



Mr. Splitfoot

By Samantha Hunt

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A contemporary gothic from an author in the company of Kelly Link and Aimee Bender, *Mr. Splitfoot* tracks two women in two times as they march toward a mysterious reckoning.

Ruth and Nat are orphans, packed into a house full of abandoned children run by a religious fanatic. To entertain their siblings, they channel the dead. Decades later, Ruth's niece, Cora, finds herself accidentally pregnant. After years of absence, Aunt Ruth appears, mute and full of intention. She is on a mysterious mission, leading Cora on an odyssey across the entire state of New York on foot. Where is Ruth taking them? Where has she been? And who — or what — has she hidden in the woods at the end of the road?

In an ingeniously structured dual narrative, two separate timelines move toward the same point of crisis. Their merging will upend and reinvent the whole. A subversive ghost story that is carefully plotted and elegantly constructed, *Mr. Splitfoot* will set your heart racing and your brain churning. Mysteries abound, criminals roam free, utopian communities show their age, the mundane world intrudes on the supernatural and vice versa.

Making good on the extraordinary acclaim for her previous books, Samantha Hunt continues to be “dazzling” (*Vanity Fair*) and to deliver fiction that is “daring and delicious” (*Chicago Tribune*).

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Mr. Splitfoot By Samantha Hunt Bibliography

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- Binding: Hardcover
- 336 pages



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Editorial Review

From School Library Journal

At 17, orphans Ruth and Nat are on the brink of aging out of the religious cult they live in. Nat, who claims to talk with the dead, shares his visions with the other children, while Ruth helps him set the stage. When con man Mr. Bell comes to the home, he discovers in them a perfect scam, and he recruits them to join him in his travels. Years later, Ruth arrives at her sister's home and entices her niece Cora to join her on a walking journey. Cora, practical, hardworking, pregnant by a married man, is unconnected to her own life and willingly goes with Ruth. The walking is hard, but Cora is fascinated by her silent aunt and is certain that Ruth is taking her somewhere important. In alternating chapters, readers follow teenage Ruth and Nat as they travel, while Cora and Ruth's present-day walking journey bridges the past into a ghostly present that provides a way for Cora to connect not only with Nat but with the baby who is inching its way into her life. It is perplexing why Cora follows the silent Ruth, but Ruth's story demands to be told, and Hunt delivers it in a prose style that dwells within another realm, allowing disbelief to be easily suspended. Much like Cora, who blindly follows Ruth into the wilds beyond her home, readers will wonder where they are going and by joining the protagonists' journey will discover that what they imagine they know about someone is often quite different from the reality. VERDICT Hunt's lyrical writing and compelling tale are perfect for well-read teens.—Connie Williams, Petaluma High School, CA

Review

A New York Times Editors' Choice

A Publishers Weekly Bestseller

Featured on the New York Times Paperback Row

Longlisted for the Brooklyn Eagles Literary Prize?

January 2016 Indie Next Pick

A Paris Review Staff Pick

Named a Best Book of 2016 by MPR News

One of TimeOut New York's "15 Best Books of 2016"

One of Esquire's "The 25 Best Books of 2016 (So Far)"

One of Refinery 29's "The Best Books Of 2016 So Far"

One of Paste Magazine's "The 16 Best Fiction Books of 2016 (So Far)"

One of BookRiot's "The Best Books Of 2016, So Far"?

One of Huffington Post's "5 Hot Books"

Featured on iBooks's "25 Best Books of January"

One of Read It Forward's "Favorite Reads of January"

A BookBrowse Editor's Choice

"Samantha Hunt's third novel, MR. SPLITFOOT, will haunt me...I've dog-eared so many pages in honor of vivid prose that my advance reader's copy of MR. SPLITFOOT curls up with fattened corners...the novel moves not just in two time frames, told through two voices, a first-person narrator and a third-, but also...it moves in the fourth dimension, stamping itself upon the reading mind. Hypnotic and glowing, MR. SPLITFOOT insists on its own ghostly presence."—Gregory Maguire, *New York Times Book Review*

"The historical and the fantastical entwine like snakes in Samantha Hunt's fiction...Turned around and around in these woods, you won't always know where you are, but there's a rare pleasure in this blend of romance and phantoms."—*Washington Post*

"This gripping novel alternates between two story lines: in one, the budding con artists Nat and Ruth struggle to survive in an abusive Christian foster home; in the other, set some years in the future, Ruth, inexplicably rendered mute, leads her niece, Cora, on a journey across New York State on foot. The narratives, which twist together into a shocking dénouement, are marked by ghost stories, from Nat and Ruth's forays into the world of mediums and séances to Cora's struggle to piece together her aunt's past. 'History holds up one side of our lives and fiction the other,' one character tells Cora, and the novel's pleasures lie in the intersections between the two."—*New Yorker*

"The ghosts of industrial America haunt the author's picaresque third novel alongside the maybe-supernatural kind. Deep in upstate New York, two orphaned teens break free of the shady Love of Christ! foster home and make a business of claiming to channel the dead; years later, one of them, Ruth, turns up mute and gaunt at the home of her pregnant niece and draws her into a mysterious march along the Erie Canal. The two narratives alternate suspensefully, building a world of hidden forces and untethered souls that feels like the dystopia we already live in."—*Vulture*, "7 Books You Need to Read This January"

"*Mr. Splitfoot* [is] at once an intriguing mystery with clues, suspense, enigmas galore, and an exhilarating, witty, poignant paean to the unexplainable, the unsolvable, the irreducibly mysterious...[Hunt's] epistemological and ethical rigor are complemented by a lovely respect for what remains uncategorizable, unable to be mastered or explained away."—*The Boston Globe*

"If you're looking for one of those books that's an escapist adventure, a gothic page-turner that is also so finely crafted that you'll feel enriched as well as transported for having read it, try *Mr. Splitfoot*. The novel features two intertwining storylines, beginning with the education of two orphans who learn to interact with the dead, and relocating decades later when one of those orphans comes to find her niece and bring her on a mysterious journey. Samantha Hunt's prose sparkles whether she's writing about the most mystical of moments deep in a seance, or the more mundane times when niece and aunt slog through upstate New York as they set out for who-knows-where. The way the narratives ultimately come together is unsettling yet satisfying that the novel practically begs to be called 'haunting.'"—*Esquire*, "The 25 Best Books of 2016 (So Far)"

"Turn to any page of this one-of-a-kind Gothic fiction about motherhood and hauntings—literal and metaphorical—and you'll come upon moments of startling originality...Hunt is scary good."—*O, The Oprah Magazine*, "10 Favorite Books of 2016"

"Zombies are out, ghosts are in. [Hunt] taps into the cultural zeitgeist with a new novel blurring the natural and supernatural."—*Wall Street Journal*, "Six Books to Curl Up With This Winter"

"The way I feel about Samantha Hunt's *Mr. Splitfoot* is how one of its characters describes meeting his wife: 'We fell in love in a bloody way, thorns and hooks'...Ruth's and Cora's experiences of that landscape are like hallucinatory expeditions through a gothic wasteland. Somewhere along the way, Hunt conned me into believing that temporary possession by a hellish demon isn't, after all, so different from the crucible of motherhood."—*The Paris Review*, Staff Pick

"I started the recent novel *Mr. Splitfoot*, by Samantha Hunt, and there I was. Lost. The 'real world' seemed only marginally more real than the scary religious cult in upstate New York, where the novel is partly set. Though it wasn't a pleasant place, I was thrilled to be somewhere I would never, in real life, want to be."—Francine Prose in the *New York Times*

"Creepy, disquieting and unsettling, this book grabs the reader right away."—*TimeOut* New York, "15 Best

Books of 2016"

"Hunt mixes her gothic ingredients with great skill, and throws in some quirky contemporary twists for good measure...The result is a riveting, linguistically playful tale about demons (real or imagined), loss, magic and motherhood."—*Financial Times*

"Hunt's back with a modern gothic starring a scam-artist orphan who claims to talk to the dead; his sister who ages into a strange, silent woman; and, later, her pregnant niece, who follows her aunt on a trek across New York without exactly knowing why. Also featured: meteorites, a runaway nun, a noseless man, and a healthy dash of humor. Although it's still too early to speculate on the prize-winning potential of *Mr. Splitfoot*, Hunt's fantastical writing is already drawing favorable comparisons to Kelly Link and Aimee Bender, and her elegantly structured novel promises to be the year's most unusual ghost story."—The Millions, "Most Anticipated: The Great 2016 Book Preview"

"*Mr. Splitfoot* is going to be a wild ride. If you're all about magical realists like Kelly Link, this is one title you'll need to pick up, because Samantha Hunt's third novel takes the banal and rockets it into the fantastic (and the fantastically wonderful). I don't want to divulge too much about this one because I'd rather you read it yourself, but I will say that if you love dual narrative structures or complicated timelines, this is an especially good pick for your must-read list."—Bustle, "17 Of 2016's Most Anticipated Books To Put On Your Wishlist Immediately"

"Spooky and unnerving...Part gothic spine-chiller, part bleak, backwoods road novel, *Mr. Splitfoot* ranges all over the modern-day Burned-over District...Cora's journey with Ruth is confounding, rich in backwoods weirdness, spooky and strange and artfully intertwined with the slowly unwinding story of Ruth and Nat's earlier adventures...[*Mr. Splitfoot*] exhume[s] the carnival of millenarianism and inter-realm interaction that swept the region two centuries ago, resurrecting it in a tale both strange and terrifying on the same scorched earth where evangelical fire once burned."—*Paste Magazine*

"*Mr. Splitfoot* is an eerie and electrifying read — mixing modern and gothic, and blurring the line between the living and the dead...Even if the supernatural is not your cup of tea, the frenetic style of *Mr. Splitfoot* will sweep you up in the book's wildly unraveling reality."—MPR News, "The best books of 2016 (so far)"

"It's a sure bet both of Hunt's narratives - one fast, one slow; each propelled by tight, tense sentences - will converge in space, if not in time, but how she makes it happen is as satisfying as it is unpredictable. *Mr. Splitfoot* is a horror story of sorts, but Hunt is careful not to summon anything supernatural in the daylight. 'Every story is a ghost story,' we're told more than once. A hint? A red herring? Hard to say."—*Philadelphia Inquirer*

"The natural and supernatural quickly blur, as characters like Captain Ahab and Huck Finn pop up in this suspenseful, wryly witty novel."—Huffington Post, "5 Hot Books"

"Fans of the wondrous and strange will find solace in Samantha Hunt's haunting novel...Hunt's narrative drips in magical realism, so you'll have to roll with the whimsy and supernatural elements, including Nat's charming ability to communicate with mischievous ghosts."—Refinery 29, "5 Terrific New Books To Read This January"

"[A] quirky, mysterious novel...Hunt has conjured an unusual and engaging story...Hunt's aim is not to be believable, but to play with the unanswerable questions and mysteries that underlie life. The emotional connections between Hunt's key characters are authentic, as is the unusual world she creates at Love of

Christ!, and her writing is lively and funny. At times it felt like both Cora and I were on a wild goose chase, trailing Ruth wherever she went, but I gladly followed, eager to reach the surprising conclusion of this enigmatic journey."—*The Dallas Morning News*

"Hunt maintains a dark and disturbing atmosphere throughout this intriguing, well-drawn gothic, creating a terrain that's familiar and yet alien and unnerving at the same time...If all stories are ghost stories, if our pasts do haunt us, maybe they can save us, too."—*Miami Herald*

"An American Gothic fever dream...Hunt's packed prose writhes with hallucinatory detail. At her best, she lurches from lyricism to cynicism in short, declarative sentences."—*Chicago Tribune*

"[*Mr. Splitfoot*] conjures ghosts with startling prose and enough hope to sway even the most hardened of nonbelievers."—*San Diego Book Review*

"The devil unquestionably stalks these pages, but so do more benevolent spirits, and the novel ends, unexpectedly, on a note of uplift and hope. An episodic picaresque that is undeniably strange and often intriguing."—*The Globe and Mail*

"*Mr. Splitfoot* has the offbeat charm of Scarlett Thomas' work, while the theme of communing with the dead inevitably brings Hilary Mantel's *Beyond Black* and Sarah Waters' *Affinity* [...] to mind... Its vision of unexpected love and loyalty remains compelling."—*Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*

"Love dark, creepy, gothic books about orphans in group homes speaking to the dead, mysterious strangers, arduous journeys, cults, and homicidal maniacs? Who doesn't? While I am notoriously grumpy when it comes to dual storylines, the two threads in this book, separated by time and place, were so artfully woven together and linked by such mysterious and sympathetic characters, I was hanging out on the edge of my seat anticipating what would become of them. As the plots began to converge, I was absolutely addicted. This could've easily been a one-sitting book."—Andi Miller, BookRiot, "The Best Books Of 2016, So Far"

"You'll want to savor every fiendish bit of this book. With her latest novel, Samantha Hunt has delivered a gothic tale that's both deliciously creepy and emotionally satisfying, combining supernatural intrigue and thematic weight...Hunt's confidence in her story propels the book from page one, a task made all the more impressive when you consider the murky waters it traverses. *Mr. Splitfoot* is about the divide between the natural and the supernatural, between faith and reason, and in the hands of a storyteller like Hunt...the novel becomes something truly special. If you're a lover of rule-breaking ghost stories, spoiler alert: *Mr. Splitfoot* is for you."—BookPage

"This deeply inventive Gothic story is about two women with a shared past and a mysterious future...Part ghost story, part love story, part modern gothic horror, *Mr. Splitfoot* is an original, vivid and compelling work of literary fiction...A rewarding journey."—BookBrowse

"Ethereal...The book deftly straddles the slippery line between fantasy and reality in a story that's both gripping and wonderfully mystifying...[I]nterconnected chapters builds suspense while keeping readers guessing about what crazy turn might happen next. Hints of what's in store for readers include a cult of Etherists, a noseless man, a pile of lost money, and a scar-like pattern of meteorite landings. **This spellbinder is storytelling at its best.**"—*Publishers Weekly*, starred

"A truly fantastic novel in which the blurring of natural and supernatural creates a stirring, visceral conclusion."—*Kirkus Reviews*, starred

"An entrancing, modern, haunted tale...[*Mr. Splitfoot*] belongs in the welcome genre of books by new writers who don't accept the confines of modern literary fiction's terse and limited geometry, its focus on flawed human relationships and their legacy. Yes, these are humans; yes, there are relationships—beautiful ones, fraught ones; humans with tremendous flaws. (No one but perhaps Flannery O'Connor has pegged the grotesque rage underlying religious fundamentalism this well.) An exuberant writer, Hunt furnishes every millimeter of her story with life, with palpable losses, longing, desire, tenderness, and even the trappings of pop culture. If you're craving the tangy prose and warm sweep of a really well-wrought novel, you'll find it here...But it's the liberties Hunt takes that make this novel levitate into something wholly remarkable and new. She's such a powerful writer that she naturally reaches beyond the usual canonized frame of what's real...Delve into this tightly crafted book. And then: sweet dreams."—Chronogram

"The author of the wonderful Tesla novel, *The Invention of Everything Else*, is back with a contemporary gothic about orphan children who can channel the dead, a mysterious mission, and something hidden in the woods."—BookRiot, "15 Books Out in 2016 You Should Mark Down Now: Fiction Edition"

"Hunt's enchanting third novel adeptly obscures the line between earthly and the metaphysical. Decades after leaving her fundamentalist foster home, Ruth, now mute, encounters her pregnant niece, Cora. The two women embark on a twisted and otherworldly quest—intensified by Hunt's lucid imagery—across New York state, where contemporary society is obscured in the wake of sublime characters and hair-raising happenings."—*DuJour*

"[A] perfectly formed snow-globe of a novel that exists in its own well-crafted universe that hangs together remarkably well no matter how hard you try to shake it up...Hunt is an excellent writer, with real talent for character development, dialogue and atmosphere. There are lots of story links to discover that span the 14-year-gap that separates the twin narratives - many of which will only be uncovered upon a second reading. That perhaps is the magic of *Mr Splitfoot* - a novel whose real charms are only largely evident once you finish the final page."—*New Zealand Herald*

"A supernatural road trip."—*Vanity Fair*, "In Short"

"I get the chills. Is it a true story? Is it a sad story? It's what people want. It has a lot of good energy and people, people will like it. They will keep reading it until they read the end of it. It's intriguing because a person will know there's something two-sided. Yeah. It's a good one."—Charlotte Brontë, speaking through a medium

"Part road trip, part gothic, *Mr. Splitfoot* belongs on the shelf beside *The Haunting of Hill House* and *We Have Always Lived in the Castle*. Samantha Hunt is astonishing. Her every sentence electrifies. Her characters demand our closest attention. Her new book contains everything that I want in a novel. If I could long-distance mesmerize you, dear reader, into picking up this book and buying it and reading it at once, believe me: I would."—Kelly Link, author of *Get in Trouble*, *Magic for Beginners*, and many others

"Samantha Hunt's new book is a revelation. It's emotionally precise, brilliantly imagined and flat out spooky. A gothic novel that somehow manages to feel thrillingly contemporary and wholly original."—Jenny Offill, author of *Dept. of Speculation*

"I'm speechless. *Mr. Splitfoot* is so inventive, so *new*; I haven't read anything like it in years. On the surface it's about false spirituality and the most demented road trip across New York State ever attempted, but it's also about the horrible ties that bind us and the small acts of redemption that make life almost okay. On top of that, it's a thrilling page-turner. I couldn't stop reading it."—Gary Shteyngart, author of *Little Failure*,

Super Sad True Love Story, and many others

“*Mr. Splitfoot* is lyrical, echoing, deeply strange, with a quality of sustained hallucination. It is the best book on communicating with the dead since William Lindsay Gresham's *Nightmare Alley*, but it swaps out that novel's cynicism for a more life-affirming sense of uncertainty.” – Luc Sante, author of *Low Life* and many others

“*Mr. Splitfoot* is an absolutely thrilling book. Filial and maternal love are on display in all their complicated hugeness. But Hunt gives us plenty of humor amid the horror and awe-- and then turns on the lights and shows us what was looming above us the whole time. I can't stop thinking about it.” – Sarah Manguso, author of *Ongoingness*, *Two Kinds of Decay*, and others

From the Inside Flap

Ruth and Nat are seventeen. They are orphans. And they are developing an uncanny ability to talk to the dead. These talents bring them into the orbit of Mr. Bell, a con man with his own mystical interests. Together they embark on an unexpected journey that connects meteor sites, utopian communities, lost mothers, and the scar that maps its way across Ruth's face.

Decades later and after years of absence, Ruth visits her niece, Cora. But while Ruth used to speak to the dead, she now won't speak at all. It seems, though, that she has arrived just in time. Cora is in trouble, single and pregnant and not sure what is in store for her. Aunt Ruth has a plan, even if she's not telling. Cora knows she must follow. Their journey becomes an odyssey. But where is Ruth taking them? Where has she been all these years? Why won't she talk? And who or what is hidden in the woods at the end of the road?

A subversive ghost story that is as haunting in its examination of family, motherhood, and love as it is in its conjuring of the otherworldly, *Mr. Splitfoot* will set your heart racing and your imagination aflame. Unwinding in an ingenious structure, it tracks two women in two times as they march toward a mysterious, explosive reckoning. A contemporary gothic, it is a truly fantastic novel in which the blurring of natural and supernatural creates a stirring, visceral conclusion. *

**Kirkus Reviews*, starred review

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Lisa Chaffee:

In this 21st hundred years, people become competitive in each way. By being competitive at this point, people have to do something to make these individuals survive, being in the middle of typically the crowded place and notice simply by surrounding. One thing that oftentimes many people have underestimated it for a while is reading. That's why, by reading a publication your ability to survive enhance then having chance to stand than other is high. In your case who want to start reading the book, we give you this particular Mr. Splitfoot book as beginning and daily reading publication. Why, because this book is greater than just a book.

Wayne Gaddis:

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Jack Bell:

Beside this Mr. Splitfoot in your phone, it could give you a way to get more close to the new knowledge or details. The information and the knowledge you might got here is fresh in the oven so don't always be worry if you feel like an previous people live in narrow commune. It is good thing to have Mr. Splitfoot because this book offers to you personally readable information. Do you oftentimes have book but you rarely get what it's all about. Oh come on, that won't happen if you have this in your hand. The Enjoyable blend here cannot be questionable, such as treasuring beautiful island. Techniques you still want to miss the idea? Find this book and read it from today!

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