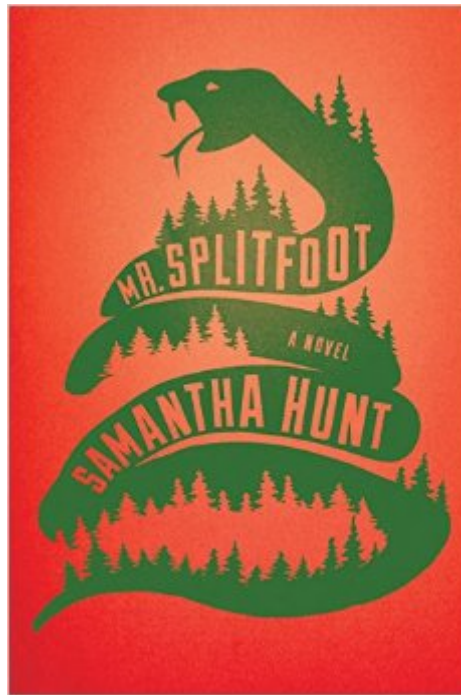


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# Mr. Splitfoot



## Synopsis

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 *ædazzling* (Vanity Fair) and to deliver fiction that is *ædaring and delicious* (Chicago Tribune).

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Samantha Hunt's Favorite Ghost Stories

What's your favorite ghost story? To quote Kelly Link, "I'll give you two

things. Three things. No, just two. The third one is a secret. My first favorite ghost story comes from Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller. In 2004 they built a sound walk through Central Park called Her Long Black Hair. This piece features three old photos of a stranger (presumably), a woman with long black hair who had once walked through Central Park posing for photos along the way. Cardiff and Miller recreated this woman's walk, imagining the crumbs of her life though the woman and her photographer were long gone. Cardiff and Miller's piece singly leads participants down the same path the woman and then the artists followed. Layers and layers of time piling up, places getting haunted by all the people who ever walked there. The stereo effect of the headphones places Cardiff's footsteps and voice directly behind you. So someone who came before you is now following you? It's creepy and early on in the walk, just as you become aware of her footsteps, Cardiff whispers "Don't turn around." It's chilling and impossible advice for me to follow when ghosts abound even in the most public places. Many of the ghosts are still alive. History's everywhere and I look back all the time. Mr. Splitfoot uses this idea of well-trod routes. It follows the Erie Canal, a path loaded with ghosts and old stories. The canal serves as a spine and pathway through nearly all the meteorite landings in New York. The cult in Mr. Splitfoot is inspired by meteors. The Erie Canal easily became the River Styx for me.

What's your second favorite ghost story? I found my second favorite ghost story on a box of Honeycomb cereal when I was a girl. A spooky 45 record one could cut from the box. I still have it. Wade Dennings' version of "The Hitchhiker." A young dead girl is given a ride home. Dennings' eerie voice and the image on the record—a full moon, an open grave—became such deep obsessions, my brain granted them permanent residencies. So of course a couple versions of "The Hitchhiker" are laced throughout Mr. Splitfoot. It's not the only record that made the book. Carl Sagan and Ann Druyan's Golden Records (those compilations of life on Earth that are still cruising through space onboard Voyager I and II, looking for life out there) make an appearance in Mr. Splitfoot. Books and records are the best ghosts. I think of Italo Calvino addressing his reader so directly in Chapter 1 of *If on a winter's night a traveler*. He's talking right to me even though he's been dead since 1985. Records are even better ghosts because they come around and around again like the themes in Mr. Splitfoot: old friends, myths, patterns in religions and cults, footsteps, daughters becoming moms. And records, just like people, can get stuck, skipping on a scratch.

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