

2019 flap copy

JANUARY

***Scuffletown* by Howard Owen**

A familiar name piques Willie Black's interest on a slow news day: Scuffletown Park. He and the first of his four wives lived next to the pocket park when they were young and still on speaking terms.

Now, Scuffletown is the site of a crime scene, one that doesn't fit the usual modus operandi for Richmond. For one thing, there's plenty of blood but no body. Also, it seems that a knife was involved, a rarity Willie's gun-happy city. And, Scuffletown is in the heart of the Fan, where violence is a blessedly rare occurrence.

Before long there is a body. There also is a neighbor who caught the deed on his iPhone camera. When his old friend and current police flack Peachy Love gives Willie a sneak peek at the remarkably clear photograph, he starts wishing he'd never seen Scuffletown Park again. How is it possible that Abe Custalow is standing over what appears to be a very dead body?

Abe has been sharing Willie Black's condo since Willie found his childhood pal living homeless in Monroe Park. Even now, with Willie married to the lovely Cindy Peroni Black, Abe remains ensconced there. OK, he did kill a guy once, but the guy deserved killing, and Abe's been Mr. Clean ever since.

With his condo-mate in jail, Willie does what a good reporter does best: He starts digging, with no assistance from Custalow, who insists that Willie "just leave it alone."

That would go against every instinct in Willie Black's nosy-ass body, but when he finally gets within hailing distance of the truth, he understands why Abe wanted him to back off. Before Scuffletown reaches its conclusion, Willie knows he will have to risk his oldest friendship in order to save his oldest friend from a life behind bars.

Howard Owen bio

This is Howard Owen's 17th novel and the seventh in the Willie Black mystery series. Owen was a longtime newspaperman, working at everything from reporter to sports editor to editorial pages editor. He has been writing fiction since 1989. He and his wife, Karen, live in Richmond. Among his earlier novels are the best-selling Littlejohn and the Willie Black mystery, Oregon Hill, which won the Dashiell Hammett prize for best crime literature in the United States and Canada.

FEBRUARY

***Post Facto* by Darryl Wimberley**

When Clara Sue Buchanan gave up big-city journalism to buy her Southern hometown newspaper, she was determined to ferret out the truth in whatever story that came along. What came were high school football games, the locals' catch of the day, and family reunions. Until a string of paranormal sightings turns the monotony upside down. Then millions of dollars in federal funds are on the horizon, but they threaten to ignite a blood feud. A dog is the victim of a ritualistic killing. A drug stash shows up in the truck of a dead prison guard. Things are getting a lot more interesting. Especially when a mysterious trunk appears from an era past, promising to rip open a decades-old case of unexpected death and tragic suicide. Suddenly, all of Clara Sue's big-city reporter skills are in play as she tries to crack the code of small-town corruption, venality, and wanton murder.

Before she's the next victim.

Darryl Wimberley bio

A native Floridian and the first winner of the Willie Morris Award for Fiction, Darryl Wimberley's work has garnered critical acclaim and four national awards.

MARCH

***Mrs. Rossi's Dream* by Khahn Ha**

"I live in a coastal town in the deep south of the Mekong Delta. During the war this was IV Corps, which saw many savage fights. Although the battles might have long been forgotten, some places cannot forget."

Thus begins the harrowing yet poignant story of a North Vietnamese communist defector who spends ten years in a far-flung reform prison after the war, and now, in 1987, a free man again, finds work as caretaker at a roadside inn in the U Minh region. One day new guests arrive at the inn: an elderly American woman and her daughter, an eighteen-year-old Vietnamese girl adopted at the age of five from an orphanage in the Mekong Delta before the war ended. Catherine Rossi has come to this region to find the remains of her son, a lieutenant who went missing-in-action during the war.

Mrs. Rossi's Dream tells the stories of two men in time parallel: Giang, the thirty-nine-year-old war veteran; Nicola Rossi, a deceased lieutenant in the United States Army, the voice of a spirit.

From the haunting ugliness of the Vietnam War, the stories of these two men shout, cry, and whisper to us the voices of love and loneliness, barbarity and longing, lived and felt by a multitude of people from all walks of life: the tender adolescent vulnerability of a girl toward a man who, as a drifter and a war-hardened man, draws beautifully in his spare time; the test of

love and faith endured by a mother whose dogged patience even baffles the local hired hand who thinks the poor old lady must have gone out of her mind, and whose determination drives her into the spooky forest, rain or shine, until one day she claims she has sensed an otherworldly presence in there with her. In the end she wishes to see, just once, a river the local Vietnamese call “The River of White Water Lilies,” the very river her son saw, now that all her hopes to find his remains die out.

Just then something happens. She finds out where he has lain buried for twenty years—and how he was killed.

Khahn Ha bio

Khanh Ha is the author of *Flesh* (Black Heron Press) and *The Demon Who Peddled Longing* (Underground Voices). He is a seven-time Pushcart nominee, a Best Indie Lit New England nominee, twice a finalist of The William Faulkner-Wisdom Creative Writing Award, and the recipient of Sand Hills Prize for Best Fiction, and Greensboro Review’s Robert Watson Literary Prize in fiction. *The Demon Who Peddled Longing* was honored by Shelf Unbound as a Notable Indie Book. Ha graduated from Ohio University with a bachelor’s degree in journalism.

APRIL

***Westfarrow Island* by Paul A. Barra**

Big Anthony Tagliabue is a local character whose fiancée Agnes Ann owns a stable on the eponymous offshore island. She is secretly training a promising filly for the track when she discovers that Tagliabue also harbors a secret: he’s a deep cover operative who is called to duty when a Russian spy ship transits the coast on her way back to St. Petersburg. Giselle, his enigmatic and exotic handler, intimates that his mission to rescue a defector from the Leonov might also ameliorate his thirst to find the killers of his mate. Agnes Ann is not so sure about Giselle.

The result is a tense tale of high seas adventure off Georges Bank, racing drama at Saratoga, bloodletting in the north woods and intrigue on Westfarrow Island. Tagliabue is a bona-fide modern day hero with a big right hand and a fast gun hand. His literary thriller will keep you reading in thrall until the last page.

Biography of Paul A. Barra

Paul A. Barra is a former naval officer, reporter and teacher who graduated with a BS from Niagara University and an MS from Loyola University of New Orleans. He was the senior staff writer for the Diocese of Charleston and an award-winning freelance magazine writer before becoming a fulltime novelist. His four previous books have been shortlisted for the Thriller

Award of the International Thriller Writers, the Chanticleer International Book Awards and the Tuscany Prize.

Barra and his wife Joan have eight children and live in Reidville, South Carolina, with dogs, cats, chickens, alpacas and a burro named Cletus to guard them all. He invites you to kindly visit his website: www.paulbarra.com

MAY

The Measure of the World by Charles Davis

France, 1791. Amid the political turmoil of the French Revolution, another revolution is taking place, an ambitious project to remeasure the Paris meridian, thus determining the precise distance from the North Pole to the Equator in order to calculate a new base unit of length, the meter, establishing a rational system of measurement based on nature that will unite all people of all nations for all time.

A young surveyor and would be savant sets out for Southern France, charged with reconnoitering the ground ahead of the main expedition and drawing preliminary maps of poorly charted land near the frontier with Spain. In the course of his travels, he realizes people are rarely rational and not everyone wants to live in a savant's utopia. He also discovers love, rivalry, murder, and a sense of place as he pieces together a map of life that will serve him for the rest of his days.

THE MEASURE OF THE WORLD is a tale of adventure and misadventure exploring how maps tell stories, charting physical and metaphysical ways through the world, defining who we think we are and what we value.

Charles Davis bio

CHARLES DAVIS was born and brought up in England, but has lived his adult life elsewhere, working in the United States, Sudan, Turkey, Ivory Coast, Spain, and now France. He is the author of four previous novels published by The Permanent Press: *Walk On, Bright Boy* (2007), *Walking The Dog* (2008), *Standing at the Crossroads* (2011), and *Hitler, Mussolini, and Me* (2016).

For full biographical details and information on other publications, please visit <http://charlesdavis2.wix.com/charlesdavis>.

JUNE

Deep Dive by Chris Knopf

Sam Acquillo has spent most of his time in the Hamptons hanging out with the other half of the moneyed wonderland – cops and bartenders, carpenters, store clerks and firemen. He could care less about the concerns of the 1%, until his best friend Burton Lewis, a certified billionaire, is dragged into a high-profile death investigation.

When Sam’s girlfriend Amanda notes, “Didn’t Fitzgerald say, ‘the rich are different from you and me’?”

“Yeah, they can afford to be even more screwed up.”

A former corporate super star, brought down by the machinations of the grasping class, Sam’s not entirely unfamiliar with the cultural norms of super wealth. It’s why he retreated to his cottage refuge at the tip of Oak Point Peninsula jutting into the Little Peconic Bay. But in the intervening years, he’s engaged with all forms of low life – tough guys and connivers looking for that edge, an easy path into a social order besotted with unattainable yearning. A world where the best revenge is one with no consequences, no penalties or costs.

For some, there is no power without prestige, and no prestige that can’t be bought. They see no distinction between corporate profit and high-minded non-profits, charity being the currency of social preeminence.

In Deep Dive, Sam discovers just how right he is. The rich can achieve a level of depravity and hate both invisible, and incomprehensible, to the rest of us.

JULY

***Evergreen* by Howard Owen**

Willie Black knew he had a father, even if he didn’t know where he was buried.

It wasn’t like Artie Lee gave his son anything but his genes. He died when Willie was 15 months old, and Artie and Peggy never married. They couldn’t have, in the segregated commonwealth of Virginia in 1960.

Then, in January of 2018, Artie Lee, dead almost 57 years, reinserts himself into his son’s life. Philomena Slade calls Willie, the mixed-race night-cops reporter for the local daily rag, to her death bed to ask him a favor he can’t refuse: Keep Artie’s grave clean. She’s been doing it after everybody else who knew him either died or chose to forget they ever knew Artie Lee.

Willie Black finds his father’s final resting place in Evergreen, an abandoned cemetery on the east side of Richmond where full-grown trees and thickets obscure memorials to people who, like Artie Lee, are long-forgotten.

Willie soon discovers that the almost-impenetrable wilderness of Evergreen is a metaphor for his search for Artie.

Artie Lee, a saxophonist and race man who did not suffer bigots gladly, died in a car crash. Willie knew that. When he starts figuratively digging, though, he finds out more than he really wanted to know. Arthur Meeks and Archangel Bright, Artie's friends back in the day, don't seem that eager to talk about him, but Willie keeps pumping them. Eventually, he'll discover how a double-homicide at a Ku Klux Klan rally in 1960 connects with an auto wreck on a deserted road a year later.

It's not like Willie has plenty of extra time to unearth a story he might not even be able to write. In addition to covering the always-thriving Richmond crime scene, he's now assigned by his newspaper's most recent boy publisher to do a daily feature from the city's past. Who can blame him if he starts mixing a little fiction with the history?

As he tries to find out what happened to Artie Lee, Willie figures that, when it comes to reconnecting with his long-deceased father, late is better than never.

When he digs up the truth, though, he'll see that "never" might not have been so bad.

Howard Owen bio

This is Howard Owen's 18th novel and the eighth in the Willie Black mystery series. Owen, a longtime newspaperman, worked at everything from reporter to sports editor to editorial pages editor. He has been writing fiction since 1989. He and his wife, Karen, live in Richmond. Among his earlier novels are the best-selling Littlejohn and the Willie Black mystery, Oregon Hill, which won the Dashiell Hammett prize for best crime literature in the United States and Canada.

AUGUST

***SWIM* by Eric C. Wat**

Carson Chow is a high functioning addict. For years, he's been able to meet the increasing demands from his aging immigrant parents, while hiding his crystal meth use every other weekend. One Friday night, as he's passed out from a drug binge, he misses thirty-eight phone calls from his father, detailing first the collapse and eventually the death of his mother. Carson has always been close to his mother; he was the only person she confided in when his father had a one-night affair with her younger sister twenty years ago. For the following two weeks, he throws himself into the preparation of his mother's funeral, juggling between temptations and obligations. Sometimes slipping into relapse, his efforts are thwarted by a stoic father who is impractical and unable to take care of himself, a grandmother suffering dementia, a sister with a failing marriage, and a young niece with unknown trauma that can be triggered by the sound of running water. He tries to find support from his ex, Jeremy. Now clean and sober, Jeremy rebuffs him. As Carson assumes his mother's caregiving role, her secret resurfaces and now haunts him

alone. Will this tragedy plunge him deeper into his abuse or finally rouse him from his addiction stupor?

Eric C, Wat bio

Eric Wat has been active in struggles for LGBT, immigrant, and workers' rights for more than two decades. His short stories and essays have appeared in various anthologies and journals. He is the author of *The Making of a Gay Asian Community: An Oral History of Pre-AIDS Los Angeles* (2002) and is currently working on a follow-up book on AIDS activism in the Asian Pacific Islander communities. *SWIM* is his debut novel. He lives and writes in Los Angeles.

SEPTEMBER

***Satellite Street* by Eleanor Lerman**

Satellite Street is woven through with the theme of transitions. Paul Marden is grappling with the way that a sudden, devastating illness—and his slow recovery—have made him reevaluate what “normal” is for a man in his sixties who grew up in a time of change that promised better days than the ones he is now living through. Another character’s transition involves both gender and spirit; Lelee was born male and wanted to transition to female but the process has been hindered by heart issues. Lelee also believes that she can speak to the dead, although she is skeptical of her own experiences. At one point, she tells Paul that she thinks the dead are all liars or themselves deceived about who or what they are.

The rundown beach town both Paul and Lelee grew up in is itself in a transitional phase: suddenly rediscovered by surfers and other millennials, it has become a magnet for hipsters and hence, almost unrecognizable to its old inhabitants, The coastal town where Paul and Lelee live now lies between a bridge to another upscale beach town and an area of canals and marshland and has been heavily damaged by Hurricane Sandy. Paul’s rented house, on Satellite Street, is one of the few that survived the storm.

Set amongst the context of these thematic elements, the story revolves around Paul’s relationship with these places and with Lelee as well as his father, an elderly nursing home patient. It is Paul’s father who inadvertently involves him in a feud between The Great Oswaldo, a long-ago children’s program host who has become a professional skeptic and Happy Howie, who speaks through Lelee, demanding that Paul settle an old score for him with Oswaldo. In the 1960s, when Howie was a famous radio personality in New York, Oswaldo outed him as gay. In that era, a disc jockey on a rock and roll station couldn’t be a darling of teenage girls who lived their lives by the top ten hit list on the radio and also be queer. Lelee is astonished to be “contacted” by Howie and will have to reevaluate what she thinks of her own interactions that lead beyond the human horizon. Paul will have to incorporate all these experiences with the help of a fondness for an old movie about Godzilla, the atomic beast who, as a child, he felt sorry for. After all, Paul was an unhappy kid who understood what it meant to be so angry that you wanted

to destroy the world. Now, in his diminished physical state, and presented with a seemingly petty request to settle a score from beyond the grave, he's going to have to figure out how to use a monster's strength to survive this life and whatever may lie beyond.

Eleanor Lerman bio

Eleanor Lerman is the author of numerous award-winning collections of poetry, short stories and novels. She is a National Book Award finalist, the recipient of the 2006 Lenore Marshall Poetry Prize from the Academy of American Poets, and was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship as well as fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts for poetry and the New York Foundation for the Arts for fiction. In 2016 her novel, *Radiomen* (The Permanent Press), was awarded the John W. Campbell Prize for the Best Book of Science Fiction. Her most recent novel, *The Stargazer's Embassy* (Mayapple Press, 2017), received an American Fiction Award from American Book Fest in 2018. www.eleanorlerman.com

OCTOBER

***Captives* by Reiner Prochaska**

Frederick County, Maryland, September 1944. Florian Schneider, a code breaker for the German Army, is interned at POW Branch Camp 6. Many of his fellow inmates—most of them seasoned Afrika Korps veterans—mistrust the taciturn soldier, whose rank belies his education and his excellent command of the English language. He is assigned to work on the farm of Vivian Klein, whose daughter, Mary, has moved back home for the remainder of the war while her husband is fighting in the Pacific. An unlikely, complicated romance ensues between Mary and Schneider.

Once Schneider earns the trust of his peers by saving the life of Bernd Wagner, he dares to propose to them the impossible—a plan for escape: After a performance of *Coriolanus* by the German soldiers for their American captors on New Year's Eve, a group of German soldiers will steal a car and head for the New Jersey coast. Schneider knows that two spies enlisted to sabotage the Manhattan Project are scheduled to be delivered via submarine to the coast off Maine around New Years Day 1945. Schneider believes in the slight chance that he and his fellow escapees may be able to radio the sub to pick them up off the East Coast.

On New Years Eve, everything starts out as planned, but shortly after midnight, as the men are stealing a truck on Vivian Klein's Farm, Mary surprises them. Unwilling to harm Mary or jeopardize the escape, Schneider tells the men to leave without him. Without Schneider's language skills, they are captured trying to cross the Susquehanna Bridge, and Wagner is killed. Blaming Schneider for the failed escape, the men convene a Court of Honor to decide his fate.

Reiner Prochaska bio

REINER PROCHASKA is an actor and a playwright, whose plays have been produced regionally and published internationally. A former longtime member of Maryland Ensemble

Theatre, he is the Artistic Director of Frederick Classical Ensemble, a theater company dedicated to classical, Medieval, and Renaissance drama. A graduate of Towson University, Reiner teaches writing at his alma mater and acting at McDaniel College. He lives in Frederick, Maryland.

NOVEMBER

***Written Out* by Howard Mittelmark**

Roger Olivetti's novels never set the world on fire as he had once hoped, but he's contented himself with a comfortable living as an editor, an apartment in downtown Manhattan, and a lovely—and bestselling—novelist wife. Then the bottom falls out of the publishing industry and his marriage simultaneously and Roger finds himself living in the basement of his mother's house, in the Long Island town where he grew up. While he attempts his comeback, old romances are rekindled and old friendships renewed. Things are beginning to look up, but choices that at first seemed reasonable lead to preposterously catastrophic consequences, until Roger finds himself looking down, at the body of a woman he's just murdered. Soon he's scrambling to stay a step ahead of the local mafia—and his mother's book club, as they slowly puzzle out the identity of the killer.

Written Out is a comic thriller in the mold of Carl Hiaasen, a hilarious page-turner that deals with questions of class, free will, and whether it's possible to move back to the suburbs without losing your soul.

Howard Mittelmark bio

Howard Mittelmark lives in New York City, where he works as a writer and editor. He is married to the novelist Sandra Newman, with whom he wrote the bestseller *How Not to Write a Novel*. He is the author of the novel *Age of Consent*, and his writing has appeared in numerous print and online publications, including *The Village Voice*, *The Awl*, *Vulture*, *The International Herald-Tribune*, and the *Times of London*. He has reviewed books for *The New York Times*, the *Washington Post* and the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, and ghostwritten bestselling memoirs. He grew up on Long Island.