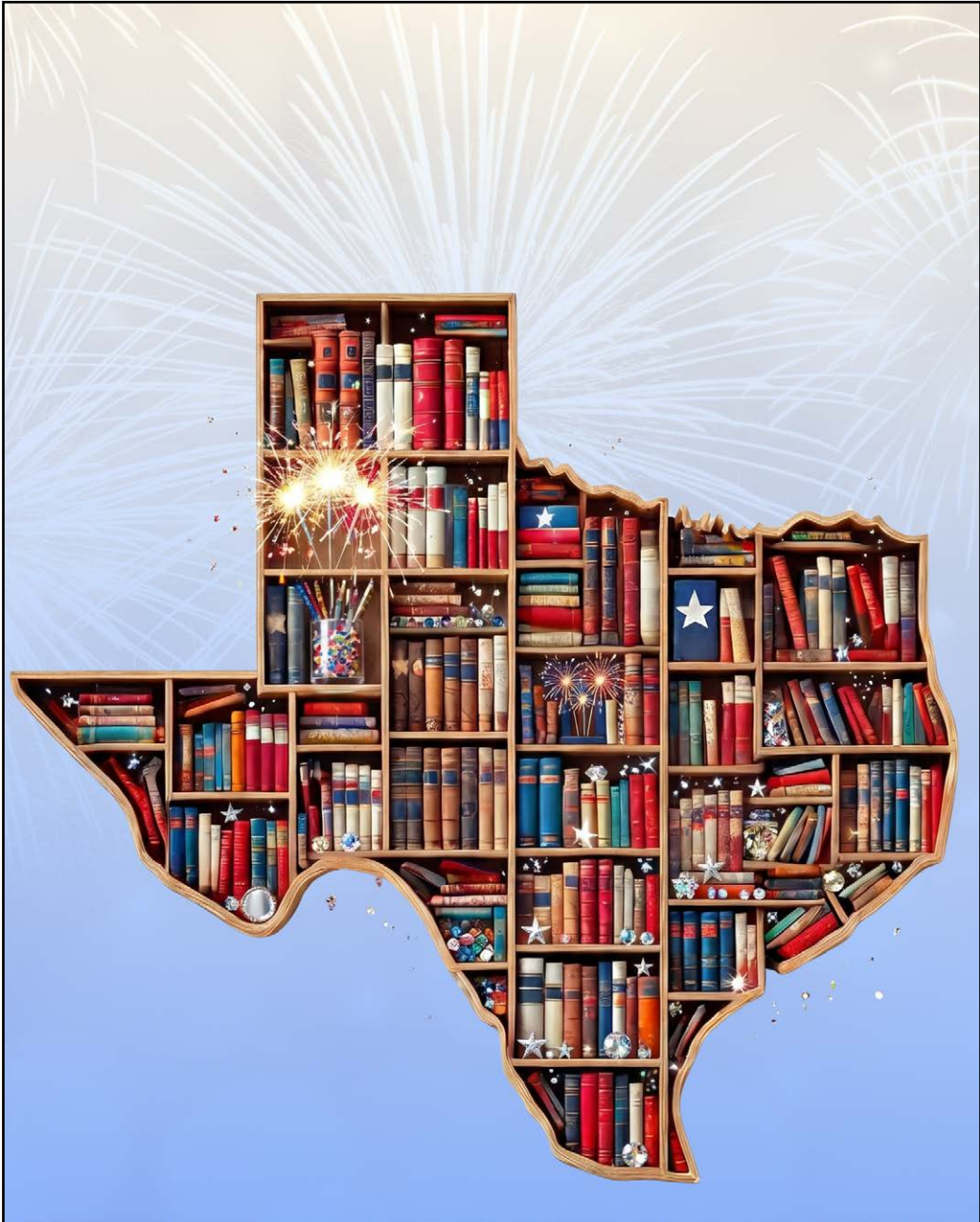


THE LONE STAR LITERARY LIFE

M A G A Z I N E



JULY 2026

ISSUE 22



LONE★STAR
LITERARY★LIFE
TEXAS . LITERALLY .



Letter
from the

Editor



Dear Reader,

On a trip to the California coast, as I stood on the edge of a cliff overlooking the waves, I discovered fairy lights in the ocean. Diamonds glinting brightly in the small swath of undulating water, light dancing and sparkling more vividly than any fireworks.

It was a moment of joy, a little gift that couldn't quite be captured in a video, though I tried.

Every one of us has that same sparkle in us. Something innate that, when revealed, radiates delight.

If you doubt you have that sparkle, be assured that it is there. You just have to discover it. Not sure how to go about it? Here are some tips:

Think about what lights you up.

What, when you're doing it, feels like you could happily go on forever? That thing that puts you so deeply in a flow state that you don't realize how much time has passed?

Consult those who know you best.

Ask them what lights you up. The thing, when you talk about it, that gives you a contagious energy, an enthusiasm that draws others into your excitement.

“*Nothing can dim the light that
shines from within us.*”

– Maya Angelou

Trust your body.

If you're still not sure, list all the possibilities. Sit quietly and focus on each thing that might be your sparkle. What feels like expansion in your body? What feels like a contraction? Go with what feels like it's growing. It's possible to have more than one, even many.

A side note to all my introverted friends out there: it can feel super uncomfortable to venture into an area that might bring attention to you. It's a choice to share your sparkle. You get to decide who sees your light.

That said, we were all designed to shine, and we all have the opportunity

to bring joy and delight to the world, in ways big and small, just by doing the things we love.

Warmly,



Amy Kelly
*Editor-in-Chief, Lone Star Literary Life
and the Lonestar Literary Life Team*



CREATIVITY FOR THE COMMON GOOD

Art House Dallas is a local non-profit that exists to create community and empower local artists. Each year we host over 100 events and programs for writers, musicians, visual artists, and performing artists. There's something for everyone!

www.arthousedallas.com



JUST FOR WRITERS

You can apply to be in a monthly writing group, attend a feedback for writers, and meet writers and creatives at one of our upcoming virtual or in-person events.

Find out information, group applications, and registration at arthousedallas.com

Video from the EDITOR

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NOW YOU CAN LISTEN TO

Lone Star Literary Life!



We are excited to introduce a brand new way to experience *The Lone Star Literary Life Magazine*.

Many of our articles are now available in audio format, so you can listen to the stories, interviews, and insights you love wherever your day takes you. Whether you are commuting, walking the dog, or simply prefer listening, you can now enjoy Lone Star Literary Life on the go.

On each article page, you will find a link to listen to the audio version of that piece. We have also created this dedicated

page where you can easily find all the month's articles with audio and listen to them in one convenient spot.

As you explore the recordings, you may notice that some links include an asterisk (*). This simply means the article is read by an AI voice rather than a human narrator. Our goal is to make the magazine more accessible and enjoyable in multiple formats, and we are thrilled to offer another way for readers and listeners to connect with the vibrant Texas literary community. ★



Letter from the Editor



Now You Can Listen to Lone Star Literary Life!*



Love, Jill column*



Play Like He Would
by Heath Hamrick*



Book Campaigns*



Texas Literary Podcast Highlight*



Texas Books Preview*



Marketing Moment*



Indie Bookstore Roundup



Texas Reads*



What to Read Next in Young Adult*



Texas Writes*

SECRET Shelf

Remember searching for hidden pictures in magazines when you were younger?

We've brought that sparkling spirit to this issue.

Five previously published books are hiding throughout these pages, waiting to catch your eye. Your mission is simple:

Find each cover shimmering somewhere in the magazine.

It's a fun way to explore the issue, and you might just discover a gem of a book that deserves another moment in the spotlight.



Here are the dazzling books on this month's **SECRET SHELF**

Share your glittering finds with us on Instagram and tag [@LoneStarLit](#).

Happy searching!



YEARS OF “MAYBE NEXT YEAR.”

The book you've been dreaming of is not finished because you lack *time*. You lack *a plan*.

You are the thought leader, the coach, the expert. You have the ideas. Stop letting analysis paralysis and the myth of “finding time” stall your author dream.

A FINISHED MANUSCRIPT IS SIX MONTHS AWAY.

My Book in Six is the 183-day roadmap for nonfiction authors who need structure, not more hours.

- **20 Minutes a Day** (*Write during the cracks in your schedule.*)
- **Idea to Done** (*Month One is dedicated to finding your best idea.*)
- **Real Community** (*Find your author people. No one succeeds alone.*)

WRITE YOUR BOOK TODAY

July

BOOKISH EVENTS



July sparkles with literary events to light up your month. Join in the fun with festivals, comic cons, workshops, and more. Click here for [links to the July events below](#), or visit the [Lone Star Lit Bookish Events calendar](#) for information on all upcoming author signings and indie bookstore events across Texas. ★

July

WLT Summer Writing Retreat

July 10-11

Deep Vellum Music & Literature Festival

July 18-19

Cowtown Comic Con

July 18-19

Texas Book Lover's Con

July 19-20

Greater Austin Comic Con

July 20

Macondo Writers Workshop

July 25

Kiss & Tell 2026



WHY CAN'T I SELL MY BOOK?

You wrote it. You launched it. You're posting about it.

*So why does marketing
still feel confusing...
and exhausting?*



*You're not failing.
You're just in a stage.*

INTRODUCING THE AUTHOR JOURNEY ASSESSMENT

*A free quiz designed to show you exactly where you are
– and what to focus on next.*

*Stop guessing.
Start building strategically.*

TAKE THE FREE AUTHOR JOURNEY ASSESSMENT

Most authors are applying the wrong strategy for their stage.

START THE QUIZ



LOVE,

Jill

Lots of people like books and reading. Some of us (like me) must admit to taking that up a notch, or twenty. I'm in the camp with my fellow book crows who pick up each shiny new story with glee, collecting them in our nests, and occasionally bestowing them on only the worthiest of mortals.

This month's theme of 'sparkle' perfectly encapsulates how I feel about the world of books. Sparkly. Bubbly. Effervescent. If I'm chatting with an author, reading just about anything, listening to an audiobook while walking, or chatting with my book club,



you can bet I'm having a marvelous time.

I adore that tingly excitement of realizing the book I just started has grabbed me by the feels and won't let go even after the last word. Even better is the appreciation for having been so deeply engrossed in a story that the outside world fell away almost completely. One or two movies have given me that level of escape, but books reliably take me away from the everyday--pretty much every day. My poor husband just rolls with it and knows to get my eyes on him before expecting me to hear what he's saying. Best guy ever.

Books can also spark connections with writers and fellow readers. I recently chatted with an author at a book fair in my town. He was the most delightful guy and a talented writer. Talking with him and discovering why he writes

Jill Anderson

A lover of stories and a believer in kindness. A misplaced Texan, she currently lives in Tacoma, WA, and thinks the weather might keep her there permanently.



resulted in an even greater enjoyment of his books than I would have felt otherwise. I read one of his gorgeous sentences with awe, and smiled with pride for my new friend. Seeing someone in a train station or at the park with one of your favorites in hand can lead to marvelous interactions with strangers, as well as recommendations for your next great read.

Books can help our similarities shine more brightly than our differences. Any lover of stories has probably tried a book club at least once. They can sometimes veer towards a vibe of 'we like wine and happened to read a book' or alternately 'we studied this sucker intently and will demonstrate our superior understanding'—neither of which is much fun. When you stumble across one that feels more like friends sharing their love of stories with each other, the magic of books comes alive in the room. My current book club pushes me to see things in books that I never would have noticed

otherwise, multiplying the magic even further.

Whether you are a fellow book crowd or a more normal person who reads occasionally when the busyness of life allows time, I hope you can grab a glittery gem or two and find some time to experience a spark of reading joy in your life. Happy reading! ★

Feels Like the
First Time Reel

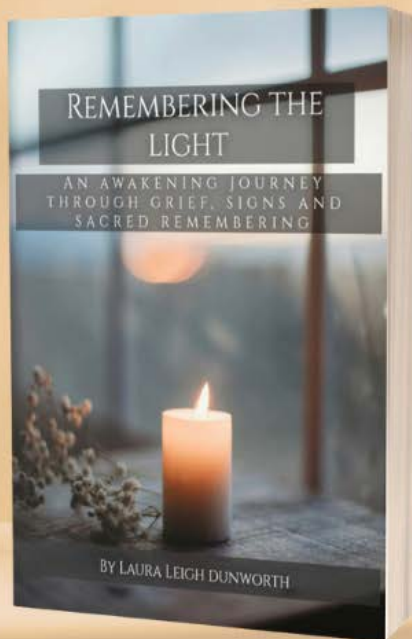
REMEMBERING THE LIGHT

AN AWAKENING JOURNEY THROUGH GRIEF, SIGNS AND SACRED REMEMBERING

BY LAURA LEIGH DUNWORTH

A profound journey through grief, exploring the connections that transcend physical existence. Through heartfelt reflections and the signs that guide us, Laura Leigh Dunworth reveals the sacred process of awakening to our true selves and the light we carry within.

READ NOW



AUTHORS, LET'S GET THE WORD OUT—FOR FREE!

At Lone Star Literary Life, we love helping Texas authors shine—and that starts with two totally free tools just for you:

★ **Texas Books Preview**

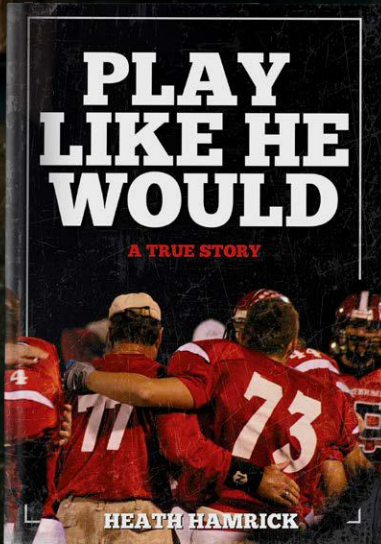
Have a new release? Submit it for a complimentary listing in our monthly Texas Books Preview—a go-to feature for book lovers, librarians, reviewers, and bookstore buyers across the state.

Texas Bookish Events Calendar

Hosting a launch party, book signing, or workshop? Add your event to our statewide calendar and connect with readers who are ready to show up and support.

LET'S TELL TEXAS ABOUT YOUR BOOK!





Play Like He Would

By Heath Hamrick

Stoney Creek Publishing

July 28, 2026

185 pages



Football has always been big in Texas, and there's not much bigger in many small towns than high school football. Friday Night Lights. Family, tradition, and hopefully triumph on the field. In *Play Like He Would*, Heath Hamrick looks at the impact of a tragic loss on one high school football team and community.

Jerry "Slugger" Hamrick came to the little town of Bremond, Texas, looking for a job. His family had moved several times, following his coaching career all over Texas. The Bremond Tigers had a winning history, but recent seasons had been unkind. Was this a place Slugger Hamrick could win? He believed it was. So when the job was offered to him, he packed up his wife and two school-age sons and took it.

The 1999 season was Slugger's third as head coach, and it was likely to be a "make or break" season. By year three, the football faithful expected to see a winning season, a trip to the playoffs. The odds did not appear to favor the Tigers—as practice kicked off, "there were no world-beaters in the room that Slugger could see." But sixteen-year-old Jason "Meat" Yancy was the



“
*Put angels on our shoulders tonight,
and keep us from harm.*”

smiling, encouraging heart of the team. As the players worked to come together, Slugger saw Jason improving a little with every play and thought, “That boy...is the reason guys like me do what we do.”

The tale Heath Hamrick weaves is part small-town history, part

memoir, part remembrance. He weaves his own experiences in Bremond with family history, the shenanigans of local teenagers, and, of course, football. But the main focus of the book is how a team and a community grieve when they lose a player, a brother, a friend. To his friends, Jason Yancy seemed to lack



his usual joie de vivre that day, but no one ever expected he wouldn't see the end of the game. When he collapsed on the field, the town was in shock, and as with any loss, people dealt with grief in different ways.

Hamrick draws on his own memories and conversations

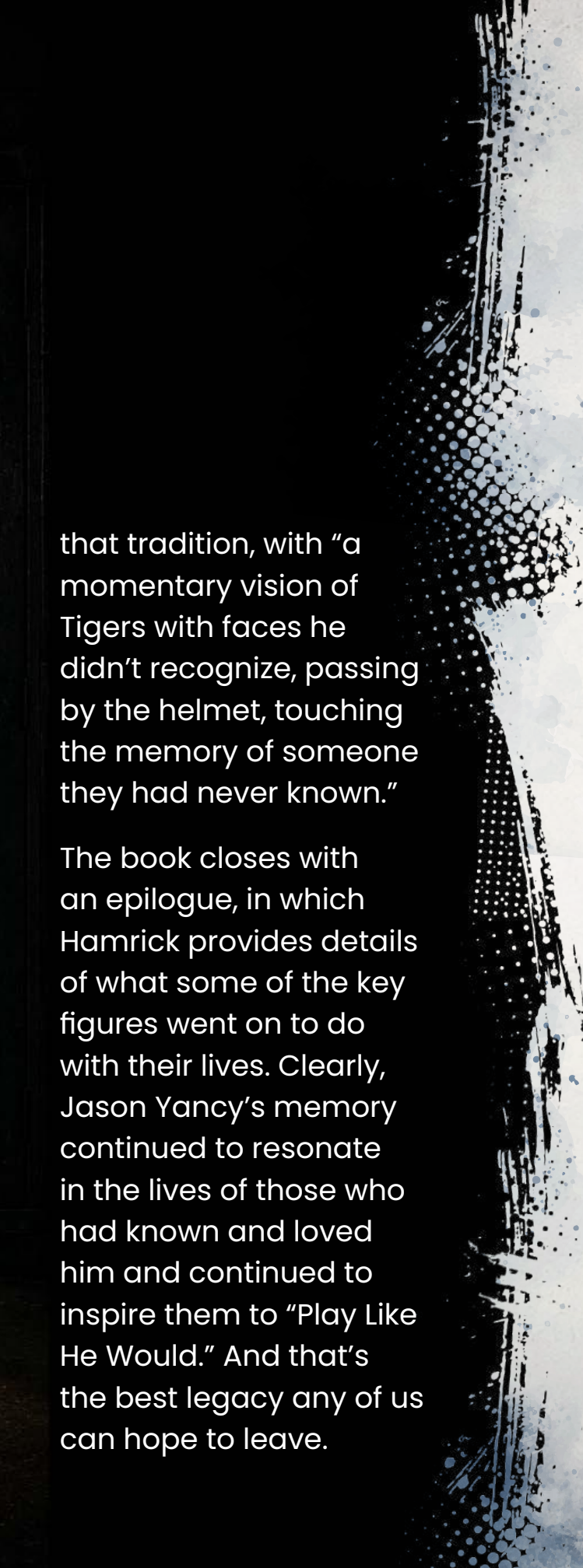
with Jason's teammates, friends, and family, some held during the students' high school years, to reconstruct how the team came together to honor their fallen friend's memory. "Play Like He Would" became a rallying cry to remind those young men to play to win, as Jason would have. To treat each other with kindness, like Jason would have. To strive to be better people, like Jason would have. Before the fateful game on October 1, 1999, coach Chuck Caskey prayed, "Put angels on our shoulders tonight, and keep us from harm." For the Bremond Tigers, Jason Yancy became the angel on their shoulder through what should have been the rest of his high school years.

While the book faces a weighty subject head-on, it is not without its moments of humor. At one point, Slugger's frustration with one of his young players overwhelms him, and he screams, "You make me want to crap in my hands and rub it in my hair!" Whether they've coached a sport or not, everyone who has ever worked with

children, or had children, or been around children for any significant length of time, will likely find that relatable. And when Hamrick describes the good-natured jokes Jason Yancy pulled on friends and teachers alike, it is clear why his death was so profoundly felt.

Hamrick also explores how even the deepest grief loses its sharp edges over time. Slugger mounted Jason's helmet on the locker room wall as a memorial, and it became a tradition for players to touch the helmet on the way out to the field. He thought of future athletes continuing





that tradition, with “a momentary vision of Tigers with faces he didn’t recognize, passing by the helmet, touching the memory of someone they had never known.”

The book closes with an epilogue, in which Hamrick provides details of what some of the key figures went on to do with their lives. Clearly, Jason Yancy’s memory continued to resonate in the lives of those who had known and loved him and continued to inspire them to “Play Like He Would.” And that’s the best legacy any of us can hope to leave.

Heath Hamrick was born in Pasadena, Texas, into a third-generation coaching family. He grew up watching his father, Slugger Hamrick, coach in places ranging from Central Texas to the Rio Grande Valley and back again. A lifelong educator, Heath occasionally has time to dress up as a historical figure to produce videos as “Heath the History Guy” on YouTube. He is also just possibly the most naive political operative in American history, having co-written *Worse Than You Think: The Mostly True Story of Two Teachers Running for Congress Deep in the Heart of Texas* for TCU Press.

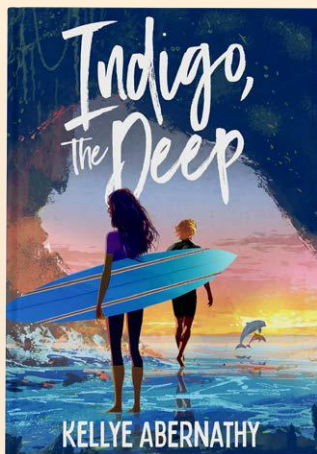
Perhaps most importantly of all, Heath was present in Milano on that night in October of 1999 when an entire town mourned for a young man whose life had been cut tragically short. He was also there as those same young men who had sat with tear-streaked faces in the Milano locker rooms bounced back in the memory of #77 and brought a town and a team back to life. ★

July BOOK CAMPAIGNS



Join Lone Star Literary Life Book Campaigns as we dive into a sparkling ocean fantasy and a glittering speculative thriller. Add some zing to your TBR with one of these shiny new reads. Follow along as our reviewers share their perspectives. Stay engaged on social media to join the conversation with our team. ★

Find us on:

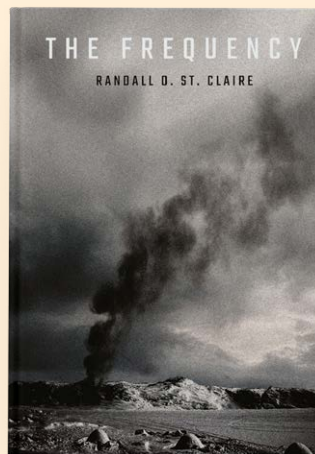


TEEN & YA / COMING OF AGE /
FANTASY

Indigo, The Deep

By Kellye Abernathy

Atmosphere Press
July 9–August 3



SPECULATIVE THRILLER / MYSTERY /
HISTORICAL MYSTERY

The Frequency

By Randall D. St. Claire

Atmosphere Press
July 21–August 17



Texas Literary Podcasts

Stories from Real Life

What makes a person sparkle? Sometimes it's talent or achievement, but more often, it's resilience, authenticity, and the willingness to share the moments that shape who we are. That spirit shines brightly in *Stories from Real Life*, hosted by Melvin E. Edwards. Through thoughtful, in-depth conversations, Edwards invites guests to share the experiences that have challenged them, transformed them, and ultimately helped them discover their own unique light.

From stories of loss and healing to creativity, faith, perseverance, and personal growth, each

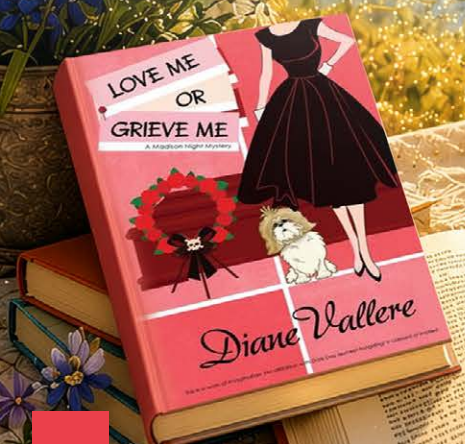
episode offers a reminder that extraordinary wisdom is often found in ordinary lives. In a world that can sometimes feel disconnected, *Stories from Real Life* celebrates the human experiences that bring us together and encourages listeners to find hope, inspiration, and a little extra sparkle in their own journeys. You can listen to the podcast at *Stories from Real Life* or on major podcast platforms. ★

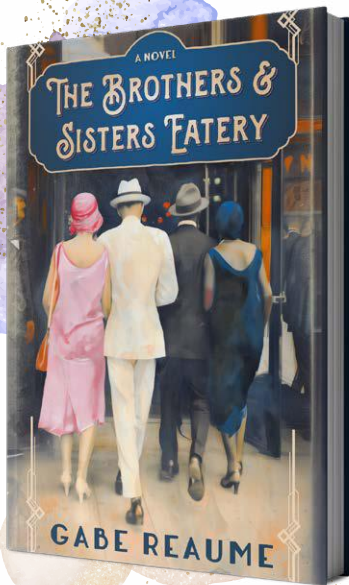


New books to put the sparkle in your **July** festivities

Texas authors will light up your summer reading list with this brilliant collection of new releases. We're highlighting speculative and legal thrillers, historical fiction, a sports memoir, and much more. No matter where the summer takes you, we have just the book to brighten your beach reading or put the sparkle back into a rainy summer afternoon. ★

Enjoy these standouts, and [click here to visit the full collection on our website.](#)





HISTORICAL FICTION

The Brothers and Sisters Eatery

By Gabe Reaume

June 30, 2026

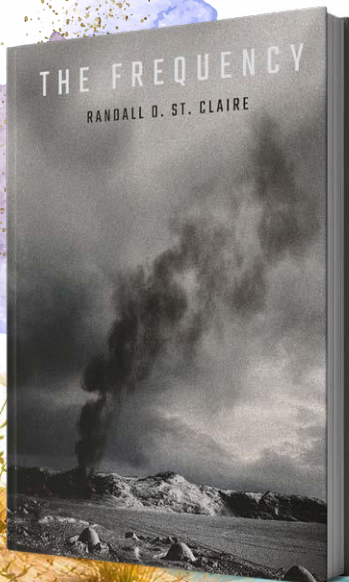
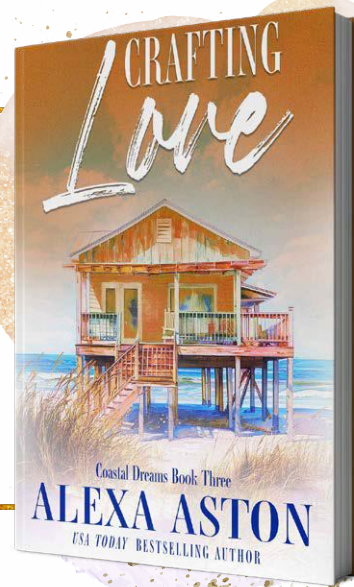
ROMANCE / SMALL-TOWN ROMANCE

Crafting Love Coastal Dreams, Book 3

By Alexa Aston

Oliver-Heber Books

July 28, 2026



MYSTERY / SPECULATIVE THRILLER

The Frequency

By Randall D. St. Claire

Atmosphere Press

July 21, 2026



TEEN & YA / COMING OF AGE / FANTASY

Indigo, The Deep

By Kellye Abernathy

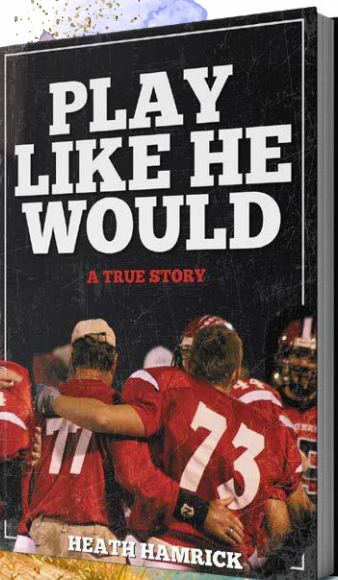
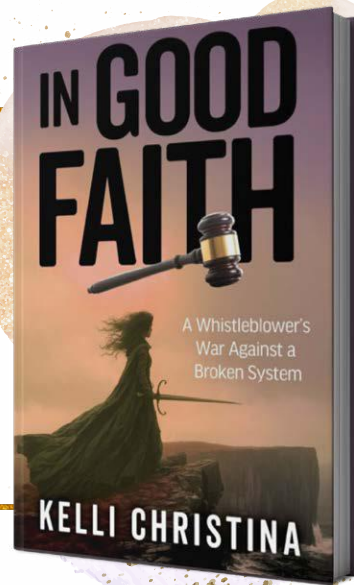
Atmosphere Press
July 7, 2026

NONFICTION / MEMOIR / LEGAL THRILLER / CRIME DRAMA

In Good Faith: A Whistleblower's War Against a Broken System

By Kelli Christina

Morgan James Publishing
JULY 7, 2026



NONFICTION / SPORTS / MEMOIR

Play Like He Would

By Heath Neal Hamrick

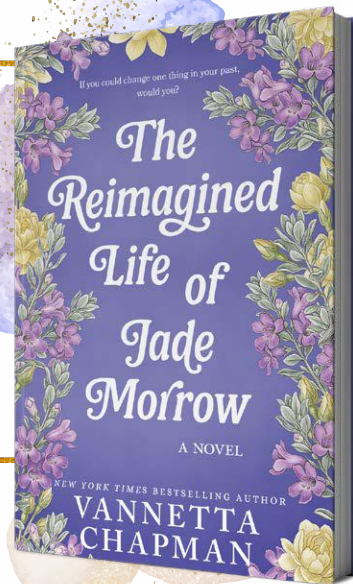
Stoney Creek Publishing
July 28, 2026

WOMEN'S FICTION / FRIENDSHIP /
SMALL TOWN / SECOND CHANCES

The Reimagined Life of Jade Morrow

By Vannetta Chapman

July 23, 2026

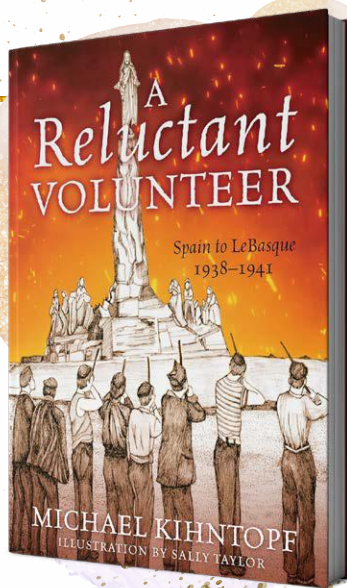


HISTORICAL FICTION / MILITARY HISTORY

A Reluctant Volunteer

By Michael Kihntopf
Illustrator, Sally Taylor

Outskirts Press
May 21, 2026



**WANT TO KNOW
MORE ABOUT HOW
LONE STAR LITERARY
CAN HELP YOU SHINE?**

CONNECT WITH US



Forget the Rules.

Find Your
Sparkle

*The Marketing Magic
of Being Yourself*

Let's start with a little truth that many authors discover the hard way: finishing a book is only half the adventure.

The other half? Figuring out how to tell people it exists.

Somewhere between "You should start a newsletter" and "You need to post three Reels a day," many writers find themselves staring into the marketing abyss, wondering if disappearing into the woods with a notebook might be the better option.

The amount of marketing advice available today is enough to make even the most enthusiastic author want to take a nap. Every expert has a different formula. Every platform promises visibility. Every success story seems to begin with, "I accidentally went viral..."

What if the answer isn't doing more?

What if the answer is doing more of what you actually enjoy?

That's not revolutionary advice, but it might be the most overlooked marketing strategy in publishing.

Many writers find themselves staring into the marketing abyss, wondering if disappearing into the woods with a notebook might be the better option.



Too often, authors force themselves into someone else's version of success. They spend hours making videos when they hate being on camera. They drag themselves to events when they'd rather be home writing. They join platforms they secretly dread opening.

The result? Burnout. Inconsistency. Marketing that feels about as exciting as a root canal.

Instead, consider starting somewhere much simpler:

What lights you up?

Marketing Works Better When You Enjoy It

When people talk about author marketing, they usually focus on platforms.

Should you be on TikTok?

Do you need Instagram?

Should you start a podcast?

But before worrying about *where* to show up, it's worth asking *what* to share.

Think about the conversations that come naturally. The topics that can fill an hour without anyone noticing the clock. The stories that make eyes light up across the dinner table.

That's where the best marketing lives.

Readers can tell the difference between a post written out of obligation and one written with genuine enthusiasm. One feels like an advertisement. The other feels like a conversation.

And people rarely remember advertisements.

They remember conversations.



What Do You Love Talking About?

Books are an obvious starting point, but they're rarely the whole story.

Maybe it's the characters—the ones who refused to cooperate and the ones who practically wrote themselves.

Maybe it's the research rabbit holes that somehow led from a simple question to three hours spent reading about Victorian funeral customs.

Maybe it's writing craft, mythology, gardening, true crime, rescue dogs, vintage recipes, or the deeper themes woven throughout a story.

The goal isn't to create a carefully curated "brand."

The goal is to figure out what already sparks excitement.

Readers aren't looking for a nonstop stream of "Buy my book!" announcements. They're looking for connection. They're

looking for the person behind the pages.

Choose three to five topics that feel easy and enjoyable to discuss. Return to them often. Let them become familiar landmarks for readers.

Enthusiasm does more heavy lifting than most marketing tactics ever could.



What Do You Love Doing?

Once it's clear what to talk about, the next question becomes how to share it.

This is where many authors give themselves unnecessary homework.

The truth is, there's no requirement to be everywhere.

It's far more effective to show up consistently in the places that feel like a natural fit.

Some writers thrive at book festivals. Put them behind a table with a stack of books and a steady stream of readers, and they're in heaven.

Others would rather wrestle an angry raccoon than spend eight hours making small talk.

Both approaches are perfectly valid.

Authors who love meeting readers face-to-face may thrive with bookstore events, library programs, conferences, and festivals.

Authors who prefer connecting from behind a keyboard can build meaningful relationships through newsletters, blogs, social media, podcasts, and online communities.

The same principle applies to content formats.

Love writing? Start with a newsletter.

Love talking? Consider podcast interviews.

Love visuals? Explore Instagram or Pinterest.

Love video? Experiment with short-form content.

The best platform isn't necessarily the newest or trendiest.

It's the one that still feels manageable six months from now.

You're Allowed to Have Boundaries

Here's something that doesn't get discussed nearly often enough:

Not everything needs to be shared.

Part of finding sparkle is also figuring out what dims it.

Maybe discussing research is enjoyable, but family life feels private.

Maybe sharing writing struggles feels comfortable, but discussing politics does not.

Maybe certain parts of life simply belong off the internet.

That's not a weakness.

That's wisdom.

Authors who build sustainable careers aren't usually the ones who say yes to everything.

They're the ones who understand their limits and create marketing habits they can maintain for years.

Part of finding sparkle is also figuring out what dims it.



Start with the Sparkle

The most effective marketing strategy isn't the most complicated one.

It's the one an author will actually use.

Consistently.

Enthusiastically.

Without dreading every step of the process.

Before downloading another content calendar or creating yet another social media account, pause and consider:

What topics create genuine excitement?

What activities feel energizing rather than exhausting?

What interests, experiences, and passions make that author unique?

The answers may not fit neatly into someone else's marketing formula—and that's perfectly fine.

Because the marketing that creates lasting reader relationships isn't necessarily the loudest or the most frequent.

It's the most genuine.

Find the sparkle. Build from there.



READY TO FIND YOUR SPARKLE?

Take the free Author Journey Assessment to discover your unique marketing style, your ideal platform, and the content topics most likely to connect with readers—in a way that feels authentic and sustainable.

AUTHOR JOURNEY ASSESSMENT



BOOKISH HUMOR

CHRIS MANNO

Chris Manno's award-winning cartoons appear in periodicals worldwide. Several of his cartoon collections are available in paperback and Kindle format. He is also the author of the award-winning Texas novels *East Jesus* and *Blood and Remembrance*. Manno earned a doctorate in English from Texas Christian University, where he teaches writing. ★

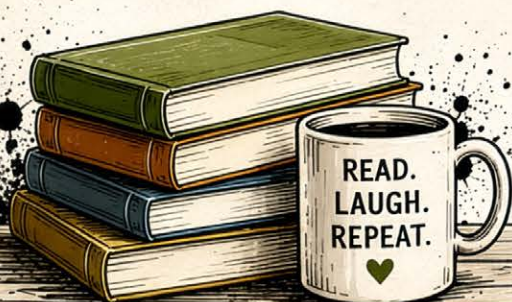


"Hey Siri, I need a metaphor to get out of the one I'm stuck in now."

LSLL

Enjoy more of Manno's cartoons in

SONG OF MANY AND MUCH.



Tropes Bookstore – from left to right:
Amy, Leslie, Brittany Buck, Jodee Lynch, Jill



Daydream – Jill, Amy, Alma, Leslie



Out and About



Teri Whitman – Jill, Teri, Amy



Folklore Grove – Jill and Leslie



Leslie & TD Motley



Jill and Maida Malby



The Dock Bookshop – Donya, Leslie, Jill, Amy

Trista Ricketts & Leslie



Jacqueline Smith & Leslie



Ashlee Rosales

GM Potter & Leslie



M.L. Roelke & Leslie



C.C.S. Jones and Leslie

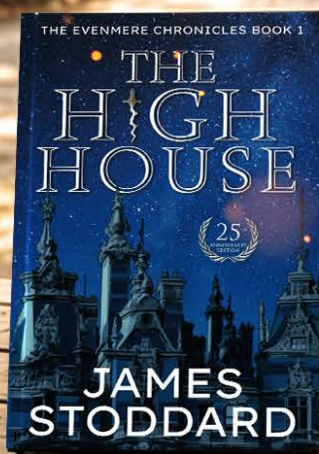


Stephanie Pass & Leslie

Indie Bookstore Roundup

Texas bookstores shine a light on the vibrant Texas literary scene. Visit the local independent bookstore in your neighborhood and search out the indies on your summer travels as well. Check out the latest news on the bookstores in your area.

Read on!





Abilene

Texas Star Trading Co. has been put up for sale by retiring owners Glenn and Carol Dromgoole. They will continue to operate the store as usual while they consider offers.

Arlington

Daydream Bookstore Cafe opened in April. A romance-focused bookstore offering a curated selection of romance titles, the store also has a cafe and hosts four book clubs.



Austin

Black Pearl Books announced that their current store closed on June 20th. They celebrated their tenure at the current location with a day of festivities including a local author signing. In their post, they assured that they were not closing for good and have events planned for fall. We'll stay tuned to their social media platforms to await their new chapter.



Cedar Park

Paper Bark Birch Children's Bookstore, a local, family-owned store carrying everything from board books to YA, graphic novels, and manga, was recently named one of the Ten Best Children's Bookstores in America by Fodor's Travel.



Cleburne

Spice Girls Bookstore held their grand re-opening on May 30 with authors and vendors helping to celebrate the new location.



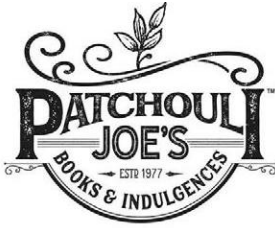
Dallas

Deep Vellum was included on Condé Nast Traveler's list of Best Independent Bookstores in America. Recognized for their continuing efforts to translate contemporary literature, the store is a hub of literary excellence.



Cypress

X & O Books announced their plans to open this summer. The store, owned by a woman who is a third-generation Houstonian, will offer bookish merchandise and a drinks parlor.



Denton

Patchouli Joe's Books and Indulgences closed on May 30 after attempts to secure a new location were unsuccessful.



Garland

Dani's Bookshelf and More announced they are moving to a permanent location. The ribbon cutting will be held on July 3 at 6pm.



Killeen

The Scarlet Page celebrated their ribbon-cutting grand opening in May. The black queer-owned store strives to create a space where everyone feels "seen, safe, and celebrated."



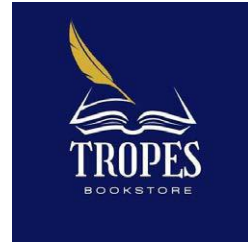
Fort Worth

Leaves Bakery & Books announced that the store will be closing on August 15.



Houston

Good on Paper celebrated their Grand Reopening at their new location on June 10th and hosted a signing with author Glenton Richards.



New Braunfels

The Chapter & Co reopened in their new space in early May. They continue to focus primarily on romance and fantasy titles along with book-focused items and a cafe. They place an emphasis on supporting other small businesses with their inventory.

North Richland Hills

Tropes Bookstore held their grand opening for their bricks and mortar store in early May. A woman-owned store, they work to create an inclusive and welcoming space for their community.

Prosper

Barnes and Noble opened a new location in the Gates of Prosper shopping center. Local author Tanner Mitchell cut the ribbon and held a book signing.



San Antonio



Bluebonnet Books & Homegrown Goods opened this spring. The store hosts signings, storytime events, and provides a curated selection of handmade goods.



Ghoulish Books closed at the end of June. After a split of the bookstore and independent press companies, the bookstore will reopen in its current location under a new name. The press will also reopen after moving out of state.



Tyler

The Headless Librarian will be moving to a new space this summer. With the larger space, owner Katy Perez plans to expand book selection, add a tea bar, and host events.



Wichita Falls

Enchanted Pages held their grand opening in late April, drawing a crowd of nearly 600. The store features a cozy reading lounge, crafting events, book clubs, and books for all types of readers.

Other Industry News

Deep Vellum announced that they are partnering with Texas Bookfest to help launch a new imprint, **Burro Libro Press**. The partners will help “emerging authors with strong Texas ties take the next step into publishing.” Five finalists will be selected by the Deep Vellum editorial team by November. Additionally, Deep Vellum Publishing was named one of the recipients of the inaugural **Literary Arts Fund**, a new national project to bolster nonprofits that serve creative writers.

Letterpress PLAY is opening in a new, larger location early this fall. ★

TEXAS BOOK LOVERS CON

JULY 2026

10 am
to
6 pm

18TH



19TH

10 am
to
4 pm

DENTON CIVIC CENTER

*Over 60 Authors & Vendors
Q&A + Panel Discussions
Free Admission*





THE
BRIGANDS

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR
PARRIS
AFTON BOND
THE LEXICONS
VOLUME ONE



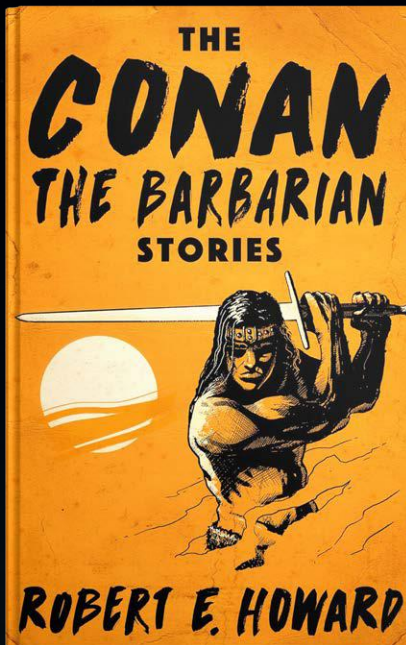
CLICK TO
LISTEN



TEXAS READS

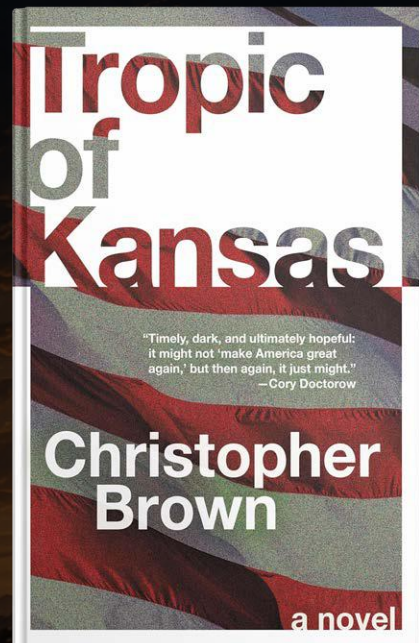
If we are to discuss science fiction (SF), we had better define it first. SF can be about space travel, visitors from another world, time travel (forward or backward), technology gone wrong, an evolved humanity (improved or regressed), or an altered home planet (dystopian).

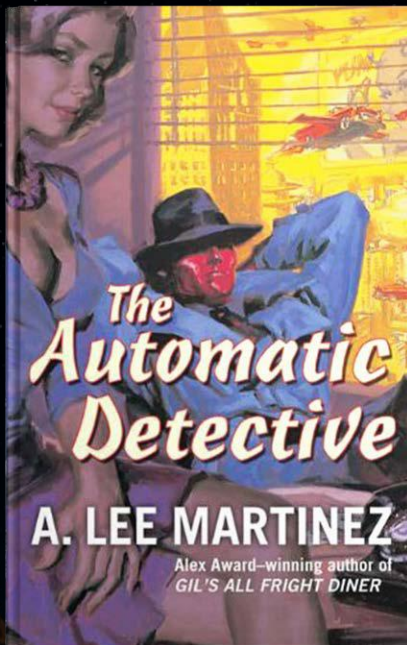
I have been asked to write this article about SF writers from Texas. So, let's identify Texas SF writers from different parts of the SF world. Let's start with a true pioneer on the subject.



Robert Ervin Howard was an American writer who wrote pulp fiction in a diverse range of genres in the late 1920s and early 30s. Here's something you probably did not know. He created Conan the Barbarian and is regarded as the father of the sword and sorcery subgenre! Conan was a savage fighting to become king, surrounded by a circle of friends and enemies. Howard was born and raised in Peaster, Texas.

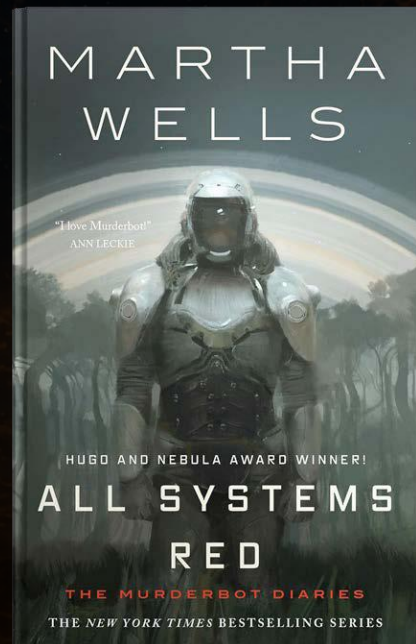
Christopher Brown's Tropic of Kansas is a dark study in a dystopian land. The United States of America no longer exists as a country. It's broken -- just faction territories at war with each other during a new time of political unrest created by a destroyed ecological system. Sig, an orphan, must cross the wasteland, once the heartland of the American Midwest, as he journeys to occupied New Orleans. He must survive citizen militias and dangerous drones. He is followed by Tania, a government investigator. Christopher Brown lives in Austin.

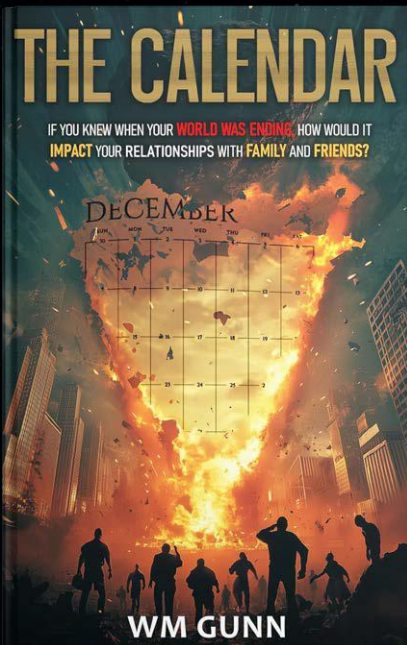




A. Lee Martinez's The Automatic Detective offers a different twist to SF. Mack Megaton's neighbors are kidnapped, and he is bent on finding them in Empire City. What started out as one missing family becomes a battle for the future of the Empire and every citizen who calls her home. Oh, by the way, Mack is a robot! Martinez was born in El Paso.

Martha Wells' The Murderbot Diaries tells of a future corporation that controls any actions not approved by the company. It is told from the perspective of a cyborg guard. A 'Murderbot' is hacked and slowly develops human emotions. Ms. Wells is from Fort Worth.





Lastly, a personal plug for The Calendar, which I released last year. Long-range monitors detect a massive rock plunging through space on a path toward Earth. Will it miss our planet, deliver a glancing blow, or destroy Mankind? And how will people react to an uncertain future? Or will they be told? The meteor is the overriding umbrella of the book, but it is more about how such a calamity impacts and changes interpersonal relationships. I'm from Arlington.

Let me end with a quote from one of the authorities on this subject, Rod Serling.

*“Science Fiction is the improbable made possible.
Fantasy is the impossible made probable.”*



WM Gunn lives in his hometown in Texas with his high school sweetheart bride of many years. His debut full-length novel, *The Two Terrors of Tulelake*, was released in October 2024, and *The Calendar* in March 2025. *And the Walls Came Tumbling Down* will be released this fall.

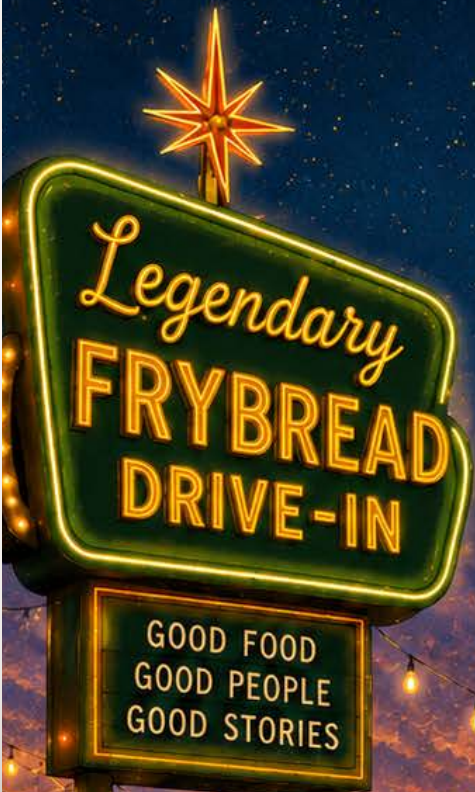


What to Read Next in Young Adult

Welcome to **Texas Reads YA!** As a teen who loves to read YA, I sometimes have a hard time finding quality YA novels.

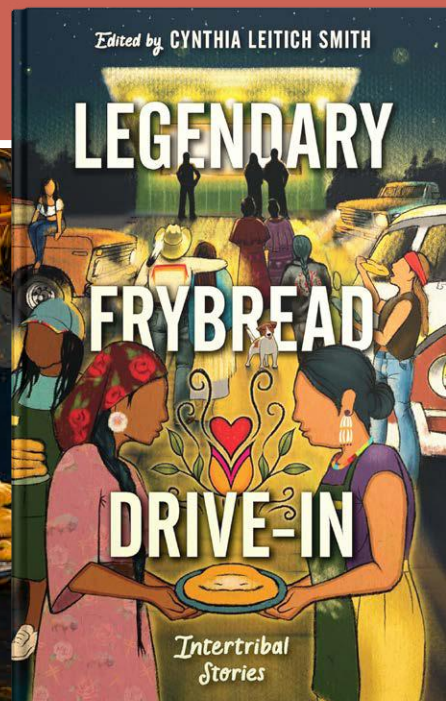
Both of the novels draw on Native storytelling and culture to write beautifully, rich stories. One contains stories and poems from many authors and the other uses traditional storytelling structure to write a story about family and magic.





Legendary Frybread Drive-In: Intertribal Stories

The road to Sandy June's Legendary Frybread Drive-In slips through every rez and alongside every urban Native hangout. The menu offers a rotating feast, including traditional eats and tasty snacks. But Sandy June's serves up more than it hosts live music, movie nights, unexpected family reunions, love long lost, and love found again.



That big green-and-gold neon sign beckons to teens of every tribal Nation, often when they need it most.

Featuring stories and poems Kaua Mahoe Adams, Marcella Bell, Angeline Bouley, K. A. Cobell, A. J. Eversole, Jen Ferguson, Eric Gansworth, Byron Graves, Kate Hart, Christine Hartman Derr, Karina Iceberg, Cheryl Isaacs,

Darcie Little Badger, David A. Robertson, Andrea L. Rogers, Cynthia Leitich Smith, and Brian Young.

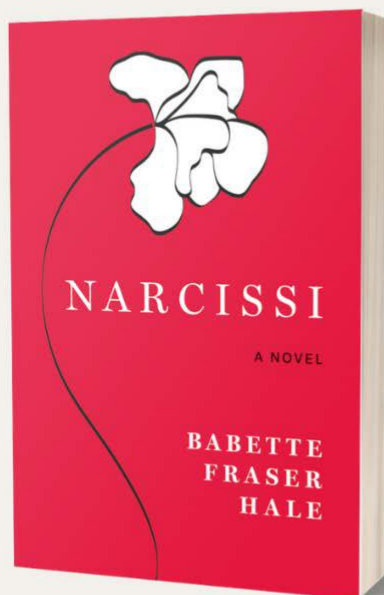
Legendary Frybread Drive-In, is a beautifully written anthology with thoughtful structure and blending of the authors to create a story that is intricately intertwined. The stories and poems are relatable, powerful, and warm.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Cynthia Leitich Smith

Cynthia Leitich Smith is a bestselling, acclaimed author of books for all ages. Cynthia has received the American Library Association's Children's Literature Lecture Award, been named the NSK Neustadt Laureate, and is the author-curator of Heartdrum, a Native-focused imprint at HarperCollins Children's Books. She is a citizen of the Muscogee Nation and lives in Denton, Texas.

COMING SOON



*Hurt is
never the
whole story.*

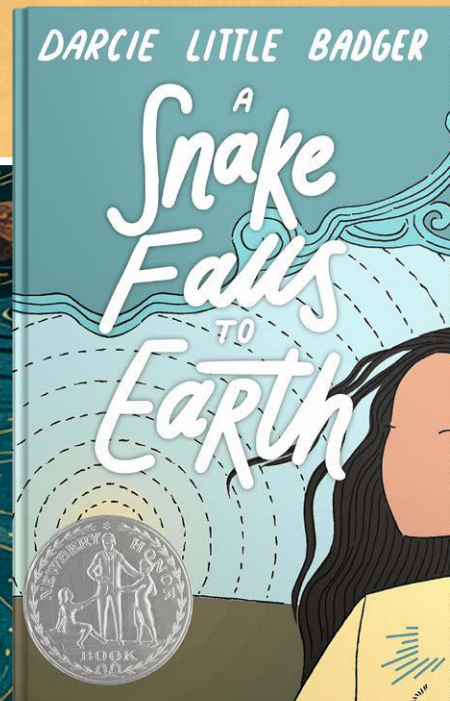
NARCISSI: A NOVEL
BABETTE FRASER HALE



A Snake Falls to Earth

Nina is a Lipan girl in our world. She's always felt there was something more out there. She still believes in the old stories.

Oli is a cottonmouth kid, from the land of spirits and monsters. Like all cottonmouths, he's been cast from home. He's found a new one on the banks of the bottomless lake.



Nina and Oli have no idea the other exists. But a catastrophic event on Earth, and a strange sickness that befalls Oli's best friend, will drive their worlds together in ways they haven't been in centuries.

And there are some who will kill to keep them apart.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
**Darcie Little
Badger**

Darcie Little Badger is a Lipan Apache writer with a PhD in oceanography. Her second fantasy novel, *A Snake Falls to Earth*, received a Nebula Award, an Ignyte Award, and a Newbery Honor and is on the National Book Awards longlist. Darcie is married to a veterinarian named Taran.

Sydney Spell is a nursing student at UT Austin. She has enjoyed reading throughout her adolescence and is an especially big fan of YA novels.

Darcie Little Badger introduced herself to the world with *Elatsoe*. In *A Snake Falls to Earth*, she draws on traditional Lipan Apache storytelling structure to weave another unforgettable tale of monsters, magic, and family. It is not to be missed.

A Snake Falls to Earth is a story that weaves traditional Lipan Apache culture and storytelling into a masterful narrative full of magic, relationships, and intriguing characters. ★



**Tex-Indie Author
Book Fair 2026**

Discover Texas Indie Authors

Sat, Oct 17 | 10 AM – 5 PM
10510 Westview Dr, Houston, TX

Why Some Stories Sparkle Long After We Finish Them

Some stories stay with us long after we turn the final page. We remember the characters, relive their struggles, and reflect on the truths woven into their journeys. Those stories sparkle because the writer successfully creates authentic characters, evokes credible emotions, crafts an unpredictable plot, instills heartfelt hope, and balances

storytelling with literary technique.

Adding sparkle to a story isn't impossible, but it does require a writer to focus on what matters most to readers: the experience of a well-crafted adventure that feels as though it could happen to them. Fireworks ignite in the reader's imagination, and the story takes its place among the stars.



Sparkling stories consistently glisten with the following elements:

Real Characters

Memorable characters enter a story with a problem to solve or a goal to achieve—something deeply connected to the human experience.

- ★ Flaws, needs, wants, strengths, weaknesses, motivation, and a meaningful backstory
- ★ The most to gain—and the most to lose—in the scene or story
- ★ An immediate connection with the reader
- ★ Impactful actions that reveal a willingness to help others
- ★ Inner and outer obstacles that demand courage and determination
- ★ Sacrifices made for others without selfish motives
- ★ A clearly defined and distinctive voice





Credible Emotions

Readers connect to emotions that feel genuine and earned.

- ★ Feelings consistent with the character's personality and life experiences
- ★ Complex emotions that often overlap and resist easy explanation—anger, sadness, surprise, joy, fear, disgust, and even hope
- ★ Emotional conflict woven throughout the story
- ★ Concerns and struggles readers can identify with
- ★ Symbolism that influences a character's heart, mind, and choices

An Unpredictable Plot

Readers love surprises, but only when they are believable.

- ★ Draws readers into the adventure
- ★ Leaves them thinking, "*This could happen to me.*"

- ★ Raises the stakes through tension, conflict, and uncertainty
- ★ Forces difficult choices and meaningful consequences
- ★ Refuses to shield the protagonist from hardship
- ★ Features a powerful antagonist with a credible chance of success



Heartfelt Hope

Hope is often the sparkle readers remember most.

- ★ Communicates the possibility of something greater than present circumstances
- ★ Inspires belief in a positive outcome
- ★ Demonstrates integrity and courage in difficult situations
- ★ Shows heroes and heroines rising above life's challenges
- ★ Affirms the human need for relationships, significance, and security
- ★ Resonates with enduring truth
- ★ Produces positive transformation in the character that extends to the reader

A Believable Balance of Craft and Storytelling

The best stories weave technique so seamlessly into the narrative that readers never notice the craft behind the curtain.

- ★ Strong nouns
- ★ Active verbs
- ★ Showing instead of telling
- ★ Minimal redundancy
- ★ Fresh and imaginative details
- ★ Creative turns of phrase
- ★ Rhythmic sentences that enhance pacing and readability
- ★ A reader-centered focus
- ★ Meaningful content
- ★ Restraint that avoids overwriting

Stories sparkle when they leave readers feeling better about themselves and the world around them. They inspire a deeper vision of life filled with purpose, meaning, and possibility.

Readers don't remember perfect writing.

They remember stories that made them feel something—something fresh, real, and unforgettable. ★

1/4 AD





DiAnn Mills

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



The Lone Star Literary Life Magazine

Editorial Calendar

 MONTH	 THEMES	 AD CLOSE	 CONTENT DEADLINE	 PUB DATE
JAN	RESOLVE	12-15-25	12-15-25	01-07-26
FEB	EXTEND	01-14-26	01-19-26	02-04-26
MAR	HOPE	02-11-26	02-16-26	03-04-26
APR	GROW	03-11-26	03-16-26	04-01-26
MAY	HONOR	04-15-26	04-20-26	05-06-26
JUN	EMPOWER	05-13-26	05-18-26	06-03-26
JUL	SPARKLE	06-10-26	06-15-26	07-01-26
AUG	PREPARE	07-15-26	07-20-26	08-05-26
SEP	WELCOME	08-12-26	08-17-26	09-02-26
OCT	THRILL	09-16-26	09-21-26	10-07-26
NOV	GATHER	10-14-26	10-19-26	11-04-26
DEC	INSPIRE	11-11-26	11-16-26	12-02-26



INTERESTED IN CONTRIBUTING TO OUR PUBLICATION?

Find everything you need to know about what we're looking for and how to submit your work on our website.



info@lonestar-lit.com



THE LONE STAR LITERARY LIFE MAGAZINE

ISSUE 22