

In brief by Hephzibah Anderson

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

Kate Lebo
Pan Macmillan, £14.99, pp416

Shove over, velvety peaches and plump strawberries. Lebo, an award-winning US baker and writer, is interested in fruit that is wild and tough, forbidding rather than forbidden. Gathering 26 of her favourites – among them medlars that need to rot in order to sweeten – she whips up a zingy blend of natural, culinary and personal history. Notes on the medicinal properties of these fruits add a witchy kick, and recipes cover glue and sinus washes along with huckleberry pie. It's a prickly, piquant delight.

Early Morning Riser

Katherine Heiny
Fourth Estate, £14.99, pp336

On the surface, Heiny's second novel exudes sitcom cosiness. Schoolteacher Jane hooks up with Duncan, a furniture restorer, on the very afternoon that she moves to Boyne City. Thanks to his good looks and pleasant ways, marriage-averse Duncan has slept with nearly every woman there. Even so, over some 20 years, he and Jane build a life together, riding out life's calamities and embracing a found family of eccentrics. With its deadpan charm and sharp truths, it's like Anne Tyler with added grunge.

Sex Robots & Vegan Meat: Adventures at the Frontier of Birth, Food, Sex and Death

Jenny Kleeman
Picador, £9.99, pp368
(paperback)

During a five-year quest, British journalist and film-maker Kleeman has sampled "clean" chicken nuggets, met a hyperreal silicone sex doll, explored a 3D-printed "suicide pod", and observed an artificial womb that promises to make childbirth as simple as "opening a Ziploc bag". Thoughtful scepticism makes her a savvy guide, and her fresh insights into, for example, disruptive technology's gender dimension underpin provocative takes on progress. Absorbing.

To order *The Book of Difficult Fruit* for £13.04, *Early Morning Riser* for £13.04 or *Sex Robots & Vegan Meat* for £9.29 go to guardianbookshop.com or call 020-3176 3837



Africa

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 McGreal

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 revelatory investigation reveals, Karegeya's killing was of a different order.

Do Not Disturb is part murder mystery and part sweeping history of an extended family tragedy spread over two countries, three wars, four decades and a genocide. Along the way, Wrong asks hard questions about the true nature of Kagame's rule and the claims made for Rwanda's rebirth.

For years, guilt-ridden politicians in the west fawned over Kagame as a national saviour after his Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) drove from power the Hutu extremists who slaughtered around 800,000 Tutsis as the UN looked on. Tony Blair called him a "visionary leader" even as the RPF faced its own accusations of war crimes and Kagame locked up political opponents or worse.

"I don't ignore all those criticisms," Blair said in 2010. "But I do think you've got to recognise that Rwanda is an immensely special case because of the genocide. Secondly, you can't argue with the fact that Rwanda has gone on a remarkable path of development." Bill Clinton called Kagame "one of the greatest leaders of our time".

Wrong is having none of it. She writes that the west's implicitly

racist pandering to an authoritarian leader helped entrench his power and spread conflict across the region. As for its much vaunted development policies, Wrong concludes that Rwanda's economy is held together by aid. "The sad thing about the west's current gushing admiration for strongman rule in central Africa is its historical naivety," she writes.

Wrong makes her case with a deep investigation of the murder of a charming, manipulative, roguish man who also had blood on his hands. Karegeya 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 Yoweri Museveni's rebel army as it fought its way to power in Uganda in 1986.

Kagame and Karegeya served Museveni's new government as senior intelligence officials, but it wasn't long before the exiled

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Members of the Rwanda National Congress with posters of murdered party co-founder Patrick Karegeya in 2014. Alexander Joe/AFP/Getty

Rwandans were planning how to take power in the homeland that neither of them really knew. 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 Karegeya as an accomplished manipulator of foreign politicians in maintaining the saviour myth, even as he grew disillusioned with political repression and killings.

The extent of Karegeya'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.

As Karegeya tells it, the breaking point came with the RPF's killing of old Ugandan comrades as the two countries fought over their plunder of the mineral-rich Democratic Republic of the Congo. The spy chief's dissent lands him in prison and exile in South Africa, where he and other disillusioned Rwandan officials pose a particular danger to Kagame. Karegeya quite literally knew where the bodies were buried. A few years later, he was among them.

Wrong marvels at the extent to which western politicians have been willing to give a pass to Kagame and what she describes as his criminal regime. "It's all very well talking about human rights but the fundamental, primary human right is the right to be free from the threat of violence," Andrew Mitchell, the Conservative former international development secretary, tells Wrong. "As far as I'm concerned, Kagame is a hero for ending the violence."

Do Not Disturb will make uncomfortable reading for those who still adhere to that view, even if some will argue that Wrong does not take enough account of Rwanda's efforts to address the legacy of genocide and a country awash in murderers. For all that, we can be pretty certain one person won't care. Asked about Karegeya's murder, Rwanda's president denied responsibility. Then Kagame added a comment about his old comrade in arms. "I actually wish Rwanda did it. I really wish it."

Chris McGreal is the Guardian's former Africa correspondent. To order Do Not Disturb for £17.40 go to guardianbookshop.com or call 020-3176 3837