

Bondurant, Matt. *Oleander City*. Blackstone. ISBN 9798200831166.

Bondurant weaves together real and fictional characters during the aftermath of America's largest natural disaster, the hurricane of 1900, which destroyed Galveston, TX, killing thousands. Six-year-old Hester is the only survivor at an orphanage; Red Cross nurse Diana assists Clara Barton with relief efforts; Jewish boxer Joe Choyinski arrives for a fundraiser bout against Jack Johnson, a Black boxer. Together and apart, the well-drawn characters face racism, sexism, and other challenges in this intense novel.

Braverman, Blair. *Small Game*. Ecco. ISBN 9780065066175.

Outdoorswoman Braverman's bracing first foray into fiction is a taut, gritty exploration of performative pop culture that will have even the most armchair-bound reader rooting for her heroine. Twentysomething

women, from Afong Moy, the first Chinese woman to arrive in the United States, in 1834, to Annabel Moy in 2086. Each generation grapples with inherited trauma. In 2045, Dorothy Moy tries an experimental therapy to break the chain and save her daughter. Ford draws on his Chinese heritage in this skillful blend of historical and speculative fiction that addresses contemporary issues.

Mujica, Bárbara. *Miss del Río: A Novel of Dolores del Río, the First Major Latina Star in Hollywood*. Graydon House. ISBN 9781525899935.

Before Latina stars Rita Moreno, Salma Hayek, and Jennifer Lopez, there was Dolores del Río, the beautiful and talented Mexican-born actress who broke down barriers in 1920s–40s Hollywood, achieving stardom at a high personal cost. Mujica tells del Río's extraordinary life story through the eyes of a fictional lifelong

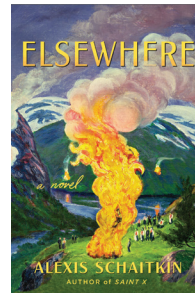
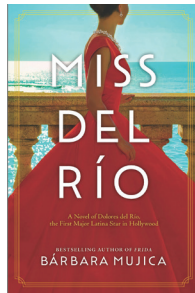
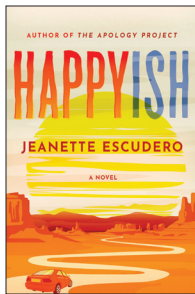
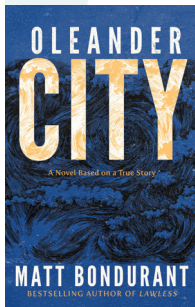
writing and compelling characters make this a standout.

Schaitkin, Alex. *Elsewhere*. Celadon. ISBN 9781250219633.

Schaitkin's sophomore novel is a thought-provoking work of speculative and dystopian fiction. With captivating prose, she creates a mystical isolated village where the girls grow up, marry, and become mothers. But a troubling affliction affects most of them; they begin to fade, then disappear entirely. As villager Vera enters adulthood and becomes a mom, she wonders whether she too will be taken. A meditation on motherhood with strong touches of Margaret Atwood and Shirley Jackson.

Sivak, Zoe. *Mademoiselle Revolution*. Berkley. ISBN 9780593336038.

Sivak's story of an heiress's coming-of-age amid two revolutions is riveting. Young Sylvie, daughter of a Black mother and a



survival-skills instructor Mara joins the cast of a reality TV show with high hopes of winning the prize money and changing her life. But that changes when the show's crew disappears, the contestants' masks come off, and the food supply runs out.

Escudero, Jeanette. *Happyish*. Lake Union. ISBN 9781542032674.

In Escudero's heart-wrenching, occasionally hilarious novel of self-discovery and love, Alex is celebrating her "happyish" life—good friends, a good job, one year divorced—when she is diagnosed with a brain tumor and given some nonnegotiable time off. She embarks on a grand trip, along the way reassessing her life choices, making new friends, and finding the strength to deal with her condition. This tale infused with Latinx culture packs an emotional wallop.

Ford, Jamie. *The Many Daughters of Afong Moy*. Atria. ISBN 9781982158217.

Ford's moving, beautiful novel follows seven generations of Chinese American

POP FICTION

BY LIZ FRENCH

confidante, taking readers through times of war, economic privation, and growing nationalism in the United States. This dazzling look at a groundbreaking star shines.

Perkins-Valdez, Dolan. *Take My Hand*. Berkley. ISBN 9780593337691.

Perkins-Valdez's powerful novel, based on real-life events, personalizes an all-too-familiar story of exploitation of impoverished Black people. In 1970s Alabama, nurse Civil Townsend uncovers abuse at the government clinic where she works. When her white boss coerces the Williams sisters, two of Civil's young patients, into being sterilized, she fights back. Forty years later, she's an OB-GYN devoted to reproductive rights who is still haunted by the sisters' case. Nuanced

white father, flees unrest in 18th-century Saint-Domingue, arriving in Paris in time for the French Revolution, where she mingles with Robespierre and his alluring mistress. Involvement with the revolutionaries stirs her to action and awareness of injustice in her home country and elsewhere. Tailor-made for book clubs, this debut will thrill fans of historical fiction.

Zhang, Jenny Tinghui. *Four Treasures of the Sky*. Flatiron. ISBN 9781250811783.

Magical realism combines with historical events in Zhang's scrupulously researched debut, written as COVID struck and anti-Asian violence increased in the United States. Abducted from 19th-century China to a San Francisco brothel, Daiyu escapes, disguised as a boy, and finds work at a shop in Pierce, ID. When she, the elderly Chinese shopkeepers, and another Chinese friend are accused of murdering a white "rival," they face an uncertain future. A stunning condemnation of white supremacy and vigilante justice.