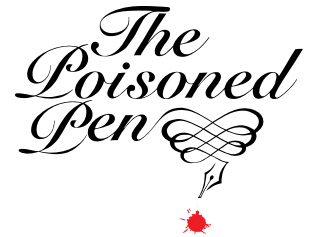


# BOOKNEWS from

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## WISHING YOU HAPPY HOLIDAYS



**AUTHORS ARE SIGNING...**

*Some Events will be webcast on Facebook Live*

### **TUESDAY DECEMBER 3 7:00 PM Book Launch Party**

**Jeff Lindsay** signs [Just Watch Me](#) (Dutton \$26)  
A heist novel targeting Iran's crown jewels

### **WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 4 7:00 PM Double Book Launch Party**

**Mark De Castrique** signs [Murder in Rat Alley](#) (Poisoned Pen \$26.95/\$15.95)  
Sam Blackman, PI  
**Paige Shelton** signs [Thin Ice](#) (St Martins \$26.99)  
Starts a series set in Alaska

### **THURSDAY DECEMBER 5 7:00 PM**

**Greg Iles** signs [Cemetery Road](#) (Morrow \$28.99)  
We've held on to first prints since March!

### **SATURDAY DECEMBER 7 11:00AM**

**Bud Selig** signs [For the Good of the Game: The Inside Story of the Surprising and Dramatic Transformation of Major League Baseball](#) (Harper \$28.99). Foreword by Doris Kearns Goodwin

### **SATURDAY DECEMBER 7 2:00 PM**

**Jennifer Roberson** signs [Life and Limb](#) (Daw \$26)  
December SciFi/Fantasy Book of the Month.

### **SUNDAY DECEMBER 8 2:00 PM**

**Patricia Smith** signs [Remember](#) (Polis Books \$15.99)  
Psychological suspense/social anxiety

### **TUESDAY DECEMBER 10 7:00 PM**

**Matt Coyle** signs [Lost Tomorrows](#) (Oceanview \$26.95/\$16)  
**Carl Vonderau** signs [Murderabilia](#) (Midnight Ink \$16.99)

### **AND COMING JANUARY 6-12**

### **MONDAY JANUARY 6 7:00 PM**

**Tarryn Fisher** signs [The Wives](#) (Graydon House \$16.99/\$27.99)

### **TUESDAY JANUARY 7 7:00 PM Publication Party**

**Brad Taylor** signs [Hunter Killer](#) (Morrow \$27.99)  
Our copies come with an exclusive: Pike Logan's passport

### **WEDNESDAY JANUARY 8 2:00 PM A New Year's Tea**

**Debra Goldstein** signs [Two Bites Too Many](#) (Kensington \$7.99)  
Sarah Blair cozy #2 in Wheaton, Alabama

### **THURSDAY JANUARY 9 7:00 PM Publication Party**

**Thomas Perry** signs [Small Town](#) (Grove \$26)

### **SATURDAY JANUARY 11 2:00 PM Scream for Ice Cream Publication Party**

**Dana Stabenow** signs [No Fixed Line](#) (Head of Zeus \$29.95)  
Kate Shugak #22

### **SUNDAY JANUARY 12 2:00 PM Publication Party**

**Tasha Alexander** signs [In the Shadow of Vesuvius](#) (St Martins \$27.99) Lady Emily in Pompeii  
**Karen Odden** signs [A Trace of Deceit](#) (Morrow \$16.99)  
Victorian Mystery

### **DECEMBER DISCUSSION CLUBS**

*Please buy your copy from The Pen. Anyone welcome but remember you risk spoilers if you don't read the selection in advance. The clubs each include a Holiday Party with the regular meeting*

**Coffee & Crime:** Saturday December 14 10:30 AM  
Share your favorite book of any sort of 2019

**SciFi Friday:** December 13 7:00 PM

Wells, Martha. [All Systems Red](#) (\$16.99). Gailey Sarah, [River of Teeth](#) (\$15.99)

**Croak & Dagger:** Saturday December 21 10:30 AM

Soho Crime. [The Usual Santas](#) (\$19.95), a collection of Christmas crime capers

**Hardboiled Crime:** Thursday December 19 7:00 PM

Anderson, Kent. [Green Sun](#) (\$16.99)

## POISONED PEN GIFTS

[Poisoned Pen Gift Cards](#) The perfect gift or last minute gift. Can be for any amount and you can request we personalize the card to name a specific book or other item.

### Mystery of the Month Club

The Mystery-of-the-Month Club is individually tailored to each customer's specific tastes. Just let us know what kinds of mysteries you enjoy, whether you're looking for signed hardcover books or paperbacks, and we'll take it from there! For more information, drop Patrick King a line at [pat@poisonedpen.com](mailto:pat@poisonedpen.com). We can't offer a single subscription price because each customer's mystery of the month varies.

### A Six Month Subscription to a Poisoned Pen Book of the Month Club

We have revised our Clubs to fewer categories. And we offer a single subscription price for six months as well as the pay each month option. Please select one and email [Karen@poisonedpen.com](mailto:Karen@poisonedpen.com) to subscribe yourself or someone on your list.

*The four clubs below offer a Signed hardcover 1<sup>st</sup> printing each month*

*Subscription price: \$195 for six months includes shipping*

#### The First Mystery Book of the Month

If you belonged to this club you would own *IQ*, *Where the Crawdads Sing*, and *The Woman in the Window*

#### The Historical Fiction Book of the Month

If you belonged to this club you would own *The Widows of Malabar Hill*, *Tangerine*, *The Golden Hour*, and *The Last Train to London*

#### The Mystery Book of the Month

*This club combines the former Discovery, Hardboiled, Surprise Me! and Thriller Clubs*

If you belonged to this club you would own *The Terminal List*, *Forever and a Day*, and *November Road*

#### The Not Mystery Book of the Month

If you belonged to this club you would own *The Kite Runner*, *All the Light You Cannot See*, *Black Leopard*, *Red Wolf* and *On Earth We Are Briefly Gorgeous*

*These two clubs offer an Unsigned hardcover or occasional paperback each month*

*Subscription price: \$175 for six months includes shipping*

#### The British Book of the Month

If you belonged to this club you would own *Murder for Christmas*, *The Silent Patient* and *Transcription*

#### The Cozy Book of the Month

If you belonged to this club you would own *The Mitford Murders*, *Death by Chocolate Cherry Cheesecake*, and *The Bodies in the Library*

## DECEMBER EVENT BOOKS

Coyle, Matt. [Lost Tomorrows](#) (Oceanview \$26.95). San Diego PI Rick Cahill gets a call from Leah Landingham asking him to come to Santa Barbara to attend the funeral of her sister, Krista, who was his training officer when he was a rookie cop 17 years earlier. Three years later, his wife, Colleen, was murdered, and he hasn't been back to the city since. He hesitates because he knows that within the Santa Barbara PD he's still unjustly despised as "the cop who got away with murdering his wife." At the funeral, Leah asks him to investigate Krista's death. The police think it was a hit-and-run accident, but Leah is sure it was murder. When Rick, whose creed is "Sometimes you have to do what's right even when the law says it's wrong," learns that Krista had reopened the cold case file on Colleen's murder just one week before her death, he knows that the two crimes are connected. The twisty plot takes readers down some false trails before reaching the explosive climax—perfect for fans of Noir. Order other books in the [Rick Cahill series](#).

De Castrique, Mark. [Murder in Rat Alley](#) (Poisoned Pen \$26.99/\$15.99). Dana Stabenow writes, "*Murder in Rat Alley* starts off on a personal level, with the discovery of the remains of a long-lost uncle and brother, which then morphs into a history of international espionage and murder. De Castrique's novel reminds me of James R. Benn's Billy Boyle series in the able way both authors meld fact with fiction, allowing for pointed commentary without interrupting the narrative..." Which gets going when the skeletal remains of a body are found near Pisgah Astronomical Research Institute, once a NASA tracking station but now a weather research center, outside Asheville, N.C. When the bones are identified as those of Frank DeMille, a software engineer who disappeared in 1971 while working on the Apollo space mission, the FBI is called in to handle the case. Cory DeMille, Frank's niece, approaches her PI friends, Sam Blackman and Nakayla Roberson, and asks them to investigate, as she's certain that the FBI will stonewall her. Sam and Nakayla agree to assist. The subsequent murder of Loretta Case, who was Frank's girlfriend and the secretary for the head of PARI back in 1971, raises the

stakes. “De Castrique skillfully entwines the reasons for the two deaths and provides a fascinating motive that spans the decades. Intelligent, kind protagonists and an eye-opening historical background help make this one winner,” affirms *PW*. Order other [Blackman Agency Investigations](#), some of which may not be available for awhile.

Iles, Greg. [Cemetery Road](#) (Morrow \$28.99). When Marshall McEwan left his hometown at age eighteen, he vowed never to return. The trauma that drove him away ultimately spurred him to become one of the most successful journalists in Washington D.C. But just as the political chaos in the nation’s capital lifts him to new heights and winning the Pulitzer Prize (by telling a lie) news that his father is terminally ill pushes him to return to Bienville, Mississippi, in spite of his boyhood vow. While his father is dying, his mother is struggling to keep the family newspaper from failing, and Bienville is in the midst of an economic rebirth that might be built upon crimes that reach into the state capitol—and perhaps even to Washington. But the underlying pulse is Marshall’s path towards recognizing it’s time to put away childish things, and love. “I never meant to kill my brother. I never set out to hate my father. I never dreamed I would bury my own son, nor betray the childhood friend who saved my life. Am I indeed an honorable man?” And does “the real world await”—but not without working through loyalties and betrayals and pain? Iles give himself 591 pages to find out.

The *NY Times* adds this: “There’s something about Bienville that rings true, something about the plight of small towns all over the South struggling to remain relevant in a modern economy. In fiction, if not in life, all they need is a hometown hero like Marshall McEwan to revive them. ‘I’m a good Southern boy at heart,’ Marshall says, explaining why he has returned to care for his aged father and rescue both the family newspaper and the town itself.

Lindsay, Jeff. [Just Watch Me](#) (Dutton \$26). This terrific series launch, our **December Surprise Book of the Month**, from bestseller Lindsay opens with master thief Riley Wolfe, an antihero Dexter fans will relish, using a helicopter to steal a 12-ton statue in broad daylight during its installation ceremony in Chicago. Wolfe also abducts the honoree, a greedy pharmaceutical mogul who developed a cancer treatment he only sells for \$500,000 a dose, before pushing him to his death from the aircraft. But vigilante justice isn’t enough of a rush, so Wolfe seeks “a heist that was beyond impossible, something ridiculous, unthinkable, stupid, totally out of the question,” and finds one after learning that the Iranian crown jewels are scheduled to be exhibited at Manhattan’s Eberhardt Museum. He sets his sights on the exhibit’s prize, the Ocean of Light, a diamond valued at more than \$15 billion—if he can get past the formidable array of security, both electronic and human. His crafty multistep plan is a pleasure to watch unfold. Having warmed readers up with Dexter, it’s no surprise that Lindsay reveals that that Wolfe is capable of killing without any pretense of a moral justification. Lindsay is the bestselling author of [Darkly Dreaming Dexter](#) and [its sequels](#) that spawned the TV series.

Roberson, Jennifer. [Life and Limb](#) (Daw \$26). Two sort-of angels, one a cowboy, the other a biker, reluctantly join the fight against the forces of hell. Gabriel and Remi were raised separately with the same purpose in mind. Their Granddaddy, who wasn’t really

their grandfather by blood, promised them both they’d grow to become soldiers with “the fate of the world” on their shoulders. Still, when grown-up biker Gabe meets Remi for the first time and hears he’s going to partner up with a cowboy, he’s skeptical. And when Granddaddy tells the two of them they were “born of heavenly matter” and they’ve got to start killing demons disguised as werewolves, black dogs, and other mythical creatures, he’s downright incredulous. And horrified that their mission involves sacrifice. A lot of worldbuilding sets up a planned series stemming from this our **December SciFi/Fantasy Book of the Month**.

Selig, Bud. [For the Good of the Game](#) (Harper \$28.99). Selig, who served as the ninth commissioner of Major League Baseball from 1998 to 2015, delivers a straightforward, insightful account of his life and how he dealt with challenges in a quickly changing sport. Starting with his ownership of his hometown Milwaukee Brewers in 1970, through his becoming commissioner after the resignation of Fay Vincent, Selig gives an honest account of his struggles with what he believed were owners “stuck in the past” and “planted on the wrong side of history” when it came to modernizing the league’s economic system and forging a partnership with the Players Association.” Selig highlights his friendship with Hank Aaron and praises both John McCain and George W. Bush while staying silent on Donald Trump. But his focus is on the “transformation of major league baseball” from Jackie Robinson on. Foreword by Doris Kearns Goodwin whom Selig credits for urging him to write his book.

Fans, don’t miss [Baseball Americana](#) (Harper \$24.99), compiled by Harry Katz, with its preface by Librarian of Congress Carla Hayden where the exhibition that prompted publication of this lavishly illustrated history of the game was staged. I love this book and bought several for gifts. Foreword by George F. Will.

Shelton, Paige. [Thin Ice](#) (St Martins \$26.99). Our PP blogger Lesa Holstine reviews this series start: “Renowned thriller writer Elizabeth Fairchild was kidnapped by a crazed fan but managed to escape after three days. Now, under her real name, Beth Rivers, she’s run as far as she can, to the isolated village of Benedict, Alaska. Her kidnapper hasn’t been caught yet. With only a few memories of her ordeal and the man’s name stuck in her head, she’s going to hide until either the police or her determined mother find the man. She attracts attention as a newcomer, but everyone in Benedict seems to be hiding or escaping from the past. The police chief knows who she is and recruits her to use her skills to help with a murder investigation. The case keeps Beth occupied, while she tries to remember her ordeal and looks over her shoulder with every unusual sound. Known for her cozies, most recently the Scottish Bookshop Mysteries, Shelton turns thriller author for this riveting story with an unusual setting and cast of characters. Fans of strong amateur sleuths will admire Beth’s struggle to build a new future in a remote location.” I am reminded of Kelley Armstrong’s Casey Duncan thrillers set in the Yukon, another community of people seeking to live under the radar.

Smith, Patricia. [Remember](#) (Polis Books \$15.99). LA high school senior Portia Willows, the unreliable narrator of Smith’s first novel, suffers from social anxiety disorder. Portia’s parents refuse to get professional help because they are repeatedly assured that

her distress is just a phase. This fragile veneer of normality is ripped away when her mother and her much adored younger sister are killed in a car crash. With only her alcoholic, housebound father for company, Portia drifts deeper into numbing depression. Her days degenerate into a blur of beer drinking and watching TV, with only occasional visits from her grandmother. Early on, Portia unexpectedly forms a bond with her new neighbor Ethan Torke, who has just moved back to live with his father, and a kind of mutual love seems to evolve. But does the love only serve to mask Portia's deteriorating reality, where memory and fantasy merge, and inevitable violence looms? "Smith's empathy for her characters makes for a supremely relatable take on mental illness. *Remember* is an emotional rollercoaster of a debut, culminating with a twist that will leave you reeling."—Alafair Burke. But this is not so much a psychological thriller as focusing a lens on mental illness.

Vonderau, Carl. [Murderabilia](#) (Midnight Ink \$16.99). William MacNary was eight years old when his father went to prison. Since then, he's carefully built a life as a family man and a private banker for the wealthy. He tries to forget that his father dismembered and photographed thirteen women. And he tries to forget those exquisitely composed photos of severed hands, heads, and feet that launched the "murderabilia" art market. William has not spoken to his father for thirty-one years. No one at his tony bank knows whose son he is. Not until his wife's colleague is murdered and carved up in the same way his father would have done it. All the evidence points to William. And only one person can understand the copycat killer—the monster William hasn't seen since he was a child. This debut takes you inside the world of private banking—a surprisingly dangerous one. "Murderabilia [is] a story that will lay a cold finger of dread on the back of your neck. Vonderau is a terrific writer who has written a terrific book."—Karin Slaughter

#### **KICKING OFF THE NEW YEAR EVENT BOOKS Jan 6-11**

Alexander, Tasha. [In the Shadow of Vesuvius](#) (St Martins \$27.99). I am saving the ARC of Lady Emily's visit to Pompeii to read on my upcoming flight to Egypt, so I will just report that she and Colin and friends arrive, venture into the ruins, and amidst the casts of bodies preserved by Vesuvius' ashes find one displaying very Edwardian sideburns! The community of archaeologists provides a pool of interesting suspects for Emily who is not impressed by the local police's dismissal of the murder as the work of local gangsters.

Fisher, Tarryn. [The Wives](#) (Graydon House \$16.99/\$27.99). A woman called Thursday is the admirably unreliable narrator of this engrossing psychological thriller set in Seattle and Portland. Thursday is a nurse by profession but her energy goes into her role as the perfect wife for Seth, her perfect husband. The husband with whom she shares Thursdays nights and a Friday dinner. The other days Seth divides between his former wife and his new, and pregnant, wife, who lives in Portland. Thursday is aware of, and accepts, this polygamous arrangement. But her carefully constructed world begins to unravel when Thursday finds out by chance the name of wife number three and decides to drive down from Seattle and learn more.... While you must stretch a bit to accept the end game, I go with a Library Reader who says, "Fisher has a knack for telling you a story where there's no anticipating the twists and turns, and *The Wives* was no exception. A

psychological thriller so immersive that I consumed it in a single sitting. For fans of *The Wife Between Us* and *The Silent Wife*."

Goldstein, Debra. [Two Bites Too Many](#) (Kensington \$7.99). Things are finally looking up for Sarah Blair following her unsavory divorce. Settled into a cozy carriage house with her sassy Siamese cat, RahRah, she has somehow managed to hang on to her modest law firm receptionist job and—if befriendng flea-bitten strays at the local animal shelter counts—lead a thriving social life. For once, Sarah almost has it together more than her enterprising twin, Emily, a professional chef whose efforts to open a gourmet restaurant have hit a real dead end ... When the president of the town bank and city council is murdered after icing Emily's business plans, all eyes are on the one person who left the scene with blood on her hands—the Blair girls' sharp-tongued mother, Maybelle Follows [One Taste Too Many](#) (\$7.99).

Odden, Karen. [A Trace of Deceit](#) (Morrow \$16.99). Odden writes a fine Victorian mystery with an eye for the unusual—here, the London art world from the perspective of a young woman painter who studies at the prestigious Slade School of Art—and a gift for creating characters who are intelligent, vivid, and believable. When a worried Annabel Rowe visits her brother Edwin's flat and is there informed by Inspector Matthew Hallam of the Yard that Edwin has been stabbed to death, she is grievously shocked. But not totally surprised since Edwin has a long history of risky behavior, addiction, and a jail term for fraud. He was however an immensely talented art restorer and since his release from prison was doing respectable work for an ambitious new auction house. However the valuable portrait of Madame de Pompadour by Boucher he'd been treating at his flat is missing and so the police theory is that robbery led to his murder. Then comes news that the owner of the painting claims it was destroyed in a warehouse fire five years back that burned all manner of valuables stored at the site. Annabel and Matthew, he reluctantly, begin to dig beneath the veneer of society and the art world to out the truth behind Edwin's murder. It's a wide ranging inquiry. An excellent book I recommend to fans of art and/or historical mystery.

Perry, Thomas. [A Small Town](#) (Grove \$26). Twelve conspirators meticulously plan to throw open all the gates to the prison that contains them, so that more than a thousand convicts may escape and pour into the nearby small town. The newly freed prisoners rape, murder, and destroy the town—burning down homes and businesses. An immense search ensues, but the twelve who plotted it all get away. After two years, all efforts by the local and federal police agencies have been in vain. The mayor and city attorney meet, and Leah Hawkins, a six-foot, two-inch former star basketball player and resident good cop, is placed on sabbatical so that she can tour the country learning advanced police procedures. The sabbatical is merely a ruse, however, as her real job is to track the infamous twelve. And kill them! Leah is a strong lead in a Perry plot with a high body count.

Stabenow, Dana. [No Fixed Line](#) (Head of Zeus \$29.95). We begin on a New Year's Eve when a blizzard has locked Alaska down. Not, however, one plane which, unsurprisingly, goes down in the Quilaks. What plane? Who's on board? Chopper Jim, now a civilian rather than a State Trooper, is pulled into investigating the crash site where he finds two survivors, kids who speak no English. Meanwhile Kate Shugak finds herself facing an unexpected legacy from her recently deceased yet mortal enemy....



22<sup>nd</sup> in this always exciting, award-winning series.

Taylor, Brad. [Hunter Killer](#) (Morrow \$27.99). **Our copies come with an exclusive: Pike Logan's passport.** Pike Logan and Jennifer Cahill are preparing to join their team on a counter-terrorist mission in the triple frontier—the lawless tri-border region where Argentina, Brazil, and Paraguay meet—when someone arranges a vicious booby trap at their home in Charleston, South Carolina. It kills a dear friend. The perps set it up to look like an accident and the authorities rule it was not foul play, but Pike knows the explosion was meant to kill him. And so refusing to stand down, the Taskforce, an extra-legal team, under assault and undeterred, swings into action and heads south tracking highly trained Russian assassins who are on a mission of their own .... There isn't a spot in this thriller that Taylor didn't visit to research this novel. From the Amazon basin in the north of Brazil, to Rio in the south. It's not just the settings that allow this series to ring true, but Brad's own experience executing missions in support of the national command authority in hot spots around the globe. As Nelson DeMille raves, "*Hunter Killer* has the gun metal ring of authenticity and the crisp writing of a military communiqué."

### DECEMBER BOOKS OF THE MONTH

*Please note that our clubs change in January to a six month subscription option as well as the pay by the month option. And there are fewer clubs*

**British Crime Club** One unsigned hardcover or paperback per month  
To Be Announced

**Cozy Crimes Club** One unsigned hardcover or paperback per month  
Dumas, Margaret. [Murder in the Balcony](#)

**Discovery Club** One paperback or hardcover per month  
Singh, Nalini. [A Madness of Sunshine](#)

**First Mystery Club** One Signed First per month  
Harnetiaux, Trish. [White Elephant](#)

**Hardboiled Crime Club** One signed First per month  
Coyle, Matt. [Lost Tomorrows](#)

**History/Mystery Club** One Signed First per month  
Ellis, Bella. [The Vanished Bride](#)

**History Paperback** One per month  
Saunders, Kate. [Laetitia Rodd and the Case of the Wandering Scholar](#)

**Modern First Editions** One Signed First per month  
Morgenstern, Erin. [The Starless Sea](#) (Signed copies sold out)

**SciFi/Fantasy/Horror Club** One Signed First per month  
Roberson, Jennifer. [Life and Limb](#)

**Surprise Me! Club One Signed First Per Month**  
Lindsey, Jeff. [Just Watch Me](#)

**Thriller Club** One Signed First per month  
De Castrique, Mark. [Murder in Rat Alley](#)

### SIGNED BOOKS

Cameron, Bruce. [A Dog's Promise](#) (Forge \$26.99) continues the story of Bailey, the good dog whose journey started in *A Dog's Purpose* and continued in *A Dog's Journey* (both major motion pictures). This time, Bailey is joined by Lacey, another very special dog, who helps Bailey fulfill his promise over the course of several lives. Later printing.

☞Chevalier, Tracy. [A Single Thread](#) (Viking \$27). It is 1932, and the losses of the First World War are still keenly felt. Violet Speedwell, mourning for both her fiancé and her brother and regarded by society as a 'surplus woman' unlikely to marry, resolves to escape her suffocating mother and strike out alone. A new life awaits her in Winchester. Yes, it is one of draughty boarding-houses and sidelong glances at her naked ring finger from younger colleagues; but it is also a life gleaming with independence and opportunity. Violet falls in with the broderers, a disparate group of women charged with embroidering kneelers for the Cathedral, and is soon entwined in their lives and their secrets. As the almost unthinkable threat of a second Great War appears on the horizon Violet collects a few secrets of her own that could just change everything.... I am in love with this splendid book, so British, so acutely portraying the life of a single and thus "dangerous" woman, and of lives anchored to a venerable institution—here Winchester cathedral. The resolution is surprising and satisfying.

☞Ellis, Bella. [The Vanished Bride](#) (Hodder \$35). "The Brontë sisters as sleuths—what a delicious idea! Bella Ellis has brilliantly recreated the feel and atmosphere of the Brontë novels, as well as bringing the three sisters (and their dissolute brother) vividly to life. What's more, it's a rattling good story!"—Rhys Bowen. Library Journal agrees with Rhys and me who has been telling you that the Gothic novel is on the rise: In 1845, Charlotte, Emily, and Anne Brontë's famous novels are yet unwritten. Life on the Yorkshire moors is disrupted when a Mrs. Chester vanishes, leaving rather more than a trace—a great quantity of blood. The Brontë sisters are naturally curious, and they resolve to find justice for the woman when no one else will. Their quest takes them from the local pub to lavish parlors, from the seaside to the forested ruins of a derelict village. It involves a frightened governess, a disgraced musician, and a startling, hidden family trait. The theme of the novel is the role of women in a world that expects submission, demanding respectability without granting respect. Pseudonymous author Ellis succeeds in her aim to portray the "conviction that the sisters' short lives were...as compelling and exciting as their novels." Many elements appear that echo those of the Brontës' actual writing: wild storms, a woman tumbling from towering battlements, mysterious fortune tellers, madness, and other details worthy of the most gothic penny dreadful. Brontë fans will rejoice to see how well the sisters fit the imagined role of sleuths, while those less familiar with the trio can still expect an enjoyably haunting read." **This Signed UK edition is our December History/Mystery Book of the Month.**

Estleman, Loren. [When Old Midnight Comes Along](#) (Forge \$28). At the start of Edgar-finalist Estleman's stellar 28th Amos Walker mystery, the Detroit PI is retained by Francis X. Lawes, a local government official in charge of insuring procurement integrity, to find out what happened to his PR consultant wife, Paula. After Paula went missing six years earlier, her car was found abandoned in a bad neighborhood. She's widely believed to have been

murdered, but Lawes, who's looking to remarry, is hoping for conclusive evidence she's dead. Walker learns that the police inquiry into the disappearance was handled by an old friend of his, John Alderdyce, who recently retired from the force. Alderdyce always believed that Lawes was behind his wife's murder, but he was never able to prove it. The plot thickens when Walker learns that the first police officer to find Paula's vehicle was gunned down soon afterward. Chandler and Hammett fans will feel right at home on the mean streets of Estleman's Detroit.

Harnetiaux, Trish. [White Elephant](#) (SimonSchuster \$25). For the season, what more fun than a Christmas office party that goes horribly wrong? In snowy Aspen, Colorado, where the high-end real estate market is cutthroat and a White Elephant gift exchange can turn competitive rather than congenial in a heartbeat—especially at Calhoun + Calhoun, Claudine and Henry's agency. Claudine is staging this year's party at Montague House, a listing that could signal a new beginning, or at least enable C+C to hang on. And how fortuitous that pop star Zara, wounded by a spectacular break up, is on her way to Aspen shopping for a vacation home. That's the set up for a debut that begins to slide off the expected track when a strange gift, an antique cowboy statue, appears in the White Elephant exchange, a gift with special meaning to Henry and to Claudine and to no one else. As a major snowstorm maroons the party guests and keeps the law from the scene—so Agatha Christie!—a crazy night plays out. This debut is our **December First Mystery Book of the Month**.

Hilderbrand, Elin. [What Happens in Paradise](#) (Little Brown \$28). A year ago, Irene Steele had the shock of her life: her loving husband, father to their grown sons and successful businessman, was killed in a plane crash. But that wasn't Irene's only shattering news: he'd also been leading a double life on the island of St. John, where another woman loved him, too. Now Irene and her sons are back on St. John, determined to learn the truth about the mysterious life—and death—of a man they thought they knew. Along the way, they're about to learn some surprising truths.

⌘Kernick, Simon. [Die Alone](#) (Random UK \$32). Alastair Sheridan has it all. Wealth, good looks, a beautiful wife and children and, in the chaotic world of British politics, a real chance of becoming Prime Minister. But Alastair also has a secret. He's a serial killer with a taste for young women. Only a handful of people know what kind of monster he is, and disgraced detective Ray Mason is one of them. Awaiting trial for murder, Ray is unexpectedly broken free by armed men and given an offer: assassinate Alastair Sheridan and begin a new life abroad with a new identity. The men claim to be from MI6. They say that Sheridan is a threat to national security and needs to be neutralized. Ray knows they are not who they say they are, and that their real motives are far darker. The only person Ray trusts is ex-cop and former lover Tina Boyd, who's keen to settle her own scores with Sheridan. With enemies on every side, only one thing is certain. No one wants them to get out alive.

Mukherjee, Abir. [Death in the East](#) (Random UK \$44). Begun as Mukherjee's homage to Agatha Christie. "She started everything: the unreliable narrator, the idea that everybody could be guilty, the notion that the guilty party is one of those being hunted. Although this book is very much my style and my take on Christie, it morphed very quickly into something else, however." It flips between 1905 London, with Wyndham as a young constable

pounding the beat in the murky East End, and Assam in 1922. There are two locked-room murders as well as sinister ghosts from Wyndham's cloudy past. And his Sergeant Banerjee. As in previous books, Mukherjee interrogates the often violent and shameful shared history of Britain and India. "An [excellent series](#) to order and read your way through.

Reid, Kiley. [Such a Fun Age](#) (Putnam \$26). A hot debut that publishes December 31; Signed for us on January 19. In this conversation starter of a debut novel, a public incident of racial profiling recalibrates the relationship between a 20-something black babysitter and her white employer. Alix Chamberlain is the white owner of a small, successful Philadelphia business. She has a toddler and an infant underfoot and a book to write, so she hires 25-year-old Temple University graduate Emira Tucker, who is black, to babysit three days a week. Alix considers Emira a godsend and wants her to know it. *Such a Fun Age*, is about the way that good deeds fueled by even the best intentions can fizzle under the weight of unacknowledged self-interest. One Saturday, Emira gets a phone call from Alix at nearly 11 p.m.: she's in a jam and needs care for her toddler. Emira can use the cash, so she drops everything to kill time at an upscale grocery store with the two-year-old. At the market, a middle-aged white woman sees Emira with the white toddler and alerts a security guard, who confronts Emira, suggesting that she has kidnapped the child. Alix is appalled when she learns what happened and tells Emira that she has her full support if she wants to sue the store. Emira would rather drop the subject....

"Full of nuanced characters and a very current plot about race and privilege, *Such a Fun Age* will keep you slightly off-balance and questioning how you would react. Emira is a character that you'll love for her feistiness and strength of character. Perfect for fans of *Americanah*, *Red at the Bone*, and *An American Marriage*."

Salvatore, RA. [Boundless](#) (Harper \$27.99). For the SciFi fans, this second book in Salvatore's all-new Forgotten Realms trilogy—full of swordplay, danger, and imaginative thrills—features one of fantasy's most beloved and enduring characters, Drizzt Do'Urden.

## CLASSICS

Bellairs, George. [The Body in the Dumb River](#) (Poisoned Pen \$14.99). *Booklist* loves this: "The British Library Crime Classics series continues to breathe new life into books written during and shortly following mystery fiction's golden age. This solid procedural, originally published in 1961, features Scotland Yard detective Tom Littlejohn, who has just finished a case in East Anglia when another one demands his attention. A man found murdered in a local river had, it turns out, been living a double life. His snobby family thinks he traveled for a sales job, but he actually ran a carnival booth at different fairgrounds, which allowed him keep them in a modicum of style. When the double life is exposed (including a younger woman who helped with his booth), the family is shocked, though some not as shocked as others. Bellairs, a pseudonym for Harold Blundell, a banker and philanthropist, neatly marches the narrative through a series of complications neatly and does a good job of bringing a dead man to life, after the fact." First published in 1961.

*Other classics*

Chesterton, GK. [The Complete Father Brown](#) (Penguin Classics \$21). Father Brown is one of the most unforgettable characters in literature. This volume brings together all the stories featuring G. K. Chesterton's amateur sleuth—plus two additional cases, “The Donnington Affair” and “The Mask of Midas,” that were discovered in Chesterton's papers after his death. Introduction by Chesterton scholar Michael D. Hurley. You can watch the TV series on Netflix, several seasons.

Edwards, Martin. [The Story of Classic Crimes in 100 Books](#) (Poisoned Pen \$12 Signed). Nominated for the 2018 Anthony and Macavity Awards, this well researched work tells the story of crime fiction published during the first half of the twentieth century. The diversity of this much-loved genre is breathtaking, and so much greater than many critics have suggested. To illustrate this, the leading expert on classic crime discusses one hundred books ranging from *The Hound of the Baskervilles* to *Strangers on a Train* which highlight the entertaining plots, the literary achievements, and the social significance of vintage crime fiction. This book serves as a companion to the acclaimed British Library Crime Classics series but it tells a very diverse story. It presents the development of crime fiction—from Sherlock Holmes to the end of the golden age—in an accessible, informative and engaging style.

Leroux, Gaston/Leslie S. Klinger. [The Phantom of the Opera](#) (The Haunted Library \$15.99). Starred Review: “The inaugural release in the Horror Writers Association Haunted Library of Horror Classics series will be a revelation to those familiar only with the musical based on the 1910 novel by Leroux (1868–1927). The tale of a Paris opera house inhabited by a spectral figure with seemingly magical abilities remains genuinely creepy today. Much of the book's power stems from the author's presentation of his narrative as the factual product of his own diligent archival research and interviews with survivors of the phenomenon. This understated treatment means that even his spoiler-laden prologue heightens rather than lessens suspense. A turnover in the management of the opera house coincides with sightings of the so-called Opera ghost and the grim discovery of the hanged corpse of Joseph Buquet, the company's chief scene-shifter. These events are followed by an unexpectedly triumphant performance by Christine Daaé, who previously had an undistinguished singing career, which proves to be linked to the phantom. Fans of literate horror, whatever their opinion of Andrew Lloyd Weber, will be gratified.” Publishes in early January but may appear sooner at The Pen.

Hughes, Dorothy. [Dread Journey](#) (\$15.95). Cornell Woolrich meets Agatha Christie in this taut, grim reissue in the American Mystery Classics series, first published in 1945. The passengers on a claustrophobic train trip from Los Angeles to New York City are first viewed from the perspective of railroad porter James Cobbett, who briefly describes the principals before they come onstage. They include Viv Spender, a filthy rich movie mogul (“The Zeus of America's greatest industry!”); his secretary, Mike Dana; a honeymooning couple, the Crandalls; famous film star Kitten Agnew; and Gratia Shawn, a would-be Hollywood actress. Hughes (1904–1993) movingly evokes the quiet desperation of the characters, whose backstories she gradually reveals. In particular, Kitten fears that Viv is preparing to replace her as the lead in a film version of Mann's *The Magic Mountain*, and she suspects that he poisoned his wife. Deferring the identity of the

inevitable murder victim heightens the suspense. Sarah Weinman (*The Real Lolita*)

## MORE GIFT IDEAS

*Please refer to the Holiday Booknews for a large selection*

*Don't forget to request free gift wrap and worldwide shipping*

Alizart, Mark. [Dogs](#) (Wiley \$16.95). One day dogs will rule the earth. To have a dog is to have an angel by your side. Those are just two of the thoughts explored in this Philosophical Guide to Our Best Friends, translated from the French and focusing on dogs not as pets but as life coaches guiding us to be our best selves, to contentment and simple joy. Does petting a dog lower your blood pressure? Our barking dog raises mine, but still.... This small book is a fine gift.

✦Austen, Jane. [Sanditon](#) (Grand Central \$16.99). When a chance accident transports unconventional Charlotte Heywood from her rural hometown of Willingden to the would-be coastal resort of the eponymous title, it exposes her to the intrigues and dalliances of a seaside town on the make, and the characters whose fortunes depend on its commercial success. These include charming (and slightly wild!) Sidney Parker. The twists and turns of the plot, which takes viewers from the West Indies to the rotting alleys of London, exposes the hidden agendas of each character in what is essentially a real estate scam. Austen was working on this novel at the time of her death. It is slated for a TV series in January.

For a spectacular gift you can add [The World of Sanditon](#) (\$40), the Official Companion to the Series on PBS Masterpiece Theater as created by Andrew Davies (*War & Peace*, *Mr. Selfridge*, *Les Misérables*, *Pride and Prejudice*). “It explores the world Austen created, along with fascinating insights about the period and the real-life heartbreak behind her final story. And it offers location guides, behind the scenes details, and interviews with the cast, alongside beautiful illustrations;

Blauner, Andrew, ed. [The Peanut Papers](#) (Library of America \$24.95). “Writers and Cartoonists on Charlie Brown, Snoopy & the Gang, and the Meaning of Life: A Library of America Special Publication”—with some graphics. Some twenty years after the last strip appeared, the characters Charles M. Schulz brought to life in *Peanuts* continue to resonate with millions of fans, their beguiling four-panel adventures and television escapades offering lessons about happiness, friendship, disappointment, childhood, and life itself. Thirty-three writers and artists reflect on the deeper truths of Schulz's deceptively simple comic, its impact on their lives and art and on the broader culture. They include Ann Patchett, Chuck Klosterman, Jonathan Lethem, Rick Moody, Adam Gopnik, George Saunders, Joe Queenan, Maxine Hong Kingston, Jonathan Franzen, and Umberto Eco!

✦Christie, Agatha. [The Last Séance](#) (Morrow \$16.99). A collection of ghostly and chilling stories including one by Christie never before published in the USA, “The Wife of Kenite”! Among the 20 tales: fantastic psychic visions, specters looming in the shadows, encounters with deities, a man who switches bodies with a cat. But we do get puzzles pondered by Poirot and Miss Marple as well.

Fingeroth, Danny. [A Marvelous Life: The Amazing Story of Stan Lee](#) (St Martins \$29.99). Fingeroth's biography of the late editor, author and former chairman of Marvel Comics Stan Lee is a loving but sharp-eyed account of the life and career of the man who



the author worked under early in his comics career. Born Stan Leiber, Lee (1922-2018) was an infectiously energetic writer, editor, and one-man comics industry promotional bullhorn. Over the course of more than two decades leading Marvel Comics, Lee (alongside a stellar team of such writers and artists as Steve Ditko and Jack Kirby) co-created many of the comics' industry's most enduring characters, from Spider-man and Black Panther to such superhero teams as the X-Men, Fantastic Four, and the Avengers.

Lee "had the authority of an owner but the insecurity of a freelancer." He was related to the original owner of Marvel. He knew it was unlikely he could be arbitrarily fired one day. But Stan never owned the company no matter what lofty title he had. They would try to get rid of him. Some new owner would buy the company and they'd say, "Sure, Stan Lee was instrumental in creating Spider-man and X-Men but what has he done for us lately? Why are we paying him all this money?" He never lost that feeling that life was perilous, that things could change at any moment. I think that no matter how wealthy or famous he became that enabled Stan to keep contact with the regular guy. He understood what regular people were up against every day, says Fingerroth.

Gardini, Nicola. [Long Live Latin](#) (Farrar \$26). A passionate Oxford professor of languages explores the beauty and history to be found in the study of Latin literature. It is an understatement to say that Gardini is passionate about Latin. "After an unlikely introduction in middle school (Latin had been removed from the curriculum, but one teacher remained vigilant), he was hooked, and it is Gardini's hope to engage others the same way. With each chapter in *Long Live Latin*, he spotlights different "episodes" in the life of the language, tracing a lineage of words and authors from the creation of its alphabet to its influence on modern literature. Gardini has written a loving tribute to Latin as well as a compelling response to those who would call the language "useless." The study, he writes, is "demanding, challenging, exhausting, and like a good hike through the mountains, restorative in and of itself." Gardini explores Latin's origins as a literary language while also sharing his own journey, making his sometimes pedantic explanations friendlier. His enthusiasm is infectious. Whether new to the study or remembering Latin lessons from years ago, interested readers will appreciate his insights, both translational and social. Through Latin, readers "step into the river of history, and there we find a deeper understanding of where we began and where we want to go." —Jennifer Oleinik

Some of you have heard me say that I decided upon a new challenge: learning Latin. I'm realizing it was a step I missed on my way to language usage. **I highly recommend DUOLINGO, an easy to use and inexpensive language app (loads of languages) that takes 5 to 10 minutes a day.** It speaks words aloud in addition to written exercises. Interestingly Duolingo reports the language most often pursued is Swedish.

Kreitner, Richard. [Booked: A Traveler's Guide to Literary Locations Around the World](#) (Black Dog \$29.99). A practical, arm-chair travel guide that explores eighty of the most iconic literary locations from all over the globe that you can actually visit. Such as the Monroeville, Alabama courthouse in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Chatsworth House, the inspiration for Pemberley in *Pride and Prejudice*, and the Kyoto Bridge from *Memoirs of a Geisha*. The full-color photographs throughout reveal the settings readers

have imagined again and again in their favorite books.

Letts, Elizabeth. [Finding Dorothy](#) (\$17). A richly imagined novel tells the story behind *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, the book that inspired the iconic film, through the eyes of author L. Frank Baum's intrepid wife, Maud. "Old Hollywood is its own kind of Oz in *Finding Dorothy*, complete with false dazzle and complex combinations of threat and allure. But what really satisfies here is the unlikely friendship between L. Frank Baum's unsinkable widow, Maud, and the young Judy Garland, on the vulnerable cusp of fame. It's an alliance that seems touched with magic and serendipity and something even more transformative, true understanding between women."—Paula McLain

Lomas, Becky. [Moon USA National Parks](#) (\$24.99). The complete guide to all 59. Get inspired, get outdoors, and discover the wild beauty of the United States. Includes strategic lists and itineraries, suggestions for adventures and road trips, planning strategies and resources, plus gorgeous color photos.

McHugh, Erin. [National Parks: A Kid's Guide](#) (Running Press \$19.95). Calling all Junior Rangers! This fun-filled guide explores the wonders and weirdness of more than 75 U.S. parks, monuments, and landmarks, from Acadia to Zion.

Rios, Alberto. [A Small Story about the Sky](#) (Copper Canyon \$16). "Rios evokes the mysterious and unexpected forces that dwell inside the familiar."—*The Washington Post*. Arizona's first poet laureate Rios "delivers another stunning book of poems, rich in impeccable metaphors, that revel in the ordinariness of morning coffee and the crackle of thunderous desert storms. In one sonnet, Ríos addresses injustice in the borderlands, capturing with mathematical precision the everyday struggles that many migrants face—'The border is an equation in search of an equals sign.' A series of sonnets about desert flora abounds with fantastic, magical imagery—'Bougainvilleas do not bloom—they bleed' and 'Apricots are eggs laid in trees by invisible golden hens.' Likewise, Ríos's bestiary sonnets overflow with inimitable similes, worthy of a book unto themselves—'Minnows are where a river's leg has fallen asleep' and 'Gnats are sneezes still flying around.' This robust volume is the perfect place to start for readers new to Ríos and a prize for seasoned fans."—*Booklist*

Thunberg, Greta. [No One Is Too Small to Make a Difference](#) (Penguin \$10). The groundbreaking speeches of Greta Thunberg, the young climate activist from Sweden who has become the voice of a generation, including her historic address to the United Nations. Her August 2018 decision not to go to school one day in order to protest the climate crisis sparked a global movement, inspiring millions of students to go on strike for our planet, forcing governments to listen, and earning her a Nobel Peace Prize nomination. Penguin Press hopes that you will be inspired by her words.

Somerville, Neil. [The Literary Pocket Puzzle Book](#) (Skyhorse \$9.99). Conundrums for book lovers, a literary challenge and escape just right for a stocking stuffer. And for more fun, Kate Jackson's [Golden Age of Detection Puzzle Book](#) (\$12.95), 100 puzzles based on the British Library Classics series: word searches, anagrams, snapshot covers, and crosswords, fun for all levels. Add a classic to go with it for a delightful package.

✂Winspear, Jacqueline. [What Would Maisie Do?](#) (\$17.99). An illustrated companion to the best-selling Maisie Dobbs series,



which invites readers into the beloved heroine's world—and shares her wisdom and inspiration.

## BOOKS FOR KIDS

*There is a large selection to browse.*

[This link](#) shows you what is in stock.

## OUR DECEMBER LARGE PAPERBACK PICKS

Crais, Robert. [A Dangerous Man](#) (\$16). Joe Pike was just leaving the bank where a lonely young teller called Isabel shyly tried to flirt with him when he spotted two guys abduct her as she stepped out for lunch break. Joe swings into action, chases them down, puts them down, and the two men are arrested. But the arrests are only the beginning of the trouble for Joe and Izzy, beginning with disbelieving cops. Then, after posting bail, the two abductors are murdered and Izzy disappears. Pike, pissed and worried, calls in his PI partner Elvis Cole, who uncovers a surprising story for Izzy's family, one with very old roots.

Dumas, Margaret. [Murder in the Balcony](#) (Henry Press \$15.95). A smart screenwriter and her eclectic band of employees and friends solve a homicide in a historic San Francisco movie theater. Screenwriter Nora Paige fled scandal, the paparazzi and the gossip-driven environs of Los Angeles after her famous actor husband left her for an equally famous actress. Nora headed north, where she's now the manager of the Palace, a historic San Francisco movie theater. She loves classic movies and has grown equally to adore the aging, beautiful theater and its staff, including the ghost of a 1937 usherette who only Nora can see. When a young employee's boyfriend is killed in an apparent robbery, Nora doesn't suspect his death is connected to the Palace. Nevertheless, she sets out to learn the truth about the murder to ease her employee's grieving heart. She's shocked when her investigation leads to disturbing information about the dead man and his possible connection to a smarmy local real estate developer. Apparently, there are clandestine plans to buy out the businesses on her block and tear down the buildings, including Nora's beloved theater. Just when she's convinced that she's uncovered the villain, another person dies under suspicious circumstances. Is it possible the theater's resident ghost can eavesdrop on suspects and uncover the murderer in modern day San Francisco? Find out in our **December Cozy Crimes Book of the Month**. Start with [Murder at the Palace](#) (\$15.95).

Faye, Lyndsay. [The Paragon Hotel](#) (\$16). I am struck by this review from a Faye fan. "This book has got everything, moving back and forth between the mafia-ruled streets of New York, to the speakeasies of the West Coast, heavy on the ambiance (which I love), and written with a sense of grit and glamour that is delivered in equal proportions. The New York narrative will hook you with the story of what is, in essence, the tale of a young spy-in-training. And in 1921 Portland, Oregon, you'll be drawn in by the quirky, charismatic cast, the secrets among them, and by Portland's lesser-known history of seriously virulent segregation—the Ku Klux Klan has brutally come to town. The dialogues click along smartly and at a quick pace, and Nobody's voice is definitely unique and true to both her character and the times (meanwhile, she constantly modulates her appearance/habits/interactions with the characters to become "the Nobody" that fits each respective situation – also fun). Extremely well-researched (as all Lyndsay Faye books tend to be)" and written in the slang of 1921 which

Faye gleaned from reading a trove of Ernest Hemingway letters and addresses issues you might well not expect to find in Oregon but are historically true.

Jones, Stephen. [Lives Laid Away](#) (\$15.95). Here is the *NY Times* review: "A clever, punchy tale set in one of today's more romantic locales: Detroit. A city climbing back from ruin is a great backdrop for redemptive stories like this one, about a native who is renovating houses on his childhood street to try and rebuild the neighborhood he grew up in. Stephen Mack Jones is also a playwright and a poet, which means he knows how to make every word count. This timely story of ICE raids with a sinister motive has heart and muscle aplenty." Jones' former cop, now PI, [August Snow](#), won the 2018 Hammett Prize and Nero Wolfe Award in his debut. Patrick and I both recommend this brilliant series that among other things reminds us that Detroit is a border city.

Kent, Kathleen. [The Dime](#) (\$15.99) is Kent's was her very first foray into crime fiction. It went on to be an Edgar Award finalist, and is currently being developed for TV by 20th Century Fox. The lead is the badass detective Betty Rhyzyk. Dallas, Texas is not for the faint of heart. Good thing for Betty Rhyzyk she's from a family of take-no-prisoners Brooklyn police detectives. But her Big Apple wisdom will only get her so far when she relocates to The Big D, where Mexican drug cartels and cult leaders, deadbeat skulls and society wives all battle for sunbaked turf. NPR reviewer Maureen Corrigan calls *The Dime*, "One of the most breathless, inventive, and be forewarned, violent suspense plots I've read in a long time." Look out for Kent's latest outing with Detective Betty this winter – [The Burn](#) (\$27) arrives February 11.

Mukherjee, Abir. [A Necessary Evil](#) (\$15.95). The fabulously wealthy kingdom of Sambalpore is home to tigers, elephants, diamond mines, and the beautiful Palace of the Sun. But when the heir to the throne is assassinated in the presence of Captain Sam Wyndham and Sergeant 'Surrender-Not' Banerjee, they discover a kingdom riven with suppressed conflict. Prince Adhir was a modernizer whose attitudes—and romantic relationships—may have upset the more religious elements of his country, while his brother—now in line to the throne—appears to be a feckless playboy. As Wyndham and Banerjee desperately try to unravel the mystery behind the assassination, they become entangled in a dangerous world. "Mukherjee is adept at multifaceted, slow-burn plot manipulations. Packed with incident and intrigue, yet never in a way that sacrifices historical verisimilitude or character development for the sake of a thrill. At its heart, the novel and its prequel, [A Rising Man](#) (\$15.95), take the buddy-cop formula and turn it on its head in endless rotations. From the cars to the flowers to the moth-eaten flags, Wyndham sees empire for the lie that it is. This makes him an intriguing embodiment of the intricacies and hypocrisies of the period—especially in Mukherjee's hands."—*Los Angeles Review of Books*. For the newest in this series see Signed Books.

⌘Saunders, Kate. [Laetitia Rodd and the Case of the Wandering Scholar](#) (\$17). Set in 1851, we are with 53-year-old Laetitia Rodd, a clergyman's widow who does inquiries to supplement her meager income, hearing a plea from Jacob Welland, a fellow Hampstead resident who's dying of consumption. Jacob wants her to find his younger brother, Joshua, from whom he became estranged after Jacob wooed and married Joshua's love some

15 years before, so he can make amends. Joshua has been living “like a wild creature, in hedges and ditches” around Oxford in the years since a breakdown ended his studies at Oxford University. To facilitate her search, Mrs. Rodd stays with clergyman Arthur Somers and his wife, Rachel, outside Oxford. Though Somers’s obsessive High Church practices disturb her, she gleans useful information from parish curate Henry Barton, a friendly Oxford don. When Arthur is poisoned, Henry and Rachel, who Mrs. Rodd has guessed love each other, are arrested for the crime, and she strives to prove their innocence. Saunders’s exquisite prose and patient storytelling build a convincing Victorian voice, while Mrs. Rodd’s shrewd, energetic narration adds further appeal to the rich depiction of 19th-century landscapes and attitudes. A good choice for mainstream readers who appreciate Victorian fiction and our **December History Paperback Book of the Month**.

✠Sansom, CJ. [Tombland](#) (\$18.99). “Don’t believe those tapestries of pretty lords and ladies happily hunting unicorns: The Middle Ages were murder.”—*New York Times Book Review*. Spring, 1549. Two years after the death of Henry VIII, England is sliding into chaos. The nominal king, Edward VI, is eleven years old. His uncle, Edward Seymour, Lord Hertford, rules as Edward’s regent and Protector. In the kingdom, radical Protestants are driving the old religion into extinction, while the Protector’s prolonged war with Scotland has led to hyperinflation and economic collapse. Rebellion is stirring among the peasantry. Matthew Shardlake has been working as a lawyer in the service of Henry’s younger daughter, the lady Elizabeth. The gruesome murder of one of Elizabeth’s distant relations, rumored to be politically motivated, draws Shardlake and his companion Nicholas to the lady’s summer estate, where a second murder is committed. As the kingdom explodes into rebellion, Nicholas is imprisoned for his loyalty, and Shardlake must decide where his loyalties lie—with his kingdom, or with his lady? “The tale is enthralling... Sansom describes 16th-century events in the crisply realistic style of someone watching them transpire right outside his window...” The [Matthew Shardlakes](#), of which *Tombland* is the 7<sup>th</sup>, is a brilliant series we recommend you order and read all the way through.

Stein, Triss. [Brooklyn Legacies](#) (Poisoned Pen \$15.95). Newly minted PhD (history) Erica Donato is searching for a long-lost plaque that identified the building where Walt Whitman’s *Leaves of Grass* was printed. Her quest for her museum employer takes her to Brooklyn Heights, where she meets her idol: scrappy, aging activist Louisa Gibbs. Louisa’s next-door neighbors are Jehovah’s Witnesses, whose headquarters loom over her garden. Church officials claim that a strip of her property actually belongs to them, and the real estate developers to whom they hope to sell their building won’t close the deal until the boundary dispute is resolved. Louisa asks Erica to research her family home’s history in readiness for the inevitable court battle. When the church official handling the real estate deal is found dead, Donato ends up investigating not only his murder but also a crime that rocked Brooklyn Heights back in the psychedelic ’60s. This lively tale illustrates the evolution of a fascinating New York neighborhood. The love for Brooklyn that Stein shares with her protagonist shines through on every page. “The mystery here isn’t easily solved; diverse forces for good and for nefarious gain are at work and will keep readers engrossed and guessing. Donato’s fans

will enjoy her new professional direction as well as a surprise in her personal life that’s held till the book’s satisfying close. A must for history buffs—those who like surprises, and fans of this Brooklyn-based series.”—*Booklist*

Williams, Beatriz. [The Wicked Redhead](#) (Morrow \$16.99). The narrator of [The Wicked City](#) (\$15.99) brings her mesmerizing voice and indomitable spirit to another Jazz Age tale of rumrunners, double crosses, and true love, spanning the Eastern seaboard from Florida to Long Island to Halifax, Nova Scotia. “There has been a rash of then-and-now novels recently, but Williams weaves together two time frames so skillfully that the reader doesn’t feel a bit discomfited by the time and narrator-switching in successive chapters. Williams is a skillful storyteller who keeps the reader intrigued by how it will all pan out.” **Can be Signed January 18 when Williams appear with Willig and Williams** with their new book, [All the Ways We Said Goodbye: A Novel of the Ritz Paris](#) (Morrow \$27.99). There is a hardcover edition as well: [The Wicked Redhead](#) (\$26.99) also signed January 18.

### SOME NEW BOOKS FOR DECEMBER

Adams, Ellery. [The Whispered Word](#) (\$15.95). North Carolinian Nora Pennington, owner of Miracle Books, believes that a well-chosen novel can bring healing and hope. But she and the other members of the Secret, Book, and Scone Society know that sometimes practical help is needed too. Such is the case with the reed-thin girl hiding in the fiction section of Nora’s store, wearing a hospital ID and a patchwork of faded bruises. She calls herself Abilene but won’t reveal much else. And when a customer is found dead in an assumed suicide, Nora uncovers a connection that points to Abilene as either a suspect—or another target. “A love letter to reading, with sharp characterizations and a smart central mystery.” —*Entertainment Weekly*

Baxter, Cynthia. [Last Licks](#) (Kensington \$26). It’s autumn in the Hudson Valley, and Kate McKay has some tricks up her sleeve for a deliciously spooky season at her Lickety Splits Ice Cream Shoppe. But with a cold-blooded murderer thrown into the mix, the scares are about to become a little too real.... “A sweet treat. I loved everything about the Hudson Valley setting, from the small-town ice cream shop to the organic cows. Cynthia Baxter’s characters feel real enough to touch and her descriptions are mouthwatering. This book is best read with a spoon and a tub of ice cream nearby.”—Laurien Berenson

Blanchard, Alice. [Trace of Evil](#) (St Martins \$26.99). Rookie detective Natalie Lockhart is young, she has a past — and who doesn’t in the sleepy little town of Burning Lake, New York? — but she also has a good heart and the need to find out what happened to nine missing transients. What she finds, however, may be worse than murder, and may connect to the stabbing death of her beloved oldest sister years ago. Burning Lake has a history somewhat like that of Salem, Mass.; the question is, can Natalie keep her head above water long enough to successfully work the new and the old cases? This is Blanchard’s first thriller.

✠Beaton, MC. [Beating about the Bush](#) (St Martins \$26.99). Albert Morrison, the chairman of an English company that manufactures batteries, hires PI Agatha to find the saboteur responsible for burning down the company’s R&D department and with it the prototype of a highly anticipated new product. In the course of her investigation, Agatha comes across the body of Mrs. Din-

widdy, Morrison's longtime assistant. The blunt-force trauma to the head in the shape of a hoof points to the company's pet donkey, Wizz-Wazz. Agatha concludes Wizz-Wazz is innocent after discovering an ashtray made from a donkey's hoof. Disapproving of the subsequent save-the-donkey PR campaign Agatha initiates, Morrison fires her, but this only strengthens her determination to solve Mrs. Dinwiddy's murder. PW echoes my own take on the Agatha Raisins: "The obnoxious, rude, and outspoken Agatha may not appeal to every reader, but cozy fans with a taste for the silly and the offbeat will be gratified. This long-running series shows no sign of losing steam."

Brandreth, Benedict. [The Spy of Venice](#) (\$15.95). When he is caught by his wife in one ill-advised seduction too many, young William Shakespeare flees Stratford to seek his fortune. Cast adrift in London, Will falls in with a band of players, but greater men have their eye on this talented young wordsmith. England's very survival hangs in the balance and Will finds himself dispatched to Venice on a crucial assignment. Dazzled by the city's masques and its beauties, he little realizes the peril in which he finds himself. Catholic assassins would stop at nothing to end his mission on the point of their sharpened knives—and lurking in the shadows is a killer as clever as he is cruel. A strong read for fans of CJ Sansom and Edward Marston's Nicholas Bracewell series.

Cameron, WH. [Crossroad](#) (Crooked Lane \$26.99). Soon after Melisende Dulac moves from Massachusetts to a small Oregon town to become an apprentice mortician, she's first on the scene of a fatal car accident. She immediately spots the bodies of two men and a teenage boy, and later, at a long distance from the wreck, the body of a newborn. Things gets stranger after the bodies, stored in the mortuary, disappear, and scattered ashes are found in the crematorium, along with a skull from an unknown corpse. Since Melisende was the last person to see the bodies, the police suspect she stole them. When the person who represents the teenage boy's family discovers a bullet casing at the scene and concludes the crash was no accident, Melisende begins to investigate. The stakes rise as she delves into an uncertain situation not knowing whom to turn to for help. Cameron keeps the surprises coming. "Gripping and darkly comic...Packed with unusual and enthralling characters, and set in a wonderful, fully-realized, high desert milieu, *Crossroad* had me hooked from page one." —Owen Laukkanen

Child, Lee. [The Hero](#) (Harper \$12.99) explores the endurance of heroes from Achilles to Bond, showing us how this age-old myth is a fundamental part of what makes us human. He demonstrates how hero stories continue to shape our world – arguing that we need them now more than ever. Implicit is Child's belief that the hero is a concept essential to understanding fiction or to writing it.

And Child's essay proceeds in the eminent fashion of a scholar to stitch together strands of the history of storytelling and fiction itself dating all the way back to the Stone Age. "Fiction became curiously central to our nature," he writes. "Stories not least among them. Encouraging, empowering, emboldening stories that somehow made it more likely the listener would still be alive in the morning." Fiction, in other words, as a mechanism of survival as well as entertainment. "There are only two real people in fiction — the storyteller and the listener. The story proceeds based on the teller's aims and the listener's needs."

Cogman, Genevieve. [The Secret Chapter](#) (\$16). Time-travelling, dimension-jumping, Librarian-spy Irene and dragon-prince Kai will have to team up with an unlikely band of misfits to pull off an amazing art heist—or risk the wrath of a dangerous villain with a secret island lair. 6<sup>th</sup> in a terrific bookish fantasy series called The Secret Library. [Order all of The Secret Library](#) and binge.

Cook, Robin. [Genesis](#) (Putnam \$27). This is a solid medical thriller headed by NYC's Chief Medical Examiner Laurie Montgomery. When autopsying young social worker Kera Jackson, dead from what looks like a routine drug overdose (fentanyl), anomalies show up—also a fetus. The pathology resident Dr. Aria Nichols whose attitude is as breathtaking as her autopsy skills, takes an impulsive step when an emergency sidelines Laurie and uses genealogical DNA databases at a start-up ancestry site to try to trace the fetus' DNA back to male relatives to identify its father, the likely killer. Then another social worker, a close friend to Kera, is murdered. It's pretty easy to work out who the killer and motive are, but the medical stuff kept me turning the pages.

Coyle, Cleo. [Brewed Awakening](#) (Berkley \$27). Clare Cosi wakes up on a Washington Square park bench with no money, no identification, and no memory of how she got there. She knows she's in Greenwich Village, though, and makes her way to her ex-mother-in-law's Village Blend Coffeehouse, only to find it populated by people she doesn't know. But they know her. To her horror, Clare realizes that it's not only what happened yesterday that she doesn't remember, it's the entire past 15 years of her life—not that Village Blend now belongs to her, not that she's engaged to NYPD Detective Mike Quinn, not that she has been missing for days, and not that she's the last person to have seen hotel owner Annette Brewster, who's presumed kidnapped. Amid the delightfully twisty mystery, Coyle (the husband-and-wife team of Alice Alfonsi and Marc Cerasini) poses an intriguing question: if you lost all memory of your beloved, would you fall for him all over again?

Davis, Graeme, ed. [The Rivals of Sherlock Holmes](#) (Pegasus \$25.95). Today, the figure of Sherlock Holmes towers over detective fiction like a colossus—but it was not always so. Edgar Allan Poe's French detective Dupin, the hero of "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," anticipated Holmes' deductive reasoning by more than forty years with his "tales of ratiocination." In *A Study in Scarlet*, the first of Holmes' adventures, Doyle acknowledged his debt to Poe—and to Émile Gaboriau, whose thief-turned-detective Monsieur Lecoq debuted in France twenty years earlier. If "Rue Morgue" was the first true detective story in English, the title of the first full-length detective novel is more hotly contested. Two books by Wilkie Collins—*The Woman in White* (1859) and *The Moonstone* (1868)—are often given that honor, with the latter showing many of the features that came to identify the genre: a locked-room murder in an English country house; bungling local detectives outmatched by a brilliant amateur detective; a large cast of suspects and a plethora of red herrings; and a final twist before the truth is revealed. Others point to Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *The Trail of the Serpent* (1861) or Aurora Floyd (1862), and others still to *The Notting Hill Mystery* (1862-3) by the pseudonymous "Charles Felix." As the early years of detective fiction gave way to two separate golden ages—of hard-boiled tales in America and intricately-plotted, so-called "cozy" murders in Britain—the legacy of Sherlock Holmes, with his fierce devo-



tion to science and logic, gave way to street smarts on the one hand and social insight on the other—but even though these new sub-genres went their own ways, their detectives still required the intelligence and clear-sightedness that characterized the earliest works of detective fiction: the trademarks of Sherlock Holmes, and of all the detectives featured in these 17 stories.

Drake, Temple. [NVK](#) (Other Press \$15.99). “A weirdly wonderful tale of love, tragedy, lust, and, yes, a new breed of vampire: the auto-created immortal creature. Set in modern-day Shanghai, *NVK* tells the story of a young businessman who meets and falls hard for an aloof foreign beauty. Their torrid affair transforms into one of mystery as well as unasked and unanswered questions as Drake seductively draws the reader into a world of secrets and death. Here is a different telling of the lone vampire story that will appeal to readers who believe, perhaps, that the undead do walk amongst us, seeking love and connection, and not necessarily looking for their next meal.”

Driscoll, Sarah. [No Man's Land](#) (Kensington \$26). “Perilous adventures inside derelict buildings add texture and excitement to Driscoll’s solid fourth FBI K-9 novel featuring search-and-rescue expert Meg Jennings and her Labrador retriever, Hawk. Meg teams with EMT Todd Webb and *Washington Post* reporter Clay McCord to unmask a serial killer preying on the elderly. Clues lead Meg and Hawk into the world of extreme urban exploration called urbexing. Driscoll’s narrative power is at its best when the K-9 duo chases the killer through claustrophobic locations, though the pacing is undermined at times by heavy exposition. Dialogue strains when Meg’s team tries to connect urbexing with the victims’ illegal annuity policies and Tamil ritual killings. Logic is also an issue, as it’s never clear why the killer goes to such elaborate lengths to take elderly patients into the bowels of deserted buildings when he could kill them in their nursing homes. This will appeal to dog lovers and those who enjoy PG-rated action.”

Ellison, JT. [Good Girls Lie](#) (Mira \$27.99). Ash Carlisle, the heroine of this high-tension thriller from bestseller Ellison, leaves the U.K. after the death of her parents to attend the Goode School, an exclusive girls’ boarding school in Marchburg, Virginia. Ash knows that graduating from Goode will be her ticket to an Ivy League college. But as she settles in as a sophomore, she’s unprepared for the meanness of the other girls and the hazing she faces when tapped for one of Goode’s secret societies. When a student is found dead, an apparent suicide, the police question Ash and others who knew the victim. The dean, who worries about the potential bad publicity for the school, and the police think that Ash may be hiding something. As the body count rises, Ash’s involvement with the deceased seems too much of a coincidence to be ignored. Alternating points of view raise the suspense, blurring the lines between what’s true and false. No one among the cast of calculating characters is above suspicion.

It comes in a paperback too: [Good Girls Lie](#) (Mira \$16.99). “Sinister and atmospheric, this page-turner elevates the thriller genre with descriptive writing and well-drawn characters. Ash arrives at the Goode School with secrets of her own. Following an honor code is difficult enough (no lies allowed), but throw in secret societies and overly privileged students, and the scene is set for murder. For readers who liked *The Secret History* and *Watching You*.

Eskens, Allen. [Nothing More Dangerous](#) (Mulholland \$27)) Here’s a Library Reads recommend for a book out in the fall but Signed here on March 13, 2020. “When an African-American teenager and his family move in across the road, 15-year-old Boady discovers another side to things he’s always taken for granted in 1976 Missouri. As secrets hidden in plain sight slowly emerge, the boys come face-to-face with the forces that make a town, and a person, dangerous.”

✠Fowler, Christopher. [Bryant & May: The Lonely Hour](#) (Bantam \$28). The Peculiar Crimes Unit investigates a murder committed with a trocar, a surgical instrument normally used to drain body fluids. A man wearing a pig mask, Hugo Blake, used it on Dhruv Cheema, who worked in his family’s fashion business. After hanging Cheema upside down in Hampstead Heath, within a circle of objects associated with satanic rituals, Blake stabbed him in the neck. The next night, Blake stabs another man in the neck before throwing his body over a bridge into the Thames. Fowler maintains suspense by alternating between Blake’s bloody campaign and the PCU’s desperate efforts to stop it by trying to find a connection between the victims. Meanwhile, Bryant and May’s decades-old partnership is tested as never before as the two argue fiercely over how to proceed. This whydunit is the epitome of an intelligent page-turner as well as the oddly humorous sparkler the whole series is.

Flower, Amanda. [Verse and Vengeance](#) (Crooked Lane \$26.99). In Agatha-winner Flower’s whimsical fourth Magical Bookshop mystery, Violet Waverly, the proprietor of Charming Books, a bookstore built around a magical tree in Cascade Springs, N. Y., agrees to take part in a fund-raising bicycle race at the urging of her police chief boyfriend, David Rainwater. When Joel Redding, a curious PI who visited the store, has a fatal accident during the race, a copy of Walt Whitman’s *Leaves of Grass* is found in his bike’s backpack. Vi throws herself into what soon becomes a murder investigation, fearful that Redding had learned her big secret—that the supernatural essence of Charming Books can convey book recommendations to customers. Vi’s important relationships—with Rainwater, her grandmother, and a cat named Emerson—overshadow the plot. “This one’s for those who like some esoteric literary history and don’t mind a pinch of magic in their cozies.”

Frenkel, Franco. [A Bookshop in Berlin](#) (Atria \$26). In 1921, Françoise Frenkel—a Jewish woman from Poland—fulfills a dream. She opens La Maison du Livre, Berlin’s first French bookshop, attracting artists and diplomats, celebrities and poets. The shop becomes a haven for intellectual exchange as Nazi ideology begins to poison the culturally rich city. In 1935, the scene continues to darken. First come the new bureaucratic hurdles, followed by frequent police visits and book confiscations. Françoise’s dream finally shatters on Kristallnacht in November 1938, as hundreds of Jewish shops and businesses are destroyed. La Maison du Livre is miraculously spared, but fear of persecution eventually forces Françoise on a desperate, lonely flight to Paris. When the city is bombed, she seeks refuge across southern France, witnessing countless horrors: children torn from their parents, mothers throwing themselves under buses. Secreted away from one safe house to the next, Françoise survives at the heroic hands of strangers risking their lives to protect her. Published quietly in 1945, then rediscovered nearly sixty years later in an attic, this memoir, in the tradition of *Suite Française* and

*The Nazi Officer's Wife*, portrays a fearless woman whose lust for life and literature refuses to leave her, even in her darkest hours.

✚Greeley, Molly. [The Clergyman's Wife](#) (Morrow \$15.99).

“In *Pride and Prejudice*, Charlotte Lucas chooses with her eyes wide open to marry Mr. Collins, the unctuous clergyman who has nothing to recommend him but the ability to provide her with a household of her own. “In *The Clergyman's Wife*, Molly Greeley pauses to consider the backstory and consequences of this choice. This is a gentle story, notable for the author's clear, lyrical writing and consideration of the real financial challenges facing women in Jane Austen's day, as well as her empathy for the characters — especially, and perhaps surprisingly, Mr. Collins — without letting them off the hook for their moral choices. With a light touch, wisdom, and care, Greeley explores questions that provide a richer understanding of history and of our own lives.” See Austen's *Sanditon* above in More Gift Ideas.

✚Grey, Iona. [The Glittering Hour](#) (St Martins \$28.99). A nine-year-old child pieces together clues to her mother's wild past in this slow-building but dramatic historical tale of love lost and familial secrets uncovered. It's a tragic spiral all the way through, so not an ideal holiday season read IMHO—actually not one I want to read any time. In 1936 England, Alice Carew is sent to live with austere grandparents after her parents leave for Burma. Her only entertainment is her correspondence with her mother, Selina, who sends her clues to a treasure hunt that gradually reveals the story of Selina's life before Alice was born. In 1925, Selina Lennox was one of the “Bright Young People” whose outrageous behavior often featured in gossip columns. Though Selina's parents urged her to settle down with staid former soldier Rupert Carew, bohemian artist Lawrence Weston captured her heart. Told in a series of extended flashbacks, their romance is vividly drawn and heart-wrenching. Together, Alice and the reader come to understand that Alice's origins are not what they seem. To understand Selina's choice you have to understand the strictures of English life in the 1920s.

✚Griffiths, Elly. [Now You See Them](#) (\$15.99). 1960s Brighton, UK, Beatlemania and miniskirts are in full swing. DS Edgar Stephens and his pal, magician Max Mephisto, have their careers well in hand and Edgar's wife, the former DS Emma Holmes, is a stay-at-home mom. When a string of young girls goes missing, likely victims of kidnapping, Edgar and his team snap into best detecting mode, and Emma sinks into restless frustration, knowing she's the best detective for the job but unable to convince her husband to let her return to work—this is the 1960s, after all. But when Max's daughter Ruby and then Edgar's daughter Marianne become victims as well, Emma goes rogue to solve the case and find the girls. Griffiths is the author of the archaeologist Ruth Galloway Mysteries.

Hall, Tarquin. [The Case of the Reincarnated Client](#) (Severn \$28.99). Joy, India's Most Private Investigator Vish Puri returns after too long an absence. I love the rich characters in Hall's series and admire his clever plots that rise from real life issues, not contrived ones. “They are beautifully written, amusing, and intensely readable.”—Alexander McCall Smith. When a young woman comes forward claiming to be the reincarnation of Riya Kaur, a wife and mother who vanished during the bloody 1984 anti-Sikh riots, Puri is dismissive. He's busy enough dealing with an irate matrimonial client whose daughter is complaining about

her groom's thunderous snoring. Puri's indomitable Mummy-ji however is adamant the client is genuine. How else could she so accurately describe under hypnosis Riya Kaur's life and final hours? Driven by a sense of duty—the original case was his late father's—Vish manages to acquire the police file only to find that someone powerful has orchestrated a cover-up. He is forced into an alliance with his mother that tests his beliefs and high blood pressure as never before....

For a delightful package add a Signed copy of Hall's [The Delhi Detective's Handbook](#) (\$15), a charming little hard-cover reproducing Vish's very own casebook. This is one of my very favorite series.

Hamdy, Adam. [Aftershock](#) (Mebius\$26.99). Having survived the lethal [Pendulum](#) (\$16.99) conspiracy, photographer John Wallace atones for his past mistakes. DI Patrick Bailey clings to the hope that he can, at last, return to a normal life in London. FBI Investigator Christine Ash – alone and paranoid – hunts down the remaining members of the ruthless Foundation organization. But when marked assassins strike at the heart of the UK government, a shocking new threat emerges that forces all three to reunite. With time running out, they must defeat a lethal new adversary; a manipulative mastermind with sinister powers unlike anything they've seen before. At 500+ pages this is a big, high action read but it's the third in a series and should be read after [Pendulum and Freefall](#).

Hess, Annette. [The German House](#) (Harper \$25.99). Set against the Frankfurt Auschwitz Trials of 1963, Annette Hess's international bestseller is a harrowing yet ultimately uplifting coming-of-age story about a young female translator—caught between societal and familial expectations and her unique ability to speak truth to power. For twenty-four-year-old Eva Bruhns, World War II is a foggy childhood memory. At the war's end, Frankfurt was a smoldering ruin, severely damaged by the Allied bombings. But that was two decades ago. Now it is 1963, and the city's streets, once cratered are smooth and paved. Shiny new stores replace scorched rubble. Eager for her wealthy suitor, Jürgen Schoor-mann, to propose, Eva dreams of starting a new life away from her parents and sister. But Eva's plans are turned upside down when a fiery investigator, David Miller, hires her as a translator for a war crimes trial. As she becomes more deeply involved in the Frankfurt Trials, Eva begins to question her family's silence on the war and her future. Why do her parents refuse to talk about what happened? What are they hiding? Does she really love Jürgen and will she be happy as a housewife?

Hockensmith, Steve. [The Double-A Western Detective Agency](#) (\$13.95). Set in 1894, Edgar-finalist Hockensmith's sixth mystery featuring Otto and Gustav Amlingmeyer triumphantly combines homage, humor, and fair-play. With the cash prize from “a sleuthing contest” they won at the Columbian Exposition in Chicago, the Amlingmeyer brothers have set up their own business, the A.A. Western Detective Agency, in Utah. Otto is eager to tackle a case in Idaho that involves, in words typical of one of Dr. Watson's unpublished cases, “a ghostly puma, the map to lost silver mine, a damsel in distress and a drowned man found dead in his bed dressed as a nun.” But as that client can't pay anything, the brothers' business partner, Col. C. Kermit Crowe, insists that they accept a more prosaic request from someone who can, a rancher plagued by cattle thieves in the New Mexico territory. Accompa-

nied by Crowe's fetching and capable daughter, Diana, Otto and Gustav soon find themselves in the middle of a bitter feud and a murder investigation. Sherlockians will hope for a shorter hiatus between books in this superior series. This is fun for those who enjoy Parker's Hitch & Cole series.

Hollis, Lee. [Poppy Harmon and the Hung Jury](#) (Kensington \$26). Famous aging crooner Tony Molina is on trial for assaulting chef Carmine Cicci at the chef's Palm Springs, California, restaurant. Soon after PI Poppy, the lone woman on the jury and the foreperson, delivers a hung jury vote to the judge, Poppy notices a slight nod between Molina and Alden Kenny, the one hold-out juror. Days later, Poppy finds Alden floating dead in a swimming pool and winds up investigating his murder. Meanwhile, Poppy's detective agency partners are focusing on their only paying client, Rod Harper, whose aspiring singer daughter, Lara, has gone missing. Complicating matters for Poppy are the plight of her daughter, Heather, who's up for parole after serving 10 months in prison for involuntary manslaughter, and Rod's amorous overtures. The stakes rise after Poppy discovers some surprising connections among Alden, Molina's wife, and Lara.

Jenoff, Pam. [The Ambassador's Daughter](#) (\$16.99). In Jenoff's eloquent follow-up to [The Diplomat's Wife](#) (\$16.99), conflicted Margot accompanies her German diplomat father to Paris for the treaty negotiations following WWI. Traveling to England and then France, Margot deliberately delays the inevitable return to Berlin and avoids the impending union with her injured fiancé Stefan. Guilty about abandoning their commitment, Margot feels detached from the life she's expected to lead, shielding herself "from the truth that inevitably awaits." Though at first an outsider in Paris and bored with the social functions she must attend, her world changes when she meets Krysia—a pianist from Poland with radical political affiliations, an ethereal appearance, and an affinity for forthright speech—and then Georg, the striking but troubled German naval officer. The two share an immediate and undeniable attraction, but with new introductions come new afflictions.

Keneally, Thomas. [The Book of Science and Antiquities](#) (Atria \$28). An award-winning documentary filmmaker, Shelby Apple is obsessed with reimagining the full story of the Learned Man—a prehistoric man whose remains are believed to be the link between Africa and ancient Australia. From Vietnam to northern Africa and the Australian Outback, Shelby searches for understanding of this enigmatic man from the ancient past, unaware that the two men share a great deal in common. Some 40,000 years in the past, the Learned Man has made his home alongside other members of his tribe. Complex and deeply introspective, he reveres tradition, loyalty, and respect for his ancestors. Willing to sacrifice himself for the greater good, the Learned Man cannot conceive that a man a millennia later could relate to him in heart and feeling. A "meditation on last on last things, but still electric with life, passion and appetite" —*The Australian*

Kim, Un-su. [The Plotters](#) (\$16.95). Behind every assassination, there is an anonymous mastermind—a plotter—working in the shadows. Plotters quietly dictate the moves of the city's most dangerous criminals, but their existence is little more than legend. Just who are the plotters? And more important, what do they want? Reseng is an assassin. Raised by a cantankerous killer

named Old Raccoon in the crime headquarters "The Library," Reseng never questioned anything: where to go, who to kill, or why his home was filled with books that no one ever read. But one day, Reseng steps out of line on a job, toppling a set of carefully calibrated plans. And when he uncovers an extraordinary scheme set into motion by an eccentric trio of young women.... From the novelist dubbed "the Korean Henning Mankell" comes a fantastical crime novel set in an alternate Seoul where assassination guilds compete for market dominance.

Kurland, Michael. [The Bells of Hell](#) (Severn \$28.99). Counter-intelligence agent Jacob Welker recruits a number of civilians to help foil a suspected terrorist attack by German spies in New York in 1938. In March, Otto Lehman arrives in New York on the *S.S. Osthafen* to be immediately confronted by two men with FBI badges...only, that isn't his real name and the men aren't with the FBI. The next day Lehman is found tied to a chair, beaten to death and naked, in an abandoned Brooklyn warehouse. The sole witness to the crime, Andrew Blake, a homeless man struggling through the Great Depression, claims those responsible were speaking German. With the threat of the perpetrators being Nazis, President Roosevelt's own covert counter-intelligence agent Jacob Welker is brought in to investigate. Welker recruits Blake along with Lord Geoffrey Saboy, a British 'cultural attaché, and his wife Lady Patricia, to help him to thwart a Nazi terrorist attack. But who exactly are the Nazis, what is their target?

✧Liardet, France. [We Must Be Brave](#) (\$17). December 1940. In the disorderly evacuation of Southampton, England, newly married Ellen Parr finds a small child asleep on the backseat of an empty bus. No one knows who little Pamela is. Ellen professed not to want children with her older husband, and when she takes Pamela into her home and rapidly into her heart, she discovers that this is true: Ellen doesn't want children. She wants only Pamela. Three golden years pass as the Second World War rages on. Then one day Pamela is taken away, screaming. Ellen is no stranger to sorrow, but when she returns to the quiet village life she's long lived, she finds herself asking: In a world changed by war, what can she wish for?

Littlejohn, Emily. [Shatter the Night](#) (St Martins \$27.99). I like good police procedurals and this one is excellent complete with the small town that makes cozies popular. We're in Cedar Valley, Colorado, where the annual Halloween festivities are interrupted by an explosion that terminates a car and its owner, retired Judge Caleb Montgomery, right outside his law offices. Caleb had earlier advised Detective Gemma Monroe he'd been receiving anonymous threats which he dismissed. But his new widow indicates Caleb was haunted by some inappropriate action in his past. Reeling from shock since the Montgomerys were family friends, and somewhat distracted by her upcoming wedding plans (long in the making—Gemma and Brody have a child together), she digs in. One line of inquiry leads her to the Bella Vista Penitentiary and a stone-cold killer; another to the newly renovated Shotgun Playhouse which is preparing to open *Macbeth* shortly. The plot is a bit rickety but it's less the point than the well drawn relationships.

✧MacNeal. [The Doll Factory](#) (Atria \$27). MacNeal's lively debut finds a fresh way to dramatize the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood of revolutionary, mid-19th-century British painters. In addition to William Holman Hunt, John Everett Millais, and Dante Gabriel



Rossetti, MacNeal creates a fictitious PRB member, Louis Frost, who meets Iris Whittle, the heroine, a painter of miniature faces at Mrs. Salter's Doll Emporium. Dismissed for being a woman, Iris longs to be seen as a real painter, and when she meets Frost, he proposes a deal: if she poses for him, he will give her art lessons. At the same time, Iris also comes to the attention of Silas Reed, a taxidermist who sells stuffed animals to artists as props for their paintings. Unbeknownst to Iris, he stalks her with the intention of possessing her like an object. Louis turns out to be a generous mentor and Iris ends up falling for him. Only Albie, a light-fingered street urchin befriended by Iris, is aware of how much danger she is in from the obsessed Silas. "Told against the backdrop of the Great Exposition at the Crystal Palace and its industrial wonders, MacNeal's consistently enjoyable novel reads like an art history lecture co-delivered by Wilkie Collins and Charles Dickens and read from a revisionist feminist script. This debut is a blast; it enticingly vacillates between a realistic depiction of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood's London and lurid Victorian drama."

Malerman, Josh. [Malorie: A Bird Box Novel](#) (Random \$28). In his sequel to [Bird Box](#) (\$15.99), the inspiration for the record-breaking Netflix film that starred Sandra Bullock and "absolutely riveted" Stephen King, Malerman brings new, unseen horrors to life.

✎McDermid, Val. [How the Dead Speak](#) (Grove \$26). The Starred Review for Val's 11th Tony Hill thriller beings, "developers digging on the grounds of the shuttered Order of the Blessed Pearl convent, near Bradfield, England, uncover more than 30 children's skeletons, triggering an investigation by the regional major incident team. With Carol off the force and afflicted with PTSD, and Tony in prison for manslaughter, the team members suffer under the new leadership of Detective Chief Inspector Rutherford, who's hostile toward them. The stakes rise after the discovery of the murdered bodies of young men in a different area of the convent grounds. Interviews with an elderly retired priest, Fr. Michael Keenan, and Mother Benedict, who ran the convent, reveal a disturbing pattern of abuse at the hands of the nuns. Carol is lured out of isolation by a defense attorney, who persuades her to sign on to a new organization that helps wrongly convicted felons find justice. Series fans will be pleased to see Tony and Carol reunite after a long separation, despite the uncertainty of their complicated relationship's future. McDermid is writing at the top of her game." 3 Signed UK Firsts remain (\$44).

New in paperback: [Broken Ground](#) (\$16.99). Six feet under in a Highland peat bog lies Alice Somerville's inheritance, buried by her grandfather at the end of World War II. But when Alice finally uncovers it, she finds an unwanted surprise—a body with a bullet hole between the eyes. Meanwhile, DCI Karen Pirie is called in to unravel a case where nothing is quite as it seems. And as she gets closer to the truth in this twisty thriller, it becomes clear that not everyone shares her desire for justice. Or even the idea of what justice is.

Nellums, Eliza. [All That's Bright and Gone](#) (Crooked Lane \$26.99). Six-year-old Aoife Scott worries about her mother, Siobhan, after Siobhan is sent to the hospital following a disturbance outside Michigan's Westgate Mall. Aoife is puzzled about the delay in her mother's return home and the vagueness of her beloved lawyer uncle, Donny Scott, about her mother's situa-

tion. Aoife is equally mystified by conflicting information about her dead brother, Theo; the silence around Theo's parentage and demise; the role of her mother's "special friend," Marine veteran Mac Corey; the hostility of her neighbor, Mr. Rutledge; and the odd nocturnal behavior of Uncle Donny. Inspired by her imaginary friend, Teddy, and her actual friend, eight-year-old fledgling detective Hannah, Aoife sets out on a path of discovery that entails risk to herself and her loved ones. "Through the honest, winning, and convincing Aoife, Nellums, in her debut, provides ample evidence that the most important mysteries are those that lie closest to home. Fans of Alan Bradley's Flavia de Luce novels won't want to miss this one."

Ocker, JW. [Twelve Nights at Rotter House](#) (Turner \$16.99). Further proof that horror and the modern Gothic (here add a haunted house) are growing hot is this gem set in Rotterdam. During the titular 12 nights at the deserted, haunted Rotterdam Mansion, nothing is as it seems, even for the jaded expectations of horror geeks like Felix Allsey and Thomas Ruth. Felix, a travel writer starting what may be his last book at the notorious Rotter House, has invited Thomas to join him there in order to repair their damaged friendship. They debate the paranormal and discuss movies, as they usually do, until things start to go very wrong. Thomas is convinced of the superstitious happenings while Felix isn't so sure; in the process they remember their shameful past. The two men discover that while Rotter House is indeed a dark place, this is a horror story of their own making. "Ocker (author of the Edgar-winning *Poe-Land*) tailor makes his meta-thriller for an age where genre tropes have been repeatedly ripped apart then put back together. He depicts the obsessions of his nerd characters with great strength, in part because he balances real affection for them with an author's sense of clarity. The tension of the book is in understanding a situation and still becoming helpless in its grasp."

Olafsson, Olaf. [Sacrament](#) (Harper \$26.99). An elderly French nun is called upon to revisit a two-decades-old case from 1987 in Iceland. Back then, Sister Johanna Marie, brought in to investigate because she had learned the language from her Icelandic college roommate, discovered that priests engaged in abhorrent behavior with impunity. Now, in 2009, she would rather tend her convent's rose garden, but when a Cardinal calls upon her to obtain new evidence from a witness who will speak only to her, she agrees to help. The circumstances of the original case are vividly recalled: during an investigation of a priest accused of abusive behavior, the priest fell to his death from a bell tower. Johanna is concerned now about what this witness remembers and what he will reveal. "Besides the investigation particulars, the reader discovers why Johanna became a nun and why she had to mask her feelings for her college roommate—a hidden love that impacted the rest of her life."

✎Parris, SJ. [Treachery](#) (Pantheon \$26.95). Parris's excellent fourth Elizabethan whodunit featuring philosopher spy Giordano Bruno finds Sir Francis Drake preparing to lead a large fleet against Spain. While the official story is that Drake intends to sail along the Spanish coast to rescue English ships being held in that country's ports, he's actually planning an all-out assault on Spain's New World holdings. But Drake's departure from Plymouth is delayed after crew member Robert Dunne, an officer who circumnavigated the globe with Drake seven years earlier, is found hanged in his locked room aboard Drake's flagship, an ap-

parent suicide. Seeing evidence that Dunne was murdered, Drake is wary of embarking with a killer on board. By chance, Bruno's friend, Sir Philip Sidney, was scheming to join the Drake fleet, and after learning of the problem, volunteers Bruno, who has successfully solved murders before, to investigate. Bruno soon gets on the track of a monstrous plot against the kingdom. This is historical mystery fiction at its finest.

Poyer, David. [Overthrow: The War with China and North Korea](#) (St Martins \$28.99). Poyer writes sterling naval fiction and here in his 19<sup>th</sup> thriller US Navy officer Dan Lenson is faced with a (near future) war in the Pacific. He is leading Task Force 91 and about to launch operation Rupture, the first attempt by the U.S. and its allies to seize Chinese territory. After three years of conflict, political support is waning, strikes and riots are everywhere, and money for the war is drying up, as are ships, troops, and resolve, but China is on the ropes as well. "Though Dan's story is primary, other regular characters continue story lines that are equally riveting and important to the overall plot. Blair Titus, Dan's wife, now undersecretary of defense, struggles with strategy and the war's political side; Sgt. Hector Ramos continues his never-ending infantry battle against the mainland Chinese invaders of Taiwan; and in western China, SEAL Teddy Oberg is organizing and training insurgents for one last mission that may win the war. Horatio Hornblower fans won't want to miss the latest chapter in this stirring saga." An excellent gift idea for the military fiction reader.

Quincy, DM. [Murder at the Opera](#) (Crooked Lane \$26.99). London, 1815. Amateur sleuth Atlas Catesby is about to discover the dark side of the bright lights. His long-awaited night at the opera with Lady Lilliana ends abruptly when a notorious courtesan is shot to death in Covent Garden. The infamous victim was the mistress of the powerful Marquess of Vessey. Atlas believes that the marquess--his former brother in law--is responsible for the long-ago death of Atlas's sister, Phoebe. Atlas seizes the opportunity to potentially avenge his sister's death. But his inquiry is complicated when Phoebe's grown son implores Atlas to help prove Vessey's innocence. Plunging into the cutthroat backstage life of the theatre community, the adventurer and the noblewoman soon discover that ruthless professional rivalries can escalate into violence, setting the stage for death.

Quick, Amanda. [Tightrope](#) (\$16). After surviving a murderous attack and starting a new life as an innkeeper, a former trapeze artist is drawn to the enigmatic man investigating the bizarre murder of her first-ever guest.

Reagan, Lisa. [Vanishing Girls](#) (Grand Central \$12.99). This exciting series launch from Regan finds Detective Josie Quinn suspended from the Denton, Pennsylvania, police force for using excessive force and impatiently waiting for her police sergeant husband, Ray Quinn, to sign divorce papers so she can marry the man she loves, someone she knows Ray hates. When 17-year-old high school student Isabelle Coleman vanishes, Josie fears Isabelle's disappearance may be linked to other cases of missing girls in nearby areas. The sudden appearance of a mute and obviously traumatized girl, who has been missing for close to a year and is wearing Isabelle's tongue barbell, confirms Josie's suspicions. Frustrated and baffled as she watches her colleagues fail to follow crucial leads, she suspects a conspiracy among Denton's law enforcement community to protect those responsible for

these crimes. At great personal peril, Josie leaves the sidelines to pursue the truth.

Rosenstiel, Tom. [Oppo](#) (Harper \$27.99). This is a very well written and cleverly conceived political thriller that turns around a centrist Senator, Wendy Upton, who is offered the Veep spot by both political parties. When she is threatened and unnerved she hires Peter Rena to investigate what in her past is opportune for some player and which side is doing it and for what gain. With two parties at war with each other and internally, a restive electorate, and a political culture driven by money more than ideology.... What's up? I skimmed this because it is so much like every day's headlines it wore me out. Which is too bad as it's a good book.

Sallis, James. [Bluebottle](#); [Ghost of a Flea](#) (Soho \$16.95 each). The 5<sup>th</sup> and final 6<sup>th</sup> in Sallis' terrific PI series featuring Lew Griffin of New Orleans written from 1992-2001 and now reissued. Lew's series "is one of the most inventive and affecting sagas in recent crime fiction." He is an African American private detective, a poet and teacher, who specializes in finding missing persons. "Griffin's moral intelligence and questioning mind fold a noir perspective into post-existential angst. And of course there is New Orleans, full of dangerous mirage."—*Wall Street Journal*. [Buy them all](#) for fine binge reading in a genre with too few working private eyes these days.

⌘Saunders, Kate. [Laetitia Rodd and the Case of the Wandering Scholar](#) (Bloomsbury \$26). See the simultaneous large paperback edition in our December Large Paperback Picks for a review of this excellent Victorian mystery.

Shepard, Sara. [Reputation](#) (Dutton, \$16.). A Library Reads recommend:"Set in an elite private school, with a large cast of characters, this book has it all: scandals, affairs, and murder. I love the way the multiple perspectives intersect and intertwine. For fans of *Gossip Girl* and *Big Little Lies*."

Simenon, George. [Maigret's Pickpocket](#) (Penguin \$13). When Inspector Maigret's wallet and badge are stolen on a bus, it sets off a chain of events culminating in a grisly murder case

Singh, Nalini. [A Madness of Sunshine](#) (Berkley \$27). "Singh brings us into the wild side of New Zealand, to a tiny village where the new cop knows everybody by name and really cares about protecting them. Maya has returned to find her old school friends greatly changed — and one may be a serial killer. This thriller is compelling; the characters are fresh and exciting but realistic. The tension builds with every page turned, right up to the finale — wow!" Indeed—and so here is our **December Discovery Book of the Month**. "With a well-drawn cast of characters and a vivid New Zealand setting, this book slowly draws you in, picks up speed, and takes you on a dark, twisty ride. For fans of *Then She Was Gone* and *All the Missing Girls*."

Soule, Charles. [Anyone](#) (Harper \$21.99). Speculative fiction that questions how the world as we know it would exist if the god-like power to transfer consciousness became a marketed product for consumers. "An imaginative, time-fragmented thriller about the bitter and potentially deadly consequences of body-snatching. Readers won't feel that they're on the edge of their seats as much as they're on a balance beam above a pit of lava while trying to solve a Rubik's Cube." The Indie Next Pick: Soule takes what was so fun about his novel *The Oracle Year* and perfects it. This

takes the high-paced adventure of a spy novel or an action film and pairs it with the thoughtfulness that is found in really good science fiction. Soule puts his characters through unimaginable stressors to make us evaluate our views on race, identity, humanity, and the very existence of the self.”

Stevens, Taylor. [Liars' Legacy](#) (Kensington \$26). A twisty sequel to [Liars' Paradox](#) (\$9.99), which introduced sibling assassins Jack and Jill, blends cutting-edge surveillance technology with traditional spycraft. The immersive, globe-trotting narrative opens with rival kill teams from the U.S. and Russia stalking enigmatic operative Christopher Holden, who's flying from Dallas to Frankfurt, Germany. The alternating points of view require attentive reading as the characters often switch their names, nationalities, and allegiances. Midway, the numerous double-crosses and master disguises grow a bit tedious. Stevens wisely chooses to unite Jack and Jill with Holden, who yearns for a closer relationship with them for unclear reasons. Holden, who trades in information, promises to help the twins identify their absent father and determine whether their mother, Clare, faked her death months earlier. All roads lead back to a political assassination plot and an open-ended climax, setting the groundwork for a third outing. Jason Bourne aficionados will find much to like. I highly recommend reading *Liars' Paradox* first.

Straley, John. [The Big Both Ways](#) (Soho \$9.99). In first Cold Storage #1, it's 1935 and jobs are scarce, but Slippery Wilson walks off his job at a logging camp after a gruesome accident kills a coworker. He's headed for Seattle with all his savings; he plans to buy a piece of farmland and be his own boss. When he stops to help a woman get her car out of a ditch, his life takes a serious detour. The woman is Ellie Hobbs, an anarchist from the docks of Seattle who watches out for her young niece and dreams of flying planes. But right now, she's got one busted nose and has just stuffed a dead man's body into the trunk of her car. So begins the action that will take Slip, Ellie, her niece, and her noisy yellow bird on a heart-stopping adventure up the Inside Passage from Puget Sound to Alaska

Thane, James L. [Crossroads](#) (Moonshine Cove \$14.99 SIGNED). Kalispell, Montana Attorney Dave Matthews is on a downhill slide, blaming himself for the recent death of one of his closest friends. He's drinking heavily and generally avoiding his responsibilities when the brother of another close friend, a mill worker named Steve Helstrom, is charged with the murder of a prominent environmentalist. Dave reluctantly agrees to defend Helstrom and suddenly finds himself thrust into a case in which the evidence appears heavily stacked against his client. He's also finds himself thrown in the middle of a raging battle over the future of Montana's national forests, and before it's over Dave's own future will be very much on the line as well.

Tursten, Helene. [Winter Grave](#) (Soho \$26.95). DI Embla Nystrom, who's also a big game hunter and Nordic light welterweight champion, has a lot on her plate in Tursten's fast-paced sequel to 2018's [Hunting Game](#) (\$15.99). In Strömstad in western Sweden, she takes on a lethal combination of two missing children, arson, and a policeman's murder. On the personal side, she has a torrid affair with the married lawyer of a suspect and must cope with nightmares about a lost friend. Though badly injured when assaulted by a man during a moose hunt the previous year, Embla relishes the thrill of the hunt, whether stalking wild boar—or

killers bent on gory revenge. Embla and her team manage to create satisfying personal relationships and enjoy some great nights out, and the villains get appropriately punished. And, fun for fans of Tursten's Göteborg cop Irene Huss, Huss and Nystrom cross paths and ignite some sleuthing chemistry. “Embla, a sharp-witted detective and titled boxer, inspires confidence that the truth will out, despite the pervasive gloom of Tursten's Swedish winter... a winner for fans of Scandinavian crime fiction and atmospheric British procedurals, like those by Susan Hill, Deborah Crombie, and Reginald Hill.” —*Booklist*. I recommend you reading *Hunting Game* first.

Walters, Damien. [The Dead Girls Club](#) (Crooked Lane \$26.99). “An engaging story, full of twists and turns. Chapters alternate from Heather's childhood experiences to her present to form the whole story. Creepier than scary, pick this up if you want a story full of dread, suspense, childhood memories, death, and plenty of surprises. For fans of *The Turn of the Key* and *The Silent Patient*.”

Watkins, Eileen. [Gone, Kitty, Gone](#) (Kensington \$15.95). With her new van, Cassie has expanded her Comfy Cat business to include mobile cat grooming. Next stop: a cat expo at a hotel just outside her hometown of Chadwick, New Jersey, where Cassie will give a grooming demo using shelter cats to encourage adoption while her veterinarian boyfriend Mark will offer a program on cat care and health. The highlight of the expo will be a major cat show featuring pop sensation Jaki Natal. Almost as famous as his owner is her pet Gordie, a Scottish fold, who's become a social media darling. But when adorable Gordie goes missing and his sitter is found murdered, Jaki is having kittens. While the cops are more interested in solving the murder of a human, Jaki insists Cassie help expose the catnapper and return gorgeous Gordie to the fold.

Wilde, Darcie. [And Dangerous to Know](#) (Kensington \$26). When the ladies of the ton of Regency London need discreet assistance, they turn to Rosalind Thorne. Lady Melbourne has entrusted her with recovering a packet of highly sensitive private letters stolen from her desk. The contents of these letters hold great interest for the famous poet Lord Byron, who had carried on a notorious public affair with Lady Melbourne's daughter-in-law, the inconveniently unstable Lady Caroline Lamb. Rosalind is to take up residence in Melbourne House, posing as Lady Melbourne's confidential secretary. There, she must discover the thief and regain possession of the letters before any further scandal erupts. However, Lady Melbourne omits a crucial detail. Rosalind learns from the Bow Street runner, Adam Harkness, that an unidentified woman was found dead in the courtyard of Melbourne House. The coroner has determined she was poisoned.

Williams, Beatriz. [The Wicked Redhead](#) (Harper \$26.99). Can be Signed January 18. See Our December Large Paperback Picks for a review.

Winters Rachel. [Would Like to Meet](#) (Putnam \$16). “Evie recreates famous movie meet-cutes as a way to inspire a jerk client to write a screenplay, and learns a lot about herself in the process. For fans of Meg Cabot and Jennifer Crusie.”

✳Wolfe, Suzanne. [The Course of All Treasons](#) (Crooked Lane \$26.99). Set in 1586 England, Wolfe's excellent second mystery featuring Nicholas Holt, who works for Sir Francis Walsingham, Elizabeth I's legendary spymaster, delivers on the promise of



2018's *A Murder by Any Name*. Holt's assignment, to trail a possible Spanish agent, turns deadly when an attempt is made on his own life. When reporting to Walsingham, Holt learns that a fellow spy has already been tortured and murdered. Holt then goes undercover, pretending to join forces with the dangerously ambitious Earl of Essex, to find out who's targeting Walsingham's agents. Wolfe vividly brings London to life, from the raunchy taverns to the stages offering plays by Will Shakespeare. But the book's greatest strength is its characters, starting with the clever but flawed Holt, and including a twin brother and sister team of Jewish healers and a young Irish woman with a talent for disguise. Note: the author drops into anachronistic dialogue now and then.

#### OUR DECEMBER SMALL PAPERBACK PICKS

*(Most of the titles listed publish December 31 but will likely arrive right around Christmas and ship thereafter to you)*

Bell, David. [The Forgotten Girl](#) (\$9.99). Tasked with watching his niece after his estranged, former-addict sister shows up, Jason Danvers is forced to confront unresolved past issues when his she suddenly goes missing again. *Kirkus* had this to say "Dark secrets emerge from a man's long-ago high school days in this strong and moody novel. Personal relationships are critical in this satisfying read, which is in the same class as Russell Banks *The Sweet Hereafter*."

Berry, Steve. [The Malta Exchange](#) (\$9.99). Cotton Malone #14. Former operative Cotton Malone finds himself racing the Knights of Malta, a rogue cardinal, the Secreti, and the clock to find a document dating back to the fourth century. *LJ* opined with "Thrillers abound, but Berry has the lock on making history zing with his breathless pacing and galloping action." The scenes for the action are enticing and not often visited.

Harris, Sherry. [Sell Low, Sweet Harriet](#) (Kensington \$7.99). Garage Sale #7. While investigating a murder on the side at the nearby Air Force base, former military spouse Sarah Winston, whose garage sale business is taking off, must haggle for her life when she takes on a mysterious new client. *Kirkus* concluded its review with, "Canny hints for garage-sale success blend nicely with two difficult mysteries for the intrepid heroine to unravel."

Hoag, Tami. [The Boy](#) (\$9.99). After the murder of a young boy and the disappearance of his teenage babysitter, detectives Nick Fourcade and his wife Annie Broussard investigate the dual mysteries. *PW* ended its review with, "Hoag keeps the twists and turns coming all the way to the shocking conclusion."

Iles, Greg. [Cemetery Road](#) (\$9.99). His father's terminal illness, his family's struggling newspaper, and a politically charged murder trial force a Washington journalist to return to his small Mississippi hometown. *PW* was just one review source raving about this saying "Iles once again delivers a sweeping tale of family dysfunction, sexually charged secrets, and the power of wealth, with an overlay of violence and Southern sensibility."

Macmillan, Gilly. [The Perfect Girl](#) (\$9.99). Fighting to start over after serving time for her role in a fatal accident, teen musical prodigy Zoe is horrified when her mother is found dead after a career-launching recital, in a high-suspense tale told over the course of 24 hours.

Murphy, Catie. [Dead in Dublin](#) (Kensington \$7.99). Dublin Driver #1. When one of her clients—a beloved restaurant critic—

drops dead supposedly from spoiled seafood, Megan Malone, a driver for the Leprechaun Limo Service, decides to look into the fishy death much to the chagrin of a handsome Garda. *Kirkus* loved this cozy saying "Murphy's irrepressible debut provides a lively entry in the Dublin Driver Mysteries."

Slaughter, Karin. [Pieces of Her](#) (\$9.99). The daughter of a woman who has wanted nothing more than a quiet life in her small beachside home embarks on a desperate search for answers when she discovers the explosive truth about her mother's true identity. *PW* concluded its review with, "The plot takes a while to build momentum, but once it does, it speeds to the satisfying payoff. Slaughter reinforces her place at the top of the thriller pack."

#### DECEMBER SMALL PAPERBACKS

*(Most of the titles listed publish December 31 but will likely arrive right around Christmas and ship thereafter to you)*

Bartlett, Lorraine. [Murder Ink](#) (Berkley \$7.99). Victoria Square #5. When the arrival of a tattoo parlor in Victoria Square results in murder before the ink is dry, Katie Bonner sets out to find the truth while being torn between three very different men.

Burton, Mary. [Senseless](#) (Kensington \$9.99). Reissue. Tormented by a tragic event in her past, Eva Rayburn tries to start over in her Virginia hometown, but a new nightmare begins and every victim is linked to her and what happened 10 years earlier at a sorority party.

Delany, Vicki. [A Scandal in Scarlet](#) (\$7.99). Sherlock Holmes Bookshop #4. Gemma and Jayne donate their time to raise money for the rebuilding of a burned-out museum, but the murder of museum board chair Kathy Lamb places a fellow shopkeeper under suspicion, and Gemma becomes entangled in the investigation.

Flower, Amanda. [Matchmaking Can Be Murder](#) (Kensington \$7.99). When her niece Edith's former fiancé, a cruel and greedy man, is found dead in Edith's greenhouse, quilter Millie Fisher must piece together the clues to keep Edith out of prison and protect her own reputation.

Frey, Rea. [Not Her Daughter](#) (St Martins \$9.99). In a story that raises the question of what it means to be a mother and how far someone will go to keep a child safe, a successful entrepreneur kidnaps a five-year-old girl in an attempt to rescue her from her damaging mother.

Gadol, Peter. [The Stranger Game](#) (\$9.99). After her boyfriend goes missing while playing a viral game in which players follow others in real life as they do online, Rebecca tries the game herself and discovers a disturbing and sinister subculture.

Galdorisi, George. [Tom Clancy's Op-Center: Scorched Earth](#) (St Martins \$9.99). An Islamic extremist is on a quest for vengeance after his only son is killed and it is up to the Op-Center to stop him.

Griffin, Laura. [Desperate Girls](#) (\$8.99). When a vicious murderer she once helped prosecute resurfaces and launches a killing spree to avenge himself against those who put him behind bars, a successful defense attorney is forced to investigate a disturbing case from her past and hire a private bodyguard to protect her.

Griffin, WEB. [Enemy of My Enemy](#) (\$9.99). *Clandestine Operations* #5. Special agent James Cronley, Jr. uncovers evidence of a stolen fortune in the hands of Odessa while tracking down two escaped Nazi war criminals.

Hart, John. [Iron House](#) (\$9.99). Reissue. Two decades after a pair of orphaned brothers are separated when one of them flees after a murder accusation, the runaway brother, now a seasoned killer, returns to North Carolina to protect his brother and solve the mystery of their past.

Irving, Nicholas. [Reaper: Threat Zero](#) (St Martins \$9.99). When a political convoy is ambushed, killing the wives, husbands, and children of high-ranking leaders, Harwood and Stone find themselves tracked by an unknown adversary while trying to prevent a vengeful president from retaliating against innocents.

Jones, Darynda. [Summoned to The Thirteenth Grave](#) (8.99). Charley Davidson #13. In the final installment in the best-selling paranormal series, Charley Davidson returns to the earthly plane after a century in exile and prepares for the ultimate battle to solve a loved one's death.

Klein, Libby. [Theater Nights Are Murder](#) (Kensington \$7.99). Gluten-free baker Poppy McAllister, while choosing between two suitors, and her aunt Ginny must save the Senior Center's production of *Mamma Mia* when a murder threatens to take center stage.

Penney, Elizabeth. [Hems and Homicide](#) (St Martins \$7.99). Apron Shop #1. When skeletal remains are found in the storefront she is renting, and then her landlord, who has ties to her grandmother's past, is murdered, Iris Buckley wonders if her shop Ruffles & Bows is doomed to fail before it even opens.

Robb, J D. [Vendetta in Death](#) (\$8.99). Eve Dallas #49. Homicide detective Eve Dallas investigates the sordid past of a wealthy businessman for clues to track down a vigilante killer who disguises herself to seduce her targets.

Ross, Barbara. [Sealed Off](#) (Kensington \$7.99). Maine Clambake #8. When her renovation of an old mansion on Morrow Island results in murder and the discovery of a secret room with a mysterious diary, Julie Snowden must quickly tear down the walls of the home to find the truth.

Swanson, Denise. [Come Homicide or High Water](#) (Sourcebooks \$7.99). Back to Scumble River #3. School psychologist Skye Denison-Boyd's hopes to ease back into work after returning from maternity leave are upturned when the residents of Scumble River find themselves mixed up in another murder.