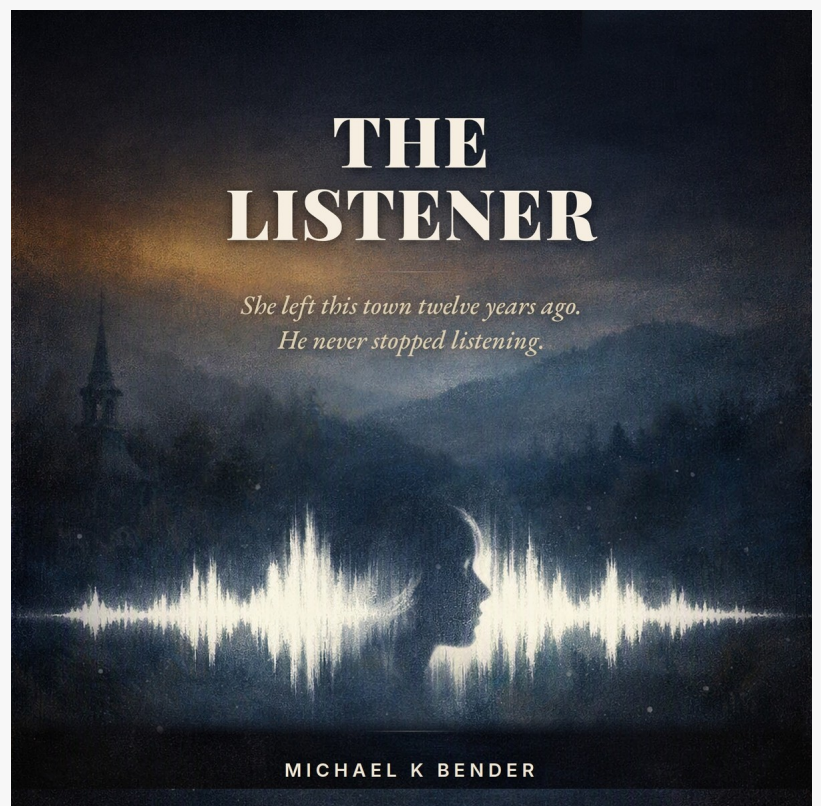


Michael K. Bender Releases New Psychological Suspense Novel, The Listener

Asks What It Costs to Listen for a Living — and What It Means to Be Listened to by the Wrong Person

CAIRO, NY, UNITED STATES, August 27, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Michael K. Bender's new novel follows a forensic psychologist who returns to her Catskills hometown and discovers she has been secretly listened to for more than a decade.

Author Michael K. Bender has released *The Listener*, a new work of psychological suspense set in the fictional Catskills town of Ashford Hollow. The novel is Bender's first work of psychological suspense, following his crime fiction novels *The Quiet County* and its sequel, *What the Ground Keeps*. *The Listener* is available now in paperback and Kindle editions.



The Listener1

The novel follows Mara Williams, a forensic psychologist and criminal profiler who returns to her small hometown after a twelve-year absence to care for her ailing mother. As Mara resettles into the rhythms of small-town life, she becomes increasingly unsettled by Martin Shaw, an attentive, ever-present neighbor, and by the disappearance of a local woman that no one else in town seems willing to question.

“

He believes listening is the highest form of love. The horror is that, in a different register, he might not be entirely wrong.”

Michael K Bender

The book examines what Bender describes as the razor's edge between being known and being hunted. Its central psychological premise draws on the documented phenomenon of erotomania, a delusional disorder in

which a person becomes convinced that another person is in love with them, along with the broader dynamics of organized predatory fixation.

"I became interested in the psychology of professional listening — the way forensic psychologists, criminal profilers, and therapists are trained to attend to another person with a quality of presence very close to love, yet must, by ethical necessity, remain entirely apart from it," Bender said. "I found myself wondering what it would cost a person to make a living doing so, and what it would mean to encounter someone who listened for exactly the opposite reason."

Bender said he wanted the novel's antagonist to avoid familiar tropes of fictional villainy. "He is not a monster in the way fiction usually makes its monsters," Bender said. "He is something I find more frightening: a man who has constructed an entirely coherent private world in which what he does is not only permissible, but good. He believes listening is the highest form of love. The horror is that, in a different register, he might not be entirely wrong.

Set against the backdrop of a close-knit mountain community, *The Listener* also explores the emotional toll of caregiving, the compromises of small-town trust, and the difference between being known by one's neighbors and being watched by one of them.

About Michael K. Bender

Michael K. Bender is the author of several novels of psychological suspense and literary crime fiction, including *The Quiet County* and its sequel, *What the Ground Keeps*. His work often returns to questions of small-town silence, institutional failure, and the quiet machinery by which ordinary people either protect one another or fail to. He lives and writes in the northeastern United States.

Availability

The Listener is available now in paperback and Kindle editions on Amazon:

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0HGD2YW9Z>

Media Contact

Michael K. Bender

michael@mkbender.com

518.704.1688

www.mkbender.com

###

Michael K Bender

Mkbender

+1 518-704-1688

[email us here](#)

This press release can be viewed online at: <https://www.einpresswire.com/article/937335626>

EIN Presswire's priority is source transparency. We do not allow opaque clients, and our editors

try to be careful about weeding out false and misleading content. As a user, if you see something we have missed, please do bring it to our attention. Your help is welcome. EIN Presswire, Everyone's Internet News Presswire™, tries to define some of the boundaries that are reasonable in today's world. Please see our Editorial Guidelines for more information.

© 1995-2026 Newsmatics Inc. All Right Reserved.