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Luster: A Novel
By Raven Leilani
(William Morrow, 9780062878441, $27.99)
As a young black woman working in New York publishing and barely making rent each month, Leilani’s narrator must make a difficult choice: she marries the only man who has ever looked at her — and then must carefully manage the slippery slope of a suburban marriage. This novel is filled with unexpected turns and is a deeply personal, intimate coming-of-age story that seamlessly examines the plight of millennials living under capitalism along with the complexities of intimacy and race, all while finding both the humor and profound sadness in those things. This is a multi-layered, black as well as an extraordinary debut from Raven Leilani. —Sibyl Butte, Bookshop Santa Cruz, Santa Cruz, CA

Harrow the Ninth (The Locked Tomb Trilogy #2)
By T. T. Theodorakis
(Orbit, 9780765388391, $27)
“Harrow the Ninth is an exceptional second entry in Sappho’s Locked Tomb trilogy, which has quickly become a beloved series. The narrative in this world is given even more room to flex its muscles as an integral part of the story. Mur’s particular gift with language and her dead humor remain on full display. For all of the questions answered and curiosity resolved, I’m left desperate to know where we headed in this journey!” —Dana King, Left Bank Books, St. Louis, MO

The Death of Vivek Oji: A Novel
By Akwaeke Emezi
(Transept Books, 2020051098, 027)
“I am staggered by the immersion, fluid, irresistible prose Emezi has perfected in their third novel, The Death of Vivek Oji. This novel follows the captivating, coturnished Vivek through the recesses of his mysterious death, while simultaneously examining the people and relationships he’s left behind in Delhi. And a captivating third-person narrator leads the reader through a grounded, lively picture of Nigeria, family and friendship bonds stretched to their breaking points, and the passing of this unique, complex young boy. Through addictive, multifaceted characters and a simple, beautiful story, Emezi imprintshumanity, empathy, and love. This is one of the most magical, compelling, exciting, thought-provoking, and important books of our time.” —Margo Adams, Loganberry Books, Shaker Heights, OH

Flyaway: A Novella
By Kathleen Jennings
(Gray & Silver, 2020050987, 029)
“I’ve never read anything quite like this book. The prose is confident—it’s like on brand new shoes on which beautiful and strange flowers grow. Jennings’ use of syntax is exquisite, and her story is captivating. Words that sound like music to one person might be spoken so matter-of-factly by another. Each word choice and grouping creates a new meaning. This is a... fairy tale? An allegory? A murder mystery? I’m not entirely sure. It doesn’t matter. Trying to categorize this wonderful novella is like putting a unicorn into a horse box. It doesn’t fit. But that’s precisely why it’s so delightful. It’s as if the author is asking us to discover the story for ourselves.” —Annie Carl, The Neverending Bookshop, Edmonds, WA

True Story: A Novel
By Kate Reed Petty
(Viking, 2020051076, 028)
“A brilliant feminist novel of a novel that uses different methods of storytelling to illustrate how storytelling creates different versions of truth (if truth even exists) and reality. Are the stories we tell ourselves? Do we become the stories that are told about us? This is the question True Story poses us all layer upon layer of the narrative. Past, present, dream, part truth emotionally as assault, and part self-love as truth. True Story will keep you turning pages and guessing until the genius, puzzle-completing ending. I LOVED this book!” —Debra Ginsberg, DIESEL, A Booksore, Santa Monica, CA

Hieroglyphs: A Novel
By Karena Ann smartphone Books, 2020051035, 032)
“Jill McCorkle’s latest novel, Hieroglyphs, tackles early love and how we process our memories in the midst of those we experience it. McCorkle weaves the stories of four bridesmaids and their individual trajectories into a braided cord of empathy, revelation, and survival. Her storytelling skill is in high gear in this quiet yet deeply insightful and mesmerizing novel. This is as epic as Captain Ahab’s, and more wonderful. This novel would be like putting a unicorn into a horse box. It seamlessly examines the world of cricket, the underworld of illegal transactions, and the destruction of Germany that ultimately ended the war, Binder tackles both with equal parts waste and humanity to create something truly stunning.” —Margy Adams, Loganberry Books, Shaker Heights, OH

The Eighth Detective: A Novel
By Alcy Prous
(Deep Wood, 2020051081, 031)
“For people who love murder mysteries, this book is completely satisfying. Short stories are picked apart by a young scholar and an older author who become rivals through a mathematical standard to the classic detective novel. Each story depicts a variation of victim, killer, and context without giving away the solution. The final story, however, contains clues to yet another mystery-involving the author. Prous builds brilliant, with puzzles and the final reveal... well, no spoilers from me, but it was unexpected in the best way.” —Liesel Freeman, Boulder Book Store, Boulder, CO

The Disaster Tourist: A Novel
By Yun Ko-Eun
(Little, Brown, 2020051019, 026)
“This book is about every sort of disaster that can happen: ecological, economic, social, moral, and even the unexpected. When Yoon, a disaster tour guide for a travel company, is forced to go on a business trip to a remote island, she gets caught up making a living for her own. Her story brilliantly plays the layers of culture, capitalism, and all the ways we are shaped by the histories of those who came before us. A shocking, thought-provoking book that’s also a great read.” —Dan Schwartz, Changing Hands, Phoenix, AZ

The Butterfly Lampshead: A Novel
By Alise Bordner
(Distill), 2020050978, 030)
“Absolutely loved reading The Butterfly Lampshead. We’re relocated through Bordner’s novel by Francis, a child is removed from her mother’s care because of mental illness. Throughout the story, Franklin questions her own sanity as she deeply believes she witnesses phenomena that defy nature. Increasingly, she withdraws from the world, seeing no other way and working hard to remember the events of her life. This book and this amazing character are haunting.” —Mark LaFramboise, Politics and Prose Booksellers, Washington, DC

The Bright Side Streets for Animals: A Novel
By Becky Mandelbaum
(March Books, 2020050983, 029)
“The Bright Side Streets for Animals is a story of struggle, relationships, understanding, and forgiveness. When a daughter is compelled to return to the home she left years ago, she must confront the truth about why she left and whether all fences can be mended. Becky Mandelbaum weaves together all of the threads of this story until it becomes a beautiful tapestry.” —Mary O’Malley, Andersen’s Bookshop, La Grange, IL

You Had Me atHola: A Novel
By Alexia Dixon
(March Books, 2020051010, 028)
“I don’t have enough superlatives to do this book justice. Everything is spot on, from the chemistry between the main characters to the telenovela drama to the meddling but supportive cousins. I love all the Spanish, the Traditional Mexican foods, the readings into the making of a TV show (especially the inclusion of the intimacy coordinator), and the way the telenovela tropes, like the twist of the main character. Now I just hope Michelle and Ava get their own books soon!” —Cecilia Cacle, East City Bookshop, Washington, DC

I Hold a Wolf by the Ears: Stories
By Laura van den Berg
(Gray & Silver, 2020051107, 031)
“Laura van den Berg’s new collection of stories, one of the most unique I’ve read in recent years, navigates a space between the outer and inner world and takes unexpected turns that, like her novel, The Third Hotel, seem to bring to aesthetics of literature outside of our time and place to tell stories that are very much grounded in our present. These stories are haunting, timeless, and get better when you reread them. I read ’I hold a Wolf’ more than times by now.” —Fernando Flores, Melville Books, Austin, TX

Miracle Country: A Memoir
By Kendra Atleework
(Gray & Silver, 2020050979, 032)
“Miracle Country is one of those books that takes you on the one of the places you might never have imagined. And, in the case of the Owyhee River Valley, it demonstrates that any project is worth the effort and full of significant vitality. Atleework’s unflinching combination of personal and natural exploration is the perfect complement to the backward of the High Desert, and she effectively manages to do it. This book is about a major project and the contemporaneity of the mountain—ones existence in general— and for an appreciation of her own life, and her brash and brutal, resonant and inviting, this book makes the Sierra Nevada tangible in a way that only great writing can.” —David Nutch, Colfax Door Books, Reno, NV