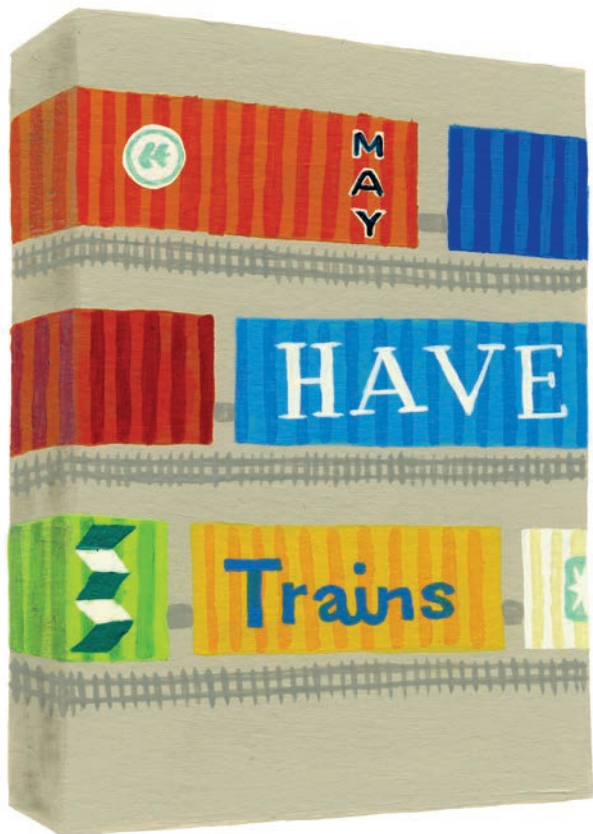




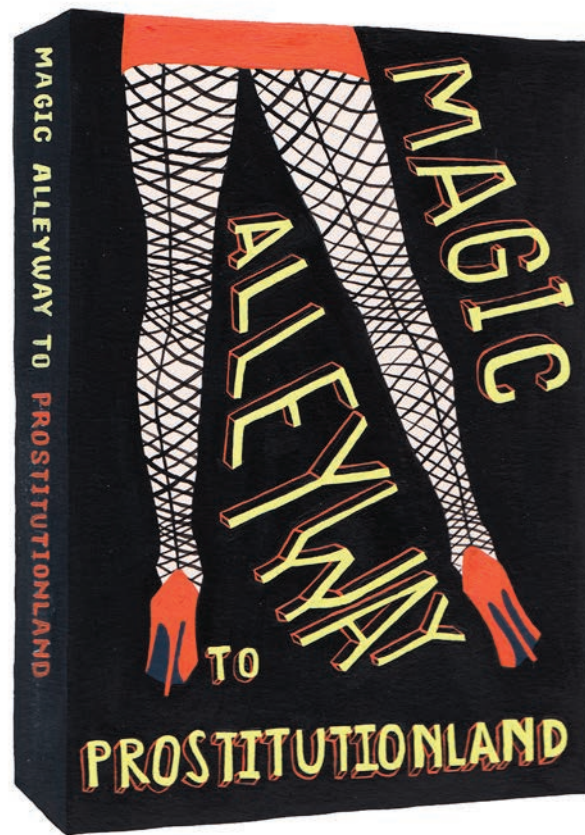
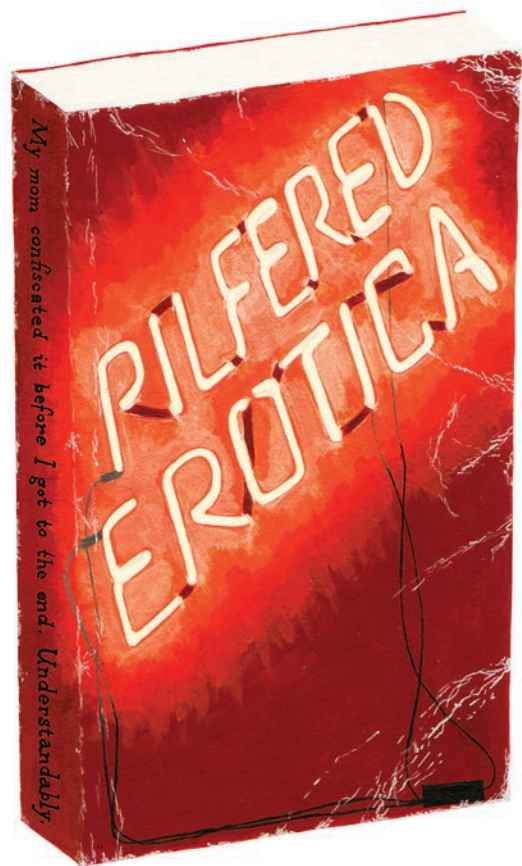




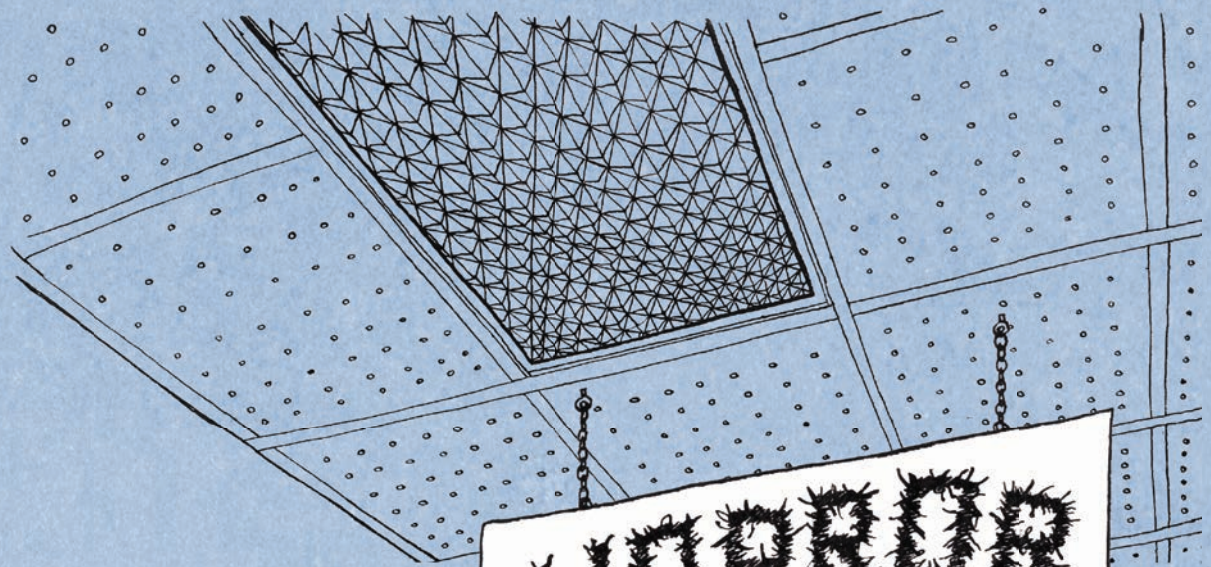






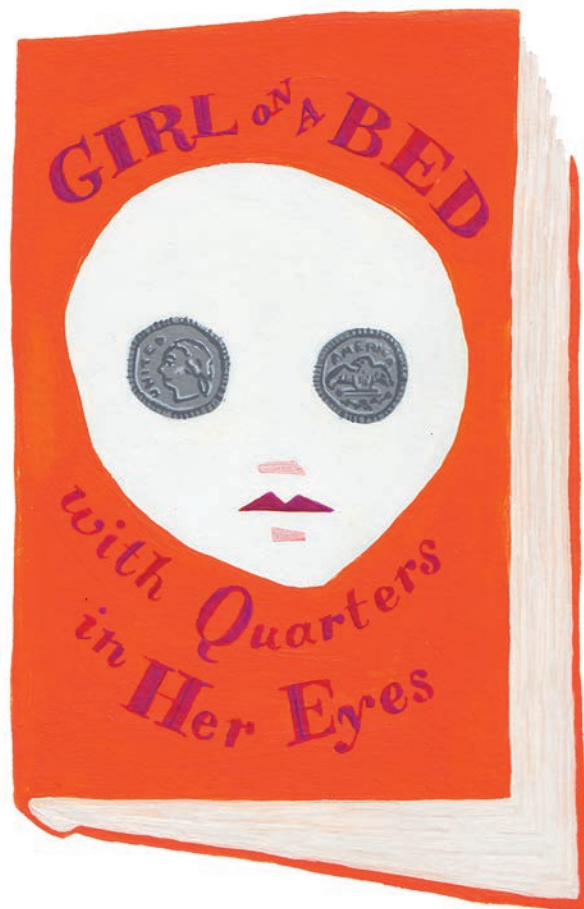


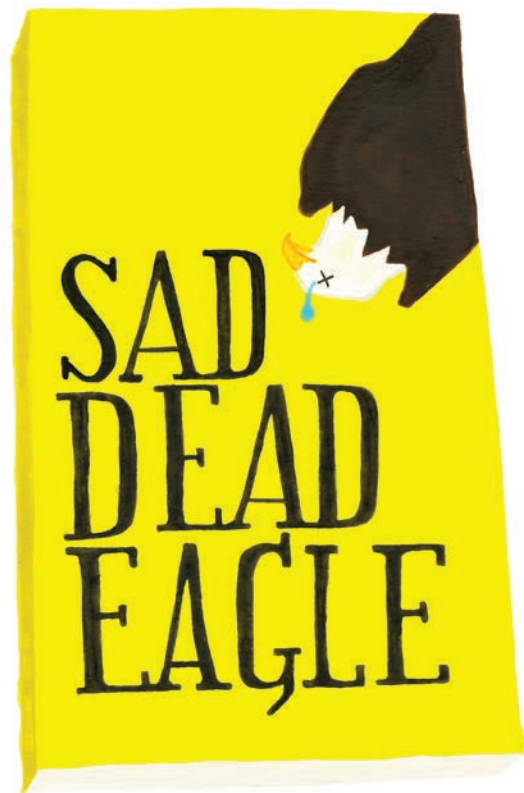


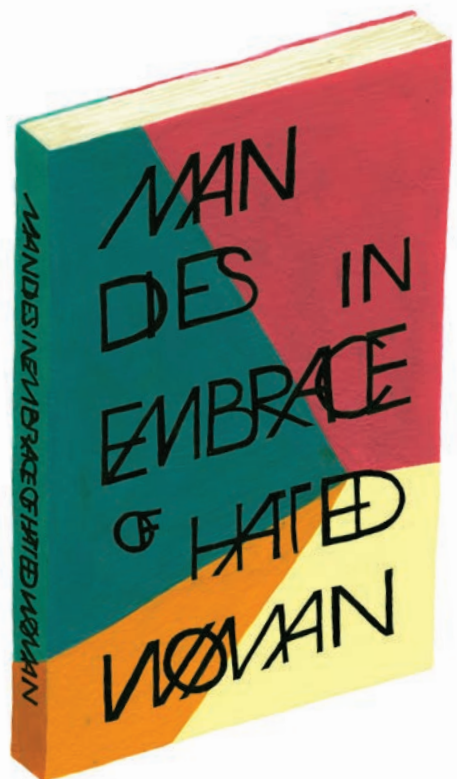


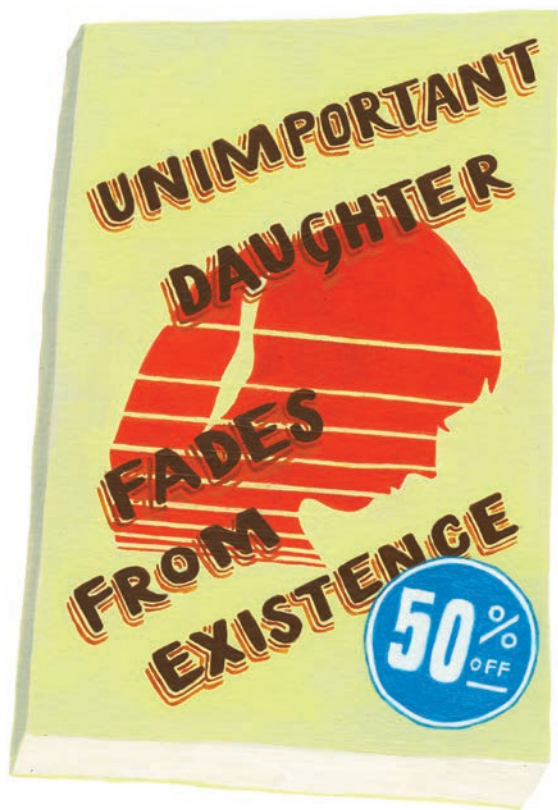
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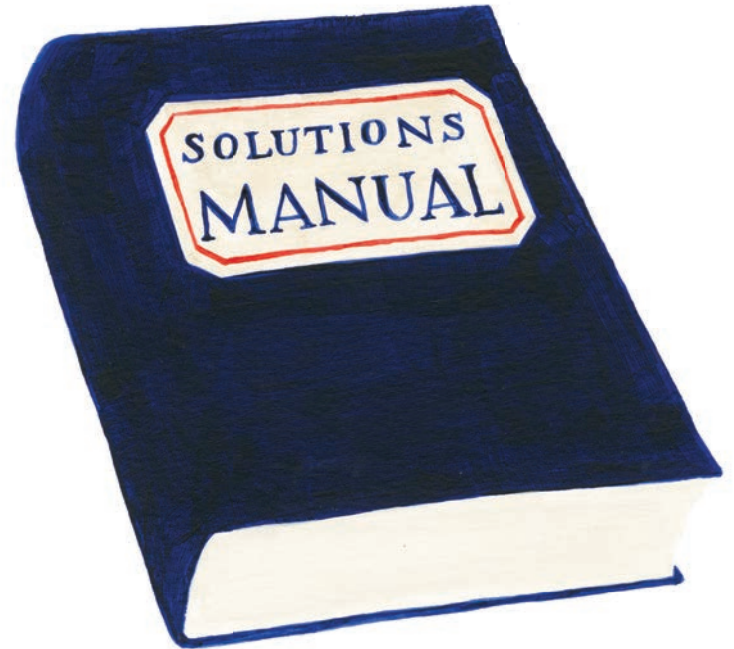


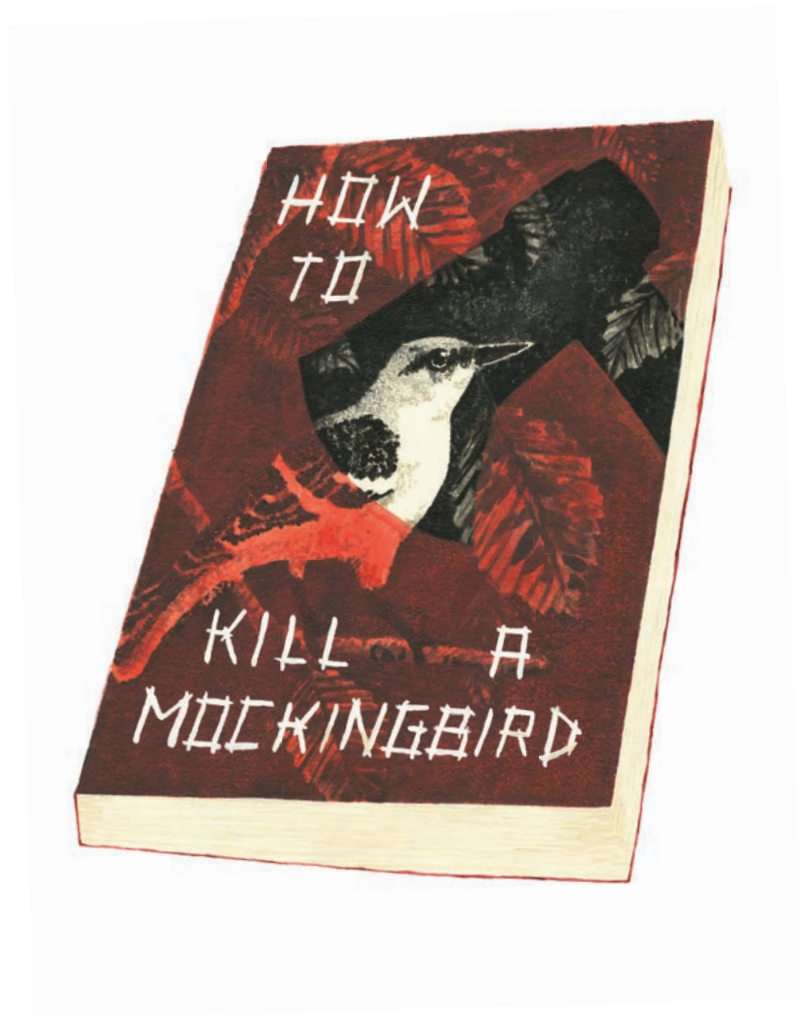




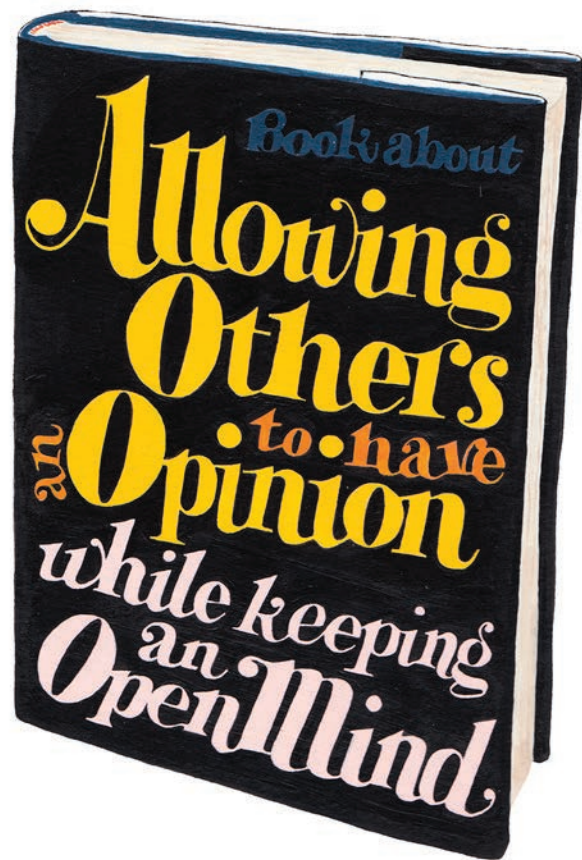
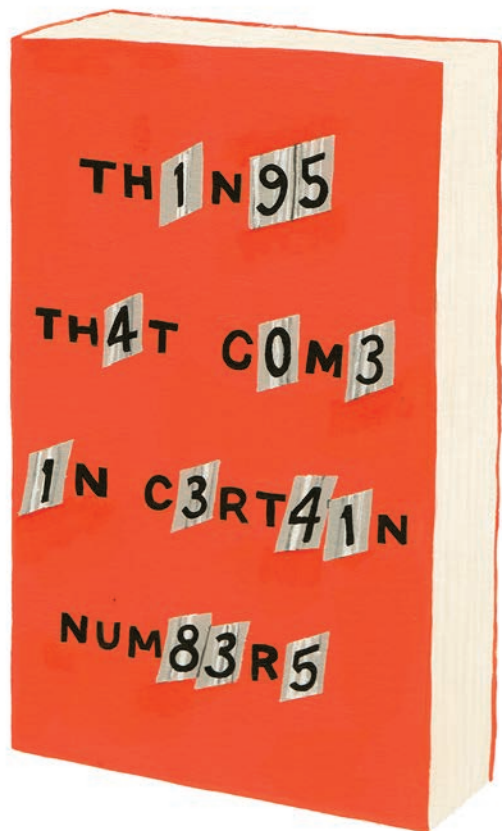


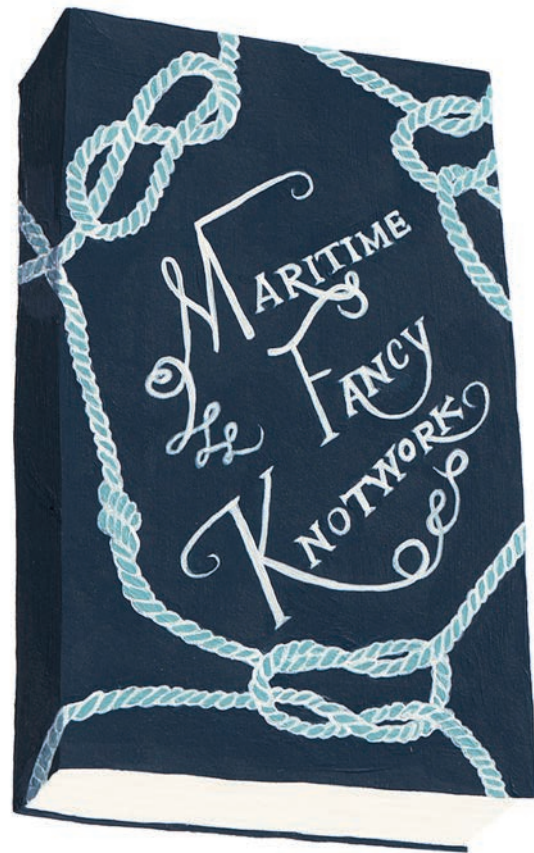
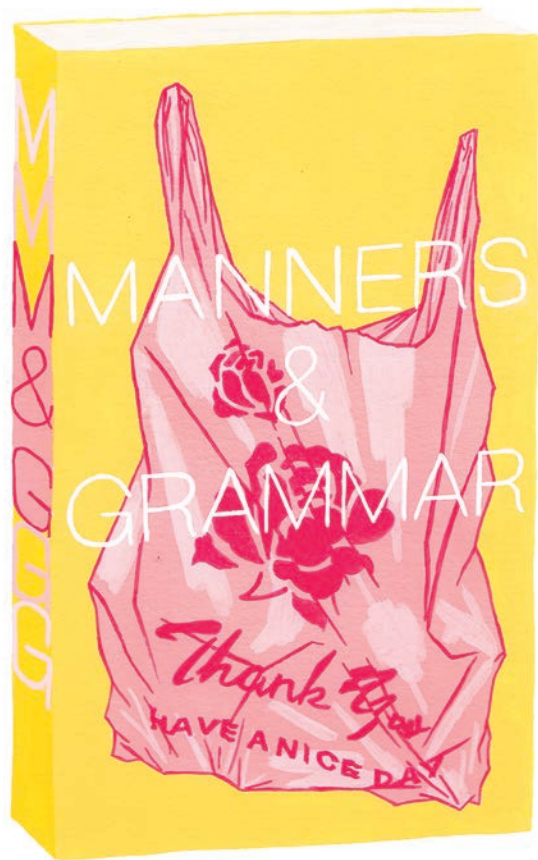




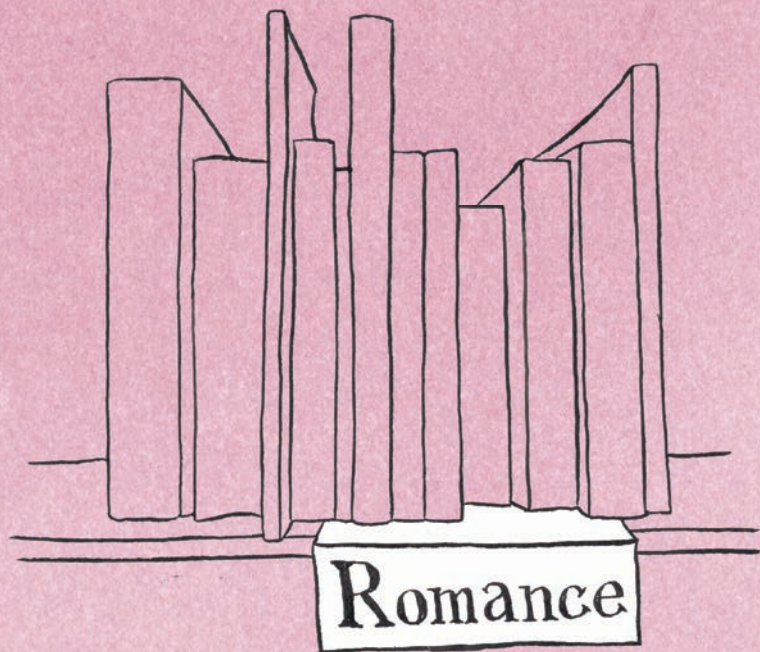




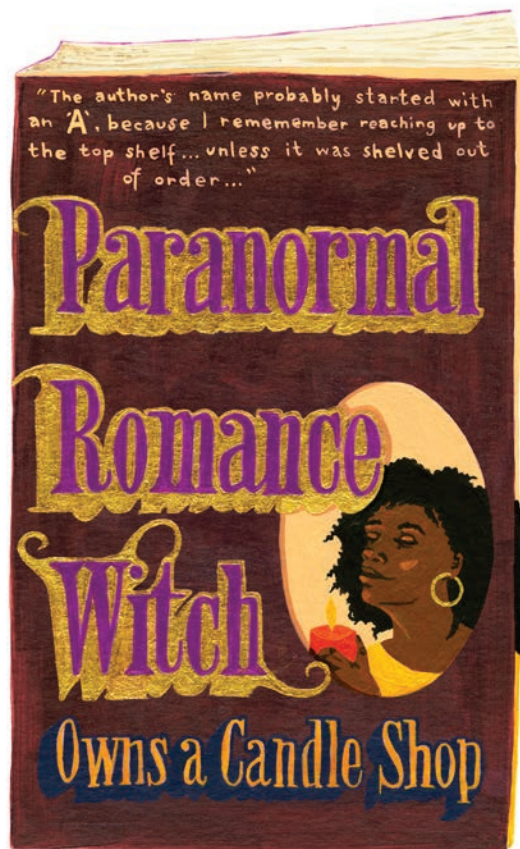


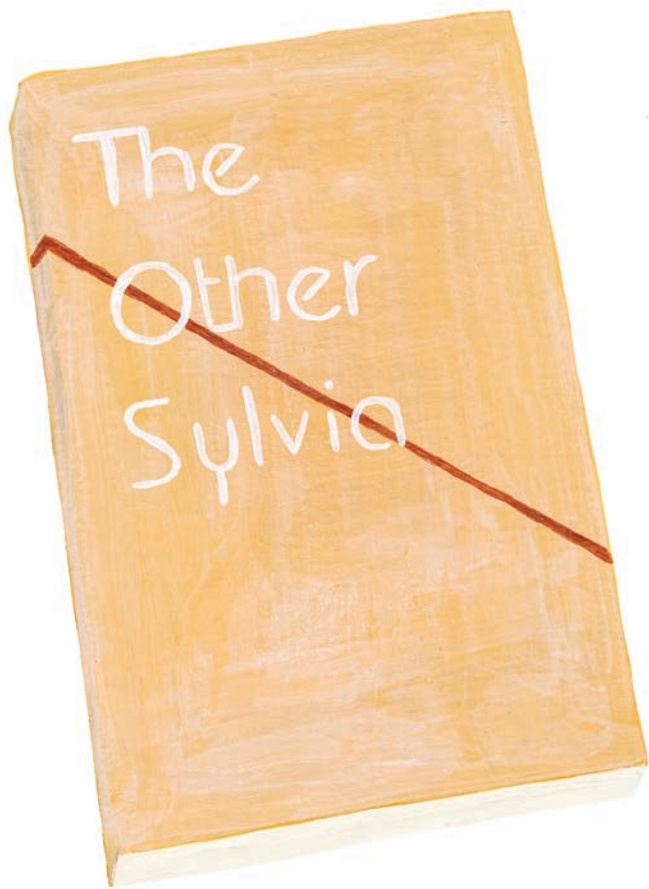


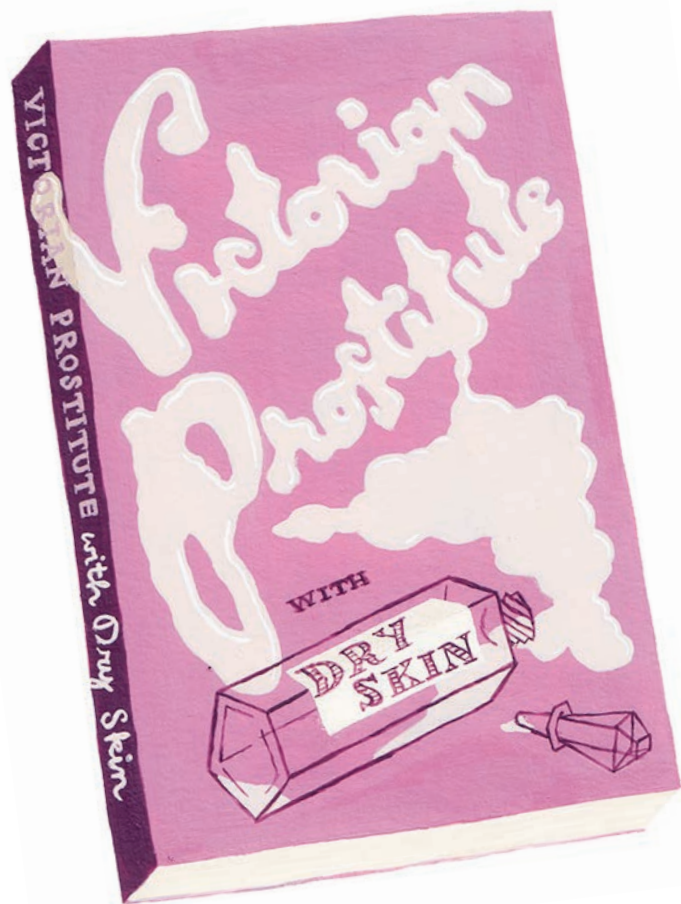
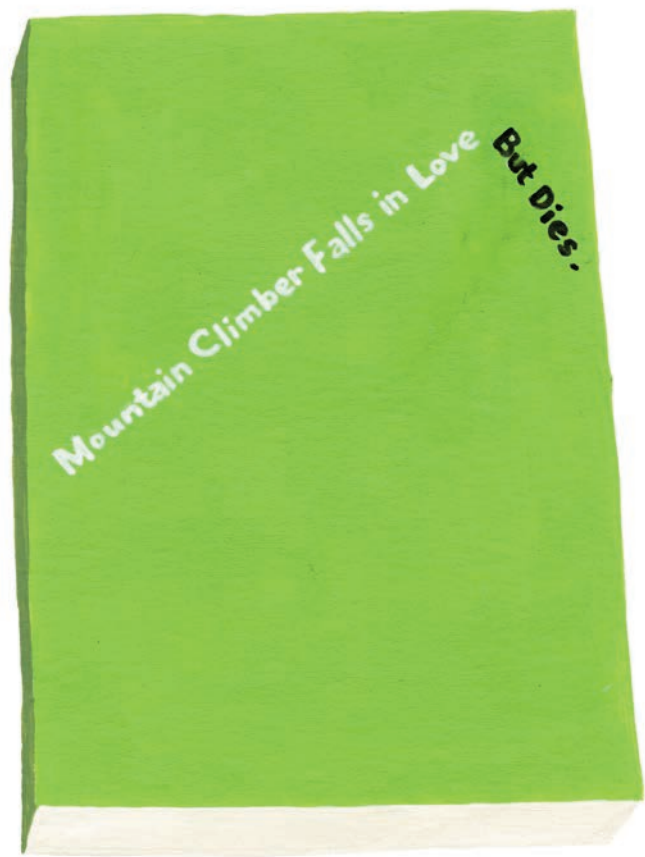






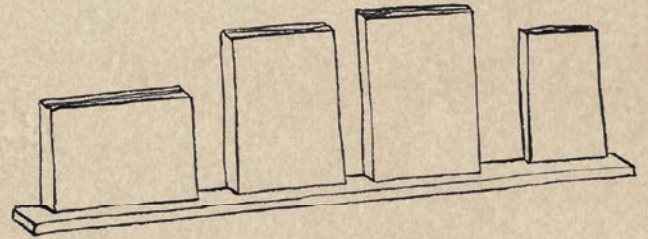
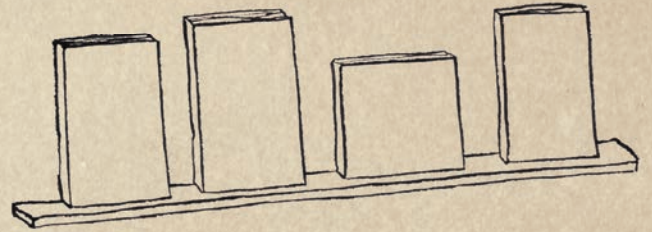




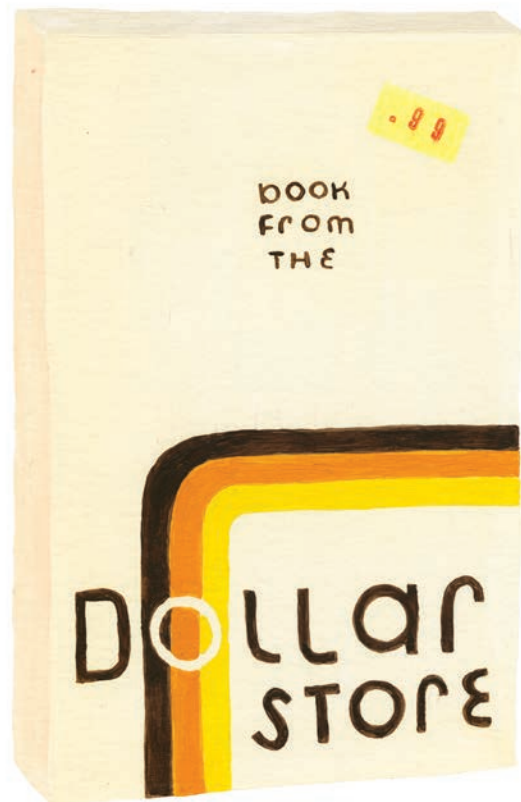




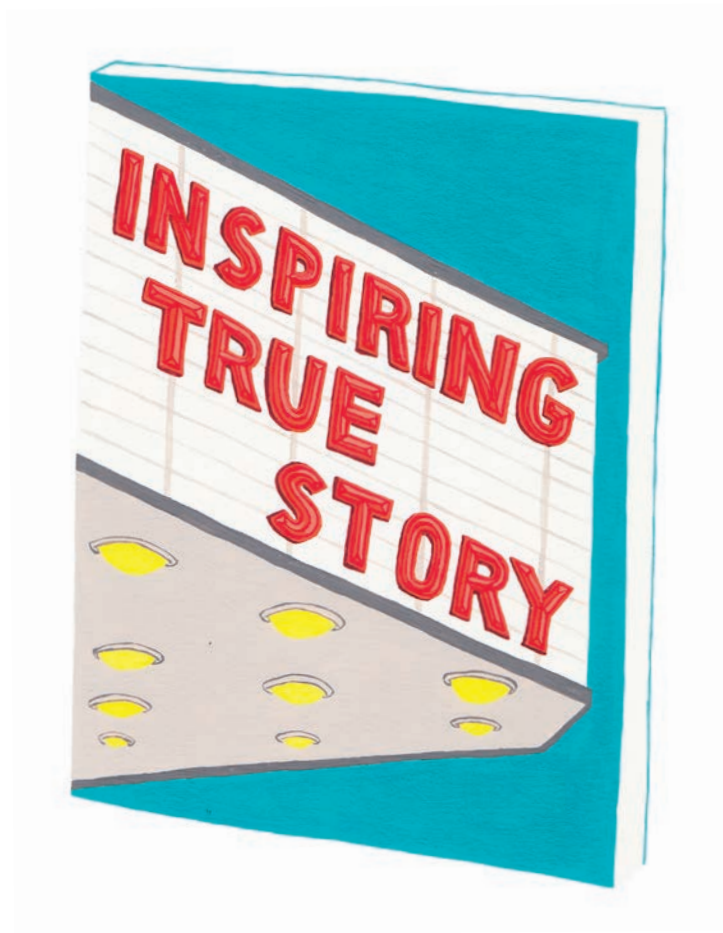
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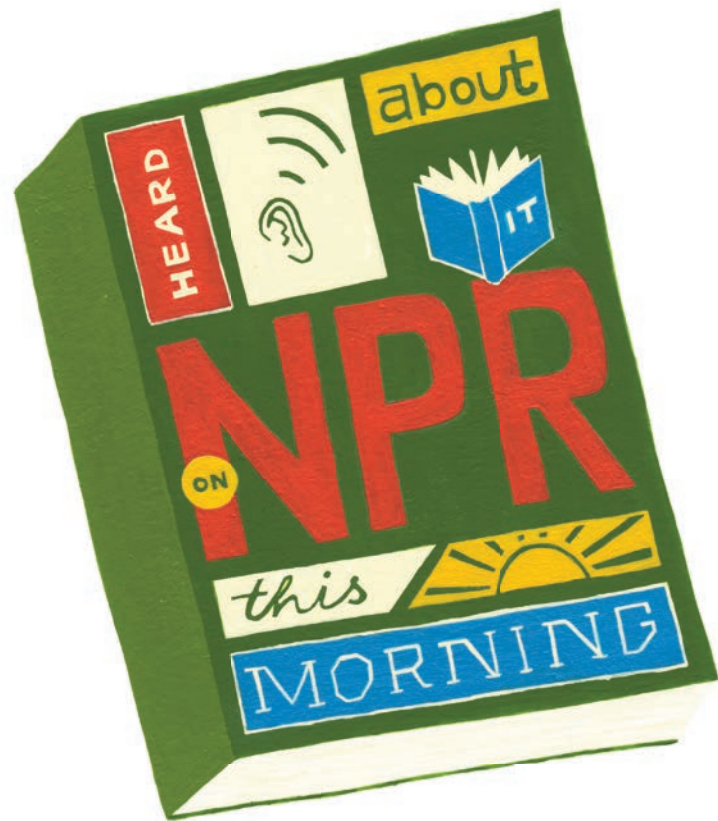
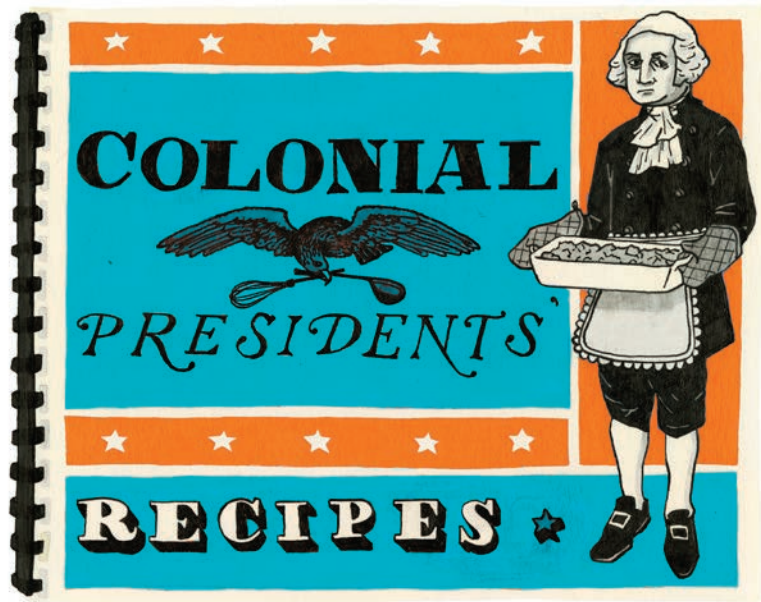


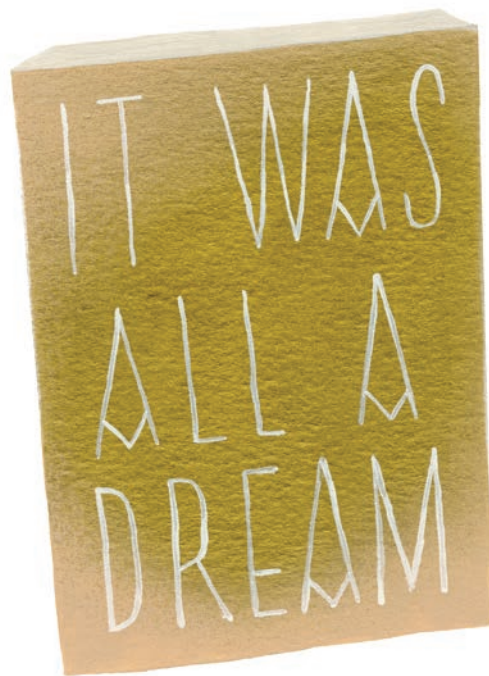
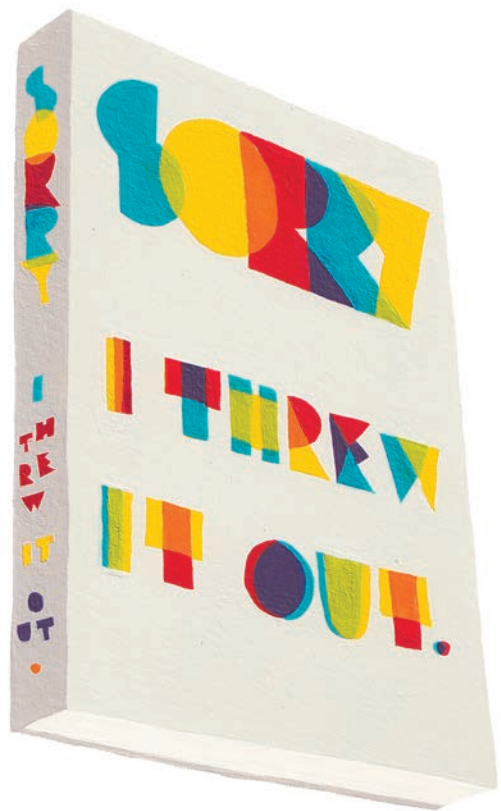




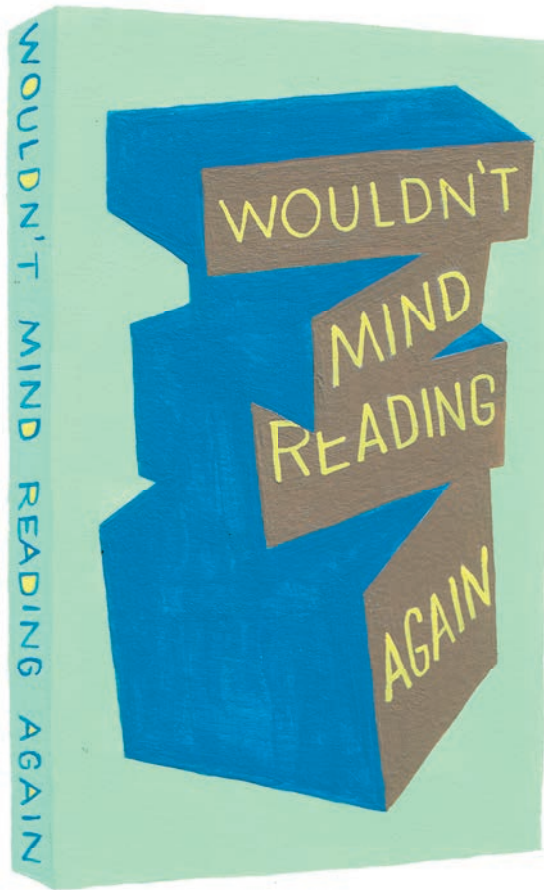












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