

BOOKNEWS from

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

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



SPECIAL LABOR DAY BOOKNEWS

SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 2-3

[The Poisoned Pen Conference](#)

Arizona Biltmore 2400 E Missouri Ave, Phoenix, AZ 85016

Sunday 9:00-5:30; Monday 9:00-4:00

Fee: \$125 480- 947-2974 or 888- 560-9919

Or To make it easier to register you can [pay on line](#) with our new ticket program at no additional cost by August 27. No refunds from August 27.

Chances are you can register at the door on Sunday although lunch Monday is not guaranteed.

9 Author Panels, Agatha Christie Tea, Sallis/Rankin Lunch Conversation, Rankin on Scottish Literature and his 30 year career, Stabenow and Straley speak Alaskan Mystery. Sunday night concert with James Sallis and the Three-Legged Dog Band at The Poisoned Pen. **For writers: pitch sessions & editors' forum.**



In celebration of his 30th year, Ian Rankin signs [Rebus's Scotland: A Personal Journey](#) (Orion \$25). He has a new story in [Ten Year Stretch](#) (\$10)

The other authors:

James R. Benn signs [Solemn Graves](#) (Soho \$26.95)

Mark De Castrique signs [Secret Undertaking](#) (PP \$26.95 or \$15.95)

Warren Easley signs [Moving Targets](#) (PP \$26.95 or \$15.95)

Mary Anna Evans signs [Undercurrents](#) (PP \$26.95; \$15.95)

Timothy Hallinan signs [Fool's River](#) (Soho \$26.95), Poke

Rafferty; and [Fields Where They Lay](#) (\$15.95)

Mette Ivie Harrison signs [For Time and All Eternities](#) (Soho \$26.95 or \$15.95)

Annie Hogsett signs [Murder to the Metal](#) (PP \$15.95)

Stephen Mack Jones signs [August Snow](#) (\$15.95)

2018 Hammett Prize Winner

Thomas Kies signs [Random Road](#) (PP \$26.95; \$15.95)

Sujata Massey signs [The Widows of Malabar Hill](#) (Soho \$26.95)

Francine Mathews signs [Death on Nantucket](#) (Soho \$24.95)

Hank Phillippi Ryan signs [Trust Me](#) (Forge \$26.95)

James Sallis signs [Willnot](#) (Bloomsbury \$26)

Dana Stabenow signs [Less Than a Treason](#) (Zeus \$26.95; \$12.95) and [Silk and Song](#) (\$29.95)

John Straley signs [Baby's First Felony](#) (Soho \$25.95)

David Wagner signs [A Funeral in Mantova](#) (PP \$15.95)

Tina Whittle signs [Necessary Ends](#) (PP \$15.95)

Reavis Z. Wortham signs [Gold Dust](#) (PP \$26.95 or \$15.95)

And later the first week in September:

TUESDAY SEPTEMBER 4 2:00 PM

Remembering Fred Ramsay with Susan Ramsay, Dana Stabenow and Barbara

Fred's book: [Countdown](#) (Poisoned Pen \$15.95)

WEDNESDAY SEPTEMBER 5 7:00 PM Noir Night

Peter Blauner signs [Sunrise Highway](#) (St Martins \$27.99)

THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 6 7:00 PM Longmire!

This is a ticketed event: \$30 One book, admits one; \$35 one book, admits two

[Purchase tickets HERE](#)

Location: Kerr Cultural Center 6110 N Scottsdale Rd, Scottsdale, AZ 85253

Craig Johnson signs [The Depth of Winter](#) (Viking \$28)

Walt Longmire #15

Our copies come with a link to an exclusive podcast recorded at Craig's home in Ucross, Wyoming

Doors open 6:00 PM Program 7:00 PM

CONFERENCE BOOKS TO BE SIGNED

Please order ASAP as otherwise we may not have enough copies to supply those not attending. Last minute orders thanks to the holiday will not work. We hate to disappoint anyone but attendees will have priority purchasing books that have not been prepaid for shipping or local pickup.

Benn, James R. [Solemn Graves](#) (Soho \$26.95). I am such a fan of this remarkable WWII series that explores various war theaters in a different by analogous manner to the novels of Alan Furst. Dana is as crazy about Benn as I and will be interviewing him alongside Francine Mathews, aka Stephanie Barron. Here's the Starred Review for Benn's latest: "Set in the summer of 1944, Benn's exceptional 13th mystery featuring U.S. Army investigator Billy Boyle takes Boyle to Normandy, where Major David Jerome, the commanding officer of a signals company, has been found with his throat slit in a villa [apple pressing/cider farm]. A glass near the body with morphine residue at the bottom indicates to Boyle that the murderer spiked the major's drink to lessen his resistance. Oddly, troops from Jerome's company who were at the crime scene when Boyle arrived don't hang around to be questioned—and Boyle must also account for the presence of 20-year-old Yvonne Viro, a mute woman living in the villa, whose clothing is drenched with blood. Complicating Billy's task are a morally suspect Resistance leader and the villa's owner, whose code name in the Resistance—Corday—evokes the excesses of the French Revolution." The opening of this can be hard to follow but it becomes clear when we recognize what we're dealing with her is the Ghost Army, a deceptive operation designed to fool the Germans into thinking the Allies had division strength on hand. The twist in the end is a real surprise and reinforces the whole sleight-of-hand scenario. "Benn has never been better at integrating a whodunit plot line with a realistic depiction of life on or near the battlefield." You can read this gem without ever having read a previous series entry. Or you can give yourself a huge treat and [read Benn](#) all the way through.

De Castrique, Mark. [Secret Undertaking](#) (PP \$26.95 or \$15.95). This is a very clever (and sneaky) plot. Barry Clayton runs the only funeral home in Gainesboro while working part-time as Sheriff Tommy Lee Wadkins' deputy. He's wearing his lawman's hat when his lifelong antagonist, Archie Donovan Jr., approaches him with a dubious charitable scheme: Archie wants to be arrested during the Apple Festival Parade so he can raise bail, the proceeds to go to the local Boys and Girls Club. Naturally, the gesture will also be good for Archie's insurance business. But the parade is marred by a shooting—the Commissioner of Agriculture is injured, and Barry's beloved Uncle Wayne is gravely wounded as he tries to wrestle the gun away from the shooter. The shooter's son is soon found dead in his trailer, a clean shot to the head, and Barry realizes he's dealing with something a lot bigger than a spur-of-the-moment killing. Unraveling the complicated case requires him to collaborate with slick Archie and fend off the intrusions of multiple state and federal law enforcement agencies. "The hero's easy charm in his seventh case makes the reader feel like a longtime Gainesboro resident and a sleuthing sidekick."—*Kirkus Reviews* on a series I recommend

to all fans of Margaret Maron and of Sharyn McCrumb's *Ballad Series*. You can [order a full set](#) of Barry's engrossing investigations—they aren't folksy, as the tag line "Buryin' Barry" suggests. And there's a link to the last Lucas Davenport by Sandford where Lucas is a US Marshal.

Easley, Warren. [Moving Targets](#) (PP \$26.95). Angela Wingate, the grown daughter of a prominent Portland, Oregon, couple against whom she rebelled as a teen, needs Cal Claxton's help in Easley's entertaining sixth mystery featuring the genial lawyer with a strong sense of social responsibility. A year earlier, Angela's rich real estate developer father died of a stroke. Soon afterward, she began to make peace with her estranged mother, Margaret. The two bonded during the Women's March on Washington, with Margaret returning home determined to shift the focus of Wingate Properties from luxury apartments to affordable housing. Five weeks before Angela's visit to Cal, Margaret was killed by a hit-and-run driver. Angela now wants justice. Political corruption, collusion with foreign interests, money laundering, and so much more emerge as Cal investigates. Cal treats everyone with the respect and consideration they deserve, but wrongdoers get exactly what's coming to them. "Intelligent dialogue, evocative descriptions of the Oregon landscape, and sly pokes at the current cultural climate make this a winner." I think of Easley as a kind of poet of Portland and some rural regions. The [Cal Claxtons](#) are all winners, especially the Hillerman-like thriller arising from events in the Columbia Gorge: [Not Dead Enough](#) (\$15.95).

Evans, Mary Anna. [Undercurrents](#) (PP \$26.96). Evans, whose last book for archaeologist Faye Longchamp, [Burials](#), has just been announced as one of 3 finalists for the 2018 WILLA Award, and who has a Sisters in Crime Research Grant for a work on Agatha Christie in the works, sets Faye to work in Memphis, a city "steeped in music, poverty, history, and the smoky tang of barbecue." She's there working alone to do an assessment of a site, welcome work for her small archaeological consulting firm. Faye spies a child too young to be wandering along a creek alone. A day later she uncovers a dying woman, buried alive near a spot where the girl might well be hiding. Nobody would blame Faye for turning away, but she can't make herself leave Kali, the woman's now orphaned daughter, who might be in danger. She's not welcomed by the people in Kali's struggling community, nor by the police working the crime. Yet she stays, for Kali, and for the bereaved. When they confide rumors of other women beaten to death by a man so obsessed with burial that he places fresh flowers in their cold hands, Faye begs the police to widen the investigation to seek a serial killer. They refuse. Faye's gut is telling her that a monster is stalking Memphis—if the police can't catch him, then she will have no choice but to try to find him herself. "The Longchamp mysteries combine history and mystery in a gritty way that makes them feel different from most amateur-sleuth fare—dark -edged rather than cozy. Faye, too, is not your traditional amateur sleuth; she could just as easily anchor a gritty thriller series and give some of the giants in that genre a run for their money."—*Booklist*. The [Faye series](#) will reward your time spent with it.

Hallinan, Timothy. [Fool's River](#) (Soho \$26.95). The eighth installment in Hallinan's Edgar Award-nominated ticking-clock thriller about the most dangerous facets of Bangkok's seedy underbelly. The two most difficult days in Bangkok writer Poke Rafferty's life begin with an emergency visit from Edward Dell, the almost-boyfriend of Poke's teenage daughter, Miaow. The boy's father, Buddy, a late-middle-aged womanizer who has moved to Bangkok for happy hunting, has disappeared, and money is being siphoned out of his bank and credit card accounts. It soon becomes apparent that Buddy is in the hands of a pair of killers who prey on Bangkok's "sexpats"; when his accounts are empty, he'll be found, like a dozen others before him, floating facedown in a Bangkok canal with a weighted cast on his unbroken leg. His money is almost gone. Over forty-eight frantic hours, Poke does everything he can to locate Buddy before it's too late. Also, for burglar Junior Bender, one of the best Christmas crime capers ever: [Fields Where They Lay](#) (\$15.95).

Harrison, Mette Ivie. [For Time and All Eternities](#) (Soho \$26.95 or \$15.95). Using a Mormon bishop's wife, Linda Wallheim, as her lead character, Harrison is never afraid to tackle difficult and divisive issues in Utah that resonate further. So when Linda's son Kenneth becomes engaged, and his fiancée, a medical student he met at a "Mormons Anonymous" meeting, belongs to a family that practices polygamy, Harrison takes the Wallheims to meet them. In exploring the life of Carter père and his five wives and many children—and a murder—Harrison works to highlight various points of view, but for me the result is unconvincing, or should I say muddled, for plural marriage? [The Bishop's Wife: His Right Hand](#) (\$15.95 each).

Hogsett, Annie. [Murder to the Metal](#) (PP \$15.95). "Allie Harper and her lover, Professor Thomas Bennington III, who is blind, have formed the T & A Detective Agency not as a way to earn a living but as a way to give back to the community – Cleveland – in gratitude for Tom winning \$550 million in the MondoMega-Jackpot as told in [Too Lucky to Live](#) (\$15.95). However, from the beginning of their new-found and enormous wealth (okay, the payout was \$197 million – who cares?) their lives have been filled with all kinds of requests for money (you can imagine!); attempts to hack their accounts and steal the money, and danger to them so serious that there have been murders. A woman from Allie's former life – what Allie describes as before the Bulldozer of Fate – comes to her for help. Loretta Coates was the head librarian at the library where Allie had gotten a job and although they weren't terrifically close, Loretta can't think of anyone else to turn to. The man she loves and has every reason to believe really loves her has simply disappeared along with his car, a classic GTO, which was the only thing of value that he owned and something he treasured. Allie, Tom, and Otis take on the case because it is exactly the sort of thing they intended T & A to do: to find out what happened and to help people come to closure with whatever loss they've suffered. Then all hell breaks loose... This new series is engrossing, well thought-out, and just plain fun. Hooray!"—ReviewingtheEvidence.com on our paperback originals cozy series.

Jones, Stephen Mack. [August Snow](#) (\$15.95) 2018 Hammett Prize Winner! And Nominated for the 2018 Shamus Award for Best First Private Eye Novel and a Finalist for the 2018 Nero Award. Tough, smart, and struggling to stay alive, August Snow is the embodiment of Detroit. From the wealthy suburbs to the

mains of Detroit's bankrupt factory districts, here is a fast-paced tale of murder, greed, sex, economic cyber-terrorism, race and urban decay. "[A] witty, mayhem-packed first novel... Snow's own voice has echoes of Raymond Chandler's. Be assured that when the showdown comes, Snow—an action-hero with the heart of a mensch—and his crew prove up to that task." —*The Wall Street Journal*. "All of us begin in grace and great promise and, staring at the door left open behind, wonder where they've gone. Stephen Mack Jones knows this, as does his narrator August Snow, as does their battered city, Detroit. Jean Cocteau believed the world is a misunderstanding. We read searching for stories that help us untangle some of that misunderstanding; August Snow is one." —James Sallis

Kies, Thomas. [Darkness Lane](#) (PP \$26.96). [Random Road](#) (\$15.95) introduced Geneva Chase—"a reporter with a compelling voice, a damaged woman who recounts her own bittersweet story as she hunts down clues," says *Library Journal*—to murders straight out of a nightmare: six bodies found naked and cut to ribbons in a posh Connecticut home. It's a scene straight out of Hieronymus Bosch painting. Having survived this and a personal tragedy, Geneva's story still includes alcoholism and career challenges compounded by the rocky finances of her newspaper employer. But she's working. She's fighting the urge to reconnect with a magnetic yet married lover. And she's raising a rebellious young lady who is not her daughter but a cherished legacy. Nevertheless the newshound in Geneva spurs her to bad if not downright dangerous choices as two unrelated crimes unexpectedly collide. Out on the crime beat, Geneva works to unravel the connection, if any, between the disparate, potentially grim, stories while her newspaper is put up for sale, a high-flying Hollywood production lights up the town, and her personal battles accelerate. Jarring twists and turns include charming movie stars, a missing girl, treacherous diamond merchants, adultery, sex traffickers, and murder.

Massey, Sujata. [The Widows of Malabar Hill](#) (Soho \$26.95). The Indie Next Pick: "This is a harrowing story—and the mystery is great, too! Life for a single woman in Bombay in 1916 is fraught. But Perveen Mistry has the support of her lawyer father and is educated as a lawyer, as very few women are in this time and place. She becomes essential when the law firm needs to interview three widows living in full purdah, secluded from the world in general and men in particular. When their house agent is murdered, the male police are stymied by the women's inaccessibility. The backstory is disturbing in how the law favored even abusive men over women. A fascinating start to a new series." This splendid series start was our January 2018 History/Mystery Pick and unless we are lucky these will be second printings. The [paperback](#) (\$16.95) publishes in November.

Mathews, Francine. [Death on Nantucket](#) (Soho \$24.95 or \$15.95). The fifth Merry Folger Mystery is full of regional charm, a strong sense of local history, and foggy New England Island atmosphere. It has a clever plot centered on the family of a famous Vietnam War correspondent who made a breathtaking escape from the enemy... and is now murdered. In its way this is a country house murder if set on an island, it explores the dynamics and price of fame, and the kinds of betrayals only family can inflict on one another. To balance, police chief Merry's long romance comes to a heartwarming fruition. I love the whole series, cranberry bogs, cranky islanders, and all. Order the [whole Nantucket Mysteries series](#).

Rankin, Ian. [Rebus's Scotland: A Personal Journey](#) (Orion \$25). Photos plus short pieces by Rankin, the closest thing so far to an autobiography of this brilliant Scottish writer.

Bonus: place your order now for late September's [Long Shadows](#) (Orion \$41). The stage debut for the legendary detective John Rebus in this brand new, original story by Ian Rankin, written alongside the award-winning playwright Rona Munro.

Ryan, Hank Phillippi. [Trust Me](#) (Forge \$26.95). The *Booklist* Starred Review: "This is the first stand-alone for Ryan, author of the Jane Ryland-Jake Brogan mystery series, and it's a knockout. Truth is elusive here, as the plot twists, driven by guilt and desperation, and tension, grows. First-rate psychological suspense." Grief-stricken journalist Mercer Hennessey believes there are "no more good days" after her husband and three-year-old daughter die in a car crash, until she's assigned to write a true crime book about the Baby Boston murder trial. She gains a renewed sense of purpose—to avenge two-year-old Tasha Nicole Bryant, whose body was dumped in Boston harbor. Tasha Nicole's mother, Ashlyn Bryant, is accused of her daughter's murder, and Mercer is sure she's guilty. But when Ashlyn is found not guilty, Mercer must write a redemption story instead. After spending time with Ashlyn, Mercer begins to wonder whether Ashlyn is in fact innocent—and whether the book will be Ashlyn's redemption story—or her own. *PW* notes, "Ryan casts a revealing light on media sensationalism, ethics in journalism, and the nature of truth."

Sallis, James. [Willnot](#) (Bloomsbury \$26). "Willnot is a slippery, poetic mystery that becomes a love story to small town America."—Ian Rankin. Sallis has created some of the most finely drawn protagonists in crime fiction, all of them memorable observers of the human condition: Lew Griffin, the existential black New Orleans private investigator; retired detective John Turner; the unnamed wheelman in *Drive*. Dr. Lamar Hale now joins the ranks of Sallis' finest characters. In the woods outside the town of Willnot in rural Virginia, the remains of several people have suddenly been discovered, unsettling the community and Hale, the town's all-purpose general practitioner, surgeon, and town conscience. At the same time, Bobby Lowndes—military records disappeared, of interest to the FBI—mysteriously re-appears in his home town, at Hale's door. Over the ensuing months, the daily dramas Hale faces as he tends to his town and to his partner, Richard, bump up against the inexplicable vagaries of life in Willnot. And when a gunshot aimed at Lowndes critically wounds Richard, Hale's world is truly upended. "James Sallis is one of our greatest living crime writers, and *Willnot* continues an almost unseemly streak of excellence. Try to get his words, his stories, his people out of your head. Just try."—Laura Lippman. "...an ingenious and unusual use of the Macguffin; pungent dialogue; a world that's either dark shot through with abundant light or light shot through with abundant dark; likable, complex characters. A brisk and sure-handed treat."—*Kirkus Reviews*

Stabenow, Dana. [Less Than a Treason](#) (Zeus \$26.95; \$12.95). Kate Shugak #21 catches you up on the first 20 while creating a new mystery that will propel you once again into Kate's Alaska part homeland in next year's Kate #22. I loved spending time with old friends (like Bobby!) and various Park Rats. And Jim.

Dana has also completed Johanna's journey west along the Silk Road starting in 1322 in [Silk and Song](#) (\$29.95). When her trader father, son of Marco Polo and a Chinese lover, dies and

Johanna is in the clutches of the proverbial wicked stepmother she knows the smart move is to head to Venice. But she doesn't stop there... Romance and a road trip! Plus there's the horse.

Straley, John. [Baby's First Felony](#) (Soho \$25.95). Reading the Shamus Award-winning Sitka, Alaska author is not for the faint-hearted. Cecil Younger is not your average investigator—criminal defense work—as this unusual narrative underlines. In part it's because the citizens of Sitka are far from regular guys and so in part he coaches would-be felons on how to avoid self-incrimination, using a kind of illustrated guide he constructs called *Baby's First Felony*. The question is will he follow his own advice when his teen-age daughter Blossom is caught up in a crime scene where \$50K is washing around. One of his own rules? No good can come of walking around with a lot of someone else's money. Cecil narrates this story in a structure fashioned on a trial where he is testifying in his own defense, having more or less blown away his professional and private life.... There is an interesting (and accidental) parallel to the situation Julia Keller's *Bell Elkins* opens with in the novel Keller signs for us Sept. 11. See below. It's an interesting wrinkle to put the investigator in the role of (maybe) criminal, no?

Wagner, David. [A Funeral in Mantova](#) (PP \$15.95). "Wagner's fifth series entry provides his usual deft mix of art, travel, and suspense," says the normally acerbic *Kirkus Reviews*. *Library Journal's* take: "Rick Montoya, an American translator living in Rome, is hired by wealthy American Angelo Rondini to be his guide and interpreter in Mantova. Angelo was born in Italy, but his parents emigrated when he was an infant. Now, he's back for the funeral of his cousin Roberto, whom he never knew. But, Inspector Crespi has questions about the death of the well-to-do dairy farmer. Rick discovers that there are a number of people who didn't like Roberto. There were squabbles about land, fishing, and politics. As he investigates further, Rick also uncovers questions about Angelo's own history. Wagner's fifth series outing features a likable amateur sleuth who carefully analyzes other people. Rich in details of the food and culture of Italy's Lombardy region, this atmospheric mystery will be appreciated by fans of Martin Walker's French-flavored "Bruno" mysteries. Readers of Frances Mayes's *Under the Tuscan Sun* will enjoy the colorful descriptions. Think of Wagner as Donna Leon light (with food and fine tips) and [order all five](#) of his Italian mystery series that draws on his career in the Foreign Service. I add that the cheese made in the Montova region will hook you.

Whittle, Tina. [Necessary Ends](#) (PP \$15.95). *PW* writes, "In Whittle's skillfully plotted sixth mystery featuring witty, intrepid Tai Randolph, PI Finn Hudson approaches Tai's boyfriend, Trey Seaver, a SWAT-trained corporate security agent. Finn asks Trey to look into an attempt on the life of Nicholas Talbot; years before Talbot was arrested for his wife's murder, but the case was dismissed due to lack of evidence. Trey, who was one of the Atlanta police officers who responded to the crime scene, is convinced that Nicholas was guilty. Soon Tai and Trey are pulled into the orbit of the Talbot brothers, who have a major stake in the hit television series *Moonshine*, a Prohibition-era werewolf drama filmed in Atlanta. A fine cast of believable—if eccentric—characters includes conniving actresses, jilted lovers, pushy financial backers, and stalker-fans, each with his or her own weighty agenda. Tai and Trey, with all their strengths and foibles, make a top-notch team. Readers will look forward to their further

adventures.” I add this is a transition book for Tai who is giving up a legacy to become a professional investigator. There is high action in this series as well as piercing portrayals of Trey’s efforts to cope with the aftermath of a traumatic brain injury. The dynamic between Tai and Trey is crucial to his evolution. [Order all five](#) Tai Randolphs.

Wortham, Reavis. [Gold Dust](#) (Poisoned Pen \$26.95). “Reading the seventh Red River Mystery is like coming home after a vacation: we’re reuniting with old friends, returning to a comfortable place. Wortham’s writing style is easygoing, relying on natural-sounding dialogue and vivid descriptions to give us the feeling that this story could well have taken place.”—*Booklist*. This from Wortham: “A significant portion of the novel is based on the true story of a CIA experiment in California back in 1950. To conduct a simulation of a biological warfare attack, the U.S. Navy sprayed large quantities of a seemingly harmless bacteria over the city of San Francisco during a project called Operation Sea-Spray. A number of citizens contracted pneumonia-like illnesses, and at least one person died as a result. It was frightening to find out those tests were continued until at least 1969. I came across this story four or five years ago and thought, “What if?” The story moved on from there and became *Gold Dust*, when my fictional CIA agents contracted for a substance of the same name to be sprayed on the tiny community of Center Springs, Texas. I also had to get the right songs in the right year, talking to Stock Inspectors about cattle rustling in the 1960s (yep, in addition to the biological experimentation, there’s a secondary plot line about rustling), and driving to the Broken Spoke dance hall in Austin and interviewing the man who still owns it. I also wanted to check into the Austin music scene at that time, and that took a little doing to find out who was playing then.”

EVENT BOOKS SEPTEMBER 4-6

Blauner, Peter. [Sunrise Highway](#) (St Martins \$27.99 Sept. 5). Bestseller Blauner’s excellent sequel to 2017’s [Proving Ground](#) (\$16.99) connects two strong story lines—the discovery of a body washed up on a beach in Far Rockaway, Queens, and a trail of murdered women along Long Island’s Route 27 (aka Sunrise Highway) that dates back to 1977. The case involving the body found on the beach—a badly decomposed pregnant woman with stones lodged in her throat—resonates with NYPD Det. Lourdes Robles, whose sister has been missing for six months. But as she begins to find connections between the killing and numerous murders out of her jurisdiction in Suffolk County, she becomes entangled with police chief Joey Tolliver, a charmer who has more than a few skeletons in his closet. The intertwining narratives—Robles’s investigation and Tolliver’s shadowy backstory—make for an action-packed and plot twist-laden thriller. Exploring such subjects as police corruption, misogyny, and racism, this is a page-turner of the highest order. And not for the faint-hearted. I’m such a fan girl of Blauner whose unsparing novels of his region remain icons for me. I suspect this one is inspired by a real trail of murders along a regional highway.

Johnson, Craig. [The Depth of Winter](#) (Viking \$28 Sept. 6). “Bestseller Johnson’s harrowing 14th mystery featuring Sheriff Walt Longmire takes the Wyoming lawman to Mexico, where ruthless killer Tomás Bidarte holds Walt’s grown daughter, Cady, captive in a remote mountain compound in the middle of the Chihuahua desert. The six-foot-four Walt faces formidable obstacles in res-

cuing Cady, not least being his attention-drawing size. Fortunately, one of his allies on this suicidal mission, a blind man known as the Seer, thinks to pass him off as real-life retired NFL star Bob Lilly, a ruse that works for a while. Once Walt and his team arrive at the compound, the trouble really begins. The tension lets up only intermittently as Walt lurches from one dire situation to another. Humorous asides and witty dialogue provide welcome relief from the often grim circumstances in which Walt finds himself, including a stint in the stocks during a Day of the Dead celebration and the climactic confrontation with Bidarte, who plays matador to Walt’s bull. Johnson is in fine form.”—*PW Starred Review*. Our copies come with access to an exclusive Podcast I made with Craig at his home in Ucross, Wyoming. Such fun.

Ramsay, Fred. [Countdown](#) (Poisoned Pen \$15.95). Unforgettable characters lift Ramsay’s sequel to 2017’s [Copper Kettle](#), set in 1928 in Floyd, Virginia. When Sheriff David Privette tells Jesse Sutherlin, who runs a successful sawmill, that his father’s bludgeoned body has been found under the sawdust in a soon-to-be abandoned ice house, Jesse is stunned, as the family thought that Pa Sutherlin died in 1918 of the Spanish flu in Norfolk. Once the identification is confirmed, Jesse vows to find the killer. His only hope lies in locating the man who told his family in 1918 that his father was dead and locating his father’s distinctive pocket watch, which was not with the body. He gets no help from Privette, who considers the investigation a lost cause, and finds his own life in peril. While unraveling the mystery is fun, the novel’s real pleasure lies in experiencing life—with all its kindnesses, sorrows, and triumphs—through the eyes of Jesse and his astute wife, Serena. Readers new to Ramsay (1936–2017) will want to read his earlier books after finishing this.” I can’t begin to say how much all of us miss Fred, the man, and Fred the author, and how glad we are that his super fan Dana Stabenow stepped up to polish up this, Fred’s final book..

ON SALE SEPTEMBER 4

Jance, JA. [Field of Bones](#) (Harper \$27.99 on sale Sept. 4). Due to an injury Jance will not be touring but she is signing her new Brady for us at her home. A serial killer investigation disrupts Joanna Brady’s maternity leave in bestseller Jance’s exciting 18th novel featuring the Cochise County, Arizona, Sheriff. Acting Sheriff Tom Hadlock is on duty when June Carver brings in her son, Jack, with a skull that the high school senior found in the remote San Bernardino Valley. Evidence at the scene suggests that a serial killer has been using it as a dump site. Readers know from the first chapter that a man known only as the Boss has been keeping his victims prisoner, torturing them, and disposing of their bodies in the desert. Hadlock puts every available officer on the case, while Joanna offers advice and secures an FBI profiler willing to help. Jance ratchets up the tension by switching between the Boss’s depredations and the police’s efforts to identify him and rescue his prisoners. The birth of Joanna’s daughter, Sage, and other developments in her personal life will enthrall established fans.

Kadrey, Richard. [Hollywood Dead](#) (Harper \$28). Sandman Slim #10. Life and death takes on an entirely new meaning for half-angel, half-human hero James Stark, aka Sandman Slim. Back from Hell, trailing more trouble in his wake, he’s had to make a deal with the evil power brokers, Wormwood, so he can return to LA—an arrangement that comes with a catch. While he may be

home, Stark isn't quite himself...because he's only partially alive. There's a time limit on his reanimated body, and unless Stark can find the people targeting Wormwood, he will die again—and this time there will be no coming back. Even though he's armed with the Room of Thirteen Doors, Stark knows he can't find Wormwood's enemies alone. To succeed he's got to enlist the help of new friends—plus a few unexpected old faces. Is this a new beginning—or the beginning of his end?

A FEW BOOKS IN STOCK NOW

Grant, Rob. [The Quanderhorn Experimentations](#) (Gollancz \$39 Signed and in stock). The UK has a vibrant SciFi publishing community so maybe once a year I like to highlight one of its new books as this, our **September SciFi/Fantasy Club Pick**. And this one is, appropriately, set in England, 1952. A time of peace, regeneration and hope. A Golden Age. Unfortunately, it's been 1952 for the past 65 years. Meet Professor Quanderhorn: a brilliant, maverick scientific genius with absolutely no moral compass. Assisted by a rag-tag crew—his part-insect “son” (reputedly ‘a major breakthrough in Artificial Stupidity’), a recovering amnesiac, a brilliant scientist with a half-clockwork brain, and a captured Martian hostage—he'll save the world. Even if he has to destroy it in the process. With his Dangerous Giant Space Laser, Utterly Untested Matter Transfuser Booth and Fleets of Monkey-driven Lorries, he's not afraid to push the boundaries of science to their very limit. And far, far beyond... This is our **September SciFi/Fantasy Club Pick** so only 3 unreserved Signed copies are available.

Hannah, Sophie. [The Mystery of Three Quarters](#) (Harper \$27.99 Signed and in stock for the conference and thereafter). **Our copies come with a printed interview I made with Hannah.** Bestseller Hannah's third Hercule Poirot pastiche offers Agatha Christie fans another ingeniously deceptive puzzle. The premise is especially clever—someone, posing as Poirot, has sent letters to four people accusing each of them of having murdered Barnabas Pandey. Pandey, a 94-year-old, was found drowned in his bathtub in Combingham Hall three months earlier—a death that was universally accepted as a tragic accident. Two of the recipients of the letters confront Poirot angrily, professing to have no idea who Pandey was, but the third, Annabel Treadway, distraught at the accusation, discloses that Pandey was her grandfather and insists that no one in the household could possibly have killed him. Aided again by Insp. Edward Catchpool, an enigmatic Scotland Yarder, Poirot uses his “little gray cells” to ascertain who has been impersonating him, whether Pandey was in fact the victim of foul play, and if so, whodunit. “The gratifying reveal is a neat variation on one of Christie's own solutions and demonstrates Hannah's facility at combining her own plotting gifts with another author's creation.” Signed UK Edition: [Mystery of Three Quarters](#) (Collins \$46) due in mid-September.

Hart, Elsa. [City of Ink](#) (St Martins \$25.99 Signed Sept. 10). Hart's superb third novel set in 18th-century China (after 2016's *The White Mirror*) finds librarian Li Du back in Beijing after a period of exile. As the secretary to Chief Inspector Sun, he transcribes witness statements and performs other clerical duties. When two bodies are found in a tile factory office with their throats slit, Li Du accompanies his boss to the scene. The victims are Madam Hong, whose husband, Hong, owns the factory, and

Pan Yongfa, an employee of the Ministry of Rites, responsible for negotiating contracts with Hong and inspecting the quality of the work being done. The proximity of the corpses to each other leads Sun to suspect that they were discovered *in flagrante delicto* by Hong, who murdered them in a jealous rage—a motive that under Chinese law serves as an absolute defense. Hong refuses to confess, however, and Li Du, who suspects that the case is much less straightforward than it appears, investigates on his own. As always, Hart excels at making even walk-on characters fully realized and at combining a gripping whodunit plot with a vivid evocation of the period. This entry solidifies her status as a top-notch historical mystery.

Keller, Julia. [Bone on Bone](#) (St Martins \$26.99 Signed Sept. 11). *PW* Stars it: “The inhabitants of the dying town of Acker's Gap, West Virginia, face only bleak prospects in Keller's beautifully written seventh Bell Elkins novel. Adults close themselves off emotionally, clutching their despair, while young people are likely to slip into hopeless drug addiction—or dealing. Wheelchair-bound former sheriff's deputy Jake Oakes and just-out-of-prison former prosecutor Bell, who was put behind bars after confessing to her abusive father's murder, also appear to have no useful futures, but they get a new focus by investigating the shooting murder of banker Brett Topping. The police question Topping's 19-year-old drug-addicted son, Tyler, but once Tyler is cleared, along with his ultraviolet dealer, Deke Foley, suspicion shifts to more seemingly wholesome members of the community. Despite the pervading melancholy, characters stubbornly struggle to rediscover purpose for their lives and to pin down responsibility for personal failures. This thoughtful, painfully empathetic story will long linger in the reader's memory.” If you haven't read Keller the best place to start is with the first Bell, [A Killing in the Hills](#) (\$9.99).

McMorris, Kristina. [Sold on a Monday](#) (Sourcebooks \$15.99 Signed Sept. 8). 2 CHILDREN FOR SALE. McMorris' novel is inspired by an actual newspaper photograph that stunned the nation. The sign is a last resort. It sits on a farmhouse porch in 1931, but could be found anywhere in an era of breadlines, bank runs and broken dreams. It could have been written by any mother facing impossible choices. For struggling reporter Ellis Reed, the gut-wrenching scene evokes memories of his family's dark past. He snaps a photograph of the children, not meant for publication. But when it leads to his big break, the consequences are more devastating than he ever imagined.

Munier, Paula. [A Borrowing of Bones](#) (St Martins \$26.99 Signed Sept. 11). PP Staffer Tracy writes, “Dog fans rejoice! Paula Munier's *A Borrowing of Bones* is an engaging series first featuring Mercy Carr, retired military police, and Elvis, retired army bomb sniffing dog. Both Mercy and Elvis are working through grief and PTSD by hiking the Vermont forests, but finding an abandoned baby along the trail along with human bones allows both of them to use their rusty skills. They find compatriots in game warden Troy Warner and his canine sidekick Susie Bear. I liked all of the main characters including the dogs and look forward to the next book.” The portrayal of working dogs will appeal to fans of David Rosenfelt and Margaret Mizushima. “The blend of lovingly detailed setting and lively characters, both human and canine, makes this a series to watch.”