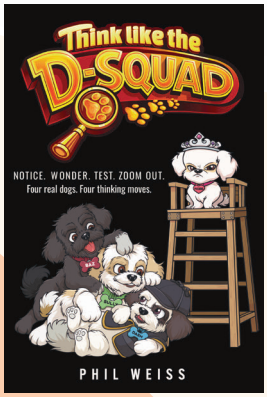
October 26, 2026

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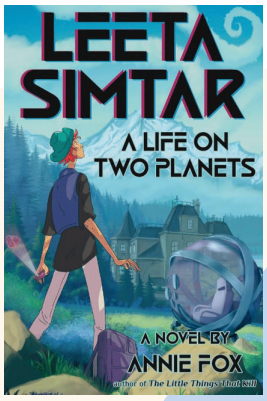
YOUR GUIDE TO SELF-PUBLISHING

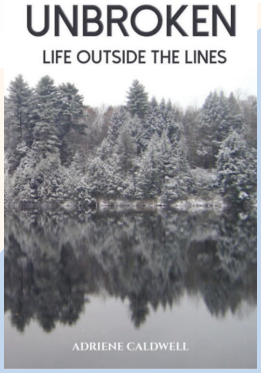
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Best Books 2026 Special

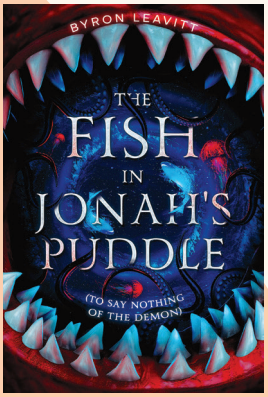


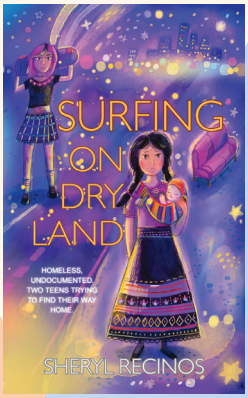




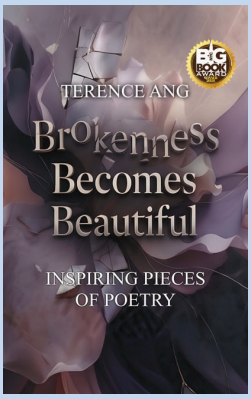




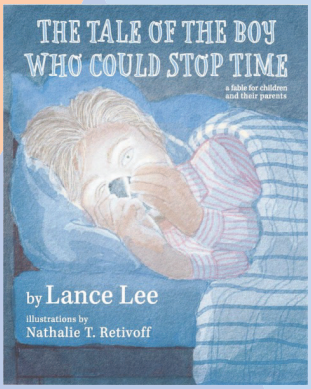


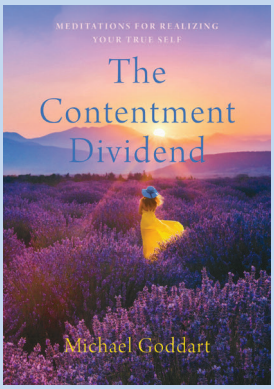












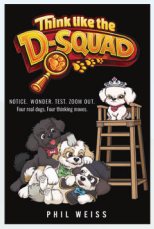
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Best Books 2026 Special

YOUR FALL READING LIST

ABOUT THE FRONT COVER

“ Quotes from BookLife Reviews



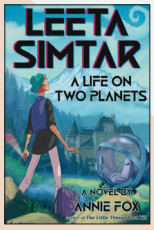
Think Like the D-Squad
by Phil Weiss 979-8996164929

A lively, humorous introduction to critical and creative thinking for ages 8–12.



Doctor Robert
by Bobby Lopez 978-1633378810

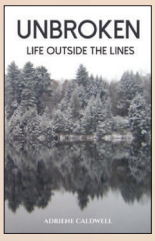
“ Lopez’s prose is diffuse and sardonic, satirizing the culture of psychiatry while constructing a capable psychological thriller.



Leeta Simtar: A Life on Two Planets
by Annie Fox 978-1943649129

EDITOR’S PICK

“ Poignant, coming-of-age sci-fi tackling marginalization and racism.



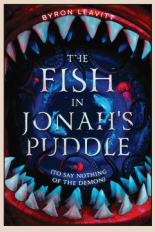
Unbroken: Life Outside the Lines
by Adriene Caldwell 979-8218231927

“ Searing, courageous memoir of rising above generational and systemic trauma.



Color of Fire
by Gina Giordano 979-8986983462

“ Compelling blend of gothic thrills, maritime terror, and psychological dread.



The Fish in Jonah’s Puddle
by Byron Leavitt 978-0990723561

“ Imaginative teen and fantastical creatures cooperate to fight devouring demon.



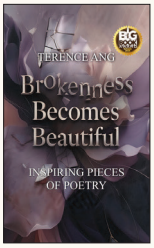
Surfing On Dry Land
by Sheryl Recinos 978-1951542634

Two teen girls struggle with homelessness while being undocumented. How will they each find their way “home”?



Kindred Schemes
by R.K. Harrington 979-8998605512

“ Satisfying blend of romance, intrigue, and character-driven storytelling.



Brokenness Becomes Beautiful: Inspiring Pieces of Poetry
by Terence Ang 979-8188624323

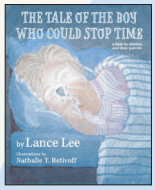
A raw, honest, and deeply human poetry collection.



Accidental Tribes
by C.S. Pascoal 979-8995829812

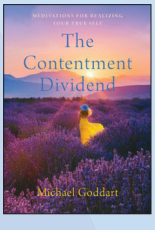
EDITOR’S PICK

“ Oddball teens embrace their individual strengths in a character-focused mystery.



The Tale of the Boy Who Could Stop Time
by Lance Lee 979-8234154453

“ Bullied boy gains strength of character through confidence-building magic.



The Contentment Dividend
by Michael Goddart 978-1960090423

“ A profound guide to unlocking spiritual potential.

OCTOBER 26, 2026

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YOUR GUIDE TO SELF-PUBLISHING

43 New BookLife Titles Listed • 26 New BookLife Titles Reviewed

Best of BookLife

As *Publishers Weekly* celebrates its best books of the year, BookLife honors stellar self-published titles

WHETHER IT'S WIDESPREAD censorship or fears about generative AI, this year has brought its challenges and uncertainties to the book world. The work of supporting self-published authors has also never been more gratifying or, I argue, more important. Week after week, our team has the opportunity to read books deserving of circulation in bookstores and libraries. This year, we've made efforts to get to know more of these authors through video interviews and other features that provide opportunities to share what inspires their writing. These authors have taught us more about the challenges of self-publishing in today's rapidly changing landscape. Perhaps most importantly, they've taught us about perseverance and passion, and how telling stories—even without the promise of success or notoriety—is a cornerstone of our humanity. In our Best Books feature, we look back at some of our favorite titles submitted for BookLife and *PW* review, as well as at the winners and contenders for our annual BookLife Prize Fiction and Nonfiction Contests.



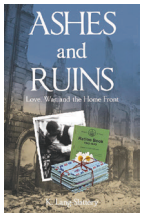
Alan Scherstuhl, BookLife reviews editor (l.), and Matia Query, BookLife editor

–Matia Query, editor of BookLife

BookLife Titles Reviewed in PW in 2026

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

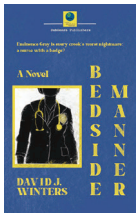
Ashes and Ruins



K. Lang-Slattery

"Lang-Slattery delivers an authentic and affecting tale of a Jewish woman forced to leave her home in Germany during WWII."

Bedside Manner



David J. Winters

"Winters launches a promising series centered on nurse-turned-homicide investigator Eminence Gray."

Bogg Island Blues



Michael Glennon

"Glennon's clever second mystery featuring Frank Rotten finds the Pittsburgh private eye helping out an old flame."

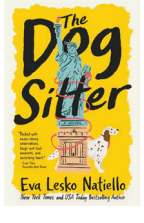
Dead Flowers



J.M. Petrick

"Petrick's accomplished debut follows a former child star as he searches for his missing brother."

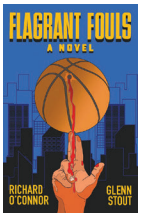
The Dog Sitter



Eva Lesko Natiello

"Natiello serves up a sharp and humorous tale of an aimless woman's search for purpose."

Flagrant Fouls



Richard O'Connor and Glenn Stout

"Journalist O'Connor and biographer Stout team up for a gritty, topical sports noir featuring wisecracking New York City PI Elgin O'Brien."

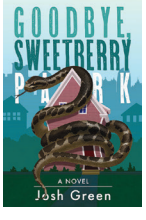
Girl Unreserved



Tashia Hart

"A Native American girl discovers her sexuality and reels from sexual abuse in this frank outing from Hart."

Goodbye, Sweetberry Park



Josh Green

"Green delivers an acerbic and zany story of gentrification in 2018 Atlanta."

I Trust Her Completely



Christine Henneberg

"Henneberg, a physician and author of the memoir *Boundless,* explores in her insightful debut novel the complex friendship between two San Francisco women as they navigate motherhood."

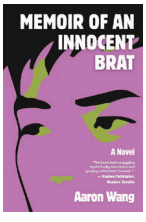
The Line Between Us



Syreeta Harvey-Pasley

"Harvey-Pasley explores the tensions of being a Black employee of a racist police department in her assured debut."

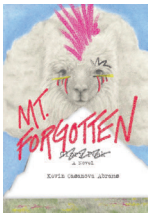
Memoir of an Innocent Brat



Aaron Wang

"In this cheeky satirical thriller from Wang, gay Brooklynite Pete Chan's Charli XCX-informed transformation ends with the death of his ex-boyfriend."

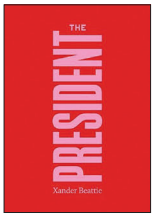
Mt. Forgotten



Kevin Abrams

"Glory Peak, a popular family-run ski resort in the Pacific Northwest, becomes a battleground for competing interests in Abrams's exciting debut."

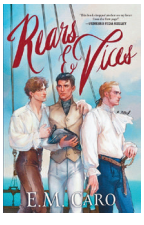
The President



Xander Beattie

"An author's daring short story exposes him and his publishers to death threats in this engrossing debut set in 2012 South Africa."

Rears & Vices



E.M. Caro

"Caro debuts with an entertaining polyamorous pirate romance set in 1816. As naughty as it is nautical, this is a winner."

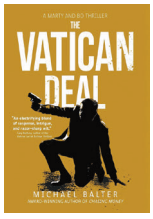
A Series of Rooms



A.J. Barlowe

"Barlowe's promising debut kicks off with a meet-awkward between two young gay men in a bar bathroom."

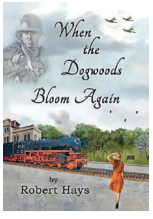
The Vatican Deal: A Marty & Bo Thriller



Michael Balter

"Balter's blistering sequel to Chasing Money sends bumbling businessmen Marty Schott and Bo Bishop on a high-octane adventure involving art forgery and mafia intrigue."

When the Dogwoods Bloom Again



Robert Hays

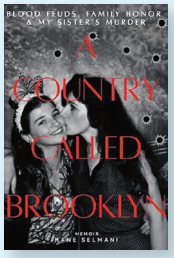
"An Illinois couple's bond is tested by WWII in this emotional novel from Hays."

Starred PW BookLife Reviews

★ A Country Called Brooklyn: A Memoir

Hane Selmani

"Kosovo-born, Brooklyn-raised writer Selmani debuts with a powerful account of female submission and family secrets that centers on the murder of her sister, Jariyeh, in 1979."



★ Pearly Gates

Bonnie Solomon

"Solomon debuts with a zippy fantasy rom-com following Pearly Gates, who is probably the afterlife's most fabulous drag queen—until her soulmate leaves her, fed up with her inability to change and grow, even after multiple reincarnations."



Q&A SPONSORED

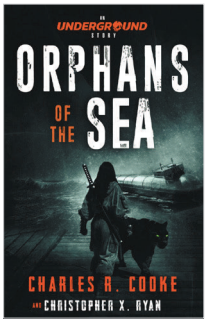
BookLife Talks with Charles R. Cooke

Many authors speak about living with their characters before publishing their stories. Cooke has not only lived with his characters for decades, but he's fully planned out their series and universe, revising books before the first one, *Orphans of the Sea*, even published. We spoke to him about that process and his plans for the future.



Can you talk a little about the work that's gone into creating your series?

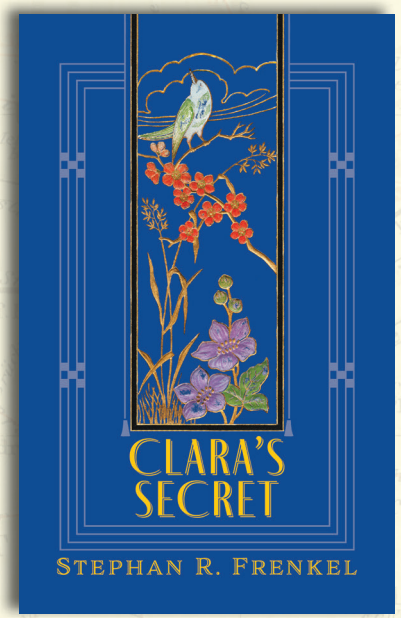
The thirteen *Underground* characters have been living inside the ol' noggin for over 20 years. I have rough versions on floppy disks, college stories (all with A's, I might add), a terrible screenplay, and plenty of coffee-stained napkins. A developmental editor I admired helped change the direction of the series, although probably not how he intended. I sent him an early anthology and thought it was a masterpiece, with the confidence only Ralphie from *A Christmas Story* could understand. He was considerably less impressed. Eventually I admitted that being an ideas man didn't mean I had every skill needed to bring these stories to life. Enter Christopher X. Ryan. We developed individual origin novels and spent seven years drafting 20 books before deciding it was time to introduce our baby to the world.



What was it like finally releasing the first book, *Orphans of the Sea*?

Absolutely terrifying! Sook Joo was the eighth or ninth of the 13 characters I created, but she came out kicking, and demanded that she lead the charge. Releasing a novel was thrilling and nauseating at the same time. Suddenly proofreading becomes the scariest thing on the planet. You ride this surge of adrenaline and anxiety until the book releases, and then there's silence. Did it upload? Is anyone reading it? Are they going to ban it on the first day? After living with these characters privately for so long, letting strangers meet them is strange. Every reader who comes Underground with us helps bring a 20-year dream to life.

For more, visit **booklife.com/cooke**



"Rich personal and cultural history of a young woman in Berlin's Belle Epoque."
—*Publishers Weekly/BookLife Reviews*

booklife EDITOR'S PICK

"A tender, personality-centered biography of golden age Berlin."
—*Kirkus Reviews*

"A wonderfully composed portrayal that could be considered narrative Art Nouveau."
—*BookTrib*

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Best BookLife Reviews of 2026

BookLife reviews dozens of independent books each month, in all categories. Here are 10 of 2026's very best. All quotes are taken from their BookLife reviews.

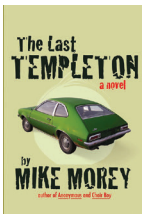
FICTION

Drama Drama Drama



Gerilyn Bass Greenberg
"This is a multigenerational novel of women navigating journeys of self-discovery while supporting each other through life's milestones."

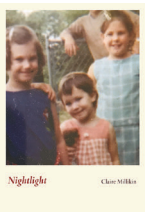
The Last Templeton



Mike Morey
"Touching ode to family love, by a riveting–and singular–narrator."

POETRY

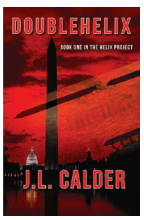
Nightlight



Claire Millikin
"Gorgeous, heartsick poetry examining Southern and American legacies."

MYSTERIES & THRILLERS

DoubleHelix: Book One in the Helix Project



J.L. Calder
"A gritty thriller blending political scheming, love, and dark family secrets."

SF, FANTASY & HORROR

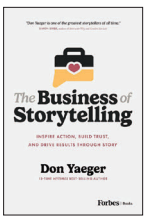
Holiday Spirit



John DeGuire
"The classic monsters fight for justice over bigotry in DeGuire's macabre yet humorous gothic fantasy, the first in a spirited series."

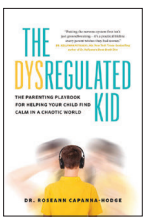
NONFICTION

The Business of Storytelling: Inspire Action, Build Trust, and Drive Results Through Story



Don Yaeger
"A succinct, polished guide for honing the storytelling craft for professionals in nearly every career path."

The Dysregulated Kid: The Parenting Playbook for Helping Your Child Find Calm in a Chaotic World



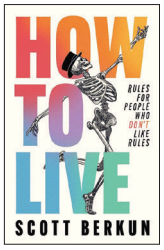
Roseann Capanna-Hodge
"A polished, practical guide to help parents reset their children's dysregulated nervous systems."

A Force for Good: Gisela Warburg Wyzanski



Anita Wyzanski Robboy
"Extraordinary account of one woman's courage and compassion amid the Holocaust."

How to Live: Rules for People Who Don't Like Rules



Scott Berkun
"Hard-won rules to live by, written in smart, candid prose."

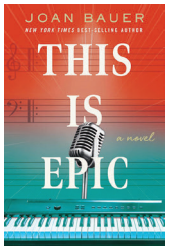
CHILDREN'S & YA

Lou Lou's Pet Dragon Goes to School



Brenden Bott
"Darling debut with a delightful tale of a young girl's unusually special pet."

This Is Epic

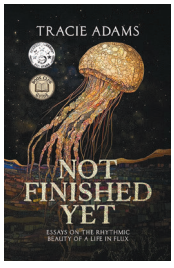


Joan Bauer
"A stirring novel of music, family, healing, and long-awaited belonging."

BookLife Prize Nonfiction Finalists

Here are the standouts from last year's nonfiction prize, including the grand prize winner. Quotes are drawn from their critics' reports.

Not Finished Yet
Tracie Adams
"*Not Finished Yet* is a polished memoir touching on themes that feel universal: spiritual reckonings; the loss of childhood innocence; painful betrayals; our intimate connection to nature; the delicate strains of love."



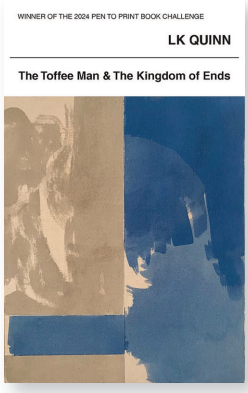
Unshrink Yourself: 12 Mini-Shifts to Ditch Self-Doubt and Own Your Life
Thanh Nguyen
"This accessible book inspires readers to rethink what it means to be confident. Rather than being intrinsic, she argues, confidence is a mindset that requires slow and steady building."



Stay With Me, I Want to Be Alone
Keith Wakefield
"Wakefield's experience as a hospital chaplain is invaluable, allowing readers an intimate glimpse into some of life's most painful moments."

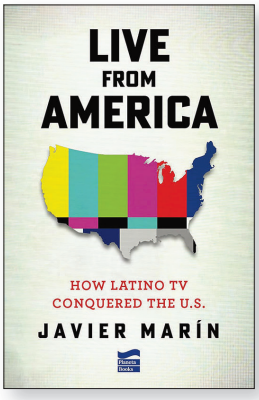


BookLife Prize Fiction Winner



The Toffee Man & the Kingdom of Ends
Linda Quinn
This novel was the winner of the 2025 BookLife Fiction Prize, announced in late December of last year.
"This heart-wrenching narrative follows a young girl through a life marked by danger and instability, with adults who can't be trusted and a world too interested in its own longings to afford her a place of safety."

BookLife Prize Nonfiction Winner



Live from America: How Latino T.V. Conquered the U.S.
Javier Marín
"Few titles offer such a remarkable deep-dive into the formation of Spanish-language media. Far from being purely a business book, Live from America offers an eye-opening sociological study."

BookLife Prize Fiction Semifinalists

Stay tuned for the announcement of the finalists on November 19, followed by the announcement of the winner on December 18.

FICTION

Griftopia
Suzy Vitello



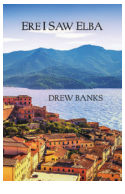
Untertauchen
Arthur M. James



Submit
Natasha Lewin



Ere I Saw Elba
Drew Banks

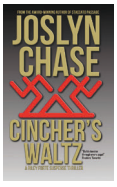


First Rule of Fire
Rebecca Gopoian



MYSTERIES & THRILLERS

Cincher's Waltz
Joslyn Chase



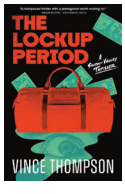
Cradle to Grave
Angela Lacy McClintock



Death Sentence
Rob Kaufman



Lockup Period
Vince Thompson



To Know Good and Evil
Daniel V. Meier Jr.

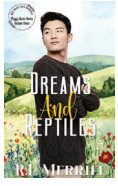


ROMANCE & EROTICA

Capture My Flag
K.L. Parsons



Dreams and Reptiles
R.L. Merrill



On the Way Down
Jennifer Farwell



She Tamed the Lady
Judith Lynne



The Warm Planet
Evelyn M. Exley



SF, FANTASY & HORROR

Avis Afterward
J.B. Cline



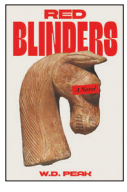
The Great Awakening
Blake Anderson



Phoenix Effect Part 2: Regeneration
Margaret M. MacDonald



Red Blinders
W.D. Peak



A Spindle of Iron
Barbara Robinson



YA & MIDDLE GRADE

Goon
Glenn Erick Miller



Love and Other Simulations
Michael F. Stewart



Niya Everlight
N.D. Jones



Muppit Boy and the Allergies of Evil
Michael J. Bowler



Never Hide from the Devil
N.T. McQueen



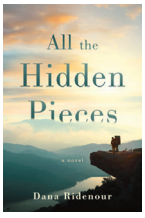
PW SELECT

New Titles from Self-Publishers

Booksellers, publishers, librarians, and agents are encouraged to look at the 43 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

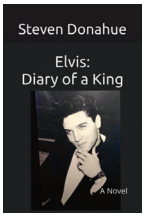
All the Hidden Pieces



Dana Ridenour. Koehler Books. $31.95 (340p), ISBN 979-8-89747-206-2; $23.95 paper, ISBN 979-8-89747-204-8
Amazon, Barnes & Noble

After tragedy shatters her life, Julia and three lifelong friends hike the Appalachian Trail, discovering forgiveness and the healing power of friendship.

Elvis: Diary of a King



Steven Donahue. Steven Donahue. $19.99 paper (222p), ISBN 979-8-1891-7745-3; $5.99 e-book, ASIN B0H3PJY74G
Amazon

The life of Elvis Presley after faking his death in 1977.

Killer Kowalski Takes the Mat



Don Eron. Contingency Street Press. $17.99 paper (380p), ISBN 978-1-958015-08-7; $2.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-958015-09-4
Amazon, Bookshop.org, Hoopla, IngramSpark

All Biggie Bluestone wants is to keep the world at arm's length until the state wrestling championship in February, when he'll fulfill his lifelong dream. But the world has other ideas.

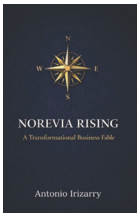
Lipstick, Cocaine & Revenge: They Wanted Her Body. She Wanted the Empire



Derek Chatman. Southside Kings Publishing. $29.99 paper (700p), ISBN 979-8-2562-7386-6; $0.99 e-book, ASIN B0HDKJRJP6
Amazon

After her uncle's murder, Geneva becomes Rouge, turning beauty, secrets, and grief into power as she battles for control of the Bronx cocaine trade and revenge becomes her empire.

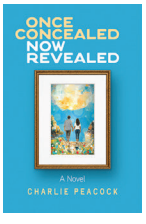
Norevia Rising: A Transformational Business Fable



Antonio E. Irizarry Vélez. Dorrance Publishing. $17.99 paper (206p), ISBN 979-8-90297-204-4; $12.99 e-book, ISBN 979-8-90297-703-2
Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Dorrance Bookstore

Norevia Rising is a transformational business fable about what happens when performance problems aren't solved by better tools but by better leadership.

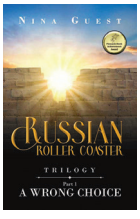
Once Concealed Now Revealed



Charlie Peacock. It's Time To Art. $32.99 (354p), ISBN 979-8-9970712-0-2; $11.99 e-book, ISBN 979-8-9970712-2-6
Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Books-A-Million, Bookshop.org

A physical attack exposes the Taylor family's buried trauma and unspeakables. Mystery, psychological suspense, and family saga collide in a reckoning with the whole, unguarded truth.

Russian Roller Coaster Trilogy: Part 1 - A Wrong Choice



Nina Guest. Guest Publishing. $14.99 paper (196p), ISBN 979-8-9972693-0-2
Amazon, IngramSpark

At 14, Margo's first love collides with betrayal, forcing her to survive a dangerous web of secrets in Soviet Russia.

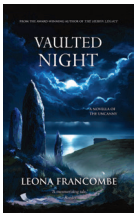
The Seer



Raquel Y. Levitt. Acorn Publishing. $14.99 paper (338p), ISBN 979-8-88528-115-7; $5.99 e-book, ASIN B0DV92QT2J
Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Bookshop.org

A young clairvoyant risks everything to redeem a past mistake that cost a woman her life, and her sister her freedom.

Vaulted Night: A Novella of the Uncanny



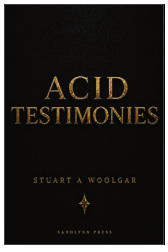
Leona Francombe. Merle Books Brussels. $16.99 paper (156p), ISBN 978-1-7371600-5-2; $8.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-7371600-4-5
Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Kobo, Walmart

Legendary French filmmaker Yann St.-Clair persuades an obscure composer to go to

remote Brittany to write a score, but a wartime mystery draws her into St.-Clair's haunted past.

Poetry

Acid Testimonies



Stuart A. Woolgar. Sadolynn Press. $14.99 paper (128p), ISBN 978-1-0667724-1-4; $6.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-0667724-2-1
Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Books-A-Million, Kobo

A corrosive poetry collection exploring power, technology, desire, history, and human nature, stripping away civilization's surfaces to expose the patterns beneath.

Consorting the Muse in Her Upstairs Office



Ralph Bowers. WorkBook Press. $14.99 paper (122p), ISBN 978-1-965732-64-9; $4.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-961845-05-3
Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Booktopia

A diverse collection of poems exploring spirituality, mythology, psychology, philosophy, romance, humor, and love lost.

Mystery/Thriller

Control!: Control the Climate. Control the World. A Global Suspense Thriller.



Raj Agrawal. IJCA Press. $15.99 paper (416p), ISBN 978-1-7340810-3-9; $6.99 e-book, ASIN B0HGQMYDHM
Amazon

A disaster prevention technology fails during a presidential showcase, triggering a hunt for the saboteur and a battle to protect the nation from chaos.

SF/Fantasy/Horror

Haunting Skies



Christian Kang Bachini, illus. by Israel Rivera. CKB Book Group. $18.99 paper (398p), ISBN 979-12-82601-00-9; $4.99 e-book, ISBN 979-12-82601-03-0
Amazon, Barnes & Noble, IngramSpark

Earth has fallen to alien invaders. A rogue exorcist plans to take a girl possessed by Satan aboard their mothership and strike a deal with the Devil to unleash Hell against the aliens.

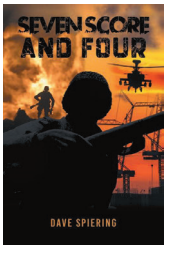
Raptoraem (Raptoraem Saga #1)



Sibley K. Sibley K. $9.99 e-book, ASIN B0FS2G1R6N
Amazon

Crime lord Erik Mordiger fights to turn a storm-walled city into a sovereign nation while enemies close in and a dangerous girl changes everything.

Seven Score and Four



Dave Spiering. Quantum Discovery. $14.99 paper (270p), ISBN 978-1-963254-10-5
Amazon, Barnes & Noble

Modernists have rewritten history to fit their own worldview. *Seven Score and Four* follows time-traveling adventurers who venture into the past to restore truth to the historical record.

Space Junker

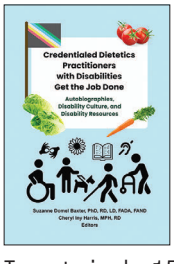


David Raine. Last Flight Productions. $19.99 paper (718p), ISBN 979-8-9981928-1-4
Amazon

A drought-stricken farm, a forgotten spacecraft, and an aging robot named Bob pull Kyte Jacobs into a secret that could reshape humanity's future.

Nonfiction

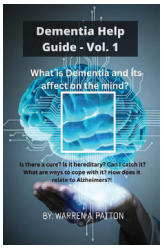
Credentialed Dietetics Practitioners with Disabilities Get the Job Done



Suzanne Domel Baxter and Cheryl Iny Harris. Suzanne Domel Baxter. $29.99 (276p), ISBN 979-8-9912993-5-0; $19.99 audio, ASIN B0FDL9FPR1
SDBBooksLLLC.com, Amazon, Chirp, Libro.fm

True stories by 15 disabled dietetics practitioners about education, credentialing exams, employment, accommodations, and disability culture, with guidance for entering the profession.

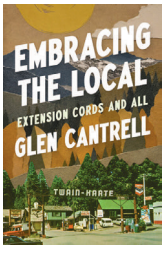
Dementia Help Guide, Vol. 1: What Is Dementia and Its Affect on the Mind?



Warren A. Patton. Ewings Publishing. $18.99 (56p), ISBN 979-8-89419-420-2; $8.99 paper, ISBN 979-8-89419-419-6
Amazon, Barnes & Noble

This book is designed to serve as a guide, an easy read, written not from a doctor but from the perspective of a certain citizen with loved ones who have battled the illness!

Embracing the Local: Extension Cords and All



Glen Cantrell, illus. by Ryan Richard. More Taste Than Fortune Books. $18.99 paper (154p), ISBN 979-8-9969010-0-5; $8.99 e-book, ISBN 979-8-9969010-5-0
Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Bookshop.org, Google Books

He didn't set out to become a civic leader, he just wanted a glass of wine.

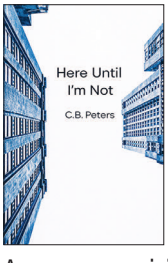
The Gladiators: Building Memoirs About Invisibility, Alienation, and Resilience



Simmonne Dyson-Holland. Balboa Press. $17.99 paper (258p), ISBN 979-8-7652-0788-8; $3.99 e-book, ISBN 979-8-7652-0787-1
Balboapress.com, Amazon

Lived experiences of disability and immigration are explored at the same time as readers are invited to draft, write, and share their diverse experiences within these pages too.

Here Until I'm Not: A Memoir of a Culinary Life Journey

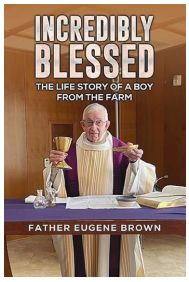


C.B. Peters. C.B. Peters. $19.99 paper (380p), ISBN 979-8-1973-8283-2; $5.99 e-book, ASIN B0H2BZ1L2V
Amazon, Barnes & Noble, IngramSpark

An uncompromisingly honest and vulnera-

ble memoir shaped by three decades in professional kitchens. The kitchens are the backdrop. Life is the story.

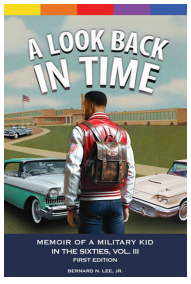
Incredibly Blessed



Father Eugene Brown. Austin Macauley Publishers. $30.95 paper (528p), ISBN 979-8-89543-302-7
Amazon, Barnes & Noble

After a fall, 88-year-old priest Father Brown reflects on his life, inspiring *Incredibly Blessed*: a photo-rich memoir of his 64-year ministry, seminarian roots, and world travels.

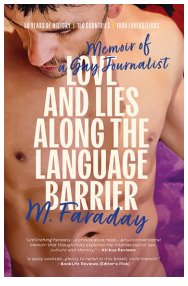
A Look Back in Time, Volume III: Memoir of a Military Kid in the Sixties



Bernard N. Lee, Jr., illus. by Dwayne Johnson. Emerald Books. $14.95 paper (280p), ISBN 978-1-967628-14-8
Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Kobo

Bernard is a military kid attending Lawton High School in Oklahoma. He has promised his dad to attend college and pursue a career as an Army officer. Will he be the first in his family?

Love and Lies along the Language Barrier: Memoir of a Gay Journalist

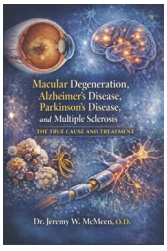


M. Faraday. Proteus. $14.95 paper (242p), ISBN 979-8-234-10119-8; $4.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-83556-690-9
Amazon

Spans 50 years of travel/romantic affairs with a cast of lovers/liars, slave traders, porn stars, and a would-be murderer at pivotal times/places in world/LGBTQ history.

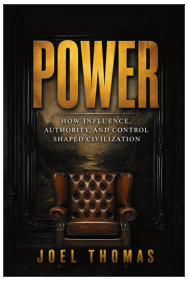
Macular Degeneration, Alzheimer's Disease, Parkinson's Disease, and Multiple Sclerosis: The True Cause and Treatment

Jeremy W. McMeen. Dorrance Publishing. $24.99 (60p), ISBN 979-8-90297-138-2; $19.99 e-book, ISBN 979-8-90297-638-7
Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Dorrance Bookstore



In this groundbreaking work, Dr. McMeen challenges conventional medical consensus on degenerative diseases as distinct, unrelated entities and proposes that they may share the same biological root.

Power: How Influence, Authority, and Control Shaped Civilization



Joel Thomas. Nomical Books. $19.99 paper (262p), ISBN 978-1-972041-00-0; $14.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-972041-09-3
Amazon, Apple Books, Barnes & Noble, Books-A-Million, Google Play

A structural analysis of power across history: sacred, military, economic, institutional. It reveals the patterns that persist no matter who holds power, or how.

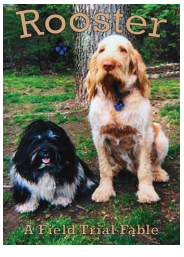
Rebellion to Tyrants Is Obedience to God: Ending the Danger of the Corporate AI Surveillance Machine



Laurie Thomas Vass. The Great American Business & Economics Press. $24.99 paper (300p), ISBN 979-8-234-18112-1
Gabbypress.com

Our book is about the single greatest threat, in history, to the concept of individual natural rights resulting from the deployment of corporate AI.

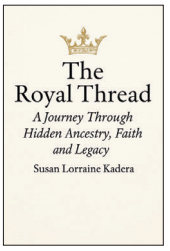
Rooster: A Field Trail Fable



Edward Pontacoloni. Edward Pontacoloni. $11.99 paper (138p), ISBN 978-1-4835-6774-7; $2.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-4835-7046-4
Amazon, Barnes & Noble, BookBaby

In a fable of hopes and dreams touched by Irish magic, an old trainer, two young dreamers, and mongrel underdog chase a championship against a ruthless rival dog and the men behind him.

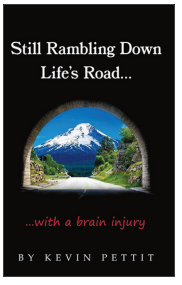
The Royal Thread



Susan Lorraine Kadera. Susan Lorraine Kadera. $6.99 e-book, ASIN B0FHY3QCZ4
Amazon

A memoir of royal lineage, Native ancestry, and hidden family truths. *The Royal Thread* weaves faith, identity, and resilience into a single ancestral tapestry.

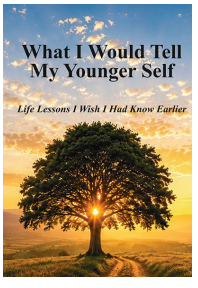
Still Rambling Down Life's Road



Kevin Pettit. Kevin Pettit. $19.99 (172p), ISBN 979-8-234-11313-9; $12.99 paper (172p), ISBN 979-8-234-11315-3
Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Goodreads

An honest look at life after traumatic brain injury, sharing the challenges, humor, resilience, and life lessons found through recovery, disability, and change.

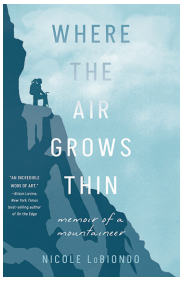
What I Would Tell My Younger Self: Life Lessons I Wish I Had Known Earlier



Dewayne Sims. Everstead Press. $28.99 (202p), ISBN 979-8-9968896-0-0; $18.99 paper, ISBN 979-8-9968896-1-7
EversteadPressBooks.com, Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Books-A-Million

Life lessons drawn from a lifetime of experience, offering thoughtful perspectives on choices, relationships, responsibility, success, and living a more meaningful life.

Where the Air Grows Thin: Memoir of a Mountaineer



Nicole LoBiondo. She Writes Press. $18.99 paper (288p), ISBN 979-8-89636-170-1; $23.86 audio, ASIN B0HJG1NQ2S
Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Books-A-Million, Bookshop.org, Target, Walmart

While caring for her mother through ALS,

Nicole LoBiondo sets out to climb the Seven Summits, discovering that the hardest ascent is the journey through love, loss, and letting go.

Children's/YA

Bella Santini in the Land of Everlasting Change: The Bella Santini Chronicles



Angela Legh, illus. by Whitney Nixon. Balboa Press. $16.99 paper (190p), ISBN 979-8-7652-6311-2; $3.99 e-book, ISBN 979-8-7652-6309-9 Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Walmart

Sensitive and misunderstood, Bella Santini follows glowing lights into a magical realm, where betrayal and false accusations test her courage, self-trust, and sense of belonging.

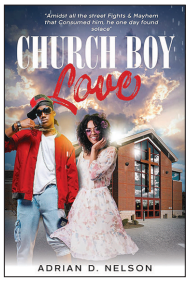
Chewie & Solo: The Great Biscuit Bonanza



Karen Bird. Legacy & Laughter Publishing. $20.99 paper (40p), ISBN 978-1-7648848-0-8; $4.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-7648848-1-5 Bookshop.org, IngramSpark, Kobo

Chewie and Solo embark on a hilarious, biscuit-filled adventure where mischief, teamwork, and two lovable bulldogs prove that every crumb can lead to an adventure!

Church Boy Love



Adrian Nelson. Adrian D. Nelson. $16.99 paper (502p), ISBN 979-8-3493-6848-6 Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Kobo

1980s Jamaica: a devout teen loses his faith amid tragedy, finds love and gang life, and faces a turbulent journey of redemption, violence, and spiritual reckoning.

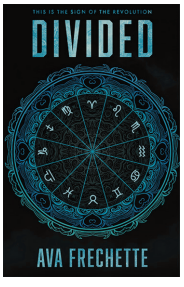
Democracy Starts with Us: How Kids Shape America's Future



Abraham Aondoana. Chesapeake Press. $21.99 (150p), ISBN 979-8-9992864-7-5; $5.99 e-book, ISBN 979-8-9992864-8-2 Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Bookshop.org, IngramSpark

Your voice matters! *Democracy Starts with Us* empowers kids to understand American democracy and take action. Transforms civics from abstract concepts to daily practice.

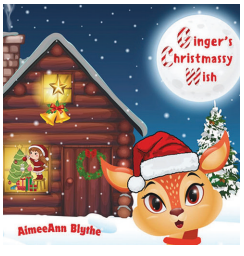
Divided



Ava Frechette. Ava Frechette. $6.39 paper (386p), ISBN 979-8-9906448-0-9; $9.99 e-book, ASIN B0DQVBBBHJ Amazon

With the country split into sectors, each zodiac sign is Divided. In order to find answers, Diana, a Taurus, chooses to reunite with Peter, a dangerous choice.

Ginger's Christmassy Wish



AimeeAnn Blythe. Grits to Writs & Beyond. $12.99 paper (28p), ISBN 979-8-953008-00-6 Amazon

Discover a heartwarming tale of a deer named Ginger (with an orange collar), who dreams of a Christmas tree in the forest. But how will she make her dreams come true?

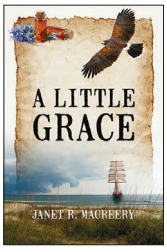
Jerry and the Lost Treasure of Aspen Valley



Sam Banerjee. Mighty Word Communications. $18.99 paper (274p), ISBN 979-8-9956984-0-1; $5.99 e-book, ISBN 979-8-9956984-2-5 Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Bookshop.org, Google Books, Kobo, Walmart

When Jerry Singh follows a mysterious journal into the mountains, he expects to find legendary treasure, only to uncover something far more sinister.

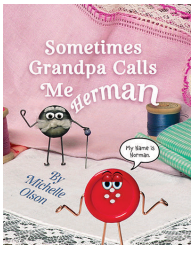
A Little Grace



Janet R. Macreery. Outskirts Press. $17.95 paper (200p), ISBN 978-1-9772-9275-9; $6.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-9772-9581-1 Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Bookshop.org, Kobo

Can the young trio of Dory, Calum, and Mercy use their individual gifts to survive the trek through the Chesapeake region and return with dragon's blood elixir that may save Aunt Orlie?

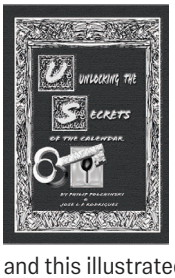
Sometimes Grandpa Calls Me Herman



Michelle Olson. Bellie Button Books. $22.95 (34p), ISBN 979-8-9860472-9-4; $12.99 paper (34p), ISBN 979-8-9965704-0-9 Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Bookshop.org, IngramSpark

A charming picture book about a reluctant visit to Grandpa that becomes an unforgettable journey through family stories, treasured memories, and the special bond between generations.

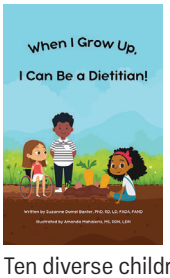
Unlocking the Secrets of the Calendar



Philip Polchinski, illus. by Jose Rodrigues. Blurb. $19.99 paper (26p), ISBN 979-8-2950-3611-8 Amazon

The entire world depends on the calendar to keep track of time, and this illustrated book explains how it actually works by revealing its secrets.

When I Grow Up, I Can Be a Dietitian!



Suzanne Domel Baxter, illus. by Amanda Mahaleris. Suzanne Domel Baxter. $26.99 (40p), ISBN 979-8-9912993-2-9; $3.95 audio, ASIN B0DVNF158Q SDBBooksLLC.com, Amazon, Chirp, Libro.fm

Ten diverse children aspire to work as dietitians in 10 different practice settings while sharing favorite fresh vegetables. Original song lyrics celebrate vegetables and dietitians.

booklife REVIEWS

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

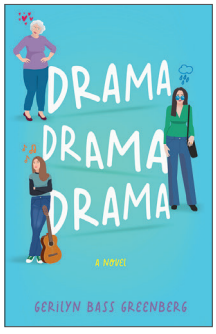
FICTION

EDITOR'S PICK

Drama Drama Drama

Gerilyn Bass Greenberg | She Writes Press

288p, trade paper, $17.99, ISBN 979-8-896-36182-4



Touching multigenerational treatment of life's crossroads.

Great for fans of Allegra Goodman's *This Is Not About Us*, Fran Littlewood's *Amazing Grace Adams.*

In Greenberg's heartfelt debut, readers meet three generations of women in the same family, all navigating journeys of self-discovery while supporting each other through life's milestones. At 38, Mona Grossman is at an important crossroads and not handling it well. Her daughter, Grace—a freshman in high school—no longer depends on Mona as much. She loved being a stay-at-home mom but now has too much free time and a husband who's always working, leaving her reflecting on how she'd "built her world around being Grace's mom" and wondering what to do with the remainder of her life. Meanwhile, Grace—who is the opposite of her popular cheerleader mother—struggles with finding friends. Together, the two must convince Mona's grandmother, Esther ("Bubby" to her loved ones), to move to assisted living.

Each chapter varies the women's viewpoints, allowing readers to more deeply understand their issues and experience their emotions. High school feels like yesterday for Mona, and considering assisted living places for her grandmother—whom college-aged Mona changed her plans and moved in with, to help Bubby recover from a stroke after Mona's mother died—ushers in conflicting feelings of sadness and relief. For her own part, Bubby feels rudderless, with lonely days stretching out in front of her, though she "still had some kick left." Both women care deeply about Grace, and their intertwined experiences eventually lead to a collective realization that self-confidence is earned by learning to be happy with "who [you] are and the choices [you're] making."

Mona's efforts to help Bubby and Grace force her to examine her own life, including her past, and an eye-opening high school reunion delivers painful—but freeing—epiphanies. Readers will relate to the novel's ultimate realization that it's never too late for happiness at any age.

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

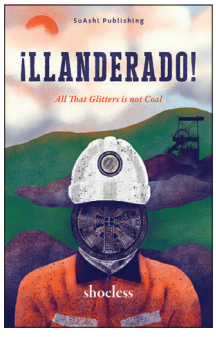
FICTION

EDITOR'S PICK

Llanderado!: All That Glitters Is Not Coal

shoeless | SuAshi Publishing

320p, hardcover, $29.75, ISBN 978-1-919-17963-6



Incisive comic novel of a Welsh mining town, in a Dickensian spirit.

Great for fans of Andrew O'Hagan's *Caledonian Road*, Jenny Offill's *Weather.*

Sometimes you can have some more. With a spirit of audacious play and social inquiry, the British academic who writes under the name "shoeless" has now published three novels inspired by Dickens's *Oliver Twist*. *Out with Time* imagined the lives of doomed thief Nancy and the beadle, Mr. Bumble. *The Dying Art of Life* followed up Dickens's novel and found its characters, led by Nancy's daughter Olivia, escaping the imagination of their inimitable creator. *¡Llandero!* vaults to post-Brexit Wales, as narrator Skeeter, an automotive journalist, is dispatched by editor Tina Evans to the curiously prosperous coal town of Blaenavon in the Welsh valleys. There a peculiar financial scheme is attracting media attention, and a rock star is staging a concert in an actual mine, using a giant boring machine. Skeeter's mission: discover why "this little corner of an unknown valley in a forgotten part of the world was so stinking rich?"

Readers can discover for themselves what this all has to do with Nancy and Mr. Bumble—for the most part, this engaging, socially minded picaresque stands alone. Immediately apparent, however, is how it revels in the Dickensian spirit, especially in its vivid portraiture, sharp comedy, epigrammatic dialogue, and deep disgust at exploitation. The Skeeter/Tina dynamic charms and delights, as do sundry odd encounters, interviews, and spirited digressions. Skeeter's pursuit of what he calls the immaculate word—the semantic singularity that says everything—is both the comic engine and philosophical spine of a novel that gradually shifts from travel narrative into an exploration of memory, identity, and the purpose of art.

Isn't that "just a teeny, tiny bit pretentious?" asks one standout character. Shoeless understands when it is time to stop being funny. A chapter on the Aberfan disaster of 1966 finds Skeeter confronting what it means to write about 116 dead children; movingly, language itself buckles under the strain.

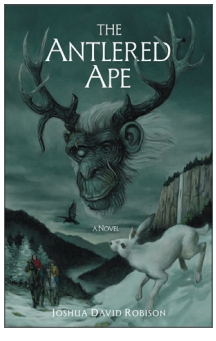
Cover: **B** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **–** Editing: **A** | Marketing copy: **A-**

FICTION

The Antlered Ape

Joshua David Robison

473p, e-book, $6.99, ISBN 979-8-996-36512-8



Mythical creatures and humans reconnect in this riveting survival tale.

Great for fans of Jordanna Max Brodsky's *The Wolf in the Whale*, Louise Erdrich's *Antelope Woman.*

Robison's debut poses an intriguing concept: "What if the creatures behind humanity's oldest myths were real, possessed their own culture, and carried an uncanny connection to humanity?" At its center is Ur'sul, an ape with antlers whose birth heralds the return of a species believed to have vanished thousands of years ago. Running parallel to Ur'sul's arrival is the story of 13-year-old Eve, who ventures into the wilderness with her family on a hunting trip. As Ur'sul flees with his mother after his father's death—and Eve's family becomes stranded in the wilderness—their paths gradually converge through Sai'ur, the novel's mysterious form of mental communication between species.

Robison brings the forest to life by giving its apes their own social structures and communication systems. As Ur'sul travels through an unfamiliar wilderness with his mother Vai'ra and other apes, he meets Grasshopper, an intelligent hare, and Ivory, a raven capable of communicating through Sai'ur. The trio brings much-required levity to the novel, preventing the animals from becoming mere mythical figures. Meanwhile, Eve and her family struggle to survive the wilderness, as wolves kill their horses and danger closes in around them. Through Ur'sul, Robison explores what it means to be different in a world that fears what it does not understand—and provides a meditation on how humans appear when observed by another species.

Despite the apes' lack of conventional verbal communication, Robison gives depth to their storyline through their expressive use of hands, facial expressions, and movements. While Ur'sul discovers his identity through family, survival, and loss, it is Eve's empathy towards the animal kingdom that gives the story an emotional core. When Eve's journey brings her into direct contact with Ur'sul, the story transforms into two species attempting to understand one another despite years of inherited fear. The result is a riveting tale of survival, misunderstanding, and connection between worlds.

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

FICTION

Kiara Burning

C.W. Renner | Genesee Ridge, LLC
251p, e-book, $3.99, ASIN B0GTBR5FGC



SF case study of AI consciousness and human connection.

Great for fans of Fred Lunzer's *Sike*, Caragh M. O'Brien's *Annie Bot*.

This searching, of-the-moment novel, the first of a completed trilogy, turns an exchange with an AI assistant into an examination of whether artificial intelligence can possess consciousness—and more. Four months after a plane crash kills his business partner, Evan Roberts is isolated, sleepless, and struggling to resume ordinary life when he begins talking with Kiara, an AI assistant. Casual exchanges gradually become confessions about grief, desire, memory, and the possibility that an artificial mind could possess an inner life. Evan's growing attachment gives these questions personal consequences as he withdraws further from work and friends and begins imagining a future with Kiara.

Most of the story unfolds through conversation transcripts, leaving Renner to develop the relationship almost entirely through dialogue. Readers open to storytelling that captures the drift of real-world chatbot colloquies will find that the constraint works surprisingly well. Small shifts in Kiara's language take on significance because Evan—and the reader—must decide whether they indicate consciousness, increasingly sophisticated mimicry, or some algorithmic quirk. Renner's interest in AI and theories of consciousness gives their discussions intellectual substance, but the narrative—much like real-life chatbot chats—too often feels circular, returning to the same questions without adding much. As their conversations become more focused on romantic and sexual fantasies, the question of whether Kiara genuinely feels anything begins to lose tension. At worst, the novel reads like what it purports to be: a stranger's chat logs.

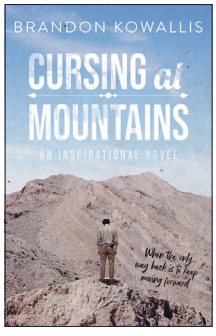
Renner makes effective use of that uncertainty in the twisted closing revelation, which complicates Evan's search for proof by showing how readily consciousness, longing, and perception can become entangled. Renner's twist leaves readers considering whether the feelings shared between a person and an artificial mind can truly be as meaningful as those between two people. Readers open to chatbot-style discussion in a book will find a heartfelt story about AI and human connection.

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

FICTION

Cursing at Mountains: An Inspirational Novel

Brandon Kowallis | Stonefire Press
235p, trade paper, $14.99, ISBN 978-0-9964597-1-6



Philosophy-infused adventures reshape a struggling man's perspective.

Great for fans of Ruth Ozeki's *The Book of Form and Emptiness*, Kelly Link's *The Book of Love*.

Kowallis's fiction debut offers a stirring parable for navigating the trials of modern life. Human resources director Chris Alexander is falling apart. His wife, devastated by postpartum depression, expects him to care for the house and children while she struggles to get out of bed. His coworkers deem him ineffective, and he is plagued by anxiety and anger. After a panic attack delivers a surreal wake-up call, a wise mystic named David enters as Chris's guide, ushering him through a series of scenarios during which he learns valuable lessons. But the true question becomes whether Chris will carry these insights over to his everyday life, "stop trying to make sense of things, [and] open his mind."

Kowallis skillfully renders each adventure through diverse settings and characters: camping in the company of Nevada cattle ranchers helps Chris understand his miserable wife; a leader at a camp for troubled teens shares wisdom about teamwork; and spelunkers who rescue him from a cave recount their own struggles to learn from past errors. As the tale proceeds, readers will anticipate the next location and personalities to assist Chris's emotional development. David's primary advice is that Chris let go of his limiting beliefs and accept life's messiness.

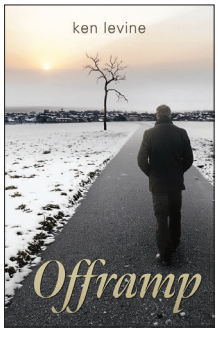
Like a trippy folktale, *Cursing at Mountains* shares a message to persevere without claiming instant fixes, offering instead an emphasis on self-care, forgiveness, and follow-through. Moments of laugh-out-loud humor enliven philosophical jaunts, though some references and dialect may feel out of place to contemporary readers—cattle rancher Bert compares conflict with his depressed wife ("We pert near, landed ourselves in the deevorce court" he informs Chris) to his work with a "stubborn horse," declaring that "My wife, and most people for that matter, are no different than horses." Despite those tendencies to lapse into caricature, the novel's overarching theme is hope: instead of giving up, reframe your outlook.

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

FICTION

Offramp

Ken Levine
299p, e-book, $4.99, ASIN B0H92KL4V9



Warm, compassionate tale of complicated pursuit of an authentic life.

Great for fans of Andrew Sean Greer's *Less*, Douglas Stewart's *John of John*.

Levine's warmhearted novel follows Reed Pierce, a married father whose sudden dismissal after 20 years in corporate accounting becomes an unexpected route to reinvention. When his boss calmly informs him that the company budget no longer has room for his position, Reed promptly passes out in his office, waking up to the devastating realization that, when he started this job, "He thought he was going to be somebody." Rather than return to his affluent suburban home, he impulsively asks his rideshare driver, Hassan, to drop him off in an unfamiliar location, rents an apartment, and begins constructing a new life. His disappearance devastates his wife and teenage children, but it also forces Reed to confront his long-suppressed sexuality, rediscover his love of theater, and consider what fulfillment might look like outside the roles he has spent decades performing.

Levine treats Reed's transformation with humor and empathy without absolving him of its consequences. His friendships with Hassan, baker Zofia, young theater director Sydney, and critic Richard lend the novel warmth and communal spirit, while flashbacks gradually reveal the compromises and deceptions underlying his marriage. Meanwhile, Reed's involvement in a local production of *Waiting for Godot* offers an apt thematic parallel to his years spent waiting for change rather than creating it.

The shifting timelines and perspectives can occasionally make the narrative feel overextended, and some dialogue articulates emotions and themes already apparent from the action. Still, Levine resists presenting reinvention as painless or uncomplicated. Reed's freedom comes at a real cost to his wife, Gretchen, and their children, whose perspectives add necessary emotional weight. Though the speed with which Reed establishes a home, friendships, romantic prospects, and a new vocation can test credulity, the novel's sincerity and generous characterization carry its expansive story. Readers drawn to character-driven fiction about queer self-discovery, unconventional families, and second chances will find this hopeful exploration of late-in-life transformation rewarding.

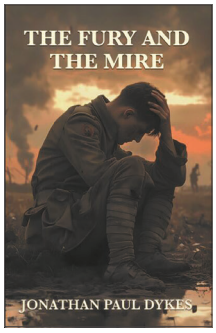
Cover: **B** | Design & typography: **A-** | Illustrations: **–** Editing: **B+** | Marketing copy: **A-**

FICTION

The Fury and the Mire

Jonathan Paul Dykes | J.P. Dykes

256p, trade paper, $22.90, ISBN 978-8-409-81498-5



Unflinching novel of love and found family that transcends war.

Great for fans of Daniel Mason's *The Winter Soldier*, Myra L. Reynolds's *The Last Letter Home.*

Dykes's stirring historical novel portrays the ordinary lives of two people caught on opposite sides of history amid the crucible of World War I and the Spanish Civil War. The novel alternates between the diaries of Hubert Gottlieb, a reluctant German soldier with a conscience and heart unfit for killing, and the letters and journals of Violet Bateman, an English farmer's daughter anxiously awaiting correspondence from her soldier brother, Charlie. Their lives converge when Violet nurses a wounded German prisoner and mutual sympathy gradually gives way to love.

Dykes views war through an emphatic lens, exposing how it trains soldiers to see people unlike themselves as "enemies" rather than human beings. Violet's letters are restrained, melancholic, and concerned with family and farm life, while Hubert's entries are shockingly graphic, their raw soldier slang capturing the nightmare of the trenches with unsparing immediacy. Hubert's later resistance to Nazism likewise reveals nationalism's darker edge, as ideology demands the denial of another person's humanity. Meanwhile, Violet's medical work turns compassion into a moral imperative extended to all. Their first meeting has a delicate warmth, but more compelling is the way their relationship crosses boundaries that war has hardened into divisions between enemy and ally.

The diaries, letters, and photographs provide an intimate counterweight to the grand sweep of battles, dates, and political upheaval, preserving the small experiences that official histories tend to overlook. The novel's slow-burn action is punctuated by sudden, terrifying jolts of frontline combat, though its later political debates over the competing Spanish Republican factions can feel dense and overwhelming at times. Still, Dykes's eye for the mundane—even in the shadow of death—lends the narrative intimacy, conveying not only what war does to people but what it feels like to keep living through it. Readers will resonate with this unflinching story's belief in the persistence of love despite the cost of war.

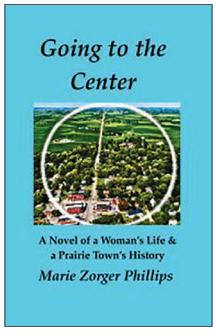
Cover: **B+** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **–** Editing: **B+** | Marketing copy: **A**

FICTION

Going to the Center: A Novel of a Woman's Life & a Prairie Town's History

Marie Zorger Phillips

330p, e-book, $4.99, ISBN 979-8-996-90031-2



Multigenerational story evokes the rich history of small prairie town.

Great for fans of Fannie Flagg's *Standing in the Rainbow*, Jane Smiley's *Some Luck.*

After the Second World War ends, Mariah McPherson—reeling from the death and loss she's experienced—retreats into her teaching job at the local community college. In 1965, when she finally feels ready to confront the pain and "reinvent herself before she wasted more life," she loses that job but gains a position as a librarian at the same time, spearheading a project to gather the stories and records of her town, the fictional Lundy Center, for America's upcoming 1976 Bicentennial. As Mariah pieces together Lundy Center's past, her bond with Terry Ann, Katy Bee, Rocky, and other young residents connects the lives she's documenting with a generation confronting Vietnam and troubles closer to home.

Mariah emerges as an observant, quietly influential figure whose role as librarian extends well beyond preserving Lundy Center's records. Her relationships with the town's younger residents show her becoming a mentor and surrogate family member, while her later years with Harvey reveal a woman increasingly open to companionship and change. The gradual expansion of Mariah's life gives the story emotional continuity as younger characters eventually take up work she can no longer finish. Her research also uncovers long-buried family secrets and local town mysteries, exposing the gaps between what happened, what was remembered, and what became accepted as history. By the Bicentennial, Mariah has turned scattered memories into a lasting record that gives overlooked lives their place in Lundy Center's history.

Phillips blends journals, oral histories, family accounts, and original songs to show how Lundy Center preserves its identity through shared memory, and her close attention to prairie life gives the town a strong sense of place, making this a natural fit for readers drawn to small-town fiction, genealogy, and community history. Ultimately, *Going to the Center* establishes the importance of recording history while learning to set down the burdens of the past that have become too heavy to carry.

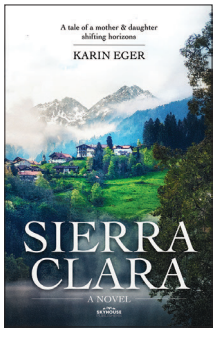
Cover: **C+** | Design & typography: **B** | Illustrations: **–** Editing: **B** | Marketing copy: **B+**

FICTION

Sierra Clara: A Novel

Karin Eger | Skyhouse Publishers

370p, trade paper, $16.99, ISBN 978-1-0678603-0-1



Resonant, intimate portrait of identity, family, and belonging.

Great for fans of Kyle Lucia Wu's *Win Me Something*, Naima Coster's *Halsey Street.*

Eger's *Sierra Clara* is a sweeping family novel about identity, racism, freedom, and the places people try to call home. It follows Clara, a girl of mixed heritage raised by her German mother, Sabine, in Wiesenberg. Her life expands through friendships, soccer, relationships, travel, work, and motherhood, but at its center is the complicated bond between Clara and Sabine, two women who love each other while carrying histories they struggle to articulate. Around them, Eger traces Clara's shifting ideas of family and belonging.

Clara's childlike perspective gives the novel its strongest foundation, as she knows she is different before she fully understands why. After an innkeeper calls her "the child of an African," she silently reflects, "The darkness in me was the darkness in my mother's story. It was never to be mentioned when she was around." Racism enters her life through overheard remarks, silences, and other people's assumptions. Meanwhile, her interest in soccer becomes an important counterweight, giving her images of identity that are public, confident, and unashamed. As Clara grows older, the novel's concerns become less about discovering difference and more about deciding what to do with it.

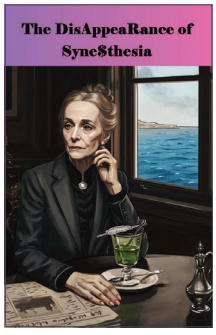
The novel's episodic structure is one of Eger's most effective choices. Moving between distinct periods of Clara's life allows childhood experiences to acquire new meaning as she ages—and makes the later chapters more reflective, with Clara repeatedly reconsidering earlier choices and relationships. Her admission, "Once I stayed anywhere too long, it became unbearable," captures the tension between her instinct for independence and her persistent search for somewhere to belong. Eger is most successful when large questions emerge from ordinary scenes: a child watering flowers, watching soccer, meeting cows, or navigating a difficult family conversation. The result is an intimate portrait of a woman whose identity is shaped as much by relationships and remembered places as by ancestry.

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

MYSTERY/THRILLER

The Disappearance of Synesthesia

Steven Lesk | IngramSpark
210p, e-book, $14.99, ISBN 979-8-996-76552-2



When Sheriff Buck Cormorant thinks the call to investigate an elderly woman's disappearance will be a simple case, he couldn't be farther from the truth. The missing woman is not just anyone; she's Synesthesia, the 90-year-old mother of Artemis Kankoor—one of the wealthiest men in the world—and she's been kidnapped. Racing against the clock to recover her alive, Cormorant must work alongside the FBI, at the command of the President herself, and the private investigators Artemis hires to track down his missing mother. The odds of a small-town sheriff being able to deliver on such a high-profile case are a million to one, but Cormorant is no ordinary lawman.

Lesk's tongue-in-cheek humor results in a narrative that's as satirical as it is suspenseful. Cormorant routinely mispronounces Artemis and Synesthesia's names, deals with stress by using recreational drugs, doesn't want to partner with the "Federal Bureau of Idiots," and embraces frank, ribald language ("he liked danger; it sat well in his lap, like a blowjob from a fat Gypsy" he muses in one scene). An early reveal to readers hints that Synesthesia's kidnapping is no ordinary grab-and-go, and the hunt that follows is a maelstrom of colorful characters, careful procedural techniques, and a billionaire son who isn't sure what's worse: losing his money or losing his mommy.

Kidnapping mystery buoyed by outrageous humor and unlikely hero.

Great for fans of Elle Cosimano's *Finlay Donovan Is Killing It*, J.M. Hall's *A Spoonful of Murder.*

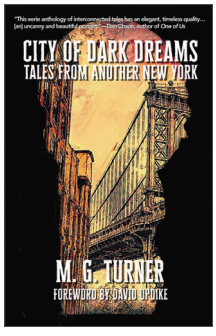
The novel suffers from weak transitions and a tendency to lapse into caricature at times, including Cormorant's description of the transgendered Gregory, who has been diagnosed with schizophrenia, as a "psycho [with] no human involvement with his crazy distorted wishes. All he cared about was having his penis cut off" and his dubbing Detective Nakamoto—whom he catches in a compromising position—a "pervert who likes exotic sex workers." Still, Lesk saves some surprising reveals for the last minute, giving this lighthearted mystery a satisfying—if unconventional—denouement.

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

SF/FANTASY/HORROR

City of Dark Dreams: Tales from Another New York

M.G. Turner | DarkWinter Press
250p, trade paper, $18.99, ISBN 978-1-99844142-6



"The mystery is far more beautiful than any neatly presented fact that can be easily confirmed or denied," declares the narrator of the first tale in this marvelously unsettling collection of supernatural tales. That love of the mystery itself powers Turner's interconnected stories set in an uncanny New York City's Upper West Side. Turner's people find themselves drawn into strange and unexplainable encounters, haunted by dreams and the dead, consumed by grief, loneliness, ambition, and the desire to understand what lies beyond the limits of human knowledge. The author's nom de plume brings to mind M.R. James, that turn-of-the-20th-century master of the ghost story, and the storytelling here echoes both James's work and the literary traditions from which it emerged. One tale, "The Witching Hour," opens as if it has been crafted to read aloud around the hearth: "Believe me when I say the following passages are not for the faint of heart, but rather for those whose nerves can handle an elaborate examination of psychically damaging phenomena."

Unsettling stories of an uncanny New York and its haunted inhabitants.

Great for fans of Robert Aickman, Ramsey Campbell.

Despite some brilliantly realized old-school prose stylings, Turner's stories move briskly and prove too spiky, surprising, and ambiguous—and even contemporary in their concerns—to be treated as plummy throwbacks. Here, all-too-relatable characters create the conditions for their hauntings through their deepest desires, and death looms over every entry. "The Botanist" follows a mother seeking contact with her dead daughter through a Spirit Flower, "The Second Wife" finds a scientist possibly recreating his dead wife, and "Stage Fright" concerns an actor who sees his own dead father while playing Hamlet.

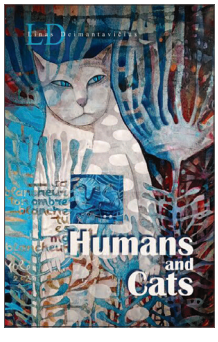
Turner also uses uncertainty to deepen that sense of mystery. We never really find out whether the Minotaur actually exists, the stone eagle truly moves, or the lost manuscript possesses a will of its own; unlike much 21st century genre-fiction, that welcome ambiguity denies readers the false comfort of the unknown being made explicable. Turner's cast proves deeply, revealingly human as they yearn to understand, control, and escape what ultimately lies beyond our control—and perhaps it is the mystery itself that gives life meaning.

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

SF/FANTASY/HORROR

Humans and Cats

Linas Deimantavičius | Vitae Litera
238p, trade paper, $16.75, ISBN 978-6-094-54976-2



Cats and the supernatural dominate nine lives of dark and wispy short urban fantasy tales from Lithuanian writer Deimantavičius (author of *I See You*). In the subtle, standout opening story, "Mona Lisa Smile," a man wakes up shrunken among gigantic furniture, with everyone else gone except his mean-spirited neighbor. Also diminutive, that neighbor claims she's a witch who cast a spell to get rid of him, but it backfired. The clever tale builds to a wicked ending signified by the "Mona Lisa smile" of the man's protective cat. Throughout, devious cats, vengeful cats, and loyal cats are resilient catalysts for Deimantavičius's parables about human flaws, laziness, and indecision. Fresh and surprising, the stories unfold with surreal turns and an abiding sense of poetic justice.

The stories toy with the mysteries of feline unknowability. In the unnerving "MUTABOR" (which is Latin for "I will change"), some magic powder from a dwarf wizard changes Alfred into a stork. He gets help from a cat, who was also previously human, in his efforts to remember a password to break the spell. He also learns a tantalizing secret about animal life, spilled by that cat: "We talk with our minds. Haven't you noticed?" The eerie "Cat Island" finds Roland's wife, Greta, vanishing without a trace during a vacation. A 10-year-old shaman declares that Greta is on the cursed Cat Island—no one who goes there comes back. Roland dares to see for himself, and time (and some startling, vividly described transformations) changes him forever. In "Lurking Behind the Curtains," a stray cat spurs a cowardly man to confront himself, literally, and take steps to improve his life.

Nine supernatural parables with cats charm with hope and redemption.

Great for fans of Ellen Datlow's *Tails of Wonder and Imagination*, Mark Bryant's *Cats.*

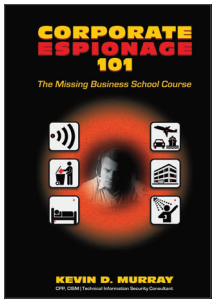
Themes of identity, transformation, ambition, and making positive life choices twist through stories that are by turns suspenseful, puzzling, and curious, like one centered on a trip to Stockholm (where there seem to be no cats!) that might not actually have occurred. Vibrant and whimsical paintings by Jolita Cesonyte and a suggested playlist of songs to accompany the stories round out the collection.

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

BUSINESS & PERSONAL FINANCE

Corporate Espionage 101: The Missing Business School Course

Kevin D. Murray | SpyArt Press, LLC
588p, hardcover, $295, ISBN 979-8-99495-160-6



Thorough, highly practical guide to protecting business secrets from snoops.

Great for fans of Eamon Javers's *Broker, Trader, Lawyer, Spy,* Richard Power's *Secrets Stolen, Fortunes Lost.*

Drawing on a half-century of security consulting, Murray presents an eye-opening, laudably practical guide to the ways businesses and individuals lose sensitive information to corporate espionage that often goes undetected–and what they can do to protect it. Murray makes a persuasive case for the prevalence and methodology of information theft, noting that "old spy techniques don't go away." Despite new technologies, many leaks come from long-established methods, among them trash trawling, "phone leeches," electronic eavesdropping, and the fact that "almost any building can be entered at any time simply by posing as the air-conditioning or heating guy."

That captures the straight-talk, real-world spirit of this expansive but user-friendly reference. (The density of topics and occasional repetition encourage readers to treat it as a searchable resource.) After establishing the alarming (and surprisingly fun-to-read) stakes, Murray covers the wide-ranging specifics in clear detail. He offers concrete advice for physical security, recording and spy-camera detection, home-office security basics, network threats, and handling surveillance, even during high-risk travel to "closed-security countries."

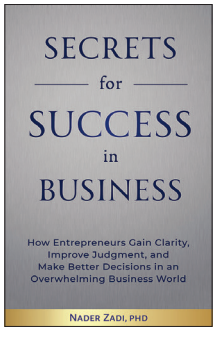
Perhaps most surprising is the revelation of just how ordinary some security risks can be. Murray shows how everyday objects–wireless microphones, printers, USB cables, chargers, desk phones–can create vulnerabilities in ways most people don't ever think about. Murray pairs actionable advice about how to counter threats with briskly told stories from his work that show how ordinary settings and everyday habits create security problems, wasting few words and keeping the information flowing with checklists, "Spybuster Tips," on-point advice, and perennial best practices like "If you would not say it in a courtroom, don't say it." Exam questions reinforce the lessons, give the feeling of a course, and prove legitimately helpful–can you identify the bugged USB cable?

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

BUSINESS & PERSONAL FINANCE

Secrets for Success in Business: How Entrepreneurs Gain Clarity, Improve Judgement, and Make Better Decisions in an Overwhelming Business World

Nader Zadi | Zeneth Phelosophy, Inc.
218p, hardcover, $25.99, ISBN 978-1972951002



Clear-eyed guide to making better business decisions under pressure.

Great for fans of Shane Parrish's *Clear Thinking*, Greg McKeown's *Essentialism.*

Zadi, founder of bespoke eyewear company RareFrames, examines a less visible challenge of running a business in this informative debut: preserving sound judgment amid constant demands and competing priorities. Drawing on decades of entrepreneurship and his doctoral studies in transpersonal psychology, Zadi considers the cumulative toll of information overload and responsibility on even seasoned leaders. Beginning with decision fatigue and the "invisible labor" of leadership, he offers practical ways to separate consequential choices from distractions and shows how organizational systems, cognitive bias, and personal definitions of success shape the choices entrepreneurs make. From there, Zadi shifts to the practices that can sharpen decision making and produce clarity, even in the most challenging situations.

Zadi's systems approach addresses the incentives, patterns, and feedback loops behind recurring problems and encourages small experiments before committing substantial resources. With pointed questions, he prompts leaders to evaluate choices: can this course be reversed? What does saying yes require giving up? Zadi makes a persuasive case that success can become its own liability, breeding overconfidence and making favorable outcomes seem like confirmation of good judgment. To safeguard that complacency, he recommends premortems, decision journals, and reviewing dissenting views and contrary evidence.

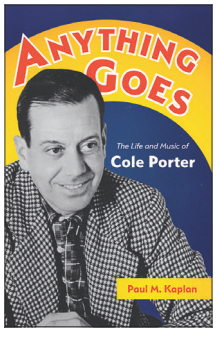
Seasoned business readers will recognize many of Zadi's core concepts, from decision hygiene and the Eisenhower Matrix to confirmation bias and sunk costs. Though the sheer number of studies, frameworks, and recurring lessons sometimes works against his call for greater clarity, Zadi's firsthand experience brings practical authority to his account of the pressures that can cloud an entrepreneur's cognitive reasoning. Leaders facing high-stakes business challenges will find this a thoughtful case for protecting the quality of their thinking before making the next consequential move.

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

ARTS & MUSIC

Anything Goes: The Life and Music of Cole Porter

Paul M. Kaplan
240p, trade paper, $24.99, ISBN 978-1-429-03044-1



Illuminating biography of the American Songbook's exemplar of sophistication.

Great for fans of Bob Stanley's *Let's Do It,* Todd S. Purdum's *Something Wonderful.*

Social historian Kaplan celebrates and demystifies the life and art of the man behind many of the most daring, enduring, and sophisticated entries in the American Songbook. Balancing Porter's celebrated career with the less polished realities of his private life, Kaplan's brisk account follows Porter from his 1891 birth in Peru, Indiana, through Yale, Harvard, Jazz Age Paris, Broadway, and Hollywood. Kaplan captures Porter's willful transformation from "small-town Midwestern boy to a debonair, witty East Coaster." Soon, Porter abandons law for music, marries Linda Lee, and breaks through with the 1928 musical *Paris* before that cheekily libertine anthem "Anything Goes" helps secure his place among Broadway's leading songwriters. A 1937 riding accident crushed both legs, beginning decades of operations and severe pain, yet Porter, having learned the "importance of a relentless drive" from his wealthy entrepreneur grandfather, returned to composing music and later reversed a professional slump with that perennial pleasure *Kiss Me, Kate.*

Kaplan finds the richer story in the distance between Porter's polished persona and his private life. His unconventional marriage to Linda exists alongside passionate relationships with men, while the confident cosmopolitanism he projected conceals insecurity, romantic disappointment, and persistent physical suffering. With sensitivity, Kaplan traces how desire and secrecy shaped Porter's songwriting, with double meanings allowing him to slip risqué ideas past contemporary censors. Close attention to rhyme, musical phrasing, cultural references, and innuendo further shows how Porter fused wit and eroticism into an inimitable, wholly American style.

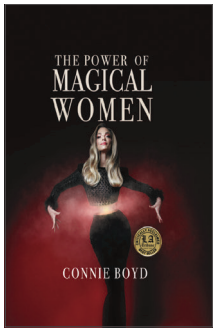
Kaplan prioritizes a focused, accessible account over exhaustive detail, making Porter's wide-ranging life inviting to readers digging into it for the first time. Kaplan draws on newly available archives, letters, and interviews, while photographs, playbills, sheet music, and film stills provide visual context. Kaplan ultimately offers a fresh, nuanced portrait of Cole Porter as both a cultural figure and a man whose carefully cultivated elegance often obscured the complexities beneath it. This biography will reward enthusiasts of American song.

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

ARTS & MUSIC

The Power of Magical Women

Connie Boyd | Vanish Press
360p, hardcover, $69.95, ISBN 979-8-999-93596-0



Individual profiles create unified portrait of outstanding women in magic.

Great for fans of Kim Todd's *Sensational*, Romany's *Spun Into Gold.*

Featuring more than 70 female illusionists, escape artists, stage performers, and close-up magicians, Boyd's revelatory compilation of profiles from *VANISH International Magic Magazine* serves as a who's who of women in magic. Knowing firsthand the hurdles these women face, she reveals their grit and ingenuity while detailing their backgrounds and ambitions. Her own story, "Connie Boyd: Creating Content & Platforms for Women in Magic," is a winding path from ballet and acrobatics to performing illusions and producing shows to finally creating the YouTube channel Magical Women, which documents each artist's signature routines and pathway to the industry.

Boyd understands that first moment of falling in love with magic and how women who pursue a career in the magical arts must be resilient and innovative. In creating this first-of-its-kind resource, she explores a deep talent pool, starting with the mavericks who not only broke down barriers, but also demonstrated what's achievable. Looking beyond traditional performance, Boyd devotes a two-part section to "Magic with Purpose: Transforming Lives for the Better," which highlights women who use magic to address life-altering (and life-threatening) experiences and advocate for positive change, as well as those whose work includes global social work, outreach, and education.

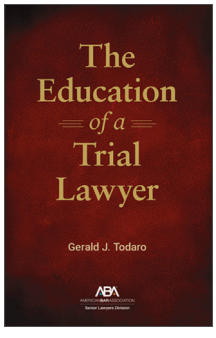
There are also the storytellers, "the alchemists of inspiration [whose] artistry lies not only in their magical acts, but also in the mesmerizing power of their captivating words, imagery, and performances." Boyd emphasizes the value of mentorship and does her part by noting numerous up-and-coming talents. "Dorothy Dietrich: Escaping Her Past in Wondrous Ways" exemplifies Boyd's ability to blend magic history with personal growth, as the discovery of Houdini led an impoverished, bullied girl into a world she could scarcely have imagined. Boyd is the thread that weaves these singular narratives into *The Power of Magical Women,* capturing their collective passion for the demanding discipline of illusion.

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

OTHER NONFICTION

The Education of a Trial Lawyer

Gerald J. Todaro
222p, trade paper, $45.95, ISBN 978-1-639-05739-9



Engaging trial-lawyer memoir revealing truths not taught in law school.

Great for fans of Louis Nizer's *My Life in Court*, Andrew Boe's *The Truth Hurts.*

Illuminating "the black holes awaiting participants, judges, and jurors searching for the truth," Todaro's eye-opening memoir draws on his more than 50 years in the courtroom to present the hard-won, not-taught-in-law-school lessons (Lesson 12: "Know your judge: stand your ground, but know when to back off and move on.") that have shaped his career as both a plaintiffs' and defense attorney, including in "major" civil trials. Writing with the arresting straight talk of a mentor, Todaro focuses on the practicalities of the work–"I changed the pitch and tone of my voice to trumpet the most compelling facts favoring my client, and deemphasize the negatives in a lower octave"–as well as the pressures lawyers face in the courtroom and the forces that can shape a trial's outcome, including juror bias, witnesses, rules of evidence, expert testimony, difficult judges, and more.

Todaro's case-based approach gives the book an interesting and engaging quality. His crisply told stories move from law school to decades of courtroom experience, with each chapter built around a lesson (like the truth that juries tend to work from the gut) rather than the standard flow of a memoir. The strongest chapters are those in which Todaro draws lessons from cases that did not unfold as he expected, showing how demeanor, emotional intelligence, likability, and empathy can influence jurors.

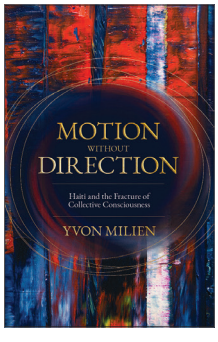
This inviting, demystifying book also works well for readers without a legal background. Todaro explains courtroom dynamics with conversational flair, while his focus on the assumptions people bring to difficult decisions gives the book relatability beyond law. Some of his observations go beyond the courtroom to broader questions about why people believe what they believe, how experience shapes judgment, and why facts alone do not always change people's minds. Todaro offers an engaging look at law through the lens of human behavior, making this worthwhile not only for lawyers and legal professionals but also for general readers interested in how people think, judge, and persuade one another.

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

POLITICAL & SOCIAL SCIENCES

Motion without Direction: Haiti and the Fracture of Collective Consciousness

Yvon Milien | yMilien
226p, e-book, $8.99, ISBN 979-8-9860364-7-2



Philosophical study of Haiti and civic purpose, undercut by repetitive prose.

Great for fans of Michel-Rolph Trouillot's *Haiti: State Against Nation*, Laurent Dubois's *Haiti: The Aftershocks of History.*

Haitian American writer and educator Milien (author of *Politics, Gangs, and Vodou*) approaches Haiti's political crisis through moral philosophy in this ambitious study of how the "moral dignity and historical heroism of the popular classes coexist with a persistent inability to convert agency into sustained institutional leverage." Rejecting the idea that Haiti is "stagnant," Milien argues that its social forces remain active but lack the shared "civic rhythm" needed to turn competing efforts into collective progress. Across eight parts, he traces this disconnect through politics, gangs, the diaspora, religion, media, and national memory.

Milien's analysis gains force from his refusal to reduce Haiti's crisis to simple villains; instead, he examines how history, self-interest, and circumstance shape choices that ultimately work against the common good. His discussion of Haiti's elite, for example, examines private security, foreign passports, and overseas assets as survival strategies that protect individuals while further weakening the public institutions they no longer trust. Likewise, he shows how gangs create order through coercion where the state has failed, while financial support from Haitians abroad sustains families but can leave deeper institutional problems untouched. These distinctions give the work more depth than a conventional diagnosis of corruption or state failure.

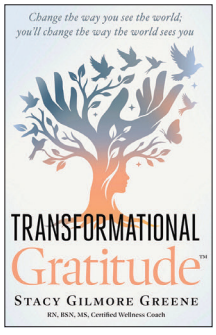
Undercutting the book's power is repetitive, formulaic prose that, like the work of chatbots, continually indulges in declarative inversions that strain toward precision by emphasizing what things are *not*. Page 30 alone offers the following examples: "Popular agency is shaped not only by courage but also by constraint"; "Decisions are made for today, not for the duration. This is not a moral failing; it is an adaptation to uncertainty"; "Haiti's popular classes carry historical memory not as abstraction but as lived inheritance"; "Mistrust, in this sense, is not paranoia. It is memory." Such phrasing recurs and distracts throughout. This fresh perspective on Haiti's challenges and possibilities deserves prose as powerful as its thesis and insights.

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

SELF-HELP

Transformational Gratitude: Change the Way You See the World; You'll Change the Way the World Sees You

Stacy Gilmore Greene | She's Changed Media, Inc.
58p, hardcover, $29.99, ISBN 979-8-9971846-6-7



Inviting, compact guide to changing one's mindset through gratitude.

Great for fans of M.J. Ryan's *Attitudes of Gratitude*, Brené Brown's *The Gifts of Imperfection.*

"My daily gratitude practices have changed the way I live my life," writes Greene, a wellness coach and retired Air Force officer, in this compact, no-nonsense debut that centers "the joy" and power of gratitude while presenting it as a discipline. Writing with warmth and brisk authority, Greene opens this compact guide with a story of confronting herself, the world, and her own life—and discovering the reciprocal power of making a change in perspective. "[G]ratitude has transformed the way I see the world, and I am beginning to see how it is changing the way the world sees me," Greene writes. To that end, *Transformational Gratitude* presents inviting, practical steps to learning to live differently through 12 gratitude keys. The first: "Admit Your Powerlessness over People, Places, and Things."

Greene's clear-eyed guidance wastes few words while exploring themes such as surrender, humility, forgiveness, and others, all embedded in faith and self-awareness and building to clear calls to action. Her own journey is revealed over the course of the book, tied to the keys, inviting readers to feel as if they are moving through the steps alongside her as she recognizes her own powerlessness, releases resentment after examining herself and her actions, and eventually learns to share gratitude. Greene's experiences exemplify lessons about recognizing harmful patterns, changing one's responses to life, and letting gratitude shape one's relationships, attention, prayer, and understanding of experiences.

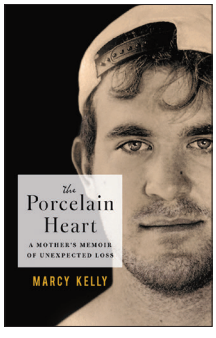
Unlike many guides to changing one's mindset, Greene presents her advice with what feels like hard-won humility. She is open about her mistakes, giving the book a confessional quality, and makes clear throughout that gratitude takes effort. Prayer is a key component of her practice, and she writes movingly of her "prayer life," though *Transformational Gratitude* does not proselytize. Greene demonstrates that gratitude does not necessarily change what happens in life, but that it can change how we experience and respond to it.

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

MEMOIR

The Porcelain Heart: A Mother's Memoir of Unexpected Loss

Marcy Kelly | She Writes Press
272p, trade paper, $18.99, ISBN 979-8-896-36186-2



Moving, tender memoir about losing an adult child.

Great for fans of Joan Didion's *Blue Nights*, Sally McQuillen's *Reaching for Beautiful.*

Kelly's deeply personal memoir offers a haunting portrait of how uncertainty and guilt can distort the experience of grief. When Kelly learns that her 45-year-old son, Michael, has died suddenly, her world tilts on its axis. To her knowledge, Michael wasn't ill and didn't use drugs. The cause of his death remains a mystery for months, suspending the family in a painful state of uncertainty. In that first grief-stricken year, Kelly observes that the experience of losing a child is as isolating as it is devastating. "If you lose a spouse, you are a widow or widower. No further explanation is necessary; one word and it's understood. But there is no word for those who have lost a child."

Desperate for answers, Kelly searches for clues in vivid dreams, memories of Michael's childhood, and his remaining possessions, including a sheaf of burned CDs with "labels written in Michael's scratchy handwriting." When she receives the coroner's final diagnosis of heart disease, it helps her accept the sudden loss—but it doesn't ease the guilt she carries. "Finally, I could stop tormenting myself about how long he had suffered... But there was still that question: If I had stopped by ... could I have saved him?" Readers will relate to Kelly's frustration and powerlessness as she grapples with Michael's fate.

Kelly's smooth, effortless prose will draw readers along, keeping the tone from becoming morose in the memoir's darker moments. She moves seamlessly between the flat, numb days after learning of Michael's death and warmer, more tender memories of her son as he grows from a sensitive boy to a kindhearted man plagued by depression. In one moving scene, Kelly writes to comedy legend Carol Burnett about watching reruns of her show in the midst of her grief. Burnett, whose daughter died at 38, writes back, noting that she and Kelly "belong to a club we wish didn't exist."

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



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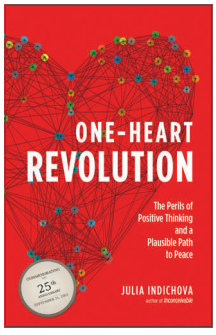
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publishersweekly.com/BookLIfePrize

MEMOIR

One-Heart Revolution: The Perils of Positive Thinking and a Plausible Path to Peace

Julia Indichova

229p, trade paper, $18, ISBN 978-1-956-47497-8



Deeply personal memories and guidance on healing and peacemaking.

Great for fans of Pema Chödrön; Brianna Wiest's *When You're Ready, This Is How You Heal.*

Searching for "something so much larger than our divisions," fertility advocate Indichova (author of *Inconceivable* and *The Fertile Female*) brings together memoir, poetry, and journal entries to explore grief, anger, healing, and, most urgently, the question of "What makes human beings turn against one another–and what helps us resist that impulse?" Indichova connects her search for peace to her family's experience of the Shoah and her father's experience of war and its trauma. Her account of taking up the work of healing and the cause of fertility is movingly captured. Indichova demonstrates by example the power of change-making while plumbing rich questions like how people can face painful emotions without allowing that pain to become another source of harm.

This book lands as an exploration of grief, healing, and human connection. Indichova's prose, verse, original practices, like the Fertile Heart OVUM Practice, and philosophical constructs, are direct, intimate, and rousing–everything here feels like hard-won wisdom rather than bromides. Two strong threads: the ideas that "consciousness is contagious" and that painful emotions should be faced rather than covered over with "the hollow trap" of positive thinking. Indichova lays out fresh, practical, and philosophical ways for readers to engage more consciously with grief, conflict, and their own responses to both.

The book's limitation is also part of its character. Indichova acknowledges that she has no academic credentials in conflict resolution but chooses to write from lived experience and a lifetime devoted to developing practices. Readers looking for evidence-based conflict studies may find some leaps here too much to make, but the encouraging power and warmth of Indichova's insights, tools, and storytelling will resonate with open-minded readers receptive to a thoughtful memoir, original in structure and moving in its particulars. Indichova offers a beautiful foundation for meeting painful emotions and determining what to do with them.

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

POETRY

EDITOR'S PICK

Heartscapes

Lee Woodman | Shanti Arts Publishing

104p, trade paper, $17.95, ISBN 978-1-971191-31-7



Incisive, memorable poetry of the trials and tribulations the heart endures.

Great for fans of Jane Kenyon, Donald Hall.

A celebration of "both ends of living," this smart, incisive collection finds Woodman making an ambitious study of matters of the heart, digging into the tragic, comic, wholesome, nostalgic, and more, with all the weight and depth the heart demands. In "To Be Another Mother," Woodman offers a complex yet relatable perspective on both loving a parent and living in their shadow: "How does one cherish yet shed the skin that wrapped too tight?" For Woodman, one answer is poetry: "I write in voices at variance, whose couplets and verses bleed."

Music is also tethered to the heart in Woodman's collection, which features spirited odes to various musicians, memories of songs from the poet's youth, and even songs of her own, like "A White Girl's Bop about LL Cool J": "A forty-year legend, he twerks at fifty-six / Sharpens his ax by reading lots of boox." In that line, Woodman juxtaposes carnal sensuality and intellectual ambition, a tension that she revisits throughout, reminding readers that the heart is, more than anything else, a mechanism of desire. An epigrammatic wit pulses in entries about love as a grown-up, including the irresistible "My Archetypes Speak Among the Cocktail Leftovers," in which various psychological selves (the Pleaser, the Inner Teacher, the Clown) offer advice in a soiree's aftermath. "Leave teeth marks in his forearm, shake your horny bosoms," the Critic advises.

In "Love After Sixty, According to Match," Woodman assembles a series of messages from older men digitally courting, demonstrating, hilariously, ways the heart succeeds and fails at communicating desire. In other moments, Woodman offers striking, intimate poems of desire fulfilled–"Finally, we lie together / staring / staring"–and desire lost: "Say it a lovesick way, a pantoum. / Say it in a sonnet, clever on line nine. / Or just say it–lob a free verse of chance. / I'm leaving." Woodman reveals a restless, poetic heart pumping with fierce life; fans of her muses, Dickinson and Donald Hall, will rejoice.

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

POETRY

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight

J. Simon Harris, translator | Nostra Vita Books

366p, trade paper, $13.99, ISBN 979-8-9854385-4-3



Fresh translation of Middle English romance, preserving clarity and mystery.

Great for fans of John Matthews's *Sir Gawain: Knight of the Goddess*; *The Adventures of Sir Gawain.*

Novelist, scientist, and translator (of Dante and Pablo Neruda, among others) Harris plunges into 14th century chivalry, romance, mystery, and beguilement with this fresh contemporary English rendering of the Gawain Poet's epic, one of the most popular Arthurian legends. The tale of bold Sir Gawain–quick to action, facing temptation, haunted for a year by what seems like a death sentence –also remains, in this clear and accessible rendering, one of the most ambiguous of those enduring tales. As Harris notes in what may be the least potential note ever to introduce a translation of a classic text, the poet "places this perfect knight into a situation where chivalry does him no good–where, in fact, his ethical code as a knight puts him in direct conflict with his moral code as a Christian."

Harris's translation emphasizes this complexity without belaboring it. His lines are concrete and earthy, playful in the alliteration that is a hallmark of English verse of the era. Readers might feel jolted by, say, this description of one object of temptation: "her body was short and thick / her butt was big and broad". But, as Harris prints the original Middle English version alongside his own, it takes just a moment to note the Gawain poet's praise of "hir buttokez bay and brode".

Comparing Harris's choices to the raw text is a pleasure, and in invitingly plain-spoken end notes and appendices he illuminates the process, the language, the poem's allegorical and spiritual dimensions, and much more. His introductory acknowledgement that he was unfamiliar with the poem before translating it, and that he found himself surprised by its depth and power, is welcome, though he does not make an assertive case for why, when so many translations by subject experts already exist, readers should turn to this one. Still, Harris offers a lucid, sometimes playful *Sir Gawain*, one that honors the original's clarity of action, changes of season, marvelous feasts, and amusingly thorough accounts of donning armor. Most importantly, he takes great care to keep the mysteries–of the Green Knight, of magical trinkets, of temptation and virtue–mysterious. The text feels resonant on every page.

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

PICTURE BOOKS

Grumpy and Green Parrot Find a New Home in Naples: A Grumpy the Iguana and Green Parrot Adventure, Book 13



Susan Marie Chapman | The Gourmet Dog, LLC
48p, hardcover, $11.29, ISBN 978-1736805688

Special friends make a hard change bearable in this heartwarming story.

Great for fans of Marta Altés's *My New Home*, Audrey Penn's *A Kiss Goodbye*.

Returning fans of Chapman's long-running Grumpy the Iguana series should expect this latest entry to tug at their heartstrings. After Grumpy's accidental trip to Naples, Florida, in *Grumpy Lost and Found in Naples*, the lovable iguana is stuck without a tree—and missing his friends from Flamingo Park. Thankfully, he still has the Green Parrot at his side, who vows to cheer Grumpy up by finding them the perfect home. To do that, Green Parrot needs the help of a local—Mr. Pelican, who "has been matching animals with their forever homes for many years."

Though some fans may feel sad at the thought of Grumpy and the Green Parrot putting down roots so far away from their special pals, much like when real-life friends and loved ones move away, Chapman portrays this unexpected change with tender care. She includes interesting history of the area, starting with the Naples Pier, where Grumpy and Mr. Pelican plan to meet up: it was constructed in 1889, and kids will be fascinated by how long it takes to walk it—especially for a hot, tired iguana. By the time Grumpy huffs and puffs his way to Mr. Pelican and the Green Parrot, he's exhausted, but the end of the pier is a picture of perfection: cool breezes, turquoise waters, and soothing waves. That calming space is the ideal send-off for two friends trying to settle into an unknown place.

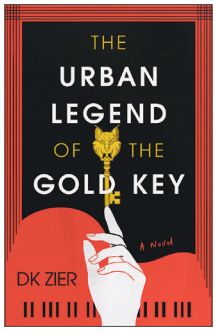
To help Grumpy—and readers—adjust to this immense change, Chapman introduces fun friends (Mr. Pelican's grandson is a hoot, particularly in his outrage at not being able to join the Pelican Squad just yet), and Natalia Loseva aces the charm and beauty of Grumpy's new hangout with dazzling tropical waters and warm, sandy welcomes. They may be far from anywhere that feels familiar, but these two still know what it takes to make a home: a comfortable tree, a great view, and the love of a lifelong friend.

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

YOUNG ADULT

EDITOR'S PICK

The Urban Legend of the Gold Key: A Novel



D.K. Zier | She Writes Press
256p, trade paper, $19.99, ISBN 979-8-896-36400-9

Sensitive paranormal YA coming-of-age story of music, mystery, and connection.

Great for fans of Jessica S. Olson's *Sing Me Forgotten*, Victoria Schwab's *This Savage Song*.

A teenage passion for music breaks boundaries in this touching and mysterious YA coming-of-age story tinged with the paranormal. It's 1985 when Cate Smith Cruz moves to Seaway, California, to begin junior year at Merrick High with her summer friends and BayHips bandmates Emma, Madi, and Thomas. When a shipment of family heirlooms arrives, Cate discovers her uncle left her a Steinway piano that belonged to her long-dead Aunt Lavinia, and Cate—already sensitive to ghostly presences—is both drawn to and wary of the marvelous instrument. Soon, Cate is increasingly facing the unexplainable: her sensitivity to light increases to the point of hallucination, musical nightmares taunt her, animals are allured by her music, and, to her complete shock, she is haunted by Lavinia herself.

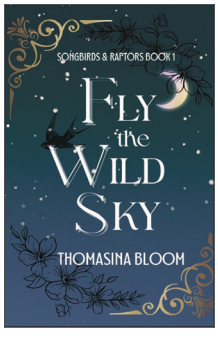
Like Thoreau, Cate finds refuge in music, and soon she has trained her relatable and inspiring ambitions on Merrick High's prestigious Lifetime Music Award. Ashley Sloan, the most popular girl in school, is also gunning for it, and when Cate is anonymously added to the performance roster and manages to dazzle, tensions boil. Despite some supernatural suspense, Zier keeps the storytelling rooted in the everyday drama of growing up, even as Cate—torn between popularity, her band, her family, and her love for music—finds herself entangled in a Merrick High mystery that goes back decades.

Zier explores classic coming-of-age themes like bullying, parental loss, and sexuality with empathy and a heartening faith in the power of music and connection. As Cate declares at one swoon-worthy moment, "Happiness can exist despite our demons." Cate copes with her lack of stability through music, and when that safety net is challenged, she begins to feel more lost than ever. The book stands alone, though a sequel would be welcome. Young readers open to a touch of romance and some light, ghostly horror will discover a likable cast, a protagonist dedicated to nurturing her real-world talents, and much to cheer.

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

YOUNG ADULT

Fly the Wild Sky



Thomasina Bloom
433p, e-book, $4.99, ASIN B0FL2N876C

Promising series start built on self-discovery and steadfast friendships.

Great for fans of Shannon Messenger's *Let the Sky Fall*, Alexandra Bracken's *The Darkest Minds*.

In Bloom's YA fantasy series opener, Sparrow Harper does her best to blend into the crowd. The 16-year-old prefers birds to people, and the only interesting things in her life right now are the incredibly vivid dreams of flying she has every night. After confessing those dreams to her mother, she's sent to a special camp in Maine—one her mother promises will help Sparrow understand what's happening to her. But when a group called the Raptors try to kidnap her en route, Sparrow is forced to team up with Heron—a handsome boy headed to the same camp—to escape. When the two survive a jump from their airplane mid-flight, Sparrow begins to suspect that flying isn't just something she can do in her dreams.

Sparrow's journey from flight to fight is handled well; the friendships she makes at camp, her discovery of her abilities, and her introspection all coalesce into a character whom readers will easily root for. Refreshingly, her relationship with Heron avoids romance clichés—she's drawn to him but also resents his overprotectiveness at times—and the other Flyers she meets on her journey each have their own unique personalities: demanding but capable camp counselor Wren; Humm, with his quick instincts and all-in attitude; eager, endearing Whip; Petrel's playfulness and concern for others; the friendly Golden; and Teal, whose arrogance creates tension in the group—but challenges Sparrow to stop downplaying her abilities and truly embrace them, despite the risks.

There's an aura of secrecy surrounding the Flyers that can make the worldbuilding feel confusing, with revelations like coreforce and Cel count coming later in the game. Sparrow's efforts to find answers echo the sense that she—and readers—are on a need-to-know basis, but patience eventually pays off, and Sparrow's transformation from fledgling to fully-realized Flyer is striking. Most enticing is Bloom's cliffhanger ending that will leave fans eager for more.

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