

## PROVINCETOWN STORIES

by Russ López

Shawmut Peninsula Press. 218 pages, \$19.95

Anyone who's been to Provincetown knows what a uniquely colorful place it is—a long-time mecca for artists, members of the LGBT community, and others in search of an alternative on Cape Cod. Russ López' *Provincetown Stories* contains a series of short tales featuring both tourists and residents. López seems familiar with every type of visitor, be they gay, straight, Black, white, seasonal, or year-round.

His portraits are knowing and often incisive, as when he remarks in "Jilted" of a lesbian who's stumbled upon a rejected gay man: "She was sympathetic to the demon twink's distress but found his self-centeredness difficult to take." Or when he writes in "Scenes from Commercial Street": "Some, unfortunately, break down under the sexual freedom. ... Temptation is everywhere. ... Provincetown is as much a graveyard of love affairs today as it was for sailing ships in centuries past." In "The Return," a man visits Provincetown after many years' absence and tries to make peace with the ghosts of those lost to AIDS. In "Belle and Daphne," a character realizes that her desire for a faithless woman is as ephemeral as Provincetown itself, perennially in danger of being washed away.

The most touching stories offer knowing and well-crafted views of just one or two characters. Indeed the book may be a little too encyclopedic, with perhaps too many characters to keep track of. It's a relief in "Calculating Romance" to have an interaction between two characters we've met before, suggesting that these stories, which have a kind of cumulative effect, could form the basis for a *Tales of the City*-style saga set in Provincetown. In the meantime, for anyone who loves the place, *Provincetown Stories* is like a fun afternoon spent at Herring Cove or on Commercial Street.

DALE BOYER

## ROCKY HORROR

### A Behind-the-Scenes Look at the Cult Classic

by Mick Rock with Tim Mohr  
HarperPop. 256 pages, \$50.

Make space on the coffee or bedside table for *Rocky Horror*, the late celebrity photographer Mick Rock's comprehensive collection of more than 200 photos (both black-and-white and color) that chronicles—from British stage inception to screen—the production of the legendary film.

First there's the glitzy slipcase displaying Tim Curry's silver glitter-stained lips, which turn ruby red (more glitter) on the cover. What follows is a sumptuous catalogue of rapturous images that support Rock's opening description of the "sharp, tight, brilliantly

conceived" vision and "the power of pure rollicking fun." They recapture the "sensory overload" and "faraway world of satin, mascara, and chains" that has seduced and titillated moviegoers for more than fifty years. There are Tim Curry's iconic bustier, fishnet stockings, and platform heels as Dr. Frank-N-Furter; Susan Sarandon's alluring bra and bikini as Janet Weiss; Peter Hinwood's skimpy gold lamé speedo as Rocky. Captions, commentaries, and interviews from the director, producer, musical director, and costume designer ("everything used, old, painted, dyed") add dimension.

But the photos are the focus of this luxe portfolio. They should interest lifelong fans who still attend midnight singalong showings, throwing toast and toilet paper at the screen, as well as astonished neophytes to participate in the "Time Warp" "jump to the left, step to the right" and join the "sweet transvestite" throng from *Transsexual, Transylvania*.

ROBERT ALLEN PAPINCHAK

## COME SEE ME IN THE GOOD LIGHT

Directed by Ryan White  
Apple TV+

How would you live your life differently if you knew it would end soon? Genderqueer poet, performer, and activist Andrea Gibson died last July at age 49 following a nearly four-year battle with ovarian cancer. An expert at turning pain into poetry, Gibson worked with filmmakers to document some of their final months in *Come See Me in the Good Light*. By Gibson's side through it all is their wife, fellow poet Megan Falley, who



Andrea Gibson in *Come See Me in the Good Light*.

brings an endless supply of giggles to their otherwise macabre final chapter. This levity is fitting for the documentary, which features Gibson's dark humor center stage as a crutch the couple relies upon while navigating the unthinkable.

What's most striking in the documentary is Gibson's reckoning with their knowledge that for a long time they didn't even want to be alive. They talk about their struggles with

suicidal ideation and the mental battles they fought to get to where they are in the film: desperate for just a little more time. They meet with doctor after doctor to join trials and receive experimental treatments, all in the hope of making it to their fiftieth birthday. In one scene Gibson and Falley play with "old age filters" to see what they'd look like in their 70s and 80s. The moment turns emotional as Gibson realizes they'll never become that wrinkled and gray version of themselves. Despite the grief that weighs on the scene, there's something else there too: a bittersweet appreciation. This person who wanted to die for so long now wants nothing more than to live.

MEG RICHARDS

## BOOKISH

Created by Mark Gatiss  
Eagle Eye Drama

The cozy crime genre has enjoyed a resurgence lately. From *Only Murders in the Building* to the *Knives Out* films, audiences are back in the mood for murder with a soft edge. With its roots in the books of Agatha Christie and Dorothy L. Sayers and its heyday in the 1920s and '30s, the genre offers us a peculiar, old-fashioned comfort in turbulent times.

*Bookish*, the latest from talented actor-cum-writer Mark Gatiss, doesn't so much reinvent cozy crime as deliver an entertaining, queer-friendly addition to the canon. The setup is pleasingly quaint. Gabriel Book is a secondhand bookseller in postwar London with a mysterious wartime past—and a "letter from Churchill" granting him access to the local police whenever a murder occurs nearby (conveniently, often). The bookshop provides more than atmosphere. Book's archives become an investigative engine, and the setting neatly explains his verbal precision and old-world polish.

The mysteries arrive as tidily self-contained two-parters, but the real hook is Book's private life. He's married to Trottie (Polly Walker) and their affection is unmistakable, yet their marriage is celibate. You see, Book is gay and theirs is a "lavender marriage." This element is the series' most affecting and often threatens to outshine the crime storylines. Into this arrangement comes Jack (Connor Finck), an orphan newly out of prison, hired to help in the shop. The Books take him in, though their interest may be more complicated than charity.

Gatiss' writing is sharp, funny, and genuinely moving. The show's pleasures are familiar—period detail, tidy plotting, a likable amateur sleuth—so don't expect a genre overhaul. Its most subversive move is also its simplest: placing a gay man at the center, which is a rarity in cozy crime and still uncommon in the genre at large.

SEAN COOK