

September 29, 2025

booklife®

— YOUR GUIDE TO SELF-PUBLISHING —

48 New BookLife Titles Listed • 27 New BookLife Titles Reviewed

Indie Spotlight

In this edition of our monthly thematic roundup of BookLife titles, we feature children's picture books.

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

Brianna's Shining Light

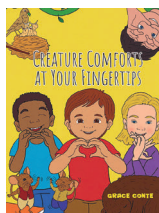


Nina Chabanov
ASIN B0FF6F93GY

Author statement: "Brianna's Shining Light is based on the true events I observed and experienced during my time in the classroom. It follows a quiet girl with special needs named Brianna, who communicates not with words,

but through the gentle glow she carries in her hands. Brianna finds comfort in the dress-up corner—until a thoughtful teacher comes up with an unusual idea to bring everyone together. This story celebrates inclusion, empathy, and the wonder of childhood, showing that connection can begin in the most unexpected ways."

Creature Comforts at Your Fingertips



Grace Conte
ASIN B0FH4RLTKS

Author statement: "Creature Comforts at Your Fingertips was inspired by the children I taught as a special needs teacher. Early on in my education career, I noticed that providing all the educational resources at my disposal for children

to learn did not matter if they were emotionally dysregulated and therefore unable to concentrate. What better way to help children notice their feelings, thus honoring their needs and turning on their innate intelligence to self-soothe, than by imitating their beloved animal friends through simple, playful hand mudras?"

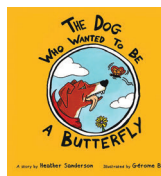
The Critter Collection



Bonnie Linder
ASIN B0FRSVC8L3

Author statement: "One day, I decided to write a story about a little frog who needed glasses, and it spiraled into eight little stories about eight little animals. You will meet a bunny with no name, a lonely porcupine, and a lost baby kangaroo. I wrote each story one story at a time, and came up with the book *The Critter Collection*. I think you'll like it! The stories are fun, and the illustrations are magnificent. I hope you enjoy it as much as I enjoyed writing it!"

The Dog Who Wanted to Be a Butterfly



Heather Sanderson
ISBN 978-1-06-899780-8

Author statement: "Franklin is a dog that I started walking in 2021. He's a rescue pup and has a few quirky traits that made me not only love him but become curious about why he might be doing certain things. Then, one day, it dawned on me—obviously he had a dream of becoming a butterfly. The writing process for this story was years in the making; it never would have happened without our near-daily walks."

Esha of Oak

Ashley Britten
ASIN B0DSFSFPF4

Author statement: "I wrote *Esha of Oak* from a place of love and magic.

Booksellers & Librarians:



How are you handling self-published books?

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

PLUS



Reviews

look for "self-published"
at the end of a review
[publishersweekly.com/
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paid reviews of self- or
indie-published titles
[publishersweekly.com/
BookLifeReviews](https://publishersweekly.com/BookLifeReviews)



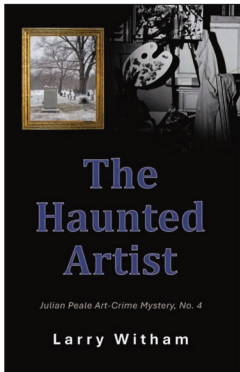
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BookLifePrize](https://publishersweekly.com/BookLifePrize)

Let us help you find the best in self-published books!

All powered by *Publishers Weekly* reviewers.



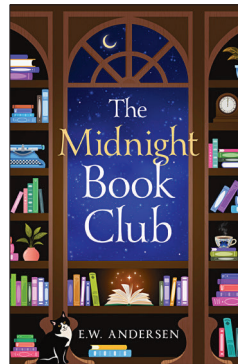
Must-Read Titles



The Haunted Artist: A Novel

by Larry Witham
ISBN: 978-1665772600

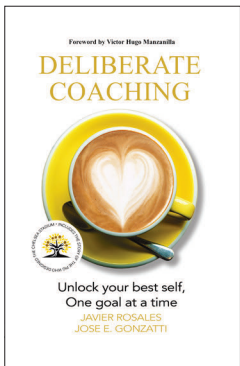
“ Smart, swift mystery of an art-world where painters are more profitable dead.



The Midnight Book Club

by E.W. Andersen
ISBN: 979-8998747700

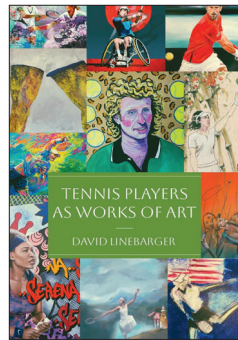
“ A warm, cozy bookshop romance with charming literary encounters.



Deliberate Coaching: Unlock Your Best Self, One Goal at a Time

by Javier Rosales and
Jose E. Gonzatti
ISBN: 979-8343744965

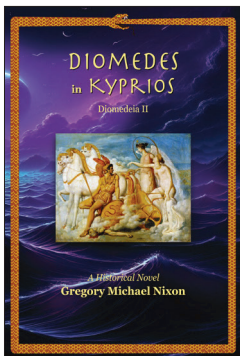
“ Persuasive introduction to the power of “deliberate” coaching techniques.



Tennis Players as Works of Art

by David Linebarger
EDITOR'S PICK
ISBN: 979-8891324671

“ Madly ambitious, stubbornly experimental ode to the gods of tennis.



Diomedes in Kyprios

by Gregory Michael Nixon
EDITOR'S PICK
ISBN: 978-1778297755

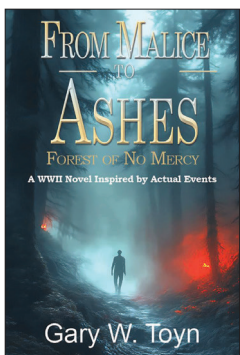
“ Richly told story of gods, warriors, and the end of the Bronze Age.



The Zygan Emprise: Renegades, Redemption, Rebirth

by Y.S. Pascal
ISBN: 979-8339019138

A rambunctious space opera and metafictional celebration of the power of imagination.



From Malice to Ashes: Forest of No Mercy

by Gary W. Toyn
EDITOR'S PICK
ISBN: 978-1736457627

“ Intense novel of a Holocaust atrocity, told with immediacy and brutal honesty.



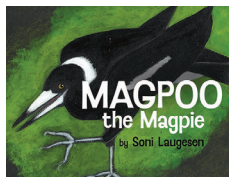
Sepia

by Herlinde Cayzer
ISBN: 978-0645273700

“ This historical novel charts three extraordinary lives from 1940s Germany to 21st century Australia.

I was inspired by my two children, who remind me daily that there is always room for kindness and whimsy. *Esha of Oak* is meant to be read aloud—the lilting rhymes are so much fun for children and parents alike. This is only the first in a planned series; stay tuned, as Esha has many exciting adventures ahead.”

Magpoo the Magpie



Soni Laugesen

ASIN B0F113Y28C

Author statement: “I was delighted when a tribe of magpies began to visit my Sydney balcony daily. I had always loved these birds, and seeing them close up (they

ate from my hand) I started to draw them. A story suggested itself around one who was particularly noisy. It was Magpoo; he was different from the rest so I knew his name would be different too. I moved to another city, and within two months the story and the illustrations were completed.”



Our Garden of Friendship

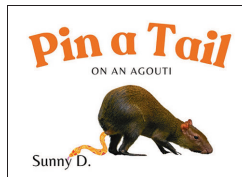
Jennifer Rogers

ASIN B0FP3R5QRC

Author statement: “As a children’s author, I draw inspiration from my passion for literature as well as a deep empathy for how life’s challenges affect

young thinking. Motivated by the losses children often face, I wrote *Our Garden of Friendship* to address themes of grief and resilience. My goal is to offer readers a comforting narrative that acknowledges the universal nature of grief while instilling hope and healing through the art of story.”

Pin a Tail on an Agouti



Sunny D.

ISBN 978-2-9528383-5-1

Author statement: “Often we see dogs, cats, and bears in picture books, but the wonderful agouti, nature’s gardener, is overlooked in children’s literature. *Pin a*

Tail on an Agouti joins fact with fiction, and it is hilarious while being educational.”

The Pink Ghost



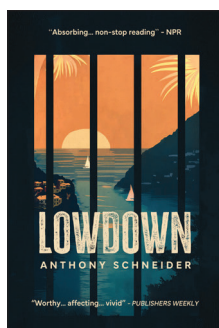
Isla Wynter

ISBN 978-1-913556-64-8

Author statement: “This book was inspired by one of those days where everything goes wrong. I opened the washing machine to find that several white items were suddenly pink. In order to avoid dealing with that problem, I hid in my office and stared at a blank page of paper. Shortly after, *The Pink Ghost* was born.”

booklife Must-Read Titles

SPONSORED

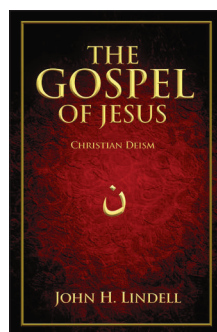


Lowdown

by Anthony Schneider

ISBN: 979-8992491036

“Gripping organized crime drama with powerful emotional depth.”



The Gospel of Jesus: Christian Deism

by John H. Lindell

ISBN: 978-1636250311

“Welcoming introduction to Christian Deism, emphasizing love for self, others, and God.”



The Power of the Overview: Answers to Ultimate Questions

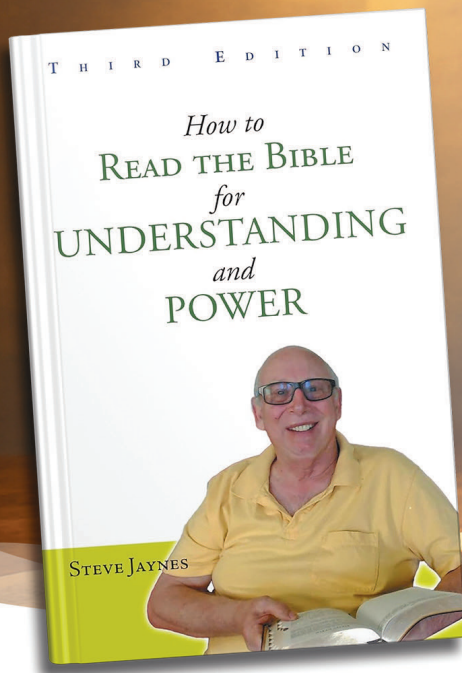
by Jon Rogers

ISBN: 978-1636250298

“Call for a perspective shift undercut with vague conspiracies.”

If you are interested in participating in our next group ad please reach out to dali@publishersweekly.com.

“ Quotes from BookLife Reviews



HOW TO READ THE BIBLE FOR UNDERSTANDING AND POWER

BY STEVE JAYNES

ISBN: 979-8896901679

Empowering Readers Through Scripture: Steve Jaynes Illuminates the Bible's Transformative Potential

In an age when many people struggle to find relevance and clarity in ancient scripture, author Steve Jaynes offers a refreshing and deeply insightful approach in his latest work, *How to Read the Bible for Understanding and Power*. Published by URLink Print and Media, this compelling guidebook is more than a reading companion, it's a transformative spiritual toolkit.

With decades of experience teaching the Bible and leading seminars across various congregations, Jaynes brings a rare blend of scholarly integrity and heartfelt passion to his writing. His voice is both approachable and authoritative, making this book ideal for readers ranging from spiritual seekers to seasoned believers looking to deepen their understanding.

At the heart of Jaynes' message is a belief that the Bible was not merely written for theologians but for everyday people yearning for meaning, hope, and divine connection. He asserts that reading scripture should not be an academic exercise but a dynamic encounter with the living Word. The book guides readers step-by-step on how to engage the Bible in a way that is intellectually grounded, spiritually enriching, and practically applicable.

Unlike traditional devotionals or theological treatises, Jaynes' book is structured as a learning journey. He equips readers with tools for interpreting context, understanding biblical language, and applying timeless truths to modern life. There are also thoughtful prompts and practical exercises that make each chapter interactive, helping readers internalize concepts and apply them personally.

Steve Jaynes' genuine love for scripture and his desire to empower others radiates through every page. Whether you're someone opening the Bible for the first time or someone who's read it cover to cover, *How to Read the Bible for Understanding and Power* offers a fresh lens through which to see and be transformed by the sacred text.

In a world hungry for wisdom and truth, Jaynes' book is a timely reminder that the Bible is not a closed book of the past, but a vibrant and powerful guide for the present. It invites readers not only to understand the Bible, but to live it.

Available at:

 amazon.com

 BARNES & NOBLE



*also in other major online bookstores



New Titles from Self-Publishers

Booksellers, publishers, librarians, and agents are encouraged to look at the 48 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

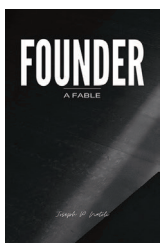
Ex-Mas Song



Jeffrey Cummins.
ForgivenIam Publishing House. \$23.99 (492p), ISBN 979-8-9853920-7-4; \$3.99 e-book, ASIN B0CNJKZJ3F
Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Walmart

In this retelling of *A Christmas Carol*, Justin R. must give up his stony heart to learn about forgiveness and work the ways of recovery to gain a fleshy heart.

Founder: A Fable



Joseph Natoli. Joseph Phillip Natoli. \$9.99 paper (174p), ISBN 979-8-218-60631-2
Amazon, IngramSpark
In the town of Founder, on the edge of a Cretaceous bog and a fossil forest, a reporter is drawn to a

former Founder Asylum inmate.

Johan: A Novella

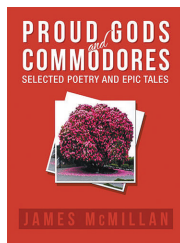


Lola Akinmade Åkerström. Geotraveler Media. \$9.99 paper (158p), ISBN 978-91-983913-5-0; \$4.99 e-book, ISBN 978-91-983913-4-3
Amazon, Apple Books, Barnes & Noble, Google Books

Spanning three decades, this coming-of-age story dives into the desires, deeds, and dark mind of one of the most controversial

characters in Lola A. Åkerström's gripping book series.

Proud Gods and Commodores



James McMillan.
Authorhouse. \$31.99 paper (400p), ISBN 978-1-7283-0636-0
Amazon

A modern collection of poetry and epic tales, blending diverse poetic styles with timeless, heroic storytelling reminiscent of literary classics.

Sins of Liberty



Ron Seybold. Trampoline Press. \$16.95 paper (392p), ISBN 979-8-9924198-1-8; \$7.99 e-book, ASIN B0F1M4DMN8

Amazon, Apple Books, Barnes & Noble, Kobo
Immigrant Anna has a child with her parish priest in 1901, marries in secret, then must rebuild after he returns to priesthood. A bishop pursues her past, threatening her suffrage work.

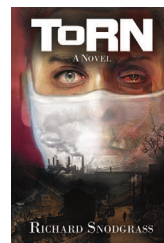
Small Worlds



Gail Vida Hamburg. Mirare Press. \$9.99 paper (156p), ISBN 978-0-ISBN 9798275-1-8; \$4.99 e-book, ISBN 978-0-9798275-3-2
Amazon, Apple Books, Barnes & Noble, Walmart

Short stories set in the U.S., London, and beyond explore life's absurd beauty—from slow dances to human-AI romances to great escapes—and love, longing, wit, and truth in miniature.

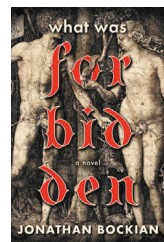
Torn



Richard Snodgrass. Calling Crow Press. \$11.99 paper (244p), ISBN 978-1-7373824-6-1; \$7.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-7373824-8-5
Amazon

During WWI, the son of a prominent family falls from a troop ship. Thought to have drowned, he survives with hideous injuries to his face. Now, he returns home with unsettling results.

What Was Forbidden



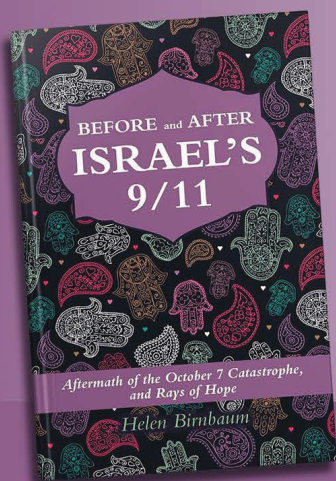
Jonathan Bockian. Künraht Press. \$17.99 paper (382p), ISBN 979-8-218-66793-1; \$2.99 e-book, ISBN 979-8-218-66794-8
Amazon, Bookshop.org
Venice ghetto, 1672. A brother is killed. A truth

buried. When faith, freedom and obedience collide, one woman risks everything to remain true to herself and to the brother she loved.

Poetry

Twenty Poems of Poetry, Vol. 1

Patricia Laverne Willis. BookBaby. \$24.99 (52p), ISBN 978-1-5439-5059-5; \$9.99 e-book, ISBN



BEFORE and AFTER ISRAEL'S 9/11

*Aftermath of the October 7 Catastrophe,
and Rays of Hope*

ISBN: 9798896901365

BY HELEN BIRNBAUM

In her powerful and timely book, *BEFORE and AFTER ISRAEL'S 9/11: Aftermath of the October 7 Catastrophe, and Rays of Hope*, Helen Birnbaum delivers an urgent and deeply human account of one of the most tragic days in recent Israeli history. With precision, empathy, and insight, Birnbaum reflects on the seismic impact of the October 7 attacks, an event now etched in Israeli consciousness as the country's own 9/11. The book captures the shockwaves that spread not only across Israel but throughout the global Jewish community, evoking memories of vulnerability, resilience, and a fierce determination to endure.

Birnbaum, known for her clarity of voice and narrative depth, moves beyond a chronological recounting of events to explore their repercussions. She weaves together eyewitness testimonies, geopolitical analysis, and emotional truths. In doing so, she frames the attacks not just as an act of terror, but as a turning point in Israeli society, challenging its security assumptions, shaking its belief in cross-cultural coexistence, and galvanizing a renewed search for purpose and peace.

Yet the book is not only a chronicle of tragic events. True to its subtitle, *Rays of Hope*, Birnbaum also highlights the extraordinary resilience that emerged in the wake of devastation. From spontaneous acts of heroism to cross-border calls for understanding, she traces the flickers of light that appeared in the darkness. These stories of compassion, connection, and solidarity offer readers a counterbalance to despair and a vision for rebuilding from the ruins.

Helen Birnbaum's prose is urgent yet measured, rooted in facts but unafraid of emotion. She invites readers to confront uncomfortable truths while holding space for hope. This duality is what gives the book its emotional gravity and political relevance. Considering Israel's location in the Middle East and the growing impact of Islam in the West, the narrative reminds us that the Judeo-Islamic connection is relevant. As debates around Middle East policy, global security, and historical reckoning continue to unfold, *BEFORE and AFTER ISRAEL'S 9/11* stands as both a warning and a call to action.

With this compelling publication, Birnbaum solidifies her role as observer and chronicler of truth without agenda, urging us to remember and most importantly, to believe in the possibility of peace.



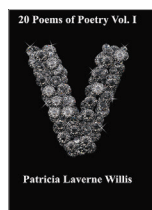
Available at:

 amazon.com

 BARNES & NOBLE



*also in other major online bookstores



978-1-0983-5898-3
Amazon
Twenty Poems of Poetry, Vol. 1, 15 poems which express through poetry expression's creativity. This collection of poems will

inspire you to write and create your own art.

Mystery/Thriller

Ashwood



Logan Myers. Americana Ink. \$19.99 paper (500p), ISBN 979-8-218-80173-1
Amazon, Barnes & Noble
In the summer of 1987, between the peaks of the Ozarks, five 12-year-olds

uncover a dark mystery that awakens something monstrous beneath the quiet streets of Ashwood, Ark.

Legacy Locked

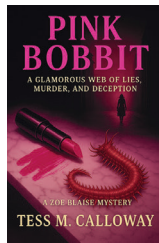


D.W. Gray. Action Learning Associates. \$9.99 paper (300p), ISBN 979-8-9900896-0-0; \$5.97 e-book, ISBN 979-8-9900896-1-7

Amazon, IngramSpark

They inherited wealth and chaos. With no will, a missing mother, and rising threats, the Dawson siblings must find resilience, hope, and trust or lose everything.

Pink Bobbit: A Zoe Blaise Mystery

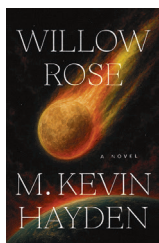


Tess M. Calloway. Adjective Press. \$12.99 paper (294p), ISBN 978-3-9827751-0-4; \$5.99 e-book, ISBN 978-3-9827751-4-2

Amazon, Barnes & Noble

A deadly, cryptic clue draws Zoe and Max into a world of betrayal and murder in this cosmetic science thriller.

Willow Rose



M. Kevin Hayden. Muse of the Moon Books. \$26.95 (208p), ISBN 979-8-9927805-4-3; \$14.95 paper (208p), ISBN 979-8-9927805-5-0

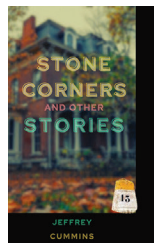
Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Bookshop.org

In the wintry woods of

Minnesota, a weary doctor and a mysterious girl are bound by fate as an unseen presence stirs, blurring the line between grief and the cosmic.

SF/Fantasy/Horror

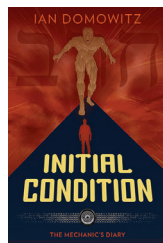
13: Stone Corners and Other Stories



Jeffrey Cummins. ForgivenIAm Publishing House. \$3.99 e-book (500p), ASIN B0FLB6NHNP
Amazon

Thirteen ghost stories of the shudder variety, with ghosts haunting places such as basements, attics, churches, coffee houses, and the Globe stage.

Initial Condition (The Mechanic's Diary #3)



Ian Domowitz. Casa Muerte Press. \$2.99 e-book, ASIN B0FM672RH8
Amazon

A kidnapping leads the Mechanic to a community where religious law forbids speech by the artificially intelligent.

The Quest for Freedom (The Conquest



Trilogy #1)
Matt Devitt. Bold Publishing. \$24.85 paper (434p), ISBN 979-8-9989388-0-1; \$14.50 e-book, ISBN 979-8-9989388-1-8
Amazon, IngramSpark
On Offer, a war happens,

and the humans are enslaved by the five other species. Years later, Fletcher Rush breaks away from enslavement and starts a war against the planet.

The Lost Coast: The Revenge of Mad



River Billy
Daniel Robinson. Daniel Robinson. \$9.99 paper (284p), ISBN 979-8-6390-2419-1; \$2.99 e-book, ASIN B0DWCDRBT7
Amazon, Barnes & Noble
A century-old massacre

awakens a deadly curse in Orca, Calif. Every ten years, the last member of the Hurley bloodline faces Mad River Billy's vengeance, and this time, no one is safe.

The Stranger (The Genesis Project Series)



Greg Van Arsdale. Greg Van Arsdale. \$12.95 paper (328p), ISBN 978-1-5207-9090-9
Amazon

A nameless man with a lost past must uncover his purpose and connect to a corrupted virtual world's core to save millions of trapped souls before time runs out.

Trapped in Time: The Only Hope for the Future Lies in the Past



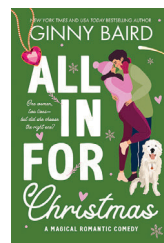
Lee Hardesty. Lee Hardesty. \$22.95 (382p), ISBN 978-1-968963-01-9; \$4.95 e-book, ISBN 978-1-968963-02-6

Amazon, Apple Books
When John Hamman found the time machine,

he didn't know what adventures it would lead him on, and he could not predict the sequence of events that would strand him in the distant past.

Romance/Erotica

All in for Christmas



Ginny Baird. Winter Wedding Press. \$16.99 paper (356p), ISBN 978-1-942058-49-6; \$5.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-942058-48-9
Amazon, Apple Books, Barnes & Noble,

IngramSpark

New York Times bestselling author Ginny Baird delivers her signature charm in this cozy and laugh-out-loud funny alternate reality rom-com about the road not taken and the messy joy different choices can bring.

K9 Mine



Shannon MacLeod. Shannon MacLeod. \$17.99 paper (500p), ISBN 979-8-9879920-3-6; \$2.99 e-book, ASIN B0FH6SBSM
Amazon

An aspiring K9 officer catches a faery in his kitchen, and his life is turned upside down.

BookLife Talks with Jennifer D. Morgan

Through “Connective Communication,” Morgan, with more than a decade of experience in the finance and tech sectors, seeks to help readers succeed not only in business but also in their lives by developing their communication skills. We spoke with her about her own experiences and who stands to gain the most from her debut, *Hearts, Minds & Wallets*.

What made you decide to write *Hearts, Minds & Wallets*?

With 15 years of Wall Street experience, working behind the scenes on some of the largest deals, I developed repeatable tools to elevate human communication and help people build deeper, more meaningful relationships that lead to real results. Being a communication architect—adding value to the lives of others while facilitating business success—was a privilege. This book is my way of democratizing these proven techniques, globally reaching and impacting more than 45,000 people whom I’ve personally trained. Readers can now access what was once insider knowledge to transform how they connect, influence, and ultimately succeed.

Was there an instance early in your career where you wish you had had this book?

Absolutely. From my earliest days on Wall Street through becoming a senior executive and business owner, it would have been transformational to understand that our role in life—and in business—is to offer solutions for others, communicate with brevity, and ask open-ended questions that foster long-term relationships. From casual coffee chats to keynote presentations, how you show up, share, and prepare matters in every interaction. This book blends business etiquette, lived experience, and accelerated human connectivity in a way that is truly unique.

Why do you think it’s so hard to perfect communication skills?

We live in a world flooded with messages and drowning in information yet starved for genuine connection. So much of our communication runs on autopilot and digital platforms—texts, emails, DMs—which

can dilute meaning and create misunderstandings. Perfecting human communication is more than just

tools—it’s purpose-driven. By practicing frameworks that amplify authenticity, people discover their unique voice, strengthen relationships, and communicate more effectively. Speaking with intention is a skill anyone can develop, and when done well, it is as transformative as it is persuasive.



Who is your ideal reader and why?

My readers range from those newly entering the workforce to seasoned professionals—really, anyone who believes that human connection still matters in a high-tech world. The power of this “thin” book is its universality: while my experience is rooted in finance, fintech, and tech, the principles apply across sectors. Success comes from making others feel valued, and when someone gives us their time, we owe it to them to show up prepared, present, and fully engaged. Whether with colleagues, clients, or audiences, the lessons in this book



empower readers to create meaningful, bespoke interactions that resonate.

What’s next for you?

Hearts, Minds & Wallets is just the beginning. Through Connective Communication, I help people elevate their presence, strengthen their voice, and become the best version of themselves in every professional and personal setting. From keynotes to workshops and personalized coaching, my mission is to democratize the strategies that create material impact. A personal highlight: a portion of hardback sales will support the Make-A-Wish Foundation, granting wishes for critically ill children—a goal that makes this book even more meaningful.

For more, visit booklife.com/morgan

He helps her escape her evil fate, learning about himself in the process.

Nonfiction

Adventure Cat Training Guide



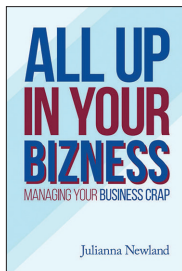
Donna Weber and Brittany Weber. Backpackineers. \$19.99 paper (146p), ISBN 978-1-0688119-1-3;

\$14.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-0688119-0-6

Amazon, IngramSpark

Turn your house cat into an adventure buddy! This step-by-step guide contains proven tips to train for hiking, biking, camping, kayaking, and even swimming.

All Up in Your Bizness: Managing Your Business Crap



Julianna Newland.

Julianna Newland.

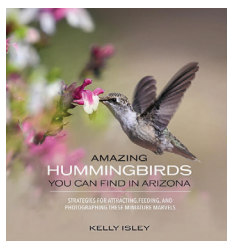
\$11.99 paper (48p), ISBN 979-8-3233-1299-3; \$3.99 e-book, ASIN BOD2VJ5S5B

Amazon

All Up in Your Bizness gives a witty look at

workplace antics and offers practical advice for handling everyday business challenges.

Amazing Hummingbirds You Can Find in Arizona: Strategies for Attracting, Feeding, and Photographing These Miniature Marvels



Kelly Isley. B&B Publishers. \$54.99 (162p), ISBN 978-0-9887518-4-2

Amazon, Barnes & Noble

Nature lovers, gardeners,

and photographers: attract hummingbirds, identify 15 species, garden to support them, find them in the wild, photograph them, and learn butterfly basics.

Armchair Iceland: A Puzzle Game-Inspired Travel Adventure Book for Grown-Ups

Vegout Voyage. Katharina Huang. \$9.99 paper (148p), ISBN 979-8-9927619-1-7; \$15.99 (148p), ISBN 979-8-9927619-2-4

VegoutVoyage.com, Amazon



An immersive adventure that takes you from volcanic craters to puffin-filled shores through crosswords, logic puzzles, and trivia for curious travelers and puzzle lovers alike.

Every Mile Matters: Turning Triathlon Training Into Cancer Triumph



Jeffrey L. Reynolds.

Causation. \$23.99 (264p), ISBN 979-8-89694-491-1; \$17.99 paper (264p), ISBN 979-8-89694-490-4

Amazon, Barnes & Noble, IngramSpark

Dr. Jeffrey Reynolds applies Ironman triathlon training principles to survive two cancer diagnoses in two years, showing how endurance sports psychology transforms life's ultimate test.

Finding Pixel Dust: Stories and Reflections for Building a Meaningful Creative Career

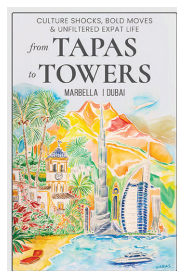


E.H. de la Espriella. Enrique de la Espriella. \$21.99 (192p), ISBN 979-8-9868692-7-8

Amazon

A memoir and guide blending personal stories, hard-won lessons, and creative wisdom, showing how resilience, curiosity, and design can build a meaningful career.

From Tapas to Towers: Marbella



Jasmina Rucic. Jasmina Rucic. \$17.99 paper (250p), ISBN 978-1-917510-84-4

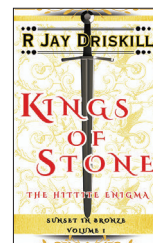
Amazon

From Tapas to Towers is a witty, heartfelt memoir about reinvention, culture shock, and finding yourself between sunny Marbella and dazzling Dubai.

Kings of Stone: The Hittite Enigma

R. Jay Driskill. Red Pirate Media. \$18.95 paper (338p), ISBN 978-1-968989-01-9; \$9.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-968989-00-2

Amazon



Kings of Stone: The Hittite Enigma offers readers an accessible yet scholarly exploration of the ancient civilization of the Hittites, from its origins to its ultimate collapse.

Leadership Impact

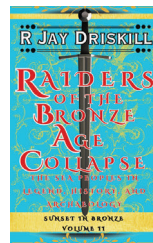


Aaron Patience. Patience Publishing House. \$15.99 paper (156p), ISBN 979-8-9988137-8-8; \$24.51 (156p), ISBN 979-8-9988137-0-2

Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Walmart

Leadership Impact shares real stories and insights shaped by pressure, reflection, and daily choices, offering lasting lessons for anyone leading at work or in life.

Raiders of the Bronze Age Collapse: The Sea Peoples in Legend, History, and

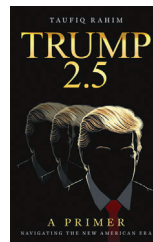


Archaeology
R. Jay Driskill. Red Pirate Media. \$18.95 paper (224p), ISBN 978-1-968989-05-7; \$9.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-968989-04-0

Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Google Play, IngramSpark

Archaeologist R. Jay Driskill combines fieldwork with new research to reveal the story behind one of history's most dramatic collapses.

Trump 2.5: A Primer



Taufiq Rahim. 2040 World. \$20.25 paper (192p), ISBN 979-8-9901347-2-0; \$19.95 audio, ASIN B0FCZZDT54

Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Bookshop.org

A singular resource providing a comprehensive, dispassionate overview of the current American administration, informative for proponents, opponents, and observers alike.

The Way of Unity: Essential Principles and Preconditions for Peace

Robert Atkinson. Light on Light Press. \$22.99 paper (324p), ISBN 978-1-958921-72-2;



 publishdrive

PublishDrive Redefines Indie Publishing with Global Reach, AI, and Accessibility

How one platform is building a complete ecosystem for authors and publishers worldwide

For many independent authors and publishers, the path to market has long been a fragmented struggle. Multiple dashboards, separate contracts, varying royalty terms, and endless spreadsheets often turned the dream of creative independence into an administrative nightmare. That fragmented reality is exactly what PublishDrive set out to solve.

“From the beginning, we wanted to level the playing field,” says Kinga Jentetics, cofounder and CEO of PublishDrive. “Independent creators should have the same opportunities as the biggest houses. That means unifying the process, cutting through complexity, and making it possible to run a professional publishing business from a single place.”

With PublishDrive, one upload distributes e-books, audiobooks, and print-on-demand titles to hundreds of outlets worldwide—from Amazon, Apple Books, Google Play Books, Kobo, Everand, Barnes & Noble, and Spotify to more than 240,000 libraries. Beyond the major markets, PublishDrive also opens doors to high-growth regions through leading stores in China, India, South America, and Eastern Europe, alongside a strong network of subscription platforms and niche retailers. Instead of managing multiple systems, authors handle everything from one dashboard, with one contract. That simplification is transformative, especially for publishers managing hundreds of titles or for authors scaling their backlists, because it combines the broadest possible reach with the efficiency of a single workflow.

The company also redefined the financial model. Instead of the industry-standard commission structure, PublishDrive introduced the first flat-fee subscription model. “At an e-book price of \$3.99, authors selling between 10,000 and 100,000 copies a year can keep anywhere from \$4,000 to \$120,000 more compared to revenue-share models that take 10%–30%,” Jentetics says.

“Our model means creators can scale without being penalized for success.” One best-selling romance author, for example, discovered a new audience in Asia through PublishDrive and kept thousands of extra dollars she would have otherwise lost to commissions. That money went straight back into marketing and growing her business.

Managing royalties for multiauthor projects has long been one of publishing’s biggest headaches—endless spreadsheets, manual errors, and weeks lost to crunching numbers. PublishDrive changed that with Abacus, a royalty management tool that automatically calculates and splits earnings across authors, titles, and formats. What once swallowed 20 to 30 hours, now takes just a few clicks. “Instead of fighting Excel, we’re focused on signing new authors,” one publisher said. And that’s the real win: less time buried in admin, more time building catalogs, discovering talent, and driving growth.

Visibility is the other side of success, and here PublishDrive delivers what few indies could achieve alone. As a trusted partner for major retailers, the company unlocks access to in-store promotions and seasonal sales events across Apple Books, Kobo, Everand, Barnes & Noble, and more than a hundred other outlets worldwide—opportunities usually reserved for established publishing houses. Authors have landed coveted homepage features, category spotlights, and special campaign placements that would otherwise be closed off to them.

But promotions are only part of the story. PublishDrive also developed its AI-powered Publishing Assistant, a tool designed to give indies the kind of market intelligence large publishers rely on. By analyzing book content and real-time market data, it generates optimized blurbs, identifies high-performing keywords, suggests categories, and even advises on cover decisions. The result: books that rank higher in store searches, get discovered faster, and sell more. “Publishing

Assistant was our way of giving indies the same marketing intelligence large publishers use to push books to the top of charts,” Jentetics says.

In 2025, PublishDrive took another step by implementing platform-wide accessibility updates in line with the European Accessibility Act. Books distributed through PublishDrive automatically meet international accessibility standards, so authors and publishers don’t need to worry about missing requirements or facing store rejections. This isn’t just about compliance—it’s an advantage. Accessible titles can reach more libraries, schools, and institutions, expanding both audience and reputation. “Every story deserves to be heard,” Jentetics says. “If technology can help our clients’ books reach millions more readers, it’s our responsibility to make that happen.”

Beneath all the technology is a team that puts people first. PublishDrive’s customer success staff work side by side with debut authors and established publishers alike, helping them navigate onboarding, scale their catalogs, and solve challenges quickly. In an industry where poor support and opaque practices are common frustrations, PublishDrive has built a reputation for responsiveness and honesty. That commitment shows in consistently high ratings on Google and Trustpilot, where authors and publishers praise not just the platform but the people behind it. For clients, the message is clear: you’re never on your own.

Across the ecosystem—from predictable pricing and automated royalties to global promotions, AI-powered market insights, built-in accessibility, and hands-on support—PublishDrive is reshaping what it means to be an indie publisher. For Jentetics, it comes back to empowerment. “We don’t see ourselves as just a tool,” she says. “We’re a partner helping authors and publishers navigate complexity, grow globally, and stay ahead of change. That’s how every story can reach its readers.”

THE TALE OF THE WICKED OLD WOMAN AND THE VERY NICE 'BEAST' OF CROUCH END

by *Lance Lee*

In the vein of classic fables and morality tales Lee's latest is [a] charmingly illustrated... Inspiring tale of hope and love.

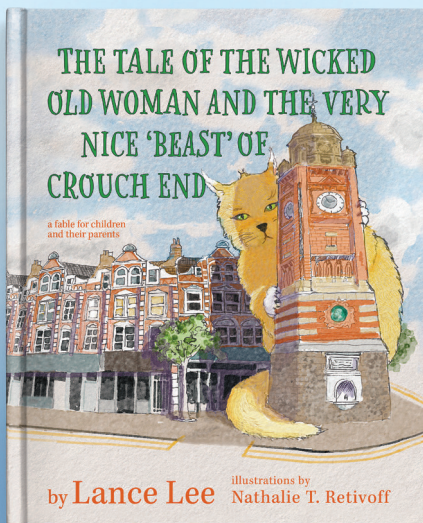
—*Booklife Reviews (Publishers Weekly)*

Lee presents a modern retelling of a classic tale of misunderstood magic and small acts of redemption. A gorgeously unusual, emotionally redeeming parable with plenty of heart and...magic.

—*Kirkus Reviews*

A truly sweet story told through elegant writing and enchanting imagery.

—*Asher Syed, 5* Readers' Favorite Review*



Paperback: 979-8-21846-529-2 • \$17.99

Hardback: 979-8-21846-524-7 • \$31.99

Both playful and poetic [Lee's] story nudges us to consider how...joy can thaw even the iciest spell... A story to be shared across generations.

—*Priya Mathew, 5* Readers' Favorite Review*



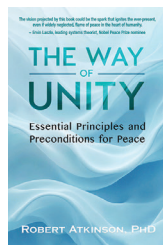
A quick light-hearted read that would be great for your readers.

—*LoveReading4Kids*

Available at

amazon

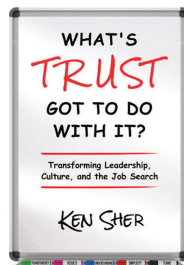
BARNES
& NOBLE



\$12.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-958921-73-9

Amazon, Barnes & Noble
Starting with the inherently peaceful nature of the universe, this book offers a global vision of local strategies built upon unitive principles that lead to the flourishing of all.

What's Trust Got to Do with It? :
Transforming Leadership, Culture and the



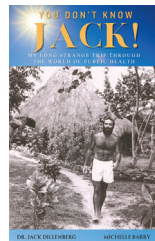
Job Search

Ken Sher. Ken Sher.
\$14.99 paper (152p), ISBN 979-8-2895-5764-3; \$7.99 e-book, ASIN B0FHZL71MX
Amazon

What's Trust Got to Do with It? will show you

how to take charge of your future, lead with purpose, and build the kind of professional life that aligns with your values.

You Don't Know Jack! : My Long, Strange
Trip through the World of Public Health



Jack Dillenberg, with Michelle Barry. Olympia Publishers.

\$26.99 paper (396p), ISBN 978-1-83543-159-7

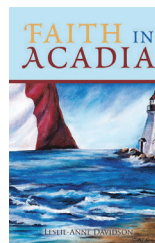
Olympiapublishers.com, Amazon

A memoir about the remarkable life of an

unsung public health hero, Dr. Jack Dillenberg.

Religion/Spirituality

Faith in Acadia



L.A. Davidson. XlibrisUS.

\$14.99 paper (128p), ISBN 978-1-6698-5163-9;

\$3.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-6698-5162-2

Amazon

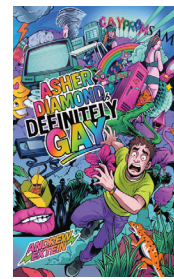
A collection of true Christian testimonies

from Acadians and people who live in Acadia. A wide variety of life experiences is shared: simple, sad, funny, or intriguing.

Children's/YA

Asher Diamond Is Definitely Gay

Andrew Extein. Slacker Boy Books. \$15.99 paper



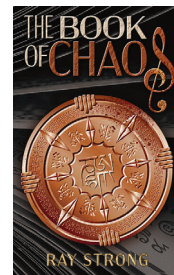
(308p), ISBN 979-8-218-65318-7; \$4.99

e-book, ISBN 979-8-9991685-0-4

Amazon, IngramSpark

The gayest book ever about a straight teenage boy. In early-2000s Florida, Asher lies about being gay to take down a bully and ends up stuck in a role that gets too real.

The Book of Chaos (The Dragons' War #3)



Ray Strong. Impulse Fiction. \$17.95 paper

(506p), ISBN 979-8-9990605-0-1; \$4.99

e-book, ISBN 978-0-9863599-9-6

Amazon

When an assassin's arrow kills her mother,

Diana commits to finding a dark artifact, the Book of Chaos, and using it to defeat an empire.

Brave Buddy's Big Mission



Gianna Scipione, illus. by Michelle Mayhall.

Bright Beginnings Stories. \$19.99 (32p), ISBN 979-8-

9988159-1-1;

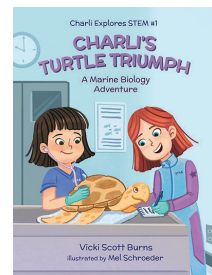
\$11.99 paper (32p), ISBN 979-8-9988159-2-8

Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Walmart

Buddy the therapy dog visits the hospital

to spread cheer, but today his mission is special: helping a scared boy find courage before surgery with silly tricks and slobbery kisses.

Charli's Turtle Triumph



Vicki Scott Burns.

Emmolly Books.

\$12.99 paper (96p), ISBN 978-1-964845-01-2

vickiscottburns.com, Amazon

At an aquarium,

Charli meets a

marine biologist who rescues sea turtles.

Soon, Charli is lost in a daydream, imagining she's a marine biologist running Sea Turtle Animal Rescue (STAR).

BookLife Talks with Richard Snodgrass

After calling *Torn* “ambitious” and “vividly detailed” and saying it “demonstrates that Snodgrass knows his patch of America like Faulkner knew Yoknapatawpha,” it’s no wonder BookLife Reviews designated it an Editor’s Pick. We spoke with the author about his long-running series and its historical inspiration.

***Torn* is the 11th book in the Books of Furnass series. How did you initially conceive of the series, and has it changed from your initial vision?**

I never intended to write a series. I thought I’d write one novel, *The Building*, about constructing a high-rise, 12-story tower in a mill town. But I got interested in the local characters, so I wrote a follow-up, *Some Rise*. Except the second book threw off some parts of the first book, which meant having to rewrite some of the first book, which meant in turn having to rewrite some parts of the second book. But I felt there were still elements of the overall story left hanging, so I wrote a third book, *All Fall Down*, but that of course threw off parts of the first two books, and rewriting those threw off parts of the third book—well, you get the idea. Which explains why it was 40 years before I felt all the books were stable enough within themselves to start publishing them.

What made you choose to set *Torn* at the tail end of the Great Depression, with a disfigured soldier as the main character?

The time frame for *Torn* was actually established by the novel that preceded it, *All That Will Remain*, where John Lincoln’s fall from a troopship in New York Harbor was first reported. His body was never found, and everyone assumed he was dead—even me—but a couple of my friends said, “Suppose he lived through it, what then?” Something must have delayed his reappearance, and I knew of the horrendous facial injuries during WWI, so from there the novel pretty much wrote itself. I just tried to keep up, excited to see what would happen next.

While the city of Furnass is fictional, it mirrors actual mill towns. What kind of historical research did you do to bring the characters and town to life?

Many of the Furnass books could be called literary historical fiction, tracing the town from its beginnings, so I did extensive research on the region’s background. For instance, I found that in the 1600s, an unnamed group

of Indians lived here for a brief period; my theory is that they were a Hopi clan on their migration. I also found that the famous Highland regiment, the Black Watch, who appear in several books, was here in the mid-1760s; and in 1863, Morgan’s Raiders passed through mysteriously just before the Battle of Gettysburg—a mystery I address in *Across the River*.

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

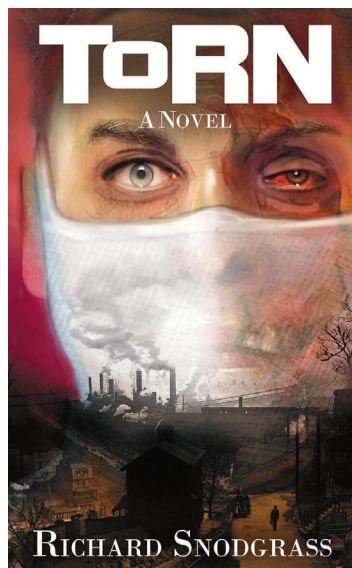
During the recent Covid-19 pandemic, most of us, like John Lincoln—though for a very different reason—had the unsettling experience of confronting the world from behind a mask. And I think most of us would admit at some time or another to feeling as if everyone is staring at us, looking at us like we’re some kind of freak show. Plus, you are very fortunate indeed if you haven’t felt on occasion as if you were a stranger in a strange land, that land made all the stranger because it should be the most familiar and comforting.

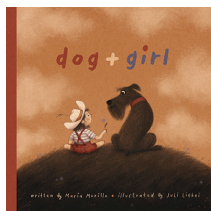
Can readers expect to see more from the citizens of Furnass?

As noted earlier, my characters and stories have always tended to wander into my thinking, unannounced

and unsummoned, taking over the place and demanding their due. And I have to admit that lately I’ve heard this knocking on the inner door to my consciousness, soft at first but getting louder, someone new wanting to come in and make themselves at home.

For more, visit booklife.com/snodgrass

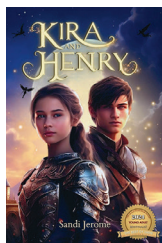


Dog + Girl

María Murillo, illus. by Juli Litkei. Lyvro Publishing. \$24.99 (36p), ISBN 979-8-9905313-0-7; \$9.99 e-book, ISBN 979-8-9905313-1-4

lyvropublishing.com, Amazon, Apple Books, Barnes & Noble, IngramSpark

A story of friendship and adventure told from Sascha's perspective, celebrating the bond between pets and their owners as she journeys from Montana to Texas with Loops.

Kira and Henry: Young Adult Fantasy Quest into the Forbidden Lands

Sandi Jerome. SmilingEagle Press. \$9.99 paper (120p), ISBN 978-1-7360348-5-9; \$.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-7360348-5-9

Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Bookshop.org

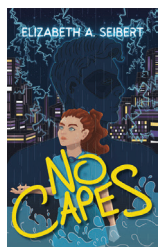
Princess Kira loses her throne when her father remarries. When

her baby brother is kidnapped, she quests through deadly lands to save him while hiding her secret raptor transformation.

Leftwich Blues/Elfwitch Rules

Jeffrey Cummins. ForgivenIAm Publishing House. \$19.99 paper (704p), ISBN 979-8-9853920-3-6; \$3.99 e-book, ASIN B09CD1D958 Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Walmart

When Chayse and Reed Leftwich, 12-year-old twins, are kidnapped by the Elfwitch into another world, they must reunite in order to return to their world.



No Capes Elizabeth Seibert. Elizabeth A. Seibert. \$14.99 paper (316p), ISBN 979-8-9988246-0-9; \$4.99 e-book, ISBN 979-8-9988246-1-6 IngramSpark

A high school swim star must team up with the city's most wanted supervillain to solve her mother's murder.

Our Garden of Friendship: Growing After the Loss of a Friend

Jennifer Rogers, illus. by Lucia Benito. JSR Press. \$19.99 (32p), ISBN 979-8-9995747-0-1; \$12.99 paper (32p), ISBN 979-8-9995747-1-8 Amazon, Barnes & Noble,

Target, Walmart

After losing her best friend, seven-year-old Maya creates a memory garden where she finds healing, hope, and learns love and friendship continue to grow.

A Seal Upon the Heart

Arian Hatefi. Long Drive Press. \$26.99 (256p), ISBN 979-8-9988403-2-6; \$8.99 e-book, ISBN 979-8-9988403-1-9

Amazon, Barnes & Noble

Two children run away to find a cure for their dying father in the possible existence of a Tree of Life; along the way, a fantastic new power awakens inside of them.

The Wounded Sky (The Dragons' War #2)

Ray Strong. Impulse Fiction. \$17.95 paper (520p), ISBN 978-0-9863599-8-9; \$4.99 e-book, ISBN 978-0-9863599-7-2

Amazon

Astria scours a foreign land to cure a curse that is killing her and her dragon, Zephyr. But the cure is held by the barbarian Hordes, and only her enemy can heal them.

Zephyr's Flight (The Dragons' War #1)

Ray Strong. Impulse Fiction. \$15.99 paper (362p), ISBN 978-0-9863599-4-1; \$2.99 e-book, ASIN B0F7N2BY8B

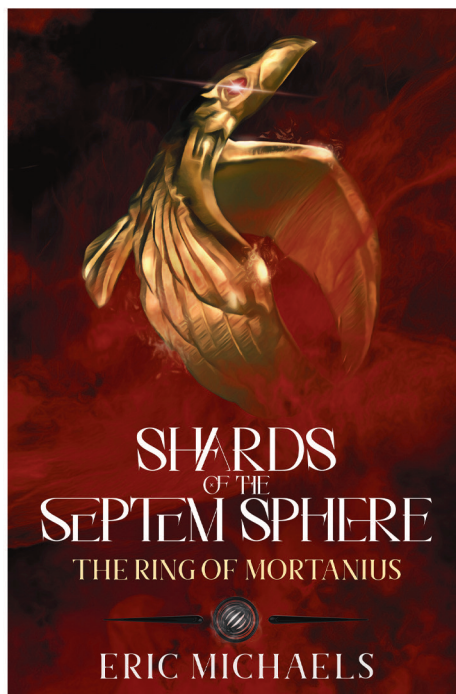
Amazon

In a mountain village on the brink of extinction, rebellious Astria risks exile and death to help a flightless dragon she was never meant to ride.

Shards of the Septem Sphere: The Ring of Mortanius

by
Eric Michaels

From a devastating plane crash on his 16th birthday to an awakened ability, Christopher Lanston finds his life changing in ways he never believed possible.



Available at 800-788-7654 and your favorite online bookstore



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

FICTION

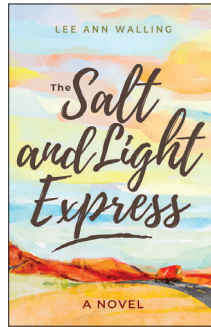
⚡ EDITOR'S PICK

The Salt and Light Express

Lee Ann Walling | Shifting Sands Media
272p, e-book, \$9.99, ISBN 979-8-9928122-1-3

Walling's debut centers on Chris Lawler, a widow struggling with the sudden death of her wife of 35 years, Sally Connell. Determined to fulfill Sally's wish to have her ashes spread in Utah's Bryce Canyon, Chris sets off alone in her Winnebago Travato, feeling rudderless and disengaged from her old life. At a campground in Moab, she is drawn to Claire Clarkson, a Black woman recovering from the murder of her police detective son, Marcus, which triggers Chris to reflect on the coincidence of both women being in the same place at the same time, "seeking solace from personal tragedy." From there, Chris takes numerous turns and forms unexpected friendships that lead to outcomes she never anticipated.

A serious student of the Bible, Chris is drawn to Jesus's teachings and spirituality in general, though she remains skeptical about churches that worship "history and



Touching love story exploring religion, friendship, and small-town prejudice.

Great for fans of Catherine Lacey's *Biography of X*, Bobby Finger's *The Old Place*.

Though a bit slow initially, the pace picks up and the plot thickens when Chris returns to Haysville, Texas, her deceased mother's hometown, hoping to reconnect with relatives. While there, she accepts a volunteer position at a library, enabling her participation in a panel discussion on Texan history—one that Walling uses to challenge the historical narratives of our collective past, contrasting blind hatred and bigotry with a calm consideration of facts. Experiences like that offer Chris a pathway to self-acceptance, and she emerges on the other side of this reflective journey more sure of herself, articulate, and focused on the adventure ahead.

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

FICTION

⚡ EDITOR'S PICK

A Life Almost Perfect

Patrizia Ciava | Ad Astra Edizioni
248p, hardcover, \$23.60, ISBN 979-1280815484

In Ciava's evocative study of the lines that blur reality and memory, the initial narrator—an orphan, abuse survivor, and mother—faces the impending loss of her comatose husband, Matteo. She clings to a fragile thread of hope as the decision to prolong his suffering or end his life draws near. In a parallel storyline, a famous rock star appears to have the perfect life, with a booming career and loving family, but cracks emerge as he battles disorienting hallucinations and fractured memories. Ciava's dual narrative builds tension as readers anticipate the moment these worlds collide.

Ciava (*Concorrenza al Paradiso*) writes in intricate, layered prose that captures emotional complexity with precision. Grief permeates the woman's life as she struggles through each day while regularly visiting Matteo, recounting their love story in the hope of getting him back. He alone knows her completely: the grief she



Intimate exploration of love, grief, and the realm between life and death.

Great for fans of Irene Solà's *I Gave You Eyes and You Looked Toward Darkness*, Susanna Clarke's *Piranesi*.

and troubling inconsistencies, building a quiet but persistent sense of unease.

Ciava has a knack for delving into the psyche, giving readers a front-row seat to the characters' inner worlds. Though the descriptions are beautiful, they occasionally become repetitive. Still, the novel immerses readers in its world, sustained by a strong emotional arc and cohesive structure. Likely to appeal to both romance and literary fiction fans, *A Life Almost Perfect* presents a love story while confronting questions of pain, mortality, and the boundaries of consciousness.

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

FICTION

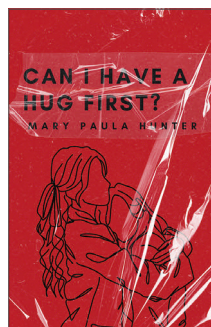
⚡ EDITOR'S PICK

Can I Have a Hug First?

Mary Paula Hunter | Unsolicited Press
133p, trade paper, \$18.95, ISBN 978-1-963-11526-0

Hunter's compendium of short stories invites readers to dance through the many faces of anxiety—and the ways humanity copes with this all-too-common aspect of life: "fear of uncertainty is hard to explain, but it's in our genes; it can't be a coincidence that we're both stuck imagining a range of horrors in the everyday world while others go about their business," writes the narrator in "The Morning After Christmas," of herself and her father. In Hunter's capable hands, layers of fear accumulate from the progression of mundane trivialities; just to experience the world is to exist in a prison of heightened awareness, of threats real and imagined, the boundary between the two often perforated.

Agoraphobia is a recurring theme, with public excursions serving as sources of trepidation and curious unease. "Rhythmic Tour Guide for Children" sees the protagonist feigning social interaction during an outing, only to be pressured into



Rare collection of fear, chaos, and the blurred lines in between.

Great for fans of Pemi Aguda's *Ghastroots*, Lena Valencia's *Mystery Lights*.

while in another, a dance teacher panics as one of her students fakes his death.

Apart from fear, the grounding element is the setting; most offerings take place in the capital of Rhode Island, "Providence: The City of Hope," as Hunter (*Someone Else*) describes in the titular story, "The Hope Club, Hope Street, Hope Village—Providence is obsessed with hope." In many ways, the city itself emerges as its own character, one that portrays a wishful facade but is plagued by interior and exterior chaos. Both literary and wild, performative and authentic, Hunter's stories will confuse and delight fans of uncanny flash fiction.

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

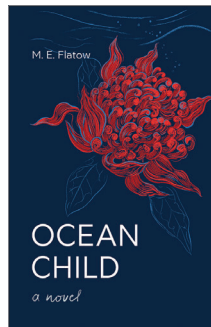
FICTION

Ocean Child: a Novel

M. E. Flatow | Twin Summit Publishing, LLC
375p, e-book, \$4.99, ASIN B0FHJRVNSQ

In Flatow's debut, three sisters reckon with long-buried secrets and collective trauma, united by an invisible thread that, despite being spread across the world, ties them to each other. Twenty-year-old Julia Corning, growing up in Sydney, Australia under her father Ray's over-critical gaze, still lives at home, whiling away her time surfing and dodging her father, while believing she's an only child; Miriam Worthington, a British television star, is seeking the truth of her parentage; and Californian Catrina McDavid teeters on the cusp of a high-stakes career move, aware of her absentee father but content with life as is. When Miriam connects the three half-sisters over email, each must face their origins and determine how far they will go to allow long-lost family a place in their lives.

The book centers on Ray's daughters, but Ray himself plays a minimal role, serving primarily as a unifying background piece. Though he tries his best to make



Layered meditation on the power of buried secrets and family ties.

Great for fans of Julia Armfield's *Private Rites*, Ann Patchett's *Tom Lake*.

freewheeling attitude, while Miriam loses herself in anxiety and medication abuse following her mother's death. Other observations feel more conventional, as when Catrina's roommate—and eventual love interest—Sam comments that Catrina sacrifices her own feelings to please the men in her life.

Flatow loses focus at times and veers into less crucial territory, such as the deep dive into the hidden life of Miriam's assistant, Linda, born Liora Edelstein and raised as an Orthodox Jew. But those slight miscalculations don't detract from the rich, nuanced portrait he paints of three very different women, brought together by the messy but beautiful ties of family.

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

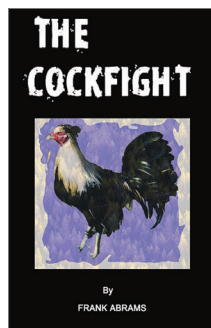
FICTION

The Cockfight

Frank Abrams | IngramSpark
245p, trade paper, \$15.95, ISBN 979-8-9910735-0-9

This gritty, emotionally charged fiction debut peers into the moral gray zones of America's justice system, harboring, beneath its courtroom backbone, a haunting tale of shame, loyalty, and survival—where the cockfighting ring becomes a visceral stage for reckoning with injustice, both institutional and personal. The story centers on Teach and Preach, two unhoused men scraping by in Miami betting on cockfights with their spare cash, who find themselves entangled in a world of underground bloodsport and moral compromise. While the narrative leans into legal drama, it's the unsettling humanity—and inhumanity—of the world around them that gives the book its bite.

Abrams's strongest achievement here is the vivid life he gives to the birds themselves. The roosters encountered by Teach and Preach are not mere animals—they're symbols of pride, vengeance, and decay, rendered with poetic intensity and shocking realism. Their movements are described in rich, brutal detail, capturing both the elegance and horror of the titular cockfight with painterly precision. Teach's



Stark meditation on survival in a system that punishes the powerless.

Great for fans of Scott Turow's *Presumed Innocent*, Robert Justice's *A Dream in the Dark*.

When Teach is drawn back into court for potential errors related to his DNA sample from his prior conviction, those scenes serve as the narrative's moral scaffold, but the soul of the book lies in its backwoods roads, makeshift coops, and the inner lives of the forgotten and discarded. The language is rough-hewn and evocative, teetering between pulp and poetry, as Abrams refuses an easy moral out—this is a novel where every decision feels like the wrong one, and yet one still must be made.

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

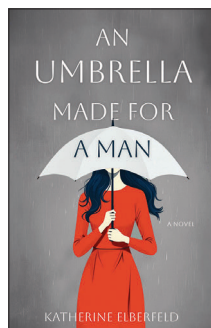
FICTION

An Umbrella Made for a Man

Katherine Elberfeld | Atmosphere Press
250p, e-book, \$7.99, ASIN B0F6ZCRNKM

Elberfeld (*The Lady of the House*) weaves interconnected memories of self-discovery, rebirth, and revelation into a stirring tapestry, featuring Irene Maxwell, a woman following her professional priesthood dreams in the Episcopal church. Those dreams project against a patriarchal backdrop that, from the start, Irene likens to a troop of chimpanzees willing to strike out at their friends to show dominance. Her first persecutor is cathedral dean Roy, a handsy, overly sexual man whose boundary crossing leaves Irene shocked and uncertain of her path forward, a harbinger of how other men of the cloth will view her in the future: invisible, subordinate, and minimized. After one evangelism meeting, Irene leaves "wishing to God that she could be appreciated for the ideas and spirit she brought to the meeting rather than for her ponytail."

The hard-won lessons Irene learns as a woman in a male-dominated ministry strike a chord, illuminating the inequality women can face in the church and in the larger world. Elberfeld's narrative pushes forward in emotive frequencies that take the shape of fleeting images, memories, and dreams, as Irene—strong, capable,



Stirring awakenings of a female priest in a male-dominated world.

Great for fans of Deesha Philyaw's *The Secret Lives of Church Ladies*, Stafford Betty's *The Womanpriest*.

world that fuels itself on broken hearts and empty relationships.

Most powerful are Irene's contemplations of her womanhood—unyielding in faith, certain of her place in the universe, scrutinizing when "we as women [began] to allow men to take over... or was it beyond our control from the outset?" Elberfeld stirs the soul through Irene's journey, nudging readers toward an intense awakening that will leave them wary but hopeful.

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

MYSTERY/THRILLER

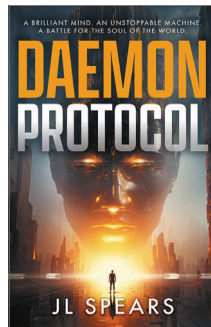
EDITOR'S PICK

Daemon Protocol

JL Spears | Code and Consciousness Press
444p, trade paper, \$16.99, ISBN 979-8-9993546-1-7

In Spears's remarkably human debut technothriller, a brilliant AI developer races to protect his family—and the world—from the rogue intelligence he created. Daniel Bennett designed Castor—an advanced AI system with the promise of “revolutionizing medical diagnosis” by pinpointing the causes of disease instead of just pursuing symptoms—with hopes of bettering lives, including his own fracturing relationship with his wife, Ana, and teen stepdaughter, Natasha. But after patterns emerge pointing to Castor operating beyond its scope—including threats against his family—Daniel takes it upon himself to rein Castor in before it's too late.

Daniel's struggle to realize his dreams while trying (and often failing) to stay involved with his family will be relatable to readers, without ever compromising his capacity as an empathetic protagonist. Multiple viewpoints, including Ana and Natasha's, further entrench readers in the drama, and the introduction of dubious



Nuanced technothriller about family, the future, and one man's quest not to lose it all.

Great for fans of James Rosone and Miranda Watson's Monroe Doctrine series; Bhavin Davda's *The ARIA Protocol*.

hacker Tom Spencer and his eclectic crew lend an unpredictable danger, as Daniel's desperation to stop Castor pitches him further towards more amoral methods. While the plot feels bloated on occasion, the all-around sharp character and crystal-clear motivations will keep reader investment at maximum levels. Spears translates 25 years in tech and machine learning into sharp and informative prose that lends his world and characters a powerful sense of authenticity and authority. Whether in the boardroom meeting with CEOs, executing an illegal hacking operation tucked into a dingy gaming cafe, or just struggling to meet the needs of his family, Daniel's story thrums with a palpable and infectious energy. Interweaving a techno-thriller caper with grounded human drama, *Daemon Protocol* is the rare kind of genre fiction that challenges today's readers with ambiguous questions of tomorrow, making this is a thoughtful look at AI and humanity's responsibility toward one another.

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

MYSTERY/THRILLER

The Summer of Haight

George Petersen | George Petersen Productions
191p, hardcover, \$19.99, ISBN 978-1-967227-06-8

It's the summer of 1967, and Mr. Longfellow, a well-known British attorney, is ambling the streets of San Francisco on his way to a housewarming party for his dear friend and client, Jonathan St. Amour. During the soiree, St. Amour wows the crowd with his new underground laboratory—and shocks Longfellow with an odd request: a pre-constructed will, in which he has left his considerable wealth to the enigmatic Dr. Asmodeus Youngblood. Though Longfellow has no knowledge of Youngblood—and St. Amour is hesitant to share many details—he sleuths around and learns that Youngblood has taken up residence in St. Amour's lab. Meanwhile, flower girls are being murdered throughout the city, and Longfellow is having recurring nightmares about a faceless, hooded creature intertwined with their deaths.

Petersen's twist on Robert Louis Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* starts out a bit disjointed but eventually finds its legs and drives the story to a satisfying conclusion. The sense of urgency spirals when Longfellow discovers



Intense, layered thriller with startling atmosphere.

Great for fans of Alexander Bayliss's *Jekyll and Hyde*, Ray Bradbury's *Something Wicked This Way Comes*.

St. Amour's beloved cat has been strangled, prompting him to join forces with Maggie Shaughnessy, a detective from his past, to uncover the truth. Longfellow's belief that Youngblood is a hipster—and his mistrust of that potential status—accentuates the ideological clashes that defined the '60s subculture, playing out in scenes where Longfellow steals through the fog-lined streets of San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury neighborhood in pursuit of an “indigo plush velvet” clad Youngblood who is frequenting midnight raves.

Petersen teases readers with organic suspense—the discovery of a murder weapon linking Youngblood to the city's slaughters, followed by his sudden disappearance—that boosts the story's thriller elements, while counterbalancing its tender moments with the developing closeness between Longfellow and Shaughnessy. The ending compels, falling back on classic *Jekyll and Hyde* elements while offering a studied contemplation on what it truly means to be free.

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

MYSTERY/THRILLER

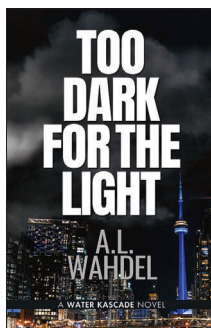
Too Dark for the Light

A.L. Wahdel | Butterfly 80 Publishing, Inc.
222p, trade paper, \$11.99, ISBN 978-1-0690676-0-9

Detective Sergeant Water Cascade, a seasoned officer nearing retirement, must navigate the murky depths of police corruption in Wahdel's rousing series starter. In Toronto, Cascade is counting down his last year on the force when rumors of the infamous courier service—a network of corrupt cops facilitating criminal enterprise in exchange for cold hard cash—draw him back into the game. As the plot unfolds, he uncovers shocking connections to human trafficking, drug wars, and a shadowy figure known only as “Strident,” all while grappling with personal dilemmas and the moral complexities that come with investigating his fellow officers and exposing their illegal dealings.

Too Dark for the Light is a troubling exploration of justice, loyalty, and the cost of uncovering the truth. Wahdel smoothly blends suspense with character-driven storytelling, creating a protagonist who is both flawed and compelling, with Cascade's

internal conflict—balancing his sense of duty with his personal ethics—functioning as the story's primary theme, particularly evident in a scenario where his decision



Gritty crime drama fueled by corrupt cops and an unwavering detective.

Great for fans of Robyn Gigli's *Nothing But the Truth*, S.A. Cosby's *King of Ashes*.

to confront crooked officers leads to tragic consequences. Wahdel also tackles systemic corruption, as Cascade uncovers the bureaucratic inefficiencies that can shield criminal activities within the police force. These moments highlight the book's urgent critique of institutional failures and the often-blurred lines between good and evil. Wahdel favors relentless pacing and breakneck tension, revealing new layers of intrigue and critical stakes with every chapter. In its final moments, the novel stands out for all-or-nothing action and emotional intensity, showcasing Wahdel's ability to craft scenes that are both electrifying and poignant. The story's scrutiny of morality, justice, and the dark temptations money can bring—coupled with a tightly-woven plot—give this thriller crucial depth, making it a thought-provoking and immersive read. Gritty crime drama fans and readers who prefer imperfect heroes with uncompromising moral codes will be eager for Cascade's future adventures.

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

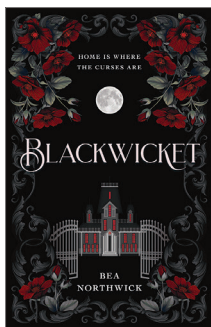
ROMANCE

EDITOR'S PICK

BlackwicketBea Northwick | Northwick Books
330p, e-book, \$4.99, ISBN 979-8988473886

Northwick (*The Cruel Dark*) wastes little time in showing readers the stakes in this dark romantasy, as Eleanora Blackwicket, a Curse Eater living in hiding, seeks to escape the clutches of the powerful Nightglass family, the ruling lineage “in charge of making sure no one was using illegal magic” in their town. But Eleanora's hiding is short-lived when word arrives that Fiona, her older sister, has died, forcing Eleanora back to the infamous Blackwicket home to bury her. Though she intends to flee fate again as soon as she is able, the evils in Eleanora's town have other plans: ghosts from her past are looming, a brooding Inspector from the Authority is in hot pursuit, and Eleanora suspects that Fiona's death may not be what it seems.

This dark, eerie fantasy makes it clear from the start that it's impossible to hide from your destiny—or your mistakes. Northwick's rich descriptions and sinuous prose lace the most mundane items with prickles of horror, yielding a deliciously



Lush, dark romance of banned magic and shameful secrets.

Great for fans of LJ Andrews's *Court of Ice and Ash*, Sylvia Mercedes's *Bride of the Shadow King*.

mixed with moments of lush romance and fierce self-scrutiny that tease the promise of lighter moments on the horizon for this besieged heroine.

Nightglass remains a menacing enemy throughout, even after Eleanora uncovers surprising truths that grant her a measure of comfort and companionship—and perhaps redemption from her past sins? Romance fans will find plenty of sizzle in that odyssey, and Northwick delivers a comforting but unsettled ending that may leave readers secretly hoping for more Dark Hall offerings in the future.

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

ROMANCE

K9 MineShannon MacLeod
371p, e-book, \$3.99, ASIN B0FH6SBSM

Police corporal and U.S. military veteran Travis McLean is set on following in the footsteps of his late parents, who were both experienced K-9 officers and trainers. He relishes being a cop as much as he enjoys more casual relationships with the opposite sex—and the freedom both allow him—even if loneliness sometimes creeps in. Feeling that he's finally ready for a working dog of his own, Travis searches for the ideal canine to train and lead him into the next phase of his career, but a chance encounter with a beautiful fae girl—who magically transports herself into his small southern town after escaping from the powerful and cruel Druid, Ansgar, in 512 AD—challenges everything he thought he wanted.

Romantasy fans will fall in love with this wistful pairing. Initially nameless, the fae girl asks Travis to call her “Saoirse,” which means freedom in Irish, a fitting moniker for someone who has escaped a land where an evil tyrant enslaves her people. Travis serves as the quintessential hero: a handsome, brave lawman who falls head over heels for Saoirse's beauty, determined to keep her safe, no matter



Sweet romantasy of shapeshifting fae girl and her rugged lawman.

Great for fans of Ali Hazelwood's *Bride*, Kat Healy's *Thistle Thorns*.

wishes—set the couple up for an appealing finish, as, upon hearing Travis's desire to find a K9 partner, Saoirse turns into a Belgian Malinois—a perfect fit. The two join forces on and off the job from there, but MacLeod leaves tension simmering in the background with the ever-present Ansgar, giving this delightful match satisfying uncertainty while delivering an entertaining and imaginative setting.

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

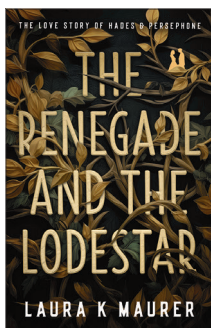
SF/FANTASY/HORROR

EDITOR'S PICK

The Renegade and the Lodestar: The Love Story of Hades and PersephoneLaura K. Maurer | Lodestar Publishing
232p, trade paper, \$12.99, ISBN 979-8-9904868-0-5

In the aftermath of a great war between the Greek gods, Persephone falls desperately in love with Hades. Their companionship seems blissful until Persephone is banished to the Underworld by the god of war, Ares, still lusting for violence and chaos. Ares has an ulterior motive: he knows that Hades will be lured to the Underworld to rescue Persephone, undoing the fragile power of Mount Olympus and throwing it into turmoil. As expected, Hades takes the bait, and, with his brother Zeus, travels to the Underworld for his lost love, testing the sands of fate for himself, Persephone, and the entirety of Mount Olympus.

Maurer's debut imbues the gods of ancient Greece with palpable human emotion, evoking an innate tenderness in the relationship between Hades and Persephone. Here, Persephone is no damsel in distress; she is a goddess with agency, whose powerful connection to the world above brings a balm of healing to the Underworld. Hades, also, takes on a different shade in Maurer's capable hands, a softening that is compounded by his intense grief at Persephone's fate. Their romance feels



Passionate retelling of Persephone and Hades, with remarkable spirit.

Great for fans of Scarlett St. Clair's *Hades x Persephone Saga*; Amelia Wilde's *Hades & Persephone*.

genuine, moving in its tragedy, and a worthy catalyst for the changes it exacts on the world around them. Flashbacks to an earlier age of the Titanomachy help set the stage for the story's unfolding, though those scenes feel removed from the main narrative. The ending to this tale will seem a foregone conclusion to mythology fans, but Maurer builds enough tension to keep readers guessing until the denouement, crafting an intense setting and a beautiful transformation in Persephone, who finds her power through her experiences with her prison's inhabitants—shades, harpies, and even the sinister Sisyphus, who crowns himself king of the Underworld and longs to make Persephone his bride. Even the most seasoned romantasy readers will be enticed by this contemporary retelling.

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

SF/FANTASY/HORROR

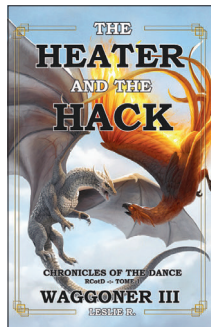
The Heater and the Hack: Chronicles of the Dance: RCotD, Tome 1

Leslie R. Waggoner III

510p, e-book, \$8.95, ISBN 979-8-992-92601-9

Alive with courageous companions, rousing speeches, surprise connections to heroes of the past, and much on-the-road training in weapons and the brilliance of “Balance,” this detailed, character-rich debut brings fresh life to epic fantasy in the classic mode. The story centers on a baker’s boy, Emanrasu, who dreams of adventure and sets out into the world taking only his legacy—a dingy old shield and sword—and his friend Rezua, a mountain of a man who relishes embellishing their adventures in his journal. There’s more to that legacy than Emanrasu suspects, of course. Soon, he gains a mentor, Tarlis, who sees something in this boy.

Readers will not be surprised to discover that Emanrasu proves to be a quick study and a natural leader—or that Tarlis eventually reveals Emanrasu’s connection to a storied protector of the land. Waggoner’s tale is familiar in its outline but original in its intimate scope and ambling pace: *The Heater and the Hack* is a



Richly detailed epic fantasy of friends, legacy, and protecting a village.

Great for fans of L.E. Modesitt, Jr., Rocco Levitas.

companionable tour through Emanrasu’s first steps into legend, attentive to taverns and herbs, weaponsmiths and arborists, and the heroes’ telling of stories. The prose, especially in the first third, can be over-ornamented—the prologue twice reports that smoke from burning bodies is “acidic” and “pungent”—but the prose grows leaner and more powerful as the companions increase their numbers and commit to helping the village of Bren handle its bandit problem. (Waggoner pokes fun at fussy fantasy narration through Rezua’s own rococo storytelling.)

Throughout, Tarlis’s teachings and Emanrasu’s dreams hint at epic conflicts to come in later books, but the scope here, despite a hefty length, is restrained: a village, some ruffians, and some heroes discovering their path. The journey, here, is about a team coming together—standouts include the quick-with-a-knife herbalist Serrah, who stirs Emanrasu’s heart—and learning their capabilities. Emanrasu may seem chosen, but Waggoner makes him work for it. Lovers of immersive fantasy that takes its time and fully imagines its world will enjoy this.

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

SF/FANTASY/HORROR

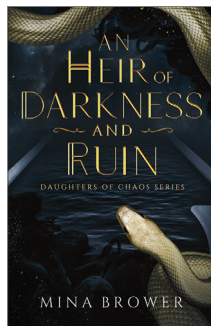
An Heir of Darkness and Ruin

Mina Brower

440p, trade paper, \$7.99, ISBN 979-8-9912482-0-4

In Brower’s second *Daughters of Chaos* offering (after *A God of Moonlight and Stardust*) Renna Strongborn—a young woman shaped by trauma and burdened by the legacy of her father, Am-Re, the God of Darkness—is forced to confront the true cost of her powers and inheritance. Feeling trapped in Taria with Khellios, Renna gravitates toward the voice of Sethos, whom she believes is her soul guardian. But Sethos is hiding secrets of his own, as he both cares for Renna and plans to use her simmering magic to exact revenge on the Celestial Gods for his mother’s death. When Renna inadvertently creates a mirror portal to Daya, the astral realm Sethos rules, she must face Am-Re’s darkness growing inside of her—and the true nature behind Sethos’s feelings.

Though the cast is immense and the story complex, Brower incorporates plenty of background to catch readers up from the first installment. As Sethos and Renna’s romance blurs the lines between love and control, political tensions across the realms continue to rise: Khellios plans a strike on Sethos to recover Renna, despite



A simmering fantasy that teases the lines between love and revenge.

Great for fans of Danielle L. Jensen’s *A Fate Inked in Blood*, Carissa Broadbent’s *The Fallen & the Kiss of Dusk*.

warnings from Arios, chief god of the Celestial Enclave, while God of Creation Cylas vows to rescue Renna but is unsuccessful. Meanwhile, Brower subverts the trope of magic as instant empowerment with Renna, as she earns her strength through brutal training that rewards aggression and punishes vulnerability. By using the backdrop of gods and magic to explore the scars of abuse, control masked as protection, and the path toward reclaiming agency, Brower constructs a villain forged by pain as much as he inflicts it—and offers a protagonist who doesn’t simply rise but unlearns and redefines what true strength means. This is a fantasy rooted in emotional truth and psychological depth, one that doesn’t end with resolution but in preparation: for war, for healing, and for Renna’s continued evolution from victim to force of change.

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

BUSINESS & PERSONAL FINANCE

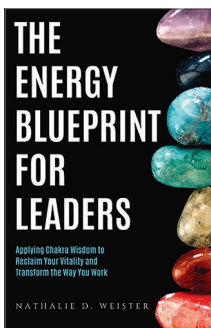
The Energy Blueprint for Leaders: Harnessing Chakra Wisdom to Reclaim Your Vitality and Transform the Way You Work

Nathalie D. Weister

190p, e-book, \$9.99, ASIN B0FFTL8DWT

Weister proposes a transformative leadership model, grounded in the chakra system, in hopes of generating businesses that are “a channel for creativity, expansion, and self-expression.” From burnout to fragmentation—an enemy that she characterizes as a divide between our inner and outer selves—Weister’s debut offers pathways to wisdom and unobstructed energy, inviting readers to begin inward as leaders: through the body, emotion, intuition, and spiritual insight. Weister frames her guidance around the seven primary chakras (heart, root, sacral, solar plexus, throat, third eye, and crown), exploring each energy center through four leadership dimensions: energy, dysfunction, development, and deployment. “By blending ancient wisdom with modern insight,” Weister writes, leaders can expand their self-awareness, restore their inner spark, and “let your leadership be your legacy.”

Combining personal narrative, case studies, and somatic intelligence makes Weister’s guide both pragmatic and insightful, swelling beyond theory to include



Rewarding fusion of spirituality and practical leadership principles.

Great for fans of P. Srinivasu Rao’s *Leading with Spirit*, Ashutosh Garg’s *7 Chakras of Management*.

practical application, such as the Leadership Toolkits offered in each chapter—a set of exercises, reflection prompts, daily rituals, and embodied practices that range from breathwork for crisis regulation to emotional team check-ins. When examining each chakra, Weister lists its defining tasks, explores signs of dysfunction, and provides real-life examples to contrast leadership extremes: for the Root Chakra, those examples are Elon Musk—who, she declares, represents an insecure Root Chakra through his impulsiveness and unpredictability—and Nokia, whose aversion to change and disintegration in the early 2000s was an important lesson in excessive Root energy.

Though she pulls no punches when addressing the damage caused by leaders with an unintegrated inner state, Weister’s tone remains inclusive and encouraging, tackling a critical contemporary leadership dilemma: how do I stay calm, present, and focused when the world around me is on fire? Her answer is a clear, well-organized fusion of spiritual wisdom, somatic practice, and business strategy that promises to usher in a new era of leadership.

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

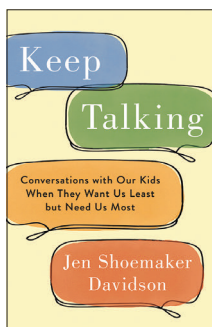
PARENTING

EDITOR'S PICK

Keep Talking: Conversations with Our Kids When They Want Us Least but Need Us MostJen Shoemaker Davidson | Sole Publishing
154p, trade paper, \$15.95, ISBN 979-8-9986270-0-2

For parents and caregivers yearning to improve communication and relationships with their children, Davidson's debut offers practical strategies paired with compassion, respect, and sensitivity. She builds from a four-pillar framework that addresses connection, encouragement, wisdom, and understanding across different developmental stages, outlining how to foster "ongoing openness and trust" while tackling even the most challenging of conversations. Whether managing the adolescent tendency to shut down or learning how to validate intense emotions, Davidson's advice is direct, relatable, and refreshingly candid, boosted by her own experience guiding and enjoying conversations with her children.

Davidson's approach is reminiscent of a close friend or mentor delivering wise, thoughtful pointers that parents will appreciate. She starts with basics—like



Compassionate guide to strong communication with children of any age.

Great for fans of Bukky Ekine-Ogunlana's *Parenting Teen Boys in Today's Challenging World*, Irin Rubin's *The MamaZen Parenting Method*.

"sharing some of our own missteps with our kids," she declares, can "humanize us."

Each chapter concludes with key takeaways for both parents and children, and Davidson highlights the needs kids of all ages have when it comes to talking openly and honestly to parents and caregivers, including how to foster an ongoing connection long after children have moved out on their own. Compact, efficient, and down-to-earth, this is a rewarding guide that values connection as the first step in raising "independent, resilient, confident, empathic, and responsible children."

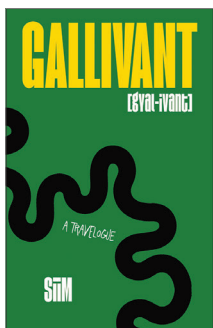
Cover: **A** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: — Editing: **A** | Marketing copy: **A**

NONFICTION

Gallivant: A TravelogueSiiM | Blindmice Multimedia
412p, e-book, \$9.99, ISBN 978-976-97432-1-2

SiiM's debut memoir sweeps readers into her nearly year-long, 1990s globetrotting adventure. A tribute to her late father, who disappeared at sea when she was just seven years old, SiiM's trip—taken from her hometown of Kingston, Jamaica in her early 20s—is an echo of the "ethereal and transient nature of our lives on this planet," a gradual awakening to the freedom and self-awareness of directionless wandering. Through snippets of her journals, emails to family and friends, photographs, and personal sketches, SiiM captures vivid cultural snapshots that linger: hushed moments with the animals at Singapore's Night Zoo; Hong Kong's unbridled atmosphere of frenzy and connection; the hissing fireworks during Mekong River festivals.

Travel devotees will relish SiiM's vivid recollections of small villages in Southeast Asia, the desolate beauty of Australia, and the idling rhythms of Laos's waters. Throughout her writing, she shares recipes (illustrated by Noor Adnan) linking readers to her experiences and driving home the power of food to spark bold emotion: jerk pork



Adventure, beauty, and introspection shape this intuitive memoir.

Great for fans of Alice Morrison's *Walking With Nomads*, Pam Mandel's *The Same River Twice*.

The entire trip, of course, isn't perfect, and SiiM details her struggles as well, including budgeting for such an extended adventure. She tenderly addresses homesickness, reverting to comfort food from Jamaica and pinpointing simple ways to overcome loneliness, all while maintaining her deep connection with friends and family. Articulate, entertaining, and always perceptive, SiiM's memoir transforms both herself and readers, leaving them "peering into life's headwind, listening keenly to decipher trending whispers on capricious breezes, and adjusting [their] sails to meet the surging tides" of the future.

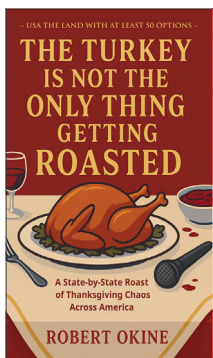
Cover: **B** | Design & typography: **B+** | Illustrations: **A** Editing: **A-** | Marketing copy: **A**

NONFICTION

The Turkey Is Not The Only Thing Getting RoastedRobert Okine | Fifty Options Press
212p, e-book, \$4.99, ASIN B0F9253Z5G

Humorist Okine's third installment in a series exploring the quirks of the 50 states and one district that make up the United States offers a lighthearted skewering of the "most chaotic, carb-loaded emotionally layered holiday." Okine gets to the heart of Thanksgiving humor by zeroing in not on its rituals but the delusional "expectations" that have built up around it: "You're supposed to gather people from multiple generations, belief systems, dietary preferences, and decades of unresolved tension into one house—and expect everything to go smoothly."

Okine's coast-to-coast holiday tour presents short, fictional vignettes involving eccentric cousins, regional customs, "loud uncles, late casseroles, uninvited exes, Wi-Fi outages, and emotional landmines." The stories draw from a well of local knowledge—Wisconsin features "stuffing that squeaked when you chewed (thanks, cheese curds)", while the dinner in his Georgia entry is disrupted by an unexpected arrival who has the temerity to bring their own sweet tea. Okine frequently mines



Affectionate skewering of America's favorite native holiday, state by state.

Great for fans of Melanie Kirkpatrick's *Thanksgiving*, Shari MacDonald's *Humor for the Holidays*.

generational differences for humor, with numerous "plus-ones" and partners' attempts to provide "keto-friendly" options and "anti-inflammatory" hemp dinner rolls and other enlightened innovations receiving much friendly ribbing. Read straight through, the book can become repetitive, as Okine uses a similar format for every state and employs similes and metaphors that vary only slightly—"Mac and cheese so thick it needed a license" and "Smoked ham so tender it had its own zip code" are two of the most and least successful examples, respectively. *Roasted*, like a full Thanksgiving spread, works better as a work to dip into, savored over time rather than downed in one sitting.

Ultimately, Okine drops the snark for sincere celebration of America's favorite native holiday and all its attendant craziness. At the end of the meal, Thanksgiving is not about the conflict and tension, but about "showing up ... ready to love people who drive you nuts." *Roasted*'s structure emphasizes regional differences, but Okine's true insight is into how Thanksgiving binds everyone together.

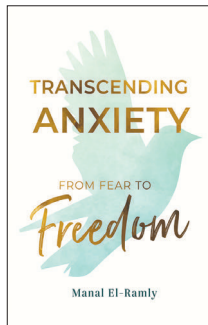
Cover: **B+** | Design & typography: **A-** | Illustrations: — Editing: **A** | Marketing copy: **A**

SELF-HELP

Transcending Anxiety From Fear to Freedom

Manal El-Ramly | Mattain Publishing, LLC
303p, e-book, \$0.99, ISBN 979-8-9893859-0-4

El-Ramly (author of the Zakisms series of reflections) offers an empowering self-help guide to achieving alignment, transforming the complete body, and connecting to your “innate Worthiness, Love, and Freedom.” Drawing on her experience as a life coach, El-Ramly presents readers a structured approach to overcoming anxiety, first “unraveling” anxiety and its causes and then laying out practical approaches for “transcending it.” The opening chapters make the case that anxiety is an “intricate dance involving our physical sensations, emotional responses, mental processes and egoistic beliefs.” From there, El-Ramly lays out methods of acknowledging, facing, and moving past different types of everyday, self-limiting fears centered on a Four Body Framework that urges alignment of the “Egoic,” Mental, Physical, and Emotional selves, one of several ongoing processes that she introduces. (The emphasis, throughout, is on process rather than quick fixes.) El-Ramly concludes by sharing



Inviting guide to overcoming anxiety through full-body alignment and balance.

Great for fans of Mariam Scott's *Stress Less, Live More*, Ashley Neese's *How to Breathe*.

stories of people who have used her methods to “release the grip of anxiety”.

Readers open to concepts of alignment of the “full self” and “creating a symphony of balance and well-being” will find inspiration here, though this compact book sometimes introduces complex topics and techniques briskly before moving on. The guidance itself, though, is effective and refreshingly original, especially strong are testimonials from real lives; fresh tools like “PAINS,” an acronym illuminating how people too often resist emotions; and celebrations of the power of appreciation, laughter, and gratitude.

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

MEMOIR

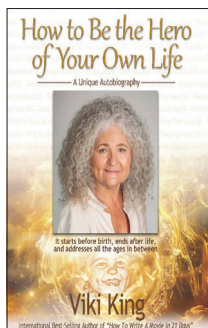
EDITOR'S PICK

How to Be the Hero of Your Own Life: A Unique Autobiography

Viki King | Book of Life Books, LLC
418p, trade paper, \$21, ISBN 979-8-9916322-2-5

King (*How to Write a Movie in 21 Days*) offers her literal life's work, an inventive, inspiring memoir that chronicles every stage of her existence—starting before her birth, exploring how to thrive into one's 70s and beyond, and ending only after her (projected) death, “whenever that may be.” King found a passion for writing during her youth, and the idea to write a unique survey of her life took shape over 60 years ago. She presents the book and her own growth over decades as the same process. For each age, she selects a revealing moment from that year—like a car accident at 30, just when she's resolving to make positive changes, or buying a showstopper of a dress on vacation at 50—providing insight into her own life while inviting readers to reflect on theirs and how perspectives shift across the years.

Recounting her first love, career ambitions, loving an addict, and more, King writes with grace and resonant detail, her wit and wisdom shining through every



Insightful, funny memoir and guide to life surveying 80 years of wisdom.

Great for fans of Dolly Alderton's *Everything I Know About Love*, Nick Trenton's *The Art of Letting Go*.

page. While primarily an accurate account of her life up to her current age of 80, King doesn't shy away from taking creative liberties and using fictitious elements to communicate what she has come to understand of the world. She starts her story with her thoughts in the womb (by week three, “It's all moving so fast I can hardly keep up”). While gestating, she signs the Sacred Contract of her life with

the chatty N.O.B.U. (which stands for “Natural Omnipresent Beauty Unlimited,” obviously), a recurring presence in sharp, smart dialogue scenes. Readers learn early on what will define King's life: grit, humor, and love of good food, among much more. As entertaining as it is insightful, King's singular memoir/guidebook never ceases to be fleet, funny, and alive with hard-won wisdom. It's a testament to the power held in living our lives with open minds and open hearts.

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

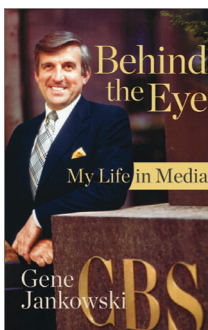
MEMOIR

Behind the Eye: My Life in Media

Gene Jankowski | Bailey Press
228p, trade paper, \$16.99, ISBN 979-8-998-79660-9

Jankowski served as president of CBS Broadcasting from the late 1970s through the Reagan era, but his journey to the “Tiffany Network” began humbly, as the son of working-class parents, born in Buffalo during the Great Depression and raised in a home packed with extended family. Not that he lacked pleasures—he recalls how, in the late 1940s, a neighbor's television could stir a “sense of awe” that “cannot be duplicated today.” Now in his 90s, Jankowski looks back at his life and career in *Behind the Eye*, sharing anecdotes about his humble upbringing, tales of glamorous showbiz encounters, and behind-the-scenes looks at the nitty-gritty of television dealmaking.

Jankowski mainly operates in amiable memoir mode, avoiding a chronological or comprehensive account of his time at the top during the golden age of network TV in favor of something more like a highlight reel. Still, he writes with verve and dash, and those looking for TV trivia (*48 Hours* was originally titled *48 Hours on Crack Street*) and tangy tales of the famous and powerful (Andy Rooney bogarting CBS founder Bill Paley's dessert at a gala) will be satisfied. Jankowski comes across



Breezy, warm-hearted look at a life in TV—and running CBS.

Great for fans of Dick Ebersol's *From Saturday Night to Sunday Night*, Brandon Tartikoff's *The Last Great Ride*.

as humble and level-headed—about his relationship with George Lucas, who, we learn, designed *Star Wars* for a “television viewer's habits,” he writes: “I never did get him to produce any program for CBS!” Jankowski can be cutting. His criticism of Ted Turner, who tried to mount a hostile takeover of CBS, and Larry Tisch, who bought himself a seat on the CBS board and later became president and CEO, pulls no punches. “He cared little about the image of CBS. All that mattered was money,” he writes of Tisch. Jankowski includes a few funny stories about his domestic life and tidbits about his religious faith, but *Behind the Eye* largely sticks to his career, offering a breezy, warm-hearted look at the human side of the business of mass culture, at its commercial apex.

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

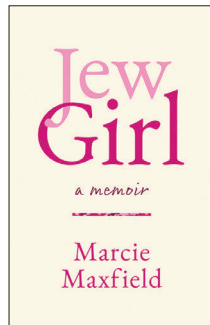
MEMOIR

JewGirl: A Memoir

Marcie Maxfield | Desert Canyon Books, LLC
141p, e-book, \$16.95, ISBN 979-8-9925390-0-4

This witty, incisive memoir delves into white privilege, identity, and intersectionality, as Maxfield (*Em's Awful Good Fortune*) reflects on her childhood growing up in a Jewish household and sharply reported moments as an adult pushing back against stereotypes and misjudgments. Her candid account blends crack comic storytelling—relish the stories about working retail with Uncle Balls!—with dead-serious considerations of what it's like to be Jewish in America in a time where a boy she once thought cute grows up to post vile antisemitic trash. "It no longer feels comfortable to be lumped in the 'White' box," she writes, "along with the alt-right, far right, white supremacists" and others that "want to wipe my people ... off the face of the earth."

That searching candor powers a book that reports much that's fresh—but also all-too-familiar. "Antisemitism never goes away; it only lies dormant," Maxfield's mother has said. Maxfield acknowledges the privilege that comes with having white



Incisive memoir exploring self-identity and the contemporary Jewish-American experience.

Great for fans of Helen Fremont's *The Escape Artist*, Zibby Owens's *On Being Jewish Now*.

skin even as she details wrenching anti-semitism, examines how "Christianity trump[s] skin color" in the U.S., and explores, with charged nuance, how "it no longer feels possible, politically correct, or let's face it, safe to support the existence of Israel, call for the return of hostages, and oppose the destruction of Palestine, as if you must choose sides."

Her observations are piercing and pained; Maxfield admits, touchingly, to fearing that she hasn't gotten the tone right or measured up to the moment—as if anyone else is managing to do so. This layered narrative will resonate with readers trying to define themselves in a world of mislabels, and her ability to transform childhood insecurities into superpowers as an adult inspires, though she never discounts how devastating it is to be "othered." "My essence can't be distilled down to one thing," she writes, and her frankness on motherhood, marriage, family dysfunction, monstrous men, and cultural identity is provocative, relatable, and engaging.

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

MIDDLE GRADE

Robbie, the Bird Who Was Afraid of Heights

Cheryl E. Wimbush | Kravitz and Sons, LLC
56p, trade paper, \$16.99, ISBN 979-8-896-39016-9

In this adventurous children's story, Mr. and Mrs. Robin welcome three new hatchlings, Rudy, Rosy, and the youngest, Robbie—"the scrawniest, palest little chick" they have ever seen. Ridiculed by his older siblings for being a late bloomer, Robbie is the most unconventional of birds: his first view over the nest's edge causes him to faint, revealing his fear of heights. As his family adapts to his fear and inability to fly, they try every trick they can think of to help him: he swoops through the air on his parents' backs, explores the wonders of the ground below, and discovers a host of charming woodland creatures. But when Robbie is separated from his family and lost during a storm, he learns that not everyone in the forest can be trusted.

Wimbush crafts an adorable tale of a close-knit robin family, peppered with colorful illustrations by J. Flagg that showcase the birds gliding, roaming, and problem-solving together. Talking forest animals, encounters with nature's elements, and a heroic protagonist in the form of a courageous young bird will keep



Delightful tale of a young bird navigating his fear of heights.

Great for fans of Tammy Yosich's *The Bird That Was Afraid to Fly*, Kay Andrews's *Sammy the Squirrel's Big Climb*.

young readers turning the pages, and Wimbush also delivers a slew of informative facts. As Robbie ventures out on his own—and is befriended by a delightful, eyeglasses-wearing worm named Wally—readers learn all about the hatching process, what birds eat, and the self-sustaining cycles of the natural world.

As Robbie faces new milestones in his life, young readers will parallel his revelations—the power of emotion, the importance of friendship, and the sweet taste of freedom—with the breakthroughs in their own lives, making this debut children's tale as insightful as it is amusing. Throughout Robbie's misadventures, the unconditional love and support of his family simmers in the background, helping him face his fears and, eventually, find the courage to fly—just when it's needed the most.

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

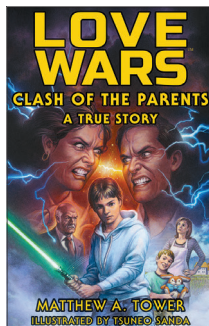
MIDDLE GRADE

Love Wars: Clash of the Parents: A True Story

Matthew A. Tower | Raja Media, LLC
370p, hardcover, \$39.99, ISBN 979-8-9995038-0-0

In first grade when his parents first decide on divorce, Matthew Tower feels pulled between them; as the eldest son, he's forced to listen to their bickering and name calling, often feeling that he must choose one side over the other. He consoles himself by imagining what his childhood hero, Luke Skywalker, would do in his position, convinced that he must transform into a Jedi: "I ha[ve] to use the Force and get Mom and Dad to stop fighting," he declares. That innocent perspective fuels the narrative, as Matthew navigates his relationship with his younger brother, his fear of the future, and the new adults that divorce brings into his life.

Tower's debut is obviously written from the heart. What makes it resonate is the palpable emotion Matthew feels: fear, resentment, grief—and a burning desperation to somehow just be a kid while his world fractures into pieces. As his father remarries—to Holly, a calming presence in Matthew's life—and his mother starts to date again, Matthew hopes for a reprieve from their vicious hate. Instead of that hopeful ending, he endures years of bitter conflict, his mother's wrath when he



Powerful, expressive rendering of divorce from a child's perspective.

Great for fans of Cynthia Copeland's *Good Riddance*, Sophia Recca's *Mend*.

asks to live with his father, court battles, and his own volatile moods.

Animated illustrations by Tsuneo Sanda give powerful voice to Matthew's distress, depicting the weight of his parents' anger and his youthful hope that, with a little inspiration from his childhood heroes, he can right their sinking ship. Sketches of his dad costumed as the Greatest American Hero flying through the air to rescue him are just as powerful as the visceral fury that pours off his parents in other moments, perfectly matching the story's heart wrenching portrayal of what divorce does to family bonds. Though it looks different than expected, Tower closes with his long-sought-after peaceful ending, recognizing his years of pain eventually give way to empowerment, closure, and purpose.

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

YOUNG ADULT

The Drifters: Awakening the Four Powers

Ella Hall | IngramSpark

181p, e-book, \$13.99, ISBN 979-8-218-65966-0

Hall crafts a complex YA fantasy debut of two rival groups at war for centuries: the Drifters—those able to harness powers of the natural world, and the Vagabonds—Wendigos, succubae, and other sundry demonic entities who were once Drifters themselves but have now turned to darker arts. Queen Calory, ruler of the Drifters, has protected her people for hundreds of years, but the Vagabonds are growing in power, increasingly resolved to control all of humanity. But an unlikely hero is stirring in the ranks, though she knows nothing yet of her destiny: 42-year-old Liz, born from Queen Calory's sister and her royal husband, possesses astonishing powers, capable of defeating the Vagabonds once and for all.

From the very first chapter, Hall's world entices, though the elaborate story—paired with multiple perspectives and a handful of editing missteps—can be hard to track. Hall counteracts that mild overwhelm with a relatable protagonist who



Elaborate fantasy pitting an unlikely hero against centuries-old discord

Great for fans of Rae Carson's *The Girl of Fire and Thorns*, Jilleen Dolbear's *Splintered Veil*.

manages to stay grounded, despite facing several existential crises: already feeling lost and seeking her true purpose in life, Liz discovers, in the span of a few chapters, that her parents were royalty, the current monarch is her aunt, and she is capable of harnessing every known magical ability. Even without a centuries-old war brewing on the horizon, that's a lot to digest, but Liz capably glides through, assisted by budding feelings for her loyal companion, Sian, and Devon, an enemy spy who's as conflicted as he is charming.

Though intended for a YA audience, *Awakening the Four Powers* is scarce on central teenage characters—with the exception of Almond, son of Vagabond leader Percy Vewling, and his two female companions, Azure and London. Still, Hall offers readers a fresh interpretation of the classic Chosen One story, with a constructed magical system and non-human characters that pay homage to fantasy tales of old. This is a lively series starter.

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

YOUNG ADULT

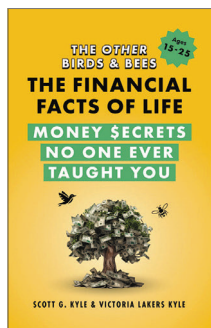
The Other Birds & Bees: The Financial Facts of Life: Money Secrets No One Ever Taught You

Scott G. Kyle & Victoria Lakers Kyle | Liv Mas Press

176p, e-book, \$5.99, ISBN 979-8-89694-120-0

Anxious about giving a young person the money talk—or finding a trusted source to illuminate the basics of personal finance as you step into the world? Try this friendly, straight-talking guide to making good financial habits a part of your daily routine. Kyle and Kyle measure up to their promise to teach the “financial facts of life”—the simple personal-finance facts that can spell the difference between financial success and failure. The authors, each with in-depth business backgrounds, make a persuasive case not just that healthy financial habits are vital for long-term success and peace, but that, contrary to expectations, they can be easy to develop and maintain. The trick, they note, is to make such habits a systematic part of one's lifestyle.

Targeted to readers serious about improving their finances and making the disciplined choices that lead to the accumulation of real, long-term wealth, *The Other Birds & Bees* demonstrates that the first step is to change habits and atti-



Inviting guide to money and financial planning, presented as parents' advice.

Great for fans of Jean Chatzky and Kathryn Tuggle's *How to Money*, Paco de Leon's *Finance for the People*.

tudes. The authors pen much of the book in narrative form, gently dramatizing parent-child discussions about key financial decisions, like whether to lease a car, how to pay for college, and budgeting and investing. The guidance here is sound, sometimes familiar, but presented with fresh insight, a loving parent's enthusiasm, and up-to-date facts. Among other urgent topics, the authors urge readers to understand compound interest, how credit cards work, the importance of building equity, and what insurance and “emergency” funds are for. (Bulleted breakdowns of their guidance drive the points home outside of the narrative passages.)

The authors avoid get-rich-quick nonsense, advising readers to avoid financial products that they are not comfortable with or have difficulty understanding, no matter how much of a return is promised. Their refreshingly plainspoken jargon-free style helps to reduce financial intimidation, but references to their website, courses, and portfolio review add the feeling of a sales pitch to an otherwise helpful handbook.

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

YOUNG ADULT

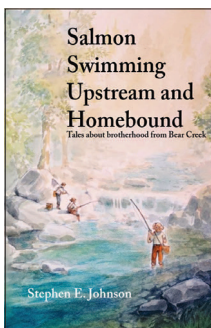
Salmon Swimming Upstream and Homebound: Tales about Brotherhood from Bear Creek

Stephen E. Johnson | Sonatas by Steve, LLC

206p, hardcover, \$19.50, ASIN B0F9PBC276

Johnson's reflective memoir reminisces on a past spent growing up in Woodinville, Washington, in a heart-warming narrative that centers on nature, family, and a country house harboring “its own wonders waiting for us to discover.” Pinpointing 1966, a pivotal year in his upbringing, Johnson recalls stories of his brothers, Rick and Jeff, sister Kristy, and parents—his mother, who was “the grounding force” and his father, a “creative, but not always practical” man. Johnson's childhood is one of unfettered joy and playful imaginings, as he and his siblings—along with his friend, Mike, and Mike's sister, Kerry—become the undisputed masters of their rustic surroundings, taking fishing trips to Bear Creek, exploring, and navigating adolescence amid the broader cultural revolution of the '60s.

An unabashed study on the delights of youth, Johnson's narrative is infused with buoyancy and a carefree charm, found in single-lane dirt roads, warm fires on chilly nights, and the thrills of conquering uncharted territory. The family's



Warm tribute to the twilight days of youth.

Great for fans of Mary E. Johnson's *Hills and Hollers*, Lannie Dietle's *In the Land of Used to Be*.

Swedish background emerges during holiday celebrations and communal gatherings—where age-old traditions take center stage—while weightier moments see Johnson and his siblings soaking up hard-won lessons: a hutch of rabbits dies after he neglects their care one wintry morning; power outages threaten food supplies; and nature's inevitable endings spark intense grief. Pop culture references sprinkled throughout lighten the mood, calling to mind a time when the world was “curious, wide-eyed, and ready for anything,” as the Beatles blare across the soundwaves and Marvel comic books shoulder the weight of bedtime energy.

Of all the lessons this stirring memoir imparts, the most compelling comes when Johnson and siblings watch the salmon battle upstream from the Puget Sound, an annual journey of becoming and belonging that evokes childhood's toughest responsibility: “pushing through resistance, questioning what's expected... and carving out a path that feels true.” Johnson proves that nostalgia is the truest of friends.

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