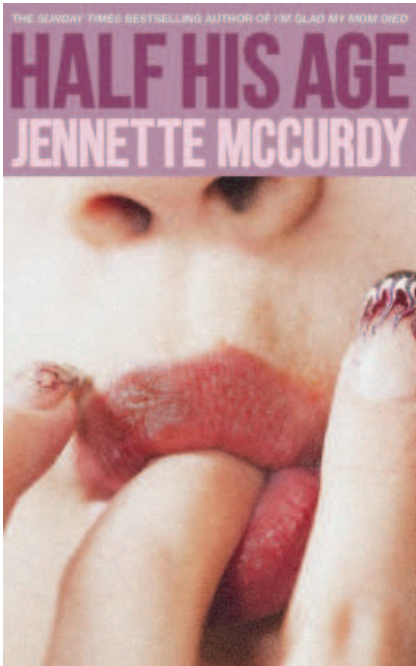


THE SHELF

7 new books to look out for in 2026

We truly believe that one of the highlights of starting a new year is the anticipation of newer titles slated for publication—freshly made out of the press and ready to grace our already-waiting shelves. With a plethora of options mushrooming on the internet, here are seven books to put on your radar in 2026.

NUR-E-JANNAT ALIF

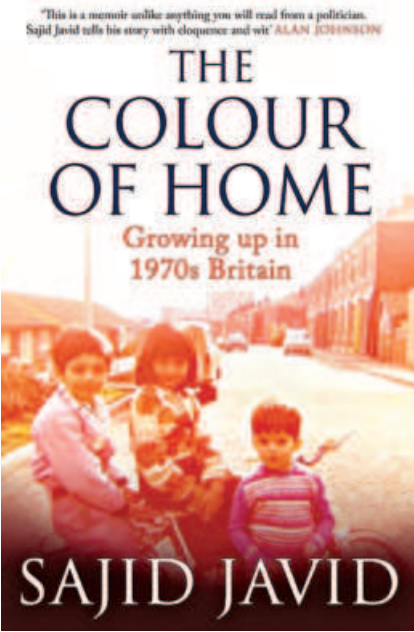


**Half His Age**  
Jennette McCurdy  
Ballantine Books, 2026

First on our list, we have the fiction debut of Jennette McCurdy, author of the widely fascinating and heartbreakingly hilarious memoir *I'm Glad My Mom Died* (Simon & Schuster, 2022). A 17-year-old is the protagonist of this story, a girl with too much hunger and not enough steadiness, who walks into a creative writing classroom and latches onto the one adult who seems to notice her. Waldo wants Mr. Korgy, her teacher, with a fixation that's messy and urgent, less 'romance' than a desperate attempt to be seen and chosen. McCurdy frames that desire as both thrilling and frightening, tracing how power can hide inside attention, how loneliness can make risk feel like relief. What makes the premise hit harder is how it keeps widening the lens: class and consumerism, the internet's ability to amplify longing, and the strange ways a young person can confuse intensity for safety. It is haunting and funny, deeply morbid and full of longing, a coming-of-age story told like a warning and a confession at the same time.

**The Colour of Home: Growing up in 1970s Britain**  
Sajid Javid  
Abacus, 2026

A five-year-old Sajid Javid walks to primary school through a Rochdale underpass, where a racist taunt, "Run, Paki, Run", bounces off the walls and teaches him, early, what it means to be seen as an outsider in 1970s Britain. His family has arrived from Punjab in the wake of Partition, holding on to Indo-Pakistani traditions that offer comfort at home, but often bring rejection outside it. In this memoir, Javid recounts a childhood marked by poverty, racism, and the tension of trying to navigate two cultures simultaneously. Those pressures spill into trouble at school, run-ins with police, and later a rupture at home, when he risks estrangement by defying



an arranged marriage in favour of the woman he loves. Told with honesty, heart, and humour, *The Colour of Home* is both a tribute to the family who carried him and an invitation to every outsider to keep going.

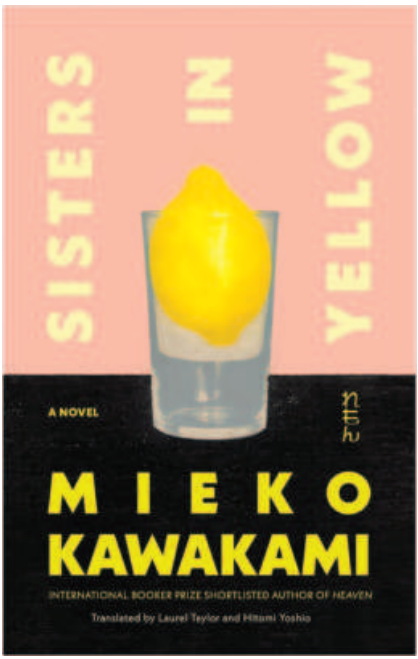
**Tomar, Shongkho**  
Prodipto De Chowdhury  
Lekhachitro Prokashoni, 2026



*Tomar, Shongkho* was written in just four days, but it does not read as something rushed; it reads like a personal diary, crafted at times of covetous yearning. For those four days, Shongkho, the protagonist of the novel, stayed inside the narrator's mind—his pain, sorrow, love, and childhood replaying like scenes that the author just could not look away from. The book unfolds as a monologic epistolary, intimate and unguarded, moving letter by letter toward an ending that feels inevitable. It is, first, written for Shongkho, with love, and then handed gently to the reader, as if saying, this is for you too.

**Sisters in Yellow**  
Meiko Kawakami, Laurel Taylor

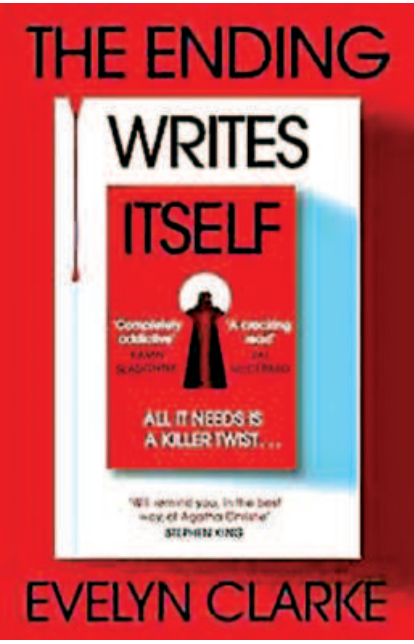
(Translator),  
Hitomi Yoshio (Translator)  
Knopf, 2026



Set in a 1990s Tokyo splitting fast into haves and have-nots, *Sisters in Yellow* moves with the swagger of noir and the urgency of a thriller. Hana, growing up without a father and exhausted by the pity she attracts at school, is drawn to Kimiko, an older woman who feels strangely young, talking easily about boys and possibilities, offering Hana a different kind of 'mother' and a glimpse of a better life. Soon, fate gathers two more young women into their orbit, each bruised but unbroken. The four decide to remake their lives the only way they can—together. They open a bar called Lemon and fight to keep it afloat, navigating predatory lenders, organised criminals, and the plain bad luck that seems to follow people with no safety net. What begins as a business soon becomes a pact, taking care of Lemon means taking care of one another. Narrated by Hana in Kawakami's vivid, poetic voice, the novel is packed with reversals and sharp portraits of Tokyo nightlife, from bar owners and ageing hostesses to street touts coaxing strangers indoors.

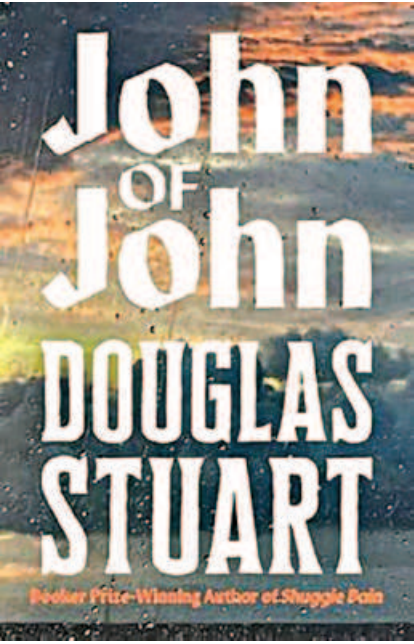
**The Ending Writes Itself**  
Evelyn Clarke  
Harper, 2026

Evelyn Clarke is actually two authors. No, seriously, they are—Victoria E Schwab and Cat Clarke, two lifelong friends joining forces to present the world with a cutting-edge mystery thriller. Six struggling authors accept what sounds like a dream weekend on a private Scottish island, invited by Arthur Fletch, a reclusive literary superstar famous for his twisted plots and iconic characters. When they arrive, the dream curdles fast: Fletch is dead, and his final manuscript is unfinished. His agent and editor, desperate to publish the book, turn grief into a deadline. The writers are given 72 hours to produce a worthy ending, and the prize is a huge payout for ghost-writing the last chapter, plus a promised career resurrection for the winner, complete



with future bestsellers. Suddenly, with the clock ticking, the island becomes a pressure cooker of ego, ambition, and suspicion. Starting is hard. Finishing may be dangerous. *The Ending Writes Itself* is a locked-room thriller with a sharp publishing world hook, and if you happen to love books about books, April 7, 2026, might be the time to hop on it.

**John of John**  
Douglas Stuart  
Grove Press, 2026



Another promising creation from the Booker Prize-winning author Douglas Stuart, *John of John* is about John-Calum Macleod, who comes back to the Isle of Harris with an art school education and not much else. Out of money, short on prospects, he takes the ferry home and steps into a life that feels unchanged in every way that matters, except that he no longer fits inside it. There, Cal finds himself pulled between two forces that have always shaped him. There is his father, John, a sheep farmer and tweed weaver, steady in his work and firm in his faith, a pillar of the local Presbyterian church who looks at his son's long hair and sees a soul drifting

from salvation. And there is Cal's grandmother Ella, a profanity-loving Glaswegian with a soft spot for him and a sharp tongue for everyone else, who has spent decades keeping an uneasy peace inside a fraying household. As the seasons move from lambing to shearing, the island's tight community begins to feel less like a shelter and more like a net, the kind that holds you, and tightens. Cal wonders what kind of life is possible for him here, what kind of love, what kind of truth.

**The Sleeping Sisters**  
Jennifer Givhan  
Mulholland Books, 2026



Fortuna Miércoles moves her family across the Rio Grande to a better neighbourhood, hoping distance can outrun a curse that has stalked her bloodline since her great-great-grandmother crossed the desert with a cactus thorn splitting her throat. But a family's violent legacy does not stay buried for long. Twenty years earlier, girls and women vanished into the Albuquerque night, their bones later found on the mesa. The killer, the so-called Reaper, was never caught. Now, beneath the dormant volcanoes called the Sleeping Sisters, the killings have begun again. Detective Jeanette Palacio, haunted by the murders of her own cousins, is pulled back in when a new body turns up in Fortuna's backyard. As mother and detective collide, the novel tightens into an investigation that feels both earthly and ancient: are the Sleeping Sisters awakening, or has someone in Fortuna's family set the trap? Inspired by true events and shot through with a Chicana Indigenous reimagining of the headless woman legend, *The Sleeping Sisters* is a fierce literary horror novel about motherhood and the monstrous bargains we make to protect the ones we love.

**Nur-E-Jannat Alif** is a gender studies major and part-time writer, who dreams of authoring a book someday. Find her at @literatureinsolitude on Instagram or send her your book/movie/television recommendations at nurejannatalif@gmail.com.

EDITORIAL

Why read?



ILLUSTRATION: MAHMUDA ENMAD

There is a curious bite to the air now. Notwithstanding the terrifying levels of AQI that threaten to permanently damage our lungs, heart, and brain, the air feels promising—of new beginnings, of renewed potential, of reevaluating the old and embracing the new. It is not only the first month of a new calendar year that makes one want to rethink the past, it is also the way the January sun hits one just right, the way the dustgreen leaves sway as one wraps the shawl around them a little tight, the way one cracks the spine of a new book open, curling up with a piping hot cup of dudh cha.

Elsewhere, the world remains as terrifying and frustrating as ever. Battles long fought before—for equality, for access to public space, for participation in politics, for living a dignified, human life—are being waged again. As the world increasingly turns inwards, where borders tighten and laws preventing movement become stricter, we turn, as we must, to books. To fiction's ability to transcend borders. To poetry's ability to see through the pain of others. To the world of make believe and storytelling, of kinder voices and

softer ideas, with the hope that we will recall, and indeed, reembrace the very essentiality of our human existence.

When I think about reading, and I do think about reading quite a lot as this is what I do at work and at leisure, I think about reading's ability to affect and its ability to enact change. Against the harsh

**Exactly a year ago, after having read a poem titled "Egg Drop Soup" on our Literature page, a regular reader reached out to share that she simply had to make herself the same soup that day.**

realities of the world we must inhabit, reading has allowed me to hold a sort of tenderness that has often cushioned the brutal blows the world throws at us. When I read through submissions—creative submissions as well as student work—I cannot help but marvel at the sheer privilege of bearing witness to someone else's voice

and vulnerability, courage and conviction, all expressed through written words.

I recently read a submission where Joseph Stalin's reading habits were discussed. The point was that being a great reader did little to deter him from his dictatorial proclivities. Is it a rather sobering counterpoint to the case in hand here? Perhaps. Here at Star Books and Literature though, nothing is going to stop us from hoping that you will pick up our pages on Thursdays and Saturdays. That maybe you will find a poignant piece here, a remarkable one there, and maybe, just maybe, pick up your own pen and write a line or four.

Exactly a year ago, after having read a poem titled "Egg Drop Soup" on our Literature page, a regular reader reached out to share that she simply had to make herself the same soup that day.

I hope our pages help you find your soup.

**Dr Nazia Manzoor** teaches English at North South University. She is also Editor, Star Books and Literature. Reach her at nazia.manzoor@gmail.com.