

# 9 Audiobooks You Need To Listen To

 [buzzfeednews.com/article/ariannarebolini/audiobooks-saving-my-sanity-during-coronavirus](https://buzzfeednews.com/article/ariannarebolini/audiobooks-saving-my-sanity-during-coronavirus)

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Being a mother during a pandemic made reading almost impossible. Then I started listening.

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**Oh, hi there!** Arianna Rebolini here, books editor at BuzzFeed News, mother of a 1-year-old. As I'm sure other parents will understand, being the latter during a pandemic has made being the former a little more difficult. I pull out my e-reader and my son Theo needs to hold it *immediately*. I look away for a moment and suddenly he's tearing through the pages of a galley. He falls asleep, thank god, but I only manage to get 10 minutes into reading before I'm asleep, too.

What torture to be surrounded by amazing books all day every day, without having the time or energy to dive in. I need to read for my job but also for my sanity. So I decided to give audiobooks another shot.

When I'd tried to listen to audiobooks in the past, my mind would wander too frequently or I'd find a podcast to dip into instead. But when lockdowns began, Libro.fm\* — an audiobook service that splits profits with independent bookstores — got on my radar as a [way to support your local bookshop](#). And as [we started curating lists with them](#), I started to think, *Hmm, maybe these people are onto something here.*

And guess what: They are! Audiobooks are great! The more I listened, the more I wanted to listen. I listen to books while I'm taking Theo for walks, while I'm watching him at the park, while I'm cooking, while I'm cleaning. It's multitasking that doesn't feel like multitasking. But it's also made me realize some books are especially engaging in audio — some, I'd wager, are even better when you listen to them. Now I want to share my joy and intel with you. Below are some of my favorites.

*\*This is not sponsored content, though I do receive free review copies through Libro.fm's [influencer program](#). I've since begun a paid subscription and will evangelize about it to anyone who will listen.*



Riverhead

Bennett's bestselling novel follows identical twin sisters Desiree and Stella after they run away from their small Southern hometown, Mallard, in 1968 and their lives diverge — Stella goes north to live as a white woman, marrying a white man who knows nothing of her past; and Desiree has a daughter with an abusive man intent on punishing her for her light-skin privilege, eventually leaving with her daughter and returning to Mallard. The novel spans decades, following the sisters' daughters as their own stories intertwine in themes of race, gender, class, and family.

Shayna Small's narration is immersive, and her pitch-perfect accents add further depth to these characters, intoning their learned (or affected) markers of class, heritage, and gender.

# HOME BEFORE DARK



*A Novel*

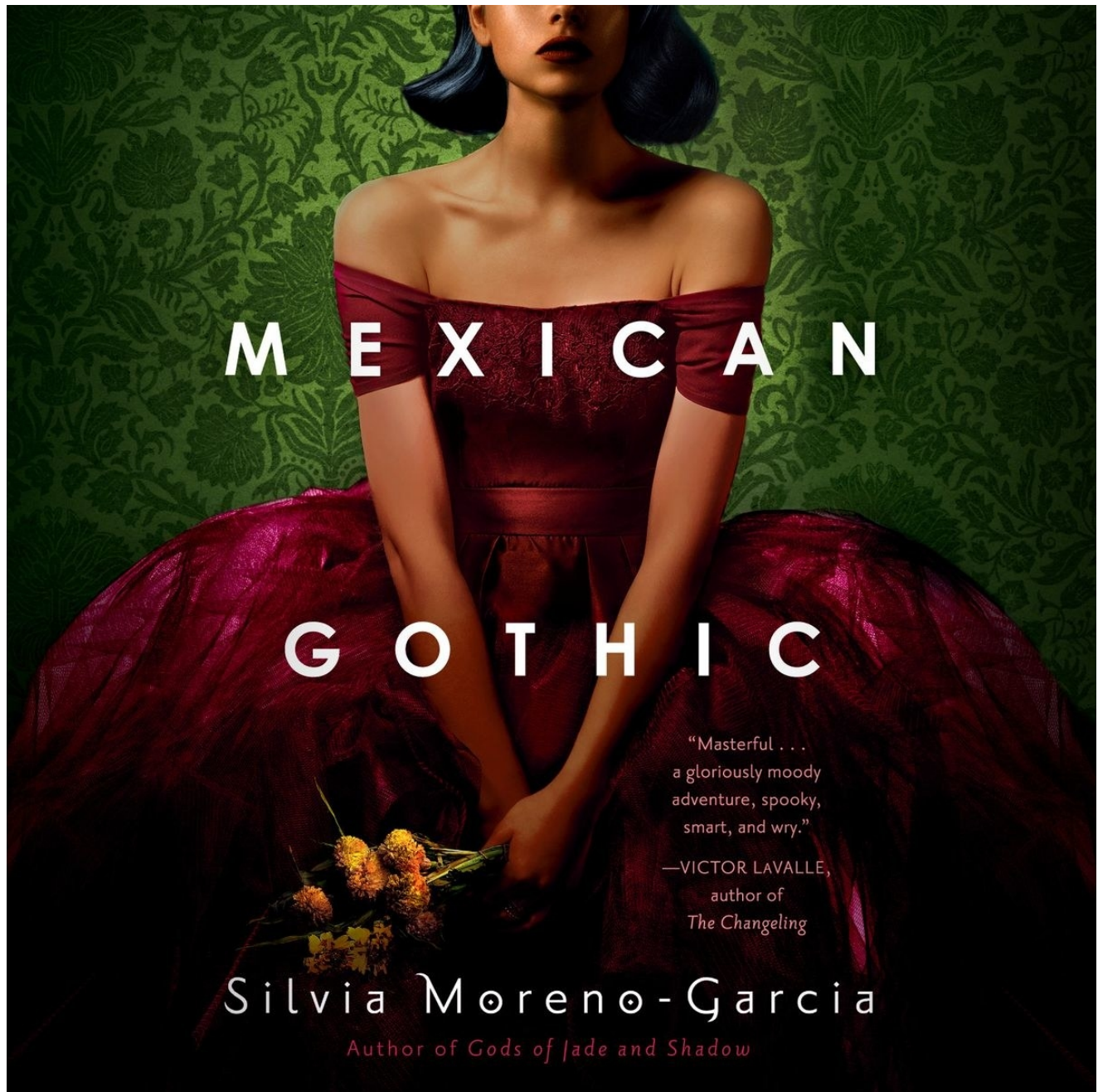
NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR

## RILEY SAGER

Penguin Random House

Twenty-five years ago, Maggie Holt and her parents moved into an old Victorian estate in the woods of Vermont — and lived there for three weeks, before a series of horrifying ghostly encounters forced them to flee. Maggie was too young to remember those events, and she's always doubted the story, which her father recounted in a nonfiction book that became a global bestseller. Now she's a restorer of old homes — and when she inherits that same Victorian estate after her father's death, she decides to renovate and flip it. But when she returns, she finds reason to believe her father's account.

The dual narration by Cady McClain and Jon Lindstrom works on multiple levels: It not only gives life to both perspectives, but it also further complicates your trust in these characters. Cady's voice gives way to paranoia; Jon's seems so authoritative — who can you believe??



Del Rey

Noemí Taboada is a socialite who delights in parties, fancy dresses, seducing men, and anthropology. After receiving a garbled letter from her recently married cousin and dear friend Catalina, she travels to the distant village of High Place and the decaying mansion that is now Catalina's home. There, she finds Catalina incoherent and lethargic among an

inhospitable family — except for the young, shy Francis, who becomes an unexpected ally for Noemí. Meanwhile, the house itself seeps into her dreams and slowly comes alive around her.

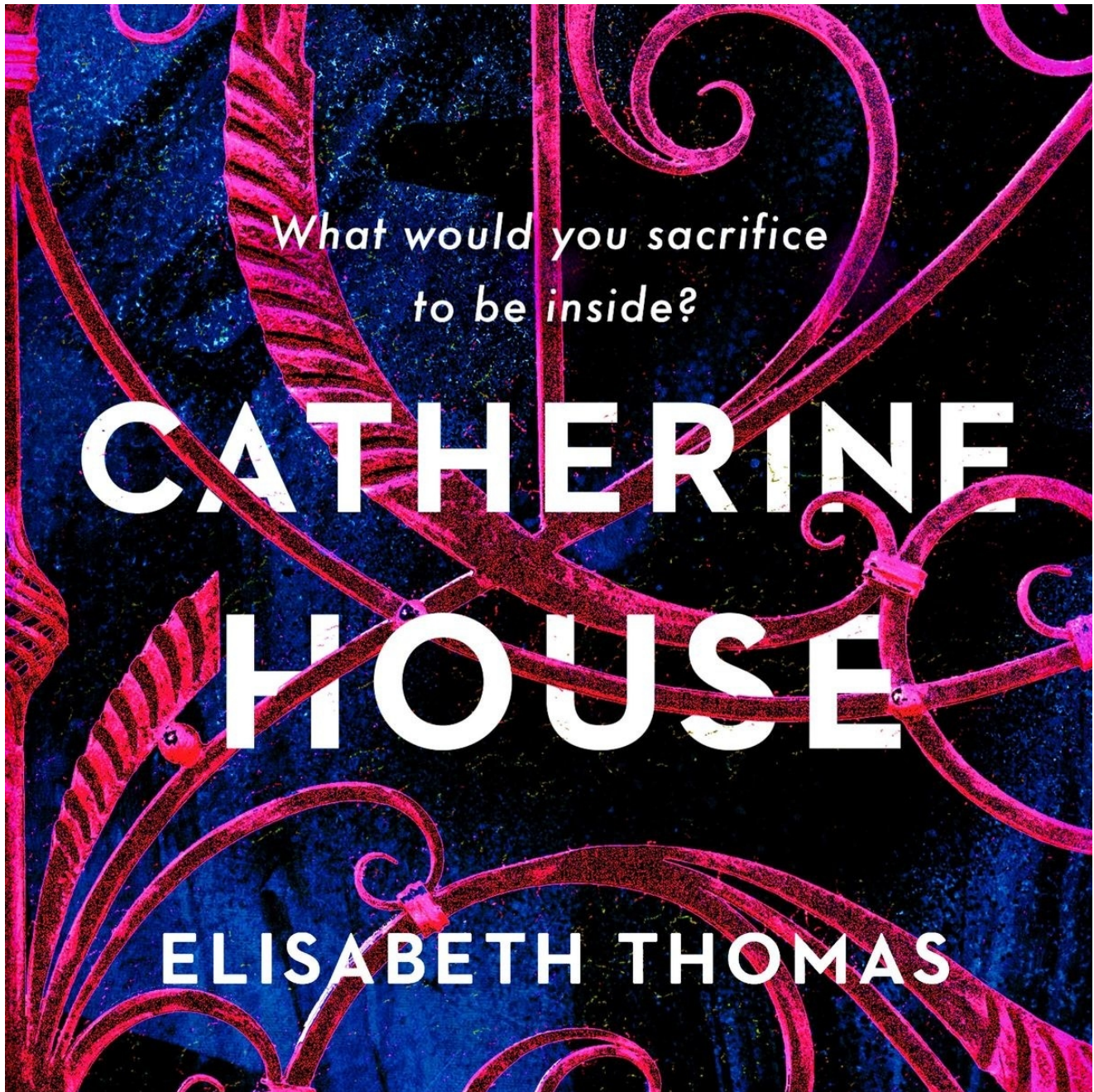
Frankie Corzo gets the pacing just right, and I'd find reasons to extend my daily walk just to get a little more listening in. Full disclosure, though: This one creeped me out so much that I switched to print for the last couple chapters, which — I don't know why — felt a little less scary to me.



Margaret K. McElderry Books

Brooklyn teenager Anna Cicconi thinks she's lucked out when she finds a summer nanny job in the Hamptons. But when she arrives, she finds that the community is still reeling from the disappearance of Zoe Spanos, a local girl who bears a resemblance to Anna. As she delves deeper into Zoe's disappearance, she begins to believe that they are connected — and that she herself is responsible for what happened to her. But Martina, a teen who hosts a podcast about the case, isn't satisfied with Anna's confession.

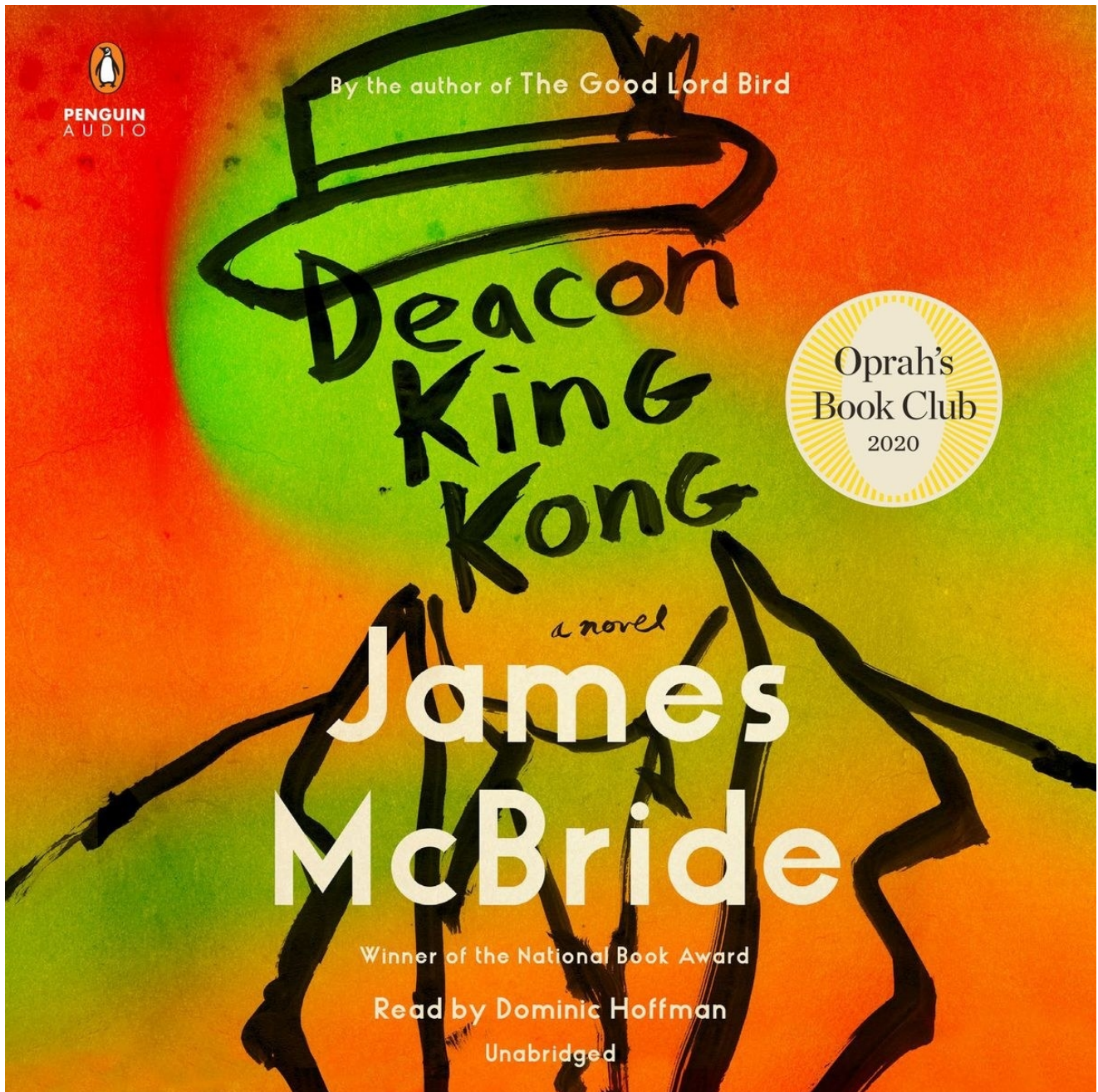
You are PLAYING yourself if you don't listen to this one. Interspersed with Anna's perspective are transcripts from Martina's podcast, which — you guessed it — are produced like mini podcast episodes in the audiobook, complete with theme music, interviews of varying audio quality, and ambient sound. (Interviewees are voiced by Dan Bittner, Inés del Castillo, Jonathan Davis, Gibson Frazier, Madeleine Maby, Soneela Nankani, Jackie Sanders, Candace Thaxton, and Jesse Vilinsky.)



### Custom House

This dark, speculative thriller is about a prestigious school that offers free tuition plus room and board to students who, in return, cut themselves off from the outside world for the three years they are enrolled. Our narrator Ines is more than happy to leave a past trauma behind her, and isn't eager to get out into the real world — but the further she gets in her Catherine House education, the more apparent it becomes there's something sinister underneath it. It's an electrifying update on gothic horror, evoking haunting institutional imagery and weaving in "psychosexual" experimentation and power imbalances.

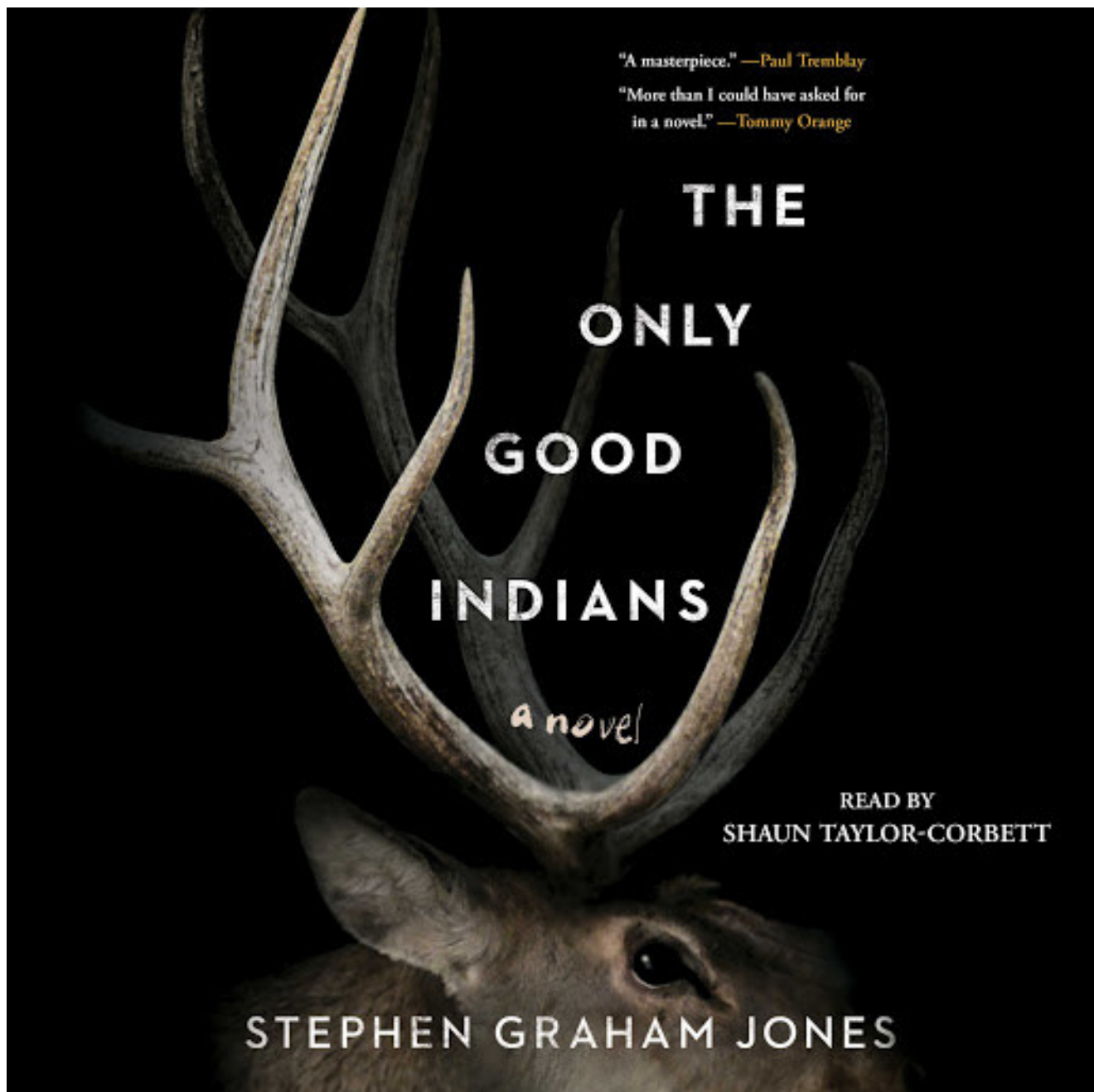
I know this doesn't add anything substantial to the listening experience, but I enjoyed the fact that the audiobook narrator and the fictional narrator share the same name. And Inés del Castillo, the audiobook narrator, brings Ines the protagonist fully to life — in all of her wary, headstrong, and even self-sabotaging glory.



Riverhead

It's 1960s [New York](#). Cuffy Lambkin, better known as Sportcoat, a deacon at the Five Ends Baptist Church, has just shot 19-year-old drug dealer Deems Clemens in the face — effectively putting a target on his own back. Residents try to make sense of the shooting as the mystery behind it slowly unravels.

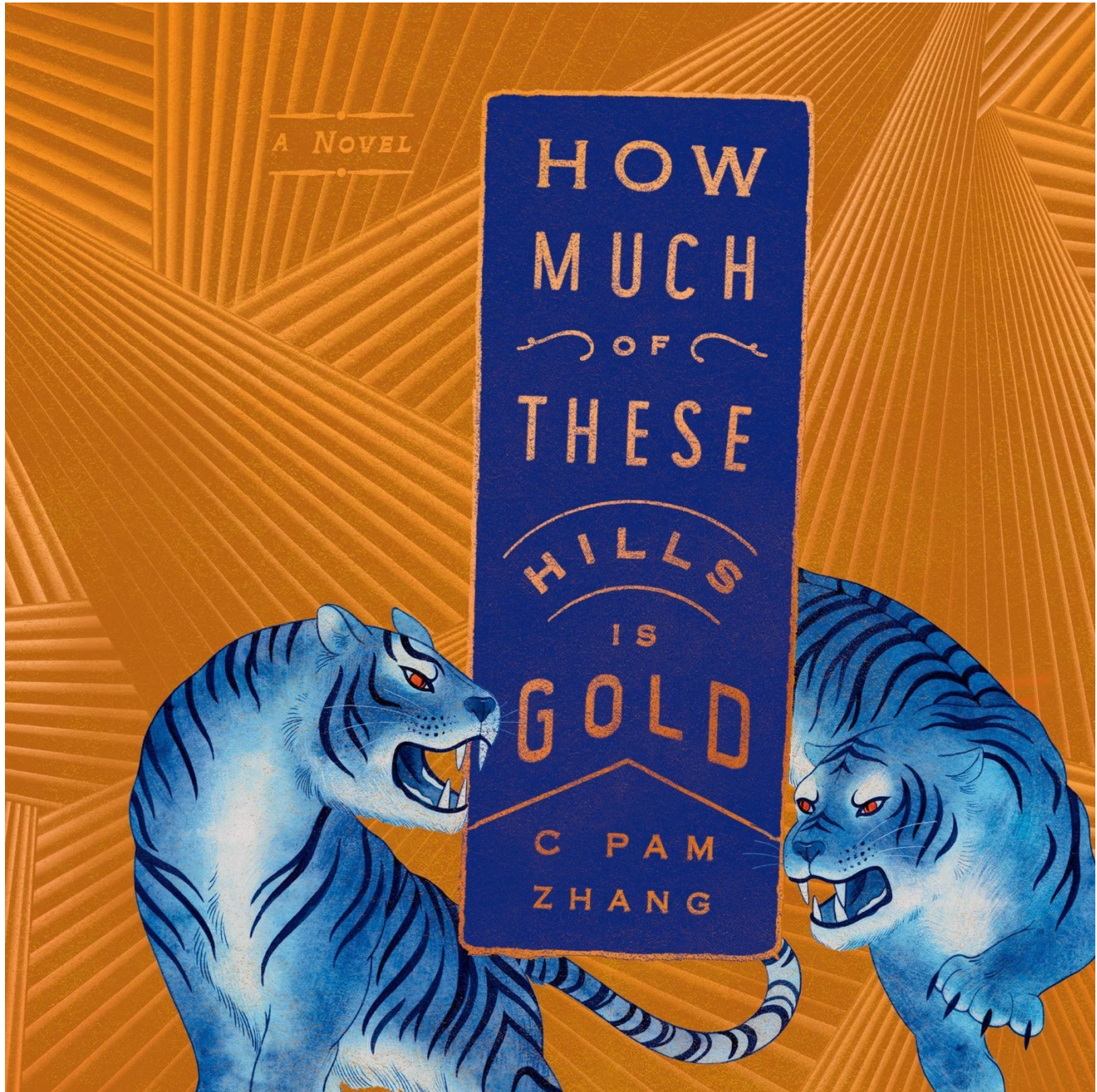
James McBride fills his NYC with larger-than-life characters, and Dominic Hoffman more than meets the challenge of voicing them. To be honest, I'll listen to anything he narrates.



Saga Press

Jones' latest is a bone-chilling account of Lewis, Gabe, Cass, and Ricky — four Blackfeet men facing the consequences of a youthful indiscretion. While out hunting elk one snowy day, the young men are frustrated when the herd retreats to land reserved for elders. They disregard the community law but the trip quickly turns chaotic, and one elk puts up a fight, taunting Lewis as he tries again and again to bring her down. Years later, after all of the young men have moved off the reservation, Lewis sees that elk again — or something evil that's taken its image.

Like in *The Vanishing Half*, voice and heritage are so interwoven for the characters in *The Only Good Indians*; in as early as the first chapter, Lewis describes the way his voice shifts from conversations with Blackfeet friends to conversations with white people. And Shaun Taylor-Corbett really inhabits Lewis — especially when he's giving voice to his fear and panic.



Penguin Random House

In the Gold Rush–era American West, siblings Lucy and Sam (the children of Chinese immigrants) find themselves orphaned when their father dies in the middle of the night. Knowing there's no one left to protect them in their dangerous mining town, they hit the road

with a stolen horse and their father's body — in search of a proper burial site that will allow them to say goodbye to their pasts.

Zhang has created a world that borders myth and reality; Catherine Ho and Joel de la Fuente only amplify this surrealism. Sometimes hushed, often charged with anticipation, their voices are utterly dreamy.



Penguin Random House

When grad student Zachary Ezra Rawlins finds a story from his own childhood in a mysterious library book, he sets off on a journey of self-discovery that will lead him to a secret world buried deep below the surface of the earth.

I started this one just yesterday. I hate that I'm not listening to it right now. And, yes, Dominic Hoffman is as phenomenal here as he is in *Deacon King Kong*.