



THE BOOK STALL

May 2020
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Nancy Dreher, *Editor*



Dear Readers,

We miss you! We're staying very busy with online orders, virtual events, and some deliveries, but all that is a poor substitute for our daily interactions with our customers and authors. There is always a bookseller online fulfilling orders as we receive them, and we're doing our best to meet the needs of our readers. To spice things up a

bit, we launched Blind Date with a Puzzle, a huge success! I understand all the puzzles had a very nice time.

Coronavirus is responsible for many cancellations, but as far as I know, Mother's Day is still on the calendar for May 10. A book is a particularly thoughtful gift this year, given that there is no place to wear a cute sweater! We have some great reviews in this issue and will be posting more recommendations in the coming weeks. Keep up with us on Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram!

Everyone at my house is reading when we're not talking about what to have for dinner or what movie to watch afterwards. My husband, Roger, really enjoyed Stephen Ambrose's *Nothing Like It in the World: The Men Who Built the Transcontinental Railroad 1863-1869*. My oldest, Katie (23), loved Veronica Roth's first adult fantasy novel, *The Chosen Ones*. Lexy is busy with her annual re-reading of the *Harry Potter* series. I read Jason Rosenthal's wrenching *My Wife Said You May Want to Marry Me*, knowing full well how the story ends with his brilliant author-wife's untimely death—but still hoping for a miracle. *Saint X* by Alexis Schaitkin is a riveting story about a young girl's mysterious death during a vacation in the tropics and her sister's chance encounter many years later with someone connected to her death. I was an early fan of Stephanie Danler's writing in her novel *Bittersweet*, and was not disappointed by her brutally honest memoir, *Stray*. The inimitable Scott Turow's latest legal thriller, *The Last Trial*, is on our "shelves." Legendary lawyer Sandy Stern from *Presumed Innocent*, now 85, takes on what he knows is his last trial to defend an old friend. Finally, Lawrence Wright has always been one of my favorite non-fiction writers (*Going Clear* about scientology is an amazing read!), so I was surprised and delighted to see that he'd written a novel, *The End of October*. I was even more surprised he had written presciently about a deadly virus that brings the world to its knees.

At this point, with so much uncertainty, it's hard to know when the store will re-open. We're hoping that in the near future we can return to curbside pick-up. In the meantime, remember us when you're in need of a book—we're just a few clicks away.

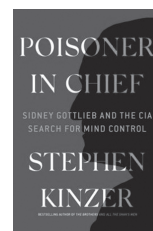
Stay safe and socially distant!

Steph

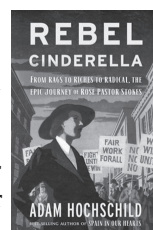
Staff Reviews from Home

JON GRAND

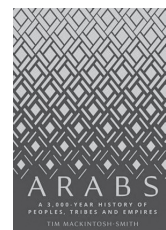
Poisoner in Chief: Sidney Gottlieb and the CIA Search for Mind Control by Stephen Kinzer (\$30). *The Manchurian Candidate* was a great movie. But what if you really could implant the mind with instructions that could be activated at will? What if you could control the minds of your enemies, or create a group of your own people who would obey without question or scruples? For Sidney Gottlieb, finding the means to control minds as a tool of national defense was his life's work. He was brilliant and ruthless in his pursuit of it. LSD was but one of the weapons in his arsenal. He lived simply, quietly, in a cabin with no running water, tending a herd of goats. He too represents the "banality of evil."



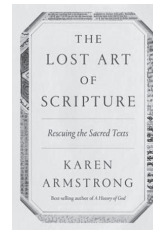
Rebel Cinderella: From Rags to Riches to Radical, the Epic Journey of Rose Pastor Stokes by Adam Hochschild (\$30). Rose Pastor came to the United States in 1903, a poor Jewish immigrant from Russia. She would marry into one of New York's wealthiest families, and, with her husband, take up the causes of labor rights, birth control, and numerous other social justice issues. Her ability to stir audiences earned her a reputation as a woman who was dangerous to the country. In Hochschild's telling, she streaks across the pages like some shooting star only to burn out and end her life in poverty, as it began.



Arabs: A 3,000-Year History of Peoples, Tribes and Empires by Tim Mackintosh-Smith (\$35). Gertrude Bell tried to warn Churchill and others that the partitioning of the Middle East after WWI would be disastrous. Why? Because the boundaries failed to take into account the differences and animosities between the various Arab tribes and peoples. The failure to understand and respect the differences has led to the problems we see today. And in our ignorance, we too tend to see Arab peoples as a single homogeneous group. Mackintosh-Smith's book is essential to understanding the subtle, nuanced relationships that bind together or tear apart the group we call Arabs. In telling their story, he tracks the complex currents that impacted their history and nurtured their myths. This is not a prescription for peace in the Middle East. It is, however, an essential guide to understanding the people of that troubled region.



The Lost Art of Scripture: Rescuing the Sacred Texts by Karen Armstrong (\$35). We think of scripture as something written: the Bible, the Quran, the Torah. But that causes us problems. The original sacred "texts" were not texts at all, but oral recitations that used poetry, music, and repetition to help explain the unexplainable and connect with the unknowable. Over time there were new stories, new meanings, and new interpretations. As these were written down, sources and traditions were often merged, leading to seeming inconsistencies and contradictions. Perhaps worse, once written down, they became set in place, losing the dynamism that kept pace with changing times. Armstrong argues that the texts are not meant to be "true" in the scientific sense. Rather the texts point us toward higher truths that we can only partly understand. Understanding the history, the evolution, of these texts provides context for the inconsistencies and

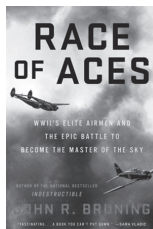




points towards the commonalities and universals. Religion has and will continue to be a powerful force in the world. Understanding the commonalities and recognizing the corruptions is critical. Armstrong has provided a useful road map.

Race of Aces: WWII's Elite Airmen and the Epic Battle to Become

the Master of the Sky by John R. Bruning (\$30). Eddie Rickenbacker was America's first Ace of Aces, a deadly fighter pilot with some 26 enemy kills to his credit. In 1942, he offered a bottle of bourbon to the first pilot who could beat his record. It was a challenge that could not be ignored. For three years, pilots chased the prize. Bruning takes us into their high-tension, adrenalin-charged world, where pushing the envelope sometimes meant pushing up daisies. For the top contenders, skill and daring sometimes took second place to luck. Bruning captures the drama, the fear, the passion, and the fatigue that defined the lives of these pilots as they pushed the boundaries of their machines and themselves. Why did they do it? Must have been some bottle of bourbon.



ANN KEIL



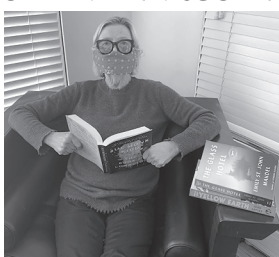
Why We Swim by Bonnie Tsui (\$28). Swimming is the second most popular recreational activity in the United States,



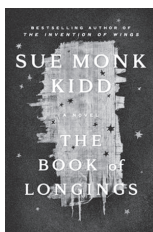
topped only by walking. Though it is not an innate skill, it seems to have been around forever. Ten thousand-year-old Neolithic Age paintings of swimmers have been found in the middle of the Sahara Desert. *Why We Swim* is a series of essays about swimmers and swimming, interwoven with interesting facts, such as a list of inventions related to the sport. Leonardo da Vinci developed an animal skin bladder for breathing underwater, whereas Ben Franklin invented hand paddles to increase his speed.

An intriguing chapter covers samurai swimming, a type of competitive swimming in Japan. Contestants have to cross a body of water while wearing 45 pounds of body armor and carrying a sword, or shoot arrows at a target while treading water. Note that the arrows only shoot straight when the feathers are completely dry. There is inspiration here, too, from the Icelandic fisherman who swam in 41° water for six hours after his boat capsized, to a woman who came back from a severe leg injury to become a member of the Ocean's Seven, an elite group of marathon swimmers. This book is not only an ode to swimming, but also a meditation on what being involved in any sport brings to us.

SHARMAN MCGURN



The Book of Longings by Sue Monk Kidd (\$28). Suppose Jesus the man, the historical figure, had been married. Whom might his wife have been, and what could have their relationship entailed? Sue Monk



Kidd's latest novel explores this premise, focusing on the years from before Jesus began his ministry until after his crucifixion.

Meticulously researched, the novel contains much information about the time in which it is set, including the place of women in society. The main character of the story is Ana, from an upper-class family in Sepphoris, Galilee. Ana is a feisty and strong-willed young girl, at odds with her mother. Her father, Matthias, is the head scribe and counselor to Herod Antipas, tetrarch (leader) of the area. Among the members of Ana's household is her Aunt Yaltha, well-educated at a time when most women were illiterate. Yaltha takes Ana under her wing, serving as a knowing mentor to her niece. She helps Ana to follow her dream of being an educated woman; in fact, Ana learns to read and write in several languages. Another key member of the household is Judas, Ana's cousin and adopted brother. His role in the novel, as in the Bible, is key. These characters, along with a large supporting cast, provide the reader with an interesting story, as well as a history lesson. Set in several locations throughout the far-flung Roman Empire, from tiny Nazareth to cosmopolitan Alexandria to the contemplative retreat of Therapeutae, Kidd has captured what it must have been like to live during that era. With a feminist perspective, I found *The Book of Longings* to be a fascinating account of what might have been.

KATHY RILEY



A Burning by Megha Majumdar (\$25.95, coming out June 2).

A captivating first novel that revolves around three characters whose lives are changed by a flippant Facebook post. Jivan, a poor student, is at the train station in Bengal when it is bombed by terrorists. Jivan is accused of being part of the militant group that planned the attack. Her teacher, PT Sir, and her friend, Lovely, could provide an alibi for her but are too involved in their own lives. PT Sir becomes involved in a right-wing political group, while Lovely is trying to establish an acting career. The author explores the price these characters pay to pursue their dreams of improving their circumstances. The publicity around Jivan's trial and their ambitions lead to a very unsettling conclusion. This is a fast-moving and engaging read.



NATALIE ROBBINS



In Five Years by Rebecca Serle (\$27). Though I am sad the current pandemic prevented us from seeing Rebecca Serle

at the Highland Park Library in March, her book, *In Five Years*, packs the comfort and kinship of a room full of people into a delightful read. December 15, 2020 has been Dannie Kohan's day. After nailing an interview at a top law firm in New York, her boyfriend celebrates by proposing. Always a planner, Dannie feels relief that her five-year-plan was unfolding exactly as scheduled. That night, Dannie wakes up in the year 2025 in a different apartment, next to a different man, wearing a different ring. The next hour feels vivid and oddly right, which only adds to the confusion she feels waking up the next morning back in her 2020 life. Dannie is determined to brush the incident aside until four years later, when she comes face to face with the man in her vision. Several characters weave in and out of Dannie's story, and though they are certainly not spared from the grief of real life, their bonds feel so endearing and pure it borders on otherworldly. The relationship between Dannie and her best friend leapt off the pages and filled the room with the

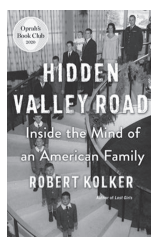


warmth that I had been craving. Serle's New York City was central to the narrative in a way that made me feel like a participant in the story, as opposed to an observer. *In Five Years* reads like a love letter: to New York City, to friendship, to what we thought our lives would be, and to what they became.

CHARLOTTE ROBERSTON



Hidden Valley Road: Inside the Mind of an American Family by Robert Kolker (\$29.95). Imagine the picture-book family of post-WWII America. The military officer father is handsome, smart, and ambitious. Mom is a pretty, well-spoken Texan, who prides herself on her domestic skills. They have 12 children born between 1945 and 1965, ten boys and finally two girls. The Galvin family was well-known in Colorado Springs, first for their sheer numbers, all those handsome little boys and their charming parents, while the reality of family life at home was disturbing. As the boys grew into teenagers, casual roughhousing became bitter fights among them, and the parents were either unable or unwilling to stop the fights, even when the boys were injuring one another. Among the children, violence, terror, and abuse became commonplace. The oldest boy, Donald, was diagnosed with schizophrenia as a college freshman. Subsequently five of his younger brothers fell victim to the disease, and the already brittle family structure crumbled. The author intersperses the tragic tale of the Galvin family with the history of schizophrenia and the erratic and largely ineffective treatments over the years. This history was written with the cooperation of all the living members of the Galvin family, and, as many reviewers have noted, it is competently and compassionately told. In the mid 1970s, the Galvins became subjects of a study, ongoing today, by the National Institute of Mental Health, examining the genetic and familial origins of this devastating disease. This book is a mesmerizing portrait of the ravages of mental illness, as well as the courage, hope, and grit of Galvin family members in their efforts to sustain one another and further society's understanding of schizophrenia.



Hollywood Park: A Memoir by Mikel Jollett (\$27.99, out May 26). This memoir stands out in the litany of unspeakable childhoods. Born to parents who were members of the California drug-rehab-turned-cult, Synanon, Mikel and his older brother were sent at six months to be raised in "The School," a group setting attended by caregivers. They were to be "Children of the Universe," needing no familial bonds. Seen through his 5-year-old eyes, he describes the parents. "They would arrive like ghosts, visiting us for a morning, an afternoon. They would sit with us or walk around the grounds, to laugh or cry or toss us in the air while we screamed. Then they'd disappear again, for weeks, for months, for years, leaving us alone with our memories and dreams, our questions and confusion, the wide-open places where we were free to run like wild horses in the night." The author is a songwriter and front man for the band, Airborne Toxic Event, and there is poetry in his description of the longing, fear, hunger for a family—and the literal hunger that permeated his youth. Seized from Synanon at the age of 5 by his mother and grandfather, he and his older brother grew up impoverished, primarily in the Pacific Northwest. They watched their mother, who was emotionally unavailable to her children, pair up with a succession of men, always hoping that one of them would become an actual "dad." Mikel met his own father when he was 6, and in his



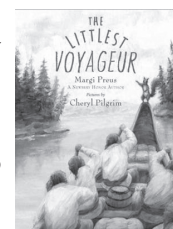
teens moved to Los Angeles to live with him and attend high school, after which he graduated from Stanford. There is so much more to this young man's history, and as I read it, my heart was heavy—hoping that someone so smart, sensitive, and caring would catch a break in life. Fortunately, he did, and this is his story, which is well told.

Childrens's Reviews

BETSY BALYEAT



The Littlest Voyageur by Margi Preus, illustrated by Cheryl Pilgrim (\$16.99). It is 1792, and unbeknownst to a group of voyagers traveling from Montreal to a trading post on Lake Superior, an intrepid, curious squirrel is hidden in their canoe. La Rouge is soon discovered because he is so excited he can't stay hidden. The voyagers are not particularly happy to have him, especially because he is no help. He doesn't paddle, he doesn't cook, and he is no help on portage because he can't carry anything. When they finally arrive at the trading post, La Rouge is shocked: the voyagers traveled all that way to trade for beaver pelts. With help from a sweet flying squirrel named Monique, La Rouge organizes forest friends to try and stop the voyagers. Newbery honor winner Preus threads together a nature adventure, history lesson, cautionary environmental tale, and an animal love story. It is an entertaining book with a heart-warming ending. *Ages 7-10*



Awesome Dog 5000 vs. Mayor Bossy Pants by Justin Dean (\$13.99). Marty, Skyler, and Ralph are back for a new adventure. This time they face Mayor Bossypants, a small man with a very large ego, who has managed to convert himself into a giant robot. How much longer can they hide Awesome Dog from him—especially when they need their canine friend to power their invention, a machine that will make cafeteria food edible? This book is filled with silly, fun humor and really grounds itself when the friends learn how to be brave enough to own up to a mistake. Almost every page is illustrated black and white art, and the illustrations at the end of the book contain a decoding game. This is great for fans of Dogman. *Ages 7-9*



Golden Arm by Carl Deuker (\$17.99). As he enters his senior year of high school, Laz Weathers' life already seems to be heading toward a dead end. Laz stutters and has a learning disability, and college is probably not an option. The only bright spot in his life is baseball. Laz is a gifted pitcher, but his hopes for a minor league team are dashed when his high school drops their baseball program. Laz, who is well known as a talented pitcher, gets an opportunity to transfer to Lakehurst High, which has the city's top team, and live with the family of the star player. This is a chance to get out of the trailer park where he lives, get away from the drug dealers who hang out at the edge of the park, and make a life for himself. An action-packed story about baseball, brotherhood, and a boy from the wrong side of the tracks, who is trying to be a successful minor league baseball player. *Age 12 up*



The Paper Girl of Paris by Jordyn Taylor (\$17.99). In this interesting historical fiction tale, you meet two sides of a family—one side in the present day and one side in the past. Sixteen-year-old Alice inherits an apartment in Paris from her



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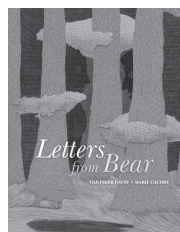
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grandmother. The apartment has been empty and locked up for 70 years, and Alice wants to find out why its existence was hidden for so long. Both Alice and her mother wonder why Gram never talked about her childhood, and, even more important, the other girl in all the photos on the tables? Why didn't Gram's family return to the apartment after the war? Alice decides to find some answers on her own. What she learns shocks her and her parents. She first finds out that the unknown girl in the pictures is Adalyn, Gram's younger sister, who was active in the French Resistance. Adalyn was determined to fight the Germans any way she could, even if it meant risking her safety, her reputation, and her relationships to the people she loved. Alice's engaging contemporary perspective neatly frames Adalyn's heartbreaking story as it slowly unfolds—providing a history lesson as well. The author also includes the "ineffable romance of the City of Lights." A solid historical fiction tale. *Age 12 up*

AMY TROGDON

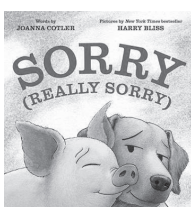


Letters from Bear by David Gauthier, illustrated by Marie Caudry (\$17.99). Bird has flown south for the winter, and Bear just cannot hibernate because he misses Bird. He decides to follow



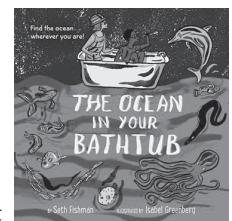
Bird, who is "on the other side of the world." In a series of letters, delivered by the wind, Bear tells Bird about his adventures in the dark forest, with a mermaid in the sea, in a boat made out of a hollowed-out tree trunk, and many more. Once Bear reaches the tropical island, he discovers that Bird, who has missed Bear, has already headed back North. An enthralling book of adventure and friendship that may inspire some letter-writing in your house. *Ages 4 - 7*

Sorry (Really Sorry) by Joanna Cotler, illustrated by Harry Bliss (\$17.99). At the farm, it's not just one or two, but all the animals are really grumpy. Cow is upset with her muddy hooves, so she gives Duck a face full of muck. Adding insult to injury, Cow announces she did it because she felt like it... and she's not sorry! Duck, who is also mad now, strikes out at Bird, saying, "Your tweets stink!" Bird turns on Goat...and so it goes. Made



to apologize, they do, but none of them are sincere. When Goat accidentally bumps into Pig and refuses to apologize, Pig breaks down crying. Along comes Dog, who reminds them about their good friendship. Kindness reigns supreme and brings everyone to their senses. Saying you are sorry—and meaning it—is not easy to do. *Ages 4-8*

The Ocean in Your Bathtub by Seth Fishman, illustrated by Isabel Greenberg (\$17.99). This companion book to *A Hundred Billion Stars* shows us how our ocean connects us in so many ways—through our food, our water, our weather, and more. Oceans cover most of our planet

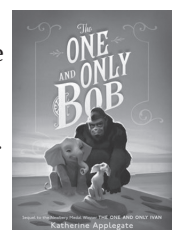


and give us most of our water. We also need to do our part by recycling. Every time you pick up a piece of trash, you are helping to save our oceans. The large cartoon art, with bold letters, make these books very child-friendly and so much fun to read aloud! *Ages 4-8*

Echo Mountain by Lauren Wolk (\$17.99). Set in Depression Era Maine, Ellie's family is forced to move from town to the county surrounding Echo Mountain. Life is hard, but Ellie and her father find they love the wilderness. Ellie's mother and older sister long for their old life in town. When Ellie's father has an accident felling a tree, he goes into a coma, and no one knows what the outcome will be. Meanwhile, Ellie finds she has a gift for healing and makes several attempts to wake her father. She also meets an old woman, who lives on the mountain top, and her friend, a young boy from the other side of the mountain. Lauren Wolk has become one of my favorite authors. She writes historical fiction beautifully, with memorable characters who are empathetic and have a lot of heart. *Ages 10 up*



The One and Only Bob by Katherine Applegate (\$18.99). Remember *The One and Only Ivan*? The beloved gorilla has a little dog friend, Bob, who is sassy, full of attitude, and wry observations. Bob now lives with a girl, Julia, and her parents. Luckily, her father works for the zoo, where Ivan and Ruby the Elephant now live. Bob has always felt he was a "bad dog," meaning "not a good representative of my species." But a tornado strikes, and Bob proves to himself and others that he is indeed brave. The canine glossary and picture dictionary of canine postures add to the pure joy of this book. A must-read! *Ages 8-12*



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