

BOOKNEWS from

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Let Joy Be Yours....

AUTHORS ARE SIGNING...

Some Events will be webcast at <http://new.livestream.com/poisonedpen>.

HOLIDAY HOURS

December 24 and 31: 10:00 AM-5:00 PM
Closed December 25 and January 1

HOLIDAY EXTRAS

Gift Cards, the perfect last minute choice, can be a dollar amount or for a specific book, can be emailed anywhere

Membership in one of our Book Buyers Clubs: bonus, six months Jan.-June comes with a \$25 Gift Card in July when you can renew

Free Gift Wrap

Worldwide Shipping, ask for rates

TUESDAY DECEMBER 1 7:00 PM

Gini Koch signs [Alien in Chief](#) (Daw \$7.99) Alien #9

WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 2 7:00 PM

Burton Barr Library, Pulliam Room, 1221 N. Central, Phoenix
Jon Talton signs [A Brief History of Phoenix](#) (Arcadia \$21.99)

SUNDAY DECEMBER 5 2:00 PM

Dana Stabenow signs [The Land Beyond](#) (Gere \$15.95) Silk & Song #3
Nifty giveaways include an insert map for the first 100 buyers

SUNDAY DECEMBER 6 2:00 PM

Weston Ochse signs [Grunt Traitor](#) (Solaris \$7.99) Task Force Ombra

THURSDAY DECEMBER 10 2:00 PM Holiday Tea

Jane Cleland signs [Ornaments of Death](#) (St Martins \$25.99)
Josie Prescott

SATURDAY DECEMBER 12 10:30 AM

Coffee and Crime asks those attending to share their favorite Christmas Cozy

TUESDAY DECEMBER 15 7:00 PM Book Launch!

James Rollins signs [The Bone Labyrinth](#) (Morrow \$27.99)

THURSDAY DECEMBER 17 7:00 PM Christmas Party

Hardboiled Crime Discussion Club meets to party. Everyone is invited to present a favorite novel of 2015 to the group.

SATURDAY DECEMBER 19 10:30 AM

Croak & Dagger Club discusses Spencer Quinn's [Dog on It](#) (\$16)

THURSDAY JANUARY 7 7:00 PM

Brad Taylor signs [The Forgotten Soldier](#) (Dutton \$26.99) Pike Logan #9
Publishes on December 29

EVENT BOOKS

Cleland, Jane. [Ornaments of Death](#) (St Martins \$25.99). Prescott's Antiques auction venue in Rocky Point, NH, has been transformed into a winter wonderland for Josie's annual holiday party. Josie is especially excited this year because Ian Bennington, a recently discovered distant relative, will be joining the fun. Both Ian and Josie are, it seems, descended from Arabella Churchill, a 17th century royal mistress. The party is a success and Ian is a hit. It gives Josie an unexpected thrill to have family—morphing to unexpected dread when he vanishes. Ian doesn't keep his dinner date with Josie's good friend, Lavinia, or his lunch date with her. In short, he's missing. He had told Josie that he had given his daughter two priceless 17th century watercolor miniature portraits, one of Arabella and one of her lover, King James II, and they've gone missing, too. Knowing that after her nasty divorce, Lavinia is facing financial ruin, Josie can't help wondering if her friend is behind the theft—and Ian's disappearance. Determined to find Ian, Josie uses her knowledge of antiques to track the miniatures in hopes they will lead her to him. I've always been a sucker for miniatures, especially those of Hans Holbein whose subjects were mostly Tudor. We have some of Cleland's earlier Josies: [click here](#) to order. Out of stock means out of print.

Koch, Gini. [Alien in Chief](#) (Daw \$7.99). Book 12 in the rollicking Alien series. Order earlier Aliens [here](#).

Ochse, Weston. [Grunt Traitor](#) (Solaris \$7.99). Their spies were among us for years. They mapped our infrastructure, learned our weaknesses, until, finally, they flipped the switch and threw us back into the Dark Ages. Only OMBRA and its battalions around the world seem capable of defending Earth from the next wave of attack—terraforming. But at what price can we gain our freedom? The Crays are pushing the human race to the edge of extinction, and we will have to learn new ways of living to defeat this threat. This is a time for heroes. For killers. For Grunts. Benjamin Carter Mason will question his identity, his beliefs and his mission as he dives deep into the heart of an alien-transformed Los Angeles. And in the end, he might be the last person on Earth defending who we are. Book 2 in the Task Force Ombra series of military science fiction. Start with [Grunt Life](#) (\$7.99).

Rollins, James. [The Bone Labyrinth](#) (Morrow \$27.99). Comes with a specially designed insert that will knock your socks off! Rollins outdoes himself in this speculative but science-based adventure thriller. Go back some 50,000 years. The date of a big bang for brains. Why did early humans suddenly develop remarkable intelligence? (Why have our brains shrunk since then?) This question is at the root of Rollins' latest, complex, probing, and hugely entertaining Sigma Force thriller. He and Sigma take you caving in Croatia and Ecuador, open up some history including the work of a renowned Jesuit scholar, Father Athanasius Kircher, a kind of Leonardo of the Order, as well as that of modern geneticists, visit burial sites, shrines, a primate research center near Atlanta, and the Beijing zoo. Did I say there are twins whose bond is key? And an endearing silverback gorilla called Baako? Who is not the only primate to appear.... I read this one in one long gulp on the flight from Dubai to LAX. Square away some time to enjoy it. Order earlier Sigma Force adventures [here](#).

Stabenow, Dana. [The Land Beyond](#) (Gere \$15.95). Sixteen-year-old Johanna flees Cambaluc in 1322, following the murder of her father and the murderous intentions of her step-mother, accompanied by her foster sister and wise woman Shasha, and by Jaufre, an orphan of the Road who has been raised to be her companion—and who hopes to become more. Together they take to the Road, that storied collection of routes that link the silks of Cathay, the spices of the Indies and the jewels of the Indus to the markets of the western world. Their destination? Venice, that fabled port of the Middle Sea, and the home of Johanna's grandfather, the legendary Marco Polo. But first they must survive treachery, betrayal, a war of conquest waged by an ambitious Mongol general, a long separation, and a Road beset by thieves and robbers emboldened by the steady deterioration of the Mongol Empire. They meet a chugi monk, a goliard, a Knight Templar, and two refugees from the harem of Sheik Mohammed of Talikan, but in spite of these new friends it is still a long and difficult journey, at the end of which they arrive in Venice only to discover Marco Polo on his deathbed. This third and final book in the Silk and Song trilogy, opens in Venice in 1324, where Johanna and company must find a new patron, a new way to earn their living, and above all a new home—all of which is complicated by a cunning kidnapping, a daring rescue, a tragic death, and a brush with royalty that puts Johanna and Jaufre and all their friends in the most danger they've seen yet. Book #1: [Everything Under the Heavens](#); Book Two: [By the Shores of the Middle Sea](#) (\$14.95 each). If you like I will sign your copy since this trilogy is dedicated to me

Talton, Jon. [A Brief History of Phoenix](#) (Arcadia \$21.99). Though the new metropolis is one of America's largest, many are unaware of Phoenix's rich and compelling history. Built on land once occupied by the most advanced pre-Columbian irrigation society, Phoenix overcame its hostile desert surroundings to become a thriving agricultural center. After World War II, its population exploded with the mid-century mass migration to the Sun Belt. In times of rapid expansion or decline, Phoenicians proved themselves to be adaptable and optimistic. Phoenix's past is an engaging and surprising story of audacity, vision, greed and a never-ending fight to secure its future. Chronicling the challenges of growth and change, fourth-generation Arizonan Jon Talton tells its story.

Taylor, Brad. [The Forgotten Soldier](#) (Dutton \$26.99). For years, the extralegal counterterrorist unit known as the Taskforce has worked in the shadows, anticipating and preventing attacks around the globe. Created to deal with a terrorist threat that shuns the civilized rule of law, it abandoned the same, operating outside of the US Constitution. Though wildly successful, it was rooted in a fear that the cure could be worse than the disease. And now that fear has come home. A Special Forces soldier is killed on an operation in Afghanistan, and complicit in the attack is a government official of an allied nation. While the US administration wants to forget the casualty, one Taskforce member will not. When he sets out to avenge his brother's death, his actions threaten to not only expose the Taskforce's activities, but also destroy a web of alliances against a greater evil. Pike Logan understands the desire, but also the danger. Brought in to eliminate the risk, he's now forced to choose between his friend and the

administration he's sworn to protect, while unbeknownst to either of them, the soldier's death is only the beginning.... Order earlier Pike Logans [here](#).

GIFT IDEAS

Cunningham, Michael. [A Wild Swan and Other Tales](#) (Farrar \$23). "The author of *The Hours* gives us a modern take on classic fairy tales, from a sympathetic Rumpelstiltskin to a jaded but content Steadfast Tin Soldier. Cunningham is not shy with his characters: he strips away sentimentality like an old Band-Aid, tearing through the romanticism that these tales usually inspire. Each story is less a retelling and more an unflinching dissection of human nature—our base needs and urges, our raw fears and joys. Shimizu's haunting illustrations give the book a classic feel, and make it a perfect addition to any fairy tale lover's collection."

Gawande, Atul. [Being Mortal](#) (Holt \$26). Dana handsold this book on Small Business Saturday. Here is the start of her review of a difficult subject—but thinking it through and applying it could be the best gift you ever give yourself and your loved ones: "I give this book five stars not because I loved it but because it is what I would call a necessary read, and I mean necessary for everyone, young, old, medical professional and laity alike. It's about That Conversation, what Gawande calls in one chapter 'Hard Conversations.' The subject is how we want to live out the end of our life. Gawande is a surgeon and one of the best parts of this book is that he is learning how to have this conversation himself. He's learning how to do it as a medical professional with his patients, and he's not shy about telling us where and how he has screwed up. He is also learning how to do it as a son to his father, also a surgeon, who has been diagnosed with a rare spinal tumor. The difficulty, he writes, is that in the last fifty years we have learned how to prolong life. 'You'd think people would have rebelled. You'd think we would have burned the nursing homes to the ground.' But we haven't, and new discoveries and better medical practice mean that citizens of industrialized nations are living longer, healthier lives. 'A life,' Gawande writes, 'designed to be safe but empty of anything they care about.' The trick now is to make sure our aging populations are not just safe, or even—heresy! sacrilege!—not safe at all, but living a life that achieves quality of life, not just quantity. The good news is, things are changing. (He doesn't say so but you know it has everything to do with the Boomers, a generation now making decisions for their parents, and who will soon be making those decisions—or not—for themselves.). Read the rest of Dana's comments [here](#).

Gregson, Tyler Knott. [All the Words Are Yours Signed](#) (Perigree \$18). The Beat Generation had its poets with evocative voices. Now the Tweet Generation has its bards and one of the leading poets is Gregson. This charming volume presents his haikus accompanied by his signature photographs, which capture the rich texture of daily life, vibrantly reveals the intimate reflections of one of poetry's most popular new voices. It took a bit of doing to get these signed copies, but we did it! Lovely for Valentine's Day, too.

Lee, Stan. [Amazing, Fantastic, Incredible](#) (Touchstone \$30). An illustrated, full-color graphic memoir wherein Stan Lee—comic book legend and co-creator of Spider-Man, the X-Men, the Avengers, the Incredible Hulk, and a legion of other Marvel superheroes—shares his iconic legacy and the story of how modern comics came to be. With Peter David and Colleen Doran.

Feed the Mind and the Body... Food and/or Fiction

Gilbert, Sandra. [Eating Words](#) (Norton \$35). In this rich collection by literary critic Gilbert and restaurant critic Roger Porter, great writers past and present contribute their thoughts on food and cooking. Most of the writings sampled are from the 19th and 20th centuries, though 11 earlier ones go back as far as Leviticus. Includes writing by Julia Child, Anthony Bourdain, Bill Buford, Michael Pollan, Molly O'Neill, Calvin Trillin, and Adam Gopnik, along with works by authors not usually associated with gastronomy—Maxine Hong Kingston, Henry Louis Gates Jr., Hemingway, Chekhov, and David Foster Wallace. Preface by Ruth Reichl.

Rothschild, Hannah. [The Improbability of Love](#) (Knopf \$27.95). The Indie Next Pick: "A girl, a painting, and a cast of delightfully quirky characters are at the heart of Rothschild's debut. At the intersection of London's art auction houses and the pursuit of a dream, Annie navigates her way through the city's wealthy and aspiring elite as she juggles her mother's eccentricities with her own quest to become a chef. Funny, smart, and satisfyingly clever, *The Improbability of Love* will warm your heart and give you pause the next time you admire that old painting hanging, so innocently, on the wall."

Tom, Jessica. [Food Whore: A Novel of Dining and Deceit](#) (Harper \$14.99). In Jessica Tom's first novel, *Food Whore*, her experience as a restaurant reviewer for the *Yale Daily News Magazine* and her work with food truck, restaurant and culinary program initiatives is put to good use. The story revolves around Tia Monroe, who finds herself working as a coat checker at Madison Park Tavern, a position that doesn't fit her true desire to be known for food writing. One of her essays, however, on making a special kind of cookie for her ailing grandfather, lands her a feature story in the *New York Times*. Through a twist of fate, Tia collides with Michael Stalz, a *Times* restaurant critic, who confides to her that he's lost his sense of taste. He decides to hire Tia to taste the food for him and become his ghostwriter. Gourmet food descriptions—"The waiter returned with a pre-appetizer *amuse-bouche*, a soup spoon filled with diced radishes, shortbread crumbs, and a black pepper gastrique"—and the *haute couture* fashion scene of New York City are deliciously blended into a story of intrigue and double cross. This is truly a novel of Millennials where social media, short-term loyalties, casual betrayals while carving out a path in one of the world's most competitive food scenes enter into the everyday fabric of life. Plus the energy of the players is amazing.

Wilson, Bee. [First Bite: How We Learn to Eat](#) (Basic \$27.99). As physical nourishment, a social bonding agent and cultural identity, food is central to human life. Although tastes and cuisines vary wildly across cultures, nearly all of us form powerful habits and attitudes about food from early childhood. These learned behaviors and principles, as well as cultural messages and conversations about food, can have a powerful effect on the rest of our lives. Wilson (*Consider the Fork*) begins with a simple premise: humans are born with an innate hunger for food, but nearly everything else that concerns food—tastes, aversions, habits, disorders, attitudes—is learned. There are hundreds of reasons that people relate to food in complicated, often unhealthy ways; Wilson herself has some experience with this, both personal and familial. However, she argues, it is possible to change some of that behavior, to make food "a daily source of delight rather than something to fight against." She draws on a variety of research to explore the complex relationship humans have with food, which

often begins as early as toddlerhood. Food writer and social historian Wilson explores the connection between food and memory (encompassing both Proust and favorite childhood meals), the influence of siblings (establishing taste as one's identity within the family), and school lunches and other institutional food (with plenty of fascinating historical context). She admits the difficulty of changing food-related behavior and attitudes for a range of people: picky toddlers, veggie-averse teenagers and those who struggle with eating disorders. At the end of each chapter, she highlights a single food that encapsulates that chapter's concept. Thanks to ShelfAwareness for this writeup.

BOOKS FOR THE HOLIDAY SEASON

Charming little collectible hardcovers, 60-some pages each and with unexpected cover art featuring toggled-up red birds plus berries to create a series look. Select a volume or go with the whole set of six.

Dickens, Charles. [A Christmas Carol: Penguin Classics #1](#) (\$16). A charming and collectible hardcover edition of the tale first published on December 19, 1843. Dickens read it aloud and Londoners bought out the first printing in days.

Alcott, Louisa May. [Merry Christmas and Other Stories: Penguin Classics #2](#) (\$16). Stories of 19th Century America drawing on the Little Women as well as Alcott's family's experience in suffrage and abolition as well as generosity and charity. The cover art ties these little hardcovers together as a series.

Gogol, Nikolai. [The Night before Christmas: Penguin Classics #3](#) (\$16). The Russian novelist wrote this in 1831 about the blacksmith Vakula's battle with the devil who has stolen the moon and hidden it in his pocket, thus wreaking havoc on the village of Dikanka and upping the rivalry between Vakula and the devil for the beautiful Oksana.

Hoffman, EA. [The Nutcracker: Penguin Classics #4](#) (\$16). A leader of German Romanticism wrote this for his children, nieces, and nephews in 1816. The gift of a nutcracker like none other sets the stage for a Christmas Eve like none other, too.

Trollope, Anthony. [Christmas at Thompson Hall: Penguin Classics #5](#) (\$16). Stories by one of England's most popular and prolific 19th Century novelists when Christmas was way less commercial.

Baum, L. Frank. [The Life and Adventures of Santa Claus: Penguin Classics #6](#) (\$16). First published in 1902, two years after *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* and drawing on a Santa Claus presented in Clement Moore's 1822 poem "A Visit from St. Nicholas."

And for kids....

Evert, Lori. [The Reindeer Wish](#) (Random \$17.99 ages 3-6). Anja, who lives "far to the north and high in the snowy mountains," wants a puppy more than anything. One Christmas Eve, a talking cardinal leads her not to a puppy, but to an abandoned baby reindeer. She becomes his "reindeer mama" and names him Odin. As the seasons unfold, Odin starts to miss his own kind. It is with a heavy heart that Anja takes her antlered friend to the North Pole to join Santa's reindeer, but Santa's gift of a squirming puppy cheers her up considerably. Tailor-made for animal lovers is illustrated with creatively composed photographs of Anja (the author-photographer team's daughter) and Odin frolicking through gorgeous Nordic landscapes.

Singer, Isaac Bashevis. [The Parakeet Named Dreidel](#) (Farrar \$17.99 ages 5-8). It is the eighth day of Hanukkah in a family's Brooklyn home, and a silver Hanukkah lamp is flickering on the windowsill. A boy named David, the narrator's son, shouts "Papa, look!" and points to a parakeet peering into the window. David and his father shoo the poor freezing parakeet inside. It perches on David's head, eats, drinks, speaks Yiddish and even pushes a dreidel with its beak. They know they must find the bird's owner, and they try, but David says, "Meanwhile, let's call it Dreidel." More than nine years later, David finds the parakeet's true owner just by chance... and marries her. Suzanne Raphael Berkson makes her picture-book debut in this warm adaptation of a story that first appeared in Newbery Honor author Isaac Bashevis Singer's Hanukkah collection *The Power of Light*. Illustrated by Suzanne Raphael Berkson

FIRST NOVELS

Bywaters, Grant. [The Red Storm](#) (St Martins \$25.99). Here is the winner of the Minotaur/Private Eye Writers of America Best First PI Novel contest, presenting a black ex-boxer scraping by doing PI work in 1938 New Orleans. An acquaintance, the criminal Bill Storm, asks William Fletcher to find his estranged daughter Zella, which leads to Fletcher becoming Zella's protector when Bill is murdered. This mixes him up with a psychopathic mobster once mutilated by Bill, with rival gangsters, and corrupt cops. The unassuming Fletcher is stoic in facing whatever is thrown at him.... "The best things here are Fletcher's detailed, precise first-person descriptions of boxing and slugging and his accounts of the racism to which he's routinely subjected."—*Kirkus Reviews*

Cox, Susan. [The Man on the Washing Machine](#) (St Martins \$25.99). When former party girl and society photographer Theophania Bogart flees to San Francisco to escape a high-profile family tragedy, a series of murders in the communal living complex where she settles drags her unwillingly out of hiding. I tried to embrace this debut, winner of this year's Minotaur/Mystery Writers of America First Novel Contest, but it's overstuffed with plot and with clichéd San Francisco characters, and the writing is self-conscious, striving too hard for effect (as witness the title—there is a guy standing on Theophania's washing machine at one point, a man who isn't what he appears to be). This is one of those times I disagree with a Starred Review, just for the record. And one of those times demonstrating once again that there is no substitute for reading a book before recommending it.

Hallman, Carly. [Year of the Goose](#) (The Unnamed Press \$16). The December Indie Next Pick: "Sometimes too much pineapple turns your tongue into a caterpillar, all that acid seeping through. Between detailing a government-sanctioned fat camp meant to 'rehabilitate' China's morbidly obese children and the brutal assassination of China's richest man — Papa Hui, CEO of Bashful Goose Snack Company, China's most profitable corporation — Hallman's [Year of the Goose](#) contains that same tartness. Snarky and sinister, this debut novel will make you both cackle and cringe."

Macmillan, Gilly. [What She Knew](#) (Harper \$15.99). Rachel Jenner is walking in a Bristol park with her eight-year-old son, Ben, when he asks if he can run ahead. It's an ordinary request on an ordinary Sunday afternoon, and Rachel has no reason to worry—until Ben vanishes. See British Books for more.

Messinger, Holly. [The Curse of Jacob Tracy](#) (St Martins \$25.99). This debut drops you into St. Louis, 1880, a town full of ghosts.

Jacob Tracy, who nearly died at Antietam, can see them and remains haunted by the restless dead. See History/Mystery for more.

Powers, Kim. [Dig Two Graves](#) (Tyrus \$24.99). In his twenties, Ethan Holt won the decathlon at the Olympics and was jokingly nicknamed “Hercules.” Now he’s in his late thirties and teaching at his ivy-covered alma mater while raising his young daughter Skip as a single father. After a hushed-up scandal over his Olympics win and the death of his wife in a car accident five years ago, Ethan wants nothing more than to forget his past. Skip is not only the light of Ethan’s life—she is his life. Then, Skip is kidnapped. A series of bizarre ransom demands start coming in that stretch Ethan’s athletic prowess to its limits, and he realizes with growing horror that they are modern versions of the Twelve Labors of Hercules, demanded in tricky, rhyming clues by someone who seems to have followed every step of Ethan’s career. “Connections to Greek mythology add a deeper element to the kidnapping plot...and the eventual truth about the kidnapper is quite a shocking reveal.... Enough adrenaline to please fans of Dan Brown.” —*Kirkus Reviews*. I wanted to like this more than I did; the concept is strong but it veers off into movie territory. Also in trade paperback: [Dig Two Graves](#) (\$16.99).

Schofield, Douglas. [Time of Departure](#) (St Martins \$24.99). The December Indie Next Pick: “Claire Talbot has a lot to prove in the misogynistic legal world in which she has immersed herself, but she puts it all on the line when Marcus Hastings enters her life with an old case that stirs an ominous feeling in the pit of Claire’s stomach. Though the string of missing girls occurred before she was born, Claire senses a familiarity with the case, and with Marcus, that she can’t explain. What begins with an ambitious young female prosecutor, a mysterious cold case, and an intriguing ex-cop who knows too much about both ends in a series of twists that readers won’t see coming.” Boy, I’ll say. I was really enjoying this book as a fine legal thriller, replete with deeply buried secrets and plot twists, and then it derailed. Probably cleverly, but I am not partial to books like *The Time Traveler’s Wife*. So, no Pick here even if the author, who lives outside the US, were available to sign.

Schulian, John. [A Better Goodbye](#) (Tyrus \$24.99). “This visceral, gritty noir takes place on the seedy fringes of modern Hollywood. Nick Pafko, who was a boxer until he killed an opponent and derailed his promising career, needs a job. Jenny Yee, a clever Korean college student with a penchant for reading Elizabeth Bishop’s poetry, works a lucrative day job in the massage trade. Scott Crandall, a sleazy middle-aged actor still trolling for his first big break, is also a pimp whose stable of working ladies demand protection from a recent violent crime wave. Then there’s Onus DuPree Jr., a psycho ex-jock and ex-con, who has befriended Scott and wants to join the excitement of DuPree’s criminal enterprises. Meanwhile, Scott hires Nick as his security muscle and Jenny as a masseuse; she quickly becomes his biggest draw. To stir the potboiler, Nick and DuPree hate each other from the outset, especially after Nick and Jenny become lovers. Despite the slow buildup and scant use of humor, the dialogue is razor sharp, and the characters well developed—the good-hearted Nick is easy to root for. A robbery triggers a grisly showdown.” IMHO noir needs humor for power and contrast and that is the weakness here: it’s a story by the former Chicago sportswriter that lacks the necessary moments of release from grim’s grip. Also in trade paperback: [Better Goodbye](#) (\$16.99)

Seskis, Tina. [One Step Too Far](#) (Harper \$14.99). “This highly anticipated U.S. publication of Seskis’s debut psychological thriller is off and running from the very first page, in which readers meet Cat Brown, formerly Emily Coleman, as she sheds her previous life with a move to London, leaving behind what she assumes will be a shocked and bewildered family.” See British Books below for more.

BRITISH BOOKS

Bannister, Jo. [Desperate Measures](#) (St Martins \$25.99). This is the third novel set in Norbold, a small British town where senior police officer Hazel Best has fallen from grace after the murky circumstances surrounding the death of Superintendent Johnny Fountain. Hazel is a kind of champion of Gabriel Ash, once a government security analyst and now a wreck following the kidnapping of his wife Cathy and their two sons four years ago. Ash had a scheme to combat Somali pirates and they struck back, hence the guilt. Ash came out of seclusion he shared with a small white dog six months back and has worked with Best on two investigations and is apparently benefiting from counseling. But suddenly as he continued to follow old leads about the kidnapping including one to an arms dealer in Cambridge who claimed to be in touch with the pirates, Ash sees evidence that Cathy is still alive. Will anything Ash do endanger his family further, but how can he not do his all to bring them home? And what will Hazel’s role be considering she’s already under serious scrutiny? Various lines of investigation follow. Where it goes is both surprising and disheartening. You can’t really make sense of this if you don’t read the first two: [Deadly Virtues](#) (\$15) and [Perfect Sins](#) (\$25.99)—think of them as forming a trilogy. Former journalist Bannister does not write cozies, nor is she of the darker ilk of James or Rendell.

Bonner, Hilary. [Friends to Die For](#) (\$13.95). A group of friends living in London’s Covent Garden are subjected to the whims of a dangerous prankster. At first, while disturbing, the tricks are funny. But as they continue they become more serious and violent, until finally someone lies dead. As the remaining friends struggle to manage their grief and identify the culprit, suspicion soon falls close to home and secrets furtively kept hidden are brought to light. [Death Comes First](#) (\$13.95).

Cameron, Stella. [Out Comes the Evil](#) (Severn \$28.99). John Charles reviews: “As far as Alex Duggins and her friend Tony Harrison are concerned, one murder in Folly-on-Weir was more than enough. However just as things are settling down in the small English village after the events in [Folly](#) (\$17.95), the debut novel in this quietly compelling series, the body of the widow Pamela Gibbon is found at the bottom of a well near a ruined manor house outside the village. Suspicion immediately falls upon Harry Stroud, who had been engaging in a not-so-secret affair with Pam. However, the police are not ruling out anyone in their investigation including Alex and Tony, which leaves Alex with no other choice but to do some detective work of her own. Cameron’s second well-crafted mystery has a bit more realistic grit than some traditional British village mysteries, but if you miss Caroline Graham’s Inspector Barnaby books this should be just your cup of tea.” Ordered Upon Request.

Charles, Kate. [False Tongues](#) (Poisoned Pen \$14.95). Here’s a belated shoutout for Charles’ return to crime writing. “Kate Charles books are not simple murder mystery books, they are set

against the background of the Church of England and feature a cast of characters that you can get to know as they often reappear in other titles. In *False Tongues* we get reacquainted with Callie Anson at a curates' reunion in Cambridge, where there is too much gossip and a desperate need for truth and forgiveness. The events in Cambridge are intertwined with events in London, where Callie's new fiancé is working on a sad case of murder and bullying amongst a group of teenagers. In just one week life for the characters in London and Cambridge will never be the same."—Kim Walker. I like the Callie Anson series a lot and, good news, Charles is writing a new one! Click here to order earlier [Ansons](#).

Cleeves, Ann. [Harbour Street](#) (St Martins \$25.99). Vera Stanhope is an unlikely homicide ace for Northumbria—or any jurisdiction. Stout, shrewd, uncompromising, observant, she's not someone you'd like to go up against. So when her sergeant, Joe Ashworth, boards a train in Newcastle that is packed with Christmas shoppers and finds, when bad weather halts the train and passengers swirl away into the snow, that one of them has been stabbed to death, it's not good news for the killer that Vera, happy to escape the holiday festivities as well as her isolated old home, seizes the case. The 70-year-old woman victim seems an unlikely one. She resided in the Harbour Street Guest House in the seaside village of Mardle, where she was a valued colleague and almost part of the owner's family. But of course, Margaret's life wasn't that simple.... Sixth in this top-notch police procedural series brought to British TV as *Vera* starring Brenda Blethyn. I can't help but think of actress Dame Margaret Rutherford when I think of Vera.

Ewan, Chris. [Dark Tides](#) (St Martins \$25.99). The Isle of Man to the west of, say, Liverpool and Preston, is tricky to reach, needing either the ferry service or short flights from London or Dublin. So it's a nifty place to set crime fiction, larger than a village, but isolated like a country house. It has its own Halloween festival called Hop-tu-naa. And for Claire Cooper, whose mother vanished during one such Hop night when Claire was eight, each festival is a struggle. At fourteen, Claire gets involved with a quintet of friends performing dares on the night, and one goes horribly wrong. And now, six years later, one of those friends is killed in an accident. Now a police officer, Claire doubts it was an accident and believes a single footprint found near the body is a deliberate taunt. Then comes another death and another footprint.... Claire's investigation is bound to unlock dark secrets from her past, no? You may recall Ewan from his Good Thief series. Standalones are *Safe House* and *Dead Line*. Order [here](#).

Fowler, Christopher. [Bryant and May London's Glory Signed](#) (Doubleday UK \$39). In every detective's life there are cases that can't be discussed, and throughout the Bryant & May novels there have been mentions of some of these such as the Deptford Demon or the Little Italy Whelk Smuggling Scandal. Now Arthur Bryant has decided to open the files on eleven of these previously unseen investigations that required the collective genius and unique modus operandi of Arthur Bryant and John May and the Peculiar Crimes Unit – investigations that range from different times (London during the Great Smog) and a variety of places: a circus freak show, on board a London Tour Bus and even a yacht off the coast of Turkey. And in addition to these eleven classic cases, readers are also given a privileged look inside the Peculiar Crimes Unit (literally, with a cut away drawing of their offices), a

guide to the characters of the Peculiar Crimes Unit, and access to the contents of Arthur Bryant's highly individual library. This is an excellent gift for someone new to Fowler, one of this generation's most talented and original writers. [Click here](#) to order earlier books in this super series. You will see that #12, *Bryant and May and the Burning Man* (Bantam \$26), releases in its US edition on December 15.

Friedman, Daniel. [A Riot Most Uncouth](#) (St Martins \$24.99). This book belongs in History/Mystery but I mention it here since it begins a series featuring Lord Byron as the sleuth, 1807. I'd like to buy into it but Friedman, author of the Buck Schatz mysteries (which I never did "get" either, humor being one of those things that either works or not for each of us), doesn't capture the era or its Englishness.

Gordon-Smith, Dolores. [The Chessman](#) (Severn \$28.95). I've been skeptical of *PW*'s reviews for cozies and traditional mysteries for some time. I have not read this new case for Jack Haldean so here is the review. You can decide if you agree: "The Sussex village of Croxton Ferriers, the setting for Gordon-Smith's stellar ninth mystery set in post-WWI England is rocked to its core when a badly mutilated body turns up in the local church. One of the two women who discovered the remains in a cupboard is Isabelle Stanton, a cousin of amateur sleuth Jack Haldean, a fighter pilot during the war who soon gets on the case. The other is Isabelle's friend, strikingly beautiful Sue Castradon, whose husband, Ned, was badly disfigured in the war and who bears grudges against everyone in general but one person in particular: Sir Matthew Vardon, a greedy, scurrilous old rascal, whose son, Simon, is smitten with Sue. A chess piece left in the church cupboard may be a vital clue. Plausible red herrings abound as Jack and the village residents ponder the case and all its incongruities over tea in the drawing rooms of Croxton Ferriers." Ordered Upon Request.

Herron, Mick. [Nobody Walks](#) (\$15.95). I agree with this *PW* Starred Review for a novel set in Herron's fictional London and introducing Thomas Bettany: "In this superb thriller, CWA Gold Dagger Award-winner Herron returns to the secretive world of British intelligence featured in his two Slough House novels, *Slow Horses* and *Dead Lions*. Thomas Bettany, a former undercover specialist who came apart after his wife's death, is doing menial labor in a European slaughterhouse, estranged from everyone—including his grown son, Liam. When Liam falls to his death from the balcony of his London flat, apparently under the influence of a new drug called muskrat, Bettany returns to England to find out what really happened. His quest leads him to the shadowy Vincent Driscoll, head of the software-design firm Liam worked for, and to the bizarre Dame Ingrid Tearney, head of the Intelligence Service, who is either worried that Bettany will discover something better kept under wraps or else wants Bettany to do some dirty work on her behalf. Well-drawn characters complement plotting that's convoluted but never opaque or formulaic. Herron may be the most literate, and slyest, thriller writer in English today.

Littlewood, Alison. [Path of Needles](#) (\$14.99). "Trails of corpses, not bread crumbs, lead to terror in this captivating, psychologically complex hybrid of magical realism and police procedural from Littlewood. When the body of 15-year-old Chrissie Farrell is found in the woods outside Ryhill, England, a crown placed

on the dead girl's head and other odd details remind Police Constable Cate Corbin of the Snow White fairy tale. Cate enlists the dubious aid of folklore lecturer Alice Hyland to discover the killer's motives. Subsequent murders mirror other folkloric motifs, and Cate and Alice struggle to decipher the moral and behavioral factors linking victims to their mythic archetypes. Can Cate stop an inventive murderer in a world suddenly turned irrational by the possible existence of supernatural forces? Is the bluebird mysteriously communicating with Alice a herald of inspiration or a harbinger of death? Crisp pacing and assured prose lend authenticity to a self-referential thriller that questions our values and the stories that define us." That is the *PW* Starred Review, which is in direct opposition to one found in *Kirkus*. I haven't read this novel, so I point out that the story clearly works for some readers, but not all.

Macmillan, Gilly. [What She Knew](#) (Harper \$15.99). Rachel Jenner is walking in a Bristol park with her eight-year-old son, Ben, when he asks if he can run ahead. It's an ordinary request on an ordinary Sunday afternoon, and Rachel has no reason to worry—until Ben vanishes. Police are called, search parties go out, and Rachel, already insecure after her recent divorce, feels herself coming undone. As hours and then days pass without a sign of Ben, everyone who knew him is called into question, from Rachel's newly married ex-husband to her mother-of-the-year sister. Inevitably, media attention focuses on Rachel too, and the public's attitude toward her begins to shift from sympathy to suspicion. As she desperately pieces together the threadbare clues, Rachel realizes that nothing is quite as she imagined it to be, not even her own judgment. A British debut in the so-hot domestic suspense genre.

Martin, Andrew. [The Yellow Diamond Signed](#) (Faber UK \$34). Detective Superintendent George Quinn, Mayfair resident and dandy with a razor-sharp brain, has set up a new police unit, dedicated to investigating the super-rich. When he is shot in mysterious circumstances, DI Blake Reynolds is charged with taking over. But Reynolds hadn't bargained for Quinn's personal assistant, the flinty Victoria Clifford, who knows more than she's prepared to reveal... The trail left by Quinn leads to a jewelry theft, a murderous conspiracy among some of the most glamorous (and richest) Russians in London—and the beautiful Anna, who challenges Reynolds' professional integrity. Reynolds and Clifford must learn to work together fast—or risk Quinn's fate. Set in the heart of 21st Century Mayfair, a world of champagne, Lamborghinis and Savile Row suits, *The Yellow Diamond* starts an entrancing new series by the always satisfying Martin. And as it's fun, it's our **December Surprise Me Club Pick**.

Mawer, Simon. [Tightrope](#) (Other Press \$15.95). The December Indie Next Pick: "Picking up where he left off in *Trapeze*, Mawer reacquaints readers with Marian Sutro, whose role with the WWII Special Operations Executive resulted in interrogation, incarceration, and the brutalities of a concentration camp. Returning to London, Sutro attempts to put her life back together, but players from her past reemerge, leading her down the familiar paths of deceit and deception, this time within the shifting landscape of the Cold War. Mawer brilliantly blends fact and fiction, and what results is a gripping tale of suspense, intrigue, and espionage."

McDermid, Val. [Splinter the Silence Signed](#) (Grove \$25 January 16). Dr. Tony Hill and Carol Jordan, a former detective chief constable, still aren't on speaking terms in their solid ninth outing, despite the closeness they once shared. Tony continues his clinical psychological work in Bradfield, England, while Carol is busy drinking herself into oblivion. Meanwhile, the top brass desire to create a new Major Incident Team that would serve an area beyond Bradford. Strings are pulled to get Carol back in charge, with Tony as her unofficial sobriety coach, much to her annoyance. "The new team's first case involves several outspoken women who have run afoul of Internet trolls after taking strong feminist stances; though the women and their causes seem unrelated, they all go on to commit suicide. Tony sees a pattern and warns Carol that there could be something more sinister at work. Diamond Dagger Award-winner McDermid handles the delicate dance that is the slow reunion of her two heroes with as much grace as she affords the novel's victim."—*PW*. Val will be here on January 16 to sign this December release which will keep readers up late into the night. Our UK edition has sold out.

Reay, Katherine. [The Brontë Plot](#) (Nelson \$15.99). "Lover and seller of rare books Lucy Alling likes to add a little something special to her treasured finds, in order to make the buying and selling of books and memorabilia more lucrative. When the lawyer she is dating confronts Lucy with authoring the inscriptions and tampering with the provenance of the books, her unethical embellishments shame her. But even as James retreats, his wealthy grandmother Helen unexpectedly hires Lucy as a literary consultant on a buying trip to London. The idea of visiting the home of the Brontë sisters particularly excites both of them. Once in London, Helen has a secret agenda that helps Lucy consider the morality of her actions, and both must confront their pasts in order to find peace with their decisions. Quotations and allusions flow freely in Reay's third tribute to the female giants of English literature. While some readers may miss the more obscure references, the finely drawn characters, flawed and authentic, including her genius decorator boss Sid, dominate and ground the story emotionally. Lucy realizes that her beloved Brontë characters know more about God and grace than she ever suspected. Fans may find themselves unearthing their classic novels after savoring this skillfully written homage."—*PW* Starred Review

Rothschild, Hannah. [The Improbability of Love](#) (Knopf \$27.95). "A girl, a painting, and a cast of delightfully quirky characters are at the heart of Rothschild's debut. At the intersection of London's art auction houses and the pursuit of a dream, Annie navigates her way through the city's wealthy and aspiring elite as she juggles her mother's eccentricities with her own quest to become a chef. Funny, smart, and satisfyingly clever, *The Improbability of Love* will warm your heart and give you pause the next time you admire that old painting hanging, so innocently, on the wall," says the Indie Next Pick which I endorse.

Seskis, Tina. [One Step Too Far](#) (Harper \$14.99). "This highly anticipated U.S. publication of Seskis' debut psychological thriller is off and running from the very first page, in which readers meet Cat Brown, formerly Emily Coleman, as she sheds her previous life with a move to London, leaving behind what she assumes will be a shocked and bewildered family. Our view of Cat's rough first weeks in the city, and her introduction to a seedier life than the one to which she was accustomed in the suburbs of

Manchester is interspersed with multiple narratives that provide disconnected clues to the motivation for her frantic hegira. The author's use of this technique propels the plot by leaving the reader unsettled and on edge, eager for more information. And, in order to achieve the intricate plot twists, Seskis reverses the classic methods of such predecessors as Charles Dickens and Thomas Hardy by distancing us from her characters in order to keep us ignorant of the driving force behind their actions until the climactic conclusion." *LJ* continues, "Add this one to the growing *Gone Girl* subgenre, designed for readers who appreciate the journey and are willing to invest the time to reflect on its significance once the destination is reached."

Shaw, William. [The Kings of London](#) (\$15). Our David Brooks is a fan of Shaw's picture of swinging London in the 1960s, although his heart lies in the work of Peter Lovesey first and foremost. When the burned body of an unidentified man is discovered in a derelict house early in Shaw's darkly humorous sequel to 2014's *She's Leaving Home*, Det. Sgt. Cathal "Paddy" Breen and Temporary Det. Constable Helen Tozer of Marylebone CID investigate. A second corpse—belonging to Francis Pugh, the son of a prominent politician—is discovered in similar circumstances, but with the skin removed from his limbs. Breen soon becomes drawn into a bohemian and criminal milieu of art dealers, hippies, and drugs. "Shaw perfectly captures London in the swinging '60s with its atmosphere of sexism, where bottom ogling and pinching are commonplace. References to contemporary figures from the Beatles and Donovan to Dennis Hopper and Prime Minister James Callaghan bring the era further to life. Breen and Tozer come across as fallible human beings, not razor-sharp law enforcers, and it's their relationship—both professional and personal—that makes this a winner."

Stone, Nick. [The Verdict](#) (Pantheon \$25.95). "This propulsive legal thriller from Thriller Award-winner Stone centers on the arrest and impending trial—seemingly a certain prosecutorial slam dunk—of multimillionaire hedge funder Vernon James, a poor West Indian immigrant's son, for the murder of the young blond whose strangled body is found in his luxury suite at the London hotel where only hours earlier he accepted an award from the Hoffmann Trust, a liberal umbrella organization, as "Ethical Person of the Year." James's predicament should come as catnip to Terry Flynt—at 38 hanging on by his fingernails to a job as a lowly legal clerk—who blames James, his former childhood best friend, for getting him booted out of Cambridge and starting him on the downward spiral of booze and depression that nearly destroyed his life. But, as Flynt is stunned to discover when he's tapped to work on the defense team, his feelings are significantly more complicated, especially once the evidence he starts to uncover suggests that James might be innocent. Though not all the plot strands tie up as tightly as one might wish, the Machiavellian plotting, Old Bailey fireworks, and almost Dickensian richness of character and setting make this a standout."—*PW* Starred Review. I am not as enamored with this as the *PW* reviewer, in part because the story suffers from bloat (OK, call it "Dickensian," but...) but Stone's style is to write large. He's the author of FMC Pick *Mr. Clarinet* and a spokesperson for a multicultural Britain.

Ward, Sarah. [In Bitter Chill](#) (St Martins \$25.99). A debut for fans of Sharon Bolton and Stephen Booth by a debut Derbyshire author. It's filled with lots of old secrets and closed mouths and hearts stretching across 30 years from 1978 when two girls were

kidnapped to the present when the mother of the girl who did not return commits suicide. A prime example of village insularity and solid police work I really like so it's our **December British Crime Club Pick**. We are spoilt for choice for British crime for you this December!

Whitehouse, David. [Mobile Library](#) (\$16). A picaresque novel about a bullied boy called Bobby, another outcast child called Rosa, and her divorced mother Val who cleans the town's mobile library for a living. When abuse heaps up and Val loses her job, the three abscond in the 16-wheel bookmobile for a series of adventures like those that fills the books in their library on wheels. Either you buy into this and enjoy the ride, or you carp. It's improbable but I like the idea of a child's realization that the kinds of adventures found in books can happen in real life.

INTERNATIONAL URBAN NOIR

Fabre, Cedric, ed. [Marseille Noir](#) (Akashic \$15.95). Just as Marseille is tailor-made for noir, this dark banquet is tailor-made for noir fans."—*Kirkus Reviews* on an anthology of original stories translated from the French. Makes an intriguing contrast with the lovely crime capers set in Marseille by Peter Mayle.

Humaydan, Imar, ed. [Beirut Noir](#) (Akashic \$15.95). Most of the writers in this volume are still living in Beirut, so this is an important contribution to Middle East literature—not the "outsider's perspective" that often characterizes contemporary literature set in the region. "Humaydan writes in her introduction to this haunting anthology that 'all of the stories are somehow framed by the Lebanese civil war, which lasted from approximately 1974 until 1990 . . .'" The crimes in this Akashic noir volume are often submerged in the greater tragedy of a beautiful city constantly torn within and without by violence."—*PW*

WHERE IN THE WORLD?

Alaux, Jean-Pierre. [Late Harvest Havoc](#) (Le French Book \$12.95). Winter is in the air in Alsace and local customs are sowing trouble, piquing the curiosity of the famous winemaker from Bordeaux, Benjamin Cooker. While the wine expert and his assistant Virgile settle into their hotel in the old city of Colmar, distinguished vineyards are attacked. Is it revenge? The plot thickens when estates with no apparent connection to one another suffer the same sabotage just days prior to the late harvest. All of Alsace is in turmoil, plunged in the grip of suspicion that traces its roots back to the darkest hours of the German occupation. As he crosses back and forth into Germany from the Alsace he thought he knew so well, Cooker discovers a land of superstition, rivalry, and jealousy. Between tastings of the celebrated wines, he is drawn into the lives and intrigues of the locals. This somewhat slight series has much local charm as well as delicious drink (and food) and supplements Martin Walker's Bruno mysteries. You can catch the first three, set in Bordeaux, the Touraine region, and Burgundy in the omnibus edition [The Winemaker Detective Mysteries](#): (Le French Book \$19.95).

Alexis, Andre. [Fifteen Dogs](#) (Coach \$17.95). The winner of the 2015 Scotiabank Giller Prize and the Toronto Book Awards got a *PW* Starred Review back in February, 2015: "'One evening in Toronto, the gods Apollo and Hermes' decide that the only way to determine whether human intelligence contributes to happiness is to grant it to 15 dogs and see whether they die happy. This audacious beginning of the latest novel from Alexis (*Childhood*, winner of the Books in Canada First Novel and Trillium Book Awards)

places the book firmly in the ancient tradition of stories about the immortal gods placing wagers on mortal activity. The gods' interference allows Alexis to neatly sidestep potential criticism that he has anthropomorphized, sometimes leveled at works that try to imagine the inner lives of animals, while he ruminates on aspects of human society including political structure, the nature of dominance, the role of the weak, religion, authenticity and performativity, love, and art. Clearly familiar with canine behavior, Alexis manages to encapsulate an astonishing range of metaphysical questions in a simple tale about dogs that came to know too much. The result is a delightful juxtaposition of the human and canine conditions, and a narrative that, like just one of the dogs, delights in the twists and turns of the gods' linguistic gift."

Eco, Umberto. [Numero Zero](#) (Houghton \$25). Set in 1992, the book's formal plot involves a hack writer who is hired to help create a newspaper dedicated to extortion and slyly conducted libel. The plot also features a vast conspiracy theory spun by a paranoid reporter working for the newspaper. In The Prague Cemetery, Eco showed he is obsessed with the idea of shadowy events and organizations that underpin our everyday reality. The conspiracy sprawls to include both real and implausible ideas, like Mussolini's supposed faked death, the terrorist attacks that plagued Italy during the turbulent '60s and '70s, the controversial Cold War program Operation Gladio and, as ever, the Masons.

"In this slim volume, Eco somehow also takes the time to deconstruct media and its reality-warping tendencies. *Numero Zero* viciously satirizes the forces that go into dishonest news-making as well as the gullible Italian public that eats it up." The December Indie Next Pick adds: "Eco's new book engages on many levels, from the intense literary verve to the cunning insertion of conspiracy theories. Colonna, an unemployed writer, is hired to write the history of a newspaper, which will never see print, while one of his colleagues discovers that Mussolini may have met a different end than the historically accepted one. When Colonna digs deeper, the life he has made, and the lives of his friends, unravel in unexpected ways. Eco has produced another genre-bending, erudite piece of fiction that will amuse and distress lovers of literature and history with equal measure."

Hammer, Lotte/Soren. [The Girl in the Ice](#) (Bloomsbury \$27). Maybe all Scandinavian crime is going to be called "The Girl.... Something" as a marketing device after the success of the Stieg Larsson series. But don't let that put you off this interesting novel by a Danish brother and sister who open up with the discovery of the body of a 23-year-old which has lain concealed under Greenland's tundra for a quarter of a century. Note: Greenland is an autonomous Danish territory with limited self government and its own Parliament since 1979—but you knew all that if you read the marvelous [Smilla's Sense of Snow](#) (\$16) by Peter Hoeg, winner of the first Dilys Award from Independent Mystery Booksellers for their favorite book to sell in 1993, and still one of my top crime fiction picks. This premise, although the body is centuries older, also begins Erin Hart's dazzling [Haunted Ground](#) (\$16), set in 2005 Ireland. Anyway, the girl in the ice is Danish so the case is handed over to Detective Chief Superintendent Konrad Simonsen of Copenhagen, one of those shrewd if self-destructing cops. The portrait of this cynical, guilt-laden and self-critical policeman is well worth reading. And there is much cultural wisdom infusing a maniac-murderer hunt. I keep thinking the Scandinavian crime-wave is slowing, but then comes a book like this....

Hochgatterer, Paulus. [The Sweetness of Life](#) (\$14.99). Austrian author Hochgatterer makes his U.S. debut with this remarkable thriller. Monsters appear to lurk in the forest-ringed fairy tale Austrian town of Furth am See, including whoever left the faceless corpse of Sebastian Wilfert in the snow for his little granddaughter, Katharina, to discover. Investigating the inexplicable Christmas-time crime officially falls to Det. Ludwig Kovacs and his vacation-depleted team, but potentially crucial evidence could come from quite a different quarter: child psychiatrist Raffael Horn, who is treating the traumatized (and now mute) Katharina. Skillfully mixing the observations of these two middle-aged kindred spirits—experienced enough to have lost their illusions, but not their humanity—with those of some of the more damaged townsfolk, Hochgatterer, himself a Vienna child psychiatrist, tells a suspenseful and shattering story with an elegance of expression that matches his exceptional insight into hearts and minds."

Holt, Jonathan. [The Absolution](#) (Harper \$25.99). The powerful conclusion to the Carnivia Trilogy fuses intelligence gathering, Italian freemasonry, US and NATO programs aimed at communism in Italy, an anonymous virtual world, a giant cruise ship programmed to destroy Venice, Venice itself, and the Veneto, as a breakaway region. It's full of twists and a perspective we don't often find. Order *The Abomination* and *The Abduction* as well as *The Absolution* [here](#).

Howell, Katherine. [Web of Deceit](#) (St Martins \$25.99). An excellent police procedural from Australia led by Detective Ella Marconi held me to the end. It begins when a man deliberately crashes his car into a tree. It doesn't kill him outright but the man, Marko, appears to feel that someone is out to get him and can't be stopped, and that the paramedics on the scene are now putting themselves in danger. Jane being one of them. The narrative then follows what happens to these characters and to the police who become involved in what becomes an increasingly complex manhunt. An analog author would be fellow Australian Barry Maitland.

Jonasson, Ragnar. [Nightblind Signed](#) (Orenda UK \$35). The peace of a close-knit Icelandic community is shattered by the murder of a policeman – shot at point-blank range in the dead of night in a deserted house. With a killer on the loose and the dark Arctic waters closing in, it falls to Ari Thor to piece together a puzzle that involves tangled local politics, a compromised new mayor and a psychiatric ward in Reykjavik where someone is being held against their will... Dark Iceland #2.

Lemaitre, Pierre. [Camille](#) (\$14.99). Here in the final volume in Lemaitre's internationally bestselling trilogy of "meta-meta detective" novels (*The New York Times*), Parisian Police Commandant Camille Verhoeven faces his most harrowing case and its ultimate reckoning. Anne Forestier finds herself in the wrong place at the wrong time when she is trapped in the middle of a bank robbery. Shot three times, she is lucky to survive—and unlucky to remember the face of her assailant. Followed home from her hospital bed, Anne is in grave danger. But one thing stands in her favor: a dangerously vengeful partner, carrying the scars of devastating loss, who will break all the rules to protect the woman he loves: the diminutive Verhoeven. Begin with *Alex* and then *Irene*: [click here](#) to order.

Meyrick, Denzil. [The Last Witness](#) (Pantheon \$24.95). James Machie was a man with a genius for violence, his criminal empire spreading beyond Glasgow into the UK and mainland Eu-

rope. Fortunately, James Machie is dead, assassinated in the back of a prison ambulance following his trial and conviction. But now, five years later, he is apparently back from the grave, set on avenging himself on those who brought him down. Top of his list is his previous associate, Frank MacDougall, who unbeknownst to D.C.I. Jim Daley is living under protection on his loch-side patch, the small Scottish town of Kinloch. Daley knows that, having been the key to Machie's conviction, his old friend and colleague D.S. Scott is almost as big a target. And nothing, not even death, has ever stood in James Machie's way.

Mina, Denise. [Blood, Salt, Water](#) (LittleBrown \$26). Patrick would agree with this Starred Review: "Roxanna Fuentesilla, the suspicious character at the center of Mina's riveting sixth novel featuring Glasgow Det. Insp. Alex Morrow, has been under loose surveillance. The Scottish police suspect her of shady business dealings involving her insurance agency and possibly having a hand in stealing—or laundering—£7 million. When one of Roxanna's children reports her missing and her cell phone records place her in Helensburgh, Morrow and her colleague, Det. Constable Howard McGrain, pretend to be Missing Persons officers and travel to the sleepy coastal town. Meanwhile, two Helensburgh men, Iain Fraser and Tommy Farmer, murder a woman and toss her body in the local loch. And the unexpected return of Susan Grierson, who spent 20 years in the U.S., brings back long-buried memories for Iain, not all of them comfortable. As Morrow discovers troubling evidence of Roxanna's widespread dirty dealings, more bodies turn up in Helensburgh. Morrow's incarcerated half-brother, gangster Danny McGrath, adds a wild card to an installment that exposes the bleakness of small-town Scotland as skillfully as it does the bustling mean streets of Glasgow." Order Alex's earlier cases [here](#).

Sue, Eugene. [The Mysteries of Paris](#) (Penguin Classics \$30). Sensational and engrossing, this sprawling work was one of France's first serial novels; spun out over 147 issues and sixteen months, it garnered wild popularity, influenced political change, and inspired a raft of successors. Parisians rushed in droves to the newsstands each week for the latest installment—like readers of the *Strand* did for a new Holmes story. Sue's (1804-57) intricate melodrama unfolds around a Paris where, despite the gulf between them, the fortunes of the rich and poor are inextricably tangled. The suspenseful story of Rodolphe, a magnetic hero of noble heart and shadowy origins, was, as Professor Peter Brooks writes in his foreword, "the runaway bestseller of nineteenth-century France, possibly the greatest bestseller of all time." It also inspired the genre of "city mysteries," much imitated in the 19th century with novels like *Les Misérables*, *The Mysteries of London*, and *The Mysteries of New York*. More recently, authors like Umberto Eco, China Miéville, and Carlos Ruiz Zafón have claimed *The Mysteries of Paris* as an influence, while Michael Chabon and Paul Auster have paid direct homage with, respectively, *The Mysteries of Pittsburgh* and *The New York Trilogy*. The cover art is wonderful, evocative and colorful, a kind of Ripperesque feel, but French. At long last, this lively translation makes the riveting drama of Sue's classic available to a new century of readers

Tuil, Karine. [The Invention of Our Lives](#) (Atria \$27). A French novel (in translation), a finalist for the Prix Goncourt, makes its U.S. debut with this "suspenseful, if at times daunting, Gatsby-

esque odyssey laced with provocative observations of prejudice, politics, and sexism. "Sam Tahar, a \$1,000-an-hour Manhattan DA, media darling, and sex addict, enjoys the kind of life he could barely have imagined back when he was growing up in Paris as Samir, the poor son of Tunisian immigrants. But the lofty social position as the son-in-law of Rahm Berg, 'one of the richest men in the US,' comes with a high price: Sam's pretense that he is a North African Jew, not a Muslim. Deep down Sam knows that the question is not if his past will catch up to him but when. Sam's secret lights the fuse on the twisty plot, but where it eventually explodes comes as a complete shock. Sadly, Tuil's theme of anti-Muslim prejudice and its consequences seems even timelier today than when the novel was first published in France in 2013."—*PW*. Novels about characters exchanging or usurping lives are not uncommon. This one gains from its themes. Yet while I could buy into Sam, I never did bond with his counterpart.

Tursten, Helene. [The Treacherous Net](#) (Soho \$26.95). Rob and I have watched the TV series on MHz-TV and bonded with the characters: Irene Huss of the Göteborg PD, her chef husband, their two daughters, and the other members of the city's cop shop. I've been a fan of the books since the very first one, [Detective Inspector Huss](#) (\$9.99). Here we are now in May when the snow is barely melting, but crime is heating up. The body of a teenage girl is found in the woods, naked and horrifically scarred. Then there's the mummified body that is discovered bricked up in a chimney on a demolition site. These crimes fall to Irene's Violent Crime Unit. And to the new Superintendent Efva Thylqvist, who uses her sex appeal and smooth talking to bend the predominately male staff to her will. Then a second young girl is found, wearing what appears to be the other half of the sexy lingerie set recovered near the first body. Fearing the two cases are linked and that the killer may strike again, Irene and her colleagues up their game. Will it be enough? I recommend reading all 8 Irene's in order. [Click here](#) to buy.

And Out of This World...

Anderson, Gillian/Jeff Rovin. [Dream of Ice](#) (SimonSchuster \$25). After uncovering a mystical link to the ancient civilization of Galderkhaan, child psychologist Caitlin O'Hara is left with strange new powers. Suddenly she can heal her young patients with her mind and see things from other places and other times. But as she learns more about her powers, she also realizes that someone is watching her, perhaps hunting her—and using her son to do it. Meanwhile Mikel Jasso, a field agent for a mysterious research organization, is searching for Galderkhaani ruins in Antarctica. After falling down a crevasse, he discovers the entire city has been preserved under ice and that the mysterious stone artifacts he's been collecting are not as primitive as he thought. As Mikel and Caitlin work to uncover the mysteries of the Galderkhaani, they realize that the person hunting Caitlin and the stones may be connected in ways they never knew possible. Second in the Earthend saga. [A Vision of Fire](#) (\$15).

Dellamonica, A. [Daughter of No Nation](#) (Tor \$26.99). A fantasy adventure set in a seafaring world full of tall ships and political intrigue. Sophie Hansa thinks she's ready to go back to Stormwrack. She's been working out, practicing her knot-tying, learning self-defense. So when Garland Parrish, the captain of the Nightjar, shows up to take her there, the only immediate problem is how guilty she feels about leaving her adoptive parents at

home to worry. Of course, as soon as she's back in the alternate, magical world where her birth parents come from, problems start multiplying. The plan is simple: Sophie goes to visit her birth father, Cly, and he agrees to let her birth mother out on bail until their court case is resolved. But nothing in Stormwrack is simple, and soon Sophie; Parrish; her teenage half sister, Verena; and her genius adoptive brother, Bram, are caught up in another web of intrigue. This second book in the Stormwrack series picks up a few months after the end of *Child of a Hidden Sea*.

Dick, Philip K. [Philip K Dick: The Last Interview and Other Conversations](#) (Melville \$15.95)

Elton, Ben. [Time and Time Again](#) (Forge \$26.99). It's the first of June, 1914, and Hugh Stanton, ex-soldier and celebrated adventurer is quite literally the loneliest man on earth. No one he has ever known or loved has been born yet. Perhaps now they never will be. Stanton knows that a great and terrible war is coming. A collective suicidal madness that will destroy European civilization and bring misery to millions in the century to come. He knows this because, for him, that century is already history. Somehow he must change that history—and prevent the war.

McDevitt, Jack. [Thunderbird](#) (Berkley \$26.95). A stargate more than ten thousand years old has been discovered on a Sioux reservation in North Dakota. Travel through the gate leads to three equally mysterious destinations: (1) an empty garden world, dubbed Eden; (2) a maze of underground passageways; or (3) a space station with a view of a galaxy that appears to be the Milky Way. The race to explore and claim the stargate quickly escalates, dividing those involved into opposing camps who view the teleportation technology either as an unprecedented opportunity for scientific research or a disastrous threat to security. In the middle of the maelstrom stands Sioux chairman James Walker.

Ruff, Matt. [Lovecraft Country](#) (Harper \$26.99). Chicago, 1954. When his father Montrose goes missing, 22-year-old Army veteran Atticus Turner embarks on a road trip to New England to find him, accompanied by his Uncle George—publisher of The Safe Negro Travel Guide—and his childhood friend Letitia. On their journey to the manor of Mr. Braithwhite—heir to the estate that owned one of Atticus's ancestors—they encounter both mundane terrors of white America and malevolent spirits that seem straight out of the weird tales George devours. At the manor, Atticus discovers his father in chains, held prisoner by a secret cabal named the Order of the Ancient Dawn—led by Samuel Braithwhite and his son Caleb—which has gathered to orchestrate a ritual that shockingly centers on Atticus. And his one hope of salvation may be the seed of his—and the whole Turner clan's—destruction. Christopher Moore finds this novel “rubs the pervasive, eldritch dread of Lovecraft's universe against the very real, historical dread of Jim Crow America and sparks fly. . . . Ruff renders a very high-concept, imaginary world with such vividness that you can't help but feel it's disturbingly real.”

Tripathi, Amish. [The Secret of the Nagas](#) (Quercus \$26.99). At a crucial moment after the cliffhanger ending of book one, *The Immortals of Meluha*, the warrior-hero Shiva—the man who is the prophesied Neelkanth, or destroyer of evil—is fighting to protect his wife Sati from an invasion by the Nagas, a mysterious militaristic society. Evil forces are growing in strength all around the conflict, and Shiva's own philosopher-guides have betrayed his unquestioning faith by accepting aid from the dark side. Even

the idyllic empire of Meluha hides a terrible secret. Accompanied by his troop of warriors, Shiva travels East to the land of Branga in hopes of discovering clues as to the whereabouts of the Naga people. The journey concludes in the Naga capital of Panchavati, where a surprise awaits him. Book 2 in *The Shiva Trilogy*.

Vallgren, Carl-Johan. [The Merman](#) (Pantheon \$24.95). Nella and her brother Robert live a difficult life with their mother and father in a small town on the west coast of Sweden. Robert is bullied at school, and Nella has to resort to debt and petty crime to pay off his tormentors. When she turns to her friend Tommy for help, her suspicions are aroused by the mysterious comings and goings of his brothers at their dilapidated boat house. But when she uncovers the reason behind their enigmatic behavior, her life is opened to the realities of a mindboggling secret. Here is a modern fairy tale.

Weber, David. [Hell's Foundations Quiver](#) (Tor \$27.99). New complications erupt as the resurrected monk warrior Merlyn Athrawes continues his rebellion against the Church of God Awaiting. Operating from the relative sanctuary of Charis, he develops new weaponry against the medieval duplicity of his enemies. But just as he and his forces seem to gain ascendancy, a new force arrives to be reckoned with in Weber's latest military science fiction thriller.

PW'S TOP TEN 2015 MYSTERIES/THRILLERS

Anolik, Lili. [Dark Rooms](#) (\$15.99). In this suspenseful, sad, and shattering first novel, the shooting death of 16-year-old wild child Nica Baker has a devastating effect on her year-older sister, Grace, who just can't let Nica go. Grace repeatedly sees, hears, and talks with her during the grief-swamped, drug-muddled months that follow. See Our December Trade Paperback Picks for a fuller review.

Ayatsuji, Yukito. *The Decagon House Murders* – best to buy from amazon as this is a very small publisher. A tense, sophisticated homage to Agatha Christie's *And Then There Were None* has seven members of the Kyoto University Mystery Club visit an isolated island, where six months earlier the bodies of architect Nakamura Seiji, his wife, and two servants were found in the burnt remains of a 10-sided house. This book is published by [lockedroominternational.com](#)

Burke, James Lee. [House of the Rising Sun Signed](#) (SimonSchuster \$29.95). Former Texas Ranger Hackberry Holland sets off to find his estranged son, Ishmael, a U.S. Army captain, in Burke's stunning follow-up to 2014's *Wayfaring Stranger*. Hackberry also finds himself in possession of an artifact rumored to be the Holy Grail, incurring the wrath of a vicious arms dealer who wants the artifact for himself.

Dobyns, Stephen. [Is Fat Bob Dead Yet?](#) (Crown \$26.95). Dobyns displays his genius for dark comedy in this intricate crime novel set in New Haven, Conn. The death of a motorcyclist in a bizarre accident involves a host of eccentric but plausible characters, including a group of con artists who bilk the gullible by soliciting charitable donations for organizations like Free Beagles from Nicotine Addiction.

Hawkins, Paula. [The Girl on the Train](#) (Penguin \$26.95 unpeppered printing). [A First Mystery Club Pick in the Signed UK edition, is now worth \$100+.] Emotionally fragile Rachel Watson, the principal narrator of Hawkins's riveting debut, passes the

house where she used to live with her ex-husband on her train commute into London. She also often spies an attractive couple, whom she imagines to be enjoying the happily ever after that eluded her. Then the woman vanishes—only to turn up on the front page of the tabloids as missing.

McCarry, Charles. [The Mulberry Bush](#) (Grove \$26). The unnamed narrator of this exceptional spy novel vows to avenge his father, a disgraced secret agent. He engineers his own recruitment into the CIA, where he becomes a covert agent, hunting and killing terrorists in the Middle East. However, he never forgets his chief purpose in life: exacting retribution on those responsible for his father's downfall.

Miller, Jax. [Freedom's Child](#) (Crown \$25). Freedom Oliver, the heroine of Miller's hard-hitting debut, was arrested for killing her husband and for the past 20 years has been in a witness protection program in a small Oregon town. Mayhem ensues when Freedom travels to Kentucky in search of her missing daughter, a possible kidnapping victim, whom she gave up for adoption.

Stone, Nick. [The Verdict](#) (Pantheon \$25.95). Multimillionaire hedge-funder Vernon James goes on trial for murder after the strangled body of a young woman is found in his luxury suite at the London hotel where, only hours earlier, he accepted a major humanitarian award. Lowly legal clerk Terry Flynt, who was once James's best friend, has reason to resent James, but Flynt has a key role to play in his former friend's defense. See British Books for the full Starred Review.

Winslow, Don. [The Cartel](#) (Knopf \$27.95 reprints). In this sequel to 2005's *The Power of the Dog*, DEA agent Art Keller goes after his old nemesis, Adán Barrera, the leader of a Sinaloa cartel, who has escaped from prison and is intent on reestablishing control of his empire. This exhaustively researched novel elucidates not just the Mexican drug wars but the consequences of our own disastrous 40-year "war on drugs."

Young, Hester. [The Gates of Evangeline Signed](#) (Putnam \$26.95). A First Mystery Club Pick. Journalist Charlotte "Charlie" Cates—the heroine of Young's haunting, heartbreaking, yet ultimately hopeful debut—has disturbing dreams in which unknown children appeal for help. After being asked to write a true-crime book about the never-solved 1982 disappearance of a two-year-old from his family's Louisiana estate, Evangeline, a tiny, abused boy adrift with her in a boat on a bayou appears to her in a dream.

OUR TOP TEN DECEMBER TRADE PAPERBACKS

Anolik, Lili. [Dark Rooms](#) (\$15.99). "The bullet that snuffs out the life of 16-year-old wild child Nica Baker hits her family like a hollow-point, especially psychologically enmeshed big sister Grace, in this suspenseful, sad, and shattering first novel from Vanity Fair contributing editor Anolik. Only a year older, and the yang to Nica's yin, good girl Grace had been relying on her sister's charisma and cool to smooth Grace's way through the emotional minefields of Chandler Academy, the precious Hartford, Conn., private school where their parents both teach. In fact, Grace just can't let Nica go, repeatedly seeing, hearing, and talking with her during the grief-swamped, drug-muddled months that follow. When a fellow student's suicide-confession officially closes the case, Grace doesn't buy it. Deferring her enrollment at Williams, she sifts through the wreckage of their lives, ostensibly to figure out who really killed Nica, but, even more crucially, to find herself." Picked by *PW* as one of the 2015 Top Ten Mystery/Thriller.

Crawford, Susan. [The Pocket Wife](#) (\$14.99). Dana Catrell leads a quiet life in a suburb a stone's throw from Manhattan. She spends her days tidying, reading, missing her son who's away at college, and wondering what went wrong in her marriage to her husband, Peter, who comes home late most nights and makes her feel as unimportant as a pocketful of loose change. And struggling with her bipolar disorder. Then on one horrific, boozy day, Celia—Dana's friend and neighbor—is found murdered and Dana's life suddenly begins to spiral out of control as she feels herself sliding toward the brink of insanity, unable to account for the troubling gaps in her memory on the afternoon of Celia's death. Even more terrifying, Dana was the last person to see her friend alive on that deadly day when Celia revealed a disturbing secret. Is murder on Dana's mind—or is it all in her head? And is there a killer lurking inside her...or is there one outside, for real? Detective Jack Moss gives counterpoint to Dana's unreliable narration.

De La Motte, Anders. [MemoRandom](#) (Atria \$16). This Swedish author is published in the US in paperback originals. His Game Trilogy got a big play. And now he opens with a terrific new book going deep inside Stockholm police intelligence where, as seems true with every intelligence agency, secrecy, betrayals, and horrific competition rule. David Sarac is a handler in the Intelligence Unit at the city's PD, identifying, recruiting, and wrangling warriors against organized crime. Anything goes if he can deliver. Including whatever support he gives to his high-level informant, Janus. Then David suffers a stroke in a high-speed car chase and wakes up in hospital with no memories of the past two years—or of Janus. Can he reconnect with Janus and rebuild before the whole network is brought crashing down? Are his enemies inside, or outside, his unit? Billed as the first of two thrillers.

Lancet, Barry. [Tokyo Kill](#) (\$15.99). This Shamus Award nominee for Best PI Novel has been optioned for TV by JJ Abrams. But it won my heart earlier as did the first investigation performed by struggling antiques dealer Jim Brodie in First Mystery Club Pick [Japantown](#) (\$15.99). San Franciscan Brodie is back in Japan for a rest but he checks in with the PI firm he inherited from his father and acquires a new case from a WWII veteran, Japanese, who arrives with a dark story that connects to the war and with two very recent home invasions in Tokyo. Brodie agrees to provide the old warrior with protection, his first error in a wild ride that goes on to a murder and into Yokohama and a world of Chinese spies... Lancet will join us in the spring to sign Brodie's third case, [Pacific Burn](#) (SimonSchuster \$25).

✎McDermid, Val. [Skeleton Road](#) (\$14). A standalone novel about a cold case that links back to the Balkan Wars of the 1990s. In the center of historic Edinburgh, builders are preparing to demolish a disused Victorian Gothic building. They are understandably surprised to find skeletal remains hidden in a high pinnacle that hasn't been touched by maintenance for years. But who do the bones belong to, and how did they get there? Could the eccentric British pastime of free climbing the outside of buildings play a role? Enter cold case detective Karen Pirie, who gets to work trying to establish the corpse's identity. And when it turns out that the bones may be from as far away as former Yugoslavia, Karen will need to dig deeper into the Balkans' tragic history.

Perry, Thomas. [A String of Beads](#) (\$16). Another excellently engineered thriller from Thomas Perry featuring Jane Whitefield. . . . Soul-searching and car chases too. What more could we ask

from an escape artist like Perry?”—*New York Times Book Review*. Actually, we get more in a story connecting Jane with her Indian heritage so that this excellent adventure reads in part like a Tony Hillerman. I loved it. Perry joins us January 13 to sign a stand-alone called [Forty Thieves](#) (Grove \$26) about two couples one a detective team, and other assassins for hire, who are both hired to exercise damage control on the same murder case... but clearly from opposite sides.

Scherm, Rebecca. [Unbecoming](#) (\$16). A January 2015 First Mystery Club Pick gains extra resonance from recent terrible events as the focus is on Grace, who's fled Garland, Tennessee, and some tragic events in her past, to reinvent herself as a Californian restoring bric-a-brac in a grubby, outlying Parisian neighborhood. Despite her precautions Grace finds herself the center of a cat-and-mouse game as her deceptions begin to unravel. There's no black-and-white in this story, nor clear moral choices. But great atmosphere.

Simmons, Dan. [The Fifth Heart](#) (\$18). “They were the footprints of a gigantic dove!” Sherlock Holmes meets the Brahmins in this “lively, imaginative mashup, done in trademark Simmons fashion. In 1893, writes Simmons by way of an opening, Henry James, ‘for reasons that no one understands (primarily because no one besides us is aware of this story),’ decides to leave this cruel world, unhappy at his lack of literary success. Family members and friends have been dying all around him, so the time seems right. Meanwhile, Sherlock Holmes has plunged over the waterfalls in Switzerland, locked in mortal struggle against Professor Moriarty. Naturally—well, not at all naturally, in fact—Holmes and James connect.”—*Kirkus Reviews*. I add, it happens in Washington DC where the death of Henry Adams' wife Clover in 1885 is their focus. Terrific fun, a good holiday read and gift.

Stein, Triss. [Brooklyn Secrets](#) (\$15.95). Erica Donato, Brooklyn girl, urban history grad student, and single mom, is researching the 1930s when Brownsville was the home of the notorious organized criminals the newspapers called Murder Inc. She quickly learns that even in rapidly changing Brooklyn, Brownsville remains much as it was. It is still poor, it is still tough, and it still breeds fighters and gangs. Doing field research, Erica stops in at the landmark local library and meets Savanna, a young woman who is the pride of her mother and her bosses, and headed for an elite college and a future. A few days later, she is found beaten and left for dead. Her anguished mother is everywhere, insisting someone knows something. After a massive, angry demonstration, a young girl friend of Savanna's is found dead too. Is there a connection? Did perfect Savanna have a few secrets? Erica's curious. But Erica's focused on the 1930s and has located a few women who are happy to share memories. Two are childhood friends who disagree on much but guard secrets too, ones kept for a lifetime. Never one to resist looking deeper than her research requires, Erica keeps encountering an apparent derelict white man, a vengeful rejected girl friend, the role of boxing as a way out of poverty, and fading evidence of long ago crimes. For the hardcover edition see New Books.

☞Thomas, Sam. [The Witch Hunters Tale](#) (\$15.99). See History/Mystery for a review of this 3rd book for midwife Bridget set in Puritan York.

NEW BOOKS FOR DECEMBER

Albom, Mitch. [Magic Strings of Frankie Prest](#) (Harper \$24.99).

The December Indie Next Pick: “According to the Spirit of Music, the narrator of Albom's latest novel, everyone joins a band in life — some of them play music, while others can be in a band of friendship, romance, or career. Frankie's music is so powerful that he can actually affect people's futures with the six magic strings on his guitar, but this gift becomes a burden for Frankie, impacting his loves and friendships, and, ultimately, his life. Albom offers a story destined to become a classic that will have readers looking at music differently than they ever have before.”

Arlt, Roberto. [Seven Madmen](#) (NY Review of Books \$15.95). A weird wonder of Argentine and modern literature begins when its hapless and hopeless hero, Erdosain, is dismissed from his job as a bill collector for embezzlement. Then his wife leaves him and things only go downhill after that. Erdosain wanders the crowded, confusing streets of Buenos Aires, thronging with immigrants almost as displaced and alienated as he is, and finds himself among a group of conspirators who are in thrall to a man known simply as the Astrologer. The Astrologer has the cure for everything that ails civilization. Bringing back this lost work, the *NY Review of Books* says it is, “Brutal, uncouth, caustic, and brilliantly colored, *The Seven Madmen* takes its bearings from Dostoyevsky while looking forward to Thomas Pynchon and Marvel Comics.”

Baldacci, David, ed. [Faceoff](#) (\$15). I love the concept of this International Thriller Writers' anthology where authors pair up their sleuth (22) in investigations (11). I'm especially fond of Deaver and Sandford putting Rhyme and Davenport together in “Rhymes with Prey”! The whole list: Patrick Kenzie vs. Harry Bosch in “Red Eye,” by Dennis Lehane and Michael Connelly. John Rebus vs. Roy Grace in “In the Nick of Time,” by Ian Rankin and Peter James. Slappy the Ventriloquist Dummy vs. Aloysius Pendergast in “Gaslighted,” by R.L. Stine, Douglas Preston, and Lincoln Child. Malachai Samuels vs. D.D. Warren in “The Laughing Buddha,” by M.J. Rose and Lisa Gardner. Paul Madriani vs. Alexandra Cooper in “Surfing the Panther,” by Steve Martini and Linda Fairstein. Lincoln Rhyme vs. Lucas Davenport in “Rhymes With Prey,” by Jeffery Deaver and John Sandford. Michael Quinn vs. Repairman Jack in “Infernal Night,” by Heather Graham and F. Paul Wilson. Sean Reilly vs. Glen Garber in “Pit Stop,” by Raymond Khoury and Linwood Barclay. Wyatt Hunt vs. Joe Trona in “Silent Hunt,” by John Lescroart and T. Jefferson Parker. Cotton Malone vs. Gray Pierce in “The Devil's Bones,” by Steve Berry and James Rollins. Jack Reacher vs. Nick Heller in “Good and Valuable Consideration,” by Lee Child and Joseph Finder.

And don't forget we have Signed copies of Baldacci's new thriller for assassin Will Robie: [Guilty Signed](#) (\$30).

Bayer, William. [The Luzern Photograph](#) (Severn \$29.95). In 1882, the young Lou Andreas-Salome, writer, psychoanalyst and femme fatale, appears with Friedrich Nietzsche and another man in a bizarre photograph taken in Luzern, Switzerland. Over thirty years later, an intense art student in Freud's Vienna presents Lou Salome with his own drawing based on the infamous photograph. In the present day, Tess Berenson, a brilliant performance artist, moves into an art deco loft in downtown Oakland, California. Her new apartment, she learns, was vacated in a hurry by a professional dominatrix who used the name Chantal Desforges. Tess's curiosity about Chantal intensifies when her body is discovered in the trunk of a stolen car at Oakland airport. Embarking on an obsessive investigation into the murder, Tess discovers a link to the original Luzern photograph and the 1913 drawing — but as

she gets closer to the shocking truth, Tess finds that she too is in jeopardy. Ordered Upon Request.

Billheimer, John. [Contrary Blues](#) (\$16). Here's a reminder that one of my late Mother's and my favorite debuts, a First Mystery Club Pick, is back in print. It's set in West Virginia and starts a well-plotted series. Progress on to [Highway Robbery](#) (\$16).

Burcell, Robin. [Last Good Place](#) (Brash Books \$12.99). Burcell brilliantly revisits Carolyn Weston's cop duo inspiring *The Streets of San Francisco* and delivers a modern, dark, twisting tale of murder and deception with a puzzle that will keep you guessing until the end."—Jamie Freveletti

Burke, James Lee. [House of the Rising Sun Signed](#) (Simon-Schuster \$29.95). "Former Texas Ranger Hackberry Holland travels to Mexico in 1916 seeking repentance and reconnection with his estranged son, Ishmael, a cavalry unit officer and World War I veteran. In tracking his son, he stumbles into the path of a conniving Austrian arms dealer named Andre. After a violent brawl that leaves four Mexican soldiers dead, Hackberry flees the country, carrying with him a stolen artifact that Andre left unattended. He soon discovers that the artifact is believed to be the Holy Grail. The backstory of Hackberry's two ex-wives and Ishmael unfolds as the stakes rise quickly in his conflict with Andre. Seeking retribution for Hackberry's actions, Andre focuses on Ishmael, causing chaos in west Texas and Mexico. Readers of best-selling Burke's novels about the Holland family (*Wayfaring Stranger*) will gravitate to this prequel featuring the well-known and notoriously cantankerous Hackberry Holland. The large cast features complex and compelling characters, and the action deftly builds to a roaring boil."—*Library Journal*

Carter, Chris. [An Evil Mind](#) (Atria \$25). In Wyoming, a gruesome discovery in a diner parking lot leads to a series of interviews at the FBI's Quantico Academy between the LAPD's Robert Hunter and his former Stanford roommate Lucien Folter, a fellow criminal psychologist—and suspect in some 30 cannibalistic murders. That's the set up for a serial killer thriller high on gore and on a chilling contest between the hunter and the torturer where the outcome is far from assured.

Chaze, Elliott. [Black Wings Has My Angel](#) (\$12.95). She had the face of a Madonna and a heart of dollar bills. Chaze's pulp classic presents the dreamlike tale of a man after a jailbreak who meets up with the woman of his dreams—and his nightmares. A phenomenal work of the period and a legend among noir buffs is now back in print for the first time in more than half a century. Bill Pronzini calls this, "an indisputable noir classic, arguably the best of all the crime novels published by Gold Medal during its glory years...The details of the crime and its aftermath are vividly described, and the love-hate relationship between Sunblade and the woman and the demons in both that lead to their downfall are masterpieces of dark-side character development...Elliott Chaze was a fine prose stylist, witty, insightful, nostalgic, and irreverent, and a first-class storyteller."

Chazin, Suzanne. [A Blossom of Bright Light](#) (Kensington \$25). A split-second decision thrusts Detective Jimmy Vega into the epicenter of a disturbing case when a body is found near a gathering place for immigrants in upscale Lake Holly, NY. The cold-bloodedness of the crime and the innocence of the victim torment Vega. In a community gripped by fear of deportation, Vega needs the help of his girlfriend, activist Adele Figueroa, to gain people's

trust. But Adele is acting strangely, consumed by a secret that threatens to tear them apart. When the case takes a personal turn, both Vega and Adele discover that Lake Holly's tranquil façade hides a terror of monstrous proportions, poised and ready to strike again. To confront the killer and save their relationship, Vega and Adele must forge a new level of trust—in each other, and in their most deeply held beliefs—to expose a dreadful evil. Latino Vega is well worth following through this case.

Christopher, Adam. [Made to Kill Signed](#) (Forge \$25). The city of Christopher's imagination is the Los Angeles of history, the 1960s, with one noticeable difference: Raymond Electromatic, the world's only robot detective and last functioning robot to survive the collapse of the robot boom 10 years prior. Ray was programmed to solve crimes, while the computer system that he was paired with (named Ada) was instructed to make money doing so. But Ada has turned her programming—and Raymond's—to new operations, making Raymond the world's only robot detective and the world's only robot assassin. When a girl wanders into the office looking for someone both to find a missing person and summarily kill that person, it seems like the perfect job for Ray. But the more Ray discovers about the assignment—the actor he's been assigned to find and kill, the ways Ada manipulates his programming, the political forces at play in the city—the more the job feels like a set-up. And perhaps it is. Christopher notes that he was inspired to write this novel when considering what it might be like to read an unknown science-fiction epic from Raymond Chandler. The December Indie Next Pick for our **December SciFi Pick**: "It's just another day in 1965 Hollywood and business as usual for Ray and his boss, Ada. That is, until a mysterious woman shows up with a duffel bag full of unmarked gold bars and a request. Unable to pass up all that money, Ray takes the case. Soon, Ray discovers that this is no regular 'find him and assassinate him' kind of job. *Made to Kill* brings back noir with a stylish new twist in this captivating tale for people of all makes and models!" Watch [the book trailer](#) to get into this first in a planned trilogy.

Collins, Max AI. [Quarry's List](#) (Hard Case Crime \$9.95 reissue). When the man he worked for abruptly exits the business, paid assassin Quarry finds himself in the crosshairs as a rival tries to take over. But what does Quarry have that the new man wants? And how did the beautiful blonde in the swimming pool become a target?

Ephron, Hallie. [Night, Night, Sleep Tight](#) (\$14.99). "Deirdre Unger has just driven from San Diego to Beverly Hills and is in no mood to be locked out of her screenwriter father's house. After all, he asked her to come and help put it on the market. When she discovers his body floating in the pool, her world turns upside down. Her father's death seems like an accident, but when a detective shows up to question her brother and Deirdre, she really gets upset. As she struggles to understand what happened, childhood memories of an earlier Hollywood murder involving her best friend, Joelen, and her movie star mother's boyfriend (think Lana Turner's daughter, Cheryl Crane, and Johnny Stompanato) are dug up and what seemed to be old history resumes new life. Set in Hollywood in the 1960s and the 1980s, the latest from Ephron is an entertainingly suspenseful read with its mix of movie stars, scandal, gossip, and mystery."—*LJ*. This page-turner has a personal resonance for Ephron: she explains in an afterword that the house where Lana Turner's daughter murdered

her mother's boyfriend in 1958 was just blocks from the Ephron home, and the girl was just a few years older than she.

Ferry, Peter. [Old Heart](#) (Unbridled Books \$16). Winner of the Chicago Writer's Association's Best Traditional Novel for 2015: The judges find it, "At once an incredibly complex and simple story—a story of love, regret and second chances that seamlessly toggles between the present and a past set against the backdrop of World War II. The novel's central figure, Tom Johnson, age 85, plots to spend his final days not in a retirement home, as his children demand, but traipsing through Europe on a seemingly preposterous quest to hunt down the love of his life, a Dutch agent abandoned at the war's end. This is an artful novel with a mesmerizing plot, skillful in its use of place and history, poignant in its representation of young, middle-aged and old characters, and wonderful in its examination of lives within lives. It would have been easy for sentimentality to overwhelm these characters, but Ferry's subtle hand forbids that. Instead, we see how the divergent paths of duty and romance come together; we understand how family is not a right but a hard-won honor; and why every point of view needs to be heard." It's very rich with our Midwest (love the lake house) but also evokes Holland wonderfully well. Tom fights off the deprivations of age as well as the determination of his children (one of them, alas motivated by self interest—he's a gambler) with skill but he's unyielding. I really love this book so it's our **December Fresh Fiction Pick**.

Giambanco, Valentina. [The Dark](#) (Quercus \$26.99). Echoes of the decades-old Hoh River Boys kidnapping and murder continue to haunt Seattle Homicide Detective Alice Madison. After the nightmarish showdown in the woods with the madman Harry Salinger, Madison, and the surviving Hoh River Boys, attorney Nathan Quinn and his now-imprisoned client John Cameron are bound together by the experience, which changed all their lives forever. But the nightmare isn't over, especially for Quinn, whose younger brother David never returned from the awful night the boys were kidnapped. When David's remains are found, Madison resolves to follow the trail to see if it can lead her to the killer. But Madison has a knack for attracting all the wrong kinds of attention. As she follows the evidence, a sadistic murderer follows her every move. And as Madison's personal demons threaten her career with the Seattle PD and darkness once again closes in, she finds herself gripped by obsession as well as a resolve to nail a psychopath. In my experience, Europeans bring a different sensibility to thrillers set in the US. Giambanco lives in London.

Greaney, Mark. [Tom Clancy: Commander-In-Chief](#) (Putnam \$29.95). **Can be Signed February 16** when Greaney visits us with his 5th Gray Man thriller [Back Blast](#) (\$16.95). When Russian President Valeri Volodin's ambitions are foiled in Dagestan, he faces a difficult choice. The oligarchs who support him expect a constant flow of graft, but with energy prices cratering, the Russian economy sputters to a virtual halt. Unable to grow the Russian market at home, his hold on power relies on expansion abroad—a plan that has been thwarted by the United States in the past. But this time Volodin has determined that an indirect approach is the best. A chaotic world is the best camouflage for a series of seemingly unrelated attacks. Only one man recognizes an ominous pattern in the reports of terror from around the globe. U.S. President Jack Ryan sees a guiding hand in the worldwide chaos, but before he can act he needs proof.... The 16th for Jack Ryan, clearly written with the current Russian President in mind....

Harrison, Mette. [His Right Hand Signed](#) (Soho \$26.95 Signed Jan. 12). In Draper, Utah, a tight-knit Mormon community is thrown into upheaval when their ward's second counselor—one of the bishop's right-hand men—is found dead in an elaborately staged murder on church property. Carl Ashby was known as a devout Mormon, a pillar of the community, and a loving husband and father. Who would want him dead? The Indie Next Pick: "In this riveting and compassionate mystery, beloved counselor Carl Ashby is found dead at church, leaving the Mormon community devastated. But when Linda and Kurt Wallheim learn that Carl was originally a female the news turns their world inside out, directing their focus away from the bigger issues at hand. In a community that is so set with its gender roles, can the Wallheims look past that to discover who killed Carl and why?" Inspired by the history of a family friend, Mormon Harrison, author of last year's First Mystery Club Pick [The Bishop's Wife](#) (\$15.95), a bestselling debut, publishes a novel that coincides (accidentally) with breaking news about Salt Lake City's newly elected gay mayor, a judge's ruling on a gay couple adoption, and a LDS Church position on LGBT.

Hawken, Sam. [The Night Charter](#) (LittleBrown \$26). Exactly one year ago, Camaro Espinoza killed five bad men in New York City and fled town. Now she's keeping a low profile in Miami, running night charter catch-and-release fishing trips off the coast. It's a simple life for a former combat medic. But it wasn't easy to come by. Camaro plans to do everything she can to hold onto it. Trouble comes knocking in the form of Parker Story, a man in over his head with all the wrong people. Parker wants to book Camaro's boat to run a small errand off the coast of Cuba. Camaro knows she shouldn't get involved. But Parker's got a teenage daughter named Lauren, and Parker's associates have threatened to harm her if the mission doesn't go off without a hitch. Camaro has never met the girl. Barely seen her picture. But that doesn't mean she can ignore her plight. Camaro's used to being wanted—by men good and bad, by soldiers wounded on the field of battle, by the long arm of the law. But she's never been needed before... "The Night Charter caught me completely by surprise. In precise, neon-soaked prose, Sam Hawken launches a promising new series headed for the high seas of John D. MacDonald and the relentlessness of Lee Child. Camaro herself is a wonderful creation, an uncompromising heroine whose adventures many readers, including this one, will look forward to for many books to come."—David Morrell, echoed by Owen Laukkanen.

Hoover, Colleen. [November 9](#) (Atria \$16). Fallon meets Ben, an aspiring novelist, the day before her scheduled cross-country move. Their untimely attraction leads them to spend Fallon's last day in L.A. together, and her eventful life becomes the creative inspiration Ben has always sought for his novel. Over time and amidst the various relationships and tribulations of their own separate lives, they continue to meet on the same date every year. Until one day Fallon becomes unsure if Ben has been telling her the truth or fabricating a perfect reality for the sake of the ultimate plot twist. Can Ben's relationship with Fallon—and simultaneously his novel—be considered a love story if it ends in heartbreak?

James, Marlon. [A Brief History of Seven Killing](#) (\$17). Winner of the 2015 Man Booker Prize and a recipient of the 2015 American Book Award, and various 2014 Notable Book mentions. "How to describe Marlon James's monumental new novel?"

It's like a Tarantino remake of *The Harder They Come* but with a soundtrack by Bob Marley and a script by Oliver Stone and William Faulkner, with maybe a little creative boost from some primo ganja. It's epic in every sense of that word: sweeping, mythic, over-the-top, colossal and dizzyingly complex. It's also raw, dense, violent, scalding, darkly comic, exhilarating and exhausting—a testament to Mr. James's vaulting ambition and prodigious talent." —*The New York Times*

Kahn, Michael. [Trophy Widow](#) (\$15.95). One of my favorite legal thrillers highlights our celebrity-obsessed culture in a very clever murder mystery. Savvy attorney Rachel Gold has represented a few celebrity clients in her career, but none anywhere close to Angela Green, the most famous abused housewife in America. She is surely the only former housewife to receive an award from the NAACP and an interview with Oprah while serving time for killing her husband. Her recently announced book and motion picture deal has her enmeshed in a new legal controversy—a Son of Sam lawsuit over the proceeds from that deal. To defend her in that lawsuit, Angela retains Rachel Gold, who already has her hands full with a wacky ostrich sexual abuse case, compliments of a referral from her best friend, Benny Goldberg. As Rachel digs into the underlying facts of the murder case, she comes across issues that were never pursued at trial—loose ends no one bothered tying up because of the dramatic nature of the incriminating evidence. Is it possible, Rachel wonders, that Angela is innocent, that she was framed by someone with an entirely different motive for killing her husband? But if Angela is really innocent, the killer is still out there—and, as Rachel soon discovers, prepared to kill again.

Kelly, Mary Louise. [The Bullet](#) (\$16). Caroline Cashion is beautiful, intelligent, a professor of French literature. And in a split second, everything she's known is proved to be a lie. A single bullet is found lodged at the base of her skull. It makes no sense: Caroline has never been shot. Then, she learns the truth: that she was adopted when she was three years old, after her real parents were murdered. Caroline was wounded the night they were attacked, a gunshot to the neck. Surgeons had stitched her up with the bullet still there, nestled deep among vital nerves and blood vessels. Now, Caroline has to find the truth of her past. Why were her parents killed? Why is she still alive? She returns to her hometown, where she learns that the bullet in her neck is the same bullet that killed her mother....

Lansdale, Joe R. [Fender Lizards](#) (Subterranean Press \$40). Edgar-winner Lansdale, a master of the coming-of-age novel, takes on similar themes in this remarkable tale of a young woman on the precipice of adulthood. In the East Texas town of Piney Woods, 17-year-old Dorothy "Dot" Sherman serves burgers and fries on roller skates at the Dairy Bob, a "drive-in fast-food spot." Her father went out for a pack of cigarettes five years back and never returned, so it's now Dot, her younger brother, Frank, and their mom and grandma in a small single-wide trailer. Things get even more crowded when Dot's 23-year-old half-sister, Raylynn, and her two small children flee from Raylynn's abusive husband after Dot gives him a good whack with a two-by-four. Then out of the blue, a man named Elbert turns up, claiming to be Dot's dad's brother. Meanwhile, a traveling circus comes to town with a roller derby contest offering a \$10,000 prize. Under the tutelage of Elbert, who turns out to be an excellent skater and a decent dude, Dot enlists Raylynn and her coworkers from the Dairy Bob

to form a ragtag team called the Fender Lizards. Lansdale has always had a fondness for strong-willed female characters, and he lets Dot narrate the tale in her own colorful, infectious way. This novel should appeal to adults and teens alike, and Dot's hard work and personal responsibility will inspire and resonate with many readers. We expect Lansdale to visit us this winter so he could sign copies then.

Martin, Andy. [Reacher Said Nothing](#) (Bantam \$25) or "Lee Child and the Making of *Make Me*." Andy Martin shadows Child like a literary private eye in a yearlong investigation of what it takes to make fiction's hottest hero hit the page running. The result is a fascinating, up-close-and-personal look into the world and ways of an expert storyteller's creative process as he undertakes the writing of the much anticipated twentieth Jack Reacher novel, *Make Me*. Fueled by copious mugs of black coffee, Lee Child squares off against the blank page (or, rather, computer screen), eager to follow his wandering imagination in search of a plot worthy of the rough and ready Reacher. While working in fits and starts, fine-tuning sentences, characters, twists and turns, Child plies Martin with anecdotes and insights about the life and times that shaped the man and his methods: from schoolyard scraps and dismal factory jobs to a successful TV production career and the life-changing decision to put pencil to paper. Then there's the chance encounter that transformed aspiring author James Grant into household name "Lee Child."

Parker, T Jefferson. [Full Measure](#) (\$15.99). Turning towards fiction exploring an Afghanistan vet who returns home to the foothills of San Diego and his family's avocado ranch exhilarated by freedom (and relief, seasoned with guilt), Parker paints a landscape that is vanishing—literally here since the ranch has burned in a wildfire and his family faces ruin. Plus Patrick Norris has to cope with his hero-worshipping brother Ted, a circle of criminal misfits who've drawn Ted in, a love affair, and finally, an agonizing choice about what he will make of his own life. This is an intense read where we experience pain and joy.

Patterson, James. [14th Deadly Sin](#) (\$16). With a beautiful baby daughter and a devoted husband, Detective Lindsay Boxer can safely say that her life has never been better. In fact (for a change), things seem to be going well for all the members of the Women's Murder Club as they gather to celebrate San Francisco Medical Examiner Claire Washburn's birthday. But the party is cut short when Lindsay is called to a gruesome crime scene, where a woman has been murdered in broad daylight. As Lindsay investigates, shocking video footage of another crime surfaces....

Poyer, David. [Tipping Point](#) (St Martins \$26.99). Captain Dan Lenson is under fire both at sea, and in Washington. His command of the first antiballistic-missile-capable cruiser in the Fleet, USS Savo Island, is threatened when he's called home to testify before Congress. There, he must defend his controversial decision to prevent a massive retaliatory missile attack by Israel against civilian targets in the Mideast. Shaken by the near-end of his career, Lenson returns to command uncertain of his own future, but determined to do his best by a damaged ship and an increasingly divided crew. Ordered to the Indian Ocean, Savo cruises off East Africa, protecting shipping lanes from pirates. But this seemingly-routine patrol turns ominous when an unknown assailant begins assaulting female crew members. But then, an explosive showdown begins between India and

Pakistan... with Savo Island, and her unique but not yet fully battle-ready ability to intercept ballistic missiles, standing alone between two nations on the brink of the first theater nuclear war. Dan will have to battle tsunami-driven seas, incoming weapons, and a quickly tilting balance of power, as China moves inexorably in her bid to displace America in the far Pacific. 15th in series by an author with an excellent command of the military thriller.

Pyne, Daniel. [Fifty Mice](#) (\$15). “At the start of this wonderfully paranoid jaunt through competing realities from Pyne (*Twenty-nine Palms*), Jay Johnson, an ordinary guy, is abducted at a Los Angeles subway station. A deputy U.S. marshal known as Public later informs him that he’s in the Federal Witness Protection Program because of a murder investigation. While Jay claims ignorance, it becomes apparent that his memories are easily forgotten, manipulated, or invented. He’s given a fake family as cover, and, as his life begins to resemble a performance art piece, layers of artificially reconstructed events begin to reveal their true nature. Even Santa Catalina Island, where Jay winds up, is like a film set, a Potemkin village populated by federal agents and witness protection program inductees. As Jay struggles to discover the truth, Pyne’s confident hand guides readers to a surprising, popcorn-dropping final twist.”—*PW*

Ramsay, Frederick. [The Vulture Signed](#) (Poisoned Pen \$26.99). “Ike Schwartz’s car is a smoking ruin on a Pickettsville, VA, street. As a former CIA operative and the current sheriff, Ike has his share of enemies, but who could be responsible for the bombing? Pickettsville launches an all-out investigation aided by Ike’s CIA colleague Charlie Garland. This is the tenth in this terrific police procedural series.”—*Library Journal*. Yes, the car is found just outside Pickettsville, Virginia, a smoking ruin of twisted metal and shattered glass. Ever since he left the CIA, the incorruptible Pickettsville sheriff has made enemies at home and abroad. Now, one has caught up with him, with a bomb powerful enough to turn quiet Main Street into a smoking crater. Is this a cop killing—or domestic terrorism? The town plunges into mourning, and Ike’s wife Ruth, the president of the local college, puts on a brave face as the sheriff’s department organizes a manhunt, the likes of which Pickettsville has never seen. Back at the CIA, Ike’s old colleague Charlie Garland joins the hunt, becoming fixated on a blurry videotape of the crime scene. Charlie’s elastic job description includes monitoring Ike’s life. Investigations—led by more than one player—fan around and out of Pickettsville as far as a small town in Idaho where Martin Pangborn, head of the radical militia called the Fifty-First Star, runs his organization. The Fifty-First Star may be too big to fail, but the Vulture is something no one, not even Martin Pangborn, is prepared for. “It takes a lot of high-tech tricks to uncover the truth. Ike’s 10th uses themes cut from current headlines to ramp up the excitement.” Trade paperback: [The Vulture](#) (\$15.95).

Roland, Gwen. [Postmark Bayou Chene](#) (LSU Press \$25.95). With James Lee Burke publishing a Holland and not a Robicheaux this month, I thought this Indie Next Pick might be welcomed by many of you: “As if a near-dead dog towed by an empty skiff wasn’t enough to rattle the village of Bayou Chene, a misdirected letter returns, dragging a host of secrets in its wake. In the ensuing fracas, three young friends find out that the perils of their swamp are tame compared to the vagaries of the human heart—territory more dangerous than a wad of cottonmouths in high water. Roland’s ear for dialogue and eye for detail bring the van-

ished community of Bayou Chene and the realities of love and loss on the river back to life in a well-crafted, bittersweet tribute.”

Starr, Jason. [Savage Lane](#) (Polis \$26). Patrick reviews: “Starr really returns to what he does best in this sly suburban noir. Set amidst a tony Westchester neighborhood where the residents have apparently achieved the American Dream, Starr’s forty-somethings are so wrapped up in their placebo lives of Pilates class, Ipads, and fat corporate paychecks that is it any wonder they aren’t ‘fulfilled?’ Karen Daily is a hot-to-trot middle-aged divorcee with a lot of secrets. Mark Berman is her ‘best friend’ but has a growing obsession with her that threatens to destroy his marriage to Deb, who, unbeknownst to him is having a kinky affair with an eighteen-year old. This train is on a disaster course from the opening scenes. What a blast...” The Signed Hardcover, sold out, is our **Hardboiled Crime Club Pick**.

Stein, Triss. [Brooklyn Secrets](#) (Poisoned Pen \$26.95) is the third investigation for Brooklyn historian Erica Donato. I love the solution to the crime. So does *Booklist*: “Brooklyn’s rich history comes to life in Stein’s wonderful descriptions, and Erica is an engaging tour guide.” See our December Trade Paperback Picks for more.

Tunaghe, Sheila. [The Odds of Getting Even](#) (Dial/Random \$16.99). The Indie Next Pick: “This much-awaited mystery in the series that began with the Newbery Honor-winning *Three Times Lucky*, followed by *The Ghosts of Tupelo Landing*, opens with sixth-grader Moses LoBeau—Mo—and her partner in the Desperado Detective Agency, Dale Earnhart Johnson III, preparing to testify at the trial of Dale’s father. Stoic and funny, this preteen ‘Steel Magnolia’ reaffirms that good sense, courage, and friendship carry the day. The third time is indeed the charm in this heartwarming series.” Ages 10+.

Watkins, Claire. [Gold, Fame, Citrus Signed](#) (Riverhead \$27.95). Patrick secured Signed firsts of a debut for a writer he thinks has serious promise. “In her powerful depictions of the scorched and merciless landscape, Watkins realizes a genuine nostalgia for our lost living world, and the American West in particular...[W]ith its damaged and complicated heroine and multiple voices, shifting perspectives, and unconventional narrative devices, [*Gold Fame Citrus*] is a wholly original work.”—*Library Journal* Starred Review

Williams, Beatriz. [Along the Infinite Sea Signed](#) (Putnam \$26.95). I came across this excellent short review so, since we still have signed stock, here it is: In 1966, a middle-aged Frenchwoman recounts to a single pregnant woman the story of her triangle with the Jewish man she loved and the German officer she married in 1935. Williams knows how to pour on the glamour--Parisian landmarks and luxury yachts feature prominently, and Annabelle’s debauched aristocratic family lives in decidedly genteel poverty. Headstrong Pepper also knows her way around high society despite her dire straits. Passionate and starry-eyed, Williams’ latest romance is a beautiful escape from everyday life.

THE COZY CORNER

Canadeo, Anne. [A Murder in Mohair](#) (Gallery \$15). In Canadeo’s cozy eighth Black Sheep Knitting Mystery, a cold-hearted murder in Plum Harbor leads the knitters to investigate a new psychic who may be far more dangerous than she seems

Coyle, Cleo. [Dead to the Last Drop](#) (Berkley \$26.95). After the White House asks coffeehouse manager and master roaster Clare Cosi to consult on the coffee service for a Rose Garden Wedding, she discovers a historic pot was used as a CIA “dead drop” decades before. Now long-simmering secrets boil over, scalding Clare and the people around her...

Hunter, Maddy. [From Bad to Worst](#) (Midnight Ink \$14.99). In Hunter’s busy 10th Passport to Peril mystery, Emily Andrew Miceli, the Iowa tour guide (and wife of a sexy Swiss former police inspector), leads a group of about 30 older adults to Germany, where the many musicians in the group will perform in Oktoberfest shows. An accident kills Astrid Peterson, a popular accordion player, after which things go seriously awry. “While there are a lot of people to keep track of, a few stand out, such as Emily’s mother, who has OCD and tries to alphabetize everything that holds still. And her outspoken Nana clearly could give Stephanie Plum’s Grandma Mazur a run for her money. Readers should be prepared for a fair amount of material that strains credulity. For example, practically everyone on the tour works for the same lock-and-key factory. Some will find all the mayhem charming, while others may want to burn their passports.”—*PW*. *Kirkus* adds, “Although the flying-accordion motif is at odds with the sad fate of its owner, the dexterously constructed plot saves this cozy from utter bathos.”

Oust, Gail. [Cinnamon Toasted](#) (St Martins \$25.99). This Southern cozy has a lot of charm, propelled by the voice of Piper Prescott, divorced wife of Brandywine Creek, Georgia, strutter CJ (about to marry former, and younger, beauty queen Amber). Her ex-mother-in-law arrives at Spice It Up!, Piper’s thriving spice shop (OK, suspend disbelief here, it’s a small town but apparently filled with affluent cooks), with news she’s about to get “filthy rich” off the sale of some software she’s developed to Trustychipdesign.com. It’s celebration time—and it’s also Oktoberfest, the annual town blast which of course means the townsfolk will devour Piper’s inventory. The company’s two principals arrive to seal the deal with Melly, but then of them, Chip Balboa, is found dead at the foot of Melly’s basement stairs. Suddenly she’s gone from toast of the town to hot suspect. Handsome police chief (handily single) Wyatt arrives and we roll from there.... [Kill ‘Em with Cayenne](#) (\$7.99) is Piper’s debut.

TOP TEN DECEMBER MASS MARKET PICKS

Blackwell, Juliet. [Give Up the Ghost](#) (NAL \$7.99) Haunted Home Renovation #6. Hired by San Francisco millionaire Andrew Stirling, contractor Mel Turner must employ her ghost whispering gift to uncover the secrets of his haunted Victorian mansion in which a beautiful psychic is found stabbed and an angry ghost keeps potential buyers from stepping foot inside the house. In addition to writing the Haunted Home Renovation series, Blackwell also writes the Witchcraft mystery series, and she has also branched out into women’s fiction this year with her marvelous novel *The Paris Key*.

Cass, Laurie. [Pouncing on Murder](#) (NAL \$7.99) Bookmobile Cat #4. When maple-syrup season is marred by the death of her favorite syrup provider, bookmobile librarian Minnie Hamilton and her rescue cat, Eddie, must tap into the clues to find the truth before someone else ends up in the same sticky situation. If you miss the Cat Who mysteries written by Lillian Jackson Braun, you might want to give Cass’s series a whirl.

DiSilverio, Laura. [Readaholics and the Poirot Puzzle](#) (NAL \$7.99) Readaholics Book Club #2. Amy-Faye Johnson and her fellow book club members take a page from Poirot to prove Amy’s brother’s innocence in the murder of his business partner, an investigation during which the truth becomes stranger than fiction. DiSilverio also writes the Mall Cop mystery series as well as the Swift Investigation series.

Hall, James W. [The Big Finish](#) (\$9.99) Thorn #14. Teaming up with the FBI to catch his son’s killer by setting himself up as bait, Thorn travels to a small North Carolina town to infiltrate a gang only to discover that nothing he has been told is true. *Booklist* had this to say about the latest Thorn “As always, Hall combines absurdist mayhem with remarkably subtle character interaction. Thorn is a stripped-down hermit version of Travis McGee, but like Trav, he makes a fine avenging angel.”

Hurwitz, Gregg. [Don’t Look Back](#) (\$9.99). Embarking on a rafting and hiking tour through southern Mexico, single mom Eve spots a man throwing machetes at a human-shaped target before finding a missing woman’s digital camera containing images of the same man. *LJ*’s take included “Hurwitz has crafted another satisfying thriller that will keep readers turning the pages to find out what happens next. A taut, smart, suspense-filled ride to satisfy the most discerning of thrill seekers.”

Knott, Robert. [Robert B Parker’s The Bridge](#) (\$9.99). Virgil Cole and Everett Hitch navigate numerous charges in the form of an ominous storm, a traveling theater group, dangers at a bridge construction site, a sheriff’s disappearance and a scheming band of night riders. *Booklist* has this to say “Knott’s third shot at recreating the Cole-Hitch partnership is by far the best. He’s getting a handle on Parker’s spare prose style, and the repartee between the two reflects the dry humor that helps bond them. There is also a very clever mystery mixed in, and the Seraphine subplot adds a Twilight Zone finish to an extraordinarily entertaining novel.”

Meltzer, Brad. [The President’s Shadow](#) (\$7.99) Culper Ring #3. Investigating human remains found in the White House’s Rose Garden, Beecher White discovers that the crime was committed as a warning to the president and to reveal dark truths about the death of Beecher’s father.

Mrazek, Robert. [The Bone Hunters](#) (NAL \$9.99) Finchem and Vaughan #2. When the 780,000-year-old remains of our earliest human ancestor inspires a new religion in China, the Chinese government dispatches operatives to find and destroy the world’s most priceless fossil, but the U.S. government has its own team on the hunt, led by Professor Barnaby Finchem and archaeologist Lexy Vaughan. Mrazek’s latest adrenaline-rich mix of intriguing historical facts and non-stop suspense is tailor made for fans of Steve Berry’s or David Gibbon’s thrillers.

NEW IN MASS MARKET PAPERBACK

Adler, Rebecca. [Here Today, Gone Tamale](#) (Berkley \$7.99) Taste of Texas #1. Retreating to Broken Boot, Texas, where she now works at her aunt and uncle’s popular Tex-Mex restaurant, former reporter Josie Martinez, after finding the dead body of a local jewelry designer, sets out to save the Wild Wild West Festival from being marred by murder.

Archer, Jeffrey. [Mightier Than the Sword](#) (\$9.99) Clifton Chronicles #5. In the aftermath of an IRA bombing, Harry Clifton uses his new literary station to raise awareness for his POW

friend while Giles Barrington works to secure a political career and Sebastian's past threatens his engagement.

Budewitz, Leslie. [Guilty As Cinnamon](#) (Berkley \$7.99) Spice Shop #2. When one of her potential clients is found dead, poisoned by a spice found in her shop, Pepper Reece, who makes flavorful seasoning blends while solving crimes, is stuck in the middle of a heated police investigation and decides to use all her senses to shake things up and catch the killer herself.

✚Carmack, Amanda. [Murder at Whitehall](#) (NAL \$7.99) Kate Haywood #4. When someone blackmails the queen and commits murder during the Christmas festivities at Whitehall Palace, Kate, Queen Elizabeth I's personal musician, must keep the royal guests entertained while trying to solve two mysteries and catch a killer who is playing out of tune. By the author of *Murder in the Queen's Garden*.

Childs, Laura. [Scorched Eggs](#) (Berkley \$7.99) Cackleberry Club #6. When a friend at County Services dies in an arson fire, Suzanne, Petra and Toni investigate a varied list of suspects before discovering links to a nearby casino and a dangerous secret.

Cook, JJ. [Fat Tuesday Fricassee](#) (Berkley \$7.99) Biscuit Bowl Food Truck #3. While feeding the masses and attending high-society soirees during Mardi Gras in Mobile, Alabama, food truck chef Zoe Chase throws fat into the fire when she investigates the wealthy members of a secret cabal who are trying to protect one of their own who may be a killer.

Copperman, EJ. [Ghost in the Wind](#) (Berkley \$7.99) Haunted Guesthouse #7. Guesthouse owner, single mother, and reluctant ghost whisperer Alison Kerby is about to sit down to movie night with her family and friends when she's struck speechless. Floating before her is the ghost of her musical idol, 1960s English rock star Vance McTiernan, who desperately needs help from Alison and her resident ghostly gumshoe, Paul Harrison.

Davis, Krista. [Murder Most Howl](#) (Berkley \$7.99) Paws and Claws #3. While running the Sugar Maple Inn during the town's weekend-long murder mystery game, which results in a real murder, Holly Miller, along with her Jack Russell terrier and calico kitten, must play dirty to catch a killer who doesn't play by the rules.

Gibbins, David. [Total War Rome: Destroy Carthage](#) (\$9.99). The story of Fabius Petronius Secundus— Roman legionary and centurion—and his rise to power: from his first battle against the Macedonians, that seals the fate of Alexander the Great's Empire, to total war in North Africa and the Siege of Carthage.

Higgins, Jack. [Rain on the Dead](#) (\$9.99) Sean Dillon #21. Investigating the attempted assassination of a former U.S. President, black ops specialist Sean Dillon discovers a link between the would-be assassins and a powerful associate from his distant past.

Husom, Christine. [The Iced Princess](#) (Berkley \$7.99) Snow Globe Shop #2. Curio shop owner Camryn Brooks and her BFF, coffee shop owner, Alice Nelson, find a real-life mystery brewing in their shop after Molly Dalton, a rich socialite who begs them for a job, is found dead.

McCoy, Max. [Giving Up the Ghost](#) (Kensington \$7.99) Ophelia Wylde. When telegraph keys across the country begin bursting into flames and chattering ghostly nonsense, the terror and turmoil is enough to bring the railways, banks, and news industry to

a standstill. There's only one person they can turn to: Mrs. Ophelia Wylde, a young widow turned detective who has famously brought murderers to justice by speaking to their victims on the other side.

Patterson, James. [Burn](#) (\$9.99) Michael Bennett #7. Back in the city that never sleeps, Detective Michael Bennett takes over a chaotic Outreach Squad in Harlem, where he receives an unusual call: a man claims to have seen a group of well-dressed men holding a bizarre party in a condemned building. With no clear crime or evidence, Bennett dismisses the report. But when a charred body is found in that very same building, the detective is forced to take the demented caller seriously.

✚Purser, Ann. [Suspicion at Seven](#) (Berkley \$7.99) Lois Meade #14. Cleaning business owner Lois Meade investigates the murder of a woman strangled with a silver necklace and discovered with a bag of costume jewelry beside her.

Tremel, Joyce. [To Brew or Not to Brew](#) (Berkley \$7.99) . As she prepares to open her own craft brew pub in Pittsburgh, Maxine O'Hara finds that crime is on tap as suspicious acts of sabotage and murder threaten to tank her brand-new business before it even opens.

Truman, Margaret. [Murder at the FBI](#) (\$7.99). Reissue Capital Crimes #6. Ross Lizenby and Christine Saksis investigate when the body of special FBI agent George Pritchard is found hanging behind the target at the Bureau's firing range.

Truman, Margaret. [Murder in Georgetown](#) (\$7.99). Reissue Capital Crimes #7. *Washington Post* reporter Joe Potamos is good at unearthing the skeletons in the nation's capital, so when he's assigned the story of a senator's daughter, whose body is found floating down the C&O Canal, he immediately senses this case is rife with secrets.

HISTORY/MYSTERY

Beard, Mary. [SPQR: A History of Rome](#) (Norton \$35). "Beard uses *S.P.Q.R.* to correct modern myths about the Romans and to examine carefully ancient myths that the Romans often accepted as historical fact. Beard's skillful exegesis of Rome's strange founding story reveals far more about the Roman character than dry retellings of countless military campaigns, and she characterizes Rome and its various contemporary chroniclers as unreliable narrators who reveal just as much as they obscure with their self-serving exaggerations, propaganda and outright lies. Beard recasts hoary old Romans as dynamic people and ancient history as a continuing conversation with distant, yet familiar, participants"—Hank Stephenson. Those of you who relish novels like those by Saylor and Davis and Scarrow, and John Maddox Roberts' SPQR series, would enjoy this.

Buckley, Christopher. [The Relic Master](#) (SimonSchuster \$26.95). The year is 1517. The Catholic Church under the Medici Pope Leo X has let the relic trade get out of hand. Dismas, a Swiss, is a relic hunter: one who procures "authentic" religious relics for wealthy and influential clients (the description of the 1517 Basel Relic Fair is hilarious). His two most important patrons are Frederick the Wise, Elector of Saxony, and Archbishop Albrecht of Brandenburg and Mainz. While Frederick is drawn to the recent writing of Martin Luther in his court headquarters in Wittenberg, Albrecht and his Brandenburg relatives have borrowed heavily from Augsburg banker Jacob Fugger and seek to

pay Fugger off from the profits of the trade and buy Albrecht a Cardinal's hat. When Albrecht's ambitions increase his demands for grander and more marketable relics, Dismas and his artist friend Albrecht Dürer conspire to manufacture a shroud to sell to the unsuspecting noble. Unfortunately Dürer's reckless pride exposes Albrecht's newly acquired shroud as a fake, so Albrecht puts Dismas and Dürer into the custody of four loutish mercenaries and sends them all to steal Christ's burial cloth (the Shroud of Chambéry, housed in the Duchy of Savoy), Europe's most celebrated relic. It is only when they reach their destination that they realize they are not alone in their intentions to acquire a relic of dubious legitimacy. Dropping you onto the cusp of the Reformation, satirist Buckley fills this rollicking novel with fascinating details about art, religion, politics and science; Vatican intrigue; and his signature wit making this novel both entertainment and a learning experience. I am hoping for signed copies.

Crowley, Roger. [Conquerors: How Portugal Forged the First Global Empire](#) (Random \$30). The bestselling historian of great seafaring empires turns to Portugal. Beginning in 1415, Portugal diligently explored sea routes around Africa and India, intent on creating a new non-Mediterranean course for trade, which resulted in a complete upheaval of the multireligious and multicultural governance of the Indian Ocean's trade routes. In a flowing narrative, he demonstrates kings João's and Manuel's high expectations of regional dominance, and brings to life the Portuguese explorers Vasco da Gama, Alfonso de Albuquerque, and Francisco de Almeida. Detailed descriptions address the high mortality of seafaring, and Crowley documents the turmoil inflicted upon native cultures as the Portuguese refused to compromise or give credence to local customs or the rank of non-Christians, even as they indulged in a side quest for a near-mythical Ethiopian Christian king. Surprisingly, there's no discussion of the Portuguese sailors' attitude toward Muslims after centuries of Moorish invasions and war on the Iberian Peninsula. Perfect for anyone who likes a high seas tale. FYI, a seminal reason the British entered India was because some of it came in the dowry of Katherine of Braganza when she married Charles II.

David, Saul. [Operation Thunderbolt: Flight 39](#) (LittleBrown \$30). On June 27, 1976, an Air France flight from Tel Aviv to Paris was hijacked by a group of Arab and German terrorists who demanded the release of 53 terrorists. The plane was forced to divert to Entebbe, in Uganda--ruled by the murderous despot Idi Amin, who had no interest in intervening. Days later, Israeli commandos disguised as Ugandan soldiers assaulted the airport terminal, killed all the terrorists, and rescued all the hostages but three who were killed in the crossfire. The assault force suffered just one fatality: its commander, Yoni Netanyahu (brother of Israel's current Prime Minister. "David paces the narrative effectively, cutting back and forth among Entebbe, Tel Aviv, and Israeli military establishments with occasional looks at events in other world capitals. With high tension and as many plot twists as any fictional thriller, this book is hard to put down."—*Kirkus Starred Review*

✎Entwistle, Vaughn. [The Angel of Highgate](#) (\$12.95). It is October 1859, and notorious philanderer Lord Geoffrey Thraxton cares for nothing except his own amusement. After humiliating an odious literary critic and surviving the resulting duel, he boasts of his contempt for mortality, and insults the attending physician. It is a mistake he will come to regret. When Thraxton

becomes obsessed with a mysterious woman who appears to him one fog-shrouded night in Highgate Cemetery, he unwittingly provides the doctor with the perfect means to punish a man with no fear of death...

Fiennes, Ranulph. [Agincourt: The Fight for France](#) (Pantheon \$26.95). Renowned polar explorer and British military veteran Sir Ranulph "brings a distinctive point of view to his recounting of the 1415 Battle of Agincourt, further underscored by the astounding number of participants to whom he's related. He begins with a flowing introduction to the period between the 11th century Norman invasion of England and the completion of Henry V's French campaign (which concluded with the Battle of Agincourt), followed by an insightful analysis of the strategy and logistics of the latter. Fiennes's even-handed descriptions of late medieval violence form a solid foundation for his occasional comparisons between Agincourt and various 20th-century war scenes. A nice collection of images of key figures helps readers navigate the various bouts of infighting on both sides, and illustrations of arms and armor give readers a feel for the martial technology of the time..."—*PW*

✎Friedman, Daniel. [Riot Most Uncouth](#) (St Martins \$24.99). George, Lord Byron, is leading the large and wastrel life at Trinity College, Cambridge, skirting its rule against dogs in students' rooms by keeping a large bear he calls "The Professor." It's 1807. When a young woman is found murdered in a local boarding house, Byron sees a chance to prove his genius by solving the case, unimpeded by police (there were none). Either you buy into Friedman's serio-comic voice, or you don't, but if you're a serious history buff, this isn't for you.

Gibb, Camilla. [The Beauty of Humanity Movement](#) (\$16). Dana reviews a book from 2012, calling this "a well written look at modern Vietnamese history told through the life of one man in Hanoi, introduced in the first line: 'Old Man Hu'ng makes the best pho [a kind of soup] in the city and has done so for decades.' He did from the shop left to him by his uncle when the French were in power, continued to do so after Uncle Ho and the communists forced him into the streets to sell from a push cart, did through the US bombings of December 1972, and still does today, when a young Vietnamese American woman named Maggie comes in search of news of her father. He was a member of an artists and writers' group, the Beauty of Humanity Movement, which met in Old Man Hu'ng's pho shop in the 1950s. The group was disbanded by Uncle Ho's communist party and either murdered or sent away to re-education camps, some never to be heard of again. There is a lot going on here, just for starters history from the Vietnamese side, a side we here in America seldom see. Read the whole review [here](#).

Gortner, CW. [Mademoiselle Chanel](#) (\$14.99). There are so many facets to Coco's life it has to challenge any biographer to collect and weave them together.

Greaves, Chuck. [Tom and Lucky and George and Flo](#) (Bloomsbury \$27). Greaves steps away from his terrific legal thrillers (akin to those of Michael Kahn) to set four real-life Jazz Age figures on a collision course. We witness Sicilian immigrant Salvatore Lucania becoming New York mobster legend Charlie "Lucky" Luciano; Nassau County lawyer George Morton Levy growing a reputation for being a peerless defense attorney; ambitious Thomas E. Dewey being named special prosecutor for New York County, with an

eye on the governor's mansion; and Cokey Flo Brown, a grifter, madame, and heroin addict, running a brothel in New York City. Greaves. Greaves delves into the "compulsory prostitution" trial of the notorious mob boss. While building the background of each character takes time, the result is a robust view of a highly flawed case. In an especially effective approach, Greaves opts to tell only Cokey Flo's story from the first-person perspective, lending the drug-addled con woman credibility and empathy while casting greater suspicion on both defendant and prosecutor. Still, Greaves doesn't let the reader forget Flo's motivations or her checkered history. There are no white hats in this New York courtroom. The trial transcript and character dialogue work to re-create the unsavory atmosphere of New York's mob network as well as the Depression-era privations. And the fastidious research enables Greaves to meld seamlessly the four lives into one engrossing story whether you like gangster fiction or historical, or just a good story.

✎Hays, Tony. [Shakespeare No More](#) (Perseverance \$15.95). Our **December History Paperback Pick** is a treat with the unsentimental look it takes at Will Shakespeare, his Puritan wife Anne, the death of his son and his daughter's unfortunate marriage. The tale is told through the eyes of Stratford Constable Simon Sadler, Will's lifetime friend who split when he found Will in bed with Peg, his wife. Still, it is Simon Will calls to his sickbed that April, 1616, to say he's been poisoned. And while Simon doesn't wish to be engaged, being still furious at being cuckolded, eventually he and the local doctor determine that Will had it right.... The story ties into malfeasance and worse at higher levels. It's interesting that many Stratford citizens are relieved rather than heartbroken at Will's death.

Henderson, Bruce. [Rescue at Los Baños](#) (\$15.99). In February 1945, as the U.S. victory in the Pacific drew nearer, the Japanese army grew desperate, and its soldiers guarding U.S. and Allied POWs more sadistic. Starved, shot and beaten, many of the 2,146 prisoners of the Los Baños prison camp in the Philippines—most of them American men, women and children—would not survive much longer unless rescued soon. Deeply concerned about the half-starved and ill-treated prisoners, General Douglas MacArthur assigned to the 11th Airborne Division a dangerous rescue mission deep behind enemy lines that became a deadly race against the clock. The Los Baños raid would become one of the greatest triumphs of that war or any war...

Hijuelos, Oscar. [Twain and Stanley Enter Paradise](#) (Grand Central \$28). "This vividly imagined and detailed epic about two giants of the 19th century is the product of over a decade of work; Hijuelos was still revising the manuscript up until his untimely death in 2013. In his late teens, the author became captivated by Sir Henry Morton Stanley and his extraordinary trajectory from a poverty-stricken Welsh orphan to a world-renowned explorer; Hijuelos also discovered that Stanley had a friendship with Mark Twain. Using third-person narrative, letters, and journal entries (all fabricated), and by bringing in Stanley's wife, the painter Dorothy Tennant, as a foil between the two men, the author brilliantly breathes life into Victorian times. Particular focus is paid to Stanley's early life in America, and an entirely concocted journey he took to Cuba with Twain in search of Stanley's adoptive father and namesake. Stanley, formal and somewhat rigid, though certainly erudite and keen for adventure, contrasts with Twain, the more relaxed and gifted speaker whose humor endeared him to audiences around the world."—*PW* Starred Review

Kilmeade, Brian. [Thomas Jefferson and the Tripoli Pirates](#) (Sentinel \$27.95). This is the little-known story of how a newly independent nation was challenged by four Muslim powers and what happened when America's third president decided to stand up to intimidation.

Messinger, Holly. [The Curse of Jacob Tracy](#) (St Martins \$25.99). This debut drops you into St. Louis, 1880, a town full of ghosts. Jacob Tracy, who nearly died at Antietam, can see them and remains haunted by the restless dead. He stays out of the areas they populate, guiding wagon trains westward with his pragmatic and skeptical partner, Baz. Then he gets an unusual job offer from a wealthy English bluestocking who wants Jacob to retrieve a friend's legacy from a nearby location. It sounds simple, but Miss Fairweather is harboring some dark secrets of her own.... A fusion of mystery and the paranormal I enjoyed.

Montillo, Rosea. [The Wilderness of Ruin](#) (\$15.99). "Delving deep into the history of Boston circa the 19th century, Montillo (*The Lady and Her Monsters*) unearths a riveting true-crime tale that rivals anything writers in the 21st century could concoct. Jesse Harding Pomeroy, an adolescent from a deeply troubled family, earns notoriety in working-class Boston and surrounding towns by kidnapping and torturing young boys. The sensational journalism of the period soon turns him into a subject of grotesque fascination in the city and beyond. After Jesse is apprehended by court order and sent off to reform school, his mother secures a commutation that returns the teenager to the city, with monstrous results. A masterly storyteller, Montillo skillfully evokes the poor and patrician neighborhoods that served as a backdrop for the crimes, particularly after the 1872 fire that ravaged the city center. The police investigations that tracked down Jesse are stunning in their similarity to modern-day sleuthing. Alongside the graphic, disturbing details of Pomeroy's crimes, Montillo chronicles the contemporary fascination with mental illness by writers such as Herman Melville, Oliver Wendell Holmes, and other paragons of 19th-century Boston. A host of doctors and lawyers also figure prominently in these pages, as they all try to understand what drove a young boy to commit horrific crimes that gripped a city for decades. B&W illustrations."—*PW*

Palombo, Alyssa. [The Violinist of Venice](#) (\$15.99). "A lovely book, engrossing and realistic. In simple, spare prose, Palombo gives life to an improbable romance between Vivaldi, the 'Red Priest' and Adriana D'Amato, the lovely daughter of a wealthy merchant. Music is Adriana's downfall—she falls deeply and passionately in love with the composer—and ultimately her salvation. The most compelling aspect of the novel is Adriana's love of music and the author's virtuoso descriptions of the Vivaldi's compositions. The passages are so evocative one can almost hear the ebb and flow of the music. We are in the hands of a not only a master story teller but also a dedicated music lover." —Roberta Rich I add that Vivaldi was ordained a priest in 1703 and from then to 1740 taught the violin at the Ospedale della Pieta where, inevitably, he had many young students.

Scarrow, Simon. [Britannia Signed](#) (Headline \$44). A new chapter in a long-running series set in Roman Britain. As Prefect Cato and Centurion Macro tramp the hillsides of western Britannia dreaming of their eventual return to Rome, the officers face daily threats that will test their courage to the full as they fight to protect their men and the Empire. Includes maps and charts.

Smith, Noble. [Sword of Apollo](#) (St Martins \$27.99). Greece has attracted far few modern storytellers than Rome, but here's one set in the 5th Century BCE. Nikias of Plataea has survived battle, shipwreck, and torture. But now the young warrior must face his greatest challenge: leading the people of his city-state on a desperate exodus to Athens while being hunted down by the largest Spartan expeditionary force in history.

✂Thomas, Sam. [The Witch Hunter's Tale](#) (\$15.99). The third chapter in an excellent 17th Century York series begins when winter descends on the city along with threats of witchcraft. In these tumultuous times, anything can set off fear and bring the harsh Puritan ethos down on... well, anyone. Widow and midwife Bridge Hodgson ought to be safe, protected by family, wealth, and exemplary good deeds, but no. As women and children die, a massive witch hunt builds, an elderly woman is executed on the testimony of Bridget's nemesis Rebecca Hooke, a former midwife, and Joseph, Bridget's ambitious Puritan brother-in-law, seeks to benefit from anti-witch hysteria, Bridget must make tough moral choices and decide what she will do, how far she will go, to protect her own. This will propel her into an interesting future as we will learn in March 2016 with book #4.

✂Weir, Alison. [The Marriage Game](#) (\$16). Weir joins those turning over the relationship between Elizabeth I and Sir Robert Dudley. We can't ever know the truth of it, what killed his wife Amy Robsart, why Elizabeth chose a single life (I often argue that Thomas Seymour seduced her in her youth and the result convinced her she was sterile, hence why marry?). Better by far to read the exciting PF Chisholm mystery [An Air of Treason](#) (\$14.95) which advances a new theory for Amy's death and is truly exciting.

✂Wilson, DK. [The Traitor's Mark](#) (Pantheon \$25.95). True: Hans Holbein, King Henry VIII's portrait painter, died in the autumn of 1543. A century later a chronicler reported that the artist had succumbed to plague, yet there is no contemporary evidence to support this. Suspicions have been raised over the centuries, but the mystery of what actually happened remains unsolved to this day. In the novel, Young London goldsmith Thomas Treviot is awaiting a design for a very important jewelery commission from Hans Holbein. When the design fails to turn up, Thomas sends a servant to track Holbein down, only to discover that the painter has disappeared. In his hunt for Holbein and the lost design, Thomas is led into a morass of dangerous political intrigue, Spanish spies and courtiers that is more treacherous than he could ever have anticipated...