In brief by Hephzibah Anderson

The Book of Difficult Fruit: Arguments for the Tart, Tender, and Unruly Kamish

Pura MacMillan, £14.99, pp426

Show over, velvety peaches, and plum strawberries. Let us, an award-winning US baker and writer, be interested in fruit that is wild enough, formidable rather than forbidding. Gathering 26 of her favourites – among them medial herbs that need to rot in order to sweeten – she wraps up a zingy blend of natural, culinary and personal history. Notes on the medicinal properties of these fruits add a wry kick, and recipes cover gelée and wine soaked fruits. It’s a prickly, pleasant delight.

Early Morning Riser
Kathleen Hickey
Fourth Estate, £14.99, pp386

On the surface, Hickey’s second novel exudes stilted coyness. Schoolteacher Jane hooks up with Duncan, a furniture restorer, on the very afternoon that she moves to Bayeux City. Thanks to his good looks and pleasant ways, marriage-averse Duncan has dealt with nearly every woman there. Even so, over some 20 years, he and Jane build a life together, riding out life’s calamities and he and Jane build a life together, riding out one of an extended family tragedy and part sweeping history. It’s like Anne Tyler with added grunge.

Sex Robots & Vegan Meat: Adventures at the Frontier of Birth, Food, Sex and Death
Jenny Kleinman
Picador, £9.99, pp368

Jenny Kleinman, is interested in fruit that is not only forbidden. Gathering 26 of her favourites – among them medial herbs that need to rot in order to sweeten – she wraps up a zingy blend of natural, culinary and personal history. Notes on the medicinal properties of these fruits add a wry kick, and recipes cover gelée and wine soaked fruits. It’s a prickly, pleasant delight.

The case against a strongman saviour

Michela Wrong uses a dissident’s murder to focus her attack on Rwanda’s president Paul Kagame in this fascinating study, writes Chris McGoey

Do Not Disturb: The Story of a Political Murder and an African Regime Gone Bad
Michela Wrong
Fourth Estate, £20, pp502

When Rwanda’s former intelligence chief was found strangled in a plush Johannesburg hotel room, there was only ever one real suspect. Patrick Karegeya spent years dodging assassination attempts evidently set in motion by his childhood schoolmate, Rwanda’s eternal ruler, Paul Kagame. Karegeya even had tapes of former intelligence colleagues plotting his death. For all that, the ex-spy master allowed himself to be tricked into attending his own murder on the last day of 2013. Far too many of Kagame’s former allies turned opponents have met untimely ends for the man who has dominated Rwanda since the genocide in 1994 not to be the prime suspect. But, as Michela Wrong’s engrossing and riveting investigation reveals, Kagame’s killing was of a different order.

Wrong writes that the west’s implicitly racist pandering to an authoritarian leader helped entrench his power

Rwandans were planning how to take power in the homeland that neither of them really liked. In late 1990, some of the most important members of Museveni’s officer corps disappeared across the border to attack Rwanda. Four years later, Kagame emerged to the outside world as the hero who put an end to the genocide. Kagame made his old schoolmate his external intelligence chief. Wrong portrays Kagame as an accomplished manipulator of foreign politicians in maintaining the savre myth, even as he grew disillusioned with political repression and killings.

The extent of Kagame’s own complicity is never quite clear, but he is hardly an innocent party either to the RPF’s slaughter of Hutu civilians or in serving a president he calls a dictator and assassin.

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Wrong makes her case with a deep investigation of the murder of a charming, manipulative, roguish man who also had blood on his hands. Kagame grew up among Tutsi exiles in Uganda after his ancestors fled Rwanda to escape Belgian rule. Kagame was a more recent arrival when his family was driven out by violent anti-Tutsi purges in the run-up to Rwanda’s independence in 1962. Their mothers were friends and the boys attended the same school. Years later, they were drawn to khối Museveni’s rebel army as it fought its way to power in Uganda in 1986. Kagame and Kagame served Museveni’s new government as senior intelligence officials, but it wasn’t long before the exiled Kagame was a strongman saviour.

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