

Bieker, Chelsea. *Heartbroke*. Catapult. ISBN 9781646221271.

A woman mourns the deaths of two babies lost to a fire years ago while writing to an estranged son, a teenager mourns the disappearance of her bossy best friend yet appears implicated in the incident, and a young woman falls for the wrong man but resists staying with him. Throughout this powerful collection, Bieker impressively gives her characters plenty of play: how will their stories really end?

Ecoffery, Jonathan. *If I Survive You*. MCD. ISBN 9780374605988.

Ecoffery links together smart, penetrating scenarios to portray a family from Jamaica striving to make it in Miami. At its heart is younger son Trelawny, figuring out who he is as the family survives a hurricane, recession, marital breakup, lousy houses, lousy jobs, and discrimination, with issues of self and identity surfacing painfully. A standout work, fresh, original, and beautifully written—often in second person.

Fofana, Sidik. *Stories from the Tenants Downstairs*. Scribner. ISBN 9781982145811.

From public schoolteacher Fofana, these eight linked stories plumb the lives of tenants in Banneker Terrace, a low-income high-rise in Harlem threatened by gentrification. The portraits are conveyed in

MacLavery, Bernard. *Blank Pages: And Other Stories*. Norton. ISBN 9780393881592.

During World War II, a woman discovers what happened to her sailor son by watching a newsreel, while a writer reconsiders his life after losing his life partner, and artist Egon Schiele and his wife spend their final days together before succumbing to the 1918 influenza. Irish author MacLavery's seventh collection is a classic, tinged with hope and loss while revealing his mastery of the written word.

Mantel, Hilary. *Learning To Talk: Stories*. Holt. ISBN 9781250865366.

In these loosely autobiographical stories capturing ground-down 1950–60s Britain, the late Mantel doesn't focus on financial stress or even the stubborn snobbery revealed in the title story, whose heroine spends years taking elocution lessons. In-

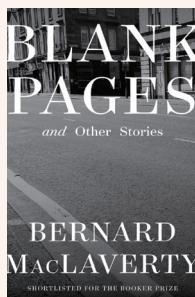
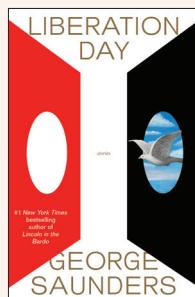
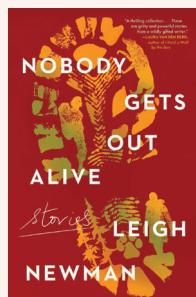
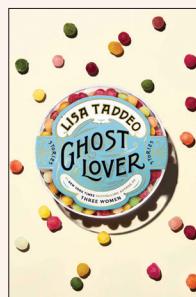
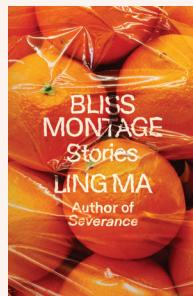
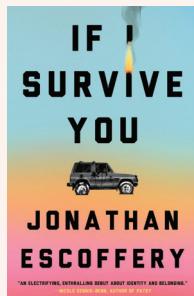
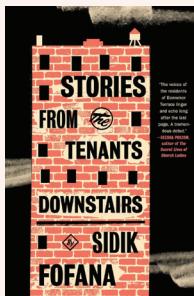
eloquently insightful characters are at once hardheaded and easy to love.

Saunders, George. *Liberation Day: Stories*. Knopf. ISBN 9780525509592.

From employees creepily compelled to reenact Custer's Last Stand and marginalized individuals literally reprogrammed as political protesters, to a hell-themed amusement park and a grandfather's pleading letter amid dystopian crisis, Saunders crafts breathtakingly original stories. On the surface, his language is disturbing and hypnotic, but the currents underneath really catch readers and pull them under. It's hard to stop reading.

Shipstead, Maggie. *You Have a Friend in 10A: Stories*. Knopf. ISBN 9780525656999.

A teenage girl fleeing an ugly home situation ends up as a horse wrangler, a newbie novelist begins to realize what a pretentious



SHORT STORIES

BY BARBARA HOFFERT & LISA PEET

tightly woven, propulsive, rhythmically rich language, and though the characters all connect, each has a distinctive voice and story. A singular accomplishment.

Ma, Ling. *Bliss Montage: Stories*. Farrar. ISBN 9780374293512.

A woman lives in a large compound with her husband and all her former boyfriends. A wife travels with her husband to his homeland and learns that the festival he's attending involves burying oneself alive as a means of renewal. Ma reveals the absurdity of the everyday through envelope-pushing stories that feel weird and disturbing until one surrenders to their sensibility and realizes that they're brilliant.

stead, she clarifies the significance of ordinary lives, showing how each of us is a fuse (burning faster or slower) and how each of us can hurt. A quiet probing of our deep everyday sorrows.

Newman, Leigh. *Nobody Gets Out Alive*. Scribner. ISBN 9781982180300.

The sisters, daughters, wives, lone wolves, and a few anxious husbands in this dynamic debut navigate complicated relationships and the gravitational pull of Newman's home state of Alaska, where everyone is running to or from something. Including a brusque, secretly sentimental ex-wife trying to sell her quirky home and a panicked mother on the road, these

jerk he was in graduate school, and after Iris inherits her blind grandfather's Parisian house, a story unfolds of a family tragedy during World War II. Throughout, Shipstead displays luminous, exacting language to create distinctive characters who deal more or less successfully with life.

Taddeo, Lisa. *Ghost Lover: Stories*. Avid Reader: S. & S. ISBN 9781982122188.

Taddeo's stories portray women who have been shaped and often debased by assumptions framed largely by men, and she's ferociously observant of contemporary mores that destructively angle us all toward power while crudely defining success in terms of sex and money, and failure as excess fat. Frank, acidulous, surprisingly twisty, and blazing with desire that's often dangerous or misplaced; just the sort of uneasy reading that Taddeo always delivers.