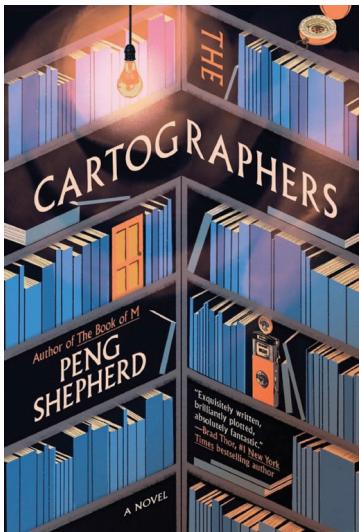




reviewed by
**anna
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THE CARTOGRAPHERS

by Peng Shepherd
William Morrow
400 Pages
\$27.99 US



even years ago, Nell Young had the brightest of futures. Recently awarded a Ph.D. in cartography, or mapmaking, she worked with her father, a superstar in the field, at the New York Public Library's map division. Until the "Junk Box Incident," which got her fired, broken up from her boyfriend, and estranged from her father. Finally finding work at a Brooklyn company making distressed and doctored facsimiles of ancient maps for the paying public, Nell shuts out the world. Her only friend is her boss, Humphrey.

But then she is called back to NYPL and finds her father has died at his desk. Shocked and confused by her feelings for the man she fiercely loved who ultimately betrayed her, she does the unthinkable: she swipes the portfolio from the secret drawer in his desk only she knows about. Later she opens it to find a cheap, old gas station roadmap of New York state. Puzzled at why her father would be keeping it safe, she calls on Felix, her old ex, to help her figure out the truth.

Having met in college, Felix also studied cartography but instead works at a multi-billion-dollar tech company working on algorithms to coax the massive amounts of world data into cohesive patterns—the newest kind of map. He, too, is just as bewildered as to why Nell's father would keep such a useless artifact. That is until Nell starts digging into the map's origins. She checks other map collections and finds time after time that the map of New York state is either lost, missing,

or damaged from every place it was ever catalogued. Add to the fact that buyers online are offering breathtaking prices for copies of the map, and that someone in a black car starts following Nell, and the plot thickens.

Who is willing to pay huge sums for this map? Why are there seemingly no other copies left in the world? And who are the shadowy group calling themselves The Cartographers? What do they want? The truth is closer to Nell than she would have imagined, and further from anything she could possibly believe. A break-in at the NYPL map room is followed by a murder and suddenly Nell is the prime suspect. She must count on the good graces of Humphrey, Felix, and her father's old boss, Swann, to keep her away from the police until she can unravel the mystery of the old gas station map. But Nell, as stubborn as her father, will stop at nothing to find the truth. Even if it means ruining things a second time with Felix.

Told from multiple points of view, this novel twists and turns like an old road map. The plot points (pun intended) are well-drawn and make for a ripping good yarn and will leave the reader breathless until the last page. Thoroughly enjoyable, don't start reading it in the evening or you'll stay up all night waiting to see what could possibly happen next.

∞ AUTHOR PROFILE

Raised in Phoenix, Arizona, Peng Shepherd earned an MFA from New York University. She has lived all over the world. This is her second novel, the first being *The Book of M*, which was published in 2018. She currently lives in New York City.