

BOOKNEWS from

ISSN 1056-5655, © The Poisoned Pen, Ltd.
Volume 32, Number 1
January Booknews 2020
sales@poisonedpen.com tel (888)560-9919
http://poisonedpen.com

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



Our Podcasts are now downloadable on [Google Music](#) and [iTunes](#)

HAPPY NEW YEAR

AUTHORS ARE SIGNING...

Some Events will be webcast on Facebook Live

Check out our new [YouTube Channel](#)

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 Art World Mystery

TUESDAY JANUARY 14 7:00PM

Andrew Grant signs [Too Close to Home](#) (Ballantine \$28)

Paul McGrath, courthouse janitor

Nick Petrie signs [The Wild One](#) (Putnam \$26)

Peter Ash tracks a killer in Iceland

Our copies include an essay by Petrie on why Iceland

WEDNESDAY JANUARY 15 7:00 PM

Professor Paul Davies signs [The Demon in the Machine](#) (Allen \$27.50)

Winner of the 2019 Physics World Book of the Year Award

THURSDAY JANUARY 16 7:00 PM

Chris Hauty [Deep State](#) (Atria \$27)

Debut thriller

WRITERS WORKSHOP

SATURDAY JANUARY 25 4:00 PM

Fee: \$35 includes copy of [House on Fire](#). Limited to 25

Putting the Thrill in Your Thriller: techniques for turning up the tension. *Booklist* recently proclaimed that *New York Times* bestselling author Joseph Finder "may well be the best contemporary thriller writer going." Finder also taught writing at Harvard. Learn from this "master of the modern thriller" some of the techniques used by some of the greats of the genre to create scenes of unforgettable tension.

EVENT BOOKS TO START THE NEW YEAR

Alexander, Tasha. [In the Shadow of Vesuvius](#) (St Martins \$27.99). Pompeii, so storied, so tragic, so rich in windows into Roman life. Robert Harris wrote a terrific thriller, [Pompeii](#) (\$17), I urge you to read, that puts you right at ground zero when Vesuvius erupted at a time when no one had a clue about volcanology. The tourists visiting the resort area ignored warning signs, like the residents. Alexander, fascinated with the history and the ruins which keep yielding new information and artifacts, traveled there to research a Lady Emily adventure that begins in 1902 when she and husband Colin rent a villa as a base for exploration under the prodding of friend Ivy Brandon. And while doing so examine a cache of preserved bodies only to notice that one has very modern sideburns. Refusing to write off the man's murder as an act of Neapolitan gangsters, Emily and Colin investigate amidst a tangle of police and archaeologists. Meanwhile a backstory narrated by a Greek slave and terrific poet flows along towards the 79 AD eruption. As a bonus, a new character is introduced who causes Emily a lot of soul searching. I myself went to Pompeii some years ago and was fascinated by the work done and to be done. You can check some of it out at the Metropolitan Museum of Art if you're in New York. 14th in the consistently engrossing [Lady Emily Mysteries](#).

Davies, Paul. [The Demon in the Machine](#) (Allen \$27.50). The winner of the 2019 Physics World Book of the Year Award journeys across an astounding landscape of cutting-edge science. Weaving together cancer and consciousness, two-headed worms and bird navigation, Davies reveals how biological organisms garner and process information to conjure order out of chaos, opening a window onto the secret of life itself. What is life? For generations, scientists have struggled to make sense of this fundamental question, for life really does look like magic: even a humble bacterium accomplishes things so dazzling that no human engineer can match it. Huge advances in molecular biology over the past few decades have served only to deepen the mystery. World-renowned physicist and science communicator Paul Davies of ASU searches for answers in a field so new and fast-moving that it lacks a name; it is a domain where biology, computing, logic, chemistry, quantum physics, and nanotechnology intersect. At the heart of these diverse fields, Davies explains, is the concept of information: a quantity which has the power to unify biology with physics, transform technology and medicine, and force us to fundamentally reconsider what it means to be alive—even illuminating the age-old question of whether we are alone in the universe. **If we had a Nonfiction Book of the Month Club (and we could if 20 people sign up for it) this would be my January pick.**

Fisher, Tarryn. [The Wives](#) (Graydon House \$16.99/\$27.99). Fisher has crafted a tense Trust No One scenario told mostly from the viewpoint of a woman calling herself Thursday. Thursday for the day in the week when her husband visits her in the rotation of their polygamous marriage. Seth is a hunk, an irresistible lover, and Thursday accepts the rules of the arrangement. Until one day she decides to drive south from Seattle to Portland where Hannah, wife number three who is pregnant, lives. To say more would spoil the surprises awaiting the reader. You will make your own

call about the justices Fisher visits upon the players in this domestic drama, all of it told in a compelling voice. Fisher smoothly inserts moments of self-doubt, longing, paranoia, and triumph into her unsettling narrative. And, as *Kirkus* writes, "Fisher is a slick writer who keeps a tight rein on her lightning-fast plot, and the lengths that her feisty narrator goes to in order to reclaim her life make for salaciously satisfying reading."

Goldstein, Debra. [Two Bites Too Many](#) (Kensington \$7.99). Join us for a cozy treat and tea on January 8 a 2:00 PM. 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 befriending 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. Determined to get her mom off the hook ASAP, Sarah must collect the ingredients of a deadly crime to bring the true culprit to justice. Start the series with [One Taste Too Many](#) (\$7.99).

Grant, Andrew. [Too Close to Home](#) (Ballantine \$28). Paul McGrath, a former US intelligence agent now working out his reentry to civilian life and camping out in his recently deceased father's Hell's Kitchen brownstone with Robson, a fellow MI buddy, has adopted the perfect cover for a mission: janitor at the New York County Courthouse. The repetitive tasks are soothing, the cloak of invisibility impenetrable, and the pool of people needing help endless. Having disposed of one problem by taking it to the brink (of the Albany Egg where he can toss the scumbag off the roof), McGrath is hunting a file that went missing in the courthouse, a file on one Andrew Pardew, the man who defrauded and very likely murdered Paul's investor father. While looking for the file he comes across a man being defrauded by another venture capitalist. And if this is not enough, he learns of the death of his family's longtime housekeeper and is faced with unfinished, and dangerous business, from the past. It's a complicated story with a real surprise in store for you. McGrath is an example of the lone wolf agency so in play at the moment.

Hauty, Chris. [Deep State](#) (Atria \$27). Hauty makes his debut with a lively thriller. Army veteran Hayley Chill, ace at relentlessly driving forward on any mission—she's a boxer—is plucked from the White House intern pool to work for Peter Hall, the White House chief of staff. Hayley is in the right place at the right time one winter evening to help Secret Service agent Scott Billings take down two intruders headed for the White House. After drinks at a D.C. bar, the two spend the night at Scott's place in suburban Virginia. In the morning, Hayley goes to Hall's Washington home, where she finds him dead, apparently of natural causes. A boot print in the melting snow outside the house suggests foul play to Hayley, who eventually uncovers a conspiracy to assassinate the U.S. president, populist war hero Richard Monroe. A refreshing change from the typical male action hero, Hayley is a capable, kick-ass, and sharp woman from unassuming roots

I read debut fiction for voice, that marriage between the art and craft of storytelling, “the waltz of the heart and the mind.” We all hear voice differently and may disagree on whether one sings out to us like the fabled Lorelei. Anyway, Hauty’s sings to me despite some implausible scenes in the plot (he’s a screenwriter which accounts for them) and thus *Deep State* is our **January First Mystery Book of the Month**. I’m also pleased that the hero of this sophisticated thriller is ex-military—and a woman. With more missions to run.

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). Two years after a diabolically plotted escape from the local prison loosed hundreds of inmates in the little town of Weldonville to rob, rape, and kill before most of them were re-arrested, the verdict is clear: “They murdered Weldonville.” The place has never recovered from the trauma of the breakout and its aftermath; nearly everyone knows someone who was murdered or widowed that night, and no good news has arrived to counterbalance the memories. So the town council comes up with a plan that’s novel, neat, and logical: Take \$1 million in grant money that’s been given to rebuild the town and make it all available to six-foot two inch Detective Lt. Leah Hawkins, a basketball player local who’s ostensibly taking a leave of absence to brush up on state-of-the-art police procedure but who’s actually being asked, if not exactly authorized, to find the twelve ringleaders, scattered across the country—and kill them. And she succeeds until some of them get wind of what’s going on and take up arms to fight back. This is “Perry’s large-scale update of *The Bride Wore Black*”, a live-action thriller with twelve coyotes pitted against a wily Roadrunner.

Petrie, Nick. [The Wild One](#) (Putnam \$26). Iceland! This is the superbly realized landscape for Peter Ash’s 5th high action involvement in someone else’s disaster. It’s also a place where, to reach it, Ash first has to fight (OK, drug himself) into beating his PTSD-induced claustrophobia and board a plane, and then given the harsh conditions and brutal encounters he faces, battle the PTSD even harder. It has surged because, Ash feels, he can’t figure out what to do in a civilian life without a mission (see Andrew Grant’s Paul McGrath above), so in its way this is a coming of age, or to grips, novel. Reacher had it easier. The instigator of

all this is a plea from a grieving grandmother to find her eight-year-old grandson who, rumor has it, accompanied his father, the sole suspect in the murder of his mother, back to his native Iceland. Money no object. Of course none of this is as it seems as it is clear when a flunky of the US Embassy meets Peter at the airport and tries to deport him immediately.... The conditions are harsh although, Peter points out, no challenge to a man from Wisconsin. You will come to love the missing man and boy’s Icelandic relatives, “these Goddamned Vikings.” I add there’s an Irishman named after the poet Seamus Heaney.

Here’s what Nick has to say about the location: “Everything about this small island nation evokes its epic history – the remoteness of the place, its strong, stoic, resilient people, the way every human habitation seems only a temporary encroachment on the vast, wild landscape. Setting a novel in Iceland seemed like the perfect way to push Peter Ash to his limits and beyond. But all this thinking came after the first visceral impulse. The real inspiration for the book came at the tail end of my visit to Iceland for a backpacking trip. Waiting to board the plane, an entire novel appeared in my head, start to finish. This had never happened before. It felt like a vision or a religious experience.”

Stabenow, Dana. [No Fixed Line](#) (Zeus \$29.95). Let me say first that this is a beautiful book: a silk bookmark, a generous font and leading for ease of reading, just what a hardcover book should be. Second, if you’ve been following Dana’s heroic achievement in getting Storyknife, a retreat for writers, up and running, you will enjoy the plot of Kate Shugak’s 22nd investigation, even more. It begins on a New Year’s Eve, nearly six weeks into an off-and-on blizzard that has locked Alaska down, effectively cutting it off from the outside world. But now there are reports of a plane down in the Quilaks. With the NTSB (National Transportation Safety Board—responsible for investigating aviation incidents) unable to reach the crash site, ex-Trooper Jim Chopin is pulled out of retirement to try to identify the aircraft, collect the corpses, and determine why no flight has been reported missing. He discovers a real airplane, dead men, and two young children, survivors, who speak no word of English. And some illegal cargo. Meanwhile Kate is still ensnared from beyond the grave by her mortal enemy. Events then send her to Anchorage where she faces a figure from her past, another ill wisher....

Don’t miss this chance for Dana to sign copies of [Death of an Eye](#) (\$29.95/\$15.95) for you, the start of a private eye series set during the reign of Cleopatra. For photos of the research trip Dana and I made to Egypt in December go to [Instagram.com/poisonedpenbookstore](#)

Taylor, Brad. [Hunter Killer](#) (Morrow \$27.99). Our copies come with an exclusive: Pike Logan’s passport. Replete with stamps and visas, it will track his journeys made for the Taskforce. Relaxing alongside Jennifer Cahill, his romantic and business partner, Pike Logan is at home in Charleston, South Carolina, when a dear mentor and brother in arms is killed in a car-bomb explosion that Pike is sure was meant for him. Pike’s sense of hypervigilance is piqued further when a Thai mercenary and old friend reaches out from the shadows to warn him that the threat is far from over. The web of intrigue becomes increasingly layered when Pike’s elite unit, the Taskforce, which is already working in the tri-border region between Argentina, Brazil, and Paraguay to quell Hezbollah activity, finds itself in the midst of a

thick Russian plot. When the same ex-Russian Spetsnaz soldiers who were behind the attack at Pike's home also attempt to gain control of the Brazilian economy and political structure through a series of coordinated assassinations, Pike's quest for personal retribution and his sense of service to American foreign interests commingle... A surefire hit for those who like contemporary foreign affairs spiced heavily with page-turning action so vividly depicted by retired Special Forces Lt. Colonel Taylor, who brings "an unquestionable level of authenticity to his [Pike Logan military thrillers](#)." IMHO Taylor's writing gets better and better.

JANUARY BOOKS OF THE MONTH

Click on a club to enroll on a subscription basis. To enroll on a pay per month basis email Karen@poisonedpencom

[British Crime Club](#) One unsigned hardcover or paperback per month

Jan: Steadman, Catherine. [Mr Nobody](#)

[Cozy Crimes Club](#) One unsigned hardcover or paperback per month

Jan.: Simon, Clea. [A Spell of Murder](#)

[First Mystery Club](#) One Signed First per month

Jan.: Hauty, Chris. [Deep State](#)

[The Book of the Month Club](#) One Signed First per month

Jan.: TBA

[Historical Fiction Club](#) One Signed First per month

Jan.: Montgomery, Jess. [The Hollows](#)

[Fantastic Fiction](#) One Signed First per month

Jan.: Reid, Kiley. [Such a Fun Age](#)

SIGNED BOOKS TO START THE NEW YEAR

Dorsey, Tim. [Naked Came the Florida Man](#) (Harper \$29). A long-running series has to change up to remain vital and in his 23rd offbeat thriller for Serge A. Storms, a serial killer with his own (warped) moral code, Dorsey does a wizard job. I especially like all the bits of unusual history and the personalities he limns as Storms and his stoner buddy Coleman, always a beat behind, pursue a cemetery tour. We're in hurricane-tossed Key West at the opening pages. Along the way Storms indulges his desire to harm wrongdoers who are beyond the law's reach by targeting a man who encourages animal cruelty and another who rips off impoverished elderly people. In his way He's like Reacher—or like Peter Ash or Nick Heller or Paul McGrath or IQ, all of whom come to visit us in January...crime fiction providing us with contemporary and morally ambiguous knights errant. I especially like the visit to the grave of Mitzi, the dolphin better known as Flipper in the 1960s TV series.

⌘Herron, Mick. [Catch: Slough House Novella #2](#) (Murray \$19.99). If life in the Intelligence Service has taught John Bachelor anything, it's to keep his head down. Especially now, when he's living rent-free in a dead spook's flat. So he's not delighted to be woken at dawn by a pair of Regent's Park's heavies, looking for a client he's not seen in years. John doesn't know what secrets Benny Manors has stolen, but they're attracting the wrong attention. And if he's to save his own skin, not to mention safeguard his living arrangements, John has to find Benny before those secrets see the light. Benny could be anywhere, provided it serves alcohol. So John sets out on a reluctant trawl through the bars of the capital, all the while plagued by the age-old questions:

Will he end up sleeping in his car? How many bottles of gin can he afford at London prices? And just how far will Regent's Park go to prevent anyone rocking the Establishment's boat?

Montgomery, Jess. [The Hollows](#) (St Martins \$29). Rural Ohio in 1926 is much more Appalachian than Midwest as portrayed by Montgomery largely through the eyes of her widowed Bronwyn County Sheriff, Lily Ross, a woman struggling with the loss of her husband, the former sheriff KIA, and raising her two children in Kinship while rising to the challenges of a job few think she can manage. Plus she is running for reelection. She has a strong support group in her mother and some of the Kinship women which makes the contrast to the elderly woman who dies falling from the Moonvale Hollow Tunnel to a glancing blow by a B&R Railroad train, and to other women in Kinship, both more poignant and ironic. The identity of the dead woman is a mystery and eventually leads Lily to The Hollows, a notorious local asylum. And to some amazing information. The number of surprises in this remarkable sequel to 2019 First Mystery Book of the Month [The Widows](#) (\$9.99) is impressive, unexpected, and wow, ties into issues being reprised today without any preaching. I am deeply impressed and thus this is our **January Historical Mystery of the Month**. Yay!

Preston, Douglas/Lincoln Child. [Crooked River](#) (Grand Central \$29). Not on sale until February 4 but as we always sell out I am putting this in early. Our copies will come with an extra Chapter from their last book, [Verses for the Dead](#), the one that was "exclusive" to Barnes & Noble which drove me nuts, and with a postcard of Lincoln and denizens of Sanibel Island. Here's a Starred Review: "When more than a hundred shoes containing severed human feet wash ashore on Florida's Sanibel Island in Preston and Child's exciting 19th Pendergast novel, eccentric FBI agent Aloysius Pendergast, who's vacationing in nearby Fort Myers with his ward, Constance Greene, joins the investigation. The arrogant Coast Guard commander in charge is sure the shoes belong to convicts executed at a Cuban prison, but Pendergast thinks otherwise and enlists the aid of oceanographer Pamela Gladstone to analyze currents in the Gulf of Mexico to determine their source. The stakes rise as it becomes clear that a mole within the investigation is tipping off those responsible for the crime. Pendergast and Gladstone wind up captured by some nasty villains, and a handful of Pendergast's friends, including the resourceful Constance, must rush to the rescue in an extended, nail-biting climax."

Reid, Kiley. [Such a Fun Age](#) (Putnam \$26). This highly touted debut, a Reece Witherspoon Hello Sunshine Book Club Pick for January, is our **January Fantastic Fiction Club** choice. It is going to be HUGE so pay attention. It taps into major social tropes while introducing a lively, confident voice, not just for Elmira but for her besties and for the family for whom she babysits. The author drops by to sign it for us on January 19 so please order NOW. "Kiley Reid has written the most provocative page-turner of the year...[*Such a Fun Age*] nestl[es] a nuanced take on racial biases and class divides into a page-turning saga of betrayals, twists, and perfectly awkward relationships...The novel feels bound for book-club glory, due to its sheer readability. The dialogue crackles with naturalistic flair. The plotting is breezy and surprising. Plus, while Reid's feel for both the funny and the political is undeniable, she imbues her flawed heroes with real heart." —*Entertainment Weekly*. As I say in this Booknews, I'm all about voice, so kudos to Reid.

Rowland, Laura. [The Woman in the Veil](#) (Crooked Lane \$28). Sarah Bain, a London newspaper crime scene photographer, is assigned to take pictures of the corpse of a naked woman with a mutilated face. But as she prepares to take the photo, Sarah realizes the woman is breathing. Sarah's boss, Sir Gerald Mariner, thinks "Sleeping Beauty" would make a great story, and fortunately Sarah's fiancé, DS Thomas Barrett, is on the case. Many claim to know Sleeping Beauty's identity, but Barrett quickly narrows the possibilities to three: artist August Legrand claims that she's his wife; Frances Oliphant insists the woman is her stepsister; 10-year-old Venetia Napier is sure the woman is her long-missing mother, Maude. When Sleeping Beauty finally awakes, she remembers...and Sarah learns that not all stories have a happy ending when one of the claimants is murdered. Is Sleeping Beauty really who she claimed to be? At the time of this writing I am working on this clever 4th Victorian by Rowland to be signed, so no promises. But do place your order and we will advise.

Simpson, Rosemary. [Death Brings a Shadow](#) (Kensington \$26). Investigators Prudence MacKenzie and ex-Pinkerton Geoffrey Hunter discover all that glitters is not gold in the Gilded Age, whether on the island of Manhattan or an island off the coast of Georgia. Out now but Signed on January 26 along with Ann Parker's new Inez Stannert 1870s San Francisco mystery [Mortal Music](#) (Poisoned Pen \$26.99/\$15.99) with host Dianne Freeman, [A Lady's Guide to Gossip and Murder](#) (Kensington \$26), the second book in the Countess of Harleigh Mysteries.

Thomas, Will. [Lethal Pursuit](#) (St Martins \$29). This book arrived signed so late you probably missed it. Here is the excellent review in the *Wall Street Journal*: "*Lethal Pursuit* focuses on Cyrus Barker and Thomas Llewelyn: 'private enquiry agents' in late- 19th-century London who are commissioned by the prime minister to complete a simple courier assignment that becomes a dangerous international escapade. Barker and Llewelyn must carry a sealed briefcase to Calais, France, for delivery to an unnamed foreign capital. It had been in the possession of a British secret agent who was stabbed and left to die in London. After the pair accepts the mission, the independent-minded Barker (the undeniable boss of his put-upon 'partner' Llewelyn, the book's narrator) transforms this small job into a full-fledged investigation into the spy's death and the contents of the mysterious briefcase. Inside the satchel, they find, are scraps of an ancient document that, according to no less an authority than Cardinal Henry Manning, are fragments of a Fifth Gospel from the first century. Other real-life figures (Max Beerbohm, George Bernard Shaw) also appear, but the true star power comes from its compatibly mismatched leads. Joy to those who discover Mr. Thomas's latest novel this holiday season."

VanderMeer, Jeff. [Dead Astronauts](#) (Farrar \$27). *Kirkus* awards a Star: "VanderMeer continues his saga of biotech gone awry and the fearsome world that ensues. David Bowie had just one dead astronaut, poor Maj. Tom, in his quiver. VanderMeer puts three in the middle of a strange city somewhere on what appears to be a future Earth, a place where foxes read minds and ducks threaten their interlocutors... In the ruin of the world that the nefarious Company has left behind after its biotech experiments went south, such things are commonplace, and nothing is quite as it seems, although everything dies. Sometimes, indeed, everything dies even as it lives, which explains why those three astronauts, a nicely balanced blend of ethnicities and genders, are able to

walk and talk even as their less fortunate iterations lie inert. Says one, Chen, of his semblable, 'Keep him alive. He might have value,' an easy task given that one version of Chen has been blown 'into salamanders,' as our duck can attest...Much of the action in VanderMeer's story is circumstantial, but it provides useful backstory to his previous books *Borne* and *The Strange Bird*, delivering, for example, the origin story of the blue fox and emphasizing the madness of a humankind that destroys the natural world only to replace it with things very like what has been destroyed. Or at least that's their intention, creating instead a hell paved with the results of mad, bad science."

Williams, Beatriz/Lauren Willig/Karen White. [All the Ways We Said Goodbye](#) (Harper \$27.99). You know going in that any novel bridging WWI into WWII and onto the aftermath of 1964 is going to hold tragedy—even if the geographical center of the stories is the fabled Ritz Paris. The three Ws (they have fun naming an American law in the book as Willig, Williams, & White) are all experienced at linked stories. This one begins in 1914 with Aurelie, a young woman who becomes trapped on the wrong side of the German offensive front with her father, Comte Sigismund de Courcelles. The de Courcelles ancestral estate becomes the invaders HQ where Aurelie is thrown back into the company of handsome officer Max Von Sternburg. On to France, 1942, where Daisy Villon, raised by her glamorous American grandmother in a suite at the Ritz, agrees to assist in the Resistance—her grandmother points out that as she is Jewish, so Daisy too is at risk. And she takes wild risks, falling in love. Again, betrayal looms. Opening and closing the story is Babs Longford, a proper British widow of 1964 whose husband Kit was the love of her life. Yet she knows that their marriage was haunted by a woman known as La Fleur. An American led investigation of La Fleur takes Babs to the Ritz. IMHO Babs commits the greatest betrayal and comes off best, but you will have to decide that for yourself.

CLASSICS

Lorac, ECR. [Fell Murder](#) (Poisoned Pen \$14.99). The Garths had farmed their fertile acres for generations, and fine land it was with the towering hills of the Lake Country on the far horizon. Here hot-tempered Robert Garth, still hale and hearty at eighty-two, ruled Garthmere Hall with a rod of iron. Until, that is, old Garth was found dead—'dead as mutton'—in the trampled mud of the ancient outhouse. Glowering clouds gather over the dramatic dales and fells as seasoned investigator Chief Inspector Macdonald arrives in the North Country. Awaiting him are the reticent Garths and their guarded neighbors of the Lune Valley; and a battle of wits to unearth their murderous secrets. First published in 1944, *Fell Murder* is a tightly-paced mystery with authentic depictions of its breathtaking locales and Second World War setting. This edition also includes the rare E.C.R. Lorac short story "The Live Wire."

Alcott, Louis May. [Little Women](#) (\$16). This classic by a woman who supported herself by writing lurid Penny Dreadfuls is gaining a new audience thanks Greta Gerwig's big screen adaptation. Sisters Meg, Jo, Beth, and navigate hardship and adventure in post-Civil War America with the love and guidance of their mother in Concord, Massachusetts. No wonder given this cast: Timothée Chalamet, Chris Cooper, Laura Dern, Louis Garrel, James Norton, Bob Odenkirk, Florence Pugh, Saoirse Ronan, Eliza Scanlen, Meryl Streep, and Emma Watson. Still, there is

some inevitable social media chatter over it. I read it as a young teen and am sticking with that long ago takeaway and respecting the context of when it was written and not that of today.

Woolrich, Cornell. [Waltz into Darkness](#) (Penzler \$15.95). Louis Durand was a lonely man looking for love. He found it, that is true, through a mail order bride service, not unlike the Internet services available today, and it did provide him with quick and easy love plus great sex, but it also led him down the primrose path to destruction, murder and death. *Waltz into Darkness* enjoys the rare distinction of having been made into two different movies, one being Francois Truffaut's *Mississippi Mermaid*. Once again, a classic of one time becomes relevant to our time.

OUR LARGE PAPERBACK PICKS FOR THE NEW YEAR

The inclusion of the publisher's name means the work is original; if none, then the work is a reprint of a hardcover

✚Airth, Rennie. [The Decent Inn of Death](#) (Penguin \$16). A surplus of riches hits this month with British crime. The Catherine Steadman *Mr. Nobody* reviewed in Some New Books for the New Year is a clear choice for the British Crime Club Book of the Month, but this welcome surprise from Airth does too. So it will be our **February British Crime Club Book of the Month**—it's out January 14 so you can ask for it early if you are in the club.

Who can resist revisiting John Madden, the mesmerizing detective in Airth's fantastic 2000 debut [River of Darkness](#) (\$16), an international bestseller that scooped up numerous awards? Not Dana Stabenow, who writes: A classic country house murder in post-WWII England with a blizzard obscuring almost all the tracks of the red herrings in the snow. But only almost, because not-so-retired Chief Inspector Angus Sinclair, plus definitely retired Detective Inspector John Madden, faint but pursuing, are on the case of a killer who has left a trail of bodies that predates the war. Interesting twists in both the killer's multiple motives and in the shifting list of [un]usual suspects, a surprise reveal, and a great visit with John, his family, and friends to enjoy.

✚Barron, Stephanie. [That Churchill Woman](#) (\$17). Jennie Jerome, daughter of NY financial baron Leonard, married Lord Randolph Churchill at age 19 after a tumultuous courtship and over obstacles like the groom's ducal family (Marlborough). This made her the mother of Winston Churchill and wife of a politician who never quite hit the peak and who died of a terrible disease (almost certainly syphilis). Lord R had kept secrets like being gay when it was a crime; Jennie had affairs. But the crux of this brilliantly realized novel is both how she fought to choose how to lead her life and how did



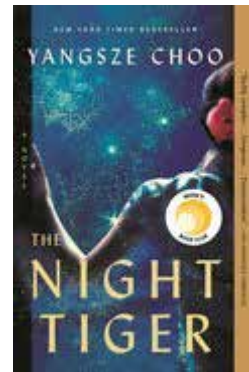
her persona and choices shape her son. American heiresses seldom had it easy marrying into British and other aristocracy (vide Consuelo Vanderbilt who married another Churchill). Jennie never let it break her.

Burke, James Lee. [The New Iberia Blues](#) (\$16.99). Patrick writes, "Dave Robicheaux may be getting on in years but he's certainly not ready to ride into the sunset, as Burke proves in his masterful new novel. As a longtime reader of Burke, I'm always in awe of the lush, poetic language, the visionary attention to time and the presence of the ghosts of the past among the

living. This time out, Robicheaux discovers the crucified body of a woman floating in the surf close to a famous movie director's beachfront property. As more bodies are found, each staged in what appears to be a ritualistic, symbolic manner, Robicheaux and his longtime Sancho Panza, Clete Purcell, find themselves on the hunt once again. Dave's daughter Alafair, now a successful novelist in her own right, plays a prominent role this time out. Reading Burke is like spending time with an old friend, and his moral compass is reassuring in these troubled times." Yes, it's Dave Robicheaux, in his 22nd investigation running through dark corners of Hollywood, the mafia, and the backwoods of Louisiana.

Choo, Yangsze. [The Night Tiger](#) (\$16.99). I really love this 2019 Modern Firsts Book of the Month Pick.

Quick-witted, ambitious Ji Lin is stuck as an apprentice dressmaker, moonlighting as a dancehall girl to help pay off her mother's Mahjong debts. But when one of her dance partners accidentally leaves behind a gruesome souvenir, Ji Lin may finally get the adventure she has been longing for. Eleven-year-old houseboy Ren is also on a mission, racing to fulfill his former master's dying wish: that Ren find the man's finger, lost years ago in an accident, and bury it with his body.



Ren has 49 days to do so, or his master's soul will wander the earth forever. As the days tick relentlessly by, a series of unexplained deaths racks the district, along with whispers of men who turn into tigers. Ji Lin and Ren's increasingly dangerous paths crisscross through lush plantations, hospital storage rooms, and ghostly dreamscapes. *The Night Tiger* pulls us into a world of servants and masters, age-old superstition and modern idealism, sibling rivalry and forbidden love. A plus—it's a coming of age story twice over.

✚Finch, Charles. [The Vanishing Man](#) (\$17.99). This is the second of a "prequel trilogy" after [The Woman in the Water](#) (\$17.99). Fans of the series, which set the earlier Lenox novels in the 1860s, will know what's coming in the detective's personal and professional life, but that in no way decreases the pleasure of this account of his earlier life. Finch's nimble prose, edged with humor, makes this twelfth in the Charles Lenox series a pure delight." —*Booklist* Starred Review. Lenox, nervously trying to establish his chosen career as a detective (his brother is in Parliament) and deeply mourning the death of his landowner noble father, accepts a commission from the immensely powerful Duke of Dorset, a commission which causes Lenox to reflect on the Upper Ten Thousand and their privileges, pride, riches, and influence. A theft has occurred from the Duke's private library which forces him to confide a deeply secret family trust to Lenox involving a portrait reputed to be Will Shakespeare. Yet, oddly, the portrait that has been stolen is that of the Duke's grandfather. As the Duke and Lenox interact, Lenox's social and professional reputations may be ruined, but he's dogged in working the case. And loving his childhood friend, the married and pregnant Lady Jane, silently. Then comes a murder and a treasure hunt...

Gentili, Sulari. [Give the Devil His Due](#) (Poisoned Pen \$15.99). A series led by "Australia's answer to Lord Peter Wimsey" is for fans of Rhys Bowen, Kerry Greenwood and Jacqueline Winspear,

not to mention Dorothy L. Sayers. His 7th investigation is an adventure-packed romp that threads 1934 Sydney's upper class and its seedy underworld. Wealthy Rowland Sinclair, an artist



with leftist friends and a free-wheeling lifestyle, reluctantly agrees to a charity race. He'll drive his beloved yellow Mercedes on the Maroubra Speedway, renamed the Killer Track for the lives it has claimed. His teammates are a young Errol Flynn and the well-known driver Joan Richmond. It's all good fun. But then people start to die... The body of a journalist covering the race is found murdered in a House of Horrors. An English blueblood with Blackshirt affiliations dies in a Maroubra crash. Reporters

stalk Rowly for dirt while bookmakers are after an edge. When someone takes a shot at him—it could be anyone. Then the police arrest one of Rowly's housemates for murder. I was so inspired by the wonderful scenes with Errol Flynn that we watched him in 1938's *Robin Hood* (Olivia de Havilland, Basil Rathbone) where his magnetism is on full display.

Hammer, Chris. [Scrublands](#) (\$18), Karen reviews: Australian author, Hammer, begins his debut novel with a stunning opening that will keep you engaged until the end of the story. Priest Bryant Swift, mingles with parishioners outside the church before the service begins. He leaves, presumably to make final preparations. When he next appears, he is holding a rifle and kills five parishioners, before he is stopped by a bullet. One year later, war-time correspondent, Martin Scarsden, is assigned to visit Riversend, to report on how the community is coping. What he finds is a town in decay, oppressive heat, and a diminishing population with no hope that things will get better. Scarsden insinuates himself into the town's life and culture, discovering the opinions of Swift are varied. Some describe him as charismatic, popular among young people, while others see him as less than a stellar representative of the church. Adding to that mystery is the discovery of two bodies, identified as German backpackers who went missing around the time of the church shootings. Are they connected? In a search for the answers, Scarsden discovers more small town secrets and how citizens have been coping. The reader is always aware of the fierce heat and the struggles of the citizens of Riversend.

Harper, Jane. [The Lost Man](#) (\$16.99). Australia's outback, with its brutal climate and equally bruising isolation, looms as large as any character in this stark standalone from bestseller Harper. The huge properties in Queensland underline both loneliness and family connection. For years, the three Bright brothers—divorced dad Nathan, the eldest; family man and everybody's favorite, middle child Cameron; and the mentally challenged youngest, Bub—have maintained an uneasy equilibrium on adjacent cattle ranches. That flies out the window the week before Christmas when Cameron goes missing; his desiccated corpse is subsequently discovered a few miles from his perfectly operational truck in the shadow of the eerie head-



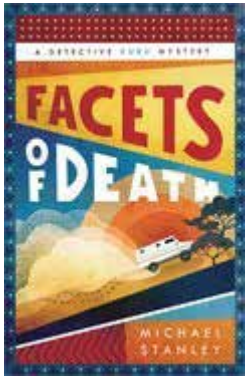
stone known as the stockman's grave. "The atmosphere is so thick you can taste the red-clay dust, and the folklore surrounding the mysterious stockman adds an additional edge to an already dark and intense narrative. The truth is revealed in a surprising ending that reveals how far someone will go to preserve a life worth living in a place at once loathed and loved." —*Booklist*. Harper won the CWA Gold Dagger for [The Dry](#) (\$9.99 or \$15.99) and went on to write [Force of Nature](#) (\$16.99)

✠Rosett, Sara. [Murder in Black Tie](#) (McGuffin Ink \$13.99). Rosett's enchanting fourth High Society Lady Detective mystery after [The Egyptian Antiquities Murder](#) (\$13.99) opens in November 1923 as Olive Belgrave, "a discreet problem solver for the High Society set," is motoring down from London to Parkview Hall—the home of her aunt, Lady Caroline, and her cousins Peter and Gwen—for a house party. Among the guests are Vincent Payne, who possesses unusual antique maps; Inspector Lucas Longly of Scotland Yard, who's smitten with Gwen; a wealthy heiress or two; and Mr. Quigley, a scripture-quoting parrot. When Payne is found dead in the conservatory, suspicion falls on Peter, a veteran of WWI, who is still suffering from shell shock. As always, the pacing is snappy, the plot is just complicated enough, and the period details are spot-on. In each successive book, Olive matures, becoming more confident and—slowly but surely—more financially independent. Eager readers will wonder what the next step in her evolution will be.

Simon, Clea. [A Spell of Murder](#) (\$16). Becca's cats mean well, but when Harriet, the eldest of the three, conjures a pillow, Becca, a member of a coven, believes she did it. Youngest cat Clara is worried the pillow will create problems. Becca lacks self-esteem and needs money after being laid off from her job as a researcher. Now that it appears she can cast spells, the coven's only male, Trent, shows more interest in her. Some of the women want to confide in Becca, which draws the attention of the police when she finds the body of Suzanne, another member of the coven. But it's only then that Becca learns her ex was seeing Suzanne. While Becca attempts to question people and find the killer, Clara and her feline sisters use their powers to follow and protect their human. "In this endearing first Witch Cats of Cambridge mystery, Clea Simon reveals what we've always suspected: cats really do have supernatural powers! While felines Clara, Harriet, and Laurel are focused on pillows and extra treats, it's the readers who are treated to an absorbing plot as the cats use their secret abilities to help their human Becca find romance, a new career—and a murderer! (A) delightful series launch... You don't have to be a cat lover to appreciate this paranormal cozy's witty observations, entertaining dialogue, and astute characterizations." —*PW* on our **Cozy Crimes Book of the Month**.

Stanley, Michael. [Facets of Death](#) (Poisoned Pen \$15.99). This seventh Kubu mystery is set at the beginning of the detective's storied career. Stanley's 95 short chapters underscore the hypereagerness of the charismatic young detective. In a *Starred Review*, Bruce Tierney writes, "Botswana police Detective David Bengu is more commonly known by his nickname, Kubu, which is Setswana for hippopotamus, in a nod to his plus-size dimensions. In the latest adventure from the writing team known as Michael Stanley, the portly policeman finds himself in hot pursuit of a gang of diamond thieves who engineered a devilishly clever, broad-daylight heist. Three trucks left the diamond mine at Jwaneng, each carrying a locked box. One of the boxes

contained diamonds and the other two only pebbles in an attempt to confuse any potential hijackers. To say that it didn't work



would be a monumental understatement. The diamond truck was quickly identified and hijacked, while the other two made it to their destination unimpeded. Kubu quickly arrives at the conclusion that the robbery could not have been pulled off without the assistance of an insider, but that line of reasoning leads to dead end after dead end (literally more than figuratively), as one by one the likeliest perpetrators die off violently. But where are the diamonds? A fabulous test of Kubu's legendary deductive talents, *Facets of*

Death is easily one of the best heist novels I've read since Gerald Browne's classic *11 Harrowhouse*." I add that Kubu also cracks a luggage scam at the Gabarone airport. I am truly proud of the work the authors and I did on this prequel intended to introduce Kubu to a new audience. Be one of them!

NEW BOOKS FOR THE NEW YEAR

The inclusion of the publisher's name means the work is original; if none, then the work is a reprint of a hardcover

Bartz, Andrea. [The Lost Night](#) (\$17). For the past 10 years, Lindsay has lived with the grief of her best friend's suicide. Edie was the life of the party and only 23 when she was found dead with a gun in her hand in her Bushwick, Brooklyn loft in 2009. As the anniversary of the suicide gets closer, Lindsay meets up with Sarah, an old member of her and Edie's "beautiful little hipster clique." When Sarah offhandedly mentions a detail about that night that Lindsay remembers completely differently, Lindsay realizes there are blanks in her memory from that time—something that's not uncommon when it comes to the boozy party years of her early 20s. Using skills she's honed in her job as a magazine fact checker, Lindsay begins an investigation into the circumstances of Edie's death, first realizing that it was probably a murder and then that she was somehow involved. Can Lindsay handle figuring out who was responsible, even if it means the killer is her? It's hard to believe that a decade has some removed us from the world of 2009?

✎Benedict, Marie. [Lady Clementine](#) (Sourcebooks \$26.99). Benedict is making a career of penning fictionalized biographies of interesting but overlooked women. Here it's the wife of Winston Churchill. In its Starred Review, *LJ* writes: "Behind every successful man, they say, stands a strong woman. Lady Clementine Churchill was an example of such, as this self-narrated fictional recounting makes clear. Benedict takes readers through the First World War and the period between wars and concludes Clementine's story on V-E Day, marking the end of World War II on the European front. Clementine Hozier survives a peripatetic childhood with a mother who cares more for her many illicit affairs than for her children, but Clementine, reserved and intelligent, comes through with a strong will and keen political mind. She was in many ways the perfect partner for British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, who sometimes needed a guiding voice to keep him on topic, as well as someone to cater to his whims. While Clementine did that, she also kept herself in the thick of political life with her husband and later became an important figure in her own right..."

✎Black, Benjamin. [The Secret Guests](#) (Holt \$27). Reviews for this historical by Black, the pen name of Booker Prize winner John Banville, are mixed. Here is the positive, a Star from *LJ*: "When World War II began in 1939, Operation Pied Piper evacuated almost a million children from cities to the British countryside for safety. The Blitz began in 1940, and, despite the dangers, the British royal family refused to leave the country. While the bombs fell, the family steadfastly remained in place. But what if the young princesses, Elizabeth and Margaret, were evacuated in secret? In Black's alternate history, the princesses, accompanied by a female intelligence agent and Irish police officer, are taken into the neutral Republic of Ireland to a remote, crumbling country estate owned by a distant relative and given new identities. However, little remains secret in the Irish countryside. As the young women settle into the rural routine, speculation mounts in the area about who is in their midst and just what their potential political value might be. Black's lucid prose is the perfect foil for tangled politics, old hatreds, unsolved crimes, the threat to Irish neutrality, and the possibility of new alliances that seethe underneath." I like Black's Irish noir, have not read this book yet, and am interested to learn that Banville will soon be writing crime fiction under his own name.

Block, Lawrence, ed. [From Sea to Stormy Sea](#) (Pegasus \$26.95). A new review is worth mentioning: "For this imagination-firing anthology, Lawrence Block asked writers to use a celebrated American painting as a launch pad for a short story. Block would have made a great schoolteacher: he gives amazing homework assignments. He has selected 30 of his favorite paintings by American artists and invited 17 writers to pick one to use as a springboard for a short story; the chosen artworks are reproduced in full color before each tale. (Block took a similar approach with his previous anthologies *In Sunlight or in Shadow: Stories Inspired by the Paintings of Edward Hopper* and *Alive in Shape and Color: Seventeen Paintings by Great Artists and the Stories They Inspired*.) While most of *From Sea to Stormy Sea*'s contributors would list 'crime writer' as their day job, the resulting collection isn't strictly a crime anthology: there's some dystopian fare and a couple of rom-com-ish pieces. Still, many stories do hinge on a feat of delicious duplicity." Nice to see a story by Jan Burke and always a treat to get one from John Sandford.

Bradford, Keith. [Life Hacks](#) (Adams \$14.99). I ran across this gem at the Arizona Science Center Gift Shop and fell for it hard. Simple solutions to a wide variety of everyday problems and frustrations. It is divided into subject groups and is full of fascinating tips like using tea bags to deodorize shoes and how to fold a fitted sheet to a large section on all sorts of digital tips useful for YouTube, Instagram, streaming services, etc. It's fun to read, useful, and IMHO an excellent gift when you are at a standstill about what to buy. Proof—I gave one to my grandson, now 26, for Christmas. Success!

Brennert, Alan. [Daughter of Moloka'i](#) (\$16.99). Brennert's beloved novel [Moloka'i](#) (\$17.99) currently has over 600,000 copies in print. This companion tale tells the story of Ruth, the daughter that Rachel Kalama—quarantined for most of her life at the isolated leprosy settlement of Kalaupapa—was forced to give up at birth. The book follows young Ruth from her arrival at the Kapi'olani Home for Girls in Honolulu, to her adoption by a Japanese couple who raise her on a strawberry and grape farm in California, her marriage and unjust internment at Manzanar

Relocation Camp during World War II—and then, after the war, to the life-altering day when she receives a letter from a woman who says she is Ruth’s birth mother, Rachel, who as a 7-year-old was sent to Kalaupapa .

Connolly, Sheila. [Fatal Roots](#) (Crooked Lane \$26.99. We’re not all about book love—when it isn’t deserved. Our blogger Lesa writes: After her grandmother’s death, Boston expat Maura Donovan moves to County Cork, Ireland, where she learns she’s inherited a cottage and a pub. Maura is settling in well, but her leisurely life is interrupted when her estranged mother and a half-sister she never knew about suddenly show up. Then, a trio of grad students arrives and asks to investigate the “fairy forts” on Maura’s land. When one of the students disappears, Maura carefully investigates the ring fort and finds the body of a man who has been buried there for several decades. Readers will be disappointed in the slow-pacing (including a tedious accounting of a kitchen remodeling project), numerous apologies by Maura’s mother, and the eventual account of the death of the unknown man. The story is repetitive and drawn out, and not much happens to move it along. Only fans of Connolly’s previous books, such as *The Lost Traveller*, will be interested enough to finish it.

Delany, Vicki. [There’s a Murder Afoot](#) (Crooked Lane \$26.99). Cape Cod’s Sherlock Holmes Bookshop proprietor Gemma Doyle attends a Sherlock conference in London, where she bumps into her disreputable artist uncle, Randolph Denhaugh. Randolph, who stole a priceless family painting in his youth, claims to be producing sketches based on the Holmes canon and seems to be entangled in an art scam. His subsequent murder implicates Gemma’s father, a former Scotland Yard officer who had an earlier confrontation with his brother-in-law and was found near the body with no memory of what occurred. Gemma, aided by such allies as her cop boyfriend, Ryan Ashburton, and her business partner, Jayne Wilson, delves into her uncle’s shady activities in the guise of a wealthy American and discovers a slew of people with grudges against the dead man. The smart Gemma, the steadfast loyalty of her circle, and the intriguing art milieu will appeal to cozy fans who are also Sherlockians. The can read up on the [first four in the series](#).

Flower, Amanda. [Verse and Vengeance](#) (Crooked Lane \$26.99). 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—tend to overshadow the plot, which is attenuated to begin with. This one’s for those who like some esoteric literary history and don’t mind a pinch of magic in their cozies.

☞Griffiths, Elly. [Now You See Them](#) (Houghton \$26/\$15.99). Brighton copper Edgar Stephens is now a Superintendent and married to former DS Emma Holmes. Edgar’s wartime partner in arms, magician Max Mephisto, is a movie star in Hollywood, while his daughter Ruby has her own TV show, *Ruby Magic*. The

funeral of Stan Parks, aka Diablo, actor and wartime comrade to Edgar and Max, throws the gang back together. The reunion sparks all sorts of feelings. Bob Willis, now a DI, is dealing with the disappearance of local schoolgirl Rhonda Miles. Emma, frustrated by living the life of a housewife and mother, keeps thinking how much better she would run the case. She is helped by Sam Collins, a woman reporter also hampered by sexism at work. Sam notices a pattern with other missing girls. Edgar listens to the theory but doesn’t give it much credence. He is preoccupied with the threatened invasion of Brighton by Mods and Rockers on the May Bank Holiday. The case takes a more sinister turn when one of the missing girls is found dead. Then Ruby fails to turn up for a rendezvous and it becomes clear that she too has disappeared. Still in stock, the Signed UK hardcover: [Now You See Them](#) (Quercus \$36).

☞Grimes, Martha. [The Knowledge](#) (\$16). Superintendent Richard Jury’s investigation centers on gem smuggling, tax dodging, and greed. The real mystery is how to find a cab drivers’ pub, the Knowledge, so secret that even Scotland Yard can’t force its patrons to reveal its location. Grimes displays the quirky, intelligent elements that have made this a long-running bestselling series filled with complicated cases and distinctive characters.” And distinctive geographies all over the UK. I enjoyed this one and am embarrassed to have overlooked its paperback release some months ago.

Johansen, Iris. [Hindsight](#) (Knopf \$28). Dr. Kendra Michaels, blind for the first twenty years of her life before gaining her sight via a revolutionary surgical procedure, is a renowned investigator known for her razor-sharp senses—honed during her years in the dark—and keen deductive abilities. Now her skills are needed uncomfortably close to home. Two staff members have been murdered at a school for the blind where Kendra spent her formative years. But the murders are puzzlingly dissimilar: one victim was brutally stabbed, while the other was killed by a bullet to the head. Are the crimes related? Or is Kendra on the hunt for more than one dangerous killer? With the killer (or killers) still on the loose, Kendra must put her life on the line to unravel a terrifying conspiracy

Kepler, Lars. [The Rabbit Hunter](#) (Knopf \$27.95). The bad news is that Kepler won’t be touring the US (or apparently the UK) this month. The good news is shown in this Starred Review: “Kepler manages a clever and intriguing variant on the serial killer theme in their outstanding sixth novel featuring Stockholm DI Joona Linna. Linna, who’s behind bars for helping a convict escape and assaulting a guard, gets a chance at redemption when he’s summoned to a meeting with his attorney, only to find the Swedish prime minister present. The previous night, Swedish foreign minister William Fock was murdered in his home by a masked man. Fock’s killer left a living witness—escort Sofia Stefansson, whose assignment went bad after Fock drugged her and tied her to his bed. Stefansson overheard the murderer tell Fock that ‘Ratjen opened the door.’ The police believe Ratjen to be Salim Ratjen, a convicted drug dealer who was recorded making a phone call referencing ‘three big celebrations.’ Since the date of the first one coincides with Fock’s killing, the PM fears that two more terror attacks are in the works. Linna agrees to help, but the investigation takes some highly unexpected directions. Kepler has never been better at hiding key clues in plain sight.” Knopf has put a lot of effort and \$\$ into this series including having the first entries re-translated.

✎ Lovesey, Peter. [Bertie and the Tinman](#) (\$16.95). The first of three in a delightful series. Bertie, Prince of Wales and future King Edward VII, is a charismatic but self-indulgent man who enjoys the finer things in life, including dining, flirting, and flitting from party to party with his entire thirty-person staff in tow. But the fun and games come to a tragic halt when Bertie hears the shocking news that his friend the legendary jockey Fred Archer, known as the Tinman, has taken his own life. Bertie has his doubts that it was in fact suicide, especially considering the Tinman's ominous final words: "Are they coming?" Bertie resolves to discover the truth, looking for new suspects and evidence on a quest that will take him through some of the most disreputable parts of London, much to the dismay of his mother, Queen Victoria. I recommend instead you buy the trilogy in one volume: [Bertie, The Complete Prince of Wales Mysteries](#) (\$31.50), and dive into all three cases.

Lunney, Tessa. [April in Paris 1921](#) (Pantheon \$20.95). This pricey paperback gets a rave from a fan: "Enter Jazz Age Paris with captivating descriptions of the period's fashion, music, food and art, juxtaposed with war-weary Parisians and political rumblings. Kiki Button is the likeable and bravely witty heroine of this mystery/spy story that combines nightly parties of drinking, decadence, and dancing with intrigue, codes, and danger."

MacRae, Molly. [Thistles and Thieves](#) (Norton \$25.95). American expat Janet Marsh, one of the four proprietors of Yon Bonnie Books in Inversgail, Scotland, is riding her bicycle in the hills when she spots a body lying next to a damaged bicycle. Malcolm Murray, a retired doctor, appears to have had a fatal accident. Or was it foul play? A few days later, a box of first editions arrives mysteriously at Yon Bonnie with a note asking that the books be looked after. Janet and her colleagues have a hunch the books belonged to Malcolm or maybe his brother, Gerald. The stakes rise when Janet and company find Gerald stabbed to death in his cottage. The plot, which includes mistaken identities and numerous red herrings, unfolds slowly. This slow-paced look at a Scottish backwater is best for cozy fans and those who love bibliomysteries—as well as those happy to enjoy details of Scottish life and culture. Third in the [Highland Bookshop series](#), it pairs well with Paige Shelton's [Scottish Bookshop Mysteries](#) set in Edinburgh.

✎ Marwood, Alex. [The Poison Garden](#) (Penguin \$16). After what looks like a mass suicide on the grounds of a cult's commune in Wales, the three known survivors are forced into modern British life in this psychological thriller. Romy, pregnant and almost 21, and her two half siblings, Eden, 15, and Ilo, 13, are the only survivors found alive in Plas Golau—home of the Ark commune—when an ungodly stench leads the authorities to the grounds. More than a hundred people have died from poisoning, their bodies rotting in the sun where they fell as they sought help. As the only adult survivor, Romy's progression from suspect to the freedom of her own small apartment takes months. But despite her willingness to pretend otherwise for the authorities, her true goal is not to assimilate into a world she has been catechized her entire life to believe will soon end. She must find her siblings, who have been placed with her mother's sister, Sarah, and return to the safety of the cult in its second location, in Scotland, one that the authorities know nothing about. There are some gruesome tasks she must undertake first, however, and she performs these with alacrity. *Kirkus* calls this new novel from Edgar winner Marwood, "A gripping, unexpected novel with graphic elements that are not for the faint of heart."

Patterson, James/James O Born. [Lost](#) (Little Brown \$27.99). Having attended the University of Miami on a football scholarship, then worked the city's streets as a beat cop, Tom Moore has the local smarts to head up the FBI task force Operation Guardian, which aims to target international crime in the sun-drenched city. His big problem: Russian nationals Roman and Emile Rostoff, known as the Blood Brothers, have built a deadly crime syndicate on his doorstep.

✎ Robinson, Peter. [Many Rivers to Cross](#) (Harper \$27.99). When Inspector Alan Banks of Yorkshire's Eastvale police force finds a Middle Eastern boy stabbed to death, he knows he's facing a possible hate crime. But the case is endlessly confounded. The boy was stabbed elsewhere—but where?—and the seemingly unrelated death of a heroin addict may not have been an overdose. Meanwhile, a close friend's troubles weigh heavily on Banks who over the years has won and lost both friends, family, and colleagues. I miss the TV series although not everyone liked the casting—the Yorkshire scenery was always gorgeous.

Scott, EG. [The Woman Inside](#) (\$16). A debut, the ultimate betrayals novel for fans who really liked *Gone Girl*. Two inveterate liars, both amoral, a posh Long Island setting.... It's a train wreck in the making. Troubled soul mates Rebecca and Paul are cheating on each other after two decades of marriage, with Rebecca spinning into opiate addiction and getting fired from her pharma rep job and discovering that Paul, her contractor husband who went broke, is planning a new life without her. Or is he? I go with *Kirkus* which advises, "Although it's as shallow as the grave an inconvenient body is buried in, this thriller does offer some nastily entertaining twists." Expect to see a miniseries made from it.

Shteyngart, Gary. [Lake Success](#) (\$18). Narcissistic, hilariously self-deluded, and divorced from the real world as most of us know it, hedge-fund manager Barry Cohen oversees \$2.4 billion in assets. Deeply stressed by an SEC investigation and by his three-year-old son's diagnosis of autism, he flees New York on a Greyhound bus in search of a simpler, more romantic life with his old college sweetheart. Meanwhile, his super-smart wife, Seema—a driven first-generation American who craved the picture-perfect life that comes with wealth—has her own demons to face. How these two flawed characters navigate the Shteyngartian chaos of their own making is at the heart of this piercing exploration of the 0.1 Percent. Named a Best Book of 2018 by, among others, *The New York Times Book Review* • *NPR* • *The Washington Post* • *O: The Oprah Magazine* • *Mother Jones* • *Glamour* • *Library Journal* • *Kirkus Reviews* • *Newsday*.

Simenon, George. [Maigret Hesitates](#) (Penguin \$13). When a series of letters, penned on expensive stationery, arrives at Maigret's desk claiming that a murder will take place but that the writer is unsure as to who will die, who will do the killing, and when the killing will occur, Maigret's interest is piqued. He quickly traces the stationery back to the house of Emile Parendon, an eminent lawyer. But once there, the inspector finds that pinning down clues to a crime not yet committed isn't easy. When a murder does take place, the identity of the victim surprises even Maigret. #67 in the Maigrets.

Smith, Alexander McCall. [The Colors of All the Cattle](#) (\$15.95). When Mma Potokwane suggests to Mma Ramotswe that she run for a seat on the Gaborone City Council, Mma Ramotswe is unsure until she learns that developers plan to build the flashy

Big Fun Hotel next to a graveyard. Her opponent is none other than Mma Makutsi's old nemesis Violet Sephotho. Violet is intent on using every trick in the book to secure her election, but, for her part, Mma Ramotswe refuses to promise anything beyond what she can deliver. Meanwhile, to impress a new girlfriend, Charlie volunteers to take on the role of lead investigator in a case for an old friend of Mma Ramotswe's late father. With Charlie's inquiries landing him in hot water and Election Day fast approaching, Mma Ramotswe will have to call upon her good humor and generosity of spirit to help the community navigate these thorny issues. 19th in a binge-worthy series. It published last May but somehow we overlooked it. Oops.

Smith, JP. [If She Were Dead](#) (Sourcebooks \$15.99). "Popular author Amélie Ferrar, the protagonist of this taut, twisted thriller from is always thinking ahead, envisaging her next plot twist. Though Amélie has relied tangentially on her personal life for inspiration, she finds herself at a crossroads: she thought she was happy—immersed in a two-year affair with a married man, Ben—but she wants more. Her daughter's in college, her ex-husband's new wife is expecting, and she feels untethered and alone. Unfortunately, Ben doesn't feel the need for any changes and has no intention of leaving his wife. Stranger still, Ben's wife has reached out to Amélie as a friend and confidant. Is it coincidence, karmic comeuppance, or perhaps something more sinister? As Amélie plots the future, on the page and off, she begins to lose control of her narratives with such unexpected and dangerous results as betrayal and death. Smith does a masterful job blending multiple story lines," says *PW*. But neither woman is sympathetic, the final twist is unlikely and unpleasant, and the pace is soft. Still....

Staalesen, Gunn. [Wolves at the Door](#) (Orenda \$15.95). Varg Veum, whose Old Norse-derived name connotes "an outlaw," prowls the mean streets of contemporary Bergen, Norway, in Staalesen's searing 21st novel featuring the world-weary PI and former child welfare officer. Veum abandoned social work because he lost faith in his country's ability to help children caught up in "pure evil," but only 16 months earlier, he was arrested then found innocent of possessing child pornography. Now, after being nearly killed in a hit-and-run, he's stubbornly tracking those responsible for the murders of other men similarly arrested and likely guilty of the same crime. Though often depressed, Veum doggedly pursues "life's many shadowy beasts," aided by "new Norwegian" Ghulam Mohammed and Tønsberg lawyer Svend Foyn. Eventually, Veum discovers who's lying—nearly everyone—in this bleak parable of disintegrating Norwegian cultural values. Raymond Chandler fans won't want to miss this one. When I opened *The Pen* 30+ years ago we were selling earlier books by Staalesen, truly a father of Nordic Noir and still going strong.

⌘Steadman, Catherine. [Mr. Nobody](#) (Ballantine \$27). Our **January British Crime Book of the Month** begins when, drenched with seawater, bleeding from a head wound, and missing his memory, a man awakens on Holkham Beach in Norfolk. Written on his hand is a clue, but a clue to what? His identity? Or something more sinister? Once taken to the hospital, the man initially called Mr. Nobody is dubbed Matthew, and although he cannot speak, brain scans reveal no physical trauma. When the leading neuropsychiatrist, an American, is unable to take on the case, he recommends British Dr. Emma Lewis, who is eager to seize

the chance to prove her new theories about fugue states. True fugue states are rare, but Matthew's case seems authentic. Yet taking on Matthew's care requires returning to Norfolk where something so terrible happened when she was 16 that she and her mother and brother entered a form of Witness Protection. It also means cooperating with Peter Chorley, Head of Neurolinguistics at Cambridge, and signing a fistful of nondisclosure forms, leaving Emma wondering who is protecting this man. The action spirals on, switching into several voices. "With each step, confusion descends, blurring the path forward with deliciously gothic twists. As in all good thrillers, lights unexpectedly snap out, a creepy house is hidden down a tree-woven lane, and long-buried secrets emerge. As Emma takes charge of her patient, his memories slowly entangle their pasts together, and exposing those secrets may imperil Emma's very life. A spellbinding thriller perfect for those dark and stormy nights." It may seem implausible but really the dilemma, if possible, that Mr. Nobody faces is a heartbreaker. Steadman, an actress best known for playing Mabel in *Downton Abbey*, became a bestseller with *Something in the Water*, a Reese Witherspoon Hello Sunshine Book Club Pick in Jun, 2018.

Stevens, Taylor. [Liars' Legacy](#) (Kensington \$26). Stevens has always been a master of the fast-moving twister. And still is. Her taut and twisty sequel to 2018's [Liars' Paradox](#) (\$7.99), 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. Stevens wisely chooses to unite Jack and Jill with Holden, who trades in information and 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. Patrick is a fan so grab the paperback and get started.

Woods, Stuart. [Treason](#) (Putnam \$28). Back in Manhattan after his British excursion last book, Stone continues his new career as a US asset. CIA director Lance Cabot calls on the wealthy New York attorney Stone, a part-time CIA consultant, for help in exposing a State Department mole who's working for the Russians. Stone is soon distracted by airplane broker Callie Stevens, who persuades him to buy a private jet, an upgrade for his existing one, in a deal that goes smoothly until, in an undeveloped subplot, an act of vandalism on the new jet suggests that Callie's ex-husband is out to get her. Stone flies his new plane to Paris, where by chance he encounters American entrepreneur Peter Grant, who may be in thrall to Russian oligarch Yevgeny Chekhov. A poisoning and a murder raise the stakes as Stone's dealings with the shifty Grant and generic villain Chekhov start to dovetail with the original mole investigation. A ride with Stone is a ticket to the 0.01% lifestyle and entertaining dialogue, along with admiration for his sexual staying power and special brand of fidelity.



TEN SMALL PAPERBACK PICKS TO START THE NEW YEAR

Note: when no publisher is listed the book is a reprint of a hard-cover

Berry, Steve. [The Malta Exchange](#) (\$9.99). Cotton Malone has cleared his US case load and headed to Europe where the background to his 14th investigation begins at Lake Como in April, 1945, when partisans shot the fleeing Benito Mussolini and his mistress. Some of the dictator's loot went missing and now Cotton is at the site musing on the dilemmas Mussolini faced and the fate of 7 letters written by Churchill to the Italian that first Churchill and then MI6 were intent on recovering. (Berry has done some deep homework here). Meanwhile the Pope has unexpectedly died from a brain bleed and time is counting down until the conclave of Cardinals assembles to elect a successor. One of them is a Maltese, an ambitious man. And another, the head of the Holy See's secret intelligence agency, the Entity for short, is bent on finding a legendary document purportedly written by Constantine the Great that could also rock the Church. It's important in all this to distinguish between the Vatican as a city state and the Holy See. And, as we learn, between the physical and spiritual authority of today's Knights of Malta who are actively seeking the Nostra Trinità too. There is a large cast of players with agendas in the mix which Berry keeps briskly stirring for nearly 400 pages as the clock ticks towards the conclave. Lots of action, lots of history, and fresh eyes on some of it

Box, CJ. [Wolf Pack](#) (\$9.99). Scottsdale as a hunting field? The Poisoned Pen Bookstore as bait? A deadly assassin bedded down at the Hotel Valley Ho? Yes, all that, but this 19th Joe Pickett thriller opens with a big drone spooking mule deer high up in Wyoming Game Warden Katelyn Hamm's territory. Joe Pickett, both surprised and relieved to be back at his old post, and quartered in a new and more spacious home after the old one was burned to the ground, responds to her call. Neither warden will accept such bad behavior on their turf and Joe muscles in—only to have the FBI and the DOJ ask Joe to stand down. Hmm...what will be the role of Nate Romanowski when something takes to the sky besides his falcons? Meanwhile there's that wolf pack on the prowl in Scottsdale. How do these two plot strands come together? It takes a wolf to take down a wolf.... Bonus: Joe's mother-in-law Missy is off on a surprise round-the-world cruise as events from book #18 still shake out.

Flower, Amanda. [Murders and Metaphors](#) (\$7.99). January means ice wine season in the Niagara Falls region, but the festivities leave Charming Books owner Violet Waverly cold, still reeling from a past heartbreak. A past heartbreak who will be present at the annual midnight grape-harvest festival, and no magic in the world or incantation powerful enough could get Violet to attend. But Grandma Daisy, an omniscient force all on her own, informs Violet that she's already arranged for the mystical Charming Books to host celebrity sommelier Belinda Perkins's book signing at the party. Little do either Waverly women know, the ice wine festival will turn colder still when Violet finds Belinda in the middle of the frozen vineyard—with a grape harvest knife protruding from her chest. Belinda grew up in Cascade Springs, but she left town years ago after a huge falling-out with her three sisters. One of those sisters, Violet's high school friend Lacey Dupont, attends the book signing in the hope of making amends

with her sister, but Belinda and Lacey end up disrupting the signing with a very public shouting match and Lacey quickly becomes the prime suspect in the sommelier's murder in this third Magical Bookshop Mystery. For the fourth: [Verse and Vengeance](#) (Crooked Lane \$26.99).

Fox, Candice. [Crimson Lake](#) (\$9.99). Six minutes in the wrong place at the wrong time—that's all it took to ruin Sydney detective Ted Conkaffey's life. Accused but not convicted of a brutal abduction, Ted is now a free man—and public enemy number one. Maintaining his innocence, he flees north to keep a low profile amidst the steamy, croc-infested wetlands of Crimson Lake. There, Ted's lawyer introduces him to eccentric private investigator Amanda Pharrell, herself a convicted murderer. Not entirely convinced Amanda is a cold-blooded killer, Ted agrees to help with her investigation, a case full of deception and obsession, while secretly digging into her troubled past. The residents of Crimson Lake are watching the pair's every move...and the town offers no place to hide. For some reason this is a reissue of the small paperback of last January. This thriller begins a series set in Queensland, Australia, perfect for readers of authors like James Patterson, Harlan Coben, Lisa Gardner, and Tana French.

Hawley, Noah. [Before the Fall](#) (\$9.99). The 2017 Edgar winner for Best Novel finally makes it into small paperback. "I had no doubt that Hawley could write, that he could create amazing characters, that he had an ear for dialogue and a unique point of view—but could he write a successful novel? The answer, as readers of his four earlier books probably know already, is a resounding yes...Noah Hawley really knows how to keep a reader turning the pages, but there's more to the novel than suspense. On one hand, Before the Fall is a complex, compulsively readable thrill ride of a novel. On the other, it is an exploration of the human condition, a meditation on the vagaries of human nature, the dark side of celebrity, the nature of art, the power of hope and the danger of an unchecked media. The combination is a potent, gritty thriller that exposes the high cost of news as entertainment and the randomness of fate."—Kristin Hannah

Irving, Nicholas/AJ Tata. [Reaper: Threat Zero](#) (\$9.99). It's Family Day at Camp David when the President's convoy is ambushed and many members and relatives of his cabinet are killed. In the immediate aftermath, Vick "The Reaper" Harwood watches a live feed of his former ranger buddy Sammie Samuelson's confession and apparent suicide. But when Harwood goes to Samuelson's home to investigate, traces of evidence left by his old friend point to a fiendish plot involving transnational terrorists and political opponents back at home. Meanwhile, the President wants retribution and will stop at nothing to get it. Harwood joins Team Valid—which includes Harwood, FBI Agent Valerie Hinojosa, and a Navy SEAL and Marine Force Recon sniper—which has one mission: to kill the family members of the Camp David terrorists. But once they arrive in the Middle East, Harwood and his crew realize that nothing is what it seems. "You couldn't ask for a better writing team—from the strategic to the tactical—the experiences of both authors bleed through on every page, the authenticity ripped straight from a battlefield after action report. *Reaper: Ghost Target* starts with a crack, and hits on all cylinders." —Brad Taylor

Montgomery, Jess. [The Widows](#) (\$9.99). "Montgomery's debut features two tough-as-nails, strong-willed women whose empa-

thy leaves a lasting impression. A simultaneous examination of women's rights, coal mining, prohibition, and Appalachian life, this is a fantastic choice for historical fiction fans."—*Library Journal* (starred). "*The Widows* is the story of a community in crisis: the Pinkertons are waging war against miners and the law, and no one is safe from their recklessness. But two brave women take a stand, committing themselves to saving their community and families. Jess Montgomery's gorgeous writing can be just as dark and terrifying as a subterranean cave when the candle is snuffed out, but her prose can just as easily lead you to the surface for a gasp of air and a glimpse of blinding, beautiful sunlight. This is a powerful novel: a tale of loss, greed, and violence, and the story of two powerful women who refuse to stand down."—Wiley Cash, echoed by Julia Keller. And certainly a good choice for fans of Sharyn McCrumb's *Ballad Mysteries*

Robb, JD. [Vendetta in Death](#) (\$8.99). It's clear that Roberts has tremendous fun inhabiting the world she has built in 21st Century Manhattan using AI plus medical and forensic and engineering technology as the beat for the NYPD's Lt. Eve Dallas. The plots rocket along—this one is revenge driven by a killer who calls herself Lady Justice and taps into rage over rapes—and the sex is offstage but registers hot. But I read them for imagining a better future than the one we may be headed for—they are not dystopian but optimistic futurist fiction.

Slaughter, Karin. [Pieces of Her](#) (\$9.99). Sara Linton and Will Trent are visiting her family in the Atlanta suburbs when explosions rock nearby Emory University. As the couple heads toward campus, they encounter a multiple-car accident. Dr. Sara stops to offer medical assistance and discovers that one vehicle contains several armed men—two with gunshot wounds—and a traumatized woman she recognizes as missing CDC epidemiologist Michelle Spivey. After a brutal fight that injures Will, the men take Sara and flee. Will is certain that Sara's kidnappers bombed Emory, and intelligence suggests the men are part of a paramilitary group that's planning something catastrophic. With the clock ticking, Will and his partner, Faith Mitchell, scramble to follow bread crumbs into the Appalachian Mountains left by a terrified but determined Sara. "Vivid characters and rapidly escalating stakes complement the riveting, adrenaline-fueled plot. Along the way, Slaughter examines such topics as misogyny, white nationalism, and the politicization of law enforcement. Fans will devour this visceral, gratifying thriller." Which is, I add, not just terrifying in the weaponizing and its domestic terrorism, but a richly satisfying journey.

Taylor, Brad. [Daughter of War](#) (\$9.99). Amena, a 13-year-old Syrian refugee, has landed with her family in Monaco, where she and her younger brother pickpocket tourists to survive. One day the theft of an iPhone from a Syrian intelligence agent lands them in deadly trouble. The phone contains information about a Syrian plan to use a North Korean biological agent known as Red Mercury, a deadly poison that kills then renders itself safe and untraceable, on an American Special Forces outpost. Pike and his team are in Monaco on a separate mission when they stumble on the Red Mercury plot. Soon Amena is fleeing from the Russians, the Syrians, and the North Koreans, all of whom want the phone. Taylor's military thrillers featuring Pike Logan and the Taskforce's counterterrorism agents have always drawn on his professional expertise for meticulous plots, but in this 13th our luck is in that the resourceful Amena more or less steals the show.

"Taylor has already established himself as a master of special-ops thrillers, and this one will only add to his stellar reputation... Taylor adds human depth to his usually plot-driven novels, and the result is one of his best books to date." —*Booklist* (starred review)