

Some secrets aren't meant to be kept.

WHAT LIES BEHIND US

The debut novel of Tera Arkin, an unforgettable thriller that takes two people through their past, present, and future.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Boston, MA (Lullaby Press) May 15 2021-

Lullaby Press is proud to announce Tera Arkin's debut novel, *What Lies Behind Us*, which will be available in stores and online as an ebook on May 25th, 2021.

What Lies Behind Us offers a gripping narrative about cycles of trauma as two young adults navigate a rapidly unfolding mystery. Set in Garrett, Washington, the novel follows a paranormal investigator and the daughter of a correctional officer as they work together to piece together the details of a fatal incident, all the while bonding in a way they'd never experienced before.

Arkin draws the events of the story from the real devastations of the prison industrial complex, addressing the abuses of power that many political movements have turned their focus on in recent years. A page-turning thriller, the novel leaves the reader on the edge of their seat, revealing the lengths that perpetrators will go to protect their reputation.

As memorable as it is distinctive, *What Lies Behind Us* is a must-read for readers of contemplative, taboo-breaking fiction.

Tera Arkin



Tera Arkin is a lifelong resident of Washington state, having grown up in the small town of Garrett. They wrote and directed several plays during their time at the University of Puget Sound, notably *Frances Lehmann's Fantastic Escape Plan*, which won the Chancellor's Performance Award in 2014. Arkin's work explores the bizarre and paranormal underbelly of our day-to-day lives in evocative prose and character-driven narratives.

What Lies Behind Us is their first novel. See what they're up to on Twitter or Instagram @teraarkinwrites or on their website, teraarkin.net



A Conversation with Author Tera Arkin

Author of *What Lies Behind Us*

1. The writing style of *What Lies Behind Us* is so expressive. Can you tell us about your process?

Because my background is in theatre, my writing process mostly centers around dialogue. As a novelist, though, I still believe dialogue the best way to move a story forward, because the interactions and decisions of the characters are overall what creates the narrative. I really try to develop my characters thoroughly as human beings of their own before placing them into the setting of the story. As a result, *What Lies Behind Us* is a very character-driven story.

In terms of the plot, I utilized the traditional mystery novel technique by planning out the answers to any possible questions about the events that Sage and Taylor uncover in the novel, and then setting up the bread crumbs that bring them to that knowledge. The tricky part was having these story beats work with the story beats of Sage and Taylor's developing relationship, but I made it work by creating dueling outlines that meet at certain points in the narrative arc.

For my writing process itself, I write my drafts in my house and do editing at a coffee shop or public library. Being at home is comfortable to me so the words and ideas flow naturally onto the page, but editing feels more like work, so I have to bring myself into a more public, "presentable" space to make my work comprehensible to a general audience.

2. What drew you to this particular story?

My parents have always had a fascination with ghosts and the paranormal. We visited Roswell, New Mexico several times when I was a kid. This influenced the books I read and movies I watched in my youth; I was always drawn to fiction about supernatural things.

My whole family, as well, struggles with mental health issues, myself included (though I promise that it has nothing to do with the alien fanaticism). Most of my writing has involved themes about mental health issues, and for my first novel, I figured, why not combine the two?

The idea for this story came easily to me, but fleshing it out in depth was difficult. I had to do a lot of research about the prison system, and learned a lot about the awful history of police and prison violence in America. Much of this information isn't readily available unless you go looking; prisons will go to extreme lengths to cover up deaths and assaults. This is what inspired the idea of Taylor looking into her father's confidential records that the general public wouldn't have access to. This concept of secret-keeping and secret-finding is what guided me through writing the trickier parts of the book, because once I had established an unknown piece of information for Sage and Taylor, I had to figure out a way for them to uncover it.



A Conversation with Author Tera Arkin

Author of *What Lies Behind Us*

3. The ideas of grief and change is strong in your book.

What about these ideas moved you?

Obviously the concept of coming to terms with trauma informs what happens in the story, both before the book begins and during the course of its events. Everyone experiences some kind of circumstance that they can't truly deal with during the course of their lives; the way we differ is in how we deal with it. Some people never truly do deal with it, which often causes even more trauma for the people in their lives.

Humans are messy, complicated, and flawed creatures. For most of our lives, we are only able to manage what goes in our lives with the tools we're given, and this is the central concept that guides the plot of the book. Neither Sage nor Taylor came into this world with a good set of tools. In the book, the two learn, for better or worse, how they came into their lot in life, and try to understand the ways they've failed to deal with it before. They learn a lot about each other, themselves, and the workings of the world through the course of the novel, as I did while writing it. I genuinely hope that my readers will be able to gain a better understanding of their own circumstances by reading this story.

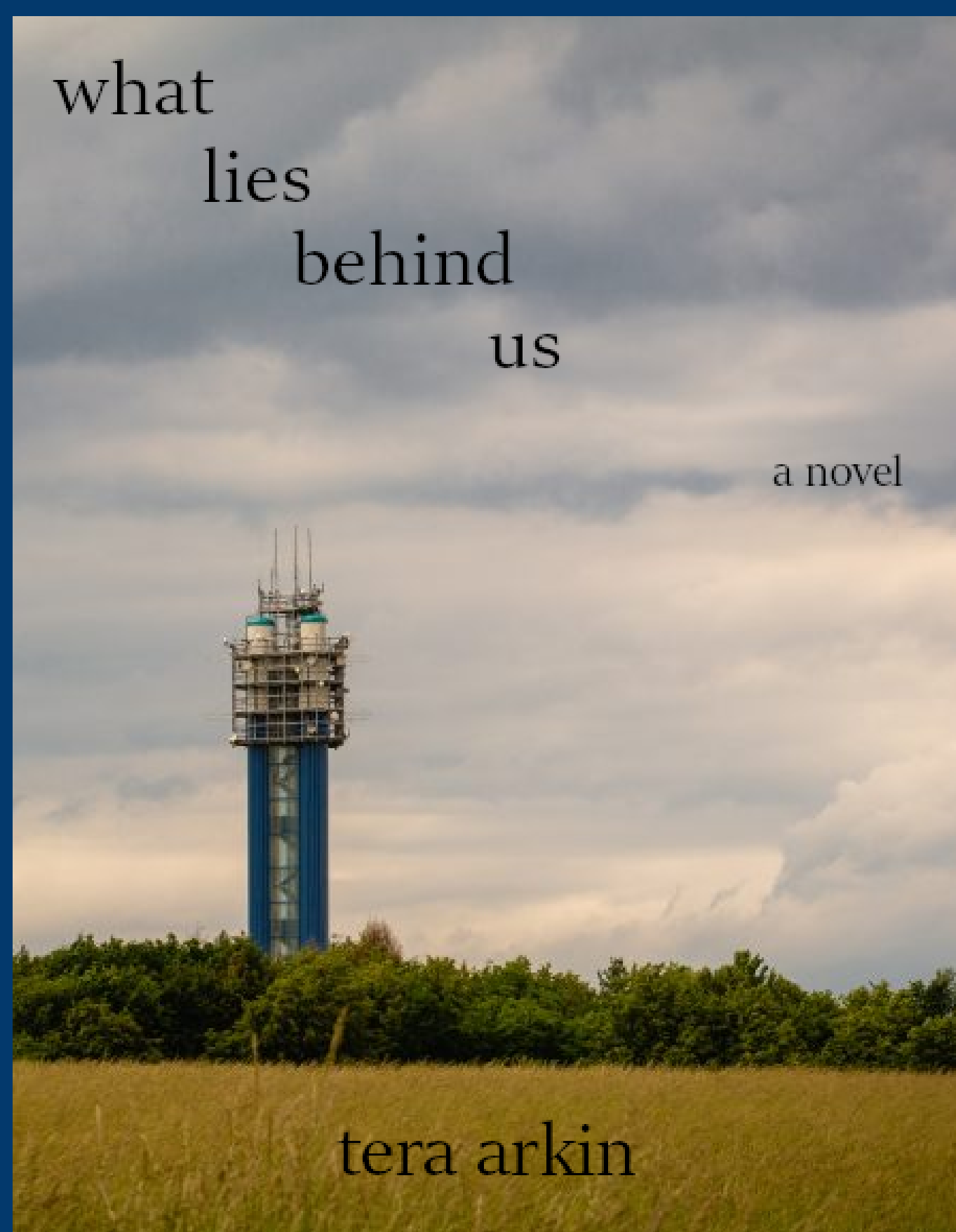
4. The setting of *What Lies Behind Us* adds much to the texture of the story. Can you tell us about why you chose to set the story there?

I grew up in a home less than three miles from the Washington State Penitentiary, so I've been hearing stories and rumors about the place for my entire life. I didn't set out to write a story about it initially, but once I realized that my story was going to address cycles of trauma and abuse, it seemed obvious to frame the story through the lens of the carceral system. Setting the story in my hometown, which is a place near enough to the penitentiary to observe its general existence, but far enough removed that those who do exist outside of it never have to know about the violence that goes on. Garrett is this privileged bubble that keeps itself on the fringes of Walla Walla, but never directly engages with the knowledge of what's going on there. I wanted to shatter that boundary through this story, making the reader have to acknowledge the reality of what's happening in my backyard, and theirs.

5. Is this book part of a series?

What Lies Behind Us is a standalone, but I have several novels in the works that also focus on transgender identity and the underpinnings of transphobia in the discourses of American society. My next book is set to come out in winter 2021, and, without giving too much away, it's about a busker who meets a film director and embarks on a mission to make the world's first flash mob feature length film.





Title: What Lies Behind Us

Author: Tera Arkin

Category: Fiction, Thriller, LGBTQ

Publisher: Lullaby Press

ISBN: 832-3496897887

Format: Trade paperback

Publication Date: May 25, 2021

Pages: 307

Price: \$15.99

Trim: 5" x 8"

Target Audience: all genders, ages 17-30,

interested in mystery and paranormal

Available From: Ingram, Amazon

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About the Book

Sage Albany studies ghosts: their appearances, their habits, how they come to be, and where they go when they're gone. As a paranormal investigator, their job is to make sense of bizarre phenomena. Their most recent client is Taylor Garrison, the daughter of the warden at the penitentiary in their city. After her father dies, she begins to see figures and hear voices of the men who died in the prison. Sage suspects she's experiencing a psychotic episode, but when they begin to see the apparitions for themselves, they realize that Taylor isn't losing her mind. As the two become closer, they begin to learn more about the history of the penitentiary, and uncover a dirty secret about the role her father played in the events that unfolded there.

Reviews

"Arkin leaves their reader feeling haunted ... a pensive story told through enticing prose"
-Valerie Andersen, author of *Betty and All Her Lovers*

"An intricate mystery that doesn't hold anything back ... Arkin's debut novel has cemented their place in modern LGBTQ literature"
-David Cruikshank, author of *I Told You So*



Chapter Excerpt

Sage was damn near tired of everything. In the passenger's seat of their Ford Ranger, they'd sprawled out the contents of their messenger bag: a leatherbound journal, a billfold wallet, a lighter, a pair of dollar-store shades, and a paperback copy of Aleister Crowley's Book of Thoth. Nothing but the essentials. When they drove home, they turned the radio (105.9, currently playing Soundgarden's smash hit "Spoonman") up as high as it would go. It had been a long drive to Walla Walla and it would be an even longer drive home. Now that the night had fallen completely, construction along the I-90 ate up an entire lane of freeway, meaning that everyone and their grandmother would be funneled into three lanes of traffic on the drive back to Seattle. They were bumper-to-bumper behind a silver Prius, where Sage could see the driver obviously texting and not giving a damn who saw.

The construction phased out near the rest stop exit at the Wallula junction; after that, it was smooth sailing back home. Sage made a hasty effort to clean up the contents of their car, collecting the sundry garbage that had piled up after a week of traveling forty miles to and from their motel daily. It was mostly empty A&W cans and paper takeout bags, with a cigarette-butt-filled Gatorade bottle wedged under the seat for good measure. The trip from the motel they'd been staying at (a decaying specimen; all the surfaces were sticky and the shower spouted a murky, greenish substance that could barely pass for water) back to Seattle took four and a half hours. Thankfully, their schedule for the weekend was filled with a whole lot of nothing. It would take at least ten hours for all the footage from their UV camera to render; they planned to spend that time ensconced in a weighted blanket and sound asleep.

8am sharp. The alarm clock on the nightstand began to shriek out a series of beeps from under a pile of tissues and a tangle of phone chargers. With sleep still crusted into the corners of their eyes, Sage groaned and threw off the weight blanket, smacking the alarm until it turned off. They grabbed their phone and pressed the home button, letting the screen nearly blind them as their eyes adjusted to the blue light. Nothing new to speak of, unsurprisingly; no news or notifications that meant anything important to them.



Chapter Excerpt

Sage put it back down on the nightstand and started for their desk, nearly falling into the carpeted chair sitting before it. A sleek gray laptop sat obediently on their desk, fully charged, with their camera plugged in to the side as it had been all night long. The video was finished rendering, as evidenced by the loading bar at the top of the screen sitting fully blue and still. They unplugged the UV camera from the USB port and set it aside. A prompt flashed up: “Open T_Garrison_518.mp4?” They clicked “Yes,” and a new window expanded across the entirety of the screen.

The footage they’d taken during the week was grainy, which was to be expected of a camera that compact and durable. Really, nothing out of the ordinary for a house like this: the sound of the foundation settling, the wind coming through a door. All the earmarks of a suspected haunting that usually didn’t mean anything. The client, a pleasant but visibly anxious young woman named Taylor Garrison, was certain there was something more going on that Sage couldn’t see. They’d shrugged it off for the length of the session; usually it just meant there was something the client was holding on to from their past that they wanted to resolve with a paranormal investigator. Sage did their best to accommodate those feelings (it was part of their job), but with Taylor it seemed more dire.

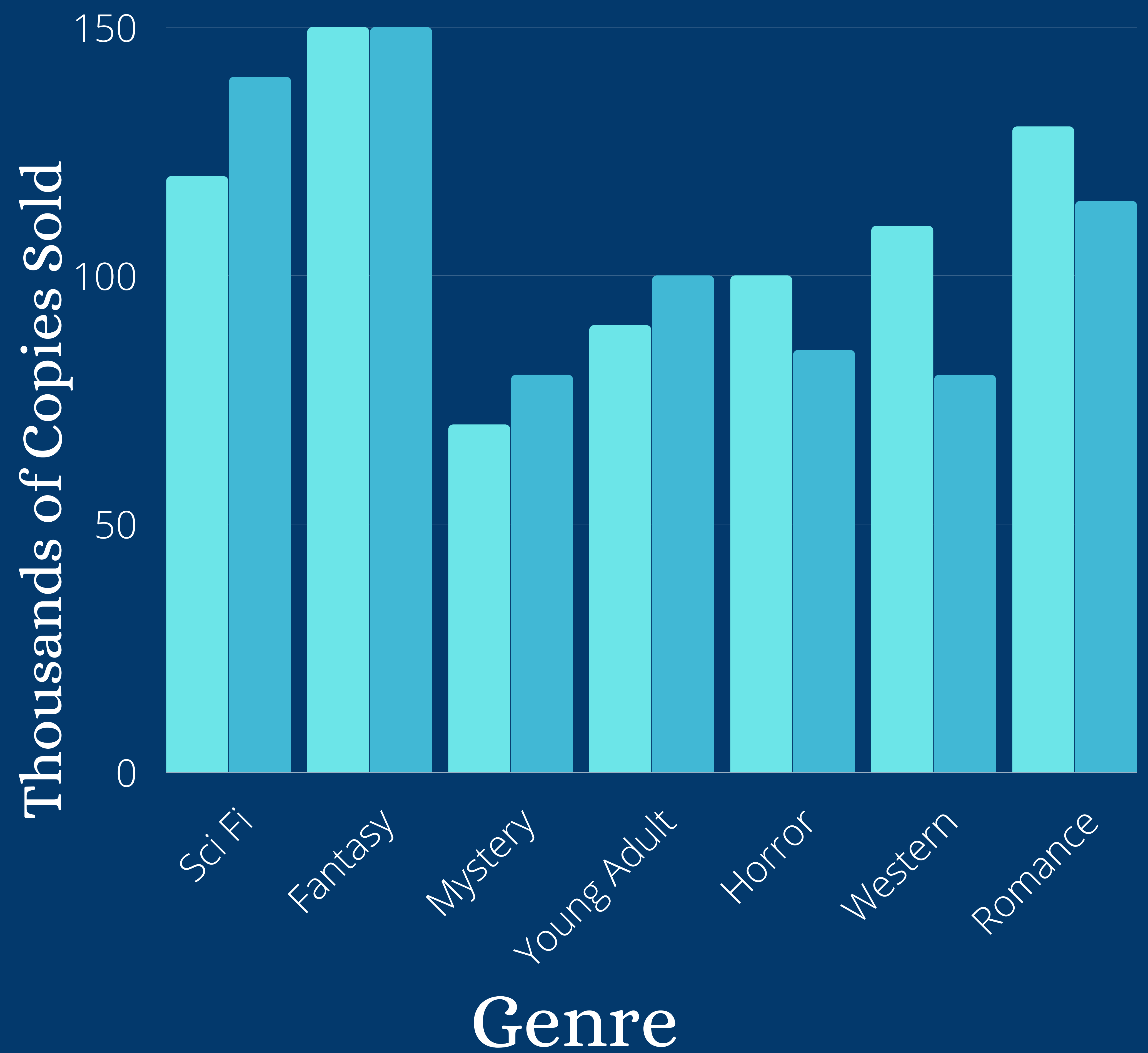
On the screen, the camera followed Sage walking through each room of the house one by one. The bathroom, kitchen, living room, guest room, dining room, and the smaller bedroom showed no signs of unusual activity. As soon as they crossed the threshold of the master bedroom, static appeared at the top right corner of the screen and slowly crept towards the center. What Sage could see was a puff of white smoke above the four-poster bed that hadn’t been visible in person. Instead of dissipating, the smoke lingered. A low hum filled the speakers, slowly increasing in volume, until the sound of Sage taking their standard verbal notes during the session was completely drowned out. In the video, Sage moved towards the bookcase, nearly as tall as the room itself. The second the camera passed through the smoke cloud, the laptop turned unreasonably hot, nearly to the point of burning, and quickly lost all power.

With a quick reboot, Sage tried to access the footage to see what the hell was wrong with it. The file was there, seemingly undisturbed. But when they opened the video, none of the footage would play. All that was left was a black screen, with the same low hum, and a realization that something was terribly wrong at the Garrison house.



Lullaby Press Selling Data

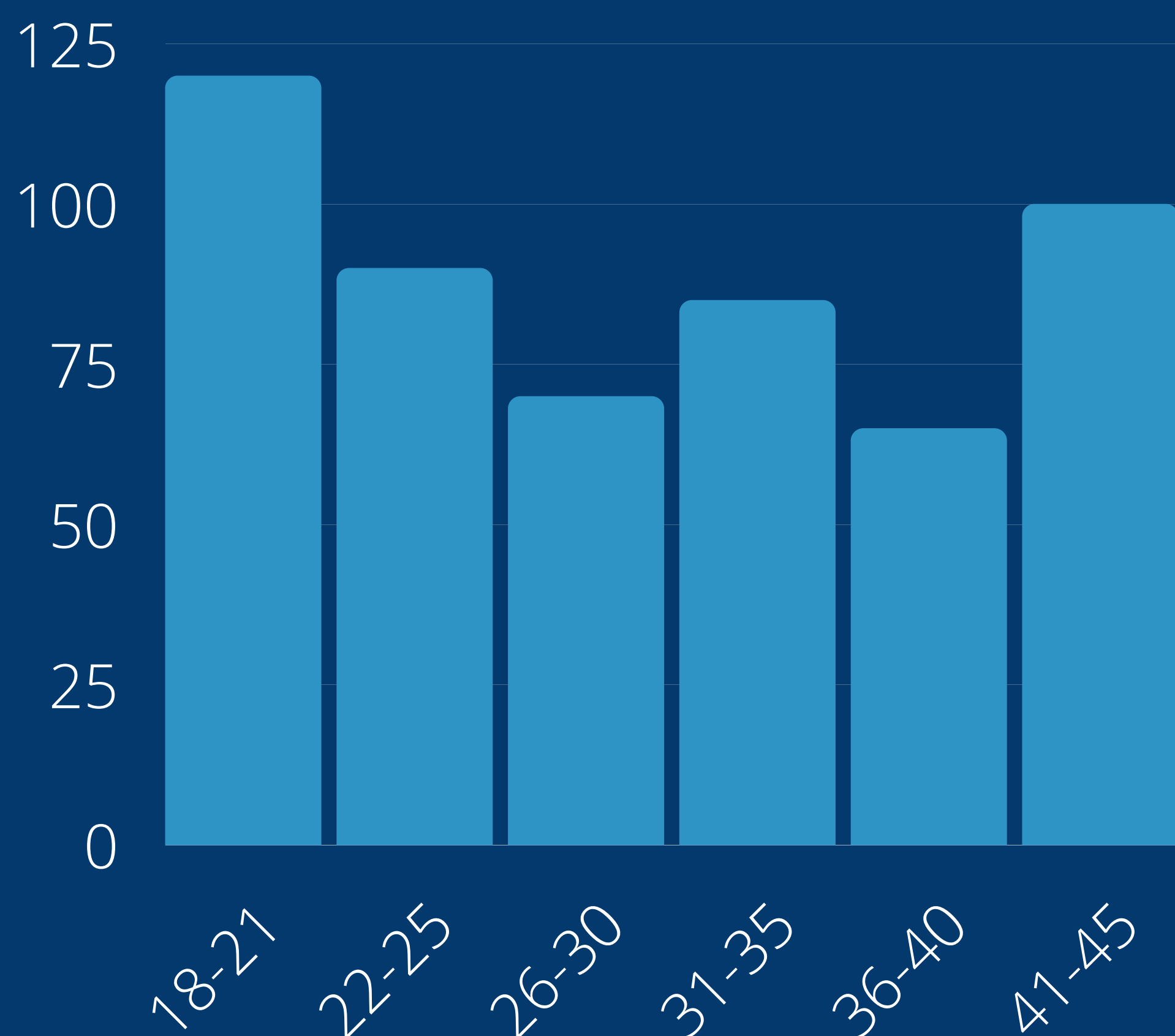
Number of Books Sold in Spring/Summer 2020 vs 2021



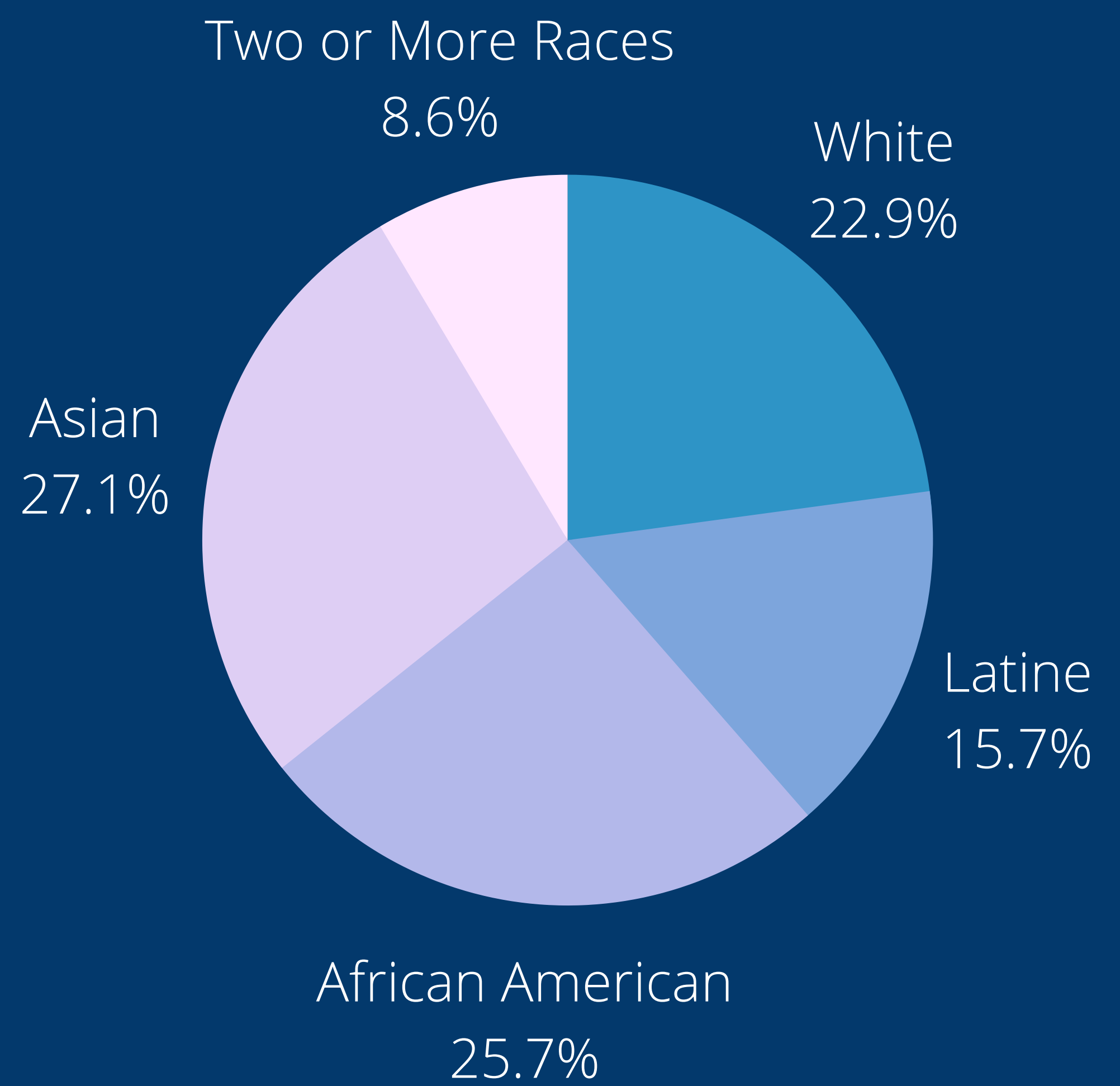
Lullaby Press Selling Data

Who is reading mystery/thriller right now?

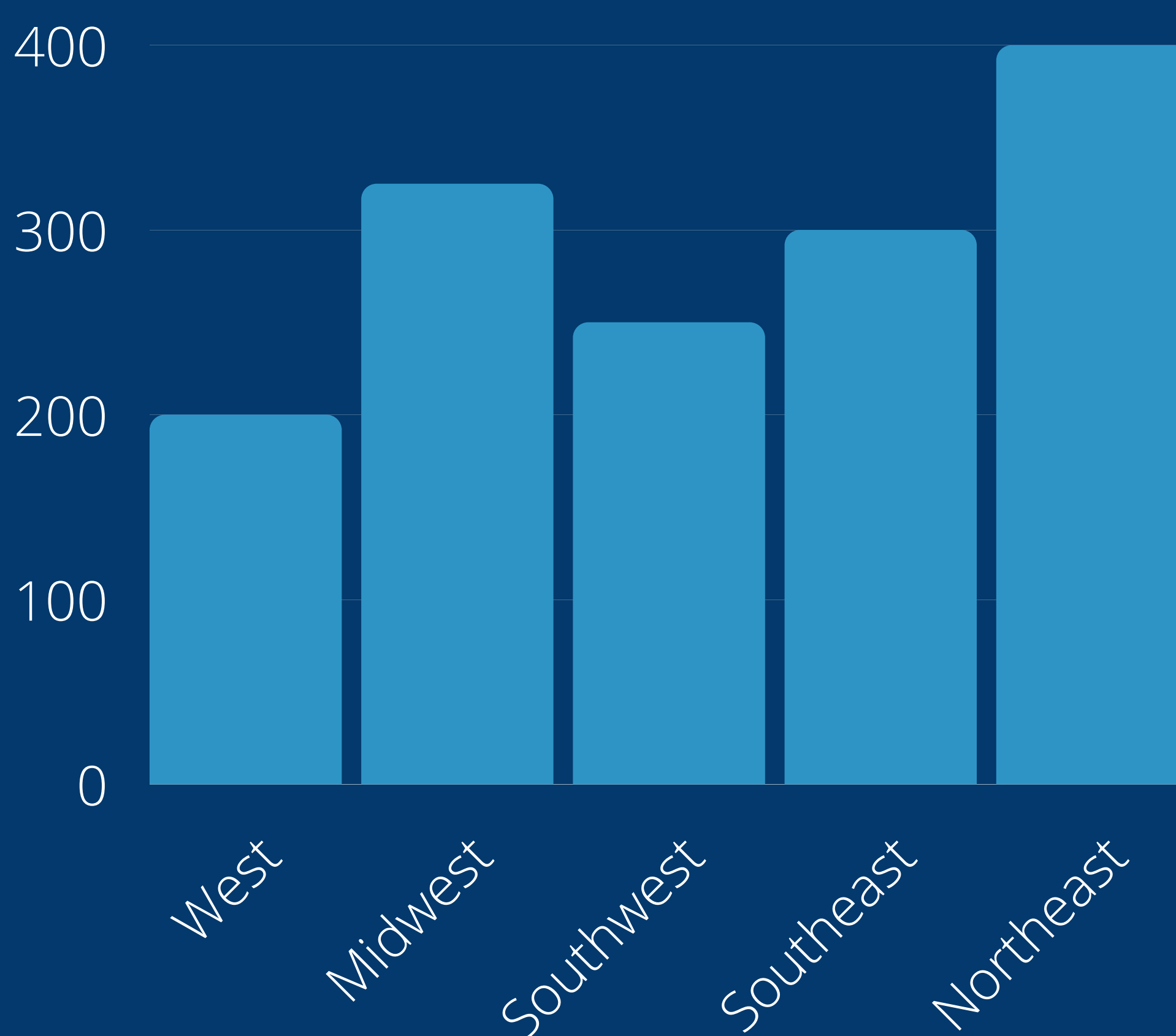
Age Range



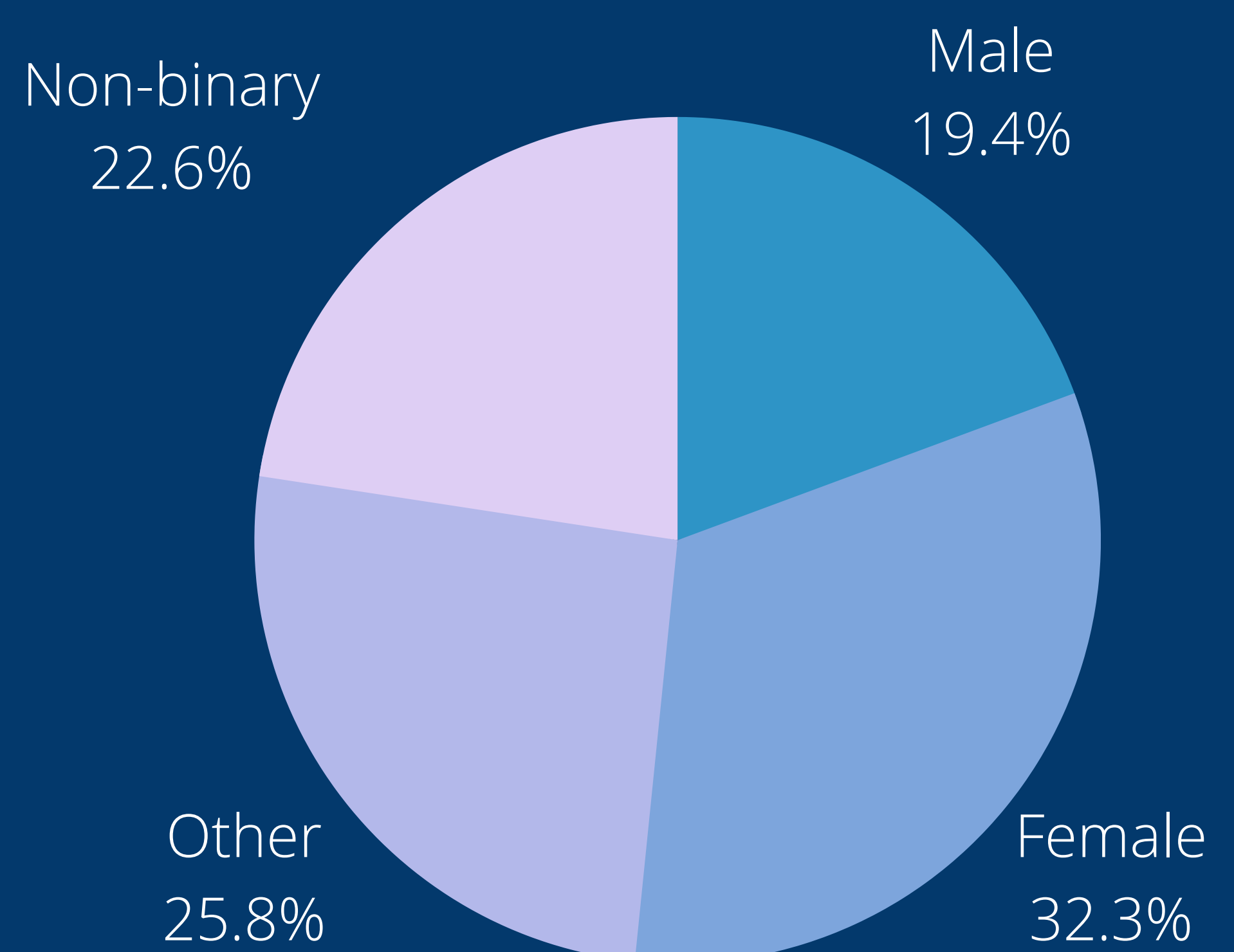
Ethnicity



Region (USA)



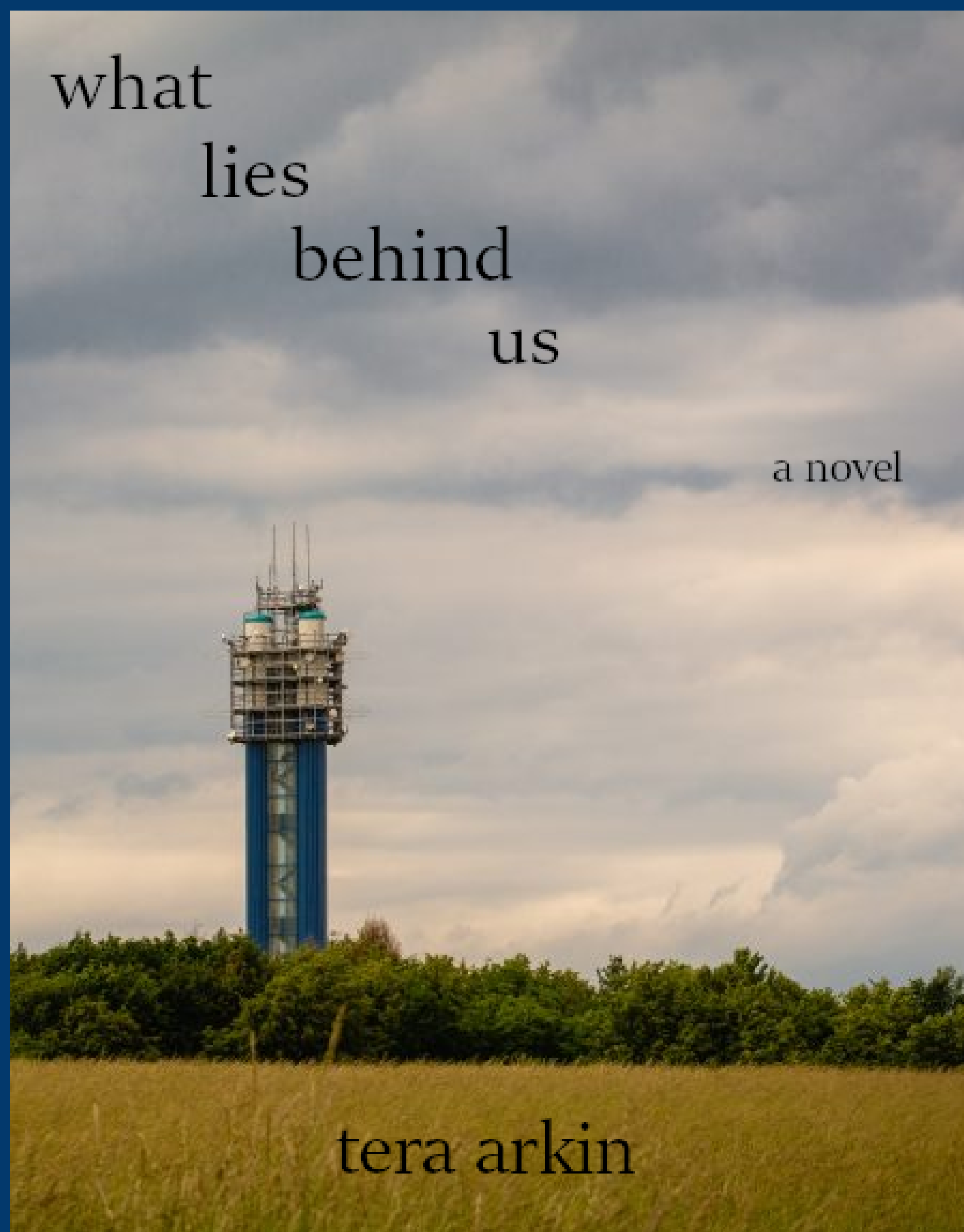
Gender



Come join us for our

BOOK LAUNCH!

Event & Meet and Greet with author Tera Arkin



For more information
and RSVP:
call (617) 555-6077
or email
info@lullabypress.com

Saturday, June 5th 2021

6pm at Utopia Books

528 First Ave

Seattle, WA

What Lies Behind Us

tells the page-turning story of the meteoric friendship between Sage Albany, a paranormal investigator, and Taylor Garrison, the daughter of a correctional officer, as a lingering phantom helps the two uncover a dark secret about her father's past.



Tera Arkin is a first-time novelist and longtime playwright hailing from Garrett, Washington. They live in Seattle with their partner and their dog, Chewy.

**Get a signed copy
of Tera Arkin's
debut novel!**



What Lies Behind Us

Book Signing Tour with author Tera Arkin

Book Launch Event

6/5- 6pm

Seattle, WA

Utopia Books

6/6 - 7:30pm

Vancouver, WA

Barnes & Noble

6/7 - 6:30pm

Portland, OR

Once Upon a Book

6/9 - 6pm

Sacramento, CA

Barnes & Noble

6/10- 7pm

San Francisco, CA

The Green Arcade

6/12- 6pm

Santa Barbara, CA

Twice Told Tales

6/13- 7:30pm

Los Angeles, CA

The Last Bookstore

6/14- 5:30pm

San Diego, CA

Verbatim Books

6/16- 7:30pm

Phoenix, AZ

Barnes & Noble

6/19- 6pm

Santa Fe, NM

Tome Raiders

