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Trade Publicity
Simon & Schuster Inc.
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New York, NY 10020

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“Fully realized characters and gripping prose makes for an excellent, riveting novel that is highly recommended.” **Booklist**, STARRED review

“Powerful.... Beanland enlivens the smart and suspenseful narrative with fully developed protagonists that illuminate the community’s response to mass catastrophe. Readers will relish this.”
—**Publishers Weekly**, STARRED review

“Beanland’s research is meticulous, her characters are well drawn, and her writing is gorgeous. The House Is on Fire is a stunning achievement.” —**JEANETTE WALLS**, *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Glass Castle*

Dear Reader,

Rachel Beanland’s debut novel, *FLORENCE ADLER SWIMS FOREVER*, was a breathtaking portrait of just how far we will go to in order to protect our loved ones and an uplifting portrayal of how the human spirit can endure—and even thrive—after tragedy. The novel was a Barnes & Noble Book Club selection, Indie Next pick, Amazon Best of the Month, a best book of 2020 by *USA Today*, and was the winner of the National Jewish Book Award for Debut Fiction. And now, Rachel returns with another masterful work of historical fiction based on true events. We had sky-high expectations for Rachel’s sophomore novel, and I am delighted to say she has exceeded those expectations and, quite frankly, blown us away. *THE HOUSE IS ON FIRE* (Simon and Schuster; April 4) follows four unforgettable individuals in the three days following an incendiary 1811 tragedy that tore a community apart in a single night. Ultimately, it exposes secrets, racial tensions, and the meaning of freedom within the bounds of tragedy.

The 1811 Richmond Theater fire was one of our country’s deadliest fires, yet very little has been written about it. Deeply researched and with characters based on real people, Rachel’s novel opens at height of the winter social season. On a cold winter evening, many of Virginia’s gentleman planters, along with their wives, children, and slaves pack the seats of the city’s only theater. In the third-floor boxes sits newly-widowed Sally Henry Campbell, who is glad for any opportunity to relive the happy times she shared with her husband. One floor away, in the colored gallery, Cecily Patterson doesn’t give a whit about the play but is grateful for a four-hour reprieve from a life that has recently gone from bad to worse. Backstage, young stagehand Jack Gibson hopes that, if he can impress the theater’s managers, he’ll be offered a permanent job with the company. And on the other side of town, blacksmith Gilbert Hunt dreams of one day being able to bring his wife to the theater, but he’ll have to buy her freedom first.

When the theater goes up in flames in the middle of the performance, Sally, Cecily, Jack, and Gilbert make a series of split-second decisions that will not only affect their own lives but those of countless others. And in the days following the fire, as news of the disaster spreads across the United States, the paths of these four people will become forever intertwined. Ultimately, this is a novel about the interconnectedness of human beings and how, as June Gervais put it in one of the (many!) blurbs for the novel: “the survival of one character hinges on the integrity and courage of another—sometimes unbeknownst to them both.”

THE HOUSE IS ON FIRE is smart, propulsive historical fiction at its finest. I direct you to Rachel’s authors note (enclosed) which gives much more detail about her research process and the people that her characters are based upon. This novel is sure to be embraced by book clubs everywhere as it’s the

kind of page-turning book that you finish and want to talk about immediately, but it's also meticulously detailed and will appeal to a discerning reader of literary fiction. Above all else, **THE HOUSE IS ON FIRE** is a novel of character and heart—a novel that offers proof that sometimes, in the midst of great tragedy, we are offered our most precious—and fleeting—chances at redemption.

I hope you enjoy getting lost in these pages as much as I did. I will be in touch soon to discuss coverage opportunities.

Thank you for your time.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Rachel Beanland is the author of the novel *Florence Adler Swims Forever*. She is a graduate of the University of South Carolina and earned her MFA in creative writing from Virginia Commonwealth University. She lives with her husband and three children in Richmond, Virginia.

Early Praise for **THE HOUSE IS ON FIRE:**

“A riveting story that places the reader at the very heart of a devastating, true-life tragedy. Beanland has clearly done her research, and the effect is both heart-wrenching and eye-opening, as unlikely heroes and unforgivable cowards add to the rich mosaic of a community torn apart in a single night. Enthralling.” —**FIONA DAVIS**, *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Magnolia Place*

“The world is about to be on fire with the publication of Rachel Beanland's *The House Is On Fire*. This is a propulsive, pulse-pounding read - one that grabbed hold of me and didn't let go until the very last page. It is the kind of book you finish with a sigh, and hope against hope there is a sequel coming.” —**KATHLEEN GRISSOM**, *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Kitchen House* and *Glory Over Everything*

“Beanland’s characters must carry both their own sudden losses and contend with the collective grief of a community and the violent darkness of the era. Split second decisions in the face of danger forever alter the trajectory of so many lives—*The House is on Fire* is stunning in its breadth and scope of human strength and in its insistence on love amidst destruction. From fragments of half-told history, Beanland creates a world that is real, aching, dark, and true.” —**KATIE RUNDE**, author of *The Shore*

“I whipped through this book as if the pages themselves were on fire. Heart-pounding and suspenseful, this is unputdownable historical fiction at its finest. In **THE HOUSE IS ON FIRE**, Rachel Beanland gives us a front-row seat to a terrifying nineteenth-century calamity and the fascinating cast of villains, heroes and everyone in between who must confront it and cope with the aftermath. These characters have been seared into my memory and this story will stick with me.” —**ELISE HOOPER**, author of *Angels of the Pacific*

“I recognized the faces and places Beanland brings to life and marveled at her impressive research and attention to historical detail... At turns heartbreaking and hopeful.” —**MEREDITH HENNE BAKER** Meredith, author of *The Richmond Theater Fire: Early America’s First Great Disaster*

"Holy smokes! This magnificent novel may start with a fire, but it only gets more urgent from there, as Rachel Beanland raises the stakes for her unforgettable characters on every page. Prepare to abdicate all responsibilities until you've finished this breathtaking book."

—MARY LAURA PHILPOTT, author of *Bomb Shelter: Love, Time, and Other Explosives*

"A meticulously researched, riveting account of one of America's first tragedies. Rachel Beanland demonstrates how the choices we make impact others, how the help we give or withhold changes lives, and how the narrative of events is influenced by who is telling the story. This timely tale – of courage and cowardice, of love and obsession, and of holding on to hope or letting go – will stay with readers."

—JANET SKESLIEN CHARLES, bestselling author of *The Paris Library*

"THE HOUSE IS ON FIRE by Rachel Beanland is precisely the sort of story that made me fall in love with historical fiction long ago: Beanland's sophomore novel sheds light on real events and real people, but it's reimagined in a way that allows readers to viscerally experience that fateful night in 1811—to watch, from their own theater seat, as bravery unfolds in real-time. THE HOUSE IS ON FIRE is gripping and imaginative, but Beanland takes great care with the story, paying homage to the unsung heroes who stepped forward during, and after, the tragedy. A heart-rending and remarkable story."

—SARAH PENNER, *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Lost Apothecary*

"Thrilling, heartbreaking, radically empathic, THE HOUSE IS ON FIRE is a gorgeous braid of heroism, cowardice, tragedy, and the aftermath of everything. I loved this book."

—HANNAH PITTARD, author of *We Are Too Many*

Beanland proves again that she is a master storyteller with a tight grasp of the historical record. Here, with both warm and exacting prose, she has breathed life back into a night of shocking tragedy for a young country, returning to the Richmond Theatre Fire the terror and humanity lost by two centuries of forgetting. The depth and realism of her characters is matched only by the galloping pace of this novel, which is likely to sit with unease and beauty in the minds of readers for a long while."

—BRIAN CASTLEBERRY, author of *Nine Shiny Objects*

"I could not turn the pages fast enough! An absolutely propulsive feat of storytelling! *The House is On Fire* reveals the little known events of an American tragedy of Titanic proportion. In heartstopping, intimate detail Beanland transports us directly into the souls of a truly diverse cast of Virginians whose varied means of survival during the theater fire and in its deftly-told aftermath, not only paint a rich portrait of 1800s America, but also hold up a timeless mirror to the racial disparity revealed by unexpected loss -- and the means through which we must all come together to rebuild. Brava!"

—AFIA ATAKORA, author of *Conjure Women*

"Rachel Beanland's THE HOUSE IS ON FIRE is an utterly captivating and essential read. From page one I was drawn into the lives of four brilliantly developed and unforgettable characters - black, white, freed and enslaved - who's lives intertwine in unimaginable ways in the aftermath of one of early America's deadliest tragedies, The Richmond Theater Fire of 1811. Beautifully written, Beanland captures all that is unjust and wrong alongside all that is good and hopeful. THE HOUSE IS ON FIRE is magnificent, I could not put it down."

—NICOLA HARRISON, bestselling author of *Montauk* and *The Show Girl*

"Propulsive. Rachel Beanland's *The House Is On Fire* pulls you into a major moment in American history via the lives of four vividly drawn characters."

—FARAH ALI, author of *People Want to Live*

"Gripping.... Beanland's stunning account not only of the fire but of its horrifying aftermath, rooted in recorded history, will have you screeching at the page! Opportunities abound for heroes and cowards alike, and Beanland transforms archival records into the quintessential historical fiction novel—cinematic, poignant and resonant—for readers who want to investigate America's history through the eyes of those who are more often than not silenced."

—LAUREN FRANCIS-SHARMA, author of *Book of the Little Axe*

“If ever you doubt the interconnectedness of human beings, Rachel Beanland's *The House Is On Fire* will remind you. In a hundred deftly crafted moments, large and small, the survival of one character hinges on the integrity and courage of another--sometimes unbeknownst to them both. Beautifully constructed and sensitively told, this novel will wring out your heart and make you grateful for it.”

—JUNE GERVAIS, author of *Jobs For Girls With Artistic Flair*

“Beanland has an uncanny skill for capturing the voices of a range of people at a time in history when only a few had their experiences recounted, making *THE HOUSE IS ON FIRE* an enriching and elucidating blend of both historical fact and fiction.”

—NATALIE JENNER, author of *The Jane Austen Society* and *Bloomsbury Girl*