



**FREEHAND  
BOOKS**  
**FALL**  
**2019**



## Message from the publisher

I'm writing this message having just seen the finale of *Canada Reads*. Our little press published *Homes: A Refugee Story*—winner of the audience vote and one of the final two contenders on the show. The *Canada Reads* debates reminded us of the difference that books can make in the world and the importance of what we have published. And they made us look forward to what is coming up! We are very excited to present our Fall 2019 list:

First up is *Agnes, Murderess* by Sarah Leavitt, an internationally-acclaimed cartoonist and the author of *Tangles* (2010), the first work of graphic literature to be a finalist for the Writers' Trust Non-Fiction Prize. *Agnes, Murderess* is a graphic novel based on the legends of the Cariboo Region of BC and a roadhouse owner who is rumoured to have murdered over fifty people in the mid- to late-nineteenth century.

We also have two fast-paced novels on our roster. *This Has Nothing to Do with You* by Lauren Carter is a dramatic page-turner set in Northern Ontario. It is about two siblings coming to terms with a murder committed by their mother.

*The Towers of Babylon* by Michelle Kaeser is a darkly hilarious novel. Told in four voices, it tracks a group of hapless Millennials trying to find meaning in a world that that may well be inching toward decline.

Freehand has now entered our second decade, and we are so excited about what's to come.

**ANNA BOYAR**

*Interim Managing Editor, Freehand Books*

SARAH LEAVITT

Agnes,  
Murderess

SEPTEMBER 2019

Internationally acclaimed cartoonist Sarah Leavitt has created a Gold Rush story like no other

*Agnes, Murderess* is a graphic novel inspired by the bloody legend of Agnes McVee, a roadhouse owner, madam and serial killer in the Cariboo region of British Columbia in the mid-nineteenth century.

In Sarah Leavitt's story, Agnes's life begins on an isolated island off the coast of Scotland where she lives with her terrifying grandmother, Gormul, who is determined to have an heir to her land and her evil powers. Agnes escapes to London, then on to British Columbia, settling in 108 Mile in the Cariboo region. Here, she assumes ownership of a roadhouse serving the Gold Rush Trail. But no matter how far into the wild she ventures, she can't seem to rid herself of Gormul, who haunts both her dreams and her waking life.

Leavitt puts a decidedly queer twist on the story, moving from women's passionate friendships in the gardens of St John's Wood to cross-dressing in the Cariboo. At the same time, the book grapples with the colonizer's dangerous belief that Canada is a "new world," free of ghosts and history. *Agnes, Murderess* presents a tortured, complicated woman struggling to escape her past. It is a spine-chilling tale of ghosts and murder, friendship and betrayal, love and greed, fate and choice.

**SARAH LEAVITT** has earned international acclaim as a writer and cartoonist. Her first book, *Tangles: A story about Alzheimer's, my mother, and me*, was published in Canada, the US, UK, Germany, France and Korea and a feature-length animation is in development. In 2010, it became the first work of graphic literature to be a finalist for the Writers' Trust Non-Fiction Prize and was also a Globe and Mail Top 100 Book of 2010. Her prose and comics have appeared in anthologies, magazines and newspapers in Canada, the US and the UK. Sarah teaches comics classes in the Creative Writing Program at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver.



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\$29.95 CDN

7.5 x 11 PAPERBACK

304 PAGES

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CGN006000 Comics & Graphic Novel/Literary

CGN010000 Comics & Graphic Novel/Historical Fiction

CGN004010 Comics & Graphic Novel/Crime and Mystery

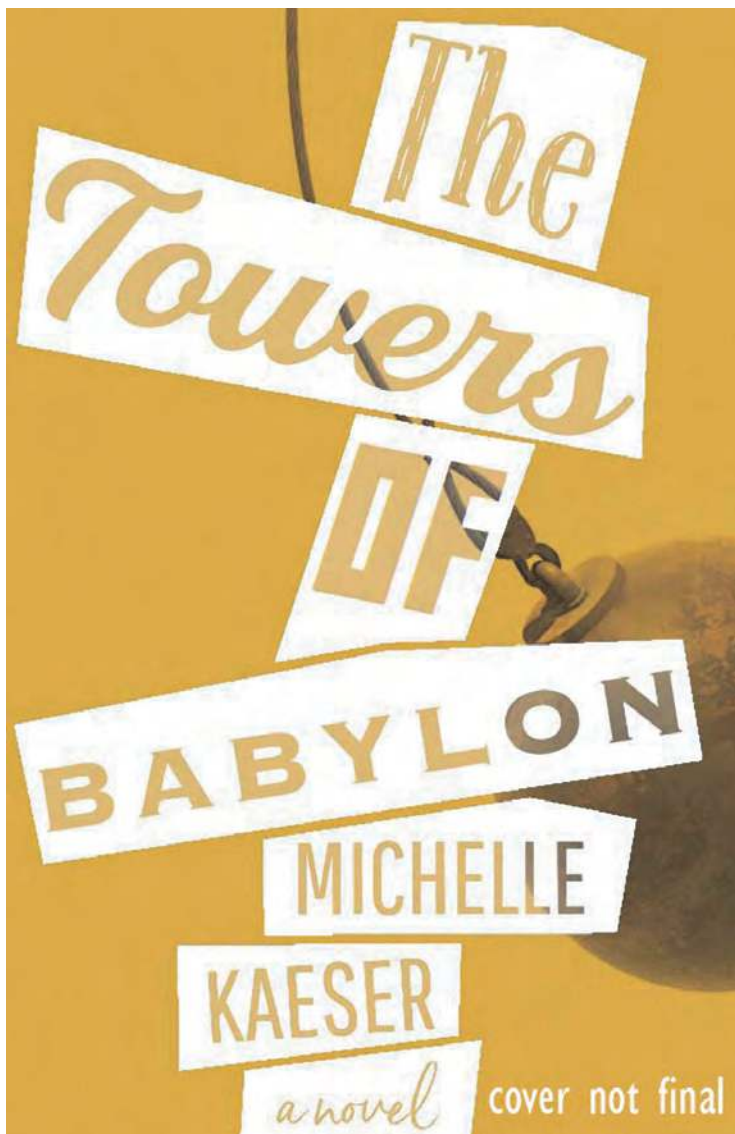
SEPTEMBER 2019

## A snapshot of a civilization past its prime

Embracing the anxieties of contemporary urban life, *The Towers of Babylon* tracks a group of hapless Millennials trying to find meaning in a world that consistently rejects them. As the novel's four narrators pinball around Toronto—where real estate prices are hyper-inflated, public infrastructure is crumbling, and climate change is bringing on killer heat and savage storms—they each try to do what's right for themselves and for the world. Trouble is, none of them can agree on what right means.

There's chronically unemployed and accidentally pregnant Joly; her best friend Louise, a billboard marketing genius in moral crisis; Joly's boyfriend Ben, a communist/Anglican hybrid with a big heart and big hopes and a big reservoir of anger; and Yannick, Joly's brother, a private equity hotshot, overworked and overburdened and trying to shake off an encroaching depression with brute will.

*The Towers of Babylon* looks at a generation struggling—professionally, personally, and spiritually—to carve out their place in a civilization that may well be inching toward decline.



ISBN 978-1-988298-49-8

\$22.95 CDN

6 x 9 PAPERBACK

320 PAGES

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FIC019000 Fiction/Literary

FIC069000 Fiction/City Life

FIC045000 Fiction/Family Life - General



**MICHELLE KAESER** was born and raised in Toronto, and currently lives in Vancouver. Her fiction and essays have appeared in anthologies, journals, magazines and newspapers across the country. She was a finalist in the inaugural HarperCollinsCanada/UBC Prize for Best New Fiction (2013); the runner-up in the Edna Staebler Essay Contest (2017); a finalist in the Edna Staebler Essay Contest (2012 and 2014); an honourable mention in the Prairie Fire Fiction Contest (2013); and an honourable mention for the Glimmer Train Very Short Fiction Award (2013 and 2009).



SEPTEMBER 2019

A compulsively readable novel about two siblings coming to terms with a murder committed by their mother

The morning after her high school graduation, Mel and her older brother Matt find out that their mother has murdered their father. *This Has Nothing to Do With You* is the story of how they come to terms with their mother's destruction of their family and her past that fuelled her actions.

Three years after the murder, Mel has not gone to visit her mother in prison—and there isn't much hope that she is going to. After drifting around the continent, living in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, and then in a cave in Arizona, she has returned to her family and friends in Northern Ontario and is struggling to care for a dog, Grommet, a mastiff with a tragic past who lives with her in a too-small apartment that does not allow pets. Meanwhile Matt, a new parent, is withdrawing from his family, increasingly unable to pull himself away from the news, looking on in horror as the Rwandan genocide unfolds, desperate to do something.

Here is a dramatic page-turner that pays tribute to the bonds that are formed through trauma and grief.

**LAUREN CARTER** is the author of four books. Her first novel, *Swarm*, was on CBC's list of 40 novels that could change Canada. In 2014, her short story "Rhubarb" won top place in the Prairie Fire fiction prize and appeared in the annual Best Canadian Stories (edited by John Metcalf). Her work has also been nominated for the Journey Prize and longlisted multiple times for the CBC Literary Prizes in both poetry and fiction. She grew up in Blind River, ON, and has lived in the Greater Toronto Area and The Pas, MB. She currently resides in St. Andrews, MB.

# this has nothing to do with you

a novel **lauren carter**

ISBN 978-1-988298-54-2

\$22.95 CDN

6 x 9 PAPERBACK

320 PAGES

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FIC019000 Fiction/Literary

FIC045020 Fiction/Family Life - Siblings

FIC066000 Fiction/Small Town & Rural



ABU BAKR AL RABEEAH  
WITH WINNIE YEUNG

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A  
REFUGEE  
STORY

M

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S

*This charming  
and warm-hearted  
book is a refugee  
story like no other.  
A captivating read.*

— DEBORAH CAMPBELL



- ★ *OverDrive's Big Library Read—April 2019*
- ★ *A 49th Book of the Year (Nonfiction)*
- ★ *A CBC top Canadian nonfiction book of 2018*

*Homes: A Refugee Story* follows the life of the al Rabeeah family, who left their home in Iraq in hopes of a safer life. They moved to Homs, Syria. Abu Bakr, one of eight children, was just ten years old when civil war broke out on the streets around him. *Homes* is a remarkable true account of growing up in a war zone and ultimately finding safety in Canada, told from Abu Bakr's perspective. It is a story that he had a deep-seated desire to share with Canadians.

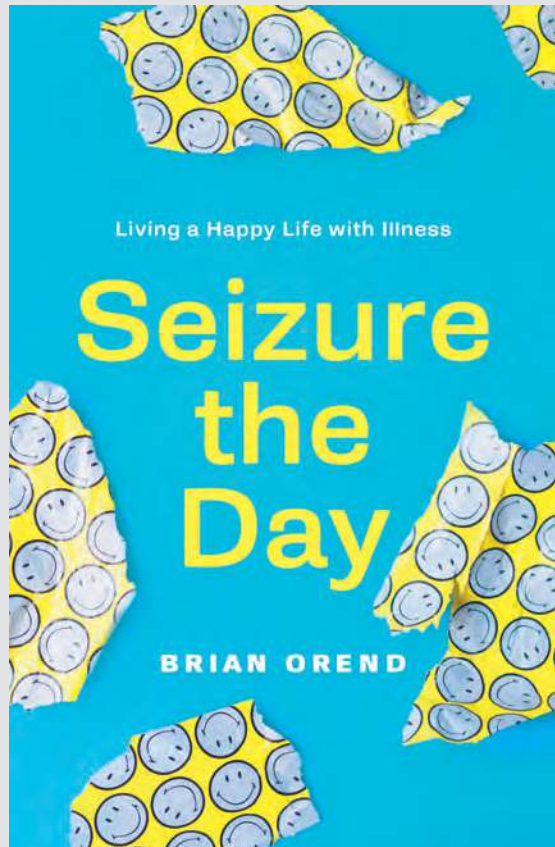
Winnie Yeung has expertly crafted this story, drawing on countless hours of interviews with Abu Bakr and his family. The result is a beautifully-written, eye-opening book that is both heartbreaking and hopeful. In an interview with CBC books, Yeung reflected on the process of helping to tell the al Rabeeah family's story: "Listening became the thing that I had to learn how to do.... To be able to just sit back and be quiet and let Abu Bakr tell the story that he needed to.... Now I'm realizing that is the best gift that we can give to anyone who's going through any kind of trauma, big or small, just to listen."

Find book club guides, author interviews and supplementary material: [FREEHAND-BOOKS.COM](http://FREEHAND-BOOKS.COM)

ISBN 978-1-988298-28-3 \$19.95 CDN/US



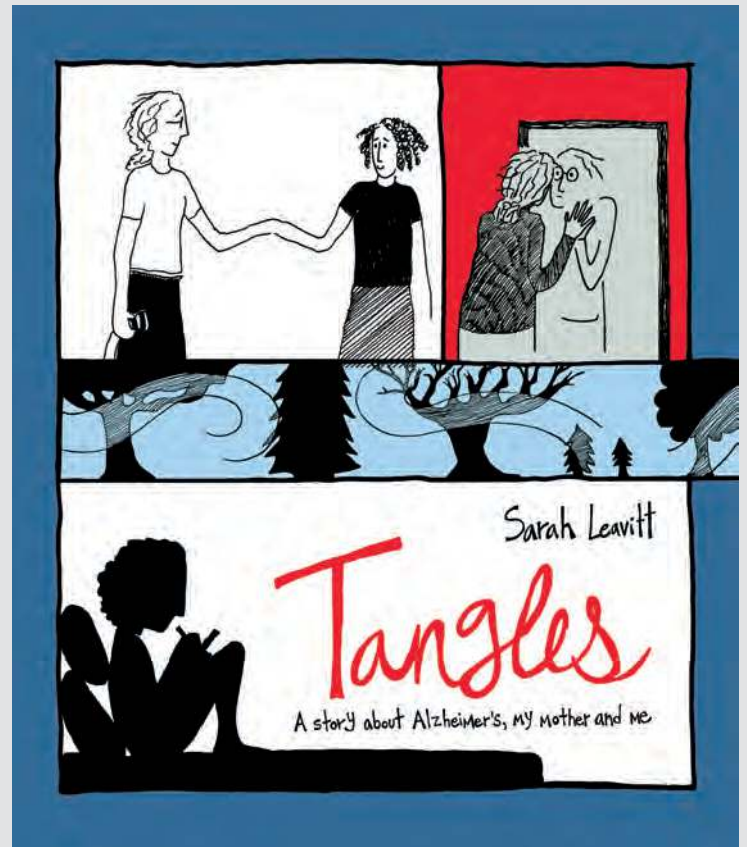
## NON-FICTION



ISBN 978-988298-41-2 \$22.95 CDN/US

“How can you find happiness when the odds are stacked against you? Whatever your lot in life, *Seizure the Day* offers real world solutions and inspiration for how to become your happiest self” — Roko Belic, director of the film *Happy*

“This is a beautiful book about struggle and overcoming, told with insight, wisdom, and good cheer. At once smart and funny, it will, quite literally, put a smile on your face” — Darrin M. McMahon, author of *Happiness: A History*

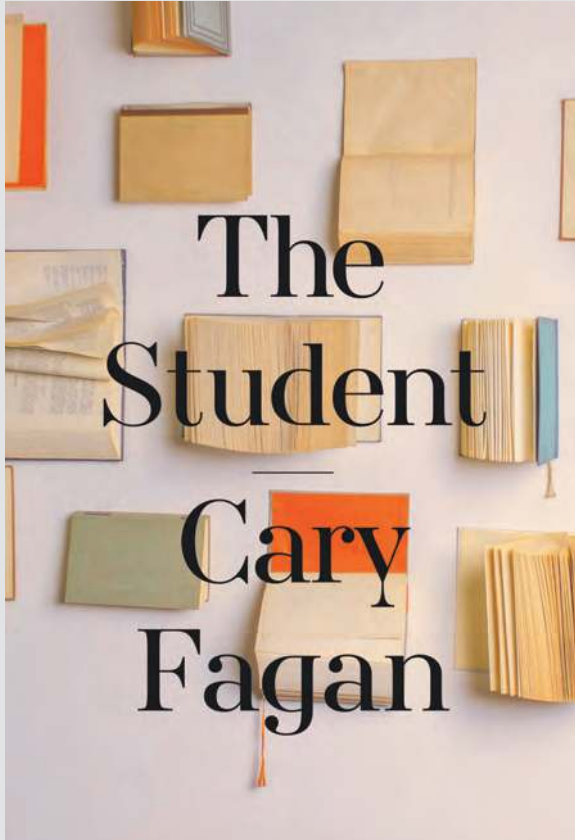


ISBN 978-1-55111-117-9 \$23.95 CDN

- \* Finalist for the Writers Trust Non-Fiction Prize
- \* A Globe and Mail Top 100 Book of 2010
- \* Winner of the 2011 CBC Bookie Award for Best Comic or Graphic Novel
- \* Finalist for the Alberta Readers' Choice Award
- \* Finalist for the Hubert Evans Non-Fiction Prize

“Sarah writes and draws with perspicacity, humour and even anger... Her experience pulsates with realism and life, even while her mother is slowly disappearing... By creating this book, she has re-created her mother, a woman anyone would be privileged to have known.” — *The Vancouver Sun*

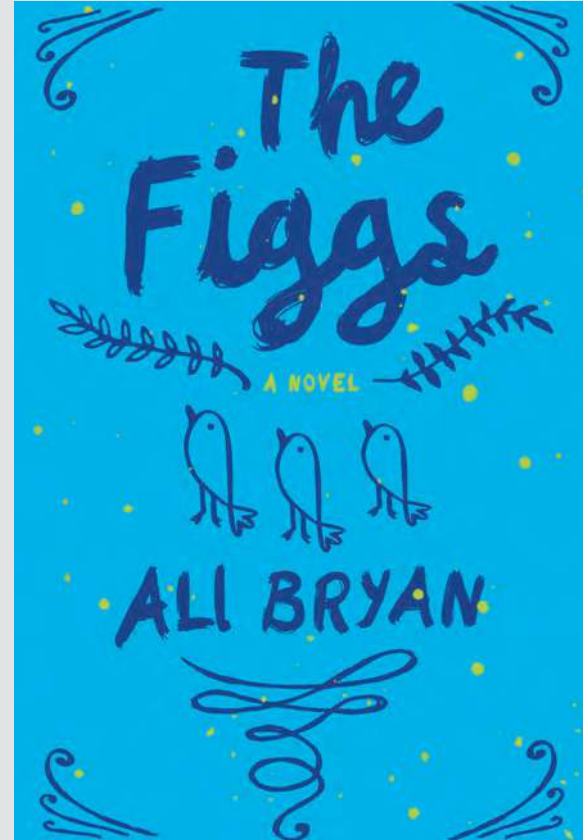
FICTION



ISBN 978-1-988298-44-3 \$21.95 CDN

“A marvel of compression, *The Student* is a spirited gem of a novel. Cary Fagan captures with wisdom and intimacy the passions that sustain and shape individuals into their best selves. Exploring Toronto’s fledgling diversity of the 1950s and its blossoming in the aughts, he reveals how, even as communities change, our need for the models preserved in literature does not. I loved this book!”

— Carol Bruneau, author of *A Bird on Every Tree*



ISBN 978-988298-25-2 \$21.95 CDN/US

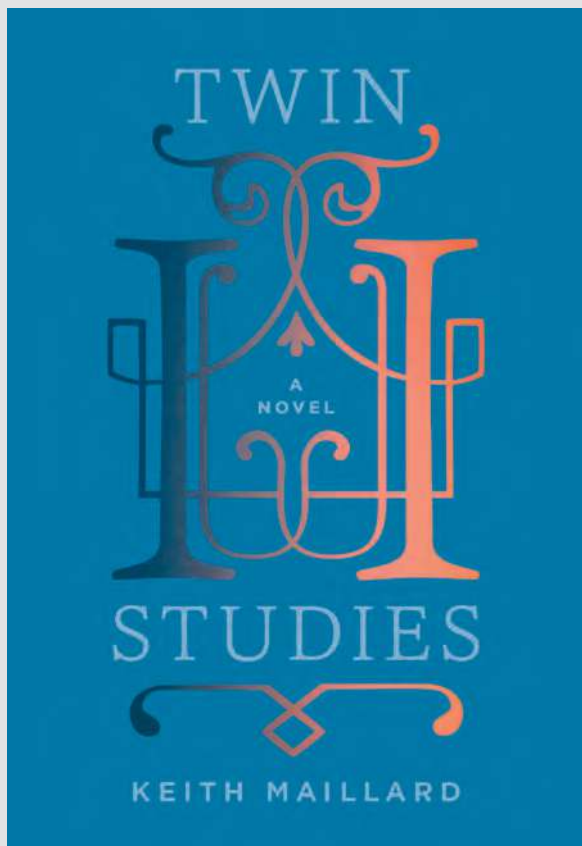
“Modern mayhem at its finest, *The Figgs* dives into the comical and profound challenges of family life. Tackling enablement, empowerment, and the sticky bonds of love, this is a soaring read with both sarcasm and soul.”

— Cassie Stocks, winner of the Leacock Medal for *Dance, Gladys, Dance*

“Ali Bryan does a deft job of painting the human charm of family.... Don’t be surprised if this gets a Stephen Leacock nomination.”

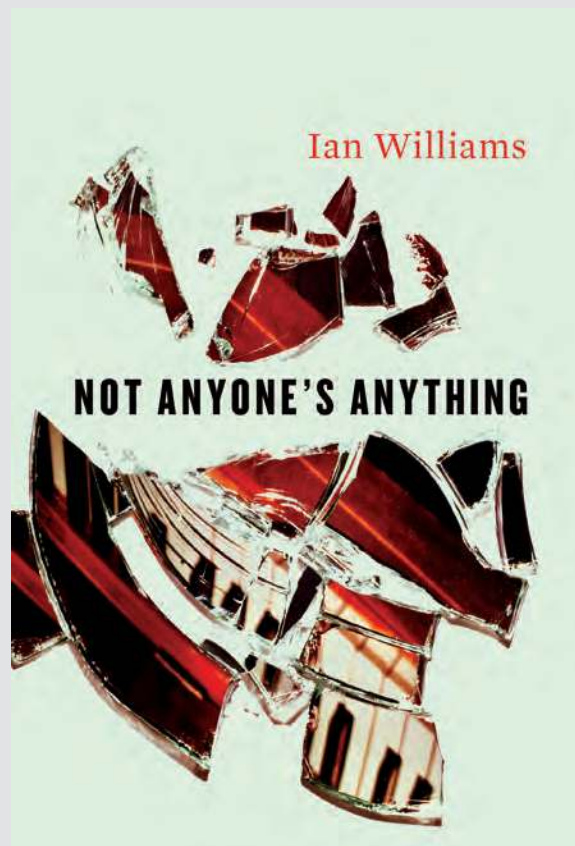
— *Alberta Views*





ISBN 978-988298-31-3 \$24.95 CDN

"[T]his new fiction deepens and extends the fascination with power, gender, death and beauty that has characterized all his earlier work, and it finds the author working at the peak of his considerable talents as he explores the uncanny elements of the twin experience.... This novel is that very rare work: a story that grapples with difficult intellectual issues without ever abandoning the novelist's primary duty — compelling narrative. Maillard can deal with complexity at all levels and turn it into engaging story and moving lyrical beauty." — *Vancouver Sun*



ISBN 978-1-55111-995-3 \$21.95 CDN

★ *Winner of the 2011 Danuta Gleed Literary Award*

"The writing in *Not Anyone's Anything* is fresh, funny, and intelligent. This is a solid first book with gripping, convincing dialogue, a fluid sense of urbanity, and structural innovation that doesn't come off as trickery. You see the poet here, in the crisp choice of language and even in the line breaks, as Williams uses typography and unusual layout to suggest a split-screen view of life. This is a brilliant collection." — Danuta Gleed Literary Award jury (Gail Anderson-Dargatz, Robin McGrath, and Hal Niedzviecki)

# THE COMPLETE LIST

FICTION				CDN	USD	AUS
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978-1-988298-47-4	Agnes, Murderess	Sarah Leavitt	2019	29.95		
978-1-988298-34-4	All of Us In Our Own Lives	Manjushree Thapa	2018	21.95		
978-1-55481-054-3	And Me Among Them	Kristen den Hartog	2011	21.95		
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978-1-988298-41-2	Seizure the Day: Living a Happy Life with Illness	Brian Orend	2019	22.95	22.95	29.95
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