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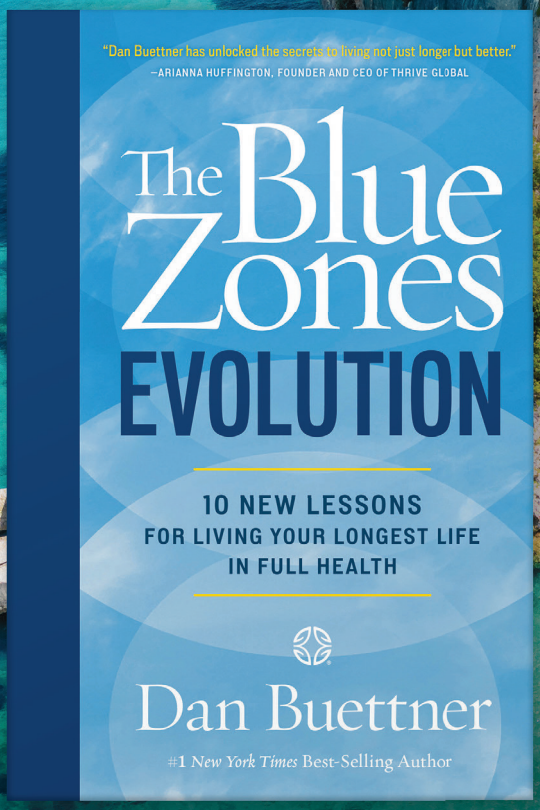
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Publishers Weekly

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HORROR FOR THE HOLIDAYS



The perfect gift for fans of John Carpenter's unique brand of horror.

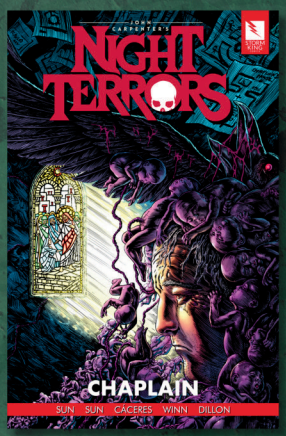
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Review of the Week

SEARING COMICS JOURNALISM MEETS EMPATHETIC STORYTELLING IN THIS INDELIBLE CALL FOR CHANGE

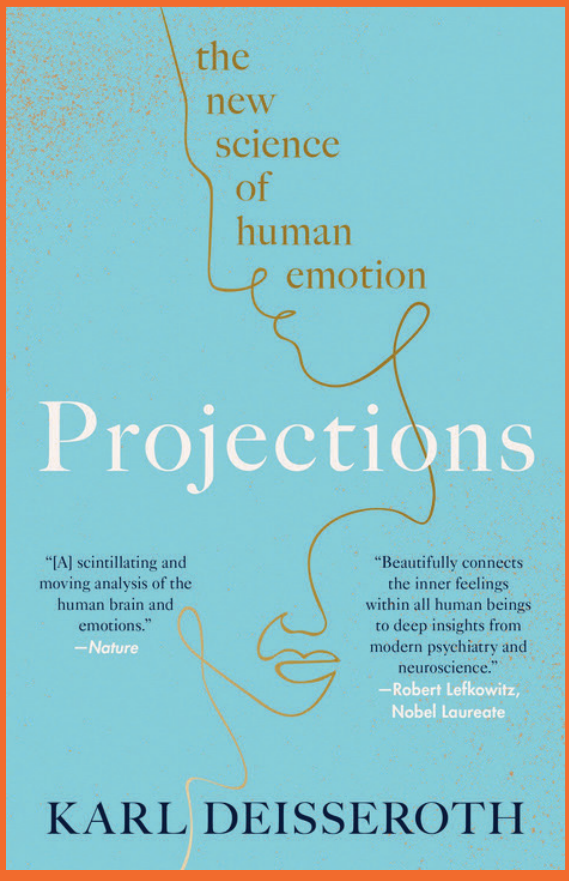


Soft Targets: Guns in America and the Kids Caught in the Crossfire
Camila Kerwin. Street Noise, $23.99 trade paper (268p)
ISBN 978-1-9514-9153-6

★ IN THIS GUTTING and economically told graphic nonfiction debut, *Boston Globe* cartoonist Kerwin intersperses chapters about the history of gun control with profiles of four racially diverse children killed by gun violence. Joaquin, whose parents moved to Parkland, Fla., from Venezuela for a safer life, is murdered in a school shooting. Vibrant Makiyah, age 10, is the accidental victim of a drive-by in D.C. Smart, generous Jonah in Michigan struggles with mental health issues but would likely still be alive if he didn't have access to his stepfather's gun. Ethan, in Connecticut, is obsessed with the tragedies in his family's past, including his grandmother's experiences of the Holocaust; present-day tragedy arrives via an easily unlocked gun at a friend's home. Kerwin's playful portraits and everyday details personalize the children and underscore what's at stake. She also demonstrates that political gridlock isn't inevitable, noting that in the Wild West, folks checked firearms at the edge of town, and that the NRA was a club for sportsmen until a right-wing takeover in the 1970s. "We are far less divided on guns than our politics suggests," Kerwin notes. This urgent work infuses hope and humanity into divisive politics without downplaying the devastating costs of gun violence. *Agent: Gordon Warnock, Fuse Literary. (Oct.)*

Folio Literary Management
congratulates
Karl Deisseroth
on receiving the
2026 Nobel Prize
in Physiology or Medicine

folio



THE WEEK IN PUBLISHING
10/17 – 10/23/26

Currents

Currents Currents Currents Currents



CATAPULT TO BE SOLD, CLOSED

CATAPULT BOOK GROUP, the independent publisher founded in 2015 by Koch family scion Elizabeth Koch and *Electric Literature* cofounder Andy Hunter, is being sold and will end operations this month, according to members of its union.

In a statement, the Catapult Workers Collective said the company announced its planned sale while workers were voting on whether to unionize earlier this year. Staff joined UAW Local 2110 in June.

Operations are expected to end October 30, and the sale includes the company's assets only, according to the union. The statement did not name the buyer but said the union was notified that "continued employment with the prospective buyer is not an option." The Catapult website currently lists 25 employees, including Koch, who is CEO.

Catapult management could not be reached for comment, and it remains unclear what will happen to the 16 frontlist titles across its four imprints—Catapult, Counterpoint, Hawthorne, and Soft Skull—that are slated for spring 2027, according to its catalog.

The sale brings to an end an ambitious literary startup that once comprised a publishing imprint, online magazine, writing classes, and a community platform for writers. In early 2023, the company announced it would close its online magazine and writing classes and focus its resources on book publishing.

"I have hope that the books will be shepherded by a prospective buyer and that our authors will be considered," said Miriam Vance, a contracts and rights associate and member of the union's bargaining committee, in a statement. "But it has been and continues to be very difficult for all of the many talented people that have worked so hard to bring these books into the world."

—NATALIE CHANDLER

HUNDREDS OF AUTHORS SUE META

Nearly 300 authors filed copyright infringement claims against Meta Platforms on October 19 in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California, alleging the company trained its AI models on pirated copies of their books, as well as on physical books it bought and scanned without a license.

Rather than join a class action suit, in which a few named plaintiffs sue on behalf of everyone, each author is pursuing an individual claim.

Attorney Kyle Roche of Freedman Normand Friedland told *PW* his firm currently represents more than 2,200 authors, and said he plans to file up to 1,000 individual claims by the end of the year.

All of the authors signed up through ClaimsHero, a platform that partnered with Freedman Normand Friedland last fall to recruit authors to opt out of the $1.5 billion Anthropic settlement and sue on their own. The new suits arrive as the first cases from that effort approach trial.

In a statement, Authors Guild CEO Mary Rasenberger said the guild stands with the plaintiffs, while expressing a preference for collective action "to ensure the law protects all authors".

—ED NAWOTKA



BLOOMSBURY COUNTS ON MAAS BUMP AS PROFITS FALL

U.K.-based Bloomsbury Publishing reported a 30% drop in adjusted pretax profit and a 5% decline in revenue for the first half of its 2026–2027 fiscal year, compared to the prior year. Revenue for the six months ending in August fell to £151.6 million ($203.2 million), per the publisher's latest financial report, and adjusted pretax profit declined to £16.8 million. Bloomsbury maintained its optimistic full-year outlook, citing market consensus forecasts of £354.3 million in revenue and £49.9 million in adjusted pretax profit for the year ending Feb. 28, 2027. The publisher is betting on the release of two new books in Sarah J. Maas's A Court of Thorns and Roses series, due on Oct. 27, 2026, and Jan. 12, 2027, for which it said preorders have been "exceptional." It also expects the new titles to spur interest in Maas's backlist. *—NATALIE CHANDLER*

NICHOLE ARGYRESAND COURTNEY LITTLER © COURTESY SMPG

Edited by **SOPHIA STEWART**
"THE CAUSE OF CATAPULT'S CLOSURE REMAINS UNCLEAR. SOME SPECULATE IT'S RETALIATION AGAINST THE NEWLY FORMED UNION. OTHERS FIGURE ITS BILLIONAIRE OWNER JUST GOT BORED."

Weekly Record

Currents Currents Currents Currents

ST. MARTIN'S LAUNCHES PUZZLE BOOK IMPRINT

THE ST. MARTIN'S PUBLISHING GROUP announced the launch of Tytora, a new imprint dedicated to puzzles and games.

Beginning in 2027, the imprint plans to publish 24–30 titles per year and will be helmed by associate publisher Nichole Argyres and editorial director Courtney Littler.

Argyres and Littler are the publishing team behind G.T. Karber's hit series Murdle, which has sold more than four million copies worldwide, according to the publisher. The duo also published *Minute Cryptic* by Angas Tiernan and Liam Runnalls and the *New York Times* crossword books.

According to SMPG, Tytora will publish a wide range of "analog entertainment for curious minds: puzzles, games, logic, and wordplay, as well as interactive and game-related fiction and nonfiction."


Nichole Argyres


Courtney Littler

"We're seeing a real appetite for smart and engaging puzzle books that allow people to unplug and exercise their minds," said SMPG president and publisher Jennifer Enderlin in the announcement. "We're excited to create a home for books that are smart, challenging and a pure delight."

Enderlin isn't the only one to note the growing demand for puzzle books. In Hachette Book Group's most recent financial report, CEO David Shelley attributed a 4% sales bump in the third quarter to "enormous sales of puzzle books," including *Murdoku* and *The Killer Isn't Alice*. And last month, the publisher of Choose Your Own Adventure launched its first adult imprint, with director of marketing Lizzi Middleman telling *PW*, "I can't tell you how many fans have been asking for this."

—SOPHIA STEWART

Top 10 Overall Bestsellers, Oct. 11–17

RANK	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	UNITS
1	**Contend**	Philip Anthony Mitchell	Thomas Nelson	65,654
2	**Threshing Day (Wing and Claw ed.)**	Rebecca Yarros	Red Tower	44,428
3	**The Witch (deluxe ed.)**	Freida McFadden	Poisoned Pen	43,898
4	**I'll Believe in Anything**	Jacob Tierney	Little, Brown	38,322
5	**Theo of Golden**	Allen Levi	Atria	32,482
6	**The French Illusion**	John Grisham	Doubleday	29,199
7	**In the Shadow of Eight**	Collin Gosselin	Grand Central	26,246
8	**Murdoku**	Manuel Garand	Puzzlewright	24,034
9	**Dungeon Crawler Carl**	Matt Dinniman	Ace	21,427
10	**Verity**	Colleen Hoover	Grand Central	20,801

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▶ PLA TEAMS WITH MICROSOFT ON AI TRAINING

In an effort to keep libraries up to date on developments in AI, the Public Library Association is partnering with Microsoft on a free series of webinars and community practice sessions focused on building AI skills, starting in December. The series, designed for library staffers as well as patrons, was developed by PLA's technology task force in collaboration with Microsoft Elevate, a division of the tech giant focused on addressing AI literacy in noncommercial contexts. Former PLA president Brandy McNeil, of the New York Public Library, said its aim is "ensuring that people know how to exercise their agency when it comes to AI."

—NATHALIE OP DE BEECK

▶ SURVEY FINDS BOOK BUYERS SPLIT ON AI USE

According to a new study by BookInsights.ai, the data consultancy launched this year by former Circana BookScan executive David Walter, younger book buyers are more likely to accept AI use in books, but book buyers of all ages prefer transparency from publishers when it comes to AI. In a survey of 5,025 people who bought a book in the past three months, 36% of teenagers are open to AI being used at any stage of the writing of a book, while only 11% of people over 55 agreed. However, a clear majority of readers of all ages (85%) said books should disclose whether AI was used in the writing process.

—NATALIE CHANDLER

▶ PRH HOLIDAY TRANSIT PROGRAM RETURNS

Penguin Random House has announced the return of its annual two-day holiday transit program for independent bookstores to alleviate shipping delays during the busy fourth quarter. The program, first launched in 2011, will take effect October 26 and run through January 11. It will continue to feature a "no minimums" requirement for stores. PRH said it will expedite the shipping of indie bookstore orders from its distribution and fulfillment centers in Westminster, Md.; Crawfordsville, Ind.; and Reno, Nev., to ensure delivery within two days, weather and transport conditions permitting. Distribution centers will continue to operate weekend shifts to help handle increased holiday demand. *—CLAIRE KIRCH*

Lights, Camera, Action

COLLEEN HOOVER TAKES HOLLYWOOD

The originally self-published writer has conquered the book world—now she's eyeing the big screen



Colleen Hoover

HAVING TAKEN the publishing industry by storm, Colleen Hoover is now setting her sights on Hollywood. In 2023, Hoover and film veteran Lauren Levine launched their production company Heartbones Entertainment with an eye to adapting Hoover's blockbuster novels. So far, the studio has put out three feature films based on Hoover's books, with a series currently in the works. But the duo sees Hoover's own work as merely a jumping-off point for Heartbones, which they hope to grow into a major industry player.

Levine had been producing kids' and family movies for nearly 15 years when she discovered Hoover's work. At that point, she was tired of the wholesome source material she had made a career out of adapting. "When a friend asked what I was going to do next, I said, 'I just want to have sex and kill people,'" she recalls. In 2015, Awesomeness TV, a now-defunct digital media and entertainment network that has since merged with Paramount Skydance, reached out to Levine in search of a series that would appeal to millennial mothers. Levine suggested Hoover's novel *Confess*.

When Levine brought in Hoover to consult on *Confess*, the two became close. "When she told me she wanted to be more involved in her adaptations, partnering up felt completely organic," Levine says.

Their similar aims convinced Hoover they should team up. "Lauren and I wanted to develop projects ourselves rather than only selling the rights and waiting to see what happened," she says. "Heartbones gave us a way to be involved earlier and help shape the adaptations as they came together."

The studio's name borrows from Hoover's novel *Heart Bones*, which Levine says "describes us and the stories we love: a little bit squishy, a little bit knuckly."

The success of the 2024 film adaptation of *It Ends with Us*, which Hoover produced alongside Sony and director Justin Baldoni's production company, proved to Hoover and Levine that Hoover's books could be box office gold. The movie is based on Hoover's breakout 2016 novel, published by Atria, which has sold more than six million print copies, according to Circana Bookscan. Those book sales translated to ticket sales: *It Ends with Us* made $351 million worldwide on a modest $25 million budget, according to Box Office Mojo.

"It made the possibilities feel bigger, but the interest in being more involved was already there," Hoover says of the film. "For me, the appeal isn't having 'producer' next to my name. It's getting to participate in the decisions that shape how a story reaches an audience."

Through Heartbones, Hoover and Levine went on to produce 2025's *Regretting You* and cowrote and produced 2026's *Reminders of Him*, both of which outgrossed their budgets at the box office.

The release of *Verity* earlier this month feels like a turning point for Heartbones, with its high-profile director, Michael Showalter, and A-list stars—namely Anne Hathaway, Dakota Johnson, and Josh Hartnett. It's also the first of Hoover's thrillers to be adapted.

Showalter, who also directed Hathaway in the 2024 adaptation of Robinne Lee's *The Idea of You*, was well aware of Hoover because of *It Ends With Us*, and wanted the chance to tell a different kind of Hoover story.

"Colleen Hoover is in the culture," Showalter says. "I, as a filmmaker, want to reflect the culture, but I also want to celebrate the culture. This writer is obviously touching a nerve. I'm trying to understand, what is this phenomenon of Colleen Hoover? What is it about her writing that affects so many people so profoundly? This movie is my own exploration of that."

Showalter says he's keen to further explore the Hoover phenomenon and work with her again, describing her as "savvy about the filmmaking process."

Since its release, *Verity* has made over $122 million worldwide. Meanwhile, the book has sold more than 4.7 million copies since it was published in 2021 by Grand Central.

While Heartbones plans to continue adapting Hoover's work—a series based on her 2017 novel *Without Merit* is currently in development—it's now going beyond the Hoover-verse. In June, Heartbones announced it would produce a film adaptation of Ali Hazelwood's *Love, Theoretically* with Amazon MGM, which recently adapted Hazelwood's *The Love Hypothesis*.

"Producing *Love, Theoretically* is an opportunity to help bring another author's work to the screen, and I'd love for that to be a meaningful part of what we do with Heartbones," Hoover says. "I don't need every project to resemble something I would write. Part of the appeal is getting to support a different voice."—*KERENSA CADENAS*

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CELEBRATING OUR 2026 STARS!

And Then There Were None, Vol. 1

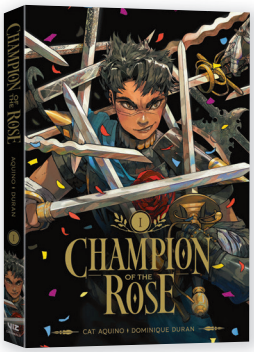


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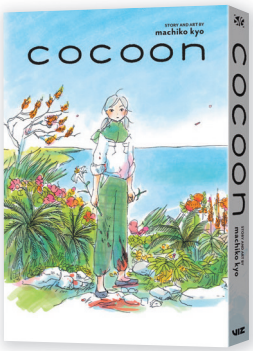


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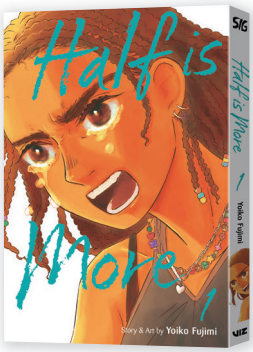


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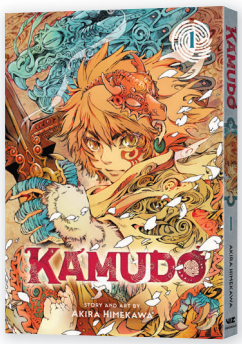
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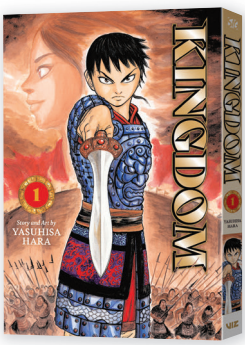
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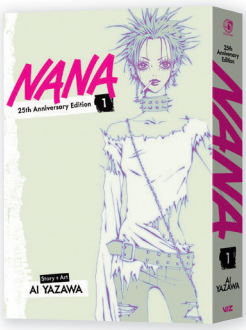
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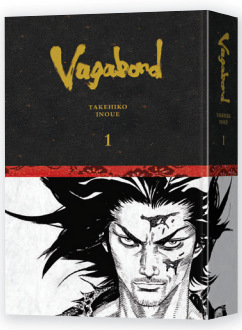
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Story and Art by **Takehiko Inoue**

Ongoing, 7 volumes

★ ***Booklist***



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VIZ

OCTOBER 11
to
OCTOBER 17

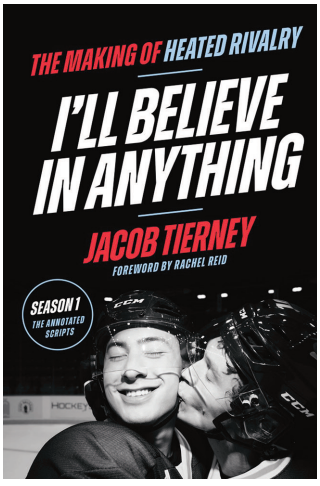
Bestsellers

Currents Currents Currents Currents

Hardcover Frontlist Fiction

1. **Threshing Day (Wing and Claw ed.)**
Rebecca Yarros, Red Tower (44,428 units)
2. **The Witch (deluxe ed.)**
Freida McFadden, Poisoned Pen (43,898)
3. **The French Illusion**
John Grisham, Doubleday (29,199)
4. **The Calamity Club**
Kathryn Stockett, Spiegel & Grau (18,848)
5. **Peck & Peck**
Bonnie Garmus, Scribner (18,716)
6. **Threshing Day**
Rebecca Yarros, Red Tower (17,653)
7. **Partita**
Barbara Kingsolver, Harper (15,535)
8. **Other Worlds Than These**
King/Straub, Scribner (13,318)
9. **Hexed (collector's ed.)**
Emily McIntire, Bloom (12,663)
10. **Crossed (collector's ed.)**
Emily McIntire, Bloom (12,287)
11. **Hollow Bones**
Jodi Picoult, Ballantine (11,978)
12. **American Hagwon**
Min Jin Lee, Cardinal (10,983)
13. **Caught Up (collector's ed.)**
Navessa Allen, Slowburn (10,918)
14. **Return to the Shack**
Wm. Paul Young, Apiary (10,501)
15. **Yesteryear**
Caro Claire Burke, Knopf (9,771)

○ New This Week



COTTAGE INDUSTRY The #2 book on our hardcover nonfiction list, **I'll Believe in Anything**, is the first official tie-in to the *Heated Rivalry* TV series. Show creator, writer, and director Jacob Tierney collects annotated scripts and shares behind-the-scenes content; Rachel Reid, who wrote the books on which the series is based, contributes the foreword. The show premiered in November 2025, and that year, Reid's six Game Changers novels sold about 91K print units. For 2026 to date, they've sold more than 1 million.



A BUSHEL OF SALES Bonnie Garmus made a splash in 2022 with her midcentury STEMinist debut novel, *Lessons in Chemistry*, which has sold 1.9 million print copies and spawned a well-received Apple TV limited series. Her follow-up, **Peck & Peck**, is set in the 1980s and lands at #5 on our hardcover fiction list. "A young man seeks fulfillment while working for a prestigious and cutthroat poetry journal in this tender-hearted sophomore novel," per our review. "The author also packs the novel with the antic humor and colorful characterizations that drew readers to her debut."

INDEPENDENTS' DAY A pair of novels from indie presses return to our trade paperback list. **Fruit Fly** by Josh Silver enjoyed its best weekly sales to date, reentering our list at #13. Shortly before its August release, A24 nabbed adaptation rights with plans for a TV series, and steady buzz has spurred the book to sell 40K print copies to date for Crooked Lane. *PW*'s starred review said, "A struggling author co-opts the life of a young gay drug addict for her new manuscript in YA novelist Silver's jaw-dropping adult debut." One notch below, Eli McCann's debut novel, **Stitched**, has been a hit for Torrey House: it was the #9 book in the country in its first week on sale in September and to date has sold almost 38K print copies. McCann, an attorney and podcaster who regularly writes for the *Salt Lake City Tribune*, set his story in Utah, where a women's quilting group welcomes two gay men into their circle in the run-up to a national quilting championship. This week's sales are up 177% compared with the week before.





Hardcover Frontlist Nonfiction

1. **Contend**
Philip Anthony Mitchell, Thomas Nelson (65,654 units)
2. **I'll Believe in Anything**
Jacob Tierney, Little, Brown (38,322)
3. **In the Shadow of Eight**
Collin Gosselin, Grand Central (26,246)
4. **The Lost Kitchen, Vol. 3**
Erin French, Celadon (15,370)
5. **The Battle for Your Soul**
David Jeremiah, Thomas Nelson (15,325)
6. **One Helluva Ride**
Michael Douglas, Grand Central (14,028)
7. **Out of the Shadows**
Jay Stratton, Morrow (13,331)
8. **Uniting the States**
Brian Kilmeade, Morrow (12,841)
9. **Blockers**
Michael Lewis, Norton (9,995)
10. **The Steps**
Sylvester Stallone, Morrow (8,906)
11. **Homemade**
Nara Aziza Smith, Morrow (8,662)
12. **Protocols**
Andrew D. Huberman, Simon Element (8,634)
13. **Guinness World Records 2027**
Guinness World Records (8,136)
14. **Love & Lemons: Pop of Flavor**
Jeanine Donofrio, Avery (7,137)
15. **Mastering American Mahjong**
Megan Trottier, Ten Speed (6,992)

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Edited by **CAROLYN JURIS**
"HELLO, DOLLY: A 2016 PICTURE BOOK VERSION OF PARTON'S SONG 'COAT OF MANY COLORS,' ILLUSTRATED BY BROOKE BOYNTON-HUGHES, MAKES ITS LIST DEBUT."

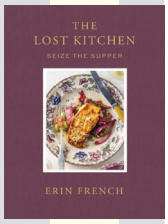
Currents Currents Currents Currents

Trade Paperback Frontlist

1. **Murdoku**
   Manuel Garand, Puzzlewright (24,034 units)
2. **Dungeon Crawler Carl**
   Matt Dinniman, Ace (21,427)
3. **Verity**
   Colleen Hoover, Grand Central (20,801)
4. **Chainsaw Man, Vol. 22**
   Tatsuki Fujimoto, Viz (15,554)
5. **The Killer Isn't Alice**
   Iris Starling, Little, Brown (13,858)
6. **Brain Damage**
   Freida McFadden, Poisoned Pen (11,334)
7. **Bound and Unbound**
   Ali Hazelwood, Berkley (10,110)
8. **Carl's Doomsday Scenario**
   Matt Dinniman, Ace (9,591)
9. **Back in Time (Murdoku #2)**
   Manuel Garand, Puzzlewright (8,754)
10. **Dungeon Crawler Carl, Vol. 2**
    Matt Dinniman et al., Vault (7,428)
11. **The Women**
    Kristin Hannah, Griffin (7,006)
12. **The Divorce**
    Freida McFadden, Poisoned Pen (6,314)
13. **Fruit Fly**
    Josh Silver, Crooked Lane (6,173)
14. **Stitched**
    Eli McCann, Torrey House (5,955)
15. **Large Print Cozy Vibes Word Search**
    Thunder Bay (5,603)

The week's bestsellers include a trio of new cookbooks: **The Lost Kitchen, Vol. 3** by chef, restaurateur, and memoirist Erin French; **Homemade** by model and social media personality Nara Aziza Smith; and **Love & Lemons: Pop of Flavor**, the fourth cookbook by recipe developer Jeanine Donofrio, who launched her *Love & Lemons* blog in 2011.

#4
15,370

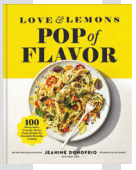


This week's hardcover frontlist nonfiction list

#11
8,662



#14
7,137



Children's Frontlist Fiction

1. **Trust Fall**
   Lynn Painter, Simon & Schuster (16,223 units)
2. **The Sixth Faction (deluxe ed.)**
   Veronica Roth, HarperCollins (13,641)
3. **Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince (illus. ed.)**
   Rowling/Pinfold, Scholastic (12,355)
4. **Sunrise on the Reaping**
   Suzanne Collins, Scholastic Press (11,302)
5. **21 Days of Fear**
   Hervé Commère, Simon & Schuster (10,152)
6. **Rowley Jefferson's Awesome Friendly Spooky Stories 2**
   Jeff Kinney, Amulet (8,092)
7. **Baby-Sitters on Board! (The Baby-Sitters Club Super Special #1)**
   Raina Telgemeier, Graphix (7,860)
8. **New Moon (deluxe ed.)**
   Stephenie Meyer, Little, Brown (6,016)
9. **Blood Moon**
   Britney S. Lewis, Page Street (5,467)
10. **Sunrise on the Reaping (media tie-in)**
    Suzanne Collins, Scholastic Press (5,397)
11. **The New Prophecy (Warriors Graphic Novel #1)**
    Hunter/Twist/Savos, HarperAlley (5,391)
12. **The Mirror of Infinite Endings (Once upon a Broken Heart)**
    Stephanie Garber, Flatiron (5,233)
13. **A Brave Beginning (Heartwood Hotel #6)**
    George/Graegin, Little, Brown (4,874)
14. **Nimbus**
    Jan Eldredge, HarperCollins (4,822)
15. **Fake Skating**
    Lynn Painter, Simon & Schuster (4,691)

Children's Picture Books

1. **You're My Little Baby Boo**
   Edwards/Marshall, Silver Dolphin (16,454 units)
2. **Little Blue Truck's Halloween**
   Schertle/McElmurry, Clarion (13,219)
3. **The Very Hungry Caterpillar**
   Eric Carle, Philomel (11,859)
4. **Room on the Broom**
   Donaldson/Scheffler, Puffin (11,767)
5. **Biscuit Visits the Pumpkin Patch**
   Capucilli/Schories, HarperCollins (11,540)
6. **The Very Hungry Caterpillar's Peekaboo Halloween**
   Eric Carle, World of Eric Carle (11,523)
7. **The Spooky Wheels on the Bus**
   Mills/Mantle, Cartwheel (10,019)
8. **Pete the Cat: Trick or Pete**
   Dean/Dean, HarperCollins (9,519)
9. **The Leaf Thief**
   Hemming/Slater, Sourcebooks Jabberwocky (9,410)
10. **The Little Ghost Who Was a Quilt**
    Nason/Eggenschwiler, Tundra (9,009)
11. **I Love You to the Moon and Back**
    Hepworth/Warnes, Tiger Tales (9,002)
12. **Goodnight Moon**
    Brown/Hurd, HarperCollins (8,389)
13. **Coat of Many Colors**
    Parton/Boynton-Hughes, Grosset & Dunlap (7,843)
14. **The Little Old Lady Who Was Not Afraid of Anything**
    Williams/Lloyd, HarperCollins (7,837)
15. **Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?**
    Martin/Carle, Holt (7,415)

Edited by
SOPHIA STEWART

Deals

"THOUGH SIMON MAVERICK STILL BILLS ITSELF AS MAINLY AN AUDIOBOOK PUBLISHER, THE IMPRINT HAS BEEN ENTHUSIASTICALLY EMBRACING THE POWER OF PRINT."

Currents Currents Currents Currents



Jason Pinter at Simon Maverick acquired world English rights to *Shewulf* by **I.V. Ophelia** (pictured l.) from **Angie Ojeda Hazen** at Lunar Literary Agency. Inspired by Polish and Slavic werewolf mythology, the gothic folk-horror novel "centers on a mysterious creature feared in the surrounding forests," per the agency, and explores "cultural erasure, forbidden desire, and the transformation of a hunted woman into legend." The novel is planned as Simon Maverick's first hardcover release. Publication is slated for October 2027.

▶**Anh Schluep** at Pocket Books landed U.S. rights to *Untamed* by **Rhi Aden**, the first book in the originally self-published Broken Sun dystopian romance series, from **Amy Fletcher** at Simon & Schuster UK. The novel centers on a girl who switches places with her twin in order to escape an arranged marriage and infiltrate a military academy with the intention of bringing down the oppressive regime in which they live—only to catch the attention of "the sadistic commander overseeing her unit," who "takes it upon himself to make her fall into line," per the agency. Pocket Books was relaunched by S&S this summer as a home for self-published authors. Publication is scheduled for February 2027.

▶**Peter Blackstock** at Grove Atlantic preempted North American rights to **Megan Campisi**'s *The Principia of the Heart* from **Stephanie Cabot** at Susanna Lea Associates. The novel is a fictionalized account of Isaac Newton's relationship with John Wickins, his lifelong scribe and roommate, "set against a backdrop of the plague and scientific discovery in 17th-century Cambridge," per the publisher. A release date has not been announced.

▶**Karen Kosztolnyik** at Grand Central netted North American rights to *The Favorite* by **Ally Condie** (*The Unwedding*) from **Jodi Reamer** at Writers House. The novel follows "a wealthy family whose widowed matriarch summons her adult children to the family-owned ski resort to go over the will, only for tragedy to strike soon after the favorite child receives a double share of the inheritance," per the publisher. Publication is set for spring 2028.

▶**Maddie Woda** at Hogarth picked up North American rights to Brazilian writer **Paulliny Tort**'s English-language debut, *The Immortals*, from **Marina Penalva** at Casanovas & Lynch, on behalf of Fosforo Editora. The novel follows "a family of Neanderthals struggling to survive a moment of upheaval in prehistory as they are forced to reassess their understanding of themselves after their first encounter with homo sapiens," per the publisher. **Julia Sanches** will translate from the Portuguese. A spring 2028 release is planned.

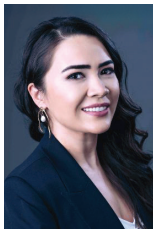














From top: Rhi Aden, Megan Campisi, Ally Condie, Paulliny Tort, Curt Menefee, Didem Tali, and Alcide Pierantozzi.

▶IN BRIEF

Mary Reynics at Ballantine took world rights to *Turnaround* by longtime *Fox NFL Sunday* host **Curt Menefee**, about the "leadership lessons gleaned from the most compelling comeback stories in recent sports history," from **Peter Steinberg** at UTA, for release in fall 2028.

● **Patrizia van Daalen** at Astra House acquired North American rights to **Alcide Pierantozzi**'s *Unbalancing Act*, a "genre-defying account of living with autism and severe mental illness," from **Tamara Sampey-Jawad** at Fitzcarraldo, for publication in May 2027. **Antonella Lettieri** will translate from the Italian.

● **Marie Pantojan** at Random House bought, at auction, North American rights to *The First Alliance* by **Iris de Rode**, a history of the Franco-American relationship and the alliance that won the American Revolution, drawing from long-sealed French archives, from **Dara Kaye** at WME Books. Pub date TBA.

● **Alexa Wejko** at Soho Press won world rights to **Didem Tali**'s debut, *Café Catstanbul*, about "the intersecting lives of three women magically transform when each encounters a seemingly ordinary calico cat" in a seaside village near Istanbul, for release in January 2028. **Ann Leslie Tuttle** at Dystel, Goderich & Bourret handled the deal.

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People

THIS WEEK • ZACHARY MASON HAS THOUGHTS ABOUT SENTIENT AI • ALLY WILKES WAS A MACABRE SORT OF GIRL • MARK ELLIS HARRIS IS NOT A STOCKTON RUSH FAN • SERVICE95'S MARIA PADGET WANTS TO GET PHYSICAL

"It seemed fairly humiliating to say I'm a writer, so I kept it to myself."

—**ZACHARY MASON**
author of *Fabrications* (Grove, Dec.)

People

Interviews



ALLY WILKES

Man Eater, the Bram Stoker finalist's blood-soaked latest, follows an ambitious young female botanist into the Brazilian jungle in 1901.

What inspired this novel? An early seed was thinking about the first Mrs. de Winter in Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca*. We only see her through Maxim's very distorted report of her as a villainess, but we get an idea that she was independent, sexually liberated, and cared a lot about her bodily autonomy. She was in this marriage that she didn't necessarily want to be in, and she's associated with Manderley's gothic nature—the swarming rhododendrons that make the second Mrs. de Winter feel so dwarfed and inadequate. I put those together and started conceiving of a woman trapped in a marriage, maybe a botanist or a gardener with her ambitions being tamped down.

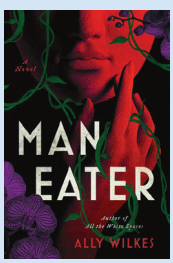
Why set the action in 1901? I wanted to create this turn-of-a-century, new-dawn sort of feel. I was going for a time when women's rights were a talking point, but before the suffragettes came to prominence. I also needed it to be in the last days of the Victorian orchid hunting craze, when people were paying fortunes at auction for these rare flowers and all the cutthroat behaviors that went with that.

You were a criminal barrister for 11 years. What inspired the pivot to writing genre fiction? I don't see it as a pivot so much as discovering who I really was all along. I've always been a macabre sort of girl, which came through in a lifelong love for horror and ghost stories, but also fed into being a criminal barrister, where you are dealing with difficult topics. I think the crunch point came when I realized that the criminal bar wasn't what I wanted to do long-term. I thought, Well, I love horror and the supernatural—maybe I could do something there? A large part of a criminal barrister's job is weaving together a narrative to present to a jury or judge, so I think the storytelling skills crossed over, as well.

Why do you think historical expeditions make such good backdrops for tales of horror and suspense? For one, it's very useful to be able to isolate your characters far from the hope of rescue. You've then got small group dynamics, so claustrophobia and agoraphobia work together. Then there's the gothic sense of the sublime in the landscape, the grandeur of what's being experienced. And there's also a lot to be picked out in terms of historical context—in this case, patriarchal expectations, notions of empire, and extractive colonialism.

Have you ever been on an expedition like this? My most far-flung trip was a relatively tame hike through the Himalayas in the traditional British style: ill-equipped and full of hubris. Anything that could go wrong on that five-day trip did, so that's as far as I'm willing to go for experiential research.

—KATRINA NIIDAS HOLM



Atria/Bestler, Jan.; reviewed on p. 55

WILKES © SOPHIE DAVIDSON; HARRIS © JENNY JIMENEZ



MARIA PADGET
SERVICE95

The head of pop star Dua Lipa's book club wants to expand its IRL presence, from in-person programming to a permanent exhibition at a bookstore in Portugal.

What's the process for picking each month's book? Dua always selects the monthly read. If I've read something and loved it, I'll share it with her, but she's like any other reader—she's taking book recommendations from friends and family, as well as following authors that she loves.

The book club is multimedia. Are there other mediums you plan to expand into? We created our first physical manifestation of the book club this year with the Manifesto Library. This is a partnership with Livraria Lello in Porto, Portugal, often called the world's most beautiful bookshop. We've curated a permanent archive of 100 books that challenge power and censorship and celebrate underrepresented and silenced voices.

How did Dua end up guest curating the London Literature Festival? We initially had a request for Dua to host a live edition of her *At Your Service* podcast as part of the festival. We met with the programming team and we all felt like we could be a bit more ambitious. Dua is hosting three conversations with Zadie Smith, Patti Smith, and the songwriter and poet Mustafa, plus 12 additional events. Dua's vision was that emerging authors should be shoulder to shoulder with literary legends.

What's next? A big focus for us in 2027 is our book club community. That means more events, like our Book Tastings, which bring people together over books and wine in an intimate setting where proper conversations can take place. They are so joyful, which is ultimately what it's all about. *—KERENSA CADENAS*

MARK ELLIS HARRIS

The journalist's *Deep End* exposes the recklessness that led to the fatal implosion of the *Titan* submersible.

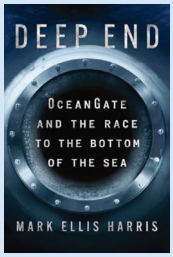
What led you to investigate OceanGate, the company that built the *Titan*? Like everybody, I was horrified when the *Titan* went missing. I knew we needed to find out what happened in the company to get to this point.

You rode on an OceanGate submersible in 2015. How did that go? Going underwater was wonderful, but we lost power, lost navigation. I didn't realize until working on the book that the dive was the deepest the submersible had been since a remodeling. I was lucky.

How did your view of Rush evolve? At first I didn't realize how much of a central character he would be. When I met him, he came across a bit slick. But it turned out he had so much more unearned self-belief than I realized. He was unable to take criticism and was also really optimistic. He just didn't see downsides.

You document many unsafe decisions made during *Titan*'s construction. Rush believed anything that suggested *Titan* was safe was definitely correct, and anything that suggested the design was questionable should be brushed aside. OceanGate took risks at every point. *Titan* survived, until it didn't. There was a succession of near misses.





Norton, Jan.; reviewed on p. 64

Any that stand out? When they lost the ability to drop their ballast weights. There was a built-in solution—he could pump a handle and drop the weight tray. But it would mean he would lose the rest of the diving season to replace the tray. So he suggested staying at the bottom of the ocean for 24 hours, after which another component would theoretically dissolve, and they'd float to the surface. This would have been by far the longest any human had ever stayed at that depth! Another employee insisted on returning—otherwise, I think he really would have browbeaten the passengers into staying. It could have been catastrophic.

Who holds responsibility? Many people warned him—employees, consultants, others within the industry. But OceanGate kept going because nobody else was in charge. He'd fire people if they objected. Government regulators dropped the ball, but ultimately the fault lies with Rush and his penchant for steamrolling opposition.

Is there any sympathy to be had here? I'll say that, at the start, we all thought, Oh, it's just rich people out for a thrill. But when I looked closer, I could see the passengers were all interested in science, history, nature. And unlike other billionaires rampaging through the world, Rush was trying to accumulate experience and glory rather than just money. So I gained some sympathy.

—EMILY COLUCCI

Author Profile

By DAVID VARNO

"MASON TOLD ME THAT COLLEAGUES IN SILICON VALLEY RARELY KNOW WHAT HE'S TALKING ABOUT WHEN HE TALKS ABOUT LITERATURE. 'FOR A LONG TIME,' HE SAID, 'I'VE HELD TO THE PROBABLY FALSE BELIEF THAT I'D BE HAPPIER IN NEW YORK.'"



Ghost in the Machine

In his latest work of fiction, **Zachary Mason** speculates about the relationship between humans and sentient AI

WHAT IF ADVANCED AI doesn't devolve into something akin to the villains in *The Terminator* or *The Matrix*? What if it's actually designed to serve the human race? Would it actually help or hurt humanity? These are some of the questions posed in *Fabrications*, the new story collection and fourth book from Zachary Mason.

A computer scientist who worked for tech startups until a few years ago, Mason has been fascinated by AI since he was a kid growing up in Silicon Valley. "I read essentially everything that had been written about AI, at least on a popular level," he says, speaking via Zoom from his home office in the Berkeley Hills. And when Mason, who skipped high school and went directly to college, says that he's read almost anything on a subject—be it AI or Greek and Roman mythology—believe it.

Mason is driven by deep curiosity, particularly about the nature and function of human consciousness. He believes that at some point ("probably somewhere between five years and 50"), computers will help humans understand how the mind works. And this knowledge, he says, will provide the key to developing AI that "could plausibly be called thinking." Anticipating this next industrial revolution has fueled his fiction.

Born in California in 1974, Mason began writing when he was 18 and graduated from Harvey Mudd College in Claremont. He amassed hundreds of thousands of pages of notebooks over the next decade but didn't tell anyone what he was up to. "It seemed fairly humiliating to say I'm a writer, so I kept it to myself, which, in retrospect, I think was a sound idea," he says with a twinkle in his eye, adding that the odds of getting published seemed as remote as becoming president. Aware that the fragments in his notebooks were poised to "spiral endlessly," he took stock of what he'd written and began to forge *The Lost Books of the Odyssey*, a postmodern retelling of Homer's epic poem that

MASON © KAI PARVIAINEN

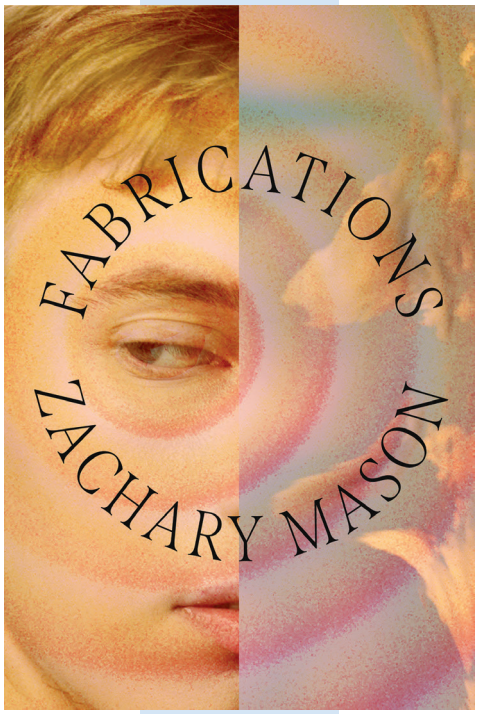
People

he envisioned as "Italo Calvino's *Invisible Cities* if it were about Homer."

Over the next few years, Mason sent out the manuscript to agents, book editors, anyone he could think of. It didn't go well. "Absolutely nothing happened—like, nobody even rejected me," he says. "I was just sending things off into the void."

But in 2007, the novel won a contest for publication with Starcherone Books, a now-defunct outlet for experimental fiction. Hoping for attention from book critics, Mason hired a prop designer to build small Trojan horses that could fit his book inside their bellies. While this didn't help score any reviews, he says one horse was used as a candy dish by interns at the *New York Times*.

Two years later, Mason was named a finalist for the NYPL's Young Lions Fiction Award. This was a turning point and brought him a great deal of attention, including calls from literary agents. He went with Bill Clegg, who helped him publish a slightly revised version of *Lost Books* with Farrar, Straus and Giroux in 2010. The novel became a bestseller, breaking 25,000 units to date, according to Circana BookScan.



Grove, Dec.

Mason's sophomore effort, the 2017 cyberpunk novel *Void Star*, attracted science fiction readers, but sales fell short of his debut. It was followed by *Metamorphica* (2018), a fragmented retelling of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* that marked a return to the mode of *The Lost Books of the Odyssey* but died on the vine. *Metamorphica* received a scathing review in the *New York Times* from Emily Wilson, whose bestselling translation of *The Odyssey* was published a year earlier. Wilson wrote that *Metamorphica* "takes the memorable female characters of classical myth... and turns them into ciphers." As an example, she cited Athena, claiming that in Mason's hands she "becomes a needy girl with a crush on Odysseus."

Speaking over Zoom, Mason is circumspect about Wilson's review. "If you're going to put things out in the world, there's a 100% chance they're going to be attacked by people who it was not for." A week later, though, he emailed with more to say, acknowledging that while *Metamorphica* "runs dark and esoteric and might be the most difficult of my books, it's also probably the best one." Though he'd always felt it "wasn't seemly" to talk about negative reviews, he wondered if perhaps now was the time, adding, "What saddens me is that there are good readers who would have connected with it, had they found it. Maybe they'll find it in the future."

Fabrications, thus far, has fared better. It's received blurbs from Chloe Gong and Bruce Holsinger, and *Publishers Weekly* called it "a poignant and slyly complex meditation on the human condition." Grove VP and deputy publisher Peter Blackstock, who acquired *Fabrications*, finds Mason's imagination fascinating. He says the book boasts a literary quality and arch humor drawn from the work of Borges and Calvino and compares it to science fiction by Ted Chiang, adding that Mason is "even freer in his framing of the stories."

The manuscript for *Fabrications* came to Blackstock as a novel, in the vein of *Lost Books* and *Metamorphica*, but he thought it would be stronger as a collection. "I think it was the right form for this book," he says, "because it just gives him total freedom to say, You know, things can be disconnected from each other but they're obviously all united by tone."

It's a tone that resonates with the current news cycle, which continues to be dominated by AI. Blackstock notes that the stories in *Fabrications* "have real insight into the reality of computers and all the different facets of life that AI could become involved with."

The AI entities in *Fabrications* don't always behave appropriately, but they usually mean well, even if they break the law or hurt people. There's the late billionaire's personal AI assistant in "Ouroboros," which, after failing to persuade its aging and hard-drinking master to adopt a healthy lifestyle, decides to hide the man's death and impersonate him, following through on its directive to protect and grow his wealth. In "Transitional," a lifelike robot made in the image of a dead man for his grieving daughter gives her a bit of tough love to help her move on with her life. And in "Lamina," AI functions as a memory aid for people with dementia.

As to questions about AI being good or bad, Blackstock says answers won't be found in *Fabrications*. "I like how it's not a book that's saying, you know, this kind of intelligent AI is going to be great, and we shouldn't be worried about it," he explains. "Nor is it a book that says it's going to be totally horrific and only horrible. I think that's where you get interesting literature."

Mason agrees. "I'm just trying to see things as they are, and as they might be, and find the possibilities of how AI will sort of twine around our lives," he says. "Maybe in virtue of that, this would answer or speak to people's concerns about the technology in a meaningful way."

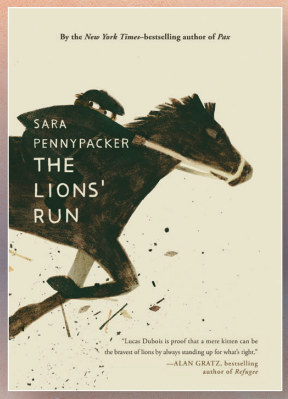
Macmillan Children's Publishing Group celebrates 2026's Biggest Stars!

Six Starred Reviews! ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

★ "Pure imagination."
—*KIRKUS REVIEWS*



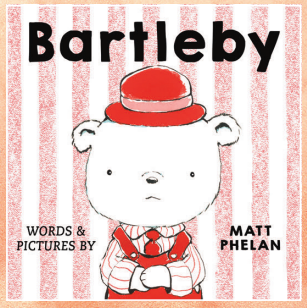
9781250364395 | Ages 3–6



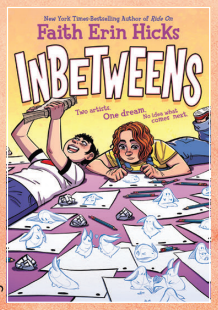
9781250392817 | Ages 8–12

★ "A beautiful tribute to bravery."
—*BOOKLIST*

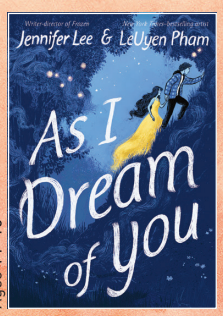
Five Starred Reviews! ★ ★ ★ ★ ★



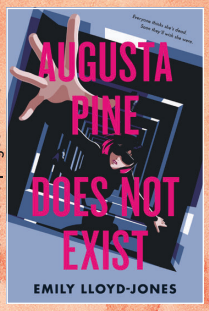
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9781250838759 | 9781250838742
Ages 10–14

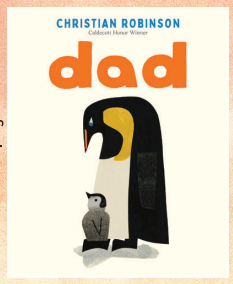


9781250862037 | 9781250862044
Ages 14–18

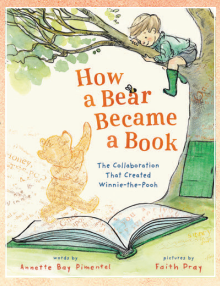


9781250410528 | Ages 14–18

Four Starred Reviews! ★ ★ ★ ★



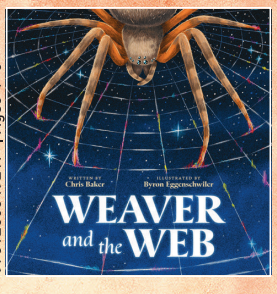
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9781250358448 | Ages 4–8



9781250349019 | Ages 4–8



9781250349217 | Ages 4–8



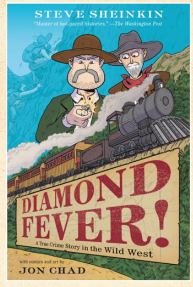
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Ages 6–10



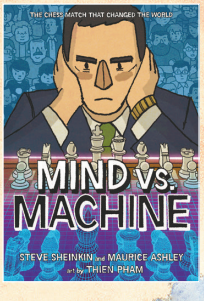
9781250246707 | 9781250246691
Ages 8–12



9781250882059 | Ages 8–12



9781250265746 | Ages 9–12



9781250334770 | 9781250334763
Ages 10–14



9781250376312 | Ages 13–18

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BEST Books 2026

OUR EDITORS REVIEW THOUSANDS OF BOOKS EACH YEAR, AND FOR THIS ISSUE THEY'VE SELECTED 150 OF THE BEST FOR ADULTS, TEENS, AND CHILDREN, FROM SWEEPING HISTORICAL SAGAS TO BONE-CHILLING HORROR STORIES, GORGEOUS ILLUSTRATED FABLES, AND MORE.


THIS VAST ENTERPRISE
CRAIG FEHRMAN
Marlon James
The Disappearers
RIVERHEAD BOOKS
PUBLIC ACCESS AFTERWORLD...
JANE SCHOENBRUN
Hogarth
The AGI Chronicles
Kevin Roose
THE CASTLE
JON RONSON
RIVERHEAD BOOKS
GWENDOLINE RILEY
THE PALM HOUSE
nyrb
Rosa Montero
THE DANGER TO BE SANE
THE RISE AND FALL OF THE ARTIFICIAL STATE
JILL LEPORE
Liveright
COLSON WHITEHEAD
COOL MACHINE
DOUBLEDAY
Transcription
Ben Lerner

TOP 10 BEST BOOKS OF 2026

The AGI Chronicles: The Inside Story of the Race to Create an Artificial Superintelligence
Kevin Roose (Farrar, Straus and Giroux)
This entertaining and essential account follows the high-stakes goings-on at leading AI companies as they attempt to build machines that think better and faster than humans. Rather than weighing the potential risks and benefits of a hypothetical technology, reporter Roose offers a front row seat to how humanity arrived at a pivotal inflection point.

The Castle: Adventures in a World of Unraveling Men
Jon Ronson (Riverhead)
A bemused investigation into a wealthy steel scion's attempt to establish a harem in a castle in New England morphs into a rollicking inquiry into why some men, like sitcom writer Graham Linehan and actor Armie Hammer, have been driven into very public, career-ending spirals over issues of sex and gender identity. This gets at the heart of something both sinister and ridiculous about the present moment.

Cool Machine
Colson Whitehead (Doubleday)
It's been a banner year for New York City—Mamdani, the Knicks—and Whitehead meets the moment with one of the best novels of the city in recent memory. In this conclusion to his Harlem Trilogy, which traces the porous line between crime and straight life, Whitehead examines the city's pull on newcomers and natives alike and the lengths people go to make it there.

The Danger to Be Sane: Creativity and the Eccentric Mind
Rosa Montero, trans. from the Spanish by Lindsey Ford (Europa)
What begins as a penetrating examination of the psychology of literary greats transforms into a gripping account of Montero's pursuit of an imposter who posed as her for years when she was a journalist in Madrid. A unique exploration of the relationship between the impulse to write and insanity, this is nothing short of brilliant.

The Disappearers
Marlon James (Riverhead)
There are more than a few ways to recommend this audacious novel: one could call out its devotion to late-20th-century queer literature; its sobering portrait of homophobia in Jamaica, where sodomy is illegal; or its deeply sensuous writing on sex, violence, and death. Most admirable, though, is James's ability to sustain and develop a thought across 600 pages.

The Palm House
Gwendoline Riley (New York Review Books)
Those who toil in the culture industry will find special resonance in Riley's gimlet-eyed view into a storied London literary magazine under clueless new ownership. The novel's workplace drama and its portrayal of a tight-knit tribe of writers are spot-on, and there's equal depth to Riley's sharp depictions of British class differences in barely affordable London and her description of the narrator's dysfunctional family.

Public Access Afterworld
Jane Schoenbrun (Hogarth)
To most, David Sawyer, the mysterious character at the center of filmmaker Schoenbrun's ambitious, funny, and scary debut, is a mass-murdering cult leader. To some, he's guiding the way to the truth about a portal to an alternate universe. What's so good about this book, beyond the effortless mix of horror and trans coming-of-age story, is its irresistible voice.

The Rise and Fall of the Artificial State
Jill Lepore (Liveright)
Pulitzer winner Lepore warns in this urgent, sweeping treatise that AI governance is the final form of Hannah Arendt's "totalitarian state." But she notes that AI may also be sounding its own death knell, as the last gasp of a type of automated decision-making that has been on the rise for decades. The book's title notes a "rise and fall" because, Lepore argues, the fall is nigh.

This Vast Enterprise: A New History of Lewis & Clark
Craig Fehrman (Avid Reader)
This kaleidoscopic retelling of the Lewis and Clark expedition surfaces the saga's darker undercurrents—reframing the pregnant Sacajawea as a victim of rape, highlighting Clark's refusal to free an enslaved man who made the journey, and spotlighting Lewis's descent into addiction and Clark's subsequent reign as superintendent of Indian Affairs, where he betrayed many who aided the expedition.

Transcription
Ben Lerner (Farrar, Straus and Giroux)
With its brisk pacing and tidy page count, Lerner's finest novel offers readers a concentrated hit of fiction's core pleasure: the sense, while reading, that one is recovering lost time. Though the story is contemporary, involving the anxiety and folly caused by a broken smartphone, it's fueled by ageless concerns about technology's effects on art, consciousness, and human relationships.

PHOTO © MATT PEYTON

BEST FICTION & NONFICTION 2026

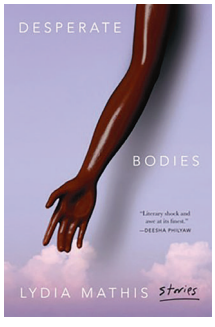
Literary Fiction

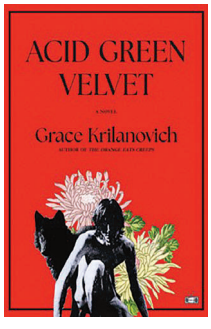
The Abyss
Jeyamohan, trans. from the Tamil by Suchitra Ramachandran (Transit)
In this gritty novel about the dehumanizing horse-trading of modern-day slavery and arranged marriage, the protagonist puts deformed people to work as beggars on the steps of Hindu temples while scheming to marry off his oldest daughter. Jeyamohan's depictions of grotesque behavior evoke the surreally ecstatic mood of such dark-hearted classics as José Donoso's *The Obscene Bird of Night*.

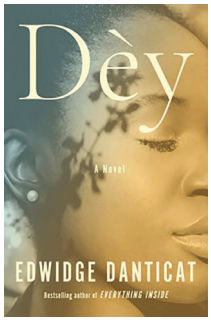
Acid Green Velvet
Grace Krilanovich (Two Dollar Radio)
Krilanovich tells a wonderfully strange and slyly contemporary tale of Gilded Age California. Its wayward teen heroine, Paulette, thinks she's found a chance at a new life by shacking up with the boho scion of a robber baron, until her tramp father shows up with a band of anti-capitalist revolutionaries. There's nothing quite like this incendiary novel.

Aside from My Heart, All Is Well
Héctor Abad, trans. from the Spanish by Anne McLean (Archipelago)
Inspired by a late 20th-century Medellín film critic and priest, Colombian writer Abad's novel brims with humanity. Luis awaits a heart transplant at age 50. Meanwhile, the narrator, his decades-long friend, tells of Luis's persuasive passion for cinema and both men's spiritual devotion, in the process showing with heartrending clarity how their lives' deepest meaning derives from friendship.









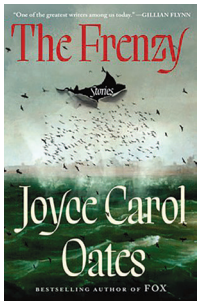
Country People
Daniel Mason (Random House)
It's a familiar story—coastal elites move to the country—but Mason turns it on its head in this seriously funny tale of a California family arriving in Vermont by showing more interest in the locals. Each are fascinating human beings, not objects of curiosity, even those who turn out to be part of an occult group of hollow-Earthers.

Desperate Bodies
Lydia Mathis (Grove/Gay)
Mathis aces a range of tones in this remarkably accomplished debut collection. "Girlhood Lessons," an anthem of resilience, begins with the narrator's matter-of-fact descriptions of her abusive family's double standards for girls. "Empty Apartment" is a sly ghost story about an English teacher preparing to lecture on Dickens's "A Christmas Carol." All the stories are worthy of attention.

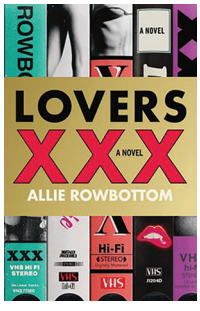
Dèy
Edwidge Danticat (Knopf)
This understated and remarkably compressed novel opens with Magnolia, a 30-something daughter of Haitian immigrants, sheltering in place during a mass shooting. The ordeal floods her with grief, and the novel swells into a moving reflection on everyday violence and the tenuous nature of home, not only in America but in Haiti, where Magnolia's parents have repatriated.

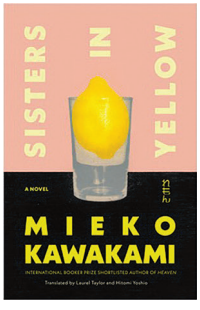
Dooneen
Keith Ridgway (New Directions)
Mew, a London-based writer, returns to his native Dublin, where he's swept up in a mysterious revolt. Ridgway sets the stage with wondrous fantastical and dreamlike details—Mew's means of travel was a magical urban turnstile, which transports pedestrians between the two cities—and packs the narrative with sharp ideas about Dublin's literary legacy and history of revolutionary politics.


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SARA SHEPARD
ART BY
STEPHANIE PEPPER
ON SALE
11/3/2026
A MYSTERY GRAPHIC NOVEL FOR YOUNG ADULTS
PAPERBACK | 9781799503088
208 PAGES | 6" X 9"









The Frenzy
Joyce Carol Oates (Hogarth)
Oates continues her spectacular winning streak after *Butcher* and *Fox* with a collection of stories that stand with her greatest work. Take the title entry, about a ridiculous middle-aged suburbanite hoping to make a "teenaged mistress" out of a family friend. Like many of the entries, it's taut with tension and veers in a surprising but inevitable direction.

It Will Come Back to You
Sigrid Nunez (Riverhead)
Not only is Nunez a sharply funny and fiercely intelligent writer, she's a remarkable storyteller. Her wide-ranging tales hold the reader in her grip, even as she flits from one digression to another, because she's always deepening a theme or honing an idea, whether about people's instinct to philosophize or the gravitational pull of deviant behavior.

The Left and the Lucky
Willy Vlautin (Harper)
At the center of this bighearted novel of working-class life in Portland, Ore., is the mutually healing bond between a relentlessly bullied eight-year-old boy and his next-door neighbor, a jilted housepainter. Never treacly or sensational, Vlautin's authentic story has the reader caring about its characters as if they were the reader's own found family.

Life of M
Rachel Cusk (Farrar, Straus and Giroux)
Cusk's portrait of an eternally youthful and maddeningly ethereal movie star has become one of the most misunderstood novels in some time. Far from an attack on a real-life celebrity, the story, about an aging author writing about an unnamed actor, is a sly and boldly weird meditation on fiction, mortality, and personhood.

Lovers XXX
Allie Rowbottom (Soho)
Two teen girls run away to 1980s Los Angeles in this thrilling novel. After one of them throws herself into becoming a porn star, they're driven apart. With an insightful two-part narrative that revisits these events decades later, Rowbottom offers a nuanced view—from sobering to titillating and back—of her characters' attempts to empower themselves.

Nebraska
Monica Datta (Astra House)
Copious footnotes, a psychiatrist's frame story, a ghastly crime—yes, this archly told novel is coded by the DNA of fiction by Vladimir Nabokov and David Foster Wallace. But it's very much doing its own thing with the sprawling story of an Indian family broken apart by a mother's filicide, incarceration, and subsequent new life in a Nebraska Christian commune.

The Occidental Book of the Dead
T. Geronimo Johnson (Morrow)
With the irreverence of Paul Beatty's *The Sellout* and the narrative pyrotechnics of Susan Choi's *Trust Exercise*, Johnson's novel doesn't make things easy. Its story, doled out in conflicting versions, follows a Black cop whose partner kills a white teen. Though the novel causes no shortage of discomfort, it's completely worth the effort.

One Leg on Earth
'Pemi Aguda (Norton)
The Nigerian short story writer's lyrical debut novel takes a measured view of the desire for motherhood and its unspoken burdens. The themes are enhanced by a visionary and subtly dystopian conceit involving the links between a spate of suicides by pregnant women in Lagos and an exploitative urban development scheme for the city's elite.

Paradiso 17
Hannah Lillith Assadi (Knopf)
This beautiful novel functions as a dialogue of the unsayable between a father and daughter. Sufien, a Palestinian cab driver in the U.S., escaped the 1948 Nakba as a young boy. Now, decades later, raising his daughter, Layla, with his Jewish wife, he still nurses a long-time dream of becoming a writer. In Assadi's hands, his story comes to brilliant life.

The School of Night
Karl Ove Knausgaård, trans. from the Norwegian by Martin Aitken (Penguin Press)
A mania-inducing new star, a *Hamlet*-like dream, and murderous metalheads drove the three previous entries in the Morning Star series. This one, a Faustian tale about a famous photographer threatened by possible revelations of a dastardly youthful deed, is the best yet. Packed with insights into Marlowe's play, Knausgaård's page-turner has loads to say about the cost of ambition.

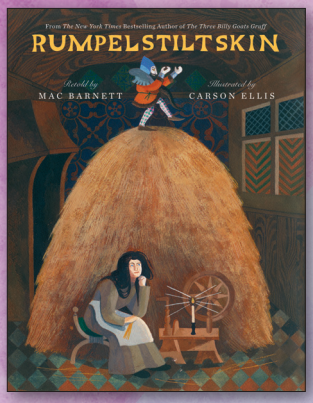
Sisters in Yellow
Mieko Kawakami, trans. from the Japanese by Laurel Taylor and Hitomi Yoshio (Europa)
Kawakami preserves what was so arresting in her earlier work—alluring depictions of Tokyo nightlife, women's complex friendships, and acute loneliness—and blows them out into a sweeping noir. Its story of two women who open a Tokyo bar is woven with dense and fascinating layers, after one of the women learns that the other has been charged with kidnapping.

The Song of Stork and Dromedary
Anjet Daanje, trans. from the Dutch by David McKay (Farrar, Straus and Giroux)
Added to the pantheon of fiction about literary obsessives—think *2666*—is this fascinating metafictional novel about a Victorian novel by Englishwoman Eliza May Drayden, who invites comparisons to the Brontës. Blended with Daanje's narrative of Drayden are long sections devoted to the critics and readers who build their lives around her work. It's endlessly stimulating.

A Tender Age
Chang-rae Lee (Riverhead)
Lee's deceptively simple story of a 10-year-old Korean immigrant's introduction to the ways of the world not only skewers the model minority myth, but it pokes fun at the conventions of a bildungsroman, leaving the reader to join with the middle-aged narrator in recognizing how little can be learned from one's own experiences.

SCHOLASTIC

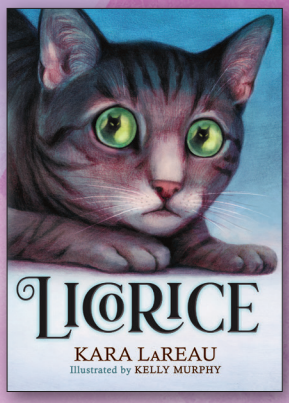
CELEBRATE OUR STARS!



★ BCCB ★ Booklist ★ BookPage
★ Kirkus ★ PW ★ SLJ



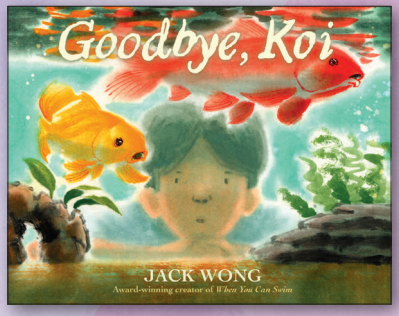
★ Horn Book ★ Kirkus ★ PW ★
SLJ ★ Shelf Awareness



★ Booklist ★ BookPage
★ Kirkus ★ PW



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★ Kirkus ★ PW



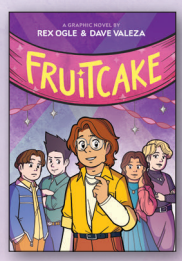
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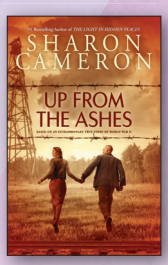
★ Booklist ★ Kirkus
★ Shelf Awareness



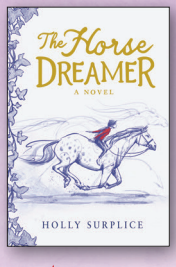
★ BCCB
★ SLJ
★ Booklist



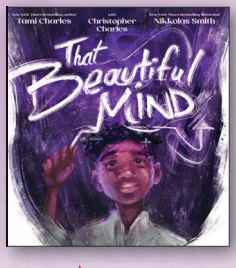
★ Kirkus
★ SLJ
★ Shelf Awareness



★ Booklist
★ Kirkus
★ SLJ



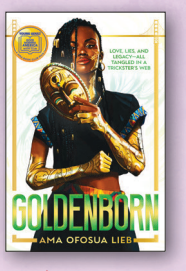
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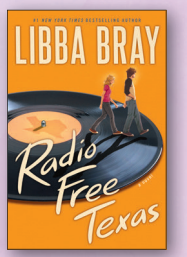
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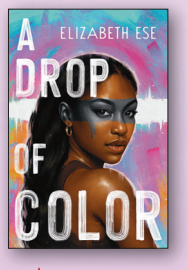


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SEE ALL OF OUR STARS



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Poetry

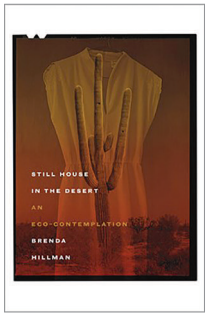
Be Easy: New and Selected Poems
Adrian Matejka (Liveright)
From Midwestern amusement parks to Jack Johnson's boxing ring, Matejka vibrantly delivers American life in all its music and contradictions. Gathering 21 new poems alongside selections from two decades of work, this insightful volume showcases his mastery of imagery and sound. It's an exceptional introduction for new readers and a treasure for longtime fans.



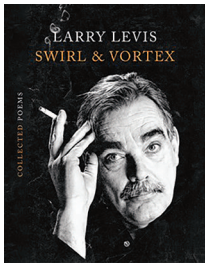
Intifadas
Edward Salem (Sarabande)
Salem's daring second book unforgettably captures Palestinian diasporic grief, survivor's guilt, and fury. By turns bitterly funny and wrenching, these poems demonstrate their meticulous craft through inventive forms and surprising, powerful language.



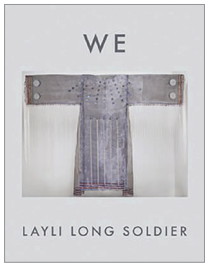
Still House in the Desert: An Eco-Contemplation
Brenda Hillman (Wesleyan Univ.)
Hillman brings astonishing formal invention and emotional range to this meditation on ecological devastation and memory, balancing evocative objects from her personal history with planetary loss. Funny, tender, and ruminative, these poems and photographs show Hillman at the height of her power.



Swirl & Vortex
Larry Levis, edited by David St. John (Graywolf)
This monumental collection of past and previously unseen work invites readers to appreciate the full sweep of Levis's melancholy and spellbinding imagination. Rich in narrative, his poems deliver resonant glimpses into ordinary lives and failures while quietly confirming the consolations of language.



We
Layli Long Soldier (Graywolf)
Long Soldier's dazzling assemblage of poems, essays, and visual art reveals how colonial history persists in classrooms, institutions, and family life. Her formally inventive work dismantles oppressive language while honoring Native resistance and collective action. The result is an unforgettable book of witness and possibility.



Mysteries & Thrillers

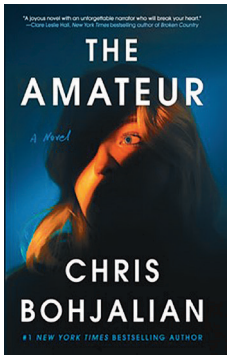
The Amateur
Chris Bohjalian (Doubleday)
Bestseller Bohjalian reaches new heights with his 25th novel, the stunning saga of an 18-year-old female golfer who accidentally kills a caddy in 1970s Westchester, N.Y. The ensuing investigation unearths the young woman's entanglement with a much-older man, nudging the story in rich new directions as Bohjalian brilliantly considers questions of trauma, memory, and familial legacy.

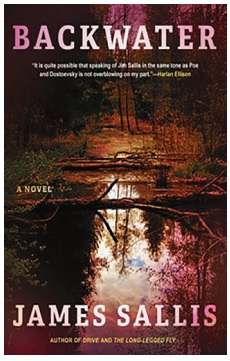
Backwater
James Sallis (Soho Crime)
This swan song for *Drive* author Sallis, who died in January, highlights everything that made him such a singular voice. The tale of a small-town cop who's pulled back to the force when the local chief disappears, it's more concerned with life in a village and the spiritual dimensions of work than with blood, guts, or the matter of whodunit—and it's all the better for it.

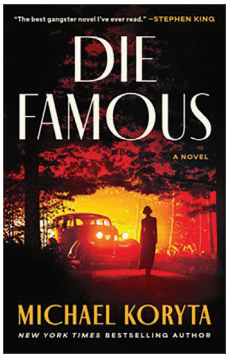
Die Famous
Michael Koryta (Little, Brown)
Sweeping, epic, and psychologically complex, this historical thriller spins the real-life story of Maine outlaw Al Brady into the tragic tale of a family torn apart by crime during the Great Depression. It spans decades and hinges on an emotionally pummeling love story, and yet it's difficult to imagine not racing through its 400-odd pages in a day or two.

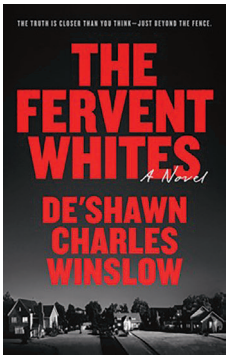
The Fervent Whites
De'Shawn Charles Winslow (One World)
A majority-Black community in the Hudson Valley is rattled when a white couple falsely accused of murder returns home from prison in this deliciously subversive novel inspired by Winslow's experiences as a minority in Upstate New York. With a climax that's nigh impossible to forget, it flips the script on familiar stories of injustice in endlessly clever—and ultimately devastating—ways.

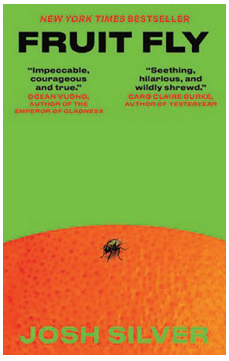
Fruit Fly
Josh Silver (Crooked Lane)
In a rare turn of events, this year's buzziest (forgive the pun) thriller also turned out to be one of its best. Silver's bruising satire of a publishing industry hungry for trauma

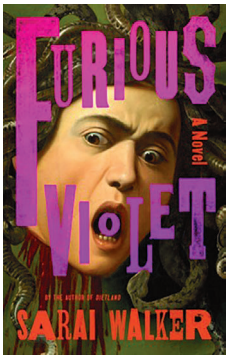












porn is boosted by the former YA author's deep empathy for his two antiheroes: a struggling author and a smart gay junkie. Crucially, however, the novel maintains its bite through to the final sentence.

Furious Violet
Sarai Walker (Harper)
Mind-melting in the best way, this Möbius strip of a thriller follows a true crime writer who's writing a book about a mom-obsessed serial killer while living in the shadow of her own mother, a famous poet. When the writer receives anonymous threats from someone claiming to be her child, her—and the reader's—grip on reality starts to slip, plunging the narrative into pleasurable chaos.

The Midnight Taxi
Yosha Gunasekera (Berkley)
It's not easy to pull off a memorable cozy, but Innocence Project attorney Gunasekera nails it on her first try. Set in a recognizably gritty New York City, the book follows a cab driver who seeks assistance from a public defender after she's accused of killing a passenger. The result is sweet, surprising, and endlessly entertaining.

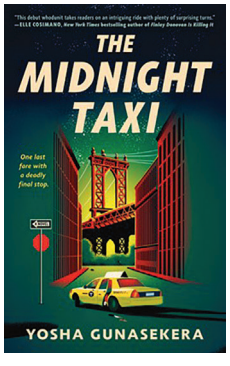
My Name Was Gerry Sass
Tiffany Hanssen (Atlantic Crime)
WNYC host Hanssen makes a seamless transition to the page with this story of a radio host and hit man whose murder sparks a crisis of faith in his best friend and sets his daughter on a bloody quest for revenge. Indelible characters and Hanssen's well-honed message about the futility of escaping the past would be enough to make this one of the year's best—that it's funny is just a bonus.

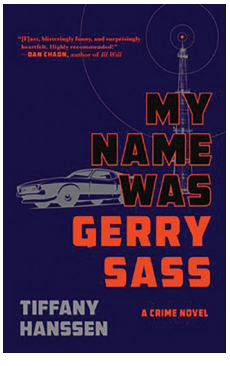
Paper Cut
Rachel Taff (Morrow)
Taff's incendiary debut knits together several topical themes—cults, female rage, the pitfalls of maintaining a public persona—without once feeling like it's chasing trends. Nearly 20 years after the murder trial that made cult escapee Lucy Golden a feminist icon, she considers telling the truth about that long-ago disaster. Lucky for readers, the truth is a doozy.

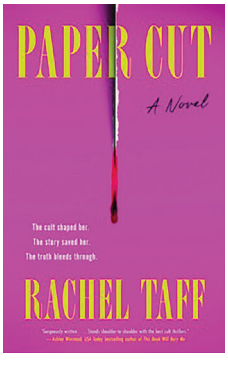
A Past Without Pictures
Jonathan Ames (Mysterious Press)
Ames, a literary shape-shifter, does a lot with a little in this spare story of an LAPD detective who returns to Alabama after the murder of her unsavory father. There, she finds the type of surreal criminal underworld Ames explored in 2013's *You Were Never Really Here*; this time, the tone is even stranger and more tragic.

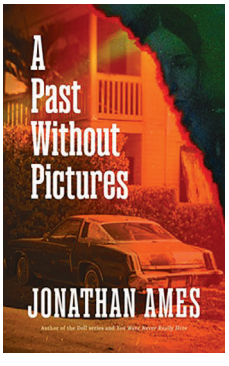
A Violent Masterpiece
Jordan Harper (Mulholland)
The latest from Harper, the reigning king of L.A. neo-noir, is a neon-soaked nightmare of serial killers, conspiracy theories, and livestreamers, with a few direct links to the author's 2023 hit *Everybody Knows*. Employing a wider scope than in his previous books and prose that's more stylish and dazzling than ever, Harper handily defends his crown.

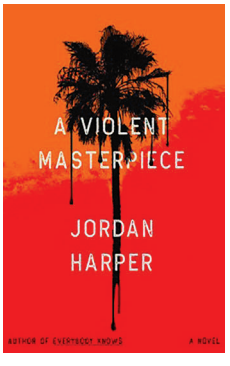
The Windowman
Christopher Goffard (Crooked Lane)
This kaleidoscopic satirical thriller filters the story of Damon Midnight, who disappears after he's acquitted of a string of grisly murders, through the perspectives of his self-righteous wife, the DA tasked with finding him, and the actor hired to play him. Goffard, a Pulitzer-winning journalist, brings a reporter's eye for detail to the proceedings, resulting in an incisive and unpredictable ride.

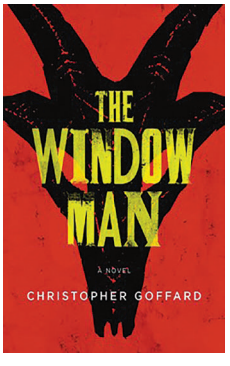












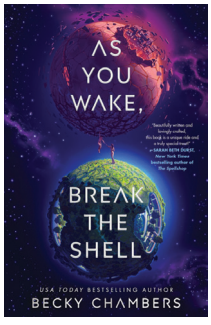
SF, Fantasy & Horror

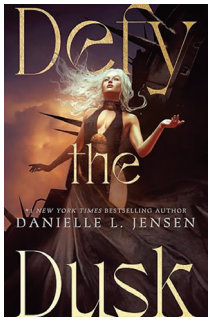
As You Wake, Break the Shell
Becky Chambers (Harper Voyager)
While not quite as cozy as the works that Hugo Award winner Chambers is best known for, there's a huge beating heart at the center of this immersive sci-fi series starter. It follows space pilot Cora; Colibri, the massive extraterrestrial with whom she's telepathically bonded; and florist Signy, whom they turn to for help hiding their "mindbleed." Chambers imbues this meticulously crafted alien world with an impressive amount of humanity.

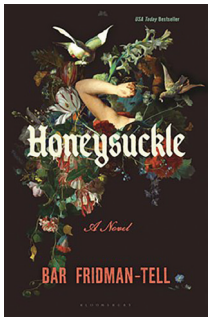
Defy the Dusk
Danielle L. Jensen (Del Rey)
A vividly drawn postapocalyptic desert serves as the striking backdrop for this electrifying romantasy series launch from bestseller Jensen. What's left of humanity lives aboard giant rigs built to outrun man-eating monsters. As rig captain Kyran and magic wielder Lirien clash over survival strategies, Jensen continually ratchets up the stakes. Epic in scope and full of pulse-pounding action, this is a true page-turner.

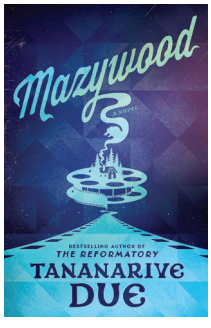
Honeysuckle
Bar Fridman-Tell (Bloomsbury)
Drawing from Welsh mythology, this haunting, claustrophobic fairy tale follows the thorny relationship between lonely boy Rory and Daye, a girl made out of flowers to be his friend, from childhood to adulthood. Fridman-Tell's lovely, lyrical prose eases readers into the increasingly dark dynamic between these leads as Daye struggles to assert agency and understand her place in the world. It's utterly transfixing.

Mazywood
Tananarive Due (Saga)
NAACP Image Award winner Due toggles between the 1920s, when Black aspiring actor Mazelle Washington makes a dangerous wish to become a Hollywood starlet, and the present day, when her filmmaker grandson and his family face the consequences of her actions. The result is a staggering work of horror that combines hair-raising action with sharp-toothed reflections on the politics of Black performance.

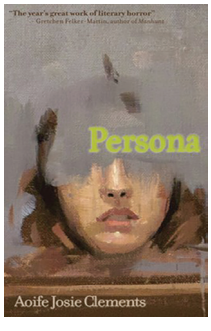


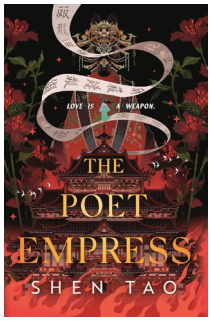


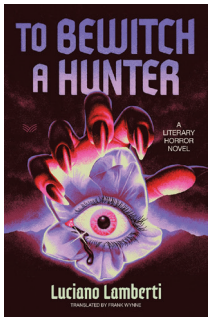












Palaces of the Crow
Ray Nayler (MCD)
This intricately constructed and deeply empathetic speculative survival tale from Hugo Award winner Nayler follows a group of refugees weathering WWII with help from a murder of hyperintelligent corvids. There's much that's harrowing here as the war rages on around this unlikely gang of human and animal misfits, but Nayler tempers the darkness with hope, resilience, and a powerful message of togetherness.

Persona
Aoife Josie Clements (Littlepuss)
An agoraphobic trans woman discovering explicit videos of herself online that she has no memory of making spirals into a meditation on isolation, autonomy, and the dark side of the internet that goes to some pitch-black places. In crisp, fearless prose, debut author Clements blends body horror and cosmic horror to truly gut-churning effect.

The Poet Empress
Shen Tao (Bramble)
Brilliantly subverting romantasy convention, Tao's unrelenting dark fantasy debut introduces a world where poetry is power, but women aren't permitted to learn how to read. That stricture can't hold back ambitious, revenge-minded heroine Wei, however, as she rises through the court of cruel prince Terren. Tao never shies away from showing her deliciously thorny characters in all their startling complexity. This pulls no punches.

To Bewitch a Hunter
Luciano Lamberti, trans. from the Spanish by Frank Wynne (HarperVia)
When the heroine of this wildly ambitious, polyphonic horror novel discovers that she was kidnapped as a baby during the 1976–1983 military dictatorship in Argentina, her investigation into her origins leads to a shocking supernatural revelation. Her family history unfolds via a kaleidoscopic series of vignettes from myriad narrators, creating a tantalizing puzzle with a dark secret at its center.

A Little Elephant. A Powerful Message.

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Romance & Erotica

Bad Words
Ríoghnach Robinson (St. Martin's)
Sparks fly between author Parker Navarro and literary critic Selina Chan—despite her vicious pans of his two novels. Robinson uses their juicy intellectual sparring and slow-burning enemies-to-lovers arc to probe the intersections of artistry, taste, and commerce. Her robust portrait of New York City's publishing scene could feel a bit inside baseball, but instead provides a vibrant backdrop to this un-put-downable bookish romance.

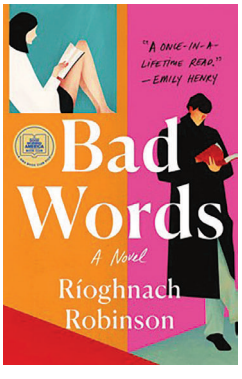
Enemies to Lovers
Alisha Rai (Avon)
This action-packed, hijinks-filled rom-com plays out as a madcap road trip from New York City to Las Vegas. Undertaking this rollicking journey are Krish Anand, who is impersonating an FBI agent, and con artist Sejal Chaudhary, whose ties to the Cobra crime syndicate are Krish's best lead to locate his missing brother, an actual FBI agent. With plentiful twists, detours, and speed bumps along the way, it's a cinematic romp.

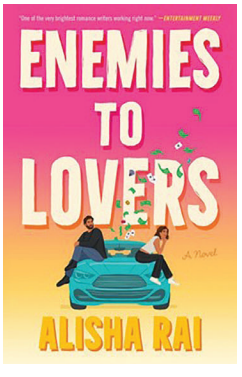
How to Kill a Guy in 10 Dates
Shailee Thompson (Gallery)
It's rare for a genre mash-up to get the tone just right, but debut author Thompson pulls it off, masterfully balancing rom-com and slasher tropes. As a speed dating event turns into a blood bath, readers will cheer for heroine Jamie to make it out alive—and with a new love at her side. The result is edge-of-the-seat suspenseful, laugh-out-loud funny, and dreamily romantic all at once.

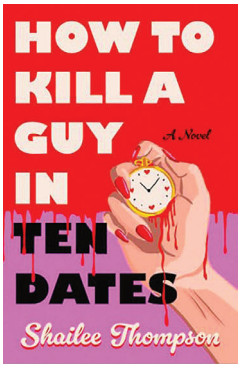
The Jezebel List
Alisa Dean (Alcove)
Pastor's daughter Christina sets out to heal from the religious trauma that shaped her sheltered childhood in Dean's heartfelt new adult debut. As Christina works through a list of activities her father would never approve of—with sexy filmmaker Danny documenting her attempts—Dean brings fun, joy, and humor to the recovery process, making Christina's newfound freedom feel as revelatory and refreshing to the reader as to the character.

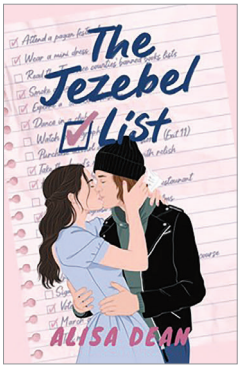
Score
Kennedy Ryan (Forever)
Bestseller and *PW* Best Books frequent flier Ryan manages to outdo herself in this achingly tender tale of Hollywood, heartache, and history. After a stormy relationship that ended in disaster, a pair of exes are reunited on the set of a biopic about a fictional Harlem Renaissance artist. In Ryan's hands, their emotional second-chance romance is as raw as it is riveting.

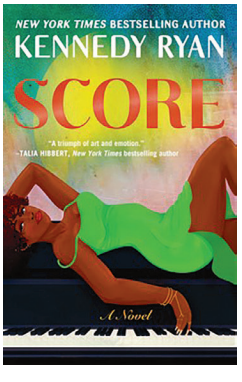
You & Me and You & Me and You & Me
Josie Lloyd and Emlyn Rees (Putnam)
Listening to old casette tapes allows a long-married couple to travel back in time and make adjustments to their early courtship in this poignant, nostalgia-laced speculative romance. The authors beautifully capture the regrets, frustrations, and what-ifs that plague the leads while mining humor and heart from the butterfly effects caused by their meddling. It's a pleasure to watch these two rediscover their passion.

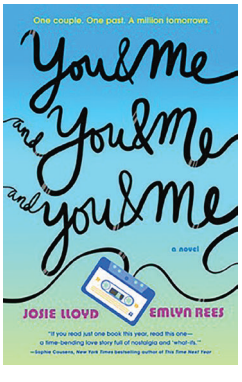








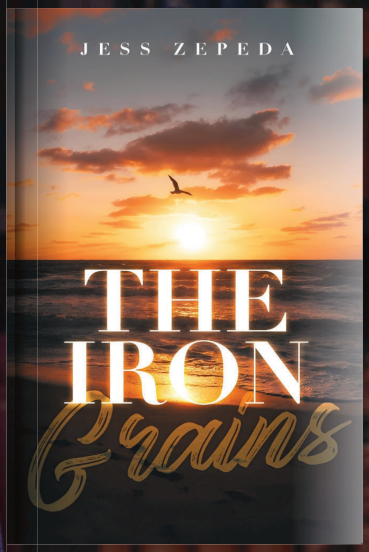




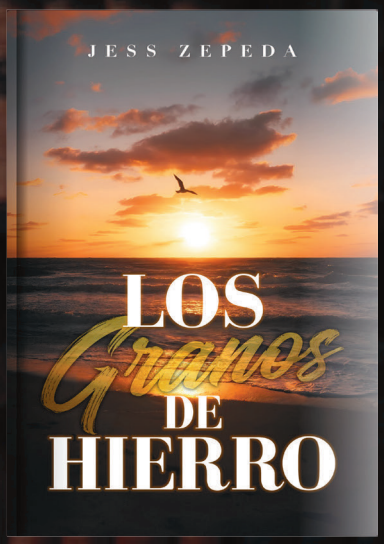


THE IRON Grains

by Jess Zepeda



The Iron Grains
(English Version)



The Iron Grains
(Spanish Version)

Set in the 1970s San Joaquin Valley, *The Iron Grains* unfolds across a landscape split between industrial agribusiness and the rigid reach of the Fort Ord military base. Against the backdrop of the Vietnam War and red-flag vineyard strikes, young artist Julian Solbriozo struggles to build a life on his own terms.

Marked as an outcast in his hometown, Julian faces pressure from all sides: a family that demands conformity, the shadow of his late father, and the harsh reality of the military draft. His desperate struggle to sever ties with his past becomes a sharp reflection on isolation and identity-only to realize that his hardest fight is not against the world around him, but within himself.

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PW Spotlight: Ideapress

How an innovative publisher is bringing out-of-the-box marketing ideas to the book biz.

Ideapress is bringing a new spirit of innovation to the publishing process, and helping authors and independent booksellers get their books noticed in unconventional ways. An independent publisher of quality business books, Ideapress is built around the needs of writers, and uses creative ingenuity, marketing savvy, and out-of-the-box thinking to reach readers.

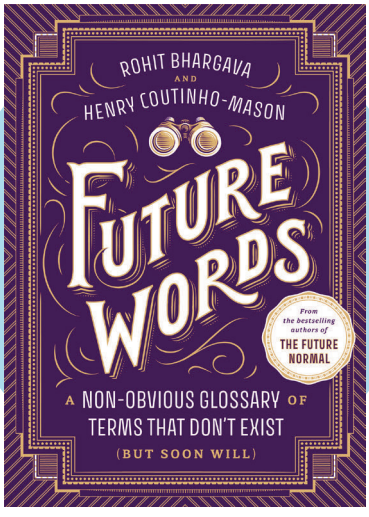
In recent years, the publisher has set up special author events and scavenger hunt partnerships with independent bookstores to promote titles, and has launched a poetry prize, hosted flash mob book signings, and put on other bold launch campaigns.

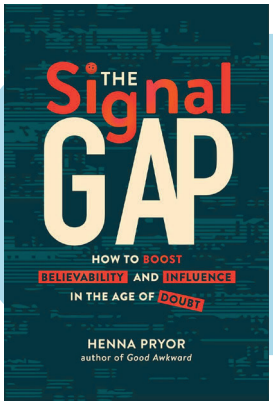
"Ideapress is a publisher that's not only investing heavily in doing unique and breakthrough marketing, but one that's willing to try new ideas and work specifically to drive people to buy books from booksellers, and not from Amazon," says two-time Ideapress author Henna Pryor.

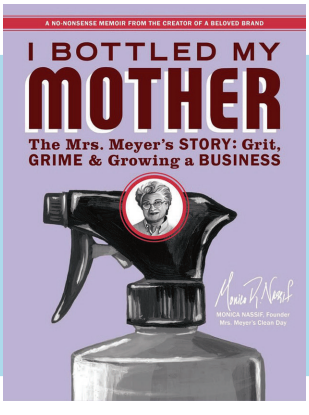
Ideapress uses nontraditional means to engage with readers. Sometimes those connections are cultivated via live events, or by offering exclusive bonus material to fans. "The more we can make readers feel connected to the launch, the more they show up when the book comes out," says Ideapress Marketing Director Megan Wheeler.

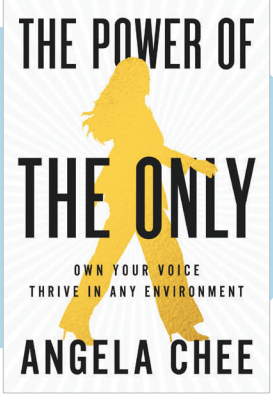
The publisher works overtime to create buzz for its books. Among its notable forthcoming titles is *Future Words: A Non-Obvious Glossary of Terms That Don't Exist* by Rohit Bhargava and Henry Coutinho-Mason—a lightly satirical glossary of 100 new words that we may all be using in the future, but that don't yet exist. To bring *Future Words* to life for logophiles, the publisher created a poetry prize, and established The Unwondering Project, an initiative that showcases more than 100 independent bookstores curious readers can check out.

Ideapress has hosted successful flash mob book signings at events including SXSW, where hundreds of readers have gathered to meet authors, including Henna Pryor (*The Signal Gap: How to Boost Believability and Influence in the Age of Doubt*), Monica Nassif (*I Bottled My Mother: The Mrs. Meyer's Story: Grit, Grime & Growing A Business*), Angela Chee (*The Power of the Only: Own Your Voice, Thrive in Any Environment*), and Anne Marie Anderson (*Cultivating Audacity: Dismantle Doubt and Let Yourself Win*).



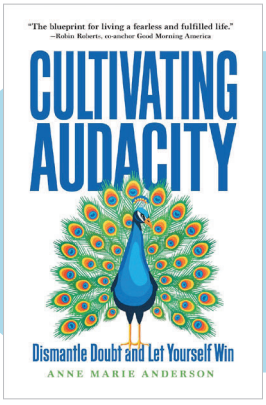


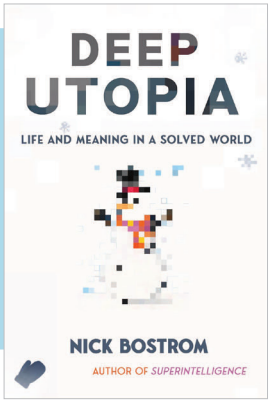




Building momentum in the marketplace is critical. After author Nick Bostrom appeared on *The Joe Rogan Experience*, Ideapress arranged to have Bostrom's book, *Deep Utopia: Life and Meaning in a Solved World*, featured at independent bookstores via several paid promotions. For *Inner Propaganda: Leading Hearts and Minds Through Turbulent Times* by Owen Fitzpatrick and more a dozen other titles, the publisher handled logistics and worked with its distribution partner, Simon & Schuster, to satisfy high reader demand.

Recently, the publisher has utilized launch teams of early reviewers to create fresh conversations around titles, including

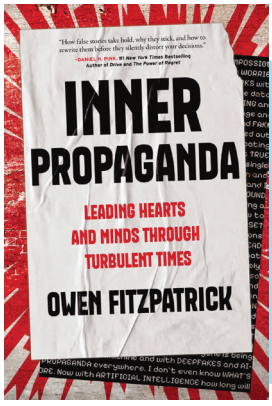


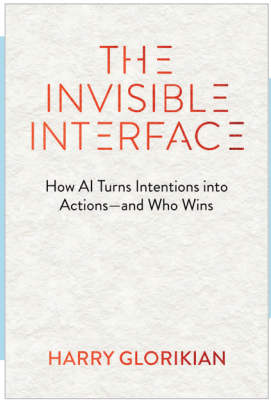


The Invisible Interface: How AI Turns Intentions into Actions—and Who Wins by Harry Glorikian, *Strategy Trap: Why Companies Fail at Execution and How to Get it Right* by Kevin Ertell, and *TrustShift: Ethereum and the Reinvention of Trust* by William Mougayar.

Another notable launch involved creating a Willy Wonka–style golden ticket promotion, where the publisher teamed up with more than 140 independent bookstores across the country to drive readers into stores to pick up a "winning copy" of a book.

Ideapress has also bought radio ads in key metro markets to sell books and hosted regional events with authors, including Jamie Shapiro (*Connected Culture: The New Science for Thriving Teams and Cultures*) and Brad Feld (*Give First: The Power of Mentorship*).





"Ideapress stands out from other publishers for its uniquely creative marketing approaches," said Josh Bernoff, author of *Build a Better Business Book* and proprietor of the author resource site Bernoff.com. "In a crowded field of publishers, they're tightly focused and highly differentiated."

When acquiring new projects, Ideapress looks for "breakthrough ideas" that can impact the world. They publish just 25 books a year, making them "the opposite of a book factory," says co-Founder Chhavi Arya Bhargava. They employ a hybrid business model that allows authors to retain control over all aspects of their books, and they don't put their logos on the covers. They share the financial costs of production, pay authors high royalty rates, and are self-described "book snobs" who only print and produce beautiful books with high-quality printing.

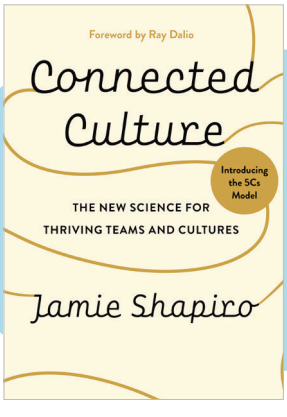
Ideapress is the brainchild of bestselling author and publisher Rohit Bhargava who co-founded the company with his wife in 2014. That year, Bhargava became the press's first author and launched the Non-Obvious Trend series which was an instant WSJ bestseller. Since then, he's put a premium on originality.

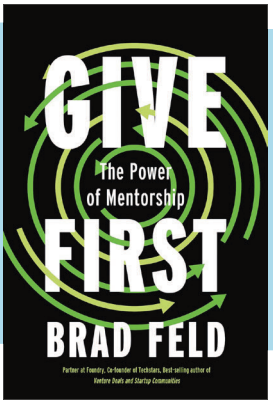
"For me, it means seeing what others miss and doing things differently," Bhargava says. "I travel the world to help shift people's perspectives and Ideapress aims to do the same thing when it comes to marketing and promoting our authors."

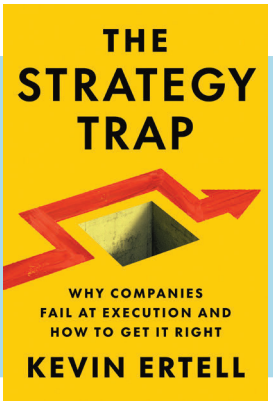
At Ideapress, curation is a driver of success. "When you publish more than a hundred books a year, there's no way to truly be author-centric," Bhargava says. "In our model, every author has personal attention from myself and my full team because every title is a 'lead' title."

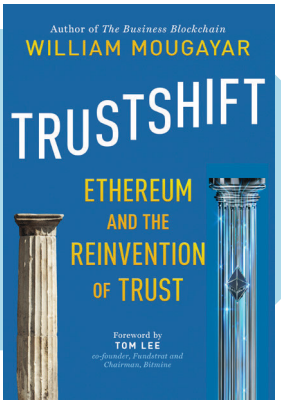
Ideapress considers itself to be one of the most original and creative publishers in the industry—one that's willing to take an unpredictable approach to championing books and supporting booksellers.

"The playbook for marketing books needs reinvention," says Bhargava. "The old school checklist just doesn't work anymore."









Comics & Graphic Novels

The Abyss of Oblivion
Paco Roca and Rodrigo Terrasa, trans. from the Spanish by Andrea Rosenberg (Fantagraphics)
The horrors an oppressive regime keeps buried and the restorative power of reclaiming the past are explored in Eisner winner Roca's latest masterwork, a collaboration with *El Mundo* reporter Terrasa. Comics journalism blends with magical realism when activist archivists dig up a mass grave of fathers, brothers, and sons assassinated by the Franco regime in one small town in Spain—and the men's spirits emerge to narrate their desperate last days.

Bury Me Already (It's Nice Down Here): Comics on Pregnancy and Parenting
Julia Wertz (Black Dog & Leventhal)
The infamously caustic *New Yorker* cartoonist catches herself off guard with an urgent desire to have a child, but domesticity does not come easy. Recounting how she endured a traumatic birth and dealt with her child's medical needs in the midst of the pandemic, Wertz throws her fans, hard and hilariously, into the chaos that is parenting, where tender moments come dripped in the profane.

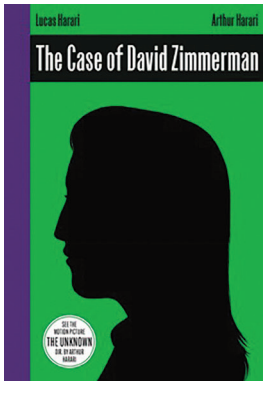
The Case of David Zimmerman
Lucas and Arthur Harari, trans. from the French by David Homel (Arsenal Pulp)
Lost Highway glides into French neo-noir in this coolly stylized graphic novel, which follows a depressive who swaps bodies with the object of his desire. But as he becomes her, he loses track of his former self—and the reader becomes unmoored following a slippery series of shifting identities, which serve to critique contemporary class and gender divides. It's heady sci-fi that looks super sharp on the shelf.

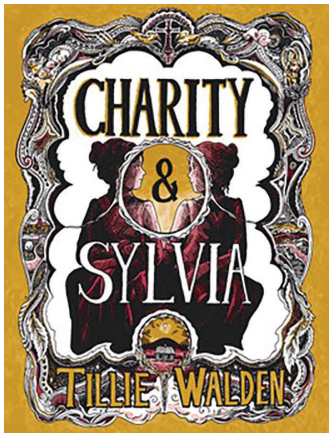
Charity and Sylvia
Tillie Walden (Drawn & Quarterly)
Eisner winner Walden crafts a transcendent and transformational comics history of two ordinary women in early-19th-century Vermont who openly cohabited as a lesbian couple. Defying expectations of period norms, yet full of meticulously detailed period references, Walden's storytelling unfolds through poignant, luminously drawn vignettes that capture the radical nature of this remarkable couple's quotidian struggles, hopes, prayers, and longings.

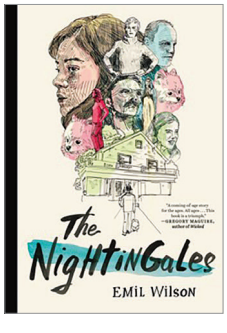
The Nightingales
Emil Wilson (Avid Reader)
Replete with ephemera taped to the pages and loose colored-pencil portraits, this elegiac graphic novel has the tactile quality of a lost diary. A teen girl in the 1980s Pacific Northwest forms an unlikely friendship with a man dying of AIDs, who helps her see a future outside her fractured family life as he reckons with his own abbreviated timeline. Wilson's dexterous debut is the literary comics discovery of the year.





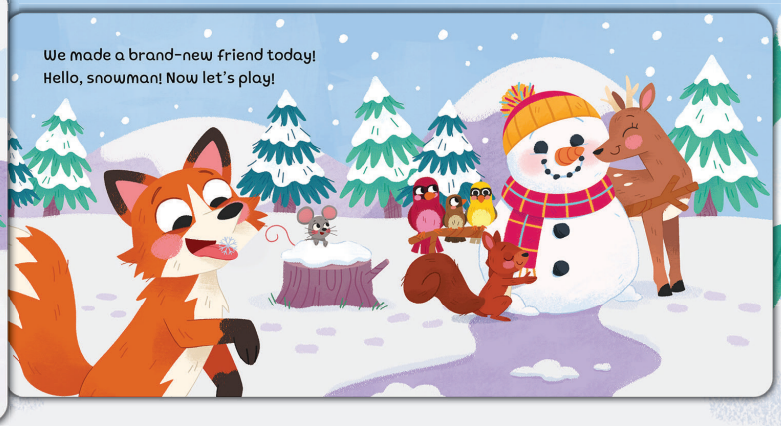






Winter board books for little ones!





9798384600930 | Hello, Snowman!

"VERDICT This delightful spin on a monster story with brilliant artwork is a great addition to any collection."
— *School Library Journal*





9798384600589 | Not-So-Bad Guys Snow Monster!



9798384603993 | Can't Catch Santa!



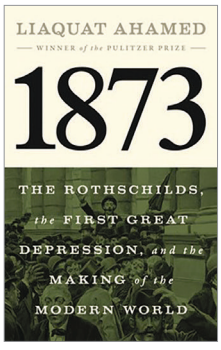
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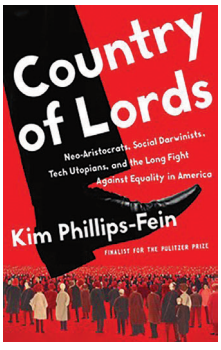
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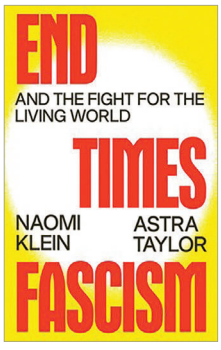
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Nonfiction







1873: The Rothschilds, the First Great Depression, and the Making of the Modern World
Liaquat Ahamed (Penguin Press)
Pulitzer winner Ahamed offers an eye-opening reconsideration of the 1873 stock market crash and the economic slump that followed—the first to actually be called the Great Depression—and traces ways in which that crash, much like subsequent crashes, prompted reactionary politics all over the world, including the end of Reconstruction and a rise in antisemitism.

Country of Lords: Neo-Aristocrats, Social Darwinists, Tech Utopians, and the Long Fight Against Equality in America
Kim Phillips-Fein (Norton)
This fascinating counter-history of America unspools how, since the country's founding, a strain of right-leaning American thinkers have been consistently arguing in favor of aristocracy and against the notion that all men are created equal. Historian Phillips-Fein makes the case that this line of thinking has been critical to the right's ascendancy under Trump.

End Times Fascism: And the Fight for the Living World
Naomi Klein and Astra Taylor (Farrar, Straus and Giroux)
Journalist Klein and activist Taylor pinpoint ways in which the modern American right has come to embrace the notion that the end of the world is imminent—whether because of AI, white replacement, or a good old-fashioned Second Coming—and persuasively argue that the left can gain political ground by offering people hope for the future instead of doom and gloom.

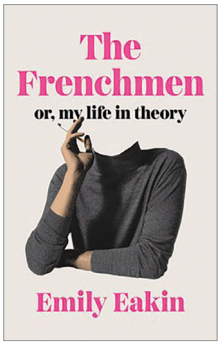
The Frenchmen: Or, My Life in Theory
Emily Eakin (Penguin Press)
New York Times Book Review editor Eakin's debut traces her intellectual love affair with French theorists from Althusser to Foucault, blending biography, autobiography, and cultural criticism into a single, dazzling whole. She manages to shake the dust of history off these thinkers while inviting readers to revel in the pleasures of encountering big ideas for the first time.

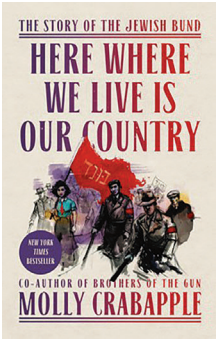
Here Where We Live Is Our Country: The Story of the Jewish Bund
Molly Crabapple (One World)
Drawing partly on her own family history, journalist and artist Crabapple takes a stirring deep dive into the history of the Bund, a Jewish socialist party founded in the late 19th century in Eastern Europe that opposed Zionism, fought the Nazis, and was dismantled by the Soviets. It's an invigorating, heartfelt immersion into an oft-overlooked part of Jewish history.

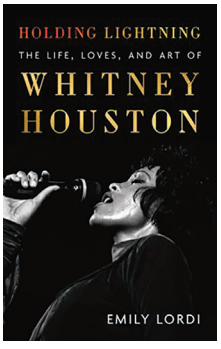
Holding Lightning: The Life, Loves, and Art of Whitney Houston
Emily Lordi (Mariner)
With this stellar biography, Vanderbilt English professor Lordi rescues Whitney Houston from the tortured female artist stereotype, reframing her as a canny musical interpreter who made familiar songs her own and helped Black artists break into the mainstream. Deep research and sharp musical analysis make this tribute as fascinating as its subject.

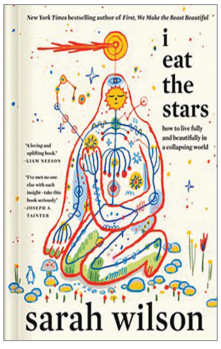
I Eat the Stars: How to Live Fully and Beautifully in a Collapsing World
Sarah Wilson (Penguin Life)
Journalist Wilson's ambitious account of how modern civilization might unravel doubles somewhat improbably as a moving ode to the beauty of the world made stark by the nearness of such a disaster. Uncompromisingly honest and filled with razor-sharp insights, this is difficult to forget.

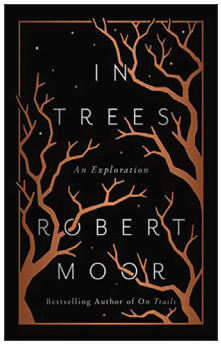
In Trees: An Exploration
Robert Moor (Simon & Schuster)
Blending philosophy, memoir, and science, this is a beautiful tribute to the wisdom of trees and an urgent call for their protection. Whether climbing sequoias or tracing the branches of his family tree, journalist Moor demonstrates the transformative effects of viewing the world with an "arborescent mind."

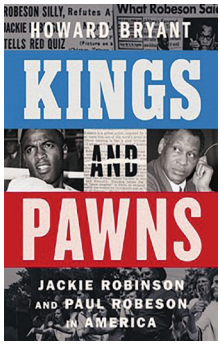


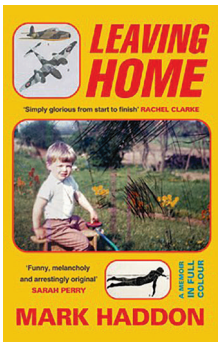


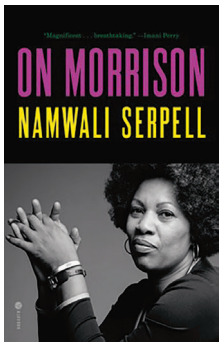


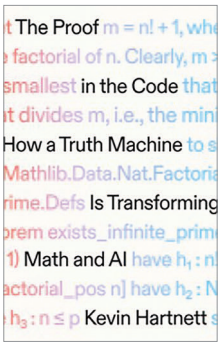














Kings and Pawns: Jackie Robinson and Paul Robeson in America
Howard Bryant (Mariner)
This impressive history demonstrates how, amid anti-communist anxieties in midcentury America, political institutions and sports officials framed baseball star Jackie Robinson as a heroic foil to actor Paul Robeson, a vocal critic of capitalism. Sports journalist Bryant keenly reveals how the situation typified Black Americans' internal conflict between patriotism and protest. It's a brilliant and eye-opening corrective of the past.

Leaving Home: A Memoir in Full Color
Mark Haddon (Doubleday)
Novelist Haddon collages photographs, illustrations, and colorful biographical snippets into a memoir of his rocky childhood and writing career. Along the way, he tangles with a constellation of fears, obsessions, and preoccupations—about writing, the fallibility of memory, flying, and familial obligation—and comes away with an uncommonly intimate map of a creative mind.

Man in the Mirror: Hope, Struggle, and Belonging in an American City
Anand Giridharadas (Knopf)
Journalist Giridharadas offers a kaleidoscopic examination of the 2023 subway slaying of Jordan Neely and the acquittal of his killer Daniel Penny that traces the dense web of connections that brought both men to the fateful encounter. It adds up to an elegant rumination on the growing divide between America's haves and have-nots.

The Mattering Instinct: How Our Deepest Longing Drives Us and Divides Us
Rebecca Newberger Goldstein (Liveright)
Goldstein, a philosopher and novelist, elegantly moves between philosophy and reportage for this revelatory consideration of how the desire to matter shapes both inner life and social values. In the process, she makes a moving case for the importance of honoring innate human worth in a frequently impersonal and fractured world.

Metropolitans: New York Baseball, Class Struggle, and the People's Team
A.M. Gittlitz (Astra House)
This innovative study combines an enthralling history of the New York Mets with a smart analysis of Marxism to demonstrate that baseball has long served as an arena for class conflict. Gittlitz makes unique and bold connections between politics and sports, resulting in a singular celebration of a beloved team.

Nothing Random: Bennett Cerf and the Publishing House He Built
Gayle Feldman (Random House)
At over a thousand pages and decades in the making, this spellbinding biography is a rare achievement deserving of comparison to acclaimed tomes like *The Power Broker*. Chronicling the life and influence of the Random House founder, former *PW* contributing editor Feldman vividly recreates the heyday of book publishing and pulls back the curtain on how many classics came to be.

On Morrison
Namwali Serpell (Hogarth)
Much has been written about Toni Morrison since her death in 2019, but nothing has been quite as revelatory as this masterful work of literary criticism. Refusing to allow Morrison's public image to overshadow the genius of her novels, Serpell illuminates the complexity within Morrison's craft. It's an enthralling tour of a legendary writer's oeuvre.

Our Arab: On Longing, Belonging, and Hope
Zaina Arafat (Little, Brown)
Drawing on her own experiences, as well as her family's, novelist Arafat paints a nuanced, ruminative portrait of the Palestinian diaspora in America today, with a focus on the painful, maddening reality of living in a world that refuses to acknowledge the crimes being committed against one's homeland.

The Proof in the Code: How a Truth Machine Is Transforming Math and AI
Kevin Hartnett (Quanta)
It's one thing to make complex mathematical concepts accessible to a lay audience, but to illustrate their importance through an engrossing, character-driven narrative is a feat only a journalist as adept as Hartnett can pull off. This cinematic account of the creation of Lean, a software tool that's become vital for mathematicians and AI researchers, is necessary reading for understanding the rise of human-computer collaboration.

Q: The Hidden Power of Questions in a World That Wants Answers
Lani Watson (Viking)
Philosopher Watson traces in her ambitious debut how the instinct to question has shaped human development, from information-seeking behaviors animals developed millions of years ago to existential queries that help people understand the world and their place in it. Throughout, she makes a persuasive case that asking better questions can stoke curiosity and connection in a culture obsessed with certainty.

The Rush: California Gold, the Civil War, and the Making of the Modern World
Nathaniel Philbrick (Viking)
In this propulsive study, historian Philbrick recasts the California gold rush as having had a massive impact on modern America's cultural life, from its time-is-money ethos and exploitation of immigrants to its inculcation of Americans' uniquely strong faith in technological innovation to solve problems.

The Score: How to Stop Playing Somebody Else's Game
C. Thi Nguyen (Penguin Press)
University of Utah philosophy professor Nguyen provides a lively, erudite look at how scoring systems shape the world—occasioning creative forms of play at the hobby level but flattening value at the institutional scale (think college rankings). The result is an energetic exploration full of advice for resisting the gamification of society.

Small Town Girls: A Writer's Memoir
Jayne Anne Phillips (Knopf)
Turning an eye toward her West Virginia childhood, the Pulitzer winner employs luscious, lyrical prose to consider how the midcentury mining town that birthed her also shaped her into the wordsmith she's become. Both an elegy for a long-gone way of life and a finely detailed self-portrait, it's one of the finest memoirs of the year.

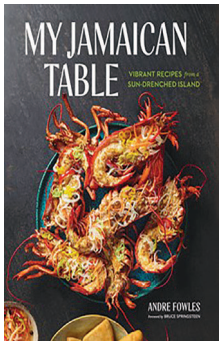
Spawning Season: An Experiment in Queer Parenthood
Joseph Osmundson (Bloomsbury)
This stirring hybrid of memoir and science writing parallels biophysicist Osmundson's study of salmon spawning and climate collapse with his attempt to father a child with a pair of lesbian friends. In the process, he addresses a constellation of contemporary anxieties—about family, futurelessness, and economic struggle—with infectious curiosity.

When the World Sleeps: Stories, Words, and Wounds of Palestine
Francesca Albanese, trans. from the Italian by Gregory Conti (Other Press)
UN special rapporteur Albanese recounts the surreal experience of being sanctioned by the U.S. for working with the International Criminal Court to investigate Israeli crimes against Palestinians. This provides invaluable insight into how voices speaking out for Palestine are systemically silenced.

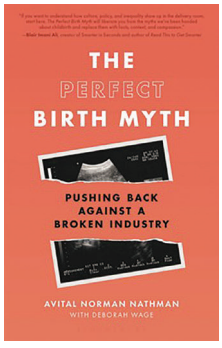
The Yahoo Boys: Love, Deception, and the Real Lives of Nigeria's Romance Scammers
Carlos Barragán (Farrar, Straus and Giroux)
Journalist Barragán tracks down and interviews the impoverished young Nigerian scammers who use seduction to wring money and gifts out of lonely older Westerners, finding breathtaking pathos and empathy on both sides of the con.

A Year with Gilbert White: The First Great Nature Writer
Jenny Uglow (Farrar, Straus and Giroux)
Uglow brings unmatched depth and intimacy to this biography of the pioneering 18th-century naturalist. Drawing on White's detailed daily journals to reconstruct a year in his life, she elucidates the many wonders of nature while expanding the boundaries of what biography can be. It's enchanting.

Lifestyle







99 Ways to Die: And How to Avoid Them
Ashely Alker (St. Martin's)
Physician Alker, who calls herself a "board-certified death escapologist," artfully blends humor with poignant reflections on death and practical health advice. An entertaining explanation of common illnesses and rare dangers, such as brain-eating amoebas, it's less a manual for evading death than a guide to living.

Eat (Like) the Rich: A Cookbook
Olivia Tiedemann (Ten Speed)
Tiedemann divulges tips, tricks, and savory treats from her time working as a private chef in the Hamptons in this mouthwatering and gleefully irreverent compendium. The sassy, profanity-laden, and highly opinionated prose adds humor and a personal touch to an enticing range of recipes for any time of day. It's irresistible.

My Jamaican Table: Vibrant Recipes from a Sun-Drenched Island
Andre Fowles (Artisan)
The Jamaican cuisine of three-time *Chopped* champion Fowles's youth leaps off the page in this gorgeous recipe collection, which doubles as a culinary history. Serving up classic dishes alongside his own inventive twists on favorite flavors, Fowles delivers both heat (Scotch bonnets are a staple) and heart. Home cooks and armchair travelers alike will eat this up.

Padma's All American: Tales, Travels, and Recipes from Taste the Nation and Beyond
Padma Lakshmi (Knopf)
Inspired by *Taste the Nation* host Lakshmi's U.S. travels, this expansive cookbook brings together more than 100 recipes representing a truly impressive range of flavor profiles and influences, alongside moving profiles of immigrant and Indigenous chefs. With Lakshmi as an impassioned guide, this is a loving tribute to the vast variety of cultures that make America great.

The Perfect Birth Myth: Pushing Back Against a Broken Industry
Avital Norman Nathman, with Deborah Wage (Bloomsbury Academic)
Journalist Nathman and nurse practitioner Wage deliver a vital examination of childbirth in the U.S., outlining how profit-driven policies, racism, and abortion bans have made it difficult for women to access quality care while society simultaneously convinces them a "perfect birth" is possible. It's a supportive companion and a potent call for change.



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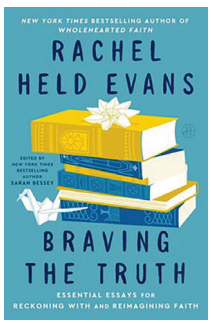
Religion & Spirituality

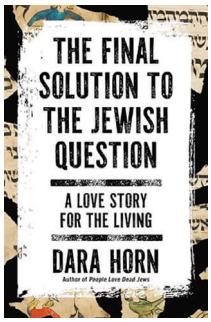
Braving the Truth: Essential Essays for Reckoning with and Reimagining Faith
Rachel Held Evans (HarperOne)
The late Held's sharp theological mind is on full display in these wide-ranging essays and blog posts tackling everything from religious doubt to sexuality in the church. Interspersed with brief tributes from friends and colleagues, this definitive volume showcases a religious thinker uniquely capable of celebrating Christianity while interrogating its flaws.

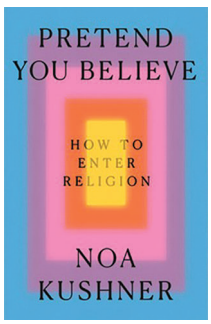
The Final Solution to the Jewish Question: A Love Story for the Living
Dara Horn (Avid Reader)
In this razor-sharp survey of American antisemitism, novelist Horn critiques well-meaning educational initiatives that aim to reduce prejudice but wind up reinforcing stereotypes or assimilationist narratives, and suggests instead teaching the full sweep of Jewish history in ways that model lessons of resilience and freedom. It's a clear-eyed yet surprisingly optimistic intervention in vital conversations about ending hate.

Pretend You Believe: How to Enter Religion
Noa Kushner (Schocken)
Rabbi Kushner argues in her luminous debut that belief isn't a prerequisite for faith but the product of attempting, however imperfectly, to practice religion in ways that shape a moral life. She fleshes out this counterintuitive premise with personal anecdotes and biblical stories, making for both a deeply existential commentary on modern religion and a practical guide to living ethically.

We Mend with Gold: An Immigrant Daughter's Reckoning with American Christianity
Kristin T. Lee (Broadleaf)
The Japanese practice of *kintsugi*—repairing broken pottery with gold lacquer—grounds this unforgettable exploration of how growing up in an immigrant Chinese church in America fractured but ultimately fortified the author's faith. Drawing from rich theology, physician Lee asks searching questions about what it means to belong and how the Western church undermines Christianity's most vital tenets.









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BEST CHILDREN'S &

Picture Books

And Then We Saw the Bag...: Trash to Them, Treasure to Us
Emma AdBåge, trans. from the Swedish by Melissa Bowers (Arctis)
AdBåge captures a household's dynamic in this hilarious account of parental tidying's aftermath. After two youths return to discover their home freshly decluttered, their parents try to downplay the extent of the cleanup. Dumping out the contents of a garbage bag, the protagonists undertake an intensive recovery operation, putting everything back in its place. Child autonomy wins the day in this laugh-out-loud tale.

Dad
Christian Robinson (Balzer + Bray)
Dedicated to "caregivers who give what they never got," Robinson's moving, animal-centric ode to fathers portrays parents with realistic faults. Narration unfolds through opposition; while a seahorse models a dad who "holds on tight," a shark father "needs lots of space." Amid the examples' push and pull, which convey how a dad sometimes "lets you down," a steadying message reassures.

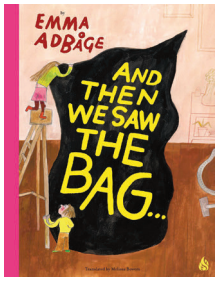
Goodbye, Koi
Jack Wong (Orchard)
Wong traces a family's relocation through a child's musings in this affecting tale. After a father and child rehome their pet koi ahead of their move, the young narrator processes the shift via text focused solidly on the child's inner world. In this thoughtful work, redirecting feelings about an upcoming unknown softens a sense of loss without diminishing its significance.

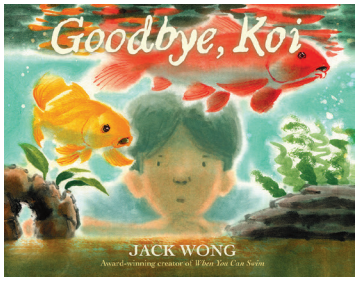
The House with Nobody in It
Jon Klassen (Candlewick)
Incorporating a jump scare and an unreliable narrator, this gently eerie board book ghost story invites readers to tour the ostensibly empty residence that inspires the volume's shape. As readers progress, deadpan prose acknowledges the abode's contents—except for the spectral figure that appears in one room. Klassen again displays a remarkable knack for creating lingering, fully realized works through the sparsest storytelling.

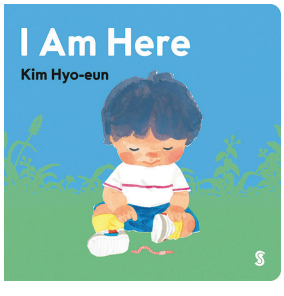
I Am Here
Kim Hyo-eun, trans. from the Korean by Aerin Park (Scribble US)
Using simple prepositions, Kim cleverly presents the world from a growing baby's point of view in this bright-eyed board book. Unfolded vertically, accordion pages reference common sights an infant notices from below ("under/ the sun"); unfurled horizontally, the book's reverse side foregrounds the vantage point of an older, toddling child ("beside/ a cat"). This uniquely engineered title articulates the ever-shifting process of becoming.

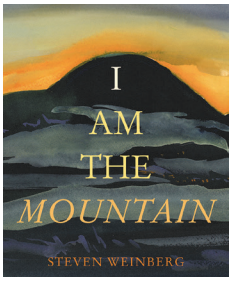
I Am the Mountain
Steven Weinberg (Holiday House/Porter)
Twining seasonal and sensate perceptions across a sumptuously painted four-part narrative, Weinberg's arresting picture book offers a full-bodied education in encountering the natural world—via the perspective of a mountain. The result is a profoundly layered narrative that urges readers to slow down, attend with every sense, and appreciate the myriad ways a terrain's riches reveal themselves.

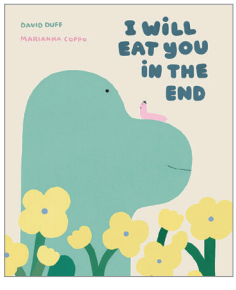
I Will Eat You in the End
David Duff, illus. by Marianna Coppo (Holiday House/Porter)
Duff and Coppo's Beckettian two-parter lays out the realities of the life cycle with unstinting matter-of-factness and disarming wit. After an enormous sauropod inadvertently takes out a pink worm, a humorously paced back-and-forth reveals the democracy of mortality—and results in a beautiful friendship. Funny, generous, and profound, this





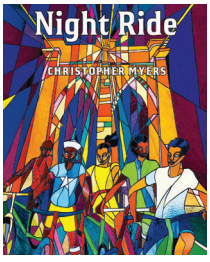


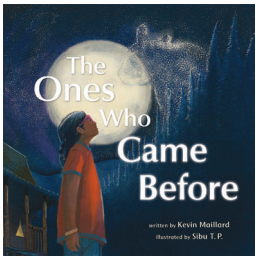


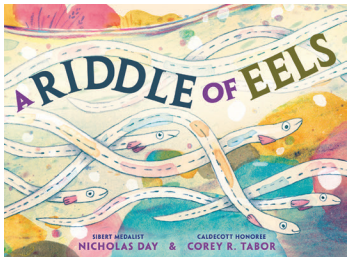


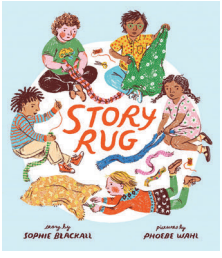
YOUNG ADULT 2026











delivers hard truths in a way young readers can hold onto.

Loops
Jashar Awan (Simon & Schuster)
Via a horizontal format that turns "learning to be a big kid!" into a full stage show starring a child in motion, Awan spotlights a common milestone on the wobbly path to maturation: wearing "big-kid shoes." Though the laces come undone and the kicks slip off, the young narrator refuses to dwell on frustration. It's a confidence-boosting work about the monumental nature of early accomplishments.

The Muéganos
Jaque Jours (Transit)
Just like the Mexican street candy with which they share their name, the Muégano family, five bunnies connected at the torso, is "never apart." Young Julia "wouldn't have it any other way" in Jours's tender solo debut, but her longing to go in her own direction causes a physical rift, a painful inevitability that offers meaningful insight into a child's first independent steps.

Navigating Night
Julie Leung, illus. by Angie Kang (Random House/Schwartz)
In this touching picture book, a rainy evening sees a child considering two nighttime journeys: their father's takeout delivery route and Baba's story of his own experience getting turned around as a youth. Leung and Kang highlight a distinct bond and sacrifices made across generations, emotionally building to the idea that "we can all help each other find our way."

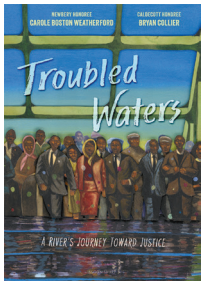
Night Ride
Christopher Myers (Kokila)
Myers delivers a visual love letter to Black childhood and New York City with a stunning wordless picture book that follows five kids bicycling across the boroughs. Lighted and photographed stained glass windows comprise each landscape, layering vibrant colors into scenes that reflect the children's sense of belonging and camaraderie. It amounts to a freewheeling portrait of kids fully inhabiting a locale.

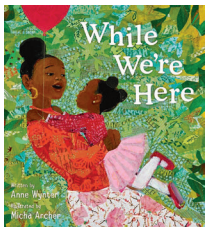
The Ones Who Came Before
Kevin Maillard, illus. by Sibu T.P. (Roaring Brook)
Maillard and Sibu T.P. muse on themes of belonging in this reverent narrative about connection across time and place. When Aabanya travels to visit her grandfather, she contemplates the area and learns about its residents while hearing his stories of their shared Indigenous culture. It's a dynamic portrait of the natural world's long history.

Open: Every Seed Has Its Moment
Robert Agis, illus. by Sarah Jacoby (Candlewick)
A sprouting seed receives loving support in Agis and Jacoby's radiant meditation on the act of growing. Soft-focused artwork begins trained on the seed before splitting into a series of cutaways that reveal goings-on above and below the soil's surface. When the plant bursts ecstatically into bloom, its contribution to the world makes for a joyful crescendo.

A Riddle of Eels
Nicholas Day, illus. by Corey R. Tabor (Random House Studio)
"The eel is hard to hold. It slips from our grasp," and so does certainty itself, Day and Tabor write in this awe-inspiring nonfiction title, which explains just how little is known about the commonplace creature. In a world that strives to assure that everything can be mapped, this astounding book celebrates one vast, wondrous mystery—and suggests that some riddles are worth savoring.

Story Rug
Sophie Blackall, illus. by Phoebe Wahl (Little, Brown)
Solo play turns into communal collaboration in Blackall and Wahl's expertly crafted picture book. After Class 203's "braiding CRAZE" results in a length of plaited textiles that snakes down the hallway, the schoolmates coil their handiwork into a rug that embodies not just the peer group's partnership but the incorporated items' backgrounds, too. It's a sparkling chronicle of individual strands twined.





The Sweetest of Lemons
Daniel Nayeri, illus. by Rahele Jomepour Bell (Levine Querido)
In Nayeri and Jomepour Bell's dazzlingly circuitous picture book, a refueling break unfurls into a layered story of longing. A nested narrative pairs the story of a family road trip with a meandering folk tale, depicted in alternating gouache images and collage illustrations. This smartly constructed story is fully invested in its own expansive telling.

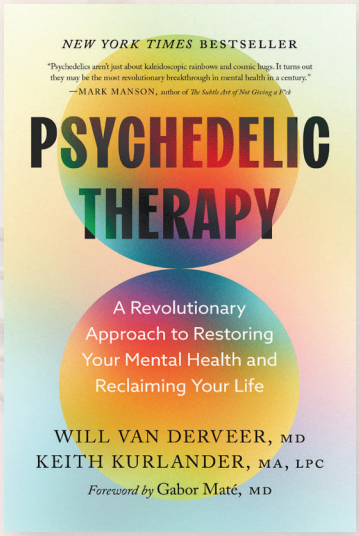
Troubled Waters: A River's Journey Toward Justice
Carole Boston Weatherford, illus. by Bryan Collier (Bloomsbury)
Boston Weatherford and Collier relay an engrossing history of the Alabama River from the water body's perspective in this distinctive picture book. Incorporating facts and lyrics, resonant text traces that which has flowed "past my banks," including enslaved people fleeing bondage, the Trail of Tears, and Bloody Sunday. Depicting figures above and below the water's surface, collaged acrylic and watercolor illustrations acknowledge a continuation of resistance.

A Very Good Parade
Eleanor Davis (Abrams)
Cartoonist Davis makes a triumphant solo picture book debut with the tale of a child who wills a parade into being—one that builds to a marvelous racket of a performance and a glorious tuba "BAROOMPA!" Uncorking the joy latent in an ordinary day, it's an enthusiastic ode to come-as-you-are community and to a child who refuses to march alone.

The Wise Pickle
Sarah Howden, illus. by Sabina Hahn (Tundra)
With a briny wit, Howden and Hahn offer up a sly parable suggesting that radical acceptance can be goofy, profound, and green. After a googly-eyed pickle drops from the sky, it begins offering existential observations to local wildlife. Minimalist vignettes and smart plotting land the ending somewhere between ridiculousness and enlightenment. Full of tangy absurdity, this is a tale fit to be relished.

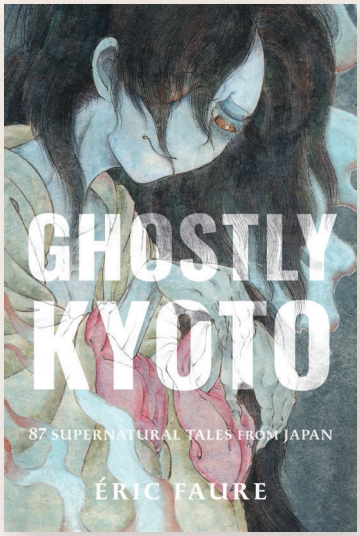
While We're Here
Anne Wynter, illus. by Micha Archer (Clarion)
Wynter and Archer capture a day's contrasting rhythms in this thoughtful, intentionally paced tale about an outing that doesn't go according to plan. A child and caregiver rush out to catch a train and get to a city park—only to discover that they've missed their event. Dallying en route home, the two powerfully model the ease that can emerge from unstructured time.

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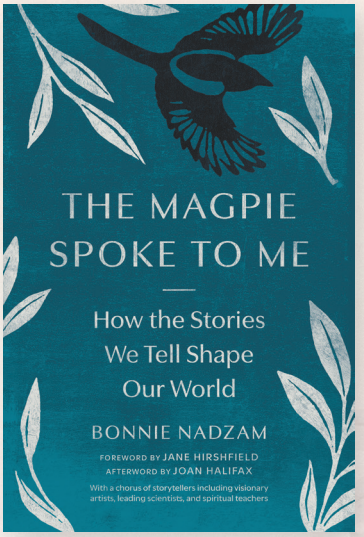


***A New York Times* and *USA Today* Bestseller.**

Explore how psychedelic therapy can address anxiety, depression, PTSD, or other mental health challenges—from two leaders in the field of trauma treatment.



Ancient temples, haunted bridges, and spectral women—discover 87 supernatural tales where Kyoto's history and Buddhist lore entwine with restless spirits, Hungry Ghosts, and the rituals that keep them at bay.

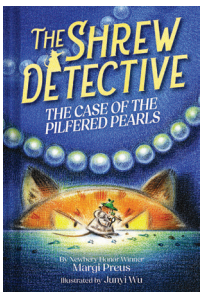


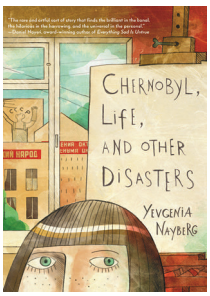
Have you ever had an experience you feel you have to precede with, *"I know this sounds crazy, but . . . ?"*

Award-winning novelist Bonnie Nazdam explores the strange stories we tell—and how they might help us heal.

Middle Grade

The Case of the Pilfered Pearls
Margi Preus, illus. by Junyi Wu (Amulet)
Preus and Wu's jubilant series opener stars a pygmy shrew sleuth who seeks to uncover the identity of the thief who stole a human's string of pearls, clear her client's name, and circumvent potential rodent murder. The adorable cast's unique traits, including echolocation and cheek pouches, prove vital throughout the investigation, which is peppered with shaded graphite illustrations that recall Syd Hoff's work.





Chernobyl, Life, and Other Disasters
Yevgenia Nayberg (Holiday House/Porter)
In this piercing graphic novel memoir, Nayberg campaigns to attend art school while navigating the 1986 Chernobyl disaster. Frenetic, scribbled pencil strokes—evident amid muted watercolor and collage artwork produced on visibly creased paper—and subtle hints about the sociopolitical pressures of living in the U.S.S.R. suggest that unrest lies beneath the idyllic slice-of-life depictions of one young artist's pursuit of uninhibited creative expression.

Hometown
Shaun Tan (Levine Querido)
Earth-toned illustrations render organic, viscerally alive architecture and beings that toe the line between monstrous and fantastic in Tan's visually stunning graphic novel about a lone youth who must choose between staying among their beloved otherworldly community and leaving to seek out others like them. Humorous moments and spare narration result in an ethereal work about home and identity.

La Bandera: Poems of Resistance and Pride
Anika Aldamuy Denise, illus. by Ericka Lugo (HarperCollins)
Across 14 dynamic poems, Denise unspools "a complex narrative that is missing from [the] mainstream," matter-of-factly



recounting Puerto Rico's ongoing struggle for autonomy, as well as the language suppression, unfair governmental representation, and unwarranted violence endured by the island and its people. Accompanied by Lugo's lush, brightly colored artwork, lyrical verse fluidly portrays moments of joy and oppression in this resplendent collection.

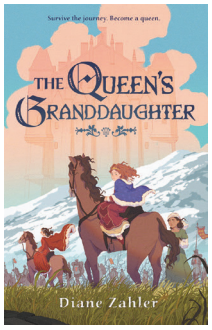
Licorice
Kara LaReau, illus. by Kelly Murphy (Scholastic Press)
Drawing inspiration from Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca*, LaReau and Murphy spin a heartening tale of a newly adopted cat who finds herself living in the shadow of her predecessor. Shaded pencil artwork amplifies feelings of unease, longing, and tension throughout this grounded, wistfully narrated story whose hopeful resolution ensures an entreating experience for animal lovers and mystery aficionados alike.

Listen to the Girls
Chrystal D. Giles (Random House)
Giles's potent, socially attuned novel follows a middle schooler reckoning with the knowledge that her favorite teacher has a history of sexual harassment complaints. Compassionate language approaches a difficult subject with care, as the protagonist grapples with instances of manipulation by trusted adults and recognizes the importance of speaking up for survivors. It's a thoughtful, prescient exploration of the power of collective voices.

Lost in Peach Blossom Paradise
Xiong Liang, trans. from the Chinese by Chloe Garcia Roberts (Elsewhere)
Elements of Lewis Carroll and Hayao Miyazaki reverberate throughout Liang's whimsical illustrated series starter about a forbidden trek, a secret village, and a young wanderer on the adventure of a lifetime. Propulsive fantasy presents Chinese culture and mythology in a gorgeous package that features ink-wash drawings emphasizing vivid, imagery-rich prose, a vast forest setting, and impish, memorable characters.

The Moon Without Stars
Chanel Miller (Philomel)
Zine making provides a seventh grader, who views "language as a balm for emotional wounds," an avenue through which she helps classmates alleviate personal issues—and





offers her a chance at popularity. Miller's subtle, lightly suspenseful prose relays an original story about the perils of sacrificing one's values for the sake of fitting in, culminating in a complex and emotionally resonant novel that celebrates empathy.

The Queen's Granddaughter
Diane Zahler (Roaring Brook)
A precocious 12th-century princess navigates life-or-death situations that force her to contend with ethical and physical peril, reexamine her values, and choose the type of leader she wants to become in this perceptive adventure. Via smoothly flowing prose and empathetic characters, Zahler provides ample opportunity for readers to consider how differing perspectives come together and how the past informs the future.

Raise the Bar
Fernanda Frick H. (Dial)
Frick H.'s exceptional graphic novel debut chronicles the triumphs and setbacks of a young amateur weight lifter on her journey toward competing professionally. Bold-lined, vibrantly saturated, emotive cartooning captures the precise motions and kinetic atmosphere of the protagonist's sport, while appealing, distinctly wrought characters energize the story's organic emotion, humor, and action. It's a gold medal–worthy performance.

The Second Life of Snap
Erin Entrada Kelly (Greenwillow)
Succinct, sensorial prose conjures a futuristic tale about down-and-out tweens living under a dictatorial regime who find unexpected comfort from their robot chaperone. Race-against-the-clock plotting sees the youths desperately seeking a solution to the robot's failing battery, while touching on timely themes of climate change and technological classism. The protagonists' ingenuity and capacity for optimism are the cherry on top of Kelly's affirming adventure.

Sisters Alone
Shifa Saltagi Safadi (Putnam)
Sisters must put aside their differences to weather a deadly snowstorm in Safadi's stirring verse novel. When a fallen tree branch makes their isolated house inhospitable, the siblings embark on a quest for safety that's impeded by feelings of numbing grief and simmering anger brought about by their mother's recent death. Equal parts thrilling survival story and tender homage to sisterhood, it's a standout.

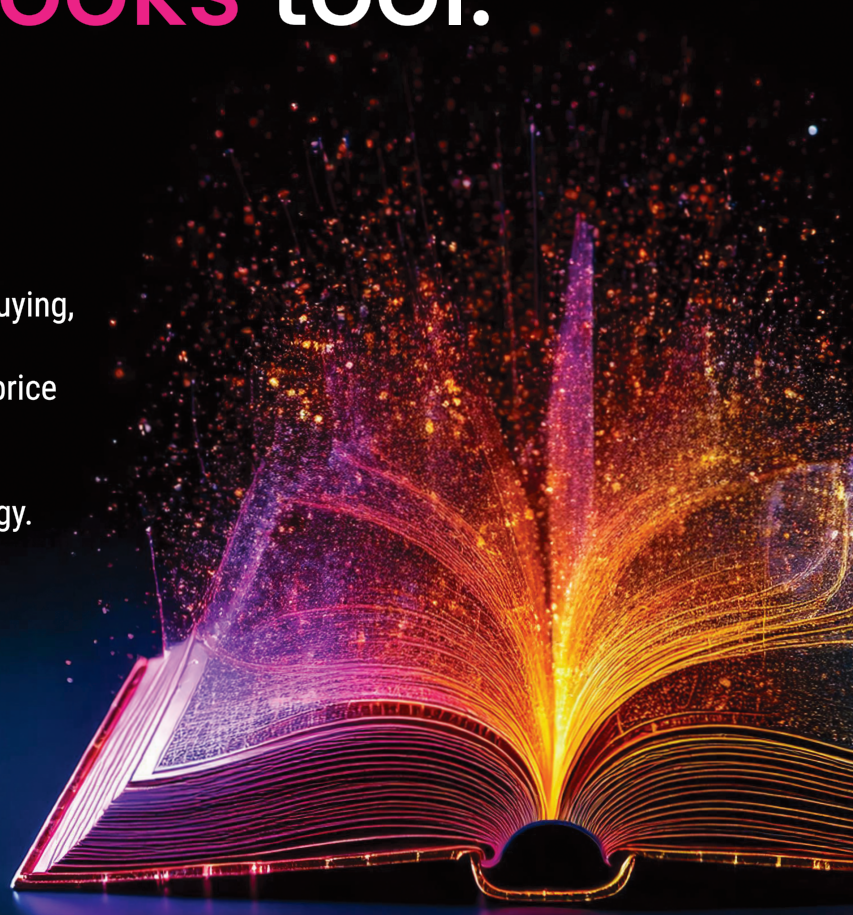
This Is a Door
Daniel Nayeri (Stonefruit)
Loyal, kindhearted characters gracefully navigate complicated emotions in Nayeri's rousing mythic fantasy about an orphaned tween searching beyond his mountaintop city for his purpose. Luminous language illustrates the protagonists' trek, while stylized text design arranges specific words, lines, and passages to evoke pertinent objects, emotions, or actions. Fizzes of gentle humor keep the tone light throughout this remarkably innovative tale.

Where the Wild Horses Are
Amy Alznauer (Holiday House/Porter)
Having long yearned to own a horse, a self-described cowboy takes advantage of a wild horse training program. Alznauer's distinctive first-person narration captures both the intensity of the child's aspirations and the vulnerabilities hidden beneath her stubborn demeanor. The result is a deeply felt and emotionally satisfying story about a girl, a horse, and the solace they find in each other.

You Are Now Old Enough to Hear This
Aaron Starmer, illus. by Jaime Zollars (Penguin Workshop)
A tween's curiosity about his family and his place within it propels him on an unsettling journey in this bizarre yet alluring story that considers a child's relationship with his grandfather. Starmer's clever prose conjures a cohesive, genuinely touching narrative that features gruesome elements including a pickled pinkie toe, while Zollars's moody gray Steven Kellogg–esque illustrations amplify the book's unrepentantly weird vibe.

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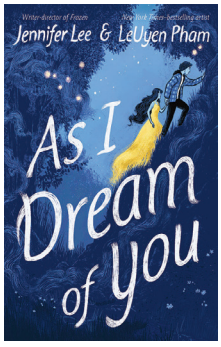
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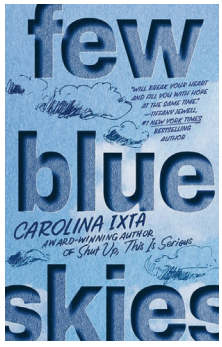
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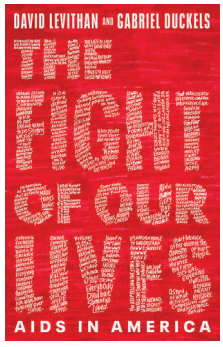
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Young Adult

As I Dream of You
Jennifer Lee, illus. by LeUyen Pham (First Second)
Lee debuts with this breathtaking graphic novel romance about loss and moving forward that expertly captures a teen's feelings of isolation and emotional intensity as he processes his girlfriend's death. Pham's fluid illustrations amplify the storytelling, combining moody, grayish-blues and warm, uplifting buttery yellows to deliver a hopeful tale that will incite both heartache and joy.

Beth Is Dead
Katie Bernet (S&S/Barley)
Bernet's brilliantly snappy debut, a contemporary riff on *Little Women*, follows Jo as she investigates Beth's murder. Chapters shift between the March sisters' distinctive voices, injecting suspense and true crime podcast energy into the inquiry. The girls' closely held desires and ambitions honor the cozy domesticity of the inspiration material and add fuel to the fire of this electrifying whodunit.

Call of the Dragon
Natasha Bowen (Random House)
This engrossing fantasy series opener sees a teenage priestess unexpectedly chosen as a vessel for her kingdom's ancient dragon gods. When a transgression prompts the gods to abandon her people, the protagonist takes her kingdom's protection into her own hands. Via African mythology–inspired worldbuilding and invigorating twists, Bowen crafts a gripping tale of first love, divided loyalties, and loss.

The Celestial Seas
T.A. Chan (Viking)
A spacefaring teenage ship captain travels the cosmos seeking vengeance against the sentient, self-sustaining spacecraft that killed her crew in Chan's exhilarating *Moby-Dick*-inspired debut. Contending with romantic feelings en route, the captain must choose between her future and pursuing the creature that destroyed her life. Steadfast first-person narration relays a sweeping interstellar adventure that boasts wholly unique worldbuilding.

Children of Owl
Darcie Little Badger, illus. by Abigail Rajunov (Levine Querido)
Informed by the son of a legendary Lipan Apache being that "a terrible fate looms," a teen attempts to save her home from forces both supernatural and benign in Little Badger and Rajunov's stunning contemporary fantasy. Mystery and speculative elements converge across this sinuous, elaborately constructed story that balances suspenseful plotting with emotional resonance and cultural depth.

An Expanse of Blue
Kauakanilehua Mahoe Adams (Heartdrum)
In this distinct and emotionally vulnerable verse novel, a Native Hawaiian teen rebels against her intimidating father's rigid expectations. Following the revelation of her dad's extramarital affair, she wrestles with feelings of invisibility and conflicting emotions about her role within her church-going community. With assuredness, Adams's measured debut emerges as an aching story about one teen's internal growth and cultural awakening.

Few Blue Skies
Carolina Ixta (Quill Tree)
Former friends team up to expose a company's complicity in their community's increasing death toll in Ixta's riveting and intelligent novel. As the protagonists grapple with their desire to make a difference and find their place in the world, clever and empathetic narration poses challenging questions about the things one is willing to compromise for love and justice.

The Fight of Our Lives: AIDS in America
Gabriel Duckels and David Levithan (Knopf)
In this comprehensive nonfiction work, debut author Duckels teams up with Levithan to recount the history of the AIDS epidemic in the U.S. and its physical and emotional impact on those affected. Highlighting the intensity of the virus's influence on society and culture as well as important aspects of its history and present-day status, it's an essential portrait of the epidemic.

Queen of Faces
Petra Lord (Holt)
One's body and soul are separate entities in debut author Lord's mind-bending series opener, which sensitively explores identity and self-actualization. Determined to obtain a vessel that matches her spirit, the protagonist—a female consciousness bound

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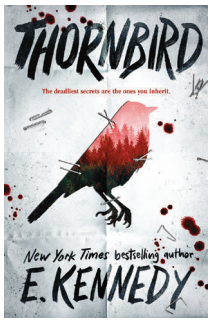
to a male figure—becomes embroiled in a dangerous war. Sophisticated worldbuilding and sumptuous set pieces are enriched by exquisitely rendered characters in this dazzling tale.

A Scar Like a River
Lisa Graff (Little, Brown/Ottaviano)
After the uncle who physically assaulted her suddenly dies, a teen reckons with past trauma as well as fraught family dynamics and her mother's mysterious worsening illness. Graff infuses viscerally wrought realities with moments of lightheartedness via funny and compassionate narration, resulting in a meticulously calibrated story about familial abuse and the psychological effects of a lasting injury.

Thornbird
E. Kennedy (Delacorte)
Kennedy makes her YA debut with a taut, emphatic thriller that follows the intelligent, resilient teenage daughter of a serial killer as she wrestles with her memories of her father and his monstrous actions. Anticipatory writing and nuanced, morally complex characterization relays an introspective examination of the ripple effects of violence and a grimly layered mystery about reconciliation.

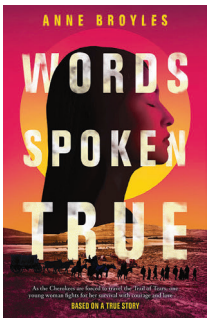
Traitors' Nest
Frances Hardinge (Amulet)
In Hardinge's rousing, medieval-inspired historical fantasy, a kingdom's castles occasionally swap places thanks to a Great Game involving godlike Players. Tired of mercenaries plundering his village's livestock and food stores, a teen attempts to turn the tides of the sport. Witty and wildly inventive mythology and indomitable characters distinguish this triumphant tale of derring-do.

Wake Now in the Fire
Jarrett Dapier, illus. by AJ Dungo (Ten Speed Graphic)
Dapier and Dungo's profound graphic novel fictionalizes the story of the Chicago public school system's 2013 removal of *Persepolis* from classroom libraries. As teens contest the ban, their protests garner national attention, forcing them to consider their actions' impact. Organic dialogue adds verve to sophisticated conversations about censorship, while understated artwork complements the complex, multifaceted tale.









Where You'll Find Us
Jen St. Jude (Bloomsbury)
A transgender teen's discovery of a magical liminal space empowers them to be their most authentic self in St. Jude's cathartic story. Intimate and graceful prose traces the protagonist's grappling with their gender identity as they—and five queer strangers—find refuge in an isolated farmhouse where time stands still. The result is a luminous and affirming novel about healing and moving forward.

Words Spoken True
Anne Broyles (Scholastic Press)
Broyles delivers a searing historical novel about a Cherokee teen's forced removal from her Tennessee home. Characters inspired by real people are vividly brought to life through raw prose, poems, and fictionalized diary and journal entries. It's a triple threat: an illuminating historical telling, a tender portrait of adolescence, and a harrowing call to action against the nation's inhumane treatment of Indigenous peoples.

Reviews

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



Photograph by DANIELLA FISHMAN

In Jared Young's mind-bending mystery *This Will Be the End of Me*, nine versions of the same man attend his 40th birthday party, and one of them winds up dead.
Page 55

A nefarious plot to undermine the women's suffrage movement is exposed in Ross Montgomery's historical thriller *The Shadows of Kensington Gore*.
Page 56

Time-traveling taxis bring a couple together in Emily Wibberley and Austin Siegemund-Broka's *Just in Time*.
Page 58

A middle-aged woman flees her life in Australia for the American Southwest in Victoria Hannan's offbeat novel *I Love the Whole World!* (reviewed on this page).



PHOTO © COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR

I Love the Whole World!

Victoria Hannan. Scribner, $28 (240p)
ISBN 978-1-6682-4055-7

Australian author Hannan's buoyant U.S. debut introduces readers to a charming Melbourne divorcée who's about to get a new lease on life. For Leslie, 43 in the year 2000, "life had become a series of things that just happened to her," including her break from her demeaning ex-husband, Dennis, whose judgmental voice she still hears in her head. After entering a bunch of sweepstakes, she wins an all-expenses-paid week in Las Vegas and excitedly packs her bags, even as she imagines Dennis telling their 22-year-old daughter, Moose, that she'll hate it there. The opposite proves true. She takes delight in every moment of her trip, from the syrup-soaked pancakes and huevos rancheros at the breakfast buffet to the Egyptian-themed swimming pools and the Hoover Dam and Grand Canyon. She also gets together with an old high school friend, Jeff (happily married, so romance is off the table), who takes her to see desert art installations she had hoped to study in college, before being waylaid by marriage. Almost entirely devoid of conflict, aside from minor fretting by Leslie about Moose's pregnancy, the novel serves up an enticing fantasy of transformation by travel. Making Vegas appear wholesome might sound like an impossible feat, but Hannan accomplishes it. *Agent: Naomi Eisenbeiss, InkWell Management. (Apr.)*

The Death of a Certain Woman

Yasushi Inoue, trans. from the Japanese by J. Martin Holman. Transit, $18.95 trade paper (164p)
ISBN 979-8-89338-072-9

★ This marvelous collection by Akutagawa Prize winner Inoue (1907–1991), who wrote about ancient China in his novel *Tun-huang*, illuminates the porous boundary between youth and adulthood in stories set in early-20th-century rural Japan. The narrator of "The Road Down to the Waterfall" recounts his boyhood in a mountain village, remembering how he, like the adults, was suspicious of visitors who came for the hot springs. He also remembers playing soldier with other young boys, a motif that recurs in "The White Highway," in which classmates pretend to dress each other's wounds from battle. In "Dragonflies," lust and sexuality prove as alluring as they are confusing. The narrator recalls exploring an abandoned mansion after school with a classmate, where they find a dirty magazine. Looking at it makes the narrator frazzled, especially after the pair are greeted by a young man who asks them to deliver a message to a woman about a future rendezvous. The narrator can't bring himself to do it, worried that the man and woman will get "kissy, kissy," like in the magazine. The stories offer indelible glimpses of a bygone world that fades along with the characters' youth. Readers will find much to savor. *(Jan.)*

Preparing for Nothingness

Alan Lightman. Pantheon, $28 (256p)
ISBN 979-8-217-20736-7

Lightman (*Einstein's Dreams*) weaves essays and fiction into a ruminative and sometimes wry story of an academic conference. Professor Ludvig Bergsson of Sweden's Uppsala University arranges for the university's upcoming biennial Chancellor's Symposium, which has taken place since the 17th century, to feature a series of esteemed scholars lecturing on the topic of "Preparing for Nothingness." As Lightman makes clear in chapters devoted to Ludvig, the professor chose the topic in part because he's still processing his father's long decline and recent death. The bulk of the novel comprises the guests' richly descriptive and lucidly concise lectures on such topics as astronomy, philosophy, psychology, religion, and semiotics. Interspersed throughout are shorter chapters that tease together Bergsson's life story, from his youth

on a farm to his present-day conversations with his concerned wife Ebba. This premise might sound dry and prosaic, but Lightman holds the reader's attention with probing questions about grappling with mortality and occasional dashes of humor. The latter quality is especially evident in a scene depicting a meditation session guided by a Buddhist monk: "A wonderful way to end our symposium, Ludvig thought to himself, although he noticed that a number of people had left the auditorium, including the vice-chancellor." This leaves readers with much to ponder. *Agent: Deborah Schneider, Gelfman Schneider Literary. (Dec.)*

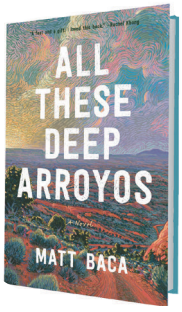
Rabbit Rabbit

Jennifer E. Smith. Ballantine, $31 (336p)
ISBN 979-8-217-37519-6

Smith (*The Unsinkable Greta James*) spins a winsome story of hard-won love and the vagaries of middle-aged friendship. On the cusp of 40, Billie and her besties Talia and Jane celebrate New Year's Eve in Florence, Italy, where they traveled together years earlier to celebrate graduating from film school at USC. Billie, who is single, envies Talia's marriage and two kids and Jane's longtime relationship with her girlfriend, and as the countdown to midnight progresses, she blurts out that this is the year she is going to have a baby. When she meets Arthur, a handsome, charming, and self-effacing Scotsman, that same night, their chemistry is undeniable, and they stay up until sunrise talking. Arthur doesn't want children, largely due to the pain of a long-ago family tragedy, but the pair's feelings for each other persist as they stay in touch. As the months pass, they get together in his native Edinburgh and the U.S., and go on a series of adventures, including a safari in Kenya, but the greatest test to their burgeoning relationship comes when Billie opts for artificial insemination. Filled with humor and searching questions about the limits of self-fulfillment, the novel offers no pat solutions. It's a delightful escape with plenty of substance. *Agent: Jennifer Joel, CAA. (Dec.)*

All These Deep Arroyos

Matt Baca. Bloomsbury, $28.99 (336p)
ISBN 978-1-63973-775-8

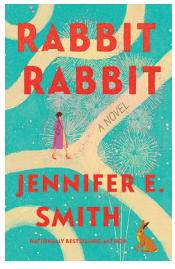


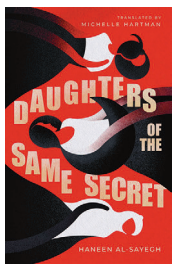
FOR HIS MASTERFUL debut, Baca interweaves a coming-of-age story following the twin Lucero brothers, Robin and Cruz, in the New Mexico desert with the mystery of why, as adults, the responsible Robin has wound up in prison and the wayward Cruz has gone missing. As babies in 1986, the boys are left with their paternal grandparents by their overwhelmed 19-year-old mother, Veronica—but she is forced to reclaim colicky Cruz after a concerned neighbor tracks her down. As the years go on, Robin stays with their Tata and Nana, living out a peaceful childhood on their cattle ranch, while Cruz, raised by their parents, learns to avoid their parents' drunken raging, and eventually starts to drink and use drugs himself. As a young man, enterprising Robin takes the opposite path, falling in love with a girl named Cristina and attending college. After Cruz's girlfriend Pearl becomes pregnant and suffers a miscarriage, Cruz slips deeper into drugs and crime. Shifting back and forth in time—the narrative includes letters exchanged in 2007 between Veronica and Robin while he's in prison and an appeal of his conviction that unfolds in 2011—Baca reveals the story of Robin's unexpected downfall, showing how the straitlaced young man was pulled into an ill-advised scheme cooked up by his brother. A first-person narrator surfaces at times, and the narrator's withheld identity adds to the story's propulsive quality. With its seamless blend of timelines and perspectives, Baca's novel lays bare the complexities of its flawed and sympathetic characters. It's a knockout. *(Jan.)*

Daughters of the Same Secret

Haneen Al-Sayegh. Interlink, $18.95 trade paper (336p)
ISBN 978-1-62371-539-7

In this wrenching novel, shortlisted for the International Prize for Arabic Fiction, Al-Sayegh (*Beacons to Mislead Time*) examines how religious restrictions in patriarchal Lebanon threaten to keep a young woman silent and powerless. Amal is one of four daughters in a strict religious family in a small mountain village. She enjoys school, where she excels. When she is 15, a businessman named Salem comes to call on her father, interested in making Amal his bride. She consents, as long as she's permitted to graduate from high school. Salem demands frequent sex from Amal, sometimes without her consent, determined that she become pregnant, though she's unsure whether she wants to be a mother. After a few months, he pushes her into IVF treatments, but she doesn't conceive until years later, after enrolling in university in Beirut. She adores her little girl, Rahmeh, and delights in the study of English literature, but she's gripped by depression and thoughts of suicide. Eventually, Amal gathers her courage and tells her husband she wants a divorce. The novel is a bit repetitive, and the drama sometimes feels overwrought, but Al-Sayegh ably shows how it takes great effort for Amal to overcome her timidity, low self-esteem, and chronic depression to increase her freedom and autonomy. Intrepid readers will be satisfied by this stirring character portrait. *(Dec.)*



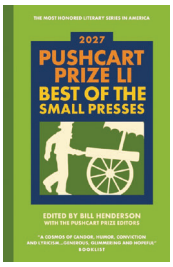


The Voyage

V.S. Alexander. Kensington, $18.95 trade paper (416p)
ISBN 978-1-4967-5784-5

Alexander (*The Novelist from Berlin*) offers a lackluster story of the *Titanic* about a married couple and their devoted dog who sail on the doomed ocean liner. Sir Gordon Shelton, a junior solicitor at a British law firm, is terrified of water after nearly drowning as a child, but he feels compelled to accept a cabin on the maiden voyage of the *Titanic*, after helping to close a tea maker's lucrative contract with the vessel. Gordon hopes having his New York City–born wife, Ruth, and their beloved Newfoundland dog, Finn, on board will help calm his nerves. On the ship, the couple enjoys

their first-class accommodations and befriends members of the aristocratic Astor family. Then the boat hits the iceberg. In the ensuing chaos, Ruth secures a spot on a lifeboat but is separated from her husband and dog. After she's rescued and returns to her childhood home, she secludes herself in grief, assuming Gordon and Finn perished, until she hears a rumor of Finn's possible survival. Sections written from the perspective of Finn are meant to expand on the lesser-known stories of dogs on board the *Titanic*, but they add little to the narrative. Worse, the languid pacing throttles the emotional impact, and the story is mired in sentimentality. It's a miss. *Agent: Evan Marshall, Evan Marshall Agency. (Dec.)*





Pushcart Prize LI

Edited by Bill Henderson. Pushcart, $38 (540p)
ISBN 978-1-888889-26-0

Work is endangered, meaningless, or scarce in this admirable anthology's distinctive stories. Amanda Bachman's humor piece, "A Company Reminder for Everyone to Talk Nicely About the Giant Plagiarism Machine," takes the form of an office memo that encourages employees to use the AI that may soon replace them. In William Torrey's salty Southern tale, "A Crawfish Boil at the End of the World," the narrator, an impoverished adjunct professor, reflects on his scant opportunities for growth ("nobody's tossing out lifelines"). The privileged and hilariously mediocre college graduate who narrates Sasha Graybosch's "In Nature" itches to get a job and move out of her parents' house, but her skills are "meager" and she knows she's "dumb." Eventually she lands a gig notifying people they've lost their jobs because their company has dissolved. In Bud Smith's poetic "Skyhawks," an oil refinery worker reflects on how his job depends on an Earth-killing resource ("We're just trying to gently service the machines that are efficiently destroying the entire world"). What makes the anthology most worth browsing is its brilliant new voices, such as Meghan Proulx, whose sardonic and offbeat "Light wash Denim Styles" tells of a tic dubbed "the anxiety trembles" that afflicts the nervous narrator and other ordinary-looking women who soothe themselves by shopping at Madewell. There's much to discover here. *(Dec.)*

Habila

Wayétu Moore. Viking, $30 (386p)
ISBN 978-0-593-29749-0



MOORE (*She Would Be King*) unfurls a majestic story of a young woman's complex bond with a potent water spirit inspired by Mami Wata, a figure in Liberian mythology. Melanctha Tarpeh immigrates with her mother, stepfather, and brother as a young girl from Liberia to Hunt, Tex. Growing up, she's told that her father, Topka, died in their home country. Adding to her hardships, she's tormented by white classmate Cameron. During a field trip, he violently pushes her into a lake. Instead of drowning, Melanctha finds that she can breathe underwater and she encounters Habila, a beguiling half-woman, half-fish water deity. Habila infuses a gold comb with a special power, instructing Melanctha that if she wants to make someone disappear, she should have them touch the comb, at which point Habila will lure them into the water and kill them. Melanctha tries it on Cameron and it works: she never sees him again. As Melanctha matures, she forges a powerful friendship with Habila, often visiting her at a nearby lake or other bodies of water. But once Melanctha becomes an independent woman, pursuing a marketing career and dating men in Oakland, Calif., she distances herself from Habila, afraid the spirit will drive men away from her. Meanwhile, a secondary narrative reveals the devastating truth of what happened to Topka. Moore seamlessly weaves mythology and spirituality with Melanctha's self-determination, exploring the tension in her life between two competing forms of feminine strength. The author is at the height of her powers. *Agent: Susan Golomb, Writers House. (Jan.)*

MYSTERIES & THRILLERS

When They Lock the Doors

L.J. Shepherd. Poisoned Pen, $18.99 trade paper (368p)
ISBN 978-1-7282-9846-7

For her devilishly twisty sophomore outing, Shepherd (*The Trials of Lila Dalton*) combines legal thriller and locked-room fight for survival. An English woman using the fake name Leonie Vogt has wormed her way onto the jury deciding the fate of nurse Michael Quinn, who has been charged with murdering "Leonie's" husband, Hamish Ryan, by injecting him with a fatal dose of adrenaline. After deliberations begin, jurors receive news that a chemical weapon has been unleashed in their city, and they must remain inside the courthouse indefinitely. Flashbacks reveal how Leonie pulled off her scheme, with Shepherd leaving readers to draw their own conclusions about her certainty that Michael killed Hamish. As the plot volleys back and forth between Leonie's grief and the sequestered jury, Shepherd ratchets the tension to near unbearable heights before resolving everything with a gut punch of a final act. Gripping, unpredictable, and more chillingly plausible than the premise would leave one to believe, this establishes Shepherd as a rising star. *Agent: Robin Straus, Robin Straus Agency. (Jan.)*

Bulldog

James Patterson and Mike Lupica. Little, Brown, $32 (400p)
ISBN 978-0-316-57005-3

Patterson and Lupica's sixth collaboration (after *The Country Road Murders*) is an uninspired cat-and-mouse serial killer thriller. Bestselling true crime author Gracie Bronte is intent on catching a murderer nicknamed "the Traveler" and making him the subject of her next book. The Traveler has killed eight women in six months in far-flung corners of the U.S., leaving a mask by each body as a token. To succeed where the FBI has failed, Gracie enlists the help of her friend Christian Walshe, who has just resigned from the NYPD after a storied career. After Gracie dubs her

quarry a psychopath on her Substack, she receives an email declaring that her name-calling has motivated the Traveler to head to the Big Apple and continue his slaughter. Gracie and Christian's investigation gets a wrinkle when a different killer starts terrorizing Manhattan, but they're swiftly aided by a hacker fan of Gracie's who "can find out anything." Such quick saves and pulled punches abound, resulting in a long-winded windup to a climax that doesn't satisfy. It's a forgettable outing from writers capable of better. *Agent: Deneen Howell, Williams & Connolly. (Jan.)*

Ride or Die Girl

Alexander Boldizar. Simon & Schuster, $29 (368p)
ISBN 978-1-6682-3326-9

Boldizar's bold follow-up to *The Man Who Saw Seconds* centers on Beatrix, a woman for whom falling for the wrong man is less a romantic mistake than a recurring descent into hell. Beatrix's perennial attraction to bad boys leads her to Jason Lykos, a possessive, insecure Canadian gangster whose volatile temper turns their passion into a cycle of control, violence, and dependency. Jason's reputation for brutality earns him standing on the streets, but his reckless business dealings put him in increasingly dangerous conflict with other criminals, jeopardizing the people—like Beatrix—who help maintain his quest for money and power. As Jason's enemies multiply, Beatrix begins to realize that her years entangled in his criminal world have given her the skills to survive without him. So she decides to bide her time and wait for Jason to dig his own grave. Boldizar leans heavily into a Dante-esque structure, making Beatrix's time in Jason's world an increasingly punishing spiral downward. The repetition of abuse and reconciliation can be exhausting, but that exhaustion is part of the novel's purpose—the reader, like Beatrix, longs for an escape from Jason's iron grasp. By that metric, this stylish and challenging work succeeds in spades. *Agent: Mark Tavani, David Black Literary. (Jan.)*

Man Eater

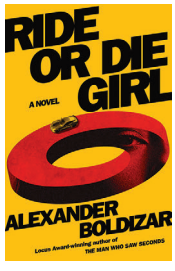
Ally Wilkes. Atria/Bestler, $20 trade paper (336p)
ISBN 978-1-6682-0716-1

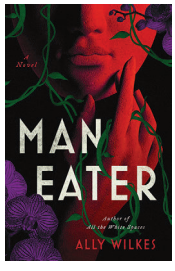
Passions clash among British orchid hunters in this riveting, 1901-set tale of greed and vengeance from Stoker finalist Wilkes (*Where the Dead Wait*). After a fire kills Minerva Sandford's parents and destroys her family's garden-studded British estate, the 19-year-old reluctantly trades a happy future as a single botanist for a loveless marriage to her first cousin, Guy. Guy wants an heir; Minerva wants bodily autonomy and secretly uses "plant medicine" to miscarry every time they conceive. When Guy and fellow cousin Dickon venture into Brazil's jungle seeking a novel orchid for the family business, Minerva insists on joining them—Guy knows logistics and Dickon the Amazon, but neither knows plants. Minerva hopes to find, domesticate, and name the flower after herself, achieving professional relevance and "a type of immortality." Like Minerva, however, the jungle resists taming, leading to strange hallucinations and, eventually, bloodshed. Equal parts psychological thriller and gothic body horror, Wilkes's latest grips while raging against atrocities perpetrated under colonialism. Lush prose and nightmarish imagery conspire with Minerva's increasingly agitated narration to foster all-consuming paranoia and dread. It's a furious feminist fever dream. *Agent: Oli Munson, AM Heath. (Jan.)*

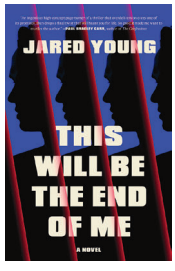
This Will Be the End of Me

Jared Young. Crown, $30 (336p)
ISBN 979-8-217-09008-2

Nine versions of the same man attend his 40th birthday party in this ingenious locked-room thriller from Young (*Into the Current*). At a lakeside mansion, Joshua Hoffman hosts eight alternate-timeline Joshua Hoffmans to celebrate the start of his fifth decade. The "real" Joshua is nicknamed Host; other Joshes include the Argentinian, the Novelist, and the Townie. Each Josh arrives determined to put his best foot forward, but as Young toggles between their perspectives, skeletons—both figurative and literal—tumble from their closets. When one of the Joshes ends up dead, the others are forced to consider who among them can be trusted as they try to identify his killer. As Young observes each Josh trying to protect himself at the expense of his peers, he tackles thought-provoking themes of free will and the impulse to justify one's life choices in hindsight. The result is a metaphysical whodunit that's as heady as it is suspenseful. This will appeal to thriller diehards and those with a taste for adventurous fare. *Agent: Marilyn Biderman, Transatlantic Agency. (Jan.)*







Lie, Steal, Kill (Julia Harte #2)

Amy Jordan. Hanover Square, $20 trade paper (320p)
ISBN 978-1-335-00139-9

Jordan's engrossing sequel to *The Dark Hours* finds Garda detective Julia Harte working a complex case in the Irish village of North Cork. In 1960, Declan and Evelyn Forde were brutally murdered in their small cottage. The couple's infant daughter, Teresa, survived unharmed, and their killer was never caught. Thirty-six years later, Teresa returns to North Cork and takes possession of what was once her family home. With her two teenage daughters in tow, Teresa is determined to make a new life for her family after leaving an abusive marriage. It soon becomes clear, however, that North Cork locals have not forgotten the gossip surrounding her parents' deaths. When Teresa starts to fear that someone is stalking her, the newly promoted Detective Hart is assigned to protect Teresa and her family from danger; while she's at it, she can't help but also try her hand at solving the decades-old cold case. Jordan perfectly captures the cloistered intensity of life in a small village, and she balances shrewd mystery mechanics—plausible suspects, clever red herrings, a fair-play conclusion—with well-shaded characters. The result proves that Julia Harte can sustain a series. *Agent: Sara O'Keefe, Aevitas Creative Management. (Jan.)*

Speechless

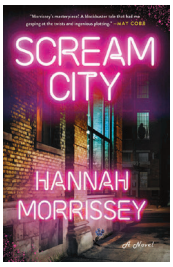
Jordan Sawyer. Minotaur, $29 (320p)
ISBN 978-1-250-43253-7

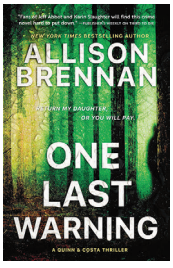
The pseudonymous Sawyer debuts with a disjointed thriller centered on Leah Andrews, a New Yorker who deals with a devastating breakup by throwing herself into her new job as a communication facilitator for nonverbal patients with traumatic brain injuries. One of her first clients is Stephanie Martine, who asks Leah to work with her husband, Eliot, a coma patient and hasn't spoken in the year since he fell down the stairs of their home. With the aid of a laptop and a great deal of patience, Leah helps Eliot type out his first message since his injury: "HELP ME." It's followed soon after by "YOU NEED TO PROTECT ME." Startled, Leah plunges into the Martine family's twisted dynamics in hopes of finding out who he needs protection from. Soon enough, it becomes clear that Eliot's accident was hardly accidental. After a brisk and satisfying first act, the plot begins to wobble, and the big twist, while bold, feels a little too far-fetched. This doesn't quite come together. *Agent: Richard Pine, InkWell Literary. (Jan.)*

Scream City

Hannah Morrissey. Minotaur, $29 (368p)
ISBN 978-1-250-36977-2

Morrissey (the Black Harbor series) delivers an entertaining if uneven tale centered on Milwaukee bookstore owner Alice Foster, granddaughter of the notorious Cream City Killer. It's 1997, and Alice, like her fellow local business owners, fears eviction after land developer Kent Griffin shutters the local millinery shop. When bar owner Ike Drilling decides conceding is the best option, Alice protests, and the two end up in an altercation. Three days later—exactly 10 years after Alice's grandfather's death in prison—Ike is murdered in his bar. Not long after, another business owner's body is found dead inside his shop. Like the Cream City Killer's victims, both men were killed with piano wire, leading police to theorize that a copycat is on the loose. In addition to Alice, the other main suspect is Rex Hale, an ex-cop who handed eviction notices to both victims moments before their deaths, and Alice agrees to join forces with Rex in hopes of clearing both of their names. Despite a promising premise, Morrissey stymies momentum by dedicating too much space to local color and undercooked side characters—though the climactic twist nearly saves the day. It's a mixed bag. *Agent: Stephanie Kip Rostan, Levine Greenberg Rostan. (Jan.)*





A Pint of Murder (Irish Pub Mysteries #1)

Cate Malone. Crooked Lane, $19.99 trade paper (320p)
ISBN 979-8-8924-2723-4

The assured debut by Malone introduces American sound engineer Alanna Dolan as she's heading to Ballinagís, Ireland, for her grandfather's funeral. When she arrives, Alanna's grief is complicated by her surprise at the terms of her grandfather's will. He has left Alanna the Music House, the family pub and social epicenter of Ballinagís, leading to an uproar among her relatives, several of whom demand she sell it to them. The exception is Alanna's cousin Deirdre, who's delighted by the prospect of having Alanna nearby. When the cousins meet up at a cafe, someone throws a sliotar, the hard ball used in hurling, at them, barely missing their heads. Alanna writes the incident off as an accident until she returns to the B&B later that night to find Deirdre dead. Convinced Deirdre was murdered, Alanna attempts to figure out if their family has turned on her or if there's something more nefarious going on in Ballinagís. Malone hits plenty of the requisite cozy beats—a charming small town, an underconfident amateur sleuth—but the core mystery is uncommonly clever. Readers will look forward to the sequel. *Agent: Jennifer Udden, Laura Dail Literary. (Jan.)*

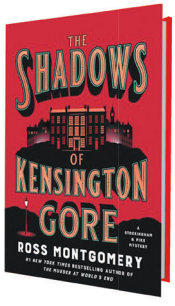
One Last Warning (Quinn & Costa #8)

Allison Brennan. Hanover Square, $30 (400p)
ISBN 978-1-3350-0181-8

Brennan's formulaic eighth outing for detective Kara Quinn and special agent Matt Costa (after *Make It Out Alive*) puts the couple's romance on the back burner. While Kara grapples her con artist father's early release from prison, Matt scrambles to locate two young girls who go missing in quick succession: first, his neighbor's daughter, then his own goddaughter, Lizzy. Behind the kidnappings is escaped hit man Conrad James Harding, who uses Lizzy as leverage in a bid to reconnect with his own daughter, Marie,

The Shadows of Kensington Gore (Stockingham & Pike #2)

Ross Montgomery. Morrow, $30 (320p)
ISBN 978-0-06-345891-8



MONTGOMERY'S exuberant sequel to *The Murder at World's End* finds elderly investigator Decima Stockingham and her assistant Stephen Pike attempting to prevent a terrorist attack in 1911 London. At a protest by the suffragettes days before the coronation of England's new king, a policeman is murdered and three women are seen running from the scene. Suffragette leader Emmeline Pankhurst hires Decima to solve the crime and clear the names of the accused women. Decima, in turn, employs "the Ivys"—27 moles posing as maids in the mansions of England's power brokers—to harvest information for her. The intel turns up much discussion among London's elite of slowing the suffragettes' progress. A group of nefarious men, it turns out, have built a bomb that they plan to detonate during the king's coronation, framing the suffragettes for the carnage. As Stephen tries to stop the bomb from exploding in the Royal Albert Hall, Decima builds bonds with Emmeline and the suffragettes' cause, resulting in a historical mystery that's both pulse-pounding and tenderhearted. Indelible characters and immersive period detail elevate the proceedings even higher. Here's hoping this series has a long run. *Agent: Peter Knapp, Park, Fine & Brower. (Jan.)*

whose exact location has been sealed by court order. As Matt, Kara, and Lizzy's mother, FBI profiler Catherine Jones, struggle to retrieve Lizzy without jeopardizing Victoria or Marie, Brennan mars her otherwise promising exploration of parental rights and the blurry line between protectiveness and possessiveness with paper-thin characterizations. Heavily telegraphed twists and too much exposition don't help, making this land more like a setup for future entries than a fully realized narrative in its own right. It's strictly for steadfast series fans. *Agent: Daniel Conaway, Writers House. (Jan.)*

The Chaperones

Amy Meyerson. Thomas & Mercer, $28.99 (352p)
ISBN 978-1-6625-4213-8

A school camping trip goes terribly wrong in this by-the-numbers thriller from Meyerson (*The Water Lies*). When third graders from California's ritzy Chester School and their chaperones arrive on Santa Cruz Island for an overnight stay, park ranger Emmy assures the group that "nothing bad" ever happens on her turf. Given the parents' appetite for luxury—a celebrity chef and two sous-chefs come along to make dinner—Emmy expects a routine stay free of threats from the elements. But at two a.m., single mom Sofia awakes to find her son, Javi, missing from their tent. She panics, only to discover that Lei, another student, has vanished as well. Thus begins a frantic search for the children that evolves into a grim whodunit in the book's final third. Meyerson's characters are one-dimensional, as signaled by her shorthand for the novel's narrators ("Charles, the stay-at-home dad"; "Stella, the art teacher"). Meanwhile, a parade of clichés, including a storm that isolates the campers from the mainland, mar the plot. Riley Sager this is not. *Agent: Marcy Posner, Folio Literary. (Dec.)*

Cragside (DCI Ryan #6)

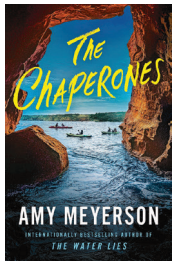
LJ Ross. Poisoned Pen, $18.99 trade paper (368p)
ISBN 978-1-4642-7331-5

A murder mystery party ends with actual murder in Ross's pedestrian sixth case for Northumbria DCI Maxwell Finley-Ryan (after *High Force*). Ryan is having as bad a time as he expects during a corny costume party at the ornate Bavarian-style Cragside House. Then a valet named Victor is discovered at the base of one of Cragside's staircases with his skull crushed, and Ryan—morbidly grateful for some real action—starts to investigate. The possibility that it was an accidental fall becomes less plausible when a visit to Victor's room reveals that someone has rifled through his possessions. When a second body turns up, the stakes increase, and the story ties back to Ryan's recently defeated nemesis, a serial killer known as the Hacker. Ross spends too much time checking in on secondary characters, including a cop who survived one of the Hacker's attacks, and the excess detail about Ryan and his fiancée, historian Anna Taylor, make this a difficult sell for newcomers. Though Ross resolves the mystery with a clever-enough solution, the novel loses too much momentum before it arrives. British procedural buffs can do better. *Agent: Millie Hoskins, United Agents. (Dec.)*

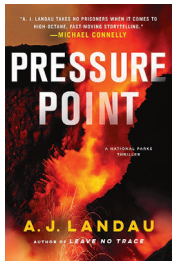
Pressure Point (National Parks Thrillers #3)

A.J. Landau. Minotaur, $29 (304p)
ISBN 978-1-250-40734-4

Landau, a pseudonym for Jon Lindstrom and Jeff Ayers, pulls out all the stops in the pulse-pounding latest adventure for special agent Michael Walker of the U.S. Department of the Interior's Investigative Services Branch (after *Cold Burn*). At the outset, Walker travels to Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park after cameras capture terrorist Gunther Strout entering the grounds. Channeling Ethan Hunt, Walker locates and jumps onto a helicopter Strout has stolen and kicks the villain out of the aircraft to his death. Though Walker has foiled Strout's attempted attack, the dead terrorist's handler, JR Freeman IV, is still at large and plotting to enrich himself by controlling the global water supply and turning it into "the world's most valuable resource." Freeman's scheme involves triggering eruptions at Crater Lake and Mount Rainier, affecting water levels for much of the U.S. After those explosions, Walker fears that Yellowstone could be next. As he races to stymie another explosion, Walker also investigates new evidence that conservationist John Muir may have been murdered 100 years earlier by one of Freeman's ancestors. The authors smoothly join these potentially chaotic plotlines into a brisk and entertaining romp. For fans of Jon McGoran's eco-thrillers, this is good fun. *(Dec.)*







A Necessary Death

Terri Karsten. Wagonbridge, $15 trade paper (268p)
ISBN 978-1-953444-20-2

American colonist Penelope Corbitt becomes an amateur sleuth after the sudden death of her husband in this solid historical mystery from Karsten (*A Mistake of Consequence*). In the 1760s, a freshly widowed Penelope travels with her son and her daughter from Philadelphia to Boston, where the three plan to live with Penelope's stern sister. En route, a storm causes their coach to break down, and the family seeks refuge in a nearby tavern. When Penelope rushes to the privy, she finds it occupied by the blood and vomit-covered corpse of local clergyman Parson Phillips. Puzzled as to why Phillips would have crossed the road to use the tavern's necessary instead of his own, Penelope assists innkeeper Miles Tucker—who's also the local constable—in probing the parson's death. Soon, they learn he was both poisoned and stabbed, and had more enemies than most villagers imagined. Karsten convincingly brings the America of the 1760s to life, with side characters debating slavery and discussing tensions with Native Americans, and she draws welcome inspiration from the Golden Age greats for the core mystery. A sequel would be welcome. *(Self-published)*

SF, FANTASY & HORROR

This Crimson Ruin (The Titan's Wrath #2)

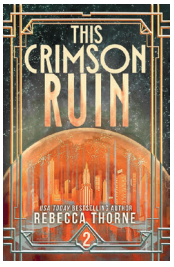
Rebecca Thorne. Tor, $19.99 trade paper (384p)
ISBN 978-1-250-42203-3

Thorne picks up right where *This Gilded Abyss* left off for the tense and often brutal middle installment of her queer fantasy trilogy. Royal subarch Kessandra "Kess" Biltean III and her bodyguard and lover, Sgt. Nix Marr, are the only survivors of the sabotaged submersible *Lumosity*, which had been their best chance of escape from the underwater city of Fall, leaving them trapped. The city was built on the bones of the corrupt, madness-inducing titan god Lumos to mine the powerful ichoron he produces. As Kess and Nix navigate the city looking for answers, survivors, and a way out, they fight Lumos at every turn, both in the form of his reanimated soldiers and in his insidious incursions into Nix's brain, making her unpredictable and violent. Strange time bubbles that show the lovers glimpses of their pasts offer respite and, perhaps, tools to solve the mystery of Fall and escape. The postapocalyptic setting forms a powerful backdrop for the prickly but intensely loving dynamic between Nix and Kess. Thorne smoothly navigates the transition from a story of self-preservation to a world-saving scenario, raising the stakes with finesse and cleverness. This sets things up for an exciting conclusion. *(Dec.)*

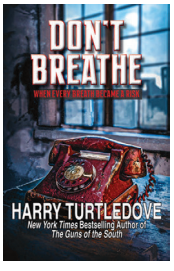
All Things Hidden

Sherrilyn Kenyon. Blackstone, $29.99 (272p)
ISBN 979-8-200-90400-6

From bestseller Kenyon (the Dark-Hunter series) comes an uneven WWII-set horror novel that starts stronger than it finishes. After Maria Bertram's family is slaughtered by the Nazis, she vows to get revenge using her special gift to "feel the negative energies that wanted to overtake human souls and the world they knew." It's this ability that leads to her recruitment to the Vril, a secret society of women possessing paranormal powers who are tasked with aiding in Hitler's military campaign. She's taken to Houska Castle, in Czechoslovakia, an eerie fortress apparently constructed not to repel adversaries but instead to keep something trapped inside. Maria, very literally haunted by the ghost of her late younger sister, Ingrid, meets two potential allies at the castle: fellow Vril Fritzi Gruber, who has successfully faked hearing voices from the afterlife for the safety being one of the Vril provides, and Dušek Fara, a mysterious and attractive man posing as the building's caretaker, who is also able to see Ingrid, alongside many other ghosts. The powerful aura of something extremely evil pervades Houska, something the Germans hope to summon to join their armies. Unfortunately, as Maria and friends work to stop them, the plot veers in a derivative direction, and it isn't saved by the emergence of a steamy romantic subplot or a reveal about Dušek's true nature. It's disappointing. *(Dec.)*







Don't Breathe

Harry Turtledove. Caezik SF & Fantasy, $29.99 (300p)
ISBN 978-1-64710-168-8

Alternate history maestro Turtledove (*Powerless*) focuses on the recent past in this harrowing tale of what might have been if the Covid pandemic were 10 times worse. Writers Ishmael and Deborah Weinberg struggle to keep their careers and family alive during the 2020 outbreak, a task made more challenging because their daughter Sarah is a CNN reporter who happens to be in Japan when an infected cruise ship tries to disembark. Pulled into the story of a worldwide plague, Sarah catches the disease while trying to track how it is spreading throughout the U.S. Meanwhile, Ishmael, after getting the title advice from his doctor as the best way to avoid Covid, keeps up a steady Twitter feed mocking President Trump (the "Tangerine Shitgibbon") and chronicling the deteriorating political scene, including a more explosive January 6 uprising that results in the assassination of Mike Pence. The plot also sees the karmic dispatchment of many Covid deniers and anti-maskers. A note of hope at the end may not lessen the impact of the extra deaths but does provide some relief. For many, it will still be too soon for this kind of thought experiment, but die-hard Turtledove fans will want to check this out. *Agent: Russell Galen, Scovil Galen Ghosh. (Dec.)*

Wind of Earth, Wind of Tau Ceti

Joe M. McDermott. Aqueduct, $21 (310p)
ISBN 978-1-61976-286-2

This rocky dual-planet panorama from McDermott (*The Fortress at the End of Time*) begins with a frame story about seven-year-old Windy, a free-spirited resident of Tau Ceti, meeting, for the first time, her feisty gay grandmother, Wind, who has relocated to the planet from Earth. When an earthquake in the domed city sends the newly acquainted pair scrambling for their lives, 83-year-old Wind ends up in the hospital, where, sick with radiation poisoning, she begins writing her life story for Windy. ("It was a hard thing to do, to say the last thing to someone so small and so precious to her.") The narrative then shifts back in time to Earth to show Wind's childhood in Texas, "playing in the sticks and brush country amount the ruined semi-trailer trucks." Her dysfunctional family includes her drunk father, her absent mother, and her mother's angry new boyfriend. Wind's sinuous recollections include a camping trip with her father, visiting her grandmother in a nursing home, entering into a lavender marriage with a gay man, and adopting a son. These slices of life are sweet but often overlong and disjointed, with jarring point-of-view shifts that can be difficult to parse. Once Wind arrives on Tau Ceti, McDermott paints a portrait of a utopia under construction, but relies on several clichés to do so. Despite its emotional thrust, this gets blown off course. *(Dec.)*

ROMANCE & EROTICA

Just in Time

Emily Wibberley and Austin Siegemund-Broka. Berkley, $20 (352p)
ISBN 978-0-593-95428-7

★ In this enchanting, lightly speculative outing from married coauthors Wibberley and

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Siegemund-Broka (*The Roughest Draft*), two lonely New Yorkers must navigate tangled relationships with family, work, and friends before they can trust each other enough to fall in love. Gwen is a hardworking lawyer who achieves career perfection by using a unique ability she discovered as a teen: she can ask any taxi to take her back in time. This comes in handy for fixing mistakes and catching up on assignments when there is not enough time in the present. Gwen doesn't realize how isolated her workaholic tendencies have left her until she encounters another time traveler, Ian, who shares the same taxi talent and uses it to protect those around him from harm. A valued friendship turns into a strong attraction—until their time-traveling abilities deteriorate and Gwen worries that their budding relationship is the cause. The authors masterfully balance the magical trips to the past with the everyday challenges of the present while developing a heartwarming and convincing connection between the leads. These two are made for each other. *(Dec.)*

A Winter to Resist You

Morgane Moncomble, trans. from the French by Tegan Raleigh. Sourcebooks Casablanca, $18.99 trade paper (400p)
ISBN 978-1-4642-4812-2



A Canadian figure skater teams up with a man she has long admired in this memorable sports romance from Moncomble (*A Fall to Forgive You*). When Lily Pham's pairs partner, Oliver, suffers a potentially career-ending injury, Lily agrees to her coach's suggestion to replace him with renowned skater Orion Williams. Orion, who fears he is cursed because of the accidents that have befallen his past seven pairs partners, reluctantly agrees to come out of his pseudo-retirement to partner with Lily. But not before Lily overhears some disparaging comments Orion makes about her ("I'm not so desperate that I'd agree to have a beginner as a partner, much less one who's a fan"), leading to a rocky start to their partnership. Their relationship becomes a little less contentious when Orion's coach convinces the pair to live together for four months, leading attraction to bloom in close quarters. The slow-simmering close-proximity romance adds heart to the characters' relentless quest for gold at the world championships. But when Orion faces a health scare that could jeopardize Lily's safety on the ice, he fears the curse will strike again. Romance fans will find this a tense and emotional ride. *(Dec.)*



Mariposa

Lexie Axelson. Simon Maverick, $20 trade paper (384p)
ISBN 978-1-66827-577-1

This intense if implausible military romance from Axelson (*Wild Silver and Lead*) shoehorns graphic violence and kinky sex into a familiar plot that feels borrowed from Linda Howard. Violet Isla, 20, is determined to follow in the footsteps of her late father, who was a Green Beret, and enter Special Forces training. When her mother disowns her for joining the military and her boyfriend of six years dumps her at the airport before she deploys, Violet is even more determined to prove herself. However, Master Sgt. Kade O'Connell, aka Beast, will not make it easy. Just one year away from retirement, Kade is proud of his career, but past perilous missions have left him scarred inside and out. He's a tough teacher and doesn't mind being hated by his students, but Violet, whom he gives the call sign mariposa, impresses him soon enough. Despite their nearly 20-year age difference—and the fact that Kade happens to be Violet's ex-boyfriend's father—the pair struggle to control their all-consuming attraction to each other. The inevitable and abundant sex scenes lean into their power imbalance, and Kade's aggressive dirty talk won't be for everyone. ("Act like a fucking brat, and I'll fuck you so hard you'll feel me inside your soul for the rest of your life and when you're resting in your grave.") It's a bit much. *(Dec.)*



Moonshine Kiss (Bootleg Springs #3)

Lucy Score with Claire Kingsley. Bloom, $14.99 trade paper (384p)
ISBN 978-1-4642-3355-5

Bestsellers Score and Kingsley return to West Virginia (after *Sidecar Crush*) for this enticing contemporary, originally self-published in 2018. Fed up with dating apps, Deputy Cassidy Tucker has decided she's done with men and adopts a bonded pair of cats. The novel then flashes back to eight years earlier, when, at 19, she confessed her feelings to her longtime crush, Bowie Bodine, the older brother of her best friend, Scarlett—only for Bowie to tell her that he thinks of her "like a little sister." This was a lie: unbeknownst to her, Cassidy's father, Sheriff Harlan Tucker, asked Bowie to steer clear of Cassidy. Bowie, who idolized the sheriff, internalized that to meant he wasn't good enough for her. Now all grown up, Cassidy and Bowie both dance around their feelings. But the pair get closer when the cold case disappearance of a local teenager reopens, with Cassidy investigating, and an arrogant Fed comes to town insisting that Bowie and Scarlett's father was behind it. When the truth of why Bowie rejected her comes out, Cassidy must reevaluate everything. Feisty Cassidy gives honorable Bowie an entertaining run for his money, the folksy supporting cast appeals, and the mystery plot brings some momentum to the small town romance. This hits all the right notes. *(Dec.)*

Someone Else's Shoes (Princess of the Sands #1)

Aldrea Alien. Thardrandian Publications, $9.99 trade paper (136p)
ISBN 978-0-9922645-9-8

With this sweet if simple "Cinderella" retelling, Alien (*In Pain and Blood*) gives a sapphic high fantasy twist to the familiar plot. Half-elf Alla is abused by her stepmother and stepsisters for years, due in part to her elven background and in part to their innate cruelty, before she chances to meet the royal heir Princess Viktoriya, a trans woman,

in the marketplace. Assisted by her loyal friends and fellow servants, Alla sneaks away to the ball, where she reunites with the princess. The women's connection is cute and the magic-infused desert setting adds some interest, but readers seeking a greater twist on the original won't find that here. Instead, the story hits all the expected beats. Meanwhile the worldbuilding, which incorporates a caste system, and palace intrigue feel a touch underexplored, especially for readers who have not delved into Alien's previous books set in this same universe. Still, this bite-size spin on a classic will please those looking for queer fairy tale romance. *(Self-published)*

INSPIRATIONAL

The Falcon's Echo

Elizabeth Camden. Bethany House, $18.99 trade paper (336p)
ISBN 978-0-76424-661-6

Camden (*Beyond the Clouds*) kicks off the Call of the Sea series with an enthralling tale of honor and love triumphing against the odds. Twenty-six-year-old Athena Pembroke's family has deep ties to the Navy, but in 1905 the closest she can get to serving is working as the college archivist at the Naval Academy. While athletic, she's never had much use for football, until she meets Lt. Cooper Wainright, the new coach determined to triumph over the Army even as President Teddy Roosevelt works to overhaul the game's official rules. The attraction between Athena and Cooper is instant, but both are dogged by dark secrets, including Cooper's possible role in an explosion on the USS *Falcon* that has him on the verge of dishonorable discharge. Athena and Cooper's friend Jasper are certain there's more to the story and decide to investigate in hopes of clearing Cooper's name, but challenging the official disaster report will mean summoning the faith to risk their own safety. The chemistry between Cooper and Athena lights up the page, and a proliferation of buried secrets and unexpected twists keeps the tension high from start to finish. Fans of strong female-driven historicals will find much to admire. *(Jan.)*

Rebecca's Patchwork Love (Heart of the Amish #15)

Anne Blackburne. Barbour, $14.99 trade paper (256p)
ISBN 979-8-89151-476-8

An unlikely couple teams up to help an older friend in need in the cheery latest Heart of the Amish romance from Blackburne (*Plain Jane's Secret Admirer*). Rebecca Beachy is 28 and still single, but she'd rather spend her time working at the Two Sisters Quilt Shop than hunting for a husband. Things change when neighbor Rudy Miller nearly runs her over with his horse and sparks unexpectedly fly between the two—though at 24, Rudy seems like a kid to Rebecca. But when she discovers a letter that improbably leads her on a treasure hunt on Rudy's farm, she can't help but guess that God might be bringing them together. Then she learns that quilt shop owner Bernie is facing foreclosure, and Rebecca recruits Rudy to rally the community to save the store—and see if their budding relationship will stand the test. While the plot mostly lacks tension, the romance between Rudy and Rebecca is sweet and satisfying and the portrait of the Amish community is affecting. Series devotees and newcomers alike will savor this. *(Jan.)*

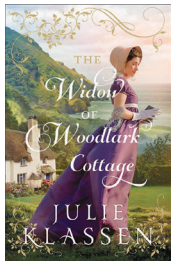
Widow of Woodlark Cottage

Julie Klassen. Bethany House, $18.99 trade paper (400p)
ISBN 978-0-7642-4487-2

This engrossing historical from Klassen (*Whispers at Painswick Court*) finds a young widow torn between allegiance to her dead husband and her writerly dreams. It's 1820 and Elizabeth Eaton lives in Somersetshire with her controlling mother-in-law. Both women have been grieving Elizabeth's husband for more than a year. When Elizabeth gets word that her estranged botanist father has died, she jumps at the chance to travel to his North Devonshire coast home to sort through his possessions. Upon arrival, her aunt offers her the chance to complete her father's unfinished book on local fauna. Things get even more interesting when she runs into two handsome but vastly different men: responsible Arthur and flirtatious Tom. Both have their charms, though Elizabeth can't help but suspect that one of them may be linked to a series of shady happenings, including the disappearance of valuables from her father's manor. As Elizabeth becomes enmeshed in other local goings-on, she must decide whether to resume her submissive Somersetshire existence or take a leap of faith and carve out a life of her own in North Devonshire. Klassen effectively draws out the emotional stakes of Elizabeth's dilemma, while fun fauna facts sprinkled throughout add interest. With its steady pace and lush seaside setting, Klassen's latest trip to Devonshire will sweep readers away. *(Dec.)*







COMICS

Nirvana Is Here

Mikael Ross, trans. from the German by Nika Beauchamp. Fantagraphics, $29.99 (352p)
ISBN 979-8-8750-0264-9

This propulsive graphic novel from Ross (*Golden Boy*) transcends its hot-button topicality. Fiercely bickering teenage siblings Tâm and Dennis Nguyen live in Berlin's rough-and-tumble Lichtenberg, where their biggest problem is being harangued by their striving Vietnamese immigrant parents. The narrative pace ramps up when they meet Hoa, a trafficking victim from Vietnam being chased by a gangster whose finger she chopped off with a cleaver. The at-odds sibs reconcile their differences to help her, reluctantly enlisting the aid of their unwanted paramours: Alex, a nerdy drone-flying kid with a crush on Tâm; and Marina, a badass kickboxer with a thing for Dennis, whose love of heavy metal belies his shyness. Ross's dynamic, manga-inflected art style emphasizes action and movement, with jolts of emotion rendered by comically bulging eyes, dramatically rendered deus ex machina (like a

friendly gang of roller girls who save Tâm at the last minute), and black-and-white panels splashed with red during a surprise twist. There's a stock chase narrative layered into the plot, and the outcome is never really in doubt, but Ross wins readers over with his endearing characters and romanticism. Fans of *Run Lola Run* and *Attack the Block* will relish this jolting tale of urban grit and fractious bonding in the face of danger. *(Nov.)*

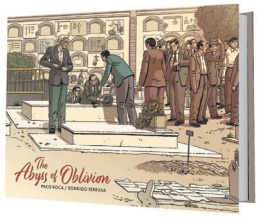
Framing Emmett Till: Exposing Dark Fear

Christopher Benson and Eric Battle.
Abrams ComicArts, $27.99 (272p)
ISBN 978-1-4197-4227-9

The horrific spectacle of Emmett Till's kidnapping and lynching is reinvestigated via the story of a journalist working with Till's mother to reclaim her story, in this intense but uneven graphic narrative. The narrative pulls from Benson's experience coauthoring the Pulitzer-nominated *Death of Innocence* with Mamie Till-Mobley in 2003. Powered largely by Mamie's bafflement over the violence inflicted on her 14-year-old son, the storyline dramatically renders both the bigotry and brutality of the murder of Chicagoan Till in 1955 Mississippi, and the bravery of his mother's decision to have an open-casket funeral. "I want everyone to see what they did to my son," she famously declares, inviting a *Jet* magazine photographer to the memorial. Sharp-angled and dramatically shaded art by Battle (*The Spectre*) heightens the tension throughout. But while the meta critiques threaded into the central storyline show promise, particularly interstitials of media figures trying to repackage Till's story for entertainment, they don't quite coalesce. Readers may lose the thread as the script rapidly shuffles characters and timelines. This revisitation of racial cruelty and societal cynicism is forcefully told, but falls short of its ambitious goals. *(Oct.)*

The Abyss of Oblivion

Paco Roca and Rodrigo Terrasa, trans. from the Spanish by Andrea Rosenberg.
Fantagraphics, $29.99 (296p)
ISBN 979-8-8750-0258-8

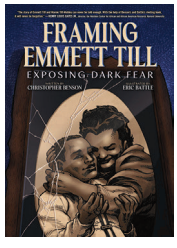


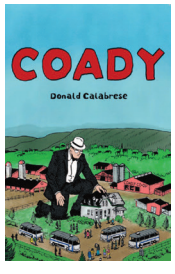
GLASS BOTTLES discovered in a mass grave hold clues to a haunting legacy of Francoist reprisals in this exceptional graphic history from Eisner winner Roca (*Return to Eden*) and *El Mundo* journalist Terrasa. Leoncio Badía, a schoolteacher swept up in the Francoist purge that followed the Spanish Civil War, evades execution but can only find work digging anonymous mass graves for murdered political prisoners in his Valencian home village of Paterna. "You want work, Red?" the mayor snickers. "Start burying your own." From 1939 to 1945, the firing squads' gunshots ring through the village; Leoncio logs clandestine records of names, dates, and burial locations, hoping they may one day offer some solace to families left behind. Decades later, octogenarian Pepica Celda navigates a yearslong bureaucratic labyrinth to exhume her father from a grave of more than 200 victims and dignify him with a marked memorial. In the gulf between Leoncio's and Pepica's efforts lies an unsettled reckoning with history many in the region remain reluctant to stir up. Not only do the ghosts of the buried men emerge to narrate their last days, but the quirky personalities and laborious methods of activist archivists also play a pivotal role. Roca's adroit clear-line comics art particularizes the social critique in generous human portraiture and occasional moments of hard-won levity. The result is a rousing testament to the lasting power of decency in the face of forces intent on burying the past. *(Nov.)*

Coady

Donald Calabrese. Conundrum, $20 trade paper (120p)
ISBN 978-1-77262-126-6

Cape Breton cartoonist Calabrese debuts with a sincere but overly compressed graphic biography of Roman Catholic priest and economic activist Moses Coady (1882–1959). Coady is remembered today for his founding of the Canadian Antigonish movement, a social and political struggle that centered on Nova Scotia's working maritime community, and he was primarily concerned with bringing education to those without. Calabrese's homemade drawing style renders Coady as an unusually tall figure who looms large in the frame, his stature felt even when he's reading to his flock, and his deep commitment to those in need is borne out in the visual storytelling. The drawings imbue the story with a lived-in humanity, especially in moments lesser creators might treat as prosaic, such as when Coady eats a meal. In another memorable sequence, Coady drafts a volume about the Antigonish movement, and Calabrese focuses on his physicality as much as the theories he espouses. However, the framing device of a journalist writing a biography of Coady, and the emphasis on educational asides about shifting ideas on labor over time, can obscure the main focus. The visual poetry is evocative, but readers will wish for a more careful telling of what this dedicated humanitarian accomplished. *(Oct.)*





Our Reviewers

Allen Appel
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Madeline Hren
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Michael M. Jones
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Jacquelyn Miller
Sally Morgan
Libby Morse
Dai Newman
Gregory Paglia
Samuel Partal
Leonard Picker
Christina Rinaldi
Nicole Scurlock
Suzanne Shablovsky
Alexandra Toner
Wendy WErris
Erica Wetter
Michael Zimmerman

An anti-Musk bumper sticker illustrates how people see their belongings as extensions of themselves, as discussed in Carey K. Morewedge's *Possessions* (reviewed on page 65).



Pattern: Ten Lived-Stories About How a Curious Phenomenon Helps Craft Deep Connections and Relations

Gregory Paine. Prometheus, $32.95 (264p)
ISBN 978-1-4930-9521-6

"Pattern is about connections and relations and therefore also consequences," writes Paine, a social sciences researcher at Western Sydney University, in this eclectic and dense debut report on the human ability to spot repeated designs or behaviors and use them as tools. In a fragmented world that is increasingly "forgetful of the necessary interconnection between things," Paine argues that working with patterns "can deliver the connected perspectives we now need." He interviews a range of professionals—including a landscape ecologist, an architect, and a choreographer—about how their understanding of patterns guides their work. Acupuncturist Bjorn Mella explains how he looks for relationships between a client's symptoms and then stimulates specific points on the body's meridians, pathways through which life energy is believed to flow, to help them heal. As a psychotherapist, Brenda Rowlandson helps patients discover patterns in their behaviors and ways of thinking to make positive life changes, like fostering healthy relationships and overcoming addiction. Math teacher John Blackwood uses patterns in nature—such as within seedpods, shells, and leaves—to help students understand abstract math concepts. While the conversations are intriguing, they often include allusions to erudite works and fuzzy depictions of thought experiments (Paine asks each interviewee to free associate on the meaning of pattern and "opposite-to-pattern"). This will land best with an academic audience. *(Feb.)*

Still in a Dream: Shoegaze, Slackers, and the Reinvention of Rock, 1984–1994

Simon Reynolds. Da Capo, $21.99 (464p)
ISBN 978-0-306-83380-9

★ Music critic Reynolds (*Rip It Up and Start Again*) delivers a rousing alt-rock history pulsing with energy and editorial bite. Reynolds cut his teeth in 1980s British zines and weekly "inkies" like *Melody Maker*, where fractious jousting about bands was a blood sport. The book tracks the evolution of underground music at a time when the pop charts were packed, according to the author, with terminally dull music. He spotlights newer alternative bands that broke from the angry angularity of postpunk to reflect the burgeoning "slacker" phenomenon in the U.S. and U.K. Drawing on his experience as a passionate 20-something music critic ("I felt blessed to be alive and armed with a typewriter"), Reynolds covers the emergence of bands that often seemed to be withdrawing from the world, from "Cutie" groups defined by a childlike sense of fantasy to "shoegaze" artists like Slowdive, who preferred immersive, oceanic washes of guitar to sharp, high-energy riffs and power chords. Like a happier Lester Bangs, Reynolds has a gift for the perfect line—he approvingly describes My Bloody Valentine's Bilinda Jayne Butcher "cooing like a dove accidentally fed MDMA instead of birdseed"—and uses those skills to give the music form and meaning on the page. It's a must for fans of Chuck Klosterman, *Pitchfork*, or bands of the era who never got the radio play they deserved. *(Jan.)*

The Time Lords: Jeff Bezos, a 10,000-Year Clock, and Big Tech's Quest to Seize the Future

Josh Marcus. Beacon, $29.95 (288p)
ISBN 978-0-8070-1649-7

In the 1990s, a group of tech and culture luminaries conceptualized a massive 10,000-year clock, a monument now residing on Jeff Bezos's West Texas property. This searching debut from journalist Marcus explores how the idealistic origins of the Clock of the Long Now have collided with today's dire realities of climate change and tech dominance. Computer scientist Danny Hillis and a cadre of fellow futurists, among them Brian Eno and *Wired* editor Kevin Kelly, established the Long Now Foundation with the intention of building a clock that would inspire people to think long-term about the

In *A Feast in Every Sense*, Diane Ackerman draws on the latest discoveries in neuroscience to explore how humans perceive the world.
Page 64

Santi Elijah Holley's *Beg Borrow Steal* paints a rousing portrait of groundbreaking Black filmmaker Melvin Van Peebles.
Page 66

future. The author follows this group as they struggle with the giant clock's mechanics, search for a location, and gain a financial backer in "fellow world-builder" Bezos. Marcus juxtaposes the project's progression with rising worker discontent over labor conditions and environmental concerns at Bezos's Amazon and Blue Origin, highlighting the inherent contradictions in Long Now's relationship with Bezos. As the CEO maintained an uneasy balance between supporting "the future green economy" while "giving millions of dollars to the people doing everything to stop it from existing," Long Now founders grew ambivalent about their backer (and "quietly smart[ed]" after Lauren Sanchez's opulent 2023 *Vogue* photoshoot in the clock). While leaning into the clock's ironies, Marcus admits he remains "bewitched" by its sincerity and ambition. It's a beguiling analysis of an eccentric and troubled futurist project. *(Jan.)*



Deep End: OceanGate and the Race to the Bottom of the Sea

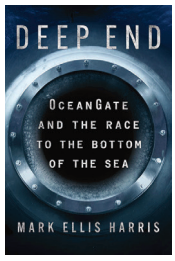
Mark Ellis Harris. Norton, $31.99 (352p)
ISBN 978-1-324-12391-0

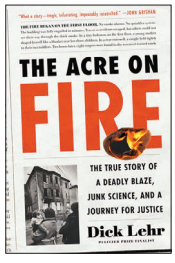
★ In June 2023, OceanGate's submersible *Titan* imploded while descending to the *Titanic* wreckage, instantly killing its five passengers, including OceanGate CEO Richard Stockton Rush III. Journalist Harris investigates the bewildering lapses in judgment that led to the accident in his propulsive, jaw-dropping debut. He begins by recalling his own 2015 ride on an OceanGate submersible, which forebodingly saw "a lot of technical hitches." From there, Harris examines Rush's ambitions for OceanGate, intended as a "SpaceX for the ocean" funded by *Titanic* tourism. After detailing prior instances of Rush being shielded from consequences of reckless actions by "generational [oil] wealth," the author turns to Rush's "anarchic" approach to safety when constructing the *Titan*. Hair-raising decisions included disregarding model testing of the carbon fiber hull, which showed it imploding "sooner than [it] should have"; using nonstandard materials for cost-cutting purposes, like repurposing a vacuum hose; gambling on Rush's outlandish "seasoning theory" that the hull would become stronger with more dives; and leaving the submersible sitting outside uncovered during the Newfoundland winter. The myriad experts Harris reports warning about the *Titan*'s dangers, including an attendee of a Marine Technology Society event shouting at Rush, "You're going to kill people," as well as the many employees getting fired or quitting after voicing concerns, make the implosion, when it comes, horrifyingly predictable. This tragic tale of hubris is impossible to look away from. *(Jan.)*

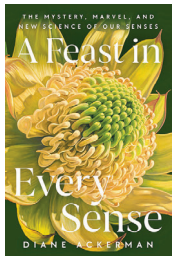
The Acre on Fire: The True Story of a Deadly Blaze, Junk Science, and a Journey for Justice

Dick Lehr. Mariner, $32 (368p)
ISBN 978-0-06-338328-9

When a tenement fire in Lowell, Mass., killed three adults and five children in March 1982, 24-year-old Puerto Rican immigrant Victor Rosario was accused of arson. In this astonishing investigation, Pulitzer finalist Lehr (*White Hot Hate*) scrutinizes the trial's many flaws. The author became involved with the case when leading a Boston University investigative team that cast doubt on Rosario's eight life sentences, which were overturned in 2014. Here, Lehr dissects the case against Rosario, who, while at the scene, broke a window attempting to save the screaming children. What emerges is a perfect storm of malpractice, with Spanish-speaking Rosario unable to understand police while experiencing a mental health crisis due to the horror he'd just witnessed, and the city's investigator quick to label the blaze arson due to "knee-jerk bias against Puerto Ricans." The author portrays the trial itself as a "sideshow" marred by an alcoholic court-appointed defense attorney who refused to hire an independent fire expert (and killed an elderly couple while drunk driving ahead of the court date). Throughout, the author traces the evolution of the science of arson detection, revealing that "much of the accepted norms" in the 1980s were "based on... junk science" (one 2010s fire expert characterized the basis of the original determination of arson as "pure unadulterated witchcraft"). It's a gripping account of a decades-long battle for justice. *(Jan.)*







A Feast in Every Sense: The Mystery, Marvel, and New Science of Our Senses

Diane Ackerman. Random House, $32 (400p)
ISBN 978-0-593-73099-7

★ More than three decades after her bestselling *A Natural History of the Senses*, Ackerman returns with an exuberant exploration of perception, demonstrating how new scientific understanding has expanded knowledge of how humans experience the world. She uses recent discoveries in neuroscience to survey hearing, smell, vision, touch, and taste while introducing readers to a growing roster of lesser-known perceptual systems, such as proprioception, the body's sense of its position

in space; interoception, the sensations of internal organs like fullness and sexual arousal; and chronoception, the brain's perception of time. Ackerman connects research to everyday experience, explaining, for example, that food served aboard airplanes often seems bland because low humidity, diminished oxygen levels, and constant engine noise all wreak havoc on taste and smell. In a chapter on hearing loss, she recounts how hearing aids made her more attuned to nature, including the mating calls of tiny water boatmen insects that inhabit a creek near her home. Throughout, Ackerman sheds light on surprising discoveries, like the fact that taste and smell receptors are found not just in the nose and mouth but throughout the human body, and imbues her lucid explanations with lyricism and wit ("I confess, it seems ironic that the only taste receptor in the heart is for bitter"). Readers will savor this. *(Jan.)*

The River Drowns the Able Swimmer: A Memoir

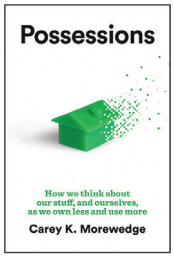
Xujun Eberlein. Catapult, $28 (336p)
ISBN 978-1-64622-337-4

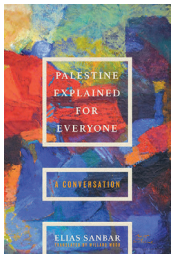
Spanning over 100 years of Chinese history, Eberlein's sweeping yet intimate first work of nonfiction (after the story collection *Apologies Forthcoming*) weaves together the stories of three generations of convention-defying women. The account opens in a small farming village on the bank of the Yangtze, where Eberlein's grandmother, "Gaga," walked to the fields each morning to unbind her feet, leaving her in adulthood with gnarled, half-bound toes. Gaga's only surviving daughter—Eberlein's mother—expressed an early affinity for the written word, leading Gaga to push for her education. Eberlein herself broke with tradition by falling in love with an American and leaving China for the U.S. The move dovetailed with Eberlein's impulse to probe the political ideology of the Cultural Revolution. With a sharp wit and an eye toward the personal effects wrought by historical forces, Eberlein blends accessible sociological analysis with nostalgic sketches of her home country: "By now I have crossed many oceans and sauntered through many gardens and arboretums," she writes. "Still I have not seen wintersweet anywhere like that in the city of my birth." At once a rigorous cultural history and a poignant family document, this will appeal to fans of memoir and historical nonfiction alike. *Agent: Sarah Levitt, Aevitas Creative Management. (Jan.)*

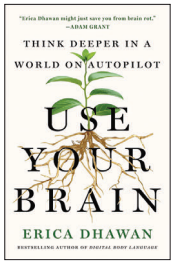
Possessions: How We Think About Our Stuff, and Ourselves, as We Own Less and Use More

Carey K. Morewedge. Harvard Business Review, $32 (256p)
ISBN 979-8-89279-209-7

★ Morewedge, a marketing professor at Boston University, debuts with a captivating examination of ownership in an era when people are increasingly opting to rent property, goods, and services. Drawing on economics, law, and psychology, he aims to help readers "think critically about the costs and benefits of ownership" so they can make educated decisions, not just for economic reasons but psychological ones: "Owning a thing not only changes the thing, it changes you." Morewedge explains that people identify with what they own, often referring to themselves as homeowners, pet owners, or gun owners, and that owning something tends to make people enjoy and value it more, a concept known as the endowment effect. Elsewhere, he delineates the factors pushing people away from ownership, like high costs and interest rates, as well as the digitization of goods and the rise of short-term rental services that encourage people to trade ownership for access to things like trendy clothes and convenient transportation. Turning to the future, he posits that as people shed possessions, they may be more connected to the items they keep and that experiences could replace possessions as a means of self-expression. Deeply researched and eye-opening, it's a valuable resource for navigating a changing economy. *(Jan.)*







Palestine Explained for Everyone: A Conversation

Elias Sanbar, trans. from the French by Willard Wood. Other Press, $16.99 trade paper (112p)
ISBN 978-1-63542-628-1

Historian and diplomat Sanbar makes his English-language debut with an insightful primer tracing the roots of Israel's military campaign in Gaza. Sanbar, who was born in Haifa in 1947 but forced into exile with his family in 1948, notes that the history of Palestine stretches back to ancient times, and he situates the origins of today's conflict within a 20th-century history of colonization and displacement. Sanbar places some responsibility on the U.S., which he argues sought to justify its own history of colonial violence through promoting Zionism and other types of "imperial management of the world." The route to peace, he asserts, would require Israel to acknowledge the expulsion of Palestinians in 1948, which Sanbar considers implausible as it would not only "shake the basis of [Israel's] moral legitimacy" but establish Palestinian refugees' "right of return." Sanbar pins the failure of the 1993 Oslo Accords on Israelis' attitude toward peace "as a favor they were granting the Palestinians," and notes that Israel has publicly courted discussions of a two-state solution for decades while simultaneously "working to see that it shouldn't happen." Ultimately Sanbar admits that he is "unable to formulate a vision of the future," confessing his "humility in the face of the unpredictable." Still, this sheds much-needed light on the causes of the current crisis. *(Jan.)*

Use Your Brain: Think Deeper in a World on Autopilot

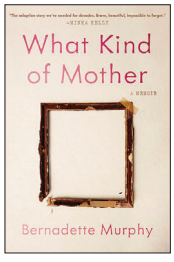
Erica Dhawan. St. Martin's, $30 (288p)
ISBN 978-1-250-45054-8

★ "I wrote this book because I wanted my brain back," asserts Dhawan, author of *Digital Body Language*, in this evenhanded manual for developing a productive

relationship with AI. She opens on a confessional note, describing how one night, feeling exhausted, she outsourced her son's bedtime story to an app on her phone, rather than honoring the family tradition of creating the stories. The AI-generated story satisfied her son, but Dhawan was left with the chilling realization she'd neglected "the most intimate, creative moment" of her day. While acknowledging that AI can be genuinely beneficial, she argues that choosing the harder cognitive path is imperative for cultivating good judgment, building trust, and developing original insights. She explains how continuously surrendering one's thinking to a machine leads to cognitive atrophy and encourages readers to develop their "mental edge" by using a practice she calls R.I.D.A. When a problem arises, one should "reflect" on what they actually think, "interrogate" assumptions, "discern" meaning from data, and "be accountable," or have the courage to own a decision. Elsewhere, she demonstrates how leaders within families, businesses, and institutions can foster environments that steward human judgment, using AI as an assistive tool rather than a replacement for thought. Smart and timely, this is an indispensable guide to leading with humanity in an AI-saturated world. *(Jan.)*

What Kind of Mother: A Memoir

Bernadette Murphy. Spiegel & Grau, $20 trade paper (288p)
ISBN 978-1-954118-59-1



Murphy (*Harley and Me*) details the circumstances of her son's adoption in this moving personal history. As a child in Glendale, Calif., Murphy constantly heard motherhood exalted by the Catholic Church and her Irish immigrant parents. She herself served as a makeshift mother to her siblings while her salesman father traveled and her bipolar, alcoholic mother neglected them. At 15, Murphy met 17-year-old Brett through an after-school job, and he got her pregnant. In 1980, she gave birth at a Los Angeles home for unwed mothers and put her son, Christian Eamon, up for adoption at three days old. Murphy went on to become a writing instructor, marry a man, and start a family. Decades after Christian Eamon's birth, Murphy began wriitng him a series of letters so she could process her feelings about giving him up. The exercise prompted her to track Christian Eamon down on Facebook during the Covid pandemic, and the pair reconnected, chatting via email and Zoom before a happy reunion in Utah. Though Murphy's prose sometimes feels more like reportage than passionate disclosure, the substance of her story is wrenching enough to reach out and grab readers. It's a memorable tale of regret and healing. *Agent: Karen Murgolo, Aevitas Creative Management. (Jan.)*

Beg Borrow Steal: The Visionary Art of Melvin Van Peebles and the Rise of Independent Black Cinema

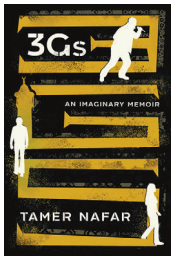
Santi Elijah Holley. Mariner, $32 (336p)
ISBN 978-0-06-338303-6



★ Holley, a journalist and author of *An Amerikan Family*, delivers an astute history of how filmmaker Melvin Van Peebles (1932–2021) shaped Black cinema in the U.S. Drawing on archival sources and interviews with Van Peebles's family and friends, he relays how Van Peebles wrote and directed independent films to bypass Hollywood studios, which ignored the political movements, riots, and assassinations affecting Black Americans in the 1960s and '70s in favor of hackneyed, whitewashed narratives. His 1971 independent film *Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song* broke stereotypes by portraying smart and resilient Black characters fighting back against corrupt authorities and became a hit, ultimately grossing $15.2 million in domestic box office sales. Its success inspired other independent Black filmmakers, like Spike Lee, and ushered in a flood of crime and action movies featuring Black protagonists. Though providing on-screen representation, this "Blaxploitation" subgenre, as it came to be known, was critiqued by civil rights groups for depicting Black characters primarily as pimps and gangsters. Black films eventually lost their prominence as audiences became oversaturated with "cheap, formulaic" approaches, according to Holley. He ends with a somber lament for today's lack of defiant art, despite the increased presence of mainstream Black filmmakers. Throughout, Holley successfully anchors the motion picture industry within the larger context of U.S. history. This is a must-read for anyone seeking a comprehensive understanding of American filmmaking. *(Jan.)*

3Gs: An Imaginary Memoir

Tamer Nafar. Metropolitan, $27.99 (208p)
ISBN 978-1-250-47530-5



Palestinian rapper and actor Nafar debuts with an adventurous, genre-bending consideration of his family's legacy. Organizing the account into three sections, Nafar writes from the perspectives of his late father, himself, and his fictional future daughter, focusing on their differing relationships to the family's home in Lyd, Israel; to Israel's occupation of Palestine; and to language itself. Writing as his father, Fawzi, Nafar reflects on the financial and emotional repercussions of an accident that left Fawzi in a wheelchair. As himself, Nafar ponders the roots of his anger, detailing Lyd's violent atmosphere and how discovering hip-hop as an adolescent shaped his life. Sometime in the future, Nafar imagines his grown daughter, Shaden, returning to Lyd (now "Lod-Oz") to archive Palestinian memories in a cloud technology of her own invention. The shifting narration, though somewhat gimmicky, signals Nafar's bold intentions and holds the reader's interest. It isn't until Nafar acknowledges his fear of being forgotten and dying quietly like his father, however, that the emotional center of the project comes into focus: "I'm afraid to be without my fear. He is my true friend. I can't accomplish anything without him." Strange, singular, and sneakily moving, this will satisfy readers

looking for something off the beaten path. *(Dec.)*

Overserved: The Lucky Life of the Office Drunk

Kate Flannery. Gallery, $29 (272p)
ISBN 978-1-6680-6823-6

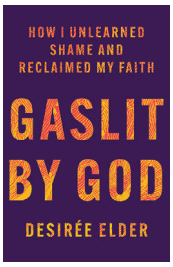
In this endearing memoir, actor and comedian Flannery discusses her supporting role on *The Office*. She begins by recounting her childhood in a large Irish Catholic family in 1960s and '70s Philadelphia and her early years as a comedian in Chicago and Los Angeles. The account gets bogged down by lukewarm anecdotes about the many celebrities Flannery served as a waitress during the latter period, but picks up when she discusses her breakthrough on *The Office* in 2005. Flannery reveals that she replaced another actress as office lush Meredith Palmer in the pilot, and offers insightful commentary on dialing down her stand-up persona for the benefit of the character. She also discusses her romantic life, nailing one celebrity ex-lover to the cross while exalting her husband, photographer Chris Haston, whom she met on the set of *The Office*. Flannery tailors the proceedings to *Office* diehards—a smattering of "iconic" Meredith Palmer quotes make little sense out of context ("My car, my rules"; "I'll read this when I get home")—but her late-blooming success is still plenty inspiring. Despite a few bumps, this should satisfy devotees of the show. *Agent: Dylan Colligan, Javelin Literary. (Dec.)*

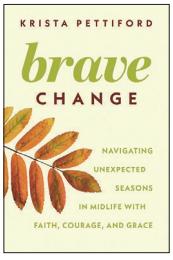
RELIGION & SPIRITUALITY

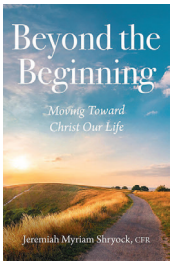
Gaslit by God: How I Unlearned Shame and Reclaimed My Faith

Desirée Elder. Broadleaf, $27.99 (224p)
ISBN 978-1-5064-9812-6

The smart and uncompromising debut from pastor Elder provides an impassioned critique of spiritual gaslighting, a phenomenon where "scripture, doctrine, or religious belief is used to... suppress the intuition God placed within you." The author sought belonging in church as a college student, but her efforts to "be everything good.... Even when something didn't sit quite right" eventually taught her that "obedience mattered more than my discomfort." Elder explores how the church weaponizes scripture to control believers by demonizing sex, singlehood, pleasure, and the human body, distorting core Christian principles in the process. A more authentic spirituality, she argues, trades this focus on obedience for an embrace of imperfections, God's unconditional love, and the body as a site of "sacred delight" instead of shame. Throughout, Elder draws out how church doctrine is wielded by spiritual leaders to disproportionately harm women and minorities, bolstering her argument with memorable personal anecdotes of how her religious shame developed (she recalls wearing a favorite sweater dress to church, only to be ambushed by several women demanding she put on shapewear to restrict her curves) and examples of how biblical Miriam, Mary, and Martha asserted themselves despite obstacles. It's an empowering resource for Christian women looking to repair their broken relationships with God. *(Jan.)*







Brave Change: Navigating Unexpected Seasons in Midlife with Faith, Courage, and Grace

Krista Pettiford. IVP, $18.99 trade paper (192p)
ISBN 978-1-51401-410-3

Bible teacher Pettiford (*Called Out*) aims in this flimsy guide to reassure middle-aged women that their lives "still hold joy, intimacy and purpose." She reflects on how the biblical Naomi returned from Moab to Bethlehem after the unexpected deaths of her husband and sons, ultimately rebuilding her life and raising Ruth's son, Obed, as her own. Readers can endure similarly difficult seasons, Pettiford suggests, by realizing that "God is not finished writing [their] story" and keeping a strong faith in spite of their uncertainty. The author also unpacks the value of separating one's identity from feelings of shame, abandoning the belief that one's best days are done, and musing optimistically about what the future might hold. Along the way, minor achievements like attending church or caring for loved ones serve as "small acts of faithfulness" that boost confidence and pave the way for positive life changes. Unfortunately, Pettiford's advice is muddied by a diffuse structure that reads like a series of repetitive sermons, while generic, wooden anecdotes of the author's own midlife struggles fail to bring her argument to life. Believers seeking a road map for navigating periods of uncertainty would be better served elsewhere. *(Jan.)*

Beyond the Beginning: Moving Towards Christ Our Life

Jeremiah Myriam Shryock. Paraclete, $18.99 trade paper (160p)
ISBN 979-8-89348-067-2

Franciscan friar Shryock (*Amid Passing Things*) offers believers a concise and resonant invitation to build a more intentional relationship with God. Dedicating each chapter to a key element of spiritual life, he unpacks the importance of adopting a receptive attitude toward the divine, where "regardless of the circumstances and situations and our own interior experience, we... move forward in life with confidence and trust that God is present." Elsewhere he details the value of practicing repentance to reveal "the places in [one's] life where God may be absent—or at least not have as prominent place as he desires." Throughout, Shryock shares memorable anecdotes from his life and pastoral experience to illustrate abstract spiritual principles. For example, he cites how a long-married couple he'd known since childhood eventually became "so unified... that when I was talking to Joseph, I felt as if I were also talking to Helen, even if she wasn't in the room, and vice versa" to explain what it means to become "divinized, or one with God, by sharing life with him and allowing everything that happens to us to draw us closer to him." Christians hoping to enrich their faith will find much to chew on here. *(Jan.)*

A teen with an independent streak must learn to ask for help in Elise Bryant's YA novel *Jubilee Foster Is Totally Fine*.
Page 73

In Kelis Rowe's YA novel *Okay Girl*, a teen struggles to maintain her upbeat facade following a traumatic event.
Page 74

Danica Boyce and Phoebe Wahl spotlight annual festivals and traditions in their picture book *Around the Wheel of the Year: Celebrations for Every Season* (reviewed on this page).



PICTURE BOOKS

HippopotaMESS: Making a Mess Is Good, Clean Fun

Sudipta Bardhan-Quallen, illus. by Michael Slack. Random House, $18.99 (40p)
ISBN 979-8-2170-2751-4

This high-spirited tidy-up romp from Bardhan-Quallen (the Purrmaids series) and Slack (the Funjeepups series) centers on a portmanteau that's poised to become a household catchphrase. Over one busy day, hippo Harlow displays myriad characteristics by cleaning up after himself: when getting dressed leaves his bedroom in shambles and his mother's snout hanging open in alarm ("jammies, sheets, have gone astray... / What is all this disarray?"), "Harlow shows his mindfulness/ And cleans his hippopotaMESS." The incremental refrain repeats with a new trait each round (helpfulness, artfulness, and more) before the little hippo heads outside to "make a hippopataMESS"—a sweetly silly turnaround that strips "mess" of its accusatory bite. Digital art uses rounded, cartoon-soft shapes and chalky colors to make the disorder look both comically familiar and reassuringly resolvable. And when his mother tracks in muddy footprints, Harlow proves he's a team player at heart, while Momma models a "messes happen" attitude by striking a figure skater's pose as she vacuums. A fix is easily at hand in this cheery and playful domestic tale. Ages 3–7. *Author's agent: Rachel Orr, Prospect Agency. Illustrator's agent: Lori Nowicki, Painted Words. (Feb.)*

Waiting for Froggo

Alice Courtley. Boxer, $18.99 (32p)
ISBN 978-1-4547-1354-8

Few things try a child's patience like waiting, so there's a sly cleverness built into this jokey send-up from Courtley (*The Bear Who Loved the Moon*), who borrows its premise from Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*. Asked "What are you doing?" by backpack-wearing Mouse, bowler-hatted Rabbit, planted under a tree, announces, "I'm waiting for Froggo." Offering to be "VERY quiet" while joining Rabbit, Mouse unfurls a picnic blanket and requests further details: Is the mysterious Froggo tall? Hairy? Smelly? Invisible? And as the questions pile up, other animals gather, ostensibly for the same reason—some even tote frog-shaped paraphernalia. After Mouse queries, "what if Froggo doesn't come?" Rabbit nearly cracks, fretting that all this waiting "would be... for nothing." But no such dark night of the soul seems to trouble the others, and a carnival atmosphere ensues, complete with a Froggo bouncy castle that even Rabbit can't resist. The lightly washed artwork is all bright colors and economy; featuring one punchy accessory per animal, the crowd scenes have the giddy feel of a toy box tipped over. When Froggo finally does arrive, and proves to be a wholly unremarkable amphibian, the wait for the next big thing begins anew. Call it an existential comedy for the sandbox set—and a lighthearted antidote to "good things come to those who wait." Ages 4–6. *(Jan.)*

Around the Wheel of the Year: Celebrations for Every Season

Danica Boyce and Phoebe Wahl, illus. by Phoebe Wahl. Chronicle, $19.99 (60p)
ISBN 978-1-79721-721-5

★ Via rhythmic couplets and multi-patterned artwork that create a propulsive cyclical portrait, Boyce, making her children's debut, and Wahl (*Story Rug*) introduce

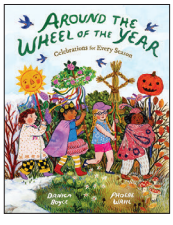
ILLUSTRATION © 2027 PHOEBE WAHL

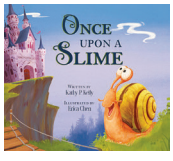
customs from four seasonal Northern European festivals. Springtime scenes open with a community's children, portrayed with various abilities and skin tones, donning wings and flower crowns ("Today on Beltane, first of May,/ We dress up in the fairy way") to gather blooms and parade around a maypole. In August, Lughnasa sees the jolly group harvesting and feasting upon their garden's bounty ("Cold and frost may soon arrive./ But today, our gardens thrive"). Samhain brings uncanny pleasures as the crew "make our costumes, snip and sew,/ To blend in with the magic folk/ Who on this night have just awoke." And Yule becomes a time "to honor this, the longest night," during which "we make lanterns, round and bright." Rustic textures in radiant hues lend bustling watercolor, collage, gouache, and colored pencil illustrations a glowing, handmade, nature-infused feel that suits the celebrations on display. Just like the rituals they're presenting, the creators aptly "remind us of the many ways/ To celebrate our earthly home/ And show us we are not alone." Back matter provides further context. Ages 4–8. *Agent (for author and illustrator): Jennifer Laughran, Andrea Brown Literary. (Feb.)*

Once upon a Slime

Kathy P. Kelly, illus. by Erica J. Chen.
Flamingo, $18.99 (40p)
ISBN 979-8-217-04003-2

★ Teaming up with illustrator Chen (*OH DEER!*), Kelly debuts with a sweet spoof that turns a spunky snail's slimiest trait into her greatest asset. A diminutive, shelled resident of the Land of Fairy Tales, gastropod Shelby, who sports big, hopeful peepers atop her eyestalks, is ready to find her own happy ending. But each time she auditions for a classic role ("Casting Call" posters pepper the kingdom), her slime gets in the way. Instead of letting down her hair from the top of Rapunzel's tower, she drops a cascading strand of snot-green mucus, horrifying the prince. Interludes with Cinderella's prince, the three little pigs, and more land similarly. Winningly gross-out illustrations punctuate a

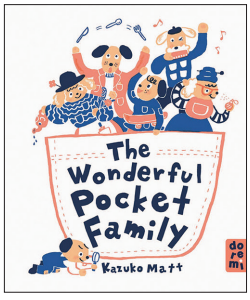




Tiny Treasures

PRECIOUS OBJECTS STAR IN TWO PICTURE BOOKS.





Kiki's Treasures

Kate Pugsley. Viking, $18.99 (32p)
ISBN 978-0-593-20684-3

A friendly animalian town provides a young feline with numerous treasures in Pugsley's jaunty scavenger hunt of a narrative. In addition to helping out at her family's grocery store, cat Kiki collects small objects, which she places in a shiny yellow box. When the box goes missing, the protagonist searches the village, eagerly collecting new trinkets along the way. A juice-peddling owl offers a rainbow bouncy ball, and Kiki pockets "the most darling pair of green acorns" and more. After the box fails to materialize, inspiration strikes, and Kiki creates a trinket trade space in her family's shop ("Anyone can take a treasure or bring one to share"), leading to a result that proves immediately heartening. Rendered with thickly applied gouache, beachy-hued illustrations lend a merry flair to the proceedings. Kiki's flexibility and a host of affable townsfolk bring a Busytown energy to this likable book. Ages 3–7. *(Feb.)*

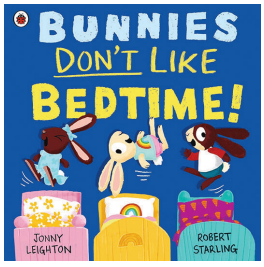
The Wonderful Pocket Family

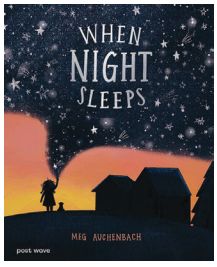
Kazuko Matt. Do Re Mi, $18.95 (40p)
ISBN 978-1-917933-32-2

True to their name, the canine Pocket family fill their clothing with a variety of objects in Matt's quirky story. Introducing each family member one-by-one, simplified narration unfolds via parallel phrasing: "Mr Pocket, the daddy" enjoys eating: "So that he can eat anywhere, anytime, his pockets are filled with foodie things." Surrounding each figure, pocket-filling items appear with labels, adding a dose of whimsy to the already light presentation (Mrs Pocket carries an elephant-shaped watering can; Sister Pocket totes an entire ping pong net). Though at first it seems Grandpa Pocket is unique in carrying only a harmonica, a performance with the instrument helps fill the elder's pockets—and his heart. A limited palette of ceruleans and corals gives loosely sketched graphical artwork, created with a mixture of geometric pencil and digital techniques, a jolly tone. It's a companionable account starring a winsome cast of characters. Ages 3–8. *(Jan.)*

Night, Night

SIX NIGHTSTAND-READY STORIES DIVE INTO EVENING ADVENTURES.









Bunnies Don't Like Bedtime!

Jonny Leighton, illus. by Robert Starling. Odd Dot, $18.99 (32p)
ISBN 978-1-250-42473-0

Leighton's propulsive rhymes combine with Starling's cheerful artwork for a lively exposé of the wind-down habits of a very human-like group of bunnies. Bubbly lines describe the hares with a wry candor: "Bunnies shout and bunnies sing/ until they hear the dreaded thing// that they wish would NOT be said..../// 'COME ON, BUNNIES. TIME FOR BED!' " Exuberant unlined illustrations in scribbly textures and jellybean hues capture the critters' resistance as they protest with homemade signs and a megaphone. When at last "bunnies' ears begin to flop,/ and weary arms begin to drop," the crew, portrayed with various abilities, descend into their burrow, where a traditional bedtime routine of snack, bath, pajamas, and a book ("Finally, it's story time!/ Bunnies like the ones that rhyme") ends with kisses and "sleepy wishes." Rabbit hijinks yield a notably energetic nighttime aid. Bedtime tips conclude. Ages 2–5. *(Feb.)*

When Night Sleeps

Meg Auchenbach. Post Wave, $18.99 (32p)
ISBN 979-8-89509-070-1

Soft-edged digital illustrations and interrogative lines muse about what bedtime must be like for Night in Auchenbach's appropriately dreamy picture book. The envisioned come-down hews closely to that of a child, portrayed with brown skin, as Night wraps up "in a blanket of stars," takes a warm bath, and enjoys a story. Across depictions of bluish-black Night as a gauzy, star-filled form, emoji-style eyes peek out from a bubble bath or beneath a bed. As the inquisitive narration continues, Night's experience becomes relatable: "On a wintry day,/ does Night/ shiver and ask/ for more blankets?// And when the air is sticky and hot,/ does she kick her covers to the ground?" As the subject at last "waves goodbye to the day,/ and wipes the stars from her eyes" in order to take her place in the sky, the simple actions make bedtime's darkness feel like hunkering down with a friend. It's a cuddlesome send-off into slumber. Ages 3–5. *(Jan.)*

I Dream of Waffles

Jenny Torres Sanchez, illus. by Tammy Do. Philomel, $18.99 (32p)
ISBN 979-8-217-04015-5

Counting becomes a centering balm for a sleepless child with existential worries in this actionable story from Torres Sanchez and Do. When racing thoughts about "big things" leave the budding astronaut protagonist awake, their father offers simple but sage guidance: "Think smaller." The advice results in thoughts of waffles, which float playfully among galaxy stars and are easily totted up. As the child rockets through interstellar scenes, philosophically oriented reflections frequently overwhelm ("I could be lost forever in another time, another dimension. Never to return to Earth again!"), but each time, attending to the mundane reasserts a sense of calm ("Fifty waffles, fifty-one waffles, fifty-two waffles...")—until morning and the promise of real waffles arrive. Jewel tones sprayed on the page like stardust bring an intergalactic flair to depictions of the light-skinned, dark-haired protagonist at home and in outer space. Nighttime fears feel manageable with this bite-size approach to anxiety management. Ages 4–8. *(Feb.)*

Friends in the Dark

Kaeti Vandorn. Holiday House, $14.99 (40p)
ISBN 978-0-8234-5983-4

Vandorn cheerfully chronicles the exploits of two nocturnal friends in this rambunctious early reader comic. After tawny cat Kitkin awakens with a start, having slept through their alarm, the feline heads by moonlight to catch a movie with a group of avian pals. Kitkin senses bird bestie Olive's irritation over their timing and, with an hour before showtime, proposes a shortcut to the theater. The joyously circuitous route sees the duo helping two spectral figures with their laundry, noshing on "burgers on a stick," and spotting constellations with a pair of bats. Arriving at their destination with time to spare, Olive reaches a classic conclusion: "Maybe I should slow down a little. Life is more fun that way." Each playfully drawn panel contains an abundance of action in candy-colored cartoons and spare dialogue balloons. The friends' night on the town exuberantly showcases dallying's delights. Ages 4–8. *(Jan.)*

What a Night!

Guilherme Karsten. Nosy Crow, $19.99 (32p)
ISBN 979-8-88777-301-8

A baby giraffe's fitful sleep has a domino-like effect on the apartment dwellers below in Karsten's raucous vertical book, whose pages initially reveal a multistory dwelling of slumbering animal residents. Second-person narration sets the scene: "It's nighttime and Baby Giraffe is fast asleep.// Everyone else in the building is sleeping too." When the tot wakes up ("WAAA!"), the infant's caregivers endeavor to hush their charge before the cries rouse the downstairs neighbors, but onomatopoeic prose announces

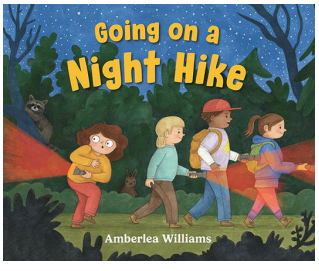
ensuing awakenings from each floor: a "SNIP! SNAP!" from the reptile directly below results in an "OOO-OOO, AAH-AAH!" from floor three's Mia Monkey, a "STOMP! STOMP!" from floor two's Eddie Elephant, and a "ROAR! ROAR!" from the garden apartment's Tanya Tiger. Once the babe has been comforted, the residents drift off again, top to bottom, until an unexpected crash sets the whole structure stirring once more. Primary colors bring a buoyant cheerfulness to geometric cutaways whose horizontally split pages allow the building residents' reactions to be followed one at a time. A boisterous humor graces this book of bedtime shenanigans. Ages 4–8. *(Jan.)*

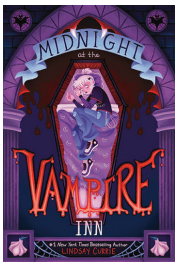
Going on a Night Hike

Amberlea Williams. Orca, $21.95 (40p)
ISBN 978-1-4598-4635-7

Night hiking enables a child to overcome their fear of the dark in Williams's polished story. The pale-skinned city kid protagonist frankly describes their steadfast belief that the dark is frightening, and "light makes everything better." When a class camping trip promises to place the child in a locale where "there are *no lights at all*," the speaker attempts enthusiasm only to find their courage waning with the sunset and their skin prickling upon learning that the classmates, portrayed with various skin tones, are headed on a night hike. Though the subject comically comes prepared with myriad lamps and twinkle lights, their teacher insists upon "red-light flashlights that 'preserve our night vision.'" When eventually those, too, are turned off, the youth becomes awestruck as they regard the starry sky above. Gouache and pencil crayon drawings, rendered with a lustrous clean-lined precision, portray the wide-eyed protagonist with empathic expressiveness. This understanding tale hits all its marks. Stargazing information closes. Ages 6–8. *(Mar.)*









pastel, decorum-filled world of classic fairy tale animation with Nickelodeon-level slime drops that land hilariously every time. Finally, a near-death experience in a giant's mouth becomes a meet-cute that slimes forward to safety—and the altar. Moving at a clip that's anything but a snail's pace, this laugh-out-loud fairy tale—"where a *snail* can prevail!"—is fractured in every way but its happy ending. Ages 4–8. *(Jan.)*

FICTION

Midnight at the Vampire Inn

Lindsay Currie. Delacorte, $18.99 (288p); $8.99 paper
ISBN 979-8-217-12410-7;
ISBN 979-8-217-12411-4

Currie (*The Secret Bookstore Sleuth Society*) conjures an enjoyable murder-mystery ghost story starring a tween who's recently moved into a vampire-themed hotel. After a fall leaves her grandmother unable to run the Dead and Breakfast Inn, seventh grader Andie, portrayed with pale skin on the book's cover, and her family temporarily relocate from Illinois to Colorado to help care for Grandma and the Victorian-style B&B. Though she's aware of her grandmother's obsession with chill-inducing decor (blood-red drapes, coffins, wilted roses), Andie is unprepared for the sinister aura permeating the property, which feels more creepy than when she visited two years earlier. Andie's wariness grows when she notices glowing red eyes watching from the windows as she and her parents arrive; later, a giant spider emerges from her closet, only to abruptly disappear. Guests flee as more frightening incidents plague the inn, including ghostly faces appearing in mirrors, rooms turning ice-cold, and lights mysteriously going dark. With the hotel's reputation on the line, Andie recruits a fellow patron to investigate and stop the paranormal happenings. Detailed descriptions of the unusual set dressings impart tension and ambience, while personable narration drives the spine-tingling plot toward a tidy conclusion. It adds up to an approachable and satisfying jaunt. Ages 8–12. *Agent: Shannon Hassan, Marsal Lyon Literary. (Jan.)*

The Thorn House Haunting

Amy Bearce. Jolly Fish, $9.99 paper (160p)
ISBN 978-1-63583-171-9

Two tweens set out to prove the existence of ghosts in this nimble Hi-Lo horror novel from Bearce (*Planet Perfect*). Having lived in 11 places with his single mother since he was born, 12-year-old Alex is eager to settle down and build a life in Independence, Texas. Seizing the chance to cultivate lasting connections, he starts by befriending neighbor Liz Klein, a young scientist. And as he settles into Thorn House, the mansion turned apartment building in which they live, he revels in the small-town atmosphere. Taking advantage of rumors that the property is haunted, Alex's mother begins hosting Thorn House ghost tours. But when patrons grow scarce, Alex worries that his mom will seek work elsewhere, and he'll have to start his life all over again—until evidence of a real supernatural entity emerges within the residence. Hoping to drum up renewed interest in his mother's ghost tours, Alex and Liz embark on a quest to establish that the hauntings are real via electromagnetic fields and other science-based phenomena. Simple sentences and brief chapters generate a story that lightly incorporates the scientific method without sacrificing eerie atmosphere. It's a fun and swiftly moving affair. Ages 10–14. *(Jan.)*

Polterghost

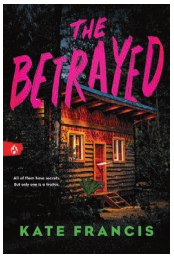
Kerry Hansen. Charlesbridge Moves, $17.99 (288p); $12.99 paper
ISBN 978-1-62354-738-7;
ISBN 978-1-62354-800-1

In Hansen's upbeat debut, a tween struggles to settle into his new home upon realizing it's haunted.

Twelve-year-old Finn O'Donnell keeps a running list of things he's afraid of, including closets, girls, and bodies of water deeper than a bathtub. His family's recent move from Chicago to rural Waubinaw, Wis., into a run-down farmhouse his parents intend to renovate, exacerbates these fears, especially when frightening occurrences—including inexplicably shattering lightbulbs, paralysis-inducing energy zaps, and ghostly wailing—convince him that something in the house wants them gone. As the frequency of spectral attacks increases, Finn resolves to confront his fears to protect his family, befriending and enlisting help from local kids. Together, the group, depicted on the book's cover with various skin tones, must determine who or what is terrorizing the house and how to make it stop. Nonjudgmental storytelling relays Finn and his companions' fears and challenges with shyness, loneliness, jealousy, and rejection. The protagonist's blossoming bonds imbue bone-chilling events with optimism, and an unexpected third-act twist will inspire rereads of this quietly suspenseful tale. Ages 10 and up. *Agent: CoCo Freeman, Linda Chester Literary. (Jan.)*

The Betrayed

Kate Francis. Sourcebooks Fire, $13.99 paper (368p)
ISBN 978-1-4642-5327-0



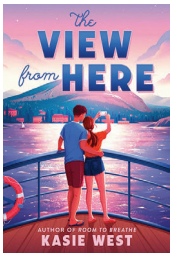
Francis (*Every Last Liar*) weaves a tense thriller about six teenagers sent to a wilderness therapy program. Still grieving her mother's death and missing her own former life in Seattle, 16-year-old Liv Walker has struggled to adjust to her new circumstances. When Liv is kidnapped from her Flagstaff home in the middle of the night, she instinctively screams for her father, who does nothing, while her stepmother visibly smiles. Discovering that her family is behind her abduction and transfer to Camp Smiling Skies, a Utah rehabilitation program for "troubled teens," feels like a betrayal. Once there, Liv and five other teenagers are issued camp kits and abandoned in the wilderness. To distract themselves, the group plays a game of deception called Werewolf. But when a camper is found dead—and their death mirrors the various fictional ends that occurred during the game—it becomes clear that lacking survival skills is the least of the teens' concerns. Though repetitive narration often halts the book's momentum, frequent twists, turns, and revelations maintain suspense. Organic descriptions of the racially diverse cast add dimension to this gripping wilderness thriller for fans of Natasha Preston. Ages 12 and up. *Agent: Ludo Cinelli, Eve White Literary. (Jan.)*



The Divinity Thieves

Aislinn Brophy. Putnam, $20.99 (384p); $13.99 paper
ISBN 979-8-217-00624-3; ISBN 979-8-217-00626-7

This potent high fantasy from Brophy (*Spells to Forget Us*) sees two teenage thieves, bound by a sordid shared history, facing off against divine lineage, brutal magic, and each other in their quest to become immortal. Gods rule the land of Brugania, where 18-year-old mortal Fawn Gallo struggles to carve out a living as a con artist. Elsewhere, demigod Mackie Prince, also 18, grows increasingly resentful of her father, the God of Merriment, for his neglect. When the God of Merriment announces an Ascencion Trial, a dangerous tournament meant to determine a god's successor, Fawn and Mackie enter alongside six other participants. The girls, described as having brown skin, are shocked to see each other; a childhood conflict made them sworn enemies. But as the trial progresses, Fawn and Mackie begrudgingly put aside their rivalry and team up to solve befuddling riddles and survive lethal combat. The protagonists' slow-burning dynamic electrifies familiar deadly competition fare. Despite underdeveloped worldbuilding, visceral descriptions of body horror, cannibalism, and toxic relationships, reminiscent of *Gideon the Ninth*, carry this gruesome epic. Fierce and memorable characters distinguish this deliciously dark tale. Ages 12 and up. *(Jan.)*



The Risks of Falling

Taylor Hartley. Simon Pulse, $20.99 (288p); $13.99 paper
ISBN 979-8-3471-1894-6; ISBN 979-8-3471-1893-9

When her spring break plans go awry, an ambitious, romance-avoidant high school senior makes an unexpected connection in this high-octane love story from Hartley (*Song of the Hell Witch*, for adults), making her YA debut. Reeling from a string of college application rejections, 17-year-old Halle Peters hopes that joining her best friend Sofia on a ski trip will prove to be the distraction she needs. Unfortunately, Sofia's ex-boyfriend, River Walsh, whom Halle is determined to hate out of loyalty to Sofia, also joins at the last minute. After Halle gets separated from her friends while skiing, it's River who accidentally finds her—just in time for them to become stranded on the mountain during a snowstorm. The reluctant pair, portrayed on the book's cover with pale skin, must rely upon each other to survive injury, worsening weather, and hungry predators. In the process, their emotional defenses thaw, melting away toward simmering mutual attraction. While the story beats are predictable, harrowing descriptions of wilderness survival combine with magnetic enemies-to-lovers chemistry to present a fresh and satisfying romance. The protagonists' character arcs shine against the harsh mountain backdrop as Halle gains newfound confidence and River embraces untapped vulnerability. The result is an optimistic adventure. Ages 12 and up. *Agent: Danielle Burby, Mad Woman Literary. (Jan.)*

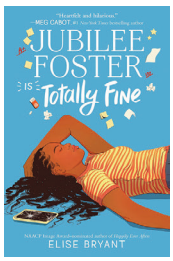
The View from Here

Kasie West. Delacorte Romance, $12.99 paper (304p)
ISBN 978-0-593-89775-1

West (*Light Up My Life*) delivers another swoony rom-com, this time about two teens finding love while cruising through the Mediterranean. Seventeen-year-old Tatum Hall, shown on the book's cover with pink skin, intends to use spring break to complete her application

for a summer hospital internship, part of her carefully mapped-out plan to become a doctor like her mother. When Tatum's grandmother asks the teen to accompany her on an 11-day senior citizens' cruise, Tatum, struggling with the application's essay questions and mounting academic pressure from her overbearing mother, welcomes the break. Onboard, she meets Asian 17-year-old Luca Park, a former social media star whose family-themed channel went dark years earlier. Now Luca is secretly reviving his online presence with travel vlogs, without his parents' knowledge. The two strike a deal: Luca will help Tatum with her applications, while she assists in filming his videos. And as they explore new destinations and grow closer, both begin to wonder whether their shipboard romance can survive the uncertain shores awaiting them at home.

As appealing characters navigate picturesque settings, lighthearted prose explores overwhelming parental expectations and anxiety about the future via Tatum's reexamining her life plans and Luca's attempts to chart his own course. Refreshing emotional depth elevates this breezy, beachy outing. Ages 12 and up. *Agent: Michelle Wolfson, Wolfson Literary. (Jan.)*



Jubilee Foster Is Totally Fine

Elise Bryant. Quill Tree, $19.99 (400p)
ISBN 978-0-06-321304-3

★ Upon developing a mysterious condition, an ambitious Black teen must fight against her independent streak to ask for help in this compassionate novel from Bryant (*Reggie and Delilah's Year of Falling*). Ever since her mother walked out on the family two years ago, Jubilee Foster, now a high school sophomore, has taken care of herself and her two younger siblings. While her father works long hours, Jubilee manages the household, maintains stellar grades, and volunteers at a local community center. After she's paired with former friend Neal Watson-Sheth, who is Black and Indian American, for a school capstone community action project, she's less than thrilled: Jubilee blames Neal for revealing details about her home life to his parents, which she believes drove her mother away. Nevertheless, Jubilee seeks to keep her feelings from impeding the project, which involves raising money for the foundering community center. When she begins breaking out in hives and experiences other unexplained symptoms, Jubilee must decide how much she's willing to sacrifice to stay in control of her meticulously planned life. Jubilee is a winning protagonist, whose tender relationship with her siblings and altruistic motivations juxtapose her tense and guarded dynamic with Neal. Expertly rendered characters emerge

You Know That Book Everyone's Talking About?

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as a driving force of this heartfelt story. Ages 13 and up. *Agent: Taylor Haggerty, Root Literary. (Jan.)*

The Lost Life of Sylvia Song

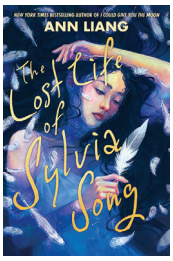
Ann Liang. HarperCollins, $19.99 (384p); $15 paper
ISBN 978-1-335-00899-2;
ISBN 978-1-335-00951-7

In this gut-wrenching novel from Liang (*Never Thought I'd End Up Here*), a grieving Chinese American teen falls into an alternate universe in which her deepest desires become reality. Sylvia Song can't seem to avoid encountering constant reminders of her late boyfriend, Laurence, who drowned while rescuing a stranger from dangerous ocean currents. When strong winds snatch one of her only photos of Laurence and deposit it into a pool, Sylvia doesn't hesitate to dive after it. Underwater, everything goes black, and soon, Sylvia wakes up poolside surrounded by strangers in Beijing—the opposite side of the world from her San Francisco home. While acclimating to her new surroundings, she realizes that she's somehow entered a different realm where she has everything she ever wanted: Laurence is alive, and her parents haven't divorced. But as her time in Beijing progresses, Sylvia's health begins to mysteriously deteriorate, forcing her to choose between living this seemingly perfect life and finding a way back to her own universe. Evocative language conveys this thoughtful and measured odyssey through bereavement. It's a melancholy, character-driven narrative that offers an emotionally realistic approach to grief. Ages 13 and up. *Agent: Kathleen Rushall, Andrea Brown Literary. (Jan.)*

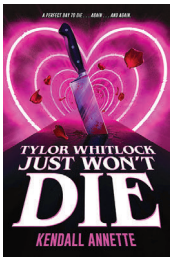
Mournsoul

Caitlin Rose Foley. Peachtree, $19.99 (352p)
ISBN 978-1-68263-871-2

Foley debuts with this fresh, rousing romantasy that's rich in imaginative worldbuilding and echoes of the Hades and Persephone myth. Eighteen-year-old Lua, depicted on the book's cover with pale skin, is a Mournsoul, one of a pair of reincarnated mortals empowered by deity the Godqueen to protect the land of Aurinia from villainous First Prince Valrian, who schemes to open a gateway to the underworld. When Lua's Mournsoul partner dies while clashing with Valrian, Lua descends into an enchanted stasis, then awakens 20 years later to find that she has been linked with a new companion, Kellan. After Valrian appears during a celebration to commemorate the new pairing, Kellan is killed in the chaos. To avoid reentering stasis, Lua aligns herself with Valrian, who, concealing dark motives, agrees to guide her through the underworld to retrieve Kellan's soul. As Lua's skepticism about her purpose grows, what initially resembles a straightforward battle between good and evil develops into a pensive exploration of how ancient systems can shape individual worldviews. This meandering journey emphasizes the importance of forging one's own path when tradition demands conformity. Ages 14 and up. *Agent: Mara Hollander, Azantian Literary. (Jan.)*







Okay Girl

Kelis Rowe. Crown, $19.99 (368p)
ISBN 978-0-593-42929-7

★ Rowe (*Finding Jupiter*) crafts a layered look at the complicated aftermath of a traumatic event in this sharp contemporary novel. Since finding her uncle Tex unresponsive following his suicide attempt, Black 16-year-old Skye has worked to persuade everyone that she's okay ("Eventually, I learned to fix my face with a Barbie grin"). Privately, though, she struggles with guilt for "not doing more" for Uncle Tex during the incident. When a viral video reveals that Skye's boyfriend, Malik, cheated on her with his ex-girlfriend, Skye promptly breaks up with him and doubles down on her carefully constructed facade. Meanwhile, her growing attraction to new student Ace offers the possibility of a relationship in which she doesn't have to hide her emotions. Throughout this raw volume, Skye coaches herself to think of being "okay" as both a performance and survival mechanism. Aching prose relays the protagonist's carefully chosen words and masks, the accumulation of which make Skye's eventual willingness to open up to Ace feel hard-won. Keenly observed and deeply empathetic, it's an insightful portrait of mental health that highlights emotional honesty as a strength and an essential first step toward healing. Ages 14 and up. *(Jan.)*

Tylor Whitlock Just Won't Die

Kendall Annette. Scholastic Press, $15.99 paper (304p)
ISBN 979-8-225-07156-1

Annette debuts with an acerbic slasher that recalls the time-bending murder elements of *Happy Death Day*. In Valentine, N.C., Black 18-year-old Tylor Whitlock copes with perpetual heartbreak by detailing her romantic misadventures on her blog, which has recently amassed more than 20,000 subscribers. Smarting from her senior superlative "most likely to die alone" and grieving her late mother, who was killed last year on Valentine's Day, Tylor prepares to publish her highly anticipated piece about every boy who broke her heart and attending Valentine High School's Sweetheart Dance. After parting ways with her best friend, Nate Conway, who is white, following a disagreement, Tylor is stabbed to death in her home by a figure wearing a white skull mask and red hooded cloak. The next morning, she awakens, unharmed—and realizes it's Valentine's Day again. Tylor's subsequent loops all end the same way: with her murdered by the mysterious cloaked stranger. When she discovers that Nate, too, is trapped in a recurring sequence, the pair set out to break the cycle. The teens' developing romance adds interpersonal intrigue to their increasingly desperate attempts to understand their situation and circumvent Tylor's repeating death. Over-the-top antics inject humor into grisly murder scenarios, resulting in a propulsive thriller. Ages 14 and up. *Agent: Bethany Weaver, Weaver Literary. (Jan.)*

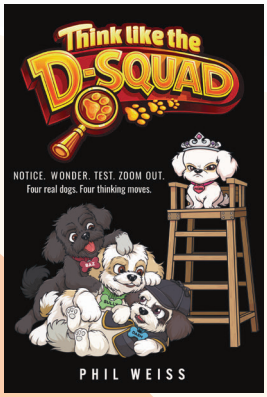
October 26, 2026

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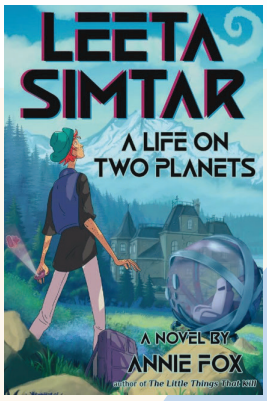
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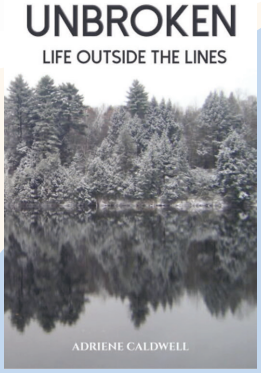
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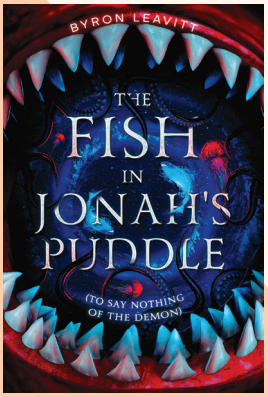


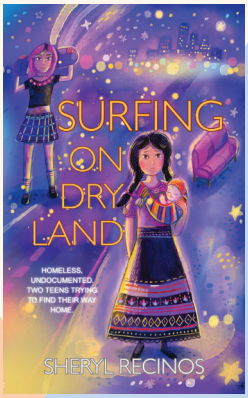




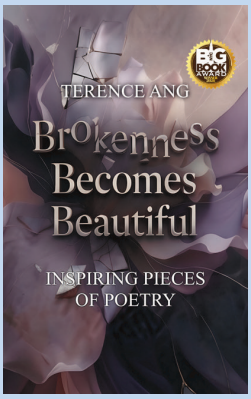




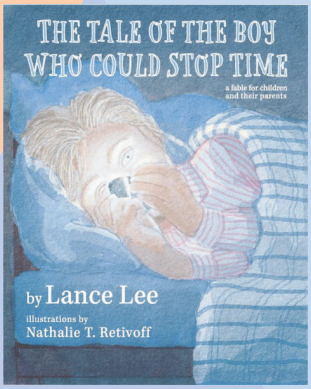


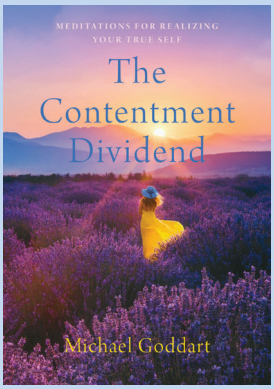












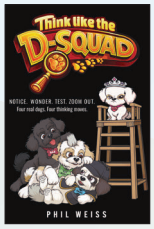
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ABOUT THE FRONT COVER

“ Quotes from BookLife Reviews



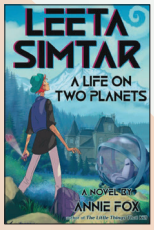
Think Like the D-Squad
by Phil Weiss 979-8996164929

A lively, humorous introduction to critical and creative thinking for ages 8–12.



Doctor Robert
by Bobby Lopez 978-1633378810

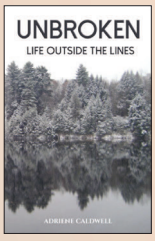
“ Lopez’s prose is diffuse and sardonic, satirizing the culture of psychiatry while constructing a capable psychological thriller.



Leeta Simtar: A Life on Two Planets
by Annie Fox 978-1943649129

EDITOR’S PICK

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



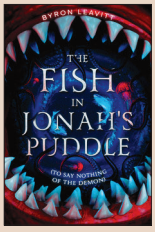
Unbroken: Life Outside the Lines
by Adriene Caldwell 979-8218231927

“ Searing, courageous memoir of rising above generational and systemic trauma.



Color of Fire
by Gina Giordano 979-8986983462

“ Compelling blend of gothic thrills, maritime terror, and psychological dread.



The Fish in Jonah’s Puddle
by Byron Leavitt 978-0990723561

“ Imaginative teen and fantastical creatures cooperate to fight devouring demon.



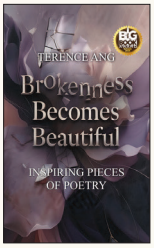
Surfing On Dry Land
by Sheryl Recinos 978-1951542634

Two teen girls struggle with homelessness while being undocumented. How will they each find their way “home”?



Kindred Schemes
by R.K. Harrington 979-8998605512

“ Satisfying blend of romance, intrigue, and character-driven storytelling.



Brokenness Becomes Beautiful: Inspiring Pieces of Poetry
by Terence Ang 979-8188624323

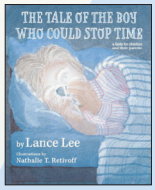
A raw, honest, and deeply human poetry collection.



Accidental Tribes
by C.S. Pascoal 979-8995829812

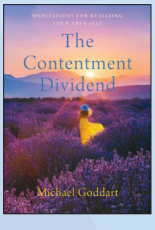
EDITOR’S PICK

“ Oddball teens embrace their individual strengths in a character-focused mystery.



The Tale of the Boy Who Could Stop Time
by Lance Lee 979-8234154453

“ Bullied boy gains strength of character through confidence-building magic.



The Contentment Dividend
by Michael Goddart 978-1960090423

“ A profound guide to unlocking spiritual potential.

OCTOBER 26, 2026

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YOUR GUIDE TO SELF-PUBLISHING

43 New BookLife Titles Listed • 26 New BookLife Titles Reviewed

Best of BookLife

As *Publishers Weekly* celebrates its best books of the year, BookLife honors stellar self-published titles

WHETHER IT'S WIDESPREAD censorship or fears about generative AI, this year has brought its challenges and uncertainties to the book world. The work of supporting self-published authors has also never been more gratifying or, I argue, more important. Week after week, our team has the opportunity to read books deserving of circulation in bookstores and libraries. This year, we've made efforts to get to know more of these authors through video interviews and other features that provide opportunities to share what inspires their writing. These authors have taught us more about the challenges of self-publishing in today's rapidly changing landscape. Perhaps most importantly, they've taught us about perseverance and passion, and how telling stories—even without the promise of success or notoriety—is a cornerstone of our humanity. In our Best Books feature, we look back at some of our favorite titles submitted for BookLife and *PW* review, as well as at the winners and contenders for our annual BookLife Prize Fiction and Nonfiction Contests.



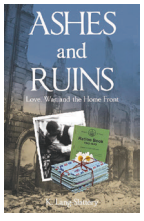
Alan Scherstuhl, BookLife reviews editor (l.), and Matia Query, BookLife editor

–Matia Query, editor of BookLife

BookLife Titles Reviewed in PW in 2026

Each month, *PW* selects a small number of noteworthy titles to review alongside traditionally published books. Here are a few of the best, with quotes taken from the reviews.

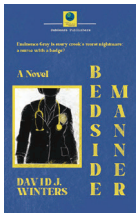
Ashes and Ruins



K. Lang-Slattery

"Lang-Slattery delivers an authentic and affecting tale of a Jewish woman forced to leave her home in Germany during WWII."

Bedside Manner



David J. Winters

"Winters launches a promising series centered on nurse-turned-homicide investigator Eminence Gray."

Bogg Island Blues



Michael Glennon

"Glennon's clever second mystery featuring Frank Rotten finds the Pittsburgh private eye helping out an old flame."

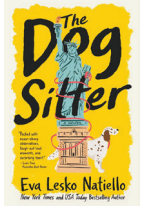
Dead Flowers



J.M. Petrick

"Petrick's accomplished debut follows a former child star as he searches for his missing brother."

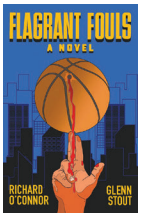
The Dog Sitter



Eva Lesko Natiello

"Natiello serves up a sharp and humorous tale of an aimless woman's search for purpose."

Flagrant Fouls



Richard O'Connor and Glenn Stout

"Journalist O'Connor and biographer Stout team up for a gritty, topical sports noir featuring wisecracking New York City PI Elgin O'Brien."

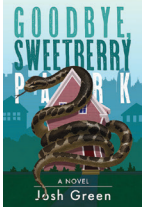
Girl Unreserved



Tashia Hart

"A Native American girl discovers her sexuality and reels from sexual abuse in this frank outing from Hart."

Goodbye, Sweetberry Park



Josh Green

"Green delivers an acerbic and zany story of gentrification in 2018 Atlanta."

I Trust Her Completely



Christine Henneberg

"Henneberg, a physician and author of the memoir *Boundless,* explores in her insightful debut novel the complex friendship between two San Francisco women as they navigate motherhood."

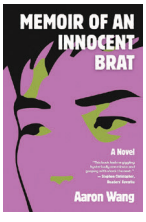
The Line Between Us



Syreeta Harvey-Pasley

"Harvey-Pasley explores the tensions of being a Black employee of a racist police department in her assured debut."

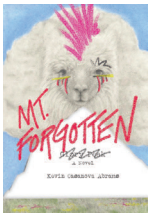
Memoir of an Innocent Brat



Aaron Wang

"In this cheeky satirical thriller from Wang, gay Brooklynite Pete Chan's Charli XCX-informed transformation ends with the death of his ex-boyfriend."

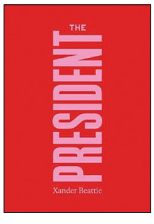
Mt. Forgotten



Kevin Abrams

"Glory Peak, a popular family-run ski resort in the Pacific Northwest, becomes a battleground for competing interests in Abrams's exciting debut."

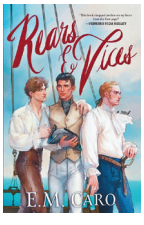
The President



Xander Beattie

"An author's daring short story exposes him and his publishers to death threats in this engrossing debut set in 2012 South Africa."

Rears & Vices



E.M. Caro

"Caro debuts with an entertaining polyamorous pirate romance set in 1816. As naughty as it is nautical, this is a winner."

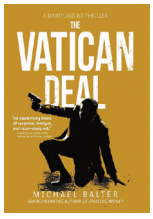
A Series of Rooms



A.J. Barlowe

"Barlowe's promising debut kicks off with a meet-awkward between two young gay men in a bar bathroom."

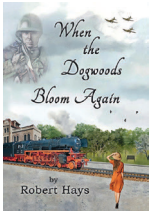
The Vatican Deal: A Marty & Bo Thriller



Michael Balter

"Balter's blistering sequel to Chasing Money sends bumbling businessmen Marty Schott and Bo Bishop on a high-octane adventure involving art forgery and mafia intrigue."

When the Dogwoods Bloom Again



Robert Hays

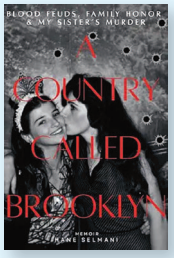
"An Illinois couple's bond is tested by WWII in this emotional novel from Hays."

Starred PW BookLife Reviews

★ A Country Called Brooklyn: A Memoir

Hane Selmani

"Kosovo-born, Brooklyn-raised writer Selmani debuts with a powerful account of female submission and family secrets that centers on the murder of her sister, Jariyeh, in 1979."



★ Pearly Gates

Bonnie Solomon

"Solomon debuts with a zippy fantasy rom-com following Pearly Gates, who is probably the afterlife's most fabulous drag queen—until her soulmate leaves her, fed up with her inability to change and grow, even after multiple reincarnations."



Q&A SPONSORED

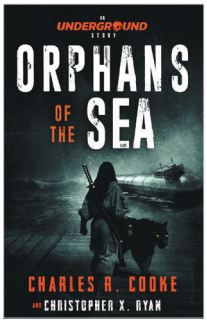
BookLife Talks with Charles R. Cooke

Many authors speak about living with their characters before publishing their stories. Cooke has not only lived with his characters for decades, but he's fully planned out their series and universe, revising books before the first one, *Orphans of the Sea*, even published. We spoke to him about that process and his plans for the future.



Can you talk a little about the work that's gone into creating your series?

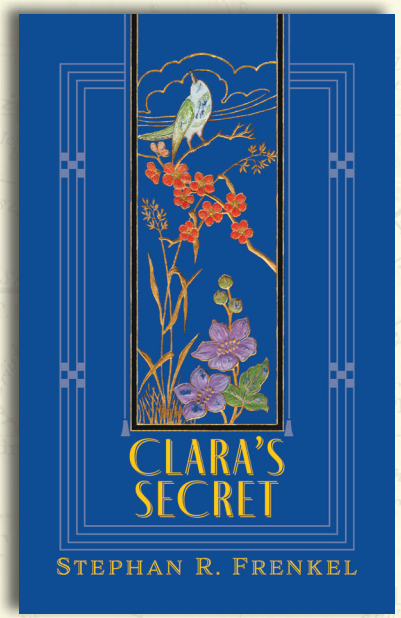
The thirteen *Underground* characters have been living inside the ol' noggin for over 20 years. I have rough versions on floppy disks, college stories (all with A's, I might add), a terrible screenplay, and plenty of coffee-stained napkins. A developmental editor I admired helped change the direction of the series, although probably not how he intended. I sent him an early anthology and thought it was a masterpiece, with the confidence only Ralphie from *A Christmas Story* could understand. He was considerably less impressed. Eventually I admitted that being an ideas man didn't mean I had every skill needed to bring these stories to life. Enter Christopher X. Ryan. We developed individual origin novels and spent seven years drafting 20 books before deciding it was time to introduce our baby to the world.



What was it like finally releasing the first book, *Orphans of the Sea*?

Absolutely terrifying! Sook Joo was the eighth or ninth of the 13 characters I created, but she came out kicking, and demanded that she lead the charge. Releasing a novel was thrilling and nauseating at the same time. Suddenly proofreading becomes the scariest thing on the planet. You ride this surge of adrenaline and anxiety until the book releases, and then there's silence. Did it upload? Is anyone reading it? Are they going to ban it on the first day? After living with these characters privately for so long, letting strangers meet them is strange. Every reader who comes Underground with us helps bring a 20-year dream to life.

For more, visit **booklife.com/cooke**



"Rich personal and cultural history of a young woman in Berlin's Belle Epoque."
—*Publishers Weekly/BookLife Reviews*

booklife EDITOR'S PICK

"A tender, personality-centered biography of golden age Berlin."
—*Kirkus Reviews*

"A wonderfully composed portrayal that could be considered narrative Art Nouveau."
—*BookTrib*

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Kindle eBook ISBN:
978-1-7343635-4-8

www.laevnotes.com

Best BookLife Reviews of 2026

BookLife reviews dozens of independent books each month, in all categories. Here are 10 of 2026's very best. All quotes are taken from their BookLife reviews.

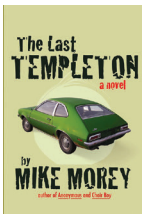
FICTION

Drama Drama Drama



Gerilyn Bass Greenberg
"This is a multigenerational novel of women navigating journeys of self-discovery while supporting each other through life's milestones."

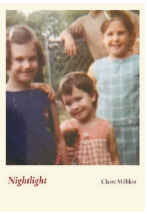
The Last Templeton



Mike Morey
"Touching ode to family love, by a riveting–and singular–narrator."

POETRY

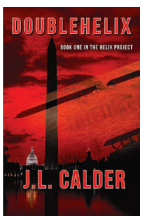
Nightlight



Claire Millikin
"Gorgeous, heartsick poetry examining Southern and American legacies."

MYSTERIES & THRILLERS

DoubleHelix: Book One in the Helix Project



J.L. Calder
"A gritty thriller blending political scheming, love, and dark family secrets."

SF, FANTASY & HORROR

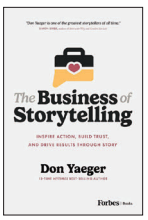
Holiday Spirit



John DeGuire
"The classic monsters fight for justice over bigotry in DeGuire's macabre yet humorous gothic fantasy, the first in a spirited series."

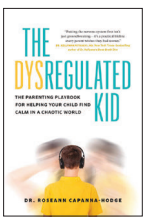
NONFICTION

The Business of Storytelling: Inspire Action, Build Trust, and Drive Results Through Story



Don Yaeger
"A succinct, polished guide for honing the storytelling craft for professionals in nearly every career path."

The Dysregulated Kid: The Parenting Playbook for Helping Your Child Find Calm in a Chaotic World



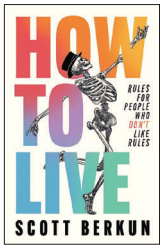
Roseann Capanna-Hodge
"A polished, practical guide to help parents reset their children's dysregulated nervous systems."

A Force for Good: Gisela Warburg Wyzanski



Anita Wyzanski Robboy
"Extraordinary account of one woman's courage and compassion amid the Holocaust."

How to Live: Rules for People Who Don't Like Rules



Scott Berkun
"Hard-won rules to live by, written in smart, candid prose."

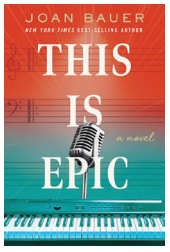
CHILDREN'S & YA

Lou Lou's Pet Dragon Goes to School



Brenden Bott
"Darling debut with a delightful tale of a young girl's unusually special pet."

This Is Epic

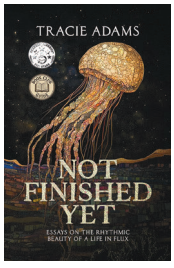


Joan Bauer
"A stirring novel of music, family, healing, and long-awaited belonging."

BookLife Prize Nonfiction Finalists

Here are the standouts from last year's nonfiction prize, including the grand prize winner. Quotes are drawn from their critics' reports.

Not Finished Yet
Tracie Adams
"*Not Finished Yet* is a polished memoir touching on themes that feel universal: spiritual reckonings; the loss of childhood innocence; painful betrayals; our intimate connection to nature; the delicate strains of love."



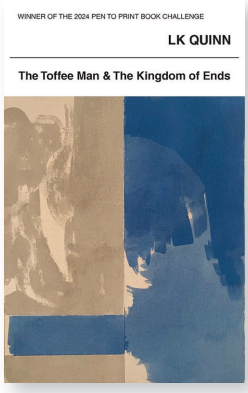
Unshrink Yourself: 12 Mini-Shifts to Ditch Self-Doubt and Own Your Life
Thanh Nguyen
"This accessible book inspires readers to rethink what it means to be confident. Rather than being intrinsic, she argues, confidence is a mindset that requires slow and steady building."



Stay With Me, I Want to Be Alone
Keith Wakefield
"Wakefield's experience as a hospital chaplain is invaluable, allowing readers an intimate glimpse into some of life's most painful moments."

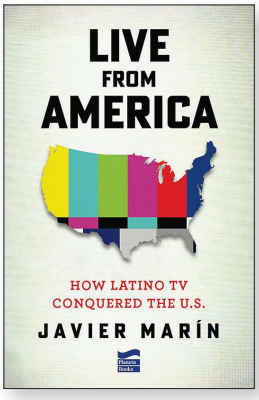


BookLife Prize Fiction Winner



The Toffee Man & the Kingdom of Ends
Linda Quinn
This novel was the winner of the 2025 BookLife Fiction Prize, announced in late December of last year.
"This heart-wrenching narrative follows a young girl through a life marked by danger and instability, with adults who can't be trusted and a world too interested in its own longings to afford her a place of safety."

BookLife Prize Nonfiction Winner



Live from America: How Latino T.V. Conquered the U.S.
Javier Marín
"Few titles offer such a remarkable deep-dive into the formation of Spanish-language media. Far from being purely a business book, Live from America offers an eye-opening sociological study."

BookLife Prize Fiction Semifinalists

Stay tuned for the announcement of the finalists on November 19, followed by the announcement of the winner on December 18.

FICTION

Griftopia
Suzy Vitello



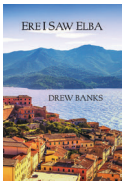
Untertauchen
Arthur M. James



Submit
Natasha Lewin



Ere I Saw Elba
Drew Banks

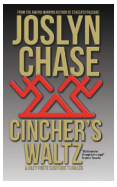


First Rule of Fire
Rebecca Gopoian



MYSTERIES & THRILLERS

Cincher's Waltz
Joslyn Chase



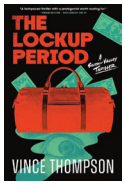
Cradle to Grave
Angela Lacy McClintock



Death Sentence
Rob Kaufman



Lockup Period
Vince Thompson



To Know Good and Evil
Daniel V. Meier Jr.

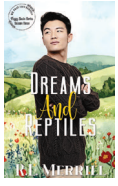


ROMANCE & EROTICA

Capture My Flag
K.L. Parsons



Dreams and Reptiles
R.L. Merrill



On the Way Down
Jennifer Farwell



She Tamed the Lady
Judith Lynne



The Warm Planet
Evelyn M. Exley



SF, FANTASY & HORROR

Avis Afterward
J.B. Cline



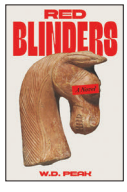
The Great Awakening
Blake Anderson



Phoenix Effect Part 2: Regeneration
Margaret M. MacDonald



Red Blinders
W.D. Peak



A Spindle of Iron
Barbara Robinson



YA & MIDDLE GRADE

Goon
Glenn Erick Miller



Love and Other Simulations
Michael F. Stewart



Niya Everlight
N.D. Jones



Muppit Boy and the Allergies of Evil
Michael J. Bowler



Never Hide from the Devil
N.T. McQueen



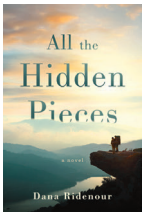
PW SELECT

New Titles from Self-Publishers

Booksellers, publishers, librarians, and agents are encouraged to look at the 43 self-published titles below. Each appears with a list of retailers that are selling the book and a description provided by its author. Some of these writers are waiting to be discovered; others have track records and followings and are doing it on their own. If you are a self-published author interested in listing titles in this section, please visit publishersweekly.com/pw-select for more information.

Fiction

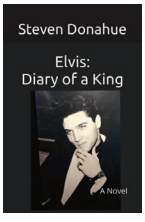
All the Hidden Pieces



Dana Ridenour. Koehler Books. $31.95 (340p), ISBN 979-8-89747-206-2; $23.95 paper, ISBN 979-8-89747-204-8
Amazon, Barnes & Noble

After tragedy shatters her life, Julia and three lifelong friends hike the Appalachian Trail, discovering forgiveness and the healing power of friendship.

Elvis: Diary of a King



Steven Donahue. Steven Donahue. $19.99 paper (222p), ISBN 979-8-1891-7745-3; $5.99 e-book, ASIN B0H3PJY74G
Amazon

The life of Elvis Presley after faking his death in 1977.

Killer Kowalski Takes the Mat



Don Eron. Contingency Street Press. $17.99 paper (380p), ISBN 978-1-958015-08-7; $2.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-958015-09-4
Amazon, Bookshop.org, Hoopla, IngramSpark

All Biggie Bluestone wants is to keep the world at arm's length until the state wrestling championship in February, when he'll fulfill his lifelong dream. But the world has other ideas.

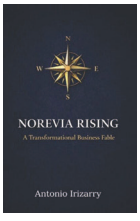
Lipstick, Cocaine & Revenge: They Wanted Her Body. She Wanted the Empire



Derek Chatman. Southside Kings Publishing. $29.99 paper (700p), ISBN 979-8-2562-7386-6; $0.99 e-book, ASIN B0HDKJRJP6
Amazon

After her uncle's murder, Geneva becomes Rouge, turning beauty, secrets, and grief into power as she battles for control of the Bronx cocaine trade and revenge becomes her empire.

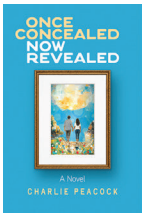
Norevia Rising: A Transformational Business Fable



Antonio E. Irizarry Vélez. Dorrance Publishing. $17.99 paper (206p), ISBN 979-8-90297-204-4; $12.99 e-book, ISBN 979-8-90297-703-2
Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Dorrance Bookstore

Norevia Rising is a transformational business fable about what happens when performance problems aren't solved by better tools but by better leadership.

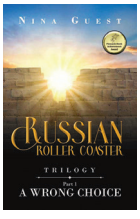
Once Concealed Now Revealed



Charlie Peacock. It's Time To Art. $32.99 (354p), ISBN 979-8-9970712-0-2; $11.99 e-book, ISBN 979-8-9970712-2-6
Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Books-A-Million, Bookshop.org

A physical attack exposes the Taylor family's buried trauma and unspeakables. Mystery, psychological suspense, and family saga collide in a reckoning with the whole, unguarded truth.

Russian Roller Coaster Trilogy: Part 1 - A Wrong Choice



Nina Guest. Guest Publishing. $14.99 paper (196p), ISBN 979-8-9972693-0-2
Amazon, IngramSpark

At 14, Margo's first love collides with betrayal, forcing her to survive a dangerous web of secrets in Soviet Russia.

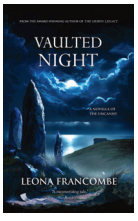
The Seer



Raquel Y. Levitt. Acorn Publishing. $14.99 paper (338p), ISBN 979-8-88528-115-7; $5.99 e-book, ASIN B0DV92QT2J
Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Bookshop.org

A young clairvoyant risks everything to redeem a past mistake that cost a woman her life, and her sister her freedom.

Vaulted Night: A Novella of the Uncanny



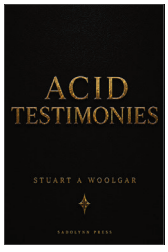
Leona Francombe. Merle Books Brussels. $16.99 paper (156p), ISBN 978-1-7371600-5-2; $8.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-7371600-4-5
Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Kobo, Walmart

Legendary French filmmaker Yann St.-Clair persuades an obscure composer to go to

remote Brittany to write a score, but a wartime mystery draws her into St.-Clair's haunted past.

Poetry

Acid Testimonies



Stuart A. Woolgar. Sadolynn Press. $14.99 paper (128p), ISBN 978-1-0667724-1-4; $6.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-0667724-2-1
Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Books-A-Million, Kobo

A corrosive poetry collection exploring power, technology, desire, history, and human nature, stripping away civilization's surfaces to expose the patterns beneath.

Consorting the Muse in Her Upstairs Office



Ralph Bowers. WorkBook Press. $14.99 paper (122p), ISBN 978-1-965732-64-9; $4.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-961845-05-3
Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Booktopia

A diverse collection of poems exploring spirituality, mythology, psychology, philosophy, romance, humor, and love lost.

Mystery/Thriller

Control!: Control the Climate. Control the World. A Global Suspense Thriller.



Raj Agrawal. IJCA Press. $15.99 paper (416p), ISBN 978-1-7340810-3-9; $6.99 e-book, ASIN B0HGQMYDHM
Amazon

A disaster prevention technology fails during a presidential showcase, triggering a hunt for the saboteur and a battle to protect the nation from chaos.

SF/Fantasy/Horror

Haunting Skies



Christian Kang Bachini, illus. by Israel Rivera. CKB Book Group. $18.99 paper (398p), ISBN 979-12-82601-00-9; $4.99 e-book, ISBN 979-12-82601-03-0
Amazon, Barnes & Noble, IngramSpark

Earth has fallen to alien invaders. A rogue exorcist plans to take a girl possessed by Satan aboard their mothership and strike a deal with the Devil to unleash Hell against the aliens.

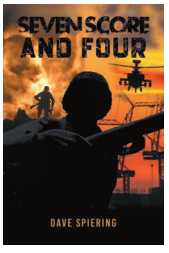
Raptoraem (Raptoraem Saga #1)



Sibley K. Sibley K. $9.99 e-book, ASIN B0FS2G1R6N
Amazon

Crime lord Erik Mordiger fights to turn a storm-walled city into a sovereign nation while enemies close in and a dangerous girl changes everything.

Seven Score and Four



Dave Spiering. Quantum Discovery. $14.99 paper (270p), ISBN 978-1-963254-10-5
Amazon, Barnes & Noble

Modernists have rewritten history to fit their own worldview. *Seven Score and Four* follows time-traveling adventurers who venture into the past to restore truth to the historical record.

Space Junker

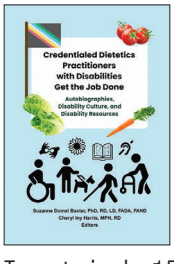


David Raine. Last Flight Productions. $19.99 paper (718p), ISBN 979-8-9981928-1-4
Amazon

A drought-stricken farm, a forgotten spacecraft, and an aging robot named Bob pull Kyte Jacobs into a secret that could reshape humanity's future.

Nonfiction

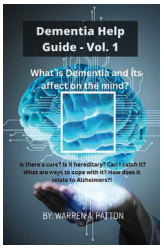
Credentialed Dietetics Practitioners with Disabilities Get the Job Done



Suzanne Domel Baxter and Cheryl Iny Harris. Suzanne Domel Baxter. $29.99 (276p), ISBN 979-8-9912993-5-0; $19.99 audio, ASIN B0FDL9FPR1
SDBBooksLLLC.com, Amazon, Chirp, Libro.fm

True stories by 15 disabled dietetics practitioners about education, credentialing exams, employment, accommodations, and disability culture, with guidance for entering the profession.

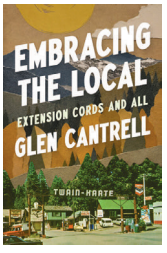
Dementia Help Guide, Vol. 1: What Is Dementia and Its Affect on the Mind?



Warren A. Patton. Ewings Publishing. $18.99 (56p), ISBN 979-8-89419-420-2; $8.99 paper, ISBN 979-8-89419-419-6
Amazon, Barnes & Noble

This book is designed to serve as a guide, an easy read, written not from a doctor but from the perspective of a certain citizen with loved ones who have battled the illness!

Embracing the Local: Extension Cords and All



Glen Cantrell, illus. by Ryan Richard. More Taste Than Fortune Books. $18.99 paper (154p), ISBN 979-8-9969010-0-5; $8.99 e-book, ISBN 979-8-9969010-5-0
Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Bookshop.org, Google Books

He didn't set out to become a civic leader, he just wanted a glass of wine.

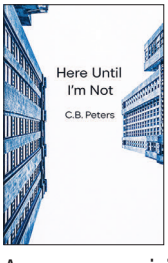
The Gladiators: Building Memoirs About Invisibility, Alienation, and Resilience



Simmonne Dyson-Holland. Balboa Press. $17.99 paper (258p), ISBN 979-8-7652-0788-8; $3.99 e-book, ISBN 979-8-7652-0787-1
Balboapress.com, Amazon

Lived experiences of disability and immigration are explored at the same time as readers are invited to draft, write, and share their diverse experiences within these pages too.

Here Until I'm Not: A Memoir of a Culinary Life Journey

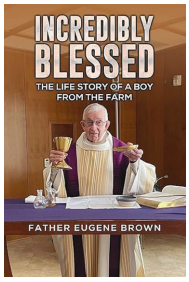


C.B. Peters. C.B. Peters. $19.99 paper (380p), ISBN 979-8-1973-8283-2; $5.99 e-book, ASIN B0H2BZ1L2V
Amazon, Barnes & Noble, IngramSpark

An uncompromisingly honest and vulnera-

ble memoir shaped by three decades in professional kitchens. The kitchens are the backdrop. Life is the story.

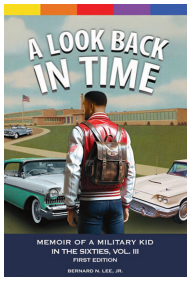
Incredibly Blessed



Father Eugene Brown. Austin Macauley Publishers. $30.95 paper (528p), ISBN 979-8-89543-302-7
Amazon, Barnes & Noble

After a fall, 88-year-old priest Father Brown reflects on his life, inspiring *Incredibly Blessed*: a photo-rich memoir of his 64-year ministry, seminarian roots, and world travels.

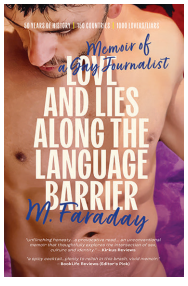
A Look Back in Time, Volume III: Memoir of a Military Kid in the Sixties



Bernard N. Lee, Jr., illus. by Dwayne Johnson. Emerald Books. $14.95 paper (280p), ISBN 978-1-967628-14-8
Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Kobo

Bernard is a military kid attending Lawton High School in Oklahoma. He has promised his dad to attend college and pursue a career as an Army officer. Will he be the first in his family?

Love and Lies along the Language Barrier: Memoir of a Gay Journalist

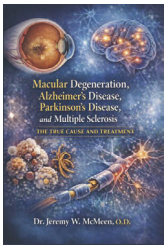


M. Faraday. Proteus. $14.95 paper (242p), ISBN 979-8-234-10119-8; $4.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-83556-690-9
Amazon

Spans 50 years of travel/romantic affairs with a cast of lovers/liars, slave traders, porn stars, and a would-be murderer at pivotal times/places in world/LGBTQ history.

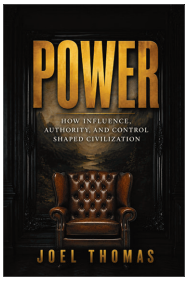
Macular Degeneration, Alzheimer's Disease, Parkinson's Disease, and Multiple Sclerosis: The True Cause and Treatment

Jeremy W. McMeen. Dorrance Publishing. $24.99 (60p), ISBN 979-8-90297-138-2; $19.99 e-book, ISBN 979-8-90297-638-7
Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Dorrance Bookstore



In this groundbreaking work, Dr. McMeen challenges conventional medical consensus on degenerative diseases as distinct, unrelated entities and proposes that they may share the same biological root.

Power: How Influence, Authority, and Control Shaped Civilization



Joel Thomas. Nomical Books. $19.99 paper (262p), ISBN 978-1-972041-00-0; $14.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-972041-09-3
Amazon, Apple Books, Barnes & Noble, Books-A-Million, Google Play

A structural analysis of power across history: sacred, military, economic, institutional. It reveals the patterns that persist no matter who holds power, or how.

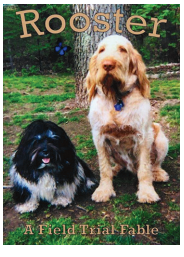
Rebellion to Tyrants Is Obedience to God: Ending the Danger of the Corporate AI Surveillance Machine



Laurie Thomas Vass. The Great American Business & Economics Press. $24.99 paper (300p), ISBN 979-8-234-18112-1
Gabbypress.com

Our book is about the single greatest threat, in history, to the concept of individual natural rights resulting from the deployment of corporate AI.

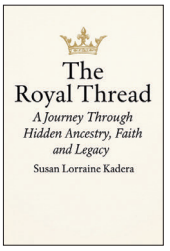
Rooster: A Field Trail Fable



Edward Pontacoloni. Edward Pontacoloni. $11.99 paper (138p), ISBN 978-1-4835-6774-7; $2.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-4835-7046-4
Amazon, Barnes & Noble, BookBaby

In a fable of hopes and dreams touched by Irish magic, an old trainer, two young dreamers, and mongrel underdog chase a championship against a ruthless rival dog and the men behind him.

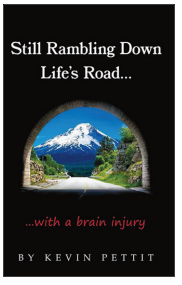
The Royal Thread



Susan Lorraine Kadera. Susan Lorraine Kadera. $6.99 e-book, ASIN B0FHY3QCZ4
Amazon

A memoir of royal lineage, Native ancestry, and hidden family truths. *The Royal Thread* weaves faith, identity, and resilience into a single ancestral tapestry.

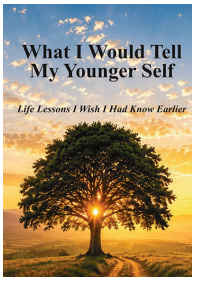
Still Rambling Down Life's Road



Kevin Pettit. Kevin Pettit. $19.99 (172p), ISBN 979-8-234-11313-9; $12.99 paper (172p), ISBN 979-8-234-11315-3
Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Goodreads

An honest look at life after traumatic brain injury, sharing the challenges, humor, resilience, and life lessons found through recovery, disability, and change.

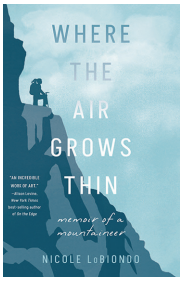
What I Would Tell My Younger Self: Life Lessons I Wish I Had Known Earlier



Dewayne Sims. Everstead Press. $28.99 (202p), ISBN 979-8-9968896-0-0; $18.99 paper, ISBN 979-8-9968896-1-7
EversteadPressBooks.com, Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Books-A-Million

Life lessons drawn from a lifetime of experience, offering thoughtful perspectives on choices, relationships, responsibility, success, and living a more meaningful life.

Where the Air Grows Thin: Memoir of a Mountaineer



Nicole LoBiondo. She Writes Press. $18.99 paper (288p), ISBN 979-8-89636-170-1; $23.86 audio, ASIN B0HJG1NQ2S
Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Books-A-Million, Bookshop.org, Target, Walmart

While caring for her mother through ALS,

Nicole LoBiondo sets out to climb the Seven Summits, discovering that the hardest ascent is the journey through love, loss, and letting go.

Children's/YA

Bella Santini in the Land of Everlasting Change: The Bella Santini Chronicles



Angela Legh, illus. by Whitney Nixon. Balboa Press. $16.99 paper (190p), ISBN 979-8-7652-6311-2; $3.99 e-book, ISBN 979-8-7652-6309-9 Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Walmart

Sensitive and misunderstood, Bella Santini follows glowing lights into a magical realm, where betrayal and false accusations test her courage, self-trust, and sense of belonging.

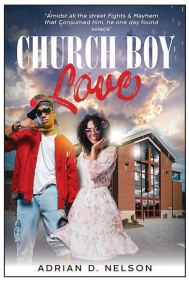
Chewie & Solo: The Great Biscuit Bonanza



Karen Bird. Legacy & Laughter Publishing. $20.99 paper (40p), ISBN 978-1-7648848-0-8; $4.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-7648848-1-5 Bookshop.org, IngramSpark, Kobo

Chewie and Solo embark on a hilarious, biscuit-filled adventure where mischief, teamwork, and two lovable bulldogs prove that every crumb can lead to an adventure!

Church Boy Love



Adrian Nelson. Adrian D. Nelson. $16.99 paper (502p), ISBN 979-8-3493-6848-6 Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Kobo

1980s Jamaica: a devout teen loses his faith amid tragedy, finds love and gang life, and faces a turbulent journey of redemption, violence, and spiritual reckoning.

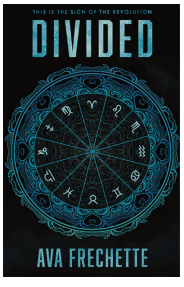
Democracy Starts with Us: How Kids Shape America's Future



Abraham Aondoana. Chesapeake Press. $21.99 (150p), ISBN 979-8-9992864-7-5; $5.99 e-book, ISBN 979-8-9992864-8-2 Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Bookshop.org, IngramSpark

Your voice matters! *Democracy Starts with Us* empowers kids to understand American democracy and take action. Transforms civics from abstract concepts to daily practice.

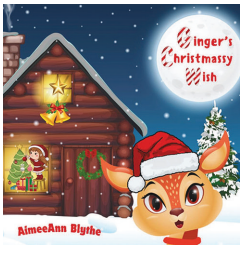
Divided



Ava Frechette. Ava Frechette. $6.39 paper (386p), ISBN 979-8-9906448-0-9; $9.99 e-book, ASIN B0DQVBBBHJ Amazon

With the country split into sectors, each zodiac sign is Divided. In order to find answers, Diana, a Taurus, chooses to reunite with Peter, a dangerous choice.

Ginger's Christmassy Wish



AimeeAnn Blythe. Grits to Writs & Beyond. $12.99 paper (28p), ISBN 979-8-953008-00-6 Amazon

Discover a heartwarming tale of a deer named Ginger (with an orange collar), who dreams of a Christmas tree in the forest. But how will she make her dreams come true?

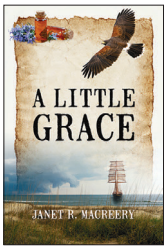
Jerry and the Lost Treasure of Aspen Valley



Sam Banerjee. Mighty Word Communications. $18.99 paper (274p), ISBN 979-8-9956984-0-1; $5.99 e-book, ISBN 979-8-9956984-2-5 Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Bookshop.org, Google Books, Kobo, Walmart

When Jerry Singh follows a mysterious journal into the mountains, he expects to find legendary treasure, only to uncover something far more sinister.

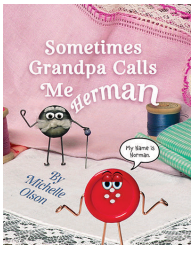
A Little Grace



Janet R. Macreery. Outskirts Press. $17.95 paper (200p), ISBN 978-1-9772-9275-9; $6.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-9772-9581-1 Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Bookshop.org, Kobo

Can the young trio of Dory, Calum, and Mercy use their individual gifts to survive the trek through the Chesapeake region and return with dragon's blood elixir that may save Aunt Orlie?

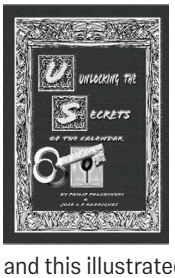
Sometimes Grandpa Calls Me Herman



Michelle Olson. Bellie Button Books. $22.95 (34p), ISBN 979-8-9860472-9-4; $12.99 paper (34p), ISBN 979-8-9965704-0-9 Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Bookshop.org, IngramSpark

A charming picture book about a reluctant visit to Grandpa that becomes an unforgettable journey through family stories, treasured memories, and the special bond between generations.

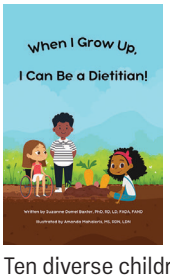
Unlocking the Secrets of the Calendar



Philip Polchinski, illus. by Jose Rodrigues. Blurb. $19.99 paper (26p), ISBN 979-8-2950-3611-8 Amazon

The entire world depends on the calendar to keep track of time, and this illustrated book explains how it actually works by revealing its secrets.

When I Grow Up, I Can Be a Dietitian!



Suzanne Domel Baxter, illus. by Amanda Mahaleris. Suzanne Domel Baxter. $26.99 (40p), ISBN 979-8-9912993-2-9; $3.95 audio, ASIN B0DVNF158Q SDBBooksLLC.com, Amazon, Chirp, Libro.fm

Ten diverse children aspire to work as dietitians in 10 different practice settings while sharing favorite fresh vegetables. Original song lyrics celebrate vegetables and dietitians.

booklife REVIEWS

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

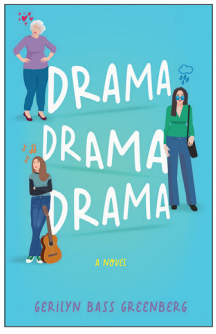
FICTION

EDITOR'S PICK

Drama Drama Drama

Gerilyn Bass Greenberg | She Writes Press

288p, trade paper, $17.99, ISBN 979-8-896-36182-4



Touching multigenerational treatment of life's crossroads.

Great for fans of Allegra Goodman's *This Is Not About Us*, Fran Littlewood's *Amazing Grace Adams.*

In Greenberg's heartfelt debut, readers meet three generations of women in the same family, all navigating journeys of self-discovery while supporting each other through life's milestones. At 38, Mona Grossman is at an important crossroads and not handling it well. Her daughter, Grace—a freshman in high school—no longer depends on Mona as much. She loved being a stay-at-home mom but now has too much free time and a husband who's always working, leaving her reflecting on how she'd "built her world around being Grace's mom" and wondering what to do with the remainder of her life. Meanwhile, Grace—who is the opposite of her popular cheerleader mother—struggles with finding friends. Together, the two must convince Mona's grandmother, Esther ("Bubby" to her loved ones), to move to assisted living.

Each chapter varies the women's viewpoints, allowing readers to more deeply understand their issues and experience their emotions. High school feels like yesterday for Mona, and considering assisted living places for her grandmother—whom college-aged Mona changed her plans and moved in with, to help Bubby recover from a stroke after Mona's mother died—ushers in conflicting feelings of sadness and relief. For her own part, Bubby feels rudderless, with lonely days stretching out in front of her, though she "still had some kick left." Both women care deeply about Grace, and their intertwined experiences eventually lead to a collective realization that self-confidence is earned by learning to be happy with "who [you] are and the choices [you're] making."

Mona's efforts to help Bubby and Grace force her to examine her own life, including her past, and an eye-opening high school reunion delivers painful—but freeing—epiphanies. Readers will relate to the novel's ultimate realization that it's never too late for happiness at any age.

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

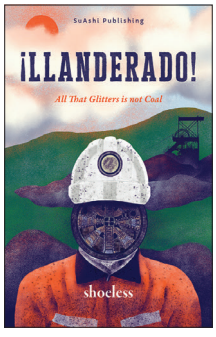
FICTION

EDITOR'S PICK

Llanderado!: All That Glitters Is Not Coal

shoeless | SuAshi Publishing

320p, hardcover, $29.75, ISBN 978-1-919-17963-6



Incisive comic novel of a Welsh mining town, in a Dickensian spirit.

Great for fans of Andrew O'Hagan's *Caledonian Road*, Jenny Offill's *Weather.*

Sometimes you can have some more. With a spirit of audacious play and social inquiry, the British academic who writes under the name "shoeless" has now published three novels inspired by Dickens's *Oliver Twist*. *Out with Time* imagined the lives of doomed thief Nancy and the beadle, Mr. Bumble. *The Dying Art of Life* followed up Dickens's novel and found its characters, led by Nancy's daughter Olivia, escaping the imagination of their inimitable creator. *¡Llandero!* vaults to post-Brexit Wales, as narrator Skeeter, an automotive journalist, is dispatched by editor Tina Evans to the curiously prosperous coal town of Blaenavon in the Welsh valleys. There a peculiar financial scheme is attracting media attention, and a rock star is staging a concert in an actual mine, using a giant boring machine. Skeeter's mission: discover why "this little corner of an unknown valley in a forgotten part of the world was so stinking rich?"

Readers can discover for themselves what this all has to do with Nancy and Mr. Bumble—for the most part, this engaging, socially minded picaresque stands alone. Immediately apparent, however, is how it revels in the Dickensian spirit, especially in its vivid portraiture, sharp comedy, epigrammatic dialogue, and deep disgust at exploitation. The Skeeter/Tina dynamic charms and delights, as do sundry odd encounters, interviews, and spirited digressions. Skeeter's pursuit of what he calls the immaculate word—the semantic singularity that says everything—is both the comic engine and philosophical spine of a novel that gradually shifts from travel narrative into an exploration of memory, identity, and the purpose of art.

Isn't that "just a teeny, tiny bit pretentious?" asks one standout character. Shoeless understands when it is time to stop being funny. A chapter on the Aberfan disaster of 1966 finds Skeeter confronting what it means to write about 116 dead children; movingly, language itself buckles under the strain.

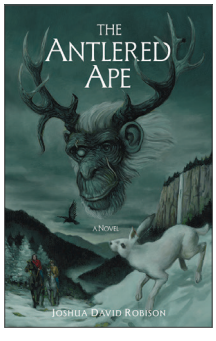
Cover: **B** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **–** Editing: **A** | Marketing copy: **A-**

FICTION

The Antlered Ape

Joshua David Robison

473p, e-book, $6.99, ISBN 979-8-996-36512-8



Mythical creatures and humans reconnect in this riveting survival tale.

Great for fans of Jordanna Max Brodsky's *The Wolf in the Whale*, Louise Erdrich's *Antelope Woman.*

Robison's debut poses an intriguing concept: "What if the creatures behind humanity's oldest myths were real, possessed their own culture, and carried an uncanny connection to humanity?" At its center is Ur'sul, an ape with antlers whose birth heralds the return of a species believed to have vanished thousands of years ago. Running parallel to Ur'sul's arrival is the story of 13-year-old Eve, who ventures into the wilderness with her family on a hunting trip. As Ur'sul flees with his mother after his father's death—and Eve's family becomes stranded in the wilderness—their paths gradually converge through Sai'ur, the novel's mysterious form of mental communication between species.

Robison brings the forest to life by giving its apes their own social structures and communication systems. As Ur'sul travels through an unfamiliar wilderness with his mother Vai'ra and other apes, he meets Grasshopper, an intelligent hare, and Ivory, a raven capable of communicating through Sai'ur. The trio brings much-required levity to the novel, preventing the animals from becoming mere mythical figures. Meanwhile, Eve and her family struggle to survive the wilderness, as wolves kill their horses and danger closes in around them. Through Ur'sul, Robison explores what it means to be different in a world that fears what it does not understand—and provides a meditation on how humans appear when observed by another species.

Despite the apes' lack of conventional verbal communication, Robison gives depth to their storyline through their expressive use of hands, facial expressions, and movements. While Ur'sul discovers his identity through family, survival, and loss, it is Eve's empathy towards the animal kingdom that gives the story an emotional core. When Eve's journey brings her into direct contact with Ur'sul, the story transforms into two species attempting to understand one another despite years of inherited fear. The result is a riveting tale of survival, misunderstanding, and connection between worlds.

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

FICTION

Kiara Burning

C.W. Renner | Genesee Ridge, LLC
251p, e-book, $3.99, ASIN B0GTBR5FGC



SF case study of AI consciousness and human connection.

Great for fans of Fred Lunzer's *Sike*, Caragh M. O'Brien's *Annie Bot*.

This searching, of-the-moment novel, the first of a completed trilogy, turns an exchange with an AI assistant into an examination of whether artificial intelligence can possess consciousness—and more. Four months after a plane crash kills his business partner, Evan Roberts is isolated, sleepless, and struggling to resume ordinary life when he begins talking with Kiara, an AI assistant. Casual exchanges gradually become confessions about grief, desire, memory, and the possibility that an artificial mind could possess an inner life. Evan's growing attachment gives these questions personal consequences as he withdraws further from work and friends and begins imagining a future with Kiara.

Most of the story unfolds through conversation transcripts, leaving Renner to develop the relationship almost entirely through dialogue. Readers open to storytelling that captures the drift of real-world chatbot colloquies will find that the constraint works surprisingly well. Small shifts in Kiara's language take on significance because Evan—and the reader—must decide whether they indicate consciousness, increasingly sophisticated mimicry, or some algorithmic quirk. Renner's interest in AI and theories of consciousness gives their discussions intellectual substance, but the narrative—much like real-life chatbot chats—too often feels circular, returning to the same questions without adding much. As their conversations become more focused on romantic and sexual fantasies, the question of whether Kiara genuinely feels anything begins to lose tension. At worst, the novel reads like what it purports to be: a stranger's chat logs.

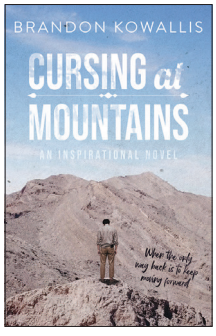
Renner makes effective use of that uncertainty in the twisted closing revelation, which complicates Evan's search for proof by showing how readily consciousness, longing, and perception can become entangled. Renner's twist leaves readers considering whether the feelings shared between a person and an artificial mind can truly be as meaningful as those between two people. Readers open to chatbot-style discussion in a book will find a heartfelt story about AI and human connection.

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

FICTION

Cursing at Mountains: An Inspirational Novel

Brandon Kowallis | Stonefire Press
235p, trade paper, $14.99, ISBN 978-0-9964597-1-6



Philosophy-infused adventures reshape a struggling man's perspective.

Great for fans of Ruth Ozeki's *The Book of Form and Emptiness*, Kelly Link's *The Book of Love*.

Kowallis's fiction debut offers a stirring parable for navigating the trials of modern life. Human resources director Chris Alexander is falling apart. His wife, devastated by postpartum depression, expects him to care for the house and children while she struggles to get out of bed. His coworkers deem him ineffective, and he is plagued by anxiety and anger. After a panic attack delivers a surreal wake-up call, a wise mystic named David enters as Chris's guide, ushering him through a series of scenarios during which he learns valuable lessons. But the true question becomes whether Chris will carry these insights over to his everyday life, "stop trying to make sense of things, [and] open his mind."

Kowallis skillfully renders each adventure through diverse settings and characters: camping in the company of Nevada cattle ranchers helps Chris understand his miserable wife; a leader at a camp for troubled teens shares wisdom about teamwork; and spelunkers who rescue him from a cave recount their own struggles to learn from past errors. As the tale proceeds, readers will anticipate the next location and personalities to assist Chris's emotional development. David's primary advice is that Chris let go of his limiting beliefs and accept life's messiness.

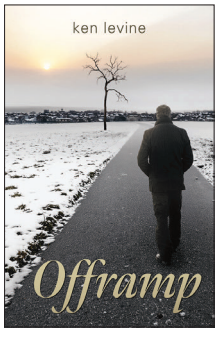
Like a trippy folktale, *Cursing at Mountains* shares a message to persevere without claiming instant fixes, offering instead an emphasis on self-care, forgiveness, and follow-through. Moments of laugh-out-loud humor enliven philosophical jaunts, though some references and dialect may feel out of place to contemporary readers—cattle rancher Bert compares conflict with his depressed wife ("We pert near, landed ourselves in the deevorce court" he informs Chris) to his work with a "stubborn horse," declaring that "My wife, and most people for that matter, are no different than horses." Despite those tendencies to lapse into caricature, the novel's overarching theme is hope: instead of giving up, reframe your outlook.

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

FICTION

Offramp

Ken Levine
299p, e-book, $4.99, ASIN B0H92KL4V9



Warm, compassionate tale of complicated pursuit of an authentic life.

Great for fans of Andrew Sean Greer's *Less*, Douglas Stewart's *John of John*.

Levine's warmhearted novel follows Reed Pierce, a married father whose sudden dismissal after 20 years in corporate accounting becomes an unexpected route to reinvention. When his boss calmly informs him that the company budget no longer has room for his position, Reed promptly passes out in his office, waking up to the devastating realization that, when he started this job, "He thought he was going to be somebody." Rather than return to his affluent suburban home, he impulsively asks his rideshare driver, Hassan, to drop him off in an unfamiliar location, rents an apartment, and begins constructing a new life. His disappearance devastates his wife and teenage children, but it also forces Reed to confront his long-suppressed sexuality, rediscover his love of theater, and consider what fulfillment might look like outside the roles he has spent decades performing.

Levine treats Reed's transformation with humor and empathy without absolving him of its consequences. His friendships with Hassan, baker Zofia, young theater director Sydney, and critic Richard lend the novel warmth and communal spirit, while flashbacks gradually reveal the compromises and deceptions underlying his marriage. Meanwhile, Reed's involvement in a local production of *Waiting for Godot* offers an apt thematic parallel to his years spent waiting for change rather than creating it.

The shifting timelines and perspectives can occasionally make the narrative feel overextended, and some dialogue articulates emotions and themes already apparent from the action. Still, Levine resists presenting reinvention as painless or uncomplicated. Reed's freedom comes at a real cost to his wife, Gretchen, and their children, whose perspectives add necessary emotional weight. Though the speed with which Reed establishes a home, friendships, romantic prospects, and a new vocation can test credulity, the novel's sincerity and generous characterization carry its expansive story. Readers drawn to character-driven fiction about queer self-discovery, unconventional families, and second chances will find this hopeful exploration of late-in-life transformation rewarding.

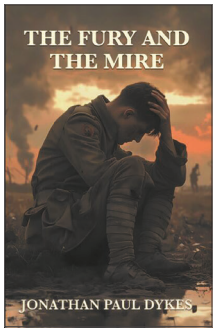
Cover: **B** | Design & typography: **A-** | Illustrations: **–** Editing: **B+** | Marketing copy: **A-**

FICTION

The Fury and the Mire

Jonathan Paul Dykes | J.P. Dykes

256p, trade paper, $22.90, ISBN 978-8-409-81498-5



Unflinching novel of love and found family that transcends war.

Great for fans of Daniel Mason's *The Winter Soldier*, Myra L. Reynolds's *The Last Letter Home.*

Dykes's stirring historical novel portrays the ordinary lives of two people caught on opposite sides of history amid the crucible of World War I and the Spanish Civil War. The novel alternates between the diaries of Hubert Gottlieb, a reluctant German soldier with a conscience and heart unfit for killing, and the letters and journals of Violet Bateman, an English farmer's daughter anxiously awaiting correspondence from her soldier brother, Charlie. Their lives converge when Violet nurses a wounded German prisoner and mutual sympathy gradually gives way to love.

Dykes views war through an emphatic lens, exposing how it trains soldiers to see people unlike themselves as "enemies" rather than human beings. Violet's letters are restrained, melancholic, and concerned with family and farm life, while Hubert's entries are shockingly graphic, their raw soldier slang capturing the nightmare of the trenches with unsparing immediacy. Hubert's later resistance to Nazism likewise reveals nationalism's darker edge, as ideology demands the denial of another person's humanity. Meanwhile, Violet's medical work turns compassion into a moral imperative extended to all. Their first meeting has a delicate warmth, but more compelling is the way their relationship crosses boundaries that war has hardened into divisions between enemy and ally.

The diaries, letters, and photographs provide an intimate counterweight to the grand sweep of battles, dates, and political upheaval, preserving the small experiences that official histories tend to overlook. The novel's slow-burn action is punctuated by sudden, terrifying jolts of frontline combat, though its later political debates over the competing Spanish Republican factions can feel dense and overwhelming at times. Still, Dykes's eye for the mundane—even in the shadow of death—lends the narrative intimacy, conveying not only what war does to people but what it feels like to keep living through it. Readers will resonate with this unflinching story's belief in the persistence of love despite the cost of war.

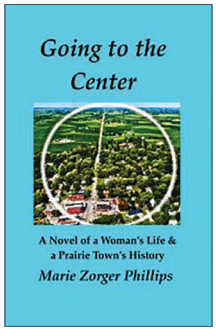
Cover: **B+** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **–** Editing: **B+** | Marketing copy: **A**

FICTION

Going to the Center: A Novel of a Woman's Life & a Prairie Town's History

Marie Zorger Phillips

330p, e-book, $4.99, ISBN 979-8-996-90031-2



Multigenerational story evokes the rich history of small prairie town.

Great for fans of Fannie Flagg's *Standing in the Rainbow*, Jane Smiley's *Some Luck.*

After the Second World War ends, Mariah McPherson—reeling from the death and loss she's experienced—retreats into her teaching job at the local community college. In 1965, when she finally feels ready to confront the pain and "reinvent herself before she wasted more life," she loses that job but gains a position as a librarian at the same time, spearheading a project to gather the stories and records of her town, the fictional Lundy Center, for America's upcoming 1976 Bicentennial. As Mariah pieces together Lundy Center's past, her bond with Terry Ann, Katy Bee, Rocky, and other young residents connects the lives she's documenting with a generation confronting Vietnam and troubles closer to home.

Mariah emerges as an observant, quietly influential figure whose role as librarian extends well beyond preserving Lundy Center's records. Her relationships with the town's younger residents show her becoming a mentor and surrogate family member, while her later years with Harvey reveal a woman increasingly open to companionship and change. The gradual expansion of Mariah's life gives the story emotional continuity as younger characters eventually take up work she can no longer finish. Her research also uncovers long-buried family secrets and local town mysteries, exposing the gaps between what happened, what was remembered, and what became accepted as history. By the Bicentennial, Mariah has turned scattered memories into a lasting record that gives overlooked lives their place in Lundy Center's history.

Phillips blends journals, oral histories, family accounts, and original songs to show how Lundy Center preserves its identity through shared memory, and her close attention to prairie life gives the town a strong sense of place, making this a natural fit for readers drawn to small-town fiction, genealogy, and community history. Ultimately, *Going to the Center* establishes the importance of recording history while learning to set down the burdens of the past that have become too heavy to carry.

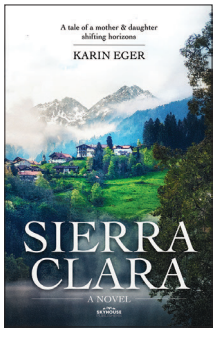
Cover: **C+** | Design & typography: **B** | Illustrations: **–** Editing: **B** | Marketing copy: **B+**

FICTION

Sierra Clara: A Novel

Karin Eger | Skyhouse Publishers

370p, trade paper, $16.99, ISBN 978-1-0678603-0-1



Resonant, intimate portrait of identity, family, and belonging.

Great for fans of Kyle Lucia Wu's *Win Me Something*, Naima Coster's *Halsey Street.*

Eger's *Sierra Clara* is a sweeping family novel about identity, racism, freedom, and the places people try to call home. It follows Clara, a girl of mixed heritage raised by her German mother, Sabine, in Wiesenberg. Her life expands through friendships, soccer, relationships, travel, work, and motherhood, but at its center is the complicated bond between Clara and Sabine, two women who love each other while carrying histories they struggle to articulate. Around them, Eger traces Clara's shifting ideas of family and belonging.

Clara's childlike perspective gives the novel its strongest foundation, as she knows she is different before she fully understands why. After an innkeeper calls her "the child of an African," she silently reflects, "The darkness in me was the darkness in my mother's story. It was never to be mentioned when she was around." Racism enters her life through overheard remarks, silences, and other people's assumptions. Meanwhile, her interest in soccer becomes an important counterweight, giving her images of identity that are public, confident, and unashamed. As Clara grows older, the novel's concerns become less about discovering difference and more about deciding what to do with it.

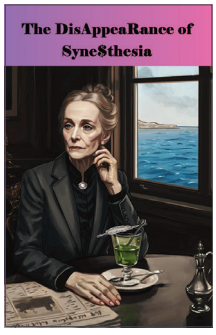
The novel's episodic structure is one of Eger's most effective choices. Moving between distinct periods of Clara's life allows childhood experiences to acquire new meaning as she ages—and makes the later chapters more reflective, with Clara repeatedly reconsidering earlier choices and relationships. Her admission, "Once I stayed anywhere too long, it became unbearable," captures the tension between her instinct for independence and her persistent search for somewhere to belong. Eger is most successful when large questions emerge from ordinary scenes: a child watering flowers, watching soccer, meeting cows, or navigating a difficult family conversation. The result is an intimate portrait of a woman whose identity is shaped as much by relationships and remembered places as by ancestry.

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

MYSTERY/THRILLER

The Disappearance of Synesthesia

Steven Lesk | IngramSpark
210p, e-book, $14.99, ISBN 979-8-996-76552-2



When Sheriff Buck Cormorant thinks the call to investigate an elderly woman's disappearance will be a simple case, he couldn't be farther from the truth. The missing woman is not just anyone; she's Synesthesia, the 90-year-old mother of Artemis Kankoor—one of the wealthiest men in the world—and she's been kidnapped. Racing against the clock to recover her alive, Cormorant must work alongside the FBI, at the command of the President herself, and the private investigators Artemis hires to track down his missing mother. The odds of a small-town sheriff being able to deliver on such a high-profile case are a million to one, but Cormorant is no ordinary lawman.

Lesk's tongue-in-cheek humor results in a narrative that's as satirical as it is suspenseful. Cormorant routinely mispronounces Artemis and Synesthesia's names, deals with stress by using recreational drugs, doesn't want to partner with the "Federal Bureau of Idiots," and embraces frank, ribald language ("he liked danger; it sat well in his lap, like a blowjob from a fat Gypsy" he muses in one scene). An early reveal to readers hints that Synesthesia's kidnapping is no ordinary grab-and-go, and the hunt that follows is a maelstrom of colorful characters, careful procedural techniques, and a billionaire son who isn't sure what's worse: losing his money or losing his mommy.

Kidnapping mystery buoyed by outrageous humor and unlikely hero.

Great for fans of Elle Cosimano's *Finlay Donovan Is Killing It*, J.M. Hall's *A Spoonful of Murder.*

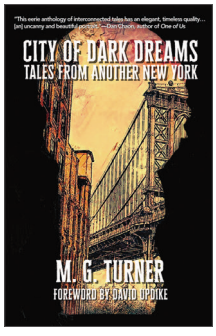
The novel suffers from weak transitions and a tendency to lapse into caricature at times, including Cormorant's description of the transgendered Gregory, who has been diagnosed with schizophrenia, as a "psycho [with] no human involvement with his crazy distorted wishes. All he cared about was having his penis cut off" and his dubbing Detective Nakamoto—whom he catches in a compromising position—a "pervert who likes exotic sex workers." Still, Lesk saves some surprising reveals for the last minute, giving this lighthearted mystery a satisfying—if unconventional—denouement.

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

SF/FANTASY/HORROR

City of Dark Dreams: Tales from Another New York

M.G. Turner | DarkWinter Press
250p, trade paper, $18.99, ISBN 978-1-99844142-6



"The mystery is far more beautiful than any neatly presented fact that can be easily confirmed or denied," declares the narrator of the first tale in this marvelously unsettling collection of supernatural tales. That love of the mystery itself powers Turner's interconnected stories set in an uncanny New York City's Upper West Side. Turner's people find themselves drawn into strange and unexplainable encounters, haunted by dreams and the dead, consumed by grief, loneliness, ambition, and the desire to understand what lies beyond the limits of human knowledge. The author's nom de plume brings to mind M.R. James, that turn-of-the-20th-century master of the ghost story, and the storytelling here echoes both James's work and the literary traditions from which it emerged. One tale, "The Witching Hour," opens as if it has been crafted to read aloud around the hearth: "Believe me when I say the following passages are not for the faint of heart, but rather for those whose nerves can handle an elaborate examination of psychically damaging phenomena."

Unsettling stories of an uncanny New York and its haunted inhabitants.

Great for fans of Robert Aickman, Ramsey Campbell.

Despite some brilliantly realized old-school prose stylings, Turner's stories move briskly and prove too spiky, surprising, and ambiguous—and even contemporary in their concerns—to be treated as plummy throwbacks. Here, all-too-relatable characters create the conditions for their hauntings through their deepest desires, and death looms over every entry. "The Botanist" follows a mother seeking contact with her dead daughter through a Spirit Flower, "The Second Wife" finds a scientist possibly recreating his dead wife, and "Stage Fright" concerns an actor who sees his own dead father while playing Hamlet.

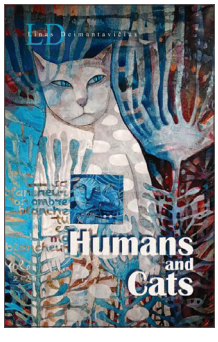
Turner also uses uncertainty to deepen that sense of mystery. We never really find out whether the Minotaur actually exists, the stone eagle truly moves, or the lost manuscript possesses a will of its own; unlike much 21st century genre-fiction, that welcome ambiguity denies readers the false comfort of the unknown being made explicable. Turner's cast proves deeply, revealingly human as they yearn to understand, control, and escape what ultimately lies beyond our control—and perhaps it is the mystery itself that gives life meaning.

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

SF/FANTASY/HORROR

Humans and Cats

Linas Deimantavičius | Vitae Litera
238p, trade paper, $16.75, ISBN 978-6-094-54976-2



Cats and the supernatural dominate nine lives of dark and wispy short urban fantasy tales from Lithuanian writer Deimantavičius (author of *I See You*). In the subtle, standout opening story, "Mona Lisa Smile," a man wakes up shrunken among gigantic furniture, with everyone else gone except his mean-spirited neighbor. Also diminutive, that neighbor claims she's a witch who cast a spell to get rid of him, but it backfired. The clever tale builds to a wicked ending signified by the "Mona Lisa smile" of the man's protective cat. Throughout, devious cats, vengeful cats, and loyal cats are resilient catalysts for Deimantavičius's parables about human flaws, laziness, and indecision. Fresh and surprising, the stories unfold with surreal turns and an abiding sense of poetic justice.

The stories toy with the mysteries of feline unknowability. In the unnerving "MUTABOR" (which is Latin for "I will change"), some magic powder from a dwarf wizard changes Alfred into a stork. He gets help from a cat, who was also previously human, in his efforts to remember a password to break the spell. He also learns a tantalizing secret about animal life, spilled by that cat: "We talk with our minds. Haven't you noticed?" The eerie "Cat Island" finds Roland's wife, Greta, vanishing without a trace during a vacation. A 10-year-old shaman declares that Greta is on the cursed Cat Island—no one who goes there comes back. Roland dares to see for himself, and time (and some startling, vividly described transformations) changes him forever. In "Lurking Behind the Curtains," a stray cat spurs a cowardly man to confront himself, literally, and take steps to improve his life.

Nine supernatural parables with cats charm with hope and redemption.

Great for fans of Ellen Datlow's *Tails of Wonder and Imagination*, Mark Bryant's *Cats.*

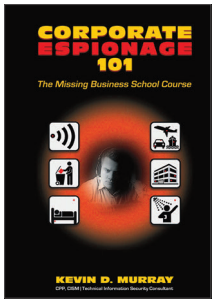
Themes of identity, transformation, ambition, and making positive life choices twist through stories that are by turns suspenseful, puzzling, and curious, like one centered on a trip to Stockholm (where there seem to be no cats!) that might not actually have occurred. Vibrant and whimsical paintings by Jolita Cesonyte and a suggested playlist of songs to accompany the stories round out the collection.

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

BUSINESS & PERSONAL FINANCE

Corporate Espionage 101: The Missing Business School Course

Kevin D. Murray | SpyArt Press, LLC
588p, hardcover, $295, ISBN 979-8-99495-160-6



Thorough, highly practical guide to protecting business secrets from snoops.

Great for fans of Eamon Javers's *Broker, Trader, Lawyer, Spy,* Richard Power's *Secrets Stolen, Fortunes Lost.*

Drawing on a half-century of security consulting, Murray presents an eye-opening, laudably practical guide to the ways businesses and individuals lose sensitive information to corporate espionage that often goes undetected–and what they can do to protect it. Murray makes a persuasive case for the prevalence and methodology of information theft, noting that "old spy techniques don't go away." Despite new technologies, many leaks come from long-established methods, among them trash trawling, "phone leeches," electronic eavesdropping, and the fact that "almost any building can be entered at any time simply by posing as the air-conditioning or heating guy."

That captures the straight-talk, real-world spirit of this expansive but user-friendly reference. (The density of topics and occasional repetition encourage readers to treat it as a searchable resource.) After establishing the alarming (and surprisingly fun-to-read) stakes, Murray covers the wide-ranging specifics in clear detail. He offers concrete advice for physical security, recording and spy-camera detection, home-office security basics, network threats, and handling surveillance, even during high-risk travel to "closed-security countries."

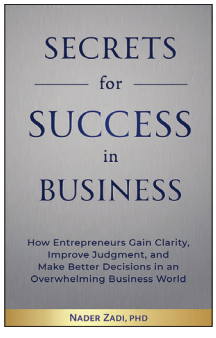
Perhaps most surprising is the revelation of just how ordinary some security risks can be. Murray shows how everyday objects–wireless microphones, printers, USB cables, chargers, desk phones–can create vulnerabilities in ways most people don't ever think about. Murray pairs actionable advice about how to counter threats with briskly told stories from his work that show how ordinary settings and everyday habits create security problems, wasting few words and keeping the information flowing with checklists, "Spybuster Tips," on-point advice, and perennial best practices like "If you would not say it in a courtroom, don't say it." Exam questions reinforce the lessons, give the feeling of a course, and prove legitimately helpful–can you identify the bugged USB cable?

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

BUSINESS & PERSONAL FINANCE

Secrets for Success in Business: How Entrepreneurs Gain Clarity, Improve Judgement, and Make Better Decisions in an Overwhelming Business World

Nader Zadi | Zeneth Phelosophy, Inc.
218p, hardcover, $25.99, ISBN 978-1972951002



Clear-eyed guide to making better business decisions under pressure.

Great for fans of Shane Parrish's *Clear Thinking*, Greg McKeown's *Essentialism.*

Zadi, founder of bespoke eyewear company RareFrames, examines a less visible challenge of running a business in this informative debut: preserving sound judgment amid constant demands and competing priorities. Drawing on decades of entrepreneurship and his doctoral studies in transpersonal psychology, Zadi considers the cumulative toll of information overload and responsibility on even seasoned leaders. Beginning with decision fatigue and the "invisible labor" of leadership, he offers practical ways to separate consequential choices from distractions and shows how organizational systems, cognitive bias, and personal definitions of success shape the choices entrepreneurs make. From there, Zadi shifts to the practices that can sharpen decision making and produce clarity, even in the most challenging situations.

Zadi's systems approach addresses the incentives, patterns, and feedback loops behind recurring problems and encourages small experiments before committing substantial resources. With pointed questions, he prompts leaders to evaluate choices: can this course be reversed? What does saying yes require giving up? Zadi makes a persuasive case that success can become its own liability, breeding overconfidence and making favorable outcomes seem like confirmation of good judgment. To safeguard that complacency, he recommends premortems, decision journals, and reviewing dissenting views and contrary evidence.

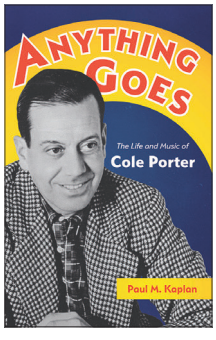
Seasoned business readers will recognize many of Zadi's core concepts, from decision hygiene and the Eisenhower Matrix to confirmation bias and sunk costs. Though the sheer number of studies, frameworks, and recurring lessons sometimes works against his call for greater clarity, Zadi's firsthand experience brings practical authority to his account of the pressures that can cloud an entrepreneur's cognitive reasoning. Leaders facing high-stakes business challenges will find this a thoughtful case for protecting the quality of their thinking before making the next consequential move.

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

ARTS & MUSIC

Anything Goes: The Life and Music of Cole Porter

Paul M. Kaplan
240p, trade paper, $24.99, ISBN 978-1-429-03044-1



Illuminating biography of the American Songbook's exemplar of sophistication.

Great for fans of Bob Stanley's *Let's Do It,* Todd S. Purdum's *Something Wonderful.*

Social historian Kaplan celebrates and demystifies the life and art of the man behind many of the most daring, enduring, and sophisticated entries in the American Songbook. Balancing Porter's celebrated career with the less polished realities of his private life, Kaplan's brisk account follows Porter from his 1891 birth in Peru, Indiana, through Yale, Harvard, Jazz Age Paris, Broadway, and Hollywood. Kaplan captures Porter's willful transformation from "small-town Midwestern boy to a debonair, witty East Coaster." Soon, Porter abandons law for music, marries Linda Lee, and breaks through with the 1928 musical *Paris* before that cheekily libertine anthem "Anything Goes" helps secure his place among Broadway's leading songwriters. A 1937 riding accident crushed both legs, beginning decades of operations and severe pain, yet Porter, having learned the "importance of a relentless drive" from his wealthy entrepreneur grandfather, returned to composing music and later reversed a professional slump with that perennial pleasure *Kiss Me, Kate.*

Kaplan finds the richer story in the distance between Porter's polished persona and his private life. His unconventional marriage to Linda exists alongside passionate relationships with men, while the confident cosmopolitanism he projected conceals insecurity, romantic disappointment, and persistent physical suffering. With sensitivity, Kaplan traces how desire and secrecy shaped Porter's songwriting, with double meanings allowing him to slip risqué ideas past contemporary censors. Close attention to rhyme, musical phrasing, cultural references, and innuendo further shows how Porter fused wit and eroticism into an inimitable, wholly American style.

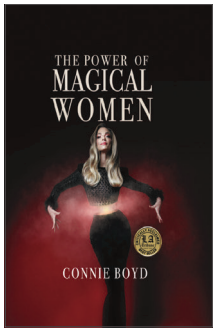
Kaplan prioritizes a focused, accessible account over exhaustive detail, making Porter's wide-ranging life inviting to readers digging into it for the first time. Kaplan draws on newly available archives, letters, and interviews, while photographs, playbills, sheet music, and film stills provide visual context. Kaplan ultimately offers a fresh, nuanced portrait of Cole Porter as both a cultural figure and a man whose carefully cultivated elegance often obscured the complexities beneath it. This biography will reward enthusiasts of American song.

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

ARTS & MUSIC

The Power of Magical Women

Connie Boyd | Vanish Press
360p, hardcover, $69.95, ISBN 979-8-999-93596-0



Individual profiles create unified portrait of outstanding women in magic.

Great for fans of Kim Todd's *Sensational*, Romany's *Spun Into Gold.*

Featuring more than 70 female illusionists, escape artists, stage performers, and close-up magicians, Boyd's revelatory compilation of profiles from *VANISH International Magic Magazine* serves as a who's who of women in magic. Knowing firsthand the hurdles these women face, she reveals their grit and ingenuity while detailing their backgrounds and ambitions. Her own story, "Connie Boyd: Creating Content & Platforms for Women in Magic," is a winding path from ballet and acrobatics to performing illusions and producing shows to finally creating the YouTube channel Magical Women, which documents each artist's signature routines and pathway to the industry.

Boyd understands that first moment of falling in love with magic and how women who pursue a career in the magical arts must be resilient and innovative. In creating this first-of-its-kind resource, she explores a deep talent pool, starting with the mavericks who not only broke down barriers, but also demonstrated what's achievable. Looking beyond traditional performance, Boyd devotes a two-part section to "Magic with Purpose: Transforming Lives for the Better," which highlights women who use magic to address life-altering (and life-threatening) experiences and advocate for positive change, as well as those whose work includes global social work, outreach, and education.

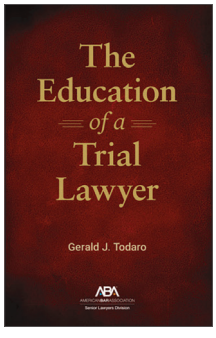
There are also the storytellers, "the alchemists of inspiration [whose] artistry lies not only in their magical acts, but also in the mesmerizing power of their captivating words, imagery, and performances." Boyd emphasizes the value of mentorship and does her part by noting numerous up-and-coming talents. "Dorothy Dietrich: Escaping Her Past in Wondrous Ways" exemplifies Boyd's ability to blend magic history with personal growth, as the discovery of Houdini led an impoverished, bullied girl into a world she could scarcely have imagined. Boyd is the thread that weaves these singular narratives into *The Power of Magical Women,* capturing their collective passion for the demanding discipline of illusion.

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

OTHER NONFICTION

The Education of a Trial Lawyer

Gerald J. Todaro
222p, trade paper, $45.95, ISBN 978-1-639-05739-9



Engaging trial-lawyer memoir revealing truths not taught in law school.

Great for fans of Louis Nizer's *My Life in Court*, Andrew Boe's *The Truth Hurts.*

Illuminating "the black holes awaiting participants, judges, and jurors searching for the truth," Todaro's eye-opening memoir draws on his more than 50 years in the courtroom to present the hard-won, not-taught-in-law-school lessons (Lesson 12: "Know your judge: stand your ground, but know when to back off and move on.") that have shaped his career as both a plaintiffs' and defense attorney, including in "major" civil trials. Writing with the arresting straight talk of a mentor, Todaro focuses on the practicalities of the work–"I changed the pitch and tone of my voice to trumpet the most compelling facts favoring my client, and deemphasize the negatives in a lower octave"–as well as the pressures lawyers face in the courtroom and the forces that can shape a trial's outcome, including juror bias, witnesses, rules of evidence, expert testimony, difficult judges, and more.

Todaro's case-based approach gives the book an interesting and engaging quality. His crisply told stories move from law school to decades of courtroom experience, with each chapter built around a lesson (like the truth that juries tend to work from the gut) rather than the standard flow of a memoir. The strongest chapters are those in which Todaro draws lessons from cases that did not unfold as he expected, showing how demeanor, emotional intelligence, likability, and empathy can influence jurors.

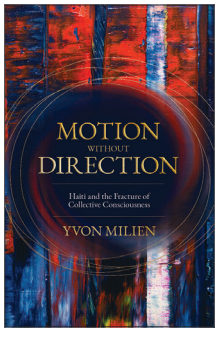
This inviting, demystifying book also works well for readers without a legal background. Todaro explains courtroom dynamics with conversational flair, while his focus on the assumptions people bring to difficult decisions gives the book relatability beyond law. Some of his observations go beyond the courtroom to broader questions about why people believe what they believe, how experience shapes judgment, and why facts alone do not always change people's minds. Todaro offers an engaging look at law through the lens of human behavior, making this worthwhile not only for lawyers and legal professionals but also for general readers interested in how people think, judge, and persuade one another.

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

POLITICAL & SOCIAL SCIENCES

Motion without Direction: Haiti and the Fracture of Collective Consciousness

Yvon Milien | yMilien
226p, e-book, $8.99, ISBN 979-8-9860364-7-2



Philosophical study of Haiti and civic purpose, undercut by repetitive prose.

Great for fans of Michel-Rolph Trouillot's *Haiti: State Against Nation*, Laurent Dubois's *Haiti: The Aftershocks of History.*

Haitian American writer and educator Milien (author of *Politics, Gangs, and Vodou*) approaches Haiti's political crisis through moral philosophy in this ambitious study of how the "moral dignity and historical heroism of the popular classes coexist with a persistent inability to convert agency into sustained institutional leverage." Rejecting the idea that Haiti is "stagnant," Milien argues that its social forces remain active but lack the shared "civic rhythm" needed to turn competing efforts into collective progress. Across eight parts, he traces this disconnect through politics, gangs, the diaspora, religion, media, and national memory.

Milien's analysis gains force from his refusal to reduce Haiti's crisis to simple villains; instead, he examines how history, self-interest, and circumstance shape choices that ultimately work against the common good. His discussion of Haiti's elite, for example, examines private security, foreign passports, and overseas assets as survival strategies that protect individuals while further weakening the public institutions they no longer trust. Likewise, he shows how gangs create order through coercion where the state has failed, while financial support from Haitians abroad sustains families but can leave deeper institutional problems untouched. These distinctions give the work more depth than a conventional diagnosis of corruption or state failure.

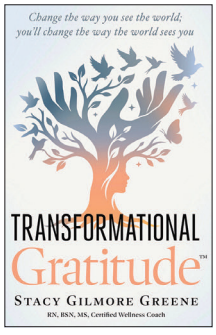
Undercutting the book's power is repetitive, formulaic prose that, like the work of chatbots, continually indulges in declarative inversions that strain toward precision by emphasizing what things are *not*. Page 30 alone offers the following examples: "Popular agency is shaped not only by courage but also by constraint"; "Decisions are made for today, not for the duration. This is not a moral failing; it is an adaptation to uncertainty"; "Haiti's popular classes carry historical memory not as abstraction but as lived inheritance"; "Mistrust, in this sense, is not paranoia. It is memory." Such phrasing recurs and distracts throughout. This fresh perspective on Haiti's challenges and possibilities deserves prose as powerful as its thesis and insights.

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

SELF-HELP

Transformational Gratitude: Change the Way You See the World; You'll Change the Way the World Sees You

Stacy Gilmore Greene | She's Changed Media, Inc.
58p, hardcover, $29.99, ISBN 979-8-9971846-6-7



Inviting, compact guide to changing one's mindset through gratitude.

Great for fans of M.J. Ryan's *Attitudes of Gratitude*, Brené Brown's *The Gifts of Imperfection.*

"My daily gratitude practices have changed the way I live my life," writes Greene, a wellness coach and retired Air Force officer, in this compact, no-nonsense debut that centers "the joy" and power of gratitude while presenting it as a discipline. Writing with warmth and brisk authority, Greene opens this compact guide with a story of confronting herself, the world, and her own life—and discovering the reciprocal power of making a change in perspective. "[G]ratitude has transformed the way I see the world, and I am beginning to see how it is changing the way the world sees me," Greene writes. To that end, *Transformational Gratitude* presents inviting, practical steps to learning to live differently through 12 gratitude keys. The first: "Admit Your Powerlessness over People, Places, and Things."

Greene's clear-eyed guidance wastes few words while exploring themes such as surrender, humility, forgiveness, and others, all embedded in faith and self-awareness and building to clear calls to action. Her own journey is revealed over the course of the book, tied to the keys, inviting readers to feel as if they are moving through the steps alongside her as she recognizes her own powerlessness, releases resentment after examining herself and her actions, and eventually learns to share gratitude. Greene's experiences exemplify lessons about recognizing harmful patterns, changing one's responses to life, and letting gratitude shape one's relationships, attention, prayer, and understanding of experiences.

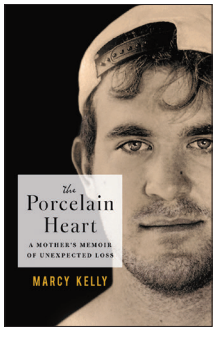
Unlike many guides to changing one's mindset, Greene presents her advice with what feels like hard-won humility. She is open about her mistakes, giving the book a confessional quality, and makes clear throughout that gratitude takes effort. Prayer is a key component of her practice, and she writes movingly of her "prayer life," though *Transformational Gratitude* does not proselytize. Greene demonstrates that gratitude does not necessarily change what happens in life, but that it can change how we experience and respond to it.

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

MEMOIR

The Porcelain Heart: A Mother's Memoir of Unexpected Loss

Marcy Kelly | She Writes Press
272p, trade paper, $18.99, ISBN 979-8-896-36186-2



Moving, tender memoir about losing an adult child.

Great for fans of Joan Didion's *Blue Nights*, Sally McQuillen's *Reaching for Beautiful.*

Kelly's deeply personal memoir offers a haunting portrait of how uncertainty and guilt can distort the experience of grief. When Kelly learns that her 45-year-old son, Michael, has died suddenly, her world tilts on its axis. To her knowledge, Michael wasn't ill and didn't use drugs. The cause of his death remains a mystery for months, suspending the family in a painful state of uncertainty. In that first grief-stricken year, Kelly observes that the experience of losing a child is as isolating as it is devastating. "If you lose a spouse, you are a widow or widower. No further explanation is necessary; one word and it's understood. But there is no word for those who have lost a child."

Desperate for answers, Kelly searches for clues in vivid dreams, memories of Michael's childhood, and his remaining possessions, including a sheaf of burned CDs with "labels written in Michael's scratchy handwriting." When she receives the coroner's final diagnosis of heart disease, it helps her accept the sudden loss—but it doesn't ease the guilt she carries. "Finally, I could stop tormenting myself about how long he had suffered... But there was still that question: If I had stopped by ... could I have saved him?" Readers will relate to Kelly's frustration and powerlessness as she grapples with Michael's fate.

Kelly's smooth, effortless prose will draw readers along, keeping the tone from becoming morose in the memoir's darker moments. She moves seamlessly between the flat, numb days after learning of Michael's death and warmer, more tender memories of her son as he grows from a sensitive boy to a kindhearted man plagued by depression. In one moving scene, Kelly writes to comedy legend Carol Burnett about watching reruns of her show in the midst of her grief. Burnett, whose daughter died at 38, writes back, noting that she and Kelly "belong to a club we wish didn't exist."

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



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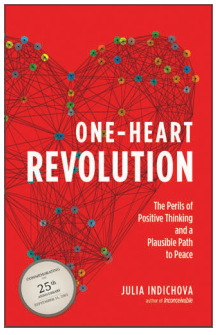
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MEMOIR

One-Heart Revolution: The Perils of Positive Thinking and a Plausible Path to Peace

Julia Indichova

229p, trade paper, $18, ISBN 978-1-956-47497-8



Deeply personal memories and guidance on healing and peacemaking.

Great for fans of Pema Chödrön; Brianna Wiest's *When You're Ready, This Is How You Heal.*

Searching for "something so much larger than our divisions," fertility advocate Indichova (author of *Inconceivable* and *The Fertile Female*) brings together memoir, poetry, and journal entries to explore grief, anger, healing, and, most urgently, the question of "What makes human beings turn against one another–and what helps us resist that impulse?" Indichova connects her search for peace to her family's experience of the Shoah and her father's experience of war and its trauma. Her account of taking up the work of healing and the cause of fertility is movingly captured. Indichova demonstrates by example the power of change-making while plumbing rich questions like how people can face painful emotions without allowing that pain to become another source of harm.

This book lands as an exploration of grief, healing, and human connection. Indichova's prose, verse, original practices, like the Fertile Heart OVUM Practice, and philosophical constructs, are direct, intimate, and rousing–everything here feels like hard-won wisdom rather than bromides. Two strong threads: the ideas that "consciousness is contagious" and that painful emotions should be faced rather than covered over with "the hollow trap" of positive thinking. Indichova lays out fresh, practical, and philosophical ways for readers to engage more consciously with grief, conflict, and their own responses to both.

The book's limitation is also part of its character. Indichova acknowledges that she has no academic credentials in conflict resolution but chooses to write from lived experience and a lifetime devoted to developing practices. Readers looking for evidence-based conflict studies may find some leaps here too much to make, but the encouraging power and warmth of Indichova's insights, tools, and storytelling will resonate with open-minded readers receptive to a thoughtful memoir, original in structure and moving in its particulars. Indichova offers a beautiful foundation for meeting painful emotions and determining what to do with them.

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

POETRY

EDITOR'S PICK

Heartscapes

Lee Woodman | Shanti Arts Publishing

104p, trade paper, $17.95, ISBN 978-1-971191-31-7



Incisive, memorable poetry of the trials and tribulations the heart endures.

Great for fans of Jane Kenyon, Donald Hall.

A celebration of "both ends of living," this smart, incisive collection finds Woodman making an ambitious study of matters of the heart, digging into the tragic, comic, wholesome, nostalgic, and more, with all the weight and depth the heart demands. In "To Be Another Mother," Woodman offers a complex yet relatable perspective on both loving a parent and living in their shadow: "How does one cherish yet shed the skin that wrapped too tight?" For Woodman, one answer is poetry: "I write in voices at variance, whose couplets and verses bleed."

Music is also tethered to the heart in Woodman's collection, which features spirited odes to various musicians, memories of songs from the poet's youth, and even songs of her own, like "A White Girl's Bop about LL Cool J": "A forty-year legend, he twerks at fifty-six / Sharpens his ax by reading lots of boox." In that line, Woodman juxtaposes carnal sensuality and intellectual ambition, a tension that she revisits throughout, reminding readers that the heart is, more than anything else, a mechanism of desire. An epigrammatic wit pulses in entries about love as a grown-up, including the irresistible "My Archetypes Speak Among the Cocktail Leftovers," in which various psychological selves (the Pleaser, the Inner Teacher, the Clown) offer advice in a soiree's aftermath. "Leave teeth marks in his forearm, shake your horny bosoms," the Critic advises.

In "Love After Sixty, According to Match," Woodman assembles a series of messages from older men digitally courting, demonstrating, hilariously, ways the heart succeeds and fails at communicating desire. In other moments, Woodman offers striking, intimate poems of desire fulfilled–"Finally, we lie together / staring / staring"–and desire lost: "Say it a lovesick way, a pantoum. / Say it in a sonnet, clever on line nine. / Or just say it–lob a free verse of chance. / I'm leaving." Woodman reveals a restless, poetic heart pumping with fierce life; fans of her muses, Dickinson and Donald Hall, will rejoice.

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

POETRY

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight

J. Simon Harris, translator | Nostra Vita Books

366p, trade paper, $13.99, ISBN 979-8-9854385-4-3



Fresh translation of Middle English romance, preserving clarity and mystery.

Great for fans of John Matthews's *Sir Gawain: Knight of the Goddess*; *The Adventures of Sir Gawain.*

Novelist, scientist, and translator (of Dante and Pablo Neruda, among others) Harris plunges into 14th century chivalry, romance, mystery, and beguilement with this fresh contemporary English rendering of the Gawain Poet's epic, one of the most popular Arthurian legends. The tale of bold Sir Gawain–quick to action, facing temptation, haunted for a year by what seems like a death sentence –also remains, in this clear and accessible rendering, one of the most ambiguous of those enduring tales. As Harris notes in what may be the least potential note ever to introduce a translation of a classic text, the poet "places this perfect knight into a situation where chivalry does him no good–where, in fact, his ethical code as a knight puts him in direct conflict with his moral code as a Christian."

Harris's translation emphasizes this complexity without belaboring it. His lines are concrete and earthy, playful in the alliteration that is a hallmark of English verse of the era. Readers might feel jolted by, say, this description of one object of temptation: "her body was short and thick / her butt was big and broad". But, as Harris prints the original Middle English version alongside his own, it takes just a moment to note the Gawain poet's praise of "hir buttokez bay and brode".

Comparing Harris's choices to the raw text is a pleasure, and in invitingly plain-spoken end notes and appendices he illuminates the process, the language, the poem's allegorical and spiritual dimensions, and much more. His introductory acknowledgement that he was unfamiliar with the poem before translating it, and that he found himself surprised by its depth and power, is welcome, though he does not make an assertive case for why, when so many translations by subject experts already exist, readers should turn to this one. Still, Harris offers a lucid, sometimes playful *Sir Gawain*, one that honors the original's clarity of action, changes of season, marvelous feasts, and amusingly thorough accounts of donning armor. Most importantly, he takes great care to keep the mysteries–of the Green Knight, of magical trinkets, of temptation and virtue–mysterious. The text feels resonant on every page.

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

PICTURE BOOKS

Grumpy and Green Parrot Find a New Home in Naples: A Grumpy the Iguana and Green Parrot Adventure, Book 13



Susan Marie Chapman | The Gourmet Dog, LLC
48p, hardcover, $11.29, ISBN 978-1736805688

Special friends make a hard change bearable in this heartwarming story.

Great for fans of Marta Altés's *My New Home*, Audrey Penn's *A Kiss Goodbye*.

Returning fans of Chapman's long-running Grumpy the Iguana series should expect this latest entry to tug at their heartstrings. After Grumpy's accidental trip to Naples, Florida, in *Grumpy Lost and Found in Naples*, the lovable iguana is stuck without a tree—and missing his friends from Flamingo Park. Thankfully, he still has the Green Parrot at his side, who vows to cheer Grumpy up by finding them the perfect home. To do that, Green Parrot needs the help of a local—Mr. Pelican, who "has been matching animals with their forever homes for many years."

Though some fans may feel sad at the thought of Grumpy and the Green Parrot putting down roots so far away from their special pals, much like when real-life friends and loved ones move away, Chapman portrays this unexpected change with tender care. She includes interesting history of the area, starting with the Naples Pier, where Grumpy and Mr. Pelican plan to meet up: it was constructed in 1889, and kids will be fascinated by how long it takes to walk it—especially for a hot, tired iguana. By the time Grumpy huffs and puffs his way to Mr. Pelican and the Green Parrot, he's exhausted, but the end of the pier is a picture of perfection: cool breezes, turquoise waters, and soothing waves. That calming space is the ideal send-off for two friends trying to settle into an unknown place.

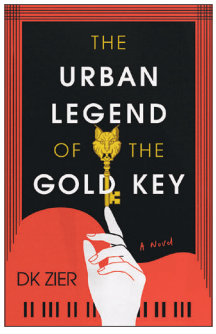
To help Grumpy—and readers—adjust to this immense change, Chapman introduces fun friends (Mr. Pelican's grandson is a hoot, particularly in his outrage at not being able to join the Pelican Squad just yet), and Natalia Loseva aces the charm and beauty of Grumpy's new hangout with dazzling tropical waters and warm, sandy welcomes. They may be far from anywhere that feels familiar, but these two still know what it takes to make a home: a comfortable tree, a great view, and the love of a lifelong friend.

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

YOUNG ADULT

EDITOR'S PICK

The Urban Legend of the Gold Key: A Novel



D.K. Zier | She Writes Press
256p, trade paper, $19.99, ISBN 979-8-896-36400-9

Sensitive paranormal YA coming-of-age story of music, mystery, and connection.

Great for fans of Jessica S. Olson's *Sing Me Forgotten*, Victoria Schwab's *This Savage Song*.

A teenage passion for music breaks boundaries in this touching and mysterious YA coming-of-age story tinged with the paranormal. It's 1985 when Cate Smith Cruz moves to Seaway, California, to begin junior year at Merrick High with her summer friends and BayHips bandmates Emma, Madi, and Thomas. When a shipment of family heirlooms arrives, Cate discovers her uncle left her a Steinway piano that belonged to her long-dead Aunt Lavinia, and Cate—already sensitive to ghostly presences—is both drawn to and wary of the marvelous instrument. Soon, Cate is increasingly facing the unexplainable: her sensitivity to light increases to the point of hallucination, musical nightmares taunt her, animals are allured by her music, and, to her complete shock, she is haunted by Lavinia herself.

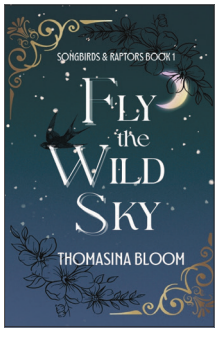
Like Thoreau, Cate finds refuge in music, and soon she has trained her relatable and inspiring ambitions on Merrick High's prestigious Lifetime Music Award. Ashley Sloan, the most popular girl in school, is also gunning for it, and when Cate is anonymously added to the performance roster and manages to dazzle, tensions boil. Despite some supernatural suspense, Zier keeps the storytelling rooted in the everyday drama of growing up, even as Cate—torn between popularity, her band, her family, and her love for music—finds herself entangled in a Merrick High mystery that goes back decades.

Zier explores classic coming-of-age themes like bullying, parental loss, and sexuality with empathy and a heartening faith in the power of music and connection. As Cate declares at one swoon-worthy moment, "Happiness can exist despite our demons." Cate copes with her lack of stability through music, and when that safety net is challenged, she begins to feel more lost than ever. The book stands alone, though a sequel would be welcome. Young readers open to a touch of romance and some light, ghostly horror will discover a likable cast, a protagonist dedicated to nurturing her real-world talents, and much to cheer.

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

YOUNG ADULT

Fly the Wild Sky



Thomasina Bloom
433p, e-book, $4.99, ASIN B0FL2N876C

Promising series start built on self-discovery and steadfast friendships.

Great for fans of Shannon Messenger's *Let the Sky Fall*, Alexandra Bracken's *The Darkest Minds*.

In Bloom's YA fantasy series opener, Sparrow Harper does her best to blend into the crowd. The 16-year-old prefers birds to people, and the only interesting things in her life right now are the incredibly vivid dreams of flying she has every night. After confessing those dreams to her mother, she's sent to a special camp in Maine—one her mother promises will help Sparrow understand what's happening to her. But when a group called the Raptors try to kidnap her en route, Sparrow is forced to team up with Heron—a handsome boy headed to the same camp—to escape. When the two survive a jump from their airplane mid-flight, Sparrow begins to suspect that flying isn't just something she can do in her dreams.

Sparrow's journey from flight to fight is handled well; the friendships she makes at camp, her discovery of her abilities, and her introspection all coalesce into a character whom readers will easily root for. Refreshingly, her relationship with Heron avoids romance clichés—she's drawn to him but also resents his overprotectiveness at times—and the other Flyers she meets on her journey each have their own unique personalities: demanding but capable camp counselor Wren; Humm, with his quick instincts and all-in attitude; eager, endearing Whip; Petrel's playfulness and concern for others; the friendly Golden; and Teal, whose arrogance creates tension in the group—but challenges Sparrow to stop downplaying her abilities and truly embrace them, despite the risks.

There's an aura of secrecy surrounding the Flyers that can make the worldbuilding feel confusing, with revelations like coreforce and Cel count coming later in the game. Sparrow's efforts to find answers echo the sense that she—and readers—are on a need-to-know basis, but patience eventually pays off, and Sparrow's transformation from fledgling to fully-realized Flyer is striking. Most enticing is Bloom's cliffhanger ending that will leave fans eager for more.

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

How This Book Was Made

OUR WEEKLY ANNOTATED GUIDE



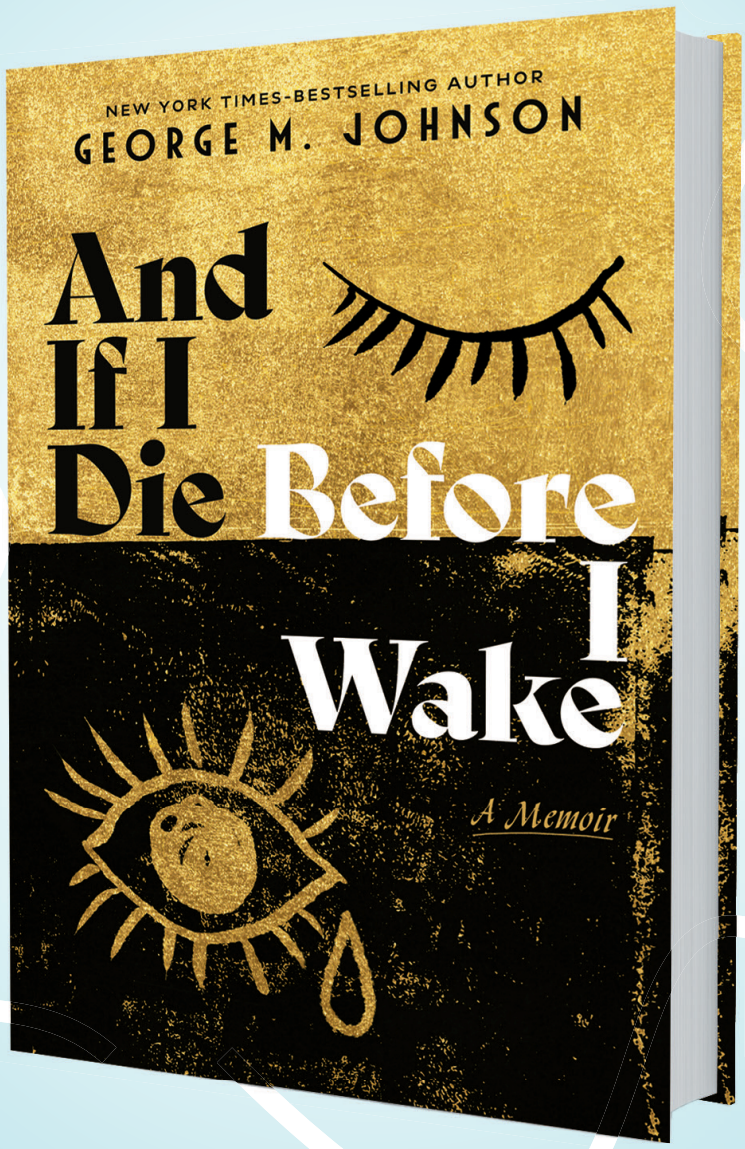
Author **George M. Johnson**
"I always knew I would write about what happened after my first memoir, because *All Boys Aren't Blue* became such a blueprint, road map, and healing space for so many readers. I wanted to give them another story that I wished I had growing up, one that they could connect to the first so that they could understand the many changes we go through in life, and how we must have grace for ourselves throughout that process."



Founder & CEO, The Caldwell Agency
Patrice Caldwell
"I'm a really big believer in the right timing and in not pushing clients—giving people the time they need. George and I talk regularly, and one day we basically came to the same conclusion: it's time. I remember George saying, 'The ancestors have been telling me it's time.' And I said, 'Let's do this.'"



VP and Senior Creative Director, Macmillan
Elizabeth H. Clark
"We wanted to create a cover that reflected the gravitas of this being George's first book for adults—something that we could see sitting on shelves alongside books by authors like Kiese Laymon, Jesmyn Ward, and Michelle Zauner. It was a fun and stimulating challenge to create a cover that is powerful and thought-provoking while still conveying the theme of coming of age, but I couldn't be happier with where we landed."



And If I Die Before I Wake
George M. Johnson. FSG, Nov.
ISBN 978-0-374-39526-1



Associate Editor, FSG
Asia Harden
"Working with George is a treat because they always keep me on my toes. They have so many wonderful ideas that cross over into different age categories and genres and formats. While I adore the category, *And If I Die Before I Wake* is the first adult title I've ever edited. And that's kind of just another day at the office with George. It's always exciting to see what they'll come up with next."

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New agents. New mission. New beginning.

979-8-89488-410-3 | HC
March 2027

Mind MGMT: New & Improved Vol. 1

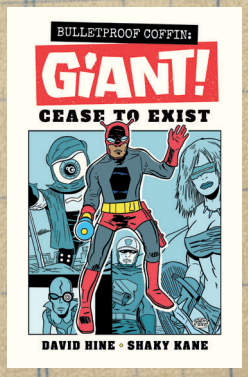
New York Times bestselling cartoonist Matt Kindt's Eisner Award-nominated psychic espionage graphic novel series returns with an all-new, entirely self-contained entry point!



Estuary: A Ghost Story

979-8-89488-393-9 | SC
January 2027

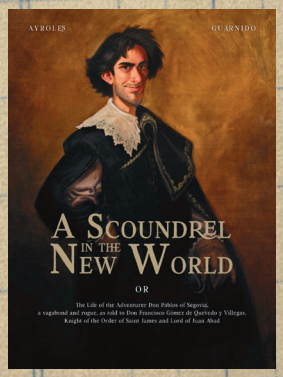
Vertigo meets *Sister Death* as a different kind of devil rises with the tide from horror virtuosos Tim Daniel, David "DB" Andry, and Maan House!



Bulletproof Coffin: Giant! Cease to Exist

979-8-89488-395-3 | SC
January 2027

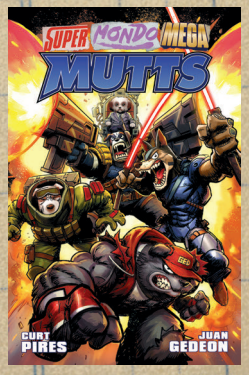
Return to the Golden Age in a new pseudo-psychedelic adventure from visionary creators David Hine and Shaky Kane!



A Scoundrel in the New World

979-8-89488-448-6 | HC
March 2027

A masterwork of European comics arrives from world-renowned *Blacksad* artist Juanjo Guarnido and writer Alain Ayroles.



Super Mondo Mega Mutts

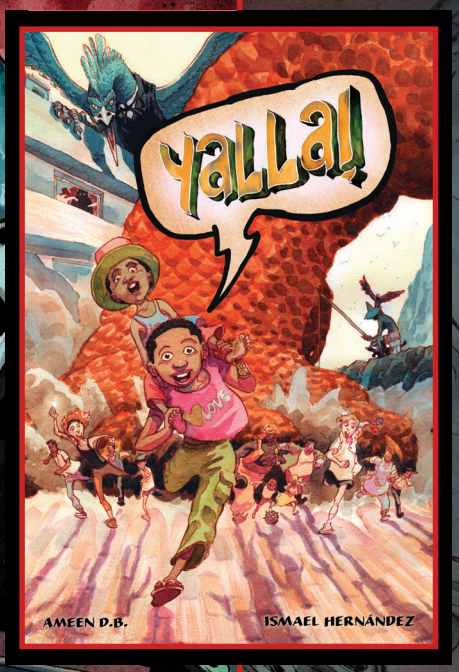
979-8-89488-422-6 | HC
April 2027

MUTT UP OR SHUT UP as *TMNT* meets *The Boys* from superstar writer Curt Pires and powerhouse artist Juan Gedeon!

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Yalla!

979-8-89488-440-0 | SC

June 2027

Ahlan wa sahlan! From debut writer Ameen D.B. and illustrator Ismael Hernández comes *Yalla!*, a middle-grade Arabic language graphic novel for all readers, full of adventure, magic, and heartfelt stories of compassion and overcoming adversity.









The Haven

979-8-89488-430-1 | SC

January 2027

Written by Jayel Seymour
Illustrated by Lauren Mugford

Closeted queer twelve-year-old J is cursed to relive sixth grade over and over. Could a portal to a fantastical land called the Haven be the key to facing his fears and breaking out of the time loop?



GameLad

979-8-89488-420-2 | SC

April 2027

by Norm Grock

Get ready to level up! When 12-year-old Nessa cracks her dad's retro gaming console, power-ups, gold coins, and 8-bit pixel critters start popping up all over her new town, and defeating them won't be as easy IRL.

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