

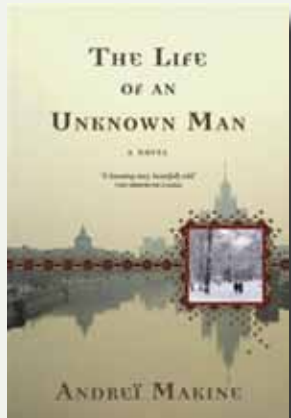
# San Francisco



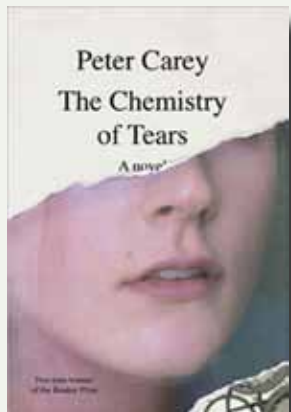
August 2012

# Book Review

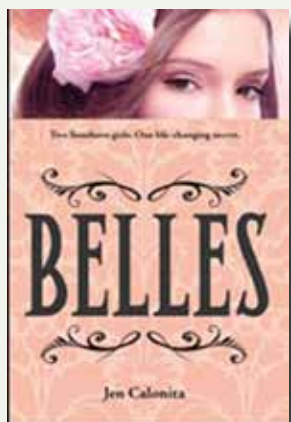
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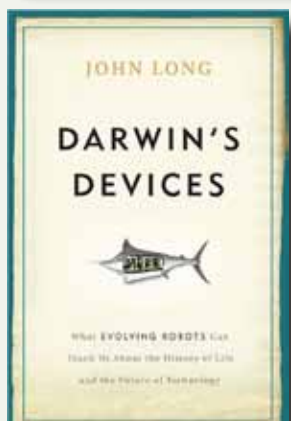
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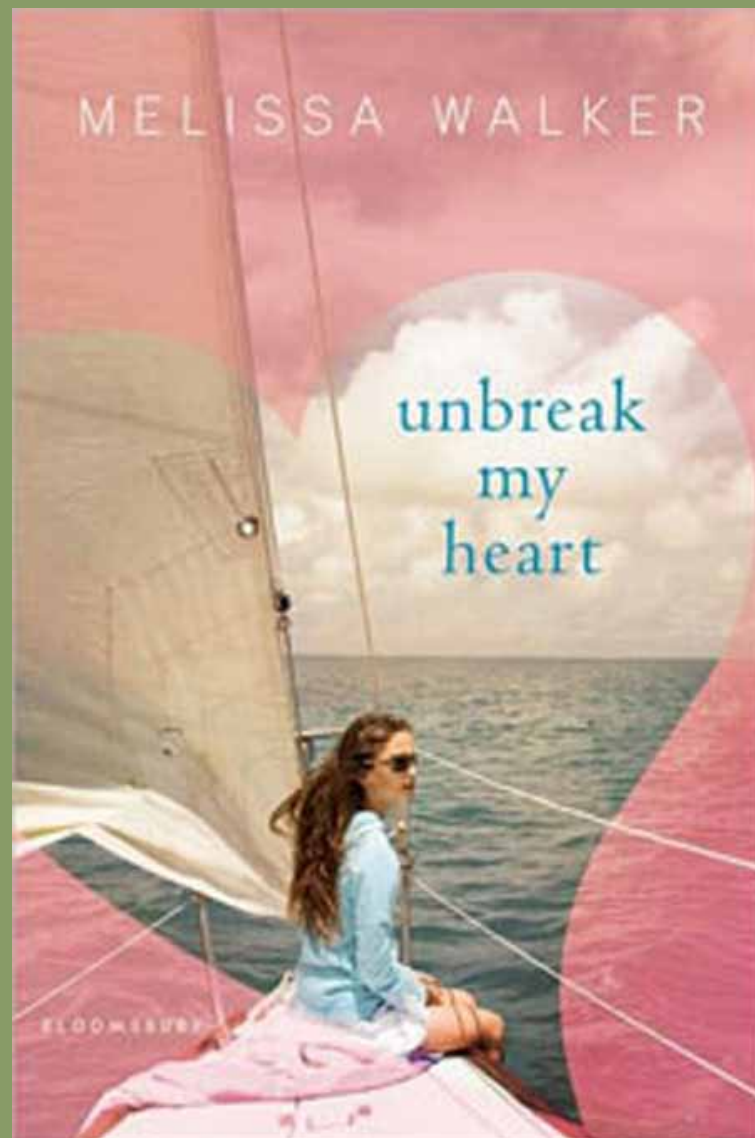
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## Unbreak My Heart

By Melissa Walker

Bloomsbury Children's, \$16.99, 240 Pages, Format: Hard

A combination of romance, family, and a unique setting sets *Unbreak My Heart* above the rest. Clementine is stuck on a boat with her parents and sister for the summer. What makes it even worse is that she's stuck there knowing she has no social life back home, as she did something to make her best friend hate her shortly before leaving.

The mystery of her best friend's dislike is slowly revealed through journal entries and flashbacks as Clem sails the coast. While interesting, these flashbacks fall secondary to

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# Masthead

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# San Francisco Book Review

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Can Help Authors**  
By Scott Lorenz



# From the *Editor...*

Hello readers!

The days seem to just be getting hotter, and as they do, I am always glad to be inside, with a fan, surrounded by some of my favorite things: books. Lots of books. We have so many, even with all our reviewers, I don't know how we have time to review them all! Yet somehow, here they are.

If you are looking for something to do on these long summer days, why not try one of our books? Whether you like to sit in the sun or stay inside with the air conditioning, like me, we have a book to recommend for you. You might like to escape to the past with some Historical Fiction, or to other worlds entirely with a Science Fiction or Fantasy book; whatever the weather is like there, it is bound to be fun! For those who prefer to stay grounded in this world, especially with elections coming soon, you might try a book from the Current Events and Politics section. If you are a person who likes to stay active, discover some delicious foods in the Cooking, Food, and Wine section, and then burn those calories off with help from our Health, Fitness, and Dieting books.

If you have kids who love to read, or are one yourself, don't miss the monthly Kids' Book Review section, where the kids themselves give their own reviews of Children's, Tweens, and Young Adult books. These youngsters have a blast writing the reviews, and we love putting them together for the publication.

So take a look, find a book, and have some fun. We have something for everyone.

Enjoy!



*James Rasmussen,*  
*Editorial Assistant*

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Cover



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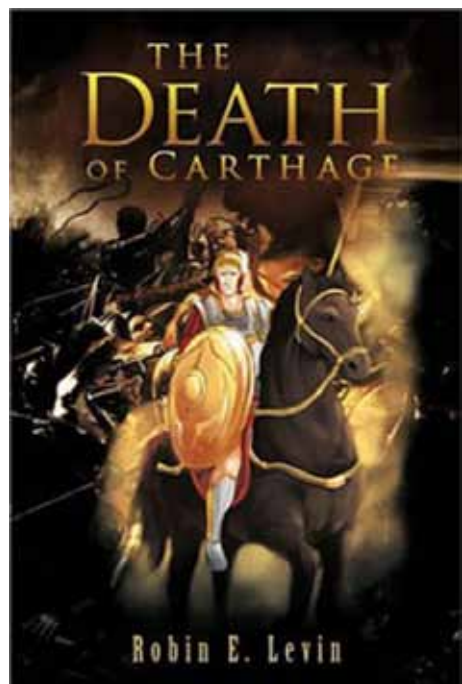
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Category

# Historical Fiction



## The Death of Carthage

By Robin E. Levin

Trafford, \$18.70, 308 pages, Format: Trade

★★★

Fans of historical fiction on the history and events of ancient Rome will find plenty to enjoy in Robin E. Levin's *The Death of Carthage*. The author has clearly done her research, filling the pages with crucial details of this past world that does a great job of immersing the reader in the time period and making them feel like they are really there.

The book is set during the time of the Second and Third Punic wars between Rome and the battle-hardened Carthage, divided into three separate stories. The first, "Carthage Must be Destroyed," is told in the first person from the viewpoint of Lucius Tullius Varro, who finds himself joining the Roman cavalry, serving in Spain under Scipio and playing a main part in the Second Punic war. The second story, "Captivus," is told by Enneus, Lucius's first cousin, who finds himself captured by Hannibal's general, Maharbal, and after a terrible Roman defeat, must now fight to stay alive. In the final story, "The Death of Carthage,"

told from the viewpoint of Enneus's son, Ectorius, is serving as a translator who plays witness to the definite and final end of Carthage.

*The Death of Carthage* is stiff at times, and lacking in character growth and development, as things just happen for the characters, as opposed to emotions and experiences coloring the story; at times the story feels like a history book. Nevertheless, the details are there to truly entrance the reader and make them remember this incredible time in the history of the world.

Sponsored Review

## Reign of Madness

By Lynn Cullen

Berkley, \$16.00, 425 pages, Format: Trade

★★★★★

Intoxically dramatic, vividly detailed, and brimming with royal intrigue, *Reign of Madness* is historical fiction at its finest and possibly the hottest new novel of 2012. Step into the Golden Age of Spain and meet Juana of Castille- or Juana the Mad—and you'll never want to leave. Hers wasn't called one of the most controversial reigns in Spanish history for nothing.



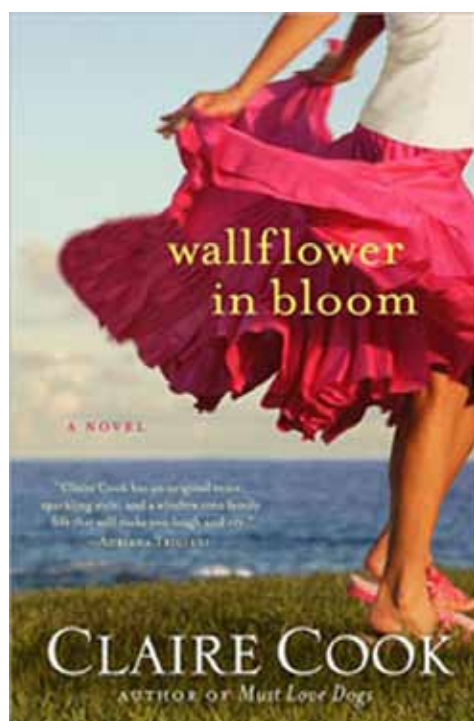
The third child of Spanish monarchs Isabel and Fernando, Juana lived a charmed childhood. She enjoyed close relationships with her sisters, thrived on the wild stories of the New World, and married the perfect man. This is no fairy tale, however. Juana's vain husband, the Duke of Burgundy, transforms from loving and kind to an increasingly adulterous, abusive, and evil monster. When Juana's older siblings tragically die and she finds herself first in line for the Spanish throne, she finds herself in dire straits. With both her husband and father against her and hungry to claim the crown, rumors start to swirl that the Queen has gone mad. Juana risks being locked up forever.

Historically accurate and emotionally powerful, *Reign of Madness* will captivate you on page one and hold your interest throughout its turbulent, touching, and tremendous course. This is without a doubt one of the best works of historic fiction I have ever read. Juana will steal your heart.

Reviewed by Jennifer Melville

Category

# Humor / Fiction



## Wallflower in Bloom: A Novel

By Claire Cook

Touchstone, \$24.99, 272 pages, Format: Hard

★★★★★

As a personal assistant to her new age guru brother Tag, Deirdre Griffin has spent the last few years of her life putting his needs above her own. Flying from city to city at the drop of a hat, working atrocious hours, serving as his gatekeeper/gopher and generally living under his shadow. But when Tag crosses one line too many, Deidre is finally forced to face the emptiness of a life lived through someone else's glory. With the help a stiff drink Deidre uses her brother's fame to land herself a spot on Dancing with the Stars. Through hard work and a little alone time, Deidre finally figures out how to shine.

Billed as standard, chick lit summer release fare, readers may be lulled in thinking *Wallflower in Bloom* is simply a fun-filled romp of a middle-aged woman coming into her own. Through Claire Cook's skilled narrative, they won't realize till the very end they've been taught a wonderful lesson. It is never too late to find your place in the world.

Reviewed by Lanine Bradley

## Elevating Overman

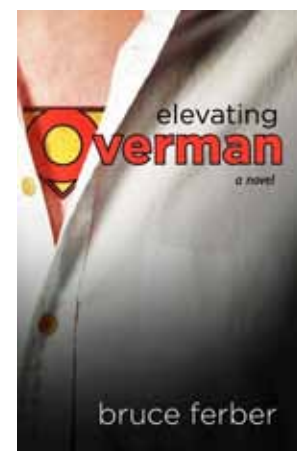
By Bruce Ferber

Fulcourt Press, \$17.95, 307 pages, Format: Trade

★★★★★

Ira Overman has lived a life steeped in mediocrity. A car salesman, he is divorced and has two children he is all but estranged from, and no real future to look forward to. But after a routine eye surgery, Overman finds himself suddenly in possession of a new sense of self and an amazing amount of willpower. Without even really meaning to, Overman finds himself suddenly not only bettering himself and his life, but also revisiting the poor choices that mark his life and trying to improve the lives of others. From developing a relationship to his kids to seeking out an old classmate who was deeply wronged, Overman is determined to put his new gifts to good use.

Bruce Ferber is an Emmy-nominated writer, known for his contributions to several television shows, and his talent shines in his first novel. *Elevating Overman* is a brilliantly-written novel with an amusing plot and a cast of full-bodied characters that are so ridiculous that they come across as truly authentic. From Nancy, the true-to-life condescending ex-wife, to Jake, the arrogant-turned-hero-worshipping best friend, this novel is full of characters that readers will love even as they appreciate not knowing them in real life. Ira Overman himself is the quintessential anti-hero; an overweight middle-aged man with a sorry excuse for a life. Certainly the world is past expecting great things of him, which is why it's such a pleasure to read along as he reconnects with his children (befuddling his ex-wife in the process), tells off his awful boss, helps to repair his best friend's marriage, and reconnects with an old friend from high school. Ferber is a skilled author, and he surely has a bright future as a novelist should he choose to continue down this career path.



Sponsored Review





# Bad Reviews Suck. ...and why I don't care.

By Rachel Carsman Thompson  
Founder of Bad Redhead Media

**L**et's talk about reviews, shall we? We've all read instances where an author acts poorly in the face of a one or two-star review. It's usually referred to as 'authors behaving badly,' usually for good reason. Writers are generally sensitive, artistic types. We slave over our computers to pound out stories that will not get out of our heads. It's a lonely occupation, even with the advent of social media and blogging because the ideas, the writer, and our medium are solely what bring our stories forth.

Then...after we've paid for editing, proofreading, graphics, and formatting (hint hint), we upload our books and wait. Martini or Nutella in hand, we wait.

What if people love it? What if people hate it? What if what if what if? (I do recommend using betareaders for a bit of loin girding.)

And so it goes.

Well, guess what: some will love it. Some will hate it. As anyone who creates art can tell you, no work is universally loved.

Most of us accept this, perhaps grudgingly and with a certain amount of angst. Then we move on. More to write. Right?

We've all certainly read books we've hated. I even threw out a CD once because the music was so incredibly god-awful, I couldn't bear to deal with the hassles of returning, so I broke it and dumped it in the bin. And it felt good!

Why then are authors behaving badly?

Or, are we?

## Authors Behaving Badly – Defined

I'm of the camp that believes there are some authors behaving badly. Why?

I hear the argument frequently that one poor review will affect sales much more than ten positive reviews (though I haven't seen actual data). And perhaps that is true. Yet, accept that when you write a book, you are putting yourself out there for any scrutiny or criticism people want to heap upon you. You are no longer the lone author in your office, tapping away to your iTunes playlist. You are now part of an established tradition and community, and you will be schooled in hard knocks whether you want to be or not.

You don't like everyone you meet, right? Sometimes a person disappoints you, or isn't interested in what or who you are. That's life, baby. All artists must develop a hard shell to criticism, as a form of staying true to our own vision as well as not allowing others to manipulate our emotions. It's been my experience that the authors who doth protest too much might want to look at what they've



written instead. There could be merit. I'm not saying there will be; I'm saying there could be. (Example: some people object to the use of hashtags in the one-sentence intros of my second book, *Mancode: Exposed*. I read them. I changed nothing. But, I'm aware that the use of this tool annoys some. #ohwell.)

### Peer Reviews

I, personally, would never write a scathing review of a fellow author's book, knowing the effort we put into writing them. That said, there is a lot of crap out there (just as in music and in art), and though I'm an avid reader, I'm not a reviewer by practice, so I don't feel comfortable advising someone else on what I believe they should have done (which I think is rather presumptuous anyway). I will email them with changes or suggestions if they've asked.

Meaning, I don't review books as a book blogger – simply as a reader. I believe those who are book bloggers or professional reviewers should adhere to some guidelines (as many amazing reviewers do): review the book, not the writer; offer suggestions for improvement; point out inconsistencies or annoying tendencies; I would hope editing and grammar had already been looked at but worth pointing out if the author missed something in the process. Etc.

And yet, not every reviewer, reader, or book blogger ascribes to that. I'm often shocked at the horrible things people say that have nothing at all to do with the work itself.

(There are rumors now that Amazon will remove author to author reviews, unverified purchases, and other inappropriate commentary. If that's the case, great. So far, there's nothing in their official guidelines about it {though it's been supposedly mentioned on their Facebook page}. I'm thrilled to see them taking steps to verify and set up better quality control.)

As writers, it's our job to learn from these reviews; what we did well, what needs improvement. And move on.

### Poor Reviews

Sometimes, a person will have a viscerally negative reaction to your book. They hate it with every cell of their

soul. It happens. However, I have very little respect for negative reviews that attack the author personally or use inappropriate names, labels, or make judgmental statements regarding the author's personal life. (I speak from experience. People often make these types of remarks about who I am as a person. Remember this: readers don't know you. At all.)

But...do I feel it's worth reacting? No way. For all the time you spend agonizing and righteously whining over that one poor review, you could have written five chapters of your next book.

### What to Do

So, is it then, a waste of time to read our negative reviews, if controlling our emotions about them is more difficult than moving on? That's up to each writer, of course.

I read all my reviews. As I said, I never respond (though I do pull anonymous quotes from them occasionally for the entertainment value, 'trustafarian dewdrop' being my current fav).

Negative reviews actually legitimize your work. Many people look at a book with all four and five-star reviews and say, "Friends and family," though (from my experience), that's rarely the case. This is hard for most authors, especially new ones, to understand. I know it took me awhile!

Breathe. Relax. It's just ONE review. (Wait til you have received ten, twenty-five, even fifty! Vodka helps.)

### Bottom Line

I write my books with my vision. That is my success. If people buy it and hate it to the point of writing a one-star review, at least I've elicited an emotion and that, my friends, is a win.

What if someone recommends others not buy it? Don't care. I have faith that anyone who is truly interested in me, my book, or my work overall will be intelligent enough to make their own decision, find out more about me, or move on. The sheep that can't make their own decisions probably won't enjoy my work, anyway.





**Final words:** Reacting defensively to a poor review reminds me of kids fighting in the schoolyard over something that seems monumental at that moment, yet which they will forget about within minutes.

**You dig in to make your point, fight with everything you have, and guess what? Nobody remembers anything about your book anymore. They label you instead.**

**If writing is your profession, be professional. Name-calling and drama is fun for some, and if you think it will sell you more books, knock yourself out.**

**Truly, please. Then we won't have to listen to you anymore.**

### Editor's Note:

We originally ran this article on our website a couple of weeks ago. To-date, it's created THE most comments on the site -- many of them quite heated. Click [HERE](#) to read all of the comments.

*"I loved reading this article. Reviews come from one point of view. It's just a subjective opinion. When anyone tells me he or she is being objective, I believe the opposite. Don't sweat any review, good or bad; be happy someone is reading your book."*  
-- Justin Bog

*"...When it comes to book bloggers/review websites, I think anyone who posts a scathing rant review of a book without receiving a giant paycheck as compensation are just bitter \*\*\*\*\* who should probably find a hobby that doesn't involve tearing down artists who actually contribute something to the world."*

--Cassandra Duffy

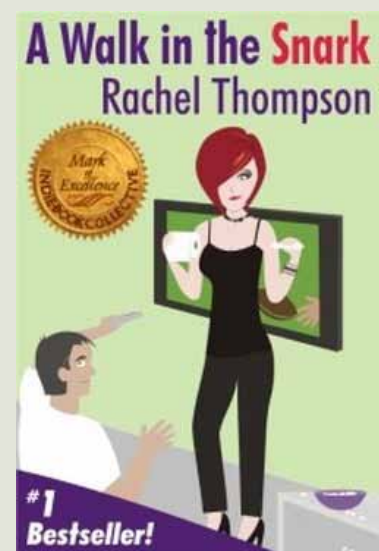


## About Rachel Carsman Thompson

Author Rachel Thompson is a successful self-published author and social media/branding consultant. Releasing her first title in January 2011 and her second in December, 2011, she's sold nearly 15,000 copies of *A Walk In the Snark* and *The Mancode Exposed* combined. *Snark* hit #1 on the Kindle Motherhood and Women's Studies lists last September, and in 2011 *Mancode* placed in the Amazon Top 100 Paid list, as well as number one on the Parenting and Family list. She will release her next title, *Broken Pieces*, this winter.

Thompson has more than 18,000 followers on Twitter, an expanding presence on Facebook, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Instagram, YouTube, and several other channels. Her blogs at [RachelintheOC.com](#) (author site) and [BadRedheadMedia.com](#) (consulting/social media site) allow her to personally connect with readers. Give her a shout!

Thompson is the Blog-To-Book expert for Triberr, and her articles have been picked up by Catalyst Partnership, Business2Community.com, 12Most, and other popular social media sites. She was chosen by Blog-World as one of twenty-three bloggers to watch in March, 2012.



## Category

# Popular Fiction



### Sacre Bleu

By Christopher Moore

William Morrow, \$26.99, 404 pages, Format: Hard

★★★★

After Van Gogh is murdered by the grotesque dwarf “The Colorman” in Auvers, another “little man,” Henri Toulouse-Lautrec, and Lucien Lessard, a far lesser known Impressionist, try to solve the crime in Montmartre, Paris.

This novel is rather difficult to characterize. First, it’s a surprisingly true and detailed history of Impressionism, and even the whole history of art, beginning 40,000 years ago in a cave of France, when The Colorman was born.

Second, it is about *Sacre Bleu*—sacred blue—named for the color of the cloak of the Virgin Mary. It’s made from crushed lapis lazuli, and only supplied by The Colorman and his assistant, the whorish Juliette. It’s also about the mixing of colors, mostly blue, and the emergence of the color blue in the Impressionists—the first painters to paint outside, to paint light.

Juliette is the daemon herself—the muse of artistic creation. In history, we learn in the novel, many artists have

painted her in different bodily manifestations, and been inspired by her. But at what cost? Murder, syphilis, madness, that’s what.

This is a kind of Monty Python look at 1890 France. You know, the absinthe, risqué girls, people smacked by baguettes for a joke, artists’ garrets, Left Bank existential hipness (fifty years before its time).

As a bonus, the novel is illustrated with dozens of paintings and even features blue ink to read.

Reviewed by Phil Semler

### Reel Life: A Novel

By Jackie Townsend

Ripetta Press, \$9.02, 380 pages, Format: Trade

★★★★

Siblings play an important role in our lives, especially in sister-to-sister relationships. Townsend has crafted the life-long story of Betty and Jamie, two redheaded sisters just a year apart in age. Like most of us, the girls share their childhood with parents who are less than perfect. As a result, the sisters struggle to relate to a mother and father who are each distant in unique, yet troubling ways. Betty and Jamie take their own paths through life, each adapting on her own, yet turning to the other for support.

Sibling rivalry, petty disagreements, the pain of parental separation, and the travails of life play out in chapters named for various movies. Townsend does a great job of intertwining the characters’ lives with the themes of films such as *The Wizard of Oz*, *Vertigo*, *Shrek* and *The Exorcist*. However, the story drags in many places, as the minutiae of life is described in extreme detail, with a few vague, minor characters unnecessarily thrown into the mix. Surprising twists add to the drama, as infidelity and betrayal re-occur like a generational curse. But, that’s real life, and ultimately, *Reel Life* turns out to be interesting, just like in the movies.



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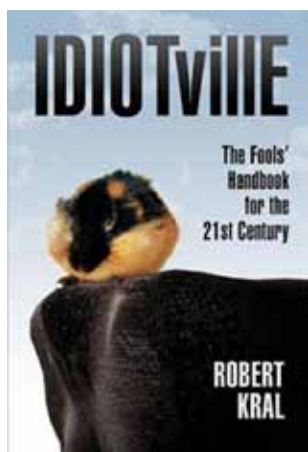


**Idiotville: The Fools' Handbook for the 21st Century**

By Robert Kral

CreateSpace, \$8.99, 165 pages, Format: Trade

★★★



Imagine every numbskull, dimwit, nincompoop, and shortsighted goof-ball you've ever met lived in the same town. A town where the buck is passed whenever possible, where committee groupthink has replaced actual thinking, where the easy way is the only way anyone ever considers. From time machines to drug-laced chocolates, erotic shoeshines to election shenanigans,

life is never dull there. Welcome to Idiotville.

*Idiotville* is a series of interconnected short stories that build toward a collective vision: a town full of Gilligans, Barney Fifes, and Michael Scotts. Characters recur throughout, and inane molehills quickly become ludicrous mountains as the absurdities pile up with every passing page. And while a few of the stories are comedic non-starters, most will have you shaking your head in bemusement, if not chuckling to yourself quietly.

It starts off strong with its opening story, and the chapter featuring the Church of Bob is a real highlight, but Chapter 11's *The Wildlife* is the true comedic highwater mark. The town decides to divvy up its remaining forested area for development, and soon rumors of monsters in the woods run rampant. It's a wonderfully bizarre story with a great payoff.

The main drawback of *Idiotville* is that a town full of idiots needs a straight man to play off of, and the only ostensible straight man is shut down in the first few pages. (The mayor is a less than suitable stand-in, seeing how much mayhem ensues from his incompetent leadership.) This leaves the reader as the book's straight man, which can get a bit exhausting at times.

Amidst the idiocy, Kral delivers some delightful turns of phrase. (Describing the F-word as "the most magnificent of all swearwords, the mother of all curses" was a particular favorite of mine.)

*Idiotville* is a little something for the idiot in all of us.

Sponsored Review

**The Life of an Unknown Man: A Novel**

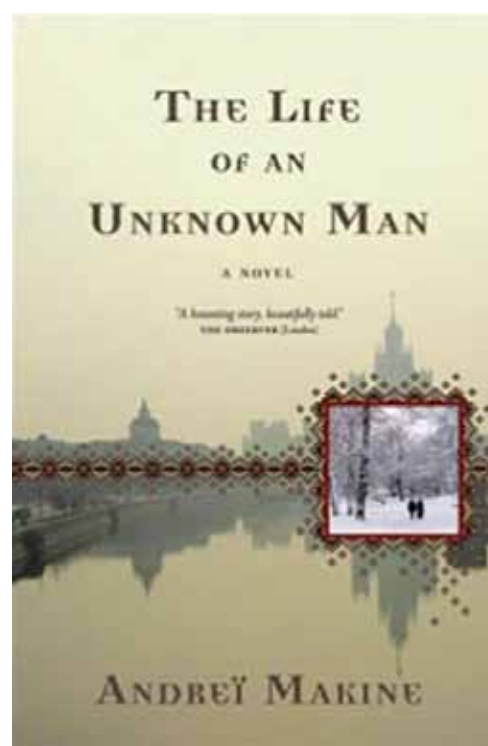
By Andreï Makine, translated by Geoffrey Strachan

Graywolf Press, \$15.00, 192 pages, Format: Trade

★★★★★

Ivan Shutov is looking back on his life and left wanting and wondering. This midlife crisis state-of-mind is brought on by his young girlfriend leaving him, seeing the Soviet Union that he left twenty years ago as a dissident come crashing down, and by, quite obviously, his turning fifty. He wonders how Russia has changed from the utter soul crushing place that it used to be. He also wonders what happened to Yana, the girl that he whispered lines from Chekhov's poetry so many years ago.

Shutov finds that everything has changed and he is truly



a man that Russia forgot, but it is also here that Shutov and readers experience one of the largest shifts that this reader has ever experienced. He meets Georgy Lvovich Volsky who tells Shutov a beautiful story of hope, struggle, and music in Leningrad during WWII.

Here is the true unknown man in the story. He is unknown by the people he lives with and they have plans to ware-

house this old, mute, elderly man. However, he is far from mute and his story humbles Shutov when he realizes that compared to Georgy, he has so little to complain about and even less to regret. Georgy's story would humble anyone.

Reviewed by Gwen Stackler





# The Back Page

## BOND GIRL

By Francine Mathews



**T**he thunk-thunk of the Chinook grew louder in the humid Virginia sky; it swung into view just as we lifted our heads from the deep grass of the cemetery. It wasn't the Enemy, with their forward-looking infra-red that could detect body heat even in the densest forest; it was salvation, in the form of our pickup chopper. We'd made it to the rendezvous point on our topographic maps, and we'd survived the three-day ordeal of *Escape and Evasion*. My squad mate, Karen, lifted her M16 in the air. "Oh, yeah, baby," she crowed. "Grandma was air-lifted out of a secret CIA installation!"

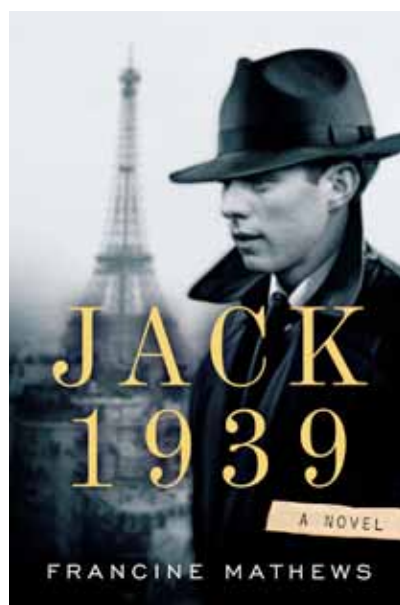
She was twenty-two at the time and had no children. She quit our elite training program soon afterward. She'd been perfectly frank in admitting she'd enrolled purely to have kickass cocktail party conversation for the rest of her life. And she was right: I always wait for the pregnant pause at the dinner table after some new acquaintance says, "Wait. Seriously? You worked for the CIA?"

I did. And it was worth all those hours hiding in the cemetery, just to say so.

I wasn't born to be a spy. My parents tried to raise me right—Catholic, conciliatory, cowed. But I grew up near Washington, D.C., during the Deep Throat years, when nothing seemed sexier than a small brown sign off the George Washington Parkway. CIA, it said. Just like that. An exit ramp disappeared into a thicket of trees. Could you even take that exit? And what would happen to you, if you did?

All writers begin life as readers—and I cut my teeth on LeCarre. I devoured Ludlum, MacInnes and Deighton. I pressed copies of Nelson DeMille's *Charm School* on prospective boyfriends. I wanted it all: the cat suit, the thigh holster, the midnight assignation under a bridge in Prague. I could quote Bond from *Dr. No* to *Never Say Never Again*, and there was a special place in my heart for *Vesper*.

But it's tough to be a woman in America and really love Bond. Bond Girls have copious breasts and Barbie Doll legs. Bond Girls have names like Honey Ryder. And most importantly, Bond Girls always die—usually because they insist on wearing high heels, or they can't drive a stick shift. They trip on their stilettos as they race to the helicopter, and expire on the word



“James...!” Far better to wear combat boots, as I did. Provided you carry a particular shade of lipstick in your gear—MAC’s Chili will do just fine—that pairs brilliantly with camouflage.

I applied to the Agency as an analyst, but after a year of FBI background checks and a polygraph, I was pulled into the CIA’s training program as a special treat. For a year I learned to be a spy: tossing supplies out of open airplane doors to partisans waiting in the bush; rappelling off a helicopter skid with an M16 strapped to my back; making brush passes and taking agent meetings and servicing dead drops; working surveillance on the streets of DC at night. This was long before waterboarding and Rendition and the ugly outing of Valerie Plame. A kinder, gentler intelligence era. Our worst enemy was Moammar Gaddafi, who downed Pan Am 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland, in 1988 as a Christmas present. CIA employees died on that plane. I was allowed to work on the investigation. I spent four years at the Agency before quitting to write books, and I don’t regret a day of it. My knowledge of the covert world has proved endlessly useful as background to the novels I’ve written—even my latest, *JACK 1939*. As I wrote about a young Harvard kid picking up a pistol for the first time, it helped to remember just how clueless I once felt, in similar circumstances; and I put a lot of my girlish fantasies into the creation of Diana, *JACK*’s British femme fatale.

Intelligence is a funny business, worked in the shadows with occasional bursts of glory. There was the time I flew to Houston to debrief George H. W. Bush; the time I got a yellow sticky note of praise from Al Gore; and the never-to-be-forgotten moment when I donned a Dolly Parton wig and rhinestone glasses to meet a terrorist asset. Raising kids, I’ve gotten endless

mileage out of my old career. When one of my sons—then about five—told me scornfully that he could never be a writer because “that’s a girl’s job, Mom,” I narrowed my eyes and said, with just the right hint of menace, “Remember, Sweetie. It’s Mommie who can fire a grenade launcher. Not Daddy.”

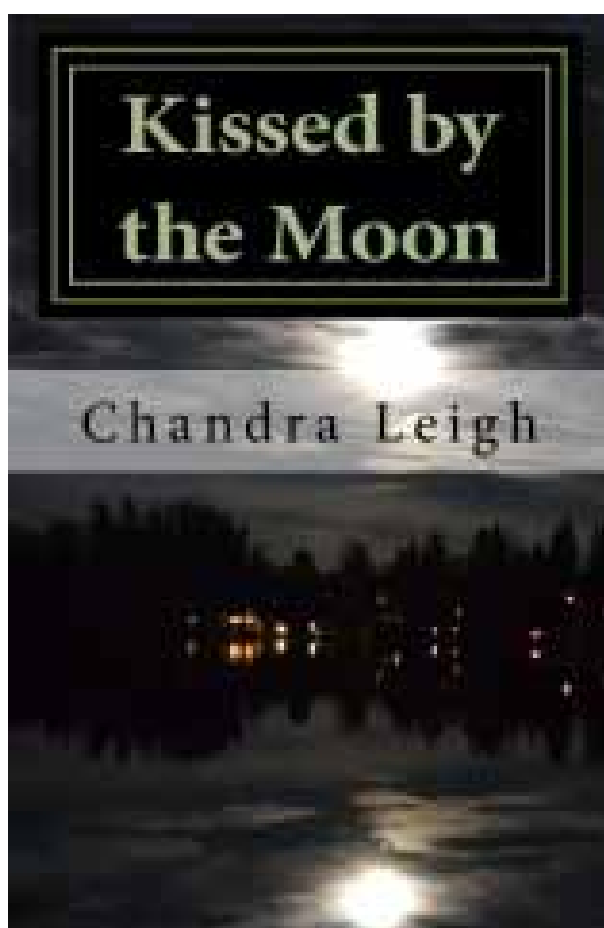
## About Francine Mathews

Francine Mathews is well-known for writing some of the most engaging political and historical novels of the past decade. She has degrees in History from Princeton and Stanford, as well as spy training and years of investigative experience as an intelligence analyst with the CIA. Publishers Weekly called her debut, *The Cutout* (2001), “riveting,” and later named *The Alibi Club* (2006) one of the “15 best novels of the year.” She lives with her husband and children in Denver.



Category

# Romance



## Kissed by the Moon

By Chandra Leigh

CreateSpace, \$12.99, 320 pages, Format: Trade

★★★★★

Readers who like their romance novels mixed with some fantasy, the paranormal, witchcraft, and mischief will thoroughly enjoy Chandra Leigh's book *Kissed by the Moon*. Selina Tamson, the main character, is questioning many things in her life. Readers meet Selina just as she acknowledges a hard truth about her current relationship. Why continue seeing a man with whom she has no intention of raising children? All she wants to find is her knight in shining armor to love and start a family. While Selina fills her best friend, Carmen, in on the break up details, Carmen invites her to a dinner. The only catch is that in addition to Carmen and her husband, someone else will be there...a very single someone else.

Kieran Blackwell donates money to the zoo where Selina works as a veterinarian, he drives a motorcycle, which Selina finds to be incredibly sexy, and he is willing to debate with her over controversial issues, such as fate versus religion and belief in God. Kieran sees magic everywhere and thinks that everyone has access to magic as long as they believe. Can the two find common ground?

Told from Selina's point of view, the story unfolds at a nice pace, revealing important details about Selina and her growing abilities. Leigh's use of dialogue keeps the story moving quickly. The author explores themes of personal journeys, fear, desire, dreams, hopes, self-awareness, open-minded thinking and tolerance. Readers will enjoy Leigh's descriptions of Seattle and the surrounding areas. She comments on the city's architecture and the diversity of the people. Selina's sisters own a store called "Harvest Moon Books and Sundries" and they are very in tune with their spiritual side. They carry books on witchcraft, meditation, spiritualism, chemistry, herbology, and human artifacts and history. Sometimes it seems they can even see the future and hear whispers on the wind. Her sisters teach Selina about tarot cards and psychic readings, spirit guides, and the conscious versus the subconscious. After experiencing fantastical dreams, Selina must resolve her own feelings about magic versus miracle and her uncertainty about faith coexisting with magic.

Danger comes with her discoveries and Kieran may be the only one who can help Selina find her way. *Kissed by the Moon* is the first book in a planned series.

Sponsored Review

## Midnight Promises

By Sherryl Woods

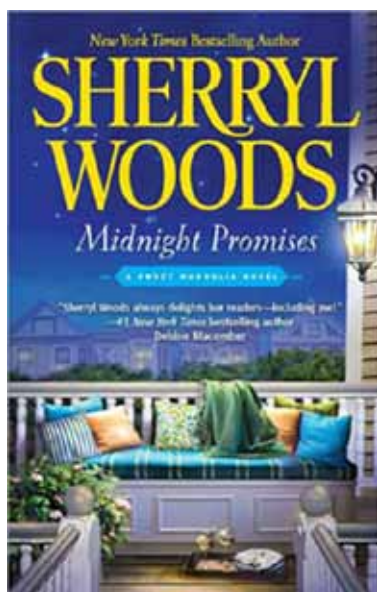
Mira, \$7.99, 384 pages, Format: Mass

★★★★★

Fans of the author's *Sweet Magnolia* series may now rejoice! There are three new books to add to the series: *Midnight Promises* is the first one. There's even a bonus here – the three Senior Magnolias, who adopt the motto "we're old and we're bold!" (You have to love it and them -- and you will!)

This is the story of Karen and Elliott Cruz – now that they're married, that is. True romance seldom runs smoothly, and this one is no exception. Karen's first husband ran out on her and her two kids, leaving behind all the bills for her





to settle. She is understandably in a constant state of financial pressure (some real, some imagined), so when Elliott is asked by several of their friends to become a partner in a much-needed new gym for men in their hometown of Serenity, Karen is beyond suspicious and hesitant.

In the meantime, two of the three seniors Liz and Flo are worried about the eldest of them, Fran, who has suddenly become more forgetful than usual. And Elliott's older sister Adelia is experiencing domestic difficulties.

Perception and compromise are almost sturdy secondary characters in this well-written, engaging tale of the meaning of small-town community. We should all be so fortunate as to have friends like this batch, who always have each other's backs!

Reviewed by Kelly Ferjutz

### A Duchess to Remember

By Christina Brooke

St. Martin's Press, \$7.99, 320 pages, Format: Mass

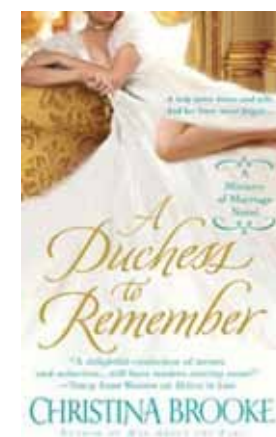
★★★

Apparently the term 'historical,' when used to categorize works of fiction, has different meanings. I prefer the traditional rather than the faux. The latter includes modern-day sensibilities dressed up in supposedly appropriate costume, but not always. Behavior has more to do with allowing the characters to do as they please rather than the time they find themselves living in, unless the two concepts coincide for some reason known only to the author.

I've not read either of the preceding books in this author's *Ministry of Marriage* series, nor will I look for any new ones. I realize I'm probably in the minority by these standards. There are many readers who don't object to a hard-headed, willful heroine who will flout society's rules as she wishes while securing the alpha male hero she is really determined to hate until she doesn't. In fact, this is one of the favorite story lines of romance readers.

Plot seldom means much, either, and *A Duchess to Remember* features a total mish-mosh of one that bears little resemblance to the actual society of 1816.

Reviewed by Kelly Ferjutz

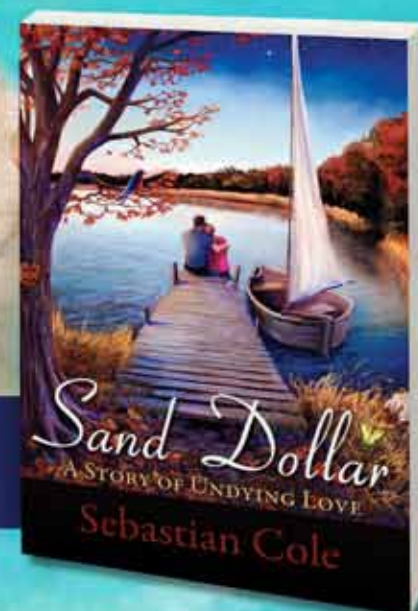


"SAND DOLLAR is one of those rare books that makes you feel, laugh and cry all at the same time. This smashing debut by Sebastian Cole reads like the bests of Nicholas Sparks with just enough schmaltz. Moving and emotive, it's every bit THE NOTEBOOK done up for summer."

-Jon Land, bestselling author

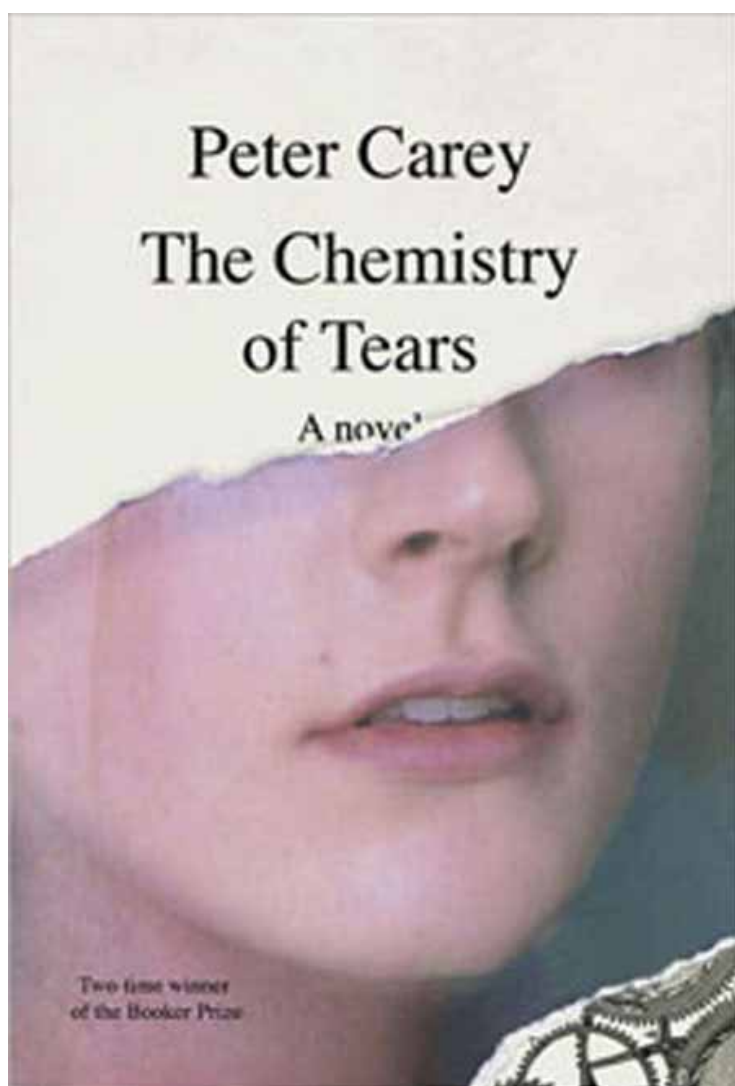
Sand Dollar: A Story of Undying Love  
by Sebastian Cole  
SebastianColeAuthor.com

Looking for the next great love story?  
Well you've found it!



Category

# Modern Literature



## The Chemistry of Tears

By Peter Carey

Knopf, \$26.00, 229 pages, Format: Hard

★★★★★

I kiss your toes...

As Catherine Gehrig privately grieves for the unexpected death of her colleague and married lover of thirteen years, she hides herself in the Swinburne museum, hidden away with a secret project and her anguish. Her usual rational

and controlled presence of mind ruined with grief, the story grows even stranger as Catherine unpacks a most extraordinary find in an automaton that her boss has arranged for her to restore. Accompanying the automaton are the notebooks of the original owner, an Englishman from the nineteenth-century named Henry Brandling, who commissioned the piece from a German genius as a present for his consumptive son. But as the story grows ever stranger, twists and turns in an eerie eldritch puzzle, Catherine, two hundred years later, will learn more of catastrophe and the human chemistry of love than she ever imagined.

An unbelievable writer, in *The Chemistry of Tears* Peter Carey has outdone himself. The book is lively, brilliant, utterly entrancing, and intoxicating to the reader, wrapping the reader into the narrative so thoroughly that Catherine's grief and Brandling's frustrations become unimaginably tangible, complex as clockwork, tasting of vodka and love, with the bitterness of steel.

Reviewed by Axie Barclay

## Home

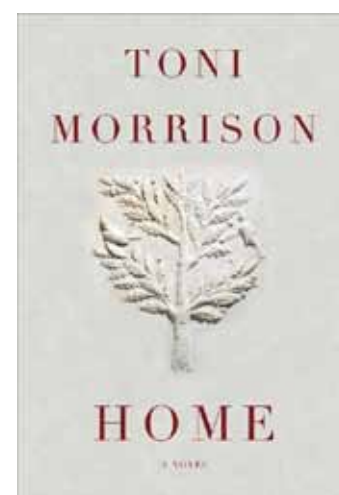
By Toni Morrison

Knopf, \$24.00, 160 pages, Format: Hard

★★★★★

Frank Money returned from the Korean War a broken man. Unable to deal with his guilt for the atrocities he witnessed and his inability to save his friends, Frank suffers from waking visions that wash over him at inopportune times. Frank is lost until he receives a letter about his sister; without his intervention, "She be dead." Cee is indeed almost dead when Frank finally reaches her, and he has no choice but to take her to the home to which he's sworn he'd never return. The indomitable women of Lotus, a small community on the outskirts of Atlanta, assiduously nurse her to health and give Cee a sense of self-worth she's never possessed. Both siblings find refuge in Lotus and learn what it means to be home.

This slim novel reads like a short story. Each spare scene focuses attention on the difficulty an African American has





in finding his or her place in the world, specifically a segregated United States. In Frank, the problem is compounded by his veteran status and mental instability, but each of the characters struggles. *Home* beautifully argues that each individual has something to contribute to the community and everyone deserves a home.

Reviewed by Tammy McCartney

### Derby Day: A Novel

By D.J. Taylor

Pegasus Books, \$25.95, 404 pages, Format: Hard

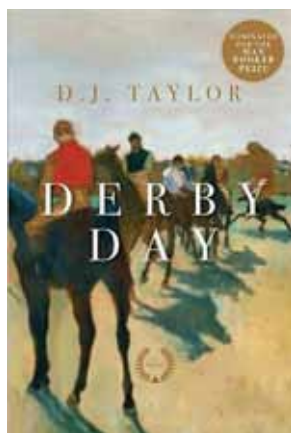
★★★★★

D.J.Taylor channels Charles Dickens, Anthony Trollope, even a wry sprinkle of Jane Austen in this arch, knowing comedy of manners and errors. *Derby Day* calls itself a Victorian mystery. Although there are a prodigious number of plot lines, not much is mysterious save whether the sweet little part-Arab horse, Tiberius, will win or deliberately lose the Derby.

The novel is full of intrigue. Most characters are, at least, duplicitous. Several are significantly smarter than others. Attending as they delicately manipulate each other in pursuit of gain is amusing - until an ill-advised, gloomy country gentleman commits suicide, after finding himself bankrupted by the machinations of a devious race track tout.

Taylor's genius lies in his ability to make a reader care about the plights of these deeply venial creatures. His observer's eye is both fond and merciless. Watch slick Mr. Happerton slowly and compassionately poison his father-in-law or try to fondle his mistress's vicious Pekinese. Sit beside green-eyed Mrs. Rebecca as she scatters scorn over a raffish collection of London artistes or plots to run her gambler husband for Parliament, since she can't run herself. It all ends in disaster, what else? One can only hope for a sequel.

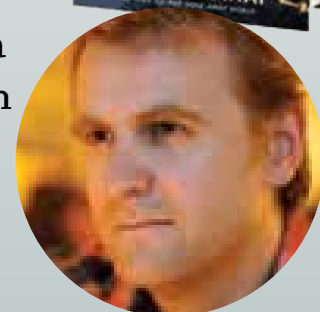
Reviewed by Elizabeth Benford



# Audible Authors

## Nick Harkaway

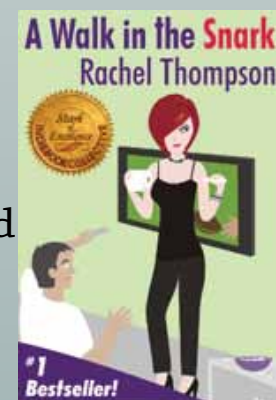
Author of *The Gone-Away World* and *Angelmaker*. He is tall and has a shaggy and unkempt look about him, which even the best grooming products cannot entirely erase. His eyebrows were at one time wanted on a charge of ruckus and affray in the state of Utah, but this unhappy passage has now been resolved.



**CLICK/TAP** to listen to our interview.

## Rachel Thompson (aka RachelintheOC)

Rachel Thompson is a published author and social media consultant. Her two books, *A Walk In The Snark* and *The Mancode: Exposed* are both #1 Kindle bestsellers! When not writing, she helps authors and other professionals with branding and social media for her company, BadRedhead Media. She hates walks in the running out of coffee, and coconut.



**CLICK/TAP** to listen to our interview.

AudibleAuthors.net



Category

# Horror

## Revamp

By Beck Sherman

Amazon Digital Services, \$0.99, 822 KB, Format: eBook

★★★★

When Emma Spade arrived in Los Angeles from New York, the airport looked like a “battlefield without bodies.” Then some helpful men approached her wearing armbands with two red stripes on the top and bottom and a thick white one going through the middle with the letters UVF on it. Before she could say “Philip Dick,” she realizes these guys will suck her dry. She digs her thumbs into the eyes of one of them, pops the eyeballs out, and gets the hell out of there.

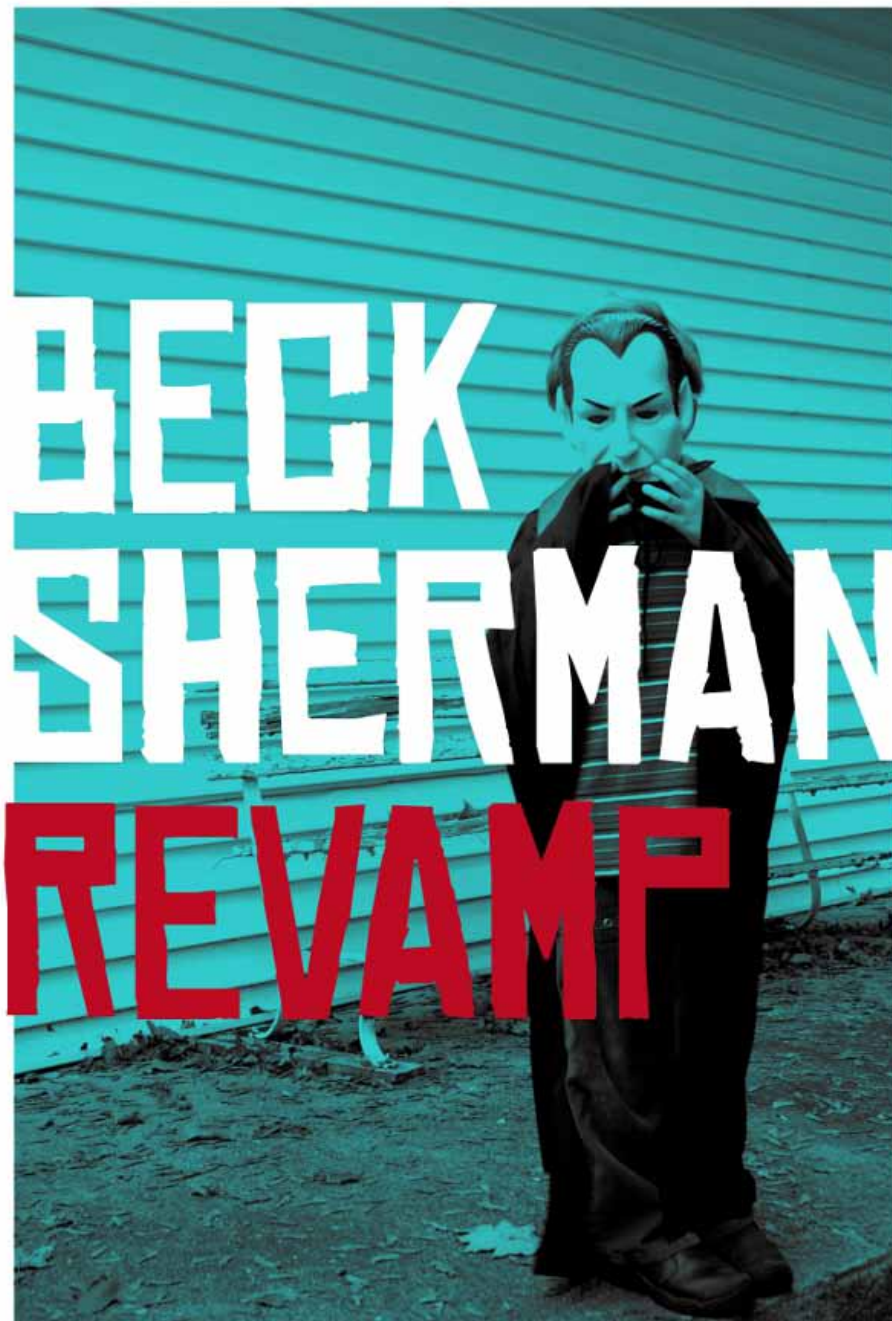
This is the opening of Sherman’s book. A giddy satire on all things American and yet, at the same time, a kind of homage to the traditional vampire book featuring such things as stakes, safe churches and daylight, large teeth, etc. These vamps don’t mind garlic, but are still averse to holy water and crosses.

What I liked about the vampires was their incredible organization. UVF stands for “United Vampire Front.” Humans are now “farm-raised” for the vamps’ drinking delight. The vampires have been “reborn” with the “fresh stuff.” They don’t have to drink that “cheap, processed crap,” one says early on. The Patriot Act?

So, Emma gets away, thinking this can’t be happening, but meets Cooper, who convinces her it is happening. Now it’s Emma and Cooper, and a small band of humans who have to save the human world.

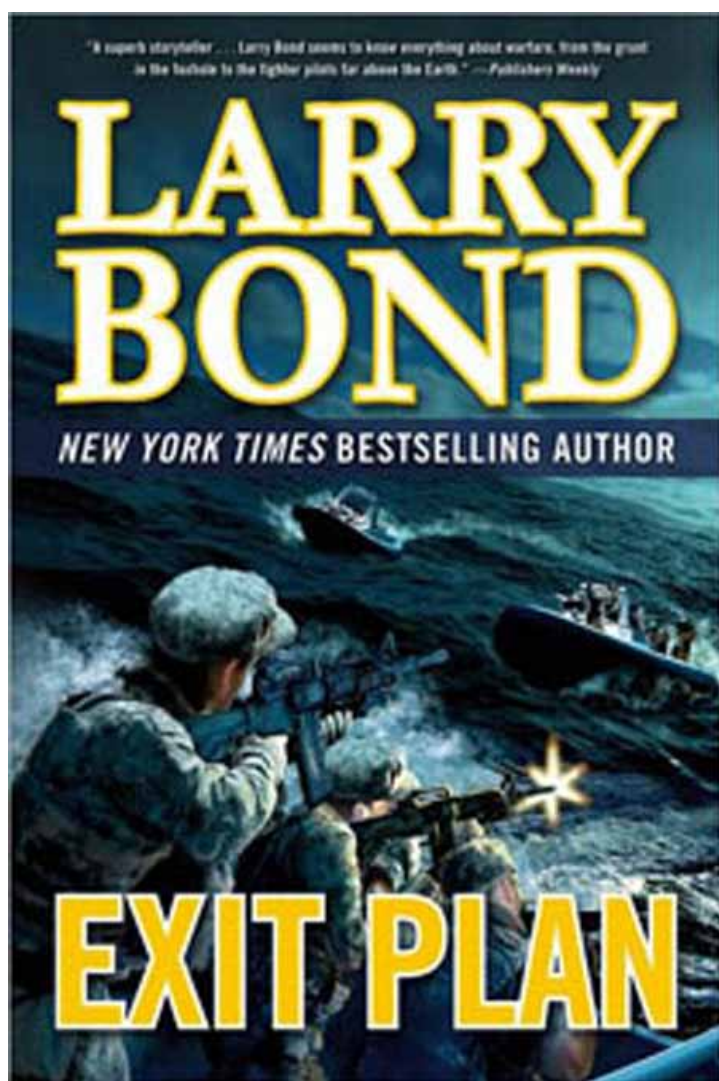
The words flow delightfully in this story. In fact, I sucked up the words. Like most folks in LA, vampires appreciate nice cars, enjoy clubbing, watch the news (“their news”), and frequent bars (“blood joints”). Emma and Cooper blend in with the vampires, searching out Mabon, the main vampire who’s unleashed this nightmare. He was born in 1840, a former CIA operative seeking ancient revenge against the government. For a vampire, time does not heal wounds, but “makes revenge that much sweeter.”

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Category

# Mystery, Crime & Thriller



## Exit Plan

By Larry Bond

Forge, \$26.99, 412 pages, Format: Hard

★★★★

*Exit Plan* by Larry Bond and Chris Carlson was a very pleasant surprise. I confess I've not read a straight military thriller for years and was not expecting a sophisticated take on how Iran might try to manipulate world opinion. The initial plot and the reaction of the interested parties is

entirely plausible, leading up to what would be a very unexpected outcome if this was being played out in the real world.

I'm pleased to say *Exit Plan* is not a simple one-person shooter book in which navy SEALs take on the Iranians and leave bodies littering the landscape. It's a taut and exciting adventure as a small team find themselves stranded in Iran and have to figure out a way of escaping. Even on their own, this would be a challenge. But it's all the more difficult because they have to protect a man and his pregnant wife. As the submarine waits off the coast outside territorial limits, the Iranian navy also get into the action to detect and destroy the American vessel. Taken overall, this is a nicely balanced book in which we see both the military action and the political context as the situation develops.

Reviewed by David Marshall

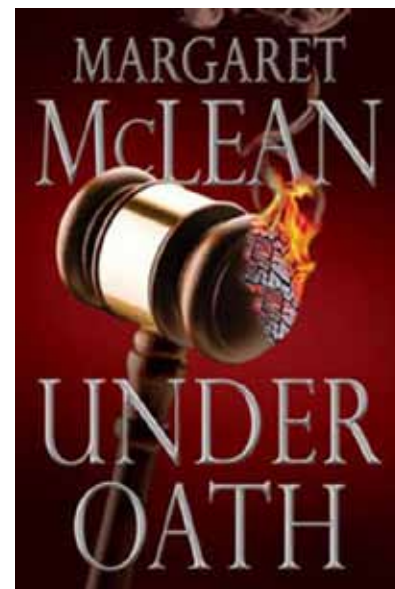
## Under Oath

By Margaret McLean

Forge, \$25.99, 380 pages, Format: Hard

★★

*Under Oath* by Margaret McLean is a legal thriller—as if anyone actually does find the practice of law thrilling unless truck loads of money are coming in through the door. So here we have an entire novel telling the story, blow-by-blow, of a murder trial. Now this is either going to grab you by the scruff of the neck and pull you through to the end as if pursued by bailiffs demanding money, or it's going to leave you pretty cold. It all depends on how you feel about spending 380 pages finding out whether the prosecution can nail this particular individual accused for murder. Personally, I read it under the threat of indefinite jail for contempt if I failed to finish it, i.e. out of a sense of duty. I can't say I got very excited by the legal technicalities or clever cross-examinations. For me, it lacks a proper context. I prefer a book to include the investigation and discussion of legal strategy





before we get into court, and then watch as all the careful planning goes up in smoke. So for all you legal eagles, this is probably a must-read. Everyone else should think twice.

Reviewed by David Marshall

### 23 Shades of Black: A Filomena Buscarsela Mystery

By Ken Wishnia

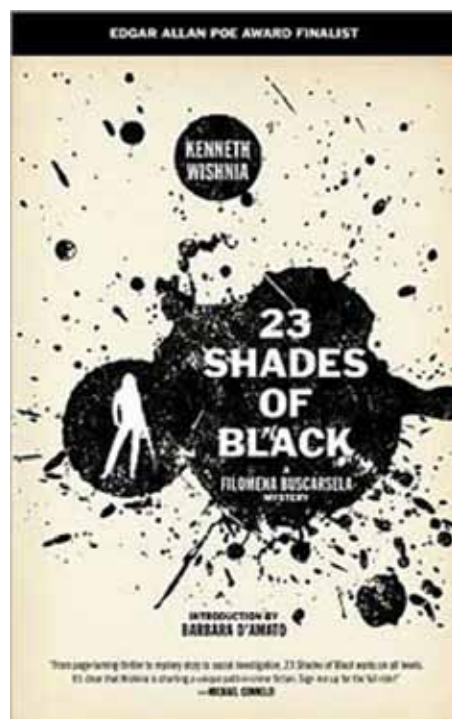
PM Press, \$17.95, 259 pages, Format: Trade

★★★★

*23 Shades of Black* by Kenneth Wishnia was nominated for both an Edgar and an Anthony award when it first appeared in 1997. It is therefore a joy and delight to see it back in print again. Quite simply, this is a wonderful story about the trials and tribulations of Filomena Buscarsela, an immigrant from Ecuador who is trying to make her way up the ladder as a police officer in the New York of the 1980s. Yes, it's back to the Reagan years, when large corporations ruled the roosts and women were even less empowered than they are today. Indeed, were it not for her fighting qualities, she would long ago have given up the unequal struggle to get promoted to detective and simply accepted a quiet life on patrol.

Unfortunately, she finds herself provoked into investigating a death, and the more rocks she lifts, the more unpleasant the creatures who crawl out. But the feature that makes this book stand out is the laconic humor. When everything is filtered through the eyes of someone who has seen the worst of human nature under a military regime in South America, the North looks tame by comparison. This is a book to savor!

Reviewed by David Marshall



### Rise and Fall of Mary Jackson Peale

By M.G. Crisci

Orca Publishing Company, \$15.95, 374 pages,

Format: Trade

★★★★★

I'm not going to lie; I was not initially excited about Mr. Crisci's account of "theatrical agent extraordinaire," Mary Jackson Peale. Reluctantly, I curled up under the covers, opened the book, and steeled myself for a dull retelling of this woman's life in an industry I know nothing about. What I am here to say is this: that was nothing more than contempt prior to investigation. What I found in the pages of Crisci's tome was romance, betrayal, redemption, and some serious gumption on the part of Ms. Jackson Peale. And the ending -- oh the ending -- was absolutely breathtaking. I apologize for my prematurely uninformed opinion and now rate *Rise and Fall of Mary Jackson Peale* as one of my top 10 best books of the year.

The plot twists and character developments are unexpected to say the least and incredibly hard to describe in a mere 400 words. Mary Jackson Peale manages to burn her bridges in London through a series of illicit lesbian affairs and is forced to flee to America and start anew. Thus, Mary and all her baggage (mostly emotional) arrive in the states with a criminal past, no money, no contacts in the theatrical world, and nowhere to live. One by one, these complications get resolved and within no time at all, Mary Jackson Peale has catapulted herself into theater fame as an agent to the stars. Life's looking up for Ms. Peale. That is; until her world collapses on her with a bang that I'm certain was heard around the world.

Clearly, Ms. Peale will not be forgotten, thanks to Mr. Crisci's fantastic portrayal of her. *Rise and Fall of Mary Jackson Peale* takes the cake as the best theater-oriented book I've read in a while. Thank you to Crisci for reminding me not to judge a book by its cover. Glad I didn't miss this gem!



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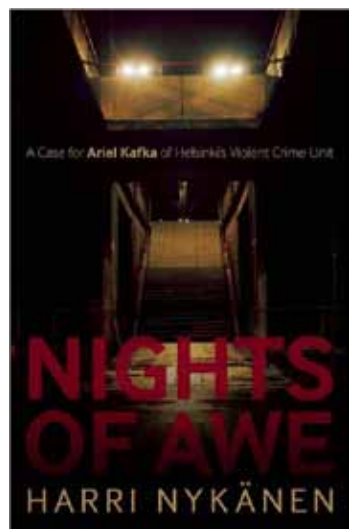
**Nights of Awe (An Ariel Kafka Mystery)**

By Harri Nykanenm Kristian London (translator)

Bitter Lemon Press, \$14.95, 252 pages, Format: Trade

★★★★

Although Harri Nykanen has written four different crime series and 30 different novels, *Nights of Awe* intro-



duces his readers to Ariel Kafka, a Jewish inspector in the Helsinki Violent Crime Unit. Kafka, with sprinkles of humor, narrates the story of investigating a complicated case starting with the deaths of two Arabs. He then discovers some information, which leads him directly to more dead bodies. Again Muslims. Within the investigation, Kafka is dealing with the *Days of*

*Awe*, which lead to Yom Kippur, the most holy day on the Jewish calendar.

Kafka butts heads with the Finnish Security Police investigators as they begin to get more and more interested. Meanwhile, the complex case drags him into his past, specifically his Jewish identity.

Nykanen is a former crime journalist and, through Kafka, you get a sense for the complexity and the violence of these possibly gang-related crimes, but Finland, as well. Kafka's humor stands out from the book and Nykanen writes well, but *Nights of Awe* seems to lose its pacing in the middle. Definitely a writer to read, but this may not be his best example.

Reviewed by Elizabeth Humphrey

**Oscar Wilde and the Vatican Murders: A Mystery**

By Gyles Brandreth

Touchstone, \$14.00, 368 pages, Format: Trade

★★★★

Arthur Conan Doyle needs a respite from Sherlock Holmes and his fans, so off he heads to a spa in Germany in 1892. Oscar Wilde is also a guest, which means that Doyle isn't going to get quite the rest he was hoping for. In

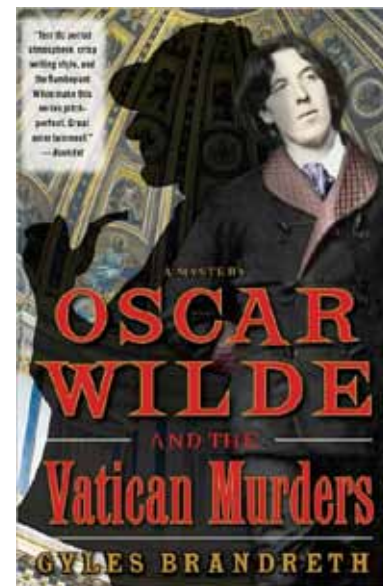
fact, the thought of rest goes out the window when he opens one of his fan letters to find a finger with no note, just a return address: Rome.

Off to Rome our intrepid heroes go and with the help of another clue, their first stop is the Vatican. The Eternal City has a few surprises up its sleeve for Wilde and Doyle, and even has a beautiful woman that turns Doyle's

head for a moment or two. At first, even the Pope himself is a suspect, along with every priest they meet. Slowly the mystery deepens to include a young girl that was a delight to all until the day Pope Pius IX died and she disappeared.

Fun, atmospheric, and witty, just like Wilde was, Brandreth's trip to the Vatican with Wilde and Doyle will keep you turning pages and wishing you were there with them.

Reviewed by Gwen Stackler

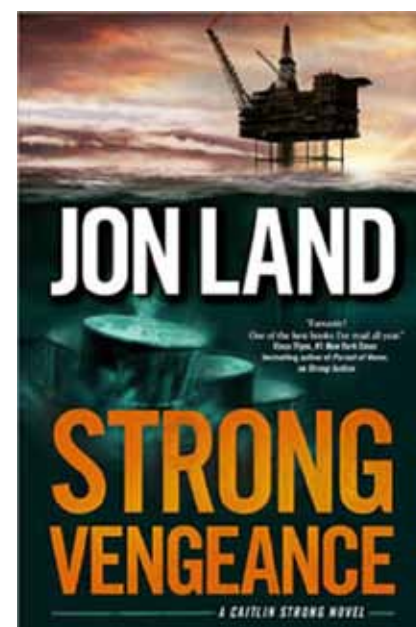
**Strong Vengeance: A Caitlin Strong Novel**

By Jon Land

Forge, \$24.99, 352 pages, Format: Hard

★★★★

Caitlin Strong, the fiery fifth-generation Texas Ranger, is back and ready to wrangle in a cord of history, along with the murder mystery upon an oil-rig linked to the Mother Mary, a sunken slave ship wreckage from 1818. The Texas heroine is in full form as she takes on more than the eye meets. By way of the murder case of the ship's crew she is laced into a "homegrown terrorist attack" cultivated by an American cleric. And then there are the boys, the sons of the outlaw Cort Wesley Masters, the man whom she put away and then fell in love with. The boys she





has taken into her custodial care, and eventually into a space in her heart and life that she had not planned to fill.

Resigned to a desk after a high school hostage situation forces her to realize her emotional state has been altered by the teenagers she is caring for, she never loses her Ranger instincts nor her passion for the hunt. Caitlin Strong won't be held down for long. Especially when she is the best hand there is to solve a case so convoluted.

The fourth book in the Caitlin Strong series, *Strong Vengeance*, is a solid addition. Readers of the series will appreciate the action-packed plot and strong, no pun, character development. When I first chose this book to review, because of the thriller/mystery genre and gripping synopsis, I was unaware that it was a series. Had I been familiar with the prior installments I am quite positive that the reading would have been smoother waters, allowing me to jump right in and not warm up first. However, the solid story line carries itself and the complex, yet welcoming, characters allow for a first-time Caitlin Strong "fan to-be" to follow along with focused reading. This is an action-oriented read, one that will have long-time fans cheering for Strong's comeback and new realizations, and one that will undoubtedly make for a deeper following for the newly introduced

Sponsored Review

### The Thirteenth Sacrifice: A Witch Hunt Novel

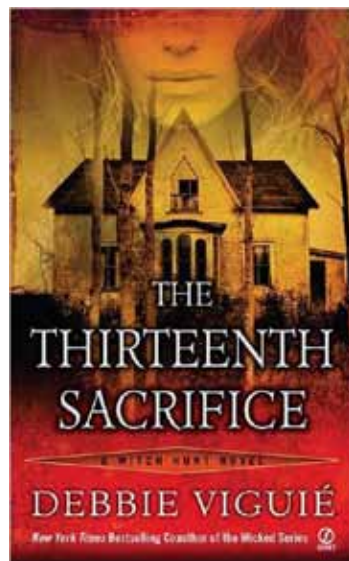
By Debbie Viguié

Signet, \$7.99, 368 pages, Format: Mass

★★★★★

Samantha Ryan is a detective trying to forget a strange past, but that isn't going to be an option in *The Thirteenth Sacrifice*, the first novel in a new mystery series by Debbie Viguié.

Samantha Ryan grew up in a coven that practiced terrifying magic. As a child, she saw horrific things that still haunt her in nightmares. She, however, escaped and was adopted by a family that helped her put her past behind her. Or so Sa-



mantha thought. Strange murders begin occurring, which she realizes are connected with witchcraft. To stop them, Samantha must face her fears, go undercover as a witch, and practice witchcraft despite her Christian beliefs. Will she be accepted by the coven in time to stop the impending crisis, and will she lose herself in returning to her past?

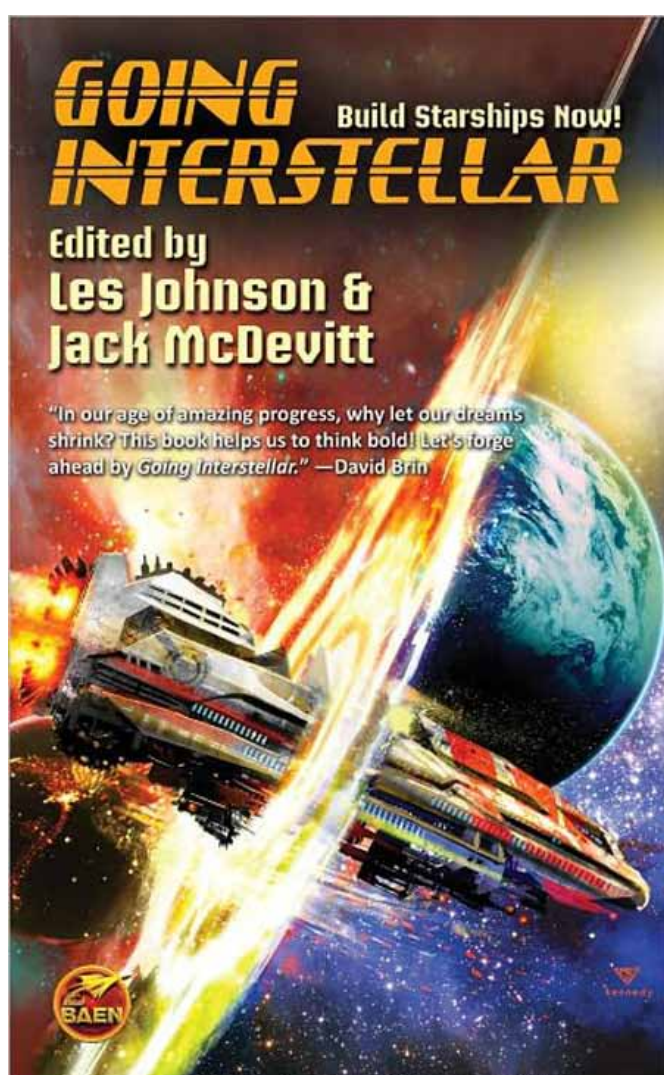
Viguié successfully weaves the supernatural with reality in a way that allows the reader to suspend disbelief. At the same time, she writes a satisfyingly unpredictable mystery. For readers who enjoy a bit of the occult in their mysteries, this is definitely a mystery worth checking out.

Reviewed by Annie Peters



Category

# Science Fiction & Fantasy



## Going Interstellar

By Les Johnson and Jack McDevitt, editors

Baen, \$7.99, 434 pages, Format: Mass

★★★★

*Going Interstellar*, edited by NASA's Les Johnson and writer Jack McDevitt, is a fascinating anthology of stories and papers that keeps the science fiction dream alive. The possibility of the new starship, once a totem in science fiction shows like *Star Trek*, is explored here by scientists

and writers. The book comprises essays on types of energy sources to fuel space ships, as well as stories told without the "warp drive" which once was a dream that we could get to any place soon. There isn't a rationale here about why we do not use nuclear energy to fuel space ships, suffice to say, it could be used for other reasons by competing nations.

A bright future is also not presented here, with most of the tales being drawn out by the time scales necessary to travel to even the nearest stars. What one finds is the "pitfalls" of the human condition, with us bringing our foibles and problems to the stars. There are exiles, conflicts, bickering, and murders that take place between the stars. There is also a dividing line between the essays about space propulsion and the human stories. Surprisingly, not very present are the dreams of The Space Age, ie., we are all from the same place and we should stop bickering among ourselves because we may have common enemies.

Reviewed by Ryder Miller

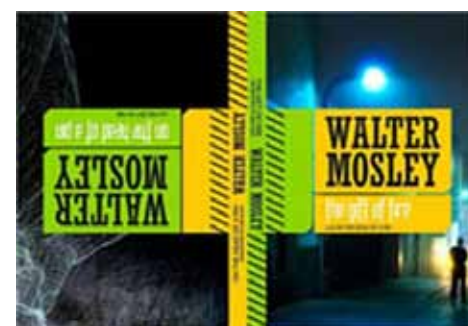
## The Gift of Fire / On the Head of a Pin: Two Short Novels from Crosstown to Oblivion

By Walter Mosley

Tor Forge, \$24.99, 288 pages, Format: Hard

★★

*The Gift of Fire* and *On the Head of a Pin* are two new novellas from Walter Mosley intended to form a collection detailing various potential end-of-the-world scenarios. Although neither story is overwhelmingly Christian in theme, there is a distinct parallel between what happens and various tenets of the Christian faith. The first conflates the mythology of Prometheus with an exploration of what would happen if a young man suddenly began to demonstrate great individual power and proselytizes. The second wonders what would happen if, by accident, a small team developed a machine that could interact with a dimension occupied by the spirits or souls of all living things, whether in our time, the past, or future.





I'm a major fan of Walter Mosley's writing style, and when that talent is used to show us the real world, there are few better. But this book will only appeal to those who want to share in Mr. Mosley's world view, which, put simply, is that enlightenment comes when we set aside our differences and achieve a type of spiritual oneness. If that personal philosophy works for you, this is a beautifully written pair of sermons for you to read.

Reviewed by David Marshall

### Talcon Star City

By Gary Caplan

CreateSpace, \$12.90, 265 pages, Format: Trade

★★★★

One will find in *Talcon Star City* a universe populated with all sorts of new extraterrestrial civilization for a tale that brings back the excitement of traditional Space Opera and the television space shoot-out. Marvels also abound in his galaxy. The story continues here with Star Knight and commodore Robert Sheppard leading his part of the fleet in the flagship Phoenix to rendezvous and help protect the not fully impregnable Talcon Star City. The universe is at stake again with the enemies being the Varlons and the newly joined ally The Accads, who are also acquisitive and evil in their own right.

It is good old guilty space fun to be party to all the intergalactic maneuverings as the forces assemble. One can brush shoulders here with extraterrestrial allies, some of whom have alien powers. It would have been nice to have pictures, but the book is somewhat visual anyway, with interesting descriptions of other space creatures.

If one is looking for it, they will find captured here the excitement of preparation for the forthcoming galactic battles. Though long in the coming, there is the big battle at the end in the Rhendal Sector, but the story does not end there. Many civilizations have gathered to take on the imperialistic Varlons and their allies, but it will be a tough battle in a longer space war. Though a sequel to *Phoenix Ris-*

*ing*, which won the 2010 Indie Excellence Award for Caplan, it is understandable without reading the prequel. There is also a glossary at the end of the book if needed.

Some sentences seem long in all the universe building. There is much material here for future and side tales. If one does not like character development, they will be happy to find that it is not a major part of this novel. One will not find a lot of personal growth taken place in Robert Sheppard in this single book, but the book is more about his high adventures on the seas of space. The characters are also more fully realized if one has read the prequel. One will need to follow the longer story for the book to be more meaningful psychologically, but there is more excitement on the way.

Sponsored Review

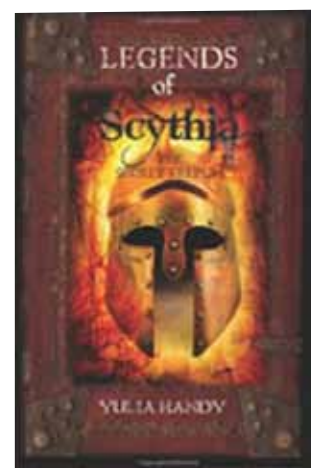
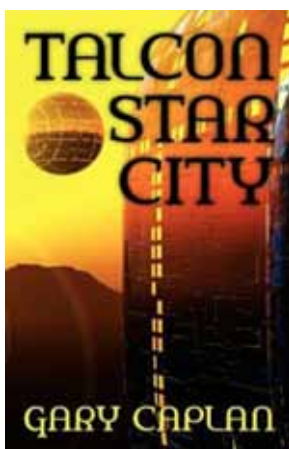
### Legends of Scythia: The Secret Keepers

By Yulia Handy

CreateSpace, \$14.99, 258 pages, Format: Trade

★★★★★

The land of Scythia is a mystery to most historians. Long ago, they inhabited the land in the northern part of the Black Sea. This book combines the mysteries of Scythia with Greek and Middle Eastern traditions. The plot focuses on Arcadius and his sister Terra. They are the main stars of the book, and while both have a different narrative, they both have the same destiny. Their home land of Bata, in the land of Scythia, is ravaged by pirates commanded by the villainous Teomon. Terra is found and raised by the mythical Amazon warriors. Arcadius is found by an old fisherman whom adopts the boy as his own son. Arcadius becomes a man of the sea, sympathetic and kind. Their two paths come together when the hidden power of a golden book is discovered. The book is the secret to unlocking the magic power of a long forgotten society. The two siblings must discover their own power that will put a stop to Teomon's evil plans and save the land of Scythia.



The Scythians were an actual group of people, and the story pulls from these actual myths to create new ones. The story is both familiar and unfamiliar at times. There are dwarfs, but there are also lizard queens. The book has a timeless charm that will keep readers of any age mesmerized within its pages. All the characters are great, with real personal voices, distinct motives, and imaginative personalities. The book's villain, Teomon, I found particularly interesting. He is the perfect foil for a book like this, both barbaric and crafty. The book's pace is wonderful -- action and excitement are skillfully written into each page. It's a great mixture of fantasy and mythology that creates a new world for these characters to live in and grow. I loved the world that was created and hope to venture back to the land of Scythia soon.

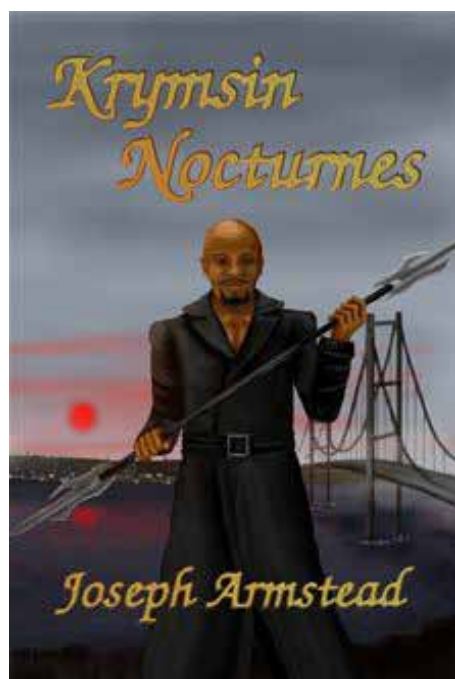
Sponsored Review

### Krymsin Nocturnes

By Joseph Armstead

By Light Unseen Media, \$4.99, 418 KB, Format: eBook

★★★★



Darkness fills the pages of this book. It takes the reader into hidden places that exist just tissue paper thinness away from the world as we know it. Darkness and horror abound in the story with people – and not people whose lives have been twisted over years, or millennia, to take two sides of an ongoing battle to protect mankind from the other.

The other are fantastically imagined and varied in ways I have never seen before. Full of blood, violence, profanity, and nonstop action this is a horror story that will linger in the mind. A fascination with weaponry and its destructive capacities are prevalent throughout the book. Vampires, immortals of all shapes, many from ages past combine in a horrific swirl of terror that is mesmerizing. The action swirls around Quinn the immortal, who is also known as

The Adversary. He has, for long centuries, opposed the evil that would wipe out mankind and has returned to fight again at a dark point in the ever present battle.

Not for the faint at heart, this story is for those who like their paranormal stories with lots of horror, blood, and violence.

Sponsored Review

### The Killing Moon: Book One of the Dreamblood

By N.K. Jemisin

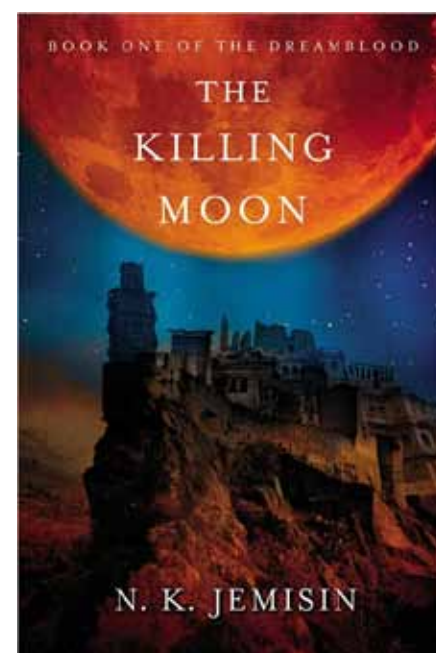
Orbit, \$14.99, 440 pages, Format: Trade

★★★★

*The Killing Moon* by N K Jemisin is the first of two books set in a new fantasy world—the next is published almost immediately, making the wait mercifully short—in which a few carefully trained and religiously devout individuals can become Gatherers. In this role, they help people to a peaceful death and, in so doing, extract the essence of these individuals' dreams. Once liberated from the body, dream energy can be passed on to Sharers who use it to heal the sick. Called narcomancy, this system of magic is the foundation of life in Gujaareh but, across the border in Kisua, it has long been banned as a form of murder. In that country, people die a natural death when their time is up.

When the leading Gatherer is tasked with helping a woman to a peaceful death, he discovers that his role has been corrupted. This is a political assassination. What follows is a completely absorbing journey of discovery for this Gatherer and his young apprentice. *The Killing Moon* is a quantum leap forward from Jemisin's *Inheritance Trilogy*. Read this or miss out on one of the best fantasy books of the year so far.

Reviewed by David Marshall



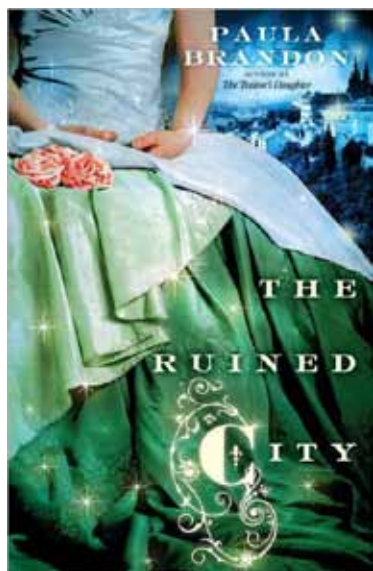


## The Ruined City

By Paula Brandon

Spectra, \$15.00, 384 pages, Format: Trade

★★★★★



The prophecy is coming true. In the Veiled Isles, the power of magic is in flux, plague is running rampant, the city burns, dead walk the streets, and reality is wavering. In her first writing endeavor, Paula Brandon has created a dynamic trilogy that combines magic, mystery, drama, and intrigue. In the series' first book, *The Traitor's Daughter*, readers meet Jianna Belandor, the privileged daughter of a Faerlonnish overlord. Jianna is on her way to meet her future husband when she is kidnapped and held captive by rebels angry with her father. She escapes with the help of Falaste Rione, a doctor and a rebel sympathizer. Jianna struggles to reconcile her attraction to Falaste and allegiance to her father. Paula Brandon's exciting trilogy continues with *The Ruined City*. Magicians must join together to fight an unknown power that threatens the Isles and promises catastrophe. Brandon addresses issues of class, race, political espionage, and slavery. The book reads like an old-fashioned historical fantasy. Although the living dead are included in the plot, they are not zombies per se. They serve another purpose. *The Ruined City* should be read in conjunction with the others and not as a stand-alone book. Fans can look for *The Wanderers*, the final book of the series, on July 31, 2012.

Reviewed by Kathryn Franklin

## Throne of the Crescent Moon

By Saladin Ahmed

DAW, \$24.95, 274 pages, Format: Hard

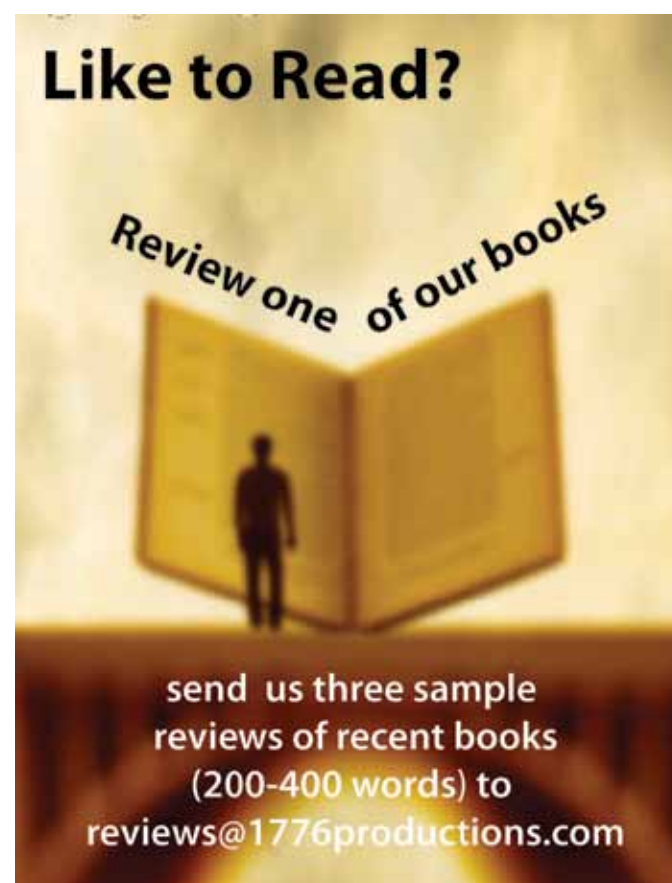
★★★★★

Fantasy fans are bound to enjoy author Saladin Ahmed's debut novel, *Throne of the Crescent Moon*, the first book in the *Crescent Moon Kingdoms* series. Ahmed has creat-



ed a world that will seem familiar to the reader, but has its own entirely unique characteristics. In a land filled with djenn and ghuls, Doctor Adoulla Makhslood is ready to retire. After a long career, he is now known as the "last real ghul hunter in the great city of Dhamsawaat." But when an old flame's family is murdered, Adoulla is pulled back into the dangerous job of hunting monsters and saving lives. Along with his sidekick Raseed (a holy warrior with a talent for fighting) and young Zamia (a young girl with the power of the Lion-Shape and the desire to revenge the destruction of her tribe), Adoulla sets out to investigate the unusual deaths. The city is in turmoil as its citizens suffer under the iron-fisted rule of the Khalif and cheer for the antics of the Falcon Prince, a Robin Hood type character. The interplay between the book's multitudes of characters is interesting. Back stories are slowly revealed as the plot unravels. Between magical battles and encounters with monstrous beasts, the fast-paced dialogue and plot development keeps readers enthralled.

Reviewed by Kathryn Franklin





# Kids' Book Review

August 2012

Kids' Book Review is rolling right along, picking up speed as we go, with even more young reviewers anxious to review books for us. We now have more than 60 little reviewers participating!

With summer in full swing, the kids have been filling their time with reading books. We like to hear that! In fact, we even ran out of books in early July. Yikes!

Want to know what absolutely makes my day? It's when I edit the kids' reviews and see their cute little faces with their books! It's something that is contagious, and I'm always calling everyone into my office to see the photos that the parents send along with their reviews.

A.D.O.R.A.B.L.E.

As we pick up steam with this program, next month we will have a real treat for our readers. Four-and-year-old Hayden will be reviewing a

children's cookbook and making three recipes inside. We'll be reprinting the recipes in next month's issue, along with the to-die-for photos his mom sent us with Hayden in his cute little chef's uniform making the recipes.

If you're a publicist, keep the children's, young adult, and tweens books a-comin'! The kids are gobbling them up!

Want your daily dose of cute? Click or tap on the icon to follow us on Facebook. We try to upload a review each weekday there.



Find current and past reviews written by the children on our **website**.

If you have a child who would enjoy participating in KBR, click or tap **HERE** for information.

*Heidi Komloske*

President & CEO



## Category Children's

it would bend down to talk to her. So Red Knit Cap Girl had a gathering the next day with all her friends. With lanterns, they celebrated in the forest, waiting for the moon to come. The owl came down and said, "The moon is there, but you can't see her." All of a sudden, the wind blew out a lantern and Red Knit Cap Girl said, "Aha!" She blew out all the lanterns and then the moon came out at last.

I liked this book a lot. I really liked the pictures; they looked like they had wood underneath them. I really liked the picture of when the moon came out at last. I want to read it again and again.

Reviewed by Rachel, Age 5

### When You Are Camping

By Anne Lee

Kane/Miller Book Publishers, \$14.99, 30 pages,

Format: Hard

★★★★★

*When You Are Camping* is a fun book. I liked it because it talked about being outside and being in the water. My favorite part was when they went into the stream. That picture was really funny, because I could only see their faces. I would read this book again.



Reviewed by Grant, Age 4

### Monkey's Friends

By Ruth Brown

Kane/Miller Book Publishers, \$14.99, 32 pages,

Format: Hard

★★★★★

Monkey met his old friend Snake. And he met a bear. And a Kangaroo. Two Kangaroos, actually. And one elephant. And one frog and he met a ant and crocodile. He was trying to talk to



### Red Knit Cap Girl

By Naoko Stoop

Little, Brown Books for Young Readers, \$15.99, 34 pages,

Format: Hard

★★★★★

This was about a girl who was called Red Knit Cap Girl. Red Knit Cap Girl wondered about everything, but most of all, she wondered about the moon. She wanted to reach the moon to talk to her, but the moon was too far away. So when she was swinging on the swing, porcupine came along and said she should talk to owl, owl knows everything. Owl said that the moon was too far away, but maybe







the animals to say hello. At the end of the book, it was the end of the day, so Monkey had to sleep. I liked this book because it's so fun. I liked the pictures; just the animals, but not the bears, because they were so dangerous. But the bear was not dangerous to the monkey, because it was a baby bear. I liked the rhymes and the story and guessing what animal came next. My favorite friend would be a baby bear. I did like the monkey; I would like a monkey, too.

Reviewed by Raif, Age 3

### Don't Forget, God Bless Our Troops

By Jill Biden

Simon&Schuster, \$16.99,

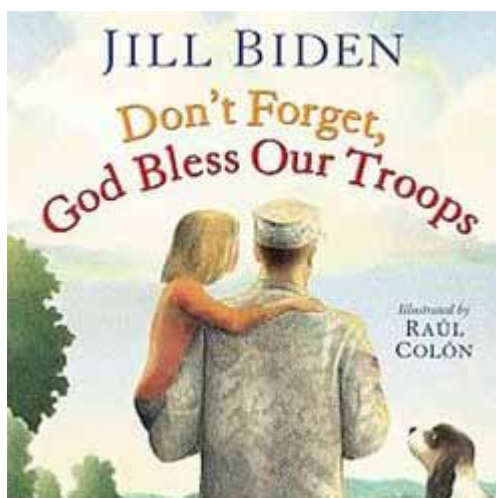
32 pages, Format: Hard

★★★★★

This book will make you cry, and it will make you smile. *Don't Forget, God Bless Our Troops* is about a little girl named Natalie, whose daddy is a soldier. In the beginning, Natalie says goodbye to her dad. He's leaving on a deployment and will be gone for a long time. It is fall, almost winter and Natalie is sad but knows she has to be brave. Natalie, her mom, and her brother bake cookies and have Thanksgiving and Christmas without their dad. Natalie really misses her dad when her tooth is loose and it's ready to fall out. She wishes he were there with her. When it's spring and time to go to the pool, she misses her dad too. No matter what she does, she thinks of her dad and is brave. She's very courageous! At the end, Natalie's daddy comes home safe and sound! It is a very happy time and her daddy tells her that he's so proud of her for being brave and strong when he was gone.

I liked this story a bunch. It was sweet and easy to read. The first time I read it I cried and cried, because my daddy is in the military too and I know exactly how Natalie was feeling. The ending was my very favorite. I will read this story again and again. I loved it!

Reviewed by Alexandria, Age 7



### The Bully Goat Grim: A Maynard Moose Tale

By James Stimson, Illustrator, Willy Claflin, Narrator

August House Little Folk, \$18.95, 32 pages, Format: Hard

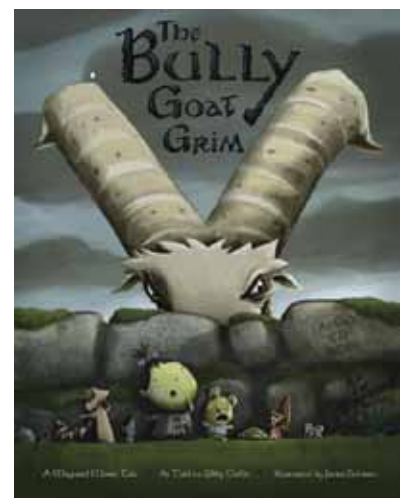
★★★★★

This was one funny book! Listening to it on CD makes it especially good because the speaker's voice is so funny. I listened to it lots of times and laughed every time! If you want a cute and funny story about beating mean bullies, this is a great one!

There was once a Bully Goat Grim. Every time he saw a cute little animal he would lower his head and "gaddump, gaddump, gaddump, POW!" He would hit them with his head and send them flying. This went on and on until the baby troll had a great idea. The Bully Goat Grim hollered to her, "Beware, beware, the Bully Goat Grim! Nobody better not mess with him!" Being a smart, home-schooled troll, she recognized a double negative when she heard one and encouraged everyone to mess with him, giving them free rides across the forest! The Bully Goat Grim didn't want this at all. No one saw him as a threat anymore so he ran away and left everyone alone. Great ending!

I loved that the baby troll was so smart because she's homeschooled, like me. I also liked her idea to defeat the Bully Goat Grim! It was funny and original too. This is a really great book about bullies and I think every kid should read it... or listen to it... at least once!

Reviewed by Alex, Age 7



### I, Too, Am America

By Langston Hughes, Bryan Collier, illustrator

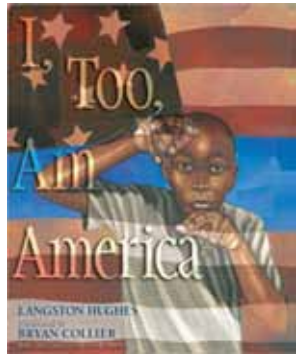
Simon and Schuster, \$16.99, 40 pages, Format: Hard

★★★★★

*I Too, Am America* was a poem with lots and lots of pictures. The pictures were very interesting and colorful, some of them pieced together with lots of different pictures like a collage. Some of the illustrations were strange and didn't



make sense. The poem didn't make much sense to me at first either. The black man was talking about how he was the darker brother, how he was sent to the kitchen when company came, and how people will be ashamed when



they see how beautiful he is. What? I didn't understand what he was talking about. When my mom asked me what this book was about, I said "Nothing! It is just a poem, with no plot line! It's pretty but kind of weird."

My mom explained to me that African Americans used to have less rights than other Americans and were treated differently. This made a bit more sense, but I don't think a kid's book should have to be explained so much. This book may be nice as part of a social studies class. If I picked it up and read it at the library, I wouldn't have brought it home to read again. For kids like me, black and white kids are the same and have always been equal.

Reviewed by Alex, Age 7

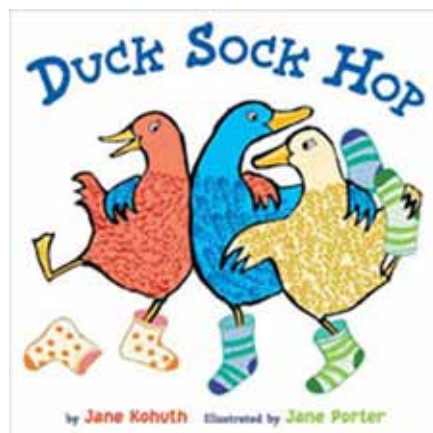
### Duck Sock Hop

By Jane Kohuth, Jane Porter, Illustrator  
Dial, \$16.99, 33 pages, Format: Hard

★★★★★

I would give this book thirty stars! Because I loved it and liked it a lot. There was a lot of ducks, and there was a party and the ducks had socks. They had very special kinds of socks that had buttons on them, and jewels, and little gems. And so when they were dancing, they were dancing for too long and so all of them fell off. The ducks had to go to the duck sock shop, and they counted the days to the next sock hop.

I liked the pictures of the socks and the ducks. I liked the shop. I liked the rhymes. It was funny to think about the ducks dancing in socks. My favorite socks were the jewel socks. One of the ducks got mad when it was tripping.



It is very fun how in the pictures there are little stamps of feathers on the ducks. My favorite part was when they picked out their socks from the sock box.

Reviewed by Rachel, Age 5

### Big Cats: In Search of Lions, Leopards, Cheetahs, and Tigers

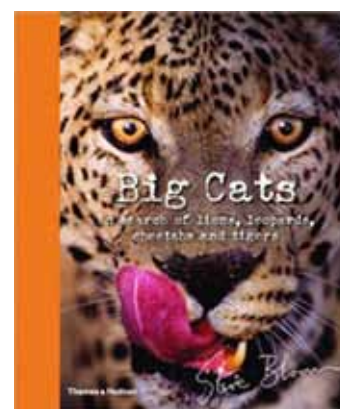
By Steve Bloom

Thames & Hudson, \$15.95, 48 Pages, Format: Hard

★★★★★

If you are interested in big cats, this is the perfect book. Photographer Steve Bloom takes us on a journey through Africa, India, and China in search of wild lions, leopards, cheetahs, and tigers. It has lots of interesting facts and photos. My favorite photo was a mother leopard licking her cub. Cute!

The photographs were probably the best part of the book. They were amazing! Some were really close up and some



were far away, like big cats hunting their prey. Steve Bloom gives lots of tips to kids so that they can take their own amazing animal photographs! I learned lots about cats, and also lots about how to take better pictures.

I also liked how Steve Bloom wrote the book like a day-to-day trip on a safari. It made me feel like I was there with him. He has a really cool job! The animals were amazing. I think it would be fun to scout out big cats and take pictures of them just like the author. *Big Cats- In Search of Lions, Leopards, Cheetahs, and Tigers* was an amazing book and I will definitely read it again.

Reviewed by Alexandria, Age 7

### Goal!

By Javaherbin, Mina

Candlewick, \$6.99, 32 pages, Format: Hard

★★★★★

This book is good. I love it because it's about soccer. The little boys call it football like my daddy. They play soccer in







the dirt road with the new federation-size, leather soccer ball that Ajani got because he was the best reader in class. One of the boys, named Badu, goes on the roof to watch for bullies. He jumps down when the bullies are coming.

This book makes me happy and sad because the little boys were playing soccer nicely and the thing that makes me sad was the bully boys stealing the old plastic ball. But it is okay because the little boys hid the new soccer ball. After the bully boys left, the little

boys took the new soccer ball out of the bucket and played soccer again. That was my favorite part.

I liked the pictures because they had a lot of detail and nice colors like brown and some grey and blue. They were really good.

I think boys and girls in kindergarten will like this book because it is nice and the little boys share the new ball and play soccer. I think kids in preschool will like this book, too, because they will like the pictures and the story.

Reviewed by Allan, Age 5

## The Scariest Thing of All

By Debi Gliori

Walker Childrens, \$16.99, 23 pages, Format: Hard

★★★★★

*The Scariest Thing of All* is about a rabbit named Pip, that has an enormous list of things that scare him. Everyday Pip finds new things to add to his list; some of them are pretty weird, like the leggy wiggler, the gobbler, and the wood troll. One day Pip got so tired from working so hard being scared, that he fell asleep outside, when he woke up he heard the scariest noise ever! Raaaaar! Raaaaar! Raaaaar! It scared him so bad he ran right in to the forest and the things were so scary that he didn't even stop to add them to his list. He ran right into brambles, through a hay stack, across

a ditch, and under a fence. And that's when he saw the scariest thing of all!

It was starring him right in the face. You will have to read the book your self to find out what it was. I bet you

will be very surprised! This is a awesome book for anyone who likes scary tales and cool illustrations. I give this book five stars for reminding me that everything is not always what it seems.

Reviewed by John, Age 9

## Vote for Me!

By Ben Clanton

Kids Can Press, \$16.95, 39 pages, Format: Hard

★★★★★

It's Donkey against Elephant. These two amazing lads are making outrageous claims to get your vote! This race is getting too hard and too evil. It is full of fights, brag-

ging, horrible name calling, and making fun of the other candidate. Donkey and Elephant, those two evil suckers, would do ANYTHING to get your vote! Are they true? Are they tricks? Who would you choose? Who will win? Remember, they are both evil, horrible,

terrible, mean animals! This story gives the reader a nice good laugh! Those pictures were hilariously funny. Look very closely at the details.





*Vote for Me* gives the readers an idea of how candidates try to capture your votes. They try to do that by making the opponent look bad. If I were running for president, I would do things differently. I would be more like Grace Campbell in *Grace for President* by Kelly DiPucchio and LeUyen Pham. I would focus on myself and talk about what I'm going to do. I think that if you tell the truth, you'd get more votes. Perhaps that's why there's a surprise ending.

Reviewed by Esther H, Age 8

## Hana Rescues Misty

By Azra Z. Mehdi, Sama Nadeem Izhar (illustrator)  
Julhana, \$9.99, 26 pages, Format: Trade

★★★★



*Hana Rescues Misty* is about a little girl and her mom who are walking home from the supermarket one day. As they are walking, they hear a "meow," but they can't figure out what is making that sound or where it is coming from. Then they find a white and black kitten with purple stripes stuck high up in a tree. The kitten is too high for Hana or her mommy to reach, so her mommy calls the fire department. The fire department comes to rescue Misty from the tree and set up a ladder against the tree. But when the fireman tries to save the kitten, it jumps up to an even higher branch. It jumps up one more time to an even higher branch.

Hana is scared that the kitten will climb all the way to the top of the tree and Hana's mommy has an idea. She asks Fireman Terry if Hana can climb the ladder to rescue the kitty. All of the firemen say "No!" but then Hana's mommy asks if the firemen can put a harness on Hana and then let her climb the ladder. The firemen agree and Hana is able to rescue the kitten just as another little girl comes up to the tree. This other little girl has been looking for her missing kitten, Misty, and thanks Hana for finding her.

I didn't like this book so much because I found it boring and unrealistic. I know that firemen wouldn't let a little girl climb up a tree, even with a harness. A 2-year-old might like this book because they might think they would be al-

lowed to go up a tree to rescue a kitty.

Reviewed by Hannah, Age 6

## San Francisco, Baby!

By Ward Jenkins (illustrator)  
Chronicle Books, \$12.99, 24 pages,  
Format: Hard

★★★★

I think this book is really, really, really great, because there were nice colors in the pictures and the pictures looked good, even though the people had funny noses. This book reminded me of when I went on a cable car when I visited my Nana and Papa in California. This book is good for remembering a fun trip.

This is about a girl who visits San Francisco with her daddy and saw great views of the city, Alcatraz, the Golden Gate Bridge, sea lions, and Lombard Street. They visited Union Square (to buy stuff), Chinatown (I really don't know what they did in Chinatown, it looks like they were just looking at people, though), Haight Ashbury (they were just in the sun), and the Mission District (they looked at pictures and the girl ate a burrito on the street). And then they said goodbye and went to sleep.

The best part of this book was when they got to ride the cable car. The worst part of this book was when they had to say goodbye. This book would be better if they were living there always. I think kids who want to remember a fun trip to San Francisco would like this book the best. Kids who had never been to San Francisco would like this book, because they might want to see the Golden Gate Bridge.

Reviewed by Allan, Age 5





## Horseplay

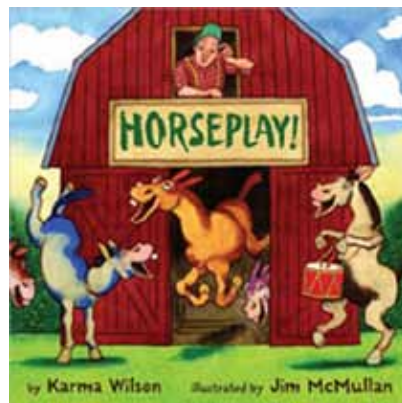
By Wilson, Karma

Little, Brown Books for Young Readers, \$16.99, 34 pages,

Format: Hard

★★★

These horses are playing a lot at night time, so they sleep all day, and so the farmer says that they don't do any work at all. The first night, the farmer snuck out in the barn and watched them. They were playing all around like hide-and-seek and other games. The farmer snuck out in the second night and found them playing cards and one was bringing out treats. The farmer said, "I thought I told you, no horseplay!" Will the farmer ever find a way to stop them playing around?



If it was a real-life book, I would have liked the pictures better. I liked the pictures and it was also funny how the farmer was very tired and so he fell asleep and so the horses went back to play. I liked the rhymes, too. I thought that it was mean how the horses were teasing the donkey, but I thought it was funny to see how the horses were playing.

Reviewed by Rachel, Age 5

## Bink and Gollie, Two for One

By Kate DiCamillo, Alison McGhee, Tony Fucile (illustrator)

Candlewick Press, \$15.99, 79 pages, Format: Hard

★★★★

Two very different people can be best friends. Bink is short; Gollie is tall. Bink is always excited; Gollie is always calm. Bink and Gollie are two best friends. They heal each others' sadness by encouraging and cheering each other up. They spent a day at the state fair. Gollie wanted to know their destinies so they both traveled into the dark path! Can Mad-am Prunely tell them their destinies?



This story is heart-warming. The pictures were hilariously funny. I read it three times. The scenes are too jumpy, so it confused me a little.

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Category

# Early Reader



## The Templeton Twins Have an Idea

*By Ellis Weiner, Jeremy Holmes, illustrator**Chronicle Books, \$16.99, 229 pages, Format: Hard*

★★★★

Abigail and John, whose mother just died, are 12-year-old twins. They desperately want a dog and for their father's inventions to go well. Their father, a professor, invented a one-man helicopter. Another man, Dean D. Dean, wanted it and offered several chances for the professor to give it to him. The twins' father refused because it wasn't finished yet, so Dean and his twin brother Dan kidnapped the children and pretended they never did. The twins must use clever ideas to escape and save their father too.

I liked this book because the Templeton twins are very clever. I think their father's inventions are good ideas. I was really irritated, though, that the narrator kept on talking when it got to the most exciting parts. I felt like, "Come on, get done with this already!" I really liked the story because there are a lot of exciting and surprising things that happen to the twins.

Reviewed by Miriam, Age 8

## Milo and Jazz: The Case of the Diamonds in the Desk

*By Lewis B. Montgomery, Amy Wummer (illustrator)**Kane Press, \$6.95, 96 pages, Format: Trade*

★★★★

*Milo and Jazz: The Case of the Diamonds in the Desk* is the eighth book in this series. Milo and Jazz (aka Jasmine) are friends who solve mysteries. Their newest case starts when Milo finds a diamond necklace in his desk at school. Earlier that day he had read about a local burglary where the thieves had broken into a jewelry store and stolen all the gold and jewels and a diamond tiara and necklace. When Milo finds the necklace, he wonders, "Who put this in my desk?" and "Why would the burglars be here at school?"



Because Milo is in a different class this year, he has to wait to meet up with Jazz during recess and shows her the diamond necklace. Jazz wants to return the necklace to the police, but Milo wants to solve the case. Jazz agrees to wait 24 hours before they tell an adult or return the necklace to the police so that they have time to try to solve the mystery.

They begin asking a lot of questions around the school and slowly begin figuring out what happened step by step backwards. So first, they find out who put the diamonds in Milo's desk, then they figure out how the diamonds got there, and they finally figure out who took the diamonds and return the diamond necklace to its owner.

I mostly liked this book. I liked trying to figure out what happened and seeing what they discovered. I liked the pic-



tures as well. This book would be good for an eight-year old and older to read by themselves while younger kids can have their mom or dad read it to them.

Reviewed by KBR Hannah, Age 6

### Junie B. Jones and the Stupid Smelly Bus: 20th-Anniversary Full-Color Edition

By Barbara Park, Denise Brunkus (illustrator)

Random House Books for Young Readers, \$14.99, 85 pages, Format: Hard

★★★★

Junie B. Jones is a very funny girl who is almost six years old. When she opens her mouth, it gets her in trouble. Junie B. knows she's in trouble when she is being called 'Missy!' This book is about Junie B.'s first day of kindergarten and why she did not want to get on the school bus. She did not want to get on the bus for three reasons – one was that it smelled like an egg salad sandwich, another was because it was yellow, and the third reason was that the seats had no cloth. Junie B.'s mom made sure she got on the school bus for her afternoon kindergarten class. Her first day of school wasn't much fun. Then it was time for Junie B. to get on the school bus to go home, but she didn't want to get on the bus so she hid in the supply closet. The rest of the book is about what happens while Junie B. hides from everyone and is left alone in the school.

I liked this book because it was very funny. I would have liked it better if there was a picture of Junie B. licking her shoes! This book is great for little students who don't like buses but do like girly colors.

Reviewed by Murphy, Age 6



### Werewolf Versus Dragon

By David Sinden, Matthew Morgan, Guy Macdonald  
Simon & Schuster UK, \$8.99, 194 pages, Format: Trade

★★★★

*Werewolf vs. Dragon* is a little violent, and I really didn't like the picture of Marackai. I liked this book a lot because it always had lots of surprises moving in and out of the story. I liked the part where they first saw the two dragons. It was fun to learn how they figured out who owned the mama dragon. I would definitely recommend this book to others.

Reviewed by Braeden, Age 8



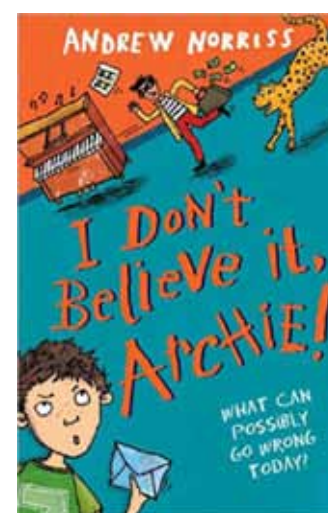
### I Don't Believe It, Archie!

By Andrew Norriss, Hannah Shaw (illustrator)

David Fickling Books, \$12.99, 124 pages, Format: Hard

★★★★

Archie is just a normal boy, except that strange things happen to him every day! On Monday, Archie saves Cyd from an unattended rolling piano and from being buried alive in gravel. Cyd becomes a great friend to Archie, because she can always figure out what really happened when Archie gets in trouble. Another day, Archie finds that his hands are stuck to the handles of the library door! What could possibly be happening? Every day, when Archie comes home, he never finishes what he was supposed to do. His mom always says, "I don't believe it, Archie!" Throughout the week, Archie and his new friend Cyd experience bizarre happenings. By the end of the week, Cyd is leaving for a week of vacation with her mom. How will Archie manage without Cyd's help? Will Cyd be able to leave for her vacation without a hitch?





I like this book because it is very funny. My favorite character in the book is Cyd, because she always helped Archie when he had a problem. She always solved the problem by finding out what really happened. I would recommend this book for anyone who feels their days are boring.

Reviewed by Faith, Age 8

## Hooey Higgins and the Shark

By Steve Voake, Emma Dodson (illustrator)

Candlewick Press, \$14.99, 112 pages, Format: Hard

★★★★★



Hooey and his friend want to buy a chocolate egg, but they don't have enough money. The next day, they find an ad in the newspaper about a shark. So they try to catch it, because they could make money with the shark by showing

it to people. They catch a sea urchin instead, but the sea urchin is a bag of bombs! Read the book to find out what happens next!

I like this book because it gets your imagination going. I would recommend this to a friend because the drawings are funny and the way his friend, Twig, talks is silly.

Reviewed by Bobby, Age 7

## Magical Monty

By Hurwitz, Johanna

Candlewick, \$15.99, 112 pages, Format: N/A

★★★★★

Magical Monty is about a boy who is six in first grade. This book tells about his life. He gets a magic kit and he gets a sister. So far, the magic kit is not working so well, but he gets one trick right. At least one is better than none. Monty can't decide what to give his mother for Mother's Day, then he marches in a parade. Wacky things follow.

This book is really great because I am a first grader and because Monty is silly. I would recommend this book to a friend because it is fun to read.

Reviewed by Bobby, Age 7



## Guys Read: The Sports Pages

By Jon Scieszka, Gordon Korman, Chris Rylander, Dan Gutman, Anne Ursu, Tim Green, Joseph Bruchac, Jacqueline Woodson

Walden Pond Press, \$16.99 272 pages, Format: Hard

★★★★★

John Scieszka used to be a teacher. He started a book series called *Guys Read*, because he wants young boys to read more. This book is the third one in this series. It's a group of stories written by adults who love sports. It gives a lot of dates, like 1948, 1967, and 1975. The author grew up with five brothers, and they play all kinds of sports; and they even made up some sports.

The funniest thing about the book is "the lucky grapefruit" from the chapter "How I Won the World Series" by Dan Gutman. They were watching the World Series and he picked up a grapefruit and the team in the World Series scored a home run. From then on, they brought the lucky grapefruit to every single game they went to. Then, they started losing every game, so at the end, they ate it.

This book is for kids in grades 3-7, ages 8-12. I think if you are a boy and you like to play sports or watch sports, you will enjoy reading this book.

Reviewed by Tucker, Age 9





Category

# Tweens



## The Cabinet of Earths

By Anne Nesbet

HarperCollins, \$16.99, 272 pages, Format: Hard

★★★★★

I think Anne Nesbet did a wonderful job on *The Cabinet of Earths*. It takes place in Paris, one of the most beautiful places in the world, but also, the most mysterious. I would not recommend this book for younger kids, though. It gave me the chills. This book is very thrilling. I can't wait for the next one!

Reviewed by Ruby Sanchez - age 9

## Child of the Mountains

By Marilyn Sue Shank

Delacorte Books for Young Readers, \$16.99, 259 pages,

Format: Hard

★★★★★

Lydia Hawkins, an open-hearted, strong, eleven-year-old girl has a very rich family. Not money rich (in fact, they're really poor), but FEELING rich. Lydia lives with Mama, Gran, and BJ, who has Cystic Fibrosis. They all care for each other and protect one another. Gran is the best grandma in the world. Mama keeps her children happy no matter what she has to do. BJ is probably the smartest kid ever known!



The family has a really hard time living. Rain pours really hard on her family. First, Gran and BJ die. Then Mama gets arrested. It is very unfair for this to happen. Then, she has to move to a coal camp and live with her uncle and aunt. The people in her heart have disappeared right in front of her eyes. She has no friends. Kids in school are mean to her. She feels solitary. Can she bring her Mama back home?

Reading about prison and trials made me ask my mom a lot of questions: What's the difference between jail and prison? Why do they have to cut your hair in prison? Do kids have to testify? Are there prisons for kids? Do they have to cut your hair? Do they have to stay in a cage? I learned a lot!

Reviewed by Esther, Age 8

## Horten's Miraculous Mechanisms: Magic, Mystery, & a Very Strange Adventure

By Lissa Evans

Sterling Children's, \$14.94, 270 pages, Format: Hard

★★★★★

S. Horten is very small, in a family of tall. Only his great-uncle Tony, an inventor of magical tricks, was short. Tony disappeared after the War to search for his fiancée, Lilly. Stuart finds some of Tony's coins, along with a note, and so



sets out to find his uncle no matter what the cost. He finds he will not go unmolested on his journey; next door are three nosy triplets who hinder him in every way. However, he manages to make friends with one of them when he tells her the story, and she helps him on the chase. He finds more support from Leonora, the younger sister of Tony's fiancée.

Stuart is hindered again, but this time by Jeannie and Clifford, who want to find Tony's workshop and sell the ideas off as their own.

I like this book a lot; there were a lot of realistic, not random, connections between clues. I enjoyed the characters, most especially Stuart and the triplets, but also Stuart's father, who says a lot of things in a very educated and wordy way. I am excited to read the next book in the series!

Reviewed by Gretl, Age 11

### The Rock of Ivanore: Book 1 of the Celestine Chronicles

By Laurisa White Reyes

Tanglewood Press, \$16.95, 356 pages, Format: Hard

★★★★★

*The Rock of Ivanore* is the engaging tale of Marcus Frye, an orphaned apprentice to the enchanter Zyll, who lives in the village of Quendel. On his fourteenth birthday, Marcus and five other boys are sent on a quest. They must find the Rock of Ivanore and bring it back to the village, or face a life of shame. Before Marcus leaves, Zyll gives him his magical staff, Xerxes, and a magic key to aid him on his journey.



The quest takes the boys on perilous adventures across the Isle of Imaness, where they encounter snakes, monsters, and the strange half-breed Jayson. As some of the boys are captured, Marcus learns an important secret about Jayson and races with him to the seaside city of Dokur, hoping to outrun Arik and his evil Mardoks who are planning to destroy Dokur. After an intense battle, the heroes return home with a dramatic twist that sets the stage for the sequel.

I would give this book five stars. It has everything an adventure reader craves: dangerous quests, magical spells, mythological creatures, deception, battle scenes, and suspense. Fans of Percy Jackson and Harry Potter are sure to be hooked on this new series.

Reviewed by Brendan, Age 8

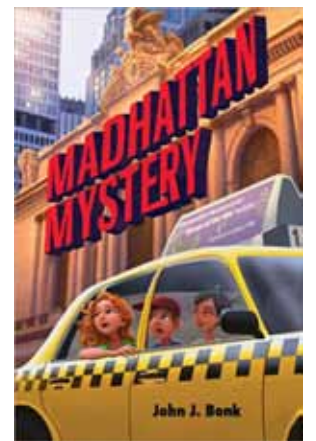
### Madhattan Mystery

By John J. Bonk

Walker Children's, \$16.99, 292 pages, Format: Hard

★★★★★

From the sleepy town of Cold Springs, New York, Manhattan is very different for Lexi and Kevin. Their mother died and now their dad is with their new mom, Clare. While their dad and new step-mom go on their honeymoon, they send Lexi and her younger brother Kevin to Manhattan to stay with their Aunt Roz.



Kevin and Lexi meet Aunt Roz's next door neighbor, Kim Ling Levine, a fast talking, bad-mouthing city girl about the same age as Lexi. While in New York, the Queen of the Nile, or, Cleopatra's jewels, go missing en route to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The reward money is one hundred and eighty thousand dollars! Kim, Lexi, and Kevin decide that they can find the treasure in time for the planned opening of the exhibit. Will the threesome be able to find the jewels and get the reward money in time?



I liked this book because it was suspenseful and funny. It was an enjoyable read, and I would recommend the book to a friend who likes mysteries, but likes a good laugh, too. I would recommend this book for children ages eight or older.

Reviewed by Faith, Age 8

## Ordinary Magic

By Caitlen Rubino-Bradway

Bloomsbury Children's, \$16.99, 288 pages, Format: Hard

★★★★★



*Ordinary Magic* was an excellent book. It is totally different than your typical book involving magic. Instead of someone being different because they are magical, Abby Hale becomes an outcast when she learns she has no magical powers - an ord. Abby enrolls in a school that prepares ords for the world. She makes many new friends (and enemies) as she learns that life as an ord is anything but ordinary.

Reviewed by Delaney, Age 12

## The Invaders: Brotherband Chronicles, Book 2

By John A. Flanagan

Philomel, \$18.99, 429 pages,

Format: Hard

★★★★★

*The Invaders* is the sequel to *the Outcasts*, about a group of young men who fight in a competition called the Brotherband Tournament. Like *Rangers' Apprentice*, the story takes place in medieval Europe. As each boy in Skandia turns sixteen years old, he must compete on one of the teams in the tournament.

Hal, the protagonist of the story, leads the Heron crew. The book



begins with the Herons chasing evil Zavac and his pirates who have stolen the Andomal, the Skandians' most sacred artifact. The pirates escape in a furious storm. The Herons are forced to camp at Shelter Bay, where they construct the Mangler, a crossbow capable of great things. Meanwhile, the pirates conquer the small town of Limmat, where they're trying to steal emeralds. Hal and his crew attack the pirates and win back Limmat. The pirates escape, but damage another team's ship. Hal saves the other team, but the pirates' escape leaves a cliffhanger for the next book.

I give *the Invaders* a four out of five. I enjoyed the plot and the descriptions, but it moved slowly. I was also hoping for more battles throughout the story and a more suspenseful final battle scene.

Reviewed by Brendan, Age 8

## Warriors: SkyClan And The Stranger, Vol. 3: After The Flood

By Erin Hunter, James L. Barry, Illustrator, John Hunt, Illustrator

HarperCollins, \$6.99, 112 pages, Format: Trade

★★★★★

The book, *Warriors: SkyClan and The Stranger, Vol 3: After the Flood*, is the third book in a trilogy by Erin Hunter. It is about SkyClan, a group of wild cats, who have to rebuild their camp after a flood. Billystorm, the clan leader's husband, wants his kits with Leafstar, the clan leader, to go hide with twolegs or humans to protect them. Sol, an apprentice, wants Leafstar to make him a warrior, but she isn't sure he understands the warrior code. Several of the other cats tell Leafstar that they may want to leave the clan because they are afraid of the gorge. Then, Leafstar's kits suddenly go missing, and the clan must hunt for them. Before they can find the kits, a group of rouge cats attacks SkyClan.





I think that this graphic novel is written pretty well. I would recommend it for children under 10 because it is a short novel. The plot is a bit simple. However, Erin Hunter never gives away the ending. Overall, I like this book a lot.

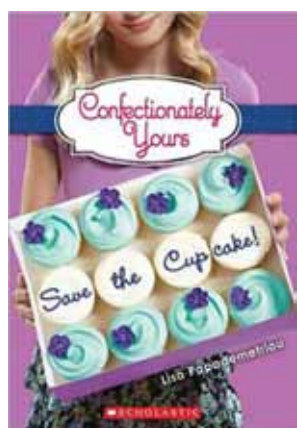
Reviewed by Logan Petersen, Age 11

### Confectionately Yours #1: Save the Cupcake!

By Lisa Papademetriou

Scholastic, \$5.99, 192 pages, Format: Trade

★★★★★



Haley is in seventh grade. She likes baking cupcakes. Her sister's name is Chloe. They live in their grandmother's apartment in her shop. A few months later, Hayley is trying to "save the cupcakes," deal with divorce and other problems with her friends. And every time she feels upset, she makes cupcakes.

I like this story because I like cupcakes and because it comes with cupcake recipes. I would recommend this book to a seventh grader who likes cupcakes and if they like to cook. Every cupcake in the book has a different icing and I like trying different kinds.

Reviewed by Bobby, Age 7

### Alexander, Spy Catcher

By Diane Stormer

iUniverse, \$20.95, 93 pages,

Format: Hard

★★★★★

A boy named Alexander has some friends and they go build a clubhouse in the woods behind Alexander's house. Alexander finds that his cell phone has a wifi service when it usually doesn't. He goes back home and finds that his brother's remote control car is acting strangely when



it goes on one side of the room. Alexander's Uncle Charlie, who lives with them, works for the government, and when Alexander tells him about these clues, Uncle Charlie is worried that people are spying on his work. A few nights later, Uncle Charlie goes out into a storm and doesn't come back. Alexander tries to stop the spy and get his Uncle back.

I thought this book was very exciting. Everything happens all at once and it is very fun. I especially liked the exciting part, but I can't tell you about that; you will have to read it to find out!

Reviewed by Miriam, Age 8

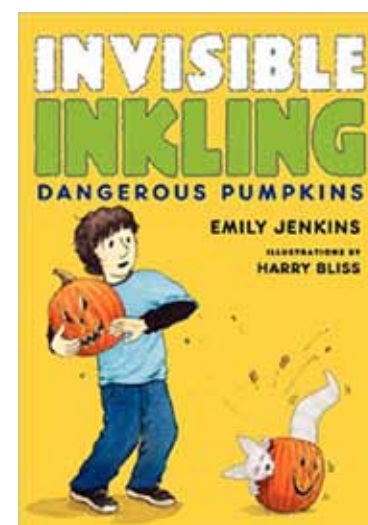
### Invisible Inkling: Dangerous Pumpkins

By Emily Jenkins, Harry Bliss (illustrator)

Balzer + Bray, \$14.99, 151 pages, Format: Hard

★★★★★

*Invisible Inkling* is about this Bandapat, a kind of invisible mammal that loves to eat all types of squash, but its favorite is pumpkins. Without pumpkins, its skin would crumple up and turn very dry. The name of this bandapat is Inkling, and it came to live with a boy name Hank. Very soon, it was going to be Halloween, and people were putting out pumpkins. Hank



was walking with Inkling on his shoulders when they met Hank's friend, and Inkling saw some pumpkins on the stoops. Inkling jumped inside one of the pumpkins and began to eat it. Inkling keeps getting into trouble for eating people's pumpkins, and Hank keeps getting blamed for it.

I loved this book! It was very funny. My most favorite thing about it was when Hank's sister scared him when they went out Trick-or-Treating. I really liked the ending; that was a funny part, too. I think Inkling was funny and he looked so cute in the



pictures (even though the people in the book couldn't see him). I think Hank would be a nice person to meet, because he has a nice personality and he seems very patient.

Reviewed by Miriam, Age 8

## The Unseen World of Poppy Malone #2: A Gust of Ghosts

By Suzanne Harper

Greenwillow Books, \$16.99, 311 pages, Format: Hard

★★★★



Poppy Malone is a spunky, nine-year-old whose family consists of Poppy's twin, Will, a mischievous, more-than-occasionally annoying brother, fourteen-year-old Franny, who is very "teen-agery," her younger brother, Rolly, who is very much ob-

essed with getting a dog, and her parents, who search for the super-natural for a job. Poppy is dragged to Shady Rest Cemetery, Austin, Texas. Somehow, ghosts follow the Malones to their house. The Big Question is: Can Poppy, Will, Franny, Rolly, and Henry (a new friend) get the ghosts out of the house before Mr. and Mrs. Malone notice?

I liked this book. I liked the different personalities and the humor in the book. My favorite character is Will, because he is always joking and is nice at heart. My favorite part of the book is when the ghosts tell stories about themselves. I think this book is suited for tween readers, but is easy enough for younger levels of children, like third grade readers. This book has a lot of "...s," which I thought was interesting when I began the book, but later on I realized that there was one in almost every paragraph in the book, which was kind of tedious.

Reviewed by Gretl, Age 11

## Planet Tad

By Tim Carvell

HarperCollins, \$12.99, 256 pages, Format:

★★★★★

*Planet Tad* is a book about Tad, who is writing a blog. The blog covers his life from seventh to eighth grade, and in that time a lot happens. He sets four goals for himself during this time period: one, start a blog; two, survive seventh grade; three, get girls to notice him; four, start shaving.

He's pretty successful at meeting two out of the four goals, because he is unable to grow a mustache and girls only notice him because they think he's silly. (He was supposed to be an Avatar for Halloween, but it didn't go so well- they thought he was a Smurf.)



Tad is supposed to go to the school dance with a girl named Katie, whom he has a crush on. He puts on DB2 to smell better, but it turns out he's allergic to it- he wakes up the next morning covered in hives, and the dance is out for Tad.

I really enjoyed this book, and Tad's observations about life, TV, movies, and girls are really funny. I hope this book ends up becoming a series so I can read more. I would recommend this book to other kids who like funny books about kids who are in middle school- even though I'm not in middle school yet.

Reviewed by Sebastain, Age 7

## Earthling!

By Mark Fearing

Chronicle Books, \$22.99, 248 pages, Format: Trade

★★★★

*Earthling!* is an extraterrestrial graphic novel written by Mark Fearing. The main characters are Bud the Earthling, his friend Gort, and Gort's friends Stel, Haz, and Wain-



bert. Bud is supposed to go to normal school, but gets on the wrong bus. That bus sends Bud to the space school for aliens, called Cosmos Academy. Only Gort knows that Bud is from Earth. Bud's new friends want to help him get back home. Principal Lepton believes that Earthlings are evil and tries to get all the Cosmos Academy students against Bud and his new friends. To find out if Bud gets back to Earth, you'll have to read this amazing book.

I rate this colorful book with awesome drawings a 4 ½. This book has lots of made-up words that make you laugh out loud. My favorite character in this goofy book is Gort. His full name is Gort Mcgortgort. The funniest part to me is the zeroball finals. I really enjoyed this book, because it seemed like the author had actually experienced it all as a kid. Sci-fi lovers who are looking for a great summer vacation book will love *Earthling!*

Reviewed by Zack, Age 9

### 13 Secrets (13 Treasures Trilogy)

By Harrison, Michelle

Little, Brown Books for Young Readers, \$16.99, 421 pages, Format: Hard

★★★★



Rowan has tried everything. Despite the magic boundaries she installs, the fairy messengers from the society she used to work with won't leave her be! Finally, she decides to return to the society, which

is responsible for undoing switches where a fairy replaces a human in a family. Rowan agrees to complete one last job for them. While on the mission, an old enemy attacks getting Rowan and her friends more involved in the fairy world than they ever wanted to be.

Being the third book in the series, I was concerned that

I wouldn't understand it, because I had not read the earlier books. But it was quite the opposite, as the author provided all the information necessary to catch up. As a result, I thought it was a bit of a spoiler if I wanted to go back to read the earlier books, but at least this reading wasn't confusing.

This book was fast-paced, an interesting, believable mix of mystery thriller and the fantasy novel. However, this book had too much betrayal and deceit in the story to be enjoyable for me. Also, personally, I enjoy some comic relief in the stories I read. I would not recommend this book to readers who like light-hearted plots.

Reviewed by Alexander, Age 12

### Just Grace and the Flower Girl Power

By Cherise Mericle Harper

Houghton Mifflin Books for Children, \$15.99, 192 pages,

Format: Hard

★★★★★

Just Grace's friend, Augustine Dupre, is getting married! Just Grace wants to be the flower girl. She becomes disappointed when Augustine Dupre says the job has been taken by her fiancé Luke's niece, Delphine. However, Augustine promises to give Just Grace another important job at the wedding. What could

be more important

than being the

flower girl? Just

Grace wants to

give Augustine

the best wedding

present ever -- to

have Augustine's

favorite cat, Crin-

kles, walk down the

aisle as the flower

cat! But training a cat

is one hundred times

harder than training a

dog! With a lot of begging and a lot of training, will Just Grace be able to get Crinkles down the aisle?





This is a very funny book. I liked this book because it had a lot of humorous comics inside. It was an enjoyable read. In fact I enjoyed reading it so much that I would give this book as a gift to my friends. I recommend this book for girls ages eight and older. I definitely plan to read all of the other books in this series.

Reviewed by Faith, Age 8

## Dragonborn

By Toby Forward

Bloomsbury Children's, \$16.99, 340 pages, Format: Hard

★★★★★



*Dragonborn* is a magical book full of adventure. It is about a boy named Sam, who is twelve years old, and he is an apprentice to Flaxfield, a great, old wizard. One afternoon, Sam returns from fishing with trout for dinner and finds that Flaxfield has unexpectedly died. Sam misses Flaxfield a lot. Sam is alone, except for his blue and green dragon, Starback. Together they set off on a mission to find a new

master so that Sam can finish his apprenticeship and be a wizard. Along the way, Sam and his dragon get separated. Sam meets a roffle who takes him to a college for wizards. There are cunning and dangerous wizards searching for Sam and others who want him to join the wizard war. Still, Starback is never far away, and he desperately tries to protect Sam from the evil forces.

*Dragonborn* is exciting and fun to read! I liked reading the pages from an apprentice's notebook, especially the parts about roffles from the Deep World and dragons. Read this book to discover whether Sam finds a new master who is kind and loving.

Reviewed by Kyle, Age 8



## The Mapmaker and the Ghost

By Sarvenaz Tash

Walker Children's, \$16.99, 248 pages, Format: Hard

★★★★★

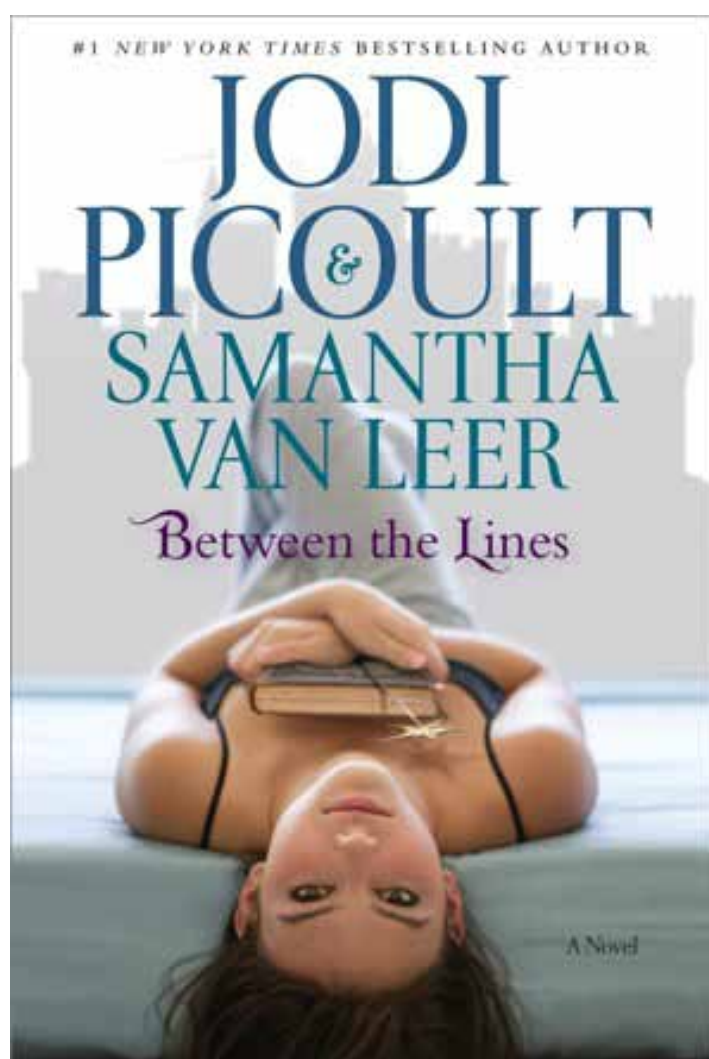
I liked the book *The Mapmaker and the Ghost* because its plot has some fun, unexpected twists in it. I also liked it because Goldenrod is very, very adventurous, and loves to do new things. I also really liked it because to Goldenrod met the one and only Meriwether Lewis. And finally, the plot was filled with lots of humor and fun. I didn't like the Gross-out Gang. They had really gross names and did really gross stuff... and mean stuff too. But other than that, this is book is a real treat to readers of all ages.

Reviewed by Aleah, Age 9



Category

# Young Adult



## Between the Lines

By Jodi Picoult, Samantha van Leer

Simon Pulse/Emily Bestler Books/Atria, \$19.99, 352 pages,  
Format: Hard

★★★★★

'Between the Lines' is a fairy tale, the last book a prominent mystery author wrote before fading into obscurity. Delilah loves it. She reads it constantly, and loves it with a

passion. But when she finds that the characters in the book are more than just words on paper, she is determined to help 'Between the Lines's protagonist, Oliver, escape.

I thought *Between the Lines* was very well-written, had a very interesting premise, and was well-developed. I liked how the characters had their own diverse and original personalities outside the confines of the book, and I enjoyed seeing what those were. I thought the ending was kind of unsatisfying, though. I thought it was cruel for Delilah to be fine with the fact that someone else had taken Oliver's place in the story. I enjoyed the way that the author's imagination of things in the story was translated into the world in the book, even though it was not necessarily set in writing, like the way that 'War and Peace' and 'The Encyclopedia of Butterflies' were on Rapsclullo's shelves, even though the book did not mention them at all. I would definitely recommend this book to others.

Reviewed by Peterson, Age 14

## Otherkin

By Nina Berry

Kensington Teen, \$9.95, 310 pages, Format: N/A

★★★

The Othersphere is a world next to our own. Some things in our world have shadows in the Othersphere, which at times, can manifest; people who have these shadows can change into an animal. Dez is one of these rare people, an Otherkin, who is being hunted by the Tribunal, a religious organization that exists only to kill the Otherkin. Dez and the rest of the Otherkin must find a way to defeat the Tribunal. She and her devilishly handsome boyfriend Caleb, a Shadow Caller, fight their electric attraction for each other while learning more about being Otherkin.

*Otherkin* was not as suspenseful or action-packed as its cover implied, although the part where they were learning about their newfound abilities was interesting. The book could have been resolved much earlier. I liked how the characters had strength enough to get themselves out





of difficulties and that the mentor was approachable and witty. Each of them had different motives, struggles, and factors weighing on them that influenced their actions. I enjoyed this book for the most part, but I probably will not be recommending it.

Reviewed by Peterson, Age 14

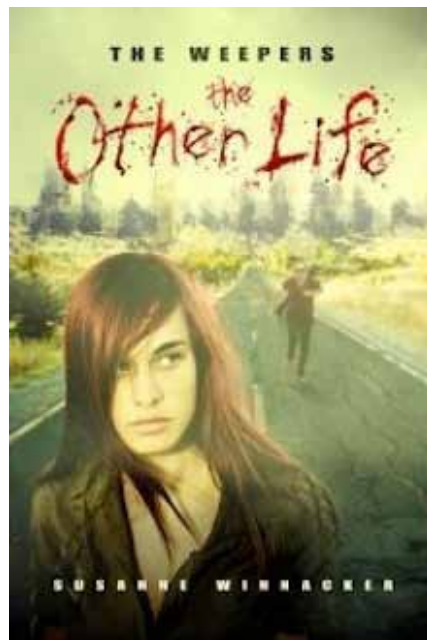
### The Weepers: The Other Life

By Susanne Winnacker

Marshall Cavendish, \$17.99, 254 pages, Format: Hard

★

In this post-apocalyptic world, the rabies virus has almost completely wiped out civilization. After 3 years in a bunker, Sherry and her family have run out of food, so she and her father must leave the safety of their dwelling. As they scavenge, her father is abducted by Weepers, people who have been completely transformed by the rabies virus. She and her new boyfriend, Joshua, who is really nutty, disturbingly so, go out to rescue her father.



This book doesn't make any sense. Why did the Weepers, who kill and eat humans on sight, kidnap and then spare her father? Why not eat him right away? Joshua was a complete contradiction--he loves her, no wait, he doesn't. He goes crazy trying to kill the Weepers, then he nicely apologizes for his temporary insanity. Even though he is crazy and remains crazy for the whole book, Sherry remains infatuated. I guess one can't be picky when there are only five males left uninfected. The zombies (Weepers) were exceedingly cliché except for the two or three bizarre anomalies put in for no apparent purpose, like their random and inconsistent flashes of intuition. I would not recommend this book to anyone.

Reviewed by Peterson, Age 14

### Cuttlefish

By Dave Freer

Pyr, \$16.95, 274 pages, Format: Hard

★★★★

*Cuttlefish* is about a thrilling and dangerous pursuit of the submarine Cuttlefish by the English Navy. Clara's mother is a famous scientist who has found the secret to a technological advantage that will decide the balance of power in their war-torn world. Clara and her mother try to escape to Australia on one of the London Underground's submarines, the Cuttlefish. Clara and her friend Tim must safely guide Cuttlefish through the perils of submarine life, mechanical failures, and treachery.



I liked this book, as the characters acted consistently with their personalities. Clara was a surprisingly strong character who, although she wasn't completely invulnerable, was able to take charge of her fate and solve the problems she encountered on her dangerous voyage. The setting, unlike that of most other post-apocalyptic novels, was rather hopeful and the protagonists actually succeeded in the end, which was refreshing. The plot was interesting, and I felt the book came to its conclusion at the appropriate time. The pacing was very good; it moved quickly, but not so fast as to be rushed. I would definitely recommend this book to others.

Reviewed by Peterson, Age 14

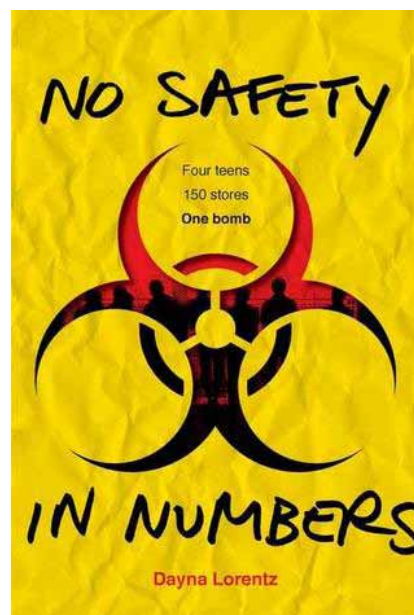
### No Safety in Numbers

By Dayne Lorentz

Dial Books for Young Readers, \$17.99, 263 pages, Format: Hard

★★★★

*No Safety in Numbers* takes place over seven days and is told from the perspectives of four teens. Marco is a hard-working boy, who is often bullied by his peers. Lexi is a computer whiz, whose mother is a United States senator. Ryan is a football player, like his older brother. Shay is a



free-spirited Indian girl who is new to town. When Marco accidentally discovers a biological bomb in the air ducts of a megamall, the shopping complex is suddenly and completely shut down. No one can leave. Then, people start to get sick, coughing violently; the ears and fingertips of others turned blue. Some people die. The four teens try to find a way to escape from the mall.

*No Safety in Numbers* is an outstanding novel that keeps you reading until the very end. I recommend this book because readers can easily imagine this nightmarish scenario in real life. Even though the teens are very different from one another, they find themselves helping each other in the midst of a deadly virus. *No Safety in Numbers* is the first novel of a trilogy, and I cannot wait to read the sequel.

Reviewed by Zachary, Age 11

### The Sisters Grimm: Book Nine, The Council of Mirrors

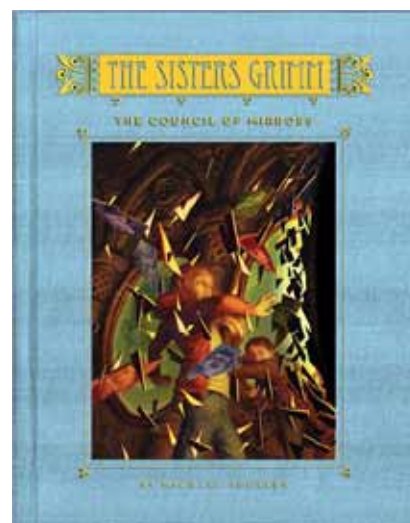
By Michael Buckley

Amulet Books, \$15.95, 333 pages, Format: Hard

★★★★★

I liked the book *The Sisters Grimm*, *The Council of Mirrors* because it's really surprising. Who would think that Sabrina would have to lead an army and that Daphne would build a coven! Another thing I liked about the book is that I didn't expect Mirror to be defeated the way he was, by knowing that people cared about him if he was kind.

Overall, this book was really fun.



Reviewed by Aleah, Age 9

### Deadweather and Sunrise: The Chronicles of Egg, Book 1

By Geoff Rodkey

G. P. Putnam's Sons, \$16.99, 296 pages, Format: Hard

★★★★★



Egg is the son of a plantation farmer on a miserable little isle named Deadweather. When suddenly his father disappears without a trace, and Egg is sent to live with the wealthy Pembrokes, he slowly comes to realize that the Pembrokes are not as pleasant as they at first seemed. Now Egg is on the run from Mr. Pembroke, trying to protect the secret that his father was hiding.

This book was fun. I liked the way the plot moved along swiftly but not so as to be confusing. The inter-character interactions seemed slightly incredible, but at the same time they were funny and entertaining. I enjoyed the way that Egg was able to use his talents and skills to get out of difficult circumstances, such as when he was able to talk the Plantation Pirates into assisting his cause. It is a rather light-hearted and quick-paced fantasy that ended well; even though it is meant as the first in a series, I liked how Egg conclusively solved the conflict in this book. I would definitely like to read the next book in this series.

Reviewed by Peterson, Age 14

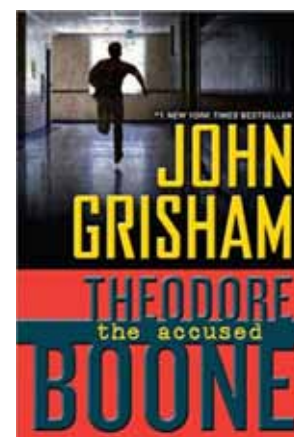
### Theodore Boone: The Accused

By John Grisham

Dutton Juvenile, \$16.99, 271 pages, Format: Hard

★★★★★

*Theodore Boone: The Accused* is the third book in a series by John Grisham. Theo Boone is a thirteen-year-old boy in eighth grade, and he dreams of becoming either a famous trial lawyer or a great judge. On behalf of his classmates, Theo observes the second murder trial of Pete Duffy, but problems arise in his own life that same day.







First, someone breaks into his locker. Then his bike tires are slashed. When a computer store is robbed of tablets, laptops, and cell phones that are worth a total of \$20,000, Theo is the prime suspect in the robbery. Theo's family is horrified when Theo is accused of the robbery, and Theo feels angry and shocked. Will Theo be set free or will he be detained for this crime?

*Theodore Boone: The Accused* is a gripping thriller filled with suspense. Theo has a strong spirit because he did not give up when he was accused of robbery. I liked the part when Theo's family was trying to prove his innocence. Read this book to find out what happens to Theo. I recommend this book because it helps the reader understand what it might be like to be accused of a crime.

Reviewed by Zachary, Age 11

### My Mixed-Up Berry Blue Summer

By Jennifer Gennari

Houghton Mifflin Books for Children, \$15.99, 119 pages, Format: Hard



June, a twelve-year-old girl, likes to swim and boat on Lake Champlain with her best friend, Luke. She also likes to bake pies. She is hoping to bake a prize-winning one for the fair this summer, but her mother's girlfriend, Eva, has just moved in with them and the community's hostility toward their family makes her wonder if it would be better just to lie low and not enter the fair at all. June feels like everything was fine before Eva came, and she wishes that Eva would just go away so she wouldn't have to deal with other people judging her and her mother.

I don't want to read this book ever again; I don't want to have to deal with all the politics and judging. I can sympathize with June; she just got up and moved on from her



situation and found a way to be herself and not a 'label,' and I liked reading about the pies and the contest and how June came up with an original pie. The pie wasn't the main focus of it at all, though, or the berries; it was all about her mother's lesbian relationship and June trying to deal with all these other people judging her mom.

Reviewed by Gretl, Age 11

### Deadly Pink

By Vivian Vande Velde

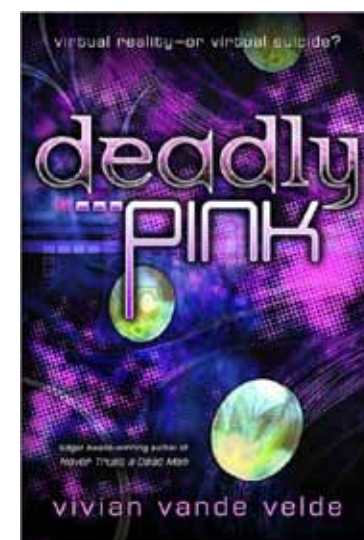
Harcourt Children's Books, \$16.99, 276 pages, Format: Hard



Grace is called out of school at the start because her older sister, Emily, has gotten stuck in a computer game; she altered the game so she could hide there and never come out. Grace has to go in and rescue her sister, and she must do it before 8 hours in the real world run out. Grace goes in and tries to find her sister, who is trying to keep away from Grace. Grace finds out that Emily is hiding herself in this game because she helped her friends cheat on tests for college, and she is afraid her parents will be ashamed of her, so she is hiding. Grace finally talks to Emily and convinces her that even if her parents are disappointed, it is better than devastated. So Emily goes out and says the words that would set her free, but she can't go back until she repays the sprites who she cheated to make the game easier.

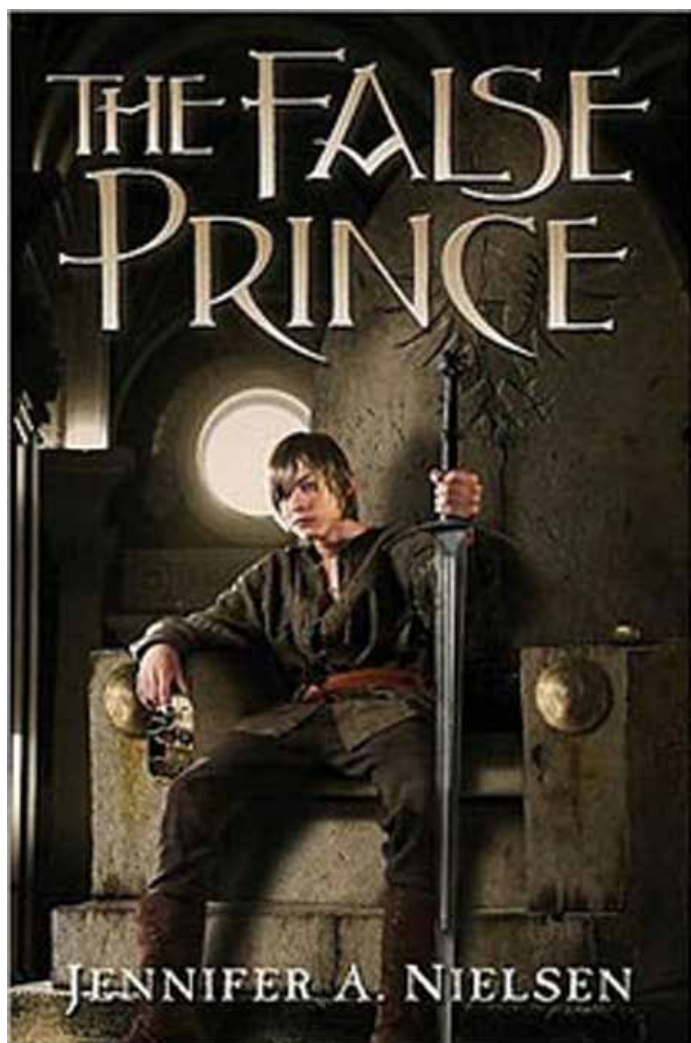
It's a nice story, actually. The younger sister always thought the older sister was so cool, with her job, and friends, and college, and everything. So the story is cool that Grace realizes she has worth too and her older sister looks up to her.

Reviewed by Gretl, Age 11



Category

# Young Adult



## The False Prince: Book 1 of the Ascendance Trilogy

By Jennifer A. Nielsen

Scholastic Press, \$17.99, 344 pages, Format: Hard

★★★★★

Since leaving his family behind some years before, Sage has lived hand to mouth, hopping between orphanages and stealing for extra food. When he and a few other boys his age are taken from their orphanages by a man who says he has a plan for them, Sage doesn't know what to expect. But after the three arrive at Conner's grand home, the nobleman's scheme slowly becomes clear—and it doesn't bode well for any of them. The teens will have to learn in two weeks' time to impersonate the kingdom's lost prince. Whoever is chosen will have to play by Conner's rules permanently, and the two who are not chosen will certainly be killed.

Sage has to figure out how to play along, despite his deficiencies, particularly his strong tendency toward stubbornness. The other two youths have their own plots to stay alive as well. Every page of *The False Prince* is filled with danger or the promise of danger, and readers can't help but keep turning the pages to find out what happens not only to Sage but to his two companions, as powerful men scheme to take over a kingdom. This book should captivate young and older readers alike.

Reviewed by Cathy Carmode Lim

## Just Write: Here's How!

By Walter Dean Myers

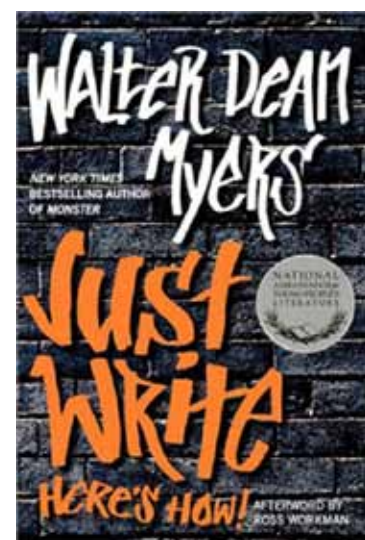
Collins, \$7.99, 176 pages, Format: Trade

★★★★★

Any American teenager who hasn't been living in a cave has probably read something by Walter Dean Myers. Myers is a prolific author with numerous awards on his walls and over fifty books under his belt, most of which are written for teens. He had a tough childhood. His mother died in childbirth, he was raised by foster parents, and he had a difficult speech impediment. He dropped out of high school and joined the army at seventeen. There is a reason his books are so raw, gritty, and realistic. He overcame a lot to reach his dream of being a full-time writer. Who better to inspire young writers, to show them how to use their own experiences to inform their writing, and to show them how to observe, research, plan, and dream?

Myers has written a terrific book on writing that young people will find accessible, sensible, and extremely useful. This could well show up as a text in high school classrooms all around the country. He has not only filled it with useful hints, but many examples from his own work. This is something aspiring writers can relate to and put to use as they read.

Reviewed by Rosi Hollinbeck





**Transfer Student: Book 1 in The Starjump Series**

By Laura A. H. Elliott

CreateSpace, \$12.00, 212 pages, Format: Trade

★★★★

Ashley is a spoiled Beverly Hills brat. She and her BFF, Tiffany, are at the observatory on a school field trip. A galaxy away on Retha, Rhoe is planning to starjump. He needs to do that to save his brother, so sick he cannot speak. No one believes Rhoe can do

it, but he is going to try, no matter how dangerous it is. His best friend, Yuke, tries to talk him out of it, but Rhoe is determined. Once alone, he sets up the scope and when he looks into it, something strange happens. On Earth, Ashley, at the same moment, looks into the telescope at Griffith Observatory. Moments later, she finds herself in what turns out to be Rhoe's body on Retha.



Rhoe lands in Ashley's body on Earth. It seems hormones exist in both places, and they have a hard, but interesting, time adjusting to their new bodies. The adventures begin for both characters and each finds himself/herself falling in love with their new body's best friend, even though their bodies are the same sex as the friends. Yikes! Of course, the end goal for both is to get back to their own planets and body. No easy task, especially for Ashley who has no idea how she got to Retha. The two finally convince their best friends that they really aren't who they seem to be and let the love flow. Will they get back? Do they really want to get back? And then there are some really bad guys.

Laura A. H. Elliott has written a page-turner of a Young Adult Science Fiction love story. Although the start is slow, any teen, boy or girl, who likes Sci-Fi will like this book. The love story is just a nice bonus.

Sponsored Review

**Wanted**

By Heidi Ayarbe

Balzer &amp; Bray, \$17.99, 400 pages, Format: Hard

★★★★

*Wanted* by Heidi Ayarbe chronicles Michal Garcia's life as a high school bookie in the heart of Nevada, Carson City High. To many at Carson City, Sanctuary is not only where they place their bets, but it's where they get their rush, living off of gambling highs until the next coveted text which pulls them back into the game again.

However, Michal has seen the full effects of the capricious nature of gambling and knows that a single unlucky move can prove can provide disastrous consequences. This is one of the many reasons Michal refuses to bet and experience the thrill. Michal is satisfied sitting on the sidelines, that is, until Josh Ellison convinces her to take a leap of faith. But misjudgement lands Michal into a terrifying debt that forces her to choose between her character and her friends, her morals and her chances.



Through the eyes of a steely protagonist, the world of gambling is exposed to the young adult audience in Heidi Ayarbe's *Wanted*. Ms. Ayarbe's cast of colorful characters enhances her unique atmosphere and allows readers to take a look into the underground industry. Although Miss Ayarbe's attempts at fluency in the teenage vernacular fall a little flat, rendering slightly uncomfortable dialogue, there is no doubt of a vibrant plot and an exciting ride.

Reviewed by Alex Masri

**Belles**

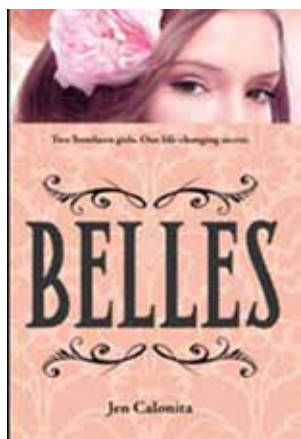
By Jen Calonita

Poppy, \$17.99, 356 pages, Format: Hard

★★★★

This new series by Jen Calonita, author of the *Hollywood Secrets* series, is off to a great start with *Belles*.

Izzy and Mira come from opposite sides of the spectrum—Izzy lives in what many people call a “rough” neighborhood,



while Mira lives in a large privileged household. Izzy has been taking care of her grandmother, but when her illness advances to a point that she needs additional care, Izzy is sent to live with her only remaining relative: Mira's father, who Izzy just learned is her uncle.

Chapters are told in alternating viewpoints from Izzy and Mira, and this is an essential part of the story. Mira's friends are determined to make Izzy's life awful at her new school, and learning what Mira knows and what her friends are planning while watching Izzy struggle to fit in is much more effective than reading from just one perspective. Izzy isn't a character to sit down and take it, either, so readers will be rooting for her to both find her place and stand up for herself.

*Belles* is a great start to a series sure to be filled with drama and discovery.

Reviewed by Shanyn Day

### **The Temptation: A Kindred Novel**

By Alisa Valdes

HarperTeen, \$8.99, 305 pages, Format: Trade

★★★

On her way to her orchestra performance, Shane swerves to avoid a coyote. She becomes grievously injured, and has

only her dog for company in the desert. She is saved by a cowboy named Trevor, who miraculously heals her. He stays with her until the paramedics show up, leaving with only one request--that she not mention him. Worried over by her friend and her mother, Shane slowly doubts about what really happened. Meanwhile Shane's boyfriend starts acting strangely and she is being threatened. Shane becomes a target in a feud between two powers who have taken their fight beyond life.

I loved the way magical realism is incorporated into the book, finding it very refreshing to have some science mixed in. Although Trevor is an amazing character, I didn't feel Shane's relationship start off with him well. It felt forced and a little cliché, but develops fully later on. The focus of the conflict was a nice change. The climax is very exciting, and was my favorite part, but I believe the whole story would be better rounded if it stayed as a single book. Although, those who love Trevor will be excited to hear it will be a trilogy.

Reviewed by Amanda Muir



**"This family of friends is friends of family."**



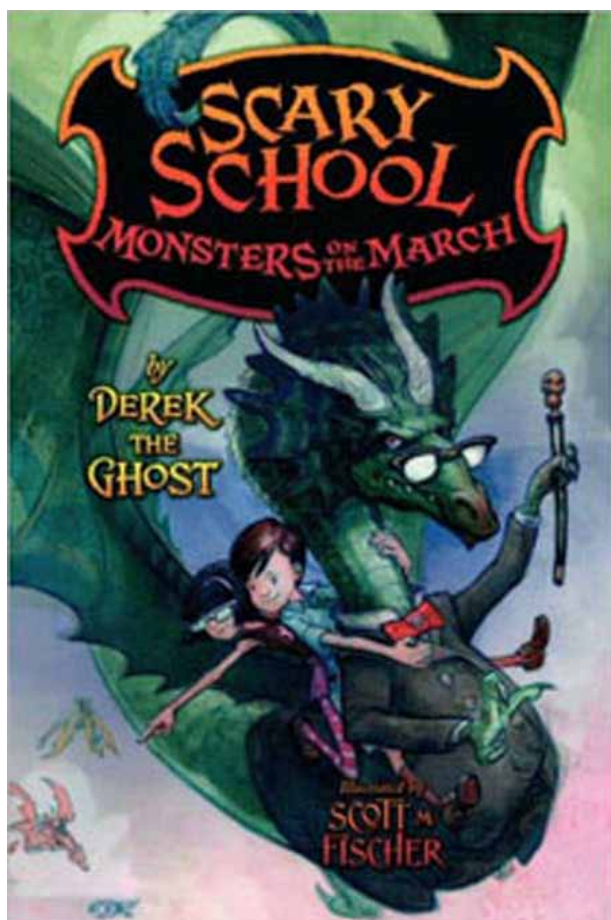
A novel by Alexander Rutherford

<http://www.sbpri.com/AlexanderRutherford>

*"Available in Paperback, through Amazon.com, BarnesandNoble.com and other book retailers."*



## Category Twens



### Scary School #2: Monsters on the March

By Derek the Ghost, Scott M. Fischer (illustrator)

HarperCollins, \$15.99, 238 pages, Format: Hard

★★★★★

Are you ready for another spooky and fun year at Scary School? Eleven-year-old Derek the Ghost is back with his second book about the school, *Monster on the March*. Before reading, log on to ScarySchool.com to unlock the Bonus Chapter from Book One. This book picks up where that chapter ends. As winners of last year's Ghoul Games, Charles Nukid, Penny Possum, and the rest of the student body travels to the Monster Forest to meet Zog, the Monster King. Are the horrible rumors about him true? Fans of wacky Wayside School and the Goosebumps books will enjoy the comedic thrills and chills of the *Scary School* series. Derek the Ghost communicates through ghost whis-

perer (and author) Derek Taylor Kent. Scott M. Fischer's illustrations bring the character to life (or death in the case of new sixth grade teacher King Khufu, a 4,500 year old mummy who teaches the kids to read hieroglyphics). Meet nine-headed Ms. Hydra – she's the new school hall monitor who doesn't let a late kid slip by her 18 eyes! The students of Scary school may be able to survive class, but can they survive their field trip?

Reviewed by Kathryn Franklin

### Summer of the Gypsy Moths

By Sara Pennypacker

Balzer + Bray, \$15.99, 273 pages, Format: Unknown

★★★★★

For two months Stella has lived with her Great Aunt Louise, inventing ever new excuses for her flighty mother's absences. When Louise takes in another foster child to keep Stella company, the plan backfires. The girls are complete opposites. Stella is imaginative, dreamy, trustful. Angel is street-wise, tough, cynical. Stella makes rules for everything, striving for structure.

Angel breaks rules as a matter of principle. They rub each other the wrong way until an unexpected tragedy early on forces them to depend on each other. To say more about that would be a spoiler.

The story unfolds with humor that varies from bitter-sweet to hilarious. All of Pennypacker's characters shine, though the story is told through Stella's eyes. The caterpillars attacking Louise's beloved blueberry bushes are a major challenge for Stella, and a symbol of her growing maturity as they evolve into the moths of the title.

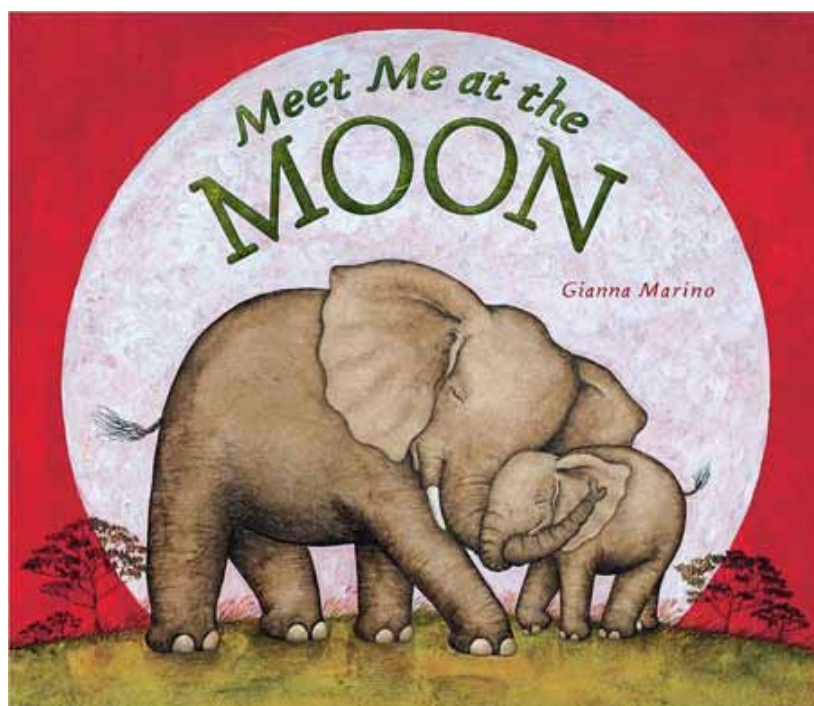
But challenges galore unfold for both Angel and Stella as they navigate a situation more bizarre than any TV show, a situation that finally resolves into a happy ending for each of them.

Stella's voice is quirky and poignant; settings are palpable. Pennypacker's turn of phrase is sheer reading pleasure.

Reviewed by Elizabeth Varadan



## Category Children's



### Meet Me at the Moon

By Gianna Marino

Penguin Young Readers, \$16.99, 40 pages, Format: Hard

★★★★★

Little One's mother has to climb the highest mountain to ask the skies for rain. Little One does not want her to go. Little One wonders how he (or she) will be able to hear Mama. She assures him she will sing and he will hear her on the wind. Little One wonders how he will know she still loves him. She will love him from afar and he will feel that love in the warmth of the sun. They'll both look at the

brightest star and it will be like seeing each other. When Little One wonders how they will find each other again, Mama promises to meet Little One at the moon where the sky and earth come together. Little One sadly stays with friends while Mama goes on her journey. He listens to the wind and looks at the stars each night. He feels her love in the warm earth. But it seems a long time she's gone. When rains come, Little One cannot hear the song, see the stars, or feel the warmth.

This lovely story answers a need most children have at times. The enchanting illustrations support every word of the sweet story.

Reviewed by Rosi Hollinbeck

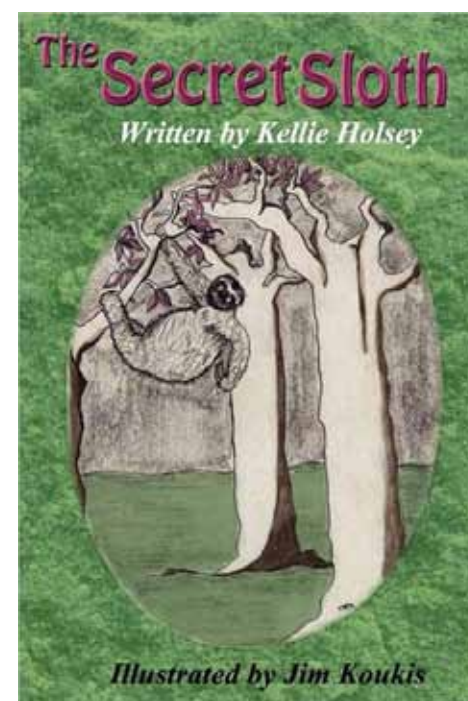
### The Secret Sloth

By Kellie Holsey, Jim Koukis (Illustrator)

Winter Goose Publishing, \$7.99, 32 pages, Format: Trade

★★

*The Secret Sloth* is a story about this wondrous, slow-moving creature. Written in rhyme, with some facts tossed in, children can learn about the habitat above the Rainforest floor. People usually think of the Sloth living way up high in the treetops, but what most don't know is that the Sloth is also a swimmer. The story also tells of the Sloth's many enemies that they need to watch out for. Facts about how the rainforest is in danger of disappearing are also presented in the book.



An honorable effort by author Kellie Holsey in not only raising awareness about the Sloth, but also the importance the Rainforest plays in the Earth's atmospheric well-being. The illustrations throughout the book are quite elementary, which might not necessarily be a bad thing. Tighter editing of the book would increase the readability, as there are a few punctuation errors.

With a great heart, soul, and intention behind the book, it's sure to enlighten any young reader into the life of the



Sloth. Portions of book sale proceeds goes to Kids Saving the Rainforest. More information on that program can be found at [kidsscavingtherainforest.org](http://kidsscavingtherainforest.org).

Sponsored Review

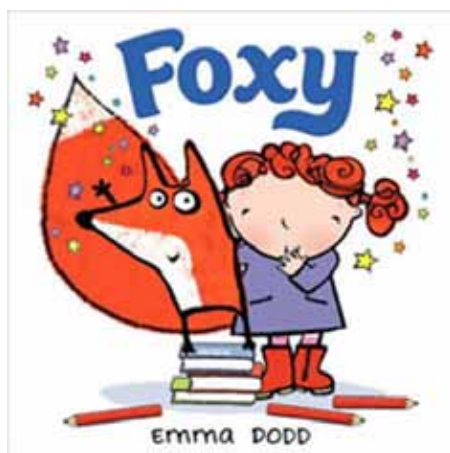
## Foxy

By Emma Dodd

HarperCollins, \$14.99, 40 pages, Format: Hard

★★★★★

Tomorrow is Emily's first day of school, but she can't sleep! She's worried that she doesn't have everything she needs to get her through the day. Fortunately, she has Foxy to help her out! Emily tells Foxy the things she needs, and Foxy does his best to help, but sometimes he gets her request wrong. When Emily asks for an eraser, Foxy instead produces an elephant! And instead of a pencil, she gets a penguin! Foxy creates a pirate flag (instead of a school bag), and shoes and a hat that Emily isn't so sure she actually wants to wear after all. But Foxy provides the perfect answer to Emily's last question: of course the other kids will like her, and Emily will surely make lots of new friends!



Perfect for children ages three to seven, Emma Dodd's new picture book *Foxy* is a delight to behold. The story is clever and cute, and the pictures bring it to life; even younger kids will surely enjoy looking at the bright illustrations of Emily and Foxy. Parents will certainly be charmed by the positive message at the end of the story.

Reviewed by Holly Scudero

## When Dads Don't Grow Up

By Marjorie Blain Parker, R. W. Alley (illustrator)

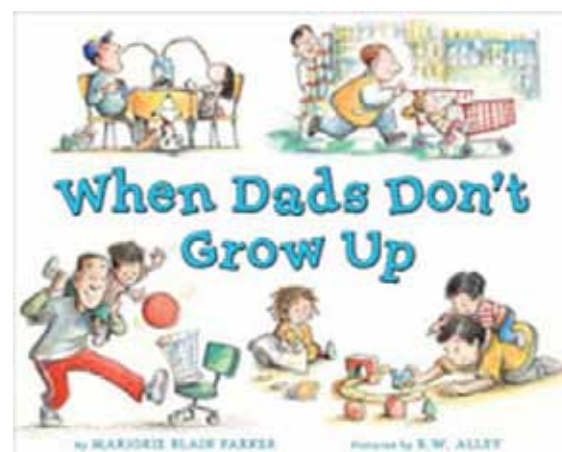
Dial Books for Young Readers, \$16.99, 32 pages, Format: Hard

★★★★★

"Some dads just never grow up." These dads like to drink their milk through a straw and pop bubble wrap. They play sports, both indoor and outdoor, and, as a consequence, are really good at fixing things. They remember what it's like to

be little and always, always want to join in. "They may look like grown-ups on the outside, but underneath they're just like us...KIDS!"

This heart-warming tribute to playful dads is impossible to read without a smile. When dads don't grow up, they have a lot of fun, and each montage features dads and their kids enjoying themselves thoroughly. The pictures burst with energy and delight: a little girl launches into a flying tackle as her dad falls in the autumn leaves, a chair tips as a dad tries to catch a long toilet-paper pass, a flipper-clad dad chases his son through the sprinkler. The dads are a variety of ages and ethnicities, but each of them clearly loves his child. *When Dads Don't Grow Up* would be a great Father's Day gift for the father who still reads the comics and watches cartoons. "Their kids are lucky."



Reviewed by Tammy McCartney

## UNBREAK MY HEART, cont'd from page 1

the excellent cast of characters written by Melissa Walker.

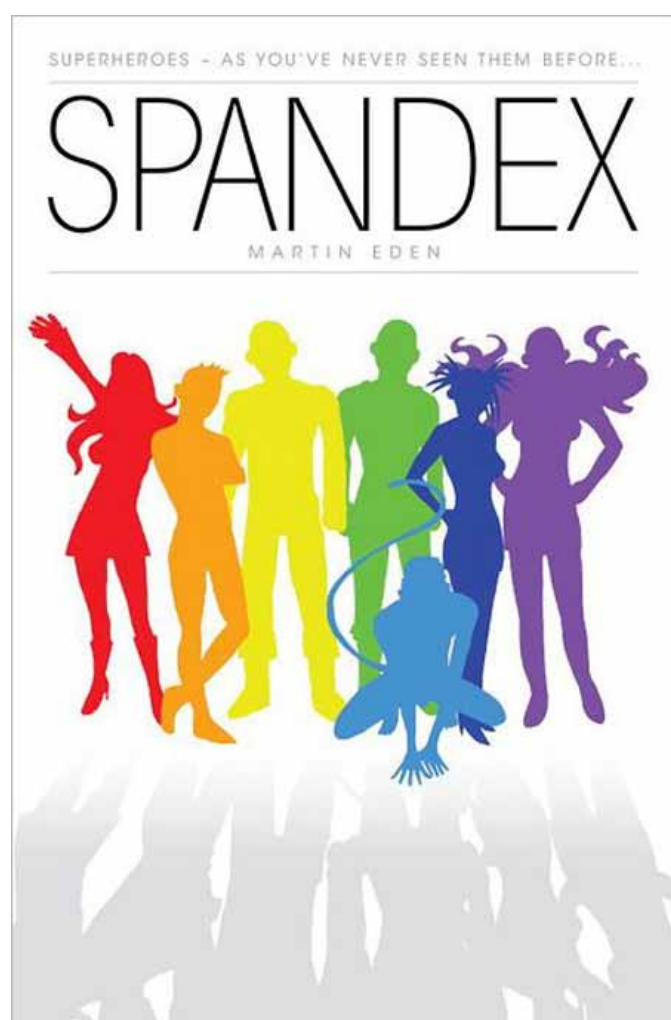
Perhaps one of the best sister connections of 2012, Olive and Clem connect in a way that is refreshing. Rather than dueling, fighting siblings, the reader is exposed to a loving relationship. Another character of note is James, the boy traveling with his own family along the coast, on the same path as Clem. Their relationship progresses in a natural, easy way, and both Clem and James are fully genuine in their interactions.

A lovely summer story with a fun setting, *Unbreak My Heart* has excellent characters, relationships, and self-growth.

Reviewed by Shanyn Day

Category

# Sequential Art



## Spandex - Fast and Hard

By Martin Eden

Titan Books, \$19.95, 96 pages, Format: Hard

★★★★

Sometimes it really is a matter of color-coordinating the outfits. *Spandex: Fast and Hard* follows the first three issues of Spandex, a group of LGBT heroes and heroines that fight crime together. It follows their first fight against a fifty-foot lesbian, the ever-multiplying Pink Ninja, and Nadir, a villainess who makes life bland. It follows their love lives,

a new member, and why Spandex is one of the most important groups out there.

Although the art style makes it look like a simple puff piece, there is actually some sophisticated storytelling going on, with some interesting twists throughout the three issues compiled here. The bad guys are not presented as generic bad guys; even as brief as they are around, they are shown to be human beings. This is also one of the few times where the characters' love lives are explored as part of the character and not for the sake of titillation. There is also supplementary material that looks at the origins of the characters and the group. This is definitely one of the more interesting graphic novels you will read.

Reviewed by Jamais Jochim

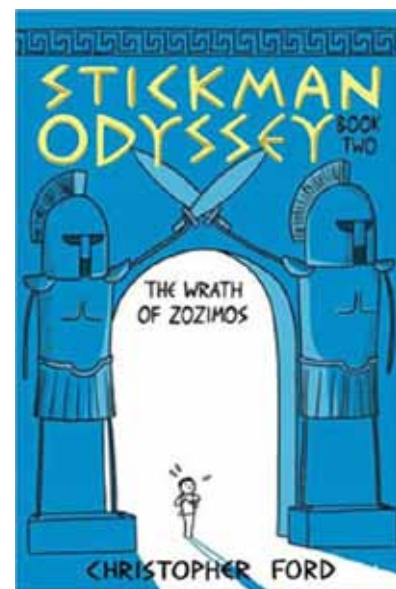
## Stickman Odyssey Book 2: The Wrath of Zozimos

By Christopher Ford

Philomel, \$12.99, 224 pages, Format: Hard

★★★★★

A long, long time ago in the land of Sticatha, the great king Xenon has been killed by an evil witch, Xenon's wife, who has taken over the kingdom. Zozimos, son of Xenon, promised his friends, Atrukos and Praxis, to help them on their quests. But Zozimos's uncle kidnapped him to take him to Sticatha for Zozimos to exact revenge on his stepmother and take back the throne. Zozimos, who has some anger issues, really wants to finish his journey with his friends, but ends up promising his uncle he will return to Sticatha when he thinks his uncle is dying. For those who remember the original Odyssey, there are more twists and turns than you can shake a ... ahem ... stick at!



This second book in the Stickman series is going to be a huge hit with middle-graders, but especially with boy middle-graders. It's clever and smart. The drawings are ridiculously simple and funny, which just adds to the silliness of



the franchise. Those who know the story of the Odyssey will get an even bigger kick out of this fun book. Christopher Ford knows what will tickle the funny bones of all those kids, and he absolutely produces.

Reviewed by Rosi Hollinbeck

**Tales from Neverland (Grimm Fairy Tales Presents)**

By Dan Wickline, Joe Brusha

Zenescope Entertainment, \$12.99, 168 pages, Format: Trade

★★★

Peter Pan was always such a good little boy, at least that was what we were told. *Tales From Neverland #1* gives us an alternate look into Neverland, where Tinkerbelle was banned from Fairy Kingdom due to a horrible crime, Tiger Lily was an avenging princess, Captain Hook was the good guy, and Peter Pan is as evil as they come. This is a decidedly nasty version of Neverland, and for those who



like twisted tales this should definitely whet your appetite.

“Tinkerbelle” is probably the weakest of the four tales, with an attempt at being a fairy CSI tale. It’s just painting Belle as a darker character, and should have been handled with more finesse. “Tiger Lily” is better, as the Indian Princess is recast as a gritty warrior; it gives a great taste of the Nasty Neverland, and decidedly highlights the differences. “Croc” is

a waste; nothing is really developed here beyond making Pan a villain. “Family History” actually works, making a great gothic horror tale. Overall, the art could have been more consistent, and too much effort was made making something dark that just needed some twisting, but this is nonetheless a fine effort.

Reviewed by Jamais Jochim

# WHAT ARE YOU DOING THIS WEEKEND?

Download the perfect wine-tasting apps in the iTunes App Store.

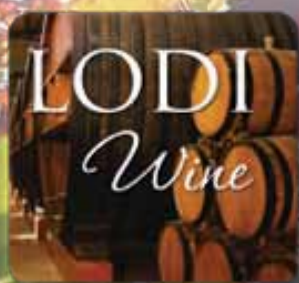
Santa Clara  
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Dry Creek



Category

# Poetry & Short Stories

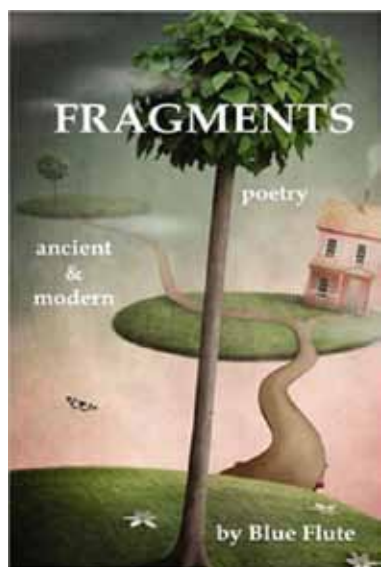
## Fragments: Poetry, Ancient & Modern

By Blue Flute

CreateSpace, \$15.99, 300 pages, Format: Trade

★★★

*Fragments* is a timely and most refreshing anthology about our literary predecessors and rich poetics; aficionados everywhere have been awaiting such a comprehensive



volume that both contextualizes and invigorates by key region and aesthetics. This book resonates with keen musical and visual elements of poetry, especially in the contemporary works of its own Blue Flute and fellow poets, Claudia Schoenfield, gennepher, and Polona Oblak, while alongside the great exemplary voices of Sappho, Chaucer, T.S. Eliot, and Edgar Allen Poe. With an astute

eye to the eastern and western traditions of prosody, Blue Flute pens the genre with a fine-tooth comb.

Though prolific and ambitious at cataloging and compiling, *Fragments* lacks some chronology and balance. There are an odd number of poems per each cultural area, but little variety of poetic figures, so the liner aspect is obstructed by selective groupings. Still, *Fragments* is a very tactical read, especially with the given texts of translation; Blue Flute gives an essential display of visual and phonetic translations for the source language, which proves most helpful and satisfying. However, as we progress through the oeuvre, the pronunciation tips and additional comments/notes for the translations dwindle significantly. Yet,

*Fragments* is alluring and favorable to a wide-ranging view of the verse. Readers everywhere will ultimately reconsider history and, in turn, recover a practice of the lyrical form.

Sponsored Review

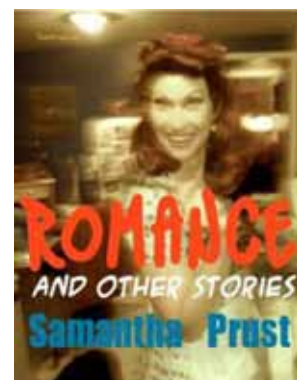
## Romance and Other Stories

By Samantha Prust

The Write Deal, \$6.25, 89 pages, Format: eBook

★★★

Engaging short stories are the better of two worlds. They are gold-foiled invitations that greet their readers and show them a fine time, then kindly show them the door where they can move on. They don't rob so much time, allowing the reader the courtesy of making more plans, and the want of just a little more at the close. They leave you wondering about the characters, lingering on the details and wishing that you could stay overnight in a guest room and see what continues after the click of the light goes off, the last page shows up.



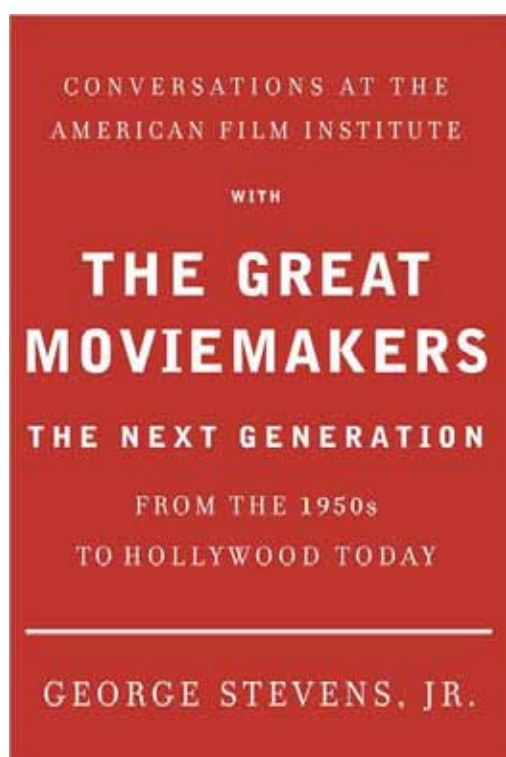
Samantha Prust's collection, *Romance and Other Stories*, is a fine time, indeed. Her stories' rhythms and seemingly ordinary lives of her characters are relatable and intriguing. She opens with a coming-of-age spun story titled Recipes where a budding girl is going through the inevitable changes of adolescence over the spread of a summer. She wrestles with the purchase of her new bra and the realization that just knowing what lies under the sheer of her T-shirt has changed her. And with the beauty of a short story, we see this significance in an afternoon. From Recipes to Angles, two "beautiful, but broke" waitresses wager the ho-hum life they are living by selling more than the day's specials. There is a slight conflict between the two and a deeper, internal struggle with one that lends a multifaceted meaning to the superficial.

Each story carries its own weight, true to short story development, cuts to the chase and leaves the reader to ponder. I did want to see a further dive into struggle. External conflict is not as prevalent as internal, which, if explored deeper, could lend to a tighter tale. All in all, Prust creates prevailing, multidimensional characters that make for an afternoon of instant immersion.

Sponsored Review



# Category Music & Movies



## Conversations at the American Film Institute with the Great MovieMakers: The Next Generation, From the 1950s to Hollywood Today

By George Stevens, Jr.

Knopf, \$39.95, 737 pages, Format: Hard

★★★★★

“Film works psychologically differently from the written word... Film is very direct, like life. You’re sitting there and it attacks you. With movies you use your ears and eyes in combination. I could never adapt a book into a movie. I think truly cinematic stories have to be rooted in the moving image, not literature.”

George Lucas reflects in just one of the gems from the massive collage of producers, directors, writers, actors, editors, cameramen, and all those picture makers in *Conversations at the American Film Festival*. In this phenomenal collection, George Stevens, Jr., gathers some of the most prolific and inspiring screen story-tellers since the 1950s. An intimate conversation with Q & A is the form and the outcome is as valuable and inspiring as a finely extracted

jewel. Recorded at the American Film Institute, all realms of the work are up for topic, from the inspiration and birth of concept, to the logistical aspects of lighting, sound, and color, to the inner workings of influence, and the final product of moving art. One hundred and three black and white photographs are a welcome contribution.

Readers and film enthusiasts will meet the minds of such greats as Janusz Kaminski, Robert Altman, Nora Ephron, Jack Lemmon, Sidney Poitier, John Sayles, and Gregory Peck, amongst other profound artists. This is a fascinating read, a mammoth of an adventure.

Reviewed by Sky Sanchez-Fischer

## Fat, Drunk, and Stupid: The Inside Story Behind the Making of Animal House

By Matty Simmons

St. Martin's Press, \$25.99, 218 pages, Format: Hard

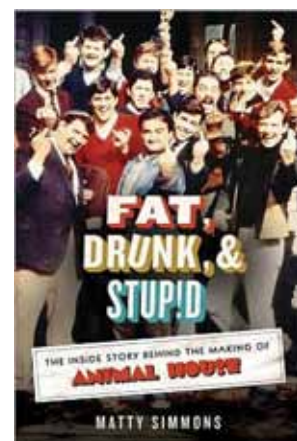
★★★★★

Animal House is iconic. The first great college comedy—and arguably the best—it changed campus culture, National Lampoon, and the comedy genre forever. And Matty Simmons, founder of National Lampoon, was there for every second of it, from its birth to its ascension into legend.

*Fat, Drunk, and Stupid* chronicles the launch and growth of National Lampoon, the film's gestation, and the unexpected aftermath of its success, both for National Lampoon and for the numerous attempted sequels and TV spinoffs of Animal House. Balancing warm nostalgia and honest first-hand reporting of events, Simmons manages to cover a lot of territory in two hundred pages, even concluding the book (quite appropriately) with a where-are-they-now for the cast and writers.

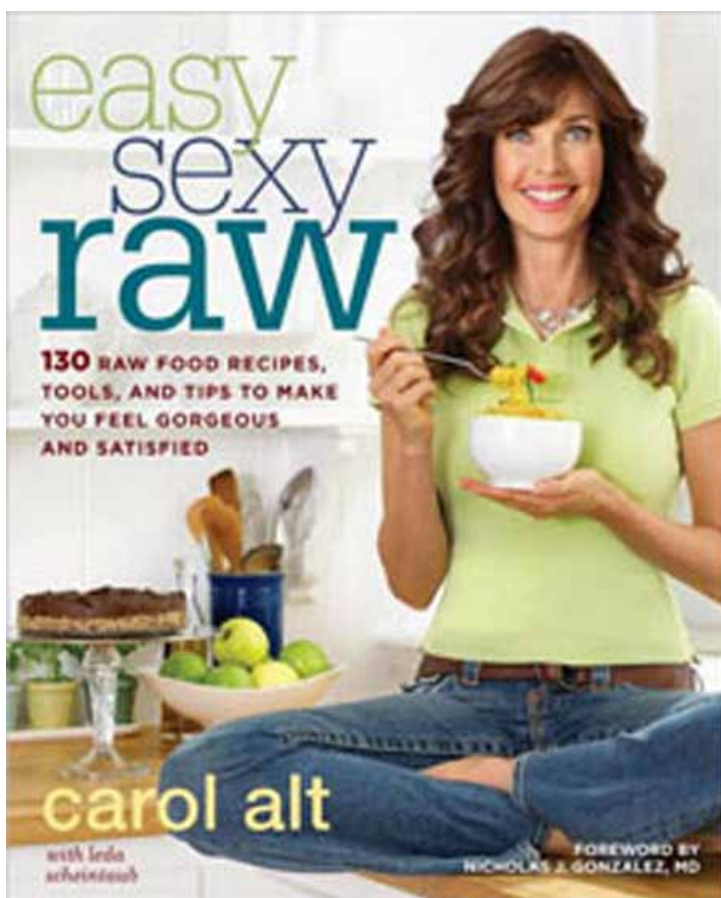
Oddly enough, the actual filming of the movie gets the shortest coverage in the book, and in the end, *Fat, Drunk, and Stupid* feels a bit truncated. (That's probably an unavoidable consequence of wanting to spend more time with the characters and actors, though). However, these are the moments that meant the most to Matty Simmons, and they're richly explored with snippets from the cast and two photo inserts. It's a fitting tribute to a true classic.

Reviewed by Glenn Dallas



Category

# Cooking, Food & Wine



## Easy Sexy Raw: 130 Raw Food Recipes, Tools, and Tips to Make You Feel Gorgeous and Satisfied

By Carol Alt

Clarkson Potter, \$18.99, 256 pages, Format: Trade

★★★★★

Certainly not for everyone, but if you are convinced that eating raw foods is your thing, *Easy Sexy Raw* is a “cook-book” you must have on your shelf. Your food budget will also need to be seriously enlarged as most recipe ingredi-

ents are costly. This is not a vegetarian or vegan cookbook, as Carol Alt includes a few options with beef, pork, and fish (raw, cured, or marinated). The nine page introduction and thirty-three page informative section educate you on just what raw foods are and how to deal with them, including a list and discussion of ingredients and a shopping list for the raw kitchen.

In this cookbook, raw means uncooked, unprocessed, unroasted, unpasteurized and un-canned. If this is for you, your kitchen work is drastically changed. You may heat your creation (i.e. hot soup) up to 110°F and still consider it raw. The three primary kitchen equipment pieces are a blender, juicer, and dehydrator.

The index is excellent and well cross-referenced. Many useful tables are also included, such as a soaking and sprouting chart, tips to turn recipes or restaurant foods from cooked to raw, a list of basic raw foods, menu ideas, and a swapping list.

Reviewed by George Erdosh

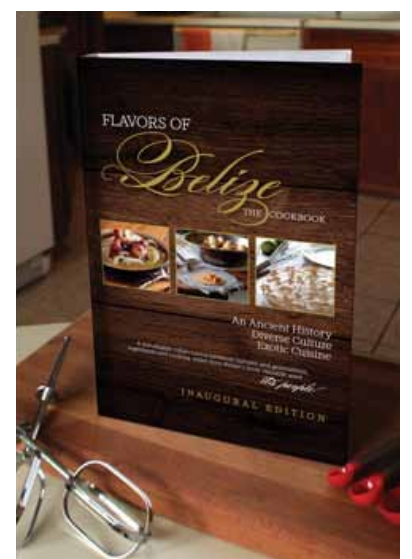
## Flavors of Belize: The Cookbook

By Tanya McNab and Shelley Brown Sonesifer, Wayne and Carla McNab, Matt Armendarix, Adam C. Pearson

McNab Publishing, \$39.95, 144 pages, Format: Hard

★★

Having ten diverse cultures, the cooking of Belize reflects the foods of each culture, and *Flavors of Belize: The Cookbook* offers a collection of recipes from every one of these. The recipes come from a magazine, “Flavors of Belize,” by the same authors, as well as from several local chefs. The cookbook reads like an international recipe book, yet many of the recipes you are likely to find on your cookbook shelf (hummus, kibbeh, lobster thermidor, pesto, tandoori chicken, lemon pie, and so on). The chapters are organized according to the courses of a meal, and recipes listed in alphabetic order precede





each chapter. The many full-page color-photo illustrations are beautiful and add to this cookbook. The recipes are not hard to follow, though ingredients are not listed logically (two cups carrots, diced; two cups pineapple, diced; one cup onion, diced). Many ingredients are local and no substitutes are given (smoked banana leaves, salsa casera, hibiscus petals, cow feet, pig tail, and Lisette's Secret Sauce). Some errors also slipped in (e.g., no lemon in lemon pie). A brief history of the local culture is a nice addition. Index is simply an alphabetic listing of recipes and not cross-referenced.

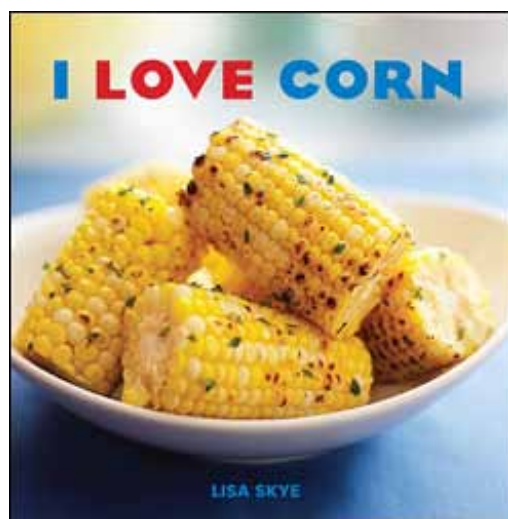
Reviewed by George Erdosh

### I Love Corn

By Lisa Skye

Andrews McMeel Publishing, \$19.99, 142 pages,  
Format: Hard

★★



Cookbooks that present recipes contributed from many sources rarely work for most home cooks. *I Love Corn* falls into that category. Lisa Skye collected recipes from chefs, restaurateurs, and other food professionals, and organized them in six categories: breakfast,

soups, starters, mains, sides, and sweets. Corn is the common ingredient in all, though in many cases the corn is in the form of cornmeal (corn muffins, cornbread, polenta, cornmeal cake, corn tortilla) and even as popcorn. Most recipes you are likely to find in your cookbook collection and some look interesting enough to try. Coming mostly from chefs, both techniques and ingredients are in the professional arena in many recipes. Ingredients such as Maggi sauce, truffle salt, truffle butter, Beluga lentils, Mexican sour cream, duck eggs, and baby onions will be a challenge to find. Serving sizes are not uniform and often erroneous (Fifteen ears of corn for four servings?). Recipes are well written and easy to follow, but

many are difficult, asking you to assemble several separate preparations. Layout is poor, with many recipes continuing overleaf. Nice color photos illustrate this small-format, hardcover cookbook. A fifteen-page, contributors' biographies section appears to be simply filler. Index is weak and poorly cross-referenced.

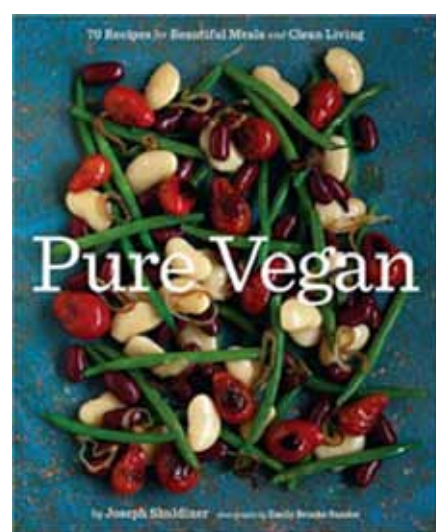
Reviewed by George Erdosh

### Pure Vegan

By Joseph Shuldiner

Chronicle Books, \$29.95, 224 pages, Format: Hard

★★★★



Who says that all vegan food is for health nuts? Certainly not Joseph Shuldiner, a graphic designer with a love of delicious plant-based foods and author of a new cookbook, *Pure Vegan*. As the inside cover declares, "this is vegan like you've never seen it before." There are no politics to be found here, no ethics; this cookbook doesn't even

follow the standard layout of recipes organized by category. Instead of entrees or desserts, recipes are sorted by time of day, and even that is not hard and fast. Shuldiner includes all kinds of cookery here, from main courses to salads to snacks to drinks; who wouldn't love a vegan cocktail? Morning dishes include French Toast with Cardamom Pear Compote and Savory Breakfast Tarts. In the afternoon, you might feast on Roasted Pepper Involtni or Pistachio Olive Oil Cake. Evening fare might be Celery Root and Fennel Chowder or Poblano Chiles Rellenos. If it's late at night, or very late at night, you might indulge in Chocolate-Tahinkini Timbales with a Lavender-Tangerine Martini, or a Charoset Tart with a Shiso Leaf Martini. These recipes are not for the faint of heart, and they're certainly not for the home cook on a budget. But with such delicious sounding recipes and enticingly beautiful photos, there's surely something in *Pure Vegan* to tempt everyone!

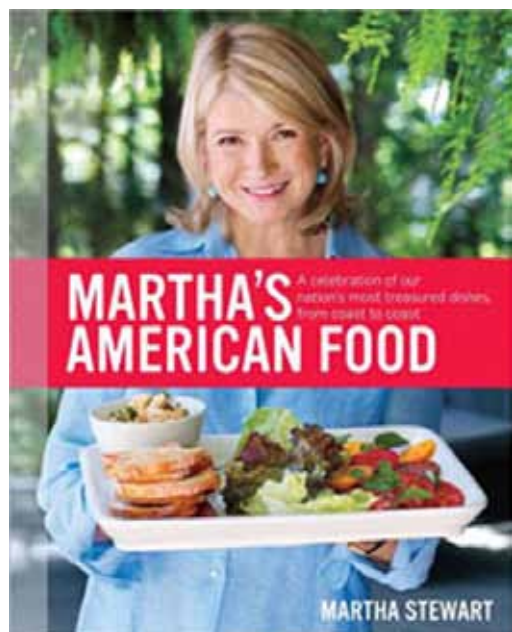
Reviewed by Holly Scudero

**Martha's American Food: A Celebration of Our Nation's Most Treasured Dishes, from Coast to Coast***By Martha Stewart*

Clarkson Potter, \$40.00, 431 pages, Format: Hard

★★★★★

What comes to mind when one thinks of American food? Burger and fries, perhaps? Martha Stewart helps remind us that our country's culinary heritage is far deeper than



that. In her spectacular new cookbook *Martha's American Food: A Celebration of Our Nation's Most Treasured Dishes, From Coast to Coast*, Stewart selects the best dishes from each geographic region and presents them in mouth-watering, leap-off-the-page photos that beg to be taste-tested immediately.

Paging through these 200 taste-ful recipes, I simply could not wait to create them in my own kitchen. All American meatloaf and chicken pot pies feel like a warm grandmother's embrace and bring back happy feelings of nostalgia. Next, journey across the country and experience the best it has to offer. New England Clam Chowder, Corn Beef and Cabbage, and Philadelphia Cheesesteak immerse us in the feel of the Northeast. Oyster Po' Boys, Cheese Straws, and North Carolina Pulled Pork Sandwiches scream sunshine and Southern sweet tea. You'll feel like you're in the Southwest with your bowl of Southwestern Corn Chowder. Not only are the recipes amazing, but the regional information and back stories are fun and educational, too.

This is one cookbook that will hold a proud spot on my bookshelf for years to come. Open its beautiful pages and you'll feel like you're walking into Grandma's kitchen. American food has more distinctive flavors and amazing combinations than you ever imagined.

Reviewed by Jennifer Melville

**Cook, Eat, Thrive: Vegan Recipes from Everyday to Exotic***By Joy Tienzo*

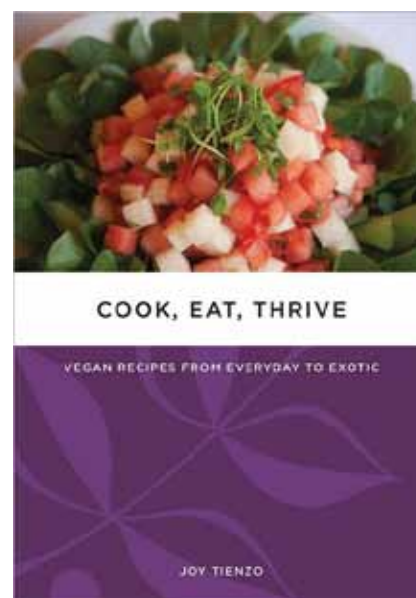
Tofu Hound Press, \$17.95, 237 pages, Format: Trade

★★★★★

This is a simple, basic, yet excellent vegan cookbook without unnecessary fluff and filling, not even illustrations. Though the book production is almost austere, author Tienzo draws from a wide-ranging international repertoire, providing reasonably simple recipes using available ingredients. The beginner vegan cook should have no difficulty with most of the recipes.

The twelve-page introduction provides everything a vegan cook needs to know: ingredients, equipment, terminology. Tienzo labels the recipes with several or all of six symbols, whichever apply: raw, low fat, soy-free, wheat-free, tasty for all, and quick-fix. Head notes are brief and informative; sidebars are equally good. Several tables provide information such as spice rubs, infusing oils, or a guide to grains. One table gives extensive menu lists for all occasions (e.g., kid-friendly dinner, poker night, vegan wedding fare). Book organization is very good with color tabs separating chapters to help the cook find them quickly. Layout of recipes is excellent, all on single pages to be cook-friendly. To give the pages some color, the black text is interspersed with purple text. The dessert section is extensive ("This is the largest section of the book, and that's no accident"). The well cross-referenced index is also excellent.

Reviewed by George Erdosh





# ALpHaBeT SoUp

by holly ScUdeRo

## French Toast: A Personal Revelation



To say my mama doesn't like French toast would be a bit of an understatement. It's not like she hates it with a passion or anything. One could say she strongly dislikes it. With a passion.

Suffice to say, French toast is not my mama's cup of tea.

The reason why can be traced back to an unpleasant childhood memory. I can't remember the specifics, but I know it involved a camping trip, rainy weather, and French toast that was overly-drenched in the batter and then undercooked over a campfire. The resulting breakfast entree wasn't just soggy; my understanding was that extra batter oozed from it upon being cut. Notably, French toast is traditionally made with egg, which leaves one wondering about what the possibility of salmonella or other food-borne illnesses.

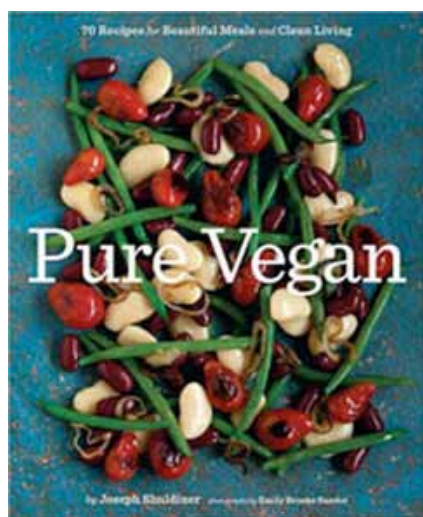
Of course, this could have been an exaggeration on my mama's part but, impressionable child that I was, it still had a profound effect on my opinion of this breakfast favorite. My mama never cooked it, and the few times I ever tried it in a restaurant where understandably colored by this legendary family tale. I steadfastly refused to eat French toast at friends' houses, I shunned frozen boxes of French toast in grocery stores, and I spent years fervently believing that French toast was, in a word, gross.

So it was with great trepidation that I made the decision to try making French toast on my own. My husband loves it but, due to my general dislike of eggs and my refusal to cook it at home, he only ever ate it at the occasional break-

fast out. But for Father's Day this year, our first year celebrating it with our then four-month-old son, I had decided to venture into the kitchen and make something yummy for him.

But what to make? Pancakes? We make pancakes all the time, and he loves them, but they're not special enough. Breakfast sandwiches? Ooh, I could make English muffins, hit the farmers' market for some fresh eggs, and buy some artisan cheese, and... never mind, way too complicated. Breakfast scramble? Maybe, but would I even have time to chop up all of those veggies?

[Click cover to read our review.](#)



Finally, I remembered a cookbook I had just finished perusing *Pure Vegan*, by Joseph Shulkiner. One of the recipes in it had caught my attention and merited a bookmark for future consideration. That recipe was French Toast with Cardamom Pear Compote. Of course, making the compote was out of the question; I didn't have the ingredients or willpower to make it. I didn't have the time, either; with such a small baby, it was a bit of a miracle when I got to cook anything at all.

But the French toast itself? That I could do.

And you know what? It was amazing! It was so unbelievably good that I could hardly believe I had avoided it for my entire life. This recipe (the French toast part, anyway) is definitely being added to my collection of personal favorites.

## French Toast with Cardamom Pear Compote

From *Pure Vegan* by Joseph Shuldiner

### Compote:

2 pears, peeled & cored  
⅓ c maple syrup  
grated zest of ½ lemon  
1 tbsp fresh lemon juice  
½ tsp ground cardamom

### French Toast:

1 cup all-purpose flour  
1 tsp ground cinnamon  
½ tsp salt  
1¼ c soymilk  
1 tbsp maple syrup, plus more for drizzling  
1 tsp pure vanilla extract  
1-2 tbsp canola oil or soy margarine  
6-8 slices rustic bread  
powdered sugar for dusting

To make the compote: Cut the pears into ½-inch dice. Put them in a small saucepan over medium-high heat; add the maple syrup, lemon zest, lemon juice, and cardamom; and bring to a simmer. Lower the heat and simmer, stirring occasionally, until the mixture is thick and syrupy, 10 to 20 minutes. Remove from the heat and cover to keep warm. (If you make the compote in advance, reheat before serving.)

To make the French toast: In a medium bowl, combine the flour, cinnamon, and salt and blend with a whisk. Add the soymilk, maple syrup, and vanilla and whisk just until smooth and free of lumps.

In a large skillet, heat 1 tablespoon of the canola oil over medium-high heat until a drop of water sizzles when added to the pan. Dip several slices of the bread (however many will fit in the skillet without touching) in the batter and fry until golden brown on the first side, 1 to 2 minutes. Turn and fry the second side until golden brown. Repeat with the remaining bread, adding more oil as necessary. Serve with the pear compote and a dusting of powdered sugar. Drizzle with additional maple syrup if desired. Serves 6 to 8.

**Holly's Notes:** The author suggests using homemade bread; specifically, he recommends the recipe for Twenty-One-Hour Boule, found elsewhere in *Pure Vegan*. Since I'm not cool enough to make my own bread for recipes like this (or rather, because having a baby leaves me no time for things like kneading dough), I instead chose to use a soft-crusted French baguette from the bakery section of my local grocery store. We sliced it pretty thick, and it was delicious! Definitely spring for real maple syrup for a recipe like this; sugar-laden "table syrup" can't hold a candle to the real thing. I think this recipe is great because, like so many vegan recipes, it uses ingredients that I pretty much always have on hand. (I very rarely have eggs, since I don't really like them that much.) And, like so many vegan recipes, it can easily be non-veganized for the omnivore. I'd be willing to bet that the recipe would come out just fine with the use of regular milk in place of the soymilk.

As I said earlier, I did not make the compote, but I'm including it here, because it was part of the original recipe. The French toast itself was fabulous, and it made a believer out of me. This recipe is a keeper!

## About Holly Scudero

Holly Scudero lives in San Diego, California, with her husband, baby, and cat. She has been writing for SBR/SFBR since December 2008. She's a stay-at-home mama who loves to cook vegetarian and vegan meals, when she has enough time to cook anything at all! When not playing with her son, reading, doing copy editing, writing book reviews, or writing other things, Holly spends her time cooking, knitting, playing video games, watching her husband play video games, or listening to music.



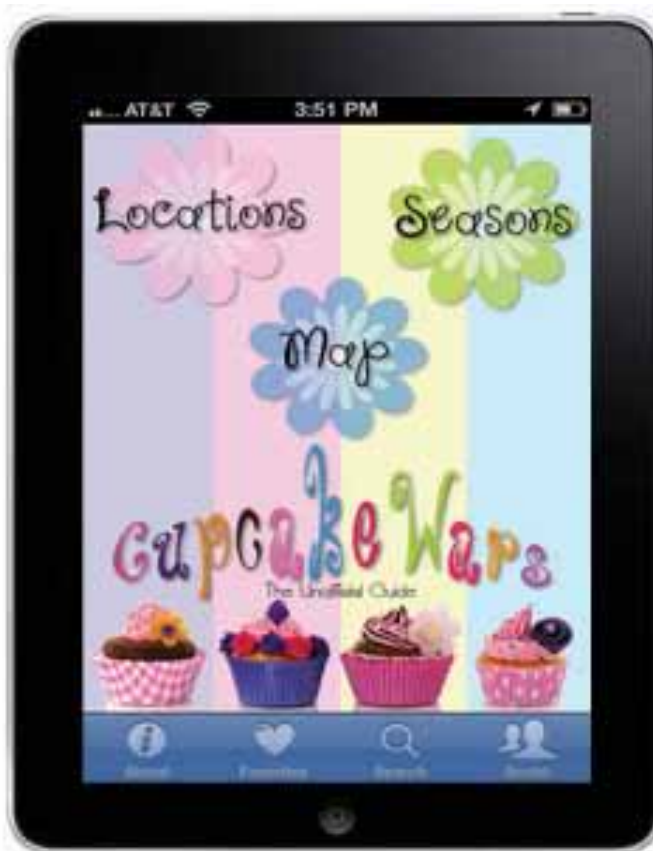




fan?

# Love Cupcake Wars?

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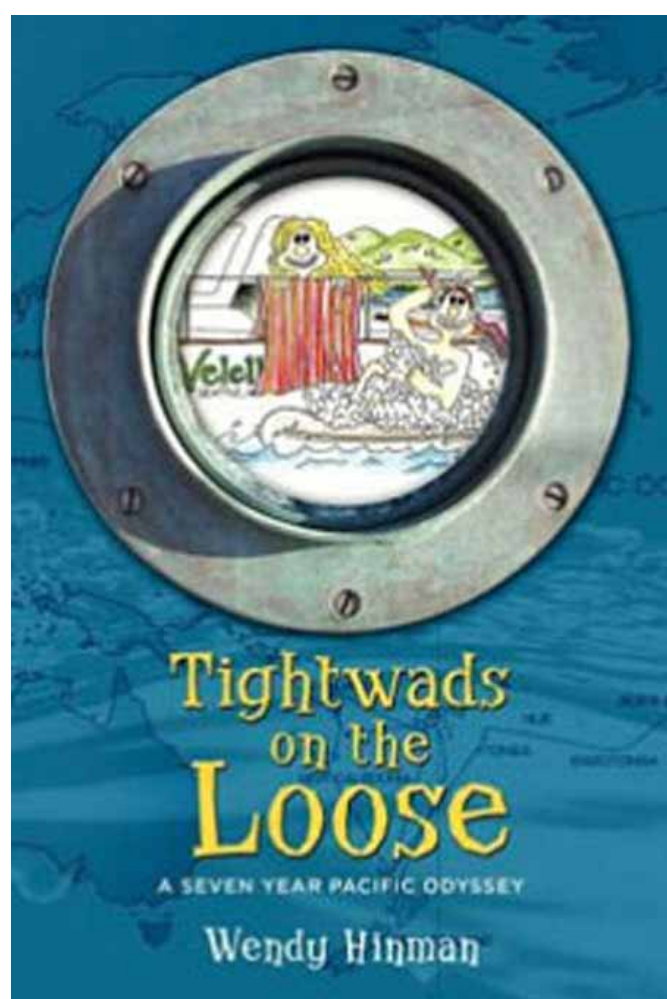
coming to Google Play  
very soon (promise!)

GoLocalapps



Category

# Travel



## **Tightwads on The Loose: A Seven Year Pacific Odyssey**

By Wendy Hinman

Salsa Press, \$14.95, 374 pages, Format: Trade

★★★★

Wendy Hinman and naval architect husband, Garth, sail across the Pacific from Seattle because, well, just because they want to. Experienced yachties, they set out on a very tight budget (The Tightwads) in the 31-foot Velella, with no particular destination in mind, leading to a 35,000-mile wander for seven years.

Learning Pidgin English in Vanuatu, the tea ceremony in Japan, dodging corruption in the Philippines and watching helplessly as an albatross dies, becalmed for days in the middle of the ocean, almost being crushed by a behemoth of a container ship. They get into some tough scrapes, but their yin and yang, self-control, and, more importantly, sense of humor, see them through. A sharp contrast to the whining, sozzled yacht cruisers and expatriates infesting marina bars around the world, their boredom vents itself in silly personal feuds.

Wendy and Garth spend two years on the island of Kwajalein, in the Marshall Islands – a speck of no interest, which hardly anyone has heard of, except that it's a U.S. Army base with no seeming purpose. Thousands of government contractors idle the time away propped up by tax dollars. The Tightwads get jobs because they've run out of money and need to overhaul the Velella. Their earnings go to, wait for it, building a trailer big enough to lift the boat. A military base on an island without an essential piece of equipment.

The return to the U.S. is bewildering, as they view the hurried, consumer society with fresh eyes. To borrow from Robert Heinlein – strangers in a strange land.

A light-hearted tone and unaffected style make this an entertaining tale and almost a love story. When I go sailing, I know who I want as shipmates.

Sponsored Review

## **Travel Unscripted**

By Mark Murphy

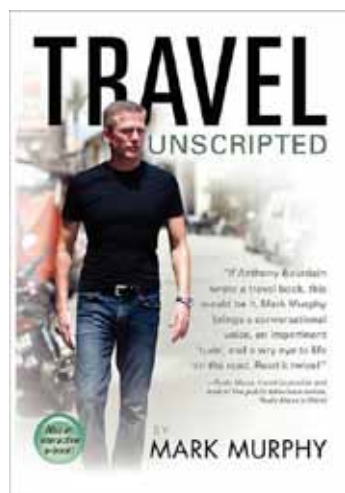
Highpoint Executive Publishing, \$24.95, 288 pages,

Format: Hard

★★★★★

Whether he's being peppered with fireworks, subjected to squirming insectoid cuisine, or experiencing an involuntary mud massage in the Dead Sea from an enthusiastic woman, Mark Murphy is unflappable in his excitement and interest. His love of travel and his willingness to see the world at a moment's notice made Agent@Home and Vacation Agent magazines a success, and the TravelPulse.com website one of the earliest adopters of video content in its field.





*Travel Unscripted* chronicles the trials and tribulations of his career, peppered with anecdotes and insights galore about both their improvised film process and the quirks involved in obtaining that footage in some of the most beautiful and foreign places on Earth.

From his childlike wonder at the marvels of Japanese toiletry to his grotesque and hi-larious description of StinkyTofu, Murphy provides a friendly and personable voice, offering a playful counterpoint to the detailed recaps of his many adventures overseas. And despite the lovely photography and far-flung locales, it's Murphy that sells the book, and he does so with a winsome smile and a mischievous twinkle in his eye.

While the frustrations of travel and interaction with overly-involved officials are mentioned, they don't bog down the book; instead, Murphy focuses on the on-the-fly solutions he and his crew conjure, as well as the weird and wonderful moments that make each trip memorable. (His quest to find a talking sheep in order to fulfill a promise made to his daughter was probably my favorite anecdote of the entire book, not a choice so easily winnowed-down.)

Complete with video links for all of the adventures he describes -- embedded in the eBook version! -- *Travel Unscripted* deftly straddles the fence between personal travelogue and guidebook to the countries that made these adventures so noteworthy.

In short, *Travel Unscripted* is a love letter to travel and a thoroughly enjoyable read.

Sponsored Review

## Category

# Business & Investing

### Fourth Branch-Money Trail

By Daniel Shine Kim

outskirts press, \$3.00, 207 KB, Format: eBook

★★★★

For a long time, the fourth branch of government has been an independent media, reporting on corruption, conflicts of interest, and criminal violations, but usually reporting after-the-fact, and after the damage was done. Author Kim postulates creating a new fourth branch of government that handles all financial transactions in a clear and transparent way, and reporting them all on the Internet for viewing by everyone. While that may seem an extreme solution, the last few years of scandal and scams, not to mention the rise of anonymous donor-funded super-PACs influencing American elections calls for something different than business-as-usual.



Kim uses examples mostly from the U.S., China, and Korea in the book to illustrate problems that have happened and how greater transparency could have prevented them sooner, before hundreds of millions, if not billions, were misappropriated, stolen or lost. Kim also explores the relationship the trust citizens have of their government to the success of democracy and how increasing the ability of citizens to know what is actually happening with their money (tax, investment, and general funds) increases the stability of the government. Additionally, Kim covers potential improvements to the social safety net, health care, and education--all of which he suggests major overhaul to existing institutions to make them more efficient or cost-effective.

Much of *Fourth Branch-Money Trail* reads like a dissertation, not overly academic, but filled with theory and ideas never yet tried outside of a classroom. Kim's writing style is clear and easy to read, though in places could have used another round of copy editing. He should have included an index and better references to events and facts he discusses. But even after all consideration of the concept, one phrase comes to mind - "Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?" or "Who watches the watchmen?"

Sponsored Review

# How Book Shepherds Can Help Authors

By Scott Lorenz, Westwind Communications



**I** recommend authors look into hiring a book shepherd for a current or upcoming writing and publishing project. A book shepherd is someone whose expertise in books and publishing will help you throughout the entire book process. From cover art, editing, dealing with Amazon to locating a printer, a book shepherd will assist you from start to finish.

I am a proponent of using a book shepherd because there are so many things to know about in the book publishing process and so much is swiftly changing its extremely difficult to keep up with it all. It takes a person with experience to guide you along the way and that's what a book shepherd does. Hiring a guide is a concept that's been working for humankind for thousands of years. If you were going to a foreign land and wanted to see and do as much as you could would you read a guide book or hire someone to show you? Consider yourself fortunate if you can afford a book shepherd as it is well worth the money spent.

Dan Poynter recently compiled a comprehensive list of book shepherds. At the top of his list is Shel Horowitz who explains his role: "Basically, I walk unpublished writers through the process of becoming well-published authors. I start by helping them determine if they should publish traditionally, self-publish, or subsidy publish—and then help them complete all the steps for their choice, then work with them on the marketing as the book nears completion."

Tanya Hall is a unique book shepherd in that she works for a national publisher/distributor. "So instead of working in a vacuum without any up-to-the-minute feedback

on trends, pitches, etc like most book shepherds operate, I have the luxury of a sales force and team of experts behind me to guide the direction I give to my clients. Most of our clients "in development" go through an editorial project development phase, followed by any number of services ranging from design to printing to (if accepted for publication/distribution by our review committee) distribution and marketing." For more information, visit her **website**.

Bobbie Christmas explains that her book shepherding style is rooted in an editing background. "After twenty years of editing magazines, newspapers, and corporate communications, I opened Zebra Communications in 1992 and specialized in editing books. As self-publishing grew and became an excellent way for consultants and other entrepreneurs to promote themselves and their businesses, I heard horror stories about otherwise intelligent people who made terrible decisions that cost them money and time and in the end often embarrassed them, rather than helping them get their books out to the public. I realized my clients needed more than editorial services, so I added book shepherding to my offerings." Bobbie's **website**.

Mike Ball, award winning syndicated columnist and author of three books, offers unique assistance to new authors from his position on the front lines of the publish-





ing wars. “Hey, it can be complicated, time consuming and downright confusing,” says Ball. “I just helped out an elderly author who got completely flummoxed by the forms Amazon threw at him. I understand it can be a daunting task for anyone. That’s why I am happy to assist for a reasonable hourly fee.” Find Mike at [writeittight.com](http://writeittight.com) or call him at 313-405-7664.

Simon Warwick-Smith of [warwickassociates.net](http://warwickassociates.net) says, “We are a one-stop shop, from cover and interior design to physical printing, and eBooks, to sales, marketing and publicity. Been in business for 20 years with a long list of satisfied clients”

Rita Mills says, “I don’t much care for the term ‘book shepherd’ as I feel what I do is more like herding cats than docile sheep. People come to me with either an idea or a manuscript and I project manage the process and assign a freelancer for an ala carte service as needed. Some just come to me with a manuscript that needs editing so they can take it to a traditional publisher, and some want me to take on the whole project from manuscript to marketing. I work with 30+ freelancers (some of whom I have worked with over 20 years) who do all kinds of editing, design, PR, marketing, indexing, ghostwriting, grant writing, etc. I know my people’s skill set and can assign the individual with the specific genre/skills needed. For instance, someone who might be good at editing a nonfiction title might not be good with a fiction title or a children’s book. I also specialize in children’s picture books and I have portfolios on upwards of 300 illustrators. I have packaged roughly 450 titles since my years as the managing editor of an academic press at the University of Houston. I left there in 1997 to start my company, The Book Connection. My projects have ranged from back-of-the-room sales to high-end coffee table books. I am also a print broker, and print worldwide depending upon the need and goals involved in a project” For further information on Rita and her services, please visit her **website**.

Linda F. Radke of Five Star Publications explains, “At Five Star Publications we have specialized in producing and marketing books since 1985. Our talented staff of editors, writers, illustrators, graphic designers, and publicity specialists is available to help with every aspect of publishing and promoting your book. Utilizing a network

of experts in every aspect of publishing and publicity, Five Star Publications works closely with you every step of the way. Call us as soon as you start writing your book or at any point during the process of producing and promoting your book. We provide all the services, guidance, and ongoing support you need to successfully master every aspect of the publishing process. Once you contact us, we’ll be pleased to provide a proposal tailored to your specific project. Since every project is different in scope and needs, your time frames and costs will be handled on an individual basis.”

**The Bottom Line:** If you can afford to spend a few hundred to a few thousand dollars on a book shepherd, I highly suggest you do so as it will help save your sanity! There are so many exciting changes in the book publishing business it’s practically impossible to keep up with them all. The book shepherd will help you through the entire process or just a piece of the process where you need it.

Check out this **audio interview** about book shepherds I did with Clark Covington.

### About Book Publicist Scott Lorenz

Scott Lorenz is President of Westwind Communications, a public relations and marketing firm that has a special knack for working with authors to help them get all the publicity they deserve and more. Lorenz works with bestselling authors and self-published authors promoting all



types of books, whether it’s their first book or their 15th book. He’s handled publicity for books by CEOs, CIA Officers, Navy SEALs, Homemakers, Fitness Gurus, Doctors, Lawyers and Adventurers. His clients have been featured by Good Morning America, FOX & Friends, CNN, ABC News, New York Times, Nightline, TIME, PBS, LA Times, USA Today, Washington Post, Woman’s World, & Howard Stern to name a few.

**Learn more** about Westwind Communications’ book marketing approach at or **contact** Lorenz at or by phone at 734-667-2090. Follow Lorenz on **Twitter**.

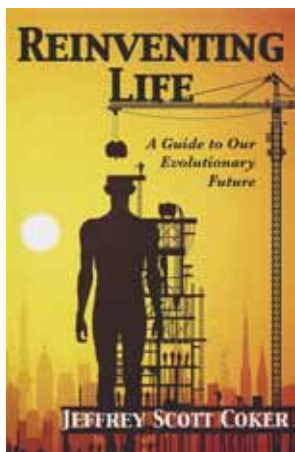
## Category Science & Nature

### Reinventing Life: A Guide to Our Evolutionary Future

By Jeffrey Scott Coker

*The Blue Helix*, \$9.99, 225 pages, Format: eBook

★★★★



Jeffrey Scott Coker's *Reinventing Life* would be the textbook for an introductory course on Humanity's Near Future. Coker's book begins by laying out the facts of evolution and Humanity's complete dominance of over the Earth. Coker argues that these two facts make Human's not only responsible for what the world will look like in the future, but must take our role as stewards of

the Earth and the diversity of life on it. His arguments are concise, readable, and convincing; despite having an academic background, his presentation is tailored to the laymen without sacrificing detail or complexity. After laying down this foundation, Coker covers the primary ways in which humans are directing evolution and life on earth: ecological change; cellular change; genetic change; and, finally, creating digital life.

*Reinventing Life* doesn't pull punches when it comes to the changes Man is making to life, Coker is up-front with the vast amount of change and damage humans have done, and are doing, to Life and he doesn't offer easy answers for these dilemmas, because there aren't easy ones. He lets the reader know what will happen if nothing changes and what the future could be if we do change. For better or worse, his honesty in this matter, and his refusal to reassure the reader, is refreshing on topics that usually are too often

sugar-coated. Coker isn't a pessimist, though he knows, and shares with the reader, all the exciting and wonderful ways Humanity's ascendent control over the mechanism of evolution and Life itself can not only make homo sapiens' lives better, but all living things' lives better.

Sponsored Review

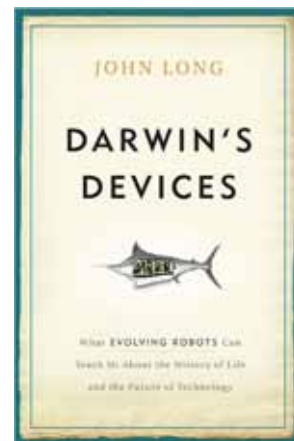
### Darwin's Devices: What Evolving Robots Can Teach Us About the History of Life and the Future of Technology

By John Long

*Basic Books*, \$26.99, 288 pages, Format: Hard

★★★★★

A century ago, many scholars still doubted Darwinian evolution. A few brave thinkers considered even more radical interpretations of earthly existence. Now, many tread on the very fabric of sentience. Long discusses robotically engineered "evolvabots," inviting readers to toe the fine line between science and science fiction. By endeavoring to understand how robots might work, we're realizing what sentience means biologically. Long is trying to figure it out, and he's on the right track.



Long, a biorobotics expert and Vassar biology professor, is a longtime expert on robotics. He and his colleagues pioneered the emerging field of evolution biorobotics. He runs research programs to design, construct, and evolve biorobots. His two "pet" robots, Madeleine and Tadros, have been featured in *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*. Long has also taught evolution on The Discovery Channel and The History Channel.

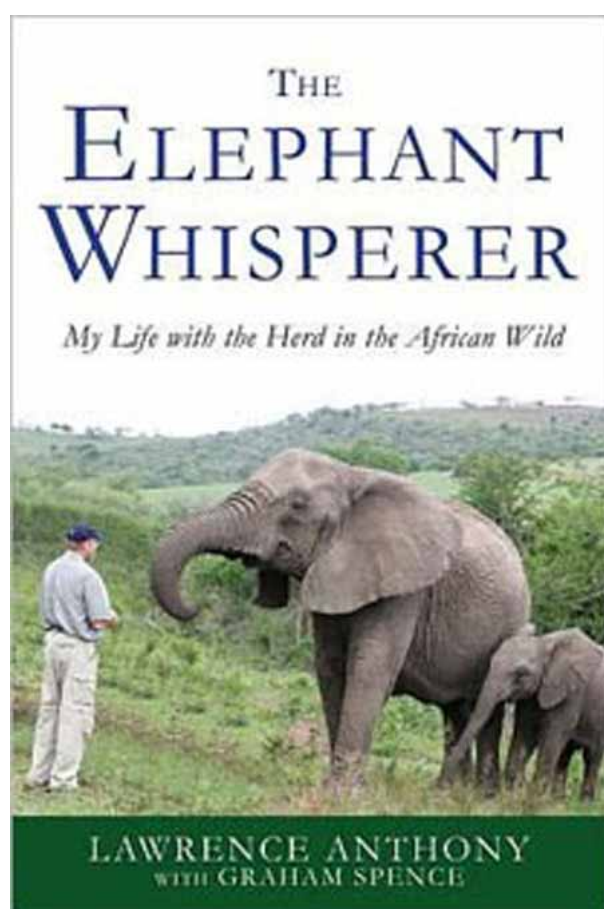
The book's contents are a rich world seldom seen in science. Albeit a little scary, robotics is here to stay and Long is a driving force behind it. Long's eye-opening work may explain the behavior of extinct species and pave the way for the future. We can glean insight into evolution by "letting robots play the game of life." The book is invaluable, readable, and intellectually stimulating.

Reviewed by D. Wayne Dworsky



Category

# Biographies & Memoirs



## The Elephant Whisperer: My Life with the Herd in the African Wild

By Lawrence Anthony, Graham Spence

Thomas Dunne Books, \$16.99, 368 pages, Format: Trade

★★★★★

The telephone call was a plea rather than an invitation: Would you be willing to take a herd of wild elephants? While most of us would assume it was a crank call, conser-

vationist Lawrence Anthony, who ran a wild animal refuge in Zululand, recognized the caller's desperation. He heard himself assent and some days later, with a lot of pushing and shoving, seven potentially killer elephants were harbored in a hastily made barricade.

*The Elephant Whisperer* is every bit as much a page-turner as a novel. Co-author author Graham Spence undoubtedly deserves some credit for the book's spirited tone.

The elephants' acceptance of their new owner deepens into affection. But he, hesitant to appear anything other than down to earth, took a little time before admitting the great creatures followed his travel movements through a humanly unintelligible bush telegraph. Their awareness that he had missed a flight back from Johannesburg, and then came to welcome him home on a subsequent flight, confirmed his acceptance of their intelligence.

Anyone who remembers *Born Free*, a personal story of tamed East African lions, will hope this book, too, is destined for the screen.

Reviewed by Jane Manaster

## Schooled

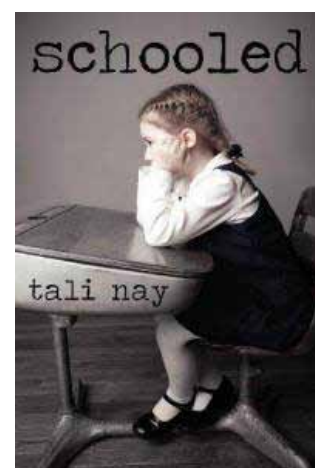
By Tali Nay

Corner Chapter Press, \$13.50, 245 pages, Format: Trade

★★★★★

What is your earliest memory of school? Most likely, it involves something embarrassing or disgusting... or both. "[The] inevitable thing about the concept of school is that eventually someone will throw up." Veritas!

A collection of short-shorts, this memoir glimpses at things about which we've forgotten and those we have tried to forget. *Schooled* travels chronologically from kindergarten to graduate school, bringing the author's recollections to life in passages that are each much too fun to be contained in a handful of paragraphs. Along with Nay, we feel left out at recess, vindicated after acing our reports, and wildly free on the LAST last day of school.



Nay hits all the coming-of-age rites right on the nose: spelling bees, drivers education, and first kisses. “Kissing is one of those things that seem self-explanatory yet can be totally messed up if you don’t know what you’re doing. Like sex. Or pumping gas.”

Funny, yet still matter-of-fact, Nay re-navigates her school years with both abashed hindsight and a sense of pride. After all, she may not have made varsity basketball, but she survived (and thrived in!) the educational system and lived to tell the tale.

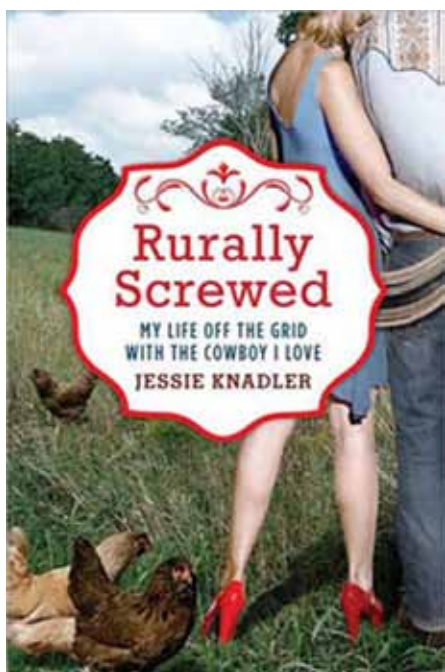
Sponsored Review

### Rurally Screwed: My Life Off the Grid with the Cowboy I Love

By Jessie Knadler

Berkley, \$24.95, 324 pages, Format: Hard

★★★★★



Quirky, laugh-out-loud funny, poignant, passionate, new beginnings, and chickens all describe *Rurally Screwed: My Life off the Grid with the Cowboy I Love* by Jessie Knadler. It’s a classic fairy tale: New York magazine editor gives up her flagging career and Kundalini yoga to marry a twenty-five-year-old bull rider she met at the annual bucking horse sale in the badlands of Montana. Whereupon her

hard partying, Manhattan lifestyle turns to chopping firewood, sewing, canning, and raising chickens in Virginia, all the while wondering “What the... did I do?”

When getting swept off her feet by a Garth Brooks-listening, gun-owning, Republican cowboy wears off and reality sets in, Knadler is left with reality with a workaholic husband who can get called off to war, leaving her with moonshine, Bible club, and a serious lack of decent Thai food.

*Rurally Screwed* is a great love story that carries on past “I Do” and “Happily Ever After.” It deals with relationships when the shiny newness wears off and the grim day-to-day

trials of love are left. The book is much the same as Knadler describes her wedding and marriage: energetic, individual, and a tiny bit nuts.

Reviewed by Axie Barclay

### Lots of Candles, Plenty of Cake

By Anna Quindlen

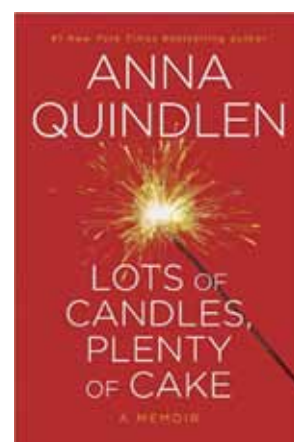
Random House, \$26.00, 182 pages, Format: Hard

★★★★★

New York Times bestselling author, Anna Quindlen has hit the mark again with her heartwarming and hilarious memoir on life, family, and aging in today’s world. Nothing – and I mean nothing – is off limits with Quindlen and she tackles every topic with equal wit, humor, and aplomb. Those, like myself, in their twenties might not relate to her musing on the peculiarities of the gaining process, but everyone is sure to enjoy her play on words. There’s a reason (or many, many reasons) why this woman is a best selling author: the way she weaves words into beautiful and captivating sentences is nothing short of incredible. As far as I’m concerned, she could have written a book on nuclear physics and it would still come off as wonderfully poetic.

At sixty years of age, Quindlen discusses the trials and joys of each passing year, takes on conventional myths about aging, and declares with admirable optimism her excitement over the years to come. While it’s no doubt that those of the older generations will garner more enjoyment (I can hear my mom laughing as she reads it now), all will find it a worthy read from a wonderful author.

Reviewed by Elizabeth Raymond



### Elizabeth: Learning to dress myself from the inside out

By Mary Elizabeth Moloney

Heart Whisperings, \$14.95, 283 pages, Format: Trade

★★★★★

More years of dream analysis would pass, as well as Mother’s debilitating stroke and death, before I could allow the “pythons” in that dream to bite me with their gifts. Mary





Elizabeth Moloney spills out an intriguing and absorbing tale of how she came to be, a woman unto her own. She tells of a life fettered by the most significant woman in her life, her mother. A mother who she feels has taken control of her and “dressed” her in her own image. The term “dressed” is both figurative and literal, and her story clearly supports this theme. Throughout, she outlines her journey

with chapters titled by apparel and the date which is pertinent to the time, from her First Holy Communion dress in 1943 to a red strapless tea gown in 1951 to the black knitted scarf which accompanied her time as a Sister in a noviceship and later an Aspirant. Each outfit has been chosen by her mother, as Elizabeth acquiesces to her, until there is a shift and Elizabeth begins to create an identity for herself, a life free from her mother’s ruling and full of her own dreams and limitless opportunities. Readers begin to witness a growth that is both rooted for and inspiring to the rest. As Elizabeth begins to “dress” herself, she comes alive and, with that, faces many struggles and challenges that accompany great transformation.

Through the excavation of her dreams and analytical dream-work with a Jungian philosopher, Elizabeth begins her real work of uncovering who she is without her mother’s supervision or approval.

Mary Elizabeth’s story is an intriguing read, there are many relatable themes and experiences that many women can certainly empathize with. There are some minor pronoun confusions, as far as the relationships of Mother (her true mother) and Mother Superior, when they are both responded to as the same. It works itself out but, at first was a little puzzling. This is a read worth the investment and just may encourage another to break from their tight-fitting duds and choose something more suited for themselves in the process.

Sponsored Review

## Shepherd Girl: A Dog Story

By Cat L. Needham

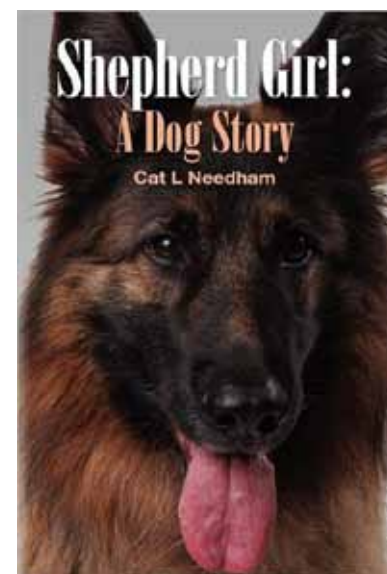
CreateSpace, \$14.99, 221 pages, Format: Trade

★ ★ ★

Cat Needham is in love. Head-over-heels, over the moon in love. I mean this girl’s got it bad. Only the object of her affection is a goofy, long-coated German Shepherd named Athena. Puppy love indeed! In Needham’s book *Shepherd Girl – A Dog Story*, she gushes and extols the virtues and oddities of her beloved pet.

Initially, Cat was smitten with a puppy she met at the Virginia German Shepherd Rescue Booth at the Chantilly, VA Super Pet Expo. But Sasha was adopted by someone else and Needham’s loss only solidified her resolve to possess a German Shepherd. Eventually she found the one that stole her heart. Named after the Goddess of Wisdom and War, Needham envisioned a real bad-a\*\* guard dog in Athena. Needham’s love for Athena is evident paragraph by paragraph, chapter after chapter, as she tells readers of the ups and downs of dog ownership. Boasting of Athena’s eccentricities as any dog lover does, with the affection any parent has for a child, you know how ga ga she is over this dog.

I enjoyed this book as an animal lover myself, but I felt that it ran a bit long at times. Anyone who’s ever owned a pet, whether a dog, cat, or cockatoo has a trove of stories they could share with others. We journey with Needham through Schutzhund training, being labeled a dog park bully, and most obviously being wrapped around Athena’s paw with manipulation, much like children manipulate their parents and grandparents. We even come to know several of Athena’s dog friends. This dog is doted on. And she’s a bit of an attention grabber. One might even go so far as to say she seeks adoration from everyone. Early on, Needham realized that Athena enjoyed “doing her private business” in front of an audience, the more people present, the better. Needham loves her dog, there’s no doubt. And her writing



is humorous and generous, and she willingly admits she's got it bad for Athena. If you are an animal lover, you'll enjoy this book. Because face it, we've all been gushy in love with our pets and we want to share that with others.

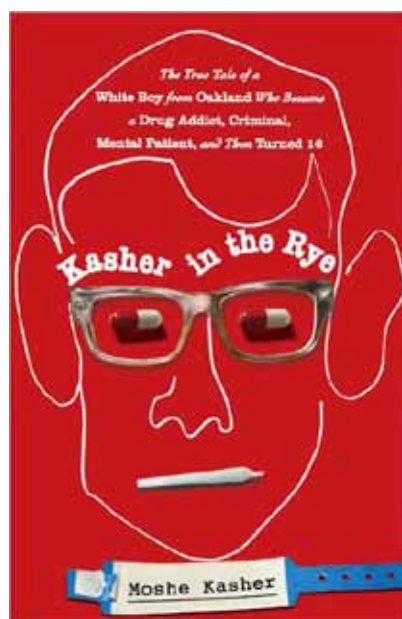
Sponsored Review

### **Kasher in the Rye: The True Tale of a White Boy from Oakland Who Became a Drug Addict, Criminal, Mental Patient, and Then Turned 16**

By Moshe Kasher

Grand Central Publishing, \$24.99, 300 pages, Format: Hard

★★★★



Moshe Kasher has penned a memoir that is equal parts heart breaking and inspirational. *Kasher In The Rye* is his attempt to make sense of – and shed – his demons while explaining how everything went so very wrong in his life. The result is simply jaw dropping.

Growing up in Oakland, CA, Moshe Kasher never quite fit in. A Jew in a Christian home. A white kid in a black school.

A drug addict in an affluent middle school. Everywhere Moshe went, it seemed he just could not fit in. That is, until he discovered booze. Then drugs. Then stealing. Life would never be the same again.

Kasher really opens the door for people to see what it actually is like to be so desperately addicted to a substance that nothing else matters; how it feels to literally live for the high. Non-addict readers will be shocked. Readers who've shared in this struggle will feel a kinship of empathy for Moshe.

While the writing is relatively pedestrian – and the big F-bomb is dropped into every other sentence – the story carries the reader through some of less than stellar prose. I would recommend this to all.

Reviewed by Elizabeth Raymond

### **When I Left Home: My Story**

By Buddy Guy, with David Ritz

Da Capo Press, \$26.00, 266 pages, Format: Hard

★★★★

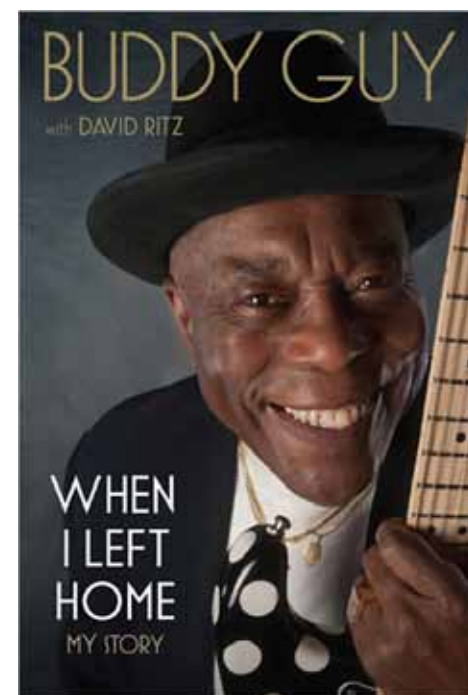
Buddy Guy was born in 1936 in Louisiana to sharecropping parents. With little education, his “good job” was as a custodian at LSU Baton Rouge. In this heartfelt autobiography, he describes the first guitar his father bought him for just over five dollars from a drunken bluesman.

At 21, he headed to competitive Southside Chicago to be a bluesman. Guy found his shtick there: he would attach his Strat to a 150-foot cord like Guitar Slim, start playing outside in the snow, and enter the club playing like crazy. “I cottoned to the electricity because it was something I could turn up,” he says. “Not better but louder.” He jammed crashing notes together, added “buzzin’ and fuzz tones and distortion,” and a new style was born in 1957.

Chess Records was not interested in recording Guy’s “noise.” He kept playing Chicago gigs making ends meet until he went to London. Clapton, Beck, and Hendrix worshipped Guy—and imitated him shamelessly, much to Buddy’s chagrin.

His anecdotes about mentors (including Willie Dixon, Muddy Waters, John Lee Hooker, and many others) are priceless. Guy is an American treasure. Listen to a Buddy Guy playlist while reading this, and you’re in blues heaven.

Reviewed by Phil Semler





Category

# Current Events & Politics

## Debating Same-Sex Marriage

By John Corvino, Maggie Gallagher

Oxford University Press, \$16.95, 224 pages, Format: Trade

★★★★★

In *Debating Same-Sex Marriage*, John Corvino and Maggie Gallagher have done the nearly impossible: they've taken a fiery hot button topic and presented a debate that is thorough, civil, and wholeheartedly respectful of the other's viewpoints. You would be hard pressed to find two people who disagree more vehemently, yet their arguments never cross over into name-calling, generalizations, or whole-hearted condemnation. I was wowed by the authors' ability to stay on topic and debate such a heated subject matter so tactfully. Regardless of where you stand on the debate line, *Debating Same-Sex Marriage* is serious food for thought.

*Debating Same-Sex Marriage's* format is quite interesting – and massively effective. Each of the authors offers up an essay outlining their views first. Then, they each have a chance to offer a rebuttal to the other's essay. The result is that each point made by Corvino is addressed by Gallagher and vice versa. It's like witnessing a live debate between



these two lively characters. Excellent indeed.

While my personal views did not change in light of Gallagher's arguments, I did find myself contemplating ideas I had not previously thought of. I highly recommend this to all – if only for a manual on how to respectfully debate a member of the opposing viewpoint. Well done!

Reviewed by Elizabeth Raymond

## America, You Sexy Bitch: A Love Letter to Freedom

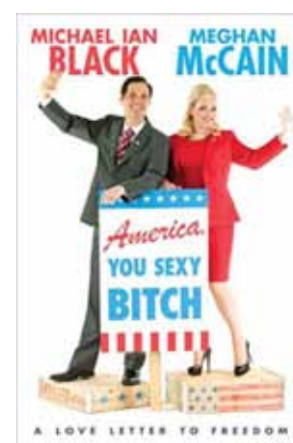
By Meghan McCain, Michael Ian Black

Da Capo Press, \$26.00, 336 pages, Format: Hard

★★★★★

When Twitter and Ambien conspired to bring together Republican trailblazer Meghan McCain and comedian Michael Ian Black, no one could have predicted the book that would result. At first blush, *America, You Sexy Bitch* appears to be a fish-out-of-water buddy-comedy road trip across America, but in reality, it's a book examining preconceived notions and the long, difficult road toward dispelling some of them.

McCain and Black pull no punches, turning the spotlight on themselves and their opinions, unafraid to reveal



both virtues and foibles along the way. They confess when they've been petty, and they celebrate every epiphany and unexpected moment of connection. From Las Vegas to New Orleans, Branson to Salt Lake City, they sample the weirdness and wonder of the American melting pot.

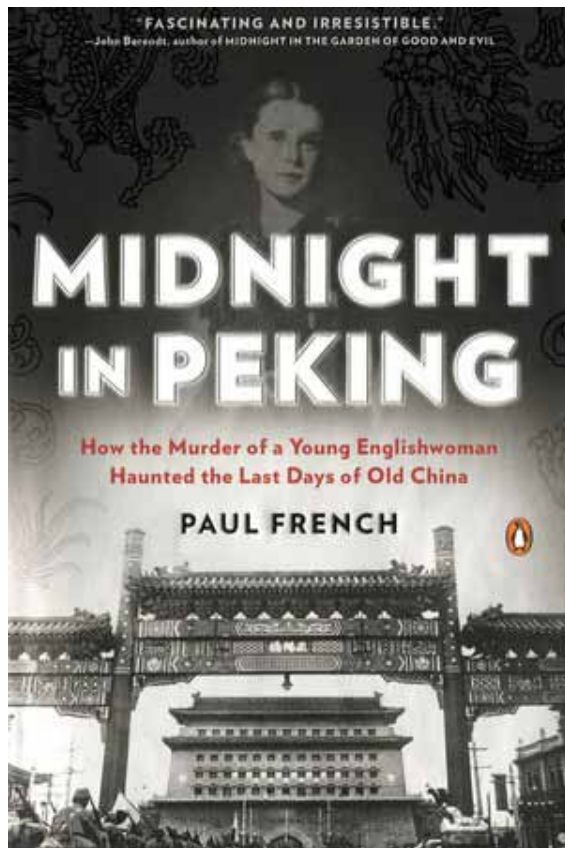
Not just funny as hell, but thought-provoking and occasionally challenging, *America, You Sexy Bitch* features not only the polarized snippiness of modern “discourse,” but genuine attempts by people with differing views to find common ground.

In a better world, this would be the start of a fascinating series of books with mismatched and ideologically disparate people taking road trips and coming to something approximating a better understanding of each other and the country they share. I loved it.

Reviewed by Glenn Dallas

## Category

# History



### Midnight in Peking

By Paul French

Penguin, \$26.00, 272 pages, Format: Hard

★★★★★

During the early morning hours of January 8, 1937 a mutilated body was found in the old section of Peking under the Fox Tower. While the extent of the mutilation wasn't viewable at first, that the victim was a white woman was immediately shocking. Foreigners only made up two or three thousand of Peking's one-and-a-half million inhabitants and they tended to stick to their own area of the city called the Legation Quarter. The victim was quickly identified as Pamela Werner and the search was on for her murderer, or murderers.

The search, however, was not an easy one; China was on the brink of being invaded by the Japanese, the British Government wanted to have their man assist on the case,

and the victim's adopted father was less than loved by his countrymen. Everyone had something to hide, or someone to hide from, and when politics or saving face was brought into the mix, nothing was as it seemed.

*Midnight in Peking* is about a murder that was never really solved, and a time and place that we can no longer visit. It is fascinating, and at times infuriating, because justice was never served for Pamela Werner.

Reviewed by Gwen Stackler

### Rawhide Down: The Near Assassination of Ronald Reagan

By Del Quentin Wilber

Picador, \$16.00, 320 pages, Format: Trade

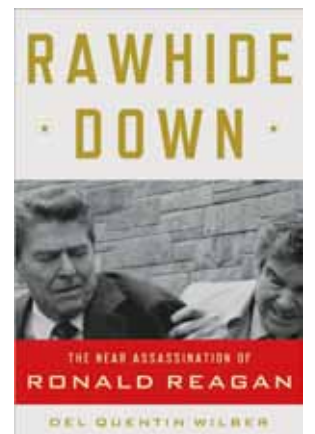
★★★★★

Surprisingly, the events of March 30, 1981 - the day that President Reagan was shot - have not been detailed in book form. Del Quentin Wilbur corrects this deficiency with a micro-detailed look at the events of that day. It's an engaging narrative which begins with a look at the schedules of Reagan (whose Secret Service name was Rawhide), his Secret Service detail members, and the disturbed individual who sought to impress a Hollywood starlet.

In these pages, Ronald Reagan is a likable and courageous man who was able to joke with his emergency room physicians. (He wondered what the gunman had against the Irish, as all those shot happened to be of Irish heritage.) But he was also a man who wondered if he was about to meet his maker. Reagan lost fully half of his blood volume as surgeons removed a bullet near his heart. The elderly president was uniquely fit and strong. He ignored medical advice and returned to his duties at the White House just twelve days later.

The courage of the Secret Service agents who saved the president's life is nearly incomprehensible. The only disappointment in Wilbur's fascinating, unique account is that it ends too soon.

Reviewed by Joseph Arellano





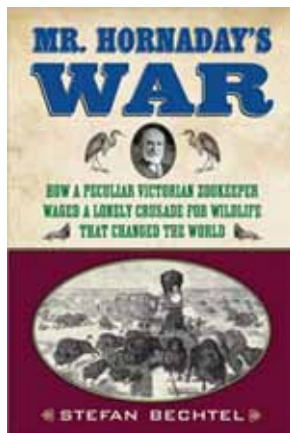
## Mr. Hornaday's War: How a Peculiar Victorian Zookeeper Waged a Lonely Crusade for Wildlife That Changed the World

By Stefan Bechtel

Beacon Press, \$26.95, 272 pages, Format: Hard

★★★★

William Temple Hornaday is not a name that many would think of when discussing zoos or animal conservation today, and that's a shame. He was one of the first to cry out and actually do something when the rest of the country was busy slaughtering the American Bison almost to the point of extinction. Hornaday single-handedly saved the Alaskan fur seal when others couldn't be bothered with an animal they would never see. He came up with the idea of the National Zoo in Washington, D.C., was respon-



sible for picking out the location and designing the Bronx Zoo from a wooded patch of land, and served at its helm for thirty years. He fought tirelessly in the “plume wars,” pitting himself against the fashion of sacrificing endangered birds just for the sake of a lady's hat.

Stefan Bechtel brings the man and his contradictions to the twenty-first century in a timely biography of a man that should be celebrated, as opposed to being a footnote in animal conservation history. The complete transformation from the backwoods hunter in his youth to the loudest, most bombastic, and passionate champion of animals is a great story of how one man can indeed make a difference, even today.

Reviewed by Gwen Stackler

“Buy now at [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com)”

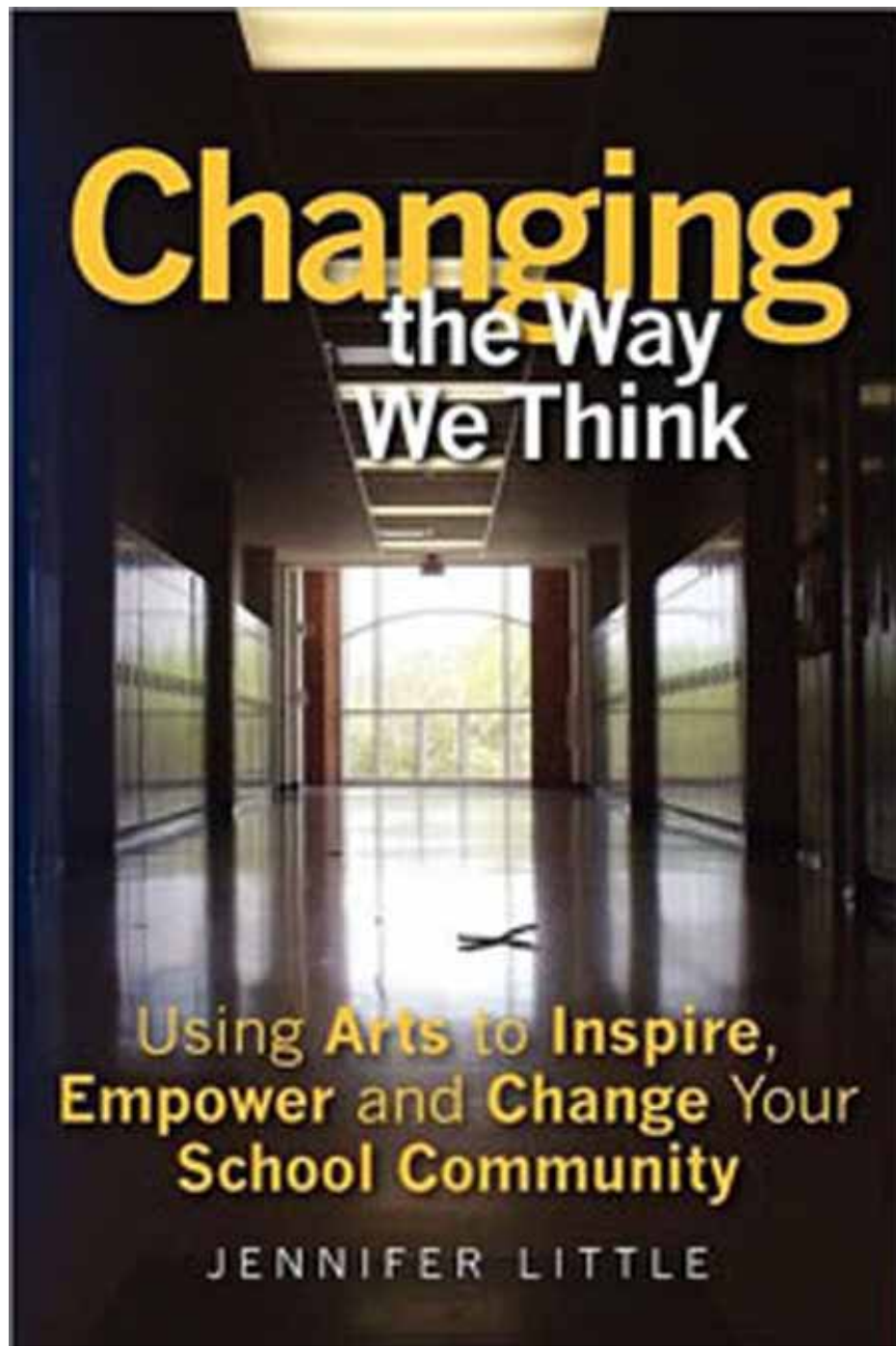
*The ground-breaking history of America's quest for innovation, jobs, prosperity for the middle-class and security for those in need.*



*“cogent, well-constructed...deserves wide readership.”*  
Kirkus Indie Reviews

Category

# Reference



## Changing the Way We Think: Using Arts to Inspire, Empower and Change Your School Community

By Jennifer Little

CreateSpace, \$11.99, 93 pages, Format: Trade

★★★★★

*Changing the Way We Think: Using Arts to Inspire, Empower and Change Your School Community* is a blueprint for creating applied theatre projects in schools. Little taps into her own personal experiences of creating *multidisciplinary connections* in her New Jersey school district. Little has been so successful at bringing together the theatre with other subjects, such as English, social studies, visual arts, and television, that the program has won many statewide awards. Little applies her techniques to areas of students in conflict. Her students developed an anti-bullying piece entitled *Shadows*.

Little explains how approaching one subject, such as bullying, homelessness, or intolerance can and will extend into other academic disciplines. In *Changing the Way We Think*, Little describes that applied theatre requires a bit of *pushing the envelope* and to really study what your community is ready for. Besides community buy-in, Little suggests tips for getting the administration and other teachers to appreciate the richness of applied theatre projects. Although education can occur through working with published dramas, Little provides the steps to educate through the exploration of local issues. In doing so, the students start pursuing answers by researching, surveying and interviewing. As one who has been through it, Little provides a list of steps, lesson plans, resources and countless tips from her hands-on experiences.

*Changing the Way We Think* is very readable and provides information that might be useful to others who are trying to make connections to do something different in their school district. Little encourages reaching out, creating publicity and attending conferences. A moving a powerful section of the book is Little's inclusion of students' powerful responses to participating in applied theatre. The students attest to the changes that occur and the changes that they witness from such a project.

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