

MARCH 31, 2025

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YOUR GUIDE TO SELF-PUBLISHING

60 New BookLife Titles Listed • 13 New BookLife Titles Reviewed

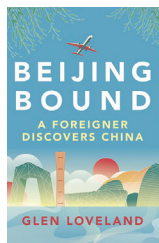
Indie Spotlight

In this edition of our monthly thematic roundup of BookLife titles, we feature books about travel and world cuisine.

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

TRAVELOGUES

Beijing Bound: A Foreigner Discovers China

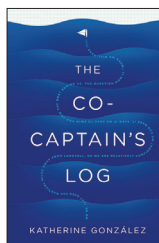


Glen Loveland
ASIN B0DT2742XJ

Author statement: “*Beijing Bound* is the product of 13 years spent in China—years that offered me a front-row seat to one of the most extraordinary transformations of the modern era. As the first non-Chinese HR leader at China Central Television and a professional with the Walt Disney Company,

I navigated a society in flux, witnessing firsthand the dynamism of Beijing’s ascent. From the fervor of the 2008 Olympics to the tightening contours of Xi Jinping’s China, my experience as a gay American in both professional and social spheres afforded me a unique vantage point on a country where tradition and modernity remain in constant negotiation.”

The Co-Captain’s Log

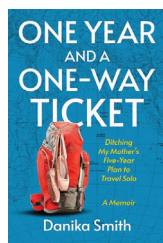


Katherine González and Andrés González
ASIN B0DJBY4DBR

Author statement: “This epistolary travelogue gives my multimedia account of sailing 11,000 miles across the Pacific Ocean. Friends and family followed us in real time as we sailed 23 days nonstop from Mexico to French Polynesia. From the Graveyard of the Pacific to the paradise of the

Polynesian Islands, this is the true story of a journey with the real people, the real places, and the adventures that inevitably follow.”

One Year and a One-Way Ticket

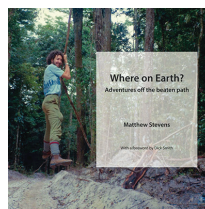


Danika Smith
ASIN B0DTRPVNHN

Author statement: “*One Year and a One-Way Ticket* was born from the challenges and growth I experienced as a solo female traveler. Facing external dangers and internal doubts, I learned to trust myself in ways I never had before. My journey mirrors the struggles many women face

when breaking free from societal and familial expectations, and I wrote this book to help them feel seen, heard, and empowered. Whether you’re crossing continents or taking the first step toward a long-buried dream (like writing a book!), I hope my story inspires you to be fearless and pursue a life fueled by love, joy, and passion.”

Where on Earth? Adventures off the Beaten Path



Matthew Stevens
ISBN 978-0-648-70797-4

Author statement: “The adventures documented in *Where on Earth?* span four decades of travel around the world to challenging places by unlikely modes of transport to eat alarmingly unfamiliar foods,

Booksellers & Librarians:



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BookLife Talks with Robert J. Potter

With a murder mystery that BookLife Reviews described as a “heartfelt” treatment of “the line between reality and the supernatural, while never losing sight of the mystery elements,” Potter (author of *Far-Sighted*) shows no signs of stopping. We spoke with him about his personal connection to the book and what’s on the horizon.

What’s the story behind *Far-Sighted*?

This is a difficult question to answer without revealing plot details. Nonetheless, I can say this.... Like my protagonist, Richard Drake, I moved to Tampa, Fla., looking for adventure and a warmer climate. Well, I found a great deal more! Tampa and the unincorporated subdivisions are home to many kinds of people: mystics, swingers, hard cases, refugees, loose cannons, and bigots. The list goes on and on. During my stay in this tropical paradise, I went from naïve Midwesterner to browbeaten fool.

Yes, I was a changed man, and by 2012, retreating to my hometown (Jacksonville, Ill.) was my only viable option. I needed time to regroup. And even after I recharged my batteries, I required an outlet, a means to express everything that was held within my soul. I turned to writing, and as a result, the novel *Far-Sighted: The Legacy of Richard Drake, Clairvoyant* was born.

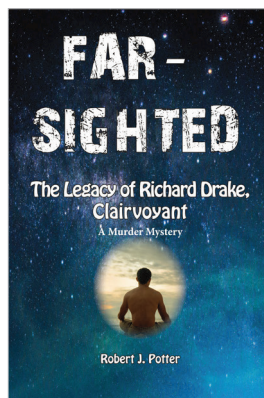
You mentioned you’ve done a lot of research for the book. Can you talk about that process a bit?

While writing *Far-Sighted*, I found myself frequenting various libraries, including the Jacksonville Public Library, where I checked out books and did extensive reading. Although I was writing fiction, the factual parts of the book are based on verified research. For example, the restaurant Subconscious is mentioned in the story, and to verify that this business fit within my timeline, I had to call the Hillsborough County Circuit Courthouse to find the business license and confirm the years between grand opening and closing. Also, there is mention in the story of a waxing gibbous moon. Consequently, I had to consult astronomical charts to verify that there was such a moon on the date listed in the text.

Was the main character, Richard Drake, inspired by anything from your own life?



To be clear, Richard Drake is not my double. Nevertheless, he and I have many commonalities. For instance, we view the world in a similar manner. Also, we are both self-deprecating idealists, yet we tend to make excuses for other people and their shortcomings. And during the “glory days” of our youth, we shared the same fundamental problem: being pursued and annoyed by people who sought nothing more than “love on the run.” But there is one major difference between Richard and me. Richard could always push through and complete any project, despite his feelings of sorrow and inadequacy. In this way, I wish I were more like him.



How do you imagine readers at this moment will connect to your book?

Readers generally fall into one of two camps: 1) those who enjoy a quick, fun read, and 2) those who enjoy a detailed, complex novel. If you fall into the second

group, then you will probably enjoy *Far-Sighted*. This book has a logical timeline and, periodically, date markers are provided. The characters are complex, and the story has several subplots. However, if you seek a quick, easy read, then do not waste your time on *Far-Sighted*. Most of chapter one is centered around character development, and the “real” action does not begin until chapter three. So, for those who enjoy a short novella, I would recommend my second book, *Maladjusted: A Murder Mystery*, instead.

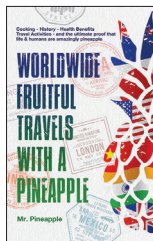
Can readers expect another book from you soon?

Yes, there are more books in the oven! Actually, I am simultaneously working on books three and four, and I am sorry to say that they have nothing to do with my first two books. But do not despair. By popular demand, there will be a sequel to *Far-Sighted*. I have deliberately delayed the sequel because the story line is quite complex and I cannot do it justice if I’m forced to rush through the writing process. Please, be patient. More than likely, there will be a sequel to *Maladjusted*, too, although I have not made a decision about it.

For more, visit booklife.com/potter

first on my own, then with my wife, and then with our children. Early on I kept trip diaries; later, as the internet grew, I sent messages home. This book collects all of these tales, fleshed out with memories refreshed by the thousands of photographs I've taken over the years."

Worldwide Fruitful Travels with a Pineapple



Mr. Pineapple

ISBN 978-1-73883-455-6

Author statement: "With the purpose to inspire everyone to live more 'pineHappily,' I travel the world to write my books inspired by the pineapple. You will discover the amazing history of the pineapple, peculiar pineapple landmarks and attractions, easy-to-make food and drink recipes,

and info on pineapple health benefits and the infamous kinkiness of the pineapple."

FICTION

The Professional Tourist

Noah Chinn

ISBN 978-1-990411-12-0

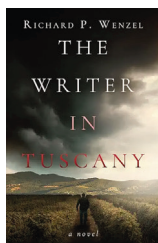
Author statement: "Fresh out of college, Azrael travels to Japan to reinvent himself as an English teacher. Only none of that is what he expects: his coworkers are either burnt-out or unhinged, one of his



students dabbles in the fringes of Tokyo's criminal element, and the most unlikely of world-traveling adventurers happens to be camped outside his school. Then there's Hanna. Foul-mouthed, cynical, and everything Az never knew he wanted. She's got big plans to shake up the world of teaching, and Az can't get her out of his head.

This novel grew out of my own experiences as an English teacher in Tokyo. While it is in no way autobiographical, I did work in many teaching-related anecdotes that happened to me because, well, they were funny!"

The Writer in Tuscany



Richard Wenzel

ASIN B0DR9KZNCB

Author statement: "My mystery novel, *The Writer in Tuscany*, is set in the beautiful, rolling hills outside Florence, Italy. A recurring theme is the exploration of Italy's rich culture—not just the wine and cuisine but also its art, music, and current social forces. I enjoy travel and all things

Italy and Italian, and I loved crafting a story from the perspectives of various international visitors to the villa and vineyard. Each visitor ultimately becomes absorbed in the nefarious plot."

Q&A

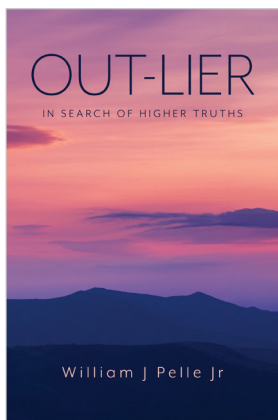
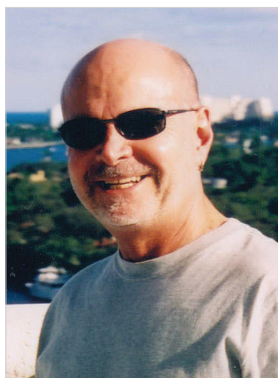
SPONSORED

BookLife Talks with William Pelle

Pelle's debut is a record of his life, from childhood memories and being the first federal civil service executive to come out as gay to his life after retirement. The goal of the book, Pelle says, is to offer readers insight into how they can evolve and turn their weaknesses into strengths.

What led to the decision to write your memoir?

I had life lessons to give to readers, lessons that take the reader to a higher place with higher truths. I also saw that underdogs can win big over time. I valued myself as an underdog. I saw that there is an underdog in each of us just waiting to be tapped into and propelled forward. It is a choice to turn our weaknesses into strengths, our fear into excitement. It's all the same energy. I also saw the



importance of openness. For me, openness was to come out to others as soon as I came out to myself. Hiding out and suppression sucks energy from the soul. I had to be true to myself. I saw the limits of conventional thought, how it can unintentionally inhibit creativity. I also saw the value of infusing youth into tradition and the need to bring back the mavericks.

How do you make sure that you are telling "the truth" when referencing situations and people that are decades old?

My memories of my coming-of-age, my childhood traumas, and my turning weaknesses into strengths are all indelible and irrefutable. I have carefully done my own fact-checking as I relived my past in writing this book. I used relatives and friends to substantiate what I say. If anything, I underplayed the truth rather than embellished it.

For more, visit booklife.com/pelle

BookLife Talks with Manuel Rose

Time Enough for Murder, Rose's latest work, throws readers into a science-fictional mystery where main character Nathan Harris must use the time travel machine he's invented to prevent the murder of his family. We spoke with Rose about his writing process, his inspiration for the story, and what he's working on next.

What's the story behind *Time Enough for Murder*—why and how did you write it?

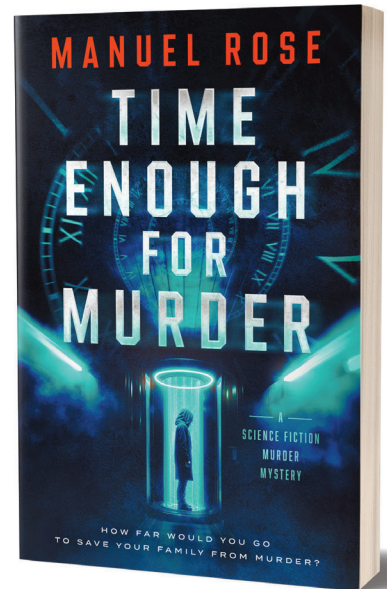
I wanted to write a science-fictional novel about time travel, but with a twist. I decided to include a murder mystery in my story, as well as an element of romance. This story can easily be enjoyed by groups of nearly all ages, especially anyone with a vivid imagination, like me. Scientists have experimented with time travel with several devices for many years with no success. Albert Einstein's theory states that massive objects can bend space-time. He also stated that the stronger the gravity, the slower time will pass. Maybe someday, time travel will become a reality, and not just science fiction, but until then, we can all dream.

With the different routes that the main character, Nathan, goes through, was the writing process different for this book than for your other novels?

Absolutely! I had to do much more research for *Time Enough for Murder* than for *Avalina*, *Death on the Railway*, and my other novels. Also, I had to make sure that all of the plot points, as they pertained to time travel, flowed freely and cohesively. I wanted my readers to feel for the main character, Nathan, and to root for him whenever he achieved a goal. Nathan is a rather complex character, being both a scientist and an inventor, and I'm sure that some people could relate to him. The other thing I had to be careful with, especially since it was primarily a murder mystery story, was to make sure I didn't prematurely give anything away.

Do you think there's a "wrong/right" way to do time travel in a story?

I would say, try not to make it so redundant by



repeating the same scenes over and over again. Also, try to be as historically accurate as possible. Do your research!

You write both children's and adult books. Do you have any advice for other authors who want to write for both audiences as well?

As a writer, I always ask myself: what should I write? There are times when I want to write children's books. There are times when I want to write thrillers or horror. There may also be times when I want to write science fiction. The point I'm trying to convey is, you don't have to stick to only one genre. Do what pleases *you*. If you want to write in more than one category, go for it! If it's not fun anymore, then why even bother? I would also like to add that there are many people in the audience that crave a complete and satisfying ending in a story. It's *your* story! Don't rely on your audience to try and figure out the ending. I always give everyone a complete and well-developed ending, because the ending is the most important part of any story, especially if you want your audience to return for another title.

Can readers expect another book from you?

Absolutely! As a matter of fact, I'm working on a psychological thriller right now with the tentative title *Beautiful, but Deranged*. I love to write stories to entertain people and myself.

For more, visit booklife.com/rose

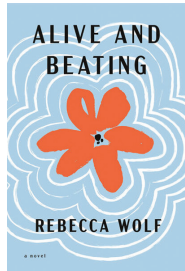


New Titles from Self-Publishers

Booksellers, publishers, librarians, and agents are encouraged to look at the 60 self-published titles below. Each appears with a list of retailers that are selling the book and a description provided by its author. Some of these writers are waiting to be discovered; others have track records and followings and are doing it on their own. If you are a self-published author interested in listing titles in this section, please visit publishersweekly.com/pw-select for more information.

Fiction

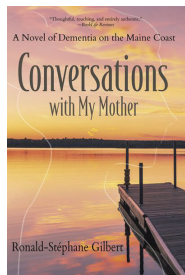
Alive and Beating



Rebecca Wolf. Arbitrary Press. \$29.95 (244p), ISBN 978-1-958762-13-4; \$17.99 paper (244p), ISBN 978-1-958762-14-1
Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Bookshop.org, IngramSpark

Inspired by a true story, *Alive and Beating* follows six people from Jerusalem, all of whom are awaiting organ transplants, on the day that will forever change their lives.

Conversations with My Mother: A Novel of Dementia on the Maine Coast



Ronald-Stéphane Gilbert, illus. by Eddie Vincent. Rootstock Publishing. \$19.99 paper (324p), ISBN 978-1-57869-181-4; \$7.99 e-book, ASIN BODHW9B73V
Ronaldstephanegilbert.com, Amazon, Rootstock Publishing

An elegant, kind-hearted Francophone struggles with dementia as her small town succumbs to development in a story that is as much about gain as loss and more about hope than regret.

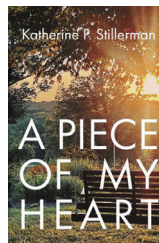
A Curlew Cried

Winifred Millicent Hardie. BalboaPressAU. \$20.99 paper (338p), ISBN 978-1-9822-9627-8; \$3.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-9822-9628-5



Amazon
In this historical novel, an English family immigrates to a farm in Western Australia, where they must endure many trials and tribulations over several decades.

A Piece of My Heart



Katherine P. Stillerman.
Katherine P. Stillerman. \$14.95 paper (244p), ISBN 979-8-3364-2630-4; \$4.99 e-book, ASIN BODF21KNZC
Amazon

After 30 years apart, Hattie marries her first love, Will. Their joy is short-lived when Will is detained in China for the duration of World War II. Will love survive?

Prairie Cinderella: Vinnie Ream and the Gilded Age



Joan Koster. Tidal Waters Press. \$13.99 paper (310p), ISBN 978-1-959318-18-7; \$4.99 e-book, ASIN BODT7K7NXX
Amazon, Apple Books, Barnes & Noble, Bookshop.org

Despite her plainspoken ways and western twang, nothing will stop 19th-century sculptor Vinnie Ream Hoxie from pursuing her art.

The Queen's Musician: A Novel

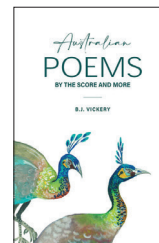


Martha Jean Johnson, illus. by Stacey Aaronson. Sparkpress. \$17.99 paper (344p), ISBN 978-1-68463-310-4; \$12.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-68463-311-1
Amazon

An untold story about how the plot against Anne Boleyn entrapped a gifted young musician.

Poetry

Australian Poems: By the Score and More



Brian Vickery. Xlibris Au. \$13.99 paper (136p), ISBN 979-8-3694-9214-7; \$3.99 e-book, ISBN 979-8-3694-9215-4
Amazon

This poetry book provides cheeky outlooks on politics and politicians, Covid-19, Ned Kelly (Bushranger), Mount Warning Wollumbin, aging, arthritis, and other miscellaneous topics.

My Garden of Roses: A Book of Poems



Janice E. Holliman. Authors' Tranquility Press. \$24.99 paper (78p), ISBN 978-1-965463-10-9
Amazon

My Garden of Roses is more than just a collection of poems; it is a reflection on the

beauty and complexity of life, a meditation on the resilience of the human spirit.

Poems, Tributes, and Dreams



Gary Nadelen. Dorrance. \$10.99 paper (36p), ISBN 979-8-88812-365-2 Amazon, Barnes & Noble

Escape into a world of dreams, visions, and heartfelt stories with *Poems, Tributes, and Dreams*, a collection that soothes sorrows and inspires peace within every reader.

Mystery/Thriller

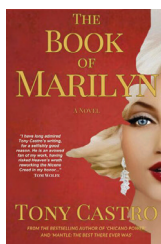
7 Days: A Dee Rommel Mystery



Jule Selbo. Pandamon Publishing. \$18.99 paper (350p), ISBN 978-1-950627-76-9; \$5.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-950627-80-6 Amazon, Barnes & Noble, IngramSpark

Dee Rommel's past haunts her when an eccentric purse thief is found dead, and her boss's friend, an environmentalist, dies under suspicious circumstances.

The Book of Marilyn

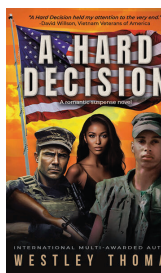


Tony Castro. Prodigal Son Books. \$28.95 (204p), ISBN 979-8-9924004-1-0; \$19.95 paper (204p), ISBN 979-8-9924004-4-1 Amazon

A thriller about the hunt for Marilyn

Monroe's lost diary holding deadly secrets that could rewrite history, topple power, and cost lives. Some truths are too dangerous to survive.

A Hard Decision

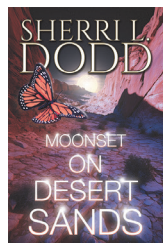


Westley Thomas. Authors' Tranquility Press. \$9.99 paper (138p), ISBN 978-1-964037-88-2 Amazon

Childhood sweethearts torn apart by war reunite years later, forcing Zera to choose

between her past and present in a story of love, loss, and resilience.

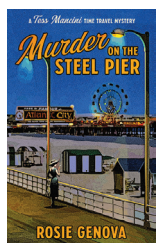
Moonset on Desert Sands (Murder, Tea, and Crystals #2)



Sherri L. Dodd. Black Rose Writing. \$23.99 paper (300p), ISBN 978-1-68513-579-9; \$6.99 e-book, ASIN BODF33L1YW Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Black Rose Writing

Arista thought facing a serial killer was terrorizing. Now comes something even more dreadful: her blood-thirsty uncle and his henchman nearing her safe haven.

Murder on the Steel Pier: A Tess Mancini Time Travel Mystery



Rosie Genova. Two Roses Books. \$12.99 paper (342p), ISBN 979-8-9911241-1-9; \$4.99 e-book, ASIN BODS934R1L Amazon, Apple, Barnes & Noble, Kobo, Smashwords

After a birthday blowout in Atlantic City, reporter Tess Mancini wakes up in 1955—but she can't get back to the future until she clears her teenaged grandpa of murder.

The Orchid Network



Pieter Hendrik. Pieter Hendrik. \$3.50 e-book (104p), ISBN 978-0-6398627-5-0 Kobo

A series of world leader deaths caused by genetically modified orchid forces. Plants exist for healing purposes. These are designed to kill.



Jill Amber Chafin. Vine Leaves Press. \$17.99 paper (332p), ISBN 978-3-98832-137-4; \$5.99 e-book, ISBN 978-3-98832-138-1 Amazon, Bookstore.org, Vine Leaves Press

A young mother's desperate moment spirals into an unthinkable mistake in this gripping domestic thriller, exploring new motherhood, guilt, and the fragility of human connection.

Thread of the Forgotten Soul



Ashley Maruzzo. Ashley Maruzzo. \$18.99 paper (424p), ISBN 979-8-3484-8184-1; \$3.99 e-book, ASIN BODV2HCVZZ Amazon, Barnes & Noble, IngramSpark

Threads of the Forgotten Soul follows Nerisse as she uncovers a cursed loom that traps souls. Haunted by eerie visions, she must unravel its dark history before it claims her next.

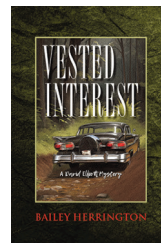
The Untended: A Novel



Mattea Kramer. She Writes Press. \$17.99 paper (312p), ISBN 978-1-64742-887-7; \$12.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-64742-888-4 Barnes & Noble, Bookshop.org

Casch Abbey, a waitress and single mom, falls in love with a veteran and a painkiller. When addiction jeopardizes her life, she faces tough choices in a small town's hidden world.

Vested Interest: A David Elliott Mystery



Bailey Herrington. Gatekeeper Press. \$20.99 (260p), ISBN 978-1-6629-5694-2; \$12.99 paper (260p), ISBN 978-1-6629-5695-9 Amazon, Apple Books, Barnes & Noble, Google Play

In *Vested Interest*, a young woman disappears, and deaths follow. David uncovers dark secrets in his congregation, leading to a deadly confrontation.

Vigilante Priest



Joe Gallagher and Dan Bowden. Rukia Publishing US. \$29.99 (478p), ISBN 978-1-7378472-3-6; \$19.99 paper, ISBN 978-1-7378472-4-3 Amazon, Apple Books, Barnes & Noble, Kobo

A former priest with mob ties and a detective on the edge cross paths in a city where justice is anything but black and white.

SF/Fantasy/Horror**Desiderata**

M.P. Desmarais. M.P. Desmarais. \$29.99 (372p), ISBN 979-8-9923235-2-8; \$3.99 e-book, ISBN 979-8-9923235-0-4

Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Bookshop.org, Kobo

A tyrant's empire falters during an energy crisis. He turns to a substance found in a crashed spaceship. Four companions with a better solution stand in his way.

The Era of the End (Omega Plan #1)

Jonathon Karagiannis. Escarpment Publishing. \$24.99 paper (460p), ISBN 978-1-922329-77-6

Amazon

Two secret societies threaten a marine captain, an Aes Sidhe chief turned criminal, a trafficked Aes Sidhe woman, and an ex-con man whose eyes have opened to the truth.

Hive (Madders of Time #1)

D.L. Orton. Rocky Mountain Press. \$13.99 paper (352p), ISBN 978-1-941368-39-8

Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Books-A-Million, Bookshop.org, Powells

In a world torn apart by invasive drones and environmental collapse, a cryptic message arrives from the future. With enemies hiding in plain sight, Isabel's every move risks disaster.

Planet Meno: The Origin of Species

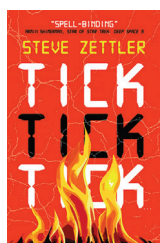
Andrew Davis. Burton Mayers Books. \$9.99 paper (274p), ISBN 978-1-917224-05-5

Amazon, Blackwell, Foyles, Waterstones, Walmart

Teenagers Rod and Ida, a wheeled species living on Planet Meno whose sun is failing, battle against hostile forces to discover the origin of their tormented race. Is there any hope?

Tick... Tick... Tick...

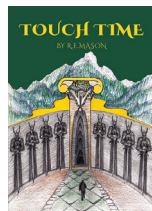
Steve Zettler. Vine Leaves Press. \$17.99 paper



(302p), ISBN 978-3-98832-139-8; \$5.99 e-book, ASIN BODNK1RKJ4

Amazon, Apple Books, Barnes & Noble, Kobo

An agent investigates a bizarre occurrence: a bull has gone sterile for no discernible reason. Things spiral out of control, and humanity's very existence lies in the balance.

Touch Time

R.E. Mason. Gatekeeper Press. \$21.99 paper (542p), ISBN 978-1-6629-5198-5; \$4.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-6629-5200-5

Amazon, Apple Books, Barnes & Noble, Google Play

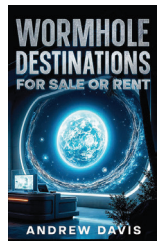
In *Touch Time*, a band of misfits struggles to survive on a hostile planet split between two dimensions. With Adrian threatening their world, their hope lies in a rumored sanctuary.

Villainsac

John Warwick. Gatekeeper Press. \$14.99 paper (398p), ISBN 978-1-6629-1634-2; \$9.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-6629-1635-9

Amazon, Apple Books, Barnes & Noble, Google Play

Villainsac, a 13th-century French village, hides dark secrets. A cursed chateau, mysterious vanishings, and an ancient decree send John Mortimer on a haunting journey. Book one of four.

Wormhole Destinations For Sale or Rent

Andrew Davis. Burton Mayers Books. \$14.99 paper (280p), ISBN 978-1-917224-09-3

Amazon, Blackwell, Foyles, Waterstones, Walmart

Molly never wanted to be an estate agent. The view from the window of a house for sale with her first employer blows her mind. And what is her second employer, E-R Realtors, selling?

Romance/Erotica**Black Moon Rising: Black Knights Inc. Reloaded**

Julie Ann Walker. Limerence Publications.



\$12.99 paper (300p), ISBN 978-1-950100-20-0; \$7.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-950100-19-4

Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Google Play, iBooks, IngramSpark, Kobo

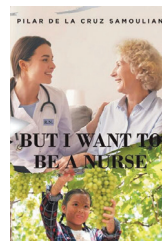
He's an adrenaline junkie who doesn't know when to quit. She's an FBI agent who does everything by the book. Are they destined for disaster, or love?

Nonfiction**The Business of Possibility: Re-Imagining Your Organisation**

John A. Wood. XlibrisAU. \$13.99 paper (162p), ISBN 979-8-3694-9217-8; \$3.99 e-book, ISBN 979-8-3694-9216-1

Amazon

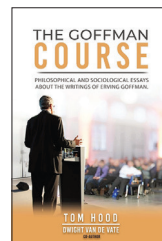
This guide explains the paradigm shift organizational leaders must make in the 21st century to create thriving and sustainable organizations in service to the common good. Read on!

But I Want to Be a Nurse

Pilar de la Cruz Samoulian. Authors' Tranquility Press. \$9.99 paper (178p), ISBN 978-1-964810-86-7

Amazon

A young Mexican girl overcomes abuse, hardship, and barriers to achieve her dream of becoming a nurse, proving that education and perseverance can change lives.

The Goffman Course

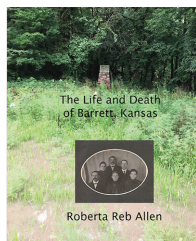
Tom Hood. Authors' Tranquility Press. \$12.99 paper (262p), ISBN 978-1-959930-54-9; \$3.99 e-book, ASIN BODFK74YNT

Amazon

Revised edition of *The Goffman Lectures*, expanded by applying Goffman's concepts to published biographies of four trans people.

The Life and Death of Barrett, Kansas

Roberta Reb Allen. Roberta Reb Allen. \$28.99

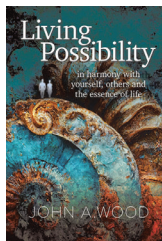


paper (248p), ISBN 979-8-218-58919-6

Amazon
The book follows the lives of pioneer Anna Reb, her family and the village of Barrett from 1890 to the

1960s.

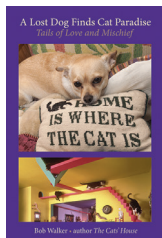
Living Possibility: In Harmony with Yourself, Others and the Essence of Life



John Wood. Xlibris Au. \$3.99 (162p), ISBN 978-1-6698-3025-2; \$11.99 paper (162p), ISBN 978-1-6698-3024-5

Amazon
This guide explains the source and solution to the day-to-day upsets that ail us all and how when we see from possibility, we can transform and be in harmony with ourselves, with each other, and with the essence of life.

A Lost Dog Finds Cat Paradise: Tails of Love and Mischief



Bob Walker. Bob Walker Photography. \$39.95 (92p), ISBN 979-8-9917424-0-5; \$29.95 paper (92p), ISBN 979-8-9917424-1-2

Amazon, IngramSpark

Discover how a starving, homeless puppy adopted The Cats' House, a feline fantasyland inhabited by ten frisky floor-to-ceiling cats.

The Magician's Daughter: A Memoir



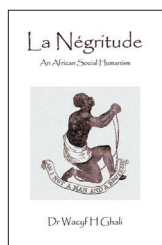
Katy Grabel, illus. by Mary Meade. Wild Rising Press. \$14.99 paper (244p), ISBN 978-1-957468-37-2

Katygrabel.com
Fourteen-year-old Katy joins her father, a former magician, on a tour to

revive his Las Vegas dreams. As tensions rise, she struggles with family conflicts and the spotlight's allure.

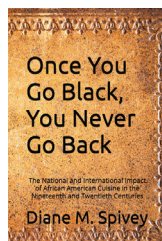
La Négritude: An African Social Humanism

Wacyf H. Ghali. iUniverse. \$16.99 paper (218p), ISBN 978-1-6632-6425-1; \$3.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-6632-6426-8



Amazon
Explore the rich cultural heritage and historical struggles of sub-Saharan Africa, and find a path to unity and growth without losing sight of its true essence.

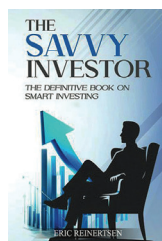
Once You Go Black, You Never Go Back: The National and International Impact of African American Cuisine in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries



Diane M. Spivey. Freedom Words International. \$21.99 (438p), ISBN 979-8-3053-9388-0; \$14.99 paper (438p), ISBN 979-8-3054-1967-2

Amazon
Achievement against the odds in the food service industry.

The Savvy Investor: The Definitive Book on Smart Investing



Eric Reinertsen. Book Authors Hub. \$15.99 (168p), ISBN 979-8-3097-1181-2; \$10.99 paper (170p), ISBN 979-8-3097-1975-4

Amazon, Barnes & Noble

The Savvy Investor is your comprehensive guide to mastering the art of investing. It provides practical strategies for conquering your financial goals and securing your future.

Stagehand: A Backstage Pass to My Life



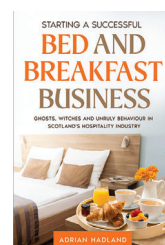
Stories
David Aretsky. BookBaby. \$22.49 paper (488p), ISBN 979-8-3509-7816-2; \$6.99 e-book, ASIN B0DRDQ5KV

Amazon, Barnes & Noble, BookBaby

After heartbreak, I reflect on 40 years backstage, working with Prince, Mick Jagger, Michael Jackson, and more. World travel scuba, cycling, and exploring. Life is an adventure!

Starting a Successful Bed and Breakfast Business

Adrian Hadland. Low Battery Books. \$9.99 paper

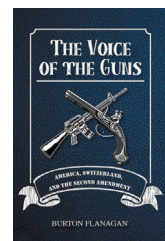


(200p), ISBN 978-1-0683370-0-0; \$3.19 e-book, ISBN 978-1-0683370-1-7

Amazon, IngramSpark
Set in a small town in Central Scotland, a first time B&B proprietor tells

a wry, enjoyable tale populated with quirky characters and an assortment of eccentric guests.

The Voice of the Guns: America, Switzerland, and the Second Amendment



Burton Flanagan. Authors Press. \$5.99 paper (24p), ISBN 978-1-64314-858-8

Amazon
This book analyzes the Second Amendment, its history, and compares U.S. gun laws to

Switzerland's, offering insights and conclusions on firearm legislation.

Who Banged the Big Bang!



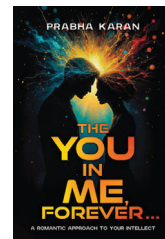
Prabha Karan. Prabha Karan. \$3.99 e-book, ISBN 978-969-649-274-0

Kobo

Who Banged the Big Bang! presents established facts and methodically

approaches the unknown, particularly the mysteries surrounding the Big Bang, infinity, and consciousness.

The You in Me, Forever...



Prabha Karan. Prabha Karan. \$1.99 e-book, ISBN 978-969-659-234-1

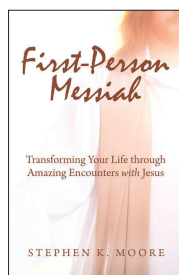
Kobo
This book offers insights into human relationships to help you feel more fulfilled. You will learn

how to strengthen your bonds with others and increase your happiness.

Religion/Spirituality

First-Person Messiah: Transforming Your Life Through Amazing Encounters with Jesus

Stephen K. Moore. WestBowPress. \$18.99



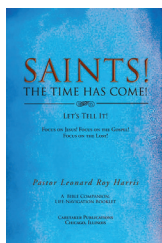
paper (204p), ISBN 978-1-9736-9954-5; \$3.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-9736-9956-9

Amazon

First-Person Messiah enables someone to see and experience the emotional and spiritual

impact Jesus had on people in his day—and to empower us to be transformed through his indwelling.

Saints! The Time has Come! Let's Tell It! Focus on Jesus! Focus on the Gospel! Focus on the Lost!



Leonard Roy Harris. XlibrisUS. \$19.99 paper (192p), ISBN 978-1-5144-2666-1; \$3.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-5144-2665-4

Amazon

This is a testimony of encouragement and

challenge. It is written for the busy saint who is on the go and may not have time to read many books.

Children's/YA

Awakening the Five Champions: Keys to Success for Every Teen



Brian E. Razzino. Razzino and Associates. \$15.99 paper (250p), ISBN 979-8-9917945-0-3; \$6.99 e-book, ISBN 979-8-9917945-1-0

Amazon, Atlantic Books, Barnes & Noble

Dr. Brian Razzino helps teens build confidence, resilience, and emotional well-being using the Five Champions: courage, creativity, empathy, love, and exploration.

Call of the Owl Woman: A Novel of Ancient



Peru

K.M. Huber, illus. by Katherine Lloyd. Sparkpress. \$17.99 paper (272p), ISBN 978-1-68463-304-3; \$12.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-68463-305-0

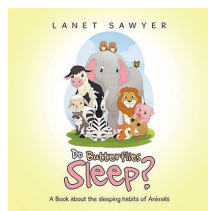
Barnes & Noble, Books-A-

Million, Bookshop.org

In sixth century Peru, 15-year-old Patya discovers her late grandmother's secret

legacy while facing a deadly drought and religious extremism.

Do Butterflies Sleep?: A Book about the Sleeping Habits of Animals



Lanet Sawyer.

XlibrisUS. \$14.99 paper (32p), ISBN 979-8-3694-0806-3; \$3.99 e-book, ISBN 979-8-3694-0805-6

Amazon

Lanet Sawyer, an artist and lifelong animal enthusiast, resides with her husband and two dogs. Her enduring passion for writing has reached its culmination in this book on animal sleeping behaviors.

The Dragon Codex: Quest for the Relics of Design



Design

David Block. David Block. \$22.99 paper (242p), ISBN 979-8-9910385-4-6; \$7.49 audio, ASIN B0DN85H5H3

Amazon

Join young dragons on a magical quest to save

creativity! The Dragon Codex blends adventure and graphic design for readers of all ages.

Forever We Dream



Mark Workman, illus. by Nicola Robson. Birdeto Books. \$12.99 paper (258p), ISBN 979-8-9898067-2-0; \$4.99 e-book, ISBN 979-8-9898067-1-3

Amazon, IngramSpark

In this captivating coming-of-age dramedy, the world's only conjoined triplets enter a televised music competition to find their long-lost mother.

Listen 'n' Learn Sound Stories



Ellen Hajek. Authors' Tranquility Press. \$14.99 paper (112p), ISBN 978-1-965075-23-4

Amazon

Listen 'n' Learn Sound Stories uses engaging stories, activities, and illustrations to help children associate sounds with letters, improving listening and phonics skills.

Neuralnet's Children

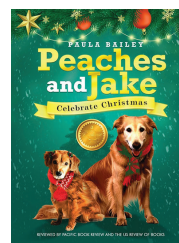


Andrew Davis. Burton Mayers Books. \$14.99 paper (288p), ISBN 978-1-8384845-6-9; \$3.99 e-book, ASIN B09ZH2GQYC

Amazon, Blackwell, Foyles, Waterstones, Walmart

Humanoid Als Simon and Alice are bullied by fellow pupils and their class teacher. With help from unexpected sources, can they use their remarkable abilities to defeat their enemies?

Peaches and Jake Celebrate Christmas

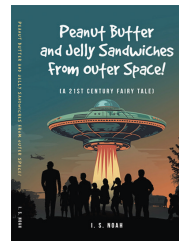


Paula Bailey. 1derfulife Publishing. \$12.99 paper (46p), ISBN 979-8-89395-829-4

Amazon, Barnes & Noble

Join Peaches the dog as she and her family embrace the joy and traditions of Christmas in this heartwarming children's tale.

Peanut Butter and Jelly Sandwiches From Outer Space!: A 21st Century Fairy Tale

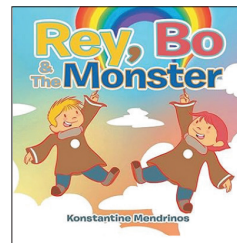


I.S. Noah. Fulton Books. \$18.95 paper (256p), ISBN 979-8-88731-691-8

AbeBooks, Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Books-A-Million

In a nearby reality, a hike in the forest turns into a mad adventure for four children and their parents, culminating in a riot at the president's Stop the Steal of Our Sasquatch rally.

Rey, Bo & The Monster: A Tale of Happiness



Konstantine Mendrinos. Page Solutions - Bluegrass Bound Books. \$11.99 paper (32p), ISBN 979-8-89633-014-1

Amazon

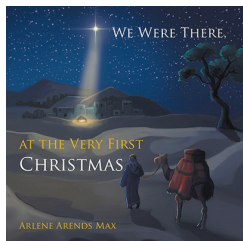
This enchanting children's book is a captivating story about two children who live in the clouds, whose task is to create happiness through their paintings.

Shades and Shadows (The Darklands #1)



Ashley Laster. Amazon.
\$9.99 paper (292p), ISBN
979-8-3059-2283-7;
\$4.99 e-book, ASIN
B0DRZ6TY9V
Amazon
After Ari overhears a
nurse forbidding roses,
she's determined to rid
herself of anxiety-induced hallucinations.
But Samael Lowood, a ghost with a smile
like winter, refuses to cooperate.

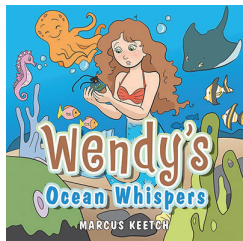
We Were There, at the Very First Christmas



Arlene Max. Xlibris
Us. \$9.99 paper
(24p), ISBN 978-
1-5434-7133-5;
\$3.99 e-book,
ISBN 978-1-
5434-7134-2
Amazon

Children will get to know Mary, Joseph, a
shepherd, and others who experienced the
birth of Jesus by hearing their words and
thoughts in rhyming verse.

Wendy's Ocean Whispers



Marcus Keetch.
XlibrisAU. \$13.99
paper (28p), ISBN
979-8-3694-
9124-9; \$3.99
e-book, ISBN
979-8-3694-
9123-2

Amazon

Join Wendy the scallop shell on her journey
as she is swept around the oceans and
rescued by a little girl called Sarah and
again by a pretty mermaid called Marla.

The Witch's Arcana



S.L. Vela. Corvus Books.
\$15.99 paper (374p), ISBN
979-8-218-57250-1;
\$9.99 e-book, ISBN 979-8-
218-57251-8
Amazon, Barnes & Noble,
Books-A-Million
Lyra, given a second

chance by an enchanted tarot card, must
confront her killer and find tarot cards
before he does. Her growing affection for
him complicates her quest to change fate.

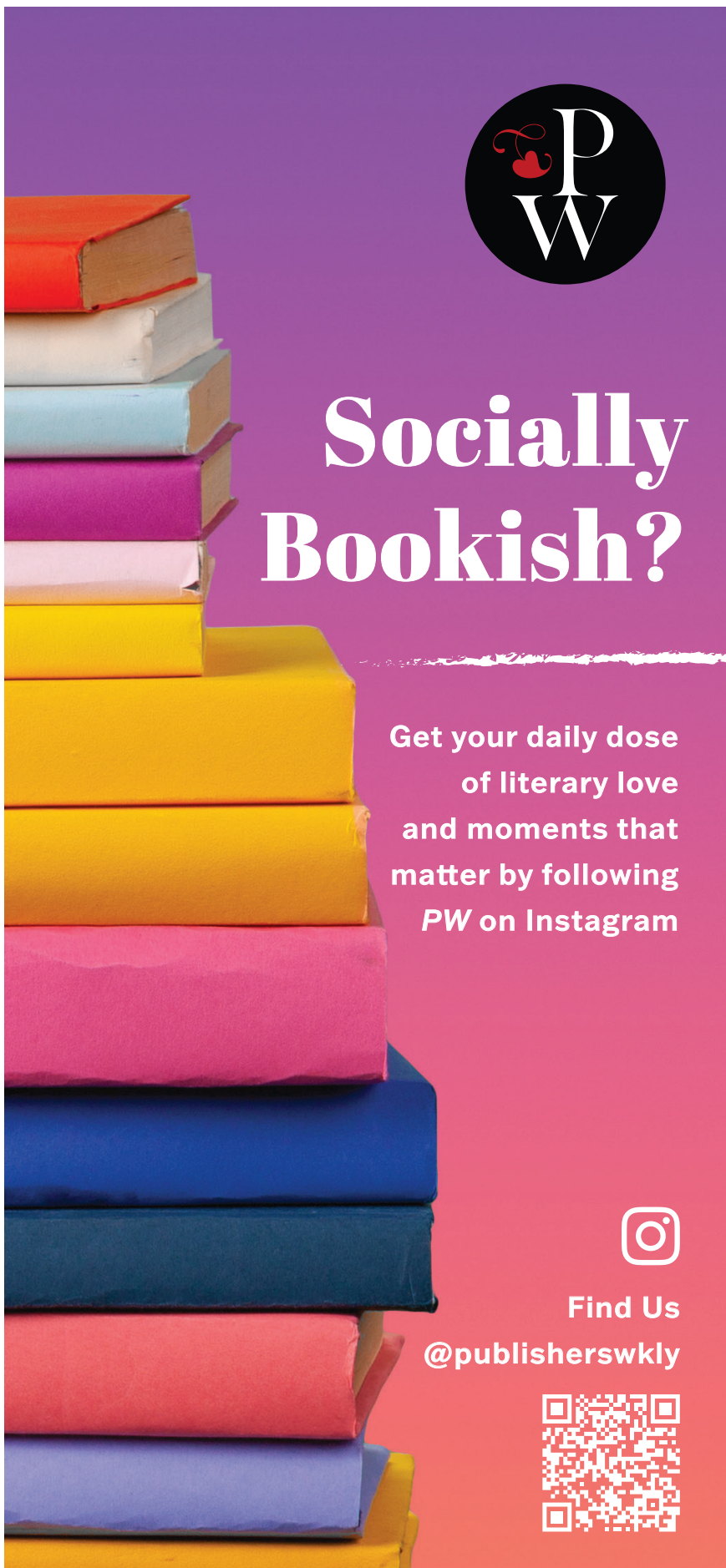


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COMICS & GRAPHIC NOVELS

EDITOR'S PICK

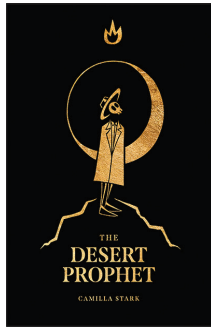
The Desert Prophet

Camilla Stark

168p, hardcover, \$39.99, ISBN 979-8-89704-589-1

With a loose style that blends cartoonish minimalism, stark expressionism, and an electric feel for spectral skeletons and desert nightscapes, artist and designer Stark tackles spirituality, the climate crisis, and the end of the world in this inviting debut. The story has the simplicity of a fable: a skeletal messenger of the Desert God, having forsaken his calling due to the people's failure to heed his message of impending crisis, must travel the arid waste to face the deity he once served.

The Prophet's trek is fraught with peril, featuring a ravenous beast bent on consuming everything in its path, a power-hungry rival spreading a corrupted message of the Desert God, and a doctor peddling death as an escape from despair. But the heart of the journey is the prophet's interactions with various mystical figures with their own ways of dealing with the collapsing world. Stark devotes



Highly original graphic novel of a skeletal god and wisdom in the wastes.

Great for fans of Sherwin Tjia's *Plummet*, Fabien Vehlmann and Kerascoët's *Beautiful Darkness*.

refusing to leave his post—are tinged with mystery.

But it's not all wrack and ruin. Another Prophet reveals a vision (a bravura surprise, rendered in one of Stark's few uses of color), and a Priestess acts as a savior and conscience in a tricky spot. Ultimately, our hero achieves his goal and gains an audience with the god he serves, and the lesson he learns, while not entirely surprising, proves not just wise and inspiring but persuasively earned. *The Desert Prophet* may unfold on an esoteric plane, but it pulses with resonance for mortals facing their own everyday wastelands.

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

FICTION

EDITOR'S PICK

Horrible Women, Wonderful Girls: A

Jaycee Grayson Novel

Julie Ann Sipos | Dartmouth Park

301p, e-book, \$0.99, ISBN 979-8-9919994-1-0

Sipos's sharp, irreverent narrative explores addiction, reinvention, and the chaos of toxic workplaces—all wrapped in biting wit and unpredictable turns. After a short stint at the Betty Ford Center, filmmaker Jaycee Grayson beats a hasty escape with the help of her high-powered attorney sister, Meredith. Her Hollywood career is in shambles thanks to an alcohol-fueled meltdown. Seeking redemption and a new start, she lands an unexpected opportunity at Wonderful Girls, a booming Wisconsin doll company. But Jaycee quickly discovers corporate backstabbing isn't exclusive to Hollywood.

The small-town setting of Jaycee's fresh beginning proves just as cutthroat, as her creative ideas are stolen before her first day on the job. The company's unseen founder, Happy Lindstrom, has sold out, leaving the business in the clutches of



Sharp tale of reinvention, with irresistible characters.

Great for fans of Kristin Hannah's *Fly Away*, Bailey White's *Quite a Year for Plums*.

ruthless twin sisters: Trudi and Tina. As Jaycee fights to reclaim her career, she also battles her alcoholic past, exposing riveting family dynamics that Sipos mines with grace. Jaycee's struggles link to Meredith's flaws and marriage challenges in an empathetic way. The intriguing web of new relationships introduced by her

move—including her entanglement with a police officer—adds welcome diversity to the story, particularly with Littleburgh's Mennonite and Hmong communities. The writing here is bold and inventive, tackling controversial topics with razor-sharp humor, unexpected lyrical sweeps, and striking chapter titles. Jaycee's growing attachment to the town's Hmong residents—descendants of Laotian guerilla fighters resettled in America after assisting US troops during the Vietnam War—adds cultural nuance, and Sipos's prose crackles with energy, packing more into a single sentence than some manage on an entire page. Readers will be eager for the sequel to this striking debut.

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

FICTION

EDITOR'S PICK

Silver Echoes: A Gold Digger Novel

Rebecca Rosenberg | Lion Heart Publishing

350p, e-book, \$4.99, ISBN 978-1-732-96997-1

Rosenberg (author of *Gold Digger*) mines the history of one of Colorado's most legendary families, bringing glorious life to the true story of Silver Dollar Tabor, daughter of Horace and Baby Doe Tabor. A performer with a burning desire to restore her family name after her parents' fortune collapses, Silver is determined to stay in Colorado but is instead forced to flee when a jealous rival accuses her of stealing a ring. Thus begins Silver's stormy journey, leading her to Chicago and immersing her in a world of decadence and deceit, all as she longs to reunite with Carl Erikson, the one man who understands her "tumultuous soul... [and] cared for her anyway."

Rosenberg vividly crafts early 20th-century life in this fictionalized account, surmising from historical research that Silver may have been suffering from dissociative identity disorder. As the story unfolds, Silver's alter ego, Echo—"a relic of [a] lonely childhood"—reawakens within her, instilling a newfound courage and



Dazzling reimagining of Silver Dollar Tabor's tumultuous life.

Great for fans of Stephanie Marie Thornton's *Her Lost Words*, Barbara Chase-Riboud's *The Great Mrs. Elias*.

strength, urging her to "push [the] limits" and aim for the stars. That development drives the chaotic, uncertain events that follow, which Rosenberg infuses with uncommon grace and ample space for her leading lady to grow. Enhancing Silver's journey is a dynamic supporting cast, both good and evil, each radiating their own electric energy—particularly the steely, guilt-ridden Baby Doe.

Rosenberg's lyrical prose captivates, and her meticulous research crafts a nearly flawless reimagining, spinning a convincing tale of Silver's legendary beauty amid her intense clashes with a frenzied inner energy. Rosenberg's Silver—based on preserved letters from the real Silver to her mother—tangles with tigers, navigates Chicago's seedy underworld, and fights against a harsh, uncaring world. Her deeply felt story will draw readers in from the first page, as Rosenberg skillfully immortalizes Silver's brilliant but troubled soul for the ages.

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

FICTION

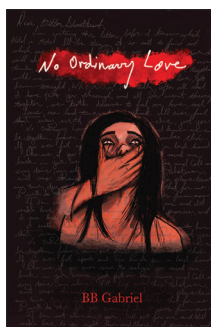
No Ordinary Love

BB Gabriel | Writing Brave Press

337p, trade paper, \$22.99, ISBN 978-1-0691213-0-1

Crafting a thoughtful and intense narrative from three different women's perspectives, Gabriel draws from her own experience in this fictionalized memoir of domestic violence. That charged intimacy powers a story that starts with therapist Gabbi, struggling through a family vacation that triggers memories of a violent past relationship. From there, flashbacks and alternating viewpoints build momentum, with 17-year-old Katee adjusting to a family move by jumping into the arms of a much older man, only to discover he is far from the haven she originally thought. At the same time, school counselor Alex is slowly falling apart, thanks to a dangerous ex stalking her every move.

The three women in Gabriel's novel endure terrifying trauma in the name of love: Gabbi has escaped and built a new life for herself, with a loving husband and reconnected family, but her flashbacks and triggers threaten to derail that success; Alex devotes herself to her students while slowly realizing that her ex, now out of jail,



A heartbreaking—but ultimately hopeful—story of domestic violence.

Great for fans of Lindsay Fischer's *The House on Sunset*, Leslie Morgan Steiner's *Crazy Love*.

Each woman in Gabriel's story harbors steely inner strength that manifests in remarkably different ways. Though the story is intense, it shines a light on the different methods abusers use to control their victims, from manipulating emotions to sexual trauma. Despite that heavy content, the narrative sparks glimmers of hope in its reminder to any victim that they are "not to blame and that [their] experience was not an individual one but part of a much bigger societal problem." That's a powerful—and timely—message for any reader.

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

ROMANCE

EDITOR'S PICK

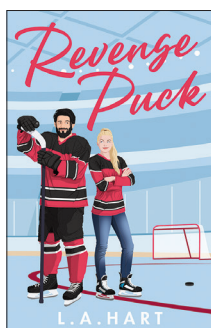
Revenge Puck

L.A. Hart | Editor's Choice Publishing

364p, e-book, \$4.99, ISBN 978-1-732-86499-3

Hart's first take in her Shot at Love series hatches a passionate sports romance from a reckless moment of revenge. Dumped by her hockey star boyfriend, Christian, the day before the championship playoffs, Elle searches out his biggest rival to snap a selfie with—and make Christian jealous. The intimidating Preston agrees but delivers much more than Elle expects, kissing her in front of the cameras and blowing up social media. When that turns into a fake relationship—and more trolling against Christian—fans are shocked: the notoriously private Preston doesn't date. But, as Elle uncovers the reasons driving Preston's secrecy, a spark forms—and Preston starts to think Elle may be worth breaking his rules.

Hart (author of the Mercy Academy series) immediately pulls readers in, building their sympathy for the endearing, relatable Elle, whose breakup with Christian is equal parts embarrassing and miserable. Elle's arc steers the plot, as she learns to forge her self-worth on more stable constructs than a hockey star's quicksilver



Revenge is sweeter than expected in this sports-fueled romance.

Great for fans of Tessa Bailey's *Fangirl Down*, Elle Kennedy's *The Deal*.

attention; her efforts at self-acceptance—buoyed by best friend Audrey, who delivers the perfect balance of humor and tough love—eventually net her the confidence to trust that Preston genuinely cares for her, though that's a long, challenging journey. Elle's eventual discovery of why Preston doesn't date—and the truth behind his guarded, brooding persona—hits closer to home than she expects, giving the couple a satisfying hurdle to overcome while distracted by their steamy meetups. Readers will savor the "enemy of my enemy is my friend" vibe that drives these two together, and, as the bad blood between Preston and Christian develops into something deeper, fans may discover their relationship is also worth cheering. Hart's skill at crafting her characters' human sides—and giving them what feels like very genuine, realistic problems to conquer—sets this romance apart.

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

BUSINESS & PERSONAL FINANCE

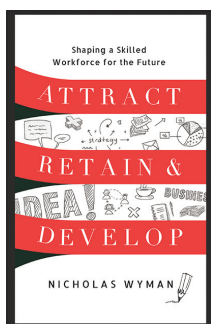
EDITOR'S PICK

Attract, Retain, and Develop: Shaping a Skilled Workforce for the Future

Nicholas Wyman | Greenleaf Book Group

288p, hardcover, \$28.95, ISBN 978-1-639-08121-9

This insightful guide from chef-turned-workforce-practitioner Wyman (author of *Job U*) lays out, in inviting yet practical terms, what it takes to find, keep, and encourage employees in a moment of "strained global supply chains and economic uncertainty." Wyman, founder of the Institute for Workplace Skills and Innovation Group, urges a balance between efficiency and flexibility, between creative disruption and ensuring that employees thrive. Throughout, he pairs of-the-moment understanding of the "upheaval and chaos" of the "Fifth Industrial Revolution" with a commitment to connecting with employees, mentoring and developing good workers over years, and maintaining a human touch in the face of automation. The clear-eyed advice draws on lessons from his early career, including memorable tales from his apprenticeship under German Executive Chef Klaus Lemm, but also of-the-moment guidance about evaluating talent. Especially persuasive: Wyman's case for the importance of observation in a relaxed setting during the interview phase, one of many processes



Fresh insights for hiring and nurturing talent in uncertain times.

Great for fans of Geoff Smart and Randy Street's *Who*, Daniel Chait and Jon Stross's *Talent Makers*.

that can't be replaced by AI applicant-sorting programs. These welcome perspectives on hiring, training, and actually encouraging employees to stick around include fresh takes on working with Gen Z employees who may not have received significant "training, support, and feedback" in Covid-era jobs. Wyman calls for real commitments to diversity, not just lip service, and skills-based training targeted to different abilities. He also drills down on employee expectations, such as desires for hybrid schedules and work-life balance, which must be coupled with any bid for productivity. Offering apprenticeships may be a good way to foster workforce development and continuing education, especially reskilling and upskilling, to keep teams prepared for inevitable industry shifts.

Wyman covers a lot with crisp, inviting prose and ample data and anecdotes: hiring, training, building pleasant offices, designing work schedules that meet the needs of diverse employees, and more. Yet it is the thoughtful, detailed discussions—and above all, the humane spirit—that make this a valuable guide for anyone invested in workforce development.

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

HISTORY & MILITARY

EDITOR'S PICK

Under Nazi Noses: How a Dutch Banker Heisted \$1 Billion to Fight Hitler

Erik Schaap, trans. from the Dutch by John Tepper

Marlin | Boissevain Books, LLC

300p, e-book, \$8.99, ISBN 978-1-963-63203-3

Marlin translates Erik Schaap's Dutch biography of Walraven van Hall, bringing this striking account of heroism during the Second World War into English. Walraven van Hall, a distant relative of Marlin, came from a wealthy family and, at the start of the Nazi occupation in the Netherlands, was working as a successful banker in Zaandam. As Nazi power rose, van Hall began raising funds for the families of Dutch sailors suffering under occupation, quickly expanding to a vast network that supported striking railroad workers, Jews in hiding, and the Dutch Resistance. Van Hall acted as the Resistance's "oilman," easing tense relationships across the country until, months before the war's end, he was betrayed and executed by the Germans.

Van Hall's story is one of unsung bravery, evident in the staggering sums he

*Rousing biography of a WWII leader of the Dutch Resistance.*

Great for fans of Tim Brady's *Three Ordinary Girls*, Halik Kochanski's *Resistance*.

funneled to support the Resistance—roughly one billion dollars in today's terms. He secured that capital through private fundraising, guarantees from the Dutch government-in-exile, and an audacious fraud scheme targeting the Dutch State Bank under Nazi control. Van Hall's meticulous records of the money's disbursement, all written in brilliant code that escaped Nazi attention, ensured each loan was repaid after the war ended.

Marlin (author of *Oxford College Arms*), carefully presents and edits van Hall's work, adding personal photographs, a family tree, and extensive endnotes to augment Schaap's biography. The institutions van Hall founded during the war continued briefly afterward to help aid recovery for the Netherlands—and to disburse the remainder of the collected funds. After the war, van Hall received posthumous recognition for his bravery from the Dutch, American, and Israeli governments. This is a lovingly wrought tribute, rich in historical context, to how "persistent, honorable, reasonable behavior can accomplish astonishingly good things."

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

MEMOIR

EDITOR'S PICK

Everything is NOT Peachey: One Woman's Pursuit of Happiness in the Face of Chronic Illness

Lisa Peachey | 5D Garden, LLC

186p, e-book, \$8.99, ISBN 978-1-962-19008-4

Everything is fine—until it isn't. For Peachey, life changed abruptly, but not overnight, when small, unexplainable symptoms—headaches, allergies, fatigue—gradually accumulated until she found herself dominated by constant worry and limitations. She lives as an "environmentally ill, chemically sensitive person living in the toxic landscape that is our modern world." A simple dinner out became daunting, while vacations and visits to friends and family presented insurmountable challenges. With candor, wit, and a commitment to showing what it's like "to feel helpless and alone when your doctor doesn't know how to help," Peachey shares the daily reality of life with Multiple Chemical Sensitivity, a condition often dismissed as whimsy that in truth has devastating health consequences.

Peachey paints this life with urgent clarity. Imagine having to leave a restaurant, party, or hotel because your face swells up and you're struggling to breathe. Or

*Candid, moving memoir of life with Multiple Chemical Sensitivity.*

Great for fans of Meghan O'Rourke's *The Invisible Kingdom*, Kate Grenville's *The Case Against Fragrance*.

having to request someone stop wearing perfume or change laundry detergents just so you can be near them. For Peachey, who is highly allergic to many smells and chemicals, these are all-too-familiar situations. Food choices, bath products, fragrances, and even friends must be scrutinized for her to be minimally comfortable, minimally normal.

As Peachey recounts her journey from years of misdiagnoses to the relief of finally understanding this wasn't all in her head to the adjustments she was forced to make in her everyday life, her writing is lively and inviting, offering a window into the complex, often invisible struggle of living with a condition that affects approximately 10% of the population. In vivid detail, Peachey brings her experience to life—at times, reading about her challenges can feel overwhelming. Yet, her story is also a hopeful guide for others facing the same affliction. Peachey encourages readers to "become their own advocates," to keep fighting even when answers seem elusive. Today, Peachey is "happy, healthy, and strong," a testament to her resilience and determination.

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

MEMOIR

EDITOR'S PICK

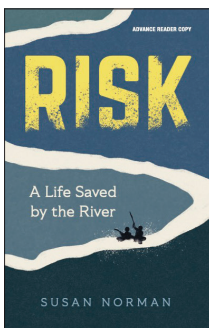
Risk: A Life Saved by the River

Susan Norman | She Writes Press

296p, mass market, \$17.99, ISBN 978-1-647-42924-9

Norman parallels the risks and rewards of parenting with her passion for whitewater paddling in this insightful debut. Sharing snapshots from her earliest years to her time as a parent—raising, and eventually adopting, her twin brother David's son, Seth—Norman draws insights as an adult looking back on a childhood that was marked by her mother's multiple sclerosis, her parents' divorce, and "weekend escapes to the river," realizing that her upbringing shaped her desire to "seize control of whatever part of living I could." That quality fosters Norman's thirst for whitewater kayaking and empowers her, at age 56, to parent a neurodivergent child who is struggling with emotional trauma and uncertainty.

Norman entwines the past and present with rich metaphors of navigating turbulent waters, describing parenting as "a long, tortuous path filled with small defeats and wins"—not unlike the slalom kayaking she pursues in her free time. "You must use setbacks and mistakes as opportunities for course adjustments," she writes, "while never losing focus on what awaits downstream." Other themes

*Insightful memoir of parenting, sacrifice, and giving yourself grace.*

Great for fans of Diana Welch et al.'s *The Kids Are All Right*, Jennifer Finney Boylan's *Stuck in the Middle with You*.

explored include familial sacrifice and seeking stability in hard times, whether that's a practice run on Gore Canyon that devolves into a near-disastrous misadventure or adjusting mid-life to the new rhythms that accompany first-time parenting.

The book's honesty is endearing and relatable, and readers from any background will connect with Norman's moments of doubt, when she candidly states, "I have no idea what in the hell I am doing." At every juncture, the hardships she faces test and reconstruct her perspective, teaching her to trust her instincts and give herself—and Seth—a hefty measure of grace. That involves seeking professional help at times, as Norman learns that "childhood trauma cannot be swept under the table." She closes with a gentle reminder that life's unexpected paths can be exponentially rewarding, encouraging readers to "embrace the process and then savor the resulting joy."

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

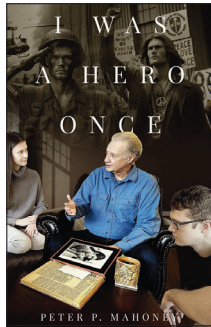
MEMOIR

I Was a Hero Once

Peter P. Mahoney | Atmosphere Press
265p, hardcover, \$26.99, ISBN 979-8-89132-398-8

With perspectives that can only come from a rich life of experience, Mahoney tells his urgent American story, a journey whose exploration of the concept of heroism takes us from a horrifying scene “of death in the bamboo grove in Vietnam” to impassioned anti-war activism, as one of the so-called “Gainesville Eight,” back on the home front, and then on into the life that followed, with stops in New Orleans, where he choked up delivering a speech at a protest, Russia, where he met his wife, and New York, in the early 1980s, serving on the New York Vietnam Veterans Memorial Commission, which built the city’s Lower Manhattan memorial. “Most people don’t do nuance,” he writes. The memorial is complex, Mahoney writes: it “does not glorify soldiers; it highlights the ordinariness of the individuals called upon to endure extraordinary circumstances in war.”

The same goes for *I Was a Hero Once*, a sometimes searing, always empathetic memoir that shares, with candor and insight, Mahoney’s life as “a Gump-like witness



Wise account of serving, protesting, and fighting to better one's country.

Great for fans of Bruce Dancis’s *Resister*, Eli Greenbaum’s *Hell No, We Didn’t Go!*

led to arrests—and trumped-up charges of inciting a riot. Mahoney’s clarifying, unsensational account of the trial and the machinations of both sides offers fascinating insight not only into the legal system of the era but also into how American society handles dissent. In the years after, Mahoney eventually settled in rural Vermont, a wildly changed man whose worldview is vastly different from the perspective of his youth. But he still sounds a startling warning for his country and its “extremist minority,” noting the failure of “great nations that failed to respect the ideals they were founded on.”

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

POETRY

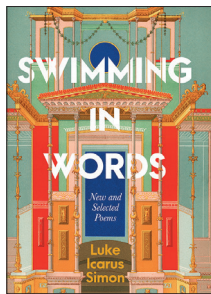
EDITOR'S PICK

Swimming in Words: New and Selected Poems

Luke Icarus Simon | Stirling Publishing Australia
186p, hardcover, \$26.99, ISBN 978-0-994-51828-6

Australian-Cypriot playwright, novelist, and poet Simon (author of *Lost in the Last Divided Capital*) delivers poignant and urgent mastery in this collection of 70 new and selected poems (some revised). *Swimming in Words* reaches across oceans, cultures, and languages to illuminate a life totally immersed in the euphoria and despair of being alive. “Desolation unfolds // I was so close to perfection,” Simon writes in “Clarity in Herrod Atticus Street,” demonstrating a central tension in the collection: the chasm of difference between expectation and reality. “Forgive me father // for what I have not become,” he writes in “Last Prayer,” addressing, with that “father,” a parent and God both over a wish unfulfilled.

Simon also depicts the plight of gay men in oppressive societies through landscapes of heartache, futile hope, and betrayal. “You and me?” he writes in “A Stale Kiss From Judas.” “There shall be no wedding // album // This is only an affair, no baptisms, no legal status,” since gay marriage is illegal in both their countries.



Inspired cross-cultural poems of mortality, migration, and queer love.

Great for fans of Omar Sakr; David Lehman.

Though a shared life of peace and comfort is impossible for the lovers in Simon’s poetry, they still try; in “Ravine,” Simon tells the story of two men from countries where homosexuality is a crime: “Understanding each other’s basic needs // They map out // Their own culture.” The eponymous “Swimming in Words,” a 4,000-word autobiographical epic, concludes Simon’s collection and unifies the mosaic of concepts and themes that the polyglot poet ponders throughout. Like the other entries, it catalogs real suffering, but it also reads like a hero’s journey, documenting and exemplifying a powerful human response to the world’s cruelties and complexities. Shouldering the burdens of homophobia, racism, and xenophobia in his dealings with the publishing industry, along with a terminal diagnosis, Simon portrays a life of trying and failing, over and over, while suggesting that to be able to try at all—and to create and tell urgent truths—is the triumph of existence.

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

Booksellers & Librarians:



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Every week, *Publishers Weekly* reviewers highlight self-published books that deserve your attention.

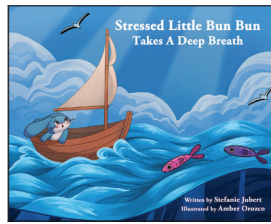
PICTURE BOOKS

EDITOR'S PICK

Stressed Little Bun Bun Takes a Deep BreathStefanie Jubert | Windy Sea Publishing, LLC
36p, hardcover, \$18.99, ISBN 978-1-956-27721-0

Jubert's therapeutic picture book debut follows Stressed Little Bun Bun, a darling blue-coated bunny whose challenges navigating life while suffering from anxiety are described in rhyming text: "Stressed Little Bun Bun is worried all day. / So many worries, they make him feel grey." His brother, Brave Mighty Bun Bun, is just the opposite; for him, "nothing is stranger than just sitting still," so while the bolder brother larks off on adventures, Stressed Little Bun Bun spends much of his time afraid for him. One day, while the two brothers build sand castles on the beach, Brave Mighty Bun Bun finds a treasure map and takes to the seas to claim his fortune. After waiting and worrying for hours, Little Bun Bun receives a note that says his brother is in trouble—and that he needs Little Bun Bun's help.

Fortunately, *Stressed Little Bun Bun Takes a Deep Breath* introduces a powerful technique that the protagonist—and readers—can turn to when facing anxiety:



Delightful tale of an anxious bunny learning to breathe and face fears.

Great for fans of Tom Percival's *Ruby Finds a Worry*, Scott Magoon's *Breathe*.

challenge—from buzzing bees to snowy peaks—with a clear head and a calm heart.

Written in verse with interactive prompts, Jubert's debut is an excellent read-aloud option, especially for anxious kids, and the high drama of its storyline will keep children engaged for repeat readings. (That said, some couplets feel strained to fit the irregular meters.) Amber Orozco's adorable illustrations enliven and adorn the tale, gorgeously depicting both the adventure and the feelings of the big-eyed, floppy-eared, surprisingly courageous hero. Little Bun Bun's story teaches that worrying does not equal weakness, and that with a couple of useful tools, we can breathe, take five, and persevere.

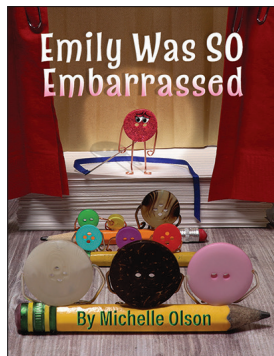
Cover: **A-** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **A** | Editing: **A-** | Marketing copy: **A-**

PICTURE BOOKS

Emily Was SO EmbarrassedMichelle Olson | Bellie Button Books, LLC
34p, hardcover, \$22.95, ISBN 979-8-9860472-6-3

Olson's one-of-a-kind picture book for young children introduces an anthropomorphic button named Emily who learns to overcome embarrassment, work to achieve what she loves, and follow her heart. Like many kids, Emily loves to dance, twirling with a long blue ribbon flowing gracefully behind her—but she only enjoys this expressive hobby in the privacy of her bedroom, where no one can see if she makes a mistake. That changes when her best friend Becky asks her to perform alongside her in the talent show, making Emily anxious. "I don't think I can dance with so many buttons watching," she laments. "I might mess up."

With Becky's encouragement—and a lot of practice—Emily builds the confidence to perform, and on the day of the show, everything is going well until she trips on her ribbon and falls. Anyone who has felt the hot sting of humiliation will relate to Emily's blunder and admire her for having the courage to get up and finish her dance.



Inspiring story of a button learning to overcome embarrassment.

Great for fans of Elizabeth Estrada's *I Choose to Try Again*, Angela DiTerlizzi's *The Magical Yet*.

a welcome tactile touch. A shiny pink button with wide, expressive eyes and twisty metal arms, Emily dances in a room lined with puffy paint bottles, crayon boxes, and spools of thread, and her bed is a tiny pink box with a fluffy cotton ball for a pillow. The talent show is held in a drawer that also contains thumbtacks, pencils, and a flashlight, and the stage is a stack of notecards. This unexpected setting will delight young readers, who will cheer for and learn from Emily.

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

PICTURE BOOKS

Holidayville's Lucky Easter SurpriseRenita Bryant | Mynd Matters
48p, hardcover, \$20.99, ISBN 978-1-963874-06-8

Holidayville's annual Easter egg hunt has finally arrived, and young Imani is determined to find the coveted golden egg and net herself a feature in the town's local newspaper. With the help of her two best friends, Chase and Kayla, Imani searches high and low, desperately seeking the egg that's rumored to hold "a prize beyond imagination." But their efforts prove in vain—until they wander away from the crowds and stumble upon Lucky the Leprechaun, who is sneaking a quick nap in his pot of gold. When Lucky wakes up—and worries that the kids are after his gold—he quickly transports himself back home to Leprechaun Land, accidentally taking Imani and co. with him.

Bryant (author of *Santa's Holiday Mix-Up*) weaves a lively story with plenty of fun twists and turns, from leprechauns and their pots of gold to whimsical tooth fairies flitting about a strange new land. Amid all the excitement, important lessons abound—including the value of setting a goal and working together with others to accomplish it. Imani, Chase, and Kayla are an ideal team, easily cooperating and cheering each other on, and that camaraderie and kindness spell big rewards for



Fun Easter egg hunt transforms into a magical adventure.

Great for fans of Teresa Bateman's *The Leprechaun Under the Bed*, Gabby Dawney's *Through the Fairy Door*.

at every turn as well as the sparkling charm of Leprechaun Land. Leaving young readers with the uplifting idea that "everything is possible," Bryant showcases the wonder and beauty that can be found in the world and within one's own town, proving that a cheerful attitude—and a little luck—goes a long way.

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

steady, deliberate breathing. "Wiggle, wiggle, wag your nose," the bunny says to himself: "Three quick sniffs, then breathe out slow." Then, with newfound confidence, Stressed Little Bun Bun braves stormy seas and treacherous mountains. Jubert makes clear that this "new superpower" isn't a one-time fix, as Little Bun Bun repeatedly turns to it, facing each

Kids will be encouraged by the uplifting reactions of Emily's friends when she steps off stage, as it turns out, no one cared about her mistake. This will help kids see that they don't have to be perfect to pursue their passions.

What makes this book stand out is the unique illustrations, which utilize real-life craft supplies to bring Emily's world to life,

the trio. Lucky plays a role in their good fortune as well, and their teamwork ensures their return to Holidayville with special memories of new friends, experiences, and, of course, the shiny golden egg.

The bright, buoyant illustrations by Sandra Figueras capture the magic surrounding beloved holiday traditions, evoking Holidayville's bubbly town spirit

YOUNG ADULT

EDITOR'S PICK

Colony

Ron Wolff

388p, e-book, \$7.99, ISBN 978-1-941035-17-7

Wolff creates a riveting epic that balances coming-of-age angst with science fiction thrills in this intricately plotted YA debut. Seventeen-year-old Adam, son of Mission Commander David Flynn, was the first person born on Mars. Having grown up at Hellas Station around a handful of adult scientists, he's excited to finally meet other kids when the Starship Horizon—transporting 79 new colonists—arrives. But some of those kids are not what Adam expects: as the cream of the crop from Earth, they are arrogant and entitled, especially Conrad and Constance, twin children of the officious Colonel Griggs, Starship Horizon's Commanding Officer, who, upon arrival, promptly takes over the station.

Unsurprisingly, the fresh Earth colonists and seasoned Mars dwellers don't mix well. Wolff takes time developing Adam's feelings of wonder and anticipation as he assesses how his life will drastically change with the new arrivals, while also tightly



Suspenseful SF pits teens against alien bugs on Mars.

Great for fans of David Macinnis Gill's *Black Hole Sun*, Jonathan Maberry's *Mars One*.

building tension as conflict grows between the station's scientists and the newcomers. That dynamic swiftly amplifies when the bodies of two scientists—who were exploring the caverns under the dormant volcano Hadriacus Mons—are discovered. Wolff ups the ante with the appearance of an

invasive and ravenous alien insect species: the base is quickly infiltrated, 43 colonists go missing, and it falls to Adam to step up and lead the other children to the safest place possible—the station's Core.

Wolff skillfully captures how teenagers talk, tease, and test limits but can also pull together when the need arises. As the menacing alien bugs spread and Griggs grows more unhinged, Adam moves further into a leadership role, though he's continually surprised at the Earthlings' callousness toward protocol and logic, prompting him at one point to proclaim "There's no vacation here...You can't escape your work. And you can't escape Mars." That sharp sense of urgency drives this inventive tale, keeping readers hooked until the very last page.

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

YOUNG ADULT

Mars High School: The Olympians, Book 1

J. Sandrock | Mariner Valley Publishing

411p, e-book, \$3.99, ASIN B0D4RV5FV7

The first of Sandrock's Mars High School series—set in 2354—blends high school drama with Martian adventure, as bright student Andie Ellis comes of age in a Mons-Plex—an underground colony designed to protect humanity from Mars's harsh environment. When a seismic event disrupts life in the colony, Andie and her best friend, Aiyana, stumble onto an underground chamber they nickname the Pocket, filled with ancient artefacts, cryptic warnings about Ghosts of Lake Michigan, and mysterious Latin inscriptions. Joined by their friends Ric, Reillee, and Sitara, the group embarks on a thrilling quest that uncovers an abandoned settlement and long-buried secrets—all while balancing the everyday pressures of academics and adolescence.

Sandrock portrays the Martian society as wide-ranging and diverse, blending Aiyana's Diné heritage and Sitara's Indian background with evolving Martian traditions. Celebrations like Halloween and Krampus-nacht, along with competitive rivalries—the K-Bowl face-off between the Olympians and Legionnaires, low-gravity



Fun SF adventure of Mars teens and chilling secrets.

Great for fans of Kass Morgan's *The 100*, Riley Redgate's *Alone Out Here*.

sports like Bullseye-Handball—make the setting both futuristic and relatable. The characters are vibrant and multi-dimensional, led by the ever-inquisitive Andie, whose curiosity and leadership evolve as she uncovers Mars's hidden past. Mr. Stein, Andie's eccentric yet insightful science teacher, fosters this spirit of

discovery, encouraging his students to question and explore. Meanwhile, a strangely smart school cat named Ares communicates with Andie, contributing to the group's critical discoveries.

As Mons-Plex recovers, Sandrock depicts the return of life to a new normal, of sorts, as citizens go about their daily lives while contemplating the possibility of the planet's largest volcano, Olympus Mons, reawakening. The discovery of a preserved body marks a turning point, shifting the story from a scientific mystery into a deeply personal quest for Andie. This is a captivating launch to a new series, weaving exploration, friendship, and self-discovery into a tale that promises even greater adventures and deeper mysteries in the next installment.

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



Reviews

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

FICTION

Chrysanthemum Under the Waves

Maggie Umber. Maggie Umber, \$35 trade paper (284p) *ISBN 979-8-218-41076-6*

Umber (*Sound of Snow Falling*) presents nine unsettling graphic shorts that delve into darkness, grief, and the author's fascination with James Harris, a demonic figure from a 17th-century ballad. The collection eschews a standard comics-style narrative in favor of evoking an eerie and contemplative vibe, through ephemeral black and gray story fragments and portraits. In "Rine," a faceless man and woman marry in an abandoned Victorian mansion before the man fades into shadow, leaving the woman alone. A woman on a ship falls in love with a cloven-footed man in "The Devil Is a Hell of a Dancer," only to drown in the sea on which they sail. A ghost rows a lonely, lost woman in a small boat in "The Rock." Harris haunts the collection, showing up as a suit-clad suitor, a dapper lover, and the devil himself. Umber's gestural sketches with gothic tones add to the spectral atmosphere. Fans of Frank Gogel's *Grief* anthology will find a comfortable discomfort here.

Crockettville

Matthew Minson. TLOED, \$5.99 e-book (320p) *ISBN 979-8-9854717-7-9*

Minson (*Sun City*) delivers a heartfelt and hilarious story of greed, environmental protection, and small-town life in West Texas. Dave Crockett, acquisitions agent for Enroxx Energy, is no fan of the outdoors and the suffocating Texas heat, so he's dismayed when he's dispatched to the state by his eccentric boss, Dick Dunlap. Dick, a nudist who's often naked at the Houston office, erroneously believes Dave is descended from the famous frontiersman of the same last name and insists on calling him Davy. Dave's mission: purchase the sleepy desert town of Crockettville, Tex., which has the most consistent wind currents in America, and where Enroxx plans to install wind turbines. Dave eventually learns to appreciate the landscape's charms—including a crystal-clear swimming hole and wondrous night sky free from light pollution—and bonds with café owner Bettie, maker of an addictive fried apricot pie, along with

beautiful biodiversity researcher Angie and stoic Native American Geronimo, a direct descendant of the Apache warrior, who watches over the town with his donkey, Biden Trump. After an Enroxx engineer reveals the company's true motives for the site, which would devastate the town, Crockett tries to intervene. Infused with deadpan humor and stocked with appealing characters, Minson's witty tale builds to a stirring environmental rallying cry. This is sure to put a smile on readers' faces.

Finding Isobel

Mary Behan. Laurence Gate, \$15 trade paper (268p) *ISBN 978-1-7344943-6-5*

Behan (*A Measured Thread*) delivers an immersive story of a woman's search for answers about her birth. In rural Wisconsin, Isobel Babić receives an unexpected inheritance of \$50,000 from the woman for whom she was a full-time caregiver. Isobel, who was raised in Canada, delays her plan to start veterinary school and flies to New Zealand to visit her adoptive parents, Novak and Christina, who live there now, and get answers about the circumstances of her adoption. Novak, who was born in Yugoslavia, discloses that Isobel is the daughter of his brother, Toma, who arranged for a woman to bring Isobel to Canada from Sarajevo after his wife, Amela, was killed during the Bosnian war. Though Novak's acquaintances in Bosnia told him that Toma died in the war, Isobel flies to Sarajevo to meet with Gordana, the woman who brought her to Canada, and discovers some startling information about her birth parents. Behan expertly traces the complex web of relationships surrounding an adoption and Isobel's conflicted emotions upon uncovering her family's secrets. This will move readers.

Impossible People

Anna Lyndsey. Rootling, \$15.98 trade paper (456p) *ISBN 978-1-7384119-0-0*

Lyndsey (*Girl in the Dark*) captures the horror of having one's chronic illness dismissed by others in her scattershot latest. After Tom Jenkins, a British PhD student in physics, starts experiencing headaches and nausea, he takes part in the psychology department's study of

self-described "reactors," people who believe they have electromagnetic hypersensitivity. Tom comes to believe that he's a reactor, too, when he notices the symptoms lift as he spends time away from campus, which has just installed a high-powered Wi-Fi system. After many reactors drop out of the study, Tom and his psychologist friend Kevin band together to report on its problems. When their concerns are brushed under the rug and Tom's girlfriend dumps him, claiming he's imagining his condition, he retreats to the countryside and joins a camp of fellow reactors. As he recuperates, he hatches plans for an experiment that will prove what they're enduring is real. Rigorous discussions between Tom and the others about the scientific method throttle narrative momentum as the plot veers from Tom's inner turmoil to hints of a far-reaching conspiracy. Still, Lyndsey paints a realistic picture of what it means to cope with a condition that is not recognized as a medical diagnosis, but which still has the power to shape one's life. It's a provocative tale.

It's a Lot to Unpack

Dina Honour. Scylla, \$11.99 trade paper (272p) *ISBN 979-8-9891100-0-1*

In this humorous and tender memoir, Honour (*There's Some Place Like Home*) recounts her life as a reluctant expat in Europe. New York City and "my personality were so co-dependent that I had no idea where it ended and I began," Honour writes, recalling her shock at her husband's proposal that they move with their two kids from Brooklyn to Cyprus for his work in 2008. At the time, Honour had lived in New York for 20 years, and she feared what she'd find if she had to reexamine her sense of self. But the offer was a "career unicorn" for her husband, so she agreed to pack up. Honour writes with quick wit and bruised candor about her rocky first few months in Cyprus, during which she moped and struggled to adapt to the relaxed pace of life. Then, with equal panache, Honour illustrates how, as her husband's work whisked them to Copenhagen and then Berlin, she learned to extricate her self-worth from being a "New Yorker" or an "expat," and came to appreciate the resilience that the

family's new lifestyle fostered in her and her children. This will resonate with anyone who's had to redefine themselves under unexpected circumstances.

The Jericho Manuscript

Julian Doyle. Chippenham, \$13.81 mass market (266p) *ISBN 979-8-386292-46-1*

Doyle (*The Assassination of Mary Magdalene*) puts his knowledge of the Gospels to good use in this intriguing Sherlock Holmes pastiche. In 1901, Watson's friend and former war comrade, the Rev. David Adams, asks for his help in getting Holmes to go to the scene of a suspicious death. The victim is Canon Alfred Lilly, a friend of Adams's, who was found in his study with a fatal knife wound in his neck. On Lilly's desk is a scrap of paper with a partial passage from the Gospel of Mark about Jesus's journey to Jericho. Holmes quickly proves that Lilly didn't take his own life, as the police suspect, and develops a theory that his murder was related to his translation of an ancient manuscript preserved in a Paris church. The mystery deepens when Holmes ascertains that the fragment Lilly had composed varies from the accepted text of the Gospel of Mark and includes details about what happened in Jericho that had been kept secret for centuries. The investigative trail leads to another murder and more shocking discoveries that call Church doctrine into question. Doyle seamlessly combines a sturdy understanding of Holmes's specific skill set with the giddy puzzle-solving of a Dan Brown thriller. It's great fun.

The Lazarus Key

Rachel Aukes. Waypoint, \$15.99 trade paper (392p) *ISBN 978-1-956120-04-2*

Aukes (the Redline Corps series) successfully tweaks the *Jurassic Park* formula in this intricate sci-fi thriller about a plot to revive extinct species. Sam Brodie, a federal wildlife officer, is called to Yellowstone National Park to investigate reports of an unusually large cat roaming the area. Brodie and a colleague find and kill the animal; afterward, Brodie notices that its massive teeth resemble those of the extinct saber-toothed tiger. She reports her findings to her superiors, and the case gets shunted to the Wilderness and Animal Special

Protection team, or WASP, a task force that "works the weird stuff" in America's wilderness. As more evidence of living prehistoric carnivores surfaces across the region, Brodie gets reassigned to WASP to help unravel the mystery. Flashbacks reveal that the creatures are part of a business initiative by billionaire Marc Angel, who hopes to charge people for the opportunity to hunt the beasts or watch them battle each other. Soon Angel and his corporation are clashing with Brodie and her colleagues, with deadly results. Aukes takes the time to fully develop his characters while still providing enough action to keep the pages flying. A sequel would be welcome.

Ranch Dressing: A Samantha Kidd Mystery

Diane Vallere. Polyester, \$5.99 e-book (272p) *ISBN 978-1-954579-93-4*

In this solid cozy from Vallere (*Gilt Trip*), former fashion buyer Samantha Kidd probes a murder at a New Jersey dude ranch. Samantha and her husband, Nick, have traveled from Philadelphia to join her father-in-law, Nick Sr., at the Down Home Ranch for a weeklong stay. Nick Sr. is toying with the idea of purchasing the property from its current owner, Joey Baldwin. Samantha hopes to take it easy, but her plan goes awry when she discovers Baldwin's bludgeoned corpse in an empty horse stable. The situation triggers Samantha's investigative instincts, and, despite the local sheriff's warning to stay out of the case, she starts investigating staff members, Baldwin's widow, and other suspects. Vallere approaches the material—and Samantha's narration—with a light touch; the gumshoe makes her grim discovery because she learned from "six seasons of *Yellowstone*" that horses shouldn't be wandering a farm alone at night. When the solution comes, it's clever and satisfying. Readers in the mood for a low-stakes whodunit will be charmed.