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**The Association of Jewish Libraries Announces
the 2022 Winners of the Jewish Fiction Award**

Derek B. Miller is the winner of the Association of Jewish Libraries (AJL) Jewish Fiction Award for his novel *How to Find Your Way in the Dark*, published by Mariner Books. The award includes a \$1,000 cash prize and support to attend the 2022 Annual Conference of the Association of Jewish Libraries, June 27–29, in Philadelphia. One other honor book has been recognized: *A Play for the End of the World* by Jai Chakrabarti, published by Knopf, an imprint of Penguin Random House. The Committee reviewed over 70 works of fiction originally written in English with significant Jewish thematic content published in the United States in 2021. Thanks to all those who submitted entries for consideration. The wide array of books published in 2021 is a testament to the vibrant state of contemporary Jewish fiction.

How To Find Your Way in the Dark is, by turns, a comedy, a murder mystery, and the coming-of-age story of its protagonist, twelve-year-old Sheldon Horowitz (who we met near the end of his life in Derek Miller's earlier novel *Norwegian by Night*). Sheldon is under the influence of his cousin Abe, who is obsessed with antisemitism and the Nazi menace that America is ignoring. Spending the summer of 1941 as a bellhop at Grossinger's, Sheldon works out a complicated scheme of revenge on his father's killer while his best friend, Lenny Bernstein—not the famous one—delivers crowd-pleasing comedic monologues at various resorts but keeps getting fired because his routines are too topically Jewish. The lead-up to World War II permeates the action. Readers learn about Canada's early efforts to defend England, including details about aircraft bombers, technical aspects of several types of guns, and the history of the Colt factory in Hartford, Connecticut. Miller's writing defies gender norms in crafting male characters who love their toys but don't fear to express their emotions. *How To Find Your Way in the Dark* is a wide-ranging story with engaging characters and nonstop action, and Derek Miller is a deft plotter who juggles characters and settings with the same daring spirit as his hero. —Beth Dwoskin, member of the Award Committee.

Jai Chakrabarti opens *A Play for the End of the World*, his debut novel, with the 1942 performance in a Warsaw Ghetto orphanage of *The Post Office*, a play about the power of imagination by the Bengali Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore. From this beginning, Chakrabarti imagines Jaryk and Misha, two friends from the orphanage who survive the Holocaust and emigrate to New York City. Decades later, Misha, followed by Jaryk, travels from New York to India to assist with a 30th-anniversary production of the same play, mounted during a period of civil unrest in protest of government policies. Chakrabarti ably weaves stories of Misha and Jaryk in America, Jaryk's relationship with a young Southern woman named Lucy, and the Bengali refugee crisis of the 1970s. Moving fluidly from 1942 Warsaw to 1970s New York and India, *A Play for the End of the World* touches on themes of love and loss, friendship, guilt, the cost of war, the role of art, and the power of imagination.

The AJL Jewish Fiction Award Committee members are Paula Breger, Beth Dwoskin, Laura Schutzman, Hannah Srour, and Sheryl Stahl.

The Association of Jewish Libraries gratefully acknowledges the generous support of Dan Wyman Books for underwriting the Award. Submissions for the 2023 AJL Fiction Award (titles published in 2022) are now being accepted. For more information, please visit <http://www.jewishlibraries.org/jewish-fiction-award>.

About the Association of Jewish Libraries

The Association of Jewish Libraries is an international, professional organization that fosters access to information and research in all forms of media relating to all things Jewish. The Association promotes Jewish literacy and scholarship and provides a community for peer support and professional development. For more information, visit www.jewishlibraries.org.

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