



THE BOOK STALL

August 2021
Vol. XXXII, No. 6
Nancy Dreher, *Editor*



THE FRONT LINE



Lazy days of August are the perfect time to grab a book and while away the hours before the start of the school and all the obligations that Fall brings. Happily, there are lots of choices for summer reads by the pool or on the beach. Here are a few I've enjoyed. I loved *Count the Ways* by Joyce Maynard, a wrenching novel that follows a family from its early happy days with young children through tragedy and ultimately reconciliation. Another excellent family saga is *We Are the Brennans* (on sale August 3), a bit reminiscent of Mary Beth Keane's *Ask Again, Yes*. In *Brennans*, Tracey Lange has written a compelling story about re-discovering the importance of familial connections. *The Startup Wife* by Tahmina Anam is a timely novel about a couple who write an app to customize spiritual experiences. Although it is the wife who has done the coding work, her husband is viewed by some as a new messiah. *The Guncle* by Steven Rowley is a warm-hearted novel about two children sent to spend the summer with their Gay Uncle Patrick (they call him GUP) in Palm Springs. *Ghosts* by Dolly Alderton (on sale August 3), is about a young woman in London who downloads a dating app and falls for the first guy she matches with. Of course, things go downhill from there. Set in the upper-crust world of Manhattan, *The Portrait of a Mirror* by A. Natasha Joukovsky is a novel of manners, marriage, privilege, and art. At our recent beach vacation, my daughter Katie (24) enjoyed *The Siren* by Katherine St. John about filming a thriller on an idyllic Caribbean island as a hurricane approaches. A perfect beach read!

Saturday, August 21 is Bookstore Romance Day, a national celebration of this increasingly popular genre. We started our section just a few years ago and have watched it grow in popularity. We saw a surge of browsing, as we all watched *Bridgerton* based on Julia Quinn's romance novels. Lots of booksellers here enjoy these titles, but if you really want great suggestions, Kari Patch and Betsy Balyeat are the ones to talk to! Visit us on that Saturday for prizes and raffles.

Of course, August presages the start of school (particularly exciting this year after a long year of remote learning!), and lots of kids have required reading to complete before the start of classes. Stop by or call us to pick up that title. If we don't have it, we can order it and have it in the store in a day or two or send it off to you! For the younger kids, we have a large selection of workbooks on a variety of subjects to help build skills and confidence for the academic year.

We're delighted to work with so many libraries on some upcoming events. Highland Park (and others) have joined together to offer Domestic Thriller Night on August 12 at 7 pm featuring two of our favorites: Megan Miranda and Shari Lapena to talk about their new books, *Such a Quiet Place* and *Not a Happy Family*, respectively. *World of Wonders* was one of our bestsellers at the end of last year and on Wednesday, August 25 at 7 pm, Aimee Nezhukumatathil will be talking about her book, in which she writes so beautifully and movingly about nature.

On Thursday, August 26 at 6:30, our great friend, Kevin O'Brien will be "here" virtually to talk about his latest book, *The Night She Disappeared*. He'll be in conversation with another favorite, Garth Stein (*The Art of Racing in the Rain*). On September 7 at 3:30 pm, we'll host our first in-store event welcoming Jarret Dapier for the launch of his new picture book *Jazz for Lunch*. All ages are welcome and, as we expect some young children who cannot yet be vaccinated, we are requiring masks for this event.

We're so happy to see so many of you back in the store!
Feels like old times!

Steph

Our Events in August

Our author events in August are virtual, available to you on your computer and mobile device. **Each virtual event requires registration.** To sign up, please go to www.thebookstall.com and on the homepage, click "Events" and scroll down to the "August Events." Click on the date of the event, and follow directions for reserving your spot.

WEDNESDAY, AUG. 4

6 – 7 pm An Author/Illustrator Visit with DAN SANTAT



Join the Winnetka Public Library for a virtual visit from Dan Santat, the author of the 2015 Caldecott Medal-winner *The Adventures of Beekle*:



The Unimaginary Friend. This program brings the library's summer of "Reading Colors Your World" to an end and is presented in partnership with the Deerfield, Evanston, Glencoe, Lincolnwood, and Wilmette public libraries. Dan will talk about his books, share an interactive art demo and activity, and end with a brief Q&A session.

THURSDAY, AUG. 12

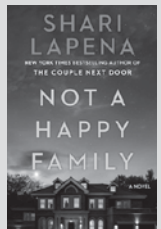
7 pm An Evening with MEGAN MIRANDA, *Such a Quiet Place* SHARI LAPENA, *Not a Happy Family*



We partner with Chicago-area public libraries to welcome thriller writers Megan Miranda



and Shari Lapena, to be interviewed by Mary Kubica. Ms. Miranda's new book, *Such a Quiet Place*, is described as the perfect summer beach read. It's set in a seemingly idyllic neighborhood, but there is deceit and viciousness festering inside the households of this community. It will leave you wondering, Do you ever really know your neighbors? Ms. Lapena's *Not a Happy Family* has rich people behaving badly, sibling rivalry, twists, turns, red herrings, and, of course, a few murders interspersed. We offer signed bookplates with each title. Public libraries participating in this event are Arlington Heights, Algonquin, Deerfield, Glencoe, Highland Park, Lake Villa, Mount Prospect, Niles-Maine, Schaumburg, Vernon Area, and Wilmette.



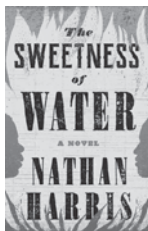
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THE INSIDE LINE

KARA GAGLIARDI



The Sweetness of Water by Nathan Harris (\$28). We can all imagine the brutality of the Civil War's final days. So it comes as some surprise that *The Sweetness of Water* opens with an act of kindness. A white homestead owner named George Walker gets

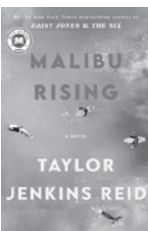


lost on his property, bereft after learning of the death of his Confederate son. Limping from a hip injury, he comes across two emancipated slaves, brothers Prentiss and Landry. The brothers share a canteen of water, a meal of rabbit, and all but carry him home. In return, George asks for their help in planting a peanut farm. He works side by side with them, offers shelter in his barn, and a fair wage.

Here is the crux of the problem. The town, the place, and the time cannot accept the bond that this man and his family have with these two former slaves. Themes of grief, tolerance, and healing run throughout this book. Prentiss and Landry dream of reuniting with their mother, who was sold away when they were boys. A forbidden romance between two Confederate soldiers turns violent and sets the town on fire. A prostitute becomes an unlikely friend to both George and his wife, Isabelle. Isabelle, in turn, does her best to provide sustenance to the homeless citizens of Old Ox, Georgia.

Harris asks us to imagine being a slave one day and free the next. He juxtaposes kindness with the ugliness of racism and homophobia. In the end, *The Sweetness of Water* leaves us with hope. An ambitious and startling debut.

Malibu Rising by Taylor Jenkins Reid (\$28). If it's a vacation you're after, then *Malibu Rising* will take you there. The bestselling author of *Daisy Jones & The Six* journeys back to 1983—an era both frivolous and full of excess by today's standards. Nina Riva and her siblings are hosting their annual end-of-summer party, and Malibu is at a fever pitch. The world can't get enough of the offspring of legendary crooner Mick Riva. Older sister Nina models swimsuits and pays the bills. Jay surfs professionally and teams up with brother Hud, a photographer. Younger sister Kit is fearless on the waves, challenges expectations, and protects the people she loves.



While it is the life of celebrity that entices, it's the backstory of poverty and abandonment that intrigues in this guilty pleasure of a book. For all his fame, Mick Riva left his family and never looked back. Former wife June loved her kids and ran the fish fry to make ends meet. Fast forward to the present day, and Nina must contend with the fact that she married a man—a tennis pro—who is also unfaithful. The brothers fall in love with the same woman. Trays of coke are passed around the party. Malibu burns.

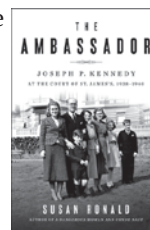
Jenkins Reid provides a layered and well-paced story with just enough fluff to keep us going. Here's a piece of cake with no calories.

JON GRAND

The Ambassador: Joseph P. Kennedy at the Court of St. James, 1938-1940 by Susan Ronald (\$29.99; on sale Aug. 3). Some claim that Joseph Kennedy's appointment to the ambassadorship to the Court of St. James (England) was a means of getting him out of Roosevelt's hair. Regardless of the reason, his appointment to this most prestigious and strategically import-



ant post was a surprise. Initially he was a resounding success, but within two short years, that all changed. His Fascist sympathies, in the face of Hitler's advances, and his antisemitism soon made him a pariah. For his family, the assignment was an opportunity to



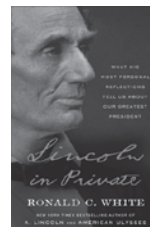
join the social world of London high society and establish contacts that would later prove invaluable politically. But as World War II broke out, and Joseph Kennedy was recalled from London, he was a man in disgrace.

This Is How They Tell Me the World Ends: The Cyberweapons Arms Race by Nicole Perlroth (\$30). Without question, this is one of the most



frightening books I've read in a very long time. Recent attacks on companies demanding ransom by online hackers cost millions of dollars. But as upsetting as these attacks are, they rarely impact you or me and offer only the smallest hint of the damage a major cyberattack could cause. Consider: a concerted attack on our power grids and pipelines, along with attacks on banks wiping out funds and making deposits and withdrawals impossible, coupled with disinformation as to who or what is to blame. Such a strike would swiftly bring a country to its knees without firing a single shot. Turning off your phone or iPad won't help. These can be attacked regardless. Your anti-virus or malware programs won't help. These programs can be swatted aside like pesky flies. Sadly, there is no way to truly opt out. "The price of freedom is eternal vigilance." Never were these words more true.

Lincoln in Private: What His Most Personal Reflections Tell Us About Our Greatest President by Ronald C. White (\$28). Lincoln was a



scribbler. From the very beginning, he would jot down thoughts or phrases that came to mind on scraps of paper. These he would save in desk drawers, coat pockets, even inside his top hat. Eventually, many of these found greater expression in his speeches. But often they would simply record a belief or feeling in response to an event. They are his private musings. Remarkably, some 111 of these survive. As White analyzes these fragments, we hear the authentic, private voice of Lincoln as he shapes his views on the large issues of his day.

Doom: The Politics of Catastrophe by Niall Ferguson (\$30). Covid is surging once again, wildfires are burning in the West, hurricane season has started early, and climate change threatens our very existence. All this is nothing new. Disasters have been with us throughout human history. But history reveals no cycle that would help us anticipate the next disaster,



making these random events all the more terrifying. In surveying the historical landscape, Ferguson argues that, while we cannot predict, we can learn and better prepare for the inevitable. He blames our failure to respond better on bureaucratic complexity and intransigence. Ferguson's survey of natural and man-made disasters can be painfully graphic. His focus on China as the source of the world's next world war reminds one of Nicole Perlroth's book (reviewed above.) Many readers will no doubt be looking for an extensive examination of what went wrong dealing with Covid. But you will be disappointed. Ferguson does treat the subject, to be sure, but it is perhaps the

weakest chapter in the book. It is too early for the Covid pandemic, and our response to it, to be properly evaluated. Yet, despite the disastrous events that await us, human resiliency and the will to survive have thus far overcome the threats that besiege us. Plus, we have science on our side.

MELANIE HAUCK



Great Circle by Maggie Shipstead (\$28.95). If a riveting historical novel, an engaging beach read (but better!), and a feminist book had a baby, it would be Maggie Shipstead's novel *Great Circle*. The main protagonist, Marian, struggles to become an aviatrix in



Montana starting in the 1920s—like Ameila Earhart. The story follows her passion and her struggles to learn to fly at a time when women were actively deterred from doing so. Her goal is to be the first person to circumnavigate the world longitudinally, crossing over both the North and South Poles. Through her, we learn about real-life women pilots and the sacrifices they made to pursue their dreams in the sky.

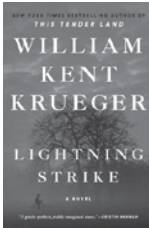
Marion's story is interspersed with the modern-day story of Hadley, a Hollywood starlet famous for acting in movies similar to the "Twilight" series. She is jaded about the industry and fed up with the frenzy social media creates around today's celebrities. She self-destructs, prompting the film industry to drop her. To redeem herself, she agrees to play Marion in an artsy depiction of Marion's life. Hadley delves into the real story, not the dramatized version, of Marion's life and discovers unanticipated parallels and lessons.

Great Circle is chock-a-block with fascinating characters, sweeping narratives, and soaring writing. This baby is informative, entertaining, and exhilarating.

ELIZABETH HUBBARD



Lightning Strike by William Kent Krueger (\$27; on sale Aug. 24). To get myself through the summer of 2020, I read all 17 of William Kent Krueger's Cork O'Connor mysteries, set in Minnesota's Iron Lake. There was definitely a feeling of



letdown when I got to the last page of number 17. But I was thrilled to read *Lightning Strike*, a prequel set in the summer of 1963, where we meet Cork's father Liam and get a peek into the backstory that Krueger fans have been waiting for. There's a return to some familiar characters and the beauty of Cork's woods and lake, and, of course, a dead body that causes Cork to question everything he took for granted about his family, his town, and himself. You can read this one first or last, but I guarantee that you will want to spend time with the O'Connors, learn about the Indian Relocation Act of 1956, and immerse yourself in the natural world that Krueger so obviously loves.

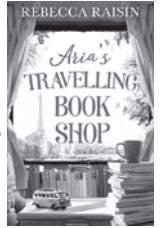
The Box in the Woods by Maureen Johnson (\$18.99). Fans of Johnson's *Truly Devious* series will be delighted to be reunited with Stevie, Janelle, Nate, and David, but this time it's summer vacation, and the kids are not in Vermont at the famed Ellingham Academy. Whether you've read the three previous books or not, this one stands alone and is true detective fiction, with Stevie back at what she does best: solving crimes! This time the teens are at summer camp, the site of a decades-old murder, and it's up to them to figure out what happened. Johnson does a masterful job of bringing us back to the 1970s, while also keeping us grounded in the present. She



writes teen dialogue so authentically and has created a wonderful cast of characters whose friendship is enviable. While this is young adult literature, this "older" adult enjoyed it thoroughly and read it in one delightful day. If you aren't familiar with the series, I urge you to read it yourself or buy it for the teenager in your life. Either way, don't miss this perfect summer read!

Aria's Travelling Book Shop by Rebecca Raisin

(\$16.99; on sale Aug. 10). I'm not generally a romance reader but this book, a tale of "second-chance-at-love," charmed me completely. It's the story of a young woman, Aria, who has suffered a great loss and turned to the "nomad life" to escape her grief. We meet her and her fellow nomads and follow them from the UK to France as they travel from fete to festival selling their various wares. Aria is the proprietor of The Little Bookshop of Happy Ever After, a van turned bookstore, specializing in romance titles. This is for book lovers, fans of rom-coms, or anyone who wants a feel-good story, interwoven with wine, pastries, love potions, and friendship. You might get a little teary (in a good way), and you will undoubtedly laugh as well!



The Reading List by Sara Nisha Adams (\$27.99,

on sale Aug. 3). Sometimes a book grabs you almost immediately, and you just know it will be a favorite. *The Reading List* did that for me, and though I began by devouring it, I slowed down because I didn't want it to end. It is a novel for "book lovers" and for anyone who has ever found comfort in a bookstore, a library, or simply with a book. A found list of book titles brings together an unlikely cast of characters. Aleisha, a 17-year-old spending her summer working at the library, and Murkesh, a lonely widower, connect in spite of their differences and begin to change and grow because of their shared experience with the list. As others find the list, they become intertwined with each other, and reading brings them closer together and in some cases becomes the only reason to leave their homes. This is a book about books and the idea of sharing a world you have loved and allowing others to enter that world.



Come Fly the World: The Jet-Age Story by the Women of Pan Am by Julia Cooke (\$28). Non-fiction for the fiction lover is a good way to

describe *Come Fly the World*. The story of Pan Am flight attendants, this book brings to life the era of jet-setting air travel interwoven with world history. We meet small town Lynne, who traded her science degree for a chance to see the world, and other women, who leave behind disappointed parents, safe and predictable careers, and boyfriends who expected a more traditional relationship. We learn about the weight, height, and age requirements, in addition to the need to speak two languages and be able to navigate political situations as they flew soldiers in and out of Vietnam and thousands of children during the fall of Saigon. Yes, there was glamour and excitement in these women's lives, but there was also great responsibility and hard work as they navigated the changing world of commercial flight.



MIKE WYSOCK



I know that urging you to spend a few hours meditating on loneliness might be a tall order, but to do so with Kristen Radtke's *Seek You: A Journey Through American Loneliness* (\$30) in your hands is absolutely



delightful. This graphic narrative synthesizes personal essay with cultural criticism, introductions to psychological research, and inquiries into American pop-culture. A New Yorker by way of Wisconsin, Radtke was "...raised with the tenets of Midwestern politeness. Be Quiet. Don't Touch," only to move to the big city and still feel alone amongst an alienating mass of other lives. Radtke explores our relationship with technology and the duality present in our connected world; are we reaching out, or escaping, or both? A long section on the strange and cruel work of psychologist Harry Harlow provides a foundation for a discussion on the necessity of physical touch, an antidote to "skin-hunger". The heart of Radtke's work is the exploration of the distance between inner desires and the performance of everyday life. Loneliness is a pervasive, deeply personal condition; it is also gravely misunderstood. Never once falling into the trap of blithe self-help pedantry, the juxtaposition of Radtke's art and words on each page pulls the reader into introspection. Concise, lyrical text is set against arresting graphics that call to mind Edward Hopper and Chris Ware awash in evening tones. At the end of her work, Radtke beseeches us to use our own loneliness to reach out instead of inward, to call out and to listen. As readers and booksellers, this is our wheelhouse. In this immediate moment, I'm writing to all of you. Read this novel and, somehow, join me in engaging in a sweet, solitary communion.

Calendar continued

WEDNESDAY, AUG. 25

7 pm

AIMEE NEZHUKUMATATHIL
World of Wonders: In Praise of Fireflies, Whale Sharks, and Other Astonishments



As a child, Nezhukumatathil called many places home: the grounds of a Kansas mental institution, where her Filipina mother was a doctor; the open



skies and tall mountains of Arizona, where she hiked with her Indian father; and the chillier climes of western New York and Ohio. But no matter how awkward the fit or forbidding the landscape, she was able to turn to our world's fierce and funny creatures for guidance. This award-winning poet's *World of Wonders* was widely acclaimed as a top pick in 2020.

THURSDAY, AUG. 26

6:30 pm

KEVIN O'BRIEN, *The Night She Disappeared*
GARTH STEIN, *The Cloven*



We welcome authors and long-time friends for a discussion of their writing life and their latest novels. North Shore native O'Brien's



latest novel, *The Night She Disappeared*, is the story of "the other woman," who becomes the prime suspect when her lover's wife goes missing. **Garth Stein**, author of *The Art of Racing in the Rain*, has a new book, *The Cloven*, a coming-of-age story, set in the Pacific Northwest, about a mutant—the most successful Genetically Modified Human Organism ever created. The book features a special full-color four-page fold-out spread by comic artist and writer Matthew Southworth.



THE CHILDREN'S LINE



KARI PATCH

Hello Children's Book Fans, If you are looking for things to entertain the whole family early this month, many of our local partner libraries (Deerfield, Wilmette, Winnetka, Lincolnwood, and Evanston) are hosting author and Caldecott winner **Dan Santat** virtually on **Wednesday, August 4 at 6 pm**. The event is free, but does require registration through any of the sponsoring library websites. We have hosted Mr. Santat before at The Book Stall, and he was a delight. That is all we have on the calendar in the children's department this month. We hope you are enjoying summer break and starting to think about a new school year on the horizon. Amy reviews two new back-to-school books below, and we will be sure to have some more for you next month.

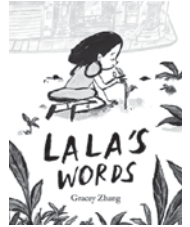
Happy summer reading!

Kari P.

AMY TROGDON



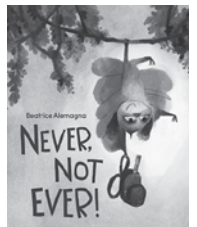
Lala's Words: A Story of Planting Kindness by Gracey Zhang (\$18.99). Everyday Lala runs to her special place in the city, through the neighborhood, beyond a fence in a patch of weeds, cement, and leaves. It's a



place of her own, where she

nurtures the plants living there. She talks to them, waters them, and comes home very hot and dirty. One morning, her Mom has had enough and forbids Lala from going outside. Lala worries about her plant friends and whispers to them during the day and night. The next morning it is cooler and breezy, and looking out the window, Lala is amazed. Her plant friends have grown overnight, forming a huge plant umbrella over her neighborhood. This is a lovely picture book about kindness and trust. *Ages 4-8*

Never, Not Ever! by Beatrice Alemagna (\$17.99). Pascaline is a very cute 5-year-old bat with large eyes that engage everyone. It is the first day of school and Pascaline is not going...ever! Her contempt for the thought of going to school is so strong, her parents are reduced to the size of peanuts. So she tucks them under her wing and heads to school, feeling much more courageous. With humorous, descriptive illustrations, we can see Pascaline and her parents throughout the school day, during which Pascaline's parents embarrass her many times. Kids need their parents to make them feel safe on the first day of school—but not for long! *Ages 4-8*



First Day of School by Esther van den Berg (\$18.95). First day of school jitters are normal, but this new picture book should help ease the pain. Young Robin goes to his new school with his mother "just to look it over." The school is a huge old tree with carved-out gathering places and lots of ladders and swings. Robin's teacher, a kind old fox, shows him what his day will be like—with circle time, sharing time, snack, gym, and art. By the end of the day, Robin doesn't want to leave. The illustrations are cozy and warm, in soft reds and browns. This is a gently reassuring story to share with first-timers. *Ages 4-8*



The Thing I'm Most Afraid Of by Kristin Levine (\$17.99). Becca lives in Virginia with her divorced parents, spending half her time with her mom and the other half with her dad. The year is 1993, and Becca learns her dad is moving to Vienna for work. She will have to fly over to see him for two months in the summer, which terrifies her. Becca



The Children's Line continued

suffers from extreme anxiety and panic attacks. To help alleviate some of her fears, she keeps a Doomsday Journal to list all of her fears. But even that cannot seem to help her overcome the fear of flying and the airport metal detectors. However, once she arrives in Vienna, she meets her dad's girlfriend and her son, Felix, a bookworm, and Sara, a Muslim au pair from Bosnia. Sara tells of her escape from war-torn Sarajevo, which inspires Becca to make a list of all the things she wants to do—despite her fears. This book realistically deals with Becca's personal growth, as well as her ability to establish meaningful relationships with the people in her life. Anxiety, change and courage are the main themes explored in this fine novel, while also giving historical background to the Bosnian War. An excellent middle-school adventure. *Ages 9-12*

Secondhand Dogs by Carolyn Crimi (\$16.99).

Miss Lottie loves all animals and begins to take in rescue dogs after her own dog passes away. Her first dog is Gus, who keeps a keen eye on the rest of the dogs Miss Lottie has collected over time. He is insecure in his role as leader of the pack but makes up for it with caring and loyalty. There is also excitable Roo, brave Tank the bulldog, and Moon Pie, whose owner has just passed away. In addition to the dogs, there is a shy white cat, Ghost, who only talks to Gus. They have formed a tight-knit family. Along with Miss Lottie, there is also Quinn, a boy next door, who seems lost in his own family but comes alive when he is feeding and taking care of the animals. Miss Lottie has never had a problem introducing a new dog to the pack, but when Decker—part shepherd, part Doberman—arrives, everything changes. It becomes apparent that Decker is a bully, who wants the house and Miss Lottie all to himself. Each animal has its own distinct personality, and the reader will get to know and love them all...even Decker, after his back story is explained. Carolyn Crimi, one of my personal favorite authors, has given us a warm-hearted, compassionate story of love, family, and loyalty that readers will adore. *Ages 8-12*



BETSY BALLYEAT

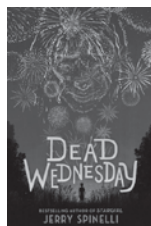


Ahmed Aziz's Epic Year by Nina Hamza (\$16.99).

Ahmed Aziz recalls the year when he was 12 and forced to move from Hawaii, the only home he had ever known, to his father's home in Minnesota. The move

was necessary because his dad was ill and could receive life-saving medical treatment there for a rare genetic condition. Ahmed reluctantly embraces his new community and his school. He is assigned to an accelerated section of language arts, a class taught by his father's old friend Janet Gardner, even though he hates to read. However, Ahmed surprises himself by actually reading all the assigned books for class: *Holes*, *Bridge to Terabithia*, and *From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler*. It turns out that the characters in books often face the same problems that the reader has and sometimes even offer useful ideas. Ahmed must decide who he wants to be; it is an epic year indeed. *Ages 10-12*

Dead Wednesday by Jerry Spinelli (\$17.99, on sale Aug. 3). Robbie "Worm" Tarnauer is excited to participate in Dead Wednesday, when the 8th graders in Timber Springs, Pennsylvania are given a black shirt, assigned the name of a local teenager who died a preventable death, and then ignored for the day—treated as "dead" by the



faculty. Though it is intended to be a grim warning, most students see the day as a chance to goof off. Worm however—aptly named since he prefers to be out of sight, underground, watching, listening—is happy for a day of invisibility. But when Worm receives the name "Rebecca Ann Finch" and dons the black shirt, he also gets a surprise: the sudden presence of Becca's ghost, that only he can see and touch. Becca Finch is as surprised and confused as Worm, only remembering losing control of her car on an icy slope that past Christmas Eve. She is guilt-ridden about the pain her death caused and convinced that she has arrived to help Worm take charge of his existence. The more she reveals about her life and death, however, Worm begins to wonder if it's Becca who actually needs his help. Worm's slowly building affection for lively Becca leads to a bittersweet conclusion that leaves both of them ready—or reader—for what may come next. Spinelli has created another middle grade masterpiece, with unforgettable characters who are authentic and often quite funny. *Age 12-15*

We Are Inevitable by Gayle Forman (\$18.99).

After his brother dies from an overdose, Aaron is alone and adrift. His friends have all graduated, his mom has left, and the family bookstore is literally falling to pieces around him. When a shelf suddenly collapses, it triggers a domino effect. His dad can't afford a replacement, and Aaron discovers they are in dire financial straits as his dad has been relying on credit cards to cover expenses. Aaron has been struggling since his older brother's death and now realizes that years of addiction and final hospitalization wiped the family out. Transferring the ownership of the store to Aaron was supposed to offer a clean slate. Instead, he realizes he has to sell. He can't bring himself to tell his father that he sold the shop to a local business owner. Then party bro Chad, an old friend of his brother who uses a wheelchair, shows up in their small town in the Cascade Mountains of Washington State and insists on helping build an access ramp for the store. Soon more townspeople appear, eager to help renovate. Aaron tries to renege on the sale, but the buyer demands \$13,000 delivered in two weeks. While he is running out of time, the community brings the store back to life, and Aaron realizes he can't hide any longer. His reckoning with grief is slow-burning and real, and the cycle of addiction is handled with care. This is a moving story of growing through grief and an ode to the miracle of books and independent bookstores. *Age 14 up*



Enduring Freedom by Jawad Arash and Trent Reedy (\$18.99). In the days leading up to 9/11, 16-year-old Baheer and his family live in fear of the Taliban and their strict laws. Joe Killian, a high school senior and Iowa National Guard enlistee, is angered by the Al-Qaida attacks and is eager for revenge. So he is disappointed to learn that his unit is in fact tasked with the rehabilitation of Afghanistan. Meanwhile, studious Baheer is optimistic as he approaches the U.S. soldiers in hopes of improving his English and bettering his country with these new allies. This first encounter does not go well, but Baheer and Joe over time develop a friendship as they help each other learn and dismantle prejudice. Readers will find Baheer to be a genuine teenage boy whose struggles do not change him from doing what is right, based on the Islamic teaching he learned from his grandfather. Joe's growth is more apparent as he challenges himself to write the truth. Loosely based on the two authors' real-life experiences with each other, this is a story of friendship, hardship, acceptance, and courage. *Age 12 up*





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A Few September Highlights!

TUESDAY, SEPT. 7

3:30 pm, Book Release Party

JARRETT DAPIER, *Jazz for Lunch*

Evanston writer, librarian, and drummer Jarrett Dapier celebrates his picture book debut. In it, Cuz Auntie Nina and her nephew cook up a symphony of food and sounds, as the whole neighborhood gets ready for some foot-stomping, finger-licking, booty-shaking, mouth-watering fun! The book is for ages 4 – 8, but this event is for everyone! We'll have a jazz soundtrack and snacks. Please join us!

WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 22

4:30 pm, In-Person, Ticketed Event

AMY TIMBERLAKE, *Egg Marks the Spot*

This new volume includes full-color plates and additional black-and-white illustrations by Caldecott medalist Jon Klassen. Newbery Honor author Amy Timberlake takes

readers on a second adventure in the new series reviewers have called an instant classic. This is an in-person, ticketed event. See our website for details.

THURSDAY, SEPT. 23

8 pm

KRISTIN HANNAH, *The Four Winds*

Kristin Hannah appears in this virtual event to talk about her novel that stunningly brings to life the Great Depression and the people who lived through it.

THURSDAY, SEPT. 23

6:30 pm

SUSAN VAN DUSEN, *The Missing Hand*

A valuable heirloom has been stolen from a member of a Torah study group, and grievous sins of the past push their way into the present. Murder, distrust, and ill-gotten gains from World War II Bohemia threaten the peaceful Jewish community of Crestfall, Illinois.

Our Young Readers Review

We are always looking for great youth reviews. Are you an avid reader and writer? Consider becoming a youth reviewer for The Book Stall. We welcome reviews from students in grades 6-12. If you are interested in reviewing books for The Book Stall, please email us at bookrecs@thebookstall.com. Provide your name and grade level, and we will provide you with instructions.

Don't Breathe a Word by Jordyn Taylor (\$17.99).

For someone who just wants to belong, Eva is miserable as the new kid at Hardwin Preparatory Academy. Fortunately for her, a secret society called the Fives deems her worthy of their acceptance. Eva does all that is demanded of her, eager to be part of a group. But this group, she soon realizes, is demanding her to help keep some mysterious secrets. In a separate storyline, 60 years prior to Eva's attendance at Hardwin, a shy girl named Connie reluctantly joins five of her peers in an experiment in the school's fallout shelter. Led by the intriguing Mr. Kraus, the group spends their time completing tests in preparation for a possible nuclear war. As time goes on underground, however, the weight of the experiment becomes much more serious and even dangerous. Truth and trust topple down more quickly than anybody is prepared for. From the rubble, secrets form, and Connie must play a role in keeping them buried. The yearning for the truth produces a connection between Eva and Connie as their stories intertwine, but the truth never comes easily. What will be more powerful in the end? An army furiously protecting an institution, or a couple of angry women determined to expose its wrongdoings?

—Lilly G., NTHS



Take Three Girls by Cath Crowley, Simmone Howell, and Fiona Wood (\$17.95). Ady, Clem, and Kate could not be any more different. Ady is popular with her seemingly perfect life, Kate is a brainiac with a love of playing music, and Clem is a lovestruck girl with a dwindling passion for swimming. Underneath the surface, they each have troubles and insecurities of their own. The girls attend St. Hildas, where an online bullying website PSST is at large. To support their students, the school provides a wellness class which focuses on loving oneself. Ady, Clem, and Kate are forced to team up in wellness class, much to their displeasure. Over time they bond, and as each girl is targeted by PSST, they stand together to fight back. This book is written through a series of journal entries from wellness class, and a first-person point of view following each girl, chapter by chapter. *Take Three Girls* is an inspiring story about social media, online bullying, and overcoming insecurities.

—Grace C., NTHS

