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JUNE 22, 2026

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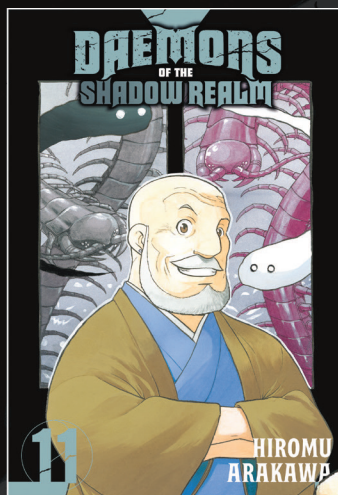
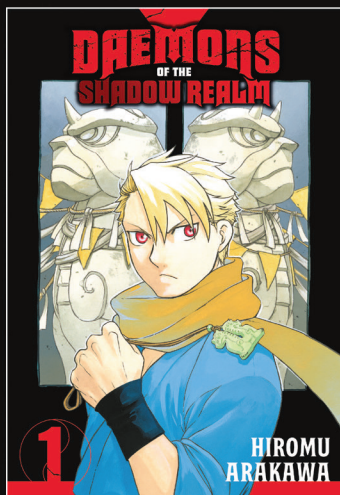
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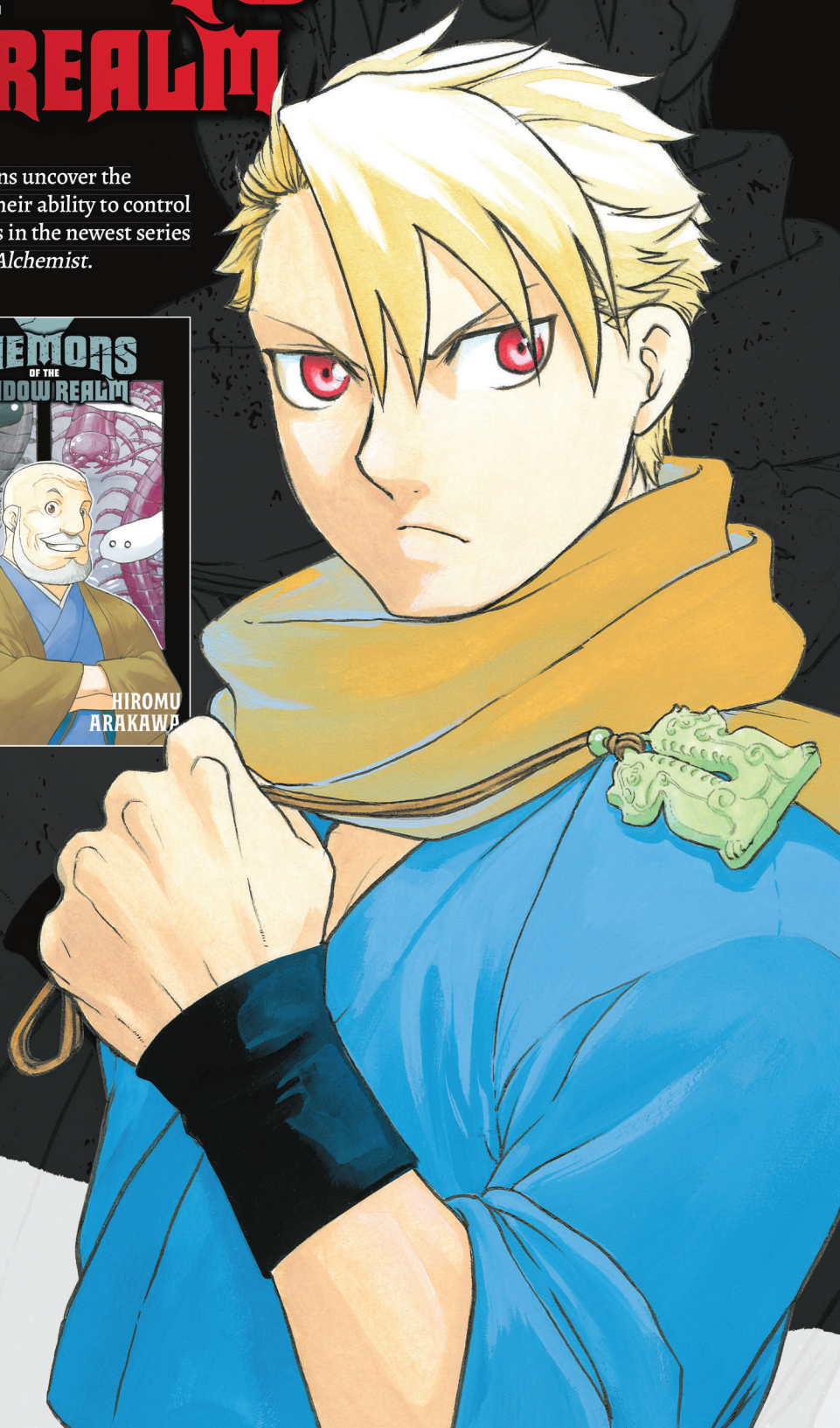
Volume 11 ISBN: 979-8-89910-030-7
\$12.99 USD / \$17.99 CAD | Older Teen (16+)

Uncover Unforgettable

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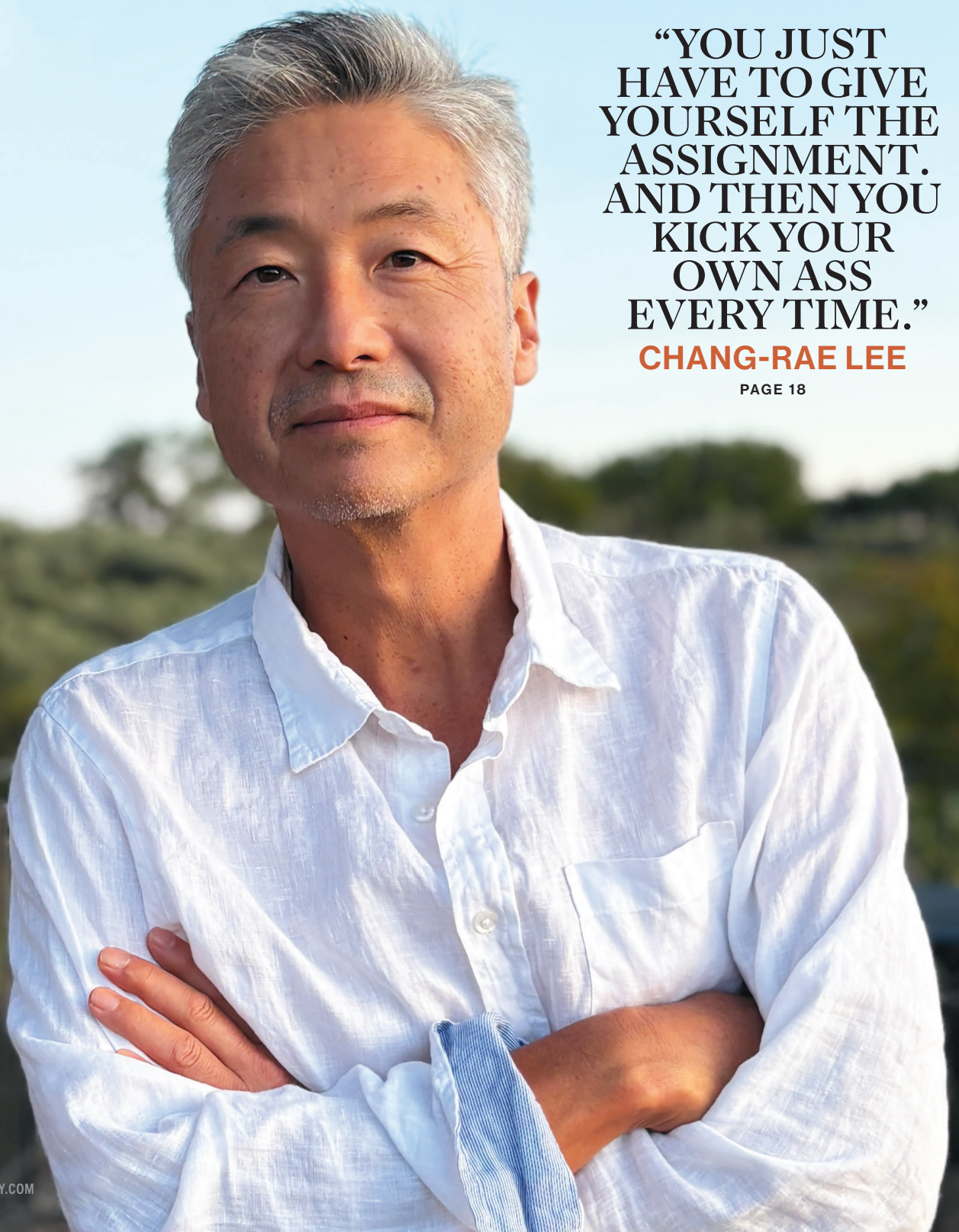
ESTABLISHED 1872

Publishers Weekly

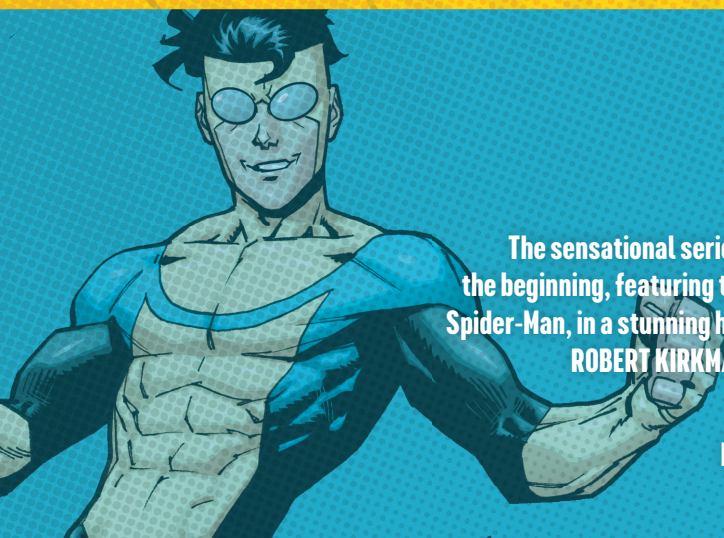
**“YOU JUST
HAVE TO GIVE
YOURSELF THE
ASSIGNMENT.
AND THEN YOU
KICK YOUR
OWN ASS
EVERY TIME.”**

CHANG-RAE LEE

PAGE 18



NONSTOP ACTION FROM THE BEST SUPERHERO SERIES IN COMICS



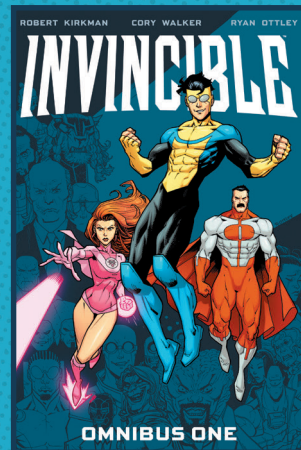
INVINCIBLE

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INVINCIBLE UNIVERSE BATTLE BEAST

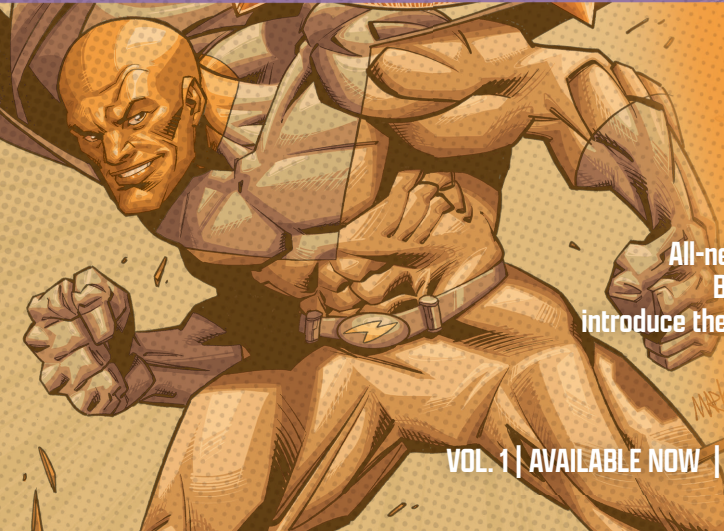
INVINCIBLE UNIVERSE: BATTLE BEAST VOL. 2

Superstars **ROBERT KIRKMAN** and **RYAN OTTLEY** don't hold back as Battle Beast continues his rampage through faces new and old in the **INVINCIBLE UNIVERSE**.

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Cover photograph by
MICHELLE
BRANCA LEE

FIND AMERICA'S FAVORITE TEENS IN NEW DELUXE EDITIONS!

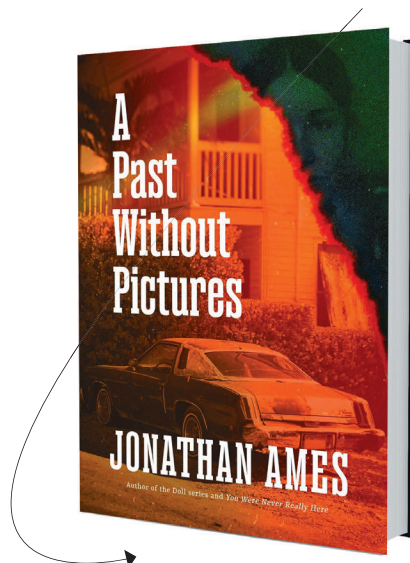


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Review of the Week

A DAUGHTER SEEKS REVENGE FOR HER ESTRANGED FATHER'S MURDER IN THIS BARE-KNUCKLE NOIR FROM THE CREATOR OF 'BORED TO DEATH'



A Past Without Pictures

Jonathan Ames. Mysterious Press, \$23.95 (176p)
ISBN 978-1-61316-805-9

★ AMES FOLLOWS his Doll trilogy with a spare but potent novella. The morning after newly minted LAPD detective Maria Cole kills a burglary suspect, she wakes to a call from an Alabama number informing her that her estranged ex-con father, Billy Cole, has been shot to death. She arrives in the beach town of Fair Port to welcome news from slimy police chief Karl Rawlins: Billy's killer has been captured. The next day, the suspect is found dead in his cell. Maria is unconvinced by Karl's story about Billy's murder, though, and adds a murder investigation to her list of chores in settling her father's meager estate. As she reminisces on the few good moments in a childhood that left her feeling isolated, angry, and alone, Maria notices a strange entry in Billy's calendar that puts her on the trail of someone named "Charb." Eventually, she follows the clues to Fair Port's biggest power brokers, and the bare-bones tale morphs into a hyperviolent revenge thriller. Ames's disaffected style infuses the proceedings with a deep sadness that elevates it from bog-standard crime fiction to something headier and more emotionally wounding. This will enchant both the author's existing fans and thriller readers looking for something off the beaten path. *Agent: Eric Simonoff, WME. (Aug.)*

Featured Titles from Gatekeeper Press



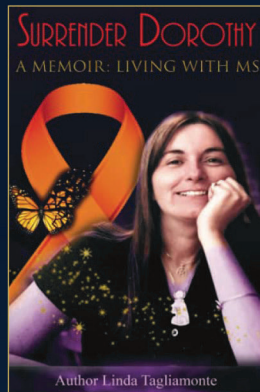
Our Mary The Stage Life of Mary Anderson

Ronald Tracy

A teen actress rises from Kentucky stages to transatlantic fame, defies critics, and retires at her peak—drawn from memoirs and archives.

PB: 9781662914218 \$14.00

THEATER BIOGRAPHY



Surrender Dorothy A Memoir: Living With MS

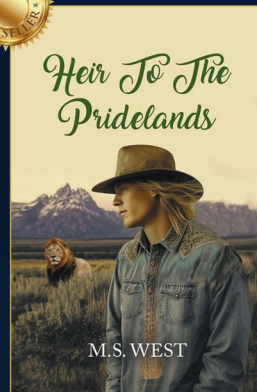
Linda Tagliamonte

A tender memoir of love reshaped by Multiple Sclerosis, tracing the shift from partners to caregiver.

PB: 9781662912191 \$9.98

EB: 9781662912207 \$4.98

BIOGRAPHY



Heir To The Pridelands

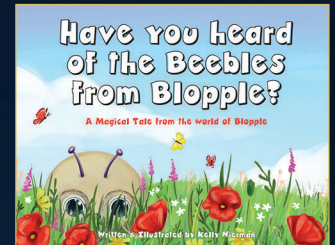
M. S. West

When worlds collide, destiny roars. A fierce shifter romance of passion, humor, and courage as two hearts defy fate for true love.

HC: 9781662970108 \$26.99

EB: 9781662970115 \$3.99

PARANORMAL ROMANCE



Have you heard of the Beebles from Blopple?

A magical tale from
the world of Blopple

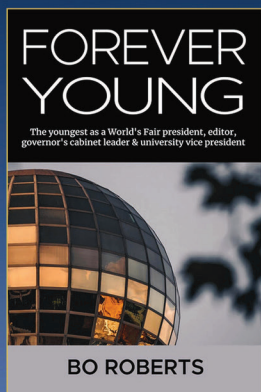
Kelly Niernan

A curious girl discovers a hidden world where kindness, wonder, and friendship turn an ordinary day into an unforgettable adventure.

HC: 9781662973284 \$20.99

PB: 9781662973291 \$11.99

JUVENILE FANTASY



Forever Young

The Youngest as a World's Fair President, Editor, Governor's Cabinet Leader, University Vice President

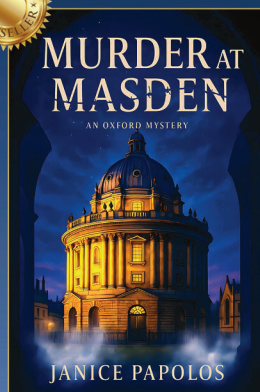
Bo Roberts

From newsroom to world stage, one man's unlikely rise to "youngest ever" honors reveals a bold journey through power, service, and ambition.

HC: 9781662927379 \$29.99

EB: 9781662927386 \$7.99

BIOGRAPHY



Murder at Masden

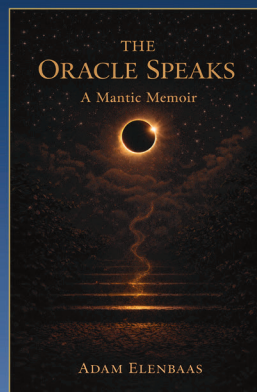
Janice Papolos

A literature professor's new romance turns lethal when murder strikes her circle—now she must outwit a killer who may be closer than she thinks.

HC: 9781662967191 \$26.99

PB: 9781662967207 \$16.99

MYSTERY THRILLER



The Oracle Speaks A Mantic Memoir

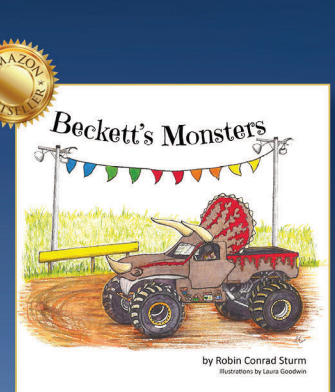
Adam Elenbaas

A spiritual memoir tracing one man's path through doubt, loss, and vision to uncover astrology as a language of fate, meaning, and awakening.

PB: 9781662970610 \$19.99

EB: 9781662970627 \$9.99

SPIRITUAL MEMOIR



Beckett's Monsters

Robin Conrad Sturm

A boy's thrill at monster trucks turns to fear—until his grandparents show him courage bigger than any monster.

PB: 9781935355304 \$9.99

EB: B0GHX46XYD \$1.99

JUVENILE FICTION

THE WEEK IN PUBLISHING

6/13 - 6/18/26

Currents



The United States District Court for the Southern District of New York hears cases in the Thurgood Marshall U.S. Courthouse in Manhattan.

PUBLISHERS CONTINUE PIRACY FIGHT

FRESH OFF OF LAST month's victory against pirate website Anna's Archive, 13 publishers are suing another pirate site, WeLib, for copyright infringement. The plaintiffs include the Big Five, Cengage, Elsevier, McGraw Hill, Pearson, Taylor & Francis, and Wiley.

The suit, filed in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York, charges that the operators of WeLib copied the source code and most of the contents of Anna's Archive. Though the owners of WeLib claim to operate a library, publishers say the site is a mechanism to cash in on pirated content.

According to the complaint, download speeds for free users are typically very slow, but in exchange for a "donation," users receive "fast downloads" and avoid wait lists. The publishers argue that in reality, the "donations" are paid

memberships, and "given the volume of the pirated files WeLib encourages its users to download, buying this extra download speed is a practical necessity."

On its website, WeLib says it hosts more than 43 million books and 98 million papers, and its collection of literary works has purportedly attracted more than 80,000 daily active users. Also per the website, WeLib's users have accessed more than 51 million books in the last month alone.

"WeLib steals, distributes, and profits from millions of literary, educational, and scientific works from its cowardly locations on the internet, in the process injuring authors, publishers, and the public," said Maria Pallante, Association of American Publishers CEO and president, in a statement.

The suit, Pallante added, is "part of our ongoing and vigorous response to the mass theft of literary works, which has no place in the modern world and cannot be tolerated." —JIM MILLIOT

S&S TEAMS UP WITH THE BLACK LIST

In its latest expansion into the book world, the Black List has partnered with Simon & Schuster to add more than 6,000 titles from the publisher's backlist to its database.

Since launching in 2005, the Black List has grown into a prominent discovery platform for screenwriters and film producers, and a marketplace for screenplays, pilots, plays, and unpublished manuscripts—and, now, unadapted books.

Per an announcement, the goal of the partnership is to help film and television professionals find new projects for potential adaptation. The platform currently counts more than 7,000 film industry professionals among its users.

The spate of new titles spans such S&S imprints as Atria, Avid Reader, Gallery, Saga, Scribner, and Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers.

In a statement, Lesley Collins, S&S's domestic rights manager and film and TV liaison, said the collaboration creates "new opportunities for our authors' work to reach the screen" by connecting the publisher's catalog with "top-tier creators and decision-makers."

—ED NAWOTKA

BEN GEORGE JOINS PUSHKIN PRESS

Ben George, previously executive editor at Little, Brown, will join Pushkin Press US as executive editor, effective July 1. At Pushkin, he "will spearhead a new U.S. list of literary fiction and literary nonfiction," per an announcement, and will work with the publisher's U.K. team on joint publications. At Little, Brown, George acquired and edited titles from authors including Adam Haslett, Leslie Jamison, and Luis Alberto Urrea; he was laid off in a restructuring in 2024. Prior to that, he was an editor at Viking Penguin. "I have long admired the independent spirit and savvy of Pushkin's publishing," George said in a statement. "It's an honor to join them in the thrilling endeavor of bringing that spirit across the Atlantic and establishing Pushkin as a fixture of independent publishing in America as well." —SOPHIA STEWART



Edited by SOPHIA STEWART

"PUBLISHERS ARE LOOKING FOR NEW WAYS TO PROTECT AND PROMOTE THEIR IP, WHETHER BY GOING AFTER PIRATE LIBRARIES OR GETTING THEIR BACKLISTS IN FRONT OF THE FILM INDUSTRY."



Weekly Record

WITH PROFITS UP, WILEY AND MCGRAW-HILL DOUBLE DOWN ON AI

WILEY AND MCGRAW-HILL saw strong financial results in the most recent fiscal year, thanks in large part to the publishers' investments in AI. Profits rose at both companies in the year, with Wiley and McGraw-Hill posting net incomes of \$221.6 million and \$85.8 million, respectively.

In a statement, Wiley president and CEO Matthew Kissner noted that the company generated \$49 million in AI licensing deals, which he called "a rapidly expanding recurring stream" of income.

CFO Craig Albright added that AI is not just a profit driver for Wiley, it's also increasing internal efficiency, with AI productivity initiatives in legal, marketing, and content operations now underway "to transform process and workflow."

Meanwhile, McGraw-Hill reported that the majority of its gains were driven by sales of digital products and increased usage of AI tools by students, with CEO and president Philip Moyer noting in a statement that the company "has achieved over 7.5 million users of our new AI personalized learning tools and now has an existing base of more than 100 million active student and educator curriculum licenses in over 100 countries."

He added that McGraw-Hill is ramping up its AI efforts, with Moyer announcing that the company is preparing to pilot "our new agentic AI version of our precision education model, and we intend to be a leader in creating a vibrant 'cloud' knowledge offering in the world of education and learning." —JIM MILLIOT



Matthew Kissner and
Philip Moyer

► AUTHORS AGAINST BOOK BANS APPOINTS NEW PRESIDENT

Advocacy organization Authors Against Book Bans has named Katherine Locke as its next president, effective July 1. Locke succeeds Maggie Tokuda-Hall, who served as the inaugural president of the coalition, which she cofounded in 2024 and which mostly comprises children's authors. Locke, a children's author, also brings to the role more than 14 years of experience in the nonprofit sector. "Building on two years of growth, strong leadership, and clear vision, I look forward to fighting alongside my fellow authors to defend the freedom to read everywhere it is threatened," Locke said in a statement.

—SAM SPRATFORD

► CENTER FOR FICTION HONORS BOUDREAUX

Brooklyn's Center for Fiction awarded Doubleday VP and executive editor Lee Boudreaux its annual Medal for Editorial Excellence, recognizing editors who have "discovered, nurtured, and championed writers of fiction," per an announcement. Boudreaux joined Doubleday in 2018 following stints at Little, Brown; Ecco; and Random House, and over her career has worked with Margaret Atwood, Percival Everett, Bonnie Garmus, Andrew Sean Greer, Madeline Miller, and Curtis Sittenfeld. In a statement, Greer called Boudreaux "a sorceress, a conjurer, and a demon, by which I mean: she is simply the best, and I love her." —SOPHIA STEWART

► GAY, MILLMAN REVAMP THE 'RUMPUS'

Just over a year after acquiring online literary magazine the *Rumpus*, married authors Roxane Gay and Debbie Millman have launched a redesigned website, new logo, and significantly broadened editorial scope. "We'll still be covering with the same rigor and integrity fiction, essays, poetry, book reviews, author interviews, and so forth," said Millman, who serves as culture editor and creative director. "But we're also going to include more design criticism, art criticism, and overall cultural coverage." The relaunched site now also hosts a Spanish-language vertical, "El Alboroto," and a column edited and written by people who are or have been incarcerated.

—CLAIRE KIRCH

Top 10 Overall Bestsellers, June 7–13

RANK	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	UNITS
1	Theo of Golden	Allen Levi	Atria	48,480
2	The Deal	Elle Kennedy	Bloom	38,150
3	Harvest Season	Brynne Weaver	Slowburn	37,078
4	Whistler	Ann Patchett	Harper	34,915
5	Yesteryear	Caro Claire Burke	Knopf	30,846
6	The Divorce	Freida McFadden	Poisoned Pen	28,309
7	Project Hail Mary	Andy Weir	Ballantine	26,796
8	Oh, the Places You'll Go!	Dr Seuss	Random House	26,570
9	The Mistake	Elle Kennedy	Bloom	24,101
10	Sing the 50 United States!	Dr. Seuss	Random House	23,025

Duly Noted

QUEER COMICS' NEW CLASSIC

Just in time for Pride Month, an annotated edition of Maia Kobabe's much-censored graphic memoir finds power in the margins

IN THE YEARS SINCE its original 2019 publication, Maia Kobabe's graphic memoir *Gender Queer* has garnered critical acclaim and a large, devoted readership. It's also become one of the most widely banned books in the country.

This month, Oni Press is celebrating *Gender Queer*'s place in the comics canon, and its resilience amid ongoing attempted censorship, with a new edition that combines Kobabe's coming-of-age story with copious notes from collaborators, friends, academics, and other queer and trans cartoonists.

"Everyone at Oni considers ourselves to be caretakers of *Gender Queer* in a very real sense," says Oni publisher Hunter Gorinson. "Now it seems to exist on a very short shelf of books, alongside things like *Maus*, *Persepolis*, and *Fun Home*, in terms of having transcended what we normally would consider to be 'the world of comics' to now have a much broader cultural impact. "That's something that we're constantly thinking about: not only ways to preserve this book and its legacy but also doing new exciting and innovative things with it. And *Gender Queer: The Annotated Edition* is one of the books I'm most proud to have ever published."

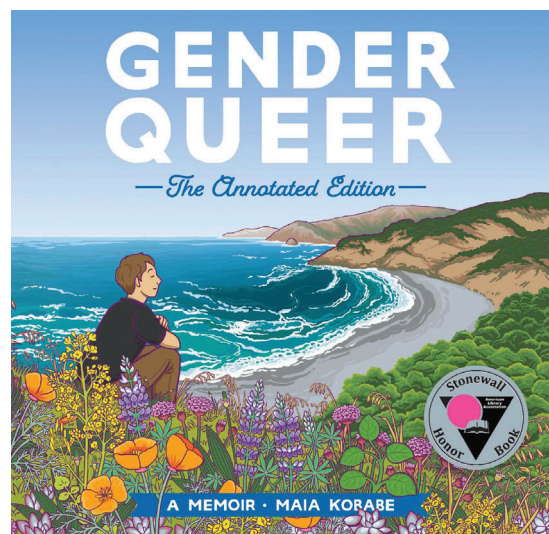
Both Gorinson and Kobabe agree that *Gender Queer*'s honest portrayal of a young person's self-discovery against the backdrop of a homophobic world has struck a chord with many readers, particularly those who are themselves coming of age. "I do think that so many of us are so hungry for vulnerable human stories about the questions that so many of us wrestle with about the intersection of body, identity, and sexuality," Kobabe, who uses the pronouns *e*, *em*, and *eir*, told *PW*.

But not everyone wants to hear that story. According to the American Library Association, *Gender Queer* was the most challenged book in America in 2021, and it retained that status for two more years before falling to the #2 slot in 2024 and then to #3 in 2025. The new annotations discuss those challenges, among other aspects of *Gender Queer*'s storytelling.

"The annotations themselves provide a rare opportunity for Maia and *eir* collaborators to address the hyperbolic and often overstated

"'GENDER QUEER: THE ANNOTATED EDITION' IS ONE OF THE BOOKS I'M MOST PROUD TO HAVE EVER PUBLISHED."

—HUNTER GORINSON,
ONI PRESS



controversy surrounding the book," Gorinson says. "This was a chance to incorporate a lot of the book's legacy into its telling, because it's very much a real part of what *Gender Queer* has become, for better or worse."

The bans aren't the sole focus of the annotations, which also include academic analysis from scholars, personal stories from queer artists, and technical insights from comics creators into the craft of comics. Among the featured annotators are designer and animator Phoebe Kobabe; cartoonist Ashley R. Guillory; Sandra Cox, an English professor at Southwest Missouri State University; and Matthew Noe, lead collection and knowledge management librarian at Harvard Medical School.

Given that much of the conversation around *Gender Queer* "has been hijacked," Gorinson says, he hopes that the annotated edition—which provides ample context about the book's creation, intention, and current controversies—"becomes the primary teachable edition of this book in college curriculums."

Kobabe has seen firsthand how useful the book is as a teaching tool. During the pandemic, the author was frequently invited to speak to college classes over Zoom, including courses in gender studies, English, comics, and graphic medicine. Kobabe says this experience "got to show me how many different venues the book is being taught in and what kind of questions students were asking about it, so when we were thinking about the annotated edition, one of my first thoughts was how useful this might be in the classroom."

As LGBTQ+ works continue to be targeted in public schools and libraries—a recent PEN America report saw the share of queer books among all books challenged jump from 25% in 2024 to 39% in 2025—the new edition of *Gender Queer* affirms the book's enduring impact on readers past, present, and future.

"It's incredible to wonder, Is my book entering an American canon of important works?" Kobabe says. "It's a really good feeling, knowing that I wrote something that speaks to so many people." —CHRISTIAN HOLUB



A world to discover for every reader.



"Zicky deftly employs two different artists to reflect how the narrative slips between fantasy and reality... all while grounding the chaotic story in the growing pains of children and the anxieties of the adults raising them."

--Booklife/ Publishers Weekly



"... sharp and hilarious..."

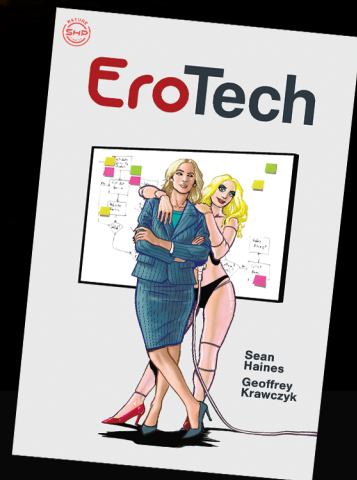
The ending will leave the reader HUNGRY for the next installment!"

--Booklife/ Publishers Weekly
(Editor's Pick!)



"A decade in the making, this is a densely-crafted tale of disparate characters rising to the challenge of a universe full of mysteries."

-- Zak Webber,
Sci-Fi Comic Nexus



"A wonderful opening with sex, humor, great storytelling & unfortunate things getting stuck in places. This futuristic sci-fi is sure to get you excited in bed. If that's where you read, of course"

-- Shattered Glass
Comic Reviews

Graphic Novels available through **iPg**



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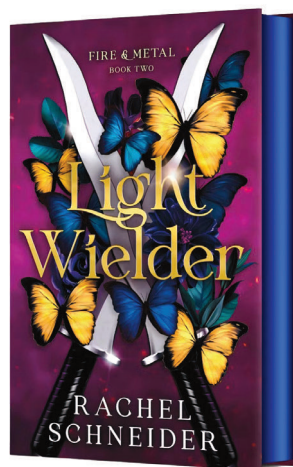
JUNE 7
to
JUNE 13

Bestsellers

Hardcover Frontlist
Fiction

- 1 **Harvest Season**
Brynn Weaver, Slowburn
(37,078 units)
- 2 **Whistler**
Ann Patchett, Harper
(34,915)
- 3 **Yesteryear**
Caro Claire Burke, Knopf
(30,846)
- 4 **Light Wielder**
Rachel Schneider, Saturday
(19,814)
- 5 **The Calamity Club**
Kathryn Stockett, Spiegel & Grau
(16,787)
- 6 **Rocket's Red Glare**
Patterson/Eversmann,
Little, Brown
(13,398)
- 7 **Our Perfect Storm**
Carley Fortune, Berkley
(11,109)
- 8 **Land**
Maggie O'Farrell, Knopf
(10,047)
- 9 **The Midnight Train**
Matt Haig, Viking (8,973)
- 10 **Daughters of the Sun and Moon**
Lisa See, Scribner
(7,726)
- 11 **The Ballad of Falling Dragons**
Sarah A. Parker, Avon
(7,435 units)
- 12 **A Parade of Horribles**
Matt Dinniman, Ace
(7,387)
- 13 **The Final Target**
Nora Roberts, St. Martin's
(7,234)
- 14 **Ironwood**
Michael Connelly, Little, Brown (7,042)
- 15 **Road Trip**
Mary Kay Andrews, St. Martin's (6,814)

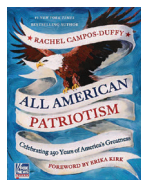
○ New This Week



LIGHTEN UP Rachel Schneider's **Light Wielder**, #4 on our hardcover fiction list, is the second installment of the author's originally self-published romantasy duology *Fire & Metal*. Saturday Books reissued the first installment, *Metal Slinger*, in trade paperback last year and in hardcover this past February. The two editions have sold a combined 80K print copies. The outlook is bright for book two, with first-week hardcover sales nearing 20K—more than double those of book one's hardcover.

POWER COUPLE Olympic gymnast Shawn Johnson and former NFL player Andrew East know a thing or two about commitment, having notched more than a decade of marriage and risen to the tops of their respective sports. The couple—who boast a combined 5.7 million Instagram followers—wring lessons from those achievements in their debut book, **The Courage to Commit**, which lands at #6 on our hardcover nonfiction list and argues that dedicating oneself to a relationship, a job, or a personal goal is less a sacrifice than a way to work toward purpose and mastery. Our review said the “energetic” self-help title makes “a convincing case for staying focused in a culture preoccupied with keeping options open.”

ALL AMERICAN With the nation's semiquincentennial around the corner, one-third of our nonfiction hardcover list comprises books with variations of either “America” or “Patriotism” in their titles. Two books by Fox News pundits extol our country's virtues with gusto: Rachel Campos-Duffy's **All American Patriotism** and Bret Baier's **The Case for America**, which



occupy the #7 and #13 spots, respectively. The subtitle of Barbara McQuade's **The Fix**, at #14, promises a path for “saving America from the corruption of a mob-style government,” while Martha Raddatz's **The Hero Next Door**, one spot below, advertises tales of “patriotism and purpose.” Meanwhile, debuting at the top of our list is Marine veteran Rye Barcott's **Courage Can Save Us**, which profiles 10 political leaders on both sides of the aisle whom Barcott says offer a road map for fortifying democracy in the U.S.

Hardcover Frontlist
Nonfiction

- 1 **Courage Can Save Us**
Rye Barcott, Bloomsbury
(12,972 units)
- 2 **The Land and Its People**
David Sedaris, Little, Brown
(9,359)
- 3 **Strangers**
Belle Burden, Dial (8,327)
- 4 **A Screaming Life**
Kim Thayil, Morrow
(6529)
- 5 **View from the East Wing**
Jill Biden, Gallery
(6,048)
- 6 **The Courage to Commit**
Johnson/East, Portfolio
(5,397)
- 7 **All American Patriotism**
Rachel Campos-Duffy,
Harper Influence (3,744)
- 8 **London Falling**
Patrick Radden Keefe,
Doubleday (3,725)
- 9 **Market Wizards**
Jack D. Schwager, Harriman
House (3701)
- 10 **The King Is Coming**
John Bever, Thomas
Nelson (3,412)
- 11 **Take Me to Your Leader**
Neil deGrasse Tyson, Simon
Six (3,205)
- 12 **The Book of Birds**
Macfarlane/Morris, Norton
(3,147)
- 13 **The Case for America**
Bret Baier, Mariner (2,734)
- 14 **The Fix**
Barbara McQuade, Seven
Stories (2,726)
- 15 **The Hero Next Door**
Martha Raddatz, Avid
Reader (2,683)



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Edited by SOPHIA STEWART

"'90S NOSTALGISTS WILL BE STOKED TO SPOT SOUNDGARDEN GUITARIST KIM THAYIL AT #4 IN HARDCOVER NONFICTION; I KNOW I, ONETIME AIM USER 'GRUNGEGURL98,' SURE WAS."

Trade Paperback Frontlist

- 1 **Theo of Golden**
Allen Levi, Atria (48,480 units)
- 2 **The Divorce**
Freida McFadden, Poisoned Pen (28,309)
- 3 **Dungeon Crawler Carl**
Matt Dinniman, Ace (19,363)
- 4 **Atmosphere**
Taylor Jenkins Reid, Ballantine (11,677)
- 5 **Dolly All the Time**
Annabel Monaghan, Putnam (8,861)
- 6 **Jujutsu Kaisen, Vol. 30**
Gege Akutami, Viz (7,990)
- 7 **Want to Know a Secret?**
Freida McFadden, Poisoned Pen (7,562)
- 8 **Murder Takes a Vacation**
Laura Lippman, William Morrow & Company (7,201)
- 9 **Field Guide for the Formerly Villainous**
Autumn K. England, Poisoned Pen (7,050)
- 10 **Dandadan, Vol. 19**
Yukinobu Tatsu, Viz (6,990)
- 11 **Dear Debbie**
Freida McFadden, Poisoned Pen (6,899)
- 12 **Rules for the Summer**
Meghan Quinn, Bloom (6,804)
- 13 **Game On**
Navessa Allen, Slowburn (6,683)
- 14 **Murdoku**
Manuel Garand, Puzzlewright (6,652)
- 15 **Dungeon Crawler Carl, Vol. 1 (graphic novel)**
Matt Dinniman et al., Vault (6,640)

Debuting at #12 on our hardcover nonfiction list, **The Book of Birds** reunites writer Robert Macfarlane and illustrator Jackie Morris, who first worked together on the 2018 sleeper hit *The Spells Book*. The duo has so far penned three odes to nature, which all received starred reviews in *PW*.

2020

3,953



2026

3,147



First-week print unit sales for Robert Macfarlane and Jackie Morris

2018

236



Children's Frontlist Fiction

- 1 **Skysshade (Lightlark #3)**
Alex Aster, Amulet (11,286 units)
- 2 **Dawn on the Coast (The Baby-Sitters Club Graphic Novel #19)**
Martin/Nopra, Graphix (6,848)
- 3 **Weather or Not (InvestiGators #10)**
John Patrick Green, First Second (6,689)
- 4 **First Crush (The New Girl #2)**
Cassandra Calin, Graphix (5,884)
- 5 **Big Jim Believes (Dog Man #14)**
Dav Pilkey, Graphix (5,151)
- 6 **Partypooer (Diary of a Wimpy Kid #20)**
Jeff Kinney, Amulet (4,980)
- 7 **Every Exquisite Thing**
Laura Steven, Wednesday (4,633)
- 8 **The School for Thieves**
Peter Burns, Aladdin (4,462)
- 9 **The Summer of Second Chances**
K.L. Walther, Sourcebooks Fire (4,024)
- 10 **Captain Underpants: The First Epic Manga**
Dav Pilkey, Graphix (3,750)
- 11 **KPop Demon Hunters: The Movie in Comics**
Random House (3,432)
- 12 **Powerless**
Lauren Roberts, Simon & Schuster (3,398)
- 13 **Nothing Like the Movies**
Lynn Painter, Simon & Schuster (3,202)
- 14 **The Prophecies Begin (Warriors Graphic Novel #3)**
Erin Hunter, HarperAlley (3,075)
- 15 **Talons of Power (Wings of Fire Graphic Novel #9)**
Sutherland/Holmes, Graphix (3,059)

Children's Picture Books

- 1 **Oh, the Places You'll Go!**
Dr. Seuss, Random House (26,570 units)
- 2 **Sing the 50 United States!**
Dr. Seuss, Random House (23,025)
- 3 **Why a Daughter Needs a Dad**
Lang/Hill/Hanson, Sourcebooks Wonderland (19,205)
- 4 **America, I'm So Glad You Were Born**
Earhardt/Barnes, Zonderkidz (17,486)
- 5 **I Love Dad with the Very Hungry Caterpillar**
Eric Carle, World of Eric Carle (13,020)
- 6 **Why a Son Needs a Dad**
Earhardt/Barnes, Sourcebooks Wonderland (12,938)
- 7 **The Very Hungry Caterpillar**
Eric Carle, Philomel (12,203)
- 8 **Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?**
Martin/Carle, Holt (10,165)
- 9 **Goodnight Moon**
Brown/Hurd, HarperCollins (9,853)
- 10 **I Love You Like No Otter**
Rossner/Hanson, Sourcebooks Wonderland (9,527)
- 11 **Gigantic: The Small Whale with a Big Heart**
Rob Biddulph, Doubleday (8,919)
- 12 **The Rainbow Fish**
Marcus Pfister, NorthSouth (8,543)
- 13 **National Geographic Kids Why?: Over 1,111 Answers to Everything**
Crispin Boyer, National Geographic Kids (8,339)
- 14 **I Love You to the Moon and Back**
Hepworth/Warnes, Tiger Tales (8,331)
- 15 **You're My Little Sunshine**
Edwards/Marshall, Silver Dolphin (7,709)

Edited by
SOPHIA STEWART



Deals

"WITH THE TV ADAPTATIONS OF BOTH HEATED RIVALRY AND OFF CAMPUS BECOMING MASSIVE HITS IN THE PAST YEAR, PUBLISHERS ARE GOING ALL IN ON SPORTS ROMANCE."



Ruqayyah Daud at Required acquired world exclusive rights to *Scoring Position* by debut novelist **Ellie May** (pictured l.) from **Jessica Mileo** at InkWell Management. The new adult sports romance, pitched for fans of Elle Kennedy's *Off Campus* series, sees "a socially disastrous college junior and an ambitious but down-on-his-luck

baseball star strike a deal to help each other survive their grueling spring semester—only for their fake relationship to become all too real," per the publisher. Publication is scheduled for winter 2027.

► **Nicole Luongo** at Grand Central bought, at auction, world English-language rights to **Sierra Greer's** *Girl on the Back of a Motorcycle* from **Kirby Kim** at Janklow & Nesbit. The *Annie Bot* author's latest novel follows "a young AI game designer whose hit app becomes the weapon of a predator who stalks her through both the virtual world she built and the coastal Maine town where she's fighting to keep her family safe," per the publisher. A winter 2028 release is planned.

► **Jennifer Enderlin** at St. Martin's acquired North American rights, in a two-book deal, to **Sarah Pekkanen's** *The Night Nanny* from **Margaret Riley King** at WME. The novel is about "a woman who enters a prestigious school for nannies in England, only to land a job as a night nanny to a troubled young boy and a mysterious family," according to the publisher. Publication is scheduled for August 2027.

► **Rebecca Taylor** at Inklore acquired, at auction, in a three-book deal, world English rights to webcomic *Novae*, created by **Jennifer**

Xu and Kate Rhodes, who are known collectively as **Kaiju**, from **Ammi-Joan Paquette** at Aevitas Creative Management. The narrative centers on the romance between a necromancer and an astronomer, who must "defy death itself to keep their love ablaze" when the astronomer "falls victim to a vengeful sorcerer's blood-drenched plot," according to the publisher. A summer 2028 publication is planned for the first book, with **Sara Phoebe Miller** set to edit.

► **Jillian Ramirez** at Bloomsbury picked up world English rights to two books by **Andrea Cáceres** from **Rebecca Sherman** at Writers House. The first, *Cat Affirmations*, is a companion book to the author-illustrator's 2025 *Dog Affirmations: An Illustrated Journey Through Your Dog's Thoughts* that offers "wisdom from the minds of cats," per the publisher, and is slated to publish in fall 2027. The second, *Home Is Where Your Dog Is*, is a gift book about how dogs can help us "feel at home and connect with our community," framed by Cáceres's own story of immigrating to the U.S., and is scheduled for a spring 2028 release.



From top: Sierra Greer, Sarah Pekkanen, Andrea Cáceres, Jennifer Xu and Kate Rhodes, Ken Krimstein, Chrystia Freeland, and Joseph O'Connor

► IN BRIEF

Jonathan Karp at Simon Six took world English rights to *Unreliable Boyfriend: An Insider's View of Dealing with a Chaotic Superpower, Plutocrats, and Other Complicated People* by **Chrystia Freeland**, former deputy prime minister of Canada, from **Andrew Wylie** of the Wylie Agency, for an October publication.

► **Will Balliett** at Thames & Hudson bought world all-language rights to an as-yet-untitled graphic biography of Yoko Ono by *New Yorker* cartoonist and author **Ken Krimstein** from **Jennifer Lyons**, who has an eponymous agency. A fall 2027 release is set.

► **Michael Reynolds** at Europa landed North American rights to **Joseph O'Connor's** *The City of Echoes*, about an American GI and Jewish Londoner in wartime Rome in the days before the Allies' liberation of the city, for a January 2027 release.

Isobel Dixon at Blake Friedman handled the deal. ► **Marnie Cochran** at Rodale bought, at auction, North American rights to *The Generation X Syndrome* by physician **Bojana Jankovic Weatherly** and author **Stephen Perrine**, about the link between Gen Xers' childhoods and their rising rates of heart disease, cancer, and cognitive and menopausal issues, for publication in fall 2027. **Richard Pine** at InkWell Management handled the deal.



People

THIS WEEK • CHANG-RAE LEE TALKS KOREAN SUMMER CAMP • GIL DURÁN WANTS TO FIGHT TECH BRO FASCISM
• ALISA DEAN IS STILL HEALING FROM RELIGIOUS TRAUMA • MICHAEL JACOBS FOUNDED GALPÓN PRESS IN A SHED

“When you start
getting older—
even though I told myself,
I’m not going to be
that writer—
you start thinking about
your past.”



—CHANG-RAE LEE
author of *A Tender Age* (Riverhead, Aug.)

People



Interviews



GIL DURÁN

The journalist's *The Nerd Reich* examines the authoritarian ideologies of Silicon Valley's tech and venture capital billionaires.

What inspired you to begin investigating the ideologies of tech elites? I first took notice when Elon Musk rebelled against the pandemic lockdown rules, and nobody did

anything. Then I moved to San Francisco and saw venture capitalists loudly engaging in politics, resulting in the city's 2022 recall elections. It was clear to me that something was going on. People have been slow to realize how radicalized these guys have become and how much power they're seizing.

You start with Peter Thiel's admiration for the 1997 book *The Sovereign Individual*. It's a doom-tinged book that "prophesied" that in the 21st century, technology—cybercurrency and automation—would spell the end of democracy, and that the people who made the right moves could find themselves in advantageous postapocalyptic positions as "sovereign individuals" above government regulation. The book so inspired Thiel that he has credited it for why he started PayPal.

Tell me about "network states." Network states are "privatized" governments. They are a longtime right-wing fever dream. The most current version is, because AI is going to drive the economy to collapse, the wealthy need to build fortress societies to escape the chaos. Even Sam Altman has been hoarding guns and gas masks in Big Sur. It's very strange that the most successful people in our economy are wholly engrossed in fantasies of doom.

Why do you call these ideologies fascism?

If you look at the different definitions of fascism, they meet them. When recently rereading William Shirer's *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, I was shocked by how much Silicon Valley's ideas align with Nazi ideas. For example, the network state is basically what the Nazis called Lebensraum. And Curtis Yarvin's idea for a CEO dictator is analogous to Führerprinzip, Hitler's idea of a leader with nothing above him, not even the law. There are alarming echoes of history here: all these weirdos and malcontents who write gobbledygook that seems crazy—then 10 years later, it's the regime.

Why did you devote an entire chapter to JD Vance? It's terrifying the degree to which Peter Thiel created JD Vance. I don't think we've ever had a politician reach that level of influence who is so closely connected to one billionaire. Vance is an existential threat to our country.

How can people fight back against tech fascism? The good news is that there are 8.5 billion people in the world and only 3,000 or so billionaires. We have to figure out how to create a world where we don't become servants of their power. We have to make a choice: billionaires or democracy? Because it will not be both. —EMILY COLUCCI



Avid Reader, Aug.;
reviewed on p. 41

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MICHAEL JACOBS GALPÓN PRESS

The former Abrams CEO and his partner Sheridan Hay founded their own imprint last year in a shed behind their home. Their latest title, Italian bookseller Antonio Romani's memoir *The Patient Wait of the Stones*, came out this month.

What drew you to *The Patient Wait of the Stones*? We hung our shingle up here in Washington County, N.Y., with the intention of publishing projects of passion—regional, seasonal, and literary—with detailed attention and national distribution. It's a bookish book. Its narrative is personal, poetic, historical, specific to place—all things my partner, Sheridan Hay, who is the editor of Galpón, both love. It's wonderfully co-translated from the Italian by the author and his wife, novelist and essayist Martha Cooley. They're our friends, which seems to be a prerequisite for being a Galpón author!

What big changes have you seen in publishing since leaving Abrams?

So many, but clearly the overriding issue of AI and its uses and abuses, and the deeply challenging decline of longer-form readership due to attention snatching hits from the social media—sphere.

What other projects do you have lined up? We shall see. Right now, it's just the two of us, and my partner writes and teaches, so I'm at a bit of a crossroads in terms of moving forward. For me, publishing is such a collaborative enterprise that I'm feeling the need to re envision how I want to have Galpón evolve. Meanwhile, as the enterprise was birthed in a shed, I suppose I will continue to "mess around" out here in the shed and see. Bottom line is, we've made two fine books available that deserve to be published. Looping back to the beginning and back to the future, publishing is what I know and love. —JIM MILLIOT

ALISA DEAN

In *The Jezebel List*, the debut author pairs Christina, a woman healing from religious trauma by working through a to-do list of so-called sins, with Danny, the filmmaker documenting the process.

What inspired this book? I'm a pastor's daughter from the evangelical American South. Christina's upbringing and journey is kind of my story as well—though she gets to make this list of things to try and check it off with a hot documentarian, which is not

what happened in my life, unfortunately. But a lot of the family stuff, the Southern culture, that's all drawing from my life and experiences. I didn't find romance as a genre until I was older, like in my 30s, and when it came to drafting my own book, I realized that a lot of why I became so obsessed with romance is because of my journey of healing from religious trauma. Romance novels are about being known for exactly who you are and being appreciated for exactly who you are. That's what it was like for me coming out of a shame-based religious upbringing and learning to appreciate who I am. It sounds so silly to call this book a religious trauma rom-com out loud. Like, how does that even work? But the genre actually makes so much sense as a place to unpack these themes.

How did you decide where in Christina's emotional journey to begin? I definitely didn't want to start with Christina still in the middle of the religious abuse. I wanted a very cozy, sweet story. I also didn't want it to be set in the hard aftermath of therapy, because that's a very vulnerable place with a lot of crying—it's not quite right for meet-cutes

and dating. So it came to me: What if I make this about the joy on the other side? When, after all the heavy lifting of therapy and learning to love yourself, the world opens to you. But there is an underlying grief that comes in that phase, too. That's what we see Christina dealing



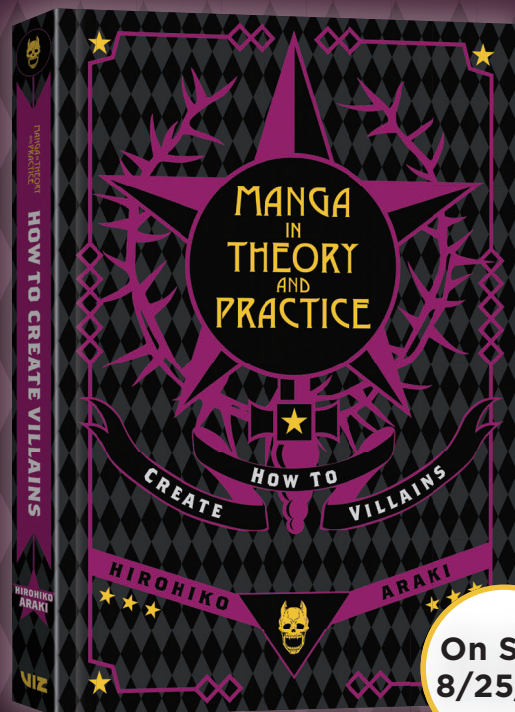
with: when you finally get to enjoy the world for the first time without judgment or shame, you also have to deal with grief over all the years you didn't live that way.

What do you hope readers take away? Well, I'd like them to squeal a lot. I think the best romances have you thinking deeply in one sentence, and then squealing out loud the next. Romances can deal with pretty heavy issues, but there's a guaranteed happily ever after. We can process difficult things when we know it's going to turn out okay. I would hope that readers who identify with Christina's upbringing—for whatever reason, religious or otherwise—feel seen and validated and are able to process a little of that in a hopeful way. And for readers who haven't had that experience, I hope they come away with a little more of Danny's empathy.

—MARY M. JONES



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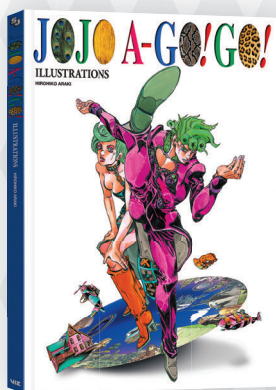


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Author Profile

By SONA CHARAIPOTRA

"LEE TOLD ME HE'S GONE HOLLYWOOD AND IS COLLABORATING WITH ANG LEE ON A SCREENPLAY. 'IT'S SO DIFFERENT THAN WRITING A NOVEL,' HE SAYS. 'ANG IS METICULOUS. I'M LEARNING SO MUCH.'"

Back to the Beginning

For his latest novel, **Chang-Rae Lee** mines childhood and family history—and finally writes about his immigrant experience



ALL HIS LIFE, Chang-Rae Lee, like many writers of color, has felt the weight of representation. And for nearly 30 years, he has chosen to run—and write—the other way.

His 1995 debut, *Native Speaker*, is a literary thriller that follows corporate spy Henry Park as he grapples with the death of his wife and child while working an undercover assignment. It won a PEN/Hemingway Award, but Lee also got pushback for not writing about his immigrant experience.

"A lot of the responses took me by surprise, because they were like, Oh, he really should just write about himself.

Why is he writing about spies and intrigue? Stick to your name," he says via Zoom from his summer home in Umbria, where he's on sabbatical from the English department at Stanford University. "I had put so much work and intention into it. But that was the takeaway."

Lee says he just didn't want to write domestic literature at the time. "I didn't want to write an around-the-house book, because while I've read them and I love them, I wasn't going to be the one who wrote that," he says. "With a first novel, there are always assumptions: Oh, he's Henry Park. He grew up with a greengrocer dad, and he.... But nope. My dad was a mild-mannered psychiatrist. I grew up mostly in Westchester."

Following *Native Speaker*, Lee published six novels that also surprised and defied expectations, including *A Gesture Life* (1999), about the ramifications of World War II, and *On Such a Full Sea* (2014), a postapocalyptic thriller about a global pandemic. "You just have to give yourself the assignment," he says. "And then you kick your own ass every time."

But for his latest novel, *A Tender Age*, out in August from Riverhead, Lee's returning to what he calls "notions about self and identity and migrancy and all those things that I was interested in anyway, but just, you know, in a slightly different way." It follows the triumphs and travails of 12-year-old Jeon-Gi, a Korean American city kid growing up in 1970s New York City, where the heat isn't the only thing that's oppressive. As Jeon-Gi navigates cliques, street fights, and his mother's expectations, he also learns what it means to be both too Korean and too American.

"I'd been thinking about this for a while—about childhood and the particular time of childhood that I experienced," he says. "But the more I started writing, the less I wanted to be restricted by the confines of my life. All of those things were just turning in my head the whole time."

A Tender Age was inspired by Lee's preteen experiences at Korean church camp. "It was two weeks a year, but when you're the only Korean kid in your class, in your school, I

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Author Profile

don't know, the water just felt right," he says. "There's this kinship, but then you realize everyone is so different. You're taken out of your normal society and put into this little microcosm. You learn so much about humanity."

The idea of writing about his camp experiences came to him during the thick of the pandemic, when Lee was feeling particularly reflective. "I'm 60," he says. "And when you start getting older—even though I told myself, I'm not going to be that writer—you start thinking about your past. How did I form these notions about myself, my family, the world? I had no ideas about who I was and who I should be. But back then, I felt everything so viscerally."

That's the energy Lee brings to his troubled protagonist in *A Tender Age*. During a summer full of firsts and lasts, a sudden storm brings things to a head at Jeon-Gi's Korean summer camp, and one rash decision will change his life—and his family's dynamics—forever. "He's a time capsule for me, in a way," Lee says. "This is a book that's closer to the bone—well, my personal set of bones—than any other novel I've written. I've done some shorter autobiographical pieces for the *New Yorker*, personal essay type of stuff."

Lee and his parents moved to the United States from South Korea when he was three, living in New York City for about two years before the family settled in a Westchester suburb. "Before I went to kindergarten, I didn't speak a word of English," Lee recalls. "So, my parents pushed my teachers to push me, and I became a voracious reader. I remember the Reading Is Fundamental bookmobile would come by, and I would wait for it. That and the ice cream truck—those were dispatches from society, from culture for me."

He remembers loving Scott O'Dell's *Island of the Blue Dolphins* and many 1970s books about kids being trapped in the Museum of Natural History. "They were always having to get out of a pickle," he says. "Feral kids, left to their own devices. That really imprinted me with a sense of storytelling, a sense of language."

When Lee was in high school, his family briefly hosted an international student from South Korea who went to an American boarding school. "My parents were like, Wow, all these kids go to Ivy Leagues," he says. "That's like catnip for immigrant parents."

And that was how Lee ended up at Phillips Exeter Academy. "It was there that I started loving literature, poetry, and started writing," he says. "People cared about language, people cared about books, and it was just something I had never experienced before."

One story Lee read while at Exeter that had a profound impact on him was "The Dead" by James Joyce. "Maybe I was still too



Riverhead, Aug.

young, but the way I felt after I read it, I just kept thinking that was an experience I wanted to have again," he says. "And I wanted to be able to create that experience for someone."

Lee graduated from Exeter in 1983 and went to Yale, completing his BA in English in 1987. He then spent a year working on Wall Street. "I had nothing better to do," he explains, "and the magic of Yale..."

But it was a mistake. "I quit that job to start writing a novel," Lee says. The book wasn't published, but it earned him a fellowship to the University of Oregon, where he graduated with an MFA in 1993. He started teaching and got married; his thesis from UO would become *Native Speaker*.

Returning to New York when his mom was diagnosed with cancer in 1998, Lee founded the MFA program at Hunter College. "My parents were thrilled with it all, but in a way, I was being educated away from them," he says. "Beyond anything they could ever conceive of."

That feeling of grasping at the unknowable about close family members is present throughout *A Tender Age*, as Jeon-Gi wallows in the idea of being a disappointment and unfathomable to the mother who loves him. Lee lost his mother when he was 25, and his father died eight years ago. "Going back to the beginning," he says, "just brings me back to the end."

"I wanted to get it all down before I forget it," he adds. "Me missing my parents and thinking about legacy. At 60, there's this urgency, and you really think about what you're leaving behind."

For immigrant families in particular, Lee wanted to articulate that inevitable dynamic. "We're all grappling with different traumas, even in the same house," he says. "The parents couldn't ask for help. And with certain things, they couldn't help. But deep down, kids know everything. It's in the nerves, in the blood. It's not a tragedy. It's just the sadness of a certain type of family, you know?"

Now a father of two daughters, Lee says working with young writers at Stanford is helping him see how the next generation will forge a legacy on its own terms. "They're just so much smarter than we were at their age, or any age," he says. "I'm glad that they're still driven to share stories."

The next assignment, if Lee's willing to accept it? "The Exeter novel, of course," he says. "I've been thinking about it, the bubble of it. There weren't many minority kids at those schools at the time, and it was mind-blowing for sure. I might have to write that now." 🧐

Sona Charaipotra is a journalist, an editor, and the author of six books.

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Art by JIN (REDICE STUDIO), Adapted by Brix (REDICE STUDIO), Original Story by Daul

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Coming Together

DESPITE HIGH COSTS,
PUBLISHERS STILL
SEE SAN DIEGO
COMIC-CON AS
A PRICELESS
OPPORTUNITY TO
CONNECT

By HEIDI MACDONALD

IT HAS BEEN a strong year for comics so far: sales records are being set everywhere, led by DC's smash Absolute line, and comics shops are thriving. Even the Marvel Cinematic Universe is staging a comeback with new Avengers and Spider-Man films in the pipeline.

The good vibes are set to carry over into San Diego Comic-Con, the annual extravaganza of all things pop culture. Now in its 56th year, the show runs Wednesday, July 22, to Sunday, July 26, at the San Diego Convention Center. The biggest news for the 2026 con is Marvel Studios' return to Hall H, after skipping last year's event. But on the show floor and in meeting rooms, the rest of the comics industry will be asking the perennial question: How can comics stand out amid all the media hoopla?

While the con is still a chance to escape from the economic and political uncertainties of the outside world, it arrives as many of the biggest publishers are facing uncertainties of their own: Boom! Studios, Dark Horse, and even Marvel Comics are going through reorganizations and changes in leadership that will have attendees buzzing with speculation.

FACE-TO-FACE

With all this tumult, it's a crucial time for publishers and retailers to meet in person, says Atom Freeman, owner of Prana DMS, a marketing and publishing consultant that represents a variety of small publishers. "This industry is always changing, and we need to come together in the same space to understand how that happens," he says.

One of the key B2B elements will be Friday's Retailer Day, a day of programming organized by retailer group



Marvel Studios will return to Hall H at the San Diego Convention Center this year, after skipping SDCC in 2025.

ComicsPRO. While details haven't been announced as of press time, Freeman says it's a useful event. "Prana tries to present for our clients, but we're also there to listen to retailers and find out what they need," he adds.

Freeman isn't setting up a booth, but he'll have two panels, one on the past and present of distribution and one titled "Inside the Mind of a Hacker," which will spotlight the ongoing cyberpunk series *Rekcah*, which Prana reps.

The ongoing comics sales boom has been fueled by an influx of new, younger readers to comics shops, but SDCC isn't necessarily a destination to reach them, Freeman says. "It's not a place for the casual fan to become a weekly warrior," he says. "It's for the establishment—and the establishment is changing so much this year."

But every publisher has a different SDCC strategy, and Skybound's doesn't involve a booth. Robert Kirkman's imprint at Image Comics has had a bang-up year thanks to *Invincible*, source of one of the hottest streaming shows on Amazon Prime; the continued success of its Hasbro-tie-in *Energion Universe*; and the *Walking Dead*. For 2026, the focus is on *M.A.S.K.*, a new Hasbro tie-in title, and *Terminal*, an ambitious and entirely new series that Kirkman describes as the *X-Men* meets *The Walking Dead*.

According to SVP and publisher Sean Mackiewicz, Skybound is skipping the booth this year due to the time and money required to staff it. But it will have two panels, and creator signings at the Image Booth. SDCC is also a place to network with Skybound's many media partners, including Amazon, Hasbro, Lego, and Netflix, which all attend in various ways.

"We focus on our comics that have media extensions and big promotions," Mackiewicz says. "Our biggest licensing partners are there, so it makes sense for us to send a team, but it's less about retail and more about marketing and publicity." But fans are still in for some freebies, and for Kirkman's always-quotable spotlight panel, he adds. "It is a lot to ask for fans around the world to show up to this event, but it's worth it."

POPPING UP

For other publishers, being at the con is still the best way to make a splash—and sell books. Canadian literary graphic novel publisher Drawn & Quarterly stopped exhibiting for a few years because of the high costs but returned in 2025 to spotlight the 80th anniversary of its *Moomin* franchise, and had its best sales year ever at the show, according to publisher Peggy Burns. For 2026 half of the booth will be dedicated to *Moomin*, and Burns notes



Kelly Thompson

WHILE SHE DOESN'T do conventions, Kelly Thompson remains a perennial nominee at the Eisner Awards that are given out at San Diego Comic-Con every year. She's nominated once again for Best Writer for *Absolute Wonder Woman*, one of the standouts of the megasuccessful *Absolute* line that helped DC dominate this year's nominations. —CHRISTIAN HOLUB

1/ Absolute Wonder Woman won Best New Series at the last Eisners, and is now nominated for Best Continuing Series as the Absolute line continues to do really well. How does that feel?

I've been very lucky to have nominations, but I haven't had the win for a new series and then a nomination for the continuing series. *Absolute Wonder Woman* is the thing I'm proudest of in my career, but the whole team is really strong. I was really excited to see [Absolute Wonder Woman artist] Hayden Sherman getting nominations, but the one that excites me is the book nomination. That feels like a team win.

2/ What is fulfilling about being part of the Eisners even when you can't be there in person?

Whether you're super engaged or

you're more reclusive like I am, you still want to be recognized by your peers and readers. I try not to put too much importance on it, because it's a good consolation when you remember so-and-so is a genius and they've never been nominated. It feels better to know that we're all trying and sometimes it works out and sometimes it doesn't.

3/ It wasn't that long ago that Monstress creator Marjorie Liu became the first woman to win the Best Writer Eisner, so it's awesome seeing more writers like you recognized.

It's been great to see more women being recognized. Will I ever be able to beat Mariko Tamaki now? No. But it's been great to see more diversity in general, in both content and creators. One of the reasons that I like the way the categories of the Eisners are broken up is that there is a lot of opportunity for more indie stuff to get through. It's not just Big Two stuff.

4/ You're about to launch a new Buffy the Vampire Slayer comic. Is there anything you're taking from Absolute Wonder Woman to this other icon?

I'm able to carry a lot of the lessons I've learned on *Absolute Wonder Woman* through to other books I'm doing, but on just a practical level, there's a lot of magic in *Buffy*. Magic in the *Buffy*-verse works differently, but there are still things I can pull and be like, That didn't work over there, so maybe that'll work here, or maybe it also won't work. ☺



PW
BEYOND
the BOOK
Momo

JOHN CUSACK

An epic road trip, two fugitives, and a mission to restore an ancient artifact for Jackie Gleason. This is the backdrop to actor John Cusack's debut graphic novel **Momo** (Mad Cave Studios, Sept. 29; illus. by Ignacio Noé). We spoke to the acclaimed Hollywood icon about his love of graphic novels and why the French playwright and theorist Antonin Artaud makes a cameo in his 1972-set satirical work.

Q

If you had to condense Momo's storyline into a few words, what would you tell prospective readers?

A wild fusion of theological noir, cosmic satire, and darkly comic Americana in a mind-bending odyssey.

After such a storied career in film, what made you decide to create a graphic novel? Have you always loved the form?

Yes, I have always enjoyed them.

Can you name a few sparks of inspiration that led to writing Momo?

Antonin Artaud, of course. I started with a vision of Artaud rising out of the sea like Godzilla—author Mark Leyner and I were contemplating a

film on Artaud, which we saw as a musical called *Full Metal Artaud*—but we soon realized the best version of that film we could make would be a minute long, maybe two maximum. Then I found out about the connections among Jackie Gleason, Richard Nixon, and the Homestead Air Reserve Base and got a hold of sensitive documents and White House flight logs that confirmed that Nixon, Gleason, and someone with a redacted name had flown from Boca Raton, Fla., to Homestead. And it was clear to me the redacted name was Artaud.

[Editor's note: Jackie Gleason's second wife wrote a controversial account that the comedian, who harbored an interest in UFOs, was secretly taken to Homestead Air Reserve Base by Richard Nixon in 1973 and shown alien-like humanoid figures.]

Tell us about your lead characters. How did you develop them?

They are real people, so it was simply reportage. It was a true story mostly—and it was kind of like writing fan fiction for something that existed in a parallel universe or in my head.

Do you feel that there is a certain crossover between film and graphic novels?

Of course—it's the closest you can get to film while still being a book.

What can you share about collaborating with Ignacio Noé?

Complete gratitude and bliss. He is an absolutely brilliant artist and we are currently working on our next collaboration.

Do you have an affinity for Jackie Gleason? What's the story there?

What Jackie did for Momo and more broadly the world is beyond heroic, I think.

You've got appearances coming up, including at San Diego Comic-Con. Are you a fan of the convention and have you been before?

I have never been.

Do you feel it's important for creators to explore new outlets and avenues of expression?

I know telling stories is integral to being human—we need stories and need to tell them. This is another way to tell a story, and I was delighted to enter this world.





they're bringing twice as much Moomin merch. The booth will also showcase cartoonist Lisa Hanawalt and her new humor book *I Can't Stop Thinking About Horses and Sex*.

Despite SDCC's reputation as a place where attendees only care about movies, indie cartoonists and projects can still get attention, Burns says. "SDCC is a chance for the cartoonists to network with each other, be in programming, touch base with Hollywood, and, honestly, just look at original art and long boxes."

Ignition Press began publishing comics last year and had a pop-up space in San Diego's Gaslamp Quarter, as opposed to a booth. This time it'll have both, and the pop-up will be much closer to the con, according to publisher Filip Sablik.

A floor presence is still important for reaching a new audience, Sablik says. "It's a place people pay attention to for new projects and announcements."

The goal of both the booth and the pop-up is to raise awareness for Ignition's lineup of 20 published series with something "for every possible reader," he notes. "Of course, there is a benefit to being on the show floor with the guaranteed traffic, but our off-site will have space for activations and creators to set up and exhibit." Ignition will be debuting two new series: *Sicko* by Tini Howard and Emma Carr, and the *Patron* by Christian Ward and John J. Pearson.

Oni Press is another publisher with a lot to promote, including an updated line of Archie titles, the Flux House line from creator Matt Kindt, and a new series called *Super Mondo Mega Mutts*. Publisher Hunter Gorinson says Oni doesn't necessarily build announcements for SDCC but "it's just become a natural pivot point in the calendar." As the Hollywood takeover of SDCC has receded from its peak, he thinks there is still room to get the word out.

Oni's booth is a relatively modest one, spotlighting creator signings rather than massive displays, but it gets the job done. "Our booth presence is not built to attract movie producers," Gorinson says. "It's built to showcase our creators, get books into people's hands, and have a lot of signings. This is how you do it in 2026."

SITTING IT OUT

But not everyone feels SDCC is a must-do. Fabrice Sapolsky, owner of indie FairSquare Graphics, exhibits at more than 30 North American shows per year, and while SDCC is important to him, "it's not mandatory to be there as in the past," he says. "There are more than 200 conventions in the U.S. every year, and many of them offer just as good business. SDCC can bring visibility, but not going isn't going to play against you. For many, it's a costly option to carefully consider."

Sapolsky is an Eisner nominee this year for the anthology *Noir Is the New Black*. "This year, we have to be there," he notes, but he's still waiting to hear if he'll get a table for creator signings.

The idea that other shows compete with SDCC may come as a surprise, but David Glanzer, the show's chief communications and strategy officer, says he takes it into account, citing the frustration over exorbitant hotel room costs as a particular problem for SDCC. New hotels are being built in downtown San Diego, but none will be available for this year's con. Rooms outside the guaranteed room block are going for as much as \$1,500 per night—a price even studios will balk at in the current cost-conscious Hollywood.

"We want everyone to have an affordable hotel room, but there is just limited lodging, so it is a continuing battle," Glanzer says.

Despite the costs, many industry vets still feel SDCC is the best place to be in late July. "Comic-Con is the one show that has a festival vibe to it," Sablik observes, and pop-ups aren't as effective at New York Comic Con, the other super-show of the year. "Once you get outside of the Javits Center, you're in New York City, and there are five million things competing for your attention. In the Gaslamp Quarter, Comic-Con is all there is."

Freeman agrees that there are other regional options for fans and publishers, but "San Diego is the biggest show on Earth, and it's incredible," he says. "It's going to be exciting!" 🍷



From top: Sean Mackiewicz, Peggy Burns, Hunter Gorinson, and Filip Sablik



Reviews

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Photograph by DANIELLA FISHMAN



A teenage girl tries to figure out her life while navigating the influence of three surrogate mothers in Sarah Blakley-Cartwright's novel *Heavy Cream* (reviewed on this page).



Heavy Cream

Sarah Blakley-Cartwright. Simon & Schuster, \$28 (304p)
ISBN 978-1-6682-1774-0

In this arresting and offbeat coming-of-age novel from Blakley-Cartwright (*Alice Sadie Celine*), a 16-year-old girl leaves her vagabond life in California for the East Coast. Gerry, the narrator, looks back on her youth, describing her early years on the road with her restless mother, racking up truancy notices as the pair stay in a series of motels. Then Gerry's mother buys a one-way ticket to Sydney, having impulsively fallen in love with an Australian man, and she packs Gerry off to spend a week with her hippie college friend Bonnie in Connecticut. After a week turns into three, Gerry calls up her aunt Nell, an artist, and asks to stay with her in New York City. Through Nell, she meets wealthy socialite Finley, who registers Gerry in a prestigious girls' school. Meanwhile, Bonnie connects her with a successful film producer, who she interns for as a script reader, and Nell helps Gerry land an internship at the Guggenheim Museum. Gerry makes for a winning

protagonist as she weighs her fantasies of artistic success and the influence of her three mentors while trying to find her place within their opposing social and economic classes. Culminating with a hard dose of reality, it's a fresh story of female resilience. *Agent: Martha Wydysz & Ellen Levine, Trident Media Group. (Sept.)*

Cloud Six

Amy Fusselman. Catapult, \$27 (224p)
ISBN 978-1-64622-348-0

A middle-aged Arizona couple find themselves in the lowest level of heaven after dying in a plane crash in this laugh-out-loud novel from Fusselman (*Idiophone*). The reader meets Mam and Bunko a day before their fiery demise. At a book club meeting hosted by Mam's colleague and lifelong friend, Brenda, Bunko drinks too much and treats Brenda rudely. Mam is reluctant to apologize because she resents Brenda for earning a higher salary at the Scottsdale Middle School One (Mam is a learning specialist, and Brenda is vice principal). Hoping to improve her miserable life, Mam has

applied to teach at a private school in Connecticut. She and Bunko leave her teen daughter, Penny, in Arizona and fly there for a job interview, but the plane goes down. The couple wind up in Cloud Six, where an entry-level demon disguised as Brenda ("the last person Mam wanted to see") informs them that they're dead. Fusselman adds depth to the zany story as Mam desperately seeks a way to connect with Penny, and there's no shortage of humor, particularly in a subplot devoted to Cloud Six manager Widdershins, who hopes to improve his station by updating the look of Cloud Six with help from his ex, an interior decorator who lives in hell. Readers will delight in every page. *Agent: Monika Woods, Triangle House. (Sept.)*

Children of the Wolf

Abby Geni. Ballantine, \$30 (320p)
ISBN 979-8-217-29953-9

This engrossing novel by Geni (*The Lightkeepers*) sees a pair of siblings attempt to start a new life after surviving childhood with their serial killer father. Ulf Thorvaldsson had a twisted obsession with his Swedish heritage, and raised his daughter, Liv, and her older brother, Finn, to embrace Viking traditions on their closed-off Iowa compound. He would slip away for days before returning and locking himself in the basement. After an FBI raid on the home set in motion by teenage Finn, who knew better than Liv that their father was a killer, the world was captivated by revelations of Ulf's ritualistic human sacrifices. Twenty years later, Liv and Finn live in Haven, Mich., as beekeepers. Finn, whose tongue was cut out by Ulf during their final confrontation, is unable to speak but happy with their quiet lives. Liv, who's recently fallen in love with a client named Penny Westerman, is terrified Ulf will escape and continue his killing spree. When she learns a series of men have gone missing, she worries a new killer is on the loose. She's also desperate to keep her identity hidden from Penny, who turns out to have her own secret links to violence. Geni keeps the reader guessing with a twisty plot

A recent college graduate develops a strange and obsessive relationship with her boyfriend's family cat in *Kitten*, Stacy Yu's debut novel.
— Page 30 —

In Lawrence Osborne's crackling espionage thriller *Children of Wolves*, an American PI gets entangled with the daughter of his client in Istanbul.
— Page 32 —

After successfully faking a relationship, the leads of Amy Buchanan's *The Best I Never Had* must now fake being exes.
— Page 36 —

and complex characters. It's hard to look away from this one. *Agent: Laura Langlie, Laura Langlie Agency. (Sept.)*

Solstice

Carol Gilligan. Random House, \$29 (336p)
ISBN 978-1-4000-6176-1



Gilligan, a psychologist primarily known for her theories on ethics and gender, follows her 2009 novel *Kyra* with a deeply felt narrative of a couple's push-pull dynamic over decades. In 1969 Boston, dancer and choreographer Eve marries Gabe, an intense and brooding journalist haunted by his childhood in Berlin, where his Jewish family was persecuted during the Holocaust. Since escaping from Germany via the Kindertransport, he has been searching for a sense of home. Together, the couple have two sons. As Gabe becomes absorbed in his work and less available emotionally, Eve falls into an affair. Gabe also has a fling, but he and Eve reconnect and have a daughter together. In 1991, however, they go their separate ways, and Eve takes off for a residency in Amsterdam choreographing a modern dance based on the biblical story of Adam and Eve. A rabbi helps her interpret the original text, and she sees the story in a startling new light. Gilligan crafts luminous depictions of bodies in motion together, in harmony and in opposition, and shows how Eve experiences and expresses emotions through physicality and movement. This artful novel is both cosmopolitan and exquisitely intimate. *Agent: Sarah Chalfant, Wylie Agency. (Aug.)*

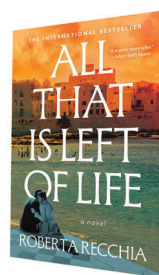
Meet Me in the Garden

Nina LaCour. Flatiron, \$29.99 (400p)
ISBN 978-1-250-81047-2

LaCour (*Yerba Buena*) spins a gorgeous family saga that dares much and delivers on its promise. In 1944 New Orleans, the Honores' light complexion accords them some social privilege, but as Creoles of color they're still subjected to Jim Crow. They're also grieving. The father recently died in an asylum, where he was committed upon his return from fighting in WWII, and the mother

All That Is Left of Life

Roberta Recchia, trans. from the Italian by Antonella Lettieri. Scribner, \$20
trade paper (464p)
ISBN 978-1-6682-2605-6



SET IN 1980s ROME, Recchia's irresistible English-language debut follows a family's struggle to rebuild after a teenage girl's murder. During a family holiday, 16-year-old Betta Ansaldo sneaks out of the house with her cousin Miriam. Betta's brutalized body is discovered on the beach at dawn by a local barkeeper. The inept local cops fail to ask Miriam—who is in her room when the news about Betta's death reaches the household—if she knew her cousin's whereabouts overnight. Eager to keep her name out of the papers, Miriam's parents send her back to boarding school within days of the crime. As the case goes unsolved, Miriam's weight dangerously drops, and her mother sends her to a

psychiatrist. The doctor turns out to be cynical and unscrupulous, known for handing out barbiturates to his patients "with the discretion of a gentleman of a bygone era... like freshly cut flowers," and Miriam develops a danger-

ous addiction to them. She also crosses paths with Leo, a small-time drug dealer who, as he grows closer to Miriam, uses his underworld connections to unravel what happened the night Betta died. Recchia depicts with devastating astuteness how grief hollows out Betta's family and whittles away at Miriam, and her captivating storytelling transcends the plot's well-worn trope of a young man with a checkered past who intuitively knows exactly what a woman needs. Cinematic in pacing and scope, this is nearly impossible to put down. *Agent: Beniamino Ambrosi, Cheney Agency. (Aug.)*

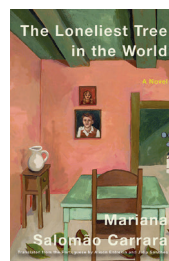
has remarried. It's a double blow to the youngest daughter, 18-year-old Odette, a budding artist. Odette regularly meets with her cousin Delphine in a secluded public garden, where they share such secrets as Odette's affair with the family's talented dressmaker and Delphine's liaisons with a white photographer, who gets her pregnant. Years later, both cousins are living in Los Angeles when Odette spots a barefoot and disheveled Delphine on the street. Delphine blackmails Odette into raising Delphine and the photographer's five-year-old daughter, threatening to out her as a lesbian if she doesn't comply. Far less melodramatic than the plot summary suggests, LaCour's sensuous novel is steeped in rich details of jazz, Creole cooking, and California glamour, and the characters are pitch-perfect. This satisfies. *Agent: Sara Crowe, Sara Crowe Literary. (Aug.)*

The Loneliest Tree in the World

Mariana Salomão Carrara, trans. from the Portuguese by Alison Entrekin and Julia Sanches. Catapult, \$27 (288p)
ISBN 978-164-622-319-0

Brazilian writer Carrara's weighty English-language debut unfolds the

tragic story of a tobacco farming family from the perspective of a tree growing on their property. The father, Carlos, is depressed and possibly poisoned from the insecticides used on the tobacco leaves. His teen daughter, Alice, has stopped going to school and spends her free time preparing for a beauty pageant when she's not working in the field. Maria, 11, gets sick easily from handling the green tobacco but works hard at school to become a junior counselor. Their mother, Guerlinda, has her hands full with taking care of the house and two-year-old Pedro, who refuses to speak. Things have steadily been going downhill for the family, with the bills piling up, Guerlinda attempting to recover from Pedro's traumatic birth, and Carlos's worsening mental health, which is exacerbated by the insecticides. All of their pain is heightened in the novel's final act, when, after months of backbreaking work, Carlos brings Guerlinda's mother to the farm to help them harvest and dry the tobacco, and disaster strikes. Carrara makes clever use of her narrator's birds-eye view on the family, which the tree calls "a bit of



an unsavory angle, because they think the only thing watching them from above is God, if that.” It’s an arresting exercise in naturalism. (*Aug.*)

Kitten

Stacey Yu. Random House, \$29 (304p)
ISBN 979-8-217-15506-4

Yu’s striking debut finds Katie, a young Chinese American woman and recent college grad, adrift in New York City, financially precarious and unable to muster the professional or personal ambitions being so diligently pursued by her peers. The defining relationship of her life has been with her mother, a troubled woman who lives alone in Katie’s hometown of Little Rock, Ark. Enter James, a slightly older copywriter with a family vacation home in the seaside town of Holme who’s taking care of his parents’ cat, Silver. Katie, recently out of a job, travels with James and Silver to Holme. There, she feels out of place among James’s moneyed family friends and develops an unusually strong connection with Silver, even tasting the pet’s food and role-playing as a cat during sex with James. Near the end of the visit, she makes a consequential decision she can’t take back. Some elements feel a bit far-fetched, such as James’s tolerance of Katie’s increasingly strange behavior, but Yu incisively depicts the complexities of Katie and her mother’s relationship (“I took something from my mother by being born, both her youth and her future”). There’s much to admire in this offbeat tale. *Agent: Meredith Kaffel Simonoff, Gernert Co. (Aug.)*

Freyja

Margrét Ann Thors. Spiegel & Grau, \$28 (304p)
ISBN 978-1-966302-23-0

In this eerie and beguiling debut from Icelandic American writer Thors, a single mother’s painful childhood memories resurface with the disappearance of a young girl. Narrator Unnur Nódóttir’s seven-year-old daughter, Lilja, is the center of her life in Reykjavík. Now in her 30s, Unnur has tried to distance herself from a traumatic event that took



place in the summer she was 11. An orphan raised by her aunt, she spent that summer working for a farmer in Iceland’s remote Dark Valley, where she befriended a girl named Freyja. One day, the girls got into a fight and Freyja disappeared. Now, Unnur mysteriously receives photographs of her and Freyja, and Lilja’s father returns to town with his new girlfriend, detective Lóa Bryndísardóttir, and her daughter, Freyja. Soon, the new Freyja disappears, and Lóa launches an investigation that Unnur fears will implicate her in the old Freyja’s presumed death and cause Lilja to be taken from her. Though the plot goes off the rails with a few too many twists, Thors brilliantly rides the line between realism and myth, weaving in such folkloric figures as the huldafólk, believed by Lóa and others to replace well-behaved children with imposters. This will stay with readers. *Agent: Erin Harris, Folio Literary. (Aug.)*

Yñiga

Glenn Diaz. Coffee House, \$18 trade paper (264p)
ISBN 978-1-56689-761-7

The incendiary latest from Diaz (*The Quiet Ones*) chronicles a Manila woman’s displacement and reckoning with her country’s legacy of violence. It opens with the capture of a fugitive general wanted for murder. He’s apprehended in a bakery across the street from Yñiga Calinauan, a 40-year-old academic and sometime writer. Five days later, the neighborhood mysteriously burns down, and Yñiga loses her apartment in the conflagration. Back in her childhood home, where her sister cares for their mother, who’s declining from dementia, Yñiga grapples with her failed career, her erstwhile relationship with a writer, and her poet-revolutionary father Itos’s disappearance into the jungles to join leftist rebels. She teams up with her family’s handyman to organize a protest against a proposed coal-fired power plant, and begins an affair with an unnamed man who claims to be writing a biography of Itos. After a shocking revelation

about the purported biographer, the novel’s body count begins to rise. Through Yñiga’s story, Diaz skillfully explores the history of terror and upheaval in the Philippines after the Cold War. Readers will find much to ponder. *Agent: Jessica Craig, Craig Literary. (Aug.)*

The Depopulation

Marina Closs, trans. from the Spanish by Thomas Bunstead. Bellevue Literary, \$17.99 trade paper (320p)
ISBN 978-1-954276-60-4

Argentinian writer Closs tells the story of a Jesuit mission gone awry in this immersive English-language debut set in 17th-century South America. Deep in the Guayrá region in a Spanish colony straddling the present-day border of Paraguay and Brazil, a group of Indigenous Guaraní are led by Antonio Ruiz, a Jesuit priest whose intense raptures cause him near-constant pain. The Jesuits forbid the Guaraní from worshipping their pagan gods, but the community mostly functions peacefully, with the Guaraní relying on Ruiz and fellow Jesuit Jesús Maceta for advice and to teach them trades. Their routine is upended by the arrival of Overá, 24, a Guaraní who claims he is Jesus’s younger brother. Overá fascinates the locals and infuriates Ruiz by calling himself the “Son of God.” After hearing that Portuguese colonists are plundering nearby settlements, Ruiz and Overá disagree over their course of action, with Ruiz calling on them to stay and fight and Maceta urging them to abandon the mission for safer ground. The novel brims with lush descriptions of Guayrá forests, and Closs, who exhibits deep knowledge of the region’s history, often uses dry humor to highlight the absurdity of the Jesuits’ “civilizing mission,” as when the priests prescribe a hymen-restoring ceremony to Overá’s Indigenous bride. It’s an inspired effort. (*Aug.*)

Ashes and Ruins

K. Lang-Slaterry. Pacific Bookworks, \$18.98 trade paper (400p)
ISBN 979-8-9862013-1-3

Lang-Slaterry (*Immigrant Soldier*) spins an authentic and affecting tale

of a Jewish woman forced to leave her home in Germany during WWII. In the late 1930s, widow Clara Lang lives alone in Meiningen, her three children having immigrated to England and the U.S. She's only recently found happiness after a cold marriage to her now-deceased husband, having fallen in love with a physician. Then a friend warns her the Nazis will soon evict all the Jewish residents of the city. Devastated, Clara leaves for London to stay with her daughter, Edith. She helps care for her granddaughter and witnesses her son-in-law George's erratic behavior, which she chalks up to shell shock resulting from his combat at Dunkirk. As the bombing raids become more frequent and rationing ramps up, Clara and Edith increasingly rely on one another, especially after George returns to active duty. Slattery renders the wrenching effect of antisemitism on her characters as they desperately try to survive. Fans of WWII fiction ought to take a look. (*Self-published*)

POETRY

Behold

Shara McCallum. Alice James, \$21.95 trade paper (100p)
ISBN 978-1-967149-02-5

McCallum (*Madwoman*) delivers a sensitive reflection on visual art—especially by contemporary Caribbean, Black, and women artists—in her beautiful latest. Many poems feature her visits to museums in the U.S. and abroad to see these artworks in person. The prose poem “Snow” recollects her first visit to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, while “Self-Portrait” opens candidly: “At this point, I don’t know what in me is Jamaican/ versus American. Or, reaching further back,/ Trinidadian, Venezuelan, African, Scottish, English.../ you get the drift.” “The Colour of Departure” identifies with the travel theme in Sheida Soleimani’s *Banner Project*: “bright blue/ suitcase with silver/ buckles metal flap... I know intimately/ this luggage/ the very sort that lugged/ my sisters’ and my little clothes/ trinkets and other hastily/ gathered family/ possessions

across borders.” The speaker in “Femicide,” a meditation on Joan Snyder’s *Resurrection*, advises, “you cannot wear a red dress/ when rape and murder have sewn it/ so must document it piece it into/ sequenced panels that recount violence/ disproportionately wrought against/ girls and women with a didactic hand.” This skillful collection uncovers the intersection of art’s public and private dimensions. (*Sept.*)

Abider

Melissa Crowe. Univ. of Pittsburgh, \$20 trade paper (110p)
ISBN 978-0-8229-6837-5



In her valiant third outing, Crowe (*Lo*) chronicles the sunset of a long heterosexual marriage and the dawn of an actualized queer identity. Vivid, image-driven narratives help set the anti-nostalgic tone: “is it any wonder/ I thought I could wring sense from/ language, collapse the distance between/ word and thing, the way a baby says/ milk then tastes it?” Witty elegies (“I’m Tired of Writing About My Childhood”; “This One’s Going to Be About Birds”) satirize metaphor, but the book’s bright side zings with comic colloquialisms (“an embarrassment of dicks”), buoyant allusions (“Whose Woods I Am I Think I Know”), and end rhyme (“How we came away burning./ How we stretched in the sand./ How the beak of the tern/ dipped the sea like a hand”), heralding the speaker’s turn toward sensual delight. “You Ask Me Why I Still Haven’t Ordered a New Vibrator” answers the title question with a question, “What if half of pleasure’s/ the greased elbow of the thing—or love?” Showcasing the poet’s ironic best, it’s a masterly volume about love, not merely abided, but embodied. (*Sept.*)

Safe Rooms

Rae Armantrout. Wesleyan Univ., \$28 (128p)
ISBN 978-0-8195-0172-1

The incisive 19th collection from Armantrout (*Go Figure*) is another sterling example of her humorous

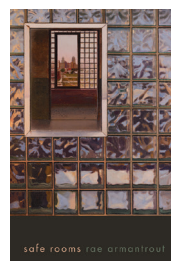
and philosophical perspective on a world of selfies and existential dread. As she writes in “Calendar,” “When you’ve been around/ the calendar this often/ you start to feel bullied,// asked to pay attention now/ to spring’s teed-up flowers/ like they were really new// and not the reenactments/ that you know they are.” Armantrout’s sure voice shines through, even as temperature averages are “playing goose, goose, duck/ in the valley of the shadow.” Her poems are peppered with poignant one-liners: “We claim things happen/ in the past/ to prove we have survived them” (“The Blue Car”); “[T]he god who made you/ cannot know/ anything about you” (“Specimens”); “When the this/ and the that/ don’t match,// something’s about to happen” (“Odd”). While the collection occasionally rambles off course, its pages are rich with cerebral and linguistic playfulness. The result is an insightful contribution from one of the clearest-eyed diagnosticians of the modern age. (*Aug.*)

If You Love That Lady

Maya C. Popa. Norton, \$27.99 (82p)
ISBN 978-1-324-12456-6



In her exquisite third collection, *PW* poetry reviews editor Popa (*Wound Is the Origin of Wonder*) explores the charged and subtle spaces between being “In love” and being left to “the remainder/ of a life that love had made.” With elegance, sly humor, and a difficult-to-pinpoint tone, somewhere between self-mockery and hope, Popa interrogates the terms, both the rules and the words, that bind lovers: “He said the arc of things was always/ toward their ends; all bows bend/ goodbye.” These meditations on love and love poetry reach for a world beyond the self and its feelings, to see, for instance, “a Ferris wheel/ ...just off the New Jersey turnpike.” In love, as in poetry, Popa suggests, everything is a mirror: “I was the beloved.” Trapped and freed by the same longing, these gorgeous lyrics assert that one is “always at the beginning/ without a watch and no place to be.” (*July*)



The Dance

Christian Wiman. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, \$18 trade paper (128p)
ISBN 978-0-374-61740-0



Wiman (*Survival Is a Style*) scrutinizes contemporary life with searching faith and observant solitude in his sweeping sixth collection, bearing much lyrical fruit along its way. With his characteristic acuity and spiritual sensibility, Wiman describes “metastasizing malls/ and chemical rivers, the subdivisions of death.” As a counterweight to this vision of development-as-degradation, many poems focus on individual characters (“Among the monks... one who kept apart... who sensed my faith was mostly faith in art”) and overlooked entities, including animals. In “For the Love of Wolves,” Wiman subverts familiar spiritual metaphors: “he herds his/ absurdities like sheep: Prayer and Peace, Grace and God, even/ Being.” “Bug” carefully describes a bug “touch as if with/ care and keen discernment/ each notch and knot/ in the old wood as it senses/ itself back to grass.” Throughout, Wiman’s excellent ear is attentive to sound; in “The Word,” hard consonants soften into sibilance: “Change, when it came, came so soft it seemed a seem.” This potent volume is a lasting tribute to the transitory world. (*July*)

We Interrupt This Broadcast

Gregory Orr. Norton, \$27 (96p)
ISBN 978-1-324-12423-8

The generous and ruminative latest from Orr (*The Selected Books of the Beloved*) features poems whittled and burnished to a fine point. Rhymes and puns abound in “slender” or “sort-of” sonnets, “exploded” villanelles, and an interlude of “Some Odd Proverbs, Notions, and Small Songs”: “That shameful thing I did/ easier done than said” and “Absence makes/ The heart/ Go ponder.” Reflections on life during the pandemic (“We were all stuck there—/ Where wearing a mask was only doing your share./ It was the strangest of times, and we tried hard to be fair”) join poems that meditate on

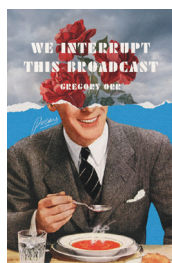
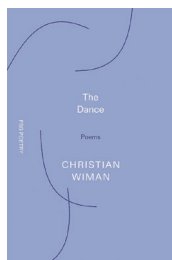
memory, mortality, friendship, marriage, and the value of poetry itself: “Many people think poems/ Are dumb/ Or irrelevant./ You don’t and I/ Like that/ About you.” Early traumas continue to preoccupy but surface now with fresh understanding: “And you, my ancient bruises and wounds,/ Time to admit/ In a sense I’m deeply grateful to you.” Indeed, wry expressions of praise and gratitude lend the book its sheen: “House made of/ Flesh/ And moan// No where I’ll ever/ Go/ Will suit me so.” The abundant pleasures of the writing life provide the through line: “It gives me joy to rhapsodize/ For hours/ About sounds and rhythms.” Readers seeking prosodic invention and poetic wisdom will find satisfaction here. (*June*)

MYSTERIES & THRILLERS

Children of Wolves

Lawrence Osborne. Summit, \$27 (224p)
ISBN 978-1-6682-2643-8

Exotic locales and expatriate travelers populate this elegant spy thriller from Osborne (*On Java Road*). American PI Tyler Sedgwick has spent six fruitless months in Istanbul trying to locate Chana Simavi Knight, the wayward daughter of wealthy California businessman James Arthur Knight. Just as Tyler is about to give up, he learns that Chana is living under the assumed name Aylin and stumbles across her and her three glamorous friends at a hotel. The crew met at a reform school for monied troublemakers, and now enjoy a hedonistic, leisure-heavy lifestyle that belies the communist beliefs they espouse. Tyler worms his way into their circle, keeping his discovery a secret from James as he grows increasingly attracted to Aylin. When Tyler reveals he went to college with David Meltzer, the U.S. diplomatic consul in Turkey, Aylin is intrigued and wants an introduction, setting in motion an assassination plot that falsely implicates Tyler as its mastermind. An ambiguous ending might frustrate some readers, but Osborne impresses with his poetic prose and vivid sense of place worthy of John Fowles or Paul Bowles. It’s a scintillating treat. (*Aug.*)



The Butcher Legacy: A Dr. Wren Muller Novel

Alaina Urquart. Zando, \$29 (354p)
ISBN 978-1-63893-340-3

Former mortuary technician Urquart (*The Butcher Game*) continues her grisly series centered on New Orleans forensic pathologist Wren Muller with this underwhelming thriller. Nearly two months after her husband was killed in the previous book, Wren is leaning on her morgue work for the New Orleans police department for stability. Her friend, homicide detective John Leroux, heads to Massachusetts to track sinister pastor Philip Trudeau, a suspect in the murder of Wren’s husband. Then young girls start to go missing in the areas once prowled by now-imprisoned serial killer Jeremy Rose, who targeted Wren once upon a time, and Wren must help interrogate Rose about the disappearances. As the prisoner plays sadistic mind games with Wren and the investigators, Urquart swings for the fences, incorporating into the plot a north woods torture cabin, a masked orgy, and lurid pop-psychology motivations for her villains. All the operatic misery fails to connect, however, thanks to shallow characterizations, cluttered plotting, and too many infelicities of language (as when Wren steadies herself on “grooves of the smooth concrete”). Kay Scarpetta this is not. *Agent: Sabrina Taitz, WME.* (*Aug.*)

A Numbers Game

R.J. Dark. Datura, \$19.99 trade paper (400p)
ISBN 978-1-917415-32-3

Dark (a pseudonym for *Gods of the Wyrdwood* author R.J. Barker) delivers a winning comedic noir centered on Mal Jones, a bogus psychic medium whose “chats” with the dearly departed are facilitated by the computer skills of his cranky office assistant, and Jackie Singh Khattar, who runs the local protection racket. Mal and Jackie’s friendship stems from having grown up together in Yorkshire’s Blades Edge, one of the roughest council housing estates in Northern England, where they both still live. When Mal is unable to make his latest payment to Jackie,

Jackie offers him a way to earn what he owes by taking on a new client: the lovely young widow Janine Stanbeck, whose husband, Larry, recently died in a traffic accident before he could cash his lottery ticket for £8 million. Jackie tells Mal that, if he finds the ticket, he'll receive a big payout. Complicating Mal's search is the escalating gang war between Larry's father, who runs all the crime in Blades Edge ("and a lot of the surrounding areas"), and an encroaching band of Russian mobsters. As the violence increases, Dark ably walks a tightrope between humor and menace, crafting a Coen Brothers-esque thriller populated by a cast of colorful tough guys. A sequel would be welcome. (Aug.)

The Woman Who Wouldn't Die Quietly
Katarina Bivald. Poisoned Pen, \$17.99
trade paper (368p)
ISBN 978-1-7282-9582-4



Swedish crime writer Berit Gardner investigates the death of an influential gallery owner in Edgar winner Bivald's excellent third outing for the character (following *Just Another Dead Author*). After her grandmother dies, Berit heads from England to the tiny Swedish island of Ångsö to sort through the dead woman's belongings. She's joined by her friend, DCI Ian Ahmed of the Devon and Cornwall police, who needs a quiet place to recuperate from a broken leg. Ian is surprised when world-famous gallery owner Margrethe Cullenberg-Franzén invites him and Berit to her intimate 80th birthday dinner on a nearby island in the Stockholm archipelago. When the pair arrives, the atmosphere is tense, with barbs flying back and forth across the dinner table. Eventually, the imperious Margrethe storms out of the house, and is later found at the bottom of a nearby cliff. Swedish police believe her fall was an accident, but based on the mood at dinner, Berit and Ian suspect foul play. Bivald excels at surprise and misdirection, and she buttresses those mystery fundamentals with a psychologically complex lead and intoxicating Scandinavian atmosphere.

This sophisticated cozy plays all the right notes. *Agent: Anna Frankl, Nordin Agency.* (Aug.)

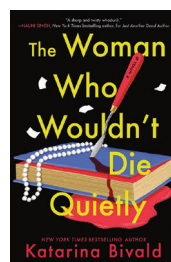
The Line Between Us
Syreeta Harvey-Pasley. Sienna-Rose Press, \$29.99 (312p)
ISBN 979-8-2186-4517-5

In her assured debut, Harvey-Pasley explores the tensions of being a Black employee of a racist police department. Camden, N.J., has become the latest epicenter of anti-police protests after two white cops fatally shot Black college student Darius Porter when a neighbor mistook him for a burglar. With Camden's Black community up in arms and its police force on the defensive, Black police detective Jada Edgars is caught in the middle. Adding to Edgars's stress is a baffling missing persons case she's just been assigned, in which two Black women seem to have vanished into thin air. Her initial investigation leads her to fear the disappearances might mark the return of the Yellow Rose killer, an unidentified assailant who murdered several Black women in Camden years earlier and left a single yellow rose by each of their bodies. Harvey-Pasley conveys the pressures bearing down on her protagonist with empathy and skill, keeping the emotional stakes high as she brings the core mystery to a satisfying end. This bodes well for the author's future efforts. (Self-published)

SF, FANTASY & HORROR

Back for Blood: Never Whistle at Night Part II
Edited by Shane Hawk and Theodore C. Van Alst Jr. Vintage, \$20 trade paper (416p)
ISBN 979-8-217-00762-2

Though editors Hawk and Van Alst (*Never Whistle at Night*) tout this excellent anthology of 21 stories from Native American fantasists as "horror fiction through and through," their selections show a range in theme and approach that resists such simple classification. Several entries explore Indigenous identity, among them Jessica Doe's gruesomely amusing "Miss Cherokee Princess 1996," whose narrator uses herbal magic to



transform her body to fit media representations of Native American beauty, and A.J. Eversole's "Civilized," whose white-passing narrator is able to evade consequences for his crimes. There are also stories featuring monsters drawn from folklore, including "a malevolent spirit, half-goat and half-man," who rampages through Jake Arrowtop's "Goat Eyes" and also gets a mention in Debra Magpie Earling's "The Corpse Room." The most intriguing tales are those whose characters inhabit worlds where the mundane and the magical coexist, among them Stephen Graham Jones's "Rez Dogs," which probes similarities between its feral dog and feral child characters, and Ramona Emerson's "Toothjar," in which a Navajo family accepts a ravenous monster as its protector during a pandemic. Taken as a whole, this collection packs an impressive punch. (Aug.)

An Edge Sharp Enough
Jesse Q. Sutanto. Harper Voyager, \$30
(368p)
ISBN 978-0-06-345536-8

Pivoting from mystery to dark fantasy, Sutanto (*Dial A for Aunties*) ensnares readers in a complex web of political intrigue and forbidden magic in this serpentine duology launch. The Divine Empress wages war with machines made from the powerful metal dacerium, forcing conquered nations to worship false god Ezeri and reject the magical power of Art. The nation of Tchu-Morrokhai fights back by training assassins at the Institute, among them Mara, who is adept at Art and creates devices to trap this mystical force. Meanwhile, in Velingard, wealthy scholar Livya Bellevue and her servant Cerra survive a kidnapping attempt, rescued by commoner Kaian, who loves Livya from afar. Livya was likely a target because her mother, Yohana, created the indestructible metal adther, the only material stronger than dracerium and a crucial component of the revolution that rid Velingard of its ruling family. Commander Fonde's investigation into the attempted kidnapping is diverted by the mysterious killing of President Garian, who was half-eaten

by a demonic force. Sutanto toggles between this vast cast of characters who are not necessarily what they seem, and she doesn't always play fair with the twists—while shocking, they can feel a bit manipulative. Still, this fast-paced, suspenseful tale of finding courage and strength in the face of adversity is an exciting start. (Aug.)

The Tongue I Dream In

Sheree Renée Thomas. PM, \$16 trade paper (160p)
ISBN 979-8-88744-195-5

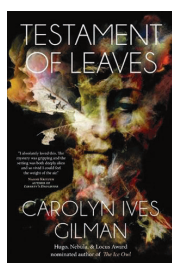
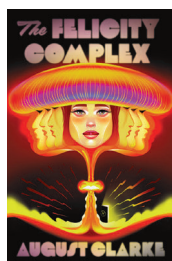


The 36th installment of the publisher's Outspoken Authors series (after Ian Shoales's *Veni Vidi Venti*) showcases the many extraordinary talents of World Fantasy Award winner Thomas (editor of *Africa Risen*) across nine poems, seven stories, a critical essay, and the keynote speech she delivered at 2022's Afrofuturism Gala. Exploring the relevance of Afrofuturism to the current experience of African-Americans, her works veer from the bleak—"Jugganaut" imagines far-future minstrel shows in space—to the hopeful, in "Sweet Chariots in Dixieland," which explores the possibility of reclaiming and reframing the past. In between, there's "The Dragon Can't Dance," about how society praises the achievements of the marginalized while still devaluing the achiever, and "Child's Play," in which a meddling god looks out for an abused child. Thomas's characters draw strength from their heritage, be they mythological (the mermaids of "River, Clap Your Hands") or mortal (the young folks of "Generations in the Stream"). As in previous series entries, a centerpiece interview, here conducted by fellow Afrofuturist Nisi Shawl, gives readers insights into the hidden connections of the "Sheree Reneeiverse." The result is a gift for longtime Thomas fans and an ideal introduction for newcomers. (Aug.)

The Felicity Complex

August Clarke. Erewhon, \$28 (320p)
ISBN 978-1-64566-117-7

Clarke (*Metal from Heaven*) delivers a biting dystopian satire that blends queer speculative fiction, body horror,



and Cold War paranoia. Deep beneath the earth, the Felicity Complex, a luxury bunker designed for the wealthy, prepares for the apocalypse, staffed by six lab-grown women (called "specimens") engineered to embody idealized femininity and service. Among them is Hallelujah, an earnest concierge specimen whose unwavering belief in her purpose begins to fracture when the bunker's first guests arrive and long-buried secrets surface. Hallelujah's innocent perspective provides both humor and a sense of unease, and the other specimens, all with their own distinct roles to play, are just as well drawn. Together, they carry the novel's sharp-toothed commentary about autonomy, gender, power, and ownership. Some revelations feel telegraphed too early, and the relationships among the specimens could use more room to breathe, but the fast pace keeps the tension high, while Clarke's prose cultivates dread with architectural precision. Fans of *Fallout*-esque retro-futurism, sapphic speculative fiction, and satirical examinations of privilege and gender will find this both deeply unsettling and darkly entertaining. *Agent: Kiana Nguyen, Donald Maass Literary.* (Aug.)

Tapeworm: A Vampire Novel

A.P. Thayer. Evil Twin, \$28 (304p)
ISBN 978-1-63893-345-8

Desire meets with grotesquerie in Thayer's spooky debut, which, à la the television show *The Strain*, reimagines vampirism as the result of parasitic worms. Approaching middle age, Victor somewhat grudgingly joins his friends' annual retreat from Los Angeles to the small town of Superstition, Calif., where he hopes to drink away the sorrows of his recent split from his wife, Trish. Thayer drops hints from the start, however, that a malignant force lurks in Superstition. Recently freed, it needs to feed on the human inhabitants to survive and spread. This horror element contrasts and combines well with the dynamics of the friend group, which, comprising four couples including Vic and

Trish, who has opted out of the trip, has a complex web of interpersonal dynamics fraught with history, tension, and longing. The influence of the parasitic creature(s) augments this already-brewing tension and makes Vic question both himself and his relationships. The only letdown here is the pacing, as the tension builds enjoyably for quite some time, only for the reveal of the creature to feel too abrupt. Still, Thayer is a promising new voice in horror. *Agent: Helen Lane, Ki Agency.* (Aug.)

Testament of Leaves

Carolyn Ives Gilman. Fairwood, \$16.99 trade paper (120p)
ISBN 978-1-958880-30-2

This sure-footed sci-fi mystery from Gilman (*Dark Orbit*) sends a detective to a surreal jungle planet to investigate the murder of a controversial linguist. Soft-spoken and rule-abiding inspector Shameesh is unprepared to face the unruly hinterlands of the planet Hant where the body of a scholar, Bonino Algai, lies in a thicket outside a village, at the crossroads of a deep-rooted cultural divide. There are several suspects, including many of the natives whose dying language Bonino was studying, and whose chilly reception of Shameesh makes clear what they think of outsiders. Also under suspicion are several prospectors, who came to the village with claims to the ancestral lands and with whom Bonino was overheard arguing. Helping with the case are Bonino's pet octopod, a havoc-prone creature named Baxter, and the digitally uploaded consciousness of the dead woman herself. The investigation leads from the mines to a sacred grove where Shameesh observes an ancient ritual: the gathering of tree leaves that bear markings believed to be the native language. (After colonization, there's no one left who can read it.) This linguistic plot is the most fascinating of the many threads Gilman tugs on; others come up a bit short. Nevertheless, with an earnest sleuth and a darling tentacled sidekick leading the way, there's much to enjoy here. (Aug.)

Dreamland

Olivia Blake. Tor, \$29.99 (368p)
ISBN 978-1-250-36893-5

A serial killer stalks Los Angeles as a young aspiring actor becomes entangled in a Hollywood family's dark secrets in this inventive but disorienting gothic genre-bender from bestseller Blake (the Atlas series). Anya Morris, the 22-year-old mixed-race daughter of a hard-working Filipino mother, wants nothing more than to be a successful actor. She scores a job in the home of movie star William de Witt looking after the family's mysterious secret scion, Julian, who is a couple of years older than Anya, hidden away from the world, and supposedly epileptic. As Anya is drawn into the de Witt family's surreal world, she soon learns how far she's willing to go to achieve her goals. Meanwhile, women's dismembered bodies keep turning up around the city, all while the sweltering Santa Ana winds put everyone on edge. Anya is often detached from the bizarre events going on around her, keeping readers, too, at arm's length, and Blake's characteristically lush prose sometimes conceals more than it illuminates. Despite some hiccups, readers looking for a cerebral mystery with no easy answers will appreciate this. *Agent: Amelia Appel, Triada US Literary.* (Aug.)

Sinister

Veronica Lancet. Atria, \$23 trade paper (736p)
ISBN 978-1-6682-4250-6

Lancet (*Fairydale*) explores the fine line between love and obsession in this atmospheric if overlong new adult romantasy. Petra Valentine, 18, has always felt like an outsider at the elite St. Anselm Hall in Radcliffe, New England. When she crosses paths with the school's golden boy, Sinclair "Sin" Arnoult, at a party, a drunken hookup leads to an unplanned pregnancy. Petra is subsequently haunted by strange dreams about Gilded Age versions of herself and Sin, where she is a member of an oppressive religious cult and Sin is an occult professor. Meanwhile, their classmates are being murdered and when Petra and Sin

team up to investigate, they uncover Radcliffe's morbid past. Along the way, Petra comes to suspect that Sin may be connected to the murders. Indeed, there's more to him than his charm and good looks: something older and darker, that, despite the danger, Petra can't help but be attracted to. The story's mature themes sometimes feel at odds with the simplistic dialogue and prose, and the plot is overloaded with twists on the way to a somewhat anticlimactic final reveal that takes the form of an information dump. Still, Lancet is good at conjuring chemistry, and her leads' intense devotion and pining leaps off the page. Readers who loved *Fairydale* will devour this. (Aug.)

ROMANCE & EROTICA

The Jezebel List

Alisa Dean. Alcove, \$19.99 trade paper (336p)
ISBN 979-8-89242-651-0



Probing religious trauma and personal growth, Dean's debut is an equal parts sensual and affecting exploration of love and identity. As a senior at a strict Evangelical college in Tennessee, Christina has only just begun to reckon with her restrictive religious upbringing as a fundamentalist pastor's kid. After a life spent praying, acting in line with the church's teachings, and absorbing the limiting lessons she was fed, her faith was shaken by a major church scandal. Intensive therapy has led her to conclude that she wants to know who she is outside of her religion. To do so, she makes a checklist of sinful and blasphemous acts to unleash her inner Jezebel, starting with attending a pagan festival. There, she meets documentarian Danny, whose videos critiquing Southern religious culture were inspirational to Christina. He pitches a documentary about her journey and the pair grow close as he chronicles her checking items off her list (other items include watching porn and going to a science museum). A spicy, liberatory love story ensues, told from both Christina's and Danny's perspectives. Their nuanced

romance balances nicely with an unvarnished look at the effects of generational trauma and the weight of expectations. With as many laugh-out-loud moments as tear-jerking ones, this powerful and immersive new adult romance stuns. (Aug.)

In What World

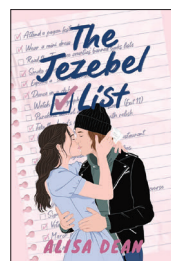
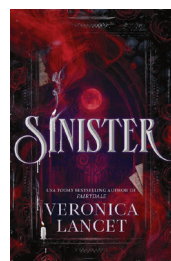
Bridget Morrissey. Berkley, \$19 trade paper (352p)
ISBN 979-8-217-18801-7

This cute sapphic rivals-to-lovers romance from Morrissey (*Anywhere You Go*) explores a multiverse of what-ifs to bring its protagonists back to one another. Life has gone in different directions for Marlowe Jenkins and Priscilla Covington-French in the 16 years since the drama class competition and occasional hate-filled kisses of their teen days: Priscilla has become the award-nominated star of a popular TV medical drama, while Marlowe assistant directs high school musicals. Then their shared theater mentor, Dallas Winthrop, disappears. His last act was to call Priscilla and tell her that he'd figured out "how to walk through universes." Both women are pulled into the mystery and together discover that the wooden "Memory Machine" Dallas has kept at the school theater all these years can actually take them to alternate timelines. As they search for Dallas across worlds, they encounter versions of themselves who have made different life choices, and begin to realize they can make a new choice about their own connection. The vagueness and haphazard execution of this conceit may grate on true sci-fi fans, but it succeeds in its role as the underpinning for a sweet, feel-good story of allowing oneself to get unstuck from old patterns. Morrissey does a nice job capturing the messy drama of queer theater kids, delivering a playful love letter to second chances. It's a charmer. (Aug.)

Some Kind of Haunted

Hazel Beck. Mira, \$18.99 trade paper (368p)
ISBN 978-0-7783-0625-2

Pseudonymous writing duo Beck (*Dragon Fires Everywhere*) launches



a horror romance duology with a lukewarm tale that delivers neither big feelings nor big scares. Twins Lexi and Logan Darling travel to small town Midas, Iowa, after their estranged grandmother's death to sort out an unexpected inheritance, including her house and knitting store. Upon entering the town, Lexi immediately feels a creeping dread familiar to her from a lifetime of nightmares and mental health struggles, which she has worked hard to keep under control but which Midas exacerbates. After an especially realistic nightmare, Lexi and Logan learn from the locals that Lexi's arrival is a harbinger of the town's next Feed—a night when demons invade to feast on the humans as part of a generations-old deal. As the danger draws closer, a love interest for Lexi emerges in “surly” diner owner Jack, but the characters aren't fleshed out enough for readers to truly get invested. More interesting is this question of delusion versus reality as Lexi struggles to trust herself in the face of unbelievable happenings. Still, the narrative, while certainly dramatic, feels familiar and even a bit slow. Only die-hard Beck fans need apply. (Aug.)

The Best I Never Had

Amy Buchanan. Griffin, \$19 trade paper (320p)
ISBN 978-1-250-34158-7



Buchanan (*Let's Call a Truce*) playfully deploys romance tropes in this thoroughly entertaining contemporary. Fake dating did not lead to a real relationship for Thea Pappas and Owen Hayes. Despite intense mutual attraction, after spending a weekend getting Owen's matchmaking family off his back, Thea took the money he owed her and the pair went their separate ways. Owen let his family think her disappearance was due to a bad breakup—a lie that comes back to bite him when, three years later, the pair are unexpectedly thrown back together by the engagement of Thea's sister, Addy, to Owen's brother, Harrison. After a painful childhood

in the foster system, Addy is desperate to cement her place in the picture-perfect Hayes family—and Thea is determined not to let her lingering attraction to Owen ruin things. She and Owen must pretend to be bitter exes while secretly yearning for a love they never had in the first place. It's a fun take on fake relationships, second chances, and forced proximity, helmed by characters who prove easy to root for. The supporting cast is equally charming, especially Owen's grandmother Cece. Buchanan handles Thea and Addy's difficult childhood with grace, adding emotional heft on the way to a well-earned happily ever after. This sparkles. (Aug.)

First to Finish

Rebecca J. Caffery. One More Chapter, \$18.99 trade paper (384p)
ISBN 978-0-00-868488-4

Toward the start of Caffery's underwhelming return to the world of Formula 1 racing (after *Pole Position*), driver Johannes “Jo” Muller gets dumped by his secret boyfriend, Jackson Carter, son of the team principal of his biggest competitor. The breakup affects his performance on the racetrack—until he gets some comfort and motivation from his race engineer, Caleb Hughes. Caleb, a PhD student, has sworn off relationships and knows getting involved with the driver is a mistake, but there's no denying their chemistry. When Jo invites Caleb to stay at his penthouse, both face temptation leading to an aborted hookup. After the “horny haze” clears, the men reluctantly agree to keep things professional. Jo sees Caleb as “everything I want but can't have,” and Caleb is afraid to put his career at risk despite intense feelings. They grow closer once again as Caleb cares for Jo's injuries after a crash, but a third-act fight about Jackson leaves their relationship in jeopardy both personally and professionally. The racing scenes are exciting, but the bland central romance needs more fuel. Cameos from the heroes of the far zippier *Pole*

Position are some of the highlights. This feels stuck in second gear. (Aug.)

A Summer of Stars

Liana Cincotti. Forever, \$18.99 trade paper (368p)
ISBN 978-1-5387-7927-9

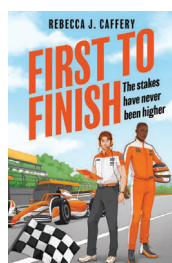


Centered on a PR relationship between an actor and an athlete, this dreamy romance from Cincotti (*Picking Daisies on Sundays*) blurs the line between real and pretend. Tennis superstar Luna Aldridge is painted as the bad guy by the public and the media after her horrible ex-husband leaks audio of one of their fights taken out of context. To rehabilitate her image, she reluctantly agrees to her publicity team's scheme to pair her with up-and-coming Hollywood golden boy Kieran Alexander. Luna's far from thrilled: three years ago, she overheard Kieran call her an “uptight princess” and she's never forgiven him. Still, he dutifully shows up at her matches and she dangles off his arm on the red carpet. Both are surprised to discover the other's hidden depths, as Kieran defends Luna from her ex's negative attention and she, in turn, intervenes with his hypercritical father. Real feelings spark, and when they're caught kissing by the tabloids, Luna questions whether it's all for the cameras or if she and Owen could have a future together. In swoony prose, Cincotti expertly captures quietly romantic moments between the mutually pining Luna and Kieran, adding authenticity and allure to their PG romance. Readers will be hooked. (Aug.)

Something Like Desire

Marie Hoy-Kenny. Blackstone, \$29.99 (224p)
ISBN 979-8-228-49712-2

There's a reverse *Parent Trap* scheme at the heart of the enjoyable adult debut from YA author Hoy-Kenny (*Shadow Lab*). When Lexi Callen's mother announces she's leaving Lexi's father for her affair partner, Nicholas Wrenford, Lexi and her soon-to-wed sister, Gia, are



devastated. Lexi decides to break her mother and Nicholas up and finds an eager accomplice in Nicholas's hot son, Zach, who's determined to avenge his equally heartbroken mother. As they work together to separate their respective parents, feelings blossom, leading Lexi to break up with her long-term boyfriend Jayden and causing Jayden to spiral. Things only get messier when Gia gets drunk at her wedding and calls out all of the family shenanigans in a profanity-laced diatribe. Now Lexi and Zach must weigh their relationship against their familial loyalties. The drama is juicy, the prose lively, and the characters endearingly flawed, with Lexi going on an especially satisfying personal growth journey over the course of the plot. This entertains. (Aug.)

INSPIRATIONAL

An Accusing at the Old Bailey

Erica Vetsch. Kregel, \$18.99 trade paper (312p)

ISBN 978-0-8254-4864-5

★ Vetsch (*A Scheming in Parliament*) wraps up the *Of Cloaks and Daggers* series with another thrilling Regency-era mystery. Investigator Bertrand Thorndike is once again on the case, this time hosting a symposium to puzzle out who's been stealing munitions plans from London's scientific elite. When a scientist drops dead from being poisoned and one of Bertie's colleagues is named the primary suspect, he works to clear his friend's name, launching an investigation that turns up other suspects along with plenty of other misdeeds. There's also the matter of Bertie's sham engagement to Philippa Cashel, a ruse originally orchestrated to protect her inheritance from a scheming cousin. But the engagement becomes more real as their families start making wedding plans, and when both Bertie and Philippa feel a spark, they turn to God to figure out whether true love can be born from a lie. Crackling chemistry between the leads and no shortage of tense plotlines and scenes (suspects held at gunpoint, bombs being defused,

several affairs) will keep readers on the edge of their seats. It's a winner. (Sept.)

In These Hills

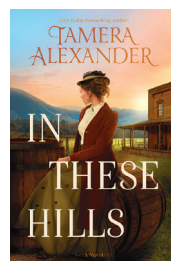
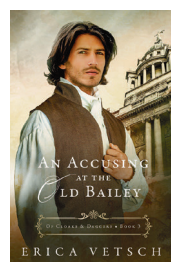
Tamera Alexander. Tyndale, \$32.99 (416p) ISBN 978-1-4964-7562-6

The captivating latest from Alexander (*A Million Little Choices*) follows a young woman fighting for her beliefs in the early 20th century South. Josephine Dunham has strong opinions on women's independence and the evils of alcohol, but after she wounds a man while resisting arrest at a rally in 1905 Atlanta, she's forced to flee and winds up in small-town Lychburg, Tenn., where she realizes life isn't so black-and-white. First, she takes a much needed job as a bookkeeper at the original Jack Daniel's distillery, using her salary to aid the battered wives of alcoholics. Then, despite her negative feelings about marriage, sparks fly with Dodge Coburn, her handsome, rough-around-the-edges coworker. Things are looking up, but it's only a matter of time before Josephine's new friends uncover the truth about the past she's left behind in Atlanta, and she's forced to harness her faith anew to protect herself and those she loves. Josephine's moral quandaries are sketched with nuance as she works to carve out a future in a chaotic, hostile world. Alexander's fans will be well pleased. (Sept.)

Writer in Residence

Rhonda McKnight. Thomas Nelson, \$18.99 trade paper (368p) ISBN 978-1-4003-5439-9

A prolific romance novelist finds herself at a professional and personal crossroads in the resonant latest from McKnight (*The Thing About Home*). After her editor rejects the proposal for her 30th book, Alex Chambers worries she doesn't have another story in her. Hoping to get her out of her funk, Alex's mother drags her to an author talk given by none other than Gabe Scott, the charismatic bookstore clerk Alex has long crushed on. Things heat up when Alex attends a writers retreat Gabe helped establish,



where sparks fly and she winds up teaching a writing class to a group of disadvantaged teens who inspire her to open up more in her work. So when Alex is contacted by a distant cousin who promises information about Alex's long-dead father, it seems like a clear sign from God to write about what she learns—even if it changes her close relationship with her mother and, unexpectedly, her blossoming one with Gabe. McKnight makes palpable the anxieties and self-doubts of a midcareer author, and though the narrative momentum briefly lags in the middle, readers will be satisfied by the conclusion to Alex's quest to come to grips with the truth about her dad. It's an upbeat tale about what it means to rewrite one's story. (Sept.)

COMICS

Orlando: A Graphic Novel Biography

Virginia Woolf and Jules Scheele. Avery Hill, \$21.99 trade paper (144p)

ISBN 978-1-917355-24-7

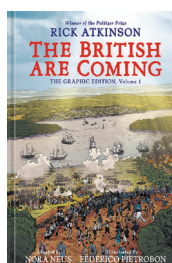
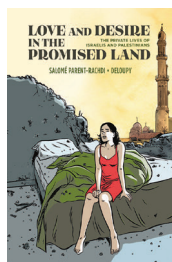
★ Woolf's groundbreaking 1927 novel receives a passionate and faithful reinterpretation by cartoonist Scheele (*Queer*). With vivid *ligne claire* reminiscent of a flamboyant *Tintin* and saturated colors, Scheele sensually relays the story of a beautiful Elizabethan nobleman's development as a poet—and his sudden transformation into a woman. Over the course of centuries, the unaging Orlando loves, loses, writes, and loves again, fumbling and soaring to revelations about life and art. Many of Woolf's words remain, whimsically spoken by side characters, birds, and even objects, while what is only implied about Orlando's often hedonistic sex life in prose is made joyfully explicit in comics art. Other additions by Scheele include visual callbacks to historical paintings and fashion plate-like illustrations, with Woolf's commentary on how clothes shape how we're perceived and how we perceive ourselves. Historical and contemporary queer icons join in (including Oscar Wilde and Marsha P. Johnson), and herald Orlando's

transformation, enshrined in the night sky, at the moment of Orlando's ecstatic epiphany about humanity's call to create art and poetry. The artistic references both are rooted in history and highlight Woolf's continuing resonance. This transporting adaptation and homage is sure to impress those who know the novel deeply and kindle the interest of those who do not. (*June*)

Love and Desire in the Promised Land: The Private Lives of Israelis and Palestinians

Salomé Parent-Rachdi and Deloupy, trans. from the French by Jenna Allen. Fantagraphics, \$24.99 (160p) ISBN 979-8-8750-0169-7

The political is personal, revelatory, and tender in this work of graphic journalism, which offers a window into the love and sex lives of Israelis and Palestinians. The subjects—all interviewed before the attacks of Oct. 7, 2023—include a celebrity mixed couple, an ob-gyn who treats sexually naive Orthodox women, and a Ramallah woman who observes that “the occupation creeps into people's private lives,” such as when young Palestinian couples lose to Israeli development a hillside road that was a popular make-out spot. Conservative men and women from both cultures quietly experiment with less religious lovers, but LGBTQ+ Palestinians face greater danger, as in the case of Mohammed, who is blackmailed by a Hamas intelligence officer. Creative approaches to family-making emerge as well. Jean-Marc, a single Jewish man, utilizes a coparent matchmaking service. In an act of resistance, Fathiya gets pregnant via artificial insemination with sperm smuggled out of the prison where her



husband is detained. Parent-Rachdi and Deloupy are both present on the page in a conversation about the post-2023 impact of their work: “I see it as a counterpoint to the news,” Deloupy says. Deloupy's fluid, collage-like comics depict the diversity of both humans and landscape; he takes poetic license at evocative moments, and in others turns out journalistic courtroom-style sketches. The result is both joyful and sobering. (*June*)

I'm No Angel

Ai Yazawa, trans. from the Japanese by Andria McKnight. Viz, \$24.99 trade paper (432p) ISBN 978-1-9747-5785-5

This light school dramedy from Yazawa, first serialized in Japanese manga magazines in the early 1990s, offers up a confection sprinkled with hints of the umami pleasures of her manga series such as *Paradise Kiss* and *Nana*. Upbeat teen Midori, “the angel of Class A,” is elected to her high school's student council and decides to prove she's more than just a nice girl stereotype. She quickly falls for council president Akira, who rides a motorcycle and sports a rockabilly pompadour, but their promising romance is complicated by his lingering feelings for the school's beautiful art teacher. Yazawa fans expecting her signature ultra-chic art and edgy drama may be surprised by how conventional this early outing is—it's replete with old-school manga clichés like school festivals, accidental panty shots, and even a tough guy caring for a kitten in the rain. The art has a matching throwback vibe, though midway through this first omnibus volume, it moves beyond just the sparkly-eyed characters and begins to develop the dramatic and playful

touches that came to define Yazawa's visual style. Newcomers would do well to start with Yazawa's later work, but this serves up bubbly fun for fans of low-stakes romance and classic shojo manga vibes. (*June*)

The British Are Coming

Rick Atkinson, adapted by Nora Neus and Frederico Pietrobon. Ten Speed Graphic, \$35 (272p) ISBN 978-0-593-79930-7

Journalist Neus (*Renegade Girls*) and Italian artist Pietrobon adapt Atkinson's popular history of the American Revolution into an uninspiring graphic novel. Focused on 1775–1776, the account leans heavily into military leaders' perspectives on the unsuccessful campaign to capture Quebec and the long siege of Boston. Sections detail the British destruction of Falmouth, Mass., after townspeople refused to hand over their guns; the devastation of illnesses like smallpox on the plans of the revolutionaries; and the lack of American supplies. There's a notable scene in Boston when a play about the siege, attended by British troops, is interrupted by actual fighting. Figures speak primarily after-the-fact about the events they lived through, as if narrating rather than experiencing them, which creates a dry and textbook-like effect. Pietrobon's realistic art recalls turn-of-the-21st-century superhero comics, and maps help readers track troop movements. Less successful are the corny onomatopoeia signifying sound effects in battles. While this provides a basic overview of the early days of the revolution, most readers will yearn for greater depth and more humanizing touches. It's a disappointment. *Agent: Rafe Sagalyn, CAA. (June)*

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Alexandra Toner
Erica Wetter
Michael Zimmerman



A Chilean vista, as seen in Scottish journalist and historian James Crawford's environmental lament *The Vanishing Earth* (reviewed on page 43).



The W: A History of the WNBA

Tamryn Spruill. Abrams, \$32 (496p)
ISBN 978-1-4197-5881-2

Sports journalist Spruill debuts with a passionate history of the Women's National Basketball Association, America's longest-running professional women's sports league. After the U.S. women's basketball team won gold at the 1996 Olympics, the NBA Board of Governors approved a plan to install women's teams in cities with NBA teams. Eight teams played in the inaugural 1997 season, but the WNBA struggled with viewership amid ESPN's "failed" strategy of tailoring coverage to a male audience, Spruill explains. The league muddled through its first decade with poor player pay and only a fraction of the resources dedicated to the men's league. Franchises struggled to avoid shuttering; the Houston Comets, winners of the league's first four titles, folded in 2008. In recent years, attendance at WNBA games has risen as well-known collegiate players like Caitlin Clark have been drafted into the league. The WNBA capitalized on the momentum by adding games to the schedule, making games available

on major networks, and expanding the league with new franchises like the Golden State Valkyries. But issues persist, Spruill notes: There's a lack of Black female head coaches despite most players being Black, and many players receive racist and homophobic comments online. Filled with smart analyses and vivid game recaps, this is a much-needed account of a league on the rise. (Sept.)

Endings: Encounters with Extinction

Neil Griffin. House of Anansi, \$24.99 (288p)
ISBN 978-1-487-01426-1

In this lyrical exploration, poet and naturalist Griffin (*Bat Planet*) examines the ecological, historical, and personal dimensions of extinction. While recognizing that extinction is a natural phenomenon, Griffin asserts that current extinction rates far exceed the norm. Journeying from Canada's boreal wetlands and the jungles of Belize to Kenya's savannahs and the mountains of Rwanda, he encounters endangered species that spark discussions of humanity's relationship with the natural world. Whooping cranes, the world's tallest flying birds, have

only two major breeding grounds left, as many of their wetland homes have been plowed into farmland. Mountain gorillas have also been pushed to the brink. Now protected by the Rwandan government, they are safe—as long as there is better money in taking tourists to see them than in poaching them, Griffin adds. Summarizing Earth's five major extinction events, Griffin pairs discussions of geological history with creation stories drawn from cultures around the globe. These sections offer little that will surprise readers familiar with basic paleontology or geology, but they effectively situate today's biodiversity crisis within a broader temporal and cultural framework. Ultimately, Griffin urges "presence and careful interaction with the non-human world," acknowledging that spending more time with nature won't stop civilizational collapse, but that "large practices grow from small beginnings." It's a passionate call for change amid trying times. (Sept.)

The Everywhere Millionaire: Who Is Really Rich in America and How They Got There

Owen Zidar and Eric Zwick. Holt, \$32.99 (368p)
ISBN 978-1-250-37850-7

"Wealth in America is more abundant, and closer to home, than most people think," contend economists Zidar and Zwick in this illuminating examination of small business owners who have built extraordinary fortunes. The U.S. is home to three million "Main Street Millionaires," the authors say, owners of private businesses, like car dealerships, convenience stores, and restaurants, whose average wealth is \$25 million. One key to their accumulation of wealth is the tax code. By organizing their businesses as sole proprietorships or limited liability companies, they can avoid the corporate and dividend taxes that traditional C-corporations (like General Motors and IBM) have to pay. Zidar and Zwick profile an array of entrepreneurs, including Dick Portillo, who opened his first hot dog stand in a Chicago-area parking lot in 1963. By carefully managing every dollar, Portillo grew the business to 22

Reviews

In *The Castle*, journalist Jon Ronson spins an anecdote about an ostensible Netflix producer luring women to a Connecticut castle into a treatise on contemporary masculinity.

— Page 41 —

Literature scholar Susan Farrell details the creation and impact of *Slaughterhouse-Five* in *Vonnegut's War*, a blend of biography and cultural history.

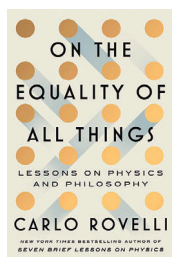
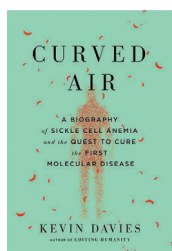
— Page 44 —

restaurants, and he eventually sold it for \$1 billion. But there's a dark side to these wealth stories, the authors reveal: as these millionaires' businesses become more successful, they keep much of the resulting gains for themselves, opting for conspicuous consumption—like \$60 million weddings—rather than sharing profits with employees, and thereby driving income inequality. By turns inspiring and maddening, this is a vivid depiction of America's millionaire class. (Sept.)

Curved Air: A Biography of Sickle Cell Anemia and the Quest to Cure the First Molecular Disease

Kevin Davies. Belknap, \$29.95 (320p)
ISBN 978-0-674-29396-0

Davies (*Editing Humanity*), executive editor of *The CRISPR Journal*, delivers a captivating history of the century-long effort to understand and treat sickle cell disease, a molecular disorder that leads to misshapen red blood cells that cause excruciating pain and organ damage. SCD arose in sub-Saharan Africa thousands of years ago, Davies explains, and the 1949 discovery that it's caused by an inherited genetic mutation transformed scientists' understanding of genetics. Despite sickle cell being one of the world's most famous genetic diseases, patients, most of whom are Black, "suffered in silence" for decades, according to Davies. Research was continually underfunded, and patients were often perceived as drug seekers and turned away from care. The emergence of the gene-editing technology CRISPR, which received FDA approval for treating SCD in 2023, is now "offering new hope" to the community, Davies writes. His narrative juxtaposes the experiences of Victoria Gray, the first SCD patient to be treated with CRISPR, and Brittany Hightower, an SCD patient who went viral in 2021 after filming herself being turned away from a hospital while experiencing an acute pain crisis. (She died 15 months later.) Davies skillfully translates complex genetics into accessible prose and effectively connects scientific



advances to broader questions of race and medical ethics. It's an illuminating account of scientific progress and medical inequity. (Sept.)

Between Chapters: How I Started Over, Took Some Chances, and Found the Plot

Zibby Owens. Zibby, \$15.99 trade paper (240p)
ISBN 978-1-968506-90-2

Owens (*Blank*), founder of Zibby Media, delivers a raw and funny essay collection about her transition from stay-at-home mom to publisher, podcast host, and bookstore owner. A decade ago, Owens, the daughter of Blackstone Group CEO Stephen Schwarzman, was living with her husband and their four children under 10 on the Upper East Side, but her marriage was on the rocks, and she craved a creative life. She took up tennis, fell in love with her instructor, and eventually married him after divorcing her husband. Here, she details the guilt she felt upending her children's lives, as well as the realization that "deep down I knew that I had to find joy and happiness or I wouldn't be able to be a parent at all." Reading helped her feel less lonely on days her kids were with her ex, and she began plowing through books. Eager to have more intimacy with writers, she started a podcast where she interviewed authors, launching her literary career. Elsewhere, Owens discusses the plight of motherhood (when clunkily explaining sex ed to her fourth-grade twins, she frets: "I ruined them"), taking weight loss drugs, her Jewish heritage, and the grief of losing a parent. Heartfelt and often humorous, this will make moms juggling parenting and a personal life feel seen. (Sept.)

On the Equality of All Things: Lessons on Physics and Philosophy

Carlo Rovelli, trans. from the Italian by Simon Carnell. Scribner, \$27 (192p)
ISBN 978-1-668-09242-2

In these six rigorous essays originally delivered as lectures, theoretical physicist Rovelli (*White Holes*) advances the argument that reality

is fundamentally "more complex and varied than we think." Inspired by conversations with academics in the Department of Philosophy at Princeton University, the essays challenge conventions about time, causality, and truth. He explains that the scientific advances of the last century—particularly in quantum physics—have led him to abandon certainties about how the world works and to see the universe not as objects occupying space but as relationships. Under this framework, time does not exist at a fundamental level: reality is merely a string of events. The difference between the past and the future is merely statistical, but mental structures that enable memories and anticipations give humanity the illusion of time moving forward. Confidence in time's forward flow, he suggests, resembles the once strongly held belief that Earth is immobile. Building on the work of Kierkegaard, Rovelli asserts there is no independent, objective reality. Just as speed is only meaningful relative to an observer, truth depends on interactions between an observer and what is being observed. The final chapter on the nature of science is particularly well done, as Rovelli explains how science is not a body of empirical information but a constantly evolving way of organizing how to live in the world. While the text can be challenging, this will intrigue those well versed in physics and philosophy. (Sept.)

Songs That Changed the World: Music of Resistance and Transformation

Andrew Clarke. Rockpool, \$23.95 (240p)
ISBN 978-1-922662-36-1

Clarke (*The Immortals of Nascar*) examines in this lively compendium 42 songs from the past 100 years that have "shifted thinking, sparked action, or given people a voice they didn't know they had." Some publicized civil rights issues, like Billie Holiday's 1939 antilynching song, "Strange Fruit," which gave voice to the suffering of Black people and challenged "white cultural control" of the music industry. Others helped transform popular music: Elvis Presley's 1956 rendition

of “Hound Dog” shocked audiences, thanks to his “suggestive” hip moves influenced by the Black musicians he grew up watching, while “I Wanna Hold Your Hand” helped launch Beatlemania in the U.S., establishing the template for modern celebrity and fandom. The author spotlights classic protest songs like Pete Seeger’s “We Shall Overcome” alongside less expected anthems, including Algerian rapper Soolking’s 2019 “La Liberté,” a “cry for freedom” against the military’s dominance of the country. Also spotlighted is Japanese singer Kyu Sakamoto’s 1961 “Ue o Muite Arukō,” which reframed American perceptions of Japan after WWII and remains the only Japanese-language song to have reached #1 on the U.S. Billboard charts. Diverting and informative, it’s a satisfying overview of the ways music can spark change. Photos. (Sept.)

Your Turn: How to Create a Midlife You Love

Allison Aubrey. Simon & Schuster, \$30 (304p)
ISBN 978-1-6682-0725-3

NPR journalist Aubrey debuts with a solid resource on how women can make the most of midlife. She focuses on the “third turn,” the period spanning roughly from age 50 to 75 when one shifts their focus away from the immediate responsibilities of parenting and building a career and gains the energy needed to work on oneself. Women can take advantage of this time by dealing with anxieties that impede their fulfillment, discovering strengths to inform new goals, reigniting old passions, and fostering their relationships by staking out quality bonding time. While much of the self-discovery advice is smart if not entirely original or midlife-specific, the book gains strength and specificity from Aubrey’s candid discussion of finding her own midlife purpose, including during a gap year from work when she tried out new activities and interviewed other women “navigating this turn of life with gusto.” She also provides valuable background on the science of healthy aging, including

boosting physical and mental well-being. Readers will be inspired. (Sept.)

Situated: Find the People and Places That Bring Out Your Best

Angela Duckworth. Scribner, \$30 (352p)
ISBN 978-1-6680-0594-1

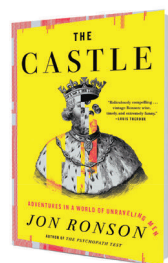
People too often attribute a lack of success to weak willpower rather than the circumstances that shape their behavior, according to this persuasive manual. Psychologist Duckworth (*Grit*) argues that efforts to change oneself are most effective when they begin “upstream,” because situations stimulate thoughts, which in turn provoke responses, making optimizing one’s surroundings easier and more proactive than “attack[ing] the motivation problem at the last possible moment.” Drawing on research in self-control and behavioral change, she outlines how readers can wisely design the spaces (homes, workplaces) they spend time in, choose friends to learn from and mentors to broaden their horizons, and find work cultures that honor their values and spur growth. While some of the advice hews to familiar habit-design principles, Duckworth illustrates it with a trove of memorable examples:

The Castle: Adventures in a World of Unraveling Men

Jon Ronson. Riverhead, \$32 (336p)
ISBN 978-1-59463-420-8



JOURNALIST RONSON (*So You’ve Been Publicly Shamed*) delivers a by turns amusing and harrowing report on the desultory state of contemporary men. In 2023, Ronson’s son was invited to a party at a castle in rural Connecticut, replete with “draw-bridge, gargoyles, and many... too many... spires and towers and turrets.” When it turned out the party was actually a film shoot for an allegedly Netflix-produced harem-themed reality show called *101 Princesses*, Ronson’s son left; but Ronson later visited the castle himself to find out more about its builder and resident, Chris Mark, the scion of a steel fortune whose wealth has made him quixotic, irrational, scheming, and entitled. Ronson’s brilliant book broadens from there, becoming not



just a wry tale of “the complexities of luring women to a harem in your castle during the post-#MeToo age,” but an examination of why men seem to be spiraling, by way of profiles of the worst offenders. They include family vlogger Greg Chism, whose pursuit of algorithmic success led him to make increasingly disturbing YouTube videos; British showrunner Graham Linehan, who entered a career-destroying spiral after being told a TV episode he wrote may have been transphobic; and alleged cannibal Armie Hammer, whom Ronson finds sympathy for, while nonetheless noting that the actor exhibits an inordinate affinity for meat. Ronson’s intuitive but still rigorous approach makes this a blockbuster portrait of men gone mad. (Sept.)

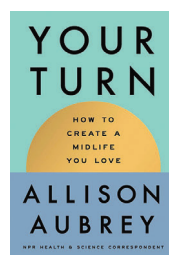
a snorkeling accident involving her elderly mother becomes a metaphor for recognizing when a situation is too powerful to overcome alone, while a closer look at Olympic swimmer Michael Phelps’s career reveals how coaches, teammates, and facilities are essential to maximizing raw talent. Other chapters lucidly apply the same logic to marriage, parenting, leadership, exercise, studying, and resisting digital distractions. Readers of *Grit* will find this a useful and humane follow-up. (Sept.)

The Nerd Reich: Silicon Valley Fascism and the War on Democracy

Gil Durán. Avid Reader, \$30 (320p)
ISBN 978-1-6682-2140-2



This transfixing debut from journalist Durán investigates the antidemocratic ideologies espoused by tech billionaires linked to the second Trump administration. In 2025, Durán notes, many observers were surprised to see the leaders of Silicon Valley, previously presumed to be “a quirky... bastion of liberal ideas,” aligning themselves with Trump. Some, like Elon Musk, served in his administration; others, like Peter Thiel, were closely associated with Vice

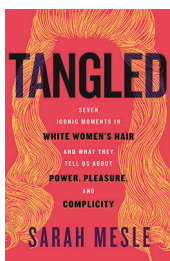
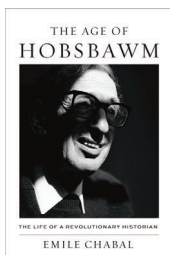
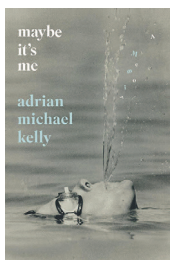


President Vance. However, the author argues that “tech’s authoritarian turn has been years in the making,” starting with Thiel’s late-’90s obsession with James Dale Davidson and William Rees-Mogg’s treatise *The Sovereign Individual*, which depicts “a coming... revolution—fueled by technology—that would enable wealthy entrepreneurs and investors to overthrow... governments.” From there, Durán tracks tech leaders’ increasing attacks on liberal democracy, along the way delineating the ideological and personal quirks of their primary thinkers, among them blogger Curtis Yarvin, who advocates for “corporate dictatorship”—and who has a habit of hiding “in a closet with the lights off and think[ing] of what an asshole he [is]” after psychedelic-fueled online trolling binges. Many of the theories Durán covers are unsettlingly divorced from reality—such as former Coinbase executive Balaji Srinivasan’s vision of future Americans wearing “shirts emblazoned with corporate logos to signify their tech affiliations,” or Thiel’s ideas about a tech-driven Antichrist. It’s an ominous look at an insular elite arrayed against American democracy. (Aug.)

Maybe It’s Me: A Memoir

Adrian Michael Kelly. ECW, \$19.95 trade paper (360p)
ISBN 978-1-7704-1864-6

In this frustrating self-portrait, Kelly (*The Ambassador of What*) chronicles his yearslong struggles with depression and his attempts to overcome it. “I may not know much, but I know pain,” Kelly writes, detailing how his dejection led him, for example, to ask his wife to work full-time to support him while he worked on his novel and searched for an academic position. The account gains depth when Kelly turns his attention to his childhood, describing his emotionally distant parents as “amputees” missing essential capacities for healthy connection. Meanwhile, his search for relief—through therapy, travel, and occasional teaching gigs—provides some momentum. But Kelly’s insight that depression is a mouth that “swallows



all the light” can’t make up for monotonous storytelling as he recalls drifting through customer service jobs, stewing on his failed ambitions, and enduring bouts of debilitating back pain. Meanwhile, his assertion that embracing daily habits like meditation led him to a “happy transformation” is too thinly explored to provide a satisfying narrative arc or equip readers facing similar challenges with useful advice. Though well-intentioned, this misses the mark. (Aug.)

The Age of Hobsbawm: The Life of a Revolutionary Historian

Emile Chabal. Harvard Univ., \$35 (496)
ISBN 978-0-674-73776-1

★ Historian Chabal (*France*) offers an enthralling intellectual biography of “communist polymath” and historian Eric Hobsbawm. Born in 1917 in Alexandria, Egypt, to English-Jewish parents, Hobsbawm was raised in Vienna, moved to Berlin during the 1930s, and took up studies at Cambridge before WWII. Along the way, Hobsbawm “witnessed or wrote about almost every major development” in the prevailing political order. “Following his journey,” Chabal writes, “offers an extraordinary panorama” of 20th-century Europe, particularly postwar developments, from the communist takeover of the East, to Paris during the May 1968 protests, to Thatcherism in 1980s Britain. Moreover, Chabal notes, Hobsbawm was a bestseller—his books reached “hundreds of thousands” of households—with “an uncanny ability to identify coming trends” and an innovative approach to the historian’s craft; the postwar era saw an expansion of labor history, or “history from below,” an arena in which Hobsbawm excelled. But “just as the field exploded,” Hobsbawm “seemed to turn away from it” and began working on expansive social histories that presented “the triumph of capitalism” as the result of its ability to “continually evol[ve]” and incorporate into itself “new technologies, new territories, and new ideas”—a notion of immense influence on the

left. Throughout, Chabal uses Hobsbawm’s work to ruminate on history-making and “the hidden structures that support... ideas.” It’s a remarkably illuminating portrait of the man, his times, and his discipline. (Aug.)

Tangled: Seven Iconic Moments in White Women’s Hair and What They Tell Us About Power, Pleasure, and Complicity

Sarah Mesle. Beacon, \$27.95 (296p)
ISBN 978-0-8070-1634-3

This entertaining and intriguing study from former *LARB* editor Mesle (*Reasons and Feelings*) analyzes the social implications of white women’s hair trends spanning from 1979 to 2016. Theorizing that women’s hair has always “mattered to the ongoing contentious question of what whiteness is, and, relatedly, what Americanness itself should look like,” Mesle ties seven noteworthy pop culture hair moments to concurrent shifts in gender roles and broader political sea changes. Olympic gymnast Mary Lou Retton’s signature no-fuss short cut, popularized by her partnership with Vidal Sassoon, signified a turn toward the conservative austerity that arose with the election of Ronald Reagan, who Retton publicly supported. Julia Roberts’s unruly red curls in *Pretty Woman* mark a shift toward women’s increased freedom and offer a “model of wildness, of living without regret” that draws on racialized gender expectations. “The Rachel,” Jennifer Aniston’s infinitely imitated layered bob on *Friends*, “became an icon of the transition to the global economy, the digital era, the information age.” Sprinkled between these deeper studies are short reflections on other celebrities with notable hair, from Farrah Fawcett’s feathered “angel” style to JoJo Siwa’s side pony with an oversize bow, as well as the author’s own memories of traumatic haircuts and girlhood friendships formed over braiding hair at sleepovers. Readers interested in the intersection of feminism and pop culture will be delighted. (Aug.)

The Vanishing Earth: Dispatches from the Frontiers of Extraction

James Crawford. Bloomsbury, \$30 (448p)
ISBN 978-1-63973-322-4

★ Historian and journalist Crawford (*The Edge of the Plain*) takes readers on “a journey to the literal and ideological frontiers of extraction” in this sweeping account of the toll the pursuit of endless economic growth has taken on the planet. Braiding history and travelogue, the book is “a pilgrimage,” Crawford writes, “among the living ruins of extractive capitalism,” chronicling what it looks, smells, and feels like as humanity’s industrial engine has “accelerated... all of the planet’s biogeochemical cycles... taking them far beyond their capacity to regenerate or replenish.” In the present, he visits the likes of the groundwater-guzzling lithium harvesters on the salt flats of Chile’s Atacama Desert. Turning to the past, he tours such gruesome sites as the “industrial bone mills” of 19th-century Britain, where human and animal remains dredged out of the battlefields of Europe were ground into fertilizer. Along the way, he studies the ideological underpinnings of extraction, particularly the notion of “escape” from the material limits of the natural world. Crawford also offers a “fragile” glimpse of a “viable future,” highlighting less environmentally damaging feats of science and engineering, such as wooden skyscrapers. But as he brings the ruinous consequences of extraction into sharp relief, it becomes clear that, as one climate scientist explains, “the decline of our... civilization is inevitable. It will disappear and become something different.” This is a dizzying feat of reporting. (Aug.)

Mud on the Moon: A Hybrid Memoir
Nita Noveno. Red Hen, \$18.95 trade paper (232p)
ISBN 978-1-6362-8493-0

Noveno debuts with a moving blend of autobiography and imagination that interweaves her quest to connect with her Filipino heritage and a fictionalized account of her father’s immigration to the U.S. Born in 1966, Noveno grew up in Ketchikan, Alaska, rebelling against

her strict, taciturn father, who seldom discussed his past. As an adult, she traveled the world, feeling a constant sense of displacement and grasping at whatever tidbits she could find about her background. While visiting family on Mindanao in 2004, Noveno learned her fragmented travels and sense of isolation mirrored her father’s, who left Luzon for the U.S. in 1928 seeking success, only to encounter racism and take backbreaking jobs harvesting crops, cleaning, and canning salmon in California and Alaska, none of which provided sufficient income for his family in the Philippines. Throughout, Noveno alternates between autobiographical chapters spanning from the 1980s to the late 2000s and imagined ones chronicling her father’s travels across the U.S. Along the way, she considers how shifting immigration policies impacted him and his peers, particularly after Filipinos were reclassified from U.S. citizens to aliens in 1934. Noveno ensures the fictional chapters feel as lived-in as the nonfiction. It’s an auspicious first outing. (Aug.)

Mothers of Invention: A History of Creativity from the Greek Muses

Moiya McTier. Grand Central, \$28 (288p)
ISBN 978-1-5387-6860-0

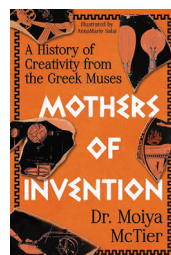
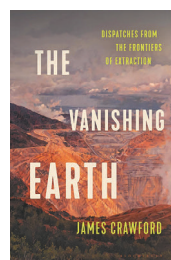
★ In this innovative history, astrophysicist and folklorist McTier (*The Milky Way*) chronicles the evolution of human creativity from the perspectives of the Greek Muses, the nine goddesses of the arts and sciences born to Zeus and Mnemosyne (the goddess of memory). In her narrative role as Clio, the Muse of history, the author shares how the Muses fear that human creativity is being hobbled by the cult of celebrity, the myth of the lone genius, social inequality, and the rise of AI. McTier combines a history of innovation with witty and occasionally crotchety commentary from the Muses. Ourania, the highly mathematical Muse of astronomy, traces her influence from Ptolemy’s geocentric model of the universe through the launching of Sputnik and the Challenger explosion. Galileo, the narrator claims, was Ourania’s first love, as well as “the mortal world’s first

modern genius.” Terpsichore, the Muse of dance, oversees a survey of the evolution of textiles and the birth of ballet; Melpomene, the Muse of tragedy, and her twin sister Thalia, the Muse of comedy, reflect on how collaboration and competition spark creativity; and Erato, the Muse of erotic poetry, discusses the history of sex and its regulation, including the development of the birth control pill. Entertaining and wholly original, this will inspire readers to embrace and celebrate human ingenuity. (Aug.)

A Person My Colour: Love, Adoption and Parenting While White

Martina Dahlmanns. Catalyst Collective, \$21.95 trade paper (214p)
ISBN 978-1-967673-58-2

Dahlmanns discusses adopting three Black children as a white woman in South Africa in this frank memoir. In 1995, a 30-something Dahlmanns visited South Africa as a gift to herself for getting a communications degree. She ended up staying, meeting a man, and marrying him in 2004. A short time later, the couple adopted a Black girl named Lele, and were disturbed by casual remarks that they were “unlucky” to not have adopted a white baby. After adopting a boy named Kai and his younger sister Nene next, Dahlmanns joined a dialogue group about race in South Africa. There, she met a Black woman named Tumi Jonas-Mpofu, whose unvarnished observations about the country post-apartheid led Dahlmanns to confront racial prejudices she realized she held onto from her childhood in Germany. (Jonas-Mpofu, who became one of Dahlmanns’s best friends, occasionally pops into the account to share her own experiences with Dahlmanns and the dialogue group.) Dahlmanns has a knack for unexpected metaphors (she compares “snippets of memory” to “props on an unlit stage randomly appearing in the beam of a flashlight of a child playing in the dark”), and her willingness to risk embarrassment in the name of opening dialogue about cross-racial adoption is admirable. The result is a worthy consideration of a sensitive subject. (Aug.)



Vonnegut's War: The Making of Slaughterhouse-Five

Susan Farrell. Bloomsbury Academic, \$27 (280p)
ISBN 978-1-350-58000-8

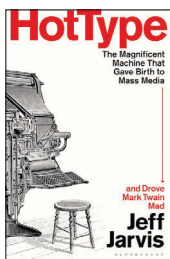
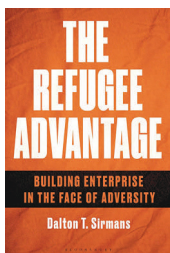
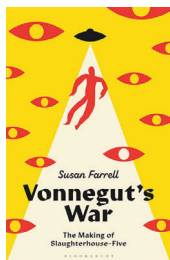


Farrell (*Imagining Home*), a literature professor at the

College of Charleston, offers an arresting account of the creation and impact of Kurt Vonnegut's 1969 novel *Slaughterhouse-Five*. Born in Indianapolis in 1922, Vonnegut enlisted in the army during WWII and was captured by German soldiers during the Battle of the Bulge and imprisoned in a slaughterhouse in Dresden, where he survived Allied firebombing of the city. Upon returning to the U.S. in 1945, Vonnegut conceived of a novel based on his time in Dresden, but he struggled to shape the traumatic experience into fiction. Farrell traces the evolution of the drafts as Vonnegut sought to subvert the traditional war hero narrative by centering the story on passive antihero Billy Pilgrim. The inclusion of Tralfamadorians, an alien species from Vonnegut's previous novels who experience the past, present, and future all at once, enabled him to explore the pull between free will and determinism. When it was published, the book resonated with readers critical of the U.S. entanglement in the Vietnam war and made Vonnegut "perhaps the most easily recognizable American writer of the next fifty years," Farrell writes. Through Farrell's detailed storytelling, including gutting scenes of Vonnegut's wartime imprisonment, *Slaughterhouse-Five* emerges as an alchemical mixture of its author's biography, the realities of war, and the 1960s cultural zeitgeist. This is a tour de force of literary detective work. (Aug.)

The Refugee Advantage: Building Enterprise in the Face of Adversity
Dalton T. Sirmans. Bloomsbury, \$27 (248p)
ISBN 978-1-350-59779-2

Sirmans, founder of the Sirmans Global Impact Foundation, debuts with a convincing case for hiring and investing in refugees. He contends that refugees—people who have been forcibly displaced from their



homelands because of violence, war, or persecution—are not burdens to the countries they move to but enterprising individuals who “have embraced the premise of entrepreneurship, not only as a way of life but as a way of survival.” Data shows that 14% of refugees become entrepreneurs, compared to just 9% of U.S. citizens and 11.5% of other immigrants. This is because adversity breeds innovation, Sirmans suggests. Refugees who have had to grapple with hardship become employees and founders who can navigate bad quarters or brutal markets. Sirmans shares stories of refugees who have become successful entrepreneurs, like Hedayat Oryan, who fled Afghanistan after being targeted by the Taliban. He paid smugglers to take him to Indonesia, where he was arrested and held in a prison in the Indonesian jungle for a month. He managed to escape and eventually make his way to Australia, where he founded tiling and construction businesses with fellow refugees. “He kept finding options that others didn’t see,” Sirmans explains. Filled with inspiring stories and calls for compassion, this will help business owners see refugees in a new light. (Aug.)

Hot Type: The Magnificent Machine That Gave Birth to Mass Media and Drove Mark Twain Mad

Jeff Jarvis. Bloomsbury Academic, \$25 (384p)
ISBN 979-8-7651-2395-9

The Linotype machine, an 1886 invention that mechanized and vastly sped up the setting of type to print newspapers and books, sparked an explosion of printed content while stirring fears of unemployment and dehumanizing technology, according to this wide-ranging history from journalist Jarvis (*The Web We Weave*). Invented by German American engineer Ottmar Mergenthaler, the Linotype used a typewriter-like keyboard and a tiny foundry to cast whole lines of text from molten metal. Jarvis presents a perceptive study in technological change: although thousands of typesetters were initially laid off, the ensuing publishing

boom ended up employing many more Linotype operators (until computers killed the profession off). Still, the proud, centuries-old culture of hand typesetting—including typesetting races held in front of paying audiences of thousands—withered. The book’s presiding spirit is humorist Mark Twain, an ex-typesetter who went bankrupt backing a rival to the Linotype. Twain’s unfinished final novel, *No. 44, The Mysterious Stranger*, features a demonic typesetting shop with what seems to Jarvis like an invisible Linotype. Jarvis pens a colorful and enthralling portrait of Gilded Age industrial ferment, replete with ingenious inventors wrangling with impatient investors, and a rich analysis of humanity’s love-hate relationship with technological expansion. Readers will be rapt. (Aug.)

Pause: How to Lead Brilliant Work in a Busy World

Shawn Vanderhoven, with Anne Vanderhoven. Simon Acumen, \$30 (336p)
ISBN 978-1-6680-4948-8

Vanderhoven, an executive development leader at the Wiseman Group, debuts with a practical guide to helping teams work efficiently in distracting environments. “In a world of endless demands and constant connectivity,” he argues, “a leader’s ability to pause isn’t just a luxury; it’s an absolute necessity.” Drawing from hundreds of interviews with professionals across industries, as well as findings from neuroscience, psychology, and management, he offers solutions that combine individual productivity methods with leadership strategies. Noting that team leaders are often overwhelmed by competing priorities, he encourages them to establish clear goals and only take on tasks that align with them. He points to how a newly hired chief people officer at Bankers Financial Corporation successfully employed this strategy by framing her team’s priorities on the office walls so they wouldn’t get lost in the “noise” of digital tools and dashboards. Other time management strategies include creating hours-long “Focus Blocks,” or times of day when no one is expected to respond to messages; removing devices

during in-person conversations so “distractions can’t compete for presence”; and allowing for regular “clearing” conversations so employees can share their problems before they turn into festering resentments. The useful tips and memorable case studies on offer here will bring relief to organizations feeling lost in a sea of diversions. (Aug.)

RELIGION & SPIRITUALITY

What Does God Have Planned for Me Next? Experience All of It. Miss None of It.

Doug Wekenman. Waterbrook, \$24.99 (256p)
ISBN 979-8-217-15194-3

Pastor Wekenman debuts with a hit-or-miss look at how Christians can summon the faith to “follow God into the next chapter of your life.” Recalling how he abandoned his dreams of becoming an orthopedic surgeon after God “called” him to join the ministry, the author encourages readers to relinquish rigid visions of their future, lest “your commitment to your own details... limit what God wants you to do.” They’d be better served, he suggests, by using interventions like prayer, reading scripture, and fasting to strengthen their spirituality, thereby allowing them to recognize God’s plan for their future. Wekenman’s advice can be hazy or contradictory; six pages after writing that people must put in effort to find their life’s direction (“It’s not all God”), he concedes that “whether he causes it or simply allows it, God is in control of all of it.” Nevertheless, readers will appreciate Wekenman’s frankness about his personal struggles, including a former pain pills habit, and when he does give direct advice it’s refreshing (after making a difficult decision, it’s important to “own it” and “thrive without the pain of second guessing”). Despite its flaws, this will be of value to believers worried about their next steps. (Sept.)

And the Sea Was No More: Reading the Bible in the Deep

Dave Nienhuis. Eerdmans, \$28.99 (300p)
ISBN 978-0-80288-614-9

Weaving memoir with biblical exegesis, Nienhuis (*A Concise Guide to*

Reading the New Testament), a professor of the New Testament at Seattle Pacific University, delivers an affecting if meandering consideration of how faith informs suffering. As a very young child, the author participated in a prank with a boy who lit himself on fire, a “bright instantaneous emergence of unspeakable horror” that left Nienhuis with PTSD and panic attacks for years. His attempts to surmount the trauma in adulthood via extensive therapy fuel his exploration of what it means to wade through “the Deep,” which he defines as a state of pervasive suffering over which humans are powerless. Unpacking biblical stories, Nienhuis writes that believers must look to Jesus (who did not come to “destroy the Deep” but to “throw himself into it”) for help grappling with the darkness, along with relying on friends and family and participating in communal worship. Nienhuis’s tangents and overwrought prose frequently distract, but his command over scripture is strong, and his honesty about his doubts and continued struggles with depression is refreshing (“What good is it to hear God promise to never again flood the earth when so many of us experience a deluge of panic, or grief... most every day?”). This will offer succor to Christians enduring tough times. (Sept.)

The Greatest Love: Lessons for Living with Extraordinary Courage—Even After the Worst Day of Your Life

Tim Brown. Convergent, \$28 (240p)
ISBN 978-0-593-98139-9

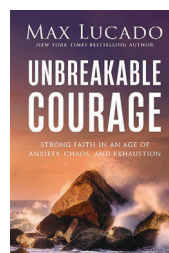
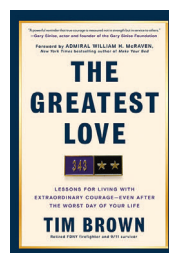
★ | Brown, a retired FDNY firefighter, debuts with a moving reminder of the value of sacrifice. After surviving the 9/11 attacks on the Twin Towers—he was an emergency management specialist helping to coordinate the on the ground response—the author was plagued with survivor’s guilt as he struggled to remake his life. Here, he draws on his experience to unpack how to recover from trauma, suggesting that readers can turn pain into purpose by finding a cause that benefits others (whether that means

tutoring students in need or taking care of an elderly relative); relying on their faith; and leading in ways that prioritize the good of the whole. He also shares advice on triaging grief in the immediate wake of a crisis by recognizing signs of burnout, getting adequate support from friends and therapists, and taking small, gradual steps to reestablish a sense of competency and control. The author illustrates his lessons with touching odes to the friends and colleagues he lost, and meditates poignantly on what it means to honor grief without letting it subsume one’s life. Readers will be inspired and uplifted. (Aug.)

Unbreakable Courage: Strong Faith in an Age of Anxiety, Chaos, and Exhaustion

Max Lucado. Thomas Nelson, \$29.99 (240p)
ISBN 978-1-4002-4654-0

Bestseller Lucado (*Tame Your Thoughts*) issues a vociferous call for Christians to hold onto core faith principles. He notes that the U.S. suicide rate is the highest it’s been since WWII, and that religious adherence is fading in favor of an obsession with worldly culture and digital distractions. But past believers have endured similarly difficult times, he reminds readers, citing how the prophet Elijah served the northern kingdom of Israel during a period of profound state hostility and repression. Narrating how Elijah fought to prevent King Ahab and Jezebel from forcing Israel to worship pagan gods, Lucado extracts lessons on how readers can surmount challenges of their own by using periods of loneliness as opportunities to connect with God; leaning on prayer and scripture to “weather seasons of discouragement”; and being wary of earthly temptations. Some readers will be put off by the author’s fearmongering about what he considers the ills of society, including divorce, homosexuality, sex outside of marriage, and digital culture, but devoted fans will appreciate his strident, energetic tone. It’s an impassioned but often myopic guide to a changing world. (Aug.)





A cephalopod plots escape in Zana Fraillon and Corinna Luyken's middle grade novel *An Octopus Named Houdini*.
— Page 49 —

Class inequality and civil unrest set the stage for Isabel Cañas's speculative YA offering *The House of Gardenias*.
— Page 51 —

Jason Douglas Griffin makes his solo debut with his picture book *Be the Acorn* (reviewed on this page).



PICTURE BOOKS

The Back of the Universe

Jessixa Bagley. Holiday House/Porter,
\$18.99 (48p)

ISBN 978-0-8234-5674-1

Bagley (*Maurice*) transforms a sleepless night into a cosmic round-trip in this atmospheric lullaby. Caretaker cadences (“You can’t sleep? Hmm. Let’s try going somewhere”) and a bedroom door ajar establish the book’s home base, from which narration pitched between reverence and reassurance takes readers on a visit to “the back of the universe.” Dense, glowing charcoal and watercolor illustrations slowly make their way from the universe’s “farthest corner... the quietest place imaginable” toward “two teeny-tiny sparkling lights. Are they eyes?” and past the sun, then through the solar system and the nighttime grid of a city, to the stars on a youth’s ceiling and the sparkle of their own sleepy eyes. Throughout, precise storytelling locates the child as not lost in the immensity but held within it (“Someone once told me we are made of stardust. I think that means we are in the stars, and the stars are in us”). As final pages orient around a single pale-skinned child’s sleeping head, this epic wind-down melds telescopic reach with snugly

intimacy. Ages 4–8. Agent: *Alexandra Penfold, Upstart Crow Literary*. (Sept.)

Be the Acorn

Jason Douglas Griffin. Roaring Brook,
\$19.99 (48p)

ISBN 978-1-2504-1722-0

In this fervent picture book, spidery, smudged artwork from Caldecott Honoree Griffin radiates the conviction of a child wrestling with big feelings, lending urgency to a familiar premise. Choko Choko is a young squirrel whose family is unhoused and hungry: “There’s a giant hole where his family tree used to be. And acorns have become harder to find.” When he’s told he’s too little to help find a new home, his frustration explodes in a “storm cloud” of feelings, depicted in scribbly gray spot illustrations and hand-lettered howls that have the unmistakable shape of a child’s full-body meltdown. Family matriarch Great Haha quiets the rage by popping an acorn cap on Choko Choko’s head and offering advice: “Be the acorn,” or, focus on the small-looking nut’s “BIG possibilities.” Soon enough, Choko Choko stumbles on an acorn many times his size, and, with his help, that potential begins to take root. Marvelously expressive, digitally finished pencil and spray paint illustrations render a storyline

that never turns pat as Choko Choko’s efforts help the family break ground. It’s a tale that branches out in unexpected ways, making one tiny critter’s story of purpose and patience feel fully leafed out. Ages 4–8. Agent: *Elena Giovino, Heirloom Literary*. (Sept.)

Day Shift, Night Shift

Ariel Vanece, illus. by Jade Orlando. S&S/Millner, \$19.99 (32p)
ISBN 978-1-665-97406-6

Two train enthusiasts connect across generations and schedules in a carefully structured tale from Vanece (*Searching for Mr. Johnson’s Song*) and Orlando (*Love, Lah Lah*). Pop Pop works the night shift as a railroad mechanic, repairing trains so they run while he sleeps. When he returns home early in the day, young Atticus meets him at the door, where the pair share a shift-change greeting: “Good morning to you.... And good night to you!” While Pop Pop slumbers, Atticus steps into her own work as a train mechanic on a model railroad at home, assembling a new track and problem-solving around a big hill. When evening arrives, Pop Pop helps Atticus troubleshoot her “train troubles” before tuck-in time ushers in a “Good night to you.... And good morning to you.” Unlined illustrations

in greens, reds, and yellows depict the Black family members, often portrayed in overalls and caps, across scenes that alternate between Pop Pop's rail yard and Atticus's toy train world. Threaded with the sights that anchor the duo's shared rhythm, this endearing story spotlights a working family brought together by rituals, interest, and mutual care. Ages 4–8. *Author's agent: Ana Crespo, East West Literary. Illustrator's agent: Anne Moore Armstrong, Bright Agency. (Sept.)*

Flyer McTire

Beth Ferry, illus. by Matt Myers.

HarperCollins, \$19.99 (32p)

ISBN 978-0-0633-5210-0

Ferry (*The Snowball Fight*) and Myers (*Seven Skies All at Once*) serve up a fleet second-chance story starring not a plucky vehicle but a discarded racing car tire. Flyer loves the spectacle and speed of the track, but he's soon deemed too worn to compete: "Rolled away, sold, he was tossed in a pile./ He couldn't believe that he'd raced his last mile." Though the tire initially sits heartbroken amid heaps of fellow castoffs under a twilight sky, he gets a new life when he's repurposed as a farm tire swing. Sailing through the air with an ecstatic boy, portrayed with brown skin, hugging his sidewalls, Flyer gets his groove back: "He felt the sweet speed./ He felt the old spark." Sculptural acrylics are funny, poignant, and kinetic in equal measure, and the illustrator coaxes real soul from a few chisel-textured features on Flyer's face. Reminiscent of *The Yellow Bus*, this bighearted picture book drives home the idea that life can have more than one chapter. Ages 4–8. *Author's agent: Elena Giovinnazzo, Pippin Properties. Illustrator's agent: Steven Malk, Writers House. (Sept.)*

Same Time, Next Week?

Marlene Droop, trans. from the German by Alisha Niehaus Berger. NorthSouth, \$19.95 (40p)

ISBN 978-0-7358-4630-2



A group of animals road-trip beyond city limits in search of stars in this carefree adventure from Droop, making her English-language

debut. The story begins on the road, with Giraffe comically craning out the driver's window, head somewhere beyond the frame ("Usually Giraffe drives a convertible. But tonight, the friends are taking Turtle's van"). Aerial shots reveal illuminated city skyscrapers as Giraffe and Turtle travel along elaborate roadways, picking up buddies Crocodile and Sheep. Scribble-textured, naive-style illustrations in a limited palette lend the excursion an epic quality, particularly in a spread that sees the group exiting their bright urban environs ("Away from the lights, they drive into the darkness"). Despite the trip's time-sensitive nature and the small obstacles that present themselves, the contented travelers enjoy one another's company, chatting, snacking, and knitting on the way. In response to the "*splitter, splatter*" of rain, Giraffe drives with an umbrella in hand; when sleepiness descends, they collectively agree to a quick snooze. Though the trip doesn't exactly go as planned, quiet camaraderie makes for a successful outing, and instills yearning for the next one. Fellowship propels this sportive expedition. Ages 4–8. *(Sept.)*

Seven Curious Ants

JooHee Yoon. Chronicle, \$18.99 (40p)

ISBN 978-1-79-721610-2

Yoon (*Up Down Inside Out*) unfolds a methodical house-hunting chronicle in which seven intrepid ants venture beyond their home in search of less tight quarters. Departing from their anthill in response to the birth of the 200,501st ant, the subjects first turn to wise Mole for help, explaining, "We yearn for someplace less crowded, where we can dream of things other than dirt and pebbles." Mole's advice is simple: "Follow the sun, and one way or another, you will find the perfect home." Dense yet pert prose follows a repeated pattern as the ants march up a tree, encountering different dwellings and their residents en route. At each stop, a single group member peels off, variably feeling an affinity for a worm-occupied apple, a squirrel's well-provisioned abode, a buzzing

"geometric structure" with a view, and an owl's napping nook. After a near miss with a spider, the remaining trio beat a hasty retreat, but while two continue to feel the pull of adventure, another longs to return to predictable surroundings. Pointillist dots and lithographic printing techniques give jaunty crayon, pencil, and ink scenes a stereographic feel, keeping the pages turning across this beat-by-beat journey of discovery. Ages 4–8. *(Sept.)*

The Wishing Well

Gideon Sterer, illus. by Emily Hughes. Union Square, \$19.99 (48p)

ISBN 978-1-4549-6361-5

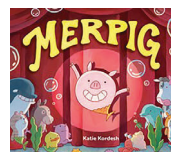
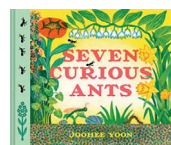
From collaborators Sterer and Hughes (*If You Make a Call on a Banana Phone*) comes a meditative fable that contemplates the real meaning of wealth. At the "long, and dark, and deep, and cold" bottom of a wishing well lives its guardian and the story's narrator: a self-proclaimed but far from ghoulish green-furred "monster" with sad, wise eyes and an endearing plush-toy vulnerability. Over the centuries, it sees coins "plip, plop, plip," sometimes onto its head, and dutifully chronicles attendant wishes, most commonly "If only I were rich." But as the coins pile up, it becomes clear that the "richest monster on Earth" understands prosperity differently than the wishers do. Through the well's circular opening—a porthole to the world above—the creature glimpses sunshine, stars, seasons, and loving relationships, riches the humans seem to take for granted, which it vows one day to claim and cherish. Unhurried text and deliberately paced images that nod to classic fairy tales build to a satisfying story that speaks not only to the follies of getting and having but to the rewards of taking the long view. Ages 4–8. *Agent (for author and illustrator): Stephen Barr, Writers House. (Sept.)*

Merpig

Katie Kordesh. Rocky Pond, \$18.99 (32p)

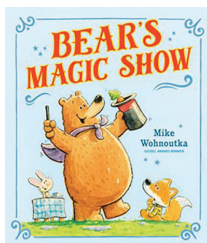
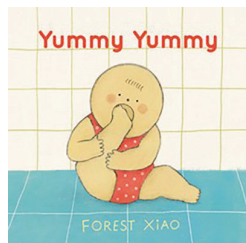
ISBN 978-0-5936-2050-2

Kordesh (*Enola's Best Friend*) offers up a buoyant lesson in finding new ways to shine. Aspiring star Marlon, an orange-tailed merpig, is used



New and Novel

SIX PICTURE BOOKS EXPLORE THE UNFAMILIAR.



Yummy Yummy

Forest Xiao. Candlewick, \$8.99 (20p)
ISBN 978-1-5362-4293-5

Babies gum every “yummy” thing they encounter in Xiao’s deliciously wry board book. While conventional foods come first (“Corn is yummy./ Watermelon is yummy”), the accounting quickly shifts into comedy as round-headed tots, portrayed with various skin tones, gnaw on a guitar (“Music is yummy”), furniture (“Stool is yummy”), and the like (“Air is yummy”). One of the roly-poly figures next puts their own foot in their mouth (“I am yummy”), before moving on to another baby (“My friend is yummy”), who looks on with dot-eyes and a neutral expression. While Daddy’s toe peeking out from a hole in a sock is not deemed desirable (“Daddy is not yummy”), Mummy’s chest feeding yields a fitting close (“Mummy is the yummiest”). Aided by shape-based, thin-lined drawings, this winking presentation aptly evokes the hunger with which the youngest children discover their world. Ages up to 3. (Sept.)

We Might See

Charlie Mylie. Abrams Appleseed, \$7.99 (24p)
ISBN 978-1-4197-5895-9

In Mylie’s jam-packed board book, a day out offers the chance to take in myriad sights, sounds, and concepts. Observational narration unfolds over a few phrases that build from the title prompt to encompass arrayed encounters (“Walking outside, we might see// places we pass/ things going fast”). Reverse type labels aspects of the busy scenes, from nouns (“bird,” “bike”) to sounds (“beep beep,” “arf arf”) to adjectives (“stinky,” “shy”). Vibrant, almost fluorescent renderings appear as blocky geometric shapes on a black background, frequently adding a touch of whimsy to what’s otherwise a straightforward grouping of first words; a chicken crosses the road, a mouse observes a swimming mer-mouse, and a spaceship beams up an elephant. When a return trip home offers a chance to remember the day, word and image take readers back through terms and experiences. Countless common (and not so common) visuals make for an immersive vocabulary builder. Ages up to 5. (Aug.)

Bear’s Magic Show

Mike Wohnoutka. Candlewick, \$18.99 (40p)
ISBN 978-1-5362-4285-0

A newbie performer endeavors to put on a magic show in Wohnoutka’s spirited story about try, try, trying again. Though prior entertainment efforts such as a puppet show and a baking show resulted in comic mishaps of the tangled-marionette and flour-everywhere varieties, Bear determines that “third time’s the charm” and undertakes a magic performance. Created for an audience of one—supportive pal Fox—the new act is similarly marked by mischance: an attempt to pull a bunny from a hat yields merely a carrot, and a card trick proves equally frustrating. “This is my worst show yet,” the budding magician laments. Luckily, reassurances from Fox inspire an (accidentally) successful illusion on the third attempt. Lightly sketched watercolor

and colored pencil illustrations expressively capture the hapless subject’s quick-changing moods. Bear’s eagerness to keep trying approaches, despite repeated setbacks, makes for an endearing portrait of undertaking new things. Ages 3–7. (Sept.)

Muriel and the Mystery

Charlotte Parent. Tundra, \$18.99 (56p)
ISBN 978-1-77488-915-2

Parent’s enigmatic work promotes the open-minded embrace of the unknown. Gray shrewlike animal Muriel is a creature of habit; each morning, in a forest “she knows by heart,” she goes hunting for snails before returning home for a solitary meal. One day, she “notices a minuscule mystery under a leaf”—pictured as a sizable, featureless black splodge. The next day, an even larger “mystery” similarly disrupts her routine. When the black blobs proliferate, even finding their way into her home, Muriel ventures outside at night, where she grows emboldened enough to enter a tunnel and have a cup of tea with the invisible entity inside. Afterward, she slips back into her routine, but with mystery for company. Mixing ink, charcoal, black pencil, white gouache, and digital coloration, gently smudgy illustrations emphasize the comparative bigness of small Muriel’s world. Deeper meaning suffuses the likable character’s eye-opening night out. Ages 4–7. (Sept.)

Wake Up, Poppyville!

Vikki Chu. Knopf, \$18.99 (48p)
ISBN 979-8-217-12479-4

In the wildly surrealistic solo debut from Chu, two intrepid warthogs arrive at the village of Poppyville just in time to witness its nocturnal inhabitants’ hijinks. After the town “starts to stir! The moon is up, and the air smells like blueberries and cinnamon,” the travelers’ explorations take them past numerous bizarre sights. A ghostly octopus-like creature called Gus carries “kids,” including a tuber named Tater, to school. At Clover’s Creamery, the warthogs join townsfolk who queue at length for blueberry milk. Later,

spring-like feline Clemen-Cat jumps high enough to catch a star. A trip to a recently opened toy store rounds out the expedition until moonset, when Poppyville's inhabitants settle into slumber. Arresting cut paper, water-color, ink, and digital illustrations with a black background frequently present the subjects and setting only in silhouette for an otherworldly effect. This offbeat expedition has the eccentricities of a dream. Ages 4–8. (Sept.)

Face to Face

Dinah Johnson, illus. by Kayla Mahaffey.
HarperCollins, \$19.99 (40p)
ISBN 978-0-06-325729-0

Interrogative second-person narration encourages curiosity about others in Johnson and Mahaffey's uncanny work, which models empathetic perspective-taking. Poetic prose initially emphasizes paying careful attention to others: "Sometimes a first glance/ doesn't tell the whole story—/ sometimes if you look again,/ instead of a grimace/ you see a grin." The focus soon turns to introspection and identifying emotions, particularly upon coming face-to-face with someone new ("Are you nervous or startled or mad?/ Are you excited, curious, glad?"). Park-like scenes anchor the text's abstract concepts by focusing on a small cast of children, pictured with varied skin tones, who observe and think about each other ("This girl seems worried. Do you wonder why?"). Stylized, finely brushed acrylic paintings, which employ saturated coloring, frequently present large-eyed characters for an occasionally unnerving effect. The creators bring a bighearted optimism to this probing depiction of IRL interpersonal moments. Ages 4–8. (Aug.)

to being the center of attention, so when Ms. Melody doesn't cast him as the class play's lead, the news hits hard: "SEAWEEED! I'M PLAYING SEAWEEED!?!?" After his increasingly desperate attempts to upstage his classmates, including one that reads as pure Elton John tribute, don't persuade Ms. Melody of his star power, Marlon resigns himself to blending in with the set far upstage—a vantage point that makes it clear the production is headed for the rocks. Taking in his costars' concerns, he pivots to producer-director, running lines, crafting costumes, building sets, handling publicity, and even baking morale-building cookies—and the show goes off swimmingly. Soft-toned ink, gouache, and water-color illustrations give the whole undersea world a sherbet-bright warmth, and the animal-fish cast members radiate distinct personalities through small, expressive details. In a story with big main-character energy, Marlon learns that talents can beam brighter when they support a shared purpose. Ages 5–8. *Agent: Rebecca Sherman, Writers House.* (Sept.)

EARLY READER

What Will We Find in This Box?
(Snake & Bat #1)

Mo Willems. Union Square, \$10.99 (64p)
ISBN 978-1-4549-6678-4

★ Willems (the Elephant & Piggie series) launches a dynamic new early reader series with a classic setup and another likable animalian duo. Snake and Bat communicate via exuberant oversize speech bubbles, and the creator's unmistakable aesthetic boisterously captures the pals' highs and lows with full-bodied exaggeration—as the book begins, the two positively burst with excited curiosity over the discovery of a plain brown box. While a "Rummage!" doesn't yield the cheese they'd hoped to find, the box produces other exultation-producing pleasures. "I FOUND THE IN-STRUC-TIONS," cheers Bat, expressing glee over the number of languages they come in. Meanwhile, Snake relishes the box's pretend uses ("I am in my store!... I am a snail!"). In a clever tie-in with another

Willems-universe duo, fan-favorite Piggie arrives on the scene, seemingly fresh off another tale, and Snake and Bat vibrate with elation as they announce their find, then quake with remorse when they discover the box is addressed to their friend. Happily, the intended recipient's interest in the container is limited to its contents. Melding earlier characters' energy with portraits of supportive parallel play, Snake and Bat promise to provide adventures both rollicking and emotionally true-to-life. Ages 4–8. (Sept.)

FICTION

An Octopus Named Houdini
Zana Fraillon, illus. by Corinna Luyken.
Simon & Schuster, \$17.99 (160p)
ISBN 979-8-3471-1475-7

★ Drawing inspiration from New Zealand's real-life cephalopod Inky, Fraillon (*Etta and the Octopus*) and Luyken (*The Arguers*) present a moving verse novel that traces an aquarium resident's yearning for home and budding friendship. Though curmudgeonly octopus Houdini—named for her numerous breakouts—longs to return to the ocean ("The Sea she is singing she is howling so strong she is/ calling us"), she waits for the perfect moment to flee for good. Until then, she endures visitors' gawking by day, and by night leaves her tank, plotting her eventual escape. Upon meeting aquarium owner's daughter Juno, whose skin tone echoes the white of the page, Houdini is stunned by a feeling of connection, like "a Tide pulling us closer." Over the course of multiple visits, Houdini grows fond of the child, and their bond strengthens while "Juno holds our arms strokes our head between our/ eyes." But as Houdini's escape efforts grow increasingly dangerous ("pain is creeping across our skin seeping weeping"), she worries about whether Juno will understand her need to leave. Spare, eloquent lines relay big emotions with few words, while digitally rendered watercolor-like illustrations capture Houdini's undulating movements and fluid environment in bold, inky swatches. It's



a tender and insightful outing. Ages 8–12. *Author's agent: Claire Wilson, RCW Literary. Illustrator's agent: Steven Malk, Writers House. (Oct.)*

The Creeps

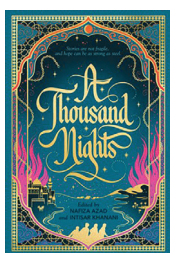
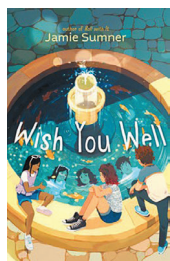
Tehlor Mejia. Delacorte, \$17.99 hardcover (288p); \$8.99 paper
ISBN 979-8-217-03145-0;
ISBN 979-8-217-03146-7

A financially insecure family's extended stay at a roadside motel morphs into a desperate bid for survival in this spine-tingling paranormal horror novel from Mejia (*The Better to Eat You With*). When 12-year-old Dylan Vega and his mother, who can no longer work because of her chronic illness, lose their apartment, they're forced to move into the Good Night Motel. Dylan finds the establishment smelly, uncomfortable, and terrifyingly dilapidated, and the sinister elderly receptionists present a list of rules, the most important of which is "DO NOT GO INTO THE BASEMENT." Rule violations earn strikes, and three strikes results in immediate eviction. Dylan's new friend Ollie St. James, a long-term resident, believes rule-breakers aren't simply expelled from the motel—they vanish entirely. Determined to uncover the truth, Dylan and Ollie delve into the Good Night Motel's secrets. But when Dylan's mom garners three strikes and disappears, the boys' inquiry takes on a new sense of urgency. Unsettling details amp up the fear factor, the tense atmosphere skillfully mirrors Dylan's feelings of overwhelm, and threads of positivity keep things light as the youths combat seemingly hopeless circumstances. It all adds up to an unnerving supernatural jaunt. Ages 8–12. *Agent: Jim McCarthy, Dystel, Goderich & Bourret. (Oct.)*

The Disappearance and the Diary (The Manor Mysteries #1)

Eileen Biltmore. Simon Spotlight, \$18.99 hardcover (160p); \$7.99 paper
ISBN 979-8-3471-1140-4;
ISBN 979-8-3471-1139-8

This breezy, 1914-set mystery series launch from debut author Biltmore considers class dynamics within an



affluent British household. Lady Peggy Eldritch, depicted on the book's cover with pale skin, can't wait to celebrate her 12th birthday. Not only are her parents throwing an extravagant ball in her honor, but she'll also be receiving a treasured family heirloom, a sapphire necklace first worn by her great-grandmother Margaret. Peggy's excitement is tempered by the arrival of her 15-year-old cousin Juliette, who's visiting from France and who has seemingly traded her former friendliness for a snobbish and aloof persona. Things take a turn for the worse when Juliette's own heirloom necklace vanishes—and is quickly recovered among the belongings of Peggy's beloved 16-year-old lady's maid, Sarah. As Sarah faces dismissal, Peggy determines to prove the teen's innocence and identify the real culprit. Her investigation takes her into hidden spaces of the manor where she's lived all her life, and to an old diary that could help her save Sarah as well as shine a light on forgotten family history. Across straightforward plotting, Peggy begins to comprehend her privilege and build empathy, resulting in a socially conscious narrative wrapped in a jovial adventure. Publishing simultaneously: *The Girls and the Ghost*. Ages 8–12. (Aug.)

Wish You Well

Jamie Sumner. Atheneum, \$17.99 (288p)
ISBN 978-1-66590-574-9



Sumner (*Schooled*) combines hard-won hope and biting humor in this striking novel about a trio of chronically ill kids who scheme to manipulate a wish-granting charity. For four years, 13-year-old Violet Marino has navigated progressive blindness caused by macular degeneration. While attending an annual picnic at Nashville's Vanderbilt Children's Hospital, she meets fellow rising eighth graders Wyatt Cass, a recent heart transplant recipient, and Noor Singh, who's undergoing chemotherapy following the removal of several Wilms tumors. Though they barely know one another, reticent Violet and acerbic Noor agree to optimistic Wyatt's plan: each member of the trio will apply for a wish from charity organization Wish

on a Star and, when granted ("Who could say no to cancer and blindness and failed hearts?"), insist that the others be brought along for the fulfillment of the wish. As their ploy gains traction, their initially far-fetched relationships deepen, forcing them to embrace emotional vulnerability in a way they haven't done since the onset of their illnesses. Organic, perceptive dialogue relays the fully realized protagonists' fears and anxieties surrounding their health challenges and arrayed adolescent concerns, including crushes and future planning. Dynamic character interactions celebrate connection in the face of triumphs and hardships, culminating in a winning, cathartic joy ride. Ages 10–up. *Agent: Keely Boevig, WordServe Literary. (Sept.)*

A Thousand Nights

Edited by Nafiza Azad and Intisar Khanani. Candlewick, \$19.99 (496p)
ISBN 978-1-5362-4154-9

Azad (*Road of the Lost*) and Khanani (*The Theft of Sunlight*) curate and contribute to a captivating anthology of Muslim folklore that showcases stories from 15 female Muslim authors, including Hanna Alkaf, Diana Ma, and Farah Naz Rishi. Each tale is preceded by sections of an overarching narrative from Azad and Khanani that follows teens Nusaybah and Khawla, who meet in a desert after fleeing violence and civil unrest. As the girls journey toward an unknown destination, they tell each other stories as "a way to keep our spirits alive." Nusaybah regales her companion with "Your Marvi," a reflective fantasy entry from Zeba Shahnaz about a goatherd's daughter who, having returned home following her abduction by a jinn, finds herself unexpectedly drawn back to the magical world she left behind. Khawla next spins the tale "For Bread and Olives," Ream Shukairy's darker offering, during which the arrival of a mysterious stranger coincides with the unexplained disappearances of one family's children. As the collection unfolds, Nusaybah and Khawla encounter fellow refugees, each of whom contributes their own telling. Narratives of

survival and displacement move fluidly between revolutions against tyrants, encounters with bird catchers, and stories about royalty, generating a varied yet thematically cohesive mosaic. Ages 12–up. *Agents: (for Azad) Katelyn Detweiler, Jill Grinberg Literary; (for Khanani) Ellen Scordato, Stonesong Literary. (Sept.)*

Our Strange Duet

Erin A. Craig. Delacorte, \$24.99 (400p)
ISBN 979-8-217-12418-3

Craig (*House of Salt and Sorrows*) delivers an alluring reimagining of Andrew Lloyd Webber's *The Phantom of the Opera* from the perspective of ingénue Christine Daaé. In late-19th-century Paris, 20-year-old chorus dancer Christine, the orphaned daughter of a talented violinist, dreams of becoming a singer. After she clashes with temperamental leading soprano Carlotta Giudicelli, Christine is exiled from the rest of the corps, forced to dress in a room that's rumored haunted by the enigmatic Opera Ghost. When a voice begins coaching Christine's vocal practice, she initially believes it's the Angel of Music, a spirit her father claimed would one day guide her toward greatness. She soon begins to suspect that the voice belongs to the Opera Ghost, and that he's manipulating things in Christine's favor, after a plummeting backdrop wounds Carlotta, allowing Christine to sing in her place and rise to stardom. Meanwhile, Christine reconnects with childhood crush Raoul de Chagny, the new patron of the opera house, and finds herself caught in a dangerous love triangle with the moody, obsessive Opera Ghost and sweet, handsome Raoul. The novel leans heavily on its source material, rarely treading new ground. It's a propulsive if unoriginal homage. Ages 12–up. *Agent: Sarah Landis, Sterling Lord Literistic. (Sept.)*

The Heart Trials (The Heart Trials #1)

J. Elle. Putnam, \$21.99 (400p)
ISBN 979-8-2172-3822-4

★ Merging the spectacle of reality dating competitions with the tension of survival games, this brutal and beguiling romantasy series

opener by Elle (*Fortress of Ambrose*) is set in a dystopian island society that treats emotion as a commodity. To maintain order in the kingdom of Ethyria, ruler the Benevolent regulates his constituents' feelings according to class: Skyborn citizens maintain exclusive access to love, while everyone else is chemically suppressed using drugs called Heartfillers, which induce artificial happiness in consumers. Lowborn, orphaned Axira Merreri, who has pale skin, illegally sells Heartfillers to Skyborn elites, hoping to earn enough money to buy a ship and escape. After one of Axira's clients, a Skyborn royal, overdoses on the contraband, she's arrested for his murder. To secure her freedom, she forms a reluctant alliance with Prince Caelus and volunteers to enter the Tournament of Hearts, a dating competition that offers lowborn contestants a chance at Skyborn citizenship and the privilege of experiencing true love. If Axira obtains and delivers to Caelus a potent magic found within the contest, he'll grant her gold and passage off the island. Sumptuous prose and cerebral, original worldbuilding coalesce into an electrifying narrative that boasts relentless tension, political unease, and irresistible momentum. The result is both gut-wrenching and page-turning. Ages 14–up. *Agent: Jodi Reamer, Writers House. (Sept.)*

Hearts on the Table

Susan Metallo. Candlewick, \$19.99 (464p)
ISBN 978-1-5362-4036-8

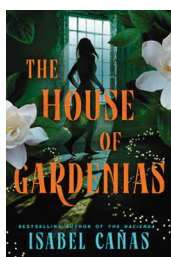
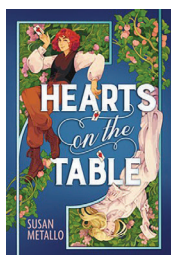
Set in WWI-era Illyria (modern-day Croatia), this clever retelling of *Twelfth Night* from Metallo (*Reasons to Hate Me*) follows identical 17-year-old British twins Sebastian and Violet Farris, who flee England via ship after their father attempts to force both Violet, who's never been in love, and transgender Sebastian into marriage by selling them to the highest bidder. Separated when their vessel is attacked en route to Italy across the Adriatic Sea, the twins become entangled in a familiar web of mistaken identities and romantic complications. Violet disguises herself in male clothing for both

ideological and practical reasons, soon finding an ally in Teo Dukarić, the son of a wealthy landowner. Teo pines for local Olivia Kos, whose disinterest—unbeknownst to Teo—stems from her hidden attraction to women. Though extended historical exposition at times halts momentum, outspoken Violet proves a winning protagonist whose wily fierceness inspires adoration. Intermittent chapters narrated by Olivia's younger sister Faustina—a gifted pianist whom some characters consider a fool—injects lyricism and heart into this inventive Shakespearean adaptation. Ages 14–up. *Agent: Susan Hawk, Upstart Crow Literary. (Sept.)*

The House of Gardenias

Isabel Cañas. Dutton, \$19.99 (288p)
ISBN 978-0-593-62041-0

★ Cañas (*The Possession of Alba Díaz*) blends political tension with the supernatural to deliver an immersive and mesmerizing YA debut. When 16-year-old Minerva Treviño finds a flyer advertising a position as a lady's maid in Calle Jacaranda, a wealthy part of the city, she forsakes her current life scavenging meals and enduring physical abuse from her parents, hoping for more stable conditions. Her employer, elderly Encarnación del Valle, who lives alone, uses her fortune to obtain chispa, a magical source of light. As violence from an impending revolution looms, Encarnación and her attendants leave for the del Valle family mansion high in the mountains. Upon arriving, Minerva glimpses ghosts, suspecting a haunting. She's similarly unsettled by Encarnación's calculating relatives, who believe that their connection to the ruling Viceroy will ensure their safety. But after Encarnación is mysteriously murdered and Minerva witnesses one of the ghosts feeding on the chispa, Minerva investigates the history of the family, their home, and the magic, determined to protect herself as tensions within the manor and the city skyrocket. Elegant depictions of a nation's struggle for democracy and chilling portrayals of class inequality result in a page-turning novel that exhilarates from start to



finish. Ages 14–up. *Agent: Kari Sutherland, KT Literary. (Sept.)*

My Own Kind of Person

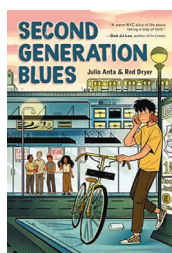
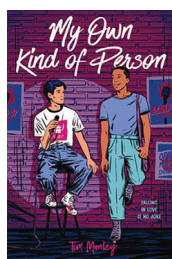
Tim Manley. Rocky Pond, \$19.99 (320p)
ISBN 979-8-217-11448-1

A teen who uses humor as a coping mechanism must recalibrate to tackle overwhelming obstacles in Manley's sincere debut. Though he's long laughed through difficulties, pale-skinned Long Islander Sean O'Brien—a 17-year-old amateur comedian—is finding it harder to joke his way through high-pressure situations, including a failed attempt at losing his virginity, his mother's navigating depression and mania, and his own increasingly prevalent anxiety. An opportunity to lead with honesty rather than deflection comes when Sean's English teacher tasks him and his classmates with performing truth-telling stories. When Sean learns about an upcoming comedy competition whose prize is a chance to open for his favorite comedian, he uses his assignment to rework his usual self-deprecating stand-up set into an honest unpacking of insecurities around gender and sexuality, hopeful that a new approach will garner him the win. As the contest nears, however, Sean struggles to process the emotional vulnerability and increased scrutiny that his more revealing set inspires, all while navigating his unexpected attraction to Black and gay classmate Elijah. Earnest dialogue probes questions about the intersection of gender, sexuality, and mental health. This is a candid exploration of the truth behind comedy and laughter's ability to heal. Ages 14–up. *(Sept.)*

We Run the Night

Peace Mbengei. Soho, \$19.99 (336p)
ISBN 978-1-64129-750-9

Pulling from Kenyan urban legends, Mbengei debuts with a heart-stopping supernatural horror novel. Returning to class following the sudden death of her father in a hit-and-run, senior Shani Bara just wants to make it through the rest of the school year. She's been sleeping less since her father's accident, making it difficult



for her to focus on her studies, and she must maintain impeccable grades and behavior to keep her scholarship to elite Kenyan boarding school Taji Academy. Meanwhile, rumors swirl about night runners—shadowy figures said to roam the campus grounds after dark. Most students dismiss them as pranksters, until Shani awakens in her dorm room covered in mud and realizes she may be becoming one herself. As students begin vanishing and school administrators offer little support, Shani races to uncover the truth behind the night runners before she disappears as well. Eerie ambience and mounting tension fuel a twist-filled paranormal mystery that intertwines with the protagonist's search for the driver responsible for her father's death. Shani's ongoing clashes with wealthy bullies and former friends add layers to her struggles with grief, identity, and loss, lending emotional weight to this suspenseful tale. Ages 14–up. *Agent: Andrea Somberg, Harvey Klinger Literary. (Sept.)*

COMICS

Diablomachia (Diablomachia #1)

Da Hosoi. Nakama, \$10.99 paper (184p)
ISBN 978-1-5458-2762-8

A boy and his demons make a happy home together in this slight but sunny fantasy adventure manga series launch, Hosoi's English-language debut. Chipper young human Neve, who sports overalls, lives in a hidden mountain fortress with demon refugees from hell. Together, they help other demons flee from the underworld, simultaneously concocting cures for the Red Infection, a mysterious plague that's been ravaging Earth. If Neve remains inside the fortress, which prevents his aging, he's safe from both danger and the passage of time. But outside forces jeopardize Neve's mostly peaceful existence, including a concerted attack by evil demons and the arrival of two agents from the Order of the Celestial Dawn, an enigmatic organization conspiring to drag him back into the human world. What's more, Neve's exposure to demons has caused him to manifest supernatural powers of his own. Bold, cheery art and simplistic

demon designs—some with animal-like faces, others with flames shooting out of their heads—recall 1980s shonen manga. Neve's positive demeanor and his camaraderie with his demon cohort juxtapose high stakes and occasional somber flashbacks revealing Neve's origins. Reminiscent of *Zatch Bell!*, it's a fun and familiar quest story. Ages 10–up. *(Aug.)*

Second Generation Blues

Julio Anta, illus. by Red Dryer. HarperAlley, \$26.99 hardcover (256p); \$18.99 paper
ISBN 978-0-06-322234-2;
ISBN 978-0-06-322233-5

This empowering graphic novel from Anta (*Speak Up, Santiago!*) and debut illustrator Dryer finds a Cuban American teen juggling his passion for music journalism and his familial responsibilities. While his friends spend their summers at soccer camp or away on fancy vacations, Luis Menendez is stuck working with his immigrant father at his family's Cuban restaurant in Queens. As the neighborhood gentrifies and rent prices increase, the restaurant struggles financially, but when a prominent music magazine offers Luis an internship, his father cautions him about the impracticality of making a living as a music editor. Later, when Luis reveals his new relationship with Afro-Puerto Rican newcomer Yara, who recently moved into a nearby luxury high-rise, Luis's father lectures him for getting distracted by romance. As his bond with his father sours further, Luis grapples with the weight of his parent's expectations and his desire to follow his dreams. Relatable dialogue and emotive, character-focused artwork portray Luis's vulnerability and yearning for understanding with nuance and sensitivity. Shifting color palettes set the tone: dreamy blues and purples permeate Luis and Yara's budding romance, while striking reds and inky blacks highlight Luis's interactions with his father. The result is an attentive and affirming portrait of one teen's experience blazing his own trail. Ages 13–up. *Author's agent: Jessica Mileo, InkWell Management. Illustrator's agent: Britt Siess, Britt Siess Creative Management. (Sept.)*

June 22, 2026

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33 New BookLife Titles Listed • 12 New BookLife Titles Reviewed

Indie Spotlight

In this edition of our monthly thematic roundup of BookLife titles, we feature mysteries and thrillers.

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POLITICAL AND CORPORATE THRILLERS

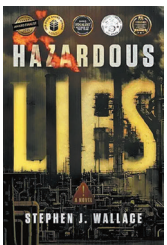
Devil's News



Isabel Wells
ASIN B0DX7HKLKS

Author statement: "I was inspired to write *Devil's News* by my interest in narcissism, high-pressure work environments, and the hidden dynamics that exist behind the scenes. My writing process often begins with a personal experience, and for this story, it was a toxic job I left, which I reimagined into something more sinister."

Hazardous Lies



Stephen J. Wallace
ISBN 978-1-63299-793-7

Author statement: "As an engineer, I investigated many accidents in chemical plants. In *Hazardous Lies*, a new government investigator, Jon Barrett, uncovers a corporate cover-up involving powerful political allies, while dealing with his own past trauma."

The Lockup Period

Vince Thompson
ASIN B0GX314884

Author statement: "I've been a waiter on L.A.'s Sunset Strip, an executive at major media companies, a CEO, and a public-company



board member. Along the way, I've done business with venture investors, celebrities, and—unknowingly at the time—a few crime figures. I like to write about startups, greed, and the underbelly of the business world. I find the characters who dwell in these areas quite entertaining. I don't like particularly dark content, and I try to leave my readers better off than when they joined me."

The Weird Girl



Carla Damron
ISBN 978-1-965733-79-0

Author statement: "Social worker Georgia Thayer battles to keep her foster kid safe from the deadly fentanyl epidemic. When a teen is badly injured and another disappears, Georgia takes on crooked southern politics, powerful families, and her own self-doubt to bring down a drug kingpin."

As a social worker, advocacy is a core element of my profession. In *The Weird Girl*, I use suspense to expose the prevalence and dangers of fentanyl."

PSYCHOLOGICAL THRILLERS

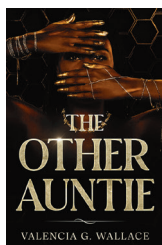
Anyone but Her

Cynthia Swanson
ASIN B0D94HSH3M



Author statement: “My publishing path is unusual. My first two psychological suspense/thriller titles were traditionally published by Big Five publishers. I’m also the editor of a small press anthology, *Denver Noir*, published by Akashic Books in 2022. Despite the success of all three titles, I chose to go indie for *Anyone but Her*.”

The Other Auntie



Valencia G. Wallace
ASIN B0GRN7PYDM

Author statement: “*The Other Auntie* is a psychological thriller about a mother entering rehab for a second chance. Instead, detox uncovers memories buried beneath a lie carefully constructed by her sister, Naomi. I started writing at a young age to create a safe space for me to express my pain. My mother wrote poems, became lost to addiction, and died before she could get a second chance. At its heart, *The Other Auntie* asks a question that first emerged while thinking on my own family history: Who benefits when one person is labeled bad and another is labeled good?”

Revenge Waits



Pamela Dunnam
ASIN B0GTYZ92YV

Author statement: “The heart of this story examines family loyalty and the ripple effects of revenge on everyone caught in its wake. I have always been fascinated by the quiet tensions beneath the surface of ordinary people and communities, where reputation and appearances can matter more than truth.”

SMALL TOWN AND PLACE-DRIVEN MYSTERIES



Carbon City, 1925

James Alan Gill
ASIN B0G64W5DQ5

Author statement: “I grew up in the setting of *Carbon City, 1925*, hearing stories about the Klan wars and the mine massacres and the gangsters who operated with impunity. I wanted to write about this history, but I also didn’t want to retell the story that had already been told. I spent over 10 years researching the time period, but it wasn’t until I created my fictional characters that *Carbon City, 1925* took shape.”

Q&A SPONSORED

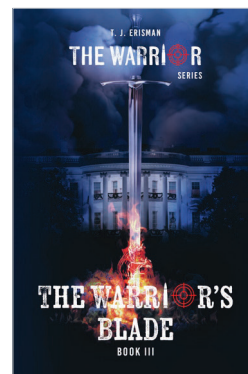
BookLife Talks with T.J. Erisman

This year, Armed Forces vet Erisman ended her military thriller trilogy with *The Warrior’s Blade*, an action-packed tale that follows two battles: one in our world that Marine Peter Mercer fights, and another in the spiritual realm between demons and the Divine Task Force. We spoke with her about finishing the series and what she hopes any veterans take away from it.

The thriller genre is large and wide-ranging. What makes your books stand out to readers?

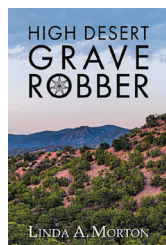
My books do more than deliver high-stakes military action. They explore the brutal emotional and psychological cost of combat—the trauma, grief, and hidden battles that tier 1 operators face long after the fight is over.

What truly sets the Warrior series apart is that it tells two stories at once: the visible war fought with bullets and blades, and the unseen war being waged for the warrior’s soul. While elite operators engage the enemy in the physical world, a fierce



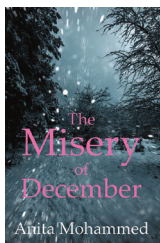
battle rages in the spiritual realm between demonic forces and the Celestial Task Force. These aren’t internal struggles or metaphors. This is real influence from the unseen realm—the moments when the hair stands up on the back of your neck, when something evil feels close, or when a miracle happens that defies explanation. My hope is that these stories reach combat veterans who are silently battling unimaginable trauma and suicidal thoughts. If this series can give even one warrior a sense of hope and remind them that they’re not alone in the fight—maybe even help save a life—then it’s done its job.

For more, visit booklife.com/erisman

High Desert Grave Robber

Linda A. Morton
ASIN B0FQMTGFK

Author statement: "Having lived and worked in New Mexico for many years, I am familiar with the art and culture of the area. This story takes place in Santa Fe and is about a teacher who takes a summer job at a prestigious art gallery and finds herself in the middle of an FBI investigation. Native American art and local culture are woven into the mystery."

The Misery of December

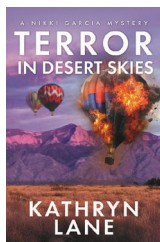
Anita Mohammed
ISBN 978-1-66297-286-7

Author statement: "An unknown gang disrupts the peaceful pact established decades ago between three crime syndicates and the police in Burlington, Vermont. A group of detectives are tasked with identifying and bringing down this new terror in town. I was born in Trinidad and moved to Montreal, Canada, when I was 11 months old. *The Misery of December* is my debut novel."

Sashé Boudreaux: Beignets, Bones, and Buried Secrets

Coco McQ
ASIN B0G3826162

Author statement: "I wanted to write a Southern cozy-ish mystery that blended humor, history, and community with deeper themes of injustice and redemption. I hope that readers will come for the mystery, but stay for the people, the atmosphere, and the feeling of sitting on a Louisiana porch listening to a friend tell a story worth hearing."

Terror in Desert Skies: A Nikki Garcia Mystery

Kathryn Lane
ASIN B0FN43VPYQ

Author statement: "Private investigator Nikki Garcia's vacation becomes a nightmare when a hot air balloon crashes, leaving her sister-in-law dead and her brother fighting for his life. When Nikki uncovers evidence that the crash may not have been an accident, she races to catch a ruthless perpetrator. My love of adventure, art, culture, and the graceful beauty of balloons in flight inspired me to create *Terror in Desert Skies*."

Wave's End

Kay Jennings
ASIN B0FRGF8D46

Author statement: "I grew up on the Oregon coast in a small town not unlike my Port Stirling fiction setting and began writing my mystery series with *Shallow Waters* seven years ago. Several of my books were inspired by real life stories, and *Wave's End* reflects current conflicts regarding land use issues throughout Oregon, and, especially, on the coast."

You can't win a fight you don't know you're in.

50 SECRETS Nobody Tells You in HOLLYWOOD

The Working Actor's Guide to
Avoiding Pitfalls and Supercharging Your Career

Mike Kimmel
Foreword by Gigi Erneta

ISBN 978-1-953057-18-1 (paperback)
ISBN 978-1-953057-17-4 (hardback)
ISBN 978-1-953057-16-7 (ebook)

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Mike Kimmel
Foreword by Valerie Marsch

"With humorous and welcome candor, Kimmel provides a wealth of behind-the-scenes information and advice about auditions, interacting with agents, and prioritizing self-care, with actionable game plans for actors ranging in age from their 20s to their 50s."

—BookLife by Publishers Weekly Review

"...the author guides would-be actors through lessons on dealing with managers, agents, and other performers, as well as the labyrinthine workings of the entertainment industry in general."

—Kirkus Reviews

Available from Ingram!



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Booksellers, publishers, librarians, and agents are encouraged to look at the 33 self-published titles below. Each appears with a list of retailers that are selling the book and a description provided by its author. Some of these writers are waiting to be discovered; others have track records and followings and are doing it on their own. If you are a self-published author interested in listing titles in this section, please visit publishersweekly.com/pw-select for more information.

Fiction

Conference Room Wars: A Workplace Novel on Leadership, Emotional Intelligence, and Building High-Performance Teams

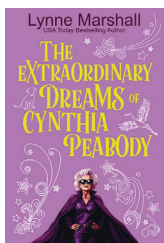


Michael Cook, illus. by jcalebdesigns. MW Cook. \$25.99 (300p), ISBN 978-1-970551-04-4; \$5.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-970551-02-0
Amazon, Apple Books, Barnes & Noble,

IngramSpark, Kobo

Workplace novel that tackles toxic culture and ineffective management through emotional intelligence and leadership development.

The Extraordinary Dreams of Cynthia



Peabody
Lynne Marshall. Lynne Marshall. \$11.99 paper (278p), ISBN 979-8-2492-1773-0; \$3.99 e-book, ASIN B0GJ32NX2B
Amazon, Apple Books, Barnes & Noble, Kobo

A reluctant hero, mysterious portals, inexplicable abilities! She must be off her trolley. Is becoming the unofficial guardian angel of her hometown worth risking her life?

House of Dust

K.R. Elliott. Forensic Mythopolitik Press. \$19.99 paper (430p), ISBN 978-1-972847-01-5; \$9.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-972847-01-5
Amazon



After the seventh farmer dies in his field, journalist Grace Washington returns to rural Pennsylvania to investigate a company forcing families off farms.

Kill My Darling



Thanh Dinh, illus. by Tiago Araujo. Writerly Books. \$23.99 paper (286p), ISBN 978-1-0694998-9-9; \$9.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-0694998-9-9
Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Indigo

After killing her lover, Angela unravels through memory and obsession, where love erases selfhood. A dark, lyrical descent asking if devotion is salvation or annihilation in the end.

Land Shadows

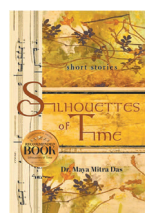


R.J. Striegel. Open Instructional Narratives. \$24.99 paper (356p), ISBN 978-0-9904141-6-2; \$3.99 e-book, ISBN 978-0-9904141-8-6
Amazon, Apple Books, Barnes & Noble,

IngramSpark

Orphaned by the Scottish Clearances, Murdoch McNeil claws his way from a New York orphanage to a New Mexico ranch—only to face the same dispossession that destroyed his family.

Silhouettes of Time



Maya Mitra Das. Bookwrights House. \$14.99 paper (162p), ISBN 978-1-965552-33-9
Amazon, Barnes & Noble
Silhouettes of Time by Maya Mitra Das blends lyrical, multicultural

stories of love, identity, and resilience across time, memory, and tradition.

Submit: A Novel



Natasha Lewin. Stage of Grace Press. \$25.99 (202p), ISBN 979-8-9953003-1-1; \$11.99 paper (202p), ISBN 979-8-9953003-0-4
Barnes & Noble, Books-A-Million, Bookshop.org,

Walmart

A late coming-of-age literary novel about a Black woman's reckoning with menopause, marriage, and purity culture—and what it means to surrender to faith.

Top Dog



Kris Hoover. Dorrance Publishing. \$19.99 paper (268p), ISBN 979-8-89499-370-6; \$14.99 e-book, ISBN 979-8-89499-868-8
Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Dorrance Bookstore

Top Dog is a wild adventure through the dog-showing life of the '70s, a unique tale of finding yourself and finding love in the most unexpected of places.

PERSISTENCE

ISBN : 979-8892285612

Persistence: *Living an Authentic Life with a Disability* by **Linda Dezenski** is a heartfelt and deeply reflective memoir that offers readers an honest examination of identity, perseverance, and the pursuit of self-acceptance in a world that often misunderstands difference. Born with Cerebral Palsy, Linda Dezenski invites readers into her personal journey with remarkable openness, sharing the emotional, physical, and social realities of navigating life with a disability. Yet what makes this memoir stand apart is that it never confines itself to a narrative solely about limitation or hardship. Instead, Dezenski creates a richly human story filled with humor, vulnerability, determination, and insight. She refuses to allow disability to become the defining feature of her life story and instead presents it as one element within a much broader journey of discovering purpose, confidence, and authenticity. Through candid storytelling and moments of both pain and triumph, she reveals the complexities of living in a society that is not always built for inclusion while also celebrating the strength that comes from embracing oneself fully. Her voice feels sincere and relatable, drawing readers into experiences that are deeply personal yet universally understood.



heartbreak and humor, emotional transformation, and a powerful message capable of resonating with audiences across generations. Persistence ultimately stands as more than a memoir; it is a moving reminder that authenticity itself can be an act of courage. For readers seeking a thought-provoking, emotionally engaging, and socially relevant story, Linda Dezenski delivers a work that is not only memorable but necessary, offering a message that remains with readers long after the final page has been turned.



At a time when conversations surrounding representation, accessibility, and authentic voices continue to shape literature and media, Persistence arrives as both a timely and necessary work. Readers today increasingly seek stories grounded in truth, stories that move beyond stereotypes and offer meaningful insight into lives and experiences often underrepresented in mainstream narratives. Dezenski succeeds in doing precisely that by providing a perspective that educates without preaching and inspires without relying on sentimentality.

The memoir's themes of resilience, belonging, overcoming societal expectations, and redefining self-worth extend far beyond disability and speak to anyone who has struggled to find acceptance or identity in a world eager to place labels on people. The emotional depth and visual storytelling potential throughout the memoir also suggest strong cinematic possibilities. Linda's journey contains all the elements of a compelling film adaptation: a courageous protagonist, moments of

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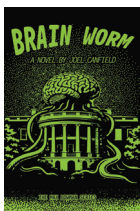


*also in other major online bookstore



Mystery/Thriller

Brain Worm

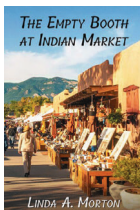


Joel Canfield, illus. by A.J. Canfield. Joined at the Hip Worldwide. \$15.99 paper (230p), ISBN 978-0-9975707-7-9; \$5.99 e-book, ASIN B0GHPQ9D9X

Amazon, Apple Books, Barnes & Noble, Google Books, Kobo

Max Bowman travels a trail of weirdness that shockingly takes him directly to the White House, where the president has big, beautiful plans for Max.

The Empty Booth at Indian Market



Linda A. Morton. Linda A. Morton. \$13.95 paper (132p), ISBN 979-8-218-61454-6; \$5.99 e-book, ISBN 979-8-218-71823-7

Amazon, Barnes & Noble, IngramSpark

It's busy Indian Market weekend in Santa Fe, New Mexico. A display booth sits empty. Local police discover a major crime near the market scene.

SF/Fantasy/Horror

A Fairy Story: Saving the Green



Levanah Shell Bdolak, illus. by Ched. C. Readers Magnet. \$19.99 paper (314p), ISBN 979-8-90000-034-3; \$5.99 e-book, ISBN 979-8-90000-035-0

Amazon, Barnes & Noble

Merrilee learns she has Fae blood and joins a mysterious stranger to save his kingdom, launching a global adventure revealing hidden realms, ancient beings, and the true, unseen Fairies who protect nature.

The Final Steep

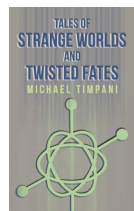


A.K. Hayat. Steep House Press. \$17.99 paper (406p), ISBN 978-9948-626-94-7; \$4.99 e-book, ISBN 978-9948-634-89-8

Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Blackwell's, Kinokuniya

A tea necromancer anchors a ghost prince for seven days before he becomes a monster, then hunts the royal conspiracy behind his death.

Tales of Strange Worlds and Twisted Fates



Michael Timpani. Dorrance Publishing. \$13.99 paper (104p), ISBN 979-8-89978-136-0; \$8.99 e-book, ISBN 979-8-89978-635-8

Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Dorrance Bookstore

A collection of 50 original, thought-provoking short tales ranging from sci-fi to fantasy to horror.

The Von Chronicles: Forbidden



M.C. Jones. Dorrance Publishing. \$20.99 paper (288p), ISBN 979-8-89649-065-4; \$15.99 e-book, ISBN 979-8-89649-564-2

Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Dorrance Bookstore

Against the backdrop of a secluded island, the fates of two young souls collide as their families, exiled from their homelands, clash over control of the island's resources.

Nonfiction

Ben Franklin 2026: His Views of America

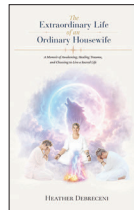


and the World
Robert Merz. Values of America Publishing. \$9.99 paper (224p), ISBN 979-8-2475-0741-3; \$4.99 e-book, ASIN B0GN4RHLJQ

Amazon

Explores how Franklin's 13 virtues, his understanding of the "burden of freedom," and his diplomatic wisdom provide actionable frameworks for revitalizing American democracy.

The Extraordinary Life of an Ordinary Housewife: A Memoir of Awakening, Healing Trauma, and Choosing to Live a Sacred Life

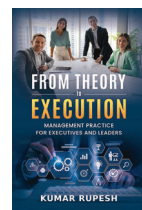


Heather Debrececi. Heather Debrececi Enterprises. \$15.55 paper (178p), ISBN 979-8-9953313-0-8; \$6.99 e-book, ISBN 979-8-9953313-1-5

Amazon, IngramSpark

A raw spiritual memoir of trauma, healing, awakening, and discovering the sacred hidden within ordinary life.

From Theory to Execution: Management Practice for Executives and Leaders



Kumar Rupesh. Kumar Rupesh. \$21.99 paper (266p), ISBN 979-8-1951-5068-6; \$9.99 e-book, ASIN B0GZDYX11R

Amazon

An integrated management framework connecting strategy, operations, forecasting, finance, and execution for executives and practicing leaders.

Health Basics for a Mismatched World: 10 Principles to Take Control of Your Health



David Bunn. Palmetto. \$17.99 paper (310p), ISBN 979-8-3188-1348-1; \$6.99 e-book, ISBN 979-8-3188-1349-8

Amazon, Barnes & Noble

Reclaim your health with a science-based roadmap rooted in evolution and ecology. Bunn shows how to restore balance through food, movement, sleep, and environment.

The Hollywood Chronicles of a Female Tech Founder



N.D. Zerman. Deepstory Publishing. \$21.99 (188p), ISBN 978-90-836672-0-1; \$9.99 e-book, ISBN 978-90-836672-3-2

Amazon, Barnes & Noble

N.D. Zerman's business memoir chronicles a female founder building ScriptBook AI over seven years, exposing how Hollywood and venture capital reward loyalty over truth.

Life on the Ohio Frontier: A Collection of Letters from Mary Lott to Deacon John Phillips, 1826-1846



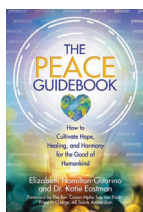
Jacqueline Miller Bachar, illus. by Paul Bachar Jr.. International Forum. \$24.99 (150p), ISBN 978-1-886934-00-9; \$14.99 paper, ISBN 978-1-886934-01-6

Amazon

These letters tell the story of Mary Phillips Lott and describe the sadness and tribulations of life on the Ohio frontier.

The Peace Guidebook: How to Cultivate Hope, Healing, and Harmony for the Good of Humankind

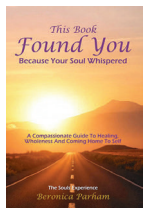
Elizabeth Hamilton-Guarino. Health Communications. \$17.95 paper (304p), ISBN 978-0-



7573-2608-0; \$12.99 e-book, ASIN B0FCG78FL9
Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Books-A-Million, Bookshop.org, Target, Walmart
In a divided and noisy world, *The Peace Guidebook*

invites readers to return to what matters most: compassion, connection, peace, and humanity.

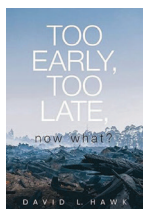
This Book Found You Because Your Soul



Whispered
Beronica Parham. Cheryl Taylor. \$16.99 paper (196p), ISBN 979-8-9865872-4-0; \$6.99 e-book, ISBN 979-8-9865872-3-3
Amazon

This reflective work explores the idea that personal transformation begins from within, examining how inner awareness, self-discovery, and spiritual insight can guide individuals toward growth. Through a series of contemplative passages, it considers the role of intuition, emotional healing, and purpose in shaping one's life direction.

Too Early, Too Late, Now What?

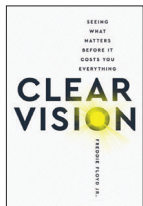


David Hawk. Brilliant Books Literary. \$14.99 paper (326p), ISBN 978-1-64133-827-1; \$2.99 e-book, ASIN B0B1PBKH55
Amazon

David L. Hawk revisits decades of research on environmental decline, regulation, and human choices, asking what can still be done before it is too late.

Religion/Spirituality

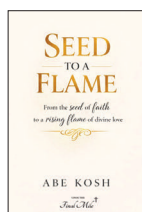
Clear Vision: Seeing What Matters Before It Cost You Everything



Freddie Floyd Jr. Floyd Legacy Publishing. \$16.99 paper (104p), ISBN 979-8-218-93661-7; \$3.99 e-book, ASIN B0GQGK4MN4
Amazon

Short, powerful chapters combining biblical wisdom, mindset growth, and practical life lessons to help readers regain clarity and direction.

Seed to a Flame: From the Seed of Faith to a Rising Flame of Divine Love

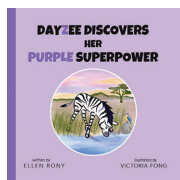


Abe Kosh. Upon the Final Mile. \$11.99 paper (142p), ISBN 979-8-9959648-1-0; \$2.99 e-book, ISBN 979-8-9959648-0-3
Amazon

This uplifting collection of poems, short stories, and relevant scripture verses invites readers on a heart-felt journey of hope, faith, and love.

Children's/YA

DayZee Discovers Her Purple Superpower



Ellen Rony. Alexander Works. \$18.95 (32p), ISBN 979-8-218-76349-7
Dayzeethezebra.com, Amazon, Barnes & Noble,

IngramSpark

DayZee is a newborn zebra unlike any other. She faces social isolation, a rough introduction to Malawi's animal kingdom, and the lonely longing to fit into her herd.

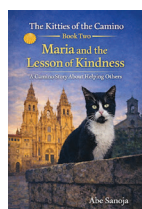
Fates Design



Abigail Holton. Xlibris. \$19.99 paper (160p), ISBN 978-1-5245-0733-6
Amazon, Barnes & Noble

Ten years after abandoning him, Michael's father returns with a dark secret. Alongside his friends Luna and Jeremy, Michael faces a battle between good and evil.

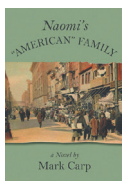
The Kitties of the Camino: Maria and the Lesson of Kindness



Abe Sanoja. The Kitties of the Camino Publishing. \$16.99 paper (32p), 13 ISBN 979-8252085517
Amazon

Bilingual English-Spanish stories inspired by the Camino. The Kitties share values like kindness and curiosity. Proceeds support children, kitty shelters, and the environment.

Naomi's "America" Family



Mark Carp. Xlibris. \$23.99 paper (486p), ISBN 978-1-5035-8751-9
Amazon, Barnes & Noble
Joseph Moshev, 17, arrives in 1903 America chasing dreams

but faces hardship. Alongside cousin Naomi, 16, he pursues ambition. Can they succeed in a changing nation?

Never Forgotten



Suria Scapin, illus. by Lumina Pirilampus. Catavento Press. \$19.95 (42p), ISBN 979-8-9865057-0-1; \$14.90 paper, ISBN 979-8-8691-3858-3
Amazon, Barnes & Noble,

Bookshop.org, IngramSpark

A young girl recalls her grandmother through images and stories, keeping her alive in memory. A poetic celebration of love, legacy, and the bonds that transcend loss.

Operation Midnight Rose



AimeeAnn Blythe. AimeeAnn Blythe. \$9.99 paper (174p), ISBN 979-8-2553-5559-4; \$9.99 e-book, ASIN B0H31W9GWB
Amazon

In Nazi-occupied Berlin 1945, siblings Liesel and Max uncover their parents' secret. The children must navigate codes hidden in an old leatherbound book.

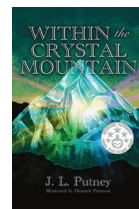
Reunion of Strangers



Steve Hobbs. Hatchet Mountain Press. \$17.99 paper (214p), ISBN 978-0-9993177-4-7; \$0.99 e-book, ISBN 978-0-9993177-5-4
Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Books-A-Million

Henry Rawlings, a deadly gunfighter rescued by a family on a dimension-jumping ship, must protect them as teen Andy Banks in 1986 unlocks future memories that could save them all.

Within the Crystal Mountain



James Putney, illus. by Hannah Prismen. J.L. Putney. \$12.97 paper (304p), ISBN 979-8-227-23929-7; \$0.99 e-book, ISBN 979-8-201-51571-3
Amazon

A simple farmer, one of the small folk from the land of Gen, is tasked with the deliverance of his village, which has been imprisoned by a mysterious enchantment.



BookLife Reviews are paid reviews of independently published books. A lightning bolt (⚡) indicates an Editor's Pick, a book of outstanding quality.

PERFORMING ARTS

EDITOR'S PICK

Broadway for Beginners: A Tourist's Guide to Broadway and Off-Broadway in New York City

Brian Guy | Preview Night Press

82p, trade paper, \$16.99, ISBN 979-8-994-22730-5

The title of this lively, informative guide is a bit of a misnomer, as the chances are excellent that even a seasoned theater hand will learn much from Guy's guide, a welcome and helpful introduction. Guy, co-producer of the award-winning hip hop musical *Mexodus*, invites readers behind the curtain of New York's most storied theaters. The emphasis is on the practical, with an eye toward the out-of-towner on a budget, as Guy lays out practical instructions for getting the most out of Broadway while prioritizing limited time and finances and purchasing tickets at discounted rates. Insider tips abound, like how to get last-minute house seats or secure a refund when a star has been replaced for the performance. Guy includes a seating guide for short people, how to research accessibility in older theaters and



Charming, comprehensive advice for the Broadway-bound audience.

Great for fans of Teale Dvornik's *History Hiding Around Broadway*, David Armstrong's *Broadway Nation*.

infectious when reveling in the humanity of performers and the anything-can-happen ethos of live theater, both celebrating and warning about Broadway's intimacy, like the dangers of the front row: "It is a literal splash zone, but we true Broadway fans agree you want to sit where you can get spit on."

Beyond that, *Broadway for Beginners* brims with helpful and fascinating tidbits. Guy's style is effusive and charming, and the reader will experience it like being on the end of a highly animated conversation with a fun in-the-know friend. This is a learned and engaging little book that will offer much to theatergoers.

Cover: **B** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: – Editing: **A** | Marketing copy: **A**

HEALTH & DIET

EDITOR'S PICK

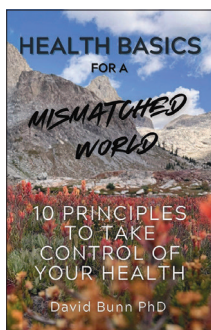
Health Basics for a Mismatched World: 10 Principles to Take Control of Your Health

David Bunn | Palmetto

308p, trade paper, \$17.99, ISBN 979-8-318-81348-1

"Something fundamental is broken—not just in our food and health systems, but in the way we think about health itself," Bunn writes in this all-encompassing guide to healthy living. Drawing from years of experience in Ecology, he characterizes the human body as a highly tuned ecosystem that requires careful balancing of nutrition, movement, connection to others, physical strength, and more. Through 10 holistic health principles that range from minimizing dietary sugar to active social engagement, Bunn steers readers away from an overdependence on what he terms the "sickcare" system—one "primarily focused on managing symptoms, rather than keeping you healthy"—and into personal ownership of health outcomes.

Bunn's stats on the power of big food, big pharma, and the industries that shape public policy drive home how organizations work together to make change



Rousing ecological approach to full-body health and wellness.

Great for fans of Erin Clifford's *Wellness Reimagined*, Casey Means's *Good Energy*.

vincing, delivered in bite-sized, encouraging prose that elicits hands-on application.

"Real health starts when you decide to take charge," Bunn declares. He urges readers toward incremental change without sounding judgmental. Bunn has firsthand experience with these principles, which helped reverse his own chronic health issues. That boots-on-the-ground awareness, combined with extensive research and unique tools (apps to help analyze food hazards, steps to choose a functional practitioner) makes this a comprehensive, systematic approach to cultivating "a lifelong relationship with your own body and environment."

Cover: **B** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: – Editing: **A** | Marketing copy: **A**

SELF-HELP

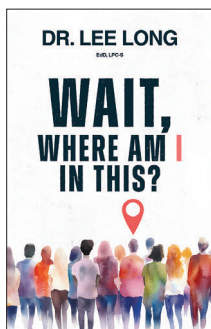
Wait, Where AM I in This?

Lee Long | Novus Press Works

252p, e-book, \$9.99, ISBN 978-1-963-36612-9

Long debuts with a straightforward but profound premise: that putting the energy into the discovery of your inner world and finding the most authentic version of yourself is the foundation for understanding others and the key to connection in relationships. With an emphasis on recognizing our own patterns and their sources, on listening to our embodied responses to situations, and on discovering our true preferences, values, and priorities, Long centers individuals' unique circumstances and offers empathetic guidance on how to move from looking externally for solutions to acknowledging one's own fears and giving oneself grace.

Long's approach to the material is organized, flexible, and easy to follow. He makes an effective case for doing the inner work with "patience and persistence" and provides a balance between explanatory frameworks and encouraging stories of patient growth from his three decades as a therapist, structured as relatable dialogues. Long proves personable and caring while also maintaining a voice of



Heartening, original guide for self-discovery and facing one's patterns.

Great for fans of Mel Robbins's *Take Control of Your Life*; Ichiro Kishimi and Fumitake Koga's *The Courage to Be Disliked*.

authoritative mentorship rooted in hard-won experience. Especially heartening is his presentation of "progress" as an "ongoing commitment" to "growing" capacity to navigate dynamics and patterns, and of failures and setbacks as part of life as "a complex, evolving being engaged in an ongoing dialogue with yourself, others, and the world around you."

As this is not formally structured as a workbook, readers are encouraged to understand the underlying ideas rather than just complete exercises. Those ideas illuminate and edify, including Long's clear-eyed guidance for understanding our roles in persistently difficult interpersonal relationships and his reminders to check in with ourselves about how we really feel and not just whether we're fulfilling what is expected of us. Long is a compassionate, astute reader of people with much fresh, empathetic wisdom and practical advice.

Cover: **B** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: – Editing: **A** | Marketing copy: **A**

FICTION

Unforgivable: Through a Child's Eyes

I. Caroline Crocker | *Rambling Ruminations*
428p, e-book, \$4.99, ASIN B0CW1734LD

Crocker reconstructs the harrowing life story of her father, Frits Evenbly, beginning with a deceptive idyll in the Belgian Congo of the 1930s, where Congolese "houseboys" indulge him with affection. When Frits's father falls ill, the family is forced to return to the Netherlands for better medical care, only to learn his father suffers from an incurable disease. Facing financial ruin, five-year-old Frits and his younger brother Jan are sent to a children's home—*het kindertehuis*—in Nazi-occupied Holland, an easy decision made by their distant mother who never wanted children, let alone sons. There, the boys endure a triple-war: the terror of Nazi occupation, the abuse and neglect of the sisters tasked with their care, and the quieter but no less devastating agony of maternal rejection.

Crocker's greatest triumph lies in the way she filters catastrophe through the bewildered consciousness of a child: Frits witnesses a man beaten and executed, sees corpses discarded like refuse, fears being killed by a German soldier over a loaf



Poignant child's-eye view of trauma and recovery during WW2.

Great for fans of Corrie Ten Boom's *The Hiding Place*, J.G. Ballard's *Empire of the Sun*.

The narrative skillfully balances the imaginative speculation required to fill historical gaps with research from family letters, diaries, and memoirs. Frits's narration is painfully earnest, occasionally sharpened by a dry wit that keeps the novel from drowning entirely in despair. What sets it apart is how forgiveness is seen not as an erasure of the past but as an act that sets a survivor free from childhood wounds. By the final pages, what lingers is the astonishing persistence of tenderness amid the magnitude of cruelty a child endured.

Cover: **A-** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **A** Editing: **A-** | Marketing copy: **A**

FICTION

Reckless Disregard and Other Stories

Linda Griffin | *Main Street Rag*
241p, trade paper, \$18.95, ISBN 978-1-964277-83-7

Griffin's pensive debut collection of 15 short stories ranges from a mini novella to briefer selections, touching on themes so whimsical they often border on the cryptic. In "Arlen Spencer," a strange "drea[m] within a dream" leads to vague reflections on life's opacity, while the first and titular story in the collection unfolds like a murder mystery of sorts, as Kristen helps Detective Cabral solve the hit-and-run that killed her boyfriend, Bobby. But that trajectory takes a turn midway, where, instead of resolving the central mystery, Griffin introduces another that completely changes the story's direction. The collection frequently takes such detours, picking up forsaken characters while spotlighting the mundane, the unanticipated, and the complexities of this thing called life.

Griffin sometimes plays with form and structure to underscore her themes, as in the widowed Emma's house remodel in "Home Improvement," where pages of logistical drudgery—room dimensions, tile samples, demolition schedules—parallel the difficulties of growing older while trying to reshape self-sufficiency. Emma,



Ruminative collection tests need for human connection against self-reliance.

Great for fans of George Saunders's *Tenth of December*, Jamel Brinkley's *Witness*.

that rejuvenates his passion for his wife, while she casually informs him that "I want to be left alone." Griffin leaves their ending unknown, framed by familiarity, disappointment, and, against all odds, hope.

Most of Griffin's stories leave their outcomes open to reader interpretation, exploring a wide range of themes that all hover around a universal truth: with human connection comes pain, loss, beauty, and an enduring struggle between the lure of autonomy and the power of belonging to something larger than yourself.

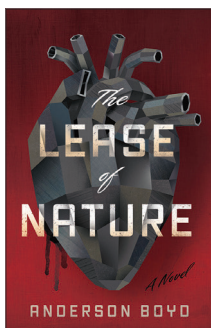
Cover: **B-** | Design & typography: **A-** | Illustrations: **-** Editing: **B+** | Marketing copy: **A-**

MYSTERY/THRILLER
The Lease of Nature

Anderson Boyd | *Greenleaf Book Group*
368p, e-book, \$27.95, ASIN B0G27M1414

In Boyd's debut, he crafts an ambitious tale centered on the human body—its preservation, manipulation, and commodification—bringing together two seemingly disparate lives. Daiyu, a young woman born to working-class parents in Mao-era China and now an inductee in a high-level crime syndicate, and Maya, a cardiac surgeon at the forefront of experimental vascular engineering, inhabit worlds as far apart as possible. Yet both are shaped by early, formative personal loss and governed by external institutional forces. As their worlds begin to intersect, the novel traces how they navigate systems that seek to control human life—either to extend it or to exploit it.

At its core, the novel probes a timely if troubling question: how far can the human body be altered before something essential is lost—and who gets to decide the tipping point? By placing scientific innovation alongside organized, deliberate violence, Boyd draws out unsettling parallels between domains often seen as opposed: perhaps scientific innovation is necessary, or perhaps it sits too close to power structures that treat the body as something to be managed, improved, or



Compelling novel pairs experimental medicine with organized crime.

Great for fans of Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*, John Hands's *The Serpent's Embrace*.

Boyd is not interested in easy answers. What he does instead is interweave profound questions with the lived experiences of his characters, allowing them to be worked out through human choices made under pressure. Though the wide cast and ever-shifting perspectives can sometimes distract from the novel's central focus, readers will appreciate the unexpected way Boyd ties Daiyu and Maya's arcs together—especially their joint connection to Jian. This thought-provoking offering will interest readers drawn to morally complex speculative fiction.

Cover: **A-** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **-** Editing: **A-** | Marketing copy: **B+**

MYSTERY/THRILLER

Killer

Gary Marcus | Verity Press, LLC

326p, mass market, \$17.99, ISBN 979-8-9945018-0-1

In Marcus's action-packed thriller debut, Richard Zumwalt is driven by a lifelong jealousy of his twin brother, Henry. At 18, he devises a plan to kill his parents and frame Henry—a plan that shockingly works, landing Henry in psychiatric prison with a 25-year sentence. Desperate to get his life back, Henry—with the help of his first love and now sister-in-law Susan—pulls off an unbelievable escape, assuming the identity of Jake Johnson and building a new existence for himself. But when Susan reaches out to him with a distraught message about Richard making a powerful play for the presidency, Henry's faced with a difficult choice: enjoy the immense success of his ground-breaking, multi-million-dollar medical company as Jake Johnson, or reclaim his birthright to seek vengeance against his deadly twin brother.

Marcus crafts an ambitious plot swimming with intrigue: political agendas, identity swaps, forbidden romance, and intimate betrayals abound, with twisty



Ambitious thriller of stolen identity and family dysfunction.

Great for fans of Sarah Bonner's *Her Perfect Twin*, Scott Reardon's *The Prometheus Man*.

reveals hidden around nearly every corner. Richard is a no-holds-barred, detestable villain, killing without compunction and thirsty for power, while Henry quickly learns that justice comes with a steep cost. Underlying their fraught relationship is an exploration of alcoholism and its perils, as the Zumwalt family has amassed their fortune in the beer industry. "Alcohol is a drug, and my family thrives off selling it," Henry muses, later declaring it to be "more destructive to the health, lives, and economy of this country than all the current illegal drugs combined."

Violence, tragedy, and family dysfunction form the center of this dramatic tale, illuminating how identity can be impacted by mental illness, early life bonds, and the temptations of power. From the start, readers will root for Henry to make things right and earn a true new beginning, and Marcus delivers a climactic ending—of difficult choices, sacrifice, and high-stakes confrontations—that will leave readers pleasantly surprised.

Cover: **B+** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: — | Editing: **B** | Marketing copy: **A**

MYSTERY/THRILLER

Bogg Island Blues

Michael Glennon | Hardboiled Books

244p, e-book, \$3.99, ISBN 979-8-31783-292-6

Glennon (*Song & Dance*) delivers an entertaining private-eye caper, the second Frank Rotten book, a detective series as proudly scuzzy as its protagonist's name suggests. P.I. Rotten dreams of sleeping with Maggie Malloy, the foul-mouthed, unpredictable bombshell from his college days. After helping her evade mafia goons, Rotten follows her to Bogg Island, a picturesque New England tourist destination where he discovers that she is married to Bill Hackney. When Bill's father Harry Hackney falls off a cliff, Bill and Maggie stand to inherit a fortune. The police suspect foul play. Then the island's resident bird activist comes forward, claiming to be Harry's secret wife, entitled to half of his inheritance. Was it murder, and who will benefit financially? Perhaps the most important question is one narrator Rotten asks himself: "Was I hanging around just to maybe get laid, or did my actions serve a higher purpose?"

Bogg Island is a classic whodunnit with bullets flying from its first pages and a self-conscious hardboiled streak. Sometimes, it edges toward parody, and narrator



Witty PI and overpowering femme fatale power this brisk noir throwback.

Great for fans of Michael Craven, Charlie Huston.

Rotten's trivializing focus on women's bodies as their primary value will distance many readers. Still, wistful wisecracks, philosophical observations, and a feel for the East Coast's loneliest milieus power this sharply told page-turner. Maggie steals the show as a cunning, cold-hearted beauty who lures men into trouble; Frank jovially acknowledges his powerlessness in the face of Maggie's charms and takes her orders to hunt down clues (and tacos) or to hide incriminating evidence.

Glennon executes Frank's unique voice with jaunty flair. "[My] careless gullibility had almost gotten the leading lady killed. Boo-hoo. What a weeper." The fictitious island offers a colorful backdrop in which bluffs, ferries, and docks play essential roles. The reading of a much-anticipated will builds delicious tension, complete with an excellent plot twist. Impersonations, multiple identities, a miniature spy cam, and red herrings make the book a page-turner that noir and crime-caper fans will delight in.

Cover: **A** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: — | Editing: **A** | Marketing copy: **A**

MYSTERY/THRILLER

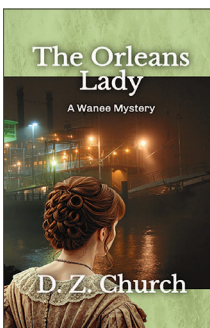
The Orleans Lady: A Wanee Mystery

D.Z. Church | Bodie Blue Books

337p, e-book, \$3.99, ASIN 979-8-994-00131-8

In 1877 post-Civil War America, Cora Countryman—headstrong and reputation-bruised—embarks on a Mississippi journey to uncover the whereabouts (and whyabouts) of her long-absent mother. Cora accepts the trip arranged by Mr. Kanady—local newspaper editor and potential lover—based on hearsay of a certain Marie Mae whose photograph resembles her mother. Their plan is coolly drawn: Cora and her chaperone, Mrs. Gibson, will pass as ordinary travelers, while Kanady plays the "pigeon," bait for the river's more dangerous gamblers. The scheme fractures when Cora encounters a woman who looks like her mother—poised and chillingly aloof—before the woman slips away, "deny[ing] recognition of her own daughter."

The story's central mystery—Cora's quest for the truth about her mother—gradually expands into a dangerous plot involving stolen jewels, blackmail, and a fatal plunge that leaves Cora questioning the bigger mystery of her mother's game. At its heart, Church's novel (the fifth in her Wanee Mystery series) is a study in female agency and the elusiveness of identity, as characters adopt various



Plucky heroine navigates lively mysteries in post-Civil War America.

Great for fans of Amy Stewart's *Girl Waits with Gun*, Eleanor Catton's *The Luminaries*.

roles—gamblers masquerading as gentlemen, a British princess in disguise, a so-called "hoodlum king," and Kanady himself performing as a "French fop." Cora's refusal of marriage in favor of "a life of study, mystery, and adventure" marks her as a radical figure despite the prescribed positions available to women of her time.

Church writes with a keen eye for texture—the gleam of polished decks, lively Midwestern towns, the murmur of crowded saloons—and populates the story with a dynamic, eccentric cast. If the middle chapters occasionally wander through secondary mysteries such as the missing jewels of Mrs. Granville and the disappearance of Winston Small, they regain force in moments of crisis, when Cora, clad in borrowed trousers, stands shoulder to shoulder with Kanady amid flood and fire. The result is a steadily unfolding mystery that investigates the peril and promise of self-determination in a world reluctant to grant it.

Cover: **B-** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: — | Editing: **A-** | Marketing copy: **A**

SF/FANTASY/HORROR

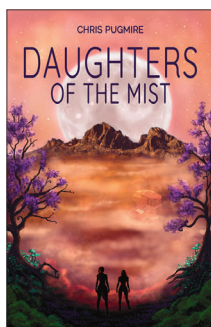
Daughters of the Mist

Chris Pugmire

185p, e-book, \$5, ASIN B0GQ3CB39R

In Pugmire's adventurous YA debut, an isolated human colony inhabits a distant planet. Just 45 members strong, this group has managed to survive in the only home they've ever known—though “they still called it an alien planet,” walling in their settlement to “keep the ‘alien’ stuff out.” The lone outsider is Enlett, a teenager raised by her mother away from the community. When her mother dies, Enlett returns and makes her first friends: quiet, thoughtful Kethra, who prefers to keep her opinions to herself, and clever Zektrin, who is curious to learn how everything works. Together, the three rebel against the settlement's norms by venturing outside its borders.

Pugmire's fragile world is governed by a “wise but also foolish” AI called the Almanac that residents regard with cautious respect: “they didn't always pass on its orders directly, but in important matters, they followed it to the letter and likely survived because of it.” The Almanac's self-awareness creates an undercurrent of tension, as



Three teens rebel against futuristic colony in this hopeful SF.

Great for fans of Ally Condie's *Matched*, Neal Shusterman's *Scythe*.

“besieged by ... evil wizards, dragons, and other things possibly much worse.”

Perhaps most noteworthy: this distant colony has no men, which raises the stakes for Enlett after an interesting twist prompts questions about gender as a social construct. Watching Enlett awkwardly learn the rules of her new society makes her an endearing protagonist, particularly when she must come to terms with the real reason her mother hid her away. While serving as a warning about the rise of censorship and AI technology, this spirited tale also brims with youthful optimism and hope for the future.

Cover: **B+** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: — Editing: **B+** | Marketing copy: **A**

MIDDLE GRADE

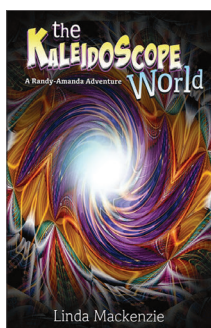
The Kaleidoscope World: A Randy-Amanda Adventure

Linda Mackenzie | Creative Health and Spirit

218p, trade paper, \$14.95, ISBN 979-8-986-71797-5

Mackenzie encourages young readers to embrace positivity in this lively series starter that challenges 11-year-old best friends to not only find their way home from a magical world, but also to confront their most paralyzing fears. The outgoing Manda (don't call her Amanda!) always pulls timid Randy out of his funk, and he admires her bravery and confidence. When Manda arrives at Randy's house and declares that she's dreamed something exciting will happen to them—and that it involves Melinda, the “Crazy Lady” who lives in a castle-like house—it sweeps the two into a fantastical odyssey that middle-grade readers will relish.

Melinda has transformed her childhood home into a soothing tropical oasis, and the centerpiece is a large, ornate kaleidoscope. When she purchased it, she was warned to “NEVER let anyone with a negative thought look into it,” and she duly cautions her young guests, but Randy and Manda can't resist its mysterious allure. They gravitate to the kaleidoscope and are quickly transported into a mythical



Lesson-driven fantasy fueled by power of positive thinking.

Great for fans of Bree Barton's *Zia Erases the World*, Jennifer Bell's *Magicalia*.

landscapes populated by wizards, elves, unicorns, mermaids, and trolls. It's a realm ruled by Mr. Negative, and they join other humans trapped there by their pessimistic mindset, including Melinda's long-lost husband. Only positive thoughts can help them escape.

Immersing young readers in enchanted terrains like *The Castle of Light*, *River of No Return*, and *Sea of Doubts*, Mackenzie incorporates important lessons into her whimsical worldbuilding. On their way to the Morbid Mountains, Randy and Manda receive guidance from larger-than-life figures (including Babbling Barbara, Sammy Should, and Scary Mary McFairy) who introduce the eager, emboldened friends to the helpful traits that will help them defeat Mr. Negative. In *The Kaleidoscope World*, Mackenzie imparts her belief that the forces of positivity can overcome entrenched negativity, and that young readers can forge their own path to happiness by channeling their energy, engaging their curiosity, and adopting an optimistic worldview.

Cover: **B** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: — Editing: **B** | Marketing copy: **A**

YOUNG ADULT

EDITOR'S PICK

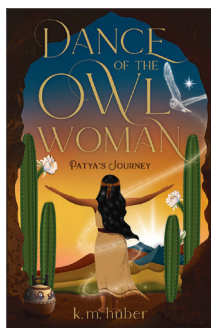
Dance of the Owl Woman: Patya's Journey

K.M. Huber

264p, trade paper, \$17.99, ISBN 979-8-896-36382-8

In Huber's second series installment, Patya—of the Nasca people, in sixth century Peru—must work through trials that test her resolve against the evil forces confronting her family. After a horrible encounter that alters her girlhood, the death of her grandmother, paya Kuyllay, and a corrupt priest's attempt to sacrifice her brother, Tachico, Patya vows to do whatever it takes to keep her family safe. Caught in a web of deception spun from the revenge-fueled priest Achiq—who is working tirelessly to usurp Patya's power and her family's position as water-guardians—Patya's ordeals eventually push her into accepting—albeit reluctantly at first—her destiny as an Owl Woman.

YA readers will find a resilient and courageous protagonist in Patya, who—despite painful losses and her fear that “something is coming”—seeks answers in the only way she knows how: by bravely reaching out to the orcas, her guardian spirits, paying respect to her clan's traditions, and enveloping the soul of the Owl Woman to bring about “a portent of change.” She often doubts her ability to guide others; however, her travelling companion, Waru, reminds her that “your heart may be



Luminous tale of resilience and destiny in 6th century Peru.

Great for fans of Jill Hedgecock's *Pizco*, Tanya Landman's *The Goldsmith's Daughter*.

wounded, but it is not poisoned,” especially when compared to Achiq or his mentor, Pikaq—both of whom attempt many times to murder her loved ones. Despite being taught certain rules and beliefs, in the end, stretching beyond what she knows is what helps Patya reach her destiny.

Huber (*Call of the Owl Woman*) beautifully weaves ancient history and magic, transporting readers into Patya's world with lush descriptions and profound spiritual rituals. Like many chosen ones, Patya is hesitant, declaring, “I don't want any other world” when faced with relinquishing her past trauma. But by letting go, Patya fully transforms until she is “not a girl anymore, [as] a warrior has taken her place.” Her strength will inspire any reader facing their own healing journey.

Cover: **A** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: — Editing: **A** | Marketing copy: **A**

The following are reviews of self-published titles that have previously appeared in *PW*

FICTION

Bogg Island Blues

Michael Glennon. Hardboiled, \$3.99 e-book (244p)
ISBN 979-8-31783-292-6

Glennon's clever second mystery featuring Frank Rotten (after *Song and Dance*) finds the Pittsburgh private eye helping out an old flame. When Maggie Malloy summons Frank to Bogg Island in New England, he answers the call, even though Maggie's previous entreaty ended with Frank's friend getting his thumbs broken by the mob. In college, Frank fell in love with Maggie at first sight, only to learn that she preferred his roommate. He's held a candle for her ever since. When Frank arrives on Bogg, he finds that Maggie is married to a man named Bill Hackney and in no rush to discuss her predicament. Before Frank can get a clear answer about why she's called him, Maggie's father-in-law, Harry Hackney, is found dead of an apparent drunken fall off a cliff, and Frank's job becomes figuring out whether Harry was murdered. Frank notices strange parallels between Harry's death and that of Bill's mother decades earlier, and he navigates his complex feelings for Maggie as the inquiry grows increasingly perilous. With some well-concealed plot twists and a sympathetic gumshoe at its center, this affable PI novel is easy to like.

Cayman Conundrum: A Liz Adams Mystery

Stacy Wilder. Wild Hawk, \$4.99 e-book (200p)
ISBN 979-8-9907831-1-9

Wilder's lively fourth whodunit featuring PI Liz Adams (after *A Christmas Conundrum*) sees her tracking down her new husband's missing friend. Liz has just married her former client Brad O'Connor. After she helped Brad identify who was hacking his identity-theft protection company, he and his business partner, Tim Knight, sold the business. Tim has moved to the island of Grand Cayman to try his hand at writing, planning to fold his research about the area's history of money laundering into his first novel. Before he can complete his manuscript, however, he vanishes. When Liz and Brad, who are in Grand

Cayman for their honeymoon, learn about Tim's disappearance, they determine to find him. Their probe is made more complicated when it intersects with that of Liz's old flame, JP, a French intelligence operative who's been assigned to investigate money laundering in the Caymans. Wilder's answer to the question of Tim's whereabouts is both logical and surprising, and the tropical setting offers plenty of pleasures for arm-chair travelers. Fans of Carolyn Hart's cozies will enjoy themselves.

Contesting the Wool: A Material Witness Mystery

Diane Vallere. Polyester, \$8.99 e-book (300p)
ISBN 978-1-9545-7923-1

In Vallere's winsome sixth cozy featuring Southern California fabric store owner Poly Monroe (after *Sheer Window*), the death of a millionaire begets several mysteries. The tight-knit town of San Ladrón, Calif., is abuzz over the reading of Reginald Villamere's will, but Poly is surprised to be invited, since she never met the dead man. She assumes she's just a plus-one for her boyfriend, Vaughn McMichael, the executor of Villamere's estate, but to her shock, she turns out to be one of Villamere's beneficiaries, receiving a collection of textiles left over after the renovation of a historic movie theater that Villamere oversaw. When Poly goes to the theater to take stock of the textiles, she finds the bloody corpse of Ben Schaffley, the attorney representing Villamere's estate, in the storage room. Worried she's either being targeted by a killer or somebody is killing on her behalf, Poly digs through Villamere's past in search of plausible suspects. Vallere gives cozy fans everything they could want: a lovable lead, a small-town setting worth escaping into, and a witty resolution to the whodunit. It's a charmer.

Flagrant Fouls

Richard O'Connor and Glenn Stout. Sager, \$35.99 (438p)
ISBN 978-1-958861-63-9

Journalist O'Connor (*Taking a Shot*) and biographer Stout (*The Young Woman and the Sea*) team up for a gritty, topical sports

noir featuring wisecracking New York City PI Elgin O'Brien. The half-Black, half-Irish O'Brien was an NBA star for a decade. Since retiring, he's found a challenging second career as a gumshoe, drawn to the work in part because of the police's indifference to his father's murder when O'Brien was a teenager. His latest client is Pat Malone, who wants O'Brien to track down the gunman who fatally shot his son, college basketball player Teddy, outside of a Manhattan strip club. No obvious motive for the killing presents itself, and police seem content to call it a random act of violence, but Pat insists there's more to the story. O'Brien, meanwhile, is troubled by a feeling that Pat is holding back key evidence. His investigation touches upon endemic wrongdoing in college sports, where the lure of big money corrupts coaches and players alike. The authors combine their journalistic expertise with O'Connor's experiences playing college basketball to lend the proceedings authenticity, and O'Brien proves a gruff and charming lead. It's nothing but net.

Girl Unreserved

Tashia Hart. Not Too Far Removed, \$23.99 (140p)
ISBN 978-1-7353453-3-8

A Native American girl discovers her sexuality and reels from sexual abuse in this frank outing from Hart (*Native Love Jams*). Winnow Sticks is five when she and her friends mimic a sex scene from a movie they glimpsed their parents watching. At 10, Winnow is sent by her parents, who are getting divorced, from their Red Lake Nation home in Minnesota to live with her aunt Shelly in Arkansas. There, she befriends a girl named Sarrah, who kisses her. Shelly gives Winnow a pornographic magazine to explain sex, which she and Sarrah look at. Then Winnow moves with her aunt to Texas, where Shelly forces her to attend a weekly Bible study session at a local church, during which Winnow regularly locks herself in the bathroom to masturbate. The narrative blends Winnow's coming of age with harrowing episodes of sexual assault, as when she's abducted as a preteen by two boys who threaten to kill her if she doesn't have sex with them. Here and elsewhere, Hart's

gritty and plainspoken chronicle glimmers with poetic insight—Winnow, humiliated by the attack, spends the night outside, “staring up at the stars, wondering how far my pain and fear stretched out beyond my body. It felt like it was traveling to at least the edge of the solar system.” This bracing tale is worth a look.

The Many Seas to Guernsey

Catherine Taylor. Cameo, \$6.99 e-book (516p)

ASIN B0GR9Q81LW

Taylor (*Beyond the Moon*) delivers an immersive tale of enduring love between a British woman and a German Catholic seminarian on the eve of WWII. In 1936, 16-year-old Kitty Garland-Fry moves to the island of Guernsey with her artist father, mother, and siblings. Not long after, she meets Lukas von Harnitz, who's visiting his British-born maternal grandparents. Lukas is drawn to Kitty and her free-spirited family but remains conflicted about his feelings for her and his call to the priesthood. Lukas's cousin Caspar, a German military officer, also visits Guernsey and is equally smitten with Kitty, though her heart belongs to Lukas despite his efforts to distance himself from her and remain true to his priestly aspirations. Brokenhearted after both men leave, Kitty accepts Caspar's invitation to visit him in Bavaria, eager to leave behind memories of Lukas, who has since returned to the seminary. When she arrives, Germany is on the brink of war and Caspar's family mocks her country's policy of appeasement. Taylor heightens the drama of Kitty's love triangle when the trio converge in Berlin amid Germany's escalating tensions, and Kitty, stuck in the country, faces the brutality of Hitler's regime. WWII fiction fans will be riveted.

The Pope's Jew

Eva Mekler. Manhattan Book Group, \$14.59 trade paper (288p)

ISBN 978-1-963844-44-3

A ghostwriter uncovers her client's secrets and finds love and danger in this enticing tale from Mekler (*Sunrise Shows Late*). In 1980 Paris, wealthy industrialist Luc Kasten hires 30-something American journalist Diane Jameson to ghostwrite a

memoir to share with his family. Diane accepts, intrigued by the charming older man, and agrees to spend the weekend with him at his home in the south of France. Despite Luc's claim that he wants to set the record straight (“My life has been half-truths for a very long time”), Diane has trouble getting him to disclose seemingly innocuous details, like the name of his childhood best friend. When she presses him, he redirects by flirting, and she begins to fall for him. She also starts digging into his past, casting doubt on his stated birth year of 1920 and discovering that Guy Thibault, an old enemy of Luc's who was responsible for sending him to a concentration camp during WWII, is now blackmailing him, having recently figured out his long-ago misdeed, which Mekler doesn't reveal until late in the novel. With Diane enmeshed in Luc's life and Guy after him, the narrative blends an enriching morality tale with a suspenseful game of cat and mouse. WWII fiction fans won't want to miss this.

Saturn's Favorite Music

Laura Lee. Elsewhere, \$9.99 e-book (368p)

ASIN B0F4J5B34K

A rookie radio DJ pays her dues in small-town Michigan in this wry portrait from Lee (*Identity Theft*). It's 1992 and Clara Jane is fresh out of broadcasting school in Detroit and looking to lead a glamorous life as a DJ. Willing to do whatever it takes, she accepts a midday slot in rural Saturn and surrenders to the indignity of playing soft rock, despite her preference for grunge. Her first day is a disaster—she mispronounces a name while reading the obituaries and unwittingly plays a song with overt drug references. Another DJ, 37-year-old divorcé Seth Jones, tries to make Clara feel at home by having her as a regular guest on his morning show. Their friendship remains platonic despite everyone at the station thinking they're sleeping together. Meanwhile, the station owner starts cutting costs, axing on-air personalities and expecting Clara to handle administrative responsibilities in addition to DJing. Lee shines in scenes with Clara and Seth on air together, showing how their camaraderie develops through humorous banter. It's a crackling look at a medium in transition.

When We're Broken

Shawna Holly. Three Sparrows, \$3.99 e-book (425p)

ASIN B0DD6VWCCR

Holly returns to small-town Alabama in the emotional companion piece to *The Stories We Keep*. Cat, 17, bonds with new student Glen Lewis in 1981 over the loss of their fathers—hers recently died in a work accident, while his abandoned the family. The pair start dating, but trouble brews during the summer months when their classmate Ally spreads rumors that Glen had sex with her. Glen then informs Cat that Ally is telling the truth, but that it happened before he started dating Cat. Later, Cat spies Glen talking with another girl at a Fourth of July party and then sees him hanging out with Ally outside of a bar. Cat chooses to ignore further rumors of Glen's infidelity and marries him immediately after graduating from high school. She gives birth to a daughter, Jenna, a couple of years later, but Jenna is colicky, and Glen becomes distant and neglectful, often spending time at a bar after work, and Cat wonders if she should have heeded earlier warnings. The narrative can feel repetitive, especially as Cat and Glen constantly pick at each other, but it builds to a satisfying and hopeful conclusion. Readers will be stirred by this bittersweet bildungsroman.

When the Dogwoods Bloom Again

Robert Hays. Thomas-Jacob, \$4.99 e-book (244p)

ASIN B0F5JFQPM

An Illinois couple's bond is tested by WWII in this emotional novel from Hays (*Darkening of the Light*). The reader first meets Army draftee Gil Bennett plowing his parents' field. Worried how a tour overseas will affect his relationship with his girlfriend, Annie, he proposes and she accepts. He then leaves for basic training in South Carolina, where he befriends fellow soldiers Jeff Bartlet and Henry Burnett. The “Three Bees” are sent overseas, where they have one another's backs on reconnaissance missions behind enemy lines in France. Meanwhile, back home in Illinois, Annie lives on her grandmother's farm, which Gil is expected to take over after they marry. Though she misses him, she's excited by her attraction to mechanic Howard, who fixes her flat tire.

Annie and Gil lead separate lives while he serves in the Army, and neither is fully prepared for how Gil's return will affect their relationship. A revelation near the end feels a bit rushed and underexplored, but Hays capably shows how Gil's fear of death creeps up on him before each battle, as when a dream of "beautiful southern Illinois" gives way to nightmare-induced "screams in the black of night." This will move readers.

Where's Jackson Pollock?

Jim Davidson. Jim Davidson, \$5.99 e-book (324p)

ISBN 979-8-9998060-0-0

Davidson (the Chris Hamilton series) shines in this captivating comic thriller set in early-1990s Florida. Russell Henderson is in deep water after the SEC charges him with insider trading. Facing the loss of his freedom and the seizure of his assets, he's relieved when his girlfriend, former gallerist Victoria Scarsfield, recognizes that the paintings above his bed, which Russell took as collateral from an ex-business partner, are worth millions—one's a Rothko, the other a Pollock. Victoria finds buyers willing to pay in untraceable cash, then develops a ruse to keep the couple's pockets lined: after the sales are final, she'll swap out the genuine paintings for forgeries she's commissioned. Unfortunately, the brother of the broker who sells the paintings sends the police after Victoria and Russell before they can pull off their scheme. Then a pair of dead bodies turn up, raising the stakes. Davidson populates the narrative with well-shaded characters on both sides of the law, and complicates the seemingly straightforward plot with a number of canny wrinkles. Fans of Tim Dorsey's eccentric Florida noir should check this out.

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ANNOTATED
GUIDE



Author Julie Buntin

"What a profound gift, to land at Random House, with a team of serious readers who were willing to give me the time and space to find my way. *Famous Men* was exhilarating to write, but hard, too—it grew with me over the course of many years, including the birth of two children. I've left it a different—and I hope better—writer. At every turn, Random House encouraged me to write the book I wanted to write."



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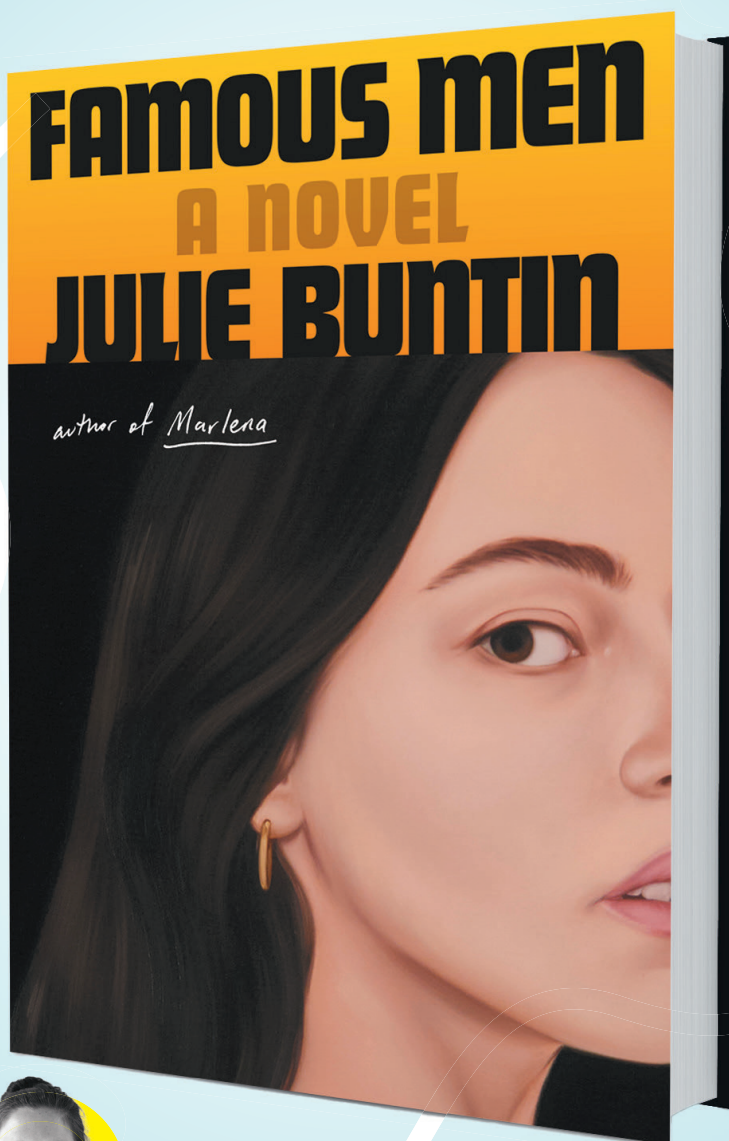
Claudia Ballard

"We sold *Famous Men* based on an early partial of the manuscript. We all had complete confidence that Julie's obsession with the idea—the complicated demands of authority, talent, currency, and class—would come together at the highest possible level. Julie leaves no sentence unexamined."



VP & Executive Art Director, Random House
Greg Mollica

"Our vision was to create something bold and commanding—a cover centered on the main character that captures the tension and atmosphere of the story. When we discovered Meghann Stephenson's painting *I'll Be Your Mirror*, it immediately felt right."



EVP & Publisher, Random House
Andy Ward

"I loved *Marlena*, and we signed Julie up for her next novel several years ago. We had no idea what she was going to write at the time, mind you, so imagine my delight when Caitlin sent me the final draft of *Famous Men* and I started reading. I was in immediately. So sharply observed, so complicated, so uncomfortable."

Editorial Director of Fiction, Random House

Caitlin McKenna

"Julie takes language seriously and so, as the editor, you match that attention. After four-plus reads, I envy those encountering *Famous Men*'s richness—of prose, of ideas, of characters—for the first time."



Famous Men

Julie Buntin. Random House, July
ISBN 978-0-593-22995-8

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