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JANUARY 22, 2024

MAD CAVE®

10

YEAR

ANNIVERSARY
CELEBRATION



MAD CAVE STUDIOS:

A Decade of Creativity, Comics, and Community



GENESIS OF A DREAM:

Mad Cave Studios' tale begins with Mark London, a dreamer captivated by the storytelling wonders of the 80s. "Ever since I can remember, I have wanted to write stories," London shares. However, London went down a different path initially, per his father's wishes. The turning point for London came in a heartfelt conversation with his wife in 2014, reigniting that storytelling spark.

FROM DREAM TO REALITY:

Transitioning from a personal passion to a business is no cakewalk. "I wanted to be responsible for more than just bringing my work to life; I wanted to help others do the same." London shares. "I needed to start my own publishing company. One that brought passionate, like-minded people together to satisfy an authentic audience with a fresh approach to the industry." The founding members of Mad Cave like Giovanna Tobar Orozco, Miguel Zapata, and Cecilia Medina supported the company's growth, as new, pivotal members like Mark Irwin, Allison Pond, Kurt Nelson, and Mike Marts later joined in the madness.

MILESTONES ILLUMINATING THE PATH:

Reflecting on the last decade, London sheds light on pivotal moments. "Battlecats is where it all started; however, partnering with Diamond Comics early on solidified Mad Cave's evolution from a passion project to a true publisher." Following this partnership, Mad Cave's growth continued via their Maverick imprint, Simon & Schuster distribution, acquisition of Papercutz, and the introduction of licensed and creator-owned projects.

CULTURAL IMPACT:

Mad Cave's commitment to working with international creators and diverse voices stems from London's passion to create authentic stories. Mad Cave's dedication to storytelling reflects the enduring flame that sparked its inception, driving a continuous pursuit of narratives that resonate globally.

These roots drive Mad Cave to be a platform for all creators. The commitment to providing opportunities for emerging talent mirrors the founder's desire to bring passionate individuals together. In doing so, Mad Cave has not only sustained its passion, but has also fostered and encouraged creativity. The pillars of Mad Cave Studios—authenticity, inclusivity, impactful storytelling, and support—showcase how the company's origins continue to shape its identity.

ENVISIONING THE FUTURE:

Mad Cave anticipates an exciting future after a decade of growth with steps forward that will redefine Mad Cave, Maverick, and Papercutz. London reveals: "Collaborating with renowned creators, we're unveiling legacy licenses such as Dick Tracy, Gatchaman, Flash Gordon, and more. Our digital partnerships with IPG, Globalcomix, and Omnibus ensure widespread availability. Mad Cave's future involves exceeding reader expectations and expanding into unexpected markets."

2014

Mad Cave Studios Founded

2015

First Release *Battlecats*

2016

First Convention Wizard World Chicago

2017

Established Diamond Comics Distribution

2018

Launched Annual Talent Search

2021

Established Diamond Books Distribution

Launched Young Adult Imprint, Maverick

Established Representation by Echo Lake Entertainment

2022

Established Lunar Distribution

Launched Creator-Owned Projects

Established Simon & Schuster Distribution

Established IPG Digital Distribution

Acquired Middle Grade Publisher, Papercutz

2023

Launched Licensed Partnerships

2024

10 Year Anniversary



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JANUARY 22, 2024



Leela Corman

The Eisner-shortlisted cartoonist's *Victory Parade* is one of our most anticipated graphic novels of spring. Read more about it and our other picks in *PW's* comics and graphic novels preview, starting on p. 19.

LOU LUBIE
A FOX IN
MY BRAIN

I WAS RELIEVED MY PROBLEM HAD A NAME...

When Lou was sixteen, she first experienced the black thing. Some time passed, and it went away; however, when she entered college, the darkness returned. Prescription after prescription, psychiatrist after therapist, pouring out her feelings she tried to find anything, anyone that could relieve the isolating dampness dragging her away from the world.

Then, for no reason at all, with no warning sign, the darkness disappeared again.



Lou Lubie's **A FOX IN MY BRAIN** is a heartwarming and honest account of Lou's experience with **cyclothymia**, a bipolar disorder that appears to her in the form of a fox. In this graphic memoir, the reader experiences that depths of depression, the grips of seclusion, the isolation of minimizing symptoms, and the struggle of learning to love yourself.

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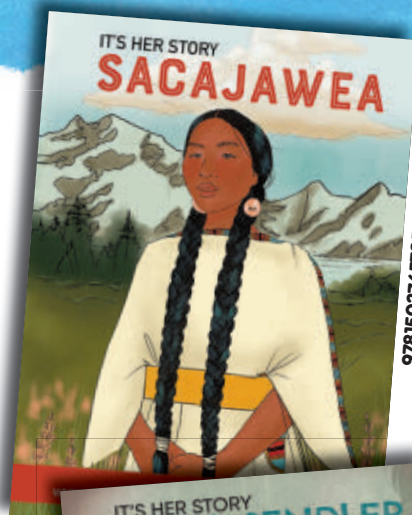
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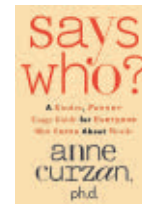
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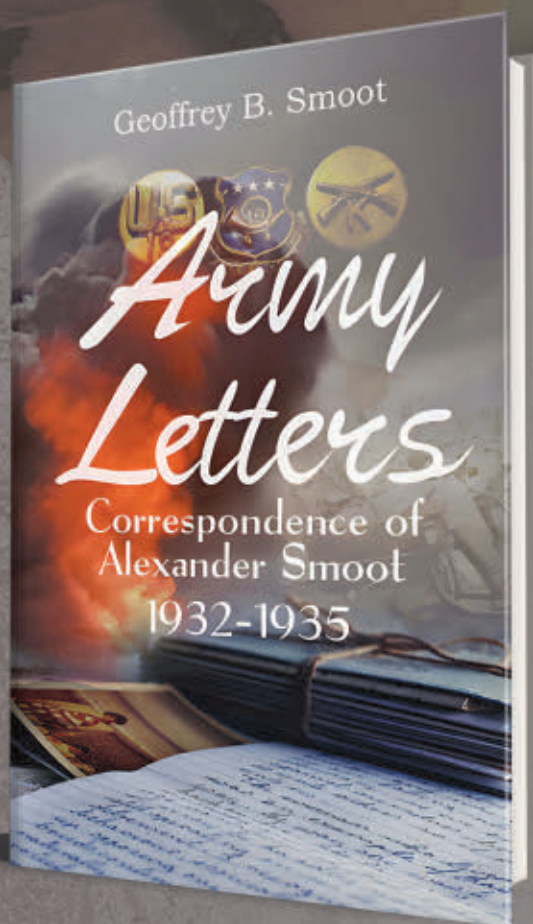


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Reviews Roundup
 Picture books consider family, memory, and the meaning of home

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Geoffrey B. Smoot



Army Letters

Correspondence of
Alexander Smoot
1932-1935



Geoffrey B. Smoot is a retired history teacher who served in the US Coast Guard as an aerographer's mate before attending college.

Desiring to preserve the legacy of Alexander Smoot, his father, Geoffrey discloses the letters that were his only link to his family for three years.

Army Letters: Correspondence of Alexander Smoot 1932-1935 unfolds a story of a young man who just graduated high school and was struggling to find work while trying to figure out if he could go to college. Learning that jobs were scarce, and any thoughts of college were just dreams, Alexander Smoot enlisted in the army to take the burden off his family while hoping to contribute to their sustenance from his army pay. His struggles are expressed, in his own words, through letters.

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The Week *in* Publishing

IN MAJOR WIN, APPEALS COURT HALTS TEXAS BOOK-RATING LAW

In a third significant victory for freedom to read advocates in three weeks, the Fifth Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals on January 17 upheld a lower court decision blocking key provisions of HB 900, Texas's controversial book rating law, agreeing that the law likely violates First Amendment protections against compelled speech.

Among the findings in the unequivocal 36-page decision, a three-judge panel of the Fifth Circuit—viewed by many as the most conservative court in the nation—rejected the state's argument that the mandatory book ratings at the heart of the new law would be merely “informational” and “uncontroversial,” like nutrition labels or warning labels on packs of cigarettes. “Balancing a myriad of factors that depend on community standards is anything but the mere disclosure of factual information,” the court held. “And it has already proven controversial.” Furthermore, the court agreed



Charley Rejsek, CEO of Book People, and Valerie Koehler, owner of Blue Willow Bookshop, plaintiffs in the suit to stop HB 900.

that compliance with the law would cause booksellers “irreparable” economic harm.

The appeals court decision comes after Judge Alan D. Albright preliminarily enjoined HB 900 in August, saying it would impose “a web of unconstitutionally vague requirements” on booksellers and publishers in the state. In a statement, the plaintiffs—which include two Texas booksellers (Austin's Book People and Houston's Blue Willow Bookshop), the ABA, the

AAP, the Authors Guild, and the Comic Book Legal Defense Fund—called the decision “historic.”

Texas state representative Jared Patterson, the author of the law, urged Texas officials to appeal the decision to the U.S. Supreme Court and vowed to explore new ways to impose “vendor accountability” in Texas schools in the next legislative session. —AA

A Kraf Revival

The Modern Library has announced the reissue of four novels by the late Elaine Kraf (1946–2013) as part of its Torchbearers series, which spotlights women writers throughout history. The first, the 1979 feminist cult classic *The Princess of 72nd Street*, will be published in August, with an introduction by Melissa Broder. The remaining books—*I Am Clarence* (1969), *The House of Madelaine* (1971), and *Find Him!* (1977)—will be published in 2025. —SMS



Judy Blume Honored for Bravery

The Eleanor Roosevelt Center has announced the recipients of its inaugural Banned Book Awards, honoring authors whose work has been challenged by local governments and school boards. The winners of the 2024 Eleanor Roosevelt Award for Bravery in Literature are Laurie Halse Anderson, Mike Curato, Alex Gino, George M. Johnson, Maia Kobabe, and Jelani Memory. In addition, Judy Blume will be honored with the first-ever Eleanor Roosevelt Lifetime Achievement Award for Bravery in Literature. —EK





A display at Tattered Cover's McGregor Square store in Denver, which was forced to close in October 2023.



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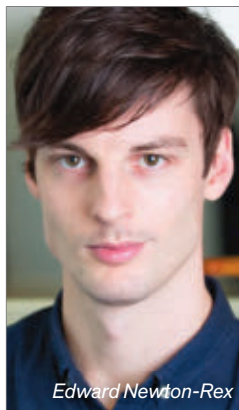
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Tattered Cover Bankruptcy Details

In a court filing, the ownership group that controls Denver's famed Tattered Cover bookstores revealed more details of its reorganization plan this week, including higher debts than initially reported. The debts include \$500,000 owed to former CEO Kwame Spearman, \$3.1 million in unsecured claims, and \$820,000 in secured claims, including \$300,000 owed to its board of directors. If the store's bankruptcy plan is approved, it will have access to up to \$1 million in debtor-in-possession financing, provided by a new company formed by current board members and investors including Leslie Rainbolt and Margie Gart. The bookseller filed for bankruptcy in October 2023. —EN

An AI Seal of Approval

The Association of American Publishers is among a number of organizations supporting Fairly Trained, a newly launched nonprofit that aims to "certify fair training data use" in generative AI. Fairly Trained's first certification is something it calls "Licensed Model certification," which, reps explained in a blog post, will function as sort of a seal of approval for generative AI models that don't train on copyrighted works without a license. The launch comes amid a host of lawsuits alleging that the use of copyrighted works for AI training without permission is infringement. The group will be helmed by technologist and composer Edward Newton-Rex, who most recently served as v-p of audio at Stability AI. —AA



Edward Newton-Rex

Call for Information

Feature: Manga Trends **Deadline:** February 26 **Issue:** April 29

We're looking for pitches on new imprints and initiatives, fast-growing publishers, trends, and new series and lead titles in manga publishing in North America. We'd like to hear from publishers, comics and book retailers, librarians, and others who work with manga and manga-related webtoons in English, especially about series that were originally published in Japan, China, or South Korea but inclusive of OEL titles. Please include sell-through numbers and contact information for sources including editors, authors, and artists for interview consideration. Books published in print or forthcoming between March 1 and December 1 are preferred. Email pitches to comics@publishersweekly.com. Submission deadline is February 26.

Big Five Dominate Bestsellers

In 2023, the major publishers maintained their grip on the bestseller lists, but indies scored some notable successes

The Big Five's grip on the hardcover bestseller lists continued in 2023, as 84.8% of the 2,080 positions on *PW*'s weekly hardcover lists were occupied by titles published by major houses. But for the second year in a row, the Big Five's hold on the lists loosened a bit, dropping roughly three percentage points from 2022, on the heels of a similar three-percentage-point drop that year compared to 2021.

Penguin Random House's failed acquisition of Simon & Schuster in late 2022 didn't prevent the nation's largest trade publisher from increasing its hold on the hardcover bestseller lists last year, with its share of list positions rising to 36.7%, from 34.6% in 2022. Simon & Schuster (14.2% in 2023 vs. 14.3% in 2022) and Macmillan (7.7% in 2023 vs. 7.9% in 2022) had minimal declines, while HarperCollins (16% in 2023 vs. 17.5% in 2022) and Hachette Book Group (10.2% in 2023 vs. 13.7% in 2022) posted more significant drops.

The two independent publishers that did the most to chip

away at the Big Five's control of the hardcover lists were Entangled Publishing and Grove Atlantic. Entangled's original edition of *Fourth Wing* by Rebecca Yarros was on the hardcover list for 33 weeks, and a special edition of the novel was on the list for six weeks, as was Yarros's *Iron Flame*, which was published late in the year. Grove's *The Covenant of Water* by Abraham Verghese also stayed on the list for 33 weeks.

Given changing market realities, *PW* is breaking out trade paperback bestseller lists from mass market lists for the first time this year in its annual analysis of bestsellers by corporation. That breakdown shows that the Big Five's control over the trade paperback lists (61.6%) isn't as great as its control over the hardcover lists, but with an important caveat: "entrepreneurial" publisher Sourcebooks was the top publisher of trade paperback bestsellers last year.

In all, Sourcebooks led with 29 titles on the trade paperback list, occupying 213 positions of the 1,040 positions and accounting for 20.5% of all trade paperback bestseller slots. Since the beginning of 2023, PRH has owned a 53% stake in the Naperville, Ill.-based publisher, but Sourcebooks remains "structurally and operationally" separate from PRH, sources explained, and Circana BookScan (which powers *PW*'s bestseller lists) continues to measure Sourcebooks' bestseller list share separately from that of PRH. Were they combined, PRH/Sourcebooks would have controlled 36.8% of all trade paperback bestseller slots last year—approximately the same as PRH's share of slots on the hardcover lists.

And in a further note on Sourcebooks' 2023 trade paperback performance, 23 of its bestsellers were published by its Bloom Books imprint, which accounted for 195 trade paperback slots. Ana Huang was Bloom's big star, placing seven titles on the *PW* trade paperback charts for a total of 123 weeks.

In 2023, HarperCollins and its Harlequin imprints had the largest share of mass market bestseller list positions. And while the Big Five had a hefty 83.6% share of mass market bestseller list positions, nearly all of the remaining positions on the *PW* mass market list were held by titles from Kensington, which racked up 40 mass market bestsellers occupying 160 positions. The indie publisher's 15.4% share of mass market list positions placed it third in mass market bestseller dominance, trailing only HarperCollins and PRH.

Of course, mass market sales have been on a steady decline in recent years. According to Circana BookScan, the format accounted for only 3.4% of unit sales in 2023.

—Jim Milliot

2023 BESTSELLERS BY CORPORATION

HARDCOVER

	Books	Positions	2023 Share*	2022 Share*
PRH	192	767	36.7%	34.6%
HarperCollins	107	334	16.0%	17.5%
Simon & Schuster	92	296	14.2%	14.3%
Hachette	54	213	10.2%	13.7%
Macmillan	71	160	7.7%	7.9%
			84.8%	88.0%

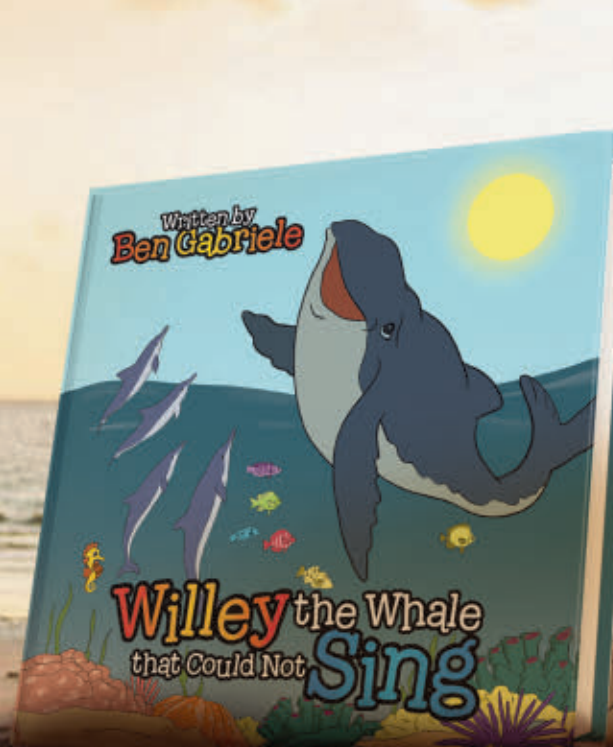
TRADE PAPER

	Books	Positions	2023 Share*	2022 Share*
Simon & Schuster	15	196	18.8%	-
PRH	41	170	16.3%	-
Hachette	30	152	14.6%	-
HarperCollins	18	87	8.4%	-
Macmillan	12	37	3.5%	-
			61.6%	

MASS MARKET

	Books	Positions	2023 Share*	2022 Share*
HarperCollins	212	390	37.5%	-
PRH	42	190	18.3%	-
Hachette	27	152	14.6%	-
Macmillan	17	71	6.8%	-
Simon & Schuster	16	67	6.4%	-
			83.6%	

*These figures represent each publisher's share of the 2,080 hardcover, 1,040 trade paperback, and 1,040 mass market paperback bestseller list positions during 2023 and 2022. There are 20 positions on each of *PW*'s four weekly adult bestseller lists: hardcover fiction, hardcover nonfiction, trade paperback, and mass market. Given changing market realities, *PW* is breaking out trade paperback bestseller lists from mass market lists for the first time this year in its annual analysis of bestsellers by corporation.



Willey the Whale that Could Not Sing

Paperback: 979-8-88622-424-5 | **\$10.99**
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A Tale of a Whale Named Snow

Paperback: 978-1-63871-862-8 | **\$14.99**
Hardback: 978-1-63871-863-5 | **\$24.99**
E-Book: 978-1-63871-864-2 | **\$2.99**



Ben Gabriele

Ben Gabriele has been exposed to marine life with the help of his travels and his daughter, who is a biologist. Such influences gave him the drive to produce the children's picture books *Willey the Whale that Could Not Sing* and *A Tale of a Whale Named Snow*. The illustrations in his books were written as authentic as possible, intending to amuse and educate his readers.

Turning real life into educational books for children, the inspiration for *A Tale of a Whale Named Snow* is the story of a whale known to the locals as Snow from a newspaper article. On the other hand, Ben's inspiration for *Willey the Whale that Could Not Sing* came from watching breaching whales and listening to various recordings of singing whales.

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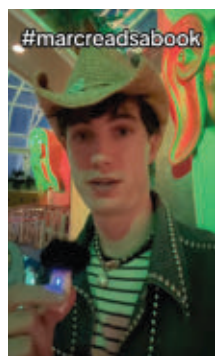


Cruising for New Readership

Why did Atria send a TikTok influencer to Antarctica?

Soon after Royal Caribbean's *Serenade of the Seas* set sail on December 10 for a nine-month "ultimate world cruise," TikTok users became obsessed with the voyage. One of those users was Marc Sebastian, a model and influencer with 1.6 million followers.

On December 20, Sebastian posted a video (which has since garnered more than 7.5 million views) about his desperation to secure passage on the *Serenade*. A week later, Sebastian got his wish, informing his followers that "a very unexpected and cool



brand" was springing for him to join an 18-night section of the cruise that included a visit to Antarctica. On January 5, from aboard the *Serenade*, Sebastian posted a video revealing his benefactor: Atria Books, an imprint of Simon & Schuster.

"Do you like to read? I don't," Sebastian said in the video. "But maybe I could." A hashtag appeared overhead: #marcreadsabook. The video then cuts to Sebastian sitting next to a stack of eight books—among them, Fredrik

Backman's *Anxious People*, Zakiya Dalila Harris's *The Other Black Girl*, and Lisa Jewell's *None of This Is True*. In the comments, followers could vote on which Sebastian would read as part of his "World Cruise Book Club." And on its own TikTok page, Atria also encouraged its 20,000-plus followers to vote.

The next day from his cabin, with an Atria "Hot People Read Books" knapsack visible behind him, Sebastian announced that Will Dean's 2020 thriller *The Last One* was the winner.

The sponsorship quickly became news in the book world, garnering some major media headlines and upsetting some users on BookTok, the app's bookish community. Why should Sebastian,

who by his own admission doesn't like to read, get to take a vacation on a publisher's dime? And why should Atria be courting his followers, many of whom are presumably not readers themselves, rather than book lovers who actually know what Atria is?

That's exactly the point, the publisher suggested in response. "We hope that seeing Marc, who is not normally a reader, pick up a book in real time will inspire others to start reading too," an Atria representative told *PW*.

Meanwhile, Sebastian responded to the criticism in a January 9 video. "Why should I have to stay in my own lane because I don't want to step on BookTok's toes?" he asked.

The comments poured in: "To be fair, I didn't know Atria Books existed before you"; "I literally looked into atria books because of you lol"; "I had also never heard of Atria Books before this and now I have and have respect for them so something must be working."

Whether or not TikTok users previously recognized the imprint's name, Atria has lately been a dominant presence on the bestseller lists thanks in large part to TikTok star Colleen Hoover, whose *It Ends with Us* and *It Starts with Us* were the top two books in the country last year, selling a combined 2.5 million print copies for Atria. But was springing for Sebastian's trip worth it?

It's too early to tell whether Atria's investment—reportedly around \$7,000—will pay off in terms of sales. So far, sales of the books featured on the cruise haven't shown much of a bump, at least not at the outlets that report to Circana BookScan. But the marketing campaign, and the press it generated, have brought the publisher significant—and quantifiable—visibility. According to data provided to *PW* by TikTok, the #atriabooks hashtag has received 98,000 global views since the cruise liner's departure and #thelastone has received 4.8 million views since the *Serenade* left port.

—Sophia Stewart

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LINK THOMPSON



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Honoring Our Creator is about choice, either choose positivity or go with negativity. It is a memoir about Link Thompson's perceptions of the Creator's means in creating all that is tangible and intangible and visible and invisible and how he gets things done.

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 **PAGETURNER**
PRESS & MEDIA

DEALS

By Andrew Albanese

DEAL OF THE WEEK

■ Vance Explores Open AI at Random House



Vance

In a preempt, Hilary Redmon at Random House has acquired Elon Musk biographer Ashlee Vance's new book about tech giant Open AI. The publisher said the book is based on "exclusive access to Open AI and its CEO Sam Altman" and will take readers "behind the scenes of the tumultuous company's quest to create artificial general intelligence—AI that surpasses human intelligence: one of the riskiest, most exhilarating, most consequential tech, business, and human-interest stories of our time." The deal was negotiated by David Patterson at the Stuart Krichevsky Literary Agency. A pub date has not been announced.

■ Zibby Nabs 'What If' Author's Debut Novel



Fernandez Miranda

Alisha Fernandez Miranda, author of the much-buzzed-about 2023 memoir *My What If Year*, has sold world English rights to her debut novel, *Unrestricted Giving*, to Kathleen Harris at Zibby Books. The publisher said the novel tells the story of "a Latina nonprofit executive juggling new motherhood and life in London who gets a dream job advising the rich and powerful on their philanthropy

only to discover that meaning well and doing good aren't always the same thing." Stephany Evans at Ayesha Pande Literary brokered the deal. The book is set for spring 2025.

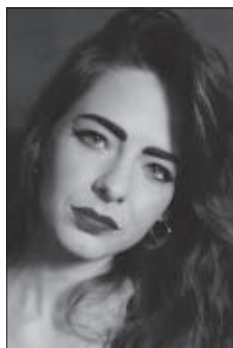
■ Island Powers Pierce's 'Agri-energy' Book



Pierce

Emily Turner at Island Press has acquired U.S. English rights to *Behind Agri-energy*, by regenerative farmer and writer Rebekah Pierce. Lisa Amstutz at Storm Literary Agency negotiated the deal. Island said the book explores how "integrating agriculture and renewable energy systems can help solve the energy crisis and keep farmers on the land." *Behind Agri-energy* is set to be published sometime in 2025.

■ Simon & Schuster Gets 'Hot Wax'



Rio

In a preempt, Simon & Schuster editorial director Tim O'Connell has acquired North American rights to two new novels by M.L. Rio, author of the bestselling *If We Were Villains*. S&S said the first book, *Hot Wax*, is about "a young girl who discovers the joys and dangers of life on tour with her father's band" and the "cross-country journey she takes decades later to flee the claustrophobic reality of her present, only to encounter the very kind of violence she thought she had buried in the past." No details were available on the as-yet-untitled second book. The deal was negotiated by Arielle Datz at Dunow, Carlson & Lerner. *Hot Wax* is tentatively set for spring 2025.

■ 'Fleishman' Author's Follow-Up Goes to RH



Brodesser-Akner

Taffy Brodesser-Akner, author of the bestselling *Fleishman Is in Trouble*, has sold North American rights to *Long Island Compromise* to Andy Ward at Random House. The deal was brokered by Sloan Harris at CAA. Random House said the novel is about "one American family in a cloistered town on Long Island and the dark moment that shatters their suburban paradise." *Long Island Compromise* is set to be published in July 2024.

■ Angry Robot Signs SF Horror Debut

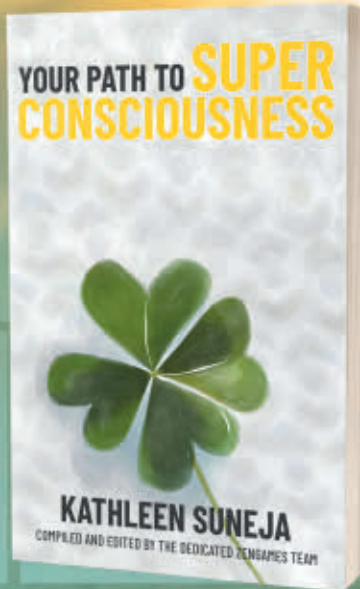


Nayak

In a two-book deal, Gemma Creffield at Angry Robot has acquired world rights to *Symbiote*, the debut sci-fi novel by Michael Nayak, a former DARPA researcher and space shuttle engineer. Lindsay Guzzardo of Martin Literary Management handled the deal. Angry Robot said the book is an "intense, atmospheric sci-fi horror story" about a newly emerged parasite that creates "a deadly evolving hive mind among scientists at the South Pole" and described it as "*Contagion* meets *The Walking Dead*." *Symbiote* is set for spring 2025. No details on the second book were available at press time.

Kathleen Suneja

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Kathleen Suneja authored three self-help books that give its readers insight into their purpose, identity, and path to super consciousness.

One of her books, *Your Path to Super Consciousness*, presents readers with varying concepts, ideas, and thoughts that guide them and shape their perceptions. Her aim is for readers to move past their fears and know their paths to super consciousness. Relatively, her two other books are called *I Am the Change I Seek* as they focus on self-discovery. The first in this duology, *Best of Daily Quotes*, is a book of daily quotations that address readers' questions about their nature and relation to others.

The second book, *A Primer in Self-Realization*, promotes inner change. Suneja's books are aimed at giving its readers insight and inspiration.

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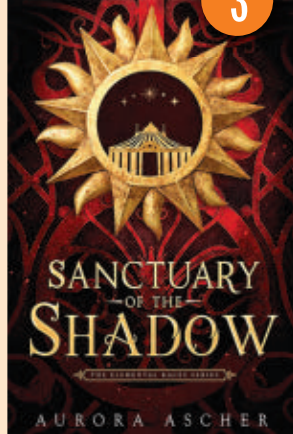
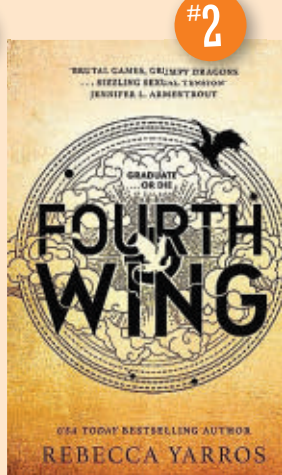
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 **PAGETURNER**
PRESS & MEDIA

BY CAROLYN JURIS

SHE SELLS SANCTUARY

Entangled Publishing launched its Red Tower new adult fantasy imprint in May 2023 with *Fourth Wing* by Rebecca Yarros; that book and every Red Tower release since has hit our list in its first week on sale. The imprint's fifth title, *Sanctuary of the Shadow* by Aurora Ascher, continues that streak, debuting at #3 on our hardcover fiction list. *Fourth Wing*, meanwhile, is #2 on that list this week, and its sequel, *Iron Flame*, takes the top spot.



Blank Space

The spy thriller *Argylle* debuts at #13 on our hardcover fiction list ahead of a movie of the same name, set to open February 2, and amid a mystery/marketing ploy surrounding its author, Elly Conway. Swifties latched onto the idea that Conway is a pseudonym for Taylor Swift—for one, the book's main character, a spy novelist named Elly Conway, totes around a Scottish fold cat in a backpack, à la TSwift. Matthew Vaughn, the movie's director, has debunked the Swift supposition, though he admits that the pop star inspired his family, which includes wife Claudia Schiffer, to get a Scottish fold of their own. The plot thickens: that cat, Chip, stars in the movie and has a book of his own coming out January 23: *Blue Chip: Confessions of Claudia Schiffer's Cat*.



NEW & NOTABLE HOLMES, MARPLE & POE



James Patterson and Brian Sitts #4 *Hardcover Fiction*, #9 overall “In this breezy thriller, Patterson and Sitts introduce private eyes Brandon Holmes, Auguste Poe, and Margaret Marple as they tackle a series of cases involving murder, kidnapping, art theft, and fraud,” our review said, deeming it “diverting-enough entertainment.”

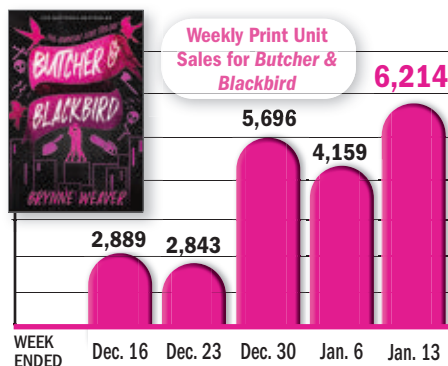
SONS OF DARKNESS



Gourav Mohanty #11 *Hardcover Fiction* This debut is “a hefty grimdark fantasy retelling of the *Mahabharata*, inspired in part by *Game of Thrones*,” according to our review. “In vivid prose, Mohanty combines ghastly tortures, sly political machinations, throbbing romance, and eerie religious and social rites into a demanding but rewarding epic and sets the stage for even more gasps in a coming sequel.”

Dream Weaver

Brynne Weaver's *Butcher & Blackbird*, a dark romantic comedy, pubbed December 12 and in its fifth week on sale appears on our trade paperback list for the first time, at #14. Zando, the book's publisher, cites a combination of BookTok buzz—#butcherandblackbird has 17.2 million views to date—and new distribution avenues; the title landed at Walmart last week.



TOP 10 OVERALL

RANK	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	UNITS
1	Atomic Habits	James Clear	Avery	39,837
2	Iron Flame	Rebecca Yarros	Red Tower	37,980
3	Fourth Wing	Rebecca Yarros	Red Tower	35,167
4	A Court of Thorns and Roses	Sarah J. Maas	Bloomsbury	30,205
5	Sanctuary of the Shadow	Aurora Ascher	Red Tower	23,993
6	Icebreaker	Hannah Grace	Atria	22,219
7	A Court of Mist and Fury	Sarah J. Maas	Bloomsbury	19,650
8	The Housemaid	Freida McFadden	Grand Central	18,690
9	Holmes, Marple & Poe	Patterson/Sitts	Little, Brown	18,590
10	The Heaven & Earth Grocery Store	James McBride	Riverhead	17,825



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ALL PRINT UNIT SALES PER CIRCANA BOOKSCAN EXCEPT WHERE NOTED

Hardcover Frontlist Fiction

RANK	LW	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	ISBN	UNITS
1	1	Iron Flame	Rebecca Yarros	Red Tower	9781649374172	37,980
2	2	Fourth Wing	Rebecca Yarros	Red Tower	9781649374042	35,167
3	-	Sanctuary of the Shadow	Aurora Ascher	Red Tower	9781649374110	23,993
4	-	Holmes, Marple & Poe	Patterson/Sitts	Little, Brown	9780316405195	18,590
5	3	The Heaven & Earth Grocery Store	James McBride	Riverhead	9780593422946	17,825
6	5	First Lie Wins	Ashley Elston	Viking/Dorman	9780593492918	14,688
7	-	The Atlas Complex	Olivia Blake	Tor Books	9781250855138	10,744
8	4	Upside Down	Danielle Steel	Delacorte	9780593498378	9,900
9	6	The Exchange	John Grisham	Doubleday	9780385548953	7,979
10	7	The Little Liar	Mitch Albom	Harper	9780062406651	7,354
11	-	Sons of Darkness	Gourav Mohanty	Head of Zeus	9781035900237	7,206
12	9	Fourth Wing (special ed.)	Rebecca Yarros	Red Tower	9781649376169	7,183
13	-	Argylle	Elly Conway	Bantam	9780593600016	5,854
14	8	Tom Lake	Ann Patchett	Harper	9780063327528	5,810
15	12	None of This Is True	Lisa Jewell	Atria	9781982179007	5,493

Hardcover Frontlist Nonfiction

RANK	LW	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	ISBN	UNITS
1	1	Oath and Honor	Liz Cheney	Little, Brown	9780316572064	16,558
2	2	The Creative Act	Rick Rubin	Penguin Press	9780593652886	10,263
3	8	Outlive	Peter Attia	Harmony	9780593236598	10,153
4	10	How to Know a Person	David Brooks	Random House	9780593230060	9,204
5	4	The Wager	David Grann	Doubleday	9780385534260	8,736
6	9	Build the Life You Want	Brooks/Winfrey	Portfolio	9780593545409	7,009
7	3	Dinner Tonight	Alex Snodgrass	Morrow	9780063278479	6,870
8	12	Rich AF	Vivian Tu	Portfolio	9780593714911	6,522
9	5	The Woman in Me	Britney Spears	Gallery	9781668009048	6,383
10	7	Hidden Potential	Adam Grant	Viking	9780593653142	5,641
11	-	Venture Meets Mission	Gupta/George/Fewer	Stanford Business	9781503636286	5,094
12	-	Gut Check	Steven R. Gundry	Harper Wave	9780062911773	4,820
13	13	Elon Musk	Walter Isaacson	Simon & Schuster	9781982181284	4,416
14	18	The Pioneer Woman Cooks: Dinner's Ready!	Ree Drummond	Morrow	9780062962843	4,060
15	-	Timeline of the Bible	Matt Baker	Thunder Bay	9781667200781	3,952

Trade Paperback Frontlist

RANK	LW	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	ISBN	UNITS
1	1	Icebreaker	Hannah Grace	Atria	9781668026038	22,219
2	3	All Good People Here	Ashley Flowers	Bantam	9780593496497	13,187
3	2	Wildfire	Hannah Grace	Atria	9781668026274	11,566
4	4	Never Lie	Freida McFadden	Poisoned Pen	9781728296166	10,419
5	7	King of Wrath	Ana Huang	Bloom	9781728289724	10,273
6	5	Throne of Glass	Sarah J. Maas	Bloomsbury	9781639730957	10,011
7	6	House of Sky and Breath	Sarah J. Maas	Bloomsbury	9781639731756	9,885
8	-	Hell Bent	Leigh Bardugo	Flatiron	9781250859440	8,265
9	8	The Housemaid's Secret	Freida McFadden	Mobius	9780349132617	8,182
10	9	The Assassin's Blade	Sarah J. Maas	Bloomsbury	9781639731091	7,886
11	13	Crown of Midnight	Sarah J. Maas	Bloomsbury	9781639730971	7,127
12	11	What Moves the Dead	T. Kingfisher	Tor Nightfire	9781250830814	7,118
13	12	Too Late	Colleen Hoover	Grand Central	9781538756591	7,108
14	42	Butcher & Blackbird	Brynn Weaver	Zando	9781638931737	6,214
15	14	The Midnight Library	Matt Haig	Penguin Books	9780525559498	6,039



Children's Frontlist Fiction

RANK	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	ISBN	UNITS
1	Winter Turning (Wings of Fire Graphic Novel #7)	Sutherland/Holmes	Graphix	9781338730920	15,182
2	Divine Rivals	Rebecca Ross	Wednesday	9781250857439	14,201
3	Ruthless Vows	Rebecca Ross	Wednesday	9781250857453	14,039
4	Influencers (Cat Kid Comic Club #5)	Dav Pilkey	Graphix	9781338896398	12,091
5	No Brainer (Diary of a Wimpy Kid Book #18)	Jeff Kinney	Amulet	9781419766947	11,234
6	The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes	Suzanne Collins	Scholastic Press	9781339016573	10,836
7	Claudia and the Bad Joke (The Baby-Sitters Club Graphic Novel #15)	Martin/Nopra	Graphix	9781338835502	10,136
8	The Chalice of the Gods (Percy Jackson and the Olympians #6)	Rick Riordan	Disney-Hyperion	9781368098175	9,071
9	Heartstopper #5	Alice Oseman	Graphix	9781338807486	8,712
10	Powerless	Lauren Roberts	Simon & Schuster	9781665954884	7,982
11	Five Nights at Freddy's (Fazbear Frights Graphic Novel Collection #4)	Scott Cawthon	Graphix	9781339005300	6,420
12	Murtagh: The World of Eragon	Christopher Paolini	Knopf	9780593650868	5,689
13	A Thousand Boy Kisses	Tillie Cole	Bloom	9781728297088	5,557
14	That's Not My Name	Megan Lally	Sourcebooks Fire	9781728270111	4,405
15	Check & Mate	Ali Hazelwood	Putnam	9780593619919	3,990
16	Lightlark	Alex Aster	Amulet	9781419760877	3,933
17	Five Nights at Freddy's: The Official Movie Novel	Scott Cawthon	Scholastic	9781339047591	3,875
18	The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes (media tie-in)	Suzanne Collins	Scholastic Press	9781339016580	3,727
19	Binding 13	Chloe Walsh	Bloom	9781728299945	3,381
20	Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban	Rowling/MinaLima	Scholastic	9781338815283	3,379
21	Twenty Thousand Fleas Under the Sea (Dog Man #11)	Dav Pilkey	Graphix	9781338801910	3,320
22	Once upon a Broken Heart	Stephanie Garber	Flatiron	9781250268402	3,230
23	Stacey's Mistake (The Baby-Sitters Club Graphic Novel #14)	Martin/Crenshaw	Graphix	9781338616132	3,154
24	Nightbane (Lightlark Saga #2)	Alex Aster	Amulet	9781419760907	2,913
25	As Good as Dead	Holly Jackson	Ember	9780593379882	2,903

Children's Picture Books

RANK	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	ISBN	UNITS
1	Taylor Swift	Loggia/Chavarri	Golden	9780593566718	12,399
2	Little Blue Truck's Valentine	Schertle/McElmurry	Clarion	9780358272441	12,036
3	You're My Little Cuddle Bug	Edwards/Marshall	Silver Dolphin	9781684122585	10,281
4	The Very Hungry Caterpillar	Eric Carle	Philomel	9780399226908	9,506
5	Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?	Martin/Carle	Holt	9780805047905	9,157
6	I Love You to the Moon and Back	Hepworth/Warnes	Tiger Tales	9781589255517	8,797
7	Happy Valentine's Day, Mouse!	Numeroff/Bond	HarperFestival	9780061804328	8,621
8	I Love You Like No Otter	Rossner/Hanson	Sourcebooks Wonderland	9781728213743	8,409
9	Chicka Chicka Boom Boom	Martin/Archambault/Ehlert	Little Simon	9781442450707	6,690
10	Bananas for You!	-	Abrams	9781419751073	5,730
11	My First I See You	Eric Carle	Little Simon	9781534424548	5,535
12	The Invisible String	Karst/Lew-Vriethoff	Little, Brown	9780316486231	5,505
13	Love from the Very Hungry Caterpillar	Eric Carle	World of Eric Carle	9780448489322	5,445
14	Guess How Much I Love You	McBratney/Jeram	Candlewick	9781536210637	5,431
15	Goodnight Moon	Brown/Hurd	HarperFestival	9780694003617	5,318
16	Love You Forever	Munsch/McGraw	Firefly	9780920668375	5,162
17	You're My Little Baby	Eric Carle	Little Simon	9781534474932	5,156
18	I Am Ruth Bader Ginsburg	Meltzer/Eliopoulos	Rocky Pond	9780593533338	4,993
19	Llama Llama I Love You	Anna Dewdney	Viking	9780451469816	4,874
20	The Wonderful Things You Will Be	Emily Winfield Martin	Random House	9780385376716	4,650
21	Just Because	McConaughey/Kurilla	Viking	9780593622032	4,544
22	Grumpy Monkey Valentine Gross-Out	Lang/Lang	Random House Studio	9780593486924	4,455
23	Happy Valentine's Day, Curious George!	H.A. Rey	Clarion	9780547131078	4,443
24	I'll Love You Till the Cows Come Home	Cristaldi/Litten	HarperFestival	9780062574220	4,383
25	Oh, the Places You'll Go!	Dr. Seuss	Random House	9780679805274	4,280

The Face of Children's Book Week 2024

Sophie Blackall has been named the inaugural spokesperson, and has created the poster for the nationwide literacy celebration

By Pamela Brill



Blackall

Two-time Caldecott Medalist Sophie Blackall has a new title to add to her pedigree: poster artist and official spokeswoman for the 2024 Children's Book Week. The Children's Book Council and Every Child a Reader, along with Random House Children's Books, made the announcement in advance of the 105th anniversary of the annual literacy event.

this beloved program," says Shaina Birkhead, associate executive director of Every Child a Reader. "Her visual interpretation perfectly captures the joy in reading what you want, when you want, and however you want."

Blackall, who grew up in Australia and currently resides in Upstate New York, has fond memories of reading outdoors with her brother and swapping her copy of *A Little Princess* for his Hardy Boys mysteries. She also recalls her fifth grade classroom's reading rocket—fashioned from cardboard boxes and tinfoil—as a place where she indulged her love of books. "I'm a firm believer in reading wherever we can and reading whatever sparks our curiosity," she says. "Kids should have access to as many kinds of books as possible: books to reflect the farthest reaches of imagination and human experience. A great deal of our childhood is spent following rules, but reading should be liberating."

In addition to creating the poster, Blackall will serve as Book Week's official spokeswoman, appearing in a livestreamed event and launching a social media campaign. "Sharing books with friends is one of the great joys of reading, and spending time with kids talking about stories is one of the best parts of my job," she says.

Anne Schwartz, v-p and publisher of Anne Schwartz Books, an imprint of Random House, who is publishing Blackall's forthcoming picture book, says, "I can't think of anyone whose work better speaks to kids than Sophie's.

What child can resist the world she brings to life in *Farmhouse* or the question she poses in *If I Was a Horse* or the game of imaginative play she celebrates in her upcoming *Ahoy!?*"

Interested schools, libraries, bookstores, and parents of home-based students are invited to sign up for Book Week online through March 1. Registered participants will each receive two free posters in English. A Spanish poster will be available online to print in an 8.5" x 11" bulletin-board-size version.

Posters will be distributed in April, along with links to download bookmarks and activity pages. Further details about author-illustrator readings and other events, which will be added to an interactive map, will be rolled out in March on the Every Child a Reader website. ■

Pamela Brill is a journalist who writes about children's books, toys, design, and trends.



Slated for May 6–12, this year's Children's Book Week will feature the theme "No Rules. Just Read," which is showcased in Blackall's poster art. "Sophie Blackall has been a longtime supporter of Children's Book Week, and we are so thrilled that she has now joined the pantheon of poster illustrators for



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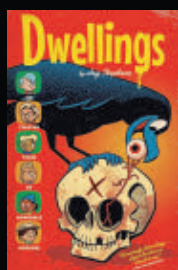


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44 YOUNG ADULT COMICS & GRAPHIC NOVELS



50 MANGA

SPRING 2024

COMICS & GRAPHIC NOVELS

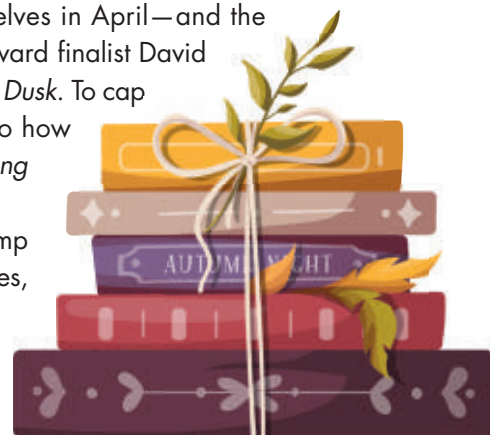
PREVIEW

Welcome to our third standalone comics and graphic novels seasonal preview! They say the third time's the charm and, for once, they may be right.

You'll find a smorgasbord of tasty treats, served up by our intrepid comics reviews editor, Meg Lemke, with an assist from manga specialist Shaenon K. Garrity. On the menu are top 10 and longlist picks for spring in the adult, middle grade, young adult, and manga categories, as well as a delectable roundup of early reader comics. Be sure to save room for dessert—Meg's entertaining profile of Leela Corman (that's her on the cover), whose graphic novel *Victory Parade* hits shelves in April—and the digestif: a q&a with National Book Award finalist David Small about his latest, *The Werewolf at Dusk*. To cap it all off, there's an annotated guide to how Tessa Hulls's new graphic memoir, *Feeding Ghosts*, got made.

From superhero sagas to summer camp romances and devastating social critiques, this feast showcases the breathtaking range of the comics format. Turn the page and tuck in!

—David Adams, adult reviews director

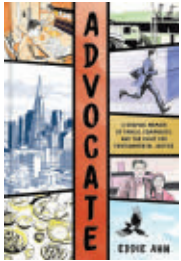




SPRING 2024
PREVIEW

Adult Comics & Graphic Novels

By Meg Lemke



Spring's slate features big-name female artists, including Leela Corman, Emil Ferris, and Marjane Satrapi; diverse graphic memoir debuts from promising newcomers such as Tessa Hulls and Eddie Ahn; and weirdo horror comics.

TOP 10

Advocate: A Graphic Memoir of Family, Community, and the Fight for Environmental Justice

Eddie Ahn. Ten Speed Graphic, Apr. 16 (\$24.99, ISBN 978-1-984862-49-5)

Ahn debuts with a graphic memoir about bucking his Korean American immigrant family's expectations of a high-paying career to serve his San Francisco community as an activist.

Dwellings

Jay Stephens. Oni, Apr. 9 (\$34.99, ISBN 978-1-63715-291-1)

The punky horror comic series from Emmy Award-winning animator Stephens gets its trade debut—a gags and gore combo that looks like Charlie Brown turned into a psychopath.

Feeding Ghosts: A Graphic Memoir

Tessa Hulls. MCD, Mar. 5 (\$40, ISBN 978-0-374-60165-2)

Hulls chronicles the legacy of her grandmother, a journalist who escaped Communist China in 1957, in a graphic narrative that tackles mental health, family dynamics, and global politics.

Heavyweight: A Family Story of the Holocaust, Empire, and Memory

Solomon J. Brager. Morrow, June 25 (\$25.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-0-06-320595-6)

Trans cartoonist Brager, founding editor of *Pinko* magazine, plumbs their complicated Jewish identity alongside tales of their great-grandfather, a boxing champion and WWII refugee.

I'm So Glad We Had This Time Together: A Memoir

Maurice Vellekoop. Pantheon, Feb. 27 (\$35, ISBN 978-0-307-90873-5)

This "sumptuously drawn" graphic memoir, per *PW's* starred review, reckons with queer cartoonist Vellekoop's religious upbringing and revelations both artistic and in his sexual and romantic relationships.

Maple Terrace

Noah Van Sciver. Uncivilized, May 21 (\$29.95, ISBN 978-1-941250-59-4)

Ignatz Award winner Van Sciver returns to his 1990s youth, in a memoir about trying to overcome childhood poverty by diving into speculative comic book collecting.

My Favorite Thing Is Monsters, Book 2

Emil Ferris. Fantagraphics, Apr. 9 (\$39.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-68396-927-3)

This is the much-anticipated second act of Ferris's 2017 breakout hit about a monster-loving young heroine in 1960s Chicago, which *PW's* starred review called "the best graphic novel to come along in recent memory." 100,000-copy announced first printing.

Victory Parade

Leela Corman. Schocken, Apr. 2 (\$29, ISBN 978-0-8052-4344-4)

Vets, widows, and refugees—and lady wrestlers—in WWII-era Brooklyn are haunted by deathly dreams and visions in this "revelatory meditation on the cost of survival," per *PW's* starred review.

A Witch's Guide to Burning

Aminder Dhaliwal. Drawn & Quarterly, May 28 (\$34.95, ISBN 978-1-77046-699-9)

Serialized on Instagram, web cartoonist Dhaliwal's tale of a witch rescued from ritual burning by a magic-demanding public speaks to the woes of overextended creatives.

Woman, Life, Freedom

Edited by Marjane Satrapi, trans. by Una Dimitrijević. Seven Stories, Mar. 19 (\$35.95 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-64421-405-3)

Bestseller Satrapi brings together cartoonists such as Paco Roca, Joann Sfar, and Lewis Trondheim in an illustrated anthology about the rise of feminist protests in contemporary Iran including her own new drawings.



NOMADS: THE SKY KINGDOM

The breakout Webtoon hit is finally available in print!

In a world where only special people known as Nomads are allowed to travel between kingdoms, Lance sets out on a mission to find his missing brother. His first stop? The mysterious Sky Kingdom... Things take an unexpected turn however when he meets the mysterious Satra and the magical cat Saber who imbues Lance with supernatural powers. Together, the trio will face fearsome foes, mysterious new creatures, and their own hidden secrets!

ON SALE
MAY 2024

ISBN: 978-1-608-86600-7

SIRENS OF THE CITY



Acclaimed writer **Joanne Starer** (*Fire & Ice: Welcome To Smallville*) and visionary artist **Khary Randolph** (*Excellence*) shine a light on bodily autonomy in a patriarchal world in this stylish, topical urban fantasy.

ON SALE
MAY 2024

ISBN: 978-1-608-86217-7

GRIM BOOK ONE DELUXE EDITION



The first deluxe edition of the blockbuster comic book phenomenon that's sold over 100,000 units! There's no better way to discover the fantasy horror adventure from superstar writer **Stephanie Phillips** (*Harley Quinn*) and fan favorite artist **Flaviano** (*New Mutants*).

ON SALE
JUNE 2024

ISBN: 978-1-608-86230-6

RARE FLAVOURS



Ram V and **Filipe Andrade**, the Eisner, Harvey, and Ringo Award-nominated team behind *The Many Deaths of Laila Starr*, reunite for this tantalizing tale of food, art, and a touch of the taboo...

ON SALE
AUGUST 2024

ISBN: 978-1-608-86153-8

BOOM! DISCOVER YOURS
STUDIOS

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ABLAZE

Kalevala: The Graphic Novel by Sami Makkonen, trans. by Laura Arpiainen (Feb. 27, \$19.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-68497-228-9), adapts the Finnish saga of warriors and wizards seeking fortune and romance in snowy lands, which is credited as the basis for Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*.

ABRAMS COMICARTS

Fall Through by Nate Powell (Feb. 6, \$24.99, ISBN 978-1-41976-082-2). The latest from musician and National Book Award winner Powell (the *March* series) follows a 1990s Arkansas punk band—whose signature song opens up a portal in the space-time continuum—on one spectacular tour.



AFTERSHOCK

Jimmy's Little Bastards by Garth Ennis and Russ Braun (Feb. 20, \$19.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-956731-33-0) returns to the world of the swaggering British spy antihero and finds him to be a (mostly) reformed middle-aged dad, with his daughter taking up his former bad habits as dark family secrets come to light.

ANDREWS MCMEEL

Finding the Light by Marian Henley (Mar. 5, \$16.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-5248-8469-7). When Henley gave birth to a boy, she realized she would one day tell him that she was a rape survivor. Her graphic memoir delves into that difficult conversation and the healing it brought about.

EVERY HILL

Safer Places by Kit Anderson (Apr. 16, \$18.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-910395-77-6). Anderson's debut collection of short comics vignettes focus on unexpected, whimsical everyday observations discovered on nature walks, in waiting rooms, and hiding under floorboards.

BLACK PANEL

Animals Rule This Land by Luke Milton (Apr. 16, \$24.99, ISBN 978-1-990521-22-5). The last dude on Earth contends with a rowdy cast of animals who have taken over the world, hell-bent on exacting revenge for ages of animal abuse.

BOOM! STUDIOS

Brzrkr: Bloodlines by Keanu Reeves, Mattson Tomlin, and Steve Skroce (Apr. 2, \$19.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-60886-149-1) collects battle-filled episodes across

eras and empires featuring the immortal sword-wielding warrior conceived by actor Reeves.

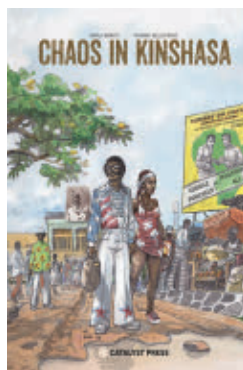
CARTOON BOOKS

Thorn: The Complete Proto-Bone College Strips 1982–1986 and Other Early Drawings by Jeff Smith (July 1, \$30 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-888963-86-1) brings together the comics

Smith drew in the 1980s for Ohio State University's student newspaper, the *Lantern*, which introduced the famed Bone series characters in their earliest incarnations.

CATALYST

Chaos in Kinshasa by Barly Baruti and Thierry Bellefroid, trans. by Ivanka Hahnenberger (Apr. 23, \$19.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-946395-98-6). The Rumble in the Jungle boxing match between Muhammad Ali and George Foreman in 1974 Zaire provides the setting for a thriller about a Harlem gangster who gets caught up in an African coup.



CONUNDRUM

The Field by Dave Lapp (May 21, \$30 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-77262-094-8). In this graphic memoir of growing up in the 1970s, young boys make mischief and

a friendship gets betrayed, all in the big field where kids in Lapp's small town were let loose for the summer.

DARK HORSE

Blood Oath by Alex Segura, Rob Hart, and Joe Eisma (Feb. 20, \$22.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-5067-3715-7). In Prohibition-era New York City, farmer and bootlegger Hazel tries to ply her trade while evading the Mafia and a darker supernatural force.

DC COMICS

The Vigil by Ram V and Lalit Kumar Sharma (Apr. 9, \$16.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-77952-343-3). Part of the publisher's *We Are Legends* program introducing Asian American heroes, this series launch finds reluctant South Asian superheroes Arlight, Castle, Dodge, and Saya teaming up to battle malicious tech and military forces. 50,000-copy announced first printing.

DRAWN & QUARTERLY

Self-Esteem and the End of the World by Luke Healy (May 14, \$24.95, ISBN 978-1-77046-714-9) sees the Ignatz Award-winning cartoonist grappling with crushing personal blows and a career roller coaster as he questions if anything personal really matters given the inescapable reality of climate change.

FANTAGRAPHICS

Blessed Be by Rick Altermatt (Mar. 12, \$24.99, ISBN 978-1-68396-778-1). This first graphic novel from the gag cartoonist known for goofy shock humor is set in a burg call Flowertown and features the hijinks of Tom

"The Acid King" Cottonwood, holy roller Henry Hotchkiss, and other colorful characters.

Tender by Beth Hetland (Mar. 12, \$19.99, ISBN 978-1-68396-935-8) is a surreal, body horror-style graphic novel debut about a woman who tries so hard to control the world around her that she

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falls apart grotesquely, with a hysterical pregnancy and self-cannibalism.

FIRST SECOND

Replay: Memoir of an Uprooted Family by Jordan Mechner (Mar. 19, \$27.99, ISBN 978-1-250-87375-0) interweaves the displaced lives of Mechner’s Jewish ancestors across Europe during WWI and WWII with his decision to move to France when his marriage falls apart in the mid-aughts.

FLUX HOUSE

Subgenre by Matt Kindt and Wilfredo Torres (July 2, \$29.99, ISBN 978-1-5067-3386-9) launches a new fantasy-dystopian-noir series in which a detective tries to solve a murder when he’s awake, and becomes a fantasy-world swordsman while he’s sleeping.

IDW ORIGINALS

Good Deeds by Che Grayson and Kelsey Ramsay (Apr. 2, \$17.99 trade paper, ISBN 979-8-88724-067-1). In this new series from the Dark Spaces line, a teen and her mother living in St. Augustine, Fla., join up with a down-on-her-luck journalist to dig into the ghostly horrors of the town’s colonial history.

IMAGE

Deep Cuts by Kyle Higgins and Joe Clark (May 7, \$24.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-5343-9862-7) riffs through the history of jazz, told in short period pieces about the hardships and joys of musicians, their families, and their fans.

IRON CIRCUS

The Last Delivery by Evan Dahm (Apr. 16, \$15 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-63899-129-8). When a package carrier arrives at a mysterious mansion with a parcel addressed to “The Resident,” he can’t complete the delivery until he passes through a party whose revelers keep getting in his way.

LIFE DRAWN

Seoul Before Sunrise by Samir Dahmani (May 21, \$24.99 trade paper,

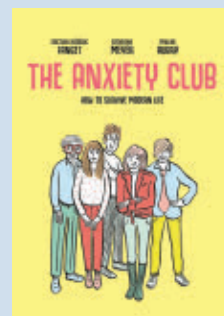
Comics Rx

Comics about the body, mind, illness, transitions (such as pregnancy and gender confirmation), and all manner of healthcare matters flourish in the growing category of “graphic medicine.”

The Anxiety Club: How to Survive Modern Life

Fanget Frédéric, Catherine Meyer, and Pauline Aubry. SelfMadeHero, Apr. 23 (\$19.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-914224-21-8)

Psychiatrist Frédéric employs case studies of three anxious people to guide readers through behavioral, cognitive, and talk therapy tools for treating this too-often self-medicated affliction.



Barking

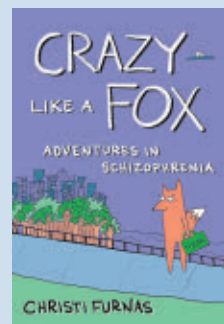
Lucy Sullivan. Avery Hill, Feb. 27 (\$22.99, ISBN 978-1-910395-76-9)

Sullivan’s debut graphic novel about a young woman institutionalized for depression after the death of a friend is drawn in “fierce slashes and splashes of ink” that depict her inner demons, offering a “terrifying glimpse into a disturbed mind,” per PW’s review.

Betrayal of the Mind: The Surreal Life of Unica Zürn

Céline Wagner. Life Drawn, July 23 (\$24.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-64337-595-3)

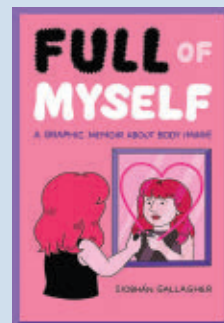
Surrealist artist, poet, and schizophrenic Zürn (1916–1970) gets a graphic biography that considers the essential role of her mental illness in her artistic development.



Crazy Like a Fox: Adventures in Schizophrenia

Christi Furnas. Street Noise, Apr. 9 (\$21.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-951491-28-4)

The experience of schizophrenia undergoes anthropomorphic treatment in this graphic tale of Fox, who finds things going sideways in his everyday life with other animals—but his doctors don’t seem to listen.



Firebugs

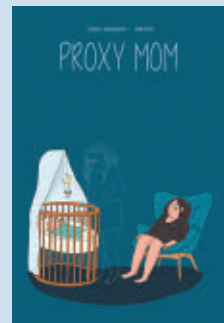
Nino Bulling. Drawn & Quarterly, Feb. 13 (\$24.95, ISBN 978-1-77046-705-7)

Lovers move through transitions, bodily and emotional, against the backdrop of catastrophic climate change in the Berlin-based artist’s English-language graphic novel debut.

Food School

Jade Armstrong. Conundrum, Apr. 23 (\$15 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-77262-096-2)

Olive drops out of university to go to “food school,” her nickname for an outpatient treatment program for her eating disorder.



Full of Myself: A Graphic Memoir About Body Image

Siobhan Gallagher. Andrews McMeel, Apr. 2 (\$19.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-5248-6768-3)

Gallagher looks back at her teenage fixation on dieting and shares how she grew into self-acceptance and self-love as an adult.

How to Baby: A No-Advice-Given Guide to Motherhood, with Drawings

Liana Finck. Dial, Apr. 30 (\$28, ISBN 978-0-593-59596-1)

From pregnancy to birth, postpartum, and co-parenting, *New Yorker* artist Finck's quirky memoir cartoons tell all in this comics tour of motherhood.

Lavender Clouds: Comics About Neurodivergence and Mental Health

Bex Ollerton. Andrews McMeel, June 11 (\$19.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-5248-6768-3)

"The sky doesn't need to be clear to be beautiful," Ollerton writes in this collection of comics about accepting spells of darker emotions.

Polar Vortex: A Family Memoir

Denise Dorrance. *The Experiment*, Mar. 5 (\$19.95 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-61519-905-1)

When her mother exhibits the sudden onset of dementia, Dorrance must fly across the world—and into a looming snowstorm and a health insurance crisis—to care for her.

Proxy Mom: My Experience with Postpartum Depression

Sophie Adrianson and Mathou. NBM, June 18 (\$19.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-68112-334-9)

Depression overcomes a new mother after a traumatic birth, and she's beset by doubts that her baby deserves someone better, in this portrayal of a postpartum mental health crisis.

Sunflowers

Keezy Young. *Silver Sprocket*, Feb. 21 (\$7.99 trade paper, ISBN 979-8-88620-037-9)

Young debuts with a graphic memoir about living with bipolar disorder and finding the stability point between alternating bouts of mania and depression.

Traces of Madness

Fernando Balias and Mario Pellejer, trans. by Richard Beevor and Mailén Sganga. *Graphic Mundi*, May 21 (\$19.95 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-63779-070-0)

Balias's debut charts how, from diagnosis through confrontations with doctors, he came to accept the voices he hallucinates as a schizophrenic. —M.L.

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BEGIN AND
END AT THE
POINT OF A
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Spring Comics & Graphic Novels



May

spring/
summer
2024

The Flavors of Iraq

Impressions of
My Vanished Homeland
Feurat Alani
Illustrated by Léonard Cohen
Translated by Kendra Boileau
Foreword by Ross Caputi
978-1-63779-067-0



May

Traces of Madness

A Graphic Memoir
Fernando Baluis
Illustrated by Mario Pellejer
Translated by Richard Beevor
and Malién Sganga
978-1-63779-070-0



June

Eventually Everything Connects

Eight Essays on Uncertainty
Sarah Firth
978-1-63779-068-7

And Mankind Created the Gods

A Graphic Novel Adaptation of
Pascal Boyer's *Religion Explained*
Joseph Béhé
Translated by Edward Gauvin
Foreword by Pascal Boyer
978-1-63779-066-3



June

ISBN 978-1-64337-968-5). University student Seong-Ji works nights, and on her walk home through the streets of Seoul she meets another young woman, whose nocturnal art project draws her into a hidden, intimate perspective of the city—and to questions about lost relationships.

LIVERIGHT

The Werewolf at Dusk: and Other Stories by David Small (Mar. 12, \$25, ISBN 978-1-324-09282-7). In a collection of comics stories about the passage of time and the experience of aging, Small (*Stitches*) includes original pieces and adapts short fiction from writers including Lincoln Michel and Jean Ferry.

MAD CAVE STUDIOS

Hound by Sam Romesburg, Sam Freeman, and Rodrigo Vázquez (Feb. 20, \$19.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-952303-78-4) weaves the imagined diaries of a British WWI soldier into a horror tale centered on a deadly cult of troops on the Western Front who call themselves “The Hounds.”

MARVEL UNIVERSE

Ms. Marvel: The New Mutant by Iman Vellani, et al. (Mar. 19, \$17.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-302-95490-1). In this new arc scripted by the actor who plays the superhero on screen (with cowriter Sabir Pirzada and artists Carlos Gomez and Adam Gorham), the young Muslim protector of New Jersey gets reborn and discovers she's a mutant like the X-Men.

NBM

Degas & Cassatt: A Solitary Dance by Salva Rubio and Efa, trans. by Edward Gauvin (Mar. 12, \$24.99, ISBN 978-1-68112-324-0), focuses on French impressionist Edgar Degas's fixation on American painter Mary Cassatt, whom he adored from afar.

Good: From the Amazon Jungle to Suburbia and Back by David Good and FLuX (May 14, \$24.99, ISBN 978-1-68112-330-1). Good's graphic memoir debut recalls his early years raised by his Indigenous mother in South America and his struggles when his American father moves him to the U.S.

NEW PRESS

Lies My Teacher Told Me: A Graphic Adaptation by James W. Loewen and Nate Powell (Apr. 16, \$27.99, ISBN 978-1-62097-703-3). National Book Award winner Powell (the March series) adapts Loewen's influential bestseller that upends traditionally taught views of history and has become a favorite of progressive educators and thinkers.

NEW YORK REVIEW COMICS

Spiral and Other Stories by Aidan Koch (Apr. 30, \$24.95 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-68137-835-0). The painterly avant-garde comics of Koch are featured in this collection of work inspired by her time in the Mojave Desert, with an introduction by critic Nicole Rudick.



graphicmundi.org

NOBROW

Single Mothering by Anna Härmälä (Apr. 2, \$20.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-913123-22-2). Finnish cartoonist Härmälä debuts with a satirical graphic novel about a young mother who's left by her partner to brave the absurdities of mommy groups and late-night feedings on her own.

ONI

I Feel Awful, Thanks by Lara Pickle (Mar. 5, \$17.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-63715-300-0). A young witch joins a coveted coven in London only to discover that—when it comes to her inner demons—being able to cast spells is no substitute for therapy.

PM PRESS

Freedom Shall Prevail: The Struggle of Abdullah Öcalan and the Kurdish People by Sean Michael Wilson and Keko Keko (July 30, \$19.95 trade paper, ISBN 979-88-87440-34-7). Kurdish liberation leader Abdullah Öcalan, who founded the Kurdistan Workers' Party in 1978 and has been imprisoned by the Turkish government since 1999, gets a graphic biography supported by Peace in Kurdistan and other human rights organizations.

PRINCETON UNIV.

1177 BC: A Graphic History of the Year Civilization Collapsed by Eric H. Cline and Glynnis Fawkes (Apr. 16, \$24.95 trade paper, ISBN 978-0-691-21302-6). A marauder and a scribe tour the felled kingdoms of the Canaanites, Egyptians, Minoans, and Mycenaeans in this graphic adaptation of Cline's 2015 study of the end of the Bronze Age.

SELFMADEHERO

The Last Queen by Jean-Marc Rochette, trans. by Edward Gauvin (Mar. 26, \$25.99, ISBN 978-1-914224-19-5), tells the love story behind a famous French sculpture, detailing how a maimed WWI veteran brings his Parisian artist lover, Jeanne Sauvage, to his mountain homeland and recounts for her the story of a magisterial bear.

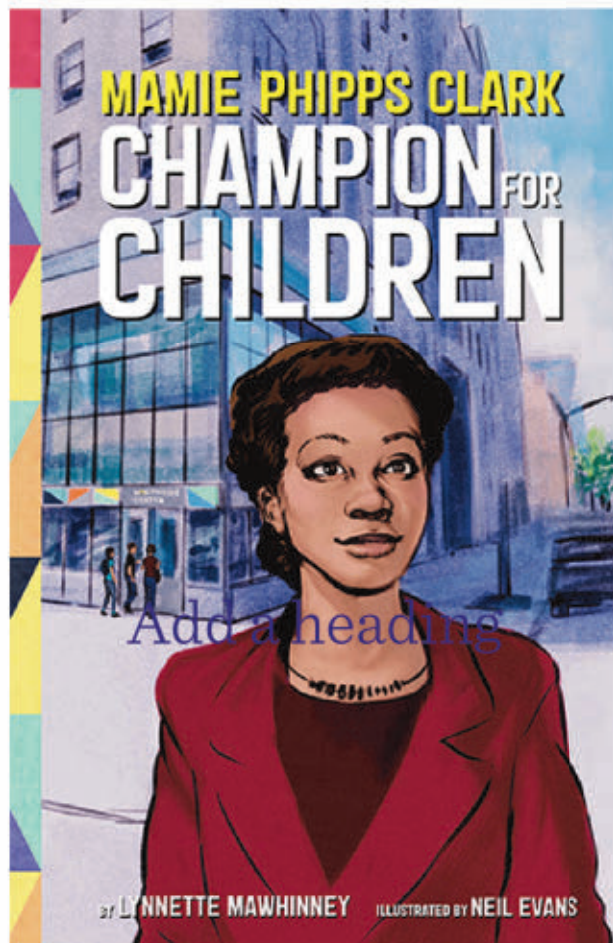
SILVER SPROCKET

Adversary by Blue Delliquanti (Mar. 13, \$15.99 trade paper, ISBN 979-8-88620-038-6). Two queer characters in very different places in their lives reunite in the American Midwest in 2021 and embark on a fraught affair.

SKYBOUND

Dracula by James Tynion IV and Martin Simmonds (May 7, \$24.99, ISBN 978-1-5343-9755-2). Tynion (the *Something Is Killing the Children* series) takes on a classic for the Universal Monsters series: the tale of a bloodthirsty count who courts and kills young women, including the daughter of a local psychiatrist digging into the secrets of his undead neighbor.

The only graphic novel about this pioneering civil rights activist



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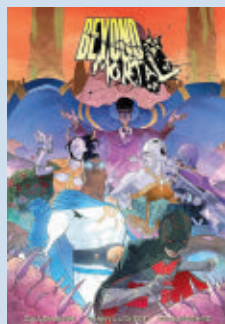
Myth Makers

In the wake of *Lore Olympus*, comics fans are all in for the escapades of gods. These comics remix ancient myths and fabled realms, or dream up brand-new deities and demons.

All Weather Turns to Storm (Immortal Thor #1)

Al Ewing and Martin Coccolo. Marvel Universe, Mar. 12 (\$29.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-302-95418-5)

The king of Asgard faces down a posse of immortals sent after him by his own mother, Gaea, in this reboot of the Marvel hero.



Beyond Mortal

Cullen Bunn and Danny Luckert. Dark Horse, July 23 (\$19.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-5067-4050-8)

Buried gods rise up and challenge superheroes for dominion over Earth in this saga inspired by bronze age comics and ancient myths.

Botanica Drama

Thom. Pow Pow, May 7 (\$23.95 trade paper, ISBN 978-2-925114-24-6)

In this wordless comic, Earth is shattered by endless night when the sentient sun decides to sleep in.

Census

Marc Bernardin, Adam Freeman, and Sebastian Piriz. Dark Horse, July 16 (\$22.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-5067-3716-4)

An everyman is hired to go door to door in N.Y.C. and count up the demons, djinns, and other mythic monsters who live, as New Yorkers always figured, hidden behind random apartment entryways.

Covenant

Lysandra Vuong. Oni, Apr. 16 (\$24.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-63715-281-2)

Gun-slinging priests face off against demons in this webtoon with a queer romance twist, which finds God sending a reluctant savior to defend a cute boy from evil.

Devour

Jazmine Joyner and Anthony Pugh. Megascopes, May 7 (\$24.99, ISBN 978-1-4197-6306-9)

Somewhere in the American South, a Black matriarch with strange powers is found to be hiding the African spider god Anansi in her basement (and he's been eating her memories).

Godfell: The Complete Series

Chris Sebela and Ben Hennessy. Vault, Feb. 27 (\$19.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-63849-201-6)

The body of God falls into disputed territory in a fantasy landscape dominated by women warriors, who battle for control of his mystical corpse.

In Perpetuity

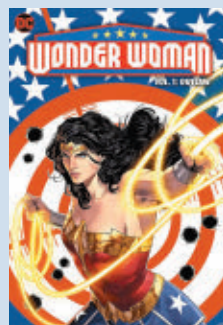
Peter and Maria Hoey. Top Shelf, Apr. 16 (\$19.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-60309-537-2)

A shade who can move between realms is recruited out of an afterlife that resembles a cross between Greek mythology and film noir, and falls into a romance with a dying woman.

Medea

Blandine Le Callet and Nancy Peña, trans. by Montana Kane. Dark Horse, May 21 (\$29.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-5067-4268-7)

The beguiling lover, devoted mother, and decried monster of Greek myth gets reenvisioned in all her complexity and majesty.



Outlaw (Wonder Woman #1)

Tom King and Daniel Sampere. DC Comics, July 2 (\$24.99, ISBN 978-1-77952-545-1)

The Amazonians are abhorred as outlaws, unjustly exiled from America, in this new arc of the Wonder Woman story line, which is based on Greek myth.

Putty Pygmalion

Lonnie Garcia. Silver Sprocket, July 17 (\$15.99 trade paper, ISBN 979-8-88620-042-3)

A DIY version of the Pygmalion myth finds a radish named Darryl hacking together a boyfriend out of a toy, only to find his new companion doesn't want to stay a boy-toy.

Starsigns

Saladin Ahmed, Megan Levens, and Kelly Fitzpatrick. Image, May 14 (\$9.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-5343-9846-7)

When the constellations crash to Earth, 12 ordinary folks become imbued with superpowers of the zodiac.

—M.L.

STREET NOISE

Gaytheist: Coming Out of My Orthodox Childhood by Lonnie Mann and Ryan Gatts (Feb. 6, \$23.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-951491-27-7) traces Mann's coming-of-age from yeshiva and summer camp experiences to his sexual awakening, and the fraught decision to leave the Orthodox Jewish community that doesn't accept him as a gay man.

You Must Take Part in Revolution by Badiucao and Melissa Chan (June 4, \$22.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-951491-29-1). Chinese artist and activist Badiucao debuts with a dystopian graphic novel cocreated with journalist Chan in which three young people radicalized by the Hong Kong protests must choose their roles in a coming revolution.

TEN SPEED GRAPHIC

Through the Elder Woods (Nothing Special #1) by Katie Cook (Mar. 5,

\$29.99, ISBN 978-1-984862-82-2). A teen named Katie crosses into a magical realm in search of her missing father, who runs an antique shop selling supernatural curiosities, and is joined on her quest by friends including a ghost radish.

TINY ONION STUDIOS

The Oddly Pedestrian Life of Christopher Chaos by James Tynion IV, Tate Brombal, and Isaac Goodhart (May 21, \$24.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-5067-3672-3) finds the eponymous teen science genius ostracized by his classmates, until one boy catches his eye—and of course turns out to be a monster.

TITAN COMICS

The Cold Ever After by Jeremy Whitley and Megan Huang (Feb. 27,

\$19.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-78774-190-4) does queer romance and the mystery of a missing princess in classic Arthurian style, complete with swordplay and a disgraced knight's return.

**TOP COW**

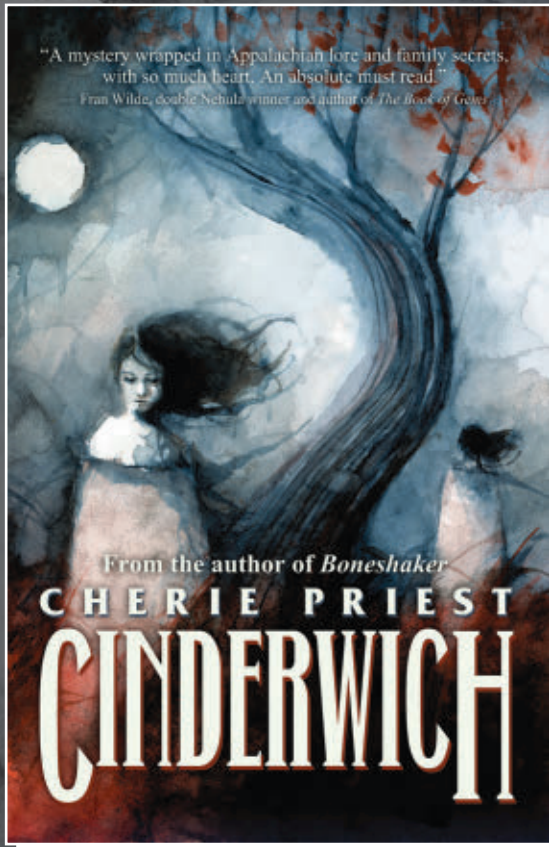
Swipe by Matt Hawkins and Yishan Li (Apr. 24, \$16.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-5343-9954-9). A man and a woman, both recently divorced, would make for the best meet-cute, if they could only escape the loopy algorithms of online dating.

TOP SHELF

Mary Tyler Moore-

Hawk by Dave Baker (Feb. 13, \$29.99, ISBN 978-1-60309-536-5) is a gonzo metafictional detective story in which a

continued on p.32



Who put Ellen in the blackgum tree?

A Southern Gothic Fantasy by award-winning author **CHERIE PRIEST!**

Decades after children spotted the desiccated corpse wedged in the treetop, no one knows the answer.

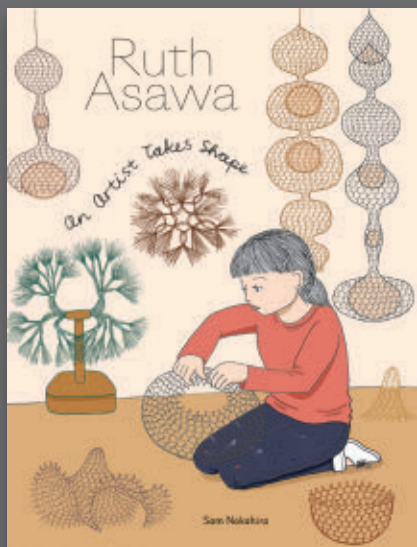
Kathy Thrush and her former college professor, Dr. Judith Kane, travel to Cinderwich, Tennessee hoping the cold case will bring them closure.

The more they unearth, the closer they come to exhuming the evil that lies, hungering, at the roots of Cinderwich.

"A spooky treasure wrapped in Appalachian lore and family secrets."

- Fran Wilde, author of *The Book of Gems*

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Ruth Asawa An Artist Takes Shape

Sam Nakahira

Featuring lively illustrations and photographs, this young-adult graphic biography of Japanese American artist Ruth Asawa chronicles her formative years.

“A tender and thoughtful rendering of an important artist’s life. Sam Nakahira uses the power and beauty of comics to its fullest to immerse you in the mind and genius of Ruth Asawa. As soon as I finished it, I wanted to read it again!”

—Tillie Walden, Eisner Award-winning cartoonist and illustrator

Off to Space

Launching this spring: interstellar adventures, alien invasions, and lonely heroes seeking love across the galaxy.

The Asiri

Roye Okupe et al. Dark Horse, June 18 (\$19.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-5067-3545-0)

West African astronauts have colonized Mars and built a thriving society that’s threatened by a new alien enemy in this afrofuturist adventure.



Catalytic Conversions (Infinite Wheatpaste #1)

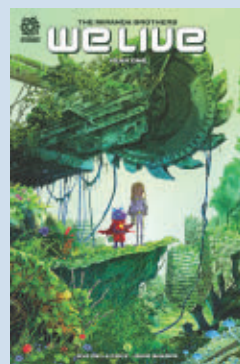
L. Pidge. Avery Hill, May 30 (\$18.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-910395-78-3)

Interconnected stories from across the universe—featuring androids, humans, and all manner of other creatures—reveal the common truths found in extraordinary environs.

Coming of Age (We Live #1)

Roy and Inaki Miranda. Aftershock Comics, May 28 (\$49.99, ISBN 978-1-956731-30-9)

Set in the year 2084, this saga portrays monsters ravaging a postapocalyptic Earth and a spacecraft launching with thousands of children on a mission to save humanity.



Deep Space Nine—the Dog of War

Mike Chen and Angel Hernandez. IDW, Feb. 13 (\$19.99 trade paper, ISBN 979-8-88724-074-9)

Publishing in time for the 30th anniversary of the popular TV series *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, this original side story sees a corgi puppy with some secret alien components joining the crew.



Eden

Christopher Sebela and Mark Laming. Humanoids, Apr. 9 (\$22.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-64337-872-5)

Earth is a disaster, and the only way off the planet is a lottery for a spot on a spaceship headed to salvation. When one family manipulates their way onboard, their prospects take an even worse turn in space.

Griz Gobus

Simon Roy and Jess Pollard. Image, June 4 (\$19.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-5343-9786-6)

Oddball adventurers on distant planets revive a priest-bot and play chicken with gods in a pair of stories from the universe of *Habitat*.





**FETCH BOOK TWO:
THE RESCUE**



Written by Mike Sizemore
Art by Dave Kennedy
Colors by Pete Kennedy

COMING MAY 2024

**ISBN: 979-8-9887285-0-4
\$14.99**

The anticipated sequel to 2023's **FETCH BOOK ONE: THE JOURNEY** called "a gateway into Greek myth for readers too young for the intensity of Percy Jackson" and "a quest that will engage anyone who's ever lost a friend" by Kirkus Reviews.



stormkingcomics.com

Last Line

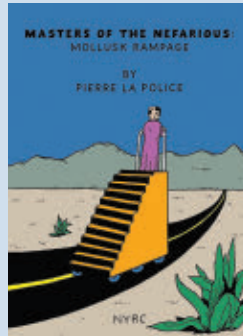
Richard Dinnick and Jose Holder. *Aftershock*, May 28 (\$17.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-956731-32-3)

A driver on the London subway system is sent reeling when her train hits a man—who she discovers fell from the sky. Investigating takes her first into secret spy territory and then outer space mysteries.

Masters of the Nefarious: Mollusk Rampage

Pierre La Police, trans. by Luke Burns. *New York Review Comics*, Mar. 12 (\$24.95 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-68137-834-3)

UFOs and ginormous mollusks are just two examples of the supernatural happenings that detectives track down in the surreal comics world of La Police.



Peeing and Pooping in Space: A 100% Factual Illustrated History

Kiona N. Smith. *Running Press*, May 21 (\$19, ISBN 978-0-7624-8661-8)

How do astronauts do their business in zero gravity? That question and others are answered in this concise comics explainer of logistical innovations required for space travel.

The Prophet (Dune #3)

Brian Herbert et al. *Abrams ComicArts*, June 25 (\$25.99, ISBN 978-1-4197-4947-6)

The comics trilogy of Frank Herbert's classic sci-fi novel, adapted by his son and drawn by Raúl Allén and Patricia Martín, concludes as Paul Atreides leads the native people of Arrakis in a final epic battle against House Harkonnen.

Star-Crossed

Jerry Frissen and Roberto Zaghi. *Humanoids*, Mar. 19 (\$24.99, ISBN 978-1-64337-759-9)

Humans make their first contact with an alien species—and promptly, a literally star-crossed love affair ensues between earthling linguist Danko and an Eo'Tarx named No'mi.

Tin Man (Joe Pineapples #1)

Pat Mills, Simon Bisley, and Clint Langley. *2000 AD*, Apr. 9 (\$24, ISBN 978-1-78618-493-1)

Sniper robot Joe Pineapple, former ABC Warrior, gets his own narrative arc, with artist Bisley returning to the android-run planet of Mars amid the skirmishes of the Voltron War.



Void Rivals

Robert Kirkman and Lorenzo De Felici. *Skybound*, Feb. 20 (\$16.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-5343-9818-4)

In this Transformers–GI Joe crossover, war rages in the ring of planetary fragments left over after two worlds collided. A pair of enemies crash-land on one such fragment—can they find a way to survive together before they kill each other?
—M.L.

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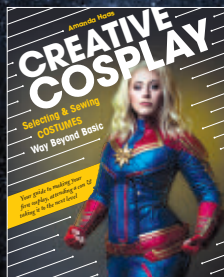


Image from *Cosplayer's Ultimate Guide to EVA Foam* by Beverly Downen.



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continued from p. 29

journalist named Dave Baker tries to track down a cartoonist named Dave Baker and the true story of a cartoon girl and erstwhile TV star named Mary Tyler MooreHawk.

ULTIMATE UNIVERSE

Ultimate Invasion by Jonathan Hickman and Bryan Hitch (Mar. 26, \$24.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-0-7851-9473-6) finds the clandestine gathering of Marvel heroes known as the Illuminati regrouping to fend off the nefarious plans of the Maker.

UNCIVILIZED

Evil Eyes Sea by Ozge Samanci (Mar. 26, \$29.95 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-941250-60-0). In this feminist-themed mystery set during the 1995–1996 elections in Istanbul, a pair of young women witness an accident while diving in the Bosphorus Strait—and delve deep into the country's murky politics.

UNION SQUARE

The Puerto Rican War: A Graphic History by John Vasquez Mejias (May 14, \$20, ISBN 978-1-4549-5246-6) explores in woodblock-style comics Puerto Rico's independence movement and 1950s uprising, including an assassination attempt against U.S. president Harry Truman.

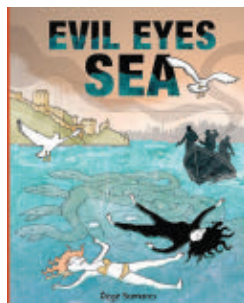
VAULT

A Time to Fight (Sainted Love #1) by Steve Orlando and Giopota (July 9, \$19.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-63849-215-3). Inventor Mac and boxer John are lovers in 1907 New York City who must keep their romance hidden—until they hop into Mac's "chrono-corridor" time portal and romp back and forth in history.

WAVE BLUE WORLD

Sharp Wit and the Company of Women, edited by Michele Abounader (Mar. 5, \$19.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-949518-25-2).

Swashbuckling women of all stripes, across eras, and drawn in varying comics styles, raise their weapons and lunge forward in this anthology comic.



WEBTOON UNSCROLLED

Third Shift Society by Meredith Moriarty (Mar. 5, \$19.99 trade paper,

ISBN 978-1-998854-29-5). Unemployed Ellie is in debt and about to lose her home. Things turn around—and get weird—when she's hired by a magical, pumpkin-headed detective named Ichabod.

ZANDO

World Without End: An Illustrated

Guide to the Climate Crisis—Past, Present, and Our Hope for the Future by Christophe Blain and Jean-Marc Jancovici. (May 21, \$35, ISBN 978-1-63893-111-9). The interdependence of the climate, economics, and politics—and the realized threat of global warming—gets a comics explainer by French climate scientist



Jancovici. 75,000-copy announced first printing.

Z2

Growing Up Farley: A Chris Farley Story by Kevin Farley, Frank Marraffino, and Ryan Dunlavey (Mar. 12, \$29.99, ISBN: 979-8-88656-038-1). This graphic biography of the *Saturday Night Live* performer and raunchy comedy film star, who died in 1997, is coscripted by his brother, Kevin, who is also a stand-up comedian.

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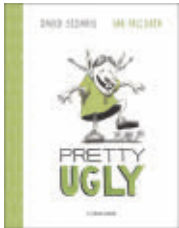
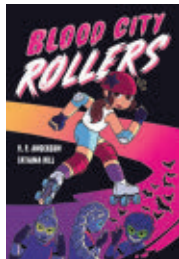
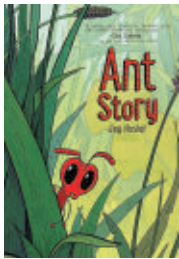


SPRING 2024
PREVIEW

Middle Grade Comics & Graphic Novels

By Meg Lemke

David Sedaris and Ian Falconer join forces—amplifying the appeal of a season also marked by the return of established category stars like Vera Brosgol, Scott Kurtz, and Booki Vivat.



TOP 10

Ant City

Jay Hosler. HarperAlley, Mar. 26 (\$15.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-0-06-329399-1)
Ant Rubi ventures out of the colony on dangerous escapades, in this fact-filled outing that features “cheerfully gross depictions” of insect life, per *PW*’s review. Ages 8–12.

Blood City Rollers

V.P. Anderson and Tatiana Hill. Labyrinth Road, Apr. 9 (\$13.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-0-593-48571-2)
Olympic hopeful Mina gets sucked into a vampire roller derby league in this mash-up of tween theme faves—skates and fangs. Ages 8–12.

Curveball

Pablo Cartaya and Miguel Díaz Rivas. Disney Hyperion, May 7 (\$14.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-368-08926-5)
Pura Belpré Honor winner Cartaya teams up with *New York Times*–bestselling artist Rivas for a tale about sports, family, and friendship featuring a baseball devotee named Elena. Ages 8–12.

Meet Me on Mercer Street

Booki Vivat. Scholastic, Apr. 2 (\$12.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-338-78868-6)
Bestseller Vivat (*Frazzled*) returns with the story of a curious young artist who documents how her neighborhood is changing. Ages 8–12.

Next Stop

Debbie Fong. Random House Graphic, Mar. 19 (\$21.99, ISBN 978-0-593-42520-6)
A tween embarks on a wild trip that “serves as a meditation on grief, a catalyst for healing, and a reminder of the importance of friendship, family, and connection,” per *PW*’s review. Ages 9–12.

The Night Librarian

Christopher Lincoln. Dial, July 30 (\$23.99, ISBN 978-0-593-61765-6)
Twins Page and Turner unite with a mysterious “night librarian” to save the New York Public Library from villains and monsters who’ve leapt to life from the pages of classic books. Ages 8–12.

Plain Jane and the Mermaid

Vera Brosgol. First Second, May 7 (\$22.99, ISBN 978-1-250-31486-4; \$14.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-250-31485-7)
Eisner and Caldecott winner Brosgol spins a fractured fairy tale in which an ordinary girl proposes to a prince—who then gets kidnapped by a mermaid. Ages 10–14.

Pretty Ugly

David Sedaris and Ian Falconer. Toon, Feb. 27 (\$18.99, ISBN 978-1-6626-6527-1)
Sedaris (*Me Talk Pretty*) and Falconer (the Olivia series) bring their star power to this “elegant standalone that showcases the creators’ urbane morality,” according to *PW*’s review. Ages 5–7.

Table Titans Club

Scott Kurtz. Holiday House, Mar. 5 (\$22.99, ISBN 978-0-8234-5316-0)
Eisner Award winner Kurtz rolls out a standalone D&D-themed middle school drama about a troubled new girl who finds her place around the game table. Ages 8–12.

Timid

Jonathan Todd. Graphix, Apr. 2 (\$12.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-338-30570-8)
A young artist moves from Florida to Boston and tries to figure out whether he should just fit in with the other Black kids or risk standing out for drawing comics. Ages 8–12.



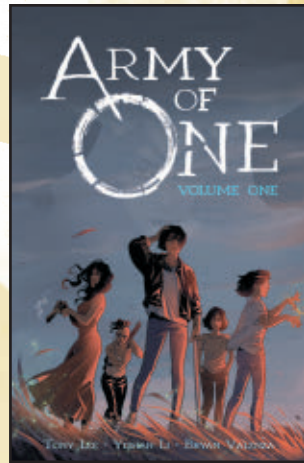
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Early Reader Spotlight

From the earliest ages, kids gravitate toward comics' dynamic yet accessible layouts and often goofy humor. Here are some choice spring picks from a blossoming category.

Attack of the Krill (Team Unihorn and Woolly #1)

Alexis Frederick-Frost. HarperAlley, Apr. 16 (\$7.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-0-06-300206-7)

A crew of horned critters on Burlap Beach get superpowers after a lunar event—and unite to defeat a tiny crustacean turned huge and villainous. Ages 6–10.



The Case of the Golden Bone (Detective Sweet Pea #1)

Sara Varon. First Second, June 11 (\$22.99, ISBN 978-1-250-23637-1; \$14.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-250-34840-1)

Parkville's a chill place for pups, until the town's treasured golden chew bone goes missing, and Sweet Pea steps up to take on the investigator's collar, in a new

series from Eisner-nominated Varon. Ages 6–10.

Cloud Puppy

Kelly Leigh Miller. Atheneum, May 28 (\$12.99, ISBN 978-1-6659-3212-7)

Vying for the cutest of all kawaii, this new series stars a combo fluffy cloud/snuggly puppy character, who loves comics and rainbows, falls out with her best friend, and looks for a way to make it all better in the end. Ages 6–9.

Club Microbe

Elise Gravel. Drawn & Quarterly, May 21 (\$17.95, ISBN 978-1-77046-702-6)

Gravel (*The Bug Club*) is back with another whimsical science comics explainer for kids, this time zooming in on micro-organisms—from those that cause sickness to those that help create snowflakes. Ages 5 and up.



The First Day of May

Henrique Coser Moreira. Levine Querido, Mar. 5 (\$15.99, ISBN 978-1-64614-382-5)

This wordless comics-style picture book portrays a young girl's delight in the first day of spring as she encounters a butterfly and gets back on the swings. Ages 3–7.

Habits and Habitats (Jackson's Wilder Adventures #1)

Sarah Davidson. Papercutz, July 16 (\$7.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-5458-1300-3).

Jackson and his Tasmanian tiger sidekick head out in their trusty jeep to wild places across the globe, from the Faroe islands to the El Yunque rainforest and African savannas. Ages 6–10.

Howdy, Partner! (Sky & Ty #1)

Steve Breen. Pixel+Ink, Apr. 2 (\$14.99, ISBN 978-1-64595-214-5) Pulitzer winner Breen turns his editorial cartooning chops to children's fare with a new series featuring a cowgirl and dinosaur delivery service. Ages 6–9.

Hugo's Haunted Handbook

Dave Whamond. OwlKids, Mar. 12 (\$18.95, ISBN 978-1-77147-587-7)

Hugo's guidebook promises to help kids get rid of their ghosts—the only problem is, his own spirit hasn't quit yet. Ages 6–9.

Lost & Found: Based on a True Story

Mei Yu. Union Square Kids, Apr. 2 (\$12.99, ISBN 978-1-4549-5264-0)

Yu's debut graphic memoir depicts in manga-influenced art how she started at a new school in Canada after emigrating from China. Ages 7–10.



The Luna Sisters and Their Amazing Lunafish

Dan Yaccarino. Holiday House, June 25 (\$14.99, ISBN 978-0-8234-5636-9)

Sisters on the moon—one who lives in shadows, the other on the bright side—get a new pet. But can they share Moona the fish? Ages 4–8.

Night Stories: Folktales from Latin America

Liniers. Toon, June 4 (\$16.99, ISBN 978-1-6626-6529-5) Publishing simultaneously in English and Spanish, this collection of classic tales from Latin American countries, retold as comics by Eisner winner Liniers, features lara, a mermaid, and La Lechuza, a great owl with a woman's visage. Ages 7–10.

Rachel Friedman Breaks the Rules

Sarah Kapit and Genevieve Kote. Holt, (June 18, \$17.99, ISBN 978-1-250-88093-2; \$7.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-250-88092-5)

Jewish baking enthusiast Rachel (try her peanut butter challah) bucks the rules of her synagogue but promises her dad she'll reform her ways for a chance to meet one of her heroes. Ages 5–9.

Surprise! (The Adventures of Penguin and Panda #1)

Brenda Maier and Fanni Mézes. Marble, Apr. 30 (\$9.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-958325-05-6)

A can-do panda and a laze-about penguin are inexplicably best buds in this odd-couple escapade series launch.

Ages 6–9.



This Book Will Self-Destruct (Agent Harrier #1)

Ben Sanders. Kane Miller, May 1 (\$14.99, ISBN 978-1-68464-897-9)

Get ready for savvy, gadget-loving spy dog Agent Harrier, who must defuse a bomb before this very book blows up! Ages 6–10.

The Unlucky Kid

Bob Holt. Kids Can, May 7 (\$14.99, ISBN 978-1-5253-0659-4)

Whether Quinn's being chased by seagulls or pulled along by a kite string tied to his tooth, nothing ever seems to go right—so how does this unlucky kid stay so happy-go-lucky? Ages 6–9.



Viewfinder

Christine D.U. Chung and Salwa Majoka. Tundra, Feb. 13 (\$18.99, ISBN 978-0-7352-6875-3)

A visitor from space finds Earth empty of human life but, through a viewfinder, can see back in time to what's been lost in this wordless graphic novel. Ages 6–9.

Zips and Eeloo Make Hummus (Zips and Eeloo #1)

Leila Boukarim and Alex Lopez. Andrews McMeel, Feb. 6 (\$11.99, ISBN 978-1-5248-8435-2)

Alien siblings land on Earth and attempt human tasks with mixed results (but a just-right recipe included) in this “warm and madcap meditation on teamwork, patience, and new experiences,” per PW's review. Ages 6–9. —M.L.

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Canadian comics will be the special focus at the 51st Angoulême International Comics Festival.

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ABLAZE

Shepherdess Warriors by Jonathan Garnier and Amélie Fléchais, trans. by Ivanka Hahnenberger (Apr. 9, \$14.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-68497-169-5). Styled after Celtic legends, this Angoulême award-winning fantasy features a young heroine who sets out into the wilderness to protect her village, which was abandoned by its men. Ages 8–12.

ABRAMS

Spying on Spies: How Elizebeth Smith Friedman Broke the Nazis' Secret Codes by Marissa Moss (Mar. 12, \$19.99, ISBN 978-1-4197-6731-9) details how cryptanalyst Friedman (1892–1980) went from linguistic analysis of Shakespeare plays to intercepting transmissions from gangsters and Nazi spies as one of America's first female codebreakers. Ages 10–14.

**ANDREWS MCMEEL**

Spring (Haru #1) by Joe Latham (Mar. 12, \$14.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-5248-8473-4). A bird and a bear, bullied friends who find comfort in each other, set forth from their home in the Valley to a place called the Beacon, spurred on by a suspicious talisman. Ages 8–12.

Time Buddies by Matthew Cody et al. (June 25, \$12.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-5248-8820-6). Hoot, an owllet from the future, crashes into the timeline of shy kid Bentley, and together they whiz through the ages, with stops at ancient Egypt, the Renaissance, and America's early cowboy days. Ages 8–12.

BLOOMSBURY

Sick! The Twists and Turns Behind Animal Germs by Heather L. Montgomery and Lindsey Leigh (Feb. 20, \$19.99, ISBN 978-1-5476-0985-7) surveys all the ways that germ pathogens attack the immune systems of animals—

including humans—and how scientists study the phenomena of infections and epidemics. Ages 8–12.

CANDLEWICK

Mission One: The Vice Principal Problem (The Blue Stars #1) by Kekla Magoon, Cynthia Leitich Smith, and Molly Murakami (Mar. 5, \$22.99, ISBN 978-1-5362-0499-5). An odd-couple pair of cousins—a gymnast and a math-

lete—join forces and the student council to fight a corrupt villain infiltrating their school in this series launch. Ages 8–12.

My Antarctica: True Adventures in the Land of Mummified Seals, Space Robots, and So Much More by G. Neri and Corban Wilkin (Mar. 5, \$18.99, ISBN 978-1-5362-2332-3) brings readers on an icy

adventure to Antarctica, where Neri navigates the region's cold, windy wonders and encounters its wildlife, including sea angels, seals, and penguins. Ages 7–10.

CHRONICLE

Poetry Comics by Grant Snider (Mar. 26, \$18.99, ISBN 978-1-7972-1965-3). Poems inspired by the four seasons, including an elegy for a late bus and an ode to the clouds of spring, are accompanied by comics art in a collection that seeks to inspire young readers to write their own poetry. Ages 8–12.

CLARION

The Circuit Graphic Novel by Francisco Jiménez and Celia Jacobs (Mar. 26, \$15.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-0-358-34822-1) is a graphic adaptation of Jiménez's intimate memoir about his family leaving Mexico to become field workers in California, where he strived to get an education between hard labor and constant household upheaval. Ages 8–12.



The Old Willis Place Graphic Novel by Mary Downing Hahn et al. (July 16, \$15.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-0-358-65015-7). A run-down Victorian mansion traps two kids, who must sort out its arbitrary rules and dodge spectral figures, in this comics version of Hahn's ghost story. Ages 8–12.

CRACKBOOM!

Inspector Joe Is on the Case! (Pick and Pocket #1) by Majda Koren and Damijan Stepanic, trans. by David Limon (Mar. 26, \$12.95, ISBN 978-2-89802-469-6). A pair of sneaky pigs who purloin everything from doughnuts to a get-away truck are chased by Inspector Joe in these humorous short comics tales. Ages 8–12.

DC COMICS

Barkham Asylum by Yehudi Mercado (May 7, \$12.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-77950-500-2). When Gotham's top villains all go to jail, their pets get sent to the pound—where Jester, the Joker's dog, finds his antics aren't so funny to the other tough critters he's incarcerated with. Ages 8–12. 40,000-copy announced first printing.

DIAL

Lucky Scramble by Peter Raymundo (Apr. 23, \$20.99, ISBN 978-0-593-53190-7). Competitive Rubik's Cuber

Tyler gets a sponsorship to fly to the Speed Cubing national championships in Las Vegas, where he squares off against the boastful reigning champ and other puzzlers. Ages 8–12.

DIFFERENCE ENGINE

Amazing Ash & Superhero Ah Ma by Melanie Lee and Arif Rafhan

(July 16, \$12.50 trade paper, ISBN 978-981-14-5044-0). Tween Ash finds her mom annoying and worries about her grandma's growing signs of dementia. Things take a turn, however, when Ash finds out she's inherited Ah Ma's secret superhero powers. Ages 8–12.

DRAWN & QUARTERLY

Winnie-the-Pooh by A.A. Milne and Travis Dandro (Apr. 9, \$29.95, ISBN 978-1-77046-696-8). PEN Graphic Novel Award winner Dandro delves into the Hundred Acre Wood in an adaptation that takes its cue from the style of Peter Shephard, original illustrator of Milne's classic tales of Christopher Robin's magical toy friends Piglet, Eeyore, Tigger, and all the rest. Ages 7 and up.

FEIWEL AND FRIENDS

Get the Party Started (Dndoggos #1) by Scout Underhill (Feb. 27, \$22.99, ISBN 978-1-250-83435-5; \$14.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-250-83434-8). Four pooches gather to throw the six-sided dice, with dungeon master Magnus spinning a quest of a magical collar



gone missing and Pickles, Tonka, and Zoey rolling along after adventure. Ages 9–12.

FIRST SECOND

Continental Drifter by Kathy MacLeod (Apr. 2, \$22.99, ISBN 978-1-250-81373-2; \$14.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-250-81374-9). Kathy lives in Bangkok with her Thai mother and American father. Every summer, the family vacations in coastal Maine, where she loves the novelty of local fare and idyllic scenery but also comes to wonder where in the world she really belongs. Ages 8–12.

Odin (Asgardians #1) by George O'Connor (Mar. 26, \$21.99, ISBN 978-1-250-76076-0; \$12.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-250-76077-7)

takes on the mythology of the ancient Norse gods in a new series that finds the creator of the Olympians series traversing the burning rainbow bridge to Asgard, of the Nine Worlds, where warrior god Odin reigns over the Valkyries. Ages 9–14.

Scram: Society of Creatures Real and Magical by Rory Lucey (July 16, \$22.99, ISBN 978-1-250-85194-9; \$14.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-250-85195-6). A group of friends hoping to happen upon a troll start a club to uncover cryptids in their suburban town, and get more than they bargained for. Ages 8–12.

Unicorn Boy by Dave Roman (Mar. 12, \$22.99, ISBN 978-1-250-83027-2; \$14.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-250-83026-5). A seemingly ordinary boy (who likes it just that way) forms a bulge on his skull—which soon reveals itself to be a unicorn horn that sings.

NEW from Jeff Smith, creator of **THE BONE** & **TUKI**:
The secret origin of the *Bone* series is reprinted for this 40th Anniversary Collection!

THORN: The Complete Proto-Bone College Strips and Other Early Drawings. The earliest renderings of the *Bone* cousins and their cast of characters, originally published in The Ohio State University's student newspaper *The Lantern*, have been collected and remastered along with new essays and assorted bonus material.

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"These college strips are an essential element in Smith's journey toward *Bone*. But they're their own unique tale too!"
- *Comic Book Couples Counseling Podcast*

"Read *Bone* the graphic novel, and read *THORN: The Complete College Strips*, and compare them... you have basically just taken maybe the best masterclass in cartooning."

- *James Kochalka Creator of Monkey vs. Robot and Johnny Boo*

Then a cat and his own breakfast start to chat him up, too. Ages 8–12.

FITZROY

Just Like Click by Sandy Grubb (Apr. 16, \$12.95 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-64603-439-0). Nick lives an otherwise quiet life on his family’s ranch, dreaming up and drawing cartoons about a superhero called Click. When robberies endanger the property and threaten to bring a family secret to light, he dons the identity of Click to try and save the day. Ages 9–12.

FLYING EYE

Cactus Kid and the Battle for Star Rock Mountain by Emmanuel Guerrero (Mar. 5, \$15.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-913123-21-5). A young cactus wizard runs away from his powerful patriarch to seek a star rock fragment to fine-tune his magic skills in the desert, where he encounters a motorbike gang and a bounty hunting lizard. Ages 8–12.

Rune: The Tale of a Thousand Faces by Carlos Sánchez (June 4, \$15.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-

83874-121-1). When the kingdom of Puddin’ is threatened, a Deaf orphan whose magical strengths get charged up by sign language sets out to save its resident witches, ogres, and other mystical creatures. Ages 8–12.

GRAPHIX

Fairest of All: The Graphic Novel (Whatever After #1) by Sarah Mlynowski and Anu Chouhan (Apr. 2, \$12.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-338-84509-9) adapts the Snow White redo from the bestselling series that features

Camp Comics

From bunk beds and bugle wake-up calls to the fast friendships that help kids find their truest self far away from home, these comics evoke the classic experiences of summer sleepaway camp.

All Together Now! (Band Camp #1)

Brian “Smitty” Smith. *Little Bee*, May 7 (\$8.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-4998-1515-3)
A quartet of undersung instruments—an accordion, a triangle, a ukulele, and a kazoo—all get assigned to a band camp’s “junk bunk” in this anthropomorphic early reader. Ages 6–9.

Camp Launchpad (Absolute Zeros #1)

Greg Smith, Michael Tanner, and Gabrielle Gomez. *LB Ink*, Mar. 5 (\$12.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-0-316-04858-3)
The scion of an astronaut bands together with other ambitious kids at the underfunded Camp Launchpad in Florida, where they compete to demonstrate their space travel prowess and best the posh camp down the road, whose director bet millions of dollars that they’ll fail to launch. Ages 8–12.

Camp Prodigy

Caroline Palmer. *Athaneum*, June 11 (\$14.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-6659-3037-6)
A pair of nonbinary middle school violinists find fellowship and inspiration—to excel in their music and express their identity—at a monthlong orchestra camp. Ages 8–12.

Gamerville

Johnnie Christmas. *HarperAlley*, July 16 (\$15.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-0-06-305681-7)
Max Lightning’s all charged up (the energy drinks help) for

a pro video game competition—but his parents have different plans. To his shock, they send Max to Camp Refresh, where electronic devices are banned and exercise and fresh air become his new IRL enemies. Ages 8–12.

Summer Vamp

Violet Chan Karim. *Random House Graphic*, May 14 (\$21.99, ISBN 978-0-593-42523-7)
A human kid who likes to cook belatedly discovers why her culinary camp peers are so pale—because her dad’s girlfriend accidentally signed her up for a camp for vampires. Now, instead of preparing meals, she has to avoid becoming one. Ages 8–12.



Upstaged

Robin Easter. *LB Ink*, May 28 (\$12.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-0-316-42952-8)
All through middle school, non-binary theater geek Ashton and their bestie—and intense crush—Ivy have gone to summer drama camp together. In their last summer before high school, can Ash finally work up the courage to tell Ivy how they really feel? Ages 8–12.

Wires Crossed

Beth Fantaskey and O'Neill Jones. *Clarion*, Apr. 30 (\$15.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-0-358-39621-5)
What happens at camp, stays at camp... except when 12-year-old Mia, who’s already reeling because her best friend is suddenly chasing the popular crowd, finds out that her science camp buddy Tariq is transferring to her school, throwing an unexpected ingredient into their tween chemistry. Ages 8–12.

—M.L.

siblings who fall into—and change the outcome of—fairy tales. When the siblings stop Snow White from biting the poison apple, how will she ever meet her prince? Ages 8–12.

Shiny Misfits by Maysoun Zayid and Shadia Amin (Apr. 16, \$14.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-338-75250-2). Disability activist Zayid takes on the vagaries of social media fame in a graphic novel that finds tap-dancing protagonist Bay Ann Musa winning the school talent show, only to have her disability go viral. Ages 9–12.



GROUNDWOOD

Wildful by Kengo Kurimoto (Feb. 6, \$22.99, ISBN 978-1-77306-862-6). Poppy escapes the gloom of her depression through leisurely forest walks with her dog, finding how the small beauties and mysteries of nature bring light into her—and she hopes her mother’s—life. Ages 9–12.

HARPERALLEY

A for Effort by Jarad Greene (Mar. 5, \$15.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-0-06-303287-3) is Greene’s second semi-autobiographical comic, which finds protagonist Jay enrolling in a theater program as a high school freshman. His parents are excited to get Shakespeare on his college admissions package, but Jay struggles to best the Bard. Ages 8–12.

Lunar Boy by Jes and Cin Wibowo (May 14, \$15.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-0-06-305759-3). A trans boy raised on the moon travels to Earth, where he feels out of place and longs to return home—until he discovers that his journey and his friendships may have changed him after all. Ages 8–12.



HOLIDAY HOUSE

Bunnybirds by Natalie Linn (May 28, \$22.99, ISBN 978-0-8234-4926-2). A tribe of prophetic, flying bunnies who believe that

calm and content mindsets are the key to staying afloat find their ranks thinning, and their princess seeks answers by traveling over the rim of the known world to the Court of Dragons. Ages 8–12.

HOLT

Survival of the Fittest by Rebecca Donnelly and Misa Saburi (Apr. 23, \$16.99, ISBN 978-1-250-80531-7). On a science-themed game show judged by a tank of sharks, animals compete in an engineering challenge to invent a new product made of natural elements. Ages 7–11.

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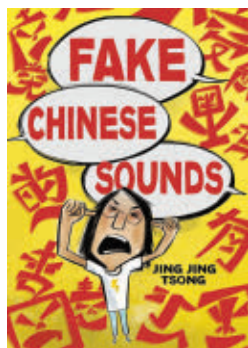
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IRON CIRCUS

The Silver City (Student Ambassador #2) by Ryan Estrada (May 14, \$15 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-63899-132-8). What if international ambassadors were kids? This entry in Estrada's series finds eight-year-old Joseph on a mission to Mexico, where he learns more about his ancestry while cracking the case of a haunted silver mine. Ages 8-12.

KOKILA

Fake Chinese Sounds by Jing Jing Tsong (Apr. 30, \$23.99, ISBN 978-0-525-55342-7; \$13.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-0-525-55343-4). Taiwanese American middle schooler Mei loves summers spent cooking guo with her visiting grandma Nai Nai, though she's bored by the mandatory Mandarin lessons. When school restarts, however, a racist bully targets her—and ignoring him only makes it worse. Ages 9-12.



LB INK

Art Club by Rashad Doucet (Feb. 6, \$12.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-0-7595-5639-3). A boy bucks his grandfather's and vice principal's prejudices about the value of art by launching an extracurricular art club at his underfunded school—if he can find the cash flow to keep it running. Ages 8-11.

LITTLE, BROWN/PATTERSON

Ali Cross: The Graphic Novel by James Patterson, Adam Rau, and Phillip Tajalle (July 29, \$12.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-0-316-32687-2) adapts the series featuring the son of FBI agent Alex Cross, as Ali chases criminals and cases just like his dad, who is unjustly being put on trial. Ages 10-14.

ONI

The Happy Shop by Brittany Long Olsen (Feb. 13, \$14.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-63715-279-9). New kid Darcy is homesick, but her mood changes

when she happens upon a shop that sells feel-good vapors (such as the glow of grabbing a sweater on sale), befriends the owners, and helps them expand their offerings. Ages 8-12.

PAPERCUTZ

The Tail of the Mummy Cat (Double Booking #1) by Chas! Pangburn, Kim Shearer, and Nic Touris (April 16, \$12.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-5458-1147-4). The launch of a new series in which each entry tells the same adventure from two different perspectives, this graphic novel finds siblings Otto and Nan on a trip through Egypt. How it goes depends very much on which of them is telling their story. Ages 7-12.

PENGUIN WORKSHOP

What Made California the Golden State? Life During the Gold Rush: A Who HQ Graphic Novel by Shing Yin Khor and Kass Gray (Apr. 2, \$13.99, ISBN 978-0-593-38585-2) presents the heady days and high risks of the California gold rush through the histories of two miners hoping to strike it rich in the Sierra Nevada. Ages 8-12.

PUTNAM

Amber Brown Is Not a Crayon: The Graphic Novel by Paula Danziger and Victoria Ying (May 21, \$19.99, ISBN 978-0-593-61569-0) adapts tales featuring Danziger's punny character, Amber Brown, whose bestie Justin is moving out of town after the pair's spent years sheltering each other from the woes of shared custody and class meannies. Ages 7-10.

The Monster and the Maze (Monkey King and the World of Myths #1) by Maple Lam (Apr. 2, \$23.99, ISBN 978-0-593-52463-3). Sun Wukong, the

Monkey King, ventures into the realm of Greek mythology in an attempt to save everyone in the world, be they gods or human, from turning into monsters. Ages 8-12.

RANDOM HOUSE GRAPHIC

Kira and the (Maybe) Space Princess (Magic Girls #1) by Megan Brennan (Mar. 5, \$21.99, ISBN 978-0-593-17754-9). In an homage to manga, fashion-forward and fun-loving superheroines—one of them a cat unicorn—battle villains with frills and glitter. Ages 8-12.

ROARING BROOK

The Adventures of Thunder and Sage (Wagnificent #1) by Bethanie Deeney Murguia (July 23, \$21.99, ISBN 978-1-250-83530-7; \$13.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-250-90873-5). Thunder knows she's a good dog—happy to nap, snap up treats, and play ball with her human. When her inner wolfishness emerges in wild impulses, however, she struggles to reconcile her dual nature. Ages 6-10.

ROCKY POND

Puzzled: A Memoir of Growing Up with OCD by Pan Cooke (Apr. 16, \$23.99, ISBN 978-0-593-61561-4). Intrusive fears start invading Cooke's mind at age 10—that he'll swear in church or slip a racy photo into his homework packet—and only ritual actions seem to calm him down in this comics memoir depiction of obsessive-compulsive disorder. Ages 10-14.



S&S/DLOUHY

The Expets by Mark Tatulli (Apr. 30, \$14.99, ISBN 978-1-6659-1487-1). A lazy, smelly canine gets recruited into a super-pet team, but he doesn't want anything to do with the do-gooders—until robbers and an intruder robot force him to tag along to defend his home turf. Ages 7-12.

SKYBOUND

Super Dinosaur Compendium by Robert Kirkman and Jason Howard (July 9, \$34.99, ISBN 978-1-5343-2722-1) collects the full saga of inner earth, evildoer Max Maximus, and a 10-year-old hero and his T-rex video-gamer best bud, who race to save the dinosaurs from destruction. Ages 8-12.

THAMES & HUDSON

The Case of the Curious Canary (Miss Cat #1) by Joëlle Jolivet and Jean-Luc Fromental, trans. by Jill Pythian (Apr. 2, \$12.95 trade paper, ISBN 978-0-500-66026-3). After a young woman who calls herself Miss Cat sets up a detective agency in a milk bar, she strikes out in search of a missing songbird, hoping the canary can help her crack a cold case. Ages 7-10.



TOP SHELF

Deja Ross Speaks to Freaks by Lisa Naffziger (July 2, \$19.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-60309-540-2). Monster-loving middle schooler Deja makes stops along her family road trip to creature-hunt, and manages to befriend the Texas Chupacabra, vowing to bring the voices of mystical beasts to the airwaves. Ages 8-12.

VIKING

Jupiter Nettle and the Seven Schools of Magic by Sangu Mandanna and Pablo Ballesteros (June 11, \$22.99, ISBN 978-0-593-46447-2). After ambitious yet bumbling spell-caster Jupiter fails her entrance exams to magic school, she gets one more chance, but finds the School of Earth Magic and her fittingly named teacher, Professor Grim, to be a drag. Ages 8-12.

A WAVE BLUE WORLD

Becoming Who We Are: Real Stories About Growing Up Trans, edited by Sammy Lisel and Hazel Newlevant (May 28, \$16.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-949518-26-9), profiles trans activists, teachers, and scientists in comics about growing up, coming out to family and friends, transitioning genders, and more. Ages 8-12.



WORKMAN

The Divmulti Ray Dilemma: A Math Graphic Novel: Learn Multiplication and Division! (The Solvers #1) by Jon Chad (Feb. 20, \$24.99, ISBN 978-1-5235-2671-0). Kid superheroes solve the problem of the villain Null Void in this launch of a graphic novel series designed to teach the foundations of math. Ages 8-12.

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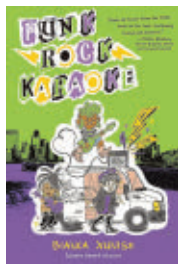
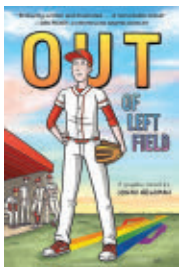




SPRING 2024
PREVIEW

Young Adult Comics & Graphic Novels

By Meg Lemke



Ngozi Ukazu and G. Willow Wilson headline a season full of serious and sassy offerings, including punky graphic novels, coming-of-age tales with modern vibes, and flights of fantasy—and flirtation.

TOP 10

Bunt! Striking Out on Financial Aid

Ngozi Ukazu and Mad Rupert. First Second, Feb. 13 (\$25.99, ISBN 978-1-250-19352-0; \$17.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-250-19351-3)

Check, Please series phenom Ukazu steps up to bat for another sporty conceit: an art school student's tuition runs out—and her only option left is to slide home on a softball scholarship. Ages 14 and up.

The Fox Maidens

Robin Ha. Balzer + Bray, Feb. 13 (\$18.99, ISBN 978-0-06-268512-4)

Ha follows up *Almost American Girl* with a feminist take on a Korean folktale, starring the daughter of a fox demon. Ages 13 and up.

The Gulf

Adam de Souza. Tundra, Mar. 5 (\$20.99, ISBN 978-1-77488-073-9)

A group of disaffected high schoolers run away to a remote island commune in this outing from a rising indie cartoonist. Ages 14 and up.

The Hunger and the Dusk

G. Willow Wilson and Chris Wildgoose. IDW Originals, June 11 (\$21.99 trade paper, ISBN 979-8-88724-082-4)

Ms. Marvel creator Wilson returns with an epic set in an apocalyptic world of orcs and humans engaged in mortal battle. Ages 13 and up.

Just Another Story: A Graphic Migration Account

Ernesto Saade. Graphic Universe, Apr. 2 (\$17.99 trade paper, ISBN 979-8-7656-2336-7)

Noting that refugee and migrant youth make dangerous crossings every day, Saade offers an up-close look at the experience for one family fleeing El Salvador. Publishing simultaneously in English and Spanish. Ages 14 and up.

Out of Left Field

Jonah Newman. Andrews McMeel, Mar. 26 (\$16.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-5248-8482-6)

The meet-cute premise of editor-turned-cartoonist Newman's debut finds a nerdy queer kid trying out for his high school baseball team to play alongside his crush. Ages 15 and up.

Punk Rock Karaoke

Bianca Xunise. Viking, Apr. 23 (\$24.99, ISBN 978-0-593-46450-2)

Ignatz promising new talent award winner Xunise brings her patented punk rock stylings to a friendship and coming-of-age story about a crew of South Side Chicago teens who start a garage band. Ages 14 and up.

Ready or Not

Andi Porretta. Atheneum, July 2 (\$14.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-6659-0702-6)

A teen clique looks to liven up summer by playing "dare" (they're skipping truths). The results will push these disparate personalities into risk and revelation. Ages 14 and up.

The Worst Ronin

Maggie Tokuda-Hall and Faith Schaffer. HarperAlley, May 21 (\$18.99, ISBN 978-0-358-46493-8)

Samurai girls on the cusp of adulthood battle real-life demons and their own teen angst. Ages 14 and up.

Young Hag and the Witches' Quest

Isabel Greenberg. Amulet, May 14 (\$24.99, ISBN 978-1-4197-6511-7)

New York Times bestseller Greenberg turns her distinctive whimsical-woodcut-style artwork to an Arthurian fable of witchery and wonderment. Ages 12 and up.

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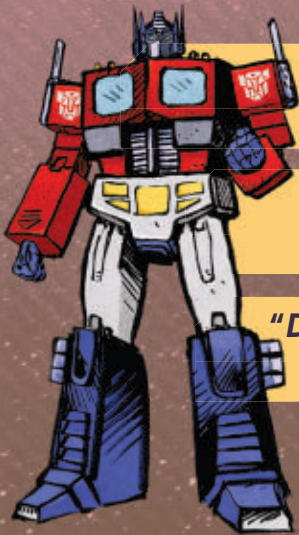
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AMULET

The Harrowing by Kristen Kiesling and Rye Hickman (Apr. 16, \$24.99, ISBN 978-1-4197-6084-6). A psychic teen whose visions feature potential killers gets kidnapped by scientists who want to harness her premonitions to deter crimes. When she foresees her closest friend and secret crush shooting a man, the question becomes—is any of it real? Ages 14 and up.

BDANG

When the Lake Burns by Geneviève Bigué, trans. by Luke Langille (June 11, \$25 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-77262-097-9). Dangerous secrets surface when a strange natural phenomenon causes a lake to catch fire, and a group of teens try to test out the legend of the flames' alchemic powers. Ages 14 and up.

DC

Bad Dream: A Dreamer Story by Nicole Maines and Rye Hickman (Apr. 2, \$16.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-77951-045-7) imagines the origin story of trans superhero Nia Nal, who struggles to keep hidden the seer powers her older sister was supposed to receive from their mother but were accidentally transferred to Nia instead. Ages 13–17. 80,000 copy announced first printing.

Barda by Ngozi Ukazu (June 4, \$16.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-77951-113-3). Love is taboo on the hellish planet Apokolips, but warrior Barda still finds herself drawn to the idea of romance—an inclination her mentor seeks to suppress by assigning her a seemingly impossible task. Ages 13–17. 90,000 copy announced first printing.

Starfire by Kami Garcia and Gabriel Picolo (July 2, \$16.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-77951-799-9) offers up an origin story for the Teen Titan, whose superpowers arise when she and her sister undergo experimental therapy for Ehlers Danlos syndrome. Ages 13–17. 110,000-copy announced first printing.

DISNEY HYPERION

Straight on Till Morning: A Twisted

Tale Graphic Novel by Noor Sofi and Liz Braswell (June 11, \$17.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-368-06814-7) asks, what if Wendy never went to Neverland with Peter Pan—and instead got left behind and snagged by travel guide Captain Hook for a very different adventure? Ages 12 and up.

King Cheer (Arden High #2) by Molly Horton Booth, Stephanie Kate Strohm, and Jamie Green (Feb. 6, \$14.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-368-08111-5). Shakespeare's *King Lear* gets a queer high school romance twist, where the matter of succession pertains to who will take over the top of the cheer squad's pyramid. Ages 12 and up.

**DYNAMITE ENTERTAINMENT**

Here in Manhattan (Gargoyles #1) by Greg Weisman (Feb. 6, \$19.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-5241-2355-0). The classic TV show *Gargoyles* gets a reboot, with a new series depicting the antics of ancient stone warriors awakened from the New York City buildings on which they'd been frozen. Ages 12 and up.

FAIRSQUARE COMICS

A Fox in My Brain by Lou Loubie (Apr. 16, \$19.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-960171-10-8) depicts the author's experience of cyclothymia bipolar disorder as a wild, wily fox that prowls through her mind. Ages 13 and up.

I Run to Make My Heart Beat by Rachel Khan and Aude Massot, trans. by Ivanka Hahnenberger (Feb. 27, \$25 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-960171-05-4) adapts Khan's semi-autobiographical novel into the comics story of a multicultural runner named Nina who finds her stride on the track in mid-1990s France. Ages 13 and up.

FEIWEL & FRIENDS

Baker and the Bard: A Cozy Fantasy Adventure by Fern Haight (Mar. 5, \$25.99, ISBN 978-1-250-82850-7;

\$17.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-250-82851-4) follows a pair of friends who bake and act together on a foraging trip for mushrooms that turn out to be truly magical. Ages 12 and up.

With a Little Luck by Marissa Meyer and Chuck Gonzales (Feb. 13, \$20.99, ISBN 978-1-250-61893-1) features a hapless high school gamer who gets the magic of boundless luck but stumbles into realizing that following his dreams might mean leaving the girl he really loves behind. Ages 12 and up.

FIRST SECOND

Call Me Iggy by Jorge Aguirre and Rafael Rosado (Feb. 13, \$25.99, ISBN 978-1-250-20415-8; \$18.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-250-

20413-4). A Colombian American teen named Iggy falls for an undocumented peer, Marisol, who's too busy to return his advances—despite the ghost of Iggy's grandfather playing cupid. Ages 14 and up.

Karate Prom by Kyle Starks (May 7, \$25.99, ISBN 978-1-250-86865-7; \$17.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-250-86866-4). *Rick & Morty* writer Starks's homage to 1980s adolescent dramedy and martial-arts pulp puts high school fighters and their dangerous ex-lovers into wilder and wilder scenarios in the run-up to prom. Ages 14 and up.

Youth Group by Jordan Morris and Bowen McCurdy (July 16, \$25.99, ISBN 978-1-250-78922-8; \$17.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-250-78923-5). *Jordan, Jessie, Go* podcaster Morris (*Bubble*) returns to comics with an absurdist and satirical monsters-among-us tale in which an otherwise typical church youth group trains to battle actual demons. Ages 14 and up.

GETTY

Ruth Asawa: An Artist Takes Shape by Sam Nakahira (Mar. 19, \$19.95, ISBN 978-1-947440-09-8) presents a graphic biography of Japanese American artist Ruth Asawa (1926–2013), who was



detained in incarceration camps in California and Arkansas during WWII before becoming a groundbreaking sculptor. Ages 13 and up.

GRAPHIC UNIVERSE

Hotelitor: Luxury-Class Defense and Hospitality Unit by Josh Hicks (May 7, \$16.99 trade paper, ISBN 979-8-7656-2335-0). When a giant alien attacks the luxury cruise ship *Hotelitor*, which is stranded in deep space, it's the vessel's teenage intern and her fellow service workers who rally to rescue the guests. Ages 14 and up.

GRAPHIX

Rainbow! by Sunny and Gloomy (Mar. 5, \$16.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-339-01123-3) collects the webtoon romance that pairs dreamy Boo Meadows with new girl Mimi, who brings her flighty fantasies down to reality as the two grow closer than just friends. Ages 12 and up.

GUNGNIR

Mutant Cats by Morgan Rosenblum, Matthew Medney, and Alex Arizmendi (Apr. 30, \$22.99, ISBN 978-1-962594-00-4). When Mutant Labs develops a renewable energy gadget, project leader Flux and his goofball team give in to corporate pressure to rush it to market—and accidentally unleash a scourge of mutant cats from an alternate dimension. Ages 16 and up.

HARPERALLEY

Homebody by Theo Parish (Apr. 23, \$18.99, ISBN 978-0-06-331958-5) delves into Parish's experiences as a non-binary person, from navigating seemingly arbitrary social mores while growing up to finding a sense of homecoming in realizing and assuming their gender identity. Ages 14 and up.

Pillow Talk by Stephanie Cooke and Mel Valentine Vargas (Apr. 30, \$18.99, ISBN 978-0-358-52571-4). Grace, aka Cinderhella, is an upstart contender who



bucks the sizeist norms of an underground pillow fighting league as she faces off against opponents like Pain Eyre, Miss Fortune, and Kat Atonic. Ages 14 and up.

Sunhead by Alex Assan (May 7, \$18.99, ISBN 978-0-06-311357-2). Rotem's so deep into her fandom of a vampire romance novel that she alienates her longtime crew, who just aren't that into it. Then she meets a new girl who gets it—and her—on a whole new level. Ages 14 and up.

Tristan and Lancelot: a Tale of Two Knights by James Persichetti and Lisa Biehler (May 14, \$18.99, ISBN 978-0-358-54123-3) takes a slash fanfic approach for an Arthurian queer romance that asks, what if Lancelot and Tristan's knightly bond blossomed into something erotic? Ages 13 and up.

HOLT

Maelstrom: A Prince of Evil by Lorian Merriman (May 28, \$24.99, ISBN 978-1-250-82283-3; \$17.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-250-82284-0). Maelstrom may be the demon scion of an evil ruler, but his even more troublesome mother won't step down. So he teams up with the "Hero of Virtue" Twigs to attempt a coup—which promptly backfires. Ages 12 and up.

IDW ORIGINALS

Taka by Ryan Jampole (Mar. 19, \$16.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-68405-976-8). After accidentally unleashing evil robots on her city, Taka—with the help of her bestie, Star, and a science priestess called Meg—secretly becomes a mech fighter to tidy up her epic fail. Ages 13 and up.

IRON CIRCUS

Indiginerds, edited by Alina Pete (July 16, \$20 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-63899-133-5), brings together Indigenous comics creators, including Rhael McGregor, PJ Underwood, and Kameron White, for stories of growing up

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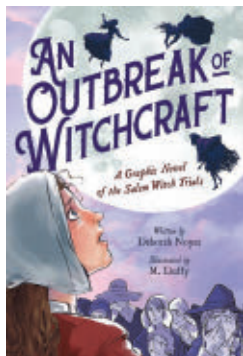
within the mixture of pop culture influences and traditions found in their First Nations communities. Ages 14 and up.

KABOOM!

The Sky Kingdom (Nomads #1) by Captain Juuter (May 14, \$12.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-60886-600-7). Reluctant young traveler Lance strikes out from his home in the sea across the kingdom of the sky in search of his missing brother, in this first collection of Juuter's webtoons. Ages 13 and up.

LB INK

An Outbreak of Witchcraft: A Graphic Novel of the Salem Witch Trials by Deborah Noyes and M. Duffy (June 4, \$17.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-0-7595-5559-4) depicts the terrors of 1692 to 1693 in Massachusetts, when accusations of witchcraft led to the executions of more than 20 people. Ages 14 and up.



LEVINE QUERIDO

49 Days by Agnes Lee (Mar. 5, \$18.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-64614-375-7) interprets the Buddhist tradition of a 49-day journey between life and death as the diary of a Korean American girl who must come to terms with what she's leaving behind. Ages 12 and up.

LITTLE, BROWN/OTTAVIANO

Freshman Year by Sarah Mai (Feb. 13, \$17.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-0-316-40117-3). Sarah heads out from the Wisconsin suburbs to start college in Minnesota, sure she'll stay close to her boyfriend and friends back home while winning the acclaim of her pros—but finds it much harder than she imagined. Ages 14 and up.

MAVERICK

I'm a Mess by Einat Tsarfati (July 9, \$14.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-5458-0086-7) celebrates the unsung advantages of scatterbrains, including keen

visual memory and the ability to find creative inspiration in chaos, while offering some tips for avoiding clutter. Ages 14 and up.

Of Her Own Design by Birdie Willis et al. (June 18, \$14.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-952303-57-9). An angsty teen scribbler escapes her argumentative parents and garden-variety teen drama into a world of stories, which start coming to life and wrapping her real-life concerns up in their plots. Ages 14 and up.

Silver Vessels by Steve Orlando and Katia Vecchio (Mar. 12, \$14.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-952303-58-6). Treasure-hunting teens in the Florida Keys set their hopes on discovering a Spanish galleon sunk in the 17th century, but it's lessons

in coming-of-age that their dive unearths. Ages 14 and up.

NOBROW

Garbage Night: The Complete Edition by Benji Lee (May 7, \$20.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-910620-74-8) binds up the original graphic novel of a dog, a raccoon and a deer in a postapocalyptic landscape eagerly awaiting the return of garbage pickup night with a sequel that finds the trio continuing their search for scavenging opportunities. Ages 13 and up.

Liberty by Julian Voloj and Jorg Hartmann (Jul. 2, \$22.99, ISBN 978-1-913123-05-5) investigates the origins of the Statue of Liberty, which welcomes immigrants to Ellis Island and was erected due to the determination of a French artist. Ages 13 and up.

PUTNAM

The Ghostkeeper by Johanna Taylor (July 23, \$24.99, ISBN 978-0-593-52667-5). Ever since a brush with death, teenager Dorian sees ghosts, and assists them in transitioning through the door to the afterlife. When that portal gets locked, however, the hauntings escalate,

interfering with his family life and romantic relationship. Ages 12 and up.

RANDOM HOUSE GRAPHIC

First Test: The Graphic Novel (Protector of the Small #1) by Tamora Pierce and Becca Farrow (July 2, \$17.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-0-307-93157-3) adapts Pierce's bestselling fantasy about a spunky girl named Kel who must get past a sexist lord's unfair endurance trials to become the first female knight in Tortall. Ages 12 and up.

TOP SHELF

Wolfpitch by Balazs Lorinczi (June 11, \$19.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-60309-539-6). A teen werewolf and two ghosts start up a garage band—despite their supernatural enmities—and take on a rival group, with unexpected consequences, in this queer love story slash rock dramedy. Ages 13 and up.

TU

Safe Passage by G. Neri and David Brame (Mar. 10, \$20.95 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-64379-034-3). Coretta Scott King Honoree Neri returns to the South Side Chicago community of *Yummy*, where their friends risk everything for the cash blowing in the wind after an armored truck crashes in the middle of gangland. Ages 12 and up.

VERSIFY

Brownstone by Samuel Teer and Mar Julia (June 11, \$18.99, ISBN 978-0-358-39474-7). Almudena reunites with her Guatemalan American father for the summer and learns about her heritage as they fix up his rundown brownstone home together. Ages 14 and up.

WORKMAN

Here I Am, I Am Me: An Illustrated Guide to Mental Health by Cara Bean (Apr. 2, \$24.99, ISBN 978-1-5235-2438-9) illuminates the neuroscience of mental health, including such tough topics as depression, suicide, and addiction, with comics that portray parts of the brain as characters. Ages 12 and up.

A vibrant pop art illustration of a woman with voluminous, curly blue hair and bright yellow sunglasses. She is wearing a pink dress with white polka dots. The background features a green field of black dots, with a large blue speech bubble containing text in the lower-left corner. The overall style is reminiscent of mid-20th-century comic book art.

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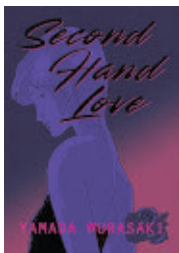
SPRING 2024 PREVIEW

Manga

By Shaenon K. Garrity

Romance and horror take center stage in this season's manga, alongside edgy action series, inspiring sports stories, LGBTQ narratives, and challenging indie titles.

TOP 10



Captain Momo's Secret Base

Kenji Tsuruta, trans. by Dana Lewis. Dark Horse, May 14 (\$14.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-5067-4058-4)

The eccentric Captain Momo lives on an interstellar cargo ship with only her cat for company and seldom bothers to wear clothing.

Her Frankenstein

Kawashima Norikazu, trans. by Ryan Holmberg. Smudge, May 7 (\$19.95 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-961581-91-3)

This psychological horror story follows a boy who becomes a monster for the girl he loves.

Just Like Mona Lisa

Tsumuji Yoshimura. Square Enix, July 16 (\$14.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-64609-277-2)

In a world where people are genderless until adolescence, late bloomer Hinase is torn between identities when both a boy and a girl confess their love for them.

Medalist

Tsurumaikada, trans. by Kevin Gifford. Kodansha, Mar. 5 (\$13.99 trade paper, ISBN 979-88-88771-85-3)

Inori's figure-skating dreams seem impossible, until a washed-up coach takes her under his wing.

My Name Is Shingo: The Perfect Edition

Kazuo Umezz, trans. by Jocelyne Allen. Viz, Feb. 27 (\$35, ISBN 978-1-974742-72-1)

An industrial robot acquires self consciousness and searches for the young couple it considers its parents in this gonzo SF classic.

Search and Destroy

Atsushi Kaneko and Osamu Tezuka. Fantagraphics, Feb. 13 (\$14.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-68396-932-7)

Kaneko (*Bambi and Her Pink Gun*) reenvision Osamu Tezuka's *Dororo* as a dystopian SF action epic.

Second Hand Love

Yamada Murasaki, trans. by Ryan Holmberg. Drawn & Quarterly, July 16 (\$24.95 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-77046-718-7)

Women deal with the complicated realities of love and fidelity in a pair of stories from the creator of *Talk to My Back*.

Since I Could Die Tomorrow

Sumako Kari, trans. by David Bove. Tokyopop, Feb. 7 (\$13.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-4278-7527-3)

When a 40-something woman enters early menopause, she's reminded of the brevity of life and resolves to make the most of her time.

Taking Care of God

Liu Cixin and Jun Yokoyama, trans. by Giuseppe Di Martino. Yen, Feb. 20 (\$15 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-975392-37-6)

Life on Earth is upended by the arrival of otherworldly elders seeking humanity's care in this adaptation of a story by the author of *The Three-Body Problem*.

Throw Away the Suit Together

Keyyang, trans. by Faye Cozy. Seven Seas, July 16 (\$13.99 trade paper, ISBN 979-8-88843-829-9)

Two college girls try to escape the looming responsibilities of adulthood by running away to a small island town in this LGBTQ romance.

ABLAZE

Shakespeare Manga Theater by Osamu Tezuka (Mar. 12, \$14.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-68497-186-2). The “God of Manga” puts his personal twist on stories from Shakespeare, including *Macbeth*, *Hamlet*, *Othello*, and a robot *Romeo and Juliet*.

Tomorrow the Birds by Osamu Tezuka, trans. by Iyasu Nagata (Apr. 23, \$14.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-68497-238-8) collects linked stories in which birds evolve at an accelerated rate, developing such powers as the ability to harness fire, and rise up against humanity.

AIRSHIP

The Mimosa Confessions by Mei Hachimoku and Kukka, trans. by Evan Ward (June 4, \$15.99 trade paper, ISBN 979-8-88843-778-0). A teenage boy is torn between the girl he’s just fallen for and the estranged childhood

friend who unexpectedly reenters his life in this light novel with LGBTQ themes.

True Love Fades Away When the Contract Ends by Kosuzu Kobato and Fumi Takamura, trans. by Julie Goniwich (June 11, \$15.99 trade paper, ISBN 979-8-88843-759-9). In this period romance light novel, a noblewoman and a nobleman pretend to be in love to avoid their arranged marriages.

ANDREWS MCMEEL

The Innkeeper Chronicles: Clean Sweep **Graphic Novel** by Ilona Andrews and Shinju Ageha (Mar. 5, \$18.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-5248-8868-8) adapts Andrews’s fantasy novel about Dina DeMille, an innkeeper with a magical broom who provides lodging to otherworldly visitors.

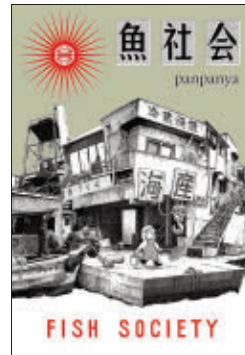
DARK HORSE

H.P. Lovecraft’s The Call of Cthulhu by Gou Tanabe, trans. by Zack Davison (July 30, \$19.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-5067-4140-6). The latest Lovecraft adaptation visualizes the horror writer’s most famous creation, a squid-faced cosmic entity worshipped by an ancient cult.

DENPA

Fish Society by Panpanya, trans. by Ko Ransom (Apr. 30, \$15.95, ISBN 978-1-63442-840-8). In the title story of this whimsical yet incisive collection, fish climb out of the sea and go to work in the Japanese fishing industry.

Holiday Junction by Shinzo Keigo, trans. by Ko Ransom (July 16, \$13.95 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-63442-870-5),



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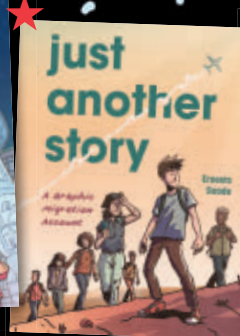
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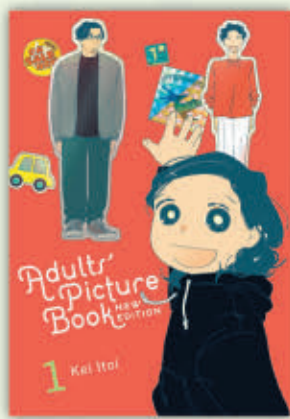


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DRAWN & QUARTERLY

Oba Electroplating Factory by Yoshiharu Tsuge, trans. by Ryan Holmberg (June 18, \$24.95, ISBN 978-1-77046-679-1). The fourth volume of short stories by Tsuge (*Nejishiki*) includes painfully honest autofiction as well as the alt-manga legend's efforts at more mainstream-friendly material.

FAIRSQUARE COMICS

Butterfly Tears by Fang Yili (Feb. 13, \$19.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-960171-07-8) is a collection of three fantasy-tinged love stories inspired by Chinese myths and legends.



INKLORE

My Love Story with Yamada-Kun at Lv999 by Mashiro, trans. by Mangamo (Apr. 2, \$12.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-984862-69-3). A college girl gets into online gaming and falls for a pro gamer who has trouble expressing his emotions in this romantic comedy that was originally serialized online.

IZE

Unholy Blood by Leena Lim (Feb. 20, \$20 trade paper, ISBN 979-84-00-90112-6). A vampire woman teams up with a human police captain to fight powerful, dangerous "half-bloods."

KODANSHA

Bless by Yukino Sonoyama (Apr. 2, \$13.99 trade paper, ISBN 979-88-88771-79-2). Aia is handsome enough to pick up modeling gigs but would rather be a makeup artist, while shy Jun is insecure about her looks—but together they could form a runway power couple.

The Fragrant Flower Blooms with Dignity by Saka Mikami, trans. by Fabian Kraft (June 4, \$13.99 trade

paper, ISBN 979-88-88771-38-9). In this opposites-attract romance, a boys' school for juvenile delinquents and a girls' school for elite young ladies are thrown for a loop when two of their students fall in love.

Ninja vs. Gokudo by Shinsuke

Kondo, trans. by Florin Evanko and Lindsey Clifford (May 14, \$13.99 trade paper, ISBN 979-88-88771-64-8), follows the battles of two deadly rivals in a war between ninja and yakuza that's threatened civilization throughout history.

Sketchy by Makihirochi, trans. by Alethea and Athena Nibley (Apr. 9, \$12.99 trade paper, ISBN 979-88-88770-

14-6). A young woman gets a new lease on life through skateboarding, in this streetwise drama from the creator of the cult-hit web manga *Is Kichijoji the Only Place to Live?*

KUMA

May Tomorrow Bring Rainbows by Noriko Kihara (Apr. 16, \$15.95 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-63442-456-1) is an LGBTQ romance about a nonbinary drag bar owner who falls for a mysterious person they meet online.

ROCKPORT

Apple Black Origins: The Spectrum and the Spectre by Odunze Oguguo and Stephanie Williams (June 11, \$13.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-0-7603-9002-3). In this light novel prequel to the Apple Black series, a young Black sorcerer's vit-iligo holds the key to finding the legendary Golden Wands.

RUNNING PRESS

The Essential Manga Guide: 50 Series Every Manga Fan Should Know by Briana Lawrence (June 11, \$24.99, ISBN 978-0-7624-8178-1). Crunchyroll

senior editor Lawrence introduces readers to popular, influential, and critically acclaimed manga series.

SEVEN SEAS

BL First Crush Anthology: Five Seconds Before We Fall in Love by Kaori Tsurutani et al., trans. by Jocelyne Allen (May 14, \$14.99 trade paper, ISBN 979-8-88843-752-0), brings together boys' love stories by some of the most popular artists in the field, including the creators of *BL Metamorphosis* and *Manly Appetites*.

Monster Cats by Pandania, trans. by Minna Lin (May 7, \$14.99 trade paper, ISBN 979-8-88843-495-6). The creator of *Yokai Cats* and *The Evil Secret Society of Cats* is back with another collection of comic strips about fantastic felines, including cats with the powers of ban-shees, yetis, and gorgons.

Mysterious Disappearances by Nujima, trans. by Deniz Amasya (May 21, \$13.99 trade paper, ISBN 979-8-88843-755-1). Two bookstore clerks with an interest in the unexplained investigate supernatural urban legends in this sexy occult mystery series.

The Tree of Death: Yomotsuheguy by Masasumi Kakizaki, trans. by Deniz Amasya (Feb. 6, \$14.99 trade paper, ISBN 979-8-88843-327-0), delves into the world of a former police officer who

becomes an immortal monster in his quest to avenge the murder of his family.

SMUDGE

UFO Mushroom Invasion by Marina Shirakawa, trans. by Ryan Holmberg (July 16, \$19.95 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-961581-01-2). A flying saucer crashes to Earth, releasing bizarre fungal

spores, in this underground horror classic.

SQUARE ENIX

Smoking Behind the Supermarket With You by Jinushi (Feb. 20, \$12.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-64609-286-4).





An overworked salaryman shares smoke breaks with a sardonic supermarket cashier, not realizing he already knows her, in this unconventional romance.

Victoria's Electric Coffin by Ikuno Tajima (Apr. 2, \$12 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-64609-291-8). In 1920s New York City, girl genius Victoria Frankenstein offers a condemned prisoner a second chance as the subject of her experiments in reviving the dead.

STEAMSHIP

Before You Discard Me, I Shall Have My Way with You by Takako Midori and Seren (Mar. 26, \$14.99 trade paper, ISBN 979-8-88843-620-2). In this period romance, a noblewoman is heartbroken when the prince to whom she was betrothed breaks off their engagement—but she isn't too devastated to plot revenge.

I Want You to Make Me Beautiful!

The Complete Manga Collection by Cocoa (Apr. 16, \$23.99 trade paper, ISBN 979-8-88843-623-3). After an office lady's boyfriend insults her looks while breaking up with her, she enlists an androgynously handsome acquaintance to give her a makeover and a lesson in love.

SUBLIME

Candy Color Paradox Assorted Pack by Isaku Natsume (Mar. 12, \$12.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-974743-82-7). Sparks fly between a reporter and a photographer during their stakeouts together in this compilation of side and bonus stories from the boys' love romance.

Engage by Yuu Minaduki (Apr. 9, \$12.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-974743-85-8). During the Tanabata

Festival, which honors a pair of star-crossed lovers, a chef confesses his feelings to the mysterious older man who visits his family's restaurant once a year.

TITAN COMICS

Speed Grapher by Tomozo, trans. by Jonathan Clements and Motoko

Tamamuro (Apr. 23, \$12.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-78774-250-5). After encountering a girl whose touch bestows strange powers, a photojournalist finds that everyone he photographs dies in this adaptation of a Studio Gonzo anime.

Three Exorcism Siblings by Shinta Harekawa, trans. by Jonathan Clements and

Motoko Tamamuro (Mar. 19, \$12.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-78774-137-9)



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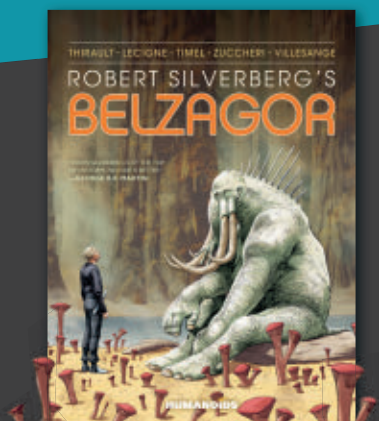
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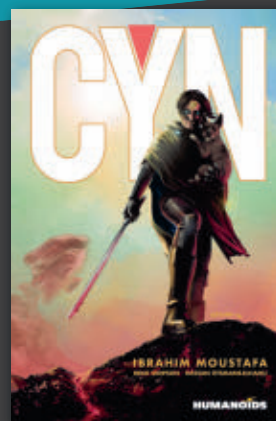
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finds the young priest of a mountain temple fighting tengu, fierce birdlike beings from Japanese folklore, to protect his two younger brothers.

TOKYOPOP

A Smart and Courageous Child by Miki Yamamoto (June 18, \$16.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-4278-7719-2). An expectant mother has second thoughts about bringing a child into the world as she follows news reports about the attempted assassination of Malala Yousafzai.

Stitch! The Manga Collection by Yumi Tsukirino, trans. by Jason Muell (July 30, \$14.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-4278-7596-9) sees the eponymous Disney character teaming up with a girl named Yuna for a series of adorable sci-fi adventures.



TUTTLE

Miyamoto Musashi's Book of Five Rings: The Manga Edition: Japan's Legendary Book on Samurai Military Strategy by Miyamoto Musashi and Koji Kondo, trans. by Makiko (Apr. 30, \$14.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-4-8053-1783-9). The classic book of samurai strategy and philosophy gets adapted into manga for modern readers.

Osamu Dazai's The Setting Sun: The Manga Edition by Osamu Dazai (Mar. 12, \$14.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-4-8053-1761-7) adapts a wrenching psychological novel set in postwar Japan by the acclaimed author of *No Longer Human*.

Soseki Natsume's Kokoro: The Manga Edition: The Heart of Things by Soseki Natsume, trans. by Makiko Itoh (Apr. 23, \$14.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-4-8053-1774-7) is an adaptation of a novel by one of Japan's most beloved writers, about the relationship between a student and an older man with a troubled past.

UDON

Ottoman: Henshin Hero Husband by Shinnosuke Kanazawa (June 30,

\$29.99, ISBN 978-1-77294-309-2). A businessman has only one thing to live for—his beloved wife—before a symbiotic relationship with an alien gives him unexpected superpowers.

VERTICAL COMICS

Kaina of the Great Snow Sea by Tsutomu Nihei and Itoe Takemoto (June 25, \$13.95 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-64729-347-5). Two young people join forces to reveal the secrets of their world, divided between the upper Canopy and the lower Great Snow Sea, in this adaptation of an anime series.

Mermaid Prince by Kaori Ozaki (June 25, \$13.95 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-64729-361-1) collects three magical short stories from the creator of *The Gods Lie* and *The Golden Sheep*.

Nude Model: Tsubasa Yamaguchi Short Stories by Tsubasa Yamaguchi (Feb. 27, \$12.95 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-64729-336-9) brings together three provocative short stories aimed at women by the award-winning creator of *Blue Period*.

VIZ

In the Name of the Mermaid Princess by Yoshino Fumikaw and Miya Tashiro, trans. by Junko Goda (Feb. 6, \$11.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-974742-73-8), chronicles the efforts of a mermaid born to a human royal family to change her kingdom's prejudices against magical beings.

Magilumiere Magical Girls Inc. by Sekka Iwata and Yu Aoki, trans. by Camellia Nieh (Mar. 19, \$14.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-974743-55-1). In a world where being a Sailor Moon-style magical girl is just another job, college grad Kana lands a position at a startup assisting up-and-coming superheroine Koshigaya.

One Piece: Shokugeki No Sanji by Yuto Tsukuda and Shun Saeki, trans. by Adrienne Beck (Mar. 12, \$11.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-974743-75-9). The creators of *Food Wars!* cook up a foodie one-shot featuring Sanji, the ship's cook in the manga juggernaut *One Piece*, and the dishes he creates to feed the Straw Hat Pirates.

Stitches by Hirokatsu Kihara and Junji Ito, trans. by Jocelyne Allen (Mar. 26, \$18, ISBN 978-1-974736-56-0). Horror writer Kihara traveled across Japan collecting spooky tales for this collection of prose stories illustrated by superstar horror artist Ito.

YEN

Ako and Bambi by Hero, trans. by Jan Cash (Feb. 20, \$15 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-975377-83-0). An aspiring horror writer moves into an apartment haunted by a ghostly entity who isn't sure what she is in this slice-of-life dramedy with a supernatural twist.

Beastrings by Shikaku Yamamoto, trans. by Tomoko Kimura (Feb. 20, \$20 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-975367-79-4) is an upbeat urban fantasy set in a city where the mayor is a retired questing hero, an elf flirts with her wolfman butler, and a bard and a dragon-man make music together.

Whoever Steals This

Book by Nowaki Fukamidori, trans. by Emma Schumacker (Feb. 20, \$13 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-975371-35-7). Mifuyu hates living in a town full of books, but when the theft of a magical tome causes reality to merge with fiction, she has to venture into the land of stories to set things right.



Z2

NCT-127: Limitless by NCT-127 and Reiko Scott (Apr. 23, \$21.99, ISBN 979-8-88656-034-3). The members of the K-pop group NCT-127 star in a reality-bending mystery that takes them through the realm of dreams.

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Wrestling Ghosts

BY MEG LEMKE

The dead speak—and leap into the ring—in Leela Corman's latest graphic novel, set during WWII

I did not set out to make a Holocaust book," Leela Corman says, adding that too often, portrayals of the Holocaust are "neatened up as a case of powerless camp prisoners and the big heroic Americans." She's speaking to *PW* via video call from her drawing studio at her home in Providence, R.I., and is dressed all in black and wearing her trademark thick dark eyeliner. The look is not goth—she's precise on this point—but art school punk or death rock.

It was actually a photo of a woman working in an American munitions factory during WWII that inspired Corman's latest graphic novel, *Victory Parade* (Schocken, Apr.). That image led her to oral histories of the period, predominantly those in Studs Terkel's *The Good War*, with its testimonies about the liberation of concentration camps. Corman, 51, says her intention with *Victory Parade* was to convey "the personal experience of collective trauma—what's happening with people day-to-day in their interior lives when there's a gigantic historical trauma ongoing."

Victory Parade is structured in alternating episodes: in 1943 in a Jewish immigrant enclave of Brooklyn; at the grim liberation of the Buchenwald concentration camp; and on the astral plane, which characters cross in dreams and when, as Corman puts it, "the world of the dead and the world of the living meet." The book's protagonist, Rose Arensberg—only accidentally, Corman claims, named after the riveter—works as a welder at the Brooklyn Navy Yard and is estranged from her husband, Sam, who is fighting in Europe. In his absence, Rose has an affair with a veteran with an amputated leg and cares for her daughter and an orphaned German Jewish refugee named Ruth. As Ruth struggles with the trauma of having escaped Nazi Germany, she finds herself drawn into the world of female professional wrestling, where she becomes known as Ruthless Ruby the Killer Kraut.

Ruth cathartically slams her opponents to the mat, haunted by visions, then whispers with a grimace: "I hate the sound of my own heart beating."

"This is what we Jews specialize in—black humor," says Corman, who cites as influences Primo Levi

("Morally, ethically, he's my touchstone"), Johannes Itten's color theory, "confrontational music," and directors Pedro Almodóvar, Fatih Akin, and Lina Wertmüller. As a Jewish cartoonist who remixes historical trauma with cartoony elements, Corman is inevitably compared to Art Spiegelman. But *Victory Parade* makes more direct visual references to the paintings of Otto



Author Profile

Dix—and Corman tips her brush to the new objectivity, an early-20th-century German art movement “more corrosive than what gets lumped in as German expressionism.”

“I’ve always made intense, bloody figurative art,” she adds. And the luminously painted scenes of *Victory Parade*, according to *Publishers Weekly’s* starred review, “blend historical realism with fairy tale themes and pregnant imagery.” Floating, dismembered body parts are a repeat theme; though Corman also took joy, she says, drawing “muscular, sweaty bodies in motion” in the wrestling ring. (She also drew the cover for the Mountain Goats’ pro-wrestling-inspired 2015 album *Beat the Champ*.)

New York City is, as the cliché goes, a character in Corman’s books. And she knows it in her bones. Though she was born in Stoneham, Mass., she grew up in the Bronx and attended N.Y.C.’s LaGuardia and City-as-School high schools. “My mother was a real Bronx girl,” she says, describing her formative years as a “very 1980s New York City adolescence”: “I would ride the subway to school and see Keith Haring’s drawings on the wall as the train sped through the station, and use my N.Y.C. Board of Education bus pass to go to CBGBs.”

Corman came of age at the height of the Cold War, and her work reflects the trauma of that era—what she calls “the terror that our leaders were all going to kill us in a nuclear holocaust,” and the fear “we were going to die of AIDS.” But more profoundly, she draws on her family’s trauma: her maternal grandparents fled Poland during WWII; her paternal grandparents immigrated before the war.

That generation was “tight lipped and stoic,” Corman says. “My grandfather, like a rock in a chair. But I understand now, trauma is exhausting. There’s a gulf between you and everybody else. But the result is those stories don’t get told. They don’t owe anybody else their trauma. But I feel a responsibility to talk about it.”

Corman also considers *Victory Parade* to be a form of “anti-fascist activism.” She pitched the book during the 2016 election cycle as a reaction to Donald Trump, whom she calls a “horrifying demagogue.” He was “using the same dehumanizing language about people seeking asylum as was used against Jews in the 1930s,” she says. Then, during the Covid-19 pandemic, the project became her refuge. It was “more comforting to retreat into drawing WWII,” she recalls, “than to engage with current events.”

Corman came up in comics during the ’90s DIY indie scene. In 1999, she self-published *Queen’s Day* under a Xeric grant. Her major trade debut was *Unterzakbn* (Schocken, 2012), about Russian Jewish immigrant sisters in Lower East Side tenements in the early 20th century; one helps poor families get contraceptives, the other becomes a sex worker and showgirl. It

was shortlisted for an Eisner Award and Los Angeles Times Book Prize and was a surprise winner of a 2023 MoCCA Arts Festival Award of Excellence.

In between *Unterzakbn* and *Victory Parade*, Corman returned to the small press community to publish *We All Wish for Deadly Force* (Retrofit, 2016) and *You Are Not a Guest* (Fieldmouse, 2023), which both collect comics essays and poetic short fiction on familiar themes—music, Jewish history, inherited trauma—that first ran in the *Nib*, the *Believer*, *Nautilus*, and other publications.

Corman also works as an instructor at the Rhode Island School of Design and Sequential Artists Workshop, a cartooning academy run by her husband, Tom Hart. Hart is best known for the graphic memoir *Rosalie Lightning*, which tells the story of the couple’s first daughter, Rosalie, who died suddenly in 2011, before her second birthday.

Grief is ever-present in Corman’s work. But she doesn’t draw directly from Rosalie’s death—“I don’t want to put myself there.” Nor are her imaginings a simple equation of sublimated trauma. Still, she unpacks PTSD in her short nonfiction comics, and the lived reality of sudden tragedy permeates her fiction. “It’s always there, enveloping,” she says. “It’s such a part of the fabric of my life, there’s no way it doesn’t come into my work.”

Corman is the sole graphic novelist published by Schocken, a Knopf Doubleday imprint dedicated to Judaica, which publishes the likes of Franz Kafka, Harold S. Kushner, and Elie Wiesel. Schocken editorial director Altie Karper acquired *Unterzakbn* on exclusive from Corman’s agent, Elizabeth Wales, after happening upon

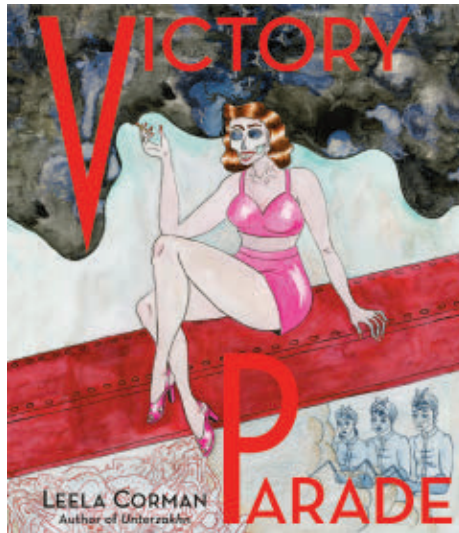
the artist’s comics in *Lilith* magazine.

“It was *Persepolis*, but with Jewish girls on the Lower East Side,” Karper says. *Victory Parade* was later picked up as the option book to that first deal, and Karper was delighted to reunite with Corman, whom she calls “smart, passionate, and funny, with important things to say about the Jewish existence, Jewish history, Jewish current affairs.”

Victory Parade and *Unterzakbn* are the first two parts of what Corman calls her “New York triptych.” Though only one character—scummy loudmouth wrestling promoter Meyer Birnbaum—appears in both, bringing levity to two dark story lines.

If the first two releases in her trilogy address trauma through sex and death, what should readers expect next? Is Corman planning to dream up a graphic novel about money?

“God no,” she laughs. “That’s beyond my skill to write about.”



Reviews

Fiction

★ Thorn Tree

Max Ludington. St. Martin's, \$29 (400p)

ISBN 978-1-250-28871-4

Ludington (*Tiger in a Trance*) delivers a vibrant narrative of art, love, and the lingering damage of 1960s excess. Daniel Tunison, a retired schoolteacher in Los Angeles, briefly became famous in the 1970s for his sculpture "Thorn Tree," a massive scrap metal construction in the Mojave Desert. The nonlinear narrative delves into Daniel's painful source of inspiration for the piece. At a 1969 Grateful Dead concert in San Francisco, his girlfriend, Rachel, runs into an ominous figure from her past, and she and Daniel flee the show. On the way back to L.A., they pull off the highway and find refuge under a tree, which, in their LSD-fueled haze, seems to exude mystical powers. The events that follow are murky, and the night ends with Rachel falling from a cliff to her death. Daniel then serves a brief prison sentence for trafficking LSD, and after he gets out, he builds the sculpture in homage to the tree under which he last saw Rachel. In the present, Daniel befriends his new neighbor Jack Dressler, who is prone to alcoholic rages and reveries of his time in a 1960s cult. One day, Jack menacingly implies to Daniel that he knows what happened to Rachel. From there, Ludington ratchets up the suspense as Daniel and Jack's encounters build to a reckoning and a dangerous showdown. Readers won't want to put this down. (*Apr.*)

Bunyan and Henry; or, the Beautiful Destiny

Mark Cecil. Pantheon, \$29 (352p)

ISBN 978-0-593-47116-6

Cecil's boisterous debut functions as both origin story and revisionist portrayal of American folk heroes Paul Bunyan and John Henry. Saddled with debt, Bunyan toils somewhere out west in the mines of Lump Town in what feels like the late 19th century, unearthing the energy source known as Lump. When one of the



In Rachel Lyon's *Fruit of the Dead*, a teenage girl gets swept off to a big pharma chief's private island (reviewed on this page).

mineral's side effects causes his wife, Lucette, to fall deathly ill, Bunyan skips town to the Windy City in search of El Boffo, the magnate who runs Lump Town. Rumor has it El Boffo has developed a machine that uses Lump to cure all ailments, and Bunyan hopes his boss will use it on Lucette before it's too late. Before Bunyan manages to gain an audience with El Boffo, however, he meets and befriends Henry, who's the run from the law for reasons not immediately specified, and their journeys intertwine as obstacles pile up. Cecil leans on some thread-worn tropes (for example, Lucette exists solely as damsel in distress), but he makes up for it with a fresh depiction of his legendary protagonists, portraying the wealth gap faced by Bunyan and the racial inequities that plague Henry. He also writes with a playful flair for language, dubbing El Boffo's scientific showroom the Wonderitorium and his healing machine the Simulorb. There's plenty of substance to this fun romp. *Agent: Chad Luibl, Janklow & Nesbit Assoc. (Mar.)*

Island Rule

Katie M. Flynn. Scout, \$27.99 (288p)

ISBN 978-1-982122-20-1

This diffuse collection from Flynn (*The Companions*) blends realism and fantasy to probe the limits of democracy. In the title story, set in 2009, a San Diego geography

professor tries to feel hopeful about President Obama and reflects on the unnamed Pacific island dictatorship she fled from. The country, where some people grow to become giants, has denied her request to return. "The Thirteen Films of Victoria Umlat," set in the wake of the 2000 presidential election, follows disenchanting married American couple Alan and Phyllis during an extended stay in Norway, Phyllis's birthplace. There, people frequently point out how she resembles wildly popular actor Victoria Umlat, who's disappeared. Eventually, Phyllis plays the part by appearing in a photo shoot as Victoria. In "The King of South Phoenix," a standout entry set in the near future, a washed-up TV writer lands a spot on a reality show called *The People's Choice*. On the program, he lives in a glass bubble high above the Arizona capital and tries to convince the audience to pick Phoenix for revitalization funds over other cities. Flynn shines brightest when committing to strange ideas such as this one. Often, though, the speculative conceits and themes feel underdeveloped. The overall sensation here is one of aimlessness. *Agent: Stephanie Delman, Sanford J. Greenburger Assoc. (Mar.)*

★ Fruit of the Dead

Rachel Lyon. Scribner, \$28 (320p)

ISBN 978-1-66802-085-2

Lyon (*Self-Portrait with Boy*) puts a modern twist on the myth of Persephone and Demeter in this irresistible narrative of a naive teenager and her protective mother. Cory is an 18-year-old camp counselor and recent high school graduate with no plans for college when she meets pharmaceutical company CEO Rolo Picazo, the slick and wealthy parent of a young camper named Spenser, and accepts his offer to work as a nanny after camp is over. Dazzled by the \$20,000 starting salary and promises of "advancement," Cory ignores a red flag involving news of the company's controversial new opiate, which is drowning in litigation due to overdoses. After she joins Rolo on his remote private island in an unspecified ocean (on the way, Cory calls her mother, Emer, with the news of her new job and living situation, and says she's unclear on the geography), the nanny arrangement takes on a sinister cast as Cory learns that

one of her predecessors has mysteriously vanished. There's also an unnerving absence of Wi-Fi, and Emer grows increasingly worried as Cory remains unreachable. Eventually, Emer embarks on a search and rescue mission to save her "distractable, undisciplined" daughter from Rolo's sinister clutches. The story is brilliantly told through Cory's and Emer's alternating perspectives, as Lyon volleys from vibrant third-person narration focused on the teenager to her mother's frantic first-person inner monologue. The result is an affecting, engrossing, and resonant tale about lost innocence and the enduring bond between a mother and daughter. *Agent: Meredith Kaffel Simonoff, Gernert Co. (Mar.)*

I'm F*cking Amazing

Anoushka Warden. Doubleday, \$29 (352p)
ISBN 978-0-385-54982-0

Playwright Warden debuts with a brutally honest if overlong account of a 30-something woman's sex life in London. After the unnamed narrator's parents separated and her mother moved to San Francisco, she came up with an equation to have a successful relationship and believes that marriage with children has a zero percent success rate. Her third "proper" relationship—with Three, a man she met while bartending at 24—follows all of the expected patterns until sex with him becomes physically painful. No matter what they try, the narrator has trouble getting aroused, and she begins to dread sex. After multiple doctor appointments and physiotherapy, the problem is still not resolved and she begins to look for alternative aphrodisiacs, such as flirting with strangers and snorting cocaine. As the years pass with Three she worries about the consequences of breaking her own rules. Though there are flashes of stylistic flair, such as recurring pages of scorecard-like "Top Humps," in which the narrator rates her former lovers on "general vibe" and other factors,

★ A Great Country

Shilpi Somaya Gowda. Mariner, \$30 (256p) ISBN 978-0-06-332434-3

Gowda's scorching latest (after *The Shape of Family*) chronicles an Indian American family's complex and varied attitudes toward class and racial divides in Southern California. Ashok and Priya Shah can't quite afford affluent Pacific Hills, Calif., but they move there anyway, determined to raise their status after their humble beginnings as immigrants in middle-class Irvine. Their middle child, Maya, readily assimilates with her wealthy classmates at the new school, but their older daughter, Deepa, refuses to benefit from the social injustice of a segregated school system and insists on staying at her overcrowded old school with her close friend Paco, whose mother is undocumented. Deepa and her parents continually clash, especially after the Shahs' 12-year-old son, Ajay, flies his homemade drone over the airport, accidentally crashes it into the ground, and is beaten by the police and arrested as a terrorism suspect. Deepa wishes her parents would acknowledge that Ajay is a victim of the systemic racism they expected to be protected from by moving to a gated community, but they're more worried about becoming subjects of controversy as his continued jailing fuels a media storm. Gowda presents each family member's viewpoint thoroughly, as well as the perspectives of the cop who leads the investigation into Ajay and another who believes he should be released. Her light touch is refreshing and graced with nuance, allowing her to find the truth in a wide range of perspectives. Readers won't want to put this down. *Agent: Ayesha Pande, Ayesha Pande Literary. (Mar.)*



too often Warden's prose reads like run-on journal entries ("Three was the best male person I had ever come across. EVER. And all my bits worked with his bits very well in a very exciting manner"), and the frankness rarely leads to deep insights. *Fleabag* this is not. *Agent: Laura Bonner, WME. (Mar.)*

★ The Understory

Sanung Sangsuk, trans. from the Thai by Mui Poopoksakul. Deep Vellum, \$17.95 trade paper (176p) ISBN 978-1-6460-5275-2

The evocative latest from Sangsuk (*White Shadow*) concerns magic, storytelling, and the cost of economic progress in Thailand. In the first part, Sangsuk regales the reader with gossip of late monk Luang Paw Tien

and his mysterious knack with animals (he adopted an ox that was marked for slaughter and survived a stampede of elephants). These miraculous accounts of Paw Tien are braided with touchstones of mid-20th-century Thai history, such as the emergence of the Volunteer Defense Corps to protect civilians in "reddish" border zones (at one point, a friend of Paw Tien weeps after fatally shooting his own best friend in a skirmish, then rationalizes the incident because the dead man was a communist). The second part tells Paw Tien's story in his own words, relating how he and his father, Old Man Jumpa, suffered in their quest to protect their village from the tigers that lived in the surrounding jungle. What transpires is a moving folk

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story about a lost world where occultists could shape shift into animals and tiger-demons could take human form, which builds toward the tragedy that sets Paw Tien on his path of penance and monkhood. This is transfixing. (Mar.)

Connemara

Nicolas Mathieu, trans. from the French by Sam Taylor. Other Press, \$18.99 trade paper (448p) ISBN 978-1-63542-356-3

A French woman's midlife crisis sets her off on a quest to recover the spirit of her youth in this pulsing novel of desire from Mathieu (*And Their Children After Them*). On the eve of her 40th birthday, H el ene, a wife and the mother of two daughters, finds herself nostalgic for the "vanished period" of her young adulthood. Despite a successful career, healthy children, and a handsome husband, she equates getting older to feeling like "something had been stolen from her." Mathieu then jumps ahead five years, with H el ene suffering from burnout at work as her midlife crisis continues, prompting her to uproot her family from Paris and retreat to the part of northern France where she grew up. There, she embarks on an extramarital affair with Christophe, a former high school flame. Recently divorced, Christophe has dashed dreams of his own; his onetime aspirations of becoming a pro hockey player have vanished along with his hopes of keeping his marriage together. Vivid flashback sequences fill in the complicated histories of H el ene and Christophe: their accumulated disappointments, jealousies, betrayals, and hard-earned lessons. Mathieu makes life's emotional precariousness and fading glory palpable. (Mar.)

Green Frog: And Other Stories

Gina Chung. Vintage, \$17 trade paper (240p) ISBN 978-0-5934-6936-1

Chung's dynamic collection (after the novel *Sea Change*) employs various genres and styles to illuminate her Korean American characters' grief and regret. The evocative and playful opener, "How to Eat Your Own Heart," which will put readers in mind of Lorrie Moore, takes the form of a macabre set of instructions for recovering from heartbreak: "Plunge your heart into the boiling water the way you would for lobster." Some stories utilize elements of

Korean folklore. For example, "Human Hearts" follows a young kumiho (a fox-like creature) who plots to avenge her sister's death at the hands of a shaman and lives with the knowledge that she was always second-best in her mother's eyes. Other entries verge into science fiction. In "Presence," Amy gets a divorce from her husband after his memory-uploading biotech company is investigated for malfeasance. Chung shines the most when portraying intense emotions with realism, such as in the beautifully strange closer, "The Love Song of the Mexican Free-tailed Bat," about a woman tenderly caring for her dead scientist father's bats in the way she wishes he'd cared for her. Chung's talents are on full display in these contemplative tales. *Agent: Danielle Bukowski, Sterling Lord Literistic.* (Mar.)

★ Tell

Jonathan Buckley. New Directions, \$14.95 trade paper (160p) ISBN 978-0-8112-3791-8

This mesmerizing page-turner from Buckley (*Live; Live; Live*) takes the form of a transcribed interview with a woman employed as a gardener for a fabulously

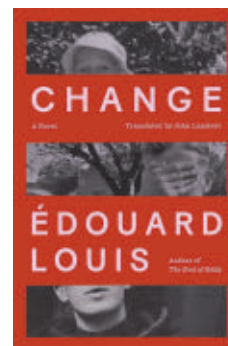
wealthy self-made Englishman who might be dead. The form, which has the feel of a talking head interview for a documentary but isn't explicitly framed, creates instant suspense, and the dramatic opening—"Shall we start with the crash? Seems an obvious place," says the unnamed interview subject—draws readers quickly into the story of her employer, Curtis, the founder of a high-end retail chain. Key elements of that life story include a difficult upbringing in various foster homes in England's gloomy Midlands and complicated romantic entanglements (be it his sincere attachment to his late wife who died young or his long-running affair with a Swiss art buyer whose pretensions the gardener hilariously satirizes). The gardener also lays bare the wastrel tendencies of Curtis's children in anecdotes about their drug abuse and bitcoin investments. As Buckley gradually winds toward the details of the aforementioned crash, which took place while Curtis was in Cambodia on business, he asks readers to think about how and why stories are told. This self-reflexivity results in a thought-provoking, artfully constructed narrative

★ Change

 douard Louis, trans. from the French by John Lambert. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, \$27 (256p) ISBN 978-0-374-60680-0

Louis (*The End of Eddy*) returns with another scorching autobiographical novel, this time drawing on his efforts to break out of isolation and poverty.

Eddy Bellegueule (Louis's birth name) grows up in a rural French village rife with racial tension and violence, where his family often has to beg for food. At 14, a drama teacher encourages him to apply to a lyc ee in Amiens, 30 kilometers away, and he jumps at the chance. At the new school, he befriends a classmate named Elena, who invites him to meals at her family home. There, Eddy learns about cinema and literature and "how not to eat like a peasant." His "new life" allows  douard—as he renames himself—to "take revenge on [his] childhood" by striving to become a successful author like his mentor Didier, who encourages him to write. He also gets a leg up from a wealthy older man he meets in a bar, who helps him get into an elite Parisian  cole and pays to have his teeth fixed.  douard calls his project of transformation a "permanent obsession," as he regularly feels like an imposter and worries he'll fail at school and have to return home. Having served as an escort in Amiens and Paris, he expresses a singular view about the trade ("In making love with a man I rejected all the values of my milieu, I became bourgeois"). With frank prose and staggering insights, Louis makes the story of his metamorphosis feel vital and alive. This is irresistible. *Agent: Jacqueline Ko, Wylie Agency.* (Mar.)



enriched by the mysteries that expand and proliferate throughout. It's a deliciously fraught tour de force. (Mar.)

Simpatia

Rodrigo Blanco Calderón, trans. from the Spanish by Noel Hernández González and Daniel Hahn. Seven Stories, \$18.95 trade paper (256p) ISBN 978-1-64421-365-0

In this kinetic offering from Blanco Calderón (*Sacrifices*), a Venezuelan man navigates political and domestic upheaval after the fall of Hugo Chavez. The story kicks off in Caracas when Ulises Kan's wife leaves him in order to flee the country and escape the repressive Maduro regime. Three months later, after the death of his father-in-law, Martín Ayala, Ulises finds out he's been tasked by Martín's will with turning the sprawling Ayala estate into a nonprofit dog rescue. According to the terms of the will, Ulises has four months to make the operation successful. If he does so, the house will be bequeathed to the organization in perpetuity and Ulises will receive an apartment on the estate. Otherwise, the property will go to Martín's children and the rescue will be forced to shutter. Meanwhile, a woman Ulises had once been enamored with mysteriously reappears, and they begin a passionate love affair. More ominously, Ulises discovers the house is routinely monitored by federal agents and other shadowy figures. The twisty story is chock full of betrayals and intrigue as Ulises faces one hurdle after another in his quest to make good on the inheritance. This page turner has plenty of depth. (Mar.)

The Last Verse

Caroline Frost. Morrow, \$30 (368p) ISBN 978-0-06-326548-6

Frost's intriguing second novel (after *Shadows of Pecan Hollow*) follows a talented 19-year-old aspiring country singer and her travails in 1977 Nashville. Twyla Higgins, tired of her sheltered life in Texas, defies her domineering mother, Faith, and makes her way to Graceland to attend Elvis's funeral. From there, she hitches a ride to Nashville, where she falls for rich pretty boy Chet Wilton, a middling guitarist who recognizes her songwriting talent. After sleeping with him, Twyla's crushed when she learns Chet is engaged to magnetic singer Lorelei Ray.

Following a violent argument on a boat, Twyla stabs Chet in self-defense and tries in vain to save him from drowning. Not long after, she hears Lorelei on the radio, singing a song Twyla had written about her guilt over Chet's death. Lorelei later blackmails Twyla into writing the rest of her debut album in exchange for keeping quiet about Twyla's involvement in Chet's death. Frost turns many memorable



workaholic former cop T. Lynn Struthers, who's hired by the Wiltons to find Chet's killer, and ambitious Lorelei, whom Twyla grows fond of in spite of the blackmail and jealousy. Classic country fans will love this. *Agent: Elizabeth Winick Rubinstein, McIntosh & Otis.* (Mar.)

Sylvia's Second Act

Hillary Yablon. Viking/Dorman, \$29 (368p) ISBN 978-0-593-49361-8

Yablon's delightful debut features a spunky retiree who overhauls her life after she discovers her husband in flagrante. Sixty-three-year-old Connecticut transplant Sylvia Fisher is leading an unfulfilled retirement in a Florida development for fellow retirees when she walks in on her husband, Louis, having sex with a neighbor. To make matters worse, Louis has lost all of their money in a questionable investment scheme. Sylvia first decamps to her uptight daughter Isabel's home in Connecticut, and later convinces her best friend from the development, glamorous widow Evie, to join her in reinventing their lives in New York City. Soon, Sylvia has a job as a wedding planner and falls for the divorced father of one of the brides. Will this new man prove to be every bit as much a cad as the one she left behind? Comic relief is aptly provided by Isabel's amorous mother-in-law, and by a Bergdorf Goodman personal shopper who shows

Sylvia and Evie they can be sexy at any age. It's impossible not to cheer for the strong heroine at the center of Yablon's savvy story. (Mar.)

★ Inside the Mirror

Parul Kapur. Univ. of Nebraska, \$26.95 (362p) ISBN 978-1-49623-678-4

In Kapur's stunning debut novel, twin sisters Jaya and Kamlesh Malhotra dare to pursue their creative ambitions in 1950s Bombay (present-day Mumbai) despite the threat of ruining their family's reputation and their chances of securing good marriages. Their father, a former government servant who's currently managing a glass factory on the city's periphery, has carefully crafted their futures: Jaya is set to become a doctor and Kamlesh a teacher. However, Jaya puts more energy into her extracurricular sketchwork than her pre-med studies, while Kamlesh's Bharatanatyam class fuels her interest in dance. Prior to Jaya's first drawing exhibition, she makes the outrageous—for an unmarried woman—decision to leave home and move in with her mentor, while Kamlesh dances onstage and stars in a film despite knowing the Punjabi community will disapprove (“If you were a girl onstage, in public, if you gave others a view of your body—your being—you were dishonorable. Shameless. That's how others saw you. A whore,” Kapur writes). Kapur perfectly conveys the twins' attempts to find their purpose while defying the expectations of a turbulent post-partition Indian society. This is a beautiful exploration of the hardships endured by women artists. *Agent: Julie Stevenson, Massie & McQuilkin.* (Mar.)

Becoming Madam Secretary

Stephanie Dray. Berkley, \$29 (528p) ISBN 978-0-593-43705-6

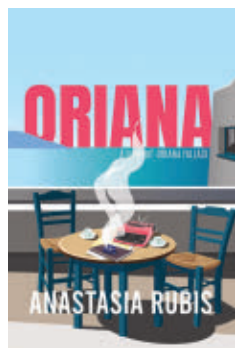
Dray (*The Women of Chateau Lafayette*) delivers an insightful fictional biography of Frances Perkins (1880–1965), the first woman to serve in the U.S. Cabinet. At the outset, Frances studies childhood malnutrition in 1909 New York City as part of her master's thesis in economics and sociology. Determined to stop children from working in factories and to advocate for the rights of all workers, she takes a job as a lobbyist for the Consumers' League of New York City. The next year, she meets

attorney Franklin Delano Roosevelt at a tea dance, and the two clash over their differing views on social justice initiatives (he's circumspect, she's strident). Frances also meets Paul Wilson, an economist and heir to the Marshall Fields fortune, whom she goes on to marry. Dray pulls off an exhaustive and stirring chronicle of Frances's professional achievements as she struggles to raise a family with Paul, who is diagnosed as manic-depressive. As secretary of labor in FDR's cabinet, Frances toils to gain support from the president and the public for the Social Security Act, which finally passes in 1935, and she draws on the example of the strong-willed Eleanor Roosevelt to persevere while Paul is institutionalized for his mental illness. Women's historical fiction fans won't want to miss this. *Agent: Kevan Lyon, Marsal Lyon Literary.* (Mar.)

Oriana

Anastasia Rubis. Delphinium, \$27.99 (368p) ISBN 978-1-953002-36-5

Rubis debuts with an uninspired biographical novel about crusading journalist Oriana Fallaci (1929–2006). The narrative begins with Fallaci's experiences as a girl



growing up in Italy during WWII with a father who is a member of the anti-fascist resistance, though the real action kicks off in 1973, when Fallaci inter-

views charismatic Greek rebel and poet Alexander Panagoulis. The story of their tempestuous love affair is juxtaposed with the arc of Fallaci's career as she drops out of medical school to support her family, gets a job as a newspaper reporter, and quickly makes a name for herself in a male-dominated industry. After pioneering the q&a format, she graduates from interviewing Hollywood stars to writers like Norman Mailer, politicians like Bobby Kennedy, and international movers-and-shakers like Henry Kissinger. She earns her name as a war reporter with multiple trips to Vietnam, where she crosses into the North to interview the general behind the Tet

Offensive. Framed predictably as an elderly Fallaci's reminiscences after a visiting Hollywood producer asks to buy the rights to her story, Rubis's narrative is more highlight reel than deep dive into what drove her to become such a formidable journalist. It fails to do justice to Fallaci's larger-than-life personality. (Mar.)

The Swan's Nest

Laura McNeal. Algonquin, \$29 (320p) ISBN 978-1-64375-320-1

The distinctive latest from McNeal (*The Practice House*) chronicles the romance between mid-19th-century poets Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett. Elizabeth, fearing a return of the debilitating and undiagnosed illness that has plagued her for over 22 years, has confined herself in her father's London home. There, she receives a letter from Robert, telling her he loves her and her poetry. The pair correspond for five months before she gives him permission to visit her in London. Through Robert's weekly visits, they continue to fall in love, but Elizabeth initially refuses his marriage proposal, worried her father will react poorly, given that Robert had called on her as a friend rather than a suitor. Undeterred, Robert persuades her to marry him in secret. They live in peace even after her father learns of their marriage and disinherits her. McNeal capably evokes her protagonists' poetic sensibilities both with dialogue ("I will conform my life to any imaginable rule that puts us together," Robert says to Elizabeth), and with her own lyrical descriptions ("On the visceral green of the greenest grass fell white blossoms that the wind tumbled and carried like snow"). This perceptive novel is a must for devotees of the romantics.

Agent: Doug Stewart, Sterling Lord Literary. (Mar.)

Levinson of Harvard

L.M. Vincent. L.M. Vincent, \$9.99 e-book (274p) ASIN B0C2XL4FG1

Vincent (*Reception*) explores the allure of Harvard for three generations of a Jewish family in this appealing tale. In 1969, Kansas high school student Mark Levinson gets accepted to the Ivy League school. Once he arrives that fall, however, he immediately feels out of his depth. Even worse, there's no record of his

grandfather Moishe having attended the university, despite Moishe's many stories of his Harvard years. Using a letter and some other artifacts from back home, Mark attempts to uncover the real story with the help of an archivist. Amid his search, flashbacks to the first decade of the 20th century reveal the truth about Moishe. While living with his aunt and uncle in Boston, he yearns to attend Harvard despite warnings about harsh antisemitism from his cousin, a student there. At a summer resort job in 1904, Moishe begins a relationship with an Irish actress who provides accent and etiquette training to help him blend in with the upper crust, thus setting the stage for his plan to become an interloper at Harvard. Though Mark's story doesn't develop enough for the amount of pages devoted to it, the revelations about Moishe's scheme are remarkable, and Vincent provides a bracing depiction of early-20th-century antisemitism. This meaty campus novel has a satisfying mystery at its core. (*Self-published*)

Mystery/Thriller

★ **Nothing Without Me**

Helen Monks Takhar. Random House, \$18 trade paper (400p) ISBN 978-0-593-59618-0

Monks Takhar (*Such a Good Mother*) explores the dark side of celebrity in this diabolically plotted and ferociously feminist psychological thriller. April Eden and her best friend, disgraced former national sweetheart Essie Lay, are favored to win British Film Association awards for *The Vanished Woman*, a movie starring Essie that April wrote and directed. It's a huge win for April, who's fought for years to break through as a female filmmaker, so when Essie messages April before the ceremony to say she's staying home, April and her boyfriend, Jags, stop by the actor's Hampstead mansion to change her mind. Instead, they discover a gown-clad Essie face down in her pool with champagne and pills nearby. Jags convinces April to leave Essie for someone else to deal with and attend the awards ceremony as though nothing happened, but when morning breaks and the news hasn't, the couple return to find Essie and the intoxicants gone—along with Essie's passport. Paranoia

seeps into April's first-person-present narration, while expertly timed flashbacks from April and Essie's alternating perspectives gradually reveal the women's fraught history, adding dimension and context to the central mystery. Exquisitely rendered, realistically damaged characters help make the novel's jaw-dropping twists feel earned rather than contrived. Liane Moriarty fans, take note: this is a must-read. *Agent: Hellie Ogden, WME. (Apr.)*

The Stars Turned Inside Out

Nova Jacobs. Atria, \$27.99 (320p) ISBN 978-1-6680-1854-5

Jacobs (*The Last Equation of Isaac Severy*) follows up her acclaimed debut with an engrossing whodunit revolving around Geneva's Large Hadron Collider. After arriving for work one morning, CERN engineer Claude Touschard discovers the dead body of precocious young physicist Howard Anderby in one of the LHC's tunnels. While it appears Anderby has been killed by radiation exposure, there's no evidence the collider was turned on the night before, nor that anybody was in it. To keep the death from becoming public, CERN hires well-respected PI Sabine Leroux to investigate. As she speaks with Anderby's colleagues, Sabine turns up copious evidence of professional rivalries and resentments, as well as Anderby's potential involvement in a "geeky arms race" with the Chinese that may have put a target on his back. Meanwhile, researcher Eve Marsh, who harbored a crush on Anderby, frets about her recently published anonymous article considering whether particle physics can combat catastrophic climate change, which was based on her unauthorized use of the lab's resources. Jacobs bestows even minor characters with such convincing motives that the plot's momentum never slows, no matter how complex things get. Golden age mystery fans will love this. *Agent: Lisa Bankoff, Bankoff Collaborative. (Mar.)*

The Princess of Las Vegas

Chris Bohjalian. Doubleday, \$29 (400p) ISBN 978-0-385-54758-1

Bestseller Bohjalian (*The Lioness*) mismatches plot and tone in this unwieldy thriller about lowlifes chasing high stakes in Las Vegas. The action centers on estranged sisters Crissy and Betsy Dowling,

[Q&A]

PW TALKS WITH HELEN MONKS TAKHAR

Women Behaving Badly

In *Nothing Without Me* (Random House, Apr.; reviewed on p. 64), Monks Takhar explores the vicissitudes of fame through the eyes of fledgling director April and disgraced film star Essie.



What inspired *Nothing Without Me*?

It was a confluence of stuff. Watching what happened to Britney Spears—the normalization of what she was put through and then subsequently had to get out of, with her conservatorship. Reading interviews about what it's like to traverse banks of paparazzi photographers. I was also interested in what makes us unable to tear away from this massive hyper-scrutiny of female bodies and female lives when they're celebrities. Why am I clicking on these stories? I've internalized so much misogyny; I wanted to play in that dirt.

Has writing this book changed your view of the film industry?

It solidified things that have been bubbling away in my mind: tales I've heard of the struggles of female directors getting their projects made. My little weirdo, April—she's got something to say, and she really wants to say it, and she's super bright, and she works real damn hard, and it's still an

uphill struggle. And that is, I understand, quite a typical experience of female filmmakers, both here in the U.K. and in the U.S.

Thus far, all of your books have dealt, in some fashion, with being publicly visible—or invisible—as a woman. Did you intentionally set out to explore that theme, or did it emerge as you wrote?

It was doing the author's note for this book that made me think, ah, there's something linking all of this. This one is about female visibility, for sure, but it is also about how demigoddesses make us feel about ourselves. Most of us in life meet these women that just seem to have "it"—this elixir of charisma, beauty, and togetherness. And you're in awe, you want to be close to it and bask in the reflected glory, but it also a little makes you feel like shit. And that gets writ large in the celebrity space.

Your female characters are often messy, ambitious, and insecure. Have you ever felt pressure to make them more likable?

The L word! Not from my editors, and not from my agent, but it does interest me that a lot of readers that maybe don't connect with my work have an issue with unlikable women. And that's okay, that's their prerogative. If you want stories of women behaving nicely and kindly, then I'm not your writer. We're not supposed to be together.

—KATRINA NIIDAS HOLM

who are dead ringers for one another and for Princess Diana—a circumstance that launches Crissy's career as the star of a musical about the late Lady Di at the tatty, off-the-strip Buckingham Palace Casino. Despite Crissy's troubles—including bulimia, romantic turmoil, and pill popping—she feels fairly sanguine about her situation until a co-owner of the casino dies under suspicious circumstances. Then Betsy moves to town with her slimy new cryptocurrency exec boyfriend, Frankie, and a precocious 12-year-old foster daughter. Things spiral quickly as Frankie's associates fast-track a scheme to turn the Buckingham into an all-crypto casino/money-laundering operation that hinges on the clueless Betsy's resemblance to her sister. Before long, the plan goes from madcap to murderous, and Bohjalian slips in some well-calibrated satire of cryptocurrency culture. He's less sure-footed, however, when it comes to the novel's tone, which is curiously buttoned-up for a subject so conducive to bold treatment. Despite a blazing, Tarantino-esque climax, Bohjalian's fans are likely to be disappointed. *Agent: Deborah Schneider, Gelfman Schneider. (Mar.)*

★ Listen for the Lie

Amy Tintera. Holt, \$26.99 (352p)
ISBN 978-1-250-88031-4

This outstanding story of a young woman haunted by rumors that she killed her best friend marks the adult debut of YA author Tintera (*The Q*). Five years ago, 20-something golden girl Savannah Harper was brutally murdered in her hometown of Plumpton, Tex. The same day, Savannah's best friend, Lucy Chase, was discovered amnesia-stricken on the side of the road with her dress covered in Savannah's blood. While Lucy was never charged with the murder, most of Plumpton has long assumed she's guilty—and given the gap in her memory, Lucy has questions of her own. Now living in L.A., she's fired from her investment job when the new season of hit true crime podcast *Listen for the Lie* renews public interest in Savannah's case. Humiliated, Lucy accepts an invitation from her grandmother, Beverly, to return to Plumpton for a visit. When Lucy arrives in town, she finds Ben Owens, the charismatic host of *Listen for the Lie*, already poking around, and attempts to stay one step ahead

★ Lost Man's Lane

Scott Carson. Atria/Bestler, \$28.99 (448p) ISBN 978-1-9821-9145-0

Carson (*Where They Wait*) evokes the best of Stephen King in this exceptional coming-of-age tale about a young man confronting the supernatural menace that's taken root in his hometown. In 1999

Bloomington, Ind., 16-year-old Marshall Miller gets pulled over by a cop on the same day he gets his driver's license. While he's waiting for a ticket, he notices a frightened teenage girl in the backseat of the officer's car. Weeks later, Marshall spots the girl's face on a missing person poster: her name is Meredith Sullivan, and she disappeared on the same day that Marshall was pulled over. He reports his encounter to law enforcement and discovers that the man who ticketed him was only impersonating a police officer. Determined to help find her, Marshall seeks out Noah Storm, the PI attached to Meredith's case, who's so impressed with the boy's attention to detail that he offers Marshall an informal internship as his assistant. During their search, Marshall experiences strange recurring dreams, frequent snake sightings, and other seemingly unexplainable phenomena. The episodes gradually lead him to believe something ghostly has come to Bloomington, and it may be his job to stop it. Carson masterfully weaves threads about Marshall's home and school life into the tantalizing central mystery, and populates the narrative's margins with fully realized characters who help bring the setting to vivid life. This unique and intelligent crowd-pleaser is not to be missed. *Agent: Richard Pine, InkWell Management. (Mar.)*



of him as she pieces together the events of that fateful night. Tintera alternates transcripts of the podcast with chapters from Lucy's perspective, getting a lot of mileage from her protagonist's dry wit ("A podcaster has decided to ruin my life, so I'm buying a chicken," goes the book's first sentence) and some devilish plot twists. Readers will be hard-pressed not to wolf down this intelligent page-turner in a single sitting. *(Mar.)*

Such a Lovely Family

Aggie Blum Thompson. Forge, \$18.99 trade paper (352p) ISBN 978-1-250-89199-0

In this enticing domestic thriller, Thompson (*All the Dirty Secrets*) zeroes in on the wealthy Calhoun family, who live in the exclusive Somerwood neighborhood of Chevy Chase, Md., just outside of Washington, D.C. It's springtime, and Ginny and Thom Calhoun are hosting their annual cherry blossom party with their three grown children on hand: Trey, who works for Thom's real estate development business; Nate, a marine biologist who

lives in California; and lifestyle influencer Ellie Grace. When someone's murdered during the party, it first appears to be the result of a robbery gone wrong, but Montgomery County police detective Jacqui Washington suspects there's more to the case than meets the eye. News of the murder quickly spreads on social media, and the combination of legal and public scrutiny starts to form cracks in the Calhouns' carefully constructed facade, causing old resentments and long-held secrets to come tumbling out. Thompson gives each of her vivid characters plausible motives and overlapping secrets, effectively laying the groundwork for a cascade of plot twists, each more jolting than the last. The end result is a decadent, stay-up-all-night page-turner. *(Mar.)*

Finlay Donovan Rolls the Dice

Ellie Cosimano. Minotaur, \$28 (320p)
ISBN 978-1-250-84600-6

The enjoyable fourth entry in Cosimano's Finlay Donovan series (after *Finlay Donovan Jumps the Gun*) picks up

right where the previous installment left off, with the suspense novelist turned sleuth and her nanny, Vero, pausing to collect Finlay's two young children from her ex-husband, Steven, before they head from Virginia to Atlantic City to rescue Javi, Vero's childhood love, from loan shark Marco. During that pause, Finlay and Vero accidentally amass multiple unwanted traveling companions, including Steven, who's angling for a reconciliation, and Finlay's mother, Susan. To make matters worse, Marco refuses to cooperate with Finlay and Vero once they arrive in Atlantic City, and shortly after their first meeting with the loan shark, the women find him dead in a luxury casino suite. Then the police—including Finlay's new boyfriend, Nick, and her sister, Georgia—arrive to look into Marco's death and the disappearance of his nephew, Ike, setting off a fine farce involving interfering mothers, lost hoodies, disappearing kidnapping victims, romantic jealousy, and dirty diapers. Cosimano nails the tone—breezy but not too fluffy—and maintains a breakneck pace throughout. Readers who prefer their mysteries to lean madcap will eat this up. (Mar.)

A Deadly Endeavor

Jenny Adams. Crooked Lane, \$29.99 (352p)
ISBN 978-1-63910-695-0

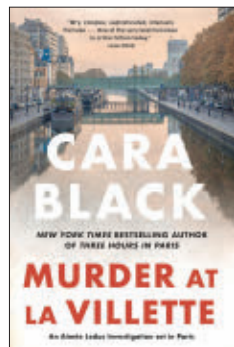
In Adams's spirited if haphazard debut, a beautiful young socialite and a working-class coroner become embroiled in the search for a serial killer in 1921 Philadelphia. Edie Shippen has recently returned to Philadelphia from California, where she recovered from the Spanish flu, only to discover that her twin sister is engaged to her former lover, Theo. Wounded, Edie resolves to become a sexually liberated "modern girl." Meanwhile, coroner Gilbert Lawless, a former WWI medic, uses morphine to cope with his combat trauma and the untimely death of his wife. When Gilbert's sister, whom Edie has just hired as her new maid, goes missing, the two team up to find her, and quickly discover that someone may be targeting and brutally murdering "modern" young women all across the city. Edie and Gilbert's investigation—which sees the pair falling somewhat predictably in love—takes them to a gin palace, a boxing

match, and the office of a fraudulent medium, among other locations, each of which Adams infuses with fascinating historical color. She never quite strikes the proper balance between grit and froth, however, seesawing between descriptions of violent slaughter and passages about Edie's wardrobe and her pug, Aphrodite. The result is an uneasy blend of dark thriller and silver-spoon cozy. *Agent: Amy Giuffrida, Belcastro Agency.* (Mar.)

★ Murder at La Villette

Cara Black. Soho Crime, \$27.95 (288p)
ISBN 978-1-64129-447-8

Black shrewdly ups the stakes in the pulse-pounding 21st mystery featuring French PI Aimée Leduc (after 2022's *Murder at the Porte de Versailles*). In 2002 Paris, Aimée has been hired by a government ministry to identify a saboteur at tech startup Glocron. Given the assignment's covert nature, she's stunned to discover that an envelope addressed to her was slipped into her purse after a visit to Glocron's offices. Inside is a letter from her ex-boyfriend, Melac—the father of her daughter, Chloé—who's been harassing Aimée to pressure her and Chloé



into moving nearer to him in Brittany. Melac has been keeping tabs on Aimée at Glocron, and after he has a harrowing encounter with a homeless man he recognizes near the company's offices one evening, he leaves Aimée a frightened voicemail. The man then stabs Melac before slitting his throat; when Aimée happens on the scene, the attacker knocks her out, plants the bloody knife on her, and flees. Accused of murdering Melac, Aimée enters a seedy underworld of Parisian biker gangs and ex-cops to track down the real killer. Though Aimée's innocence is never in doubt, Black maintains expert suspense and keeps things fresh by separating the investigator from her typical allies. This will thrill series fans and newcomers alike. *Agent: Katherine Fausset, Curtis Brown Ltd.* (Mar.)

Jumpnauts

Hao Jingfang, trans. from the Chinese by Ken Liu. Saga, \$18.99 trade paper (368p)
ISBN 978-1-5344-2211-7

Hugo winner Hao (*Vagabonds*) impresses with this sci-fi thriller series opener set in 2080. Archaeologist Yun Fan has devoted her career to proving that the Mayan and Egyptian pyramids and other historical feats are evidence of benign extraterrestrial intervention in human affairs. Her study of major inflection points in Chinese history has led her to conclude that aliens visit Earth every 800 years or so, causing a "sudden burst of innovation and advancement, pushing civilization into a new age." If that pattern holds, another such visit is imminent, and Yun has been analyzing signals from space that could indicate attempts at communication. Those signals attract the attention of military leaders in the Pacific League of Nations, which rules the planet alongside the Atlantic Alliance. After the Pacific League learns that Yun has made likely alien contact, and that all evidence indicates the aliens are peaceful, several of their scientists attempt to communicate with the life-forms before word gets to the more reactive Atlantic Alliance, who could unwittingly send Earth into interplanetary conflict. Hao's patient worldbuilding and character-driven approach lends fresh life to the familiar first contact trope. *Contact* fans will be thrilled. *Agent: Katelyn Hales, Robin Straus Agency.* (Mar.)

Calypso Down: A Chris Black Adventure

James Lindholm. CamCat, \$27.99 (368p)
ISBN 978-0-744307-44-3

Lindholm's high-octane fourth adventure for Chris Black (after *Dead Man's Silence*) finds the two-fisted marine biologist hired to consult for a team of divers preparing for an unusual mission off of Key West, Fla. International NGO Science Without Borders is sponsoring the launch of an undersea lab called Calypso I, and Black, an experienced saturation diver, is tasked with helping the scientists who will work there acclimate to extended time underwater. Before long, the benign-seeming assignment takes several perilous turns. First, while opponents of the Calypso project—some of whom distrust

the UN's role in it—are staging a protest at the diving site, a truck rams into the crowd and one of its passengers starts firing indiscriminately. Then an imminent tropical storm further threatens the mission, and when Black finally does make it to Calypso I, he faces a shocking betrayal from somebody on his team. Throughout, Lindholm mixes in scenes focused on the Brotherhood, a mysterious right-wing militia, effectively teasing who and what might be behind the violence plaguing the Calypso project. While the author loses his footing a bit when things get political—a subplot about a senator advocating for the elimination of all national borders strains credibility—he mostly keeps things brisk and exciting. Series fans will be more than satisfied. (Mar.)



Deliver Me

Malin Persson Giolito. Other Press, \$18.99 trade paper (544p) ISBN 978-1-63542-368-6

Swedish crime writer Giolito follows up *Quicksand* with an ambitious tale of adolescent violence and the forces that enable it. Things kick off with the murder of 14-year-old Billy Ali, an immigrant's son from Värninge, a poor neighborhood of Stockholm. There's no mystery about his killer: Billy's best friend, Douglas "Dogge" Arnfeldt (who lives in the wealthy suburb of Rönnaviken), pulled the trigger. But is there more to the story? That's the question facing well-meaning juvenile investigator Farid Ayad, who's been assigned to the case. Giolito interweaves Farid's investigation with a detailed history of the boys' unlikely friendship: Billy was a charming kid who attracted trouble, and after he met Dogge on a public playground when both were six years old, the two became inseparable, eventually cutting school, doing drugs, and working together for a "wannabe gangster" named Medhi Ahmad. It's gang politics that lead to the boys' final confrontation, and Giolito dedicates

significant space to the social problems—including restrictive immigration policies, corrupt law enforcement, and economic inequality—that surround gangs in contemporary Sweden. The sociological perspective joins with a strong emotional current to effectively convey the magnitude of the novel's central tragedy. This will strike a chord with genre fans who are just as interested in the "why" as the "who." *Agent: Astri von Arbin Albander, Albander Agency.* (Mar.)



Murder and the Missing Dog

Susan C. Shea. Severn House, \$31.99 (224p) ISBN 978-1-4483-1092-0

Shea's rote second cozy featuring American expat Ariel Shepard (after 2023's *Murder Visits a French Village*) sees the series showing early signs of fatigue. After the sudden death of Ariel's husband, Dan, she's spent the last three years restoring the rundown property he gave her in France's Burgundy region. Her quiet work is again interrupted by homicide when she finds a bloodied corpse on the ground outside of her friend's secondhand shop in Noyes-sur-Serein. The victim is the poverty-stricken Madame Touissant, who was preparing to sell her possessions for cash; in the wake of her death, her beloved dog has also disappeared. Ariel believes that Touissant's head wounds are evidence of foul play, despite the lack of any obvious motives or suspects. She resolves to investigate, and occasionally runs afoul of the official inquiry headed by hunky potential love interest Monsieur Legrand. Along the way, Ariel raises questions about a string of local robberies and casts suspicion on her own gardener, all while keeping her home renovation afloat. Shea sticks steadfastly to formula here, failing to deliver many notable twists or memorable characters. It makes for pleasant enough reading, but in the crowded cozy field, this fails to stand out. *Agent: Christina Hogrebe, Jane Rotrosen Agency.* (Mar.)



The Truth About the Devlins

Lisa Scottoline. Putnam, \$29.95 (384p) ISBN 978-0-525-53970-4

A wealthy Philadelphia family's dysfunction threatens to undo them in the enthralling latest from Scottoline (*What*

Happened to the Bennetts). Married attorneys Paul and Marie Devlin work beside their two eldest children and fellow lawyers, John and Gabrielle, at their esteemed family firm. TJ, the youngest Devlin, is a recovering alcoholic with a criminal record who works as the firm's informal "investigator," spending most of his days doing busywork to keep him out of trouble. When John tells TJ he may have accidentally killed a client one night, a shocked TJ agrees to help his brother avoid arrest. As TJ digs deeper into the client's death, however, he uncovers his siblings' involvement in a vast pharmaceutical conspiracy that puts his safety and sobriety at risk. Scottoline successfully anchors the story's legalese and shady pharma dealings in TJ's personal struggles, wringing real emotion from his gradual realization that, while he may be the Devlins' black sheep, he's far from the family's most amoral member. The midsection sags a bit, but for the most part, this is a ripping blend of legal and family drama. *Agent: Robert Gottlieb, Trident Media Group.* (Mar.)



Death and Fromage

Ian Moore. Poisoned Pen, \$16.99 trade paper (320p) ISBN 978-1-72827-058-6

Comedian Moore follows up *Death and Croissants* with another witty cozy featuring hapless former film professor Richard Ainsworth, who now operates a bed and breakfast in France's sleepy Vallée de Follet, and his daring amateur investigator friend, Madame Valérie d'Orçay. At the outset, Richard and Valérie take a trip to a local Michelin-starred restaurant as guests of a lauded food critic. Dissatisfied with the meal, the critic revokes one of the restaurant's stars, leading to local scandal and the suspicious suicide of the restaurant's main supplier of goat cheese. Valérie smells a rat, and she once again ropes Richard into her unsolicited investigation. Suspects include two ego-swollen chefs and a local cheesemaker who is trying to enlarge his market share by producing vegan goat cheese. Added to the mix is the sudden appearance of Richard's estranged wife, who has come to France to haul her wayward husband back home to England. The pacing is brisk, the jokes are plentiful, and the mystery is complex

enough to satisfy diehard whodunit fans. It's a generous helping of good fun, with authentic Gallic flavor. (Mar.)

SF/Fantasy/Horror

★ Grey Dog

Elliott Gish. ECW, \$18.95 trade paper (392p)
ISBN 978-1-77041-732-8

Gish's seething, gorgeous horror debut centers on 29-year-old schoolteacher Ada Byrd, whose tarnished reputation—the causes of which are better left unspoiled—drives her in 1901 to relocate from the comparatively bustling town of Willoughby to the small hamlet of Lowry Bridge, hoping to rebuild her life. Almost as soon as she arrives in the claustrophobic small town, however, she's greeted by a series of odd and terrifying visions and dreams, including insect swarms and forest creatures giving horrific birth to human infants. Ada seeks answers from a mysterious widow shunned by many of the townsfolk, leading her down a path of both terror and self-discovery. Gish's prose is as sharp as a scalpel, giving readers a precise portrait of Ada's internal state as she grapples with the unique horrors of socially enforced womanhood at the turn of the century. In an impressive and effective touch, Gish never asks the reader to like complicated, prickly Ada even as she demands to be understood. The novel's diaristic format lends itself perfectly to the revelations that unfold, and the ending will haunt readers long after the final page is turned. Calling to mind the folk horror of T. Kingfisher's *The Twisted Ones*, this marks the arrival of a bold new voice. (Apr.)

What Grows in the Dark

Jaq Evans. Mira, \$18.99 trade paper (288p)
ISBN 978-0-7783-6968-4

In Evans's suspenseful first outing, a pair of fraudulent paranormal investigators are called in to examine a real haunting. Sixteen years ago, Brigit Weylan's older sister, Emma, was found dead in an apparent suicide outside the woods where the girls once played. Soon after, Brigit left town for good. Now she lives on the road with her friend, Ian, conning people by faking supernatural happenings and then swooping in as experts. Ian, who films their

so-called investigations and uploads them to YouTube, believes they'd have a hit show on their hands if they could just get a network pickup. Then Brigit gets a call from Emma's former girlfriend, now a police detective, informing her that two teens have disappeared in the same woods where Emma died, followed by strange, seemingly paranormal occurrences. Though Brigit doesn't want to return home, Emma offers to pay, and she can't resist the money. Upon arrival, she and Ian find that the teens' disappearance is directly connected to Emma's death. The more they investigate, the more the forest comes alive—and it wants Brigit. Evans gets the pacing of this chiller just right. Skin-crawling and unpredictable, this is sure to please horror fans. *Agent: Erica Bauman, Aevitas Creative.* (Mar.)

★ Big Time

Ben H. Winters. Mulholland, \$29 (320p)
ISBN 978-0-316-30577-8

Winters (*Stranger*) plays with readers' expectations like a virtuoso in this stellar technological thriller, which opens on a nightmare situation and never takes its foot off the gas. New mom Allie Zerkofsky, a self-described "regular boring middle-school teacher," and her infant, Rachel, are abducted from a New Jersey playground by two assailants, who separate them. When Allie asks her abductor what will happen to Rachel, however, her abductor says she has no



idea what baby Allie is referring to. Allie's responding howls of grief distract the kidnapper, leading to a car crash and enabling Allie to escape.

Winters then introduces Grace Berney, an attorney for the FDA's Center for Devices and Radiological Health, whose boss asks her to trace an unusual medical device implanted in an unidentified amnesiac female patient—whose injuries readers will recognize as matching Allie's. Grace's digging leads to the defunct Substance Material Group, a business

that had been exploring a new theory about time. Winters's many jaw-dropping plot twists are always grounded in pitch-perfect depictions of ordinary people caught up in extraordinary events. Blake Crouch fans will be in heaven. (Mar.)

★ House of Open Wounds

Adrian Tchaikovsky. Head of Zeus, \$27.99 (608p) ISBN 978-1-03-590138-8

Set in the world of *City of Last Chances*, this grim and exceptional look at fantasy warfare from Tchaikovsky feels like *M*A*S*H* written by an uncharacteristically somber Terry Pratchett. Maric Jack, the latest unwilling inductee into the Pallesen war machine, is assigned to the experimental hospital of the Forthright Battalion. Ordinarily the Pallesen would kill a foreign magic-user like Jack out of hand, but the Higher Orders believe his powers can be used to help the war effort against their adversaries, the mercantile power Lor. What they don't understand is that, unlike the other miracle workers in the hospital, Jack isn't in control of the marvelous healing that happens in his presence. The miracles are bestowed by the cantankerous pacifist God whom Jack was once a priest of—and that God will revoke his blessing from anyone he heals who then goes on to attempt to harm another. While Tchaikovsky centers the story on Jack, he takes the time to develop the other hospital staff as well, painting a broader picture of the corroding conflict between medicine and war. He also spices things up with a potential love interest for Jack and myriad details of both the Pallesen and the cultures it has swallowed in its quest to "perfect" the world. This is not to be missed. (Mar.)

Three Kinds of Lucky

Kim Harrison. Ace, \$28 (464p)
ISBN 978-0-593-43747-6

With this ambitious if unwieldy urban fantasy, bestseller Harrison (*Demons of Good and Evil*) launches a new series in which magic and luck are inextricably linked. Petra Grady is incapable of working magic, but able to see and manipulate dross, the misfortune-causing waste produced by magical workings. She finds work as a sweeper, cleaning up after careless mages and

keeping the magical world secret from mundane society. Despite the necessity of her job, she's looked down upon in the hierarchy of magic users in St. Unoc, Ariz. That changes when her long-estranged best friend, Dr. Benedict Strom, requests her assistance on a project that could alter the balance between magic, dross, and shadow—dangerous energy attracted to dross. When catastrophe strikes, Petra discovers she may be the only person capable of saving the city from further disaster. While the premise and characters have promise, this opener expends a lot of ink setting up the series at the expense of the story at hand. Between establishing the world, exploring the complex magic system, and radically upending Petra's status quo, the results feel overstuffed. Hopefully future installments will take more time to breathe. *Agent: Jennifer Jackson, Donald Maass Literary.* (Mar.)



★ **Floating Hotel**

Grace Curtis. DAW, \$28 (304p) ISBN 978-0-7564-1930-1

Curtis (*Frontier*) spins a cozy and compulsively readable sci-fi adventure set aboard the Grand Abeona Hotel, a luxurious resort starship locked in a perpetual tour of the galaxy. Though the



ship has seen better days, it's still a choice setting, offering the finest amenities for its myriad guests as they travel between the stars. The subtle plot chronicles the experiences

of the hotel's staff and guests as they delve into the Grand Abeona's many mysteries. From amiable manager Carl, crusty chief technician Sasha, and new employee Daphne to an enigmatic pair of newlywed guests, each perspective adds another layer of complexity and suspense to the question of the hotel's eventual fate. With clever prose and lush descriptions, Curtis captures the spirit of the worn down yet still glamorous starship as it dutifully follows its routine, exploring the

backstory of its staff while throwing ever escalating complications in their way, including a potentially eventful academic conference onboard and a murder in one of the guest rooms. Even when the stakes are high, Curtis has a knack for keeping things intimate and understated, peeling back the layers of the novel's scrappy found family. Centering optimism in the face of an increasingly dark universe, this feel-good saga lingers long after it's finished. *Agent: Zoë Plant, Plant Agency.* (Mar.)



Next of Kin

Elton Skelter. Lethe, \$18 trade paper (196p) ISBN 978-1-59021-776-4

In this morbid and intense horror-romance hybrid from Skelter (*Life Support*), the relationship between a vicious killer and his intended victim grows complicated. Serial killer Jacob Mallory is New York City's public enemy number one, his nightly murder sprees unsolved by police. He's surprised and intrigued to learn that a beautiful stranger named Nathan McGuire has him as an emergency contact when the hospital calls to inform him of Nathan's suicide attempt. Jacob agrees to bring Nathan home, delighted at the opportunity to stage a perfect murder—but he quickly realizes he's gotten more than he bargained for as he begins to fall for Nathan, his murderous impulses colliding with a tenderness he's never felt before. Meanwhile Nathan has secrets of his own, and as Jacob becomes more compromised, surprises surface that threaten to tear apart the volatile balance between predator and prey. This tense tale succeeds as a queer romantic riff on Bret Easton Ellis's *American Psycho*, with Skelter's nimble prose perfectly evoking Jacob's wry detachment. Though the plot occasionally struggles to grow beyond the bounds of its influences, it has plenty of transgressive charm. Fans of Poppy Z. Brite's *Exquisite Corpse* will especially want to check this out. (Mar.)



★ **A Feather So Black**

Lyra Selene. Orbit, \$19.99 trade paper (496p) ISBN 978-0-316-56496-0

A queen's foster daughter becomes the key in a war for magic in this spellbinding romantic fantasy from Selene (*Diamond &*

Dawn). After the Fair Folk kidnap infant human Princess Eala and leave a changeling named Fia in her place, Queen Eithne raises this replacement daughter as a weapon to bring her real daughter home. Fia is fiercely loyal to the queen but her fae blood makes her an outcast among humans. Only one other person finds his way into her heart: Prince Rogan Mòr, Eala's betrothed since birth. After breaking Fia's heart four years prior, Rogan returns to help retrieve Eala, reopening old wounds. Before they leave for the fairyland of Tír na nÓg, the queen secretly gives Fia another task: to steal the Sky Sword from the fae lord keeping Eala captive and with it bring magic back to their land. But Fia finds more than she bargained for behind the gates of Tír na nÓg—especially in her target, the deceptive and devastatingly handsome high lord Irian. Selene makes the world of the fae mysterious, sensual, and enthralling, and utilizes a delicious love quadrangle and a complex heroine who's just beginning to unpack the trauma of her upbringing to keep the pages flying. Readers ready to graduate from Sarah J. Maas will want to snap this up. *Agent: Jessica Watterson, Sandra Dijkstra Literary.* (Mar.)



Proxy

Gary Gibson. Brain in a Jar, \$19.79 (340p) ISBN 978-986-06770-3-4

Gibson (*Echogenesis*) serves up a relentless cyberpunk adventure in which the very future of humanity is at stake. In the second half of the 21st century, following three pandemics, people find solace in proxy technology, which allows users to put their minds in another person's body for a few hours. London socialite Stacy Cotter has been mired in scandal since she was caught "proxy hooking," selling her body for proxy jaunts, years before the start of the book. She's been hiding from her notoriety in Paris, but now returns to London, where journalist Martin Wilber has agreed to tell her side of the story. Before she can meet him, however, she's kidnapped and body-jacked by goons hired by her maniacal father, tech entrepreneur Raphael Markov. With Stacy missing, her mother, Amy, hires cantankerous private investigator Ray Thomas to search for her. Meanwhile, a subplot about Dr. Isaac Sizemore, credited with creating proxy, and his AI assistant, Zero, who is able to proxy in multiple bodies at the same time,

reveals to the reader the secret purpose of the technology. It's an expansive tale of innovative science driven by a capable cast of characters whose layers Gibson peels back in alternating chapters. At times cluttered but always unflinching, this ambitious thrill ride coalesces into a cautionary message about the precariousness of humanity. (*Self-published*)

Romance/Erotica

★ This Could Be Us

Kennedy Ryan. Forever, \$17.99 trade paper (400p) ISBN 978-1-5387-0682-4

Ryan returns with a raw and affecting second installment of the Skyland series (after *Before I Let Go*). Stay-at-home mom Soledad Barnes prides herself on caring for her husband, Edward, and their three daughters—but her well-ordered world turns upside down when Edward is arrested for embezzlement and, while he's in jail, Soledad



learns of his infidelity. With her children depending on her, Soledad is determined not to fall apart. Instead, she must find a way to turn her life around with the help of supportive female friends and bell hooks's *All About Love*. Forensic accountant Judah Cross is the man who uncovered Edward's crimes, putting him and Soledad at odds. Nevertheless, the pair cannot deny the powerful attraction simmering between them. Kennedy makes the chemistry palpable and showcases the unexpected similarities between her worthy protagonists by emphasizing their mutual devotion to their families; Judah is a single father to autistic twin sons. Soledad and Judah's ensuing forbidden romance doubles as a journey of self-discovery for them both. Readers will be most gratified to see Soledad figure out how to turn her long-unpaid domestic labor into a lucrative business by selling her baked goods and starting a farm-to-table pop-up

experience. This sexy and mature romance is another hit for Ryan. *Agent: Kim Lionetti, BookEnds. (Mar.)*

Happily Never After

Lynn Painter. Berkley, \$18 trade paper (304p) ISBN 978-0-593-63801-9

Painter (*Betting on You*) charms with this lively tale of professional wedding objectors. When Sophie Steinbeck finds out her fiancé, Stuart, has been unfaithful, she wants to call the whole thing off—but her father-in-law to be is her father's boss and she worries about the repercussions. Enter Max Parks, who gets paid to object at ill-fated weddings and who helps Sophie to call things off mid-ceremony without getting blamed for the relationship's end. Both Sophie and Max have been burned by love, but when Sophie asks Max to show her the ropes of the hired objection gig, their attraction is undeniable. They agree to a purely physical relationship even as Max hopes feelings will grow. When Sophie is called to object at Max's former girlfriend's wedding, however, his instinct to protect his ex from heartbreak creates a huge rift between Max and Sophie. Will they be able to sort out their differences? Alternating between Sophie's and Max's perspectives, the zippy plot comes complete with a winning supporting cast, especially Sophie's entertaining senior-citizen roommates and mischievous cats. Rom-com fans will find this scratches the itch. (*Mar.*)

It Must Be True Then

Luci Adams. Griffin, \$18 trade paper (368p) ISBN 978-1-250-84222-0

This sparkling second-chance romance from Adams (*Not That Kind of Ever After*) finds Londoner Daisy Peterson at her wit's end: after 13 years on the job, she's just lost her data analyst position and, with it, her workplace relationship; her dependent younger sister, Mia, is looking for a financial handout; and she has no idea how to move forward. After forcing herself off the couch to buy groceries, Daisy unexpectedly meets rambunctious Bailey and Cara, the two precocious young daughters of Archie Brown, a widowed father, artist, and part-time lawyer. The girls momentarily snap Daisy out of her funk, so when, shortly thereafter, she sees a "nanny wanted" notice

on the grocery store's bulletin board, she decides to apply—only to learn that Archie's kid-averse girlfriend posted the ad without his knowledge. Still, Archie agrees to give Daisy a chance, and though she's always maintained she doesn't want children, she soon falls head over heels for Archie's girls—and then for Archie himself. Adams ably demonstrates that long-held positions can be revised, and the book's vibrant prose, appealing hero and heroine, and two kid characters who steal every scene combine to create a truly feel-good story. This is a treat. (*Mar.*)

The Breakup Vacation

Anna Garcia. MTV, \$17.99 trade paper (320p) ISBN 978-1-66801-096-9

A spontaneous girls trip to Cancun is at the center of this sexy if simplistic summer romance from Gracia (*Boys I Know*). With senior year of college approaching, theater major Grace is looking forward to a trip to L.A. with Josh, her boyfriend of six months—but then Josh dumps Grace and starts dating her theater class nemesis instead. Brokenhearted Grace relies on her friends Tiff and Camille for emotional support, and the besties agree to take a rejuvenating trip to Mexico. Unbeknownst to Tiff and Camille, however, Josh will also be in Cancun for the summer, and Grace is on a secret mission to get him back. Things heat up further when Grace meets Daniel, a soccer player from Hawaii who distracts her from her original plan. Daniel is easygoing, caring, and interested in Grace's needs—everything Josh wasn't. With Daniel in the mix, Grace's summer of heartbreak turns into a season of friendship, romance, and finding herself. The setting is lush and the conceit is fun, if somewhat familiar. Unfortunately, the characters feel one-note, and while the physical chemistry in Grace's relationships comes through, the love triangle lacks emotional depth. Still, as easy beach reading, this will do in a pinch. *Agent: Kiana Nguyen, Donald Maas Literary. (Mar.)*

A Governess's Guide to Passion and Peril

Manda Collins. Forever, \$16.99 trade paper (304p) ISBN 978-1-5387-2560-3

A governess reunites with her former crush in Collins's addictive fourth Ladies Most Scandalous Victorian romance

(after *A Spinster's Guide to Danger and Dukes*). Following her father's untimely death, Jane Halliwell is forced to take a job as governess to the daughter of Viscount and Lady Gilford. When the viscount is murdered while hosting a symposium for diplomats at his London townhouse, Lord Adrian Fielding, an agent of the Foreign Office and a man Jane adored in her youth, works to find the killer. Sparks fly between Adrian and Jane as her puppy love turns into a much more adult attraction. Though Adrian wants to keep Jane safe from the killer, she is determined to help in the investigation—especially when they learn her father may have been murdered by the same criminal they're chasing. Collins adeptly balances suspense and passion as she steadily amps up both. The result is a genuine page-turner. *Agent: Holly Root, Root Literary.* (Mar.)

★ The Duchess

Sophie Jordan. Avon, \$19.99 trade paper (304p) ISBN 978-0-06-327074-9

Jordan's scintillating second Scandalous Ladies of London Regency romance (after *The Countess*) follows Valencia, the Dowager Duchess of Dedham, whose freedom is finally in sight as her socially mandated year of mourning the accidental death of her abusive ex-husband draws to a close. Then attractive Welshman Rhain, the new Duke of Dedham, arrives at her London home (now his) with his six unwed sisters and mother in tow. Before Valencia can depart London for the remote dower house in Yorkshire, Rhain, who is unaccustomed to the rules of London society, asks Valencia to help his sisters navigate the social season. Valencia's continued residence at the townhouse puts her and the new duke in close proximity, especially as their quarters share a tempting connecting door. Though

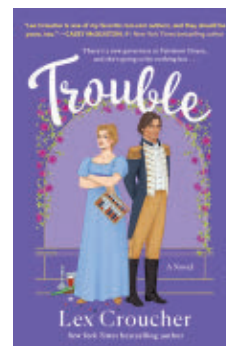


Valencia is reluctant to be under any man's control ever again, she can't help her attraction to Rhain, whose good-hearted kindness will make readers swoon. In a plot

★ Trouble

Lex Croucher. Griffin, \$18 trade paper (336p) ISBN 978-1-250-32396-5

Croucher (*Infamous*) brings a wonderfully modern aesthetic to the Regency setting of this energetic and lighthearted romance. Millworker Emily Laurence intends to masquerade as her much more refined and compassionate sister Amy in the role of governess to the teen daughters of widower Captain Ben Edwards just long enough to make sure Amy doesn't lose the position while recovering from an illness. She also hopes to steal a few things from the household along the way. Emily has her work cut out for her: her younger charge is a chatterbox desperate for attention, while the older sister is morose and prone to disappearing at the first provocation. Meanwhile, the rest of the small staff determinedly involves her in their socializing, the attractive Captain proves a strange mix of aloof and casually hands-on with running his household and raising his children, and a stranger in the local pub presses her for answers behind the Captain's departure from the Navy. Croucher excels in building quirky, sympathetic characters and social dynamics which, even when antagonistic, brim with warmth and a familial feel. In incorporating the queerness of several of the characters, Croucher hits the right balance between an easy and accepting attitude within the Edwards household and a recognition of more general social censure typical of the era. A similar balance concerning class issues gives the eventual romance between Emily and the Captain just the right amount of tension. Fans of come-as-you-are romance will find this a delicious, and not too guilty, pleasure. (Mar.)



development that Jordan masterfully utilizes to expose the dark side of glittering Regency society, the stolen moments of happiness between this well-suited duo are marred by blackmail when someone claims to know a scandalous secret Valencia harbors. The resilient heroine, powerful emotional and sexual chemistry, and hint of intrigue make this one to be savored. *Agent: Maura E. Kye-Casella, Don Congdon Assoc.* (Mar.)

Cover Story

Rachel Lacey. Montlake, \$16.99 trade paper (304p) ISBN 978-1-66251-740-2

Lacey (*Stars Collide*) departs from the typical Hollywood romance in this spicy sapphic outing. A-list actor Natalie Keane understandably increases security when the man who stalked and kidnapped her eight years ago is released from prison. Hoping to "make headlines for happy reasons instead of traumatic ones," however, she requests that her new bodyguard, Taylor Vaughn, pose as her girlfriend. Lacey brings the heat between

these two career-focused women, and given their palpable chemistry from the start, it's no surprise when they fall in love in earnest. Still, Natalie's PTSD from the kidnapping and Taylor's parents' dependence on her career to support them financially mean both women have a hard time accepting and embracing their feelings for each other. While the dialogue often feels stilted ("Therapy made a huge difference in my life, and I get enthusiastic about it," Taylor says to Natalie, "but that doesn't give me the right to be preachy") and renders the characters somewhat two-dimensional, the steamy sex scenes, Hollywood glamor, and high-stakes intrigue keep the pages turning. Lacey's fans should snap this up. *Agent: Sarab Younger, Nancy Yost Literary.* (Mar.)

Kilt Trip

Alexandra Kiley. Canary Street, \$19.88 trade paper (336p) ISBN 978-1-335-00929-6

Kiley debuts with a winning romance that doubles as a vivid travelogue through Scotland. Logan Sutherland is

satisfied with the way things are at his family-run Heart of the Highlands tour company. Therefore, he's very reluctant when his father hires American travel consultant Addie Macrae to refresh their tours and broaden their appeal. Since the death of her mom 10 years earlier, Addie has committed herself to globe-trotting, never staying in one place long enough to form lasting friendships or relationships. Still, Scotland calls to her because of her family heritage and because she has old photos of her mom visiting unlabeled parts of the Scottish countryside and wants to track down the locations.

Logan's accent and kilt appeal to Addie, though he makes it difficult, at first, to make progress on modernizing the business. Only after Logan insists that Addie experience the personal, off-the-beaten-track tours he specializes in do they both realize that perhaps a compromise of their styles is possible. Their ensuing romance strikes a nice balance between romantic interludes and heartfelt banter. Armchair travelers will especially enjoy this flirty jaunt through the highlands. *Agent: Jill Marr, Sandra Dijkstra Literary. (Mar.)*

Faery Queen

Michelle M. Pillow. The Raven, \$15.99 trade paper (344p) ISBN 978-1-62501-328-6

Bestseller Pillow catapults readers back into the high fantasy world of her Realm Immortal series in this jam-packed dark romance, which picks up a year after the events of *King of the Unblessed*. Hugh, Earl of Bellemare in England, has had his eyes opened to things beyond his mortal ken and found both love and heartache in Tania, Lesser Queen of the faerie Kingdom of Feia. He left her to rescue his sister, Juliana, from kidnappers, promising to return in a year. But while away, he has come to believe that Tania was only trifling with him—and perhaps even had him under a love spell—and resolves never to go back to fairy land. Now, however, his once-blessed childhood home of Bellemare is seeing its fortunes fail. Meanwhile, Tania, normally a being of light and happiness, can't understand why Hugh has forsaken her. As her health and kingdom slowly crumble around her, she makes a desperate play to recover Hugh's heart—and in so doing she brings the dastardly Lucien, King of the Damned,

closer to his domination of Hugh's world. The worldbuilding is expansive and Pillow strikes a good balance between romance and action. The plot itself feels fairly familiar and some sex scenes depict dubious consent, which won't sit well with all readers. Still, series fans will find this a solid continuation. *(Self-published)*

Comics

The Werewolf at Dusk: And Other Stories

David Small. Liveright, \$25 (160p) ISBN 978-1-324-09282-7

This evocative, sure-handed triptych of short stories from Small (*Stitches*) showcases his talent to conjure foreboding. The title piece, adapted from a story by Lincoln Michel, depicts an aging werewolf who's now "lucky [to] overtake an injured squirrel." As isolated as ever, he's still fearful of the full moon, but for a different reason: —"It used to mean I'd hurt other people. Now it means I hurt myself." The dreamlike middle story, "A Walk in the Old



City," portrays a burnt-out psychiatrist as he follows a mysterious old man across a bridge festooned with giant spiders, haunted by the specter of death. In the final entry, "The Tiger in Vogue" (adapted from a story by Jean Ferry), a dilettante in 1920s Germany tries to enjoy the "innocent delights" of a music hall—a Belle Epoque-style pop of color in a dim and rainy city—but despises one particular number, in which a woman courts a tiger dressed like a dapper gentleman. The tiger's wildness is barely contained by a cat tamer fashioned as Hitler, whose power requires the complacency and complicity of the audience. Small's elegant, spidery drawings, reminiscent of Jules Feiffer, and limited color palette unite the set. Wisdom does not beget freedom in the sorrowful world of these stories—but it's still a place well worth visiting. *Agent: Brenda Bowen, Book Group. (Mar.)*

Tender

Beth Hetland. Fantagraphics, \$19.99 (162p) ISBN 978-1-68396-935-8

Hetland gets under the skin in her nimble and unsettling graphic novel debut. On the surface, expectant mom Carolanne is a painfully average woman, chatting with the gals at the office about her husband and baby on the way. But a menacing mood hangs over quotidian scenes, which are periodically interrupted by Carolanne's grotesque nightmares (in one, she imagines licking a cat until she drowns in hair, her gut depicted as a cave strangled by black strands) and flashbacks revealing her desperation for a picture-perfect marriage. Her discomfort expresses itself in her habit of picking at her nails and skin, and her pregnancy further twists her combative relationship with her body before a tragedy pushes her obsessions to a frightening new level. Hetland's discordantly cheerful artwork, which features characters drawn with picture-book simplicity against pleasantly busy domestic backgrounds tinted in cool blues, provides a chilling counterpoint to the slow burn of psychological and body horror. Images of food, flesh, and obsessive consumption contribute to the sense that the increasingly unstable Carolanne is either devouring or being devoured by the world around her. Hetland's ability to maintain a sinister atmosphere in scenes both mundane and monstrous will keep horror fans turning the pages. *(Mar.)*

Fall Through

Nate Powell. Abrams ComicArts, \$24.99 (192p) ISBN 978-1-41976-082-2

This paean to 1990s DIY punk from National Book Award winner Powell (the March series) puts a paranormal twist on the intimacies and aggravations of life in a band. Arkansas-based quartet Diamond Mine summon thunderous power from their vocalist Diana's volatile, shamanistic performances. The shows are electrifying—their sound drawn as lightning bolts striking the stage—but there's something more at play. Each time the band launch into their signature song, "Fall Through," it's as though a rift opens in the spacetime continuum, and bassist Jody narrates a quasi-mystical tour diary of the group's seemingly endless six-week van tour.

[Q&A]

PW TALKS WITH DAVID SMALL

Still Got Bite

With the illustrated stories of *The Werewolf at Dusk* (Liveright, Mar.; reviewed on p. 73), Small examines what he calls “the vestibule of old age.”

How did you pick pieces for the collection, especially the adaptations from prose like the title story?

I like the concision of short stories. I did have a theme in mind. I was going to call it *The Beast Within*, which my editor didn't like, though it did end up being the title of my introduction essay. I wanted to include a story by the surrealist artist Leanora Carrington called “The Debutante.” It's about a sheltered rich girl with no friends except for this hyena whom she's teaching to speak French. I thought I had permission from the Carrington estate, and I illustrated the whole thing, and then the estate—which consisted of two estranged brothers—one of them said no. So, I lost that

story, and I thought that was the end of my book. But during that difficult month, I spent part of my time scrolling the internet, until one day I stumbled onto Lincoln Michel's “The Werewolf at Dusk.”

In the introduction, you write the stories are linked by a “dread of things internal.” But “The Tiger in Vogue,” which references Hitler, hints at external threats as well. How do you see the intersection of personal psychology and sociopolitical disaster?

The first two pieces in the book are individual stories, and the last one is about a soul sickness in society. That's the link. We're living through it again—I can't even watch the news before I go to bed. The divisions in our

country. The possibility of that man becoming our next president.

The psychiatrist in “A Walk in the Old City” is feeling burned out and cynical. How do you stay engaged as an artist?

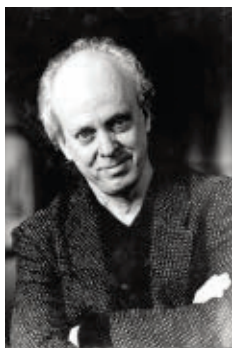
I guess this book is my response to that question. Having an adult audience is encouraging to me, because I haven't continued very strongly with children's books lately. Neither am I getting any offers. My work is different from most—I started my career with examples like Roald Dahl and Tomi Ungerer. I doubt even Maurice Sendak could get published today.

Children's publishing has changed radically. I don't know who's buying the “I Love You, Grandma”—type books coming out today, the self-help books for children. Children are acquainted with the dark. They learn to deal with it by creating metaphors. That's what a good story does.

How is your process different when you're writing a story vs. adapting or illustrating one?

It's easier in some ways, because I get to write about what I'd like to draw pictures of. That was the basis for “A Walk in the Old City,” which was based on a dream. When it was revealed that the old man living with the spiders was blind, I thought, “That says something about old age that I think is true.” It takes a certain amount of denial to get through it with grace.

—CHERYL KLEIN



While Diane fights to hold the band together, guitarist Napoleon feels pulled by responsibilities to a brother with special needs back home, drummer Steff powers through suppressed identity issues, and Jody's attention strays to a budding relationship. A musician himself, Powell captures the warmth and squalor of punk house lodgings and the frenetic buzz at each stop along the road, all in vibrant, splashy layouts. “The story of a thousand shows is one of quietly falling out of time... Here we go again.” With infectious nostalgia for humid basement shows and 3 a.m. revelations, Powell revels in the too-brief moments when music makes life vivid. *Agent: Charlie Olson, InkWell Management. (Feb.)*

★ **Zodiac: A Graphic Memoir**

Ai Weiwei, with Elettra Stamboulis and Gianluca Costantini. Ten Speed Graphic, \$28.99 (160p) ISBN 978-1-98486-299-0

Chinese artist-activist Weiwei's poignant, meditative graphic memoir debut opens as he speaks to his son about the past, and the “powerful men”—such as Mao Zedong—who “made decisions for everybody” during the cultural revolution, including what few books people were allowed to read. Weiwei interweaves his family's story and that of his own development (and persecution) as an artist alongside Chinese fables and folktales as an act of resistance. Dividing the work into chapters named for the 12 signs of the Zodiac, Weiwei philosophizes through anecdotes (“You like speaking in metaphors,” says his partner and mother of his son) that unfold in understated yet intricately drawn black-and-white comics by Constantini. Among other memories, Weiwei recounts living in exile underground with his family as a child (“in a burrow dug in the desert”) and how his father, Ai Qing, an “enemy to the party,” first turned from painting to poetry while jailed. “An artist has to be the beginning of a story, not the end,” Weiwei opines, emphasizing the potential of art to connect people and ideas. “We must combat fear with the truth.” This is a sage and inventive embroidery of philosophy, family memoir, and cultural history. *Agents: (for Weiwei) Peter and Amy Bernstein, Bernstein Literary. (Jan.)*

SMALL © GORDON TRICE

Nonfiction

★ **The Secret Mind of Bertha Pappenheim: The Woman Who Invented Freud's Talking Cure**

Gabriel Brownstein. PublicAffairs, \$32 (336p)
ISBN 978-1-5417-7464-3

Brownstein (*The Open Heart Club*), an English professor at St. John's University, takes a fresh and fascinating look at the life of Freud's "Anna O" and the illness that ailed her. In 1880s Vienna, Bertha Pappenheim (1859–1936) was stricken by a mysterious collection of symptoms (roving paralysis, aphasia, headaches, etc.) broadly defined as "hysteria." She sought treatment from Freud's mentor Josef Breuer, and together patient and doctor fashioned a curative method in which Pappenheim recounted "repressed memories," which seemed to alleviate some of her symptoms. Cited by Freud in his and Breuer's 1895 treatise *Studies on Hysteria*, the "Anna O" case serves in many ways as "the founding myth... of the theory and practice of psychoanalysis," Brownstein notes. Yet the claim that Pappenheim was "cured" is false, according to the author, who notes that Freud and Breuer corresponded in the following years about her continued mental suffering and suggests she later eschewed psychoanalysis. Brownstein theorizes that Pappenheim's symptoms may have stemmed from functional neurologic disorder, and includes case histories of present-day sufferers to contextualize the condition. Infused with emotion from Brownstein's own personal losses (he wrote the book while grieving the deaths of his wife and father, the latter of whom had begun the research into Pappenheim), the result is a riveting study of the boundaries between neurology and psychology and the gender dynamics of medicine. This captivates. *Agent: David McCormick, McCormick Literary.* (Apr.)

Minority Rule: The Right-Wing Attack on the Will of the People, and the Fight to Resist It

Ari Berman. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, \$30 (384p) ISBN 978-0-374-60021-1

Gerrymandering, voter suppression, and a minoritarian Constitution are keeping unpopular Republicans in power, according



Twins Elijah and Isaac Bell are among the subjects spotlighted in Johnny Cirillo's "eye-catching" survey of street fashion, *Watching New York*, reviewed on this page.

to this labyrinthine political exposé. *Mother Jones* correspondent Berman (*Give Us the Ballot*) surveys the underhanded tactics Republicans deploy in order to win elections and predominate in Congress, the presidency, and state legislatures despite routinely losing the popular vote. These methods include extreme gerrymandering in Wisconsin (in 2012 Democrats got 51.4% of the votes for state assembly but Republicans won 60% of the seats), voting laws in Georgia that disproportionately reduce registration and turnout among poor and minority voters, and Donald Trump's 2020 stop the steal campaign to pressure state officials and Vice President Mike Pence to throw out election results in states that Joe Biden won. Berman goes on to criticize how the Constitution gives small, rural, white, Republican-dominated states disproportionate weight in the Senate and the Electoral College. He also celebrates counteroffensives to Republican election meddling, including Michigan ballot referenda that established a nonpartisan redistricting commission and made voter registration and absentee ballot-casting easier. Throughout, Berman pairs wide-ranging and historically grounded analysis of America's minoritarian political system with a trenchant critique of its departures from democratic common sense. It adds up to an eye-opening dissection of partisan manipulation. (Apr.)

On Bette Midler: An Opinionated Guide

Kevin Winkler. Oxford Univ., \$29.99 (224p)
ISBN 978-0-19-766832-0

A "gay camp sensibility" has helped make Bette Midler a "singular talent across media for more than fifty years," according to this effusive biography from library curator Winkler (*Everything Is Choreography*). Finding her voice in 1970s "song-and-comedy" performances at gay bathhouses, Midler developed a comic style that mixed bawdy humor, unabashed camp (her fashion style was "trash with flash"), and the "outsider's perspective" she gleaned as an "unattractive Jewish girl from Hawaii" who'd failed to find success in mainstream show biz. Winkler covers Midler's years on Broadway, her television and film roles, and her somewhat rockier transition to recording music, a medium that could obscure her onstage flair (in the 1975 album *Songs for the New Depression*, for example, Midler's vocals are sanded down into "a smooth pop-singer sound," Winkler writes, as if she's trying to rid her voice "of its distinctive edge"). Though he tends to gush over the star—breathless analyses of her stage work abound; even a ragged-voiced nightclub performance is characterized as "transcendent art"—Winkler dutifully accounts for such missteps as the failed 2000 sitcom *Bette* and takes stock of the unevenness of her oeuvre, which he attributes partly to Hollywood's casting biases. Winkler's blend of dishy backstage detail, over-the-top adoration, and solid criticism befit his larger-than-life subject. Midler's fans will find plenty to sink their teeth into. (Apr.)

Watching New York: Street Style A to Z

Johnny Cirillo. Abrams Image, \$29.99 (224p)
ISBN 978-1-4197-6994-8

Photographer Cirillo (*Watching New York*) presents a sumptuous visual feast of New York City street style. Drawing inspiration from "legendary" street fashion photographer Bill Cunningham, who died in 2016, Cirillo wanders the streets of New York daily, capturing some of the city's quirkiest characters and the style that sets them apart. Arranged in brief sections, including "Accessories," "Fishnets," "Gothic," and "Zebra Prints," the fashion Cirillo highlights isn't exactly

[Q&A]

PW TALKS WITH GABRIEL BROWNSTEIN

In Search of Anna O

The woman who became the “founding myth” of psychoanalysis takes center stage in novelist Brownstein’s *The Secret Mind of Bertha Pappenheim* (PublicAffairs, Apr.; reviewed on p. 75).

Can you describe how this project began?

I had dinner with my dad, a psychiatrist, the night before he died and he gave me an essay he’d written about Bertha Pappenheim, which he said was his masterpiece. I started the book just trying to find what he was interested in, and became really fascinated by this woman who’d been a great writer and was diagnosed with hysteria and became the source of psychoanalysis. Sigmund Freud called her Anna O, and she came up with the term *talking cure*. I got really interested in the different stories that had been told about her and about her illness. There’s mystery around what happened to Pappenheim and her “hysteria,” and I didn’t want to be another person who said they had the solution. I wanted to talk about all the ways that we’ve misunderstood her and struggled to understand her, which are like miniature ways we’ve tried to understand the human mind and ourselves and others.

How did you think about Pappenheim’s condition while writing the book?

There are historians who have written about what she and her “hysteria” meant, but maybe what’s important is to understand that we just do break down this way. It’s something that we don’t like to believe happens to people, which is that they lose control of their bodies without knowing why.



According to the neurologists I talked to, it happens not infrequently—people have seizures, they lose control of their hands, they lose control of their speech. It can just happen and usually it’s for very complicated reasons.

Can you describe the approach you take to writing nonfiction?

For me, writing a book of nonfiction is like finding an area of the woods that you’re interested in and sitting down. Suddenly what seemed still and uninteresting comes to life in small ways; you notice where the birds live and what the bugs are doing, and the longer you sit and look, the more the world transforms. I guess that’s what I tried to do. The “place” I tried to look was

Bertha Pappenheim, her life and her story. I hope some of that feeling of discovery comes through to the reader.

You wrote the book during a period of personal loss. How does that connect to Pappenheim’s story?

I believe that Freud once said the mechanism of poetry and the mechanism of hysteria were the same. I don’t know exactly what he meant by that, but I certainly felt desperate in writing this book. People fall apart through trauma and people hold themselves together through stories, and that’s what Bertha Pappenheim knew, I think. And that informed my storytelling profoundly.

—MIRIAM GROSSMAN

haute couture. More often subjects upcycle, wear vintage, and otherwise innovate: a pizza box repurposed as a handbag turns up, as does a seat belt used as a belt. Elsewhere, designer Monday Blues models cargo pants and a jacket they crafted from burlap coffee bags, and designer and student Israel Yanir wears huge, futuristic-looking shoes handmade from a material called vernum. Going light on words and heavy on images, Cirillo lets his subjects’ style speak for itself, both in the photos and the accompanying text drawn from brief interviews. Expertly capturing the eccentricity and creativity of street fashion, this eye-catching volume, which contains a preface from model and influencer Gigi Hadid, will delight fashionistas and those drawn to the energy of New York. *Agent: Garrett McGrath, Null Books. (Apr.)*

It’s Okay Not to Look for the Meaning in Life: A Zen Monk’s Guide to Living Stress-Free One Day at a Time

Jikisai Minami, trans. from the Japanese by Makiko Itoh. Tuttle, \$14.99 (192p) ISBN 978-4-8053-1778-5

With this straight-talking debut manual rooted in Buddhist principles, Zen priest Minami sets out to upend conventional wisdom about happiness, success, and purpose. Contending that unexamined “obsessions and attachments” provoke suffering, Minami advises readers not to “push yourself too hard,” because “when you die... you probably won’t even remember the problems you are currently fretting about.” Elsewhere, he suggests readers should adhere to daily routines even when stricken with difficult feelings, which will “wither away before they become critical,” and help friends and family in concrete, immediate ways instead of reaching for some grandiose yet nebulous higher purpose. Despite occasionally leaning on gendered stereotypes (“To end a marital quarrel quickly, I believe it’s the man who should shut up... men’s logic is often one-dimensional and simple, and their memories of the past are fuzzy”), Minami distinguishes this outing with frank prose and an ability to boil things down to the basics. The result is an invigorating perspective on what gives life meaning

BROWNSTEIN ©MARCIA LERNER

Whether discussing her obsession with Red Lobster or highlighting offensive portrayals of women’s relationships with food in film and television, DeRuiter seamlessly blends gallows humor and sharp observation. The result is a witty and empowering volume that will satisfy foodies and non-foodies alike. *Agent: Zoe Sandler, Sanford J. Greenburger Assoc. (Mar.)*

Thunder Song: Essays

Sasha taqʷš blu LaPointe. Counterpoint, \$27 (256p) ISBN 978-1-64009-635-6

In this affecting collection, Coast Salish poet LaPointe (*Red Paint*) explores how she has navigated colonized spaces as a light-skinned Indigenous woman, and the strength she draws from ancestral knowledge. In “Tulips,” LaPointe laments how she felt compelled to hide her Native American heritage from white classmates in grade school and likens her ruse to how white settlers drained the waterways on which her Skagit Valley ancestors depended: “I changed the landscape of my own identity the same way settlers changed the land they took from us.” LaPointe suggests in “Reservation Riot Grrrl” that though making punk music offers her an outlet for her rage, the scene often assumes whiteness as the norm, as exemplified by an incident in which two white women attempted to get LaPointe’s gig canceled after spotting her wearing face paint and, assuming she was white, accusing her of cultural appropriation. The poignant “First Salmon Ceremony” recounts how LaPointe followed the example set by her white punk friends and became a vegan, only for them to judge her for longing for salmon, a fish with profound cultural significance in Coast Salish tribes: “I grieved for the girl who fell in love with anarchists and tethered herself to their values, for the silence she let herself learn.” Lyrical prose elevates LaPointe’s incisive and heartfelt personal reflections. What emerges is a beautifully rendered snapshot of contemporary American Indigenous life. *(Mar.)*

How to Make Herself Agreeable to Everyone: A Memoir

Cameron Russell. Random House, \$28 (224p) ISBN 978-0-593-59548-0

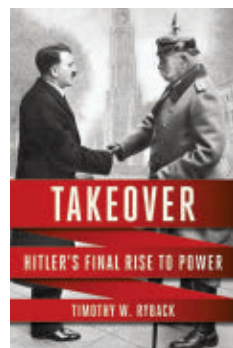
Supermodel and activist Russell catalogs the psychic toll of a career in front of the camera in her candid and

confrontational debut. Scouted to model as a naive 16-year-old in 2003, Russell quickly learned that producing the desired poses and reactions for much older photographers resulted in lucrative bookings and referrals, while questions or expressions of discomfort—in response to intimate touches from strangers, for example, or requests for sexually explicit poses—earned her a reputation as “difficult.” As Russell became more well-known, she grew increasingly eager to please the industry’s gatekeepers and power brokers, compartmentalizing her feelings along the way (“The way to stop reacting is to put the self away so there’s nobody to offend, to blame, to ignore”). Eventually, however, those feelings spilled over, and in the 2010s, Russell began organizing with fellow models to expose abuses of power across the industry. Readers expecting a standard model memoir are likely to be surprised by Russell’s forceful style and devastating revelations, which recall the frankness of Julia Fox’s *Down the Drain*. It’s an impressive and illuminating dispatch from the front lines of the fashion industry. *Agent: Caroline Eisenmann, Frances Goldin Literary. (Mar.)*

★ **Takeover: Hitler’s Final Rise to Power**

Timothy W. Ryback. Knopf, \$32 (400p) ISBN 978-0-593-53742-8

Historian Ryback (*Hitler’s First Victims*) presents a riveting blow-by-blow account of the six months leading up to Adolf Hitler’s January 1933 appointment as Germany’s chancellor. Describing a nation



in disarray, Ryback notes an “epidemic of murder sweeping the country” at the hands of partisan paramilitaries. Meanwhile the Nazi party, though it had just claimed the largest share of votes in July 1932 elections, was short of an overall majority. The tempered win led to Hitler entering the “rarefied” orbit of Kurt von Schleicher, “the ultimate Berlin power broker” who worked toward securing Hitler the chancellorship,

convinced it would “lure the National Socialist leader away from the ‘all or nothing’ faction of his movement.” As Ryback illustrates, this scheme faced multiple obstacles. Germany’s president Paul von Hindenburg, concerned for democracy, refused to appoint Hitler. Then, November elections saw the Nazis lose two million votes from July, causing “fissures in party leadership.” By the end of the year, Hitler was viewed by some as “a man with a great future behind him.” In Ryback’s propulsive narrative, the quick turnaround—brought about by multiple small compounding vagaries of breaking news, personality quirks, and political horse-trading—that resulted in Hitler being appointed chancellor by Hindenburg at the end of January makes for a chilling climax. It’s a dire and remarkably astute depiction of how fickle and contingent the forces of history can be. *(Mar.)*

The Devil to Pay: A Mobster’s Road to Perdition

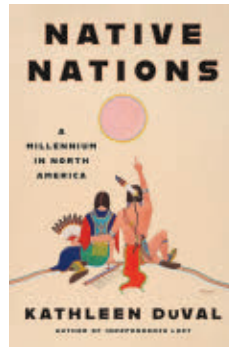
Sean Scott Hicks. Blackstone, \$27.99 (288p) ISBN 979-8-212-22763-6

In this bracing debut memoir, former mobster Hicks details his lurid life of crime in South Boston. Hicks’s biological father and stepfather both belonged to Boston street gangs, and his absent mother dabbled in drugs and sex work, setting the stage early for Hicks’s own transgressions. By age 11, he was running errands for the notorious Winter-Hill gang. Before he could legally drive, he was boosting cars, and by the time he was a teenager in the late 1980s, he was organizing a fleet of lobster boats for a smuggling operation. Throughout, Hicks balances accounts of his own crimes and other high-profile Boston cases (including the 1990 Isabella Steward Gardner Museum heist) with lighter sections about learning to read during his first stint in prison and experiencing tenderness from the likes of Whitey Bulger. Strikingly, however, a traditional redemption arc is not on the menu. “You can’t redeem an irredeemable character in a single story—which is to say, in a single lifetime,” Hicks writes near the end. “If you expected some fairy-tale happily-ever-after... you are reading the wrong book.” (Still, he ends the account with a partner, a dog, and a modest home improvement business.) Told with all the

★ Native Nations: A Millennium in North America

Kathleen DuVal. Random House, \$38 (752p)
ISBN 978-0-525-51103-8

This prodigiously researched and enlightening study from University of North Carolina historian DuVal (*Independence Lost*) recenters the past 1,000 years of Native North American history around the political power exercised by Indigenous governments. Beginning with the civilizations that established large cities a millennium ago in the Mississippi Valley—with pyramids, castles, and major road and river systems—she explains that agricultural instability during the Little Ice Age (c. 1250) prompted a turn away from urbanization. Native governments morphed into smaller-scale, more egalitarian organizations that encouraged “shared prosperity and shared decision making.” These smaller states developed complex and advanced systems of diplomacy, economics, and governance that, DuVal argues, perplexed, intrigued, and often outmatched the first several centuries of European settlers. One fascinating example is the Mohawk government’s regulation of trade with the Dutch in the 17th century. “Hardly the passive consumers the colonial planners hoped for,” the Mohawks artificially inflated the price of furs so the Dutch could only turn a profit by paying with guns, the Mohawks’ most sought after European good. Tracing numerous Native governments across the ensuing centuries—including the 19th century’s Cherokee republic and alliance of Great Plains nations—DuVal provides a profoundly empowered history of Native America. This keen reframing will appeal to fans of David Graeber and David Wengrow’s *The Dawn of Everything*. (Apr.)



vegetation. The result is a loving paean to all things arboreal. *Agent: Wendy Strotzman, Strotzman Agency.* (Mar.)

★ I Finally Bought Some Jordans: Essays

Michael Arceneaux. HarperOne, \$19.99 trade paper (240p) ISBN 978-0-06-314041-7

The distinctive voice of essayist Arceneaux (*I Don't Want to Die Poor*) enlivens his agile latest collection. “Please Unblock Me, Toni Braxton” discusses how Arceneaux’s rising profile over the past several years has led to sometimes awkward interactions with such celebrities as Don Lemon and Kevin Hart, whom he’s written critically about. “How It Feel Outside?” strikes a more soulful tone, meditating on how talking about such mundane topics as the weather allows Arceneaux to maintain his relationship with his alcoholic father and religious mother, whom he sometimes struggles to hold more personal conversations with because they remain reluctant to acknowledge that he’s gay. In the standout “DMJ,” Arceneaux uses an annoying neighbor who frequently woke him up after getting locked out of her apartment as a springboard to interrogate the complex relationships that result from living in cities, reporting that while he bonded with two neighbors on his Harlem block who “functioned like play-aunties,” he was exhausted by the constant noise (first of neighbors fighting, then of sirens as the pandemic set in) and decided to move to California. Arceneaux’s acerbic wit sizzles (to those who questioned why he relocated to wildfire-prone L.A., he responds, “At least I have a lovely view of a burning world”), and he balances the humor with heartfelt reflection. This packs a punch. *Agent: Jim McCarthy, Dystel, Goderich & Bourret.* (Mar.)

Every Living Thing: The Great and Deadly Race to Know All Life

Jason Roberts. Random House, \$35 (448p)
ISBN 978-1-984855-20-6

This enlightening history by science writer Roberts (*A Sense of the World*) explores research conducted by 18th-century naturalists Carl Linnaeus and George-Louis Leclerc de Buffon, who competed against “each other to complete a comprehensive accounting of life on Earth.”

foul-mouthed philosophizing of a Scorsese antihero, this is sure to appeal to anyone fascinated by mob life. (Mar.)

Twelve Trees: The Deep Roots of Our Future

Daniel Lewis. Avid Reader, \$30 (336p)
ISBN 978-1-982164-05-8

“Every species of tree offers lessons to the world,” according to this enchanting study. Lewis (*Belonging on an Island*)—a curator at the Huntington Library, Art Museum, and Botanical Gardens in Southern California—expounds on the biology and ecology of African baobabs, Great Basin bristlecone pines, and Central African forest ebony, among other tree species. Explaining the extraordinary abilities of California’s coast redwoods, Lewis notes that the trees “generate some two million pounds of negative pressure” to pull water from their roots to their uppermost branches, a journey that takes weeks to complete. Lewis also explores trees’ relationships with humans,

discussing how the Indian government has implemented strict bureaucratic rules controlling the growth and sale of East Indian sandalwood trees, which are often poached and sold for huge sums because of their importance to traditional Asian medicine (“When a farmer has approval to harvest, a government official must come in person to uproot the entire tree”). The plentiful trivia fascinates, and Lewis has a talent for complicating conventional wisdom. For instance, he contends that despite California residents’ denigration of



the invasive blue gum eucalyptus as the “nation’s largest weed,” it provides crucial shelter for migrating monarch butterflies, whose needs aren’t met by native

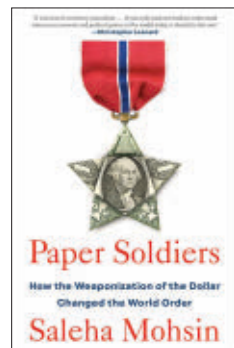
Roberts skillfully describes the methodological, philosophical, and political differences between the two, explaining that Linnaeus's Christian faith led him to believe that species were fixed and created divinely, while Buffon embraced more heretical ideas, which led him to propose a rudimentary understanding of evolution and face "formal charges of blasphemy for suggesting the Earth might be older than Scripture indicated." Despite the subtitle, there's not much in the way of swashbuckling adventures to distant lands in search of unknown species (Linnaeus and Buffon acquired their specimens largely by purchasing them from other collectors or dispatching to foreign countries acolytes who sometimes died of disease). Instead, Roberts provides a thorough accounting of the divergent outlooks of his dual subjects and offers illuminating insight into how politics secured Linnaeus's legacy while consigning Buffon to relative obscurity. (During the French Revolution, followers of Linnaeus took advantage of Buffon's inherited status as a count and connections to King Louis XVI, who contributed funding to Buffon's research, to pillory the naturalist as part of the ancien régime.) The result is an enthralling look at a pivotal period in the history of biology. Photos. Agent: Michael Carlisle, InkWell Management. (Mar.)

Paper Soldiers: How the Weaponization of the Dollar Changed the World Order

Saleha Mohsin. Portfolio, \$30 (304p) ISBN 978-0-593-53911-8

The U.S. dollar has become a tool for manipulating other countries, according to this incisive debut treatise. *Bloomberg News* journalist Mohsin traces the origins of the dollar's weaponization to the 1944 meeting between Allied powers establishing that the postwar international financial system would be built on American currency, as well as Clinton-era Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin's policy of maintaining a strong dollar by inspiring investors' confidence. The far-reaching consequences included the rise of sanctions as the preferred method for exerting American policy preferences, as when the U.S. attempted to rein in Iran's nuclear development program in 2012 by barring anyone doing business with the country from using the dollar, a policy

that ended up tanking Iran's national currency and "driving millions of Iranians deeper into poverty." Mohsin brings to the proceedings a reporter's eye for story and grounds the fiscal discussions in anecdotes about key Treasury staff, as in her description of the moment Stuart Levey, who oversaw the department's sanctions office from 2004 to 2011, learned how much money his colleagues had uncovered in their efforts to freeze Libyan despot Muammar Gaddafi's assets: "Sitting in a high-ceilinged fourth floor



office at Treasury with a view of the Washington Monument, Levey's jaw dropped... as he read the final figure for how much money his snoopers had found over the past two days: \$30 billion." It's a thorough examination of how America has wielded economic influence to its own advantage across the globe. Agent: Matt Carlini, Javelin. (Mar.)

Bite Your Friends: Stories of the Body Militant

Fernanda Eberstadt. Europa, \$28 (288p) ISBN 979-8-88966-006-4

This studious meditation from novelist Eberstadt (*Rat*) "tells the lives of certain saints, artists, and philosophers whose bodies became sites of resistance to the world as-it-is." She explores how philosopher Michel Foucault's homosexuality made him the target of state violence (he was once beaten by Tunisian police who found him driving with a male sexual partner) and how while teaching at UC Berkeley in the 1970s he embraced San Francisco's sadomasochistic subculture, believing its anonymity provided freedom from identity, which he viewed as "a reflection of the state's... control over the individual." Eberstadt commends the "self-mastery" of Russian performance artist Piotr Pavlensky (whose work protests the Russian state through public self-mutilation; he once nailed his scrotum to the ground in Moscow's Red Square), but wonders whether the "huge

fun" had by Pussy Riot during their protests offers a more enticing strategy for engaging civilians in collective action. Elsewhere, she discusses how fourth-century Greek philosopher Diogenes lived on the street to assert that "the only path to freedom [is] in self-degradation" and how Perpetua, a third-century North African Christian martyr, remained defiant in her faith even as she faced execution for refusing to "sacrifice to the Roman gods." The diverse stories of Eberstadt's subjects shine a light on the complex ways in which bodies can constitute contested political terrain. Trenchant and philosophical, this intrigues. (Mar.)

The Real Hoosiers: Crispus Attucks High School, Oscar Robertson, and the Hidden History of Hoops

Jack McCallum. Hachette, \$30 (336p) ISBN 978-0-306-83075-4

In this rousing history, sportswriter McCallum (*Dream Team*) chronicles how future NBA Hall of Famer Oscar Robertson led Crispus Attucks High School's basketball team to Indiana state championship titles in 1955 and 1956, making the Attucks Tigers the first all-Black team in the nation to win a state title. McCallum emphasizes how the story reflects the social currents of the era, noting that the Tigers were unable to play home games for lack of a suitable gym at the segregated and underfunded Attucks, and that they received threats warning them not to participate in games against all-white teams. Despite these obstacles, McCallum shows, the Tigers developed a pioneering approach to the game, applying intense "defensive pressure" and an animated offense that contrasted with the leisurely pace that had previously defined the sport. The historical research on how housing discrimination, school segregation, and anti-Black violence shaped mid-century Indianapolis makes the Tigers' achievements all the more noteworthy, and the accounts of key games excite ("Oscar hurled the ball toward the ceiling just as time expired. By the time it came down, Attucks had triumphed in one of the great Indiana schoolboy basketball games of all time"). This stirring success story hits nothing but net. Agent: Susan Canavan, Waxman Literary. (Mar.)

American Flannel: How a Band of Entrepreneurs Are Bringing the Art and Business of Making Clothes Back Home

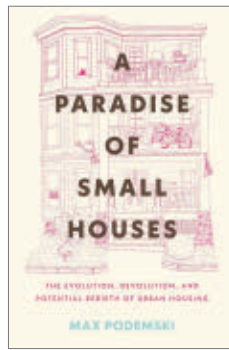
Steven Kurutz. Riverhead, \$29 (240p)
ISBN 978-0-593-32961-0

New York Times journalist Kurutz (*Like a Rolling Stone*) details in this encouraging report the efforts of entrepreneurs working to bring clothing manufacturing back to the U.S. The percentage of domestically produced clothes in Americans' wardrobes has fallen from 70% in 1980 to 2% today, Kurutz notes. Profiles of individuals attempting to reverse this trend include Bayard Winthrop, who launched the company American Giant in 2012 after becoming disillusioned with the shoddy workmanship he saw in products outsourced to China, and Gina Locklear, who earned the nickname "Sock Queen of Alabama" by transforming her family's north Alabama knitting operation into the organic sock brand Zkano. Exploring the factors that hollowed out American textile manufacturing, Kurutz details how free trade policies, beginning with NAFTA in 1993, eliminated or reduced tariffs on foreign products, igniting a race within the apparel industry to move factories to countries with the cheapest labor. The profiles humanize the machinations of the clothing market, finding in the entrepreneurs' plights an all-American tale of resilience and self-sufficiency in the face of steep odds. Readers will be inspired to look for the Made in America label. *Agent: PJ Mark, Janklow & Nesbit Assoc. (Mar.)*

★ A Paradise of Small Houses: The Evolution, Devolution, and Potential Rebirth of Urban Housing

Max Podemski. Beacon, \$28.95 (272p)
ISBN 978-0-807-00778-5

Podemski, an urban planner for the city of Los Angeles, debuts with an expansive history of North American housing design. Drawing on examples from nine cities—Boston, Chicago, Houston, L.A., New Orleans, New York, Philadelphia, Portland, Ore., and Vancouver—he outlines how and why certain types of buildings were used for housing in each place, noting both design advantages and drawbacks. For example, the small size of Philadelphia's row houses "force[d] people



“marked by openness to the outdoors” and designed to emphasize airflow, which was increased by elevating them one story into the air. Though he notes the benefits of attractive newer designs, such as Vancouver's point towers, which are surrounded by shorter buildings to preserve air and light, Podemski decries the myopic planning choices of Vancouver and other cities, arguing that by “still banning smaller, more affordable housing options,” they continue to exacerbate the affordability crisis. His intelligent analysis and deep research lend strength to his conclusion that what is required to solve the housing crisis is not just more large-scale urban developments but the deregulation of what was once common—small-scale urban home-building by local businesses and families drawing on regional design traditions. It's a must-read for housing advocates. *(Mar.)*

Broken: Transforming Child Protective Services

Jessica Pryce. Amistad, \$28.99 (304p)
ISBN 978-0-063-03619-2

Pryce debuts with a harrowing memoir of her former career as an investigator for Child Protective Services and her eventual reckoning with the system's structural inequities. As a CPS investigator in Tallahassee, Fla., Pryce responded to anonymous reports of child abuse and neglect. At first trusting in the process, she later came to see the system as geared toward hasty child removal rather than careful consideration of each case. After a close friend was investigated by CPS, Pryce came to believe that families being separated were disproportionately poor and Black, and that it would be better to provide more support to struggling families before resorting to child removal. She eventually left the department and became

out of their homes and into the public realm” and led to a vibrant street culture. Meanwhile, New Orleans's susceptibility to flooding and disease resulted in houses

an advocate for reform. While Pryce's initial naivety almost beggars belief—she recalls being so unattuned to problems with the system that she reported her own sister to CPS, shocking even her coworkers—the narrative is all the more riveting for her total immersion in the ideology. Readers will be troubled and enthralled by Pryce's detailed reconstructions of disturbing scenes in which she and other investigators entered messy and dysfunctional homes for confrontations with clearly neglectful but also desperate and ill-equipped parents. Equally noteworthy is Pryce's careful spelling out of how workplace camaraderie provides cover for the persistence of bad policy. It's an invaluable insider account of a pressing social issue. *(Mar.)*

The Observable Universe: An Investigation

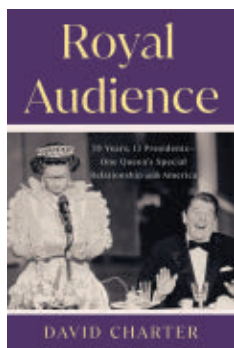
Heather McCalden. Hogarth, \$29 (304p)
ISBN 978-0-593-59647-0

Visual and performance artist McCalden grapples in her singular debut memoir with the void left by her parents' deaths from AIDS as well as her own struggle to extract meaning from the tragedy. McCalden's parents died in the early 1990s, when she was 10 years old. As an adult haunted both by her parents' physical absence and by how little she knew about them, McCalden turned first to the internet and then to a private investigator to fill in the gaps. Short, kaleidoscopic passages flit from virological science gleaned from medical journals to the development of online networks, with musings on noir, McCalden's hometown of Los Angeles, and snippets of personal history woven in along the way. Throughout, McCalden writes movingly about her disjointed upbringing—first with her parents, then with her grandmother—and draws astute parallels as the dawn of



the internet converges with the peak of AIDS: “The virus is a condition of being human.... We've moved online, the viruses have followed.” By the final pages,

relationships with 13 American presidents from Truman to Biden. According to Charter, the queen used her “crucial modern role” and considerate manner to solidify the long-term “special relationship” between the U.K. and the U.S. Her first prime minister, Winston Churchill, advised her to “stay close to the Americans” as the allies navigated post-WWII international matters, and she heeded his advice throughout her 70-year reign. Despite some high-stakes “charm offensives” during times of tension, most



of the narrative focuses on uplifting stories that humanize both the royals and the first families, particularly when warm personal friendships blossomed.

Most notably, Ronald Reagan and Elizabeth bonded over horses, their shared interest captured famously in a candid 1982 photograph of the two on horseback. The easy rapport between Reagan and Elizabeth not only filled human interest stories of the era; behind the scenes, it also helped convince the White House to provide covert support for the British during the Falklands War while maintaining a publicly neutral stance. Though Charter’s upbeat narrative glosses over presidential scandals and royal excesses, his interviews with eyewitnesses achieve genuine depth of insight into his subjects’ character. It adds up to a perceptive, if highly burnished, overview of diplomatic relations between two countries’ heads of state. (Mar.)

Lewis Carroll’s Guide for Insomniacs

Lewis Carroll and Gyles Brandreth. Notting Hill, \$18.95 (96p) ISBN 978-1-912-55959-6

The second edition of this lovely bedside companion, written by Carroll (*Alice in Wonderland*) and originally compiled (with some tweaks) by British entertainer and politician Brandreth (*Elizabeth*) in the 1970s, features a litany of cures and distractions for sleepless nights. There are “pillow problems” in verse, rhymes at

midnight, acrostics, limericks, shadow puppets, tangrams, nightcaps, ciphers, a board game for one, and a description of the puzzling Nyctograph—a tablet Carroll invented for writing in the dark. The Snark-hunting wit that animated Humpty Dumpty and the Cheshire Cat is present in the rules for letter writing (“Put it aside till the next day”), advice for encountering ghosts (“A gentleman should always raise his hat”), and tips to aid digestion (“Lobster-sauce... is entirely unwholesome”). Riddles abound (“Find a bird with the letters ‘gp’ as its nucleus”), letters turn to numbers and back again, and charming nonsense poetry comes with a moral (“Never stew your sister”). Brandreth’s arrangement of Carroll’s musings, drawn from several of his published works, is charmingly formulated to pierce the darkness: “Whatever the horrors of the night, day always comes.” It’s a thoughtful gift for clever night owls. Illus. (Mar.)

Vulture Capitalism: Corporate Crimes, Backdoor Bailouts, and the Death of Freedom

Grace Blakeley. Atria, \$30 (384p) ISBN 978-1-982180-85-0

“There is a deep contradiction between the belief that we are free and the reality of living under capitalism,” according to this fiery treatise. Blakeley (*The Corona Crash*), a staff writer at *Tribune* magazine, argues that contrary to free market doctrine, capitalist economies rely on planning by bankers, large companies, and states. The capitalist imperative of constant growth leads big businesses to become monopolies that wield their power to circumvent market dynamics, Blakeley contends, noting how Amazon artificially depresses workers’ wages by dominating regional economies in which residents have few other employment options. Successful businesses can even rival state power, as when in the early 20th century the United Fruit Company, whose banana plantations were based in Guatemala, assumed control of the country’s postal service and propped up the presidential candidacy of autocrat Jorge Ubico, who “handed over tracts of land to the UFC” once in power. Blakeley makes a persuasive case that “corporations are political institutions” unaccountable to the employees, customers, and commu-

nity members most affected by their decisions, and she details fascinating experiments that show what alternatives might look like (in the 1980s, a small Andalusian village won collective control of local land and continue to make decisions as a group about how to use it and what to do with the profits it generates). Impassioned and provocative, this will challenge readers’ understanding of the fundamental forces that govern economic markets. *Agent: Chris Wellbelove, Aitken Alexander Assoc. (Mar.)*

The Heart and the Chip: Our Bright Future with Robots

Daniela Rus and Gregory Mone. Norton, \$29.99 (256p) ISBN 978-1-324-05023-0

Rus, a computer science professor at MIT, teams up with former *Popular Science* editor Mone (*Sea of Gold*) for an optimistic exploration of how advanced robots might help humans in the near future. Envisioning smart fridges capable of detecting and automatically disposing of expired food, exoskeleton suits “equipped with motorized joints that enhance or augment the strength of the individuals using them,” and a “two-armed, wheeled robot” capable of performing yard work, the authors argue that offloading daily drudgeries to droids will allow humans “to focus on higher-level work and interactions.” Taking note of the advances needed to realize such technologies, the authors explain that roboticists are still struggling to develop hand-like sensors to make robots more dexterous. Though Rus and Mone are bullish on technology’s promise, they emphasize the need to keep in mind ethical and environmental considerations, citing a 2019 study that found the electricity expended training the average deep learning model adds as much carbon dioxide to the atmosphere as the “lifetime emissions of five cars.” Unfortunately, the authors provide more speculation than actual science, and recommendations “to encourage developers... to draw power only from renewable resources” and to take a variant of the Hippocratic oath feel inadequate to the challenges at hand. Readers might not share the authors’ rosy outlook, but this still offers a stimulating glimpse into what the future might hold. (Mar.)

Made in China: When U.S.-China Interests Converged to Transform Global Trade

Elizabeth O'Brien Ingleson. Harvard Univ., \$37.95 (336p) ISBN 978-0-674-25183-0

A combination of diplomatic imperatives, Chinese development policies, and American capitalists' hunger for cheap labor jump-started China's transformation into an economic superpower in the late 20th century, according to this probing debut chronicle. Ingleson, a history professor at the London School of Economics and Political Science, links the growth of trade between the U.S. and China to dovetailing shifts in each country's political economy. In China, she contends, the radical Gang of Four were defeated in 1978 by pragmatists, led by Deng Xiaoping, who built on earlier reform initiatives to shift the economy away from Communist autocracy toward market-oriented capitalism, financed by exports. In the U.S., business leaders' view of China changed "from a place to sell U.S. goods to

a site instead of cheap labor." Though writing in dryly academic prose, Ingleson nicely meshes large-scale economic analysis with fine-grained accounts of how businesspeople

warily navigated the new world of U.S.-China trade (fashion entrepreneur Veronica Yhap pioneered Chinese apparel imports by sparking a 1970s rage for chic Mao jackets and worker suits), often to the detriment of local economies. (One chapter recounts the doomed battle of Chillicothe, Mo.'s glove factories to win trade quotas limiting the cheap Chinese imports that eventually bankrupted them.) The result is a revealing overview of a critical sea change in the world economy. Photos. (Mar.)

The Other Fab Four: The Remarkable True Story of the Liverbirds, Britain's First Female Rock Band

Mary McGlory and Sylvia Saunders. Grand Central, \$30 (336p) ISBN 978-1-5387-3996-9

McGlory and Saunders debut with a jaunty if somewhat disorganized account

of growing up in postwar Britain and forming the nation's "first all-female rock band." Inspired by a Beatles performance at Liverpool's Cavern Club, McGlory, Saunders, and friends Valerie Gell and Pamela Birch founded the Liverbirds in 1962. They began playing local venues and soon became part of the thriving Liverpool music scene that gave rise to the Beatles, Herman's Hermits, and the Kinks. Propelled by their energetic covers of songs by Chuck Berry and Bo Diddley—and the novelty of being female performers at a time when "all-girl bands were as rare as UFOs"—the group's success at home led to a residency at the Star Club in Hamburg, Germany, where a buzzy music scene forged bonds between English rockers and German fans ("We were a younger generation, trying to dissolve the... divisions that were a hangover from the war," McGlory recalls). The Liverbirds later toured Europe and briefly Japan before breaking up in 1968 when marriage and childcare responsibilities interfered. Though chapters from McGlory and Saunders's perspectives alternate in a way that can feel disjointed, and the post-band sections of the narrative tend to meander, for the most part it's a colorful and energetic look into an electric period of rock and roll history. Classic rock fans will be charmed. *Agent: Susan Golomb, Writers House.* (Mar.)

The Art Dealer's Apprentice: Behind the Scenes of the New York Art World

David Guenther. Rowman & Littlefield, \$36 (226p) ISBN 978-1-5381-8967-2

Guenther, a clinical professor of law at the University of Michigan, debuts with a revealing if oddly flat chronicle of his time spent in the moneyed, status-obsessed 1990s New York City art scene. Landing a high-end gallery assistant gig as a broke college grad, Guenther jet-setted to deliver artwork, rubbed elbows with wealthy collectors, and learned the ins and outs of authentication. While the lucrative nature of the job appealed—his first paycheck was for a \$1200 commission—and he climbed the ranks in his three years working for gallery owner Carla Panicali (of whom he writes warmly), the art world's seedy underbelly quickly revealed itself, rife with tax evasion, social

posturing, and professional jealousies. After three years in the biz, Guenther concluded that "for people with money and power, there seemed to be a lot of things more important than art," especially status, for which art was simply a means to an end. His insight that art markets function based on a fundamentally false idea (art was a reflection of "the people who had been alive; the artworks were just mementoes") intrigues, but it's tacked on near the end of an account rendered in disappointingly workmanlike prose ("My new career began auspiciously. On the first day I met my new colleague... we spent most of the day at the front desk answering the phone"). This is skippable by all but the most devoted art aficionados. (Mar.)

A New Masculinity: A Compassionate Guidebook to Men's Mental Health

Stephan B. Poulter. Prometheus, \$22.95 trade paper (294p) ISBN 978-1-633889-42-2

In this amiable guide, psychologist Poulter (*Your Ex-Factor*) implores men to cast aside "old-school 'dude' thinking and 'jerk' behavior" and take seriously their "physical health, relationships, emotions, and self-doubts." Highlighting "silent, rugged cowboy" stereotypes and a focus on money and social status, Poulter explores how a male culture that sidelines emotional needs is perpetuated and offers in its place a "masculinity of compassion and kindness" that "empowers boys, young men, and adult men to change their world... from the inside out." Steps toward change include identifying one's emotional "blind spots" (viewing humility as a personal weakness, for example) and fostering close male friendships instead of leaning on romantic partners to meet all of one's emotional needs. Interweaving his guidance with brief quizzes, question prompts, and step-by-step breakdowns of key concepts, Poulter provides a usefully interactive survey of a more balanced and evolved masculinity, though off-kilter tangents sometimes distract, as when he cites "the horrific saga of Jeffrey Epstein" as a "cautionary tale" that "no man is beyond the hand of justice, regardless of his immense wealth [and] social power." Still, this is a fresh and discerning take on what it means to be a man today. (Mar.)

The Science of Weird Shit: Why Our Minds Conjure the Paranormal

Chris French. MIT, \$29.95 (424p)
ISBN 978-0-262-04836-1

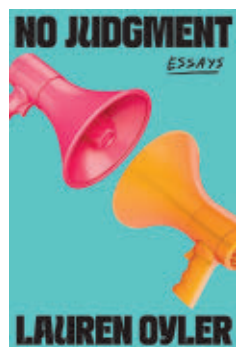
This fascinating inquiry from French (coauthor of *Anomalistic Psychology*), a psychologist at the University of London, provides scientific explanations for such otherworldly phenomena as alien encounters, déjà vu, and ghosts. For example, researchers of near-death experiences have proposed that the frequently reported sensation of “moving through a tunnel toward a bright light” is likely caused by random neurons firing in the visual cortex as a result of physical duress; because “there are more cells devoted to the center of the visual field than to the periphery,” these firings are likely to be perceived as a bright, central light. Debunking ghost sightings, French cites a study that found subjects were more likely to report “physical, emotional, psychic, and spiritual experiences” after exploring a disused movie theater if they were told it was haunted beforehand, suggesting that paranormal perceptions might be biased misinterpretations of “creaking floorboards or cold drafts.” According to French, mediums take advantage of the Barnum effect, which describes the tendency for people to believe that such vague statements as “you have a great need for other people to like and admire you” are personalized and accurate. The science intrigues, though the scholarly prose somewhat saps the fun (“Absorption, dissociativity, and fantasy-proneness have all been shown to intercorrelate with each other as well as with paranormal belief”). Skeptics will feel vindicated. (Mar.)

No Judgment: Essays

Lauren Oyler. HarperOne, \$28.99 (288p)
ISBN 978-0-06-323535-9

“There is never no judgement, and certainly not in this book,” writes cultural critic Oyler (*Fake Accounts*), laying out the mission statement for her irreverent collection. In a style reminiscent of David Foster Wallace and Vivian Gornick, Oyler opines on the injustices of the Goodreads ratings system, struggling to tame her anxiety, and her skepticism toward bestseller Brené Brown’s understanding of vulnerability. In “Embarrassment, Panic, Opprobrium, Job

Loss, Etc.,” Oyler defends gossip as the “comparing and contrasting and development of interpretation.” Reflecting in “Why Do You Live Here” on the quirks of her life as an American expat in Berlin, Oyler describes moving to the city “for no good reason” after college and wrestling with how she and other expats are changing what counts as



“authentic” Berlin. Elsewhere, Oyler pushes back against claims that autofiction is indulgent, arguing that anything can be worth writing about—“It just has to be interesting.” Oyler’s commentary is incisive, and her prose is lucid and playful. “I heard a crazy story recently,” she concludes the piece on gossip. “I wouldn’t sacrifice the knowledge for even the highest moral high ground in the world—but I would also never, in a million years, tell you.” This is as intellectually stimulating as it is fun to read. *Agent: Alia Habib, Gernert Co.* (Mar.)

Waves in an Impossible Sea: How Everyday Life Emerges from the Cosmic Ocean

Matt Strassler. Basic, \$32 (384p) ISBN 978-1-5416-0329-5

Harvard University theoretical physicist Strassler debuts with a mind-bending investigation of “how the most esoteric-seeming physics affects every aspect of human existence.” Examining what makes mass possible, Strassler explains that though atoms are mostly “empty space,” humans “don’t sink through the Earth” because “two atoms cannot occupy the same space without the addition of a lot of energy.” The author devotes much of the volume to correcting oversimplifications of physics concepts, as when he notes that the common description of protons as “made merely of two up quarks and one down quark” is an “antiquated idea from the 1960s,” with more recent research revealing that protons also contain “strange quarks,” anti-quarks, and gluons, the latter of which help draw the proton’s particles together. Strassler strives to make the physics

accessible through the use of helpful analogies (“Whereas atoms are elegant ballrooms, protons are chaotic dance floors,” he writes, emphasizing the energy and movement of protons’ constituent particles), but the nuanced discussions are still difficult to follow for anyone without a background in the subject (indirect interactions between Higgs and electromagnetic fields, Strassler observes, “rely on the quantum uncertainty of the top quark field and are possible only in a universe with a cosmic certainty limit”). This is tough going, but the enlightening science is worth the effort. *Agent: Toby Mundy, Aevitas Creative Management.* (Mar.)

Traces of a Jewish Artist: The Lost Life and Work of Rahel Szalit

Kerry Wallach. Penn State Univ., \$39.95 (288p) ISBN 978-0-271-09559-2

Wallach (*Passing Illusions*), an associate professor of German studies at Gettysburg College, resurrects in this poignant biography the life of Jewish expressionist Rahel Szalit (1888–1942), whose evocative illustrations enlivened Yiddish literature and the works of Charles Dickens and Leo Tolstoy. Born Rahel Marcus in what is now Lithuania, Szalit moved to Munich, Germany, in her early 20s, began working as an illustrator, and entered into a brief marriage with actor Julius Szalit, who committed suicide in 1919. Just as her career took off, the rise of the Nazi party forced her to flee to Paris, where she remained until being deported to Auschwitz and killed in 1942. While the established facts of Szalit’s existence are relatively paltry, Wallach—who spent 15 years scouring “everywhere imaginable for sources that could help reconstruct [Szalit’s] life,” including 35 archives in seven countries—has gained enough insight into her subject to weave a coherent, lively narrative. At the start of each chapter, invented scenes “fill in the gaps where insufficient evidence survives,” and the artist’s own wide-ranging illustrations are utilized to bring her further to life, whether it’s through a haunting self-portrait or an expressionistic depiction of a student’s first Talmud exam. Wallach’s careful perusal of the extant sources also places Szalit’s work in the context of her

complex personal life, enabling her to be celebrated “as a bisexual and queer artist.” This masterful historical reconstruction gives welcome due to a forgotten talent. Photos. (Mar.)

Hot Springs: Photos and Stories of How the World Soaks, Swims, and Slows Down

Greta Rybus. Ten Speed, \$30 (240p)
ISBN 978-1-9848-5937-2

“To soak in a hot spring is to be cradled and cared for by the dynamic forces of the planet,” writes photojournalist Rybus in her loving debut ode to the geothermal phenomenon. Ferrying readers across six continents, Rybus makes stops in Hveravellir, an oasis of serenity in the Icelandic Highlands; Therme Vals in Switzerland, where an “austere, brutalist” granite building facilitates an “immersive” bathing experience for visitors; and Italy’s Bormio Thermal Baths, a tourist destination since Pliny the Elder visited in the first century (while the destination “looks different than it did thousands of years ago,” Rybus writes, “it’s still a place for people to... tend to the rushed and weary parts of themselves”). In both the striking photos—a mix of wide-angled shots and portraits of those who visit or maintain the springs—and text, Rybus reveals how soaking can inspire self-reflection, hold spiritual significance (a priest of Himachal Pradesh’s Hot Water Temples in India explains, “We believe in the hot water.... When you bathe in the water, you know its power”), and connect bathers to the earth, “literally introducing us to the hidden core of the place we call home.” The author’s reverence for her subject comes through in dreamy prose that never overpowers the serene, striking photos. Rybus expertly captures the essence of these meditative spaces. (Mar.)

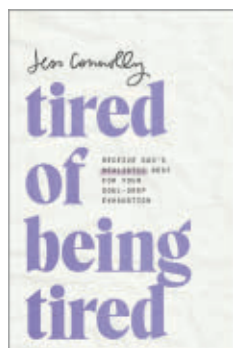
Religion/Spirituality

Tired of Being Tired: Receive God’s Realistic Rest for Your Soul-Deep Exhaustion

Jess Connolly. Baker, \$19.99 trade paper (224p) ISBN 978-1-5409-0250-4

Relentless pressure to be “everything to everyone” has left women burnt out at home and work, according to this earnest

offering from Bible teacher Connolly (*Wild and Free*). Writing that rest is a gift from God so important it was modeled in the creation story, Connolly lists excuses women use to put off downtime (“I can’t rest until the work is done”; “Rest will be boring”) and probes more deep-seated reasons it can be hard to rest, including the tendency to strive “for your worth [rather] than receiving it from God.” Tips for incorporating rest into one’s life include napping, memorizing scripture “to fight striving,” and establishing healthy bedtime and morning routines. Throughout, Connolly hammers home that women’s worth is independent of their relationships to others, adding that she too must remind herself that “I’m a child of God, not just a worker or a leader or a provider for other people in the kingdom.” While most of the book’s tips will



be familiar to readers, Connolly convincingly debunks the moral associations between rest and “laziness, indulgence, and lack of trustworthiness” with a mix of

down-to-earth anecdote and solid spiritual exhortation (“If God our Father rested during creation... if Jesus Christ Himself needed sleep and time away with God—rest cannot be lazy or sinful”). Weary Christians will be rejuvenated by Connolly’s solid counsel. *Agent: Jenni Burke, Illuminate Literary. (Apr.)*

When the Miracle Doesn’t Happen: How to Survive Loss and Find Purpose in the Pain

Jalesa Heneke. Jalesa Heneke, \$7.99 e-book (106p) ISBN 979-8-218-25883-2

U.S. Navy veteran Heneke debuts with an unflinching account of the sorrow caused by her mother’s death and an emotional ode to the faith that helped her endure it. After a 2019 leukemia diagnosis, the author’s mother, Christine Clark Lowe, deteriorated rapidly and died within a year, leaving Heneke—who’d been sure a life-saving miracle was imminent—in “almost unbearable” pain. As she organized the

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FICTION

Ours Phillip B. Williams. Viking, ISBN 978-0-593-65482-8, Feb.

★ **The Singularity** Balsam Karam, trans. by Saskia Vogel. Feminist Press, ISBN 978-1-55861-193-1, Jan.

★ **The Variations** Patrick Langley. New York Review Books, ISBN 978-1-68137-839-8, Feb.

NONFICTION

An American Dreamer: Life in a Divided Country David Finkel. Random House, ISBN 978-0-593-59706-4, Feb.

★ **Beverly Hills Spy: The Double-Agent Flying Ace Who Infiltrated Hollywood and Helped Japan Attack Pearl Harbor** Ronald Drabkin. Morrow, ISBN 978-0-063-31007-0, Feb.

The Gas and Flame Men: Baseball and the Chemical Warfare Service during World War I Jim Leeke. Potomac, ISBN 978-1-640-12605-3, Feb.

The Sentinel State: Surveillance and the Survival of Dictatorship in China Minxin Pei. Harvard Univ., ISBN 978-0-674-25783-2, Feb.

Working in the 21st Century: An Oral History of American Work in a Time of Social and Economic Transformation Mark Larson. Agate, ISBN 978-1-57284-333-2, Feb.

funeral amid Covid-19 lockdowns, Heneke learned to find “lessons and blessings” in the suffering, including gratitude that the two had formed an especially tight bond in her mother’s last months. Interspersed throughout the narrative are practices that helped her grieve, such as journaling and writing letters to her mother, and questions to invite readers’ introspection (“When is the last time you allowed yourself to feel hope?”). While Heneke has a tendency to mix metaphors and lean on awkward figurative language (“Strength was nowhere to be found, and the tip of the iceberg had completely melted to reveal the boulder of pain I was hiding underneath the surface”), she offers perceptive insight into the paradoxes of grief (“subtle and overpowering all at once”). In addition, her levelheaded approach to faith’s role in the process will resonate with readers (“God can handle our bitterness and anger”). Believers wrestling with their own grief will find actionable tips and plenty of understanding in these pages. (*Self-published*)

Children's/YA

Picture Books

★ Mama in the Moon

Doreen Cronin, illus. by Brian Cronin. Rocky Pond, \$18.99 (40p) ISBN 978-0-5936-9820-4

Baby Sloth loves sleeping nestled high up in a tree “between/ his mama/ and the moon.” When he tumbles to the ground, the tangerine-hued puffball lands in “a soft patch” of foliage, but he’s nevertheless beyond forlorn in the inky darkness. Regarding the silhouetted, tangled vegetation around him with wide, anxious eyes, he feels “far away from home./ Far away from Mama.” His mother quickly assures that she’s coming to the rescue, but a series of panels depicting the sloth’s glacially paced descent suggest that her arrival is likely to take a while. In response to her son’s repeated calls of “Are you close now, Mama?” she tells Baby to focus on the details around him. Collaborators the Cronins (*Lawrence & Sophia*) show how the smell of yellow flowers, the sound of pink worms wriggling in fallen leaves, and the feel of blue moths fluttering all seem to light up the darkness by dint of the little sloth’s budding powers of observation-as-self-regulation. By the time Mama’s long arm extends lovingly into the frame, Baby has proved a little wiser, a lot calmer—and fully worthy of emulation. Ages 2–5. (Apr.)

Emma Full of Wonders

Elisha Cooper. Roaring Brook, \$18.99 (40p) ISBN 978-1-250-88476-3

Working in his signature boldly outlined figures and loose watercolor strokes, Caldecott Honoree Cooper introduces Emma, “a large dog with many small dreams.” She’s a thoughtful hound, and on the page around her, the smaller figures of similarly patterned dogs appear in a blue gray, doing the things Emma muses about: “singing, dancing, rolling in the grass, splashing in water, going for walks. One, two, three, four, five. Her favorite things.” Emma spends her days eating, napping, and enduring lonely moments. Soon, “there were times when her whole body felt strange.” And then “the day came,” the narrator announces: Emma is seen watching



The creators Cronin portray noticing as a form of calming mindfulness in a touching picture book (reviewed on this page).

a puppy emerging from her body, licking off another newcomer, then nursing the whole litter: “And here they were! Just as she knew they would be.” The story’s reveal hinges on visual subtleties that may not add up for all readers, but the following spreads, featuring vignettes of the puppies “singing, dancing, rolling in the grass,” warmly invite a return to the story’s initial sequence. It’s a gradual look at how Emma’s dreams become reality and a contemplative story about the state of waiting—and being “full of wonders.” Ages 3–6. (Apr.)

Built to Last

Minh Lê, illus. by Dan Santat. Knopf, \$18.99 (40p) ISBN 978-0-593-56917-7

When two kids bump into each other—one wears bright red spectacles, the other has a quiff of dark hair—their individually built block towers go tumbling. But rather than turn on each other, the two, each of whom bear a certain similarity to the book’s creators, become avid construction collaborators. “Working hand in hand, we built things we never could have dreamt up on our own,” Lê writes. Digitally enhanced watercolor and colored pencil drawings by Santat portray how the pair’s increasingly complicated constructions take flight in their merged imaginations, as when an image of the Great Wall of China shown alongside a shaggy dragon is revealed to be a Tinker Toy mélange stalked by a house cat. The collapse of their most ambitious

construction momentarily sends each kid to their respective corners, but their remembering “all the times we picked up the pieces and picked each other up” helps them reconcile and move on to another creation. The previous collaborators (*Drawn Together*) craft a personal-feeling celebration of partnership and a dual portrait of any successful creative pairing. Ages 3–7. Author’s agent: Stephen Barbara, InkWell Management. Illustrator’s agent: Jodi Reamer, Writers House. (Apr.)

Oh, Are You Awake?

Bob Shea, illus. by Jarvis. Candlewick, \$17.99 (40p) ISBN 978-1-5362-2658-4

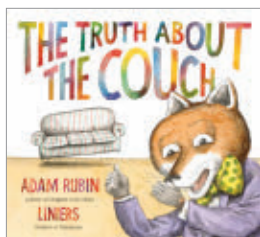
“Tell me a story, Penguin,” says a large yellow lion to the little black-and-white bird perched upon its head. An aurora-like swirl of colors hangs over Penguin’s sleepy self, a clear indication that slumber is imminent, so the bird refuses: “Now is the time we close our eyes and dream sweet dreams. I will tell you a story when we are awake.” But each time Penguin drifts off into a wonderful dream—befriending a candy-making robot, riding a unicorn, conducting a puppy train—Lion yanks the bird back into the waking world. The feline plays drums, crunches on chips, and even jumps on a trampoline, all while insisting that it’s not intentionally trying to keep Penguin up (“I’m always quiet. I’m basically a mouse”). Jarvis (*Together with You*) riffs on impeccable comic beats from Shea (*Chez Bob*) using naif-style digital artwork whose elements feel handmade—Lion’s circular mane embodies crayon-like textures, while Penguin is rendered in what looks like feathered ink. It’s a funny, visually playful bedtime battle of wills in which both beings get the resolution of their dreams. Ages 3–5. (Apr.)

The Truth About the Couch

Adam Rubin, illus. by Liniers. Putnam, \$19.99 (48p) ISBN 978-0-5936-1913-1

In a work that tackles the secret lives of couches, a nattily dressed red fox appears on a classic proscenium stage, promising readers plenty of juicy material about sofas, only to be interrupted by an equally well-dressed opossum, who insists that the fox is upholstering the truth. The lecture is all but stalled by their bickering, the possum censoring the fox’s dubious presentation boards with black tape, until

they finally agree on one thing: couches eat coins. Even this détente quickly deteriorates, however, when the fox goes on to insist that couches also eat cats and grandmothers. It takes full-on mayhem, including an appearance by dinosaur-mounted couch police, to convince the possum that couches do have lives of their own. Employing anthropomorphized cushions and legs that give each couch a devil-may-



care personality, Liniers (*Wildflowers*) details each of the fox's assertions in pencil and watercolor

sketches that speak their own loopy kind of truth. Via this collection of musings, Rubin (*High Five*) proves as quippy as ever (some couches "come from two chairs who love each other very much"), perhaps prompting human readers to regard their own settees in a new and more appreciative light. Ages 3–7. *Author's agent: Jennifer Joel, CAA. Illustrator's agent: Angelica Erbart del Campo and John Lind, Lind Publishing and Media. (Apr.)*

Not a Smiley Guy

Polly Horvath, illus. by Boris Kulikov. Holiday House/Ferguson, \$18.99 (32p)
ISBN 978-0-8234-4987-3

This dry comedy stars a child who doesn't smile no matter what his parents do. "Nice people," Ernest reflects as an infant, looking up at his relations. "What a good family to be born into. The only thing that would make it better would be some elephants." Sly, stylized mixed-media paintings by Kulikov (*Stay Curious!*) gesture toward Ernest's obsession by hiding a pachyderm in every spread. Even as he perceives the elephants, though, Ernest finds that "aside from the interesting stretchy face sensation," smiling is just not for him. When even the gift of a talking elephant doesn't make Ernest grin, his despairing mother asks why the boy is unhappy. "I'm almost always happy," Ernest explains. "I'm just not a smiley guy." Further pushed to signal contentment, he agrees to do a little jig by way of exhibiting the emotion, though "maybe not every time." Newbery Honoree Horvath lightly exploits the chilling narrative

possibilities of living with, and occasionally conceding to, loved ones who both hold power and can't see past their own expectations: "You don't have to change," the book states, "but for the people you love you do what you can." Human characters are portrayed with various skin tones. Ages 4–6. (*Apr.*)

The Prickletrims Go Wild

Marie Dorléans, trans. from the French by Polly Lawson. Floris, \$18.95 (44p)
ISBN 978-1-78250-883-0

This quirky work translated by Lawson stars a suburban family with a geometric walled garden. Clad in black-and-white patterns, Mr. and Mrs. Prickletrim give "precise and detailed instructions" to gardener Florian, measuring the grass with a ruler and inspecting blooms with a magnifying glass. When Florian quits in disgust one July morning, he tells his creation, "Now, my beloved garden, grow and bloom as you wish, in beautiful abundance," and it does. In densely worked, digitally finished pencil spreads, Dorléans (*Our Fort*) draws enormous, graceful flowers growing in lush profusion around the family's house and taking over its interior, surrounding Mr. and Mrs. Prickletrim and child Suzette with feathery branches and bold-hued blooms. A flock of singing birds arrives, and Suzette interprets their message: "*Nature is beautiful, wild and free!*" In moments of awakening, Mr. and Mrs. Prickletrim experience liberation: "They gazed, they touched, they smelled—they marvelled." The idyll doesn't last forever, but their transformation continues. While broad comedy pokes fun at those trying to exercise control over untamable forces, spreads remind readers of the magnificence of nature left to its own devices. Characters are portrayed with pale skin. Ages 4–7. (*Apr.*)

Not Just the Driver!

Sara Holly Ackerman, illus. by Robert Neubecker. Beach Lane, \$18.99 (32p)
ISBN 978-1-6659-3637-8

Readers don't have to be vehicle aficionados to appreciate these pages: by spotlighting a behind-the-scenes workforce, Ackerman (*The Gabi That Girma Wore*) and Neubecker (*Just Like Rube Goldberg*) expand their audiences' apertures in terms of both awareness and appreciation.

As the title hints, it's not "just" those piloting machines—by air, land, or water—who make vehicles go. In a busy harbor, for example, where the blue, white-capped water is filled with cargo ships, fishing and pleasure boats, ferries, and even a mini-sub, more than captains are doing the work. Harbormasters are essential, too: "From an office perched on land,/ calm dispatchers lend a hand.../ They study routes. They double-check./ *TOOT, TOOT, TOOT*—all hands on deck!" Choreographing bustle and variety, thick-lined visuals bring snappy, dramatic rhymes to life. "Teamwork helps the world to move," after all, and readers will appreciate insight into how, behind each kind of transport, many people work to ensure the journey runs safe and smooth. Figures are portrayed with various skin tones. Ages 4–8. *Author's agent: Tricia Lawrence, Erin Murphy Literary. Illustrator's agent: Linda Pratt, Wernick & Pratt. (Apr.)*

Fiction

Isabel in Bloom

Mae Respicio. Delacorte/Lamb, \$17.99 (368p) ISBN 978-0-5933-0271-2

Understated verse and other poetic forms shape this reassuring 1999-set story of a persevering Filipina tween adapting to a new life. Twelve-year-old Isabel Ligaya lives with her jasmine-growing grandparents in the rural Philippines. She was seven when her mother left for lucrative domestic work in America; now, after earning a nursing degree, Mama makes plans for Isabel to move to California. Her grandfather's advice ("When things feel hard/ find the familiar./ The people/ places/ things/ that feel like/ home") and her grandmother's gift of a tiny glass bottle of soothing jasmine scent provide comfort. In San Francisco, she feels abandoned by her mother, who's busy job-seeking and apartment-hunting, and when Isabel tries befriending classmate Melissa, who is also Filipina, Melissa's friend Ashley swipes Isabel's jasmine bottle and declares the contents "gross." But soon Isabel discovers the school's neglected garden, and tending to its ailing plants, as well as frequenting a welcoming Culinary Club and Asian American Senior Center, help her establish new friendships and a sense of purpose.

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BRIDGING DISTANCES

Nine picture books consider family, memory, and the meaning of home.

A Garden Called Home

Jessica J. Lee, illus. by Elaine Chen. Tundra, \$18.99 (48p)
ISBN 978-1-7748-8047-0

In this tender familial narrative, a child works to make a garden in a snowy place whose climate differs from Mama's homeland. Though they've never visited it, the unnamed child narrator knows that "the summers there are hot and humid, and the winters are filled with warm rain." And, indeed, the air is "thick and heavy" when the two travel there to visit Mama's sister. The siblings share a long hug when reunited, and Mama, who becomes more talkative, takes long hikes with her child and reveals abundant knowledge of plants, animals, and the environment—names that the child repeats in Mandarin. Back at home in the snowy winter, Mama reverts to her reclusive self, prompting the child to learn—and teach—how "nature here can be wondrous too." Lee's lovable characters, portrayed with pale skin and dark hair, organically introduce the natural world into the story line, and Chen's digitally edited gouache illustrations depict the impact of getting to know its diversity. A glossary concludes. Ages 3–7. (*Feb.*)

I Am Both: A Vietnamese Refugee Story

Kerisa Greene. Macmillan/Feiwel and Friends, \$18.99 (48p) ISBN 978-1-2508-6502-1

Leaning into onomatopoeia and desaturated images of daily rhythms, Greene, per an author's note, bases this tale of a Vietnamese family escaping from Saigon on her family's 1975 experiences. Hũông is one of 10 siblings growing up in a bustling unnamed city filled with street vendors selling bánh mì and durian. At school one day, bombs continually shake the earth, but eating a bowl of pho back at home results in "SIPPING SLURPING MUNCHING drown[ing] out the worries of the day." In the middle of the night, a sudden "SHAKE SHAKE" precipitates the family's flight via a plane headed to America, where the protagonist takes a new name and where sounds new and familiar recur throughout a life in which "I am both Vietnamese and American. I am proud to be me." Though the story lacks historical context for young readers, it effectively presents the constant sounds of war and home life as part of the everyday. Ages 4–8. (*Apr.*)

The House Before Falling into the Sea

Ann Suk Wang, illus. by Hanna Cha. Dial, \$18.99 (40p)
ISBN 978-0-5935-3015-3

A girl encounters injustice when travelers seeking safety arrive at her family's seaside home in this delicately rendered Korean War narrative, based, per an author's note, on family experiences. Kyung spots the approaching individuals looking "like oval stones" under heavy packs: "Umma hurried them in. Appa slid the lock shut. In the distance, war

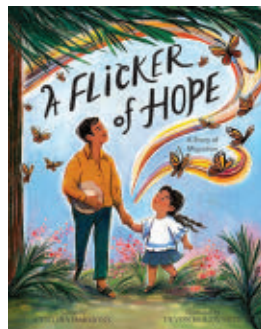
sirens cried out over Busan." The child is tasked with welcoming guests, but space grows tighter day by day, and the sirens get closer until they "found us. They shook the earth," and everyone shelters underground. As Kyung cries for "everything to go back," Umma explains how "our visitors are not stones we can toss to the sea"—and the importance of loving and helping those who have no place to go. Cha's moody multimedia art fluidly depicts the restless sea alongside Kyung's changing emotions in this story that muses on internal and external landscapes. Creators' notes, reader questions, and a glossary conclude. Ages 4–8. (*Mar.*)



★ A Flicker of Hope: A Story of Migration

Cynthia Harmony, illus. by Devon Holzwarth. Viking, \$18.99 (32p)
ISBN 978-0-5935-2576-0

A Mexican girl waits for the return of her migrant farmworker father, whose departure parallels the migratory pattern of monarch butterflies, in this ecological tale of dual-species movement. In spring, Lucía observes as the "Monarcas perch... sleepily" just as Papá prepares to head north. Papá picks up his guitar: "Songs soothe weeping hearts," he says while playing Lucía's favorite tune. As the butterflies, too, pause before journeying, Papa reminds Lucía that when "the monarchs return, our winged ancestors will guide me home." After "a million monarchs flicker magic into the sky," the smartly twined telling follows Lucía's community braiding baskets of "coxal leaves and memories," and migrant workers, including Papá, "in search of fields, crops, and a better tomorrow." Field and forest greens and butterfly oranges dominate the digitally finished mixed media, which feature strong, deep shades over pale washes. A glossary, author's note, and "How Can We Help?" section conclude. Ages 4–8. (*Feb.*)



Memory Garden

Zohreh Ghahremani, illus. by Susie Ghahremani. Holt/Godwin, \$18.99 (40p) ISBN 978-1-2508-4303-6

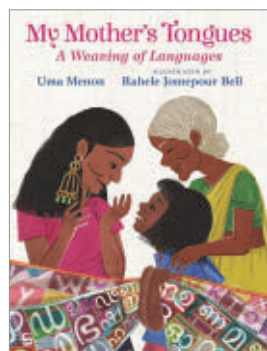
A mother-daughter team of Iranian descent contemplate memory in this intergenerational tale. An overall-clad, red-capped protagonist with two long braids loves helping in Nana's garden, but admits that "what I love even more are the

stories she tells me about a garden she knows far away,” an unspecified place that Nana calls “back home.” There, tall cypress trees stood like soldiers, flower beds were filled with fragrant blooms, and harvesting fruit was a beloved ritual. Memories unfurl as Nana, in a straw hat and green shirt, flashes back to her younger self, only obscurely referencing history (about the garden, “We had to leave it”) to focus on joyful sensate reminiscences. Vibrant illustrations in a green-gold palette—painted in gouache on vellum—include Persian motifs. Author and illustrator notes conclude. Ages 4–8. (*Feb.*)

My Mother's Tongues: A Weaving of Languages

Uma Menon, illus. by Rahele Jomepour Bell. Candlewick, \$18.99 (32p) ISBN 978-1-5362-2251-7

“Though my mother speaks with two tongues, I can see only one in her mouth. That’s because the two... are now woven together like fine cloth. The seams are invisible.” Using explanatory prose, Menon details how young Sumi’s mother, born in Kerala, speaks Malayalam as well as the



English she learned at school in India and after moving to America. Sumi, born in America, also speaks both languages. While visiting a store, Sumi’s mother speaks English with a cashier, and a blend of languages when speaking to Sumi: “The languages hop, like rabbits, from her tongue.” Further pages describe how “each language is like a muscle,” note that “the

more languages I learn and practice... the stronger my brain will become,” and underline the idea that “no matter how they speak, every person’s voice is unique and important.” Employing canvas and quilted textures, Jomepour Bell emphasizes the theme of weaving throughout this informative celebration of multilingualism. Background characters are portrayed with various skin tones. Ages 4–8. (*Feb.*)

Lost Words: An Armenian Story of Survival and Hope

Leila Boukarim, illus. by Sona Avedikian. Chronicle, \$18.99 (44p) ISBN 978-1-7972-1365-1

Based in family history, this opaquely told account of the Armenian genocide is narrated by a maturing child who survives the events. A warm moment—mother and child cooking together—ends with a knock and a whispered conversation. Dressing the protagonist and two sisters in ragged clothing, Mama sews gold buttons inside, “in case you need them,” and promises she’ll soon follow. The children cross a desert alongside others “for days. For weeks. For months,” the narrator holding

“on to Mama’s words like a prayer.” After the children reach “a land with blankets and water and food. A land far from Mama,” Boukarim traces the protagonist growing up, having “lost my words” to discuss these experiences, even through adulthood—until an intergenerational moment opens a pathway to the past. Digital illustrations from Avedikian use a flat graphic style to convey the events and saturated, chalk-like ribbons to delve into moments of memory in a telling that, while eliding definitive historical events in favor of an experiential telling, hints at unspoken events held, for decades, within. Creators’ notes and a history conclude. Ages 5–8. (*Mar.*)

The Rock in My Throat

Kao Kalia Yang, illus. by Jiemei Lin. Carolrhoda, \$18.99 (32p) ISBN 978-1-7284-4568-7

Based on personal history, per an author’s note, Yang traces a Hmong-speaking child’s experience of selective mutism. For the child narrator, “Recess is the hardest time of day,” a period of loneliness in which they turn to the natural world: “I am relieved when I see a feather on the ground.” At home, the child engages with family in Hmong, “a song, uninterrupted” that “flows and flows.” But “I don’t want to be like the many people who speak English”—including an impatient store cashier who “grew bigger and bigger” while “my mother and I grew smaller and smaller.” At school, the child’s silence goes unnoticed until a substitute teacher recognizes that “the only sound I’m able to make is a shaking cough.” Lin’s digital illustrations employ scale and perspective to smart effect; background characters are portrayed with various skin tones. An author’s note and Hmong pronunciations conclude. Ages 5–10. (*Mar.*)

Finding Home: Words from Kids Seeking Sanctuary

Gwen Agna and Shelley Rotner, photographs by Shelley Rotner. Clarion, \$19.99 (32p) ISBN 978-0-0633-0417-8

Brief quotes from displaced children speak to experiences of seeking asylum in this photojournalistic work by previous collaborators Agna and Rotner. Unembellished text opens: “Kids from all over the world have to leave their homes and countries. They have to escape—fleeing fires, floods, drought, or war—because it’s not safe for them to stay anymore.” Alongside the prose, speech balloons give voice to individual children, of various ages and skin tones, shown in photographed portraits: “One day there was everyone, and the next day there was almost no one. We had to go too.” As the pages turn, running text reflects ideals (“Families belong together... All kids need a safe place to learn... explore... play”) emphasized by the children’s quotes (“Here we have recess. Yes!”) and reflected in images of kids taking part in everyday activities. More on some children’s individual journeys concludes, along with “ways to help” for kids, grown-ups, and educators. Ages 4–8. (*Jan.*)

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Respicio (*How to Win a Slime War*) examines themes of racism, cultural heritage, and community building by focusing on positive occurrences in Isabel's life, throughout offering solutions that model helpful next steps for readers in similar circumstances. Supporting characters are intersectionally diverse. Ages 8–12. *Agent: Jennifer Laughran, Andrea Brown Literary.* (Apr.)

The Other Side of Perfect

Melanie Florence and Richard Scrimger.

Scholastic Press, \$18.99 (256p)

ISBN 978-1-3390-0285-9

Dual perspectives illuminate cultural and class differences in this thought-provoking novel by Cree and Scottish author Florence (*Legends of Funland*) and Scrimger (*Weerdest Day Ever!*). Cody, who is white, lives with his physically abusive and racist father who's struggling to make ends meet; Cree classmate Autumn, meanwhile, runs with the popular crowd and enjoys a comfortable and stable household. The two Toronto middle schoolers' paths cross when Cody runs away from home and Autumn literally stumbles across him, finding him bruised and dirty near her house. She sneaks him into her family's backyard studio, and though his status as a secret stowaway doesn't last long, Autumn's parents promise to keep Cody safe after learning of his circumstances, especially once they realize his father has been evicted from their apartment. Tensions run high between Cody and Autumn, however, when Cody unknowingly parrots his father's racist language, and the tweens' new relationship threatens Autumn's place in the social hierarchy. While explanations of relevant social topics feel underdeveloped, accessible prose and recognizable middle school archetypes make this an approachable worlds-collide story. Ages 8–12. (Apr.)

Painting the Game

Patricia MacLachlan. McElderry, \$16.99

(144p) ISBN 978-1-53449-994-2

The late Newbery Medalist blends themes of baseball and painting with loving family and friends in this slim work—her final novel—about the daughter of a minor-league pitcher and a painter seeking courage and her own path to pursuing her dreams. Eleven-year-old Lucy's mother explains that Lucy's father is “trying to

paint the game. Like me painting a picture. Trying to make the game come out the way he wants.” But when Lucy stands on the pitching mound, it's “the scariest place I've ever been.” Determined to find the courage to overcome her fear, she secretly practices pitching in pre-dawn hours, choosing to perfect her father's signature knuckleball. In this quiet story, everybody has a secret as well as encouraging partners: for Lucy, it's her friends Tex and Robin, who coach her in private. Affectionate, conflict-free relationships and myriad expressions of support and respect among the compassionate characters nudge the tale toward sentimentality, but Lucy's gentle, understated narration and persistence toward her goal keep it grounded in authenticity. All characters other than a Puerto Rican-born adult present as white. Ages 8–12. (Apr.)

Tree. Table. Book.

Lois Lowry. Clarion, \$18.99 (208p)

ISBN 978-0-06329-950-4

Lowry (*Gossamer*) movingly explores the unusual, intergenerational friendship between two Sophies: widowed 88-year-old Polish-born Sophie Gershowitz and 11-year-old Sophie Winslow, next-door neighbors in a small New Hampshire town. The two enjoy what Sophie Winslow calls a “friendship of the heart,” sharing a



love for conducting Prokofiev recordings, the color mauve, and Sophie Gershowitz's elderly cat. Young Sophie narrates the friends' story in a direct,

unembellished voice as a writing exercise and, following the advice of a visiting writer (“Begin on the day that is different”), zeroes in on the moment she overhears a disturbing conversation between her parents about her elderly friend's weakening cognitive abilities. Determined to prove this is untrue—even while experiencing events that steadily reveal the opposite—she guides older Sophie through Merck Manual–recommended cognitive tests, along the way learning poignant truths

about her friend's past. Clear-eyed, sympathetic Sophie is an astute observer and straightforward protagonist, and her relationship with Sophie Gershowitz, as well as with her parents and other friends—including her seven-year-old autistic neighbor—radiate genuine warmth. The novel's spare language and matter-of-fact recounting enhance its rich emotional core. All characters present as white; Sophie Gershowitz is Jewish. Ages 8–12. (Apr.)

Mid Air

Alicia D. Williams, illus. by Danica Novgorodoff.

S&S/Dlouhy, \$17.99 (320p)

ISBN 978-1-4814-6583-0

Black eighth grader Isaiah and his best friends Drew and Darius enjoy skateboarding and trying to break Guinness world records. His comfortable world is soon torn apart when, during an attempt to break the record for the longest wheelie on a bike, Darius is hit by a car and dies, leaving Drew and Isaiah to contemplate their upcoming summer and subsequent move to high school without him. Wracked with grief and guilt, Isaiah feels a fissure forming between him and Drew, stemming partially from Isaiah hiding parts of himself—such as his love of classic rock and comics, and his exploration of nail polish and emo fashion—for fear of being called a “wannabe-white-boy-rock-star.” To reconnect with Drew, Isaiah suggests that they try to break the world record for the longest wheelie to honor Darius. But when his desperate scheme inadvertently leads to more heartbreak, Isaiah is sent to his aunt and uncle's house in the country for respite. Pastoral features such as expressive b&w illustrations by Novgorodoff (*Long Way Down*) and clear, accessible verse by Williams (*Genesis Begins Again*) skillfully juxtapose larger, heavier examinations of grief, identity, mental health, and racism, making for a heartfelt novel about an unmoored child seeking strength and self-forgiveness. Ages 10–up. *Agent: Brenda Bowen, Book Group.* (Apr.)

★ Ultraviolet

Aida Salazar. Scholastic Press, \$18.99 (304p)

ISBN 978-1-338-77565-5

When 13-year-old Elio Solis starts eighth grade and notices that all of his classmates have begun pairing up, he doesn't understand their interest in love,



until he meets Camelia. Suddenly, “all this love stuff smacked me/ on the jaw/ like a good right hook/ and knocked/ me/ out.” They start dating, and Elio

experiences the world in ultraviolet (“Glow in the dark outrageous./ It’s what I see when Camelia’s around”) as they sneak kisses, share smoothies, and spend as much time together as possible. After their relationship ends badly and abruptly, Elio is left dealing with tumultuous feelings of anger, despair, and grief, which are amplified by the hormonal changes he experiences while undergoing puberty. Pops says he needs to “man up,” but Moms wants him to break away from toxic displays of masculinity. In a succinct, conversational style, Salazar (*A Seed in the Sun*) humorously and introspectively depicts the effects of puberty on Elio’s everyday life as he grapples with confusing messaging he receives about how to be a man. Issues around consent and patriarchal systems are handled with insight and sensitivity, culminating in a compassionate verse novel about first love, heartbreak, and vulnerability. Most characters are Latinx. Ages 10–up. *Agent: Marietta B. Zacker, Gallt and Zacker Literary.* (Apr.)

Canto Contigo

Jonny Garza Villa. Wednesday, \$20 (352p)
ISBN 978-1-25087-575-4

In December of his senior year, Mexican 17-year-old Rafael “Rafie” Álvarez is riding high: he’s a star vocalist in his school’s mariachi band, made out with a fellow mariachi member from a different school, and led North Amistad High School’s Mariachi Alma de la Frontera to their 11th first-place win in the Mariachi Extravaganza de Nacional. Eight months later, however, his family moves to San Antonio. Now attending a different school, Rafie auditions for Selena Quintanilla-Perez Academy’s Mariachi Todos Colores and is shafted into a secondary vocalist position—and the lead vocalist turns out to be transgender afromexicano Rey Chávez, the boy he hooked up with all those months

ago. Beneath the fiery passion and desperate ambition of Rafie and Rey’s rivalry, however, Rafie contends with grief over his abuelo’s recent death and must decide if this persistent duel is worth pushing down his emotions and keeping a chance at healing—and romance—away at arm’s length. Positing that love and joy are life’s greatest experiences, Garza Villa (*Ander & Santi Were Here*) crafts an earnest story that is both a quiet exploration of grief and a fierce rivals-to-lovers romance that centers the intensity and importance of passion. Ages 13–up. *Agent: Claire Draper, Bent Agency.* (Apr.)



★ Song of the Six Realms

Judy I. Lin. Macmillan/Feiwei and Friends,
\$20.99 (400p) ISBN 978-1-250-87161-9

Seventeen-year-old Guxue has spent her life as an apprentice qin player at one of the most esteemed entertainment houses in the fantasy Kingdom of Qi. Though a talented musician, Xue has few prospects outside of her contract; her family was executed, and her only remaining uncle can’t support them both as a traveling poet. Then Xue finds a patron in the enigmatic Duke Meng Jinglang, who buys out her contract after the pair team up to fend off a horrifying monster during a private performance. Upon arriving at his isolated mountain estate, Xue discovers that the handsome yet awkward Jinglang is the Duke of Dreams, an immortal ruler of the Celestial Realm. Initially overwhelmed by the Celestials’ potentially deadly political maneuvering, Xue pushes her abilities—channeled through her qin—to their limits to help Jinglang unlock hidden memories of his deceased mentor, who was on the verge of uncovering a conspiracy that could shake the foundations of the ethereal realms. Lin (*A Venom Dark and Sweet*) weaves together poetry, music, and Chinese folklore to compose a gorgeously written, captivating story of love, grief, and family that’s anchored in a vibrant world of danger and intrigue. Ages 13–up. *Agent: Rachel Brooks, BookEnds Literary.* (Apr.)



Definitely Not a Love Story

Claudia Recinos Seldeen. West 44, \$25.80
(200p) ISBN 978-1-978597-14-3

A teen copes with the inevitability of change in this poignant blank verse novel by Seldeen (*Everything I Know*). Aspiring

author Ana Morales fervently refuses to write romances like her mother does, craving to create “stories/ that change the world.” It doesn’t help that her parents’ constant bickering has left her embittered about love and makes her home life difficult. Ana’s excitement over a school short story contest is tempered by a forced partnership with former friend Alejandro Garcia, an excellent writer who favors “goopy and sweet” subjects. But not only does their collaborative effort begin with surprising synergy, Ana’s rekindled friendship with Alejandro sparks new, uncomfortable feelings. Simplistic parallel plots drive the story forward and radiate a cozy atmosphere, and Seldeen’s verse artfully expresses the emotional roller coaster of Ana’s travails at home and school, which feel familiar and are sometimes heartbreaking: “I look up/ at the way/ the tree branches/ scrape the wide sky./ The way the clouds/ stretch across/ the horizon./ And I feel/ unbelievably/ small.” Ana and Alejandro cue as Latinx. Ages 14–17. (Apr.)



Hearts Still Beating

Brooke Archer. Putnam, \$19.99 (336p)
ISBN 978-0-593-69832-7

A zombie apocalypse complicates two queer teens’ burgeoning romance in Archer’s affecting, adrenaline-fueled debut. Shortly after best friends Mara Knight and Rory Blake first kiss, the Letalis Tichnosis virus sweeps the globe, turning those it infects into mindless flesh-eating monsters dubbed Ticks. The girls get separated when their respective families flee San Diego, only to reconnect three years later, at 17, on the Island, a settlement off California’s coast. In exchange for much-needed antibiotics, the Island agrees to house 15 of the Altered—Letalis Tichnosis survivors whose homicidal urges are largely suppressed by an experimental drug. Rory’s family is still reeling from her sister’s death following a Tick attack, so Rory is deeply conflicted upon learning that an orphaned Mara is part of the Island’s new Altered population and will be living with the Blakes. Things get even murkier when the Island’s self-proclaimed, virulently anti-Tick leader starts targeting the Altered and their hosts. The resolution feels pat and some secondary characters lack depth, but escalating stakes, nuanced plotting, and a

visceral first-person-present narrative that alternates between the emotionally complex protagonists' POVs combine for a gratifying read. The boldly drawn cast is intersectionally diverse. Ages 14–up.

Agent: *Penelope Burns, Gelfman Schneider*. (Apr.)

Out of Blue Comes Green

M.E. Corey. Page Street, \$18.99 (352p)
ISBN 978-1-64567-932-5

Corey follows a transgender high schooler's coming-out experience in this hopeful debut. Senior student Kay Kinkade is having a tumultuous gender transition: he suspects that his therapist is purposefully derailing his sessions, his mother insists he dress more feminine, his longtime crush offers makeup advice he doesn't want, and his classmates constantly deadname him, especially popular jock JT. But there are some bright spots: his band, Blue, is in the running to play for prom, and, upon their introduction, new student Madi "thinks I'm a boy. Honestly thinks I'm a boy." He's also grieving his dog's recent death and, in a visit to a shelter, is mistaken for a new hire named Nathan and starts working shifts caring for the animals. Juggling school-required theater dates with Madi, an unusual confession from JT, band rehearsals, and working at the shelter tests Kay's limits and leads to a series of decisions with painful fallout. Kay's occasional shortsightedness and presumption of antagonism from around every corner can be a bit wearisome, but Corey clearly presents Kay's turmoil navigating transition alongside familiar adolescent woes surrounding crushes and the future. Most characters read as white; bandmate Libby is Black. Ages 14–up.

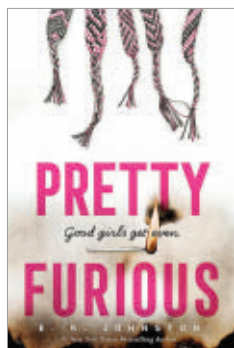
Agent: *Tina P. Schwartz, Purcell Agency*. (Apr.)

Pretty Furious

E.K. Johnston. Dutton, \$18.99 (224p)
ISBN 978-1-9848-1613-9

What begins as a passing frustration turns into a full-fledged vigilante mission when five best friends make birthday wishes to challenge the narrow-minded viewpoints of their small Canadian town in this feminist thriller. High school seniors Maddie Carter, Jen Dalrymple, Jenny Hoernig, Louise Jantzi, and Mags Sharpe are all "good

girls"; they're active in sports and clubs, get good grades, and never step out of line. But when Maddie wishes for justice after a classmate is made a pariah for getting an abortion, the friends enact



increasingly dangerous vendettas against the white alpha males who rule the school and surrounding community. Via bracingly direct scenarios depicted in the five leads' alternating POVs, Johnston (*Aetherbound*) addresses themes such as class dynamics, gender identity, religious intolerance, sexual harassment, and xenophobia. While extraneous details weaken the plot's momentum and the protagonists' chosen retributions occasionally miss the mark, the girls' evolving friendship as graduation looms is affecting, and each character's determination to better their community is impactful: "I wanted to make things better, not for 'the good old days'—because they hadn't been—but for the days to come." Most characters are white coded; several are queer. Ages 14–up. (Apr.)

This Is Me Trying

Racquel Marie. Macmillan/Feiweil and Friends, \$19.99 (368p) ISBN 978-1-250-89138-9

Marie (*You Don't Have a Shot*) traces the lasting effects of a teen's death by suicide in this introspective novel. After spending three years helping to look after his grandfather, Santiago Espinosa returns to his small hometown of Greensville, Vt., for his senior year. He has not spoken with friend Beatriz since the two lost Bryce, their best friend and Bea's boyfriend, to suicide shortly after Santiago moved away. Bea rebuffs Santiago's apologies and overtures of friendship, having adopted an icy personality and goth style to mask her lingering pain. As the friends stumble toward reconciliation, Santiago grapples with his obsessive-compulsive disorder and his relationship with his selfish father, who has perennially neglected him to launch his music career, while Bea navigates panic attacks and avoids Bryce's

grieving family members. Though the plot occasionally feels jam-packed, Marie blends prosaic high school concerns over college, dances, and relationships with wrenching depictions of adolescents struggling to cope with a traumatic loss to deliver a tender portrayal of reconnecting after grief. Santiago and Bea are Latinx; supporting characters are racially diverse. Ages 14–up. (Apr.)

Comics

A Newcomer in Pocketville (Monti and Leo #1)

Sylvie Kantorovitz. Walker US, \$16.99 (80p)
ISBN 978-1-5362-2277-7

In this early reader graphic novel told in four quickly moving chapters, Kantorovitz (*Sylvie*) introduces Monti, a quiet, self-effacing mole who lives in the close-knit community of Pocketville. One day, Monti is outraged to find someone sitting on his special rock. Following a period of self-doubt—and a genial greeting from the stranger ("This is such a beautiful rock. Won't you sit down?")—Monti befriends newly arrived resident Leo, a small, cheerful crocodile. When the baker, Mrs. Sheep, vilifies Leo ("These strangers. They never respect our ways"), spreading suspicions among her customers, Monti weighs speaking up, then acts: "Mrs. Sheep. Leo is very nice. Please do not talk that way." As Leo, Monti, and their friend Carl Crow plan a Pocketville talent show, Monti continues to deftly handle Mrs. Sheep's curmudgeonly ways while staying courteous and true to himself, and even sweet-talking Mrs. Sheep into participating. Thanks to Monti and Leo's ability to see others' gifts, the talent show is a great success. Digital panel drawings portray Pocketville's anthropomorphized animal inhabitants with simple lines and soft colors. Sweet and genuine, Kantorovitz's story models community building without a hint of preachiness. Ages 7–9. (Apr.)

Lost & Found

Mei Yu. Union Square, \$16.99 (128p) ISBN 978-1-4549-4547-5; \$12.99 paper
ISBN 978-1-4549-5264-0

Vivacious, art-focused Mei Yu could not be more excited to move to Canada from China with her parents and stuffed

cat Meiw. She's especially eager to make friends at her new school, but when she arrives at an airport full of English speakers—abundant green text neatly denotes her perception of the language barrier—her unbridled enthusiasm instantly becomes anxiety-ridden dread. School proves just as trying: Mei accidentally enters the boys' bathroom and, at lunch, assumes that her classmates are judging her for eating her ham sandwich with chopsticks. After her baba creates a visual English glossary, Mei fastidiously employs this technique to skyrocket her language learning and confidence to boot—until she loses her sketchbook. Upon its recovery, she learns that her inventive problem-solving has inspired awe among her teachers and classmates. Illustrations rendered using black outlines and manga-style exaggerations reinforce Mei's oscillating emotions. This bright and bubbly early reader graphic novel, based on debut creator Yu's own immigration story, validates the sometimes overwhelming nature of learning an unfamiliar language as a child in a new country. Back matter includes an encouraging author's note, a glossary, and a letter to readers regarding intentional spelling mistakes in the text. Ages 7–10. *Agent: Steven Salpeter, Curtis Brown Literary.* (Apr.)

Unhappy Camper

Lily Lamotte, illus. by Ann Xu. HarperAlley, \$24.99 (208p) ISBN 978-0-06-297390-0; \$15.99 paper ISBN 978-0-06-297389-4

Collaborators Lamotte and Xu (*Measuring Up*) reteam to deliver a bighearted graphic novel featuring estranged Taiwanese American sisters. Reserved Michelle would rather hang out with her white friends from choir than be more like her self-assured older sister Claire, whom enjoys exploring her heritage at a yearly Taiwanese summer camp just outside of the siblings' Seattle-area hometown. This year, their parents conspire to send the girls to the three-week-long camp together, and while both object to the obvious diplomacy effort, their attendance is deemed non-negotiable. After acing an uncomfortable ropes course and helping a scared camper cross the finish line, Michelle receives some much-missed sisterly love from Claire,

which inspires Michelle to embrace camp, and her background, more. She even realizes how bestie Jess often ridicules her Taiwanese heritage, and once the siblings return home, Michelle has the opportunity to demonstrate how much camp has restored her confidence in herself, her bond with her sister, and her culture. Xu's clean, two-dimensional linework complements Lamotte's winsome story showcasing the diversity of Taiwanese art (opera, glove puppets, folk songs, calligraphy) and toothsome culinary treats like han ts' muê (sweet potato porridge) and shaved ice with grass jelly in this feast for the stomach and the spirit. Ages 8–12. (Apr.)

The Harrowing

Kristin Kiesling, illus. by Rye Hickman. Amulet, \$24.99 (240p) ISBN 978-1-4197-6084-6; \$17.99 paper ISBN 978-1-4197-6085-3

On the same day that 17-year-old Rowan almost shares a kiss with her longtime best friend and crush Lucas, she discovers that she is a Harrow, a seer of death who, via hand-to-hand contact with the perpetrator, can glean murderous intent before a grisly death occurs. Seeking her father's help, she's sent to Rosewood, where Rowan and the other enlisted Harrows train to identify imminent criminals—"incrim"—by their red or black aura and to tag them with a tracker, which, unbeknownst to the Harrows, leads to an incrim's sedation, imprisonment, and sometimes worse. Her mother's murder three years ago motivates a grieving Rowan to use her premonitions to prevent anyone else from losing a loved one to violent crime, but after confirming Lucas's incrim status, she must grapple with the inevitability of the Harrows' premonitions and the necessity of Rosewood's vigilante operation. Ominous, high-contrast illustrations by Hickman (*Buzzing*) thoroughly match the misanthropic mood Kiesling sets. Slashes of color, mostly in hematic red, punctuate grayscale spreads and signal the blood-soaked climax of this visceral graphic novel, a jumping-off point for a critique of the prison industrial complex. Rowan appears white; some secondary characters have brown skin. Ages 14–up. (Apr.)

ONLINE ONLY

www.publishersweekly.com

FICTION

Drawing Deena *Hena Khan*. Salaam Reads, ISBN 978-1-5344-5991-5, Feb.

Heroes: A Novel of Pearl Harbor *Alan Gratz*. Scholastic Press, ISBN 978-1-338-73607-6, Feb.

I Hope This Doesn't Find You *Ann Liang*. Scholastic Press, ISBN 978-1-338-82715-6, Feb.

★ **A Tempest of Tea** *Hafsah Faizal*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, ISBN 978-0-374-38940-6, Feb.

COMICS

Freshman Year *Sarah Mai*. Little, Brown/Ottaviano, ISBN 978-0-316-40107-4, Feb.

Nonfiction

★ A Crown of Stories: The Life and Language of Beloved Writer Toni Morrison

Carol Boston Weatherford, illus. by Khalif Tahir Johnson. Quill Tree, \$19.99 (48p) ISBN 978-0-06-291103-2

"How do you tell a story?" begins this thoughtful tribute to writer Toni Morrison (1931–2019), born Chloe Ardelia Wofford. Starting with Morrison's family's move north as part of the Great Migration, Boston Weatherford (*Kin*) highlights the child's listening—"to your mother's ghost stories/ and your grandfather's violin"—as key to her learning the art of storytelling. The only Black child in her first grade class, and the only student who can read, she devours books at home "like Sunday supper," while learning to "listen to your surroundings"—including, due to racism and financial precarity, "the packing and unpacking/ of your family's possessions." As she matures, she studies English literature, then becomes a college professor, the first Black senior editor in publishing, a Pulitzer and Nobel Prize-winning writer—and, additionally, "a bridge" listening "to the silence for voices/ that have been muted far too long." Attending closely observed second-person text that puts the reader in Morrison's shoes, debut artist Tahir Johnson combines media, including paint and collage, lending textured depth to portraits of a creator whose stories "get under *our skin*, next to *our hearts*, and inside *our souls*." An author's note and timeline conclude. Ages 4–8. (Apr.)

BookLife Reviews

BookLife Reviews are paid reviews of independently published books.

A lightning bolt (⚡) indicates an Editor's Pick, a book of outstanding quality.

COMICS/GRAPHIC NOVELS

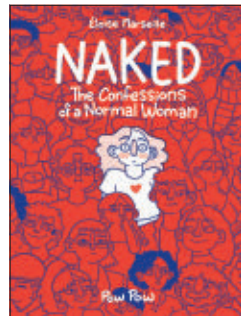
EDITOR'S PICK

Naked: The Confessions of a Normal Woman

Éloïse Marseille | Pow Pow press
168p, trade paper, \$19.95, ISBN 978-2-925-11423-9

Marseille's graphic memoir exploring her experiences with sexual desire, body image, guilt, and shame is funny, intimate, and often achingly sad. Speaking directly through a stand-in drawn with a friendly, appealing cartoony look, Marseille opens the book by declaring that she's going to talk frankly about sex as a way of helping reduce the shame, guilt, and stigma that so often compromises such discussions. "I'm really putting myself out there!" she says, and to demonstrate the point in the next panel her baggy jeans and heart-emblazoned t-shirt are gone, the nudity matter-of-fact and touchingly human. By laying herself bare, she says, she hopes her stories will help others feel better about "sex and everything that comes with it."

Marseille establishes how her parents' split and her father's subsequent establishment of a new family led to a lifetime of anger,



Touching, vulnerable graphic memoir of grappling with sex and shame.

Great for fans of Sweeney Boo's *Eat, and Love Yourself*, Lucy Knisley's *Kid Gloves*.

own desires, sexually transmitted disease, and the joys and complexities of her first long-term relationship. That ends when she realizes that she's drawing all of her validation from someone else.

Here, she draws, literally, a more thoughtful and moving sort of validation, though she doesn't always find easy answers. The book concludes with a poignant sequence where Marseille is confronted by her childhood self, who is tired of being hated by her older self; it's clear that this particular wound is too fresh to fully heal. Readers interested in comic but vulnerable graphic memoirs will relish Marseille's charming but unflinching cartooning and painfully intimate accounts of one young woman grappling with both desire and shame.

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

FICTION

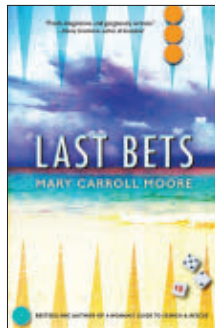
EDITOR'S PICK

Last Bets

Mary Carroll Moore | Riverbed Press
241p, trade paper, \$14.95, ISBN 979-8-9875317-5-4

Former chef and syndicated columnist Moore (author of *A Woman's Guide to Search & Rescue*) sparkles in this expertly wrought tale. Artist Elly Sorensen is reeling after the death of her estranged husband and struggling financially when she leaves Washington D.C. and returns to the Caribbean island of Bonaire to finish a long-delayed portrait commissioned by a local resident, Trevor Martin. Originally planning to stay in a spare room at his home, Elly returns to find Trevor's finances have taken a major hit, and she moves into a dilapidated room at the local resort where Trevor runs a dive shop. She immediately meets and bonds with Rosie Ryan, a 16-year-old aspiring artist from Australia who is staying on the island with her gambler father, Steve.

Readers will get lost in Moore's beautiful prose, her impeccable plotting, and her outstandingly relatable and multi-layered characters



Beautifully wrought story of two women artists outrunning their demons.

Great for fans of Marissa Stapley's *The Last Resort*, Kristin Hannah's *Comfort & Joy*.

as Elly and Rosie both try to outrun their demons—Elly's estranged husband, his debts, and her former agent's machinations, and Rosie, a controlling grandmother and the fallout from the impulsive decision to light her former boyfriend's van on fire (and immediately going viral). Rosie reminds Elly of her wild-child sister, Lily, who perished in a car accident; Rosie is in awe of Elly's artistic talents and her purported relationship with Trevor. In addition to courage and the drive to fight for their own freedom, both share a love for scuba diving, a pursuit that the author handles with skill, drawing on her own experiences.

As the story hurtles toward a rocky, dangerous conclusion, Moore expertly keeps readers guessing at the outcome—and even holding their breath—until the novel's final page, with strong, unexpected climactic developments involving well-deserved comeuppances. This outstanding tale, alive with suspense and insight, should garner a well-deserved readership for Moore.

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

FICTION

EDITOR'S PICK

Brooklyn Valentine

Rachel A. Levine | iUniverse
224p, trade paper, \$15.95, ISBN 978-1-4502-3207-4

Levine's fiction debut is a love letter not just to romance, but to the power of friendship and found family. Sal's dream of a tour company in his beloved New York City is gone, thanks in part to his friend and business partner, Manny. At 43, the self-described autodidact has his cab medallion and supports his 70-year-old father, Joe, and eight-year-old son, Bennie, in 1990s Brooklyn. Enter Terry, a wealthy woman from Wisconsin, who's in the city for just a short time and scheduled for a tour with Sal—a last hurrah of sorts for him.

Even though Bennie's mother left the family years ago, Sal and Joe have teamed up to give Bennie the best life possible despite the challenging circumstances. Sal's relationship with Terry blossoms slowly as he opens the door to his world for her, but from their very first meeting the pair draw sparks as they settle into debates, philosophical and otherwise, interspersed with the type of vulnerability that comes from



Richly imagined love letter to Brooklyn through the eyes of a vulnerable man.

Great for fans of Devney Perry's *The Copperrsmith Farmhouse*, Sonali Dev's *The Vibrant Years*.

knowing one may never see the other person again. Levine brings the city to life, welcoming readers into a place and time where a neighborhood was a person's entire world and generations circled around each other, in good times and in bad. Levine's fast-paced, sharp dialogue and spot-on ambiance slowly tease out the characters' stories, especially how Terry is pulled into Sal's daily life, offering her glimpses of the man behind the steering wheel—from the family meal with Sal's friend, Schmul, to witnessing his polar plunge on Brighton Beach. Each area of Brooklyn finds a new piece of the man revealed, a fresh insight into his life, especially when it comes to the possibility that he may lose custody of Bennie with his ex-wife back in the picture. Readers will fall in love with this novel and hope for the happily ever after that may—or may not—materialize.

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

FICTION

A Young Woman From the Provinces

Jo Ann Kiser | Atmosphere Press
422p, trade paper, \$18.99, ISBN 979-8-891-32072-7

This richly detailed bildungsroman, the follow up to Kiser's story collection *The Guitar Player and Other Songs of Exile*, surveys a surprising life, answering over its length the question of how its narrator, Geneva Clay of Kentucky coal country, grew from front-porch nights listening to "tree frogs and the lonely palpitating whip-poor-will" to become the kind of book-minded, art-struck New York City dreamer who describes "a celebrated Goya Christ" as a "mass of dark but luminous energy." The novel bustles with incident and vibrant, everyday life as it considers, year-by-year, Geneva's youth, from the 1940s into the bumptious 1960s, capturing long-gone people and ways of being (making "lye soap with bacon grease, lye, and water"; paging through a "Monkey Ward wishbook" agape at the "strange contraptions" of the women's underclothes).

A Young Woman From the Provinces touches on tragedies and occasional conflicts, like Geneva's parents telling her in Ohio not to befriend a Black boy, or her being asked to take a year off from college to help the



Gorgeous coming-of-age story of coal-country hollows and 1960s New York.

Great for fans of Ann Pancake's *Strange as This Weather Has Been*, Harriette Arnow's *The Dollmaker*.

she manages swimmingly, making diverse friends who expose her to the world, trying out journalism and work in the publishing industry, and eventually taking a lover, on her own terms.

The New York passages are as alive as those set in the hills, offering deft yet seemingly offhand character portraiture, though, fittingly, these scenes are charged with more energy than lyric detail. The novel's back half, a gush of events and impressions, demonstrates how much Geneva's life has changed in contrast to her earlier meditations on Dogwoods, crowdads, and sneakily borrowing father's Zane Grey novel. Narrative momentum at times slows, as this reads like beautifully presented memories, but readers who appreciate mid-century coming-of-age tales will find much to appreciate.

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

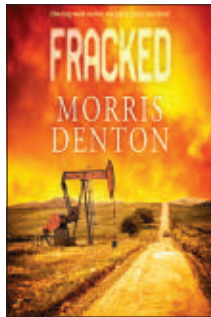
FICTION

Fracked: How Long Would You Bury Your Past to Protect Your Future?

Morris Denton
225p, e-book, \$5.99, ASIN B0CJXBMP1H

Denton debuts with a suspenseful novel that highlights crooked businessman, mental disability, the bonds of family, and the hard truth that, in the oil biz, "if you could go vertical for a specific depth and then turn horizontal, you could tap into the minerals ... without having to negotiate with dozens of surface owners." That insight belongs to Rand Holub, who—bullied, misunderstood, and misdiagnosed as mentally challenged due to his delayed speech—struggles through his adolescent years yet thrives at science, math, and engineering. At the age of 18 he leaves The Ranch, the Texas Panhandle school for troubled boys, and begins work as an oil field roughneck. Eventually married to a waitress, Shelby, and expecting a child, Rand, an amateur designer of innovative oil drilling equipment and techniques, enters into a wildcatter business agreement that will get the best of "the big boys" of the industry—and change the trajectory of his family's life forever.

The big boys don't like being beaten, of course, and with smart



Innovative wildcatter faces the big boys in this oil drama with jolting twists.

Great for fans of Reavis Z. Wortham; Richard T. Kelly's *The Black Eden*.

foreshadowing and a pervasive sense of suspense, Denton sets up the many twists and turns to come throughout this fast-paced and emotionally charged narrative that takes seriously its themes of undiagnosed autism, a family that will do anything to survive and succeed, and the interests of "the world's largest oil and gas company," here called Mesaco. Denton juxtaposes heartfelt moments of familial bonds—including with Dottie and Souter, the adults who took in Rand upon his abandonment, plus passages touching on the hazards of new fortunes—with the dark, cutthroat nature of the oil world, including Mesaco spending "years and billions of dollars trying to deny climate change."

With persuasive oil industry detail, *Fracked* balances tension with life as it's lived, letting the characters push the narrative forward. Readers will find themselves rooting for Rand and family as they face adversity and money-hungry men seeking to capitalize off of his perceived shortcomings, right up until the satisfying conclusion.

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

FICTION

Coming Home: A Novel

Kay Tobler Liss | Plain View Press, Inc.
160p, trade paper, \$16.99, ISBN 978-1-632-10106-8

Chronicling one family's year from one Christmas to the next, *Coming Home* is a touching novel of four generations making peace with the past, healing old wounds, and rediscovering the joys of their youth. Lydia is living a nice life in New York City as a writer for the *Architectural Journal*, yet she is discontent with the trajectory of her life, feeling as if she is just going through the motions. Plagued by a dream of herself dancing in a meadow she vaguely remembers from her childhood, and the longings that dream suggests, Lydia returns to her childhood home in North Carolina. There, amongst her family—brother Daniel, mother Eugenia (Gigi), maternal grandmother Nans (Zipporah), great grandaunt Virginia, and father George—Lydia urges everyone to stop running from their past and "[return] to the earth" to face the loss they have avoided: the death of her brother, Evan.

Liss (*The Last Resort*) brings this warm but emotionally charged contemporary fiction to life through the narrative of a grieving family that has become complacent in their comfortable lives to the point of



A family's story of healing, growth, and the importance of home.

Great for fans of Rhonda McKnight's *The Thing About Home*, Scott Merry's *Something to Wish For*.

pushing away the people who care about them the most. Each member discovers they have never allowed themselves to heal or move on from tragedy and fully embrace the love and happiness that life has been offering all along.

The novel demonstrates the work that reconciliation and facing the past can take, but also the power of doing so: as this fractured family repairs its bonds and moves toward truly letting each other in, they all feel the light of the sun begin to shine on their world again. *Coming Home* explores the importance of "family members talk[ing] about their feelings," all with a strong focus on the beauty of nature and art. Fans of novels that center around familial bonds, secrets, and self-discovery will find this resonant, with engaging, believable characters and a plot that's drawn from life and stirs real tears.

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

MYSTERY/THRILLER
Incident at Devil's Finger

Larry Witham | Archway Publishing
327p, trade paper, \$24.99, ISBN 978-1-6657-4918-3

The prolific Witham's gripping followup to the international art-world thriller *The Silk Road Affair* finds private investigator Julian Peale now navigating an explosive performance art project in the expansive American Southwest. Peale, tasked by his partner Joe Castelli, delves into just what the title promises, the incident at a monumental red rock near Sedona where the "flying artist" Magnifica, formerly known as Mary Saville, must abort her much-hyped performance, a parachute leap from helicopter through storied rock pinnacles near Sedona, when the colossal Devil's Finger explodes before her eyes. Horrified and suspecting the involvement of the Russian mob, Katherine Grant, heiress and art collector from the east coast art establishment, hires Castelli to probe into the realm of Sophia Saville, the ailing-with-dementia artist mother of Magnifica, who is reported to have a substantial private trust.

The mystery that follows finds Witham weaving lively art-world insight with military expertise, hacker espionage, teching rivalry, and



Greed and betrayal power this gripping Southwest art-world mystery.

Great for fans of Joe Mungo Reed's *Hammer*, Brendan Slocumb's *The Violin Conspiracy*.

more surprises. Castelli entrusts Peale to investigate who would inherit Sophia's trust if Magnifica were to die, kicking off an investigation into numerous contenders including Sophia's former flames, Shawn Byrne and Ethan Ratliff—self-made tech millionaires engaged in a long-standing feud playing out

at events like the Oracle of Fire (reminiscent of Burning Man). Their battle over futurism and fantasy, druids versus space cadets, extends across games, festivals, art, and philosophies, building to a wild climax, while Magnifica, driven to surpass her mother's artistic fame, orchestrates her most audacious stunt yet. The cast is further enriched by underworld figures Cyclops and Cyberpunk, adding layers of intrigue. Peale's support network—his wife Priscilla, her son Nathan, FBI agent Jerry Snow, and Las Vegas detective William Jackson—collaborate to uncover the dark underside of art in this twisting, of-its-moment thriller. Witham tells the tale with exquisite language, allowing readers to visualize the captivating panoramas of the Southwest, plus persuasive, entertaining glimpses of these extravagant lives.

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

MYSTERY/THRILLER
The Fruitcake

Leah Orr | Orplac Press
366p, e-book, \$0.99, ISBN 979-8-985-57837-9

Orr's excitable mystery finds Holly Kelly, newly transplanted to swanky neighborhood Laguna Palms with her husband and triplets, on the hunt for friendship and fun amid a flurry of country club outings, parties, and a yearly Christmas fruitcake exchange designed to bring the neighbors together. When that holiday tradition goes south—starting with the homeowner's association president, Patty, choking to death on a missing Lego piece baked into the neighborhood's very first fruitcake exchange—it sets off a series of murders that seem accidental at first but quickly stew with bizarre coincidences.

After the second exchange inadvertently ends in the death of resident Harry's elderly uncle, finance guru Greta muses "This is the second Christmas Eve death in the past two years. Maybe we should end this fruitcake exchange thing." Despite those misgivings, the eccentric neighbors continue the tradition, eventually culminating with Holly's delivery of a Havana fruitcake to the Hudson sisters—though her premonition that something bad will happen proves true ("I don't



Butterfly effect neighborhood murder mystery built on a tasty Christmas tradition.

Great for fans of Paula Hawkins's *The Girl on the Train*, Gillian Flynn's *Sharp Objects*.

very last bite.

"In the end, it's the chaos that leads to the order we seek," the story quotes, and despite some lumps in the batter thanks to the non-linear structure, readers will be pleased with the gripping denouement. Bloodshed, atonement, and suspense tangle together to produce a savory mystery, emboldened by Orr's sprinkling of neighborhood legends (the land, stolen from the area's indigenous tribes, is thought to be cursed) on top. It's obvious Orr relishes page-turning riddles, but the ample reflection on the intergenerational events that shape a person's life adds a richness to this holiday treat.

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

SF/FANTASY/HORROR
Breaking Out: The Resistance Chronicles, Book 1

Benjamin Crane | West 16 Publishing
392p, e-book, \$15.93, ISBN 978-1-739-47223-8

Crane constructs a futuristic sci-fi space opera, transporting readers thousands of years into the future, where the dictatorial Imperium commands authority over all human-inhabited planets in the Rim system. This equilibrium is shattered by the Imperium itself when, in fear of the potential creation of a powerful AI, they attack the village of the suspected creator, ruthlessly claiming the lives of her entire family. This tragic event propels the brilliant woman on a resolute path to develop that AI, ultimately setting the stage for the downfall of the Imperium.

The author skillfully employs the inciting incident to set in motion multiple compelling plots, centering around four distinct characters: Lauren, the brilliant mind behind the AI Merlin; Jack, who can pilot anything; the ruthless undercover Captain Greg Garcia; and Tom Wilks, owner of the ship *The Peregrine*, which he won through his gambling. Meanwhile, the strikingly menacing antagonist, Imperium Supreme Commander Bob, defies stereotypes by primarily handling HR and PR



Promising space opera series starter of rebellion, action, AI, and a cosmic empire.

Great for fans of Christopher Ruocchio; Elizabeth Bear's White Space series.

matters while his subordinates wreak havoc across the universe. The high point of the book occurs, quite literally, when Merlin, Tom, and Greg orchestrate a daring plan to intoxicate an entire prison, aiming to liberate Lauren and Jack. Described in colorful detail, the plan predictably—and entertainingly—derails, and the robots, along with the AI, save the day for a change.

Crane's writing often evokes a cinematic grandeur with its epic scale, complex character dynamics, and blend of heady what-if? ideas and intense battle sequences. The narrative loses some momentum in the latter half as the focus shifts from the fight against the Imperium to a detailed rescue operation on a nuked planet, and the cosmic empire material, while exciting, at times feels familiar. Still, living up to its title, this series starter features pivotal prison breaks and narrow escapes from imminent death, as the Rim system strives to "break out" of the shackles of the Imperium. This thematic choice sets the stage for a promising next installment.

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

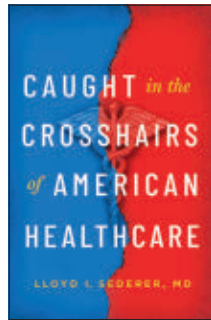
BUSINESS & PERSONAL FINANCE

EDITOR'S PICK

Caught in the Crosshairs of American HealthcareLloyd I. Sederer | Greenleaf Book Group
208p, e-book, \$26.95, ASIN BOC8M8K24D

Ever wonder why healthcare, from your annual wellness visit to an extended hospital stay, is not what it used to be? This insightful and inspiring account from Sederer (author of *Improving Mental Health: Four Secrets in Plain Sight*) offers answers to what's gone wrong with insurance, profiteering, inequitable care, outdated infrastructure and more—all while telling the rousing story of one hospital pushing back to put patients first. Hired in 1989 to help prevent McLean Psychiatric Hospital, a Harvard teaching unit in the shadows of Cambridge, from closing or becoming a managed-care “trophy” institution, Sederer chronicles the evolution of McLean and his teams’ efforts to pull it out of a “death spiral,” while providing a blueprint for America’s healthcare future.

Sederer recounts his long fight to prevent change for the worse as “for-profit intermediaries” try to seize greater control from doctors and nurses. Sederer’s experiences, observations, and recommendations



A doctor's rousing account of saving a patient-focused hospital from profiteers.

Great for fans of Brian Alexander's *The Hospital*, Ricardo Nuila's *The People's Hospital*.

amount to a troubling wake-up call.

His six-year, boots-on-the-ground odyssey is a sobering journey of how the American healthcare system has declined from a progressive system run by healthcare professionals typically with the best interest of the patient and their families at heart to a near-monopoly of profit-driven corporations that view patients as products that should be managed as efficiently as possible. At times, the book reads like a thriller with Sederer and his team of underdogs taking on corporate America. Along the way he is not afraid to dispense strong medicine as well as wisdom gained from experience. Sederer illuminates a lot of territory as he navigates the “merciless new era of corporate medicine,” the over-prescription of certain drugs, the loss of family involvement in recovery, and more. Ultimately McLean survives the onslaught with its leading position in psychiatric research and treatment intact. Sederer offers here nothing less than a real-life prescription for change that should be urgent reading for healthcare administrators, officials, and providers.

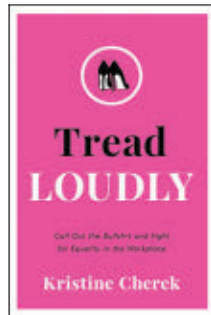
Cover: **A** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: – Editing: **A** | Marketing copy: **A**

BUSINESS & PERSONAL FINANCE

Tread LoudlyKristine Cherek | Greenleaf Book Group
192p, e-book, \$23.95, ISBN 978-1-956-07217-4

Cherek’s inspiring yet straight-talking debut is part personal account of the experiences of a woman professional enduring microaggressions and bad advice (“The key to success ... is to increase one’s grit level”) in a male-dominated work culture, part blueprint for transformative societal change, and part compendium of advice for women building their own careers. Arguing that women (and other minorities) have been at best neglected and at worse exploited in American society, Cherek picks up the call of economic equality and equitable treatment at a time when “only one in four C-suite leaders is a woman, and only one in 20 is a woman of color.” Sharing revealing anecdotes from her own career, which found her often disillusioned and feeling unsupported, Cherek takes on the myths (“There’s no such thing as having it all”), expectations, and systemic biases and barriers holding so many back while sharing clear takeaways for those coming up behind her.

“I should be able to succeed in the corporate world without having to disguise, hide, or abandon who I am,” Cherek declares. With crisp,



Hard-won insight and guidance for women in male-dominated workplaces.

Great for fans of Alicia Menendez's *The Likeability Trap*, Elaine Welteroth's *More Than Enough*.

sometimes pugnacious prose and a sturdy moral compass, Cherek points out clear wrongs—including “crude jokes, awkward comments, blatant stares at my boobs and legs”—that in individual moments it might feel easy to just let slide. Doing so, she now argues, legitimizes the underlying assumptions of the biased. Instead, Cherek

makes the case that thriving in the workplace—and improving society—means being truthful and encouraging women to tell their stories, to dare to quit bad jobs, and to not blame themselves when “the world or the workplace is unfairly stacked against you.”

Tread Loudly offers catharsis and hope as Cherek urges women to be bold—and be themselves. She buttresses her observations with examples from others’ careers and the hard facts of the closing chapter, which notes how women still lag far behind men in business, government, and academia. A former attorney, she makes a compelling case for change.

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

HEALTH, DIET, PARENTING

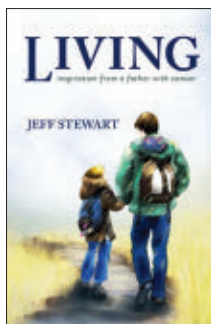
EDITOR'S PICK

Living: Inspiration from a Father with CancerJeff Stewart | Wadsack-Stewart Press
314p, trade paper, \$19.99, ISBN 979-8-987-66911-2

Compiled as a mixed media scrapbook of journal entries, personal text messages, and life lessons, this inspirational memoir is the work of a father, Stewart, diagnosed with cancer leaving behind memories, life lessons, and personal thoughts for his children. Through candid journal entries, Stewart vulnerably shares his journey with cancer from diagnosis to what he calls “ringing the bell.”

The father of seven children, Stewart takes the opportunity of compiling this book to set down “the life lessons, adages, and reflections that helped me endure hard times and avoid harder ones.”

Warm and wise, *Living* is, above all else, a literal act of love. In notes from a recorded interview conducted by his daughter’s husband, affectionately dubbed “bearded son-in-law,” Stewart chronicles his life before his cancer diagnosis, from his childhood growing up in Oregon to the present. (“Yesterday, I tested positive for Covid. Exciting.”) Stewart provides advice on love, enjoying life, and handling the inevi-



A father's touching compendium of insights and final words.

Great for fans of Meghan O'Rourke's *The Long Goodbye*, Audre Lorde's *The Cancer Journals*.

table bad times, all while sharing fascinating anecdotes from his own life’s highs and lows, such as winning \$25,000 and a car on the college edition of *Jeopardy*, meeting and marrying the love of his life in college, and getting “kicked out” of Princeton. Juxtaposing the clinical and bleak appointments and treatment with his cancer with his paternal 100 inspirational lessons such as “life is a long first draft” and “do it until you are it,” Stewart blends in humor and loving insight that readers will take to heart.

Living is a work curated out of love and with intention to impart a life’s accumulated wisdom. This touching memoir will resonate with anyone who has lost a loved one to cancer or experienced a cancer diagnosis. This remarkable memoir is the product of taking the time to say goodbye when given the opportunity and leaving behind a history and legacy for the loved ones left to grieve the loss—a final and powerful act of love.

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

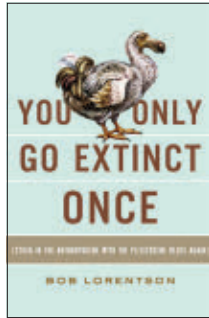
OTHER NONFICTION

You Only Go Extinct Once: Stuck in the Anthropocene with the Pleistocene Blues Again
Bob Lorentson

182p, e-book, \$10.99, ASIN B0CM43Q2ZT

In this humorous collection of short essays, retired environmental scientist Lorentson (author of *Hold the Apocalypse—Pass Me a Scientist Please*) turns a quizzical eye to nature's intersection with the human world. He plumbs an array of entertaining topics, from the DNA humans share with bananas to squid intelligence to the power of beavers, offering readers a slew of rousing stories that burst with wit. Lorentson opens each essay with a short quotation from renowned humorists, including such notables as W.C. Fields and Groucho Marx, always circling back to the evolutionary path humans continue down, reflecting on our inevitable march toward extinction if nothing changes.

In "The Opossum—America's National Shame," Lorentson chronicles the behavior and appearance of this "poor excuse for an animal," characterizing it as a "65 million year old reminder of what happens when you don't even try." He surveys more serious topics as well, though



Humorous look at humans' effect on the environment.

Great for fans of Randall Munroe's *What If?*, Bill Bryson's *A Short History of Nearly Everything*.

bemoans the fate of Earth's trees, now down to "only 375 trees per person," candidly remarking that without serious efforts to slow climate change, humans will "soon have to join a tree safari to find them."

Though humor forms the backbone of the collection, Lorentson still aims to deliver accurate scientific information, including extensive referencing for his claims. The punny wordplay and dense witticisms may not tickle every funny bone, but fans of tongue-in-cheek comedy will savor the laughs. Throughout, Lorentson pits humans against nature—respectfully, if slightly mocking—and readers will find themselves rooting for nature in the end, as he astutely observes, "Nature always seemed so big, and humans so insignificant... Maybe when nature is imaginary it will finally get better ratings."

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

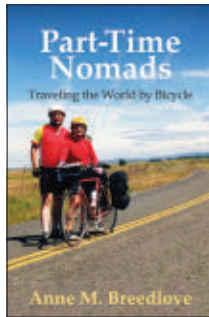
OTHER NONFICTION

Part-Time Nomads: Traveling the World by Bicycle
Anne M. Breedlove | Alive Publishing

316p, trade paper, \$33.95, ISBN 978-1-631-32203-7

Compiled from entertaining anecdotes and personal photographs, Breedlove's debut recounts her transformation from a recreational cyclist to world bicyclist with her husband Jim. The couple's interest was initially sparked from an advertisement in *Bicycling* magazine for self-guided tours in France and exploded from there: before long, the middle-aged parents had traveled through three countries and seven states, including New Zealand and France, over the course of 10 years. That transformative journey brought out the best and the worst in the pair, starkly highlighting their differences (Breedlove describes herself as a "noisy, busy, pushy extrovert" who plans every detail, while the more introverted Jim prefers to go with the flow) and uniting them as international travelers.

Cycling enthusiasts will relish Breedlove's discourse on their tours, including location choosing to packing supplies to handling the inevitable bumps in the road (trying to manage tent camping on a windy beach and navigating the intimidating "He-Man motorcycle territory" on



Spouse cyclists rediscover the world together.

Great for fans of Kristen Jokinen's *Joy Ride*, Peter Mayle's *A Year in Provence*.

locked gates; and not researching trip elevations ahead of time makes their travels exponentially more difficult.

Despite the learning curve, both Breedlove and her husband find the journey breathtaking, each in their own way, as Jim declares "Actually, cycling has little to do with bicycles for me. It has to do with being on our own, homeless in a strange place, between places, moving forward." That free spirit drives their adventures, whether they're hitchhiking in France or visiting the Vartry House, the "Highest Pub in Ireland." Travel fans may wish for more particulars on the globetrotting portions, as the book is heavily weighted to Breedlove's stateside tours, but, still, this is a bird's-eye view of rediscovering the world at a slower pace.

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

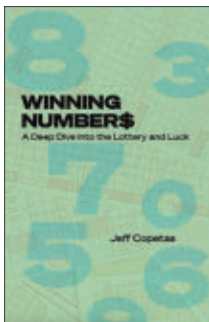
POP CULTURE & SPORTS

Winning Numbers: A Deep Dive into the Lottery and Luck
Jeff Copetas

228p, e-book, \$12.99, ISBN 979-8-9892172-1-2

If Americans share a national fantasy, it could be that of winning the lottery and living like a king, no matter how long the odds, no matter how many stories we might hear of past winners for whom that good luck proved disastrous. In this insightful debut, Copetas examines those disasters and many other facets of the lottery industry, running the numbers on the odds, talking to lottery officials, lawyers, and lottery winners who have won millions and lost it all, and also to lottery winners who—in even greater demonstrations of luck or something as powerful—haven't really changed in any substantive way. Copetas's original interviews, mixed with his own research and analysis, make this an intriguing read in a relaxed, conversational style as he examines the reality of the long-shot dream: what actually happens when someone wins big.

Overall, this is an enjoyable book with surprises ("just under one-third of people who win or inherit money don't just blow it all, they blow it all and then some"), though some of the analysis (of the odds of winning;



Illuminating breakdown of lottery, the odds, and what happens to winners.

Great for fans of David G. Schwartz's *Roll the Bones*, Jonathan D. Cohen's *For a Dollar and a Dream*.

of who actually plays) can be dry. Copetas is most engaging when interviewing, historicizing, and thinking through fascinating questions. He gives the subject enough space to tell their story and offers no judgment afterward. In a fascinating chapter, Copetas talks to Kurt Panouses, the "Powerball lawyer" who has handled over 30 lottery winners, including some billion dollar jackpots, talks about the difference in state-to-state taxes, foundations, and above all, the need for anonymity.

Even knowing the odds, it's still fascinating to think through the questions (addressed here) like whether to take winnings as a lump sum or an annual payout. Copetas looks America's lottery obsession in the eye and asks the tough questions with sometimes surprising, always informative answers in a book that pulls the reader in by shining a light on their dreams of instant wealth.

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

SELF-HELP

Awake to Your Why: Achieve Your Goals and Change Your Life with the 5 AM Advantage Bryce Chapman |

Greenleaf Book Group

224p, e-book, \$17.95, ISBN 978-1-632-99778-4

Chapman (author of *The 5am Playbook*) highlights the benefits of starting each day at 5am in this rousing handbook, declaring that “the payoff is exponentially greater than the effort of getting out of bed.” His decision to commit to a daily 5am wake-up call came after facing burnout as a successful business owner in mid-life; to regain control of his future, he challenged himself to early morning risings, with stellar results—after a decade of implementing the habit, Chapman was “healthier and happier,” with more time “to follow [his] dreams.”

Chapman acknowledges his road to success has been bumpy, sharing several stories of times his resolve was tested and detailing how his perseverance paid off—such as his 2016 run-in with a bull on his family’s cattle-breeding farm, an accident that ended in severely dislocated and broken toes, a dislocated shoulder, and a torn bicep. Those injuries required years of surgical procedures and rehabilitation, but Chapman’s



Intentional guide to taking advantage of every day.

Great for fans of Robin Sharma’s *The 5AM Club*, Dan Luca’s *The 5 A.M. Revolution*.

as examples of how to organize, plan, and prepare each day with intention, the true purpose of his habit makeover.

To further illustrate his methods, Chapman pairs personal anecdotes with actionable steps, falling back on five goal activators—“discipline, persistence, focus, action, and passion”—that together produce what he terms “the unstoppable, self-sustaining energy... you need to hit your target.” His book is brimming with clear, concise tips and real-life examples on how to achieve success one morning at a time, offering a hard-won path to accomplishing dreams. In his own words, “Self-improvement is an endurance race, and there is always room to grow.”

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

SPIRITUALITY/INSPIRATIONAL

U Dream, Inc.

Vlado Rahal | BalboaPress

174p, e-book, \$3.99, ISBN 979-8-765-23719-9

Theoretical physicist Rahal shares short, fabulistic fictions that explore life, death, and spirituality, set in lands familiar and not, from a desert in which “a traveler lost his way,” to a “faraway civilization, in another galaxy,” the depths inside “a pit of your own invention,” and a “world of eternal beauty in which all things are one” located “far beyond that which the human mind imagines.” The subjects vary too, from a vision declaring “I am the Light” to the “wise men of antiquity” to the searching title story, which concerns the development, in another star system, of machines that can read, write, and project the contents of anyone’s mind.

Each surprising story begins and ends with a quote that elucidates the moral and meaning meant to be taken from the tale. The book’s sweep is suggested by their provenance: many come from philosophers or ancient texts, others from Philip K. Dick. The result is an inspirational odyssey into the meaning of life, death, and more, told through narratives gathered throughout the author’s life richly immersed in spiritual text, Rahal’s own musings, and “letters from friends.” With lyrical prose,



Surprising, polished spiritual fables illuminating existential questions.

Great for fans of Marilyn McFarlane’s *Sacred Stories*, Jay lyer’s *Little Flowers*.

waters his flowers each morning yet unknowingly floods the ant colony nearby.

Exploring perception, mindset, and accepting things that can not be controlled, “The Boxer” centers on two men who have the same nightmare of being forced to fight each other. While one wonders how he wound up in the precarious situation in a state of frozen fright, the other accepts his fate and does his best to win the battle. Rahal explores complex themes with warmth and wit, offering lessons and illumination on topics of enlightenment, self-consciousness, and spiritual well-being.

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

MEMOIR

EDITOR'S PICK

The Girl with Three Birthdays: An Adopted Daughter's Memoir of Tiaras, Tough Truths, and Tall Tales

Patti Eddington | She Writes Press

240p, trade paper, \$17.95, ISBN 978-1-647-42650-7

Journalist Eddington’s absorbing memoir debut offers the intimate, at times wrenching story of an adoptee piecing together the puzzle of her convoluted family history through found family members, teachers, court officials, and a zeal for truth. At the age of 15, Eddington learned that the birthday she had grown up celebrating was not her true day of birth. Pressed on this, her adoptive mother explained that the choice had been a precautionary tactic, an attempt to ward off nosy neighbors from finding out Eddington’s background. Decades would pass before she learned that a five-day change in birth dates was only the beginning of the truth behind her adoption, her adoptive parents, and the reasons why her biological parents gave her away.

Putting her reporting skills to use, the grown-up Eddington retraced her family lineage through a DNA test, a Report of Investigation document, and the family she discovered during her research into her



Memoir of family secrets, self-discovery, and the truth of one adoption.

Great for fans of Emma Stevens’s *The Gathering Place*, Leora Krygier’s *Do Not Disclose*.

but wanting the truth about her birth parents, Eddington pays homage to both sets as she works through her own internal struggle as she discovers ever more truths about her adoption. This layered story of self-discovery and family history is a moving exploration of familial bonds, the adoption process, and complex relationships between parents and their children.

The Girl With Three Birthdays is riveting and mysterious, a story that will draw readers in as it pulls at their heart strings. Perfect for fans of investigative journalism and memoirs replete with shocking family history, readers will find Eddington’s unyielding pursuit of the truth gripping and suspenseful, filled with jolting revelations, relatable family dynamics, and in-depth looks at love, family, and grief.

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

MEMOIR

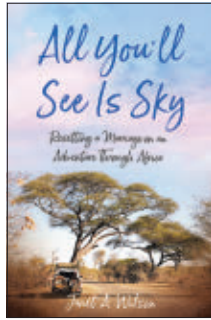
All You'll See Is Sky: Resetting a Marriage on an Adventure through Africa

Janet A. Wilson | She Writes Press

240p, trade paper, \$17.95, ISBN 978-1-647-42644-6

"I want out of this life," Wilson declares to her husband, Tom, in the opening pages of this affecting debut, a memoir that sweeps readers to a place that feels simultaneously relatable and completely foreign. Her plan to escape: a 25,000-mile road trip along the length of Africa, "from Cape Town to Cairo." After hard days in which the couple "shredded and analyzed our lives," Tom surprises her: "I'll come with you. Let's do it." That kicks off the adventure of a lifetime, complete with trials (brake trouble in Zambia), revelations (the 27,000 "lime-encrusted skeletons" unearthed from a mass grave in Rwanda), and wonder (kayaking the Nile; "a moonless sky swarming with stars"; beholding the fossil skeleton of early human Lucy).

The couple's journey, of course—like all journeys—finds them reversing both the world itself but also plunging into themselves, reconnecting and moving their marriage "from breakdown to break-



A couple's captivating journey across Africa and into their relationship.

Great for fans of Josh Barkan's *Wonder Travels*, Nikki Vargas's *Call You When I Land*.

couple finds this trip challenging nearly every belief, opinion, and value they held, ultimately leading to a deeper understanding of their place in the world and in each other's lives.

For all the pained material, including a shocking arrest, reading Wilson's experiences is a thought-provoking pleasure. Wilson's frankness, vulnerability, and precision of language give power to her considerations of heartbreaks and joys in a relationship. *All You'll See Is Sky* suggests that relationships work not because of what happens to couples, but because of how couples choose to handle what they're facing. Witnessing Wilson's transformation from brokenness to healing on a once-in-a-lifetime trip will please readers of both travelogues and relationship memoirs.

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

POETRY

EDITOR'S PICK

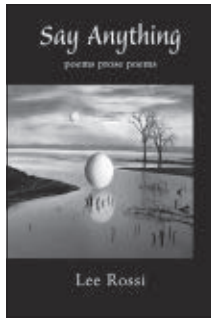
Say Anything: poems prose poems

Lee Rossi | Plain View Press, LLC

96p, trade paper, \$17.99, ISBN 978-1-632-10099-3

Rossi's incisive fifth collection is an immersive dive into the transformative waters of his imagination, at once thought-provoking but also, in its way, pointedly thoughtless. In "Consider This," the speaker remarks "I myself am incapable of thought," yet this absence is not lamentable. "Thinking is one of those expensive cul-de-sacs with no way in and no way out," the speaker writes, "meanwhile I find myself wandering along some unfamiliar street stunned by the roar of traffic, [...] stranded in the present." Outside of thought, the speaker achieves an awareness of reality more profound, sacred, and cosmic than that of the thinkers because it is grounded in the present.

Of the four sections in *Say Anything*, the first, "Surveillance," is most centrally focused on the relationship between God and self, colored by the poet's rich religious history as a former Catholic seminary student. "Cricket," in particular, illustrates the reciprocal nature of the poet's understanding of spirituality. "Don't you see?," Rossi writes, "without



Spiritual, philosophical poetry and prose radiating with shadowy brilliance.

Great for fans of Tracy K. Smith's "The Universe as Primal Scream," Adrienne Rich's "What Kind of Times Are These".

some Gentle Jailer surveilling everything, my kind of life, small as a chigger or a cricket, would go unremarked." Yet the poet is also surveilling God; here, the writing of poetry is in itself an act of surveillance—and worship—of God.

Such challenging, often moving insights abound. In the section "Cracks and Leaks," Rossi turns to prose to expand on "Surveillance's" spiritual groundwork but also to explore the human condition as it relates to mortality, aging, and memory. "Spirit Train" is a fable about a man traveling to Chicago who must change into various animal forms in order to gain passage on the Spirit Train to his final destination. This is a memorable metaphor for the myriad changes the self endures during a lifetime, but it's also an allegory for spiritual ascension. Readers seeking a spiritual, sophisticated collection will find depth, lightness, and surprising illumination in Rossi's poetry, "whose only motive is joy."

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

PICTURE BOOKS

EDITOR'S PICK

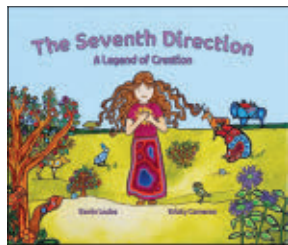
The Seventh Direction: A Legend of Creation

Kevin Locke | Medicine Wheel Publishing

44p, hardcover, \$18.95, ISBN 978-1-778-54013-4

Lakota Elder Locke delivers a stunning creation legend in this posthumously published story that marries vibrant natural landscapes to a powerful narrative of love, interconnection, and unity. The story unveils The Great Spirit, Wak'hán Thánka, creating the world, beginning with the earth and the sky, and culminating in his formation of the human spirit, "the most precious and most sacred entity in the world." Though he initially planned to gift the human spirit to the two-legged ones, Wak'hán Thánka, concerned humans would not appreciate its value, asks the animals to help him find an ideal location to hide it from them: "If it is difficult to find, it will most certainly become precious to them," he wisely declares.

Kristy Cameron's textured, brilliantly hued illustrations synchronize with Locke's message that humans must search carefully to find their connection to the world around them. As the animals each approach Wak'hán Thánka with their own plan to safely hide the human spirit, Cameron renders them in resplendent tones that echo the story's



Stunning creation story urging humans to preserve connection to nature.

Great for fans of Vicky Weber's *Taino Tales*, S.D. Nelson's *The Star People*.

landscapes. The Thát'hánka (buffalo) are painted varied shades of shimmering blue against a muted prairie, as they vow to carry the human spirit far away, "where the prairies meet the mountains"; the Mathó (bear) is colored an intense crimson, a color as fierce as his anger at being turned down by

Wak'hán Thánka; and the understated mole, Wahínheya, though blind, is a radiant picture of light against darkness—as meaningful as his winning idea to put the spirit in the one place humans will never look, inside their hearts.

Fully immersive and thought-provoking, Locke's sage picture book will appeal to visionary younger readers who can grasp the teaching that humans must rediscover their link to the natural world, to "be a good relative, not just to the two-leggeds, but to all of creation"—a timely message. Backmatter includes Lakota words featured throughout the story.

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

PICTURE BOOKS

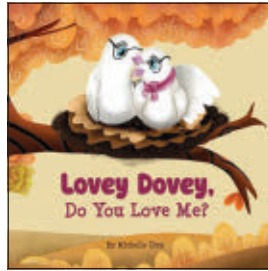
Lovey Dovey, Do You Love Me?

Michelle Urra

24p, trade paper, \$11.99, ISBN 979-8-9888572-2-8

Urra's touching picture book for young children follows a pair of doves through the stages of their lives. The story opens with a female dove shivering on a tree branch as snow falls around her. Soon she is joined by her mate, who embraces her with his wings. In the spring the couple welcome baby birds and spend the summer watching them grow until the bittersweet moment when the young doves must leave the safety of the nest. Fall and winter see the male and female dove continuing to love each other as they become grandparents and grow old together.

The progression of the doves' lives mirrors what many humans experience as they fall in love, have a family, and enter their later years. The doves' major milestones also follow the seasons—birth in the spring, maturity in the summer, decline in the fall, and finally death in the winter. This natural order of events will make sense to young readers as they celebrate the birds' joy and share in their sadness. It will also give adults a chance to talk about the ways their own familial relationships will



Touching picture book follows a pair of doves through the seasons of their lives.

Great for fans of Germano Zullo's *Little Bird*, Bryce Adam Brown's *Get On The Stage of Life and Live*.

and summer favor splashes of color and fall glows with orange and red. At the center of these shifting scenes, the wide-eyed doves perch on a branch, with the mother and father wearing glasses and scarves as they age. Ultimately this tender tale is a testament to the power of enduring affection that lasts a lifetime.

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

MIDDLE GRADE

The Moth and the Flame: The Boy Who Spoke with Insects

Bill Balson | Blurb

233p, hardcover, \$29.59, ISBN 979-8-21-096201-0

In an effort to probe the world's mysteries, Balson debuts with the exploits of 10-year-old Jay as he uses his birthday wish to answer his grandfather's musings on why some moths seem to purposefully fly into flame. Jay gets more than he bargained for with that wish, shocked to find he's been granted the ability to talk with and understand insects by G.O.W.A.D., the Granters of Wishes and Dreams, to help him uncover the answers behind his grandfather's ponderings. Each insect Jay meets on his quest has a unique personality, answering his questions and challenging his mistaken beliefs with experienced, knowledgeable voices.

Middle grade readers will be as entertained as they are educated by this adventure-fueled fantasy. Balson combines charisma and humor when detailing the various insects' stories, starting with a honeybee named Evangeline who schools Jay on how busy she is tending to the work for her Queen—and clarifies some common misconceptions about her kind (case in point: honeybees only sting in self-defense). Jay moves



A young boy uncovers nature's secrets by talking to insects.

Great for fans of Amy Sarig King's *Me and Marvin Gardens*, Danielle Davis's *Zinnia and the Bees*.

The insects themselves are so entertaining, readers will hardly notice their important lessons, and, despite their somewhat awkward placement, Balson's computer-generated illustrations give the narrative some grounding. The bigger picture rings true as well: Balson teaches the importance of being kind, not only to each other, but also to the natural world. Jay eventually earns a beautiful answer to his question, but the knowledge he gains along the way is his true prize, and Balson's encouragement to "open [your] heart and mind to the fact that there are things greater than just [yourselves]" carries weight.

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

YOUNG ADULT

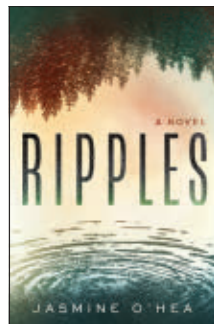
Ripples

Jasmine O'Hea | River Grove Books

324p, hardcover, \$18.95, ISBN 978-1-632-99704-3

In this uplifting debut, O'Hea offers vividly realized teen characters who learn about identity and life choices after they encounter a menacing parallel world populated with doppelgangers. After the death of his mother from a drug overdose, 16-year-old Nolan goes to live with his wealthy uncle in the Maine town of Morley. He becomes enamored with Harlow, the teenage daughter of the mayor, Matt Stevenson. On a hike in the woods, Nolan discovers a disheveled man, Topher Collins, who tells an incredible story about being from an alternate Morley dominated with an iron fist by the ruthless dictator Governor Matthias Stevenson, a double of the amiable Matt. Sixteen years ago, Topher, a photographer, had taken a picture of Matthias beating his baby daughter, Lolo, and was immediately arrested. Chased by the governor's guards, Topher fell through a portal in a pond into Nolan's version of Morley, and has feared to return, as the governor likely executed his double.

O'Hea emphasizes the human in this heady story, taking time to



A resourceful teen fights for freedom in a parallel world of doppelgangers.

Great for fans of Lauren Oliver's *Before I Fall*, Gwen Cole's *Cold Summer*.

develop the characters so that readers eventually can contrast them with their doubles, who appear after a hasty decision causes Nolan to fall through the portal and arrive in the Governor's dystopian Morley. Nolan's double, Nole, and Harlow's double, Lolo, are swapped into Nolan's world, and each learns about the freedoms that society and politicians can both give and easily take away. Nolan, meanwhile, faces the possibility that this is a one-way trip and that he could be trapped forever—but at least in this alternate world his mother is alive.

The chapters shift the first-person points of view of Harlow, Nolan, Topher, Nole, and Lolo, an approach that chops up the progression of the story, diminishing momentum, yet offering depth and insight as the teenagers critique the strange worlds they discover and learn that citizens have the power to create the government they want. Readers will root for the resilient characters who fight for freedom right up to a satisfying conclusion.

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

ENDNOTES*

*OUR WEEKLY ANNOTATED GUIDE TO HOW A BOOK IS MADE



TESSA HULLS
Author and Artist

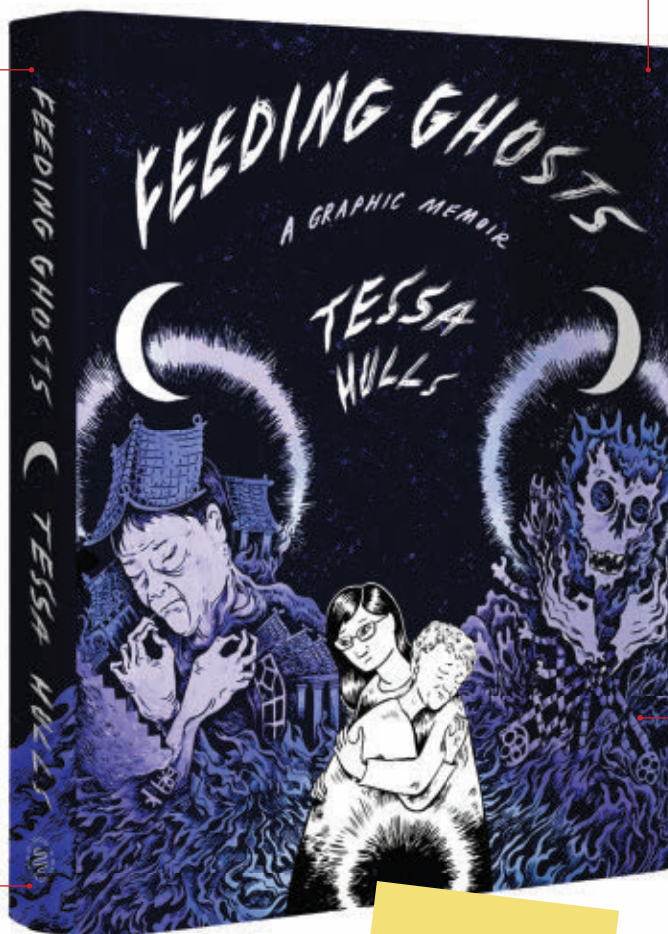
"This is the story I spent my whole life running from, and I went to great lengths—literally to Antarctica—to try and avoid confronting this history. But on some level, I always knew that my role as an artist and writer would require me to give voice to my family's ghosts. I came in with a background as a painter and writer, but I knew only a graphic novel would allow me to blend the complex threads of the story I wanted to tell."

"The book is built in trinities—China, Hong Kong, America; grandmother, mother, daughter; past, present, future—and the cover needed to reflect this structure. The central image of me and my mom embracing, with the dual ghosts of my grandmother behind us, forms a triangle that touches on all these themes. *Feeding Ghosts* leans into complexity and contradiction, and the cover reflects a story that is both dark and tender."



ANJALI SINGH
Agent, Ayesha Pande
Literary

"I was blown away from the very first time I saw Tessa's work. It was so clear that she was both a fantastic artist and a fantastic writer; in addition she had an incredible story to tell, and the intersection of family history and family trauma with broader history is right up my alley. I've always had a huge affinity for works that combine art and pictures."



SEAN MCDONALD
Publisher, MCD/FSG

"The acquiring editor, Daphne Durham, had a very strong personal reaction to Tessa's work, but really we all felt the same desperate need to publish *Feeding Ghosts* as soon as we were exposed to it. Tessa taught herself the graphic novel as a form in order to tell this story."

FEEDING GHOSTS

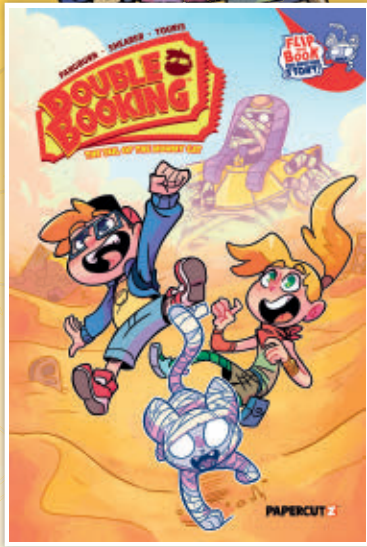
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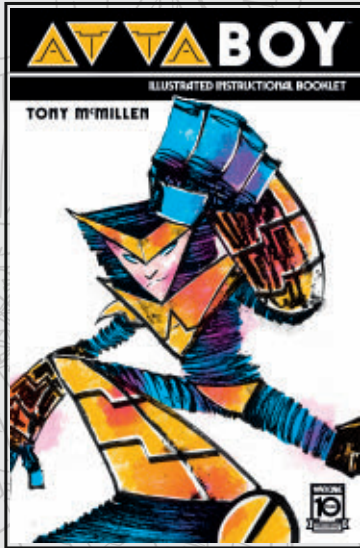
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