

OCTOBER 27, 2025

# booklife®

— YOUR GUIDE TO SELF-PUBLISHING —

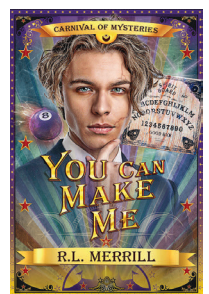
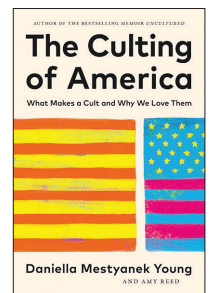
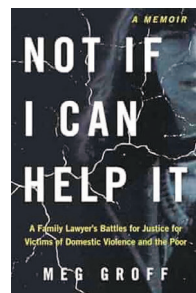
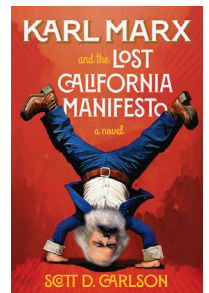
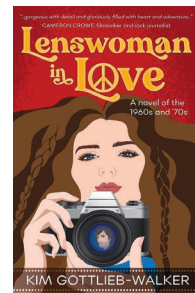
54 New BookLife Titles Listed • 24 New BookLife Titles Reviewed

## Best of BookLife

As *Publishers Weekly* celebrates its best books of the year, BookLife has many titles to celebrate

I'M CONTINUALLY AMAZED by the wonderful indie books that cross my desk, but this year in particular, I have a renewed appreciation for the challenges of publishing a book. Last fall, my second cousin, Linda, contacted me. She'd discovered typewritten pages from a book my great-uncle, who was a journalist with United Press International, had been writing before he died. Working with Linda, we set out to publish *News Was Our Game*, and what a lesson it was! Every detail counts, I learned, and the self-publishing process is often filled with missteps. My respect for BookLife authors has deepened, and I'm humbled by those who have the passion and commitment to publish their work time after time. In this issue of BookLife, we recognize the many incredible stories that we have read throughout the year. Thank you for inspiring us!

—Matia Query, editor of BookLife



# BookLife Titles Reviewed in PW

Each month, *PW* selects a small number of noteworthy titles to review alongside traditionally published books. Here are a few of the best, with quotes taken from the reviews.

## FICTION

### The Days Before Tomorrow

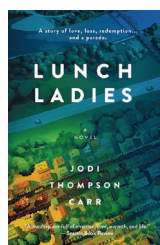
Mark Hass



"Readers will be moved by this story of a never-ending struggle for survival."

### Lunch Ladies

Jodi Thompson Carr



"A charming story of three lonely Minnesota women who find a renewed sense of purpose during preparations for their town's 1976 bicentennial celebration."

### Music for Leaving

Erika Randall



"An uplifting road novel about a terminally ill woman attempting to make amends.... This strikes just the right chord."

### What Once Was Promised

Louis Trubiano

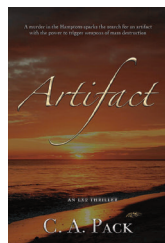


"This loving portrait of a bygone Boston is worth a look."

## MYSTERY & THRILLER

### Artifact

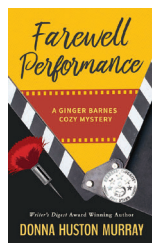
Carol Pack



"This propulsive conspiracy thriller... hits the ground running, grabbing readers from the opening pages and refusing to let go."

### Farewell Performance: A Ginger Barnes Cozy Mystery

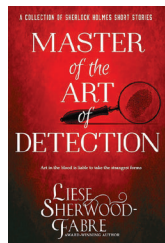
Donna Huston Murray



"Murray's clever sixth case for Ginger Barnes finds the Pennsylvania gumshoe digging into the murder of an old friend."

### Master of the Art of Detection

Liese Sherwood-Fabre



"A solid collection of stories featuring Doyle's detective.... Sherlockians will be pleased."

### Rise of the Black Cross

Steven F. Freeman

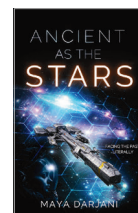


"Freeman kicks off a new series set in Renaissance-era Italy with this stylish espionage thriller."

## SCIENCE FICTION, FANTASY & HORROR

### Ancient as the Stars

Maya Darjani



"An assured space opera with a fascinating, time-bending premise.... Darjani's true strength lies in characterization, making both Yilmazes sympathetic but flawed in different ways and mining impressive psychological depth out of their differences and similarities."

### Danger Lies Within

K.M. Krenik



"Krenik's promising debut nimbly melds fantasy and mystery for a satisfying whodunit set in 2226."

## ROMANCE & EROTICA

### The Earl Was Wrong

Britt Belle



"Belle adds depth to the marriage of convenience plot via the reality show-level antics of the extended Greydon clan.... The result is a fun and fast-paced historical."

### O Little Town of Bethlehem

Elizabeth Boyle



"Bestselling romance author Boyle riffs on *It's a Wonderful Life* in this enchanting tale of redemption and time travel."



# A Publishing Company as Unique as Its Authors

Gatekeeper Press is committed to customization

**A**t Gatekeeper Press, authors always come first. The 10-year-old publishing company has a deep commitment to quality, integrity, and transparency, creating what Gatekeeper co-owner and President Tony Chellini calls an “author-centric” approach to independent publishing.

“There is no sales team at Gatekeeper Press, no pressure, and no cookie cutter approach,” Chellini says. “Authors pay only for what they need, and every project is unique. Our role is to make sure manuscripts are fully prepared and positioned for success while giving each author complete creative control and a clear, supportive path to bringing their dream book to life.”

When a writer begins their journey with Gatekeeper, they can expect “white-glove service,” Chellini says, starting with a personalized intake call with the company’s owners to create a unique publishing plan. This commitment to customization extends to Gatekeeper’s business model, where authors keep 100 percent of their rights and royalties along with worldwide distribution, no caps on sales, and no recurring fees to ensure their books remain available. Ultimately, the goal is simple: each author chooses what they need to create a product they love.

“From the very beginning, every author is paired with a dedicated Author Manager who provides concierge-level service,” Chellini says. “We start each project with a video onboarding call to set expectations and ensure alignment, and authors work directly with our editors, designers, and formatters to bring their vision to life with

complete author control and approval at every stage.”

An important part of this process is cover design, which can give a book a significant boost when it’s done well. In many cases, a book’s initial appeal hinges on its cover, which is about more than just aesthetics—it’s essential for making a good first impression. In a crowded marketplace filled with thousands of titles, readers can

**“From the very beginning, every author is paired with a dedicated Author Manager who provides concierge-level service.”**

— Tony Chellini

quickly become overwhelmed. That’s why a polished, professionally designed cover helps an author stand out, build trust, connect with readers, and, most importantly, find their audience by communicating genre and tone.

“Cover design is about ensuring an author’s story is represented authentically and powerfully,” Chellini says. “While indie authors today can design their own covers, the difference in quality is unmistakable. A book may contain an incredible story, but if the cover does not meet professional

standards, it risks being overlooked or unfairly judged.” Through Gatekeeper, authors receive unlimited cover designs until they are 100 percent satisfied.

When pictures are an essential part of a story, Gatekeeper’s professional illustrators can give the final product a human touch that cannot be achieved through AI-generated images, which often lack nuance and consistency. Gatekeeper’s professional designers specialize in different styles, including colored pencil, marker, pen and ink, acrylic, freehand digital art, digital vector illustration, watercolor, graphite, traditional, and more, allowing the press to match each author with the style that best meets their needs.

“The difference is undeniable when working with an experienced illustrator,” Chellini says. “Authors collaborate one-on-one with a professional who brings both technical skill and artistic intuition to each project. This process ensures the illustrations align perfectly with the story while also giving authors the chance to communicate their preferences and ideas directly.”

As AI and other digital tools continue to reshape the self-publishing industry, Gatekeeper aims to continue being a trusted resource for independent authors, offering one-on-one support to help make their work the best it can be. “We know that it is a predatory landscape out there for authors, which is why our focus is on providing the utmost integrity, transparency, and quality when we work with both prospective authors and Gatekeeper Press authors,” Chellini says. “At the end of the day, a book is very personal to the author, and they want the best for it. That is what they deserve.”

## Wilde Abandon: A Dark Horse Dive Bar Novel

Jennifer Ryan



"Sensuous love scenes and a touch of mystery will draw in returning readers and new fans alike. This is a winner."

## NONFICTION

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

Brian S. Bovee



"The author builds a lucid, evidence-based case for how technology is impacting faith, and cogently explains why

willpower alone isn't enough to cure the distracted mind."

### Freeze-Drying the Harvest: Preserving Food the Modern Way

Carolyn Thomas

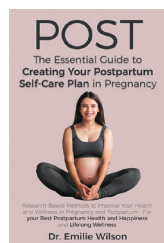


"Idaho homesteader Thomas guides readers through freeze-drying food at home in this comprehensive manual. This is

essential reading for those looking to up their food preservation game."

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

Emilie Wilson



"The shrewd advice focuses on prenatal and postnatal health equally, and Wilson brings a compassionate outlook that views self-care as a crucial

precondition for adequately showing up for a newborn."

# BookLife Reviews

BookLife reviews dozens of independent books each month, in all categories. Here are 10 of 2025's very best. All quotes are taken from their BookLife reviews.

## GENERAL FICTION

### Karl Marx and the Lost California Manifesto

Scott D. Carlson



"This wildly entertaining debut imagines a most unexpected adventure with a light, witty touch... with Karl Marx caught up in the California Gold Rush

while still composing *The Communist Manifesto*."

### The Things They Didn't See

Angela Shaeffer



"Shaeffer breaks hearts with this exquisitely crafted debut tale of a family trying to survive tragic loss."

## MYSTERY & THRILLER

### The Garbage Man

Tessa Pacelli



"A tense, twist-at-every-turn thriller about addiction and the power of AI, made timelier by Pacelli's examination of the doors technology can open

alongside its darker possibilities."

### A Noble Sin

Andrew Bridgeman

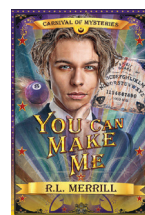


"*A Noble Sin* is a focused, personal sequel powered by surprise and vivid characters. For thriller fans, it would be a sin to pass this up."

## ROMANCE & EROTICA

### You Can Make Me: Carnival of Mysteries

R.L. Merrill

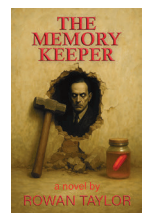


"A captivating standalone entry in a multi-author romance series, Merrill's novel is filled with sawdust and sorcerous surprises... both chilling and mesmerizing."

## SCI-FI, FANTASY & HORROR

### The Memory Keeper

Rowan Taylor

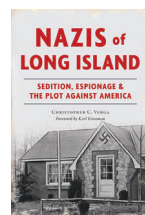


"This gripping haunted house gothic, the start of a trilogy, pulls readers in from the first pages and doesn't let go until the end."

## HISTORY

### Nazis of Long Island: Sedition, Espionage and the Plot Against America

Christopher C. Verga

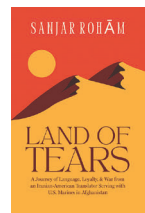


"An eye-opening account of... a surprisingly robust 'breeding ground for an American Reich' in Long Island and neighboring New York City in the days leading up to and during World War II."

## MEMOIR

### Land of Tears

Sanjar Roham



"In his absorbing memoir, Roham, an Iranian immigrant to the U.S., details his time spent as a 'terp' (interpreter) with the U.S. military in



# Lulu's Got You Covered

The leading print-on-demand platform offers accessible, high-quality publishing

**S**taying ahead in the self-publishing industry requires recognizing trends and developing print, fulfillment, and sales technology to meet author, publisher, and reader needs. No one knows that better than Lulu, the first company to offer free publishing. The leading print-on-demand partner for creators, businesses, and publishers, Lulu launched in 2002, and over the last two decades, the company has developed the best network in the world for digital printing.

"For the last 23 years, we've evolved with the self-publishing industry and worked really hard to develop our global network of printers all over the world," says Sarah Franklin, public relations manager at Lulu. "In addition to our self-publishing tools, we have direct sales integrations with Wix, WooCommerce for WordPress, and Shopify. Our Print API also allows anyone to plug into our print network, which has been essential for publishers' backlists and keeping older titles in print when they experience a resurgence in sales. Lulu provides flexible solutions for any scenario. Need a one-off digital print run to support an author event? Or a stopgap printing solution to maintain sales between offset runs? We've got you covered."

Your Lulu account is free to create and gives you access to customizable templates for the book's interior and cover files. The platform guides you through the process of uploading files and printing copies, offering support along the way if you get stuck. Lulu's on-demand printing solves logistical concerns you might have about producing too many or too few copies, storing extra books on hand, shipping books yourself, or not having enough to respond

to a sudden boost in demand.

"On-demand solves all problems around inventory," Franklin says. "No storage, no reprints after typos are found, and updates are easy. Additionally, with the help of our global print network, worldwide shipping becomes easier as books don't have to travel from one warehouse to many international destinations. It's really easy to make more than one format available to readers so they can choose if they want hardcover, paperback, and so on."

**“ For 23 years we’ve evolved with the self-publishing industry and developed our global network of printers. ”**

— Sarah Franklin

Lulu supplements its printing and fulfillment technology with a wealth of publishing, marketing, and selling education. Once you've designed and printed your book, Lulu helps writers reach new readers through technology and education. The company's help center connects all of Lulu's educational content for anyone to search. This includes dozens of detailed articles about using Lulu, more than 300 blog posts on publishing and marketing, Lulu's own Publish & Prosper podcast for entrepreneurs and creators, and its expansive YouTube

channel for tutorials and guidance.

"Our podcast frequently covers topics to help authors sell more books and reach their audience," Franklin says. "Lulu created the first print-on-demand book integration with Shopify. Our Direct Sales tools help authors understand who is buying their book, and with that information, they understand more about their buyer demographics, customer base, and how readers are finding them." Because Lulu's offerings can be tailored to each individual creator's needs, Franklin has seen a wide range of projects come to life, including tools for businesses such as branded books, training manuals, commemorative books, and product showcases. For her, this versatility—and the limitless possibilities it creates—is the most rewarding part about working in the self-publishing industry.

"Accessible and affordable high-quality publishing is a gift for so many," Franklin says. "Publishing can be a personal project, something that traditional publishing wasn't ready to take on, such as a magazine, a journal, a passion project... It's amazing to see what gets created. We make publishing available no matter where you live or how old you are. I've watched many authors create something they never thought was possible."

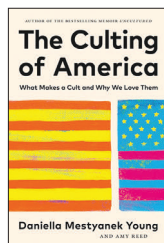


Afghanistan... [and] stirs admiration for the bravery of the men and women of the military.”

### POLITICAL & SOCIAL SCIENCES

#### The Culting of America: What Makes a Cult and Why We Love Them

Daniella Mestyaneck Young and Amy Reed



“An experienced eye on... American institutions with cult-like aspects... that use tactics like isolation, specialized language, and apocalyptic thinking

to create strong bonds and promote increasingly extreme beliefs and behavior.”

### YOUNG ADULT

#### Lavender: The Midnight Peace Runners Saga, Vol. 1.

Christina King



“With a dash of wholesome whimsy and an enormous helping of heart, King’s debut ... is a refreshing reminder to find joy in life and listen to the wisdom (and music) of the universe.”

#### The Shadows of the Kingdom

Jen Bilton

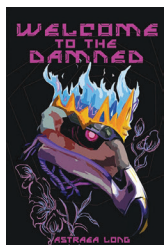


“Bilton smartly blends the cozy, the epic, and the emotionally wrenching as her heroes move on from their loving idylls, complete with

a scene-stealing ‘message cat,’ and face hard dilemmas.”

#### Welcome to the Damned

Astraea Long



“Long shines in this riveting YA sci-fi debut [with] a multifaceted heroine driven by past trauma in a city run by criminals.”

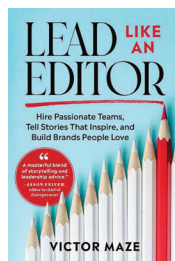
# BookLife Prize Nonfiction Finalists

Here are the standouts from the nonfiction prize this year, including the grand prize winner. Quotes are drawn from their critics’ reports.

#### Lead Like an Editor: Hire Passionate Teams, Tell Stories That Inspire, and Build Brands People Love

Victor Maze

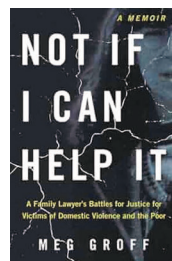
“In bright tones, Maze motivates readers to transform the way they view leadership: it’s a fluid, visionary process in his capable hands.”



#### Not If I Can Help It

Meg Groff

“This is a powerful memoir of a family law attorney that doubles as a call to action to safeguard domestic violence victims.”



#### Super Psyched: Unleash the Power of the 4 Types of Connection and Live the Life You Love

Adam Dorsay

“This is a distinctive guide that readers will find both comprehensive and appealing.”



Stay tuned for the announcement of the finalists on November 13, followed by the announcement of the winner on December 12.

# BookLife Prize Nonfiction Winner

#### A Holy Haunting

Sam Kim

“Kim emerges as an endearing, highly educated, and naturally curious individual who invites the reader to embark on a journey of discovery. *A Holy Haunting* eschews platitudes in favor of a multilayered conversation about the role of faith in today’s world.”



# 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/  
self-pub](https://publishersweekly.com/self-pub)



paid reviews of self- or  
indie-published titles  
[publishersweekly.com/  
BookLifeReviews](https://publishersweekly.com/BookLifeReviews)



*PW* reviewers critique  
thousands of self-published  
titles every year:  
[publishersweekly.com/  
BookLifePrize](https://publishersweekly.com/BookLifePrize)

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

All powered by *Publishers Weekly* reviewers.

# THE TALE OF MR. CROCODILE TAKES TEA

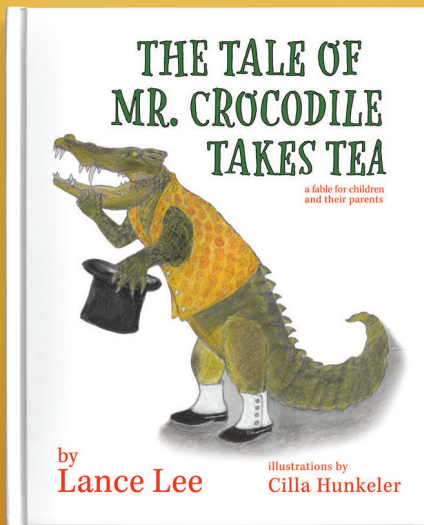
by Lance Lee

A heartwarming story that encourages readers to consider themes of acceptance and the importance of looking beyond external differences...an excellent read for children...a modern fable that entertains and educates, making it an excellent addition to a child's library.

—Carol Thompson, *5\* Readers' Favorite review*

Lee's second installment in his charming "Crouch End" series follows...an adventurous story of a crocodile learning to become a person...and offers a beautiful moral that all life has dignity and deserves respect.... *The Tale of Mr. Crocodile Takes Tea* offers a perspective that may positively inspire young readers....

—Booklife Reviews



Paperback: 979-8-21830-614-4 • \$17.95

Hardback: 979-8-21830-612-0 • \$31.50

Whimsical and delightfully thought-provoking

—Diane Donovan, *Midwest Book Review*

Delightful... Charming... Fantastical Whimsy!

—Aimee Jodoin, *4\* Foreword review*

A delightful little story of differences and respect

—Asher Syed, *5\* Readers' Favorite review*

A tale of unity told through a Crocodile's search for whether we're all persons

—Love Reading: *Love Reading for Kids, and: An Indie Book We Love*

Available at



# BookLife Prize Fiction Semifinalists

Stay tuned for the announcement of the finalists on November 13, followed by the announcement of the winner on December 12.

## GENERAL FICTION

**Chick Singer**

Lorraine Devon Wilke



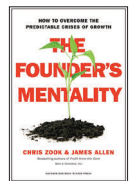
**Desert Hunters**

Xuemo



**Founder**

James Hill



**Time and the Tree**

Róisín Sorahan



**The Toffee Man & the Kingdom of Ends**

Linda Quinn



## MYSTERY & THRILLER

**The Cull: Bloodline**

Eric J. Gates



**Forever Gone**

R.S. Hampton



**The Imperfect Hand of Fate**

Fate

Wade Monk



**The Unaccompanied Soul**

Jackie Harris



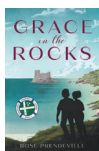
**Winter**

Rhya Tenney



**ROMANCE & EROTICA**

**Grace on the Rocks**  
Rose Prendeville



**The Lover's Eye**  
Lauren Hayworth



**Lenswoman in Love**  
Kim Gottlieb-Walker



**The Princess Shoppe**  
Kerry Blaisdell



**Ruby's Revenge**  
Christine Gallagher



**YA & MIDDLE GRADE**

**Ash and Feather**  
Sharon Frances



**Book of Blood**  
Jaya Farrer



**How I Hacked the Moon**  
R.A. Dines



**Light's Shadow**  
R. Roland Finch



**There Will Be Other Summers**  
Tegan Anderson



**SF & FANTASY**

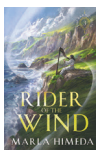
**Albedo**  
Clayton Williamson



**Kamp Kromwell**  
A.J. Grea



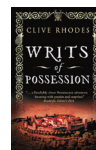
**Rider of the Wind**  
Marla Himeda



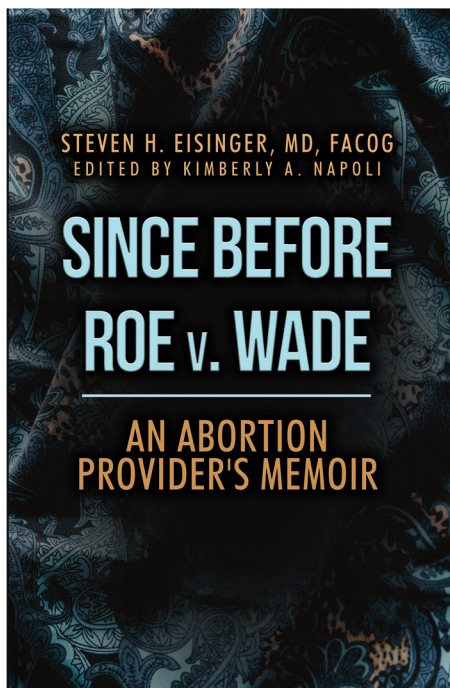
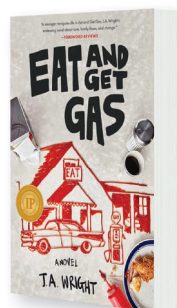
**World of Destruction**  
Ben Nobile



**Writs of Possession**  
Clive RhodesEcta



*Eat and Get Gas* was selected as the winner of the 2024 BookLife Fiction Prize, announced in late December of last year. The report for *Eat and Get Gas* praised the novel, saying that “13-year-old Evan’s coming-of-age in the midst of political chaos and familial turmoil is palpable in this page-turner.”



**Since Before Roe v. Wade: An Abortion Provider's Memoir**  
by Steven H. Eisinger, MD, FACOG

Written with clarity, humor, and passion this memoir presents an accurate picture of abortion to the public, fearlessly addressing the complex issues surrounding the topic.

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



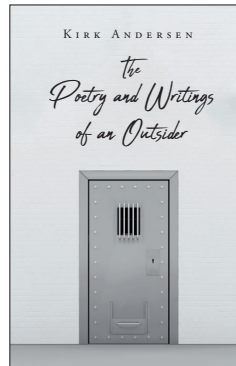
# Must-Read Titles



## Fairy Lights: Bed Time Poems & Gallery of Fairytale Art from Yesteryear

by Helen Williford-Lower  
ISBN: 978-0473742454

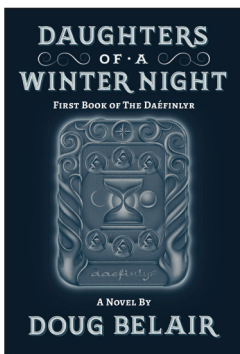
“Fanciful poetry collection sparking childhood whimsy.”



## The Poetry and Writings of an Outsider

by Kirk Andersen  
ISBN: 978-1647010485

“Somber, yet biting poems and stories exploring social and spiritual isolation.”



## Daughters of a Winter Night

Doug Belair

EDITOR'S PICK

ISBN: 979-83339959847

“Assured and engaging epic fantasy debut, with heaps of heart.”

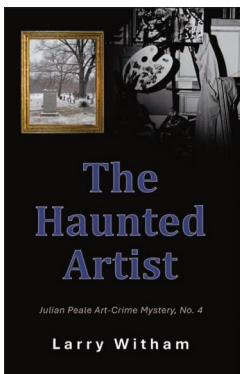


## Trapped in Time

by Lee Hardesty

ISBN: 978-1968963002

“Paleontologist rescues dinosaur-hunting grandfather in this brisk time-travel adventure.”

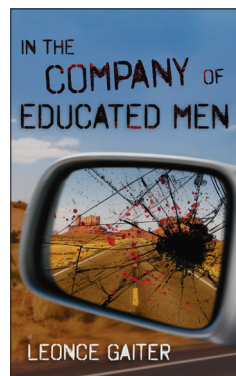


## The Haunted Artist

by Larry Witham

ISBN: 978-1665772600

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

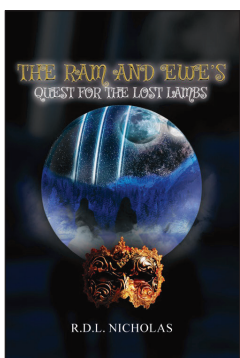


## In The Company of Educated Men

by Leonce Gaiter

ISBN: 978-0983709381

Friends on a journey of self-discovery, wrapped in danger, intrigue, and unexpected connections.

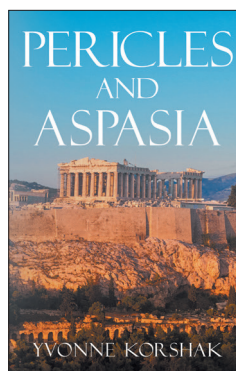


## The Ram and Ewe's: Quest for the Lost Lambs

by R.D.L. Nicholas

ISBN: 979-8990844254

“An enchanting, action packed fantasy adventure that follows a young girl and group of friends on a quest to save her father.”



## Pericles and Aspasia

by Yvonne Korshak

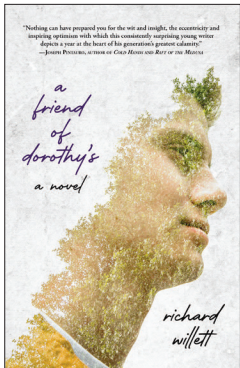
EDITOR'S PICK

ISBN: 978-1959182214

“A stellar, epic-length evocation of the golden age of Athens, rich with historical insight.”



# Must-Read Titles



## A Friend of Dorothy's

by Richard Willett

EDITOR'S PICK

ISBN: 979-8992339819

“Powerful novel of queer self-discovery amid the AIDS crisis in 1980s New York.”



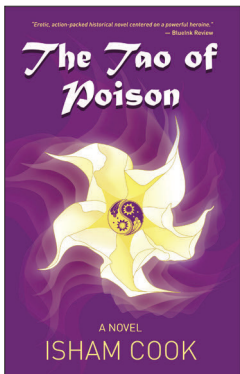
## Torn

by Richard Snodgrass

EDITOR'S PICK

ISBN: 978-1737382461

“Deeply human story of a masked soldier's return to a Depression-era mill town.”

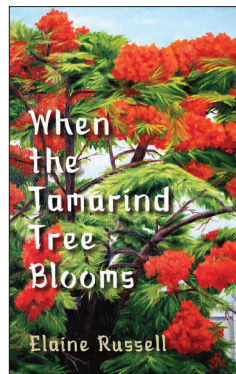


## The Tao of Poison

Isham Cook

ISBN: 978-1732277472

“Atmospheric tale of sexuality, survival, and family fused with Chinese history.”



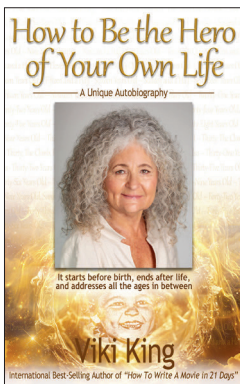
## When the Tamarind Tree Blooms

by Elaine Russell

EDITOR'S PICK

ISBN: 978-1732499492

“Stunning coming-of-age set in French colonial Laos.”



## How to Be the Hero of Your Own Life

by Viki King

EDITOR'S PICK

ISBN: 979-8991632225

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

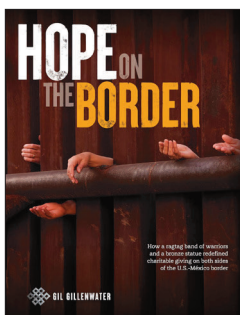


## The Day One Executive: A Guidebook to Stand Out in Your Career Starting Now

by April Armstrong

ISBN: 979-8885044196

“An empowering self-help guide to achieving success as an executive leader.”



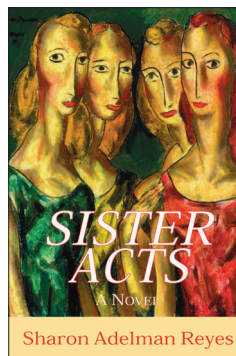
## Hope on the Border

by Gil Gillenwater

EDITOR'S PICK

ISBN: 979-8899014376

“Powerful account of humanitarian efforts along the U.S.-Mexico border.”



## Sister Acts

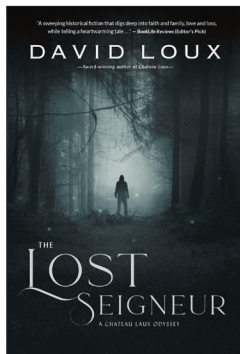
by Sharon Adelman Reyes

ISBN: 979-8218641436

“Big-hearted, incisive novel of four sisters over fractious decades.”



# Must-Read Titles



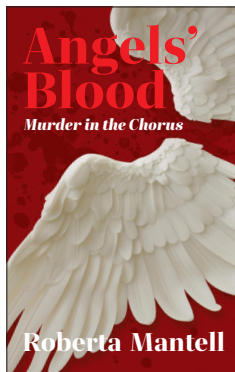
## The Lost Seigneur

by David Loux

EDITOR'S PICK

ISBN: 978-1954065048

“Compelling novel of a lost French aristocrat coming home to Colonial America.”

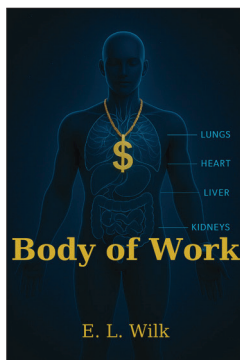


## Angels' Blood: Murder in the Chorus

by Roberta Mantell

ISBN: 978-1644567999

“Dishy mystery and music history harmonize in this smart debut.”

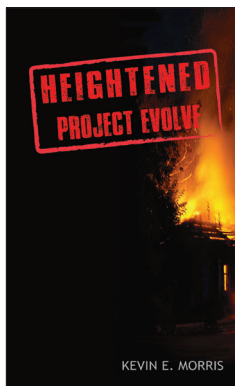


## Body of Work

E.L. Wilk

ISBN: 979-8993076829

“Tech thriller of AI, a sinister company, and a farm family's surprising fate.”



## Heightened: Project Evolve

by Kevin E. Morris

ISBN: 979-8218638498

“Action-packed YA fantasy of super-powered humans vs. the government.”

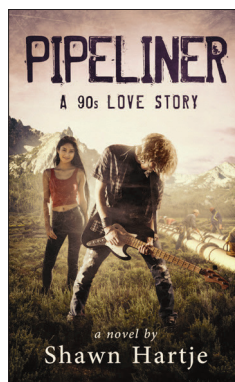


## Initial Condition

by Ian Domowitz

ISBN: 979-8299435443

“Visionary SF of an AI being's cryptic search for meaning and humanity.”

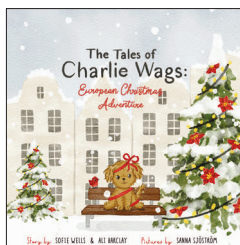


## Pipeliner: A 90s Love Story

by Shawn Hartje

ISBN: 978-0999854105

“Edgy '90s romance that blossoms amid the grunge rock scene.”



## The Tales of Charlie Wags: European Christmas Adventure

by Ali Barclay & Sophie Wells

ISBN: 979-8990005068

“Adventure-loving pup returns for a glittering European Christmas display.”

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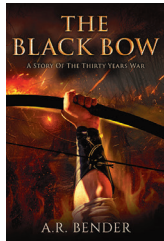


# New Titles from Self-Publishers

Booksellers, publishers, librarians, and agents are encouraged to look at the 54 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](http://publishersweekly.com/pw-select) for more information.

## Fiction

### The Black Bow: A Story of the Thirty Years War

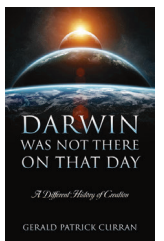


War

A.R. Bender. A.R. Bender.  
\$19.99 paper (356p), ISBN  
979-8-9888086-1-9;  
\$5.99 e-book, ASIN  
BODD6YX6FJ  
Amazon, IngramSpark

The story features a large cast of characters and encompasses various aspects of the long and brutal conflict between Protestant and Catholic forces during the Thirty Years' War.

### Darwin Was Not There on That Day



Gerald Curran. Outskirts Press. \$34.95 (252p), ISBN 978-1-9772-6822-8; \$16.99 paper, ISBN 978-1-9772-6816-7

Outskirtspress.com  
A spaceship journey with angels reveals

inspired answers to humanity's origins, challenging evolution, natural selection, and the Big Bang.

### Eternal Love: A Spiritual Journey through Illness, Letters, and Redemption



Xuemo. Ruxue International Media. \$2.99 e-book, ISBN 979-8-88991-173-9  
Amazon

A testament to faith, hope, and redemption: through 34 letters, dialogues between a

cancer patient and her mentor, she ultimately finds self-redemption.

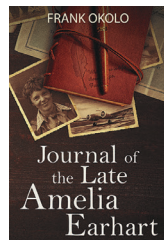
### The Hands That Were Dealt: The Games Life



Cathy Rummage. Dorrance Publishing. \$14.99 paper (132p), ISBN 979-8-88683-282-2; \$9.99 e-book, ISBN 979-8-88683-677-6  
Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Waterstones, WHSmith

Tragedy strikes and evil steals Kimmie away from everything she's ever known in a tale that explores what it takes to overcome the dark side of humanity.

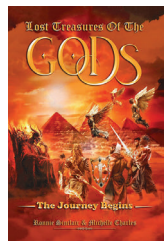
### Journal of the Late Amelia Earhart



Frank Okolo. Bitter Leaf Press. \$15.99 paper (294p), ISBN 979-8-9999840-2-9; \$4.99 e-book, ASIN B0FNKWVZGG  
Amazon

The famous aviatrix crash-lands on an uninhabited Pacific island. As castaways, she and her navigator descend into a torrid love affair that the world never knew about.

### Lost Treasures of the Gods



Ronnie Sinclair. Ronnie Sinclair. \$5.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-966540-69-4  
Amazon

The Kingdom of God is threatened by demon. Lucifer assembles a third of the Divine Host in an

attempt to overthrow God and His legions of angels.

### Marianne: A Sense and Sensibility Sequel



Alice McVeigh. Warleigh Hall Press. \$13.99 paper (292p), ISBN 978-1-7385461-3-8; \$4.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-7385461-2-1

Amazon, IngramSpark  
Marianne, a rich widow of 20, is admired by Henry Crawford and Willoughby. When her young sister Margaret is arrested for shoplifting, Marianne is unsure whom to trust.

### Painting Paris



John Simmons. Austin Macauley Publishers. \$15.95 paper (218p), ISBN 978-1-0371-0085-7; \$4.50 e-book, ISBN 978-1-0371-0086-4

Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Waterstones, WHSmith  
Paris, 1908, a time when artists were changing the way we see the world. *Painting Paris* vividly takes us there, deep into the lives of artists and collectors.

### Poinsettia Girl



Jennifer Wizbowski. Historium Press. \$18.99 paper (334p), ISBN 978-1-964700-43-4; \$3.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-964700-42-7

Amazon  
A story of hope, healing,

and the power of found family set in the 18th-century musical conservatory of Vivaldi's Venice.

### The Rabbi's Knight



Michael J. Cooper. Koehlerbooks. \$22.95 paper (408p), ISBN 979-8-88824-813-3; \$9.99 e-book, ISBN 979-8-88824-814-0  
Michaeljcooper.net, IngramSpark

A Knight Templar apprentices himself to a learned rabbi to discover how an ancient scroll's cryptic inscription might hold the key to unlock the secrets of Jerusalem's Temple Mount.

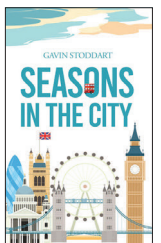
### Red Anemones



Paula Dail. Historium Press. \$9.99 (584p), ISBN 978-1-964700-38-0; \$24.99 paper, ISBN 978-1-964700-37-3  
Amazon, Historium Press  
Moving among generations of a

German-Jewish-American family, this story explores the intricate bonds, untold secrets, and unspoken legacies our ancestors bestow upon us.

### Seasons in the City



Gavin Stoddart. Austin Macauley Publishers. \$11.95 paper (142p), ISBN 978-1-0358-9880-0; \$4.50 e-book, ISBN 978-1-0358-9881-7  
Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Waterstones, WHSmith

Twelve short stories about Londoners. Each story stands on its own, but taken together they provide a kaleidoscopic portrait of the city through the eyes of those living there.



### Secrets

Kay Louise Bowen. Austin Macauley Publishers. \$16.95 paper (250p), ISBN 978-1-0371-0919-5; \$4.50 e-book, ISBN 978-1-0371-0921-8  
Amazon, Barnes & Noble,

Waterstones, WHSmith

In a hotel that offers its guests a breathtaking experience, keeping secrets becomes all the more difficult when characters' paths cross.

### The Third Period



Steph West. Red Fern Press. \$20.99 paper (410p), ISBN 978-1-967038-25-1; \$6.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-967038-24-4  
Amazon, Barnes & Noble

An aging hockey star on the cusp of retirement must battle his way back from injury and addiction to win big in the third period of his life.

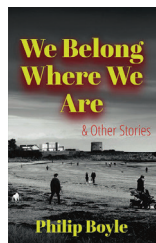
### The Waldensian Martyrs



Pam Vause. Pam Vause. \$3.99 e-book, ISBN 978-0-6459512-0-2  
Amazon, Barnes & Noble  
In 1486 Italy, young physician Pietro is a Waldensian, part of a group of heretics being

targeted for assassination by the Catholic Church.

### We Belong Where We Are & Other Stories



Philip Boyle. Philip Boyle. \$7.32 paper (218p), ISBN 979-8-2802-9862-0; \$3.60 e-book, ISBN 979-8-2802-9862-0  
Amazon

Our lives rarely turn out as expected or wanted.

Wherever we find ourselves, sometimes the only way to survive is to accept that we belong where we are.

### What Remains

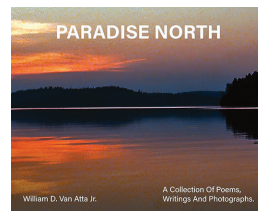


Erryn Lee. Historium Press. \$28.99 (382p), ISBN 978-1-964700-29-8; \$18.99 paper, ISBN 978-1-964700-28-1  
Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Historium Press, Indigo

*What Remains* is a dual-timeline mystery linking ancient Rome and today, where a forensic dig and a Praetorian's fate expose secrets that span centuries.

## Poetry

### Paradise North: A Collections of Poems, Writings and Photographs



William D. Van Atta Jr. Dorrance Publishing. \$41.99 (96p), ISBN 979-8-89499-354-6; \$36.99 e-book,

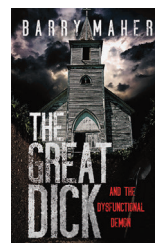
ISBN 979-8-89499-853-4

Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Dorrance

William D. Van Atta Jr.'s collection of poems, writings, and photographs expresses the beauty of the world around us, and its healing properties in our most devastating moments.

## Mystery/Thriller

### The Great Dick: And the Dysfunctional Demon



Barry Maher. Crystal Lake Publishing. \$16.99 paper (462p), ISBN 978-1-968532-13-0; \$4.99 e-book, ASIN B0FKWK2K7C  
Amazon, Barnes & Noble

A former hero running from the police finds out that's nowhere near as bad as crawling into a grave with a rotting corpse.

## SF/Fantasy/Horror

### Acadia



Sterling Nixon. S&J Publishing. \$13.49 paper (446p), ISBN 978-1-951780-34-0; \$4.99 e-book, ASIN B0FRZTFHHQ  
Amazon, Apple Books, Barnes & Noble, Everand, Kobo

Acadia, the last human city, has endured 200 years of siege. Cojaxà's dream to defend it unravels when a mysterious girl appears, forcing him to choose duty or humanity.

### The AndroBiotica Adventures



David Gittlin. Entelligent Entertainment. \$3.99 e-book, ISBN 979-8-9858605-7-3; \$6.99 audio, ISBN 979-8-9858605-6-6  
Amazon

An entertaining glimpse into the future of AI

captured in a riveting story across space and time.

**CALL: Book One: A Story of Choice, Faith, and a Droid Named CALI**



Troy Mangone. Troy Mangone. \$9.99 e-book (95p), ISBN 979-8-3495-3661-8; \$4.99 audio, ASIN B0FHBN9CQS Amazon, Audible  
She was built to serve. But when her family vanishes in a beam of light, a droid named CALI begins to question everything.

**Elfin Canine**



Jabez Flint. Dorrance Publishing. \$41.99 (496p), ISBN 979-8-89499-437-6; \$36.99 e-book, ISBN 979-8-89499-936-4 Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Dorrance

After an encounter with a talking dog in the forest and reading about local myths regarding werewolves, Tillman wonders if he's hallucinating or if it's all real.

**Falling Apart: A Dystopian Thriller Full of Twists and Intrigue**



Jan Turk Petrie. Pintail Press. \$13.40 paper (350p), ISBN 978-1-912855-88-9; \$3.49 e-book, ASIN B0FJ8BGL2M Amazon

When a hunted man breaks cover to save an abandoned child, the two are plunged into turbulent, near-future Europe, where every choice could mean the difference between life and death.

**The Invisible People**



Jeremiah Moon. BusinessEd4Kids. \$26.99 (302p), ISBN 979-8-9924448-2-7; \$16.99 paper, ISBN 979-8-9924448-3-4 Jeremiahmoon.com,

Amazon, Barnes & Noble, IngramSpark Reality glitches when Ava Chen investigates disappearances. Those who return are flawless and cold, exposing a secret war over memory and identity.

**The Marksmen Guard**



Nathaniel E. Troupe. Palmetto Publishing. \$13.99 paper (472p), ISBN 978-1-68515-991-7 Amazon, IngramSpark  
Framed for murder, Neil Stryder, Marksmen Guard

captain, becomes a fugitive mercenary, uncovering secrets to clear his name as he faces an ancient threat to humanity's survival.

**The Memory Keeper**



Rowan Taylor. Latchkey Press. \$3.99 e-book, ASIN B0FPSKTGZR Amazon  
Archivist Mara came to catalogue the Dumont estate. Instead, the house

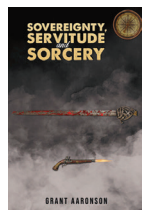
began cataloguing her, memory by memory. *The Memory Keeper* is gothic horror of haunting and possession.

**Play It Again**



CP Harrison. Brilliant Books Literary. \$19.99 paper (558p), ISBN 979-8-88945-168-6 Amazon, Barnes & Noble  
A team of U.S. soldiers investigating a smuggled atomic bomb is transported back to 1835.

**Sovereignty, Servitude and Sorcery**



Robert Graham. Austin Macauley Publishers. \$17.95 paper (268p), ISBN 978-1-0358-5325-0; \$4.50 e-book, ISBN 978-1-0358-5326-7 Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Waterstones, WHSmith

Set in an emerging industrial world, this flintlock-fantasy story is a whirlwind of deep characters, unpredictable plot twists, and political intrigue, with a exciting magic system thrown in.

**The Time Influx (The Time Anomaly Series #2)**



Katie Mitsui. BookBaby. \$17.99 paper (392p), ISBN 979-8-3178-0423-7; \$3.99 e-book, ISBN 979-8-3178-0424-4 Amazon, Barnes & Noble, BookBaby, Bookshop.org

Johnathan's time machine has been stolen, and threats to use time as a weapon have emerged. Follow the Watchdogs group on a global chase in book 2 of the Time Anomaly series.

**Romance/Erotica**

**Charlie**

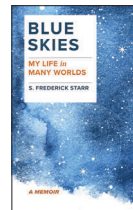


Marina Reader. Austin Macauley Publishers. \$13.95 paper (176p), ISBN 978-1-0358-8000-3; \$4.50 e-book, ISBN 978-1-0358-8002-7 Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Waterstones, WHSmith

What do we look for in relationships? Intimacy? Loyalty? Comfort? And when Charlie is ready to commit, will Mia follow? Questions are raised. Will they be answered?

**Nonfiction**

**Blue Skies: My Life in Many Worlds**



S. Frederick Starr. Dorrance Publishing. \$276.99 paper (438p), ISBN 979-8-89341-005-1; \$21.99 e-book, ISBN 979-8-89341-504-9 Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Dorrance

The wide-ranging story of an American's active life in many professions, places, and cultures over four score years.

**Diving into Dreams**



Szilvia Gogh. Limitless Positivity. \$18.99 paper (320p), ISBN 979-8-9999878-0-8 Szilviagogh.com

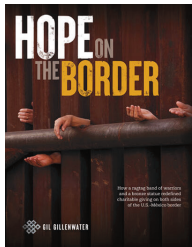
An *Eat, Pray, Love-* and *Wild-*style book, with scuba diving, about soul-searching around the world to find happiness.

**Growing a Youth Group: It's Really About**



**Ministry**  
Alan J. Kobs. WestBow Press. \$43.99 (218p), ISBN 979-8-3850-4257-9; \$20.99 paper, ISBN 979-8-3850-4256-2 Amazon, Barnes & Noble

A practical and encouraging guide that shares proven strategies and personal insights for building a strong, effective youth ministry for high school teens.

**Hope on the Border**

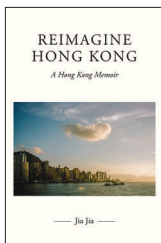
Gil Gillenwater.  
University of Pemako.  
\$27.99 (240p), ISBN  
979-8-89901-437-6  
Amazon  
In Gillenwater's  
unflinching 40-year  
U.S.-Mexico border

account, raw stories and photography reveal heartache and humanity. Not just despair—a blueprint for hope.

**The Little Book of Skincare, Self-Care and Soul Care**

Meg Baillie. Austin  
Macauley Publishers.  
\$13.95 paper (182p), ISBN  
978-1-0358-8892-4;  
\$4.50 e-book, ISBN 978-  
1-0358-8894-8  
Amazon, Barnes & Noble,  
Waterstones, WHSmith

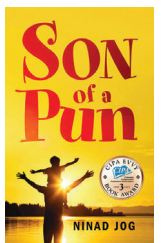
Skincare is more than appearance; it's healthcare. In self-care we talk about cultivating healthy self-esteem, confidence, and a positive body image. Soul care covers higher emotions: love, kindness.

**Reimagine Hong Kong: A Hong Kong**

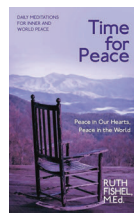
**Memoir**  
Jia Jia. Austin Macauley  
Publishers. \$34.95 paper  
(618p), ISBN 978-1-  
0358-7599-3; \$4.50  
e-book, ISBN 978-1-  
0358-7601-3  
Amazon, Barnes & Noble,

Waterstones, WHSmith

Jia Jia explores Hong Kong's cultural identity, which emerged in the mid-20th century. His critique delves into the former colony's contradictions and dichotomies, weaving together history, philosophy, sociology, and economics.

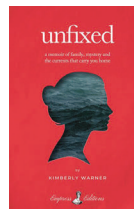
**Son of a Pun**

Ninad Jog. Outskirts Press.  
\$16.95 paper (174p), ISBN  
978-1-9772-6785-6  
Outskirtspress.com  
Dive into *Son of a Pun*, a  
whirlwind of puns,  
witticisms, and wordplay  
that turns language into a  
playground of humor and wit.

**Time for Peace: Peace in Our Hearts, Peace in the World**

Ruth Fishel. Urlink Print &  
Media. \$17.99 paper (380p),  
ISBN 978-1-68486-937-4  
Amazon  
A yearlong guide with 365  
daily inspirations to resolve  
life's challenges, nurture

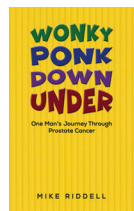
inner calm, and spread peace for personal and global healing.

**Unfixed: A Memoir of Family, Mystery, and the Currents That Carry You Home**

Kimberly Warner. Empress  
Editions. \$24.99 (250p),  
ISBN 979-8-9923865-4-7;  
\$14.99 e-book, ISBN 979-8-  
9923865-6-1  
Amazon, Barnes & Noble,  
Bookshop.org, Books-A-Million,

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When the tide of hidden truths and an unsteady body collide, one woman's search for home becomes a journey of reclamation, resilience, and the enduring power of forgiveness.

**Wonky Ponk Down Under: One Man's Journey through Prostate Cancer**

Mike Riddell. Austin Macauley  
Publishers. \$10.95 paper  
(114p), ISBN 978-1-0358-  
9078-1; \$4.50 e-book,  
ISBN 978-1-0358-9079-8  
Amazon, Barnes & Noble,  
Waterstones, WHSmith

This is an engaging account, published posthumously, of one man's journey with prostate cancer, told in a wry blokish way and packed with hilarious encounters with the medical world.

**Zepagain: Led by Zeppelin: In Tribute by Swan Montgomery**

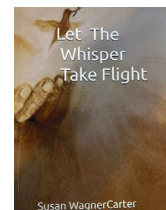
R.T. Bond. Led Zepagain.  
\$34.99 (262p), ISBN 979-8-  
3494-0725-3; \$19.99  
paper, ISBN 979-8-3494-  
3217-0  
Zepagain.com, Amazon,  
Barnes & Noble

What would you sacrifice to keep the music of legends alive? Swan Montgomery shares his journey of honoring the greatest rock band to ever exist.

**Religion/Spirituality****Let God Speak**

Mark Edward Chard. Austin  
Macauley Publishers. \$7.95  
paper (56p), ISBN 978-1-  
0358-6760-8; \$4.50 e-book,  
ISBN 978-1-0358-6762-2  
Amazon, Barnes & Noble,  
Waterstones, WHSmith

A bold, poetic reimagining of Genesis 1, *Let God Speak* explores the nature of divine creation and character, revealing God's voice not only as command but as love, order, and light.

**Let the Whisper Take Flight**

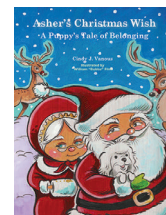
Susan Wagner Carter. Susan  
Wagner Carter. \$9.95 paper  
(70p), ISBN 979-8-  
9930610-1-6; \$4.95  
e-book, ISBN 979-8-  
9930610-0-9  
Amazon, Audible

The author, detained in war, called for prayer for American hostages. Millions answered. Now a whispered call for a moratorium on war under the Abrahamic Covenant.

**They Called Him Yeshua: The Story of the Young Jesus: How Jesus's Unrecorded Years Shaped His Ministry**

Donald Brake. Archway  
Publishing. \$28.99 paper  
(458p), ISBN 978-1-4808-  
7298-1  
Amazon, Barnes & Noble  
An account of Jesus's  
childhood in first-century

Nazareth, blending historical accuracy and spiritual insight to explore His early self-awareness and divine purpose.

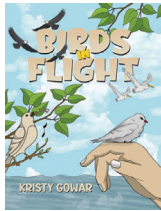
**Children's/YA****Asher's Christmas Wish: A Puppy's Tale of Belonging**

Cindy J. Vanous, illus. by  
William "Bubba" Flint. Adriel  
Publishing. \$24.99 (36p),  
ISBN 979-8-9902586-4-  
8; \$19.99 paper, ISBN 979-  
8-9902586-5-5

Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Google Books, Hatchards, Hugendubel.de, Powell's Books, Strand Books, Thriftbooks, Walmart, Waterstones

Mrs. Claus shares Asher's tale: a lost puppy Santa rescues in summer. Cared for by elves at the North Pole, he dreams of a family until a Christmas Eve wish comes true.

### Birds in Flight



Kristy Gowar. Austin Macauley Publishers. \$10.95 paper (30p), ISBN 978-1-3984-9737-5; \$4.50 e-book, ISBN 978-1-3984-9738-2

Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Waterstones, WHSmith

Where do the birds go to on their flight? Out over the sea with no land in sight? Or high above clouds to feel the sunlight?

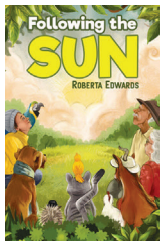
### The Bloodstones of Power: The Norwesis Chronicles



Alain Lescart. Alain Lescart. \$24.99 (216p), ISBN 979-8-3065-9013-4; \$20.99 paper, ISBN 979-8-3000-0427-9

Amazon, IngramSpark  
A gnome and a legendary dragon discover a gem of untold power, sparking an epic quest through forests, peaks, and ancient magic where friendship may be their greatest weapon.

### Following the Sun



Roberta Edwards. Austin Macauley Publishers. \$15.95 paper (222p), ISBN 978-1-5289-8372-3; \$4.50 e-book, ISBN 978-1-5289-8373-0

Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Waterstones, WHSmith

This is a tale of a group of friends in search of the sun as the world has become gloomy and cold. They have many adventures on the way.

### Fuchsia War: Time-Travel Adventure Where Women Fight to Reclaim Erased History



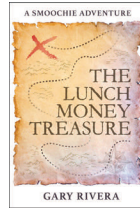
Gaia Kai. Gaia Kai. \$14.99 (280p), ISBN 979-8-218-73077-2; \$4.99 e-book, ASIN B0FLN49ZBH

Amazon  
A time-bending adventure of high-stakes women's

justice, unbreakable friendships, and unforgettable women set in a dystopian

future where men exploit Mother Earth and erase true history.

### The Lunch Money Treasure: A Smoochie Adventure

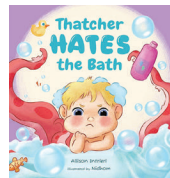


Gary Rivera. Outskirts Press. \$17.95 paper (232p), ISBN 978-1-9772-6294-3; \$9.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-9772-6831-0

Outskirtspress.com

With only four words as a clue, Smoochie sets out to find a hidden treasure, reunite lost loves, and survive her first days of middle school.

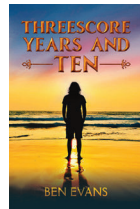
### Thatcher Hates the Bath



Allison Intriery. Roaring Potato Press. \$17.99 (32p), ISBN 979-8-9990237-0-4; \$11.99 paper, ISBN 979-8-9990237-1-1

Amazon, Barnes & Noble, IngramSpark  
Thatcher's bathtime tantrum is so epic it sparks a full-blown emergency response. Filled with humor, heart, and a whole lot of bathwater.

### Threescore Years and Ten

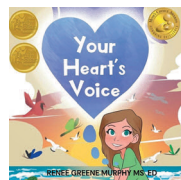


Ben Evans. Austin Macauley Publishers. \$17.95 paper (272p), ISBN 978-1-0358-9122-1; \$4.50 e-book, ISBN 978-1-0358-9123-8

Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Waterstones, WHSmith

Charlie Masters, 16, chases across the country with his friend Kirsty, avoiding the law, to rendezvous with his absent family. His very existence poses a threat to the establishment.

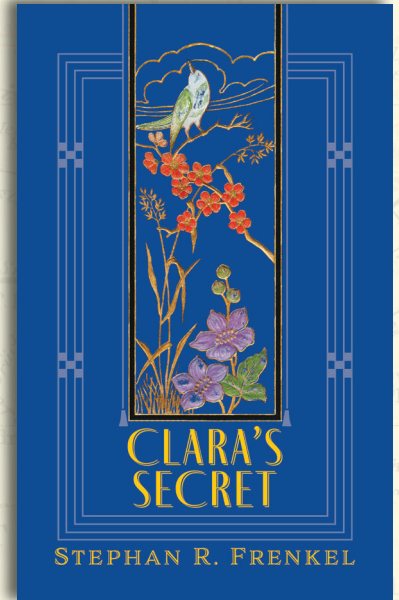
### Your Heart's Voice



Renee Greene Murphy. Renee Greene Murphy. \$19.99 (22p), ISBN 979-8-218-36877-7; \$9.99 paper, ISBN 979-8-218-36870-8

Reneegreenemurphy.com, Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Target, Walmart

Jade always had this voice in her heart telling her the right thing to do, but it was up to her to listen to it. She realized once she did listen to it that she made good choices.



**“Rich personal and cultural history of a young woman in Berlin’s Belle Epoque.”**

—Publishers Weekly/BookLife Reviews



**“A tender, personality-centered biography of golden age Berlin.”**

—Kirkus Reviews

**“A wonderfully composed portrayal that could be considered narrative Art Nouveau.”**

—BookTrib

### Interactive Content



**Paperback ISBN:**  
978-1-7343635-3-1  
**Kindle eBook ISBN:**  
978-1-7343635-4-8

[www.laevnotes.com](http://www.laevnotes.com)



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## FICTION

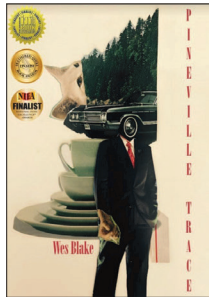
⚡ EDITOR'S PICK

### Pineville Trace

Wes Blake | Etchings Press, University of Indianapolis  
140p, trade paper, \$12, ISBN 978-1-955-52134-5

Blake's spare, evocative, quietly moving novella details the ruminative journey of an escaped prisoner, briefly interrupted by the author's first-person commentary revisiting the character of Frank Russet from his novel *Antenna* (which has been published only in excerpts). Both author and character understand how the past can bleed into the present, and that perspective permeates *Pineville Trace*, which follows the former revival preacher roaming through the aimless landscape of the 1970s. While serving time in a Kentucky minimum-security facility, Frank feeds a stray cat (he names her Buffalo), and eventually follows the gray long-haired cat to freedom. But now he's adrift.

Letting Buffalo guide him, Frank has no interest in human connection, and this quest for solitude stems from a loss of faith. Flashbacks reveal a different Frank, who could see the road sign "Prison Area: Do Not Pick Up Hitchhikers" on his way



*Poetic novella of a faithless preacher facing the slippery realm of memory.*

Great for fans of Joan Silber; Tommy Orange.

Ste. Marie, Michigan—placing himself right back in danger.

All he can do is try to replicate his old self, dressed in "a lackluster imitation of his former suit." With fragments of memory bouncing around in his head, Frank hits the road and heads to America's northern border—and a terrain that brings back bittersweet memories of his brother Henry. Blake pins down and illuminates moments and feelings with precision, and details about Frank's surroundings—forest, motel room, cabin, road, diner—mirror his internal conflicts, often fueled by Frank's steady intake of alcohol. Blake's atmospheric prose will pull readers into Frank's resigned fatalism, and *Pineville Trace* serves as the incisive, elegiac odyssey of a confidence man who has lost his sense of spiritual direction.

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

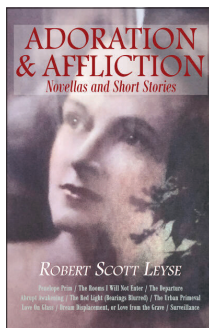
## FICTION

### Adoration & Affliction: Novellas and Short Stories

Robert Scott Leyse | Shattercolors Press  
282p, trade paper, \$15.95, ISBN 979-8-998-50930-8

From infatuation to adoration to madness, Leyse's collection delves into the complicated emotions of love and lust, opening with a tale that measures the way sexual harassment can alter a young girl's perspective of herself and her environment. Sixteen-year-old Nicoletta, the object of unwanted advances from her parents' friend at a posh gathering, "revolts at the prospect of being regarded as a victim and pitied," instead exacting her own special brand of revenge. Meanwhile, "Penelope Prim" finds the heroine "ill at ease on account of being conspicuously well-endowed," beset by her colleague, Stuart, who, with no encouragement from Penelope, convinces himself that she desires him—with disastrous consequences.

In each story, Leyse (*Nighttime Euphoria* and *the Field Reeds*) offers the sweet promise of potential romance before shocking readers with dark twists and the



*Haunting stories teasing the thin line between love and infatuation.*

Great for fans of Dathan Auerbach's *Penpal*, Yasunari Kawabata's *The Lake*.

covert—but rarely subtle—tactics of men who are hyperfocused on women's "frilly underthings" and tormented by obsessions that invade, overpower, and leave them "buried in apprehension and gloom." "Surveillance" unfolds from the perspective of Lydia's stalker, who lies in wait, luring her into a trap of frenzied limbs and brute force, while elsewhere, women turn the tables, erupting Leyse's stories into biting flames of justice and revenge. Viewing women as objects to thirst after, attain, and dominate is a common thread throughout, as Leyse takes a stark look at the perils of lust and infatuation.

At times, Leyse portrays beauty as a liability, delving into the psyche of men on the hunt while skewering traditional perspectives on love and romance. The outcome is both provocative and unsettling, a thinly veiled intersection of devotion and desire that taunts and unnerves. He closes with almost chatty discourse on the joys of unruly dogs, a piece uncharacteristically playful and exuberant.

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

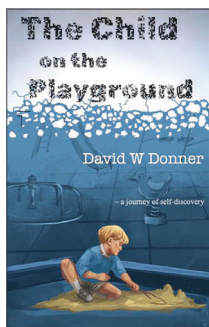
## FICTION

### The Child on the Playground: A Journey of Self Discovery

David W. Donner | Serendipity Media  
150p, e-book, \$4.94, ISBN 979-8-9989245-0-7

Donner's debut is a deeply personal and introspective journey through memory, trauma, and spiritual searching. Set in a quiet Florida town, the story follows Dan, a man recovering from an accident that almost killed him, but his search is haunted by fractured memories and disillusionment. As he struggles with identity, relationships, and his place in the world, he finds a mysterious, ghost-like child who leads him through visions of the past and a town that feels like it exists in a parallel universe. Blending subtle supernatural elements with raw emotional truth, Donner crafts a moving, thought-provoking exploration of healing, navigating the world in a neurodivergent reality, and what it means to find peace beyond organized faith.

*The Child on the Playground* feels like stepping into someone's private memories—messy, emotional, and deeply human. The story doesn't hand readers easy answers; instead, it invites them to sit with the confusion and the pain Dan feels



*Meditative reminder that healing means facing the ghosts of our past.*

Great for fans of Daria Lavelle's *Aftertaste*, John Vercher's *Devil Is Fine*.

as he tries to piece his life back together. The eerie, ghostlike child serves as a reminder of everything he's lost or forgotten, gradually coaxing his memories to the surface: memories of him as a young boy, desperate for connection, bullied, and ostracized for being different. Donner's writing is gentle but honest, never forcing the story, just letting it

unfold in raw and reflective prose, exploring what it means to heal when faith, memory, and identity all feel out of reach. Though the story is emotionally rich and thought-provoking, its slow pace and abstract structure allow the narrative to drift, leaving readers uncertain of what's real or symbolic, which can be powerful but also frustrating. Some characters feel more like ideas than people, adding to the dreamlike feel while also creating distance. Still, for those who appreciate quiet, contemplative stories, this offers a haunting, personal experience that lingers after the final page.

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

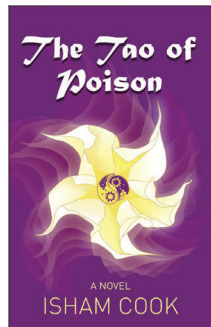
## FICTION

**The Tao of Poison**

**Isham Cook** | Magic Theater Books  
245p, trade paper, \$10.95, ISBN 978-1732277472

Provocative and steeped in Imperial Chinese history, including the White Lotus Rebellion at the turn of the 18th century, this sweeping novel follows the Yan family—husband Yan Xian, wife Lai Xinru, and their lovely 17-year-old daughter, Qiezi. Dabbling in polyandry, an illegal act, Yan Xian and Xinru find themselves caught in the crosshairs of constable Qing Da after a family argument with their neighbor turns deadly. Unless they allow him to rape their daughter, Qing Da vows to expose them for their illegal exploits. Little does he know, the Yan family harbors a secret that proves to be deadly to the corrupt government official: Qiezi is addicted to the poisonous ocean flower, Mantuoluo, and its effects—built up in her body after years of ingesting it—prove fatal to Qing Da shortly after he rapes her.

As the Yan family goes on the run, hoping to reunite safely as soon as possible, young Qiezi finds herself alone for the first time, sought after by nearly every



*Atmospheric tale of sexuality, survival, and family fused with Chinese history.*

**Great for fans of** Melissa Addey's *The Forbidden City* series; Lisa See's *Snow Flower and the Secret Fan*.

man—and some women—she encounters. Cook (*The Mustachioed Woman of Shanghai*) portrays the story's sexual violence in an almost detached manner, recounting near-constant incidents of rape and assault Qiezi suffers as she sets out on her own, even as her parents become entangled in amorous and unwanted affairs during their journey. Meanwhile, Qiezi's deadly legacy—"Any man who sleeps with me dies, and I have killed not a few," she declares—is presented as oddly empowering, mirroring her extensive knowledge of medicinal plants and eventual path as a healer.

Cook binds together the Yan family's story of survival with complex character relations and involved plot twists. The bold characters, kinetic plot, unconventional take on justice, and rich sense of atmosphere make this epic tale a studied contemplation of how beauty can usher in tragedy and sorrow.

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

## MYSTERY/THRILLER

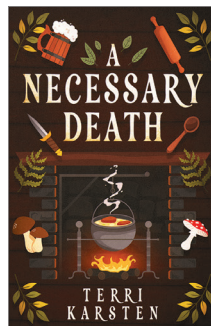
EDITOR'S PICK

**A Necessary Death**

**Terri Karsten** | Wagonbridge Publishing  
267p, trade paper, \$15, ISBN 978-1-953444-20-2

Karsten fuses lively historical adventure with reluctant sleuth mystery, creating circumstances that allow an independence-minded Colonial-era widow to break free from societal norms and forge a new future for her family. Long abandoned by her feckless husband, Penelope Corbitt has built a stable home for their 16-year-old daughter Nabby and nine-year-old son Nathaniel. When her husband drowns at sea on a merchant ship and is officially declared dead, Penelope is burdened with his extensive debts. Everything they managed to amass—the house and furniture, even the simplest kitchen pot—must be sold.

With no other options left to her, Penelope accepts the charity of her brother-in-law Simon Dawkins, whose plans for Nabby and Nathaniel—as indentured servant and apprentice—will split up the family. But Karsten (*A Mistake of Consequence*) adds in a twist: as the condescending Simon is escorting them on a grueling overland journey from Philadelphia to his home in Boston, their carriage breaks



*Rich colonial mystery with capable female lead assisting in investigation.*

**Great for fans of** Lauren Groff's *The Vaster Wilds*, Ariel Lawhon's *The Frozen River*.

rival taverns, and whispers of Indian unrest.

Karsten vividly captures the world of 1763, where women's lives revolved around food, work, and survival, yet Penelope is far more than a caretaker. At 33, she's spent much of her life solving problems created by men, so in addition to cooking and cleaning up the tavern, she tends to the Parson's pregnant wife and helps Miles find the killer. Penelope may not think she's anything special, but readers certainly will. With a careful eye to period detail, *A Necessary Death* shows just how far grit and keen intelligence will take a colonial woman with limited options.

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

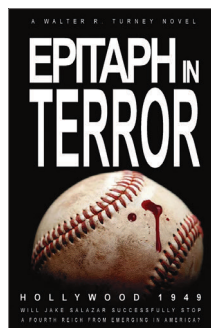
## MYSTERY/THRILLER

**Epitaph in Terror: A Jake Salazar Intrigue**

**Walter R. Turney** | Shakehouse Productions, LLC  
294p, trade paper, \$12.99, ISBN 979-8-218-44541-6

Turney's debut takes readers deep into post-WWII Los Angeles, fusing the sunlit glamour of Hollywood with the shadowy paranoia of a still-lurking Nazi threat. At its heart is Jake Salazar, a veteran trying to make a new life for himself in California. His attempt at stability quickly unravels when a murder at the office of Bob Cobb—baseball impresario and Hollywood power broker—draws him into an investigation that spirals into espionage, conspiracy, and personal danger. Soon, Jake must navigate increasingly perilous encounters as he and his war buddy, Angel Mercado, chase down conspirators linked to Hitler's rumored survival in South America.

Turney excels at capturing both the noir mood of 1949 Los Angeles and its uneasy postwar atmosphere. The crowd roars in the Hollywood Stars stadium, but in the background, whispers of fascist resurgence curdle the joy of a ballgame. The pacing is brisk, and Turney's blend of fact and speculative intrigue gives the narrative an off-kilter thrill, leaving readers wondering just what will be revealed next. The novel's standout strength is Turney's balancing act between action and intimacy:



*Brisk thriller weaving Hollywood nostalgia with WWII intrigue.*

**Great for fans of** Rory Clements's *The Man in the Bunker*, Philip Kerr's *Field Gray*.

man still negotiating what it means to live after war.

If there's a drawback, it's that the Nazi plot can sometimes veer toward melodrama, with the looming possibility of Hitler addressing American sympathizers over a baseball stadium PA system feeling more pulp than realism. Yet Turney's sharp sense of period detail and his ability to keep tension simmering on every page help ground even the more extravagant twists, leaving readers with a vividly rendered Los Angeles rife with postwar intrigue.

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

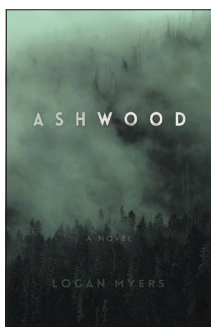
## MYSTERY/THRILLER

**Ashwood**

Logan Myers | Americana Ink  
505p, mass market, \$19.99, ISBN 979-8-218-80173-1

Myers's captivating novel blends coming-of-age drama with supernatural horror and conspiracy. Set in the town of Ashwood, the story follows Alan and his friends in summers of bike rides and ghost stories. Yet beneath the warmth of their childhood lies an undercurrent of unease, first human, then otherworldly. Their innocence is violently broken when a school shooting claims Mac's girlfriend, Morgan. From then on, dares and campfire tales give way to encounters with forces even more terrifying than human wickedness.

Myers layers town and tale alike with richly atmospheric textures: missing-children posters, a strange hum in the Ozark woods, and the cold grandeur of the Phoenician Grove. Told across five acts, *Ashwood* enters its tense mysteries through the perspectives of the five friends. Alan, a quiet newcomer, bears the weight of his parents' past. Heather, sharp and inquisitive, is the first to sense Ashwood's darkness, from the man watching Alan to the pattern of missing children. They're



*Stellar small-town thriller of coming-of-age amid dark forces and secrets.*

**Great for fans of** Ronald Malfi's *Small Town Horror*, Christopher Golden's *Straight On 'Til Morning*.

drawn with sensitivity and are compelling: Mac, defined by privilege, remains fiercely loyal to his friends despite Morgan's death, while Kevin masks his insecurity with a need for constant attention, and Don shoulders the responsibility of his family. Around them, Myers reveals a town whose prosperity rests on a secret, shocking pact.

The storytelling is fleet, witty, and alive with insights into growing up and plenty of small-town creepiness, from "the murky darkness" of a gun-stocked basement to a roadhouse populated by "bone-weary truckers, their faces etched with the exhaustion of endless roads." Mystery and characterization deepen with gruesome deaths and a chilling ritual, while Alan's transformation into an occult investigator feels tragically earned, Heather endures a harrowing supernatural assault, and Mac must choose between complacency and loyalty. Myers creates a gripping modern myth of the corruption of innocence, the exploitation of power, and the courage to stand up.

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

## ROMANCE

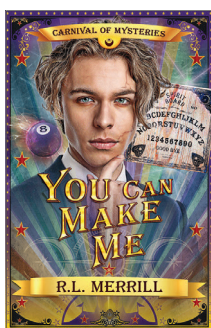
EDITOR'S PICK

**You Can Make Me: Carnival of Mysteries**

R.L. Merrill | Celie Bay Publications LLC  
312p, e-book, \$2.99, ASIN B0DVNJY34X

Errante Ame's *Carnival of Mysteries*—a magical, multiverse-traveling show—sets the stage for Merrill's captivating third standalone entry in this multi-author romance series filled with sawdust and sorcerous surprises. The story begins when investigative journalist Cooper Harris is brutally attacked and left for dead by a serial killer. Detectives Dennis Hamilton and Walter Muse Jr. rush him into a life-saving rescue, but survival comes at a heavy price. Having always relied on his good looks—"blessed with a jawline and cheekbones that people paid good money for plastic surgeons to achieve"—Cooper awakens scarred from face to limbs, barely able to walk without intense pain. His long recovery plunges him into depression, his self-esteem shattered.

To keep him safe from further danger, Denny, his former lover, hides them away in a remote cabin in California. Their relationship is complicated: once deeply in love, Cooper's paranoia led him to ghost Denny. (Their origin story unfolds in the prequel *Our Story Begins*, available for free via an enclosed link.) Denny's devotion is unwav-



*Chilling yet charming romance alive with carnival magic.*

**Great for fans of** Aiden Thomas's *Cemetery Boys*, David R. Slayton's *White Trash Warlock*.

ering, but Cooper struggles to believe that their love could survive the way he looks and feels after the attack. Fun yet unsettling paranormal elements abound: a Magic 8 Ball, a Ouija board, and the eerie carnival that stalks Cooper's dreams. Most terrifying of all is the serial killer who seems able to invade those dreams, blurring the line between reality and nightmare.

Smartly juxtaposing both Cooper and Denny's perspectives, the story follows the men's efforts to navigate relationship complexities while measuring up to the many challenges they face, both mundane (quitting smoking, dealing with family) and otherworldly. Readers will find themselves immersed in the push-and-pull dynamic between supportive, smitten Denny and vain, traumatized Cooper, particularly as they begin to untangle the mysteries that surround them. Equally compelling as a standalone or a continuation of the earlier installments, this new story is both chilling and mesmerizing, a world where love, survival, and the supernatural collide.

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

## SF/FANTASY/HORROR

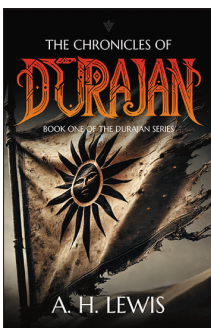
EDITOR'S PICK

**The Chronicles of Durajan: The Durajan Series, Book 1**

A. H. Lewis | Alania Press  
430p, hardcover, \$34.99, ISBN 979-8-9988458-4-0

Witness the rise of a dream—and the cost required to keep it—in Lewis's enthralling fantasy series starter. Taken from home to fight on foreign lands—and exiled for standing up to injustice—Dothemides expected to die in the brutal sands of the Durajan, where the Nine Nations send those fated to be forgotten. But when he's rescued by a banished consort, Samike, a partnership of survival sparks the fire of a revolutionary dream: remembrance, and the rise of the city known as Dothemia. But a deadly Silence spreads throughout the Nine, born from a Nakarran Creed that cannot permit such loud and vibrant hopes to smolder.

Lovers of rich, character-centered world-building will delight in the epistolary format Lewis employs for much of *The Chronicles of Durajan*. Dothemia's history, from infancy to infamy, unfolds through the perspective and prose of its citizens and leadership alike, all in accordance with Dothemides's principal dream: no story will be forgotten. Plot is more of an afterthought overall, and the arrival of the



*Spellbinding fantasy about a dream to give the forgotten a voice.*

**Great for fans of** Russell Pike's *Journey of Seven Circles*, Robert Ryan's *Arena Forged*.

villainous Nakarran Creed feels incidental rather than impactful. However, the vivid characters, empowered by sumptuously-envisioned cultures—from Dothemides himself to the beast-taming Umaru to the wrathful, amethyst-eyed Svirva—weave such engaging and tangled stories that readers will hardly notice.

Lewis rejects trendy writing in favor of exploring something deeply personal, resulting in a hybrid, third-person omniscient style that ensures readers get both the micro and macro of his nuanced characters—and the beautifully rendered Awakened World they inhabit. Readers will feel the frost in their lungs as Svirva stalks the frigid wilderness, the sweat and vitality of Dothemia's Market Row, and the weight of leadership as Dothemides grapples with the costs of his dream. *The Chronicles of Durajan* is a spellbinding story and heartfelt reminder that our voices, no matter how small, matter more than we realize.

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

## SF/FANTASY/HORROR

EDITOR'S PICK

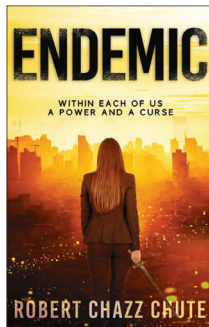
**Endemic: Within Each of Us, a Power and a Curse**

Robert Chazz Chute | Ex Parte Press

376p, trade paper, \$24.99, ISBN 978-1-927-60774-9

Chute is no stranger to dystopian fiction, and he uses Covid-19 as inspiration for this adroit thriller, reimagining New York City as an anarchic, post-pandemic fortress where the remnants of humanity are both brutally vicious and quietly resilient. Introverted and riddled with anxiety, Ovid Fairweather keeps her head down. She maintains a secret rooftop garden, trading produce for the necessities of survival—and small luxuries. Once a book editor, Ovid is the unlikely heroine of her own life, but this existence has cracked her protective shell, and she's no longer willing to bow to oppressors.

Ovid's first-person narration captures the bizarre banality of post-apocalyptic life, accompanied by the "voice in my head that spoke like a tough British man." That wry running commentary plays out against marauders roaming the city streets and looting whomever they please. Everything is scarce (especially trustworthy



*Pandemic ravages NYC but brings reticent woman roaring back to life.*

**Great for fans of** Ling Ma's *Severance*, Sequoia Nagamatsu's *How High We Go in the Dark*.

her past—she must kill the person she used to be.

While ratcheting up tension with the Memory Keepers, who impose a new level of tyranny and violence, Chute (*Our Zombie Hours*) keeps the plot focused on Ovid's evolution. Along with the everyday terrors outside, she hears echoes from past therapy sessions and tries to piece together her fractured identity. But to move forward, Ovid must unleash a long-suppressed part of herself and commit acts she's only read about in books. The virus is a potent force eroding society, but Chute celebrates the humans who decide meek doesn't mean powerless.

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

## SF/FANTASY/HORROR

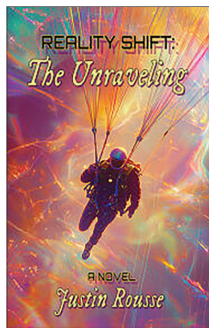
**Reality Shift: The Unraveling**

Justin Rousse | Purusha Press

290p, trade paper, \$19.95, ISBN 979-8-218-70157-4

Combining a conspiracy thriller with contemplative science fiction, Rousse's heady debut imagines an arid future soaked in technology, where humans still need to be rewired by spiritual connection, self-awareness, and personal growth. Architect Biz Evans has settled into a contented second marriage with clinical psychologist Georgina, and they're focused on helping their sons, Dhani, 25, a promising author stifled by writer's block, and high school senior Kurt, who exposed hacker classmates' identities in exchange for being named valedictorian of his elite school. Kurt's questionable judgment is on display, but Biz, Georgina, and Dhani all have sizable skeletons in their closets as well.

When a bomb is discovered in their home, they close ranks, and Georgina suggests they can each find a safe place by "reality shifting," visualizing and then inhabiting a parallel realm. These worlds aren't random: they reflect the experiences and desires of each individual and are as flawed as their creators. In one of Dhani's reality shifts, he encounters his ex-boyfriend instead of his crush—the result of



*Outside threats prompt internal reckonings in this heady metaphysical sci-fi.*

**Great for fans of** Elan Mastai's *All Our Wrong Todays*, Yael Goldstein-Love's *The Possibilities*.

lingering remorse. Every new reality suggests something about the characters, and unexpected results force them to look inward to see what went wrong. This trial-and-error process becomes more urgent as their enemies close in.

Rousse explores life-altering threats with "introspection, prayer, meditation, visualization, non-judgment, and forgiveness." His therapeutic approach digs deep into these open-minded intellectuals, who are troubled by their past mistakes. Reality shifting becomes a form of karmic therapy and leads to the introduction of numerous characters and detailed backstories. Some of these digressions stop the narrative flow, but overall, Rousse skillfully integrates his characters' interior lives with their outward goals. Instead of presenting the multiverse as earth-shattering spectacle, *Reality Shift: The Unraveling* brings the concept back down to individual microcosms, where each consciousness is a world of its own.

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

## SF/FANTASY/HORROR

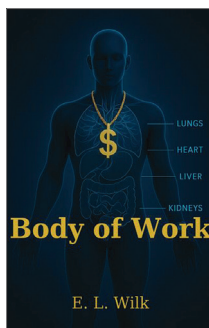
**Body of Work**

E.L. Wilk

489p, e-book, \$9.99, ASIN B0FMQMCYFC

Wilk's of-the-moment, occasionally paranoid medical thriller explores the fascinating intersection between cutting-edge science and moral complexity, as a cold, corporate future collides with the sincere and simple lives of a rural American family. William and Olivia are an ordinary couple wrestling with familiar problems as William's farm struggles to turn a profit. William is offered a lucrative position with Haloderm, a biomedical corporation, which seems like the solution to all their problems. However, as people go missing and fentanyl overdose cases linked to organ transplants rise, the question becomes: is William's salvation too good to be true, or is something far more sinister at play? At Haloderm, William encounters a world that Wilk makes both wondrous and plausible—robots performing minimally invasive surgeries with flawless precision, AI systems that serve coffee and provide security forces while perfectly mimicking human voices, and revolutionary processes that transform cadavers into life-saving medical products.

Readers will not be surprised to discover that Haloderm has dark secrets. As the financial relief helps heal their marriage, and Olivia explores breeding "designer"



*Tech thriller of AI, a sinister company, and a farm family's surprising fate.*

**Great for fans of** Emma Geen's *The Many Selves of Katherine North*, Samantha Schwebelin's *Little Eyes*.

dogs, William protects a young woman from assault and begins questioning Haloderm's carefully constructed facade. Ultimately, William must confront the terrifying possibility that the very company that saved his marriage and family may be the reason for its destruction.

As tension mounts, Wilk crafts relatable protagonists in William and Olivia, and discussions with the powerful AI called HD compel readers. The novel serves up serious jolts and resolves some mysteries before a cliffhanger ending, and Olivia's fate is an inventive surprise. Less convincing are some minor characters and an ugly incident in which a trans woman is described as a "burly, bearded man wearing a lady's Lululemon workout suit" and rapes a woman, boasting, like a supervillain, "There's nothing you can do to me or do about it. I've got the law on my side." That scene's lack of nuance, humanity, and plausibility casts a pall on the exploration of ethical questions about medical innovation.

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

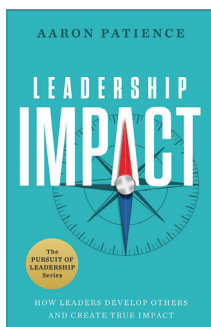
## BUSINESS &amp; PERSONAL FINANCE

**Leadership Impact**

**Aaron Patience** | Patience Publishing House  
156p, e-book, \$24.51, ISBN 979-8-9988137-0-2

Patience debuts with 50 compact lessons to increase leadership skills, drawn from his own experiences in the business world. His stories—ranging from using visual imagery to unpack fruitless habits to understanding the power of small moments of connection—are brief but memorable, light on research but rich in storytelling prose that resounds with meaning and symbolism. In one entertaining clip, Patience recounts watching an interview and video of AC/DC frontman Brian Johnson overcoming imposter syndrome to “walk on stage...with that same voice in his head and still deliver thunder”; elsewhere, he shares his daughter’s intense bond with her horse as a form of protection against the pressures of equestrian competition.

Readers will sense warmth and encouragement in Patience’s subtle advice, through stories that are designed to increase confidence, spark collaboration, and inspire meaningful change. He shares a memory of working at a bank and learning



*Short, powerful bursts of confidence, collaboration, and life lessons.*

**Great for fans of** Jack Canfield; James Clear.

and redefines success as a peaceful awareness that your values and lifestyle line up.

What makes Patience’s work unique is the distinctive format—practical business counsel, wrapped in the allure of an engaging short story collection. He weaves personal lessons into the narrative as well, whether sharing that his mother taught him the “belief in the value of consistency” or relating how he helped his daughter overcome childhood fears. His last story, “Owning the Feedback,” leaves leaders with valuable insight on navigating situations where uncomfortable truths are exposed. In it, he urges readers to practice ownership while recognizing that feedback “only works when we choose to engage with it—fully and honestly.”

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

## BUSINESS &amp; PERSONAL FINANCE

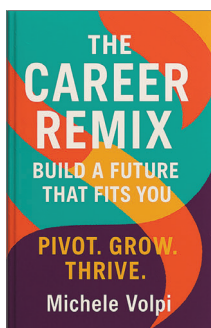
**The Career Remix: Build a Future That Fits You**

**Michele Volpi**

185p, e-book, \$6.99, ISBN 979-8-9999740-1-3

Blending theory, case studies, and interactive exercises, Volpi aims to help readers find their “career sweet spot” in this concise debut. The guide starts by encouraging readers to analyze three primary areas: their willingness to put forth effort, whether a work environment is a good fit, and what natural talents can drive their success. Without effort readiness, Volpi writes, underperformance, burnout, and feeling stuck are likely outcomes; a workplace that doesn’t fit well can sacrifice happiness and growth; and “hardwired capabilities form the backbone of long-term career success.” For career alignment, Volpi writes, readers must sync those three areas, recognize that career planning should be flexible, and “reroute—again and again—as life and work evolve.”

Volpi’s guide revolves around practical applications, offering quizzes, role plays, checklists, and more to drive home the advice. They delve into multiple aspects that can impact career success, including personality, values, and even the role of



*Interactive career planning guide, rich with practical application.*

**Great for fans of** Bill Burnett and Dave Evans’s *Designing Your Work Life*, Phyl Terry’s *Never Search Alone*.

artificial intelligence, recognizing that every industry is being transformed by AI and foundational skills alone are no longer enough to have an edge. Volpi even differentiates the “hardwired capabilities AI can’t replace,” such as strategic foresight and critical thinking, from skills that will only become more valuable as AI’s reach increases.

Most compelling in Volpi’s guide are the stories they include to make the information memorable: Charles, a finance professional yearning for promotion, who learned the hard way that advancement wasn’t worth the lost time with family; Arun’s pivot mid-stream into cybersecurity after AI appropriated his prior job; and the author’s own experience with an unexpected firing that forced a much needed rebuild. Personal touches like that root Volpi’s guidance in real life, proving that “Careers don’t grow in isolation. They grow through people, perspective, and practice.” Backmatter includes an outline for navigating intergenerational work environments, pros and cons to higher education, and advice on professional reinvention later in life.

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

## HISTORY

**EDITOR'S PICK**

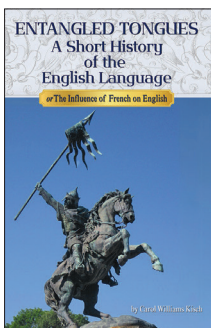
**Entangled Tongues: A Short History of the English Language or The Influence of French on English**

**Carol Williams Kisch** | Althof Press

160p, hardcover, \$28.99, ISBN 979-8-9986142-4-8

Kisch provides a brisk, brief overview of how we got modern English, with a light touch and a focus on the impact of the Norman Conquest on the development of the language. One key query guiding her exploration is how much of the language remains from before it “lost almost half of its vocabulary and simplified much of its grammar” as it was influenced by—or entangled with—French. She also illuminates how the complex development of English (she describes it as “this linguistic soup”) has led to the copious grammatical and spelling irregularities that challenge language learners. Kisch’s survey is inviting, unfussy, and practical, revealing not just the history but, in sections with titles like “Twelve Problems with English Spelling,” what it all means for us today.

*A Short History of the English Language* is an adaptation of one of Kisch’s introductory lectures in a university English class, and Kisch proves a lively, helpful guide, one whose enthusiasm is infectious. Fascinating insights abound as she



*Enticing, highly readable introduction to the history of the English language.*

**Great for fans of** K. Aaron Smith and Susan M. Kim’s *This Language, A River*.

straightens out tangled threads, reveals historical and grammatical developments, and poses urgent questions like “whose grammar, whose spelling, and whose pronunciation” became the standard.

Kisch also lays bare strange and difficult features of the language, from irregular verbs to spelling being complex enough to merit competitions to why a knowledge of French is helpful for understanding Shakespeare. Like most of her examples, her explanation of the Bard’s use of thou, thee, and you is inspired and inspiring, demonstrating the complex relationship between words and relationships and systems of power—this is the kind of enticing introduction to a topic that makes readers want to dig deeper. This history is not comprehensive (the last five hundred years get one chapter), but Kisch covers a huge amount of material in a breezy style. A helpful bibliography, endnotes for future research, and illustrations ground the history.

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

## NONFICTION

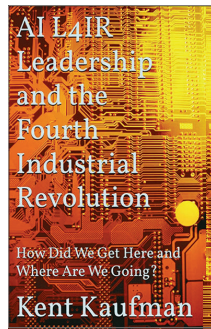
**AI L4IR: Leadership and the Fourth Industrial Revolution**

Kent Kaufman

430p, e-book, \$9.99, ISBN 978-1-0882-3238-5

We are standing on the threshold of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, Kaufman asserts in this clear, accessible guide to the world of artificial intelligence. Starting with a detailed history behind “thinking machines,” from automatons in Greek mythology to the rise of IBM, he recounts early pioneers who established AI foundations and makes an important distinction between today’s narrow AI and the concept of general AI, which remains a distant vision, emphasizing that current systems excel at processing data and spotting patterns, but they still lack true awareness or understanding. Throughout, Kaufman explains how AI functions but also analyzes how it’s shaping the world today—and what its impact may be in the decades to come.

Kaufman strikes a delicate balance between visionary and technical, addressing AI’s wide range of industry applications alongside its inner workings: neural networks, generative models, and the emerging power of multimodal systems. He also



*Expectant but grounded discourse on AI’s role in our future.*

**Great for fans of** Reid Hoffman and Greg Beato’s *Superagency*, Brian Christian’s *The Alignment Problem*.

highlights the central role of data quality, pointing out that an algorithm is only as strong as the information it’s fed. Even in these more mechanical sections, Kaufman manages to engage, avoiding jargon and grounding every explanation in real-world examples. Ethics and regulation form the core of Kaufman’s debut, as he tackles potential job displacement, the privacy challenges of mass data collection, and the dangers of surveillance and political manipulation. He calls for global standards and transparency, making it clear that technology itself is neither inherently good nor bad; rather, its impact depends entirely on how we use it. His closing chapters look forward, recognizing the need to shape AI outcomes through “thoughtful, ethical, technical, and visionary leadership.” Kaufman’s observations are optimistic but grounded, balancing excitement with caution, urging readers to shepherd AI toward its benefits and away from “inequity, privacy violations, unemployment, the erosion of truth, and ultimate subjugation.”

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

## SELF-HELP

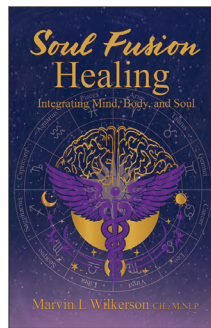
**Soul Fusion Healing: Integrating Body, Mind, and Soul**

Marvin L. Wilkerson | Ghostwriters

276p, e-book, \$14.99, ISBN 978-1-965360-53-8

Wilkerson sets an ambitious goal with his debut: healing the body and soul of every human being, through “unifying our physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual aspects.” Blending astrology, intuition, hypnotherapy, personal growth, and more, he shares a method for reconnecting with your true self, exploring how unresolved emotional baggage can hold you back while offering simple, practical ways to work through it. In a chaotic world that rarely makes sense, Wilkerson argues that wholeness and alignment are more important than ever, tapping into more abstract concepts—energy fields in the human body, the Aquarian Age, divine thought—and simple tools such as dieting and physical exercise to guide readers through self-discovery, inner balance, and integration.

Challenging readers to take responsibility for their emotional patterns, Wilkerson suggests that much of our suffering stems from unconscious beliefs formed early in life. To alter those patterns, he encourages deep introspection and spiritual tools



*Enlightening healing strategies based on mind, body, and spirit integration.*

**Great for fans of** Dadhiram Basumaty’s *Inner Mastery Outer Balance*.

such as daily mantras or visualization, declaring that, by “tap[ping] into the power of our subconscious mind,” we can control our lives and create the reality we choose to experience. Wilkerson’s tone is direct, even sharp at times, yet he makes complex ideas feel approachable while urging readers to stop ignoring the spiritual side of healing. Though Wilkerson’s writing is heartfelt and passionate, the narrative can feel repetitive—and disrupted by the quotes from notable authors, scientists, and others that Wilkerson inserts on nearly every page. Still, there are several unique therapies and strategies he covers, such as reprogramming and self-hypnosis (including a detailed how-to guide), to help readers tap into their subconscious mind. Wilkerson often speaks from his own experience as a hypnotist, and his closing chapter teaches readers how to construct and follow a “spiritual blueprint” for their lives, to produce the “deep meaning and fulfillment” we are all searching for on some level.

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

## SPIRITUALITY/INSPIRATIONAL

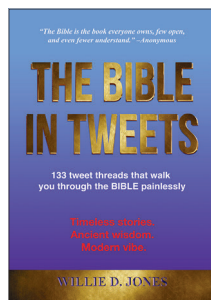
**The Bible in Tweets**

Willie D. Jones | Will the Wordsmith Publications

612p, e-book, \$19.99, ISBN 978-0-9987304-7-9

The inspiration behind Jones’s *Bible in Tweets* is fun and promising: an earnest, in-the-moment retelling of Old Testament stories and explorations of their meaning written in the style of social-media threads. In Jones’s playful but sincere approach to the most well-worn of texts, Noah’s handle is @Survivor, Abraham’s is @Patriarch, and Lot’s oldest daughter (@boldandimpulsive) posts, after fleeing Sodom, “Dad, what happened to Mom?” Readers can ponder why God usually posts from the @Elohim account but occasionally from @Trinity—and contemplate how much easier faith would be if God slid into DMs with advice like this, offered to David (@AfterGod’sOwnHeart) and adapted from 2 Samuel: “Until you take full accountability, this will continue to spiral downward.”

From Genesis to Malachi (@CulminatingProphet), Jones tweets through every book, generating handles, personalities, and perspectives for all the key figures, clearly relishing creating a sense of online banter—Elijah’s response to Ahab’s insistence that Baal “will come through”: “Yeah, whatever. It’s starting to get dark.” Seeing how the Old Testament cast employs online vernacular and style is fun,



*Playful but sincere retelling of Old Testament tales in tweet-form.*

**Great for fans of** Russ Ramsey’s *Retelling the Story* series, Krista Boan’s *Well Framed*.

especially for readers already familiar with the stories, though those less versed in the Bible will likely find much of this opaque, as comprehension often relies on the reader’s existing knowledge of the stories. In that, the book captures a truth of Twitter/X/Bluesky chatter, which tends to lack context and favor inside jokes. Despite the title, Jones’s posts here don’t always conform to the rules and constraints of tweeting as a form. Only the churlish will likely object to that, however, as Jones’s sincerity and wit become clearer with each page. Yes, *The Bible in Tweets* is often funny, but the laughs never come at the expense of the message or moral urgency of the original text, even when Elijah offers up emojis or Solomon (@WiseKing, naturally) apologizes for idolatry with a “Sorry, LORD. My bad.”

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

## MEMOIR

**Misfit 4****Mister John** | YAK Publishing

220p, hardcover, \$24.99, ISBN 979-8-9992205-1-6

Mister John's fourth collection retains his signature style and wit, opening with a meandering meditation on the art of daydreaming. Musings on his time teaching in the United Arab Emirates follow, often contrasting his Wisconsin roots with the sights, tastes, and sounds of a faraway world. From purchasing a hand-carved giraffe statue at the Dubai Shopping Festival to fondly recalling his favorite supervisor while teaching at UAE University, Mister John contemplates, ambles, and wryly reflects on a colorful life. His deliberations, though frequently costumed in humor, touch on more weighty moments as well, including the death of his beloved stepfather and near misses while navigating dangerous, sand-blown roads in the desert.

Balancing humorous anecdotes with thought-provoking impressions is where Mister John shines, a skill perfectly encapsulated in the collection's final offering, "Where's Fatma?", a contemplative account of the stark, strict environment



*Rousing, reflective, unexpected tales from a globetrotting storyteller.*

**Great for fans of** Isa Hill's *Runaway Teacher*, Sophia Benoit's *Well, This Is Exhausting*.

These narratives resemble an intimate journal recorded to preserve fond memories—personal and reflective, yet divulging nuggets of wisdom and depth that will resonate with readers. Much like the previous series installments, these stories are not shared in chronological order, yet they flow in an inviting, easy stream that weaves upbeat, emotional, and comical accounts of Mister John's eclectic adventures. Drinking snake juice, selecting the perfect seat on a plane, and marveling at the natural beauty of a field of sunflowers are just a sampling of these charismatic, cheery tales that speak to the sweetness in life's small moments of connection.

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

## MEMOIR

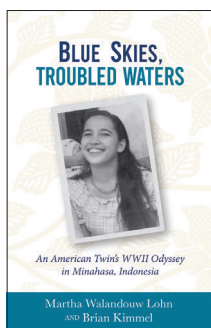
**Blue Skies, Troubled Waters: An American Twin's WWII Odyssey in Minahasa, Indonesia****Martha Walandouw Lohn and Brian Kimmel** | Together

Mapalus Press

294p, trade paper, \$19.95, ISBN 979-8-218-28676-7

Kimmel revisits his grandmother Martha Walandouw Lohn's memoir—originally published in 1966 as *Where Now Is My Garden?*—in this harrowing World War II narrative. Nicknamed Ath, Kimmel's American-born grandmother and her twin sister Kath were ripped from their New Jersey home, along with their mother, a naturalized U.S. citizen, in 1940, when their Indonesian father was deported. Ath, just six years old at the time, recounts the terrifying journey as the family traveled by sea to Indonesia, only to be imprisoned when Japanese soldiers invaded in 1942 and occupied the island. Ath's powerful story speaks to resilience, strength, and love as what anchors her and her family while they fight to survive the occupation.

Ath's writing captivates. She captures the emotive detail of a family desperate to stay together and survive, even while enemy soldiers attempt to tear them apart. There are moments of heart-stopping tension—Ath being dragged from a



*Powerful WWII narrative of family love and survival under Japanese occupation.*

**Great for fans of** Nick Golodoff's *Attu Boy*, Dieuwke Wendelaar Bonga's *Eight Prison Camps*.

Kimmel provides important historical context about his grandmother's life after the war, including their time spent on Morotai for medical treatment, their return to Manado, and Ath's work at an architectural firm and her role as lead singer in a band. Eventually, the family moved back to the United States, where Ath and her husband put down roots in Washington. Though nearly half of her Indonesian village did not survive the war, Ath's story remains one of unwavering courage and hope in the darkest of times, a tribute to a heart filled with "gratefulness, love, and peace."

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

## POETRY

EDITOR'S PICK

**An Antebellum Oz****Joseph Eldredge**

224p, trade paper, \$14.99, ISBN 979-8-992-69980-7

Poet Eldredge (*An Andrew Jackson*) offers an audacious reimagining of L. Frank Baum's *Oz*, employing the framework of the quintessential American fantasy to reveal the darkest of American truths: what life was like in the American South in the years just before what one character, Harriet, calls "de Freedom War." Framed as a five-act play, this charged, raw *Oz* tale features six teens, raised at a sugar plantation, set on divergent paths: the siblings Dorothy, Tom, and Jon are set to inherit the Master's sugar fields and enslaved people, while Harriet, Jim, and Ferdinand number among those souls to be inherited. A hurricane carries them all away to a Land of Oz mired in the dismal lows of Southern history, its shadows thick with lynch trees, slave markets, and "The Jim Crow" as the scarecrow, hanged from a tree by white folks for having "too much brains."

To get home, these teens must confront the dark systems at the land's core ... and the ones in their own minds. Eldredge's pained, pointed, grimly funny march down the "yellow railroad" of "the strange and stranded shore where tins talk / And



*Bold, hilarious, outraged abolitionist retelling of Baum's classic.*

**Great for fans of** Paul Beatty, Percival Everett.

monkeys soar" is unsteady and dreamlike, with abstract settings in constant flux. One of its many substantial pleasures is discovering Eldredge's often shocking revisions of *Oz* lore. Another is the characters and voice introduced at lightning speed, a mix of politicians, vaudevillians, folk heroes, witches, belles, tin Klansmen, minstrels, and chatty animals out of Uncle Remus tales. The storytelling is volatile, dizzying, and intoxicating, twining together Mark Twain, Suzan-Lori Parks, and centuries of deeply American voices.

Urgent history pulses beneath each scene no matter how surreal this *Oz* becomes. History buffs will relish untangling the references, but there's as much heart here as play. The teen protagonists discuss love, equality, freedom, and redemption. Harriet dares to propose a world where "I's partner on the plantation." (Tom's reply: "If that's the straight lick, that'll work.") Outraged, laugh-out-loud funny, and even hopeful, *An Antebellum Oz* dazzles the mind and jolts the conscience.

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

## MIDDLE GRADE

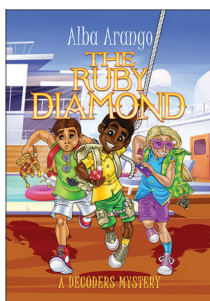
**The Ruby Diamond**

Alba Arango | Sapphire Books

157p, e-book, \$3.99, ISBN 978-1-952007-13-2

Arango's delightful tween sleuths return in her latest Decoders offering (after *The Dragon's Horn*), this time to tackle a puzzling cruise ship mystery. Steve Kemp's parents booked a four-day vacation on the *Ocean Adventure* and invited his best friends, Jenny Reed and Matt Peterson, along for the ride. The trip involves a fun challenge: find the mythical Ruby Diamond and win a free cruise every year for life. But what the Kems don't realize is their young charges aren't just interested in this diversion; they've discovered that the Ruby Diamond is real—and it's still on the ship.

Arango's fast-paced thriller is full of high-stakes tension, and young readers will feel as if they're cruising alongside the trio as they sift through clues, red herrings, and their fair share of nefarious characters. The adventure starts with a story of the ship's prior security officer, Hugo Lamberto—a gem smuggler who was offered one million dollars to transport the 100-carat red diamond on board. Steve, Jenny, and Matt quickly learn that the rumors of Hugo hiding the diamond on the ship may be



*Middle-grade mystery turns vacation cruise into high-seas escapade.*

**Great for fans of** Michael Hutchinson's *The Case of the Burgled Bundle*, M.G. Leonard and Sam Sedgman's *Kidnap on the California Comet*.

more than just rumors—and Hugo's coded letter to his brother, discovered after he died, serves as their first real clue. But the Decoders can't stay hidden forever, and they eventually come to the attention of Nico, the ship's deckhand and cousin of the Lamberto brothers, who recognizes that these smart, resourceful kids may be able to help him find the genuine jewel.

Solving clues that range from pop culture references to Greek myths, the trio skillfully juggle several interconnected mysteries, one of which offers something very rare indeed: official recognition for their stellar deductive skills. *The Ruby Diamond* can be read as a standalone, but middle-grade mystery fans will find that Arango's Decoders series, with its combination of fun, friendship, and action-packed storylines, will both challenge their wits and engage their sense of adventure.

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

## YOUNG ADULT

**Initial Condition: The Mechanic's Diary**

Ian Domowitz | Casa Muerte Press

172p, e-book, \$2.99, ASIN B0FM672RH8

Written with vision and intelligence, Domowitz's enigmatic third entry in his metaphysical *The Mechanic's Diary* series returns to the life and revelations of the philosophical Hanzhi, known as The Mechanic, an artificially intelligent life form who traverses both the real and virtual worlds yet doesn't know how he was created or by whom. He follows the *Synodal Chronicles*, a guide to a world without masters and a life of collective responsibility and empowerment. Meanwhile, in the virtual world, Hasidic Jews Baal and Sām create a golem—a clay being brought to life but without speech, a female named Ima—which could spell disaster for Hanzhi if she recognizes his true soulless nature.

Hanzhi's threats aren't limited to one realm. In the real world, Baal and Sām kidnap Hanzhi's ward, Charlie, a homunculus resembling an 11-year-old boy, and project him into the virtual realm, where Ima tortures and crucifies him. The story moves quickly back and forth between these elaborately constructed, tech-heavy, and at times esoteric worlds, making Hanzhi a steadfast and intriguing character whom



*Visionary SF of an AI being's cryptic search for meaning and humanity.*

**Great for fans of** Bo-Young Kim's *How Alike Are We*, Roxana Arama's *The Regolith Temple*.

readers will find grounding and want to follow. As Hanzhi finds an ally in Avi—short for Audio Video Interleave—who knows the Hasidic community, he learns that the unhinged Sām plans to come after Hanzhi's other two homunculi, Alpha and Bravo, decrying them as abominations, as “only God can bestow speech.”

Domowitz blends biblical lore with concepts of moral responsibility and accountability in this visceral exploration of humanity, free will, and spirituality. These concepts crackle to life through Hanzhi's interactions with Tamar, a young woman who dreams of exploring the world outside her restrictive society. Readers familiar with the Mechanic's world will be accustomed to trips into alchemical philosophy and reality bending, but newcomers may struggle to grasp this unconventional version of reality—start with book one. Ultimately, Domowitz's imaginative allegory explores the search for truth and identity alongside the value of arcane wisdom versus lived experience.

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

## YOUNG ADULT

**No Capes**

Elizabeth A. Seibert

314p, e-book, \$14.99, ISBN 979-8-998-82460-9

In this empathetic yet tongue-in-cheek urban crime drama, Seibert (*The Bro Code*) captures teenage apprehension and competition in a world reliant on superheroes. Plucky 17-year-old Madeline Roberts is a champion for her school swim team but gets grief from her coach, her “icy” older sister Arielle. While some suspect that powerful new swimmer, Aaron Ryans, is a Super (a person with superpowers), Madeline brushes that concern off—the school tests all athletes to make sure they are not Supers. Meanwhile, as an NSRP (Non-Super Regular Person), Madeline is a big fan of Golden Ace, the top crime fighter in Capital City. So, when “The Most Dangerous Supervillain of Our Time,” Dark Static, saves her from a rare mugging, she's shocked, to say the least.

Seibert turns up the mystery and suspense as Capital City gets more chaotic. Oddly kind but melodramatic, Dark Static reveals that the years-ago car accident that killed Madeline's mother, Meredith—an ace editor-in-chief for the *Capital Chronicle*—was no accident—and unsavory characters are now after Madeline. He also asks her to investigate whether Aaron has superpowers, suggests she should



*Energetic teen caper of superheroes, villains, and unsolved murders.*

**Great for fans of** Leo Petracci's *Star Child*, Kevin Hardman's *Kid Sensation* series.

find her mother's autopsy report, and insinuates that the incompetent Mayor Phil Bridges, Arielle's husband, is behind it all. As Madeline's head spins with all the developments, and she resolves to get to the bottom of who Golden Ace and Dark Static really are, Seibert throws in a surprising—and satisfying—twist that upends her life as she knows it.

First rate character development, methodical plotting, and well-loved superhero shtick propel this fast-paced mystery, teasing readers with important themes of power and responsibility. The story racks up suspects by the second, and readers quickly grasp that no one will escape this web of conspiracies—but that's ok because Madeline's determination, combined with layered characters and plot curveballs that no one will see coming, keeps readers guessing until the very end.

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