

March 30, 2026

# booklife®

— YOUR GUIDE TO SELF-PUBLISHING —

32 New BookLife Titles Listed • 12 New BookLife Titles Reviewed

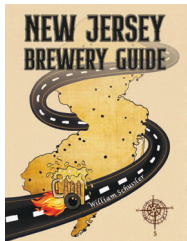
## Indie Spotlight

In this edition of our monthly thematic roundup of BookLife titles, we feature books on food and drink, travel, and world cultures.

Want to see your book featured? Check out the Indie Spotlight calendar at [booklife.com/indiespotlight](http://booklife.com/indiespotlight).

### FOOD & DRINK

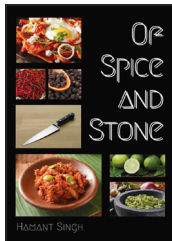
#### New Jersey Brewery Guide



William Schussler  
ASIN B0FL7CHT55

**Author statement:** "I discovered the growing New Jersey brewery scene in 2014. After visiting over a dozen breweries, I searched the internet for a book about area breweries. The only books I found were very outdated and only referenced about 20 or so breweries when over 150 were open. *The New Jersey Brewery Guide* covers them all!"

#### Of Spice and Stone



Hamant Singh  
ASIN B0F7K6F5SQ

**Author statement:** "In this collection, I explore concepts of creation and destruction through food, cooking, and recipes. Also explored are notions of family and inheritance across Asian and Mesoamerican food culture. This collection began with the desire to write

about very different subject matter than what I am usually accustomed to writing about."

### TRAVEL ADVENTURES

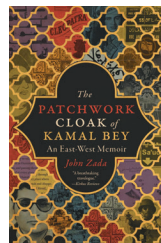
#### My Way on the Camino Portuguese

John Seegers  
ASIN B0FH4Y2GRX



**Author statement:** "I walked the Camino Portuguese from Lisbon, Portugal, to Santiago de Compostela, Spain—about 360 miles. The Camino de Santiago is a pilgrimage walk to visit the remains of Saint James, the apostle. My story is about the trials and successes of my Camino and impressions of Portugal and Spain."

#### The Patchwork Cloak of Kamal Bey: An East-West Memoir



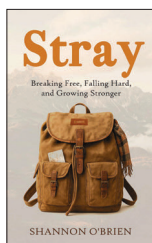
John Zada  
ISBN 978-1-77735-712-2

**Author statement:** "This travelogue has its origins in the desire to reconcile two worlds that I have long simultaneously inhabited: the West where I was born and raised, and the East in whose culture I was raised by my parents. The stories in the book recount my attempts, by way of unusual adventures in colorful corners of the Middle East, to find stronger cultural belonging and a deeper sense of home than what I was used to back in Canada. Learning about the region and the differences between those two worlds ensued."

#### Stray: Breaking Free, Falling Hard and Growing Stronger

Shannon O'Brien  
ASIN B0GC9L7PF2

**Author statement:** "Some journeys aren't just about the places you go; they're about who you become along the way. My book is a travel



memoir spanning five continents, blending vivid explorations of culture, history, and place with the messy art of self-discovery. This story was born from over 15 years of living and working abroad. I kept detailed journals throughout my travels, capturing moments that were confusing, illuminating, and transformative. Those journals became the foundation of this book."

### Troika: Three Generations, Three Days, and a Very American



#### Road Trip

Irena Smith

ASIN B0FD8S4GKR

**Author statement:** "I wrote *Troika* without knowing what kind of book it wanted to be. I followed curiosity instead of outline, and allowed the story to keep surprising me—tonally, structurally, and emotionally. What emerged is part road trip, part

family archaeology, part cultural remix. I think of it as a memoir about movement: across landscapes, across generations, and across the stories we tell ourselves about who we are."

## CHILDREN'S BOOKS

### Diwa of Mount Luntian

Cleodia Martinez, illus. by Paola Santos



ASIN B0GCDK3MF5

**Author statement:** "I wrote *Diwa of Mount Luntian* as the first of a planned five-book series to keep Filipino mythological characters alive for diasporic families through stories they can joyfully share with their communities. Growing up in the Philippines and now raising my child in the U.S., I wanted to introduce

these figures in a way that felt welcoming and relevant, rather than rooted in fear. My background in somatic practices and my experience as a Waldorf parent shape both the story and its pacing, with an emphasis on daily rhythm and sensory awareness."

### When I Grow Up, I Can Be a Dietitian



Suzanne Domel Baxter

ASIN B0F6VTDPDV

**Author statement:** "Registered dietitians are food and nutrition experts who help people eat better. The book features 10 children who are diverse in race/ethnicity, gender, and ability. Each child imagines growing up to become a registered dietitian and work in a different setting such as hospitals,

research, sports nutrition, community nutrition, or the military. Readers learn what dietitians do in different settings. Each child's favorite fresh vegetable paired with a unique dip or topping is highlighted."

# You Know That Book Everyone's Talking About?

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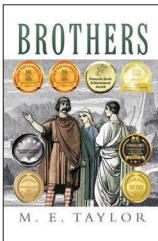


# New Titles from Self-Publishers

Booksellers, publishers, librarians, and agents are encouraged to look at the 32 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

### Brothers

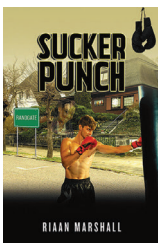


M.E. Taylor. AuthorHouseUK. \$31.65 paper (508p), ISBN 978-1-6655-8528-6; \$4.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-6655-8530-9  
Amazon

This historical novel tells an epic tale of Roman

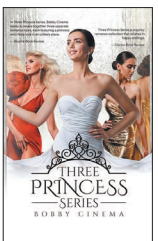
Britain, family conflict, politics, betrayal, treachery, forbidden love, and fighting between the occupying forces and rebellious indigenous Celts.

### Sucker Punch



Riann Marshall. Austin Macauley Publishers. \$16.95 paper (250p), ISBN 978-1-0358-9875-6; \$4.50 e-book, ISBN 978-1-0358-9876-3  
Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Waterstones, WHSmith

*Sucker Punch* is an engrossing true-grit boxer's story. A time capsule of social inequalities and interracial tensions in pre-democracy South Africa—its message of forgiveness ringing on timelessly.

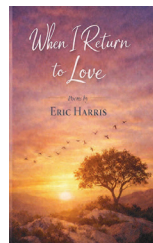


**Three Princess Series**  
Bobby Cinema. Pristine Press and Media. \$11.99 paper (138p), ISBN 978-1-4969-0810-0; \$11.99 (212p), ISBN 978-1-956161-94-6  
Amazon  
Bobby Cinema, a pioneer-

ing Indian-American author with autism, blends his unique perspective and vivid imagination in his latest works.

## Poetry

### When I Return to Love



Eric Harris. Eric Harris. \$16.50 paper (26p), ISBN 979-8-2464-6187-7  
Amazon, Barnes & Noble  
*When I Return to Love* is a collection of poems born from healing, longing, and the quiet courage it takes

to open your heart again.

## Mystery/Thriller

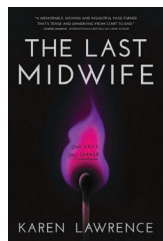
### The Death of the Shadow Merchant



Timothy Bullard. Timothy Bullard. \$21.99 (304p), ISBN 979-8-9933248-8-3; \$15.99 paper (304p), ISBN 979-8-9933248-2-1  
Amazon

This medical thriller delivers both suspense and soul, appealing to fans of action-driven drama grounded in raw human struggle.

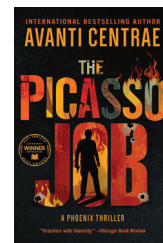
### The Last Midwife: What If Birth Was



**Controlled by the State?**  
Karen Lawrence, illus. by Roderick Brydon. Exodus Books. \$18.90 paper (470p), ISBN 978-1-9193764-0-0; \$4.09 e-book, ASIN B0FT5Y7MZN  
Amazon

Childbirth in England is a state-controlled procedure. Midwives have been outlawed for decades. Only a handful remain, risking everything to help desperate women.

### The Picasso Job: A Phoenix Thriller



Avanti Centrae. Thunder Creek Press. \$29.95 (336p), ISBN 979-8-9863164-7-5; \$7.99 e-book, ISBN 979-8-9863164-5-1  
Amazon, Apple, Barnes & Noble, Google Books  
Bestthrillers.com Book

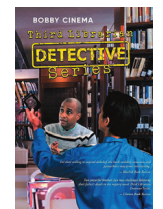
of the Year. Loyalty is lethal in this high-octane crime thriller about a good-hearted man trapped between a menacing inmate and a Machiavellian art thief.

### Sweetwater Reckoning: A Marcus Johnson Thriller



Wayne Ince. Breaking Ranks Books. \$12.99 paper (300p), ISBN 979-8-9943460-2-0  
IngramSpark

In a town where corruption runs deeper than the swamp water, powerful men have buried their secrets alongside their victims.



**Third Librarian Detective Series**  
Bobby Cinema. Pristine Press and Media. \$14.99 paper (212p), ISBN 978-1-964804-70-5  
Amazon

A thrilling journey with two heart-pumping detective stories, where librarians work in a library and use their skills to take down criminal kingpins and their nefarious empires.

### SF/Fantasy/Horror

#### Hysterical: A Novel



Amber Dean. Amber Dean. \$18.89 paper (300p), ISBN 979-8-9940089-1-1; \$8.99 e-book, ASIN B0G4WB7ZKY Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Books-A-Million, Bookshop.org, Walmart, Waterstones

Set against the chaotic pull of 2013 N.Y.C., *Hysterical* follows Jessie Anne, a young woman whose unrequited love curdles into obsession.

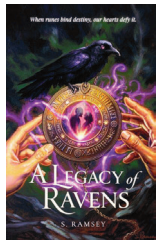
#### Isle of Wrath



Claire Contreras. The Wicked Pen. \$18.99 paper (388p), ISBN 979-8-9904551-9-1; \$5.99 e-book, ISBN 979-8-9945824-0-4

Amazon, Apple Books, Kobo In a cursed realm where memories are traded for safety, a healer's forbidden bargain with a death goddess binds her to a warrior—and a mission to shatter the curse that caged them all.

#### A Legacy of Ravens: Secrets of the Golden Pendant



S. Ramsey, illus. by Akira007. S. Ramsey. \$16.99 paper (290p), ISBN 979-8-3482-8890-7; \$2.99 e-book, ASIN B0FW8SQZ58 Amazon, Barnes & Noble, IngramSpark

Alice Reed's world shatters when a Viking pendant thrusts her into Norse magic and peril. Hunted, she must unlock her lineage or face a fate as old as time.

### Romance/Erotica

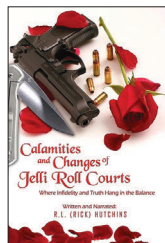
#### Be with Me: A Forbidden Love Mafia Romance (House of Ferraro #1)

Gabrielle Sands. Velvet Pages. \$21.99 paper (408p), ISBN 978-1-962477-06-2 Amazon, Barnes & Noble

A Romeo & Juliet retelling set in a dark mafia world. Forbidden love, arranged

marriage, and a possessive hero collide in this enemies-to-lovers romance.

#### Calamities and Changes of Jelli Role Courts: Where Infidelity and Truth Hang in the Balance

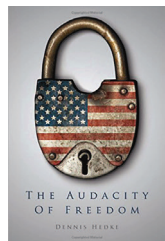


Rensley Hutchins. R.L. Hutchins Books. \$6.99 paper (126p), ISBN 978-1-952302-50-3 Amazon, Barnes & Noble In Jelli Role Courts, Tyrone's affair shatters

two families, forcing him to confront faith, marriage, and the cost of betrayal in a hard search for redemption.

### Nonfiction

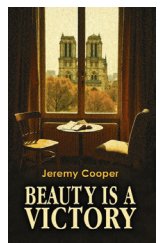
#### The Audacity of Freedom



Dennis Hedke. Tate Pub & Enterprises. \$21.99 paper (264p), ISBN 978-1-61346-408-3 Amazon, Barnes & Noble A defense of constitutional principles criticizing perceived socialist trends

in government and urging a return to America's founding ideals and individual freedoms.

#### Beauty Is a Victory



Jeremy Cooper. Austin Macauley Publishers. \$19.95 paper (134p), ISBN 978-1-0371-1686-5

Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Waterstones, WHSmith A fascinating and intimate exchange of letters over an 18-year period between a young Englishman and an elderly French painter exploring art, philosophy, literature, religion, and love.

#### Climb Greater Heights: How to Accelerate Your Business Growth, Amplify Your Success, and Build a Legacy of Significance

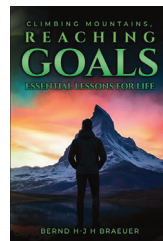


Tony Jeton Selimi. BalboaPress. \$20.99 paper (272p), ISBN 979-8-7652-6137-8; \$0.99 e-book, ISBN 979-8-7652-6135-4 Amazon

A transformative guide inviting entrepreneurs

and leaders to transcend limits, master strategic growth, achieve lasting success, and craft legacies.

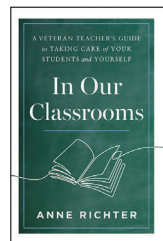
#### Climbing Mountains, Reaching Goals: Essential Lessons for Life



Bernd H.-J. H. Braeuer. Penguin Publishers. \$12.99 paper (50p), ISBN 979-8-89795-240-3; \$4.99 e-book, ISBN 979-8-89795-240-3 Books.by/bernd-braeuer-books-things, Amazon

A life-altering injury to Ben Braeuer's son triggered a journey that dramatically transformed their lives. A powerful, deeply personal guide to healing and self-discovery.

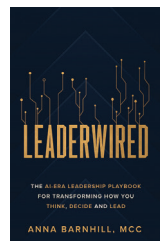
#### In Our Classrooms: A Veteran Teacher's Guide to Taking Care of Your Students and Yourself



Anne Richter. Greenleaf Book Group. \$18.95 paper (188p), ISBN 979-8-88645-391-1; \$9.99 e-book, ISBN 979-8-88645-392-8 Amazon, Barnes & Noble Classroom successes

start with you. This book empowers you to be the very best teacher you can be, so your students can be their very best.

#### Leaderwired: The AI-Era Leadership Playbook for Transforming How You Think, Decide and Lead



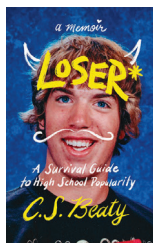
Anna Barnhill. Alpha Abundance Press. \$29.95 (232p), ISBN 979-8-9946493-2-9; \$9.95 e-book, ISBN 979-8-9946493-3-6 Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Books-A-Million,

Bookshop.org

The leadership patterns that built your career are now your biggest obstacle. *Leaderwired* provides a systematic framework for upgrading your internal operating system for the AI era.

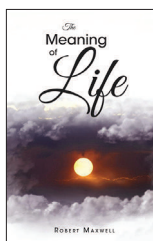
#### Loser\*: A Survival Guide to High School Popularity

C.S. Beaty. Buttery Books. \$23.99 (364p), ISBN 979-8-218-86964-9; \$17.95 paper (362p), ISBN 979-8-2827-6810-7



Amazon, Barnes & Noble, IngramSpark  
C.S. Beaty takes readers on a nostalgic journey into the past in this laugh-out-loud memoir about growing up in small-town Nebraska.

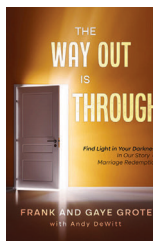
**The Meaning of Life**



Robert Maxwell. Christian Faith Publishing. \$14.95 paper (96p), ISBN 979-8-89526-357-0  
Amazon, Booktopia, Google Books, Waterstones  
Robert Maxwell explores why anything exists and

how we should live, using humor, logic, and plain English to make big questions approachable.

**The Way Out Is Through: Find Light in Your Darkness in Our Story of Marriage Redemption**

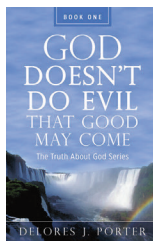


Frank Grote and Gaye Grote, with Andy DeWitt. Walking Memory Lane. \$19.99 paper (186p), ISBN 979-8-9857599-5-2; \$7.99 e-book, ISBN 979-8-9857599-6-9  
Amazon

Walk with Frank and Gaye through their unimaginable journey of healing, restoration, and joy in marriage redemption.

**Religion/Spirituality**

**God Doesn't Do Evil That Good May Come (The Truth About God #1)**

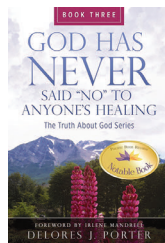


Delores J. Porter. Trilogy Christian Publishing. \$18.99 paper (234p), ISBN 979-8-89333-155-4  
Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Books-A-Million, Target, Walmart

Have you ever asked God, "Why me?" during life's hardships? Backed by Scripture, this book offers a fresh perspective on the tribulations of life—and it's an essential read.

**God Has Never Said No to Anyone's Healing (The Truth About God #3)**

Delores J. Porter. Trilogy Christian Publishing.

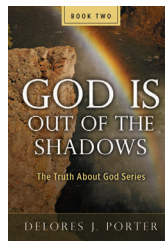


\$14.99 paper (336p), ISBN 979-8-89333-934-5  
Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Books-A-Million, Target, Walmart

Covering the subject of Divine Healing—what faith is and isn't, the

deception that steals God's miracles, eyewitness testimonies, and how to experience God's gifts for yourself.

**God Is out of the Shadows (The Truth About God #2)**

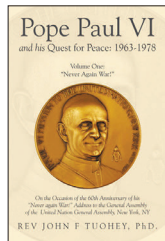


Delores J. Porter. Trilogy Christian Publishing. \$29.99 e-book, ISBN 979-8-89333-586-6

Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Books-A-Million, Target, Walmart

Fables blaming God for every death and event are challenged by the teachings of Jesus, by pure Scriptures sounding like a biography proving the goodness of God.

**Pope Paul VI and His Quest for Peace: 1963-1978: Volume One: Never Again War!**



John F. Tuohey. XlibrisUS. \$16.99 paper (256p), ISBN 979-8-3694-3388-1; \$3.99 e-book, ISBN 979-8-3694-2883-2  
Amazon

This first volume reveals the untold story of a

pope committed to ending war. Discover his historic peace efforts, including his groundbreaking UN address and Vietnam initiatives.

**Children's/YA**

**The Food Lady**



Ann Miles Sievers. Austin Macauley Publishers. \$10.95 paper (32p), ISBN 978-1-0358-5445-5; \$4.50 e-book, ISBN 978-1-0358-5447-9

Amazon, Barnes & Noble,

Waterstones, WHSmith

The food lady, so named by the animals, loves to feed them but does not want her prize roses eaten by Miss Deer. A kind raccoon tells her not to.

**Mystery at the Theme Park**

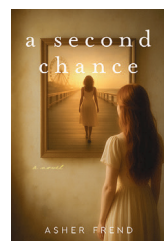


Andy Oakes. Austin Macauley Publishers. \$10.95 paper (130p), ISBN 978-1-5289-2295-1; \$4.50 e-book, ISBN 978-1-5289-6397-8

Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Waterstones, WHSmith

Dazzle World is one of the greatest theme parks on the planet, but it's hiding a terrifying secret. Eleven-year-old Ring Cogart is about to have the adventure of a lifetime!

**A Second Chance**



Asher Frend. Asher Frend. \$16.99 paper (344p), ISBN 979-8-9942559-0-2; \$5.99 e-book, ISBN 979-8-9942559-1-9

IngramSpark  
Mikaila has 22 months to save her best friend

Chara but is derailed by charming Asa, who catches her in a web of control. Follow Chara and her friends as they try to save her.

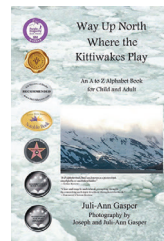
**Spilling the Career Tea: Your Guide to Value, Intent, Credibility, and Confidence**



Jerry D. Goldstein. TeaTime Publishing. \$29.99 (270p), ISBN 979-8-234-00328-7; \$19.99 paper (250p), ISBN 979-8-234-00053-8  
Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Walmart

A practical guide for students and recent graduates, translating employer expectations into learnable skills. Build confidence and career readiness from college to work.

**Way Up North Where the Kittiwakes Play: An A to Z Alphabet Book for Child and Adult**



Juli-Ann Gasper. Mainspring Books. \$14.99 paper (76p), ISBN 978-1-0881-5725-1  
Amazon

This read-aloud alphabet book has over 200 scientific vocabulary terms whose explanations are written and illustrated in a friendly style.



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

## POETRY

⚡ EDITOR'S PICK

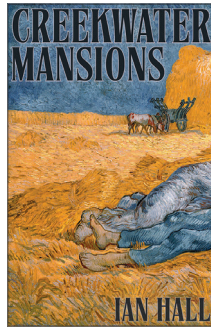
**Creekwater Mansions**

Ian Hall

140p, trade paper, \$20, ISBN 978-1-958-09466-2

It takes guts to stare down the world like Hall does in this debut, full of bile-soaked visuals and effluvia of human excess and loneliness, but Hall, like Bukowski, stubbornly manufactures grace out of the vomit in his taciturn verse. Here, hard-edged realism and surprising beauty meet: "If you could parse past the waxpaper of tonight, you'd see only eyesore: the toothed spearpoint of Camino hoods, trucks tucked in the dust of last decade." Lines like that suggest Hall's skill at scene setting, and *Creekwater Mansions* immerses readers in a Deep South—"south of anywhere you'd rather be"—stripped of charms or pleasures. Instead, the poet reveals a gristled topography marked by addiction, grief, identity, and so much trash.

The trash is the mirror, however, which Hall uses to show America to itself. Captured in visceral detail are roadkill dogs, dilapidated houses, acquaintances



*An Appalachian nocturne, gritty and heartsick, of life persisting in decay.*

**Great for fans of** Ocean Vuong's "The Emperor of Gladness" and Charles Bukowski's "Freedom"

dying of overdoses, and other vignettes of regional misery. Still, while unflinchingly dark, Hall's poems and vignettes are not without jocularly. The horror at times edges toward the bleakly epigrammatic: "I hold myself // but not together," he writes in "Hormonal," while "Every Day Is Like Sunday" boasts the hard-to-forget line, "God always speaks to me like hot grease on a blouse." Hall centers the American condition in this liminal space between despair and comedy, hopelessness and joy, the grotesque and the sublime.

In his bracing, crusty verses, Hall puts a spotlight on the undignified—"blacking out off Goldschlager & praying you barf up a truck payment is our bonded religion."—but in doing so, emphatically stresses the grace and dignity in his people's "rawboned poise" and "judgeless tangle of hick talk." Though residents of "this totaled zip code," they make art out of the lives they live, and Hall makes art in honor of them by way of his "ambition to tell it like it ought to be. To tell it ornery."

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

## SF/FANTASY/HORROR

⚡ EDITOR'S PICK

**Borderlanz: Tales From the Edges**

Douglas Smith | Spiral Path Books

372p, e-book, \$4.99, ISBN 978-1-928-04845-9

Speculative fiction author Smith (*Chimerascope*) delivers a collection that refuses easy categorization. Spanning cosmic fantasy, noir mystery, and psychological horror, these 15 interconnected stories share a preoccupation: what happens to people when systems demand everything. "The Walker of the Shifting Borderland" offers universe-ending stakes, yet what matters most is one man's exhausting devotion to saving someone he loves. The Walker's million failed attempts accumulate into something close to grief—leaving the world suspended "immobile, silent, timeless in the moment."

Power in these stories is never neutral. Order and Chaos, initially presented as divine forces, aren't moral opposites but equally destructive absolutes. Their refusal to tolerate balance becomes a quiet indictment of any ideology that sacrifices individuals for the sake of permanence. This skepticism extends to technology in



*Diverse examinations of the opposing forces that propel humanity.*

**Great for fans of** Fernando A. Flores's *Valleyesque*, Kate Folk's *Out There*.

"Gypsy Biker's Coming Home," where drone soldiers are revealed as repurposed human bodies. Here, Smith dismantles the language of heroism by exposing it as transactional: some pay with their lives so others can claim the benefit.

Balancing scale with intimacy is one of the anthology's strengths, and Smith excels in character work. From the shape-shifting Lilith Hoyle to the time-bending Tumble, he creates protagonists whose internal struggles drive the narratives. Even in fantastical settings like "Dream Flight" or "The Last of a Thing," emotional stakes remain grounded and affecting. Though the collection doesn't offer comfort, what it provides instead is clarity about love, resistance, and balance as ongoing acts. The final story refuses restoration in favor of something harder: transformation, fragile and unfinished. *Borderlanz* is ambitious, exacting work for readers willing to sit with difficult questions about what we owe each other when the world demands too much.

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

## FICTION

**The Red Sea**

Steve Spahn | Sweetwater Slim

318p, mass market, \$18, ISBN 979-8-9877961-1-5

Set in Saudi Arabia in the 1970s, this rowdy, life-as-it's-lived novel follows Henri Bonz and his group of expats as they test a new radar site for Saudi Arabia, a nation buffeted at that time by "the wind of change"—a wind that prompts Spahn to ask, "was it divine or merely the flatulence of the 20th century threatening to shred the fabric of Wahabi life?" That irreverent ambivalence captures the tone of this memoir-like account of misadventures amid an ancient kingdom's embrace of modernity, as the rowdy group, mostly military types, endeavors to enjoy their free time—including late-night parties and sexual escapades—while navigating the Saudis' laws and cultural standards. Central to the story is young Bonz, facing major life changes, hooking up with random women, and enjoying unfiltered, of-the-era chatter about sexual identity, race relations, and other hot-button issues.

The narrative delves into political unrest and acclimating to cultural differences, plus the nuts-and-bolts of contract work among the men brought in "to help the



*Raucous, impolitic novel of expat contractors in 1970s Saudi Arabia.*

**Great for fans of** David Abrams's *Fobbit*, Susan Meissner's *The Last Year of War*.

Royal Saudi Air Force find its wings." The storytelling is as chatty and profane as a friend dishing stories over beers, but also possessed of descriptive and emotional acuity. Spahn acknowledges at the start that none of his characters have undergone "sensitivity training," though the homophobic and hornedog perspectives extend to the narrative voice, which indulges in the same anti-gay slurs kicked around by the crew.

Spahn also evokes with power the mountains and the "stark tableau" of the coastal plain, where "there is no softness to mellow its jagged contours or shimmering vistas," and the curious, often conflicted cultures of the Kingdom and the men working for it. The tension of adjusting in a foreign land creates suspense as flawed characters brave surprising misadventures, and Spahn brings life to each person Bonz meets. The unpredictable nature of the longevity of some of those relationships proves moving. Fans of damn-the-torpedoes military and contractor truth-telling will be entertained by this desert trip.

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

## FICTION

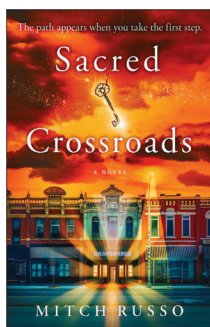
**Sacred Crossroads: A Novel**

Mitch Russo | Melbendium Press

218p, e-book, \$9.99, ISBN 979-8-218-80365-0

In Russo's tale of small-town enchantment, Manning's Hardware store serves as the heart of Cedar Springs, Massachusetts. Since its opening in 1902 by Noble Manning's grandfather, Thomas, Sr., three generations of Manning men have provided the town of Cedar Springs with the tools they require—and a little something extra. In fact, every shop in this quaint town holds its own secrets and touches of magic, from the library with books that give readers the very story they need in the moment to Mrs. Chen's bakery, where bread "taste[s] of a new dawn and possibility." But when Noble's estranged daughter, Sarah, calls him to tell him an old brass key her grandmother entrusted to her is glowing, Noble can sense the tremors of something new.

Sarah's return home sets off a chain of events that will forever change Noble and the mysterious Cedar Springs. Soon, the town's magic draws the attention of federal operatives who seek to suppress it, causing divisions between those who



*Uplifting tale of family, tradition, and small town magic.*

**Great for fans of** Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West*, Aimee Bender's *The Particular Sadness of Lemon Cake*.

professional care," declares the Federal Oversight Commission, "Federal oversight prevents these situations from deteriorating into complete social collapse."

Russo uses the tale of a magical town to explore human nature, the belief in the unseen, and cultural survival. Readers will be uplifted as Cedar Springs unites to restore what is special about their small town—and preserve their peaceful, loving way of life. Central themes touch on the bonds of family, tradition, and the complex journey of finding beauty and magic in the people we meet and spaces we create, and Russo's thread of human compassion and connection running throughout is both nostalgic and moving.

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

## ART &amp; PHOTOGRAPHY

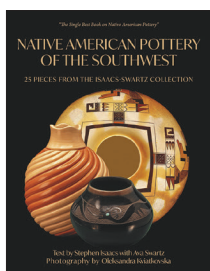
**Native American Pottery of the Southwest: 25 Pieces from the Isaacs-Swartz Collection**

Stephen Isaacs | Ingram Spark

90p, trade paper, \$26.99, ISBN 979-8-295-54662-6

Isaacs, with Ava Swartz, delivers both an exquisite catalogue and compelling argument for viewing Indigenous pottery as a lineage-driven, place-based art form. Rather than leading with art pieces in isolation, the volume builds context through historical overviews, maps, and a guide to Pueblo geography, tracing ancestry through the Anasazi, Mogollon, and Hohokam while framing pottery from these regions as not merely aesthetic objects but historical witnesses to the massacres and forced displacements that carved the history of the American West. The collection is meticulously structured, covering seven pueblos across New Mexico and Arizona, including San Ildefonso, Acoma, Jemez, and the Navajo Nation, with each section opening against cultural framing that transforms the act of passive viewing into informed engagement.

Complemented throughout by Oleksandra Kviatkovska's striking photography—attentive to rich material detail—the book's primary strength lies in its refusal to homogenize Indigenous art. Isaacs insists that meaning is found in specificity:



*Striking tribute to beauty, cultural significance of American Indigenous pottery.*

**Great for fans of** Alfred Dittert and Fred Plog's *Generations in Clay*, Stephen Trimble's *Talking with the Clay*.

attention to each finished piece as the result of risk, ritual, and accumulated ancestral knowledge. This clarity is extended by a concise guide on how to buy pottery and an annotated bibliography, encouraging readers to continue their engagement without overwhelming them.

Isaacs does not aim for exhaustive theoretical critique; he yearns to "convey the sense of wonder, appreciation of craft, and connection" he experiences when encountering Native American pottery. Intellectually grounded yet accessible, this volume serves as an ideal entry point for readers new to Indigenous pottery while still deepening appreciation for more seasoned art enthusiasts.

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

## BUSINESS &amp; PERSONAL FINANCE

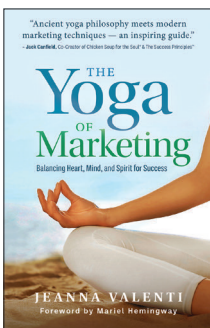
**The Yoga of Marketing: Balancing Heart, Mind, and Spirit for Success**

Jeanna Valenti

158, trade paper, \$16.95, ISBN 978-196-468683-7

Aiming to combine business savvy with wellness, Valenti, with Rachel Sacco, offers readers clear guidance on the power of yoga "to create a meaningful marketing approach that does not induce stress or frustration." Starting with yoga basics—chakras, meditation, breathwork—she outlines a wealth of specific practices, ranging from chakra toning exercises to mindful meditation, before delving into her creative outlook on marketing. She then leads readers through seven marketing centers—each aligned with a chakra center—and suggests practical methods that include creating a potential client database as a business foundation (tied to the root chakra), SWOT analysis of entrepreneurial strategies to tap into the personal power chakra, client communication samples for the throat chakra, and more.

The wealth of hands-on examples, exercises, and illuminating case studies transform Valenti's guide from informative to interactive and experiential. She peppers the writing with helpful illustrations, journaling assignments, and essential tips, using clear, concise prose that simplifies both yoga and marketing



*Concise guide on melding yoga's mindfulness with effective marketing.*

**Great for fans of** Tony Zuanich's *The Power of Empathy in Business Development*, Anil Kariwala's *Business Yoga*.

Process, Physical Evidence—and pragmatic approach to leadership. "The more real, open, and vulnerable I am, the more I can connect with other people and make better decisions," she declares.

Extensive resources fill out the back matter, from a handy timeline detailing marketing techniques for service and product launches to an author-specific resource listing potential book awards and advertising opportunities. Readers will find Valenti's mindfulness tools concise and user-friendly, resulting in a well-written guide with clear directives, easily followed instructions, and relevant case studies that will provide invaluable assistance to yoga and marketing students of all levels.

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

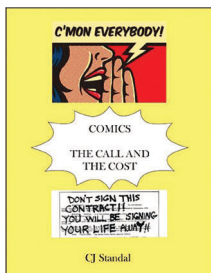
## HISTORY

**Comics: The Call and the Cost**

CJ Standal | CJ Standal Productions  
208p, hardcover, \$49.99, ISBN 979-8-986-90506-8

Standal's collection of essays on comic books and comic strips focuses on the medium's often troubling history with regard to labor, politics, marketing, and ownership. The key essay, "The Cost of Comics," offers a fascinating account of labor exploitation within comic book companies that faced little competitive pressure to offer better pay. Standal frames the chapter within the context of larger labor movements around 2020 and the formation of the first comics union, Comic Book Workers United, in 2021. He also examines earlier flashpoint efforts at organization, stretching back to Bernie Krigstein of EC Comics and the founding of the Society of Comic Book Illustrators in 1951. Before the CBWU, such organizations collapsed, due in part to heavy corporate opposition and a lack of cohesion in their missions.

In other essays, Standal discusses Marge Buell and her creation, Little Lulu, and the business of promotional uses and adaptations into other media; the profits of ownership did not extend to comics greats John Stanley and Irving Tripp, whose work



*Illuminating essays on the history of comics, labor, and licensing.*

**Great for fans of** Casey Brienza and Paddy Johnston's *Cultures of Comics Work*, Paul S. Hirsch's *Pulp Empire*.

Schulz, Davis, and Watterson," contrasts three epochal syndicated cartoonists' navigation of the art and business of the funnies. Standal examines Charles Schulz and Jim Davis's ventures into licensing *Peanuts* and *Garfield*, alongside Bill Watterson's principled refusal to license *Calvin and Hobbes*. Standal's sharp arguments, extensive research, deep passion, and clear-eyed focus on licensing, ownership, commercialization, and artistic integrity all dazzle, though the presentation is often rough as he illuminates complex issues. This will please and even hearten readers fascinated by the economic realities of popular art.

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

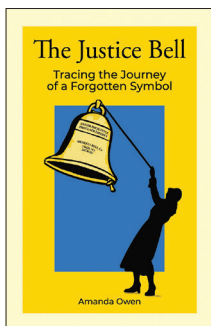
## HISTORY

**The Justice Bell: Tracing the Journey of a Forgotten Symbol**

Amanda Owen | Justice Bell Foundation  
240p, trade paper, \$24.95, ISBN 978-0-9848209-1-7

Owen (*The Power of Receiving*) revives a slice of history with this meticulously researched account of the Justice Bell, a duplicate of the Liberty Bell, commissioned in 1913 to act as a symbol for the Women's Suffrage Movement. Delving into the bell's nearly-forgotten history—it was rediscovered in 1992, at the Washington Memorial Chapel in Pennsylvania—Owen marks a pivotal time in America's past, prior to the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment that granted women the right to vote. Drawing from old newspaper records, she revives the Justice Bell's 1915 county-by-county tour of Pennsylvania, building to that November's general election, and the "army of suffragists" who organized parades, rallies, and speeches to fight for justice and equality.

Written with painstaking attention to detail and carefully reconstructed accounts, *The Justice Bell* serves as both chronicle and tribute, featuring inspiring personal stories of suffragists and advocates, reproduced black and white photo-



*Meticulously researched account of the Justice Bell's historical significance.*

**Great for fans of** Allison K. Lange's *Picturing Political Power*, Elaine Weiss's *The Woman's Hour*.

graphs of notable events, and excerpts from historical records. Owen recounts the bell's journey from town to town—displayed on a car renovated specifically for that trek—alongside fascinating details that anchor the narrative: Pennsylvania's brutal summer heat and torrential down pours that left roads muddy and flooded; mechanical issues that threatened progress; and the use of bright yellow as a suffrage color in ribbons, banners, and flowers punctuating the landscape.

Though Owen leans toward reportorial discourse rather than emotional narration, *The Justice Bell* still offers plenty of stirring moments, whether describing how the bell was designed with its clapper tied off so it could not be rung until the day all women in America were granted the right to vote or analyzing how important symbols can be buried with time—and why they should be resurrected and honored. This is a vital collection of primary sources, celebrated activists, and a movement that "believed justice was worth the fight."

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

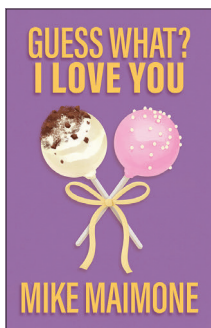
## MEMOIR

**Guess What? I Love You**

Mike Maimone | Fox & Quill  
282p, hardcover, \$29.99, ISBN 979-8993532639

Structuring his memoir of love and loss as a magnificent mixtape, Maimone uses songs as chapter titles and tonal guides, capturing how music taps into emotional reservoirs with overt lyricism and subliminal force. This 54-track playlist elegantly fuses the singer-songwriter's belief in music with the wreckage of grief, chronicling his whirlwind romance with renowned publicist Howard Bragman, who died from leukemia just days after their hospital-room wedding. Maimone charts his odyssey through the "business of death," accepting the comforting rituals of Judaism and rediscovering his voice in the silence left behind by a larger-than-life partner.

With an outsized public persona, Bragman was Hollywood's master fixer and go-to "Gay Guru," who guided figures like Chaz Bono through public coming-out moments and reshaped LGBTQ+ visibility. Maimone remembers a scruffy Midwestern boy who savored Starbucks cake pops in his hospital bed, and their affectionately absurd jokes about being "lummoxen" (lummox meets oxen). Those images collide when Bragman, pre-cancer diagnosis, buys them side-by-side



*Moving memoir of queer love and terminal illness.*

**Great for fans of** Biswamit Dwibedy's *Hundred Greatest Love Songs*, Michael Ausiello's *Spoiler Alert*.

cemetery plots in his hometown of Flint, Michigan. While Bragman saw it as simply planning ahead, Maimone notes that "he'd control his own narrative all the way through his own burial." Maimone provides a soul-baring and unsparing chronicle of their relationship, but his candid memoir also reveals how he shaped a chaotic existence as a musician into a workable life. In Nashville, he balances practicality with creativity and realizes that pursuing the relationship involves an enormous leap of faith. Weaving together the minutiae of memory (including unvarnished emails and the heart-stopping detail of receiving a marriage license and death certificate on the same day), Maimone invites readers into an intimate narrative that blends head-over-heels giddiness with deep devotion. *Guess What? I Love You* captures the intricacies of a queer relationship that's marked by (but not defined by) tragedy.

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

## PICTURE BOOKS

**Princess Penelope's Purse of Preposterous Things, Vol. 1**

Angela C. Santomero

40p, hardcover, \$19.99, ISBN 978-0-829-46036-0

Santomero's playful and encouraging picture book for young children follows Penelope, a friendly cat who learns the true value of kindness. Each day Penelope finds little ways to help her friends—Sil the Frog wants to master a “silly flip,” Pirate Argh needs help with his seafaring sound effects, and Bunny Lala needs to practice her new song. Each time, Penelope is there with a boost of encouragement to help her pals meet their goals. The exception is Dragon, who insists on roaring and breathing fire even though everyone else finds it frightening—though Penelope remains kind to this curmudgeonly creature, gently asking him to stop his incendiary antics.

To everyone's surprise, Dragon does stop, but not without shedding a few disappointed tears on his way out. When Penelope receives a “magical purse of preposterous things” from Mother Nature that will give her whatever she needs to help others, she wonders whether she might discover something special for Dragon



*Funny, lively story of a friendly cat learning the value of kindness.*

**Great for fans of** Irene Verdú's *The Letter*, Kimberly and James Dean's *Pete the Cat's Groovy Guide to Kindness*.

center on Penelope, a perky purple cat wearing a lacy pink tutu. Penelope and her friends grin brightly as they explore their home in Storybook Meadow, a vaguely regal setting dotted with wildflowers and trees of all colors and sizes. The multimodal images layer a variety of colors and textures, with Dragon's belly sparkling with green sequins and Penelope's purse covered with three-dimensional purple flowers. The story ends with Penelope's special purse giving a little wiggle, indicating that more adventures are to come.

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

## YOUNG ADULT

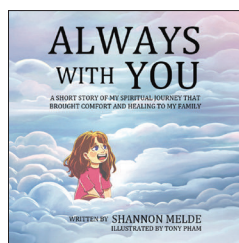
**Always With You: A Short Story of My Spiritual Journey That Brought Comfort and Healing to My Family**

Shannon Melde

44p, trade paper, \$14.99, ISBN 979-8-2955-5040-9

Melde debuts with a heartrending tribute to her daughter, Maddie, who died by suicide at age 14. The story unfolds from Maddie's perspective as she describes the ways she stays connected to her family from Heaven: she visits them in their dreams, offering reassuring hugs; she slips into her room to lie on her bed and look at her treasured belongings; and she watches her brother play video games. Maddie also recounts the memories she made with her family while she was on Earth, returning to their favorite places and recalling the many ways they built their bonds.

Maddie's story of loss, healing, and enduring connection will move readers. She begins by sharing the high points of her life in Heaven, reassuring readers that she is happy and at ease—she even has a special job: guiding newly arrived children. Since Heaven has no “time or space,” Maddie can move about freely, and she spends much of her time comforting her mother, father, and brother in their grief. These moments serve as touching anchors in a story centered on intense family sorrow,



*Heartfelt story of a young girl connecting with her family from Heaven.*

**Great for fans of** Stefan Waidelich's *Home in Heaven*, Crystal Washington's *The Baby That Whispers from Heaven*.

and carefree. Uncredited digital images in an incongruous manga style somewhat cartoonishly depict her rejoicing in her new life, occasionally undercutting the book's emotional gravity. Still, her reminder that she is “closer... than ever before” to her family may offer comfort to those grieving the loss of a loved one.

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

## YOUNG ADULT

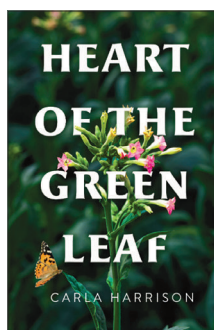
**Heart of the Green Leaf**

Carla Harrison | Palmetto Publishing

318p, e-book, \$16.99, ISBN 979-8-822-98528-5

What Harrison captures so well in her YA debut is the voice of a perceptive teenager who sees more than people expect but is just beginning to understand both the harsh realities and untapped possibilities of her life. During the summer of 1964, 14-year-old Maralee Truett is carrying the weight of the world on her shoulders. She worries so much about her family and the running of their North Carolina tobacco farm that she develops her own shame-inducing compulsion, scratching her hands until they bleed and scar. In clear-eyed first-person narration, Maralee absorbs the vulnerability of everyone and everything.

Maralee views “rows and rows of little green tufts,” and knows that this tobacco is “the family's livelihood, sitting so small and defenseless under the open sky.” She feels completely in tune with the farm, especially the livestock: “I could usually tell if an animal needed something. Just a feeling I got, like an extra energy that I could see and read,” she declares. Sensing that her mother, who bottled up grief after miscarriages, and her father, a World War II veteran with disorienting PTSD episodes, experienced traumas that they can't articulate, Maralee routinely feels obliged to



*1960s Southern teen learns the pitfalls of internalizing pain in this heartfelt debut.*

**Great for fans of** Donna Everhart's *The Moonshiner's Daughter*, Gary D. Schmidt's *The Wednesday Wars*.

help relieve their distress—at the expense of her own identity and growth. Even with these powerful undercurrents, Harrison focuses on day-to-day life and the relationships that open up Maralee's world. Her older brother, set to inherit the farm, would rather join the military and go to Vietnam, much to their father's dismay. Maralee's friendship with Josie Billings, a Black girl whose “positive energy was infectious,” provides a very different vision of the South, and her budding relationship with transfer student Jack Powell offers a sturdy source of comfort. The sharp epiphanies in *Heart of the Green Leaf* transform a sleepy summer and set Harrison's selfless teen on the important path to self-awareness and peace.

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