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# LIBRARY JOURNAL®

January 2017 | Volume 142 No. 1  
ISSN 0363-0277 | \$8.50

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has consequences of its own. Kelk (*I Heart Paris; Always the Bridesmaid*) gives readers a glimpse into life in a tiny UK village where news travels fast, and gossip travels faster. Full of laugh-out-loud moments, including getting stuck in a bathroom window; a circus-themed christening, which the baby sleeps through; and animal shenanigans, Kelk's latest is a light, fun read that balances humor with examples of what it takes to make a relationship work. **VERDICT** Perfect for fans of Marian Keyes, Jill Mansell, and Katie Fforde.—Erin Holt, Williamson Cty. P.L., Franklin, TN

★King, Crystal. **Feast of Sorrow: A Novel of Ancient Rome.** Touchstone. Apr. 2017. 416p. ISBN 9781501145131. \$26.99; ebk. ISBN 9781501145155. f

Rome under the rule of Augustus Caesar was a city of great wealth, power, and decadence. Following the death of his master, 19-year-old Thrasius is purchased by the most famous gourmand in Rome to be his protégé and cook. Already known for his talents in the kitchen, Marcus Apicius is convinced that the young slave would make him even more famous. Together the two men, first as master and slave, then, later as patron and freedman, reach the heights of culinary fame as they create incredible dishes, spend lavish amounts of money on outrageously decadent banquets, and scour the known world for the most exquisite delicacies available. But that kind of fame doesn't come without a price as Apicius finds himself in competition with the most ruthless and powerful men in the empire. King's descriptions of the food and entertainment are exquisite, her characters are beautifully drawn, and events and people of the times are deftly woven throughout this engrossing novel. One hopes to see more works by this author and self-described culinary enthusiast. **VERDICT** A delight to the senses, King's debut novel is to be savored and devoured.—Jane Henriksen Baird, Anchorage P.L., AK

★Kostova, Elizabeth. **The Shadow Land.** Ballantine. Apr. 2017. 496p. ISBN 9780345527868. \$28; ebk. ISBN 9780345527882. f

Alexandra, an American in her mid-20s, has decided to start life anew in Bulgaria. Soon after she lands in Sofia, her plans go awry when she discovers a stranger's bag among her own. Even more troubling, inside the bag is a box of cremated remains. While attempting to return the box, Alexandra becomes embroiled in a mystery that encompasses Bulgarian history from before World War II to the Bulgarian coup d'état of 1944 that led to a communist state

and through the present. On her adventure through the Bulgarian countryside, she is accompanied by an enigmatic taxi driver and meets many other interesting, rich characters. **VERDICT** This third novel from Kostova (*The Historian; The Swan Thieves*) will delight the author's fans. A slight hint of the mystical will appeal to readers who enjoyed Deborah Harkness's "All Souls" trilogy, while the mystery and thriller aspects will keep fans of Dan Brown and Umberto Eco reading. A fantastic book club pick. [See Prepub Alert, 10/17/16.]—Elizabeth McArthur, Bexar Cty. Digital Lib., BiblioTech, San Antonio

Kunzru, Hari. **White Tears.** Knopf. Mar. 2017. 304p. ISBN 9780451493699. \$26.95; ebk. ISBN 9780451493705. f

At college, an alienated tech nerd named Seth discovers a mutual kinship with wealthy Carter Wallace over audio equipment, and afterward they start up a recording studio and become avid vinyl record collectors and blues fans. When Seth prowls the streets of New York City and records a black man singing a blues line, they piece together a full song recording, then put it out on the Internet as a rare find. From here, they both descend into to a surreal alternate universe, a grail search, and a mystery story, wherein Carter winds up permanently injured in a hospital and Seth and Carter's sister attempt to discover who did it. They travel to the Deep South and end up digging up secrets concerning the Wallace family wealth and the possible true story of the blues singer they thought they had invented. **VERDICT** From the author of *Gods Without Men* and *My Revolutions* comes something different and imaginative, occasionally gloomy and affected. A stirring story of audiophiles, rare recordings, slavery, and the dangers of uncovering the past. [See Prepub Alert, 9/26/16.]—James Coan, SUNY at Oneonta Lib.

LaBan, Elizabeth & Melissa DePino. **Pretty Little World.** Lake Union: Amazon. Jan. 2017. 343p. ISBN 9781503941021. pap. \$14.95. f

This collaborative endeavor from author LaBan (*The Restaurant Critic's Wife*) and former schoolteacher/first-time novelist DePino takes three neighboring young families who are extremely close—so close that they are like a big family—and subjects them to an interesting experiment. When Celia and Mark realize they may have to leave their house for a bigger one, the other couples, Stephanie and Chris and Hope and Leo, entertain the idea of tearing down the walls to the other two homes and all living together under one roof. Everyone believes there are only pros to this arrangement and

that they can create a quasiutopian environment in which to live, or a "pretty little world." But each couple has to face their own realities and expectations they may have otherwise hidden from the others. In these close quarters, where the boundaries are blurred and more is on display for all to see, some things are just not as perfect or "pretty" as they seem or how we want others to see them. **VERDICT** A wonderful commentary on community, family, friendship, and questioning what these values mean in our lives.—Anne M. Miskewitch, Chicago P.L.

★Lally, Caitriona. **Eggshells.** Melville House. Feb. 2017. 272p. ISBN 9781612195971. pap. \$16.99; ebk. ISBN 9781612195988. f

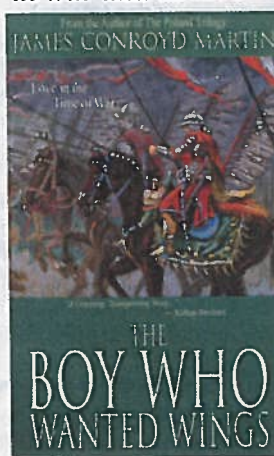
Currently unemployed, Vivian lives in the Dublin house a deceased aunt bequeathed to her and spends her days searching the city for portals to enchanted realms. She may in fact be a changeling, and discovering a way back home is one of her priorities. She also acquires a goldfish, advertises for a friend named Penelope, visits a sister also named Vivian, and makes lists of names, words, and things she hopes will reveal patterns or spells that will help her return to the place she believes she belongs. Vivian carefully maps her journeys throughout the city, noticing the

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## DEBUT SPOTLIGHT

## Q&amp;A Abby Fabiaschi



In Abby Fabiaschi's *I Liked My Life* (LJ 11/15/16), the Starling family must deal with the effects of the tragic death of mother and wife Madeline. Here, Fabiaschi discusses the novel's multiple points of view and Madeline's afterlife.

**What was the inspiration for the story?** When I was 15 years old, one of my best friends died. Her death remains this alarmingly defining moment in my life. The addition of grief to raging teenage hormones was an explosive experience for me. I matured quickly but not gracefully, and I became hyper aware that everyone has a private hell to hide. It left me very cynical. At some point I happened across Adrienne Rich's poetry and her line: "If we could learn to learn from pain even as it grasps us." That struck me as a powerful concept. I became a believer that there are snippets of beauty in life's worst moments. *I Liked My Life* started with a desire to explore mourning at that tender age in the hopes that my characters would come to that same conclusion.

**What was your writing process?** I wrote [the story] in the order that you read it. In the first draft, I really set out to explore mourning during that teenager stage, and then [I] abandoned the book for a while. I was working full time and years went by. Then my father passed away very unexpectedly at the age of 53. He was my best friend, my mentor. After he died, I didn't write, even in my journal, for years. Being a new mother and mourning my father became all-consuming. Then one day, the title popped out at me on my computer as I was looking for a document. It felt enormously important to revisit it. At that point, I was able to distinguish between the nuances of grieving as a teenager and grieving as an adult. The timing of having those years between drafts really made a difference.

**The book has three narrators—Madeline, Brady, and their daughter, Eve. What was**

**it like switching among them?**

When I started the book, exploring Eve was my intent, but given where I'm at in my life right now, I think the most about Madeline. I found her approach to motherhood inspiring. When I'm dealing with my children, I sometimes find myself thinking, "What would Madeline do?" It was easiest to write her [character] because as a mother you spend a lot of time thinking about what kind of mother you want to be. It was hardest to write Brady since the male perspective is not my own.



**In Madeline's unique afterlife, there is no God, no angels, no religion; she watches real life as if watching a movie. How did you devise her experience?** Originally, I tried to be more concrete about [describing] her afterlife. But then I realized that Madeline's story is over, and so I stopped worrying about her physical

situation and truly treated it as a different dimension. I had to let go of wanting to give her a setting and clothing and suspend my attachment to what exactly that afterlife looks like.

**Do you think the novel would have worked as well if the circumstances of Madeline's death had been different?**

I don't, because the guilt was such an important part of [these characters'] pain. Eve and Brady had to be motivated to look back at their behavior and where they were in their relationships with Madeline. If Madeline had died of cancer, then I think Brady would have been bitter and angry at the world. He would [have] dove into [his] work without ever connecting in any kind of a meaningful way with his daughter. Because it was suicide he was forced to consider his role.

**Can you talk about writing as a second career?**

I always wanted to pursue writing as a career. My father strongly encouraged me to do business and write when I was at a place in my life where I could do it without being desperate to pay the rent. When I started writing *I Liked My Life*, I was working 60–70 hours a week in high tech. At the time, I could balance my hobby, my work,



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and my marriage, but then I [had children]. Something had to give, and writing took the hit.

But then my kids turned three and four so quickly, and I missed a lot of it. I was an executive and traveling often. I was fortunate that my husband had a similar job to my own, and I was in a position where I could quit my job. I jumped into writing, and I felt like I was doing what I was supposed to be doing for the first time in my life. I used to dramatically refer to my time in high tech as "the waste of a decade," but I see now how unfair that is.

The business world fostered my work ethic. It's the reason I could sit down and write five or six hours a day even before I had a deadline. It prepared me for rejection. My business career served a purpose, but the second I left, I certainly never looked back.—Catherine Coyne, Mansfield P.L., MA