

# The New York Times

## Best Sellers

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### EDITORS' CHOICE/STAFF PICKS FROM THE BOOK REVIEW

**CHAIN-GANG ALL-STARS**, by Nana Kwame Adjei-Brenyah. (Pantheon, \$27.) This dystopian satire — in which prison inmates duel on TV for a chance at freedom — makes readers complicit with the bloodthirsty fans sitting ringside. The fight scenes are so well written they demonstrate how easy it might be to accept a world this sick.

**IN MEMORIAM**, by Alice Winn. (Knopf, \$28.) Winn's debut novel is both a harrowing war saga and an unforgettable romance about two English schoolboys whose sublimated love drives them to enlist in World War I. What follows is a thrilling yet meditative, treacherous yet romantic tale of two boys trying to defy the odds for each other.

**KANTIKA**, by Elizabeth Graver. (Metropolitan, \$27.99.) Inspired by the life of Graver's maternal grandmother, this exquisitely imagined family saga spans cultures and continents as it traces the migrations of a Sephardic Jewish girl from turn-of-the-20th-century upper-crust Constantinople to more straitened circumstances in Barcelona, Havana and, finally, Queens, N.Y.

**THE BEST MINDS: A Story of Friendship, Madness, and the Tragedy of Good Intentions**, by Jonathan Rosen. (Penguin Press, \$32.) This riveting memoir, a literary and compassionate examination of the porous line between brilliance and insanity, traces the author's childhood friendship and sometime rivalry with a neighbor and Yale classmate who is now in prison for murdering his girlfriend.

**ASCENSION**, by Nicholas Binge. (Riverhead, \$28.) A mountain far larger than Everest appears seemingly overnight in Binge's hallucinatory novel, prompting scientists and military personnel to investigate. One expedition team finds enigma after enigma there: microbes that defy understanding, tentacled creatures, elastic time.

**PAVED PARADISE: How Parking Explains the World**, by Henry Grabar. (Penguin Press, \$30.) The dream of the open road assumes a place to put our cars when we arrive at our destination, but as Grabar's wry and revelatory new book shows, the American fixation on parking has transformed our streets and cities, none of it for the better.

**WOMB: The Inside Story of Where We All Began**, by Leah Hazard. (Ecco, \$29.99.) Hazard, a midwife, conducts a searching and sensitive investigation into "the most miraculous and misunderstood organ in the human body," probing medical history, questioning researchers and interviewing everyday people about their experiences.

**SEVENTY TIMES SEVEN: A True Story of Murder and Mercy**, by Alex Mar. (Penguin Press, \$28.) In 1985, four Indiana teenage girls carried out a senseless killing. This gripping tale of the fallout focuses on forgiveness: what it is, who can give it, whether it really changes anything in a culture superficially fixated on amends.

**THE WRECK: A Daughter's Memoir of Becoming a Mother**, by Cassandra Jackson. (Viking, \$28.) In this anguished, affecting account, Jackson recalls an intersection in her life where she grappled with old family secrets while yearning for a child of her own.

The full reviews of these and other recent books are on the web: [nytimes.com/books](https://www.nytimes.com/books).

### PAPERBACK ROW

**UNDER THE SKIN: The Hidden Toll of Racism on Health in America**, by Linda Villarosa. (Anchor, 288 pp., \$18.) In this elegant and searing account, Villarosa recalls her personal awakening to structural inequalities while tracing the effects of racism on the well-being of Black Americans, covering reproductive, environmental and mental health, and more. It was a finalist for the 2023 Pulitzer Prize in nonfiction.

**MAGPIE**, by Elizabeth Day. (Simon & Schuster, 336 pp., \$17.99.) An obsessive lodger upends the picture-perfect lives of a couple struggling to have a baby in Day's psychological thriller. Our reviewer, Megan Abbott, noted that the narrative operates at a "nearconstant fever pitch," matching the feelings of fertility anxiety, fears of romantic betrayal, in-law strife and body horror.

**THE MIDCOAST**, by Adam White (Hogarth, 368 pp., \$18.) White's vivid debut traces the fortunes of a lobstering family in a misty town in Maine, from its humble beginnings to the top of a local criminal empire to its eventual disintegration. Our reviewer, Lee Cole, praised the novel for its keen observations about landscape, dialect and class distinctions in small-town Maine.

**THE FOREVER PRISONER: The Full and Searing Account of the CIA's Most Controversial Covert Program**, by Cathy Scott-Clark and Adrian Levy. (Grove, 464 pp., \$22.) The grotesque legacy of the C.I.A.'s torture program — and the War on Terror at large — is on full display in this excruciatingly detailed account chronicling the fate of Abu Zubaydah, a Guantanamo Bay prisoner who endured torture and has been detained by the U.S. government for over 20 years.

**PAPPYLAND: A Story of Family, Fine Bourbon, and the Things That Last**, by Wright Thompson. (Penguin, 256 pp., \$18.) This rich exploration of the history of Pappy Van Winkle whiskey is attuned to the mythology of bourbon and lore of the Van Winkle family, according to our reviewer, J.D. Biersdorfer: "It has notes of stoicism and melancholy and a lingering finish of pride, even when recounting the hard times."

**LAST SUMMER ON STATE STREET**, by Toya Wolfe. (William Morrow, 224 pp., \$18.99.) Set in a soon-to-be demolished housing project on Chicago's South Side, this novel follows 12-year-old Fe Fe, forced into adulthood as she sees family and friends mistreated by racist police and a neglectful state. Our reviewer, Claire Kohda, described this debut as "tragic, hopeful, brimming with love."

MIGUEL SALAZAR