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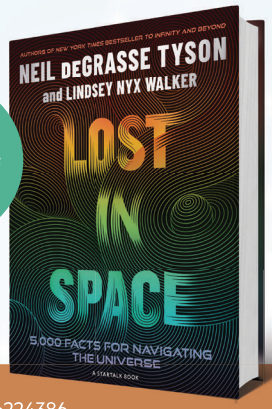
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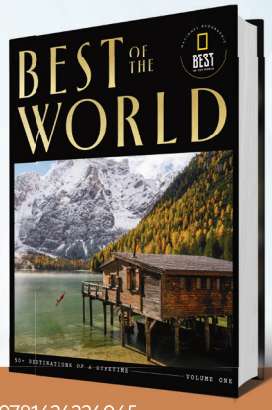


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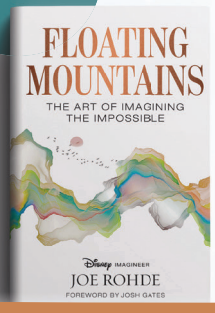


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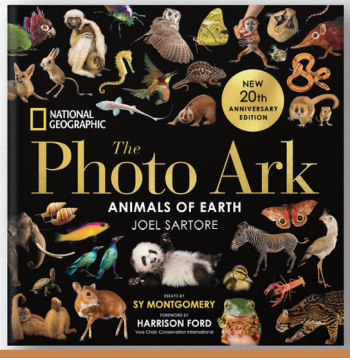


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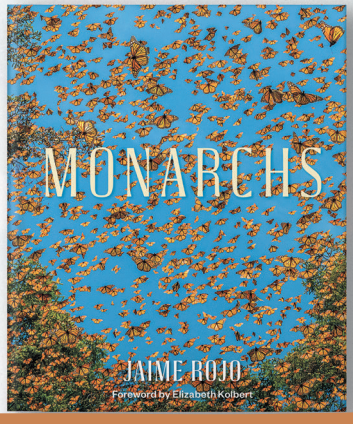
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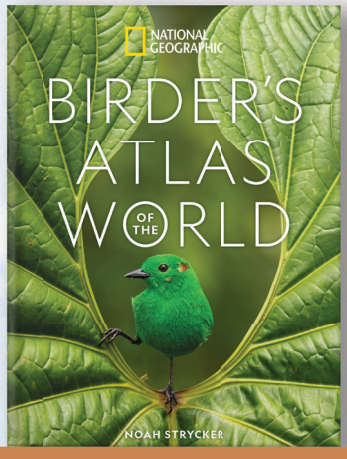
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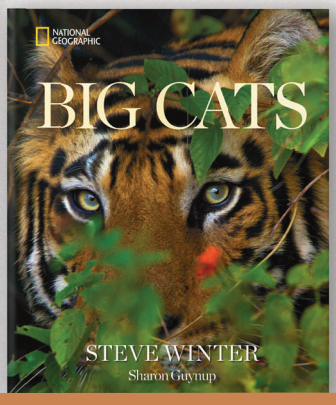
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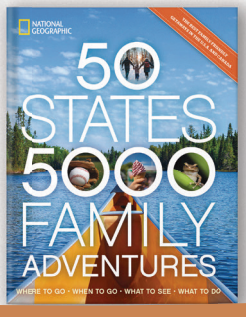
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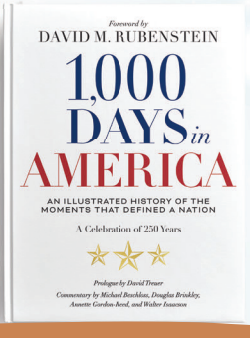
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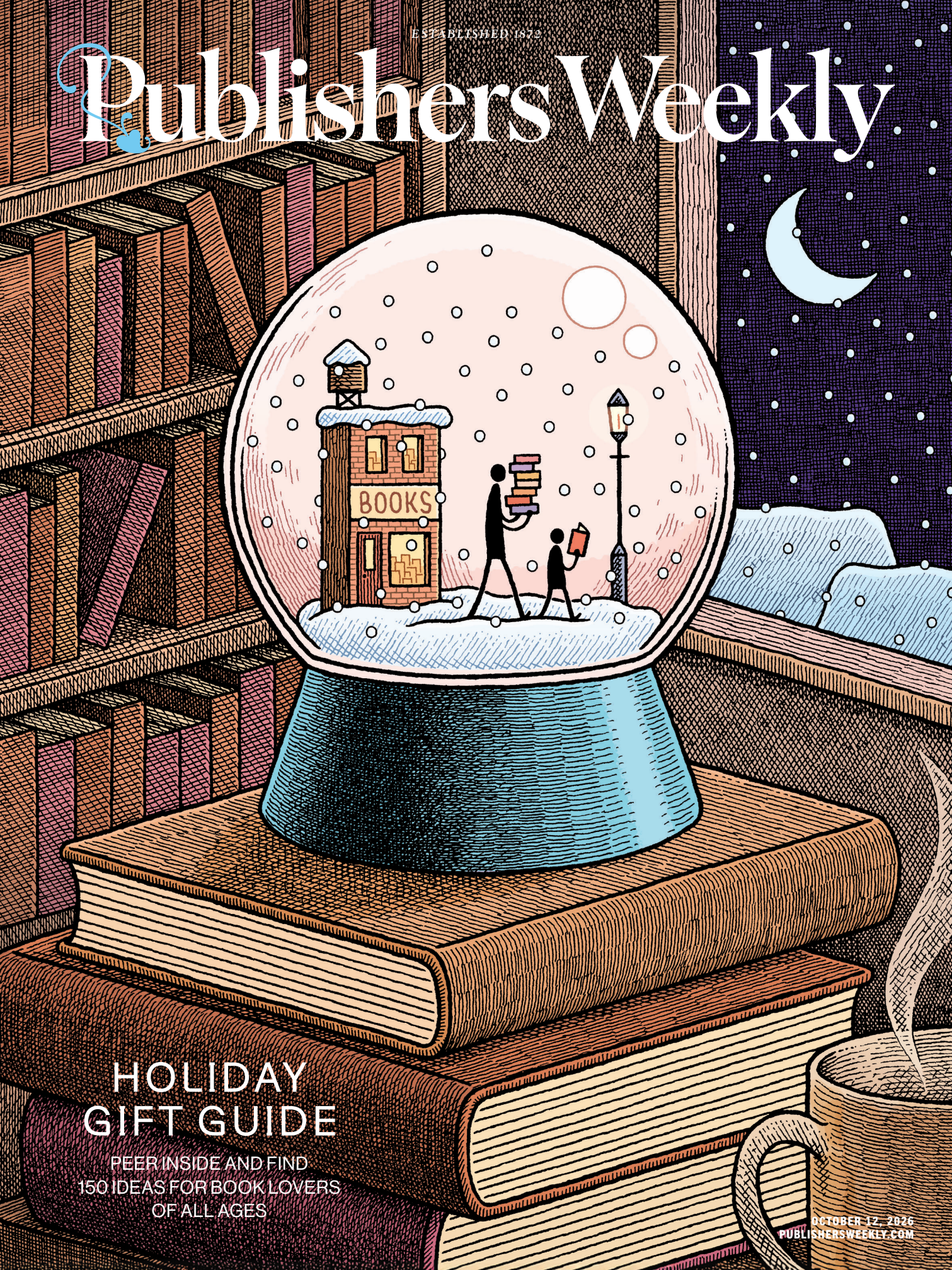
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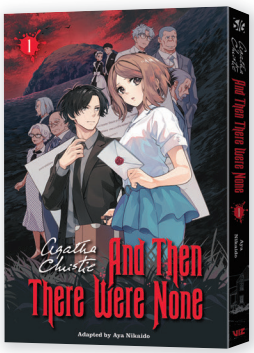
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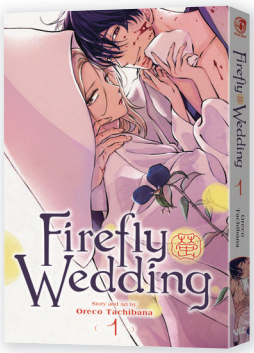


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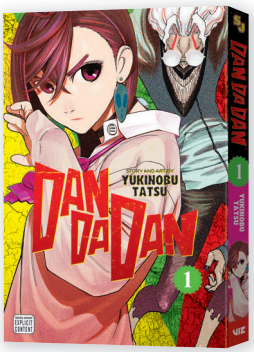
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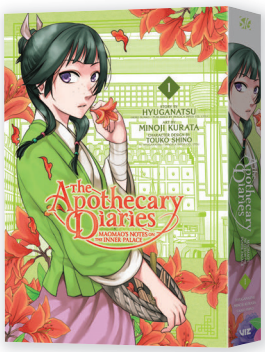
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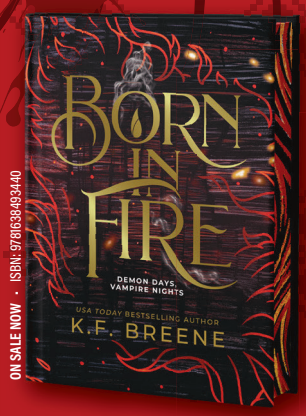
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Cover photograph by TOM GAULD

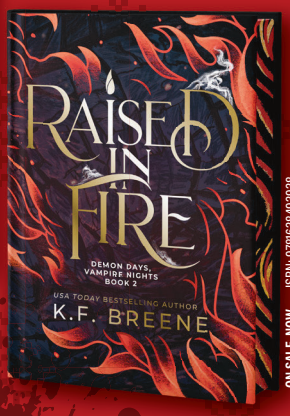
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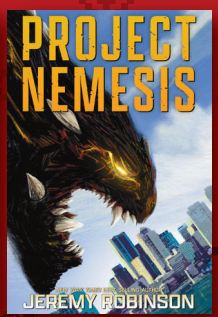
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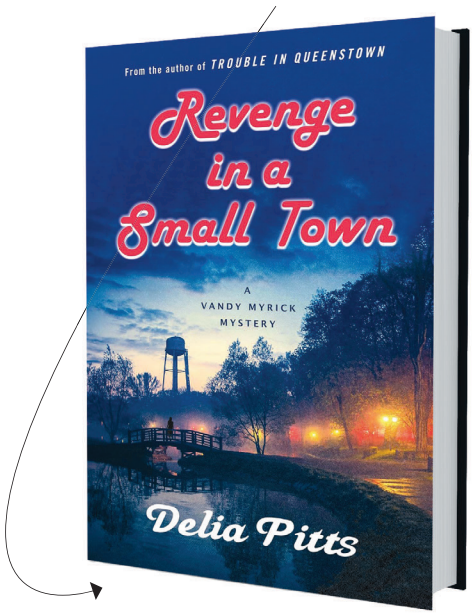
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Review of The Week

A POWERFUL FAMILY'S BURIED SECRETS RISE TO THE SURFACE IN THIS EXCEPTIONAL MYSTERY



Revenge in a Small Town (Vandy Myrick #3)
Delia C. Pitts. Minotaur, $29 (320p)
ISBN 978-1-250-42903-2

★ IN PITTS'S STERLING SEQUEL to *Death of an Ex*, PI Vandy Myrick continues to dig into the racial resentments of her hometown of Queenstown, N.J. At the outset, Vandy is hired by the Bartlett twins to protect their bedridden mother, Merna, who worked as a maid for the Peetes—Queenstown's most powerful family—several decades ago, before she fell down the stairs of their home and was paralyzed from the waist down. The Bartletts claim that their mother has been alluding to old secrets and grudges with the Peetes, and the siblings fear that someone might kill Merna to keep her quiet. Though Vandy doubts there is reason to fear for Merna's safety, she has bills to pay, so she accepts the job. When she arrives at Merna's home the next day, however, she finds the woman dead, and guiltily starts to investigate. What started out as a simple security detail morphs into an investigation into a 40-year-old mystery rooted in the uneasy relationship between Queenstown's white elites and its Black workers in the aftermath of the civil rights movement. Combining echoes of *The Help* with a riveting mystery, Pitts continues to deliver some of the best crime fiction on the market. This series deserves a long life. *(Dec.)*

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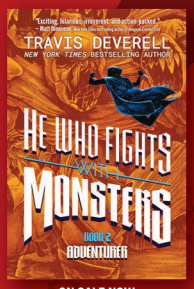


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THE WEEK IN PUBLISHING
10/3 – 10/9/26

Currents

Currents Currents Currents Currents



From l.: Outgoing Frankfurt Book Fair director Juergen Boos, U.S. historian Jill Lepore, and Sebastian Guggolz, chair of the Börsenverein des Deutschen Buchhandels at the opening press conference of the fair.

GUTEN TAG, FRANKFURT

PUBLISHING PROFESSIONALS from around the world converged on Germany for the Frankfurt Book Fair, held October 7–11, to ink deals, make connections, and, of course, talk about AI.

In an opening keynote, U.S. historian Jill Lepore warned that AI companies threaten reading, writing, and democracy, calling on publishers to "declare our independence." Later, on a panel about the impact of AI on publishing jobs, Bloomsbury founder and CEO Nigel Newton said fears that the technology will replace humans are "rubbish," and that he instead envisions a future in which "the same people can do their jobs better." However, he stressed that employers will need to equip workers with new skills.

Back in the exhibition halls, Seven Stories Press publisher Dan Simon was one of many fair-goers who observed that there seemed to be significantly fewer attendees from North America this year, and that traffic around the halls was generally light.

Still, he stressed the importance of the fair to the international book trade, noting that the brisk foreign rights sales for Seven Stories' recently acquired Paul Auster biography by Jennifer Bartlett "would not have happened as quickly were it not for Frankfurt."

Interest was also strong for dark romance, multigenerational family sagas, gaming and puzzle books, and "accessible" literary fiction with a "genre-adjacent hook," in the words of House of Anansi Press editorial director Douglas Richard, who said it has become a challenge to get readers to pick up "a more elevated, upmarket literary type of book."

In one of the last sessions of the fair, incoming director Joachim Kaufmann looked ahead to next year. "We need to make it relevant for traveling from Asia to Africa, to bring people together to meet the right people," he said. "When they go away, they must feel it was worth the effort and the money." *—ED NAWOTKA*

BOOK BANS HIT RECORD HIGH

PEN America recorded nearly 12,000 instances of book banning affecting 7,370 unique titles in 114 U.S. school districts during the 2025–2026 academic year, a record high since the group began tracking literary censorship in public schools in 2021.

In a recent report, PEN wrote that AI tools had likely facilitated the sharp increase in book bans, the vast majority of which occurred in Texas and Florida. Both states have legislation targeting "obscene" content in school libraries.

Texas recorded over 8,100 removals—more than the number of bans recorded in every state combined the previous year—and usurped Florida as the top book banner, following Texas's passage of the statewide book-banning law SB13 in 2025.

To ensure compliance with laws like SB13, schools in Texas and elsewhere are increasingly using AI chatbots to generate lists of titles with "indecent" or "profane" content. "By using key word and web searches for commonly banned books, AI tools scrape lists of titles without consideration for nuance, context, or intent, speeding up censorship," PEN said.

—SAM SPRATFORD



Anne Carson

ANNE CARSON WINS NOBEL PRIZE

The Swedish Academy has awarded the 2026 Nobel Prize in literature to Canadian poet, essayist, and classicist Anne Carson, "for her bold and inventive oeuvre that, in playful dialogue with the classical tradition, has created new forms for contemporary literature," per its announcement. The recognition honors the four-decade career of the 76-year-old writer, who is primarily published in the U.S. by New Directions and Knopf. Perhaps her best known work, the 1998 novel-in-verse *Autobiography of Red*, has sold nearly 100,000 copies in the U.S. across all formats, according to Knopf, and her most recent book, the National Book Award–shortlisted poetry collection *Wrong Norma*, was one of *PW*'s best books of 2024. In a 2010 profile, *PW* called her "one of the most respected poets and scholars in the English language, achieving a most unusual distinction: she became a popular poet." *—SOPHIA STEWART*

CARSON © PETER SMITH

Edited by **SOPHIA STEWART**
"ANNE CARSON, WHO WAS 'EATING CRACKERS' WHEN SHE HEARD SHE'D WON THE NOBEL, TOLD THE COMMITTEE AFTER THE ANNOUNCEMENT, 'I THINK YOU'RE ALL INSANE.'"

Weekly Record

Currents Currents Currents Currents

EDELWEISS OWNER ACQUIRES NETGALLEY

MONTREAL-BASED SOFTWARE company Valsoft has acquired the Newburyport, Mass.–based Firebrand Technologies and a pair of its affiliate companies, in a deal that consolidates the two major platforms that distribute digital ARCs to booksellers, librarians, and others.

Valsoft, which owns the developer of Edelweiss, will now also own Firebrand's NetGalley. The acquisition also includes Supadu, a London-based firm that builds websites and online stores and offers metadata and digital marketing services for publishers.

Firebrand, NetGalley, and Supadu will continue to operate independently and retain their leadership and employees, according to a release announcing the acquisition. A purchase price was not disclosed.

The three companies "are trusted names that publishers depend on every day," said Anthony Caruso, managing partner at Valsoft, in the announcement. "We're ecstatic to continue building and investing in the technology that helps a title from the moment it's created to the moment it reaches a reader."

In 2024, Valsoft acquired Edelweiss developer Above the Treeline, marking its second major investment in publishing industry software following its majority stake purchase in Klopotek in 2023. In 2025, Valsoft laid off 15% of the Edelweiss staff , citing a realignment of the business "around new strategic initiatives," and implemented price hikes that drew ire from users.

This summer, Ingram Content Group launched Covered, its own digital platform positioned as a lower-cost alternative to Edelweiss and NetGalley. *—NATALIE CHANDLER*

Top 10 Overall Bestsellers, Sept. 27–Oct. 3

RANK	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	UNITS
1	**Threshing Day (Wing and Claw ed.)**	Rebecca Yarros	Red Tower	857,802
2	**The French Illusion**	John Grisham	Doubleday	68,697
3	**The Steps**	Sylvester Stallone	Morrow	40,851
4	**Trust Fall**	Lynn Painter	Simon & Schuster	35,238
5	**Theo of Golden**	Allen Levi	Atria	34,772
6	**Verity**	Colleen Hoover	Grand Central	31,565
7	**The Long-Lived King**	Terrace/Crisostomo/Han	Hyperion Avenue	31,010
8	**American Hagwon**	Min Jin Lee	Cardinal	28,393
9	**Plantyou Quickies**	Carleigh Bodrug	Balance	25,390
10	**Escape Me (deluxe ed.)**	Tahereh Mafi	Storytide	23,962

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▶ POSTPANDEMIC BOOKSTORE TRAFFIC UP

After plunging during the pandemic, customer foot traffic at bookstores has steadily increased, according to an study by Placer.ai, a location analytics firm. Barnes & Noble has had the largest improvement, with visits up 33.6% since 2019, while visits to all other bookstores have increased 16.5%. B&N has experienced particularly strong improvement since 2023, and while Placer.ai said some of that increase is due to the addition of new stores, quarterly same-store visits have also increased year-over-year consistently since at least the start of 2024. The analysis also found customers were more likely to stay in a B&N location for more than 30 minutes than they were in other bookstores. *—JIM MILLIOT*

▶ MARVEL, WEBTOON TEAM ON COMICS APP

Marvel and Webtoon have announced the launch of the new Marvel Comics app, a digital comics platform that will include titles from Marvel, Star Wars, and 20th Century Studios. The app, built and operated by Webtoon, will replace the Marvel Unlimited app, which is the publisher's current digital platform. Per the announcement, the platform will eventually expand to include brands from across the Walt Disney Company portfolio, including Pixar and Disney Animation. The app, which officially launches November 16, is the culmination of a deal inked between Disney and Webtoon last September.

—CHRISTIAN HOLUB

▶ NAPOLITANO JOINS LITTLE, BROWN

Kate Napolitano will join Little, Brown as executive editor, with a focus on nonfiction, effective November 2. She will report to Alexander Littlefield, Little, Brown's editorial director for nonfiction. She previously served as editorial director of nonfiction at Atria, where she published such books as *Finding My Way* by Malala Yousafzai, *To Catch a Fascist* by Christopher Mathias, and *No Sense in Wishing* by Lawrence Burney. Over her career, which has also included stints at Dey Street and Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, Napolitano has acquired, edited, and published titles by Pamela Anderson, Quinta Brunson, Lil Wayne, Anne Helen Petersen, Phoebe Robinson, and 2Chainz.

—SOPHIA STEWART

Filling the Void

THE NEED FOR SPEED

In the wake of B&T's closure, library vendors are listening to publisher feedback and adapting to an accelerated marketplace



At a Follett Content Solutions warehouse, forthcoming titles are prepared for shipping.

WHETHER PROCESSING books for street-date delivery, pinging libraries with not-to-be-missed releases, refining collection development platforms, or tweaking metadata for discoverability, library vendors are constantly working to promote publishers and improve user experiences.

This effort went into hyperdrive during the decline of wholesaler Baker & Taylor. In fall 2025, publishers and libraries panicked as orders with B&T went unfulfilled and the company closed its doors. Publishers shouldered the disruption and cost of books going undelivered, while libraries reliant on B&T—some with exclusive contracts—sat in limbo until it filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy in March. Meanwhile, vendors saw orders more than double, and publishers worried that titles would be slow to reach shelves.

Nick Thomas, associate publisher at Levine Querido, acknowledges that it's been a tumultuous year in the institutional market. "We're all still waiting for the waters to completely divert to new channels post-B&T, but we're having a good year sales-wise," he says. He feels that Ingram rose to the challenge, with other vendors "moving into new spaces as quickly and effectively as they can."

Carolyn Morris, VP of Ingram Library Services, keeps tabs on libraries' ordering behavior and consults with publishers. "Libraries are reluctant to order where they don't see quantity on hand," Morris says. "We're collaborating with publishers on ensuring that we have the stock that we need upfront," often augmenting inventory through Ingram's print-on-demand services. Morris is also bullish on street-date availability: "We knew that was a big advantage for us and a requirement for libraries."

Amy Williams, Ingram Content Group's VP of marketing, adds that Ingram is expanding its collection development newsletters, hosting publisher preview webinars, and featuring author signings at trade shows. "B&T did an effective job of creating opportunities for publishers to connect with librarians," she says, "so that has been a big focus."

"Publishers always want to get in front of the customer," agrees Elenita Chmilowski, director of marketing at Brodart. "With the trade side, the bookstores, it's easier to communicate, and each library system is different. They don't all buy the same, and their demographics change." Brodart convenes panels of publishers and librarians to discuss industry concerns, and it has created a real-time publication release calendar, updating libraries about forthcoming, in-demand titles.

At Follett Content Solutions, now serving public libraries in addition to the school market, publisher feedback and library demand led to a collaboration with ReaderLink—the distributor that was set to acquire B&T's assets until the deal fell through in September 2025. CEO Britten Follett calls this "a distributor-of-a-distributor relationship for the street date titles." She says the arrangement "de-risks the business and gives us the power of the live point of sale data that they're seeing across the retail outlets that they're distributing to. They know, likely, what is turning into a blockbuster a little bit before we see it in the library market."

ReaderLink's Kyle Marx, EVP of supply chain planning, details this strategy. "We deal with so many types of retailers, whether Follett, Walmart, Target, or the airport accounts," he says. "We get new-release product very early from the publishers, to flow the inventory through our retailers' distribution centers." ReaderLink receives books from multiple publishers, consolidates them, and sends everything to Follett for library processing.

Marx adds that ReaderLink is beta testing a portal to let publishers add metadata attributes to items during the library distribution process.

At fast-growing Libraria, which acquired a third warehouse in April, the urgency is acute, yet the team takes care not to overpromise. "Now that this new building is operational, we have the space to bring in inventory to meet street date needs," says operations manager Mike Beechin, forecasting even greater efficiencies in early 2027.

Delivery time is already the pride of Amazon Business, a newcomer to the library market that is honing its Library Hub and data analytics for users. "People expect everything to be instantaneous with us, because the brand is built around speed," says Amazon Business's Brennan Ryan. He's keen to tout Amazon's discounted library pricing of up to 45%; a user interface, Your Company Bookshelf, with features such as bulk ordering; and more than 60 search filters to help libraries curate their lists. "Customers can tailor their account to their needs, and they have the ability to set a lot of guardrails," he notes.

Rapid transformation and changing relationships are evidence of the void left by B&T's closure. "Street date must have been a large emphasis for B&T," Libraria's Beechin ventures. "Many of their key sales and operational folks have landed with other companies, and some of that messaging has come through." —*NATHALIE OP DE BEECK*

Quick Wins for Stronger Digital Sales: Practical Strategies Publishers Can Use Now



David Walter, bookinsights.ai



Christen Thompson, Arcadia Publishing



Sarah Arbuthnot, Supadu



Keith Riegert, The Stable Book Group

On Sept 17th, publishing professionals around the world logged on for the webinar "Quick Wins for Stronger Digital Sales: Practical Strategies Publishers Can Use Now." Krista Rafanello, Publishers Weekly's senior director of marketing and events, began by introducing Mike Lacroix, marketing project manager at DeMarque, who noted that digital catalogue optimization is "something that sits at the heart of what we do at DeMarque."

Moderator David Walter, founder of bookinsights.ai, broke the conversation into four areas: identifying gaps where revenue might be left on the table; metadata, and how that plays a key role in product discovery; the reader relationship and direct to consumer (DTC); and backlist.

Panelists included Keith Riegert, president of The Stable Book Group, which brings independent publishers, imprints, distribution services, and publishing technology together on one platform; Sarah Arbuthnot, president of Supadu, which provides "the complete direct to consumer journey" to more than 300 trade and academic publishers worldwide; and Christen Thompson, direct to consumer and digital strategy director at Arcadia Publishing, one of the largest publishers of nonfiction and regional titles in the country.

Prompted to discuss wins, Riegert shared that "One of the most surprising things we've found over the last five or ten years is that digital is not cannibalizing our print sales. It's actually complementing them—and fostering discoverability." A key finding, Arbuthnot added, is that even though technology plays an important role, "success comes from making the books easier to discover." Thompson noted that Arcadia has benefited greatly from leveraging customer data and product data to help deliver curated personal experiences in the DTC space, across email, landing pages, and book-matching quizzes; and from training online agents in that content.

The panelists spent much time discussing the importance of metadata. Arbuthnot pointed out the problems—descriptions aimed at trade rather than the reader, inconsistent subject classification, and too few images. But, she said, "the more you put in there, the more likely you are to be found and the more sales you'll make."

"Those are the things that move the needle," Reigert agreed. "Aside from publishing a good book, this is the most important thing anyone can do." Thompson jumped in with the example of a massive metadata research project done by Arcadia in 2022. The result: improved metadata led to dramatically higher sales on previously dead titles. Arbuthnot added that because so many people are now going straight to AI recommendations in search, "metadata is super-important."

The panelists spoke of the power of DTC marketing, in terms of gathering rich data about your customers so you can give them personal experiences. Renewing and reinvigorating your backlist can also capture wins. And Riegert recommended taking the top 10 nonfiction books on your list and outlining their content in bullet points in the descriptions. Arbuthnot's advice: look at your traffic, note the highest conversions, and apply those learnings elsewhere. Separating your BtB site and your DTC site was Thompson's suggestion, so you can discover where your highest converters are coming from. Also, make sure you set up "abandoned cart" and "abandoned browse" on your sites.

The panel ended with audience questions, including deeper dives into units sold via DTC websites and TikTok. Arbuthnot spoke of missed opportunities: instead of linking out to Audible for audio or Amazon for e-books, for example, publishers should consider bundling all formats in their own cart. Thompson agreed, saying, "That's something we're rectifying with Supadu and DeMarque very soon."

SEPTEMBER 27
to
OCTOBER 3

Bestsellers

Hardcover Frontlist Fiction

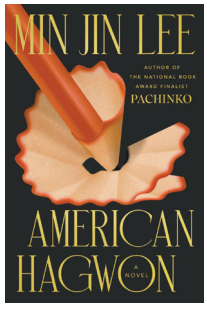
1. **Threshing Day (Wing and Claw ed.)** Rebecca Yarros, Red Tower (857,802 units)
2. **The French Illusion** John Grisham, Doubleday (68,697)
3. **American Hagwon** Min Jin Lee, Cardinal (28,393)
4. **The Calamity Club** Kathryn Stockett, Spiegel & Grau (21,237)
5. **Hollywood, Ending** John Green, Dutton (17,677)
6. **Astarion (Baldur's Gate 3)** T. Kingfisher, Random House Worlds (15,870)
7. **Dawn of the Cursed Queen (deluxe ed.)** Amber V. Nicole, Kensington (15,789)
8. **Hollow Bones** Jodi Picoult, Ballantine (15,291)
9. **Sometimes I Scare Myself** Jeneva Rose, Blackstone (14,640)
10. **Heated Rivalry (collector's ed.)** Rachel Reid, Harlequin (14,455)
11. **Ruthless** Danielle Steel, Delacorte (13,370)
12. **Yesteryear** Caro Claire Burke, Knopf (11,681)
13. **Whistler** Ann Patchett, Harper (11,240)
14. **The Munich Affair** Patterson/Ellis, Little, Brown (10,107)
15. **Fourth Wing (Wing and Claw ed.)** Rebecca Yarros, Red Tower (9,550)

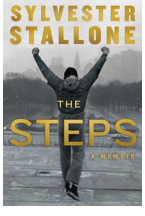
◯ New This Week



LIGHT BITE Rebecca Yarros has the #1 book in the country—and then some—with **Threshing Day**, a collection of 13 stories set in the world of her Empyrean romantasy series. The title refers to the day of trials that first-year rider cadets at Basgiath War College undertake before they bond with a dragon, or die trying. At 200-ish pages, it's a snack before the fourth novel arrives, and one that fans were hungry for: in its first week on sale, the book sold sufficient print copies to make it the third best-selling book of the year to date.

SLOW AND STEADY Nine years after the National Book Award finalist *Pachinko*, Min Jin Lee returns with **American Hagwon**,#3 on our hardcover fiction list. The novel, which kicks off in 1992 Seoul, is "an illuminating saga of ambition, education, and familial duty," per our review. It's the third book in her Diaspora Quartet, which includes *Pachinko* and her debut, 2007's *Free Food for Millionaires*. She's already working on book four, *Marshall Plan*, but Lee, who averages one novel a decade, told *PW* that she never rushes the process. "It's so stupid," she says. "It's completely against capitalism. If I write five books and die, I won. I'm never going to be as fast as other people."







ROLE-PLAYING A pair of memoirs by veteran Hollywood actors debut on our hardcover nonfiction list. The title and cover photo of Sylvester Stallone's **The Steps**, which lands like a champ at #1, pays tribute to the role and the training montage that made his name 50 years ago: boxer Rocky Balboa, who famously runs up the stairs outside the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Stallone was 30 when the movie came out, the same age Kyle MacLachlan was when shooting began on *Twin Peaks*, with MacLachlan starring as the cherry pie and black coffee–appreciating FBI special agent Dale Coooper. Series creator David Lynch looms large in MacLachlan's **Fictional Selves**, #8 on our list. MacLachlan was not long out of drama school when Lynch cast him in 1984's *Dune*, and the two went on to be lifelong collaborators and friends.

Hardcover Frontlist Nonfiction

1. **The Steps** Sylvester Stallone, Morrow (40,851 units)
2. **Plantyou Quickies** Carleigh Bodrug, Balance (25,390)
3. **Swan Song** Charles Spencer, Penguin Press (20,975)
4. **Protocols** Andrew D. Huberman, Simon Element (19,584)
5. **Tough Enough** Baird/Hunter, Basic Venture (9,089)
6. **The American Way of Killing** Malcolm Gladwell, Little, Brown (8,633)
7. **Rules to Live By** Jimmy Chin, Celadon (7,943)
8. **Fictional Selves** Kyle MacLachlan, Crown (7,262)
9. **The Cauldron** Simon Sebag Montefiore, Knopf (6,471)
10. **The Art of Gravity Falls** Alex Hirsch, Hyperion Avenue (6,200)
11. **This Cursed Beautiful Land** Evan Gershkovich, Crown (5,801)
12. **I Otterly Adore You** Thunder Bay (5,303)
13. **Work in Progress** Devon Rodriguez, One World (5,274)
14. **Making Peace with What I Can't Control** Lysa TerKeurst, Thomas Nelson (4,824)
15. **Undying Love** Thunder Bay (4,318)

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Edited by **CAROLYN JURIS**
"A ROYAL WELCOME: POET REBECCA PERRY'S DEBUT NOVEL, *MAY WE FEED THE KING* (#13, TRADE PAPERBACK), RECENTLY MADE THE BOOKER PRIZE SHORTLIST."

Currents Currents Currents Currents

Trade Paperback Frontlist

1. **Theo of Golden**
   Allen Levi, Atria (34,772 units)
2. **Verity**
   Colleen Hoover, Grand Central (31,565)
3. **The Long-Lived King**
   Terrace/Crisostomo/Han, Hyperion Avenue (31,010)
4. **Dungeon Crawler Carl**
   Matt Dinniman, Ace (18,007)
5. **Murdoku**
   Manuel Garand, Puzzlewright (14,397)
6. **Brain Damage**
   Freida McFadden, Poisoned Pen (12,665)
7. **Kneel Before Me**
   Lindsay Straube, Bloom (11,482)
8. **The Killer Isn't Alice**
   Iris Starling, Little, Brown (11,077)
9. **Cursed City**
   Kate Golden, Ace (9,880)
10. **Carl's Doomsday Scenario**
    Matt Dinniman, Ace (8,773)
11. **Verity**
    Colleen Hoover, Grand Central (8,423)
12. **The Women**
    Kristin Hannah, Griffin (8,058)
13. **May We Feed the King**
    Rebecca Perry, Transit (7,944)
14. **Grim Tidings**
    B.K. Borison, Avon (7,826)
15. **Wild Dark Shore**
    Charlotte McConaghy, Flatiron (6,075)

Lynn Painter debuted with the 2021 YA rom-com *Better Than the Movies*, which quickly became a BookTok favorite and spawned 2024's *Nothing Like the Movies*. The author, who has now written a dozen novels for teens, middle graders, and adults, tops our children's fiction list with the standalone YA rom-com **Trust Fall**.

First-week print unit sales

2024
29,527



2025
17,227



2026
35,238



Children's Frontlist Fiction

1. **Trust Fall**
   Lynn Painter, Simon & Schuster (35,238 units)
2. **Escape Me (deluxe ed.)**
   Tahereh Mafi, Storytide (23,962)
3. **The Wild Zone (Camp Half-Blood #1)**
   Riordan/Oh, Random House (14,992)
4. **The Mirror of Infinite Endings (Once upon a Broken Heart)**
   Stephanie Garber, Flatiron (13,030)
5. **Rowley Jefferson's Awesome Friendly Spooky Stories 2**
   Jeff Kinney, Amulet (9,740)
6. **Sunrise on the Reaping**
   Suzanne Collins, Scholastic Press (9,656)
7. **21 Days of Fear**
   Hervé Commère, Simon & Schuster (8,443)
8. **Baby-Sitters on Board! (The Baby-Sitters Club Super Special #1)**
   Martin/Telgemeier/Galligan, Graphix (8,197)
9. **The New Prophecy (Warriors Graphic Novel #1)**
   Hunter/Twist/Savos, HarperAlley (5,584)
10. **Sunrise on the Reaping (media tie-in)**
    Suzanne Collins, Scholastic Press (5,080)
11. **Building 903**
    Lois Lowry, Clarion (4,645)
12. **Fake Skating**
    Lynn Painter, Simon & Schuster (4,144)
13. **Blood Moon**
    Britney S. Lewis, Page Street (3,858)
14. **Big Jim Believes (Dog Man #14)**
    Dav Pilkey, Graphix (3,795)
15. **Partypooper (Diary of a Wimpy Kid #20)**
    Jeff Kinney, Amulet (3,265)

Children's Picture Books

1. **You're My Little Baby Boo**
   Edwards/Marshall, Silver Dolphin (16,326 units)
2. **Little Blue Truck's Halloween**
   Schertle/McElmurry, Clarion (15,617)
3. **Biscuit Visits the Pumpkin Patch**
   Capucilli/Schories, HarperCollins (15,520)
4. **The Very Hungry Caterpillar**
   Eric Carle, Philomel (11,667)
5. **Pete the Cat: Trick or Pete**
   Dean/Dean, HarperCollins (10,899)
6. **Peekaboo: Pumpkin**
   Reid/Arrhenius, Candlewick (10,495)
7. **The Very Hungry Caterpillar's Peekaboo Halloween**
   Eric Carle, World of Eric Carle (10,398)
8. **The Leaf Thief**
   Hemming/Slater, Sourcebooks Jabberwocky (9,961)
9. **I Love You to the Moon and Back**
   Hepworth/Warnes, Tiger Tales (9,750)
10. **The Polar Night Adventure**
    Blomdahl/Mason, DK (9,639)
11. **It's Pumpkin Day, Mouse!**
    Numeroff/Bond, HarperCollins (9,241)
12. **The Little Ghost Who Was a Quilt**
    Nason/Eggenschwiler, Tundra (9,020)
13. **Spooky Pookie**
    Sandra Boynton, Boynton Bookworks (8,981)
14. **The Pumpkin Thief**
    Hemming/Slater, Sourcebooks Jabberwocky (8,890)
15. **Goodnight Moon**
    Brown/Hurd, HarperCollins (8,822)

Edited by
SOPHIA STEWART

Deals

"EACH YEAR, A HANDFUL OF BOOKS GENERATE THE LION'S SHARE OF BUZZ AT FRANKFURT. FOR 2026, EASTON SMITH'S DEBUT—A WORK OF LITERARY FICTION!—MAY BE ONE OF THEM."

Currents Currents Currents Currents



Alex Andriesse at NYRB won U.S. rights to *Levitations* by **Easton Smith** (pictured l.) from **Sandra Pareja** at Massie McQuilkin & Altman. The first American debut novel to be published by NYRB, the book hinges on a collision of four characters in the fictional, post-industrial New England mill town of Leefield, known for its asteroid impact site turned gold mine, now home to cults and "space rock" investors. Rights have also been sold in the France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, and the U.K., among other territories. A February 2027 release is set.

▶**Molly Turpin** at Random House acquired North American rights, at auction, to *How Africa Made the World* by **Shadreck Chirikure**, a professor of archaeological sciences at Oxford, from **Carrie Plitt** at Felicity Bryan Associates on behalf of **Catherine Clarke**. The publisher called the book "a sweeping history of the African continent reaching back to the dawn of humanity, that traces the development of languages, evolution of material culture, shared societal values, and, ultimately, the rise of great civilizations to show their impact far beyond the continent's shores." A pub date has not been announced.

▶**Tricia Narwani** at Del Rey bought North American rights, at auction, to **R.L. Wilcox**'s *Psalms for the Underworld* from **Stuti Telidevara** and **Pete Knapp** at Park, Fine & Brower Literary Management. The debut novel is "a dark fantasy about an Indigenous woman who must descend into the underworld to rescue her lover, only to discover the terrible truth about the blood magic wielded by the theocratic settler colony she lives in," per the publisher. A fall 2027 publication is planned.

▶**David Ebershoff** at Hogarth netted North American rights, in an exclusive submission, to **Kay Chronister**'s *Weanlings* from **Laura Cameron** and **Amanda Orozco** at Transatlantic Agency. The *Bog Wife* author's latest novel, "rooted in the traditions of folk horror," centers on an American anthropologist arrival to a remote North Atlantic island "to research the strange creatures that inhabit the land and the local population's mysterious rituals in caring for them," per the publisher. A pub date has not been announced. **Helen Thomaides** will edit.

▶**Roxane Gay**, who has an eponymous imprint at Grove Atlantic, took North American rights to **Destiny O. Birdsong**'s *If I Told You, I'd Have to Kill You* from **Danielle Chiotti** at Upstart Crow Literary. The novel centers on Orlinda Brooks, a "femme fatale" who heads the Roven, "an organization that promises the perfect revenge for women survivors of violence ignored by the criminal justice system," only to find her own life upended by a new case, per the publisher. Publication is slated for summer 2027.

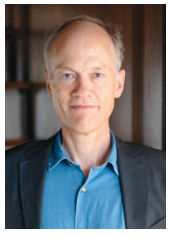














From top: Shadreck Chirikure, R.L. Wilcox, Kay Chronister, Destiny O. Birdsong, Robert L. Arnold, Sebastian Mallaby, and Tilda Swinton.

▶IN BRIEF

Mitzi Angel at FSG won North American rights to *Material Evidence*, a memoir by actor **Tilda Swinton** organized around various objects in her life, from **David Kuhn** at Aevitas Creative Management in partnership with **Christian Hodell** at Hamilton Hodell, for a fall 2028 publication. ● **Scott Moyers** at Penguin Press acquired North American rights to an as-yet-untitled book by **Sebastian Mallaby** about Anthropic CEO Dario Amodei and the challenges posed by AI, from **Chris Parris-Lamb** of the Gernert Company. Pub date TBA. ● **Chip Fleischer** at Pushkin Press US's Steerforth imprint picked up world English rights to *Our America: 50 Essays of Defiance and Hope* by activist **Robert L. Arnold**, whose spoken-word essays have earned him more than 800,000 combined followers on social media, for release in February 2027. **Margaret Colangelo** at the Cutler Collective handled the deal. ● **Dan Simon** at Seven Stories netted world rights, excluding France, Germany, and Spain, to **Jennifer Bartlett**'s *The Mechanics of Reality: Paul Auster's Life and Work*, an authorized biography of the author, who died in 2024, from **Jessica Craig** at Craig Literary. A fall 2029 publication is scheduled.

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People

THIS WEEK • SARA PARETSKY IS SECOND-GUESSING HERSELF • TOVA REICH DOESN'T HOLD BACK ON THE PAGE • EDWARD NIEDERMEYER HAS DOUBTS ABOUT ELON MUSK • HAYMARKET BOOKS' PUBLISHER FEELS NO FEAR

"I didn't want Philip Marlowe in drag. I wanted a woman who was like me and my friends."

—**SARA PARETSKY**
author of *Bad Company* (Minotaur, Nov.)

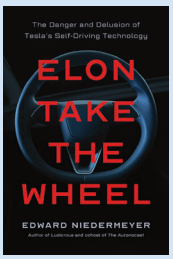
EDWARD NIEDERMEYER

In *Elon Take the Wheel*, the journalist investigates Tesla's sweeping claims about its self-driving automotive technology.

What does Tesla CEO Elon Musk say about the technology's safety record? Musk has been claiming that Tesla's driving automation systems are safer than humans more or less since the first crashes on Autopilot started being reported in 2016. What's even worse than these claims is how Musk has used them: as a cudgel to beat back criticism, even in the face of customer deaths. Musk has repeatedly argued that deaths caused by Autopilot are justified by the system's broader safety benefits—that they are just the tragic cost of technological progress. But if the safety claim is as blatantly deceptive as other claims Musk has been peddling for years, then those lost lives aren't justified at all, are they?

Do you believe Tesla will ever be able to deliver a fully autonomous vehicle? I don't believe that Tesla will ever deliver what Musk promised in October 2016—that every Tesla will have the ability to safely drive itself in any domain with zero human input. Tesla has already replaced the hardware Musk said was sufficient in 2016 multiple times, so I feel like that debate is settled. Given infinite time, money, and zero consequences—in other words, if the conditions of the last decade persist—perhaps Tesla will someday be successful in its goal, but you could probably say that for Theranos, and a number of other companies we comfortably categorize as frauds.





BenBella, Dec.; reviewed on p. 102

Would you ride in a Tesla Robotaxi? I take more risks in riding in autonomous vehicles from unproven companies than most people probably would, out of sheer professional curiosity. That said, there are companies whose track record is such that I will not ride in their vehicles. Most of those companies have gone under, but Tesla, the company with the least trustworthy track record of them all, is bigger than ever. The only way I would sample their driving automation today is if it were supervised by someone I deeply know and trust to take over in the event of a problem.

What was the most surprising finding that emerged during your research? The self-driving car is a well-established science fiction trope, and the auto industry has held it out going back a century. In reality, we can't square the unconstrained complexity experienced by such a car with the need to perform at safety-critical levels of reliability, no matter how much sense a self-driving car makes to us on an intuitive level. Realizing the extent to which Musk was able to leverage sci-fi tropes into a popular delusion was eye-opening. It seemed like it couldn't be possible that such fundamental misunderstandings could be so widely accepted. —*MICHAEL ZIMMERMAN*



JULIE FAIN
HAYMARKET BOOKS

As the radical press marks its 25th anniversary, its longtime publisher looks back.

How has the press evolved in the past 25 years? We've changed dramatically since the first book we published, *The Struggle for Palestine*, but our commitment to radical politics hasn't changed. We learned how to find the audience for these kinds of books, how to support an author in writing the best book they could write, and then get it out into the world in the right kind of way. We're also more ambitious about our books having an influence in social movements and on the people who are doing activism.

You've been publishing poetry in recent years. How does this advance Haymarket's mission? Our poetry list is an example of thinking about politics expansively. You can think of it as people who are responding to a world that is deeply unequal and deeply unjust; they are trying to speak to people's ability to change it. Our tagline is "Books for Changing the World," which doesn't mean that the books change the world—it means that the people who read them change the world.

Has the spike in book bans impacted your publishing program? They want people like us to hold back. They want us to be afraid. They want us to censor ourselves before they even have a chance to do it. We will not do that. We will confidently put resistance politics out there into the world to go along with the movements of people who are actively trying to fight against these systems. It's important for us do work that is right and good, and to take risks, so that we don't let the bad guys win. —*CLAIRE KIRCH*

NIEDERMEYER © ADAM BACHER PHOTOGRAPHY; FAIN © COURTESY OF JULIE FAIN; REICH © REBECCA REICH

TOVA REICH

In *The Convert*, a collection of stories and a novella, the author offers an unvarnished view into the lives of her Jewish characters.



Who is the ultra-Orthodox group called the Messiah Waiters in the title novella? It's a fictionalization of a very extreme group known as the Neturei Karta. And it's no secret that the protagonist is inspired by the late Ruth Blau, a Christian woman who married a leading figure in the movement. I didn't know her. I don't know how she thought about religion, but she was clearly searching for something. When she landed on Judaism, she hit one of the most extreme parts of it that exists. Everything else is fictionalized, but that was the generating idea.

What does the Neturei Karta believe? You sometimes see them in the newspapers, standing with protesters against Israel. They are completely committed to the idea of the land being Jewish, given to the Jews by God, but it's God who will return it, when the Messiah comes. So according to them, the Zionists are committing a major sin by claiming this legacy themselves. Both agree on the return to Zion—the question is how.

Basya travels to Iran and Iraq, hoping to help the Jewish communities still living there, but she describes them in dehumanizing terms, for instance calling them "flotsam." How do you navigate the line between satire and cruelty? I never see my writing as cruelty, and I almost never see it as satire. I'm always surprised when people tell me my work is provocative. While I'm writing, I don't hold back. That's just how I imagined Basya. She sees herself as a kind of aristocrat, completely unafraid to enter any realm. She looks at those Jews and thinks, Poor souls, why didn't they get out?



Seven Stories, Dec.; reviewed on p. 96

In one story, a son ships his mother off to a nursing home with shocking insensitivity. In another, the recipient of a charitable act turns violently on his benefactress. Why are your characters often such terrible people? I think a lot of people are like that. Tell me, have you only known nice people with nice thoughts all your life? This is a work with an omniscient author who can look in and see what people are thinking. People have very unkind thoughts about other people, to put it mildly. I just think I'm telling a story.

With antisemitism and anti-Israel sentiments running high in the U.S., does it concern you that some of your characters' more outrageous statements could be twisted to justify such views? The answer, I'm afraid, is no. I think about antisemitism a lot, and I've written a lot about it, mostly in my novels. A lot of antisemitism has to do with an idea of Jewish exceptionalism: Jews being different, thinking they're different. Well, here I have smart Jews, stupid Jews, nice Jews, mean Jews. I come from a deeply Jewish world, and I experience Jews as people. This is the world as I find it.

—*JASMINA KELEMEN*

Author Profile

By **ELAINE SZEWCZYK**

"PARETSKY TOLD ME THAT SHE NEEDS TO FEEL AN EMOTIONAL PULL TO WRITE A STORY. 'YOU CAN'T WRITE FOR YOUR LEGACY,' SHE SAID. 'YOU CAN ONLY WRITE WHAT YOU HAVE TO SAY IN THE MOMENT.' "



PARETSKY © LAURA BROWN PHOTOGRAPHY

Crime Boss

Sara Paretsky's new standalone thriller tackles sexism, ageism, politics, and greed

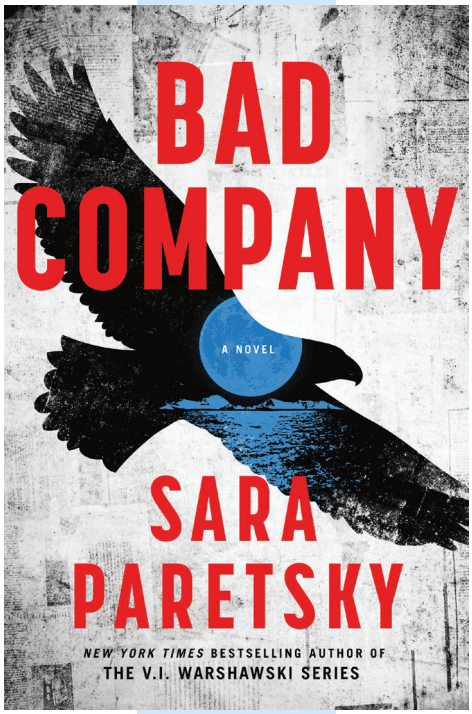
IN 2023, SARA PARETSKY took a trip to Paris to see a friend and returned home to Chicago with an idea for a crime novel. While in Paris, Paretsky stayed in a charming, out-of-the-way hotel that had a quirky, elevated bed that was hard to get in and out of. One morning, while trying to get off the bed, she fell and landed on the floor. As she sat there, feeling dazed and rubbing her hip, she began to picture an older female detective whose body is beginning to fail her.

That image inspired Paretsky's new novel, *Bad Company*, her first standalone thriller in nearly 20 years. The novel, out in November from Minotaur, stars Lily Sedako, a fiery, 70-something former CIA agent with a bad shoulder, who comes out of retirement to go on an international mission. "I wanted to write about someone my age who was more of a risk-taker, and willing to travel everywhere," Paretsky says over Zoom. "This character is kind of my fantasy, my doppelgänger, so to speak, of being an older person."

For more than four decades, Paretsky has been creating dynamic female leads who are unafraid of conflict. The trailblazing author began her career in 1982 with *Indemnity Only*, the first novel in her bestselling V.I. Warshawski series, which stars a tough female Chicago PI. *Indemnity Only* upended the hard-boiled crime fiction genre, which had been dominated by men, and created opportunities for other women in the field.

In addition to the series, which spans 22 installments, Paretsky is the author of two previous standalone novels, *Ghost Country* (1998) and *Bleeding Kansas* (2008), and the memoir *Writing in an Age of Silence* (2007). She has received the Grand Master Award from the Mystery Writers of America and the Cartier Diamond Dagger from the Crime Writers' Association, and is the founder of Sisters in Crime, an organization for women crime fiction writers. Her books have sold more than five million copies, according to Minotaur, and have been translated into 28 languages.

People



Minotaur, Nov.

When Paretsky first conceived of *Bad Company*, she says she wanted it to have the vibe of a Carl Hiaasen book. "I thought, This could be fun—this could be a caper novel," she recalls. "Then I sat down to write it. Nothing I write, first of all, is ever easy, although you always think it will be from a distance. Also, I don't do capers."

Bad Company is set in Hayalistan, a fictional former Soviet republic, known for its mineral-rich land, where Lily worked 20 years ago as a field operative, and where she returns to investigate a shadowy entity that's dredging up sensitive information about her past. Paretsky wanted Hayalistan to feel like a real place, and she rewrote the book eight times to get the details right. "I'm always second-guessing myself," she admits. "I'm always thinking, Oh, this isn't good enough, this isn't working, and throwing it out and trying again."

Keith Kahla, Paretsky's editor, says he had a great time working on *Bad Company*, their first novel together. "It's kind of like if someone calls you and says, Oh yeah, so Stephen King has a new book, are you interested?" Kahla says. "Sara is an icon. And that's not something that was gifted to her. It's the result of decades of steady, hard work."

Paretsky was born in 1947 in Ames, Iowa, and raised in Kansas, the only daughter in a family of five kids. In *Writing in an Age of Silence*, she reveals that her professor father and homemaker mother were "desperately needy" and that her father told her she had a "second-rate mind," which gave her a complex that stayed with her into adulthood. After college, Paretsky moved to Chicago, her adopted home. In the '70s, she earned a PhD in history from the University of Chicago and an MBA from the University of Chicago Graduate School of Business. In 1976, she married Courtenay Wright, a renowned physics professor, who died in 2018. "Courtenay was a huge help in my life," she says. "He had so much belief in me and gave me confidence."

When Paretsky was in her 20s, she read Raymond Chandler's *The Big Sleep* for the first time. She objected to Chandler's portrayal of women as victims and vixens and became interested in writing a detective story that showcased a real woman. While working in the marketing department of CNA Insurance in Chicago, she wrote *Indemnity Only*, which was rejected numerous times and took nearly two years to get published. The novel was partly inspired by Paretsky's misogynistic boss. ("What a particular kind of lying weasel he was," she recalls.) She was listening to him drone on one day at work when V.I. popped into her head.

"I didn't want Philip Marlowe in drag," she says, referring to the detective of *The Big Sleep*. "I wanted a woman who was like me and my friends."

Dominick Abel, Paretsky's agent, has been with her since *Indemnity Only* and says her impact on the crime genre can't be overstated. Before she came along, most female detectives were amateur sleuths. "Sara broke new ground in 1982," Abel says. "She struck a chord with a new generation of female and male readers. She was one of the first to write a female private eye in a modern way."

V.I. always speaks her mind, and so does Lily, which is what Paretsky loves about her. "Lily doesn't apologize," Paretsky says. "Accept her or hate her, but she's not going to change for you."

When *Bad Company* opens, Lily, a linguistics expert, is in Chicago. She's a restless retiree who was pushed out of the CIA by her male superiors, who labeled her difficult to work with. Lily reenters the fray after she receives an anonymous package that contains a magazine article about Hayalistan. The article includes a grainy photo of Lily interacting with local tribal women, and suggests that she may have had something to do with a coup in the country, decades ago. Lily travels to Hayalistan under an assumed name—in defiance of the CIA—where she hopes to reconnect with the women who once trusted her, and find out who's trying to frame her. While there, she investigates Russian and American dealings in the region, and begins to understand who's in charge, and what they want with her.

Paretsky lives on Chicago's South Side, near Lake Michigan and the Barack Obama Presidential Center. In her off time she works as a volunteer and mentor and is the founder and sole funder of the Sara & Two C-Dogs Foundation, which supports women and girls. She misses her late husband but finds solace in her friendships.

"I'm prone to depression, but I can also bring a lot of energy to my friends," she says. "So I can bring you down or pep you up, depending on where I am."

Like her characters, Paretsky is determined to make a difference and be heard. "It's all about voice," she says. "Voice and voicelessness. Women's voices and women bonding and connecting and making a path for each other in the world."

Elaine Szewczyk's writing has appeared in McSweeney's *and other publications. She's the author of the novel* I'm with Stupid.

Holiday Gift G

COMPILED AND EDITED BY CAROLYN JURIS, WRITTEN BY KRISTEN MARTIN

As PW's editors put together our lists of this year's gift-worthy titles for adults, teens, and kids, a few common threads emerged. Our 150 picks highlight a taste for the classics (for instance: mythology, straight-up or in homage), the nostalgic, and the idiosyncratic. Each one is destined to find and delight the right reader.

Illustrated & Art Books

Americana p. 20

Art History p. 24

Bird-Watching p. 28

Fashion & Style p. 31

Sports Culture p. 33

Street Photography p. 36

uide 2026

Children's & YA

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Science & Nature p. 79

Americana

OFFBEAT NOSTALGIA FEELS RIGHT FOR THIS SEMIQUINCENTENNIAL YEAR

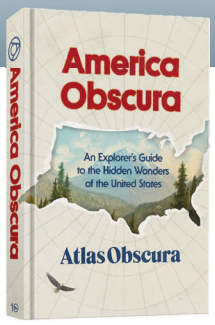


The Acme Novelty Library #21
Chris Ware (Drawn & Quarterly) $35

Ware, whose comics highlight the often melancholic experience of American, particularly Midwestern, life, delivers his first Acme Novelty Library installment in 16 years. The highly decorated folio box contains three pamphlet comics—*The Last Saturday #6*, for instance, revisits the star of the serialized strip of the same name later in life—plus two slender cardboard buildings and a broadsheet newspaper. In a personal touch, the treasure trove also includes the artist's tribute to his mother, who died in May.



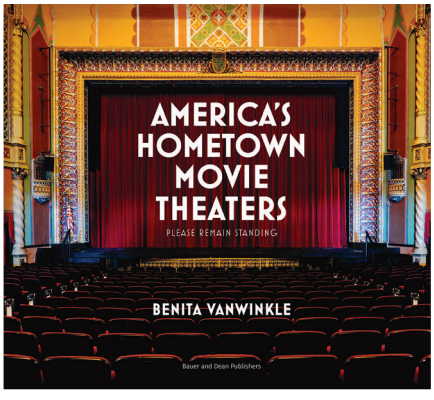
Chris Ware's *The Acme Novelty Library #21* opens like a gift box to reveal its various components.



America Obscura

Edited by Doug Baldinger and Louise Story (Ten Speed) $40

The latest from Atlas Obscura tours the weird and wonderful across 50 states, five territories, and Washington, D.C.—in the latter, visitors can dial up knock-knock jokes, kid jokes, and random thoughts via the public Jokes Phone. The World Famous Crochet Museum, a former photo-processing booth in Joshua Tree, Calif., is packed with dozens of works by anonymous fiber artists. Themed sidebars, such as a mini guide to folk-art hub Lucas, Kans., encourage deep-dive excursions.



America's Hometown Movie Theaters

Benita VanWinkle (Bauer and Dean) $75

Over the past 40-plus years, VanWinkle has crisscrossed the U.S. to photograph more than 1,200 movie theaters and drive-ins. This book collects 395 venues in the 50 states and Washington, D.C., all built before 1965 and the advent of the multiplex. The images evoke bygone glamour, faddish crazes, and local pride. In the 1920s, the discovery of King Tut's tomb spawned Egyptian-inspired movie palaces in Illinois, Idaho, and beyond, while in Albuquerque, the KiMo Theatre, which opened in 1927, blends Indigenous Pueblo motifs with art deco elements.

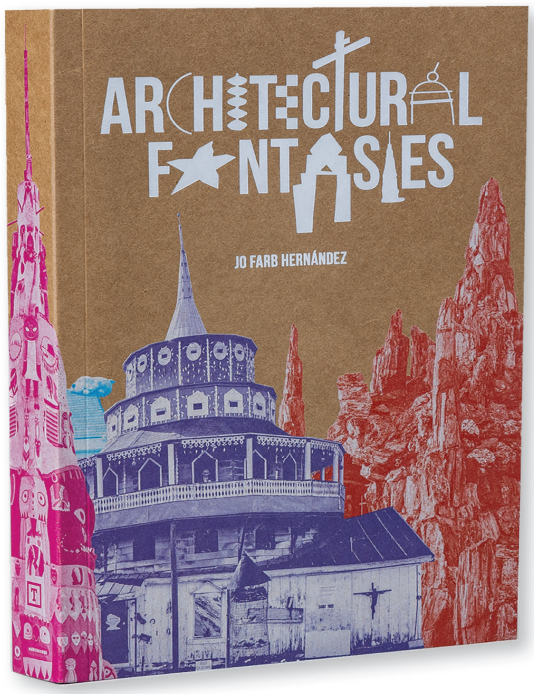
Clockwise from r.: The interior and facade of the Midwest Theater in Scottsbluff, Neb., which opened in 1946. Dixie Twin Drive-In in Dayton, Ohio, dates to 1957. Laurelhurst Theater & Pub, Portland, Ore., opened in 1923.













Navy veteran Robert "Ra" Paulette created living spaces in more than a dozen caves north of Santa Fe, N.Mex., excavating and sculpting by hand.

Architectural Fantasies

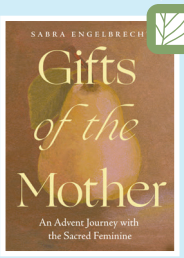
Jo Farb Hernandez, photos by Fred Scruton (Tra) $49

More than 60 artist-built dwellings across more than 30 states showcase American idiosyncrasy. In Niagara Falls, N.Y., Prophet Isaiah Robertson's Second Coming House is a kaleidoscopic assemblage of devotional symbols. Jeffrey Elersic covered the facade of his Geneva, Ohio, home with hand-lettered wooden signs broadcasting his grievances against local officials and the U.S. justice system. And Emanuele "Litto" Damonte's Hubcap Ranch in Pope Valley, Calif., is probably what you think, to the tune of about 5,000 protective wheel covers.

Essential Holiday Reads

Gifts of the Mother
9798341903517
NOW AVAILABLE
$24.99

Reconnect with the feminine God who has been there all along.



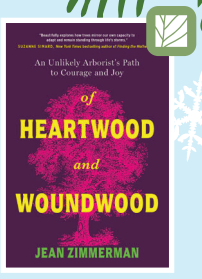
Sacred Migration
9798341903296
NOW AVAILABLE
$26.99

It's time for a spiritual migration, says Choctaw elder Steven Charleston.



Of Heartwood and Woundwood
9798341902275
NOV 2026
$31.99

A lively and moving literary memoir of trees, illness, and the fierce resilience of the human spirit.



Look and Find Christmas Stories
9798889837824
NOW AVAILABLE
$14.99

Celebrate the Christmas story from the Bible with hundreds of things to find and count!



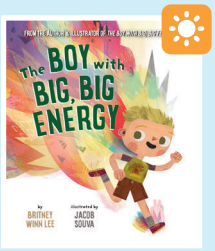
The Boredom Monster
9798889835073
NOW AVAILABLE
$19.99

"A great book for story times that's bound to inspire young readers to create their own imaginative adventures."
—School Library Journal



The Boy with Big Big Energy
9798889834069
NOW AVAILABLE
$18.99

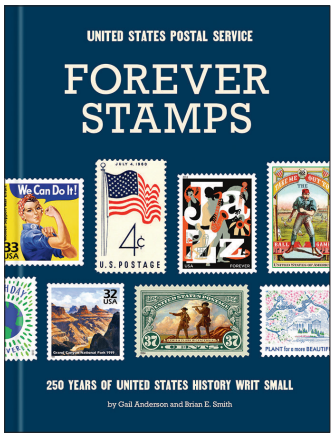
"Ideal for readers who struggle with energy or focus, and a helpful tool for those seeking to celebrate children's strengths while supporting their needs."
—School Library Journal



Discover more holiday reads

Broadleaf Books | beaming books

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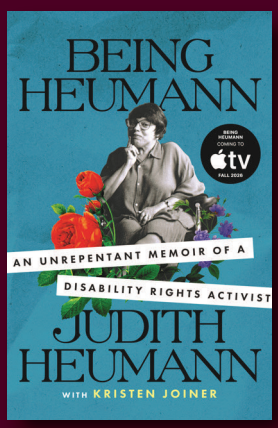
Forever Stamps

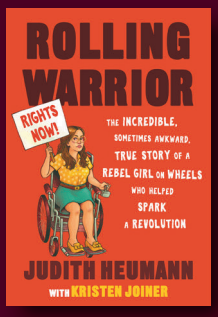
Gail Anderson and Brian E. Smith (Clarkson Potter) $28

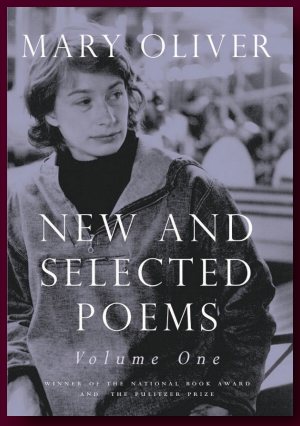
The U.S. Postal Service was established in 1775, but it took until 1847 for the first stamps to be authorized: one featured Benjamin Franklin and another depicted George Washington. The book ranges over a variety of commemorations—notable people, national landmarks, annual celebrations, and more—only a handful of which appear on actual Forever stamps, which retain the value of a first-class stamp no matter when purchased. Even if the attempted wordplay of the book's title doesn't land, the colorful artwork holds plenty of appeal.

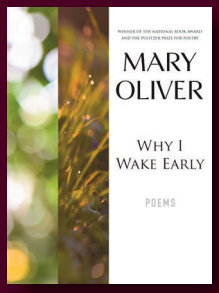
The Presidential Series, issued between April and December 1938 and approved by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, an avid stamp collector, honored every U.S. president from George Washington to Calvin Coolidge, plus Ben Franklin and Martha Washington.

BEACON PRESS IN THE MOVIES









Stream on Apple TV on November 13th

Being Heumann, by the late disability rights pioneer Judy Heumann, has been adapted into a feature film!

Directed by Academy Award–winning *CODA* filmmaker Siân Heder, and starring Ruth Madeley, Mark Ruffalo and Dylan O'Brien, among others.

Stream on PBS now

Mary Oliver: Saved by the Beauty of the World is a new PBS American Masters documentary revealing the life and career of the best-selling American poet.

With archival footage and photos, the documentary also includes poetry recitations from Stephen Colbert, Oprah Winfrey and more.

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Holiday gift guide

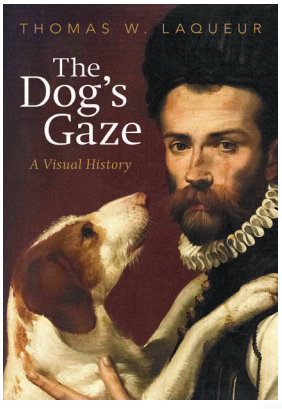
Art History

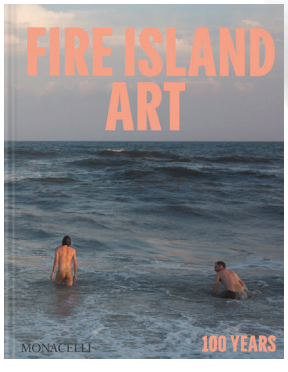
GET A FRESH LOOK AT OLD MASTERS AND LONG-STANDING TRADITIONS

The Dog's Gaze

Thomas W. Laqueur (Penguin Press) $45

Historian Laqueur's delightful survey tracks the long history of dogs appearing in artworks, from c. 9000 BCE petroglyphs in Saudi Arabia depicting dogs and humans hunting together through one of William Wegman's 11 *Stationary Figures* mosaics (2018), which adorn a subway station near *PW*'s offices. Drawing from a staggering wealth of examples, the author uncovers the overlapping uses and meanings of dogs in art, with charming asides about artists' relationships with the dogs that appear in their work—e.g., Lump, Pablo Picasso's beloved dachshund.





Fire Island Art

Edited by John Dempsey (Monacelli) $69.95

This celebrates the artistic scene that's flourished within the queer and bohemian communities on a slender barrier island within striking distance of New York City. Boldface names such as Richard Avedon, David Hockney, Frank O'Hara, and Andy Warhol abound; in the 21st century, after the devastation wrought by the AIDS crisis, residencies have sought to nurture artists outside the island's historically white, gay male population—photographer Lola Flash, multidisciplinary artist Pamela Sneed, and others. Archival photos, artwork, historical essays, and personal recollections bring a century of creativity to life.

Raphael: Sublime Poetry

Carmen C. Bambach (Metropolitan Museum of Art) $75

In the spring, the Met Museum mounted the first comprehensive U.S. exhibition of Renaissance master Raphael's work. The catalog, by show curator Bambach, gathers more than 200 works by the Italian painter, who died in 1520 at age 37. Bambach places such works as *Portrait of a Young Woman with a Unicorn* in context, both cultural—the subject's eyebrows are highly plucked, a style popularized by noblewoman Caterina Sforza—and artistic; the curator notes that it's one of several Raphaels whose composition recalls da Vinci's *Mona Lisa*.



From top: Preliminary drawings, known as auxiliary cartoons, for Raphael's altarpiece *Transfiguration*. Another spread depicts the frescoes *The Naval Battle of Ostia* and *The Christian Rulers* in Vatican Palace, *Studies of Two Male Nudes* for the former work, and *Study of a Soldier on Horseback.*



benton **buckley books**
a publishing house

Table Stakes

benton buckley books' founder explains what separates a lasting gift from a pretty prop

Beth Buckley has a simple test for a gift book: Will the recipient still be enjoying it years from now? That standard guides the list at benton buckley books, the independent publisher of luxury coffee table books where Buckley is founder and creative director.

"We make our books to be evergreen: beautiful enough to display today and in the future, with work inside that rewards being revisited," Buckley says. "That gives the gift a life beyond the occasion. It can become part of someone's home, something they continue to enjoy, share, and cherish."

She advises gift-givers to start with the recipient rather than the room where the book might sit, and to think about the places, ideas, or creative work that might draw the recipient in. Someone with strong ties to a hometown or region may connect with an architecture book, while a design book could introduce a confident home decorator to fresh ideas. "Choose the book you can imagine them returning to, sharing, and keeping," she says.

This season's list reflects that approach, and Buckley is particularly excited about several titles across architecture and interior design. *Women of Architecture: A Collective of Unique Voices* shares the work and perspectives of 25 leading women architects, showcasing projects that reveal how we live as well as where we live.

The New View series, meanwhile, introduces readers to remarkable homes and the architects behind them, with each volume focused on a different region, allowing readers to explore the relationship between architecture and place. "Together, the books become a visual gallery of how we live across the country," Buckley says.



Beth Buckley
Founder

For readers interested in interior design, older benton buckley titles like, */be-spōk/: A Philosophy of Beauty and Modish: The Book of Great Design* offer distinct creative voices and their ideas.

"These are the kinds of books we set out to make: museum-quality in their photography, editorial care, and physical presence, with enough substance to be enjoyed long after the holidays," Buckley says.

What unites these titles is that each has been curated with a long view. "They are beautiful objects to display, but they also invite readers back into their pages," she adds. "I believe that combination of visual pleasure, substance, and museum-quality craftsmanship is what gives them lasting value."

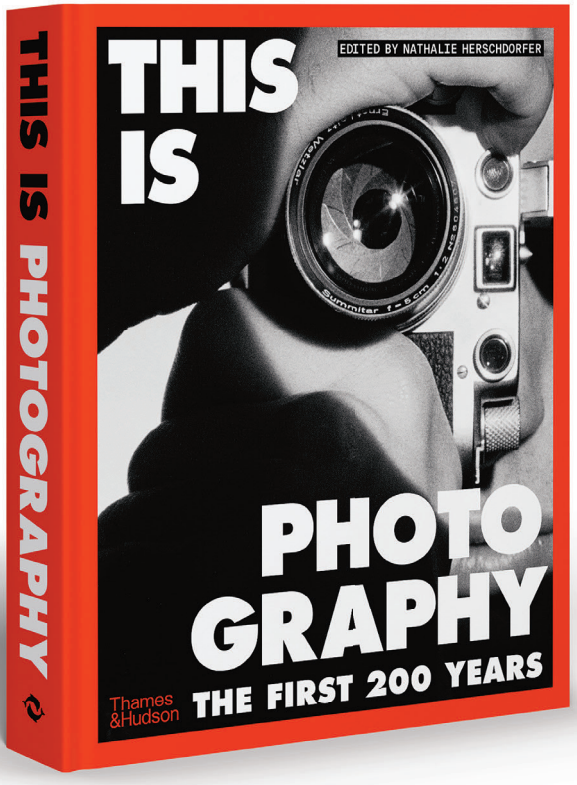
Buckley says that the way people discover books and creative work has expanded significantly. Readers have more opportunities to find designers and artists on their own, and independent publishers have new ways to find audiences for voices that might once have been overlooked.

"I welcome that change," she says. "The challenge is to use those possibilities without letting visibility become our measure of quality. A beautiful book still needs a point of view, thoughtful editing, and craftsmanship that will hold up long after the moment that introduced it has passed."

That judgment is central to how Buckley runs the house. "I often say I publish a book as though I'm curating an art gallery. Our mission is to bring unique voices and talents into view through books made with editorial conviction, collaboration, and care," she says.

She describes her approach as "widening the room" rather than gatekeeping. In her view, name recognition and follower count say little about whether a creator's work will make a strong book. She focuses instead on finding distinct voices offering work that reveals depth and integrity. She seeks books that will make a lasting contribution to the cultural conversation. "If the work is extraordinary, I want us to be willing to see it and champion it, even before a wider audience has caught on," she says.

That, for Buckley, is the value of running an independent house. However, she stresses that it doesn't mean working alone. It's a collective effort that depends on creators, editors, designers, makers, booksellers, and readers. "That interdependence is at the heart of benton buckley books," she says. "We have the freedom to see something differently, and then the privilege of bringing others together to make it real."



This Is Photography

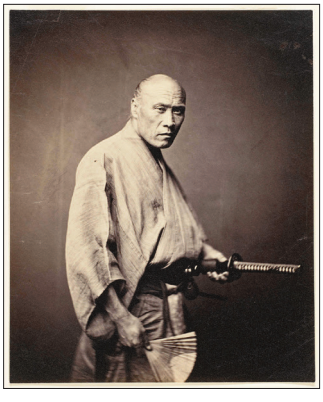
Edited by Nathalie Herschdorfer (Thames & Hudson) $55

Spanning two centuries, this collection touches on both historical moments and significant photographers from around the world, seeking to capture the medium's impact on art, science, nature, celebrity, politics, and society. Herschdorfer includes well-known photographers like Man Ray and Diane Arbus, and famous images like Eadweard Muybridge's 1878 photoset of a galloping horse, and offers rarer treasures as well, such as Rosalind Franklin's first photo of a DNA molecule, in 1952, and a set of 1915 Autochrome color photos by Sergei Prokudin-Gorskii capturing traditional Russian culture.



At r.: When Ghanaian photographer James Barnor captured this image of a photo lab assistant in 1971, color photography was not yet in widespread use in West Africa.





From l.: Artist Honoré Daumier as depicted by pseudonymous French photographer Nadar in 1862. A shot of a samurai c. 1864–65 by Felice Beato, whose photos were among the first of Japan seen in the West.

Vermeer's Afterlives

Ruth Bernard Yeazell (Princeton Univ.) $39.95

In this rigorous and visually rich chronicle, Yeazell tracks how the aesthetic of Dutch Baroque painter Johannes Vermeer, who was nearly forgotten after his death in 1675, has spread through art and culture, via both overt imitation and subtle assimilation. For instance, numerous filmmakers, including Terence Davies, Peter Greenaway, and Wim Wenders, have acknowledged debts to the Dutch master; Salvador Dalí referenced Vermeer numerous times in his work; and *Girl with the Pearl Earring* is a certified pop culture icon.





Young Woman with a Water Pitcher portrays the type of domestic scene for which Vermeer is now best known.

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EXPLORE THE STORIES BEHIND THE LEGENDS



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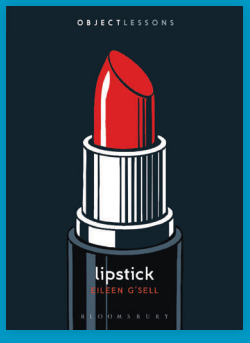
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BLOOMSBURY

OBJECTLESSONS

Discover the hidden lives of ordinary things



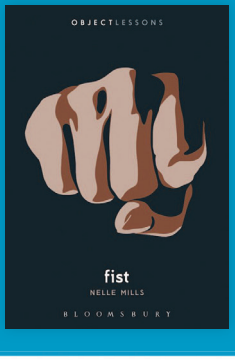
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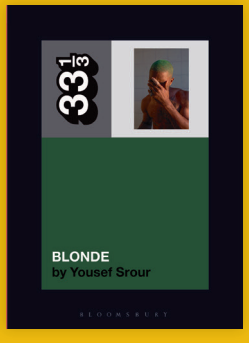
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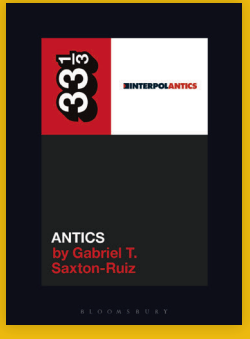
33⅓

Dive deep into legendary artists, albums and genres



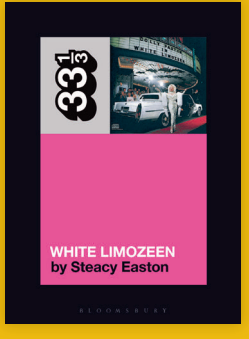
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Frank Ocean's *Blonde*



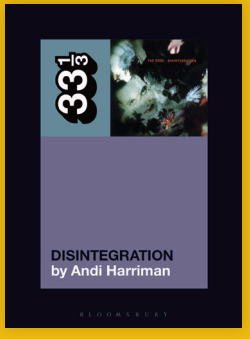
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Interpol's *Antics*



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Dolly Parton's *White Limozeen*



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Andi Harriman's *The Cure Disintegration*

Holiday gift guide

Bird-Watching

THE ART AND SCIENCE OF BIRDING IS ON FULL VIEW IN THESE TITLES FOR SERIOUS HOBBYISTS AS WELL AS THE BIRD CURIOUS

Bird Anatomy

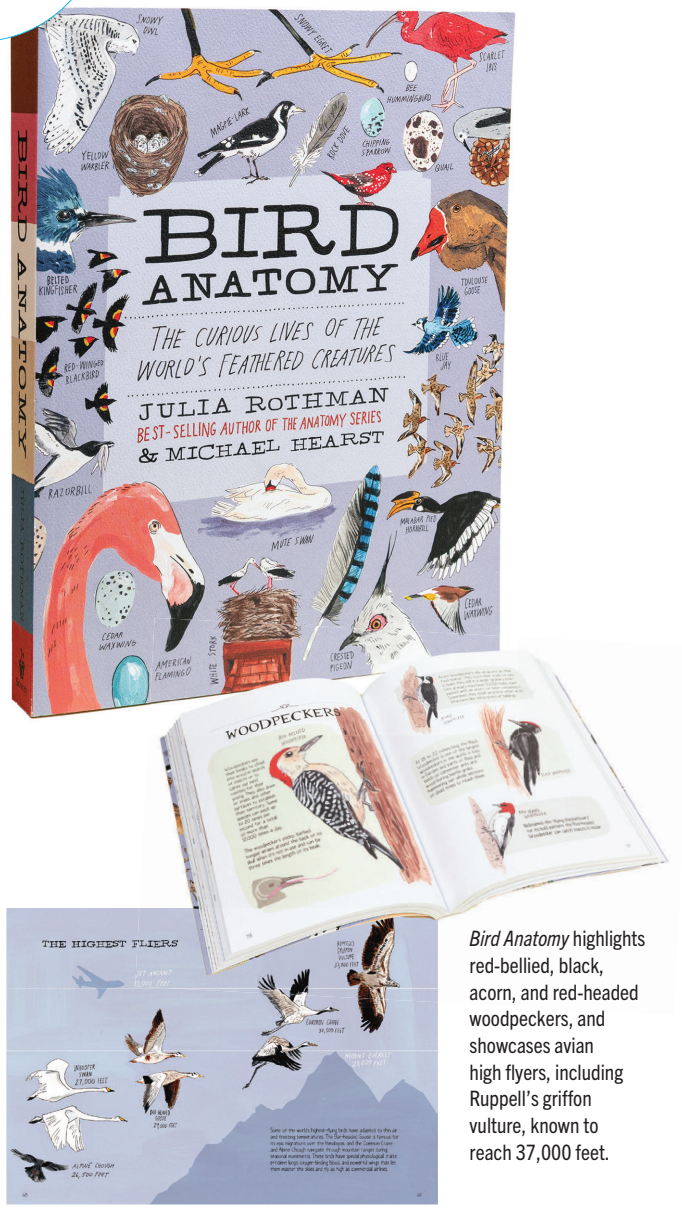
Julia Rothman, with Michael Hearst (Storey) $19.99

The latest in Rothman's popular Anatomy series is a sweeping, hand-lettered look at food sources and feather patterns, vision and vocalization, and courtship, conservation, and more. She delights in avian minutiae, illustrating, for instance, eight collective nouns (a charm of finches; a siege of herons) and 11 beak shapes (e.g., filter-feeding, fish-catching, and seed-cracking). The subject is close to Rothman's heart: her dad, who cameos in the book, leads bird walks in Pelham Bay Park in the Bronx.

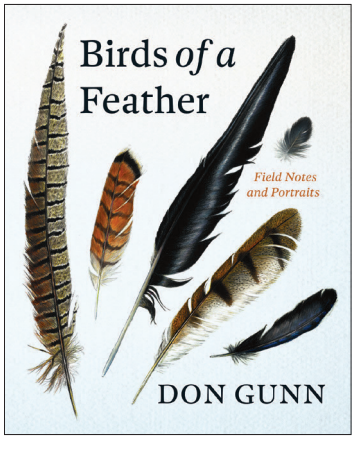
Birds of a Feather

Don Gunn (Douglas & McIntyre) $49.95

Artist and naturalist Gunn combines field guide and memoir in this tribute to the dozens of bird species he sees at his home off the coast of British Columbia. He devotes each chapter to his experience of a specific bird, drawing feathers he's found and the birds they came from. Gunn tempers his marvel at nature's diversity with alarm about habitat destruction, making for a moving call to appreciate and protect avian life.



Bird Anatomy highlights red-bellied, black, acorn, and red-headed woodpeckers, and showcases avian high flyers, including Ruppell's griffon vulture, known to reach 37,000 feet.





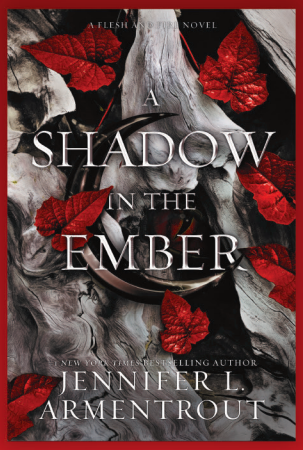


According to *Birds of a Feather*, Steller's jays are accomplished vocal mimics that can impersonate, among other birds, red-tailed hawks. Ospreys, meanwhile, are deft fish catchers.

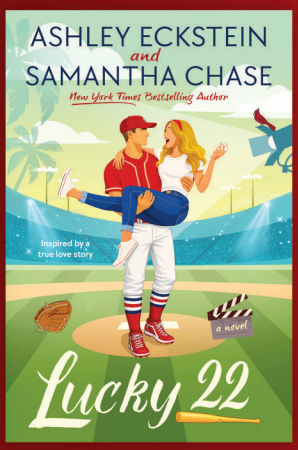
THIS HOLIDAY SEASON, BLUE BOX PRESS OPEN THE BLUE BOX...

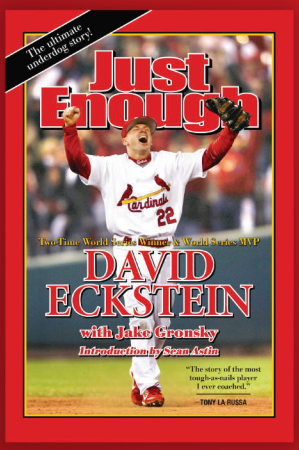
HAPPILY EVER AFTER FOR THE HOLIDAYS WITH **BLUE BOX PRESS**

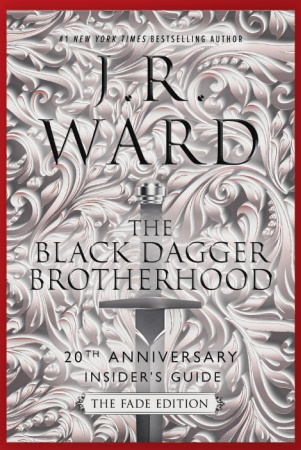


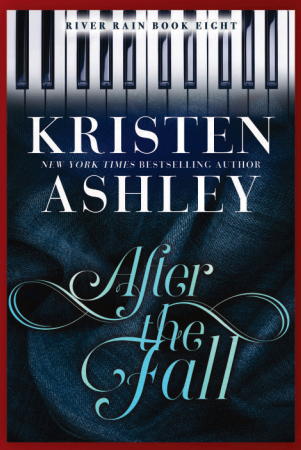


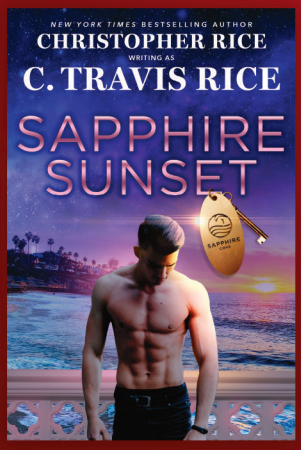


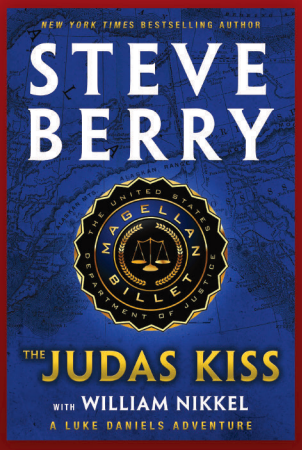






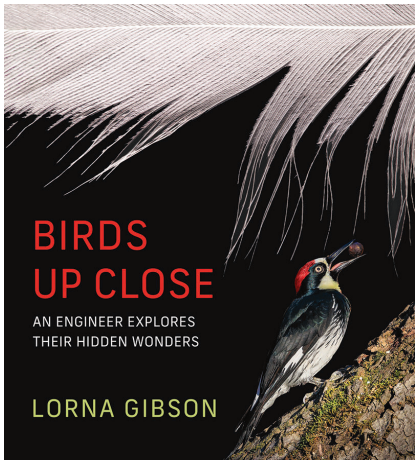


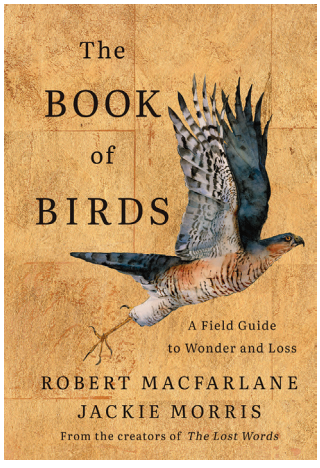


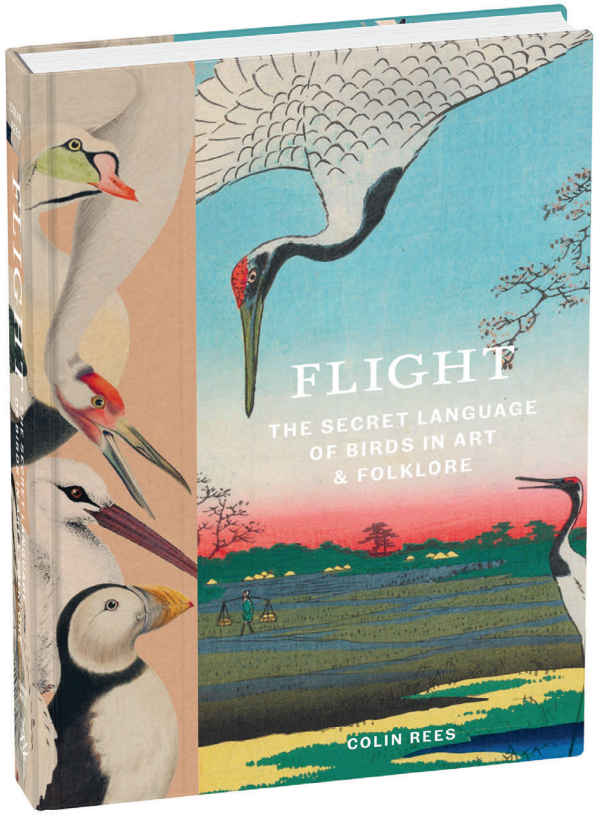




Where Bold Voices Meet Unforgettable Stories







Below: A detail from Hieronymus Bosch's *The Garden of Earthly Delights* opens the "Temperate & Coniferous Forest" chapter of *Flight*, while Jan Asselijn's *The Threatened Swan* wings it in the "Wetlands" chapter.





Birds Up Close

Lorna Gibson (MIT) $39.95

Gibson brings her engineer's eye to topics including egg shape and shell structure, the light wavelengths that determine feather iridescence, and the mechanics of bird flight, illuminating facts with photos, illustrations, and infographics. She details the whimsically named ducks she observes at Cape Ann—such as red-breasted mergansers, buffleheads, and surf scoters—before delving into the science of how their feathers keep them warm and dry, and elsewhere shows the "Jackson Pollock–style drizzles" that adorn a common murre egg.

The Book of Birds

Robert Macfarlane, illus. by Jackie Morris (Norton) $24.95

Illustrated essays on 49 birds, from avocets to yellowhammers, help readers honor, admire, and identify with threatened species. Some pieces are written from the perspective of the birds themselves; one on Moorhens takes the form of a dating profile ("We're the same type of weird if: Your toes are as long as your head"). The stunning qualities of birds are made clear: for instance, under sunlight, the kestrel "suddenly becomes translucent; her feathers shone through like stained glass, like colored crystal."

Flight

Colin Rees. Timber, $35

Amateur ornithologists and art lovers alike will flock to this extensively researched survey of how birds have made the human imagination take flight. For each of 42 birds, conservation biologist Rees shares art, folklore, legends, and literature, along with historical and scientific facts. The art spans centuries and cultures, including Frida Kahlo's 1940 *Self-Portrait with Thorn Necklace and Hummingbird*, the brightly colored toucan of the 1930s and '40s Guinness Is Good for You advertising campaign, and an Edo-era print of cormorant fishers.

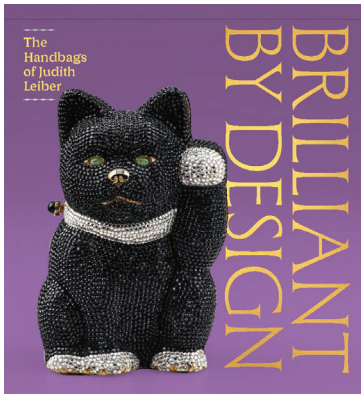
JUDITH LEIBER (AMERICAN, 1921–2018) AND JUDITH LEIBER INC. (UNITED STATES, 1963–). BLUE AND PURPLE MINAUDIÈRES. THE MINT MUSEUM, CHARLOTTE, NC. GIFT OF THE FAMILY OF VICKI AND JIM MILLS. PHOTO: BRANDON SCOTT.; *GRACE: NOW* © PHAIDON

Fashion & Style



Above: A dozen of the more than 100 handbags and accessories designed by Judith Leiber on display in the *Brilliant by Design* exhibit at the Mint Museum in Charlotte, N.C.

WHO WORE IT BEST? THE TRAILBLAZERS AND ECCENTRICS WHO'VE ALWAYS EMBRACED THE JOY OF GETTING DRESSED.



Brilliant by Design

Bridget Kerr (Yale Univ.) $55

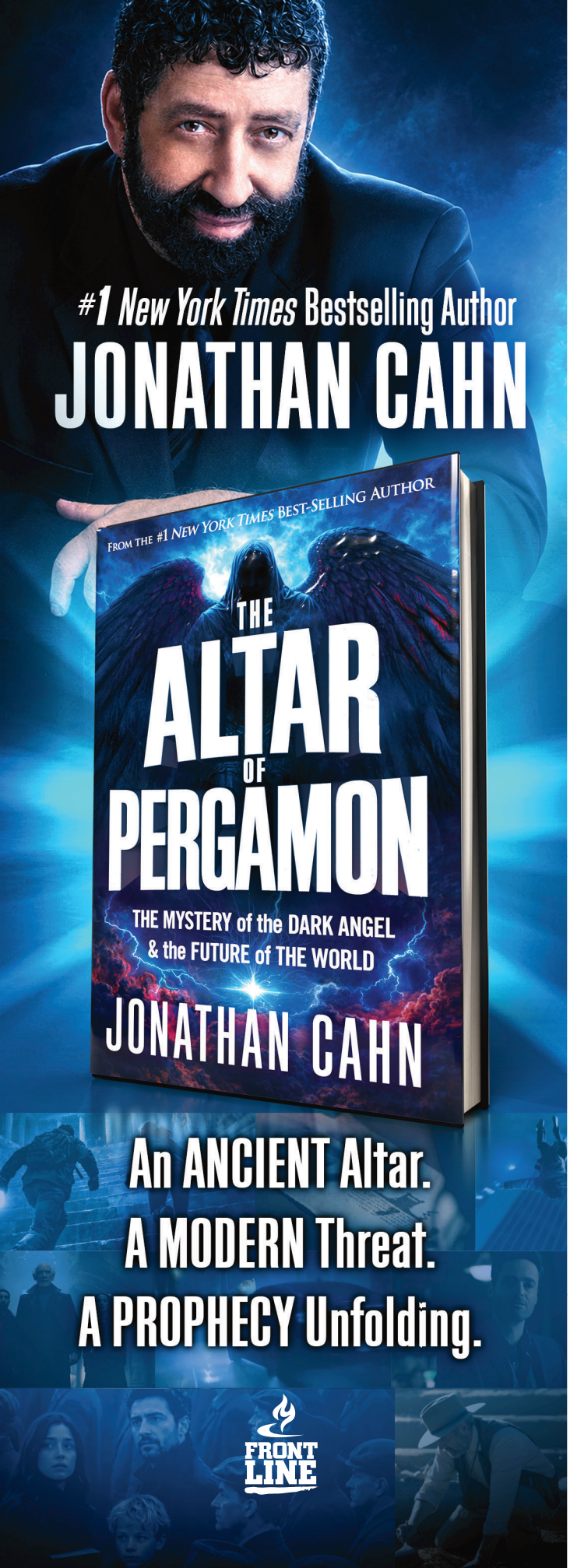
Whimsical handbags bearing the name Judith Leiber (1921–2018) are red carpet mainstays. The designer behind those confections, a Jewish Budapest native who survived WWII Hungary, immigrated to the U.S. with her American husband in 1947 and founded her namesake company in 1963. In addition to sharing biographical details, the book devotes ample space to eye candy: purses shaped like a fish, an elephant, or a crouching snow leopard, as well as objects such as a cello or rotary phone, all adorned with thousands of hand-set crystals.



Grace: Now

Grace Coddington (Phaidon) $100

Coddington came to public attention for her steadfast, unpretentious turn in the 2009 *Vogue* documentary *The September Issue*. Her latest book spans the decade since she stepped down as the magazine's creative director and serves as a platform for the imaginative shoots she continues to produce. No matter how outlandish the scenario, she writes, there's one through line in her work: "You must see the dress. That's the contract. If you can't see the clothes, it's not a fashion picture—it's just a photograph."





The Liberty Scarf

Paul Rennie (Thames & Hudson) $75

The 151-year-old Liberty department store in London sells all manner of luxury goods, but it's best known for its printed textiles. This overview touches on history and production but keeps the focus on the patterns, including those inspired by William Morris's original arts and crafts work, riffs on the famed art nouveau Ianthe designs, and modern folk-art-inspired prints conceived by contemporary artist and drag performer Grayson Perry. It's both visual feast and inspiration to tie one on.

Life/Style

Aki and Koichi Kim (Epic Ink) $30

Social media teems with fashion influencers, and two of the most charming are Aki and Koichi Kim (1.3 million Instagram followers), Southern California septuagenarians who got their start in 2023 when their daughter, Yuri, began posting photos and videos of the pair. They tell their story in a scrapbook-like lookbook that highlights their style essentials (key for each: a great pair of glasses), influences (Aki finds inspiration in art and culture; Koichi sees beauty in music and sports), and delight in each other (#couplegoals).

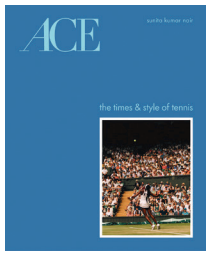
Schiaparelli: Fashion Becomes Art

Edited by Sonnet Stanfill and Lydia Caston (V&A) $70

A couture designer with a surrealist's soul, Elsa Schiaperelli (1890–1973) carved an indelible place in fashion history. She collaborated with the likes of Jean Cocteau, Alberto Giacometti, and other visionaries of her day. In 1937, shortly before Wallis Simpson's marriage to the Duke of Windsor, Cecil Beaton photographed the socialite in the provocative Schiap x Salvador Dalí lobster dress. That same year, Schiaparelli, known for her bold embrace of color, caused another sensation by mixing a little white into magenta, creating the color known as shocking pink.

Sports Culture

HERITAGE, HISTORY, ATHLETICISM, AND STYLE—ALL MAKE THEIR PLAY FOR READERS' LOVE OF THE GAME



Ace

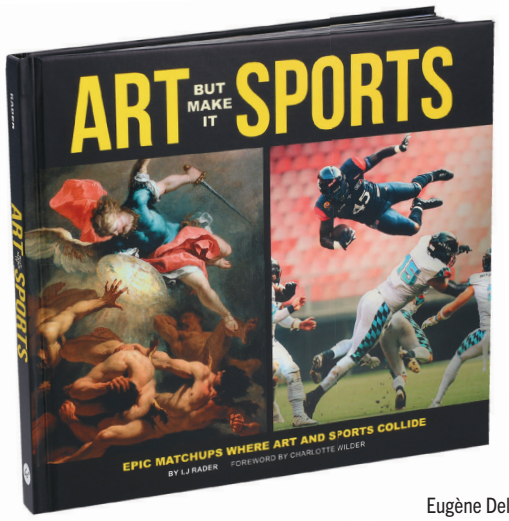
Sunita Kumar Nair (Abrams) $65

Tennis and fashion are inextricably linked: René Lacoste's 1920s crocodile logo became a streetwear must-have decades later, and for a healthy portion of the U.S., *sneakers* and *tennis shoes* are synonymous. Fashion consultant and creative director Nair serves up the sport's sartorial influence on and off the court, from the full skirts and corsets that record-setting Wimbledon champ Lottie Dod protested in the late 19th century to contemporary star Coco Gauff's collabs with New Balance and Miu Miu.

Art but Make It Sports

LJ Rader (Chronicle) $18.95

Rader's book expands on his popular social media account, where he draws unexpected parallels between artworks and athletics. An image of Team USA fencer Lee Kiefer crouching during a 2024 Olympic bout, for instance, echoes the expression and emotion in John Everett Millais's *Joan of Arc*. (Kiefer, Rader notes, fenced at University of Notre Dame.) Elsewhere, a photo of baseball star Jackie Robinson sliding into a base is juxtaposed with Elizabeth Jane Gardner Bouguereau's *The Shepherd David*, whose biblical subject straddles a lion in victory.





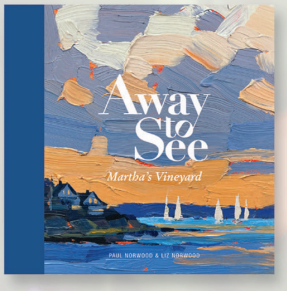


From top: Sabrina Ionescu of the New York Liberty evokes Eugène Delacroix's *Liberty Leading the People*. Trevor Lawrence of the Jacksonville Jaguars replays *Portrait of Pablo Picasso* by Juan Gris.

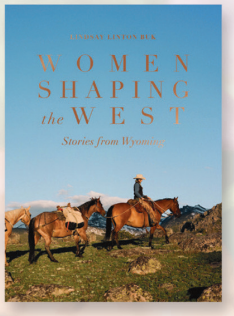


The Best Gifts Are Books

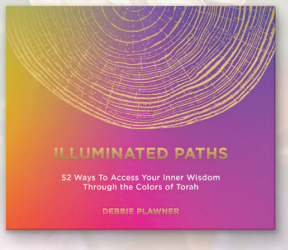
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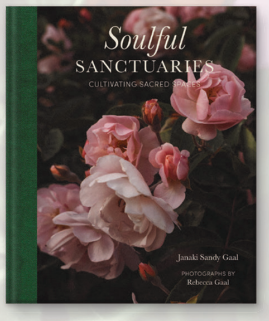
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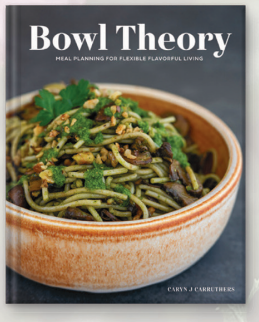
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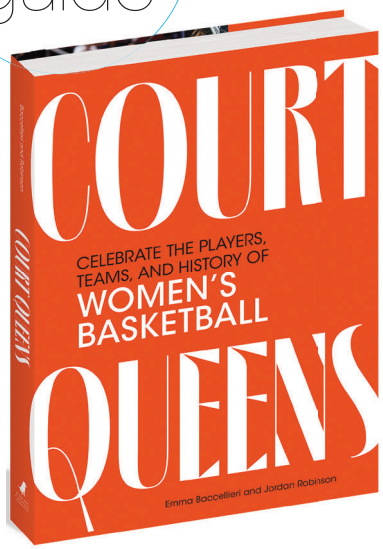


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Court Queens

Emma Baccellieri and Jordan Robinson (Black Dog & Leventhal) $35

The NBA may have had a 50-year head start on the WNBA, but women have been playing basketball since the beginning: Senda Berenson brought the sport to Smith College in 1892, just a few months after its invention. In an account rich with archival images and research, sports journalists Baccellieri and Robinson track the evolution of the women's game and its struggles at the intersection of gender and race, giving pioneering players and pivotal moments their due.

FIFA World Cup Pop-Up Book

Edited by Daniel Melamud (Rizzoli Universe) $50

The interactives and extras in this engineered tribute to the quadrennial men's event are too numerous to name, but for starters: movable wheels rotate through decades of tactical formations, boots, and finals-exclusive game balls; mini booklets reproduce, up through 2022, tickets for every tourney since the 1930 inception and every mascot since the first, 1966's leonine World Cup Willie; and splashy centerpiece pop-ups reproduce stadiums, a pitch fans can populate with a fantasy team, and the golden trophy itself.



The FIFA World Cup Pop-Up Book is rife with dynamic set pieces, including a stadium-style color wheel of national team shirts.

WIOTA © IOWA GIRLS' HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETIC UNION; VIVIAN © COURTESY OF RUTGERS UNIVERSITY





From l.: Six-on-six basketball flourished in the 1930s and '40s in small towns like Wiota, Iowa, whose team is seen here. The 1982 Cheyney State team, led by coach C. Vivian Stringer, is the first and only HBCU to make an NCAA Final Four.

Nalu

Marie Alohalani Brown and Ian Lendler (Clarkson Potter) $40

In Hawaii, *he'e nalu*, or wave sliding, has been interwoven into society for a thousand years. Brown, a Kanaka 'Ōiwi (Indigenous Hawaiian) scholar, and Lendler trace surfing's Polynesian roots, sharing "talk stories" about mythological figures like shark shape-shifter Māmala, a renowned beauty and skilled surfer. Robust research and vivid imagery depict how the beach boys of Waikīkī brought surfing to the tourist masses in the late 19th and early 20th centuries and the ways that contemporary practitioners ensure that the ancient traditions endure.



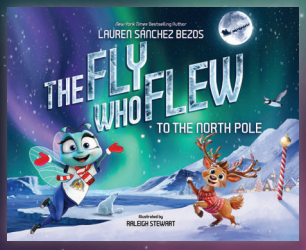


The authors of *Nalu* invite readers to *e hele mai e 'au* (come swim with us).

REPRINTED WITH PERMISSION FROM *NALU: HISTORY, LEGENDS, AND WISDOM FROM 1,000 YEARS OF HAWAIIAN SURFING* BY MARIE ALOHALANI BROWN AND IAN LENDLER ©2026. PUBLISHED BY CLARKSON POTTER, AN IMPRINT OF PENGUIN RANDOM HOUSE.

A New Holiday Adventure Takes Flight

Journey to the North Pole with Flynn the fly and her best friend Rio in a heartwarming story filled with friendship, perseverance, and Christmas magic from *New York Times* Bestselling Author Lauren Sánchez Bezos!



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Holiday gift guide

Street Photography

SHUTTERBUGS TRAIN THEIR LENSES ON PEOPLE AND PROPERTY IN NEW YORK, LOS ANGELES, IN BETWEEN, AND BEYOND

Alex Webb: Walking Blues

Alex Webb (Aperture) $60

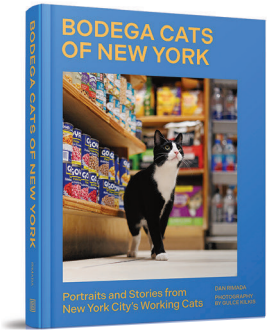
Webb brings readers along on a crisscross tour of the U.S., with images of everyday life in some 40 cities captured from 2010 to 2025. The compassionate, layered scenes, textured with color and shadow, are presented with minimal context—for the most part, only city, state, and year—allowing space to contemplate why, for instance, a person in a pink wig and dress, with cat ears and a tail, is striding barefoot outside a loading dock in Indianapolis.



Bodega Cats of New York

Dan Rimada and Gulce Kilkis (Epic Ink) $30

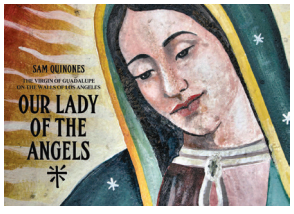
This winning roundup profiles the lives and careers of dozens of working felines across New York City neighborhoods. Though it's illegal to keep pets in a business that serves food—store names and addresses are withheld from the book—shop owners have long used cats as organic pest control. Evocative photos by Kilkis pair with Rimada's commentary on how bodega cat culture reflects the diverse, busy city; a cat's name "is not always a settled fact. It depends on who is speaking, what language they use, what shift they work, and how long they have known the cat."



Our Lady of the Angels

Sam Quinones (Angel City) $30

In 2009, when Quinones was a *Los Angeles Times* reporter, he began snapping photos of murals depicting the Virgin of Guadalupe, an apparition of Mary that appeared in Mexico in the 16th century. Immigrant business owners painted her outside their shops, Quinones writes, because local gang members wouldn't graffiti a wall with her image on it: "She appeared alongside bottles of bleach and corn oil, cellphones and milk cartons, letting customers know that she might bless both the store and the person who shopped there."



Pandemic Architecture

Penny Hardy (Blurring Books) $25

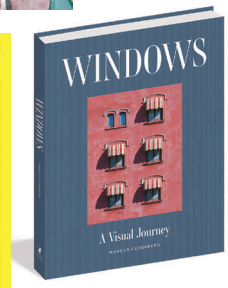
A few months after Covid shut down indoor dining (and so much else) in New York City, graphic designer Hardy bagen to document the curbside structures that allowed many restaurants to stay in business. Some represent the bare plywood minimum, but plenty of others are more creative, with entrances guarded by velvet curtains or shutter doors; decor courtesy of hanging plants, bookshelves, or globe lamps; and roofs that are peaked, thatched, or mostly open to the sky. All demonstrate that necessity is truly the mother of invention.

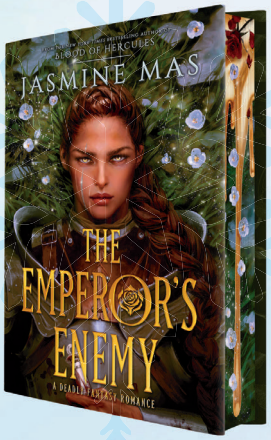


Windows

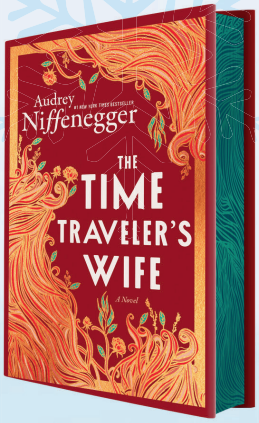
Marcus Cederberg (Black Dog & Leventhal) $45

Cederberg's minimalist photos, which have attracted 307,000 Instagram followers, favor pastels and candy colors, pleasing symmetry, and clever juxtaposition. A balcony protruding from the right side of a building in Crete appears poised to slot into a floor-to-ceiling window on the left side of a Copenhagen building on the opposite page. On another spread, which pairs Gävle, Sweden, and Como, Italy, a group of windows arranged two by three, one missing its striped awning, is a foil for the four windows opposite—one with a pediment and balcony and the others unaccessorized.

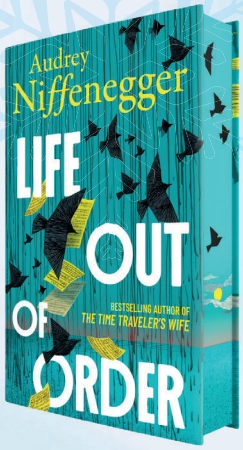




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(Collector's Ed.)
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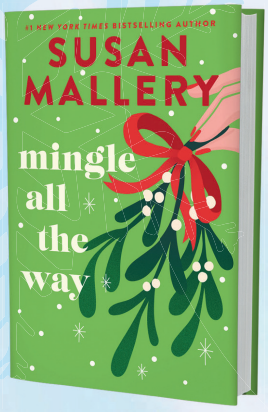
LIFE OUT OF ORDER
(Deluxe Limited Ed.)
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THE THINGS WE CANNOT SAY
(Collector's Ed.)
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HTP FOR THE *Holidays*

Check out our 2026 Holiday Gift Guide - from the hottest releases of the year to beloved classics, we've got gift editions for every type of reader.



MINGLE ALL THE WAY
by Susan Mallery
9780778332350
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A TIME OF WITCHES
by Madeline Martin
9781335002679
On Sale 9/1/2026



WHAT YOU ARE LOOKING FOR IS IN THE LIBRARY (Illustrated Ed.)
by Michiko Aoyama
9781335002716
On Sale 9/8/2026

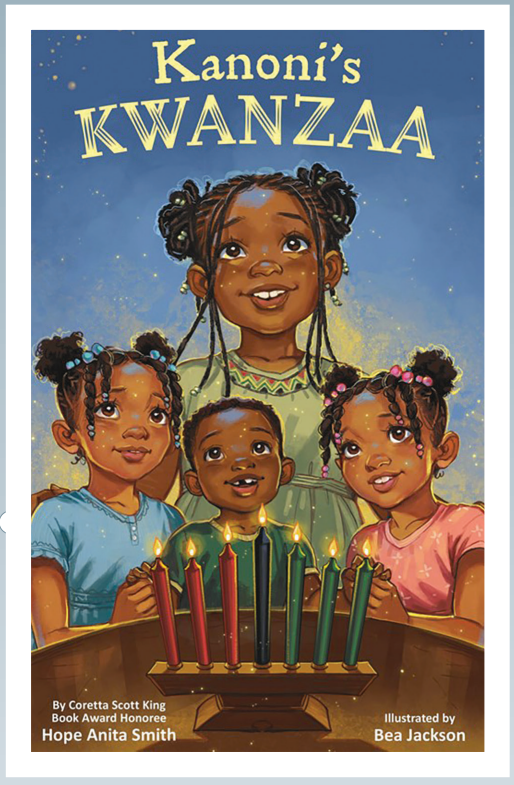


BEFORE THE COFFEE GETS COLD:
A Book Set (Books 1-6)
by Toshikazu Kawaguchi
9781335002501
On Sale 9/1/2026

HTP BOOKS

Seasonal Stories

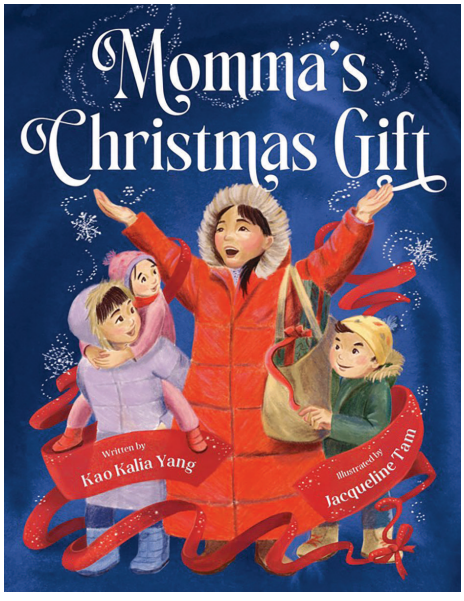
HOLIDAY-FOCUSED BOOKS FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN CELEBRATE FAMILY AND TRADITION WHILE TEEN TITLES LEAN INTO ROMANCE



Kanoni's Kwanzaa

Hope Anita Smith, illus. by Bea Jackson (Little, Brown/Ottaviano, ages 5–9) $18.99

A child learns what living out Kwanzaa's values means in this compassionate introduction to the holiday's seven core principles. On the night that Kanoni's mother introduces her to Kwanzaa, a house fire displaces their neighbors. Kanoni insists her family invite them in, setting in motion a season of generosity that sees the child sharing her room and her Christmas gifts, and turning to the community on her neighbors' behalf.



Momma's Christmas Gift

Kao Kalia Yang, illus. by Jacqueline Tam (Kokila, ages 4–8) $18.99

On winter mornings, as the child who narrates this tender story explains, Momma goes to work at the factory before her kids awaken, returning at night to cook dinner. Momma heads out on Christmas Eve, wearing the too-big red coat she chose from a church basement donation table, and comes back with one present each for the children. For the narrator, the gifts represent Momma's deliberate care as well as that of people who help those in need.

Pining for You

Stef Ferrari (Simon & Schuster, ages 12 and up) $21.99

High school senior Bennie works at a Christmas tree farm in Connecticut. When another teen, Eve, visits the farm, the girls bond over their family situations and their romantic chemistry sparkles. But Eve returns to Brooklyn before Bennie can get her number, spurring Bennie and her friends on a whirlwind adventure to find her. It's a cozy, swoony tale with Hallmark holiday romance appeal.

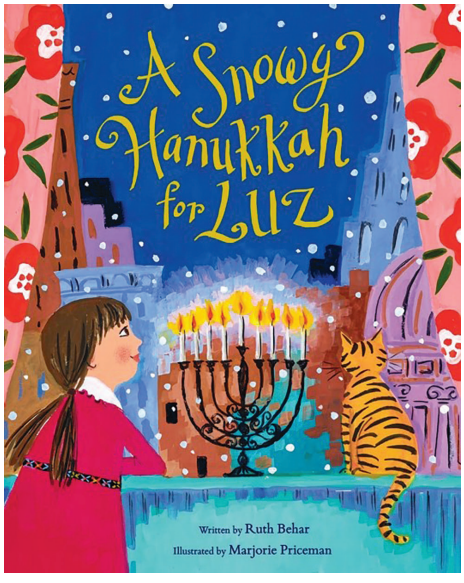




The Secret Santa Setup

Sarah Hutt, illus. by Sarah Long (Clarion, ages 14 and up) $15.99

This frothy rom-com unfolds like an advent calendar, with 25 sealed chapters that count down to Christmas. Sixteen-year-old Vermonter Amanda hopes to attend a summer youth program in Switzerland before backpacking through Europe. To pay for the trip, she works the cocoa-and-coffee stand at a local Christmas tree farm, where she clashes with 17-year-old Luke. With help from their peers, the ice between bubbly Amanda and reserved Luke thaws into flirtation, making for a leisurely, low-stakes holiday jaunt.



A Snowy Hanukkah for Luz

Ruth Behar, illus. by Marjorie Priceman (Quill Tree, ages 4–8) $18.99

As Luz and Abuelita walk home from buying latke supplies for the evening's Hanukkah party, the pair trade thoughts on the everyday miracles of the holiday. Soon, family and friends gather in joy at Abuelito and Abuelita's home, share Ashkenazi and Sephardic foods, and watch as Luz, born on the eighth night, lights all the candles. Carnival-colored illustrations help paint a warmhearted, love-filled portrait of a family's Jewish heritage.



A comfortable sense of community casts a welcome glow in *A Snowy Hanukkah for Luz*.

Kuro libros

Dive into vibrant Cuban culture and language with your little one (3-7)!



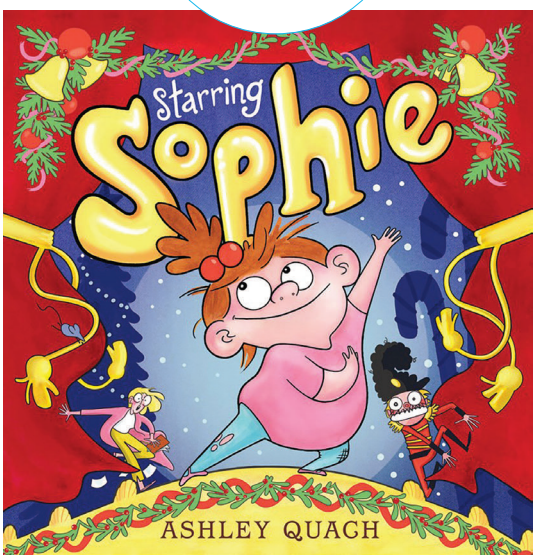
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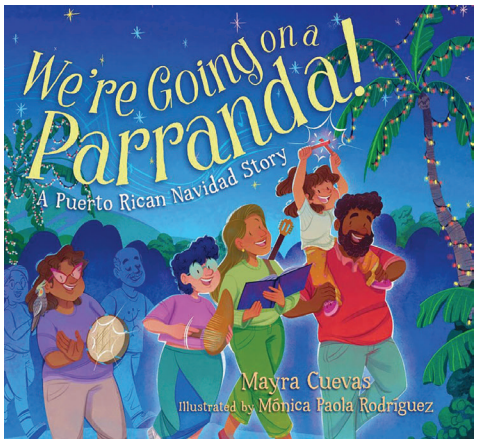
"Evocative, engaging and inspirational."
—Kirkus Reviews

"A cat's inviting celebration of Cuban culture and life."
—BookLife



Holiday gift guide









Young readers will get swept up by the lively festivities in *We're Going on a Parranda!*

Starring Sophie

Ashley Quach (Orchard, ages 4–8) $19.99

The Nutcracker gets an entertaining antihero spin in this winning story. Sophie, who yet again has been cast as a rat in the holiday ballet recital, dreams of being the Rat King. She slips away during the performance to try on the villain's costume, but her exuberant backstage choreography turns public when she accidentally lands onstage, wiping out the Nutcracker. Rat King Sophie seizes the opportunity, setting off a raucous improv performance gone deliciously awry.

We're Going on a Parranda!

Mayra Cuevas, illus. by Mónica Paola Rodríguez (Beach Lane, ages 4–8) $19.99

A family heads out at midnight for a parranda, traveling by car across Puerto Rico to surprise loved ones with music, dance, and song. When they arrive at the homes of the child narrator's relatives, she hopes to take part in the serenades but struggles to find "a rhythm of my own." Papi helps her discover the perfect instrument: "a pair of palitos,/ perfectly made, just for me." It's a gratifying celebration of the island's festive spirit.

Picture Books

TALES SET IN NEW YORK CITY, AT A REMOTE LIGHTHOUSE, AND BEYOND STOKE DEVELOPING IMAGINATIONS

Cow and Sow

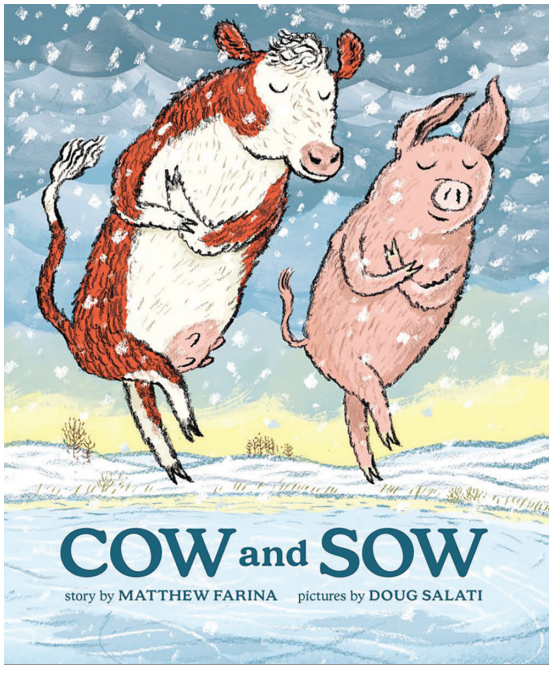
Matthew Farina, illus. by Doug Salati (Tundra, ages 3–7) $19.99

Winter feels endless for pals Cow and Sow, until a tumble on a frozen pond reveals the joys of skating. When Sow lands a showy jump, Cow accuses Sow of stealing her move. It takes a fall through the ice and a heroic group rescue to set things right, leading to a combined name for the move (ahem, "the Sow-Cow") and a wise meditation on new skills and old friends.

If the Moon

Matthew Burgess, illus. by Matthew Forsythe (Stonefruit Studio, ages 3–7) $19.99

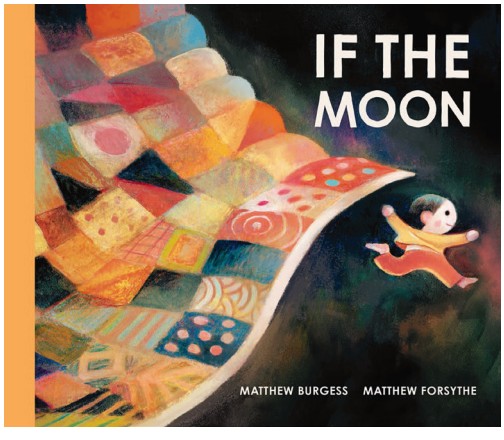
A quilt becomes a portal to possibility in this reassuring bedtime readaloud. Incantatory lines carry a sleepless child from their bedroom into the panels of an elaborate quilt, launching a cascade of transformations: the child swims to a small watercraft, then morphs from the boat's captain into a fish, a hummingbird, an owl, and more. The poem's quiet confidence and the art's ambitious scope, layered in deep jewel tones, make excellent bedfellows.



I'm So Happy You're Here

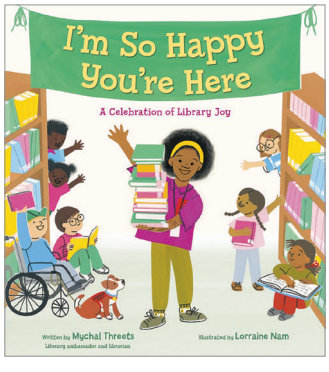
Mychal Threets, illus. by Lorraine Nam (Random House, ages 4–8) $18.99

A librarian who looks very much like viral literacy advocate and *Reading Rainbow* host Threets kicks off a day of "library joy" by greeting patrons: "You belong here with your dads. You belong here with your abuela.// You belong here if you don't have a home!" The librarian anchors almost every scene, embracing readers and suggesting that among a library's greatest treasures are the people who find their place within its walls.





If the Moon depicts a child on an imaginative nighttime adventure.



IF THE MOON INTERIOR © 2026 MATTHEW FORSYTHE

Children's Bookshelf

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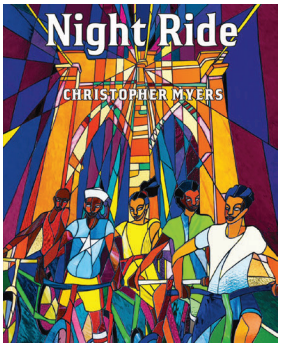
Subscribe for FREE

Holiday gift guide

Night Ride

Christopher Myers (Kokila, ages 4–8) $19.99

Caldecott Honoree Myers delivers a luminous visual love letter to Black childhood and New York City with a stunning wordless story that follows five kids bicycling across the boroughs. As the companions meet up and ride from landmark to landmark, their nocturnal adventure celebrates joyful freedom of movement. Myers and a team of artisans rendered each scene in stained glass that was later illuminated and photographed, layering vibrant colors that make every page glow with expressive life.



The Pizza Brothers

Lian Cho (HarperCollins, ages 4–8) $19.99

Genuine pizzazz is served with a tasty moral about pulling one's weight. At the family pizza shop, Paolo's to-do list runs far longer than his brothers'. Fed up, he zooms away on a scooter and lets them flop in front of a crowd, prompting tears worthy of Rigoletto. When Paolo does return, he extracts promises of cooperation, and the brothers pivot to dishing up tiny pizzas that prove a runaway hit.



The Snowmansion

Gideon Sterer, illus. by Stella Lim (Candlewick, ages 4–8) $19.99

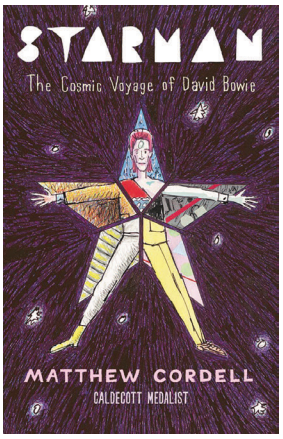
Winter's chill leads to communal warmth in this wordless fantasy. A child awakens at night and sneaks downstairs to find that a snowperson has arrived on the porch. They spend the night playing outside and build a sparkling, window-filled structure together the following day. The child's sorrow at leaving their friend alone at dinnertime, and a hasty return through the village, results in dozens of children and snow-people arriving at the snowmansion for an icy bash.



Starman

Matthew Cordell (Holiday House/Porter, ages 4–8) $19.99

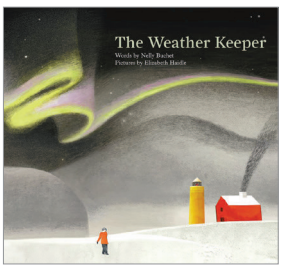
Caldecott Medalist Cordell's ardent biography of David Bowie provides a narrative tour of the musical artist's eras. Each stop on his journey yields a new persona and musical style, from Major Tom to Soul Man to Pop Star, and every section sports a distinctive look: fluorescent flamboyance for Ziggy Stardust; noirish grayscale for the Thin White Duke. It's a reverent, restless paean that honors its subject by refusing to sit still.



The Weather Keeper

Nelly Buchet, illus. by Elizabeth Haidle (Enchanted Lion, ages 4–8) $19.99

An evocative snapshot of life as "a Weather Keeper/ who reads the sky" comes into focus in this atmospheric intergenerational account. Through rhythmic free verse, the narrator describes her mother's decision to learn weather-keeping from her own mother. Encapsulating the work's sublime allure, an electric-hued aurora borealis at one point snakes across a foldout



spread inhabited by a solitary reindeer. There's a quiet charisma to this affecting portrait of deliberation, belonging, and connection.

Wide Load on the Road

Stephen Savage (Roaring Brook, ages 3–6) $18.99

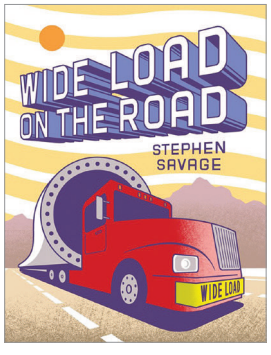
This propulsive picture book follows a massive truck and its mysterious cargo from dockside to destination. As the vehicle's cheerful red cab pulses across hilly landscapes under sun-rayed skies, expressive typography does double duty as both reportorial text and visual event: "LONG" stretches across the page as the truck makes a tight turn, and "TALL" looms vertically when the vehicle detours around a tunnel. It's a well-engineered story that delivers the goods.

Young Cat, Old Cat

Jillian Tamaki (Viking, ages 3–7) $18.99

This mesmerizing romp by Caldecott Honoree Tamaki riffs on cats' many lives. To begin, a gray kitten announces itself with a "mew" and a tug on a child's pant leg. As the pages turn, lively scenes spotlight the animal's many sides ("playful," "nice," "naughty"). Eventually, it becomes time to say goodbye to the "old cat," who appears constellation-like in the heavens before reemerging again as a kitten.



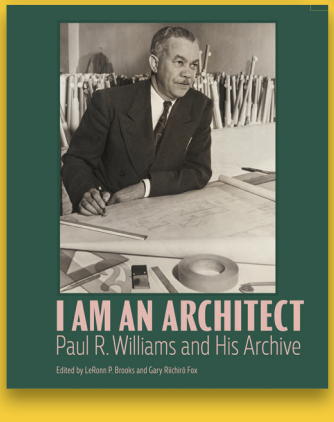


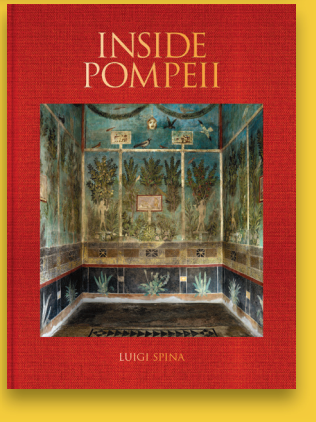
Getty

GIFTS FROM GETTY









Cassatt Reconsidered
Mary G. Morton, with a foreword by Lauren Elkin
A sweeping reconsideration of the artist we thought we knew—and the forces that obscured her legacy.

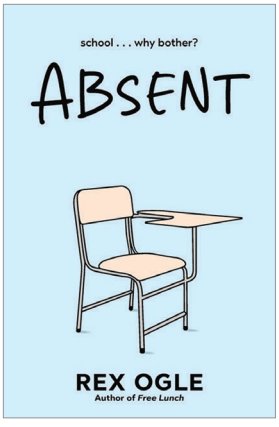
I Am an Architect
Paul R. Williams and His Archive
Edited by LeRonn P. Brooks and Gary Riichirō Fox
Discover the visionary legacy of Paul R. Williams—the groundbreaking Black architect who transformed Los Angeles and beyond, redefining modern design and advancing social progress through architecture.

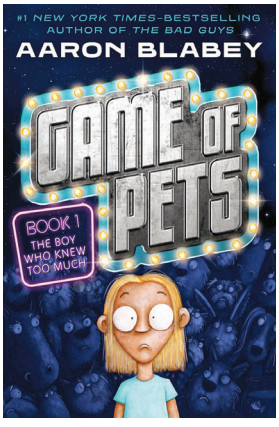
Medieval Wellness
From Beauty to Bloodletting
Larisa Grollemond
Dispelling myths of a dirty, superstitious Middle Ages, this humorous and compelling volume explores medieval approaches to health and wellness.

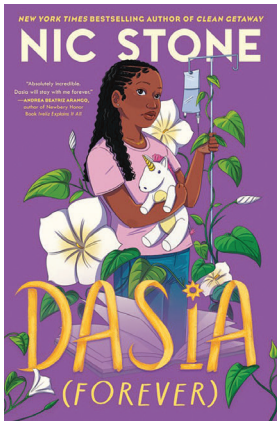
Inside Pompeii
Luigi Spina
A lavish, visually stunning volume that takes readers on a photographic tour of Pompeii's spaces, including many that have never been seen by the public.

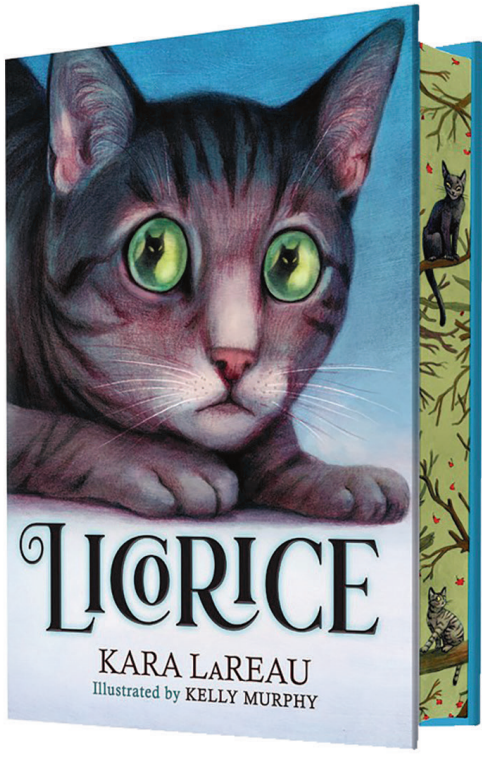
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Middle Grade

THEMES OF FRIENDSHIP, HARDSHIP, AND THE FANTASTICAL RECUR THROUGHOUT OUR PICKS FOR MIDDLE SCHOOLERS

Absent

Rex Ogle, illus. by LJ-Baptiste (Norton, ages 10–14) $17.99

Rhythmic verse, journal entries, and comics combine for a nuanced middle school portrait. After Manny's father is imprisoned, the boy no longer sees the point of school and skips class to write rap lyrics. Honors student Liam, meanwhile, spends more time hiding from bullies than in class. And while Calvin loves drawing, he often misses art class to care for his younger siblings while their single father works. When the trio receive detention for their habitual truancy, their resulting bond inspires positive changes.

The Boy Who Knew Too Much (Game of Pets #1)

Aaron Blabey (Odd Dot, ages 8–12) $15.99

Eleven-year-old Griff yearns for a pet. A solo trip to the pet store nets him an axolotl named Bob, but Griff is shocked when Bob telepathically informs him that Earth is the subject of an intergalactic game show where players control pet avatars to manipulate humankind into destroying the planet. The bizarre premise, myriad moments of slapstick comedy, and goofy illustrations add up to a raucous experience.

Dasia (Forever)

Nic Stone, illus. by Simone Douglas (Crown, ages 8–12) $17.99

This emotional and satisfying spin-off of the Dear Martin series follows 13-year-old Dasia, who's already struggling with tough family circumstances when she's diagnosed with cancer. Via unsent letters to her incarcerated older brother LaQuan, Dasia reveals recent challenges, including the death of her abusive father. While undergoing induction chemotherapy at the hospital, she meets 13-year-old fellow cancer patient Jimmy, and the girls share confidences and provide each other with companionship, support, and encouragement.

Licorice

Kara LaReau, illus. by Kelly Murphy (Scholastic Press, ages 8–12) $18.99

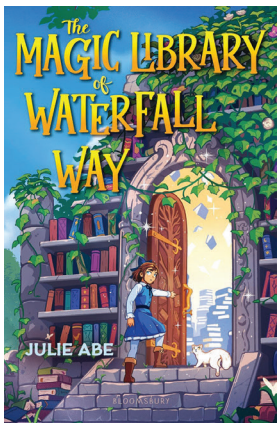
In this appealing tale for animal and mystery lovers alike, shelter feline Kitty believes she's finally found a forever home with

11-year-old Max. Instead, she discovers a family still haunted by the memory of Licorice, Max's beloved cat who disappeared. The mystery surrounding Licorice's vanishing deepens Kitty's anxieties until the truth about the cat's fate comes to light, reshaping Kitty's understanding of the household and her own presence there.

The Magic Library of Waterfall Way

Julie Abe (Bloomsbury, ages 8–11) $18.99

The Alterran Empire determines social standing by ranking citizens' Remarkableness. Eleven-year-old Lyra, the sole Unremarkable, feels isolated and is running out of time to join a guild. Rejections pile up until Lyra stumbles upon the Guild of Scholars. To gain acceptance, she must embark on a quest to restore the guild library's lost magic crystal, setting up a charming adventure that celebrates curiosity.



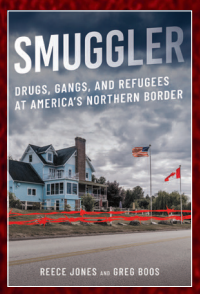


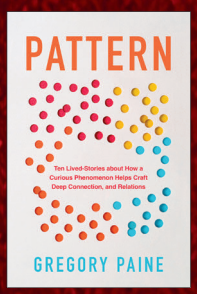
The Secret Bookstore Sleuth Society

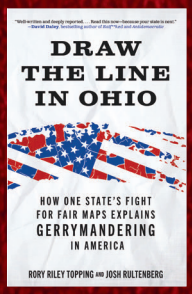
Lindsay Currie (Sourcebooks, ages 9–12) $17.99

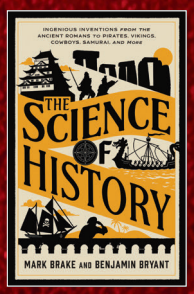
This locked-room murder mystery and series starter follows seventh grader Merrick, who has been missing her friends since financial hardship forced her to withdraw from private school and begin homeschooling from her mother's bookstore. Her friends come to see her at the shop, but the visit falls into chaos when they find an

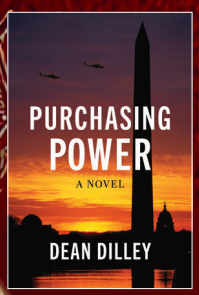
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GREAT BOOK

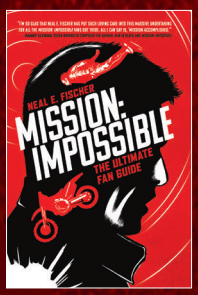




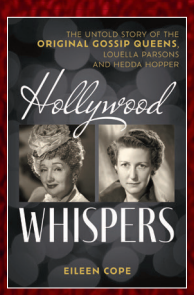












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elderly patron dead in a storage room. Then an ice storm descends, forcing the tweens to shelter at the inn adjoining the store. The tweens—plus Merrick's grandmother Ida, an Agatha Christie fan—seize the opportunity to investigate.

Sisters Alone

Shifa Saltagi Safadi (Putnam, ages 8–12) $18.99

Two siblings must put aside their differences to survive a deadly snowstorm in this stirring verse novel. In the wake of their mother's death, sixth grader Leena withdraws while older sister Rama wrestles with anger. With their father in Japan for a business trip, the pair find themselves home alone as a blizzard descends. When worsening conditions make their isolated house inhospitable, the pair work together to get help.

This Is a Door

Daniel Nayeri (Stonefruit, ages 8–12) $19.99

A 12-year-old orphan named Nothing—Ing for short—searches for his "best purpose" in this rousing mythic fantasy told in a visually arresting style. The prince of the kingdom undertakes a quest to kill the giantess terrorizing the countryside, inspiring Ing and friends Pöppy the dog and mOmO the mouse to embark on their own journey. The trio's trek is illustrated via the text, with specific words, lines, and passages arranged to evoke objects, actions, or emotions—a mostly blank opening page, for instance, concludes with "A boy named Nothing woke up on the floor."

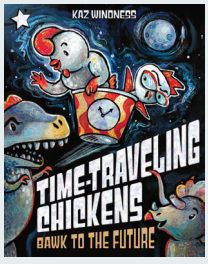
The Unusuals

Gail Carson Levine (Quill Tree, 10 and up) $19.99

In this evocative medieval murder mystery, three 11-year-olds—affluent Jewish cousins Chera and Lummie, and working-class Christian Joan—in 1277 Winchester, England, form an unlikely friendship that defies their town's rigid social and religious divisions. When Chera's grandmother and her handmaid, Joan's mother, are murdered, and the authorities' prime suspect flees, the children conduct their own investigation, doubtful of the runaway's involvement.

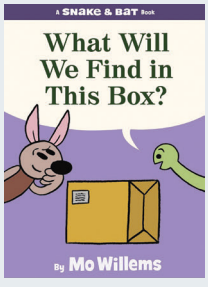
Chapter Books

BAWK TO THE FUTURE (TIME-TRAVELING CHICKENS #1)
Kaz Windness (Simon Spotlight, ages 5–9) $18.99



After a mishap at a top secret lab gives chickens Nugget and Tenders super smarts, the avian duo must scuttle the lab's plan to secure world domination. Slipping into the lab's fried-chicken-bucket-shaped time machine, Nugget hatches a scheme to rewrite history in chickens' favor. This graphic novel caper is equal parts absurd and propulsive.

WHAT WILL WE FIND IN THIS BOX? (SNAKE & BAT #1)
Mo Willems (Union Square, ages 4–8) $10.99



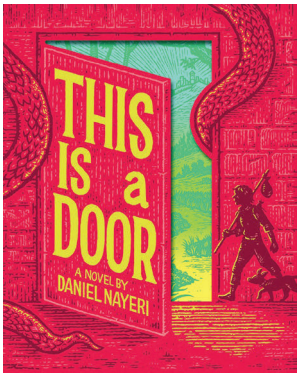
Elephant & Piggie creator Willems launches a dynamic new series with a classic setup and another likable animalian duo. Snake and Bat positively burst with excited curiosity over the discovery of a plain brown box. While a "Rummage!" doesn't yield the cheese they'd hoped to find, the box produces other pleasures, including an instruction manual in many languages and a multitude of pretend uses. Fan-favorite Piggie even makes an appearance.

Witchward Bound (Butter and Owl Adventures #1)

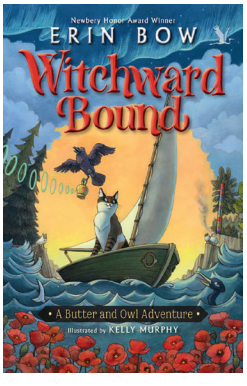
Erin Bow, illus. by Kelly Murphy (Disney Hyperion, ages 8–12) $17.99

Reminiscent of the *Odyssey*, this gleefully chaotic tale sees a magical feline and raven embarking on a journey to find their missing witch. Though their opposing personalities often put them at odds, self-important male calico cat Butter and flighty corvid Owl faithfully serve as companions to witch Penelope. When Penelope unexpectedly leaves home without them, the two venture out to find her, learning to cooperate as they encounter powerful gods, terrifying monsters, and dangerous traps.



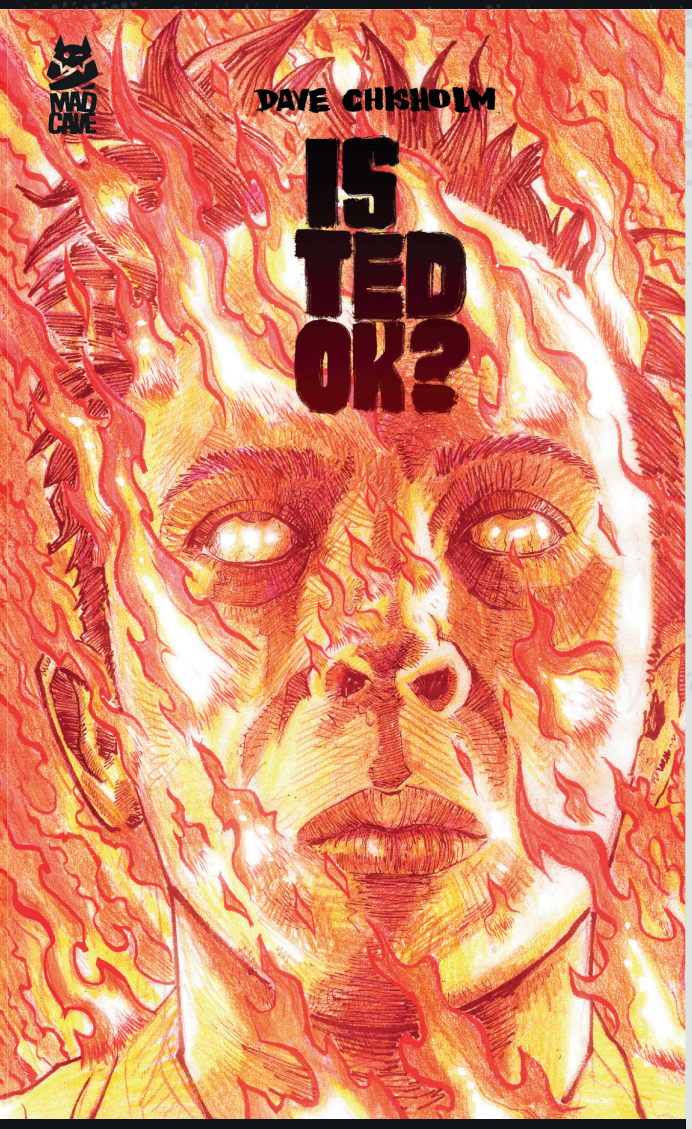






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Is Ted OK? Volume 1

What happens when the act of helping someone becomes the spark that unravels everything?

Is Ted OK? is the newest creator-owned comic from award-winning cartoonist and musician **Dave Chisholm** (*Spectrum, Miles Davis & The Search for the Sound*), who writes, illustrates, and designs the series in his signature inventive style.

The story unfolds as a spectacularly unpredictable yarn—each issue widening the lens, escalating the stakes, and shattering the scope of the issue before it, all without losing its beating heart: the search for human connection in an oppressive, paranoid world.

Available September 29, 2026
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YOU ARE ON NATIVE LAND:

A CHARITY COMIC FOR INDIGENOUS RIGHTS

Jon Proudstar, Gord Hill, Chas Lowry, Kelly Lynne D'Angelo, Jackie Fawn, Steph Littlebird, Roy Boney, Jim Terry, David Cutler, David Mack, Arihhonni "Honni" Cannon Clay David, and many more.

Collecting stories and art donated by some of comics' leading Indigenous creators, this anthology presents tales of native resistance, family and kinship, love and grief. All profits from the collection will be donated to Not Our Native Daughters, a Native-led, survivor-led organization dedicated to addressing the Missing, Murdered, and Exploited Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) crisis.

Available September 15, 2026

PB-ISBN: 978-1545835937



HAVANA SPLIT

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

Havana is on the edge of collapse, and everyone is looking to cash in before it does. This graphic novel moves through historical tension with a sharp, fast-paced noir edge. Amid Cuba's simmering unrest, Havana Split Vol. 1 unfolds in a city where loyalties shift fast, and every move carries weight, as espionage, gang rivalries, and political revolution collide.

Available September 22, 2026

PB-ISBN: 978-1545826966
HC-ISBN: 978-1545826973



EXPLOIT VOLUME 1

Laura Hudson, Tim Leong (W), Emiliana Pinna (A), Rebecca Good (C), Frank Cvetkovic (L)

Don't bury the lede. Bury your enemies.

A timely, biting satire with a pop-punk edge, Exploit has a lot to say about the state of the American tech oligarchy and the rise of global fascism.

Kirby Kuo might be late to her true purpose in life—but no one would call the 30-something journalist intern out of time. It's Kirby who uncovers a conspiracy surrounding a billionaire tech industrialist who, it turns out, is also really good at treason.

Available October 6, 2026

PB-ISBN: 978-1545828854



51 VOLUME 1

Curt Pires (W), Jok (A), Micah Myers (L)

Harvey and his coworkers throw a rager and wake up from their bender to find that every single item from Hangar 51 has been stolen. Now in the deepest trouble of his life, Harvey and his ragtag crew must go out into the world and put the genie back in the bottle—capturing rogue aliens, stolen superpower formulas, experimental energy weapons, and all manner of impossible objects. And as they hunt each piece down, a darker truth begins to surface...

Available October 27, 2026

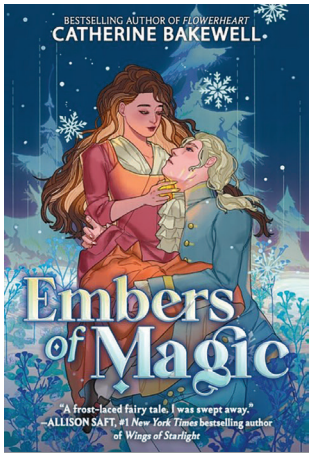
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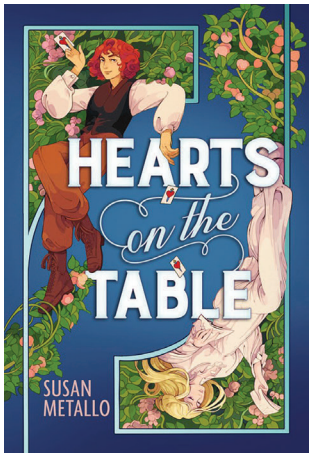
YA

RECOMMENDED READING FOR TEENS: NOVELS BY E. LOCKHART, NEAL SHUSTERMAN, RENÉE WATSON, AND OTHER FAVORITE AUTHORS









Children of Owl

Darcie Little Badger, illus. by Abigail Rajunov Levine Querido, ages 12 and up) $19.99

Sixteen-year-old Maisie's peaceful life in Sunny Parks, a mobile home community, is upended following a meeting with the son of the legendary Big Owl, a prominent figure in Lipan Apache stories, who warns her that "a terrible fate looms." Maisie is pulled into a tangle of overlapping mysteries while trying to prevent the impending disaster. Mystery and speculative elements converge in this intricately constructed story that balances suspenseful plotting with emotional resonance.

Embers of Magic

Catherine Bakewell (HarperCollins, ages 13 and up) $19.99

Tantalizing adventure gives way to romance in this reimagining of "The Snow Queen." Seventeen-year-old Fiamma has spent years keeping her missing parents' memory alive while concealing her unpredictable fire magic. After seeking the king's help on a mission to find her parents, he tasks her with accompanying Prince Joseph on a quest to kill a witch. As Fiamma falls for the prince, she must unravel the witch's curse while learning to embrace her own fire.

Everything New Again

Renée Watson (Bloomsbury, ages 13 and up) $20.99

Swoon-worthy first love and a touching exploration of the connective power of loss unfold in this romance set in small-town Oregon. Working at her family's funeral home has given 17-year-old Bliss an unusually intimate view of death. As preparations for a funeral unfold, Bliss, who is Black, develops feelings for 18-year-old newcomer Solomon, whose father is Black and whose mother is white. They bond over reflections on life and mortality and a fascination with the community's roots in the Great Migration.

Hearts on the Table

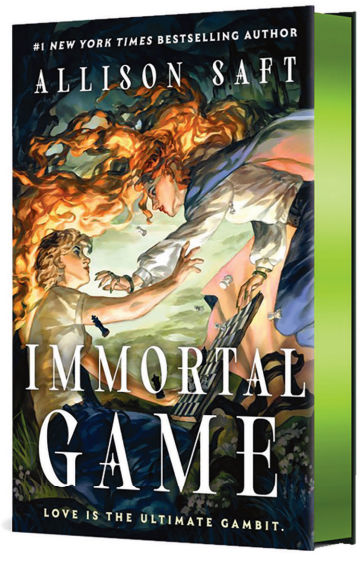
Susan Metallo (Candlewick, ages 14 and up) $19.99

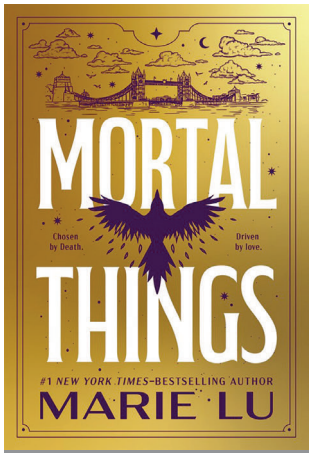
This clever retelling of *Twelfth Night* set in WWI-era Illyria (modern-day Croatia) follows identical 17-year-old British twins Sebastian and Violet Farris, who flee England after their father attempts to force both Violet and transgender Sebastian into marriage by selling them to the highest bidder. Separated when their ship is attacked, the twins become entangled in a familiar web of mistaken identities and romantic complications.

Immortal Game

Allison Saft (Wednesday, ages 13 and up) $22

Nineteen-year-old human Shea enters a magical tournament hosted by the fae High King of the Otherworld, intending to use the reward of a single granted wish to reclaim her older sister Aideen, who vanished into the fae realm six years earlier. As the competition unfolds, Shea and her rival, cunning fae princess Ciara, form a tentative alliance. Boasting unapologetically intellectual heroines, the result is a mesmerizing take on fae fantasy.





The League of Dangerous Young Ladies

J.A. Morgenstein (Stonefruit Studio, ages 12 and up) $19.99

This series launch sees the daughters of classic literary characters and historical figures embark on high-octane fantasy adventures. In 1909, Rose Moriarty, the teenage daughter of Sherlock Holmes's infamous rival, is known for mystery-solving and monster-slaying. Separated from her formidable companions—including brilliant inventor Nikki Tesla and physically enhanced Seffy Moreau—Rose must navigate both external dangers and internal doubts. The novel's emphasis on women in scientific and intellectual pursuits contending with interpersonal challenges is refreshing.

Mortal Things

Marie Lu (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, ages 14 and up) $20.99

This lush dark romantasy sees a college student navigating a sinister world of gods to save her best friend. After a mugger fatally stabs Rose's bestie, Laine, on a Manhattan street, Rose strikes a deal with Raven, god of death, that reverses the moment. In exchange, Rose must become one of Raven's Harbingers—human mercenaries compelled to do their patron immortal's bidding. Nuanced relationships and visceral stakes enthrall from cover to cover in this series launch.

The Pools

E. Lockhart (Delacorte, ages 12 and up) $20.99

Lexie has recently arrived in Covington with her younger sister and sick widowed mother, who seeks healing from the New England town's renowned hot springs. At the pools, Lexie meets swimmer Chester and the two quickly become a couple, adapting to their differences. Then the "legend of the pools," which describes a dramatic transformation following a swim, shockingly comes to pass. It's a striking fusion of teen romance and haunting fairy tale.

Rising Thunder

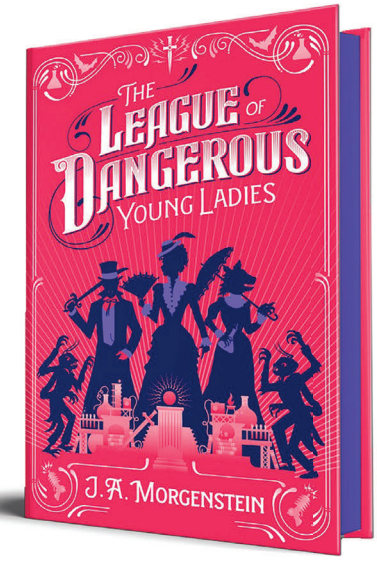
Neil Shusterman (Simon & Schuster, ages 12 and up) $24.99

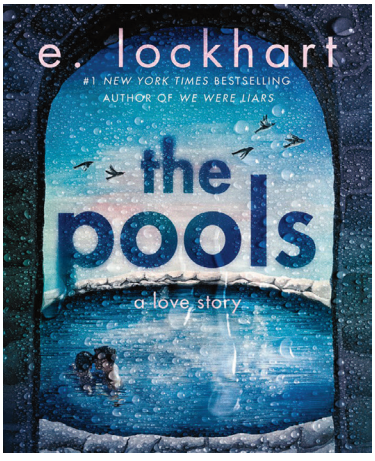
Shusterman revisits the thought-provoking dystopia of the Arc of a Scythe series in this prequel. *Scythe*, the Printz Honor recipient that kicked off the series, established that 2042 marked the end of the Age of Mortality, ushering in a seeming utopia governed by the totalitarian Thunderhead. This book rewinds to explore the forces—including teenagers in a chat room debating the future—that tipped humanity toward immortality.

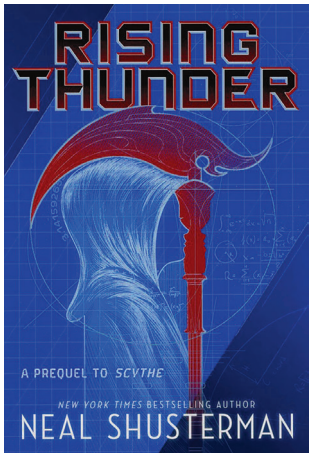
Traitors' Nest

Frances Hardinge (Amulet, ages 13 and up) $19.99

In this rousing, medieval-inspired historical fantasy, castles throughout the kingdom of Thaletal occasionally swap places. Fifteen-year-old Burr's village suffers when a red castle appears and its mercenary inhabitants start plundering residents' livestock and food stores. Burr's father joins several neighbors in a failed rebellion and is subsequently executed, leaving Burr to grieve and fight for agency, fairness, and his community's well-being. This spirited tale of derring-do is a triumph from start to finish.





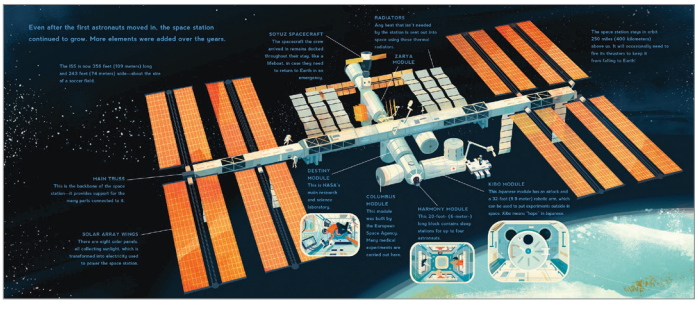




Nonfiction

REAL-LIFE SCIENCE AND HISTORY—PLUS A DASH OF CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE—INFORM AND INSPIRE KIDS AND TEENS





The Greatest Project in Space introduces the various elements of the International Space Station, which orbits 250 miles above Earth.

The Greatest Project in Space

Markus Motum (Candlewick, ages 8–12) $19.99

This energetic and inspiring work chronicles the origins of the International Space Station. Motum breaks down the satellite's function into bite-size facts that prompt awe and inquisitiveness; spreads with brightly colored digital artwork highlight key components of the craft, the astronauts' training, and life aboard the vessel since its launch in November 2000. It's a joyful offering that excels in its celebration of human ingenuity and the connective capability of a shared goal.

How to Survive the End of the World

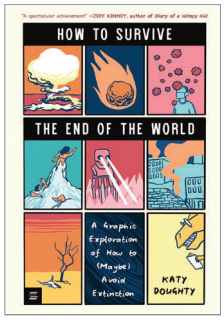
Katy Doughty (MITeen, ages 14 and up) $24.99

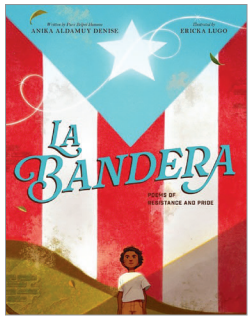
Historical evidence as well as contemporary scientific and cultural expertise propel this thoroughly researched nonfiction graphic novel. Sections cover topics relating to climate change, space exploration, technological advancement, and more as they ruminate on global factors that could contribute to possible apocalypse. Visual humor provides levity throughout fact-heavy infographic-style spreads and somber recreations of tragic events, while a recurring river motif suggests hope and optimism for the future.

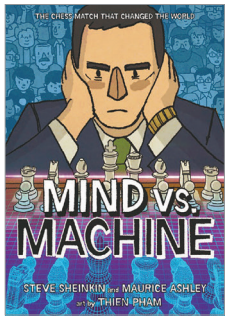
La Bandera

Anika Aldamuy Denise, illus. by Ericka Lugo (HarperCollins, ages 8 and up) $19.99

Fourteen powerful poems unspool the history of Puerto Rico, its people, and its flag. The opener, "Brazo de Oro," set in 1868, details







the creation of the first Puerto Rican banner by Ana María Bracetti Cuevas. Subsequent poems describe the invasion and colonization of the independent republic by the United States in 1898. Lush artwork and lyrical verse combine in this uplifting testament to a people and their history.

Mind vs. Machine

Maurice Ashley and Steve Sheinkin, illus. by Thien Pham (Roaring Brook, ages 10–14) $22.99

This thought-provoking graphic novel narrated by Ashley, the first Black chess grandmaster, celebrates human creativity and intuition amid an ever advancing technological landscape. Dynamic cartooning follows Garry Kasparov, the sitting world chess champion in 1997, as he competes against a supercomputer developed by IBM and Taiwanese American engineer Feng-hsiung Hsu. It's an affirming story whose high stakes and taut atmosphere closely mirror contemporary issues in increasingly unprecedented technological times.

What Do People Do at the Science Museum?

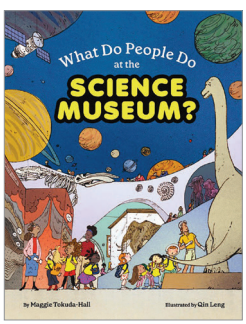
Maggie Tokuda-Hall, illus. by Qin Leng (Chronicle, ages 5–8) $19.99

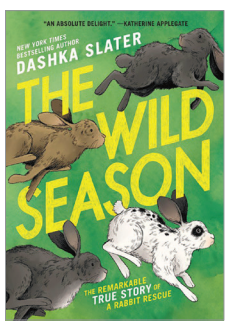
Equal parts primer and provocation, this book is smart prep for a museum day and a satisfying way to relive one. At a bustling science and natural history museum, the many child visitors chat with a variety of behind-the-scenes experts, including curators and taxidermists, about topics ranging from how evolution works to how a death's-head hawkmoth camouflages itself to swipe honey from a beehive. It makes for a lively kids'-eye-view walkabout.

The Wild Season

Dashka Slater, illus. by Jamey Christoph (Little, Brown, ages 8–12) $18.99

In this compassionate and informative story, a community comes together to rescue four domesticated rabbits abandoned in San Francisco's Golden Gate Heights Park in June 2023. The narrative follows the dedicated rescuers, who include local kids, as they determine to save the animals, offering insights into the history of the park and the differences between wild and domesticated rabbits. It underscores the dangers faced by abandoned pets and the power of collective action.

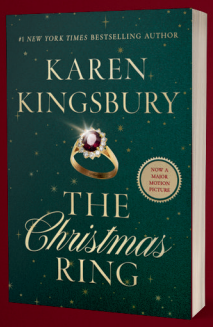




HOLIDAY 2026

Stories Worth UNWRAPPING

Our top Christmas titles of the season!



KAREN KINGSBURY

The Christmas Ring

A military widow's search for a lost heirloom leads to love, hope, and a Christmas miracle.

Now a major motion picture!

MELISSA FERGUSON

The Christmas Yes List

All she wants for Christmas is a rejection—until a charming stranger keeps saying yes.

Soon to be a streaming original movie!





MAX LUCADO

Christmas Stories

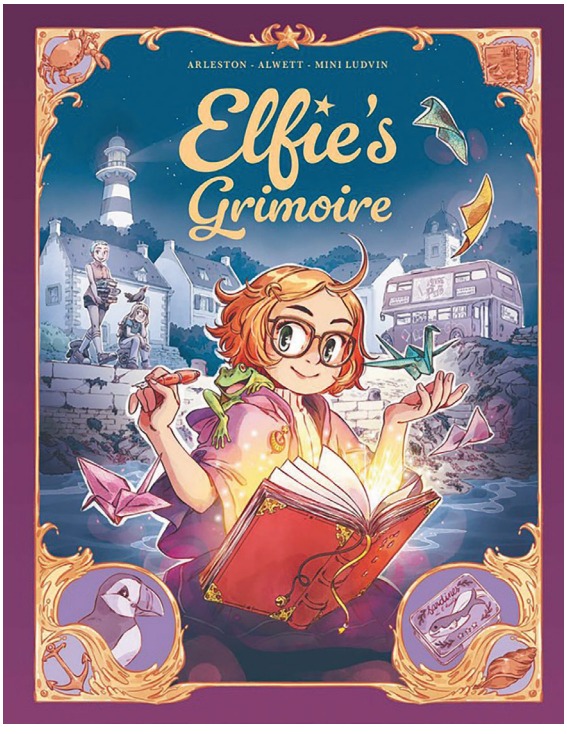
These beloved yuletide tales—from ancient Bethlehem to a small Texas town—capture the true spirit of the season.

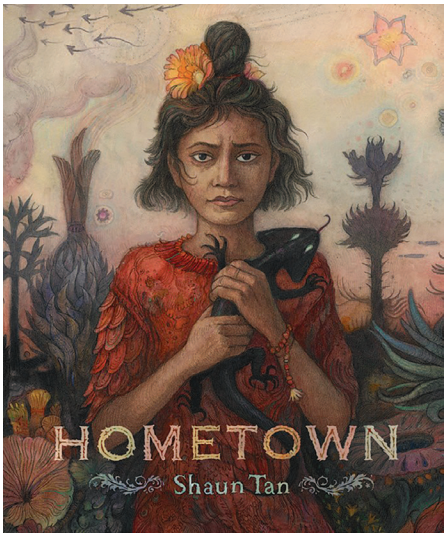
SCAN TO EXPLORE

Find out more about each title here:

Comics

ACTION AND ADVENTURE MEET HOME AND HEART IN SEQUENTIALLY TOLD ILLUSTRATED NARRATIVES





Elfie's Grimoire

Audrey Alwett and Christophe Arleston, trans. from the French by Rebecca Potters, illus. by Mini Ludvin (Andrews McMeel, ages 8–10) $22.99

Humor and sincerity propel this enchanting tale. Following their mother's death, 11-year-old Elfie and her older sister Magda are whisked away by their eldest sister, Louette, in her nomadic French bookstore. As the siblings roam, they become embroiled in freewheeling adventures, including resolving a feud in a Breton village and investigating a typewriter theft in Provence. Their discovery of their late mother's grimoire adds another layer of magic to their wanderings.

Hometown

Shaun Tan (Levine Querido, ages 10–14) $24.99

This luminous, ethereal allegory follows a lone youth who must choose between staying among their beloved otherworldly community and leaving to seek out others like them. The book's narrator introduces the audience to their hometown on an interstellar world and their creaturely family and friends. Their routine is disrupted when a blazing object crash-lands outside of town and an astronaut appears, urging the narrator to accompany him on his voyage home.

Interstellar Pen Pals (Moonie and Junie #1)

Katie Kordesh (HarperAlley, ages 8–12) $24.99

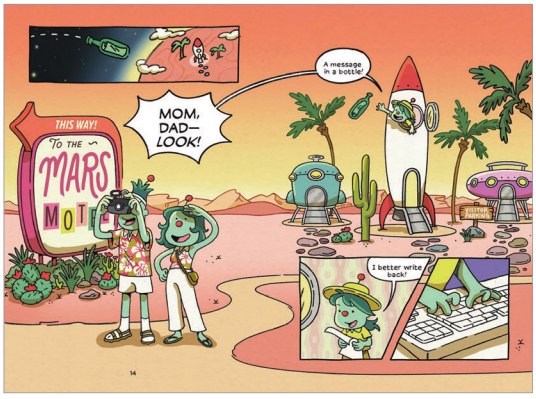
Effervescent human astronaut Moonette lives alone on the moon. To lure potential new friends, she writes a letter introducing herself, sticks it in a vessel, and tosses it into the cosmos. The missive tumbles through space until it's found by shy, green-skinned alien Juniper, who's vacationing with her family on Mars. It's a tender tale showing how curiosity and determination can foster connection even millions of miles apart.

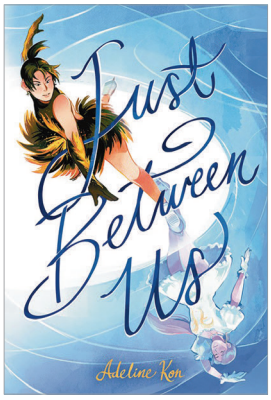
Just Between Us

Adeline Kon (Dial, ages 12 and up) $25.99

With a magnetic sapphic relationship at its core, this graphic novel offers a stirring exploration of professional figure skating. Teenage American Lydia is enjoying her status as the world's top-ranked skater when her coach agrees to train her rival, Malaysian athlete Elaine, in preparation for the Winter Olympics. The two clash both on and off the ice until they eventually bond over their love of skating and deeper feelings spring to life.









An epistolary exchange sparks an IRL friendship in the first installment of the Moonie and Junie series.

The Moonlit Spiral

Mike Maihack (Candlewick, ages 8–12) $24.99

In the world of Helix, seeking riches and artifacts from past civilizations was once a way of life. Orphaned Rion struggles to believe in the magic that once propelled treasure hunters, but is forced to reconsider his skepticism when he uncovers a hidden map to treasure and a feline youth materializes in his room. Action-adventure plotting and epistolary storytelling with echoes of Indiana Jones derring-do combine for an inviting offering.

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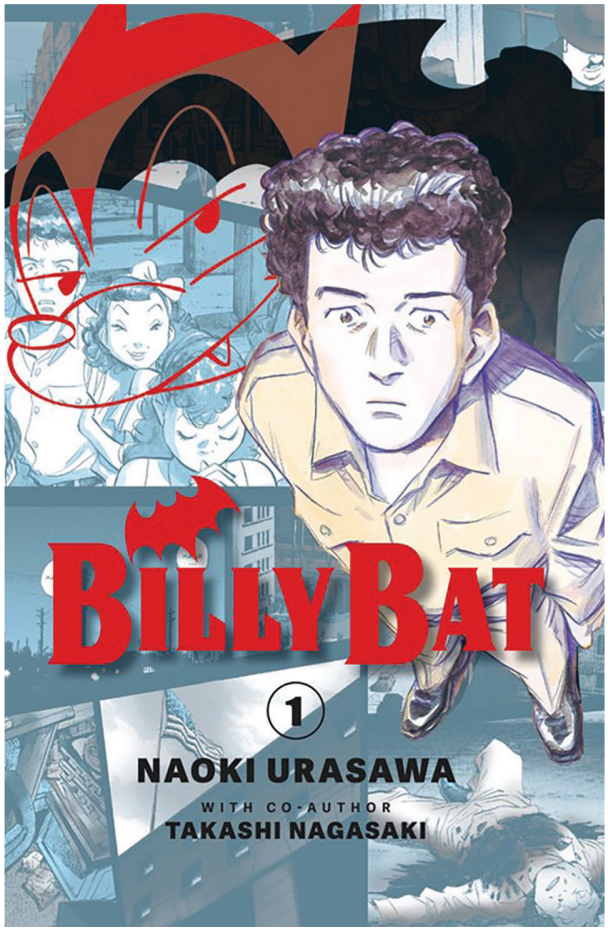
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Comics

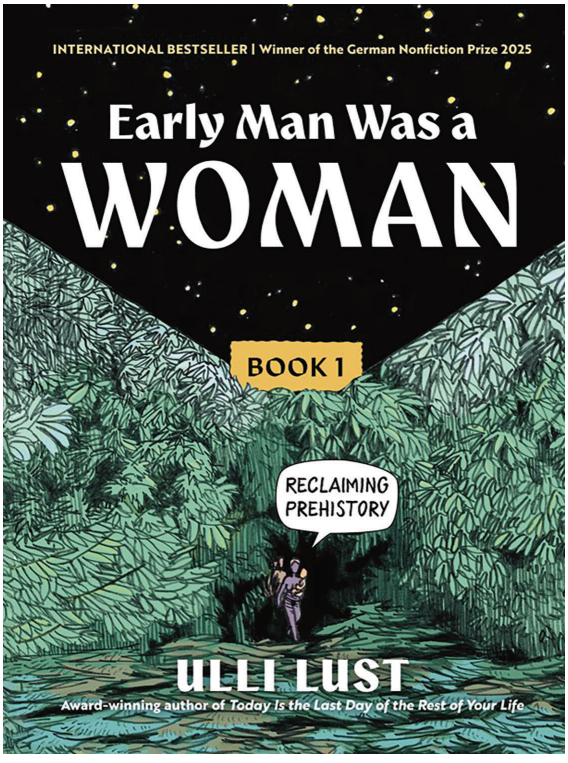
FROM THE AMERICAN CANON TO FUTURISTIC MANGA, AND POINTS IN BETWEEN, THERE'S A GRAPHIC WORK TO SUIT EVERY TASTE



Billy Bat

Naoki Urasawa and Takashi Nagasaki, trans. from the Japanese by Kristi Iwashiro (Kana) $13.99

The parallel histories of Japanese and American comics inform this crackerjack postmodern paranoia thriller. It's 1949, and Japanese American cartoonist Kevin Yamagata has scored a hit with his comic starring a cartoon bat. Haunted by the possibility that he unconsciously plagiarized something he saw while stationed in Japan during WWII, Kevin travels back to Tokyo, where he's plunged into a convoluted conspiracy straight out of one of his Billy Bat detective stories.



Early Man Was a Woman

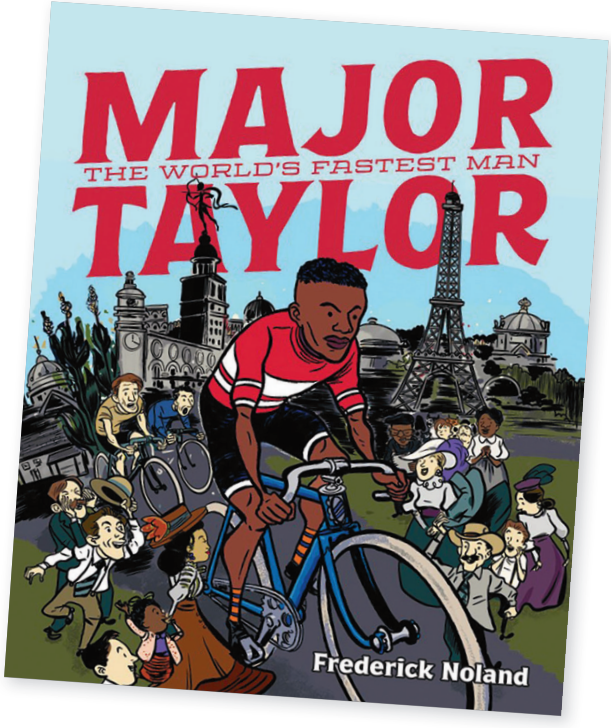
Ulli Lust, trans. from the German by Elisabeth Lauffer (The Experiment) $29.95

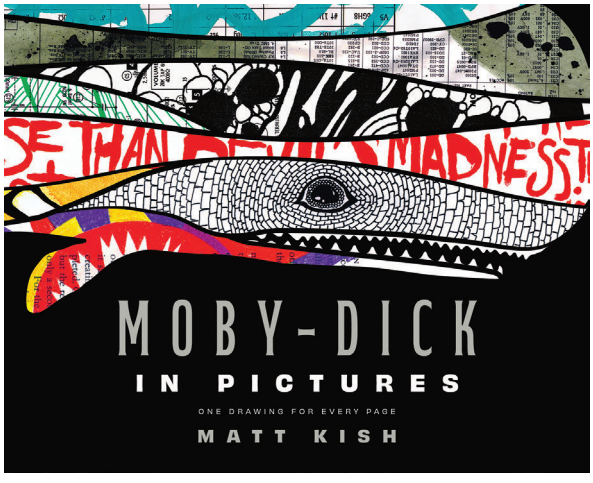
Ignatz winner Lust presents an entertaining, whimsically drawn prehistory focused on human cooperation and creative effort. Contrary to 19th-century male historians' notion that prehistoric men did all the work of survival, this argues that early cultures could only have thrived through the hard work of everyone in a community. Lust's naturalistic art, in warm earth tones, vividly evokes the paleolithic world. It's an illuminating look into what makes humans human.

Major Taylor

Frederick Noland (Drawn & Quarterly) $30

This finely crafted biography illuminates Marshall "Major" Taylor, a Black bicycle racer who became a superstar in the late 19th century. Growing up in the Upper Midwest, Taylor exhibits a talent for performing bicycle tricks. He later begins competitive racing in France and Australia, but on his home turf, the athlete faces racial discrimination and even violence. Skillful, seemingly effortless cartooning evokes Taylor's era with dynamism, making for a graphic biography that goes the distance.





Moby-Dick in Pictures

Matt Kish (Tin House) $55

In 2009, self-taught artist Kish, inspired by his lifelong love of *Moby-Dick*, set out to draw one image for each page of the 552-page Signet Classics edition, using torn-out pages from discarded books, ballpoint pens, markers, crayons, and watercolors. It took him nearly 18 months, and the result—reissued here 15 years after its first release—is a layered, fascinating epic all its own.



Our Soot Stained Heart

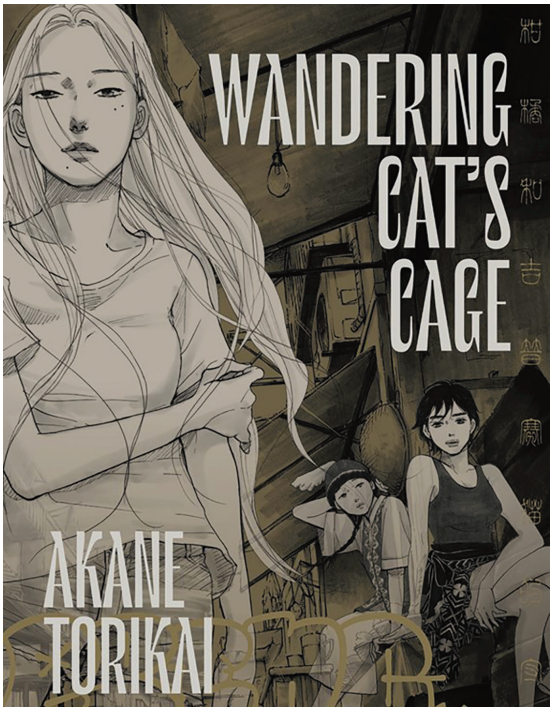
Joni Hägg and Stipan Morian (Mad Cave) $19.99

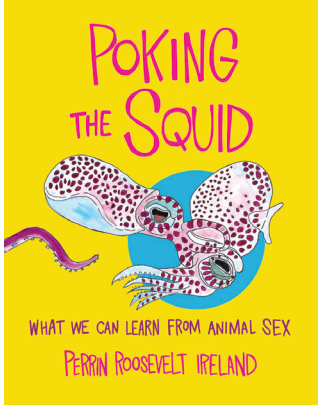
A Christmas fable gets a sociopolitical booster shot in this unexpectedly stirring steampunk holiday tale. In The Coalition, a frozen city, Peggy and her fellow workers struggle to get the coal they need to heat their homes by meeting their annual quota of bad behavior. When Peggy fails to meet her quota, she and fellow rebels are exiled to the realm of the mysterious Baron, who dreams of a world free from tyranny and violence.

Wandering Cat's Cage

Akane Torikai, trans. from the Japanese by Jocelyne Allen (Takumigraphics) $34.99

Torikai's searing science fiction reshuffles the hierarchy of reproductive power. Chiropractor Sanada and her housemate-with-benefits, sex worker Reiho, live in a dockside town where Reiho is the only man. Human fertility is plummeting, and reproductive science is controlled by an elite community. When the Health Ministry abducts Reiho to use as a stud in its latest experiment, his friends band together to rescue him. This reverse *Handmaid's Tale* challenges and dazzles.





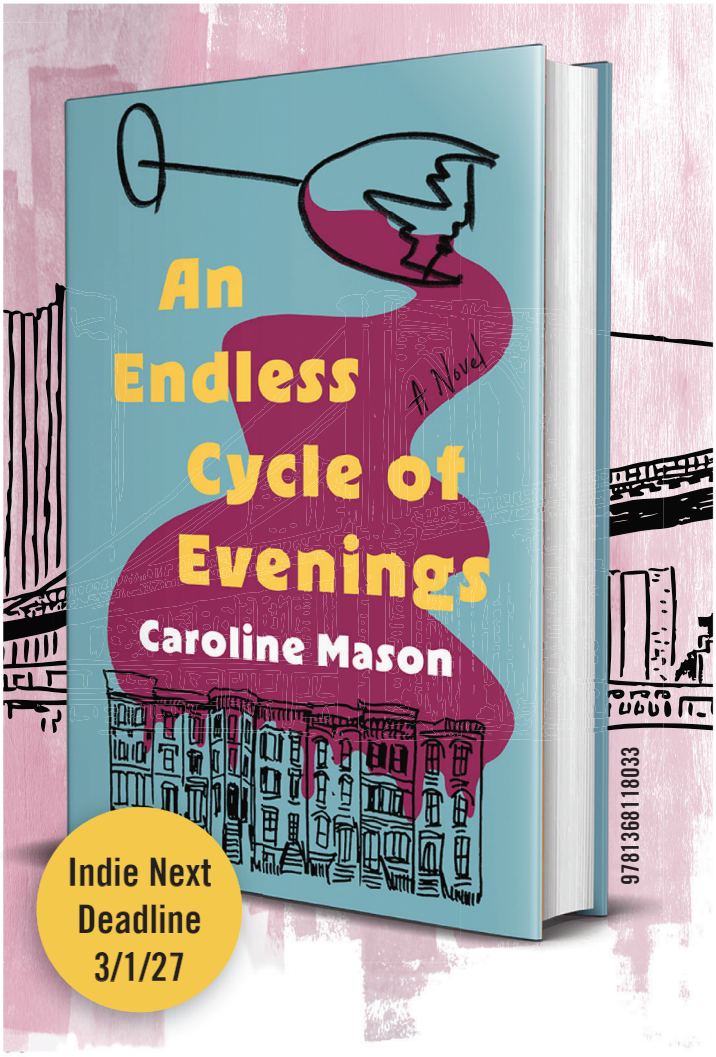
Poking the Squid

Perrin Roosevelt Ireland (Norton) $29.99

Cartoonist and environmentalist Ireland offers a humorous graphic analysis of animals, sex, and how badly science has failed to understand the nuances of gender and sexuality within the animal kingdom. In cogent comics explainers that synthesize decades of studies, Ireland describes the complex reproductive system of marine animals and profiles "lesbian" albatrosses, "polyamorous" prairie voles, and sexually cannibalistic spiders. The result is sharp, accessible, and scientifically rigorous.



Subantarctic fur seals, western rockhopper penguins, and others opine on relationships in *Poking the Squid*.



A twenty something in Brooklyn spirals through grief and a dangerously tangled relationship in this messy, hopeful coming-of-age novel.

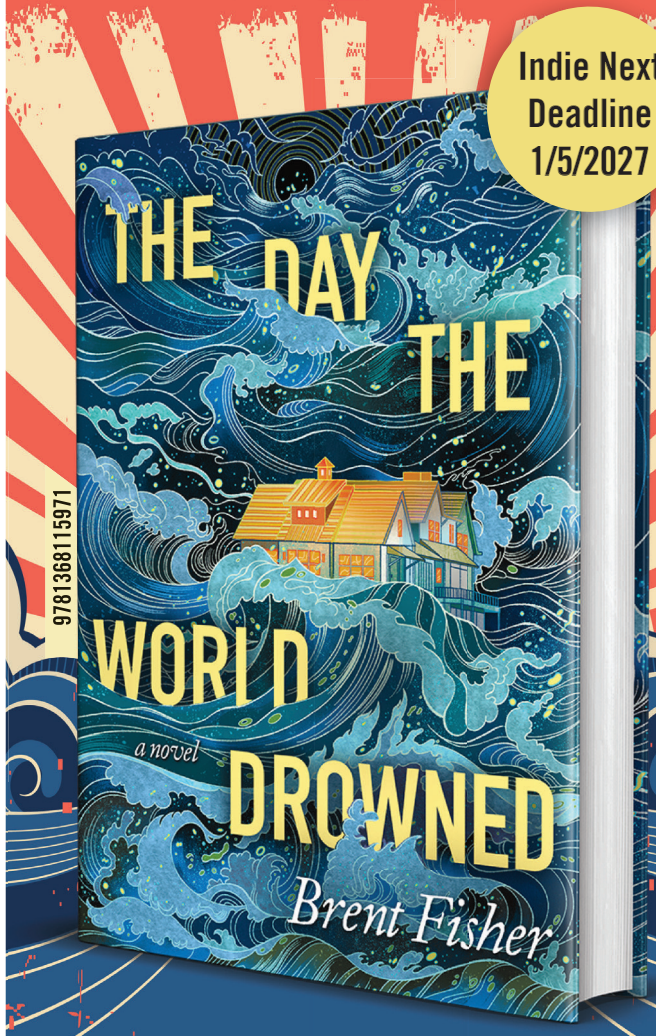
This tender, funny, and ultimately redemptive love letter to Brooklyn is a compassionate salute to the beautiful disasters of early adulthood.



By debut author Caroline Mason
(aka @literarycrushes)

PUBLISHING MAY 4, 2027
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HYPERION AVENUE



Jackson is the only person who can save the world from rapidly rising waters—if he can stop drowning in his own cycle of grief.

For fans of John Green and Jandy Nelson, a heart-wrenching, hilarious, and surreal YA debut about grief, love, and moving forward.



By Brent Fisher
(@BrentWritesStuff)

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HYPERION

Holiday gift guide

General Fiction

TESTS OF FRIENDSHIP, FAMILY, AND FORTITUDE MAKE FOR IMMERSIVE READING ON LONG WINTER NIGHTS



Etna

Paul Yoon (Scribner) $28

This magnificent novel begins with the canine narrator, a shepherd mix raised happily on a coastal farm, being conscripted and trained to sniff out land mines and disarm enemy soldiers for an American unit aiding his unnamed country's war effort. When the war ends, Etna travels the country, hoping to recover his sense of self. Yoon pulls off a fresh take on well-worn Homeric themes and convincingly captures a dog's perspective.

Fail Sons

Adam Wilson (Soho) $29

Simon had terminal cancer at the time of his 1990s cryonic preservation. In 2022, the Arizona facility that has been holding him is closing, and his estranged sons Scott and Nick endeavor to bring him to a Massachusetts outfit that promises to one day warm him back to life—if they can keep him cold on the journey. It's a dynamic, darkly comedic riff on *As I Lay Dying*.

A Gentleman in Moscow (deluxe ed.)

Amor Towles (Viking) $40

House arrest has never been so charming as in Towles's 30-year saga set almost entirely inside the Metropol, Moscow's most luxurious hotel. To Count Alexander Ilyich Rostov, the Metropol becomes both home and jail in 1922, when the Bolsheviks spare his life. Set against a lightly sketched background of upheaval, repression, and war, Count Rostov's long transformation is empathic and entertaining, and now available in a luxe 10th-anniversary edition.

Go Gentle

Maria Semple (Putnam) $30

There's plenty to enjoy in this rollicking caper about a woman who gets roped into a potential smuggling scheme. Adora, a philosopher on fellowship at a museum in New York City, begins a romance with Digby, who soon reveals they met not by chance but because he was following her. Initially convinced Digby is attempting to recover a stolen artwork from the museum's collection, Adora investigates, and a series of alarming misunderstandings ensue.

Kin

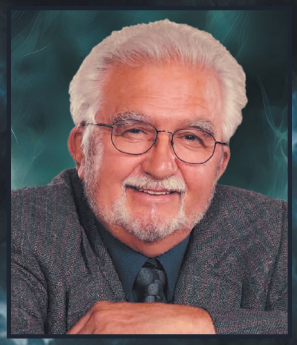
Tayari Jones (Knopf) $30

In this tour de force told in alternating narration, two motherless girls from rural Honeysuckle, La., follow very different paths into adulthood. Niecy is orphaned as an infant and raised reluctantly by her free-spirited aunt. Before Niecy learns to talk, she befriends her neighbor Annie, who lives with her grandmother. The best friends' lives diverge when Niecy leaves for Spelman College and Annie sets out to search for her mother, but through the years, they remain the most important person to the other.

Waiting on a Friend

Natalie Adler (Hogarth) $28

This dazzling story follows Renata, a lesbian who can see ghosts and has watched her friends suffer and die of AIDS in 1980s New York City. She's just lost her best friend, Mark, and refuses to rest until she "sees" him again. Then she learns of a Ghostbusters-type group called Manhattan Remediation, and sets out to stop them, hoping to protect the legacy of AIDS victims from being vanquished in the name of misguided moral purity.



ED STAUFFER

Author Photo courtesy of the University of Nebraska – Lincoln University Communication

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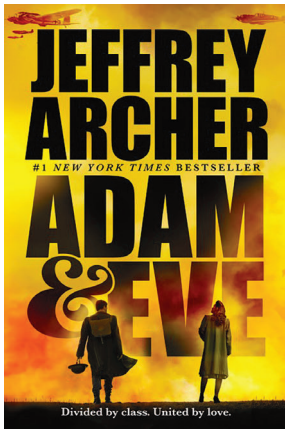
After 40 years in academia, author **Ed Stauffer** turned his vivid dreams into ten gripping, suspenseful novels. Today, **Janice Stauffer Publishing** proudly honors his life and storytelling through the official **Legacy Editions.**

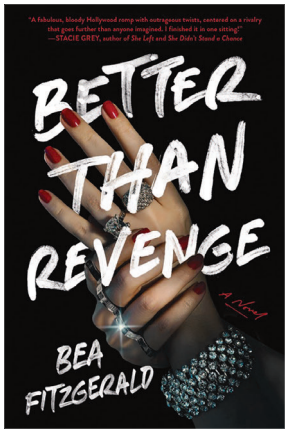


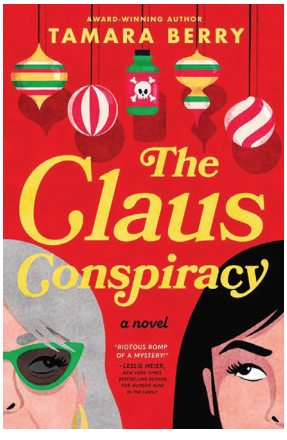
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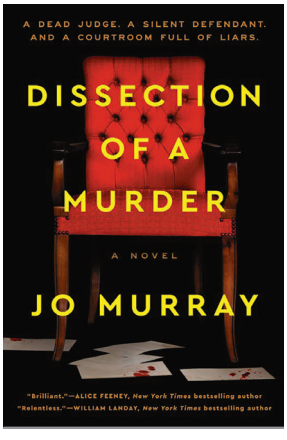
Mysteries & Thrillers

HISTORICAL HOMAGE? ZEITGEISTY SATIRE? PULSE-POUNDING THRILLS? CRIME FICTION READERS CAN PICK THEIR POISON.









Adam and Eve

Jeffrey Archer (HarperCollins) $30

On the final day of WWI, two babies are born on an English estate: Evelina, daughter of the ruling earl and countess, and Adam, son of the noble family's shepherd and maid. Over the ensuing decades, historical events unfold in the background—until they threaten Adam and Evelina's lives. Archer, who died October 5, peppers in clever speculative elements, including a scenario about Hitler's plan to invade the U.K. It makes for an engrossing homage to the Victorian novel.

Better Than Revenge

Bea Fitzgerald (Sourcebooks Landmark) $17.99

Two rival actors form a unique bond after tragedy strikes in this scintillating sapphic thriller. Nadine and Harper have been at odds since they first met at a London drama school in 1992. Both are back in London for the BAFTAs when Harper shows up at Nadine's hotel after the ceremony, covered in blood and seeking help. Fitzgerald's rendering of the thorny relationship between her leads will hook readers from the first page.

The Claus Conspiracy

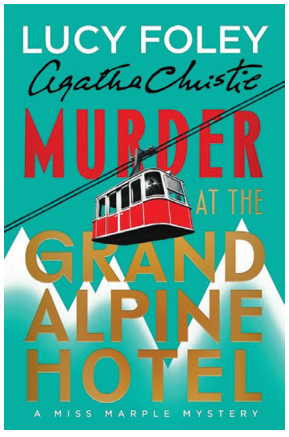
Tamara Berry (Poisoned Pen) $18.99

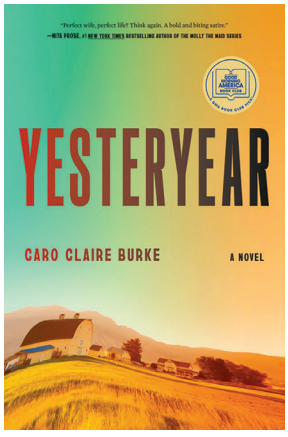
This funny, fast-paced cozy finds a former PI hosting a true crime podcast with her grandmother's friends at an Arizona retirement community. Amber's investigative skill set comes in handy when an amnesiac teen crashes into a cactus near the community's front gates, her car carrying the body of a man dressed as Santa Claus. Amber recruits her podcast cohosts to help investigate, unraveling a conspiracy involving mall Santas and the Navy SEALs.

Dissection of a Murder

Jo Murray (Dutton) $19

Leila Reynolds, a scrappy barrister in Durham, England, is defending bouncer and ex-con Jack Millman, who's accused of killing a Crown Court Judge. Because Jack refuses to provide a pretrial defense statement, Leila scrambles to investigate on her own without tipping her hand to her spouse, prosecuting counsel Julian Kesler. Julian, meanwhile, has been acting suspiciously, and Leila is receiving anonymous threats. This captivating thriller is being adapted for season two of Apple TV's *Criminal Intent*.





Murder at the Grand Alpine Hotel

Lucy Foley (Morrow) $30

This sterling mystery finds legendary sleuth Miss Jane Marple traveling to the Swiss Alps in 1950 with her friend Dolly and Dolly's assistant, Diana. The trip sours when someone at the Grand Alpine turns up dead and a powerful blizzard subsequently strands the guests. The mystery starts with familiar tropes but grows increasingly unpredictable as Miss Marple's investigation proceeds. Golden age mystery fans will adore this faithful update.

Yesteryear

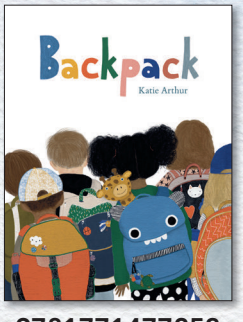
Caro Claire Burke (Knopf) $30

To her millions of Instagram followers, Natalie is a "flawless Christian woman" leading an idyllic life on the self-sustaining Yesteryear Ranch with her hardworking husband, Caleb, and their five kids. In reality, the family's remote Idaho farm is a money pit. When Natalie wakes one morning in a rustic facsimile of her home, it appears that she's traveled back in time to 1855. This tradwife satire is ripe for anyone who missed out on one of the year's most buzzed-about novels.

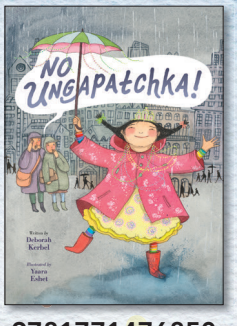
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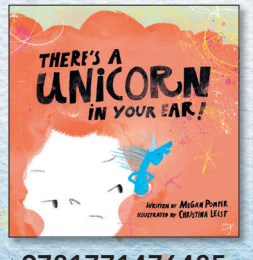
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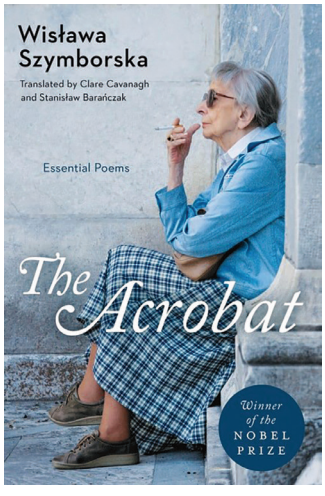
Owl kids 50

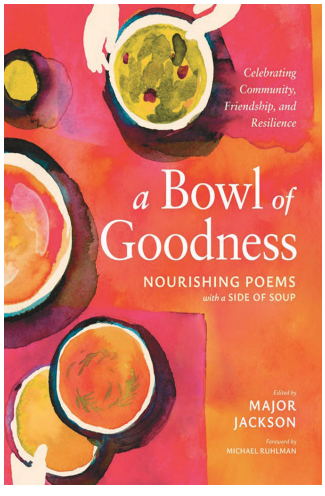
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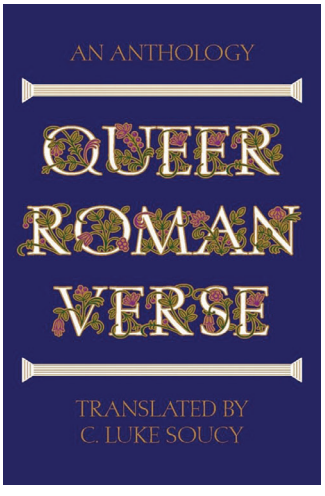
Holiday gift guide

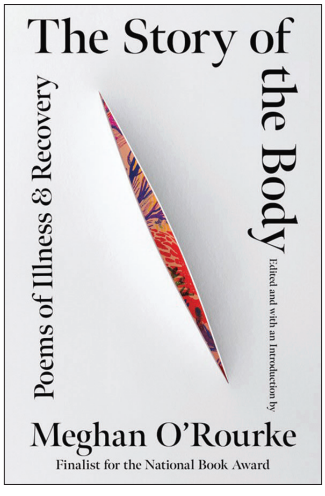
Poetry

VERSE-ATILE VOLUMES EXPLORE EVERYTHING FROM QUEERNESS IN ANCIENT ROME TO THE COMPATIBILITY OF SOUP AND STANZAS









The Acrobat

Wislawa Szymborska, trans. from the Polish by Clare Cavanagh and Stanisław Barańczak (Ecco) $18

This compact selection presents readers with an inviting overview of the work of Polish Nobel laureate Szymborska. The skillful translations preserve the buoyant movement of works such as the title piece, whose cascading enjambments mirror the performer's precarious flight: "From trapeze to/ trapeze, in the hush that/ that follows the drum roll's sudden pause." It makes for an excellent entry point into one of the 20th century's most distinctive oeuvres.

A Bowl of Goodness

Edited by Major Jackson (Storey) $25

Guggenheim fellow Jackson stirs together his favorite soup recipes, such as apple-parsnip, borscht, and she-crab, with comforting poems by contributors such as Joy Harjo, Jane Hirshfield, and Natasha Tretheway in this satisfying anthology. Celebrating food's power to bring people together, as well as its metaphorical resonances in verse, the anthology features works like Mary Ruefle's "Blood Soup," which conjures her father, and Kevin Young's "Ode to Gumbo."

Queer Roman Verse

Trans. from the Latin by C. Luke Soucy (Liveright) $27.99

Queer ancient poetry may call to mind Sappho, the Greek lyricist from Lesbos, but the Romans expressed same-sex and gender nonconforming longing, too, as translator and classicist Soucy puts on display in this anthology for classics completists. Unveiling themes that were long hidden by bowdlerized Victorian-era translations in poems by the likes of Cattalus, Martial, and Ovid, it serves as a potent reminder that queerness has always been here.

The Story of the Body

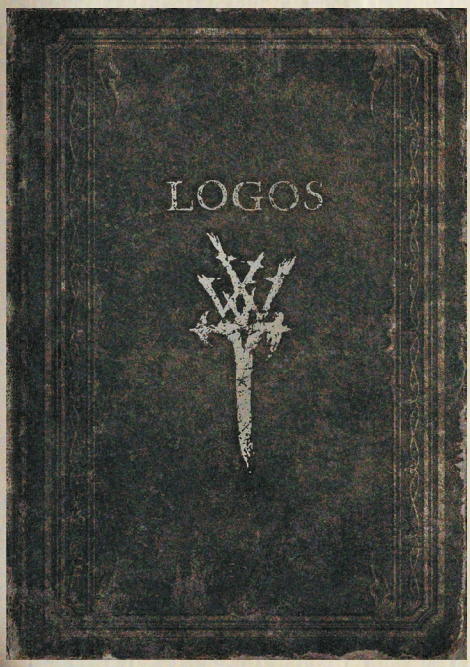
Edited by Meghan O'Rourke (Norton) $27.99

O'Rourke gathers poems that explore illness, disability, vulnerability, and the body's capacity for endurance. Louise Glück's "Time" recalls the quiet comforts of childhood illness ("By the side of the bed I had a little bell—/ at the other end of the bell, my mother"), while Ted Kooser's "The Urine Specimen" finds unexpected wonder in the body's ordinary functions. This carefully assembled compendium offers a moving exploration of resilience.

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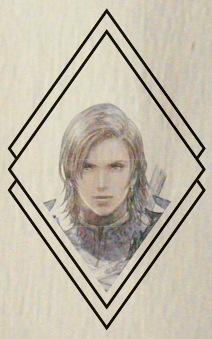
With special contributions from three of FINAL FANTASY XVI's English-language voice cast, including Ben Starr (Clive), Stewart Clarke (Dion), Christopher York (Gav), and helmed by FINAL FANTASY XVI's Localization Director, Michael-Christopher Koji Fox, *LOGOS* is a window into the vast and beloved realm of Valisthea.



Clive Rosfield
(Ben Starr)



Gav Weir
(Christopher York)



Dion Lesage
(Stewart Clarke)

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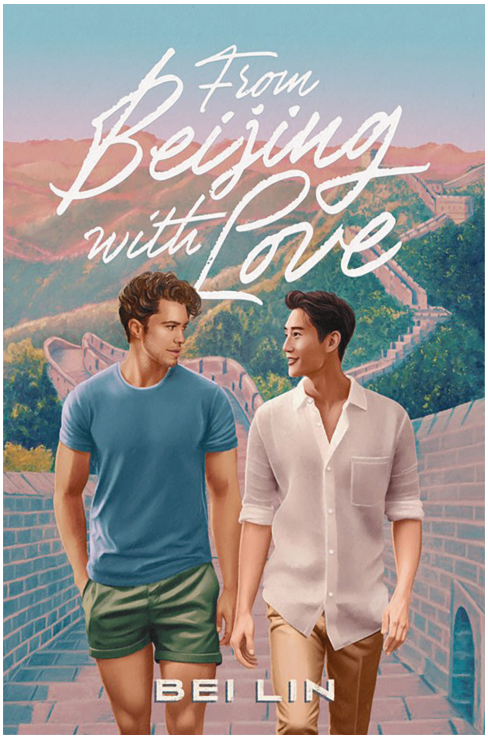
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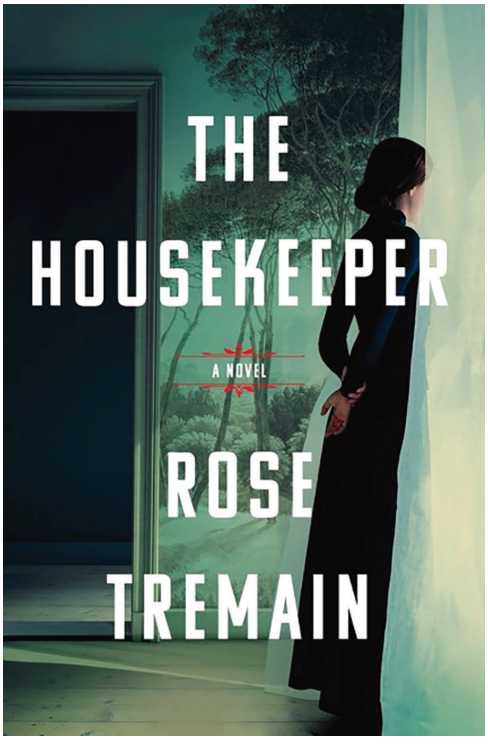
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Romance

'TIS THE SEASON FOR WRAPPING THINGS UP IN A BOW, AND WHAT BETTER WAY THAN WITH A HAPPILY EVER AFTER





From Beijing, with Love

Bei Lin (Alcove) $19.99

After screwing up at his IT job and getting dumped by his cheating boyfriend, Canadian 20-something Daniel impulsively flies to China to see his bestie. She's away when Daniel arrives but has booked him a private tour of the Great Wall with guide Yang, a PhD student. Plenty of sightseeing, fabulous meals, and tender moments add up to a slow-burning romance tailor-made for armchair travelers.

The Housekeeper

Rose Tremain (Harper) $30

This smart, simmering sapphic love story reimagines the origins of Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca*. Danni, a Polish-born Jewish seamstress, recalls the summer of 1936, when she became housekeeper at the Cornish estate that, in Tremain's telling, inspired *Rebecca*'s setting of Manderley. When du Maurier comes to visit, she and Danni are undeniably drawn to each other. It's an intimate portrait of desire and creativity.

If Books Could Kill

Kate Eberle (Penguin Books) $19

Romance fan Roxie's favorite author is Anna Matthews. When Roxie makes a wish that she could be the protagonist of Matthews's next novel, she wakes up to find it granted. She doesn't realize that Matthews is pivoting to thrillers until her romantic date ends with attempted murder. English professor Grant, who loves thriller novels, gets pulled into Roxie's misadventures in this twisty romp of a rom-com.

Major Gift

Tiffany Ezuma (831 Stories) $14.99

Ndidi struggles to cope after the death of her husband, Alex, an überwealthy tech mogul. Having come to believe that "in an ethical, just society, no one would be a billionaire," she finds new purpose in setting up a foundation to give the money away. Chronicling her turn to philanthropy is journalist Geoffrey, who ignites desires in Ndidi that she thought she'd never feel again. It's a refreshingly grounded billionaire romance.

The Santa Claus Con

Lauren Kung Jessen (Forever) $18.99

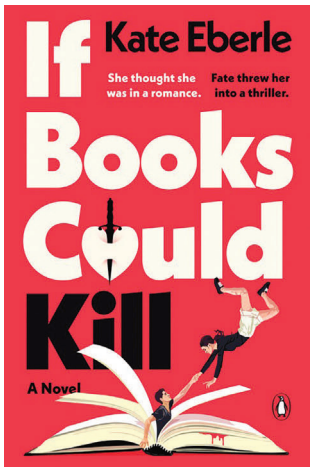
Miss Congeniality meets *Die Hard* in this excellent romantic thriller. FBI special agent Scarlett Payne is led by a riddle to Rockefeller Center, where an explosion leaves her with a fractured rib. Then a second riddle hints

of another bomb at the Santa Claus Convention. Scarlett enlists rival special agent Nathan Lambros to go undercover as a contestant. Lambros hates Christmas, but for Scarlett, whom he secretly loves, he agrees.

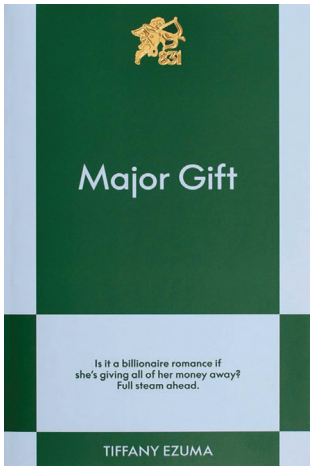
The Very Definition of Love

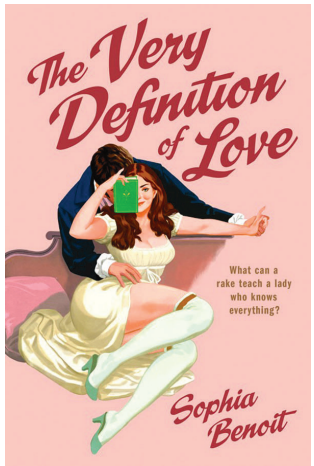
Sophia Benoit (Slowburn) $18

A bluestocking discovers love with one of London's most notorious rakes in this playful and sexy Regency. After being found alone in a library with reprobate Lord Alexander Stirling, Lady Harriet Bancroft must marry him to save her reputation. Though Alexander agrees to a marriage in name only, sexual tension ignites when innocent Harriet, who is writing a slang dictionary with an Oxford professor, requests Alexander's help with some of the more erotically charged words.









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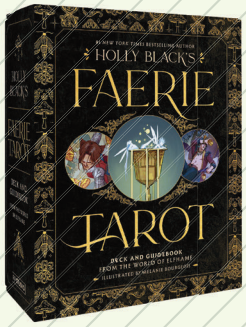
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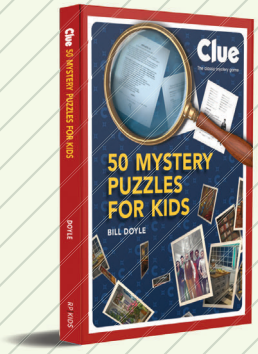
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Science Fiction, Fantasy & Horror

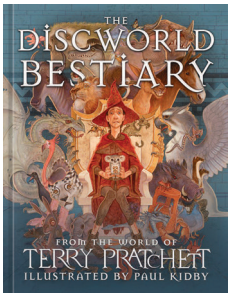
IMAGINED WORLDS BUILT BY STANDOUTS IN SPECULATIVE FICTION—LEGUIN, PRATCHETT, AND OTHERS—SURPRISE AND DELIGHT



The Complete Earthsea

Ursula K. LeGuin, edited by Brian Attebery (Library of America) $80

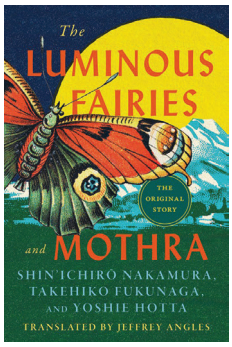
This box set brings together the legendary author's Earthsea novels plus related stories, maps, and other bonus materials. The six-book collection ranges from *A Wizard of Earthsea* (1968), which introduces the archipelago and its school for young mages, to *The Other Wind* (2001), which explores the origin of magic in the land.



The Discworld Bestiary

Terry Pratchett, illus. by Paul Kidby (Ten Speed) $35

The comedic fantasy series Discworld, which comprises 41 novels and takes place in a flat, circular world atop the backs of four elephants, is full of fantastical creatures. Series devotees will eat up this lavishly illustrated compendium by Kidby—Pratchett's longtime artist—which provides a field guide to beasts including the Terrible Man-Eating Sloth of Clup ("Being eaten by it is a drawn-out, horrible and somewhat tedious experience") and the Inflatable Mongoose ("benign but unpleasant").



The Luminous Fairies and Mothra

Shin'ichirō Nakamura, Takehiko Fukunaga, and Yoshie Hotta, trans. from the Japanese by Jeffrey Angles (Univ. of Minnesota) $19.95

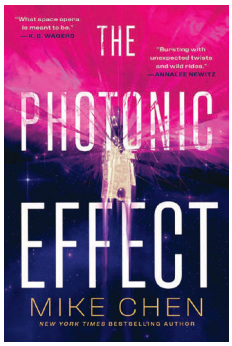
Creature feature buffs will be thrilled by the first English-language edition of this wonderfully weird 1961 novella that inspired the classic kaiju film *Mothra*. It follows strange happenings on Infant Island, previously used as a hydrogen bomb testing site. Intrepid reporter Fukada uncovers the island's creation myth: divine lovers created a giant egg, Mothra, that lies dormant at the island's heart.



Ode to the Half-Broken

Suzanne Palmer (DAW) $29

This lovely near-future foray brings hope and humor to a postapocalyptic world. The nameless narrator is a former robot assassin who secluded themself at the abandoned New York Botanical Garden for 20 years. When they venture out, they discover that all is not as it should be in the world outside. Joined by charming companions, the narrator must confront their past if they hope to achieve their dream of an equitable future.



The Photonic Effect

Mike Chen (Saga) $20

In this ingenious space opera, humanity is in contact with multiple intelligent extraterrestrial life-forms, including the Lumersians, who have shared their knowledge of photonic energy. The novel opens with starship *Horizon* captain Demora Kim being forced to retire because of a decision to disobey orders. The plot then flashes back to explain Kim's struggles to make a photonic engine functional for use in an ongoing war. Chen's skillful character portraits and worldbuilding chops will hook readers.



Seasons of Glass and Iron

Amal El-Mohtar (Tordotcom) $24.99

Blending fantasy, magical realism, and speculative fiction, this collection of 14 stories and four poems ranges widely across time and place but is connected by Nebula winner El-Mohtar's love of women. Her heroines are drawn with depth and compassion, as in the Welsh mythology–inspired "Florilegia; or, Some Lies About Flowers," which follows a woman constructed out of vegetation who has been brought into existence by magic to be an ideal wife. Throughout, the author's lyricism and striking imagery impress.

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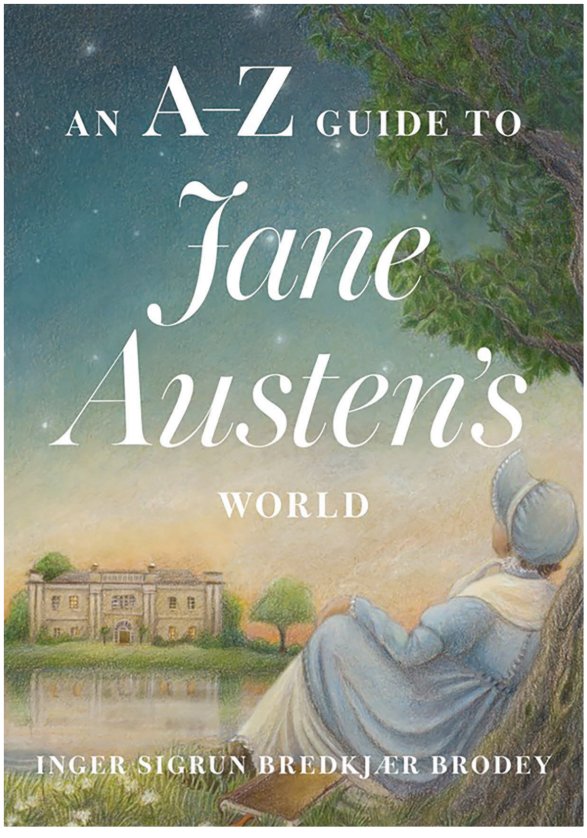
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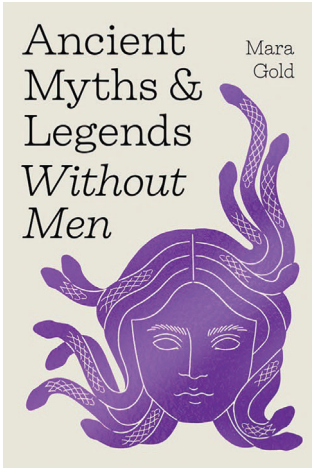
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An A–Z Guide to Jane Austen's World

Inger Sigrun Bredkjær Brodey, illus. by Harriet Wu (Johns Hopkins Univ.) $21.95

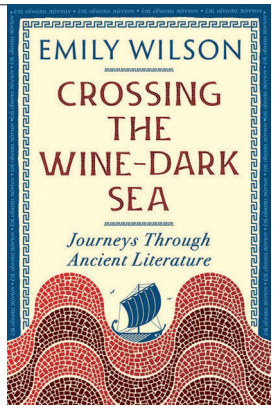
This rich guide to the language, objects, customs, and history that shaped Jane Austen's life and work illuminates her stature as a pioneering wordsmith. She was the first writer, for example, to use the word *zigzag* to describe a mental process. Several entries shed light on the Regency era or elucidate biographical details. Austen acolytes will be delighted.



Ancient Myths & Legends Without Men

Mara Gold (Running Press) $22

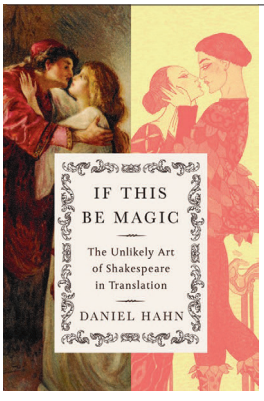
Gold, a PhD candidate in classics, offers a breezy overview of the women of ancient mythology. She explores how characters' meaning has shifted over time, with those more antithetical to previous standards of womanhood often praised as heroic by contemporary feminists. The sorceress Circe has often been viewed as a scorned woman, but modern interpretations, including Madeline Miller's 2018 novel *Circe*, depict her as a complex character with needs that have gone unmet.



Crossing the Wine-Dark Sea

Emily Wilson (Liveright) $19.99

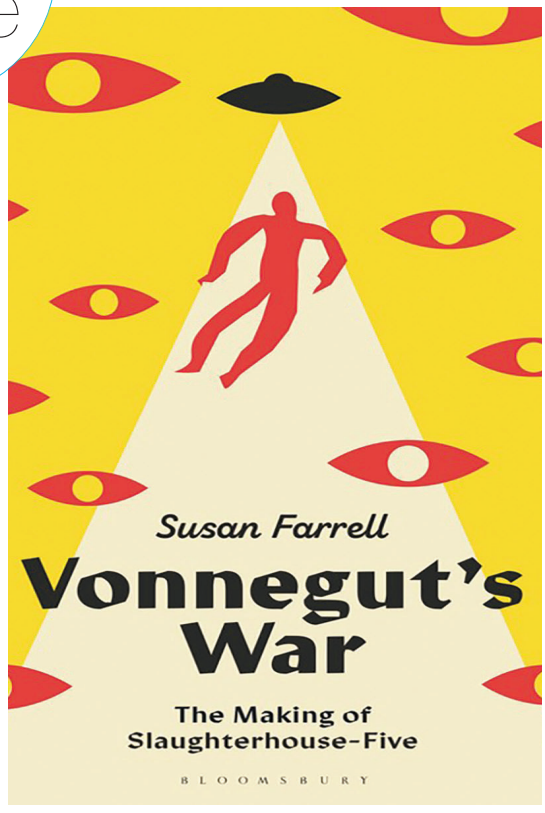
In this dazzling exploration, Wilson, bestselling translator of Homer's *Odyssey* (2018) and *Iliad* (2023), serves as an intrepid guide to the storm-tossed seas of literary translation. She acknowledges that modern culture influences interpretations of ancient texts but urges readers and translators to instead "open ourselves to the strangeness of the past, and allow it to change us." Buoyant, accessible analyses and dynamic examples make this essential reading.



If This Be Magic

Daniel Hahn. Knopf, $35

Surveying works in dozens of languages, from Arabic to Yiddish, translator Hahn's lively exploration shows how Shakespeare's intricate wordplay is preserved and transformed in translation. Hahn's delight in linguistic possibility is evident throughout, particularly when he challenges the notion of "untranslatable words," and he keeps the tone delightfully droll. This is a pleasure for scholars and hobbyist wordsmiths alike.



Vonnegut's War

Susan Farrell (Bloomsbury Academic) $27

This account of the creation and impact of Kurt Vonnegut's 1969 novel *Slaughterhouse-Five* is a tour de force of literary detective work. Vonnegut enlisted in the Army during WWII and was captured by German soldiers during the Battle of the Bulge and imprisoned in a slaughterhouse in Dresden. Through literature professor Farrell's detailed storytelling, *Slaughterhouse-Five* emerges as an alchemical mixture of its author's biography, the realities of war, and the 1960s cultural zeitgeist.

The Writer's Room

Katie da Cunha Lewin (Princeton Univ.) $26.95

Mythologized in art, literature, and media, the concept of the writer's room has long captivated readers, literature lecturer Lewin explains. But not all great writing requires seclusion—Lewin describes how the Brontë sisters wrote alongside one another at the family's dining-room table and how Agatha Christie crafted works anywhere she could. This is a poignant appraisal of readers' desire to find intimacy with the authors they love.



Essays & Memoir

WITH HUMOR, CANDOR, AND PATHOS, THESE PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS INVITE THE READER TO VIEW THE WORLD THROUGH A NEW LENS

Delusions

Cazzie David (St. Martin's) $29

Actor and screenwriter David mines the absurdities of contemporary adulthood in this hilarious essay collection. Feeling the pressure to have life figured out by 30, she spends the year before trying (and failing) to end a decade-long situationship, find a hobby that gets her off her phone, and finally decide if she wants kids. It's relatable company for anyone afraid they wasted their 20s.

Even the Good Girls Will Cry

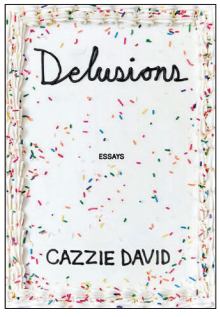
Melissa Auf der Maur (Da Capo) $32.50

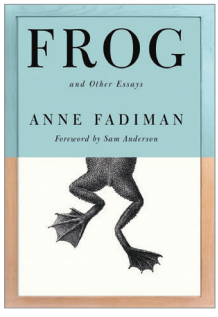
Auf der Maur's illuminating reflection on the rise and fall of 1990s alternative rock provides a look at a bygone era. In the early 1990s, Smashing Pumpkins frontman Billy Corgan connected the author with Courtney Love, whose band, Hole, needed a new bassist. She accepted, determined to help set an example for strong women in rock. Auf de Maur is refreshingly pure of heart, especially when describing her disgust with "the corporate takeover" of alt-rock.

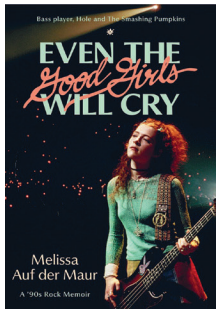
Famesick

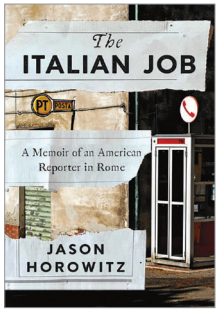
Lena Dunham (Random House) $32

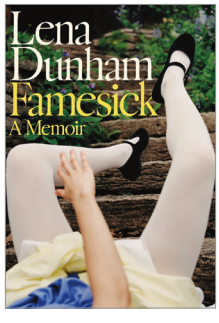
In this frank account, *Girls* cocreator Dunham takes an unsparing look at the physical and emotional costs of her first decade in the spotlight, wincingly taking stock of all the ways she ignored signals to slow down. Though the subject matter is heavy, Dunham's self-deprecating humor and penchant for gossipy anecdotes provide crucial counterweight. Fans of *Girls* will welcome this dispatch from, as Dunham's character Hannah Horvath put it, "a voice of a generation."

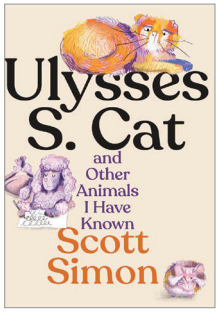












Frog

Anne Fadiman (Farrar, Straus and Giroux) $26

This captivating collection showcases literary journalist Fadiman's knack for using everyday objects to explore such profound themes as grief, loss, and personal growth. In "My Old Printer," which addresses the anxiety and loneliness of aging, she explores her devotion to her LaserJet II, while in the title essay, she examines her complicated relationship with her family's pet frog. The result is an affecting and often humorous collection.

The Italian Job

Jason Horowitz. Celadon, $29.99

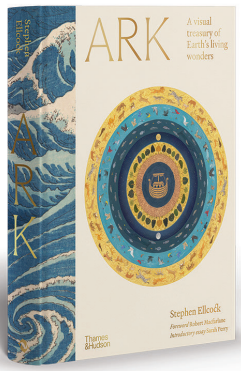
New York Times correspondent Horowitz documents his 20-plus years covering Italy in this fascinating first-person account. Part travelogue, part political study, Horowitz's insightful narrative takes a candid look at the often romanticized country, with the author's love for Italy shining through even as he acknowledges its "faults, maddening hypocrisies, and self-destructive habits." This clear-eyed portrait of a nation in transition makes for essential reading.

Ulysses S. Cat and Other Animals I Have Known

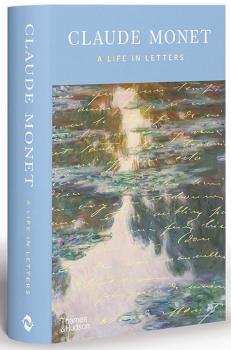
Scott Simon, illus. by Liana Fink (Norton) $24.99

In this loving testament to the ability of pets to stretch hearts and minds, NPR host Scott Simon recounts stories of animal companions he's had throughout his life. Heartwarming accounts of caretaking for even the unlikeliest of critters—be it the colony of worms his family keeps in a bin on their balcony or the imaginary pet his daughter rescued from the subway—are punctuated with poignant reflections on such topics as animal intelligence.

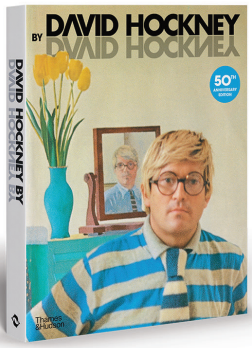
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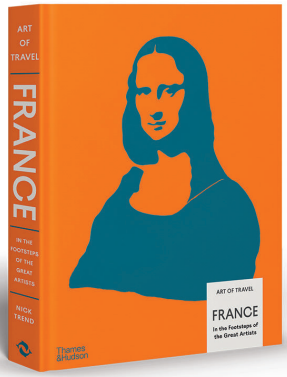
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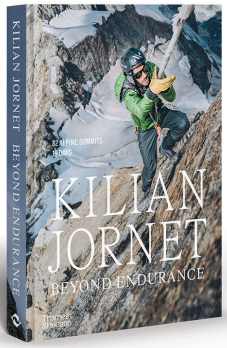
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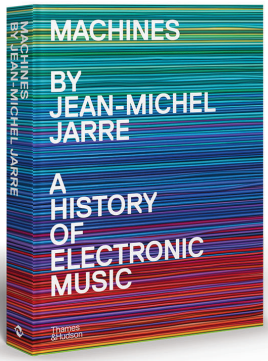
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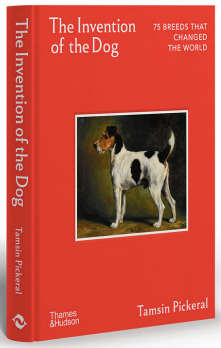
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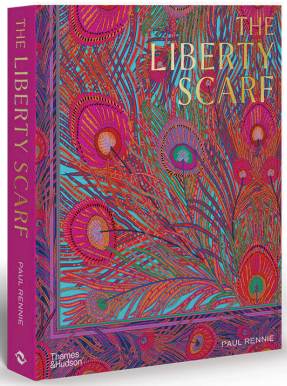
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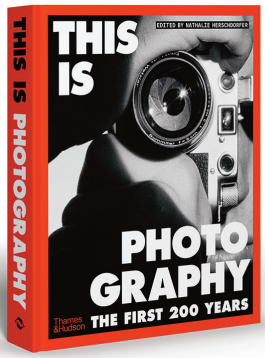
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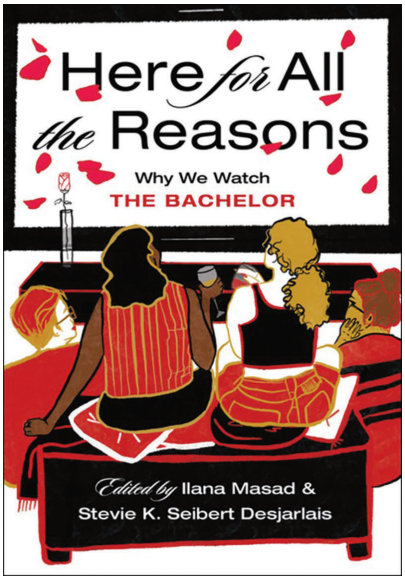
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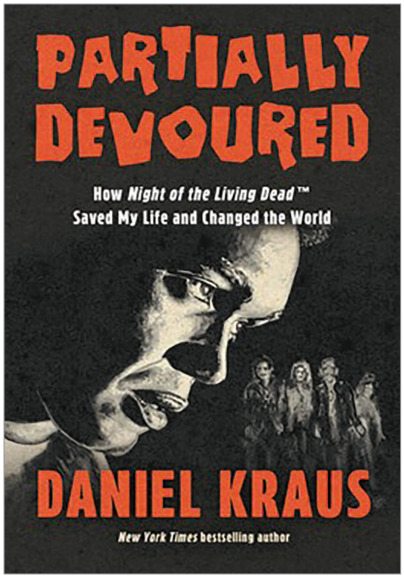
Holiday gift guide

Film & TV

VISIONARY AUTEURS AND A REALITY TV JUGGERNAUT TAKE CENTER SCREEN IN THESE UNCONVENTIONAL EXAMINATIONS







Here for All the Reasons

Edited by Ilana Masad and Stevie K. Seibert Desjarlais. Turner, $31.99

This fun anthology, with contributions by viewers of the reality TV series *The Bachelor*, is a testament to the undeniable pull of a cultural touchstone. Essays variously take aim at the show's stereotypical representations of contestants of color and its perpetuation of impossible standards for femininity and praise the franchise as a chronicle of genuine human moments, like the nonromantic relationships that arise between contestants.

Jungle Red!

Illeana Douglas (Lyons) $34.95

In this dishy, smart account, actor and film historian Douglas 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 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.

Partially Devoured

Daniel Kraus (Counterpoint) $28

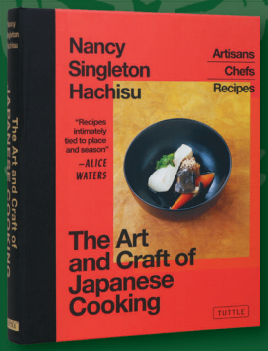
Novelist Kraus's first encounter with *Night of the Living Dead* on TV at five years old inspired a lifelong passion. This entertaining deep dive is structured around a frame-by-frame reexamination of the film, with copious detours exploring related angles. Kraus's close critical analysis of the film is where the book really pops, as he makes a convincing argument for understanding George A. Romero's zombie classic as representative of the U.S. in the late 1960s.

A Place Both Wonderful and Strange

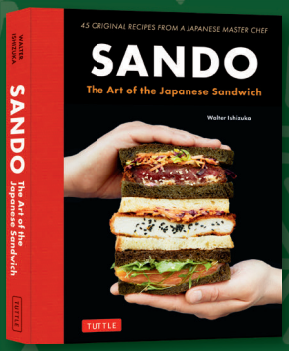
Scott Meslow (Running Press) $30

The short-lived 1990s TV series *Twin Peaks* cast a long cultural shadow, according to this energetic account from film critic Meslow. Though the show was canceled after season two, its cult popularity

Snow Many Books for the Holidays!



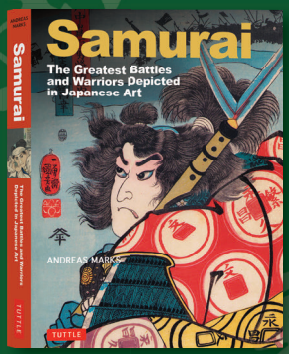
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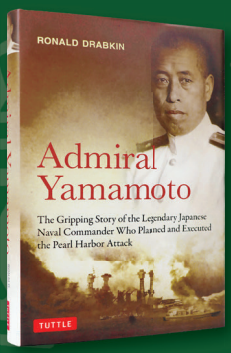
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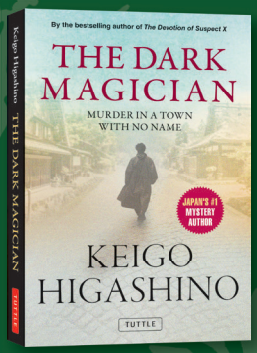
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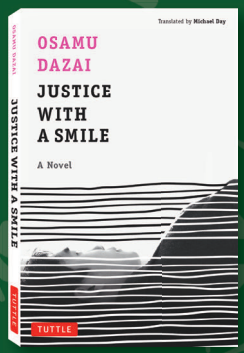
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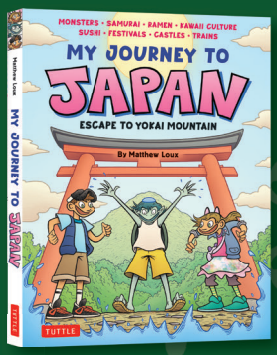
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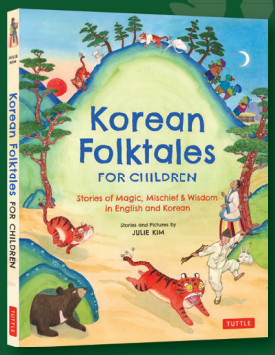
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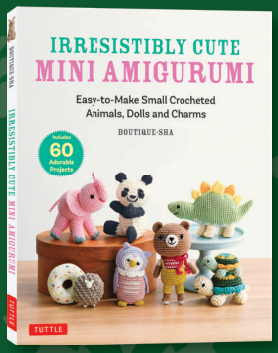
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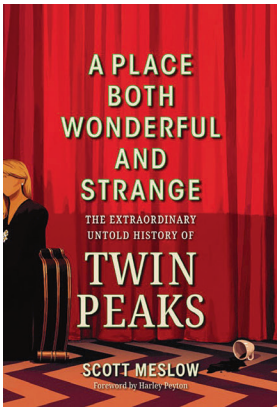


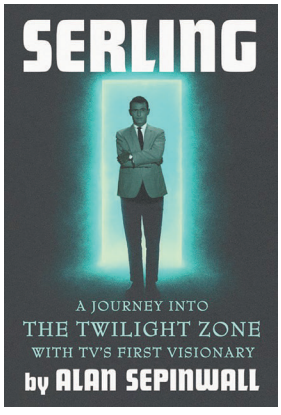
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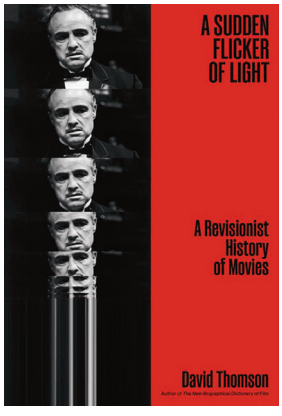
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continued to grow thanks to buzz generated by its cliff-hanger ending. Meslow interweaves his diligent account of the show's legacy with delightful peeks into its idiosyncratic production and the eccentric directorial style of David Lynch.

Serling

Alan Sepinwall (Grand Central) $35

Critic Sepinwall offers an electrifying biography of *Twilight Zone* creator Rod Serling, tracing the legendary screenwriter's formative experiences through his writing. This unique framing exposes the often thin line between Serling and his scripts, and sheds light on parts of Serling's life he rarely discussed, like his WWII service. It's a revelatory tribute to a showrunner who unlocked the door to viewers' imaginations.

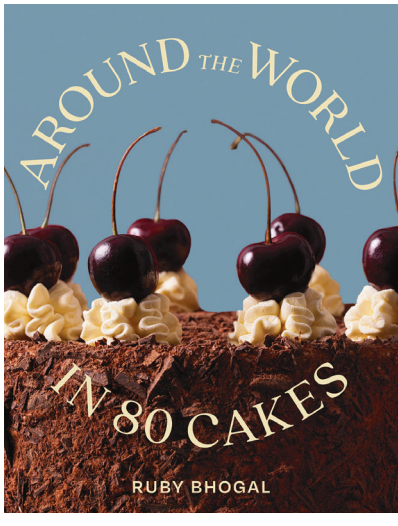
A Sudden Flicker of Light

David Thomson (Simon & Schuster) $30

This insightful history of filmmaking is a feast for cinephiles. Critic and historian Thomson trains his gimlet eye on everything from early silent films like D.W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* to recent Oscar winners like *Anora*, tracking the movies' impact on mass culture. Though Thomson extols the joys of movie watching, he remains conflicted about a medium that has turned people into voyeurs.

Food & Drink





SET A PLACE AT THE HOLIDAY TABLE FOR RECIPE COLLECTIONS THAT BRING READERS AROUND THE GLOBE AND BACK HOME AGAIN

An Alphabet for Gourmets et al.

M.F.K. Fisher (Picador) $16–19 each

Fisher revolutionized food writing in the 20th century by treating what we eat as a lens through which to understand culture and human nature. These reissues of the books that comprise the Art of Eating series—*Serve It Forth* (1937), *Consider the Oyster* (1941), *How to Cook a Wolf* (1942), *The Gastronomical Me* (1943), and *An Alphabet for Gourmets* (1949), with fresh introductions by such writers as Tamar Adler and Bryan Washington—gorgeously repackage Fisher's aphoristic wisdom, with covers that combine to form an inviting banquet table.

Around the World in 80 Cakes

Ruby Bhogal (Interlink) $35

In this delectable globe-trotting compendium, *Great British Baking Show* finalist Bhogal shines an oven light on international cake recipes and traditions. For instance, Khanom Badin, a butter cake enjoyed by the Thai Muslim community, has a name that is neither Thai nor Arabic, but is believed to have derived from the clay pot it was originally baked in. The chocolate and vanilla swirls inside a German Donauwelle, meanwhile, mimic the waves of the Danube River.

Book Club Bar

Nat Esten and Erin Neary (Epic Ink) $25

The married cofounders of Manhattan's Book Club Bar present an endearingly enthusiastic collection of bookish drink recipes. The focus is primarily on contemporary works: the "Crowd Favorites" section, for instance, includes drinks riffing on zeitgeisty titles, among them Tomorrow, and Tomorrow, and Tequila and gin-based It Ends with Citrus. Breezy author profiles and margin notes about the inspiration behind each drink add to the fun.

The Caribbean Cookbook

Rawlston Williams (Phaidon) $54.95

This comprehensive collection of more than 350 recipes for Caribbean fare, drawn from 28 countries, is sure to inspire. Williams, the chef behind Brooklyn restaurant the Food Sermon, dives deep into the region's foodways, showing how the island terrain, history of colonialism, and cultural fusion created a cuisine where "spices are the stars." Time-tested dishes include Cuba's ropa vieja and Haitian black rice, and seafood features heavily throughout this ambitious, authoritative guide.

Dishes from the Diner

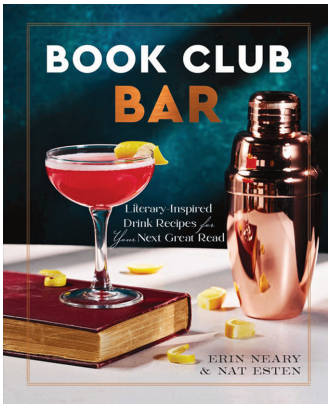
Scott Patterson (Union Square) $35

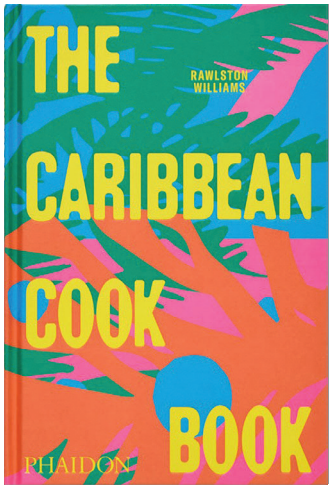
For this cozy collection of classic diner fare, actor Patterson draws inspiration from his childhood in New Jersey diner country and his role as *Gilmore Girls* diner owner Luke Danes. Behind-the-scenes info and Easter eggs for show fans pop up throughout: the Discontinued Monte Cristo refers to an obsolete menu item featured in one episode, while Connecticut Paella and New England clam chowder both nod to the show's Northeast setting.

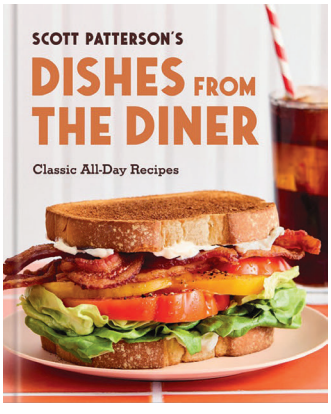
Food Is a Feeling

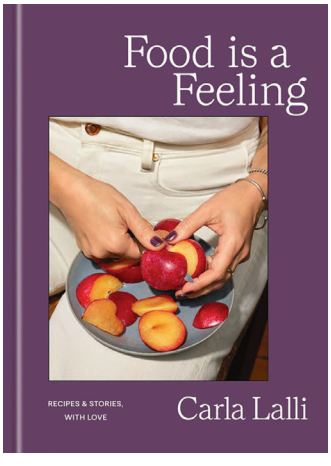
Carla Lalli (Clarkson Potter) $36

Written shortly after the dissolution of the James Beard Award winner's 24-year marriage, this deeply personal collection combines meals and memories. Each of the 65 recipes is presented alongside an essay about her experiences—the Separation Pork Chops, for example, are what Lalli prepared the night she and her husband announced their separation to their children. The memories are vividly painted and many of the dishes are mouthwatering. The former *Bon Appétit* editor's fans will be sated.





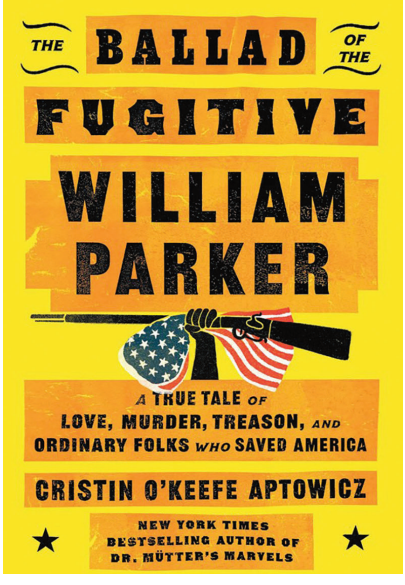


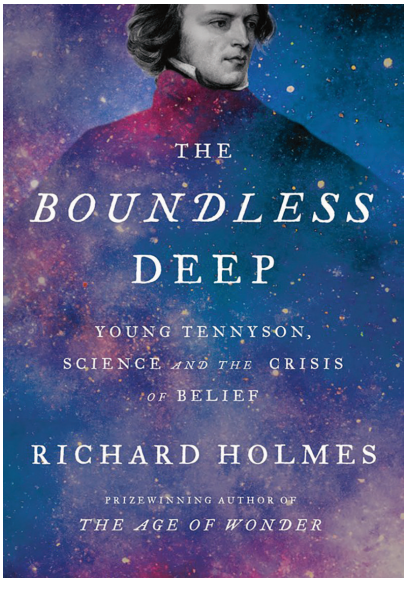


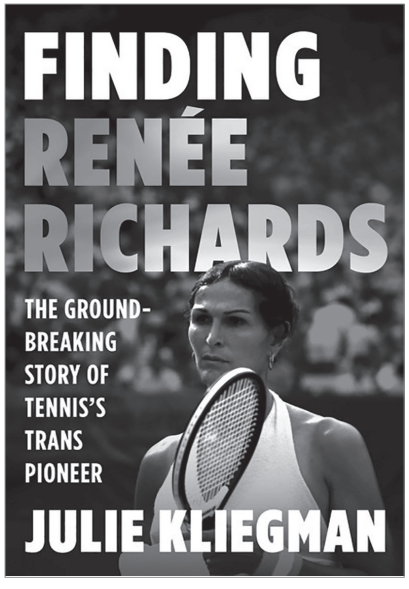
Holiday gift guide

History & Biography

CHRONICLES OF NOTABLE LIVES SHED LIGHT ON LARGER HISTORICAL MOMENTS







The Ballad of the Fugitive William Parker

Cristin O'Keefe Aptowicz (Simon & Schuster) $31

Poet and historian Aptowicz recaps the rousing tale of a Pennsylvania community that banded together to protect their neighbors from enslavers during an 1851 showdown in Christiana, Pa., at the home of fugitive slave William Parker. He and his allies armed themselves, resisting slave catchers with force. Aptowicz draws parallels to today, asking readers what they are willing to risk for their neighbors. This impeccably researched page-turner powerfully evokes the American spirit.

The Boundless Deep

Richard Holmes (Pantheon) $35

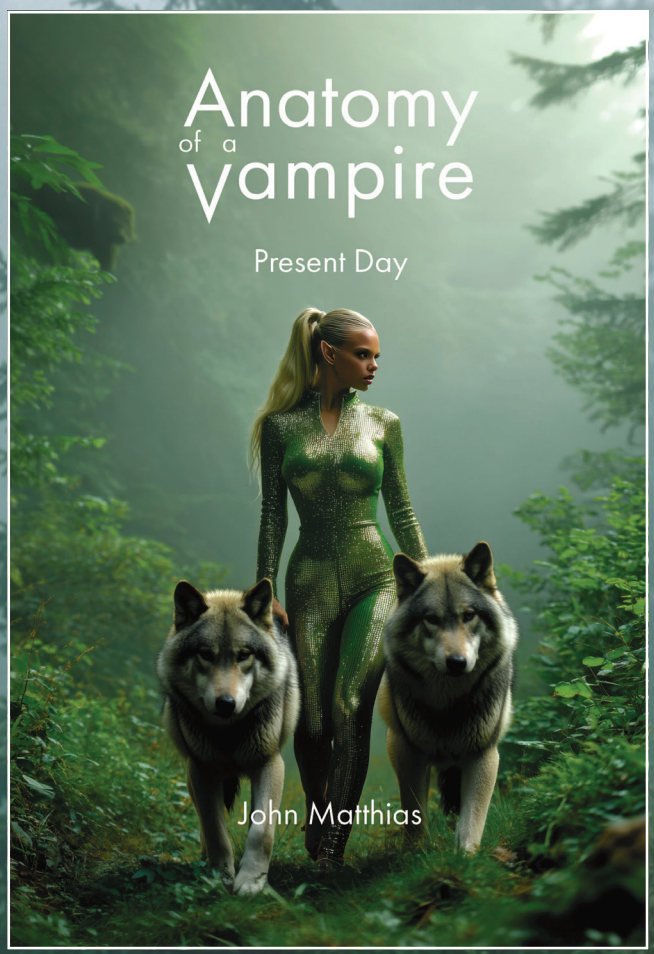
In this dynamic biography, historian Holmes uses the ideas of poet Alfred Tennyson as a window into the "intellectual and spiritual schizophrenia" that permeated the Victorian era. Holmes depicts Tennyson, haunted by failed love affairs, as drawn to an early kind of speculative science fiction. It's a fascinating and delightfully questing deep dive into the turbulent spirituality of the modern age.

Finding Renée Richards

Julie Kliegman (HarperOne) $28.99

Born in Queens in 1934, pioneering trans tennis player Renée Richards had a troubled relationship with gender from a young age. In this revelatory biography, journalist Kliegman follows Richards's stop-start transition alongside her experiences after her 1976 outing. Richards's groundbreaking fight to continue competing shockingly collides with Richards's current opinion, at age 90, that trans women should not compete with cis women if they went through puberty.

THE DEAD DON'T LIE. BUT THE WOUNDS TELL AN IMPOSSIBLE STORY.



Three hikers lie dead on a trail near Lake Louise, torn apart by something no forensic team can explain. A fourth man clings to life, the sole witness to an attack that defies every natural explanation. FBI agent Josh Cummings studies the wounds and finds them too calculated to be that of a rogue grizzly. Something more sinister was involved.

Meanwhile, Ariel Lucard has lived for over a century without aging, haunted by the summer of 1912 when two mysterious women visited him in Romania and changed the course of his existence. He has spent decades searching for answers to what he became, and why. Now the events unfolding in the present are drawing those women back into his life, pulling him toward a hidden world that has existed alongside humanity since before recorded history.

These creatures are flesh and blood. They breathe. They bleed. They have walked among us for millennia, divided into two ancient houses with very different visions for the future of both their kind and ours. One seeks dominion. The other may be humanity's only ally in a war no one knows has already begun.

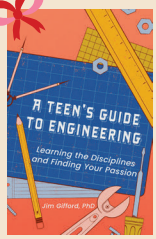
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Holiday gift guide

This Season's Most Giftable Releases From

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For high schoolers, parents, and counselors

A simple guide to help teenagers find the engineering discipline that fits them best—with self-assessments and lists of top colleges by discipline!

A Teen's Guide to Engineering: Learning the Disciplines and Finding Your Passion by Jim Gifford, PhD — ***Publishes*** *December 8*

For the Hallmark-watcher who loves a twist

A second-chance romance with a dash of danger! Can a rekindled romance survive a white Christmas *and* a black-hearted revenge plot?



The Tinsel Twist by Rosie J. Potter — ***Publishes*** *November 3*



For the mystery *and* romance readers

An enemies-to-lovers murder-mystery fantasy. Can a blind god of sight and his assassin master solve a murder before they're killed next?

Tides and Torment by Caitlan Honer — ***Publishes*** *November 10*





For your budding musician

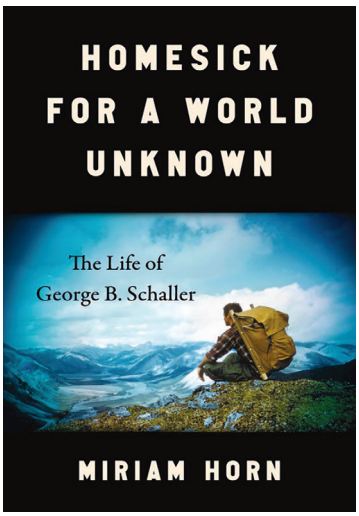
Easy to use color-coded instructional guides for learning piano—available in a variety of playing levels and genres. Check out the full Play it! series today!

Play It! Classical Music (Level 2) and ***Play It! Christmas Songs (Level 2)*** by Jennifer Kemmeter and Antimo Marrone — ***Publishes*** *November 24*

Homesick for a World Unknown

Miriam Horn (Penguin Press) $40

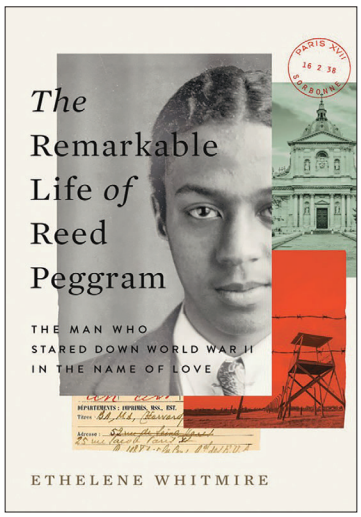
A naturalist braves fearsome predators, epic treks, and meddlesome bureaucrats in this adventuresome biography. Horn recaps the expeditions of George B. Schaller, from his revolutionary 1959–1960 study of mountain gorillas in Congo to his campaigns to halt the international trade in wool from endangered Tibetan chiru antelope. The result is a captivating account of a founder of modern environmentalism.



The Remarkable Life of Reed Peggram

Ethelene Whitmire (Viking) $30

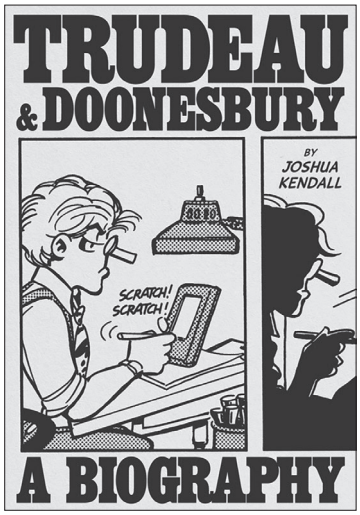
Studying in Paris as the Nazi invasion looms, fleeing the encroaching German occupation, and escaping an Italian concentration camp with his Danish lover—these are just some of the exploits of queer African American scholar Reed Peggram, whose extraordinary story comes to life in this dazzling biography from historian Whitmire. Peggram's letters from the 1930s and '40s, shared with the author after a serendipitous meeting with Peggram's great-niece, form the basis of the tale.



Trudeau & Doonesbury

Joshua Kendall (Abrams) $35

Journalist Kendall offers a masterful biography of the notoriously publicity-shy *Doonesbury* cartoonist Garry Trudeau. Much of this riveting account focuses on how Trudeau used *Doonesbury* to expose the hypocrisy of American politics and satirize numerous presidential administrations. The author also highlights ways that *Doonesbury* broke ground in shedding light on pressing social issues, including AIDS through the character of Andy Lippincott, the first openly gay character in a popular comic.



Science & Nature

FULL STEAM AHEAD: THESE BOOKS TAKE A NARRATIVE APPROACH TO FLORA, FAUNA, AND HOW HUMANS INTERACT WITH THE PLANET

The Creatures' Guide to Caring

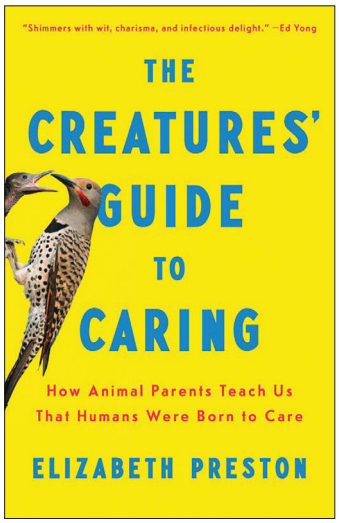
Elizabeth Preston (Viking) $30

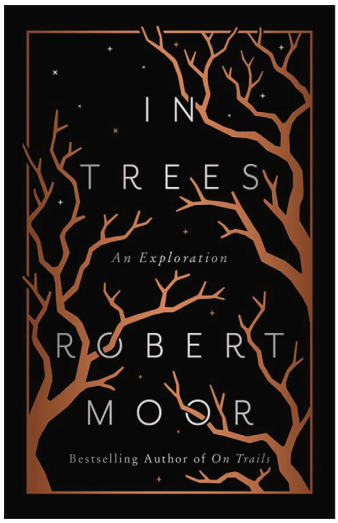
This engrossing and accessible account of the evolution of caretaking demonstrates how the need for humans and animals to raise their young led to the creation of social structures. Humans are not the only caretakers, explains science journalist Preston, who shows how creatures from bromeliad crabs and clownfish to elephants and killer whales nurture and protect their offspring.

In Trees

Robert Moor (Simon & Schuster) $30

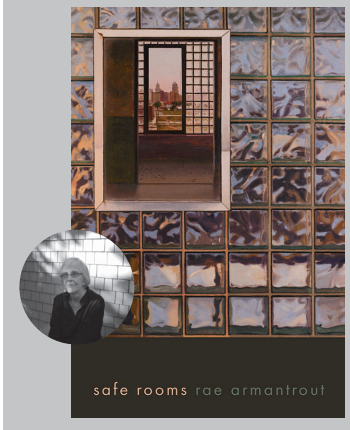
Journalist Moor defines trees as "a way of being" in this impassioned examination of their history and biology. Since human ancestors lived among their branches, trees have shaped humanity's sense of time, self, and life, the author contends. Moor's nature writing, which synthesizes reportage and philosophy, is beautiful and refreshingly original.



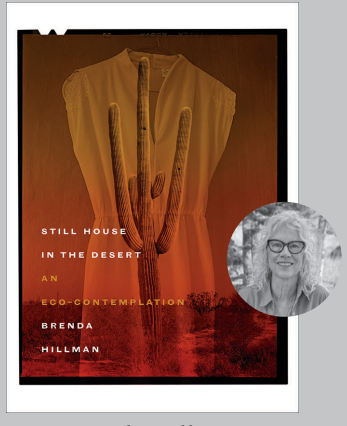


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A QUAINT SEASIDE TOWN where Jesus' parables come to life
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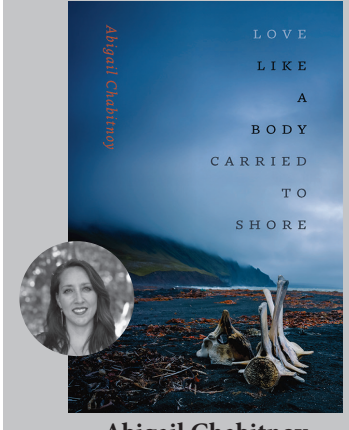
WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY PRESS



Rae Armantrout
Safe Rooms
$16.95 pbk, 978-08195-0256-8

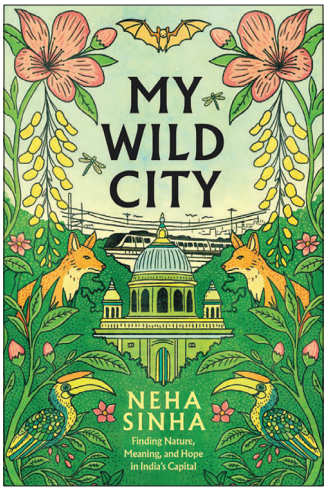


Brenda Hillman
Still House in the Desert
$28 hc, 978-08195-0241-4



Abigail Chabitnoy
Love Like a Body Carried to Shore
$16.95 pbk, 978-08195-0265-0

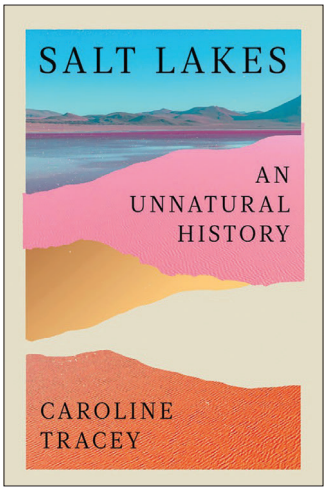
weslpress.org



My Wild City

Neha Sinha (Chelsea Green) $29.95

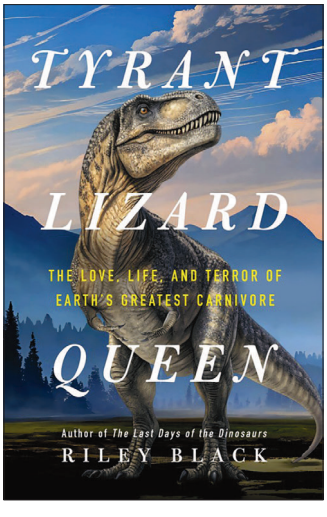
In this lyrical exploration, conservation biologist Sinha details the range of wildlife found in the bustling city of Delhi. While leopards, hyenas, and wolves have vanished as the human presence in Delhi has grown, many indigenous fauna and flora remain. Throughout, Sinha highlights how the destruction of wetlands and pollution of waterways jeopardize human and animal health, emphasizing the need to save and restore the city's natural landscapes.



Salt Lakes

Caroline Tracey (Norton) $31.99

Growing up in the West, environmental journalist Tracey became captivated by salt lakes, which predominantly form in desert regions. She chronicles their decline alongside her journey to finding queer love. By intertwining the details of her marriage with the reengineering of Mexico's Lake Texcoco into a park, for instance, Tracey shows how both reveal the beauty and delight of relinquishing expectations and forging a new path.



Tyrant Lizard Queen

Riley Black (St. Martin's) $29

In this creative blend of natural history and informed speculation, science writer Black reconstructs the life of a Tyrannosaurus rex. Nicknamed Snaggletooth, the dinosaur hatches into a dangerous Late Cretaceous world, tussles with nestmates, learns to hunt, survives predators, endures violent storms, mates, and raises a brood of her own. Combining evocative storytelling with meticulous science, Black offers a captivating and intimate portrait of Earth's most famous carnivore.

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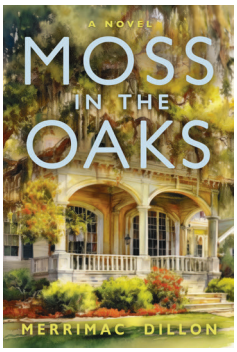
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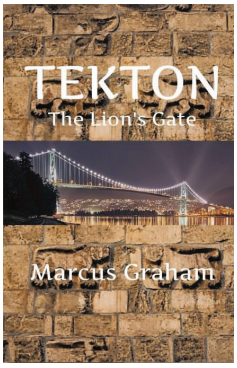


CONTEMPORARY FICTION



Moss in the Oaks: A Novel

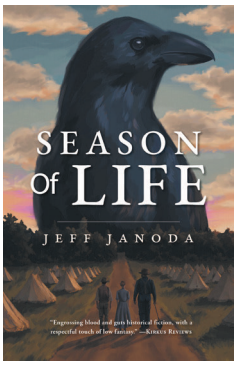
AUTHOR: Merrimac Dillon
PUBLISHER: Resolve Editions (2027)
ISBN: 9781637636060
When her famed father dies, Elizabeth DuBois returns to New Orleans, where secrets, rivalries, and forbidden relationships threaten to unravel her family's legacy and the empire holding them together.



Tekton: The Lion's Gate

AUTHOR: Marcus Graham
PUBLISHER: Tellwell (July)
ISBN: 9781834389219
What if the 'historical' Jesus of Nazareth was reborn in our time, unaware of who he might be?

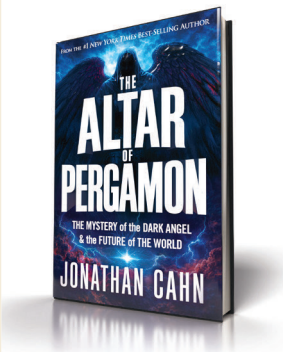
HISTORICAL FICTION



Season of Life

AUTHOR: Jeff Janoda
PUBLISHER: Friesen Press (Aug.)
ISBN: 9781038377845
After Gettysburg, three lives converge in the ruin: a free Black farmer, an untrained nurse, a Union spy. Something older than time watches, wearing a dead soldier's face.

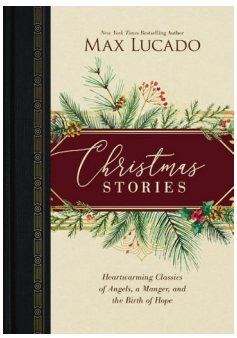
RELIGION & SPIRITUALITY



The Altar of Pergamon

AUTHOR: Jonathan Cahn
PUBLISHER: Charisma Media/Front Line (Sept.)
ISBN: 9781636416151
Jonathan Cahn's gripping new thriller blends history, prophecy, archaeology, and suspense in a global quest to uncover the chilling mystery behind the ancient Altar of Pergamon and its darkest legacy.

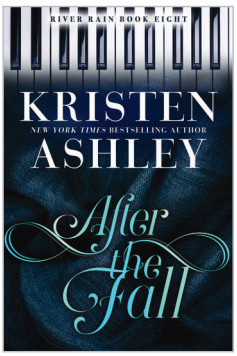
RELIGION & SPIRITUALITY



The Christmas Stories

AUTHOR: Max Lucado
PUBLISHER: Thomas Nelson Fiction (2021)
ISBN: 9780785249658
From Bethlehem to a small Texas town, Max Lucado's heartwarming Christmas tales, featuring angels, Joseph, and a missing baby Jesus, celebrate the wonder and hope of God's greatest gift.

ROMANCE



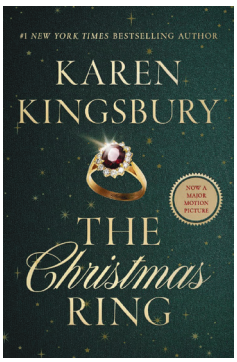
After the Fall

AUTHOR: Kristen Ashley
ILLUSTRATOR: Marz Jr.
PUBLISHER: Blue Box Press (Dec.)
ISBN: 9798903270576
Everyone knew Sully and Dru were meant to be. But Sully is battling demons he hides from everyone, especially Dru, and for her it's all or nothing. Book 8 of the River Rain series.



Christmas in Austenland

AUTHOR: Shannon Hale
PUBLISHER: Bloomsbury Publishing (Sept.)
ISBN: 9781639738908
Return to Austenland at Christmastime in this delightfully charming romance by bestselling author Shannon Hale, now available in a festive deluxe edition with ivy-patterned edges!



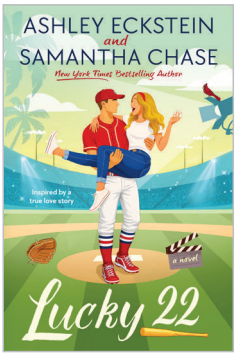
The Christmas Ring

AUTHOR: Karen Kingsbury
PUBLISHER: Thomas Nelson Fiction (2025)
ISBN: 9781400354764
Military widow Vanessa's search for her family's lost WWII Christmas ring leads to a small-town antique shop, and to a second chance at love with its guarded owner, Ben.



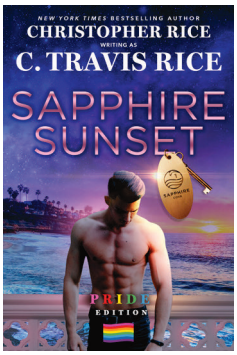
The Christmas Yes List

AUTHOR: Melissa Ferguson
PUBLISHER: Thomas Nelson Fiction (Oct.)
ISBN: 9781400356713
Recovering people-pleaser Chloe vows to collect ten nos by Christmas, but charming out-of-towner James says YES to every wild request, and his secret reason could break both their hearts.



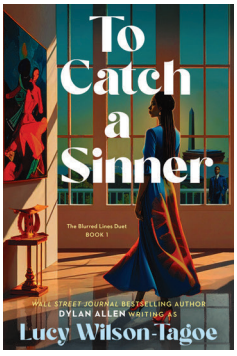
Lucky 22

AUTHOR: Ashley Eckstein and Samantha Chase
PUBLISHER: Blue Box Press (Sept.)
ISBN: 9781968707996
An aspiring LA actress and a disciplined pro baseball player are drawn together by a shared lucky number. But can love survive their demanding careers? A sweet, heartfelt romance.



Sapphire Sunset

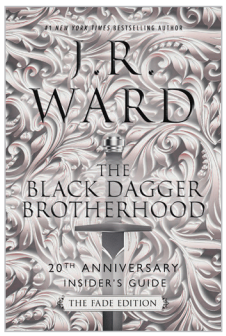
AUTHOR: Christopher Rice writing as C. Travis Rice
PUBLISHER: Blue Box Press (2022)
ISBN: 9781952457869
Ex-Marine Logan Murdoch can't afford to fall for Connor Harcourt, heir to the luxury resort where he works security. But a scandal threatens Sapphire Cove and throws them back together.



To Catch a Sinner: The Blurred Lines Duet, Book 1

AUTHOR: Dylan Allen writing as Lucy Wilson-Tagoe
PUBLISHER: Blue Box Press (June)
ISBN: 9798903270248
Journalist Sin Sackey returns to DC to start over, until a new lead pulls her back into the story that nearly ruined her and a too-good-to-be-true man tempts her heart.

ROMANTASY



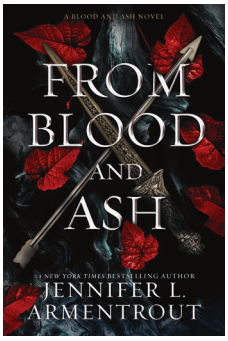
The Black Dagger Brotherhood: 20th Anniversary Insider's Guide

AUTHOR: J.R. Ward
PUBLISHER: Blue Box Press (Nov.)
ISBN: 9781968707736
Celebrate 20 years of the Brothers with a new Wrath and Beth novella, where-are-they-now interviews, fan-favorite features, and J.R. Ward's reflections on her legendary series.



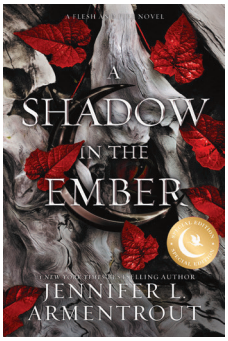
A Crown of Ruin: A Blood and Ash Special Edition Novella

AUTHOR: Jennifer L. Armentrout
PUBLISHER: Blue Box Press (Nov.)
ISBN: 9798903270507
With Poppy in stasis, Casteel must lead without her and Kieran shoulders a kingdom as gods and mortals drift apart in this Blood and Ash novella set before *The Throne of Bone and Ash*.



From Blood and Ash

AUTHOR: Jennifer L. Armentrout
PUBLISHER: Blue Box Press (2021)
ISBN: 9781952457463
Chosen as the Maiden, Poppy has never been allowed a life of her own, until her guard Hawke awakens forbidden desire as an ancient enemy rises. Book one of the Blood and Ash series.

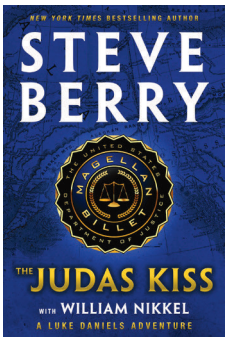


A Shadow in the Ember Special Edition

AUTHOR: Jennifer L. Armentrout
PUBLISHER: Blue Box Press (Jan.)
ISBN: 9781952457395
Seraphena was promised to the Primal of Death before birth. Her secret mission: make him love her, then kill him to save her kingdom. Book 1 of Flesh and Fire, in a special edition.



THRILLER & SUSPENSE



The Judas Kiss

AUTHOR: Steve Berry and William Nikkel
PUBLISHER: Blue Box Press (Dec.)
ISBN: 9798903270590

Magellan Billet agent Luke Daniels must stop a Russian-American conspiracy rooted in a secret deal hidden in the 1867 purchase of Alaska, in a new thriller from Steve Berry.

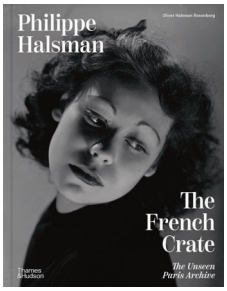
ART & PHOTOGRAPHY



Magic Hour at Disney

AUTHOR: Keith Gluck & Jerry Rees
PUBLISHER: The Old Mill Press (Dec.)
ISBN: 9798992564556

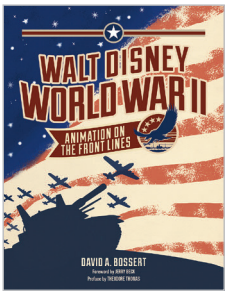
Magic Hour at Disney explores Disneyland and Walt Disney World at dusk, when fading sunlight and park lights shine together, revealing how atmosphere and design create storytelling in the sky above Main Street.



Philippe Halsman: The French Crate: The Unseen Paris Archive

AUTHOR: Philippe Halsman, Oliver Halsman Rosenberg
PUBLISHER: Thames & Hudson (Nov.)
ISBN: 9780500030462

Philippe Halsman: The French Crate presents the rediscovered glass-plate negatives by legendary photographer Philippe Halsman, capturing the development of his style and life in 1930s Paris.



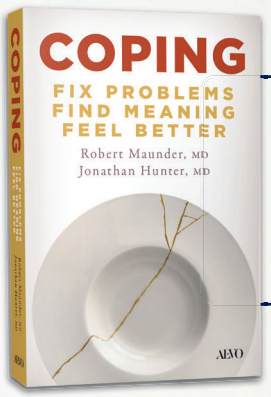
Walt Disney World War II: Animation on the Front Lines

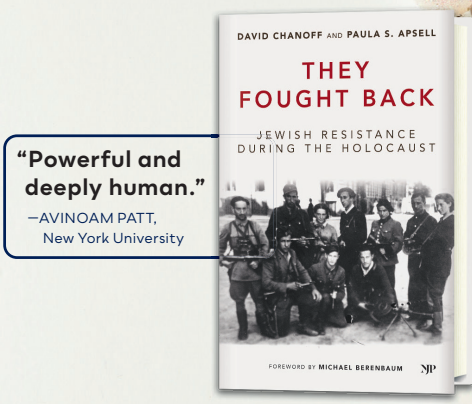
AUTHOR: David A. Bossert
PUBLISHER: The Old Mill Press (Nov.)
ISBN: 9798992564532

When America went to war, so did Walt Disney. From 1941 to 1945, his dream factory joined the Allied arsenal, creating training films, propaganda, and insignia that educated troops and sustained the American spirit.

A Little Something for Every Book Lover





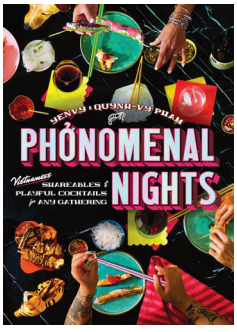






Holiday Bookshelf: Nonfiction

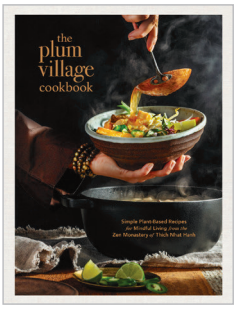
COOKING & FOOD



Phonomenal Nights: Vietnamese Shareables & Playful Cocktails for Any Gathering

AUTHOR: Yenvy & Quynh Pham
PUBLISHER: Blue Star Press; Sasquatch Books (Nov.)
ISBN: 9781632175915

Vibrant Vietnamese entertaining made easy, with wildly creative recipes, show-stopping party boards, interactive feasts, and innovative cocktails designed to bring everyone to the table.

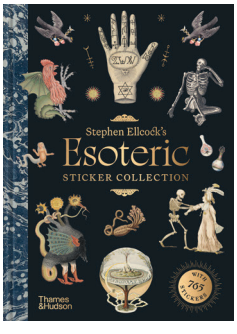


The Plum Village Cookbook: Simple Plant-Based Recipes for Mindful Living from the Zen Monastery of Thich Nhat Hanh

AUTHOR: Thich Nhat Hanh Sara Remington
PHOTOGRAPHER: Sara Remington
PUBLISHER: Parallax Press (Nov.)
ISBN: 9780938077374

Offering a unique blend of mindfulness and culinary creativity inspired by the teachings of Thich Nhat Hanh and the serene lifestyle of Plum Village.

CRAFTING

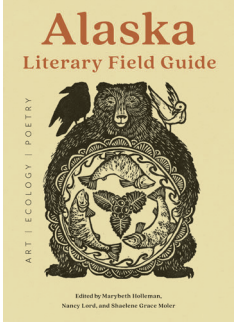


Stephen Ellcock's Esoteric Sticker Collection

AUTHOR: Stephen Ellcock
PUBLISHER: Thames & Hudson (Nov.)
ISBN: 9780500031827

A high-quality sticker book with more than 750 arresting stickers from established image curator Stephen Ellcock to use in scrapbooking, journaling, and collage.

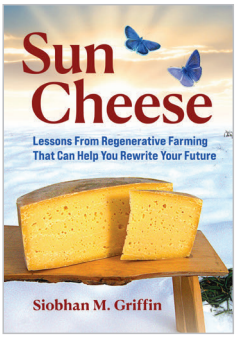
ENVIRONMENT & NATURE



Alaska Literary Field Guide: Art, Ecology, Poetry

AUTHOR: Marybeth Holleman, Shaelene Moler, and Nancy Lord
PUBLISHER: Mountaineers Books/Skipstone (Mar.)
ISBN: 9781680517620

Blending poetry, prose, science, and vibrant art by Alaska writers and artists, *Alaska Literary Field Guide* is a stunning celebration of the landscapes and wildlife of the Last Frontier.

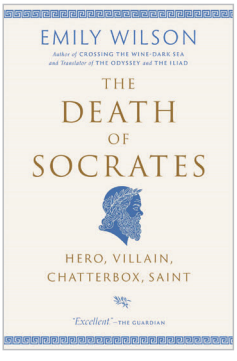


Sun Cheese: Lessons From Regenerative Farming That Can Help You Rewrite Your Future

AUTHOR: Siobhan M. Griffin
PUBLISHER: Restoracene (Aug.)
ISBN: 9798996101047

Sun Cheese offers a hopeful answer to biodiversity loss, wildfire, and climate disruption. All humans can help cool the climate with better knowledge of ecology that is informed by highly productive paleolithic land and seascapes.

HISTORY

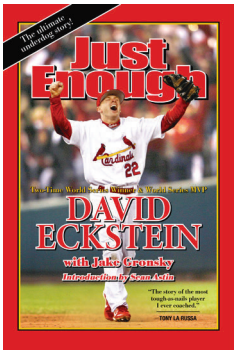


The Death of Socrates

AUTHOR: Emily Wilson
PUBLISHER: Harvard University Press (Nov.)
ISBN: 9780674309852

Best-selling author and translator Emily Wilson has captivated millions with her translations of *The Odyssey* and *The Iliad*. Here, she explores why Socrates trial and death have mattered for more than 2,400 years.

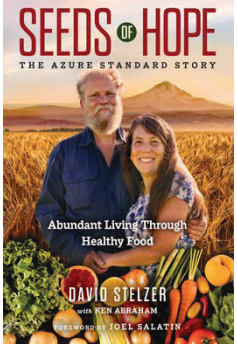
MEMOIR



Just Enough

AUTHOR: David Eckstein with Jake Gronsky; foreword by Sean Astin
PUBLISHER: Blue Box Press (Sept.)
ISBN: 9781968707712

Told he was too small, David Eckstein became a two-time World Series champion and 2006 World Series MVP. His memoir shows how grit and character can take you further than anyone expects.

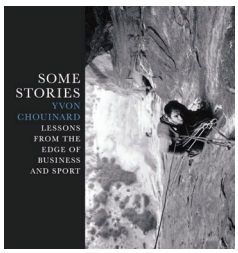


Seeds of Hope: The Azure Standard Story—Abundant Living through Healthy Food

AUTHOR: David Stelzer; with Ken Abraham
PUBLISHER: Forefront Books (Oct.)
ISBN: 9781637636121

After a childhood health crisis, David Stelzer helped transform his family's Oregon farm into Azure Standard, building a major organic food company rooted in clean food, healthy soil, faith, and grit.

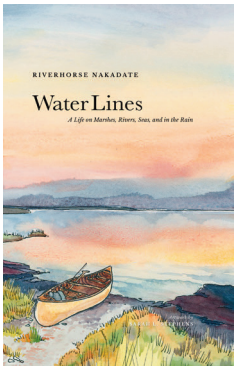
MEMOIR



Some Stories: Lessons from the Edge of Business and Sport

AUTHOR: Yvon Chouinard
PUBLISHER: Patagonia (2019)
ISBN: 9781938340826

From falconry to fishing and climbing to surfing, Patagonia founder Yvon Chouinard reflects on sport, business, and environmental activism in this eclectic portrait of a unique life well lived.



Water Lines: A Life on Marshes, Rivers, Seas and In the Rain

AUTHOR: Riverhorse Nakadate
ILLUSTRATOR: Sarah L. Stephens
PUBLISHER: Patagonia (June)
ISBN: 9781952338359

A luminous collection of essays from Riverhorse Nakadate—angler, musician, conservationist, and lifelong nomad—whose devotion to wild places and the healing power of water pulses through every page.

POLITICS & CURRENT AFFAIRS

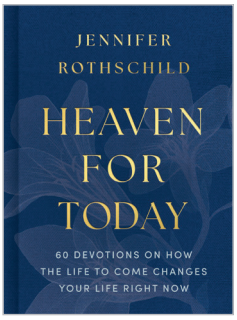


Protest: Respect It, Defend It, Use It

AUTHOR: Annie Leonard and André Carothers
PUBLISHER: Patagonia (Apr.)
ISBN: 9781952338335

Seasoned activists Annie Leonard and André Carothers explore how peaceful protest has shaped our world—and why protecting this essential democratic right matters more than ever.

RELIGION & SPIRITUALITY



Heaven for Today: 60 Devotions on How the Life to Come Changes Your Life Right Now

AUTHOR: Jennifer Rothschild
PUBLISHER: B&H Publishing (Sept.)
ISBN: 9798384533719

Heaven isn't a distant hope to cling to—it's a reality that changes how you live today. *Heaven for Today* is your invitation to let the life to come transform the life you're living right now.

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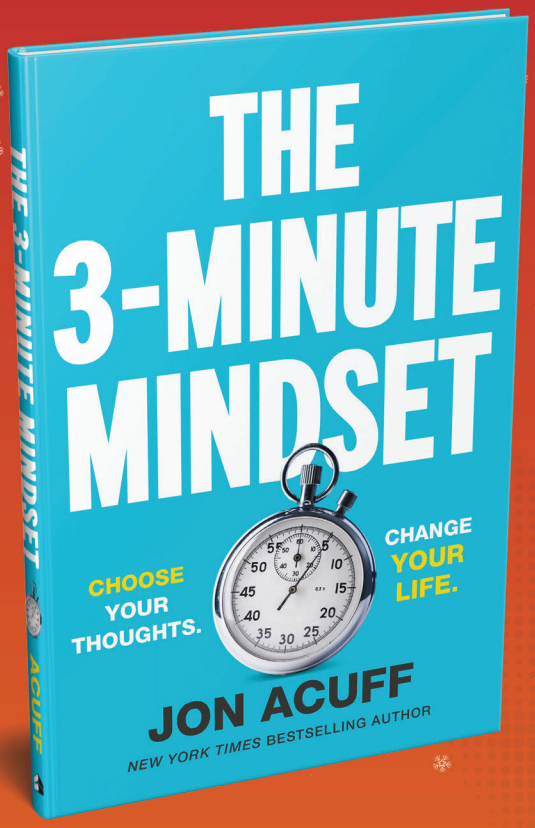
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WHAT IF A NEW MINDSET WAS ONLY

THREE MINUTES AWAY?

Jon Acuff's 90-day daily practice turns great thoughts into great results.

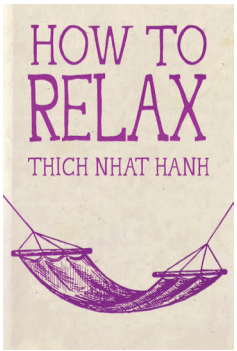
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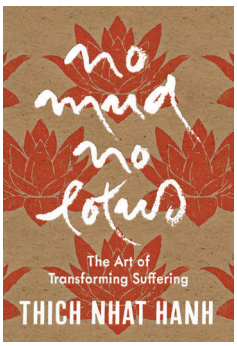
RELIGION & SPIRITUALITY



How to Relax: Hardcover Gift Edition

AUTHOR: Thich Nhat Hanh
ILLUSTRATOR: Jason DeAntonis
PUBLISHER: Parallax Press (Aug.)
ISBN: 9781967175260

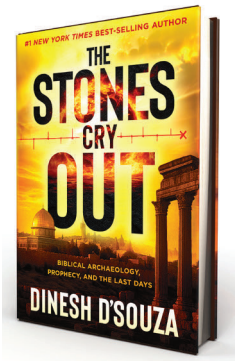
The fifth book in the bestselling Mindfulness Essentials series, a back-to-basics collection from world-renowned Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh that introduces everyone to the essentials of mindfulness practice.



No Mud, No Lotus: The Art of Transforming Suffering: Hardcover Gift Edition

AUTHOR: Thich Nhat Hanh
PUBLISHER: Parallax Press (Aug.)
ISBN: 9781967175185

The secret to happiness is to acknowledge and transform suffering, not to run away from it. Here, Thich Nhat Hanh offers practices and inspiration transforming suffering and finding true joy.

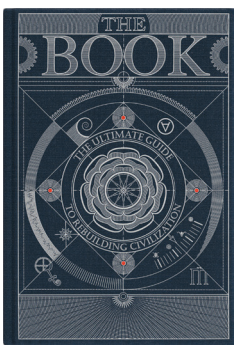


The Stones Cry Out

AUTHOR: Dinesh D'Souza
PUBLISHER: Charisma Media/Front Line (Oct.)
ISBN: 9781636415789

Dinesh D'Souza explores archaeology, history, and ancient discoveries that illuminate the world of the Bible, offering a compelling case for the reliability of Scripture and its enduring significance.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

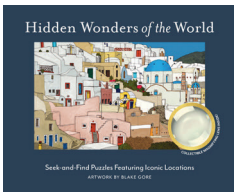


The Book: The Ultimate Guide to Rebuilding Civilization

AUTHOR: Hungry Minds
ART DIRECTOR: Lev Kaplan
PUBLISHER: Hungry Minds (2022)
ISBN: 9780578377452

A fully illustrated book that explores how to rebuild society from scratch if the modern world disappeared tomorrow. With thought-provoking ideas from science, art, engineering, and more, it's an imaginative guide to reestablishing the world.

TRAVEL

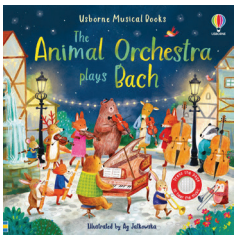


Hidden Wonders of the World: Seek-and-Find Puzzles Featuring Iconic Locations

AUTHOR/ILLUSTRATOR: Blake Gore
PUBLISHER: Blue Star Press (Oct.)
ISBN: 9781963183894

Explore 20 iconic destinations through intricate miniature art, hidden-object puzzles, and playful surprises, with a wooden camera-shaped magnifying glass for finding every tiny detail.

PICTURE BOOKS



The Animal Orchestra Plays Bach

AUTHOR: Sam Taplin
ILLUSTRATOR: Ag Jatkowska
PUBLISHER: Usborne (Sept.)
ISBN: 9781836054382

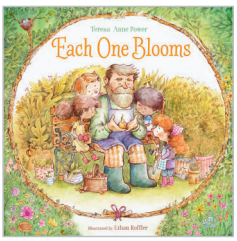
With charming illustrations, real classical music, and interactive sound buttons, this enchanting board book offers a fun, hands-on introduction to Bach and the wonderful world of classical music.



The Christmas House

AUTHOR: Erin Napier
ILLUSTRATOR: Adam Trest
PUBLISHER: HarperCollins Christian Publishing/Tommy Nelson (Oct.)
ISBN: 9781400254903

Welcome home to the Christmas House, where vanilla and cinnamon waft from the kitchen, a Christmas tree glows from the window, and Grandpa's old cracked, wooden Christmas star is the most important decoration.



Each One Blooms

AUTHOR: Teresa Anne Power
ILLUSTRATOR: Ethan Roffler
PUBLISHER: Stafford House Books, Inc. (Dec.)
ISBN: 9781734478617

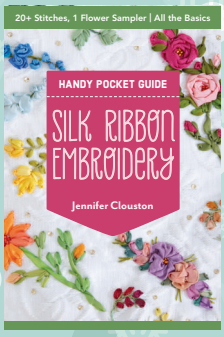
A kind gardener shows children how ordinary bulbs become extraordinary flowers, helping them see that everyone blooms differently and that growing at their own pace is worth celebrating.

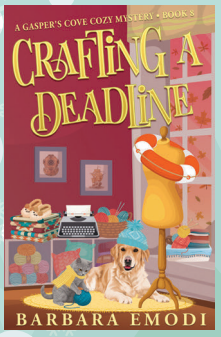
Crafty Gifts

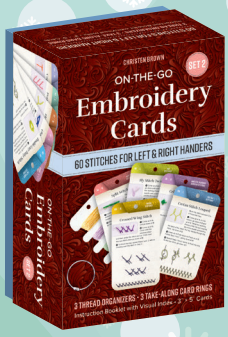
& Stocking Stuffer Books They'll Love











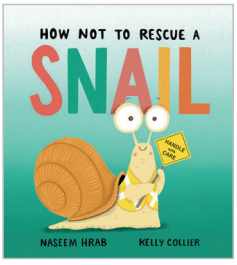




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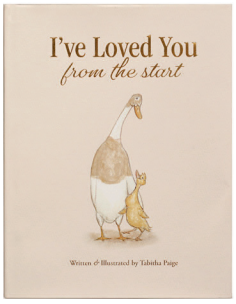
PICTURE BOOKS



How Not to Rescue a Snail

AUTHOR: Naseem Hrab
ILLUSTRATOR: Kelly Collier
PUBLISHER: Owlkids Books (Sept.)
ISBN: 9781771477284

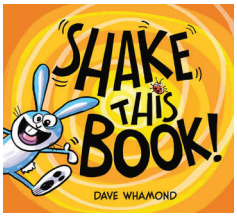
Iconic introvert Snail (*How to Party Like a Snail*) returns for a sweetly humorous story about overcoming a fear of change and using your voice.



I've Loved You from the Start: A Tender Story of Unconditional Love

AUTHOR/ILLUSTRATOR: Tabitha Paige
PUBLISHER: Blue Star Press; Paige Tate & Co. (Aug.)
ISBN: 9781963183856

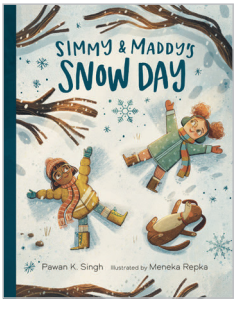
A tender picture book celebrating the unconditional bond between parent and child, with gentle rhymes and beautiful watercolor illustrations—a keepsake to treasure for years.



Shake This Book!

AUTHOR/ILLUSTRATOR: Dave Whamond
PUBLISHER: Owlkids Books (Oct.)
ISBN: 9781771476836

Egged on by a mischievous rabbit, readers are invited to find out what happens if they shake this book really hard. Hilarious and interactive, this unique book asks readers to break the fourth wall.



Simmy and Maddy's Snow Day

AUTHOR: Pawan K. Singh
ILLUSTRATOR: Meneka Repka
PUBLISHER: Owlkids Books (Nov.)
ISBN: 9781771476768

Two friends put a unique twist on a snow day tradition. This cozy, wordless story encourages readers to think outside the box and get outdoors for some wintery fun.



This Book Will Make You a Scientist

AUTHOR: Dr. Sheila Kanani
ILLUSTRATOR: Ellen Surrey
PUBLISHER: Nosy Crow (Sept.)
ISBN: 9798887772295

This book will make you a scientist as you explore 25 different scientific concepts inspired by ground-breaking scientists through history!



This Little Snowman: A Touch and Feel Book

AUTHOR: Ingela P. Arrhenius
PUBLISHER: Nosy Crow (Sept.)
ISBN: 9798887772950

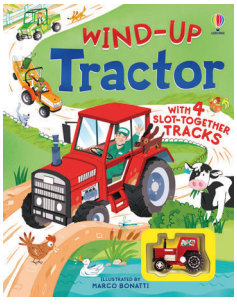
From Ingela P. Arrhenius, creator of the Peekaboo and Felt Flaps series, this stylish and innovative new touch-and-feel-series is perfect for little ones just beginning to engage their senses.



Tomorrow Bright Before Us: An Inspiring Quote for Each Day of the Year

ILLUSTRATOR: Victoria Ball
PUBLISHER: Nosy Crow (Sept.)
ISBN: 9798887770987

Ideal for gifting, this beautifully illustrated collection of 366 inspiring quotes is perfect for sharing at bedtime, in classrooms, and with friends of all ages.



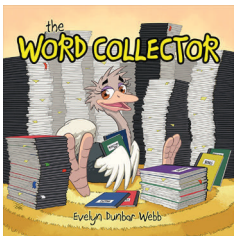
Wind-Up Tractor

AUTHOR: Sarah Hull
ILLUSTRATOR: Marco Bonatti
PUBLISHER: Usborne (July)
ISBN: 9781836053729

Perfect for farm-loving preschoolers, this beautifully illustrated book and toy set combines storytelling, imaginative play, and fine motor skill development in one screen-free activity.



PICTURE BOOKS

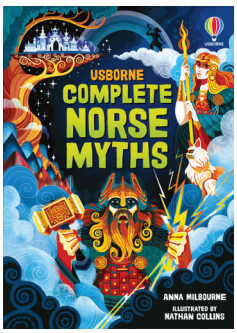


The Word Collector

AUTHOR: Evelyn Dunbar Webb
ILLUSTRATOR: Matt Tyree
PUBLISHER: Bumblemeyer Publications (2017)
ISBN: 9780998669830

Written and illustrated in a style that captures a child's interest, *The Word Collector* encourages a love of language- and a willingness to help others-as it reviews the four main parts of speech: noun, verb, adverb, and adjective.

MIDDLE GRADE



Complete Norse Myths

AUTHOR: Anna Milbourne, Mairi Mackinnon
ILLUSTRATOR: Nathan Collins
PUBLISHER: Usborne (Oct.)
ISBN: 9781836054504

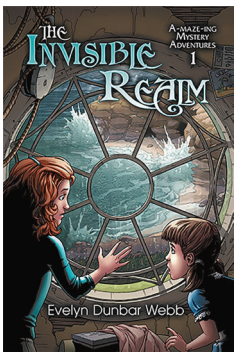
A handsome volume for any family bookshelf, this illustrated Norse mythology collection contains all the best-known stories and characters as well as lesser-known Norse gods and heroes.



Guinness World Records 2027

AUTHOR: Guinness World Records
PUBLISHER: Guinness World Records (Aug.)
ISBN: 9781806500253

A family-friendly 2027 annual packed with world records, extraordinary facts, and record-breaking achievements across science, nature, sports, history, and more.



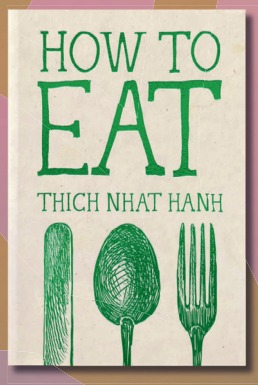
The Invisible Realm (A-maze-ing Mystery Adventures I)

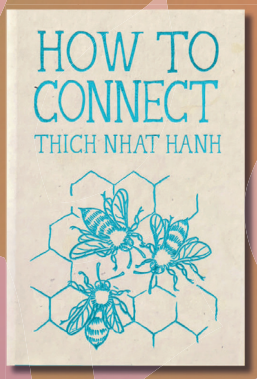
AUTHOR/ILLUSTRATOR: Evelyn Dunbar Webb
PUBLISHER: Bumblemeyer Publications (2018)
ISBN: 9780998669861

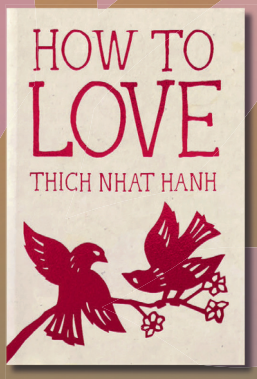
Stepsisters Hattie & Dacey embark on a treasure hunt, soon discovering a hidden world with fairy tale characters threatened by an evil entity. Struggling together through intrigue & danger, they learn what it means to be "real" sisters.

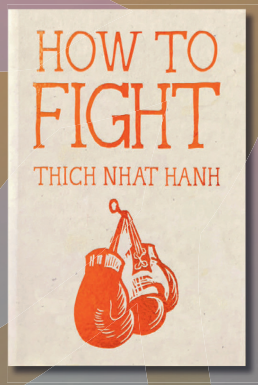
Parallax Press

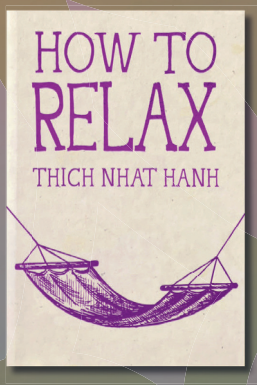
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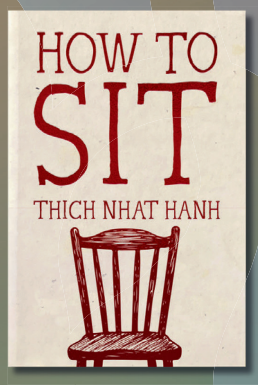








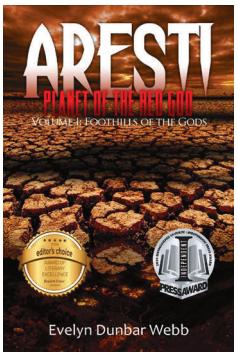




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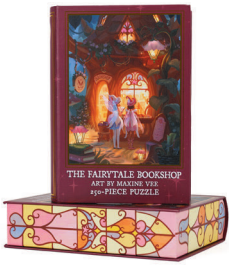
YOUNG ADULT



Foothills of the Gods: Aresti: Planet of the Red God Vol. I

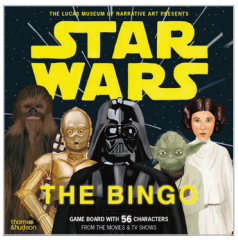
AUTHOR/ILLUSTRATOR: Evelyn Dunbar Webb
PUBLISHER: Bumblemeyer Publications (2019)
ISBN: 9780999383414
Determined to escape the Council Leader's scrutiny, 16-year-old Blaas Rakendo must join forces, willingly or not, with a special team to safeguard cryptic artifacts and unravel the long-buried scandal they represent.

GAMES, PUZZLES & TOYS



The Fairytale Bookshop Keepsake Puzzle | Book Lovers Collection

PUBLISHER: Kingdom of Threads (2025)
EAN: 784987415971
An indie bookshop straight out of a fairytale! This gorgeous puzzle comes in a book-shaped keepsake box with sprayed edges, interior art, and a magnetic closure. A must-have for every book lover.



Star Wars: The Bingo

PUBLISHER: Thames & Hudson (Oct.)
ISBN: 9780500421604
The Lucas Museum of Narrative Art presents *Star Wars: The Bingo* with fan-favorite characters from across the franchise.



Suriel Plush | ACOTAR Collection

PUBLISHER: Kingdom of Threads (Sept.)
EAN: 760944907345
Complete with a Night Court mug, this soft Suriel plush is a perfect cuddle buddy or bookshelf decor for ACOTAR readers. ©2015-2026, Sarah J. Maas. SURIEL and ACOTAR are trademarks of Fireheart Inc.



Threshing Day 500 Piece Puzzle | Fourth Wing Collection

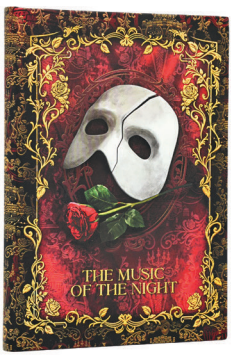
PUBLISHER: Kingdom of Threads (Sept.)
EAN: 784987409895
A beautiful 500 piece puzzle of the iconic scene from Fourth Wing, where Violet defends Andarna on Threshing Day. Perfect for every romantasy reader and dragon rider! Officially licensed product.

JOURNALS & PLANNERS



Aurelia

PUBLISHER: Paperblanks (2018)
ISBN: 9781439753859
Our Aurelia design is fit for a king. Its inspiration dates back to Paris in the mid-18th century and the original binding housed copies of King Louis XV's procedures for Holy Week. This book design is a marvellous riot of gold-tooled rococo elements, featuring birds, flowers and leaves.



Masked Melody (Phantom of the Opera)

PUBLISHER: Paperblanks (Sept.)
ISBN: 9780349723815
Let the dream begin with our Paperblanks Phantom of the Opera series. With its haunting melodies and complex love story, the mysterious world of The Phantom comes to life through our partnership with Andrew Lloyd Webber Musicals.



Shadows of Navarre (Fourth Wing)

PUBLISHER: Paperblanks (2025)
ISBN: 9781439799864
Rebecca Yarros reignited the romantasy genre with the release of *Fourth Wing* (2023), the first book in her Empyrean series. Centered around 20-year-old dragon-rider recruit Violet Sorrengail, the series defies traditional fantasy tropes by offering readers a female hero who is both formidable and deeply human.

PW Reviews

THIS WEEK • FICTION • MYSTERIES & THRILLERS • SCIENCE FICTION, FANTASY & HORROR • ROMANCE & EROTICA • COMICS • NONFICTION • RELIGION & SPIRITUALITY • PICTURE BOOKS • CHILDREN'S FICTION • CHILDREN'S COMICS



Photograph by DANIELLA FISHMAN

Katie Cotugno hauls *The Great Gatsby* into the 21st century in her sparkling, paranoia-inflected thriller, *Daisy*.
Page 96

A series of New Years Eve parties form the backdrop for Katie Naymon's *In Every Future, It's Us*, a cute friends-to-lovers romance.
Page 99

Nate Powell's *Diana* brings his graphic novel trilogy about a time-traveling punk singer to a roaring conclusion.
Page 100

Taiwanese writer Lee Chia-Ying debuts with the metafictional novel *A Perfect Day to Put Your Head in the Oven* (reviewed on this page).



A Perfect Day to Put Your Head in the Oven

Lee Chia-Ying, trans. from the Mandarin by Lin King. Riverhead, $29 (208p)
ISBN 979-8-217-18158-2

An aspiring writer casts about for material in Chia-Ying's clever meditation on literature and the nature of memory. Tan, an office worker in Taiwan, has been trying to write a novel, but she can't get past 15 pages. She finds her manuscript "unreadable" and her protagonist dreadfully boring. Taking encouragement from Flannery O'Connor, who wrote that "anybody who has survived childhood has enough information about life to last him the rest of his days," she decides to write a memoir instead. ("I'm not sure if my own life is any more interesting, but O'Connor's words do chime with me," Tan narrates.) The decision triggers a series of flashbacks, which accrue into Tan's coming-of-age story—her parents' divorce when she was a child, her close grade-school friendship with Chou Ko-Yi, the time she lost her virginity. In the present, Tan meets up with former classmates, including Chou Ko-Yi, whom she finds through Facebook. As she compares her versions of events with theirs, she tries to sort out what she'll put on the page. The story is straightforward, but there's enjoyment to be found in Tan's mischievous view of memoir as just another form of fiction, especially when she finds examples in such classics as Thoreau's *Walden* ("I was fascinated by the bravado behind such unapologetic bullshitting"). This has its moments. *(Jan.)*

Party with Cassowary

Leonardo San Pietro, trans. from the Italian by Todd Portnowitz. Knopf, $27 (176p)
ISBN 979-8-217-20850-0

A group of Italian literature students gather at a villa outside present-day Turin for the birthday party of their wealthy classmate in this slight debut from San Pietro. Among the guests are iconoclastic Pab, who wears a parka despite the heat, and birthday girl Isa M's best friend, Claudia, too busy with real problems to put on airs—her father is missing, her mother's an alcoholic, and it's up to her to look out for her younger brother. Meanwhile, the privileged Isa M copes with her depression by making miniature chairs from the wire of champagne corks. She's in love with Ezio, who has yet to arrive. Soon, the focus turns to a neighbor's large ostrich-like bird, a cassowary, who can inflict fatal wounds when provoked. After a note appears claiming that Ezio will die if someone doesn't touch the cassowary before one a.m., the friends go into a tizzy, complicated by having unknowingly drunk some punch that was spiked with a psychedelic drug, as they try to figure out who wrote the note and whether it's a prank. Ultimately, they agree they cannot ignore the warning, but they're terrified of the cassowary. The author builds tension with the plot's ticking clock, and he adds intrigue with the various character sketches, but the story falls short of any real depth. It's amusing but paper thin. *(Jan.)*

The Convert

Tova Reich. Seven Stories, $18.95 trade paper (224p)
ISBN 978-1-64421-581-4

Reich (*Camp Jeff*) takes aim at false pieties in this incendiary collection of satirical tales. In "Managed Care," a man moves his 89-year-old mother, Ruth, into a nursing home and prewrites her obituary, determined to tie up his "nagging Ruth business and clear his desk" while continuing to perform the role of doting son. Other entries follow in the acerbic and irreverent vein of Reich's *My Holocaust*. The narrator of "Mengele in Jerusalem," whose wife and daughter were killed by the Nazis, casually remarks that Hitler, "the legendary struggler with the little fake mustache," did a favor to those who survived his "tantrums" by "endowing them with an interesting past." The title novella, which centers on an anti-Zionist ultra-Orthodox Jewish sect called the Messiah Waiters, rachets up the discomfort even further. Reich gives voice to the Messiah Waiters' fervent and odious vitriol, as when one of their representatives, during a meeting with the Ayatollah Khomeini, their ally against Israel (which they view as a blasphemous theocracy), claims that "what is commonly known as the Holocaust is, in actuality, God's punishment of the

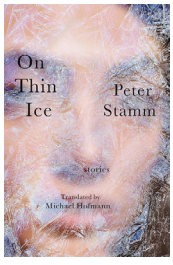
CHIA-YING © SIASIA LEE

Jewish people." The piercing satire works well in short bursts, but some readers will find the novella difficult to stomach. Still, in the collection's most lucid moments, Reich dares readers to consider the nature of victimhood, self-interest, and misguided faith. *(Dec.)*

On Thin Ice

Peter Stamm, trans. from the German by Michael Hofmann. Other Press, $16.99 trade paper (176p)
ISBN 978-1-63542-616-8

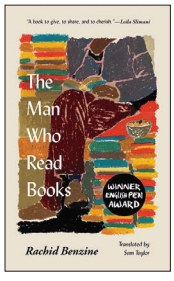
Stamm (*Seven Years*) explores the mysteries surrounding emotional and physical attraction in this beguiling story collection. In "Elin's Apples," the unnamed narrator stops at a roadside produce stand and, despite owner Elin's indifference, returns repeatedly to offer assistance that is neither requested nor acknowledged. "Roses Only" tracks a museum employee named Ljuba who progressively imposes upon scholar and author Rolf Haller, dropping in on him without invitation and organizing a series of visits to significant historic sites. Rolf dutifully accompanies Ljuba on these visits, though it's unclear whether he's pleased with their blossoming friendship. Adding to the mystery, he sends her a bouquet of roses, which she never acknowledges. Stamm makes hay from this sort of ambiguity, leaving the characters' underlying psychology open to interpretation. Sometimes, as in life, the characters have feelings too complex or contradictory to make explicit. This is especially true in the opening story, "Lieke writes...," in which a ski instructor with an unexplained scandal in his past is romantically pursued by the attractive title character. Stamm gestures at the complexities of reality in these thought-provoking tales. *(Dec.)*



The Man Who Read Books

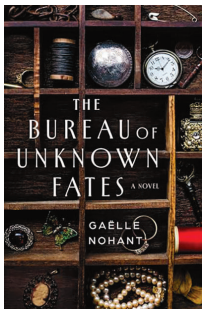
Rachid Benzine, trans. from the French by Sam Taylor. Cardinal, $20 (144)
ISBN 978-1-5387-8115-9

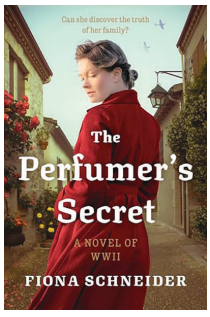
In Benzine's taut and heartbreaking novel, a French war photographer travels to present-day Gaza to report on the region during a ceasefire with



Unfinished Business

THE HEROINES IN THESE TWO NOVELS CONFRONT UNSOLVED MYSTERIES FROM WWII.





The Bureau of Unknown Fates

Gaëlle Nohant. St. Martin's, $30 (336p)
ISBN 978-1-250-45829-2

Nohant (*The Man in the Storm*) offers an immersive tale of a Frenchwoman tasked with identifying the belongings left behind by prisoners at WWII concentration camps. In 2016, Irène works for the International Tracing Service, an organization started by the Allies to find out what happened to people who went missing during the war. Among the items housed at ITS are personal belongings from the camps. After man sends her a locket that was stolen by his German grandmother from a prisoner at one of the camps, where the grandmother worked as a guard, Irène's travels to Lublin, Poland, where she learns more about the woman who owned the locket. Then, in Paris, she tracks down the relatives of the man who once owned a puppet stored by ITS. Nohant expertly weaves together the stories of people connected by the archived objects, and she examines the value in reuniting lost mementos with the families of their owners. The result is a moving story about the legacy of the Holocaust. *Agent: Susanna Lea, Susanna Lea Assoc. (Dec.)*

The Perfumer's Secret

Fiona Schneider. Harper Perennial, $19.99 trade paper (448p)
ISBN 978-0-06-349292-9

A woman discovers decades-old secrets about a relative in this entrancing parallel narrative from Schneider (*The Paris Affair*). In 1996, Stella Penhallam sets out to save her family's London perfumery from financial ruin. After she receives a package from Paris containing a notebook belonging to her great aunt Iris, from whom her family has been estranged for years, she identifies a possible way to save the business. There are pages missing from the notebook, and Stella thinks they hold the formulas to exquisite perfumes. Betting on the hunch, she travels to Paris. Initially, Iris is unwilling to share much about her past with the pair, including the reason behind the family rift. Stella remains convinced there is more to Iris's story than she is willing to tell, especially after learning of Iris's alleged collusion with the Nazis during the war. Believing Iris is innocent, Stella sets out to clear her name and recover the perfumes. Schneider adds depth to the story by exploring the cost of both Stella's and Iris's ambition and dedication to their craft. This is worth seeking out. *(Dec.)*

Israel. Narrating in the second person, Julien has a jaundiced view of the war's human rights abuses and the ways in which the press has capitalized on them ("Surgical strikes often turn out to be cases of medical malpractice"; "Editors prefer images of children crying amid the ruins"). His attention is drawn to aging bookseller Nabil Al Jaber, who refuses to let Julien photograph him until they get to know each other. Nabil then relates his tragic life story. A few days after his birth in 1948 Haifa, he and his Muslim mother, Christian father, and older brother, Moussa, were driven away by a Zionist massacre. As a boy growing up in a series of camps, he discovers his love of literature with help from Moussa. Years later, during the Six-Day War in 1967, his peaceful life is shattered when Moussa is killed. Benzine beautifully captures Nabil's love of reading and shows how it has sustained him. It adds up to a memorable portrait of life during wartime. (Nov.)

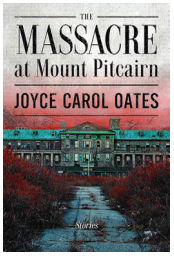
MYSTERIES & THRILLERS

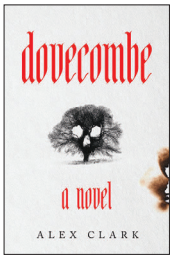
Dark Harvest (Haparanda #2)

Hans Rosenveldt, trans. from the Swedish by Ian Giles. Hanover Square, $19.99 trade paper (400p)
ISBN 978-1-335-00219-8

★ Rosenveldt follows *Cry Wolf* with a searing Scandi noir about a Russian-backed child trafficking ring. In Haparanda, a small city near Sweden's border with Finland, police detective Hannah Wester is returning to work after her last case resulted in the murder of her husband by Russian assassin Katja—whom Hannah worries might be her daughter, Elin, kidnapped as a young child and raised in the vicious Russian "Academy" to be a world-class contract killer. For her first case back on the force, Hannah investigates the discovery of a dead newborn on the grounds of a cemetery outside Haparanda. Eventually, she and her colleagues unearth a horrifying baby-harvesting operation run by an alliance of Russian criminals and Swedish power brokers. One of the operation's key enforcers turns out to be Katja, who returns to Sweden to track down pregnant escapees, putting her and Hannah on a collision course. On top of the requisite thrills and shocking surprises, Rosenveldt peppers the narrative with sardonic humor, as when one character posits that Americans would re-crucify Christ if he returned as "a woke, liberal snowflake." The result is a dark delight. *(Jan.)*







Daisy

Katie Cotugno. St. Martin's, $29 (288p)
ISBN 978-1-250-44059-4

This dazzling riff on *The Great Gatsby* from Cotugno (*Heavy Hitters*) reimagines Daisy Buchanan as a 21st-century heiress reeling from the murder of her lover, Jay Gatsby, two years earlier. Though Daisy's marriage to her boorish husband, Tom, has survived both of their affairs, Daisy relies on a Klonopin prescription to get through her days. When she throws yet another fund-raising party at her home in East Egg, Long Island, her lifelong friend Jordan Baker approaches her, desperate to pull her aside and reveal a burning secret. Distracted by new acquaintances and suspicions that Tom is cheating again, Daisy fails to catch up with Jordan at the party. A week later, Daisy finds Jordan dead in her pool, the same place Gatsby was murdered. As the police investigate, Daisy becomes paranoid that whoever killed Jordan might come after her next. Playfully hauling Fitzgerald's characters into the present while dotting the action with Jazz Age allusions, Cotugno pays tribute to the original with a taut psychological thriller that comfortably occupies its own lane. Fast, fun, and teeming with surprises, this shines as bright as the green light at the end of Daisy's dock. *Agent: Elizabeth Bewley, Sterling Lord Literistic. (Jan.)*

The Massacre at Mount Pitcairn

Joyce Carol Oates. Mysterious Press, $28.95 (208p
ISBN 978-1-61316-850-9

The potent latest story collection from Oates (*Frenzy*) finds the prolific author in fine form. The title story, which follows a woman's attempt to link the unsolved killings of eight Catholic nuns in 1937 to the disappearance of her first love 30 years later, is the strongest, showcasing the breathless quality of Oates's best prose ("Somehow it happened, happened often, when I was a young girl, and maybe in subsequent years when I wasn't so young, that I would be drawn violently in the wake of another person"). The other standout is the previously unpublished "Yare," in which a 21st-century family faces disaster on a cruise aboard the replica of an East India merchant ship sunk by pirates three centuries earlier. These stories and the collection's other two—"The Portal," about an alienated young boy, and "Strangle," about the daughter of a violent man—thrum with all the psychological intensity Oates is known for. In each, Oates prompts readers to wonder whether her characters are seeing the world as it is or as filtered through their troubled minds. This may be slim, but it isn't slight. *Agent: Warren Frazier, John Hawkins & Assoc. (Jan.)*

Dovecombe

Alex Clark. Norton, $28.99 (272p)
ISBN 978-1-324-12421-4

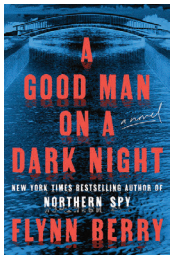
Clark debuts with an evocative gothic mystery flecked with sapphic yearning. Freshly out of an abusive relationship, narrator Dorrie accepts an invitation to join her friend Alys Strodethorpe at Dovecombe Manor, her dank family estate in Somerset. A fire 10 years earlier all but destroyed one wing of the building, and rot and vegetation are hard at work on what remains, lending credence to rumors of a family curse originating in the 16th century, when one of the Strodethorpes felled an oak. After the young women arrive, confident and charismatic Alys grows subdued in the company of her aristocratic mother, Caroline; the taciturn servants, Bonnie and Vic Keetch; and Ian Caplan, an investigator assigned to reopen an inquiry about the fire. Dorrie, who's desperately in love with Alys, throws herself into uncovering the roots of her friend's trauma, but her detective work also surfaces

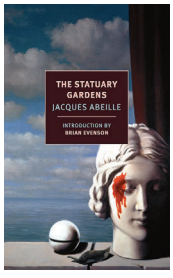
uncomfortable revelations about Dorrie herself, including her increasing possessiveness of both Alys and Dovecombe. Clark cultivates a mood of such all-consuming dread that the novel's denouement feels rushed and prosaic by comparison, with some of the more intriguing and unsettling plot threads left dangling. Still, the author's consummate talent for mood-setting and willingness to blur the lines between victim and victimizer make this a solid first effort. *(Jan.)*

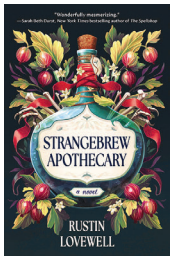
A Good Man on a Dark Night

Flynn Berry. Viking, $30 (272p)
ISBN 978-0-593-49035-8

A woman is browbeaten into aiding an oppressive U.S. government in this hard-charging thriller from bestseller Berry (*Trust Her*). Eleanor Dacre, a 38-year-old single mother and private nurse, is accosted one morning in Washington, D.C., by a man who tells her, "You need to serve your country." The man is Charles Parish, an agent with the Central Security Division, the secret police branch of an increasingly fascistic U.S. government. He tells Eleanor that she must betray her patient, Anna Bartok, a foreign policy expert with the State Department, by disclosing sensitive personal information. If Eleanor refuses, Charles will frame her for terrorism, she'll serve 30 years in prison, and her children will be raised as wards of the state. A terrified Eleanor agrees to the demands, but soon, she realizes she's being set up to aid in Anna's assassination and will be eliminated as a loose end. Berry viscerally renders Eleanor's emotional struggle between protecting her family and standing up to an authoritarian regime, and she ushers everything to a breathtaking climax. It's a wild and satisfying ride. *Agent: Emily Forland, Brandt & Hochman Literary. (Jan.)*







Blood Is Thicker

Iris Voss. Crooked Lane, $19.99 trade paper (336p)
ISBN 979-8-8924-2860-6

A newswoman's picture-perfect life falls to pieces in Voss's deliciously dark debut. Claire Walters is gorgeous, fastidious, and unwaveringly professional as an anchor for the morning news in the Pacific Northwest town of Silverton. Her facade shatters one night, however, when she runs over a pedestrian while driving her daughter Molly and drunk sister Viola home. The three women agree to hide the body in the nearby woods and keep the situation quiet, with Claire's main priority being to avoid a scandal. As the secret gnaws at her, Voss reveals other cracks in Claire's life, including her husband's infidelity. Then Claire, Molly, and Viola receive anonymous messages threatening to reveal what they've done. At the midway point, a major revelation about the person they've hit changes the shape of their worries and of the novel, morphing it from a tense psychological suspense tale into a straight-up whodunit. The characters are all, in some way, morally bankrupt, but it's fun to observe the different responses they have to the crucible Voss constructs for them. Readers with a taste for bad behavior will have a rollicking good time. *Agent: Jackson Keeler, InkWorks Literary. (Dec.)*

SF, FANTASY & HORROR

Call Me Traitor

Everina Maxwell. Tor, $28.99 (480p)
ISBN 978-1-250-36233-9

Moving questions about autonomy and identity shape this exhilarating sapphic fantasy adventure from bestseller Maxwell (*Ocean's Echo*). Three years before the start of the book, seven students on the cusp of graduating from the College Magorum banded together on an unparalleled magical project. Now, the five remaining members of the group, branded traitors, are in exile on the desolate Far Peninsula, where they were sent to die. When the empire discovers that they are, impossibly, still alive, it sends a hyper-specialized soldier called a war-tank to retrieve them. This nightmarishly powerful spell-caster, En, was trained to be a living weapon, her body covered in magical rune scars and her memory regularly wiped by an archmagus. En is already having thoughts unbefitting a war-tank when she meets one of the exiles, Tamol, who slowly turns her world upside down. The past and present timelines weave together to create suspense, with the endearingly artless Tamol at the center of both. The political structure the exiles have ostensibly betrayed could perhaps be clearer, but the magic system is complex and well developed. This is good fun. *Agent: Tamara Kawar, DeFiore & Co. (Dec.)*

The Statuary Gardens (Countries Cycle #1)

Jacques Abeille, trans. from the French by Alex Andriesse. New York Review Books, $24.95 trade paper (400p)
ISBN 979-8-89623-064-9

★ The first English translation of this wonderfully surreal and philosophical work by Abeille (1942–2022) transports readers to a country where statues are cultivated from the ground like plants. As the narrator, a traveler, becomes enamored with this strange land, readers are thrown into the world with no backstory and forced to accept the premise or be left behind. Fans of Jacqueline Harpman's *I Who Have Never Known Men* will appreciate the direct, bare-bones writing style; indeed, this is a sort of inversion of that story, as in this world, women are hidden away in the statue-growing estates, and to speak of them is both taboo and charged with tension. The narrator, curious about all that is hidden beneath the surface of this culture, embarks on a long journey to the country's northernmost steppes to learn more about its people and confront the rumor of a growing uprising. This strange and dreamlike tale offers plenty for readers to sink their teeth into. *(Dec.)*

Strangebrew Apothecary

Rustin Lovewell. Hanover Square, $28.99 (368p)
ISBN 978-1-335-00278-5

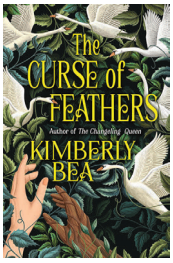
Lovewell's spirited fantasy debut follows a potion maker who must hide her true powers while traveling with a snake oil salesman. Ella Strange swore an oath to do no harm with her

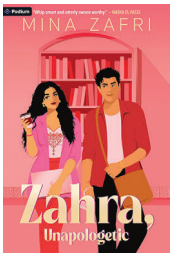
potions. She practices her magic in secret under the cover of a traveling medicine show to avoid the disdain and ignorance of the general populace. When the show sets up shop in a remote town, they learn too late it's full of light-worshipping zealots, "fire and brimstone types" who fear and persecute witchcraft. In the aftermath of this discovery, Ella and her con artist business partner, Doc Caspien, flee for their lives, pursued by the unrelenting Mavis Hornby and her team of enforcers. Ella and Doc are soon joined by tavern owner Rolli and his little sister, Kimmie, who are also targets of Mavis's ruthless crusade. Making their way through the wilderness, always one step ahead of disaster, this unlikely quartet slowly bonds. But only by pushing Ella's potion-making talents to their limits can she and her newfound friends hope to survive. Lovewell conjures a cozy yet occasionally harrowing romp through a fantastical frontier setting with danger lurking at every turn. With a focus on found family and shared risk, the story's stakes feel personal and intimate. Add in a subtle hint of romance and plenty of sequel potential and this is sure to have readers hooked. *(Dec.)*

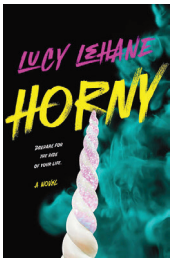
Lightning & Thunder (Heroes & Romance #1)

Sara Raasch. Bramble, $19.99 trade paper (336p)
ISBN 978-1-250-42881-3

Superhero ethics come under scrutiny in this electric fantasy romance series launch from Raasch (*The Fake Divination Offense*). Lux, a tech genius descended from the Greek god Zeus, breaks into a safe deposit box belonging to his older brother, widely beloved but secretly corrupt superhero Castor, while Castor is fending off a harpy attack. In addition to the bank account information Lux will use to repay losses caused by Castor's reckless heroics, he finds a hunk of pandora metal, the only substance known to kill gods, suggesting Castor has some deeper, more nefarious scheme cooking. After Castor disappears mid-harpy fight, his friend Erik, a superhero descendant of Thor, rescues Lux from the collapsing bank. To quell public concern, the New York Hero Council provisionally invites Lux to join them, despite suspicion on both sides. As Lux wrestles with his long nursed crush on Erik, he discovers that Erik, refreshingly, shares some doubts about Castor's motivations. Together the duo sets out in search of both Castor and proof of his crimes. Lux's snarky voice, the genuine chemistry between the leads, and the subversion of superhero tropes make for fun and frothy reading. Raasch is good at what she does. *Agent: Michelle Wolfson, Wolfson Literary. (Dec.)*







The Curse of Feathers

Kimberly Bea. Erewhon, $32 (448p)
ISBN 978-1-64566-176-4

Though of noble birth, Elisa von Ahlefeldt, the heroine of this lyrical but rocky riff on the Brothers Grimm tale "The Wild Swans" from Bea (*The Changeling Queen*), is "elf-wild," preferring the trees of the woods to the walls of her castle. In the woods, Elisa befriends Nuve, an ash-tree maiden who teaches her nature magic and warns her of the threat of hexen, witches who wish to see the land razed. Elisa's father's new bride is one such hexe, a cruel woman who transforms Elisa's six brothers into swans and influences Elisa's father to cast her out of his life, exiling her to the woods. Years pass as Elisa works desperately to break her brothers' curse. To do so, Nuve explains, she must craft six magical shirts out of nettles while under a vow of silence. The stakes rise when, still upholding this vow, she hatches a scheme to impersonate a noble woman as part of her efforts to save her family. Bea's graceful prose conjures a breathtaking woodland atmosphere and Elisa makes for a captivating heroine even when she's not speaking. Unfortunately, the plot meanders and the pace often lags, with no real weight given to the passing of time and not enough character development along the way. This is a mixed bag. *(Dec.)*

ROMANCE & EROTICA

Zahra, Unapologetic

Mina Zafri. Podium, $19.99 trade paper (296p)
ISBN 979-8-3470-2350-9

With this refreshing second-chance contemporary, debut author Zafri beautifully captures the struggle of straddling two worlds as a second-generation immigrant. Palestinian American computer programmer Zahra Diab is used to disappointing her immigrant parents. Things come to a head when she asserts her independence by moving out, leading her father to disown her. Her mother, however, is still determined to marry Zahra off to an eligible Muslim man and constantly sends candidates her way. When Zahra meets a dashing mystery man in a Washington, D.C., bookstore, sparks fly—until he rushes away without explanation. Five years later, the pair are reunited at the engagement party for Zahra's golden child brother, Rafi, where Zahra learns that her mystery man, Theo Onasis, is Rafi's best friend. It turns out he had a good reason for bailing on their first meeting: there was a family emergency. While navigating thorny family drama and generational trauma, the pair continue to gravitate toward each other. Zafri does a good job keeping the romance sweet and sexy while tackling some heavy topics, including Islamophobia and the characters' grief and trauma over the Israeli occupation of Palestine. The result is an impressive first outing with a lot of heart. *(Dec.)*

Horny

Lucy Lehane. Griffin, $19 trade paper (400p)
ISBN 978-1-250-32968-4

Lehane (*Thirsty*) uses this spicy sapphic romantic fantasy to dig into issues facing those who are othered by their societies. Rachel is undead. After years of self-hatred, she needed a change and invited a poltergeist to possess her body. As she explains it, she's "like a haunted house, except I'm a haunted person." Since then, she's faced discrimination from the living for her new status, but she's also

found fellow supernatural creatures to live with in Brookdale, Va., and a worthwhile job in a small law office while she works toward passing the bar. Then she gets a new housemate: Isolde, a unicorn sent to the human world to investigate the upcoming Convergence, the supernatural and human worlds coming together. Wholly ignorant of human mores and folkways, Isolde becomes intoxicated by her new existence—and especially by Rachel. The pair's sexual tension is hot enough to scorch the pages as they wrangle with preconceived notions of each others' kind. Explorations of queer identity and the messy awkwardness of fledgling romantic entanglements are bolstered by a lovable cast of characters, from angsty vampire landlord Lorenzo to kindhearted troll Maggie. Readers will revel in this quirky and diverting romp. *(Dec.)*

Compulsively Yours

Allison Raskin. Mira, $18.99 trade paper (320p)
ISBN 978-1-335-08131-5

Libi Newman, the heroine of this winning contemporary from Raskin (*Save the Date*), finds it easier not to date due to her OCD. Her experience? "I either need constant reassurance that the person cares for me and I start to stalk them, or I freak out that I don't love them the right way and sabotage the whole thing." Group therapy is a relief because she can say all that is on her mind without fear of judgment, even in front of her crush and fellow OCD patient Nate Keller, a psychologist. For his part, the pandemic exacerbated Nate's fear of contamination and he's been struggling since. Unable to avoid a holiday family reunion in Mexico that includes her recently widowed father's new girlfriend and her own ex-boyfriend (who is now dating her obnoxious cousin), Libi agrees to her therapist's plan to bring Nate along as a buffer. The trip will also serve as exposure therapy for both of them, helping Nate confront his anxiety around traveling. Raskin has a gift for dialogue that is both witty and realistic, making these two easy to root for as they quickly grow from acquaintances, to friends, to more than friends while navigating fake dating and taking comfort in each other. Readers are sure to be moved. *(Dec.)*

Triple Threat

Katie Chandler. Atria, $19 trade paper (352p)
ISBN 978-1-66808-68-03

Challengers meets a popular fanfic trope in this steamy throuple romance from Chandler (*Backhanded Compliments*). Everyone has a soulmark, the name of their soulmate written in silver letters across their skin. Once the soulmates meet, this mark turns black. Tennis pro Octavia Ricci and Leo Mantovani are one such pair of soulmates, but Octavia knows that Leo has a rare second soulmark that has yet to turn black. Meanwhile, she stands at a personal and professional crossroads after the death of her abusive father and coach. Navigating grief and burnout, she attempts to redefine her relationship with the sport by practicing with Ariel de Cordova. After a devastating injury ended his career, Ariel is determined to mentor his son, Eduardo, whether Eduardo wants to follow in his footsteps or not. He finds renewed purpose in helping Octavia, whom he has always had a crush on. Then Leo and Ariel meet, and both their marks turn black. Now all three characters must navigate tense romantic dynamics to figure out how they will fit together. The tennis scenes are a surprising highlight here, with plenty of high-stakes on-court action. Meanwhile, Leo provides stability and support as Octavia reckons with her father's abuse and learns to let go of the pressure to be the best and Ariel adjusts to a recovery that doesn't align with his expectations of himself. It's easy to root for these three. *(Dec.)*

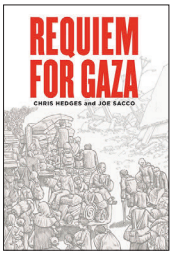
In Every Future, It's Us

Katie Naymon. Berkley. $20 trade paper (400p)
ISBN 979-8-217-18994-6

Naymon (*You Between the Lines*) charms with a friends-to-lovers romance set across a series of New Year's Eve parties. Florence Parker and Tom Sinclair have been best friends since middle school. Their families always spend New Year's Eve together and, at the annual party during their senior year of college, Florence and Tom make a pact: every NYE, they'll write down five predictions about each other's year ahead. Whoever gets the most guesses right, gets to make one major life decision for the other. The novel jumps around in time, showing how, over the years, what starts as a fun, playful ritual becomes a way to influence each other's career paths and romantic choices. In the present, they're both in their 30s and facing major personal and professional decisions—and they haven't spoken to each other for a year. The mystery of this estrangement adds some suspense as Florence recruits Tom to help her plan the annual party now that Tom's mother is too ill to keep up the tradition. Working together forces them to confront their current distance, their past closeness, their fears of an unknown future, and their feelings for each other. Florence proves a memorable heroine who undergoes satisfying emotional growth. Tom, in contrast, stays fairly one-note and the miscommunications between the two occasionally frustrate. Still, the clever structure and sparkling holiday backdrop enchant. There's plenty to love here. *(Dec.)*







COMICS

Requiem for Gaza

Chris Hedges and Joe Sacco. Fantagraphics, $24.99 (160p)
ISBN 979-8-87500-272-4

Pulitzer winner Hedges and Eisner winner Sacco follow up *Days of Destruction, Days of Revolt* with another moving record of a people overwhelmed by tragedy. Each journalist documents the stories of men, women, and children who have fled Gaza in the conflict with Israel since 2023. Hedges's human-scale prose profiles lead into larger political and historical analysis, steadily condemning the war. He cites James Baldwin's claim that Western civilization has

long been bent on a racial war "for which generations yet unborn will curse our names forever," though Hedges's assertion that genocide "is the predictable denouement of Israel's colonial project" lands as simplistic. In contrast, Sacco's graphic narrative feels hectic and urgent, showing the chaos as families scramble for survival. Individually, the stories are powerful, especially that of Osama Abdou, a Gazan survivor whose experience becomes the book's central thread. In his stylized, photographic cartoon portraits, Sacco depicts such scenes as Abdou carrying his exhausted wife during a 35-mile forced march. Taken as a whole, the account can feel relentless, documenting one human tragedy after another. But by highlighting the hopes, experiences, and names of Gazans uprooted from their lives, the work becomes what it promises to be: a memorial to a world already destroyed. *(Oct.)*

Hotel and Farm

Ben Katchor. Pantheon, $32 (176p)
ISBN 978-0-307-90691-5

Guggenheim and MacArthur fellow Katchor (*Julius Knipl, Real Estate Photographer*) documents the strange decay of cities that never were in his latest moody dispatch from a quasi-recognizable past-its-prime American East Coast. It's early-to-mid-20th-century New York transmitted through a neo-Jonathan Lethem psychedelic haze. As always with Katchor, the proceedings run light on plot but thick with insight, humor, and bafflement. The title is rendered literally, with the narrative switching from rural environs to city hotels over 100-plus eight-panel vignettes that are ostensibly the work of fictional artist Jug Oar. Themes coalesce around a Tom Wolfean satire of affluenza, with skits about characters obsessing







over hotel rooms and food. The latter provides fodder for hilarious gustatory inventions ranging from a $27 tomato to the "fruit critic" reviewing a produce stand, and a cologne-like spray called "cabbage water." Katchor's scratchy artwork evokes a sense of existing between planes of reality. It's fitfully very funny, but adds up to somewhat less than the sum of its parts. Still, this will appeal to Katchor's longtime fans and lovers of American esoterica. *Agent: Jin Auh, Wylie Agency. (Oct.)*

Diana: The Punk Singer Who Ripped Through Time

Nate Powell. Abrams ComicArts, $29.99 (320p)
ISBN 978-1-4197-9086-7

The atmospheric conclusion to National Book Award winner Powell's "interconnected triptych" (following *Fall Through* and *Come Together*) presents the tale of a rocker who casts time-tripping spells onstage. It's 1992 in the small town of Wormwood, Ark., and charismatic singer Diana looms large in the local punk/alt scene. Her loyal friends and bandmates include bisexual romantic interests Jody and Todd. Little by little, flashbacks reveal how Diana's occultism and time travels helped her escape her grandmother, an abusive religious zealot—but also how they complicate the relationships with those whom she cares for most. As her connection with Jody grows more intense, Jody laments that "it's like she wove herself into almost every role in my life." Meanwhile, Diana learns that her childhood friend Shawn (who she's kept secret from her close-knit circle) has suddenly disappeared. Powell's acrobatic visuals evoke the lyrical beauty of the Ozarks, and his stage performance sequences crackle with an authentic energy and grit. The plot, with its multiple timeline leaps and references to earlier installments, can be hard to follow but rewards patient readers. Powell's fans will eagerly plunge into this heady brew of drama, punk, and poetry. *(Oct.)*

Death Save

Rune Ryberg. Black Panel, $34.99 (244p)
ISBN 978-1-990521-50-8

Ryberg (*Gigant*) won his native Denmark's Ping award for this scrappy and tender boys-coming-of-age comedy, set in a tactile 1990s every-city where people happen to be animals. Best friends Bass (depicted as a red bird in a striped polo) and Rick (a reptilian squiggle recalling the snakes that taunt *Q-Bert*) are getting too old for their routines of prank pulling, half-assed hustling, occasional street violence, and racking up high scores at the Tutti Frutti arcade. But only Bass, a tense dreamer with a knack for electronics (including fixing broken arcade games), realizes that life could offer more. Fearing change, loose cannon Rick lashes out at the people who might help Bass take his first steps toward maturity: an old-school rabbit shopkeeper and Jeanie, a cat who works at the arcade and whose slyly emotive design captures essential feline qualities. All these antics eventually stir up insights on Bass's go-nowhere crush on sweet, long-suffering Jeanie. Spirited anthropomorphizing and the brisk brio of Ryberg's layouts freshen up a familiar narrative. Close-up recreations of the boards and guts of pinball machines delight, while sequences of precisely observed pinball action imbue the storytelling with metaphorical weight and off-kilter momentum. This will gratify nostalgia-seekers as well as lovers of slice-of-life comics storytelling. *(Oct.)*

Our Reviewers

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Dai Newman
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Samantha Puc
Zach Rabiroff
Alan Scherstuhl
Troy Segal
Suzanne Shablovsky
Alexandra Toner
Maria Valiente
Erica Wetter
Michael Zimmerman

Mollie Douthit's painting *Girls on a Train*, as featured in novelist Sara Baume's *Opening Night*, which traces how the two became friends (reviewed on page 104).



GIRLS ON A TRAIN, OIL ON LINEN PANEL © MOLLIE DOUTHIT

Vengeance and Mercy in Parkland: The Trials of a School Shooter

Joe Sexton. Scribner, $30 (384p)
ISBN 978-1-6680-9711-3

★ Pulitzer finalist Sexton (*The Lost Sons of Omaha*) offers an exceptional account of the death penalty case against Parkland, Fla., mass shooter Nikolas Cruz. Cruz pled guilty to murdering 17 students and workers and injuring 17 others on Valentine's Day 2018. Sexton follows this capital case through the knotty work of Cruz's defense team, which spent thousands of hours investigating the defendant's life. They uncovered Cruz's chaotic upbringing: his birth mother's drug and alcohol addictions; his adopted mother's neglect; and Cruz's increasingly disturbing behavior, including jokingly introducing himself as "Nik, the School Shooter." Sexton also surveys Supreme Court decisions that have shaped modern death penalty cases, including the now required presentation of a defendant's life experiences, as well as the growing body of research into fetal alcohol syndrome, which Cruz's defense team suspects he suffers from. These narratives culminate in a trial "colored at every turn by convulsive trauma for everyone involved," from the victims' families, most of whom seek the death penalty, to the defense team itself—the target of fury after Cruz was sentenced to life in prison. Sexton poignantly relays how the defense team wrestled with their own revulsion while fulfilling their "serious and far-reaching obligations" (one investigator recalls an "initial impulse to simply strangle Cruz himself"). This haunting work raises thorny moral questions about mercy in the face of unimaginable brutality. *(Jan.)*

A Brief History of the End of the Universe and Everything in It

Stephen Ornes. Norton, $29.99 (272p)
ISBN 978-1-324-08612-3

In this intriguing meditation, science writer Ornes (*Math Art*) argues that decay is not merely an agent of loss but an essential force of renewal. Using the second law of thermodynamics as a thematic guide, he explores how the universe's tendency toward disorder underlies transformations that occur in everything from cells to galaxies. Beginning at the microscopic level, he examines how programmed cell death—the process in which old or damaged cells self-destruct—contributes to the health and survival of living organisms. At the ecosystems level, he describes how the carcasses of fallen whales become thriving hubs of oceanic life. Turning to the cosmos, he explains how the deaths of stars seed the materials necessary for the formation of planets. Throughout, Ornes persuasively demonstrates that endings and beginnings are often inseparable. He's at his strongest when analyzing humanity's relationship with mortality. For example, a detailed account of Tennessee's "Body Farm," a research center where scientists study decaying human bodies placed in various environments, illuminates what decomposition reveals about both biology and criminal investigation. Packed with wry observations—including a description of the continual movement toward death as "decidedly unwelcome, like a terrible surprise party that never ends"—this is a clear-eyed look at a grim subject. *(Jan.)*

The Big Bet: Prediction Markets and the Future of Democracy

Michael Auerbach. Basic, $32 (352p)
ISBN 978-1-5416-0827-6

Investor Auerbach delivers a rigorous debut examination of the dangers for democracy posed by the prediction market industry, which allows betting on military maneuvers, generates dubious contracts between news organizations and prediction platforms, and saw over "three billion dollars" bet on the 2024 presidential election, with the victor's son, Donald Trump Jr., later appointed to an advisory role for industry behemoths Kalshi and Polymarket. The author begins by surveying the history of prediction markets, from 15th-century betting on papal elections and 18th-century London coffeehouse wagers on outlandish personal matters (e.g., whether the trader would ever have sex in a hot air balloon) to the

Journalist Mona Chollet picks apart the impossible standards women are held to in her fiery treatise *How to Resist Guilt*.
— **Page 102** —

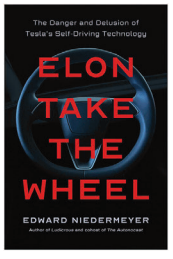
With *The Haunted Present*, Wolfram Eilenberger explores how four key thinkers, including Susan Sontag, reshaped 20th-century philosophy.
— **Page 103** —

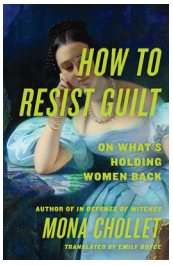
Pentagon's controversial and short-lived post-9/11 prediction market for collating intelligence on future terror attacks. These examples show how historical prediction markets suffered the same security risks as today's—for instance, the French closely tracked London's betting markets during America's Revolutionary War—and the same corrupting forces, particularly "insider advantage" and the skewed influence of "whales," or wealthy investors. After tracking the rise of Kalshi, which was given a regulatory "loophole" by a judge who designated its contracts as "commodity derivatives, not gaming," and Polymarket, which used cryptocurrency to sidestep regulation, Auerbach concludes by stressing that prediction markets risk destabilizing election integrity. It's an urgent wake-up call for those betting on democracy's future. *(Jan.)*

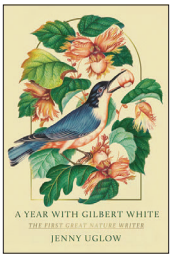
Elon Take the Wheel: The Danger and Delusion of Tesla's Self-Driving Technology

Edward Niedermeyer. BenBella, $29.95 (288p)
ISBN 979-8-90268-011-6

★ Automotive journalist Niedermeyer (*Ludicrous*) delivers an enthralling and deeply troubling account of Tesla's pursuit of self-driving technology, from engineering challenges to the company's aggressive, often deceptive marketing. His central contention is that Tesla's automation program has repeatedly prioritized the appearance of capability over the painstaking work required to achieve it. CEO Elon Musk, Niedermeyer explains, resisted partnerships with companies developing more advanced autonomous-driving systems and repeatedly portrayed self-driving as relatively simple and nearly figured out. When Tesla's Autopilot system fell short, the company resorted to elaborate demonstrations that, Niedermeyer says, regularly misled observers about its actual capabilities. Tesla used crash statistics to promote claims that its technology would dramatically reduce traffic deaths, assertions that Niedermeyer contrasts with federal safety data indicating substantially higher crash rates for Tesla's robotaxi operations than for both Waymo autonomous cars and human drivers. Niedermeyer's concern is not merely whether Tesla can eventually produce genuinely autonomous vehicles but what happens when corporate ambition, charismatic leadership, investor enthusiasm, and inadequate oversight collide with an immature technology. Niedermeyer writes with palpable skepticism and backs up his case with detailed reporting and substantial evidence. It's a disturbing examination of the gap between self-driving promises and reality. *(Dec.)*







How to Resist Guilt: On What's Holding Women Back

Mona Chollet, trans. from the French by Emily Boyce. St. Martin's, $29 (288p)
ISBN 978-1-250-42153-1

In this hard-hitting feminist analysis, journalist Chollet (*In Defense of Witches*) probes at the sources of women's self-berating guilt. Inspired by her own "daily combat" with "the enemy within," the author traces how this ever-present guilt derives from socially imposed—and usually impossible to fulfill—pressures on women, children, mothers, and workers, as well as on progressive activists, whose fears about not doing enough or saying the wrong thing, she argues, mirror the same such demands on women and other marginalized people. She locates the foundations of these guilty feelings in Christian theology, and pulls from a vast range of sources, including novels, parenting guides, news stories, and even cat memes, to explore the ways women are made to feel guilty. These include the "demonization" of survivors of sexual violence, criticism of women's predisposition to apologize, and the way women can be prone to overworking. Many of the author's observations are geared toward French society's harsh disciplinary child-rearing, but most have universal resonance, such as regarding the avalanche of unsolicited advice heaped on "bullied and scrutinized" new mothers. Some of Chollet's analysis is well-trod, but readers will be moved by her encouragement of women to understand where the "hypercritical inner voice" comes from and reassert "our own... fundamental innocence." Clarifying validation for women struggling with self-criticism can be found here. *(Dec.)*

Inconceivable: On the True Meaning of Family

Rebecca Coxon. Harper, $29.99 (352p)
ISBN 978-0-063-43725-8

Journalist Coxon debuts with an affecting memoir examining family, fertility, and identity. In 2019, while working on a documentary about family secrets, Coxon, a triplet, received an alert from the genetic database site 23andMe announcing a new match: a half sister born six months before her. Coxon had known since she was a teenager that her parents had conceived her and her siblings via IVF, but her new half sister had supposedly been conceived through a sperm donor. As the secret of her true biological father comes to light, Coxon questions what she thought she knew about her family. She goes on to share her own experience navigating fertility issues and chronicles the history of IVF. Throughout, she weaves in stories of famous figures who have dealt with infertility, such as Frida Kahlo, Hilary Mantel, Lena Dunham, and Marilyn Monroe. Coxon offers keen insight into the complicated world of assisted reproduction as a person born through IVF, a patient struggling to get pregnant herself, and a curious researcher. It adds up to a deeply felt exploration of the science of conception and the nature of family. *(Dec.)*

A Year with Gilbert White: The First Great Nature Writer

Jenny Uglow. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, $35 (480p)
ISBN 978-0-374-16232-0

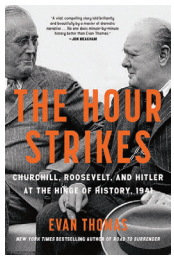
★ Uglow, a historian and the author of *Sybil & Cyril*, reconstructs a year in the life of pioneering naturalist Gilbert White

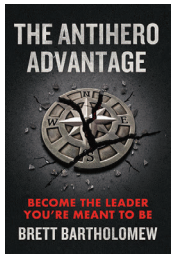
(1720–1793) in this breathtaking and innovative biography. White's most famous work, *The Natural History of Selborne*, which details the ecology of his family home in Hampshire, England, contained "a vivid, flowing style" that no naturalist had written in before, Uglow explains, noting that it hasn't gone out of print since its publication in 1789. To write it, White drew on decades of daily note-taking in which he chronicled the temperature, air pressure, and weather alongside observations of plants and animals. The result, according to Uglow, is a mode of writing that is "imbued with such feeling and links scholarly knowledge to simple daily watching." Hoping to better understand it, Uglow follows a 12-month cycle through White's journals—the year 1781, when he was halfway through writing his book. Along the way, she adds historical context and elucidates White's philosophy that all of nature is a delicate balance of interconnected living things. She depicts the arc of White's life in conjunction with the seasons, discussing his youth in January, his middle age over the summer, and his old age in fall. Insightful and a pure joy to read, it's an inventive celebration of an insatiably curious writer and the wonders of the natural world. *(Dec.)*

The Hour Strikes: Churchill, Roosevelt and Hitler at the Hinge of History, 1941

Evan and Oscie Thomas. Random House, $34 (304p)
ISBN 978-0-593-59715-6

British wooing and Axis miscalculation prod a hesitant America's entry into WWII in this colorful portrait of wartime leadership. Married historians Evan and Oscie Thomas (*Road to Surrender*) recap the period from June to December 1941, which began with Hitler in control of Europe, the Wehrmacht marching into Russia, and Churchill pleading for an American declaration of war on Germany, and ended with Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor drawing America into the conflict and Hitler's cavalier declaration of war on the U.S. allowing FDR to make Germany into America's main enemy. The Thomases explore this saga of high-wire diplomacy through vivid character studies. Churchill is an ardent swain eager for FDR's favor—"Does he like me?" he asked an FDR aide after a summit—and willing to do anything to get it. (He tacitly encouraged his daughter and daughter-in-law to have extramarital affairs with FDR advisers to sway them to support Britain.) FDR is a slippery enigma, heartily agreeing with everyone he meets before equivocating and back-tracking. ("Pinning down Roosevelt is 'like chasing a vagrant beam of sunshine,'" said his secretary of war.) Hitler is the picture of mad hubris, airily dismissing advisers' warnings that American manpower and industrial might would crush Germany. Mixing shrewd psychological analyses with cinematic vignettes, this makes for an incisive look at the larger-than-life personalities who shaped the war. *(Dec.)*





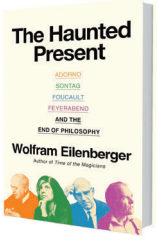
The Antihero Advantage: Become the Leader You're Meant to Be

Brett Bartholomew. Portfolio, $32 (288p)
ISBN 978-0-593-71282-5

Bartholomew (*Conscious Coaching*), founder of the performance coaching and consulting company Art of Coaching, offers a down-to-earth guide to overcoming self-doubt and trusting one's instincts to become a successful leader. Asserting there is no "foolproof formula" to being a good leader, he argues that leadership is about learning to navigate messy human emotions, power dynamics, and unforeseen challenges. This requires forgoing attempts to be the hero and instead becoming an "antihero," or someone who "never seeks one-size-fits-all solutions but instead embraces the gray areas as spaces of limitless possibilities." He stresses the importance of "social agility" and lays out how to understand the context of a situation and assess spoken and unspoken agendas. To do so, he diagrams different types of individuals, their values, and how to reach them. If dealing with a "Realist," for example, one should focus on actionable outcomes and achievements; if they're an "Empathizer," one should emphasize collaboration and openness. Bartholomew's system for problem-solving uses the acronym ADAPT

The Haunted Present: Adorno, Sontag, Foucault, Feyerabend, and the End of Philosophy

Wolfram Eilenberger, trans. from the German by Shaun Whiteside.
Penguin Press, $35 (480p)
ISBN 978-0-593-83474-9



THE STRIKING THIRD INSTALLMENT in philosopher Eilenberger's series of biographies of 20th-century thinkers (after *Time of the Magicians*) is "a testimony to liberation," according to the author. He profiles Theodore Adorno, Susan Sontag, Michel Foucault, and Paul Feyerabend, who are united in their "sense of existential disorientation," "courage to despair," and "opposition to the forms and schools of philosophy" of their time. He begins in 1949, with Adorno's return to postwar Germany, which led him to begin lecturing on the dangers of "the instrumentalization and rationalization of all life," against which he asserted that "there will always be something 'other' beyond the jurisdiction of any definition," which "represents... the salvation of humanity and all living things." From there the author tracks Sontag, a young student at UC Berkeley who was forging "a new program of study based around the liberation not of the mind... but of the body"—a "kind of sex-based cognitive revolution: living out rather than sublimating"; Foucault, who "was also guided by his hope for a new, powerful interiority"; and Feyerabend, a scientist turned philosopher who came to perceive science as a cultural product and not an all-encompassing, unifying mechanism. In Eilenberger's fascinating, refractive narrative, which incorporates his subjects' lives, desires, and thoughts, these thinkers' viewpoints add up to a vision of a world in which "present crises" are rooted in deep historical machinations. It's a staggering achievement. *(Jan.)*

(assess, decode, align, practice, and tweak) and underscores the value of "social scrimmaging," or running through potential challenges with a colleague, and adjusting plans as needed. While his advice largely treads familiar ground, his emphasis on individuality brings welcome nuance to the discussion. Nonconformists will embrace this realistic outlook. *(Dec.)*

Try Turning It Off and On Again: The Wonder and Weirdness of the Software That Runs Our World

Claire Le Goues. Princeton Univ., $29.95 (328p)
ISBN 978-0-691-29409-4

Le Goues, a computer science professor at Carnegie Mellon University, debuts with an accessible tour of software's creation, operation, and persistent shortcomings. She structures chapters around questions she routinely fields from family and friends, ranging from the quotidian, like "Can you fix my printer?" (probably not, but she explains why it might have failed), to the paranoid, such as "Is my phone listening to me?" (probably not, but it could). She makes the case that software defects are unavoidable, not because programmers are careless but because complex systems inevitably contain flaws. Elsewhere, she explains how commercial pressures encourage companies to produce what she calls the "capitalism-required bare minimum." In her discussion of artificial intelligence, she says that she's impressed by the capability of large language models to craft interesting prose but argues people should remember that the technology is just predicting the next word, merely giving the impression it understands language. Though she asserts that AI systems already outperform average white-collar workers on administrative tasks, she contends that employers often value the judgment, adaptability, and creativity of humans, which remain difficult to automate. Throughout, Le Goues combines technical expertise with humor and candor. The result is a lively introduction to the technology that increasingly governs everyday life. *(Dec.)*

Borrowed Land: A Highland Story

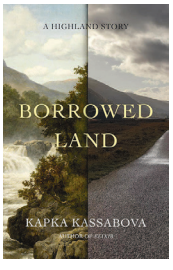
Kapka Kassabova. North Point, $20 trade paper (352p)
ISBN 978-0-374-62176-6

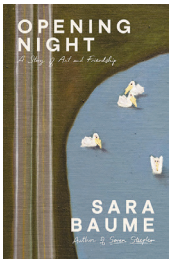
In this passionate tribute to the Scottish Highlands, her adopted homeland of more than a decade, Bulgarian poet and fiction writer Kassabova (*Anima*) extols the area's beauty and bemoans industrial expansion in the region, hoping "to record what may be lost" before it is too late. The deployment of renewable energy infrastructure, including wind turbines, hydroelectric dams, and battery energy storage facilities, in the Highlands is driven by the race to end climate change, she says, but "what is happening on the ground increasingly feels like a war on nature and communities." Tracing some 5,000 years of Highland history, a mix of wars, exploitation, and "emptiness," she journeys through sparse villages, chatting with innkeepers, artists, herdsmen, and newcomers like her herself about what draws them to the damp and chilly ruggedness. She hikes through valleys; watches rivers "run peaty, passionate and fast"; and describes her possible encounter with a glaistig, a female ghost from Scottish mythology. Elsewhere, she writes with anger and sorrow about forests turned to open-pit quarries and pastures and homes into energy substations. There is a great deal of repetition as Kassabova describes and re-describes pylon-placing and quarry-blasting, but she effectively elucidates the Highlands' majesty and profiles many colorful local characters. It's a solid portrait of a threatened landscape. *(Dec.)*

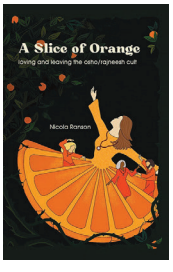
Opening Night: A Story of Art and Friendship

Sara Baume. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, $29 (240p)
ISBN 978-0-374-61878-0

Irish novelist Baume (*Seven Steeples*) examines her relationship with painter Mollie Douthit in this evocative memoir. The chatty Baume encountered quiet American Douthit's work before meeting her at a post-pandemic arts residency in West Cork, where the two bonded quickly, swimming in the ocean and coming to believe they filled in each other's personality gaps. When Douthit began dating a Swedish man named Arvid, Baume worried about what might become of Douthit's enviable, ascetic artist's life—not to mention their friendship. That question haunted Baume as she started documenting Douthit's life on the page, hoping to gain insight into her artistic practice but finding it difficult to capture a woman juggling a new relationship, pain from hard-to-treat dental problems, and mental health issues. Douthit's paintings of domestic objects—chairs, food, railings—punctuate the memoir and parallel Baume's abundant descriptions of interior spaces. For Baume, each of Douthit's paintings "was a war of memories, a prodigious compression, a sympathetic compromise," and she admits that writing about their friendship feels the same. This deceptively simple account contains its own fraught and joyful war of memories. *Agent: Anna Stein, CAA. (Dec.)*







A Slice of Orange: Loving and Leaving the Osho/Rajneesh Cult

Nicola Ranson. Unsolicited Press, $24.95 trade paper (426p)
ISBN 978-1-963115-63-5

This rattling memoir by therapist Ranson (*Plant Talk*) recounts her time in and escape from one of the most notorious cults of the 20th century. A traumatic sexual assault, a history of chronic illness, and a sheltered religious upbringing, Ranson writes, drove her to embrace the sex, drugs, and liberatory potential of 1970s counterculture—first in an avant-garde theater troupe in Bristol and then at an ashram in India. When Ranson returned to the U.K., she joined a Rajneesh meditation center, an outpost of a spiritual movement focused on sexual liberation founded by Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, who also called himself "Osho." By the '80s, Ranson's seeking took her to Rajneeshpuram in central Oregon, a community led by Osho which made headlines when rumors of Osho's sexual abuse and wealth-hoarding started to spread. Ranson frankly explores her reasons for staying at Rajneeshpuram despite

FBI raids and legal battles with the INS, making her anguish palpable as her and her fellow followers' "utopian dream" crumbled. With deep empathy for herself and others in her position, she shines light on the genuine sense of community cults can offer their followers, and the decades of reprogramming it can take to wrest one's life back. It's a chilling missive. *(Dec.)*

Livin' on the Edge: The Life and Times of Aerosmith's Joe Perry
Joe Milliken. Bloomsbury Academic, $32 (304p)
ISBN 978-1-53818-851-4

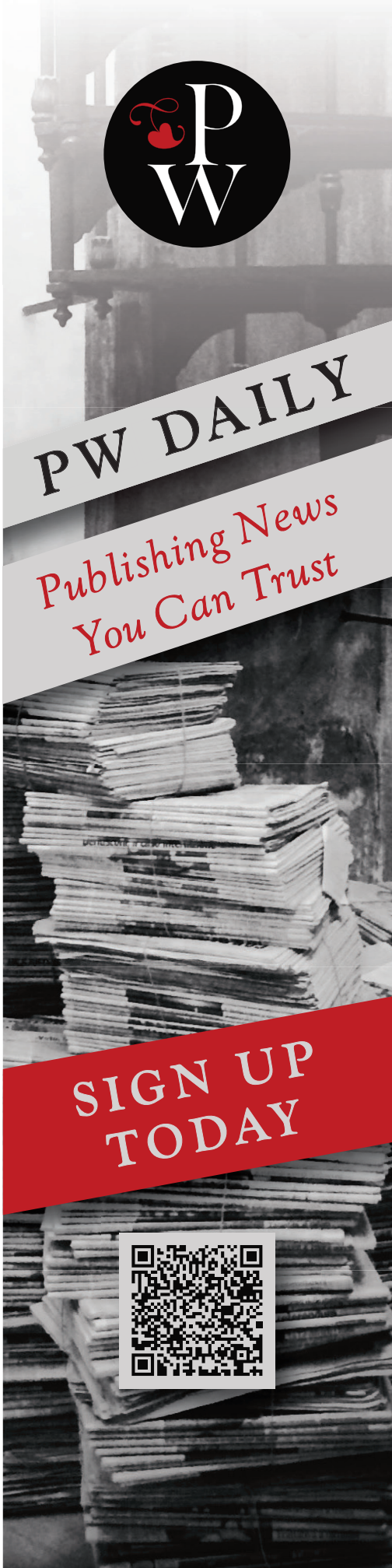
Music journalist Milliken (*Let's Go!*) draws from other Aerosmith books and his own interviews with those in Joe Perry's orbit for this ho-hum biography of the guitarist. Perry grew up in Hopedale, Mass., and spent much of his childhood playing guitar. By the start of his senior year, he'd dropped out of school and moved to Boston, where he cofounded Aerosmith in 1970. The band scraped by for a few years and were on the brink of being evicted from their shared apartment when they signed with manager Frank Connelly in 1971. They debuted with a self-titled album in 1973, but it wasn't until Columbia released "Dream On" as a single later that year that the band started gaining traction nationally. In 1979, Perry quit Aerosmith to embark on a solo career, motivated in part by his struggles with drugs and increasing friction with bandmate Steven Tyler. The split proved not to be permanent, however; the band reunited five years later. Milliken maps out Perry's career in studious detail but only skims the surface of his personal life, which may disappoint readers hoping for a more intimate portrait; the frequently stilted prose doesn't help matters. This is for Aerosmith completists only. *(Dec.)*

Smart and Capable: Supporting Children's Agency in a Complex World
Jennifer Keys Adair. Beacon, $26.95 (216p)
ISBN 978-0-8070-4511-4

In this insightful study, early childhood education scholar Adair (*Segregation by Experience*) explores how children develop agency, which she argues is not only necessary for expanding their capabilities but "essential to being fully human." Using video recordings of classrooms and community settings around the world to observe children's behavior, as well as how parents, teachers, and caregivers react to them, Adair shows that "adults, not children, are the primary variable for the kinds of learning young children get to experience." She offers vignettes of children practicing agency or being denied the opportunity to do so by adults across different types of experiences, from caring for people and the natural world (including moments as simple as showing interest in a sunbeam on the floor) to conflict resolution and difficult discussions (she contrasts caregivers who reassure children they are safe and open to communication during difficult moments vs. those who insist on a return to rigid discipline, like getting into line). Along the way, Adair critiques American child development scholars for their obsession with "the individualization of childhood," which hinders the kind of interpersonal and communal experiences that, she argues, actually help build up an individual's sense of agency. It's a vivid critique of educational systems that discourage spontaneity and open discussion. *(Dec.)*

Paper Bullets: 120 Years of Political Stickers from Around the World
Edited by Catherine Tedford. PM, $24.95 trade paper (256p)
ISBN 979-8-88744-226-6

Gallery director Tedford debuts with a colorful "people's history archive" of leftist political sticker art. She begins at the dawn of the 20th century, as the Industrial Workers of the World promoted union action with red-and-black "stickerettes" stamped with catchy slogans. In later decades, antiwar protestors sold stickers mocking Nixon, volunteer graphic designers conceived the Silence=Death pink triangle logo for ACT UP, and feminist group SisterSerpents created stickers with direct, sometimes humorous



slogans to fight misogyny ("Actually, women are not this stupid"). Also included are illuminating essays from the CrimethInc. Ex-Workers' Collective, which produced "This Phone Is Tapped" stickers in response to the 2001 Patriot Act; Egyptian artist Ganzeer, who was arrested for posting protest stickers during his country's 2011 revolution; and Kiara Welsch, who explains how the German radical left-wing youth group Linksjugend ['solid] designs its grassroots art to address everything from ableism to climate change. The result is an eclectic survey of an ingenious and ever-evolving form of political art. *(Dec.)*

Anoint My Head: How I Failed to Make It as a Britpop Indie Rockstar

Andy MacLeod. Omnibus, $22 trade paper (320p)
ISBN 978-1-917274-32-6

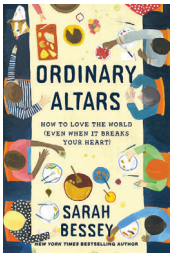
Music promoter MacLeod (*Soho Days, Camden Nights*) offers a funny, self-deprecating memoir of chasing rock stardom in early-1990s London while such bands as Blur, Pulp, Radiohead, and Suede were breaking through around him. Working in a Soho record shop by day and fronting the decidedly less-than-successful Pointy Birds by night, MacLeod treated every demo and brush with the music industry as evidence that fame was just around the corner. That conviction got an unexpected boost in 1992, when London University entertainment manager Ricky Gervais—years before his star turn on *The Office*—heard the band's demo and offered to manage them. As MacLeod traces the group's short-lived attempts to make it big (they called it quits in 1993), he mines comic gold from terrible performances, awkward encounters with successful musicians, questionable stage clothes, and the gulf between his ambitions and reality. His recollections also capture the texture of the era, from independent record shops to cassette demos. Despite sometimes lingering too long over minor gigs, personnel changes, and in-jokes, the account avoids becoming a mere catalog of near misses thanks to Macleod's humor, self-awareness, and affection for his bandmates. This lively and approachable retrospective charms. *(Dec.)*

RELIGION/SPIRITUALITY

Ordinary Altars: How to Love the World (Even When It Breaks Your Heart)

Sarah Bessey. Convergent, $27 (256p)
ISBN 978-0-59359-372-1

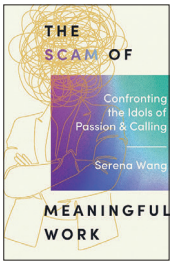
Bestseller Bessey (*Field Notes for the Wilderness*), who writes the *Field Notes* newsletter, issues a sincere call for believers to keep their faith amid rising tides of "fear and despair and distrust." Reassuring readers that "God can bring beauty out of the coldest ashes," she recommends swapping apathy for hope by loving life's "ordinary altars"—places where "the holy and commonplace intersect... and some part of your soul glimpses reality." Doing so is not a means of ignoring reality but of honoring how deeply God loves creation, she writes. But loving the world also involves working to improve it in small ways, like picking up trash, making art, or pushing for legislative reform—actions that have the added benefit of guarding against despair. The author interweaves her wise insights with affecting personal anecdotes, recalling how enduring a car accident nearly 15 years ago forced her to slow down and appreciate, amid her suffering, valuable everyday experiences like spending time with her children. This will inspire Bessey's fans and win her some new ones. *(Jan.)*



The Scam of Meaningful Work: Confronting the Idols of Passion and Calling

Serena Wang. IVP, $19.99 trade paper (208p)
ISBN 978-1-5140-1404-2

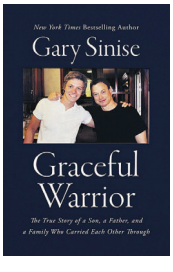
With her wise debut, missionary Wang aims to sketch out a "holistic understanding of work and calling" that decouples worth from professional productivity. She argues that society pressures people to find purpose in their jobs while the church emphasizes the importance of finding one's God-given "calling," both of which imply that "our career matters, with almost salvific consequences." She combats this by arguing that one's identity is bestowed by God rather than earned; that humans, like God, must complement work with rest; and that work is meant to honor God rather than please others or oneself. Additionally, she contends that one's primary "calling" is to forge a "covenant relationship with God," which can be fulfilled outside a professional setting—including by being a loving member of the church, spreading the gospel, and fighting to create a more just world. The author backs up her case with scriptural analysis and a candid account of attempting to parse her own complicated relationship with work after leaving a high-paying but unfulfilling role at Google. The result is a refreshing reminder for believers to embrace a broader understanding of their worth. *(Jan.)*



Graceful Warrior: The True Story of a Son, a Father, and a Family Who Carried Each Other Through

Gary Sinise. Nelson, $29.99 (288p)
ISBN 978-1-4002-0815-9

Actor Sinise (*Grateful American*) shares a heartbreaking account of his son's struggle with chordoma, a rare type of cancer affecting the spinal cord. McCanna Anthony "Mac" Sinise, a professional musician, was diagnosed in 2018 at age 27, following years of tailbone pain that he and doctors attributed to a biking accident. Despite chordoma being a highly treatable cancer with a 70% cure rate, Mac's tumor grew back after an initial surgery to remove it, and the cancerous cells eventually spread to other parts of his body. Numerous rounds of aggressive chemo followed, along with immunotherapy treatments. After years of treatment, a case of pneumonia irreversibly damaged his lungs and Mac died in 2024. Sinise, a devout Catholic, is frank about the horrors of watching his son suffer but speaks reverently of how his faith allowed him to see the "silver linings" amid the pain, including valuable time spent with his family. Snippets from Mac's texts and journals track his decline in harrowing detail. This wrenching tribute will stick in readers' minds. *(Dec.)*



A child helps change their parent's perspective in Marcelo Tolentino's picture book *Daddy, Look!* (reviewed on this page).

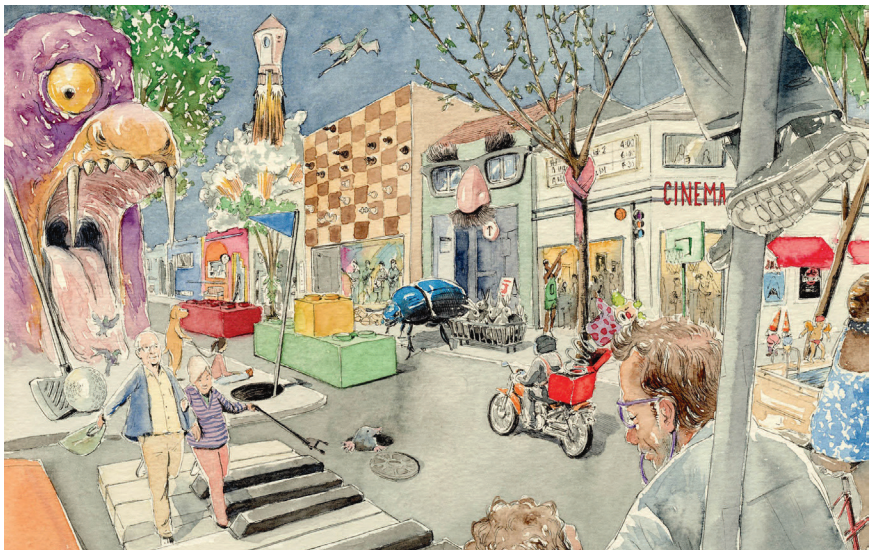


ILLUSTRATION © 2027 MARCELO TOLENTINO

PICTURE BOOKS

Daddy, Look!

Marcelo Tolentino, trans. from the Portuguese by Rahul Bery. Blue Dot, $18.95 (32p)
ISBN 979-8-9995-6764-2

A distracted parent's relational wake-up call arrives with a literal twist—a pair of perspective-changing bendy-straw spectacles—in this quietly powerful tale by Tolentino (*Sunday*). As a pale-skinned father-son duo walk through a city, the child sees marvels in everyday sights and tries to engage his dad with questions. "Is that a tightrope walker?" the boy asks, looking up toward overhead cables; "No, it's a maintenance worker," his father responds. As the questions and answers continue on facing pages, Dad glances repeatedly at his phone while delivering a series of back-to-earth dismissals. Frustrated, the kid grabs Dad's glasses, replaces them with a bendy-straw pair from his own backpack, and urges his father to take a sip of the attached drink. Suddenly, a building sprouts a monster face, and a crosswalk transforms into a keyboard. Loose washes of soft blooming color make the fantastical feel a single blink away, underscoring the idea that Dad's got some catching up to do—with both his son and the world around him. Happily, the parent suggests "How about we take the long way home?" Without moralizing about distraction, this visually witty book models the sights available to those who view the world through an attentive and playful lens. Ages 3–7. *(Jan.)*

Baby Bunny Won't Stop!

David Ezra Stein. Balzer + Bray, $18.99 (32p)
ISBN 978-1-2504-0916-4

★ In this anarchic adventure from Stein (the Interrupting Chicken series), interactive second-person prose puts a lively and imaginative young bunny in readers' care. An opening line—"How hard can it be? He's only a baby"—reveals itself to be gloriously wrong as Baby Bunny proves both full of energy and resistant to transitions. The reader, cast as caregiver, runs up against the same series of responses to every task from napping to eating veggies. Faced with simple statements about the day's next steps ("Uh-oh. Now you need a bath"), Baby Bunny offers opposition ("NO!"), beats a hasty retreat anchored in fantasy ("Baby Bunny is the fastest runner in the world!"), and snaps back to reality with a refrain: "Being only a baby, he... goes boom." Practically vibrating ink, marker, and gouache artwork achieves peak escapism in fantasies that star Baby Bunny as a deep-sea diver, biker outlaw, and rock climber. In a club scene, Baby Bunny DJs like a seasoned pro, bathed in lurid lights while stacked speakers thump and animal friends boogie on every side. Not only funny, it's also a shrewd example of letting the audience have it both ways—playing the well-meaning, breathless caretaker and identifying with a protagonist who goes big *and* goes boom. Whoever's left holding the baby will relish every page of this antic tale. Ages 4–8. *Agent: Holly McGhee, Pippin Properties. (Jan.)*

Bee and the Visitors

Aubrey Nolan. Holiday House/Porter, $18.99 (48p)
ISBN 978-0-8234-5941-4

Employing a spare voice and extravagant brushwork, Nolan debuts with an assured story about a new kid who learns her self-worth from some unlikely teachers. Uprooted from a constantly humming city apartment into a forest A-frame so quiet "the only sound is rain," dark-haired, light-skinned Bee goes silent, too. "And the longer she is quiet, the harder it

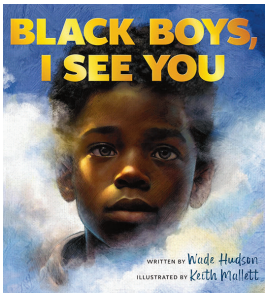
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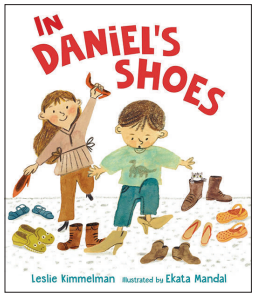
Teenagers investigate the sudden decrease in New York City's dragon population in Emily Thiede's Gilded Age YA fantasy *Gilded Wings*.
— **Page 112** —

Jumata Emill's YA thriller *That Girl Won't Die* combines prestigious boarding school politics and murder mystery intrigue.
— **Page 113** —

To Thine Own Self

PROTAGONISTS STEP INTO SELF-KNOWLEDGE IN NINE NEW BOOKS.







Black Boys, I See You

Wade Hudson, illus. by Keith Mallett. Penguin/Paulsen, $18.99 (32p)
ISBN 979-8-217-00216-0

★ Hudson and Mallett celebrate the beauty, vulnerability, and limitless potential of Black boys via a set of portraits that emphasizes individuals' gifts and importance within their families and communities. The lyrical prose introduces a diverse cast of boys, each with distinct dreams, fears, and aspirations. Each stanza opens with an intimate affirmation of the individual: "Sean, I see you./ Dreaming dreams you will make into reality./ Facing the future that you will make yours./ You know who you are./ I see you, Black boy" accompanies an image of a youth graduating from school. Whether imagining the future, helping others, navigating uncertainty, or discovering who they are, the boys are portrayed with tenderness and dignity in realistic, energetic digital paintings, and a mid-book spread depicts ancestors, peering out from the sky, who "made plans for you because they knew you were coming." It adds up to a meaningful celebration of identity, possibility, and being seen. Ages 3–7. *(Sept.)*

In Daniel's Shoes

Leslie Kimmelman, illus. by Ekata Mandal. Apples & Honey, $19.95 (32p)
ISBN 978-1-68115-718-4

Kimmelman and Mandal articulate the importance of perspective-taking in this clear-eyed story about communicating with kindness. As a toddler, pale-skinned Daniel takes up singing long before beginning to speak; after he starts chatting regularly around age five, others sometimes find his speech blunt ("Your shoes smell funny!"). When a stray comment to his sister results in her tears, the duo's mother, a rabbi, offers a lesson about the importance of kindness in the Torah, and suggests Daniel learn how to walk in others' shoes. Literalizing the practice, first by standing in his sibling's slippers, the protagonist learns to reflect before talking and improves at both "speaking out AND not hurting feelings." Thick, crayon-like detailing mingles with lightly washed artwork to soothingly capture the pale-skinned subject's learning curve across largely domestic full-bleed spreads and smaller cameos. This playful story probes a growing sense of self and interpersonal dynamics with a mixture of compassion and wisdom. A note concludes. Ages 4–7. *(Nov.)*

Jalen Plays It All

Jalen Brunson, illus. by Neely Daggett. Feiwel and Friends, $19.99 (40p)
ISBN 978-1-250-45698-4

In this winning picture book autobiography, NBA champion Brunson teams up with Daggett to take readers "back to where it all began": childhood sports. The story begins not with basketball, but with swimming, where Dad and Mom's reassurances encourage the anxious protagonist to take the plunge (" 'What if I sink?'/ 'Then you'll push hard and rise back up' "). Action-filled prose transitions seamlessly as swimming leads to soccer, football, baseball, and beyond. Each sport enables the subject to develop grit despite errors and losses: "I'm sweaty and tired and sore. I've been through A LOT. And I stay in the game./ Why?" The answer is presented as a simple recipe for achievement: "Because I don't stop trying." Colorful spatters and stars bedazzle fuzzy-edged digitally rendered sporting scenes in which the developing athlete's determination is always apparent. With persistence comes success, this inspiring story coaches. Photos conclude. Ages 4–8. *(Nov.)*

One Small Moment: Learning to Tell Your Story

Rebecca Donnelly, illus. by Amélie Videlo.
Holt, $18.99 (40p)
ISBN 978-1-250-82852-1

A child's inner critic frustrates their efforts to complete schoolwork in this empathic work from Donnelly and Videlo. The pale-skinned protagonist's first-person narration opens with self-comparatives regarding light-skinned Mom's writing skills ("I want to write like Mom does, but I don't think I'm good at it") and brown-skinned Mama's artistic abilities ("I want to draw nice pictures like Mama, but I can't"). Tasked in class with creating a story "about one small thing that happened to us," the youth erupts into tears: "How does everyone else make it look so easy?" Luckily, Mom and Mama come to the rescue across the family's two households, nudging the budding writer toward memories about a pet and stuffie. Pale, lightly outlined cartoons rendered with water-soluble pastels and crayons, paint, and digital techniques have a comforting ease. The child's realistically strong emotions and their parents' responses highlight perseverance as a skill to cultivate. Ages 4–8. *(Nov.)*

Don't Drop the Mic

Idris Goodwin, illus. by Kaylani Juanita.
HarperCollins, $19.99 (40p)
ISBN 978-0-358-69212-6

Goodwin and Juanita serve up a

transformative adventure that spotlights a microphone's power for a child finding his voice. Inside a tidy bedroom, a brown-skinned youth named Cedric listens to the sounds emanating from the family's downstairs recording studio whose "chanters, cantors,/ opera belters,/ voice-overs actors,/ rhyming rappers" are the soundtrack to Ced's life. Though he wonders what sounds he'd make with a mic in his hand, when he opens his mouth, "only whispers will come out." One day, his parents invite him into the studio, where a talking microphone informs him of one vital rule—no matter what, "DON'T DROP THE MIC!" Fine-lined domestic illustrations transition into a trippy sequence featuring glowing animal companions that help move Ced toward releasing the words inside of him. Soon, Ced understands, he can imagine holding the mic even when it isn't in his hand, a trick that helps him verbalize with others. It's a crisply told family story that points toward supported self-discovery. Ages 4–8. *(Oct.)*

I Am Wonderfully Me

Grace Byers, illus. by Lisbeth Checo and Keturah A. Bobo. HarperCollins, $21.99 (32p)
ISBN 978-0-06-297687-1

A look in the mirror yields affirmations in Byers, Checo, and Bobo's beatific picture book, which models self-love. Bouncy rhymes lend first-person declarations a sunny tone as they celebrate physical features ("My hair has such style./ My eyes are so bright.// My mouth, what a smile!/ My nose is just right!"). Beyond corporeal traits, lines enthuse about the speaker's voice, laughter, and more ("And the things I can't see/ are still works of art:/ the breath in my lungs,/ the love in my heart!"). Tending toward the photorealistic, mixed-media illustrations of wide-smiling children, portrayed with varied abilities and skin tones, show each engaging in interests (sea creatures, space) and play (running, skating, swimming). This easygoing book offers children a powerful springboard for developing confidence. Ages 4–8. *(Oct.)*

I Need Space

Molly Harris, illus. by Jon Corby.
McElderry, $19.99 (32p)
ISBN 978-1-66598-057-9

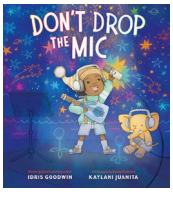
Space is a playground—complete with typical interpersonal difficulties—for the cheery rocket ship who stars in Harris and Corby's slick story. Rocco enjoys outer space's slides (composed of a planet's rings) and merry-go-round (a twisty orbit around a multi-colored planet), but "not everyone played nice," including the "hoggers... toy-stealers... line-cutters" and "roughhousers." After a bruising encounter with the latter, the protagonist escapes to the far edge of the solar system, where the calm quiet helps him to "cool his jets and refill his tank." Accompanied by an understanding extraterrestrial, Rocco returns with valuable self-knowledge about his comfort zone that he can draw on for future play. Gravelly coloration in candy colors paints the universe in stars and curvy swirls. The spaceship's lively voyage of self-discovery offers a planetary model of assured emotional regulation. Space facts and social-emotional tools conclude. Ages 4–8. *(Oct.)*

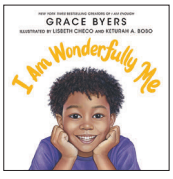
That Beautiful Mind

Tami and Chris Charles, illus. by Nikkolas Smith. Orchard, $19.99 (40p)
ISBN 978-1-5461-1638-7

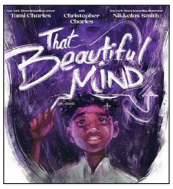
★ Parent/child collaborators the Charleses team up with illustrator Smith to deliver a bighearted tribute to unique thinkers. A neurodivergent-cued Black child standing behind a bowl of water, their image distorted by the liquid, begins, "Some days it feels like my mind doesn't work right." On the facing page, their mother drinks the fluid, clearing the distortion and offering loving support. From the video games that enchant them to the kitchen where they bake, this child contains multitudes. But while inside their room "lives the best version of me," everything changes "out there," where they experience feelings of being misunderstood, invisible, and full of self-doubt. When they remember that everyone has their own ways of existing, they arrive at a place of self-acceptance and pride about how their mind functions. Digitally painted illustrations reflect the dynamism of the protagonist's subjective experience, composed of swoops and visual echoes, chiaroscuro, and sgraffito-like textures. It amounts to a thoughtful exploration of a child's inner world. Includes creators' notes. Ages 4–8. *(Oct.)*

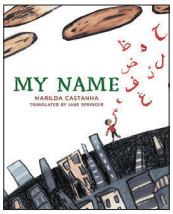












My Name

Marilda Castanha, trans. from the Portuguese by Jane Springer.
Groundwood, $19.99 (48p)
ISBN 978-1-7794-6165-0

Castanha's wrenching tale of a child's interest in his name conveys cultural pride and sweet memories amid uncertainty. After a Palestinian-cued child narrator introduces the idea that all entities and things, "Whether happy or sad,/ free or not" have a name—a line shared alongside images of caged birds—questions about his own name prompt loving parental responses. The boy's mother says, "Your name brings serenity and sweetness," while his father responds, "Your name has bravery, vitality and courage in it." Subtly conveying an unspoken larger context, watercolor, bleach, pencil, and collage illustrations that incorporate Palestinian motifs move across time and space as happy memories of the previous summer's olive harvest give way to a new reality of living, playing, and attending school behind barbed wire fences guarded by armed soldiers. Though the concept isn't contextualized until back matter, chilling text reads: "That's why many of my friends and I write out our names. Very carefully. Everywhere. All over our bodies." It's a layered portrait of all a name can hold that's solidly anchored in a child's perspective. An author's note concludes. Ages 6–9. *(Sept.)*

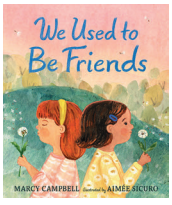
Connections

SIX PICTURE BOOKS SPOTLIGHT THE INTERPERSONAL.

We Used to Be Friends

Marcy Campbell, illus. by Aimée Sicuro. Candlewick, $18.99 (40p)
ISBN 978-1-5362-3606-4

★ Campbell and Sicuro reckon with the end of a childhood friendship in this emotionally intelligent picture book. Following the break, the brown-skinned child narrator feels enough pain to avoid even walking past the house of their former bestie, who is shown with pale skin. Emotional text recalls the friends' difficult dynamic: "It was like a game I have where you keep stacking the pieces on top of each other," the narrator says as an image of a stormy tower of playthings and recriminations fills the spread. "Eventually, the whole thing topples, and the game is over." According to the narrator's Dad, "Sometimes friendships are like that. They just end." As school encounters with the onetime pal continue, and the fear of having no other friendships fades, the two former friends carve out a tentative détente. Mixed-media vignettes ground the action in the pared-down realism of home and school, giving each pang of loss and step toward a new sense of self room to land. It's an honest and sympathetic companion for anyone learning that some painful breaks don't need fixing—only time. Ages 3–7. *(Oct.)*



The Paper Girl

Caryl Lewis, illus. by Kanako Abe. Frances Lincoln, $25 (64p)
ISBN 978-1-80570-183-5

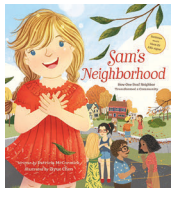
Papercut artwork graces Lewis and Abe's turbulent story about a shape-shifting paper girl gaining a fuller sense of self. Every day, the protagonist walks through a paper forest to a paper village, her heart "filled with the wonder of the world," but the villagers' chiding counsel leaves her depleted. In response to the suggestion "Be a shining example to others," the eager-to-please child "folded herself into a five-pointed star and flung herself into the sky." But the villagers critique her as not being bright enough, and further attempts, all chronicled in a shifting palette via intricately layered kirie and origami art, result in additional criticism. When a villager proposes, "Be a little more mindful of what other people think," the girl leaves the village behind with a resounding "no," a move that transforms her into a full-fledged human, portrayed with pale skin in multicolor portraits, who is "truly and absolutely herself." Plot and setting combine to give this fable a perennial feel. Ages 4–7. *(Oct.)*



Sam's Neighborhood: How One Deaf Neighbor Transformed a Community

Patricia McCormick, illus. by Ziyue Chen. HarperCollins, $19.99 (32p)
ISBN 978-0-0630-5706-7

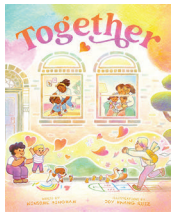
Drawing on a true story, McCormick and Chen offer a straightforward portrait of a community's coming-together. Pale-skinned Sam, who is deaf, loves her neighborhood, "likes walking on the curb... riding her bike, and reading," and talks using her hands. But her attempts to get to know the neighbors, portrayed with various skin tones, end in confusion since "they didn't speak the same language." When the community members begin gathering weekly all winter, secretly learning ASL in a nearby home, Sam watches and wonders what's happening—until spring, when she is delighted to see her neighbors signing with her ("One by one, Sam got to know her neighbors.... And one by one, the neighbors got to know one another"). Unlined illustrations with airbrush and colored pencil textures depict residents connecting via conversation and common interests including gardening and sports. This uplifting book suggests that communities can engage in intentional connection, growth, and learning. An author's note and ASL index conclude. Ages 4–8. *(Oct.)*



Together

Winsome Bingham, illus. by Joy Hwang Ruiz. Abrams, $18.99 (32p)
ISBN 978-1-419-77945-9

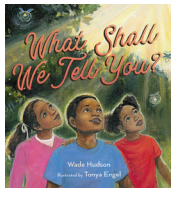
Bingham and Hwang Ruiz offer a heartfelt celebration of the simple joy of communing with loved ones. Beginning "We were meant to be together," buoyant text captures many ways that people connect ("Living, loving, laughing together... Traveling, touring, exploring together..."). Smiling, round characters with various skin tones, initially portrayed engaging with one another in arrayed activities, are surrounded with citrus-hued hearts, rainbows, and stars. Recognizing that physical space can't always be shared, the book shifts to depicting individuals apart: a child makes a wish about an incarcerated adult, and an elder knits on a bench once shared with another. Yet even in those moments, the book offers gentle reassurance that distance cannot erase love ("Then/ together is in our hearts,/ the memories that imprint in our/ minds"), and an ending spread brings the message full circle: "Together, we were meant to be." Acknowledging impermanence and change, it's an endearing look at just how precious togetherness can be. Ages 4–8. *(Oct.)*



What Shall We Tell You?

Wade Hudson, illus. by Tonya Engel. Astra, $19.99 (32p)
ISBN 978-1-662-62110-9

★ Via an intentionally paced set of questions and answers, Hudson and Engel craft a significant and reassuring meditation on a world that can be frightening and uncertain. Across rhythmic lines that acknowledge hateful language, cruelty, and mistreatment, the book's first half asks



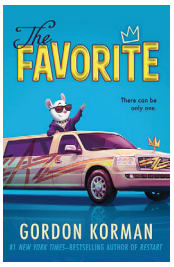


questions that start with the title phrase, including "What shall we tell you/ when lives are felled like pins/ at the end of a bowling lane?" The book's second half offers up promising answers, such as "We shall tell you/ that love, like cream in milk,/ will rise to the top,/ and hatred and distrust/ will be revealed as imposters." Saturated, thickly stroked acrylic and oil on vellum paintings frequently depict families, primarily people of color, standing together, holding hands, and embracing. Offering promise for the future and reminding children that they are deeply cared for and supported, it's a timely work, rooted in actionable hope, that speaks plainly about both a world that "sometimes seems dark and uninviting" and the work of helping to "bring light to dark places." Creators' notes conclude. Ages 4–8. *(Oct.)*

Mister in the Stars

Devon Rohana, illus. by G. Brian Karas.
Random House/Schwartz, $18.99 (40p)
ISBN 978-0-593-89703-4

★ A brown-skinned child's practice of naming "everything in her world" helps her process grief in Rohana and Karas's affecting picture book. As the story begins, the labels young Melanie assigns start merrily: "She named her least favorite dinners Yuck Yuck and No Thanks... her big brother Mister, her mama Pajama... weekends Happy Days." After Mister gets sick, the protagonist's naming brings her ritual to subsequent developments: "She named his long naps Daytime Slumber Party.... She named his sickness Bad Worst Meanie." When Mister eventually dies, the names that follow capture her despair ("She renamed her little sister Please Stay and her mama Don't Go"), until time and slow breathing bring "Peace Please" and a new set of names for her late sibling. Naive-style multimedia drawings with charcoal-like shading unfold in vignettes that fade into gray when Mister dies. Melanie's vocabulary lends a raw authenticity to this loving portrait of navigating fear and grief through small acts of autonomy. Ages 4–8. *(Sept.)*





becomes to speak," especially when her peers seem to whisper about her. One day in the woods, Bee meets a group of diminutive, nearly translucent extraterrestrial visitors whose kind, ant-like faces and scrupulous manners mirror back to Bee what she hasn't seen in herself: that she's a builder, a listener, a sharer. Interpreting her surroundings for the eager-to-learn aliens, Bee notices things for herself, too, including a nearby ocean, "a slice of blue peeking through the trees." Mixed-media spreads use thick, bright color to give the forest a pressed-together density that feels both protective and confining, suggesting that Bee is meant to outgrow it, and that it might lead the way to new friendship. It's a lyrical story about making first contact—with intergalactic visitors, yes, but also with oneself. Ages 4–8. *Agent: Anjali Singh, Ayesha Pande Literary. (Jan.)*

FICTION

The Favorite

Gordon Korman. Balzer + Bray, $18.99 (272p)
ISBN 978-1-250-40040-6

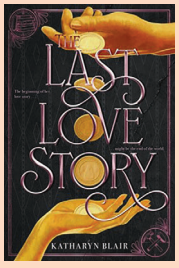
Four siblings enter an all-out contest for the chance to impress their billionaire father in this bustling novel from Korman (*Sleepless*). Since their mother divorced their father, the CEO of kids clothing company Zzazz, the Coleridge siblings have grown accustomed to their dad's sporadic visits from Los Angeles to their Sugarberry, Okla., home. During a stopover, he presents the quartet with an enticing proposition: he's looking for someone to be the new face of Zzazz. And if 14-year-old fashionista Harper; 12-year-old twins Lacey, a passionate animal lover, and Deeko, a popular athlete; or intelligent nine-year-old Bobby want to be that someone, they must each find a way to impress him. As they embark on individual missions to "Wow" their father, which include Harper running for student body president and Deeko trying his hand at online investing, the promise of money and fame drives a wedge between them. Competition stress adds an intriguing layer to the siblings' dynamics, allowing each protagonist ample time to shine and reckon with one another's shortcomings as they pursue their passions and confront the seductive pull of celebrity. Humor and sincerity combine in this introspective tale. Ages 8–12. *Agent: Elizabeth Harding, Curtis Brown. (Jan.)*

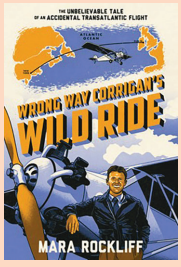
Cardboard Knight

Matthew Dicks. Holt, $18.99 (240p)
ISBN 978-1-250171-60-3

An 11-year-old chronicles the frequently hilarious and occasionally heartbreaking events of his first five months of sixth grade in this sobering epistolary novel from Dicks (*Stories Sell*, for adults), his middle grade debut. In 1985 Massachusetts, Jack Mandeville and his classmates are tasked with writing letters to *Challenger* astronaut and teacher Christa McAuliffe, and Jack uses the correspondence to document his life as the oldest of three children. Across thoughtful, observant, and self-deprecating messages, he recounts spying on a classmate's pool party and helping his panicked six-year-old sister get unstuck from a toilet. As Jack's initially humorous misadventures accumulate, however, a troubling lack of support comes into focus as he gradually realizes the outsize burden of responsibility his checked-out mother has placed on him since his parents divorced and his new stepfather moved in. While the *Challenger*'s fate looms somewhat ominously in the background, Jack's evident affection for his siblings threads a sunny undercurrent throughout. Drawing on the author's own experiences, per an endnote, this tragicomic portrait of a neglected child forced to shoulder adult responsibilities balances uproarious episodes with a nuanced exploration of the emotional costs of parentification. Ages 10–14. *Agent: Taryn Fagerness, Taryn Fagerness Agency. (Jan.)*

Recently Reviewed Online





The Last Love Story
Katharyn Blair. Avon A, $12.99 paper (352p)
ISBN 978-0-06-348400-9

Solar Sisters
Elliot Sperl and Amit Tishler, illus. by Virginia Salucci. Papercutz, $17.99 (152p); $12.99 paper
ISBN 978-1-5458-2778-9;
ISBN 978-1-5458-2777-2

What Happened in Beulah
Christy Scott Cashman. She Writes, $18.99 paper (288p)
ISBN 979-8-89636-480-1

Where We Go at Night
Ikwo Ntekim. HarperCollins, $19.99 (400p)
ISBN 978-1-335-45385-3

Wrong Way Corrigan's Wild Ride: The Unbelievable Tale of an Accidental Transatlantic Flight
Mara Rockliff. Norton, $19.99 (192p)
ISBN 978-1-324-12512-9

Clover and the Carousel Hotel

Sandra Miller, Eureka O'Hara, and Roxy Taylor. Amulet, $18.99 (272p)
ISBN 978-1-4197-7367-9

A mystery-loving tween investigates a decades-old disappearance while staying at a secret-filled Las Vegas hotel in this lively adventure from debut author Miller, O'Hara (*Jackson Bright in the Spotlight*), and Taylor (*Claimed by the Orc King*). While her fathers take their Broadway show to Europe for the summer, 12-year-old theater kid Clover Richardson heads to the Carousel Hotel, where her uncle Ryan lives and works as drag performer Lavish La Poof. There, she sets out to uncover the truth behind the hotel's notorious unsolved mystery of the Songbird, a singer who vanished from her dressing room 20 years earlier. Clover soon befriends several of the children who also live at the hotel, including accent aficionado Trace and lock-picking enthusiast Petyr, who join Clover's investigation. As the trio, depicted on the book's cover with varying skin tones, explore the building's bustling halls, snoop through hidden tunnels, and trigger secret doors, they discover that the Songbird's disappearance is more complicated than it first appeared. Resourceful tweens bursting with wonder, curiosity, and theatrical flair populate this joyful romp. With nods to classic children's sleuths including Tracy Belden and Nancy Drew, it's a satisfying, puzzle-packed offering. Ages 10–14. *(Jan.)*





Dread Chaser

Lauren Thoman. McElderry, $19.99 (320p)
ISBN 979-8-3471-1523-5

A teenage mercenary's pursuit of a life-changing reward forces him to reconsider his understanding of a post-apocalyptic society in this propulsive novel from Thoman (*You Shouldn't Be Here*). Generations after climate devastation nearly drove humankind to extinction, 18-year-old Diesel, described with russet-brown skin, ekes out a living in the harsh world left behind. With his family dead, he survives as a bounty hunter, venturing into the harrowing Expanse beyond the safety of the city walls to hunt human targets. When he's offered the largest payout he's ever seen, Diesel accepts and, accompanied by his dog, Gloom, embarks on a hunt for Ember, a girl whose identity, purpose, and alleged crime remain shrouded in mystery. As his mission unfolds, he begins to uncover conflicting information that makes him question everything he's been told about his target. And when government agents take Ember's capture into their own hands, Diesel finds himself once again navigating a rapidly changing world where every decision could mean the difference between life or death. A slow start gives way to whirlwind adventure and action-packed sequences relayed via confident prose. Diesel's relationship with Gloom is touching, lending emotional nuance to the story's high stakes. The result is positively gripping. Ages 13 and up. *Agent: Holly Root, Root Literary. (Jan.)*

Four & Twenty Blackbirds (Lakeside Murder #1)

Susan Dennard. HarperCollins, $19.99 (384p); $15.99 paper
ISBN 978-0-06-349473-2;
ISBN 978-0-06-349472-5

In this blustery, genre-blending series opener from Dennard (*Witchlight*), a slow-burning romance adds sweetness to a supernatural murder investigation. "Weird stuff happens on Blackbird," the cozy island home where 19-year-old college student Wren Peters plans to spend winter break eating pie and preparing a dance performance for the 1998 New Year's Festival. Things get off to a rough start when, one night, Wren dreams about a menacing ghost brutally murdering a man and awakens the next morning to learn that local police are investigating a homicide. When Wren's older sister, Gilly, and Chase, the eldest son of the Sullivan family—with whom the Peters have been feuding for generations—disappear after being implicated in the killing, tensions between their families escalate. Covertly accompanied by Chase's brother, Archer, Wren follows hints from her disturbing vision, hoping to find Gilly and Chase before the police do. Their alliance soon develops into romance as they hurtle toward secrets that connect their families to a murderer who can invade Wren's subconscious—and intends to make her their next victim. Ambient descriptions of harsh winter weather heighten suspense, threading instances of gruesome horror through cozy fireplace mystery fare. A sinister twist adds an eerie final flourish to this inventive tale. Ages 13 and up. *Agent: Joanna Volpe, New Leaf Literary. (Jan.)*

Gilded Wings

Emily Thiede. Wednesday, $21 (416p)
ISBN 978-1-250-40786-3

★ Thiede (*This Vicious Grace*) crafts a luminous historical mystery about a factory worker from the countryside and a newsie with a mysterious past who become embroiled in a case involving missing dragons. As 19-year-old Stella

McCaffrey, described as having fair skin, arrives in dragon-plagued 1899 New York City, newspaper headlines proclaim, "Wings Over Manhattan: Deadliest Year to Date." Though Stella is constitutionally unprepared for the appalling conditions at the factory where she works, she finds pockets of joy through her friendship with an infaerna—a type of miniature dragon whom most view as pests—which she names Aria. When Aria unintentionally steals a mysterious magical object from Gentry, a charismatic paperboy, described as having light skin, who's struggling to provide for his crew, Stella is subsequently pulled into his orbit. A sudden decrease in the city's infaerna population rattles Stella who, fearing for her and Aria's safety, recruits Gentry to investigate. Alternating perspectives bolstered by strong depictions of political intrigue follow personable protagonists. Gentry distinguishes himself from the typical love-interest mold: his devotion to his found family gives him added complexity, while his uninhibited infatuation with Stella supplies charm. Mystery and romance are well balanced across this arresting magical adventure. Ages 13 and up. *Agent: Chelsea Eberly, Folio Jr. (Jan.)*

That Girl Won't Die

Jumata Emill. Delacorte, $19.99 (400p)
ISBN 979-8-217-12427-5

★ This latest outing from Emill (*The Black Queen*) is a twisty, un-put-downable thriller set at a boarding school for wealthy Black teens. After the dramatic, mysterious death of her popular former best friend, Whitney Templeton, Prentiss Everton Academy high school senior Kennedy Churchwell expects her own carefully planned future to fall into place. Her Columbia application is submitted, she's on track to graduate at the top of her class, and she anticipates finally going out with Chauncey Dillonport—Whitney's former boyfriend and Kennedy's longtime crush. Those plans unravel with the arrival of Tessa Edmond, a new scholarship student who looks uncannily like Whitney, as Kennedy starts receiving ominous anonymous texts reading "I know what you did." Alternating chapters follow Kennedy as she and her equally baffled classmates try to determine who Tessa is and why she has appeared at Prentiss Everton, and Tessa as she covertly pursues answers about Whitney's death on behalf of a mysterious benefactor. Breakneck pacing and compulsively readable language convey sharp examinations of social pressures surrounding queer identity, classism, and racism, while maintaining a steady stream of misdirection and revelations. For fans of Karen McManus and Tiffany D. Jackson, this suspenseful page-turner will keep readers guessing through the final twist. Ages 14 and up. *Agent: Alec Shane, Writers House. (Jan.)*

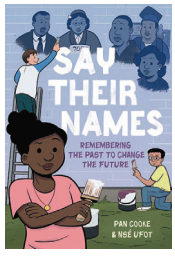
Will They, Won't They

Maulik Pancholy. Kokila, $12.99 paper (352p)
ISBN 979-8-217-00318-1

Bollywood glamour provides the backdrop for this swoony queer romance from Pancholy (*Nikhil Out Loud*) about a gay aspiring filmmaker and a closeted up-and-coming actor. While participating in a party game at a Mumbai wedding, New Yorker Ajit Jain's first encounter with fellow guest Zain Mansoor ends with the 18-year-olds, who are both of Indian descent, accidentally tumbling down two flights of stairs. Therefore, Ajit is surprised when Zain's Bollywood-star father later offers him a generous fee to spend the summer in India documenting his son's first acting role. Despite Ajit's misgivings about interacting with a "spoiled nepo baby," his awareness of his own family's financial constraints prompts him to accept the project, which he additionally hopes will strengthen his application to NYU's prestigious film program. Zain, however, seems increasingly uncomfortable around Ajit, dodging interview requests and seemingly intimidated by Ajit's openness about his own sexuality. As filming progresses, media outlets speculate about a potential romance between Zain and his female costar, and Ajit begins to reconsider his initial impression of Zain. The protagonists' palpable chemistry drives alternating POVs that capably balance the pair's disparate experiences and upbringings. Joyful and emotionally attentive, this romance thoughtfully explores vulnerability and the risks of allowing oneself to be truly seen. Ages 14 and up. *(Jan.)*







COMICS

Say Their Names: Remembering the Past to Change the Future

Pan Cooke and Nsé Ufot, illus. by Pan Cooke. Rocky Pond, $23.99 (240p); $13.99 paper
ISBN 978-0-593-85779-3;
ISBN 978-0-593-85780-9

★ Cooke (*Puzzled*) and activist Ufot, making her debut, offer a galvanizing graphic novel about civil rights history framed through a fictional United States town's tragedy. The police killing of Deborah Jones, a Black woman experiencing a mental health crisis at a local grocery store, shocks Black middle schooler Sage Collins, who notices increased tension among her classmates as opposing views about the event emerge. To help students process Deborah's death, Sage's social studies teacher educates them about other Black Americans who have been killed by police, as well as the youth-led movements that have emerged in response. Convinced that she cannot remain passive in the event's wake, Sage organizes a student walkout "in protest and in remembrance," facing pushback from her pale-skinned friend Michelle, niece of a police officer, as well as the school principal. Crisp, clearly defined artwork keeps the focus on the present-day narrative, during which the class learns about the ongoing legacy of the civil rights movement and recognizes that the struggle for racial justice continues. Approachable flashback scenes recount the death of George Floyd, the resultant protests, and more via saturated blue hues, creating a striking contrast reminiscent of vintage film. This timely and accessible tale emphasizes young people's capacity to learn, organize, and effect change. Ages 10 and up. *(Jan.)*

October 12, 2026

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YOUR GUIDE TO SELF-PUBLISHING

15 New BookLife Titles Reviewed

Indie Spotlight

In this edition of our monthly roundup of BookLife titles, we feature scary stories.

Want to see your book featured? Check out the Indie Spotlight calendar at booklife.com/indiespotlight.

SPOOKY SPECULATIVE FICTION

Chimera Island

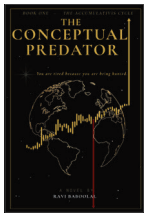


Martin Roy Hill

ISBN 978-0-578-91663-7

Author statement: "When a transport aircraft sent to evacuate scientists from a remote climate research station vanishes without a trace—along with a Chinese spy ship investigating the island—the U.S. Coast Guard sends its most secretive response unit to uncover the truth. A Coast Guard and Navy veteran myself, I have long pondered the mysteries and strange happenings that occur at sea, from ghost ships to mysterious disappearances, fata morganas, and unidentifiable objects above, on, and below the surface of the sea."

The Conceptual Predator



Ravi Baboolal

ISBN 978-1-06-786240-4

Author statement: "In December of 2025 I was walking my dog through snowy streets, pondering the exponential development of AI and humanoid robotics. I asked myself, who stands to gain? The answer stopped me in my tracks. It was the economy, as a singular entity, who stood to gain. Like a parasite, worming its way through human civilization, pushing us towards an inevitability where the only option was to welcome the machines."

Haunting Skies

Christian Kang Bachini

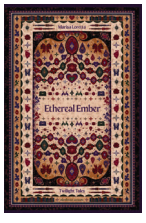


ASIN B0H89QJHWN

Author statement: "Earth has fallen to alien invaders, but a young girl possessed by Satan may be humanity's last weapon. The idea for *Haunting Skies* came to me years ago while watching an episode of *The X-Files*. I started wondering what would happen if aliens ended up abducting a human possessed by a demon and what would happen if two very different kinds of evil collided in the same story."

DARK FANTASY

Ethereal Ember



Marisa Loretta

ASIN B0FR4ZQNQ4

Author statement: "I have always been drawn to the unearthly worlds featured in fantasy tales and deeply inspired by both gothic and romantic poets. All of which has led to writing my own dark and deadly tales. *Ethereal Ember* also features my own illustrations to enhance the short stories, letting the reader experience this mystical world through both language and artistry."

False Sigil

Steven Nash

ASIN B0HCH4NX3B

Author statement: "*False Sigil* is a dark gaslamp fantasy mystery about an overlooked records clerk whose name is erased by the



magical ward meant to protect his city. To survive, he must uncover why the ward no longer recognizes him while an inquisitor closes in and the city's records begin changing around him. I wrote *False Sigil* because I was interested in what happens when a system built to protect people begins deciding who counts as real."

That Lesbian Vampire Pirate Story



Raven Belasco
ISBN 978-1-960942-17-3
Author statement: "I'm personally very proud of the mix of history and horror in this book. Because it's set in the 1860s, the times dictate the flavor of the vampiric horror and violence, and even normal human life was horrific enough that all I had to do was be faithful to history. It's also my most popular story in the series, because of the ridiculous title. I think vampires and pirates are a perfect combo for Halloween, and adding the queer element makes it just that much better."

FOLKLORE AND THE PARANORMAL

The Daughters of Alba
Ursula Williams
ASIN B0HBRM5DN8



Author statement: "*The Daughters of Alba* is a Scottish fantasy in which the boundaries between the human world and the ancient supernatural realm begin to dissolve. The story grew from my deep connection with Scotland, where I once lived and to which I continue to return."

The Hanged Man



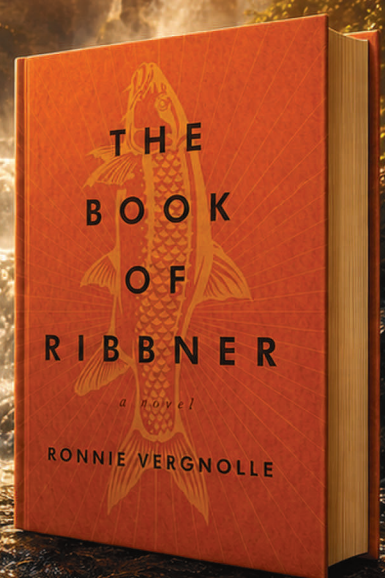
Jane Brookwood
ISBN 978-1-06-777920-7
Author statement: "In small-town Pineridge Hollow, Fiona Miller runs a metaphysical gift shop where she reads tarot, sells crystals, mixes tea, and generally minds her own business. But when she pulls the Hanged Man tarot card moments before learning her long-lost friend's son has turned up dead, she vows to uncover the truth. Tarot is a mirror that reflects subconscious workings, and, like any other tool, it's only as good as the person who wields it. A knife must be respected because it can cut. Tarot is no different."

The Haunted Mill: Bramble Grove Paranormal #1
Everett Jacobs
ASIN B0HJD64NLR
Author statement: "*The Haunted Mill* started with a real haunted

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A search for
MEANING.

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Must-Read Titles



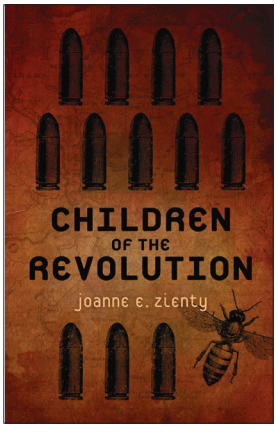
Thea

by Genevieve Morrissey

EDITOR'S PICK

ISBN: 979-8990119208

"Moving coming-of-age story of an ambitious girl in 1920s Oklahoma.



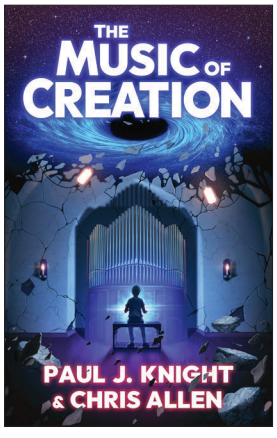
Children of the Revolution

by Joanne E. Zienty

EDITOR'S PICK

ISBN: 978-1733688109

"Urgent, humane story of resistance to corporate rule in a dystopian New Midwest.

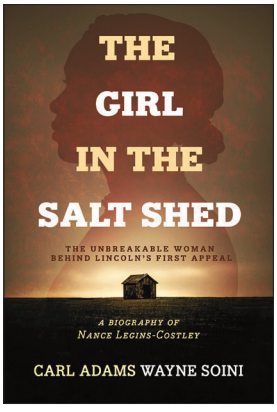


The Music of Creation

by Paul J. Knight & Chris Allen

ISBN: 978-1963832365

"Moving fantasy melding big ideas with tender relationships and philosophical queries.



The Girl in the Salt Shed: The Unbreakable Woman Behind Lincoln's First Appeal

by Carl Adams & Wayne Soini

ISBN: 979-8234229236

Myth-busting biography of Nance Legins-Costley, long known as "the first slave freed" by Lincoln.

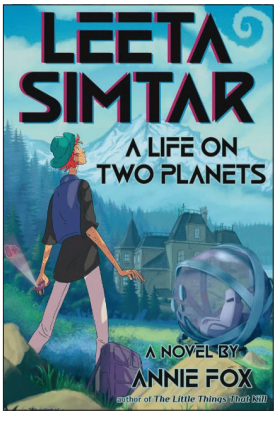


Cooking Up Magick

by HL Bernabe

ISBN: 979-8987119013

"Charming fantasy adventure blending the cozy, culinary, and epic.



Leeta Simtar: A Life on Two Planets

by Annie Fox

EDITOR'S PICK

ISBN: 978-1943649129

"Poignant, coming-of-age sci-fi tackling marginalization and racism.

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"Quotes from BookLife Reviews

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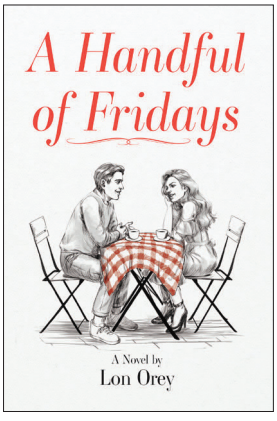


Poinsettia Girl

by Jennifer Wizbowski

ISBN: 978-1964700434

Wizbowski's writing is tender and lyrical, vividly portraying the heart of a child and her gradual transformation into a woman.

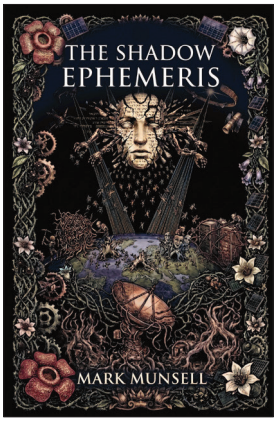


A Handful of Fridays

by Lon Orey

ISBN: 979-8318834103

A beautiful and captivating story of a love filled with challenges, some of them seemingly insurmountable.



The Shadow Ephemeris

by Mark Munsell

ISBN: 979-8197617538

A groundbreaking twist on science fiction, casting actual, unmanned Earth-orbiting satellites as the primary characters.



He Feeds Dinosaurs

by Daniel & Kristan Dow

ISBN: 979-8996824007

Told by his mother and father, Elijah's story is an engrossing portrait of love, heartbreak and laughter—and a provocative argument about the meaning of "autism."

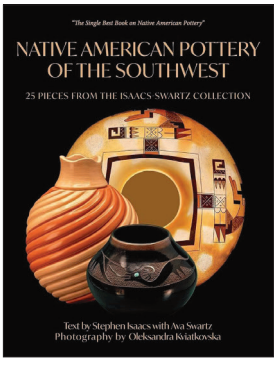


Accidental Tribes

by C.S. Pascoal

ISBN: 979-8995829812

An acclaimed tale for teenagers and adults about eight misfit teens judged by their online mistakes as they search for belonging, second chances, and the courage to trust each other.



Native American Pottery of the Southwest

by Stephen Isaacs

ISBN: 979-8295542626

"Striking tribute to beauty and cultural significance of America's Southwest Indigenous Pottery.

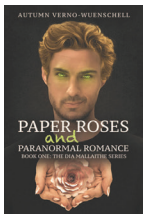
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"Quotes from BookLife Reviews



attraction I visited as a teenager. It operated inside an old abandoned mill in a small town near me, and an eccentric older man dressed as an undertaker would personally lead people through the attraction. I loved how theatrical and kitschy the whole thing was. Years later, the mill burned down under troubling circumstances, and the man who ran it became the focus of suspicion and community hostility."

Paper Roses and Paranormal Romance



Autumn Verno-Wuenschell
ASIN B0H4H3YX23
Author statement: "P*aper Roses and Paranormal Romance* is an urban fantasy that serves as an introduction to William—an immortal Vampire/Djinn living in my imagination for years. I knew his powers, his lore, and his inevitability. What I needed was a way to make an invincible near-villain someone to root for. The answer was simple: let William tell his own story. Through charm, swagger, and carefully crafted illusions, he draws readers into the romance he wants them to see."

Tiktik: A Summer of Three Names



Peter Bautista
ASIN B0HCXW2DMY
Author statement: "I moved from the Philippines to the U.S. when I was four and grew up very American, but in a Filipino family. Some of the stories that stayed with me were the scary ones—the creatures that could make you think twice about what was outside the window or waiting in the dark. That's where *Tiktik* started. It's a story about monsters, but also about a girl trying to understand her family and figure out where she belongs."

CHILDREN'S STORIES

Ginger's Kooky Halloween Adventure



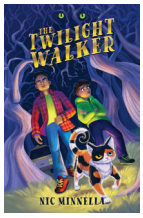
AimeeAnn Blythe
ASIN B0D3Y7MK7L
Author statement: "This Halloween, while the Hoomans (humans) head to the grocery store in town getting last-minute supplies for their party, Ginger (the deer with the orange collar) and her adorable forest pals decide to host their very own animal Halloween bash! But what will happen when the Hoomans return? Have fun with reading about a whimsical adventure filled with costumes, tasty treats, and Halloween surprises!"

Pumpkin Head Lost His Head

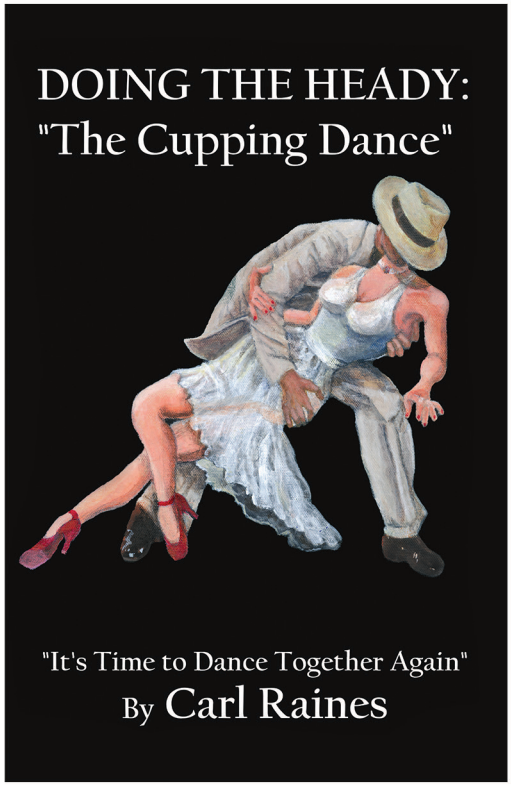


Quentin Lee, illus. by Elis Zill
ASIN B0C6R9HZZH
Author statement: "For me, *Pumpkin Head Lost His Head* holds two stories about facing fear. I wrote the manuscript at 16, shortly after immigrating to Montreal, but set it aside after repeated rejection. Nearly four decades later, I found the courage to return to the story and publish it myself. Within the book, two best friends must summon their own courage after an evening of trick-or-treating leads them into an eerie mansion, a witch's curse, and a daring rescue."

The Twilight Walker



Nic Minnella
ASIN B0GZ184PGK
Author statement: "Eleven-year-old Finn can't stand camping and is fed up with being picked on by his seemingly perfect older brother, Matt. Everything changes when their mother starts acting like a different person, and Finn—along with his cat, Pepper—is the only one who realizes the truth. I've wanted to build a story around a spooky campfire legend for a while. My young characters all face this challenge as they confront a haunted forest and a mysterious creature that lures them deep into the woods."



DOING THE HEADY:
"The Cupping Dance"

by Carl Raines

A novel about love - passionate romantic love, love of self, love of friendship, love of family and finding love within.

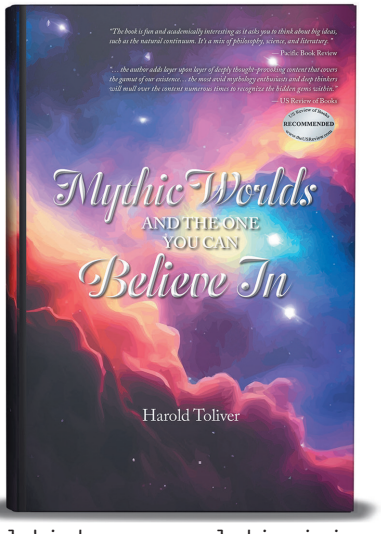
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Publishers Weekly

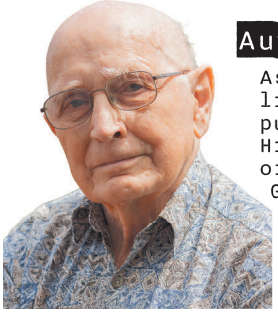
Harold Toliver Alan V. Goldman Jason Hauger Linda Knebel Pruden

Mythic Worlds and the One You Can Believe In

Paperback — 978-1778834462 $16.99
Hardback — 978-1778834486 $24.99



Combining philosophy, science, and literature, Mythic Worlds and the One You Can Believe In examines lingering misconceptions of world history as a continuing source of international tension. Awareness of the natural continuum, currently gauged at some 13.8 billion years overall, disarms sectarian zealotry and, in retrospect, explains some of the difficulties the literary and philosophical traditions have had in accommodating their beliefs to what undeniably exists. To this day, beliefs incompatible with natural history continue to intensify nationalism and support terrorist movements. As a work mainly in natural philosophy, this book uses the consensus natural continuum to critique the more prominent and durable misconceptions.



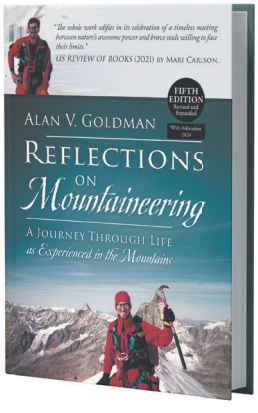
Author — Harold Toliver

As a professor of English and comparative literature, Harold Toliver has, until recently, published mainly literary criticism and history. His more recent publications have explored natural historys revolutionizing of the history of ideas, beginning in the Renaissance with Copernicus and Galileo and in England with Francis Bacon, and climaxing in the 1920s with the combined product of physics, astrophysics, astronomy, geology, evolutionary biology, and anthropology. As such, through such work, Toliver evaluates traditional assumptions made in literature, philosophy, and common beliefs about the place of the planet and its inhabitants in the scheme of things.

ISBN — 978-1778830556

Reflections on Mountaineering: A Journey Through Life as Experienced in the Mountains (FIFTH Edition, Revised and Expanded, with Addendum: 2026)

is a collection of 148 *narrative*-style poems in that each tells a story, some of which rhyme, others are in blank verse, or are prose-poems, distilling over three decades of climbing experience into a "meditation" on the human condition. The work uses the mountain environment as a lens to explore universal life themes — such as moral dilemmas, awe, fear, reality perception, and the role of chance — to make the often hidden insights of mountaineers more easily accessible to everyone. Ultimately, the collection asserts that climbers impart meaning to mountains through the very act of climbing them, offering a deep reflection on self-discipline, the trauma of defeat, and the elation of conquering peaks and exploring personal limits.



by: Alan V. Goldman

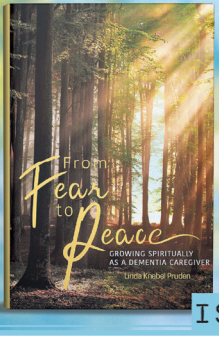


Jason Hauger

MARNA: Book 1

Lonely David finds friendship and magic when he meets Marna, a winged girl with secrets. They soar through adventures, and when Marna is captured, David faces old rivals to save her, discovering courage and the power of their bond.

ISBN — 979-8896494089



Linda Pruden

From Fear to Peace: Growing Spiritually as a Dementia Caregiver

This spiritual growth book explores Linda Pruden's experience as a dementia caregiver for her husband. Inspired by his own determination to find spiritual gifts embedded in the journey, her story provides encouragement for those living with a chronic illness and the people who love them.

ISBN — 978-1778839139

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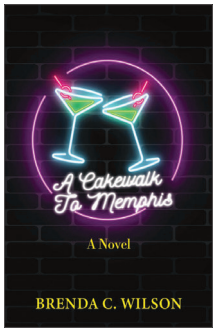
FICTION

EDITOR'S PICK

A Cakewalk to Memphis

Brenda C. Wilson | Redhawk Publications

181p, trade paper, $17, ISBN 979-8-899-33013-1



Moving novel of an urgent family mission across the Jim Crow South.

Great for fans of Maxine Clair's *October Suite*, Catherine Adel West's *The Two Lives of Sara*.

Wilson's brisk, moving debut brings vivid life to the Jim Crow South as, in 1958, Big Sallie Morning, a woman who has already lived beyond her years, embarks on a "crazy journey" through dry counties, juke joints, and A.M.E. communities, facing busybodies, criminals, and her own past and choices. Cast and milieu are drawn with engaging vigor, especially Big Sallie herself. She has served 10 years in prison for accidentally murdering her cheating husband in a segregated America. Now, when her pregnant niece's husband, Tony Earley, disappears without a trace, Memphis cleaning woman Sallie hits the road, determined to find him before the younger woman makes the kind of mistake that Sallie regrets—"For years," Wilson writes, "she had ached for the wrong reason and the wrong person." Striking historical detail abounds, made urgently personal. On her odyssey, Sallie will find that sometimes even those who remember history are still doomed to repeat it.

Wilson's storytelling blends a spirited travelogue with a woman's self-discovery and some page-turning suspense—handguns, plunging necklines, a barroom confrontation with a slick man who must be Tony but insists he is not. Every page, though, pulses with charged insight into American life, the choices faced by Black women throughout history, what prison does to good people, and what it costs to protect one's own in an unjust society. Scenes with Sallie's mother, whose "old-timer's disease" makes it hard to mend fences, prove as tense as the Tony thread.

Dialogue is sharp, funny, and pitch-perfect, and both it and the narrative voice prove rich with homegrown wisdom informed by the Bible and the blues, the gossip and hard truths of her self-sustaining communities. Big Sallie is old enough, and has seen enough, to know that while some things in life may change, much of what matters ultimately will not.

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

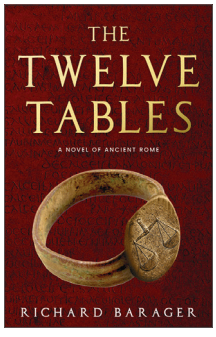
FICTION

EDITOR'S PICK

Twelve Tables: A Novel of Ancient Rome

Richard Barager | Koehler Books

282p, trade paper, $19.95, ISBN 979-8-89747-349-6



Meticulous tale of Roman ambition, romance, and political evolution.

Great for fans of Tiberian Norwood's *One Woman, One Empire*, Steven Saylor's *Roma*.

In this dynamic historical offering, Barager (*The Atheist and the Parrotfish*) presents the coming-of-age of a young man who rises from a bonded servant to a prosperous merchant during the early Roman Republic. In 462 BCE, 16-year-old Marcus Atilius's farmer father sells him into three years of bondage to pay debts. The teen quickly gains the trust of his savvy master, the salt trader Gaius Licinius, and, once freed, remains in Gaius's employ, eventually opening his own business and marrying Gaius's daughter, Gavia. Over the span of a decade, Marcus flourishes, survives the plague, and plays a key role in defending the common man's rights as his beloved city endures turmoil.

In telling Marcus's story, Barager also recounts the history of early Rome, backed by meticulous research that demonstrates how upward mobility allowed even a former servant or laborer to become educated and wealthy. The Twelve Tables, engraved bronze tablets listing laws that increased equality, gave voice to the commoner. When noblemen threaten those rights, Marcus's fight to maintain commoners' political expression is epic.

Those lucky enough to have visited Italy will thrill at mentions of famous locations like the Forum as well as depictions of ordinary people's daily lives, and well-chosen sensory details immerse readers in the city streets—where Marcus sells salt, the local tavern, his home life, and more. Barager regularly sprinkles in simple Latin vocabulary—such as *domus* for home—to add authenticity without overwhelming readers, though characters' first names are often similar and will require close attention to track. Multiple points of view, mostly Marcus's, enrich the storytelling, and thoughtful aphorisms lend a timeless tone. For those inspired to continue learning, Barager includes a bibliography of sources at the end, making this sparkling account of ancient Rome both informative and entertaining.

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

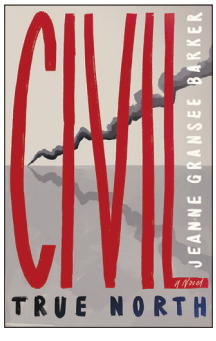
FICTION

EDITOR'S PICK

Civil: True North

Jeanne Gransee Barker | Dark Bird Press

327p, e-book, $7, ISBN 979-8-995-71380-7



Dystopian thriller explores crushing impact of PTSD on warring soldiers.

Great for fans of BH Panhuyzen's *A Tidy Armageddon*, Peter Heller's *The Dog Stars*.

In this speculative dystopian thriller, Barker (*The Intergalactic Adventures of Queen Bea*) wows with riveting action and philosophical insight into the impact of PTSD. In a near-future America, civil war divides nationalists from rebels. After her escape from a prisoner torture center, flashbacks torment Rachel Waterman, a lieutenant known as "the Raven" for her heroic fighting prowess. At a recovery camp, her anger softens into something more manageable. Meanwhile, Marine Captain Chet Miller spearheads a mission to track Rachel down and avenge the lives she took—but injury and dissension among his troops shake his belief that her execution will bring him relief. Once he and his troops infiltrate the camp, nothing goes as planned, forcing them to confront unsettling truths about themselves and the supposed enemy.

Rachel and Chet's alternating first-person points of view offer a chilling portrait of American strife that feels disturbingly plausible. Although these characters belong to warring groups, they have a lot in common: both have killed to avenge lost loved ones, endure survivor's guilt, and suffer physically and emotionally. "Is that how it works?" wonders Rachel. "You commit an atrocity, but if it saves a commensurate number of people, it cancels out?" Barker deftly paints the arc of Rachel's intense, gradually dissipating anger, showing how her journey is complicated by family dynamics. Readers will relate to Chet's increasing self-doubt as he homes in on his target.

Sarcastic banter and Barker's talent for humanizing fighters—particularly Rachel's love of coffee, which features prominently in her daydreams while imprisoned—inject the drama with uplifting moments. Perhaps most exciting is when deceptively ordinary characters reveal surprising motives, such as a knitter-turned-traitor and a seemingly inexperienced therapist who has endured more trials than Rachel realizes. Ultimately, this thriller's hunt-down plot and acute depiction of factions struggling for power drive home that no one truly wins in war.

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



ISBN 978-1778836756

The Change Center: A Week On A Ward

HOWARD BLAZEK

This is the story of a week the author spent on a closed psychiatric ward when he suffered a mental breakdown. He had returned to graduate school in his late 20s, hoping to be the great psychologist of his dreams. Instead, he woke up in a hospital bed not knowing who or where he was. This is his story. Follow him, his thoughts, perceptions and will to survive.

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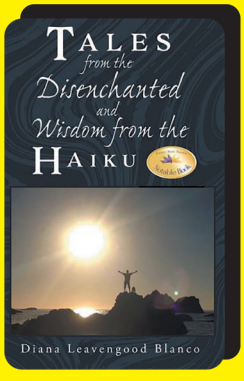
ISBN 979-8886153477

Ellie the Elf - The Spirit of Christmas



JOANNE KIERSARSKY

Come along for the adventures of Ellie The Elf. Using her golden pixie dust and magical snow globe, she helps Santa prove that the Spirit of Christmas is real.



ISBN 978-1968059323

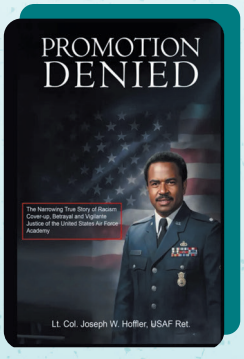
Tales from the Disenchanted and Wisdom from the Haiku

DIANA LEAVENGOOD BLANCO

My poems are oftentimes born from some great sadness. They usually speak of things that have been lost.They try to catch the soul and trap the memory -To tell the story... true...and-what-the cost.I rhyme because it helps me to remember.I rhyme so I must measure every word.I rhyme to help those lost things live forever.In rhyming, lilting, steeped-in-meaning verse.Words can prevail past flesh or thoughts or empires, And words can make souls live beyond the grave.So Man will ever know the wonder of them -The courage that they showed...the joy they gave.

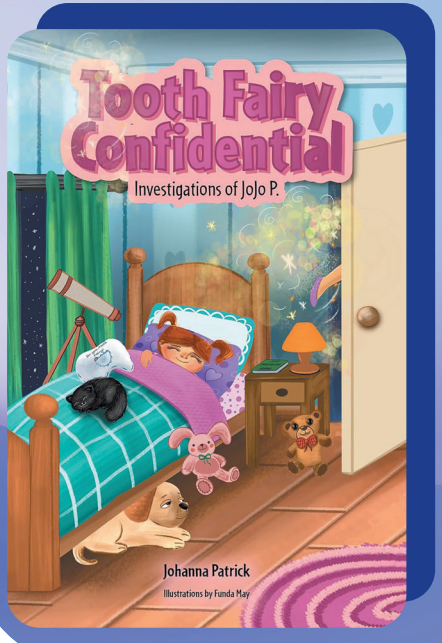
ISBN 979-8295570988

Promotion: Denied



LT. COL. JOSEPH W. HOFFLER USAF-RET.

Promotion: Denied is a powerful true account of institutional racism, betrayal, and moral courage within the United States Air Force Academy. In this deeply personal and meticulously documented narrative, Lt Col Joseph W. Hoffler, USAF (Ret.), exposes how a distinguished twenty-two-year military career was derailed by racial prejudice, unlawful investigations, and a deliberate cover-up by senior leadership.



ISBN 978-1038337009

Tooth Fairy Confidential (Investigations of JoJo P. Book 1)

JOHANNA PATRICK

We all know not to let strangers into the house—but what about the Tooth Fairy? When JoJo's second tooth starts to feel loose, she has second thoughts about letting this magical creature back into her room. She doesn't mind that Santa comes every year, because she gets to meet him at the mall, but the Tooth Fairy is a total unknown. JoJo is determined to learn everything she can before deciding if she's okay with handing over her teeth.

When every adult tells JoJo something different about their Tooth Fairy sightings, and no kid has seen her at all, JoJo decides to set up her own investigative experiments. Will she be able to learn the secret of the money-gifting magical creature? Can JoJo discover just who the Tooth Fairy is?

Tooth Fairy Confidential is light-hearted, entertaining read that encourages kids to ask questions and understand the world around them. Set at Christmas, it weaves together the Tooth Fairy and Santa Claus to help kids answer all the questions they might have about these magical beings.

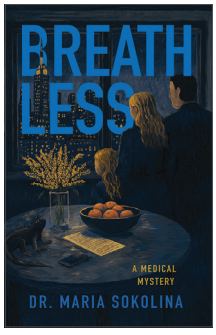
821 The Queensway, Lower Level, Etobicoke, ON, M8Z 1N6, Canada | 1 (877)-741-8091

BOOKSIDE Press

FICTION

Breathless: A Medical Mystery

Maria Sokolina | Manuscript, LLC
360p, e-book, $9.99, ISBN 979-8-901-02200-9



Intriguing medical mystery seeks holistic answers to evolutionary problems.

Great for fans of Abraham Verghese's *The Covenant of Water*, Ann Patchett's *State of Wonder.*

In an "attempt to preserve moments and people who are no longer here in reality but remain vividly alive in memory," Sokolina—a dentist in real life—examines evolutionary adaptations through two women's efforts to unearth the connection between the mouth and the body. First, there is Olga, who finds her husband, Eugene, lying on the kitchen floor one morning and calls an ambulance, only to be informed that, at just 42-years-old, he's been induced into a medical coma due to heart failure. As Olga searches for where things went wrong, her colleague and friend, Dr. Maria Sokolina, is perplexed by the changes she's noticing in her dental patients: constant exhaustion, sleep disturbances, and shrinking jaw space that leads to unwanted extractions. Where their two paths intersect is in the idea that our bodies often speak the truths we are too afraid to examine.

Sokolina's portrayal of the worry, care, and adjustments that Olga and Eugene must make after his medical crisis is realistic and affecting. From adapting to a CPAP machine to nutritional counseling to learning how to reconnect on an intimate level, the couple represent the pain of trying to hold on when life begins to fall apart. Their gradual reawakening—and redefining of their physical and emotional health—forms the story's beating heart, with Maria's more clinical perspective shaping her theory on how modern civilization has learned to manage symptoms instead of correcting their underlying cause.

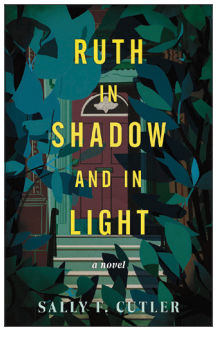
Though *Breathless* starts on a compelling note, the mystery feels overdrawn by the story's close, and the clues, medical theories, and curative answers have a tendency to become repetitive. Despite those issues, this remains a stimulating medical mystery that revolves around dentistry, teeth, and holistic wellbeing, while paralleling two women's journeys to "reclaim space, balance, and health" for themselves, their families, and society as a whole.

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

FICTION

Ruth in Shadow and in Light

Sally F. Cutler | She Writes Press
200p, trade paper, $18.99, ISBN 979-8-896-36226-5



WW2 miseries yield surprising secrets for young Jewish woman in America.

Great for fans of Celeste Ng's *Little Fires Everywhere*, Jamie Ford's *Hotel on the Corner of Bitter and Sweet.*

Cutler's thoughtful debut explores how love and hardship shape a Jewish American family from Depression-era Brooklyn through the upheavals of World War II. Raised by her widowed physician father alongside her brothers Marvin and Joey, Ruth grows up in an immigrant household rooted in Jewish tradition. As the war begins, Marvin enlists while Joey's growing hostility fractures the family from within. Following a fatal winter accident that leaves her orphaned, Ruth inherits not only her family's brownstone but also the long-buried secrets surrounding her mother's past. As Ruth uncovers the fragments of her family's history, she also begins to understand herself.

Cutler's story weaves between decades, allowing historical and personal events to unfold without feeling rushed. Against the backdrop of WWII, she captures not only the anxieties of a nation at war but also the everyday lives of those waiting at home. Grief, faith, family, identity, and the immigrant experience are all organic parts of Ruth's journey, allowing the story to explore these themes without forcing them. Similarly, familial bonds and the Jewish traditions that shaped Ruth's upbringing are shown through simple declarations rather than melodrama, such as her aunt's straightforward assertion that "we are family" and her father's affectionate *mamaleh*—"little mother"—for Ruth.

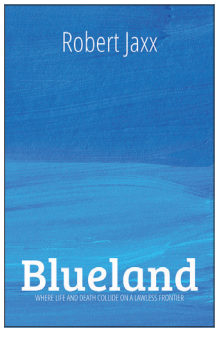
Contrasting perspectives prompt Ruth to look beyond the world she's always known—particularly her relationships with two men who challenge her to consider what she truly wants for her future and imagine how she might have a "joyful, even exciting life." Rather than relying on overt sentimentality, Cutler lets the novel's emotional moments speak for themselves. Certain phrases feel almost meditative, such as when Ruth asks, "Was love really the thing? Was love enough?" Readers will root for Ruth as she moves through the shadows of grief toward the light of self-discovery, and fans of literary historical fiction, transgenerational narratives, and coming-of-age novels will find much to admire here.

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

FICTION

Blueland

Robert Jaxx | Waterstone Press
275p, trade paper, $15.99, ISBN 979-8-234-01620-1



Realistic post-Civil War America is setting for new life out West.

Great for fans of Shannon Burke's *Into the Savage Country*, John Larison's *Whiskey When We're Dry.*

The Civil War is on its brutal way out in Jaxx's latest offering when Captain Alden Zur—leading a regiment of rangers for General Grant—decides he's had enough. Discouraged by Grant's treatment of Jewish Americans ("Grant was usin' Jews like me to fight battles with his left hand, he was throwin' Jews like me outta their homes with his right," he declares early in the novel), Alden heads home to Illinois shortly after General Lee's surrender, accompanied by fellow soldiers Eugene Byrd, Jesse Turnbull, and Charlie Rudolph. Together with his wife Edda, sons Levi and Morgan, and brother-in-law Ezra Neff's family, Alden joins a wagon train directed by the no-nonsense Tobias Henry, planning to travel West for a new life. After a harrowing journey, they reach Blueland, Colorado and settle in as cattle ranchers, but their troubles are far from over.

Jaxx (*Sunset House*) succeeds in capturing the utter chaos of the times with trigger-happy men whose adherence to the law is opportunistic at best and antagonistic at worst. With rickety jail cells, morally questionable sheriffs and their deputies, rivalries between neighboring ranches, and the widespread availability of firearms, it's nearly anarchic. Being Jewish or Black compounds the danger, and Alden's company experiences several terrifying moments of racism and bias that paint a convincing picture of a splintered America.

Almost midway through the novel, the narrative shifts focus—moving from Alden to his son Levi and Levi's friend, Arliss, as the pair embark on several violent and dangerous adventures—before returning to *Blueland* for the denouement. That sudden deviation for several chapters feels jarring, but Jaxx eventually brings the novel full circle. Between the sharp dialogue, brisk pace, and accurate rendering of American life during the post-Civil War years, Blueland offers an immersive experience of a time filled with barbarity and violence but also glimmers of hope and humanity.

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

In ***Wrong Side Out***, **Benton Savage** tells a starkly honest story of living through prolonged confusion, loss of control, and the slow work of reclaiming himself. Told from the inside, the memoir captures what it feels like when judgment falters, reality bends, and everyday decisions carry unexpected consequences, often with lasting personal cost.

Savage writes openly about isolation, damaged relationships, and moments when his own instincts could not be trusted, yet the book resists easy explanations or tidy redemption. Instead, it follows a long, uneven path marked by resistance, collapse, persistence, and gradual clarity. The struggle is not abstract or symbolic; it unfolds through real events, real mistakes, and the determination to keep going when forward motion feels impossible.

At its core, ***Wrong Side Out*** is a story of endurance and self-reclamation, of learning to live with limits without erasing identity, and of finding steadiness after years of imbalance. It is not about labels or diagnoses, but about what it takes to regain footing, rebuild trust in oneself, and fully reengage with life on one's own terms.

Benton Savage's life story is as rich and varied as his lines of writing. His time spent navigating personal changes and traversing the diverse landscapes has indelibly shaped his perspective and literary voice.

Today, Benton resides in Fort Walton Beach, Florida where he balances his property management business with his true passion, writing. His daily dedication to capturing his thoughts and experiences on paper is a testament to his unwavering commitment to exploring the complexities of the human condition.



His recently released poetry book, Fortune Cookies:100 Sayings to Help you Navigate Life's Challenges, a unique collection of poetic musings that mirrors the paper fortunes found in the heart of a cookie, reached number one on Amazon for new poetry in August 2024.

Savage's coming-of-age novel, Free and Satisfied, explores issues with impulsivity, alcohol, and nuances of an interracial relationship, was published in April 2025.

amazon ★★★★★

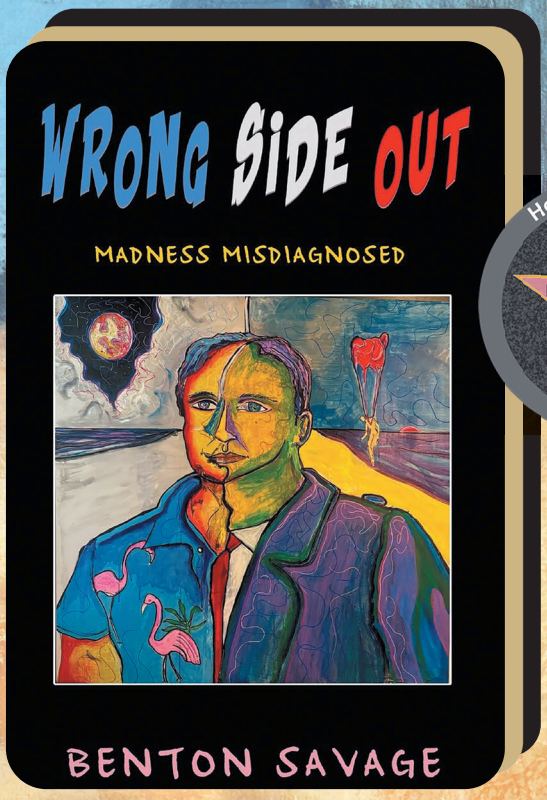
This book spoke to me in a way I never imagined. It's a powerful and thought-provoking read that challenges readers to question assumptions about mental illness and the human experience. The author's honest storytelling evokes empathy while revealing the emotional toll of being misunderstood and mislabeled. Each chapter encourages compassion, deeper reflection, and a willingness to see beyond appearances. Rather than simply recounting difficult moments, Savage offers hope, resilience, and the courage to reclaim one's identity. This compelling book reminds readers that healing often begins when someone is finally seen, heard, and believed. An unforgettable and inspiring journey.

Samaria Hugee, ***Finding Truth Beyond the DiagnosisBecoming.***

amazon ★★★★★

I just finished this, and honestly, it hit me in a way I didn't expect. I don't think it was the same neat, predictable way memoirs sometimes attempts to make it inspirational. It's uncomfortable at times, but in a way that feels honest rather than dramatic. I also appreciated that the author doesn't pretend isolation or broken relationships magically resolve, and that it's about figuring out how to live with limits without losing your sense of who you are. By the end, I didn't feel like I'd read a redemption arc so much as a reclamation. If you've ever gone through a period where your life felt upside down and you weren't sure how to get back to yourself, this book will probably land with you the way it did with me.

Andrea Cercado, ***Raw and Real***



Hollywood Book Reviews
EXCELLENT MERIT

ISBN 978-1968059323

WRONG SIDE OUT

BENTON SAVAGE

bentonsavageauthor.com

Book is available for purchase at the following:

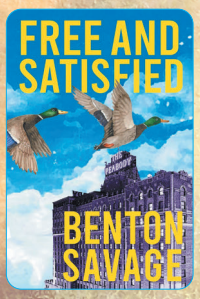
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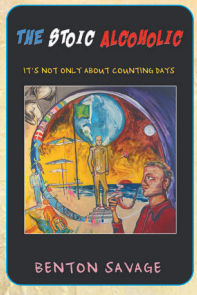
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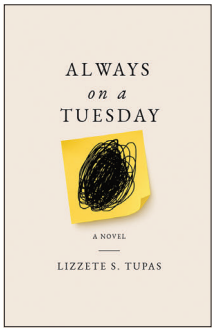


ISBN 978-1968059323

FICTION

Always on a Tuesday: A Novel

Lizzete S. Tupas | Studio LT Press
250p, hardcover, $28.99, ISBN 979-8-9955411-2-7



Compelling narrative of a recovering perfectionist's unquiet mind.

Great for fans of Elizabeth Strout's *The Things We Never Say*, Vincenzo Latronico's *Perfection*.

The first-person narration of Tupas's anxiety-driven debut captures the debilitating nature of perfectionism, as the widening gap between expectation and reality forces a hyper-competent woman to reexamine her identity. Loren Jamieson Santo Tomas is the manager of clinical revenue integrity for a large San Diego health system. She's a numbers person who also became their "magic" problem-solver, a high-pressure role that Loren takes to heart. "People trusted me to find what everyone else had missed," she explains. "I trusted myself to do the same." Until that Tuesday, when she discovers a variance of $220 million.

This discrepancy sends Loren spiraling. She doesn't make mistakes like that—or does she? Loren digs into the spreadsheet, finds the cell that corrupted her numbers, and awaits the "quiet satisfaction" that usually floods her brain with soothing relief. It doesn't come, replaced by a gnawing fear that she can no longer function at the level everyone expects. When more responsibilities are dumped into her lap and curveballs come out of left field, she wonders if Tuesdays are cursed. After all, it's the day she broke up with the "radiant" Bethany, who Loren suspected was out of her league.

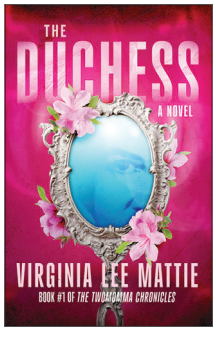
Tupas immerses readers in Loren's amorphous anguish. As her facade of untroubled competence begins to crack, Loren's forced to confront hard truths she meticulously avoided. Whenever a problem rises to the surface, it creates a ripple effect on her psyche, and Tupas adds another brushstroke to this rich portrait. While the prose on occasion can be overcooked, Tupas's ability to weave complex mental health conversations, gender identity confusion, and generational trauma shows a deep understanding of how these issues impact not only the individual directly experiencing them but also everyone in their orbit. Capturing the circuitous mindset of a deeply troubled perfectionist, *Always on a Tuesday* is an incisive examination of the sacrifices women make to become invaluable, while too often ignoring their own inherent worth.

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

FICTION

The Duchess: The Twomomma Chronicles, Book 1

Virginia Lee Mattie | Sense of Place
464p, hardcover, $26.99, ISBN 979-8-9999675-1-0



Warm and lively comic novel of an unforgettable Southern matriarch.

Great for fans of Fannie Flagg, Dorothea Benton Frank.

The spirited, often hilarious first entry in Mattie's Twomomma Chronicles series kicks off with a mystery: Navy Seaman Sissy Beddoes learns that her security clearance has been placed on hold because of surprising questions about her mother's background. Praying that this does not derail her career, Sissy reflects on growing up under the influence of her grandmother "Twomomma," an outspoken matriarch with strong ideas about how Sissy and everyone around her should live. Twomomma's opinion on Sissy's career choice: "The Navy must be hard-up if they are recruiting females!" Known as "the Duchess of Sparta," this hard-praying, hard-smoking, cotillion-minded, sugar-pie-baking, larger-than-life perfectionist grandmother powers the novel: "If I had participated in the Miss North Carolina pageant in 1936, I would have won!" she declares. That sentiment, expressed around the time of the moon landing, is funny enough, but Twomomma barrels on: "The winner had the same measurements as I do, but I was the prettier one."

Killer lines like that exemplify this family story about childhood, family secrets, and the truth behind carefully maintained facades—that "valuable crystal heirloom" might be "stacked to the ceiling" at K-Mart. Twomomma is the sugar in this novel's tea: she is controlling, dramatic, funny, and boasts a consummate sense of dish. Mattie surrounds her with relatives willing to challenge her rather than simply let her dominate. Arguments over manners, education, housekeeping, and Sissy's upbringing accumulate into a touching portrait of a family facing changing ideas about respectability. The humor comes naturally from the characters' talk and teasing, feeling warm even when the family is at odds.

The novel's length sometimes works against it. After establishing Sissy's clearance problem, The Duchess shifts into an extended account of her upbringing and family life, staying there for much of the book before returning to adult Sissy's search for answers, sometimes feeling like a collection of family stories lacking a dramatic throughline. Still, readers looking for an inviting, laugh-out-loud funny Southern family story will relish this.

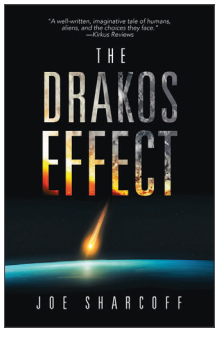
Cover: **B** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **–** Editing: **A-** | Marketing copy: **A**

SF/FANTASY/HORROR

EDITOR'S PICK

The Drakos Effect

Joe Sharcoff | iUniverse
300p, trade paper, $20.99, ISBN 978-1-532-03526-5



Big ideas, action distinguish this SF novel of humanity discovering its place.

Great for fans of Robert Charles Wilson, Jack McDevitt.

Boasting bold setpieces and engaging ideas, Sharcoff's smart thriller encompasses first-contact anxiety, utopian daydreams, dystopian nightmares, complex politics, the secret origins of our species, and a broadly humanistic perspective on potential futures. Set on 22nd-century Earth, the narrative begins *in media res*, as biologist Shana Savarino is spending time with an alien scientist from a race known as the Cephians. Humans have nicknamed the alien "Charles Darwin" as the Cephians are on Earth to evaluate whether humanity is worthy enough to join a larger alliance of alien civilizations known as the Mosaic. On a walk together amid the splendor of Yosemite National Park, they're attacked by humans who believe the Cephians are there to destroy us all, an encounter revealing Shana's antipathy toward humanity's hateful tendencies.

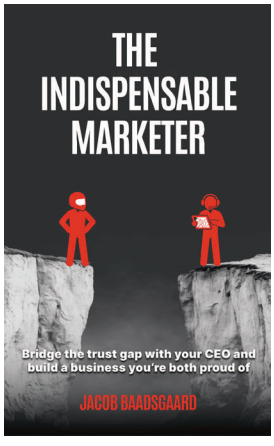
Complicating matters: an underground nuclear test awakens an eons-long-dormant intelligent device, inspiring more human paranoia. Opposing Shana is an imposing military officer who blames the Cephians for the death of a loved one and suspects them of dark intentions; some globe-shaking tragedies will test Shana and humanity alike in a story that connects ancient human fears and themes of sacrifice to contemporary explorations of the nature of consciousness. The stakes prove epic with the revelation of the origins of the device, known as an Archmage Sequencer, and its connection to other spacefaring species.

With exciting prose, Sharcoff conjures some spectacular action and conflagration, as "gamma rays burst" from a beast's "midnight jaws," but it is the focus on the hows and whys of futurism that makes the narrative so fascinating on a philosophical level. Shana proves a compelling and complex protagonist who evolves in fascinating ways, so much so that readers likely will not worry that the rest of the characters feel underwritten by comparison. Her passion, her irascibility, and her deep concern for all life fully round her out in a narrative that balances cynicism and idealism in equal, hearty measures.

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

BookLife Talks with Jacob Baadsgaard





Professional self-reflection was the catalyst for Baadsgaard's first book, *The Indispensable Marketer*. A CEO and their marketing leader can't just have a good working relationship, he argues. They must both speak the same language in order to align with a company's "goals, strategy, and execution." We spoke with Baadsgaard about how his book fits today's business landscape and who would benefit the most from it.

What made you realize you needed to write *The Indispensable Marketer*?

I fired five marketing leaders in eight years. Good people. Talented, hardworking, committed. Every time, I told myself I'd hired the wrong person. Then Chad de Lisle, my sixth, stood up in an executive meeting after I'd grilled him in front of the room and said, "I might not be the right guy for this job." I was ready to agree. Instead, I finally asked the question I'd been avoiding: What if the common denominator was me? It was. Chad wasn't failing because he lacked talent. He was failing because the environment I'd built made the job impossible. So, we spent the next year figuring out why and documented everything we built to fix it. That became the book. I owe it to Chad, and honestly, I owe an apology to the five who came before him.

You coined the term the "Trust Gap." Can you explain it a bit more?

The Trust Gap is what happens when a CEO and a marketing leader don't share a common language for goals, strategy, and execution. The CEO's vision lives in their head. The marketer guesses. The CEO reacts. The marketer guesses again. Eventually the marketer feels like a vending machine. Insert budget, pull lever, dispense revenue. Here's what took me too long to learn: the Trust Gap isn't a personality problem. It's a structural problem, so it has a structural fix. In the book, that fix is VSET: Vision, Strategy, Execution, and Team. It gives both sides the shared language they've been missing.

Who is your ideal reader and what do you hope they take away from *The Indispensable Marketer*?

The marketing leader who's talented, working harder than ever, and quietly wondering if they'll survive the next bad month. If you've ever lain awake at 3 a.m. rehearsing how to explain the numbers to your CEO, this book is for you. I hope every reader walks away with one of two things: either the tools to become indispensable right where they are, or the clarity to see their CEO isn't ready for alignment and the courage to find one who is. Both are wins. And if you're a CEO reading along, welcome. This book will show you how to stop burning through marketers and start building with one. I learned that the hard way so you don't have to.

Why or how do you think your book is particularly relevant in today's corporate landscape?

Two reasons. First, CMO tenure has long been among the shortest in the C-suite, and that pressure rolls downhill to every marketing role.

Second, AI. Cheap software can already draft copy, build reports, and optimize spend. Execution is becoming a commodity. If your value is doing tasks, you're more replaceable than ever. What AI can't do is sit across from a CEO, pull the vision out of their head, and turn it into a strategy the whole company believes in. That's what makes a marketer indispensable. The book is about building that muscle before the market forces the question.

What's next for you?

The book is the beginning. Chad and I cohost *The Indispensable Marketer* show and newsletter, where we keep having the conversations the book started. We've also built a course and a cohort for marketing leaders who want to put VSET to work with their own CEO, plus a free assessment at indispensablemarketer.com so readers can see where they stand today.

The goal hasn't changed. I want to help as many marketers as possible close the Trust Gap and become the leader they're meant to be. That's the greatness I see in them.

For more, visit **booklife.com/baadsgaard**

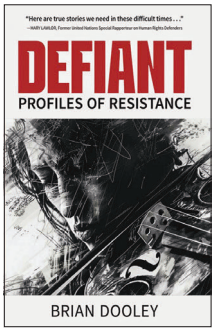
BUSINESS & PERSONAL FINANCE

EDITOR'S PICK

Defiant: Profiles of Resistance

Brian Dooley

272p, hardcover, $27, ISBN 978-1-967-49402-6



Inspiring accounts of everyday Europeans fighting injustice and oppression.

Great for fans of Andrew Hsiao and Audrea Lim's *The Verso Book of Dissent*, Ijeoma Oluo's *Be a Revolution*.

In the introduction to this charged, hopeful book documenting everyday Europeans' resistance to a "crisis of growing state violence and repression," longtime human rights activist Dooley (author of two books about the Troubles in Ireland and a study of Robert F. Kennedy) writes about a 1960s Irish civil rights leader who described herself as an "accidental activist." In *Defiant*, Dooley profiles a diverse crew of citizens who have likewise found themselves taking up brave, difficult, often dangerous activism in the face of intense government and societal pressure.

Dooley lets his subjects tell their own stories while providing clear-eyed context about the forces against them. Dooley's subjects offer testimony about refugee crises, past conflicts like the Troubles, environmental degradation in Ukraine and Turkey, and anti-LGBTQ discrimination in Poland. Likewise, Dooley's activists come from a variety of backgrounds. Elderly married couples Fidelma and Cormac McAleer and Lorena Fornasir and Gian Andrea Franchi fight a gold mine in the Irish mountains and tend to immigrants' medical needs in Italy, respectively; food scientist Bülent Şık battles his former government employers over unchecked industrial contaminants. Dooley describes his cast's lives with care and precision while demonstrating an ear for a choice quote: "I knew my dad was really angry from the very aggressive way he was playing UNO," gay-rights activist Kamil says, a small detail that speaks volumes. Hajrija Čobo, working to save a Bosnian forest from a mining operation, sold cigarettes and coffee beans during the Bosnian War. "They'd give me a small gold ring for five cigarettes … That's when I learned that gold has no value in a catastrophe."

Such insights abound as *Defiant* demonstrates the common motivations that drive exploitation and the shared beliefs that inspire resistance to greed and injustice. As Lorena Fornasir puts it: "When you see someone in danger or in need, do you have to think about it twice? No, we just acted immediately."

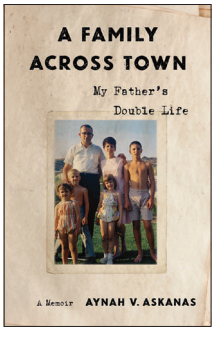
Cover: **A** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **–** Editing: **A** | Marketing copy: **A**

MEMOIR

A Family Across Town: My Father's Double Life, a Memoir

Aynah V. Askanas | She Writes Press

290p, e-book, $12.99, ISBN 979-889636-217-3



Shocking family secret prompts profound soul-searching.

Great for fans of Dani Shapiro's *Inheritance*, Maud Newton's *Ancestor Trouble*.

In her debut, Askanas explores how toxic family secrets upended her childhood and how she learned to handle the fallout with grace and understanding. Growing up in Southern California, Askanas was used to the frequent absences of her pediatrician father, Matthew Cohen, and his unwillingness to bring his family to office functions. As an adult, she learned the shocking truth: he was supporting a second family across town. "Dad lived in two households and supported two families, splitting his time fifty-fifty: Mom's 'husband' and father to Rob, Steve, Dana, and me; Lorna's 'husband' and father to Randi and Lisa." This revelation propels Askanas into a painful yet necessary excavation of her family's complicated history.

Askanas and her siblings were also blindsided when they learned their parents had never been married—and that their affair had been going on for more than 30 years. "But there is no guidebook called What to Do When You Discover Your Father's Other Family, so we all dealt with it the best we could," she quips. While Askanas looks back on her parents' relationship and flags instances of her father's duplicity, she reflects on how generational trauma may have conditioned her mother to believe she deserved mistreatment: "Perhaps some of us are drawn to the painful feelings of our past, doomed to repeat and relive them."

By relating her family's heartbreak and her journey toward healing, Askanas offers a pitch-perfect explanation of how secrets poison relationships. Her fear, anger, and sadness will resonate with readers through her powerful prose, but most noteworthy is her strength. "Family secrets are destructive, but if they are exposed and you have the genuine love and friendship of family, you can triumph over them," she asserts. In the end, readers will empathize with Askanas through her willingness to confront a festering family secret and take an unflinching look at the truth.

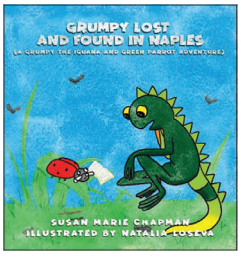
Cover: **B+** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **–** Editing: **A-** | Marketing copy: **A-**

PICTURE BOOKS

Grumpy Lost And Found In Naples: A Grumpy the Iguana and Green Parrot Adventure, Book 12

Susan Marie Chapman | The Gourmet Dog, LLC

44p, hardcover, $9.80, ISBN 978-1-736-80567-1



Endearing iguana faces surprising challenges in this series entry.

Great for fans of Jessica Meserve's *The House that Love Built*, Elisha Cooper's *Beaver Is Lost*.

Chapman's lovable iguana embarks on an unexpected out-of-town adventure that will please fans of the long-running series as it challenges Grumpy to adapt to some serious new changes. The story opens with Grumpy slogging through another Florida winter, where temps can drop so low that he transforms from a carefree iguana to a "frozen Popsicle." Since he's cold-blooded, Grumpy can't manage cool weather like some animals, and the thought of being chilled scares him—for good reason: Chapman explains that cold iguanas "lose all control of their body parts" and, without warning, plummet to the ground from their tree perches. Grumpy wants no part of that, so when he stumbles onto a family at the local park, he nestles into their blanket for a snuggly nap.

That choice sends Grumpy to places he never dreamed of, as he's accidentally packed into the family's belongings and whisked out of town—to Naples. (That's Florida, not Italy.) There, Grumpy does not recognize that he has come a long way from home. A ladybug welcomes him but is little help to a scared, sobbing lizard, and younger readers will empathize with him when he cries, "How am I ever going to find my way home?" Luckily, Chapman brings in a familiar face to comfort Grumpy: the trusty Green Parrot, who followed Grumpy's inadvertent adventure. He doesn't have great news about getting this endearing iguana back to his digs, however, and kids will be surprised at the story's cliffhanger ending.

This entry (following *Growing Up Is Hard to Do*) is packed with informative facts that build geographical literacy and showcase the habitats that iguanas need to survive. Natalia Loseva follows those lessons with giggle-worthy illustrations of Grumpy morphing into a popsicle, sunning himself on a beach chair, and conversing with a comically erudite ladybug. This startling development for our beloved iguana will definitely leave readers eager for what's next.

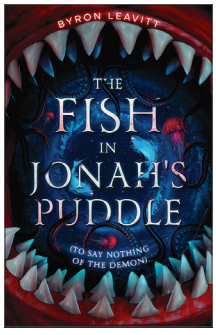
Cover: **B+** | Design & typography: **B +** | Illustrations: **A-** Editing: **B+** | Marketing copy: **A-**

MIDDLE GRADE

The Fish in Jonah's Puddle: To Say Nothing of the Demon

Byron Leavitt | Brain Waves Press

192p, trade paper, $12.95, ISBN 978-0-9907235-6-1



Imaginative teen and fantastical creatures fight devouring demon.

Great for fans of AJ Vanderhorst's *The Mostly Invisible Boy*, Alysa Wishingrad's *Between Monsters and Marvels*.

Leavitt is an expert worldbuilder, and his middle-grade debut incorporates fantasy and horror into a fast-paced, dimension-hopping adventure that hinges on the importance of imagination. Jonah Hutchins has plenty of that, too much if you ask his parents, who worry that his attachment to imaginary companions will keep the teenager from making real friends. What they don't see is apparent to the creatures who've become part of Jonah's orbit. The well-mannered, debonair troll Humphrey and wise-cracking, mischievous harpy Calisto understand that there's something special about Jonah, who can harness his creative resources and draws otherworldly attention.

So when a salmon politely introduces himself as Stuart, Jonah is unfazed. It's just another strange occurrence on a fateful day, when a violent rainstorm has left the Hutchins' backyard full of eerie puddles. Stuart shares his pond-sized waterhole with a toothy demon known as the Maw, whose rapacious appetite has torn through the membranes that separate dimensions—and who gobbles up Jonah's unsuspecting parents. Suddenly seeing her "weird" brother in a new light, the terrified Debbie joins Jonah and his (now visible) scary friends, who set off on a mission to stop the Maw from engulfing all their worlds in devastating darkness.

Drawing on different traditions (including folklore and Greek mythology), Leavitt anchors Jonah in Christian iconography, echoing his biblical namesake when he's swallowed by the demon. The Maw's murky interior is a magnificent realm: a ruined city of tilted skyscrapers, wet from flowing gastric juices, with disembodied mouths taunting defiant survivors. By illustrating his hodgepodge characters (like the prophetic Ms. Finch, who has an octopus head), Leavitt pulls young readers deeper into his creative mindset, where whimsical figures become unrelenting warriors. As these ragtag allies skillfully battle evil in *The Fish in Jonah's Puddle*, their rollercoaster ride is powered by Leavitt's full-throttle ingenuity firing on all cylinders.

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

YOUNG ADULT

EDITOR'S PICK

The Thirteenth Cagebreaker: A Cantara Academy Novel

Melissa Jean Vallejos | Iron Quill Press

457p, e-book, $4.99, ASIN B0G6LRSPM3



Magic and romance in a dark academy's spooky halls.

Great for fans of Allison Saft's *A Far Wilder Magic*, Naomi Novik's *A Deadly Education*.

In the tradition of dark academia, Vallejos's promising, well-written YA debut introduces another spooky set of hallowed halls where students venture to learn about magic. Sparrow "Roe" Kettler, an 18-year-old with a magically gifted voice, has just received a scholarship to Cantara Academy, sponsored by the prestigious Arcement family. For a dock girl from the lower city, the offer is appealing—it could reshape Roe's entire future. Unfortunately her family's history with Cantara Academy casts a dark shadow, as her mother escaped radical magic containment protocols when she was a student there. Now a similar fate may be waiting for Roe when she receives the same amethyst designation as her mother, labeling her gifts as "rare, powerful, and dangerous."

Containment is the obvious answer when students receive an amethyst designation, with Roe only the thirteenth such student in 300 years. Manifesting in a purplish glow, untamable magic is a threat to safety and stability – or so argues the academy board, staffed with dubious members including Roe's benefactor Lord Arcement. Despite this adversity, Roe works to perfect her magical expression alongside other scholarship students and Lord Arcement's talented, complicated son, Blaise. While at first Blaise regards her with cool detachment, over time he becomes her greatest admirer, reminding her through her challenges that she is "so deeply, impossibly loved."

Young readers will want to root for the frightened yet determined Roe as she strives to harness her gifts in a way that others will not find threatening—and to uncover the truth of what it means to be "caged." At times, the ligaments joining these familiar tropes feel strained, but *The Thirteenth Cagebreaker* will please fans of dark academia: it features a classically styled institution, found family, dark school secrets, and an overbearing set of villains disguised as ordinary staff. This will especially appeal to young readers who may have also been told at times they're "too much."

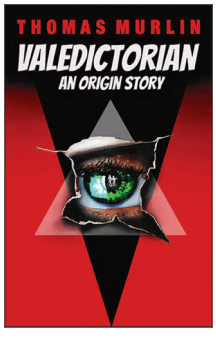
Cover: **A-** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: – Editing: **A-** | Marketing copy: **A**

YOUNG ADULT

Valedictorian: An Origin Story

Thomas Murlin | Emory House

384p, e-book, $8.99, ASIN B0H3C4Q73C



Inventive origin story takes troubled teen on a wild ride.

Great for fans of Jamison Shea's *I Feed Her to the Beast and the Beast Is Me*, Vanessa Len's *Only A Monster*.

In Murlin's trilogy starter, Jack Shaw is a man torn between two worlds. At a Harvard admissions interview, he reflects back on the unusual changes that occurred during his freshman year in high school, his memories teetering the line between reality and fantasy: when his estranged uncle Mike gifts him a comic book collection for his 14th birthday, Jack is immediately consumed, losing himself in stories of Superman, Johnny Storm, and the Green Goblin. But his rich inner imaginings of superheroes swooping in to save the day don't seem to make it into real life, as Jack is bullied at school, struggling in class, and desperate to impress his father, whose only desire is for his eldest son to become a Harvard man.

Gradually, events start to change: Jack strikes up a friendship with the unconventional new kid at school, Ryan Fisher; he cultivates a budding affinity with collectible shop owner, Mr. Shelby; he starts to see odd things that the adults in his life call hallucinations; his grades suddenly become perfect; and, when, he discovers a domino with a hidden symbol on it, it becomes a talisman, of sorts, as Jack works to gain control over the superhuman powers quietly growing inside of him. Thus begins Jack's transformation, one that Murlin credits to his experience of tragedy—an inventive spin on a superhero's origin story.

Murlin's protagonist is buckling under the weight of life's changes, from his first romance to a fracturing family to his difficulties coping with anger and resentment at school. As Jack's reality becomes increasingly twisted, and his identity starts to splinter, his uncle Mike's wise words—"You can't spend your life pretending to be someone you're not"—become a powerful refrain. Murlin rounds out Jack's journey with a truly shocking ending, as Jack learns the explosive truth that no good story exists without the perfect villain.

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

How This Book Was Made

OUR WEEKLY ANNOTATED GUIDE



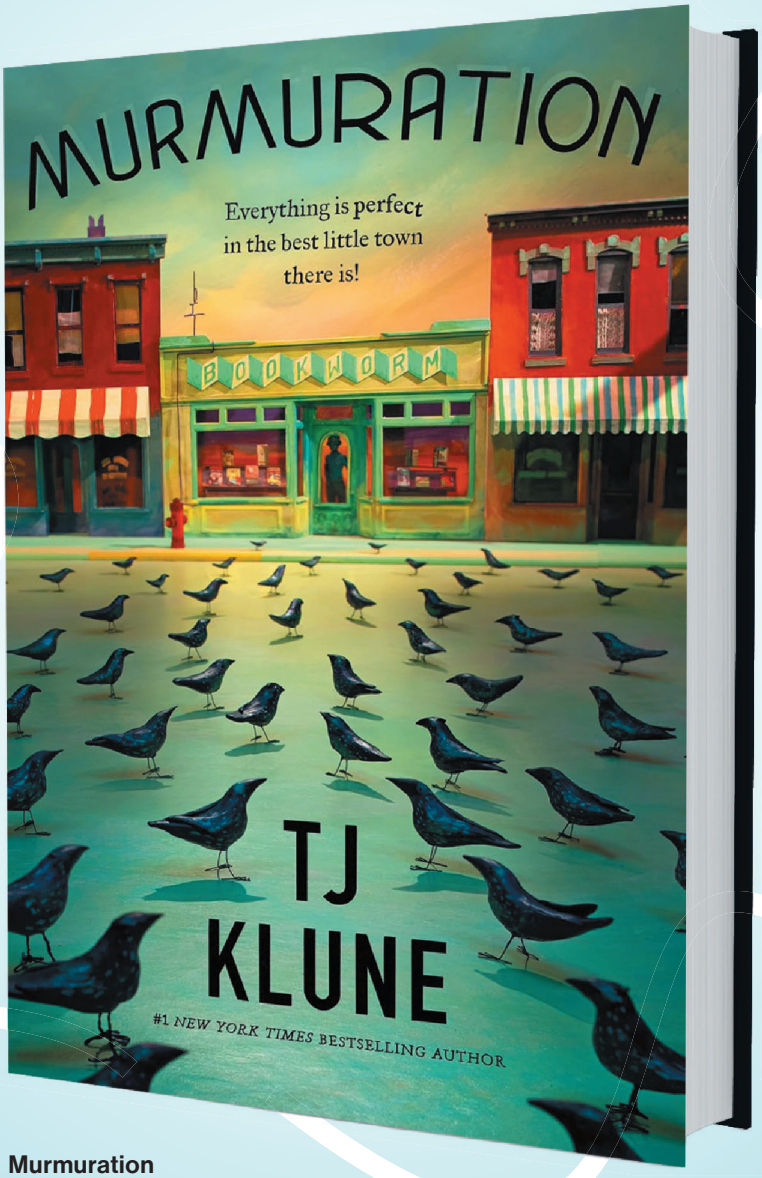
Author **TJ Klune**
"At the time of the book's original release back in 2017, I said that this book might be the most romantic thing I've ever written. Now, with the benefit of hindsight and having written more books, I still believe that to be the case. While there is the whole mystery of it all, I loved the queerness of it, how these two men—Mike and Sean—slowly gravitate toward each other. And when the truth is revealed, when all the cards are on the table, I want the reader to ask themselves what they would be willing to do for the person they love most."



Senior Agent and President, The Knight Agency
Deidre Knight
"I read *Wolfsong* when it was originally published and was so immersed, I couldn't let go of the world. I reached out to TJ, knowing that if I didn't, I'd probably regret it for the rest of my career. Tor has been terrific about wanting to bring some of his earlier works, small and indie published, to the broader market. So, I was able to work with them on making that happen."



Associate Art Director, Tor Publishing Group
Katie Klimowicz
"We approached Red Nose Studio—the artist for Klune covers with Tor—and pitched the idea of working together again. Our collaborations with Chris Sickels at Red Nose have been a really special part of my career that represent a deep appreciation for hand-made art. Chris is physically building the sets that ultimately create the world that you see on TJ's covers. Those starlings are all molded and painted by Chris, meaning there are no two alike—look at those wiry little legs. And the lace curtains in the widows!"



Murmuration
TJ Klune. Tor, Nov.
ISBN 978-1-250-46242-8



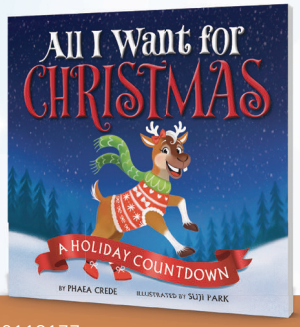
Executive Editor, Tor Publishing Group
Ali Fisher
"We didn't change much of *Murmuration* from the original 2017 edition. There were a few changes TJ knew he wanted to make, looking back on the project, and I suggested some adjustments and updates to enhance that haunting feeling we all get in life's best moments—feeling like this can't be real, can it? But overall, the story remains the same."

FISHER © ZACK DEZON

Must-Read Books for Every Kid on Your List



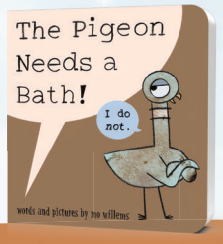
The best books to read with kids ages 3–5



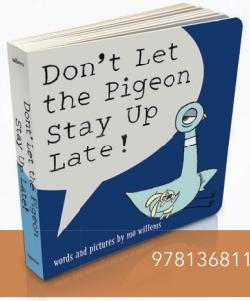
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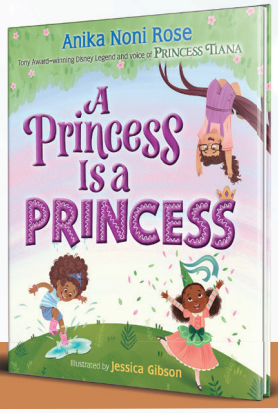
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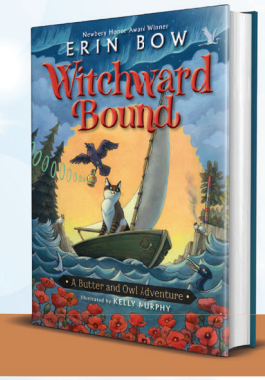
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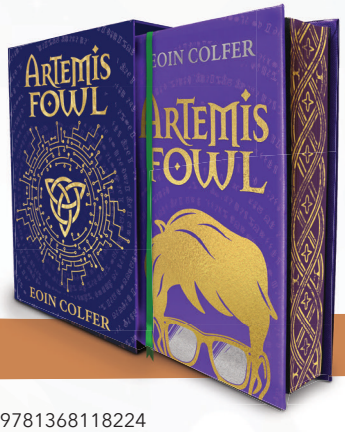


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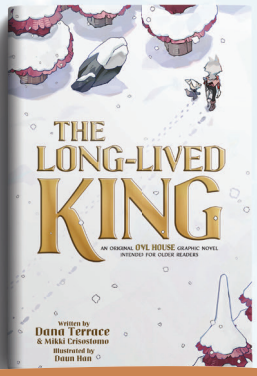


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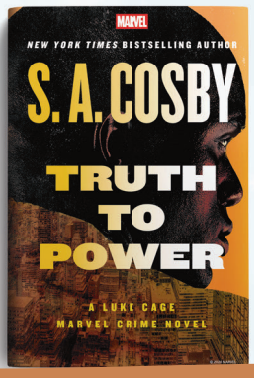


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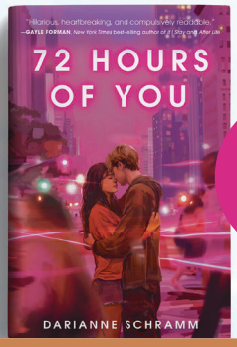


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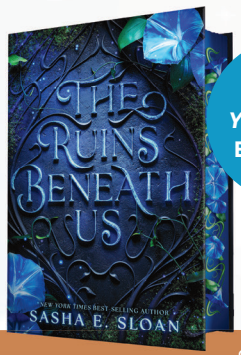


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