

APRIL 14, 2025

booklife®

— YOUR GUIDE TO SELF-PUBLISHING —

- 12 New BookLife Titles Reviewed

‘An Incredible Journey’

A peek into the making of *The Book: The Ultimate Guide to Rebuilding Civilization*

BY KAREN CLARK

It was the early days of the Covid-19 pandemic, and Seva Batischev, the cofounder of the creative collective Hungry Minds (along with Timur Kadyrov) felt a spark of inspiration. Batischev and his wife were exploring the vacant streets of Naoshima Island in Japan, a place famed for its art museums, and they began contemplating some big questions: ‘What if this really is the end? What would be left of humanity if we don’t make it through this?’ The result was *The Book*, an indie passion project that has garnered a worldwide following for its ingenuity and sumptuous presentation. Batischev spoke with BookLife about the origins of the project.

What was the process for creating *The Book*?

When the idea struck to create a book to guide future generations in rebuilding civilization, we began brainstorming. What would the book contain? How would we make it? We were fortunate to find an exceptionally talented artist, Lev Kaplan, to help us shape the visual style. At that point, we were just having fun with the process. We didn’t expect much financially; our optimistic goal was to raise \$300,000. For us, it wasn’t about the money but the joy of creating something meaningful in a time of uncertainty.

By the end of the fundraiser campaign, we raised over \$3 million between Kickstarter and Indiegogo. This success allowed us to dedicate ourselves to the project full-time, hiring experts from a variety of fields and expanding the team. Over the next year and a half, we held countless discussions, refining the book’s content and visuals. Every decision was carefully debated; every choice was made with intention.



From *The Book* by the creative collective Hungry Minds

Looking back, what makes *The Book* special is the love and dedication poured into it by a truly diverse and international team. Everyone brought their passion and unique perspective, and that’s what makes the book resonate with so many people.

Is *The Book* intended to literally live up to its subtitle—“The Ultimate Guide to Rebuilding Civilization”—or is it more of a beautiful, artistic object to admire?

When discussing the book, we always saw it as an artifact, not just a practical guide or encyclopedia. There are already plenty of analytical books that explain how things work. What we wanted was an experience for the reader, a sense of interaction with the book. We wanted them to feel they were holding something unusual, perhaps even mystical.

Let's talk about the stunning illustrations. What themes, styles, or references shaped the vision?

From the beginning, we wanted them to feel timeless and extraordinary. Great credit for the illustration style goes to our art director, Lev. He captured something remarkable, finding a delicate balance that is simultaneously practical, understandable, and visually unique. His style blends the intricate detail of medieval engravings with modern touches and contemporary techniques.

The process of creation was a journey. We chose themes—concepts and inventions we felt were essential to humanity's story. We researched them thoroughly, consulting experts to ensure accuracy. Once we had the foundation, we gave the ideas to Lev and his team. They'd produce initial sketches, which we reviewed and refined together. This process took weeks, sometimes months.

We wanted every illustration to feel alive; there's more to discover each time you look at it. The book contains many riddles and puzzles to solve. Even I, one of its creators, find new details in it to this day. Sometimes I notice a tiny element added by an illustrator that we never discussed, or a sentence or joke that only makes sense over time.

We add small updates with every new print run. We don't always announce these changes, but we feel this makes the book come alive. It interacts with its audience;

we listen and incorporate feedback from readers. These subtle touches are noticeable to those who engage with the book attentively.

The Book can be seen as a collection of recipes for reconstructing humanity's greatest accomplishments and inventions.

How did you select what was most important to include?

Jotting down hundreds of ideas, we created a massive list of inventions and concepts we felt essential to preserve for future civilizations. Then, we began the difficult process of narrowing it down to 200 entries.

Each decision to remove something was agonizing. Every time we thought, "This can't be excluded" or "This is too important to leave out," it added to the challenge.

Ultimately, we had to make firm decisions about what to include and set aside the rest. Many of the ideas that didn't make it into the first book will form the basis for our next project, *The Last Book*, which will focus more on humanity's cultural aspects.

Who would you consider your target audience? How are you positioning the book in your marketing efforts?

The ideal audience is anyone who is deeply curious and loves to be amazed. As we grow older, many of us lose the ability to marvel at the world around us. Our goal is to reignite that sense of wonder. 🌍

Karen Clark is a writer and editor who owned an antiquarian bookshop on Manhattan's Upper West Side for over a decade.

Q&A SPONSORED

BookLife Talks with Steven Gibson

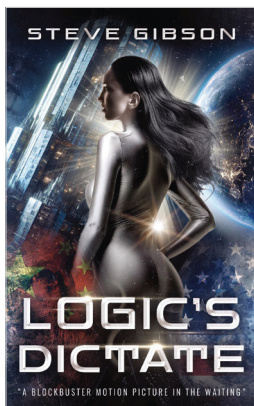
Gibson's debut novel, *Logic's Dictate*, mixes several genres to explore a future in which Earth is poised to join a peaceful intergalactic contingent after such feats as Russia's peaceful democratization and the uniting of the Koreans. But China's aggression could still throw a wrench in the works. We spoke with Gibson about his writing.

What inspired you to start writing?

I thought that I had both a compelling story and some serious messages to convey. I was also disappointed with some of the books I'd recently read and thought I could improve upon the state of the art.

You're a lawyer with a political science background. How much did that help when building the world of *Logic's Dictate*?

It was critical. The logical thinking pattern instilled by my legal training was important. My



background in studying political history was also useful. That being said, my informally gained knowledge through a lot of reading—and then thinking about that reading—was probably the most important. It's interesting, I learn as much from newspapers as I do from many sources.

Your book hits a lot of genres—thriller, sci-fi, romance. How do you balance the expectations that come with each?

I don't. I just hope the reader enjoys the story and that the messages resonate.

Why or how do you think *Logic's Dictate* is particularly relevant now?

We need to come together as a world. I hope *Logic's Dictate* helps foster that growth.

Can readers expect a sequel?

It's on the way.

For more, visit booklife.com/gibson

Spring is here for a reason:

bloom anew with these bestsellers that quench your mind's roots!



Whose Coffee Is It?

by Perry Seese
"Age brings change, sooner or later. Life brought it later to me."



Playing Hurt

by Gerald L. Nardella
"There's something all wrong with the system we have."



The Book of Life

by Michael Sandos
"Create new vibrations for you to grow and develop yourself."



Big Foot

by Michele Wallace Campanelli
"The only real monster in this life is greed."



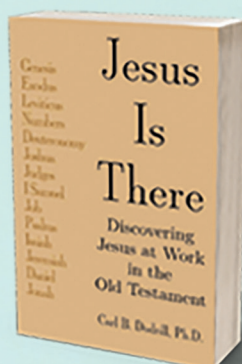
A Very Powerful Gift

by Pamela Elges Roesler
"Stewart had a serious problem. He was afraid to jump."



To the Faithless

by Kevin Garrett
"He knew that every decision ever made came down to only two choices, either good or evil."



Jesus Is There

by Carl B. Dodrill Ph.D.
"So the last will be first, and the first will be last."



A Roof Over Our Heads and Food on the Table

by Ted J. Brooks
"All that mattered to him was seeing hope."



Washington D.C. Please Don't Hurt Me

by Alila Barreras
"Will Justice help to defeat evil? Powers of Good and Powers of Evil."



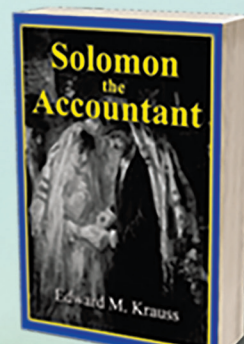
Biblical And Non-biblical Evidences For The Book Of Mormon

by Joseph Dean Debarthe
"He never changes; therefore, He never disagrees with Himself."



THE WIFI DEVOTIONAL

by Merrilynn West
"Living in thankfulness is living in a consistent awareness of what God has given you."



Solomon the Accountant

by Edward M. Krauss
"Solomon held out his hands, his palms up toward her, a gesture of total surrender."



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

PICTURE BOOKS

⚡ EDITOR'S PICK

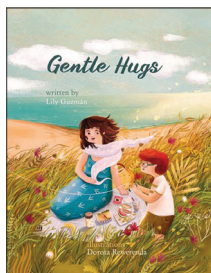
Gentle Hugs

Lily Guzmán | Bookbaby

32p, trade paper, \$14.99, ISBN 979-8-992-00721-3

Guzmán's encouraging picture book debut centers on a challenge families too often face: how to love, care for, and support each other even as a parent endures health issues. Alex is an energetic kid who loves spending time with his mom and canine sidekick, Nico. But while "on some days, Alex's mommy was happy and smiling," on others "Alex's mommy didn't feel so good." Alex's mom has a chronic illness or condition that prevents her from playing with Alex as much as he would like; sometimes "her body is hot like the sun," and at others "her body is tired like she was running up a hill." Part of Alex's growth is learning to accept his mother's condition as it is.

Though her body tires, Alex's mother's love remains unwavering. On days when she is unable to play with him, she finds other ways to show her love and attention. Guzmán's picture book shines in its depiction of compromise; though life sometimes



Big-hearted picture story of a boy's acceptance of his mother's chronic illness.

Great for fans of Nathalie Slosse's *Big Tree Is Sick*, Maudie Smith's *My Must-Have Mom*.

Nico, builds a cardboard castle.

Dorota Rewerenda's illustrations brim with personality and vibrancy, bringing Alex's story to life on every page. Her attention to detail is inspired, and there are plenty of visual clues and cues to engage young readers, such as the thought bubbles she often includes for Alex's dog, Nico. Guzmán's *Gentle Hugs* may be targeted to families with parents with disabilities, but with its masterful illustrations and valuable lesson, it's a tender, worthwhile addition to any family's library.

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

PICTURE BOOKS

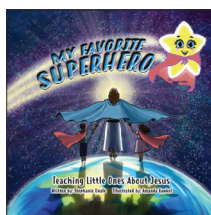
My Favorite Superhero: Teaching Little Ones About Jesus

Stephanie Unale | True Light Books

44p, mass market, \$14.99, ISBN 979-8-218-52804-1

Introducing young readers to the teachings, miracles, and parables of Jesus, this Christian children's picture book shines a unique perspective on the Gospels. The story is told by Beth, a watchful star "that lives way up in the sky" and "can see everything, all over the world." The theme of illumination applies even to the text, which emits a golden glow. Through Beth, Unale shares an easy-to-follow narrative on the life of Jesus Christ, pitched to appeal to kids' interest in super-powered heroics but honoring traditional tellings of the Passion. Don't expect spandex at the Mount of Olives—Beth, in a red cape, wears the only superhero accessories here. As the story follows Jesus's life—from birth to a childhood of helping others; from baptism to miracle-worker who preaches "lives based on love and forgiveness"; and from the Crucifixion to the Resurrection—Beth proclaims Jesus to be "the greatest superhero of all time!"

The superheroics here correspond with miracles from the Gospels: healing the



Warm introduction to the life of Jesus and unconditional love.

Great for fans of Steph Williams's *How Can I Pray?*; Jill Roman Lord's *If Jesus Lived Inside My Heart*.

wick, transforming five loaves of bread and two fish into a feast, and more. Amanda Kunke's clear, inviting illustrations bring emotional clarity to the book's realistic Middle Eastern landscapes and faces, while the luminous star adds a dash of fun. Scriptural citations establish the biblical sources of these dramatic moments, plus some lesser-known incidents from Jesus's childhood exploring his generosity and his relationship with his "earthly" carpenter father. Beth celebrates Jesus's purpose on Earth, his love for humanity, and his unflinching kindness.

The crucifixion is depicted with solemn urgency but without gore. The emphasis throughout is on unconditional love, which comes across as the greatest of powers. The final pages address young readers' contemporary anxieties and urge them to talk to Jesus "whenever you want about whatever you want."

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

YOUNG ADULT

More Than Ivory: A Novel

Gina Augustini Best | BestGAB Words Publishing

242p, trade paper, \$12.99, ISBN 979-8-9922169-0-5

Best's debut offers a powerful exploration of family dynamics, following 17-year-old Mireya Torres's growing realization that the person she loved most in the world was someone she never really knew. After Mireya's mother, Ana María, is kidnapped at gunpoint from an ATM, the ensuing investigation exposes secrets from her past, hinting at hidden cash and potential criminal entanglements. As Mireya and her Uncle Angel, a DEA agent, become the focus of the investigation, she experiences unimaginable grief and confusion, struggling to reconcile her doting mother, an eighth-grade math teacher beloved by their community in the North Dallas suburbs, with the image emerging of a woman unrecognizable to her.

Fast-paced and brimming with suspense, *More Than Ivory* will hook readers from the start. With the help of Angel and her close friends, Cici and Luka, Mireya is determined to find her mother and bring her home alive, no matter the cost. Her



Fast-paced YA thriller boasting complex family dynamics.

Great for fans of Courtney Summers's *Sadie*, Tiffany D. Jackson's *Monday's Not Coming*.

tenacity and strength in the face of tragedy make her an easy protagonist to root for, but her fundamental humaneness—the way she battles grief and guilt—renders her deeply relatable. "All I cared about was keeping her alive," Mireya declares. "Without her, I didn't think I could make it. The harsh truth was this—her survival equaled my survival."

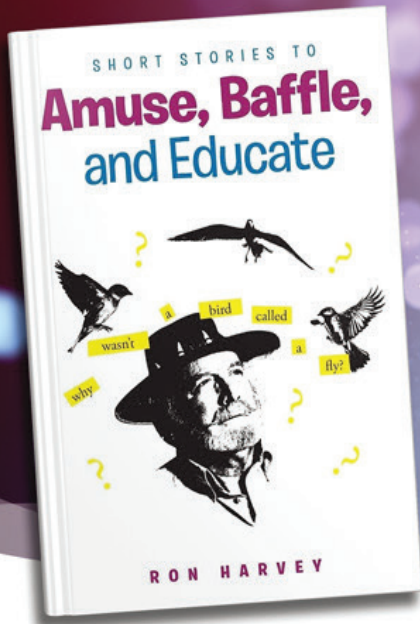
While Mireya's perspective can feel repetitive at times—particularly her ongoing disbelief that her mother kept so many secrets—the first-person narration offers an insightful look into how she processes the trauma of the abduction while remaining steadfast in her belief that her mother will be okay. Best immerses readers in Mireya's grief, self-doubt, and fear, allowing them to share in the overwhelming burden of "the ugliness of lives created and altered by lies." The ending is bittersweet but fitting—a tribute to safeguarding what one treasures most.

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

SHORT STORIES TO

Amuse, Baffle, and Educate

ISBN: 978-1684869602



Some things in life are simply inexplicable. Not only are they beyond explanation, but they also defy any attempt at rational understanding. This book takes that delightful absurdity and turns it into an adventure, captivating your imagination in ways that are as unexpected as they are preposterous. Picture this: while you're imagining an image of your own imagination, the very act of imagining is already being imagined for you. Confusing? Perhaps. Entertaining? Absolutely.

Within these pages, you'll find a whirlwind of short stories, poems, and cartoons, all of which reveal that the author's imagination has not just run wild—it has bolted out of the stable, galloped over the horizon, and is now gleefully exploring uncharted territories. Some may say it has run aground, hit a reef, and shattered its keel beyond repair. Others might argue it was never seaworthy to begin with. Either way, the result is a collection that is delightfully unhinged, brimming with wit, whimsy, and a touch of the ridiculous.

But be forewarned: some of these stories are not just a casual read. They may require a second—or even a third—reading to fully grasp the layers of humor hidden beneath their surface. That's the nature of subtle humor, after all. And in case you were wondering, "subtle" humor is the kind of humor that is, quite literally, below or under the "tle."

So prepare yourself for a literary journey that bends logic, twists expectations, and revels in the sheer joy of the absurd. Dive in, laugh, ponder, and most importantly—try not to get lost in the author's runaway imagination.



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 BARNES & NOBLE



*also in other major online bookstores

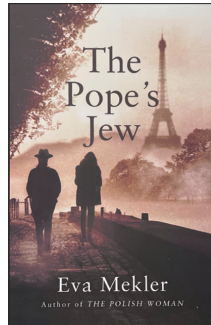
FICTION

The Pope's Jew

Eva Mekler | Manhattan Book Group
288p, e-book, \$14.29, ISBN 978-1-963844-44-3

Thirty-five years after Luc Kasten survived the Holocaust, he's ready to tell his story. To do so, he invites journalist Diane Jameson to his Parisian hotel room, where he promises her a story that has never been told before. Diane, driven by her "thirst for secrets," finds Luc slow to open up at first, as he declares his life has been "half-truths for a very long time." As the two spend their days together building a steady rapport, Diane finds herself inexplicably falling for Luc and his dark wartime past. But when a chance encounter with old enemy Guy Thibault upends both Luc and Diane's lives, they must join forces to stop him before it's too late.

Mekler's story unfolds in 1980, building on Luc's flashbacks to his time during the Second World War, as readers learn about the Resistance, the Milice, and broader politics of the time. The plot is heady, and Mekler's selective reveals build natural tension as readers glimpse not only Luc's character unfold, but also his



WWII novel examining the line between justice and revenge.

Great for fans of Cecilia Eckbäck's *The Historians*, John Boyne's *All the Broken Places*.

The fast-paced plot, combined with riveting historical detail, is the perfect catalyst to examine themes of persecution alongside the lines that blur justice and revenge. Luc never finds complete freedom from his secrets, but he does discover that sharing the burden lightens his load. There are a lot of moving parts here, but Mekler (author of *The Polish Woman*) ties them together with grace, probing, at the end, whether memories are worth the dust that comes with "dredging up the past."

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

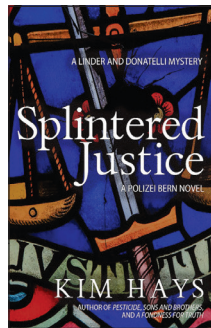
MYSTERY/THRILLER

Splintered Justice: A Linder and Donatelli Mystery

Kim Hays | Seventh Street Books
364p, mass market, \$22.95, ISBN 978-1-645-06094-9

One advantage of an ongoing novel series is the opportunity to examine complex relationships over time. Hays's fourth Linder and Donatelli Mystery exemplifies this, as the duo of Giuliana Linder, a homicide detective, and Renzo Donatelli, a cop bucking for promotion, is, as the title suggests, splintered, both personally and professionally. As Renzo faces divorce, he finds the sexual tension between him and Linder "more stressful than exhilarating," so when a complex cold case quite literally crashes into him in Bern's Old City, Renzo chooses to investigate it alone while Linder focuses on a thorny, morally gray case of her own, one that explores the line between assisted suicide and potential murder.

That sense of splintered relationships informs both cases. Renzo's case, which likewise centers on a suicide that might actually be a murder, turns on a charged affair at Bern's grandest cathedral, the Münster, some 15 years in the past, when a Croatian mother, Katika Horvat, plunged from the Münster's tower.



Twisty, humane procedural bringing the urgent darkness of Scandinavian noir to Bern.

Great for fans of Camilla Läckberg, Ragnar Jónasson.

Hays again conjures an evocative Bern of shadows and secrets, with the cathedral's gothic atmosphere—and themes of partnerships betrayed—seeping into both investigations. Characters muse about the "difference between being independent and being inconsiderate" as Renzo digs up hidden truths and unresolved feelings harbored by Denis, a glassworker at the cathedral, and Zora, the daughter of Katika, both children at the time of Katika's fall.

Looming over it all are the mass murders and displacement endured by Croats and Bosnians in the 1990s, tragic history that Hays handles with empathetic intelligence. While the material is dark, especially with the leads not buoying each other's spirits, Hays brightens the gloom with symbols of hope, like a secret-ish garden, and character arcs that bend toward reconciliation. The suspense is richly layered, as readers will worry over both cases and multiple frayed relationships. For all the novel's heft, Hays keeps the pages turning with urgent personal stakes, twists that make logical sense, and a deep humanity.

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

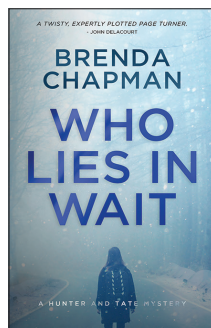
MYSTERY/THRILLER

Who Lies in Wait: A Hunter and Tate Mystery

Brenda Chapman | Ivy Bay Press
340p, trade paper, \$21.99, ISBN 978-1-0691842-2-1

The fourth installment in Chapman's Hunter and Tate Mystery series, after *Fatal Harvest*, opens with the gruesome discovery of the body of a young unidentified woman, assigned to Detective Liam Hunter and his partner, Julie Quade. As they begin their investigation, true crime podcaster Ella Tate waits in vain for her latest informant, who's promised her a juicy story of shady business dealings and a slew of victims. Meanwhile, the well-to-do Grady family is prepping for the marriage of their elderly father, Peter, to the much younger Marnie, who moved in just weeks ago after a whirlwind courtship. But when Marnie goes missing—and the cops show up on the Gradys' doorstep—Peter learns that Marnie is the unfortunate victim in Detective Hunter's latest case.

Faithful series fans will welcome back the large cast of characters who populate this story, as well as several intriguing new faces, including Nicola—a teenage sex trafficking victim who bravely escapes her captors and is on the run—and the enigmatic Grady family, whose patriarch appears oddly unaware of his fiancée's



Satisfying mystery supported by well-polished characters.

Great for fans of Carol Cole's DI Callum MacLean mysteries; David Housewright's Twin Cities PI. Mac McKenzie series.

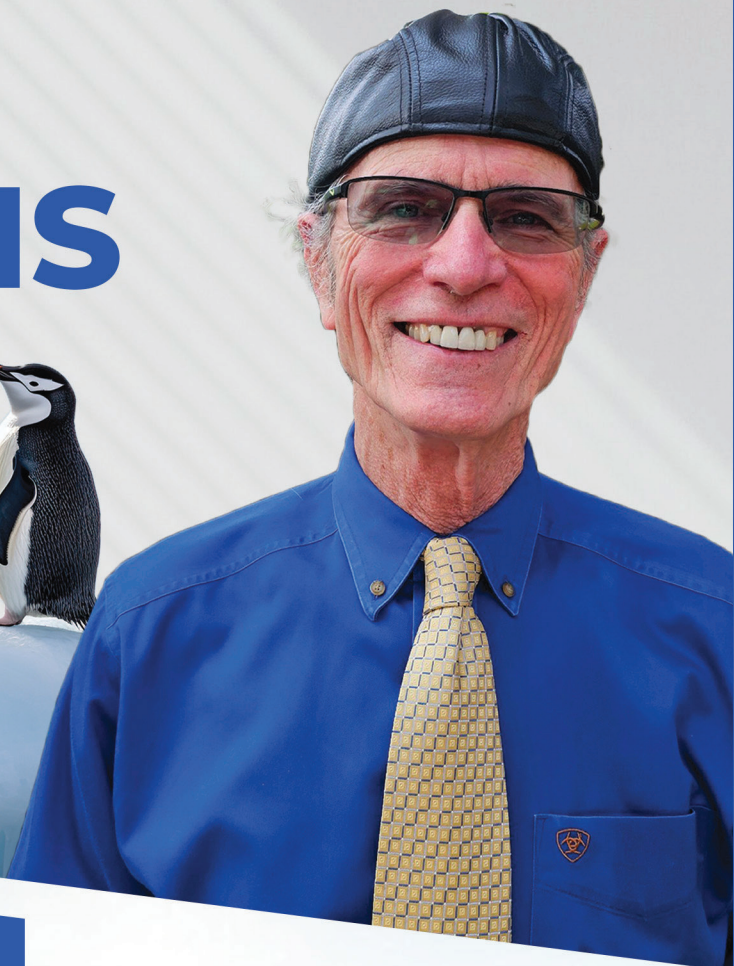
somewhat dubious past. Hunter and Quade have an easy repartee, and Ella's sharp intuition aids in their investigation, though her relationship with Hunter teeters on something more in this installment, adding sparks to their dynamic without sacrificing narrative integrity. Adding to the mix is a scandal brewing within Hunter's department—one with dark ties to his investigation—that implicates the community at large.

Chapman's latest is a believable mystery that readers can sink their teeth into, filled with crime, secrets, and just the right amount of violence. Countless potential suspects drive the plot, and Chapman skillfully threads the different storylines together while avoiding stereotyped, one-dimensional figures; instead, the main players are a little messy but mostly lovable, hopelessly flawed and tremendously brave. These idiosyncrasies will entice readers to return for the next installment in the series.

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

WHEN PENGUINS FLY

**AN ASCENSION
ENHANCEMENT
PROJECT**



About The Book

This book is a funny gentle wisdom conversation. It is the type of book that they would study in a mystery school atop one or more of the tallest mountains in the world. And normally wisdom conversations such as this are confined to those areas. But the times now demand broad participation from this species of Human Beings as their Mother Earth is preparing to move to the Fifth Dimension of Consciousness within just a few generations. You might form or join a group or a club to read this book with others and engage in the rich interactions you should expect thereafter. This book will alter your life very positively. It may be the most important book you have ever or will ever read.

ANDREW PATRICK TIMOTHY MICHAEL CRAIG

Your Author came to your planet to acquire direct experience regarding certain aspects of behavior by this species of Human Beings which caused the prospect of almost certain horrendous calamity for your Mother Earth and her entire species of Human Beings. He lived a harsh life in acquiring the information which is so vital to Senior Beings being able to properly neutralize the calamitous nature of this species of Human Beings. And yet, he wrote a book that is a funny gentle wisdom conversation. That is its own wisdom conversation. Think about it.

BOOK IS ALSO AVAILABLE ON

amazon

 **Author's
Tranquility
Press**



Discover more at www.andrewptmcraig.com
Order now, and experience the journey firsthand!

ROMANCE

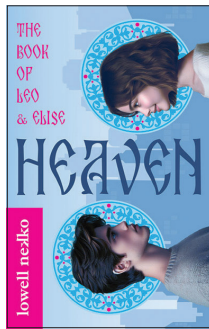
Heaven: The Book of Leo & Elise

Lowell Nekko | NekkoBooks.com

322p, trade paper, \$17.89, ISBN 979-8-992-22120-6

This erotic afterlife fantasy, Nekko's debut, opens as a life closes. At 81, a man named Leo dies, but he wakes up in his childhood bedroom, with a full head of hair, a house full of long-gone relatives and pets, and a mind reeling with questions. As he reconnects with loved ones and strives to understand this new existence, Leo encounters the love of his early years: his high school girlfriend Elise, who died in a tragic accident decades before. After spending decades in the afterlife, Elise has an adult's experience, even as Leo sees her in her teenaged body. Soon after their reunion, Leo and Elise are doing what didn't quite come naturally the first time around, back when Leo was a shy virgin.

Amid Leo and Elise's frequent spirited couplings, Nekko explores tangled questions about age and consent, making clear throughout that the situation is much more complex than what shocks Leo's mother when she accidentally witnesses Leo with the (apparently) much younger Elise. There are tensions in this afterlife,



Erotic afterlife fantasy of lost, time-crossed love.

Great for fans of Yasmine Star's *Afterlife*, Chuck Pilgrim's *After Lives Valhalla*.

Nekko has fun teasing out the mysteries of this existence—where are the bathrooms? Why is Leo sometimes his adult self and other times a child? Still, despite Leo's plan to conduct experiments to understand the nature of this reality, answers must wait for a future book, as this one ends with a cliffhanger (and something of a miracle). The sex is frequent and explicit but only occasionally presented with beat-by-beat detail. Earthly jealousies, a dash of voyeurism, and a burst of violence arise late but add little tension. The storytelling throughout is easygoing and a touch wordy as Nekko revels in the fantasy.

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

BUSINESS & PERSONAL FINANCE

Sustainable Success: How Businesses Win as a Force for Good

Paul Marushka | Rivertowns Books

320p, trade paper, \$24.95, ISBN 978-1-953943-59-0

"The demands placed on businesses by customers, communities, stakeholders, and employees today have never been higher," Marushka writes in this informative debut, asserting that "doing the right thing" in business has become a necessity, not a choice. As the CEO and founder of sustainability-driven Sphera, Marushka is no stranger to business principles that view success through a lens of culture, diversity, and social impact, and much of his writing highlights the companies excelling in those areas. He delves into the history of innovation and invention, recognizing both technological advancements that have benefited mankind and business success, and offers readers a "Formula for Good" to recast their visions into reality.

Filled with practical takeaways, interactive quizzes, and anecdotes on leading corporations succeeding at sustainability, Marushka's guide emphasizes the importance of trailblazers—or "Lions," as he calls them—whose forward thinking and embracement of challenges distinguish them from "Ostriches," those busi-



Inspiring guide presenting sustainability as the future of business.

Great for fans of Lisa Whited's *Work Better. Save the Planet*, Vincent Stanley's *The Future of the Responsible Company*.

nesses with their heads buried in the sand, seeking to do the bare minimum required to survive. From the COVID-19 vaccine to Louis Braille's system for the visually impaired to Patagonia's environmentally conscious operating standards, Marushka celebrates leaders in sustainability—and challenges readers to develop the same drive. He provides a seven-step action plan, including assessing stakeholder priorities and determining environmental footprints for future generations, that businesses can implement to become a "Force for Good."

Well-researched and informative, Marushka's guide acknowledges that "one size doesn't fit all," but his real-life examples and functional advice can help any business—new or well-established—reshape their vision and actualize "a society with opportunity for all." The reward for transforming businesses into forces for good goes well beyond financial success, he declares; it's a chance to be part of "the brightest future imaginable." Innovative thinkers and business leaders will find Marushka's ideas informative, energizing, and inspiring.

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

NONFICTION

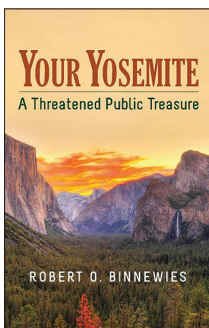
Your Yosemite: Protecting a Public Treasure

Robert O. Binnewies

356p, trade paper, \$23, ISBN 979-8-218-48442-2

The title of Binnewies's illuminating history/memoir comes from the mouth of longtime Yosemite employee Ferdinand Castillo, who for decades said to visitors at the park's Tioga Pass entrance, "Take good care of your Yosemite!" Binnewies, who served as the park's superintendent from 1979 to 1986, presents those words as a mission to all Americans. *Your Yosemite* charts, over centuries, efforts to preserve the Yosemite Valley and surrounding wilderness, especially the challenges of balancing public access with "the right of future generations to enjoy priceless national treasures." This survey of this "contested ground" tacks between a brisk history of the region, exploring "the historic Native American presence in the valley," the Gold Rush, and the battles that led to the rise of the conservation movement and the very idea of "national" parks. Binnewies also recounts his experience developing a plan to reduce automobile traffic in the park and "preserve the natural environment."

That plan succeeded, largely thanks to "public momentum" that ensured "no



Insider's wise, rousing history of the fight to preserve Yosemite National Park.

Great for fans of Dean King's *Guardians of the Valley*, Tracy Salcedo-Chourré's *Historic Yosemite National Park*.

ance." Binnewies writes with awe and humility, addressing injustice and disappointment with welcome candor.

Fortunately, the preservationist instinct that Castillo urged in visitors remains strong. The parks often have powerful champions in the federal government, from trailblazers like Teddy Roosevelt to surprise ally Ronald Reagan, who—despite naming the man Ansel Adams described as "one of the most dangerous government officials in history" to head the Department of the Interior—later signed the California Wilderness Act, safeguarding 90% of Yosemite land. Binnewies celebrates the park and its dedicated servants while reminding readers of today and the future that we can't take Yosemite's health for granted—after all, it's ours.

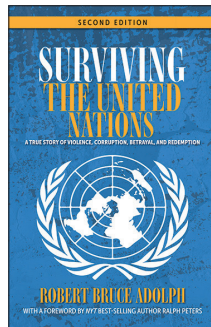
Cover: **A-** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **A** | Editing: **A-** | Marketing copy: **A**

POLITICAL & SOCIAL SCIENCES

EDITOR'S PICK

Surviving the United Nations: A True Story of Violence, Corruption, Betrayal and RedemptionRobert Bruce Adolph | Audecyn Books
296p, trade paper, \$18.95, ISBN 979-8-988-53339-9

Adolph's story lives up to its promise of "violence, corruption, betrayal and redemption" during the author's years as a senior United Nations security chief "in the most difficult and demanding security region on the planet." Adolph, a former Green Beret and retired lieutenant colonel, explores the distinctions between soldiering, peacekeeping, and working for UN humanitarian and development agencies as he recounts a career that took him to Liberia, Yemen, Sierra Leone, Iraq, and more. Beyond corruption and bureaucratic inefficiencies, he encountered life-and-death challenges, including evacuations, kidnappings, and terrorist attacks. The most devastating: the jihadist bombing of the UN Headquarters in Baghdad in 2003, which claimed 22 lives. Adolph reports his own urgent warnings, before the attack, that the site was "outrageously vulnerable."



Eye-opening account of a Green Beret's second career at the UN.

Great for fans of James Taub's *The Best Intentions*, Jan Egeland's *A Billion Lives*.

Adolph was scapegoated in the aftermath but later exonerated. *Surviving the United Nations* is not about score-settling as Adolph considers pressing questions from his 20 years at the UN. Despite clear eyes about the UN's failings, he writes movingly of its broader mission and the opportunity to dedicate himself to "the preservation of life." Adolph is a vivid storyteller who furnishes striking details to illuminate each episode, such as the chaos and confusion after the Baghdad attack, while his poignant descriptions of everything from the wounded to the weather keep the pages turning.

Especially powerful is Adolph's portrayal of an institution that often fails to comprehend the problems "on the ground" yet attempts to control much of the action there. The book bursts with telling anecdotes that persuasively justify Adolph's frustrations at the injustices he witnesses throughout his career. Maps and photos are illuminating, and an appendix offering 28 lessons learned provides a thought-provoking end to an important, well-told story.

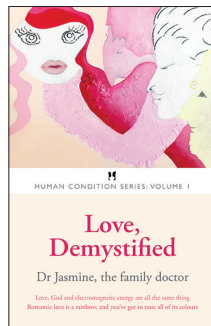
Cover: **B** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **A** | Editing: **A** | Marketing copy: **A**

SELF-HELP

Love, Demystified: Human Condition Series, Vol. 1Dr. Jasmine | Makesenseofyourworld Publishing, Ltd.
138p, e-book, \$0.99, ASIN B0D8F9L4T1

This impassioned, original debut explores the "energy" (or "frequency") of love through scientific, metaphysical, and poetic lenses, arguing that love, God, and the electromagnetic energy "that moves within living beings and ... all the other parts of the universe" are elements of the same phenomenon. That insight fuels conclusions about life, love, and the meaning of existence, such as: "If you want to be happy, you need to accept that you are part of nature and practice as many natural behavioral patterns as possible." Author Jasmine challenges conventional views on love's impact on our bodies and minds, examining how love manifests across cultures and time, from fleeting encounters to deep soul connections.

Jasmine, a physician in Great Britain, offers a wide-ranging but intimate exploration of the universe, life's purpose, and happiness—ultimately centering on love. She links our feelings of love to tangible vibrations, arguing that to sustain long-term romantic love, partners' "main natural frequencies need to become the



Impassioned, provocative dive into the metaphysics of love.

Great for fans of Kevin Hunter's *Metaphysical Divine Wisdom...*, Shelle Crowe's *The Soulmate Frequency*.

same," which, she asserts, is achieved through "perfect harmony between your physical, emotional, and spiritual natures." Further, Jasmine makes the case that love, passion, and pleasure are interconnected elements essential to a fulfilling life. The material is heady, but Jasmine's approach is often practical, including a section outlining a "Formula for Passion," vignettes from lovers' lives, original paintings, and tips.

Throughout, Jasmine offers scientific and spiritual insight in accessible, explanatory language that digs into the mysteries behind our emotions and connections without stripping them of their magic. Rich with quotes from philosophers, artists, and writers, *Love, Demystified* offers original perspectives—some provocative—such as Jasmine's resistance to the notion of a single soulmate and her assertion that "the right time for you to fall in love is exactly the time when the energy field ... that surrounds you is ready for a major shake-up."

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

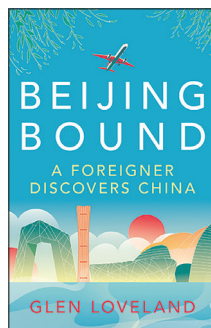
MEMOIR

EDITOR'S PICK

Beijing Bound: A Foreigner Discovers ChinaGlen Louis Loveland | Sid Harta Publishers
394p, trade paper, \$29, ISBN 978-1-922958-78-5

Former congressional staffer Loveland shares his abiding affection for Beijing in this striking debut, lovingly describing it as "a city that had captivated me with its vibrancy, its spirit and its unbridled potential." Drawn by the allure of a rising superpower, and searching for adventure alongside identity, Loveland, a self-described "gay single man without a mortgage... untethered and able to go wherever I wished" moved to the People's Republic of China in 2007. *Beijing Bound* blends travelogue and memoir into a seamless account of his formative years there—or, as he calls them, the "pre-2008 Olympics-era China," vividly capturing his cultural adaptations and the contrasts he observed between American and Chinese life.

Loveland shares, in this witty and insightful narrative, that Beijing was his city of choice due to his longing for an authentic experience, portraying it as "a clashing mosaic of old and new, a capital striving to fuse ancient traditions with modern ambition." Though initially anxious, he quickly embraces his new surroundings,



Inviting recollections of an American expat's time in Beijing.

Great for fans of Xiaolu Guo's *Nine Continents*, Moira Hodgson's *It Seemed Like a Good Idea at the Time*.

delving into the complexities of Chinese society, including what it meant to be gay in a vastly different cultural landscape. His encounters reveal not only personal insights—such as his lunchtime observations that food is consumed with a goal of efficiency over pleasure—but also broader societal norms, like the Chinese view of marriage as a duty rather than a romantic culmination.

Loveland's warm, inviting tones paint a Beijing that feels hard to leave, and his recollections sigh with nostalgia, conjuring a city where "the vibrant exchange of ideas and the warm embrace of foreign influences would be supplanted by a more insular, controlled environment." A conversation with a Chinese friend further underscores Loveland's privilege as an American with a strong passport, offering a moment of reflection on the disparities between their worlds. *Beijing Bound* will leave those curious about the everyday life of an expat in the PRC wanting more.

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

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

FICTION

Death and the Taxman

David Hankins. Lost Bard Enterprises, \$29.99 (320p)

ISBN 978-1-962740-01-2

Expanded from a Writers of the Future Award-winning short story, Hankins's fast-paced supernatural adventure and Grimsworld series launch balances the mythic and the mundane. On a routine pickup, the Grim Reaper is tricked into exchanging bodies with IRS auditor Frank Totmann. Now trapped in Frank's failing middle-aged body while Frank runs off with his identity and scythe, Grim must find a way to reverse the process before Hell's Auditor becomes aware of the mishap and comes to punish him. Ignorant of the ways of flesh, Grim contends with a mortal body's embarrassing needs (cue the poop jokes), fumbles his way through Frank's job, and desperately tries to make contact with the demon who inadvertently made the switch possible. Meanwhile, infernal forces move forward on a fiendish plot eons in the making, people stop dying with no one to collect their souls, and Grim runs into the ex he hasn't seen in millennia. Flashbacks hint at a much larger scope to the setting and Grim's complicated past as, in the present, he learns the hard way what it means to be human. The humor feels somewhat sitcomy, but the premise and subsequent mistaken identity hijinks are good fun. This is sure to entertain.

Farewell Performance: A Ginger Barnes Cozy Mystery

Donna Huston Murray. Ravenhill, \$12.99 trade paper (248p)

ISBN 979-8-3237698-7-2

Murray's clever sixth case for Ginger Barnes (after *A Score To Settle*) finds the Pennsylvania gumshoe digging into the murder of an old friend. Hollywood actor Jan Fairchild—one of Ginger's high school classmates—has returned to Ludwig, Pa., to film a movie. Jan and Ginger's mutual acquaintance, Didi, hosts a pajama party with several of their other classmates to mark the occasion. Though the evening gets off to a low-key start, a comment during a game of truth or dare freaks Jan out, leading her to rush out

the door. Ginger catches up with the film star and persuades her to return to the house, but when Jan is late to awaken the next morning, Ginger finds her dead on her bedroom floor with a shattered skull. The Ludwig police question the group, taking particular interest in Ginger. She sets out to identify Jan's killer, drawing on their shared history to crack the case. Ginger's charming everywoman qualities make her easy to root for, and Murray has the mechanics of closed-circle whodunits down. This satisfies.

The Great Gatsby Murder Case

David Finkle. Plum Bay, \$17.99 trade paper (246p)

ISBN 979-8-9858564-5-3

Finkle (*Keys to an Empty House*) offers a whimsical take on the locked-room mystery in this entertaining supernatural whodunit. New Yorker Daniel Freund, a writer who collects rare editions of *The Great Gatsby*, is delighted to find one he doesn't own in a pile on a brownstone stoop. He brings it back to his apartment, where the book starts displaying magical qualities: certain words begin to glow, and an invisible presence guides Freund's hand to phrases that seem to allude to an unsolved murder. Wondering if the paranormal activity is a beyond the grave message from F. Scott Fitzgerald, Freund visits the brownstone where he found the edition. There, he learns that his new *Gatsby* belonged to septuagenarian venture capitalist Fulton Cutler, who recently shot himself inside his locked apartment. Convinced that Cutler was murdered, Freund investigates who might have wanted him dead, and tries to deduce how they committed the seemingly impossible crime. Eventually, he teams up with a pair of retired detectives to crack the case. Finkle effectively suspends disbelief en route to a clever solution. It's a gleeful good time.

Master of the Art of Detection

Liese Sherwood-Fabre. Little Elm, \$4.99 e-book (170p)

ISBN 978-1-952408-32-8

Sherwood-Fabre (the Early Case Files of Sherlock Holmes series) delivers a solid collection of stories featuring Doyle's detective. Canonical entries include a creative

fleshing-out of one of Watson's untold tales ("The Most Winning Woman"), and a sequel to Doyle's "The Disappearance of Lady Frances Carfax," which finds Carfax, a former client of Holmes's, returning to seek help recovering jewels stolen by the criminals who kidnapped her in the original story. The author pulls off a shrewd and satisfying locked-room mystery with "The Adventure of Kisin's Curse," in which Holmes must ascertain how the assistant to an explorer was poisoned in a sealed room. Holmes's deductive talents are captured with aplomb in "The Adventure of Lafitte's Missing Treasure," in which the detective tackles the case of an American woman's missing husband, who disappeared while on a quest for a legendary pirate's treasure. Throughout, Sherwood-Fabre plays it safe, delivering comfort-food pastiches that rely heavily on established tropes. Sherlockians will be pleased.

Matched in Merriweather

Michelle Cox. Woolton, \$17.95 e-book (336p)

ISBN 979-8-9880097-2-6

Cox (*A Christmas at Highbury*) serves up a charming retelling of Jane Austen's *Emma* set during the Great Depression. Melody Merriweather resents having to leave college to run the Merc, her family's general store in Merriweather, Wis. But with her father recovering from a heart attack, she doesn't have much choice. At first, Melody tries to modernize the store by offering luxury items, but no one in town can afford them. After learning that her father lost the family's fortune in bad investments, she hatches a plan to save the store and their home by brewing and selling cider. For help, she turns to the store's handsome but aloof butcher, Cal Fraiser, innocent shopgirl Harriet Mueller, and her father's partner, the huffy old Mrs. Haufbrau. Neither the cider nor Melody's attempts at matchmaking on Harriet's behalf go as planned, and she soon discovers that her family's situation is even worse than she'd thought. While Cox glosses over the darker aspects of the Great Depression—the townsfolk pinch pennies, but no one is in dire straits—she's crafted a believable Midwest town filled with colorful characters. Silly and spoiled at first, Melody

matures over the course of the novel and learns the importance of putting herself in others' shoes. Readers are in for a treat.

One Minute Past Midnight: A John Drake Mystery

Martin Crosbie. Martin Crosbie, \$0.99 e-book (288p)

ASIN B0D225DZ8M

A Canadian police officer tackles a complicated kidnapping case in Crosbie's taut second mystery featuring RCMP corporal John Drake (after *The Dead List*). In 2004, Drake, who's working for the General Investigative Service in British Columbia, is assigned the case of five-year-old Hailey Logan, who's disappeared from her bedroom. Hours after the abduction, someone claiming to have Hailey calls the RCMP and in an electronically disguised voice asks for Drake and one of his colleagues to be present when they call back at 12:01 a.m. Drake is on hand when the next call comes through, and he soon realizes the case cuts close to home: in flashbacks that alternate between Northern Ireland in 1969 and British Columbia in the '70s and '80s, Crosbie gradually reveals why Hailey's father, Bill—a farm supervisor with an Irish background—may have cooperated with the kidnapers, and how buried secrets from Drake's past may come to light if he wants to bring the girl home safely. Crosbie throws a lot of balls in the air, but he juggles them with ease and brings everything to a satisfying conclusion. It's a sly and suspenseful winner.

Post Civ

Julianne Harvey. Ruby Finch, \$7 e-book (296p)

ISBN 978-0-9877978-5-8

Harvey (*Jamesy Harper's Big Break*) imagines the chilling aftermath of political and climate upheaval in this powerful postapocalyptic thriller. Years of right-wing assaults on government have transformed Canada into a hellhole for minorities: after passing legislation that outlawed contraception and made women second-class citizens, reactionaries overthrew the government and began hunting down queer people and people of color. Iris, a therapist, has no hope of finding justice after being gang-raped in her home. Privileged Ainsley is left at a similar loss after a mob breaches her security system and murders her husband. With a

new, deadly virus spreading across the country and global warming leading to parts of Canada's west coast being submerged, Iris and Ainsley—along with 10 other characters, including a construction worker and a nonbinary teen activist—start their individual journeys toward possible haven on Vancouver Island. Harvey closely follows their odysseys, bringing her grim vision of the future to life through an array of sometimes conflicting perspectives. This unsettling adventure will appeal to fans of Claire Vaye Watkins's *Gold Fame Citrus*.

Starman After Midnight

Scott Semegran. Mutt, \$14.99 trade paper (236p)

ISBN 979-8-218-41594-5

An unlikely friendship is tested by zany events in this darkly funny if diffuse novel from Semegran (*The Benevolent Lords of Sometimes Island*). Seff, a writer, finds a drinking buddy in Big Dave, the conservative plumber who lives next door in their Austin, Tex., suburb. Big Dave's belief in climate change ("Ranchers and farmers... know better than to deny what Mother Earth is telling us") and generally compassionate nature perpetually upends Seff's stereotypical assumptions about right-wingers. When other neighbors' pets start disappearing and some come back mutilated, Big Dave insists they install cameras. The cameras capture another nuisance: a man walking naked in the middle of the night, and Big Dave becomes fixated on tracking down the "pervert," putting a strain on his and Seff's friendship. The novel's numbered chapters are intercut with short stories devoted to side characters, such as the trio of brothers who try to outsmart a dachshund that chases them on the way to school in "The Kirby Boys Battle Cindy the Weiner Dog," and the young girl who tends a magical garden in "Melon Girl." Not all of it hangs together, but Semegran has a knack for drawing colorful characters. This waggish slice of life is worth a look.

What Once Was Promised

Louis Trubiano. Mindstir Media, \$17.99 trade paper (264p)

ISBN 978-1-963844-04-7

Organized crime, police corruption, and ethnic tensions put increasing pressure on an Italian American family in this thrilling

multigenerational saga. In 1914, 16-year-old Domenic Bassini leaves Italy for America. On board the ship, he protects young stowaway Ermino Lentini and has an intense affair with Francesca Bernardelli under the nose of her industrialist husband, Cologero. Settling into Boston's North End, Domenic lands a coveted construction job, and for the most part manages to stay out of trouble, though he invites ire from the Irish American police after backing Ermino in a fight with the son of a cop. As the years go by, Ermino grows into an ambitious mobster while Domenic marries and has a son, Dommy, whose football career at Harvard is interrupted by WWII. Dommy returns to Boston as a war hero, becomes a cop, and refuses to go along with the department's widespread corruption and graft. When Dommy's moral rectitude has grave consequences, Domenic faces an impossible decision, one that reunites him with Cologero, Ermino, and Francesca in an explosive climax. Trubiano's rendering of the period tends to feel like a Wikipedia entry, with dutiful if superfluous nods to anarchist Bartolemo Vanzetti and the Boston Molasses Flood, but the novel finds its rhythm once Dommy enters the police force. This loving portrait of a bygone Boston is worth a look.

NONFICTION

Post: The Essential Guide to Creating Your Postpartum Self-Care Plan in Pregnancy

Emilie Wilson. Selfpublishing.com, \$23.99 (310p)

ISBN 979-8-89109-664-6

This empowering debut manual from naturopathic doctor Wilson explores how women can stay healthy during and after pregnancy. The prenatal guidance includes consuming ginger to combat nausea, wearing compression stockings to reduce leg swelling, and spending at least 150 minutes per week walking, biking, or doing yoga to regulate hormone levels. Wilson bolsters the guidance with scientific research, as when she notes studies that found iron deficiency during pregnancy correlates with higher depression levels in the child through adolescence; she recommends taking 27-mg iron vitamins before birth and then dropping to 10 mg after. Throughout, Wilson emphasizes the benefits of naturopathic remedies while recognizing their limits,

suggesting that while vitamin D and saffron supplements have shown promise in alleviating postpartum depression, there should be no shame in seeking out pharmaceutical antidepressants if symptoms don't respond to other treatments. Elsewhere, Wilson urges pregnant and postpartum readers to stay connected with loved ones by combining socializing with practical activities (e.g., "a group exercise or cooking class"), and to reduce their exposure to toxins by avoiding sunscreens with avobenzone and nonstick pans made with per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances. Despite the title, the shrewd advice focuses on prenatal and postnatal health equally, and Wilson brings a compassionate outlook that views self-care as a crucial precondition for adequately showing up for a newborn. Expecting mothers will appreciate this.

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