

The Arc of History: An Interview with Amor Towles— He'll be in SLC April 2!

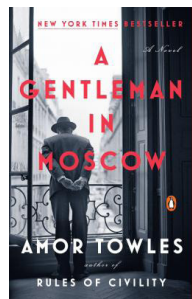
by Betsy Burton

I called Amor Towles to talk to him about *A Gentleman in Moscow*, but before we started with questions he wondered who I was and whether we hadn't met before at some book dinner or other. Knowing how often he speaks in public, I was surprised he remembered. We had met, I said. Had sat next to one another at a breakfast—an American Booksellers event at which he was the keynote speaker a couple of years ago. I thought so, he said. After chatting for a few minutes, I asked my first question which was, admittedly, longwinded.

BB: The incarceration of a person as pampered as Count Rostov in a small room in the hotel in which he had previously lived in luxury would be—despite the relief at being alive—the ultimate in humiliation. I loved the aplomb with which he copes—immediately determined to deal with life's practicalities by turning them into routines and rituals in order to bestow dignity (*continued on page 4*)



Amor Towles, who will be in SLC on April 2. See page 2 for details.



A Gentleman in Moscow, Amor Towles

A young Russian count is saved from a Bolshevik bullet because of a pre-revolution pro-revolution poem. Given his aristocratic upbringing he can't go free. So what is a Communist Committee of the Commissariat to do? Put this unsuspecting suspect under house arrest in the grand hotel in which he's staying, of course. A hotel that, like Count Alexan-

der Ilyich Rostov himself, is allowed to exist for secret reasons of state. Our Count is nothing if not creative, and it isn't long before his courtly manners and charm create a constellation of comrades that will inhabit your heart: Nina, a child who teaches him the fine art of spying; her daughter Sophia, decades later; his old friend, the poet Mishka; the glamorous actress, Anna Urbanova; the hotel staff... As witty, cosmopolitan, and unflappable as the Scarlet Pimpernel on the outside, as kind and as thoughtful as Tolstoy's Pierre Bezukhov on the inside, Alexander Rostov is a character out of time—someone who transcends time in the manner of fairy tale heroes and captures our hearts in the process. As does Towles' profound, witty, erudite, historically intriguing, and thoroughly entertaining novel, newly published in paperback. – Betsy Burton, Penguin, \$17

Indie Bookstore Day Turns 5 on Saturday April 27!



**INDEPENDENT
BOOKSTORE DAY**
SATURDAY, APRIL 27, 2019

The Great Great Salt Lake Monster Mystery along with some fun and funny activities!

Indie Bookstore Day (IBD) 2019 is Saturday, April 27th. TKE will have giveaways galore and unique items for sale—only on that day and only in the store. Events include:

11 a.m. A special Sesame Street storytime. Can you help Elmo find his puppy?

2 p.m. We'll have experts here to share

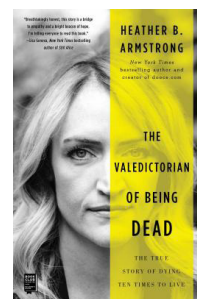


7 p.m. Local blogger Heather B. Armstrong will discuss her memoir, *The Valedictorian of Being Dead: The True Story of Dying Ten Times to Live*.

So join us in fun and frivolity and support your local Indie Bookstore! That's Saturday, April 27th, all day. And, again this year, if you visit four participating northern Utah independent bookshops on Independent Bookstore Day and complete the Indie Bookstore Day Passport, you'll be eligible to win 20% off your purchases for one year from one of the stores!

FREE AUDIOBOOKS TOO!

Audiobooks give you the ability to listen to great books, anytime and anywhere. The King's English is partnering with Libro.fm to offer monthly memberships and a special Indie Bookstore Day offer on Saturday, April 27th, to thank you for your support. Create your Libro.fm account now at www.kingsenglish.com so you will be ready to get your free audiobooks on the 27th. Then come celebrate with us at the store!

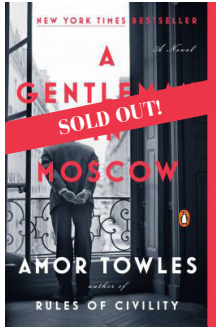


See the Spring Calendar on page 2 for
details for Amor Towles in SLC and
all upcoming events!



Adults

Thursday, March 28, 7 p.m. Well-known author and activist Rebecca Solnit will receive the Utah Award in the Environmental Humanities at the downtown library.



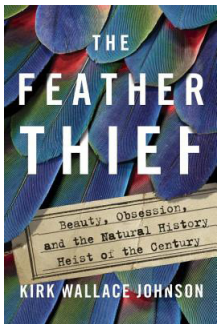
Tuesday, April 2, 7 p.m. The inimitable Amor Towles will join us to discuss *A Gentleman in Moscow* at Rowland Hall's Larimer Auditorium. *Editor's note: Event sold out! Signed copies available at TKE April 3.*

Thursday, April 4, 7 p.m. The University of Utah's Guest Writers series welcomes Francisco Cantú and Antonio Ruiz-Camacho at the downtown library as a part of

their Borderlands Conference.

Friday, April 5, 1 p.m. The University of Utah's Guest Writers series welcomes Yuri Herrera and Natalie Scenters-Zapico at the downtown library as a part of their Borderlands Conference.

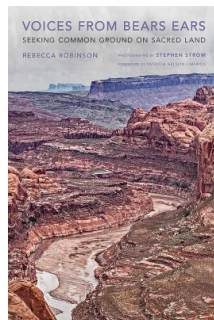
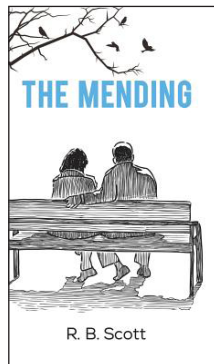
Thursday, April 11, 7 p.m. Salt Lake native Ronald Scott will read from and sign his new novel, *The Mending*.



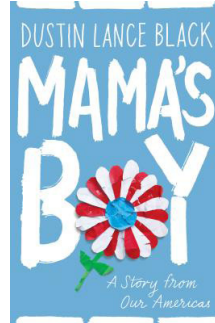
Thursday, April 25, 7 p.m. Kirk Johnson will join us to discuss *The Feather Thief: Beauty, Obsession, and the Natural History Heist of the Century*.

Friday, April 26, 7 p.m. Author Rebecca M. Robinson and photographer Stephen E. Strom will join us to discuss their wonderful new collaboration, *Voices from Bears Ears: Seeking Common Ground on Sacred Land*.

Saturday, April 27, ALL DAY is Independent Bookstore Day. Come and join the fun at the bookshop from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m.

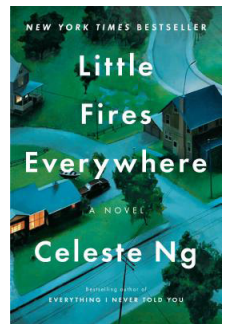
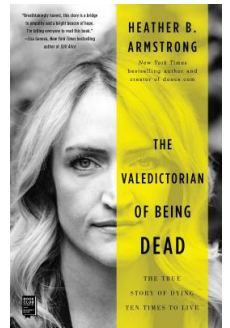


Saturday, April 27, 7 p.m. Local blogger Heather B. Armstrong will share her startling memoir, *The Valedictorian of Being Dead: The True Story of Dying Ten Times to Live*. Tickets available on Eventbrite.

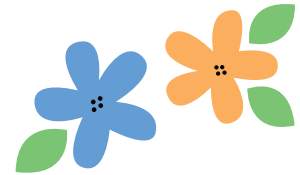
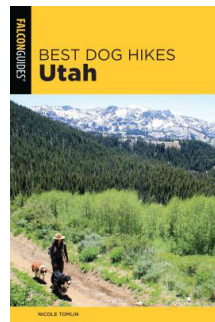


Thursday, May 9, As part of QTalks at the Utah Pride Center, Dustin Lance Black will discuss his new memoir, *Mama's Boy: A Story from Our Americas*. Time to be announced.

Friday, May 17, 7 p.m. Celeste Ng will join us to celebrate the paperback release of *Little Fires Everywhere*. Paisley Rekdal, Utah's Poet Laureate, will join her in conversation.



Saturday, May 18, 2 p.m. Nicole Tomlin will lead the way with *Best Dog Hikes Utah*.



Ever dream of writing a book?

What if you created a book so amazing it got published and then featured in the Inkslinger?

Big dreams start small,
and they begin with the first few words
on the first few pages.

Join us, a faculty of nationally published authors,
for an exclusive one-day event.

First Pages: Workshop for Beginning Writers

Saturday, March 30th, from 8:30am - 6:00pm

University of Utah Guest House

ticket price: \$175*

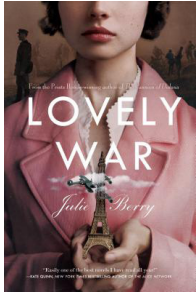
Please visit first-pages.com to view list of amazing faculty,
see our schedule, and purchase tickets.



It is our pleasure to offer customers of The King's English Bookshop
and Inkslinger readers \$50 off their ticket price. Simply use the code
INKSLINGER19 at checkout.

*tickets sold through Eventbrite.com

Kids and Young Adults

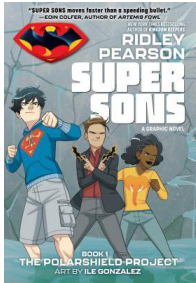
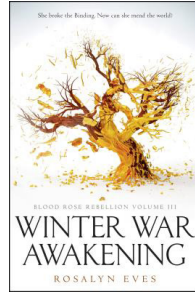


Wednesday, March 27, 7 p.m. Julie Berry will read from and sign her new teen novel, *Lovely War*, at the Provo Library.

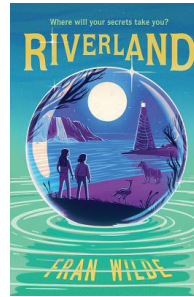
Thursday, March 28, 7 p.m. Julie Berry joins us at the bookshop to discuss *Lovely War*.

Saturday, March 30, 2 p.m. Local favorite Rosalyn Eves will read from and sign *Winter War Awakening*.

Tuesday, April 2, 7 p.m. Ridley Pearson will read from and sign *Super Sons: The Polar Shield Project*.



Thursday, April 4, 7 p.m. Margaret Peterson Haddix will introduce her new middle grade series, *Greystone Secrets*.

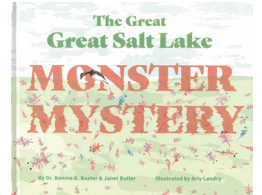


Monday, April 15, 7 p.m. Fran Wilde will be in conversation with Dan Wells about her new novel, *Riverland*.

Tuesday, April 16, 3:30 p.m. Don't miss a special visit from the Very Hungry Caterpillar!

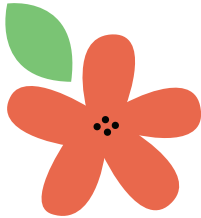
Saturday, April 27, 2 p.m. Join us for a lively storytime featuring *The Great Great Salt Lake Monster Mystery!*

Monday, April 29, 7 p.m. The Simon & Schuster Shelf Queens—Jessica Brody, Nicki Pau Preto, Joanne Rendell, Kiersten White and Suzanne Young—will join us for a panel discussion of their new teen novels.



WHAT OUR BOOK CLUBS ARE READING NOW

All are open to the public and meet at the bookshop unless otherwise noted.



ARMCHAIR TRAVEL MYSTERY

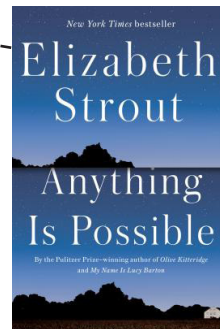
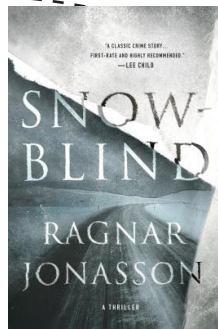
3rd Tuesday of the month, 7 p.m.

April: *Snowblind*,

Ragnar Jo'nasson

May: *The Master Key*,

Masako Togawa

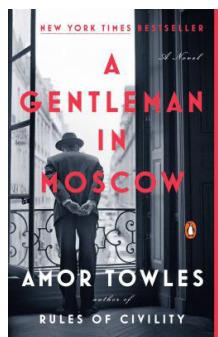


BRIAN SHORT

2nd Tuesday of the month, 7 p.m.

April: *A Gentleman in Moscow*,

Amor Towles



SECOND MONDAY

2nd Monday of the month;

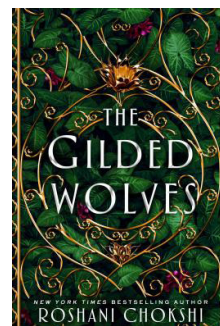
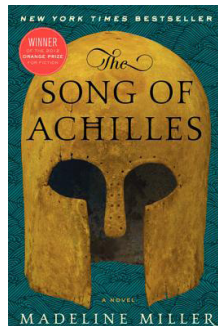
7 p.m., \$5

April: *The Song of Achilles*,

Madeline Miller

May: *Borrowed Horses*,

Sian Griffiths



ROZ READS!

Last Monday, Tuesday & Wednesday of the month, 7 p.m.

See www.rozreads.com for details.

\$10 per evening paid to Roz

April: *Anything Is Possible*,

Elizabeth Strout

May: *The Friend*, Sigrid Nunez

SLC LESBIAN

1st Wednesday of the month, 7 p.m. at the Anderson-Foothill Library

April: *Bright Lights of Summer*,

Lynn Ames

May: *Stray City*, Chelsey Johnson

YA & WINE

2nd Wednesday of the month, 7 p.m.

April: *The Gilded Wolves*,

Roshani Chokshi

May: *Stalking Jack the Ripper*,

Kerri Maniscalco

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continued from page 1



on their dailiness. But even this display of discipline and creativity doesn't stave off boredom. Physical torture would be far more grim of course, but isn't terminal boredom the worst sort of mental torture?

AT: Sounds like an excellent answer [laughs].

BB: [laughing too] It is long, but I was trying to set the book up in the first question for those who hadn't yet read it.

AT: You did a great job. I'm not sure what I can add to what you said, so I'll riff on it: In choosing this story to tell I knew that I was taking on a challenge—the challenge of telling a story inside a confined space without boring myself or the reader. Not a unique challenge; other novels have taken it on in different ways, accepting similar restraints to their advantage. *Moby-Dick*, for instance. The crew is small and once they get on the boat after the first hundred pages or so, they don't get off again. So it's a small group in a small space for hundreds and hundreds of pages.

In taking on such confines, the way to make the story interesting is to bring the world inside. To them. Through literary illusions, through a discussion of commerce and of science—biology and marine life, the stars—of Shakespeare. By bringing the world in, making it a rich experience inside the small space.

This is a different version of that of course. You're right. I'm taking a sophisticated person, used to luxury and freedom, and putting him in a small space in a time of a harsh reality. That adds different components. He's ultimately successful in his battle with confinement, and this adds to the story because by taking away the luxuries he's used to, he begins searching for purpose. It becomes a novel of purpose; he reinvents himself.

BB: Like his reading, the game of Zut the Count plays with Sofia is not only a mechanism for avoiding silence and livening up dinner—a strategy to avoid boredom—it is also a wonderful way of broadening the horizons of both players. Because I see this novel as not only good-humored but in many ways profound, might the dangers of boredom and the importance of forestalling those dangers in what-

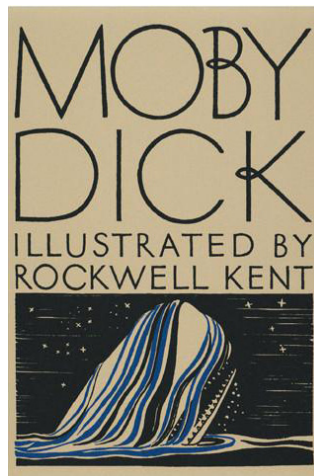
ever way one can involve avoiding the danger of becoming a bore? Of allowing the confines of one's existence to narrow one's mind and point of view? I guess that's the converse of what we were just talking about.

AT: Interesting question. No one's put it quite like that. Nicely put. This book is different from *Rules of Civility*, a novel that takes place over one year in the life of a 25-year-old woman of working class background who is climbing up the socioeconomic ladder. When I finished the first draft of this book, I realized that one of the reasons I had chosen to write it was that it is the inverse of my first novel in that everything is opposite: a young woman and an older man; a woman who is at the bottom of the socioeconomic ladder and a man at the top of that ladder; a story over one year and one that takes place over a 32-year period. It is also unlike *Rules of Civility* in that my first novel was about one woman surrounded by people her own age—if one came to New York City say, or Los Angeles or Salt Lake City, one would find people of the same age, 25 in that case, living their lives together—while *A Gentleman in Moscow* is about people across generations. About generational relationships: The Count, Nina and Sofia, the Count's grandmother, his godfather...relationships over a lifetime.

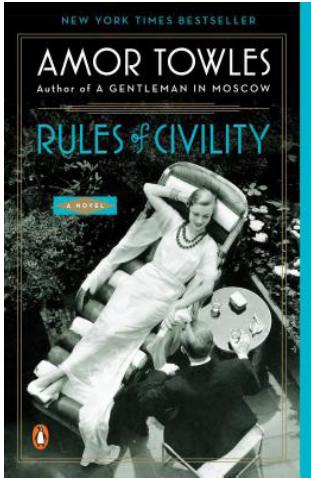
In the scene you mentioned, Zut is a way of moving through time. The Count, who is 32 when the book starts is now over 60 and moving towards the end of his life—a 60-year-old man taking care of an 18-year-old girl....the movement is generational rather than among people in a single generation. One of the things I like in that scene, as in the hide-the-thimble scene earlier in the book, is that in both the Count has a good adversary. On the one hand he plays a game to relate to someone of a young age, but on the other he ends up underestimating them. They surprise us. As Sofia does in the games of Zut.

Also it is an instance in which the simplest things can have such resonance. The route along the way to taking a child from 5 to 20 is a constant dynamic of having the rug pulled out from under us. [laughs] It's about parenting. But at the same time it's about the daily patterns of life. Small habits. The dailiness of life can become the richness of life regardless of circumstances. I'm interested in investigating how the simplest things can resonate in terms of personal purpose. In terms of the foundation for serious relationships.

BB: In the end, the Count creates a framework for his existence that seems to not only fill and ease his days but also to allow or even



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encourage him to go deeper into his own past—into his relationship with his sister and with the land where he grew up. Turns out this is a perfect way to plumb the depths of character. Did this back and forth between memory and the present just come as you wrote or was it done purposefully as a way of examining character?

AT: I'm an outliner. I work with a very detailed outline so that by the time I start chapter one I have designed everything in the chapter—the setting, the backgrounds of the characters, the imagery—in outline

form. As a part of that, I create a backstory I don't intend to use. But there are few novels in which you don't have to look back if you're painting a character in midlife. It's natural to draw on those elements. To start with where they were born...It becomes an issue of craft to do it artfully. In terms of craft, it's important to know how to reference just enough to give readers what they must know but not enough to bog them down with hundreds of pages of what happened before the age of 25. Craft in terms of economy. Knowing how much and also when to introduce it, when and how to deliver the information. I could have opened *A Gentleman in Moscow* with a chapter on all that had happened before the action starts, but it's often better not to do that. It's more pleasurable to have things pop up. That's part of the challenge of the design.

BB: One of the hallmarks of a not-wonderful writer is exactly when they introduce a character's history in a longwinded way; frontloading facts can seem amateurish.

AT: Yes! I've been writing since I was a kid, but in *Rules*, in the first draft of what was to become my first published novel, a character does exactly that. When Katy introduces herself she gives us a line that tells the readers about her past—that she was an immigrant. And that scene drove me crazy. It also felt out of character with Katy, who kept her cards close to herself; you had to do your best to keep up with her. I decided to strike that early line out when she went to a Russian speakeasy, because when she was leaving the owner spoke to her in Russian and she responded in Russian. Her knowing Russian was a surprise. It gave the reader what was needed. It worked so much better that way, which reinforced my conviction to avoid weighing down the beginning of a book.

BB: There is a growing awareness, in the action and in references to works of literature, that the personal is all-important—even to a character who is balanced, literally, on the razor's edge of history. This is evident in the Count's relationship with his sister and with the two children, Nina and Sofia. Can you talk about this?

AT: Can you explain the notion of the personal as you mean it?

BB: I guess the question stems from the fact that the book is set in Stalinist Russia and the notion that in the West it's all about the individual and in this Russia that is new to the Count it's about the collective. That there's this dichotomy. It's almost as if they're opposed.

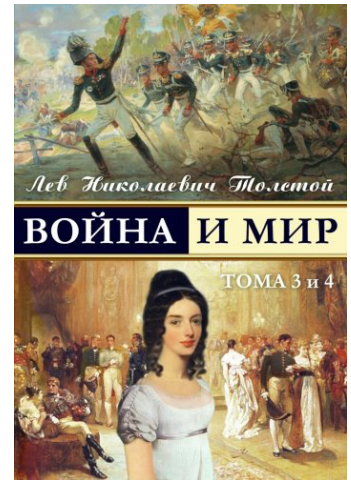
AT: Before we get into Communism and the Soviet era, let's talk about this nuanced notion of yours outside of the realm of politics.

The notion of the personal outside of politics, outside of history was certainly of great interest in the 19th century novel which centers around the question of a single person's position—*Madam Bovary* in the context of an emerging commercial middle class, or Dickens characters who were individuals but among vast numbers of the poor. And *War and Peace*. Its central philosophical investigation is what the role of the individual is in terms of politics. Of war. Of historical change. Is it Napoleon who is responsible or is it a waitress or serf at home, or the will of 10,000 or a soldier in the field? Are they as important to the movement of history and western philosophy as Napoleon? There's a long history in Western literature and philosophy of asking the question, Where does the individual begin and end? How does he or she relate to family, to history, to commerce, to society in ever-widening circles? Tolstoy would say both. The novel helps us explore the ambiguities and contradictions where characters are central but where there is the sweep of time and people as backdrop. In the end it all matters. But the exploration of the ideas in terms of individual characters is central.

The Soviet Era is a very serious political backdrop, you're right, moving to the political. That transition [to Communism] is full of good and bad. If you look at the American vision of the Soviet Union, our generation saw things in stark terms of shortages, political repression, artistic repression, spies. This was so simplistic. People did get married. They had children, celebrated holidays. They related to classical music and to literature. The ballet, chess. Life as we knew it was going on there too.

Russia is both. The challenge of writing of the Soviet era is knowing how to balance both—the dangers and the worst aspects of that era along with the good. Our view was very much a Cold War interpretation which has not helped us to understand Russia in the postwar era. I wanted the book to bring to the surface the contradictions. Because when the Soviets came to power there were millions of illiterate peasants who didn't want to go back to serfdom. The revolution sprang from a genuine impulse to make changes for the good. Ten years down the road those who had been serfs didn't want to go back to serfdom. Also, Czarist Russia had been a powerful nation until weakened by World War I. The Soviets vaulted them back to the forefront of global events. By WWII they were again one of the world's powerful nations.

Depicting the variety of viewpoints of those involved in that transition meant creating characters who help us see the different ways history is unfolding, different ways to view it. Like Mishka, who believed in the revolution while it was happening, wanted it to happen, but later became disillusioned, and Nina, who was a believer in the revolution as she came of age but who became disillusioned, and Jozef who came from a rough background and fought in the war as a communist and thought they were doing valuable things which they were—vaulting Russia into the future.



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BB: Which they did with women...

AT: Yes. That happened the day after the revolution. They were way ahead of America with women. And in a secular sense. In some ways they were way ahead of the curve. Individuals help us see the ways history is unfolding and what it might mean to different individuals in terms of their time. And the Count comes from a very specific time. But all of the characters are central to understanding their time in different ways.

BB: The miracle of the reappearing bees on the rooftop seemed the one place in the novel imbued quite literally with magic. Because it was of a piece with the Count's memories of home, it gave them, too, a nearly supernatural aura, one that put me in mind of *And Quiet Flows the Don*. Or, again, *War and Peace*. This seemed, at least for me, to somehow be the heart of the book. Did you mean it to be?

AT: There are at least 10, 20, 30 instances like that, and there need to be, in order to be all things to all readers. Different things resonate with different people due to differences in their own lives, or in what matters to them in terms of their backgrounds, or whether they're old or young, rich or poor...

BB: So it says more about me than the scene... [laughs]

AT: It may, but you're right, that is an important scene. The bees change the Count's life and launch his exploration of purpose. He's ready to throw in the towel. What the beekeeper explains is that the bees bring the pollen, the flavor, into the honey, and the honey holds it. Reminding the count, who believes he's been erased and no longer matters—maybe for good reason, he acknowledges—of this. When the Count thinks, My time has come and gone, the honey is a reminder that things can persist in strange ways. The taste from an apple orchard 500 miles away can be brought to mind by the taste of honey. It exists in an altered form but is still of value. Someone has to be that hidden existence of the past lingering around under the assumption that it is [still] valuable for this good thing to persist in this small and simple way. So yes, it is a moment of magic.

That was not the only magical moment, either. In a critical moment



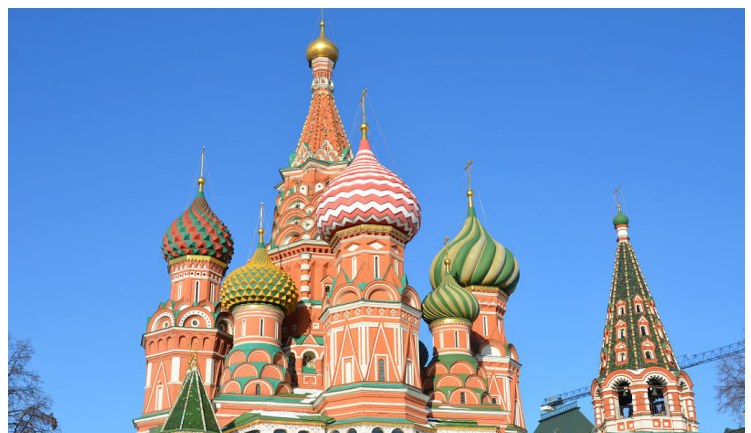
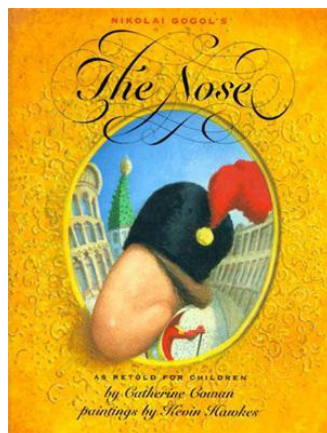
the ghost of the one-eyed cat appears when the Count returns home. Both scenes seem natural in terms of the story and in the way they are told. They are also in harmony to some degree with the magical in Russian literature. In Gogol and much later with Bulgakov. It is in keeping with Gogol, in the stories "The Overcoat" or "The Nose." He used magic in an iconic way to profile the shortcomings of Russian society. He had to be careful in Czarist Russian so he used both magic and satire. As does

Bulgakov in *The Master and Margarita* when the devil comes to Moscow. The Metropol Hotel is there too. But that [demonic] black cat wandering around Moscow... Bringing in a little magic creates harmony with a thread of Russian literature.

BB: You use the wonderful treasures which were once part of the Count's life and which furnish the hotel (or are hidden away in the storeroom, to be brought out when the proper occasion arises) to symbolically detail the arc of history. The basement in particular is a kind of archeological dig which showcases not just a bygone era, but also the way the past is secretly valued in the present. Could you say something about the old and beautiful—its value and, conversely, perhaps, whether there is any harm in glorifying it? You've talked about this but this might hit a different angle.

AT: The answer is in your question again here. I'll hand you the mic. [laughs] Your questions are better answers. The book is clearly populated with an array of objects that play a role in representing time, looking back to the past, and there's been a major change in the landscape of the nation as a whole, multiple before and afters. Objects help us understand the transitions. It's natural to human life to value objects, as the Count says. He takes better and better care of his possessions as they're winnowed down until he only has a handful. They're all he has left to help him remember the past.

On the other hand, as you pointed out, there's also the broader story of objects like those in the basement of the hotel. They were locked up during the revolution but serve the pomp and circumstance in this time too. So they are central. But remember when he recounts the tale of the bells? They are removed from the cathedral and turned into cannons. But they had originally been forged from cannons. The



The Arc of History: An Interview with Amor Towles



arc of history as seen in its objects. Cannons to bells and bells to cannons. A way of investigating life in Russia.

BB: The Count's new position in the hotel where he had lived in such luxury is an ideal situation in which to examine social status in an upstairs/downstairs kind of way, with a comrade or two thrown in. Seems in this instance that although the mighty no longer rise to the top because of inherited wealth, they do so by scaling the bureaucratic ladder—not at all the same thing as success through merit. Witness Bishop. Could you comment on this in terms of the way you might evaluate the system under Stalin?

AT: Under Stalinism membership in the party became a form of privilege. It brought you better apartments, better food, better housing, more authority, and also more opportunities for your children, to grow up and be in the communist party and live that same life. It mirrored or duplicated aristocracy, no question. But other equalities survived. A middle class of a kind. But nonetheless there was a privileged class, no question. The hotel was a means of examining that.

I read in *The New York Times* today that upward mobility is diminishing here. If you are born in the bottom 10% economically, where 100 years ago there was 25% or 30% chance to move up or down, you now have a 5% chance of not remaining there. Ten percent at most. And if you are born in the top 10% you likewise have a 90% chance of staying there with access to education, to health care, better child care and child development. And the ability to pass on wealth is growing as well. This is the reality here in America in real time. Our more struggling states look at one another with suspicion. It is a reality both here and there. It's also an aspect in *Rules of Civility*. And an ongoing interest of mine.

BB: This is a big, sweeping, romantic, if ironic novel, more along the lines of *War and Peace* (with a touch of Laurence Sterne or Henry Fielding thrown in) than *Anna Karenina*, and, like *War and Peace*, it is populated by a large and fascinating cast of characters from all walks of life—which, given the small confines of the Hotel Metropol, makes it a miraculous achievement. So, a two-part question: did you intend this to be such a complex and compendious (although utterly entertaining I hasten to add) novel or did it grow naturally into its vibrant and lively self? And did you know as much as you seem to about Russian history when you began writing *A Gentleman in Moscow* or did you learn along the way?

AT: I'll go backwards. I don't pick a topic and then research it and then write a book. That's not how I work. I write a book about a

subject I've long been interested in. Like *Rules of Civility*. I'd been a fan of the '20s and '30s since a kid. Read the novels, seen the movies, listened to the music, studied the art movements. I used that familiarity as a basis to start the book. It was a similar dynamic with *A Gentleman in Moscow*. It started long ago with an interest in Russian literature and then the avant-garde and then the soviets...So I had over 20 years of ongoing interest in Russia by the time I sat down to write. Twenty years of familiarity as a foundation for the story.

As I mentioned, I am an outliner. I write a draft from an outline and no one reads it. Then it is revised from beginning to end at least two more times. In the third draft, the smaller characters, who were all in the outline and the first draft, come closer and closer to the surface. They're impatient, their point of view is more important, they're almost demanding their time on the stage. If I look at Anna and Mishka, the page count for each increases significantly from draft one to the final draft. They become more and more important to the novel as their personalities begin to express themselves in contrast to the main characters.

I know one challenge of presenting all the different points of view in Russian life through the characters is that the novel becomes more and more crowded with these characters, these points of view of the privileged class, aristocrats, the foreigners who come and go, the people who work in the hotel...It becomes kind of Marx Brothers-esque. It makes the room more and more crowded in a slapstick kind of way. Becomes kind of a joke. Like the geese in the hall and all the guests popping out of their doors. Or the celebration after the piano competition. Obviously the Count, Anna and Sofia had to be there but then the Chef and Andrey would insist on coming and then there's a knock on the door—the concierge comes in to tell him



someone is waiting, and then the Bishops shows up. It can be sort of spontaneous. This would never play out with just the three characters. They [the others] demand their time on the stage.

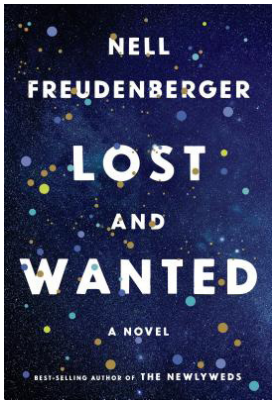
BB: The humor adds, too. And reduces the risk of sentimentality.

AT: That kind of scene can be scary or moving or comic. But in this case it starts out comic and does end on a sober note. Yes.

BB: Thank you so much. For answering all my questions. It was really interesting. And thank you for writing this miraculous book. Congratulations on its publication in paperback!

AT: Nice to meet you again, and I hope I see you when I'm there!

BB: Wouldn't miss it for the world.

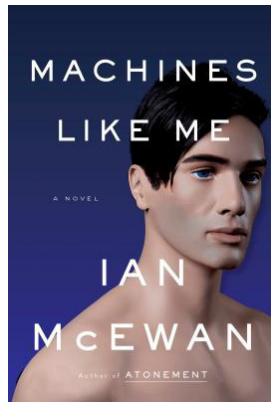


Lost and Wanted, Nell Freudenberger
Helen, a brilliant physicist, and Charlotte, a successful screenwriter, were close friends as roommates at Harvard. They supported each other through challenges of race and gender and their own ambitions. Gradually, they drifted apart and now, over a decade later, Charlie has died. After her death Helen gets pulled back into her life and what follows can happily be described as an intellectual ghost

story. The kind you want on a cold clear night, while you look up at the stars and wonder. – Michaela Riding, Knopf, \$26.95
Editor's note: available April 19

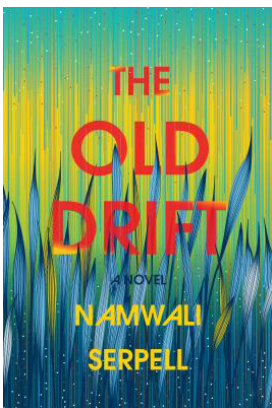
Machines Like Me, Ian McEwan

In an alternate version of the 1980s, England has lost the Falkland War and Alan Turing, instead of killing himself, has long-since mastered the development of AI, catapulting that branch of science into prominence. Charlie, a ne'er-do-well who just inherited a considerable sum, has spent the whole of it on the latest version of Adam, a humanoid/android being. Charlie ignores the warning of his new "friend" that his upstairs neighbor, with whom he's falling in love, is a liar and allows her to share the programming of Adam. So begins a complicated tale of three-way and not entirely human (depending on one's point of view) love, of science and its impact for ill and good on society, and among many other things the definitions of self and consciousness—all while telling a story of right and wrong, of children and adults and scientifically engineered beings, each in pain and in need. McEwan keeps you vacillating between suspicion and empathy in a masterful and intriguing novel designed to upset your ideas about pretty much everything. – Betsy Burton, Nan A. Talese, \$26.95

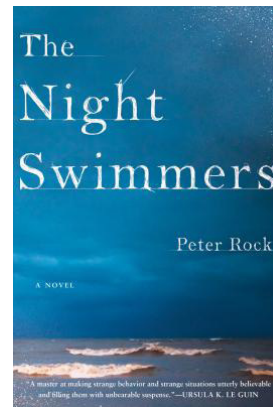


The Old Drift, Namwali Serpell

When the genre descriptions on book covers read science fiction, saga, historical fiction and historical romance, the reader knows they will either love or hate what's inside. I loved it. This tale begins in 1904 in a hotel room near Victoria Falls and continues on into the 20th century and beyond. A story of family, tragedy and, most importantly, what it means to be human, *The Old Drift* is a saga of three



Zambian families, one white, one black, one brown, and how their lives interact with politics, science and colonialism. It is one of the most compelling debut novels I have ever read, but attempting to distill its 592 pages into a blurb is nearly impossible. – Jan Sloan, Hogarth Books, \$28



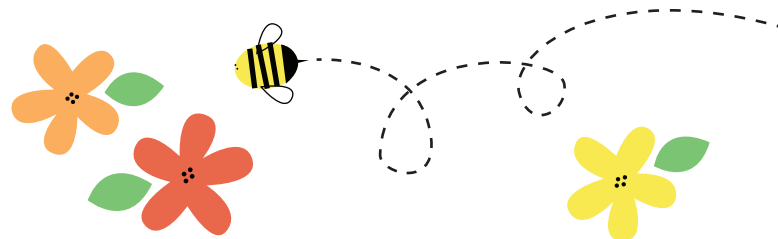
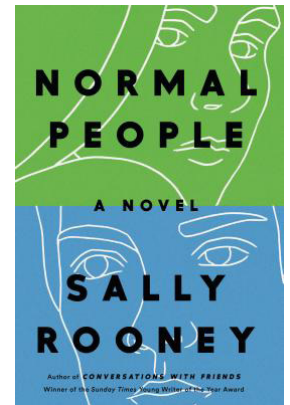
The Night Swimmers, Peter Rock

As fluid and elusive as the watery world in which the protagonist is so often submerged, Rock's latest is, like all his work, dreamlike, fragmented, unpredictable. A young man still dependent on his parents is spending a summer with them in a lake community on the shores of Lake Michigan. He's trying to write but is essentially unmoored. Swimming almost nightly, he's aware in a dreamlike way of what

goes on in the lake's shadowy depths, its currents, crosscurrents, undercurrents, just as he is subliminally aware of the unseen forces that have driven his own past. Then he encounters another swimmer, a widow a decade older who is as mysterious as the watery depths above which they stroke in tandem. All of this moves back and forth with a present 20 years later when the narrator/author, now a husband and father, parents his two daughters with love and imagination. I've never read a better account of a young man adrift in a world still uncharted in his mind. I found it spellbinding and brilliantly illuminating. – Betsy Burton, Soho, \$25

Normal People, Sally Rooney

Marianne and Connell, top students in their small-town class in Sligo, win spots at Trinity College in Dublin. Rooney's new novel follows the two sometime-lovers sometime-friends as their story unfolds at intervals of several months over the course of four years. Written in third-person, but structured equally by each protagonist's point of view, the stories track the psychological course of what both binds and separates these two young people—class, family, friends, trauma, natural affinity, intelligence—in their struggles on the cusp of adulthood. – Michelle Macfarlane, Hogarth, \$26





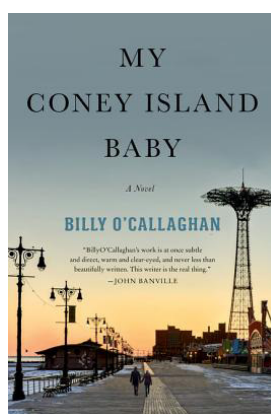
The Wall, John Lanchester

Different from so many post-apocalyptic stories in that it feels like it could really happen, this novel is set in the not-too-distant future in which we have basically ruined everything for this new generation. Military service on the Wall, required of these young people, is cold, unforgiving, and dangerous. I was immersed in the story, and then glad to be out of it and in a warm house. Lanchester is a

master of setting the stage and then inviting you into the scene.
– Anne Holman, Norton, \$25.95

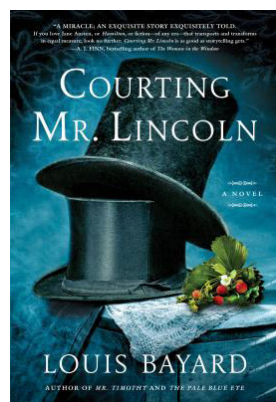
My Coney Island Baby, Billy O'Callaghan

Michael and Caitlin, two middle-aged lovers, spend an afternoon together on a cold winter day at Coney Island in a decaying hotel. Both have been married for many years. Michael's wife is now battling cancer and Caitlin's husband is about to receive a job promotion that will cause them to move away. On this single afternoon together, their marital relationships are scrutinized. Can they continue a relationship which has buoyed them both over many years, or will changing circumstances cause them to make another choice? O'Callaghan's work is reminiscent of William Trevor and Colm Tóibín. Beautiful language and a respectful approach to human dilemma.
– Sue Fleming, Harper \$25.99 *Editor's note: available April 19*



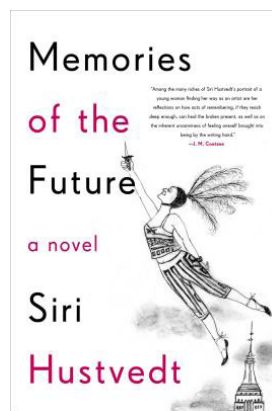
Courting Mr. Lincoln, Louis Bayard

Before Abraham Lincoln ever considered running for president, he was a young lawyer riding the circuits in rural Illinois with big political ideas and no marriage prospects. It is 1840 when we meet a feisty young Mary Todd, who is in the process of moving in with her sister in Springfield—a sister who is desperate to find Mary a suitable husband. Mary can find fault with each suitor, except for two



very unlikely men, Abraham Lincoln and Joseph Speed, who have been living together, doing most everything together, even sharing the same bed, for years. Their friendship seems to exclude the possibility of any outsiders. And though both men are extremely taken with Mary, her presence drives a wedge between them—which in turn drives a wedge between Mary and Joseph and also between Mary and Abraham. In tell-

ing the story of one of the most compelling and little-known love triangles in history, Louis Bayard has crafted a marvel of historical fiction that is absolutely stunning. In turns hilarious and heart-wrenching, this well-researched, deftly plotted novel breathes new life into historical characters we all thought we knew so well. – Rachel Haisley, Algonquin, \$27.95



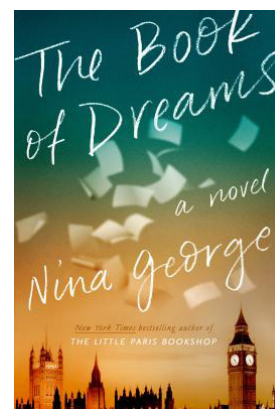
Memories of the Future, Siri Hustvedt

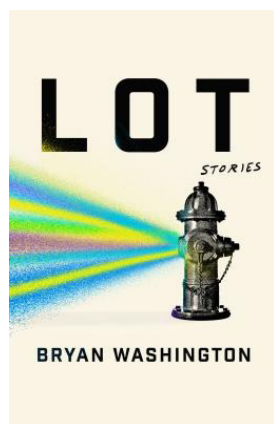
Unpredictable, philosophically complex, yet utterly entertaining, Hustvedt's latest novel features a young writer in a cramped apartment in New York, who, utterly alone (except for the characters in the novel she has begun), listens to her neighbor, Lucy Brite, through the wall with a stethoscope. Recalling all of this from the point of view of herself as successful middle-aged writer, H.S. reads from

the journal in which she had recorded (among other things) the conversations she overheard and parts of the (very amusing) novel her younger self had written. Books—the reading and writing of them—are life's blood to H.S., whatever her age. Hilarity abounds, but so does pain—present and past. The journals allow H.S. the elder to consider details long since lost to memory, and their record of overheard conversations from Lucy's apartment also presents a puzzle aching to be solved. Therein lies a plot. Quite a wild one. As the title indicates this is a book about memory. How it slips and slides and goes sideways—or doesn't. And about being. And friendship. It is intensely feminist in its outlook, and in that sense achingly illuminating; it is thought-provoking in profound ways; it is beyond erudite; it is quirky, fractured, yet in the end, all of a piece. I loved it. – Betsy Burton, Simon & Schuster, \$27

The Book of Dreams, Nina George

Henri Skinner is a tough ex-war reporter on his way to meet his 13-year old son for the first time in years. A brief moment of urgent necessity instead puts him in a coma, where he hovers between dreams, reliving stories of his childhood and the many paths his life did take and could have taken. His son Sam visits him every day, as does an ex-lover named Eddie Tomlin, as they both grapple with the lives they could have had and the lives they want going forward. Ultimately an exploration of inevitability, this novel has some of the most evocative passages about consciousness I've read in a long time. – Michaela Riding, Crown Publishing, \$26





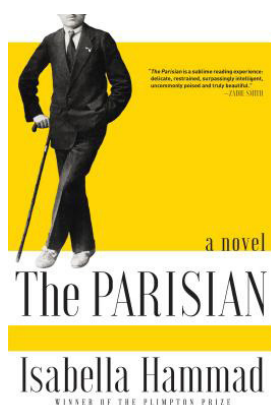
Lot: Stories, Bryan Washington

A boy in the midst of a mixed-race family living in a mixed-race community in Houston tells tales of neighbors and friends and families, of his brother and sister, his father and mother, of infidelity and baseball and drugs and death and love in his neighborhood and in his family's restaurant. The chorus of community interferes and supports, gossips and judges, in a coming-of-age story

that is harsh in terms of reality, as harrowing as it is touching, vibrantly told, and brilliantly original. – Betsy Burton, Riverhead, \$25

The Parisian, Isabella Hammad

As a young man Midhat, the son of a wealthy merchant with interests in Nablus and Cairo, travels to Paris to study medicine. There he meets and falls in love with a young Parisian woman who forever changes his life. Even in Paris, the shadows falling across the Middle East are hard to ignore, and in 1914 Midhat is forced to return home. During the ensuing years his fate becomes locked with that of his people as the upheaval in the Middle East under the British occupation and the changes in the political and geographic map of that part of the world—changes that impact us all today—loom ever larger. Listening to the beat of Midhat's heart as he attempts to relate to his friends, his grandmother, his distant father, his wife and children, we bear witness to his attempt to make sense of his own history and that of his people. In the process, we learn more about the events surrounding the birth of the Middle East as it exists today than any history could impart. A monumental achievement. – Betsy Burton, Grove, \$27



Feast Your Eyes, Myla Goldberg

Written by the author of *Bee Season*, this completely original story is told through the catalog notes for a photography show at the Museum of Modern Art. It is the life story of a fictional photographer, Lillian Presto, a boundary-pushing artist who gains notoriety for the semi-nude pictures of herself and her daughter, Samantha. Interspersed with the catalog notes are letters that Lillian has written to friends, her journal entries and letters from friends, lov-

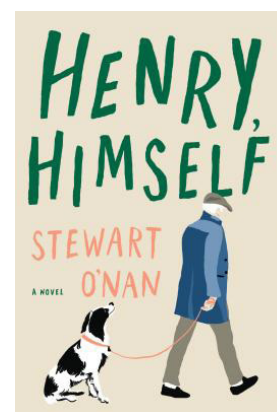


ers and neighbors. An incredible tale of dedication to beauty and authenticity, this is the story of so many women trying to balance motherhood and ambition. A truly wonderful read.

– Jan Sloan, Simon and Schuster, \$28

Henry, Himself, Stewart O'Nan

In this prequel to O'Nan's beloved, *Emily Alone*, Henry Maxwell—soldier, son, lover, husband, father, breadwinner, churchgoer—is portrayed as a 20th-century everyman. A native Pittsburgher and an engineer, he has always believed in logic, sacrifice and hard work. So why are his adult children unhappy with him? Is he a good man? Has he done right by the people he loves? As his memory and strength dwindle, Henry begins to wonder if he hasn't reached a dead end. But life still has surprises in store. O'Nan has such a gift for creating warm-hearted portraits of original American men and women. Henry and his wife Emily invite you to learn of their life together in this unsentimental but moving life story. – Sue Fleming, Viking, \$27



Queenie, Candice Carty-Williams

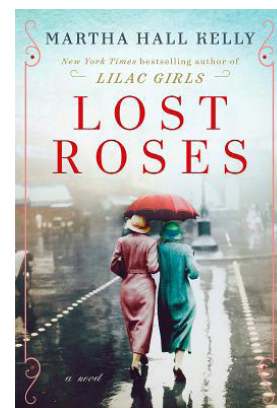
Queenie Jenkins is a young Jamaican-British woman living in London who, though she straddles the two cultures, seems to fit neatly into neither. When her long-term white boyfriend breaks up with her, Queenie tries to find comfort in all the wrong places, procrastinating her responsibilities at her magazine job, having sex with questionable strangers, and generally wallowing in her own self-pity. As she bounces from one bad decision to the



next, Queenie keeps asking herself what exactly she is doing and why—questions we all must answer for ourselves. Hilarious, heart-wrenching and undeniably honest, this is a beautiful debut novel filled with unforgettable characters and arresting insight. – Rachel Haisley, Scout, \$26

Lost Roses, Martha Hall Kelly

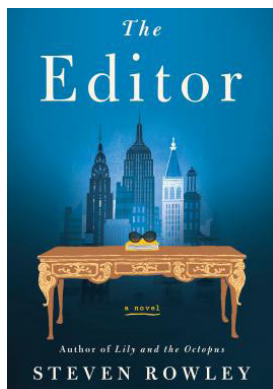
Readers of Kelly's *Lilac Girls* will be delighted with her newest novel about Caroline Ferriday's mother, Eliza Woolsey Mitchell, which is also inspired by true events. *Lost Roses* sweeps the reader from Paris to St. Petersburg and back to New York's Southampton as we follow the stories of three brave women whose lives are intertwined by friendship and loy-



alty. It's 1914 and Eliza is thrilled to be a guest of the Romanov cousins. When war looms, however, she returns to the states, leaving behind her dear friend Sofya who escapes with her family to the countryside, engaging a peasant girl, Varinka, to help with her newly born son, Max. Dangerous connections are formed as the Bolsheviks take power and the aristocracy is forced to flee or die. Eliza does all she can to locate the family, becoming in the process one of the first American women to help and support the White Russians immigrating to this country. Watching young Caroline struggle with her delicate relationship with her mother, seeing Sofya and her sister's brilliant plans for escape, we are treated to a spectacular journey through a turbulent time in history – Anne Stewart Mark, Ballantine Books, \$28

***The Island of Sea Women*, Lisa See**

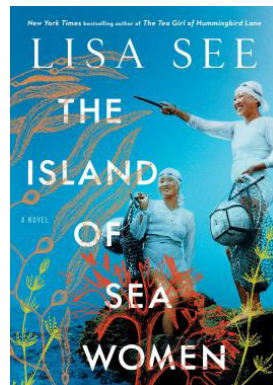
Young-suk and Mi-Ja meet as young children in 1938. Young-suk was born on the island of Jeju, south of Korea, and Mi-Ja on the mainland. Mi-Ja, whose father collaborated with Japanese colonists, has been sent to live with relatives on the island, and the lives of these characters become intertwined over the years in friendship and tragedy. Women on Jeju bear the economic responsibilities for family by diving in the cold waters for marine harvests of fish and produce while men stay ashore tending infants and toddlers—and also drinking, gambling, and lounging in the village square sharing grand thoughts. The story that unfolds reveals the distinct culture of this South Korean island as well as the horrors of colonization, World War II, the Korean War and American influence. Fascinating and well-researched, this is one among a growing number of novels that help the reader to better understand both Korean history and current Korean political thought and action. – Sue Fleming, Scribner, \$27



***The Editor*, Steven Rowley**

The Editor is the bittersweet story of an author whose first novel concerns his Irish Catholic mother. Said author is named Francis after Robert F. Kennedy. His manuscript is picked up for publication by Doubleday and his editor turns out to be none other than Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis. A wonderful relationship begins—complete with glimpses into her once overly

publicized life—as Jackie O encourages James (as he now calls himself) to dig deeper to find the proper ending and ultimately to go home and confront his past. Funny and heartwarming, this is a beautiful tale of a mother and son and their journey to reconciliation. – Anne Stewart Mark, Penguin Random House, \$27

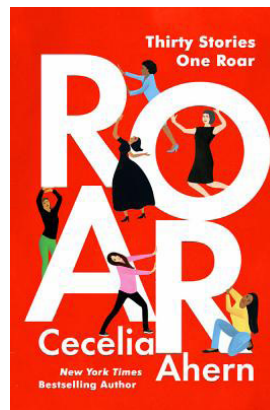
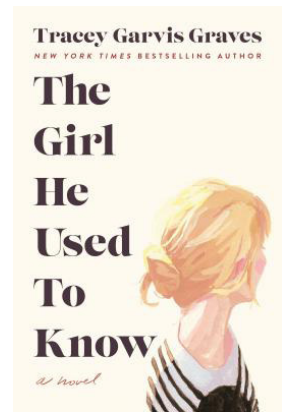


***The Girl He Used to Know*, Tracey Garvis Graves**

Tracey Garvis Graves

This sweet romance will win your heart. Annicka and Jonathon met and fell in love in college. She was an awkward, shy English major, he a chess player who lost his first game, and his heart, to her. Unexpected tragedy forces them apart, but 10 years later they're both still thinking about one another. When a chance meeting brings them together again, old feelings rekindle alongside the anxieties that initially forced them apart. This book is a tender, unique love story between two imperfect people each dealing with problems that are keeping them apart, and finding a way to be imperfect together.

– Mackenzie Lee, St. Martin's, \$26.99



***Roar*, Cecelia Ahern**

Each of these 30 short stories turns on an expectation that Cecelia Ahern then flips on its head to leave the reader either laughing or drawing in a surprised breath. Helen Reddy (“*I am Woman: hear me roar*”) would have been proud. – Anne Holman, Grand Central, \$26

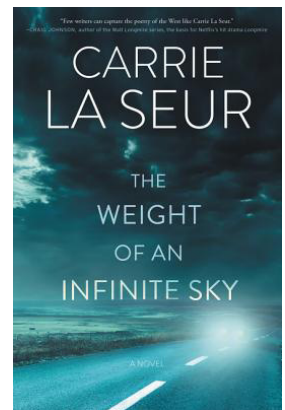
FICTION PAPER

***The Weight of an Infinite Sky*, Carrie La Seur**

Carrie La Seur

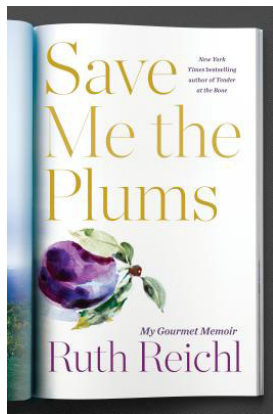
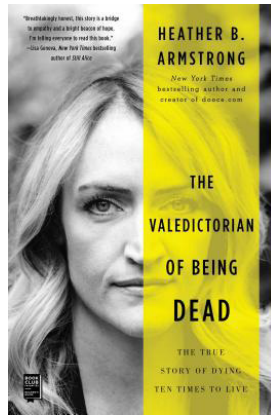
Rhodes Scholar, environmental lawyer, and 7th generation Montanan, Carrie La Seur writes a novel as big as a Western sky—yet one that stretches as far east as the theaters of New York City. This interesting, fast-paced tale delivers complicated themes of small town ranch life, difficult family issues, and humiliating soul-breaking loss, posing many complicated questions to its central character, Anthony Fry. Where did I come from? Who am I? How did I get so lost? Resplendent with themes of revenge, rage and mirror-shattering anger, La Seur's novel is an epic journey—a great read and time well spent. Enjoy! I did.

– Bets Friday Prouty, Morrow, \$16.99



***The Valedictorian of Being Dead: The True Story of Dying Ten Times to Live*, Heather B. Armstrong**

Local author Heather B. Armstrong has shared her life's journeys with us over the years with candor and humor. Thanks to her online blog DOOCE, we've laughed along with her foibles and cried along with her troubles. She's felt like family not just to us but to people, especially women, all over the world. And now she shares a most difficult time in life and what she decided to do about it. Unflinching in its honesty, this book changed what I thought I knew about depression and its treatment. Thank you, Heather Armstrong, for speaking up, speaking out, and bringing the hope! – Anne Holman, Gallery, \$26 *Editor's Note: Heather will be with us to share this journey on Indie Bookstore Day, Saturday, April 27th at 7 p.m.*



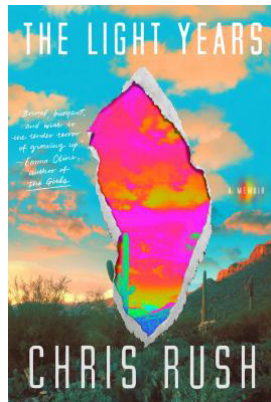
***Save Me the Plums*, Ruth Reichl**

The timing for this book could not be any better. Perfect for both Mother's and Father's Day, this is Ms. Reichl's story of her time at the venerable magazine *Gourmet*. She had already reached great heights in the food world—from food editor for *The Los Angeles Times* to restaurant reviewer for *The New York Times*—when she was approached about taking over the job as editor in chief of *Gourmet*.

In her inimitable, relaxed and ironic style, this former hippie relates her 10 years with *Gourmet* before the internet made it obsolete. During her time there, she was part of the revolution that changed the way that we think about food. And the characters she meets range from famous chefs to writers like David Foster Wallace. Interspersed with all of these tales are some wonderful recipes in this must-read for any foodie in your life and for anyone who loves a well-turned sentence. – Jan Sloan, Random House, \$28

***The Light Years*, Chris Rush**

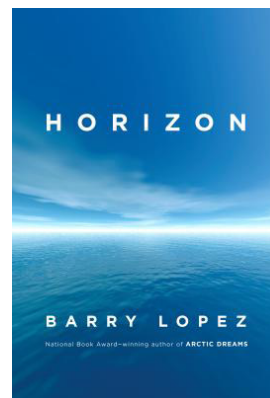
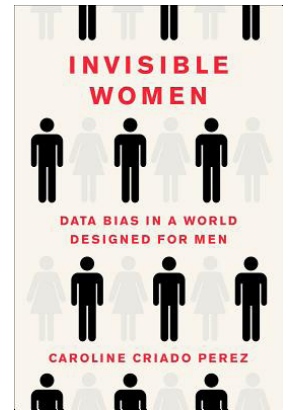
The fact that Chris Rush is still alive is nothing short of a miracle, but alive he is—and graced with one of the most lively and likeable voices in this reader's memory. At age 11, loathed by his father, mostly ignored by his mother, he is shipped from boarding school to boarding school and finally exiled altogether, sent West with a sister who considers her interest in



drugs to be holy. Rush, gay, innocent, gullible, searching for answers to questions he doesn't even know he's asking—on topics ranging from God to alien beings, macrobiotic diets to 'sacred' drugs—somehow, despite his confusion as he comes of age, never seems capable of denying who he is, instead wearing his heart (and his sexual preference) on his sleeve for all to see. Maybe that inability to deny himself is at the heart of his resilience since little else explains his survival. Except, perhaps, his sense of humor, which is as sly as it is observant, as ironic as it is bighearted. First you fall for the boy. And then you find yourself changed. Opened up. If you don't read another book this spring, do read *The Light Years*. It will light up your life for years to come. – Betsy Burton, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, \$27

***Invisible Women: Data Bias in a World Designed For Men*, Caroline Criado Perez**

An important book, full of examples of unexamined bias in our increasingly data-driven world. Women have been, and still are, excluded through oversight from most data collection—with extreme consequences. Ranging from the surprising (Swedish snow-plowing practices) to the devastating (U.S. maternal mortality rates) to the futuristic (software and AI algorithms), not only do these biases harm women, they make no social or economic sense. When 50% of the population is not included in the data of our world, billions are wasted in unusable charitable aid, in avoidable hospital visits, in loss to the GDP. Even more wasteful is the not infrequent reality of communities torn apart and lives lost. The good news is that by examining these biases we can start to reverse the harm. Required reading for, well, everyone. – Michaela Riding, Abrams, \$26



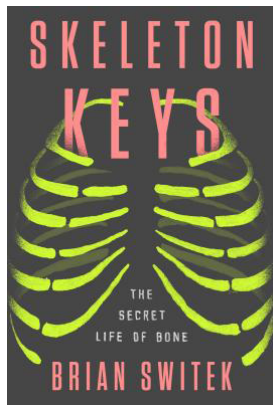
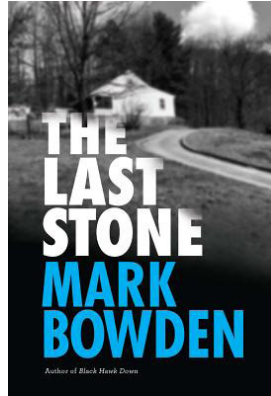
***Horizon*, Barry Lopez**

It is seldom that I finish a book, close it, and then just sit. This is a book with that sort of impact—a book about a lifetime of experiences that is told through place. His has been a way of life that I believe most of us would like to live. Part travelogue, part history, part science and part philosophy, *Horizon* is difficult to categorize. If one includes the introduction, there are seven sections, each dealing in-depth with the less-traveled areas of the world, literally going from North to South [oles, Western Oregon, to the Galapagos, to Kenya, to the Australian Outback and beyond. We learn both the history and the impact that modern man has had in bringing 'civilization' to each of these areas. What comes

through is the need for acceptance of those who are not like us, the need for understanding and, more than anything, the need to take a look at ourselves and the impact that we have had and will have on our planet. I can't do justice to this beautifully written book. All I can say is, do yourself a favor and allow *Horizon* to carry you away. – Jan Sloan, Knopf, \$30

***The Last Stone*, Mark Bowden**

In the spring of 1975, two sisters, ages 10 and 12, vanished from a shopping mall in suburban Washington D.C. Despite an extensive search and exhaustive police work, neither the girls nor their remains had been found. But in 2013, a cold case detective squad discovered something which previous officers had overlooked—something that pointed toward a man named Lloyd Welch, who was then serving a sentence for child molestation in Delaware. Over months of intense questioning and of painstaking investigation of Welch's sprawling stories, five detectives sift truth from lies in order to decipher exactly what had happened to the two sisters. Bowden, who, as a young reporter in Baltimore, covered the early weeks of the case, returns to the story in this stunning work of narrative nonfiction. More than simply a true crime book, *The Last Stone* is a deeply propulsive psychological journey, a study in truth, lies, and human capacity for evil. – Rachel Haisley, Atlantic, \$27



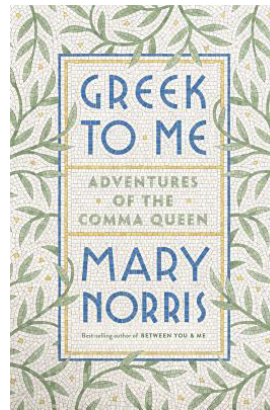
***Skeleton Keys*, Brian Switek**

Each human is connected by around 206 bones and the soft tissues that hold everything together. How each bone works and how history has used (and abused) the framework of the human body is appealingly told in Switek's engaging and enlightening book on the evolutionary history and workings of the body's most important component. In so doing, he crosses multiple disciplines of science

and literature to present a thorough and concise explanation of how the skeleton works and of how bones have been ritualized in cultures throughout history. This book is a fascinating look at one of the principal elements of our bodies. – Barbara Hoagland, Riverhead, \$26

***Greek to Me*, Mary Norris**

Norris' latest book is a paean to all things Greek. She dives into the history of the Greek alphabet and its influence on our current-day English, as well as its influence on our culture. An exuberant account of Norris' lifelong love of words and her

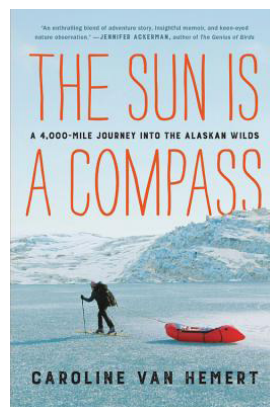
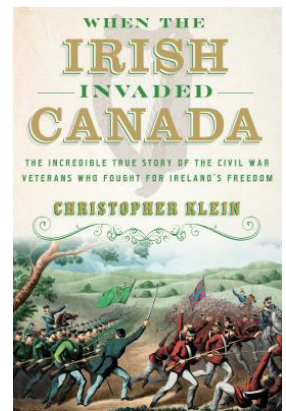


solo travels throughout Greece, it begins by recounting her youth in Ohio and the impact of her decision to go to Douglass and to attend mythology Classics 355, taught by professor Froma Zeitlin. This was the start of Norris' love affair with Greece. Her book is a wondrous journey through Greek myths, language and art which, even if you do not have an affinity for the subject, is still a humorous, entertaining guide to both ancient and modern glories of the Greek culture. – Jan Sloan, Norton, \$25.95

***When the Irish Invaded Canada: The Incredible True Story of the Civil War Veterans Who Fought for Ireland's Freedom*, Christopher Klein**

In this surprising tale of a little-known event in U.S. history after the Civil War, citizens of the U.S. actually invade Canada in order to break the grip of Great Britain on Ireland. A multitude of new immigrants from Ireland served in the Union and Confederate armies during the war—many as a condition of citizenship, some for a steady paycheck, and a few for adventure. Forced from Ireland by the Potato Famine in the late 1840s through 1850s, most of the immigrant Irish blamed British policy for the million deaths attributed to the "Great Hunger," which caused over 3 million people to emigrate in order to survive. Arriving in the U.S., they were discriminated against because of their religion and status as uneducated, unskilled but cheap labor. The Irish joined the Union Army in droves, comprising over 15% of the force by 1865. When the war ends, the Irish in America are still bitter about the treatment of Ireland by the British. With the U.S. and Britain still at odds over the perceived favoritism of the British toward the Confederacy, the stage is set for one of the most improbable chapters in American history: an invasion of British Canada by Irish Civil War veterans. What a story!

– Patrick Fleming, Doubleday, \$28.95



***The Sun Is a Compass*, Caroline Van Hemert**

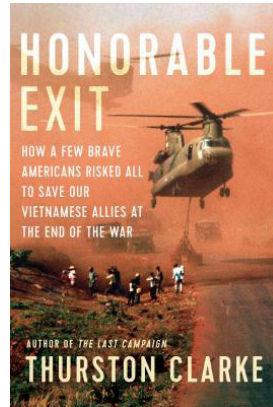
Not just one more adventure story of travel in Alaska, this book, somewhat reminiscent of Barry Lopez' *Horizon*, is the story of a 4,000-mile trek that Ms. Van Hemert made with her husband, Pat. About the bonds formed on such a trip, it also blends science,

the bounds of the physical body, and the tenuousness of life on a trek where one small mistake could mean death. The reader is exposed to everything from the sublime to the mundane, uncertainty being the only constant. Yes, this is an adventure tale. But it is also a meditation on life and on those things that make us strong, as well as those things that bring us joy and an awe for the magnificence of nature at her most demanding.

– Jan Sloan, Little, Brown Spark, \$25.98

Honorable Exit, Thurston Clarke

In the midst of the final American exit from South Vietnam in 1975, a few brave souls defied orders not to evacuate their South Vietnamese allies. Their possible fate at the hands of the Viet Cong for working with the Americans varied from death to long incarceration. In a fitting end to this most ignominious war, the powers that be, including the White House and the American Ambassador to Vietnam, denied to the very end that the war was over. It was in the hands of businessmen, missionaries, contractors, soldiers and others to see that the Vietnamese who had worked for them were evacuated. Approximately 130,000 Vietnamese were secreted out of the country by a cadre of mismatched heroes. Clarke's story of their daring actions depicts a righteous end to a sad history. – Barbara Hoagland, Doubleday, \$30

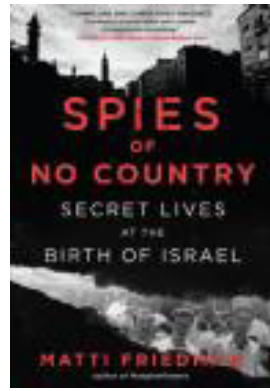


Long Shot: The Inside Story of the Snipers Who Broke ISIS, Azad

This is the personal story of a young man (a teenager really) from the area of northern Iraq considered Kurdistan. The Kurds are an indigenous people—not Arab, Persian or Turkish—who inhabit the area in the Mideast where Turkey, Syria, Iran, and Iraq all meet at a common border. Kurds are diverse religiously, some being Shia Muslim, some Sunni Muslim, some



Yazidis, and others Christian, but they usually coexist peacefully because they see themselves as Kurds first. Azad, drafted into the Iraq army, is faced with attacking Kurds in northern Iraq as a test of his loyalty to Iraq. He deserts, heads to Europe, and is granted asylum in England. After a short period there, he longs for his homeland and its people and so returns to “Kurdistan” to join the YPG, the only viable force confronting the barbaric and seemingly unstoppable ISIS. Azad becomes a renowned sniper with the YPG as they roll back the gains ISIS has made. A great read, this is also helpful in imagining what will face the U.S. as our leaders pull us out of Syria and create another vacuum in the Mideast. – Patrick Fleming, Atlantic Monthly Press, \$26



Spies of No Country, Matti Friedman

In 1947, the United Nations passed Resolution 181 ending the British Mandate of the administration of Palestine; the land would be divided between the Jews and Arabs, each having a state of its own. The Palestinian Arabs were livid at the thought and both sides knew war was inevitable. Told through the eyes of four men, Jewish by ethnicity, who had

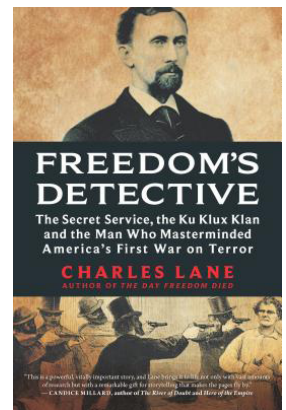
lived their lives in the dominant Arab culture and were recruited by a Jewish organization known as “The Dawn” to live among the Arab population in Beirut, Damascus and several other places, they become mista’arvim or “ones who become like Arabs,” risking their lives in order to send vital information back to their leaders and carry out covert operations, all for a country which as yet, in 1947, did not exist. Their work was, as true spy stories go, mostly mundane, even boring and lonely, yet interspersed with excitement—such as the time they attempted to blow up Hitler’s ex-yacht which was anchored in Beirut Harbor. In the end the most heart-rending of tales is when, in 1948, they returned home and not only were never able to speak of the part they played in establishing the State of Israel, but had to integrate into a “country” they never really knew. – Jack Mark, Algonquin, \$27.95

Freedom’s Detective, Charles Lane

The end of the Civil War did not end the animosity between abolitionists and proponents of slavery. As Reconstruction faltered and anger grew between those who wanted to give the former slaves the rights they were entitled to and those who resisted, the Ku Klux Klan came into being. They terrorized black families and whites who sided with the former slaves.

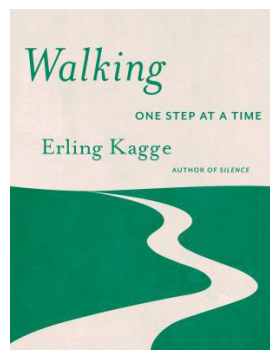
Hiram C. Whitley was named head of the Secret Service, and in that capacity, declared war on the terrorist KKK. His life and the story of the first war on terrorism is thoroughly examined in Lane’s impressive history.

– Barbara Hoagland, Harper, \$26.99



Walking, One Step at a Time, Erling Kagge

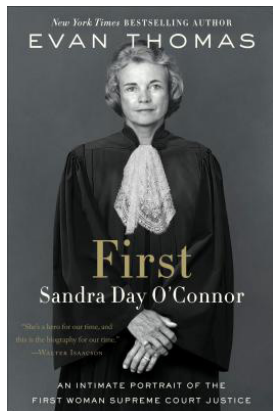
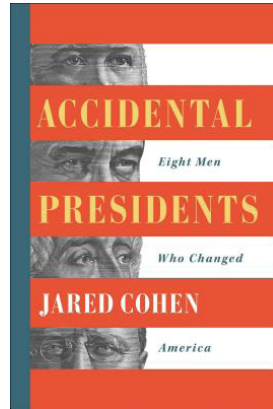
We are built to walk. In this busy, connected world that we live in, this is sometimes the last thing on our to-do list. It is, however, one of the most important things for not only our physical well-being, but also our mental and philosophical state of being.



This book by the author of *Silence* is not just about the benefits of walking, its history and philosophy, it also reminds us that the slow, observant stroll does more to disconnect us from the ever-present gadgets than anything else that we can do. It slows us down, restores our sanity. A wonderful, small book to put into your backpack before starting out on the trail. – Jan Sloan, Pantheon, \$19.95

***Accidental Presidents: Eight Men Who Changed America*, Jared Cohen**

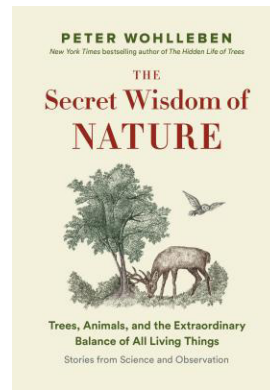
Over our country's history, eight men have ascended to the Presidency without being elected because of their position as Vice President. Whether it was because of an assassination or natural death, each man faced political upheaval and each dealt with it in ways that revealed his own character. In Cohen's book, the character of each of these men is examined and evaluated within the context of his time. While a small group excelled in their inherited positions, several were unable to rise to the demands their position as President required. Cohen's work is a valuable contribution to the history of the Presidency. – Barbara Hoagland, Simon & Schuster, \$30



***First: Sandra Day O'Connor*, Evan Thomas**

After graduating first in her class in law school, Sandra Day O'Connor could not get a job as a lawyer because she was a woman. Through perseverance and an unflappable sense of her own worth, she not only attained the first position in a law firm but also rose to be the first woman to be appointed to the U.S. Supreme Court. In that capacity she dominated the court

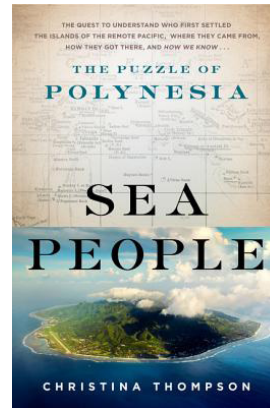
for decades as a deciding vote on contentious issues. She believed the best course in any decision was one of moderation, and she was an outspoken advocate for choosing the middle way. Her ability to accomplish consensus was invaluable during her time on the court. Hers was and is a life of service, and Thomas' excellent biography reveals a woman who was not only an enormous intellect, but one who realized she was a role model for generations to come. – Barbara Hoagland, Random, \$30



– Jan Sloan, Greystone Books, \$24.95

***The Secret Wisdom of Nature*, Peter Wohlleben**

This is the final book of the Mysteries of Nature trilogy, which started with *The Hidden Life of Trees* and *The Inner Life of Animals*. Mr. Wohlleben's curiosity and sense of wonder continue with this final work, connecting the interplay between animals and plants and how they support and communicate with one another.



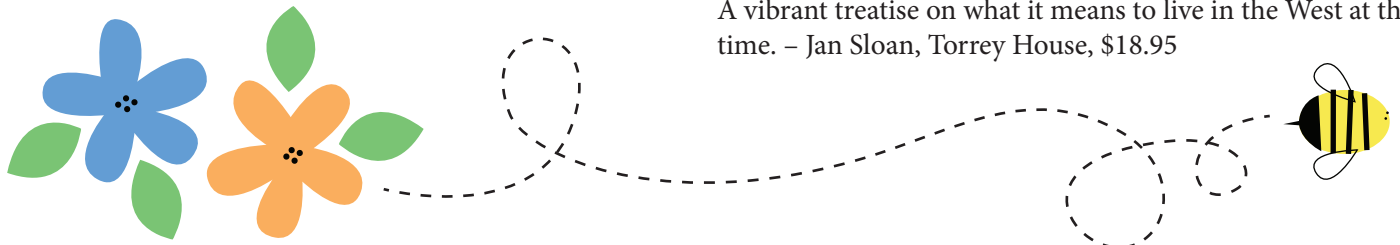
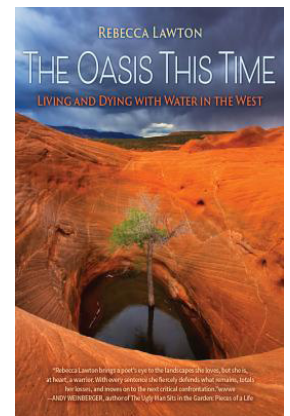
***Sea People: The Puzzle of Polynesia*, Christina Thompson**

Though Polynesians have occupied some of the remotest islands in the Pacific for more than a millennium, the process by which these islands were colonized has always been up to speculation. Using Polynesian oral history and modern linguistics, archaeology, and biology, Thompson weaves a compelling, well-researched history of the region. An authoritative

account that manages to be compulsively readable, Thompson's book on the geography and history of Polynesia is destined to be a nonfiction classic, right alongside such favorites as *Guns, Germs, and Steel* and *1491*. – Rachel Haisley, Harper, \$29.99

***The Oasis This Time: Living and Dying With Water in the West*, Rebecca Lawton**

This book of essays by fluvial geologist Lawton takes us on a voyage from the oases surrounding Twenty-nine Palms, California to Alaska, the Grand Canyon, and northern California, where she and her husband were caught in the devastating fires near Sonoma. These beautifully written essays are a call to action for our dwindling supply of this precious resource, especially in the West. Interspersed are biographical pieces that reveal her sense of wonder and her almost spiritual connection to water and to the nature that surrounds her wherever she happens to be. A vibrant treatise on what it means to live in the West at this time. – Jan Sloan, Torrey House, \$18.95





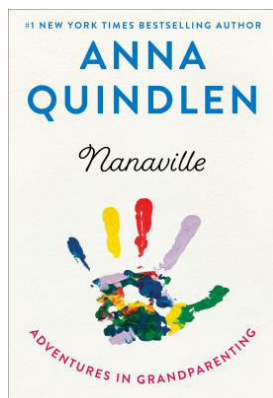
I Miss You When You Blink,
Mary Laura Philpott

Bookseller and essayist Philpott surprises and delights time after time. Whether recognizing a good line (like the title) when she sees one and following it down the path that leads to different selves (read the wonderful first essay!) or, faced with the quandary of what the perfect murder weapon might be, leading us into the vagaries of perfectionism, she is self-

effacing, wry and perceptive. Philpott exposes the reader to the consequences of everything from volunteering to criticizing celebrities to failure to thrive, giving readers plentiful food for thought in every one of these excellent essays. – Betsy Burton, Touchstone, \$25

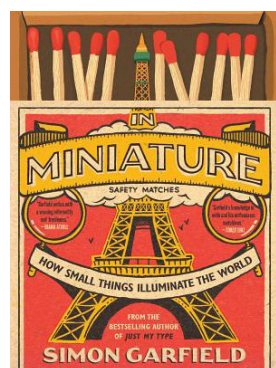
Nanaville: Adventures in Grandparenting, Anna Quindlen

A perfect book for your mom's mom on Mother's Day, this is a sweet, poignant treasure about a most special event: waiting to be, becoming and being a grandparent. Quindlen's stories mirror human experience so closely, you'll wonder how the author managed to get into your head, your kid's head and your mother's head as well. She offers sage advice about navigating the uncharted waters of a grandchild's arrival. Your job is to hold, hum and rock a bye baby. You protect, listen and love. You parrot words to teach language. It is more than enough. No rocky footing for you. Leave the sleep training, potty training and pre-school selecting to the parents. That is their job. Your job is to cherish every moment of joy in being a grandparent. Why buy several copies of *Nanaville*? Well, you'll want to gift the book to friends, silly! – Bets Friday Prouty, Random House, \$26



In Miniature, Simon Garfield

For anyone who has had a dollhouse or a miniature railway in her or his life, this book attempts to explain the psychology behind the obsession with smallness, dissecting human fascination with tiny worlds. These small worlds include an Eiffel Tower, flea circuses, model trains, and doll houses. The creation of Paris, Venice, and Ancient Egypt in Las Vegas exemplifies commercial use for the miniature, while a book written

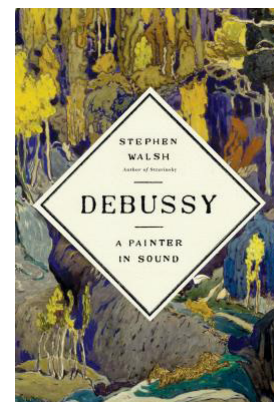


on the head of a pin is the ultimate example of a miniature for

miniature's sake. In each case, there are historical details plus a little psychology pertaining to those who create such works of art. – Wendy Foster Leigh, Atria, \$25

Debussy: A Painter in Sound,
Stephen Walsh

For those who love Debussy's music and want to learn more about his personal and professional life, this biography is a must. Walsh interweaves Debussy's early years when he is finding his way as a composer in the rigid environment of the Paris Conservatory with his compositions at that time—often songs with words from his favorite poets: Banville, Gautier, de Lisle, Verlaine. Debussy's meeting Mme von Mack, elderly and in need of a pianist for her trio, which she took with her throughout Europe, was the beginning of his experience in the wider world. His meeting with Mme Marie Vasnier, who had a gift “for fluid coloratura and for floating the almost accentless French language across high-lying melodies” and for whom he wrote songs, was another fortuitous expansion of his personal and musical development. Debussy's relations with the composers of this time, his marriage to Emma, his painful death, are all here in a wonderful book recommended for professional musicians and any who want an in-depth study of Debussy. – Deon Hilger, Knopf, \$28.95



The Trial of Lizzie Borden,
Cara Robertson

Robertson's first book details the events surrounding the infamous murders of Andrew and Abby Borden in Fall River, Massachusetts, in 1892. Based entirely on primary sources—trial transcripts, contemporary accounts, and even recently discovered letters from Lizzie herself—*The Trial of Lizzie Borden* is an in-depth discussion of the circum-

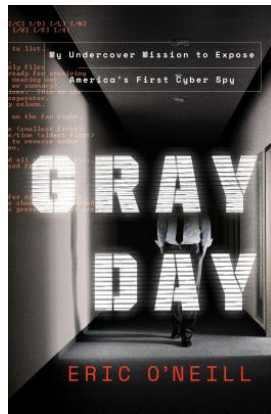
stances surrounding the incident and Lizzie's subsequent trial. Robertson has poured decades of research into this sensational book, breathing new life into a story that has captivated the American psyche for over a century. An excellent read for fans of David Grann's *Killers of the Flower Moon* and Michelle McNamara's *I'll be Gone in the Dark*. – Rachel Haisley, Simon & Schuster, \$28

Gray Day, Eric O'Neill

Robert Hanssen became one of America's greatest traitors by trading inside information to the Russians. From his position in the FBI he was privy to vast amounts of intelligence, which he freely shared with the Russians for nearly two decades.

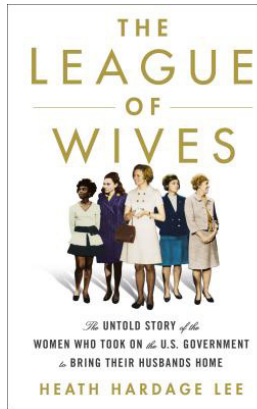
NONFICTION

O'Neill was a 26-year-old novice FBI agent when he was selected to go undercover to collect evidence of Hansen's spying activities. His story is one not only of the trapping of a spy but also a history of the value of cybersecurity in our contemporary world. – Barbara Hoagland, Crown, \$28



The League of Wives, Heath Hardage Lee

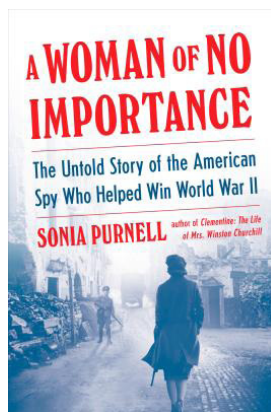
When Navy and Air Force pilots entered the Vietnam War looking forward to flying state-of-the-art F-4 Phantom jets and A-6 Intruders, many considered their Vietnam tours to be joyrides from which they would emerge triumphant. This assumption would prove to be tragically incorrect.



When the first fighters were shot down, the State Department created a smoke screen in order to assure the public that the captured pilots were being treated humanely, according to the 1947 Geneva Convention. Wives of any military husband had actual manuals with the rules for the behavior to which they were expected to adhere. But when it became obvious to a number of the MIA wives that they were not going to get information about their husbands from the government, they created a League of Wives, and many resorted to coded messages between husbands and wives. Their diligence made a difference in getting these men home. – Sue Fleming, St. Martin's, \$28.99

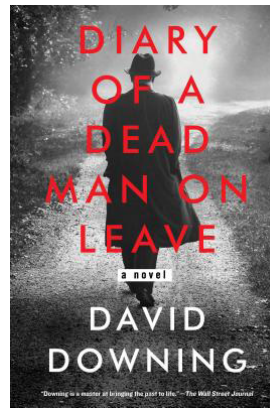
A Woman of No Importance: The Untold Story of the American Spy Who Helped Win World War II, Sonia Purnell

Virginia Hall, an American woman, talked her way into spying for Great Britain behind enemy lines in war-torn France. This most unlikely spy, young, genteelly raised, missing part of one leg, became a heroine to the resistance. Through the force of her personality she organized a network of spies and oversaw their actions throughout the conflict. At one point she was forced to flee over the Pyrenees into Spain, which she did despite her handicap, managing to walk hundreds of miles through mountain passes. The resistance units she oversaw were instrumental in shortening the war and saving countless lives. The previously untold tale of this brave and enormously resourceful woman is fascinating. – Barbara Hoagland, Viking, \$28



MYSTERY/THRILLER

Diary of a Dead Man on Leave, David Downing

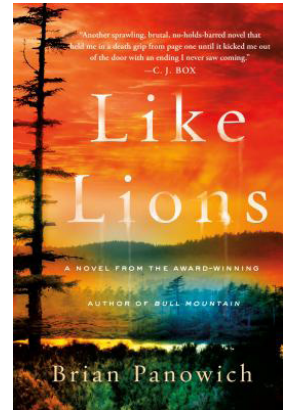


Josef is keeping a diary—not exactly Moscow rules, but then Josef, long a member of the Comintern, is losing his taste for Stalin. His anti-Nazi mission in pre-WWII Germany is nonetheless one he sees as necessary and plans to carry out. The boarding house he now inhabits is owned by a woman who doesn't hide her distaste for Nazis in general and one Nazi

boarder in particular. Perhaps predictably, her honesty gets her in trouble—as does the honesty of her son Walter. So begins an intriguing thriller, told entry-by-entry in Josef's hidden diary. An examination of the dark night of one man's soul, it also bears witness to the rise of a demagogue and an ideology uncomfortably similar to those gaining currency in America and around the world today. The heart of the book, a cynical man's quest for meaning, is a search that leads him toward connection—a connection he finds not with a woman but with a 12-year-old boy. Josef and Walter are formidable, heartfelt creations. *Diary of a Dead Man on Leave* is haunting, illuminating and timely in a terrifying way. – Betsy Burton, Soho, \$27.95

Like Lions, Brian Panowich

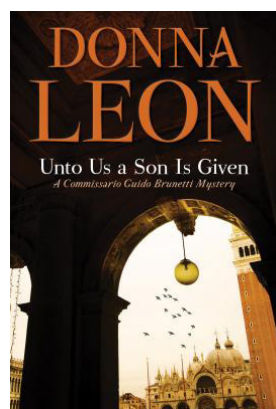
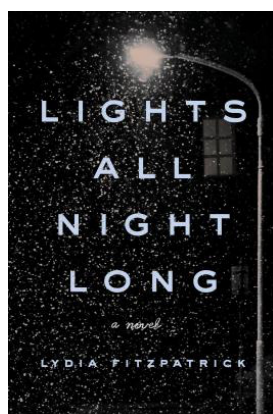
Clayton Burroughs, turncoat of his hillbilly mafia family and sheriff of a small-town in Georgia, is struggling to overcome the deaths of his father and two brothers. When another criminal family from Florida makes a move to reintroduce drug running through his neck of the woods, he is forced to bury the bloody legacy of his past once and for all. Panowich won the International Thriller Writers Association prize for best first novel with *Bull Mountain*. This second novel carries on with the lives of those introduced earlier with spare yet forceful writing. – Sue Fleming, Mino-taur, \$26.99



Lights All Night Long, Lydia Fitzpatrick (an Indies Introduce title)

Russian exchange student Ilya is an enigma to the Louisiana family that is hosting him for a summer. In their land of Super Wal-marts, free refills and Megachurches they can't grasp what he left behind—the biting cold of the small refinery town of Berlozhniki, the shared rooms, the teacher who pushed him to succeed and her policeman husband, the local oligarch whose money made Ilya's trip to the States possible. Ilya has an older, drug-addicted brother Vlad, who is in prison for multiple mur-

ders that Ilya is sure he didn't commit. Even from afar, Ilya is determined to free his brother. It was their dream to come to America, together. Forging a connection with the Mason family's oldest daughter Sadie (who has secrets of her own), and Sadie's cousin, he starts to track down the only foreigner who was in Berlozhniki at the same times the murders occurred and who must be the real killer. Vlad has left his brother the evidence he needs, but will Ilya hear it in time? – Paula Longhurst, Penguin, \$27



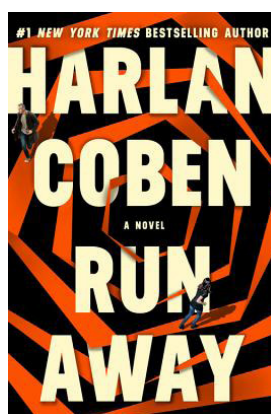
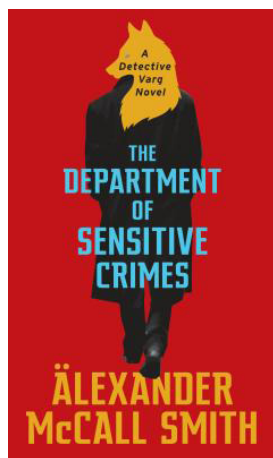
Unto Us a Son Is Given, Donna Leon

My annual Donna Leon fix has been darkly satisfied by her latest in which Commissario Brunetti, when asked by Count Falier (who never asks his son-in-law for anything) to investigate a mutual friend, agrees to do so. Already torn between affection and loyalty, both the Commissario and the Count are further devastated by their friend's death and by a subsequent murder. Leon's plots, so often driven

by the corruption of the powerful, are rarely as surprising—or as twisted—as this one. Family is at its heart and Brunetti's teenage children and wife Paula (not to mention her cooking) leaven the pain of the long-hidden truth that is eventually uncovered. – Betsy Burton, Atlantic, \$26

The Department of Sensitive Crimes, Alexander McCall Smith

Ulf Varg leads a team of detectives in the land of dark Scandinavian novels. Smith, who does not take the dour style seriously, begins with the investigation of an unusual crime—that of a man stabbed in the back of the knee—and goes on to delve into various unusual cases which include a love-sick woman and her imaginary boyfriend, and a possible werewolf in a local spa. The new series, labelled “Scandi-Blanc” as opposed to “Scandi-Noir,” is a light antidote to reality. Book One reflects the prolific author's sense of humor and witty use of language. –Wendy Foster Leigh, Pantheon, \$24.95



Run Away, Harlan Coben

Coben's Myron Bolitar mysteries are light and lippy along the lines of Robert Parker. He has also written a string of stand-alone thrillers which are impossible to put down, and this latest is no exception. Simon Greene sees his missing daughter in Central Park, and when she flees he punches out the boyfriend who is ostensibly defending her but who actually hooked her on drugs in the first place.

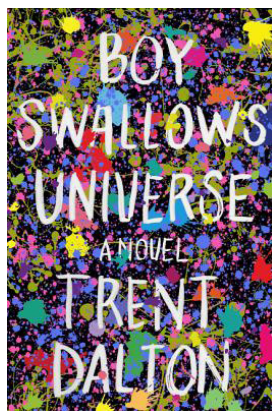
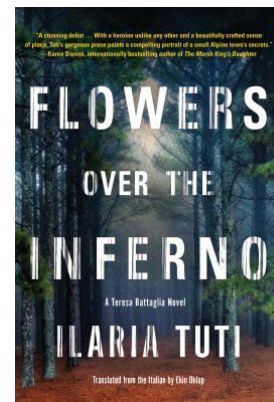
When said boyfriend turns up murdered, Simon and his wife are pulled into a plot that twists and turns in deadly ways—especially when a Chicago PI turns up investigating another missing teenager... Great characterization (especially in terms of the anguished parents), propulsive action, and complex plot machinations (that in the end add up) make this one to pick up when you need to erase the world and lose yourself in someone else's drama. – Betsy Burton, Grand Central, \$29

Flowers over the Inferno, Ilaria Tuti

This wonderful new Italian mystery series combines the police procedural with the psychological novels of Scandina Noir. It features Superintendent Teresa Battaglia, a criminal profiler with personal demons. When a naked corpse is found with its eyes gouged out, the detective and her team are called in to find the killer; in the course of the investigation they learn about the villagers and their dark past.

The gruesome crimes that follow revolve around four children at the center of the killer's world. Tuti's inspiration for that killer comes from a study run by an Austrian psychoanalyst in 1945. Kudos to Tuti and to Ekin Oklap, the translator.

– Wendy Foster Leigh, Soho, \$25.95



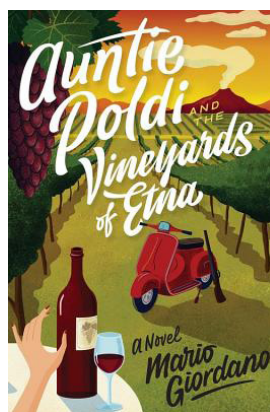
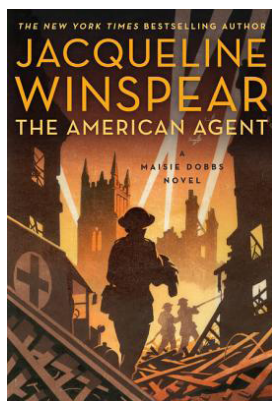
Boy Swallows Universe, Trent Dalton

Haunting, compelling, cunning, this is the heartbreaking story of a young teen with all the disadvantages of poverty, who tries vainly to maintain hope and fight for what is right—and for the good in himself. Part thriller, part crime novel, part mystical-memory play, it is reminiscent of Donna Tartt's *Goldfinch*. Left me shaking and gob-smacked. – Anne Stewart Mark, Harper, \$26.99



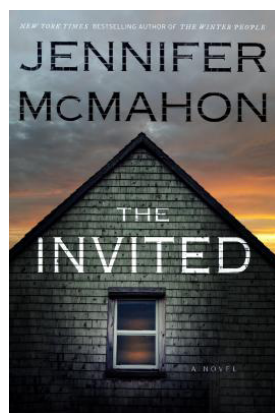
The American Agent,
Jacqueline Winspear

The year is 1940 and London is living with the blitz while Edward R. Murrow broadcasts from the BBC. In order to get background stories, Catherine Saxon, an American correspondent, rides along in an ambulance with Maisie and Priscilla as they attend to the injured while German bombers target London. When Catherine is murdered, Maisie is recruited by the Secret Service to find the killer. She is accompanied by the American, Mark Scott, who had helped her escape from Munich in 1938. The book is more than a tale of one murder; it is the story of the German blitzkrieg of England and of America's internal battle between isolationists and internationalists—a cautionary tale for modern readers. – Wendy Foster Leigh, Harper Collins, \$27.99



Auntie Poldi and the Vineyards of Etna, Mario Giordano

Donna Poldina is back! Poldi's life in Sicily, as chronicled by her nephew, is jogging along nicely until the water for the whole of Via Baronessa is cut off and a dear friend's dog is poisoned. Poldi sees the mafia at work—after all, a local judge has just been found murdered. But Poldi's lover, Commissario Vito Montana, won't let her into his investigation. So Poldi starts her own. She assembles a team, a rather creaky one, and it doesn't take long for the fur to start flying. A complicated web of vineyards, water rights, a dodgy psychic, activist groups, some cranky German tourists, a not-so-undercover FBI agent, and even the mafia, conspire to stop Poldi and her pensioners from solving the case. Can Poldi prevail? If she succeeds she could lose Montana forever. – Paula Longhurst, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, \$24



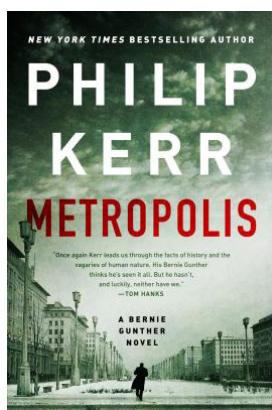
The Invited, Jennifer McMahon

Hartsboro is a world away from suburban Connecticut. Nate and Helen have given up their teaching jobs to build their dream home in the countryside. To the residents of Hartsboro they're 'flatlanders,' to their young neighbor Olive they're ruining her treasure hunt; and to one former resident they, Helen especially, are a conduit into the town's dark past—a past Helen seems determined to un-

earth: the legend of Hattie Breckenridge, who back in 1924 was hanged as a witch. – Paula Longhurst, Doubleday, \$25.95

Metropolis, Philip Kerr

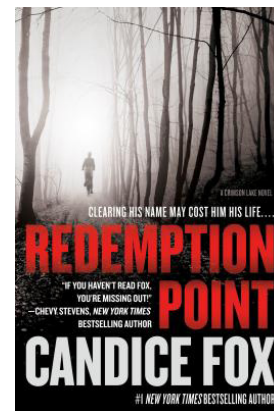
Ironically, Kerr's last novel (he died before its publication) is the first in the famous Bernie Gunther series, a prequel to the body of work that features the famous (or perhaps infamous) detective in Nazi Germany. *Metropolis* takes place in 1928 Berlin when the Nazi party is nascent, when everything is for sale, when anything is permissible. Ever the wisecracking cop, Gunter, who has much to learn, begins to do so the hard way as he sets out to investigate the murder of four prostitutes and yet another set of serial murders—this time of disabled vets. As Bernie prowls the mean streets, he gives us, along with his inexhaustible wit and a puzzle worthy of his mettle, an evocative look at Weimer Germany in its dying years. – Betsy Burton, Putnam, \$28



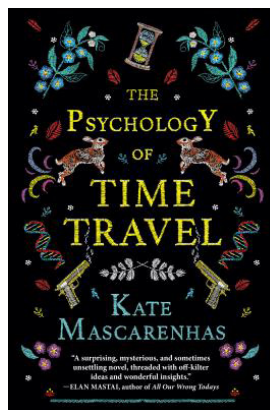
Redemption Point, Candice Fox

Ted and Amanda, still in the PI business, are investigating the murder of two bar-tending millennials at a dive in Crimson Lake. Amanda is 'assisting' newly promoted DI Pip Sweeney while Ted has a homicidal house guest, Claire Bingley's distraught father, who makes it plain that Ted better find who really hurt his daughter or Ted will pay the price.

– Paula Longhurst, Forge, \$25.99



SPECULATIVE FICTION



The Psychology of Time Travel,
Kate Mascarenhas

This clever sci-fi thriller/detective story weaves together multiple characters, often duplicates of themselves known as "green-me's and silver-selves," into a tale of the consequences of travelling through time—since, in the process, one is distilled into the pure essence of self. The Conclave, as it is known, develops time travel into a science with its own laws, currency, and terminology. This twisting story includes a narcissistic villain and multiple heroines trying to solve the murder of one of the founding members of the all-female scientific team. Perfect for fans of Crouch's *Dark Matter* and Shetterly's *Hidden Figures*. – Anne Stewart Mark, Crooked Lane, \$26.99

THE INKSLINGER

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Coming in May



"I consumed it with a lump in my throat and a fast-beating heart and, in the end, found my hope in humanity renewed by that alchemy that can be found in only the best fiction."

– Betsy Burton



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