



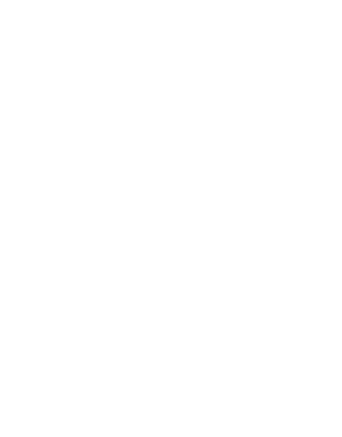
Summer 2026, Volume 61

TBR is a quarterly newsletter of the Women's Fiction Writers Association.

[Click here to learn more about WFWA.](#)

This summer edition marks TBR's one year anniversary! Over the past year, TBR has celebrated more than 100 WFWA authors and their women's fiction titles. Their wisdom and stories have brightened our reading lives, inspired our curiosity, and enriched our literary community. In this issue, you'll get to know six recently published authors through their love of reading and writing. Plus we have twelve New & Noteworthy books you'll want to throw in your suitcase before leaving for summer vacation! Whether this is your first time reading the newsletter or you've been here all along, we're grateful for your support and delighted to continue sharing the gift of reading with all of you.

BOOK TALK WITH...



...Lisa Binsfeld

Something you hope readers will take away from your writing: I believe reading fiction is as close to walking in someone else's shoes as you can get. I like to write characters who are a little controversial, maybe unlikable at times. They're struggling through faulty judgments and misconceptions—as we all do. I also write to explore societal issues, explore being the key word. I never want to preach or pretend I know the right answers. So I hope readers find something applicable to their own lives, be it a fresh perspective on a difficult relationship or a glimpse into the other side of a divisive issue. But mostly, I hope they have fun!

Favorite book when I was a child: Since I've been young, my favorite book tends to be whatever I'm currently reading. But I have special memories of *Little Women*. I have a cousin I'm very close with, and we used to act out the scenes and/or make up our own fan fiction (long before that was a thing). Because she's blonde and named Amy, my cousin always got that role. Sometimes I played Jo, but more often Beth. I was a quiet, little mouse just like her.

What sparked the idea for your latest novel: Little pink houses! The abandoned resort in the book is a real place on Ambergis Caye, Belize. It's every bit as fantastical as portrayed—and people actually live in some of the derelict castles. It really sparked my imagination, and the plot grew from there. When I learned it might have been occupied by a Y2K prepster colony, I decided to use that to infuse humor and quirkiness into the plotline.



...Robin Blackburn

Something readers would be surprised to learn about you: I love the sport of golf and have made a hole-in-one. My love for this sport has me working diligently on my next book, a non-fiction bet on a golf course.

Something you hope readers will take away from your writing: I write books with female characters in their 50s, and I hope readers know that there is a always room for love and reinvention. You're never too old for either!

My favorite book as a child: *The Little Prince*. When I was young, I would read the English version. But then I was a French teacher for many years, and every year, I looked forward to discussing this book with my students. It was such a joy to see them take in all the life lessons that the book has to share.

On my nightstand now: *Yesteryear* by Caro Claire Burke, *Dolly All the Time* by Annabel Monaghan, and *Meet Me at the Loch* by NC Barton.

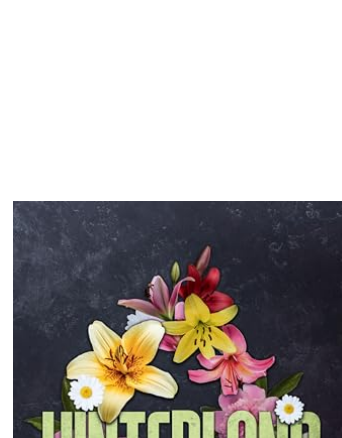
What sparked the idea for your latest novel: I grew up in New York's Lake George region and spent many years working in various restaurants (and dating a few chefs), so my inspiration came from those experiences. Plus, I've always dreamed of owning my own restaurant. This was a less expensive way to do that.



Little Pink Houses by Lisa Binsfeld

Fed up with Hollywood misogyny, Cole, a headstrong executive, decamps to Belize where she hopes to create herself outside her semi-famous family. Her plans are upended when she begins helping a precocious seven-year-old boy living in an abandoned resort. The island's castles, it really sparked my imagination, and the plot grew from there. When I learned it might have been occupied by a Y2K prepster colony, I decided to use that to infuse humor and quirkiness into the plotline.

Learn more on Lisa's [website](#).



...Cherie Dawn Haas

Something readers would be surprised to learn about you: Readers would be surprised to hear that I'm a retired fire eater (our group's subtitle was "sultry tribal dance and dangerous feats of flame"). That wild experience inspired my first novel *Girl on Fire*. More recently, and also, perhaps surprisingly, my husband and I have a small farm where we managed a vineyard (growing grapes for a winery) for about a decade. We have cut down almost all the vines and are now converting the land into a pollinator garden/butterfly trail.

Something you hope readers will take away from your writing: My goal in life is to be "a lamp, a bridge, or healing medicine." I hope readers take away something that inspires or educates them and helps them live better, with themselves and others. At the end of the day, all of this—writing, literature, the arts—is communication, and we feed off of each other. I want my work to leave a positive trace in this world.

Book that changed your life: The book that both changed and saved my life is *Man's Search For Meaning* by Viktor Frankl. When I had deep depression (which also shows up in *Girl on Fire*) in high school, a family member suggested I read it. I'm grateful.

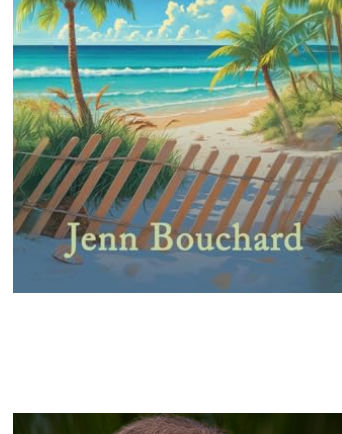
What sparked the idea for your latest novel: My fear of dementia inspired my latest novel *Hinterland*. The fear stems from seeing loved ones go through it and the possibility that I will, too. And yet, hearing my readers respond with their similar experiences is somehow comforting. They're finding that same comfort through this story, that at least we're not alone.



Second Courses by Robin Blackburn

After her celebrity chef husband divorces her, 53-year-old Lindsay takes the one thing he never expected: his beloved Lake George restaurant. There's just one problem. She's never run a kitchen, her secret writing career has stalled, and her first love just walked in wanting the head chef job. Okay, more than one problem. Now, with a real restaurant and food critic on the way, Lindsay must prove that she's all underestimated her—and, maybe, find love again.

Learn more on Robin's [website](#).



...Jenn Bouchard

Have you always known you wanted to be a writer: Not at all! I decided to start writing my debut novel *First Course* in 2015. I was 38, had two young children, and was teaching high school full-time. Eleven years later, I'm still teaching, my kids are a lot older, and my third book is about to be released. I've written a fourth, and I'm halfway through drafting my fifth.

On your nightstand now: Two stacks of books so tall I'm afraid they'll tip over! I am at the very end of Kerry Chaput's *The Secret Course*, which is beyond riveting and brilliant. I just had the joy of sitting next to Liam Callahan at the Reading a Reader fundraising dinner, so I have a signed copy of *When in Rome* that I'm very much looking forward to reading. Two of my favorite authors—Annabel Monaghan and Sara Goodman Corlino—have books coming out soon that I've preordered.

What sparked the idea for your latest novel: I absolutely love Mayflower Beach in Dennis on Cape Cod. It is such a magical place, especially at low tide. It's on Cape Cod Bay, so it's calm and the sand is soft. I knew I needed to write a story set there. And I wanted to write a book about turning 40. My main character Rachel Sinclair has a lot on her plate at this moment, and she needs to figure some things out. There's love, discovery, betrayal, hope, a surprise, and a ton of really good food. She owns an upscale beach bar, so you're in for some delicious treats.



Palms on the Cape by Jenn Bouchard

After a tumultuous childhood, Rachel Sinclair has made a life for herself. On the verge of turning 40, her upscale beach bar, Palms on the Cape, is packed throughout the Cape Cod summer season. She has surrounded herself with a devoted staff and great friends, including her best friend, Carlos, who she might be in love with. When Rachel learns of a plan to take over her business, she must decide if it's worth the gamble to join forces with an unlikely ally or risk losing everything she has worked for.

Learn more on Jenn's [website](#).



...Martha Conway

What was your favorite book as a child: My favorite book was *Half Magic* by Edward Eager. I loved books about magic, even though the magic always went away! That was part of the fun.

Why do you write women's fiction: I grew up with six sisters and no brothers. Both my neighborhood best friend and my school best friend only had sisters as well. So I grew up surrounded by lots of female energy! I've always chafed at stereotypes about women, and I like to buck those stereotypes. I love reading about interesting female characters, and so that is what I like to write.

What themes are you drawn to in books you read: Family relationships and overcoming hardship.

What sparked the idea for your latest novel: My family and I were flying home from London on my birthday. Paraway over the Atlantic, the plane's computer reported a mechanical problem, and we had to make an emergency landing in Shannon, Ireland. Fortunately, we landed safely—it was only a computer glitch—but I couldn't help feeling that this was a Big Moment. Perhaps I should take stock of my life? It was my birthday. I had just had what felt like a near-death experience. I was unexpectedly in Ireland, the country where my people had lived for centuries upon centuries. It almost felt like a sign. And then I thought: maybe the Big Moment isn't about taking stock. Maybe it's something for myself after a hectic day. On the weekends I can sometimes steal an hour or two during the day and cozy up with a book in a comfortable chair. Reading is very separate from my writing, and I don't think of having to balance the two. The hardest thing to balance as my life is work and writing. I always wish I had more time to write!

Have you always known you wanted to be a writer: It didn't occur to me to try my hand at writing fiction until I was well into my 40s. My first career was as a TV and radio news reporter, so I was telling stories that way. Then I went to work in marketing and fundraising for a library, where I still work. It wasn't until much later that I decided to try writing a novel. Of course, I had no idea how hard it would be! But I was so started. I got the bug. Writing fiction is the most rewarding thing I've ever done.

What sparked the idea for your latest novel: Memory is a central theme in *Cassie Linden Finds Her Sweet Spot*, and the story started as a way to process my father's struggle with dementia. Cassie, my main character, is dealing with her father's memory issues while trying to decide whether to even get tested for the early-onset Alzheimer's that stole her mother. My father's journey was with me throughout the writing process, and the book is dedicated to him.



We Meet Apart by Martha Conway

When World War II shuts down travel in 1940, two American sisters are stranded in Ireland—but in different realities. In Gabby's world, Ireland is inviting out the war. But in Sabine's world, Germany has invaded Ireland and taken control. Both sisters find refuge in an Irish manor where, for one hour at dusk, "the time of pookies and ghosts," their two worlds overlap. But even this brief time together is threatened when a charming soldier arrives at the manor.

Learn more on Martha's [website](#).

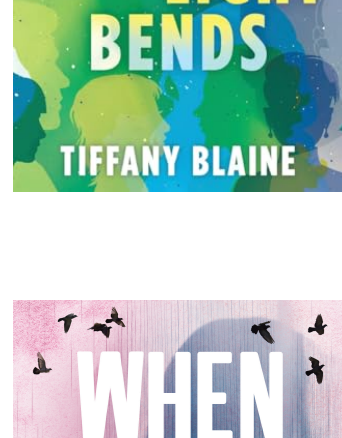


...Linda Avellar

How do you balance reading and writing: Reading is such a pleasure to me. I generally read before bed. It's my way to wind down and do something for myself after a hectic day. On the weekends I can sometimes steal an hour or two during the day and cozy up with a book in a comfortable chair. Reading is very separate from my writing, and I don't think of having to balance the two. The hardest thing to balance as my life is work and writing. I always wish I had more time to write!

Have you always known you wanted to be a writer: It didn't occur to me to try my hand at writing fiction until I was well into my 40s. My first career was as a TV and radio news reporter, so I was telling stories that way. Then I went to work in marketing and fundraising for a library, where I still work. It wasn't until much later that I decided to try writing a novel. Of course, I had no idea how hard it would be! But I was so started. I got the bug. Writing fiction is the most rewarding thing I've ever done.

What sparked the idea for your latest novel: Memory is a central theme in *Cassie Linden Finds Her Sweet Spot*, and the story started as a way to process my father's struggle with dementia. Cassie, my main character, is dealing with her father's memory issues while trying to decide whether to even get tested for the early-onset Alzheimer's that stole her mother. My father's journey was with me throughout the writing process, and the book is dedicated to him.



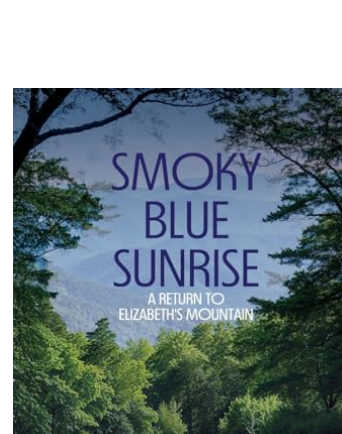
Cassie Linden Finds Her Sweet Spot by Linda Avellar

If you could learn your future, would you want to know? When newly divorced Cassie Linden returns home to care for her aging father, she doesn't plan to fall for the taciturn beekeeper she hires to help with her dad's beloved bees. She's gotten enough on her plate with a troubled son and her own memory lapses. Cassie hopes her forgetfulness is just stress but fears it might be the early-onset Alzheimer's that stole her mother. Genetic testing will tell for sure, but does she really want to know? And will the answer sink her newfound chance at happiness?

Learn more on Linda's [website](#).

NEW & NOTEWORTHY

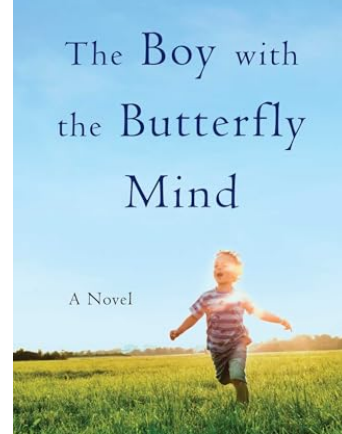
Summer is a great time to dive into a new world without getting up from your poolside lounge chair, and the best way to do that is with a women's fiction book. Here are twelve books on our summer shelf.



Dear Missing Friend by Susan McGuirk

Three hearts. Countless letters. One impossible choice. Through letters exchanged across oceans and Manhattan streets, Irish immigrant Catherine McGuirk navigates love, ambition, and heartbreak. Torn between her seafaring husband, the sailor she once refused, and her own dreams, Catherine's fate unfolds in an intimate, epistolary saga of passion, resilience, and 19th-century life.

Visit Susan's [website](#) to find out more!



Welcome to Blooms by Joanna Monahan

Daisy Greene never wanted any part of running her family's flower shop. But when her father is hospitalized, Daisy returns home to help with her dad's beloved bees. She's gotten enough on her plate with a troubled son and her own memory lapses. Cassie hopes her forgetfulness is just stress but fears it might be the early-onset Alzheimer's that stole her mother. Genetic testing will tell for sure, but does she really want to know? And will the answer sink her newfound chance at happiness?

Visit Joanna's [website](#) to find out more!



Where the White Light Bends by Tiffany Blaine

In this exhilarating debut, 72-year-old Margaret Civil faces several unforeseen decisions when her husband goes missing night after night. As she swears through the past, present, and future of the lives of her family members, Ellie needs to let go of the control she once had, but in the process, discovers how little control she ever really had in the first place.

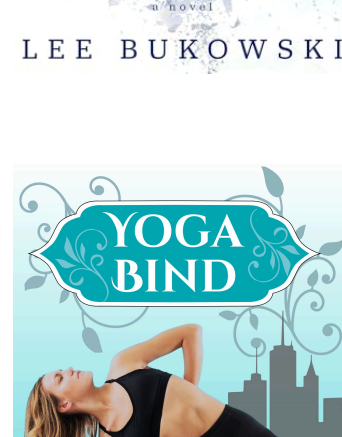
Visit Tiffany's [website](#) to find out more!



When I Leave You by J. Marie Rundquist

When Ellie Trechsel dies of a brain aneurysm at age 36, she discovers the afterlife is not the calm and comforting plane she always thought it would be. Instead, it's a painful rite of passage. As she swears through the past, present, and future of the lives of her family members, Ellie needs to let go of the control she once had, but in the process, discovers how little control she ever really had in the first place.

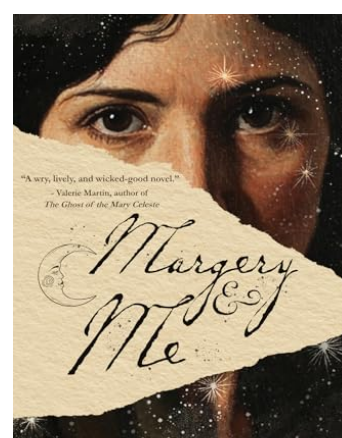
Visit J. Marie's [website](#) to find out more!



Not Too Late by Samantha Bryant

Amanda "Mandy" Deaton never intended to leave her mother in the care of strangers after her surgery, so here she is, back where she grew up. The town has changed a lot, and so have some of the people. Who knew that Turbo, that skinny trackstar from high school, would grow up into such a gorgeous, caring, confident man! Maybe coming back home could come with a few... benefits.

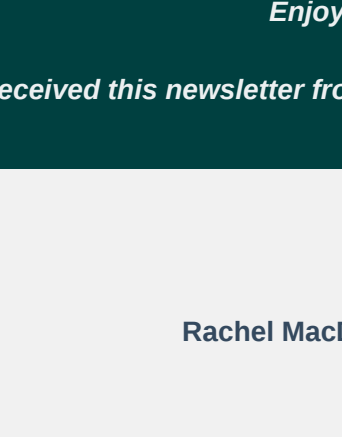
Visit Samantha's [website](#) to find out more!



Smoky Blue Sunrise by Lucille Guarino

Jolie is haunted by guilt following her sister's tragic death. She gives up her medical school aspirations and accepts a nanny position in Asheville, North Carolina. As details of her misfortune emerge, her new employers detect a reticent undercurrent in her story and encourage her to revisit that awful day when a perfect storm of events forever changed her life. Set against the beauty of the Blue Ridge Mountains, *Smoky Blue Sunrise* weaves mystery, romance, and intrigue as Hurricane Helene's terrifying impact tests Jolie's resilience once more.

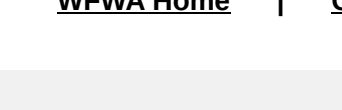
Visit Lucille's [website](#) to find out more!



The Boy with the Butterfly Mind by Lorelei Brush

When Julius's four-year-old is ticked out of preschool for aggression and suspected of having ADHD, her husband moans from his recliner, "Even my genes are failures." Julie's a high school math teacher who solves complex problems. But faced with unstable childcare, a husband who hates the idea of labeling their son a "problem," and a supervisor who's angry at the amount of time Julie's taking off work, she struggles to come up with a solution to her dilemma and fight for the next best step for her son.

Visit Lorelei's [website](#) to find out more!



Square Hearts by Julee Balko

Nicola's husband always said hearts have four sides. But ever since the night he died in a car accident, Nicola can't find a side that loves herself, let alone connects with her neurodivergent daughter. Nicola needs a fresh start. Her husband's best friend offers an affordable barge in a small town, and now she's torn between a slow-burning flirtation with her neighbor and the man who's a constant reminder of all that she lost.

Visit Julee's [website](#) to find out more!

Freedom Quest by Debora Masterson

Freedom Quest follows Michael Griffin, a gifted musician whose journey through the Southern California music scene of the 1960s, 70s, and 80s becomes a cautionary tale about artistic integrity, the pursuit of stardom, and the cost of chasing dreams. It's a sweeping, emotional odyssey with a love story that survives separation, success, failure, and illness and also reveals the redemptive power of music. At its heart lies a timeless truth that true love does exist.

Visit Debora's [website](#) to find out more!

Painting Over Cracks by Lee Bukowski

Beth Collins's life with her husband Danny seems perfect—until a freak car accident kills him and shatters her world. Desperate for a fresh start, Beth quits her job, opens a café, and moves to a new town. But in the aftermath of her grief, Beth discovers disturbing secrets about Danny that force her to wonder if the man she's mourning ever existed. When the life she built on illusion finally falls away, Beth must decide what kind of future she is brave enough to claim.

Visit Lee's [website](#) to find out more!

Yoga Bind by Meryl Davids Landau

Janelle Logan's perfect, peaceful life in New York City is upended when her beloved guru is accused of sexual assault. Will diving deeper into her yoga practices, Jewish community of girlfriends, and her previously abandoned Jewish heritage (argued on her visiting cousin) help her heal—or more heartbreak?

Visit Meryl's [website](#) to find out more!

Margery and Me by Maryka Biaggio

In the 1920s, medium Margery Crandon captivated both Boston society and psychic researchers. Her deceased brother Walter regularly appeared at her seances, entertaining the crowd with his ethereal remarks. Margery's abilities earned her the admiration of luminaries, including Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, but Harry Houdini was determined to expose her as a fraud. *Margery and Me* tells the true story of the medium who mystified scientists, challenged skeptics, and sparked a sensation across America and Europe.

Visit Maryka's [website](#) to find out more!

If you are a WFWA member and want to be considered for TBR, please fill out a book submission form [here](#).

Enjoyed this newsletter? Forward it to your friends!
Received this newsletter from a friend and want your own copy? Sign up [here](#) to receive TBR, a quarterly newsletter from WFWA.

EDITORIAL STAFF

Rachel MacDonald, Editor | rbreditor@womensfictionwriters.org

Caroline Batiene, Assistant Editor

Doretta Martelli, Proofreader

WFWA Online Community on Mighty Networks (private)
The place for Workshops, Live Events, a massive Learning Library, making connections, and more!

Connect with us:
[WFWA Home](#) | [Goodreads](#) | [Instagram](#) | [Facebook](#) | [Pinterest](#)