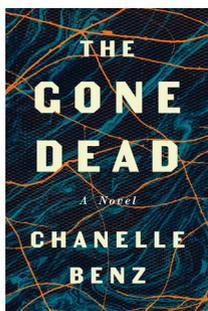




LIT STORM

Fiction sales have been down since the 2016 election, but this month, a deluge of brilliant novels promises to reverse the trend. Here, six winning picks to help you escape reality. By Brianna Kovan



THE GONE DEAD
BY CHANELLE BENZ

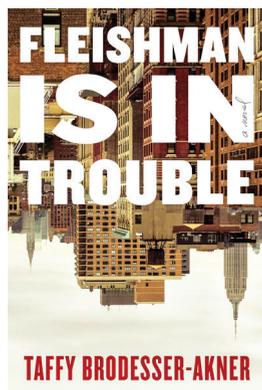
Chanelle Benz's debut novel, *The Gone Dead* (June 25), transports readers to the mucky Mississippi delta, where rising humidity and a few probing questions unearth a long-buried crime. Thirty-four-year-old Billie James returns to her father's rundown home, where, decades prior, her dad—an esteemed poet and civil rights activist—died in a freak accident. Or so she was told. Thus begins Benz's page-turner, an examination of racial justice and history—and whose versions are accepted as truth.



ASK AGAIN, YES
BY MARY BETH KEANE

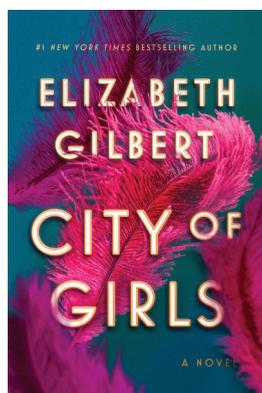
In *Ask Again, Yes* (May 28), two Irish American families live nearly parallel lives as next-door neighbors in suburban New York. Both of the husbands work as city cops; the wives have pregnancies in tandem. But privately, their lives veer ever closer to combustion. Mary Beth Keane tracks the ripple effect of untreated mental illness and addiction across the community and, ultimately, across generations. It's a beautiful novel, bursting at the seams with empathy.

Fresh NINEbeach Bondi (12.4.18) Plein Air, by Sally West; KAB Gallery



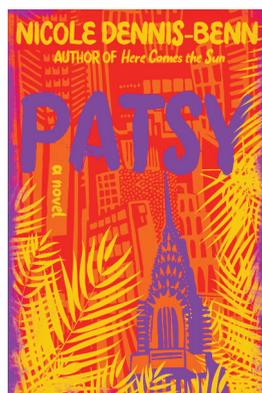
FLEISHMAN IS IN TROUBLE
BY TAFFY BRODESSER-AKNER

As a journalist, Taffy Brodesser-Akner has profiled the likes of Gwyneth Paltrow and Kris Jenner. With her debut novel, *Fleishman Is in Trouble* (June 18), she re-enters the world of the moneyed elite via a neurotic Manhattan hepatologist, Toby, whose wife (from whom he's separated) drops off their two kids and vanishes. Toby oscillates between fury and worry: Did she abandon them, or did something terrible happen? Brodesser-Akner examines this anxiety-ridden milieu in sharp, satirical prose.



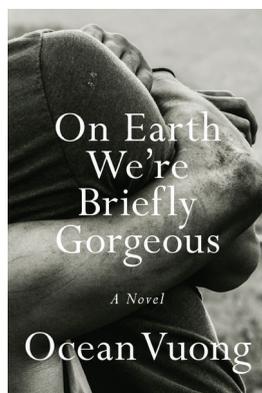
CITY OF GIRLS
BY ELIZABETH GILBERT

It's 1940, and Vivian Morris has been expelled from Vassar and sent to live with her eccentric aunt in Manhattan's Hell's Kitchen. There, she meets a lovable troupe of theater folk and showgirls who frolic around New York in unabashed debauchery. When Elizabeth Gilbert (*Eat, Pray, Love*) set out to write *City of Girls* (June 4), her goal was to tell a story of female promiscuity that didn't end in death or misfortune—a direct and delicious rebuttal to the tragic, sexist fates of the Emma Bovarys and Anna Kareninas of the canon. The result is a wildly entertaining summertime romp.



PATSY
BY NICOLE DENNIS-BENN

In her second novel, *Patsy* (June 4), Nicole Dennis-Benn (author of the award-winning *Here Comes the Sun*) follows a young Jamaican mother who moves to Brooklyn and leaves behind her five-year-old daughter, Tru, in the Caribbean. While the titular character searches for her own slice of the so-called American dream, Tru is inserted into a family (her father's) where she doesn't fit in neatly. Over the course of 12 years, the chapters alternate between mother and daughter as their stories diverge. Dennis-Benn, a Jamaican immigrant herself, writes with keen awareness of what others experience living undocumented in America—and the compromises that women make in order to prioritize themselves.



ON EARTH WE'RE BRIEFLY GORGEOUS
BY OCEAN VUONG

In *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous* (June 4), a Vietnamese American man named Little Dog pens a letter to his illiterate mother. As she'll never read his message, he's free to unleash a candid meditation on masculinity, art, and the inescapable pull of opioids. In the process, T. S. Eliot Prize-winning poet Ocean Vuong peels apart phrases and reconfigures them into new, surprising ideas, placing tense moments within the most banal of settings—like when Little Dog professes his queerness to his mother at a Dunkin' Donuts: "We were exchanging truths, I realized, which is to say, we were cutting one another."