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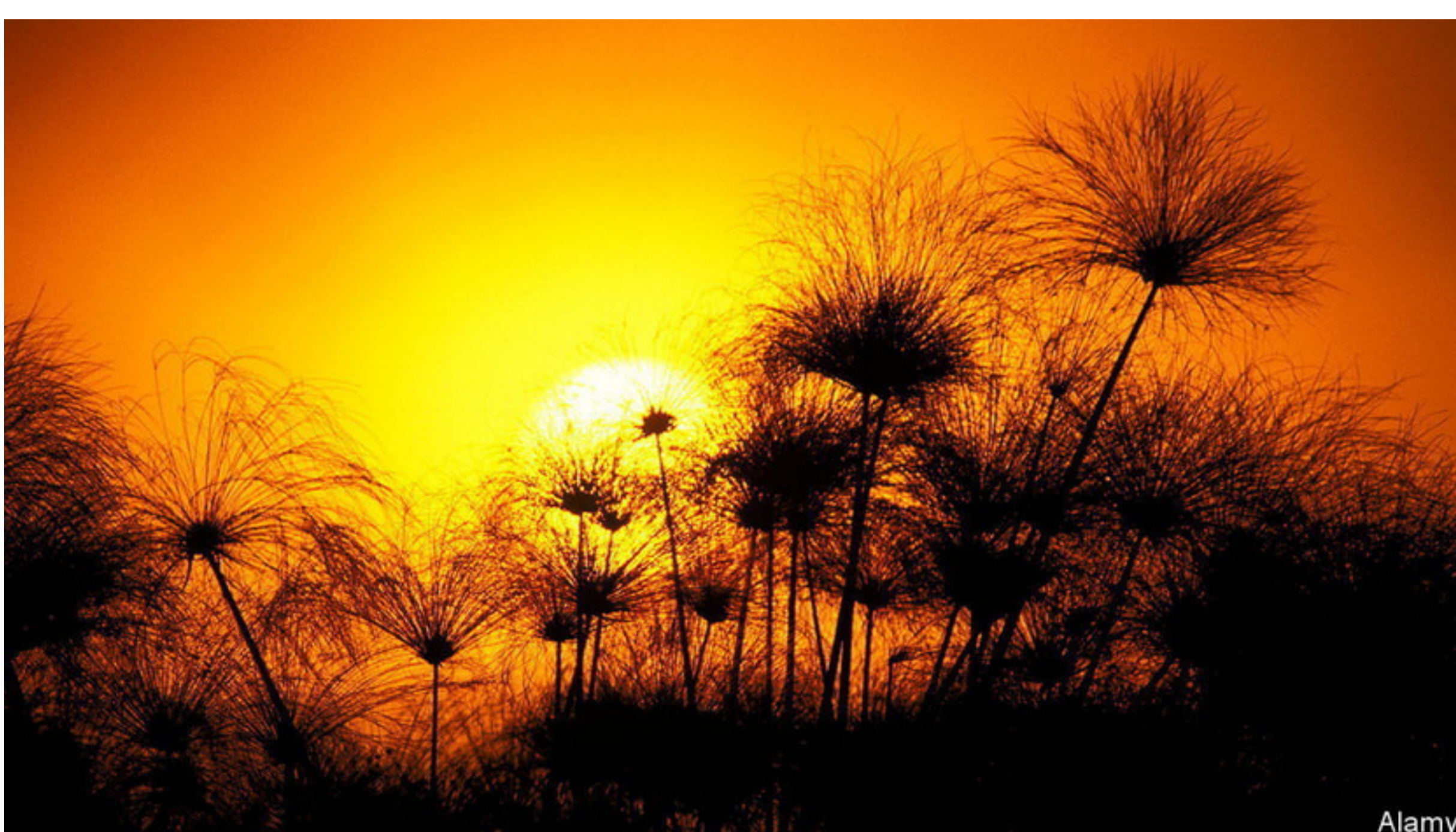
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Five of the most insightful works of the last twelve months including a history of papyrus and a guide to suffering



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For further recommendations, try our annual round-up of the best books, films, TV, music, podcasts and more.

Of Boys and Men. By Richard Reeves. *Brookings Institution Press*; 256 pages; \$28.99. *Swift Press*; £20

In some ways the world remains male-dominated, yet many men are falling behind, says the author. Boys do worse than girls in school in many countries, and are more likely everywhere to end up in prison or kill themselves. He suggests practical, incremental reforms, such as having boys start school a year later.

Life is Hard. By Kieran Setiya. *Riverhead Books*; 240 pages; \$27. *Hutchinson Heinemann*; £16.99

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A professor of philosophy at MIT argues that suffering need not diminish or spoil a good life. Living well and hardship can go together, he says; clear thinking is the key. A humane, consoling guide to this vale of tears, with a glimmer of hope.

The Subplot. By Megan Walsh. *Columbia Global Reports*; 133 pages; \$16 and £11.99

China's modern literary landscape teems with corruption exposés, homoerotic fantasy, emotive migrant-worker poetry, time-travelling entrepreneurs and desolately radical science fiction. The author makes a powerful case for Anglophone readers who want to understand China to look past the headlines and turn to books.

Papyrus. By Irene Vallejo. Translated by Charlotte Whittle. *Knopf*; 464 pages; \$35. *Hodder & Stoughton*; £25

A lively history of books in the ancient world. The committing of words and stories to papyrus scrolls was, the author says, as disruptive as the internet.

Magnificent Rebels. By Andrea Wulf. *Knopf*; 512 pages; \$35. *John Murray*; £25

An arresting group biography of the "Jena Set", a gang of young German intellectuals who played an outside part in the movement that came to be known as Romanticism. It reads as if Iris Murdoch had set a novel during an especially muddy phase of German metaphysics.

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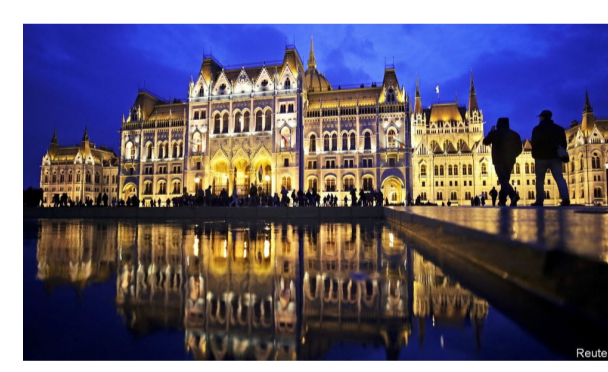


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