Exit West: A Novel
By Mohsin Hamid
“Exit West will take your breath away as it magically weaves together a story of falling in love while the world falls apart. Spirited Nadia captures the heart of the thoughtful Saeed, but as their different paths in life converge, ordinary life gives way to the insults of war. Mohsin Hamid conveys the story of these young refugees with tenderness, humanizing the horrors that we too often see as merely headlines. As chaos touches so many lives around the globe, Hamid writes eloquently of the beauty found in our struggle to survive. This is more than a timely story; this is a remarkable work of art.”
—Luisa Smith, Book Passage, Corte Madera, CA

The Stranger in the Woods
By Michael Finkel
“This is the fascinating true story of Christopher Knight, who lived in the Maine woods for 27 years and survived by stealing supplies from vacation cabins while living in extreme conditions to avoid detection. After more than 1,000 burglaries, he was finally caught and partially reintegrated into society. His story is told together with the history of hermits and those who have sought solitude in order to have insight. Chris defies psychological profiling, and it’s amazing Finkel was even able to interview him to write this book. This level of solitude would drive most people insane, but for Chris, it seems like an almost pure contemplative state. An excellent read.”
—Todd Miller, Arcadia Books, Spring Green, WI

A Piece of the World: A Novel
By Christina Baker Kline
“A Piece of the World is a beautifully rendered novel about the life of Christina Olson, the inspiration for Andrew Wyeth’s famous painting Christina’s World. Moving back and forth between Christina’s childhood and her long-term relationship with Wyeth during her middle years, A Piece of the World captures the internal struggles of a young woman living with a physically debilitating disease in rural Maine. Baker Kline does a masterful job of giving us insight into a fiercely independent woman who has suffered so many disappointments but still manages to create a fulfilling life for herself and inspire those around her with her strength.”
—Phyllis Spinale, Wellesley Books, Wellesley, MA

Celine: A Novel
By Peter Heller
“There should be an excused absence from life when a new Peter Heller novel is released to the world. There is a pace and a quality to his writing that will make you want to drink it down in one gulp. Heller’s strong narrative voice and complex plotting have always stood out to me and Celine is another example of this. Loosely based on Heller’s mother, Celine is a hard-nosed—if a bit worn down—private investigator living in post-9/11 Brooklyn. She has a stellar reputation, but when she is sent on a case to locate a young woman’s missing father, it’s clear that her age (and lifestyle) has caught up with her. You will fall in love with Celine and connect with everyone who populates this book. I would give just about anything to follow her on more adventures.”
—Katelyn Phillips, WORD, Jersey City, NJ
Edgar and Lucy: A Novel
By Victor Lodato

“Edgar and Lucy is about a terribly broken family that faces crisis after crisis yet never gives up trying to be a family. The main narrator is eight-year-old Edgar, a child brilliant beyond his years but who has a problem relating to almost everyone except his grandmother, Florence. Edgar’s mother, Lucy, loves him in her own way but thanks to Florence, Lucy really doesn’t need to make much of an effort. When Florence dies, everything changes. A stunning novel, dark at times, raw and bold, written with an uncanny feel for life and death, Edgar and Lucy kept me spellbound waiting for its conclusion but unwilling for the story to end.”
—Nancy McFarlane, Fiction Addiction, Greenville, SC

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One of the Boys: A Novel
By Daniel Magariel

“The intensity of this novel is such that you’ll be relieved that it is not longer than its 176 powerful pages. When ‘the war’ with his wife ends, a man uses devious methods to win custody of his two sons, 12 and 14, packs them in his Jeep, and heads from Kansas to start a new life in Albuquerque. The boys are aware that their father uses drugs, but their loyalty to him and their youth keep them trapped in a home that soon becomes little more than a torture chamber as their father sinks further into his addiction. Narrated in excruciating detail by the younger son, this is a moving story about how parent/child love can be turned on its head by drug abuse. Excellent writing keeps one riveted in hope that the boys will survive.”
—Alice Meloy, Blue Willow Bookshop, Houston, TX

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Rabbit Cake
By Annie Hartnett

“When Eva Rose Babbitt, mother of daughters Lizzie, 15, and Elvis, 10, drowns while sleep-swimming, her daughters are left to fend for themselves emotionally while their father tends to his grief by wearing his wife’s bathrobe and lipstick. Elvis stays up at night, trying to keep Lizzie, a sleepwalker and sleep-eater, from burning the house down with her nocturnal ‘cooking.’ But Elvis doesn’t trust the circumstances of her mother’s death and is determined to finish her mother’s book, The Sleep Habits in Animals and What They Tell Us About Our Own Slumber, so she does a little research of her own. Annie Hartnett has created endearing and memorable characters in a delightfully original story that is sure to become a beloved favorite of readers everywhere.”
—Kris Kleindienst, Left Bank Books, St. Louis, MO

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Abandon Me
By Melissa Febos

“Melissa Febos has one of those minds that’s as good at describing scenes as it is at clearly breaking down a complicated idea or articulating ambivalence. Abandon Me is a powerhouse collection—each essay can be enjoyed on its own, but taken together, they form a striking autobiographical portrait of a talented young writer and thinker. You won’t want to abandon a voice this powerful, and you won’t forget it either.”
—John Francisconi, Bank Square Books, Mystic, CT

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The Hearts of Men: A Novel
By Nickolas Butler
“If you read Shotgun Lovesongs, you know that two of Butler’s strengths are his rich Wisconsin settings and his ability to probe the depths of men’s friendships. His new novel, an epic about three generations at a Boy Scout camp in the North Woods, takes it to the next level. It starts with the bullied Nelson, who finds purpose in the Scouts and winds up running the camp, and Jonathan, the older boy who becomes both his manipulator and protector. Their complicated friendship unfolds through Jonathan’s son Trevor and grandson Thomas, who both wind up spending summers at Chippewa, but what’s a Scout to do when the Scout Oath doesn’t always hold up in reality? Is there a place for honor when nobody wants to get a stamp-collecting or radio merit badge? In Butler’s hands, the answers unfold, all in the context of a heck of a good story.”

—Daniel Goldin, Boswell Book Company, Milwaukee, WI

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MARCH ’17

Close Enough to Touch: A Novel
By Colleen Oakley
“It was just a kiss, but it nearly killed her. Jubilee is allergic to people. She can’t be touched by strangers, well-meaning or not. She retreats into her shell, away from the world, but her high school years pass, then her parents are gone, and, finally, she must move out into the world or die. She finds a home for her quiet life in a library, until Eric finds her and insists that she discover the truth of a life lived without fear. Close Enough is filled with real life, real people, and the search for happiness that we all recognize. It is a truly moving story from a rare gem of an author.”

—Linda Bond, Auntie’s Bookstore, Spokane, WA

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The Fall of Lisa Bellow: A Novel
By Susan Perabo
“I was surprised by the lasting impact of this novel. Though it speaks to a horrible crime, it is not the crime that becomes the plot, but rather the crime’s impact. This book is an intimate look at adolescence—of how gritty and hard it can be. Through Meredith’s eyes, we are reminded of the tug-of-war between needing family and needing independence, the way that friendship and loyalty can get lost in the status wars of high-school cliques, and how innocence and wisdom twist together to leave behind something much more complex. I loved this book for its intimacy rather than its sensationalism.”

—Susan McCloskey, Bookshop Santa Cruz, Santa Cruz, CA

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Eggshells: A Novel
By Caitriona Lally
“This quirky little novel is such a delight! Reading Irish authors is typically a bit of a struggle for me—their style is almost too unusual at times. With Eggshells, I felt like I was reading an incredibly charming yet melancholy story while also poking around in the deep recesses of the mind of an exceptionally vivid personality. You will laugh, you will raise your eyebrows, and your heart will break as you follow Vivian around on her daily wanderings as she tries desperately to find the ‘other world’ where she belongs. Lally has made it so easy to walk around in someone else’s very unique shoes—a subtle lesson in empathy that can always be re-learned.”

—Hannah Hyde, Little Shop of Stories, Decatur, GA

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Never Let You Go: A Novel
By Chevy Stevens
“Ten years ago: Lindsay Nash is trapped in an abusive marriage with a man who has threatened to kill her if she runs. Today: Lindsay is a successful small-business owner and a single mom raising her teenage daughter. When her ex-husband is released from jail, however, the terror starts all over again as Lindsay and her daughter are stalked and skillfully manipulated. Her ex swears it isn’t him—but is there any chance he has really changed? This fast-paced thriller will leave you guessing right up to the end!”
—Carrie Deming, The Dog Eared Book, Palmyra, NY

Setting Free the Kites
By Alex George
“This heartfelt and compelling novel from A Good American author Alex George is a story of friendship, loss, and how we deal with grief, a story about how a single friendship can change us forever. Yet again, George has developed beautiful, layered characters and you will quickly fall in love with Nathan, Robert, and Liam in blustery seaside Maine in the 1970s. You will hear the excitement each hot, blistering summer of children and families visiting the amusement park owned by Robert’s family. You will laugh, you will cry, and you will grieve, but you will not be disappointed.”
—Amanda Zirn, Bethany Beach Books, Bethany Beach, DE

All Grown Up: A Novel
By Jami Attenberg
“Though Andrea Berg hasn’t hit society’s milestones for adulthood—no husband, no baby, an anemic career—she is clearly ‘all grown up,’ and in Jami Attenberg’s wonderful new novel, she struggles to define her place to the wider world, her family, and herself. In funny, often poignant vignettes of one woman’s life, All Grown Up perpectively explores what it means to be an adult.”
—Sarah Baline, East City Bookshop, Washington, DC

Ill Will: A Novel
By Dan Chaon
“Ill Will is a house of mirrors reflecting intergenerational psychodramas in which the abuses of a parent insidiously infect subsequent generations. Violent parricide, false memories, drugs, and sex fuel a double plot line and vivid character development and taut dialog propel the reader as scene shifts blur the roles of the offender and the injured. Chaon adroitly leads us through a literary haunted house, then leaves us to find our own way out.”
—Bill Fore, Hickory Stick Bookshop, Washington Depot, CT
The Wanderers
By Meg Howrey
“In The Wanderers, Meg Howrey brilliantly weaves together the vastness of outer space with the intimacy of human nature. Howrey’s characters are artfully drawn—full of strengths and failings and each yearning for something in their relationships with others. The Mars simulation at the center of the story represents an exciting new frontier for human beings, but Howrey’s astronauts demonstrate that even those driving the larger quest for human greatness are flawed individuals leading complicated lives. This is a wonderfully introspective novel on the meaning of space exploration and what we learn about ourselves when facing the unknown.”
—Kelsey O’Rourke, Literati Bookstore, Ann Arbor, MI

White Tears: A Novel
By Hari Kunzru
“An unsettling, grungy, gorgeous tale of white appropriations of black culture, legacy, and memory, of the harrowing effects of racism through the years, of a haunting that resonates through generations through a blues song that should have been stamped on vinyl, that maybe was but never was. This is a story of the costs of a lack of reparations, of money and power and powerlessness, all tied up in the viscerally kinetic prose of an author writing about obsession. Beautiful, ugly, indelible writing makes this a book I won’t soon forget.”
—Gretchen Treu, A Room of One’s Own Bookstore, Madison, WI

The Mother’s Promise: A Novel
By Sally Hepworth
“The Mother’s Promise is an emotional story of a mother’s love for her teenage daughter, who is struggling with severe social anxiety. Alice and her daughter, Zoe, cope with their problems until Alice becomes critically ill and is faced with a heartbreaking prognosis. She turns to two strangers for help with Zoe and her future. As the relationship among Zoe and these women evolves, they all confront their own personal problems and secrets. This beautifully written story will move readers to tears of grief, compassion, and, at its conclusion, hope.”
—Fran Duke, Where the Sidewalk Ends, Chatham, MA

WHEREAS: Poems
By Layli Long Soldier
“When pain is obvious but goes unrecognized, it feels like trying to strain salt from sugar. With the poems in Whereas, Layli Long Soldier engages with where she’s ‘from’ through history and memory, analysis and reflection. Her mission? To stay angry—to declare, ‘I’m here I’m not / numb to a single dot.’ From rants and dreams and one lexical box to a pantomime of legalese, Long Soldier is agile, aware, and not asking for pity. She aims, instead, for action—‘whereas speaking, itself, is defiance.’”
—Annalia Luna, Brazos Bookstore, Houston, TX

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