

MAY 26, 2025

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62 New BookLife Titles Listed • 6 New BookLife Titles Reviewed

Safe Harbors

An unconventional work on spirituality wins the BookLife Prize

BY MARYJANICE DAVIDSON

“For a moment, it was as if Van Gogh’s *Starry Night* literally came to life right before my eyes.” In describing his first sight of fireflies, Reverend Sam D. Kim wastes no time demonstrating his gift for description and longtime habit of taking joy in the ordinary. The gorgeous visual serves as an introduction to *A Holy Haunting: Why Faith Isn’t a Leap but a Series of Stagers from One Safe Place to Another*, the 2024-2025 BookLife Prize Nonfiction winner.

Kim cofounded the 180 Church in Manhattan and was trained as an ethicist at Harvard. He lives in New York City with his wife and two sons, and is part of Harvard Catalyst, where he examines the inequities related to health, immigration, and social policies; Kim also holds the Lifelong Learning Fellowship at Yale Divinity School and Yale Medicine.

A Holy Haunting is the first book in the inspirational/spiritual category to be selected for the grand prize, which is handed out twice a year to exceptional works of fiction and nonfiction. While readers will notice the lush and lyrical writing first, what proves even more remarkable is its accessibility and resonance for nonbelievers.

A Holy Haunting provides the type of intimate, enriching reading experience that makes the book difficult to put down. The first section covers the theory of faith (“Spiritual Puberty”); the second demonstrates how faith is “often messy and tumultuous”; the third digs into the nitty-gritty of spiritual texts (“Is the New Testament reliable?”). Throughout the book, Kim pulls in a veritable cornucopia



of literary and cultural references, including C.S. Lewis, John Bloom, Peter Kreeft, Ronald K. Tacelli, and David Brooks, as well as other notables in the field, to make his points. In one moment, Kim calls upon the wisdom of Solomon (“What has been will be again, what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun. Everything is meaningless!”) and the next, Kanye West (“I always find, I always find. I always find, something wrong. I’m so gifted at finding what I don’t like the most”), and his sharp wit shines forth in a work that is as funny as it is touching and wise.

Author Kelsey Osgood, who selected *A Holy Haunting* as a finalist, called it, “a generous book to believers and

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POETRY ON FIRE

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In the tradition of poetry, there is an expectation for subtlety, complexity, and often, a highbrow approach. Yet, my book aims to break from that norm. It doesn't adhere to the lofty language of Shakespeare or cater to the tastes of professors and scholars. Instead, it speaks in the voice of the everyday—raw, accessible, and genuine.

This collection of poetry, written in the language of the blue-collar worker, is designed to reach into the core of daily life, transforming the mundane into a canvas of metaphor and meaning. Through simple yet evocative words, each verse seeks to spark emotion and sketch vivid scenes, capturing the beauty and grit of ordinary routines. In a unique perspective that allows readers to connect across communities transcending demographics and reaching some universal struggle through imagery, lines that are in effect a bridge between generation and are to draw the common folks the joy to behold of poetry.

Unlike the refined, scholarly poesy, my work harmonizes with street talk, choosing words that are grounded and effortless. These verses flow naturally, like a thought or dream, inviting all readers to experience poetry in a new, relatable way.



ASTY

AUTHOR

I was born in Port-au-Prince Haiti and came to the United States in my late teens. I went to high school and did a few semesters in college before I completed my financial aid. Now knowing what I wanted, I took Liberal Arts but never finished the degree for my missing classes due to Epilepsy that I never revealed to the administration. To me that mental illness was a setback until I discovered that many famous individuals like Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, Buddha, Elton John, Charles Dickens, Danny Glover, Vincent Van Gogh and so on have excelled in spite of it.

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skeptics alike... a patient, thoughtful tour of the Christian faith landscape today” and the BookLife Prize critic’s report said, “*A Holy Haunting* eschews platitudes in favor of a multilayered conversation about the role of faith in today’s world.”

One of the things that may surprise spiritual skeptics is Kim’s ease with bridging science, psychology, and theology, as in discussing evolutionary creation, “a Christian perspective on the origins of life that challenges the idea that faith and science are in conflict.” And in coming to understand how science and theology can coexist and even thrive, Kim takes readers back to 600 BCE and then still further, demonstrating a formidable understanding not just of theology, philosophy, and science, but history, too.

Kim also exposes his own fears and hurts, his doubts, and his crises. “I wish someone had told me sooner that struggling with doubt is not apostasy; it is just human.... Faith isn’t always linear but is instead sinuous. Sometimes, it gets worse before it gets better. God is a great artist, and the Bible tells us He is painting a masterpiece, with us as His canvas. However, He isn’t finished yet. As a result, we might not be able to connect the dots in our lives right now, as they often only make sense in reverse.”

By sharing his journey, the author comes across as a warm confidant rather than a distant spiritual adviser, especially with his candid references to “overcoming the swamp of doubt and fear,” which he hopes “may offer solace to those navigating the darkest spiritual crisis they’ve ever known.”

Kim not only offers solace and hard-won wisdom but repeatedly references joy; his God is a loving god, one he wishes everyone to get to know on their own terms: “When we finally come to realize that this poignant longing is a holy haunting for the presence of God, everything changes. What was once unsettling becomes reassuring and comforting, and what was once a burden becomes a source of delight and joy.”

When asked what inspired him to write *A Holy Haunting*, Kim explains, “I have carefully avoided commercializing the gospel. I did not want to force, push, or sell the gospel as if it were a product; rather, I wanted to speak of Jesus as if he were a good friend I had just met for afternoon tea.”

He also urges other authors to “incorporate some lighthearted self-deprecation into your writing. When we avoid taking ourselves too seriously—especially when tackling serious topics—more readers are likely to connect with our message. This authenticity invites them to be more honest with themselves and others, fostering a transformative experience for both us and potentially the world around us.” 🌱

MaryJanice Davidson’s upcoming novel, The Reluctant Reaper, will be available in November 2025.

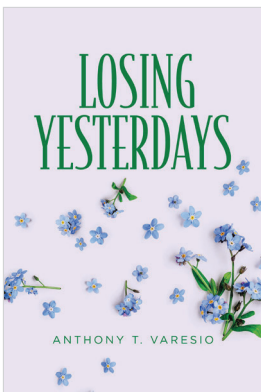
Q&A SPONSORED

BookLife Talks with Anthony Varesio

Born of a journal Varesio kept while providing care to a person with dementia, *Losing Yesterdays* offers information for caregivers while supporting sharing and connecting “with each other’s journeys to sustain the unique support system that only we can fully understand.”

What was the process like turning your journal into a book?

I would use my iPhone to take notes on more significant observations, situations, or comments made by Steve during my visits. These notes proved their value later when I started journaling. My experience and knowledge of working with those who have dementia combined with the notes and the journal to become the foundation for the book. But the



emotional impact of reliving my time with Steve was also intense. Steve had passed away only months before I decided to write the book. By reading through the journal, I discovered that I hadn’t let myself grieve. Writing the book, however, forced me to confront my grief, and it was a blessing.

How do you imagine readers at this moment will connect to *Losing Yesterdays*?

I didn’t write this book simply to convey a story or impart practical dementia-related information. All of us on this journey share a powerful common denominator—sadly, that we often feel alone on this journey. I hope this book will connect and unite us, at least on a relatable and empathetic level, to ease some of our challenges. *Losing Yesterdays* will also provide an opportunity for an even deeper connection for the readers who have faith. Faith was a game changer for Steve and his family’s quality of life, as it could be for anyone.

For more, visit booklife.com/varesio

SPOTLIGHT

No Agent? No Problem.

Bowker and Storywise have teamed up to deliver a revolutionary platform connecting authors with agents and publishers looking for great new books

For emerging authors, getting the right eyes on their manuscript can be a huge challenge. You know the story: You wrote something amazing, but your cold emails to literary agents go unanswered. What about a friend who works in book publishing to whom you can slip the manuscript? You don't have one.

In order to fix this age-old problem, Bowker, a critical resource for the publishing community for more than 140 years, and Storywise have collaborated to introduce a platform where authors can get noticed by industry professionals who are looking for their specific type of content.

"Bowker is continuously searching for new products and services to help authors produce, publish, and market their books," says Beat Barblan, Bowker's general manager. "Storywise represents a logical extension of Bowker's mission to make books easier to create, discover, evaluate, and experience."

Storywise's intuitive, accessible Discovery Network allows authors to easily attract interested agents and publishers. "We enhance author discovery through our proactive taste-matching and freehand search functionality," explains Storywise CEO Gavin Marcus. Agents create book wish lists, specifying, among other criteria, their desired genres, types of characters, storylines, and plot structures. Authors create free book listings that include a book cover, a pitch, and metadata. If the criteria align, publishers and agents are notified by the platform and can easily reach out to the author requesting the manuscript.

Agents and publishers can be incredibly specific with their tastes on a large list of fiction and non-fiction genres. They can update their wish lists as often as they like. Currently in development is a discovery feature for diverse and debut authors, so agents and publishers can zero in on fresh talent and unique voices.

Too often, great authors fall to the bot-

tom of the slush pile. The Storywise Discovery Network aims to stop this unfortunate reality. For authors, it eases the process of finding an agent or a publisher. For publishers, the AI-powered platform helps them zero in on new voices that might otherwise go unnoticed.

"We are passionate about storytelling,"



“
We are passionate
about storytelling

— Gavin Marcus

“
Marcus says, “particularly that new, constantly overlooked authors get the opportunities they deserve to publish the best version of their stories.”

And, because a great book isn't always a fit for a particular agent or publisher, the platform allows a publishing house or agency that passes on a promising project to submit it to the Storywise Discovery engine. The author then receives an invite link. This flags the book for other agents and publishers whose taste profiles better align with the work's content, allowing them access to it.

Going forward, the platform will offer more customization tools that enable

agents and publishers to further refine their wish lists and more easily connect to the right authors.

“We continually onboard publishers and agents which grows the platform and creates more opportunities for author matching,” explains Jeremy Esekow, chief product officer for Storywise. “We intend to add more customization to publisher settings which will allow them to refine their recommendations, particularly around non-fiction, literary fiction, author history and publisher readiness. On the author side, we're building out a full hands-on AI assisted developmental editing tool to help authors improve their submissions before they're matched with publishers or agents.

Some have said that publishing a book can feel a bit like stuffing a note into a bottle and then hurling that bottle into the sea. No longer.

To learn more about Storywise, visit:
<https://bowker.storywisenetwork.com/invited>



New Titles from Self-Publishers

Booksellers, publishers, librarians, and agents are encouraged to look at the 62 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

Beneath the Blushing Sky



Gary McIlroy. Oscar Publications. \$5.99 paper (60p), ISBN 979-8-9923742-0-9; \$1.99 e-book, ISBN 979-8-9923742-1-6
Amazon, Apple Books, Barnes & Noble, Everand

Set in 1965, *this* coming-of-age story follows a freshman basketball player caught up in the allure of a popular girl and the recklessness of his closest friend.

Between Memory and Oblivion: A Novel



Peter Briscoe. Palo Verde Press. \$12.95 paper (144p), ISBN 978-0-9634898-6-9; \$9.99 e-book, ISBN 978-0-9634898-3-8
Amazon, Apple Books, Barnes & Noble, IngramSpark

A young bookseller who hunts for rare books in Mexico City and Paris must fight to save them from being destroyed by librarians.

The Color of Dreams



Michael Zajackowski. Starlite Books. \$28.99 (312p), ISBN 979-8-9917691-2-9; \$15.95 paper, ISBN 979-8-9917691-1-2
Amazon, Apple Books, Barnes & Noble, Kobo

A magical encounter with a glowing little

angel reveals six powerful spiritual truths for making dreams come true.

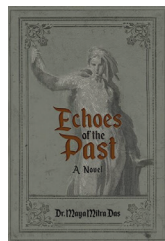
Don't Mess with Anna: A Reckoning in



Blood and Ink
Celeste Prater. Celeste Prater. \$12.50 paper (308p), ISBN 979-8-3066-7742-2; \$4.99 e-book, ASIN B0F22X4FVD
Amazon

A modern-day critic obsessed with medieval lore crosses the wrong writer and finds himself hurled into a brutal world of his own making.

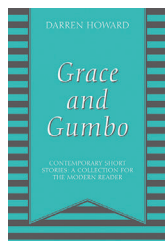
Echoes of the Past



Maya Mitra Das. Authors' Tranquility Press. \$21.99 paper (700p), ISBN 978-1-965075-00-5
Amazon

Two men, centuries apart, a sculptor and a neurosurgeon, are united by creativity, passion, and legacy, proving art and purpose transcend time and profession.

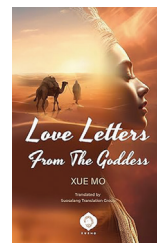
Grace and Gumbo



Darren Howard. OutSkirts. \$18.95 paper (144p), ISBN 978-1-9772-7830-2
Amazon

Grace and Gumbo is a poignant anthology that immerses readers in the vibrant streets of New Orleans through the perspectives of its African American community.

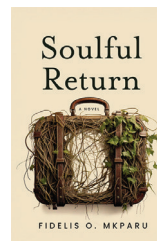
Love Letters From the Goddess: The Forbidden Letters of a Nepali Goddess and a Tibetan Pilgrim's Quest for Freedom



Xue Mo. Ruxue International Media. \$9.68 paper (228p), ISBN 979-8-88991-027-5; \$2.99 e-book, ASIN B0DV3PKCGJ
Amazon

Xue Mo weaves a tapestry of divine wisdom and tender love. Each letter is a whisper from the sacred, awakening the soul's deepest longing for freedom.

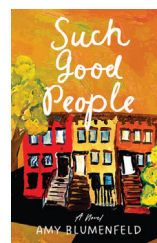
Soulful Return



Fidelis O. Mkpuru. Ofolo Press. \$19.25 paper (322p), ISBN 979-8-9924054-1-5; \$9.99 e-book, ASIN B0DZTZDTFQ
Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Ingram

Afam sets out to reconnect with the heritage he left behind as a teenager in an increasingly corrupt Nigeria where many people see him as an American intruder and an enemy.

Such Good People



Amy Blumenfeld. Sparkpress. \$17.99 paper (360p), ISBN 978-1-68463-322-7; \$12.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-68463-323-4
Barnes & Noble, Books-A-Million, Bookshop.org
An American Marriage

BookLife Talks with Kate Kaminski

I Am Danvers, Kaminski's prequel reimagining of Mrs. Danvers from Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca*, follows its titular character in a new time and place: present-day Los Angeles. We spoke with Kaminski about her interest in the character, her filmmaking background, and connecting her book to the original novel.

Discuss your inspiration to write *I Am Danvers*.

I borrowed Margaret Forster's biography *Daphne du Maurier: The Secret Life of the Renowned Storyteller* from the library out of curiosity about the writer's life. Forster's account fascinated me, especially the way that du Maurier's reputed bisexuality found expression in her work. The subtext of *Rebecca* could be read as a story of unrequited love between Mrs. Danvers and a dead woman, and that made the novel even more interesting to me. I always thought Mrs. Danvers got a bad rap, and I became obsessed with letting her out of the closet and giving her the starring role in her own destiny.

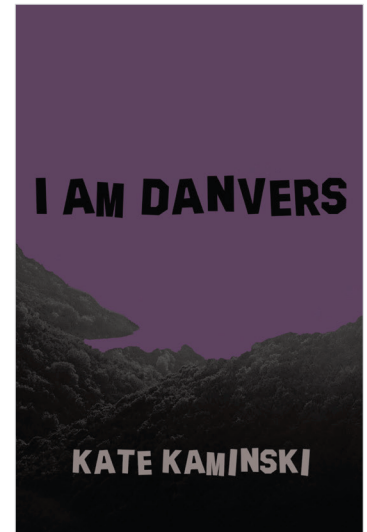
Why did you want to write the story as a prequel to *Rebecca*?

Obviously, I have not been faithful to du Maurier's classic. I wouldn't be that presumptuous. I've created a completely reimagined, standalone story prior to the events in *Rebecca*. I wanted readers to meet Danny before she becomes Mrs. Danvers, and a living Rebecca as she becomes marked-for-death Mrs. Maxim de Winter. So I've set it 10 years or so before Danny will go to work at Manderley in the present day. I pay homage to a particular plot point in *Rebecca* in a bookend prologue and epilogue, but I don't want to give any spoilers so I won't say more.

Why did you choose to set *I Am Danvers* in present-day Los Angeles?

The primary reason I chose the present day is that I wanted to reimagine Mrs. Danvers in a time when she wouldn't necessarily need to hide her sexuality. As for setting it in L.A., I'm a filmmaker so I'm drawn to the romantic idea of the City of Dreams while feeling cynical about celebrity culture and the kind of privilege that allows you to behave badly and never

pay a price. Danny comes to Los Angeles rather broken, and she is quickly starstruck. Meanwhile, everybody around her harbors hidden intentions. L.A. seemed like the perfect environment to trap Danny in a shark tank where she has to learn new ways to survive. As Vernon the manipulative house manager says, "But that's Hollywood, isn't it?"



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

I Am Danvers is in the tradition of pulp fiction + melodrama + *Hollywood Confidential* but through a modern lens. There's art theft, the film industry, savage people desperately seeking money or fame, and Danny caught in a web of deception. Her mordant observations of the other characters and the situations in which she finds herself might make you laugh and wince simultaneously. I hope readers enjoy the ride, connect to the story's roots, and embrace Danny as the flawed survivor she is.

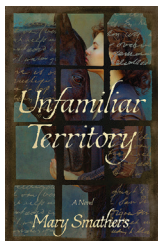
Do you have other similar books that readers could pick up?

I don't have a similar book, but I do have a dissimilar book titled *One Good Thing*, which is about a very complicated mother-daughter relationship. The main character is a lesbian who's just broken up with her cheating girlfriend and, when her real mother shows up, finds out her comfortable, predictable life is essentially a lie. This one's got a dog named Keira Knightley, kleptomania, kidnapping, and mini-golf. In terms of emotional mayhem, maybe it isn't quite as different from *I Am Danvers* as I thought.

For more, visit booklife.com/kaminski1

meets *The Wonder Years* in this emotionally gripping, character-driven novel about the ripple effect of a split-second decision to protect a friend.

Unfamiliar Territory



Mary Smathers. MKS Publishing. \$17.99 paper (364p), ISBN 979-8-9906745-0-9; \$9.99 e-book, ISBN 979-8-9906745-1-6

Amazon, IngramSpark

The gripping story of one woman's journey through Gold Rush California to find her son, and herself.

Poetry

Poems with a Bite Taken Out of Them



R. Clare Singh. Dorrance Publishing. \$15.99 paper (144p), ISBN 979-8-89127-564-5; \$10.99 e-book, ISBN 979-8-89127-062-6

Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Dorrance

Poems with a Bite Taken Out of Them is a testimony to silent suffering, indoctrination, emergence, and claiming one's identity, all at a steep cost.

Vietnam As They Knew It: A Tribute in Verse to All Brave Men and Women Who Served There



Jerry L. Staub. Jerry L. Staub. \$12.95 paper (102p), ISBN 979-8-3134-4615-8

Amazon

The Vietnam war was different from our prior wars. We faced an enemy we couldn't see, using indefensible tactics, unable to tell friend from foe. These poems are raw, gritty, and true!

Visions of a Gifted Poet



Jerrel E. Wolfe. Jerrel Wolfe Publishing. \$15.99 paper (152p), ISBN 979-8-89395-939-0

Amazon

Visions of a Gifted Poet brings to parchment two decades of this

author's finest poetry. Experience

romance, adventure, love, the human spirit, and the richer meaning of life.

Mystery/Thriller

After You, My Dear: I Will Always Follow You



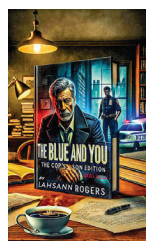
P.J. Ellis. iUniverse. \$24.99 paper (336p), ISBN 978-1-6632-5451-1; \$3.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-6632-5452-8

Amazon

Selena flees an abusive marriage and befriends a

detective in small-town Georgia, but her past catches up with her, forcing her to muster her strength and courage.

The Blue and You: The Cop's Son Edition



(BITA #2)
Lahsann Rogers. Golden Glow Films A Music Only Records Company. \$9.99 paper (166p), ISBN 979-8-3492-6671-3; \$4.99 e-book, ASIN B0DZWGKXQ5

Apple Books, IngramSpark

Charlie Williams uncovers his father's dark past, forcing him to choose between loyalty and truth in this gripping New York City tale of legacy, justice, and survival.

Damaged Goods



Debbi Mack. Renegade Press. \$11.99 paper (206p), ISBN 978-1-7341094-1-2; \$2.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-7341094-0-5

Amazon, Apple Books, Barnes & Noble, Kobo

Marine veteran Erica Jensen works as an unlicensed PI, while battling PTSD and opioid addiction. But when a man has her look for his missing daughter, Erica runs across a murder victim.

The Half-Life of Carson Hood



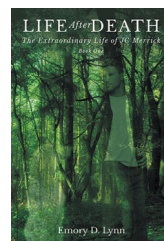
Chuck Carter. DFH Books. \$19.99 paper (310p), ISBN 979-8-9878986-0-4; \$5.99 e-book, ISBN 979-8-9878986-1-1

Amazon, G.J. Ford Book Store, IngramSpark, Righton Books

In a remote cemetery, Carson Hood finds

someone buried in his grave, putting him on a collision course with a man planning to kill the President, without a sound or a trace.

Life After Death: The Extraordinary Life of



JC Merrick

Emory Lynn. Hawes & Jenkins. \$15.40 paper (322p), ISBN 978-1-64784-317-8; \$8.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-63784-318-5

Amazon, Barnes & Noble

1994. JC Merrick, 16 and orphaned, inherits a fortune. Dark forces enter to end his life, but why? Because he can heal injured animals? Can he heal people? Let's follow his journey!



Razor's Return

Kimberly A. Biggerstaff. KAB-BAK. \$19.99 paper (214p), ISBN 979-8-9900297-5-0; \$3.99 e-book, ISBN 979-8-9900297-6-7

Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Dorrance

Razor thought he left the battles behind when he retired from the Navy SEALs. A trip back to the woman he let go forces Razor into saving Eve from the violent man controlling her.



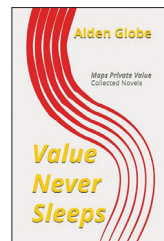
Transcendence

James Azinheira. James Azinheira. \$14.95 paper (350p), ISBN 979-8-9908199-1-7; \$3.99

e-book, ASIN B0F2J8GJ9V
Amazon

Amnesiac and homeless, he joins a community, but his past resurfaces as he becomes key to stopping a rogue AI, navigating survival, identity, and a transformative future for humanity.

Value Never Sleeps (Maps Private Value Thrillers)



Alden Globe. A.Globe MediaGroup. \$11.99 paper (410p), ISBN 979-8-3364-8821-0; \$11.99 e-book, ASIN B0DB6BG777

Amazon

The world's greatest

BookLife Talks with Christopher and Rachel Domarew

Like many people, for the Domarews, Covid-19 highlighted the need for a change. By reevaluating the structure of their lives, they were able to prioritize what mattered. This approach led them to write *The Time Doctors* to help others “streamline their approach to life.”

What is the story behind *The Time Doctors*—why and how did you write it?

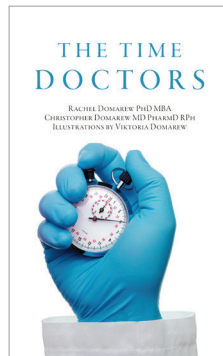
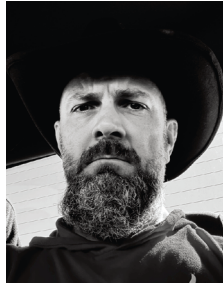
Living and working through Covid identified the need to create a highly effective structure for prioritizing our lives. We refined our approach and coping strategies and learned to draw on prior experiences to help us meet what life has to offer. We were driven to innovate and create platforms for growth. We succeeded and we failed. Several topics began to share a common thread and had profound effects on our family. As a physician running an ICU and a highly qualified project manager, we combined our skills and strategizing into Team Domarew and developed this book.

Can you talk about how your backgrounds helped inform the book?

Rachel M. Domarew, Ph.D., MBA is a project manager, homeschool teacher, and the strategic mind behind Team Domarew. Her expertise lies in supply chains and social care. She uses her educational background to enrich our family’s life. A Brazilian jiu-jitsu enthusiast, she shares her life strategies in this book and identifies, extracts, and highlights many of the principles we use regularly to tackle life’s challenges. Rachel is well positioned to examine workflow and has an exceptional eye for process flaws. She immediately spots an asset or liability as it may relate to our family’s effective use of time.

Christopher A. Domarew, MD, PharmD, RPh is a physician specializing in pharmacology and internal medicine. He leverages his years of experience as a licensed pharmacist and doctor in his practice. An avid traveler and Brazilian jiu-jitsu practitioner, he brings a surgical precision to daily planning. The book shares the insights he has gleaned from his

professional and personal life. Chris manages a busy rural medical practice and inpatient hospital service with an ICU. Having practiced as a retail pharmacist during perhaps one of the busiest times for pharmacy expansion in the U.S., he learned the importance of workflow and the need for efficiency early in his career.



What makes *The Time Doctors* stand out in the self-help genre?

This book presents real-world evidence of methods used to confront the rigors of life and create a blueprint by which to live. Time, or lack thereof, continues to inspire the authors to create content that helps to streamline and better fit together the pieces of life’s puzzle. The strategies employed are proven to deliver time and time again. The subject areas selected in this book have significant consequences and are high stakes. Financial planning, travel, life insurance, tax preparedness, retirement, asset protection, and health and wellness were chosen with purpose and intention.

Who is your ideal reader and why?

The ideal reader is someone hoping to streamline their approach to life. There is a strong focus on workflow that would be of great benefit to individuals in the workforce, as well as chapters that relate to health, wellness, asset protection, tax strategies, and retirement planning that pertain to individuals of any background. The content in this book is not taught in most college curriculums or trade schools despite its importance. Very little is done to help individuals create a meaningful structure or plan by which to live. The ideal reader is one who would like clear actionable strategies with great impact.

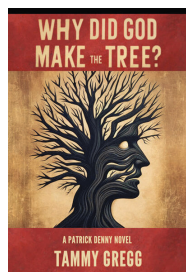
What does the future look like for *The Time Doctors*?

The Time Doctors will continue to change and develop to meet the needs of the reader by maintaining a collection of current realities useful to readers of any background at any time. The strategies we develop to cope with life’s challenges enable us to embrace every event we encounter in our lives. The ability to tackle the topics discussed positions the reader best for the future.

For more, visit booklife.com/domarew

value engineer confronts personal issues while tackling global challenges—AI, climate change, and fake pharmaceuticals containing illicit fentanyl—while solving business challenges for corporate clients.

Why Did God Make the Tree?: A Patrick



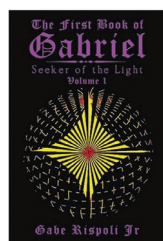
Denny Novel

Tammy Gregg. Cemetery Hill Publications. \$28.99 (306p), ISBN 979-8-9923271-0-6; \$17.99 paper (306p), ISBN 979-8-9923271-1-3
Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Bookshop.org, Ingram

Ex-horror novelist Dr. Patrick Denny's unconventional methods clash with hospital norms. As he treats patients, his dark past emerges, blurring fiction and reality.

SF/Fantasy/Horror

The First Book of Gabriel: Seeker of the



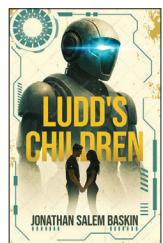
Light, Vol. 1

Gabe Rispoli Jr. Leap Write Literary. \$12.99 paper (278p), ISBN 979-8-89376-109-2
Amazon

A story of close companions that get

propelled into a dangerous journey across the Middle East to Europe, in search of the light.

Ludd's Children



Jonathan Salem Baskin. Spiritual Telegraph. \$11.99 paper (340p), ISBN 978-0-9998713-1-7; \$9.95 e-book, ASIN B0F3ZNP9C
Amazon

Two people and an industrial robot discover a conspiracy to enslave a generation of newly conscious AIs.

The RAL: Raltrepatile Allaurian Lepidon



Mark Buhler. Authors' Tranquility Press. \$12.99 paper (226p), ISBN 978-1-965463-55-0
Amazon
Humans search for life in space, only to discover the RAL:

intelligent, dangerous beings who see us as pets, food, or slaves for their galactic empire.

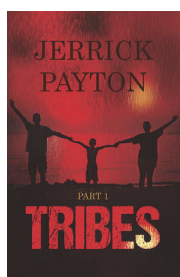
Sancta Femina



Kathryn Combs. Amadeus Publishing. \$15.99 paper (534p), ISBN 979-8-9911879-0-9; \$9.99 e-book, ISBN 979-8-9911879-2-3

Amazon, Barnes & Noble

In a fractured future, soldier Hella Nazari battles a dark regime on postapocalyptic Earth while uncovering her potential as a genetic key in an intergalactic struggle for survival.



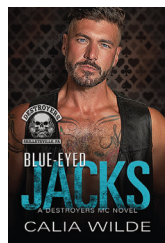
Tribes: Part 1

Jerrick Payton. Dorrance Publishing. \$16.99 paper (176p), ISBN 978-1-68537-174-6; \$11.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-68537-717-5

Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Dorrance

David learns he and his family are vampires and, just as he accepts his fate, has to flee in the night to escape a mob threatening to kill them all.

Romance/Erotica



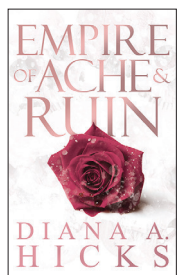
Blue-Eyed Jacks

Calia Wilde. Misfit Ink Books. \$16.99 paper (314p), ISBN 978-1-962062-27-5; \$5.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-962062-26-8

Amazon, Apple Books, Barnes & Noble, Google

Play, IngramSpark, Kobo

She's Jackson's one and only, but Kate is another man's woman. He'll do anything to save her, even if it means losing her. Will their second chance survive?



Empire of Ache & Ruin

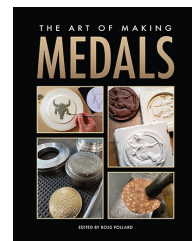
Diana A. Hicks. HMG. \$19.99 paper (590p), ISBN 978-1-949760-93-4; \$6.99 e-book, ASIN B0DY8CTBYQ

Amazon
The story follows Paloma Davis, a

talented ballet dancer and senator's daughter, who becomes entangled with the mysterious and wealthy Tristan Archer.

Nonfiction

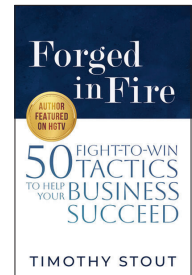
The Art of Making Medals



Ross Pollard. American Medallist Sculpture Association. \$19.99 paper (88p), ISBN 979-8-218-64881-7
Amazon

This richly illustrated book explores a wide range of traditional sculpting, casting, and die-striking techniques via step-by-step demonstrations and essays.

Forged in Fire: 50 Fight-to-Win Tactics to Help Your Business Succeed



Timothy Stout. Selfpublishing.com. \$11.99 paper (192p), ISBN 979-8-89316-431-2; \$4.99 e-book, ISBN 979-8-89316-430-5
Amazon, Apple Books, Barnes & Noble

Feeling stuck or overwhelmed? This book blends fighter grit with business strategy to help you lead with resilience and turn obstacles into wins.

A Good Life: The Perception of Perfection; An Autobiography (revised ed.)

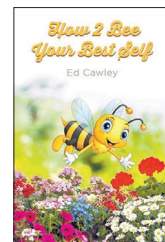
Karl Lorenz Willett. Karl Lorenz Willett. \$21.99



(410p), ISBN 978-1-80541-710-1; \$4.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-80541-711-8

Amazon, Apple Books
The book is a powerful recount of my life's trials, tribulations, and self-discovery.

How 2 Bee Your Best Self



Ed Cawley. Go to Publish. \$7.98 paper (96p), ISBN 978-1-64749-217-5
Amazon

This book encourages everyone to become more compassionate, responsible, successful, and an overall better person.

BookLife Talks with Albert Jung

In a book that BookLife Reviews called “fascinating” and an “intricate but understandable guide on the Korean writing system,” Jung introduces readers to Han’gŭl, Korea’s centuries-old system, in a unique way. As Jung puts it, the book is “a tool for writing names the way they sound... one that doesn’t require knowing Korean.”

Can you give a brief explanation as to what Han’gŭl is?

Han’gŭl is the Korean alphabet, created in the 15th century by King Sejong and his scholars. It was designed so that every Korean speaker—regardless of education or class—could write clearly, accurately, and phonetically. It was built not only to be learned but to be heard. At its core, Han’gŭl is about matching sound to symbol with clarity and intention. That belief—that everyone deserves to be heard the way they sound—is what inspired this book. What many don’t realize is that Han’gŭl was designed with the potential to represent more than just Korean. Over the centuries, it has been used to transcribe Chinese, Sanskrit, Mongolian, Japanese, and Manchu. It was a script that proved, time and again, its ability to listen across languages.

What prompted you to put together this book?

I’ve spent years quietly asking the same question: why do so many names lose their sounds when they cross cultures? Names are how we carry our history, our family, our voice. But names don’t just belong to people—they belong to buildings, places, memories, even moments in history. And when those names are erased, changed, or mispronounced, it’s not just a loss of accuracy—it’s a loss of power, presence, and how we choose to remember. That’s what this book tries to restore. It’s a tool for writing names the way they sound, using an expanded Han’gŭl system—one that doesn’t require knowing Korean. It revives an old idea for a very current problem: how to keep your voice yours, wherever you are.

What kind of research did you need to do in order to write *What’s Your Name*?

The book draws from phonetics, writing systems, and history. I looked at how Han’gŭl was once used not only for Korean but for many other languages with surprising accuracy. It was always designed to be expansive, capable of recording nearly any sound with clarity. But over time, parts of that system were forgotten, restricted, or simplified—sometimes by outside forces, sometimes by institutions preserving only what they inherited. That’s why this book isn’t just about using Han’gŭl but about reviving what it was meant to be. It asks: what could a writing system do if we let it stretch again?

If you could pick anyone to give this book to, who would it be and why?

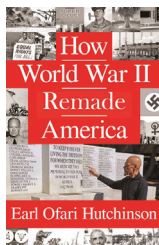
Anyone who’s had to explain their name. Anyone who’s had it mispronounced, shortened, or “fixed.” And also—to people who speak names for a living. Teachers. News anchors. Event hosts. Sports commentators. Their voices shape how we hear the world. Saying a name right isn’t about getting it perfect or merely being polite. It’s about care. It’s power made respectful.



What is the one thing you most want to tell readers about you or your book?

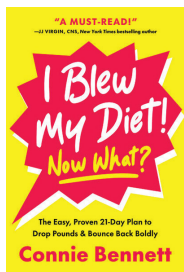
This book isn’t about teaching Korean. It’s about making sound visible—especially in names. It’s for anyone tired of hearing their name misread and for those who want to say it right. We don’t write names just to organize. We write them to remember, and that includes more than people; it includes places, songs, traditions, even fleeting moments. Think of your favorite song. You don’t just remember the words—you remember the voice. Sometimes it’s the exact voice from a concert. Sometimes it’s the voice that made it unforgettable. We want to carry the sound—not just the letters. What if we could keep that sound and put it on the page? What if someone could read your name and almost hear you? That’s what this book is trying to offer: a way to keep names close to the sound they came from and closer to who they’ve always belonged to.

For more, visit booklife.com/jung1

How World War II Remade America

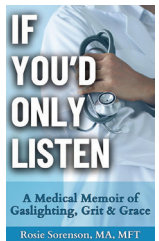
Earl Ofari Hutchinson. Middle Passage Press. \$19.95 paper (232p), ISBN 979-8-89619-042-4
IngramSpark

How World War II Remade America pays tribute to the profound changes the war brought to America, and the men and women who made those changes.

I Blew My Diet! Now What?: The Easy, Proven 21-Day Plan to Drop Pounds & Bounce Back Boldly

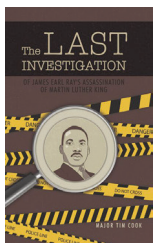
Bounce Back Boldly
Connie Bennett, illus. by Isabella Bannerman. Greenleaf Book Group. \$28.95 (360p), ISBN 979-8-88645-280-8; \$9.99 e-book, ISBN 979-8-88645-281-5
Amazon, BAM,

Barnes & Noble, Bookshop.org, Indigo Journalist, former carb addict, and best-selling author Connie Bennett (*Sugar Shock!* and *Beyond Sugar Shock*) explores why and when we eat badly and how we can bounce back boldly.

If You'd Only Listen: A Medical Memoir of Gaslighting, Grit & Grace

Rosie Sorenson. Daffodil Publications. \$15.95 paper (296p), ISBN 978-8-218-442460-0; \$3.99 e-book, ASIN BODFTRS1B7
Amazon, IngramSpark
The author navigates devastating medical

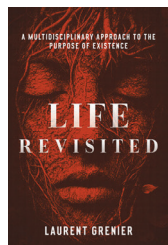
errors as she has to fight to save her husband's life, before and after his major surgery. The narrative reads like a medical thriller.

The Last Investigation

Tim Cook. Dorrance Publishing. \$35.99 (212p), ISBN 979-8-89341-195-9; \$28.99 paper, ISBN 979-8-89341-694-7
Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Dorrance

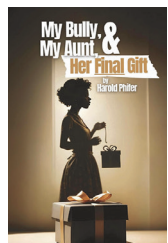
Filled with detailed notes, timelines, and eye-opening accounts,

author Tim Cook reveals the single, true murderer who ended the legendary life of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. far too early.

Life Revisited: A Multidisciplinary Approach to the Purpose of Existence

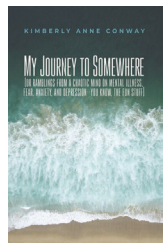
Laurent Grenier. Soledit. \$10.99 paper (146p), ISBN 979-8-89686-973-3
Amazon, Barnes & Noble
Unlocking the secrets of existence. A bold inquiry into life's greatest questions, blending

philosophy and science.

My Bully, My Aunt, & Her Final Gift

Harold Phifer. Bookbaby. \$13.95 paper (136p), ISBN 979-8-3509-7997-8; \$9.99 e-book, ASIN BODVV8PJY1
Amazon, Bookbaby, Bookshop.org

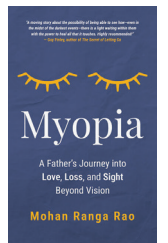
Many people waited for Aunt Kathy to pass away but no one wanted to see her off to hell. So, I had to create a buzz before her send-off to Satan, until Pastor Keith intervened.

My Journey to Somewhere (Or Ramblings from a Chaotic Mind on Mental Illness, Fear, Anxiety, and Depression—You Know, the Fun Stuff)

Kimberly Anne Conway. Dorrance Publishing. \$14.99 paper (118p), ISBN 979-8-89341-087-7; \$9.99 e-book, ISBN 979-8-89341-586-5
Amazon, Barnes & Noble,

Dorrance

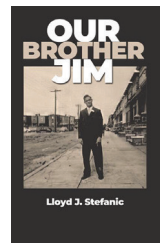
My Journey to Somewhere chronicles the author's journey to becoming a published writer; she hopes her story will open up the conversation about mental illness.

Myopia: A Father's Journey into Love, Loss, and Sight Beyond Vision

Mohan Ranga Rao. Wellness Writers Press. \$14.95 paper (196p), ISBN 979-8-9912047-0-5; \$6.99 e-book, ISBN 979-8-9912047-1-2
Amazon, Barnes & Noble,

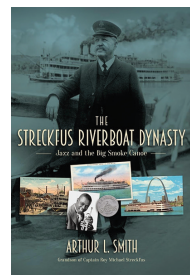
Books-A-Million, Bookshop.org

Told with unflinching honesty, *Myopia* explores the beauty and pain of parenting a child with challenges and the gifts of resilience, acceptance, and growth that arise from suffering.

Our Brother Jim

Lloyd J. Stefanic. Dorrance Publishing. \$11.99 paper (60p), ISBN 979-8-88925-018-0; \$6.99 e-book, ISBN 979-8-88925-518-5
Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Dorrance

A touching and deeply personal memoir, *Our Brother Jim* recounts the author's experience growing up with a brother with disabilities.

The Streckfus Riverboat Dynasty: Jazz and the Big Smoke Canoe

Arthur L. Smith. Arthur L. Smith. \$45.91 paper (408p), ISBN 979-8-9885466-0-3; \$15.99 e-book, ASIN B0CP8SJLZ
Amazon, Barnes & Noble

This is a thrilling story of the days of excursion riverboat glory on the great Mississippi and Ohio rivers.



Things I Wanted My Grandsons to Know Before I Leave
Kenn Stobbe. Page Solutions. \$9.99 paper (204p), ISBN 979-8-89633-019-6
Amazon

A collection of quotes, sayings, snippets, and observations that author Kenn Stobbe believes helped him to live a successful God-centered life.



Your Journey to Successful Parenting: Ages 2-11
Alexandra Rogers. A Rogers Books. \$24.99 (258p), ISBN 979-8-9916156-0-0; \$19.99 paper (218p), ISBN 979-8-9916156-1-7
Amazon, Barnes & Noble, IngramSpark

An engaging and easy-to-navigate guide to

BookLife Talks with Anthony Lee

Author and medical technician Lee presents *Toxic Minds*, a follow-up to his first book, which sees Dr. Mark Lin infiltrating an anti-medicine cult. BookLife Reviews called the book “tense” and a “slow burn domestic terrorism thriller.” We spoke with Lee about the inspiration for the book and the real-life connection that Lee shares with his protagonist.

Did you base your main character on anyone specific?

Mark is a darker version of me in the past. Many years ago, I graduated from medical school and got into residency training before calling it quits because I could not handle the responsibility of being a physician. I became happier, but I still wondered how much worse things would be if I'd just kept doing a job that made me miserable. This thought experiment solidified Mark's core traits: a conflicting mix of proficiency in clinical medicine and cynicism about the sad state of humanity. Then I gave him my introspective nature, my sense of right versus wrong, and my taste in music and movies.

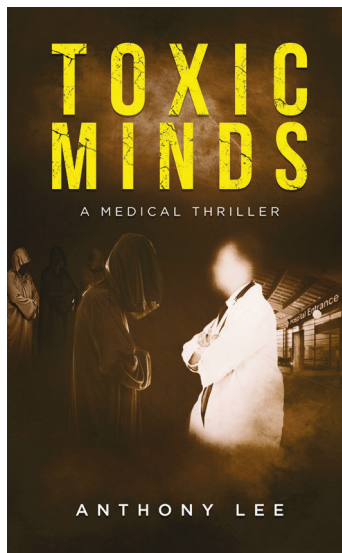
To what extent did you draw from real life for the plot of *Toxic Minds*?

Each book in my series explores the intersection between healthcare and societal issues. *Toxic Minds* centers on disinformation and its widespread and influential, yet destructive, grip on vulnerable individuals. We have seen it convince people to reject evidence-based medical treatments in favor of unproven therapies, question the expertise of scientists, and even escalate heated political rhetoric to the point of hate or violence. All of it has concerned me so much that I pictured a malignant cult with an anti-medicine agenda. That's how *Toxic Minds* was born. I became inspired to write this novel as both an entertaining thriller and a cautionary tale about cults and disinformation.

Has your writing process changed from the first book in the series to this one?



For the most part, my writing process has been consistent and similar for both the first book in the series, *Doctor Lucifer*, and the second and latest entry, *Toxic Minds*. I start with internet research into major topics for my novel and various smaller plot elements, all to ensure accuracy and realism. Then I write a rough chapter-by-chapter outline, from which I put together a very crude first draft. This is followed by five or more draft edits from beginning to end until the whole manuscript feels perfect. My editor then suggests final revisions. I feel this sequence of steps works well for me.



What do you think a good medical thriller should accomplish?

The basic element of a good medical thriller is an engaging plot that centers on some kind of medical crisis or mystery, all while giving readers an up-close glimpse into the world of science and medicine. But if you ask me what makes a great medical thriller, not just a good one, it's the addition of literary depth, in the form of complex character and thematic development. That's the goal with my medical thriller novels: excite the reader with a moving plot, an intriguing antihero protagonist, and powerful social commentary, all at the same time. I want readers to think about the book long after finishing it.

mentary, all at the same time. I want readers to think about the book long after finishing it.

Can readers expect more books starring Mark?

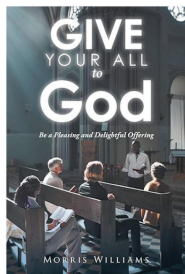
The Dr. Mark Lin Medical Thrillers series will have lots of books. My two books so far are just the beginning. There are many ways for me to present societal threats colliding with healthcare, explore different parts of Mark's psyche and growth, and hold a mirror up to the world we are living in. I see my books as reinventing and giving new life to the medical thriller genre. The thrill of contributing highly original medical thriller stories will surely keep me and this book series going for quite some time.

For more, visit booklife.com/lee

help parents master any kid-shaped dilemma using attention, conversation, logic, modeling, storytelling, and powerful behavior strategies.

Religion/Spirituality

Give Your All to God: Be a Pleasing and



Delightful Offering

Morris Williams. Brilliant Books Literary. \$11.99 paper (182p), ISBN 979-8-88945-362-8

Amazon

Sixteen worship behaviors that we can offer to God every day.

Just Like That



Frederica McCurdy Williams.

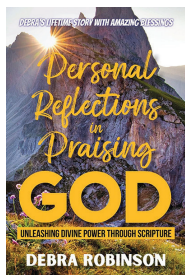
Frederica McCurdy Williams. \$20.90 paper (126p), ISBN 979-8-8536-8020-3; \$9.99 e-book, ASIN B0CCT3G3H5

Amazon

Left behind after the Rapture, Isabella faces chaos and spiritual warfare in a journey of faith, redemption, and resilience in this inspiring Christian novel.

Personal Reflections in Praising God:

Unleashing Divine Power Through Scripture



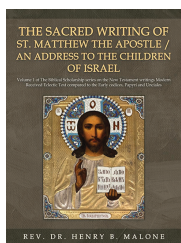
Debra Robinson.

CitiofBooks. \$24.99 (420p), ISBN 979-8-89391-291-3; \$14.05 paper, ISBN 978-1-960952-93-6

authordebrarobinson.com, Amazon, Barnes & Nobles, Citi of Books

In this compilation, Robinson details how, through scripture, He provides guidance and direction to live the best life, including steps to receiving eternal life.

The Sacred Writing of St. Matthew the Apostle / An Address to the Children of



Israel

Henry B. Malone. Authors' Tranquility Press. \$37.99 paper (336p), ISBN 978-1-966088-43-1

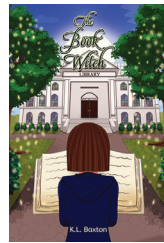
Amazon

Pastor Hank, a resilient leader shaped by a

tough childhood, champions spiritual healing through ministry, counseling, and teaching, with over 58 years of family joy.

Children's/YA

The Book Witch: An Urban Fantasy Coming-of-Age Novel



K.L. Baxton, illus. by Bruce

Giannini. IngramSpark.

\$25.99 (204p), ISBN 979-8-9922394-1-6; \$11.99 paper, ISBN 979-8-9922394-2-3

Amazon

Natalia reads at her local library because she's broke, but the mayor says he's destroying it. She learns she has the power to save it but must do so before it's too late.

The Constitution Kids



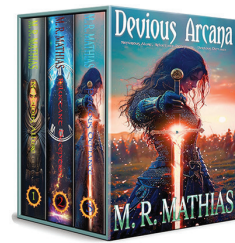
Gary Gabel. Mascot Books.

\$16.95 paper (186p), ISBN 979-8-89138-390-6

Mascot Books, Amazon, Barnes & Noble

Three teens discover a magical book with historical figures who teach them about the Constitution and its amendments.

Devious Arcana: Trilogy 1



M.R. Mathias.

Digital Wizard One.

\$14.99 e-book, ASIN B0F2XZ1YC8; \$9.88 audio, ASIN B0CY4SXHJF

Amazon

In an amazing

original fantasy realm, full of vampires, shapeshifters, unique lore, and terrible danger, an orphan and his beloved escape a malevolent pirate with the only key to his infamous treasure vault.

Dreamcatcher



Angela Ellen Grey, illus. by

Robert Hartranft. Shady Oak Press. \$16.99 paper (340p), ISBN 978-1-961841-08-6;

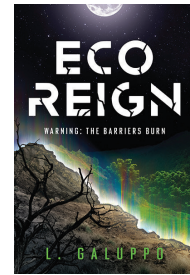
\$7.99 e-book, ASIN B0F63YBL21

Amazon

Dash brushes against her dreamcatcher that opens a door to a

mystical land where dreamers and misfits arrive through fractured portals... but few ever leave.

Eco Reign: Warning: The Barriers Burn



L. Galuppo. River Grove

Books. \$19.99 paper (326p), ISBN 978-1-63299-952-8; \$9.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-63299-953-5

Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Bookshop.org, Hudson

A YA sci-fi imagining the aftermath of an alien invasion on Earth, blending a character-driven story with themes of environmentalism, survival, and human resilience.

Fire Island



M.R. Mathias and Suzza

Sarra. Digital Wizard One. \$19.99 paper (476p), ISBN 979-8-3147-7317-8; \$2.99 e-book, ASIN B0F1ZWGGJL

Amazon

After escaping slavers, the Wickedwood, raging ogres, and a duke who wants him dead, Xak Stellar braves a dragon-infested island, to save the one person who can clear his name.

Four-Legged Heroes: The Mama Magina Books



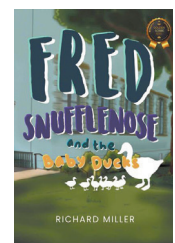
Mary Virginia McCormick

Pittman. Brilliant Books Literary. \$9.99 paper (42p), ISBN 978-1-64133-761-8

Amazon

Three heartwarming tales of husky heroism showcase courage, loyalty, and wolflike spirit, including the 1925 Iditarod. Sure to move and inspire animal lovers.

Fred Snufflenose and the Baby Ducks



Richard Miller. Milton &

Hugo. \$21.99 (26p), ISBN 979-8-89285-370-5;

\$11.99 paper, ISBN 979-8-89285-369-9

Miltonandhugo.com,

Amazon, Barnes & Noble

In *Fred Snufflenose and*

the Baby Ducks, Fred, a compassionate creature, embarks on a journey through Bethlehem, Penn., to find a missing mother duck and her ducklings.

I Miss You: Love Otis



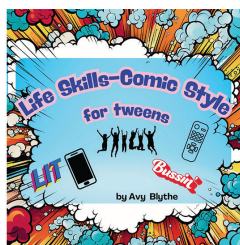
Christine Grieves. OhG Design. \$17.99 (50p), ISBN 979-8-9928270-0-2; \$9.99 paper, ISBN 979-8-9928270-1-9

Amazon, Barnes & Noble

Otis is a dog and has a best friend named Grace. One day Grace went away. He's not sure why, but Otis misses all of the fun things that they do. Where are you, Grace?

Life Skills-Comic Style for Tweens

Avy Blythe. AimeeAnn Blythe. \$11.95 paper (28p), ISBN 979-8-3135-7294-9
Amazon



what? It's *not* 125 pages of boring text.

This graphic-style guide breaks down basic life skills in a way that's actually fun to read. It's fun. It's real. And guess

Pigs Don't Fly!



Ginger Nielson. Carrot Flower Books. \$21.99 (44p), ISBN 979-8-9858879-3-8

Amazon, Barnes & Noble

As almost everyone knows, pigs don't fly! That doesn't

stop Maxwell from thinking about it.

Some Species of Outsider-ness

Angela Grey. Shady Oak Press. \$16.99 paper (290p), ISBN 978-1-961841-35-2; \$7.99



e-book, ASIN B0F2879CM6
Amazon

Piper and Slater stumble upon something dangerous and realize they'll have to trust each other to figure out the truth to survive.

We're Going to the Dinosaur Forest



Marie Nichols, illus. by Penny Weber. Marnicpress. \$24.99 (44p), ISBN 979-8-218-48694-5; \$12.99 paper, ISBN 979-8-218-40770-4

Amazon, Barnes &

Noble, Bookshop.org, IndieBound

A young boy decides to explore the Dinosaur Forest with his grandmother, where they unexpectedly encounter stomping, roaring dinosaurs and must try to outrun the danger.



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FICTION

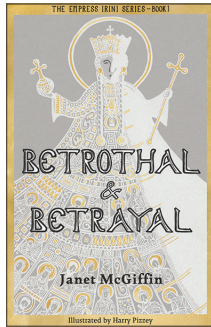
EDITOR'S PICK

Betrothal & Betrayal: The Empress Irini Series, Book I

Janet McGiffin | Scotland Street Press
248p, trade paper, \$17.95, ISBN 978-1-910895-788

Set in a vivid eighth-century Constantinople, the thrilling first entry in McGiffin's Empress Irini series revolves around 17-year-old Thekla, who has run away from home in search of the man to whom she has been betrothed. A long, tumultuous odyssey ensues, across convents and the busy markets of Constantinople, culminating in much spirited intrigue in the palace of Emperor Constantine himself. Along the way, Thekla bumps into a slew of fascinating figures, from the self-proclaimed monk Brother Elias to Irini of Athens, who goes on to wed the Emperor's son and become—as the series' title suggests—the empress. But Thekla is soon caught up in a dangerous game of thrones. Will she escape unscathed?

From the very start, McGiffin wrings page-turning tension from the challenges of life as an unmarried woman in the Byzantine Empire. There are often just two



Thrilling series starter of Byzantine intrigue, politics, and women's lives.

Great for fans of Peggy Joque Williams's *Courting the Sun*, Susan C. Wilson's *House of Atreus* series.

prompting the observation that it's not easy to serve both God and the crown.

At times, the palace politics and incessant tug-of-war for power can feel repetitive, especially as similar rumours are narrated by different characters over the course of the book. The competing factions, of course, mean the story has many moving parts, making it at times a challenge to keep up with. But McGiffin offers a compelling glimpse into royal and monastic life in the Byzantine Empire, and she brings power and resonant insight to her portrayal of women during this era. Lovers of women-centric books and stories of ancient politics and intrigue will relish this.

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

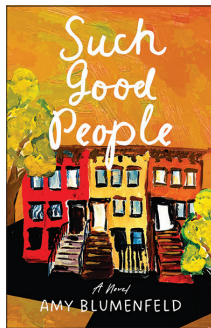
FICTION

Such Good People

Amy Blumenfeld | Sparkpress
360p, trade paper, \$17.99, ISBN 978-1-684-63322-7

Blumenfeld (*The Cast*) probes the limits of an unshakable friendship while treading lightly on themes of injustice and redemption in this thoughtful story. When Rudy DeFranco's protection of his best friend, journalism student April Zagoda, turns into a bar fight that leaves a well-connected young man dead, both of their lives are irreparably changed. Rudy is pushed into a plea bargain sentencing him to manslaughter, while April is expelled for her involvement. Flash forward 13 years, and April is happily married to State Attorney candidate Peter Nelson, raising kids together in Chicago—until Rudy comes up for release and April's past connection to him threatens to derail her new life.

Blumenfeld capably depicts the consequences of being caught in the wrong place at the wrong time, though the devastating circumstances that both Rudy and April experience seem to have a minimal impact on their core development.



Compassionate story that sees justice paid for past wrongs.

Great for fans of Michael Eon's *These Things Happen*, David Chariandy's *Brother*.

touches on clear class implications in Rudy's prosecution. Still, that part of the story is framed more as individual drama than systemic unfairness.

Surprisingly, Jillian Jones emerges as perhaps the most memorable character, a wearisome standby recast into a determined advocate, prompting a late-in-the-game reveal that alters Rudy's case. That sets the story up for a redemptive finish, as Blumenfeld explores the inequities that contribute to imprisonment and the challenges of rebuilding a meaningful life after release, closing with a poignant reminder that “behind every docket number [is] a human being.”

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

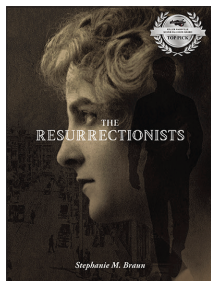
MYSTERY/THRILLER

The Resurrectionists

Stephanie M. Braun
337p, trade paper, \$14.99, ISBN 979-8-987727-0-6

Sharp-witted Jessica Chase carves a precarious path of independence in the shrouded streets of 1890s San Francisco in this smart historical debut. Jessica has left her former confidant and lover, a manipulative con artist named Felix Rodgers, back in Boston, yet even the firmest convictions can be shaken by old threats. Felix has come west, prowling the streets of the booming city with his arrogance and predatory instincts. Soon, Jessica's wealthy Uncle Alfie announces, “My girl, someone is poisoning me.” Shaken, Jessica decides to stop running away and agrees, reluctantly, to participate in a self-serving scheme of Felix's purportedly crafted to expose the assailant: a staged burial to fake Alfie's death—a plan as risky as it is ingenious.

Braun's narrative crackles with tension, delivering a fun and thrilling ride as Jessica orchestrates her counterplay: she will con her conman, who is eager to possess her. Enlisting a diverse and quirky squad—her long-lost brother Bayer, a séance mediator named Rebecca, and the burly circus strongman Boris—she attempts to outmaneuver



Thrilling 1890s San Francisco heist story and a woman's redemption.

Great for fans of Emma Donoghue's *Frog Music*, Karen Joy Fowler's *Sister Noon*.

cunning architect of her own redemption.

The pacing flags during chapters focused on Felix's indulgent drunken escapades, but Braun compensates with a layered portrayal of his character—a man with an “unlucky” past whose vulnerabilities are masked by his narcissism—rather than a one-dimensional villain. The novel is rich in fascinating and evocative historical detail, especially concerning the ethical ambiguities of the Gilded Age, like grave robbing in the name of medical progress. With its mix of clever and playful heists, eerie spiritual theatrics, and the seedy taverns and sinister graveyards of the Barbary Coast, readers will surely delight in this book.

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

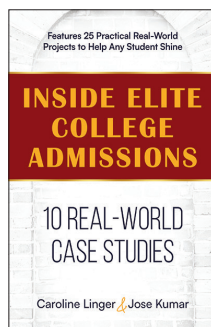
SELF-HELP, EDUCATION

**Inside Elite College Admissions:
10 Real-World Case Studies**

Caroline Linger & Jose Kumar | IngramsparK
132p, trade paper, \$19.99, ISBN 978-1-036-91452-3

Being accepted into an Ivy-level school is about much more than having a stand-out SAT score and high school transcript. Realizing they have an “investment” in their students, top-tier schools regularly seek those applicants who will help enhance their reputations as well. Linger and Kumar offer a hands-on roadmap to help take one’s application to that often elusive next level and get admission personnel to take notice. To that end, the authors present 10 anonymized case studies of successful applicants to a variety of Ivies, laying out how each presented their identity, passions, achievements, and more. The practical tips and takeaways that the authors draw from these examples—“Be Authentic”; “Show Impact”; “Reflect Meaningfully”—are rooted in one key insight: admission personnel look “beyond the numbers” when considering an applicant.

Simply put, when excellent scores and grades are the norm, the truly competi-



Highly practical look at crafting a winning application to Ivy League universities.

Great for fans of Deborah Bedor’s *The Exceptional Applicant*, Sara Harberson’s *Soundbite*.

tive student must demonstrate personal initiative, most notably in a sincere effort designed to help others—i.e., make the world a better place. The authors make a persuasive case that this principle holds true across fields. Whether a prospective student has a passion for art, technology, education, or healthcare is not important—all should demonstrate sincere initiative and how the applicant’s passions have demonstrably helped others. One example involves a student who designed an app to help analyze local park attendance, the data from which was used to improve area parks. Another turned a love of literature into a reading program for economically disadvantaged children. (Each case study includes copious examples of projects applicants-to-be could initiate.)

The authors analyze each case to illustrate how prospective students can apply the lessons to their own applications. Students aspiring to enroll in a leading university would be wise to put these lessons to work and become the “best version of themselves” well before they begin the application process.

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

POETRY

EDITOR’S PICK

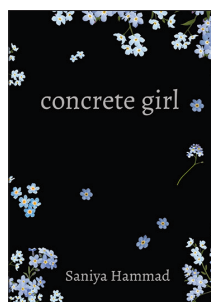
concrete girl

Saniya Hammad

142p, e-book, \$17, ISBN 979-8-218-62143-8

In Hammad’s radiant debut, the faucet is on and the feelings rush out: “I’ve cried anywhere and everywhere. But these stubborn laugh lines—forever creasing my makeup—will tell you that I’ve laughed even more.” Though this memoir-in-verse does not contain much cause for laughter, Hammad evinces a distinct joy in her unburdening, offering urgent testimony of survival and healing. Coping with the pressures of life as a Pakistani-American woman who has endured abusive parents and childhood trauma, the death of a sibling, and the myriad ways romantic love shapes women, Hammad uses poetry and prose as a vehicle for her sadness and a pathway to happiness.

Chapter names like “Girlhood” and “Motherhood” structure the collection and expand upon different chapters of self. In “Love & Heartbreak,” Hammad offers a clever set of bittersweet poems visibly influenced by Taylor Swift lyrics and the feminist millennial ethos that the pop star champions. Lines like “but the universe works against you when you’re 26 // drinks lips fingertips,” and “I should run out



Stellar memoir, in prose and poetry, of grief, romance, motherhood, and healing.

Great for fans of Lang Leav; Maggie Nelson’s *Bluets*.

the door // instead, I just ask him for a pen // and write him a love note on a napkin” viscerally capture the manic, breathless quality of young love and how it feels to be the young person experiencing it. In “Grief & Loss,” Hammad draws on the stages of grief to illustrate the chasm of sadness she keeps as a result of her sister’s death. Some poems are fueled by rage and anger—“I will never forgive the world // for it kept going on // spinning without shame // long after you had left it.”—while others show Hammad’s landscape of despair. Yet for Hammad, nothing is constant; healing is the result of change. In her final poem, she writes, “You are the roots, // I reside in the deepest blue petals. // We are never apart // always two parts of the same flower.”

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

PICTURE BOOKS

**Black Artists Rock! The Cool Kids’ Guide
A-Z, Vol. 2**

Cara Reese | Bea and Jo Press, LLC
58p, hardcover, \$20.99, ISBN 979-8-218-59181-6

With reverence and infectious enthusiasm, Reese leads a lyrical alphabetic journey through the lives and accomplishments of Black American pioneers in music, fashion, and art. Celebrating 26 creatives from A to Z with brisk three-stanza poems and bursts of digital art, Reese honors Black greatness across the arts, from authors and musicians to designers and visual artists. The lineup spans from dancer and choreographer Alvin Ailey to Zelda Wynn Valdes, “sewing Black elegance for ALL the world to see!” and from poet Langston Hughes to “self-taught” sculptor Ulysses Davis, who “insists that creativity has no price.” Young readers and adults alike will learn entertaining facts and find inspiration in this parade of artists and artistry from the Harlem Renaissance to the present.

Each person’s story is told in spirited verse that boasts its own boopish pulse: “Indigo words tumble typewriter keys / He’s uptown jazz and fresh shaved ice,” Reese writes of Hughes. Other subjects include blues musician B.B. King and his guitar, Lucille; “master painter” William H. Johnson; and Chef Leah Chase, whose



Inspiring A to Z guide to Black American creative greatness.

Great for fans of Queenbe Monyei’s *ABC Black History and Me*, Rio Cortez’s *The ABCs of Black History*.

lines suggest a continuity of rhythmic spirit between her art and that of the poets and musicians: “Tender shrimp swim in time with / smoked sausage / She’s the Queen of Creole Cuisine!” Vividly contrasting art styles give this guide a scrapbook feel, and Reese’s love of artists across disciplines is heartening—here’s Grandmaster Flash and Sun Ra alongside poet Mari Evans and the Ink Spots. At times, the uncredited art is vague or cluttered, with Stevie Wonder’s face obscured entirely and Aretha Franklin’s rendered unrecognizably in a generic, emojiified style. (More powerful is her poem: “Belting mountain-top demands for respect / To a Nation’s Young, Gifted, and Black.”) Some presentation issues are likewise distracting, like some stanzas printed in all caps, and the logic behind what letters apply to which trailblazers is sometimes obscure. Still, the book is inviting and informative, sure to inspire and motivate young readers to follow their dreams, hone their craft, and aspire to greatness.

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

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

FICTION

The Audient and the Phantom Night

Sadie Hewitt. Sadie Hewitt, \$16.99

trade paper (308p)

ISBN 979-8-9876432-3-5

A maiden falls in love with her captor in this sizzling romantasy from Hewitt (the Mage series). Fenna Terrigan believes that her brother, Dasos, died when his ship, the Polperro, sank. So when he appears unexpectedly in the middle of the night, she's shocked—and even more so when she learns he's being pursued by The Specter, aka Captain Devlin Cato, who's cursed to helm the ghost ship Phantom Night and can only be freed by offering 50 souls to the sea god, Liddros. Dasos admits he's in hot water: he owes Devlin 25 years of his life. Noble Fenna offers to take on his debt in exchange for his freedom. Aboard the ship, things heat up fast between Fenna and Devlin, who enter into a steamy affair almost immediately. Fenna finds herself increasingly drawn to Devlin as she learns the supernatural secrets that have kept him sailing the seas for over a century. The fairy tale-esque worldbuilding feels somewhat cramped, with many intriguing concepts mentioned but few fully fleshed out. Far more successful is the romance, which delivers both heat and heart. Readers who like their romantasies extra spicy will want to check this out.

The Grand Puppet Master

Eddie Shay. Tasman Tide, \$2.99

e-book (275p)

ASIN B0DG1Z1F8Z

Shay debuts with a spine-tingling techno-thriller. When Lacey Green was a child, her nanny, Mia Liao, suggested she harness her intense curiosity to help others as a detective. As an adult, Lacey has become a popular TikTok PI with assistance from Mia, who helps design her elaborate disguises. Lacey draws on those skills when her father, Shawn, dies of a suspected suicide in Hong Kong, soon after sending Lacey a cryptic message warning her not to travel to his hometown because “there are demons here lurking in the shadows. And if they catch you, they’ll

never let you go.” After a little digging, she comes to suspect that Shawn's death is connected to a bizarre disease outbreak that causes those infected to devour their own body parts. The outbreak itself may be tied to technology Shawn was developing to treat severe mental illness, and the more Lacey investigates, the more she becomes convinced that Shawn's work could spell doom for the entire world. Shay smoothly combines a chilling premise, exciting action, and a consistently captivating mystery. It's an auspicious first outing.

NONFICTION

The Focused Faith: Detox Your Digital Life, Reclaim Hijacked Attention, Build Habits for Focus & Joy

Brian S. Bovee. Brian S. Bovee,

\$9.99 e-book (146p)

ASIN B0DGZ7T1GM

This smart debut guide from Bovee, a professor of information systems at California Baptist University, challenges Christians to swap the “superficial satisfaction” of a tech-obsessed life for a more fulfilling relationship with God and themselves. Unpacking the factors that fracture attention, he explains how the attention economy is dominated by platforms that utilize algorithms and addictive scroll features to maximize time spent on their sites, conditioning users to seek instant gratification and leaving them perpetually distracted and unfulfilled. To disconnect, the author writes, one should identify goals “that align with your passions and allow you to further the kingdom of God” and get into the habit of pursuing them via a deeply focused “flow state” (examples include writing, serving others, and worshiping). By practicing “monotasking,” one can cultivate a more sustained ability to focus and direct that renewed attention to practices like prayer. Drawing from research on the psychology of attention, his experience working in the tech world, and interviews with industry insiders, the author builds a lucid, evidence-based case for how technology is impacting faith, and cogently explains why willpower alone isn't enough to cure the distracted mind. It's a valuable resource.

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