

Advance Praise

“I loved this book. I knew these characters — they were my students, my fellow teachers in a private school that hired people who had already had a real life outside of academe (even I had that, thanks to the Peace Corps), and some of my own classmates from my college days. Garfinkle catches exactly the passionate and reckless moods of the anti-Vietnam War movement among young people in those years, the deadly naiveté, delight in rebellion, and idealistic misunderstanding of where events just had to go from there. The rendering of those times is keenly accurate, to my experience at least, and very evocative.

“And there’s that best-friend pairing that we’ve all seen, maybe been part of at one time: the anxious, hopeful young woman full of doubts and longings, and her best friend the diva, the drama queen, the performer of outrages looking hard for trouble to get into. What an inspired idea, to bring the latter back to life as a ghost, an angry, unsettled child, that haunts the milder soul’s more adult life!

“Writing a really good ghost story is a lot harder than it looks. But Garfinkle pulls it off with élan and produces a wonderful story about lives unlived, for one reason or another, shifting perspectives, what (if anything) we owe our dead, and how we reflect each other, hold each other back, and provide the take-off for others’ sprints into maturity. There’s also some tasty detail about the lives of working actors on a soap-opera gravy train, that as a film and theater enthusiast, I found delightful.”

Suzy McKee Charnas, author of *The Vampire Tapestry*
and the Holdfast Chronicles

“All of us have questions and regrets about things we’ve done, but Jo Bergman is literally haunted by her past. This remarkable novel kept me on tenterhooks as I watched Jo seesaw among the different lives she would have experienced had she made different decisions. Gwynne Garfinkle has nailed both the fraught nature of the 1960s and early ’70s and the difficult path of a woman struggling to be her whole self despite the ghosts of her past and the challenges of her present.”

Nancy Jane Moore, author of *For the Good of the Realm*

“Here is a book that took me back in the same way a ghost of her past takes Joanna back, again and again. Gwynne Garfinkle’s ghost story realistically recreates a traumatic moment in America’s past. I was more than impressed with the realism of a period that I personally lived through. Garfinkle asks the reader what would happen if you could go to a pivotal moment in your past and relive it, searching for a different outcome? Would you, could you? In the end would it make it any better? Garfinkle’s deft prose takes you on this journey with suspense and gentleness, tackling both regret and hope with equal sincerity. This book lives not only in the softer side of the horror genre, but as a work that instructs us to confront our own choices and how they irrevocably impact others. If you want a thoughtful and intriguing journey, buy this book.”

Beth Plutchak, author of *Liminal Spaces*

“Garfinkle (*People Change*) delivers a fascinating, disorienting ghost story set in the 1970s. Actor Joanna Bergman has carried shame and remorse over her friend Cynthia Foster’s death since it happened four years ago. As protestors against the Vietnam War, the duo would have done anything to stop the bloodshed—but when Cynthia and Joanna plotted to blow up a New York City draft board, Joanna backed out at the last minute. Her hesitance spared her life, and Cynthia died in the explosion. Now, the war is over, and Joanna has her first stable acting gig on the daytime soap *Hope Springs Eternal* and is developing feelings for her costar, Martin Yates. She’s guiltily moving on with her life, until Cynthia’s angry ghost appears to her and forces Joanna to relive that fateful night, turning over alternate choices she could have made and how things might have gone differently. The tale moves swiftly between reality and the paranormal, successfully making the reader question if Cynthia’s ghost is just a projection of Jo’s psyche or something more concrete. Fans of counterculture narratives and ghost stories will want to take a look.”

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Can't Find
My Way Home

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by

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This book is fiction. Names, characters, businesses, organizations, places, events, and incidents either are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, events, or locales is entirely coincidental.

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Daytime dramas were produced very differently in the 1970s than they are today. When I started writing this book, some soap operas were still in production in New York; now the remaining U.S. soaps all come out of Los Angeles. I'd like to thank Lara Parker, Peter White, and Rory Metcalf for answering my many questions about old-school NYC soap opera production.

I did far more research into the 1960s-70s anti-war movement and other activism and events of the period than I can enumerate here, but I do want to mention Jeanne Córdova's memoir *When We Were Outlaws*, as well as two documentaries I found particularly useful: *The Weather Underground* (dir. Bill Siegel and Sam Green) and *Guerrilla: The Taking of Patty Hearst* (dir. Robert Stone).

Thanks to everyone who read and critiqued this novel as I wrote and revised it, and especially to Lisa M. Bradley for her insightful comments and moral support. For encouragement and camaraderie, thanks to Sonya Taaffe, Lyman Chaffee, Sofia Samatar, Patty Templeton, C.S.E. Cooney, Francesca Forrest, Julia Rios, and Victoria Janssen.

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Special thanks and gratitude to my mother, Audrey Garfinkle, for all her love and support.

Finally, I'd like to acknowledge the tireless and often unsung creators of daytime dramas through the decades, especially the brilliant writer and producer Claire Labine (1934-2016).

*For my father, Louis Garfinkle (1928-2005),
the first writer I ever knew*

Prologue:
The Harder They Fall
(December 1968)

“What do you want to be when you grow up, Joanna?” my best friend Cyn asked as we lay on our backs on her bed listening to Phil Ochs. It was a few days before the new year. We were both seventeen.

“An actress,” I said without hesitation.

“Well, I figured that much. But what kind? Do you want to be a movie star?” She said *movie star* with dreamy excitement trembling in her voice, though she usually affected nonchalance.

“I don’t know about that.” I couldn’t quite picture myself as glamorous and larger than life. Besides, I wasn’t pretty enough to be a movie star. “I like theater. It’s scary, but I like it.”

We both had on minidresses (hers a couple of inches shorter than mine) and tights, our shoes kicked off on the floor. I loved Cyn’s room, with its big Jimi Hendrix poster, the LPs propped against the wall, and the closet and dresser full of clothes I would have liked to borrow if Cyn hadn’t been so petite. (Though even if they’d fit me, they wouldn’t have looked nearly as good as they did on her.) Most of all, the room was full of Cyn’s bright, tense presence.

“You should be a movie actress, Jo,” she insisted. “If I could act, that’s what I’d want to do.” That made sense. Cyn *was* pretty enough, and she had charisma to spare.

The album side ended, and the needle replaced itself at the beginning. Phil Ochs began to sing “Tape from California” with gorgeous nasal plaintiveness.

“What do you want to do when you grow up?” I asked.

Cyn was silent. I turned my head and watched her ponder, staring up at the ceiling, her long blonde hair spread about her face. Then she shook her head and turned to look at me. “Something important. I don’t know what exactly. Something that’ll make everyone sit up and take notice.”

“You will,” I said. “Of course you will.”

She smiled. “We both will.”

I thought to say that we didn’t seem to want the same thing, though she seemed to think we did. Instead I closed my eyes and listened to Phil Ochs sing about New York City exploding.

Chapter One: The War Is Over (September 1975)

The day Cyn came back, I was about to walk home from the studio after the read-through for tomorrow's episode of *Hope Springs Eternal*. The best thing about acting was that I got to be somebody else. Corollary to that: I got to not be myself. That was always a relief. So what if this gig wasn't theater? Most of the actors in the company had theater backgrounds (some much more extensive than mine). My dad hated that I was doing a daytime drama. But it was steady acting work. Far better than being a temporary secretary.

The lobby at the studio was small and unobtrusive, with a couple of small couches, a plastic chair, and, toward the back of the room, a desk where the security guard sat reading a paperback of *Jaws*. I had almost reached the glass door that led to the street, when someone said, "Hey, Joanna," and I turned.

It was Martin Yates, my new costar. "Glad I caught you," he said. "Want to get a drink?"

I wasn't sure what I'd expected him to say—maybe that I'd left something in the rehearsal room, or that the director had just learned we'd been using the wrong version of tomorrow's script—but an invitation wasn't it. "I need to learn my lines for tomorrow," I said, waving my script. I still wasn't used to having so many lines and so little time to learn them.

Martin waved his script back at me. "Me too. Plus I promised my little girl I'd help her with her math homework. God

help me. She seems to think I'm the one qualified to help her, when my wife is the brains of the family."

I had met Martin's wife at a cast party months ago. All I could remember was a pleasant brunette with a Brooklyn accent. "I thought your daughter was in the third grade."

"She is."

I started to laugh. "Surely you can handle that! It's not exactly precalculus."

"Hey, it's been a lot longer since I've taken math than it's been for you, okay?" he said, grinning. "So how about that drink? We've just established you're far too young to be all work and no play."

I eyed him. This wasn't a come-on, was it? He smiled with an air of absolute innocence: soap opera leading man Martin Yates, in well-fitting jeans and a red shirt that showed off his slender but powerful build. I flushed at the thought of kissing him at the end of the week, much less with three cameras hovering. It would be my first love scene since I'd joined *Hope Springs Eternal*.

Just then Clarissa Bauer came up behind us, startling me, and said, "Marty, the last thing we want to do is discourage new cast members from working hard."

That was more than a bit galling, since I'd never worked as hard at anything as I had since I got this job. I'd been with the company for six months, but I suspected I'd always be the new girl as far as Clarissa was concerned. She was a dark-eyed, thin-nosed, thin-lipped woman somewhere in her forties; she wore a navy pantsuit and possessed a kind of austere beauty, like the wicked queen in *Snow White*.

"Don't worry," Martin said. "Joanna isn't cut from the same cloth as Heather O'Connor."

Clarissa shuddered. "She whose name will live in infamy!" she intoned. I laughed; Clarissa shot me a dirty look. "Heather O'Connor used to share my dressing room," she told me.

I'd heard plenty of stories about Heather's tantrums and inability to take direction. She'd been fired just before I joined the company. "I know," I said. "She does shampoo commercials now?"

"That's what she's well-suited for. She has lovely hair." Clarissa peered at me. "You have lovely hair as well, Joanna."

"Thanks," I murmured, though she was looking me up and down with narrowed eyes and a pursed mouth as though she found fault with my outfit (jeans, a white blouse with tiny purple flowers, and a brown velveteen jacket). I'd never been able to figure out why Clarissa disliked me, except maybe that she disliked ingénues on principle, especially ingénues who shared her dressing room.

To my surprise, Martin put his arm protectively around my shoulders. I caught a whiff of spicy aftershave. I didn't usually like cologne on men, but he smelled good. "We were gonna go around the corner for a drink," he told Clarissa. "Join us?"

"No, thank you, Marty. I mustn't be late to the theater. Have a good evening!" She headed through the glass door. Martin still had his arm around me. It felt strong and comforting.

"I thought Clarissa's play closed last weekend," I said.

"Next weekend, and I wouldn't mention it to her, if I were you." He gave my shoulders a squeeze, then let go of me. "So, Chauncy's?"

He had bulldozed my objections to going for a drink with him. But I did want to go. "Chauncy's, it is," I said, and let him usher me outside.

The studio was a nondescript, two-story building of pale brick nestled in the middle of a block of similar buildings on the Upper West Side. The late afternoon was pleasantly cool and cloudy. We walked around the corner to Chauncy's. I had visited the bar a few times with Susan Harding and Babette Wilder, who played mother and daughter on *Hope Springs Eternal* (though I was pretty sure they weren't far enough

apart in age for that to be biologically possible). The place was small and comfortably run-down. A transistor radio behind the bar played Elton John, "Someone Saved My Life Tonight," not too loudly. The bartender, a strapping guy with curly black hair, yelled "Hey, Marty!"

"Hi, Jim. Do you know Joanna Bergman? She's with the company."

Jim had served me drinks before, but he sized me up as though he wasn't sure. "Nice to meet you, Joanna."

Martin ordered Scotch and a mug of beer, I just a Scotch. We sat in a booth. The front section of the *Times* lay on Martin's side of the table. He pushed it aside. "Joanna Bergman," he said with a smile, and sipped his beer. "So, are you Scandinavian?"

I stared at him. "What?"

"Well, your last name...and you kinda look like Liv Ullmann."

I wanted to say, But she's so beautiful. "I saw her in *A Doll's House* this spring."

"At the Vivian Beaumont? I wish I'd managed to see that."

"She's one of my favorite actresses, especially in *Scenes from a Marriage*. *Persona* kinda freaks me out, though."

"Oh, I think *Persona's* a masterpiece," he said. "What I wouldn't give to get to work with Ingmar Bergman. The impossible dream..."

"Me too. I'd even learn Swedish! But anyway, I'm not Scandinavian. I'm Jewish. German and Polish, mostly."

His mouth dropped open—then he grinned. "Really? Me too. Russian Jewish on my mother's side. Irish Catholic on my dad's."

"Oh!" We gazed at each other, reframing our assumptions. I'd always thought he looked a little like John Cassavetes, with his dark hair and eyes, olive complexion, and lean build. I wasn't sure what I'd thought he was, but Jewish had nev-

er occurred to me. "Well, we're all vaguely Christian on *Hope Springs Eternal*," I said. "I guess it's natural enough it didn't occur to either of us."

He laughed. "True enough. I grew up pretty confused about the whole thing. Not to mention the fact that I got a double dose of guilt, Jewish and Catholic."

He said it jokingly, but then his smile faded. I wondered what Martin had to feel guilty about. We both fell silent.

Martin drank some beer. "Listen, I wanted to tell you that I was glad when I saw where the writers were going with our storyline. Even though I'll probably get a lot of hate mail. The fans are crazy about me and Babette. I've never been able to figure out why."

Neither had I, but it didn't seem politic to say so. "I hadn't been sure that was where they were going with our storyline until a couple of weeks ago," I said. "I thought maybe Sam and Jean were just going to stay platonic and investigate Eric Read." Jean Christopher was an aspiring journalist, and her cousin Vicki's husband Sam Jameson, a private investigator, was helping her look into the shady dealings of the town mayor, who happened to be Vicki's mother's second (or was it third?) husband. I thought of the storyline as Watergate, Soap Opera Style.

"I know what you mean," Martin said. "The buildup has been fairly subtle. I don't think they would have gone in this direction if you and I didn't have chemistry."

I sipped my drink and wondered again if he was coming on to me. But his tone wasn't flirtatious, just matter of fact. We did have good chemistry. It filled our scenes with tension and energy, even when we had to recite pages of exposition about Mayor Read.

"Anyway, I'm glad we'll be working together more," he said. "I could use the challenge. You know what I mean."

"I'm glad to be working with you, too, Marty." Before I'd worked with Martin, I'd viewed him as an attractive loudmouth. But I was discovering he was also a thoughtful, diligent actor. Generous—he was good at giving you what you needed.

"Nothing against Babette," he hastened to add, looking sheepish. "She's a great girl. It's just..."

It was just that she couldn't act. I was a little surprised Martin had noticed, because Babs was probably the most gorgeous woman I'd ever met, and he and Babs seemed to be good friends. "I just wish Babette had half as much personality on screen as she does off," I said. "If she did, she'd be pretty terrific."

"That's it exactly." He looked grateful, then embarrassed for some reason. He glanced down at the newspaper. "Patty, Patty, Patty," he muttered. "Damn news is full of nothing but Patty Hearst, or should I say, Tania. And when it's not Patty, it's another fruitcake trying to shoot Ford. What a circus."

I picked up the newspaper, and Patty Hearst's mug shot confronted me, a matter-of-fact, self-righteous gaze. I wondered what Cyn would have thought about the Symbionese Liberation Army. There had been something both riveting and ridiculous about them, kidnapping an heiress who proceeded to spout their rhetoric ("Death to the Fascist Insect," whatever that meant), don fatigues and a beret and brandish a carbine, change her name to Tania, and take part in a bank robbery. Watching the story unfold on the nightly news had been like watching a soap opera. It wasn't clear whether Patty Hearst's conversion had been genuine or the result of brainwashing. But I could imagine the SLA's bravado, their sense of theater, appealing to Cyn. Could almost picture a submachine-gun wielding Cyn swaggering through a bank, chewing the scenery.

"And since when do women take it into their heads to assassinate the President?" Martin asked. "What a weird trend."

I looked up from the newspaper. "I'm not sure two women constitute a trend."

“That Sara Jane Moore looks like a dumpy *hausfrau*, not an assassin,” he said. “Squeaky Fromme’s the pretty one, albeit psychotic.”

“Watch out, Marty. Apparently some dumpy *hausfraus* carry guns.”

Martin grinned like a bratty kid. “Was I being a male chauvinist, Jo?”

“Just a tad,” I said, smiling, though I felt irked.

“Well, you must admit, the whole thing’s laughable,” he said, and threw back his Scotch. “Stupid self-styled revolutionaries.” His tone was self-satisfied, smug.

I looked again at Patty Hearst staring down the camera. The sounds of the bar—“Fame” by David Bowie bumping and grinding on the radio, a guy and a girl gabbing and laughing in a booth near the door—all started to recede behind the dull roaring in my ears.

Martin picked up the newspaper and pushed it aside. “But enough about all that,” he said with a huff of laughter.

I took a sip of whiskey. It burned all the way down, a satisfying minor pain. The song trudged to its conclusion, its sped-up ethereal *fame, fame, fames* dipping down low, lower, lowest. I ransacked my brain for something to talk about, something pleasant and neutral. I looked over at Patty Hearst’s slightly crumpled mug shot. “Who knows what Patty Hearst’s trip is,” I said. “I think the SLA are kinda nuts, though that doesn’t mean they deserved to burn to death on live TV.”

“Granted,” Martin said. “That was pretty horrible.”

Pretty horrible barely began to cover it. I had sat transfixed in front of the TV during the shootout between the SLA and the police on a residential Los Angeles street. Amid the rat-tat-tat of bullets and the tear-gas haze, one of the police’s tear-gas grenades ignited a stash of ammunition in the SLA safe house, and it went up in flames with everyone inside. No one tried to put out the fire. At first it hadn’t been clear if Patty

Hearst was in there too. I'd imagined her burning to death with the others.

"Pretty horrible," I echoed, and took a sip of my drink. Memories had me by the throat like tear gas. I struggled to pick up the thread of the conversation. "I don't agree with the SLA's tactics. But that doesn't mean that I think everyone who ever did something extreme to try to change things for the better..." I couldn't finish. Did I believe we'd been in any way justified? When I let myself think about it, which wasn't often, I thought we'd been collectively insane, all four of us. The way we used to talk about revolution! The memory made me squirm, like recalling a disastrous romantic obsession. It wasn't exactly *What did I see in him?*, because I remembered precisely how I had viewed the revolution, a maelstrom of joy and freedom, the end of war, the end of ugly old white men ruling the world—but *Did you really think that was going to happen?*

"I think I get what you're saying," Martin said gently. "But one thing you learn as you get older is that change is about patience. These types are all about the grand gesture, all style and no substance."

"Sort of like actors?" I asked.

"At least actors aren't hurting anyone. Well, some performances can be painful, but the audience usually recovers." He wore a little-boy grin. He was trying to smooth things over, to make me laugh.

I did laugh, briefly. I ran my fingers over the cracked leather of my seat and touched the exposed foam within. "What we do doesn't hurt anybody, but does it really help either? Right or wrong, some people have dared to risk everything for a better world. I think it takes real bravery, of the kind I, for one, don't have."

"Brave? Stepping in front of a train, jumping off a building, that's real brave. It's also stupid. Shooting innocent people,

like the SLA did? Trying to shoot the president? You think that helps people?”

“Of course not. I’m not talking about that! I’m talking about fighting to stop injustice, to stop the war. I’m talking about not going on like it’s business as usual when people are dying.” What was I doing? I hadn’t talked like this in years.

“You do know that the war is over, right?” He spoke slowly and ponderously, as though I might be a bit dim.

“Of course I know the war’s over!” The fight left me. “It’s over now.” How the war had poisoned everything. It had burned into our minds, taken over our imaginations. And now the war was over, and Cyn was still dead. I stared into the inch of Scotch left in my glass.

“Hey, Jane Fonda,” Martin said, and I looked up and saw that he was smiling slightly. “Remind me never to talk politics with you. At least not when you’re drinking.”

A laugh escaped me. “I’m not drunk, Marty. I’m...” I shook my head. “I don’t know what I am. Sorry.” Why was I arguing with him about this stuff? It wasn’t as if I even disagreed with him. It was just that he had jabbed an old wound. Still, after six months of playing cousin-confidante-sidekick to Babette, I was finally getting a juicy storyline, a romance with a married man—and the last thing I should be doing was picking a fight with my new costar.

But Martin just smiled, his eyes heavy-lidded, as if he were entirely relaxed and enjoying himself. “Don’t apologize. It was kinda entertaining.” He sipped his beer. “Forgive me if I’m stomping all over your romantic notions of revolution.”

Wow, my new costar was infuriating. “I do not have any romantic notions of revolution! Maybe I did once, but not now.”

A commercial came on the radio, and someone turned the dial. “Fight the Power” came on, mid-song, and Martin froze. Then we both burst out laughing. It felt good, as if a door in

me that had been jammed shut had suddenly, without effort, swung open a crack.

“Wow, have I been put in my place!” Martin said. “By you *and* the radio.” He danced a little in his seat, a self-mocking shimmy, and I had the sudden wish, as if we were in a romantic comedy or a musical, for him to get up, offer me his hand, and dance me around the bar.

Then a vague uneasiness that registered as a prickling sensation at the back of my neck made me turn.

The girl standing by the bar looked just like Cyn—exactly, impossibly like Cyn. I hadn’t seen her come in. She had sleek, short hair like Mia Farrow in *Rosemary’s Baby*, a haircut that accentuated her sharp little features. She wore jeans and the black peacoat I remembered. She stood stock still, legs planted firmly in an upside-down V, that ramrod straight posture Cyn had adopted in her final year.

It couldn’t be her. It couldn’t be. But how could it be anyone else?

She stared straight at me as if she were posing for a mug shot. Then she turned and strode to the door, was gone so quickly it was as if she’d never been there.

For a few seconds I stared at the dark wood of the door. Then I got to my feet. “Excuse me,” I muttered at Martin’s astonished face and made for the door. I pulled it open and nearly collided with Ed, one of our cameramen, a beefy guy with muttonchops and a mustache. “Hi, Joanna...” he said as I hurried past him. It was dusk. There was a taxicab parked at the curb, but no one in the backseat. I ran down the block and looked up and down, then turned and did the same in the other direction. “Cyn!” I shouted at no one. She wasn’t there. What had I expected?

I went back inside the bar. Martin was chatting with Ed, who stood next to the booth smoking a cigarette. Martin threw back his head and laughed. I had the urge to sneak away, but

then Martin saw me. I walked back to the booth and sat across from him.

Martin looked at me strangely. "I wasn't sure if you were coming back."

Ed looked from Martin to me as if he might be intruding. "Well, have a good evening, folks," he said and headed for the bar.

"Sorry, Marty," I said. "I thought I saw someone I knew."

"Must've been someone important."

"It couldn't have been her." What was wrong with me? Of course it hadn't been Cyn. It had been some blonde girl who'd happened to be there when I'd been thinking about Cyn.

"You okay?" Martin asked.

"Sure." I downed the rest of my whiskey. I felt cold all over.

"Hey," he said softly, "we're gonna be working together a lot, so...what we were talking about before? The whole revolution shtick. I'm sorry if I offended you."

I could still see Cyn's afterimage when I looked at him, as though I'd been staring at the sun. Only slowly did his face, real, substantial, blot out hers. "You didn't offend me, Marty." Well, maybe he had, but somehow that didn't matter now.

"But it's clearly a subject you take personally. How come?"

Wouldn't it be a relief to tell someone? But he'd said *revolution shtick*. He would never understand. Or would he? "It's complicated," I said. Of course I couldn't tell him. It could ruin everything.

To my surprise, he reached across the table and took my hand. "You don't have to tell me if you don't want to, Joanna. I just wanted to make sure we're okay." His hand was warm, and his face was suffused with kindness.

"We're okay," I said. I'm okay, I thought. I'm okay I'm okay I'm okay. I didn't see her. I didn't hallucinate her either. It was just some blonde girl, and we'd been talking about *the whole revolution shtick*. I wanted to keep hold of Martin's hand.

About the Author

Gwynne Garfinkle is a Los Angeles native, a fiction writer, poet, and erstwhile rock critic. Her collection of short fiction and poetry, *People Change*, was published in 2018 by Aqueduct Press. Her work has appeared in such publications as *Strange Horizons*, *Uncanny*, *Escape Pod*, *Apex*, *GigaNotoSaurus*, *Mermaids Monthly*, *Not One of Us*, and *Climbing Lightly Through Forests*. She has an MFA in Creative Writing from Antioch LA. Follow her on Twitter or Instagram (@gwynnega) or visit her website: gwynnegarfinkle.com.