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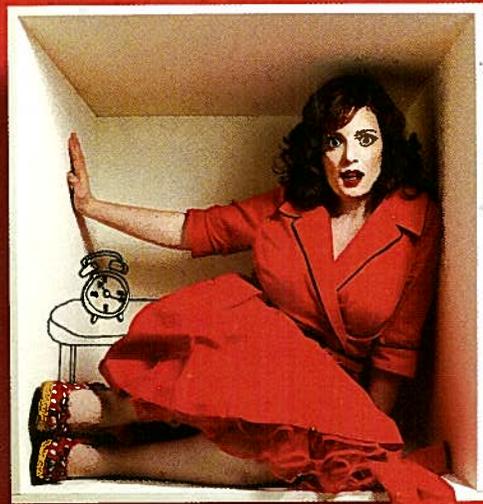
AGORAFABULOUS!: Dispatches From My Bedroom

BY SARA BENINCASA (WILLIAM MORROW)

THE ABRIDGED LIST of things Sara Benincasa has been afraid of includes leaving her home, having a wet head, driving, being a passenger in a car, and sex. But her memoir, based on her popular one-woman show of the same name, dissects all of these fears with so much verve and humor, you'll be amazed at how much fun it can be to read about such difficult circumstances.

The book is structured chronologically, beginning with her childhood panic attacks and agoraphobia. "In the simplest terms and most convenient definitions," the New Jersey native offers, "my psychiatric diagnosis is that I'm afraid of the mall." Benincasa's anxiety hit its peak when she was an undergrad, too afraid to leave her bed even to go to the bathroom, and convinced that the appliances were talking to her. "If college was supposed to be the best time of my life," she deadpans, "I couldn't imagine how awful it must get afterward." She moved back in with her parents and began the process of recovery.

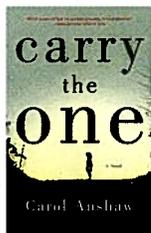
Later subjects include a stint working at an ashram, her move to New York—where she found her true calling as a comedian—and a surprisingly hilarious scene that recounts the morning after a one-night stand that involved a broken condom. She doesn't gloss over the pain she's endured in life, but by taking the comic view, Benincasa makes the otherwise unbearable far easier to bear. [SARAH NORRIS]



Agorafabulous!

* DISPATCHES FROM MY BEDROOM

Sara Benincasa



CARRY THE ONE:
A Novel
By Carol Anshaw
(Simon & Schuster)

Five young wedding guests pile into a car and travel an unfamiliar road. Half awake and hardly sober, they hit and kill a young girl. In her fourth novel, Carol Anshaw shows us that the worst day of your life is not something to grow past, but rather grow with, as the incident shapes and changes the characters' lives for decades beyond the fateful night.

Though the cast of characters revolves around the singular tragedy, their individual responses are fascinatingly nuanced. One person serves time for the accident, and emerges unrecognizable and dan-

gerous to the person who loves her. Two women carry on a passionate affair begun at the wedding, and remain locked for years in a cyclical battle between individual growth and exhilarating codependence. One passenger tangles with addiction, suppressing a secret guilt about his role in the accident, while one is quick to forgive and forget and even profits off the young girl's death. Everything, even the initial marriage, is changed by the accident.

Anshaw covers time effortlessly, drawing the reader along from Chicago to Paris to the Amsterdam art scene as her characters gain and discard lovers, professions, and ideals. For them, the accident is not the only thing that has happened, but it is the thread that ties them, no matter how much they

wish to be cut free. *Carry the One* is impossible to put down, a raw and honest look at what it means to survive in the wake of a death. [LAURIE ANN CEDILNIK]



COME IN AND COVER ME
By Gin Phillips
(Riverhead)

Archaeologists want much from the dead, but in Gin Phillips' stunning second novel, ghosts seem to need something from the archaeologist. Ren, our main character, had gained a sort of majestic fame in archaeology circles after finding a number of intact bowls in New Mexico that were made by an artist of the Mimbres community in the 12th century. The heart of

this novel is set during a years-later subsequent dig for more bowls, where Ren is visited by ghosts: sporadic visions of two Mimbres women, and Ren's 17-year-old brother Scott, appearing to her just as he did when he died when Ren was 12. Though the ghosts rarely speak, Ren feels they are nonetheless guiding her to discoveries—both of relics and of herself.

This well-researched novel also includes adventure, romance, suspense, and many pots of coffee. Always in third person, it lingers mostly with our girl Ren, but occasional chapters are closer to another one of the archaeologists on the dig and a nomadic Mimbres artist, whose chapters are snapshots from the era Ren is unearthing.

With supernatural elements, floating third-person narration, and