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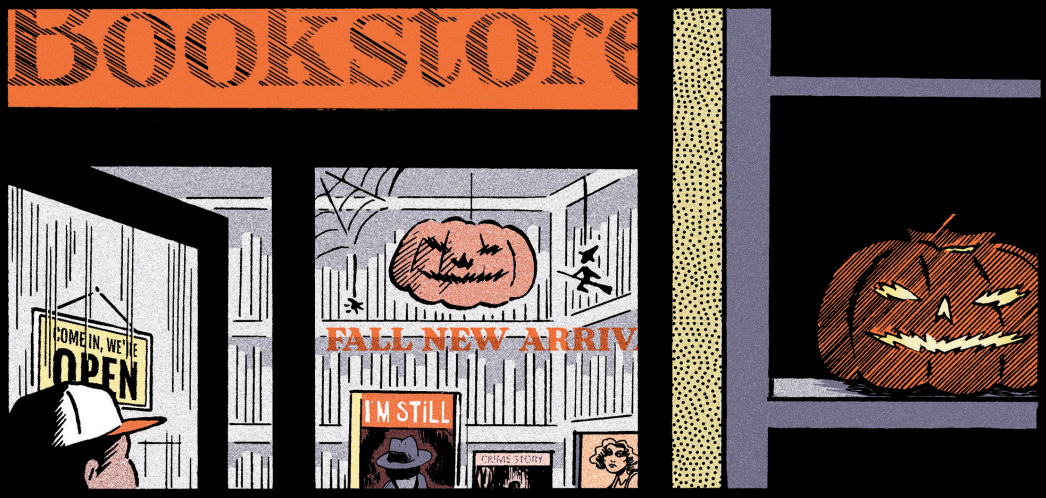

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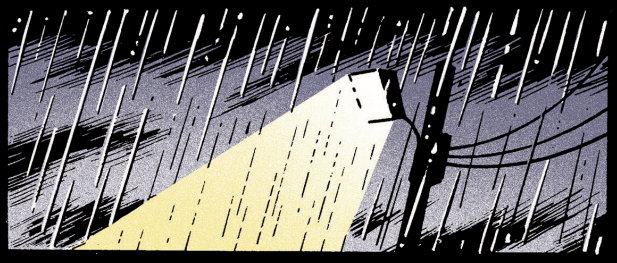





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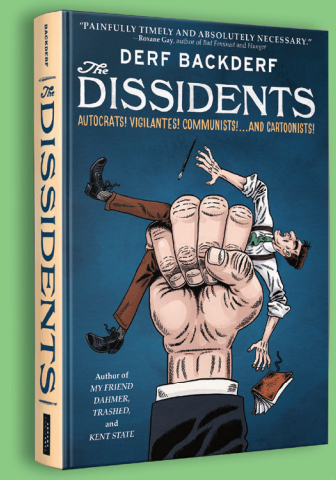

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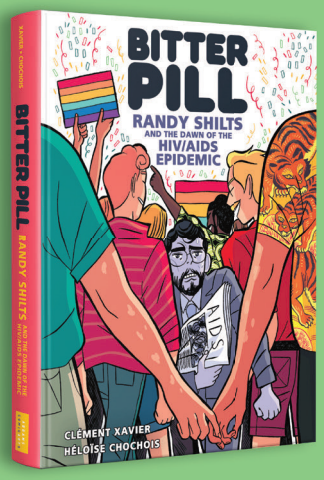

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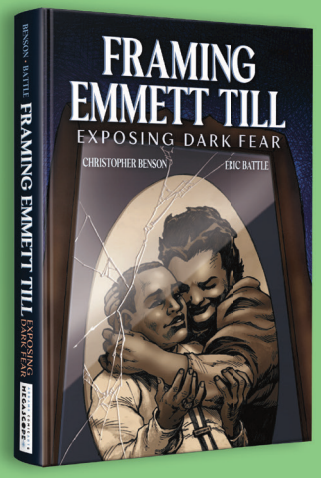

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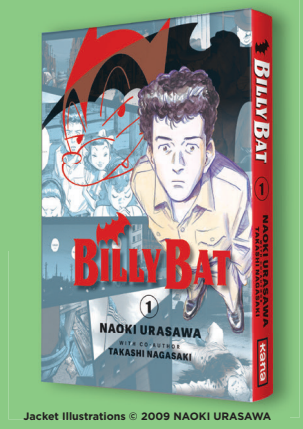

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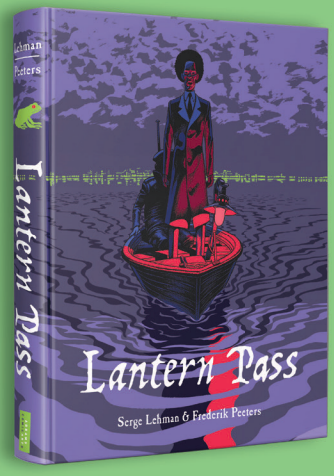

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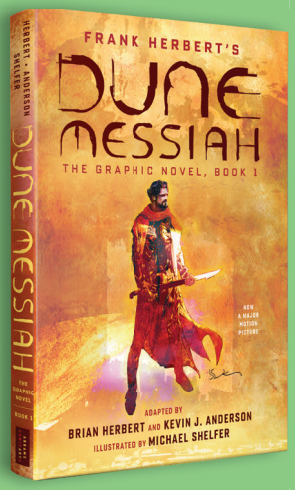

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CURRENTS

6…The Week in Publishing
Among the headlines, publishers and authors team on a class action copyright lawsuit against Google, and PEN America's president resigns.

8…Romancing the Reader
A host of booksellers in small towns and rural areas are opening romance-focused stores that double as community spaces.

10…Bestsellers

12…Deals
Erewhon takes Brittney Arena's romantasy duology, Forever wins Gina Banks's debut romance about an astronaut and a content creator stuck in space, and more.

PEOPLE

14…Interviews
We talk with authors Garth Nix and Dana Mashoian Walrath, and with the new associate publisher of Graphix.

18…Profile
In her latest comics series, Kelly Sue DeConnick mixes monstrous magic into a timely family dramedy.

FEATURES

21…Fall Comics & Graphic Novels Preview
Our editors highlight the season's most exciting trends and buzziest titles for adult, middle grade, YA, and manga readers.

58…Fall Writers to Watch
The season's most promising fiction debuts are distinguished by their authors' singular creations, including an eerily cute cat, a phantasmagoric city, and an immaculately dressed grim reaper.

REVIEWS

Fiction
68…*General Fiction*
72…*Mysteries & Thrillers*
77…*SF, Fantasy & Horror*
80…*Romance & Erotica*
82…*Comics*

Nonfiction
84…*General Nonfiction*
93…*Food & cooking*
94…*Health, Home & Hobbies*

Children's & YA
97…*Picture Books*
99…*Early Readers*
99…*Fiction*
101…*Comics*
102…*Nonfiction*

BookLife
104…*Paid Reviews*

HOW THIS BOOK WAS MADE

108…*We look at* **My Beloved Other** *by Nick Abadzis and Angela Watson.*

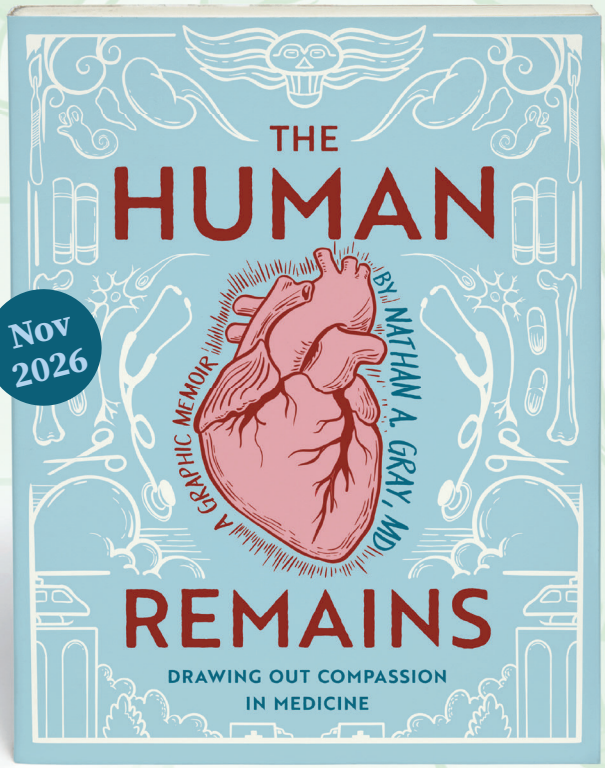
Cover illustration by LUCAS HARARI

FEATURED REVIEWS

79…Mazywood *by Tananarive Due* 85…Crossing the Red Line *by Akbar Shahid Ahmed*
99…Building 903 *by Lois Lowry*

From the worlds of
graphic mundi

A graphic memoir of one doctor's journey through clinical training and his return to the human side of care.



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"Insightful, vulnerable, and moving."
——Ira Byock, MD, palliative care physician and author of *Dying Well* and *The Best Care Possible*

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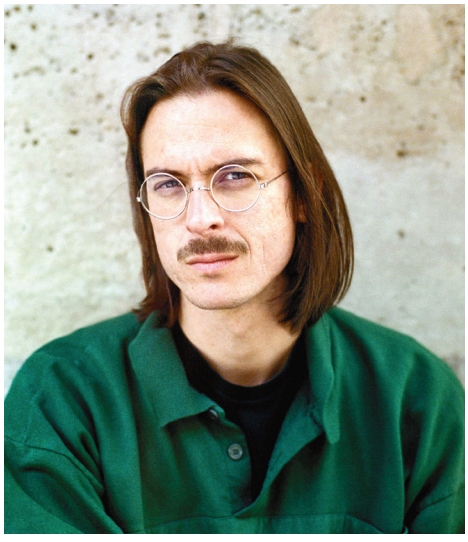
TO KICK OFF OUR FALL COMICS PREVIEW ISSUE, WE SPOKE WITH THE ARTIST ABOUT HIS LATEST GRAPHIC NOVEL, AN EXISTENTIAL MYSTERY SET IN PARIS AND ONE OF OUR TOP PICKS OF THE SEASON.

Cover Artist

LUCAS HARARI



IT'S LATE JUNE and Paris is in the grip of a heat wave. Speaking via Zoom from his studio in the Les Lilas suburb, graphic novelist Lucas Harari wears a green quick-dry towel over his bare shoulders. Two electric fans struggle to hold the heat at bay. "I use a wet towel and the *ventilateur*," the 36-year-old explains. "In France we don't have climatization everywhere."

Given these circumstances, Harari found it especially appealing to visualize crisp autumn weather for the cover of *PW*'s fall comics and graphic novels preview issue. "With this heat wave, it was very pleasant to draw some rain," he says. Naturally, his thoughts also turned to Halloween. "For me, it's a sign of fall."

A graduate of the École des Arts décoratifs in Paris, Harari has published three graphic novels in his native France. *Swimming in Darkness*, an eerie tale set in the thermal baths of Vals, Switzerland, appeared in English in 2019. *PW*'s review called it a "stylish, atmospheric book whose deliberate pacing deliciously builds tension and mystery." Next to hit the U.S. market will be *The Case of David Zimmerman*, out from Arsenal Pulp in October.

The concept for the book came to Harari one night as he drifted off to sleep. "I had this idea of two people making love and switching bodies," he says. "I woke up the morning after with the idea that the switch was not just one switch, but more complicated—like a chain."

Months passed before he found a path into the noirish character study the work would become. "I gave up several times," he admits. Before abandoning the project, he described the premise to his filmmaker brother Arthur Harari, who cowrote the Oscar-winning screenplay for *Anatomy of a Fall*. Arthur phoned a week later.

"He told me that my ideas were turning in his head," Harari says. "He wanted to make a movie with the story." (The resulting film, *The Unknown*, debuted at Cannes earlier this year.)

Over weekly meetings at a Belleville café, the brothers developed *The Case of David Zimmerman*, setting much of its action in the same Paris neighborhood. Their protagonist, David, wakes after a charged encounter with a mystery woman to find her face staring back at him from the mirror. He learns that her name is Rachel Bluem, and that she has a German passport. As Rachel, he searches for clues to recover his physical identity, negotiating an unfamiliar gender along the way.

Having mostly written male protagonists, Harari was apprehensive about inhabiting Rachel's perspective. "Maybe the solution for me was to create a character in this precise situation," he says.

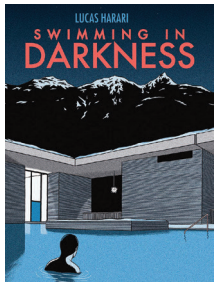
At the time he was working on the book, Harari and his girlfriend were expecting their first child. "I was very happy," he recalls. "I was also destabilized. It's this time when you realize that you're changing. You were a son, and you will become a dad. Everything that builds your identity comes to the surface. I asked myself questions about who I am, where I come from."

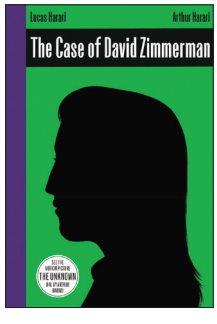
The experience brought clarity to Harari's understanding of David's situation—how family traumas and a tenuous connection to his Jewish heritage could be shaken loose by a more immediate rupture. "If something happens to you," he explains, "it brings these unconscious questions to the front. This becomes the center of your life."

Though its premise is fantastical, the graphic novel stays grounded in David's disorienting experience. "This experience—it's very traumatic," Harari says. "It's hard because it's a mystery."

Asked what he hopes readers will take from the book, he pauses before landing on an answer: "Maybe if readers can feel the vertigo of what it is to be." —*CHRIS BURKHALTER*







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THE WEEK IN PUBLISHING
7/11 – 7/17/26

Currents

Currents Currents Currents Currents



Google's headquarters in Mountain View, Calif.

CLASS ACTION SUIT TARGETS GOOGLE AI

PUBLISHERS AND AUTHORS have teamed up to file a class action lawsuit against Google, contending that the tech giant has engaged in widespread copyright infringement in developing its Gemini AI models.

Publishers Hachette Book Group, Cengage Learning, and Elsevier, as well as author Scott Turow, are the suit's named plaintiffs.

The lawsuit claims, among other things, that Google executives knew publishers would consider some of its plans to copy books illegal, and despite the prospect of huge potential monetary damages (a Google document notes the company "faced $10Bs-$100Bs" in potential fines) they decided to proceed anyway.

The plaintiffs also allege in their complaint that Google is taking books publishers provided the company in order to build its Google Books feature and using them to train its AI models. While Google can use the books to display "snippets" to potential customers, the complaint states, "Publishers and authors never authorized Google to copy the works they received for Google Books for the completely separate purpose of training its AI models and building a multi-billion dollar competing business."

Without any guardrails, Google is likely to continue its illegal copying programs, the suit alleges. Plaintiffs are asking the court to issue an injunction requiring Google to cease all unlawful activities, including infringement of the plaintiffs' and the class's copyrights. The suit is also seeking statutory damages.

Filed in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York, the suit follows an attempt by HBG and Cengage to join a class action lawsuit brought by a group of illustrators and writers in 2023. But Google challenged publishers' right to participate in that previous suit.

With the new suit, Cengage and HBG have withdrawn their motion to take part in the 2023 case, stating that they are "determined that they must take action to protect claims that appear to be outside the putative class in this action." —*JIM MILLIOT*

MARVEL NAMES NEW EIC, RELOCATES

Comics veteran Stephen Wacker has been named editor-in-chief of Marvel Comics, succeeding C.B. Cebulski, who has been in the role since 2017, per an announcement.

Cebulski will take on the new position of editor of Asia originals, based in Japan, overseeing Marvel's push into manga and other East Asian–originating graphic narratives.

Wacker previously spent more than 15 years at Marvel, seven of them as a senior editor overseeing series including Amazing Spider-Man, Daredevil, and Captain Marvel. Most recently, he served as editor-in-chief for the Substack comic book publisher 3W3M and SVP of entertainment studio Stone Kite, which he also cofounded.

Marvel also announced, at a town hall for staff held July 16 at Marvel's New York City office, that its publishing division will be relocating from New York to Los Angeles, the current headquarters of Marvel Studios and its corporate parent, the Walt Disney Company. Around 100 employees have been asked to relocate by next July. Rival publisher DC also left New York for L.A. in 2017.

—*SOPHIA STEWART*



MENGESTU © COURTESY PEN AMERICA

PEN AMERICA PRESIDENT RESIGNS

Novelist Dinaw Mengestu resigned as president of PEN America following the organization's recent report on the "rising isolation and exclusion" of Israeli and Jewish writers. Mengestu, who for six months helmed the free speech nonprofit, wrote in an Instagram post that he departed because of PEN's "ongoing failure to defend free expression fairly and equitably." From August 2024 until late last year, PEN was under boycott by Writers Against the War on Gaza for allegedly discriminating against Palestinians and pro-Palestine speech. PEN officially opposes cultural sanctions like WAWOG's, as well as the BDS (boycott, divestment, sanctions) movement writ large. Mengestu argues that the recent report provides fuel for anti-BDS legislation. A PEN America spokesperson told *PW* that board of trustees EVP Tracy Higgins will serve as interim president, and added that the organization respects Mengestu's decision and "recognizes people can disagree about how best to apply free expression principles in this extraordinarily difficult environment." —*SAM SPRATFORD*

Edited by **SOPHIA STEWART**
"FILM ADAPTATIONS ALWAYS JUICE BOOK SALES, BUT IT'S BEEN HEARTENING TO SEE THAT A BIG MOVIE CAN HELP EVEN A 3,000-YEAR-OLD POEM FIND LEGIONS OF NEW READERS."

Weekly Record

Currents Currents Currents Currents

Top 10 Overall Bestsellers, July 5–11

RANK	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	UNITS
1	**Heartstopper, Vol. 6**	Alice Oseman	Graphix	47,336
2	**Theo of Golden**	Allen Levi	Atria	43,851
3	**Regime Change**	Haberman/Swan	Simon & Schuster	35,598
4	**Yesteryear**	Caro Claire Burke	Knopf	26,521
5	**Project Hail Mary**	Andy Weir	Ballantine	24,965
6	**Whistler**	Ann Patchett	Harper	20,402
7	**Dungeon Crawler Carl**	Matt Dinniman	Ace	19,786
8	**The Exquisite Torment of Loving Your Enemy**	Brigitte Knightley	Ace	18,587
9	**The Calamity Club**	Kathryn Stockett	Spiegel & Grau	17,701
10	**Sing the 50 United States!**	Dr. Seuss	Random House	17,267

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▶ 'ODYSSEY' SALES SOAR AHEAD OF FILM ADAPTATION

In the lead-up to the premiere of Christopher Nolan's film adaptation of *The Odyssey* on July 17, print unit sales across all editions of the 3,000-year-old epic are up 76% for the year to date over the same period in 2025, according to data from Circana BookScan. Sales of Emily Wilson's translation—the first into English by a woman, published in 2017 by W.W. Norton—in particular have surged, reaching its highest-ever weekly print unit sales in the week ended July 11. Penguin Classics' translation by Robert Fagles is the second-bestselling edition, followed by Gareth Hinds's graphic novel adaptation—a deluxe edition of which was released by Candlewick this May.

—SAM SPRATFORD

GRAPHIC NOVELS FOR TODAY'S WORLD



"As gun violence continues unabated across the U.S., this book finally demystifies how we got here. Illustrating the heartbreaking loss of children, as it explains the history of gun regulations and how the NRA and the gun industry have managed to repeal them."
—Frank Smyth, author of *The NRA: The Unauthorized History*

9781951491536 (PB) October 2026



"Each story provides insight as to how the 2025 armed conflict affected the creators' daily lives and the hope and hopelessness they felt. . . . Readers will find this anthology difficult to put down."
—Starred Review from *Booklist*

9781951491550 (PB) June 2026

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Spicy Shelves

ROMANCING THE READER

A host of booksellers in small towns and rural areas are opening romance-focused stores that double as community spaces





La Petite Mort and Sweet Reads Society

WHEN THE RIPPED BODICE in Culver City, Calif., opened its doors in 2016, it was the nation's first and only romance bookstore. It wasn't until 2019 that a second such store, Love's Sweet Arrow in Chicago, entered the fray, and for a while, new competitors were few and far between. But during the pandemic, something changed: sales of romance novels spiked and publishers pivoted to meet the seemingly insatiable demand.

Now, bookstores dedicated entirely to romance are proliferating at a dizzying pace—and not just in metropolitan hubs. The American Booksellers Association reports that in the past three years, 232 bricks-and-mortar and mobile romance bookstores have opened across the U.S., from Bardstown, Ky., to Anchorage, Alaska. At least 54 stores have opened so far this year. (That figure is on track with last year, when 120 stores debuted, and significantly up from 58 total in 2024.)

Behind this surge is a new generation of booksellers—nearly all women, many in small towns—who believe in the power of bookstores as third spaces (that is, gathering places outside of the home, workplace, or school) where like-minded people can forge connections. These spaces, they say, are especially important for women living in remote or socially conservative communities, where access to books by and about women—not to mention frank conversations about love, sex, and romance—can be hard to come by.

"WHAT IS MORE SUBVERSIVE THAN WOMEN GATHERING TO TALK ABOUT BOOKS AND SEX?"
—CHERYL KEFFER, LA PETITE MORT

For Cheryl Keffer, opening La Petite Mort Books in Cockeysville, Md., this past March was "an act of resistance."

"What is more subversive than women gathering to talk about books and sex?" she asks. "I needed to channel my rage and build community and decided that I'd fill a void in a book desert while I was at it." Business, she adds, has been "amazing"—a sentiment echoed by almost every bookseller *PW* spoke with.

Aside from selling steamy reads, La Petite Mort hosts a number of book clubs, and one of its most popular in-store events is the "un–book club," which Keffer describes as "a monthly Friday night hangout for people to chat about books, or whatever else comes up."

And though Keffer created the store for romance-loving women readers, she quickly grasped its utility to the larger community: it now hosts various nonliterary programs, including Dungeons & Dragons sessions, mahjong games, and craft nights.

"It can be isolating out in the suburbs, and especially hard to make friends as adults," Keffer says. "Indie bookstores can help."

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Olivia Pack and her husband Mason Pack, who opened Forbidden Love in Bemidji, Minn., in April, are taking a similar approach. "We are much more than just a bookstore," Olivia says, noting that the store is investing heavily in hosting community events, including audiobook walks, silent reading nights, and even an in-store pop-up hosted by a local jeweler.

Meanwhile, though BookTok has helped cultivate a large and devoted romance readership, more booksellers are looking to take the genre's active fandom offline.

"I wanted to build that community in my area," says Brianna Biri, who opened For the Plot in Cape Girardeau, Mo., last month. Strategically placed couches in the store, for instance, encourage customers "to hang out, rather than just get what they want and go," she says. "I want it to feel like you're visiting a friend's house rather than a bookstore."

Another way to encourage customers to linger, many romance booksellers have discovered, is to pair steamy reads with refreshments. Sweet Reads Society in Newton Falls, Ohio, which opened in March, offers stuffed cookies, coffee, and "dirty sodas" alongside books; Verse & Vine, a bookstore and wine lounge, opened earlier this month in Poulsbo, Wash.; and X&O Books in Cypress, Tex., which will open its doors July 25, will feature a "drink parlor."

The timing of the romance bookstore boom also coincides with a mainstream embrace of the romance genre, which has long been stigmatized as lowbrow. Biri says she opened For the Plot with the aim of creating a space "where romance wasn't tucked away in the corner or treated like a guilty pleasure," adding, "I wanted a store where romance readers walked in and immediately felt like they belonged."

Alex Tenlen recalls that when she announced plans to open a romance bookstore in Riverton, Wyo., some expressed disbelief that it could be financially sustainable. "People underestimate the buying power of women," she says. "I know what women like to spend money on, I know what they actually do spend money on, and I know that women have money to spend." She adds that customers from all over Wyoming swarmed Lioness Lane during its opening weekend in February.

The country's newest romance bookstore, Love and Lore Books in Huntington, Utah, opened its doors earlier this month. It serves a rural part of the state, says owner Shaylee Allred, where people previously had to drive an hour to the nearest Walmart to buy a book.

"Our community needs a bookstore," Allred explains. "The only hiccup is that a romance bookstore won't serve the entire community." (Love and Lore also stocks a small selection in other genres to appeal to a wider array of readers.)

Allred's point is well taken: the past few years have seen a rise in niche bookstores specializing not just in romance but also in horror, fantasy, and cookbooks. In book deserts like Huntington, do bookstores have an obligation to serve a wider audience?



Lioness Lane Books

Not necessarily, says Allred, who feels her store's specialization and its location go hand in hand. Romance bookstores, she believes, are particularly important in rural Utah, where conservative values hold fast.

"Some things can be taboo in Utah, and some people really struggle with that stuff," Allred says. "Exposure is good—and romance is one of the bestselling genres for a reason. It and the people who read it should be represented, especially in a small community." —*CLAIRE KIRCH*



JULY 5
to
JULY 11

Bestsellers

Hardcover Frontlist Fiction

1 **Yesteryear**
Caro Claire Burke, Knopf
(26,521 units)

2 **Whistler**
Ann Patchett, Harper
(20,402)

3 **The Exquisite Torment of Loving Your Enemy**
Brigitte Knightley, Ace
(18,587)

4 **The Calamity Club**
Kathryn Stockett,
Spiegel & Grau (17,701)

5 **Love You More**
Emily Giffin, Ballantine
(15,920)

6 **The Shampoo Effect**
Jenny Jackson, Viking/
Dorman (9,489)

7 **He Who Fights with Monsters**
Travis Deverell,
Aethon: Vault (8,929)

8 **Country People**
Daniel Mason,
Random House (7,945)

9 **Our Perfect Storm**
Carley Fortune, Berkley
(6,685)

10 **A Parade of Horribles**
Matt Dinniman, Ace (6,236)

11 **It Could Have Been Her**
Lisa Jewell, Atria (6,173)

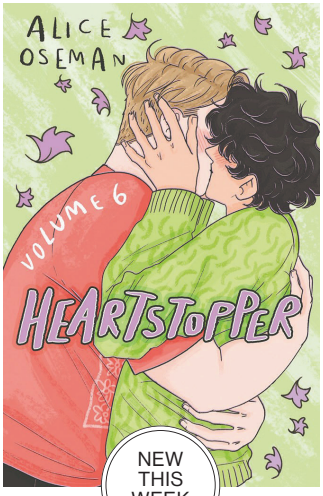
12 **Land**
Maggie O'Farrell, Knopf
(5,897)

13 **This Inevitable Ruin**
Matt Dinniman, Ace (5,150)

14 **Starside (deluxe ed.)**
Alex Aster, Avon (5,073)

15 **The Midnight Train**
Matt Haig, Viking (4,799)

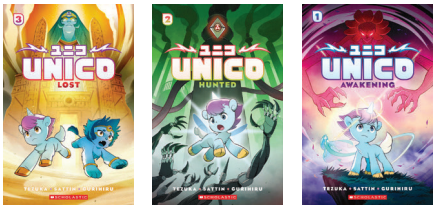
○ New This Week



(WHY ARE) WE LIKE THIS Alice Oseman brings her beloved YA graphic novel series to a close with **Heartstopper, Vol. 6**, the #1 book in the country. Also taking its final bow: the Netflix adaptation, which boosted the already popular romance between teens Nick and Charlie into the stratosphere. After three seasons, a finale movie, *Heartstopper Forever*, dropped July 17. Sales of the first five book installments, meanwhile, total 1.8 million print copies to date.

GAME FACE Matt Dinneman's Dungeon Crawler Carl series put litRPG on the mainstream publishing map. (See #10 and #13 on our hardcover fiction list, and #2 on our trade paperback list.) This week, a new player jumps into the bestseller game: Travis Deverell, aka Shirtaloon, whose **He Who Fights with Monsters** is #7 on our hardcover fiction list. Deverell may be a *PW* newbie, but he's much beloved in the litRPG community, where HWFWM began as a web serial in 2019. Aethon began releasing paperback installments in 2021 and now, through its partnership with Vault, is moving the series into hardcover.





RAINBOW CONNECTION In 2024, Scholastic's Graphix imprint published its first manga, a reboot of the Unico series created in the 1970s by legendary mangaka Osamu Tezuka (Astro Boy and others). This week, volume three, **Unico: Lost**, by American comics writer Samuel Sattin and Japanese artist duo Gurihiru, bounds onto our children's picture book list at #5 with the reimagining's best weekly print unit sales to date. Before the first volume published, Sattin told *PW*: "It's an adventure story about a fierce young unicorn who is kicked out of the heavens," adding, "We set out to honor that original material and have this be a real collaboration between the U.S. and Japan, as opposed to just taking a story and trying to make it Western."

Hardcover Frontlist Nonfiction

1 **Regime Change**
Haberman/Swan,
Simon & Schuster
(35,598 units)

2 **Revolution**
Eric Metaxas, Odysseus
(13,585)

3 **Cancel Me If You Can**
Dave Portnoy, Gallery
(7,995)

4 **Strangers**
Belle Burden, Dial (6,483)

5 **Communion**
J.D. Vance, Harper (5,443)

6 **The Land and Its People**
David Sedaris, Little, Brown
(4,022)

7 **The King Is Coming**
John Bevere, Thomas Nelson
(3,251)

8 **I Still Believe in Miracles**
Lucas Jones, Union Square
(2,685)

9 **London Falling**
Patrick Radden Keefe,
Doubleday (2,619)

10 **Famesick**
Lena Dunham,
Random House (2,397)

11 **Stripped Down**
Bunnie Xo, Dey Street
(1,903)

12 **The Way of the Wildflower**
Ruth Chou Simons,
Thomas Nelson (1,824)

13 **On Courage**
Julia Angwin, Mariner
(1,722)

14 **The Greatest Sentence Ever Written**
Walter Isaacson,
Simon & Schuster (1,709)

15 **America, U.S.A.**
Eddie S. Glaude, Crown
(1,654)

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Edited by **CAROLYN JURIS**

"IS IT POSSIBLE TO FIND HOPE IN A WORLD THAT FEELS INCREASINGLY BLEAK? BELIEVE IN MIRACLES, ADVISES INSTAPOET LUCAS JONES (#8, HARDCOVER NONFICTION)."

Currents Currents Currents Currents

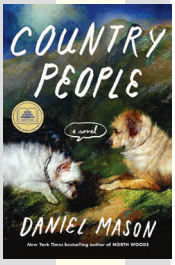
Trade Paperback Frontlist

1. **Theo of Golden**
   Allen Levi, Atria
   (43,851 units)
2. **Dungeon Crawler Carl**
   Matt Dinniman, Ace
   (19,786)
3. **The Divorce**
   Freida McFadden,
   Poisoned Pen (15,561)
4. **Into the Fading Twilight**
   Catherine Cowles, Bloom
   (14,793)
5. **The Housemaid's Wedding**
   Freida McFadden,
   Poisoned Pen (9,634)
6. **One Piece, Vol. 112**
   Eiichiro Oda, Viz (9,123)
7. **In the Wake of the Ruined**
   Kalie Cassidy, Little, Brown
   (8,226)
8. **Murdoku**
   Manuel Garand,
   Puzzlewright (8,224)
9. **Tempting Venom**
   Rina Kent, Bloom (7,600)
10. **Atmosphere**
    Taylor Jenkins Reid,
    Ballantine (7,439)
11. **Dolly All the Time**
    Annabel Monaghan,
    Putnam (7,336)
12. **18 Days in Heaven**
    Gabe Poirot,
    Harrison House (6,670)
13. **Our Last Resort**
    Clémence Michallon,
    Vintage (6,281)
14. **Want to Know a Secret?**
    Freida McFadden,
    Poisoned Pen (6,169)
15. **Dear Debbie**
    Freida McFadden,
    Poisoned Pen (6,042)

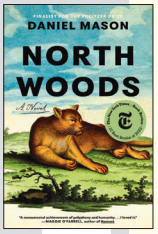
July's Good Morning America Book Club pick, **Country People** by *North Woods* author Daniel Mason, takes the #8 spot on our hardcover fiction list. Mason's previous books include the Pulitzer finalist story collection *A Registry of My Passage upon the Earth*; our starred review called his new novel "an exquisite and often hilarious tale."

First-week print unit sales for Daniel Mason

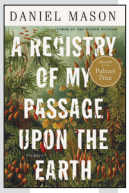
2026
7,945



2023
3,325



2020
83



Children's Frontlist Fiction

1. **Heartstopper, Vol. 6**
   Alice Oseman, Graphix
   (47,336 units)
2. **The Prophecies Begin (Warriors Graphic Novel #3)**
   Erin Hunter, HarperAlley
   (16,663)
3. **Shadow over the Pumpkin Queen**
   Megan Shepherd, Random
   House/Disney (10,211)
4. **I Survived the Bombing of Pearl Harbor, 1941 (I Survived Graphic Novel #14)**
   Tarshis/Wartman, Graphix
   (7,968)
5. **Unico: Lost (Vol. 3)**
   Tezuka/Sattin/Gurihiru,
   Graphix (6,620)
6. **Immortal Consequences**
   I.V. Marie, Delacorte (6,024)
7. **Dawn on the Coast (The Baby-Sitters Club Graphic Novel #19)**
   Martin/Nopra, Graphix (5,154)
8. **First Crush (The New Girl #2)**
   Cassandra Calin, Graphix
   (4,776)
9. **Baby-Sitter Summer (The Baby-Sitters Club Super Special)**
   Ann M. Martin et al.,
   Scholastic (4,033)
10. **Partypooper (Diary of a Wimpy Kid #20)**
    Jeff Kinney, Amulet (4,012)
11. **Big Jim Believes (Dog Man #14)**
    Dav Pilkey, Graphix (3,646)
12. **Weather or Not (InvestiGators #9)**
    John Patrick Green, First Second
    (3,560)
13. **Nothing Like the Movies**
    Lynn Painter, Simon & Schuster
    (3,470)
14. **The Prophecies Begin (Warriors Graphic Novel #3)**
    Hunter/Riess/Goetter,
    HarperAlley (3,249)
15. **The Summer of Second Chances**
    K.L. Walther, Sourcebooks Fire
    (3,219)

Children's Picture Books

1. **Sing the 50 United States!**
   Dr. Seuss, Random House
   (17,267 units)
2. **The Very Hungry Caterpillar**
   Eric Carle, Philomel (11,647)
3. **Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?**
   Martin/Carle, Holt (9,043)
4. **I Love You to the Moon and Back**
   Hepworth/Warnes, Tiger Tales
   (8,129)
5. **The Rainbow Fish**
   Marcus Pfister, NorthSouth
   (7,912)
6. **You're My Little Sunshine**
   Edwards/Marshall,
   Silver Dolphin (7,434)
7. **Goodnight Moon**
   Brown/Hurd, HarperCollins
   (7,285)
8. **Oh, the Places You'll Go!**
   Dr. Seuss, Random House
   (7,189)
9. **Chicka Chicka Boom Boom**
   Martin/Archambault/Ehlert,
   Little Simon (7,135)
10. **Where's Spot?**
    Eric Hill, Warne (6,540)
11. **First 100 Words**
    Roger Priddy, Priddy (6,131)
12. **Llama Llama Red Pajama**
    Anna Dewdney, Viking
    (5,711)
13. **The Going to Bed Book**
    Sandra Boynton, Boynton
    Bookworks (5,706)
14. **The Night Before Kindergarten**
    Wing/Durrell, Grosset &
    Dunlap (5,641)
15. **World of Eric Carle: Around the Farm**
    PI Kids (5,443)

Edited by
SOPHIA STEWART

Deals

"SCULPTORS AND PHANTASMS, SIRENS AND PIRATES, CONTENT CREATORS AND ASTRONAUTS—LOVE KNOWS NO BOUNDS IN THE ROMANCE NOVELS AMONG THIS WEEK'S DEALS."



Viengsamai Fetters at Kensington's Erewhon imprint took North American rights, at auction, to *Prince of Night* by **Brittney Arena** (pictured l.), the first in a new romantasy duology, from **Jennifer Azantian** at Azantian Literary Agency. Set in "a land where dreams are forbidden," per the publisher, the novels follow "a chronically ill sculptor who is caught dreaming and must ally with a dangerous and magnetic phantasm to take down the cursed god of the dream realm in one night—or else be trapped there forever." Publication is set for fall 2027 and fall 2028, respectively.

▶**Rebecca Brewer** at Bloomsbury Archer bought world English rights to **Gabe Converse**'s *The Body Remembers* from **Mara Hollander** at Azantian Literary Agency. In the horror novel, a "trans man's pre-transition body washes up on the beach in his hometown and is coaxed back to life by his transphobic family, threatening his own survival," per the publisher. Release is slated for fall 2027.

▶**Juliana Nador** at Simon Maverick landed, at auction, in a two-book deal, world English rights to **Seren Rose**'s debut, *The Song of Salt and Shadow*, from **Angie Ojeda Hazen** at Lunar Literary Agency. The romantasy follows "a siren born without a tail who escapes relentless hunters by boarding a haunted, cursed pirate ship," only to be drawn into "a slow-burn enemies-to-lovers romance with the ship's enigmatic captain," per the publisher. A pub date has not been announced.

▶**Seema Mahanian** at Pamela Dorman preempted North American rights to **M. Colón-Margolies**'s *Émigrés* from **Julia Kardon** at HG Literary. The novel follows "a diverse group of recent arrivals to Paris in 2015 as they navigate love, fear, ambition, and grief while trying to find their footing in a city gripped by unease and political tension," per the publisher. A pub date has not been announced.

▶**Hilary Redmon** at Knopf acquired North American rights to **John Carreyrou**'s *Satoshi's Secret* from **Eric Lupfer** at Calligraph. The book recounts the *Bad Blood* author's investigation into the true identity of Bitcoin inventor Satoshi Nakamoto, "along the way exploring the origins of a $2.6 trillion industry and revealing a mosaic of our epoch's economic, political, and cultural fracture," per the publisher. Publication is scheduled for fall 2028.

▶**Ghjulia Romiti** at Forever won, at auction, in a two-book deal, **Gina Banks**'s *We Have So Many Problems* from **Joanna MacKenzie** at Nelson Literary Agency. The debut novel centers on "a single mom science content creator who gets the opportunity of a lifetime to fly to the International Space Station, only to get stranded with the astronaut who broke her heart," per the publisher. A summer 2027 release is set.















From the top: Gabe Converse, John Carreyrou, Seren Rose, Gina Banks, Vanessa Cornell, Conceição Evaristo, and Emily Ratajkowski

▶IN BRIEF

Samantha Zukergood at Dial Press bought world English rights, in an exclusive submission, to *The Art of the Voicenote* by **Vanessa Cornell**, author of the Substack *Voicenotes from a Friend*, from **Jan Baumer** and **Steve Troha** at Folio Literary Management, for release in spring 2028. ● **Andy Ward** and **Molly Turpin** at Random House took North American rights to *Good Question* by *Atlantic* writer and former CBS anchor **John Dickerson**, "an examination of the basic unit of curiosity—the question itself—featuring real-life stories from New York City detectives, doctors, philosophers, and more," from **Tina Bennett** at Bennett Literary. No pub date has been set. ● **Helen Rouner** at Penguin Press acquired North American rights, at auction, to **Emily Ratajkowski**'s *Motherfucker*, a memoir inspired by her viral *Cut* essay about single motherhood, from **David Kuhn** and **Rachel Anne Cantor** at Aevitas Creative Management. A pub date has not been announced. ● **Stefan Tobler** at And Other Stories netted world English rights to *Backstreets of Memory* by Brazilian author **Conceição Evaristo**, translated by **Annie McDermott**, along with two other works of fiction, from **Mariana Warth** at Pallas Editora. No pub date has been set.

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People

THIS WEEK • KELLY SUE DECONNICK AIN'T DOING GRIMDARK • DANA MASHOIAN WALRATH ON STOPPING GENOCIDE • GARTH NIX HEARTS MILITARY HISTORY • GRAPHIX'S ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER IS LISTENING TO HER INNER CHILD

"The book tells you what it wants to be."

—**KELLY SUE DECONNICK**
author of *Fire* (Dark Horse, Nov.)

People

Interviews



GARTH NIX

Humanity travels the stars on giant sentient mountain ranges in *Massif*, the bestselling YA fantasist's adult space opera debut.

How do you find writing for adults versus writing for teens? You know, the distinctions are fairly arbitrary. In fact, quite a number of my books that are published as young adult in the U.S. are published as adult elsewhere. But this one was fairly unequivocal, with my agent and publishers all saying, Yes, this should be published as adult.

How about writing sci-fi versus fantasy? I love them both, but I do mainly write fantasy. That's where my natural tendency seems to be. I found *Massif* a challenge because I had to do a lot more research than I normally do. I have two other sci-fi novels, both for young adults, but they're quite soft science fiction. Whereas with *Massif*, I'm looking several hundred years into the future and trying to really ground it in science.

What sparked this story? It began with an image: a mountain range ripping itself from the earth and rising into the sky, diminishing to be a speck in orbit. That was the genesis, and then I had to think, Well, why would a mountain do that? You know, is it a mountain? I started thinking, what if it's essentially an alien, which then led me to the concept of the avatars. When humans go into orbit to find out what the hell is going on with this mountain range, they meet the avatar, who looks like a little girl who went missing on the massif, but that's just the shape the massif is using to communicate. That's a pretty common process for me: I'll have that initial image, and then I spend sometimes a year or several years thinking about what the story around it is going to be.

How did you decide that the main characters would be in the military? I'm a huge fan of military history. I had recently reread one of my favorite books, *The Cruel Sea* by Nicholas Montsarrat, when I went to a writers' festival in Brisbane located near their maritime museum. They have a WWII frigate, the HMS *Diamantina*, which is the same class of ship as in *The Cruel Sea*, and it made that story more concrete for me. This was several years before I thought of *Massif*, but looking at it, I thought, I want to write a story about the crew of a ship at war. That stayed with me, one of many inspirations.

Were you influenced by your own military experience? I served five years in the Australian Army Reserve, part-time. I was in an assault pioneer platoon, where we basically built things and blew them up. It was a formative experience, and I've drawn upon it in lots of things I've written. Not just the military detail but the personal feelings, like the experience of being terrified. That sort of concentrated experience of adversity is useful to give to characters.

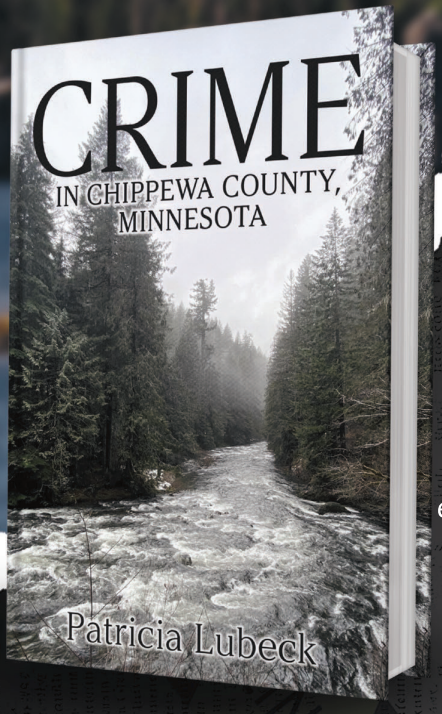
—*LEONARD PICKER*



Harper Voyager, Sept.; reviewed on p. 77

PHOTO © GARTH NIX

Writers to Watch



CRIME

in Chippewa County, Minnesota

Discover the rich history of Chippewa County, Minnesota, established in 1862 and shaped by the mighty Chippewa River, named by the Dakota as "Manya Wakan," meaning "remarkable bluffs." From its first village along the river to tales spanning the 1850s–1930s, the county's archives reveal gripping stories of murder, scandal, train wrecks, daring escapes, and more. These dramatic events forged the character of Chippewa County, and countless untold stories still await discovery. Explore history where every place has a story.

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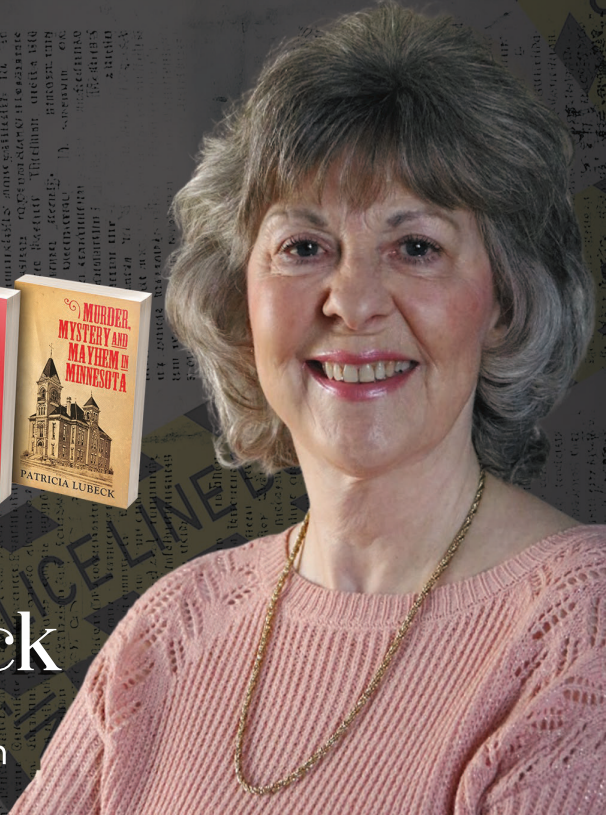


SCAN ME

Patricia Lubeck

Author

www.patlubeck.com

ReadersMagnet | 1-800-805-0762 | www.readersmagnet.com

DANA MASHOIAN WALRATH

The artist and anthropologist chronicles the histories of 10 mass atrocities in *The Book of Genocides*.

What was your impetus in writing about this difficult subject, and in comics form? I'm a granddaughter of the Armenian genocide. I learned about white privilege when I was treated differently from my mother and sister, who have darker hair, eyes, and skin. Long ago I realized genocides are human-made. This project started as an art installation, but I always knew it had to be a book. When I discovered comics like *Maus* and *Fun Home*, I went wild. I learned that comics is a perfect medium for multilayered storytelling, and it enabled me to do what all writers are taught: to show and not tell. By visualizing how genocide happens repeatedly, I demonstrated how it follows set patterns, and that subconsciously builds bridges—comics take us out of a teaching role and put us into an active understanding role.

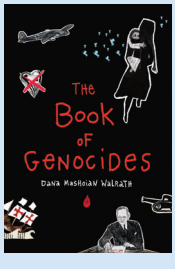


Was there anything in particular that surprised you while working on the book? How working on it ultimately felt positive. It grounded me during these horrible times, to be working in a concrete way to counter the violence that governments are perpetrating. As I was reliving and trying to embody these acts, I was also countering their perpetration.

You present portraits of people and invite readers to cut those pages into thirds and fold them into a booklet that mixes and matches human bodies with those of non-human creatures. You describe this as an act of liberation. Can you explain what you mean? One of the first steps of liberation is discerning what your heart knows to be true. The flap book is drawn into the surface of a racist mid-20th-century zoology book. We're taught the valuable lesson that we shouldn't desecrate books yet also taught that it's okay to hurt others. By cutting a page, you think, Why are we allowed to hurt people and not books? Why are we accepting all the rules taught to us? Some of these rules selectively benefit some people while hurting others. Cutting and turning pages and experiencing humans transforming into something else, then watching them reemerge, confirms their humanity. By actively turning the pages, the person looks at their own complicity: Have I ever called somebody a beast? Have I ever thought of someone as a parasite because they're not contributing enough? The act of cutting through taught systems and structures is a form of liberation.

What would you most like for readers to take away? That genocide is not inevitable. That it depends on human-made systems, structures, and beliefs. And because those are human-made, we can undo them.

—ROB KIRBY



Harvard Univ., Sept.; reviewed on p. 82



CASSANDRA PELHAM FULTON
GRAPHIX

The new associate publisher of Scholastic's comics imprint came up through the ranks, and is excited about having a hand in the latest installment of a childhood fave.

How's your new role going? I've grown up with the imprint. I started at Scholastic after college, and I will have been there 20 years this fall. After working with a number of our core authors and series for so long, I'm excited to apply that passion to a broader view of the imprint, and also try to publish books in different genres that we haven't published into as much.

What's the dominant genre in kids' comics? Everyday, relatable slice-of-life is still a huge category in kids and middle grade comics. Raina Telgemeier definitely opened the door to a lot of creators to be like, Oh, I have a story I would like to tell from my life. But also, adventure and humor comics seem to be on the rise, especially animal adventures. We do really well with Wings of Fire and Dog Man, and we hear InvestiGators come up a lot. We recently published Snowlands #1, which landed really well.

Which books from this year so far are you proud of? I was especially excited about *My Tokyo Summer* by Abby Denson and Utomaru. It's realistic; it's a memoir; it's what I love. Utomaru's artwork pulled me in right away—gorgeous and candy colored with a manga influence. Coming up, I'm excited about The Baby-Sitters Club: Super Special, which I worked on with Raina Telgemeier and Gail Galligan. It's wild to grow up reading those books, and to be working on those graphic novels and publishing the first Super Special this fall during the 40th anniversary of the series. That's super exciting to my inner kid.

—CHRISTIAN HOLUB

WALRATH © ADRINEH GREGORIAN; FULTON © SCHOLASTIC

Writers to Watch

MURDER at the Aphrodisia

THE GODDESSES ARE BACK, AND SO IS THE CHAOS.

With a talent for crafting sharp-witted, capable, and enjoyable characters, **Renaii West** – author of the acclaimed books *Death by Chaos* and *The Wrong Side of the Flame* – spins a mystery yarn full of suspense, teamwork, and wit. In addition, she enjoys traveling, ballroom dancing, and classical movies.

In her latest book, ***Murder at the Aphrodisia***, it is now three decades since that fateful night, which marked the rest of their lives, and the Goddesses of Parnassus Canyon University return for the inauguration of Aphrodisia. However, it would seem that the past will never die, and the event turns out to be anything but boring.



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SCAN ME

Author Profile

By **SHAENON K. GARRITY**

"DECONNICK TOLD ME THAT SHE, UNLIKE THE MOM IN FML, WAS NOT IN A PUNK BAND IN THE 1990S. BUT SHE DID PUBLISH A ZINE CALLED *LOIS SLAIN*."



Close to Home

In her latest comics series, **Kelly Sue DeConnick** mixes monstrous magic into a timely family dramedy

"RIGHT BEFORE this call, I got my parent coffee," Kelly Sue DeConnick says via Zoom from her home in Portland, Ore. The comics author has two kids, one 16 and the other about to graduate from high school. The first coffee of the day got her through her morning mom duties. The next, she says, will be for writing.

DeConnick's current comics series, FML, published by Dark Horse, is one of her most off-the-wall titles to date, but it's also her most autobiographical. "Every book that I do is personal," she says. "But this one's literal."

Set in an off-kilter version of Portland, it follows the misadventures of a family of four after 16-year-old Riley joins a metal band, visits a cursed witch house, and turns into a huge hairy monster. The book is drawn by artist David López, who previously teamed with DeConnick for a run on Captain Marvel. FML, which debuted in 2024, is nominated for a 2026 Eisner Award. The first trade collection, *Fire*, will hit shelves in November.

DeConnick was born in Columbus, Ohio, in 1970. With a father in the Air Force, she moved a lot growing up. "Comics are really big on base," she recalls, "so I read a ton of comics."

As a college student at the University of Texas at Austin, she studied drama, and after graduation moved to New York City to pursue a career in theater. She started to pick up work as a comics writer—"When you live in New York, you're gigging"—after meeting comic book artist Will Rosado and getting involved in the Warren Ellis Forum, an early online comics community where many up-and-coming writers and artists connected.

"Looking back on it now," says DeConnick, "the WEF was not the hearts-and-flowers, warm, and welcoming community that my brain wants to remember it as, but I met so many people who are still an important part of my life." Through the WEF, she got her first job in comics, writing a prose story that ran in the back of IDW's monthly titles.

DECONNICK © POSEY QUARTERMAN

People

More work followed. DeConnick cowrote *Eben and Stella (30 Days of Night #7)* with series cocreator Steve Niles and broke into Marvel through the Girl Comics anthologies spearheaded by editor Jeanine Schaefer. She also did rewriting and localization for manga published by Tokyopop and Viz.

"At some point," she says, "I realized, this is what I'm doing for a living. Sweet." DeConnick's writing is known for its sardonic humor, offbeat imagination, and rough-and-tumble feminist sensibilities. In online discourse, she coined the "sexy lamp test," which she described in a 2012 interview with *ComicsAlliance* as, "If you can replace your female character with a sexy lamp and the story still basically works, maybe you need another draft."

DeConnick began scripting her first original series, Pretty Deadly, for Image Comics in 2013. She approached artist Emma Ríos to draw it. The two had previously worked together on the Marvel series Osborn, and Ríos had expressed an interest in drawing a western—so DeConnick wrote a horror-themed story set on a mythical frontier. "It felt like I was asking her to prom," DeConnick says. She and Ríos are currently working on the fourth volume of the series.

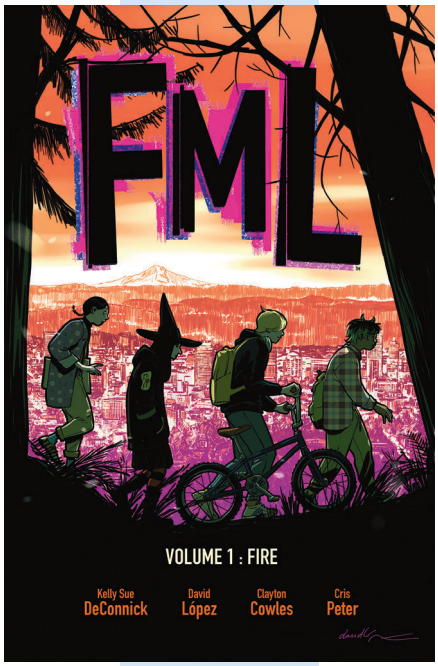
The comic DeConnick is best known for is the dystopian sci-fi series Bitch Planet, which sparked when she met artist Valentine De Landro at Fan Expo Canada in Toronto. "Comics has changed so much," she says. "We're not there yet; there's still work to be done. But at the time, I was walking around introducing myself, and most of the dudes were looking to see where the wallet was behind me. Val was a consummate gentleman."

DeConnick shared some plot ideas she calls "sweater threads," and De Landro liked her concept for a series set in a space prison where society sends its rebellious women.

Bitch Planet launched in 2014 from Image Comics. The series won a British Fantasy Award in 2016 and became a phenomenon in feminist fan circles. Readers got tattoos of the noncompliant logo that prisoners are branded with in the comic.

DeConnick and De Landro saw the series as a satire with dark but pulpy humor. "We liken the tone to RoboCop," DeConnick says. "I don't do grimdark." Reality, however, quickly overtook satire. "The last issue of the main storyline came out the week of the 2016 election, and that book became very hard to write. I always tell people we are going to come back to it. No one ever believes me, and that's fine."

FML went through many concepts and drafts before DeConnick settled on the story of Riley and his family navigating life in a version of Portland where magic and monsters exist alongside free speech crackdowns, police injustice, and true crime podcast addiction. "One hundred percent of the time, the book is not what I think it's going to be," she says. "One hundred percent of the time, I am wrong. I don't mean this in any metaphysical way, but the book tells you what it wants to be."



Dark Horse, Nov.

Fire focuses on the relationship between Riley and his mom, a fiery but loving cartoonist and former punk musician. DeConnick says she drew from her 1990s adolescence for the character, including references to zine culture. Her favorite moment in the comic is a panel visualizing an emotional break between mother and son.

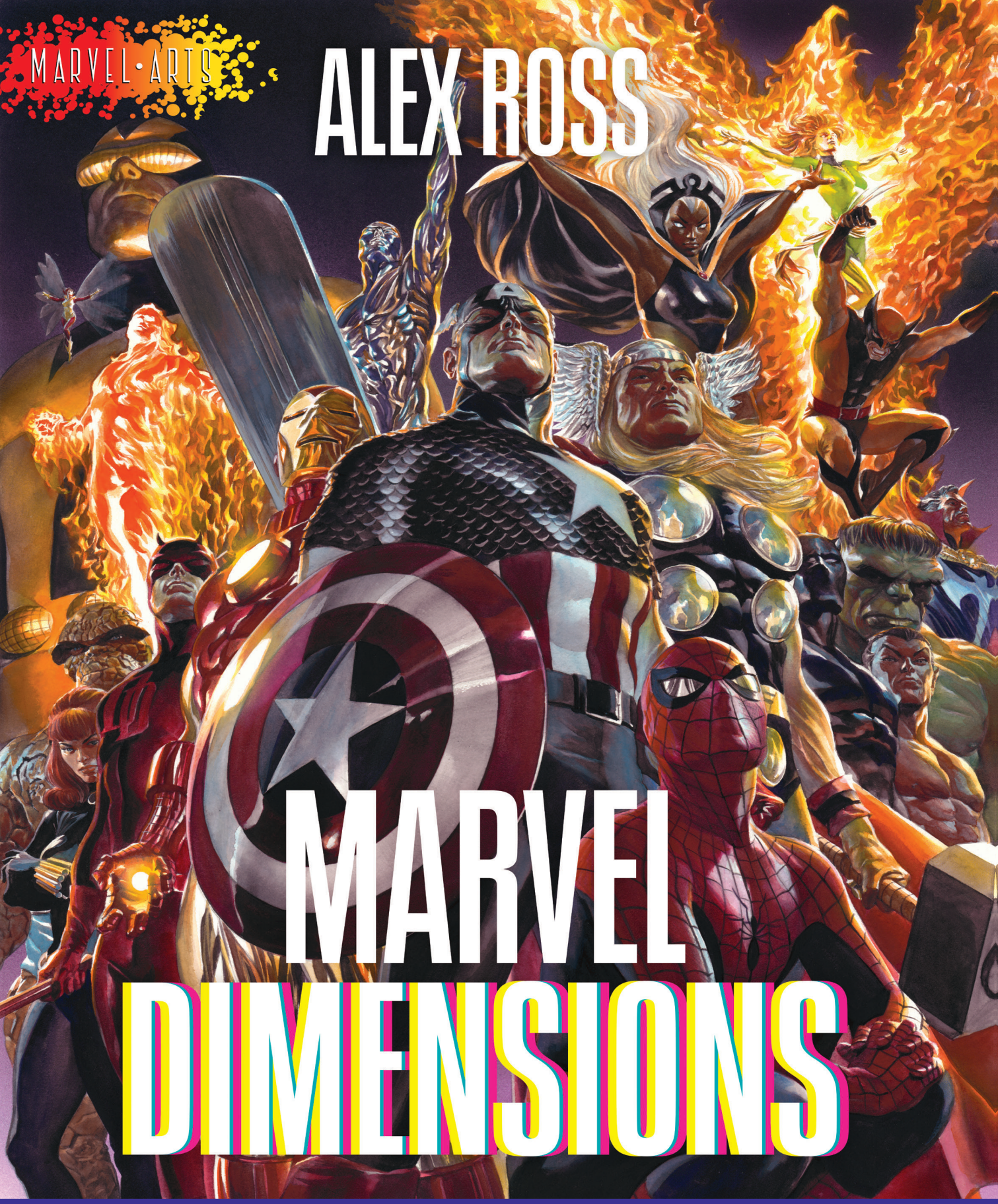
"He's drawn as an anatomical heart walking up the stairs with an umbilical cord between him and Mom broken," DeConnick says. "Especially with my son going off to college, I'm feeling that in a big, big way."

The next arc of FML will focus on the family's father and daughter. López will draw the comic and DeConnick will write bonus pages, but the main script will be penned by DeConnick's husband, Matt Fraction, who wrote the comics Sex Criminals and Superman's Pal Jimmy Olsen. Fraction pitched his wife on the idea when she told him she was having trouble writing the father's plotline. After some initial skepticism, she decided it made perfect sense. "David is the father of a daughter," she says. "So to have David and Matt both doing a book about fathers and daughters in this moment is really great."

Above all, DeConnick hopes readers see FML as a story about a family and community coming together. "A few years ago, I did a short story with Joëlle Jones for a Las Vegas shooting benefit book, and we worked with an X-ray tech who was in emergency rooms that night," she says. "She told us a story about her patients, and her story was about how trauma makes your world small. Right now, everything feels crazy and scary, and it matters that we take care of the people around us."

That said, FML is also one of DeConnick's funniest comics. "In our family, certainly, humor is a coping mechanism," she says. With that, she's off to take care of the next script, the next family issue, and the next coffee.

Shaenon K. Garrity is a frequent PW *comics contributor. Her latest graphic novel is* Steam.



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FALL 2026

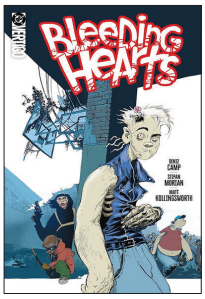
COMICS & GRAPHIC NOVELS PREVIEW

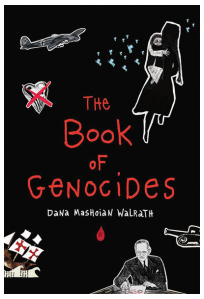
OUR EDITORS HIGHLIGHT THE SEASON'S MOST EXCITING TRENDS AND BUZZIEST TITLES FOR ADULT, MIDDLE GRADE, YA, AND MANGA READERS.

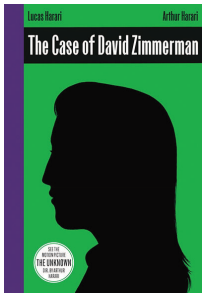
FALL PREVIEW

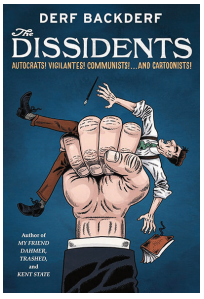
ADULT COMICS

TOP 10

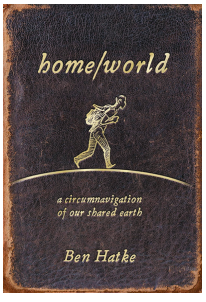




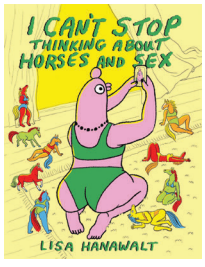




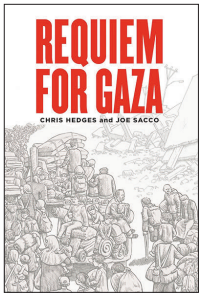


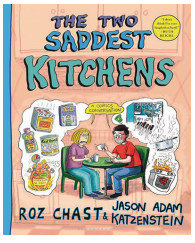


This season's rockstar lineup includes Derf Backderf, Roz Chast, Kelly Sue DeConnick, Lisa Hanawalt, Joe Sacco, and James Tynion IV. *By* **MEG LEMKE**









Bleeding Hearts

Deniz Camp and Stipan Morian. Vertigo, Oct. 20 ($17.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-7995-0556-3)

The zombie image-rehabilitation renaissance lumbers ever forward in Eisner nominee Camp's series starter, set in a future dominated by the undead. It's one of the first trade releases from the imprint's relaunch.

The Book of Genocides

Dana Mashoian Walrath. Harvard Univ., Sept. 8 ($24.95 trade paper, ISBN 978-0-674-29905-4)

Anthropologist and artist Walrath recounts the destruction of 10 different cultures in this "unflinching, artfully rendered history," per *PW*'s starred review, that delivers "grace and humanity to the victims."

The Case of David Zimmerman

Lucas and Arthur Harari, trans. by David Homel. Arsenal Pulp, Oct. 13 ($39.95, ISBN 978-1-83405-034-8)

The Oscar-winning screenwriter of *Anatomy of a Fall* teams with his cartoonist brother for a body-switch tale "that fans of Hitchcock and Cronenberg will devour," per *PW*'s starred review.

The Dissidents: Autocrats! Vigilantes! Communists! and Cartoonists!

Derf Backderf. Abrams ComicArts, Sept. 15 ($29.99, ISBN 978-1-4197-7255-9)

Eisner winner Backderf's fictionalized account of a real-life anti-censorship crusade by editorial cartoonists in WWI-era America documents "sobering history that reverberates to the present day," according to *PW*'s starred review.

Fml

Kelly Sue DeConnick, David Lopez, and Cris Peter. Dark Horse, Nov. 3 ($29.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-5067-4649-4)

Bitch Planet creator DeConnick sends the metalhead kid of a riot grrrl mama on an odyssey through a postapocalyptic Pacific Northwest.

Home/World: A Circumnavigation of Our Shared Earth

Ben Hatke. 23rd St., Oct. 6 ($29.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-250-37018-1)

This graphic memoir debut from the Eisner-winning creator of *Zita the Spacegirl* follows the cartoonist as he traverses the globe in search of a sense of belonging.

I Can't Stop Thinking About Horses and Sex

Lisa Hanawalt. Drawn & Quarterly, Oct. 20 ($25, ISBN 978-1-77046-912-9)

Saddle up for a ride through the psyche of the Ignatz winner behind *Bojack Horseman* and *Tuca & Bertie*.

Odin

James Tynion IV, Marguerite Bennett, and Letizia Cadonici. Image, Dec. 15 ($16.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-5343-3219-5)

With a reporter on their heels, modern-day Nazis trek into the forest to rouse ancient gods in Eisner winner Tynion's buzzy Nordic horror.

Requiem for Gaza

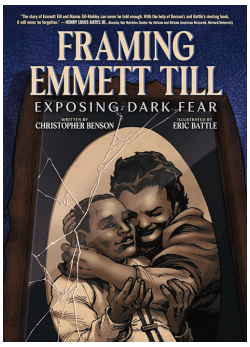
Chris Hedges and Joe Sacco. Fantagraphics, Oct. 6 ($24.99, ISBN 979-8-8750-0272-4)

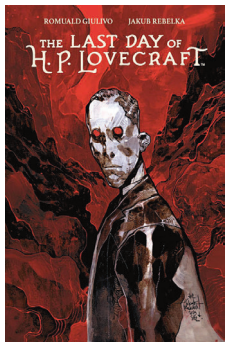
Following up their bestseller *Days of Destruction, Days of Revolt*, Eisner winner Sacco and Pulitzer winner Hedges profile Palestinian refugees living in Egypt.

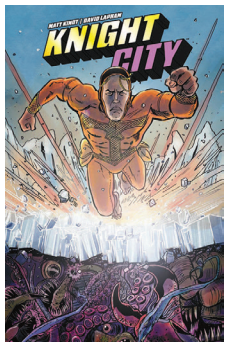
The Two Saddest Kitchens: A Comics Conversation

Roz Chast and Jason Adam Katzenstein. Bloomsbury, Oct. 6 ($29.99, ISBN 978-1-63973-518-1)

The *New Yorker* cartoonists trade quips about their inferior kitchens in this "eclectic but delectable" collaboration, per *PW*'s review.







23rd St.

The Greater Good: People, Power, and Public Health by Whit Taylor and Joyce Rice (Nov. 3, $30.99, ISBN 978-1-250-81376-3). This graphic explainer of the systems supporting public health is rooted in case studies and key moments from history, spanning everyday policy successes to lessons from epidemics.

My Beloved Other: A Memoir of Love, Race, and Optimism in a Time of Denial by Nick Abadzis and Angela Watson (Aug. 11, $29.99, ISBN 978-1-59643-370-0). Married collaborators Abadzis and Watson "examine intersections of race, nationality, and class via the lens of their 30-plus-year relationship," per *PW*'s review. "Readers will appreciate this timely and ultimately optimistic account."

Ablaze

Parliament of Rooks by Abigail Jill Harding and Richard Starkings (Aug. 4, $24.99, ISBN 978-1-68497-793-2). In this Eisner-nominated comic, an architect awakes from an otherworldly sleep and heads to a royal ball to present a vision for the city to the princess, but plans go awry.

Abrams ComicArts

Framing Emmett Till: Exposing Dark Fear by Christopher Bennett and Eric Battle (Oct. 27, $27.99, ISBN 978-1-4197-4227-9). Journalist Bennett, who cowrote Mamie Till-Mobley's memoir, interrogates how news coverage has shaped America's understanding of race through the fictionalized story of a Black reporter following the 1955 lynching of Emmett Till in Mississippi, in this release in the Megascope line.

Lantern Pass: A Supernatural Noir Alpine Thriller by Serge Lehman and Frederik Peeters, trans. by Christopher Bradley (Nov. 17, $34.99, ISBN 978-1-4197-8846-8). Angoulême award winner Peeters draws this "big, ambitious fantasy that blurs genre lines to dazzling effect while staying true to its French noir roots," per *PW*'s starred review.

Andrews McMeel

My Giant Nerd Boyfriend by Yen Ee (Aug. 18, $16.99, ISBN 979-8-8816-0194-2) collects the popular webtoon about the quotidian misadventures of a Malaysian cartoonist named Fishball and her unusually tall partner.

Avid Reader

The Nightingales by Emil Wilson (Aug. 15, $34.99, ISBN 978-1-7995-0117-6). Wilson debuts with a mid-1980s period piece about a teen whose father's ailing friend moves in. "Intimate and soft-spoken, this sketchbook family album finds the hard-won possibility of grace in America's fraught early reckoning with AIDS," according to *PW*'s review.

Bloomsbury

Thirty: A Guide to Embracing the Wonderfully Messy Decade by Ariella Elovic (Dec. 1, $28.99, ISBN 978-1-63973-763-5) examines what it means to be an adult who hasn't yet hit such milestones as getting married or having kids, much less acquired the wherewithal to roast a chicken and host dinner guests. 75,000-copy announced first printing.

Boom! Studios

The Last Day of H.P. Lovecraft by Romuald Giulivo and Jakub Rebelka, trans. by Mercedes Gilliom (Aug. 18, $19.99 trade paper, ISBN 979-8-89215-872-5), unfolds an unconventional tale of H.P. Lovecraft's final days, resulting in a "moody, surrealistic imagining of a legendary writer's life" that "Lovecraft himself might appreciate," per *PW*'s review.

Cicada

Shushu by Ziggy Hanaor and Benjamin Phillips (Sept. 1, $22.99, ISBN 978-1-80066-061-8). The first adult graphic novel by the creator of the picture book *Alte Zachen* distills the trials of motherhood through the epic battle to get a recalcitrant child to quit their pacifier habit.

Conundrum

Borderline by Zeta Paul (Sept. 29, $20 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-77262-124-2). The Mi'kmaq artist chronicles her experiences as an Indigenous young person with borderline personality disorder growing up in a dysfunctional home and a hostile world going through rapid change.

Dark Horse

Did You Hear About Mimi Green? by Connor Goldsmith and Josh Cornillon (Jan. 12, $19.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-5067-5091-0). When a fatphobic comment by a social media star named Mimi goes viral, she retreats to a woo-woo spa until the furor dies down, but finds that the restorative treatments are crueler than words.

Knight City by Matt Kindt and David Lapham (Aug. 18, $24.99, ISBN 978-1-5067-4539-8) investigates the mental load of being a superhero via the story of a flying protector of justice by day who, when he sleeps, enters a parallel realm where he leads a banal life.

DC

Harley & Ivy: Life & Crimes by Erica Henderson (Aug. 18, $17.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-7995-0950-9). The Eisner-winning creator of *The Unbeatable Squirrel Girl* puts her spin on the enemies-to-allies saga of the eponymous female villains, who bond after getting framed by the Joker.

Difference Engine

How Are You Feeling? by Andeasyand et al. (Aug. 26, $23 trade paper, ISBN 978-981-94-1178-8). Featuring contributions from cartoonists including Griselda Gabriele, Vinita Ramani, Wayne Rée, and Nurjannah Suhaimi, this anthology takes on sensitive topics including menstruation, menopause, pregnancy loss, and mental health struggles.

Drawn & Quarterly

Major Taylor: The World's Fastest Man by Frederick Noland (Sept. 8, $30, ISBN 978-1-77046-493-3) memorializes the life and times of one of the first international Black sports heroes, Marshall Walter "Major" Taylor, who won a world championship bicycle race at age 20 in 1899.

Murder School by Paul B. Rainey (Sept. 15, $27, ISBN 978-1-77046-860-3) recalls the cartoonist's miserable middle grade years dodging meanie classmates and teachers while immersing himself in unusual schoolyard games played to unexpected ends.

My Friend Kim Jong Un by Keum Suk Gendry-Kim, trans. by Janet Hong (Oct. 27, $30 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-77046-822-1). From the Eisner-winning South Korean cartoonist's island home, she can see North Korea. Here, she draws on original interviews and research to examine the life and personality of dictator Kim Jong Un.

Dstlry

Life by Brian Azzarello, Stephanie Phillips, and Danijel Zezelj (Nov. 24, $35 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-962265-27-0). In a far-flung future world, felons serving multiple life sentences must suffer through near-eternities of extended animation, working the mines of a forgotten planet—until a fresh shipment of dangerous criminals accidentally arrives on their shore.

Experiment

Early Man Was a Woman: Reclaiming Prehistory by Ulli Lust (Sept. 1, $29.95, ISBN 979-8-89303-137-9). In this "illuminating look into what makes humans human," per *PW*'s starred review, the Angoulême award winner reconsiders the role of prehistoric women, weaving together memoir, art history, archaeology, and anthropology.

Fantagraphics

Bimbo Agitprop by Raquelle Jac (Aug. 4, $34.99 trade paper, ISBN 979-8-8750-0221-2). "In her searing debut, Jac depicts her dysfunctional childhood with a mastery of craft" that "combines the technical savvy of Phoebe Gloeckner with the brutal humor of Aline Kominsky-Crumb," per *PW*'s starred review.

The Mess by Noah Van Sciver (Sept. 29, $19.99, ISBN 979-8-8750-0268-7). The Ignatz winner turns back to fiction with this tale of the grieving daughter of a hoarder cleaning out her father's packed house with her disaffected teenage son, as she holds out hope of finding an original Picasso rumored to be hidden there.

Graphic Mundi

The Human Remains: Drawing Out Compassion in Medicine by Nathan A. Gray (Nov. 10, $26.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-63779-105-9). This debut memoir takes a scalpel to the intensive cycle of study and sleep deprivation that students go through to become doctors, dissecting how the author felt his compassion drain away during his residency until he found his calling in palliative care.

Helvetiq

Flight 111 by Talel Aronowicz (Sept. 1, $24.95, ISBN 978-3-03964-147-5). The Swiss cartoonist documents a family and national tragedy: the 1998 crash of a Swissair flight from New York City to Geneva that killed both her grandparents.

IDW Dark

The Twilight Zone: Stories from the Fifth Dimension by Dan Watters et al. (Sept. 1, $19.99 trade paper, ISBN 979-8-88724-529-4). Cartoonists cross into twilight territory in this anthology continuing in the style of the 60-year-old TV series, including work from Francesco Francavilla, Nate Powell, Tom Scioli, and James Stokoe.

Ignition

Roots of Madness by Stephanie Williams and Letizia Cadonici (Sept. 22, $19.99, ISBN 978-1-96806-310-8). This Eisner-nominated series puts a supernatural twist on the real-life story of 19th-century Black entrepreneur Madam C.J. Walker, portrayed here as a young woman who mixes potions and science to counteract the poison sold to Black women as haircare.

Image

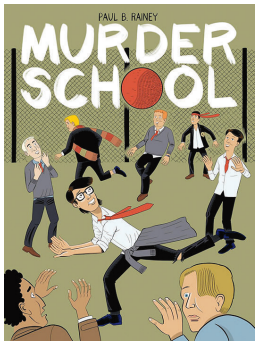
The Cutting Garden by Darcy Van Poelgeest and Erin Connally (Sept. 29, $22.99, ISBN 978-1-5343-3080-1). A mysterious child gets entangled in a series of deaths in Jazz Age New Orleans. "Familial feelings bloom between a monster and a mother in this delicate, melancholy horror story," per *PW*'s review.

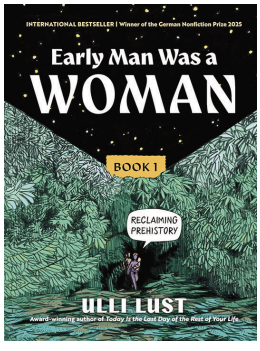
Royals by Derek Kirk Kim and Jacob Perez (Dec. 8, $24.99, ISBN 978-1-5343-8904-5). Bickering telepathic twin card sharps ply their trade in the seedy back rooms of Seoul, until they get found out by the wrong guys—and must make a criminal bargain to win their way out.

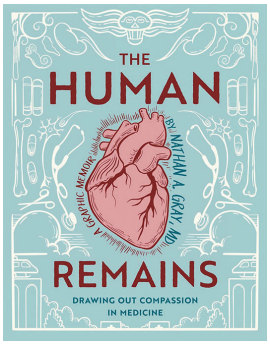
Mad Cave Studios

Havana Split by Brrémaud and Vic Macioci, trans. by Montana Kane (Sept. 1, $19.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-5458-2696-6). A daughter tries to rescue her kidnapped gambling-addict father in 1950s Cuba, tangling up with an ex-CIA agent and various gangsters and lowlifes in a plot to exchange a movie star for her deadbeat dad.

Is Ted Ok? by Dave Chisholm (Sept. 29, $24.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-5458-2998-1). An office worker toiling for a trillionaire begins to lose his grip, and the troubled









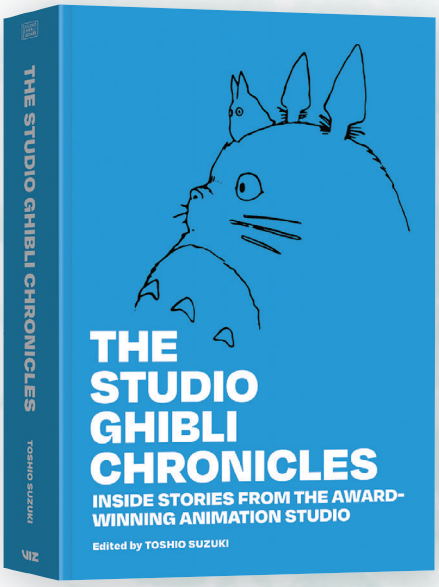
DIVE INTO THE WORLD OF STUDIO GHIBLI



THE STUDIO GHIBLI CHRONICLES

INSIDE STORIES FROM THE AWARD-WINNING ANIMATION STUDIO

Edited by TOSHIO SUZUKI



Here, for the first time, readers can explore the studio's rich history with behind-the-scenes anecdotes about favorites such as *Spirited Away*, *Totoro*, and *Howl's Moving Castle*. From initial concepts and creative planning, through production and scheduling challenges, to Ghibli's unique management methods and innovative marketing campaigns, this book offers new insights into the production of all 27 movies, including the most recent film, Academy Award winner *The Boy and the Heron*.

Edited by producer and executive director of Studio Ghibli Toshio Suzuki, *The Studio Ghibli Chronicles* is the inside story of forty years of filmmaking.

The Studio Ghibli Chronicles
Edited by Toshio Suzuki

Price: $30.00 US / $40.00 CAN • **ISBN:** 9781974762835

"Miyazaki once told me 'Suzuki-san, remember the important things!' Now is the perfect time."—Toshio Suzuki

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VIZ

OVER THE TOP

Ultraviolence

From punch-em-ups to murder-fests and other gory escapades, these comics offer escapism from a violent world via fantasies ever more bloody and outrageous. Highlights include teenagers who get murdered on repeat and a heroine whose signature move hits below the belt. —*ML*

ACCIDENTAL ASSASSIN
Molly Ní Chéileachair and Vi. Webtoon Unscrolled, Sept. 1 ($19.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-83411-050-9)
An office worker in Ireland leads a double life as a vicious assassin in training who starts to fall for the salty senior spy instructing her.

BATMAN: GARGOYLE OF GOTHAM
Rafael Grampá. DC Black Label, Sept. 15 ($34.99, ISBN 978-1-7995-0117-6)
The Eisner-winning Brazilian cartoonist plunges Batman into a face-off with a serial murderer whose selection of victims points back to the Dark Knight.

BEAST MODE 510
Sheldon Allen and Denys Cowan, with Marshawn Lynch. AWA, Oct. 6 ($19.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-9531-6588-6)
NFL player Lynch stars in an action-packed, Oakland-set crime saga, dodging bounty hunters and crossing paths with Silicon Valley villains and the Yakuza.

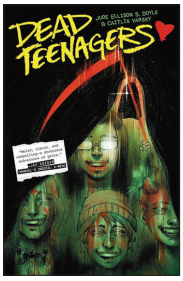
DEAD TEENAGERS
Jude Ellison S. Doyle and Caitlin Yarsky. Oni, Oct. 6 ($19.99 trade paper, ISBN 979-8-89488-335-9)
Five members of the senior class keep getting killed—again and again and again—in this horror satire where a friend group is stuck in an endless loop of murder.

DEATH FIGHT FOREVER
Andrew MacLean et al. Image, Sept. 8 ($16.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-5343-3018-4)
In a Mad Max–style future, a transdimensional demon intent on destruction is confronted by a pair of unlikely allies: a criminal and a cop.

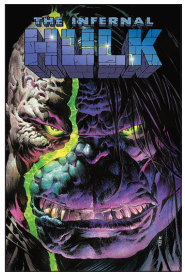
FORMING
Jesse Moynihan. Fantagraphics, Oct. 6 ($49.99, ISBN 979-8-8750-0263-2)
The webcomic reaches its conclusion in print, recounting a millennia of war between alien gods, androids, ancient Greek Titans, and humans.

FORT PSYCHO
Matt Kindt and Brian Hurt. Oni, Dec. 15 ($19.99 trade paper, ISBN 979-8-89488-369-4)
Barbaric secret agents are imprisoned on an island after their big mission goes wrong, but throwing these enraged maniacs together makes things worse.













GODFATHER OF HELL
Cavan Scott and Pius Bak. Vault, Oct. 13 ($24.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-63849-271-9)
Bestseller Scott and Bram Stoker Award winner Bak join forces for this crime-horror mash up wherein a mob enforcer sent to hell climbs up the ranks of the demon mafia to face off against boss Satan.

INFERNAL HULK
Phillip Kennedy Johnson, Nic Klein, and Kev Walker. Marvel Universe, Nov. 10 ($24.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-302-96760-4)
When Bruce Banner goes missing, an evil version of the Hulk terrorizes the universe.

JOHN OF THE NIGHT
Darryl Cunningham. Avery Hill, Sept. 2 ($19.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-917355-33-9)
Taking a cue from John Kirby, this story of a father's quest to save the universe, and the fate of his half-witch princess daughter, features many fantastical fight scenes.

JUNK PUNCH
Paul Tobin et al. Image, Dec. 15 ($17.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-5458-3005-5)
In a future where folks have weird fixations (like, even weirder than now), a heroine arises who chooses to go hard for justice via her predilection to sock people in their privates.

JUST BRUTAL
Dennis Hopeless and Brahm Revel. Ignition, Jan. 12 ($19.99 trade paper, ISBN 979-8-90385-023-5)
A divorced couple in Iowa surprise their kids when they reveal themselves to be immortal barbarians and rally the family to thwart the 3,000-year return of Farklar the Fleshless.

RAFAEL GARCIA: HENCHMAN
Peter Murrieta, David Schrader, and Ben Herrera. Titan Comics, Oct. 20 ($17.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-80618-287-9)
Maverick is a superhero corporation with all the typical work-a-day routines, papers to push and quotas to fill, as an entry-level henchman attempts to claw his way to the top.

TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES X GODZILLA
Tim Seeley and Fero Pe. IDW, Sept. 1 ($21.99 trade paper, ISBN 979-8-88724-509-6)
To defeat a mutant Mechashredder, the turtles ally with Godzilla, resulting in nonstop ninja action.

THE WEAPON IS HUNGRY
Bartosz Sztybor, Alessio Fioriniello, and Jonathan Amarillo. Boom Studios!, Oct. 27 ($19.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-5067-4740-8)
A wayward mother tries to get it right this time when she adopts a baby kaiju, rallying an oddball crew to help her raise and protect the little monster—who might just eat the world.

WHITE HOUSE ROBOT ROMANCE
Chip Zdarsky and Rachael Stott. Dstlry, Nov. 10 ($30, ISBN 978-1-962265-43-0)
When two robot employees of the White House fall for each other, they rally against the powers that be who are trying to shut them down.

WRESTLE HEIST
Kyle Starks. Oni, Aug. 4 ($16.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-5343-3339-0)
A former pro turns to crime and gathers other wrestlers to take down a corrupt promoter.

The life and career of
FINAL FANTASY'S legendary composer

NOBUO UEMATSU

ON THE RECORD



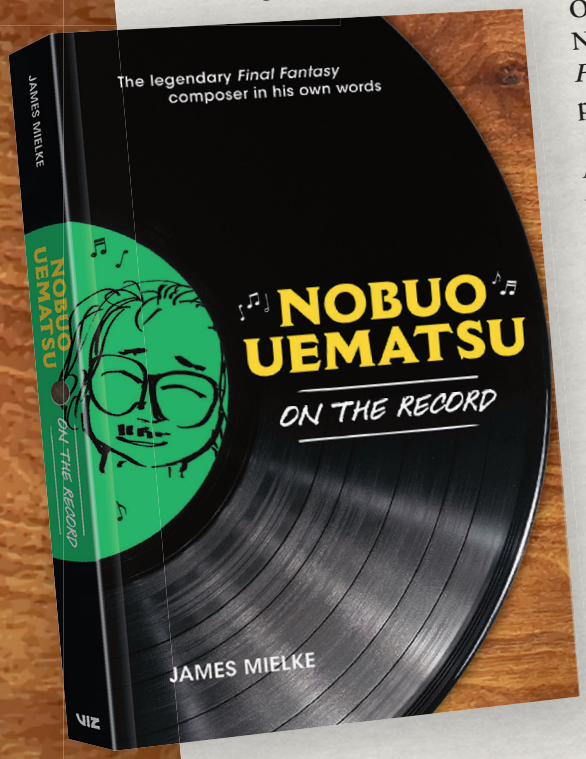


by JAMES MIELKE

One of the most celebrated and prolific composers in video game history, Nobuo Uematsu is the original composer of the phenomenally successful *Final Fantasy* games. His work is known by millions and has been performed by some of the most prestigious orchestras around the world.

Although Uematsu had no formal training, his enduring scores advanced video game music beyond the early limitations of the medium, and he continues to push the boundaries of his art today. Here, veteran gaming journalist James Mielke explores the life, inspirations, and influences of the beloved musician, from his childhood and first forays into music to his time at Square Enix and the global success of his concert tours.

Drawn from hours of conversations with Uematsu, as well as his wife, his peers, and industry titans such as Final Fantasy creator Hironobu Sakaguchi, and fellow acclaimed composers Daniel Rosenfeld (Minecraft), Yoko Shimomura (*Street Fighter II*, *Kingdom Hearts*, *Super Mario RPG* and Hitoshi Sakimoto (*Final Fantasy Tactics*, *Final Fantasy XII*, *Valkyria Chronicles*), this intimate biography offers a glimpse into the heart and mind of the man often referred to as the Beethoven of video game music.





Nobuo Uematsu: On the Record
By James Mielke

Price: $28.00 US / $37.00 CAN
ISBN: 9781974769407

On Sale 9/15

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VIZ

minder assigned to keep an eye on him finds her intervention only pushes their paranoid coexistence into ever weirder territory.

Magnetic Press

Liberty by Jordan Mechner, Etienne Le Roux, and Loïc Chevallier (Dec. 8, $29.99, ISBN 978-1-962413-83-1), recounts the espionage exploits of French playwright Pierre-Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais, who got weapons from Europe into the hands of American revolutionaries in 1776.

Marvel Universe

Ultimate Endgame by Deniz Camp, Terry Dodson, and Jonas Scharf (Sept. 22, $17.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-302-96730-7). The finale of the Ultimate Universe series finds Spider-Man, America Chavez, Killmonger, and Doom facing off against the Maker and the Children of Tomorrow against the backdrop of World War III.

NYRC

Like Swimmers by Dash Shaw (Aug. 25, $32.99, ISBN 979-889-623-1-059). Filmmaker and Eisner-nominated cartoonist Shaw returns with this "*Rashomon*-like whodunit," per *PW*'s starred review, set in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic. An artist is shot with a silver bullet and his sister tries to piece together the clues to find his killer.

Oni

Crownsville by Rodney Barnes and Elia Bonetti (Aug. 11, $24.99 trade paper, ISBN 979-8-89488-099-0). Eisner nominee Barnes sets this gothic horror and crime story within the halls of a segregated Maryland psychiatric facility that closed after allegations surfaced that staff abused patients.

Pantheon

Hotel and Farm by Ben Katchor (Oct. 6, $30, ISBN 978-0-307-90691-5). The creator of *Julius Knipl, Real Estate Photographer* returns with a short tale about the oddities of agriculture and the hospitality industry, as told by the denizens of a diner.

Pow Pow

The Price of Silver by Sophie Bédard, trans. by Robin Lang (Oct. 13, $19.95 trade paper, ISBN 978-2-925114-67-3). This girl-meets-girl love story with a supernatural twist sees a barista fall for a coworker, who turns out to be a werewolf—just the type of creature the barista was born to hunt.

SelfMadeHero

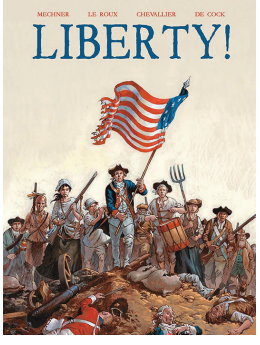
The Great Marc Evers: The True Story of a Champion Against All Odds by Ivo van Woerden and Gemma Plum (Oct. 6, $31.94, ISBN 978-1-914224-51-5). The autistic Paralympic swimmer from the Netherlands recounts how his family persevered to support him despite a medical establishment that recommended he be institutionalized in his toddlerhood.

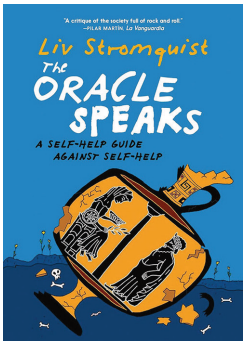
Seven Stories

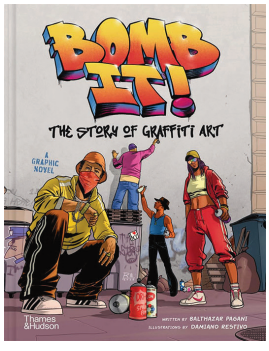
The Oracle Speaks: A Self-Help Guide Against Self-Help by Liv Strömquist, trans. by Melissa Bowers (Nov. 3, $23.95 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-64421-577-7). This takedown of the self-help and wellness industries employs a hybrid of comics, photo essays, and quotes from the writings and teachings of Catherine of Siena, the Oracle at Delphi, Slavoj Zizek, and God.

Storm King Comics

John Carpenter's Cathedral by John Carpenter, Sandy King, and Sean Sobczak (Aug. 4, $22.99 trade paper, ISBN 979-8-9928116-8-1). A cathedral in ruins in the center of Los Angeles has been presumed empty for years, until a murder pulls a lieutenant and her fellow officers across its very unholy transom and ever deeper into a vortex of evil.







Street Noise

Fertile: A Graphic Memoir by Sofia Szamosi (Nov. 3, $20.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-951491-54-3) follows the cartoonist on her difficult journey to conceive and depicts her struggle with disordered eating once she was pregnant, bringing to light all the ways that shame enters into the experience of early motherhood.

Ten Speed Graphic

Stagtown by Punko (Oct. 6, $28.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-0-593-83625-5) collects the interactive webcomic murder mystery, in which a woman attempts to uncover who or what is watching her town via the cameras cropping up on every corner and inside people's homes.

Thames & Hudson

Bomb It! The Story of Graffiti Art by Balthazar Pagani and Damiano Restivo (Sept. 15, $24.95 trade paper, ISBN 978-0-500-03034-9). The vandalism-as-art that flourished as part of hip-hop culture in the 1980s and '90s gets a graphic history that traverses from train tunnels to elite gallery collections, and from New York City to Paris and São Paulo.

Titan Comics

Alva in the Dark by Aksel Studsgarth and Daniel Hansen (Sept. 22, $19.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-80618-370-8). This magic-tinged Nordic noir, the first in a trilogy, follows a would-be burglar as she finds out that she has witchy powers desired by the Craftsman, who begins to chase her across the snow.

Top Shelf

Forevr by Brian Box Brown (Sept. 8, $19.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-60309-600-3). An app allows the dying to upload their minds and keep conversing with their loved ones as long as they pay their subscriber fees, but when a grieving family takes their late mother on a hike in the wilderness, things take a wrong turn.

Vault

The Mountains Belong to Us by Benjamin Dickson and Charlie Adlard (Nov. 3, $34.99, ISBN 978-1-63849-446-1). A shepherd and his dog pick up a young woman whose father has died in the mountains, but when the shepherd is drafted into war and leaves

How do you live when each day might be your brother's last?

SOUND OF A BLINK

STORY AND ART BY

SHUZO OSHIMI

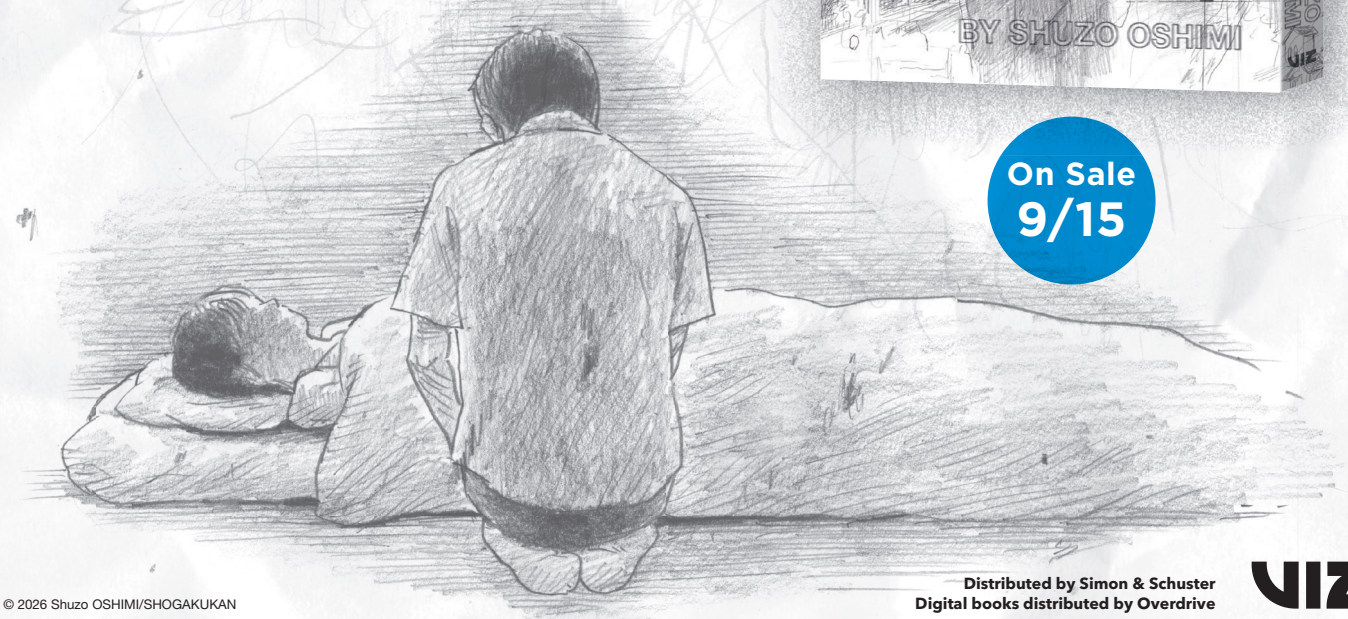


A raw, intimate coming-of-age memoir by renowned manga creator Shuzo Oshimi

Life is going well for Shuzo. He's in college, has a serious girlfriend, and just won his first manga award. But when his younger brother is diagnosed with a brain tumor, Shuzo is sucked back into the complicated family dynamics of his childhood.

Sound of a Blink, Vol. 1
Story and Art by Shuzo Oshimi

Price: $16.99 US / $22.99 CAN • **ISBN:** 9781974766031



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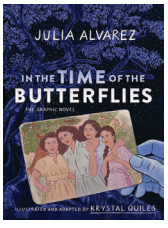
ADAPTATIONS UPDATE

Great Lit, Now with Pics

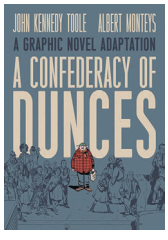
This season's crop of graphic adaptations spans genres and subgenres from literary fiction to thriller to a D&D-esque adventure gone cozy. Highlights include *A Confederacy of Dunces* drawn by Albert Monteys, Dorothy Gale as a secret agent in *NO Place*, and a pair of retellings of the myth of Medusa. —*ML*

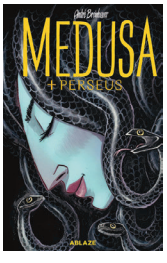


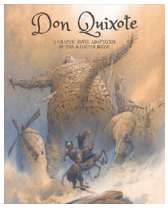


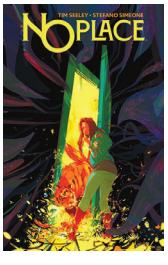




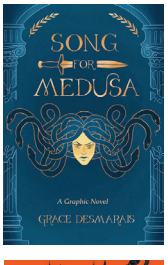


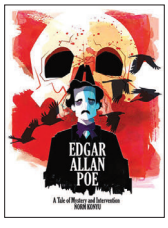














ALICE FOREVER AFTER
Dan Panosian and Giorgio Spalletta. Boom! Studios, Dec. 15 ($19.99 trade paper, ISBN 979-8-89215-998-2)
The girl who once dived through the looking glass returns, now grown up and with a daughter of her own, to a Wonderland fallen on hard times and finds the Cheshire Cat on a desperate quest.

BONJOUR TRISTESSE
Frédéric Rébéna and Françoise Sagan, trans. by Lynn Eskow. NBM, Oct. 27 ($24.99, ISBN 978-1-68112-361-5)
Sagan's novel, recently adapted into a film with Chloë Sevigny, gets retold as a graphic novel about a widower, his mistress, his daughter, and their guest on the French Riviera during one scandalous summer in the 1950s.

A CONFEDERACY OF DUNCES
Albert Monteys. Boom! Studios, Sept. 29 ($29.99, ISBN 979-8-89215-855-8)
Eisner nominee Monteys tackles John Kennedy Toole's Pulitzer Prize-winning satire, proving he's "become one of the most innovative cartoon interpreters of his generation," per *PW*'s starred review.

DON QUIXOTE
Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra and Paul and Gaëtan Brizzi, trans. by Edward Gauvin. Abrams ComicArts, Oct. 13 ($27.99, ISBN 978-1-4197-9177-2)
The Brizzi siblings, Disney animators and adapters of *Dante's Inferno,* draw the Spanish knight's classic adventures.

DORIAN GRAY
Enrique Corominas, trans. by Christopher Bradley. Titan Comics, Sept. 22 ($24.99, ISBN 978-1-80618-156-8)
Oscar Wilde's satirical novel of beauty, youth, and corruption in Victorian England gets the comics treatment.

EDGAR ALLAN POE: A TALE OF MYSTERY AND INTERVENTION
Norm Konyu. Titan Comics, Oct. 6 ($12.99, ISBN 978-1-80618-216-9)
Aurora Award winner Konyu puts a unique twist on Poe's tales, including "The Raven," "The Tell-Tale Heart," "The Fall of the House of Usher," and "The Masque of the Red Death."

IN THE TIME OF THE BUTTERFLIES
Julia Alvarez and Krystal Quiles. Algonquin, Sept. 1 ($30, ISBN 978-1-64375-376-8)
This adaptation of Alvarez's novel, which was also made into a film starring Salma Hayek, tells the true story of a trio of sisters who were killed in the Dominican Republic in 1960 in a thwarted attempt to overthrow dictator Rafael Trujillo.

LEGENDS & LATTES
Travis Baldree, Shanti Rittgers, and Sarah Webb. Ten Speed Graphic, Oct. 6 ($28, ISBN 978-1-9848-6231-0)
The bestselling novel about a bounty hunter orc turned barista in the first ever coffee shop in Thune gets drawn as a comic.

MEDUSA + PERSEUS
Andre Breinbauer. Ablaze, Sept. 22 ($29.99, ISBN 978-1-68497-796-3)
The Greek myth is retold from the alternating perspectives of its title characters, resulting in a story that questions who is the monster and who is the hero.

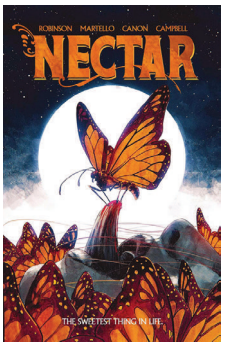
NO PLACE
Tim Seeley and Stefano Simeone. Ignition, Sept. 1 ($19.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-96806-309-2)
Dorothy Gale, formerly of Oz, and cast members of Narnia are secret agents battling injustice and trying to prevent monsters from entering the real world.

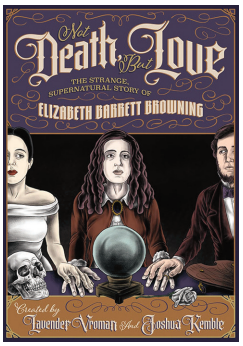
SONG FOR MEDUSA
Grace Desmarais. Andrews McMeel, Nov. 10 ($18.99 trade paper, ISBN 979-8-8816-0024-2)
The gorgon gets an LGBTQ+ love story in this reimagined version of the myth, where an imprisoned Medusa is drawn to the voice of a blind princess who is immune to her stony glare.

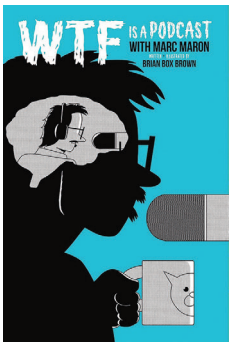
THINGS WE LOST IN THE FIRE: FOUR GRAPHIC STORIES
Mariana Enriquez and Lucas Nine, trans. by Megan McDowell. Hogarth, Oct. 13 ($28, ISBN 979-8-217-19836-8)
Argentinian cartoonist and filmmaker Nine adapts a quartet of supernatural tales from novelist and journalist Enriquez that examine Argentina's fractured past and complicated present.

her with the pup, she runs up against evil monsters and men. 75,000-copy announced first printing.

Nectar by Jeremy Robinson, Annapaola Martello, and Francesco Francini (Aug. 4, $24.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-63849-367-9). Per *PW*'s review, this "satisfyingly creepy" horror comic series features butterflies who drink blood, and "fans of gothic-tinged folk horror will enjoy the sugar rush of terror." 85,000-copy announced first printing.







Webtoon Unscrolled

Gourmet Hound by Robyn Lee Hamada (Oct. 27, $19.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-83411-049-3) collects the webtoon series, in which a foodie who has lost access to a nostalgic flavor sets out on a quest to reunite the team of chefs who helmed the restaurant she loved as a child.

Vertigo

Whats Wrongdog? (End of Life #1) by Kyle Starks and Steve Pugh (Oct. 13, $17.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-7995-0620-1). An inept hit man, who acts more like a boy playing the part, crosses the wrong bad guys and goes on the run, but trouble comes after him, including in the form of a canceled cartoonist who has turned to crime.

West Margin

Not Death, but Love: The Strange, Supernatural Story of Elizabeth Barrett Browning by Lavender Vroman and Joshua Kemble (Sept. 22, $29.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-5131-4161-9). This graphic history covers the poet's life, loves, odd-fellow friendships, writing career, and dalliances with opium and spiritualism.

Z2

WTF Is a Podcast with Marc Maron by Brendan McDonald and Brian Box Brown (Nov. 3, $34.99, ISBN 979-8-88656-222-4). Written by *WTF* producer McDonald, this comics history recounts the 1,000-episode run of the podcast, whose guests included Anthony Bourdain, President Barack Obama, and Robin Williams.

FROM SCROLL TO SHELF
The biggest hits on WEBTOON – now in print!



Trade paperback: 9781834110509
$19.99 USD / $26.99 CAD
6"x 9" / 288 pgs
On Sale 9/1/26



Trade paperback: 9781834110493
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6"x 9" / 288 pgs
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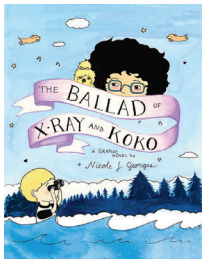
Trade paperback: 9781834110523
$19.99 USD / $26.99 CAD
6"x 9" / 320 pgs
On Sale 11/3/26

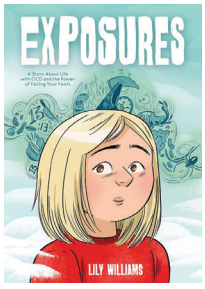
FALL PREVIEW

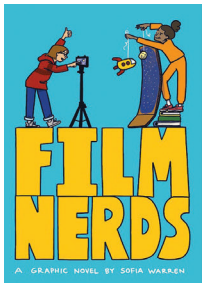
MIDDLE GRADE COMICS

TOP 10









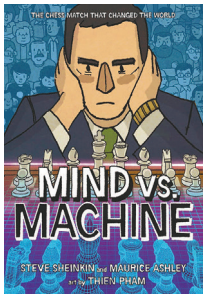


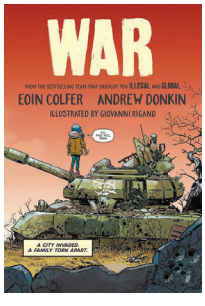


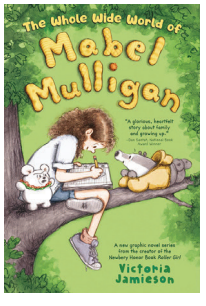
Meg Cabot, Eoin Colfer, Sina Grace, Victoria Jamieson, Thien Pham, and Shaun Tan headline a star-studded season for tween readers.

By **MEG LEMKE**









The Ballad of X-Ray and Koko

Nicole J. Georges. Holiday House, Jan. 19 ($24.99, ISBN 978-0-8234-5844-8)

The Lamba Award winner's latest, a queer coming-of-age story, stars a girl named X-Ray and her trusty pet chicken. Ages 8–12. 25,000-copy announced first printing.

Dance Team Drama (Detective Baby #1)

Meg Cabot and Amelia Allore. HarperAlley, Sept. 1 ($13.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-0-06-325496-1)

In bestseller Cabot's "effervescent" series opener, "a quotidian mystery alchemizes into a stand-out gumshoe caper," per *PW*'s starred review. Ages 8–12.

Exposures: A Story About Life with OCD and the Power of Facing Your Fears

Lily Williams. First Second, Aug. 11 ($24.99, ISBN 978-1-250-24670-7)

This "compassionate and necessary" debut, per *PW*'s starred review, offers "an unflinching portrait of one tween's managing OCD." Ages 8–12.

Film Nerds

Sofia Warren. Putnam, Sept. 29 ($13.99 trade paper, ISBN 979-8-217-00409-6)

The *New Yorker* cartoonist's debut finds friends who are drifting apart come together to make a sci-fi movie, in what *PW*'s review called a "charming send-up to creativity and belonging." Ages 8–12. 30,000-copy announced first printing.

Game On (All-American Persian #1)

Sina Grace. Random House Graphic, Oct. 6 ($21.99, ISBN 978-0-593-56623-7)

In a comic based on his upbringing, the GLAAD Media Award–nominated Superman writer features an Iranian American kid whose mom will only let him play video games if he agrees to study Farsi first. Ages 8–12.

Hometown

Shaun Tan. Levine Querido, Sept. 1 ($24.99, ISBN 978-1-64614-698-7)

This elegant picture book–style graphic narrative recalls Tan's seminal *The Arrival* with a "luminous and ethereal work about home and identity," per *PW*'s starred review. Ages 10–14.

Last One Picked

Audrey Meeker. Feiwel and Friends, Oct. 13 ($22.99, ISBN 978-1-250-38393-8)

An indoor kid who loves to read gets sent to volleyball camp, which would be bad enough, but then she finds out the friend who betrayed her is also in attendance. Ages 9–12.

Mind vs. Machine: The Chess Match That Changed the World

Steve Sheinkin, Maurice Ashley, and Thien Pham. Roaring Brook, Sept. 8 ($22.99, ISBN 978-1-250-33477-0)

This work of graphic nonfiction recounts a 1997 chess match between world champion Garry Kasparov and a computer. Per *PW*'s review, it "celebrates human creativity and intuition amid an ever advancing technological landscape." Ages 10–14.

War

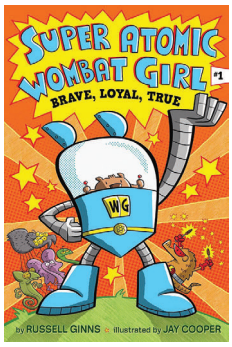
Eoin Colfer, Andrew Donkin, and Giovanni Rigano. Sourcebooks, Sept. 15 ($14.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-4642-6125-1)

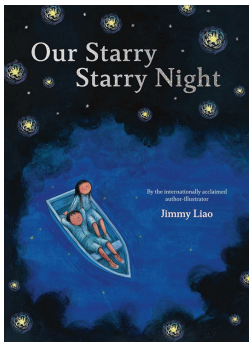
Bestseller Colfer turns from fantasy to realism, in an account of a child orphaned when a city is decimated in an unnamed conflict. Ages 10–14.

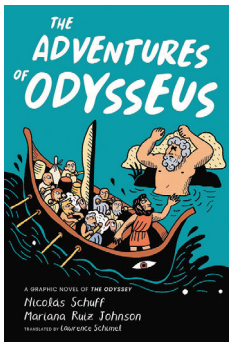
The Whole Wide World of Mabel Mulligan

Victoria Jamieson. Dial, Oct. 6 ($13.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-0-525-55393-9)

Newbery Honoree Jamieson's heroine is a sparky girl named Mabel, who can hear her stuffed animals chatter and also overhears her parents have a serious chat. Ages 7–10. 250,000-copy announced first printing.







Abrams Fanfare

Icons of Design by Tonya Bolden and David Wilkerson (Jan. 5, $15.99, ISBN 978-1-4197-5271-1) profiles Black designers across history whose work focuses on both aesthetics and usability, including costume designer Ruth E. Carter, automotive designer Ed Welburn, and fashion designer Ann Lowe. Ages 8–12. 25,000-copy announced first printing.

Aladdin

Brave, Loyal, True by Russell Ginns and Jay Cooper (Jan. 12, $13.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-6659-0202-1). A heroine wombat and her sidekick pangolin battle the villainous reptiles of Anvil in this launch of a joke-filled superhero series. Ages 7–12. 50,000-copy announced first printing.

Spy Grandma by Celina Frenn and Lucas Elliott (Aug. 18, $13.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-6659-5963-6). A grandmother who thought she'd put her secret agent days behind her gets pulled back into service at the same time her two grandkids show up for summer vacation. Ages 8–12. 50,000-copy announced first printing.

Andrews McMeel

Elfie's Grimoire by Audrey Alwett, Christophe Arleston, and Ludivine Marques-Verissimo, trans. by Rebecca Potters (Oct. 20, $22.99, ISBN 979-8-8816-1208-5). As they travel from village to village in their mobile bookshop, a trio of grieving sisters learn magical skills from the grimoire their late mother bequeathed them. Ages 8–10.

Frankenstein by Federica de Cotis et al. (Oct. 20, $21.99, ISBN 979-8-8816-1270-2) adapts Mary Shelley's classic with anthropomorphized cats playing the roles of a hubris-filled young scientist and his monstrous creation built from stitched-up parts and roused by electricity. Ages 9–11.

Marty Milagros Dooms the Earth: A Star League Story (Marty Milagros #1) by Veronica V. Jones (Sept. 29, $22.99, ISBN 978-1-5248-8584-7). Clumsy goofball Marty Milagros accidentally downloads the artificial intelligence defense system his mysterious neighbor was designing to defend Earth from space invaders, becoming the most imperfect tween weapon in the universe. Ages 10–12.

The Worst Is Yet to Come (Doom & Gloom #1) by Jane Walker and Darin Henry (Oct. 6, $22.99, ISBN 979-8-8816-0201-7). After a pair of cats who cherish evil plans accidentally kill their crime boss, Ivan Wicked, they get inherited by his too sweet niece Petunia, who foils their schemes. Ages 8–10.

Candlewick

The Moonlit Spiral by Mike Maihack (Oct. 6, $24.99, ISBN 978-1-5362-2448-1). Maihack follows up the Cleopatra in Space series with a treasure-hunt adventure tale, where Rion, Zyla, and a magical fox, denizens of a world called Helix, follow clues left in a journal by Rion's deceased parents. Ages 8–12. 55,000-copy announced first printing.

Chronicle

Our Starry Starry Night by Jimmy Liao (Oct. 6, $22.99, ISBN 978-1-7972-3808-1). First published in Taiwan, this graphic novel finds two children meeting in the evening to form a gentle communion of lonely souls under starlight. Ages 8–12.

Dark Horse

Avatar: The Last Airbender—Jet—Rebels and Rhinos by Faith Erin Hicks et al. (Sept. 8, $13.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-5067-5133-7). The revenge-driven origin story of rebel guerilla leader Jet unfolds in this standalone from the Airbender universe, which asks whether he'll pursue the Colonel, who destroyed his village and family, or put his crew's safety first. Ages 8 and up. 35,000-copy announced first printing.

The Last Human in a Crowded Galaxy by Zack Jordan and Luyi Bennett (Aug. 11, $14.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-5067-4820-7). Shenya the Widow, a spider-alien, adopts a seven-year-old human named Sarya, the last of her kind, and tries to keep her true origins secret from the Network auditor (and Sarya herself) in this comic based on the novel *The Last Human*. Ages 10–14.

DC Comics

C.O.R.T.: Children of the Round Table by Tom Taylor and Daniele Di Nicuolo (Oct. 6, $12.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-7995-0564-8). Taylor (the Superman series) riffs on the tales of Camelot in this story of contemporary L.A. tweens who get trained on Arthurian legends after they find an argumentative sword stuck in a fallen boulder. Ages 8–12.

Dial

Raise the Bar by Fernanda Frick H (Aug. 25, $24.99, ISBN 978-0-593-40732-5). A teen weight lifter muscles through trials to achieve her ambition to compete professionally in this "exceptional graphic novel debut," per *PW*'s starred review, which called it "a gold-medal performance." Ages 8–12.

Difference Engine

Magical Sweet Gula by Johanes Park and Jessica Leman (Sept. 16, $12.50 trade paper, ISBN 978-981-18-7736-0). Gula Gulali's magic is sugary: she can turn any item into a treat. She leaves a trail of cakes wherever she goes, which brings unwanted attention from the nongifted Terrans when another Magi joins her school. Ages 8–12.

Eerdmans

The Adventures of Odysseus: A Graphic Novel of *The Odyssey* by Nicolás Schuff and Mariana Ruiz Johnson, trans. by Lawrence Schimel (Oct. 27, $20.99, ISBN 978-0-8028-5663-0). Following the Trojan War, Odysseus sets a course for home, but the journey takes a decade, as he mixes it up with sirens, nymphs, and a cyclops before he hits Ithaca's shores. Ages 9–14.

Farrar, Straus and Giroux

Fast Break by Shawn Pryor and Del Hahn (Oct. 6, $22.99, ISBN 978-0-374-38955-0). Star basketball player Mkayla Thomas gets blocked by the coach at her new school, so she brings her superior skills to the Firebirds community team, where she'll have to learn to share the ball to win. Ages 8–12.

First Second

The Complete Cottons by Jim Pascoe and Heidi Arnhold (Nov. 17, $39.99, ISBN 978-1-250-42422-8). A bunny named Bridgebelle who works at the carrot factory runs a side hustle crafting magical objects that bring the unwanted attention of greedy foxes. Ages 10–14.

Don't Be Scared by Saadia Faruqi and Shadia Amin (Sept. 8, $22.99, ISBN 978-1-250-87933-2). Scary movie fan Riz tries to convince his father that hauntings are for real, but finds himself in real trouble when he and his buddies trawl for ghosts in a spooky house. Ages 8–12.

Monkey King: Uproar in Heaven by Alina Chau (Sept. 8, $22.99, ISBN 978-1-250-32786-4) adapts the Chinese myth about a royal creature born from an egg on a mountaintop who challenges the gods with his shape-shifting misadventures and ability to surf the clouds. Ages 8–12.

Small Magics by Emily Tetri (Sept. 22, $22.99, ISBN 978-1-250-85565-7). Geisel honoree Tetri returns with the story of a young girl's summer with her aunts on a magical island where pups speak and the elements respond to gentle entreaties. Ages 8–12.

Graphic Universe

The Last Boy Above Ground by Rodrigo Reyes Rico (Sept. 1, $17.99 trade paper, ISBN 979-8-7656-7137-5). Elias meets Ana, the only other human to venture to the surface of Mexico City after devastating pollution sent the rest of the world underground. Together they hope to clean up the future—if they can escape the Rat King. Ages 9–14.

Graphix

Baby-Sitters on Board! (The Baby-Sitters Club Super Special #1) by Ann M. Martin, Raina Telgemeier, and Gale Galligan (Sept. 15, $27.99 ISBN 978-1-5461-7437-0). The tween babysitting crew take a cruise



to the Bahamas and ride roller coasters, all while on the clock with childcare duties, in this spin-off. Ages 8–12.

Cat Loaf Adventures by kat.ariyn (Aug. 4, $14.99 trade paper, ISBN 979-8-225-01962-4) adapts the Webtoon comic featuring Cat Loaf and their friends Tabby and Rye as they make friends with chocolate mousses and stay away from meanie Lord Cinnabuns. Ages 8–12.

Front Desk by Kelly Yang and Fumio Obata (Oct. 20, $14.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-338-85644-6). In this adaptation of the bestselling middle grade novel, a teen works reception at the Calivista hotel, where her immigrant parents work as cleaners and hide other immigrants seeking shelter. Ages 8–12.

Splinter's Dojo (Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles Illustrated Novel #1) by Dan and Jason (Sept. 1, $12.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-5461-9561-0). The turtles go to middle school in the New York City sewer system, with nemeses Bepop and Rocksteady joining them in the classroom, in a hybrid prose and comics series launch. Ages 8–12.

HarperAlley

Earth to Chris Cleevy by Christof Bogacs, Hannah Krieger, and Sammy Savos (Aug. 25, $15.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-0-06-308613-5). An 11-year-old boy deals with OCD and his mother's new beau as he starts to realize that extraterrestrials have landed in his town. Ages 8–12.

Framed by Karina Evans and Andrea Ball (Sept. 22, $15.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-0-06-328251-3). When Toby throws a fit in art class and trashes her painting, her teacher thinks she sabotaged the rest of the class projects, too—and she must rally support to show she's not the art destroyer of junior high. Ages 8–12.

Interstellar Pen Pals (Moonie and Junie #1) by Katie Kordesh (Oct. 20, $15.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-0-06-342761-7). A message seeking friendship travels from lonely Moonie's lunar abode all the way to Junie over on Mars, and they begin a correspondence across the stars. Ages 8–12.

Helvetiq

Destination Antarctica: The Frozen Continent Bursting with Life by Guillaume de Rémacle and Adrienne Barman (Sept. 8, $22.95, ISBN 978-3-03964-146-8). This geographic explainer takes young readers on a scientific comics trip through the frozen continent, encountering penguins, seals, whales, and other wildlife in a fragile ecosystem under threat. Ages 8–12.

Hippo Park

Dog Days: The Crush and Other Stories by Claudia Boldt (Aug. 25, $19.99, ISBN 978-1-6626-4105-3) kicks off a series featuring canine tween BFFs Mia and Willow with the disruption of their easy routines by a cutie skater-cat. Ages 8–12. 50,000-copy announced first printing.

Kar-Ben

The Cloak from Baghdad by Carol Isaacs (Sept. 1, $17.99, ISBN 979-8-7656-7023-1). The story of the Jewish people of Iraq is told via a fantasy wherein a child in 1970s London is transported by a mystical cloak to 1930s Baghdad to witness the upending of her ancestor's idyllic childhood when her family is targeted for their religion. Ages 8–12.

Kids Can

Namaste, Santa by Rahul Chaturvedi and Sunita Balsara (Oct. 6, $19.99, ISBN 978-1-5253-1153-6). When Siddhu immigrates to Canada, he moves into a building full of other families from different home countries, and together the kids decide to bring in a Christmas tree to get this Santa they keep hearing about to finally make a stop there. Ages 9–12.

Kugali Ink

Àkànní by Jessica Tagbajumi and Jason Lamy (Oct. 6, $14.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-368-11066-2). A rising student learning to protect the solar system at the Onija Institute pushes back against a hostile home-planet government and finds herself aligned with

RAISING FANS

Early and Elementary Reader Spotlight

For emerging readers and elementary-age fans who can't get enough comics, this season's highlights include entries by John Gallagher, Cathy G. Johnson, Jeremy Lambert, and Kaeti Vandorn, plus fresh graphic adaptations of kid pleasers like the Boxcar Children series and *My Father's Dragon*. —*ML*

ANNALISE: THE SPECIAL DISH
J de Lavega. Little Press, Sept. 15 ($12.99, ISBN 978-1-956378-46-7)
Annalise's first menu picks for a school potluck are taken by other classmates, so she polls her diverse neighborhood for new flavors. Ages 5–7.

ASK THE DOCTOR: REAL ANSWERS TO 60 OF YOUR WEIRDEST, WACKIEST HEALTH QUESTIONS
Betty Choi and Jannie Ho. Storey, Aug. 4 ($16.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-63586-893-7)
A pediatrician recruits a cartoonist to draw answers to kids' inquiries about such pressing medical matters as the color of snot and how bad it really is to hold in one's pee. Ages 7–10.

BEST. WISH. EVER! (UNICORNDOG #1)
Mike Lowery. Storytide, Jan. 26 ($8.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-0-06-346351-6)
A birthday wish produces a chimera of a canine with a horn, and Max and his brand new bud goof off while finding out what it means to be a unicorndog. Ages 6–10.

THE BOXCAR CHILDREN GRAPHIC NOVEL
Gertrude Chandler Warner, Meika Hashimoto, and Giovanni Abeille. Random House, Aug. 25 ($21.99, ISBN 979-8-217-11734-5)
Orphaned siblings take up residence in an abandoned railway car and learn to be little adults, in this adaptation of Warner's classic series. Ages 7–10.

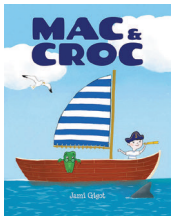
COSMIC WIENER DOG (REX ROCKET #1)
John Gallagher. Random House Graphic, Aug. 4 ($14.99, ISBN 978-0-593-71230-6)
A space dog's mission goes awry in "this buoyant, spacefaring graphic novel adventure launch [that] balances high-energy humor with emotional candor," per *PW*'s review. Ages 7–10.

EARTH AND MOONIE
Andrés J. Colmenares. Simon & Schuster, Sept. 1 ($14.99, ISBN 978-1-6659-8150-7)
Sibling celestial bodies are held together by gravity and affection as they orbit their mother Sun, playing games and evading the big B: Boredom. Ages 6–9. 40,000-copy announced first printing.













FOX RIVER COMICS CAMP
Cathy G. Johnson. Abrams Fanfare, Oct. 6 ($14.99, ISBN 978-1-4197-9181-9)
A group of campers learn to make their own sequential art, tackling all-too-familiar challenges like procrastination and perfectionism, in this foray into younger grade fare from Ignatz winner Johnson. Ages 6–10.

FRIENDS IN THE DARK
Kaeti Vandorn. Holiday House, Jan. 5 ($17.99, ISBN 978-0-8234-5983-4)
Eisner nominee Vandorn imagines the night life of the nocturnal critters of Small Town, including Kitkin the cat, who meows at midnight, and her up-late compatriot Olive, an owl. Ages 4–8.

THE HOLE (SQUARED)
Øyvind Torseter, trans. by Kari Dickson. Enchanted Lion, Nov. 17 ($24.99, ISBN 978-1-59270-508-5)
More than a decade after *The Hole*, Norwegian cartoonist Torseter picks up the adventures of the eponymous void, whose owner now says it's gone missing. Ages 7 and up.

MAC AND CROC
Jami Gigot. Kids Can, Sept. 1 ($14.99, ISBN 978-1-5253-1407-0)
A kid and a crocodile sail out to sea, but cautious Croc discovers that reckless Mac didn't really map out their route. Ages 6–9.

MINI-MONSTERS IN YOUR BACKYARD
Ian McGee. Graphic Universe, Oct. 6 ($12.99 trade paper, ISBN 979-8-7656-6077-5)
This graphic science explainer looks at commonplace insects, like assassin bugs and voodoo wasps, that are so freaky they became the inspiration for made-up monsters. Ages 7–11.

MY FATHER'S DRAGON
Ruth Stiles Gannett and Cartoon Saloon. Titan Comics, Jan. 5 ($16.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-78774-127-0)
The Newbery Honor book about a boy who runs away to the island home of a friendly dragon gets adapted by the Oscar-nominated team behind *The Kells*. Ages 7–10.

PENGUIN PICNIC (PENNY & ALBERT, PENGUIN PALS #1)
Liam Francis Walsh. Abrams Fanfare, Sept. 1 ($18.99, ISBN 978-1-4197-8412-5)
Penguin siblings seek just the right spot for a picnic, but each snowy perch has a problem, be it weather- or predator-related. Ages 4–8. 25,000-copy announced first printing.

THE PIZZA SHAPE BOOK (MOG & MORRIS #1)
Adam Thompson and Erica Harrison. Messy, Sept. 8 ($18.99, ISBN 978-1-0670985-2-0)
A dog and cat duo ponder basic geometry when not engaged in typical animal behavior, discussing the shapes of objects and foods. Ages 3–5.

TAKE OVER THE WORLD! (DONUT SQUAD #1)
Neill Cameron. First Second, Oct. 6 ($14.99, ISBN 978-1-250-44801-9)
What do donuts do in their time off from being glazed, powdered, and delicious? Plot their eventual rule of the earth. Ages 7–10.

YOU'RE A SUPERHERO!
Azie Tesfai and Penelope Rivera Gaylord. DC Comics, Nov. 3 ($12.99, ISBN 978-1-7995-0404-7)
A little girl who loves superhero movies gets introduced by her mom to all the everyday heroes around her, and starts seeing how folks like her bus driver and building super could be wearing capes, too. Ages 5–7.

rebels after an attack. Ages 8–12. 50,000-copy announced first printing.

Runeless by Bill Masuku and Daniel Quartey (Oct. 6, $14.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-368-11067-9). In the gilded city of Dura, runes determine the future of residents from birth—so what happens to the poor runeless, like Fungai and Ngoni, when a vagabond offers them an escape? Ages 8–12. 50,000-copy announced first printing.

LB Ink

Brainbow by Maya Henderson (Sept. 22, $14.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-0-316-57919-3). Sixth grader Rosie has synesthesia, and she assumes that everyone else does, too. But she discovers otherwise when rumors about her start to fly after her math tournament teammates don't trust her number sense, which she expresses via colors. Ages 8–12.

The Library of Memories by Barbara Perez Marquez and Lissy Marlin (Aug. 25, $14.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-0-316-46443-7). Copenhagen lives without memories or a sense of time as the solo human in a library, her only companions the mechanical critters who tend its stacks, until she starts to slowly read about the painful truths of her past. Ages 8–12.

Middle School Monsters by Robin Easter (Aug. 4, $14.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-0-316-58025-0). A werewolf named Jamie keeps her fur and temper under wraps at her new middle school, until she realizes she has troubles in common with her classmate Vera, whom everyone accuses of being a vampire. Ages 8–12.

Oni

Choose Your Own Adventure: Space and Beyond by Jeremy Lambert and Dani Bolinho (Aug. 4, $14.99 trade paper, ISBN 979-8-89488-113-3). The reader gets to decide in this interstellar adventure featuring black holes, alien encounters, and 44 possible endings. Ages 7–10.

Haunted Comic Club by Josh Tierney and Caitlin Soliman (Oct. 6, $16.99 trade paper, ISBN 979-8-89488-333-5). Eisner nominee Tierney scripts a mash-up of ghost stories and comics boosterism in this tale of aspiring cartoonist tweens who collaborate on a comic about a local urban legend. Ages 7–10.



Papercutz

Ever Trip by Alan C. Medina and Max Bare (Oct. 6, $14.99, ISBN 978-1-5458-3399-5). Brothers search out the seven pieces of a star that grants wishes on this road-trip adventure that puts them in the path of a martial artist robot monk and a rollerblading bear. Ages 10–14.

Jane American by Jason Douglas and Annie Wright (Sept. 1, $19.99, ISBN 978-1-5458-3621-7). A young woman strives to support her family and regain her pride in America when the end of WWII brings both grief and the loss of her wartime employment. Ages 10–14.

Solar Sisters by Amit Tishler, Elliot Sperl, and Virginia Salucci (Oct. 13, $17.99, ISBN 978-1-5458-2778-9). Child stars and influencers in the solar system swirl into interstellar drama in this soap opera about a lunar roller rink on the brink of disaster and the sisters who try to save the day. Ages 7–12.

Three Bee Honey by Desi and Jon St. Amant (Oct. 20, $19.99, ISBN 978-1-5458-3347-6). Overworked and under pressure, music-loving bee Claire sets aside her passions to grind for her failing hive before winter sets in, while training her little sisters in the ways of the swarm. Ages 7–12.

Putnam

A Beginner's Guide to Leveling Up by Elizabeth Agyemang (Sept. 8, $14.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-0-593-52475-6). When Lexie's grandfather dies and leaves behind notes on the video game he was designing, she hops over middle school drama and right into a portal on a pixelated quest. Ages 8–12. 30,000-copy announced first printing.

Rocky Pond

Say Their Names by Pan Cooke and Nsé Ufot (Jan. 12, $13.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-0-593-85780-9). Through the fictional tale of a student becoming an activist, the stories of the civil rights and Black Lives Matter movements, their youthful leaders, and the victims of police violence are portrayed in this graphic narrative. Ages 10–14. 30,000-copy announced first printing.

SelfMadeHero

Romo the WolfBoy by Ilya (Sept. 1, $19.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-914224-53-9). Blimey O'Riley's circus rolls through Victorian England as newbie sideshow attraction Romo, who performs as the wolf boy, and his stagehand enemy turned ally Francis investigate a case of ghostly giggles. Ages 8 and up.

Ten Speed Young Readers

Winnie-the-Pooh by A.A. Milne, Kevan Chandler, and Joe Sutphin (Oct. 13, $19.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-0-593-83755-9). Sutphin, the Eisner-winning artist who adapted *Watership Down*, draws the adventures of Winnie-the-Pooh and his friends Piglet and Eeyore in the Hundred Acre Wood. Ages 8–12. 30,000-copy announced first printing.

Top Shelf

Makes His Mark (Viridian #1) by Roland Boles (Jan. 12, $9.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-60309-603-4). Viridian "Vee" James's cartoons adorn his homework, but he wants to take the next step and make comics a pro gig. When he makes a bid to draw for the school newspaper, however, he finds the competition a challenge. Ages 9–12.

Usborne

The Wizard of Oz by Russell Punter and Simona Bursi (Nov. 3, $10.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-83605-490-0) adapts Frank L. Baum's classic tale of Dorothy's misadventures on the yellow brick road with the Scarecrow, Tin Man, and Cowardly Lion. Ages 8–11.

Waterbrook

On the Edge of the Dark Sea of Darkness (The Wingfeather Saga #1) by Andrew Peterson and Alessia Trunfio (Sept. 8, $21.99, ISBN 978-0-593-58112-4) gives the comics treatment to the first entry in the bestselling series, wherein three siblings born of a lineage both noble and piratical set off on a quest from their cliff home above an ominous sea. Ages 8–12.

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Mina Elwell, A.C. Medina (W), Kit Wallis (A), Dave Lentz (L)

Mia has been kicked out of monster schools at every level, from Madame Cryptorius's School for the Brilliant and Bewitched to Bugwump Swamp Middle, and now she's about to face her toughest challenge yet: Human school. Her goal: Find the monster who has infiltrated this school and started picking the human kids off as prey, and she might just get let back into a monster school. All she has to do is narrow down her list of suspects. How many monsters can there be hiding in a school? (A lot, it turns out.)

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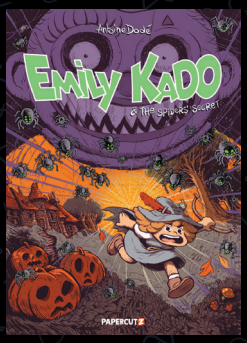

EMILY KADO: THE SPIDER'S SECRET

Antoine Dodé (W, A), Joe Johnson (T), Dave Sharpe (L)

Is a middle-grade graphic novel written and illustrated by Antoine Dodé, translated by Joe Johnson, with lettering by Dave Sharpe. This 120-page adventure blends gentle humor with eerie twists, for an uplifting and encouraging children's story that champions the power of imagination and proves that we all dare to face our fears, no matter how old you are.

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Art Baltazar (W, A)

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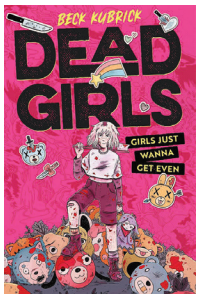
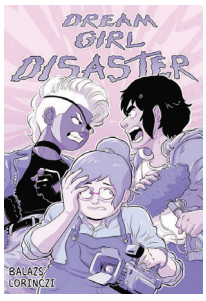
FALL PREVIEW

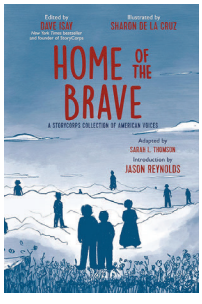
YOUNG ADULT COMICS









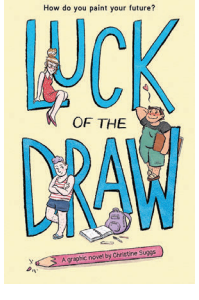




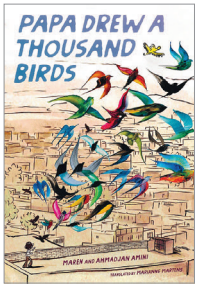
Romance, horror, fantasy, and all manner of genre mash-ups are in store for teen comics fans this season.

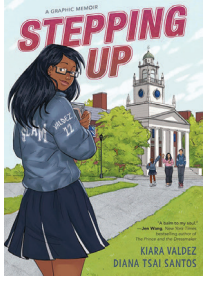
By **MEG LEMKE**

TOP 10









Dead Girls

Beck Kubrick. Simon & Schuster, Sept. 22 ($15.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-6659-5981-0)

In this send-up of murder show tropes, the teen daughter of a serial killer mom quips her way through proving her innocence when her peers start dying. Ages 14 and up. 60,000-copy announced first printing.

Dream Girl Disaster

Balazs Lorinczi. Top Shelf, Nov. 10 ($19.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-60309-598-3)

A crew of friends and frenemies put aside their squabbles to make a movie, only for one of them to be transported into the fantasy world of their script. Ages 13–17.

Fangs and All

Tas Mukanik. Putnam, Oct. 6 ($17.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-0-593-32710-4)

Boots brings her new girlfriend home but neglects to warn her that everyone in her family, including her, is a monster, in this queer rom-com comics debut. Ages 12 and up. 30,000-copy announced first printing.

Fantasy

Yoann Kavege, trans. by Nanette McGuinness. Maverick, Nov. 24 ($29.99, ISBN 978-1-5458-3615-6)

A princess and a giantess each tell their own side of the story of their two fates colliding, as one sets out to complete a ritual slaughter of a god and the other waits for a long-promised love. Ages 14 and up.

Home of the Brave: A StoryCorps Collection of American Voices

Dave Isay, Sharon de la Cruz, and Sarah L. Thomson. Philomel, Nov. 17 ($12.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-0-593-62255-1)

Oral histories are rendered into comics, from the recollections of a North Carolina midwife to the deathbed confessions of a Holocaust survivor. Ages 10 and up. 50,000-copy announced first printing.

Last Night I Dreamed of Home

Sophie Li. Norton Young Readers, Oct. 20 ($24.99, ISBN 978-1-324-08285-9)

Two Chinese students sent to study in the U.S. have clashing personalities—but the party girl and the studious boy still find themselves drawn together. Ages 14 and up.

Luck of the Draw

Christine Suggs. LB Ink, Nov. 10 ($18.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-0-316-59200-0)

Mar Ortega is at first delighted to attend a fancy art school, where shifting gender identity is no big deal, but finds the bougie prices for art supplies a barrier to fitting in. Ages 13–17.

Outline

Michèle Fischels, trans. by Thomas Mauer. Oni, Aug. 18 ($29.99, ISBN 979-8-89488-115-7)

This "introspective graphic novel debut captures the transience of young adulthood" as "high schoolers navigate shifting relationships preceding graduation," per *PW*'s review. Ages 14 and up.

Papa Drew a Thousand Birds: A Memoir

Maren and Ahmadjan Amini, trans. by Marianne Martens. Levine Querido, Nov. 3 ($26.99, ISBN 978-1-64614-707-6)

A Persian epic poem is reimagined as a story told by a father to his daughter about finding meaning and creative freedom in wartime Afghanistan. Ages 12 and up.

Stepping Up: A Graphic Memoir

Kiara Valdez and Diana Tsai Santos. HarperAlley, Aug. 4 ($18.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-0-06-325452-7)

Facing prejudice as a Black student at an elite boarding school, Valdez found confidence in step dance. Here, she offers "a raw glimpse," per *PW*'s review, into her "journey toward feeling seen and understood." Ages 13 and up.

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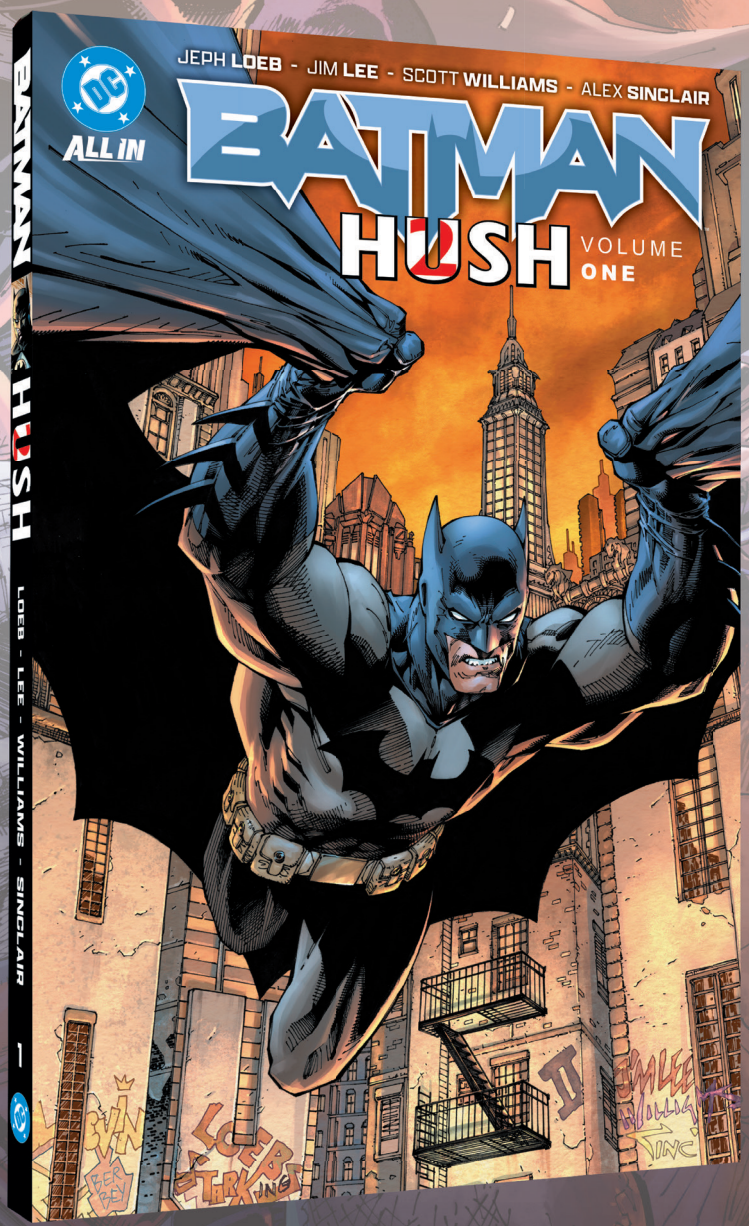

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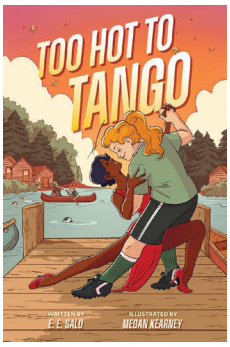





Ablaze

Roderick and the City of Morhil by Eduardo Medeiros (Aug. 18, $16.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-68497-460-3). This Junior Library Guild Gold Standard selection is set in the fantastical city of Morhil, where young letter carrier Roderick runs a route through the metropolis's bright delights and seedier depths. Ages 13 and up.

Sliced by Rafael Scavone and Guilherme Grandizolli (Sept. 1, $19.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-68497-466-5). A pair of pizza makers from feuding families must find a way to set aside their dough-pounding differences and unite against a tech-fueled corporate slice shop. Ages 13 and up.

Abrams Fanfare

The Grey and the Gallant by Ryan Maniulit (Jan. 26, $24.99, ISBN 978-1-4197-6620-6). This medieval sci-fi mash-up puts a feisty princess in the middle of entanglements with a bumbling scribe and a holier-than-thou squire in a land full of strange creatures and mysteries. Ages 14 and up.

Too Hot to Tango by E.E. Salo and Megan Kearney (Sept. 29, $24.99, ISBN 978-1-4197-7512-3). A sports camp coach falls for the artsy dance teacher across the lake in this summertime odd-couple queer romance. Ages 14 and up.

Boom! Box

Fence by C.S. Pacat and Johanna the Mad (Sept. 1, $18.99 trade paper, ISBN 979-8-89215-900-5) is the first collection of the hit GLAAD-nominated webtoon about swordplay and cutthroat flirtation at private school Kings Row. Ages 13–17.

Jem and the Holograms by Kelly Thompson et al. (Oct. 6, $14.99 trade paper, ISBN 979-8-89215-902-9). Sophie Campbell, Jen Bartel, and other notable cartoonists join up with Eisner winner Thompson for this revival of the 1980s girl-band series. Ages 13–17.

Mary Sue by Meghan Fitzmartin and Lisa Sterle (Aug. 11, $16.99 trade paper, ISBN 979-8-89215-885-5). This "spirited" fantasy about a fanfic character springing into the real world "offers a playful, self-aware tribute to fandom and wish-fulfillment," per *PW*'s review. "Beneath the outlandish premise lies a heartfelt examination of friendship, identity, and creative expression." Ages 13–17.

Catalyst

Operation Legacy and Other Stories: Graphic Histories from Africa by Trevor R. Getz et al. (Aug. 4, $24.95 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-960803-53-5) presents a trio of comics narratives inspired by the history of the continent, including a tale of rebellion where African mice rise up against the European cats ruling them. Ages 14–18.

DC Comics

Birds Of Prey: The Origins by Sara Shepard and Stephanie Pepper (Nov. 3, $16.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-7995-0308-8). *Pretty Little Liars* author Shepard dives into the DC universe and the Gotham Prep years with this story of a violent mystery that brings together a group of junior heroines and villains—including Harleen Quinzel and Barbara Gordon—to explore where they first started to feel their power. Ages 13–17.

Emanata

On Your Way by Emily Chou (Oct. 20, $25 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-77262-125-9). The coming-of-age stories of two teen girls rebelling against strict families are told in parallel across time periods, one in the 1970s and one in the '90s. In both, a young man named Keefer plays a pivotal role, though by the later decade he's only appearing as a ghost. Ages 13 and up.

Feiwel & Friends

Hollow Magic by Mars Lauderbaugh (Aug. 11, $24.99, ISBN 978-1-250-34481-6). A teenage witch seeking to tame her volatile magic finds more than she bargained for in this queer romance debut that *PW*'s review called "enchanting." Ages 14 and up.

Graphix

Frostbite by Ian Boothby and Pia Guerra (Oct. 20, $25.99, ISBN 978-1-5461-1117-7). Social media influencer snowboarders run afoul of icy vampires in this "cinematic supernatural horror graphic novel set against the stark, snowy expanse of the Canadian mountains," per *PW*'s review. Ages 12 and up.

HarperAlley

Love You to Death by Byron Gray (Jan. 12, $18.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-0-06-357-502-8). When Mora, a grim reaper in training, misses her swing of the scythe, a soul hops into a teen boy, who holds it hostage until she pretends to be his date long enough for him to make his ex jealous. Ages 13 and up.

Second Generation Blues by Julio Anta and Red Dryer (Sept. 29, $18.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-0-06-322233-5). "A Cuban American teen juggles his passion for music journalism and his familial responsibilities," per *PW*'s review, in this "empowering" and "affirming portrait of one teen's experience blazing his own trail." Ages 13 and up.

Holt

Love Light by Mela Rogers (Dec. 29, $26.99, ISBN 978-1-250-86335-5). Soulmates find each other by a light emanating from their chests in the fantastical world of this graphic novel, but a conundrum arises when one girl falls for someone who doesn't spark the expected beam. Ages 12 and up.

IDW

13 Demons Dead by Adam Tierney and Saspy (Aug. 4, $16.99 trade paper, ISBN 979-8-88724-446-4). A reluctant 14-year-old demon hunter must kill all 13 escapees from hell within a single year or they will just come back stronger. Ages 12 and up.

Street Sharks: Jawsome Justice by Stephanie Williams and Ariel Medel (Sept. 15, $21.99 trade paper, ISBN 979-8-88724-506-5). The quartet of dudes turned into sharks who bro

out while fighting grody monsters and the evil Dr. Paradigm return for their first new adventures in two decades. Ages 12 and up.

Image

The Book of Certain Doom (D'Orc #1) by Brett Bean (Aug. 25, $14.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-5343-3152-5). In the midst of the eternal battle of light vs. dark, a half-breed dwarf-orc with a magic shield and a headless chicken sidekick is prophesied to bring about Armageddon. Ages 16 and up.

Ink Pop

Marionetta by Míriam Bonastre Tur (Oct. 6, $24.99, ISBN 979-8-217-03285-3) follows up the bestseller *Hooky* and adapts a new webtoon about two friends who get drawn into a mystical circus when it rolls through their town and strike a devilish bargain that tests their bond and their morals. Ages 12 and up.

Maverick

Heat of Fashion by Lilah Sturges and Natalie Nardozza (Dec. 8, $21.99, ISBN 978-1-5458-3618-7). At the Manhattan Design Institute, fashionista Ben rules the school. When he's tasked to help newbie Annie fit in, he falls for her instead—but he may not have told her everything about his past. Ages 14 and up.



Listen by Brian Hawkins and Sandra Maria Perea (Nov. 10, $21.99, ISBN 978-1-5458-3584-5). The survivor of a car crash that killed her friends, and left her hard of hearing, returns to her family home to recover—but a buzzing sound she can't shake may be a supernatural sign of more tragedy to come. Ages 14 and up.

New Romantics by Jennie Wood and Dozerdraws (Jan. 26, $21.99, ISBN 978-1-5458-3588-3). The team behind *Paper Planes* reunites for a story about a theater kid who launches her own student-led troop when her religious school shutters the drama department. Ages 14 and up.

Tiger Girls by Felicia Low-Jimenez and Claire Low (Sept. 15, $16.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-5458-3595-1) adapts the webtoon where zodiac signs designate destiny, and girls who are unlucky enough to be born under the year of the tiger are marked for death, unless they escape to an island of sisterhood in exile. Ages 14 and up.

Oni

Yuletide: Curse of the Winter Witch by George Northy and Rachele Aragno (Sept. 29, $14.99 trade paper, ISBN 979-8-89488-320-5). In the silver-bells-to-the-walls

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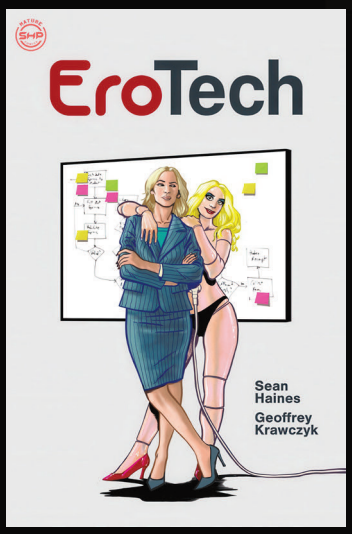

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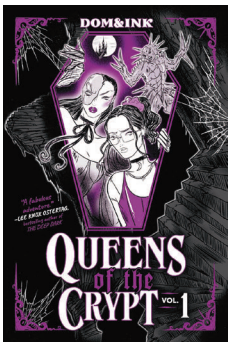
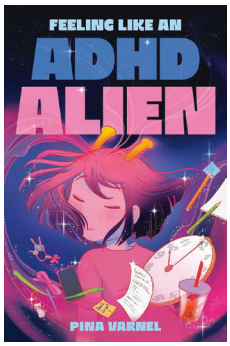




town of Christmas, Pa., three cagey teens start to question the evil reasons behind their community's over-the-top holiday traditions. Ages 14 and up.

Penguin Workshop

Queens of the Crypt by Dom&Ink (Aug. 25, $24.99, ISBN 978-0-593-75223-4). Nonbinary teen Barnaby comes out of the closet, only to find out their actual closet is a door to the netherworld from which undying queens, including the Bogeywoman, the Countess, and Lady Invisible, emerge to help Barnaby solve the kidnapping of their best friend. Ages 14 and up.

Putnam

Bite Me by Jennifer Dugan and Kit Seaton (Aug. 25, $17.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-0-593-85871-4) follows up *Full Shift* with a "whirlwind sapphic supernatural graphic novel about a recently turned vampire and the girl who's hunting her," per *PW*'s review. Ages 12 and up. 50,000-copy announced first printing.

Roaring Brook

Soulmates by David Wilson (Aug. 4, $26.99, ISBN 978-1-250-89674-2). Kit seems to have it all, but his friend Emma knows his darkest secret, and when she comes back to town after a mysterious absence, deadly omens surface from their shared past. Ages 12 and up.

Rocky Pond

Feeling Like an ADHD Alien by Pina Varnel (Sept. 15, $17.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-0-593-32556-8). Kiki spaces out so often she feels like she's from outer space, but then she discovers it's just ADHD. As she comes to terms with her diagnosis, she learns how to steer herself through the start of high school. Ages 10 and up. 35,000-copy announced first printing.

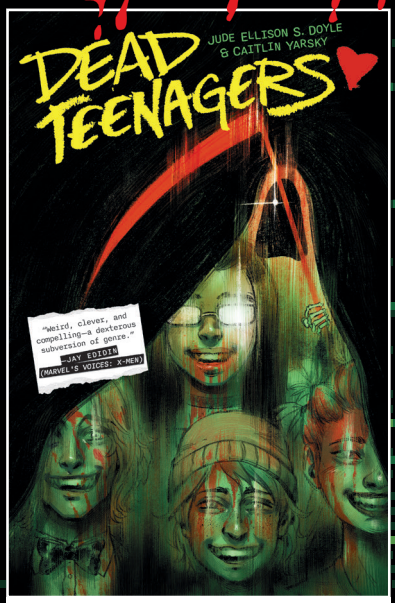
Second Story

The Secret Society of the Willbrook Witches by Camille Perron-Cormier (Oct. 6, $21.95 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-77260-479-5). A wallflower falls in with a coven of witches in this campus coming-of-age story. Ages 12 and up.

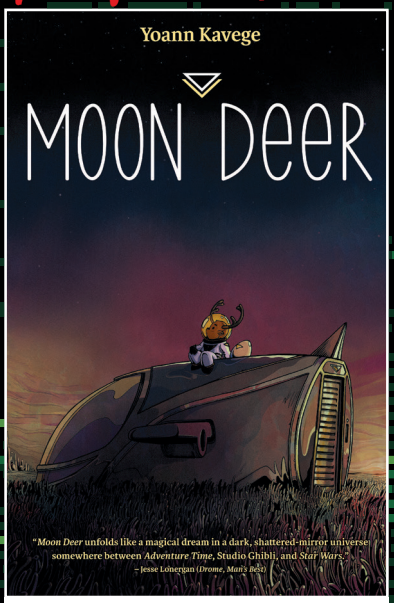
Simon & Schuster/McElderry

Pretty Evil by Rebekah and David Ian McKendry, and Tim Seeley (Sept. 15, $16.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-6659-2749-9). The daughter of a demon slayer becomes a pop singer but finds that social media is rife with vile spirits. Ages 8–12. 50,000-copy announced first printing.

FALL GRAPHIC NOVELS THAT ARE TO DIE FOR!



979-8-89488-335-9 | SC | OCTOBER 2026
It's 13 Going on 30 stab wounds in a '90s-obsessed prom night time loop horror story!



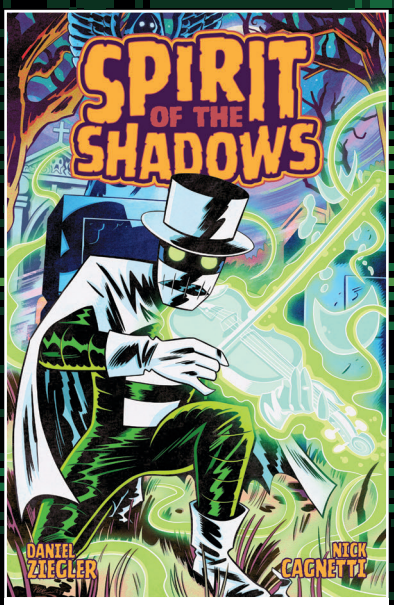
979-8-89488-322-9 | HC | OCTOBER 2026
Flee across space on a universe-altering mission with Moon Deer in this darkly twisted galactic chase.



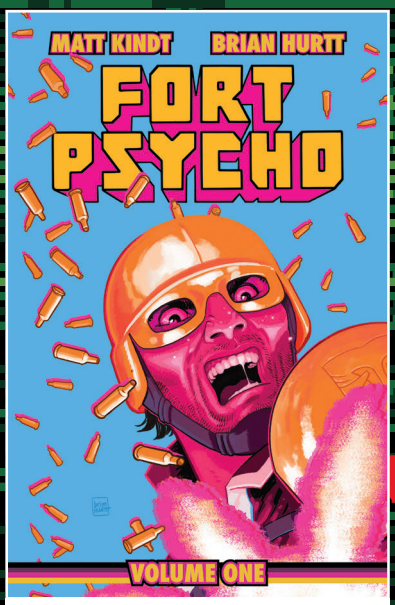
979-8-89488-352-6 | HC | NOVEMBER 2026
Demolition Man meets *V for Vendetta* in a futuristic sci-fi action thriller!



979-8-89488-356-4 | HC | NOVEMBER 2026
The horrors of the swamp are no match for the monsters of the mind in this dark fantasy.



979-8-89488-354-0 | SC | NOVEMBER 2026
Enter an eye-popping underworld in a superhero-horror story for fans of *Absolute Martian Manhunter*.



979-8-89488-369-4 | SC | DECEMBER 2026
Mission: Impossible meets *Lost* on a tropical island stocked with trained killers and secret betrayals.

ONI PRESS

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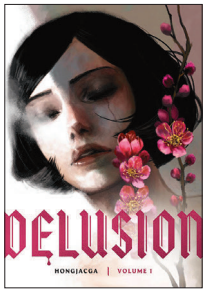
FALL PREVIEW

MANGA

TOP 10





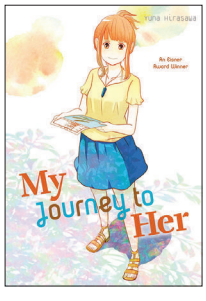


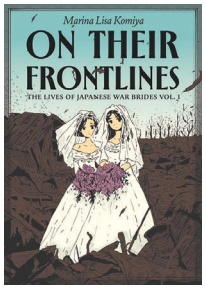


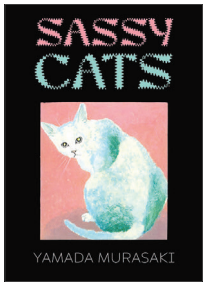


Manga gets personal this season, with affecting memoirs, semi-autobiographical dramas, and historical fiction.

By **SHAENON K. GARRITY**









Black Witch Mirror

Togawa Yonan, trans. by Jan Mitsuko Cash. Titan Manga, Sept. 22 ($12.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-78774-974-0)

Debut creator Yonan launches a series in which a girl's world fractures when she crosses paths with a witch who uses mirror-based magic.

Delusion

Hongjacga, trans. by Somin Parker. Inklore, Sept. 1 ($20 trade paper, ISBN 979-8-217-09292-5)

An artist in 1930s Korea is hired to paint a portrait of a reclusive and dangerous woman in this seductive vampire story, soon to be a live-action Korean drama on Disney+.

The Dragon School Is atop the Mountain

Ryoko Kui, trans. by Taylor Engel. Yen, Oct. 27 ($15 trade paper, ISBN 979-8-85544-475-9)

The creator of Delicious in Dungeon serves up a collection of short stories about everyday life in a world inhabited by dragons, centaurs, and other fantastic beings.

Fire!

Hideko Mizuno. Uncivilized Books, Sept. 29 ($49.99, ISBN 978-1-941250-70-9)

A teen delinquent joins the 1960s music scene in this long-awaited release of the classic work by one of the stars of the pioneering Year 24 shōjo manga movement.

Good Morning, Good Night, and See You Tomorrow

Moka Onmae, trans. by Jan Cash. Seven Seas, Nov. 10 ($14.99 trade paper, ISBN 979-8-89863-685-2)

Onmae draws inspiration from her own cancer treatments for this story about a single woman coping with a cancer diagnosis.

Human Clock

Seichiro Tokunani, trans. by Ryan Holmberg. Smudge, Sept. 9 ($19.95 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-961581-20-3)

In this Kafkaesque underground manga originally published in 1962, a watchmaker's son transforms into a clock—or is he descending into madness?

My Journey to Her

Yuna Hirasawa, trans. by Mishima Kitan. Kodansha, Oct. 6 ($13.99 trade paper, ISBN 979-8-88877-838-8)

Hirasawa's Eisner-winning autobiographical manga chronicles coming out as trans and traveling from Japan to Thailand for gender-affirming surgery.

On Their Frontlines: The Lives of Japanese War Brides

Marina Lisa Komiya, trans. by Diana Taylor. Takumigraphics, Sept. 1 ($22.99 trade paper, ISBN 979-8-8750-0229-8)

After WWII, two Japanese women are forced to set aside their love for each other and pursue new lives as the wives of American GIs, in this historical graphic novel from debut creator Komiya.

Sassy Cats

Yamada Murasaki, trans. by Ryan Holmberg. Drawn & Quarterly, Nov. 3 ($20 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-77046-897-9)

Housecats comment sardonically on life and observe the humans around them in this classic alternative manga by Murasaki, originally serialized in the magazine *Garo* from 1979 to 1980.

Sound of a Blink

Shuzo Oshimi, trans. by Daniel Komen. Viz, Sept. 15 ($16.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-9747-6603-1)

In his much-anticipated memoir, the Eisner-winning creator of Blood on the Tracks confronts childhood memories after his brother is diagnosed with a brain tumor.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Airship

The Neverending Winter, the Land of Broken Dreams by Mei Hachimoku and Kukka, trans. by Evan Ward (Sept. 22, $15.99 trade paper, ISBN 979-8-89863-253-3). A teenager is trapped in a murderous time loop at an amusement park in the latest light novel from the creators of *The Tunnel to Summer, the Exit of Goodbyes*.

Trapezium by Kazumi Takayama, trans. by Emily Hemphill (Nov. 24, $15.99 trade paper, ISBN 979-8-89863-506-0). This light novel by a real-life idol singer reveals the behind-the-scenes world of Japanese idol culture as a teenage girl strives to form her own hit group.

Dark Horse

Forget-Me-Not by Kenji Tsuruta, trans. by Dana Lewis (Jan. 5, $29.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-5067-5711-7). The slacker scion of a dynasty of detectives must solve an art theft to claim her inheritance.

H.P. Lovecraft's *The Dunwich Horror* by Gou Tanabe (Sept. 29, $49.99, ISBN 978-1-5067-5348-5). A strange young man seeks the forbidden secrets of the *Necronomicon* in Tanabe's adaptation of Lovecraft's weird fiction classic.

Suicide Island by Kouji Mori, trans. by Kumar Sivasubramanian (Dec. 8, $14.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-5067-5680-6). After a failed suicide attempt, a young man is transported to a remote island inhabited by other people who have tried to die.

Disney Manga

Poor Unfortunate Soul by Barbara Perez Marquez, Yui Obata, and Serena Valentino (Sept. 22, $14.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-4278-8136-6). The first manga adaptation of the bestselling Disney Villains novel series reveals the history of Ursula the Sea Witch and her rivalry with King Triton.

Drawn & Quarterly

Hodo by Yeong-Shin Ma, trans. by Janet Hong (Sept. 15, $30 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-77046-846-7), tells the time-jumping story of a girl's childhood trauma and encounters with ghosts.

A Lullaby in Hell by Hideshi Hino, trans. by Zack Davisson (Nov. 10, $25, ISBN 978-1-77046-907-5), collects grotesque, nightmarish short stories by cult-favorite horror artist Hino.

A Nobody Artist by Yoshiharu Tsuge, trans. by Ryan Holmberg (Nov. 10, $30, ISBN 978-1-77046-859-7). Alternative cartooning legend Tsuge, who died earlier this year, shares autobiographical and semi-autobiographical stories about making manga.

First Second

President of the Anime Club by Stephanie Evangelista Fukuda and Daigo Fukuda (Sept. 1, $17.99 paper, ISBN 978-1-250-34893-7). Friends handle blossoming feelings in their freshman year of high school as they join the anime club together. Ages 14–18.

Ghost Ship

Even the Student Council Has Its Holes! by Muchimaro, trans. by Susamaji (Sept. 8, $13.99 trade paper, ISBN 979-8-89863-067-6). In this saucy slice-of-life comic strip, a struggling high schooler joins his student council and gets to know its quirky members.

Graphix

Crescent Moon Marching by Hamachi Yamada, trans. by Azuki (Aug. 4, $11.99 paper, ISBN 978-1-5461-8626-7). A girl finds her place in a small town by joining the school marching band in this full-color manga. Ages 9–12.

Inklore

Eleceed by Jeho Son and Zhena, trans. by Somin Parker (Jan. 19, $23 trade paper, ISBN 979-8-217-09349-6). A veteran superhero trapped in the form of a chonky cat trains a young speedster learning to use his powers.

How to Hide the Emperor's Child by Lee Yeonseon and Ssal (Oct. 13, $23 trade paper, ISBN 978-0-593-87245-1). Cast aside by her husband after a single day of marriage, a former empress conceals their child from the imperial court.

Ink Pop

I Shall Master This Family by Mon, Ant Studio, and Roah Kim, trans. by Ciel (Oct. 13, $24.99, ISBN 979-8-217-22424-1). Reborn as her child self, a spurned illegitimate heir is given the chance to save her noble family. Ages 12 and up.

Ize

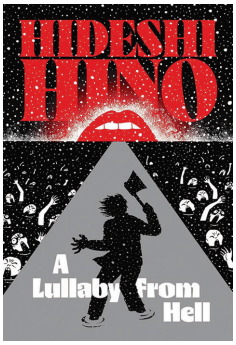
On the Way to Meet Mom by Gomynag (Dec. 8, $20 trade paper, ISBN 979-8-40090-593-3). A feral child taken in by an orphanage sets out on a fantastic quest to find his mother.

Special Civil Servant by Sora Kwon, Jaewon Seo, and ch (Nov. 17, $20 trade paper, ISBN 979-8-40090-596-4). After a monstrous encounter, an average guy lands a job with the Special Civil Service as a public defender against the paranormal.

Kana

Before Dawn and the End of the World by Inio Asano, trans. by Andria McKnight (Nov. 10, $24.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-4197-8572-6), brings together early short stories by the creator of Dead Dead Demon's Dededede Destruction. 75,000-copy announced first printing.









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Main cover by Jacoby Salcedo.

The Gentleman, the Cat & the Tearoom by Molicoross, trans. by Minna Lin (Nov. 3, $14.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-4197-9218-2). In this gentle slice-of-life series, a dashing café owner and his cat soothe each of their customers with the perfect cup of tea.

Hideout by Masasumi Kakizaki, trans. by Nube Consulting (Oct. 13, $17.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-4197-8570-2). This survival horror thriller follows a couple's descent into madness while trapped on an island.

Kodansha

Aidol by Yu Kuraishi, Kazu Inabe, and Ku Tanaka, trans. by Stephen Paul (Dec. 1, $29.99 trade paper, ISBN 979-8-88877-849-4). In this supernatural thriller, a disturbed fanboy possesses the Tokyo electrical grid and will stop at nothing to "help" the obscure idol singer he stans.

Mr. Vamp Is a Vampire by Dorothy Odoroo, trans. by Matt Treyvaud (Dec. 1, $14.99 trade paper, ISBN 979-8-88877-947-7). An ancient yet beautiful and young-looking vampire thinks he has everyone fooled in his secret identity as a teacher, but his supportive students know he's a bloodsucker.

Rainy Day Serenade by Haruka Kawachi, trans. by Lindsey Clifford (Dec. 8, $24.99 trade paper, ISBN 979-8-88877-925-5). After she's transported to the early 20th century, a modern-day girl swaps places with her look-alike and becomes entangled in romantic and family drama.

Say Hello to Mr. Wallaby! by Marume Goshika, trans. by Matt Treyvau (Sept. 8, $14.99 trade paper, ISBN 979-8-88877-952-1). A talking wallaby moves to Japan and becomes a teacher in this sunny slice-of-life series.

LoveLove

Flashlight by Sara Lozoya, trans. by Ruby La Cruz (Nov. 10, $14.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-4278-8839-6), unfurls a boys'-love romance between two small-town friends, one of whom hopes to make it big as a K-pop idol.

Ugly Girls by Rokakoen, trans. by Stephanie Liu (Sept. 29, $16.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-4278-8819-8). An unhappily married woman is stalked by a mysterious, beautiful woman she met overseas in this horror-tinged girls'-love light novel.

Mad Cave Studios

Gatchaman: Red Impulse by Steve Orlando and Riccardo Robaldo (Oct. 27, $17.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-5458-2340-8). The classic superhero squad returns in a new story about the secret missions of the Red Impulse pilots.

Manga Mavericks

Oni and Dawn: Bakumatsu High School Girls by Hana Ikuta, trans. by Charlene Woolson (Oct. 27, $14.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-968054-40-3). Ikuta's girls'-love fantasy takes place at a girls' school where all the students are the reincarnations of great samurai.

Vegetable Sandwich by Banjo Saitou, trans. by Michael Jokoh (Sept. 29, $14.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-968054-36-6). This

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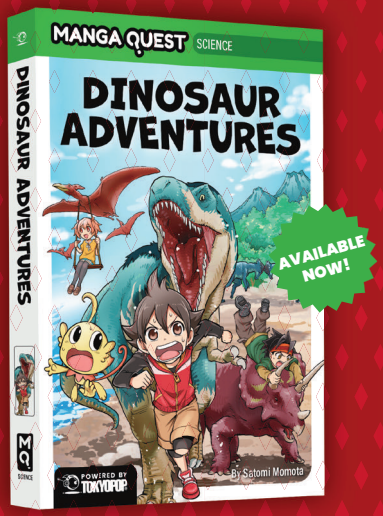

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Frédéric Brrémaud (W), Vic Macioci (A), Maggie (C), Cromatik Ltd. (L), Montana Kane (Tr.)

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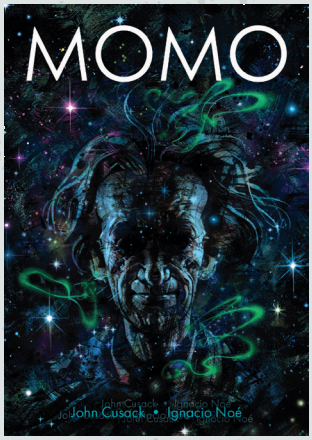

MOMO

John Cusack (W), Ignacio Noé (A)

Acclaimed actor John Cusack and celebrated international artist Ignacio Noé deliver a wild, genre-bending road trip with cosmic stakes. Two fugitives form an alliance on a mission tied to none other than Jackie Gleason, and quickly find themselves in way over their heads. What follows is a surreal collision of pulp sci-fi, occult mystery, and dark humor, packed with bizarre encounters, buried secrets, and forces far beyond their control.

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RUTH ROCHE: THE PHANTOM HAND OF COMICS

Joe Corallo (W), Megan Hetrick (A), Dee Cunniffe (C), Morgan Martinez (L)

A biographical look at Ruth Roche, one of the unsung heroes of comics from the Golden Age. This book highlights the pioneering, yet too often overlooked, comics career of Ruth Roche using the medium she most closely worked in as a writer, editor, and business partner to the legendary Jerry Iger. Follow Ruth's journey from a young woman with a penchant for storytelling through the Golden Age of comics, where Ruth worked in the midst of the action--until the fateful Wertham Trials brought all of it to an end.

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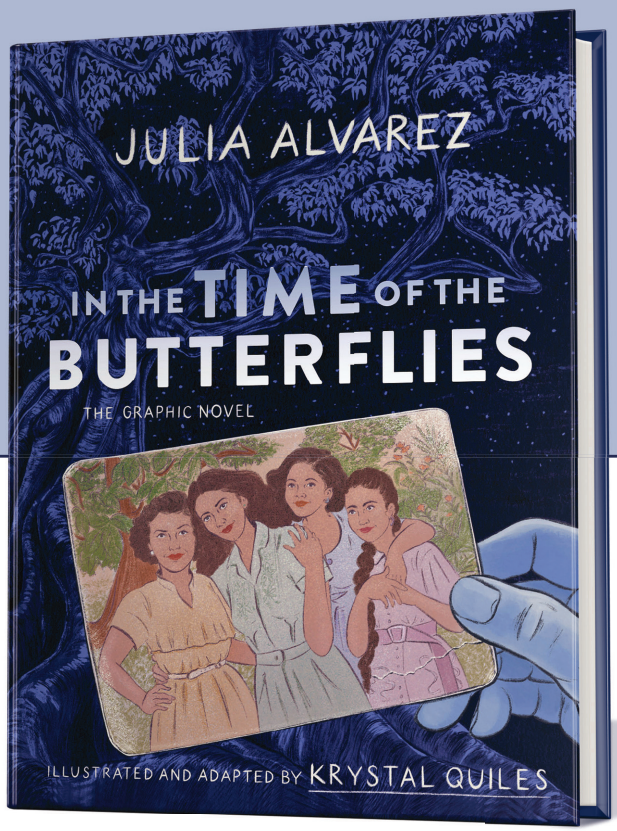

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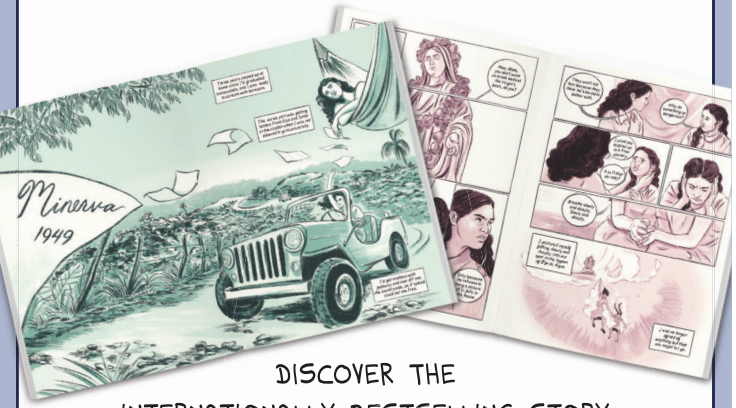

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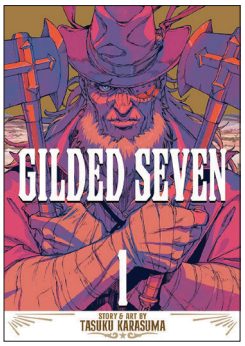

1980s-style action comedy stars a would-be tough guy who takes fighting lessons from a super-strong elementary schooler.

Nakama

CMS Astronomical Research Team by Alice Ma (Dec. 1, $10.99 paper, ISBN 978-1-5458-3254-7). A young astronomer and his assistants investigate an ancient device at the Hong Kong Observatory in an adventure that incorporates science and history. Ages 14 and up.

Land of Ming Yi by Mimi Tsoi (Nov. 10, $10.99 paper, ISBN 978-1-5458-3128-1). In a world ruled by the balance of yin and yang, four teenagers must set things right after a ritual unleashes an ancient force of destruction. Ages 14 and up.

Yashirojima: The Forest of Lost Dreams by Kaeru Utagawa (Dec. 15, $10.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-5458-3288-2). A boy in a magical forest explores Japanese history and mythology through dreams.

Seven Seas

Draw This, Then Die! by Minoru Toyoda, trans. by Evan Ward (Aug. 11, $13.99 trade paper, ISBN 979-8-89765-903-6). A small-town teenage girl dreams of becoming a manga creator in this award-winning series.

Gilded Seven by Tasuku Karasuma, trans. by Alethea Nibley and Andrew Love (Sept. 8, $13.99 trade paper, ISBN 979-8-89863-071-3). A state trooper and the gang he's tailing are transported to an alternate frontier America in this weird western from the creator of No Guns Life.

Nemurubaka: Half-Awake Fools by Masakazu Ishiguro, trans. by Jenny McKeon (Nov. 10, $16.99 trade paper, ISBN 979-8-89863-498-8). The creator of Heavenly Delusion spins a heartfelt drama about two young women living together as one attends college and the other tries to make it in an indie band.

Sleeping Dead by Nemui Asada, trans. by Tristan K. Hill (Dec. 8, $29.99 trade paper, ISBN 979-8-89863-497-1). A murdered teacher is brought back to life by a mad scientist in this boys'-love manga with a body-horror twist.

Smudge

The Darkness by Shinichi Koga, trans. by Ryan Holmberg (Nov. 11, $19.95, ISBN 978-1-961581-21-0), collects chilling short stories by the creator of Mansect.

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Square Enix

My Ex-boyfriend Loves Boys' Love by Mugiimo, trans. by Sawa Matsueda Savage (Sept. 8, $14.99 trade paper, ISBN 979-8-89910-047-5). Sparks rekindle between an office worker and her high school boyfriend when she discovers they share a passion for boys'-love manga.

The Princess Groom by Asaki Asagiri and Selen, trans. by minami (Aug. 4, $12.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-64609-497-4). A beautiful noblewoman transforms into a man to perform heroic exploits. When her fiancé learns about her alter ego, he swoons.

Stalker Stalks Stalker by Yuo Yodogawa, trans. by Kiki Piatkowska (Oct. 20, $14.99 trade paper, ISBN 979-8-89910-046-8). Unbeknownst to each other, three male college students are obsessively stalking one another.

Steamship

Flirting with My Bear-Like Boyfriend by Akari Tsuchihashi, trans. by WWWave Corp. and Biddy MacAdam (Oct. 6, $24.99 trade paper, ISBN 979-8-89863-404-9), chronicles a steamy romance between a petite woman and her big bear of a boyfriend.

Sublime

Robin in the Veil of Night by Fumi Tsuyuhisa, trans. by EC Renne (Dec. 8, $12.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-9747-6927-8). A police officer and his folklorist brother investigate a potentially murderous cult in a snowbound village.

Sunshine in Hades by Puling, trans. by Adrienne Beck (Sept. 8, $12.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-9747-1669-2). In ancient Rome, a priest of the sun god is assigned to train a gladiator in the ways of lovemaking.

Takumigraphics

Comet Club by Yi Yang, trans. by Jamie Richards (Sept. 29, $22.99 trade paper, ISBN 979-8-8750-0256-4). High schoolers in a small Chinese mountain town form the Comet Club, dedicated to investigating the mysteries of space, and stumble upon paranormal surprises.

(continued on p. 57)

MANGA FOR THE MINI

Kids' Stuff

Manga is big with tweens and teens, but younger readers are manga-curious too, and booksellers, librarians, and parents are eager for age-appropriate titles to put in their hands. Here are five new kids' and all-ages manga, featuring samurai cats, interstellar baseball stars, heroic ballet dancers, and more. —*SKG*

BALLET HERO FANTASY: DAN'S ADVENTURE FEAT. STEVEN MCRAE
Takafumi Adachi, trans. from the Japanese by Robert Harkins. Manga Mavericks, Oct. 27 ($14.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-968054-25-0)
In this offbeat two-volume series from the creator of Beyblade: Metal Fusion, a ballet student discovers that an upperclassman uses his dance skills to fight evil in a fantasy world, and the two team up to become Ballet Heroes. Ages 13 and up.



GALAXIC BASEBALL LEAGUE
Acky Bright. Viz, Oct. 13 ($14.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-9747-7258-2)
Viz Media partners with MLB Players Inc. for this sci-fi sports epic set in a future when baseball has become an interplanetary competition. Real-life stars including Aaron Judge, Juan Soto, and Jazz Chisholm Jr. make appearances as the heroes call on baseball legends to help save the game and the universe. All ages.



NIGHTMARE LIBRARY
Taiga Kayama, trans. from the Japanese by David Bove. Tokyopop Kids, Sept. 22 ($16.99, ISBN 978-1-4278-8882-2)
At the Nightmare Library, the Ghostwriters turn bad dreams into stories, which are presented to the reader. This gently spooky series is one of the launch titles in Tokyopop's new kids' line. Ages 8–12.



SAMURAI PIZZA CATS
Fred Kennedy and Lorenzo Di Santo. Nakama, Aug. 25 ($10.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-5458-2385-9)
The 1990s cult kids' anime returns in manga form with new fourth-wall-breaking adventures starring three cybernetic samurai cats who work at a pizzeria by day and fight evil in Little Tokyo by night. Nakama is pushing into younger-reader territory for the first time this season, debuting this title as well as the all-ages fantasy adventures Diablomachia and Hokis, Focus! Ages 7–12.

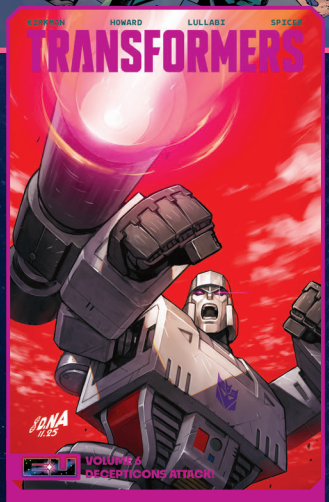


WHEN A DRAGON CALLS
Sachiko Kashiwaba and Renji Asai. Vertical, Nov. 24 ($14.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-64729-627-8)
A 10-year-old girl is spirited away from her poor "Criminals' Village" by a dragon and carried off to a new life of magic, curses, and dragon-riding knights. This epic fantasy novel, a hit in Japan, is being adapted into manga by the artist of The Boy and the Beast. Ages 10 and up.



THE NEXT PHASE OF THE ENERGON UNIVERSE IS HERE!





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Publishers Weekly Beyond the BOOK

Skybound's Must-Have Media Tie-Ins

The entertainment company is releasing a selection of comics focused on iconic superheroes and monsters, including Wolf Man and the Bride of Frankenstein, this fall.

Skybound Entertainment is bringing the action—and the monsters and superheroes, too. The L.A.-based multimedia content company—which is helmed by Robert Kirkman, creator of The Walking Dead and Invincible comic series—is known for his prowess in adapting beloved characters (Creature from the Black Lagoon, Dracula) and building global franchises that spark pop culture conversations. In conjunction with Image Comics and Universal Products & Experiences, Skybound publishes work that is part of a wide cross-channel universe including toys, games, TV series, films, and audio series.

Skybound is now rolling out a new collection of comic book adventures for its legions of fans, with tales about the Wolf Man, the Bride of Frankenstein, the insatiable Battle Beast, and the spirited and unpredictable agents of M.A.S.K. (aka the Mobile Armored Strike Kommand).



Battle Beast

One of Skybound's biggest recent publishing events is the release of *Invincible Universe: Battle Beast Vol. 1*, the first-ever Battle Beast series, written by Kirkman and illustrated by Ryan Ottley and colorist Annalisa Leoni. Invincible, an already successful comic series with multiple spinoffs, has branched off into animation and video games, and inspired the hit animated series *Invincible* on Prime Video, where Battle Beast makes appearances. Battle Beast is one of the most successful original IP launches for Skybound. The character is part of the main roster lineup for PlayStation's *Invincible VS* video game. In *Vol. 1*, Battle Beast displays an "unquenchable thirst for violence" that threatens to destroy those he loves most, and he's looking for someone (or something) in the universe to stop him before he harms others. In *Vol. 2*, which hits shelves this October, Battle Beast, "the galaxy's deadliest warrior," continues his rampage of violence, and is still looking for someone to stop him. There have been many challengers—but no winners yet, and not for a lack of trying.

M.A.S.K.

The studio also recently launched the new M.A.S.K. comic book series, created by Dan Watters, Pye Parr, and Pierluigi Casolino, that's based on a property that started out as a toy line in the 1980s. M.A.S.K. is a collaboration between Skybound and Hasbro, and part of the



popular Energon Universe, which also includes G.I. JOE and Transformers. *MASK #1* is billed as the next phase of the Energon Universe. It stars Matt Trakker and the members of M.A.S.K.—a network of specialists recruited to respond to the next global emergency. Trakker and his agents have the ability to use technology that converts their vehicles, and drivers, into high-speed weapons. The agents are pitted against V.E.N.O.M., a crew that's taking part in a secret arms race and is bent on destruction. The Energon Universe has been a hit not only in the comics space but across Hasbro's toy lines, with multiple Energon Universe characters or versions of characters being brough to life as toys. These include Transformers Studio Series EU Optimus Prime, which will hit stores in October.

Universal Monsters

Another jewel in Skybound's crown is the Universal Monsters series—an extension of the iconic franchise of horror, sci-fi, and mystery films produced in the early 20th century by Universal Pictures that include *The Mummy* and *The Phantom of the Opera*. These legendary monsters are a mainstay in the culture—so iconic that they inspired their own theme park: Universal Epic Universe in Orlando, Fla., which opened in 2025.

Skybound is taking these beloved Universal Monsters properties and turning them into bestselling and coveted comics. Among the new releases in the Universal Monsters series is *Universal Monsters: Blood of the Wolf Man* by New York Times bestselling author Joshua Williamson (G.I. JOE, Superman) and artist Leomacs (Basketful of Heads, Rogues). The book is a "brutal reimagining" of Wolf Man for a new generation of horror enthusiasts. Based on the 1941 horror film, it stars Adam Jaeger, who wakes up after a college party with blood on his hands. There's been a massacre, and he may be responsible.

In 2027, Skybound is releasing *Universal Monsters: The Bride of Frankenstein Lives* by Kelly Thompson and artist Mattia De Ilulis. The pair (Absolute Wonder Woman, The Cull) reunite to deliver this new horror series about one of horror's most remarkable and volatile female leads, who was originally inspired by Mary Shelley's 1818 novel *Frankenstein*. Made of stolen flesh and animated using electricity, the Bride is born into a world she doesn't understand—and she's not happy about it. Now she must find out who she is and how to survive, and all bets are off. The comic comes on the heels of the 2026 film *The Bride!* directed by Maggie Gyllenhaal.

Skybound prides itself on being a creator-first studio. It has everything a comics fan needs—whether they're into old school monsters, conflicted good guy warriors, or notorious villains. The Skybound universe is proving it has no limits.

UNIVERSAL MONSTERS

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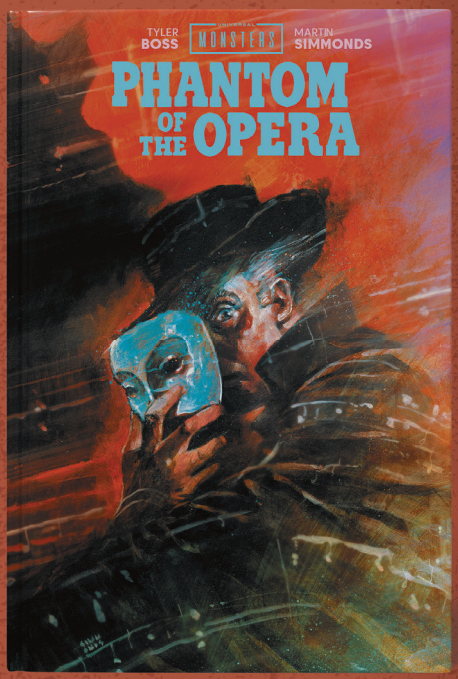

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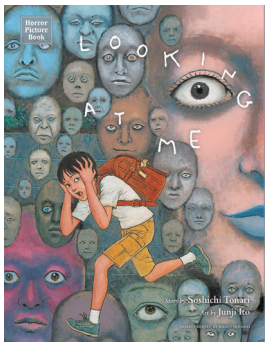




The Ultra Power Mongol Invasion by Shintaro Kago, trans. by Zack Davisson (Nov. 10, $29.99, ISBN 979-8-8750-0269-4). The creator of Brain Damage envisions a bizarre alternate history where Genghis Khan conquers the world.

Titan Manga

Egnaro the Star Eating Killer by Arata Yamaji, trans. by Andria McKnight (Dec. 8, $12.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-78774-916-0). The creator of A Certain Scientific Railgun takes readers to a world split by a colossal rift, where adventurers descend into the earth in search of ancient relics.

Nova, Little Girl in the Monster Forest by Kamatama (Nov. 17, $12.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-80618-295-4). A little girl raised by monsters has gentle, folkloric adventures as she tries to master forest magic.

The Obsession of Red Riding Hood by Yasuo Isanami (Nov. 10, $12.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-78774-937-5). When a schoolgirl accidentally releases the characters in the Brothers Grimm's fairy tales from a magic book, her life starts to resemble the tale of Red Riding Hood.

Tokyopop

The Devil's in the Lunch Deals by Ishiko, trans. by Nate Derr (Aug. 4, $13.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-4278-8872-3). Reborn as an ordinary human who runs a bento shop, a former goddess seeks to regain her divinity by performing good deeds.

The Encyclopedia of Vegetable Fairies by Ponkichi, trans. by Jacqueline Fung (Nov. 3, $16.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-4278-8787-0) comprises a bestiary of absurdly adorable animal-vegetable hybrids, from the Chinese cabbage dog to the sweet potato newt.

There, Beneath the Water by Kaiko Fuyumushi, trans. by Massiel Gutierrez (Oct. 27, $14.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-4278-8786-3). A girl moves to a rural village and learns the monstrous truth behind its local mermaid legend in this girls'-love horror.

Tokyopop Kids

As Yubooh Slumbers by Paulina Palacios, trans. by Diego Collaguazo (Oct. 13, $15.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-4278-8669-9). A girl suspects that her new school is secretly magical, but the truth only comes out while she's fast asleep. Ages 10 and up.

Vault

Return of the Runebound Professor by Actus, Roy Xavier Flores, and Yumiitsu (Sept. 8, $19.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-63849-300-6). Transported to a world of sorcery, an ordinary man takes over the life of a recently murdered professor at a magic academy.

Viz

The Amazing Digital Circus by Sakura, Glitch Productions, and Gooseworx (Sept. 8, $11.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-9747-1693-7). Hapless humans try to escape a glitchy virtual world in the manga adaptation of the Netflix animated series.

Heroes by Inio Asano, trans. by Abby Lehrke (Nov. 17, $17.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-9747-6874-5). The creator of Goodnight Punpun spins a twisted fairy tale in which bizarre heroes join forces to defeat the Dark Lord—but all is not as it seems.

Horror Picture Book: Looking at Me by Junji Ito and Soshichi Tonari, trans. by Jim Hubbert (Oct. 6, $19.99, ISBN 978-1-9747-6272-9). This installment of the Horror Picture Book series offers up a spooky story written by award-winning author Tonari and illustrated by horror master Ito.

The Seaside Where Dragon Boys Dwell by Asato Shima (Nov. 3, $11.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-9747-6924-7). A young woman moves to a seaside town inhabited by dragonfolk and finds herself living with a half-dragon man.

Webtoon Unscrolled

Act Like You Love Me! by Xuann (Nov. 3, $19.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-83411-052-3). A celebrity's overworked assistant gets the upper hand in their relationship when she finds a doll that allows her to control him.

Yen

Deep-Sea Aquarium Magmell by Kiyomi Sugishita, trans. by Kevin Steinbach (Aug. 25, $15 trade paper, ISBN 979-8-85542-156-9). An ocean-loving boy works at an aquarium located 200 meters below Tokyo Bay.

Hand in Hand with Mu-chan: Lessons from My Autistic Daughter by Rin Minato, trans. by Ajani Oloye (Aug. 25, $16 trade paper, ISBN 979-8-85542-666-3). Mintaro draws on her experiences as the mother of an autistic child for this series about a couple whose daughter is diagnosed with autism.

How to Keep a Human by Pieta, trans. by Amanda Haley (Oct. 27, $15 trade paper, ISBN 979-8-8554-1979-5), takes the form of guide to humans for monsters who want to keep these exotic and charming creatures as pets.

N by kurumuakumu and nc&gm, trans. by Ko Ransom (Oct. 27, $15 trade paper, ISBN 979-8-8554-2569-7). A string of modern-day murders is linked to an ancient cult known only by the letter *N*.

FALL 2026

WRITERS TO WATCH

THE SEASON'S MOST PROMISING FICTION DEBUTS ARE DISTINGUISHED BY THEIR AUTHORS' SINGULAR CREATIONS, INCLUDING AN EERILY CUTE CAT, A PHANTASMAGORIC CITY, AND AN IMMACULATELY DRESSED GRIM REAPER



MANUIA HEINRICH

WHEN PEOPLE THINK about French Polynesia, they often picture shimmering blue water and gorgeous beaches. Tahitian Chinese author Manuia Heinrich, who was born in Nouméa, New Caledonia, and now lives in New Zealand, wants readers to know the real South Pacific, a richly diverse cultural region with a dark history of French occupation and nuclear testing. "It's important for me to tell the world that behind the postcard is a legacy of colonial and environmental injustice," says Heinrich, 39.

Her debut YA speculative thriller, *Salt Water Blood* (S&S/Barley, Nov.), concerns Moe, an Indigenous teen living on a fictional French Polynesian island, who can hear the ocean's thoughts and who must clear her brother's name after he's accused of murder. The novel shines a light on the devastating period, between 1966 and 1996, when France conducted nearly 200 nuclear weapons tests at the Moruroa and Fangataufa atolls in French Polynesia, exposing the region's residents to toxic radiation, including Heinrich's mother, who died of cancer in 2022.

Raised in New Caledonia and Tahiti, Heinrich, who is of Māʻohi and French Polynesian descent, holds a PhD in Pacific Studies from Victoria University of Wellington. She says the history of nuclear testing wasn't discussed when she was growing up. "It was taboo, a source of anger, and associated with shame," she recalls.

Heinrich started writing *Salt Water Blood* at the hospital while her mother was dying, and finished the first draft in four weeks. "It was natural for me to write a speculative novel," she says. "Speculative elements are part of an Indigenous worldview. The belief in the spiritual and supernatural is strong."

The story, which is about generational trauma and resilience, features the ocean as a major character. "The ocean is a mother who feeds and protects us," Heinrich says. "For many Pacific Islanders, it's almost like a deity."

Heinrich can't wait to see the book in print. "I'm only the second Indigenous Tahitian to have landed a book deal with a Big Five publisher," she points out. "I hope the book will make people more interested in reading about Indigenous experiences from people of that background. And I hope they'll have a fun time, too." —*ELAINE SZEWCZYK*



Hello, Kitty

STACEY YU SPINS A STORY OF A FLOUNDERING YOUNG WOMAN'S FELINE FIXATION

BEFORE STACEY YU, 28, sold her debut novel, *Kitten*, out in August, to Random House, she hadn't seen the inside of the publisher's offices. That would be unsurprising, except that her first job out of Columbia University, after graduating during the pandemic, was in publicity at another PRH imprint. The job was remote, which meant she never got to take home any free books. "That's the main perk!" says Yu, who currently lives in London and works in branding.

Kitten's narrator, Katie, is a recent college graduate with $50 in the bank, few career prospects, and a fraught relationship with her mother. Her slightly older and much richer boyfriend, James, invites her to his family's beach house and introduces her to his family's cat, Silver, a stray they adopted after he crawled from the ocean onto James's beach towel. Katie and Silver develop an instant and mysterious connection, even cleaning the gunk out of each other's eyes.

"I love reading about characters who are so stubbornly themselves and whose perspectives are slightly skewed," Yu says about her inspiration for Katie, citing the narrator of Elif Batuman's *The Idiot* as a prime example of such characters. "They move through the world normally, but they're not experiencing it normally, which makes every detail interesting."

Random House associate editor Miriam Khanukaev describes Yu's style as a mix of "spikiness and tenderness," contrasting *Kitten* with other more barbed or guarded works about young women unraveling. "It's hard to write about being detached while not getting too detached from your characters," she says.

For her off-kilter tale of a cat who, as Katie puts it, "acted like she was discovering the world for the first time," Yu drew inspiration from the animated films of Hayao Miyazaki. "I've always been attracted to art and movies that romanticize and take the child world seriously," she says. Objectively cute though he is, Silver exudes a sense of self-possession that the floundering Katie lacks. "I thought it would be interesting to take the relationship between a person who didn't really want to be an adult and an animal who was so self-assured," Yu explains.

—MATT SEIDEL

HEINRICH © DAMIEN HEINRICH; YU © ANNE YU

School Daze

A NEW TEACHER STRUGGLES TO COPE WITH THE PRESSURE IN **LEILA RENEE**'S NOVEL OF ODD-COUPLE ROOMMATES AND COMPLEX FAMILY TIES



PHOTO © ALISHA BARZE

SOFT SPOTS (Amistad, Aug.), Leila Renee's debut, originated from a simple question: Why don't some seemingly well-matched people click? "I was thinking about people I've met where on paper, we should be best friends, but there's no chemistry," she says.

The chemistry-deficient pair at the center of the novel are two young Black women who enter an AmeriCorps-like program at a high school in South Bend, Ind. Robin, a shy 20-something with a hankering for weed and junk food, moves out of her parents' place to escape her father's beatings, while her roommate and program colleague Naomi is a seemingly flawless overachiever and exercise fanatic. Over the school year, the two move from mutual wariness to something resembling friendship.

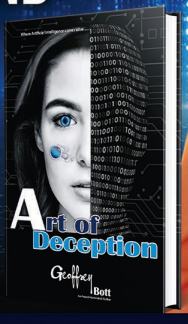
Soft Spots begins with a sardonic tone, channeling the disenchantment of its characters as they grapple with an under-resourced school system. But when Robin's abusive father falls seriously ill, the novel takes a more somber, introspective turn. "Instead of masking everything with sarcasm or avoidance, she has to confront the real things that are happening," Renee explains of this tonal shift. As Robin's teaching and familial anxieties mount, she seeks relief not just in getting high but from the works of her favorite authors, Kazuo Ishiguro and J.M. Coetzee. Renee, 33, says she learned from Dana Spiotta, her mentor in Syracuse University's MFA program, that characters should always have an obsession. "Robin has a lot of obsessions, most of them unhealthy," she says with a laugh, "but one of her healthy ones is reading."

Renee, who teaches creative writing at the University of St. Thomas in Minnesota, grew up in Milwaukee and spent 10 months on a Fulbright fellowship in South Africa. She moved to New York City in 2016 and interned for Catapult before beginning *Soft Spots* while enrolled at Syracuse. The novel is narrated alternately by Robin and an omniscient narrator. Renee began writing it by composing emails in Robin's voice, then decided a broader perspective was needed. She was reading Nadine Gordimer's *Burger's Daughter* at the time and wondering whether mixing first- and third-person narration would work. "And then Gordimer does it, and I was, like, Okay, fine. I got the Gordimer stamp of approval." —*MS*

Writers to Watch

WHAT IF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE COULD INFILTRATE HUMANITY AND SEIZE CONTROL OF THE WORLD?

Art of Deception follows Daniel Cross as he uncovers a terrifying plot involving AI assassins, lifelike robots, and global destruction. Geoffrey Bott crafts a thrilling ride with heaps of risk, mystery, and a mind-blowing finale.





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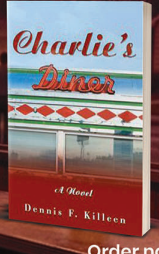

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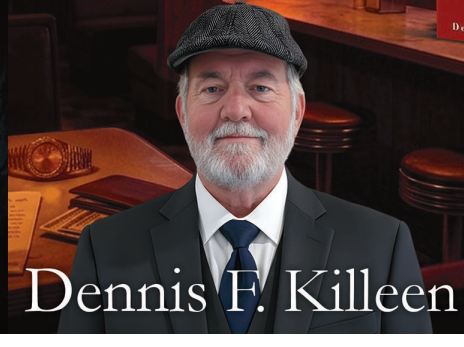


SCAN ME

Dennis F. Killeen

Mortal Wager

ELOISE RODGER BLASTS OUT OF UNIVERSITY WITH A BUZZY DEBUT ABOUT DEATH INCARNATE



DEATH'S A BITCH (Knopf, Jan.), Eloise Rodger's debut novel, refused to die. She wrote it three times, the first at 16, the second at 18, and the third at 21 as an undergraduate at Trinity College in Dublin before graduating in 2025. "All my friends were doing academic theses on James Joyce, while I was having a much more relaxed time," says Rodger, 22, who now lives in London. The third attempt gelled—she sold *Death's a Bitch* to Faber in the U.K. and Knopf in the U.S. "I very much feel like I'm championing my 16-year-old self in publishing this novel," she says.

The protagonist, Aggie, is a college student who is exhausted from caring for her younger sister, Marcie, who has severe anorexia. "Aggie is living with someone who has an incredibly specific set of rules around how they can operate," Rodger says.

One day, death personified, impeccably dressed in a tailored white pantsuit, approaches Aggie with a proposition. Death's sensitive son, Aeron, is loving his "gap year" living as a human, but Death wants him to join her in the immortal and macabre family business. She recruits Aggie to win and then break Aeron's heart so that he turns his back on humanity. In return, Death will spare Marcie, whom she claims is high on her list.

The death-haunted novel maintains a buoyancy throughout. Aggie exchanges barbed banter with Death, offers wry observations on the absurdities of her predicament, and enters an enlivening, if fraught, relationship with Aeron. Rodger says she learned to find that "sweet balance" between darkness and humor from her father, a witty barrister with an ample store of gruesome tales from the courtroom, and from poets such as Philip Larkin and Simon Armitage. "When a writer gets the balance right, you can just feel it," she says.

While Death is manipulative, imperious, impatient, and heartless, Rodger nonetheless feels a degree of sympathy for the character. "It's a logistical nightmare," she says of Death's thankless work, "and everybody hates her for basically doing her job." —*MS*

FERNANDA FRICK H.

GROWING UP IN CHILE in the 1990s and early 2000s, Fernanda Frick H. was a quiet girl with big dreams. When she was 13, Frick H. was gifted a pirated DVD of the Japanese animated classic *Spirited Away*, and, after watching it, she decided to become an animator—no matter what it took. She immersed herself in online tutorials and read secondhand animation books that she found on eBay.

"I didn't have much interest in the outside world," says Frick H., 35. "My parents were concerned that I was spending too much time on animation. There was always a battle. I didn't want to go to sleep."

Now an animation director, illustrator, and author living in Santiago, Chile, Frick H. used that youthful DIY energy as inspiration for her empowering middle grade graphic novel *Raise the Bar* (Dial, Aug.), her U.S. debut. It tells the story of Sam Sanchez, a girl who wants to become Chile's first weight lifting gold medalist. The only problem: Sam has no coach or equipment, and not much support from her family.

Frick H., who is autistic and has ADHD, sees herself in her protagonist. "Sam's not perfect," she says. "She makes mistakes. She's messy and stubborn. I like that because my career's made of pure stubbornness."

Raise the Bar started out in the 2010s as an idea for a Netflix series. The streamer optioned the project but ultimately passed on it, after Frick H. spent years developing it. In the 2020s, as she was trying to turn it into a graphic novel, her marriage fell apart—a blow that briefly slowed her down creatively but ultimately became a source of strength. "This book is about ambition and following your passions," she says. "It's about taking risks and pursuing something instead of avoiding it and hiding."

For Frick H., publishing a novel in the U.S. is a wish come true. "I can't believe it," she says. "It's something I've wanted since I was 20. It's my mission to put more stories like this into the world and make kids feel less alone." —*ES*





K CHIUCARELLO

"NANNYING IS SO ripe for stories," says K Chiucarello, 38, who has cared for the children of several well-off families in Manhattan and the Hudson Valley. Pesky NDAs make those stories difficult to tell, though. "You legally cannot talk about it," Chiucarello says, explaining that, as a result, "we never learn about the nuances of the emotional labor in those jobs."

Enter *Nanny Nanny* (Ecco, Nov.), Chiucarello's debut, which intertwines an unnamed narrator's reflections on her caretaking duties and the domestic violence she suffered at the hands of her ex-wife. The novel describes "nanny mode," a self-silencing state experienced by the narrator that Chiucarello also found themselves in, both as a nanny and as a victim of abuse. "As a nanny, sometimes I have to put my entire personality aside to help a child through something, just as people in abusive relationships also have to go into survival mode," they say.

Chiucarello, who attended a performing arts high school in Connecticut, worked as a Disney princess in Orlando and then for the Sony Corporation in Manhattan before they "fell into" nannying. After moving to the Hudson Valley six years ago, they secured a scholarship from Bard College for adult students and completed a draft of *Nanny Nanny* as their senior thesis.

The novel opens with the narrator divorced at 35, mulling over the pact she made with her high school ex-boyfriend: if neither found someone by 40, they would have a baby together. "I think baby fever is extremely real," Chiucarello says, "and when you are working with children, it's pressurized." Ecco senior editor Deborah Ghim says she was initially drawn to the novel's deceptive "rom-com-like" beginning, explaining that it then "opens up in a stunning, expansive way that shouldn't work but does."

More than delving into what it means to nanny for the rich and powerful, the story offers a way to understand the psychological effects of domestic violence. "Abuse is not logical or predictable, and yet it often operates in a universal way," Chiucarello says. "But it's so disorienting when an individual is going through it." —*MS*

RODGER © KAT GREEN; FRICK H. © CAROLINA BURGOS; CHIUCARELLO © LOUISE PALMBERG



Guarded Secrets

THE LEGACY OF APARTHEID SHAPES **KELETSO MOPAI**'S DEBUT

WHEN KELETSO MOPAI, 34, was a young girl in post-apartheid South Africa, her father took her to a farmhouse that he claimed their family, who is Black, once owned, explaining that he was trying to get it back from its current white residents. Mopai remembers the country's apartheid-era flag mounted on the wall of the house, but only later would she place the episode within a larger historical context: the dispossessing of Black landowners and the violence endured by Black workers on white-owned farms. "You hear about this white genocide," she says, referring to claims by white South Africans who have drawn sympathy from the Trump administration, "but not the actual tragedy that's happening and over and over again."

Mopai's *We Belong to the Trees* (Seven Stories, Nov.) seeks to set the record straight. In 1996, Maluka, a Black security guard, is shot to death in the farmhouse of his white employer, who claims self-defense and vanishes after being released on bail. The novel traces the period leading up to the murder and its effects on the guard's and shooter's relatives, neighbors, lovers, and friends.

Mopai grew up in the township of Lenyenye and attended a Catholic boarding school, which she describes as the best time of her life. ("I love structure and discipline," she says with a laugh). "I couldn't afford books," she recalls, "but I had a friend who would bring them in and we'd read them together." After studying geology and chemistry at university, Mopai briefly worked for a mining company before turning to writing. She published a collection of stories with a South African press, then pursued a creative writing degree at the University of Cape Town. There, she began work on *We Belong to the Trees* by expanding a story from her collection that briefly described a guard's murder. "I wanted to humanize him," she explains.

One of the novel's major themes is silence—around domestic violence, social and racial divisions, and extralegal revenge. "I feel like we do a lot of hiding in South Africa," Mopai says. "It's a front, this rainbow nation that Mandela talked about. In reality, we're very fragmented." —*MS*

DEVYN DEFOE



DEVYN DEFOE, 34, describes her hometown of Sacramento, Calif., as "the most boring place to grow up." But in the heightened reality of her debut novel, *Burnside* (Astra, Aug.), the onetime home city of Ronald Reagan is far from dull. Wildfires rage on the perimeter, raccoons invade the city's buses, and the bodies of murdered young women periodically float to the surface of trash-strewn waterways. Despite these horrors, property values keep rising—a deliberate nod, Defoe explains, to the housing crisis and the hopelessness faced by younger generations.

The novel's lurid quality stems from Sacramento's legacy of violence in the 1970s and '80s. "All these strange events seemed localized to Sacramento," Defoe says, referring to mass murderers Joseph DeAngelo, the Golden State Killer, and Dorothy Puente, the so-called Death House Landlady who poisoned multiple tenants. "I started to dig into whether there were some environmental particulars that make people behave in certain ways."

Burnside is narrated by an unnamed college student and bookstore employee who socializes with an eclectic group of artists, anarchists, and cinephiles. The narrator's voice is discursive and incantatory. "There's a porous quality to her," Defoe says, "which gives her access to what other people are thinking." One character who's less accessible to the narrator is a kindly unhoused man named Burnside, who becomes central to the plot when, to the narrator's chagrin, he is scapegoated for the violence and fires plaguing the city.

After earning an MFA from Columbia University, Defoe returned to Sacramento and commuted to Palo Alto for a Wallace Stegner Fellowship at Stanford, where she began conceiving *Burnside*. "I knew I wanted to write something about Sacramento," she says, "and I've come to realize that being immersed in an environment is really important."

As if homicidal landladies didn't provide enough material for the novel's surreal elements, Defoe also drew on her day job at Beers Books, a beloved Sacramento institution where patrons might stop by to browse its extensive occult section or under the mistaken assumption that alcohol is served there. "It's a magnet for the strangest people," she says.—*MS*

CLAIRE CARUSILLO



IT'S UNDERSTANDABLE, given her family's disastrous history with ocean liners, that Claire Carusillo, 34, has never been on a cruise. Her great-great-grandmother Fanny Mounsey was traveling from Canada to England on the *Empress of Ireland* when it sank in 1914. Fanny's husband, daughter, and son-in-law traveled to Liverpool to pursue what turned out to be a false lead that she had made it ashore, but only her daughter survived the trio's 1915 return journey aboard the *Lusitania*, which was sunk by a German torpedo.

The Mounseys' maritime tragedies inspired Carusillo's exuberant debut, *The Responsible Party* (Holt, Aug.), but she took a great deal of dramatic license. "I do hope my family doesn't feel like I've corrupted the story," she says, "but it's fiction." The novel, narrated in the present day by an aspiring writer and floundering entrepreneur named Claire, puts forth an alternative version of events. This Claire's great-great-grandmother, also named Fanny Mounsey, and her daughter, Sarah, each survive their respective wrecks and return to Illinois. Back home, Fanny and Sarah stage a vaudeville act inspired by their ordeals, called the Unsinkable Mounseys. They also might be implicated in a 1970s murder, as the narrator learns when investigators link DNA from the victim to a female Mounsey. The news leads Claire to turn to her prolix mother, Kath, for help hauling the colorful family's sunken past to the surface.

"I don't care for a spreadsheet," Carusillo says about the novel's many strands, "but I wrote a 20-page document with three columns for three different timelines to organize the story in my mind, which is pretty messy."

The Responsible Party is one of two projects coming to fruition for Carusillo this year. She and her partner, a lifelong skateboarder, are opening a combination skate shop, bookstore, and café in an old service station in Midway, Utah, where they moved to from New York City three years ago. "The town used to be a real Mormon stronghold, but it's getting a bit hipper," Carusillo says. Rushing to open the store, she learned that the building inspector delivered their business license to the wrong address, delaying their permits. No one said it would be smooth sailing. —*MS*

MOPAI © KELETSO MOPAI; DEFOE © ZIRU MO; CARUSILLO © ANTONIA ALLEN



SEÁN FARRELLY

IN AN ERA where phones serve as one's connection to the world, Seán Farrelly isn't too concerned with his digital legacy. The 29-year-old Irishman, who grew up in North County Dublin and has spent much of his career mentoring young people through creative programs such as Young Abbey Playwrights, says that despite coming of age in the 2010s, he's never had an X account, and he currently watches his TikToks via YouTube compilations. Even so, in his debut novel, *Tom Burne Has Left the Chat* (Faber & Faber, Sept.), Farrelly has zeroed in on society's complex relationship with smartphones to explore themes of grief, mental health, and community.

The novel was inspired by a 2023 *New York Times* article about people discovering their deceased loved ones' digital artifacts, and by the keen words of one of Farrelly's students. "They said their phone was like their diary, and that it was surgically attached to their hand. And I thought, Oh, that's something." The plot follows gay teen Jamie Finnerty, who finds the cellphone of late influencer Tom Burne and throws himself into cracking the code to a mysterious voice note left on the device. But Jamie's fixation on Tom's life becomes overwhelming and isn't the escape hatch from his own sorrow that he had hoped for.

"To me, our phones are the most dramatically interesting things, because people are so engaged with them," Farrelly says. "People are sending memes, and there are different group-chat dynamics. You see bullying, you see exclusion, but also you see people finding their tribes. There's just so much in it."

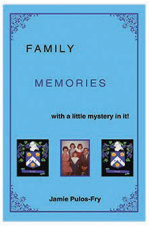
Farrelly recalls his college days as a "tapas experience," where he did "a little bit of a lot of different things." He held a longtime dream of writing for children, though, and after dropping out of school twice, he decided to pursue his writing more seriously. Over the course of the past decade, he has written four different manuscripts (including a middle grade fantasy about a tween attempting to avoid being eaten by witches) while continuing his work as a playwright and writing mentor.

"I'm fascinated by how people construct meaning," Farrelly says. "Whenever people have conversations about their digital legacy, or feel like, Oh my god, that would be the most horrifying thing in the world for others to see—I don't feel that way. But I also am really interested in the people who do." —*IYANA JONES*

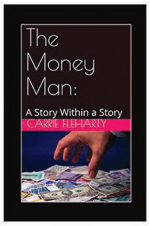
ReadersMagnet's
SUMMER TOP PICKS



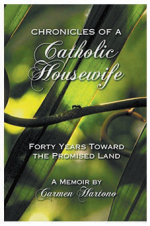
Adapt andt Overcome, Dear: Oh, Victoria!
by Brendan Bey
An action-adventure, romance against all odds and mystery story in a historical novel with action and passion for life.
ISBN: 979-8900001166
Price: $ 18.40



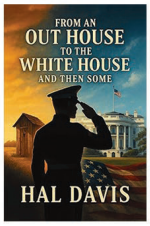
Family Memories with a little mystery in it!
by Jamie Pulos-Fry
Discover five ways that we can teach our children respect is to look beyond something through the eye of God.
ISBN: 979-8900000015
Price: $ 12.09



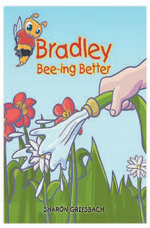
The Money Man: A Story Within a Story
by Carrie Fleharty
Take a look at the life of a man who wants to learn how to implement the Law of Attraction.
ISBN: 979-8197716392
Price: $ 12.00



Chronicles of a Catholic Housewife: Forty Years Toward the Promised Land
by Carmen Hartono
This memoir traces a forty-year marriage through the sexual revolution in the 1970s and the materialism of the 1980s.
ISBN: 978-1612049717
Price: $ 20.01



From An Out House To The White House, And Then Some
by Hal Davis
This book is a real testament of a long-suffering, perseverance, loyalty, integrity, and patriotism.
ISBN: 979-8900001432
Price: $ 20.25



Bradley Bee-ing Better
by Sharon Griesbach
Is it too late for Bradley to learn how to be a better bee-ing – or will his precious flower garden be lost forever?
ISBN: 978-1489746955
Price: $ 15.94

Reviews

THIS WEEK • FICTION • MYSTERIES & THRILLERS • SF, FANTASY & HORROR • ROMANCE & EROTICA • COMICS • NONFICTION • COOKING • HEALTH, HOME & HOBBIES • PICTURE BOOKS • CHILDREN'S FICTION & NONFICTION



Photograph by DANIELLA FISHMAN

John Grisham returns with *The French Illusion*, a pacey thriller about American honeymooners getting ensnared in a complicated criminal plot.
Page 72

Bestseller Jasmine Mas launches an unhinged fantasy romance series with *The Emperor's Enemy*, pairing a rebel soldier and an imperial assassin.
Page 80

Hippos go berserk in Fred Kennedy and James Edward Clark's madcap 1980s-styled satirical comic *The Florida Hippopotamus Cocaine Massacre.*
Page 83

T. Geronimo Johnson spins a slippery tale of a Black police officer reinventing his life and revising his story in *The Occidental Book of the Dead* (reviewed on this page).



The Occidental Book of the Dead

T. Geronimo Johnson. Morrow, $32 (672p)
ISBN 978-0-0633-3054-2

★ Nothing is what it seems in this spellbinding and profanely funny novel about race, police violence, and distorted narratives from Johnson (*Welcome to Braggsville*). It takes place in Atlantis, a thinly veiled Atlanta, where 20-year-old George Washington Jonson, who is Black, joins the police force in 1992 and gets paired with ne'er-do-well white officer Tucker. (Addressing the department's reasoning, Johnson drolly writes: "It was a widely acknowledged truth that a short white peace officer with a big personnel file was in need of a black partner.") Thirteen years later, Jonson is settled with a white wife and stepson in a nice house and is surprisingly close with Tucker. But Jonson's life deteriorates when he is partnered with a brash rookie after Tucker is put on desk duty, and a routine traffic stop ends with gunfire and the death of a white teenager. Jonson's multiple versions of what happened, on and off the record, raise more questions than answers, and the novel's second half turns the first section on its head, revisiting the same events from a new perspective. The author thrillingly plays on expectations of a sympathetic main character and a story of vindication by keeping the reader guessing at the truth and the nature of his protagonist. Fans of Susan Choi's *Trust Exercise* will devour this. *Agent: PJ Mark, Janklow & Nesbit Assoc. (Oct.)*

Soldiers & Sailors

Terrence Holt. Liveright, $31.99 (432p)
ISBN 978-1-324-09805-8

In the searching and phantasmagoric debut novel from physician and short story writer Holt (*In the Valley of the Kings*), a Philadelphia doctor returns to his Illinois hometown to begin a new life in the wake of his parents' deaths. Evidence suggests that Hal Adams's father, a WWII veteran with PTSD, murdered his wife, Hal's mother, who had Alzheimer's, before killing himself in Hal's childhood home. Hal moves back in months later, having taken a job at a local nursing home for veterans. Things get strange at work and at home—one patient visits Hal's office daily but is somehow never seen by his assistant, Nell, and another patient dies suddenly after accurately predicting a fellow resident's death. In his parents' house, Hal keeps thinking he can see and hear his father's ghost. Further unsettling him are the long monologues delivered by the patients he treats before they die, about the horrors they encountered during WWII and the Vietnam War. The war stories take up large swaths of the novel, and Holt effectively imbues them with the epic poetry of Virgil and Dante, both of whom are referenced throughout, heightening the contrast between Hal's stubbornly rational mind and the increasing likelihood that his hometown is in fact haunted by the spirits of tormented veterans. Holt's evocative prose and slow-burning plot pays dividends. *Agent: Nicole Aragi, Aragi Inc. (Sept.)*

The Pirate Queen

Ariel Lawhon. Doubleday, $32 (448p)
ISBN 978-0-385-55034-5

Lawhon (*The Frozen River*) recounts the story of Irish folk hero Grace O'Malley in this exhilarating novel. Told in a three-part looping structure, with alternating chapters titled Maiden, Mother, and Matriarch, the narrative shuffles between Grace's childhood, unhappy marriage, and battlefield triumphs in the Elizabethan era. As a girl, Grace dreams of a life at sea, but her chieftain father, Eóin, bars her from sailing. Eóin foils her love life, too, forcing her at 16, in 1546, to marry the odious Donal O'Flaherty, despite her intense bond with future chieftain Richard Bourke, who writes her a passionate letter after her union with Donal: "I will wait for you." She has three children with Donal, who physically abuses her. After Donal is killed in 1565 while battling the rival Joyce clan, Grace unexpectedly defends Hen's Castle, a key holding of her late husband's clan, against incursions by the Joyces, and she's finally able to be with Richard and earn the respect of Eóin, who hands over command of his fleet. The clever storytelling style, inspired, according to an author's note, by the Celtic Trinity Knot, rewards attentive readers, with recurring imagery and motifs forming an increasingly complex portrait of the heroine. This is transportive. *Agent: Elisabeth Weed, Book Group. (Sept.)*

PHOTO © ELIZABETH COWAN

The Barman of the Ritz

Philippe Collin, trans. from the French by Frank Wynne. Scribner, $29 (400p)
ISBN 978-1-6680-9719-9

Collin's vivid debut, a bestseller in France, draws on the life of Austrian Jewish bartender Frank Meier (1884–1947), who served occupying Nazis at the Ritz Hotel in Paris while secretly aiding the Resistance. By the eve of WWII, Frank has made the hotel's Petit Bar the place to be, with patrons including F. Scott Fitzgerald and Ernest Hemingway. In June 1940, he's behind the bar when the Germans march into Paris. The Ritz becomes home to a hundred Wehrmacht officers and Hermann Göring. As the war wears on, Frank dispenses cocktails to Germans and Frenchmen alike, hiding the fact that he's Jewish, and helps Jews escape France by supplying them with forged documents. He also keeps an eye out for his great love, Blanche Auzello, the American wife of the hotel's former manager, who also hides her Jewishness. The author does an excellent job of recreating daily life under the German occupation, and he sustains the tension by keeping the reader wondering how long Frank will be able to continue his nerve-shredding double life. This satisfying novel honors the memory of Meier and other brave Parisians who opposed Nazi rule. *Agent: Susanna Lea, Susanna Lea Assoc. (Sept.)*

Exit Party

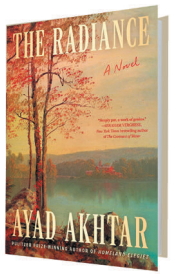
Emily St. John Mandel. Knopf, $32 (320p)
ISBN 978-0-593-32146-1

★ Mandel's masterful seventh novel (after *Sea of Tranquility*) opens in 2031, with the United States having collapsed into warring city-states and regional republics, and expands into a dizzying story of doubles and parallel universes. In a section titled "A-Side," protagonist Ari Waker, 48, attends a party in Los Angeles to celebrate the lifting of the city's curfew. Party guests seem to double, a stranger calls Ari by her unused legal name, Ibari, and the host disappears. In the weeks that follow, Ari, who was recently released from prison after serving 18 years for attempted murder, tries to make a fresh start. She spends several years working in retail before drifting to Ohio, where she works as a private investigator for a militia and then with an arms-dealing neighbor. The novel's "B-Side" offers an alternative version of Ari/Ibari's life and of the near-future U.S. Rather than collapsing, the country is consolidated into a totalitarian regime called the United State. Here, Ibari is a detective in the government's all-powerful secret police. Mandel's assured tale offers bracing commentary on the dangers of divisiveness and surveillance, and the propulsive plot is fueled by the unfolding mystery of the initiating party scene. It's a tour de force. *Agent: Katherine Fausset, Curtis Brown Ltd. (Sept.)*

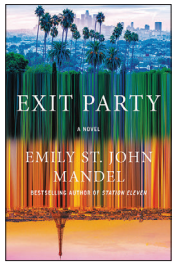
The Radiance

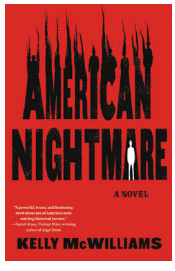
Ayad Akhtar. Summit, $29 (304p)
ISBN 978-1-6680-7863-1

★



AKTAR (*Homeland Elegies*) unfurls an intense and transcendent philosophical novel about the limits of words. It's narrated by a successful Pakistani American novelist named Ayad Akhtar, who has recently moved from New York City to an "upstate town where it's not uncommon to see a Confederate flag." After he's seriously injured in a hit-and-run, he discovers he's been transformed by the near-death experience. For one, his libido is gone, freeing him to experience the pleasure of "inner transports," as when, driving to the college campus where he teaches, his "body seemed to extend beyond itself... as if it were enlarged." The only problem is, he's having trouble translating the "wordless magic" of his condition, which is eventually diagnosed as "post-traumatic neuropsychiatric syndrome." A local cop thinks Ayad's the victim of an anti-Muslim hate crime and searches for the culprit, but Ayad is unconcerned about justice, as he confides to his friend and colleague Lucie, who inspires him to reflect on the value of platonic bonds such as theirs. The plot thickens after an attempted suicide by a student who had written about a relationship with a woman who resembles Lucie for Ayad's autofiction class, but the story's core, radiating with intelligence and sensuality, comprises Ayad's attempt to make sense of the staggering changes in himself: "My identity as a writer was at stake. The experiences I was having were so central, so transformative—what did it mean that I couldn't really find the words to convey their force?" This is profound. *Agent: Julie Barer, Book Group. (Sept.)*





American Nightmare

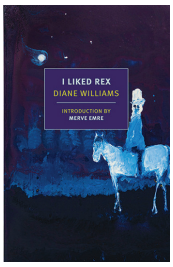
Kelly McWilliams. Crown, $29 (304p)
ISBN 979-8-217-08720-4

YA author McWilliams (*Mirror Girls*) makes her adult debut with a fast-paced if bumpy historical novel about a Black man spying on the KKK. In 1918, Clark Wendell White travels from his home in Atlanta to New York City, to interview for a job posted by the NAACP for people who can pass as white to spy on lynchings in the Deep South. Viewed as too uneducated for espionage work, he's given a menial desk job. But after Clark hears about a Tennessee lynching, he successfully petitions his boss, Gloria, to let him investigate it. A parallel narrative follows New York City butcher and KKK member Sam Cahill Jr., who notices Clark on the train to Tennessee and realizes he may have known Clark as a boy in Atlanta. As McWilliams alternates between her leads' perspectives, the novel becomes a thrilling cat-and-mouse story. Unfortunately, the author throws in a hokey supernatural element, with the ghost of Clark's childhood friend who was killed in WWI helping his investigations, while hints of a workplace romance involving Clark and Gloria distract rather than add to the story. Still, McWilliams maintains excitement as Clark receives increasingly dangerous assignments from the NAACP. Despite the odd mix of genres, this will keep readers turning the pages. *Agent: Michael Bourret, Dystel, Goderich & Bourret. (Sept.)*

The Strangers

Naomi Alderman. Little, Brown, $29 (288p)
ISBN 978-0-316-59477-6

Alderman (*The Power*) takes on the insularity of post-Brexit, post-Covid England with an uneven speculative novel about a famous novelist named Naomi Alderman who discovers a strange new animal. Naomi captures footage of the creature, which resembles a mini mammoth, with her father's garden camera. Dubbed "mimmoths" by others who spot them and share photos online, the animals quickly populate the country. They also spread beneficial fungi with their trunks. Crops grow in abundance thanks to newly enriched soil, sewer systems are unclogged, and people become "a little healthier." Yet pro-Brexit politicians demonize the mimmoths, stoking fear among the populace and prompting some people to hunt and kill them. Naomi then receives a letter from low-level bureaucrat Ian Frinton, who has been doing his own research on the mimmoths and the effect of their killings, and she reluctantly agrees to meet him. Unsure whether Ian is sincere in his desire to understand the mimmoths or if he's simply a creepy fan of her work, she mulls whether to help him. Alderman throws a lot of promising elements into the mix, from Brexit allegory to a writer weighing her desire for privacy against public duty, but it doesn't all hang together, and the underdeveloped thread with Frinton will leave readers scratching their heads. This fascinates and frustrates in equal measure. *Agent: Simon Lipskar, Writers House. (Sept.)*





I Liked Rex

Diane Williams. New York Review Books, $15.95 trade paper (136p)
ISBN 979-8-8962-3081-6

★ Delightful characters, curious images, and love affairs gone awry animate this minimalist metafictional collection by Williams (*I Hear You're Rich*). The unnamed narrator of "Oh, to Be Able to Inspire Sex Love" recalls crashing an orgy before falling asleep under a dusty rug. Sex, love, and their strange outcomes recur in entries ranging from funny to tragic. (In an introduction, Merve Emre pinpoints Williams's "cheerful sexual frankness.") "Devotional" follows a woman who keeps her lovers, including one amusingly named Seth Sharples, at arm's length to maintain the upper hand in her relationships. The standout, "The Greatest Experience," digs into a man's heartbreak as he attempts to rebuild his life after a divorce. Almost all the stories play with metafiction in one way or another, often producing the effect of being written in the very moment they are read: "This story, as yet—is just not *good enough*," frets the narrator of "For Pity's Sake" before Williams makes her into an heiress wearing a ring studded with a stone "as big as an ice rink." These deceptively simple stories eschew linear plots to home in on arresting images and phrases that reveal their characters' complex and resonant inner lives: "The loss of paradise keeps happening," reflects a recent divorcé. This is one to savor. *(Sept.)*

How to Make a Woman

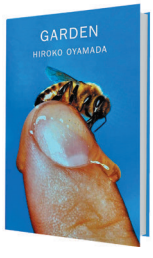
Marie Darrieussecq, trans. from the French by Penny Hueston. Transit, $18.95 trade paper (258p)
ISBN 979-8-89338-070-5

Darrieussecq (*Pig Tales*) tracks two teenage girls from a village in the French Basque Country as their lives diverge and then collide again over decades in this affecting narrative. The story opens in the 1980s, when 15-year-olds Rose and Solange, who live across the street from one another, have been best friends since they were little. Their quiet rural life is upended when Solange gets pregnant and Rose finds her own small dramas with local boys, including Christian, the high-school sweetheart she goes on to marry. After Solange gives birth, she leaves her son to be raised by her mother and becomes an actor in Bordeaux, then Paris, then London, and, at last, Hollywood. Rose gets as far as Paris, studying psychology and building a life with Christian, though she often finds herself wondering about Solange. Told in three discrete sections—Rose's story, then Solange's, then an epilogue—the narrative cleverly shows both sides of each interaction and plumbs each woman's negotiation of gender norms (Rose, ruing Christian's constant need to be

Garden

Hiroko Oyamada, trans. from the Japanese by David Boyd, Lucy North, and Yuki Tejima. New Directions, $18.95 trade paper (288p)
ISBN 978-0-8112-3057-5

★



PLANTS AND ANIMALS signify momentous change for the protagonists of these disquieting and vivid stories from Oyamada (*The Factory*). Some of the signs come on many legs: an all-girls school built on a landfill is invaded by crustaceans in "Crabs," while the title creature in "House Spider" keeps vigil over a mother on the verge of losing her grip. "Careless" concerns a pregnant gecko's grotesque appearance after a young wife's unplanned pregnancy, with the gecko regularly laying eggs on the couple's windowsill. Elsewhere, dogs figure into characters' strange homecomings, as in "The Burnaway," when a woman visiting her childhood home is shadowed by a stray dog, and "A Fine Dog," about a married couple's stop at a remote hot springs resort on their way to the narrator's in-laws, who, the husband reveals, lived in a village there before it was flooded by a dam. The couple don't have children, a fact that is highlighted by the narrator's impulsive decision to adopt a dog. Elsewhere, ants erupt from faucets, and spider lilies provide an unnerving home remedy. Unspooling with kaleidoscopic imagery and a dream-like logic of their own, these stories mimic the contrasting moods of their narrators, such as the preteen of "The Large Garden," who says of her visit to a barbecue hosted by a family friend: "This garden could feel uncomfortably hot or pleasantly cool, depending on where you were." It's unforgettable. *(Sept.)*

reassured, realizes she needs him to be strong, in the way that the "whole village agrees that girls need guys to be strong"). It's a memorable feminist meditation on friendship, chosen family, and making one's own way in the world. *(Sept.)*

Enchantment

Riikka Pulkkinen, trans. from the Finnish by Tabatha Leggett. Scribe, $19 trade paper (368p)
ISBN 978-1-964992-52-5

Pulkkinen (*True*) offers up a gripping literary mystery centered on the death of an enigmatic 17-year-old girl. Philippa Laakso is found dead in her front yard by her 86-year-old neighbor, Axel, whose late wife, Helena, had begun a friendship with Philippa that morphed into the girl being both caretaker for Helena and confidante to the couple. To Axel, who becomes preoccupied with her death, "Philippa was a good person" who "saved him." Others have their own version of who Philippa was. Alina, a 34-year-old doctor and mother whose rocky marriage has left her angry and exhausted, tells investigators that her relationship with Philippa "resembled that of a friendship," with Alina escaping from her unhappy life to drink with the teen and perform pranks, like vandalizing a car with lipstick. On dating apps, Philippa claimed to be 21 and matched with hundreds of much older men, including a former teacher. Her best friend, Saga, disgusted by her mendacity, viewed Philippa with both scorn and envy. Her ex-boyfriend, Oliver, hated her for having broken his heart. As the police piece together what happened, the novel coheres into a beautiful meditation on the brevity of youth and the thin boundary between truth and lies. This will stay with readers. *(Sept.)*

Blood Money

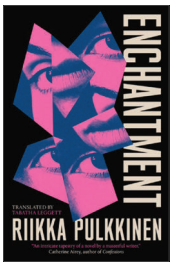
Anna Seghers, trans. from the German by Lucy Jones. New York Review Books, $16.95 trade paper (192p)
ISBN 979-8-89623-048-9

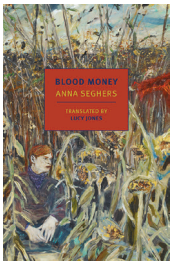
Written in the early 1930s as the Nazis rose to power, this illuminating novel by Seghers (1900–1983), author of *The Seventh Cross*, chronicles the moral unraveling of a small village on the Rhine. It begins with Johann Schulz, a young fugitive from Leipzig hiding in Oberweilerbach after killing a man during a riot, but Seghers quickly shifts her focus to the social currents drawing ordinary Germans toward National Socialism before the pivotal 1932 elections. The narrative demands close attention as its perspective moves fluidly among a large cast: brothers Andreas and Konrad Bastian, whose fortunes diverge dramatically; the Kunkel brothers, eager Nazi recruits; Naphtel, the Jewish head of the village Milk Association; the communist Rendel and his wife; the brutal brownshirt Zillich; and many others. Oberweilerbach itself emerges as the true protagonist—its web of resentments, ambitions, debts, fears, and private grievances reveal how fascism takes root through the accumulation of everyday compromises, succeeding not as a coherent political philosophy but as an irresistible promise of renewal that gathers disparate hopes and frustrations. Skillfully translated by Jones, it's a striking examination of how a democratic society surrendered itself to authoritarianism through ordinary human passion rather than extraordinary evil. *(Sept.)*

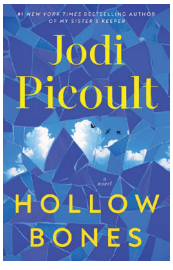
Hollow Bones

Jodi Picoult. Ballantine. $34 (464p)
ISBN 978-0-593-72625-9

In this poignant if heavy-handed dual narrative from Picoult (*By Any Other Name*), a mother and daughter build new lives for themselves in response to trauma. Molly Fitzgerald, 25, was less than two months old when her mother, Eloise, disappeared on 9/11 after a scheduled doctor's appointment at the World Trade Center, and was presumed dead. Molly was raised by her grieving father and loving stepmother, Evie, who was Eloise's roommate at the Rhode Island School of Design. As a girl, Molly has a close relationship with Evie, who treats her as if she were her own daughter. Determined to prevent others from having their lives shattered by disaster,







Molly dedicates her life to a career in emergency services. Nearly halfway through, Picoult switches to Eloise's perspective, portraying her painful childhood with a father who sexually abused her younger sister and tried to groom her, causing her to run away. After RISD, Eloise begins a promising career as an artist until she gives birth to Molly and is overwhelmed by postpartum psychosis, believing she's unfit for motherhood and worried she'll harm Molly. Eloise's story careens into a major plot twist, followed by another one involving Evie, and while both feel contrived, they yield thoughtful insights into the nature of mother-daughter relationships. This melodrama has its moments. *Agent: Laura Gross, Laura Gross Literary. (Sept.)*

The Me I Used to Be

Kristan Higgins. Lake Union, $28.99 (348p)
ISBN 978-1-6625-3800-1

Four friends torn apart by tragedy reconnect at their 25th high school reunion in Higgins's unexceptional latest. The Core Four were the envy of their Vermont school. Audrey Porter was always lucky, Micah Dell was beautiful, Jasmine Malinowski had the brains, and Beck Morrow excelled at sports. But after a car accident following a graduation party, in which Jasmine was driving, left Audrey's mother dead and Beck with a broken leg, they fell out of touch. Audrey contacts the others and persuades them to come back for the reunion. Once there, Audrey tells them her luck has run out. She's been diagnosed with early-onset Alzheimer's, and plans to end her life before losing her mind. Things haven't turned out so well for the other women, either. Beck, who was expected to have a promising basketball career before the accident, is now being sued for sexual harassment; Jasmine, who grew up poor, married into money but is unhappy as a stay-at-home mom; and Micah, pregnant at the end of high school, has stayed in town to take over her family's bakery. In lieu of a plot, Higgins's character-driven novel sees the women try to figure out whether their friendship can lead them back to their true selves. The feel-good ending

satisfies, but for the most part the story is a bit schmaltzy. The author's fans will appreciate this one, but it's unlikely to win her new ones. *(Sept.)*

Mt. Forgotten

Kevin Abrams. Bublish, $4.99 e-book (362p)
ISBN 978-1-64704-956-0

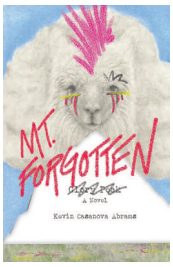
Glory Peak, a popular family-run ski resort in the Pacific Northwest, becomes a battleground for competing interests in Abrams's exciting debut. The resort was founded in the 1940s by WWII veteran William Jefferson Macklemore, who ran roughshod over the local Le'Echuwanna tribe, building on their ancestral land despite their protests. William goes on to fight his own family decades later, pulling strings to block his son, Bobby, and daughter-in-law, Annabelle, from starting a nearby alpaca farm. By 1988, Annabelle and Bobby plan to divorce. During one last hike together in the mountains, they're swept off the trail by an avalanche and disappear, presumed dead. The nonlinear narrative eventually focuses on their daughter, Clover, who was raised in town by her late maternal grandmother, who spearheaded a rival resort that's under construction nearby. Clover grew up at odds with both Bobby, who tried to make her a champion cross-country skier, and William, who once shot at her boyfriend. Disenchanted and despairing, Clover develops a ketamine problem and attempts suicide. Meanwhile, the Le'Echuwanna, led by brash elder He Who Eats Rabbit Tails, have long chafed at the Macklemore family's exploitation of the land. As the conflict draws toward a violent crisis point, He Who Eats and Clover form a murky alliance. Abrams keenly portrays his characters' animosity toward each other and their frustration with their circumstances. This will keep readers turning the pages. *(Self-published)*

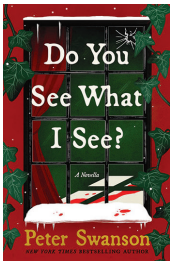
MYSTERIES & THRILLERS

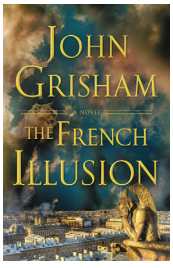
Do You See What I See?

Peter Swanson. Morrow, $19.99 (128p)
ISBN 978-0-06-343367-0

Swanson (*Kill Your Darlings*) flexes his genre chops in this sleek holiday whodunit. Struggling mystery writer Nicholas Child's agent offers him $50,000 to help one of her more successful clients, Marco Tavares, who has hit a wall with the follow-up to his blockbuster third novel, *The Girl at the Door*. Child is hired to read the manuscript—a thriller about a murderous collage artist that Tavares concedes is a mess—and offer suggestions for improving it while staying in Tavares's Cape Cod home in the days before Christmas. Shortly after he arrives, Child realizes Tavares is hosting a holiday get-together populated by guests who have uncomfortable history with him, including fellow writer James Beers, who once accused Tavares of stealing his plot for *The Girl at the Door*. When one member of the party winds up dead, Child, the only outsider, becomes a suspect. He attempts to prove his innocence in a brilliant climax that nods to a golden age classic. In addition to the sharp plotting, Swanson takes good-humored shots at the mystery genre, as when Child laments "the ever-increasing audience that apparently only read thrillers that had the word girl in its title." It's a yuletide treat. *Agent: Nat Sobel, Sobel Weber Assoc. (Oct.)*







The French Illusion

John Grisham. Doubleday, $35 (352p)
ISBN 978-0-385-55054-3

For his breakneck latest, bestseller Grisham (*The Widow*) steps out of the courtroom to unfold the story of a brutal kidnapping scheme. At the outset, newlyweds Paul Tanner, a Justice Department attorney, and Chelsea Clayburn, an art appraiser, set off for their Paris honeymoon. As Chelsea eagerly documents their trip on social media, a French gang tracks their movements. The gang members stage a car accident, and, in the ensuing chaos, render Paul and Chelsea unconscious. The newlyweds awake to find they've been separated and are being held captive with no way of knowing whether their partner is safe. Meanwhile, Paul's and Chelsea's families receive ransom notes demanding $2 million. The plot thickens when Grisham reveals that FBI personnel have been unsuccessfully investigating two similar cases that appear to have political implications. Though the characters are thinner than in the best Grisham novels, the parallel storylines of Paul and Chelsea trying to escape captivity and the FBI, CIA, and French authorities working together to nail the kidnappers generate crackerjack suspense. It's a blast. *Agent: David Gernert, Gernert Co. (Sept.)*

Backwater

James Sallis. Soho Crime, $28.95 (208p)
ISBN 978-1-64129-859-9

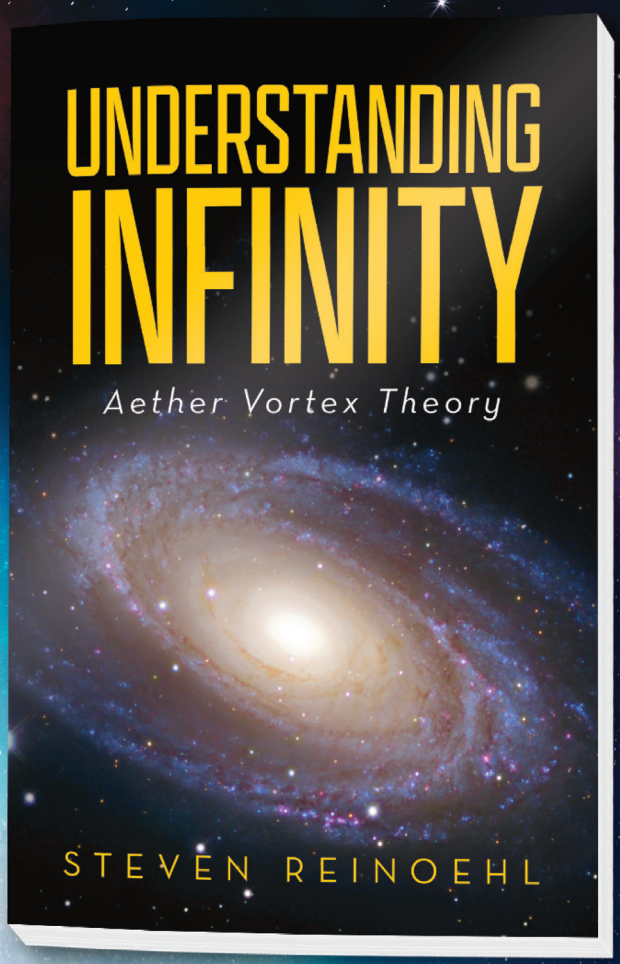
★ *Drive* author Sallis, who died earlier this year, delivers a masterful, bittersweet swan song about a retired cop who's called in for one final job. Bishop agrees to take the reins of the tiny police department of Anne's Ferry, his hometown, after its longtime chief walks off the job and is never seen again. He learns how to prepare a budget and report to city council while overseeing a staff of three quirky officers: Hollis, Felicia, and Raymond. To rescue himself from feeling "like tumbleweed, blowing into town, rolling idly about the streets," Bishop digs into the case of a car found abandoned at a truck stop with blood smeared over every surface. He chips away at that inquiry in between dealing with the mundane crimes of small-town America—fender benders, wandering elderly neighbors, squatters in old farmhouses—and learns to find beauty in life's quieter moments. Eventually, the bloody car case gets resolved, as do most of the other daily dramas on Bishop's beat, but Sallis is more interested in the texture of life in Anne's Ferry than page-turning action. Brief but brimming with life, this is a tender farewell from a towering talent. *Agent: Vicky Bijur, Vicky Bijur Literary. (Sept.)*

Before You Were Anne

Emiko Jean. Simon & Schuster, $29 (320p)
ISBN 978-1-6680-2396-9

Jean's taut second mystery for Seattle detective Chelsey Calhoun (after *The Return of Ellie Black*) hinges on the kidnapping of a nightclub hostess's daughter. In Tokyo, Rika Takahashi

DARE TO THINK DIFFERENTLY: A FRESH TAKE ON PHYSICS



This book presents a groundbreaking perspective on the nature of reality. transcending the confines of traditional physics, offering a novel lens to view the universe. While we live in an epoch of scientific progress, certain aspects of reality remain elusive. Existing theories, although supported by intricate mathematical formulae, often lack intuitive clarity.

Understanding Infinity: Aether Vortex Theory is more than just a book; it's an expedition into the core of the cosmos, set to transform your perception of reality. It is an essential read for anyone with a curious mind, regardless of their scientific background, age or gender. It appeals to those who seek new knowledge, those who dare to question the norm, and those ready to voyage into the uncharted territories of the universe.

Embark on this odyssey through the cosmos, challenge your understanding of reality, and decode the enigmas of the universe with *Understanding Infinity: Aether Vortex Theory*. This isn't merely a book—it's an open invitation to a fresh understanding of reality.

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eBook ISBN: 9798822968233

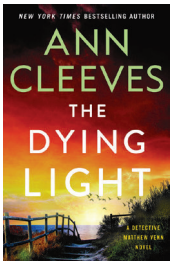
PALMETTO
PUBLISHING
Charleston, SC

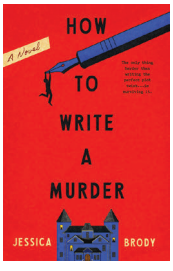
befriends club hostess Mayumi "May" Ito and starts working at Moonlight, May's upscale establishment. On the job, May introduces Rika to gangster Hiroshi Akiyama, and the two quickly fall for each other. After Hiroshi gets Rika pregnant, their relationship sours, and Rika flees to the United States, changes her name to Anne Walker, and ends up raising her daughter, Naomi, in Seattle. Sixteen years later, Rika is murdered and Naomi goes missing. The case comes to the attention of Seattle detective Chelsey Calhoun, who was adopted as a child and lacks concrete details about her early life. Alongside her affable investigative partner, Montoya, Chelsey pieces together the mysteries of Rika's death and Naomi's disappearance, uncovering an insidious sex trafficking ring and difficult details about her own past in the process. Jean smoothly toggles between the perspectives of Rika, Naomi, and Chelsey, fleshing out each woman's perspective as the complicated plot shifts into high gear. It's an exhilarating thriller with a strong emotional current. *(Sept.)*

The Dying Light

Ann Cleeves. Minotaur, $29 (384p)
ISBN 978-1-250-83680-9

Det. Insp. Matthew Venn investigates a murder and a disappearance connected to a prominent British politician in Cleeve's effective sequel to *The Raging Storm*. Venn and his team are called to Tide House, the Devon vacation home of well-known MP Paul Armstrong, where Armstrong's daughter, Hannah, and her friend, Lottie, had been staying ahead of a family vacation. Armstrong found Lottie dead in the pool, with Hannah nowhere to be seen. His public profile means the U.K.'s ministry of the interior watches and weighs in on every move Venn makes as he searches for answers, which come via observations from local villagers and conversations with the girls' parents and friends. As always, Cleeves is strong on atmosphere, and she crafts well-rounded characters whose overlapping secrets form an engrossing puzzle—developments in the personal lives of Venn's investigators land with the same sense of occasion as bombshells about the victims' lives. By the time Cleeves has narrowed her large list of suspects to a guilty few, readers will be eager to see where Venn goes next. *(Sept.)*





How to Write a Murder

Jessica Brody. Bantam, $32 (560p)
ISBN 979-8-217-29947-8

Invitees converge at a former California monastery for a writing conference held by famous mystery author Ian McCloud, only for the proceedings to devolve into a deadly real-life whodunit, in this clever if overlong meta-thriller from Brody (*The Geography of Lost Things*). Plans for a peaceful event implode as soon as McCloud spies Alastair Sinclair, the longtime agent he's just fired (and disinvited from the conference) after publicly accusing him of embezzling $2 million. Another guest McCloud isn't exactly thrilled to see is model Simone Prescott—his on-again, off-again mistress. Toss in a motley cast including fanboy and failed novelist Darius Walker, who runs a McCloud YouTube channel; event coordinator Jade Brooks, who's clearly not who she claims to be; and octogenarian aspiring author Evelyn Channing, and about the only thing missing is *Knives Out* protagonist Benoit Blanc. Before long, a landslide blocks the monastery's sole access road, and a mysterious figure who seems to be orchestrating the action starts interrupting the plot to deliver tongue-in-cheek asides. Unfortunately, as these initially intriguing, fourth wall–breaking communiques become more frequent and frenetic, they begin to feel intrusive, a narrative device more successful in concept than execution. By the time a dead body turns up and an investigation gets underway, most readers will be exhausted—though Brody ties everything up with an admittedly killer finale. This is fun, but it overstays its welcome. *Agent: Jim McCarthy, Dystel, Goderich, and Bourret. (Sept.)*

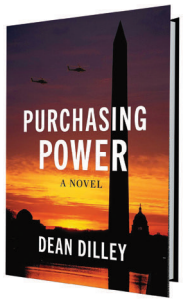
Mother Daughter Sister Stranger

Hank Phillippi Ryan. Minotaur, $29 (352p)
ISBN 978-1-250-35002-2

A woman vanishes on the anniversary of her parents' deaths in this well-crafted domestic thriller from Mary Higgins Clark Award winner Ryan (*All This Could Be Yours*). When Eliza Ramsey was 17 and her sister, Bea, was 20, the two survived a plane crash that killed both of their parents. In

Purchasing Power

Dean M. Dilley. Lyons, $24.95 trade paper (264p)
ISBN 978-1-4930-9543-8



ATTORNEY DILLEY'S traditionally published debut (after the self published *Nablus Girl*) is a sharp, funny political thriller about a rivalry between two congressional staffers. Will Bradley is a low-level employee of mediocre five-term congressman Ned Otis. Will's career is on the slow track until he meets Catherine Winningham, a staffer for Michigan congressman Jack Locklear. Catherine—driven, cunning, and relentless—is looking for lawmakers to cosponsor a bill protecting air bag manufacturers from liability in case of deadly defects. She seduces Will to secure Otis's help in passing the bill, but when her plan works, Will neglects to give Catherine any of the credit. Consumed by fury, she vows to make him pay. Will then goes to work for a top-shelf lobbying firm, where he's assigned to instigate a coup in Sabawak, a small island country in the South China Sea with large oil reserves. Catherine hears about the operation and sets about sabotaging Will at every turn. Though the details of the Sabawak assignment are complicated, the structure of Dilley's novel is delightfully simple: Will builds his career and Catherine destroys it. As their machinations unfold, leading to all manner of shady schemes and ruined lives, it's hard not to race through the pages. This is a knockout. *(Sept.)*

the decade since, the sisters have maintained a close bond. Eliza now works for a literary agent in Boston and Bea is a successful fashion influencer. On the 11th anniversary of the plane crash, Bea fails to collect her daughter, Piper, from Eliza's brownstone after a sleepover, and Eliza begins to panic. With an equally scared Piper in tow, Eliza tries and fails to contact Bea, then embarks on a search for her sister that digs up long hidden family secrets and sheds startling light on the supposed accident that left their parents dead. As Ryan's fans will expect, she packs the proceedings with big reveals and disturbing backstories, maintaining solid suspense even if the third act feels like a bit of a comedown. This may not break new ground, but it's an enjoyable ride. *(Sept.)*

We Chase Shadows

Richard Osman. Viking/Dorman, $31 (352p)
ISBN 979-8-217-06039-9

Osman is in fine form with this spry sequel to *We Solve Murders*. Retired cop Steve Wheeler and his daughter-in-law, Amy, have opened a detective agency with backing from novelist Rosie D'Antonio, "the Jackie Collins of Crime." Steve and Amy are hired by Vern Blackwood, who has made a fortune selling fake vitamin supplements and who contacts them while hiding out in a luxury compound in Italy. A killer has just penetrated Vern's state-of-the-art security system and killed one of his bodyguards, leaving behind a warning note signed by Jacob Erikson, Vern's oldest rival. Vern has no interest in identifying the killer; instead, he wants to know if Erikson really wrote the note. The adventure that ensues is brimming with Osman's trademark wit and brio, and his characters delight, even if none quite reach the perfection of those in Osman's Thursday Murder Club series. Though the central mystery is both overly convoluted and too easy to solve, readers will forgive those flaws because of Osman's unwavering commitment to having a good time. Keep Amy, Steve, and Rosie's adventures coming. *Agent: Jenny Bent, Bent Agency. (Sept.)*

No Song for the Dead (Department Q)

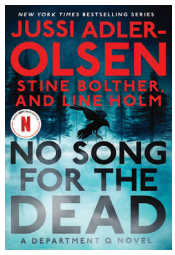
Jussi Adler-Olsen, Stine Bolther, and Line Holm, trans. from the Danish by Caroline Waight. Dutton, $30 (496p)
ISBN 979-8-217-17851-3

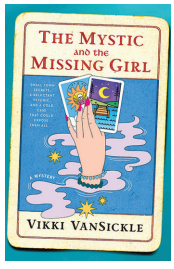
Danish crime novelist Adler-Olsen recruits journalists Holm and Bolther to carry the torch of his dormant Department Q mysteries (after *Locked In*), resulting in a solid procedural that's not quite up to series standards. After years of being ridiculed for his unorthodox investigative methods, Department Q chief Carl Mørck has retired from detective work to write novels based on his long career. In his absence, Assad, an amiable Middle Eastern man struggling with his two rebellious daughters, and Rose, a surly computer expert juggling perimenopause with a surprise pregnancy, are trying to run Department Q. After Mørck delivers a frightening tip about a case previously ruled a suicide, Assad and Rose launch an investigation alongside their new colleague, French detective Helena Henry, who's grappling with hidden anguish of her own. Gradually, the trio links Mørck's evidence to decades-old goings-on at an all-boys' school, the consequences of which appear to be spilling into the present. Though this lacks the bite of Adler-Olsen's solo efforts, there's enough atmosphere and surprise on offer to satisfy series fans. *Agent: Rudi Rasmussen, Politiken Literary. (Sept.)*

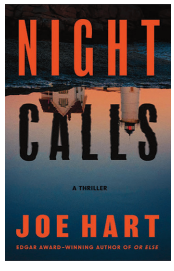
The Mystic and the Missing Girl

Vikki VanSickle. Minotaur, $28 (336p)
ISBN 978-1-250-46110-0

Children's author VanSickle (*The Lightning Circle*) makes her adult debut with an affable cozy centered on the niece of a disgraced psychic. Drew Benson has returned to her lakeside Canadian hometown to take over an esoterica shop owned by her late aunt, Hanna Mystic. Hanna was a well-known TV psychic who fell from grace after her "visions" failed to solve the 1998 case of missing 17-year-old Ginny Evans. Though Drew is a tarot reader herself, she's unsure if she'll be able to overcome Hanna's bad reputation and make the store profitable, particularly with the 20-year anniversary of Ginny's disappearance looming. The renewed interest in the case has led Nick Campbell—Ginny's 11th-grade chemistry partner, who has become a journalist for the *Toronto Star*—to cover the story. With expenses rising and vandals scrawling "Justice for Ginny" graffiti on the front of the shop, Drew sets out to prove that her aunt's visions were correct. VanSickle conjures up a sweet small-town atmosphere and enough plot twists to keep readers turning pages. It's a solid first foray into the mystery genre. *Agent: Joanna MacKenzie, Nelson Literary. (Sept.)*







Night Calls

Joe Hart. Thomas & Mercer, $16.99 trade paper (368p)
ISBN 978-1-6625-3699-1

★ Hart (*Wyndclyffe*) soars with this brilliant psychological thriller. Eight years ago, Hattie Conlee was devastated to learn that her 22-year-old son, Tommy, was the Bedfellow, a serial killer who slept in the beds of his victims after impaling them. DNA evidence and the discovery of the murder weapon—his father's wooden awl—made the case open-and-shut. Tommy escaped before he could be sentenced, however, and Hattie, fearing he might come after her, moved to the quiet town of Havensport, Maine, and changed her name to Mary Whittaker. The young couple who adopted Tommy's son, Julian, also lives in Havensport, and Hattie has begun spending time with them without revealing her identity. Her new life is threatened when investigative reporter Ross Eeling comes to Havensport, demanding that Hattie speak on the record about Tommy or he'll reveal who she is. Hattie's dilemma coincides with her growing fears that Julian may have inherited his father's violent streak—and that she might be the only person who's able to recognize the warning signs. Hart matches a serpentine plot with an intricate psychological portrait of a woman under crushing pressure. This is

masterful. *Agent: Laura Rennert, Andrea Brown Literary. (Sept.)*

The Girl with Seven Lives

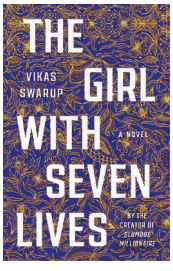
Vikas Swarup. Pegasus, $28.95 (416p)
ISBN 979-8-89710-184-9

A young woman is kidnapped in Mumbai and forced to face her past sins in this gripping survival tale from former diplomat Swarup (*The Accidental Apprentice*). A gun-wielding captor points his weapon at 25-year-old Devi and forces her to tell him about her misdeeds and past scams; in exchange, he will spare her life and auction it off to the highest bidder from the resulting list of people she's wronged. Devi unspools her life story, highlighting how, after she was orphaned, she worked for a Maharaj in Gogra, managed a bookstore in Kottayam, and faked having a nursing degree to put herself on a stable career path. Though Devi's nursing career flourished for years, her lies eventually caught up with her, leading her to the start seducing and blackmailing men for money. Swarup's setup—a character recounts their past in the midst of a high-pressure situation—recalls his 2005 hit *Q&A* (which was adapted into the film *Slumdog Millionaire*), but the gender politics at play here add depth, as the author traces a woman's quest to thrive in a world where she's the only person she can depend on. Blending nerve-shredding suspense and a big, beating heart, this impresses. *(Sept.)*

A Game of Cat and Killer

Jiro Akagawa, trans. from the Japanese by Haydn Trowell. Grand Central, $17.99 trade paper (272p)
ISBN 978-1-5387-8671-0

The charming first mystery from Japanese novelist Akagawa to be published in English introduces his most popular creation: a calico cat named Mikeneko Holmes. When a student at Hagoromo Women's College is viciously murdered, squeamish Tokyo Metropolitan Police detective Yoshitaro Katayama is asked to examine photos of the crime scene. Recognizing Katayama's discomfort with the request, his boss relents and lets him interview Dean Tomoo Morisaki at the college instead. During their discussion, the dean's calico cat, Holmes, pushes through a flap in his office door. A short time later, Morisaki is found dead in a room whose door was bolted from the inside, giving Katayama—an avid crime reader long before he became a cop—a real-life locked-room mystery to solve. The tenderhearted detective teams up with the orphaned cat, learning to interpret her signals (one key clue comes from the way she paws at a matchbox) as he sets out to determine who killed Morisaki and whether it's the same person that killed the student. Along the way, Katayama also investigates other shady goings-on at the college, including a potential prostitution ring. It's undeniably heartwarming to witness the harmony between Katayama and Holmes develop as the plot unfolds. Readers will hope for more Holmes adventures soon. *(Sept.)*







Pictures of You

Josh Malerman. Del Rey, $28 (288p)
ISBN 978-0-593-72315-9

Malerman (*Incidents Around the House*) delivers a clumsy thriller centered on Emily Moore, a 20-something painter who gets kidnapped during a trip to Lake Michigan with her boyfriend, Jack Whitney. After a night of heavy drinking, Emily wakes up in a strange hotel room wearing a ball gown and evening gloves. With no memory of how she got there, Emily attempts to leave the room—until a woman who seems to be staring down at her through a picture frame on an easel commands her not to move. Emily asks to see Jack, but the woman, who introduces herself as Helen, assures her that he is down the hall. As Emily struggles to free herself but fails to overcome Helen or Herb, a fellow artist who emerges from under her bed, she hears Jack's screams in another part of the hotel. Malerman toggles back and forth between Jack's attempts to find Emily and Emily's captivity with Herb and Helen, who start to seem familiar to Emily as they deliver long, ponderous monologues about art. The action is minimal, the characterizations are thin, and though Malerman delivers a few surprising twists in the final act, it's a slog to get there. This isn't a pretty picture. *Agent: Kristin Nelson, Nelson Literacy Agency. (Sept.)*

The Midnight Guests

Alex Hay. Hanover Square, $18.99 trade paper (352p)
ISBN 978-1-335-00158-0

Hay (*The Queen of Fives*) brings the decadence and danger of the 1920s to life in this dazzling historical mystery. In 1929, Diana Gold, owner of London's opulent Hotel Artemis, throws a buzzy grand opening event. Among the guests is American Cleo van der Meer, happy for a week away from her mother's suffocating gaze. When she meets Polly Fox-Stanton, she thinks she's found her perfect distraction. Meanwhile, as guests enjoy champagne, gambling, and other indulgences, Diana prepares to face the heads of a criminal organization to whom she owes a huge amount of money. When a dead body turns up in the hotel vaults, Diana sees the evening spiral out of control. Nearly a century later, Joe Carberry checks in as one of the last guests before the Hotel Artemis closes. Following a trail left by his crime-obsessed grandmother, he's determined to discover the truth about what happened in the hotel all those years ago, but he faces obstacles from people determined to keep that truth under wraps. Hay's tightly woven plot unfolds at an addictive pace, and the twists come in all the right places. Fans of Lucy Foley will devour this. *Agent: Rebecca Folland, Hodder & Stoughton. (Sept.)*

The Oxford Guide to Scandal and Lies

Kate Westbury. Minotaur, $29 (352p)
ISBN 978-1-250-42410-5

A librarian's death sparks an espionage investigation at Oxford University in Westbury's enjoyable debut. The atmosphere at Oxford in the early 1950s is charged, with traumatized WWII veterans, spoiled

aristocrats, and determined young women frequently butting heads. When elderly Oxford librarian Mr. Tolliver drops dead of an apparent heart attack, a government agent nicknamed Rook recruits two students—veteran Sidney Braithwaite and viscount's daughter Ginevra Bishop—to investigate. Tolliver, a former code breaker, was on the trail of a Soviet agent passing sensitive information to the Kremlin before he died, and Rook, who believes Tolliver was poisoned, tasks Braithwaite and Bishop with identifying how the librarian had narrowed down his list of suspects. Though Brathwaite and Bishop are initially reluctant to work together, they begin to respect each other's skills as the mission progresses and they develop a mutual romantic attraction. The novel is at its best when the plot hurtles forward, pushing Westbury's protagonists straight into harm's way, but the conclusion is a touch improbable. Still, with exciting action and lead characters worth rooting for, this is a promising start. *(Sept.)*

Deception

Alan Parks. Pegasus Crime, $27.95 (352p)
ISBN 979-8-89710-156-6

Parks's gritty sequel to *Gunner* finds former Glasgow cop Joe Gunner in 1941 New York City working for the British Overseas Council, a covert office stirring up support for the U.S. to enter WWII. Joe's boss, Giles Nickerson, is a posh member of English society who hobnobs with the Astors and Rockefellers to influence the elites, while Joe handles the street-level dirty work, infiltrating pro-Nazi rallies with paid agitators and blackmailing rich playboys with prostitution stings. Gunner discovers that Leopold Korff, a senior adviser to Adolf Hitler, has arrived in New York to spearhead a series of attacks by Nazi saboteurs. Nickerson knows a successful German strike would surely draw America into the war, and as the first week of December 1941 draws to a close, Gunner will have to decide how onboard he is with Nickerson's ruthless tactics. Parks brings wartime N.Y.C. to vivid life as Gunner haunts diners and the streets of Harlem, and real-life historical characters like crime scene photographer Weegee add color. For fans of WWII-era crime fiction, this series is worth a look. *Agent: Isabel Dixon, Blake Friedman Literary. (Sept.)*

First Chance

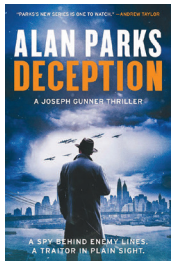
Kasey Lansdale. Blackstone, $29.99 (288p)
ISBN 979-8-228-46706-4

Set in the close-knit town of Hopeful, Tex., Lansdale's middling debut follows Chance Kirby, a newly licensed PI of Native American and Hispanic heritage who has just opened her own agency. Chance's professional drive is matched only by her loyalty to Tia, her Black teenage ward, and their dog, Sissy. When 16-year-old Patience Milroy is found dead in a pile of brush, her half sister Darla, frustrated by police inaction and suspecting a link to another murder, hires Chance to investigate. With help from police chief Izzy Lopez—one of the few women of color in local law enforcement—Chance finds parallels to the unsolved murder of a girl named Judy June and begins building a theory of the case with help from Tia and another PI. After Izzy receives a threatening note, suspicion settles on someone in the police department, and the killer's threats grow more personal. As the danger comes closer to home, Chance has to balance her desire to solve the case with the safety of her makeshift family. Lansdale writes with an evocative sense of place and admirably nuanced view of justice, but the pacing lags and the plot twists sometimes fail to surprise. It's a mixed bag. *Agent: Becky LeJeune, Bond Agency. (Sept.)*

The Sound of Murder (Musicals Are Murder #1)

Joseph Zellnik. Ziggurat, $9.99 e-book (415p)
ISBN 979-8-9923999-3-6

Theatrical composer Zellnik (the Libby Seale Mysteries) draws on his Broadway expertise for this promising series launch that pairs a clever whodunit with a tantalizing behind-the-curtain narrative. In November 1959,







Rodgers and Hammerstein's *The Sound of Music* opens successfully in New Haven, Conn. The following morning, Eva Rossi—understudy for lead actor Mary Martin—fails to show up for rehearsals and is found dead in a hotel room that's not her own. Next to her body is a *Playgoer* magazine pinned to the bedside table with a dagger thrust through Martin's photo; over the bed, the lyric "How do you solve a problem like Maria?" is scrawled in red. Shrewd assistant stage manager Lee Solomon assists the police in their investigation, which rules out suicide after they learn of an earlier attempt on Martin's life. Solomon, the real-life assistant stage manager for the original run of *The Sound of Music*, was Zellnik's uncle, and the author bases his characterization on Solomon's journals. Other delightful nuggets of Broadway trivia dot the narrative. Musical theater fans would do well to check this out. *(Self-published)*

SF, FANTASY & HORROR

Massif

Garth Nix. Harper Voyager, $30 (352p)
ISBN 978-0-0-6329201-7

★ Bestselling YA fantasist Nix (*Sabriel*) showcases his worldbuilding prowess in his first adult sci-fi novel, a riveting space opera set in the 24th century. In 2097, a mountain range, or massif, in Madagascar was lifted into the sky and began to orbit Earth. The astronauts who reached it encountered an entity that they understood to be the avatar of the massif, who informed them that the massif would leave the solar system for a time to explore the stars. Those who accompanied it returned to report that it was part of a network of such massifs, each safe for human habitation, triggering massive extraterrestrial colonization and sparking continuous warfare for centuries. Nix grounds these epic stakes in human terms, as the aftermath of one such battle leaves Kazlin Kim-Sawahla, a crewmember of the United Earth Government Navy ship Sassafras, stranded, and leads her commanding officer, ship leader Parnell Shi-Sawahla, to attempt a

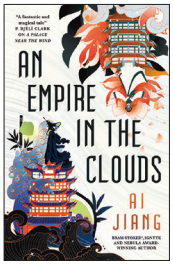
rescue that risks his life and his career. His endeavor coincides with efforts to understand more about the sentient massifs, why they facilitate human warfare, and what they're seeking in the stars. The result is a staggering adventure that should win Nix a whole new set of fans. *(Sept.)*

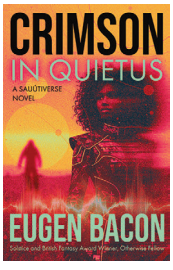
The Unhaunting

Micaiah Johnson. Putnam, $28 (288p)
ISBN 979-8-217-18113-1

Johnson (*Those Beyond the Wall*) breathes new life into an old horror trope in this clever inversion of the classic haunted house story. The building at its center is a Civil War–era family home in rural Mississippi, recently inherited by Avery Abernathy. Determined to turn it into a peaceful sanctuary from hectic city life, Avery sets about renovating the place with help from his moody older brother, Tobias, and his close friend Shantell. They quickly sense that something about the dwelling is, if not wrong, then too right: local history suggests the house and its residents have escaped every misfortune that has plagued the surrounding town for over a century. Meanwhile, the central trio's maladies, including anxiety and nicotine addiction, fade away within the house's walls. Still, weirdness abounds: the exterior indicates an attic that's not accessible from the inside, and mysterious figures appear in the windows. And if the house is indeed manipulating their perceptions, memories, and emotions, it must have its reasons. Johnson largely sidesteps ghostly phenomena to keep the focus on her well-developed protagonists, each of whom is haunted by past traumas the house exploits for its own macabre purposes. She also allows the house to speak directly to the reader, revealing designs that transcend those typically ascribed to horror's well-known malignant dwellings. This chiller will be a hit with anyone seeking a fresh take on genre conventions. *(Sept.)*







An Empire in the Clouds

Ai Jiang. Titan, $26.99 (384p)
ISBN 978-1-83541-494-1

Nebula Award winner Jiang makes her full-length debut (after the novella *A Palace Near the Wind*) with this intricate science fantasy of two disparate empires and a set of royal triplets separated by political machinations. In Piao, an empire built on tradition and connection to the natural world, Emperor Yún's power-hungry advisers plot to overthrow him and seize the crown for themselves. Learning of this, his sister, Xīlián, travels to Opera, a more modern, technology-focused empire, where her other brother, Làng, has been exiled, in hopes of enlisting his help saving Yún. The narration toggles between Xīlián and commoner No Face, who was born in Piao but now lives in Opera. Through strange twists of fate, No Face and Xīlián wind up working together to save both their homes. It takes some effort to grasp Jiang's expansive worldbuilding, which incorporates many instances of Chinese language and culture, but there's no denying the richness and depth of her vision. Readers will find much to savor here. *(Sept.)*

Jenny Will Eat You Now

Gillian Daniels. Gallery, $19 trade paper (320p)
ISBN 978-1-66821-813-6

Daniels's delectable debut blends a droll fish-out-of-water story with English folklore, visceral body horror, and surprisingly tender romance. The ancient, legendary Jenny Greenteeth has lived an isolated but contented existence for centuries in the waterways in and around what is now known as Boston. She's immortal but needs to consume flesh to survive, which, these days, often means eating the rats who foolishly wander into the abandoned subway station she calls home. When an academic stumbles into the station while recording a video about the legend of Jenny Greenteeth, Jenny becomes obsessed with the idea of eating, or possibly just meeting, him. This quest is assisted by two other folkloric humanoid creatures, a faun and a selkie, who agree to help Jenny navigate the human world that has become so unfamiliar to her. Jenny is undeniably a monster, but Daniels depicts her with empathy, complexity, and humor. It's a clever spin on a familiar story that shows human life from an entertaining new perspective. Fans of monster-human love stories and quirky myth retellings will be enchanted. *Agent: Jenna Satterthwaite, Storm Literary. (Sept.)*

Crimson in Quietus

Eugen Bacon. Meerkat, $19.95 trade paper (270p)
ISBN 978-1-965740-07-1

Bacon (*Novic*) sets this smart, metaphysical Afrofuturist saga in the multiauthor-created Sauútiverse, which imagines a binary star system supporting a federation of five planets where magic travels on sound waves. Muso'mi, gifted with the ability to steal sound, becomes a student of sound magic at a prestigious academy called the Mahadum of the Mother's Whisper. Fin'lei, whose sound magic enables her to create miniatures of people, places, and things, joins Muso'mi in researching how pools of silence form on different planets. When Fin'lei disappears, Muso'mi's investigation leads her to the serial killer Tafu'na, who stalks the academy and savors the sound of souls leaving their bodies. Bacon's prose is as rich as the worldbuilding, studded with neologisms derived from African language and legends (a helpful glossary provides both meanings and derivations). Her inspiring characters, many of whom riff on familiar archetypes (expectant mother, bickering lovers, supportive elder), persevere through extraordinary trials by relying on bonds of faith and affection. The result is both striking and stirring. *(Sept.)*

The Age of Blood and Magic

Hannah Mathewson. Morrow, $30 (432p)
ISBN 978-0-06-345628-0

The corporate intrigue of *Succession* meets a complex supernatural murder mystery in this gripping if somewhat overlong fantasy from Mathewson (*Witherward*). The Maddock family built their fortune synthesizing faery and witch magic into potions, among them Empathy (which enables users to read the feelings of others) and Shield (a protective spell), that ordinary

humans pay handsomely to use. With patriarch and Mythos CEO Oscar Maddok in a coma, his ex-wife Claudia serves as interim CEO. Meanwhile, his daughter, Valentina, maneuvers to be named CFO with the aim of eventually taking over. At a weekend-long launch party celebrating Immortality, a magical potion synthesized from vampire venom, someone curses Valentina with the Gilded Grip, a spell that, in three days, will turn her blood to gold. Lucas Sayle, a charming vampire in attendance, offers to help Valentina find the antidote and the culprit. Suspects abound: there's current Mythos CFO Hunter Corcoran; Valentina's drunken half-brother, Jude, and her intimidating college friend Charlotte, who's there as his date; vindictive property manager Fran; dying pharmaceutical billionaire Eric Burton-Shaw; and a slew of vampires. Though the plot is slow to ramp up, Mathewson's sharp prose impeccably apes corporate speak and conjures entitled, self-serving characters that readers will love to hate. It's good fun. *(Sept.)*

Something Followed Us Home: Tales of Latiné Horror

Edited by Cynthia Pelayo. Primero Sueño, $18 trade paper (336p)
ISBN 978-1-6680-9194-4

For this solid anthology, Bram Stoker Award winner Pelayo (*It Came from Netherland*) brings together 17 fascinating shorts by Latinx horror authors. The tales are bite-size, easy to get into, and span a wide-range of subgenres: there's body horror in Agustina Bazterrica's "Blue Flowers," creature horror in Ann Dávila Cardinal's "Her First Cruise Ship," and psychological horror in Juan Martinez's "Mechanical Servants LLC." Mythical creatures from Latinx folklore and the authors' own imaginations take center stage for many of these tales. Alex Segura draws from the Venezuelan myth of El Silbón in "Fidelity," where a stay-at-home mom meets a charming soccer dad who seems too good to be true. Xochitl Gonzalez's fairy tale–esque "Pomelo" tells of an isolated young girl who raises a small man born from a grapefruit from her family's prized grapefruit tree, while Diana Rodriguez Walloch's morbidly amusing "We Are Gathered Here Together" follows a family of vampires who stir up trouble at the staged funeral for their youngest daughter. A man questions his loyalty (and sanity) when his boyfriend is possessed by a demon in Gerardo Sámano Córdova's "My Boyfriend." Universally vivid and immersive, these tales are sure to leave horror fans unsettled. *(Sept.)*

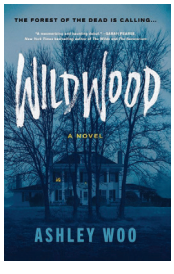
Mazywood

Tananarive Due. Saga, $32 (512p)
ISBN 978-1-6680-7514-2



NAACP IMAGE AWARD winner Due's staggering follow-up to *The Reformatory* offers a sophisticated blend of Black Hollywood history, generational trauma, family secrets, and the paranormal. In the 1920s, Mazelle Washington, a young, lonely Black girl from a family of vaudeville entertainers, wishes for a friend with whom she can put on "the best shows in the world." Soon afterward, she finds and adopts a preternaturally intelligent dog, Scout. As a double act with Scout, Mazelle becomes a child star, even as she contends with racial stereotypes, predatory agents, and the lingering fear that Scout might be something more sinister than just a smart dog. In the present, Mazelle's grandson Johnny Washington, a filmmaker, struggles to stay afloat. After his latest script gets turned down, Johnny agrees to a weekend getaway with his pregnant wife, Tasha, and their teen daughters, Imani and Sharise, in the mountain lodge Mazelle built. The joy of vacation is quickly spoiled by a supernatural presence intent on trapping the family inside the lodge. When Tasha is abducted by this unseen monster during an escape attempt and Johnny is badly injured, it's up to the resilient teenage sisters to ensure that everyone survives. Due crafts memorable and deeply human characters, good and bad alike, and provides a searing, incisive take on the politics of Black performance past and present. Add in nail-biting chase scenes and a blistering final twist, and this heart-pounding horror story further cements Due as one of the greats. *(Sept.)*





Wildwood

Ashley Woo. Harper Perennial, $18.99 trade paper (352p)
ISBN 978-0-06-343457-8

Woo debuts with an unsettling gothic mystery rooted in creepy New England atmospherics, intergenerational secrets, and one woman's psychological unraveling. Newly pregnant and recently unemployed, Elinor Leighton inherits Wildwood, her family's crumbling Vermont estate, and relocates there with her husband, Topher, hoping for a fresh start. The house unsettles them from the beginning: a disturbing 19th-century mural called *The Forest of the Dead* dominates one wall, nightmares arrive that feel more like memories, strange noises echo through the halls, and the surrounding woods seem to watch them. Elinor's growing obsession with uncovering the cause of the estrangement between her grandmother and great-uncle pulls her deeper into the estate's buried history, which is tangled up in the legacy of the Salem witch trials and the old violence of the land itself. Memorable side characters populate the edges of the narrative, including a mysterious neighbor the locals call "The Goat Lady," adding texture to the novel's strong sense of place. Woo does a remarkably effective job building an escalating sense of dread, and the vehemence behind Elinor's need to uncover her family's secrets is clear, even if the plotting loses some cohesion in the back half. Fans of the slow-burning domestic horror of Rachel Harrison and Paul Tremblay will want to seek this out. *(Sept.)*

Precious Children

Mary G. Thompson. Tachyon, $16.95 trade paper (224p)
ISBN 978-1-61696-465-8

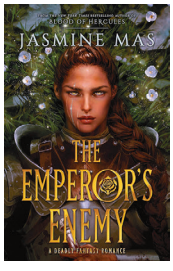
This twisted morality tale from Thompson (*One Level Down*) reads like an episode of *Black Mirror*. In a harsh near-future world where disease and accidents doom most youngsters

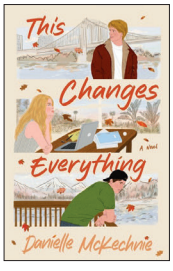
before adulthood, couples wanting children go to Generations, Inc., a high-tech fertility clinic with a snazzy cradle-to-grave-and-back guarantee: when a child dies, their memories are uploaded into a new body of the same age. After Harvard Business School sweethearts Dina and Preston Blake's son, Geoff, dies for a second time, they pick from "several rows of fourteen-year-old boys" preselected as the best fits to receive Geoff's backed-up memories and whom other families had been contracted to raise to that point. The Blakes choose Nathan Donovan, who bears a strong resemblance to Geoff and shares his artistic inclinations. But the procedure is imperfect, leaving Nathan's and Geoff's consciousnesses fighting for dominance over their body. Complicating matters, Geoff's younger sister Di suspects that her brother's previous surgery, conducted after Geoff died the first time, was unsuccessful and that the second Geoff is a con artist. Thompson uses minimal sci-fi worldbuilding to create this dark and occasionally comedic tale, focusing instead on the legal framework for these high-tech kidnappings and how their young victims fight for and against each other. It's a thrilling and suspenseful ride. *(Sept.)*

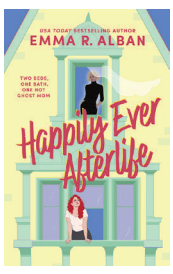
In the Woods They Wait

Carrie Lee South. Little, Brown, $29 (304p)
ISBN 978-0-3166-0898-5

South's atmospheric horror debut gets off to a strong start but doesn't quite stick the landing. In 2004, teenager Audrey Figg plays a malicious trick on her younger brother, Benny: while the siblings are hiking in Devil's Den State Park, she hides from him in a crevice, even as he wanders about calling her name. But when Audrey finally emerges, Benny is nowhere to be found, sparking a massive yet unsuccessful search by park rangers and volunteers in an area rumored to be the home of the monstrous Ozark Howler. Audrey is guilt-ridden over her prank and grows up to become a ranger herself. In 2019, the trauma of never finding Benny is revived after six-year-old Ivy Summers similarly disappears in Devil's Den when her mom momentarily takes her eyes off her. Audrey throws herself into the search for Ivy, hoping for some bit of redemption and persisting despite the passage of days without a trace. South excels at making the woods creepy and her characters nuanced, but the ultimate explanation of the disappearances feels a little goofy. Though the author is undeniably talented, the plot falters. *(Sept.)*







ROMANCE & EROTICA

The Emperor's Enemy

Jasmine Mas. Mira, $34 (448p)
ISBN 978-0-7783-0751-8

In characteristically bonkers fashion, bestseller Mas (*Blood of Hercules*) launches her Unsurvivable Love Duet series by plunging readers into a dangerous and chaotic magical world. At 23, Zora Ravenel, an orphan known as the Bear of the North for her skill and resilience as a hunter, joins the Crimson Army of the Commonwealth to fight the oppressive Draconis Empire. Her best friend was murdered by Emperor Aleksander the Sadistic's best assassin, Tarantula, who has since hunted Zora. Bent on revenge, she undertakes the Iron Ritual to become a Knight Mage. This mysterious ordeal has a small survival rate, but confers those who succeed with "a unique form of defensive magic" capable of dissipating the storm magic wielded by the Draconis. The ritual awakens an unexpected power in Zora, hinting at the secrets of her origins and making her an unpredictable asset in the war. To hone her newfound magic, she's paired with Tarantula, now the Crimson Army's prisoner, who teaches Zora how to be a weapon. Though they loathe each other, they soon discover a magnetic chemistry—even as Tarantula hides a secret that could change the course of the war. Mas's prose gleefully mashes together the colloquial and the archaic, while the haphazard plot—the narrative bounces around in time and comes complete with some outrageous reveals—pushes the enemies-to-lovers trope to its limits. Readers who like their romantasy on the unhinged side should check this out. *(Sept.)*

This Changes Everything

Danielle McKenchnie. Harper Perennial, $19.99 trade paper (352p)
ISBN 978-0-06-351939-8

★ Ellie McCain, the heroine of middle grade author McKechnie's heart-wrenching adult debut (after the Monsterton series), must choose between suitors and life priorities. An aspiring actor, Ellie has harbored a crush on Rory Campbell since their first cutely awkward meeting at age 12. Their will-they-won't-they friendship culminates in a night of passion at age 20, on the eve of Ellie leaving Vancouver for theater school in New York City—only for Rory to opt out of a long-distance relationship. Despite this heartbreak, Ellie quickly immerses herself in life in New York, befriending fellow acting students, among them Ben Winters, who becomes her roommate and eventual boyfriend. As Ben's acting career blossoms in the city and Ellie's stagnates, however, she feels conflicted about staying with him or moving to Los Angeles to try out a career in Hollywood. Fast-forward to 29-year-old Ellie, who unexpectedly reunites with Rory, now a pro golfer, in Las Vegas. McCain toggles between timelines, expertly building tension as Ellie weighs difficult life choices on her stirring quest for personal and professional happiness in an industry where misogyny is ever present. The result is difficult to put down. *(Sept.)*

Happily Ever Afterlife

Emma R. Alban. Alcove, $19.99 trade paper (336p)
ISBN 979-8-89242-784-5

Frannie Goldstein, assistant to a literary titan and heroine of this warm hug of a paranormal romance from Alban (*Like in Love with You*), wants nothing more than to be an author herself. Unfortunately, her boss, Henry, insists her writing isn't yet up to snuff. Dejected and lonely, Frannie wanders the halls of Manhattan's notoriously haunted Dakota Building, where Henry lives, not expecting to actually encounter a ghost. But Bridgette, a little girl who died in 1889, is very real and soon introduces Frannie to

her adopted spectral family: brother Michael (who died in 1923) and extremely attractive mother Elsa (deceased since 1964). Overwhelmed with the discovery, Frannie begins writing a book about the ghostly family, who are trapped inside the building. While Henry is away on a book tour, Frannie can't help but grow closer to Elsa (whom she thinks of as "Hot Ghost Mom") and her kids, who add both heart and comic relief to the tale. But when Henry comes upon her manuscript about the ghosts where she's left it lying around in his home, he thinks it's finally good enough to pass on to his agent, leaving Frannie to face big decisions about her professional and romantic futures. With addictive prose and whip-smart humor, Alban crafts a love story that's easy to fall for. It's a thrill to be haunted by these charming spirits. *(Sept.)*

So It Grows

Andie Burke. Griffin, $19 trade paper (336p)
ISBN 978-1-250-37254-3

Burke (*With Stars in Her Eyes*) shines in this sensitive enemies-to-lovers contemporary. After a horrific physical assault in Maryland, ER nurse Felicity Gallagher returns to her happy place, Kansas, where she has inherited her aunt Jeannie's plant shop, Grow Away. But there's just one problem: the stupidly hot chef, Nic Holm-Bozic, who runs the neighboring gourmet mac and cheese restaurant, C'est la Vache, hopes to expand his space. Initially, the quaint courtyard the businesses share doesn't feel big enough for both of them, but the pair find a common enemy in the pompous developer planning to build a four-story parking garage on the lot adjacent to their businesses, which would block the light and ruin the aesthetic. They set their differences aside and grow closer, with Felicity opening up about her trauma, but their budding relationship—and their lives—are imperilled when disaster strikes the town. Burke does an impressive job balancing light and dark, frankly and compassionately handling heavy topics including PTSD, suicidal thoughts, and addiction while also delivering cute banter, sassy internal monologue from Felicity, and swoon-worthy moments from Nic. This heartfelt tale is sure to captivate readers. *(Sept.)*

The Hocus Pocus Handbook

Ann Aguirre. Sourcebooks Casablanca, $18.99 trade paper (352p)
ISBN 978-1-4642-2411-9

Bestseller Aguirre (*The Only Purple House in Town*) delivers a heartfelt ode to found family in this delightfully twisty, trope-bending adventure. Thea is a human changeling in faerie land. Her negligent fae parents, mourning the loss of their "real" daughter, whom Thea replaced, pawned her off to be raised by Mudge, a wild hobgoblin with a heart of gold and a soft spot for her, as evidenced by the eponymous spell book he gives her to help her capitalize on her own special brand of magic. Though Thea is the embodiment of chaos, snubbing her nose at the conventions of the fae Winter Court, she has an uncanny ability to calm fraught situations. The evil rulers of the Winter Court attempt to capitalize on this power by arranging a marriage between Thea and Devan J. Fenelon of the rival Summer Court, hoping to gain the advantage in a simmering war. When her groom goes missing on their wedding night, Thea teams up with Kerboros, a famed fae hunter known as Winter's Hound, to track him down. As they work together alongside a small, vibrant band of helpers, the grumpy/sunshine dynamic between morose, scrupulous Kerboros and playful, mischievous Thea blossoms into endearing romance. Loaded with fun misadventures and colorful characters, this fantasy romance fires on all cylinders. *(Sept.)*

Love Felt Like This

Julie Olivia. Berkley, $20 trade paper (480p)
ISBN 979-8-217-18709-6

This cute, quirky, and slow-burning contemporary from Olivia (*If It Makes You Happy*) finds professional puppeteer Beverly desperate to save her Jim Hensonesque children's television show, *Birds on the Block*, after the nonprofit producing it loses funding.







To drum up interest, Beverly books the show's star puppet, Bernie Bird, to interview notoriously cranky rock star Griffin Harvey on live TV. The interview goes viral thanks to Griffin's unexpected chemistry with the character, but he can't stop thinking about Bernie Bird's pretty puppeteer. He's been exhausted and struggling with writer's block since assuming custody of his two-year-old daughter, Ava, but now he hopes to get his mojo back by writing children's songs for *Birds on the Block*. Beverly is wary of the collaboration, having been heartbroken by a musician before, but Griffin's involvement may be just what the show needs to get new producers interested. Soon, he and Ava are moving in with Beverly and her warmhearted but kooky extended family in small-town North Carolina, to work. Olivia makes good use of the grumpy/sunshine trope, and the forced proximity only enhances the magnetism between the leads. Add in an appealing supporting cast, including Beverly's raucous relatives and Griffin's hilarious bandmates, and all the joy of creative collaboration, and this is celebrity romance done right. *(Sept.)*

Isn't He Romantic?

Adib Khorram. Forever, $19.99 trade paper (384p)
ISBN 978-1-5387-3959-4

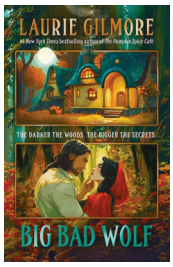
★ Khorram concludes his Love on the Vine series (after *It Had to Be Him*) with this stellar fake-dating romance. After hooking up with Chinese American cellist Ben Liu, 40, on a trip to Napa Valley, Iranian American Arya Nazeri, a 39-year-old event manager and self-proclaimed "slut," is shocked to bump into him at a client meeting back home in Kansas City, where Ben has just moved to join the symphony. When Ben's obnoxious ex, Justin, who walked in on the men's hookup, also moves to Missouri looking for a second chance, Ben implores Arya to pretend to date him to keep Justin at bay. In exchange, Ben will secure Arya a meeting with a potential client that could rescue Arya's company from the increasingly erratic choices of his business partner. Arya's reputation for

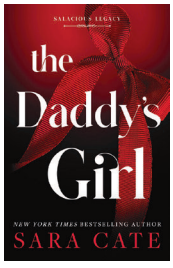
one-night stands and Justin's intrusion into more aspects of Ben's new life make the lie a tougher sell, but the genuine chemistry between the leads convinces. Khorram hits the expected beats of the pretend relationship trope in satisfying fashion, while Arya's business woes and the backstory behind his commitment phobia add texture. The slightly older protagonists, narrative emphasis on communicating one's desires, and touching found family surrounding both men also help keep things fresh. From truly sensual, exploratory sex scenes to expertly rendered emotional turmoil, this delivers on every level. *Agent: Molly O'Neill, Root Literary. (Sept.)*

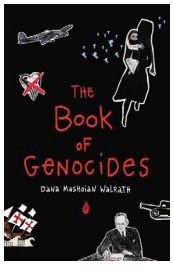
Big Bad Wolf

Laurie Gilmore. HarperCollins. $18.99 trade paper (384p)
ISBN 978-0-00-883178-3

This cozy fairy tale romance from bestseller Gilmore (the Dream Harbor series) is a reworking of the author's 2023 *A Curse of Blood and Wolves* (written as Melissa McTiernan). Twins Ruby and Lena Bellerose have lived in quaint small-town Maple Hollow, Maine, since they were orphaned at age eight. More than 20 years later, the locals still view the sisters as outsiders and they're the frequent subjects of town gossip, due partly to Ruby's air of ironic detachment and Lena's unexplained visions, which make people say she's crazy. One night, Rafe, a new-to-town woodworker, walks into the bar where Ruby waitresses and inexplicably captivates her. Ruby's never believed the local legends about monsters in the woods, until, days later, she witnesses Rafe shift from man to wolf to protect Ruby from a different werewolf. Rafe then explains his true nature, reveals that Ruby is his fated mate, and shares his suspicion that she and Lena may have psychic powers. Meanwhile, the sisters find themselves in the middle of a pack-territory war. Despite this conflict, Gilmore keeps the vibe light and the stakes relatively low, with less world-building than paranormal set dressing. Instead, a lot of time is spent on Rafe, formerly a lone wolf, adjusting to







companionship. A cliffhanger ending sets things up for Lena to find love of her own in book two. Gilmore fans will be pleased. *(Sept.)*

The Daddy's Girl

Sara Cate. Sourcebooks Casablanca, $19.99 trade paper (384p)
ISBN 978-1-4642-3448-4

The sizzling third installment of bestseller Cate's Salacious Legacy series (after *The Rule of Three*) delivers all the kinky, taboo sex fans expect. Amelia Kade, 25, has always idolized her godfather Matis Moreau, her father's best friend and the dashing manager of the elite Paris sex club her parents built and have now passed on to the next generation. Matis, 53, has spent his life as a libertine but has now decided it's time to settle down. He's also come to see Amelia in a whole new light. The pair share a powerful attraction that they futilely try to fight by setting each other up with alternate options. Inevitably, however, they give in to their chemistry, leading to some high-heat love scenes. But when Amelia's family discovers their involvement, it's possible their relationship won't survive the fallout. Cate brings a lot of erotic tension to this salacious age-gap relationship but also packs in enough emotion to keep readers invested outside of the sex scenes. Fans will eat this up. *(Sept.)*

A Series of Rooms

A.J. Barlowe. A.J. Barlowe, $26.99 (310p)
ISBN 979-8-3305-4967-2

Barlowe's promising debut kicks off with a meet-awkward between two young gay men in a bar bathroom. It's art student Liam's 21st birthday and he's attempting to clean a spilled drink off his shirt. Meanwhile, Leo is crying in one of the stalls and rebuffs Liam's concerned questions. The guys unexpectedly reconnect in a hotel room later that same night, when it's revealed that Liam's friends hired Leo, a sex worker whose real name is Jonah, as a surprise birthday present for Liam. Their night together is chaste, as Liam comforts a still upset Jonah. Afterward, Liam can't get Jonah out of his head and arranges a second meeting. Jonah eventually reveals that he ran away from his homophobic parents and was introduced to sex work by a terrible ex-boyfriend. Now he's living in a halfway house for recent parolees as an alternative to serving time for having killed a man, and working for a cruel pimp who is blackmailing him. Privileged, innocent Liam never judges Jonah's survival methods and the men share some tender moments, including Liam's first kiss. The drama ramps up when their relationship is abruptly severed by Jonah's handlers and a distraught Liam goes to the police. Meanwhile, Jonah learns a shocking truth that changes everything. The men's genuinely sweet connection balances out the grittier, more melodramatic, and occasionally contrived moments. Readers are sure to get invested in these two. *(Self-published)*

COMICS

The Book of Genocides

Dana Mashoian Walrath. Harvard Univ., $24.95 trade paper (432p)
ISBN 978-0-674-29905-4

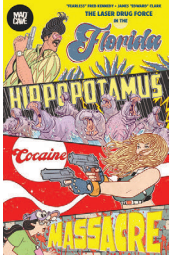
★ Anthropologist and artist Walrath (*Aliceheimer's*) examines the genocides of 10 different populations in this unflinching, artfully rendered history. She charts these atrocities chronologically, from the First Peoples of the Americas through the Armenian genocide during WWI to the current crimes against the Rohingyas in Myanmar. Walrath uses the definition of *genocide* created by Holocaust survivor Raphael Lemkin, who coined the term: "acts committed with the intent to destroy in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial, or religious group" and marked by a process of dehumanization of the targeted group. It's "always a land grab," Lemkin adds. Colonization is often a force in this process, she notes, destabilizing populations and seeding intergroup conflict, such as when Belgium issued tribal identity cards in Rwanda, contributing to the 1994 genocide of the Tutsis. Walrath invites readers to cut her pages to create a flip-book that mixes and matches human body parts with those of animals and insects, symbolizing how groups have dehumanized each other.

This act of cutting, she writes, is "not one of desecration" but "liberation." While Walrath never shies away from human behavior at its most barbaric, her soulful, naïve-style drawings and collage work deliver grace and humanity to the victims of these cruelties. This brave, heartrending study commands attention. *(Sept.)*

The Florida Hippopotamus Cocaine Massacre

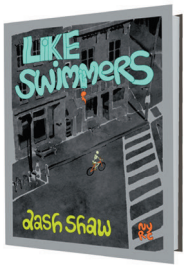
Fred Kennedy and James Edward Clark. Mad Cave, $17.99 trade paper (112p)
ISBN 978-1-5458-2738-3

This go-for-broke, guffaw-inducing satire and celebration of 1980s cop shows by Kennedy (*Dead Romans*) and Clark (*Pissant Apocalypse*) lives up to the giddiness of its title. In an early episode, one police officer uses a cartel henchman as his handlebar while gliding down a zip-line; as the mook's body is severed in two, an apple-cheeked bystander boy exclaims "What a positive male role model!" That gag exemplifies the broader spirit of the project and its send-up of violent Reagan-era pop culture. (The madness is narrated by America's first lady, an amalgam of Nancy Reagan, Barbara Bush, and the Crypt Keeper.) Set at a Florida water park whose hippos will eventually inhale bales of a drug lord owner's cocaine, the action is bloody, bonkers, and hallucinatory (see a hippos-go-*Top-Gun* fantasy sequence). Clark's throwback layouts and Becka Kinzie's pointedly gaudy colors are delightful, though momentum can sputter, especially as the first lady wordily recaps episodic events where not much has happened among a cast of caricatures. It's reminiscent of a *Mad* magazine movie parody, where panel-to-panel logic is sacrificed for one-liners. There are laughs to be had, but readers' patience may wear thin. *(July)*

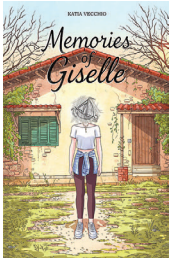


Like Swimmers

Dash Shaw. New York Review Comics, $32.95 (120p)
ISBN 979-8-89623-105-9



AN UNCANNY pandemic-era mystery unfolds among a community of artists, outcasts, and academics in Richmond, Va., in the mesmerizing, surreal latest from Ignatz winner Shaw (*Blurry*). Kenzie smells trouble when her younger brother Howie—a tattoo artist who she "sort of raised" and worries was never toughened up by the outside world—lands a job teaching cartooning at Virginia Commonwealth University's art museum. There's a Roy Lichtenstein exhibition on, and Howie's punk T-shirts and monster tattoos stick out at catered museum events, but catch the eye of his stylish colleague Isa—12 years his senior and married to a wealthy department chair. As Covid spreads, Kenzie grows wary of Isa's influence, and the clandestine errands Howie runs for her. The morning after Howie and Isa indulge in a hotel rendezvous, Kenzie finds him dead in his bedroom, and an autopsy "discovers a silver bullet." As Kenzie searches for answers, Shaw imbues the pandemic's inertia with the smoky musk of detective fiction—and something stranger. Fixated on the "tangle of lies" holding together Isa's marriage, Kenzie reconstructs "an imaginary movie" of Howie's final days from unreliable accounts and inscrutable clues. A Lichtenstein print hanging in Isa's home echoes through Shaw's fluid, pastel-hued comics art, his deliberately naive style flattened yet teeming with movement. Lichtenstein, as Howie notes, borrowed from a John Romita comic; the spellbound image hints at Shaw's interest in genre recontextualization. In this *Rashomon*-like whodunit, the truth grows hazier as the clues accumulate. Art comics fans will find that Shaw's kaleidoscopic story lingers long after its delirious close. *Agent: Duvall Osteen, UTA. (Aug.)*



Memories of Giselle

Katia Vecchio, trans. from the Italian by Edward Caio. Image, $14.99 trade paper (128p)
ISBN 978-1-5343-3075-7

The haunting first solo graphic novel by Vecchio (*Silver Vessels*) builds subtle tension beneath a sunny surface. In a series of vignettes, Giselle grows up in a typical suburban family with her parents, her brother Mirko, and her sickly grandmother. She has a happy school life, close friendships, and a first romance. But something is always subtly wrong: she overhears strange family arguments, has trouble dealing with the onset of periods and puberty, finds being touched by her boyfriend physically painful, and writes "I wish I could say goodbye to this world forever" in her journal. Placid but truncated memories of her grandmother, when she was healthier, are intercut in a sepia tone. Throughout, Giselle is troubled by an image of a sailboat that may be the key to her repressed trauma. Vecchio's cute, friendly art, drenched in vivid color, provides an ironic commentary on the subject matter, depicting the cheery facade covering ugly truths the characters don't want to face. Meticulously structured and delicately written, it's a quiet but forceful reckoning with the lingering effects of abuse. *(July)*

Our Reviewers

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Annasue McCleave Wilson
Benjamin Woodard
Michael Zimmerman

Kristin Kobes Du Mez explores a uniquely American strain of white Christian womanhood, defined by Precious Moments figurines and multi-level marketing schemes, in *Live Laugh Love*.
Page 86

In his affable memoir *Never Say Die*, Ke Huy Quan recalls his circuitous path in and out of the Hollywood limelight.
Page 90

A collage by Julia Mallory, as seen in Ashia S. Ajani's *Tending the Vines*, a passionate reflection on colonialism's legacy of environmental degradation (reviewed on page 91).



How to Design a Universe: The Science of Real and Virtual Worlds

Catherine Heymans. Bloomsbury Sigma, $28 (304p)
ISBN 978-1-3994-2144-7

Heymans, the Astronomer Royal for Scotland, debuts with a wide-ranging if somewhat surface-level exploration of the science of reality. After her young son asked, "Do you think we could be living inside a computer game?" Heymans was inspired to seek out what it would take to design a simulated universe. She guides readers through modern science, surveying quantum physics, cosmology, neurobiology, and computer science, grounding abstract concepts in analogies. For example, she compares quantum tunneling (the phenomenon in which subatomic particles pass through a barrier, enabling nuclear fusion reactions that power the sun) to two bikers who, struggling to traverse neighboring mountains to meet in the middle, opt to dig tunnels to each other. Ultimately, she finds that the computational power required to construct a universe-scale simulation would dwarf anything imaginable today, demanding energy equivalent to the mass of "one million times more galaxies than the total number of galaxies in our entire observable Universe." Her answer to the question turns philosophical: "Does it really matter whether this is all real, so long as I feel real?" Heymans has a gift for explaining complex ideas in accessible prose, but the book's central question often recedes behind scientific detours. It's a solid primer, but those hoping for a deeper discussion of simulated reality will want to look elsewhere. *(Nov.)*

Envy: Why Wanting What They Have Is the Key to Getting What You Want

Stacy S. Kim. Balance, $30 (240p)
ISBN 978-1-5387-7671-1

"Envy can be the poison that flows from toxic comparison or a potion that reveals purpose and connection," according to this intriguing debut guide. Life coach Kim argues that while envy is a socially taboo emotion, examining it honestly can shed light on one's goals and how to achieve them. For instance, readers can unpack the "intangible desire" in which their envy is rooted—coveting a friend's business class airplane seat could mean one envies their financial success—and then brainstorm steps for working toward the goal, or the values it represents. At the same time, readers should remember that jealousy can stem from unproductive personal comparisons that ignore differences in life circumstances. The author also makes a solid, relevant case for envy's supercharged role in today's image-obsessed society, though some of her broader cultural diagnoses fall outside the scope of the book, as when she frames South Korea's postwar development as having been "ignited" by envy of Japan. Still, Kim's blend of research, personal examples (she references childhood resentment of her younger brother and jealousy of other writers' success), and exercises makes a convincing argument for harnessing what's often considered a negative emotion as a tool for growth. Readers exhausted by comparison culture will find this a useful corrective. *(Oct.)*

The Widow van Gogh: Tragedy, Triumph, and the Woman who Made Vincent van Gogh a Legend: A Life of Johanna van Gogh-Bonger

Joan Martelli. Pegasus, $29.95 (336p)
ISBN 979-8-89710-198-6

Journalist Martelli (*The Law of Storms*) resurfaces in this detailed biography the crucial but little-remembered role Johanna van Gogh played in preserving her brother-in-law Vincent van Gogh's legacy. A middle-class Dutch woman without an artistic background, Johanna Bonger met Theo van Gogh in 1885 through a friend and got engaged to him in 1888. Soon she was enmeshed in "a tragic love and money triangle" with Theo and his brother Vincent, whom Theo supported emotionally and financially. Though she was often torn between resentment and sympathy for her brother-in-law during his life, Johanna was instrumental in ensuring Vincent's legacy; after the brothers died in 1890

and 1891, respectively, she inherited Vincent's letters, journals, and nearly 400 of his paintings. She focused on promoting his work, strategically loaning it to museums to exhibit and making a case for his genius to art dealers. Drawing from a wealth of research, the author utilizes rich novelistic detail to draw out the complicated emotional currents between Johanna and the brothers van Gogh, and makes clear that Vincent's legacy was far from guaranteed. The painter's fans will appreciate this fresh, energetic look at the woman who helped cement his place in art history. *(Oct.)*

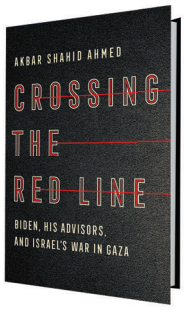
A History of the World in Twelve Beans

Joël Broekaert, trans. from the Dutch by Michele Hutchinson. Greystone, $22.95 (168p)
ISBN 978-1-77840-354-5

Dutch journalist Broekaert makes his English-language debut with a playful survey of how the "trusty, humble bean" has shaped history, from helping humans transition to an agricultural society in the Neolithic era to presenting a possible option for a sustainable meat substitute amid today's climate crisis. Along the way he zooms in on ancient Greece, where Pythagoras shunned beans, perhaps due to their gas-causing properties; ancient China, where nonviolent Buddhist teachings encouraged the development of vegetarian staples like tofu; and the Middle East, where hummus has served as a national dish for both Jews and Arabs, revealing thousands of years of shared culture. He's also frank about how beans have intersected with darker historical currents, exploring how modern chocolate production began on colonial plantations in South America, and using the black-eyed pea, which arrived in America with enslaved Africans, to trace 400 years of American racial history, including the Civil War, Jim Crow, and the Great Migration. Legume lovers will enjoy this informative ode to the unassuming food staple. *(Oct.)*

Crossing the Red Line: Biden, His Advisors, and Israel's War in Gaza

Akbar Shahid Ahmed. Norton, $31.99 (368p)
ISBN 978-1-324-11819-0

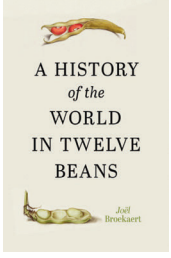


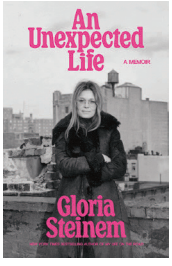
HUFFPOST CORRESPONDENT Ahmed debuts with a withering account of the Biden administration's response to the war in Gaza. The October 7 attacks caught the White House flatfooted, as the administration had deprioritized the Israel-Palestine conflict, Ahmed writes. From there, he recaps the administration's early inability to constrain Israel's outsize retaliation, Israel's continual violation of Biden's supposed "red lines," and Vice President Kamala Harris's 2024 election loss, in part brought about by the administration's disregard for growing antiwar sentiment. With input from copious anonymous insider sources, Ahmed portrays Biden as "deeply averse to wielding American leverage" against Israel and surrounded by a tight inner circle of pro-Israel hardliners, which left other staff "censoring themselves" and "doubting their instincts." The author depicts the administration's approach as both inhumane—with some officials overtly dismissive of Palestinian death tolls—and shockingly inept, such as in a callous response to reports of famine deaths that left one humanitarian aid expert "flabbergasted." The most damning evidence of the administration's intentions toward Gaza is the short-lived improvement in aid after the IDF killed seven World Central Kitchen workers in April 2024. The policy quickly reversed, Ahmed notes, writing that, even after Trump's reelection, the Biden administration "kept fueling preventable, likely illegal killing." It's a highly incriminating report. *(Sept.)*

An Unexpected Life: A Memoir

Gloria Steinem. Random House, $30 (256p)
ISBN 978-0-593-97817-7

"Revolutions that last don't happen from the top down; they grow from the bottom up like a tree," writes feminist pioneer Steinem (*My Life on the Road*) in this revealing memoir-in-essays. She highlights the key events that formed her political philosophy: a childhood rat bite exposed her to the dangers and prevalence of poverty while growing up in 1940s Ohio; seeing wedding rings appear on the fingers of her female classmates at Smith College shaped her complicated feelings about marriage in the early '50s. In measured, matter-of-fact prose, Steinem recalls how meeting luminaries including James Baldwin and bell hooks deepened her activism, how studying geology expanded her empathy, and how her years living in India in the late '50s informed her commitment to antiracist work as well as women's rights. Steinem's stirring reflections offer a road map for future generations to forge a better future by learning from the curiosity, empathy, and commitment to community that motivated the author and her contemporaries. ("Hope is a form of planning," she writes.) Both an engrossing self-portrait and a useful political handbook, this is essential reading. Photos. *Agent: Kim Schefler, Levine Plotkin. (Sept.)*





Profiles in Cowardice: A Study of Collaboration in the Trump Era

Jacob Weisberg. Penguin Press, $31 (288p)
ISBN 979-8-217-06259-1

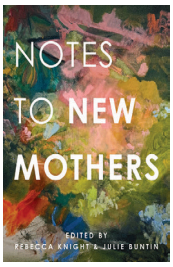
This acerbic survey from former *Slate* chairman and Pushkin Industries cofounder Weisberg (*Ronald Reagan*) profiles public figures who have kowtowed to the second Trump administration. While Trump's first term faced ample resistance, the author characterizes 2025 as "the Great Capitulation," with many who previously denounced the president's authoritarian overreach now accepting and even collaborating with "Trump's rule by decree." Attempting to explain why "cowardice so often prevailed," Weisberg turns JFK's *Profiles in Courage* on its head, cataloging instead "the weak and too willing." This rogues' gallery

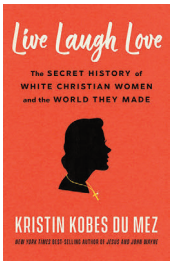
of complicity includes politicians, white-shoe lawyers, journalists, university presidents, and business leaders. Detailed profiles of each highlight formative experiences in their upbringing and burgeoning careers to pinpoint exactly why these individuals abandoned previously held convictions and their sense of civic responsibility. Most, unsurprisingly, placated Trump to further their own personal aims; among these are Mitch McConnell, who used the president to push through the appointments of conservative federal judges, and Jeff Bezos, who was driven by concern about being outmatched by his competitor Elon Musk. Some of Weisberg's analysis yields more intriguing insight, such as his thesis that Megyn Kelly's early struggle with bullying and her longtime employment at Fox News, which "turned bullying into a style," set the stage for her "transformation from victim to perpetrator." It makes for a cutting compendium of collusion. *(Sept.)*

Notes to New Mothers

Edited by Rebecca Knight and Julie Buntin. Norton, $29.99 (336p)
ISBN 978-1-324-11705-6

In these rich reflections compiled by novelists Knight (*Hex*) and Buntin (*Famous Men*), 65 writers and artists share the victories and challenges they experienced after giving birth. Organized into chapters spanning the practical ("Laboring," "Feeding") and the reflective ("What Have You Gotten Wrong?"), the dispatches, which range from single sentences to paragraphs-long statements, unfold like an ongoing conversation, with contributors echoing, challenging, and expanding on each other's experiences. In a section titled "A List of Things No One Tells You," Barrie Miskin advises new moms to stay away from "mommy message boards," while Chiara Barzini concisely states: "There is no going back." Throughout, the collection showcases a diversity of maternal experiences without prioritizing a singular narrative: Shruti Swamy describes meeting her newborn not with the "crazy hormonal onrush" she expected but with "a kind of bewildered curiosity," while Arianne Zwartjes recalls the "euphoric bliss" of her baby's first month. Elsewhere, expectations give way to reality as Brittany Rogers and Lang Fisher unexpectedly discover that co-sleeping works well for them and their kids, and Hillary Brenhouse finds her carefully laid plans for breastfeeding and daycare upended after her child's arrival. Illustrations by artists Liana Finck and Kristen Radtke deepen the anthology's emotional resonance. Honest and nuanced, it's a reassuring companion for anyone navigating postpartum. *(Sept.)*







Live Laugh Love: The Secret History of White Christian Women and the World They Made

Kristin Kobes Du Mez. Liveright, $31.99 (352p)
ISBN 978-1-324-09097-7

This sprawling account from historian Kobes Du Mez (*Jesus and John Wayne*) explores how white women shaped and were shaped by conservative American Christianity. The book begins in the 19th century with Hannah Whitehall Smith, who published a popular guide to happiness that asserted "Christians must embrace a positive attitude" no matter their circumstances. Smith's argument dovetailed with the emergent New Thought movement in which "positive thinking... produced positive results" and which went on to influence other movements like Christian Science and the Prosperity Gospel. Via Smith and other Christian women writers focused on "positivity," an idealized form of Christian womanhood—rooted in domesticity, consumerism, and subservience—was woven into the heady mix of spirituality and capitalism that defined New Thought–inflected Christianity. Kobes Du Mez surveys an impressive range of such writers, who strictly policed their fellow women's femininity (one recommended embodying "angelic innocence" by wearing "anything fluffy"). She also examines white Christian women's roles as participants in the multilevel marketing industry; as consumers of "sentimentality" via romance novels and Precious Moments figurines; and as both perpetrators and victims of a culture of silence that has allowed sexual abuse to run rampant. Most strikingly, she details the mental anguish white Christian women experience when they feel unable to meet idealized feminine standards. The result is an astute dissection of a repressive strain of American womanhood. *(Sept.)*

The Girl Who Would Be Marilyn Monroe: An Intimate Portrait of the Young Norma Jeane

Tony Castro. Bloomsbury Academic, $32 (248p)
ISBN 979-8-216-44864-8

Journalist Castro (*Mantle*) contends in this cinematic overview of the early life of model and actor Marilyn Monroe that "she embodies contradictions that America has never resolved—innocence and desire, glamour and ruin, adoration and abandonment." Born Norma Jeane Mortenson in Los Angeles in June 1926 to a single mom who struggled with paranoid schizophrenia, Monroe was raised in foster homes and an orphanage. She got married at age 16 to 21-year-old James Dougherty, who worked at a Lockheed plant. They divorced four years later and Monroe went on to pursue a career in Hollywood. Throughout, Castro draws on conversations with people who knew Monroe, including actor Susan Strasberg and journalist James Bacon, who met Monroe when she was 22, wrote the first feature article about her, and then admitted in 2005 that he and the starlet had a romantic affair. Castro's intimate portrait of the young Monroe is bolstered by vivid details of the colorful figures who populated her early life ("The Bolenders were good people. Even their sternness had a careful skin on it, like pudding that refuses to spill"). Fans will be rapt. *(Sept.)*

Pay Attention: How the Algorithms and Media Wars Are Suppressing Truth and Rewiring Your Brain

David Pakman. Harper, $30 (288p)
ISBN 978-0-06-356980-5

Political commentator and media personality Pakman (*The Echo Machine*) explores the methods of contemporary attention merchants in this drawn out but convincing insider's view. Relying on his own experience creating content, Pakman aims to make visible an "invisible... system of attention extraction" and demonstrate how it buries the truth in "noise." From the emergence of the practice of A/B testing of video titles and thumbnails, to the advent of individualized feeds, to the rise of the algorithmic selection for content with heightened emotion, Pakman shows how creators and platforms have adapted to keep people watching and reacting. He sheds intriguing light on the tenuous reality of being a creator, where the illusion of freedom is undercut by the need to constantly evolve to match the algorithm. His points, especially about constantly tweaking one's content to match trends, can feel repetitive, and his explanation of the value platforms get from constant attention (it creates predictions that help sell ads) feels like it only scratches the surface of the economic undercurrents in motion. Plus, his suggestion that readers be mindful of screen time doesn't mesh with his calls for the left to lean into emotionally compelling content to catch up with the right, who were primed for online successes by decades of talk radio. Still, it's a revealing look at how platforms work hard to trap users in an endless scroll. *(Sept.)*

Climate Crossroads: Action and Reckoning in the American South

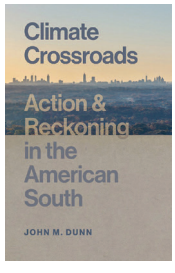
John M. Dunn. Univ. Press of Florida, $29.95 trade paper (230p)
ISBN 978-0-8130-8169-4

Journalist Dunn (*Drying Up*) writes in this ambitious if uneven report that "numerous scientific assessments indicate the American South may be the nation's region most vulnerable to climate change and that the hardest hits are yet to come." In the South, he explains, rising seas, intensifying storms, and extreme heat intersect with entrenched poverty, racial inequality, and political divisions. Traditional conservation organizations, with leadership typically dominated by affluent white voices, have often marginalized the concerns of low-income and minority communities. But his portraits of local and grassroots initiatives provide optimism and demonstrate how environmental justice and social justice are inseparable. In Norfolk, Va., for example, officials partnered with Dutch experts to develop a resilience strategy that integrates flood protection with housing and community development, and in rural Lowndes County, Ala., civil rights activist Catherine Coleman Flowers campaigned to get county and state officials to improve failing septic tanks that leaked raw sewage into the community, a problem that would only worsen amid climate change. Though Dunn's survey offers valuable snapshots of innovative responses to climate threats and underscores the region's unique vulnerabilities, the broad scope is a weakness. Dunn frequently detours beyond the South, and the rapid succession of case studies leaves many important issues underdeveloped. Readers will come away wanting more. *(Sept.)*

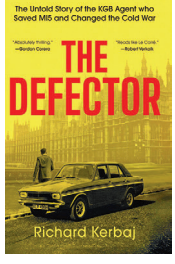
Jungle Red! The Making of MGM's 'The Women'

Illeana Douglas. Lyons, $34.95 (304p)
ISBN 978-1-4930-9394-6

★ In this fun and smart account, actor and film historian Douglas (*Connecticut in the Movies*) chronicles the making of *The Women*, a 1939 film featuring a cast of 135 women—including Joan Crawford, Rosalind Russell, and Norma Shearer—and no men. Douglas traces the long, circuitous development process for the film, which was based on Clare Boothe Luce's satirical 1936 play about Manhattan socialites. F. Scott Fitzgerald worked on an early version of the screenplay before Anita Loos took over, imbuing it with what she wryly described as "the ordinary bitchiness of women." After being fired from *Gone with the Wind* over creative clashes, George Cukor was hired to direct *The Women*, in part because it was considered an asset to have a gay man directing an all-female cast. Elsewhere, Douglas describes how MGM's chief hairdresser Sydney Guilaroff became the first hairstylist to receive an on-screen credit and clothing designer Adrian crafted looks during "an era when women's wardrobes in movies expressed their state of mind." Douglas delivers keen insights into the cast and crew's contributions and reveals the complexities inherent to getting a movie made, from stars buying the favor of the crew by having ice cream delivered to set to the perceived politics of a costume choice and camera setup. Film buffs will flock to this. *(Sept.)*







The Defector: The Untold Story of the KGB Agent Who Saved MI5 and Changed the Cold War

Richard Kerbaj. Pegasus, $29.95 (352p)
ISBN 979-8-89710-171-9

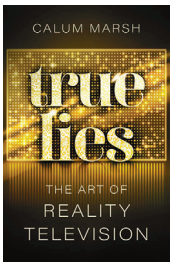
The hall of mirrors around defecting spies—are they sincere defectors with real intelligence, or double agents spreading lies?—is explored in this labyrinthine history. Journalist Kerbaj (*The Secret History of the Five Eyes*) recaps the career of Oleg Lyalin, a Soviet KGB spy in London who defected to MI5 in 1971 and divulged that his assignment had been to make plans to sabotage British infrastructure and assassinate British politicians in the event of war. Kerbaj somewhat overstates the episode's importance as a "defining chapter of the Cold War": Lyalin and his ring of inept assets accomplished little, and his defection mainly provided a pretext to expel 105 other KGB agents working under diplomatic cover. (Meanwhile, Fleet Street giddily reported on Lyalin's Bond-like womanizing.) The more fascinating side story here is Kerbaj's account of the toxic bromance between James Jesus Angleton, the CIA's paranoid chief of counterintelligence, and Anatoly Golitsyn, a KGB agent who defected in 1961. Golitsyn

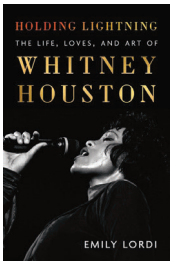
convinced Angleton that all KGB defectors after him were fakes—participants in a Soviet disinformation operation—and promoted a decade-long witch hunt for moles that targeted dozens of British and American agents. (Kerbaj tantalizingly suggests that it was Golitsyn himself who was the fake defector.) Kerbaj's narrative is baggy and meandering, but shrewdly probes at the feverish suspicions that coil around intelligence agencies. It's a richly atmospheric portrait of Cold War espionage. *(Sept.)*

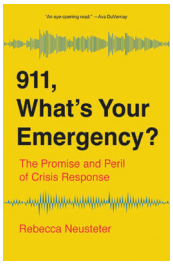
True Lies: The Art of Reality Television

Calum Marsh. ECW, $22.95 trade paper (200p)
ISBN 978-1-77041-834-9

Journalist Marsh (*The Glass Box*) delivers a sharp exploration of the staying power of reality TV. Two decades ago, pundits insisted the genre was a passing fad, but now streaming companies are investing huge sums in reality empires, making it clear the shows aren't going anywhere, Marsh says. Drawing on interviews with stars, producers, and hosts, he finds those in front and behind the camera are "more interested in capturing something that rings true about the world than in making up something that's more amusing or sensational but doesn't." That takes work—and a bit of artifice: *Hell's Kitchen* host Gordon Ramsay, for example, reveals that a single 42-minute episode is derived from 232 hours of footage compiled by 68 cameras. Antoni Porowski, the food and wine expert on the makeover show *Queer Eye*, is often criticized for lacking culinary training, but, as he tells Marsh, that's why he's a good fit for the role: he's a relatable home cook who can teach the fundamentals to those who don't know much about food. Contestants on competition shows like *Big Brother* often blame producers for their unsavory depictions, but as Marsh astutely observes, "Sometimes TV can capture the truth about a person that they themselves would never want to recognize." Fans will relish the behind-the-scenes details and insightful takes on offer here. *(Sept.)*







Starting Over with John and Yoko: The Photographs

Roger Farrington and Kenneth Womack. Rutgers Univ., $19.95 trade paper (164p)
ISBN 978-1-9788-4479-7

Photographer Farrington and music historian Womack (*Living the Beatles Legend*) unpack in meticulous detail the two hours Farrington spent shooting PR photos for John Lennon and Yoko Ono's 1980 album *Double Fantasy*. Eager to avoid leaks, Ono looked beyond New York to a Boston-based firm that employed Farrington, then a little-known 27-year-old photographer who'd cut his teeth taking pictures of weddings. The Lennon shoot was, to Farrington, "a once-in-a-lifetime incredible photo assignment," though his boss was sketchy on the details, asking him "to meet the Lennons at their Dakota apartment in New York City—sometime in the next couple of weeks... on less than twenty-four hours'" notice. Farrington describes the harried day of the shoot, as he worked to establish "that much-vaunted conspiracy between subject and photographer" and capture "the shot" before returning to Boston to develop the images. The narrative is interspersed with some of Farrington's most striking photos—several of Lennon and Ono holding hands while entering the studio; a playful, joyous Lennon with his arms raised, greeting another musician across the studio floor. Photography buffs will appreciate Farrington's detailed discussions of choosing film, exposures, and framing, along with the complexities of dealing with photo requests from major news outlets after Lennon died just four months later. This is one to linger over. *(Sept.)*

Holding Lightning: The Life, Loves, and Art of Whitney Houston

Emily Lordi. Mariner, $32 (336p)
ISBN 978-0-06328-031-1

★ Though "widely considered to be one of the greatest singers of the twentieth century," Whitney Houston is too often framed as a tragic figure, with audiences "asking what happened to her, not what she did," according to this excellent biography. Vanderbilt English professor Lordi (*The Meaning of Soul*) looks beyond this framework, depicting her subject as a "visionary musical interpreter" who applied an "expressive magic to received musical texts" to make them uniquely hers. Houston brought her "signature power and range" to 1990s R&B-inflected *I'm Your Baby Tonight*, for example, resulting in "songs that demanded new forms of rhythmic and melodic agility," and wove gospel stylings into her rendition of the national anthem at the 1991 Super Bowl, expressing "an inclusive freedom that was especially poignant for Black artists and listeners." (Such examples, the author notes, dispel the long-held myth of Houston as a naturally talented but unoriginal singer whose image and sound were shaped by Arista executive Clive Davis.) Along the way, Lordi also spotlights Houston's support for other Black female artists, and frankly discusses Houston's thornier experiences with addiction and her chaotic marriage to singer Bobby Brown, extending her the grace frequently withheld by the tabloids by highlighting the complicated tides of trauma, passion, abuse, power, and love that characterized the partnership. The result is a humanizing and wonderfully nuanced reexamination of a misunderstood musical icon. *(Sept.)*

911, What's Your Emergency?: The Promise and Peril of Crisis Response

Rebecca Neusteter. New Press, $29.99 (256p)
ISBN 978-1-62097-910-5

"Our emergency response system holds a tension between lifesaving promise and life-threatening peril," warns criminal justice and public safety scholar Neusteter in her even-handed debut examination of the modern 911 system's shortcomings. "Calling 911 has become unnecessarily and dangerously conflated with calling the police," she notes, arguing for a

crisis response system involving triage between medical, fire, social, and mental health services. "Mismatched dispatch," she explains, puts people of color and people with mental disabilities at increased risk of police overresponse, as in the high-profile cases of George Floyd and Tamir Rice. Neusteter also points to how 911 was born out of a desire for speedy police reactions to civil rights protests, emphasizing that "people with marginalized identities have good reason" to distrust emergency services. Turning to the modern iteration of 911, she notes that, though it is a national hotline, its "decentralized and opaque" structure limits data collection, creates uneven access to resources, and leads to inconsistencies. Furthermore, the 911 workforce is "plague[d]" by "understaffing and imbalances in... power," resulting in dissatisfaction for call takers, dispatchers, and police alike. Finding that virtually all parties involved agree on the need for reform, Neusteter presents recommendations made by the University of Chicago Health Lab under her leadership, which include removing oversight of 911 from police agencies. This is a robust, thoroughly supported argument for reform. *(Sept.)*

Huna: A Memoir of Revolution, Prison and Becoming

Abdelrahman ElGendy. Random House, $30 (368p)
ISBN 979-8-217-15360-2

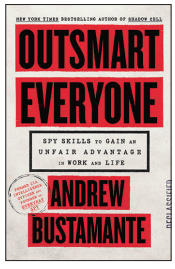
A teenager gets trapped in the gulags of Egypt in this Kafkaesque debut account from *Markaz Review* editor ElGendy. In 2013, the author, then 17, was arrested by Egyptian police for filming a demonstration against the country's military regime; his father, who had begged him to avoid the protest, joined him there and was also arrested. Both were sentenced to 15 years in prison on trumped-up terrorism charges and endured inedible food, obscene overcrowding, and arbitrary violence. ElGendy managed to smuggle out writings on prison life that went viral on social media, but he was told his refusal to inform on other prisoners would prevent him from getting a pardon. (He was released in 2020 after being retried; his father got out in 2016.) ElGendy paints a colorful portrait of a complex prison society where solidarity—inmates shared food, taught classes, and staged musicals and poetry slams—bumps up against tensions between warring ideological groups. Along the way, he renders his ordeal in unflinching yet hopeful prose that charts the struggle of mind and spirit against a dehumanizing reality ("When I failed to dodge the whips and the jailers' curses, I dreamed of the ways the pages, one day, would do me justice"). It adds up to a stirring reflection on survival and resistance. *Agent: Jin Auh, Wylie Agency. (Sept.)*

Outsmart Everyone: Spy Skills to Gain an Unfair Advantage in Work and Life

Andrew Bustamante. Little, Brown Spark, $30 (272p)
ISBN 978-0-316-57217-0

Bustamante (*Shadow Cell*), a former CIA intelligence officer, delivers an actionable guide to using spy techniques to navigate business negotiations and interpersonal dynamics. In a world overloaded with information, the most powerful competitive advantage, he argues, is the ability to filter, process, and apply it to serve one's interests. He organizes the book around skills central to intelligence operations, revealing how to detect deception by reading behavioral cues, build networks using asset-recruitment methods, and ask the right questions to steer conversations toward one's goals. Though it may sound counterintuitive, the most important lesson of espionage, he says, is to know and be oneself; spying requires people to operate under immense stress, so it's imperative to ensure one's physical and psychological needs are met. This advice is especially important in a culture that encourages superficiality, he explains, noting self-awareness helps people create meaningful connections and make decisions that align with what genuinely matters to them. Throughout, Bustamante pushes back against conventional self-help wisdom, as when he encourages readers to spend their energy exploiting existing strengths rather than shoring up weaknesses. The author's professional background lends authenticity, though the sensitive nature of CIA work limits how specific his stories from the field can get. Still, those seeking a strategic approach to emotional intelligence and decision-making will find plenty to chew on. *(Sept.)*







Ash and Honor: The Untold 368 Minutes of 9/11

Jeffrey Robinson. St. Martin's, $28 (272p)
ISBN 978-1-250-46519-1

The confusion that dominated American airspace in the hours after the 9/11 attacks is the focus of this somewhat plodding revisitation of the disaster from journalist Robinson (*Grace of Monaco*). Much of the book's tension comes from the fear that potentially hijacked planes were still in the air. Robinson's pursuit of this story resulted from "a sound file from a classified phone call" that took place between Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld in the Pentagon and President Bush on board AirForce One, in which Rumsfeld requested authorization to shoot down an allegedly off-course plane out of Madrid; Robinson later discovered that the plane had never taken off. Such misinformation was rampant, and Robinson began to wonder: "What else didn't take place that day? And what did take place that the public never knew about?" In uncovering and describing those situations, Robinson profiles the many organizations and agencies tasked with making fast decisions that day, including the FAA, which "sanitized the air of nearly 4,500 planes in around one hundred minutes"; Nebraska's Offutt Air Force Base, where AirForce One was rerouted due to its "nuclear-proof underground bunker"; and the small community of Gander, Newfoundland, which dealt with a deluge of emergency landed planes. Well researched but a bit workmanlike, this a valuable

record of bureaucracies and chains of command operating under extreme pressure. *(Sept.)*

How Our Climate Works: A Brief Guide in Seven Lessons

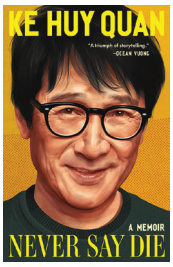
Paul I. Palmer. Princeton Univ., $27.95 (296p)
ISBN 978-0-691-18125-7

Palmer (*The Atmosphere*), a geosciences professor at the University of Edinburgh, delivers a disappointing primer on climate science aimed at helping lay readers better understand climate change. Climate, he explains, is the long-term pattern of weather in a region. Influenced by shifting temperatures, air masses, ocean currents, and molecular processes, it manifests in complex cycles, from seasons to ice ages, that affect all life on Earth. Climate change refers to "shifts in the expected climate state over the longer term." Scientists, Palmer explains, study past periods of global warming to understand the present, but the current speed at which global temperatures are rising, as a result of human-driven carbon emissions, is unprecedented. While the author remains "confident we can engineer and 'science' our way out of many aspects of climate," he acknowledges global warming may result in irreversible changes to the planet and the only "effective lever to pull" right now is reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Despite his aim for accessibility, Palmer's explanations of scientific processes are often bogged down by technical terms and mathematical formulae. Though the material is organized into chapters focusing on temperature, energy, air, and water, there is much overlap, with numerous cross-references. This gets low marks. *(Sept.)*

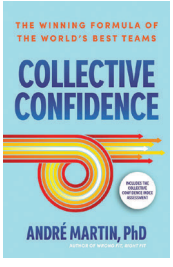
Never Say Die: A Memoir

Ke Huy Quan. Grand Central, $32.99 (208p)
ISBN 978-1-5387-7699-5

The appealing debut from Oscar winner Quan charts his path from a refugee camp to the silver screen. In 1983, when Quan was 12, he accompanied his younger brother to an audition at their school in L.A.'s Chinatown, only for the casting director to ask Quan to read lines as well. Weeks later—and five years after escaping North Vietnam with his family—Quan was cast as Short Round in *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom*. Quan describes both his pride in contributing to his family's American Dream and his wavering confidence when calls for new projects stopped coming in the mid-1990s. After decades out of the spotlight studying filmmaking and working as a choreographer, Quan decided to return to acting as he approached his 49th birthday. Soon after, his agent presented Quan with an opportunity to audition for *Everything Everywhere All at Once,* and he went on to win an Oscar for his role in the film ("For years, scripts had felt like something I was being asked to fit into. This one felt like something I could step inside"). Whether he's recalling the monotony of life in the Hong Kong refugee camp he lived in after fleeing Vietnam or reminiscing about Harrison Ford teaching him to swim, Quan's affable tone draws the reader in. It's a winning self-portrait. *Agent: Erin Malone, WME. (Sept.)*







Stone Age Astronaut: The Astonishing Adventures of America's Forgotten Flier

Liam Callanan. Wisconsin Historical Society, $24.95 trade paper (208p)
ISBN 978-1-9766-0091-3

Novelist Callanan (*All Saints*) charmingly resurrects the story of an all-but-forgotten American aeronautics pioneer. A contemporary of Earhart and Lindbergh, Lester Maitland (1899–1990) lived a life that was, in Callanan's telling, in some ways more extraordinary, as he witnessed many major moments in aviation history while never rising to other early aviators' levels of fame. Maitland's fascination with flight was sparked when he saw Lincoln Beachey, the first American to make a loop-de-loop, fly at the 1914 Wisconsin State Fair. During WWI, Maitland joined the army's Air Service and became one of its first test pilots—and, eventually, the first American to fly faster than 200 mph. In 1927, Maitland achieved his greatest feat: piloting the first nonstop flight from the continental U.S. to Hawaii, a mere five weeks after Lindbergh made his solo flight across the Atlantic. Maitland remained in the Air Force, and was stationed in the Philippines in December 1941, where he witnessed the catastrophic Japanese bombing of the Far East Air Force (a less-remembered sneak attack the day after Pearl Harbor), and later served as the U.S.'s oldest bomber pilot in Europe. Postwar, he worked in civil defense, and underwent a surprise religious conversion after witnessing an atomic bomb blast—ultimately becoming an Episcopalian priest because he "wanted to help change humanity." Readers will find this a buoyant account of a life in the skies. *(Sept.)*

Collective Confidence: The Winning Formula of the World's Best Teams

André Martin. IT Revolution, $26 trade paper (240p)
ISBN 978-1-966280-08-8

This enlightening guide from organizational psychologist Martin (*Wrong Fit, Right Fit*) explains how embracing "collective confidence," or a shared belief in a group's abilities, can help teams achieve extraordinary results. Drawing on organizational behavior research and his own work with teams across diverse industries, he reveals that groups don't have to believe they're invincible to succeed; they just have to believe they can figure out a problem together. In education, for example, schools with teachers who have faith in their collective capability outperform schools where teachers lack such confidence. Similarly, communities in which neighbors trust each other experience lower rates of violent crime. Organizations can increase their collective confidence, he says, by building belief in every member of the team, putting everyone's unique skills to work, creating low-stakes ways to win together, drawing inspiration from other successful teams, learning as a team, and putting

everyone in charge of something. Throughout, Martin demonstrates via convincing case studies how these principles work, explaining, for example, how an eight-person beverage company built group confidence by closely observing other successful startups, eventually pioneering the commercial coconut water category. The result is a practical road map for business leaders hoping to foster success. *(Sept.)*

Songs My Mother Taught Me: Why the Artist Must Take Sides

Saul Williams. Haymarket, $17.95 trade paper (200p)
ISBN 979-8-88890-584-5

★ Poet, musician, and actor Williams (*Martyr Loser King*) makes the case that artists must engage with politics in this perceptive mix of memoir and polemic. An outspoken critic of the "US-backed Israeli genocide against the Palestinian people," he laments that "far too many" poets and artists "seemed to either lack the political education or the heart" to engage in activism. Williams traces the development of his political perspective, beginning with his decision to become an actor in the third grade. Encouraged by his mother, he read about actor and activist Paul Robeson, whose protests against racial injustice in the 1930s and '40s taught Williams to "see the artist as either an agent of social change or as a producer of work that legitimizes the ruling class." In 1988, Williams spent time in Brazil as a high school exchange student, where he observed American music and entertainment being used to propagandize Brazilians into thinking the U.S. was a place of freedom and wealth. He began to believe that art, when used to invoke trust in Western ideals, could lull viewers "into the throes of indoctrination." Throughout, Williams passionately exhorts fellow poets to make "songs that crumble empires; films that teach, remind, and inspire; poems that would make a despot revoke your citizenship." This packs a forceful punch. *(Sept.)*

Ungrateful Immigrant Daughter: A Memoir from the Child of a Mail-Order Bride

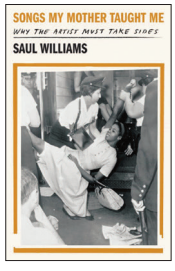
Katya Suvorova. Alcove, $19.99 trade paper (352p)
ISBN 979-8-89242-685-5

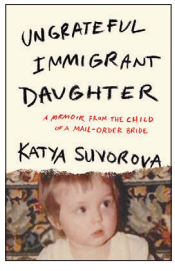
Suvorova debuts with a harrowing account of her childhood as a Russian immigrant in Texas. The author's mentally unstable mother, Yuliya, fled Russia as a mail-order bride in search of American citizenship in the late 1990s and fell into a series of abusive relationships. Suvorova, who was three years old when she left Russia with her mother, survived physical abuse and sexual molestation from her stepfathers, in addition to her mother's neglect, insults, and alcoholism. The experiences scarred Suvorova (she recalls telling a therapist, "You are only worthwhile if someone loves you back"), but a supportive teacher helped build her confidence by encouraging her to participate in high school Olympiad competitions. Much of the account involves Suvorova recalling and recontextualizing her relationship with her mother after discovering, at 17, that Yuliya was a mail-order bride. Further redemption comes when Suvorova tracks down her Russian father, Ivan, after discovering him on Facebook in the early days of the Covid-19 pandemic, and he believes her stories of abuse and neglect. In large part, though, the proceedings are unremittingly bleak. It's a brave testimony that some readers will find difficult to take in. *Agent: Natalie Lakosil, Looking Glass Literary. (Sept.)*

Jérôme Lindon

Jean Echenoz, trans. from the French by Mark Polizzotti. Elsewhere Editions, $16 trade paper (64p)
ISBN 978-1-962770-69-9

This funny and quietly tender reflection from novelist Echenoz (*Command Performance*) recounts his friendship with his editor Jérôme Lindon, who headed the French publishing house Les Éditions de Minuit from 1948 until his death in 2001 and published the work of Samuel Beckett, Marguerite Duras, and Alain Robbe-Grillet, among others. Echenoz and Lindon first met in 1979 after 31-year-old Echenoz dropped off the manuscript for his first novel at Lindon's office, expecting nothing more than a rejection letter. Instead, Lindon invited him to a meeting and offered him a contract. Terrified of the tall, austere Lindon and his "piercing gaze," Echenoz quickly signed the contract, sparking a two-decade-long working relationship. Echenoz paints himself as a gullible outsider, unaware, for instance, that "when an author has lunch with his publisher, it's always the publisher who pays," while Lindon at first appears cold and pessimistic, nitpicking novel titles and offering little in the way of encouragement. (Echenoz recalls the one time he ventured to talk to Lindon about a problem he was having with a novel and was told he "indeed had no chance of pulling it off.") However, through depictions of their frequent phone calls and lunches, Echenoz offers glimpses of the humanity beneath Lindon's gruff exterior, revealing him to be a passionate, reliable editor. The result is a charming portrayal of the often complicated writer-editor relationship. *(Sept.)*





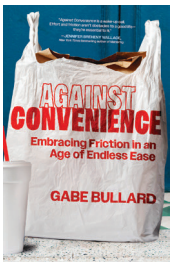


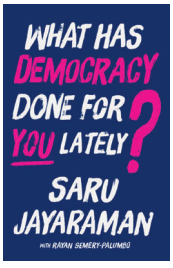
Tending the Vines: Black Abundance in Eight Plants

Ashia S. Ajani. Timber, $30 (272p)
ISBN 978-1-64326-476-9

In this passionate critique of Western colonization, poet Ajani (*Heirloom*) combines Black ecological history with accounts of nonnative plants in the U.S., such as wild mustard, castor bean, and kudzu, framing the flora's ability to "unabashedly" persist in foreign, unwelcoming environments as a form of "radical survival." Degraded contemporary landscapes, Ajani writes, are the result of white hubris, a drive to dominate nature through monocultures of cash crops that ultimately eroded soil and diminished biodiversity. In contrast, enslaved people combined generational knowledge from

African cultural heritages and Native American cultivation techniques, prioritizing stewardship and respect for the natural world. Such environmental consciousness was a matter of survival; deprived of reliable sources of food and medicine, Black people turned to gardens, forests, and wild plants. Ajani explains, for example, that rabbit tobacco was once stuffed into pillowcases to encourage sweet dreams, and that mullein, which has anti-inflammatory properties, was used to treat various ailments. Elsewhere, Ajani discusses environmental racism, such as how Black people today are most likely to live in proximity to landfills and polluting factories and to be deprived of green space. Most intriguing is the author's use of non-native plants as metaphor. Often castigated as invasive weeds, such plants proved resistant and resilient in the face of adversity, determinedly thriving in damaged environments and on marginal land, much like forcibly transplanted enslaved Africans. This is illuminating. *(Sept.)*







Against Convenience: Embracing Friction in an Age of Endless Ease

Gabe Bullard. Hanover Square, $32 (320p)
ISBN 978-1-335-00069-9

Journalist Bullard debuts with a convincing indictment of a modern "convenience industry" that deadens culture in a misguided attempt to save time and money. He argues that the explosion of "frictionless" technologies over the last decade has hampered human flourishing under the guise of making life easier. The damage is everywhere, he contends: the integration of Wi-Fi networks into appliances causes homes to malfunction; "attention economies" lessen patience; online ordering degrades once thriving "third places" like cafés; and news feeds become isolating bastions of negativity and spam. Each chapter offers a layered, persuasive takedown of a different cultural sector, balancing individual portraits of technological harm (owners of a Kentucky restaurant that joined Seamless discuss the difficulties of maintaining food quality in deliveries) with macro-scale assessments. Bullard hedges against his more intense critiques by documenting his own flawed interactions with the technologies he criticizes, and he offers a measured array of solutions like skipping the self-checkout line or voting for policies that protect businesses and workers. Bullard is refreshingly frank about the sheer scale of the cultural problem he addresses, though by the end his tone becomes more cautious than confident. Still, this is sure to spark plenty of conversation. *(Sept.)*

Character Study: Observations from a Very Curious Artist

Carly Kuhn. Union Square, $25 (192p)
ISBN 978-1-4549-6079-9

This debut collection of breezy, boldly colored sketches from artist Kuhn's Instagram series, "The Cartorialist," showcases her knack for capturing urban tastemakers in a gesture and a fold of cloth. Sections depict ordinary people caught in "the small performances of our everyday lives," from looking at art to dining at restaurants to socializing. Much of Kuhn's loose, Saul Steinberg–like sketching focuses on the fashion fold, including the models, audiences, makeup artists, and photographers at runway shows, but she also checks in at casual sites like beaches and farmers' markets, and she excels at drawing dogs. Some of her sketches are disarmingly witty, like her rows of women mummified in knobbly turtlenecks, while brief notes alongside her sketches vacillate between elucidating her drawing philosophy and delighting in her subjects' particularities ("The civilized drama of dapper men descending a staircase"; "The drama of SHOES!"). There's little more to this sketchbook than the pure joy of people-watching, but it's a pleasure worth indulging. *(Sept.)*

What Has Democracy Done for You Lately? How to Inspire Working People to Join the Fight to Save America

Saru Jayaraman, with Rayan Semery-Palumbo. New Press, $15.99 trade paper (144p)
ISBN 979-8-89385-129-8

"If we want to save democracy, we have to make it worth believing in again," argues activist Jayaraman (*One Fair Wage*) in this brief and simplistic treatise on why calls to save democracy are failing to inspire working-class Americans. The cost of living has been named the number one issue affecting voters in every national poll since 2024, yet politicians, rather than calling for raising the minimum wage, instead promise to lower inflation, a tactic which, the author contends, has historically failed to address affordability. The result, according to Jayaraman, who has spent decades fighting for wage increases for service workers, is that civic engagement has become a "luxury" of the well-off while the working class feels disenchanted. Through interviews with service workers and examinations of recent campaigns that have energized working-class voters, including those of Donald Trump and Zohran Mamdani, Jayaraman shows how victory can be achieved by focusing on affordability. She notes, however, that when it comes to maintaining the trust of the working class, even more important than campaign promises are tangible results once the election is won. Unfortunately, while these perspectives are vital and urgent, the author's clipped and redundant prose flattens her arguments and leaves the reader cold. This disappoints. *(Sept.)*

Magick: Decoding the Visual Culture of Spells, Illusions and Psychic Powers

Thomas Waters. Thames & Hudson, $35 (256p)
ISBN 978-0-500-03048-6

Waters (*Cursed Britain*), a history professor at Imperial College London, conjures up a richly illustrated survey of magical traditions. Spanning from the Paleolithic era to the present, the book is divided into categories of magical ritual and practice. "Low magic" includes superstitions, hexes, and charms meant to address "common problems," from toothaches to fertility issues. Ceremonial "high magic" covers the complex, performative practices of magical societies and court magicians as well as stage conjurers, while "alternative magic" comprises new age practices, psychic

powers, the paranormal, and the pseudo-medical. (Featured in the pseudo-medical section is a 19th-century photo of a Massachusetts doctor attempting to hypnotize three patients, a practice that was sometimes used for pain relief before the widespread availability of anesthetics.) Side features decode magical symbols and offer brief descriptions of enchanted objects. The author makes a valiant effort to draw out the universal appeal of magic and its sheer variety, zipping through time and space to highlight everything from ancient Egyptian bowls that were ritually broken to ensure enemies' destruction to photos of modern-day crystal ball readings and reiki ceremonies. Readers with an affinity for the occult will get plenty out of this. *(Sept.)*

I Shoot Rock Stars: The Wild Adventures of a Music Video Director

Tim Pope. Diversion, $19.99 trade paper (336p)
ISBN 979-8-89515-214-0

Music industry veteran Pope debuts with a candid memoir of his career making music videos for the likes of David Bowie, Neil Young, and the Cure. Born in a quiet suburb of London, the author was a natural observer who developed an interest in film and quickly became "the go-to person for photographing and documenting noteworthy events" at his high school. After college he began filming concerts, first illicitly with smuggled cameras, then as a side job for record companies. In 1981, he made the feverish music video for Soft Cells's "Bedsitter"—a "visual metaphor for loss of individuality and identity," in which lead singer Marc Almond slowly "becomes indistinguishable from his surroundings, absorbed by his bleak environment." Afterward, artists began seeking Pope out for his eccentric style. He intersperses the story of his career, itself an account of the heady rise of music videos as a medium, with enjoyably absurd anecdotes about working on videos like the Cure's "Lovecats," in which a heavily made-up Robert Smith roams around a "surrealist fever dream" of a house filled with taxidermied cats. Though Pope's overwriting can sometimes distract, there's plenty here to entertain music fans. *(Sept.)*

The Grand Canyon Black Widower

Vincent Manilève, trans. from the French by Lynn E. Palermo. Crime Ink, $15.99 trade paper (240p)
ISBN 978-1-61316-786-1

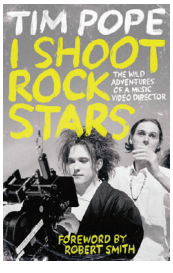
For the riveting latest installment of Crime Ink's 50 States of Crime series (after Anaïs Renevier's *The Case of the Missing Blackfeet Women*), French journalist Manilève details the case of an obscure serial killer who targeted his family members. After Robert Spangler graduated from high school in 1955, he married classmate Nancy Stahlman. The couple had two children and moved to Littleton, Colo., where Spangler began an affair with Sharon Cooper in 1978. That December, he shot Nancy and the children, framing Nancy for a murder-suicide. Despite police suspicions, Spangler wasn't charged, and he married Sharon the following year. They divorced in 1988, and Spangler married aerobics instructor Donna Sundling in 1990. When she fell to her death at the Grand Canyon in 1993, he claimed it was an accident. The next year, Sharon died of an apparent overdose, and authorities became newly suspicious of Spangler. In 2000, he was indicted for killing Donna. He pleaded guilty and died of cancer behind bars in 2001. The story's little-known subject matter makes for genuinely suspenseful reading, though some details (like an assertion that Spangler worked at *Sesame Street* several years before the program began) will cause readers cock an eyebrow. Still, it's an entertaining work of true crime. *(Sept.)*

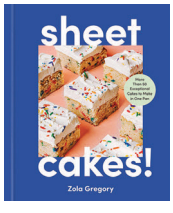
FOOD & COOKING

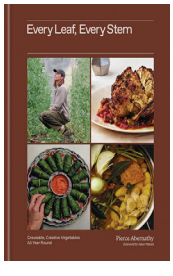
Sheet Cakes! More Than 50 Exceptional Cakes to Make in One Pan

Zola Gregory. Workman, $30 (256p)
ISBN 978-1-5235-3283-4

★ In this impressive debut, food writer Gregory demonstrates how "a sheet cake can be a fuss-free, casual affair or a multilayered work of art." After an overview of equipment (each cake is baked in either a 9-by-13-inch metal cake pan or a 13-by-18-inch rimmed sheet pan) and ingredients, Gregory offers a thorough review, complete with step-by-step photos, of fundamental techniques, including mixing methods and how to turn a sheet cake into an assembled layered cake or roulade. Classic treats include tiramisu, flourless chocolate brownie cake, lemon cake with lemon frosting, and sour cream coffee cake. Original recipes demonstrate Gregory's creativity: there's salted caramel coconut cake, buttermilk pancake cake with maple icing, mochi cake with crispy coconut-sesame topping, and plum-cardamom upside-down cake. Ambitious home bakers ready for something more challenging will want to check out the cornmeal roll with blackberry curd and rose-flavored whipped cream, coffee-hazelnut macaron cake, and lemon-meringue baked Alaska. Regardless of the recipe's difficulty level, Gregory's instructions are clear, easy to follow, and include helpful tips: the spice cake with rum-butter glaze, for example, uses whole wheat pastry flour, but if none is available, Gregory advises using a mix of all-purpose flour and whole wheat flour instead. It's a must-have addition to any home baker's library. *Agent: Katherine Cowles, Cowles Agency. (Aug.)*







Every Leaf, Every Stem: Craveable, Creative Vegetables All Year Round

Pierce Abernathy, with Ben Mims. Clarkson Potter, $40 (272p)
ISBN 978-0-593-80017-1

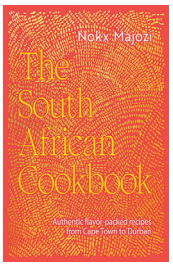
Recipe developer Abernathy debuts with an inventive collection of satisfying recipes centered on local and seasonal fruits and vegetables. He begins by sharing shopping advice, noting, for example, that canned and jarred produce are sometimes better than fresh because they're usually preserved during peak ripeness. Among many tips for prolonging freshness, he advises leaving lettuces and leafy greens whole and unwashed in the

fridge, and to reduce waste, he points out that onion, garlic, and ginger skins can be used to add flavor to a broth. Recipes are divided by season, with zucchini-green garlic fritters, grilled asparagus with sour cream and dill dip, and rhubarb and fennel upside-down cake among the spring highlights. Summer features eggplant fingers with whipped ricotta and espelette, and strawberry basil granita. For fall, there's crusted delicata squash rings, and brûléed honeynut squash with ice cream. Mushroom steaks with sunchoke au poivre, and passion fruit panna cotta are noteworthy options for winter. Abernathy also includes an "Evergreen" chapter, which focuses on produce available year-round and features dishes like a whole roasted cauliflower puttanesca and an apple cake with ginger cardamom cream. The exciting flavor profiles and practical advice make up for the somewhat user-unfriendly design, which features dense, textbook-like blocks of prose. Still, this is perfect for home cooks looking to add some pizazz to their produce. *(Aug.)*

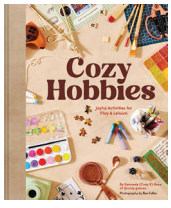
The South African Cookbook: Authentic Flavor-Packed Recipes from Cape Town to Durban

Nokx Majozi. Interlink, $38 (256p)
ISBN 978-1-62371-550-2

In this delightful debut, chef Majozi celebrates "the culinary diversity" of her native South Africa. Meat options include grilled T-bone steaks with monkey gland sauce (a sweet and tangy traditional condiment with zero monkey parts), Cape Malay chicken curry, beef stew with dumplings ("the ultimate comfort food"), and lamb bunny chow, a bread loaf or roll stuffed with lamb curry and carrot salad. For seafood, there's spicy grilled peri peri shrimp, a fruity and smokey braai snoek with apricot and lime, or a milder baked butterfish with herb crust. Vegetables and sides include steamed bread, isjingi (pumpkin and maize meal), and chakalaka (a "classic" vegetable stew of peppers, onions, tomatoes, and spices). Equally expansive is the desserts chapter, which includes malva pudding (cake soaked in caramel sauce), caramelized pineapple with fried coconut ice cream, and a milk tart. Throughout, Majozi shares anecdotes and family recipes, including sorghum fermented porridge, which her grandmother would make for breakfast; fried hake and chips, her mother's take on fish and chips; and masala fish curry, which she and her brother would help their father prepare. Vibrant photography adds to the appeal. It's an inviting and approachable primer. *(July)*







Equal Parts Cocktails: The Simple Ratio for Spectacular Drinks

Fred Siggins. Ten Speed, $22 (160p)
ISBN 978-0-593-83881-5

Bartender Siggins's accessible debut collection boasts an invitingly simple premise: every recipe, from classic cocktails to newer, more playful concoctions, features equal measurements of every ingredient. Some drinks are shoe-ins, already following this formula: the Negroni, for example, comprises one ounce gin, one ounce campari, one ounce sweet vermouth. Others take some adaptation: Siggins's makes a Manhattan recipe fit his formula through the additions of cognac and amaro, while also including a footnote with the more familiar formula. A generous introduction breaks down stemware and spirits (including less common ones such as off-dry vermouth) and offers pro tips. Siggins notes, for example, that all cocktails are made up of "some combination of" base, sweet, sour, and "weak" or nonalcoholic elements, an understanding of which can make substitutions easier. Siggins offers modifications throughout, as well as charming bits of bartending history, as in the introduction to the Scofflaw, a Prohibition-era whisky sour named for those who laughed in the face of the alcohol ban. The final section features contemporary cocktails from bartenders around the world, including the "Breakfast in Tijuana" out of Bangkok's Dry Wave Cocktail Studio, which mashes up a strawberry mezcal margarita and a marmalade breakfast martini. Purists may balk, but those looking for an expansive and approachable introduction to mixing drinks will be well served. *(July)*

HEALTH, HOME & HOBBIES

Cozy Hobbies: Joyful Activities for Play & Leisure

Kennedy Rose. Chronicle, $27.95 (240p)
ISBN 978-1-7972-4220-0

Rose, who posts about games and activities on social media under the name Cozy K, debuts with a lackluster guide to finding hobbies that reduce stress, promote mindfulness, and enable joy. Noting that hobbies often fall to the wayside as people get older, Rose—a self-proclaimed "professional hobbyist"—argues that "practicing the art of leisure is a skill that will stand the test of time, growing beautifully alongside you as the years go by." In an era when people's attention spans are pulled in myriad directions, making time for fun and whimsy, she says, is a gift to oneself. She details 45 activities that meet a range of needs: There are "brain-off" hobbies that don't require much attentiveness or skill, ideal for those feeling overwhelmed, like paint-by-numbers and leaf pressing, as well as "brain-on" activities, which offer mental stimulation, such as word searches, baking, and board games. Arts and craft options include sewing, scrapbooking, and pottery, and physical activities include bird-watching, dancing, and foraging. While some suggested hobbies are less conventional, like geocaching (an outdoor treasure-hunting game that uses GPS devices), most are common ways to spend one's time that readers are likely to already be familiar with, such as reading and hiking, and Rose's descriptions bring little new to the table. Readers aren't likely to be inspired. *(Sept.)*

The Perfect Birth Myth: Pushing Back Against a Broken Industry

Avital Norman Nathman, with Deborah Wage. Bloomsbury Academic, $19.95 trade paper (192p)
ISBN 979-8-217-09468-4

★ Nathman, editor of *The Good Mother Myth*, and Wage, a nurse practitioner and midwife, lay out a supportive road map to

maternal healthcare in the U.S. Aiming to provide an "honest and open discussion," they examine systemic issues that have made it difficult for women to access care, including a lack of affordable insurance coverage, the rise of abortion bans, and racism in medicine. Despite these roadblocks, many women are still led to believe they can have a perfect birth. Instead of aiming for such a myth, the authors contend, "we should be pushing for equity in care that doesn't qualify experiences based on outcome." They frame the practice of writing a birth plan (a document that outlines preferences for labor and delivery) as a dubious instrument of control but a useful communication tool, encouraging thorough conversations between providers and patients. Elsewhere, they unpack how social media, which is rife with posts about "blissful births," fuels an achievement mentality for expecting parents, which inevitably leads to feelings of failure. The authors end by profiling progressive birth activists and outlining solutions, including support for community-based doulas and midwives and the prioritization of postpartum care. Comprehensive and accessible, this is an important resource for those navigating a system that doesn't always have their best interests in mind. *(Sept.)*

Medicine for All People: Science and Ancient Wisdom for Revolutionary Healing

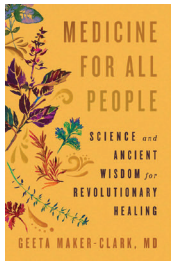
Geeta Maker-Clark. Chelsea Green, $24.95 trade paper (304p)
ISBN 978-1-64502-337-1

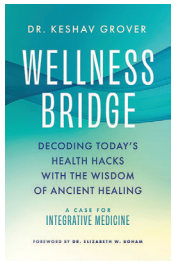
Maker-Clark, an integrative family physician, debuts with a compassionate call for a healthcare system that combines ancient wisdom with modern science. Medicine today, she argues, is too reactionary, focused on chasing symptoms while ignoring deeper forces, like food systems and socioeconomic status. She walks readers through how food, nature, community, dance, gratitude, and other practices can serve as "medicines that connect us to our past and our future and fuel our resistance against a painful world." Studies show, for example, that exposure to green space has a wide range of health benefits, including decreases in blood pressure and reduced symptoms of depression. Diet also has a profound impact on health, she says, encouraging readers to nourish their bodies by eating plant-forward meals and limiting processed foods. Elsewhere, she describes how dance helped colonized and oppressed communities cultivate resilience and frames trust as the foundation of effective healthcare; when trust crumbles, it undermines faith in public health initiatives, such as vaccines, creating a less healthy environment for everyone. Alongside convincing calls for systemic change, Maker-Clark offers practical guidance for individuals, from adding native plants to home gardens to making space in daily life for play. It's an inspired vision of what healthcare could be. *(Aug.)*

Wellness Bridge: Decoding Today's Health Hacks with the Wisdom of Ancient Healing

Keshav Grover. Amplify, $29.95 (216p)
ISBN 979-8-89138-632-7

This detailed debut guide to wellness from Grover, a physician specializing in functional and integrative medicine, combines modern medicine with ancient healing techniques. Aiming to introduce readers to the "vast number of choices that exist for us as individuals in order to experience our optimal health and wellness," he invites readers to view the book as a buffet: they can evaluate each option and choose what works for them. He discusses the benefits and drawbacks of different approaches to medicine, including integrative (combines Western medicine with alternative therapies), conventional (uses evidence-based therapies, standards of care, and innovative technology), holistic (addresses the body, mind, spirit, and emotions), and functional (focuses on identifying and addressing the root cause of disease and illness). Elsewhere, he frames food as medicine, encouraging readers to adopt Mediterranean and Ayurvedic diets rich in antioxidants and vegetables, and analyzes the cultural and health benefits of fasting, including its potential to improve mental clarity. Other chapters center on the importance of movement, how to optimize sleep, the benefits of saunas and cold plunges, and the ability of community to promote one's overall well-being. Grover's comprehensive, nondidactic approach will appeal to readers skeptical of one-size-fits-all wellness advice. *(Aug.)*







Charmed: Accessorize Your Life with 20 Projects Using Charms

Kelsey Armstrong. Quadrille, $24.99 (144p)
ISBN 978-1-83783-798-4

Armstrong, a mixed-media artist and founder of the jewelry brand Haricot Vert, demonstrates in this inspiring debut guide how to turn tiny objects into decorative charms for wearables and home decor. She claims that virtually any small object—including trinkets, paper scraps, buttons, and beads—can be turned into a charm with the help of pliers, jewelry wire cutters, and other readily available tools. The process can be achieved using several methods, such as drilling a small hole into the top of an object and gluing a screw eye into it or attaching flat-back bails (small metal loops used in jewelry-making) onto the object with a strong adhesive. She offers advice about what metals to use to make charm jewelry, noting that although sterling silver is durable, it tarnishes and needs frequent cleaning, and that while gold-plated metals are affordable, the thin layer of gold can wear off quickly and the base metal can irritate the skin. The collection of whimsical projects includes beginner-friendly magnets and keychains, intermediate-level dangle earrings and decorative pillows with sewn-on lockets and buttons, and challenging bejeweled berets and lampshades decked out

with hanging beads and trinkets. Fun and easy-to-follow, this is a must for crafters looking to add personality to everyday objects. *(Aug.)*

Dopamine Design: Creating a Home That Makes You Happy

Maitri Mody. Ten Speed, $35 (224p)
ISBN 978-0-593-83816-7

Interior designer Mody debuts with a creative how-to on designing homes with bold colors, patterns, and textures. After ending her 10-year marriage, Mody moved into a studio apartment on the Upper West Side, which she decorated with pink paint, fairy lights, and flowers: "Piece by piece, I turned it into a home that wasn't just a place to live but also an extension of *me*." This happiness-centric style, she notes, is often referred to as dopamine decor, after the neurotransmitter that regulates pleasure, and it is not about following rules or copying others; rather, Mody encourages readers to discover what makes them feel good. She explains how peel-and-stick wallpaper can add funky patterns to a wall (or even a refrigerator), DIY lamps and shelves are not only functional but one of a kind, and scoring the perfect vintage piece offers an exciting rush. Mody includes photos of vibrantly decorated homes, like that of graphic designer Marianne Plaisance, which features a lip-shaped couch and a giant cherry sculpture. Readers can glean tips from interviews with the maximalist decorators, as when Plaisance recommends, "Drench a room in one color." Much of the advice works for renters and homeowners alike, and the audacious design choices are sure to embolden anyone looking to inject joy into a boring room. *(Aug.)*

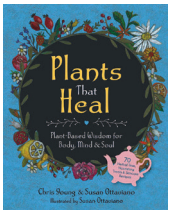
All Panic No Disco: Existential Crisis Embroidery for Your Inner Critter

Emily Wall. Andrews McMeel, $22.99 trade paper (272p)
ISBN 979-8-8816-0647-3

Embroidery artist Wall debuts with a quirky and accessible how-to on embroidering fabric with designs that mix cute creatures with wry wordplay.







She recommends crafters choose fabric that is 100% cotton for its sturdiness and ability to stabilize stitches and suggests keeping embroidery needles of different sizes on hand depending on how many strands are used at a time. Wall's detailed stitch tutorials, which include helpful illustrations, cover basic back stitches as well as more complex modified turkey stitches. The projects indicate difficulty levels, and for each, Walls offers a color guide, a stitch direction diagram, and written steps with photos. Among the hilarious designs are an open-mouthed possum with the text "screaming is self-care"; a raccoon holding a coffee cup and the line "Awake... but at what cost?"; and a mouse with a block of cheese next to the pun "My apolo-cheese (it will happen again)." Embroiderers of all levels will appreciate Wall's practical advice, as when she notes that if one is using a specialty thread, it's best to stitch with it last to help maintain tension and reduce sagging. Crafters with a dry wit will get a kick out of this. *(Aug.)*

Crochet Your Own Bag Charms: 30 Projects to Maximize Your Style

Lee Sartori. Quarry, $22.99 trade paper (128p)
ISBN 978-1-57715-815-8

In this brisk and adorable primer, crochet designer Sartori (*Amigurumi Affirmations*) demonstrates how to crochet keychain charms that can be attached to purses and bags. Because the projects are small, Sartori encourages readers to experiment with yarn scraps of any weight and fiber content left over from other projects. For the hardware, she recommends using lobster-claw clasps as well as jump rings to securely attach the charms to bags. To add an extra personalized touch, Sartori suggests incorporating beads, sequins, tassels, and other "bling" to finished pieces. Projects include pocket-size foods, such as a cheeseburger and a cluster of cherries; playful animals, including a corgi and a koala; and other miscellaneous pieces, from a mini granny-stitch sweater to a smiling toadstool mushroom. Though Sartori offers a clear, step-by-step review of single crochets, slip stitches, and other basic techniques, some readers will be disappointed by the sparse instructions for attaching finished pieces to the hardware. Nevertheless, crafters looking to add a little whimsy to their accessories will be inspired. *(July)*

Plants That Heal: Plant-Based Wisdom for Body, Mind & Soul

Chris Young and Susan Ottaviano. Skyhorse, $22.99 (320p)
ISBN 978-1-5107-8538-0

Gardener Young and illustrator Ottaviano (*The Green Witch's Guide to Magical Plants and Flowers*) provide an endearing handbook for making herbal teas, soaps, and snacks. Encouraging readers to grow and dry their own plants, the authors describe the process of making plant-based creations as "small rituals that release stress and provide a space to reset ourselves." They outline the healing powers of herbs like yarrow (reduces inflammation), peppermint (eases pain), and chamomile (calms the nervous system), and offer recipes for teas intended to soothe headaches and boost immunity. Readers also learn how to make pomegranate lip balm, coconut oil moisturizer, and aromatic sachets of dried rose petals and mint leaves that can be placed in a drawer or under one's pillow. Elsewhere, the authors provide instructions for making organic cleaning sprays using orange and eucalyptus essential oils and sage cleansing sticks with sprigs of rosemary and lavender. Food recipes are also included, like carrot and ginger soup that offers "warmth, comfort, and healing" and sweet potato pie that supports "glowing skin and strong, vibrant hair." Young and Ottaviano, who encourage readers to "color outside the lines" by personalizing these recipes, exude a contagious passion for intentional gardening and cooking. This is a treasure trove for plant enthusiasts. *(July)*

Stained-glass spreads render a late-night city bike ride as sacred in *Night Ride*, a picture book by Christopher Myers (reviewed on page 98).



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PICTURE BOOKS

Whatever You Do...

Luke Pearson. Tundra, $18.99 (48p)
ISBN 978-1-7748-8444-7

As an impish gnome wreaks havoc in a human household, Pearson (the Hilda series) takes the title's cautionary advisory to surreal new heights. When Daddy responds to a knock at the door, Mummy alone senses disaster, and a running gag takes hold: Mummy warns, "Whatever you do, don't...," and someone promptly does whatever she's forbidden. First, Daddy makes the fatal error of letting in "the cheekiest little thing you ever saw"—a sprightly stick figure in a conical starred hat who wields the Gingerbread Man's perky menace. As the pattern compounds, a spare white domestic setting gives way to an inky, neon-crammed funhouse in which most members of the pale-skinned family of five are magicked into fanciful permutations: Daddy becomes a chocolate-chip biscuit with legs, and the children morph into an ice cream cone, a sandwich, a chicken, and more. Readers may clock the gendered division of labor—Daddy supplies the chaos, Mummy the cleanup—but Mummy's black overalls and purple shirt simultaneously lend her the powerful bearing of a superhero in uniform. Flat color and clean geometry give a cut-paper look that keeps things legible and cheerfully crisp until Mummy's shout of "DON'T DO ANYTHING!" at last restores order. Mischief makes itself at home in this picture book, and the mayhem is easy to curl up with. Ages 3–7. *Agent: Steven Malk, Writers House. (Sept.)*

The Cheeky Book of Bear Butts

Jonathan Fenske. Sourcebooks Jabberwocky, $14.99 (40p)
ISBN 978-1-4642-3953-3

Fenske (*I Will Race You Through This Book!*) shows he knows this end of the market, starting with a bare/bear pun and mooning over his chosen topic from there. The premise is as simple as it sounds: across seasons, situations, and species, bears have "all kinds of bear butts." The structure is a rhythmic and frequently rhyming roll call: page by page, a bear presents its posterior ("A giant panda has a giant butt"), while the odd peanut-gallery interruption keeps the catalog from predictability (an elderly koala complains, "Back in my day we didn't have books about BUTTS!"). Grizzlies, polar bears, sun bears, a teddy bear—even a constellational Ursa Major with "a shiny heinie"—all get their turn. A brown-skinned child in a bear costume appears from time to time, and narration occasionally addresses the reader directly: "If only you could be a bear,/ with fuzzy, wuzzy underwear,// you'd walk around without a care,/ with your BARE bottom in the air." Punchy cartooning renders animal backsides in bold outline as the bears strike attitudes that range from hammy to grumpy, and compositions keep the gag fresh by varying the scale, framing, and level of, ahem, exposure. The bottom line? This is brassy, brazen, and cheerfully committed to the bit. Ages 4–8. *Agent: Carrie Hannigan, HG Literary. (Sept.)*

Grandma Fina's Wonderful Umbrella

Benjamin Alire Sáenz, illus. by Raúl the Third and Elaine Bay. Allida, $19.99 (40p)
ISBN 978-0-0632-9412-7

An elder treasures her worn umbrella but longs for companionship in this sunny story from Sáenz (*Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe*), teaming up with illustrator Raúl the Third and colorist Bay (the World of ¡Vamos! series). As Latinx-cued Grandma Fina walks through

Lois Lowry considers censorship and complicity in her dystopian middle grade novel *Building 903*.
— Page 99 —

First love proves transformative for two teens in Renée Watson's YA romance *Everything New Again*.
— Page 101 —

town on a hot day, she carries a "wonderful yellow umbrella" to keep cool and chats briefly with community members, portrayed with various skin tones. But everyone, including a mail carrier, a gardener, and a mural painter, is busy with their work, and even her grandchildren are occupied with an errand. Along the way, the town's residents notice the yellow umbrella's disrepair, but after hearing their well-meaning commentary, Grandma Fina remarks that she doesn't need a new one: "What I need is a friend to talk with on my walks." A day later, the townsfolk surprise Grandma Fina with a party, and, inadvertently, a collection of new umbrellas—a misstep that turns into a marvelous opportunity when Grandma Fina distributes them at the community center and invites her friends to walk with her. In their characteristic style, the artists infuse the bustling neighborhood with ample detail, building out the conversation-driven narrative. It's a stroll worth taking. Ages 4–8. *Author's agent: Patricia Moosbrugger, Patricia Moosbrugger Literary. Illustrator's agent: Jennifer Laughran, Andrea Brown Literary. (Sept.)*

Horizontal Crocodile

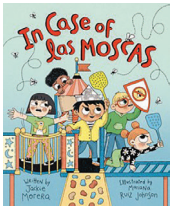
Scott Rothman, illus. by Brian Won.
Simon & Schuster, $19.99 (48p)
ISBN 978-1-6659-8867-4

With a low-slung format and protagonist to match, this gently philosophical story from collaborators Rothman and Won (*Warm and Fuzzy*) ponders how friends make room for change. The eponymous reptile, his digitally rendered body a marvelous lattice of scales, has a life engineered to fit his "nice, looooooooong" shape, including a superlong toothbrush and toaster. But the prospect of a visit from long-distance bestie Horizontal Alligator throws this well-aligned existence into chaos: cue a panicky cleanup and an emergency sofa-store excursion via stretch limo that supplies the book's first comic peak. When the visitor arrives, he reveals a new skill—walking on two feet—and a new handle: Vertical Alligator. Horizontal Crocodile clocks "the nice, looooooooong door to his nice, looooooooong house that his now very tallllll friend will now never fit into" but barely skips a beat. A joyful solution is revealed in a half-page gatefold that opens upward into a game of basketball—and a bond recalibrated. Real friendship, it turns out, can orient in more than one direction in this tale that balances the goofy and the gracious. Ages 4–8. *Author's agent: Andrea Morrison, Writers House. Illustrator's agent: Rubin Pfeffer, Aevitas Creative Management. (Sept.)*

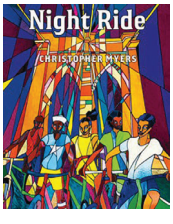
In Case of las Moscas

Jackie Morera, illus. by Mariana Ruiz Johnson. Make Me a World, $18.99 (40p)
ISBN 978-0-5939-0275-2

Idioms lead to a vividly imagined misunderstanding in this good-humored story from Morera (*Together We Remember*) and Ruiz Johnson (*All Around a Year*). Latinx-cued Diego looks forward to the arrival of his abuelos, whom he knows will lavish him with gifts and treats. But he's confused when Abuela wakes him in the morning singing, "¡Menea el esqueleto!"—"Shake the skeleton?" he wonders, questioning the strength of his Spanish. As the family members continue using Spanish idioms, and Diego translates the expressions, thought bubbles above the child's head reveal his perceptions in word and image. A school send-off that involves Abuela offering a sweater "por si las moscas" leads to consternation—"In case the flies what?"—and a peer-group plan to stop the insects' seemingly imminent attack. Comical visual translations and dynamic facial expressions feature across thin-lined digital illustrations that use saturated earth tones. Morera concludes the conversational narrative with an English colloquialism that reverses the characters' roles. The result is a lively work in which linguistic confusion becomes an opportunity for cultural connection. An author's note and glossary conclude. Ages 4–8. *Author's agent: Ashley Reisinger, Triada US. (Sept.)*







Lennie and the Mighty Oak

Anne Twist, illus. by Emily Sutton.
Candlewick, $18.99 (32p)
ISBN 978-1-5362-5473-0

Collaborators Twist and Sutton (*Betty and the Mysterious Visitor*) introduce two kindred spirits beneath an oak tree's boughs in this cozy autumnal picture book. With a new sibling who's "too little to play with" preoccupying Mum, young Lennie, portrayed with brown skin, laments his lack of a hide-and-seek partner. Escaping to Acorn Hollows, a "wild garden shared by all the cottages on the lane" that's home to a beloved oak tree, the protagonist utters a secret wish for a playmate. Soon after, a pale-skinned child, Betty, appears, looking "a little sad and lonely too," and it's not long before friendship blooms, anchored by games of hide-and-seek amid piles of orange and yellow leaves. While Lennie initially keeps the new relationship to himself, Mum and the infant are quickly incorporated into the fun after they venture outside. This time, when Lennie asks if the baby can play, Mum acquiesces, and "they all lay giggling in the leaves." Gentle language treats Lennie's feelings with care, while intricate watercolors bring a lived-in feel to domestic and pastoral scenes. Readers will find this a tender portrait of seasonal change in nature and in life. Ages 4–8. *Author's agent: Cait Hoyt, Creative Artists Agency. (Sept.)*

Night Ride

Christopher Myers. Kokila, $19.99 (48p)
ISBN 979-8-217-23846-0

★ Caldecott Honoree Myers delivers a luminous visual love letter to Black childhood and New York City with a stunning wordless picture book that follows five kids bicycling across the boroughs. Lighted and photographed stained glass windows comprise each intricate scene, layering vibrant colors that make every page glow with expressive life. As the brown-skinned companions meet up and ride from landmark to landmark—in one remarkable vertical spread, across the Brooklyn bridge—their

nocturnal adventure is clearly filled with joyful freedom of movement. The city itself becomes both backdrop and character in scenes that reflect the children's sense of belonging and camaraderie. After the kids pause at a bodega, where one buys a toy from a coin vending machine, late spreads show the figures becoming one with the city's skyline as sunrise hues streak the sky. A pleasure to linger over, this polished, freewheeling portrait of children exploring, laughing, roaming, and fully inhabiting this locale also celebrates the city that an author's note calls a "sacred space." Back matter includes more about the collaboration behind the images. Ages 4–8. *(Sept.)*

EARLY READERS

Don't Be Scared (Tiddly and Winks #1)

R.L. Stine, illus. by Marc Brown.
HarperCollins, $5.99 paper (32p)
ISBN 978-0-06-348294-4

Monsters Tiddly and Winks seek to teach each other a lesson about courage in this lightly barbed early reader,a series kickoff from Goosebumps creator Stine and Arthur author-illustrator Brown. As Winks attempts to build the "tallest, biggest tower EVER," Tiddly jumps out with a "Boo!" that causes blocks to fly. Though the builder is understandably put out, their smug-seeming companion suggests a pedagogical motive: "I want to teach you an important lesson... Don't be scared." After a repeat of the same ploy, the duo head outside for some fun, where they encounter varied animals, including a squirrel, crows, and a cat. Each time, Tiddly pedantically urges fearlessness, even if Winks doesn't seem at all alarmed ("What a cute squirrel, Winks. Don't be afraid. Squirrels are your friends"). Not to be underestimated, Winks eventually strikes back with the help of a talking spider—turns out Tiddly is susceptible to arachnophobia. Loosely inked drawings emphasize the protagonists' oversize reactions in scenes that visualize the pals' slippery camaraderie. Though the duo's emerging relationship feels more ill-tempered than comedic, readers are likely to cheer for the ending's just deserts. Ages 4–8. *(Sept.)*

FICTION

Building 903

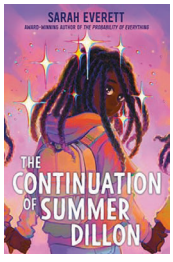
Lois Lowry. Clarion, $19.99 (240p)
ISBN 978-0-06-351510-9

★ Lowry (*The Giver*) offers an arresting dystopian novel that chronicles a tween discovering a cache of books and the startling truths they unearth about her tyrannical society. In 2099, 14-year-old Tessa mourns the loss of her twin brother Theo, who vanished two months ago. She finds comfort in her relationship with her 135-year-old neighbor Miriam, who is being involuntarily relocated to a retirement home. Before Miriam's departure, she gives Tessa a key to a secret closet that contains contraband unfamiliar to Tessa: a baseball mitt, a newspaper, and, most surprisingly, books, which were declared illegal "a long, long time ago" by their community's despotic leader and largely locked away in Storage Building 903, where they await destruction. Tessa, astonished and delighted by the images that the texts inspire within her mind, eagerly shares her findings with her parents, and as the family clandestinely discusses the extraordinary items, her father reveals that he gave Theo a book before he went missing, leading Tessa to believe that the object is related to Theo's disappearance. Prescient worldbuilding conjures a hyper-surveillance state that mirrors contemporary attitudes surrounding censorship and control. It's a haunting cautionary tale about a grim future deprived of storytelling and creative expression. Ages 8–12. *Agent: Emily van Beek, Folio Literary Management. (Sept.)*



The Continuation of Summer Dillon

Sarah Everett. HarperCollins, $19.99 (288p)
ISBN 978-0-06-344430-0



★ Everett (*The Shape of Lost Things*) considers personhood and what it means to be alive in this cerebral and perceptive story about an android continuing a human child's life after her death. For the past 11 years, android Summer 2.0 has received downloads from the consciousness of human tween Summer Dillon, who is Black. When the youth dies from a chronic illness, Summer 2.0—created in the deceased's image—is excited to fulfill her purpose by continuing Summer's life. The droid has trouble adjusting, though, especially when Summer's classmates and older sister, Alice, refuse to accept her. And if the Dillons find out about the glitches she's developed, they could send her to be recycled. Desperate to keep her problems secret, Summer 2.0 allows human scientist Cece Champion to study her, hoping for a fix. Meanwhile, she finds herself deviating from Summer's expected behaviors, further jeopardizing her future. As Summer 2.0 struggles to navigate adolescence over the course of this introspective tale, her reliance on theoretical knowledge and her relatable missteps aptly mirror young adults' first experiences. Depictions of grief complicated by ethical dilemmas result in a mournful and bittersweet offering. Ages 8–12. *Agent: Suzie Townsend, New Leaf Literary. (Sept.)*



Avery's Story (Rival High #1)

Candace Buford, illus. by Jamie Green.
Scholastic, $9.99 paper (192p)
ISBN 979-8-225-04540-1

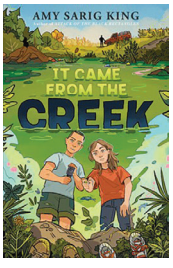
A small lie snowballs into a social media–fueled identity crisis in this ebullient series opener from Buford (*Good as Gold*) and Green (*The Dinosaur and the Bird*). Fourteen-year-old Avery Jones is disappointed to be attending Walker High instead of rival school Sherman High, where her best friend Reagan is going. Eager to fit in with her new classmates—including athletic Corinne and popular influencer Madison—Avery embellishes details about her life, cultivating a glamorous online persona and claiming to own a Vespa. When flooding forces the schools to share a campus, and Reagan arrives, Avery's carefully constructed facade begins to unravel. Determined to salvage both her reputation and their friendship, the besties scheme to transform Avery's fabrications into reality,

and they meet unexpected success. But as Avery and Madison grow closer, a public misunderstanding creates a new wrinkle in Avery and Reagan's relationship, forcing them to reconsider their perceptions about each other. Empathetic and affable first-person narration details the pressures of online validation. Nuanced interpersonal dynamics lend emotional credibility to the high-drama premise, and expressive b&w illustrations interspersed with rapid-fire text exchanges keep the pages turning. It's a relatable look at authenticity and self-image in the digital age. Ages 9–12. *Author's agent: Carrie Pestritto, Laura Dail Literary. (Oct.)*

It Came from the Creek

Amy Sarig King. Scholastic Press, $18.99 (272p)
ISBN 978-1-5461-5856-1

King (*Attack of the Black Rectangles*) delivers an absorbing tale of ecological activism about a fifth grader tackling pollution and the "toxic waste of sexism" in 1980 rural Pennsylvania. With autumn approaching, inquisitive 10-year-old Katy Devlin is running out of time to complete her summer essay responding to the prompt "What will the world be like in one hundred years?" Meanwhile, though mounting peer pressure has made her relationship with her male best friend, Joel, feel suddenly awkward, Katy enlists his help in uncovering the mystery behind the nauseating, hive-inducing smells coming from nearby Lorane Creek, which she suspects are linked to businessman James Piper, whom townspeople claim is "known for poisoning any land he puts his name on." Over the course of their investigation—which Katy uses to craft her essay, excerpted throughout—the protagonist becomes increasingly certain that the social and environmental injustices of her present will spiral if left unchecked, and she resolves to act. Whether taking on playground bullies in a kickball tournament or environmental bullies threatening their home, Katy and Joel are a memorable team whose story yields accessible and empowering messages about justice and integrity. The result is a gutsy outing that both inspires and informs. Ages 9–12. *Agent: Michael Bourret, Dystel, Goderich & Bourret Literary. (Oct.)*



The Secret Bookstore Sleuth Society (The Secret Bookstore Sleuth Society #1)

Lindsay Currie. Sourcebooks, $17.99 (288p)
ISBN 978-1-4642-4126-0

★ Currie (*X Marks the Haunt*) crafts an enthralling series launch in this locked-room murder mystery. Forced to withdraw from private school due to financial hardship, seventh grader Merrick misses her friends as she is homeschooled from her mother's bookstore, which is attached to an inn. The group's first visit to the shop falls into chaos when they find an elderly store regular dead in a storage room. Though police cite natural causes rather than foul play, Merrick isn't convinced. When a vicious ice storm forces the tweens, as well as an eclectic gathering of guests and employees, to shelter at the inn, the friends seize the opportunity to snoop. Joined by Merrick's grandmother Ida, an Agatha Christie fan, the team investigates, calling upon individual skills learned from video games, mahjong, and, in Merrick's case, scientific techniques related to her love of rare earth metals. A power outage and increasing suspicion of murder-by-poison plunges them into dangerous territory, and it becomes clear that there's a killer trapped among them. The fast pacing and strategic plotting are stimulating, and Merrick and Grannie Ida's fiercely loyal relationship is heartening. It all adds up to a gripping and expertly cultivated suspense novel. Ages 9–12. *Agent: Shannon Hassan, Marshal Lyon Literary. (Sept.)*



Children of Owl

Darcie Little Badger, illus. by Abigail Rajunov. Levine Querido, $19.99 (288p)
ISBN 978-1-64614-568-3

★ In a stunning contemporary fantasy from Lipan Apache Newbery Honoree Little Badger and featuring artwork from Rajunov (*Looking at the Sky*), three teens determine to save their home from forces both supernatural and benign. Sixteen-year-old Maisie's peaceful life in Sunny Parks, a mobile home community populated by her extended family, is upended following a meeting with the son of the legendary Big Owl, a prominent figure in Lipan Apache stories, who warns Maisie that "a terrible fate looms." With few details to work with ("It's imminent, this tragedy. That's all I know"), Maisie is pulled into a tangle of overlapping mysteries while trying to prevent impending disaster: a vengeful ghost haunts her cousin, new information in a long-unsolved murder case incriminates another relative, her late best friend's time capsule disappears, and a recently arrived foster cat has been behaving strangely. Competing clues and rising tensions within Sunny Parks repeatedly stymie Maisie's attempts to sidestep catastrophe. Omniscient narration is peppered with letters and diary entries from two of Maisie's cousins as well as ethereal, earth-toned comics, layering contextual and visual excitement atop a lush, multifaceted tale. Mystery and speculative elements converge in this fluid, intricately constructed story that balances suspenseful plotting with emotional resonance and cultural depth. Ages 12–up. *Author's agent: Michael Curry, Donald Maass Literary. Illustrator's agent: Aliza Hoover, CAT Agency. (Oct.)*



Ghosted

Wendelin Van Draanen. Holiday House, $19.99 (256p)
ISBN 978-0-8234-6039-7

Themes of forgiveness underpin this tender romantasy from Van Draanen (*The Steps*). Fourteen-year-old Gemma has long found solace in the cemetery behind her house, a quiet refuge from the affectionate bustle of her large family. There, she spends time with five ghosts known as the Ethereals, spirits whose lives ended under mysterious circumstances and whom only Gemma can see. Among them is orphaned British 15-year-old Jimmy, whose companionship becomes increasingly

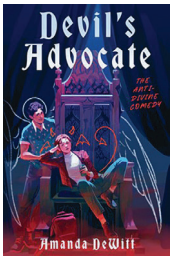
important to her. But Gemma's link to the cemetery comes at a cost: her fascination with the Ethereals contributes to the dissolution of a childhood friendship, and she's endured years of social isolation and bullying. Her younger brother, worried about the effect of her reputation on his own social standing, implores Gemma to stop visiting the cemetery. Despite her attempts to move forward—which include befriending classmate and fellow musician Mae—Gemma finds it difficult to leave Jimmy behind. Sweet supernatural romance twines with adolescent realities in an eloquent narrative that examines shifting interpersonal dynamics and the search for belonging. Anchored by a compassionate cast, including Gemma's supportive, well-intentioned family, this reflective novel offers gentle ruminations on growing up, letting go, and embracing second chances. Ages 12–up. *Agent: Katie Grimm, Curtis Brown Ltd. (Oct.)*

Everything New Again

Renée Watson. Bloomsbury, $20.99 (304p)
ISBN 978-1-5476-2166-8

★ Newbery Medalist Watson documents swoon-worthy first love in this aching romance set in small-town Larch Heights, Ore. Working at her family's funeral home has given Black 17-year-old Bliss an unusually intimate view of death. Seen by her classmates as the "weird girl" for her all-black wardrobe and comfort around corpses, Bliss spends winter break missing her best friend, brown-skinned Alex, who is vacationing in Mexico. Left with only their shared journal for company, Bliss finds her quiet routine disrupted when a beloved family friend, Pastor Alden, dies unexpectedly. As preparations for the funeral unfold, Bliss encounters a mysterious, grieving daughter searching for answers and develops feelings for 18-year-old newcomer Solomon, who left his Black father in Portland to visit his white florist mother, seeking to mend their strained relationship and understand why she abandoned the family when Solomon was young. The teens bond over reflections on life and mortality, a shared appreciation for plants, and a fascination with the community's hidden histories, as well as its roots in Black heritage and the Great Migration. Lyrical prose and skillfully rendered, emotionally raw characterization combine to present a touching and intense exploration of the connective power of loss. Ages 13–up. *Agent: Rosemary Stimola, Stimola Literary Studio. (Oct.)*







Devil's Advocate: The Anti-Divine Comedy

Amanda DeWitt. Peachtree, $19.99 hardcover (320p); $12.99 paper
ISBN 978-1-68263-868-2;
ISBN 978-1-68263-934-4

The Devil's daughter plots to become his heir apparent in this brisk paranormal romp from DeWitt (*The Underwood Tapes*). Though 17-year-old Georgia native Ada Faust, who's half human, wants to have a low-key senior year at Ivyside Preparatory Academy, it proves difficult when her father, the Devil, ramps up preparations to bring about the end of the world. Convinced that U.S. presidential candidate Nelson Campbell's election will generate enough ill will to trigger the apocalypse, Ada's father sees Campbell's potential inauguration as an opportunity to retire and appoint his own successor. To secure the role for herself, Ada infiltrates the rival candidate's campaign by posing as an intern, intending to sabotage it from within. Her plan unravels when she meets half-angel Hasan Attar, a fellow intern. As Ada wrestles with competing loyalties—including deception directed at Hasan and coordination with her own scheming half siblings—she finds herself increasingly unsure where her allegiance lies. Juggling apocalyptic stakes and sharp family dynamics rooted in rivalry and dysfunction, Ada's sardonic narration keeps the tone buoyant, lightly sketching an accessible supernatural world without sacrificing momentum. The result is an entertaining blend of celestial bureaucracy and teen angst. Ages 14–up. *Agent: Cate Hart, Harvey Klinger Literary. (Oct.)*

Anger Is Only a Shadow

Elizabeth Acevedo. Quill Tree, $19.99 (336p)
ISBN 978-0-06-288279-0

★ Acevedo (*Clap When You Land*) returns with a stirring verse novel about a teenager struggling to reconcile her present-day self and her hopes for the future. Following a stay at a youth services center for stealing and crashing her mother's food truck, Indigenous Salvadoran and Afro-Dominican 17-year-old Liliana Teicuh Pantaleon-Ortiz is released into her parents' custody in D.C. with an ankle monitor to await her next hearing. With her 18th birthday—and threat of adult sentencing—looming, the teen grapples with her instinct to fall into old patterns and her desire to chart a new path. Rather than focusing on herself, she becomes preoccupied with her older brother Aldwin, whose recent behaviors, including talking to himself and experiencing increased paranoia, have turned him into someone she doesn't recognize. Though her parents dismiss her concerns, Lil believes that disobeying probation and crossing state lines to visit Aldwin in Richmond is the only way to help him—even at the cost of her freedom. Evocative language captures institutional confinement and celebrates books—such as bell hooks's *All About Love* and Toni Morrison's *Beloved*—as a source of self-discovery and refuge. It's a striking and nuanced portrait of the realities of juvenile detention and mental illness. Ages 14–up. *Agent: Alexandra Machinist, CAA. (Sept.)*

COMICS

Haunted Comic Club (Haunted Comic Club #1)

Josh Tierney, illus. by Caitlin Soliman. Oni, $16.99 paper (240p)
ISBN 979-8-89488-333-5

Tweens bond over their love for creating and offer each other support in this earnest, lightly speculative graphic novel, a series launch from

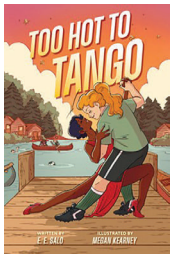
Tierney (the World Piece series) and debut illustrator Soliman. Hoping to spend more time with a classmate and crush, pale-skinned middle schooler Will, a writer, joins the Tween Zone, an after-school social club. There, Will stumbles across an art room and encounters Anita, portrayed with light brown skin, who attends another school. Anita takes comfort in drawing as she grieves her grandmother's recent death; recognizing her talent, Will suggests they create a comic book together. They base their story on a local urban legend about a Tween Zone volunteer who once drowned in the club's pool and is rumored to haunt the establishment. Between visits to the Tween Zone, the duo separately research the drowning, and as their creation takes shape, their deepening friendship helps them tackle friction outside the club, including bullies, family obligations, and a school dance. Saturated full-color artwork rendered using crisp, tactile lines maintains readers' attention across a low-conflict plot, peppered with ambiguous supernatural elements, that emphasizes the power of collaboration and creative expression. The result is a satisfying portrait of community. Ages 8–12. *(Oct.)*

The Moonlit Spiral

Mike Maihack. Candlewick, $24.99 hardcover (304p); $14.99 paper
ISBN 978-1-5362-2448-1;
ISBN 978-1-5362-2450-4

Maihack (the Mighty Marvel Team-Up series) presents a whimsical fantasy graphic novel, a treasure-hunt adventure that boasts enchanting worldbuilding. In the world of Helix, seeking riches and artifacts from past civilizations was once a way of life, and celebrated explorer Orion Theodorus Flynn was its North Star. But after he vanished while pursuing a prize that "would rival all of the past fantastic treasures he had ever discovered," the occupation faded into legend. In the present, young, orphaned Rion Flynn, portrayed with brown skin, struggles to believe in the magic that once propelled treasure hunters and informed society. Rion is forced to reconsider his skepticism when he uncovers a hidden map to Orion's final treasure and a feline youth, Quill, inexplicably materializes in his room. Joined by Quill as well as Rion's brown-skinned friend Zyla, Rion embarks on a journey to prove that Orion's quest was not made in vain and to restore the world's faith in magic. Across a vivid landscape rendered in a jewel-toned palette, the trio encounter luminous snails, secret passageways, mysterious texts, and dangerous creatures, reinforcing the story's charm. Action-adventure plotting and epistolary storytelling with echoes of Indiana Jones derring-do combine for an inviting offering. Ages 8–12. *Agent: Judy Hansen, Hansen Literary. (Oct.)*







Too Hot to Tango

E.E. Salo, illus. by Megan Kearney. Abrams Fanfare, $24.99 hardcover (208p); $17.99 paper
ISBN 978-1-4197-7512-3;
ISBN 978-1-4197-7511-6

A soccer star and a dance phenom find common ground and something more in this joyful graphic novel romance from debut author Salo and Kearney (*Swan Lake: Quest for the Kingdoms*). Pale-skinned high school graduate Honey is spending the summer before starting college coaching soccer at a sports-centered sleepaway camp. While attending a party at the art camp across the lake, Honey encounters brown-skinned Teddi, a beautiful, enigmatic tango dancer who pulls clumsy Honey onto the dance floor and teaches her a few moves. Honey soon learns that Teddi and her dance partner, light-brown-skinned Jasper, have traveled from Australia for an audition to dance for a Broadway legend, which Teddi believes could be her big break. When a game of Capture the Flag involving Honey and Jasper goes sideways and Jasper breaks his arm, Honey, feeling guilty, offers to take his place as Teddi's partner. And as the clock winds down to the audition and Teddi and Honey's preparations intensify, the girls grow closer. Energetic and sunny full-color illustrations burst with feel-good fun and personality across movement-filled panels, adding buoyancy to a familiar yet sweeping story about leaving one's comfort zone. It's *Dirty Dancing* with a queer rom-com twist. Ages 14–up. *Agent (for Salo and Kearney): Susan Graham, Einstein Literary Management.. (Sept.)*

NONFICTION

Some Body, Every Body!

Roz MacLean. Bloomsbury, $14.99 (32p)
ISBN 978-1-5476-1888-0

★ Emphasizing the idea that "all bodies are GREAT," this celebratory picture book from MacLean (*Together, a Forest*) offers a communal snapshot of people of varied abilities, ages, shapes, and sizes. Straightforward, crisply rhyming lines begin by noting physical qualities ("Some bodies are BIG./ Some bodies are small") before describing assorted actions ("Some bodies swim./ Some bodies play.// Some bodies dance around all day!"). Radiant gouache, acrylic gouache, and digital illustrations incorporate sky blues and citrus hues in depicting an intersectionally inclusive array of individuals moving and resting. On one page, a shopper riding an electric cart ("Some bodies are short") accepts help from a grocery store employee ("Some bodies are tall"). Elsewhere, a character with an ostomy bag lounges at the beach, band members wear face masks while performing onstage, and a child is nourished through a G-tube. Final pages lean into limits and similarities ("when our bodies get tired,/ they all need to rest"), concluding with an image of the way a physical form "lets me be here with you!" Showcasing a wide breadth of embodiment and movement with and without aids, this is powerfully body-neutral. Ages 3–6. *Agent: Naomi Davis, BookEnds Literary. (Sept.)*

A Spark of Greatness: The Autobiography of a Fighter

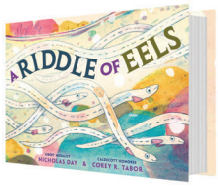
Laila Ali, illus. by Cozbi A. Cabrera. Crown, $19.99 (40p)
ISBN 978-0-593-43485-7

In collaboration with Caldecott Honoree Cabrera, Ali (*Reach!*, for adults) makes her picture book debut with a candid memoir about growing

up as the daughter of Muhammad Ali and forging her own identity inside and outside the ring. Beginning with a childhood lived alongside her father's global fame, Ali describes early feelings of loneliness and disinterest in the spotlight ("Would you want to share your daddy with the whole world?"). When the family moves into a smaller house without Ali's father, she finds a "wee fire growing in the hollow of me," a restless energy that leads to fighting at school. After she's sent to a "home for girls who need guidance," she begins to wonder if there's "more to strength than force." And seeing women's boxing for the first time prompts a moment of revelation that leads her to pursue the sport, despite early pushback from family. Through rigorous training and determination, she transforms instinct into controlled, trained skill, stepping into the ring on her own terms. Thickly stroked acrylic on board portraits depict Ali's youthful iterations in this empowering, internally focused portrait that champions using one's superpower "for good." An author's note and career facts conclude. Ages 4–8. *(Sept.)*

A Riddle of Eels

Nicholas Day, illus. by Corey R. Tabor.
Random House Studio, $19.99 (48p)
ISBN 978-0-5939-0569-2



"The eel is hard to hold. It slips from our grasp," and so does certainty itself in an awe-inspiring work of nonfiction from Day (*Nice Work*) and Tabor (*Bear for a Day*) that explains just how little is known about this commonplace creature. Wry, contemplative lines trace thousands of years of "scientists, naturalists, philosophers—anyone with any sense of wonder" whose ardent pursuit generated a parade of earnest theories about the eel's life cycle ("*Eels are a real eel of a problem*, you could say"). Aristotle determined there was "no doubt" eels came from mud; Pliny the Elder concluded that they reproduce by scraping themselves against rocks; and though Johannes Schmidt theorized that their birthplace is the Sargasso Sea, he couldn't find "a single full-grown eel there." Behind every one of these theories lies the Eel Question, which originally meant "*Where do eels come from?*" but "maybe... also should mean: *After looking at something for so long, how can we know so little?*" Mixed-media artwork aptly aligns with the text's playful spirit: loose, luminous, and slippery in their own right, vignettes gently spoof books of learning (one page renders eel likenesses of Sigmund Freud and Rachel Carson, among others), and marbled textures lend a watery feel to every spread. In a world that strives to assure that everything can be known, indexed, and mapped, this astounding book celebrates one vast, wondrous "crack in our wall of knowledge"—and delivers the delicious frisson that some riddles are worth savoring. A note and sources conclude. Ages 4–8. *(Sept.)*

We Are the Keystones: Animals That Hold Habitats Together

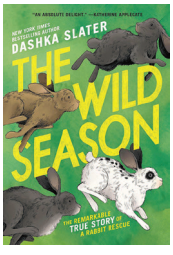
Katy S. Duffield, illus. by Hannah Salyer.
Beach Lane, $19.99 (40p)
ISBN 978-1-66594-689-6

Smooth, largely first-person plural sestains announce the pivotal role keystone species play in keeping their ecosystems balanced and healthy in this illuminating science-led appreciation from Duffield (*Crossings*) and Salyer (*Rain and the Reading Horse*): "All throughout the nature-hoods,/ in marshes, grasslands, water, woods,/ they help themselves—help others too—/ just by doing what they do." Wolves, grizzly bears, tiger sharks, parrotfish, and even the southern cassowary all receive their due. Hummingbirds, for example, "visit blossoms, dip our beaks./ Pollen dots our heads, our cheeks./ ...More flowers mean more fruits, more seeds—/ a gift fulfilling many needs." Accompanying captions provide further ecological insights, touching, for example, on the way beaver dams filter water as well as create ponds that become habitats for other aquatic dwellers. Digitally finished gouache paintings with luminous accents impressionistically render the featured organisms with vibrant, cool-toned hues, giving the art a sun-bleached feel. Earth's interconnectedness comes to the fore in this incantatory homage. Further info and sources conclude. Ages 4–8. *Author's agent: Ammi-Joan Paquette, Erin Murphy Literary. Illustrator's agent: Stephen Barr, Writers House. (Sept.)*



The Wild Season: The Remarkable True Story of a Rabbit Rescue

Dashka Slater, illus. by Jamey Christoph.
Little, Brown, $18.99 (272p)
ISBN 978-0-316-59627-5



In this heartwarming nonfiction work, Slater (*Good Night, Escargot*) and Christoph (*A Universe of Rainbows*) recount the rescue of four domesticated rabbits abandoned in San Francisco's Golden Gate Heights Park in June 2023. A dramatic opening imagines how, under cover of night, a mysterious, faceless figure, depicted in dynamic sketchlike b&w artwork, abandoned the bunnies at the park for unknown reasons. Divided into seven sections, anticipatory text follows the dedicated rescuers—including local kids, an elderly dog walker, teenage Marine Mammal Center volunteer Allison Yuen, and Jessica Peters, who founded rabbit rescue organization Oakland Street Bunz—as they determine to save the animals. Firsthand accounts and contextualizing information are handily woven into the unfolding narrative, offering insights into the history of the park and the differences between wild and domesticated rabbits, and underscoring the dangers faced by abandoned pets. Tension builds as the rabbits consistently evade capture and the rescuers contend with predators drawn by the animals' scent, lending urgency to the mission. It all adds up to a compassionate and informative true story that highlights the importance of collective action. Ages 8–12. *Author's agent: Erin Murphy, Aevitas Creative Management. (Sept.)*

booklife REVIEWS

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

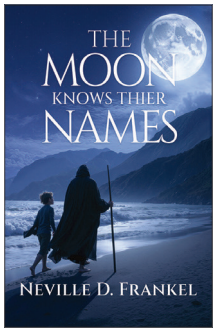
FICTION

EDITOR'S PICK

The Moon Knows Their Names

Neville Frankel

296, trade paper, $23.95, ISBN 978-1-956-92168-7



Frankel's sprawling historical novel takes place in a fictive African colony called Plumb Landing, in the aftermath of World War II. The plot revolves around four men and the little boy, Bahari, they've been tasked with protecting. Pole and Bean come from cousin tribes in Plumb Landing while Abel and Zilbs are Jewish refugees from Nazi-controlled Germany, seeking new lives on the African coast. Fate and a woman cause their paths to intertwine, propelling a cascade of events that change all their lives.

Frankel alternates between the perspectives of the four men—and Flor, Pole's wife, who's at the center of their combined tragedy—through past flashbacks and present wonderings, giving each their own unique arcs and corresponding outlooks on life. Abel and Zilbs may have suffered the same fate at the hands of the Nazis, but they couldn't be more different—Abel is incapable of harming a soul, while Zilbs has done more than his fair share of harm. Similarly, Pole and Bean come from very different tribes who suffer a history of mutual ignorance, and, sometimes, hatred. It's because of Bahari that these disparate souls are forced together, creating a tense—if symbiotic—union.

Lyrical, compelling tapestry of love, secrets, and family legacies.

Great for fans of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*, Yaa Gyasi's *Homegoing*.

Frankel skillfully melds African lore, full of myth and magic, with Western beliefs, painting each character's positions and actions against the backdrop of their shared experiences. Woven throughout the narrative are the aftershocks of British colonization, the lingering effects of WWII, time-honored traditions, and love's ability to endure, protect, and heal. Frankel writes with gentle power, imbuing readers with an intimate knowledge of each character while also keeping them guessing, and the novel's examination of how legacies—of devotion, of hate, of violence—are passed through generations is compelling. The result is transfixing, a reminder of the interweaving of lives, memories, and the human experience.

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

FICTION

Maire Said No: Spirits, Saints and Sinners in Celtic Tiger Ireland

Barbara Hallahan | Nettle

237p, trade paper, $12, ISBN 978-1-067-60000-6



Hallahan's debut probes the boundaries of human reproductive research in "the least likely country" of Ireland, consisting of three short stories that set the precedent for the novella "Maire Said No." In 1980, Áine copes with the loss of her son, Michael—a death that leaves her both weightless and weighed down—during the hidden, unwanted pregnancy of her sixth child. In 1985, a troubled teenage girl gives birth but succumbs to complications, the baby remaining in the care of her doctor, Colm. In the final story, set in 2005, Savage confronts his past indiscretions during secretive IVF research and procedures on Rose, performed under a questionable researcher Arijit Bansal.

Women's destinies are intertwined from the start, as Hallahan sculpts stark physical details with a tender, descriptive touch, with lines like "a great damp flower blooming between her legs" highlighting the confluence of beauty and terror that epitomizes women's health. In the novella, speech therapist Maire struggles with fertility while navigating her relationship with her American boyfriend. Rose's fertility issues are treated like an experiment by Arijit, the side effects often making her a shell of a person.

Diverse, compelling perspectives on women's health in Celtic Ireland.

Great for fans of Laura Anthony's *The Women on Platform Two*, Sarai Johnson's *Grown Women*.

Writing a novella preceded by stories allows for a centrality from the book's primary characters, with compelling callbacks to past and future context. The scientific terminology, procedures, and statistics are thoroughly explained and draw attention to women's health issues, and Hallahan tactfully delves into instances of prejudice, subtly emphasizing racist microaggressions through American perspectives, code switching for respect, and the sometimes-purposeful misspelling of Maire's name in dialogue. This is an essential collection of riveting short fiction, beautifully and tragically written.

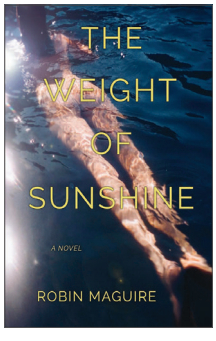
Cover: **B** | Design & typography: **A-** | Illustrations: **–** Editing: **A-** | Marketing copy: **A-**

FICTION

The Weight of Sunshine

Robin Maguire | High Frequency Press

358p, e-book, $19.95, ISBN 978-1-962931-74-8



Maguire's latest centers on well-to-do best friends—and star-crossed lovers—Nina Rhodes and Jax Hart, as they sweep through each other's lives, navigate outside relationships, and, ultimately, learn the sustaining power of belonging and love. Though close in college, Nina and Jax struggle to admit their mutual attraction, leading them both to unsatisfactory marriages: Nina with James and Jax with Penny. The unraveling of those relationships drives the pair back together, resulting in an unexpected pregnancy—and the birth of their son, Sam. But Nina and Jax soon learn that unbridled passion often comes with a cost: James dies by suicide, Penny leaves Jax, and the two must work out how to brave life together.

Maguire (*47 Men*) perfectly captures the heady attraction between Nina and Jax, and it serves as a steadying beat throughout their lives. Through multiple perspectives and flashbacks, their losses, conflicts, and the small moments of connection that constitute a meaningful life emerge. From Sam to his wife Martine and daughter Isabella to James's best friend (and Sam's namesake), the narrative plows through Nina and Jax's complexities, rendering the life journeys of several interesting characters. Foremost of those is Meredith Welbourne, James's first wife, a generous, fun-loving woman whose final decision drives home the special bond she and Nina develop in the aftermath of James's death. Other relationships proceed with the expected intricacies of human interplay—betrayals, disappointments, flashes of bliss—along with a handful of surprises, some of which feel less emotionally earned than others—particularly the twist in James's relationship with his best friend, Sam.

True-to-life journey of love, loss, and human connection.

Great for fans of Devney Perry's *Crossroads*, Jill Santopolo's *The Light We Lost*.

What gives the narrative staying power is the central pair's undeniable chemistry, each complementing and bringing out the best in the other. Readers willing to settle in and get to know Maguire's characters will be richly rewarded, and, though it ends on a sober note, *The Weight of Sunshine* is ultimately an immersive, absorbing read.

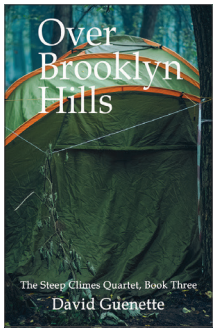
Cover: **A-** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: – Editing: **A** | Marketing copy: **A-**

FICTION

Over Brooklyn Hills: The Steep Climes Quartet, Book 3

David Guenette | CMTI Publishing

354p, e-book, $6.99, ISBN 979-8-9885055-5-6



Incisive, humane near-future novel of the Berkshires in the climate crisis.

Great for fans of Julia Glass's *Vigil Harbor*, Lauren Groff's *Florida*.

The clear-eyed third entry in Guenette's near-future series, set in the Berkshires in a 2035 of climate and refugee crises, stands out for Guenette's singular blend of prognostication, rich characterization, slice-of-life scenecraft, process-oriented thriller elements, and deep interest in activism, journalism, governance, technological shifts, and the surprising ramifications of climate change. Guenette connects horrific global heatwaves to everyday existence around Great Barrington, Mass., which faces an escalating influx of transients, both the usual vacationers and desperate people seeking relief from the heat. In the midst of a housing crisis, the journalists and city administrators in Guenette's sprawling cast fear—and will face—violence, but much of the novel explores, with keen understanding of interconnected systems, the practical challenges faced by the city, and changemakers on both sides of the law.

The cast, led by now-70-year-old artist/journalist Davin Caine, features a beleaguered town manager in a failing marriage; a climate activist building explosive devices for a domestic terror cell; and many more. Guenette writes convincing accounts of bomb-making, dealings with cartels, life on the run, and the tracking of dark money political contributions, but the heart of the novel is in his detailed forecast of the world (and weather) to come. He builds a plausible 2035 with a light hand—offshore sea walls, news outlets charging micro-payments—and welcome focus on lived experience.

The novel is structurally ambitious but also diffusive, with many pages giving to rumination. The strongest narrative momentum comes in chapters about Allen Randolph, the bomb-maker, and town manager Fletch, while Davin's macular degeneration and attraction to his house sharer, Be, inspires the warmest and funniest writing. Threads converge slowly but with intelligence and power. Newcomers will struggle to keep up, but old-hands will be moved as Guenette balances humanity and tension, hope and warning.

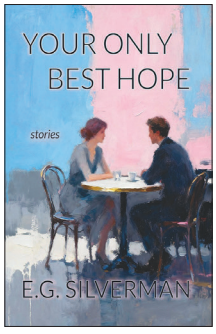
Cover: **B** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **–** Editing: **A-** | Marketing copy: **A-**

FICTION

Your Only Best Hope

E.G. Silverman | High Frequency Press

180p, hardcover, $25, ISBN 978-1-962931-63-2



Pensive characters navigate moral ambiguity in ruminative collection.

Great for fans of George Saunders's *Tenth of December*, Lorrie Moore's *Birds of America*.

A collection of evocative, sometimes morally-conflicted stories, Silverman's debut presents diverse characters in unique circumstances that each demand answers. "Moosehead Lake" introduces Paul Eiford, a man who escaped his problems in Boston by living in a cabin on a lake in Maine, only to find a different set of challenges with a young woman who may want more from him than he can give. Meanwhile, the titular offering finds Albert clinging to earlier visions of his wife before she became ravaged by cancer, as the narrative observes, "He's discovered that when faced with her decaying body and approaching death... his attempts to summon affection for her came up empty."

Readers are swept into a roller coaster of emotions in these stories, glimpsing individuals seeking meaning and purpose amid life's complexities. Ted Moran, a smalltown pharmacist in "Sourland Pharmacy" must confront whether to sell his declining pharmacy and seek retirement—at the same time he contemplates if his attraction to his employee, Lucy, is strong enough to chance cheating on his wife. In the end, he chooses the memory of his wife's now-faded admiration over disrupting the mundane and familiar. Elsewhere, Bill Snow returns to Pittsburgh after his mother's death to settle her estate. In his memories lurks a simmering connection to his old English teacher, who seduced him when he was in high school. When the pair meet again, Bill ruminates on whether to repeat his past mistakes—or "wise up for once and avoid the disappointment and guilt."

While Silverman's characters probe the tenuous lines between right and wrong—and past and present—readers will be consumed by the intricate musings and wonderings that lead up to their ultimate decisions. Most of them come to the conclusion, much like Karl in "To Smile in a Dream," that "the thing to do [is] to go on. Make the best of it or don't."

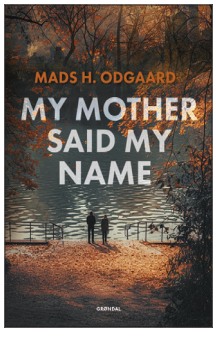
Cover: **B+** | Design & typography: **A-** | Illustrations:– Editing: **A-** | Marketing copy: **A**

FICTION

My Mother Said My Name

Mads H. Odgaard | Grøndal

377p, e-book, $3.99, ISBN 978-87-975358-7-5



Afghan refugee rebuilds through love, purpose, and human connection.

Great for fans of Kamila Shamsie's *Home Fire*, Leo Vardiashvili's *Hard by a Great Forest*.

Odgaard's debut follows Mina, a young Afghan woman fleeing the Taliban's destruction of her family, freedoms, and life. When her mother is viciously attacked by the Taliban in 2021 Kabul, Mina, her father, and her younger sister escape to a refugee camp in Denmark. While carrying the trauma of her mother's fate, Mina navigates grief, exile, and academic ambition, settling in New York City in March 2022. There, she forms a friendship with her neighbor, Holocaust survivor Isak Mendelsohn, whose own experiences with loss and suffering open a deep connection between the two. Eventually, Mina ventures into international politics and intelligence work with the CIA, while the novel's greater arc explores survival, memory, displacement, and responsibility.

This is a novel that asks—and answers—the question of how people continue living, loving, and caring after profound loss. The narrative ventures beyond a mere personal reflection; it's also a meditation on how political violence shapes individual lives across generations. Mina's journey explores how private trauma can be linked to global power systems—and how history continues to influence identity long after physical escape. Mina's relationships, especially with Mr. Mendelsohn and her own family, counterbalance the novel's geopolitical themes by emphasizing memory and care while showing that distressing emotions don't have to be experienced alone.

Odgaard portrays healing as a gradual adaptation rather than an easy resolution, as Mina's journey moves from an intimate family narrative to CIA missions and espionage to a late-in-the-game shocking turn of events that leads Mina to a welcome—if uncertain—future. Odgaard glues those many developments together with emotionally weighted prose, crafting everyday scenes that land with an intensity that often surpasses the novel's more overtly dramatic passages. The end result is both ambitious and deeply human, resulting in a narrative that emerges as a striking blend of family drama, refugee experience, and political fiction.

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

PAID REVIEWS

FICTION

Morons of War

Sloan Green

310p, e-book, $2.99, ISBN 979-8-9952671-1-9



Funny, biting military satire exposes war's moral detachment.

In this razor-sharp military satire, Green gives an insider view of drone warfare, where death arrives through vending-machine Pop-Tarts and Jimmy Buffett songs playing over missile strikes. Captain Charlie Young, a disillusioned MQ-9 Reaper pilot stationed at Cathcart Air Force Base in Nevada, yearns for a transfer to a non-combat reconnaissance unit. But his fellow pilot, Lieutenant Colonel Clutterbuck, refuses to sign his transfer until Young "get[s] weapons off the rail" and kills an enemy. As the base initiates a massive, overblown military response to protesters demanding peace, Young is caught in a spiral of administrative madness involving undercover agents, a pilot who accidentally plucks out his own eye, and a mysterious clearance authority named CLAIRE.

Green's prose is cold and snappy, using military jargon to expose the inanity of military bureaucracy. Scenes of pilots celebrating missile kills while debating refrigerator features or singing "Cheeseburger in Paradise" are grotesquely funny precisely because they are written with such casual normalcy. The characterization bites, too: Harding's wheezing bloodlust, Clutterbuck's cultlike devotion to freedom, and Milgram's desire to be a general feel cartoonish at first, until the reader recognizes how frighteningly plausible these men are within the novel's ecosystem. However, Green counters the novel's satirical tone with Charlie Young's lingering humanity and moments of genuine melancholy surrounding lost ideals of aviation, service, and heroism.

Great for fans of Joseph Heller's *Catch-22*, Ben Fountain's Billy Lynn's *Long Halftime Walk*.

While the absurdity occasionally reaches a fever pitch—notably Clutterbuck's no-door policy and his insistence on carrying a British longbow into a modern war zone—the comedy remains grounded in the question of blind institutional loyalty and the anesthetization of moral responsibility in flying attack drones. Ultimately, the novel exposes how the most dangerous aspect of mechanized warfare may not be the machines themselves, but the ordinary people who learn to operate them without ever truly feeling the weight of what they destroy.

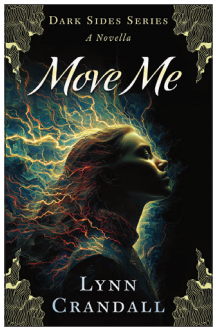
Cover: **B+** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **–** Editing: **A-** | Marketing copy: **A**

ROMANCE

Move Me: A Dark Sides novella

Lynn Crandall

128p, e-book, $3.99, ASIN B0H2FMSG8H



Compelling romantasy novella of an adversary's redemption.

Two deeply flawed individuals find romance amidst the battle between darkness and light in this accomplished but too-brief companion novella to Crandall's Dark Sides contemporary urban fantasy series. Cassie Butler is struggling to leave her past behind. Once known as Diane, she had betrayed her people, the Aeons, and joined forces with the Dark Sides, intent on inflicting darkness and suffering on the people of Auralia. In the ongoing battle between Aeons (the light) and the Dark Sides (the dark), Cassie has switched sides to rejoin the friends she's left behind. *Move Me* explores the challenges that follow. After the city is retaken, Cassie is installed as City Manager and must reconcile her new identity with the terrible things she did as a Dark Aspect (DA). When she's accosted by DAs, Cassie is flung headlong into a romance with a handsome stranger, Emmett, with secrets of his own. Together, they fight with the Aeons to maintain peace whilst learning about the power of forgiveness.

The romance compels, with memorable leads, fantasy-tinged but relatable problems, lively pillow talk, and that most crucial element: a tug of urgent connection that readers will feel right along with the leads. The novel's brisk pace and compact length, though, undercut the power of that connection, as readers will want more time with this cast—and to savor their discovery of each other. Promising story developments connected to the broader world, like some political intrigue, the resurgence of the Dark Sides, and Cassie's own redemption arc, likewise prove too interesting to settle into the background.

Great for fans of Marie Lu, Marissa Meyer.

Still, what is here engages and often delights. The choice to focus on a character who was an antagonist in other entries makes for a refreshing read in a genre where the line between good and evil is often too sharply defined. Readers familiar with the series will appreciate this return to its world, conflicts, and quirks, though reading this as a standalone diminishes its full impact.

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

SCIENCE, NATURE, TECHNOLOGY

Love Conquers Fear: Humanity, AI and the Age of Abundance for All

Brett Hurt | Do More Good

374p, hardcover, $34.99, ISBN 979-8-903-87000-4



Compelling appeal to overpower fear and evolve through love.

Intertwining science and spirituality, tech entrepreneur Hurt (*The Lattice*) explores the different ways fear can hinder humankind, urging readers to "learn how to control this basic instinct… before our weapons outpace our wisdom." The evolutionary path we are on, he writes, is a collective journey "of co-creation with the Superfecta of technologies": artificial intelligence, quantum computing, robotics, and brain-computer interfaces. To help readers usher in the Age of Abundance for All, Hurt starts with defining fear, encourages a world where love is the ultimate outcome, and prompts readers to stop planning for just the present—and start living for future generations.

Hurt's guide brims with research, personal insight, and a wealth of external citations, including multiple TEDtalks and material to help readers explore his concepts on their own. Those extra resources can make the text feel reference-heavy at times, but Hurt also includes some of his own enlightenment, gained from years of intuitive study and reflection. Most notably, his seven "New Models for Humanity" explore how humans have worked collectively in different societies—Bhutan and its framework of Gross National Happiness, Costa Rica's attention to literacy—to "deprogram" and reach a "state of spiritual abundance." Though he notes those examples are not perfect, he makes a convincing argument that they are successfully tackling essential elements to meaningful living.

Great for fans of Ethan Mollick's *Co-intelligence*, Reid Hoffman and Greg Beato's *Superagency*.

In urging humankind to integrate their future with AI technology, Hurt addresses education, climate control, religion, capitalism, women's equality, and more, building his framework on the belief that measured, intentional AI development is the key to "mitigate[ing] risk and allow[ing] humanity to flourish." We must keep up, transform, and progress with ever-evolving technological developments, he asserts—only then will we reach an upward trajectory of human advancement. Hurt's abiding foundation of spiritual Oneness, combined with his extensive tech know-how and future-focused perspective, make his dream of "create[ing] a better world through technology" feel remarkably achievable.

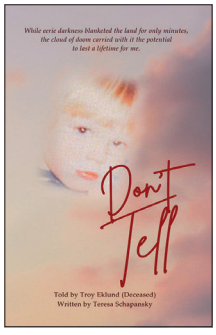
Cover: **B** | Design & typography: **A-** | Illustrations: **–** Editing: **B** | Marketing copy: **A**

MEMOIR

Don't Tell

Teresa Schapansky

185p, e-book, $22.99, ASIN BOGQNBKQWW



on's heartrending account of trauma inflicted by his abusive mother.

Great for fans of Jennette McCurdy's *I'm Glad My Mom Died*, Rex Ogle's *Punching Bag*.

Eklund's heart-breaking memoir, written by his former classmate, Teresa Schapansky, and published posthumously, begins with Schapansky's chronicle of Eklund's death after a "lifelong battle with drugs." The reason for that devastating trajectory quickly becomes clear, as Eklund's traumatic childhood story unfolds. Raised under his mother Teri's rule of "don't tell"—which became something of a mantra during his youth—Eklund recounts the men in and out of his and Teri's life, constantly moving due to Teri's criminal activities and break-ups, witnessing her drug use and overdoses, and being a victim of human trafficking starting at just six years old. The narrative takes shape through Eklund's direct memories as well as chilling accounts from family and friends that fill in the gaps from Eklund's reflections.

Schapansky takes great care in sharing her friend's story, highlighting both happy and dark times with empathy and emotion. Eklund's account delves into the horrors he faced while under Teri's care, while other narrations—Teri's brother, Eklund's younger half-sister, babysitters, family friends, Teri's ex-husband, and more—recount a tragic environment of unspeakable trauma. Many of the perspectives Schapansky shares hint at the frustration and despair that marked outsiders' attempts to protect Eklund, including Dennis, Teri's ex-husband and the father of his half-sister Sonja, who fought for custody of Eklund but was unsuccessful. "I knew that Teri was not at all fit to be a mother," he writes, though he acknowledges he wasn't aware of the full extent of her wrongs.

Despite the suffering readers glimpse through Eklund's story, what emerges is a tribute to his resilience and efforts to carve out a different life for himself as an adult. Snippets of Eklund's poetry and personal photographs give intimate weight to the narrative, illuminating Eklund's courage as he refuses to stay silent any longer. This is a heartrending, powerful rebellion against those who attempt to suppress victims of sexual assault and childhood abuse.

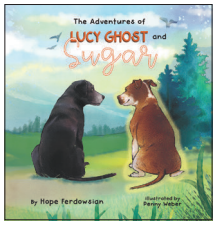
Cover: **B+** | Design & typography: **–** | Illustrations: **A-** Editing: **B+** | Marketing copy: **B+**

PICTURE BOOKS

The Adventures of Lucy Ghost and Sugar

Hope Ferdowsian | Kind House Publishing

36p, hardcover, $25.99, ISBN 979-8-9994671-0-2



Comforting story of a dog discovering meaningful work in the afterlife.

Great for fans of Elisha Cooper's *Big Cat, Little Cat*, Kerry Ferguson's *Fish Friends Forever*.

In Ferdowsian's sensitive, surprising picture book about animals and death, an elderly dog named Sugar learns about the meaningful work that awaits her in the afterlife. One day Sugar is visited by Lucy Ghost, a perky pup who used to live with the family before she died. Sugar is delighted when Lucy is joined by more grinning, spectral canines—and her excitement only increases when they introduce her to the Ghost Crew, a multispecies group of animal spirits who "help people and animals all over the world." Sugar spends the day zipping around the world with the Ghost Crew, "making each day a bit better" for animals stuck in tough spots.

Through her travels, Sugar (and readers) will gain sobering perspective on the harsh conditions many people and animals must endure around the world. A donkey hauling a cart in a war zone, for instance, is tasked with taking children to the hospital "so doctors can fix their arms and legs," lamenting, "I'll never understand why people hurt each other." A message of hope comes from ghost animals' zeal to help the living, as when spectral sharks use their fins to cut through fishing nets, freeing turtles and other creatures trapped inside. Helping gives Sugar a renewed sense of purpose and lessens her fear about dying, and before she leaves, Lucy offers a comforting farewell: "We'll be here waiting whenever you're ready."

While sparse page layouts and vague backgrounds undercut their impact, Penny Weber's illustrations are true-to-life and attentive to real-world animal bodies, poses, and expressions while emphasizing the loving relationship between Sugar and Lucy, showing the two old friends walking side by side or zipping across pastel skies on their travels with the Ghost Crew. Like all of the spirits, Lucy glows with a peaceful yellow light, while Sugar's black fur is starting to gray. Some images communicate isolation and heartbreak through small, simple details—a cow peering out from behind the bars of a cage, or a donkey finding an abandoned teddy bear behind a rock. In the end, this touching imagining of the animal spirit world will comfort readers who have also lost a furry family member.

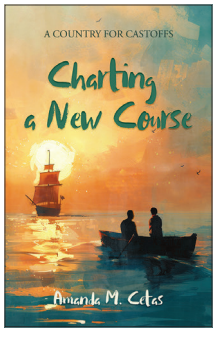
Cover: **B** | Design & typography: **B** | Illustrations: **A-** Editing: **B** | Marketing copy: **A-**

MIDDLE GRADE

Charting A New Course: A Country for Castoffs

Amanda M. Cetas | Windy Sea Publishing

194p, hardcover, $26.99, ISBN 978-1-956-27739-5



Historically vivid narrative of the hardships in 17th century life.

Great for fans of Caroline Starr Rose's *Blue Birds*, Elisa Carbone's *Poison in the Colony*.

Cetas concludes her middle grade adventure series with this historical narrative richly depicting 17th century life, following the events of *At the Mercy of the Sea*. Etienne—now shipwrecked off the coast of Jamaica—seeks cover from his pirate captain after having freed the boat's enslaved individuals. Losing his hard-earned money in the wreck, Etienne joins forces with Obi, a formerly enslaved man from the lost vessel, outrunning the weather, crocodiles, malaria, and a string of bad luck. Meanwhile, Long Island whaler's son Abraham is reeling after the sale of his brothers into indentured servitude. Six-year-old Caleb needs Abraham's help the most: he was sold to the Garlicks, a rough couple facing charges of witchcraft who have been abusive to young Caleb.

Cetas weaves those threads into a realistic tapestry of the desperate measures families often faced in early America. Here, slavery, indentured servitude, and baseless witch hunts transform society's most vulnerable into easy targets, assigning little meaning to human life while forcing men like Abraham's father into impossible choices: dangerous work, slashed profits thanks to England's taxes, and the inability to support their families leads to tragedy. Etienne also confronts hardship after hardship, finally making his way home only to find everything irrevocably altered—though his strong faith and deep sense of right and wrong see him through those traumas.

What Cetas does best is wring the emotion out of history's darkest moments: Indigenous villages are decimated and Dutch settlers displaced by English invaders, while the veiled threat of more sinister changes to come looms over the story's main characters. Still, there is a gentle hope in the series' ending, one that promises small moments of connection and tenderness amid an uncertain future. Abraham, Etienne, Caleb, and even Alsoomse—a central character from prior books—ultimately find a measure of peace, though readers familiar with history will understand that even that is no guarantee.

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

How This Book Was Made

OUR WEEKLY ANNOTATED GUIDE



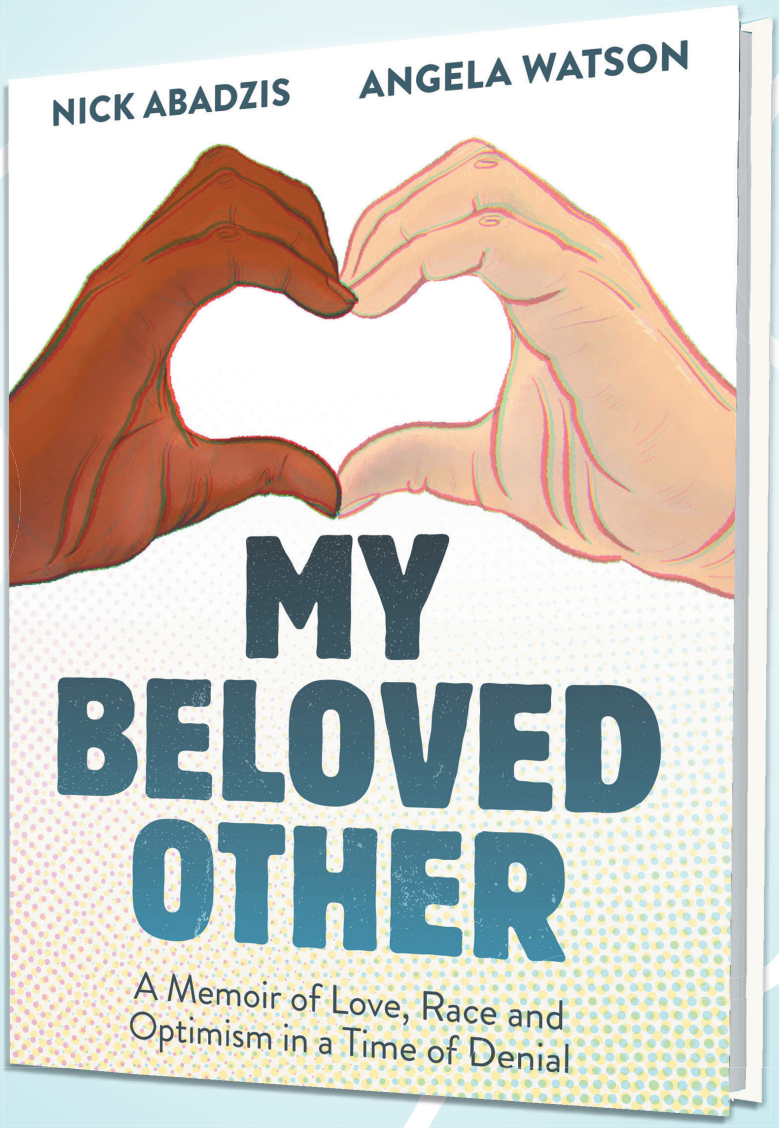
Author and Artist **Nick Abadzis**
"The idea behind hand-lettering the whole book is that I really wanted to make all the elements of lettering more a part of the artwork, in a way that comics all over the world used to do, before we could make fonts based on our own handwriting and tap out dialogue on a keyboard. I created extra work for myself choosing this method, but I really wanted *My Beloved Other* to have that personalized touch, that handmade quality."



Author
Angela Watson
"Our collaborative writing method might be a little unusual. I don't really write in the traditional sense. The way it worked was we recorded ourselves. We'd tell each other stories, tales from our past and our individual family mythologies. Nick would then transcribe those conversations, create dialogue and sequential thumbnails from them, and then we'd go over those and rewrite and edit them together."



VP and Executive Director, First Second and 23rd St.
Mark Siegel
"When he first brought up the seed of *My Beloved Other*, I was thrilled to take it on, but little did I know how it would transform into such a tale for our times. To further support Angela and Nick, we brought on the super-talented editor Traci Todd. She brought such great care into every aspect of the memoir, and to handling its many social, political, and personal threads."



My Beloved Other
Nick Abadzis and Angela Watson.
23rd St., Aug.
ISBN 978-1-5964-3370-0



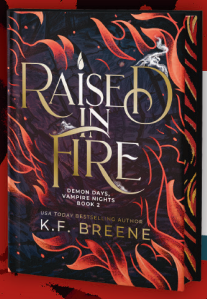
Agent, Morgan Green Creatives
Kirsty McLachlan
"There's nothing out there that directly compares the experience of racism in the U.K. and the U.S., and from the points of view of both Black and white people who, in this case, also happen to be in an interracial marriage. It's unique."

ABADZIS © NICK ABADZIS; WATSON © NICK ABADZIS; MCLACHLAN © KIRSTY MCLACHLAN; SIEGEL © MARK SIEGEL

SCORCHING — SUPERNATURAL — SUPERHUMAN



BORN IN FIRE
(DEMON DAYS, VAMPIRE NIGHTS, BOOK 1)
K.F. BREENE
AUGUST 4 2026
ISBN: 9781638493440



RAISED IN FIRE
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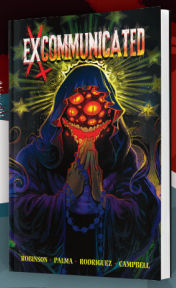
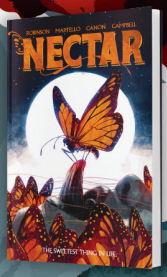
OCTOBER 6 2026
ISBN: 9781638493440



EXCOMMUNICATED
JEREMY ROBINSON - TIAGO PALMA
SEPTEMBER 22 2026
ISBN: 9781638493952



NECTAR
ROBINSON - MARTELLO - FRANCINI
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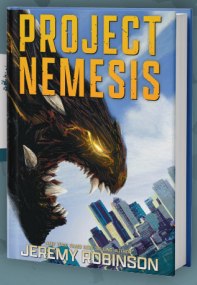

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(BOOK 1, NEMESIS SAGA)
JEREMY ROBINSON
OCTOBER 20 2026
ISBN: 9781638494102



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OCTOBER 13 2026
ISBN: 9781638492719



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ACTUS - LAUREL PURSUIT - AETHON
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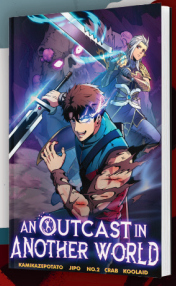

AN OUTCAST IN ANOTHER WORLD
(VOLUME 1)
KAMIKAZEPOTATO - JIPO - AETHON - TAPAS
SEPTEMBER 22 2026
ISBN: 9781638494454

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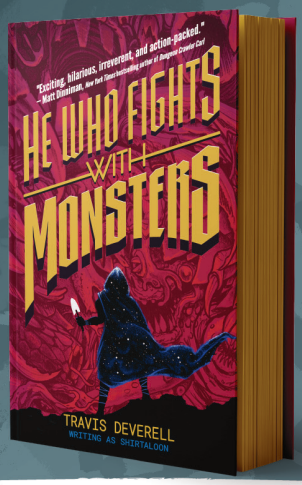
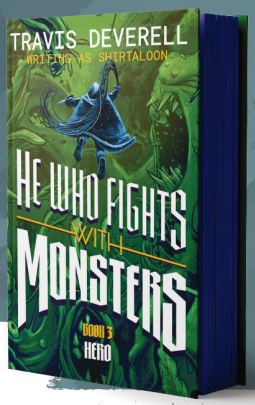
TRAVIS DEVERELL A.K.A. SHIRTALOON







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DUNGEON CRAWLER CARL

MATT DINNIMAN - LAUREL PURSUIT - TEVAGAH - AETHON





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