

# Self-Published Books Showcase

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from



## Adult

### 49 Buddhas. By Jim Ringel.

2018. 327p. Black Bee, paper, \$16.99 (9780999539804).

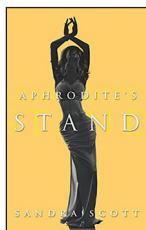
Practicing Buddhist Ringel delivers an entertaining, head-spinning murder mystery centering on protagonist Lama Rinzen Naraka, a Buddhist monk reincarnated as a young private detective on Denver's seedy Colfax Avenue. His mission is to recover the *dorje*, a ritual object that will allow him to bring enlightenment to all. Hired by local police as a freelance investigator, Naraka is assigned the murder of Sonny Heller, who, with his two brothers, ruled the city's insurance market. Heller has been killed via *lingchi*, an ancient Chinese form of torture and execution. A damsel in distress (or is she a femme fatale?) is involved, as are Naraka's ghostly teacher Daidyal, a grizzled police detective, and a Chinese customs officer who might be a spy. Ringel displays impressive literary alchemy, mixing ancient Tibetan philosophy with the trappings of a police procedural. He also skillfully uses his backdrop, employing Asian emporiums, dive bars, and poorly lit warehouses in a bitter, wintry locale. Those expecting a conventional mystery should be surprised—and thrilled—by this original take on the noir genre.

### ★ Aphrodite's Stand. By Sandra Scott.

2017. 380p. iUniverse, paper, \$20.99 (9781532034640).

Twists and turns abound in this smart, engaging romance that mixes in international intrigue. Dr. Andra Theonopilus has taken a leave of absence from her job in internal medicine to meet the wealthy Greek family of her new husband, Jayson. She feels nothing but dread—dark suspicions that are confirmed when she's faced with Jayson's brooding, imposing brother, Stefano, who

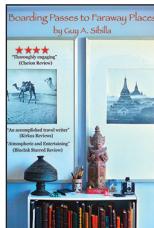
makes it clear he doesn't approve of their interracial union. But soon Andra discovers that she and Stefano are inexplicably attracted to one another. When Andra is kidnapped by a serial killer, it's a race against time to save her life. Maintaining a steady pace, Scott deftly introduces a host of compelling, multi-layered characters with their own distinct personalities and secrets. But it's the plot that really shines. There's no shortage of jaw-dropping surprises, and the tension, both romantic and action based, ebbs and flows perfectly. Throughout the story, Scott is never afraid to face issues of race and prejudice head-on, with intelligent social commentary adding another layer to the story. Dangerous, provocative, and unpredictable, *Aphrodite's Stand* is an excellent read for fans of romantic suspense.



### ★ Boarding Passes to Faraway Places. By Guy A. Sibilla.

2017. 208p. Archway, paper, \$16.99 (9781480846920). 910.

In this compelling book, Sibilla, who has been writing about his travels for more than 30 years, recounts eight journeys to out-of-the-way locales such as Myanmar, Pakistan's Karakoram Range, and the jungles of Belize. Sibilla comes by his travel habit naturally; his father was in the U.S. Army, and the family moved frequently. "Travel wasn't a break from life; it was our life," he writes. Rather than rattle off the finest hotels and places to eat, the author focuses more deeply and reflectively; his storytelling skills are evident on every page, with writing

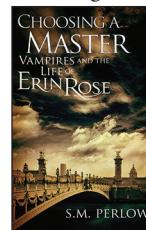


that's clear, atmospheric, and entertaining. A wonderful example is his account of being in a desert in the Middle East with two Bedouins when one of them insists he take a turn on the lute. The best he can do, he says, is an "appalling" version of "Waikiki." Nonetheless, his companions "clapped joyously and hooted with glee." It's a beautifully told story of bonding between strangers. This is excellent, not only as adventure-travel writing but as a look at meeting people across different cultures who, it seems, aren't so different after all.

### ★ Choosing a Master: Vampires and the Life of Erin Rose. By S. M. Perlow.

2018. 413p. Bealion, paper, \$14.99 (9780999285800).

This dark fantasy, a prequel to the Vampires and the Life of Erin Rose series, is set in an alternate universe where vampires live freely among humans. Two vampire groups are warring with each other: Sanguans (who feed off human blood) and Spectavi (who drink synthetic blood to avoid harming humans). The story centers on Ethan, a Sanguan with a comatose girlfriend, who is desperate to find her a cure; Vera, a human chemist for the Spectavi who experiments with a synthetic blood that can alter Sanguan behavior; and John, a human who faces a difficult situation when Sanguans discover that his rare blood is rich, yet pure—an irresistible nectar to Sanguans, a research tool for Spectavi, and a miracle cure for ailing humans. Deftly plotted and compelling, this story offers a study in morality as characters make difficult choices, but it can also be amusing, such as when Ethan asks a young woman, "Have you ever been bitten by a vampire?" She answers with an understatement intended to make a good impression: "A couple of times. Years ago. In college." This novel de-



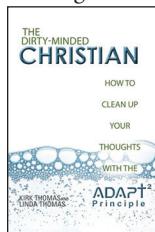
livers a fascinating new world, characters worth caring about, and thought-provoking themes, all wrapped within an enthralling story.

★ **The Dirty-Minded Christian: How to Clean Up Your Thoughts with the ADAPT<sup>2</sup> Principle.**

**By Kirk Thomas and Linda Thomas.**

2017. 147p. illus. iUniverse, paper, \$13.99 (9781532028519). 248.4.

Don't be misled by the title. The authors claim that they're not writing about "that kind of mind—but a mind that allows negative thinking to steal your happiness" and prevents Christians from fully achieving God's purposes for them. The authors' ADAPT<sup>2</sup> Principle consists of six components: attitude, discipline, action, patience, training, and trust in God. Kirk developed



the original ADAPT to maintain his focus and beat the odds while gambling. But after dreaming he was one of the soldiers gambling for Jesus' garments at the crucifixion, Kirk vowed to commit the rest of his life to God. He overcame his gambling addiction, and the second *t*, trust in God, was added—becoming the "golden nugget" of the principle. The book is well organized and meticulously written and edited. Though Linda is the primary writer, chapters toggle smoothly between her voice and Kirk's. Their often-humorous anecdotes are relatable and encouraging, and cartoonlike drawings help readers visualize concepts. Although the book's shock title may deter some, this is a treasure—an enjoyable, faith-based narrative with a highly accessible method of overcoming negativity.

**Inventions That Built the Information Technology Revolution.**

**By Rhys McCarney.**

2018. 180p. Lulu, paper, \$19.99 (9781483480947). 609.

This accessible work explains the hardware inventions that laid the groundwork for the high-tech revolution and the evolution of software that has become ubiquitous to everyday life. McCarney has a PhD in physics, is on the editorial board "of a major scientific journal," and worked 30 years at a "premier industrial laboratory" and federal research center. His compact volume traces the growth of the telecommunications industry from the telegraph and radio to the smartphone. He also discusses, among other topics, how personal software evolved from financial programs to complex, high-speed games. Readers will recognize names of multimillionaire tech gurus—Zuckerberg, Ellison, and Bezos. But McCarney decries the fact that many research scientists spent years working on hardware for nominal payoffs while software designers who piggybacked onto that hardware made millions. Although there's nothing groundbreaking here, readers will appreciate finding

the information compiled in one place. With its solid, utilitarian explanation of this topic, the book is sure to intrigue those who enjoy reading about high technology or who seek an introduction to its basic principles.

**Max Chambers, P.I.: The Case of the Nazi Ghost.**

**By Michael J. Cinelli.**

2017. 149p. Xlibris, paper, \$19.99 (9781543442649).

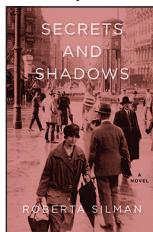
Cinelli's slim novel offers the fundamentals of a noir private-eye story with some surprising elements as well. The book opens with American GIs rescuing Jewish prisoners from Buchenwald concentration camp at WWII's end. Max Chambers is traumatized by the skeletal survivors as well as the subsequent death of a fellow GI and childhood friend. Four years later, Chambers runs a detective agency in his hometown, outside New York City. He has a beautiful wife and supportive extended family: life is good. But then a man he rescued at Buchenwald hires him to find the camp's commandant. Anxious about reliving horrible war memories, Chambers soon finds himself tracking a conspiracy of postwar Nazis in his own backyard. Cinelli's writing style is in the noir mold: short, snappy, and evocative. He weaves typical PI fare—stakeouts, fistfights, car chases—with complex threads of Nazis and thugs and a surprise ending that brings closure to Chambers' Buchenwald trauma. A satisfying, quick read, this novel will leave readers hoping for future volumes featuring Chambers and his likable supporting cast.

★ **Secrets and Shadows.**

**By Robert Silman.**

2018. 296p. Campden Hill, paper, \$12 (9781640089006).

This powerful, deftly plotted novel focuses on Pauli Berger, who, as a Jewish youth in Nazi-ruled Berlin, spent most of the war hidden with his family in the attic of a sympathetic Gentile. Now, in 1989, he's a successful lawyer known as Paul Bertram. When the Berlin Wall falls, he's determined to return to that city and confront unresolved childhood issues. Although their marriage was difficult, he asks his ex-wife, Eve, to accompany him. Once in Berlin, Eve discovers things about her former husband she may have only vaguely suspected.



The author, who has written several previous novels and whose work has appeared in the *Atlantic*, the *New Yorker*, and elsewhere, weaves the book's themes—memory, history, trauma, marriage—seamlessly. As the narrative explores Paul and Eve's struggles, it offers a subtle cultural backdrop, with intriguing references to expressionist artist Käthe Kollwitz; the poetry of Paul Celan; and the music of Mozart, Bach, Beethoven, and Sibelius. With its superbly crafted portraits of time and place and sharply edged characterizations, the story provides a provocative and haunting experience.

## Youth

**The Heath Cousins and the Moonstone Cave.**

**By Eileen Hobbs.**

2017. 65p. illus. Xlibris, paper, \$15.99 (9781543454222). Gr. 2-3.

In the first of the Heath Cousins series, 12-year-old Addie B. travels to spend the summer at her grandparents' Maine seaside home. When her three boy cousins discover a strange stone inside a nearby sea cave, she reluctantly follows. Soon, the four cousins are on a magical adventure leading through a series of doors and worlds, where they meet a mysterious woman who resembles a younger version of their grandmother. Throughout, they face trials that test their reliance on one another and their own strengths, in order to find their way home again. This is a colorful, well-paced adventure that touches on themes of grief, heritage, and identity, while introducing a hint of Native American mythology. (The cousins' grandmother is Native American.) There are a few awkward moments when the point of view switches unexpectedly from Addie to cousin Jack, but these instances aren't terribly distracting. The black-and-white illustrations have an appealing graphic-novel quality. Overall, this short chapter book is an entertaining read with a take-charge female protagonist whom young fantasy readers will enjoy.

**The Weird Animal Club: It's OK to Be Different.**

**By Christopher Knott-Craig. Illus. by Simon Goodway.**

2017. 44p. Archway, paper, \$20.95 (9781480852327). PreS-Gr. 2.

Knott-Craig introduces young readers to a group of animal friends who each have unique characteristics. For example, zebra Zoey's stripes are black and green, instead of black and white. She feels weird and lonely—until she meets Alex, a monkey with one arm. The two soon meet other animals who feel isolated, including Hannah, a hedgehog with only one quill, and Tina, a turtle with no shell. Before long, the Weird Animal Club has many members, and nobody feels lonely anymore. This sweet, if simplistic, story offers examples of self-acceptance, while also providing a few giggles. The illustrations are sharp, and the language is perfect for its audience, with repetition that's likely to charm. (As each new club member is introduced, the author lists the others who came before.) The message would be stronger had the animals found acceptance outside of their small circle. Still, children who feel different will appreciate the idea of a welcoming, tolerant group. Knott-Craig wrote the story for his six-year-old daughter, who felt lonely because of her own differences.