

BOOKNEWS from

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December Booknews 2016
sales@poisonedpen.com tel (888)560-9919
http://poisonedpen.com

4014 N. Goldwater Blvd.
Scottsdale, AZ 85251
480-947-2974



Happy Holidays!

AUTHORS ARE SIGNING...

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

MONDAY DECEMBER 5 7:00 PM

Sophie Hannah signs [Closed Casket](#) (Harper \$26.99) 2nd “new” Poirot

TUESDAY DECEMBER 6 7:00 PM Publication Party

Mark Greaney signs [Tom Clancy: True Faith and Allegiance](#) (Putnam \$29.95)

WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 7 7:00 PM

Gini Koch signs [Alien Nation](#) (Daw \$7.99)

THURSDAY DECEMBER 8 7:00 PM

Matt Coyle signs [Dark Fissures](#) (Oceanview \$26.99) Rick Cahill Thriller #3

Pascal Marco signs [Render Safe](#) (San Tan Press 15.99)

SATURDAY DECEMBER 10 10:30 AM

Coffee and Crime: share your favorite holiday or 2016 mystery

SATURDAY DECEMBER 10 12:00-2:00 PM

A WRITERS WORKSHOP with Jane Cleland

Fee \$25, limited to 25

Includes a copy of [Mastering Suspense, Structure & Plot](#) (Writer’s Digest Books \$16.99) “A gold mine of information.”— Louise Penny

SATURDAY DECEMBER 10 2:00 PM

A Champagne & Cake Christmas party

Jane Cleland signs [Glow of Death](#) (St Martins \$25.99)

Josie Prescott Antiques #11

Ellen Crosby signs [The Champagne Conspiracy](#) (St Martins \$25.99) Virginia Wine Country Mystery #7

TUESDAY DECEMBER 13 Christmas Party

James Rollins signs [The Seventh Plague](#) (Morrow \$27.99)

Sigma Force #11

Our copies come with a special collectible!

Location: Hilton Resort 6333 N Scottsdale Road, Scottsdale AZ 85250

Time: Doors Open 6:00 PM, Program 7:00 PM

Free to attend. Cash Bar. Free valet parking.

THURSDAY DECEMBER 15 7:00 PM

Hardboiled Crime Club Holiday Party with Patrick

FRIDAY DECEMBER 16 7:00 PM

SciFi/Fantasy Club discusses MR Carey, [The Girl with All the Gifts](#) (\$16)

SATURDAY DECEMBER 17 10:30 AM

Croak & Dagger Club discusses JJ Farjeon’s [Mystery in White](#) (\$12.95)

Our top recommendation for Christmas-time reading!

HOLIDAY HOURS

December 23 10:00 AM-5:00 PM

Closed Christmas Day

December 31 10:00 AM-5:00 PM

Closed New Year’s Day

SATURDAY JANUARY 7 Program with Photos 7:00 PM

Douglas Preston signs [The Lost City of the Monkey God](#) (Grand Central \$28)

Location: Hilton Resort 6333 N Scottsdale Road, Scottsdale AZ 85250

Time: Kiva Room Patio Cash Bar Opens 5:30 PM Program 7:00

Free to attend. Free valet parking.

TUESDAY JANUARY 10 A Duo of Thrills

Thomas Perry signs [The Old Man](#) (Grove/Mysterious \$26)

Erich Wurster signs [The Coaster](#) (Poisoned Pen \$26.95)

WEDNESDAY JANUARY 11 A Trio of Thrills

Nicholas Petrie signs [Burning Bright](#) (Putnam \$26) Peter Ash #2

Brad Taylor signs [Ring of Fire](#) (Dutton \$27) Pike Logan #11

Ingrid Thoft signs [Duplicity](#) (Putnam \$25) PI Fina Ludlow #4

EVENT BOOKS

Cleland, Jane K. [Glow of Death](#) (St Martins \$25.99). Josie Prescott, who owns a well-regarded antiques auction house in the little New Hampshire beach town of Rocky Point, is delighted when wealthy Edwin and Ava Towson set up an appointment at their home. Ava invites Josie to examine a lamp that might be by Tiffany. Josie and Fred video it and pack it up to take it to Prescott's for a formal appraisal. If it's the real deal it will be featured on Josie's new TV show before going to auction. She is thrilled to declare it genuine and gain a chance to sell it for a million plus. Then while hosting an annual barbecue she's summoned to the Towson mansion by the police and is there stunned to discover the dead woman on the floor is a total stranger. This victim is soon identified by her sister Jean Cooper as Ava Towson, the real Ava. So who is the woman Josie interviewed? And who is the man who set up her visit? Jean then claims that Edwin killed Ava. And now the lamp returned to the home proves to be a respectable fake, one switched out for the one Josie authenticated. But she cannot prove Prescott's didn't make the switch. Involved as a witness, and now accused of wrongdoing, Josie furious about being used in the scam, resolves to find the truth.... Well plotted, full of fascinating detail, this compelling mystery delivers a real surprise! You can [order earlier Josie Prescotts](#) thanks to Jane's providing us with stock as many are out of print. By happy chance I've paired up Jane with Ellen Crosby for a program highlighting what I find to be the two best traditional mysteries of December.

Coyle, Matt. [Dark Fissures](#) (Oceanview \$26.95 Dec 8) Rick Cahill #3. Private Investigator Rick Cahill fears the next knock on his door will be a cop holding a warrant for his arrest. For murder. La Jolla Chief of Police Tony Moretti is convinced Rick killed a missing person. No body has been found, but the evidence that's piling up says murder and it all points to Rick. With Moretti on his tail and the bank about to foreclose, his house, Rick takes a paying case that will stave off the bank, but pits him against Moretti and the La Jolla Police Department. Meanwhile, Brianne Colton, a beautiful country singer, is convinced her estranged husband's suicide was really murder.... New in paperback: [Night Tremors](#) (\$16). **Our December Hardboiled Crime Pick.**

Crosby, Ellen. [The Champagne Conspiracy](#) (St Martins \$25.99). There's snow in the forecast in rural Virginia, and winemaker Lucie Montgomery is trying her hand at Champagne--or sparkling, as they say in the business. She's also looking forward to Valentine's Day with her boyfriend, Quinn Santori. But when Quinn's estranged cousin, prominent (and ruthless) vintner Gino Tomassi, turns up at Lucie's vineyard one frigid afternoon, he has a story that takes Lucie's thoughts off wine almost entirely. Ellen Crosby returns to the Montgomery Estate Vineyard and its warmhearted cast of small-town characters in her seventh Wine Country mystery, *The Champagne Conspiracy*. Crosby keeps the plot flowing like the wine she writes about, with likable characters, inclement winter weather and enough plot twists to keep readers guessing. For mystery buffs who enjoy wine, jazz and a juicy scandal or two. Along with the Jane Cleland, my favorite traditional mystery this month.

Greaney, Mark. [Tom Clancy True Faith and Allegiance](#) (Putnam \$29.95). Tom Clancy fans should welcome Greaney's fast-paced fourth solo Jack Ryan novel in which once again a small group of heroes tackles a daunting national security threat. Ryan is now president, and his son, Jack Ryan Jr., works for a covert group known as the Campus. Both are tested when an information leak leads to carefully planned hits on members of the military and the intelligence community, apparently carried out by ISIS. The proliferation and scope of the attacks somehow don't result in widespread panic. President Ryan is able to resist pressure to respond militarily, which he believes would play into the terrorists' hands. Meanwhile, Jack Jr., an analyst as well as a skilled field agent, races against time to forestall further loss of life by tracing the leak. Those who don't mind major improbabilities (America's director of national intelligence flies to Iraq to supervise an operation without notifying the president) will be more than satisfied. [Order earlier books by Greaney](#), author also of the Gray Man thrillers.

Hannah, Sophie. [Closed Casket](#) (Harper \$26.99). Our **December British Crime Club Pick**, recommended by Karen and John Charles who have both reviewed it in earlier Booknews (Sept. and Nov.). Here is *Kirkus*' take: "A famous Irish author of children's mysteries announces that she's just disinherited her family before a gathering that includes those very family members—along with Hercule Poirot. Invited for unknown reasons to spend a week in Lady Athelinda Playford's home, Lillieoak, in County Cork, Poirot and his new Watson, Scotland Yard detective Edward Catchpool, can only watch in astonishment as she tells her dinner guests that she's leaving her entire estate to Joseph Scotcher, her secretary. Viscount Harry Playford, his wife Dorothy, his older sister Claudia, and her fiancé the pathologist Randall Kimpton, are all aghast at the news that they'll be cut off without a farthing. But Poirot and Catchpool are even more surprised that Lady Playford has disinherited them all in favor of a man with Bright's disease who's been given only a short time to live—a man who greets the news of his unexpected windfall by instantly proposing marriage to his nurse, Sophie Bourlet...." The murder that swiftly follows brings in bullying Inspector Arthur Conree. "The climactic revelation that establishes the killer's motive is every bit as brilliant and improbable as any of Christie's own decorous thunderclaps." Follows Hannah's first "Poirot," [The Monogram Murders](#) (\$14.99).

For added fun, grab [Little Grey Cells: The Quotable Poirot](#) (\$16.99), a charming small volume compiled from Agatha Christie's mysteries.

Koch, Gini. [Alien Nation](#) (Daw \$7.99). It's a typical day of bureaucracy and stress for President and First Lady Jeff and Kitty Katt-Martini, made more stressful when alien spacecraft are spotted making a beeline for Earth, none of them from the Alpha Centauri system. Then a cryptic request from an old adversary pulls Kitty out of the White House and into an explosion—and an even more explosive situation. Not only is the Mastermind back in the game, influencing the Club 51 True Believers to find and destroy all Centaurion bases, but he's also found a dangerous benefactor and created some frightening new cloning abilities. And, just to make things a little more challenging, those alien spacecraft are

coming to ask Kitty for protection, and asylum on Earth. 14th in series. [Order earlier Aliens here.](#)

Marco, Pascal. [Render Safe Signed](#) (\$15.99). Mesa author Marco's main character, Maricopa County prosecutor Stan Kobe, returns from [Identity: Lost](#) (\$15) to revive a cold-case. The investigation of a decapitation send him stumbling into a domestic terrorism plot dealing with water and power supplies. "In a sprawling tale of the Southwest, *Render Safe* hurls Stan Kobe into a cauldron of violence, lies, and prejudices that tie cold cases and old hatreds with modern greed. A colorful palette of unforgettable characters brings to life all the complexities of a great city and an untamed frontier. Toss in international black ops, love affairs, and family loyalties for a page-turning entertainment that enlightens. Truly enjoyable. A wonderful book from a new author who addresses a lot of complicated issues important to our world and whose writing I admire a lot." —Gayle Lynds. "A "chilling tale of domestic terrorism in a charged thriller that cuts a disturbing fine line between fact and fiction."—Anne Wilson

Perry, Thomas. [The Old Man](#) (Grove \$26). Perry presents a gripping story of a man on the run – so perfect for those who love his Jane Whitefield stories. It's a standalone tale which is fortunate for those who have not yet read Perry but are dog lovers! For accompanying widower Dan Chase, a former Intelligence Officer, on his carefully executed moves from New Hampshire to Chicago to... well read it to see... are Dave and Carol, two splendid Black Labs who steal the book. Twenty years ago Dan was sent on a mission to Libya which failed. So did his efforts to return the \$20 million to his superiors (clearly men desiring complete deniability). So in disgust Dan kept the money at the risk of all that follows. Like Jane, Dan has plans and back-up plans that readers get to follow. Make up your own mind about his landlady in Chicago but keep in mind that Dan's true loves are Dave and Carol.

Petrie, Nicholas. [Burning Bright](#) (Putnam \$26). "The second book in Petrie's Peter Ash series about a vet returned from the Sandbox on the run from PTSD-induced claustrophobia—which is why he's out hiking in northern California, which is where he stumbles across a grizzly, which is why he climbs a redwood, on top of which he finds June, an investigative reporter on the run from hulking men in black SUVs who are extremely well armed. Finding out who these men are, who is paying them and how to thwart them makes this more of a gallop than a plot, but what a ride. Peter is that guy, the one you want in your corner when you're in real trouble, June is a marvelous match for him, and Lewis is back from the first book, which makes me very happy. Petrie's craft is such that even the cameo roles are memorable, like the ER doc. And Jerome at Nordstrom. And people we don't even meet. Although that last may have more to do with Chip the Asshole than the tech guys."—Dana Stabenow who also raved over Petrie's 2015 First Mystery Club Pick [The Drifter](#) (\$16), as did we all at The Pen.

Preston, Douglas. [The Lost City of the Monkey God](#) (Grand Central \$28). A five-hundred-year-old legend. An ancient curse. A stunning medical mystery. And a pioneering journey into the unknown heart of the world's densest jungle. Since the days of conquistador Hernán Cortés, rumors have circulated about a lost city of immense wealth hidden somewhere in the Honduran interior, called the White City or the Lost City of the Monkey God. Three

quarters of a century later, Preston joined a team of scientists on a groundbreaking new quest. In 2012 he climbed aboard a rickety, single-engine plane carrying the machine that would change everything: lidar, a highly advanced, classified technology that could map the terrain under the densest rainforest canopy. And so the fantastic journey began....

Our copies come with a photo of Doug on location! Check the book's webpage for special shipping savings.

Rollins, James. [The Seventh Plague](#) (Morrow \$27.99). Our copies of our **December Thriller Club Pick** come with a special collectible! This Starred Review is so good I had to quote it in its entirety: "Bestseller Rollins's epic 12th Sigma Force adventure after [The Bone Labyrinth](#) (\$9.99 or \$27.99 Signed) features exotic locales, heroic quests, quixotic villains, action galore, and enough science and scientific curiosities to titillate even casual readers. Archeologist Harold McCabe, who has been missing for two years, suddenly emerges from the Egyptian desert near death and dies before being able to say where he has been and what has happened. McCabe's body seems to be the source of a deadly pathogen that threatens to cause a pandemic. That thread sends one team—including McCabe's daughter, Jean McCabe; bio-archaeologist Derek Rankin; and Sigma Force's operative named Seichan and Commander Grayson Pierce—to Egypt and Sudan. Meanwhile, Safia al-Maaz, a senior curator at the British Museum, is kidnapped while speaking with Sigma Force director Painter Crowe in Washington, D.C., and Painter follows that line, which leads to the Arctic and a huge installation run by billionaire Simon Hartnell. A Russian assassin, Valya Mikhailov, matches skills and wits with Seichan, while Valya's assassin twin brother, Anton, does likewise with Crowe. Rollins's characters are as large as his landscape in this vast and vastly entertaining thriller saga." We have a wide range of Rollins' thrillers, some of them Signed. [Order here.](#)

I've mentioned a terrific book called [Atlas Obscura](#) (Workman \$35), by Joshua Foer, before. Here's a reminder of a companion read for Rollins: A survey of either obscure or completely forgotten places all over the planet, man-made and natural. A delight to page through. (And if you were an author looking for inspiration for a setting, this book would be the place to start.)

Taylor, Brad. [Ring of Fire](#) (Dutton \$27). Fifteen years ago, in order to win a contract in the Kingdom, a desperate defense contractor used a shell company to provide a bribe to a wealthy Saudi businessman. Now a powerful player in the defense industry, he panics when the Panama Papers burst onto the public scene. Providing insight into the illicit deeds of offshore financing, they could prove his undoing. To prevent the exposure of his illegal activities, he sets in motion a plan to interdict the next leak, but he is not the only one worried about spilled secrets. The data theft has left the Taskforce potentially vulnerable, leaving a trail that could compromise the unit. Back in the good graces of the new president, Pike Logan and Jennifer Cahill are ordered to interdict the next leak as well, in order to control the damage. Unbeknownst to either group, the Saudi has been using the shell company to fund terrorists all over the world, and he has a spectacular attack planned, coinciding with the fifteenth anniversary of 9/11. 11th in former Delta Force officer Taylor's thrillers. [You can order #1-10.](#)

Thoft, Ingrid. [Duplicity](#) (Putnam \$25). Fina Ludlow prefers the role of investigator at Ludlow & Associates to that of lawyer like

her father and brothers. Her family is bruising in its members' personal lives. And there was always going to be a day of reckoning when Rand, the oldest brother lawyer exiled to Florida for crimes committed in an earlier book, returns to Boston if not to their bosom. Fina is outraged. She's also hooked into an investigation requested by a long-ago lover of her father, Carl, head of the powerhouse family personal injury firm, who is worried that her heiress daughter is giving away wealth to the Covenant Rising Church. Fina's assignment is to vet the church and its luxe-living pastor and wife.... The church investigation produces little surprise but that of one of its members does. I much admire Fina's spirit and enjoy her narrative voice. [Order Fina's three earlier investigations](#). *Brutality* won last year's Shamus Award for Best PI Novel.

Wurster, Erich. [The Coaster](#) (Poisoned Pen \$26.95). A **First Mystery Club Pick** that has been awaiting the arrival of Kansas attorney Wurster whom I scheduled to sign with Thomas Perry as Tom lent his skills to editing the book. So you will gather it's a caper, an unusual one with a unique voice in narrator Bob Patterson. Bob, law-school trained but more or less the house-husband of a wife who works for her mega-rich father, considers himself an Everyman. Until his father-in-law has a surprise heart attack and the Pattersons' world gradually becomes up-ended. "Sharks appear, and Patterson battles them, but this is not a heartwarming story of one man's redemption through steady employment. As he learns what this corner of corporate America is really up to, Patterson reveals a treacherous streak of his own. The style is witty and knowing, as when Patterson wishes he had a cold-blooded but loyal killer chum to rescue him, just like those pop-novel detectives. The violent finale boils with surprises, all the while staying mordantly funny. A rumbustious read."—*Booklist*. Also in paperback: [The Coaster](#) (\$15.95).

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[Read details here](#), or email sales@poisonedpen.com. We are making one change: **The First Mystery Club will be one signed first per month, no more.** You can see the December selections to get an idea of the curated collection on our [Home Page](#).

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SIGNED BOOKS

✱Aaronovitch, Ben. [The Hanging Tree](#) (Gollancz \$36). Another gripping and hilarious adventure through the secret streets of London makes our December **Sci-Fi/Fantasy Pick**, a tour of "what remains and an insight into what once was" with a liberal sprinkling of folklore, myth and violent crime. The Tyburn gallows, aka The Hanging Tree, stood where Marble Arch stands today. The condemned made a last trip on Oxford Street. The place has a bloody and haunted legacy and now murder strikes in the empty Mayfair mansions of the world's super-rich. And blood mixed with magic is a job for Peter Grant. Peter Grant is back as are those who inhabit the Folly and the various river gods, ghosts, and spirits who attach themselves to Grant, England's last wizard and the Metropolitan Police's reluctant investigator of all things supernatural. You can [buy the Rivers of London series](#) (also called Peter Grant Series).

Arango, Sasha. [The Truth and Other Lies](#) (SimonSchuster UK \$25). We've reduced the price of this excellent First Mystery Club Pick, a *NY Times* Notable Book, for holiday giving. I love it. A literary crime thriller with "a clever plot that always surprises, told with dark humor and dry wit" (*The New York Times Book Review*, Editor's Choice), this brilliant debut follows a famous author whose wife—the brains behind his success—meets an untimely death, leaving him to deal with the consequences. Henry Hayden seems like someone you might admire, or even come to think of as a friend. A famous bestselling author. A loving and devoted husband. A generous and considerate neighbor. But Henry Hayden is a construction, a mask. His past is a secret, his methods more so. Only he and his wife know that she is the actual writer of the novels that made him famous. When his hidden-in-plain-sight mistress becomes pregnant, it seems his carefully conceived façade is about to crumble. And on a rain-soaked night at the edge of a dangerous cliff, his permanent solution becomes his most terrible mistake....

Block, Lawrence. [Sinner Man](#) (Hard Case Crime \$24). Lost for nearly 50 years, Block's first crime novel is republished with a pulp cover. To escape punishment for a murder he didn't mean to commit, insurance man Don Barshter has to take on a new identity: Nathaniel Crowley, ferocious up-and-comer in the New York mob. But can he find safety in the skin of another man...a worse man...a sinner man.... Block fans know that the prolific New Yorker wrote a lot of pulp fiction, some of it as a woman. There is an unsigned paperback edition: [Sinner Man](#) (\$9.99).

Church, James. [The Gentleman from Japan](#) (St Martins \$27). Read [a fascinating interview](#) with former spy "Church" whose new Inspector O novel earns this Starred Review: "This complex mystery involving seven deaths in one night kicks off Church's excellent sixth novel featuring enigmatic North Korean intelligence operative Inspector O. O has been living in exile in Yanji, China, with his cynical nephew, Major Bing, who heads that

city's office of the Ministry of State Security. Bing doesn't want any part in the investigation of the unexplained deaths of three elderly men at a noodle shop, two prostitutes behind a dim sum joint, a female tourist in a new Mongolian tearoom, and a well-dressed man in an upscale hotel restaurant. Contrary to Bing's wishes, police reports of the eatery-related fatalities have reached his ministry's headquarters in Beijing, forcing him to take a role. Bing must also fend off Yanji's corrupt mayor, who hopes to use Bing's failure to solve the case to get rid of him. Some unexpected turns lead to O taking part in an operation in Europe. The pseudonymous Church, himself a former spy, makes all the plot developments chillingly plausible." He's kindly signed all his excellent Inspector O's for The Pen.

✠Cornwell, Bernard. [The Flame Bearer](#) (Harper \$27.99). #10 in Cornwell's Last Kingdom Series. *Think Game of Thrones*, but real Saxon history.

Cussler, Clive. [Built for Adventure/Built to Thrill](#) (\$90 for the pair). A special holiday promotion from Clive for the two books loaded with photographs of his collection of classic cars. Semi-autobiographical too.

Estleman, Loren. [Brazen](#) (Forge \$26.99). If you love the movies and Hollywood history, this entertaining series for Valentino, UCLA film archivist and restorer of an old movie palace, is the perfect December read. Valentino uses his extensive knowledge of the minutiae of Hollywood history to help Lt. Ray Padilla of the LAPD track down a bizarrely motivated serial killer. It is Valentino who realizes that the first death, that of his lively if aging friend Beata Limerick, is not an accident, but stages the final moments of blond bombshell Marilyn Monroe. As the killer's work continues so do we see how many blond sirens met unfortunate ends. But what's the point here? Enjoy a troll through the past and Estleman's marshaling of movie trivia which he clearly loves. You could make up a quiz to challenge your friends.

✠Hall, MR. [A Life to Kill](#) (Macmillan UK \$41). The day they've all been waiting for is at hand. The last British combat soldiers in Helmand are counting the minutes until their departure for home. For their excited families in Highcliffe, it spells the end of an agonizing six month wait. But in the final hours, disaster strikes. Nineteen-year-old Private Pete 'Skippy' Lyons is abducted and the patrol sent out to locate him is ambushed. One killed, two injured. One still missing in action... Their loved ones are left desperate for answers the Army won't provide. How could Private Lyons have been snatched from a heavily fortified command post? And why are officers trying to disguise what happened during the mission to save him? Their only hope lies with Coroner Jenny Cooper, who must take on the full might of the military to stop the truth being buried along with the boy soldiers. But in a town filled with secrets and rumors, it's not only the Army that has something to hide.

Lamb, Wally. [I'll Take You There](#) (Harper \$25.99). The Indie Next Pick: "Lamb offers another nostalgia-fueled foray into the world of Felix Funicello, last seen in the hilarious and poignant *Wishin' and Hopin'*. This time around readers find Felix as a film studies professor in the present, being schooled by the ghosts of silent screen icons, all of them women. Through the magic of film, they reveal Felix's childhood and the stories of the unforgettable women who shaped him. Lamb, in his inimitable way, weaves a family 'dramedy' in the era of bobbysoxers and hidden

'women's problems,' with the 'rise of feminism and one man's history as a brother, husband, and father.'"

✠Parsons, Tony. [The Hanging Club](#) (Century \$32 – 5 copies left). While Dana Stabenow is here on her annual Thanksgiving visit she is, being a terrific reviewer, reminding me of excellent books you may have overlooked. Here is one. "This is one of those annoying books that leaves you wrestling with your own conscience, because you spend most of it rooting for the wrong guys. Detective Constable Max Wolfe watches as the judge at the Old Bailey gives three jobs a slap on the wrist for kicking a man to death on his own doorstep. It doesn't help that he's sitting next to the wife and children of the dead man. Then Max watches a video of a gang of four hanging a taxi driver who was a member of a group of men who kidnapped and raped girls. The body is found near Tyburn, one of the traditional hanging grounds of London. Two more executions are uploaded to YouTube, one of a man who ran down a child in his car and another who mugged an elderly veteran for drug money. Since justice cannot be found in the hands of the law, the Hanging Club has taken it into their own. Parsons challenges you to decide if Max should apprehend the Hanging Club or offer to hold their coats while they get to work. Or you do until they kidnap Max, who is in their eyes equally complicit in protecting the guilty by trying to hunt the Hanging Club down. Prose as spare as Robert Parker's at his best and enough ambiguity about Max's own motives to leave you wondering, not to mention a, well, I guess I'd call him a sidekick worthy of Mouse in Walter Moseley's Easy Rawlins books."

Sheck, Laurie. [Island of the Mad](#) (Counterpoint \$28). A poetic meditation on Russian literature, bubonic plague, Venice, and the multiverse. And how might all that hang together, you ask, of our **December Modern Firsts Club Pick**? "A Pulitzer Prize finalist in poetry and author of the reverberant *A Monster's Tale*, a rethinking of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, Sheck returns with a gorgeously written work that layers together strands of history in one bravura act. Her protagonist, a hunchback named Ambrose, physically fragile but mentally robust, is prompted by a mysterious missive to run off to Venice in search of a lost notebook. Past and present, history and literature all blend as Ambrose encounters Pontius Pilate, his unfortunate dog, the artist Titian, a lovely young woman named Freida convicted of murder in the past century, and characters from Mikhail Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita*. In addition, there are frequent scenes of Venice during the terrible 1575 plague, as doctors with their distinctively beaked plague masks swoop through the text. Finally, Ambrose arrives at San Servolo, the Island of the Mad, where an abandoned hospital has been turned into a conference center. There he finds papers from two former inmates that further complicate his quest. A dizzyingly inventive work that reveals a strong sense of human connectedness; highly recommended for anyone who doesn't want just plot."—LJ. "Compelling, mysterious and hard to shake...utterly one of a kind." —Junot Diaz

Schwalbe, Will. [Books for Living](#) (Knopf \$25.95). See Recommended NonFiction below.

Trevor, Noah. [Born a Crime](#) (Random \$28). Having thoroughly mined his South African upbringing in his standup comedy and monologues on *The Daily Show*, Noah here tells the whole story in this witty and revealing autobiography. Born to a black African mother and a white Swedish father, Noah violated the Immoral-

ity Act of 1927, which outlawed interracial relationships. Though apartheid ended a decade after Noah's birth, its legacy lived on in the country's nigh-inescapable ghettos and perpetual racial conflicts, continuing to affect his life as he came of age. Noah's story is the story of modern South Africa; though he enjoyed some privileges of the region's slow Westernization.

ESCAPE INTO BRITISH LIBRARY CRIME CLASSICS

Bude, John. [The Lake District Murder](#) (Poisoned Pen \$12.95 in stock now).

When a body is found at an isolated garage, Keswick PD's Inspector Meredith is drawn into a complex investigation where every clue leads to another puzzle: was the carbon-monoxide poisoning death of a partner in a small garage a suicide, or something more sinister? The man's clean hands argue against fitting a dirty hose to the exhaust and threading it into the car. Meredith persuades his superiors to order a post mortem. As he proceeds methodically from murder to suspects to alibis to motive, what seems a plodding investigation delivers a real surprise! Stick with it to get there. It's also a surprise to learn just how small an amount of money constituted a prize in 1935. This classic mystery novel is set amidst the stunning scenery of a small village in the Lake District. It is now republished for the first time since 1935 with an introduction by the award-winning crime writer Martin Edwards.

And due in late December:

Bude, John. [The Cheltenham Square Murder](#) (Poisoned Pen \$12.95). Originally published in 1937, this reissue in the British Library Crime Classics series is a clever closed-circle-of-suspects whodunit. The setting, a residential square in the town of Cheltenham Spa, consists of 10 houses arrayed in a U shape. Bude (1901–57) sets the stage for murder by introducing the residents, including a clergyman, a doctor, and a bank manager, who are engaged in a passionate debate about whether a large ancient elm tree in one of the square's corners should be cut down. The enclave is known as Archery Nook, because so many of the residents are skilled archers, which becomes significant when one of them is shot through the head by an arrow. Fortuitously, Superintendent Meredith of the Sussex County Constabulary is in the square at the time, visiting an old friend who's a mystery writer, and is able to lend his skills to the local police. That the shooter used a barbed arrow suggests the killing was intentional. "... Bude keeps the surprises coming."

Crofts, Freeman Willis. [Mystery in the Channel](#) (Poisoned Pen \$12.95). At the start of Crofts's solid seventh procedural featuring Scotland Yard's Inspector French, first published in 1931 (after *Sir John Magill's Last Journey*), a steamship encounters a yacht adrift in the English Channel. Aboard the smaller boat are the corpses of two men, who were partners in Moxon's General Securities, an investment firm. The Sussex County Constabulary calls on French to investigate. The grim find comes after the firm declared a deficit of about £8 million, causing a panic on the British Stock Exchange. A third partner and the accountant have gone missing as well. French methodically evaluates means, motive, opportunity, and the proffered alibis, after concluding that the killer was no stranger to his victims... "it's one of Crofts' better efforts, redeemed by touches of humor (e.g., French's greatest friendship on the force 'survived perhaps the greatest test which could have been imposed on it, a walking tour in the Scottish highlands lasting for ten days')."

Edwards, Martin. [Crimson Snow: Winter Mysteries](#) (Poisoned Pen \$12.95). "Edwards's second winter-themed anthology after 2015's [Silent Nights: Christmas Mysteries](#) (\$12.95 in stock now) in the British Library Crime Classics series is a standout. As in the most successful of such volumes, the editor's expertise results in a selection of unusual suspects, expanding readers' knowledge. The longest and best of the 11 selections is by Victor Gunn, whose "Death in December" features Bill "Ironsides" Cromwell, an endearingly irascible Scotland Yarder. Ironsides joins a young colleague on a family visit to Derbyshire, only to encounter multiple impossibilities, starting with a man who crosses their path without leaving footprints in the snow and continuing with the appearance, and disappearance, of a bloody corpse from a locked and supposedly haunted room. Fergus Hume, best known for the novel *The Mystery of the Hansom Cab*, offers a nice whodunit with supernatural trappings in "The Ghost's Touch." More familiar contributors include Margery Allingham and Julian Symons. Edwards even offers an entry with a challenge to the reader, "Mr. Cork's Secret," featuring Macdonald Hastings's canny insurance investigator, which originally came with a cash prize for the most logical solution."—*PW* Starred and Boxed Review, meaning the editor gives it an A++.

MORE ESCAPE READING

✠James, PD. [The Mistletoe Murder and Other Stories](#) (Knopf \$24). "Four short stories, two featuring Adam Dalgliesh, and the first and last country house murders in the very best tradition of Golden Age British mysteries, deliberately so. "The Mistletoe Murder" has a great "Aha!" at the end, "A Very Commonplace Murder" is not commonplace and not a single murder and will leave you a creep of horror across your skin, "The Boxdale Inheritance" is a perfectly lovely little piece of bait-and-switch with the only sympathetic portrayal of a blackmailer I have ever read, and in "The Twelve Clues of Christmas" James and Dalgliesh both have their tongues firmly in their cheeks throughout. An excellent stocking stuffer for the lover of classic crime."—Dana Stabenow

✠Kinsey, TE. [A Quiet Life in the Country](#) (\$15.95). Recommended for escape and if you are missing *Downtown* (with a subversive spirit). Emily, Lady Harcastle and maid/paid companion/best friend/Jane of all trades Florence Armstrong (think of Bunter in a skirt) move from London to the rural village of Chipping Bevington in pursuit of a quiet life. Alas or hooray, almost the very first thing they stumble over is the body of a young cricketer hanging from a tree, meant to look like suicide but speedily proven by Lady Harcastle's acute observation to be homicide. The joy of this book is less about the murder(s) and more about tantalizing the reader with Emily and Flo's story before they settled into Edwardian country life. Fun—and an obvious first in series, with plenty here to mine for future books.

RECOMMENDED NONFICTION

If Travel Books light you up, [read the NY Times round-up](#) of 2016's best books to take along, or explore to sit and dream. Note that one of our top Gift recommendations, Foer's [Atlas Obscura](#) (\$35), makes the list with a rave.

Abrams Editors. [Vincent Van Gogh: The Lost Arles Sketchbook](#) (Abrams \$85). "The most revolutionary discovery in the entire history of Van Gogh's oeuvre. Not one drawing; not ten, not fifty, but sixty-five drawings."—Ronald Pickvance, from the Foreword.

Late in life, during his time living in Provence, Vincent van Gogh kept a sketchbook within a humble account ledger given to him by Joseph and Marie Ginoux, the owners of the Café de la Gare in Arles. This artifact of incalculable historical and aesthetic value remained hidden for more than one hundred and twenty years. It reappears today as a revelation and an extraordinary treasure.

Avery, Kevin. [It's All One Case](#) (Fantastic \$39.99). Leslie Klinger recommended the illustrated Ross Macdonald archives produced here highly!

Bhattacharjee, Yudhijit. [The Spy Who Couldn't Spell](#) (NAL \$27). “Brian Regan was an all too human spy, a trailblazer in the digital age—a mole who managed to squirrel away thousands of classified documents—and a brilliant, dyslexic cryptologist who was caught in part because he couldn't spell. Yudhijit Bhattacharjee has penetrated the FBI and other parts of the intelligence community to write this fantastic true story—a captivating, gracefully-written narrative that is destined to become a classic in the history of code-breaking.”—Kai Bird, Pulitzer Prize-winning Author of *The Good Spy: The Life and Death of Robert Ames*. Alongside news of WikiLeaks, Snowden disclosures, the Panama Papers, *The Spy Who Couldn't Spell* is as real as it gets. Cryptography, hard drive scrubbing, server spoor tracking, old-school surveillance tails and wiretaps, psychological profiling and high-definition courtroom drama: Bhattacharjee tells a story that would make a kickass movie.”—*ShelfAwareness*. Read Lesa's fun [blog post](#) on this book.

Collins, Lauren. [When in French: Love in a Second Language](#) (Penguin \$27). Try looking at immigration from the point of view of an American staff writer for *The New Yorker* who after relocating to London falls for a Frenchman who courts her in English. What was this like for him? And then they move to Geneva. The Swiss have four languages, Geneva being Francophone. So Lauren learns French (with many a slip) and then faces the rigorous examinations for those wishing to earn a French passport. Entertaining for those who love words, but also worth contemplating in this tumultuous age. Naming this one of the best Nonfictions of 2016, the *NY Times* adds that Collins “writes a very personal memoir about love and language, shrewdly assessing how language affects our lives.”

Hustvedt, Siri. [A Woman Looking at Men Looking at Women](#) (SimonSchuster \$35). What are we? Biology, mind, imagination? In these essays, Hustvedt examines the problematic underpinnings of current scientific fads such as evolutionary psychology and computational theory of mind. Her lengthy exercise in phenomenology provides a dense, succinct overview of the mind/body problem, which “has haunted Western philosophy since the Greeks.” The questions that preoccupy Hustvedt are the questions of a novelist, but they take consciousness itself as their subject: Where do ideas come from? How do stories get created? What is reflective self-consciousness, and how is it formed? What role do imagination, emotion, memory, and the unconscious play in this thing we call mind? The book conveys the wide range of Hustvedt's reading as she focuses on the interstices between people; between disciplines; and between concepts such as art and science, truth and fiction, feeling and perception. The research is sound and the scholarship engaging, and the exacting prose turns humorous and almost warm when Hustvedt incorporates her personal reflections, exhibiting, as she says of the artist Louise Bourgeois, “a quick mind, interested above all in its own contents.”

Lewis, Michael. [The Undoing Project](#) (Norton \$28.95). Forty years ago, Israeli psychologists Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky wrote a series of breathtakingly original studies undoing our assumptions about the decision-making process. Their papers showed the ways in which the human mind erred, systematically, when forced to make judgments in uncertain situations. Their work created the field of behavioral economics, revolutionized Big Data studies, advanced evidence-based medicine, led to a new approach to government regulation, and made much of Michael Lewis's own work possible. Kahneman and Tversky are more responsible than anybody for the powerful trend to mistrust human intuition and defer to algorithms. Here is the story of a compelling collaboration between two men who have the dimensions of great literary figures. They became heroes in the university and on the battlefield—both had important careers in the Israeli military—and their research was deeply linked to their extraordinary life experiences. The workings of the human mind is explored through the personalities of two fascinating individuals so fundamentally different from each other that they seem unlikely friends or colleagues. In the process they may well have changed, for good, mankind's view of its own mind.

Lindblad, Sven-Olav. [The Arctic](#) (Rizzoli \$50). Some of the most stunning photography of the Arctic ever published—before it vanishes. Inspired by the success and critical acclaim of *Ice: Portraits of Vanishing Glaciers*, Lindblad focuses on documenting the Arctic at the most critical period for the region in history—as it faces global warming and expanding international exploration. Stunning scenery, magnificent wildlife, and native cultures bring the Arctic to life in this unparalleled, panoramic collection of photography.

Marshall, Tim. [Prisoners of Geography: The Maps That Tell You Everything You Need to Know about the World](#) (Scribner \$26). In the bestselling tradition of *Why Nations Fail* and *The Revenge of Geography*, an award-winning journalist uses ten maps of crucial regions to explain the geo-political strategies of the world powers. All leaders of nations are constrained by geography. I wrote a thesis at Stanford in 1962 about Russia's eternal quest for a warm-water port (happening now thanks to global warming). “A brisk, well written, continent by continent (excluding Australia) survey of how geography is destiny, beginning with Putin going down on his knees every night to ask God why He didn't put mountains in Ukraine. I really liked the way Marshall organized it, too. The third chapter is about good old US, and it had not previously occurred to me that geography is why we are who we are. I mean, yeah, I understand about the insulating effect of being between two oceans, but Marshall says that if someone had sat down and drawn the perfect base for world domination, they would have come up with, you guessed it, US. Partly this is because of all that wonderful farmland but it's also partly because we're home to the world's longest navigable rivers, so we can get all that grain to market. He lays out why the entire continent of Africa is becoming a Chinese colony, and the chapter on India and Pakistan is a pocket history of the region and it will not cheer you to learn that, again, geography. Marshall is a BBC journalist who knows how to get to the meat of the story in efficient, competent prose that still makes for an enthralling read. Not a needless word anywhere. Highly recommended.”—Dana Stabenow and, in October, by me.

Phaidon Editors. [Plant: Exploring the Botanical World](#) (Phaidon \$59.95). It combines photographs and cutting-edge micrograph scans with water colors, drawings, and text. Carefully selected by an international panel of experts and arranged in a uniquely structured sequence to highlight thought-provoking contrasts and similarities. “Every once in a while, a book comes along that stops us in our tracks both with the content and the visuals. *Plant* is such a book with its perfectly-executed compilation and celebration of botanical art in all media and throughout history. *Plant* may start on your coffee table, but it won’t stay there for long.” —*Flower Magazine*

Sobel, Dava. [The Glass Universe](#) (Viking \$30) tells a long overdue story, spanning the last decades of the 19th century and into the 20th, of six remarkable women who worked at the Harvard Observatory examining and analyzing the glass plate images of the heavens taken through powerful telescopes in Cambridge and Peru. Hidden heroines of astronomy, these women discovered thousands of celestial objects, developed a classification system for the stars that is still in use today, determined a way to measure distances across space, and thereby shaped our awareness of our place in the cosmos. Their collective story, so eloquently chronicled by Dava, is full of wonder. “Sensitive, exacting, and lit with the wonder of discovery.” —Elizabeth Kolbert, Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *The Sixth Extinction*. “This is intellectual history at its finest. Dava Sobel is extraordinarily accomplished at uncovering the hidden stories of science.” —Geraldine Brooks. “[Sobel] soars higher than ever before. . . [continuing] her streak of luminous science writing with this fascinating, witty, and most elegant history. . . *The Glass Universe* is a feast for those eager to absorb forgotten stories of resolute American women who expanded human knowledge.” —*Booklist* Starred Review

Schwalbe, Will. [Books for Living Signed](#) (Knopf \$25.95 late December). In his second memoir, Schwalbe presents a collection of brief, insightful essays on the titles that have transformed his life: classic novels and children’s stories, esoteric volumes of Chinese philosophy and practical writing advice. He begins with an unusual but aptly titled choice: *The Importance of Living* by Lin Yutang, a text of idiosyncratic philosophy and advice for living, published in the 1930s by a Chinese man who later lived in the U.S. and Europe. Lin’s work reappears several times throughout Schwalbe’s narrative, as he describes his library and the memories associated with each book in loving detail. He says, books “helped me choose my life. . . . Books saved the life I have.” Schwalbe considers them through the lens of a particular topic: Searching (*Stuart Little*), Remembering (*David Copperfield*), Being Sensitive (Anne Lamott’s *Bird by Bird*). Along the way, he shares memories both amusing and poignant, and celebrates the ability of books to provoke, delight, inform and raise questions (or answer them) at the right time.

Sweet, Melissa. [Some Writer](#) (Houghton \$18.99). A “biography” (and a beautiful, sensitive, and informed one) of E.B. White, longtime feature writer at *The New Yorker*, co-author of *Strunk and White’s Elements of Style*, and author of among his many books the children’s classics *Charlotte’s Web* and *Stuart Little*. Sweet’s genius is to make every page a collage of photos, images, quotes, and more – so rich, so charming. My highest recommendation for readers, writers, and historians! For White’s was very much a 20th Century life. Read Lesa’s informative [blog post](#) about this enchanting book, our top gift recommendation.

Watson, Courtney. [Hokusai Pop-Ups](#) (Thames & Hudson \$29.95). Courtney Watson McCarthy has produced a lovely, oversize book. *The Great Wave* ripples open, and five other famous Japanese paintings captivate every eye. Rob has a print of *The Great Wave* that we bought in a famous print-maker studio in Kyoto hanging in his office.

RECOMMENDED FOR YOUNGER READERS

Barnett, Mac. [How This Book Was Made](#) (Disney \$17.99). A story arises from the process of making a book. The creators of the metafictional romp *Chloe and the Lion* return with another picture book all tangled up in the story of its own creation. After introducing the two cut paper-and-pencil protagonists, Mac and Adam, the narrative proceeds with the steps of Mac’s writing process: dozens of drafts, revisions with the editor, Adam’s illustrations, and even printing and shipping from Malaysia. But from the mixed-media cover art to the closing tiger-print endpapers, Barnett and Rex’s surreal digressions and visual humor ensure that the tale will not follow a straightforward course. (At one point, illiterate pirates hijack the story for a single spread before vamoosing because they don’t read.) Rex’s artwork features paper models and a painted globe in addition to the pencil-drawn figures, lending the work the three-dimensional texture of a puppet play. “I loved it. Kids reading this book will be fascinated by all that went into making the object they hold in their (grubby?) little hands. And they’ll be reassured that it takes a lot of work and patience to make any piece of literature.” —*N Y Times Book Review* recommending for ages K-Gr. 4. Parents may need to do a bit of explication.

Bogart, Jo Ellen. [The White Cat and the Monk](#) (Grand Central \$18.95). Bogart interprets a medieval Irish poem, “Pangur Ban.” A solitary, scholarly monk observes the cat living in his cell. The monk records the similarities between the cat’s pursuits and his own, creating a quietly powerful story about work, companionship, and the things that sustain—whether knowledge, faith, or a tasty mouse. A combination of panel sequences and full-page scenes, Smith’s ink-and-watercolor illustrations are dominated by moody browns and grays, with occasional bursts of color in the monk’s illuminated manuscripts; the cat’s playful curiosity and mutual tenderness with the monk add notes of light and humor. Bogart doesn’t emulate the rhyming couplets of the source material, instead writing in subtle, straightforward sentences: “We are each content, with all we need to entertain us.” Despite the reflective tone, text and art move readers swiftly through the story, which builds to a seeming epiphany for the monk. It’s a sophisticated and subtle story about the pursuit of joy—one that will easily resonate with readers young and old.” —*PW* Starred Review for ages 4+

Gibbs, Stuart. [Spy Ski School](#) (SimonSchuster \$16.99). *Kirkus* reviews: “Eleven months and several life-threatening adventures into his spy training, 13-year-old Benjamin Ripley is being activated as a primary agent on his first official mission. Ben, his not-so-secret crush, Erica Hale, and a host of their fellow classmates from the CIA’s Academy of Espionage are being sent to Vail, Colorado, over winter break to gather intel on Leo Shang, a Chinese billionaire businessman and potential nefarious mastermind with his sights set on the United States. To do this, Ben must befriend Shang’s daughter, Jessica, at ski school, which seems easy enough until his handsome best friend from home turns up unexpectedly and inadvertently threatens to ruin the

entire plan and blow Ben's cover. Fans of the series will enjoy spending time with Ben, Erica, and a host of secondary characters that are finally given a chance to shine, most notably Ben's friend Mike." Book #4 in the series for ages 8-12. Buy the first 3 in one volume: [The Spy School Collection](#) (\$23.99).

Haig, Matt. [A Boy Called Christmas](#) (Random \$16.99). Nobody knew until now that long ago, an "ordinary boy called Nikolas, living in the middle of nowhere, or the middle of Finland, doing nothing with magic except believing in it" would wind up as jolly old Saint Nick. A woodcutter's son living in the second-smallest cottage in Finland with scarcely a carved turnip doll to call his own, 11-year-old Nikolas is accustomed to making the best of rough circumstances. But when his father goes off on an elf-finding expedition and leaves him in the care of his evil, ancient aunt ("Hardly anyone lives to be forty-two"), Nikolas reaches his limit. He and the cottage mouse, Miiika, who believes in cheese though he's never seen it, set off to the Far North to find his father and to see if the elves his father seeks are real. The journey is perilous and heartbreaking, but ultimately transforms Nikolas into a man who understands the flaws and frailty of humankind (not to mention elves, pixies and trolls). Father Christmas's backstory is revealed in British author Matt Haig's fantastic tale of magic, treachery, disgruntled elves, Truth Pixies and a land where "impossible" is a swear word. Ages 8-12+

Jeffers, Oliver/Sam Winston. [A Child of Books](#) (Candlewick \$17.99). The Indie Next Pick: "This book is a quiet and powerful homage to the transformative power of children's literature. Readers follow a young girl as she travels a sea of words to collect a boy in need of an adventure. The imaginations of both the reader and the boy bloom under the guidance of the young girl, and by journey's end everyone becomes a Child of Books. Jeffers' colorful illustrations draw new and familiar fans alike into the story, while Winston's typographic scenery holds many rewards for the careful and observant reader."

OUR DECEMBER TRADE PAPERBACK PICKS

Bowen, Rhys. [Away in a Manger](#) (\$15.99 Signed copies while they last). Molly Murphy Sullivan is looking forward to an uneventful holiday season with her husband, baby, and her ward Bridie. She and Bridie are out shopping when they hear a beggar girl with an angelic voice singing "Away in a Manger." They're drawn to helping the girl and then her brother, but it soon becomes apparent that these children are victims of a larger scheme involving the scions of Gotham society. Molly will have to tread carefully as she seeks the truth and tries to find the children's family. Full of historical details and holiday spirit, this makes an excellent Yuletide read. And don't overlook her delightful [The Twelve Clues of Christmas](#) (\$7.99)—a country house party for Lady Georgiana that's murder—actually, several of them.

☞Boyd, Damien. [Death Sentence](#) (Thomas & Mercer \$15.95). The body of an elderly man found in an abandoned World War Two pillbox beside the Bridgewater and Taunton Canal kicks off the 6th entry in a superior British police procedural. With no obvious motive and no credible suspect, DI Nick Dixon starts digging into the victim's past. The more he digs, the deeper Dixon is drawn into a case that takes him off the grid into military and regimental links to the Falklands war, into local and London offices, and deep into the cave systems beneath rural Somerset as he relentlessly pursues a shadowy case filled with treachery and

twists. I can't believe I've missed the 5 earlier DI Nick Dixons (doesn't that have a classic ring?) so I'm wasting no time ordering them for both me and The Pen. [As The Crow Flies; Head in the Sand; Kickback; Swansong; Dead Level](#) (\$15.95 each).

Crouch, Blake. [Good Behavior Signed](#) (Thomas & Mercer \$15.95). Fresh out of prison and fighting to keep afloat, Letty Dobesh returns to her old tricks burglarizing suites at a luxury hotel. While on the job, she overhears a man hiring a hit man to kill his wife. Letty may not be winning any morality awards, but even she has limits. Unable to go to the police, Letty sets out to derail the job, putting herself on a collision course with the killer that entangles the two of them in a dangerous, seductive relationship. Good Behavior comprises three interlinked novellas (*The Pain of Others*, *Sunset Key*, and *Grab*), which together form a novel-length portrait of Blake Crouch's all-time favorite character creation, Letty Dobesh, who is being played by Michelle Dockery in the new TNT series. Crouch scored a huge bestseller this year with science-fiction thriller [Dark Matter](#) (\$26.95).

Gentill, Sulari. [A Decline in Prophets](#) (Poisoned Pen \$15.95). Rowland Sinclair Mystery #2 after [A Few Right Thinking Men](#) (\$26.95 or \$15.95). There's an Evelyn-Waugh-meets-Agatha-Christie feel about this series. It's now 1932 and the Australian bohemians are sailing back home from Europe and New York aboard RMS *Aquitania*. See the full review under New Books below. Reviewers call this series a "witty and insightful glimpses of the Australian bourgeoisie of this period" and "a delightful period piece." It begins in 1931 while Phryne Fisher sticks to 1929 in the Kerry Greenwood series we also publish.

Haas, Derek. [A Different Lie](#) (\$14.95). Now a new dad, the infamous Silver Bear finds himself staying up late for feedings and changing diapers while leading the double life of a contract killer. He enjoys his gig, but a child forces him to weigh selfishness versus safety. When the next assignment comes in, both Columbus and Risina are surprised to find that the mark is another assassin: a brash, young killer named Castillo. Castillo is an assassin on the rise. Even Columbus is impressed by his tenacity and talent. As he closes in on his target, he realizes that Castillo is a younger version of himself. It's almost like looking in a mirror. Castillo has even studied Columbus's work. But Columbus's assignment is clear: kill the young man. However, Castillo learns that his hero and unwitting mentor has a family—a revelation with enormous ramifications "Columbus' charm and dark humor offer a refreshing break from the sociopathic-assassin mold, and Haas' gut wrenching tale moves at breakneck speed. Pairs nicely with Jeff Lindsay's Dexter series and Shane Kuhn's *The Intern's Handbook*." —*Booklist*. To which I'd add Greg Rucka.

Hawken, Sam. [Night Charter](#) (\$15.99). 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. Hawken is a

strong read for fans of Laukkanen, Morrell's action thrillers, Rucka, Taylor Stevens.

✉McDermid, Val. [Splinter the Silence](#) (\$16). *Kirkus* writes, "The book has hold of a great subject: the chauvinist pig-pile of online misogyny." Dr. Tony Hill continues his clinical psychological work in Bradfield, England, while former Detective Chief Constable Carol Jordan 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....

Mishani, DA. [The Man Who Wanted to Know Everything](#) (Harper \$15.99). Trans. from the Hebrew by Todd Hasak-Lowy. "Mishani artfully alternates perspectives to ratchet up the tension in his excellent third procedural featuring introspective Israeli police superintendent Avraham Avraham. Mali Bengtson, a young mother in a troubled marriage, suspects her husband is hiding something significant from her. Bengtson crosses paths with Avraham, who chose his career because he believed the detectives in the fiction he loved growing up accused the wrong people, after widow Leah Yeger is strangled in her Holon apartment. Since this is Avraham's first homicide after becoming district commander of the investigations and intelligence branches, he struggles to adapt to his changed role, even as the initial inquiry reveals the disturbing facts that Yeger was the victim of a rape years earlier and that a neighbor claims to have seen a cop leaving the scene of the crime. Fans of Ruth Rendell and P.D. James will be pleased by the nuanced view of human nature." Third in [the Avraham series](#) by the Israeli author.

Ohlsson, Kristina. [The Chosen](#) (Atria \$17). Someone is targeting Stockholm's Jewish community in Ohlsson's taut fifth Fredrika Bergman novel. The first to die is a preschool teacher, gunned down in front of horrified parents and children outside the Solomon School. Bergman, back helping the police after an absence, joins DCI Alex Recht on a newly formed special task force, which requires them to work alongside a former colleague, who was fired for an act of violence and now heads security for the Solomon Community. Right after the crime, two 10-year-old Jewish boys disappear on their way to a tennis lesson, their bodies turning up displayed in a disturbing manner in the snowy woods. The killer left paper bags with faces drawn over the boys' heads, bringing to mind an old Israeli myth of the child-snatching Paper Boy. It's one of many tenuous leads that point to Israel, and Fredrika soon heads there to try and sort out what's become a dangerous mess in Sweden. Ohlsson's characters are compelling, and the tragedies she traces finely wrought.

Rankin, Ian. [Even Dogs in the Wild](#) (\$15.99). Retirement doesn't suit John Rebus. Being a cop is in his blood. So when DI Siobhan Clarke asks for his help on a case, Rebus doesn't need long to consider his options. Clarke's been investigating the death of a senior lawyer whose body was found along with a threatening note. On the other side of Edinburgh, Big Ger Cafferty—Rebus's longtime nemesis—has received an identical note and a bullet through his window. Meanwhile, DI Malcolm Fox joins forces

with a covert team from Glasgow who are tailing a notorious crime family. As the cases collide, it's up to Clarke, Fox, and Rebus to connect the dots and save their unlikely ally Cafferty, whose past harbors an explosive secret that could blow the case wide open—if it doesn't kill him first. The new Rebus, [Rather Be the Devil](#) (\$46) is just in Signed from London. And we have reduced the price of [Dark Road](#) (\$25, 4 copies), a play about the murders of four young women in Edinburgh worked by Isobel McArthur, the force's first Superintendent who, 25 years later as she approaches retirement, is looking anew for answers.

Taylor, Brad. [The Forgotten Soldier](#) (\$16). A Special Forces soldier has been killed in Afghanistan, but because a government high-up in an allied nation is tangled up in the death, U.S. officials want to forget the whole thing. That does not sit well with one Taskforce member, but Taskforce leader Pike Logan knows that any act of vengeance threatens not just Taskforce but America itself. Tough choices ahead. The ninth Pike Logan novel is "A realistic page-turner that fills a need for thrills while questioning the complicated process of statecraft."—*Kirkus*. See Event Books for the Pike Logan signed here January 11 but on sale end of December.

Thoft, Ingrid. [Brutality](#) (\$16). Winner of the 2015 Best Private Eye Novel Award. "In Thoft's captivating third Fina Ludlow novel, the feisty Boston PI tries to find out who attacked Liz Barone, a researcher at New England University, in her Hyde Park home, putting her in Mass. General Hospital with a severe subdural hematoma and a slim chance of recovery. Fina thinks the assault may have been provoked by the lawsuit Liz filed against New England University blaming them for the mild cognitive impairment she was experiencing, allegedly the result of injuries sustained when she played on the university's soccer team 20 years earlier. In the course of the investigation, Fina must overcome university politics, the petty rivalries among the employees of the research lab where Liz worked, and a strained relationship with the police, who resent her interference in their case. Fina uncovers a host of secrets as she confronts a myriad of potential suspects." Order [all the Fina Ludlows](#) including the 4th, *Duplicity*, to be Signed here on January 11.

NEW BOOKS

Adler-Olsen, Jussi. [The Hanging Girl](#) (\$16). #6 in the Department Q series with Detective Carl Mørck and his enigmatic assistants, Assad and Rose. The suicide of Christian Habersaat, a recently retired police sergeant from Bornholm, Denmark, sends the team looking into an unsolved case from 17 years earlier that consumed Habersaat's life—the hit-and-run death of high school student Alberte Goldschmid. The story becomes more complicated when Habersaat's grown son, Bjarke, kills himself and young women start disappearing.... Not the best entry in an absorbing series.

Albom, Mitch. [The Magic Strings of Frankie Presto](#) (\$15.99). "An author of spiritually engaged fiction and nonfiction, Albom is also a successful songwriter/lyricist. Here he blends the spiritual and the musical to tell the story of Frankie Presto, the greatest guitar player the world has ever heard. Fleeing Spain at age nine when civil war tears his family apart for America with a battered old guitar, he moves from the Forties to the Sixties, affecting everyone and transforming a few, for that old guitar has six magical blue strings, one for each life he manages to set right."—*LJ*

Aspe, Pieter. [The Fourth Figure](#) (\$16.99). A very European voice narrates this 4th case set in Bruges. A popular young woman is found dead in the canal outside her apartment building. But what seems like a clear-cut suicide evolves into something much more complex when Commissioner Pieter Van In uncovers the girl's involvement in a satanic sect. Who is the mysterious Venex, and why does he inspire such devotion from his disciples? Complicating the investigation further, Van In's boss allows beautiful journalist Saartje Maes to profile the case, sparking tension with the commissioner's expectant wife, District Attorney Hannelore Martens. As a horrific tragedy shocks the city, Van In seems to be surrounded by secrets.

Axat, Frederico. [Kill the Next One](#) (LittleBrown \$26). "Argentinian-born author Axat fuses weird fiction with psychological suspense in his stunning U.S. debut, set in the Boston area. Terminally ill businessman Ted McKay is about to shoot himself when a stranger named Justin Lynch shows up at his house with a proposal: kill a criminal who escaped justice and an innocent man who wants to die, and in return, someone will kill him, sparing his family the shame of his suicide. Ted carries out his end of the deal, only to learn that Lynch lied about the circumstances surrounding both victims. As Ted searches for the truth, strange dreams and inexplicable events cause him to question his sanity, leaving Ted and the reader uncertain as to what is real and whom to trust. Nightmare imagery, mind-bending plot twists, and a kaleidoscopic storytelling style lend Axat's tale a vertiginous air, but at the core of this literary fever dream lies an elegantly crafted and emotionally resonant mystery that astonishes, devastates, and satisfies in equal measure."—*PW* Starred Review

Block, Lawrence. [Sinner Man](#) (\$9.95). See Signed books.

Block, Lawrence, ed. [In Sunlight and in Shadow](#) (Norton \$25.95). Iconic American painter Edward Hopper serves as muse for editor Block and an impressive array of 16 other writers—including Megan Abbott, Robert Olen Butler, Lee Child, and Jeffery Deaver—who select their favorite Hopper paintings to inspire a short story. In "The Music Room," contributor Stephen King, who happens to own a reproduction of Room in New York, 1932, turns that work's seemingly innocent domestic scene—a man at a table reading a newspaper, a woman nearby striking a note on an upright piano—into a gruesome tableau involving a macabre scheme to stay ahead of the Great Depression. In a similar noir vein, for Joyce Carol Oates, *Eleven A.M.*, 1926 (which depicts a naked woman seated in a comfortable chair staring out of a city window) inspires a suspenseful duel of murderous intentions as a mistress waits for her married lover to appear in "The Woman in the Window." In "The Preacher Collects," Hopper historian Gail Levin weighs in with a fictional tale (in which she plays a minor role) based on her scholarly research, depicting the nefarious means by which Rev. Arthayer R. Sanborn comes to own a cache of Hopper's works. Block tops off this remarkable collection with "Autumn at the Automat," inspired by *Automat*, 1927, in which a young woman has a clever strategy that will keep her flush in rent money, possibly for years."—*PW* Starred Review. [Read a long essay](#) in Shelf Awareness.

Also by Block: [Resume Speed](#) (Subterranean \$25)

Burnet, Graeme McRae. [His Bloody Project](#) (Skyhorse \$24.99). I recommended this fictionalized history before and now see two Scottish stars joining me in the *Guardian's* Best of 2016 column.

With 2016 dominated by protests, here is the story of one 19th Century Scottish crofter's attempt to "reform" a corrupt and brutal agent of an uncaring landlord. Val McDermid: "Burnet sucked me in from the first page with its compelling narratives about a triple murder in the Scottish Highlands in the 19th century. A series of convincing but unreliable voices circles the central event and left me breathless." Ian Rankin: "*His Bloody Project* was a welcome surprise on the Booker shortlist, a brilliantly written story of rural hardship, fractured community and eventual, inescapable bloodshed." One can read it with Vance's [Hillbilly Elegy](#) (Harper \$27.99) in an attempt to understand Brexit and our 2016 election.

Childs, Laura. [Egg Drop Dead](#) (Berkley \$26). Maintaining good personal relationships with their suppliers is one of the secrets of the Cackleberry Club café's success, so Suzanne doesn't mind going out to Mike Mullen's dairy farm to pick up some wheels of cheese. But when she arrives, Mike's nowhere to be found. The moaning of his cows leads her to look in the barn, where she discovers a bloodcurdling sight—the farmer's dead body. Apparently not everyone was as fond of Mike Mullen as the Cackleberry Club. 7th in this cozy series.

Christie, Agatha. [Little Grey Cells](#) (Morrow \$16.99). The Quotable Poirot taken from her work and made into one little volume with... a grey cover.

Clare, Alys. [A Rustle of Silk](#) (Severn \$29.95). Clare moves to Stuart England and the forensics of the day. "Set in 1603, Clare's gripping series launch introduces Gabriel Taverner, a former ship's surgeon who's having difficulties building a medical practice in his home county of Devon. The local coroner, Theophilus Davey, asks Gabriel to examine a decomposing body discovered at an abandoned hovel by the Tavy River. There's no doubt about the cause of death. The corpse was run through the gut with a blade, and since the hands are gripping the weapon's shaft, Gabriel believes that the death is a suicide. He's later shaken to learn that the dead man was Jeromy Palfrey, an agent for wealthy silk merchant Nicolaus Quinlie and the husband of Gabriel's beloved sister, Celia. When further investigation proves that Jeromy was murdered, Gabriel must prove Celia innocent of the deed. Clare vividly evokes 17th-century Devon. Characters who are complex individuals complement the well-paced and pleasantly twisty plot." Ordered Upon Request and without delay since Severn's supply of books in the US is very limited.

Clement, John. [The Cat Sitter and the Canary](#) (St Martins \$25.99). Siesta Key, Florida, cat sitter Dixie Hemingway finds a tall, handsome tourist loitering around the home of one of her long-time clients. He tells her he's just arrived from Scotland and that he's lost his glasses, which presumably explains why he can't find the house he rented for his seaside vacation. Dixie points him to the bungalow across the street (but not before rebuffing a few of the sexy Scotsman's passes) and then continues about her business. She doesn't think about him again until she stumbles upon a dead body in her client's front hall? A man in a three-piece suit with jet-black hair, delicate wrists, and a small note card stuck to his lapel with a pearl-tipped hat pin....

Colin, Beatrice. [To Capture What We Cannot Keep](#) (Flatiron \$25.99). It is difficult for visitors—or anyone who has ever seen a photo of the city—to imagine the Parisian skyline without The Eiffel Tower. But when built, the tower, originally intended to

stand for only 20 years, sparked criticism and controversy among the artistic and engineering elite of Paris. In her second novel to be published in the US, Colin weaves together the story of the tower's daring construction with the personal life of Eiffel's right-hand man, Émile Nouguier, and the Scotswoman with whom he falls in love. Building the tower seemed like an impossible task at the time: Eiffel's previous experience lay mainly in bridge building, and his plans for the tower were roundly condemned for both practical and aesthetic reasons. Émile muses that "to construct something so high, higher than anything ever built before, seemed like trying to articulate a dream." Colin's moody, atmospheric novel captures both the idealism and the frustration of trying to chase one's dreams, trying to fashion a more compelling life or simply realize an artistic vision. When Rob and I were in Maputo we found the decay of the train station designed for the African capital by Eiffel to be startling, and sad.

Dhooge, Bavo. [Styx](#) (SimonSchuster \$16). From the #1 Flemish crime writer, "an atmospheric, noir-tinged tale about a stubborn cop who just won't quit, even if he is dead (*Kirkus Reviews*)." But will that stop him from catching his own murderer? A serial killer is on the loose in Ostend, Belgium. Nicknamed The Stuffer, the mysterious killer fills his victims full of sand and poses them as public art installations—and the once idyllic beach town is in a panic. The fact that Rafael Styx is on the case is no comfort. The corrupt, middle-aged cop has a bum hip, a bad marriage, and ties to the Belgian underworld, but no leads. When a chance encounter puts him face to face with The Stuffer, Rafael's life is cut short by a gun to the chest. But the afterlife has only just begun: Styx wakes up a zombie. "[A] taut, atmospheric, and suspenseful crime story. Readers can feel the fog settling in, as they learn about surrealist art, the history of Ostend, and Belgian imperialism as it pertains to race issues in the country today. These details are all seamlessly incorporated into the investigation... Thankfully, the door appears to be open for a sequel. Run, don't walk, to give this book to fans of Jo Nesbø and Robert Galbraith. Dhooge has won multiple crime-writing awards; it's time for American readers to see why for themselves."—*LJ* Starred Review. Richard Kadrey likes it too

Ellis, Warren. [Normal](#) (Farrar \$14). The December Indie Next Pick: "This is an eerily fun read. What if Big Brother was as small as an ant? Patients at a private asylum deep in the woods are all from the world of either Foresight Strategy or Strategic Forecasting. This means they are smart people, but deeply depressed — and many have gone insane — because they are paid to look into the future and it isn't looking good. Visionary writer Ellis offers readers *1984* meets *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* in this provocative novel."

✚Fowler, Christopher. [Bryant and May Strange Tide](#) (Bantam \$27). It's lucky #13 for London's Peculiar Crime Unit. Near the Tower of London, along the River Thames, the body of a woman has been discovered chained to a stone post and left to drown. Curiously, only one set of footprints leads to the tragic spot. "The Bride in the Tide," as the London press gleefully dubs her, has the PCU stumped. Why wouldn't the killer simply dump her body in the river—as so many do? Arthur Bryant wonders if the answer lies in the mythology of the Thames itself. Unfortunately, the normally wobbly funhouse corridors of Bryant's mind have become, of late, even more labyrinthine. The venerable detective seems to be losing his grip on reality. May fears the worst, as

Bryant rapidly descends from merely muddled to one stop short of Barking, hallucinating that he's traveled back in time to solve the case. However.... A delightful entry in a rich series. [Order the earlier Peculiars here](#)

Freeman, Philip. [Sacrifice](#) (\$14.95). The grisly discovery of an elderly sister of Saint Brigid's monastery strangled, bled dry, and thrown into a bog is just the beginning. Soon a beautiful young nun is found decapitated and hung from a barren tree. It doesn't take long before the members of the struggling monastic community of Kildare realize that not only are the nuns being hunted by a serial killer, but the murderer is performing the gruesome slayings in the manner of the ancient druid sacrifices. Set in the turmoil of 6th Century Ireland, where ruthless tribal kings wage constant war for survival and the powerful religious order of the druids is threatened by the newly-arrived Christian church, the desperate task of finding the killer falls to Sister Deirdre, a young woman torn between the world of the monastery and her own druidic heritage. Clearly this is for fans of Peter Tremayne's Sister Fidelma series.

Fusco, John. [Dog Beach](#) (\$15). A "vivid, action-packed tale of Asian gangsters and Hollywood moviemaking" (*PW*) that follows the exploits of Louie Mo, once Hong Kong's greatest stuntman turned Los Angeles knee-breaker, as his latest target unexpectedly casts him in the role of a lifetime.

Gaiman, Neil. [Poems](#) (Morrow \$23.99). A Gift Idea.

Gardner, Erle Stanley. [The Knife Slipped](#) (Titan \$9.95). At the time of his death, Erle Stanley Gardner was the best-selling American author of the 20th century, and world famous as the creator of crusading attorney Perry Mason. Gardner also created the hardboiled detective team of Cool and Lam, stars of 29 novels published between 1939 and 1970—and one lost for 75 years and now published. It was meant to be the second book in the series but got shelved when Gardner's publisher objected to (among other things) Bertha Cool's tendency to "talk tough, swear, smoke cigarettes, and try to gyp people." But this tale of adultery and corruption, of double-crosses and triple identities—however shocking for 1939—shines today as a glorious present from the past, a return to the heyday of private eyes and shady dames, of powerful criminals, crooked cops, blazing dialogue, and delicious plot twists. Donald Lam has never been cooler—not even when played by Frank Sinatra on the *U.S. Steel Hour of Mystery* in 1946

Gentill, Sulari. [A Decline in Prophets](#) (Poisoned Pen \$26.95). "Set in late 1932, Gentill's lively second mystery featuring dashing Australian millionaire Rowland "Rowly" Sinclair after [A Few Right Thinking Men](#) takes place initially aboard the luxury cruise ship *RMS Aquitania*, as it steams along toward Sydney. Members of the Theosophical Society, Roman Catholic priests and bishops, Indian mystics, casual Protestants, clairvoyants, and Freemasons mix and mingle as best they can with Rowly and his entourage of poets and artists, or as Rowly's brother refers to them, "unemployed, subversive ne'er-do-wells!" When the honor of Rowly's friend, the decidedly delectable sculptress and model Edna Higgins, is in danger, he steps in to defend her from her unwanted suitor. The latter's subsequent murder has Rowly first cast as a suspect and then slipping into the role of detective. On the ship's arrival in Sydney in time for the Christmas holidays, the murders continue, as do attempts on Rowly's life. The witty and insight-

ful glimpses of the Australian bourgeoisie of this period keep this mystery afloat.”—*PW*. There’s an Evelyn-Waugh-meets-Agatha-Christie feel about this series and an extra treat in the New York scenes where one of Rowly’s boho friends, in fact the sculptress whom he loves, is romanced by the not yet well-known English actor Archie Leach. Also [A Decline in Prophets](#) (\$15.95).

Giambanco, Valentina. [The Dark](#) (\$14.99). Echoes of the decades-old Hoh River Boys kidnapping and murder continue to haunt Seattle Homicide Detective Alice Madison in the sequel to [The Gift of Darkness](#) (\$14.99). 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....

Gunn, Elizabeth. [Denny’s Law](#) (Severn \$28.99). The murder of a man seen fighting in a house during a Fourth of July street parade plunges Sarah Burke’s whole household – her fragile mother Aggie, shrewd and ever-helpful live-in boyfriend Will and even her hard-charging niece, Denny – into her latest case. The investigation leads to a money-laundering ring with international connections, and Sarah and her smart, hard-working crew of detectives must follow the puzzle, set against the backdrop of Tucson’s unique character. I’m a fan of Gunn’s well plotted and written series. Ordered Upon Request.

Higashino, Keigo. [Under the Midnight Sun](#) (St Martins \$27.99). Rob writes a review! “I was first introduced to Keigo Higashino in 2012 by his U.S. editor and our friend, Keith Kahla. [The Devotion of Suspect X](#) (\$15.99) went on to gather an Edgar Award nomination and much acclaim. I admit to having a taste for mysteries set in foreign lands and Japan has always had great attraction. There’s a structure to Japanese life and the formality of human interactions that I find fascinating which, upon reflection, is a little strange since I like to live (or at least claim to) an unstructured life. That structure and formality are embodied in their homes, gardens, flower arrangements, and food. The enormous amount of practice and work that go into making something that isn’t, appear simple and natural, are once again on display in Higashino’s masterful *Under the Midnight Sun*. Unlike the three Detective Galileos that I had previously read, *Under the Midnight Sun* is far more a mystery of motive than of method or culprit. Although I do have a few quibbles with this psychological gem, it’s one of the best books I’ve read this year—all 536 pages.” [Order other Higashinos here](#).

Holt, Anne. [Beyond the Truth](#) (Scribner \$26). The quadruple homicide of shipping magnate Hermann Stahlberg; his wife, Turid; their elder son, Preben; and a publishing consultant with no apparent ties to the family kicks off Edgar-finalist Holt’s solid seventh Hanne Wilhelmsen novel to be published in the U.S.. Suspicion falls on Preben’s surviving siblings, Hermine and Carl-Christian, as they’ve been battling with Hermann and Preben for control of Norne Norway Shipping. But while the duo has motive, means, and opportunity, Hanne is convinced that the mysteri-

ous fourth victim is the key to solving the crime. Despite intense pressure from the public and her superiors to quickly close the case, the Oslo chief inspector launches her own investigation. Meanwhile, Hanne’s best friend and colleague, Billy T., fights temptation in the face of money problems. Realistically flawed characters, nuanced relationships, and thematically resonant subplots complement the central mystery, while Hanne’s housekeeper—an irreverent former prostitute—adds unexpected humor and heart. [Order all Holts here](#).

Kerr, Lucy. [Time of Death](#) (Cooked Lane \$15.99). If you’re in a mood for a hospital thriller (Robin Cook et al) then you will be pleased to meet ER nurse Frankie Stapleton. Summoned from Chicago to regional center Stillwater General and, to the bedside of her younger sister who is in a high-risk pregnancy, Frankie spots a man in cardiac arrest at the ER’s entry. Inside is chaos thanks to a busload of crash victims so Frankie goes into action to save his life. She succeeds, he’s stable, but within hours her sister has an emergency C-section, the cardiac case dies, and Frankie is threatened with a lawsuit: malpractice—and she’s unlicensed for Stillwater Gen. That’s the set up, a good one, and how it rolls is good too. I like Frankie, a sturdy, independent professional less competent in her personal life, and Kerr sets up what I assume to be a series well. Also in hardcover: [Time of Death](#) (\$25.99).

Kessler, Kate. [Two Can Play](#) (Orbit \$15.99). In Kessler’s solid sequel to [It Takes One](#) (\$14.99), Boston-based forensic psychologist Audrey Harte returns to her hometown of Portland, Maine, to serve as an expert witness at the trial of imprisoned 19-year-old Ian Monroe, an accused rapist and serial killer. Audrey’s past as a participant in the murder of her best friend’s abusive father in her teens not only colors all her relationships, including those with her lover, Jake Tripp, her parents, and her siblings, but also shapes her passion for her work. As Audrey works to evaluate the suspect and the surviving victims, a mysterious floral delivery and a disturbing interview with Ian suggest that he may have a partner, one with an unhealthy fascination for Audrey and who is continuing to prey on young women. Multiple points of view occasionally lead to repetitive scenes that slow the pace, but Kessler is careful to keep the action realistic and avoid genre clichés. This is a smart crime novel.” For readers of Nancy Pickard and Lisa Unger.

L’etoile, James. [At What Cost?](#) (Crooked Lane \$15.99). A serial killer is working the Sacramento area, dumping three completely hollowed-out bodies in the past six weeks. Detective John Penley and his new partner, Detective Paula Newberry, catch the case. The victims were all found along a river, and were all gang members. But CI’s are sure the deaths have nothing to do with gangs per se. Before long the case turns personal for Penley. Other reviewers will tell you why but I urge you not to spoil this by checking them out. The author writes a good police procedural in this start of a series drawing on his 29 years of experience with the justice and prison systems. This book raises some tough ethical questions. It’s well written with strong characters—I’m not a fan of serial killer books that turn personal for the cop(s) so I’ll be interested to see where the sequel goes since this scenario isn’t ripe for a repeat. Also in hardcover: [At What Cost?](#) (\$25.99)

MacRae, Molly. [Plaid and Plagiarism](#) (Pegasus \$25.95). The great thing about this start of The Highland Bookshop Mystery Series is the snappy voices with which MacRae endows her characters She puts them in the west near Oban and Fort William

into Inversgail (“the story capital of the Scottish Highlands”) where fiftyish Janet Marsh, a recent (and painful) divorcee from Illinois, and her friend Christine Robertson, a Scot, and their two daughters have purchased Yon Bonnie Books on the High Street and await a week of training from the former owners. Janet is impatient to move into what was her marital summer home in this resort town, now to be her year-round residence, but the local realtor is stonewalling her. And then the body of the unpopular local columnist, Una Graham, is discovered in the cottage’s garden shed. There is much in these pages about accepting oneself and others and it’s fun for book lovers. I’d call it traditional and snarky, not cozy. See the contrast between Inversgail and the Banffshire (east) coast fishing village in the McPherson Scottish series chapter below

Marinovich, Mat. [Winter Girl](#) (\$16). “The bleak landscape of the Hamptons in winter provides the backdrop for this absorbing thriller, an engrossing, disquieting read for a chilly night.”—*PW*. Scott and Elise, a troubled couple who live in Brooklyn, are staying in the house of Elise’s abusive and dying father, Victor, in Shinnecock Hills, Long Island. While Elise tends to Victor in the hospital, Scott becomes obsessed with the purportedly vacant house next door. Hoping to forestall their marriage’s disintegration by sharing his adventures with Elise, he convinces her to join him in breaking into the house, where they discover a large, unexplained bloodstain on a mattress in the master bedroom. When Scott asks Victor whether he knows anything about a possible murder at the neighboring house, Victor mumbles something about the “winter girl.” Scott soon learns that Elise’s family—and Elise herself—harbor some malevolent secrets.

McBain, Ed (as Evan Hunter). [Criminal Conversation](#) (Mysterious \$16.99 reissue). The call comes from Narcotics, Manhattan South. A low-level drug dealer just got caught in a buy-bust, and he’s ready to spill his guts. It wouldn’t be a priority—especially not four days before Christmas—but the thug just mentioned the Mafia, and that means all hands on deck. It’s just what Michael Welles has been waiting for. An assistant district attorney with a burning hatred of organized crime, he’ll do anything for a crack at the mob. He’s about to get a chance to bring down the whole clan—but his loved ones’ lives are at stake. From the legendary Ed McBain, who “virtually invented the American police procedural with his gritty 87th Precinct series.” He was a good friend and I miss him.

McCarry, Charles. [Mulberry Bush](#) (\$16). “The unnamed narrator of this exceptional spy novel from McCarry vows to avenge his father, a disgraced secret agent. The narrator engineers his own recruitment into “Headquarters” (McCarry’s name for the CIA) and, after training, begins his career as a covert agent, hunting and killing terrorists in the Middle East, though he never forgets his chief purpose in life: exacting retribution on those responsible for his father’s downfall. Amzi Strange, the deputy director for operations and his father’s former enemy at Headquarters, brings the narrator back home, where he decides to implement his plan by infiltrating the remains of a terror organization in Latin America that was led by the charismatic Alejandro Aguilar. The narrator begins an affair with Aguilar’s 29-year-old daughter, Luz, and eventually they marry. McCarry spins his riveting story in unexpected ways; the writing is always subdued but brilliant, leading unsuspecting readers to collide straight into the unforgiving wall of a stunning ending.”—Starred Review. Lee Child says, “Charles McCarry is better than John le Carré.”

McCarthy, Rob. [The Hollow Men](#) (Pegasus \$25.95). The British may have voted Brexit but this debut police procedural underlines its multicultural society. “Medical student McCarthy’s accomplished first novel and series launch plunges Harry Kent, a London ER doctor who also serves as an on-call doctor for police matters (the British term is police surgeon), into a difficult situation: 17-year-old Solomon Idris has taken hostages in a fast-food restaurant and he needs medical help. Idris will let three hostages go if a physician treats him. Kent enters the restaurant, where he starts to treat Idris, but when the snipers covering Kent hear a gunshot, they shoot, wounding Idris. The teenager is taken to a hospital, where someone tries to kill him. The angry, determined Kent makes it his mission to save Idris—and to find out what made him resort to such a violent act. Kent’s considerable backstory as an army doctor in Afghanistan includes his connection to James Lahiri, a doctor who saved Kent’s life overseas and has been treating Idris in London. McCarthy provides a fascinating look at the sociology of crime and policing while deftly exploring the motivations of Idris, Kent, and Lahiri.”—*PW* Starred Review

McDermid, Val. [Out of Bounds](#) (Grove \$25). The December Indie Next Pick: “McDermid is at the top of her game and *Out of Bounds* has everything readers want in a character-driven suspense novel: fully human characters, tight plotting, unexpected twists, and a story that grabs and won’t let go. Karen Pirie is still reeling from the death of her partner and is coping by throwing herself into her work as detective chief inspector of Scotland’s Historic Cases Unit. As the unit works to unravel a 20-year-old case through a DNA match from the driver in a recent car accident, Pirie skates on thin ice with her superiors by digging into the background of a mentally disturbed man who appears to have committed suicide. Highly recommended.”

McPherson, Catriona. [The Reek of Red Herrings](#) (St Martins \$26.99). The Dandy Gilver post-WWI series got off to a lighter start but here in this 9th entry we get a dark story (albeit with McPherson’s trademark humor) and a rough and ready fishing village near Aberdeen where herring has sustained the population for generations. It’s not an ideal place, or even warm, yet Dandy and her business partner Alec are spending Christmas there instead of in the gentler reaches of Northamptonshire. I won’t even begin to get into the complex plot other than to say it begins when body parts go off in barrels of herring and our sleuths arrive to pursue their inquiries. It’s also wedding season for the fisher folk. The image that may stay with you the longest is slaloming down the narrow streets to pull up right at the sea wall. 9th in series. [Order them here](#).

Mendoza, Elmer. [Silver Bullets](#) (\$14.99). Culiacán, the capital of the Mexican state of Sinaloa—where “gangsta-wraps” (slain narco soldiers swathed in blankets) are found next to the roadside almost daily—provides the deadly backdrop for Mendoza’s English-language debut, a straightforward crime novel set in 2006. The authorities call in Det. Edgar Mendieta on a possible homicide and a suicide, but since there are connections to drugs, they instruct him to hand the cases over to Narcotics—even though killings are occurring using silver bullets. Assisted by a spunky female sidekick, Lefty carries on, haunted by memories of having been molested as a child and the return of a femme fatale from his past. This mystery won the Tusquets Prize for best Spanish-language crime novel in 2007, but American readers may find Lefty’s by-the-book investigations overly familiar. In

addition, the dialogue mingles with the exposition, without quotation marks...” —*PW*

Minier, Bernard. [Don't Turn Out the Lights](#) (St Martins \$26.99). I loved French author Minier's first two dense thrillers, but this one, not so much. Which is interesting because various review media award it stars. I just bogged down. Here are other takes: “French author Minier once again displays a rare gift for raising goose bumps in his intricate third thriller featuring Commandant Martin Servaz. The Toulouse cop is on leave, undergoing treatment for depression, six months after the sadistic killer he was hunting sent him the heart of a woman Martin was involved with. He gets back on the job after receiving another package, which contains an electronic hotel key and an unsigned invitation to a meeting in the room it opens. When Martin visits the Grand Hôtel Thomas Wilson, he learns that room 117 was the scene of an artist's bloody suicide a year earlier. Meanwhile, radio show host Christine Steinmeyer receives an unsigned note from someone threatening to take her life on Christmas Eve. Unsuccessful in her efforts to identify the disturbing letter's author, she soon finds herself the victim of a sadistic plot to drive her mad. Minier sustains a high degree of tension throughout, while making his characters' reactions to extreme stress plausible.” And, “This is not *Gone Girl*. It is *Go, Girl!* No one is the person they seem at first to be. Each of the characters either greatly deceives the reader or manages to rise to a challenge unexpectedly. It is a brilliant *aria da capo*, set appropriately to an operatic soundtrack, with a surprising and thoroughly satisfying conclusion.” [Order the first investigations](#) and read in order.

Moore, Jonathan. [The Poison Artist](#) (\$14.95). “*The Poison Artist* takes place in a fog-bound, rain-drenched version of San Francisco, which becomes, in Moore's telling, almost a city from a dream, where truths and realities slip in and out of focus somewhere between the long nights and the constantly filled glasses... It's genuinely scarily, in the very best way, and nastily twisty, also in the very best way. Just like the clashes between Caleb's day and night existences, Moore's hypnotic, rich prose shifts and jars from seductive bars at night to the gruesome way fingerprints have to be taken from a body that has been underwater for days. Spiraling down from dream into nightmare, *The Poison Artist* is thoroughly unnerving and classily executed.” —*The Guardian*. “*The Poison Artist* is an elegant, gripping, hair-raising gothic chiller, a wicked mix of Poe, *The Silence of the Lambs*, and *Vertigo*. Settle in for a long night of reading—once this one grabs you, it doesn't let go.” —William Landay. “*The Poison Artist* is an electrifying read, building from shock to shock. I read the last one hundred pages in a single sitting. The final chapter is an absolute stunner. I haven't read anything so terrifying since *Red Dragon*.” —Stephen King

Oust, Gail. [Curried Away](#) (St Martins \$26.99). Early in Oust's charming fourth Spice Shop cozy, handyman Ned Feeney stumbles on the dead body of the heartily disliked Sandy Granger in the Brandywine Creek, Georgia, opera house. Sandy was directing a local production of *Steel Magnolias* and had earned the wrath of many of the players, but who wanted the woman dead? Piper Prescott, owner of the Spice It Up! shop, might have stayed out of this one if the evidence hadn't pointed toward her BFF, Reba Mae Johnson. Police chief Wyatt McBride doesn't want to hear what Piper thinks, so she'll have to clear Reba Mae's name on her own. Rampant gossip, a plethora of ladies who are

themselves perfect stand-ins for the cast of *Steel Magnolias*, and Piper's ailing relationship with aspiring chef Doug Winters all blend nicely together until a somewhat flimsy motive leads to a killer. Three appealing recipes, one for spicy chicken curry, round out the volume. [Order all four cozies here](#).

Poyer, David. [Onslaught: The War with China](#) (St Martins \$26.99). “Poyer's superb 16th thriller featuring Capt. Daniel V. Lenson., USN, steams into the roughest waters yet as China continues its smash and grab for world power. In addition to mounting a defense against Chinese aggression toward such Pacific Rim nations as Taiwan and Japan, Dan has to run a ship, the USS Savo Island, where a rapist is on the loose. A host of other problems pile on his shoulders, until just staying upright and functioning becomes problematic. Meanwhile, Dan's wife, Blair Titus, is running for Congress in a U.S. gradually disintegrating into chaos, and SEAL Master Chief Petty Officer Theodore Harlett Oberg is preparing his aging and battered body for a mission that will thrust him into a situation so dire that he wishes he were dead rather than alive. But the keel of the story—the naval battles with China—are always foremost, and Poyer is among the best authors, present or past, to write these electrifying scenes. Military-action fans will eagerly await the second installment in what appears to be a distinct story arc within the larger series.” —*PW* Starred Review

Sandrolini, John. [My Kind of Town](#) (Mysterious Press \$15.99). The Chicago mob is looking for Al Capone's lost treasure—and former ace fighter pilot Joe Buonomo holds the key to finding it. When Joe Buonomo returned from World War II, he chose to settle in California rather than go back home to Chicago—and he didn't plan on revisiting his old stomping grounds any time soon. But when Frank Sinatra asks you to fly him to the Windy City for a gig, you don't refuse. And so, reluctantly, Joe finds himself strolling down memory lane and rekindling relationships with his estranged family. But where Joe goes, trouble tends to follow. Rumor has it that a man named Butch O'Hare was in charge of hiding Al Capone's fortune, but Butch is long dead, and warring mob bosses seem to believe his old war buddy Joe knows more than he's letting on. Joe is forced to join the ridiculous quest to find the gold, but the more the search of Chicago's seedy underground drags on, the more Joe thinks the treasure might not be a myth after all.

Schofield, Doug. [Storm Rising](#) (St Martins \$25.99). Hurricane Sandy is bearing down on Bayonne, NJ, where Lucy Hendricks and her son, Kevin, have returned after living in Florida. Lucy's policeman husband, Jack, was murdered five years ago, before Kevin was born, and Lucy left New Jersey amid swirling rumors about Jack's connections to the Mafia. But the reality stretches back generations to Sicily and Lucy's family ties. Kevin also is connected to Jack, manifesting his father's memories on occasion, which scares Lucy a lot. Schofield follows up his acclaimed debut, [Time of Departure](#) (\$16.99), a slightly crazed time-travel odyssey, with a spooky thriller in which strange memories affect the protagonists' present-day lives. For anyone who enjoys mysteries with a twist...” —*LJ*. “A dash of the paranormal spices this exciting crime novel. Readers will gladly suspend disbelief as Schofield takes them on a whirlwind ride.” —*PW*

Simenon, George. [Maigret's First Case](#); [My Friend Maigret](#) (Penguin \$12 each). Two more reissues in Penguin's program to bring you all of the French cop's cases.

Smith, Carrie. [Forgotten City](#) (Crooked Lane \$14.99). A NYC police procedural not flinching from cancer and Alzheimer's. Broadway legend Lucy Merchant has tragically succumbed to early onset Alzheimer's. At age fifty-six, she's tucked away in the dementia care unit of the ultra-exclusive Manhattan care facility Park Manor. When she falls asleep and doesn't wake up, her billionaire husband is ready for the funeral, but her daughter demands an investigation. Only three months back on the job after cancer treatment, Codella finds herself at the center of a high profile case nearly everyone—especially her lieutenant—wants to shut down. But the forensic evidence raises alarming questions and Codella needs answers. To find them, she will have to crack the defenses of slippery administrators, frightened caregivers, and unobliging family members, all while unlocking some of her own dark memories. Also in hardcover: [Forgotten City](#) (\$25.99).

Swinden, Ann. [The Bookseller's Tale](#) (Shakenoak Press \$14.99). If you're hooked on Oxford as a crime scene thanks to Morse and its spinoffs (I certainly am), then this bibliomystery set in Spring, 1353, when the university is barely recovering from the ravages of the Black Death spiritually, financially, and socially, is a treat for you. It's our **November History/Mystery Paperback Pick** and kicks off her Oxford Medieval Mysteries featuring Nicholas Elyot, a bookseller once slated for a high-flying scholar's career until he renounced his vows to marry for love. Now a widower, he supports two small children and two scribes, if thinly. Unluckily one afternoon he spots a body in the River Cherwell and is impelled to pull it out before it floats of into the Thames and disappears. The dead youth is promising student William Farringdon. His brave action casts Nicholas under suspicion but inquiry reveals that the dead youth had been troubled for some time without revealing the why of it. So Nicholas aided by his scholar friend Jordain Brinkyslworth begins to investigate town, gown, and abbey, propelling him in time into taking a risky gamble that puts his family in danger.

Thomas, Paul. [Death on Demand](#) (Bitter Lemon \$14.95). "Maori cop Tito Ihaka has been put out to pasture for five years and is living a rural life out in the New Zealand sticks when a message arrives from his old boss saying he needs Ihaka's help. Back to Auckland he goes, where he discovers that the case he got fired over has been reopened with the [sort of] killer's confession. Ihaka was right and everyone in the department was wrong although no one is going to admit it out loud, but the real question is who actually drove the car in the hit-and-run, and has the killer been branching out? Then there is that unfortunate incident of the attempted cop killing and the subsequent cover-up, but of course now that Ihaka's on the case that won't hold for long. There are a lot of characters but all are people drawn in full, the NZ place names positively sing, and there is some fun writing, as in 'Booted concussively.' I bet even Stephen King would like that use of an adverb."—Dana Stabenow on a 2013 book she just discovered.

Treadway, Jessica. [How Will I Know You?](#) (Grand Central \$26). A novel of small town secrets. On a cold December day in northern upstate New York, the body of high school senior Joy Enright is discovered in the woods at the edge of a pond. She had been presumed drowned, but an autopsy shows that she was, in fact, strangled. As the investigation unfolds, four characters tell the story from widely divergent perspectives. "Treadway draws her characters into an impossible knot and then expertly teases it apart. The question of what really happened to Joy kept me up half the night."—Ann Patchett

Tursten, Helene. [Who Watcheth](#) (Soho \$26.95). "This 9th in series involves a serial killer, The Guardian, who has set himself up as a self-assigned judge and jury of women who are single, live alone, and depart from the lifestyle he has assigned them. The bodies are found wrapped in plastic. Previous to the killing they each receive a flower, an unreadable note, and a photograph of them taken without their knowledge. Connecting the victims is challenging and, as time goes on, evidence shows that the lead detective, Irene Huss, is being stalked, most likely by The Guardian, and is forced, along with her husband, to leave their home. Irene Huss is not your typical Nordic character. She is happily married (there is fun banter between her and her husband), she is not an alcoholic or drug user, has affection for dogs. Her husband is a chef and the descriptions of his prepared foods are mouth-watering. Delargy's translation was one of the best I have ever encountered," says Karen of our staff. A December Indie Net Pick too. New in paperback, #8: [The Treacherous Net](#) (\$15.95) "is most accomplished in its plot, with several threads exploring history, long-standing social stigmas and the power of the Internet. This fast-paced, gritty thriller offers both a dark story and a striking hero."—Shelf Awareness

Webster, Jason. [A Body in Barcelona](#) (Random Canada \$15.99). British author Webster's tense fifth Max Cámara novel (after *Bloody Med*) takes the Valencia-based chief inspector to Barcelona, where the long-held desire of Catalonians for independence from Spain seems to be reaching the boiling point. Commissioner Pardo, Cámara's boss, assigns him and Inspector Torres to investigate the politically sensitive murder of 10-year-old Fermín Capilla Romero, illegitimate son of billionaire Alfonso Segarra. After reading crime scene notes and interviewing Segarra, Cámara and Torres are still clueless, until an intelligence informant called Carlos directs them toward a connection between Segarra's late wife, Dona Francisca Grau, and Col. José Terreros of the Veteran Legionarios' Welfare Association. Political maneuvering, assassination, and a key celebration at Barcelona's iconic basilica, Sagrada Familia, all point toward a violent climax. Webster's thriller plays out like a blind chess match.

Wright, Erica. [The Granite Moth](#) (Norton \$14.95). PI Kat Stone, a former NYPD undercover detective, discovers the dead body of Stephen Kramer, the unfaithful husband she's been tailing, in the men's room of an Upper East Side bar. When Kat begins to look like the most likely suspect in Kramer's shooting murder, Det. Ellis Dekker, who's in charge of the case and a friend of Kat's, vouches for her innocence and brings her unofficially into the investigation. After someone breaks into both her home and office, Kat begins to think that her former undercover activities might be catching up with her. The sequel to [The Red Chameleon](#) (\$14.95).

Zandri, Vincent. [Orchard Grove](#) (\$15.99). Sometimes fences make for nice neighbors. Other times they hide the evil within. Orchard Grove is a town like any other, with quiet neighborhoods and apple groves . . . though Ethan, the depressed screenplay writer, and his secretive wife, Susan, would tell you differently. So would the seductive serial killer living next door. . . .

SCIFI/FANTASY

Abercrombie, Jo. [The First Law Trilogy](#) (Orbit \$39.99). Noir fantasy with a real cutting edge in one boxed set: *The Blade Itself*; *Before They Are Hanged*; *The Last Argument of Kings*.

Correia, Larry/John Ringo. [Monster Hunter Memoirs: Sinner](#) (Baen \$26). Book Two. With New Orleans out of control, Chad Oliver Gardenier, one of Monster Hunter International's premier hunters, has been dispatched from Seattle to reinforce the beleaguered members of MHI'S Hoodoo Squad in their fight against the darkness. Chad had once taken a werewolf while wearing only jogging gear. With half a dozen or more *loup garoux* appearing every full moon, mysterious shadow demons, hoodoun necromancers, fifty-foot bipedal crocodiles showing up every couple of months and more vampires than a Goth concert, New Orleans in the '80s gives a whole new perspective to the term "Hell on Earth."

Itäranta, Emmi. [The Weaver](#) (Harper Voyager \$14.99). "Celebrated Finnish writer Itäranta's second novel following [Memory of Water](#) (\$14.99) is a finely crafted fantasy tale that seamlessly blends a coming-of-age story with high-stakes intrigue and danger. Eliana is a young woman who lives cloistered away in her island community's House of Webs, where all orders pass through the head Weaver and the oligarchical Council. When Eliana comes across a wounded woman who has secrets and knows her name, they must work together to unravel the island's history of political corruption and discrimination. Itäranta's prose is luminous and filled with rich detail. The setting is inventive, yet one might imagine that it could have existed in our own world. Eliana has her own struggles with being an outsider, marked as undesirable by the rest of society; she is multifaceted and a sympathetic protagonist. Itäranta writes engagingly, displaying her setting and atypical characters in full color. Both seasoned readers of fantasy and newcomers to the genre will savor Itäranta's captivating fiction."

King, Stephen. [The Bazaar of Bad Dreams](#) (\$9.99). A collection of stories, featuring revelatory autobiographical comments on when, why, and how he came to write (or rewrite) each story.

Koch, Gini. [Alien Nation](#) (DAW \$7.99). See Event Books.

Pedersen, Anett. [1635: The Wars for the Rhine](#) (Baen \$16). A new chapter in Alternate history in Eric Flint's Ring of Fire series. Time travelers from our modern age are thrown into the deadly straits of the Thirty Years War in Europe of the 1600s. In the year 1635, the Rhineland is in turmoil. The impact of the Ring of Fire, the cosmic accident which transported the small modern West Virginia town of Grantville to Europe in the early seventeenth century, has only aggravated a situation that was already chaotic. Perhaps nowhere in central Europe did the Thirty Years War produce so much upheaval, and Pedersen takes full advantage of it.

Saberhagen, Fred. [The First Swords](#) (\$17.99). Vols. I-III. Here, available in one volume, are the three books that started it all. For a game, the gods have given the world twelve Swords of Power so that they might be amused as nations battle for their possession. But Vulcan the Smith has had his own little joke: the Swords can kill the gods themselves. What started out as Divine Jest has become all too serious as the gods fight to recover the Swords, and the mortals discover that the mantle of power is more delicious and more terrible than anything they could have imagined.

Towsey, David. [Your Brother's Blood](#) (Fletcher \$14.99) So... zombie myths. "Haunting, elegiac, evocative and human. Combines the taut yet melancholy feel of a classic pursuit Western with an authentically horrific sense of history gone wrong. A beautifully crafted debut."—Christopher Brookmyre

Wilson, Robert. [Last Year](#) (Tor \$27.99). Two events made September 1st a memorable day for Jesse Cullum. First, he lost a pair of Oakley sunglasses. Second, he saved the life of President Ulysses S. Grant. It's the near future, and the technology exists to open doorways into the past but not our past, not exactly. Each "past" is effectively an alternate world, identical to ours but only up to the date on which we access it—for just one time. And a passageway has been opened to a version of late 19th century Ohio. It's been in operation for most of a decade, but it's no secret, on either side of time. Jesse knows it will soon close—and he's fallen in love with a woman from our time and he means to follow her back....

DECEMBER MASS MARKET PAPERBACK PICKS

Black, Lisa. [That Darkness](#) (\$9.99) A Cleveland Police Department forensic scientist and a vigilante willing to kill to make the world a safer place investigate the murder of an unidentified teen whose demise is linked to a monster who watches their every move. *LJ's* review included "In this series launch, Black pairs Maggie with Jack Renner, a determined detective with secrets of his own who has no intention of allowing murderers to evade their punishment. A great choice for readers of psychological suspense, forensic investigations, and mystery."

Castillo, Linda. [Her Last Breath](#) (\$7.99) Kate Burkholder #5. When her best friend's husband and two children are killed in a suspicious car accident, Amish community member Kate maintains a vigil by a grievously injured survivor who may hold answers before investigating a brutal killer who makes her question everything about her Amish culture. *LJ* ended their starred review of this book when it first came out in 2013 with "Castillo once again displays her mastery of edge-of-your seat suspense."

Crais, Robert. [Promise](#) (\$9.99) Elvis Cole #16. Hired to find a missing woman, who was being blackmailed, Elvis Cole and Joe Pike find their case is somehow connected with LAPD officer Scott James and his K-9 partner, Maggie's pursuit of an armed and dangerous thief. *LJ* says "For readers who long for character crossovers and unambiguous resolutions, this excellent thriller should fit the bill. A skillfully convoluted plot evolves ever so slowly and culminates in a satisfying finish that also successfully ties up multiple story lines."

Flower, Amanda. [Prose and Cons](#) (Berkley \$7.99) Magical Bookshop #2. When she finds one of the members of the local writing group dead right before the annual Food and Wine Festival, Violet, after the shop magically tells her she will need to rely on the works of Edgar Allan Poe to solve the murder, must act fast before someone else's heart beats nevermore. Amanda Flower is an Agatha Award winning author, who also writes the Amish Quilt Shop Mysteries under the name Isabella Alan.

Gardner, Lisa. [Find Her](#) (\$9.99) D. D. Warren #8. Requesting the assistance of a survivor of an extended abduction experience who has become obsessed with the cases of girls who never made it home, Boston detective D. D. Warren becomes suspicious of the woman's agenda upon discovering her relationships with other victims. *PW* called Gardner's latest "compelling" and concluded with "As D.D.'s investigation progresses, the reader is treated to fascinating insights into the psychology of sadistic sexual predators, trauma bonding, and the effects violent crime have on victims and loved ones."

Hesse, Jennifer. [Bell, Book & Candlemas](#) (Kensington \$7.99) Wiccan Wheel #1. With the Wiccan holiday of Candlemas right around the corner, Keli—who keeps her religion secret from her colleagues, clients and new boyfriend—must make a tough decision when a hate crime targets Wiccans that escalates to murder and the community turns to her for help. *Kirkus* said “Half mystery, half chick lit, with a filigree of paganism, this is a cabin read: as lightly enjoyable yet forgettable as one of those beach reads, but in a wintry, woody setting”

Jones, Darynda. [The Curse of Tenth Grave](#) (\$7.99) Charley Davidson #10. When three gods plot to kill her daughter, grim reaper and private investigator Charley Davidson organizes a plan to capture them and cast them into a different dimension but questions her resolve about the god of death and destruction’s true loyalties. *PW* said “This mix of romance, mystery, and the supernatural may be an acquired taste, but series fans will be enthralled.”

Kelly, Diane. [Above the Paw](#) (St Martins \$7.99) Paw Enforcement #6. When students fall serious ill after ingesting a “club drug” also known as ecstasy, Officer Megan Luz and her K-9 partner Brigit go undercover to track down the dealers and distributor, only to be led in an unexpected and dangerous direction that could get them killed. Kelly also writes the “Death and Taxes series featuring IRS agent Tara Holloway.

McMahon, Jennifer. [Promise Not to Tell](#) (\$9.99) Forty-one-year-old school nurse Kate Cypher has returned home to rural Vermont to care for her mother, who’s afflicted with Alzheimer’s. On the night she arrives, a young girl is murdered—a horrific crime that eerily mirrors another from Kate’s childhood. Three decades earlier, her dirt-poor friend Del—shunned and derided by classmates as “Potato Girl”—was brutally slain. Del’s killer was never found, while the victim has since achieved immortality in local legends and ghost stories. *Kirkus* concluded with “Well-plotted suspenseful fun.”

Pavone, Chris. [The Expats](#) (\$9.99) Newly arrived in Luxembourg, mother and expat Kate Moore suspects that another American couple are not who they claim to be and as her paranoia grows, she becomes increasingly terrified that her own past is catching up with her. *LJ* loved this saying “Brilliant, insanely clever, and delectably readable, this debut thriller breaks the espionage genre bounds with its American-as-apple-pie heroine. Standing on the shoulders of such giants as Robert Littell, Gayle Lynds, Eric Ambler, Helen MacInnes, and Daniel Silva, Pavone displays the best characteristics of the form and will earn a faithful and yearning readership.” This debut won Pavone a 2013 Edgar Award—this is its first mass market paperback edition.

Poyer, David. [Tipping Point: The War with China](#) (\$9.99) Dan Lenson #15. When tensions between India and Pakistan escalate to the point of nuclear war, Dan Lenson takes his ship and crew into the high-risk region only to be targeted by an unknown predator who is assaulting female crew members. *Kirkus* concluded their review with “This is an ongoing sea saga filled with more trouble than any captain and crew should have to endure. First-class storytelling by a master of the genre.”

Ross, Barbara. [Iced Under](#) (Kensington \$7.99) Maine Clambake #4. When her great-grandmother’s black diamond necklace that disappeared in the 1920s arrives in the mail, Julia, the proprietor of the Snowden Family Clambake Company, must solve the mystery surrounding the unexplained death of her long-lost cousin in

order to protect her mother’s inheritance. *RT* loves Ross’s books saying this about an earlier entry “This cozy series continues to stand out with its exceptional plotting, intriguing storylines, and authentic detailing of the lobstering life.”

NEW IN MASS MARKET PAPERBACKS

Bartlett, Lorraine. [Dead, Bath, and Beyond](#) (Berkley \$7.99) Artisan Alley #4. When her former employer is found dead in a bathtub at a B&B in Victoria Square after making a huge scene, Katie Bonner, the owner of Artisans Alley, must solve the crime quickly before her business and her freedom hit rock bottom.

Cameron, Marc. [Field of Fire](#) (Kensington \$9.99) When a deadly nerve gas is unleashed upon Los Angeles, claiming innocent lives and creating panic, special agent Jericho Quinn is dispatched to the Alaskan wilderness to hunt down the man responsible, a brilliant Russian scientist who is beginning to lose his mind to dementia.

Conrad, Hy. [Dearly Departed](#) (\$6.99) Amy’s Travel #3. Fanny and Amy Abel, the dynamic mother-and-daughter owners of a New York travel agency, have just booked their biggest trip yet to the Taj Mahal, but when an American is found dead at the famous tourist site, Amy realizes she may have a killer on the tour.

Copperman, EJ. [The Spouse on Haunted Hill](#) (Berkley \$7.99) Haunted Guesthouse #8. When the cops show up at her doorstep, searching for her ex-husband who, owing some scary people a lot of money, has disappeared and left a body in his wake, Alison Kerby, with the help of ghosts Maxie and Paul, sets out to find her ex and clear him of the murder before the bad guys get to him first.

Cussler, Clive. [Pharaoh’s Secret](#) (\$9.99) Numa Files #13. When a power broker’s scheme to build a new Egyptian empire requires his manipulation of a Saharan aquifer, Kurt and Joe race to learn the truth about an underworld plant extract at his disposal that may have the power to restore life to the dead.

Daheim, Mary. [Here Comes the Bribe](#) (Harper \$7.99) Bed and Breakfast #30. Shocked by the arrival of a guest who claims to be her son, Judith McMonigle Flynn accepts the young man’s help investigating a murder on the premises only to discover that he has designs on the inn.

Deaver, Jeffery. [Hell’s Kitchen](#) (\$9.99) In Hell’s Kitchen, New York City, to work on a low-budget documentary on the area’s colorful history, ex-stuntman-turned-location-scout John Pellam finds himself investigating a series of suspicious fires that may be linked to efforts to hide the past and to the dark schemes of a twisted arsonist out to turn Hell’s Kitchen into the ultimate inferno. A reissue.

Golden, Christopher. [Dead Ringers](#) (\$9.99) With a deep history that threads back to the days of Alistair Crowley and an ancient house, the spirits of some long dead magicians live on by possessing the lives of others in the present day.

Harper, Karen. [Chasing Shadows](#) (Mira \$7.99) Using skills gleaned from a lifetime fighting a neurological disorder to become a highly intuitive forensic psychologist, Claire Britten is recruited onto a team of elite investigators by a former adversary who would solve a mysterious death connected to his personal life.

Henshaw, Mark. [The Fall of Moscow Station](#) (\$9.99) Burke and Stryker #3. When the Moscow Station is left in ruins after a major intelligence breach, CIA analyst Jonathan Burke and agent

Kyra Stryker are fast on the trail of Alden Maines, an upper-level CIA officer whose defection coincides with the murder of the director of Russia's Foundation for Advance Nuclear Research.

Hiebert, Michael. [Close to the Broken Hearted](#) (Kensington \$9.99) When Preacher Eli, the man who killed her brother, is released from prison and moves back to Alvin, Alabama, 22-year-old single mother Sylvie Carson succumbs to mounting panic, while Detective Leah Teal, trying to keep Sylvie calm, discovers that the girl is in real danger.

Human, Charlie. [Kill Baxter](#) (\$7.99) Sent to a reform school to develop control over his limited magical abilities, Baxter must set aside his frustrations with his studies and his problems with the school bully to save the world from the apocalypse.

Husom, Christine. [Frosty the Dead Man](#) (Berkley \$7.99) Snow Globe #3. When she finds Mayor Lewis Frost, "Frosty" to his friends, dead, apparently struck by the snow globe she sold him earlier that day, curio shop owner Camryn Brooks must shake things up to find a killer who is cold as ice.

Jaffarian, Sue. [The Ghosts of Misty Hollow](#) (Berkley \$7.99) Emma Whitecastle #6. While visiting a best-selling crime writer who needs her input as a medium, Emma Whitecastle is immediately contacted by a family of ghosts who originally owned the historic Massachusetts farmhouse and need her help in locating the spirits of their two children who disappeared, which results in the appearance of a dead body.

Jance, JA. [Clawback](#) (\$9.99) Ali Reynolds #11. When her father is implicated in the murder of a man whose Ponzi scheme bankrupted hundreds of people, Ali Reynolds and her husband struggle to clear her father's name while seeking justice for the victims.

Lee, Amanda. [Better Off Thread](#) (Berkley \$7.99) Embroidery #10. While playing elf to Captain Moe's Santa for sick children at a local hospital, embroidery shop owner Marcy stumbles upon the dead body of the hospital's administrator and must, with the help of her police officer boyfriend and her Irish wolfhound, find out who is trying to pin this murder on Moe.

Lotempio, TC. [Crime and Catnip](#) (Berkley \$7.99) Nick and Nora #3. While catering a gala for the Cruz Museum, Nora Charles agrees to look into the disappearance of director Violet Crenshaw's niece, a case previously undertaken by her frisky feline friend Nick's former owner, a private eye whose whereabouts are also currently unknown.

Lucas, Mason. [Error in Treatment](#) (Penguin \$9.99) Seeing her daughter's chalk-white complexion, sunken eyes, and horrifically swollen belly, Amy Dunn immediately rushes her to the hospital—only to be accused of starving her own child. It soon becomes apparent that Hannah is showing symptoms of a mysterious form of malnutrition never before seen by modern medicine. Called in to investigate when dozens of other children develop the same illness, neurologist Jack Wyatt is about to learn that sometimes a cure can be much worse than the disease.

Lyle, Dixie. [Purrfectly Dead](#) (St Martins \$7.99) Tango and Foxtrot #5. When zillionaireess Zelda Zoransky throws a party, she means business. Foxtrot knows she's in for a night when anything can—and will—happen. The festivities include a high-

stakes showdown between two escape artists locked in a bitter rivalry. Meanwhile, Zelda is stuck in handcuffs. Can Foxtrot, her telepathic cat Tango, and her shape-shifting pooch Whiskey collectively channel their inner Houdini and make it out of the soirée alive?

Mugavero, Liz. [Custom Baked Murder](#) (Kensington \$7.99) Pawsitively Organic #3. While planning her new pet patisserie and cafe and living-in-bliss with her boyfriend, Kristan Connor investigates the murder of the mayor's executive coach, Eleanor Chang, a woman known for her unsavory business tactics, to discover who fatally pushed her off of the corporate ladder

Murphy, Warren. [Bloodline](#) (Tor \$9.99) When their cousin, Nilo, arrives in America and falls in with a Mafia boss who comes from his hometown in Italy, Tommy Falcone, a cop, and his brother Mario, a priest, struggle to stay out of the dark world into which Nilo has dragged their family.

Smith, Wilbur. [Predator](#) (\$9.99) Hector Cross #3. Ex-SAS warrior and former private security consultant Major Hector Cross is forced to take the law into his own hands to stop old and new enemies intent on global domination.

Woods, Stuart. [Family Jewels](#) (\$9.99) Stone Barrington #37. Hired to discourage a tenacious suitor, Stone Barrington finds himself investigating his newest client's life in order to clear her of two brutal crimes.