

## Shelf Dispatch

Dear Neighbors,

I've been rearranging my bookshelves recently to make room for the piles of books stacked in every corner; it's an occupational hazard. Inevitably, whenever I make room in my shelves, I fall down the rabbit hole of what goes where.

Deciding where a book goes is easier said than done. Ostensibly I organize by genre, but it breaks down so quickly I can't really claim that at all. What happens when the only shelf that will fit my oversized Beatrice Alemagna picture books is also the only shelf that fits my book on the graphic design of national parks brochures? Would I learn more about my literary obsessions if I organized by original publication date? Do the French and Russian authors belong on a shelf together? Should my cozy science fiction go next to my cozy mystery, shelving by mood? Will I bend to the color-organizing influence of Bookstagram and BookTok and slip the sky blue *Complete Tales of Winnie the Pooh* next to the sky blue *Concept of Anxiety*, genre be damned? (Rabbit would approve.) Don't all of the Penguin black classic editions belong together, even if it results in Sei Shōnagan's *The Pillow Book* snuggling up to Jane Austen? (Yes.)

This is even before we get to the genre-bending books. Books that beg the question: Do I even believe in genres anymore? Is the demon noir *Even Though I Knew the End* a fantasy or a mystery? Does Fanny Singer's recipe-strewn memoir *Always Home* belong with my cookbooks? (The apricot galette is foolproof.) Is *Why Fish Don't Exist* nature writing or memoir or true crime?

We run into this problem in the bookshop too, but don't worry - there we choose the most practical route so you can find your books! Recently the children's room organization got a refresh, so the history and science books are easier to peruse than ever. We pause the philosophical debate for later, when we are home rearranging our own bookshelves, finding new connections and incongruities. Thinking how nice it is that things don't fit neatly into boxes. Thinking how happenstance is the muse of invention. How do you arrange YOUR books?

A quick survey of the bookstore staff found a delightful mixture of organization styles:

6-Genre, then Author (like the store)

5-Genre/Topic only

3-Aesthetics (size or color)

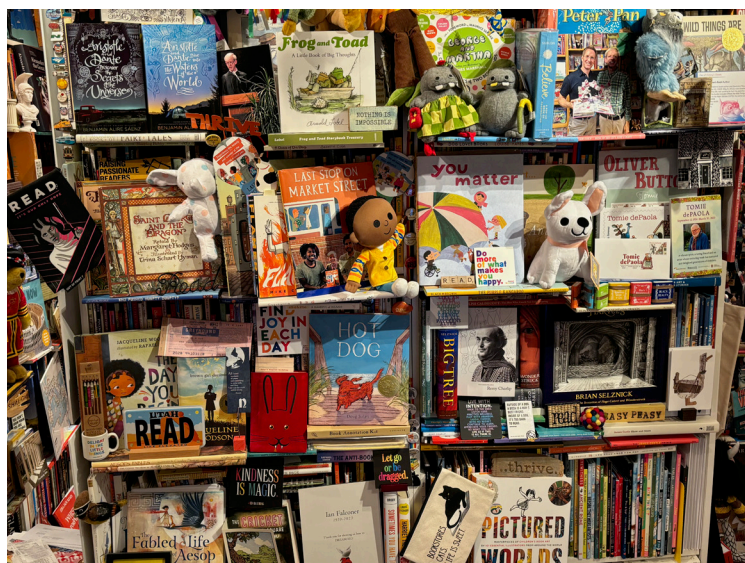
2-Read and Unread

2-No Order at All

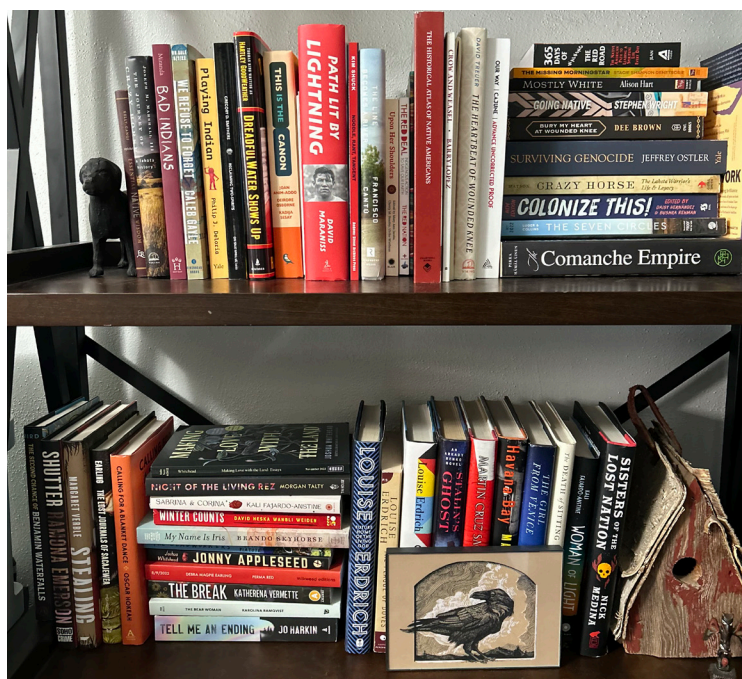
2-Other/Mix of Styles

1-Most to Least Favorite

\* and one special mention of a shelf just for Books Written by Friends



Nathan's bookshelf featuring several LGBTQ+ authors and illustrators



Calvin's indigenous bookshelf (birdhouse made by a 99-year-old man at Birch Bark Books)

## ASTOUNDING FIRST NOVELS



### *Hard by a Great Forest*, Leo Vardiashvili

As a history, this dazzling and unnerving tale of Georgia fascinates, placing us squarely in a land about which the world (or at least this reader) knows far too little. From the present day, Saba follows his older brother Sandro, who followed their father from London to Tbilisi in search of the wife and mother they had left behind, carrying them all into a past when their country was a part of the USSR and subsequently awash in the blood of a long civil war. As entertainment, Saba's

search for father and brother holds us spellbound, with a bewitching alchemy part fairytale, part mystery, part heart-in-throat-adventure in which tigers and witches haunt the woods and danger lurks everywhere. To navigate it all, Sandro has left cryptic clues in the form of lines from fairytales, poetry, proverbs and plays for his younger brother to follow on his quest (clues he hopes will be meaningless to others). But as literary fiction (and a debut novel at that) *Hard by a Great Forest* astonishes. The voice of Saba himself, the chorus of voices from the past that accompany him, those of long-dead uncles, cousins, friends, his mother, his grandmother, whether informing him, warning him or drawing him into peril, not only animate the action but illuminate it as well, weaving a complex and intriguing web of love, guilt, hope and disappointment that, while sometimes deceptive, sometimes madly funny, sometimes heartbreaking, is utterly consuming and achingly human from page to page.

—Betsy Burton, Riverhead, \$29

### *Martyr!*, Kaveh Akbar

*Martyr!* exists in a glowing molten state, an effortless fluidity of Iranian voices, ideas, yearnings, and passions expressed by characters whose relationships with time and with one another are as mutable they are beguiling. The cast: Cyrus, recovering addict, poet and scholar, cynical, self-absorbed, darkly truthful, and howlingly funny; his Iranian mother Roya, stubborn, curious, confused, skipping her way through time and place; his father Ali who brings his son to America, remaining steadfast just long enough for Cyrus to stand on his own feet; Arash, Roya's mysterious brother; President Invektive (no need to ask); Zee, friend, roommate, sometime lover of Cyrus; and Orkideh, a living museum installation in conversation with constant visitors—including the death-obsessed Cyrus—while she dies of breast cancer. Part Salman Rushdie, part J.D. Salinger, *Martyr!* is funny, phantasmagorical, farseeing, and language besotted, a marvel of a novel, a miracle of a first novel. It enchants, transfixes, and fixes itself in our hearts.

—Betsy Burton, Knopf, \$28



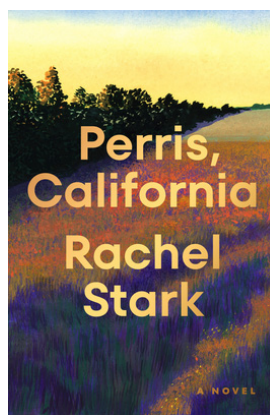
### *The Tower*, Flora Carr

From July 1576 until May of 1568 Mary, Queen of Scots was held prisoner at Loch Leven castle, the island fortress home to William Douglas. Flora Carr's debut novel envisions Mary's imprisonment there with three of her devoted maids and companions: Jane, a Scots, Marie de Courcelles, known as Cuckoo, and later, Lady Seton. After being dragged from her palace, her favorite servant murdered in front of her, pregnant Mary is brought by boat to the imposing castle. Following the miscarriage of her twin sons, she is forced to abdicate her throne in favor of her infant son James. These are the historical events that took place during these eleven months. Carr brings us into the claustrophobic surroundings and intimate feelings of the mercurial Mary and her companions in deep and absorbing detail. Escape plots, petty jealousies and romantic encounters all keep the reader deliciously involved in the lives of Mary's steadfast friends and a Queen that was.

—Anne Stewart Mark, Doubleday, \$28

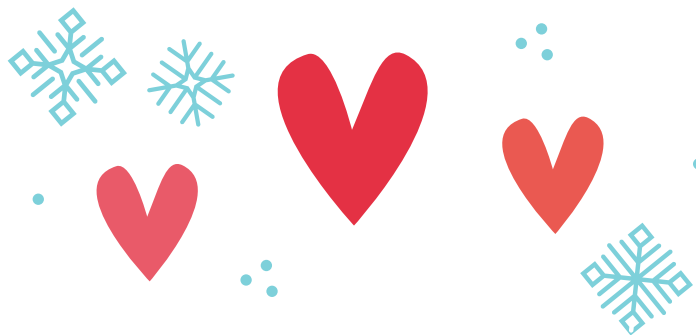


### *Perris, California*, Rachel Stark



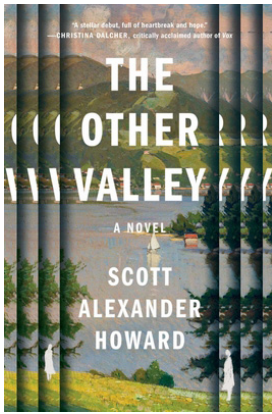
I remember the impact when I first read Dorothy Allison's *Bastard Out of Carolina* and her narrative of abandonment, poverty, and finding one's truth the hard way in the hidden landscape of America. Stark's character Tessa is reminiscent of Allison's Bone Boatwright, a female protagonist of depth and strength created with unparalleled writing skill. In her debut novel, Rachel Stark brings us to Perris in Southern California, and in between the national chain stores, run-down din-

ers, and the World-Famous Train Museum, you will find the landscape is as harsh as the economic struggle of most of its residents. Tessa, deserted by her birth family, is forced to live with her abusive stepfather and his son. She survives by strength of will and the love of Mel, a girl who fosters her heart and her hope. When Tessa loses Mel she is alone again until she finds Henry and his mama. Now an adult, Tessa becomes a mother and finds herself with a family for the first time, a family she brings back to Perris. A solid and compelling debut novel. —Calvin Crosby, Penguin Press, \$29





## FIRST NOVELS



### *The Other Valley*, Scott Alexander Howard

The claustrophobically narrow valley inhabited by 16-year-old Odile is one of many parallel valleys across the wilderness, identical in terms of geography and population with one notable exception: the valley to the east is two decades in the future, that to the west is two decades in the past. The border between these valleys is consequently closely guarded to prevent incursion of one timeframe on another: the interruption of a single

event from the past might impact the future in ever-broadening ways, something considered unthinkable by the powers that be (and an interesting philosophical issue for the reader to consider). Odile, who has been asked by authorities to keep track of one such possible interruption, is also being fast-tracked for a position on the Conseil, the organization that monitors the minimal contact between valleys. Until, that is, her growing awareness of the world around her and her growing attraction to Edme, a young violinist and son of the people she's reporting on, ever so slowly upend her understanding of that world and the rules that govern it. This is a novel of closed societies, closed boundaries, limited horizons and most of all, lack of choice. Its tone is as interior and quietly reportorial as that of Kazuo Ishiguro or Margaret Atwood and similar too in terms of the empathy bestowed on its protagonist, the acute and icily scathing eye turned on society and its mandates. Yet another astonishing debut! —Betsy Burton, Atria, \$27.99

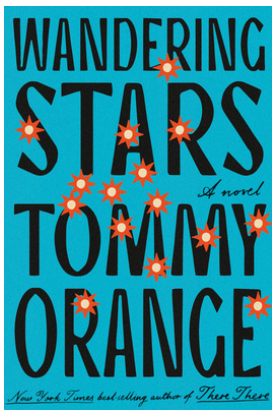
## 23k in 2023!

Last year Brain Food Books donated over 23,000 books to kids in the community! Thank you all for your brilliant support.



One of our first events of this year: *Lunar New Year Love Story* at the Marmalade Library with Gene Luen Yang, Calvin Crosby, Mickey George, Shannon Hale, LeUyen Pham, and Brady Parkin

## FICTION



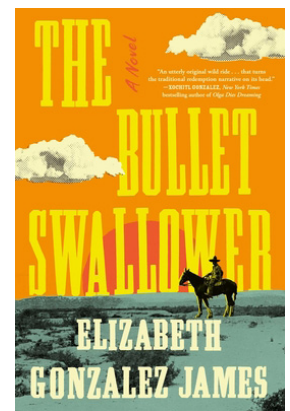
### *Wandering Stars*, Tommy Orange

A haunting, fever dream of a book is Tommy Orange's prequel and sequel both to *There, There*. Part one concerns the ancestors of the Star family. Jude, who escaped the Sand Creek Massacre of 1864; Charles, his son who lived through the abuse at Carlisle school for Indians, whose motto is "Kill the Indian, Save the Man"; Viola, who died in childbirth and whose daughter is raised by a white couple. This is some of the genetic trauma that shapes Orvil Redfeather and his

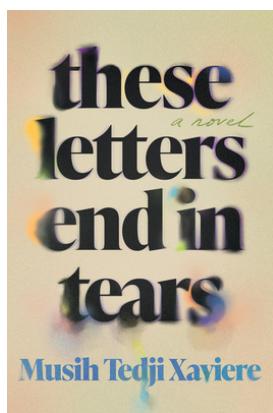
brothers Looter and Lony. The boys are living in the aftermath of a shooting and the death of their mother. Each has their own coping practices: drugs and music, games, and movies. Each must find his own way to survive as a Native American in a country that has tried to erase their customs, languages and history for generations. Poetic as it is full of anger, despair and dysfunction, this book will change your perspective, and it may change your life. —Anne Stewart Mark, Knopf, \$29

### *The Bullet Swallower*, Elizabeth Gonzalez James

*Mona by the Sea*, Elizabeth Gonzalez James' debut novel, was one of my favorite books of 2021. She is back with *The Bullet Swallower*, a title that exemplifies our Rewriting the West initiative to showcase the non-settler version of Western life. This story follows the journey of a notorious Mexican bandito as he sets off, hoping to save his family from poverty, only to be confronted by debt that transcends generations, possibly as far back as Cain and Abel. In 1895, Antonio Soñoro, an expert gunslinger and train robber, ventures on a quest that will challenge and endanger him, his family, and his eternal soul. In 1964, Jaime Soñoro, a famed Mexican actor and singer, finds a book that traces the family's origins and horrific crimes back to the beginning. Unless he can uncover the truth about his grandfather Antonio, he may well be the one to pay for the sins of his forebears. Beautifully written historical fiction with enough magical realism to satisfy Isabel Allende and Gabriel García Márquez fans. —Calvin Crosby, Simon & Schuster, \$26.99



## ASTOUNDING FIRST NOVELS



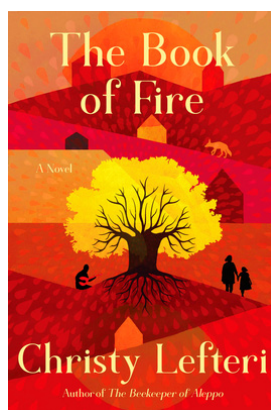
***These Letters End in Tears***, Musih Tedji Xaviere

Heed the title—this book begins, ends, and middles in tears! Set in Cameroon, where being gay is illegal and punishable by law, two girls fall in love against the odds. But when Fatima, a Muslim soccer player, and Bessem, a shy Christian girl, are caught and torn apart, Fatima goes missing. Bessem searches fruitlessly for her for the next thirteen years...until one day, a mutual friend gives her the first real clue to what might have happened to

her first love. I loved this portrait of a place in the world I am totally unfamiliar with, and a queer experience outside of the western focus of so much literature. Beautiful prose—some told in letters from Bessem to Fatima—renders this story vivid, powerful, and tear jerking. —Mackenzie Van Engelenhoven, Catapult, \$28

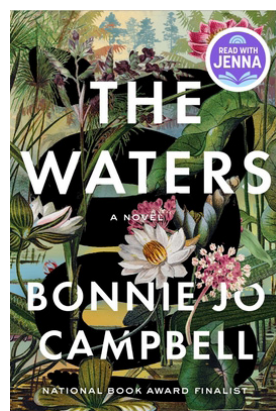
***The Book of Fire: A Novel***, Christy Lefteri

Ultimately, this story is a love letter to the land and the sea of the Mediterranean. As the title suggests, the story tracks the aftermath of a forest fire that shakes a community in the mountains of Greece. Told from the perspective of a mother who has lost the people closest to her because of the fire, the book forces the reader to contemplate the immediate effects of climate change and question what lengths we would go to to protect the place we call home. —Theodora Soter, Ballantine Books, \$29.99



***The Waters***, Bonnie Jo Campbell

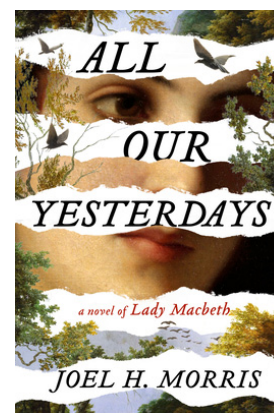
Set in the backwoods of a small town in Michigan, the setting almost becomes a living character. The description of flora, fauna, marshy soil and wildlife are so vivid you can almost see and taste it. Herbalist Hermine “Herself” Zook has healed the local women of their ailments for generations. The town-folk revere and fear her. Her three daughters differ greatly and yet are bonded to her and each other. Being raised by her Grandmother, Dorothy (Donkey) learns the art of creating



medicine from the herbs and wildlife on the small island surrounded by swamp. The beauty of family, love, and commitment are realized as the family endures the challenges of life in a small community. Many current day issues are subtly part of the driving force of the plot. A beautifully written book which will linger in your memory long after you finish. —Vivian Evans, W.W. Norton, \$30

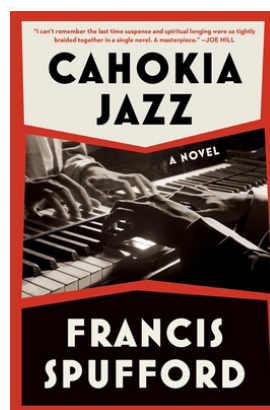
***All Our Yesterdays***, Joel H. Morris

A brilliant prequel to one of Shakespeare's greatest tragedies, *Macbeth*, this is the story of Lady M and her life before the story of the Thane of Cawdor. I kept wondering if a woman had written this debut novel, as so much of a woman's feelings, mothering, and physical experiences were so vividly portrayed here in 11th century Scotland. The Lady, as she is called throughout, recalls her mother's death at her birth, her first blood, and the prophecy of both murderer and queen after seeing the witch for the first time. The son's story, as her doomed child, brings the reader ever closer to every mother's deepest fear and begs for our attention even as we try to look away. Evocative, entrancing, and written in dark and brooding prose, no reader will ever look at Shakespeare's play the same way. —Anne Stewart Mark, GP Putnam's Sons, \$28



***Cahokia Jazz***, Francis Spufford

This tale of two detectives—Barrow, nicknamed Throwaway Boy (or Indian Joe), possessed of a hulking body and magical musical fingers (he's a formidable jazz pianist), and Drummond, initially the lead partner, who is white and slighter of form but whose mind is as frenetic and agile as his endlessly restless body—takes one surprising turn after another as the pair investigate a grisly murder in an alternate history 1920s America. The city Cahokia, detailed by Spufford in lovely, sometimes



lurid prose, seems a place by turns familiar and foreign, the product of history rechanneled (as all history can be) by capricious twists of fact and of fate. A plot as unexpected as the characters—who are an amalgam of colors, classes and cultures, engaging in ordinary or esoteric rituals clad in vestments from Klan robes to Catholic regalia, so like and unlike our own—alternately startles, confuses and captivates us (if your confusion is as complete as mine was, peek at the notes at the back of the book). Gradually, as we view our country through Spufford's brilliantly conceived lens, our own perceptions mutate, and America's nature is revealed with lethal precision: a foreign yet achingly recognizable nation besieged with, on the one hand, a longing for order, on the other, the existential threat to the whole posed by the roiling hatred, the pervasive fear, those who would manipulate both. Barrow is a glorious character, part Odysseus, part Beowulf, as mythic as they come and also as deeply and unforgettably human. His torn loyalties and longings—for friends, for love, for a sense of belonging and for the music that is at the heart of his nature—not only test him but test us as well, forcing us to think around all the angles of his choices. Compulsively readable, this is also a revelatory book, the imaginary history of which startles us into clarity—in terms of our country, yes, but also in terms of humanity, of human nature, whatever form it takes. —Betsy Burton, Scribner, \$28



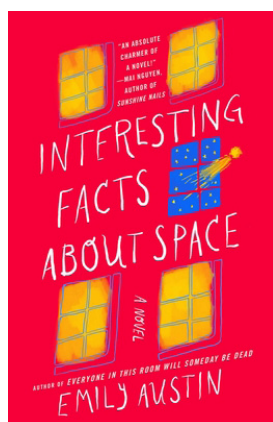


**Greta and Valdin**, Rebecca K. Reilly  
Mix *Normal People*, *Schitt's Creek*, and Chekhov in the unlikelyst blender and you get *Greta and Valdin*. With a unique, off-the-wall sense of humor that had me laughing out loud, *Greta and Valdin* follows the titular queer Russian-Maori siblings as they both navigate mishaps in love, always falling back on their large, eccentric family (including their biologist father who specializes in sea fungus, a mother who is definitely keeping secrets, and a cousin who is having a gay crisis of

his own). As their father says, “we’re all strange, romantic, emotional people in this family” – and I couldn’t have been more delighted to be along for the ride! —Mackenzie Van Engelenhoven, Avid, \$28

**Interesting Facts About Space**, Emily Austin

I was a big fan of Emily Austin’s first novel, *Everyone in this Room Will Someday be Dead*, and her sophomore outing is an equally charming, sardonic, darkly funny slice of life novel that presents a nuanced examination of mental illness and queer identity. Enid is an astronomer with a fear of bald men, who soothes herself with facts about space. But life becomes more complicated when she becomes an accidental home wrecker, starts connecting with her estranged half-sisters—products of her father’s affair—and starts hooking up with the woman whose marriage she ruined. Through Enid’s wry, self-deprecating, and often devastating observations about her life, along with her slow awakening to the trauma of her past, *Interesting Facts about Space* is a story of love, loss, and moving on. —Mackenzie Van Engelenhoven, Atria, \$28



**The Morningside**, Téa Obreht

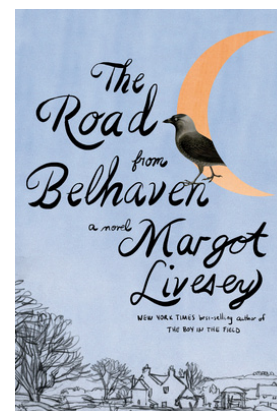
Take a crumbling 33-story luxury tower called Morningside in Island City. Add a Federal Repopulation Program promising false hopes. Sprinkle imaginatively with fairy-tale characters. View all this through the eyes of an eleven-year-old refugee named Silvia whose head and heart her Aunt Ena, Superintendent of Morningside, fills with stories of the past which her mother, inexplicably, has refused to reveal. When Aunt Ena dies, leaving those stories half-told, Silvia’s life

becomes a lonely and impoverished reality. On a long waitlist for a place at school, she works checking on unoccupied apartments, ever curious about the penthouse owner Bezi Duras and her three dogs, “wiry, black, wolfish things with diamond-hard eyes.” When another young girl, Mila, moves in with her parents, Silvia gains a friend. The girls embark on a mission to discover the truth about Bezi, who is a critic of the federal program and its many failures, and what happens

next is startling, inventive, and the stuff of fairy-tales—with a heavy dose of the real world in which we live. —Carol Kranes, Random House, \$27

**The Road from Belhaven**, Margot Livesey

Livesey has always been fascinated with the borders of our conscious world. Second sight—a characteristic that informs and confounds the heroine of this wonderfully told novel—becomes the fulcrum around which a tale of romance and family love in 19th century Scotland turns—for good and for ill. Lizzie learns as a girl growing up sheltered on her farm that although she can sometimes see into the future, this is no blessing if she can’t change that which is troubling about it. The complications her vision brings become more serious as she grows and changes, moves to the city, and finds new friends. As love casts her view of life and of herself, altering relationships she had thought to be immutable, making things seem possible that ought not to be, it also pulls us along willy-nilly in her wake, moved by her mistakes and by her fate. A luminous and insightful writer, Livesey is clear-eyed but big-hearted, at once an acute observer and a complex, compassionate and spellbinding novelist. —Betsy Burton, Knopf, \$28



ABOUT



Rebecca Gisler

UNCLE

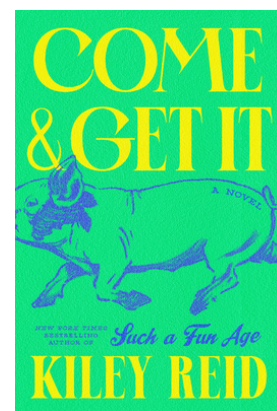
**About Uncle**, Rebecca Gisler, transl. Jordan Stump

Caring for a disabled veteran uncle who occasionally disappears—sometimes down the plumbing—cannot be easy. In addition, Uncle is prone to drinking, gorging, and hoarding. His caretaker niece is the unnamed narrator in this curious, charming story, set in a small town in Brittany. Without self-pity she weaves her tale of family, place, and somewhat claustrophobic life in long sentences which evoke her lonely life. And she observes Uncle as if he were a laboratory

animal—recording his eating habits, his routines, and so on, which she comes to know well. The titular Uncle isolates in the cozy squalor of his room, where he recalls details of his past life dispassionately: his army years, his stint with national radio-television, being an archivist with an insurance company, and finally tending the garden at a nearby abbey. It’s a life that is repetitive and tedious. But then Uncle’s health takes a turn for the worse, and he is sent to a hospital which cares for cats, dogs, and uncles. Niece’s life also takes a turn for the worse. End of story??? —Carol Kranes, Two Line Press, \$16.95

**Come and Get It**, Kiley Reid

This campus novel takes a student, a resident advisor, and a professor and tosses them all into a story of hijinks, shocking revelations, and connections both genuine and petty. Aside from the



fun held in the novel, it also takes on strong themes of race and class distortion as well as a unique look into a very specific but nuanced mental health crisis. The balance of the heavy and the hilarity is among the many pieces that will impress you. If you liked *Yellowface* by R.F. Kuang, then this will be a fantastic pick-up. —Brady Parkin, G.P. Putnam's Sons, \$29



**Good Material**, Dolly Alderton

I'm new to reading Dolly Alderton, whose first book *Everything I Know About Love* became a top five *Sunday Times* bestseller in its first week of publication, won a National Book Award (UK) for Autobiography of the Year and was made into a BBC One TV Series (and, sadly for me, has 22 holds on it at the SLC library). Not to jinx her or anything, but after reading this newest book, I'm pretty sure Dolly Alderton is in for the same (and more) sparkling success. The fact that in *Good*

*Material* she's writing about two London-based thirty-five-year-olds in the throes of heartbreak and guides us through it from both the male and female point of view and doesn't come anywhere near making it a he said/she said is remarkable enough. She credits Norah Ephron—who she believes wrote the most believable male character of all time—for giving her the idea to spend twenty hours of conversation in research with her male friends (she lists them) to form Andy, the male narrator of *Good Material*. I mean, who does that and actually makes you weep for the emotional illiteracy of Andy while brilliantly reminding you, regardless of your age, of when you loved someone just like him? Maybe they weren't a stand-up comedian like Andy who loves Jen and is losing his mind trying to figure out why she left him and doesn't yet know that talking about sadness is the same thing as processing it. But whatever Dolly Alderton did to form the voice of Andy she did it brilliantly, then she does it twice over when it gets to Jen. Or maybe it's easier to put herself into the form of a young woman who decides to give her all to relationships when she's been so fine on her own. Get ready for Jen to speak, is all I can say. *Good Material* reminds us that heartbreak at any age is a rite of passage, it's how we touch the madness inside us and how we come of age, at any age, able to see another's side of the story. Thank you, Dolly Alderton for giving Andy and Jen the reasons they needed to love each other and to leave each other, and for making us laugh (and cry) with them along the way. —Val Kittel, Knopf, \$28

**Cold Victory**, Karl Marlantes

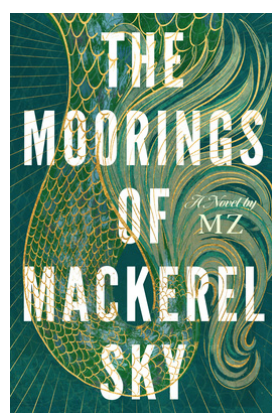
Authentic, absorbing, and action-packed, *Cold Victory* is set in Helsinki, Finland at the end of WWII. As Finland teeters between the Soviet Union and the West, a wrong word or look may lead to disaster. Natalya Bobrova and Louise Koski, both young wives of their countries' military attachés, meet at an embassy party. Both seek someone to talk to, someone to trust, a friend. At the party, their husbands Mikhail and Arnie, both world-class skiers, drunkenly challenge one another to a



friendly but secret cross-country wilderness race. Louise is delighted. Natalya is fearful, knowing the unforgiving brutality of Stalin and Berea's Secret Police. What disaster and disgrace might an American defeat of a Russian bring? Meanwhile, Louise, who is childless, na-ively publicizes the race as a cause to raise money for a local orphan-age—oblivious to the danger for Natalya, Mikhail, and their two children should he lose. Louise must get word to Arnie to let Mikhail win, But how? Readers will breathlessly follow the race in Finland's Arctic wilderness to its ultimate outcome. A masterful tale where love and friendship are held hostage to totalitarianism and loss of truth. —Carol Kranes, Grove Press \$28

**In Ascension**, Martin MacInnes

To read *In Ascension* is to become immersed in a very ambitious, fascinating rendering of space travel through the eyes of a female microbiologist/astrophysicist. Leigh, who grew up in Rotterdam, is drawn to the water as an escape from an unhappy home life and volatile father. Excelling in marine biology, she joins the crew seeking on-site information in a deep, Atlantic ocean trench. What she find there leads her to a secretive exploratory job in California. Acceptance of this secret work, however, requires Leigh's being cut off from her mother and sister—an ever-present dilemma throughout the novel. At an isolated space port in the desert, Leigh becomes a real astronaut and joins a three-member crew in training for a nineteen-month-long flight—the main objective of which is to keep themselves alive. Readers will travel with this crew as they prepare, practice, then experience the journey, through three speed accelerations, gravity shifts, physical and psychological effects on their bodies and minds. As well, readers will absorb and admire the fortitude and courage of these space travelers as they confront and celebrate the natural world both near and far with wonder and compassion, always remembering the people and places they call home. —Carol Kranes, Grove Atlantic \$18



**The Moorings of Mackerel Sky**, MZ

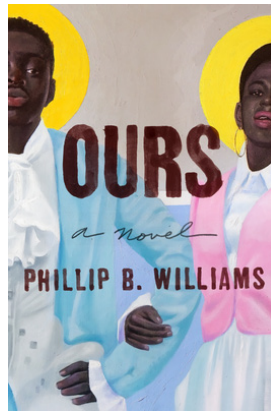
Lore and mythology have been at the forefront of fantasy and literature for a few years now, and yet this is one of the first books using mermaid lore. Set in a small town on the coast of Maine, the locals endure tragedy yearly when the mermaids take one soul as punishment for a major historical suffering inflicted on them in horrendous fashion. One character, with a unique connection to the mermaids, must do everything possible to save a life. This book is ripe with beautiful characters, each interwoven with each other into the tapestry of the town and the story. The fantasy and mystery are gripping and ethereal and will easily sweep you away in euphoric escapism. —Brady Parkin, Hyperion Avenue, \$24.99



## SPECULATIVE FICTION

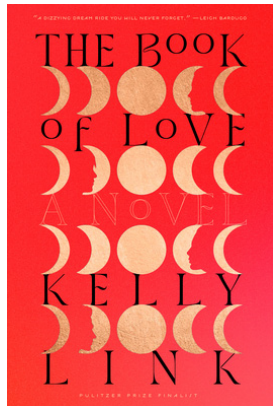
### *Ours: A Novel*, Phillip B. Williams

Poet Phillip Williams's new novel is told through a speculative lens, acknowledging the past to build the future world. A world where the savior Saint brings enslaved people to a city protected by outside influence for decades. Their utopia is protected until it isn't. Williams is ambitious, poetic, and brilliant in his writing, and he fulfills that ambition with the soul of a master storyteller with a lyrical perspective. This novel is speculative fiction at its best. —Calvin Crosby, Viking, \$32



### *The Book of Love*, Kelly Link

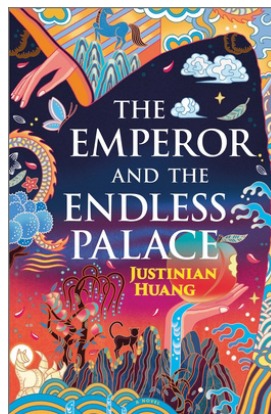
Kelly Link's spooky short stories are the stuff of legend, but this is her first novel. It's a brick, and the slow, meandering pace won't be for every reader, but the writing is stunning, the atmosphere evocative. Strange and lovely. Link is at the height of her powers, channeling potent magic and attuned to all varieties of love—from friendship to romance to abiding family ties—with her trademark compassion, wit, and literary derring-do. Readers will find joy (and a little terror) and an af-



firmation that love goes on, even when we cannot. I love a good page-turny romp, but I also adore those books that reveal how expansive, elastic, and prismatic the bubbles you can make with the soapy wand of fiction are. This is one of those books! —Mickey George, Random House, \$31

### *The Emperor and the Endless Palace*, Justinian Huang

Huang is breaking down walls and boundaries as he takes the Romantasy genre by storm. Combining queer love, Chinese mythology, three timelines, easter eggs upon easter eggs upon easter eggs, the combination of all of these create an eclectic, erotic, and enthusiastic celebration of love and every other emotion that entails. This book turns the pages itself as there are new levels and new mysteries unfolded in every single chapter. An intense reading experience for those who love love. If you are intrigued by Romantasy and want that queer flair, this book is for you. —Brady Parkin, MIRA, \$28.99



### *The Warm Hands of Ghosts*, Katherine Arden

A new take on a World War I novel, Arden writes this tale of a sister and brother both torn apart by the war, one as a soldier and the other a nurse. Arden uses her fascination with historical firsthand accounts of the supernatural and fantastical that often go forgotten in the war narrative, adding a magic realism component to the novel. The relationships between the main and secondary characters prove that no character is unimportant. If

you've loved Arden's work before, this one will continue to foster an admiration for her poetic prose. —Brady Parkin, Del Rey, \$28.99

## MYSTERY

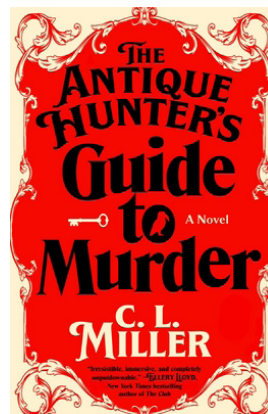
### *Midnight*, Amy McCulloch

If you enjoyed *Breathless* you're in for another treat. Olivia has the perfect life on the surface, but like the icebergs she and the passengers and crew of the luxury ship MS Vigil are surrounded by, appearances can be deceiving. The cruise is taking them from Ushuaia deep into Antarctica with an art auction of recently deceased artist Kostas Yellin's works as the main event. Olivia's art dealer boyfriend has missed the sailing, leaving Olivia to schmooze the wealthy buyers alone, and that's just the first thing to go wrong. McCulloch is quickly establishing her own niche in the adventure travel/whodunit genre. —Paula Longhurst, Doubleday, \$28



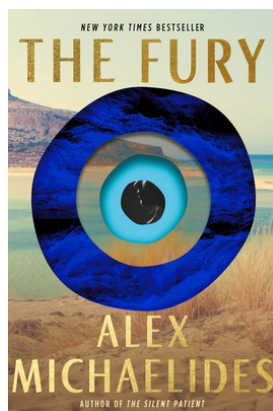
### *The Antique Hunters Guide to Murder*, C.L. Miller

Freya Lockwood went from Lara Croft in her twenties to Laura Ashley in her forties. Now divorced with a teenage daughter, she still shuns her partner/mentor Arthur Crockleford, whose actions in Cairo—Freya is convinced—ruined her life. Now Arthur is dead and Freya's flamboyant Aunt Carole suspects foul play. Arthur was on the verge of acquiring 'an item of immense value' and his clues, set up weeks before his death, seem designed to awaken Freya's inner artifact hunter. Carole, with a reluctant Freya in tow, descends on the Manor House weekend where Arthur had planned to get back a treasure, where a killer awaits. —Paula Longhurst, Atria, \$27.99



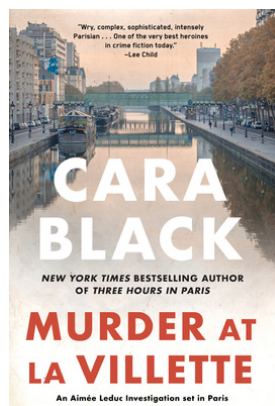
## *The Fury*, Alex Michaelides

Less of a whodunit than a whydunit, *Fury*'s narrator relates the tale of a beautiful Greek island owned by a luminous actress and the events of one wild night which ended in betrayal and murder. Whose? Ah, you'll have to read this Greek tragedy to find out. —Paula Longhurst, Celadon Books, \$28.99



## *Murder at La Villette*, Cara Black

Cara Black sets Aimee Leduc in a different district of Paris. The stylish detective and master of disguise needs to navigate partial blindness and head trauma to solve the murder for which she's been implicated. In the process we're exposed to the gritty and working-class neighborhood of La Villette and its criminal underbelly. —Christina Richards, Soho Crime, \$27.95



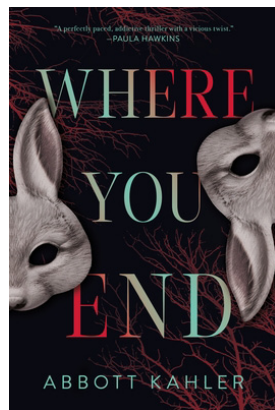
## *Anna O: A Novel*, Matthew Blake

The sleeping beauty case was a tabloid sensation. A prominent MP's daughter stabbed two friends to death whilst sleepwalking. After years asleep the government wants Anna O awake and convicted. The Abbey is a central London sleep clinic that caters to a monied clientele, and Anna is transferred there and placed under the care of Dr. Ben Prince; who has a plan to bring her back to the land of the living, but is that wise? Death has always followed Anna O and the repercussions of her move to the Abbey have yet to be fully felt. Prepare to let your tea go cold as you read this twisted tale in one sitting. —Paula Longhurst, Harper, \$30



## *Where You End*, Abbott Kahler

Prepare yourself for a disturbing book filled with unanswered questions and peculiar reflections. This is not a book for the linear reader and must be taken on faith and a good dose of trust. Identical twins are at the heart of the mystery, but not ordinary twins; they give meaning to the title "Evil Twin." Growing up in a bizarre world with their mother and various mentors, when one of them has a serious accident, the world turns upside down. Kat must rely on Jude to help her rediscover her past and personality. But inconsistencies emerge and Kat is unsure if Jude is protecting her or misleading her. Their story is told in a series of alternating episodes which add up to the final

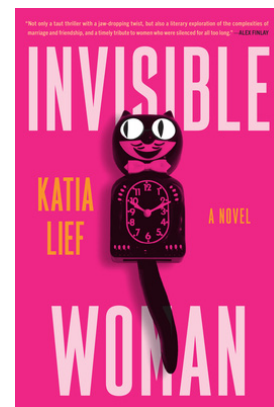


explosion. The book is a page turner because the reader is constantly asking questions. You won't expect the final answer.

—Wendy Foster Leigh, Henry Holt & Co. \$27.99

## *Invisible Woman*, Katia Lief

Is it time to tell the story? This novel at first moves briskly through familiar crime-novel motifs: a rape hidden years ago, once-close friends sharing a secret, a promising film career abandoned for motherhood, a fraying marriage. The focus is on Joni—a once-pioneering filmmaker breaking through the all-male club of Hollywood directors. Now the surfaced rape scandal rocks the film world, and Joni urges her friend Val to come forth with her story. But Val resists, and Joni's husband Paul discourages the scandal's revelation, both for very different reasons. The plot thickens and twists with more facts about the rapes, an early tragedy in Joni and Paul's marriage, and Joni's interest in Patricia Highsmith's novels, particularly their murderous impulses. Readers may not be surprised by the turn of events but will have enjoyed the ride, as I did. —Carol Kranes, Atlantic Monthly, \$27



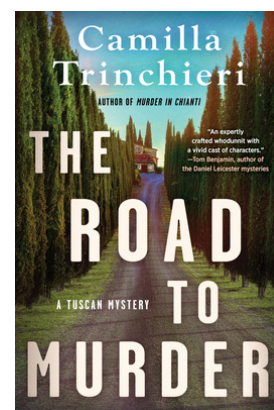
## *Under the Storm*, Christoffer Carlsson



On a cold November night, in the quiet town of Marback, Sweden, a fire destroys a farmhouse. Inside, the daughter Lovisa, is found dead—not from the flames but murdered. This fire/murder becomes a reference point—a before and after—haunting and burning and smoldering through the town over 23 years. For 10-year-old Isak Nyquist, this fire ignites something he cannot control. For rookie policeman Vidar Jorgensson, who is proud of helping to have solved this murder, the case eventually becomes a personally irritating challenge. For Isak's beloved uncle, Edvard Christensson, convicted of Lovisa's murder and sentenced to life in prison, the lesson is "love is dangerous." Edvard claims he is innocent, yet the shame of his supposed crime radiates palpably. If not Edvard, who? And, why? A page-turning, absorbing look at human psyches from one of Sweden's leading crime experts. —Carol Kranes, Hogarth \$28

## *The Road to Murder*, Camilla Trinchieri

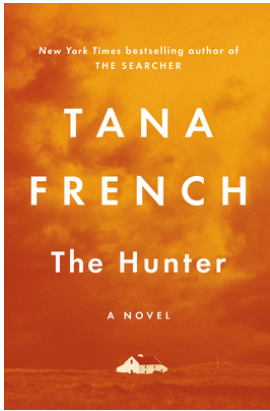
Finding book two in an Italian mystery series is like finding an old friend arriving with food and wine. Nico Doyle is that old friend and this is book two in Camilla Trinchieri's southern Italian series. Nico, widower and former NYC homicide detective, is now living in the small town of Gravigna, his deceased wife's hometown. He has become part of the community, cooking at Sotto il Fico and consulting with the local constabulary when he is needed. He is now needed to help Mares-





## MYSTERY

ciallo Perillo find the killer of Signora Nora, a wealthy widow found dead in her villa. Signora Nora was not a popular woman, and the list of suspects grows as Nico learns more about her and her family. Trinchieri has created a cast of characters both loveable and not so loveable. The plot is made rich through the descriptions of the food, and the landscape alone is enough to make the book a page turner. —Wendy Foster Leigh, Soho Press, Inc, \$27.95



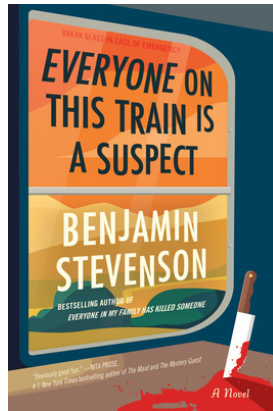
***The Hunter*, Tana French**

It's been a couple of years since retired Chicago detective Cal Hooper settled in the tiny Irish village of Ardnakelty. On the surface the place jogs along just grand. Cal and local widow Lena have settled into a comfortable rhythm and Trey Reddy has progressed from feral child to a feisty but shrewd teenager. A killer heatwave and the return of Trey's father, chancer Johnny Reddy, upends everything. Johnny's get-rich-quick scheme complete with posh English mark has the

local area buzzing. Death and the Dublin police, however, aren't far behind. Trey sees the opportunity to avenge her murdered brother without breaking the truce that Cal has established with the townsmen. Using the police to exact her revenge is a risky plan, but Trey has no idea how risky. —Paula Longhurst, Viking, \$32

***Everyone on This Train Is a Suspect*, Benjamin Stevenson**

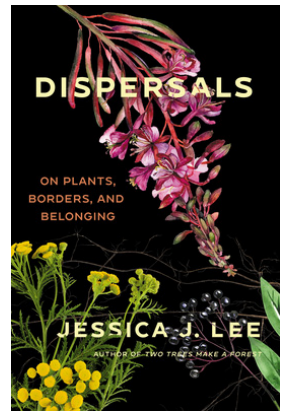
Ernie Cunningham's debut true crime novel has done well enough to earn him and girlfriend Juliette a spot at a literary festival on the Ghan, a train speeding across the Australian desert. The main draw is Henry McTavish from whom Ern is hoping to get the promise of a blurb for his still unwritten second book. The backstabbing has already begun before the Ghan leaves the station and that's just between the writers. In amongst the one-star reviews, withering literary criticism, codes, latches, super-fans and firecrackers, there's a murder—one Ern must solve or die trying. Stevenson's in-jokes and fourth wall breaking continues as in his previous book, *Everyone in My Family Has Killed Someone*. A cracking mystery that's fun to try and solve. Ern is a reliable narrator, and his honesty is refreshing. —Paula Longhurst, Mariner Books, \$30



## NONFICTION

***Dispersals: On Plants, Borders, and Belonging*, Jessica J. Lee**

I think this book was written just for me! For fans of Robin Wall Kimmerer, Jamaica Kincaid, Michael Pollan and Annie Dillard, this was written just for you too. Inquisitive, immersive, and insightful, Jessica J. Lee is a many times transplanted daughter of immigrant parents. She has written before about displacement and belonging in her exquisite travel memoir *Two Trees Make a Forest*, but in this collection Lee explores the specific ways humans and plants are entangled together on that journey. At once intimately personal and expansively researched, she asks what happens when we (humans, plants) move beyond our borders. Why do we cross borders, do we even know what borders are, and how do we put down roots, both metaphorical and physical? Combining science, global history, personal memoir and linguistics, the questions draw together into a botanical roadmap to home. How do plants hold our memories and our future, how do they carry within them both colonization and wildness, and where do we (humans, plants) go from here? —Michaela Riding, Catapult, \$27



***The Cave*, Amani Ballour, MD**

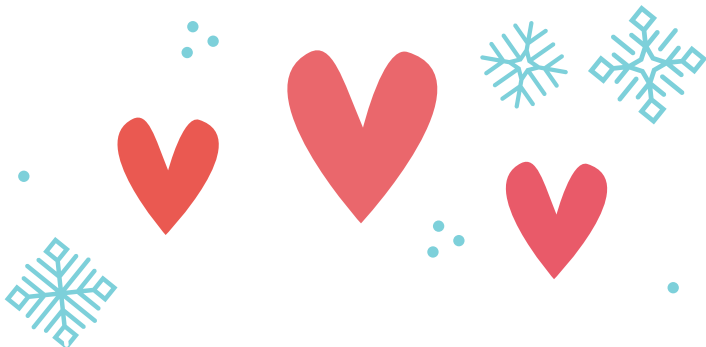
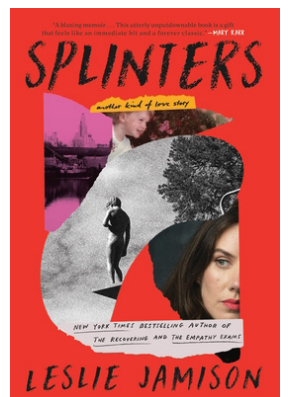


This enthralling autobiography describes the horrors of war in Syria. Dr. Amani defied the odds of a conservative Islamic regime to first become a pediatrician and then run the underground hospital known as "The Cave" in a rebel-held area of Syria. The opening scene describes the horror of a chemical attack unleashed by the Assad regime on its own people. Through years of civil war, Dr. Amani eloquently describes her efforts to treat victims of war while running a hospital

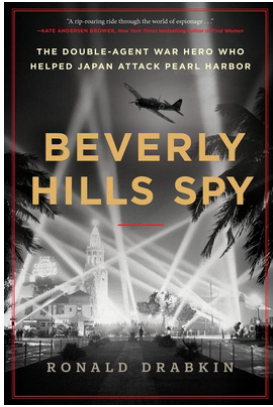
woefully undersupplied with supplies and personnel. She ultimately shares the effects of years of depredation due to the assaults of the Assad regime with the world. A difficult but necessary story in understanding modern warfare and the consequences which affect everyday people. —Christina Richards, National Geographic Books, \$30

***Splinters: Another Kind of Love Story*, Leslie Jamison**

A very accomplished and attractive writer/mother/teacher, Leslie Jamison confesses in this memoir that "some parts of me always wanted to fall in love." And fall in (and out) of love she does—sharing such moments with her readers in a brilliantly candid voice. *Splinters* is explicitly centered on a riveting portrait of her brutal divorce from "C" (father of her daughter). Along the way Jamison also describes an earlier four-year tempestuous relationship with "Dave", and later relationships with "the



tumbleweed” (a perpetual bachelor), and the “ex-philosopher” she’d begun dating before the Covid quarantine (now working at a hedge fund). But throughout her pages, another kind of love story emerges, of her real loves: motherhood in all its emotional and physical demands, and writing. “In its best moments writing made me feel like I was touching something larger than myself.” Her book tours, travels, and moments with students (she teaches at Columbia) are illustrative of her skills. Readers will appreciate the fundamental explorations of love, grief, and parenthood skillfully guided by one who has been there in spades. —Carol Kranes, Little, Brown, \$29



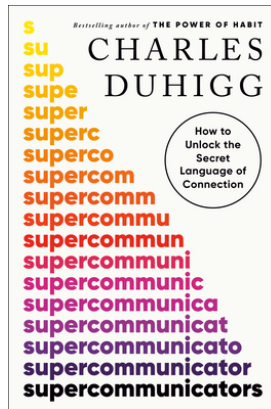
**Beverly Hills Spy**, Ronald Drabkin

This is the fascinating account of how Frederick Rutland, a highly decorated WWI Royal Navy officer, became a spy for the Japanese and a double agent for the Americans from 1920 through the beginning of WWII. Coming from a relatively poor background, Rutland enlisted in the Royal Navy in 1914 in the lowest ranks. His mechanical expertise and personal charm propelled him upward, finally becoming one of the first Flying Officers of the Royal Navy. He was

the very first person to ever takeoff from a ship. His heroism at the Battle of Jutland earned him the Distinguished Service Cross plus many other awards, but this was not enough to earn him a promotion in the class-conscious post-war service. In 1920 the Japanese, aware of his expertise, invited him to Japan to advise them on naval aviation. Japan and Britain were allies at this time. Over the course of the next twenty years Rutland ingratiated himself to the Japanese, to the point where he was sent to Los Angeles to spy on the U.S. Navy. Rutland had no second thoughts; he was well-paid and saw absolutely no chance of a war developing between Japan and the U.S. Setting up his office in a Beverly Hills mansion he befriended U.S. Navy officials as well as the “A” list of Hollywood stars. For several years his work went undetected. As war clouds ultimately darkened Rutland knew he needed to make a choice and finally offered his services as a double agent to the Americans. As spy stories go the right hand often does not know what the left is doing. Rutland became enmeshed in a series of misunderstandings, factual and erroneous reports to the point where he was suspected as a traitor by everyone, the Japanese, Americans and British. **Beverly Hills Spy** is a worthy tale of sleight of hand, double-dealing, espionage and how mistrust can lead to war. —John Mark, Harpercollins, \$29.99

**Supercommunicators**, Charles Duhigg

Prompted by his own failures as a manager, author and journalist Charles Duhigg (*The Power of Habit*) set out to discover why some people forge deep connections with others while most struggle. In **Supercommunicators** he compellingly weaves historical anecdotes, recent scientific research, and practical advice – all along assuring us that anyone can learn to connect deeply and meaningfully with family, friends, colleagues, and



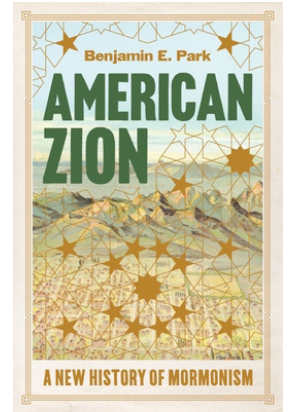
even enemies. I am generally skeptical of social science repackaged by non-scientists, but Duhigg mainly sticks to thoroughly reviewed studies from respected journals. He provides a memorable frame and enough examples to inspire action, while avoiding drowning us in the moat under the white tower. The result is a standard deviation above the average for the genre. It is too vulnerable for a weekend corporate leadership retreat, but also too detailed for a self-help manual. Duhigg aims higher—achieving meaningful connections, he asserts, is the most important thing in life. —Scott Riding, Random House, \$30

OF LOCAL INTEREST

**American Zion, A New History of Mormonism**, Benjamin E. Park

Anyone with even a passing curiosity about Mormon history should read Benjamin Park’s **American Zion, a New History of Mormonism**. Impeccably researched and written, this lively, smart book not only provides a sweeping history of Mormonism, it also captures the personalities, controversies, practices, successes, and the influence of the church from 1775 to the present. Park trains his well-honed eye on Mormonism from historical, social, cultural, racial, intellectual, political, sociological, and theological perspectives (with different mixes of these perspectives depending on the time period involved). He brilliantly addresses internal and external conflicts over issues such as church government, polygamy, race (as to both indigenous and black peoples), theocracy, gender, and economic system. There are vivid descriptions of the rise of the woman-run Relief Society, its independence, power, and influence from the 1880s through the 1930s, and its subsequent mid-twentieth-century relegation by the male leaders to a smaller role under their oversight. Park skillfully traces the rise and fall and rise again of polygamy and the numerous complications it created. The tensions in the early to mid-twentieth century between progressive thought and more conservative views by powerful church leaders are told in rich detail. Troubling and heartbreaking issues of race in the church are addressed unflinchingly. Park also effectively analyzes the culture wars of the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries and the growing political confluence of the LDS church and some of its long-time nemeses, conservative evangelical churches. One of the delights of **American Zion** is its personal focus on several key women and men. Park provides brief but telling descriptions of many people in the history of the church. These personal insights are unusually helpful in drawing readers into the narrative. **American Zion** is beautifully written, well-structured and organized, and unreserved in analyzing the many questions Mormonism raises. It provides useful information in an elegant manner and has none of the staid institutional history about it that a history book can suffer from.

—Kenneth Cannon, Liveright, \$35

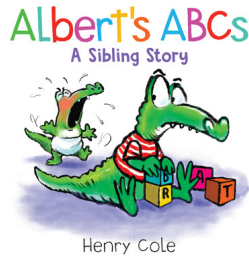




## PICTURE BOOKS

***Albert's ABCs: A Sibling Story***, Henry Cole

A gorgeously illustrated picture book about the trials and tribulations of having a baby sibling, all told alphabetically of course. A day in the life of Albert and Baxter, who is crying, possibly because he needs a diaper change. Hilarious and familiar to all older siblings who need to navigate their own needs against the needs of the much more carer-reliant little one. A wonderful addition to the 'new baby' genre - from A, all the way to ZZZZ —Antonia Squire, Peachtree, \$18.99 (Ages 2-6)



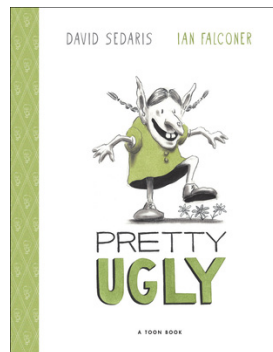
***Do You Know Them? Families Lost and Found After the Civil War***, Sharna Keller, illustrated by Laura Freeman

After the Civil War everyone in Lettie's life was trying to find their lost family members. Lettie was lucky to still live with her Uncle Charlie, but she was desperately trying to find her mom, dad, and brothers who were all sold away before

the war. Recently freed people would only have a vague idea where their loved ones were sent, and the only resources they had to find them were advertisements in local papers. Every Sunday Lettie read out the advertisements in church to other congregants, always hoping that someone was looking for them, and that in some other church, in some other place, their adverts were also being read aloud. A beautifully illustrated picture book, highlighting a little-known piece of reconstruction. —Antonia Squire, Atheneum Books for Young Readers, \$18.99 (Ages 4-8)

***Pretty Ugly***, David Sedaris, illustrated by Ian Falconer

From the twisted mind of David Sedaris comes a laugh out loud picture book destined to become a classic! Anna Van Ogre is the perfect Ogre child, doing all the good things that Ogre children are supposed to do. But sometimes, Anna Van Ogre is very bad - especially when she pulls funny faces, like cute bunny. Things go very, very wrong when she pulls a funny face, and as grandma threatened: it sticks! Now Anna Van Ogre is stuck as a pretty girl and all the ogres are horrified. How on earth can Anna rectify the situation? As only David Sedaris (with brilliant illustratory help from Ian Falconer) can imagine. —Antonia Squire, TOON Books, \$18.99 (Ages 5-7)



## MIDDLE READER



***Force of Nature***, Ann E. Burg, illustrated by Sophie Blackall

This historical novel written in beautiful verse relates Rachel Carson's life. She loved writing about and exploring nature from an early age. In college she discovered biology, but Rachel was discouraged from majoring in it because she was a woman. Her determination and love of the outdoors helped her to overcome family troubles, poverty, and society's expectations. What an uplifting story about one of the most important women in American science! —Becky Hall, Scholastic Press, \$19.99, (Ages 8-12)

***Not Quite a Ghost***, Anne Ursu

I love Anne Ursu's work—her tone, her language, her storytelling—and this one does not disappoint. Violet and her family are moving into a new home, which would be OK, but Violet is also just starting middle school, and that might be a little bit more change than Violet is comfortable with. The new house is lovely, except the attic room, which is best described as 'creepy', and of course that is the room Violet ends up with. As middle school begins, friendships are tried, made, fractured and reformed, but Violet is unwell and no one can figure out the cause. Doctors think she is faking, and so do some of her friends, but perhaps it is the girl in the wall who is making her sick? And Violet knows that no one will believe that story. —Antonia Squire, Walden Pond Press, \$19.99 (Ages 8-12)



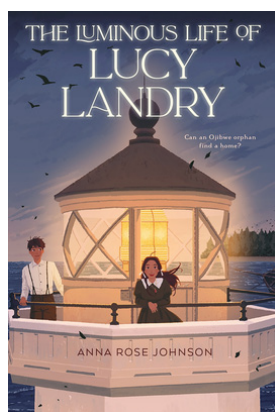
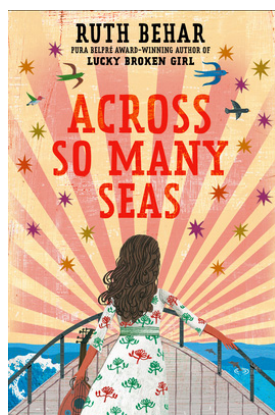
***Finding Normal***, Stephanie Faris

Late one night Temple's mom wakes her up, tells her to get dressed as quickly as she can and get in the car. Temple's Dad is already loading up some things and as they all pile into the car she notices that all her neighbors are leaving too. Temple has heard about natural disasters, and seen the aftermath on the news, she just never thought her family would lose their home to a flood, that her parents might not have flood insurance, that her entire world would be uprooted in a single night. But as Temple starts to understand what is happening, she also starts to think about how to make things better for her family and her community. A brilliant read with hope, grit and determination. I loved it. —Antonia Squire, Aladdin, \$17.99 (Ages 9-13)

## MIDDLE READER

*Across So Many Seas*, Ruth Behar

This generational story follows a Jewish family from 1492 to 2003, from Valencia during the Spanish Inquisition to Naples, then Turkey, Cuba, and finally the United States. The girls in each era are connected in their love of music and their fierce independence, which sometimes causes them great difficulties. Behar's book is reminiscent of Alan Gratz's *Refugee*. It's lyrical, exciting, and tender-hearted. —Becky Hall, Nancy Paulsen Books, \$17.99 (ages 10 and up)



*The Luminous Life of Lucy Landry*, Anna Rose Johnson

When orphan Lucy is sent to live in a lighthouse with a large family on Lake Superior, she alternates between trying unsuccessfully to help with day-to-day life and slipping into a fantasy world where she is royalty. She has a deep-seated fear of the ocean which took her sailor father's life, but she is also fascinated by a story of jewels that went down in an historic wreck. She is determined to discover the gems. In this sweet story readers will be reminded of *Anne of Green Gables* as Lucy wiggles her way into your heart. —Becky Hall, Holiday House, \$17.99 (Ages 10 and up)

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