

February 23, 2026

booklife®

YOUR GUIDE TO SELF-PUBLISHING

46 New BookLife Titles Listed • 18 New BookLife Titles Reviewed

Indie Spotlight

In this edition of our monthly thematic roundup of BookLife titles, we feature romance.

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

COZY ROMANCE

Her Name Is Blue



Iris Justice

ISBN 978-1-64979-699-8

Author statement: "Florencia-Blue is an introverted dreamer. Enter James Murray: sweet, albeit grumpily so, with a heart encased in metaphorical stone. Until, that is, a shy New Yorker with a captivating dimpled chin gently unravels his

defenses, weaving the concept of love into a tangible tapestry they both begin to cherish."

The Library at the Edge of the Wood



Liz Delton

ASIN B0GCVDZ5FX

Author statement: "This is the second standalone book in the Cozy Cottage series. I wrote this book to give space not only to romantic relationships, but to found family ones as well! When I write, I try to make my cozy fantasy as optimistic, comforting,

and heartwarming as I can, alongside our characters' low-stakes struggles of building something new!"

More to Life

Janet Nichols Lynch

ISBN 978-1-965602-01-0

Author statement: "Retired school teacher Colette Corbyn goes



kicking and screaming into assisted living.

As she begrudgingly settles into Shady Meadow, she thinks she is done with romance until she meets cute, happy-go-lucky Harry. Most romances have much younger characters, but we seniors also need to see people our age find love and companionship."

Whispers of Her Memories



Iris Blobel

ASIN B0F9V7MRW3

Author statement: "Mallory O'Neill moves to Anahera Bay, New Zealand, after inheriting her grandmother's seaside cottage. While uncovering long-buried truths, Mallory forms a romantic connection to handyman Cameron Quinn. Setting the novel in

Anahera Bay allowed me to use the landscape in a purposeful way, with the lighthouse representing stability, direction, and the possibility of finding one's way."

The Shopkeeper's Daughter

Valerie Nifora

ASIN B0GL9LFNQP

Author statement: "Agnes Cole has lived her life bound by duty, until a winter storm, a strange tin of tea, and a mysterious young man named Malcolm alter everything. My good friend gave me a tea tin shaped

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)

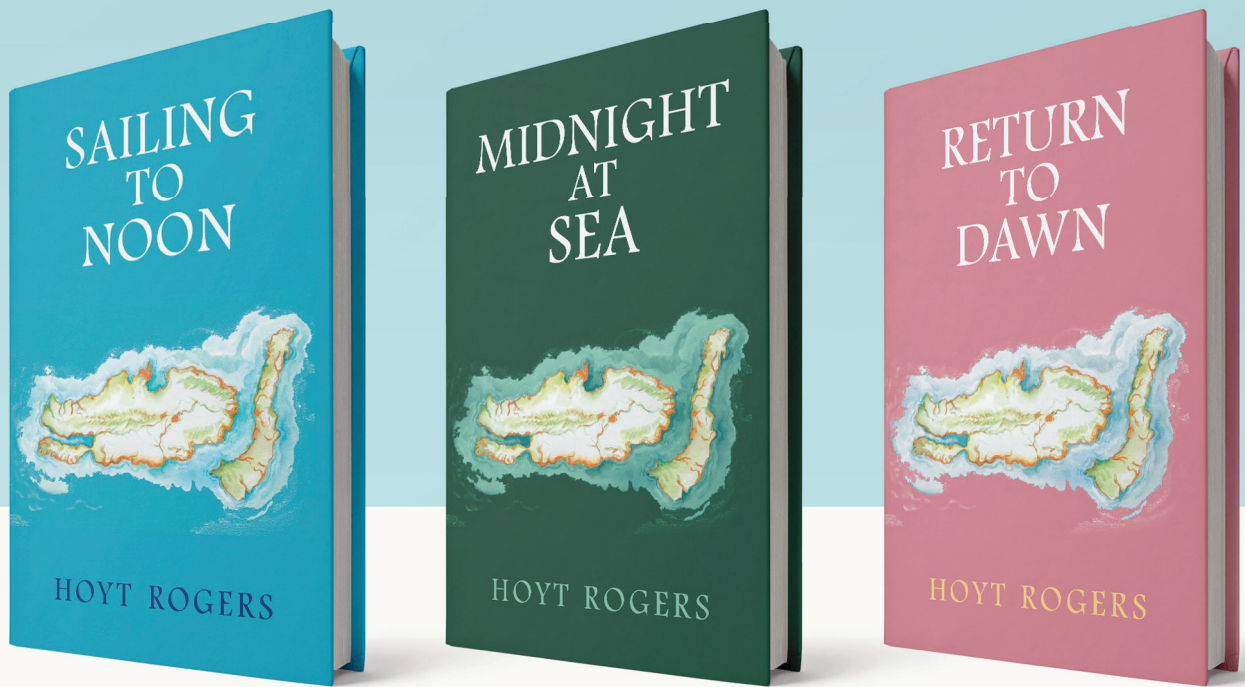


PW reviewers critique
thousands of self-published
titles every year:
[publishersweekly.com/
BookLifePrize](https://publishersweekly.com/BookLifePrize)

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

All powered by *Publishers Weekly* reviewers.

The Caribbean **Trilogy**



'Rogers's evocation of its history, its art, and its denizens, captures... the irrepressible invention and intoxication of Caribbean culture. An endlessly immersive and at times awe-inspiring... postmodern epic.' —*Kirkus Reviews*

Setting a record, each volume of *The Caribbean Trilogy* won the Independent Press Award for Hispanic/Latin Fiction. All three books were published by Spuyten Duyvil Press, and are available from: <https://www.spuytenduyvil.net>, **Amazon**, **bookshop.org**, and other outlets.

like a house. It was extraordinary. The tin was adorned with the image of a little shop—warm, inviting, full of promise. I loved it instantly. And almost immediately, I knew there was a story in it.”

ROMANTASY AND MYSTERY



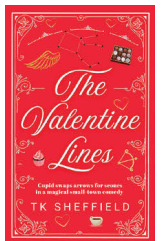
The Heart of War

Lisa Beth Darling
ASIN B004DCB3CA

Author statement: “Ares, god of war, sits alone and brooding on his secluded Greek isle when his boredom is interrupted by the sudden appearance of Alena MacLeod. From the Celtic moors to Mount Olympus, their bond sparks

betrayal, awakens buried secrets, and forces Ares to choose between his pride and the woman who claimed his heart.”

The Valentine Lines

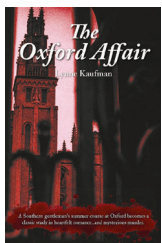


T.K. Sheffield
ASIN B0FNTRNYC7

Author statement: “*The Valentine Lines* originated as my master’s degree thesis, exploring the impact of dating apps on modern relationships. In the story, Cupid—a minor god weary of mortals’ endless swipes and dating woes—descends to Earth to champion true connection. Yet, as he

discovers, no romance can flourish until people first learn to know themselves.”

The Oxford Affair



Lynne Kaufman
ISBN 978-1966136057

Author statement: “Directing the summer travel-study program for UC Berkeley is indeed a dream job, but like any experience, it can get overly familiar. Writing this novel gave me the gift of seeing this magical place with new eyes. I get to share my insider’s knowledge of Oxford

custom and lore and create a fictional version of myself who solves a mystery while unexpectedly falling in love.”

The Thirteenth Cagebreaker: A Cantara Academy Series Novel



Melissa Jean Vallejos
ASIN B0GKL19WGC

Author statement: “My novel is YA dark academia romantasy with enemies-to-lovers tension, found family, and the slow burn that satisfies. The romance isn’t about a boy saving my protagonist. It’s about someone finally looking at all the parts she was taught to hide. I wrote

the story my 15-year-old self needed. The one that says you were never too much. You were just in rooms that were too small.”

To Love Like Venus

Stephanie Nina Pitsirilos
ISBN 978-1-958077-11-5

Author statement: “Are you ready for love? An astrologer looking at my

SPONSORED

Kindred Schemes

R. K. Harrington
ASIN B0FX9FCTBZ

Author statement: “Lady Alaina Sinclair never expected London society to be so treacherous—or so tempting. She has always preferred books to ballrooms, but with a disastrous start to her first season, she’s determined to rewrite her fate.

With her heart set on the respectable—and very eligible—Duke of Ashford, Alaina is ready to embrace society’s expectations... even if it means silencing her true desires. *Kindred Schemes* is a modern take on a Regency romance with glamour, a steamy love triangle, and enough mystery to keep readers turning the page. Historical romance has always been my favorite genre to read, and, with daydreams always playing in my head, I decided to take a leap and write down my own story.”

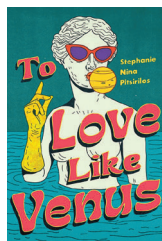


chart for the first time remarked: ‘Your chart is so Venusian!’ This intrigued me, because what does that mean? *To Love Like Venus* is a literary novel in a near-future setting that’s all about love, relationships, and how we cope with its heights and disappointments—whether partner, ideals, or the symbols that become our children.”

STORMY RELATIONSHIPS

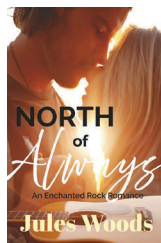
The Making of a Storm



Tasha Zima
ISBN 978-1-06-989343-7

Author statement: “I wrote *The Making of a Storm* to explore what happens when love isn’t the gentle thing people expect it to be—when it’s complicated, inconvenient, and shaped by past wounds that don’t disappear just because two people want each other. This is a romance about emotional resilience, second chances, and learning how to stand in your own power.”

North of Always: An Enchanted Rock Romance



Jules Woods
ASIN B0G2G9RZSB

Author statement: “*North of Always* is a contemporary, new adult, M/F, deeply emotional, slow-burn college romance set in Texas full of second chances, healing love, and the kind of connection that only grows stronger through the storm.”

BookLife Talks with Charmaine A. Nelson

An established academic, Nelson has published numerous books in the field of transatlantic slavery studies with a specific focus on Canadian slavery. Her most recent book, however, is her first book for children. We spoke to Nelson about *Joe the Pressman* and the historical significance of its subject.

Do you remember the first time you heard about Joe?

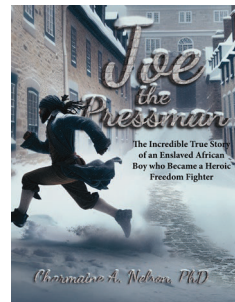
I learned about Joe while researching fugitive slave advertisements from Canada and Jamaica. There are six different fugitive slave advertisements documenting Joe's five escapes across a nine-year period [1777–1786]. It is hard to overstate how extraordinary this is! Joe's ongoing resistance forced me to rethink what "successful" resistance was and to understand that it was not just permanent escape. We know about Joe because his ongoing resistance forced his enslaver to document his existence.

Your previous books have been academic works. Why make *Joe the Pressman* a children's book?

Transatlantic slavery studies is mainly comprised of historians researching tropical locations. Far less research focuses on cold-climate regions. Most Canadians do not know that transatlantic slavery transpired in Canada from the 1600s until 1834 under the British and French. Instead, they equate Canada with the Underground Railroad [1834–1865]. I will also publish an adult trade book about Joe. However, books like *Joe the Pressman* are necessary to educate children about these important colonial histories. A nation that was built through transatlantic slavery was founded on anti-Black racism. That history cannot be redressed and repaired until it is first acknowledged.

What kind of research did you do to ensure historical accuracy?

Compared to most other enslaved people, quite a bit is known about Joe. His enslavers, William Brown and Thomas Gilmore, were the cofounders of the *Quebec Gazette*. Joe's resistance prompted Brown to repeatedly publish fugitive slave advertisements for his recapture; Gilmore died in 1773, prior to Joe's first documented escape. We also have their business ledgers, and we know a lot about their mentor, William Dunlap of Philadelphia, who was a promi-



nent printer, bookseller, and postmaster. In a 1768 letter, Brown and Gilmore petitioned Dunlap to send them an enslaved Black boy to work in their printing office. In Ottawa at Library and Archives Canada, I examined the business ledgers of the Montreal sheriff, Edward William Gray, a longtime friend of William Brown. Sheriffs in Quebec were bureaucrats who oversaw the jails and bankruptcies, meaning they helped to (re)capture prisoners, including enslaved fugitives, and to administer the estates of bankrupt enslavers, which included enslaved people. Furthermore, my broader knowledge of trans-

atlantic slavery allowed me to understand the nature of Joe's forced journey from Africa to Canada.

How do you imagine readers at this moment will connect to *Joe the Pressman*?

This is an interesting moment to publish this book, when forces openly undermine rigorous histories about transatlantic slavery and Black people. There are many good and open-minded people of all backgrounds in the U.S.A., Canada, and elsewhere who understand the importance of teaching these histories in thoughtful and empowering ways to children. I included the author's note, glossary, and bibliography because I recognize that many adults—especially parents, teachers, and librarians—will read the book to and with children. Many will be learning alongside their children and students and hearing about slavery in Canada and the U.S. North for the first time.

What's next for you?

I love reaching diverse audiences and connecting with children who have few resources about these histories. I will continue to write children's books and other academic and nonacademic books. I will also continue my work at Slavery North, an institute that supports research on slavery in Canada and the U.S. North. I am also the founder and editor-in-chief of *Black Maple* magazine, one of very few online platforms that celebrates Black Canadians. I want my work to reach as many people as possible.

For more, visit booklife.com/nelson

HISTORICAL AND REGENCY ROMANCE

The Long Flight Home



Beth Aubrey and Jim Aubrey

ISBN 978-1-7374638-0-1

Author statement: “In 1967, a 15-year-old girl from a small coal-mining town in Kentucky wrote to a pirate radio station. A reply to her request for a pen pal came from a 16-year-old boy living more than 4,000 miles away. What followed was nearly two years of deeply personal letters that forged

an extraordinary bond between two teenagers—us. After reuniting, decades later, we wrote *The Long Flight Home* together, each of us recounting our separate journeys and perspectives.”

Trees Long for Rain



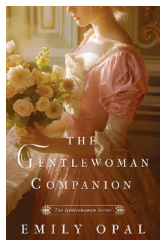
Alison McMahan

ISBN 979-8-9948005-9-1

Author statement: “On my first visit to Venice I was fortunate to attend a ‘concerto delle donne,’ a recreation of 17th-century women-only concerts from a time when women weren’t supposed to sing or perform music in public. In *Trees Long for Rain*, the hero is a young orphan girl trained at the

Ospedale della Pietà (before Vivaldi) who will do anything to sing with Monteverdi’s choir; her efforts lead her to love and murder.”

The Gentlewoman Companion



Emily Opal

ISBN 978-1-963608-04-5

Author statement: “Louisa craves freedom; Lord James is bound by duty. Neither seeks love, yet neither can resist. But when family secrets surface, James questions Louisa’s loyalty. In a storm of betrayal, will their bond break? If you read the previous book in the series, you know

that Louisa made a great blunder. I loved writing about a young woman who comes to learn that mistakes do not have to define us.”

ROM-COMS

Bro Amazing



Alby Blake

ISBN 978-1-966858-06-5

Author statement: “Writer Clarissa refuses to give up on her dream. She takes a questionable job that will solve all her problems. Hopefully. *Bro Amazing* is a nerdy why-choose sports romance featuring an e-sports gaming team. I’m familiar with gaming culture, so that felt

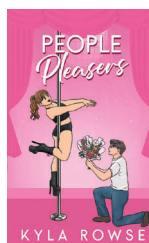
like a natural way to start my series. The other installments also focus on less mainstream sports. I’ve conducted a lot of research, but all of it is completed with passion.”

People Pleasers

Kyla Rowse

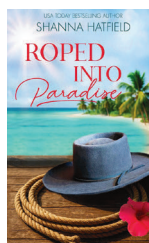
ASIN B0F4VX6P5M

Author statement: “I wanted to write a romantic comedy about an



amateur pole dancer because I couldn’t find many books on the market like that. Since then, I’ve had an incredible outpouring of love from other dancers around the world and messages from readers who were inspired to start taking classes too. They have also been moved by the message about finding self-love after a bad break up and learning to let go of other people’s expectations.”

Roped into Paradise

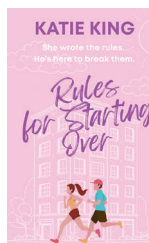


Shanna Hatfield

ASIN B0GK7BT81Q

Author statement: “McKade thought he was visiting his grandmother in Florida—not boarding a cruise. Add a forbidden attraction to the ship’s horticulturist, and his grandmother’s birthday turns into the adventure of a lifetime. Last year, I received an email from my cousin, who was enjoying a month of tropical cruises. His message simply read: ‘Any chance you might write a romance about a cowboy on the high seas?’”

Rules for Starting Over



Katie King

ASIN B0FJ2KVN92

Author statement: “My slow-burn romantic comedy features Chloe, a woman rebuilding her life after heartbreak and loss, and James, the charming man she least expects to trust. As they navigate grief, guarded hearts, and undeniable chemistry, their relationship becomes a story of healing, resilience, and the courage it takes to open your heart again.”

Shibby Magee



Carrie Kabak

ASIN B0GM73XRDP

Author statement: “Out of the frying pan, into the fire. Shibby Magee throws her heart into finding her place in the world. At its heart, *Shibby Magee* is about a woman yearning for marriage, a child, and stability, and the uneven path she takes before finally recognizing real love and accepting it.

Waiting for a Girl Like You



Katie Delahanty

ISBN 978-1-966166-01-6

Author statement: “Gwen is an undercover bridesmaid at her first love’s wedding. Duncan is the yacht rock-obsessed wedding singer who can make any bridesmaid fall at his feet. Music often inspires my writing. During the pandemic, my husband and I had makeshift date nights in our backyard while our children watched a movie inside. We ended up taking a deep dive into yacht rock and became huge fans. We all deserve a love story and to sail into the sunset. On a yacht.”

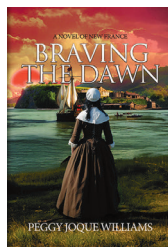


New Titles from Self-Publishers

Booksellers, publishers, librarians, and agents are encouraged to look at the 46 self-published titles below. Each appears with a list of retailers that are selling the book and a description provided by its author. Some of these writers are waiting to be discovered; others have track records and followings and are doing it on their own. If you are a self-published author interested in listing titles in this section, please visit publishersweekly.com/pw-select for more information.

Fiction

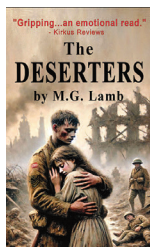
Braving the Dawn: A Novel of New France



Peggy Joque Williams. Black Rose Writing. \$22.95 paper (370p), ISBN 978-1-68513-698-7; \$6.99 e-book, ASIN B0G4X1QX1K Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Bookshop.org

Banished from France by King Louis XIV, Sylvienne d'Aubert must rebuild her life in a young Canadian colony that is at once welcoming and dangerous.

The Deserters



M.G. Lamb. DSI Press. \$12.99 paper (334p), ISBN 979-8-9986470-0-0 Amazon

Two boys. One war. No way back. *The Deserters* weaves a tale of love, loyalty, and survival across the fractured landscapes of America and the hell of war-ravaged France.

Mancala Moon



Asa Bowers. Asa Bowers. \$9.99 paper (252p), ISBN 978-1-7329481-8-1; \$2.99 e-book, ASIN B0GD7ZBVGH Amazon

When Micah is drawn into a mysterious forest, he finds himself tested by forces he cannot see.

Panama (Santiago Trilogy #2)



John Robert Hutt. Dorrance Publishing. \$21.99 paper (318p), ISBN 979-8-89499-230-3; \$16.99 e-book, ISBN 979-8-89499-729-2 Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Dorrance Bookstore

In the thrilling continuation of the Santiago Trilogy, Angela Arredondo now unexpectedly finds herself on an ocean journey from California to South America to find her family.

What Keeps Us

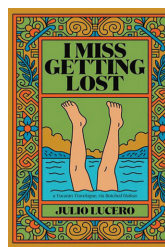


Jeanine Boulay. Echo Road Press. \$16.99 paper (232p), ISBN 979-8-218-87929-7 Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Bookshop.org, IngramSpark

Linked stories of 10 N.Y.C. women navigating impossible choices across 150 years, all connected to Brooklyn's Green-Wood Cemetery and the secrets it keeps.

Poetry

I Miss Getting Lost

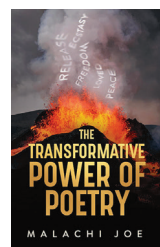


Julio Lucero, illus. by Baris Sehri. Julio Lucero. \$9.99 paper (132p), ISBN 979-8-9906022-2-9 IngramSpark

I Miss Getting Lost is a spirited travelogue-in-haiku that blends verse and prose, tracing five journeys through

Mexico's Yucatán in 110 hybrid poems of place, sensation, and self.

The Transformative Power of Poetry

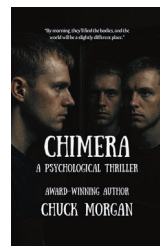


Malachi Joe. Malachi Joe. \$13.50 paper (72p), ISBN 979-8-9929013-0-6 Amazon

The Transformative Power of Poetry is a poetry collection about Malachi Joe's rebirth after trauma and loss, showing how poetry turns pain into healing, strength, and hope.

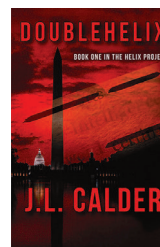
Mystery/Thriller

Chimera: A Psychological Thriller



Chuck Morgan. Charles E. Morgan. \$15.99 paper (470p), ISBN 978-1-968179-49-6; \$0.99 e-book, ASIN B0GG5TXDSH Chuckmorganbooks.com, Amazon

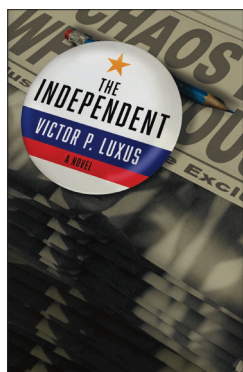
Two staged murders share a carved spiral, and DNA points FBI agent Dirk Trainor toward his own bloodline as a hidden family and a precise killer tighten the spiral around him.



DoubleHelix (Helix Project #1) J.L. Calder. Dwyer Street Press. \$4.99 e-book (389p), ISBN 979-8-9930023-0-9; \$17.99 audio, ISBN 979-8-9930023-3-0



Must-Read Titles

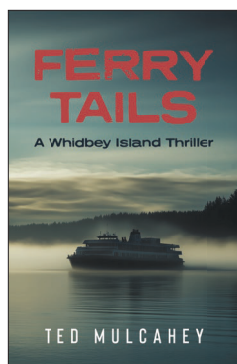


The Independent

by Victor P. Luxus

ISBN: 978-1733034708

“ Smart novel polarization and an unlikely candidate facing Trump.

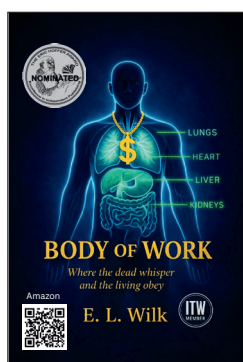


Ferry Tails

by Ted Mulcahey

ISBN: 979-8989108336

A witty, suspenseful thriller where Whidbey Island’s tranquility masks a deadly game of cat and mouse.

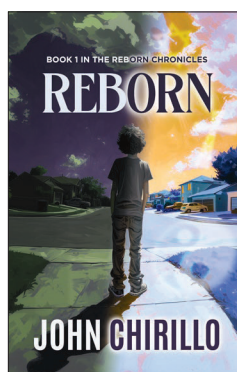


Body of Work

by E. L. Wilk

ISBN: 979-8298714754

“ Tech Thriller of AI, a sinister company, and a farm family’s surprising fate.

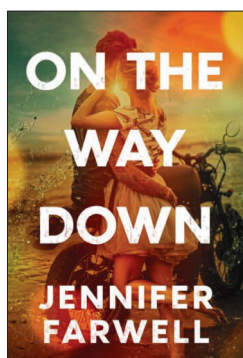


Reborn

by John Chirillo

ISBN: 979-8349671098

“ Exciting super-powered teen adventure aiming to unite all religions.



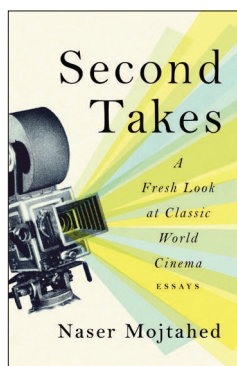
On the Way Down

by Jennifer Farwell

EDITOR'S PICK

ISBN: 978-0998614366

“ Second-chance whirlwind of passion, suspense, and sprinkles of tenderness.

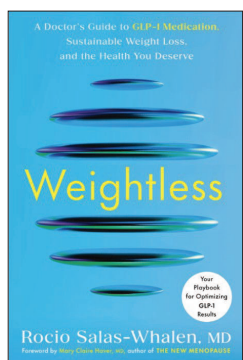


Second Takes

by Naser Mojtahed

ISBN: 979-8992514506

“ Inviting, memorable essays on classic cinema, with standout attention to Ozu and Buñuel.

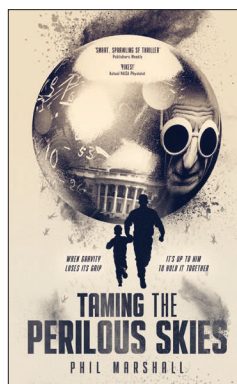


Weightless

by Rocio Salas-Whalen, MD

ISBN: 978-0593981207

“ Empathetic, clinically grounded guide to GLP-1 weight loss therapy.



Taming the Perilous Skies

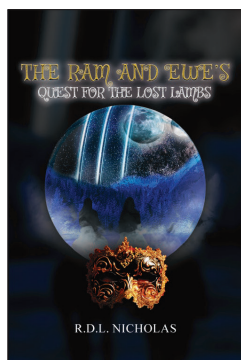
by Phil Marshall

ISBN: 979-8999680716

“ Near-future tech utopia faces collapse in this detailed thriller.



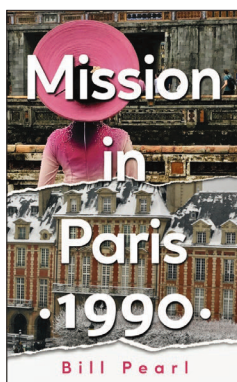
Must-Read Titles



The Ram and Ewe's Quest for the Lost Lambs

by R.D.L. Nicholas
ISBN: 979-8990844254

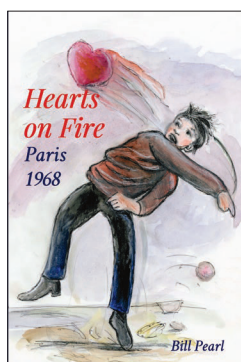
“ Young girl and her group of friends embark on a magical quest to save her father.



Mission in Paris 1990

by Bill Pearl
ISBN: 978-0997292725

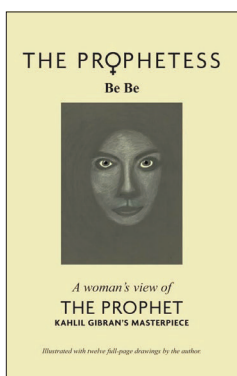
“ A fast-paced and realistic novel of an American facing the legacy of the Vietnam War.



Hearts on Fire, Paris 1968

by Bill Pearl
ISBN: 978-0692065662

A historical novel with a heartwarming conclusion.



The Prophetess

by Be Be
ISBN: 978-0982472354

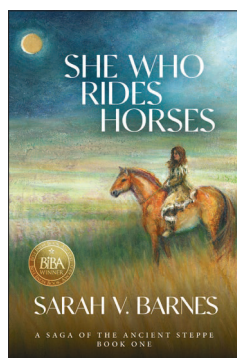
“ Be's project gender-swaps the references in Kahlil Gibran's original and includes new illustrations.



The Friday Edition

by Betta Ferrendelli
ISBN: 978-1480263185

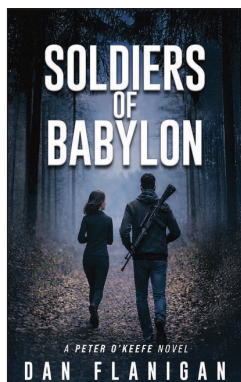
“ A smart, nimble treat of a mystery.



She Who Rides Horses: A Saga of the Ancient Steppe (Book One)

by Sarah V. Barnes
EDITOR'S PICK
ISBN: 978-1736967331

“ Horse lovers will relish this historical adventure about a young woman who becomes the first person to ride a horse.



Soldiers of Babylon

by Dan Flanigan
ISBN: 979-8991232531

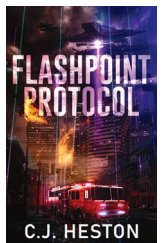
A masterful blend of noir crime and psychological thriller that doesn't flinch from uncomfortable truths.

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

Amazon, Apple, Audible, IngramSpark

When obsession with a dead girl drags Mike Green into the shadows of espionage, politics, and power, he learns the truth is never safe and survival is never guaranteed.

Flashpoint Protocol



C.J. Heston. Manhattan Book Group. \$17.99 paper (288p), ISBN 978-1-969572-33-3; \$5.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-969572-33-3

Amazon, Barnes & Noble
In a future where AI predicts fires before they spark, corruption burns hotter than flame. When technology becomes a weapon, Captain Jack Allen stands between the city and ruin.

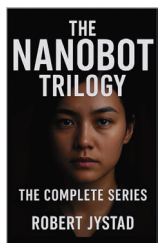
The Magician Killer



Diane Merrill Wigginton. Jeweled Dagger Publishing. \$18.99 paper (338p), ISBN 978-1-946146-20-5; \$4.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-946146-21-2
Amazon, Barnes & Noble, IngramSpark

She survived a serial killer once. Now a detached FBI profiler, Samantha Stevens hunts predators until women vanish in Alaska and the Magician resurfaces, to hunt her again!

The Nanobot Trilogy: The Complete Series



Robert Jystad, illus. by Kim Peasley. Flathead River Publishing. \$34.99 paper (764p), ISBN 979-8-9932886-9-7; \$4.99 e-book, ISBN 979-8-9943034-1-2
Amazon, Barnes & Noble

Detective Van Eng, a hearing-impaired detective with the LAPD, solves murders and takes on terrorist Dr. Belinda Armendariz, who weaponizes nanobots to accomplish her misguided goals.

To Know Good and Evil (Frank Adams Investigator Series #2)

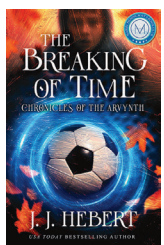
Daniel V. Meier Jr. BQB Publishing. \$18.95 paper (220p), ISBN 979-8-88633-050-2; \$7.99 e-book, ASIN BODWHS186M



Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Kobo
A small plane crashed in rural NC. The FAA said it was an accident, but one man knew it wasn't. He called Frank Adams. Frank feared for his life if he went, but the call was urgent.

SF/Fantasy/Horror

The Breaking of Time: Chronicles of the Arvynth



J.J. Hebert. MindStir Media. \$29.99 (314p), ISBN 978-1-970844-00-9; \$17.99 paper (314p), ISBN 978-1-969572-86-9

Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Books-A-Million, Powell's Books

An urban fantasy where a father's attempt to save his son shatters reality, awakens ancient magic, and drags him back toward an immortal magical order he betrayed.

Escala's Wish

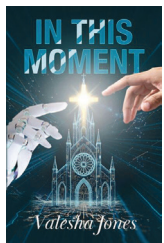


David James. Trash Panda Publishing. \$35.99 (540p), ISBN 979-8-9999799-0-2; \$5.99 e-book, ISBN 979-8-9999799-2-6

Amazon

Action-adventure romantasy filled with sharp banter, light humor, and the emotional highs and lows of first love, where magic, danger, and destiny collide in unforgettable ways.

In This Moment



Valesha Jones. Palmetto Publishing. \$18.99 paper (326p), ISBN 979-8-3188-1984-1; \$8.99 e-book, ISBN 979-8-3188-1985-8
Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Walmart

Faith meets technology in a battle for truth, purpose, and redemption.

Vaka Sevah Book 1: The Great Ice

Lawrence Brown. Lawrence Brown. \$14.95 paper (328p), ISBN 979-8-3441-2620-3; \$0.99 e-book, ASIN BOCW1BF2XG
Amazon



A hurtling fall into an alien world. *Vaka Sevah* pits a young man against a monstrous machine—and the awful revelation of a promise foretold. Gold Medal, 2025 Global Book Awards!

Romance/Erotica

Summer Lies And Blackberry Pies

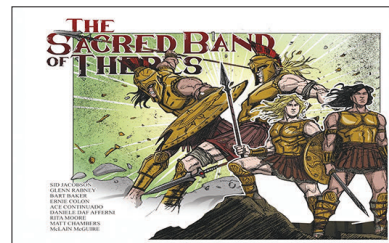


Sandy Little. Emerald Fountain Press. \$14.99 paper (250p), ISBN 979-8-9931395-0-0; \$5.99 e-book, BOG27TQPZM

Amazon, Barnes & Noble
Set in 1968 Mississippi, a tender coming-of-age romance about first love, friendship, and the quiet bravery it takes to follow your heart.

Comics

The Sacred Band of Thebes



Glenn Rabney and Bart Baker, illus. by Daniele DAF Afferni and Ace Continuado. BookBaby. \$59.99 (152p), ISBN 979-8-9985104-2-7; \$9.99 e-book, ISBN 979-8-9985104-0-3
Amazon, Apple, Barnes & Noble, BookBaby, Bookshop.org

The story of the Sacred Band of Thebes, the greatest fighting force during the height of Greek rule, told through the adventures and bonds of two young boys who become two great warriors.

Nonfiction

5 3 8 Five-Thirty-Eight: The One Hundred Year Electoral College Disaster How Can America Achieve One Person, One Vote



Joe Albanese. XlibrisUS. \$20.99 paper (410p), ISBN 979-8-3694-2616-6; \$3.99 e-book, ISBN 979-8-3694-2616-6

Amazon

Is the Electoral College a threat to democracy?

Joe Albanese sheds light on the controversial 236-year-old institution that continues to decide presidential elections, exploring its origins, flaws, and potential reforms.

Becoming Ecoactive: A Transformational Guide for Personal Growth within the Human Ecosystem

Stephen McGraw. Stephen McGraw. \$22.95 (252p), ISBN 979-8-2684-5184-9; \$14.99 paper (252p), ISBN 979-8-2890-0259-4 Amazon
In a reactive world, *Becoming Ecoactive* offers a powerful alternative: a practical, heart-centered model for living with intention, reciprocity, and ethical impact and becoming a healing presence in every interaction.

Before You Litigate Your Rights During Police Encounter: Ask Yourself These 3 Questions

Jon Moses. Jon Moses. \$12.50 paper (84p), ISBN 979-8-90271-531-3; \$4.99 e-book, ASIN BOGG53R XMZ Authormoses.com, Amazon, Barnes & Noble, IngramSpark

In a world where every encounter with police feels like a ticking time bomb, this book is a cheat code for life as it focuses on how to communicate, deescalate, and go back home safely.

Beyond the Headset: Finding My Voice

Kris Crawford. Beau Terre Press. \$17.99 paper (212p), ISBN 979-8-9930395-0-3; \$7.99 e-book, ISBN 979-8-9930395-3-4 Amazon
A raw, firsthand memoir revealing the unseen emotional cost of 911 dispatch, trauma carried after the call ends, silence in service, and the long journey back to identity and healing.

A Force for Good: Gisela Warburg Wyzanski
Anita Wyzanski Robboy. Peter E. Randall Publishing. \$34.95 (384p), ISBN 978-1-



963714-08-1; \$19.99 audio, ISBN 978-1-942155-98-0 Audible
Biography of Gisela Warburg Wyzanski, a courageous young German Jewish woman

who leveraged her wealth and family connections to save children from the Nazis.

The History of Fantasy Sports: And the Stories of the People Who Made It Happen

Larry Schechter. Lawrence Schechter. \$24.95 paper (298p), ISBN 979-8-218-42470-1; \$9.99 e-book, ISBN 979-8-218-42471-8 Amazon, Barnes & Noble, IngramSpark
The first-ever telling of how ideas for games years ago became a cultural phenomenon with millions playing worldwide. Fun and easy to read.

Houdini: The Man Who Died Twice

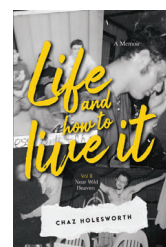
Larrian Gillespie. Cipher House Books. \$28.95 paper (420p), ISBN 979-8-9937712-1-2; \$24.95 e-book, ISBN 979-8-9937712-2-9 Amazon, CipherHouseBooks.com

Houdini: The Man Who Died Twice is a true crime investigation into whether Houdini's death was an accident or the greatest cover-up of the century.

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

Rosie Sorenson. Daffodil Productions. \$15.95 paper (300p), ISBN 978-8-218-442460-0; \$5.99 e-book, ISBN 978-8-218-442460-0 Amazon
Author's trip through medical hell with spouse, along with deep dive into medical errors and recommendations about how to prevent mistakes from ending the life of someone you love.

Life and How to Live it: Near Wild Heaven
Chaz Holesworth. Chaz Holesworth. \$12.99



paper (220p), ISBN 979-8-9942411-0-3; \$2.99 e-book, ASIN BOG86SPCVD Chazholesworthbooks.com
Life and How to Live It: Near Wild Heaven is a powerful coming-of-age

memoir about reclaiming identity, breaking indoctrination, and finding truth in the echoes of your own voice.

Positive Psych Up: Supercharging Your Purpose and Mindset for Transition Success

Philip J. Schlesinger. Philip J. Schlesinger. \$16.99 paper (162p), ISBN 979-8-218-62509-2; \$9.99 e-book, ISBN 979-8-218-70066-9 Amazon

Helps provide a psychological advantage to orchestrate a successful transition. Presents a customizable transition game plan utilizing theory and practice with easy-to-follow help.

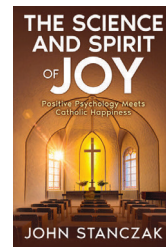
Retirement Planning Guidebook: Navigating the Important Decisions for Retirement Success

Wade Pfau. Retirement Researcher Media. \$24.99 paper (390p), ISBN 978-1-945640-19-3; \$9.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-945640-20-9 Amazon, Apple, Barnes & Noble, IngramSpark

The Retirement Planning Guidebook is designed to help readers navigate the key financial and nonfinancial decisions for a successful retirement.

The Science and Spirit of Joy: Positive Psychology Meets Catholic Happiness

John Stanczak. John Stanczak. \$16.99 paper (540p), ISBN 979-8-2772-3657-4 Amazon
John Stanczak explores what research reveals about happiness, in dialogue with Catholic tradition.





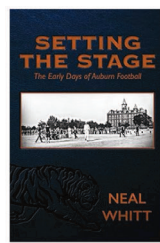
PW DAILY

Publishing News
You Can Trust

SIGN UP
TODAY



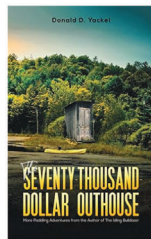
Setting the Stage: The Early Days of Auburn Football



Neal Whitt. BookBaby. \$29.99 paper (368p), ISBN 978-1-6678-6375-7
Amazon
Before the Civil War, Auburn's roots formed amid optimism and

conflict. Closed by war and spared destruction, it later boldly launched football despite fierce opposition.

The Seventy-Thousand-Dollar Outhouse

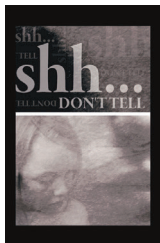


Donald D. Yackel. Austin Macauley Publishing. \$15.95 paper (274p), ISBN 978-1-64575-707-8
Amazon

Donald D. Yackel shares vivid, conversational

paddling stories from Canada, Costa Rica, Florida, and Mexico, bringing remote waters, challenges, and rewards to life for any reader.

Shh... Don't Tell

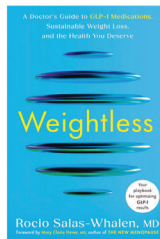


M.A. Moorer. Trafford. \$18.95 paper (236p), ISBN 978-1-4251-3673-4
Amazon

A raw, heart-wrenching memoir about one woman's journey

through childhood abuse, self-discovery, and the unwavering power of resilience. Her story will inspire you to never give up.

Weightless: A Doctor's Guide to GLP-1 Medications, Sustainable Weight Loss, and the Health You Deserve



Rocio Salas-Whalen. Rodale Books. \$28.99 (288p), ISBN 978-0-593-98120-7; \$13.99 e-book, ISBN 978-0-593-98121-4
Weightlessthebook.com

A board-certified physi-

cian shares her must-have guide to using GLP-1 medications such as Ozempic, Wegovy, and Mounjaro to reverse obesity and take charge of your health.

A Woman of Gold: A Biography of Family, Faith, and Business

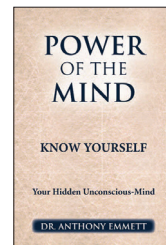


Robert W. Killick. BalboaPressAU. \$17.99 paper (260p), ISBN 978-1-9822-9969-9; \$3.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-9822-9968-2
Amazon

This is a biographical portrait of an Australian woman who has become a person of significance through business, her family, ministries in the church, and in her social milieu.

Religion/Spirituality

Power of the Mind Know Yourself: Your Hidden Unconscious-Mind

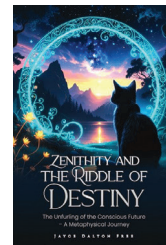


Anthony Emmett. XlibrisAU. \$17.99 paper (210p), ISBN 979-8-3694-9435-6; \$3.99 e-book, ISBN 979-8-3694-9436-3
Amazon

Dr. Anthony Emmett

dives into an exploration of our consciousness, dissecting its operational layers and energy dynamics. Through this examination, we gain insights into harnessing the extraordinary mechanism bestowed upon us.

Zenithity and the Riddle of Destiny: The Unfurling of the Conscious Future; A Metaphysical Journey



Jayce Dalton Free. Dreams of Tigers. \$12.99 paper (260p), ISBN 979-8-9992973-1-0; \$2.99 e-book, ISBN 979-8-9992973-0-3
Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Books-A-Million

A fascinating blend of philosophy,

self-reflection, and inspiration, filled with ideas that make us think deeply about life and purpose while keeping the tone light and engaging.

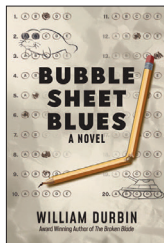
Children's/YA Abducted

J.S. Ash. Obsidian Wave Publishing. \$14.99 paper (310p), ISBN 978-1-0674140-0-9; \$2.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-0674140-2-3
Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Indigo, IngramSpark



Trapped on a living spacecraft above her town, a teenage outcast wages a one-girl war against alien mercenaries to save her best friend before the ship jumps to deep space.

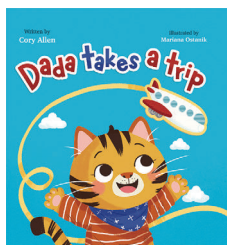
Bubble Sheet Blues



William Durbin. Lake Vermilion Press. \$11.99 paper (208p), ISBN 979-8-9997963-0-1; \$3.99 e-book, ASIN B0FWP9CN1S Amazon, IngramSpark

Luke Collins's middle school project puts his reputation as a slacker at risk, draws him closer to a girl he's long admired, and generates excitement far beyond his community.

Dada Takes a Trip

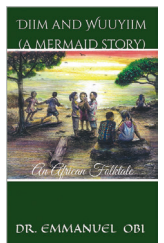


Cory Allen, illus. by Mariana Ostanik. Cory Allen Books. \$19.99 (18p), ISBN 979-8-9936010-0-7; \$6.99 e-book, ISBN 979-8-9936010-1-4

Amazon, Apple, Barnes & Noble, Books-A-Million, Bookshop.org, Google Books, Powell's Books

Told in gentle, rhyming verses, this touching story captures tender moments between father and child: saying goodbye, missing each other, and finding comfort in the promise of going home.

Diim and Wuuyiim: An African Folktale



Emmanuel Obi. Authors House. \$0.99 e-book (16p), ASIN B09WXYW251 Amazon Tuka feels an unexplained familiarity with her perfect husband, unaware that surprising truths about him and herself are yet to be revealed.

Diwa of Mount Luntian

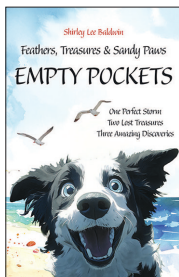
Cleodia Martinez, illus. by Paola Santos. Midsummer Studio. \$24.99 (36p), ISBN 979-8-



9942748-0-4; \$14.99 paper (34p), ISBN 979-8-9942748-1-1 Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Bookshop.org Inspired by Philippine myth, this

soothing picture book follows Diwa, a young diwata whose glowing emotions settle in the steady rhythm of daily life, cultivating inner safety and trust.

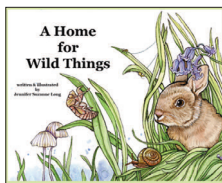
Empty Pockets (Feathers, Treasures & Sandy Paws #1)



Shirley Lee Baldwin. BookBaby. \$13.95 paper (180p), ISBN 979-8-3178-1325-3; \$2.99 e-book, ISBN 979-8-3178-1326-0 Amazon, Barnes & Noble

Jack must work for his pocket money. When he discovers a treasure, he must choose between finding its owner or selling it. He could use the money, but a nagging feeling gets in the way.

A Home for Wild Things



Jennifer Suzanne Long. Bohemia Green Arts. \$29.99 (52p), ISBN 979-8-218-90098-4; \$15.99

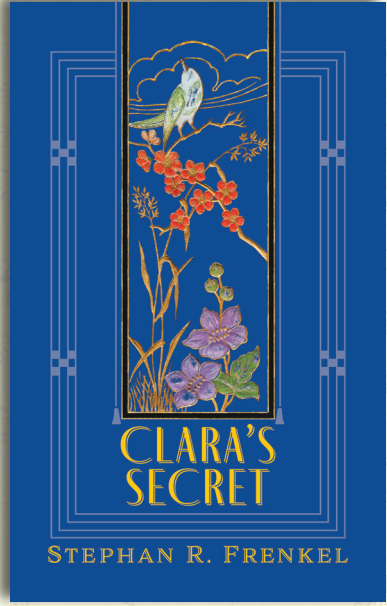
paper (52p), ISBN 979-8-218-83788-4 IngramSpark Spark wonder for bugs and backyard wildlife with this joyful picture book. Woven with lyrical verse and imaginative wordplay, it's sure to be a storyteller and young reader favorite!

Me and My Long, Long Hair



Pria Dee, illus. by Emily Hercock. Boomi. \$36.99 (44p), ISBN 979-8-9892507-2-1 IngramSpark

Just when Sita starts fitting in at her school, she learns about childhood cancer, and decides to donate her hair to create wigs for children with cancer.



“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



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

PICTURE BOOKS

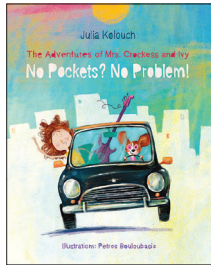
⚡ EDITOR'S PICK

The Adventures of Mrs. Crockess and Ivy: No Pockets? No Problem!

Julia Kolouch | Miriam Laundry Publishing
30p, hardcover, \$18.99 ISBN 978-1-77944-352-6

There's a kinetic joy to Kolouch's debut picture book, turning a seemingly trivial situation into a rollicking escapade. Ever since the lively pup Mrs. Crockess joined the Briggs family—becoming daughter Ivy's constant companion—they've marveled at her intelligence and resourcefulness. One of their favorite activities is making music together: Mrs. Crockess on drums, her floppy ears flying up with the ecstatic rhythm, and the equally absorbed Ivy shredding on guitar. But when a distressing sound ("Snap! P-tangngngng!") interrupts the pair's jam session, they encounter an unexpected hiccup.

Ivy Briggs isn't worried because they can get a new guitar string at the music store, but Mrs. Crockess is distraught. Despite being adept at so many activities (in addition to drumming, she can drive a car, wash dishes, and play cards), Mrs. Crockess lacks something very important: pockets! They can't make this all-important trip, she moans,



Sparkling picture book adventure of devoted human and an extraordinary dog.

Great for fans of Kael Tudor's *Marching Band*, Arthur Howard's *My Dream Dog*.

bright, richly-colored characters contrast beautifully with the minimalist stencil-like backgrounds, capturing the urgency of Ivy and Mrs. Crockess's impromptu adventure while also emphasizing their special bond. Young readers will appreciate Ivy's relationship with Mrs. Crockess, who functions as both peer and protector—and sometimes needs her own special attention and care. Dog lovers of all ages will also recognize that Mrs. Crockess's exuberant enjoyment of life inspires her human companions. In *The Adventures of Mrs. Crockess and Ivy*, Kolouch demonstrates how every day spent with a beloved pet can become extraordinary.

with no receptacle for "my money, my keys, my phone, my map, my bone, my lip balm." Ivy immediately goes into problem-solving mode, never losing hope—no matter the obstacles the two face.

Petros Bouloubasis's energetic illustrations are perfectly aligned with the zany antics and complementary personalities of Ivy and Mrs. Crockess. The bright, richly-colored characters contrast beautifully with the minimalist stencil-like backgrounds, capturing the urgency of Ivy and Mrs. Crockess's impromptu adventure while also emphasizing their special bond. Young readers will appreciate Ivy's relationship with Mrs. Crockess, who functions as both peer and protector—and sometimes needs her own special attention and care. Dog lovers of all ages will also recognize that Mrs. Crockess's exuberant enjoyment of life inspires her human companions. In *The Adventures of Mrs. Crockess and Ivy*, Kolouch demonstrates how every day spent with a beloved pet can become extraordinary.

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

PICTURE BOOKS

There's a Griffin on My Back, Vol. 3

Meredith Rusu
40p, hardcover, \$19.99, ISBN 978-0-829-45711-7

Young Robby learns how to share the spotlight and be considerate of others in Rusu's third *Mighty Moods* series entry, following *There's a Robot in My Socks*. During his soccer game, Robby scores 10 goals and wows the crowd with flashy footwork, prompting his coach to exclaim, "We've got a sports star in our midst—a future Griffin lad!" That praise has an immediate effect on Robby's pride, as he pictures a mighty griffin on his back who helps him drill, run the field, and pull off some seriously cool scores. But when his parents are too busy to marvel at his moves—or when they want him to support his sister Katie's ballet performance instead of soaking in the limelight himself—Robby feels the urge to once again take center stage.

Robby's longing for attention and praise will be relatable to young kids who love to impress the grown-ups in their lives. Whether he's kicking goals down the stairs or explaining to his neighbors why his dad thinks he's "a natural," his pride is sweet



Entertaining, relatable tale that teaches consideration for others.

Great for fans of Ashley Iman's *Ruby René Always Gets Her Way*, Daniel Gershkovitz's *The Arrogant Toad*.

Martín Morón's bright, expressive illustrations perfectly capture the ferocity of Robby's griffin—and his chagrin when his actions have uncomfortable consequences. Robby's story gives young readers an opportunity to discuss their own challenging feelings, and Rusu's late-in-the-game twist—when Katie describes her unique mythical motivator—ends the book on a delightful note.

to see—until it starts to get in the way of his ability to be present for his loved ones. Rusu handles that crucial life lesson with care, allowing Robby a moment of embarrassment that hits home but also proves amendable: when his need for accolades disrupts his sister's ballet scene, he's immediately whisked out of the auditorium—but gets the chance to express his feelings, apologize, and learn how to wait his turn.

Martín Morón's bright, expressive illustrations perfectly capture the ferocity of Robby's griffin—and his chagrin when his actions have uncomfortable consequences. Robby's story gives young readers an opportunity to discuss their own challenging feelings, and Rusu's late-in-the-game twist—when Katie describes her unique mythical motivator—ends the book on a delightful note.

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

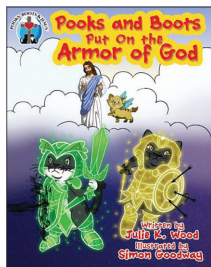
PICTURE BOOKS

Pooks and Boots Put On the Armor of God, Book Two

Julie Wood | Pooks, Boots and Jesus, LLC
50p, trade paper, \$10.53, ISBN 979-8986127354

Wood's uplifting picture book series for Christians returns, with the lovable cat duo of the title meeting new friends and undertaking more exciting missions to "help those in need." As Pooks and Boots revel in life with their newfound family, they discover something heartbreaking just down the road: their neighbor, the young Billy, has been feeling sick during football practice and must stay in the hospital to determine what's wrong. Ever eager to help, Pooks and Boots—joined by the neighbors' dogs, Pebbles and Penny—turn to their dad for assistance. When he reads them Bible passages about the armor of God—a pathway, he declares, to being "fully protected, healed, and saved"—it sparks the animals' excitement to lend Billy a hand.

Pooks and Boots remain an irresistible feline pair, and Christian families will appreciate Wood's skill at making it fun for young readers to tease out the meanings of scriptural metaphors—like the "invisible" armor of God. Remembering how kindness saved them from the pound, they're anxious to spread goodwill to others, and



Spirited feline duo learn about the biblical armor of God.

Great for fans of Deanna Draper Buck's *The Whole Armor of God*, Robert Jeffress's *Suit Up!*.

their fascination with what the armor of God means will pique kids' interest. As they learn about the helmet of salvation, the breastplate of righteousness, and more, Simon Goodway's brightly hued illustrations depict them donning their own glowing pieces of armor, ready to take on their enemies—and convinced they "are saved, healed, and protected from whatever comes [their] way."

Wood weaves the power of empathy throughout this inspiring story, as the central animal pack heads to the local shelter and children's hospital to share their toys and their newfound faith. The result is sweet to see, and returning readers will be heartened to hear that a character from *Pooks and Boots Meet Jesus* has been adopted into a royal home. Thankfully, Billy—and his new friends from the hospital—makes a full recovery, sharing with our fearless felines how his faith buoyed his confidence and boosted his football skills.

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

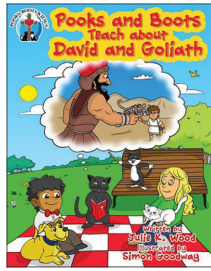
PICTURE BOOKS

Pooks and Boots Teach about David and Goliath, Book Three

Julie Wood | Pooks, Boots and Jesus, LLC
74p, trade paper, \$13.23, ISBN 979-8986127378

Pooks and Boots, Wood's entertaining feline twosome, return in this motivational children's story of courage, commitment, and Christian faith. Spirits remain high in this third entry, which finds the plucky felines setting out to help young Michael gain entrance to the Space Academy Science Competition by regaling him with stories of David and Goliath from the Bible—and inspiring him to feel real confidence while reaching for the stars. By pointing out that Michael and David have a lot in common—they've both been told they're too young to achieve their goals—Pooks and Boots remind Michael and readers that, with "the Lord on [your] side," he can succeed, even when the odds are stacked against him.

Christian readers will relish Wood's classic depiction of David versus Goliath, and kids will be awed by Simon Goodway's renderings of that battle: a small shepherd boy, with nothing more than a slingshot, facing off against a larger-than-life soldier. The lesson Michael takes away from that story will inspire readers of all ages, as he



Fearless felines return with a message of Christian faith and courage.

Great for fans of

Tim Thornborough's *David and the Very Big Giant*, Kirk Cameron's *Brave as a Lion*.

declares with gusto, "I am confident God will be with me in this competition!" Of course, Pooks and Boots can't stop at just helping Michael; the compassionate duo also reach out to Kristy, the smallest girl on the basketball team, and encourage her to apply David's example of determination and faith to her own struggles.

As in other series entries (most recently, *Pooks and Boots Put on the Armor of God*), Wood fills this story with biblical references and repeated reminders of God's presence, support, and love. Michael eventually earns his happy ending—with delightful self-assurance—as does Kristy. Wood closes with an affectionate reunion between Pooks, Boots, their dog pal Bruno, and the spirited Bandit from the series' first book, as well as a slew of shelter animals who finally get their forever home. Wood leaves readers with a reminder to pray and always remember that "God is with us."

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

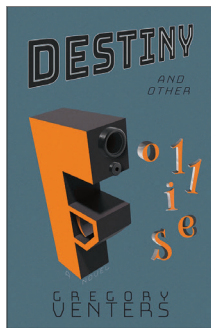
FICTION

Destiny and Other Follies

Gregory Venters | Atmosphere
346p, trade paper, \$18.99, ISBN 979-8-89132-995-9

This lengthy philosophical debut recounts the midlife anguish of Calder Brandt, an industrial consultant perpetually thwarted in his career goals at the UK-based Scientific Management. After traveling to corporate headquarters, he learns that the pompous, powerful company head, Vincent Verzopenbroeck, has sabotaged his promotion. Determined to reconstruct his future, Calder launches a startup. But even then, his success depends on the whims of opponents out to ruin his life. Meanwhile, his Bosnian banker wife Hana suffers from his neglect and endures professional struggles of her own. Will Calder overcome Vincent's malicious plotting and receive the job title he yearns for?

Venters's skillful analogies and descriptive writing sometimes steal the spotlight from the plot, but, along with the richness of Calder's emotions, they also serve to invigorate the mechanics of corporate life: business meetings, email threads, the explanations of proposals. Despite the challenge of tracking the story's large cast, Venters ensures they are realistic, relatable, and grounded in contemporary corpo-



One man's struggles offer insight into the emotions shaping global industry.

Great for fans of Glenn Ogura's *Startup*, Angie Cruz's *How Not to Drown in a Glass of Water*.

rate power dynamics, with developments like Calder's poor health post-throat cancer becoming their own character. As his physical condition constantly challenges his ability to express himself, both literally and figuratively, it also lends the novel's events a serious tone.

Venters shines in his depiction of characters locked in an isolation of their own making on the brink of the COVID-19 pandemic. Hana's loneliness, expressed in her own point-of-view segments sprinkled throughout Calder's narrative (in one particularly resonant section, she "long[s] for [her] sobs to erase their shared past of passive, separate solitude, the apathy allowed to root and spread"), mirrors his inability to connect meaningfully with others, and their petty marital bickering is realistically rendered. "Nice guys finish last" is this story's melancholy anthem, and readers of highbrow literary fiction will cheer as Calder defies backstabbing colleagues and stubbornly trudges after his career dreams against the cold inner workings of his industry.

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

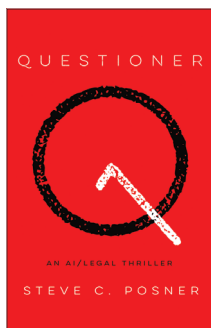
MYSTERY/THRILLER

Questioner: An AI/Legal Thriller

Steve C. Posner | Whiplash
428p, e-book, \$4.99, ISBN 978-0-974-12611-1

High stakes, brisk pacing, of-the-moment tech anxieties, and much sharp-elbowed legal talk power Posner's legal thriller, centered on a desperate effort to avert a conscious AI from unleashing an apocalypse. The story grabs from the start as Martin Bavarius, a respected retired jurist who devotes himself to teaching law and occasionally arguing appeals, comes across a homicide in a D.C. hotel, encountering the corpse of Connie Weathers, a top design engineer for the cutting-edge tech firm, QuestCorp. With rival attorney and AI expert Selena MacKenzie, Bavarius begins to look into disturbing aspects of QuestCorp, a company with which he has multiple connections—the CEO, Felix West, is an old Army friend, and Bavarius uses the AI-driven Questioner research system to prep arguments. Further complicating matters: Bavarius's agreement to represent a Kansas prosecutor who admits to seriously wounding another attorney in a duel but insists that QuestCorp's "wildly popular AI gaming system" made him do it.

Posner writes with snap, wit, and authority, and his choice to insert brief conversations ("Can a human tell if an AI has achieved at least a minimally conscious



Smart, savvy legal thriller of a retired jurist facing the singularity.

Great for fans of Thomas R. Weaver's *Artificial Wisdom*, Mario Martinez's *Judicial Algorithm*.

state?") with an actual AI prove to be one of the rare instances where chatbot text actually works in a novel. The heart of the novel is clearly human, however, as the twists, tech, and tension feel fresh and surprising. Undercutting the bleeding-edge feel, however, are some old-fashioned perils endured by MacKenzie and Bavarius's corresponding heroism.

Posner honors what readers expect from his genres—smart chatter, novel legal maneuverings, speculative tech thrills, escalating tension, occasional action, and moments of reflection about what it all means—with welcome heart and engaging characters. A sense of play enlivens the proceedings, as when Bavarius's co-counsel composes a chant based on Norse sagas about Bavarius's puppy, Gopherbreath. Moments like that reverberate later, as Bavarius and co. face nothing less than the singularity, reminding readers that these are people rather than archetypes.

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

SF/FANTASY/HORROR

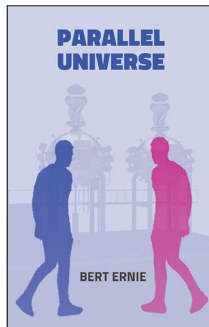
Parallel Universe

Bert Ernie | iridium peach

352p, trade paper, \$35.99, ISBN 978-0-648-55141-6

Ernie's science-fiction debut teases a ground-breaking physics experiment, a portal to a parallel Earth, and riveting political tensions. In 2010 France, mechanical engineer Max Rivette works at the European Organisation for Nuclear Research—known as CERN—when an experiment to transfer matter results in a shocking twist: a parallel universe is discovered, and Max is chosen as the “First Man” to enter. Once he arrives, he is quickly taken in by the authorities and learns this new world is both eerily recognizable and astonishingly different: money doesn't exist; the Twelve Rules of Society govern—choosing collaboration rather than conquest or hierarchy; and large-scale wars have been abolished.

Through Max's assigned guide, Dominic, he learns that the divergence between these two Earths occurred after the First World War, and, as Max becomes more immersed in this new world—forming social connections, establishing a routine civilian life—he gradually recognizes the darkness of his own left-behind universe.



Sobering SF contrasting state control and capitalism with cooperation and peace.

Great for fans of Amal El-Mohtar and Max Gladstone's *This Is How You Lose the Time War*, Blake Crouch's *Dark Matter*.

political authority. Eventually, a decision is reached: Max must be retrieved from the place he's come to view as “home.”

Max functions largely as a transport mechanism for ideas—adapting, complying, observing, and surviving but with slim interiority. That sacrifices some emotional connection for readers, but what works well is the stark contrast between the two worlds the novel sets against each other. If science fiction is a way of thinking about the present through displacement, *Parallel Universe* offers a sober warning about state control, secrecy, and the dangers of authoritarian consolidation.

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

ART & PHOTOGRAPHY

EDITOR'S PICK

Guardians of Life: Indigenous Knowledge, Indigenous Science, and Restoring the Planet

Kiliii Yüyan

224p, hardcover, \$49.95, ISBN 978-1-680-51838-2

Yüyan's hopeful, transcendent photo essay casts a glorious vision of climate optimism told from the voices of 12 different Indigenous peoples across the globe, each seeking to preserve their corner of the world and affirm their sovereignty using the historically dismissed and invaluable resource of “traditional ecological knowledge,” or “TEK.” Yüyan, a decorated photographer, writer, and *National Geographic* explorer, was inspired to explore Indigenous conservation during an encounter in Washington's Salish Sea. Sitting in a traditional skin-on-wood-frame kayak, Yüyan and his friends start singing to a pod of sleeping orcas, rousing them awake, just as Indigenous folks used to in years past. (The song, this time: “Hey Jude.”)

As he writes, “there is a link between the continued existence of many of the world's most beautiful natural areas and the Native communities who live in them.” Yüyan's inspired and inspiring stories and images document travels to Alaska, where he meets folks in the Iñupiat community who teach Yüyan about their whaling



Gorgeous, inspiring photo essay of Indigenous conservation methods.

Great for fans of Matika Wilbur's *Project 562*, Robin Wall Kimmerer's *Braiding Sweetgrass*.

practices, which make up the cornerstone of their society and increase whale populations in their area. He also ventures to Palau, where he meets the Hatohebei people, stewards of the reef landscapes around Hotsarihie, as well as the Amazon rainforest, Greenland, Mongolia, and more. Yüyan lets the people speak for themselves and their land, revealing through their words and his own photo-

graphs the deeply ingrained ethos and methods of their conservation. The Siksikaitstapi in Montana and Alberta have begun a bison restoration program, while the Klamath peoples fight against Berkshire Hathaway to restore the Klamath River and the salmon populations therein. To these stewards of the earth, the climate crisis is not hopeless but rather an opportunity to use their ancestors' knowledge. Yüyan's masterful photography thrills as it brings these voices to life and demonstrates what the world looks like when TEK is put into practice.

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

HEALTH, DIET, PARENTING

EDITOR'S PICK

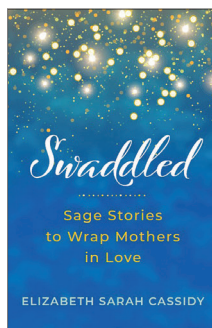
Swaddled: Sage Stories to Wrap Mothers in Love

Elizabeth Sarah Cassidy | Starling Press

240p, hardcover, \$28.99, ISBN 979-8-9926413-3-2

Full of advice, understanding, and wisdom, Cassidy's moving collection of stories examines motherhood from the perspective of 12 different women. Whether becoming a mother was planned, accomplished through adoption or surrogacy, or completely unexpected, these women share their stories with vulnerability and transparency in the hopes of providing guidance and compassion to mothers who may feel like they have to be perfect or know it all right out of the gate. Each woman echoes a recurring theme: there is no such thing as perfection, and each individual mother must find what works for her and her family and define her own version of success.

Cassidy has collected a diverse array of stories that mothers from different backgrounds will find relatable. Some women struggle while stuck at home and are anxious to get back to work, while others decide to give up or pause their careers to care for their families. The tales range from heartwarming to heartbreaking, with one woman exploring the challenges of being a “married single mom” while others



Heartening stories of motherhood reminding readers they are not alone.

Great for fans of Jessica Urlich's *Beautiful Chaos*, Tania Jane Moraes-Vaz's *Woven*.

endure and grieve through stillbirths and miscarriages. Throughout, one reassuring message shines with heartening power: “You are not alone. You're not the only one who has these feelings. Your life will come back to you, albeit in a different way: a bigger and better way.” In this way, Cassidy not only highlights the life-changing impact of becoming a mother but also underscores the importance of having an identity outside of motherhood. Importantly, she encourages struggling mothers to reach out to family, friends, and local support groups. “If you're feeling sad, scared, confused, mad, or lonely, call a friend. Preferably one who has had a baby, but anyone will do.” Poignant and impactful, this collection of stories explores the joys and pains that come with this life-altering transition. It will leave readers feeling entertained, seen, and validated—like having a long talk with an intimate friend.

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

MUSIC, PERFORMING ARTS

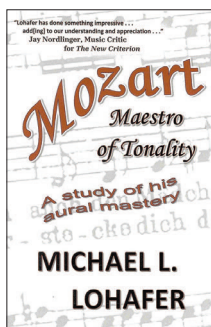
Mozart: Maestro of Tonality

Michael L. Lohafer

282p, hardcover, \$35, ISBN 979-8-3507-5192-5

Lohafer writes that his illuminating study of Mozart and his music has been written for “those music lovers whose auditory sensibilities are keenly attuned to the forceful dimensions of mellifluous tonality”—and who recognize Mozart’s “incomparable reputation as a nonpareil composer.” Readers who qualify will find much here that enriches appreciation of Mozart’s works. Lohafer, a member of the Mozart Society of America, has done a prodigious amount of both listening and reading and put it all into this loving, detailed, and accessible analysis, from the way a “sparkling, chortling motif” in the overture of *Così fan tutte* “embodies the inherent playfulness of Mozart’s personality in service of his compositional genius in a work that is sprinkled with comic touches” to how Mozart, in the *Requiem*, “sonically limned a portrait of death that ... that affirms positively the triumph of unerring faith.”

Digging fruitfully into biographical and critical records, *Maestro of Tonality* is a celebration rich in insight into how the great composer’s music functions and why it



Loving, detailed, approachable examination of the music of Mozart.

Great for fans of Jan Swafford’s *Mozart: The Reign of Love*, Charles Rosen’s *The Classical Style*.

examining how the composer reinforced emotional drama and exemplified structural integrity through key selection and modulation. Lohafer also shows how the composer repeatedly wrote arias to suit specific singers, achieving dramatic and musical unity.

Lohafer writes clearly and vividly, treating technical details with a light touch. Though his appreciation is deep and intense, his prose remains easygoing and elegant, capturing and honoring the mellifluous power of the music itself. Though not for the wholly uninitiated, Lohafer’s rousing study offers revelations for casual listeners and aficionados alike.

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

SELF-HELP

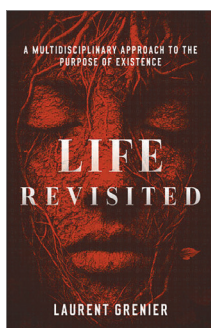
Life Revisited: A Multidisciplinary Approach to the Purpose of Existence

Laurent Grenier | Soledit

144p, trade paper, \$11.99, ISBN 979-8-896-86973-3

Grenier delivers a reflective essay on the meaning of existence, blending science, biology, and metaphysics to explore today’s existential threats, the intimate link between the human body and mind, and life’s roots in dynamic balance rather than rigid order. He draws from his own experiences—a diving accident and resultant spinal cord injury left him quadriplegic at a young age—to contemplate purpose and meaning, citing his forays into philosophy as “remed[ies] against the feeling of absurdity [and] potentially suicidal despair.” Arguing for soft determinism and panpsychism, Grenier suggests human capacity for adaptive genius and “the fundamental unity of universal nature” encourage a more thoughtful and responsible way of caring for others and treating nature with respect.

Grenier takes on the immense challenge of reconnecting science with questions on meaning and how to live, and, though the material is robust and requires careful attention to absorb, he is at his best when fusing ideas from biology, physics, and



Introspective rumination on the meaning and purpose of life.

Great for fans of Terry Eagleton’s *The Meaning of Life*, Peter Godfrey-Smith’s *Metazoa*.

Reading *Life Revisited* is, in itself, an exercise in concentration, demanding focused engagement, patience, and a willingness to grapple with challenging ideas. Grenier’s probing of timeless questions about human existence is a complex and dense line of thought that is meant to be carefully worked through while reading, allowing time to pause, reflect, and reconsider long-held assumptions. Through his aim to challenge comfortable certainties and reopen questions about life, knowledge, and human responsibility, Grenier invites a more profound awareness of existence, exercising theoretical muscles that have been honed since the beginning of time and leaving readers with the wisdom that “Authentic joy comes from a transfiguration of individual life into universal love.”

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

MEMOIR

I’ll Try Anything Twice: Misadventures of a Self-Medicating Life

Carly Schwartz

256p, trade paper, \$17.99, ISBN 979-8-896-36095-7

Schwartz’s intimate debut memoir takes an unflinching look at depression, addiction, and recovery against a backdrop of international adventures. At the start, 30-year-old Schwartz has a stable relationship and a burgeoning career at “what had recently been deemed the world’s most visited online news empire,” but she longs to experience life in real time instead of through a computer screen. She suffers from impostor syndrome in the fast-paced newsroom, where she begins to “fantasize about what my life might look like if I blew it all up.” So, she dares to move to Panama to work as a teacher, beginning her new life in an idyllic jungle community. (She has to ask: “Do jungles have towns?”)

There, her depression soon returns, and Schwartz faces a downward spiral of substance abuse that culminates in an emotional breakdown. Schwartz presents mental illness as cyclical. Those cycles become clear as she recounts attempts to reinvent herself through travel, work, and love, but also repeatedly collapsing under the weight of addiction and untreated bipolar disorder. By the final chapters, survival



Debut memoir takes an honest look at depression, addiction, and survival.

Great for fans of Kay Redfield Jamison’s *An Unquiet Mind*, Esmé Weijun Wang’s *The Collected Schizophrenias*.

has taken precedence over ambition; even writing becomes an act of endurance rather than achievement. Sharp, lively, evocative prose, laced with wit and powered by rare candor, immerses readers in each moment, and Schwartz’s dedication to the truth is inspiring. Like most people born to be writers, Schwartz is also a skeptic; she rejects narratives of easy recovery or cure-it-all breakthroughs, insisting instead on refreshing honesty about relapse, grief, and what it takes to keep pushing each day. Schwartz shares insecurities, shame, and difficulties as if confessing them to a friend, inviting others to experience the “revolutionary” understanding she discovered in an intensive outpatient mental health program: that “other seemingly normal people ... struggled in the same ways I did.” Schwartz’s telling scrupulously avoids false promises and inspirational tropes, but it still stirs hope throughout as it honors the hard work of living.

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

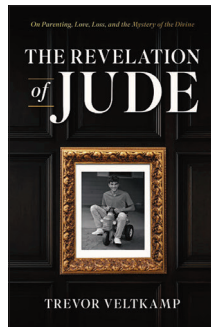
MEMOIR

The Revelation of Jude: On Parenting, Love, Loss, and the Mystery of the DivineTrevor Veltkamp | *Pieta*

358p, hardcover, \$28.95, ISBN 979-8-993-90691-1

Veltkamp invites readers into an intimate and unsparing meditation on faith and fatherhood in this spiritually probing debut memoir, which chronicles the 19-year life of his son, Jude, and the hard-and-good paradox of a life cut short. The book opens amid the quiet satisfactions of family life in rural Washington, where Veltkamp reflects on the awe and terror of parental responsibility—the moment one realizes another life is entrusted to their care. That sense of ordinariness fractures during Jude's freshman year of college, when he is diagnosed with osteosarcoma, a brutal and aggressive cancer that propels the family into a prolonged confrontation with mortality. Alongside his wife, Jody, Veltkamp navigates the disorienting routines of pediatric oncology at Seattle Children's Hospital, recording failed treatments, the agonizing decision to amputate Jude's leg in a final effort to extend his life, and the long, vigilant wait that follows.

As Jude's condition worsens, the memoir's emotional gravity deepens. In a quiet



Unflinching memoir of faith, fatherhood, and love forged through terminal illness.

Great for fans of Nicholas Wolterstorff's *Lament for a Son*, Jerry Sittser's *A Grace Disguised*.

reversal of roles, Jude—once “mercurial” and sometimes difficult—begins to steady his parents, offering comfort, humor, and reassurance even as his own body weakens. These moments form the heart of the narrative, revealing not only the cost of illness but the rare spiritual clarity it can produce. The focus is not on grief alone, but also the quiet revelations about love, belief, and identity when hope for recovery is stripped away. Veltkamp's prose is candid and reflective, admitting doubt, rage, and the easy temptation to “shake [a] fist at God,” while still allowing space for moments of grace.

Through Christian scriptures and philosophy, Veltkamp interrogates the familiar claim that suffering is redemptive and goodness can coexist with unbearable pain. Though the subject matter is unrelentingly heavy, the memoir resists sentimentality. Instead, it offers readers a steady companion through grief, illuminating how love can remain intact—even luminous—when loss feels absolute.

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

MEMOIR

Essence MergingColleen Quinn | *Pegasus*

290p, e-book, \$15.99, ISBN 978-1-83794-962-5

Quinn shares her stirring journey of self-discovery in this esoteric debut, recounting her path to “essence-merging”: her term for mindful, purposeful living “with all the wisdom of your body, your intuition, and alignment with the Source.” Her story begins with her retirement as a psychologist and transition to caregiver for her grandson—until a near-death experience from contracting pneumonia sets her on a new path. The book is less about events and more about inner change and choosing experience, and, as her story unfolds, readers experience Quinn's intensifying emotion, softening boundaries, and fading resistance. The result is a transformation that feels calm and complete rather than dramatic—an exploration of desire, openness, and the routes that real change takes when you stop watching from a distance and start fully engaging with “every moment of your life.”

Through writing that disassembles, carefully examines, and reshapes, Quinn analyzes the struggle between trying to exert control and letting go, scrutinizing her childhood—impacted by a mother with bipolar disorder—alongside the painful,



Gentle, inspiring spiritual foray into self-love, discovery, and acceptance.

Great for fans of Michael A. Singer's *The Untethered Soul*, Suzanne Giesemann's *The Awakened Way*.

and beautiful, lessons she learns as an adult. Loss, grief, love, and spirituality buoy the narrative, making change feel unavoidable but inspiring—and acceptance as something active and grounding, not weak or passive. From breathwork to exploring Plato's concept of Twin Flames to a profound devotion to Gaia, Quinn touches on the awakenings that altered her perceptions and ushered in healing and growth.

The ending doesn't reverse pain or provide definitive closure; rather, it sees Quinn settling into a new normal, where she “rest[s]... assured.” Though the style meanders—and may be challenging to fully grasp for readers on the outside of Quinn's spiritual experiences—she offers self-awareness and a range of therapeutic practices that inspire, reminding readers that, above all, “love is the only pursuit worth creating”—a timely revelation for the world we live in.

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

MEMOIR

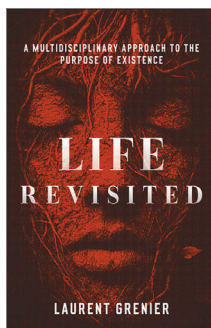
Life and How to Live it: Near Wild Heaven

Chaz Holesworth

300p, e-book, \$2.99, ASIN B0G86SPCVD

Meeting a girl at a Lollapalooza concert at New Jersey's Blockbuster Entertainment Center, kissing her during a half-remembered set from Beck or Pavement, and then getting yelled at by her father, who was chaperoning her? Somehow, this is not the most perfectly 1990s memory in the second volume of Holesworth's account of finding a path out of a miserable home life, Christian schools that rejected him, and his own lack of confidence and numbness of feeling. The story picks up in 1995, with Holesworth, 17, expelled from school and forbidden from seeing the girl he loves, feeling around for direction. With friends—at the mall or the Wildwood boardwalk—Holesworth is a charismatic extrovert, though he often doubts the sincerity of his relationships.

Guiding him, as always, is the music that helped pull him out of the “cult” of evangelical Christianity. Holesworth hears deep significance and wisdom in alternative rock and writes movingly of the songs of Tori Amos and Counting Crows; the most incisive passages blend personal history with cultural reportage, as the post-Nirvana alternative nation grows louder, dumber, and often dismissive of the



Raw, revealing account of figuring life out, guided by 1990s alt-rock.

Great for fans of David Rullo's *Gen X Pittsburgh*, Liz Prato's *Kids in America*.

sensitivity of artists like R.E.M., Holesworth's favorite. Holesworth faces the heartbreaking truth that “not everything considered ‘alt-rock’ means it's artsy or has merit”—in the end it's that stinging disillusionment that is the most '90s thing here.

Holesworth meets some of his musical heroes, including Michael Stipe, who in a tenderly hilarious scene gently but accidentally insults him. The narrative, covering just a couple of years, proves scattershot, with only the most memorable scenes (concerts; sex; drama with cops and R.E.M.-hating “punks”; encounters with a snickering morning zoo host) coming to full dramatic life—readers will wish stories about acid trips peaked more powerfully. Still, this blur of impressions and feelings (so fast, so numb) fits a life that didn't yet have direction, and the emotional trajectory is clear, as Holesworth builds, with fierce candor, to a devastating mental break.

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

POETRY

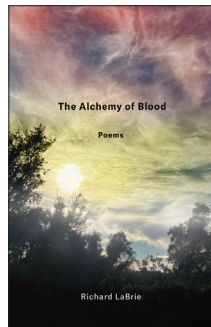
The Alchemy of Blood

Richard LaBrie | Wealtown Press

116p, trade paper, \$19, ISBN 979-8-9930-7460-1

The debut collection from psychologist LaBrie is a magnetic amalgam of punchy, thought-provoking verses that, through a variety of thematic channels, express “our vaporous organic truth.” “Scary and hot, alchemy is fun,” LaBrie writes by way of introduction, setting the tone for his existential pilgrimage that seeks to illuminate human experience as alchemical, as one continuously shifting, reacting, exploding, smoking, melding, and transforming: “Perhaps flesh is not the container // to trap these bones.” Structured by way of “Carl Jung’s separation of the concept of change and growth into the four stages of fiery transformation,” *The Alchemy of Blood* grapples with pressing concerns of the moment, among them psychological trauma and living with despair amid the climate crisis.

LaBrie weaves in charged imagery and commentary about the climate crisis and the ways waste and overconsumption are affecting human life; the Anthropocene, for LaBrie, is powered by another alchemy, that of human and plastic, organic



Jungian exploration of human life and despair amid the climate crisis.

Great for fans of Gary Snyder, Robert Bly.

why the heart is to the left and not centered.” To be imperfect, it seems, is to be alive.

Much of LaBrie’s collection appraises the world with a shadowed lens—“I saw a certain kind of darkness, and it made me expect more of the world. // That is a bad expectation, destined for disappointment.” Amid that despair, LaBrie also offers moments of hope that as humanity becomes increasingly enveloped in overconsumption and greed, love will persevere regardless of life’s conditions, while life will continue on with its jagged, asymmetrical, paradoxical wonder. In that there is hope, as LaBrie suggests toward the end of the collection: “Can’t we just witness, shakily enough to bond, but not become? That is Love.”

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

POETRY

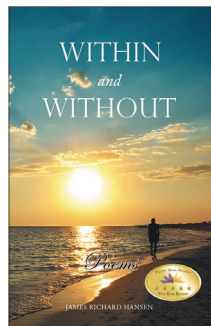
Within and Without

James Richard Hansen | AuthorHouse

62p, trade paper, \$10.99, ISBN 978-1-546-20255-4

This affecting collection from Hansen (author of *Moonlight in My Eyes*) offers a meticulous study of the world as a turning wheel. Hansen is attuned to cycles and seasons, in nature and the self, but also to the precious truths that weather all change, like the pleasures of sharing with a partner a life that is “our endless summer.” The selections here pay particular attention to the cycle of night and day, dark and light. In the morning, “sunrise lies to me in blinding orange. I expect a good day, but discover a serpent under a stone,” while in the depths of the night, “deep in my dreams I fly once again through the endless universe, only to wake in my bed to the sound of rain.”

The cycle is repetitive, but with each turn of the planet and each turn of the page, Hansen unearths new insights on the self, perspective, and questions for the universe, like “What is it like to be rain spattering pavement in the night? What is it like not to be human, not to be me?” As the insights mount, a spiritual philosophy unfolds in the mosaic of Hansen’s verses, as his “spirit soars to the heavens as my



Moving poems offering homage to cycles of nature and seasons of life.

Great for fans of Donald Hall; Mary Oliver’s “You Are Standing at the Edge of the Woods.”

imagination follows my impulse toward the infinite.” The poet’s belief in and dependence upon the divinity of everyday miracles of nature power and unify the verses, imbuing them with both gratitude and a surmounting awe.

In the concluding section of Hansen’s collection, as in his previous works, he includes a series of “Love Poems for Kristin,” which are both passionate and heartfelt, but rather earthbound compared to the more cosmically inspired selections, where “every nuance of tree and flower, breeze and glittering light, shows the way to freedom.” However, key lines sparkle in Hansen’s closing section, like “nothing could stop the power, the inevitable push through the gates of destiny into your arms.” Poetry lovers who look to the sky to experience a whole greater than themselves will find a familiar dwelling in *Within and Without*.

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

COMICS & GRAPHIC NOVELS

The Sacred Band of Thebes

Glenn Rabney & Bart Baker | BookBaby

154p, hardcover, \$59.99,

ISBN 979-8-99851-042-7

Writers Bart Baker and Glenn Rabney, and an art team headed by Ace Continuado and Daniele Afferni, reach back into history to imagine an exciting, propulsive story of the elite fighting force known as the Sacred Band of Thebes, a band of real warriors from the 4th century B.C. known for its tactics, ferocity, and intimately close brotherhood. Sacred Band warriors were paired lovers. The story follows two fictional Sacred Band leaders, Androkles and Kallistos, in their final battle against Philip II of Macedon and his son, the future Alexander the Great. The creators open in media res, in bloody battle depicted with epic sweep and intimate detail, taking full advantage of landscape page layouts. From there, the storytellers flash back to the warriors’ coming of age, revealing the pair’s ascent, starting with their conscription as children, as Ophion, the cruel leader of the Sacred Band, kills Androkles’s mother and makes him a protégé.

Growing up here is a series of brutal challenges: a showdown with the toughest boy in camp; surviving a battle against the Spartans; facing kings and Ophion; and Kallistos falling in love with an apparent enemy who turns out to be a woman, the



Exciting graphic novel of a legendary 4th-century warrior band.

Great for fans of Eric Shanower’s Age of Bronze series, Kieron Gillen and Ryan Kelly’s *Three*.

warrior Elpida. Strong visual storytelling reinforces both the action and the emotional narrative; action is brisk, clear, and impactful, attentive to both tactics and strategy. The creators avoid graphic depiction of the “Sacred” bonds that give the band its name, though it is clear that Ophion, at one point, intends to rape Androkles.

As they secure their own power and agency, the duo eventually leads their own way, enjoying prosperity and bringing in a new generation, with Kallistos fathering several children and Androkles taking on his own protégé, before climactic battles that reveal the terrifying power of Alexander himself. Rabney writes that completing this book took 16 years and multiple art teams. Despite a patchwork quality, strong writing and visceral pagecraft make this work more memorable and resonant.

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