

★
2026

SUMMER *Reads*

DISCOVER YOUR
NEXT READ!



LONE★STAR
LITERARY★LIFE
TEXAS. LITERALLY.



LOVE IN BLOOM

EMILY HARTWELL



JUST ONE SUMMER

MARIAH LAURENCE



BENEATH THE SURFACE

LUCY VAUGHN



THE LAST LETTER

KATE WINTERS



*just
one more
chapter*



— 2026 —

Welcome to Summer Reads

Summer in Texas has a rhythm all its own.

It's long afternoons spent in a favorite chair, road trips with an audiobook playing through the speakers, library visits that end with a stack of books tucked under one arm, and evenings on the porch with "just one more chapter."

Across our state, readers and writers are creating, discovering, and sharing stories that entertain, challenge, comfort, and inspire. This catalog is our invitation to celebrate those stories together.

Whether you're searching for your next great read, exploring a new genre, or supporting local literary voices, we hope this catalog helps you make meaningful connections throughout the summer.

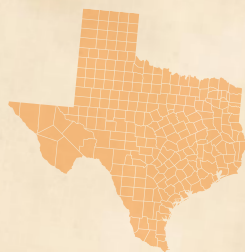
Thank you for being part of a community that believes stories matter. We invite you to explore, discover, and share the books that make this summer unforgettable.

Happy reading,



Amy Kelly
Editor-in-Chief
The Lone Star Literary Life Magazine





I completed the
LONE STAR LITERARY LIFE
SUMMER
Reads
SCAVENGER HUNT
today!

LONESTAR-LIT.COM

Download the Scavenger Hunt

SUMMER *Reads*

SCAVENGER HUNT

Howdy, book adventurers!

Can you complete the Lone Star Literary Scavenger Hunt?

Explore your local indie bookstore or library and check off as many items as you can. Happy hunting!

FIND THESE BOOKISH TREASURES

- ☐ A book by a Texas author
- ☐ A book with a cowboy on the cover
- ☐ A book with a star in the title or on the cover
- ☐ A children's book set in Texas
- ☐ A book with the word "hill" or "prairie" in the title
- ☐ A book by an author who shares your first name
- ☐ A cookbook featuring Texas BBQ or Tex-Mex
- ☐ A mystery that takes place in Texas
- ☐ A picture book with a Texas animal (armadillo, coyote, longhorn, etc.)
- ☐ A book with a map inside

DISCOVER THESE STORE FAVORITES

- ☐ A bookmark with a Texas design (flag, boot, bluebonnet, etc.)
- ☐ A display for summer reading picks
- ☐ A sign that says "local," "Texas," or "indie"
- ☐ A shelf labeled "Staff Picks"
- ☐ A journal or notebook with a Western theme

SPOT THESE LITERARY GEMS

- ☐ A title that includes the word "Texas"
- ☐ A book with a horse on the cover
- ☐ A book about music, cowboys, or rodeos
- ☐ A bilingual children's book (English & Spanish)
- ☐ A graphic novel set in Texas

BONUS:

Each item can only be used one time—no repeats!

To be featured in *The Lone Star Literary Life Magazine*:

- ☐ Ask a parent or grown-up to verify you completed your list.
- ☐ Take a photo of you holding the "I completed the Scavenger Hunt!" page.
- ☐ Snap the picture in your favorite reading spot, library, or indie bookstore!
- ☐ Email the photo to: giftguides@lonestarliterary.com
- ☐ If you'd like, include your **first name only** and the name of the bookstore.

SUSPENSE / THRILLER / MYSTERY

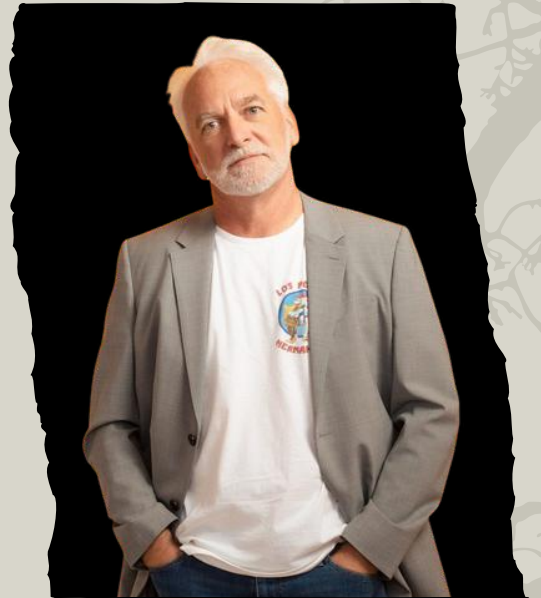


On the Bayou

By Sean Bridges

Wild Rose Press

A stake-out at a trafficker waystation ends with Special Agent Jennifer Nash placed on forced leave. Until a government insider offers her a chance at redemption. All she has to do is accompany an elite Louisiana SWAT team on a takedown mission. But as she's shuttled by boat into the Atchafalaya Basin, she believes some of the unit might be compromised. The raid ends in disaster. And the police find themselves outnumbered in the middle of a criminal operation, with a connected Cajun community and ruthless cartel members determined to put them down at all costs.



Sean Bridges is a Texas-based author and screenwriter known for his novels and audio productions such as *Parasite Zero* and *Gunbarrel Highway*.

LOST BOOKS

LOST
BOOKS

by DCO
Publishing

New &
Secondhand
Books

Calls
Bindery
Publishing



FREE BOOKS

BOOK
SHOP & CAFE

Why Summer Still Feels Like Reading Season To Me

*Kimberly
Packard*

As a kid, we didn't take a lot of vacations. My dad traveled for work, so vacation for him meant he could spend time at home. So, what did a restless kid eager to experience the world do instead? Easy. She read.

Summer meant I could be transported to any world, any life. Whether that was rescuing a parent with a tesseract or being there with Margaret as she tried to fit into her changing life.

Today I'm fortunate to be able to take those vacations, but I always have several books packed. There's something special about the sun on your skin or digging your toes in the sand as you're transported into someone else's life.

For me, summer is a time to slow down, to read books that make you laugh and love. It's a time to one-more-chapter into the early morning hours. It's a time to get on a first name basis with the local bookstore, or to have your librarian automatically put a book on hold for you because they just know you'll love it.

Summer is a time when getting lost in a book is actually finding yourself again.

Find Kim at ***KimberlyPackard.com***.

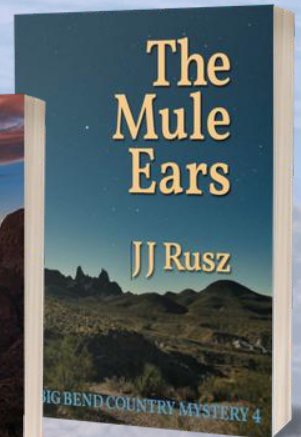
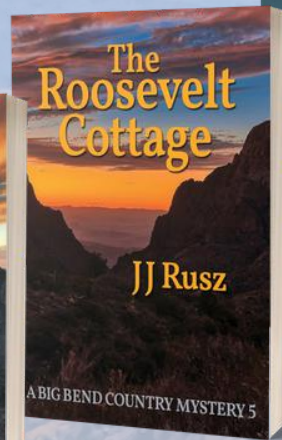
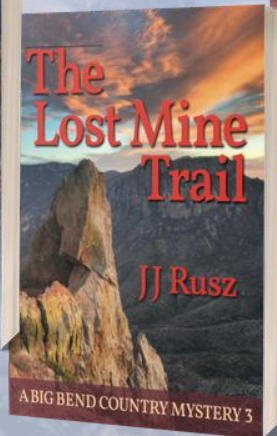
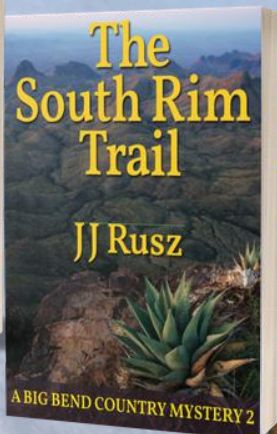
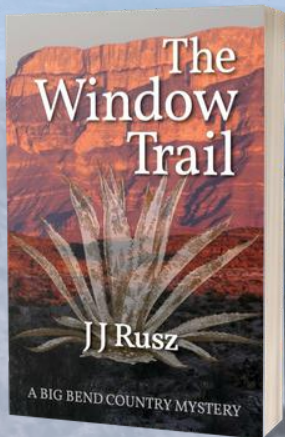


MYSTERY / HUMOR / ROMANCE

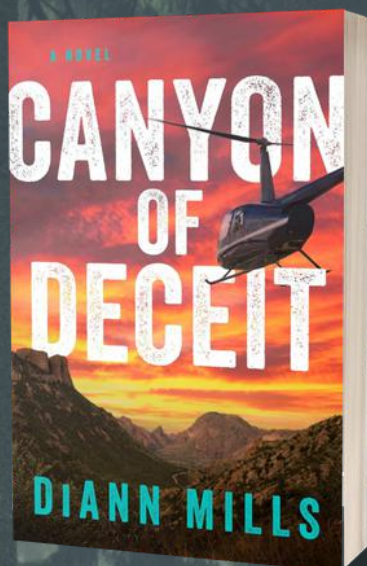
The Big Bend Country Mysteries

By J J Rusz

If intricate plots, memorable characters, nasty crimes (murder included), and a touch of humor get your pages turning, you'll likely enjoy the five Big Bend Country Mysteries. They'll transport you to the largest county in Texas, right up against the Rio Grande, with its surprising mountains, sprawling ranches, lots of cactus, and well-armed people. It's a world you won't soon forget.



J. J. Rusz is the pen name of John J Ruszkiewicz, creator of the Big Bend Country Mysteries. The author of a wide range of college textbooks, he is now retired from the University of Texas at Austin, where he taught for 40 years. He currently resides in Brewster County, Texas.



Canyon of Deceit

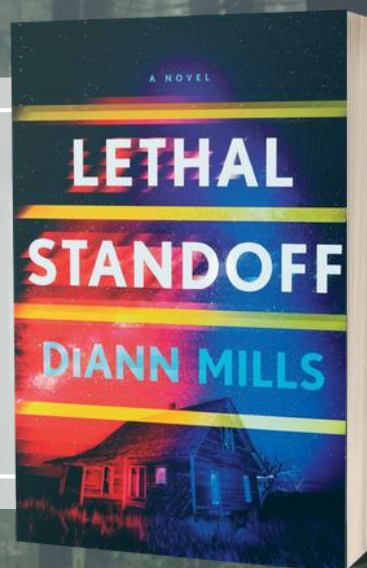
Survival isn't just about the wilderness—it's about who you can trust.

A desperate father, a hidden truth, and a child in danger. When wilderness expert Therese Palmer agrees to find a missing girl, she never expects the case to uncover a high-stakes international conspiracy.

Lethal Standoff

**Justice can be elusive.
Family secrets can be deadly.**

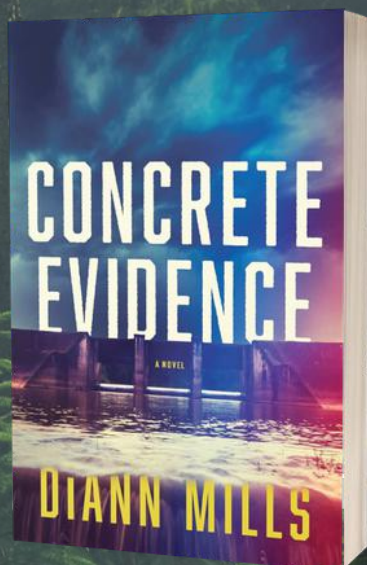
The stakes are high, and the clock is ticking in a volatile criminal case filled with unanswered questions. And Carrington Reed is running short on time to piece together clues that will solve the puzzle.



Concrete Evidence

A faulty construction job. The discovery of a dead body. A sinister plot.

As they search for answers, Avery Elliott and FBI Special Agent Marc Wilkins must decide if they can trust each other or if trust is the most dangerous choice they can make.



DIANN MILLS

Expect An Adventure



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

DiAnn Mills is a bestselling author who invites readers to expect an adventure—where heart-pounding suspense meets unforgettable romance and faith shines through every challenge. Known for crafting gripping plots and richly layered characters, DiAnn believes every breath we take unfolds a story waiting to be told—so why not make it thrilling?

Her novels have appeared on the CBA, ECPA, and Publishers Weekly bestseller lists and have earned numerous honors, including the Christy, Selah, Golden Scroll, Inspirational Readers' Choice, and Carol Awards.

DiAnn is a founding board member of American Christian Fiction Writers and serves as Conference Advisor for the Blue Ridge Mountains Christian Writers Conference. She is also active in Advanced Writers and Speakers Association, Mystery Writers of America, International Thriller Writers, the Jerry Jenkins Writers Guild, Outliers Writing University, and The Christian Pen. Passionate about helping others succeed, she invests in writers through mentoring, book coaching, editing, and dynamic workshops she teaches across the country.

A self-proclaimed coffee snob who roasts her own beans, DiAnn enjoys diving into good books, experimenting in the kitchen, and unabashedly spoiling her grandchildren—whom she insists are the smartest kids in the universe. She makes her home under the sunny skies of Houston, Texas. Connect with DiAnn for behind-the-scenes glimpses, writing tips, and lively conversations at diannmills.com.



From a young age, my parents encouraged reading, especially my mom, as a third-grade teacher. We had all sorts of books to read, and I even remember some records that taught me a few words of Spanish.

While I'm not sure this is just a summer reading memory, it is one that I have never forgotten. My grandparents lived in a small town in Southern Louisiana. At one point, they built a new house right next door to the library. Yes, you read that right, the library! I was in heaven. I would go over there every time we visited, and in true small-town fashion, I could borrow any book I wanted since they knew it was going next door.

My parents and grandparents knew where to find me, too, if I was missing. There was a world of knowledge within those walls.

My aunt lives in that house now, and I don't get lost next door, but that memory will remain with me forever. Libraries are beacons of light and hope for all.

Find Leslie at **StoreyBook Reviews**.

A Summer Reading Memory I'll Never Forget

Leslie Storey





HISTORICAL FANTASY

The Last Fairy Witch

By Jean M. Roberts

Hannah Heronstone appears to have everything—a devoted husband, a beloved child, and a thriving business built on ancient herbal knowledge. Yet beneath the calm surface of her life, something old and malevolent stirs. Centuries earlier, Eithne is a young Irish slave whose gift for healing and growing power marks her as something more.

Separated by centuries but bound by magic and fate, Hannah and Eithne must risk everything to confront the darkness rising in their worlds. To save those they love, they must cross through time itself—or lose all they hold dear.



ROMANCE / ROM-COM / TIME-SLIP

Feels Like the First Time

By Kimberly Packard

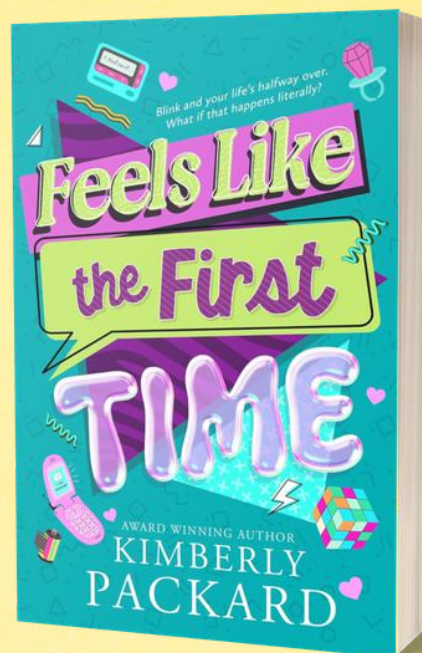
Abalos Publishing

Blink and your life's halfway over. What if that happens literally?

When college party girl Emily Murray's father cuts off the college fund—and her boyfriend ditches her to chase a record deal—Emily spirals, hard.

One shaved head and emotional black out later, she wakes up thirty years in the future, living a life she doesn't recognize.

With no way to rewind the clock, Emily scrambles to make sense of her new reality as she's forced to question: Was this really the future she was meant for?



In the Shade of the Gumball Tree

*Sybrina
Durant*

I n 1968, at fourteen, my favorite place to read was the window seat on the second floor of the dilapidated house my parents had moved us to. Our family of six had fallen on hard times and moved to the poorer side of town. It wasn't a happy place, but the extra-wide ledge of that window seat, in the bedroom I shared with three siblings, caught the afternoon sun like a bright secret. Despite our poverty, I always had books piled around me in careful stacks in my cushioned nook. Nancy Drew novels were favorites, their spines a cheerful chorus of yellows and pinks that matched the summer outside.

I'd sit there as the limbs of the big gumball tree brushed the screened window, providing shade, and sink into worlds of possibility. In each case file—*The Secret of the Old Clock*, *The Hidden Staircase*, *The Mystery at Lilac Inn*—I found a map of how to think, how to question, how to notice what others missed. Nancy's courage felt like a weather vane, always pointing toward truth, even when the turmoil of the grown-up world outside felt heavy with uncertainty.

I imagined solving puzzles with clever steps, page by page, learning to map my own path—one clue, one brave question at a time. That window seat became a lighthouse for me, offering light during long afternoons and the promise of a wider world beyond the frame of my room.

Find Sybrina at **Sybrina's Book Blog**.



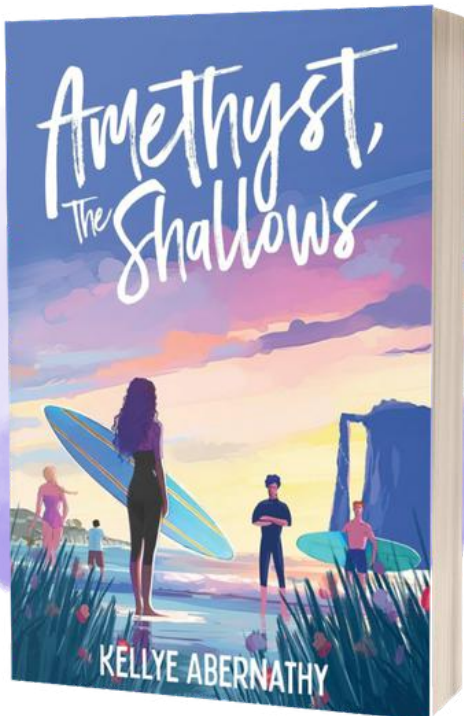


MIDDLE-GRADE FANTASY

THE AQUAMARINE SURFBOARD

Age never matters, these things are about bravery and heart.

A riveting beach tale about opening up to mystery, building community when and where you can — and discovering the ocean is filled with magic—the really BIG kind—the kind that changes the world.



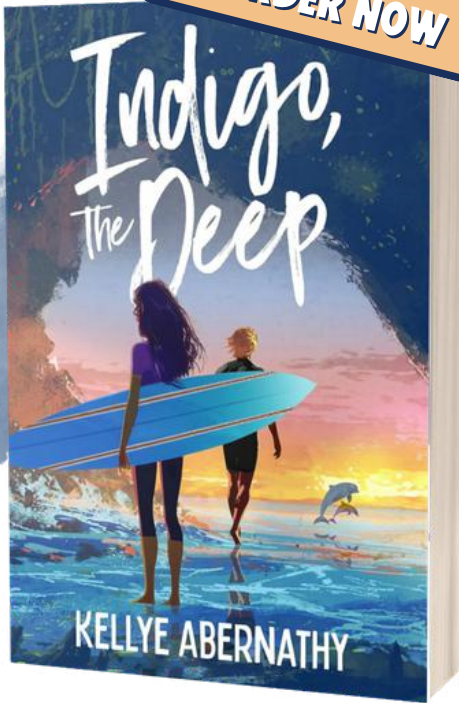
TEEN & YOUNG ADULT
COMING OF AGE FANTASY

AMETHYST, THE SHALLOWS

This is a night for being brave.

Guided by a wise surf master, mystical old women known as the Beachlings, and an open-hearted grandmother, six kids embark on transformative adventures that challenge their beliefs about possibilities and the intense nature of love.

PREORDER NOW



TEEN & YOUNG ADULT
CONTEMPORARY FANTASY

INDIGO, THE DEEP

In the heart of the deepest sea caverns, there is a stillness.

Learn to surrender to it.

Inspired by the certainty of wonder and the uncertain nature of time, Condi and Firth dive into their rawest places, discovering that healing—of nature, of others, and of themselves—is found in the bounty of a limitless sea.

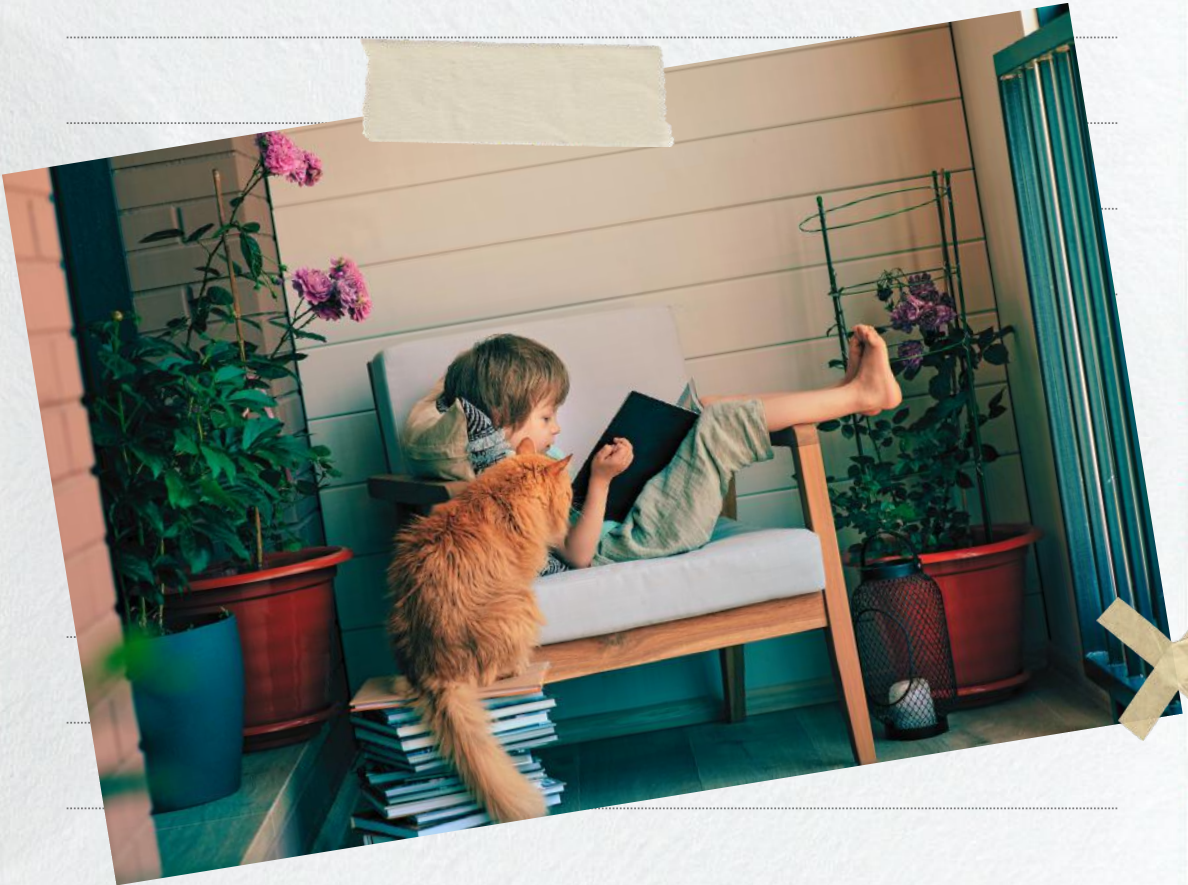
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kellye Abernathy

Kellye Abernathy is the author of the well-reviewed YA science-fantasy series: *The Aquamarine Surfboard* (2022), *Amethyst, The Shallows* (2024), and *Indigo, The Deep* (2026). A former wireless business executive and a graduate of the University of Kansas, Kellye teaches practical life skills, creative writing, yoga, and mindfulness within the trauma-survivor community in Plano, Texas. She hopes to inspire healing through body and breath awareness, creativity, consistency, and compassion. Her joys are many and varied, among them neuroscience, oceanography, swimming, biking, family adventures, and great conversation. She believes in staying curious, showing up, and keeping her heart open.









Magical Elements of the Periodic Table Book Series



By Sybrina Durant

Sybrina Publishing

The Magical Elements of the Periodic Table is a six-book series that turns the intimidating world of the periodic table into an enchanting adventure. Each book presents elements through a unique, kid-friendly cast—The Metal Horn Unicorn Tribe, The Elemental Dragon Clan, Alchemical Wizards, Actinide Knights, and Radioactive Goblins—all guiding young readers through 118 elements with the same engaging, picture-filled format.

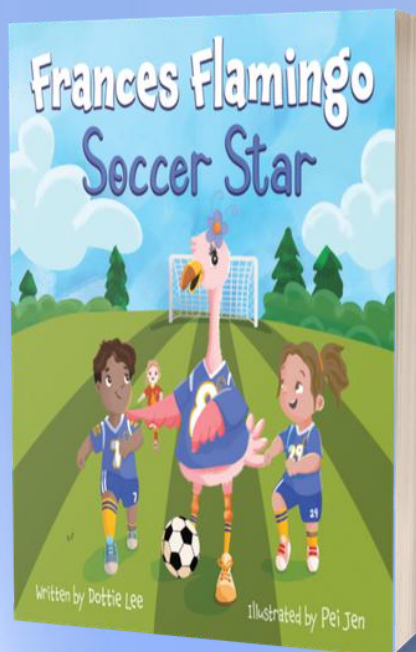
CHILDREN'S NONFICTION SCIENCE

Frances Flamingo: Soccer Star

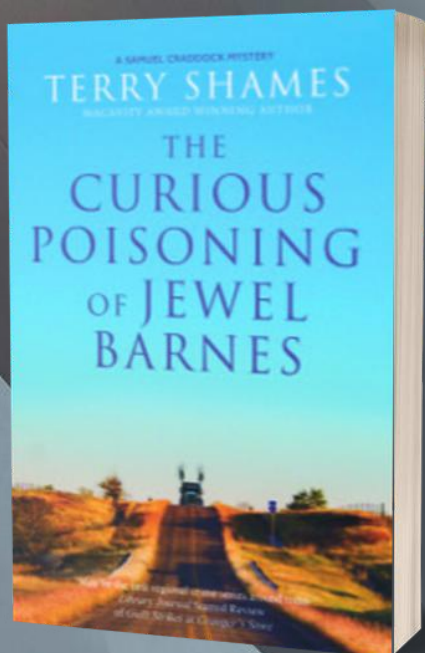
By Dottie Lee

Ink Society Press

The Adventures of Frances Flamingo series inspires children ages 4–8 to build confidence, embrace new experiences, and celebrate what makes them unique. *Frances Flamingo: Soccer Star*, encourages teamwork, perseverance, and courage through a fun and engaging soccer adventure.



CHILDREN'S PICTURE
BOOK FOR AGES 4-8



MYSTERY

The Curious Poisoning of Jewel Barnes

By Terry Shames

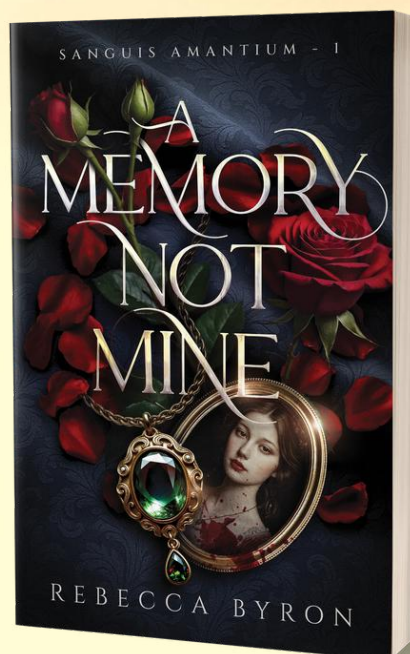
Severn House Publishing

Book twelve in the Samuel Craddock series highlights a family feud with a lethal twist. Chief of Police Craddock pursues a dangerously toxic investigation.

PARANORMAL /
VAMPIRE ROMANCE

A Memory Not Mine **By Rebecca Byron**

The Sanguis Amantium series delivers sizzling passion, ancient magic, and an epic love story that starts here. In the Scottish Highlands, Mira Garvie must embrace her clairvoyant gift when she meets a brooding protector with deep, dark secrets of his own.



A Summer Reading Memory I'll Never Forget

Sean Bridges

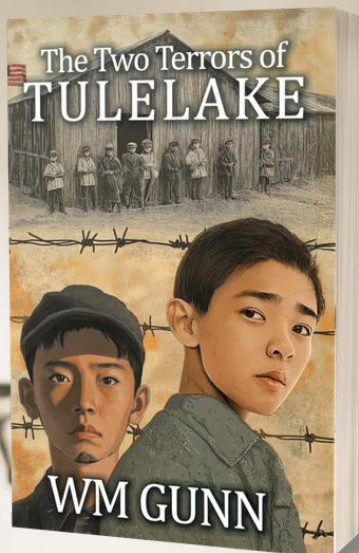
The build-up for Stephen King's IT was a summer of anticipation. I was a high school kid and already a fan in 1986. He actually taught me to learn to love to read. But that summer was the first time I ever saw a book advertised like a movie. With a 'Coming Soon' vibe.

IT is coming. And the poster art was from the First Edition cover of the novel, with the green claw peeking out of the storm drain. I was captivated, and the advertising worked on me because I saw the poster everywhere that summer. I never wanted a book more in my life.

When it finally came out, I raced into the mall bookstore. I freaked out the guy stacking the books on the shelf. I had to have it. I grabbed a copy, and it was the largest book I had ever held, a literal doorstop. I took it to the counter. It was so new they hadn't even set the price yet. They quoted me an amount, and I agreed. Honestly, I would have paid anything. I took the book home and devoured that story. It was so worth the wait.

Find Sean at **Audible Parade Productions.**





HISTORICAL THRILLER

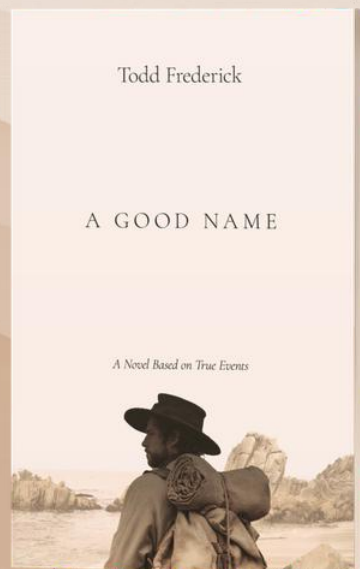
***The Two Terrors
of Tulelake***
By WM Gunn

Brainstorm Publishing

HISTORICAL FICTION

A Good Name
By Todd Frederick

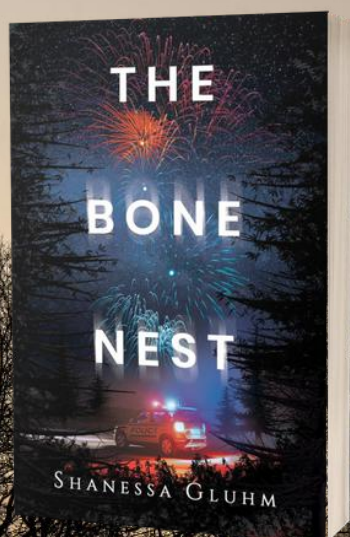
Atmosphere Press



THRILLER / CRIME / LEGAL

The Bone Nest
By Shanessa Glum

Lost Meridian Press



POST-APOCALYPTIC / DYSTOPIAN /
FANTASY / WESTERN

***Adverse Reactions: A
Novel of the Paranormal***
By Deborah J. Lightfoot

Seven Rivers Publishing

HISTORICAL FANTASY

THE WOMEN OF MIDSUMMER

By **Jean M. Roberts**

Daylily Press



The past isn't dead. It's watching,
waiting, and weaving its way
back through her.



Writer of witchy fantasy, **Jean M. Roberts** lives in Montgomery, Texas, where she is plotting her next historical fantasy adventure.

Summer Reading – A Time To Refresh

WM Gunn

I grew up on Jules Verne (the pioneering father of science fiction), Edgar Allan Poe (the pioneering father of detective fiction and the macabre), and HG Wells (the father of modern science fiction). Saturday afternoons were spent glued to my seat in the Arlington Theater watching every SF movie a ten-year-old could watch.

But one summer years later, while sitting on the sands of South Padre Island, I read something pivotal that spurred my own interest in writing to the next level—Peter Benchley’s *Jaws*. I would read some tense sentences, then glance at the ocean, and search for a great white shark. Back to the book, then back to the ocean.

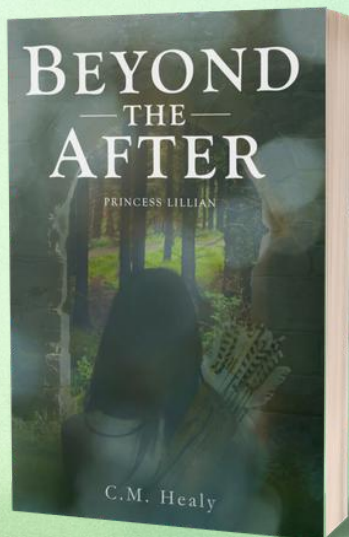
"I want to write my own stories of tension, challenge, and obstacles faced in life," I said to myself.

I write short stories, novellas, and novels ten months of the year, then take a summer break. Now I sit on the beach at North Padre Island reading Preston and Childs, Kevin Hwang, Clive Cussler, Michael Crichton, Ray Bradbury, and Frank Herbert. I take six books every year for our two-week beach break. I am transported into a storyline and witness the action. It also allows me to refresh my own writing journey with ideas (new and old).

Is this not the real purpose in reading – to learn and to experience?



Find WM Gunn at wm-gunn.com.



YOUNG ADULT ROMANTASY

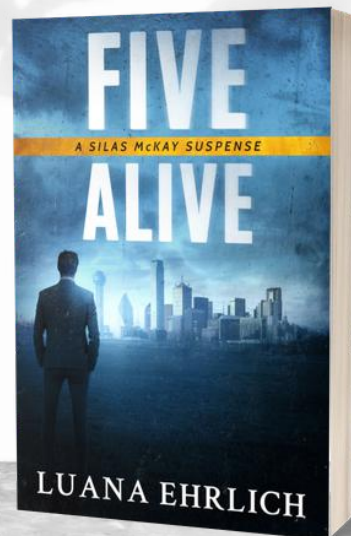
***Beyond the After:
Princess Lillian***
By C.M. Healy

Mercury West Publishing

CHRISTIAN MYSTERY/
SUSPENSE/ THRILLER

***Five Alive: A Silas
McKay Suspense***
By Luana Ehrlich

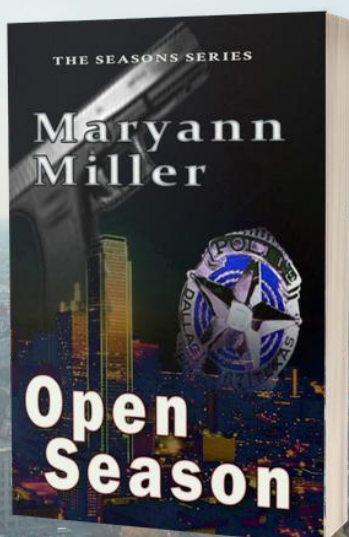
Potter's Word Publishing



POLICE PROCEDURAL
MYSTERY

Open Season
By Maryann Miller

MCM Enterprises



WOMEN'S LITERARY
FICTION

Sweet Jane
By Joanne Easley

Red Boots Press





SWEET ROMANCE

The Story Between Us & Sunset Ledge

By Darlene Deluca

The Wild Rose Press

An uncle suddenly becomes a dad and has to re-order his life. A reclusive curmudgeon faces the possibility of love again. Find all the feels on a Texas ranch!



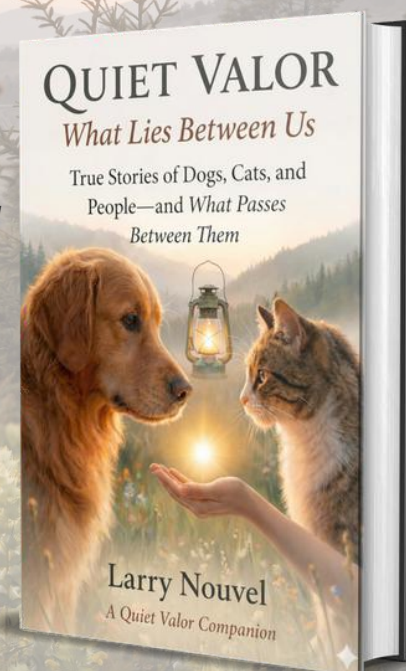
CREATIVE NONFICTION



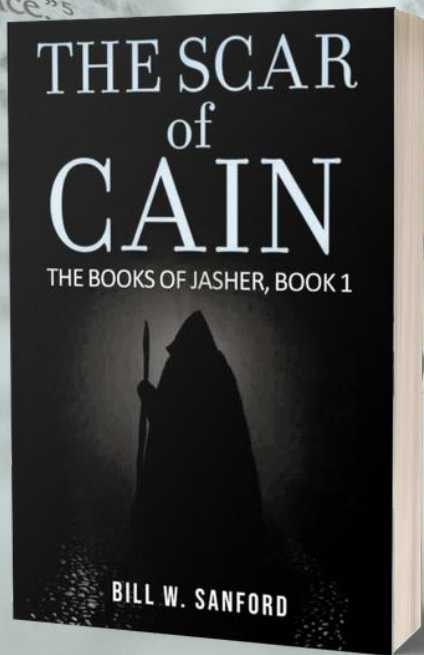
QUIET VALOR: WHAT LIES BETWEEN US

True Stories of Dogs, Cats, and People—and What Passes Between Them

The deepest courage often passes between a person and an animal, unspoken and unwitnessed. These are true stories of what dogs, cats, and the people who love them give each other when no one is watching.



BY LARRY NOUVEL



HISTORICAL FICTION

The Scar of Cain

By Bill Sanford

Christian Faith Publishing

The first in The Books of Jasher series, *The Scar of Cain* is an epic story that spans from the dawn of humanity to the near future, where ancient prophecy, hidden history, and a timeless battle between light and darkness shape the fate of the world. In 2028, immortal historian Benjamin Jasher must confront Walker Cain, a relentless force bent on creating a one-world order, before humanity's freedom is lost forever.

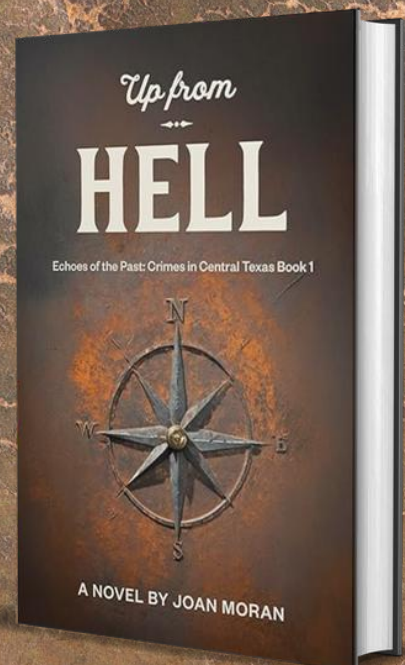
CRIME THRILLER

Up from Hell

By Joan Moran

Next Chapter

After escaping a troubled childhood, Neil Dixon becomes the Texas police officer he always dreamed of being. But when his past returns with deadly consequences, he must confront corruption, cartel violence, and the truth about the father he never knew. This is the first in Moran's Echoes of the Past: Crimes in Central Texas series.



BUSINESS SPONSORS

Thank you

to the businesses, organizations, and literary partners helping make the **2026 Summer Reads Catalog** possible.

We are grateful for the book-loving businesses who have chosen to support this season-long celebration of reading.

Their partnership helps us connect readers with great books, celebrate authors, and build a vibrant literary community all summer long.

We encourage you to visit and support the sponsors featured on this page.



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to learn more about sponsorship opportunities.



For more details and offers, visit the Lone Star Literary Life website, or reach out anytime at

giftguides@lonestar-lit.com



S E C O N D E D I T I O N