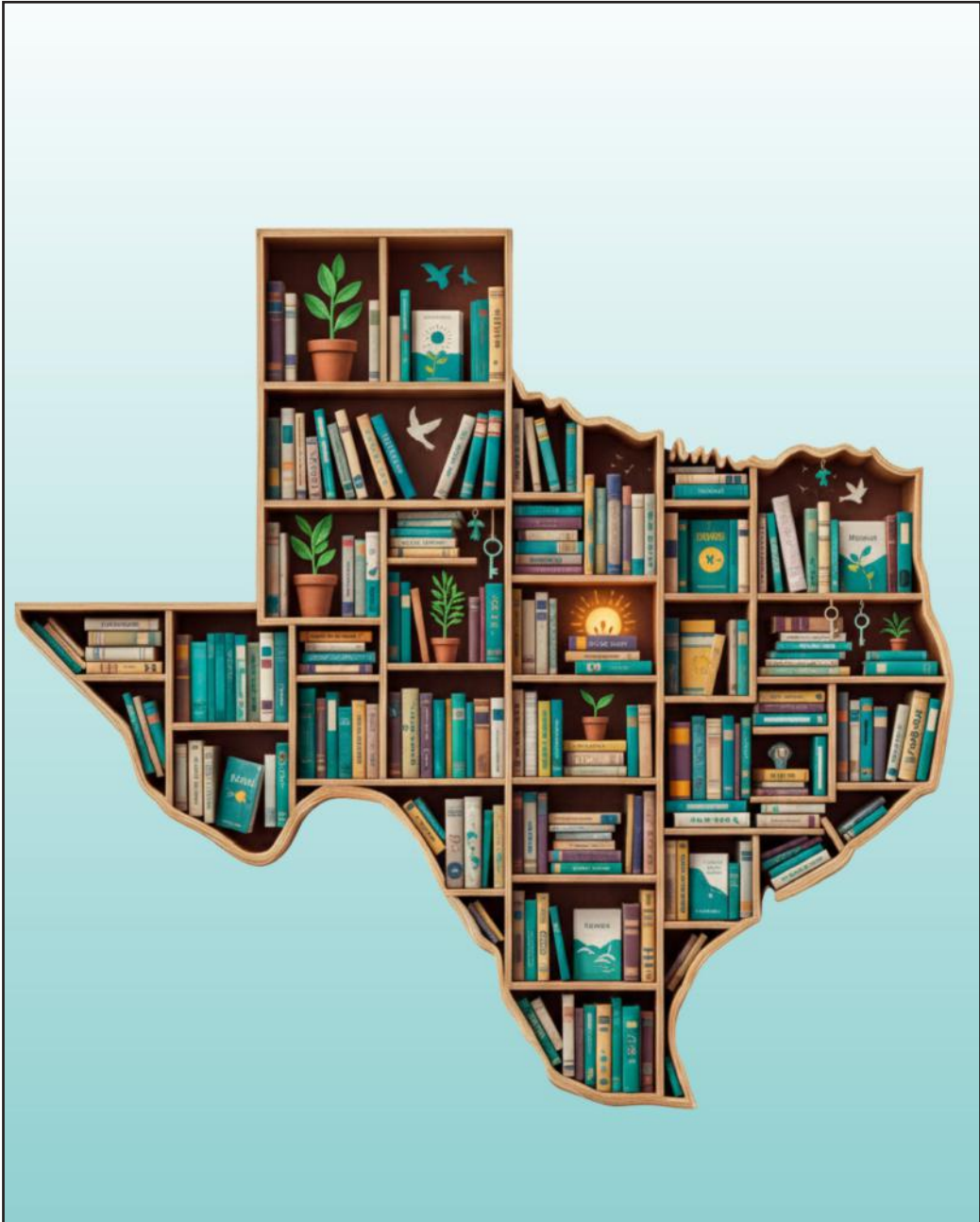


THE LONE STAR LITERARY LIFE

M A G A Z I N E



MARCH 2026

ISSUE 18



LETTER FROM

The Editor

Dear Reader,

As I made notes about this month's theme, I wondered how I could write about a concept that feels so far away right now: hope.

It's a word used so frequently that we can forget its power. How often do we hear it without really thinking about it? We hope it rains tomorrow (or not); we hope our favorite team dominates March Madness; we hope traffic isn't too bad on our way home.

Lately, hope has felt scarce. Instead, there's been a heaviness that I've heard echoed in discussions with friends, in the news, and on social media.

So immersing myself in research about this month's theme has been a gift. It helped me realize that the only antidote to this heart-weight is hope itself.

Hope is a choice, and I'm deciding to keep it kindled. That requires intention. Here are some of the ways I've kept the flame of hope burning:

- Moving my body through yoga or a walk
- Taking a break from social media, whether for an afternoon or a couple of days
- Journaling
- Reading
- Conversations with friends, especially about timely, thought-provoking books

Unsurprisingly, these are also all things I file away under "self-care." They are the things that help me slow down and choose my state of being rather than getting swept up in the cacophony of my circumstances.

Among all those activities, the most helpful have been conversations centered on books.

That is especially true when they're in groups with diverse opinions on—well, everything. Groups where our mutual respect and love for one another outweigh our differences.

While there may be moments of awkwardness or discomfort, talking about big issues and ideas through the lens of character, plot, and story opens the door to safe discourse. The understanding that results always grows my hope exponentially.

If this appeals to you—growing hope while building bridges—we've put together a free resource to support you. You can use *Questions for Discussing Any Book* in any setting, with anyone. It is designed to spark a simple conversation and take it deeper when the opportunity allows. Whether it's a book club or a family meal, the questions are

great for seeking to understand and be understood. What could be more hope-inspiring?

[GET THE QUESTIONS HERE](#)

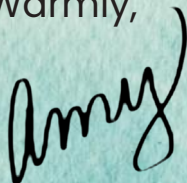
As we move through March, our hope at Lone Star Literary Life is that you feel supported, valued, and understood so that you can carry the same into your communities.

"Once you choose hope, anything's possible."

—Christopher Reeve

This month, may you choose hope.

Warmly,



AMY KELLY

Editor-in-Chief, Lone Star Literary Life



hope

[hohp] / hoʊp /

the feeling that what is wanted can be had or that events will turn out for the best.

[dictionary.com](https://www.dictionary.com)

intransitive verb

to cherish a desire with anticipation : to want something to happen or be true

transitive verb

to desire with expectation of obtainment or fulfillment

HOPE: to expect with confidence : trust

[merriam-webster.com](https://www.merriam-webster.com)

VIDEO FROM THE EDITOR

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JILL ANDERSON
Features Editor &
Columnist



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Columnist

CONTRIBUTORS



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Texas Writes





March

BOOKISH EVENTS

Hope you can join the Texas literary community for some of the exciting events on tap this March. Click here for [links to the March events below](#) or visit the [Lone Star Lit Bookish Events calendar](#) for information on all upcoming author signings and indie bookstore events across Texas.

MARCH

5-7

People's
Literary
Festival

MARCH

7

North Texas
Teen Book
Festival

MARCH

12-15

Texas
Storytelling
Festival

MARCH

14

Small Town Big
Book Festival

MARCH

18-20

Beall Poetry
Festival

MARCH

21

Hill Country
Literary
Festival

MARCH

26-27

Angelo State
University
Writers'
Conference

MARCH

29-31

Texas Library
Association
Annual
Conference



CULTIVATING COMMUNITY
THRIVING TOGETHER
TLA*2026
TEXAS LIBRARY ASSOCIATION
HOUSTON • MARCH 29-31





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.*)

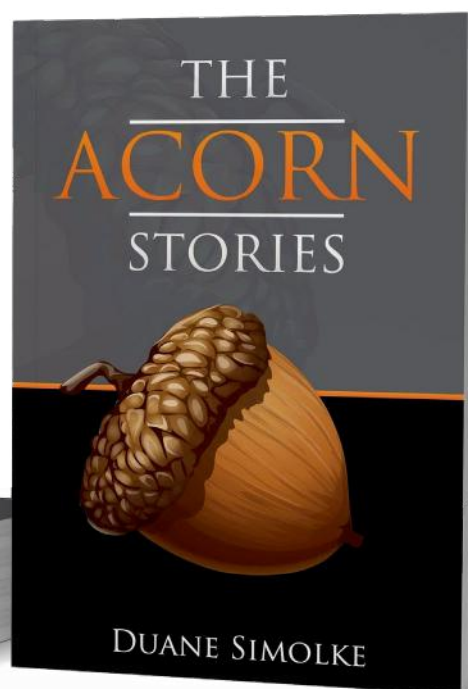
WRITE YOUR BOOK TODAY

MyBookInSix.com

THE
ACORN
STORIES

Duane Simolke

September 15, 2003



Acorn, Texas doesn't seem like the kind of small town you'd drive by on the interstate. It seems like a small town that you'd have to get off the beaten path to find. Duane Simolke (pronounced "Smoky") gives us a tour of its very heart with his slice-of-life collection of short stories, *The Acorn Stories*.



If you grew up in a small town, or if you've lived in one for any length of time, you know that everyone tends to know everyone else's business, even when you think your business is a well-kept secret. So it is in Acorn. Each of the sixteen stories in the book highlights a different character or characters. Some are likable, some not so much. Many seem like people you might know. People weave into and out of each other's stories, connected in ways you might not expect.

We meet a gay and deaf English teacher who clashes with a high school football coach over an athlete's grades. An overbearing big sister who's followed her little sister to West Texas. A boy desperate to shield his mother and brother from his abusive father. Some will make you love them. Some will make you hate them. All will draw you into their tales and make you feel almost like you're there in Acorn with them.

And at its core, this book is about emotions. It explores love, lust, grief, pain, and more as the people of Acorn work their way through those things. It illustrates the ways we can delude ourselves into seeing things the way we wish they were, the ways we can either embrace or reject those who are different from us, the ways we make do or don't. With its focus on human nature, the book would make a great choice for a book club, and Simolke helpfully includes discussion questions at the end.

Simolke's writing style isn't flashy or overly exuberant. It's conversational, gentle, like people would genuinely think or speak. The dialogue and the descriptions carry you along just quickly enough, like a moving sidewalk passing by Acorn's residents, giving you time to take a peek into their lives.



As acorns grow from trees, *The Acorn Stories* branch out of their small-town setting and create an overarching canopy vividly illustrating the human condition and all its quirks. Pick up a copy. Get to know the residents. You may find that you feel you're waving goodbye to friends and neighbors when you turn the final page.

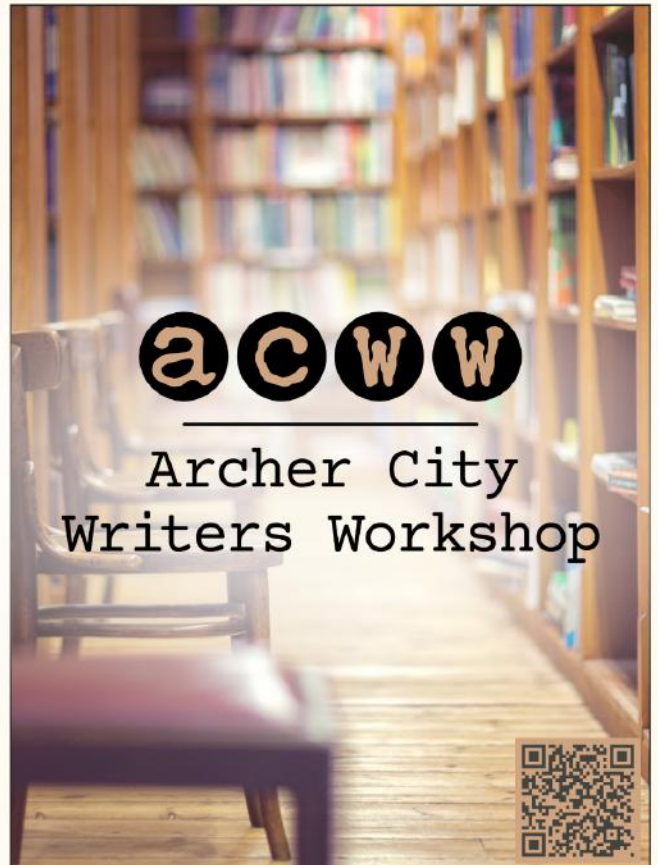
Duane Simolke has had his works published in *NightFire*, *Mesquite*, *Caprock Sun*, *Midwest Poetry Review*, *International Journal on World Peace*, and other publications. He is the author or co-author of eleven works, and his books have won the Allbooks Reviewers Choice Award and four StoneWall Society Pride in the Arts Awards. He lives in Lubbock, Texas.

Visit Archer City, Texas, home of Larry McMurtry, for a one-of-a-kind workshop experience!

A P R I L 1 5 - 1 9 , 2 0 2 6
Writing the Book Proposal ... Not Just Talking About It, with Glenn Stout

A P R I L 2 2 - 2 6 , 2 0 2 6
Fostering Fiction, with James Wade and Glenn Stout

All workshops take place at the historic Spur Hotel in Archer City. Visit our website for more information and to register. More events to come!



TEXAS LITERARY PODCASTS



Launching a podcast takes more than a microphone and a recording app. It takes hope.

Hope that someone will listen.

Hope that your voice matters.

Hope that the stories you care about will find their people.

And it takes courage.

Courage to speak before you feel fully ready.

Courage to press “publish.”

Courage to keep going when downloads are slow and the work is invisible.

In the Texas literary scene, we see that hope and courage at work every single day. Podcasters across our state are amplifying authors, championing books, asking thoughtful questions, and creating space for meaningful conversations. They are building community one episode at a time.

In this issue, we’re highlighting a few of these dedicated voices — creators who are showing up consistently and generously for readers and writers alike. We invite you to tune in, subscribe, and support them.

And if you’d like to discover even more Texas literary podcasts, you can find an expanded list waiting for you on our website.

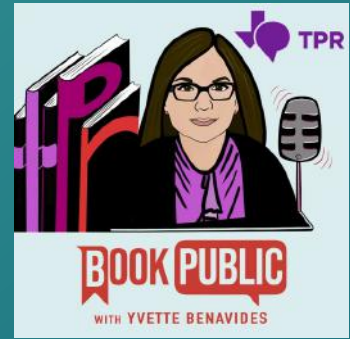




Across the Pond



Austin Liti Limits



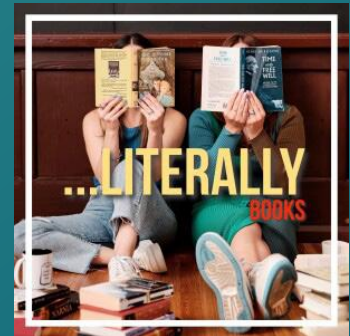
Book Public



Good Scribes Only



Likely Stories



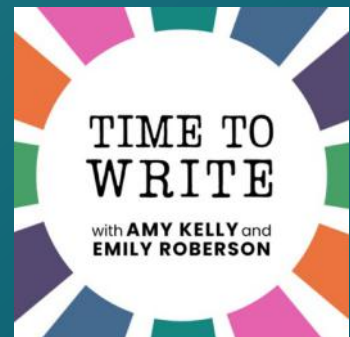
Literally Books



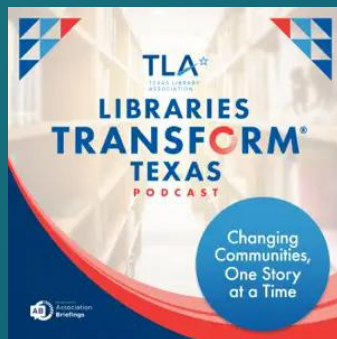
Ranch Girl Reads



She Wore Black



Time to Write



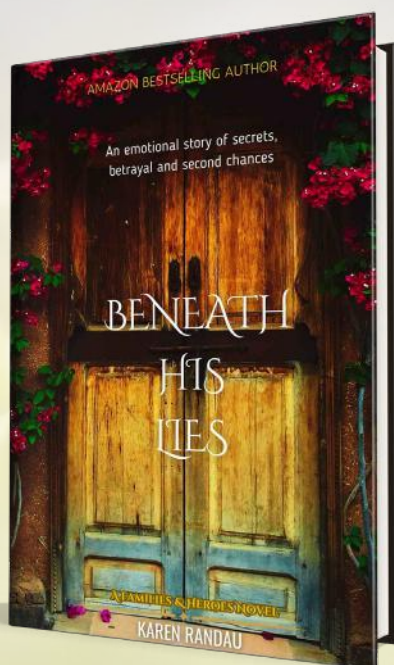
TLA's Libraries Transform Texas Podcast



The Write Atmosphere

Hope springs eternal with new releases for March

We hope your March reading adventures are magnificent. Hope thrives best with preparation, so we've got you covered. Just marvel at the Texas-connected March arrivals ready and waiting to transport you out of the mundane and into the mind-blowing. Check out nonfiction brimming with aspiration, romance with the yearning dialed up to ten, and mysteries to slake your sleuthing ambitions. Read on to explore these highlights. [Click here to experience the entire collection on our website.](#)



Beneath His Lies

By Karen Randau

Women's Fiction / Suspense /
Crime Fiction
March 3, 2026



Drop:

The Police Annals of Jax Book II

By J.R. Lightfoot

Urban Fantasy / Adult Fantasy

February 5, 2026

House of the Winged God

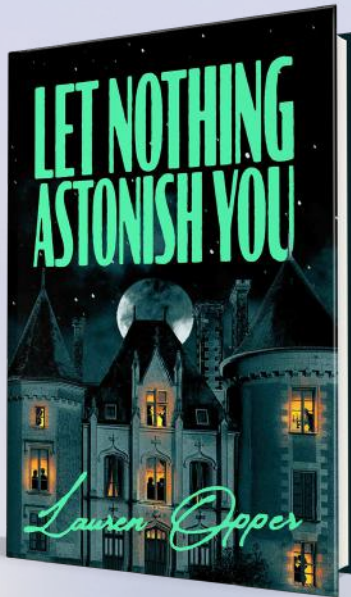
By William Xavier Chandler

Horror / Suspense

Furious Styles Entertainment, LLC

February 24, 2026





Let Nothing Astonish You

By Lauren Opper

Mystery

March 30, 2026

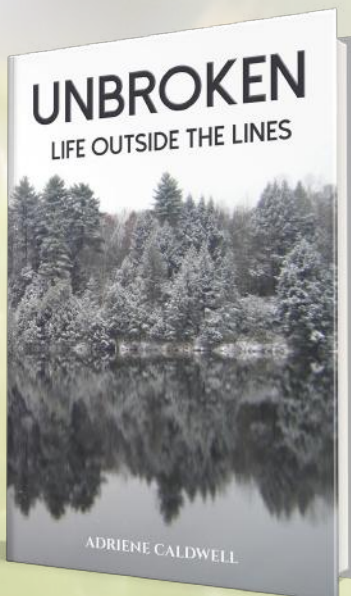


Resilient Surrender:
A Deaf-Experience Suspense

By Peter Quint

Suspense / Own Voices
Quintessential Deaf Press

January 15, 2026



Unbroken:
Life Outside the Lines

By Adriene Caldwell

Nonfiction / Memoir / Inspirational

Luminare Press

March 17, 2026

When Book Sales Feel Heavy, *Choose Hope*



Let's talk about the quiet question so many authors carry:

Why can't I sell a book?

You've written it.
You've poured yourself into it.
You've told people about it.

And yet... the sales don't reflect the effort.

It's easy in those moments to lose hope.

Before you spiral into self-doubt, let me say something clearly:

This is not a talent problem.
It's not a worth problem.
And it's almost never a "bad book" problem.

It's a stage problem.



Hope Begins With Understanding

At Lone Star Literary Life, we've worked with authors at every point along the marketing path. And what we see again and again is this:

Most authors don't fail because they can't write.

They struggle because they're trying to apply strategies meant for a stage they're not in yet.

You wouldn't ask a brand-new runner to compete in a marathon without training. You wouldn't expect a seedling to bear fruit in week two.

But authors do this to themselves every day.

They compare:

- Their Day 1 visibility to someone else's Year 10 platform.
- Their first launch to someone else's fifth book.
- Their early social posts to someone else's polished ecosystem.

Hope fades when comparison gets loud.

But hope returns when clarity arrives.

The Truth About Book Sales

Book sales are not the starting line.

They are the outcome of a system.

And that system develops in stages.

Authors move through a natural progression:

- **The Brave Beginner** — "I wrote a book... now what?"
- **The Visible Author** — "I'm trying things, but nothing feels consistent, and sales are unpredictable."
- **The Expanding Voice** — "I have momentum, but I need systems."
- **The Established Author** — "I'm visible, but I want sustainability and scale."

Your AUTHOR JOURNEY



THE ESTABLISHED AUTHOR

I've done all this...why does it still feel fragile?
What you've built is real, and it's built to last.

THE VISIBLE AUTHOR

"People aren't buying. I should be further by now."
Growth compounds. You're closer than you think.



THE EMERGING AUTHOR

"Why aren't sales happening?"
You're building traction and momentum.



THE BRAVE BEGINNER

"I don't even know where to start."
You started. That already sets you apart.

LONESTAR-LIT.COM



Here's the key:

Every single stage can feel weary.

The Brave Beginner feels overwhelmed.

The Emerging Author feels inconsistent.

The Visible Author feels frustrated by plateaued sales.

Even the Established Author can feel pressure to maintain growth.

Discouragement doesn't mean you're off track.

It means you need to understand where you are.

You Don't Need More Hustle. You Need the Right Next Step.

Most authors try to solve discouragement with more effort.

More posts.

More ads.

More random tactics.

But hope isn't restored by more effort alone.

Hope is restored by direction.

When you know your stage:

- You stop chasing tactics that don't fit.
- You stop blaming yourself for normal growth friction.
- You start focusing on the next skill, not the final outcome.

And that's when progress begins to feel possible again.



Introducing the Author Journey Assessment

We created the **Author Journey Assessment** to give you clarity — and with it, renewed hope.

It's not a personality quiz.

It's a strategic clarity tool.

In just a few minutes, you'll discover:

- Which author growth stage you're currently in
- What strengths you already possess
- Why sales may feel stuck right now
- The next focused move that will create traction.

This isn't about labels.

It's about alignment.

Because when your strategy matches your stage, discouragement begins to lift, and hope becomes practical.

Once you know your stage, you can stop asking, "Why can't I sell a book?"

And start asking, "What's my next right move?"

A New Season Starts Here

March is about hope — not vague optimism, but forward motion.

If you've been feeling discouraged...

If you've been wondering what you're missing...

If you're tired of guessing...

Taking the Author Journey Assessment is your first step.

Hope isn't pretending everything is fine.

Hope is deciding to move forward with intention.

Discover where you are, see what's ahead.

[Take the Author Journey Assessment today to discover where you are and see what's ahead.](#)

Your next chapter doesn't begin with pressure.

It begins with understanding.



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. Enjoy more of Manno's cartoons in [Cartoon Chronicle: Winter 2024-2025](#).





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



Out & about

With

Lone Star Literary Life

In this month's *Out and About*, LSL Life team members Amy and Leslie spent a hopeful, book-filled day in Denton, wandering the welcoming shelves of Patchouli Joe's Books & Indulgences and The Plot Twist. Between heartfelt conversations with indie booksellers and the discovery of stories waiting to find their readers, the day felt like a quiet reminder that hope often lives in small places—on a handwritten shelf tag, in a thoughtfully displayed debut novel, or in the steady commitment of local bookstores who believe stories still matter. It was a celebration of community, connection, and the enduring promise found within the pages of a good book.





from left to right
Leslie, Dawn, Ashley, Darci, Amy

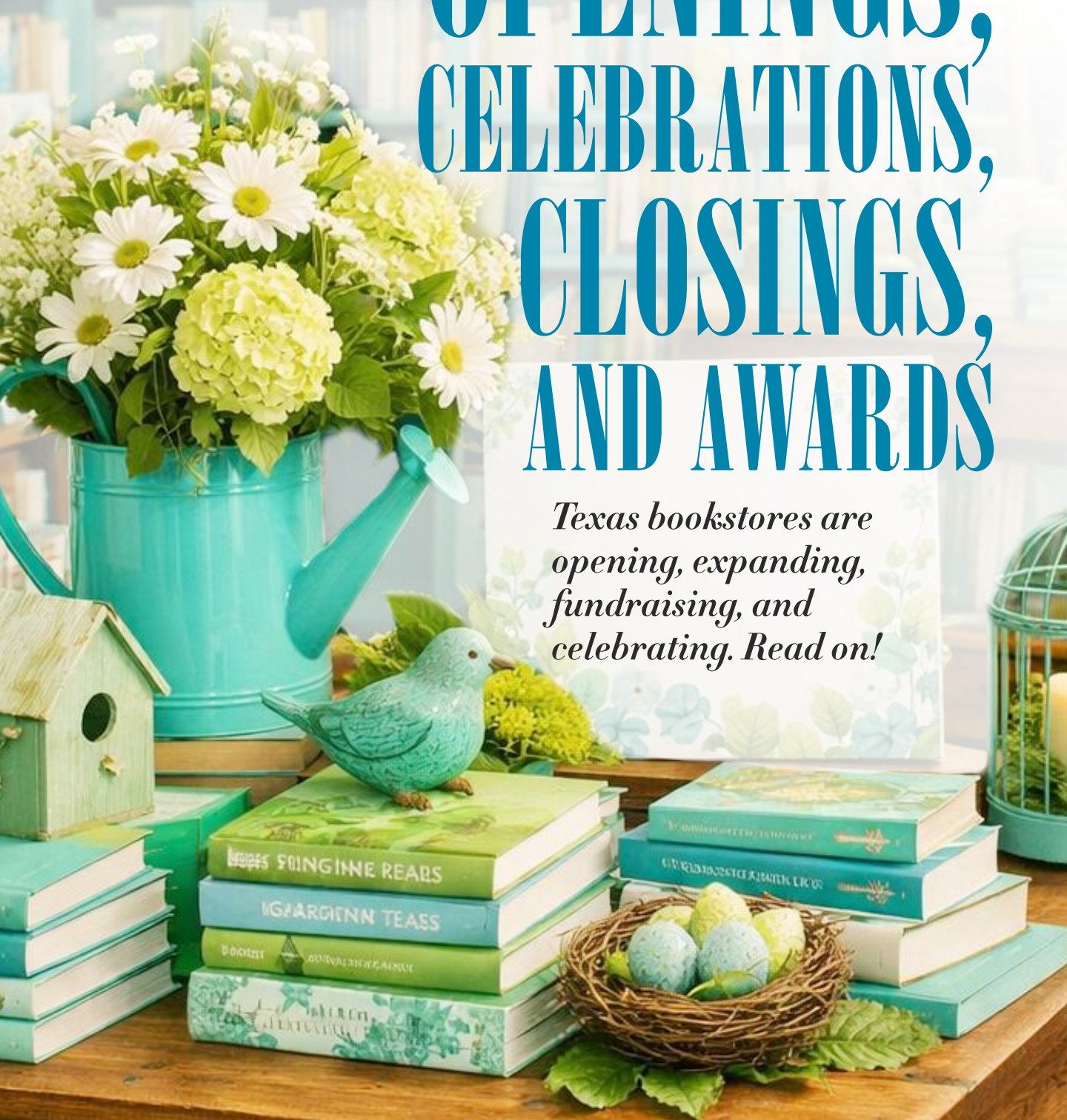


Patchouli Joe's Books



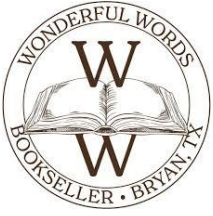
OPENINGS, CELEBRATIONS, CLOSINGS, AND AWARDS

Texas bookstores are opening, expanding, fundraising, and celebrating. Read on!



BRYAN

Wonderful Words Bookshoppe



celebrated their grand opening in December. The owners hope to build community and get people excited about reading.

CORPUS CHRISTI

Black Cat Books closed their doors in December



DENTON



The Plot Twist Bookbar

celebrated their one-

year anniversary with a celebration and book signings with Hazel S. Wilkes, Thea Claire, and Trevor and India Reiste.

Patchouli Joe's Books and Indulgences

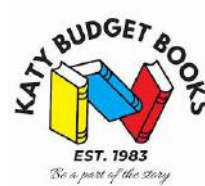


announced that they will close their doors in 2026.

Their announcement mentions a loss of convenient parking, rising costs, and changing priorities for the owners as a few of the reasons for the move.

KATY

Barnes & Noble opened a new bookstore in Katy at the end of January. The ribbon-cutting ceremony included book



signings with author ReShonda Tate and poet Devondra Banks. The company noted that they

received more requests for a bookstore in Katy than in any other city in the country.

KILLEEN

The **Scarlet Page Romance Bookshop** opened in Killeen just



THE SCARLET PAGE
romance bookshop

after the new year. Carrying a wide range of titles with a focus on diverse

stories and voices along with bookish merchandise, the store also features a room where customers can hang out as well. They plan to host book clubs, writing nights, and more.

MCALLEN



Ante Books closed their doors on February 6, after two years in business, the store officially closed.

MIDLAND

Love Affair Bookstore is



moving to a new and larger space at 4610 N. Garfield St. Suite C2/3.

NEW BRAUNFELS

The Chapter & Co. announced



that they are moving to a new location in town. Details will follow, but the new location will be a more sustainable storefront.

WEATHERFORD

Arts & Letters Bookstore

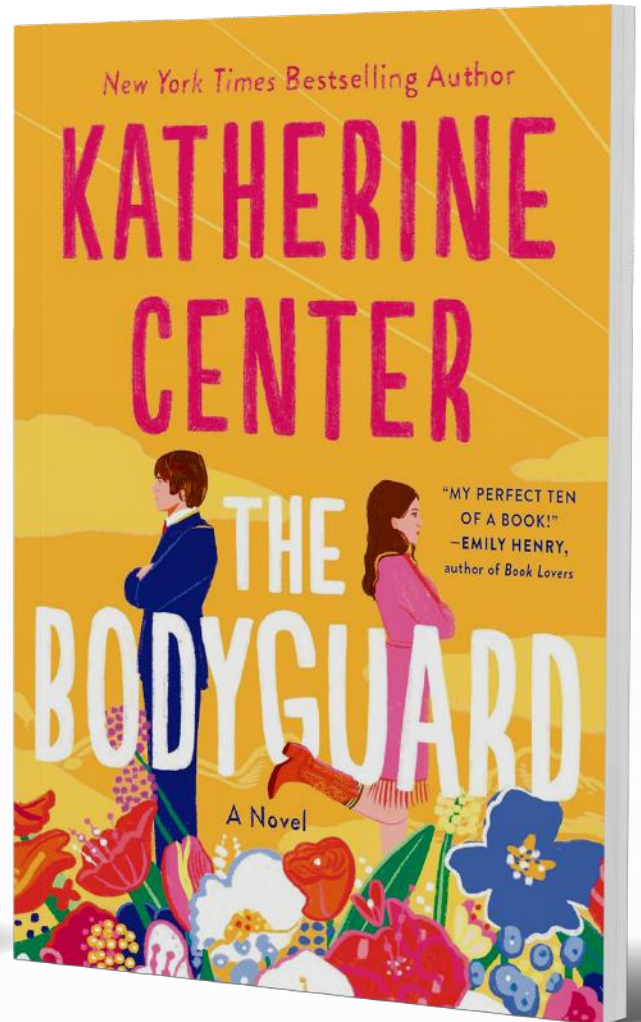


announced that they closed their Weatherford location. They plan to focus efforts on their Granbury location moving forward.

OTHER INDUSTRY NEWS

Netflix announced that *The Bodyguard* by **Katherine Center** is getting a movie adaptation. The film will star Leighton Meester and Jared Padalecki with Elizabeth Allen Rosenbaum serving as director. The film is titled *Guarding Stars*.

Two booksellers from Texas won scholarships to attend the [Children's Institute 2026](#) in Schaumburg, IL: Mona Macias from [Katy Budget Books](#) and Sabrina Caldwell from [The Book Haus](#).



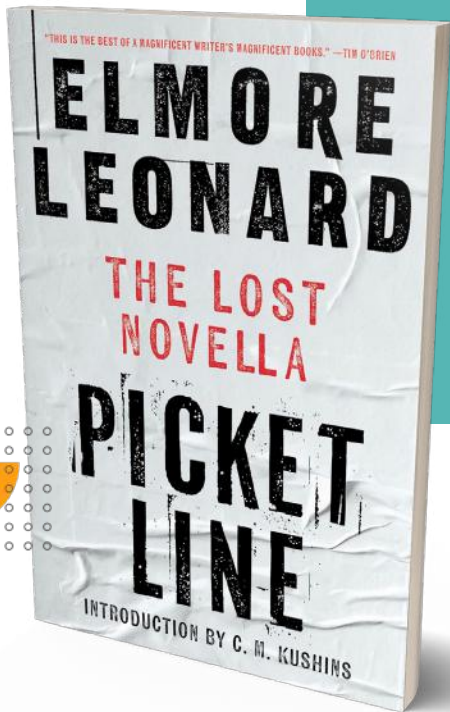
TEXAS READS

By Sean Bridges

Book Recommendations *March 2026*



I started out as a screenwriter, but some of my stories have become books. I enjoy writing within the guardrails of the traditional movie script, three-act structure. But I discovered that other ideas seem to gravitate towards a different canvas and a longer journey. My Texas Reads choices are from three master craftsmen who moved between those two worlds with ease.



Elmore Leonard – Picket Line

This recently published novella about a farm worker strike in South Texas and the growing anger on both sides was written in the early 1970's but was unreleased. I immediately got a *Mr. Majestyk* feel to the story. But this novella is more of a boiling drama than his classic crime thriller. I'd bet they were both created around the same time. Apparently, *Picket Line* was written for a Hollywood producer who passed on the material, and the story was lost in time.

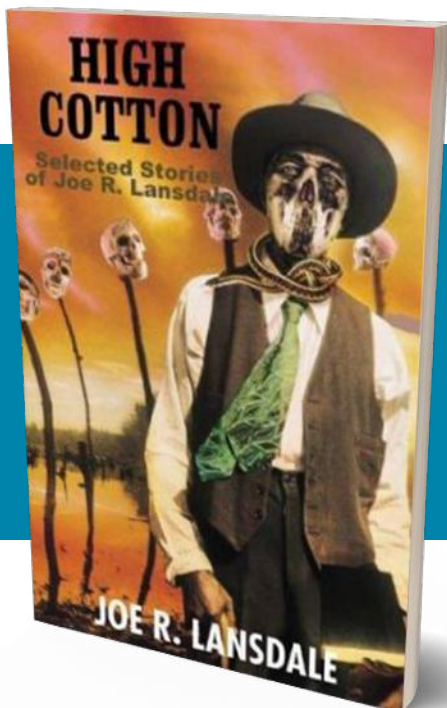
I savor any work from Elmore Leonard. He excels in creating believable characters. And this story weaves a number of them together.

From immigrant farm laborers who are on strike for fair pay, some trying to convince others to join the cause. To scab workers taking their place in the melon fields, barely keeping it together under hard labor and the oppressive Texas heat. A small band of union organizers desperate to hold the line as they try to convince farm management of their cause. And a local police force monitoring the crisis and hoping to keep the peace. Except some officers are more than happy to use violence to finally end the strike and force the laborers back to work.

It's a constant tension inching right up to the edge. Especially with the arrival of two Hispanic ex-cons who find their way into this volatile world and are ready to stoke the fires and set it all ablaze.

My biggest complaint is that it's over too soon. Right when it seems everything is in place for the story to shift gears, it's done. I was totally left wanting more. Which is a feeling I often have with a number of Elmore Leonard stories. Frankly, I hate to see them end.

It takes an artist to make it look so easy, and I absolutely love his style. I miss him and have been pacing myself through his impressive catalog of work. He's a personal favorite. So this discovery of a lost novella was such a treat.



Joe Lansdale – High Cotton

I met Joe Lansdale at a screening of *Bubba Ho-Tep* in Austin. After the movie, he was signing posters. My girlfriend at the time asked him about the books he had for sale and which one would he recommend. He signed a copy of this short-story collection to us. It was a great introduction to discover a quintessential Texan.

To me, he's a teacher as much as a writer. And Joe Lansdale taught me to never have a censor button. If you're going to be a writer, then you've gotta go where the story and characters will take you. And sometimes that journey may be uncomfortable. I've never forgotten that lesson and I learned it with this book. His stories are crafted with a sharp edge. Plus he's a favorite short story writer and *High Cotton* is the best of the best.

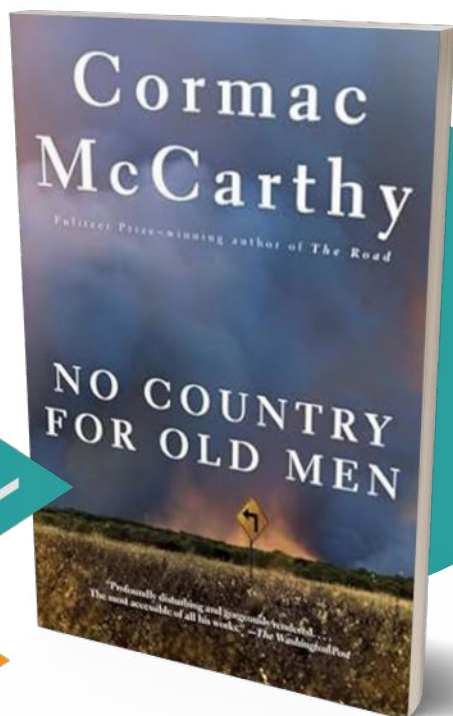
Lansdale can play your emotions like a virtuoso conductor. There's warmth and laughter and fear and disgust. Shock and horror and dread and tension. To call it a page turner doesn't do it justice. I used to think the people who populate his stories couldn't be real. But if you call Texas home long enough, then you're bound to run into any number of Lansdale characters.

I'm a big fan of his award-winning novels. I can't get enough of Hap and Leonard. I love his work with DC Comics, and his episodes of *Batman – The Animated Series* stand out from the entire run. *Cold In July* is an absolute solid recommendation (book and film). But this collection of short stories is one I must highlight. I



still feel a connection to it from all those years ago when I first turned the pages.

One other thing about Joe Lansdale. He always accompanies me when I go on a trip. Just to keep Texas close.



Cormac McCarthy - No Country For Old Men

When the Coen Brothers won Best Adapted Screenplay for the film, they said they didn't so much as write it but transcribe it. And if you read the book, it

reads and moves like a tight and taut thriller screenplay. Which, funny enough, it was. It was written for Hollywood, but Cormac couldn't get any traction with the material at all. Studio after studio turned it down. But in the face of overwhelming rejection, he wasn't deterred. He was still a fan of the story he created, so he decided to turn it into a book.

This was my inspiration to turn one of my screenplays into my first novel. I even tried to copy his style of limited punctuation. No quotation marks and a minimalist approach to the page. I took it all one step further and reached out to his agent at CAA. I made my pitch, said what a fan I was, and was surprised to receive a response. It was enough to get me a read.

His approach to Hollywood and not being stuck in one lane as a writer has always made sense to me. Write what you want and find a way to get it out to an audience.

If you haven't read this book. Read it. If you haven't seen the film. Watch it. I consider it one of the greatest American novels written in my lifetime.

He's a Texas literary giant. His books are paintings in a gallery. But he always saw himself as a journeyman writer hammering away at his favorite typewriter. Even that has a mythos. He wrote all his books on an old Olivetti Lettera 32 manual typewriter that he bought in a pawn shop for \$50. Years later, it was sold at auction for over \$250,000. Then he went and bought another

Olivetti Lettera and started in on another project. He's a Texas and American icon who would never admit that to himself.

I once saw him at The Pearl in San Antonio. My dad was floored and nudged me to look over and check out who was leaving some office building. It was Tommy Lee Jones. I was more shocked at who was there with him. Cormac McCarthy. I knew enough to not approach either of those men and ask them anything. But it was like seeing John Steinbeck or William Faulkner in the flesh.

Sean Bridges was born in Wiesbaden, Germany. He's an Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences Nicholl award-winning screenwriter and author. He's a Stephen King Dollar Baby with his festival winning audio production of *One for the Road*.

His Audible Parade Productions created a serial audio thriller, *Triple Six*, and their next horror/suspense series is out on Audible, *Parasite Zero*.

His suspense/thriller novel, *Gunbarrel Highway*, is available as a paperback, e-book and audiobook. His next novel, *On the Bayou*, will be published in May 2026.

He's currently creating a spaghetti western/werewolf feature film, *High Moon*. And he lives and works in the Texas Hill Country.



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.

Love, Sivvy and *Superfan* both take different aspects of the trials of young adulthood.

One struggles with identity specifically surrounding ideas of womanhood and success while the other struggles with classic issues of growing up and moving on.



Love Sivvy: A Novel Inspired by the Life, Letters, and Diaries of Young Sylvia Plath

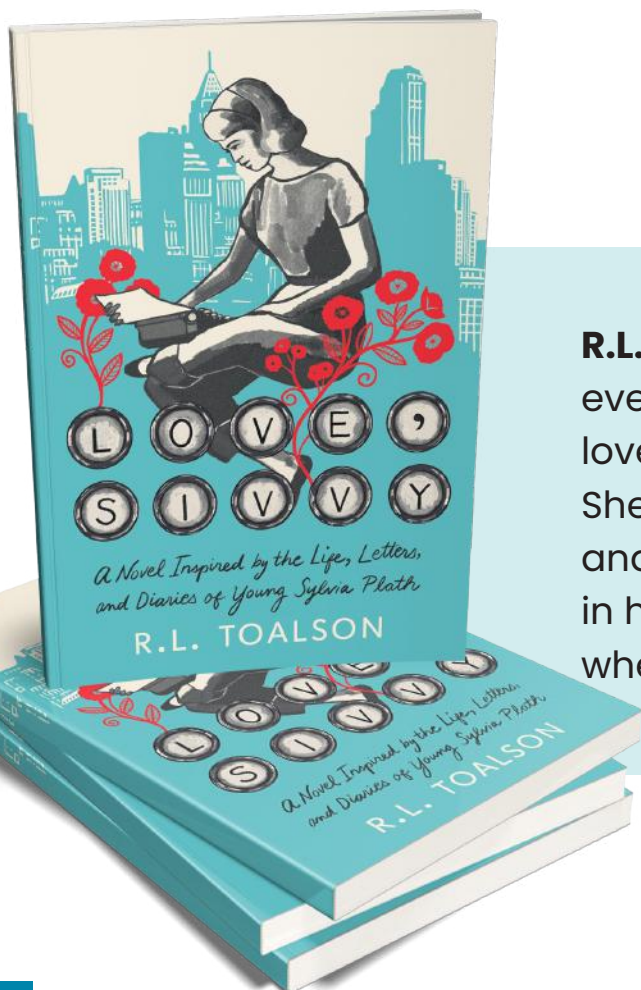
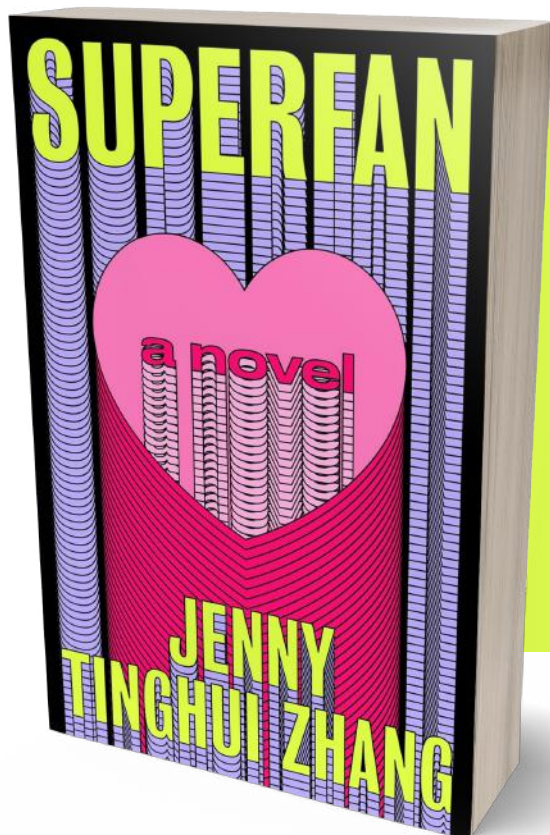
Sylvia Plath knows she was born to be remembered. She loves learning, literature, and writing, especially poetry. The problem is, she's coming of age in a time when women are expected to happily set

aside their dreams for a husband and a home. Even in high school, Sylvia struggles to reconcile the societal expectations placed on women and the ambitions she has for a great career. She aches for a partner and a family, but she longs to become a poet, too. And she's afraid she can't have both.



Covering her high school and college years, and capturing her many highs and lows as she wrestled with her mental health and blazing talent, *Love, Sivvy* is a beautifully rendered portrait of one of the most incandescent poets of all time.

Love, Sivvy is a beautiful story written in prose that captures the story of Sylvia Plath. It is a lovely introduction to the life of Sylvia Plath and is a fast-paced read that will keep you reading.



R.L. Toalson writes books for everyone—kids, teens, adults, fiction lovers, poetry lovers, essay lovers. She loves running, reading, writing, and drinking peppermint green tea in her home in San Antonio, Texas, where she lives with her family.

Jenny Tinghui Zhang is a Texas-based Chinese-American writer and the author of *Four Treasures of the Sky* (forthcoming from Flatiron Books on April 5, 2022). She is a Kundiman fellow and graduate of the VONA/Voices and Tin House workshops.

Superfan: A Novel

Freshman Minnie is adrift at college in Austin, Texas, when she discovers a boy band called HOURglass and the online forums that worship them. She especially loves Halo, whose sharp edges feel somehow familiar. After a brief romance goes painfully awry, Minnie pours everything into her new fandom, clinging to each livestream and bonding

with other fans online. But when a scandal threatens to expose Halo to harm, Minnie decides that she is the only one who can save him.

Except Halo's secret is darker than anything the tabloids could imagine. Before he was a superstar heartthrob, he was a high school dropout haunted by a tragic accident. When he is recruited for HOURglass, it feels like a chance to become someone else. And when he is onstage in front of his fans, he can almost forget the horrors of his past—until one of those very fans threatens to destroy everything.

Superfan is an attention-grIPPING story that depicts the loneliness and fandoms that are typical of young adults going through transitions. The novel is funny, heartwarming, and leaves the reader wanting to root for both the characters.

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.

The Power of Hope *for Today's Writer*



Writers can face a season of disappointment, uncertainty, and being overwhelmed. Hope seems to evade us, and we desperately crave it. Will the spring rain of today encourage the flowers of creativity? Hope for writers doesn't show up at our doorstep or lead a parade, but in quiet beauty and gentle whispers.

“

*A professional
writer is an amateur
who didn't quit.*

— RICHARD BACH

”

Hope for writers isn't a denial of our emotions, something to avoid, or a way to develop false optimism. Instead, hope focuses on patience, tenacity, and perspective. Stress, marketing changes, and world uncertainty can rob us of our creativity.

Where does a writer find hope?

Creative people find inspiration in unexpected places. We find inspiration for stories or books when we least expect it, even when we feel blocked. We find some of those hope-filled moments:

- ◆ In conversations with strangers
- ◆ In spiritual guidance
- ◆ In dreams
- ◆ In reading books, writing articles, blog posts, social media, podcasts, news articles, and TV/movies.
- ◆ In choosing a unique environment in which to write
- ◆ In acts of voluntary kindness
- ◆ In unpredictable situations
- ◆ In exploring nature
- ◆ In a vacation setting
- ◆ In helping another writer move forward in their writing goals.



Emily Dickinson, *The Poems of Emily Dickinson*

“Hope is the thing with feathers
That perches in the soul
And sings the tune without the
words
And never stops at all.”

When a writer finds hope, the victory is a tool to help other writers overcome their downtime. The courage to be transparent not only influences writers, but it also makes a powerful impact on family, friends, and their community. Hope is contagious, so let's spread the good word.

“

*You can have
everything in life you
want, if you will just
help other people get
what they want.*

—ZIG ZIGLAR

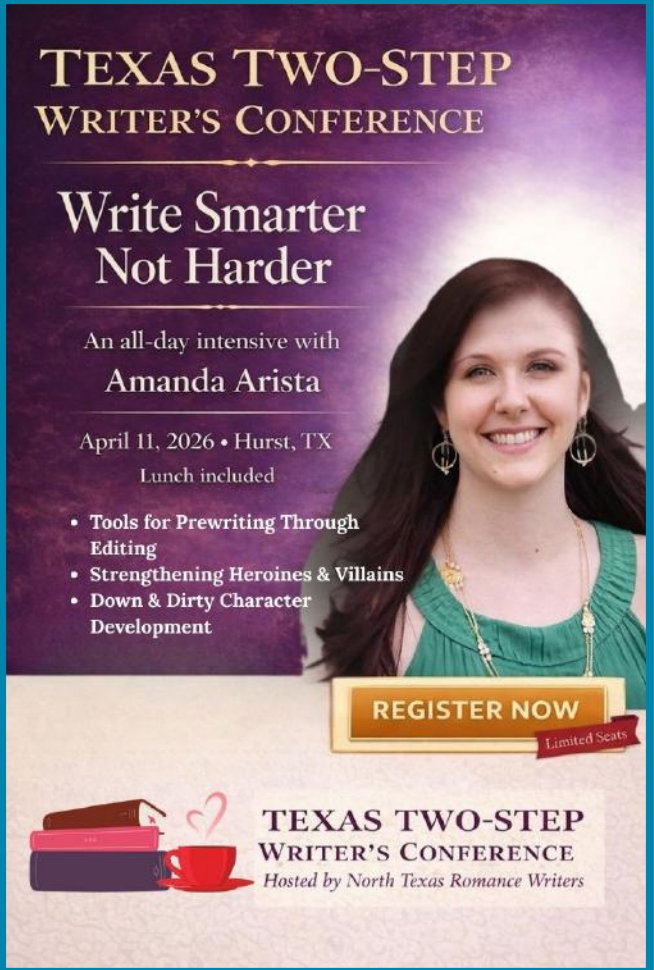
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Choosing to hope on hard days

Yielding to depression damages and can destroy our confidence. No writer wants to admit defeat and walk away from opportunities to share a manuscript that is entertaining, inspiring, encouraging, and opens the mind to new information. When those unsettling moments hit, choose hope—

- ◆ Stop and inhale self-confidence, then exhale the negativity threatening your craft.
- ◆ Place this above your computer screen: I choose hope.
- ◆ Record one good thing about the day, and it doesn't have to involve writing.
- ◆ Pour out your problem to a trusted friend or writer in whom you can confide. Then listen for suggestions.
- ◆ Switch genres to stimulate your brain. This is an exercise to build hope in something new, not a permanent change. But a genre change may be your solution!



**TEXAS TWO-STEP
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Not Harder**

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Amanda Arista

April 11, 2026 • Hurst, TX
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- Tools for Prewriting Through Editing
- Strengthening Heroines & Villains
- Down & Dirty Character Development

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Limited Seats

**TEXAS TWO-STEP
WRITER'S CONFERENCE**
Hosted by North Texas Romance Writers

The poster features a portrait of Amanda Arista, a woman with long dark hair wearing a green top and gold jewelry. Below the portrait is a graphic of a stack of books and a red teacup with a heart above it.

“
I can shake off everything as I write; my sorrows disappear, my courage is reborn.
—ANNE FRANK
”

You are a writer, and that means we feel intensely about our craft. Passion fuels the fire of creativity but be prepared to hope when our writerly emotions threaten our joy.

“

Amateurs sit and wait for inspiration, the rest of us just get up and go to work.

—STEPHEN KING

”

DiAnn Mills is a bestselling author who invites her readers to step into stories where suspense meets adventure and romance warms the heart. Known for crafting unforgettable characters tangled in unpredictable plots, DiAnn believes every breath we take unfolds a story waiting to be told—so why not make it thrilling?

Her novels have consistently landed on bestseller lists including CBA, ECPA, and Publishers Weekly, and have won prestigious awards such as the Christy, Selah, Golden Scroll, Inspirational Readers' Choice, and Carol awards.

DiAnn is a founding board member of American Christian Fiction Writers and Conference Advisor for the Blue Ridge Mountains Christian Writers. She actively participates in Advanced Writers and Speakers Association, Mystery Writers of America, the Jerry Jenkins Writers Guild, International Thriller Writers, Outliers Writing University, and The Christian Pen. DiAnn passionately invests in helping fellow authors succeed through mentoring, book coaching, and editing. She travels nationwide speaking and teaching engaging writing workshops.



MARCH 14, 2026



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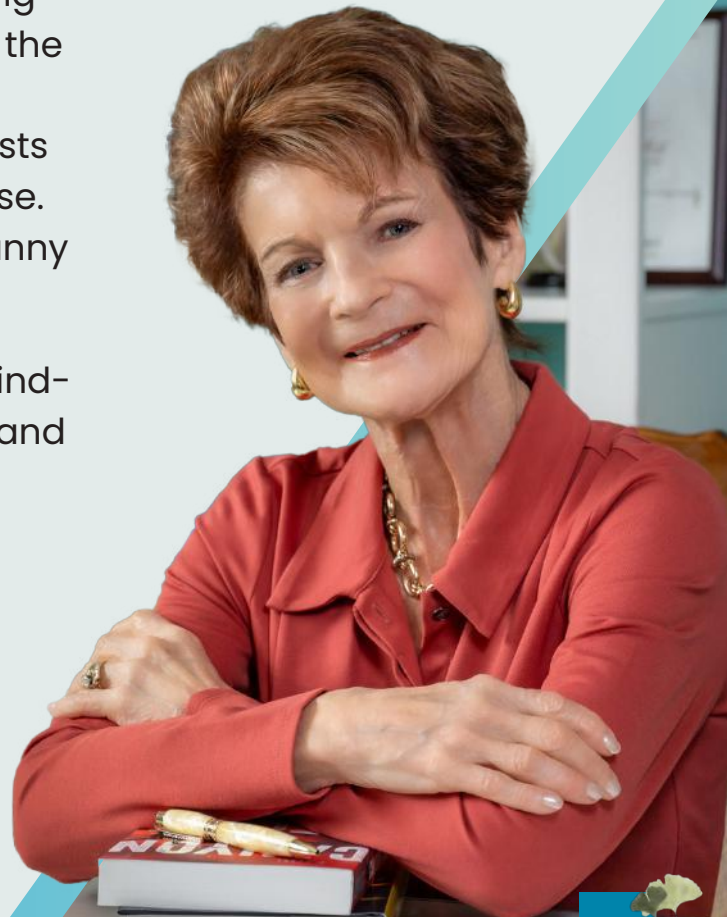
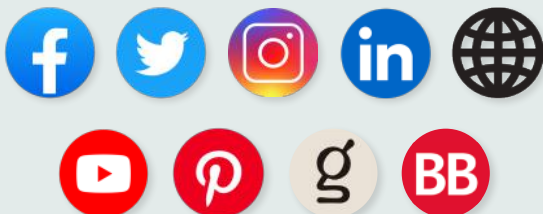


11 AM - 7 PM

Discover new reads, meet your next favorite author, and support independent voices.

A proud coffee snob who roasts her own beans, DiAnn also 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 online for behind-the-scenes glimpses, writing tips, and lively discussions:



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



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

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THE LONE STAR LITERARY LIFE MAGAZINE

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