



# JANUARY '21

## The Prophets: A Novel

By Robert Jones, Jr.

"I am at a loss for words. How can I even begin to describe the breathtaking language Robert Jones, Jr. has gifted us in his debut novel, *The Prophets*? How can I begin to explain how he achieves a feat so marvelous it almost seems impossible? Well, that's the key word: almost. From his innovative restructuring of the Bible through the lens of America's history with slavery to characters that leap off the page with colorful grace and dignity, Jones masterfully weaves a narrative that serves as a warning from the past, a prophecy for the future, and a testament to the present. His writing defies all great American novels that have come before, and in doing so becomes one of the greatest I've ever had the pleasure of reading. I can't wait for everyone to be as spellbound by this book as I am; it will stay with me forever."

—Gage Tarlton, Flyleaf Books, Chapel Hill, NC



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## What Could Be Saved: A Novel

By Liese O'Halloran Schwarz

"Wow. What a riveting read! Part family saga, part mystery, *What Could Be Saved* is just extraordinary. It is a moving, powerful story of loss and regret, loyalty and redemption. Schwarz's crisp, lyrical prose lays bare the emotional journey of each member of this unforgettable family. These beautifully drawn, tragically flawed characters will remain with me long after turning the last page."

—Anderson McKean, Page and Palette, Fairhope, AL



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## Outlawed: A Novel

By Anna North

"I am a well-adjusted adult, but I still cried when I finished this book because I loved it so much. While the western is generally a conservative genre built upon racist and sexist values, Anna North has managed to stay true to the classic in style and theme while creating a powerful and progressive story. Ada is an incredibly compelling narrator with clear passions and talents, and watching her grow into herself and achieve her goals is wonderful. *Outlawed* is about the many different ways to be whole and to own your power, even in a world that tries to hold you down. It's an exciting and extraordinary novel."

—Sylvie Weissman, Content Bookstore, Northfield, MN



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## The House on Vesper Sands: A Novel

By Paraic O'Donnell

"Paraic O'Donnell leavens the dark foreboding of a truly sinister, otherworldly mystery with distinctively clever storytelling and a decidedly marvelous cast of characters. You are in the best of hands with Inspector Cutter and Gideon Bliss on the case, along with the intrepid and resourceful reporter Octavia Hillingdon. Beautifully done!"

—Peter Sherman, Wellesley Books, Wellesley, MA



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### The Push: A Novel

By Ashley Audrain

"I read Ashley Audrain's debut, *The Push*, in two days because I literally couldn't stop. What does it mean to be a good mother? What if you don't emotionally connect with your child? How much emotional trauma is passed down from mothers to daughters? *The Push* examines four generations of females as well as the ways having children impacts one marriage. I loved this book."

—Rachel Watkins, Avid Bookshop, Athens, GA



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### Better Luck Next Time: A Novel

By Julia Claiborne Johnson

"Johnson's latest novel has all the heart and soul fans of *Be Frank With Me* enjoyed, coupled with a retro setting at a divorce ranch in Reno during the Great Depression. Funny? Check. Heartwarming? Check. A rollicking, all-round good read? Check! Do yourself a favor and read it. Then share it with someone you love."

—Susan Taylor, Book House of Stuyvesant Plaza, Albany, NY



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### The Fortunate Ones: A Novel

By Ed Tarkington

"Ed Tarkington is the mastermind behind this tender tale of love and betrayal, politics and social divide. A teenage boy growing up with a single mom in a low-income area of Nashville receives a mysterious scholarship offer to attend an elite private school for boys. Charlie Boykin is now in the midst of the children of billionaires and socialites, and the trajectory of his life is altered forever. The reader is left to ask, 'Was it all worth it?' This is a character-driven novel with a storyline as opulent as the mansions within."

—Damita Nocton, The Country Bookshop, Southern Pines, NC



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### The Center of Everything: A Novel

By Jamie Harrison

"This is a story about family, about history, and about love. The characters are like you and me; their stories are intertwined just as ours are, with a past and a hoped-for future. Author Jamie Harrison wields a mighty pen with precision and care, peopling her book with a myriad of interesting characters living believable lives. Her narrative is insightful and moving, and she has that rare gift of making a fictional story sound like the real thing."

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



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## The Wife Upstairs: A Novel

By Rachel Hawkins

"This modern reimagining of *Jane Eyre* tells the story of Jane, a young woman with a secretive past living under an assumed name who works as a dog walker in a luxurious subdivision of Birmingham, Alabama, and has a penchant for stealing from her wealthy employers. When she meets the charming, rich, and recently widowed Eddie Rochester, who has his own dark secrets, they begin a whirlwind romance. But what really happened to Eddie's first wife, the glamorous, self-made millionaire Bea? Told from multiple points of view, this twisty, suspenseful take on a classic novel is perfect for fans of domestic thrillers."

—Marilyn Negip, R.J. Julia Booksellers, Madison, CT



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## The Inland Sea: A Novel

By Madeleine Watts

"This character study of a woman's reckless year while taking time away from college and answering phones for Australia's emergency response system cuts deep. Madeleine Watts' extraordinary debut novel takes us from oceans to bathtubs, from rivers flowing in the wrong direction toward a mythical sea to apocalyptic firestorms. The writing is stunningly powerful and insightful. I highly recommend this."

—Dave Shallenberger, Little Shop of Stories, Decatur, GA



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## The Liar's Dictionary: A Novel

By Eley Williams

"*The Liar's Dictionary* is an enormously charming novel about putting the world into words. Its two logophilic heroes, separated by a century, are unforgettable characters; I loved spending time with these word-curious creations. You'll be utterly transported by this playful and seriously funny book."

—John Francisconi, McNally Jackson City Point, Brooklyn, NY



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## You'll Never Believe What Happened to Lacey: Crazy Stories About Racism

By Amber Ruffin, Lacey Lamar

"I didn't think it was possible to combine education and humor so effectively in a book about racism, but Ruffin and Lamar proved me wrong. This incredibly well-structured, digestible, challenging, and engaging book opened my eyes to the many ways racism can permeate every interaction in Black people's lives. The way the sisters play off each other and how Ruffin reflects on Lamar's experience in contrast to her own make the book especially accessible. A must-read!"

—Emily Autenrieth, A Seat at the Table Books, Elk Grove, CA



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### The Mystery of Mrs. Christie: A Novel

By Marie Benedict

"A delightful novel! While we will never know what happened to Agatha Christie during her 1926 disappearance, Marie Benedict has provided us with a compelling possibility. Keeping the reader guessing until the end, this is historical fiction that everyone is going to love!"

—Stefanie Lynn, The Kennett Bookhouse, Kennett Square, PA



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### Hades, Argentina: A Novel

By Daniel Loedel

"Tender and politically evocative, *Hades, Argentina* is a beautiful portrait of grief and reflection. Loedel has created a breathtaking debut that examines the complexities of love and the way our memories betray us. This book will stay with me for a long time."

—Cristina Rodriguez, Deep Vellum Books, Dallas, TX



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### A Swim in a Pond in the Rain: In Which Four Russians Give a Master Class on Writing, Reading, and Life

By George Saunders

"In this literal master class on literature and writing, Saunders earnestly yet playfully dissects 19th-century Russian short stories to discover how they exude life to this very day, while highlighting methods any aspiring writer can employ. The huge bonus: reading the wondrous stories themselves, and experiencing Tolstoy's authority, Chekhov's humanity, and the joy and glory of Gogol."

—Mike Hare, Northshire Bookstore, Saratoga Springs, NY



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### Across the Green Grass Fields (Wayward Children #6)

By Seanan McGuire

"If you've ever wondered if an adult book could be written to be accessible to not just young adult but middle grade readers, too, wonder no longer: The book of your dreams is here. *Across the Green Grass Fields* is a wonderful coming-of-age story that has all the mandatory trappings: bullying, parental oversight, unicorns, evil queens, and an intersex main character. It's like Tanith Lee rewriting *Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret*. This standalone novella is a wonderful entrance to the Hooflands, and I can't wait to double back and read more."

—Lizy Coale, Copperfish Books, Punta Gorda, FL



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## The Children's Blizzard: A Novel

By Melanie Benjamin

"Melanie Benjamin is at her best in this historical fiction account of the terrifying blizzard of 1888. It seemingly came out of nowhere and caught the residents of the Midwest by surprise, especially the children and teachers who were preparing to go home for the day. Benjamin looks at the lives of two sisters—both teachers at different schools—and how their decisions that day meant life or death for their students. I spent several late nights on this one!"

—Linda Hodges, Fiction Addiction, Greenville, SC



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## Black Buck: A Novel

By Mateo Askaripour

"Perhaps I have a different perspective on this book because I have a younger brother who is a Black, 20-something man in sales, but this book presents an evocative, honest, complex portrait of being a BIPOC person in a white-dominant workplace (albeit one that is high-powered, sales-driven, and New York City-based). This is a book that allows a reader to be seen if this is their experience, but also for a reader to learn about a different reality if this is not their own. *Black Buck* is a tightly woven, contemporary debut from an author to watch."

—BrocheAroe Fabian, River Dog Book Co., Beaver Dam, WI



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## Our Darkest Night: A Novel of Italy and the Second World War

By Jennifer Robson

"This is a love story...until it isn't. This is a war story...until it isn't. This is a story about surviving the worst of humanity then finding humanity. Set in Italy, this is WWII fiction writing at its finest. Prepare it to be pulled into this heart-wrenching saga. So much for book clubs to discuss. So much for readers to enjoy. If you loved the depth of research in *The Gown*, you will love *Our Darkest Night*."

—Carolyn Roys, Anderson's Bookshops, Naperville, IL



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## A Crooked Tree: A Novel

By Una Mannion

"*A Crooked Tree* is the delicately woven story of a single mother's bad decision to kick one of her children out of the car miles from home, and how that decision affects an entire network of friends and neighbors throughout the summer. Gorgeously told and intricately written, this hardly seems the work of a debut novelist; Una Mannion will be one to watch, and *A Crooked Tree* already has me anticipating her next book!"

—Mary O'Malley, Skylark Bookshop, Columbia, MO



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