

Featuring 315 Industry-First Reviews of Fiction, Nonfiction, Children's and YA books

KIRKUS

VOL. XC, NO. II | I JUNE 2022

REVIEWS

SPECIAL
SUMMER
READS
ISSUE

Featuring 53 cool books to keep
you refreshed all season long

Plus interviews with Emily Henry, Sarah Stodola,
Ebony LaDelle, Dan Abdo & Jason Patterson

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK | Tom Beer

A CELEBRATION OF VACATION READING



John Parakevas

THERE ARE A LOT OF REASONS to look forward to summer, but if you're a book lover, surely the top one is a relative abundance of vacation reading time. But what to read? In this, Kirkus' third annual Summer Reads issue, our editors have rounded up some of the best new fiction, nonfiction, children's books, and young adult literature so that readers of all ages are ready to hit the beach—or simply stay home—with just the right entertainment.

In our interview with *Beach Read* author Emily Henry on Page 14—her latest novel is *Book Lovers* (Berkley, May 3)—she offers an excellent definition of the type of book we're celebrating here: "A 'beach read' is all about compulsive readability," Henry says, "a hook that's so powerful you just keep your nose in your book despite any and all stimuli around you—your job, your real life, and even your vacation just fade into the background."

That pretty much describes Ebony LaDelle's YA debut, *Love Radio* (Simon & Schuster, May 31), an engrossing Detroit love story full of Motor City's Black music and culture; our interview with LaDelle runs on Page 138. During summer vacation, it can be hard to keep kids interested in books, but few will be able to resist the zany charms of Barb, the wise-cracking heroine of *Barb and the Ghost Blade* (Simon & Schuster, May 1), the sequel to last year's *Barb the Last Berzerker*; we speak with creators Dan Abdo and Jason Patterson on Page 90. And if you want to know more about that beach resort where you've booked this summer's trip, pack a copy of *The Last Resort: A Chronicle of Paradise, Profit, and Peril at the Beach* (Ecco, June 28); author Sarah Stodola answers our questions on Page 54.

I don't know if there's a beach in my future yet, but after editing this issue I've already added a few titles to my own list of summer reads:

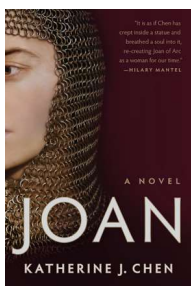
Jackie & Me by Louis Bayard (Algonquin, June 14): For a dose of Camelot-era glamour, I'm looking forward to this novel about the courtship of JFK and Jackie, as seen through the eyes of the future president's semicloseted friend. "Romance with bite: the perfect escapism for today's anxious times," says our reviewer.

The Angel of Rome by Jess Walter (Harper, June 28): I've been a dedicated reader of anything Jess Walter writes since falling under the sway of his 2012 novel, *Beautiful Ruins*. "Prepare for delight," says our reviewer of this new story collection, and that sounds like just what I want in a summer read.



The Adventures of Miss Barbara Pym by Paula Byrne (HarperCollins, June 7): The author of *Excellent Women* and other wry novels of English life seems to be forgotten and rediscovered every decade or so; let's hope that this biography makes Pym canonical once and for all. A "gift to fans, novices, and aspiring writers," writes our reviewer.

Joan by Katherine J. Chen (Knopf, July 5): I'm a sucker for a good historical novel, and this iconoclastic imagining of Joan of Arc, from the author of the *Pride and Prejudice* spinoff *Mary B*, looks like one I can really immerse myself in. Our review: "An elegant and engaging work of historical fiction."



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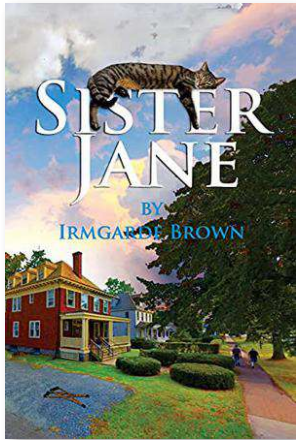
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28 GREAT INDIE BOOKS WORTH DISCOVERING

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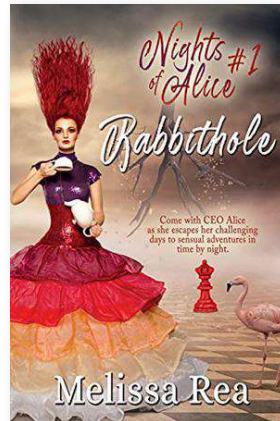


SISTER JANE

by Irmgarde Brown

“In Brown’s debut novel, a seemingly miraculous gift upends an ordinary woman’s life.”

A wise, winning story of a modern-day miracle worker.

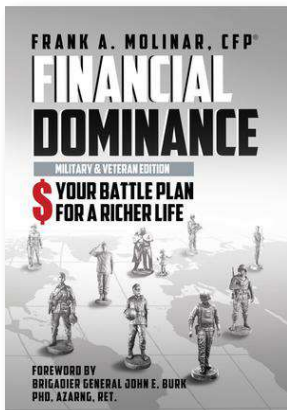


RABBITHOLE

by Melissa Rea

“A magic portal transports an overworked entrepreneur to a fantasyland in a loose, erotic spin on a classic tale.”

A creative and sensual novel that doesn’t disappoint.

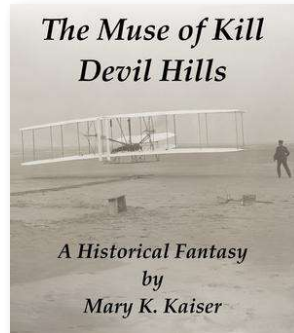


FINANCIAL DOMINANCE

by Frank A. Molinar

“A financial planning guide for members of the armed services.”

Clear-eyed, no-nonsense monetary advice for military personnel.



THE MUSE OF KILL DEVIL HILLS

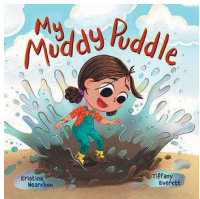
by Mary K. Kaiser

“A Greek deity helps the Wright brothers invent the airplane in this debut fantasy.”

An airy, humorous aviation tale with appealing infusions of myth and history.

his own sexuality—and the danger that it may bring him. Mellman’s tale shines when it interrogates the ways sex and gender impact the lives of ordinary people, as when the cast reflects on the public execution of a “sodomite” or when, in the very beginning of the book, a character named Alex reveals that she regularly wears male drag. Alex is one of the book’s most compelling characters—a figure from Nico’s past life in the streets of Venice whose class position and tendency to act like a “beggar boy” get her into trouble. If any fault could be had with the novel, it’s that Mellman leaves Alex’s fate ambiguous. Of course, readers will just have to come back for more.

Absorbing political machinations and sexual tension collide to hook readers.



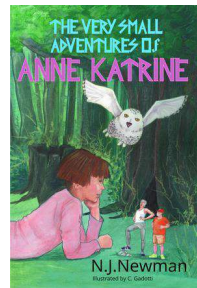
MY MUDDY PUDDLE

Nearchou, Kristina
Illus. by Tiffany Everett
 FriesenPress (24 pp.)
 \$19.99 | \$9.99 paper | \$5.99 e-book
 Jan. 20, 2022
 978-1-03-910073-2
 978-1-03-910072-5 paper

A child struggles with the right timing for playing in a puddle in this humorous picture book.

A girl who appears to be in preschool or kindergarten is thrilled when the school sandbox is filled with water. “I want to jump in!” she cries. But she quickly realizes that cavorting in the tempting puddle would make her teachers and parents upset. The next day, the sandbox has dried out—the marvelous puddle is gone. Luckily, just as buses arrive, rain starts to fall, and when the girl asks permission to play in the new puddles, her parents provide boots, a raincoat, and an umbrella. For any child who has wanted to jump in a muddy puddle at school, the compulsion will be immediately recognizable. Using simple words and lines, with some rhymes in the text and repeated phrases, Nearchou creates a narrative at the perfect level for emergent readers. Everett’s digital cartoon illustrations have soft edges and child characters with huge eyes, warm expressions, and skin tones in many different hues. Much of the storytelling happens in the details the illustrator creates, including the girl’s vividly imagined scenes and the cloudy skies that roll in as kids play on swings. Young readers will use the images to help decipher the text or just fill in their own memories of playground escapades.

An accessible text and a desire for puddle adventures make this an outstanding preschool pick.



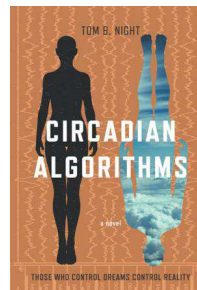
THE VERY SMALL ADVENTURES OF ANNE KATRINE

Newman, N.J.
Illus. by C. Gadotti
 Apex Collaborative (164 pp.)
 \$12.95 paper | June 30, 2022
 978-1-73629-460-4

A young girl befriends Danish elves and a charming snowy owl in this middle-grade fantasy debut and series opener.

Ten-year-old Anne Katrine loses one of her favorite people—her grandmother. Her parents settle the late woman’s estate in Denmark and leave their daughter in Pennsylvania for what was meant to be a temporary stay but becomes indefinite. Now she’s stuck with cruel relatives, like spiteful Aunt Jess and bullying cousin Neena. But things aren’t all bad. In the surrounding woods, Anne Katrine meets a couple of affable men—each no more than 5 inches tall. Yul and Nissa are Danish elves who offer her magic seeds so she can be elf-sized, too (or return to her regular size when necessary). They need her help retrieving Yul’s laptop, which Neena swiped, thinking the tiny object was a bracelet charm that Anne Katrine stole. Meanwhile, the elves hitch rides from warmhearted snowy owl Dumbert and sneak into Anne Katrine’s attic bedroom for late-night visits. Yul and Nissa make Pennsylvania life so much better; unfortunately, they plan to travel to a faraway land to restock their magic seeds, and Anne Katrine, who misses her parents, will be lonely once again. Newman’s delightful story is reminiscent of “Snow White” and “Cinderella.” The appealing young hero radiates tenderness and perseveres despite horrid treatment, especially from Aunt Jess, who, it seems, hates her niece. Nissa stands out among the vibrant characters; he has an extensive vocabulary and likes a good pun (“Owl be right back”). Newman wisely keeps the plot uncomplicated, though there’s a lot left unresolved. The author has a series in the works and ends this book with the promise of even greater adventures awaiting Anne Katrine. Gadotti’s black-and-white sketches enliven the pages, from Anne Katrine’s bandaging Dumbert’s wound to the Pennsylvania woods.

Colorful characters headline this imaginative, witty tale.



CIRCADIAN ALGORITHMS

Night, Tom B.
 Self (242 pp.)
 \$17.99 | \$12.99 paper | \$5.99 ebook
 Mar. 22, 2022
 979-8-40413-543-5
 979-8-40413-598-5 paper

In Night’s SF novel, an experimental surgery affecting sleep requirements turns a woman’s waking life into a nightmare.

It’s 2019, and Madeline Johnston has had trouble sleeping ever since she took up the reins as CEO