

BOOKNEWS from

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UPDATING AN EXCITING JANUARY

Note: All the event times are Mountain Standard Time

Watch these virtual events on [Facebook Live](#) or on our [YouTube](#) channel and any time thereafter at a time that suits you. You don't have to belong to Facebook to click in. You also can listen to our [Podcasts](#) on [Google Music](#), [iTunes](#), [Spotify](#), and other popular podcast sites.

MONDAY JANUARY 18 6:00 PM

Joanna Schaffhausen and PJ Tracy

Schaffhausen discusses [Every Waking Hour](#) (St Martins \$27.99)

Ellery Hathaway

Tracy discusses [Deep into the Dark](#) (St Martins \$26.99)

Our January Crime Club Book of the Month

Signed books available for both titles

TUESDAY JANUARY 19 6:00 PM Virtual Book Launch

Lisa Gardner in conversation with Riley Sager

Gardner discusses [Before She Disappeared](#) (Dutton \$27)

A standalone thriller

Signed books available

WEDNESDAY JANUARY 20 11:00 AM MT/1:00 PM

ET/6:00 PM BT

A Kate Mosse/JoJo Moyes Book Launch Party

For those who wish to join in [click on the link](#) and you will get an invitation from the UK host. Cost is \$35 and includes an unsigned copy of *City of Tears*

Note that we are hosting a conversation with Mosse January 23 as well

THURSDAY JANUARY 21 11:00 AM

Jeffrey Siger and David Wagner in conversation about International Crime

Siger discusses [Murder in Mykonos](#) (\$12.99)

Wagner discusses [Cold Tuscan Stone](#) (\$12.99)

Both books are reissues of first in series

FRIDAY JANUARY 22 4:00 PM

Laura Joh Rowland in conversation with Karen Odden

Rowland discusses [Portrait of Peril](#) (Crooked Lane \$26.99)

A Victorian Mystery

Signed books available

MONDAY JANUARY 25 1:00 PM

Kate Mosse in conversation with Brad Meltzer

Mosse discusses [The City of Tears](#) (St Martins \$27.99)

MONDAY JANUARY 25 7:00 PM

Kwei Quartey in conversation with Michael Connelly

Quartey discusses [Sleep Well, My Lady](#) (Soho \$27.95)

The sequel to [The Missing American](#) (\$27.95 Signed/\$16.95)

Signed books available

TUESDAY JANUARY 26 5:00 PM

Tim Dorsey discusses [Tropic of Stupid](#) (Harper \$27.99)

Serge Storms #24 with a real Florida history spin

Signed books available (tip ins)

THURSDAY JANUARY 28 6:00 PM

Gregg Hurwitz in conversation with Isabella Maldonado

Hurwitz discusses [Prodigal Son](#) (St Martins \$27.99)

Orphan X

Maldonado's series start [The Cipher](#) is heading to film starring

Jennifer Lopez

Signed books for both available

THURSDAY JANUARY 28 7:15 PM

Hardboiled Crime discusses Erle Stanley Gardner's [Skills Can't](#)

[Cash Chips](#) (\$12.95)

SATURDAY JANUARY 30 4:00 PM Virtual Book Launch

Donis Casey discusses [Valentino Will Die](#) (Poisoned Pen \$16.99)

Bianca Dangereuse

Signed books available

SATURDAY JANUARY 30 5:15 PM

Luanne Rice discusses [The Shadow Box](#) (Thomas & Mercer

\$24.95/\$15.95)

Signed hardcover books available

MONDAY FEBRUARY 1 7:00 PM Virtual Book Launch

Faye and Jonathan Kellerman in conversation

Faye discusses [The Lost Boys](#) (Harper \$29.99)

Jonathan discusses [Serpentine](#) (Bantam \$28.99)

Alex Delaware

Signed books for both titles

SIGNED BOOKS

Askaripour, Mateo. [Black Buck](#) (Houghton \$26). Our **Fantastic New Fiction Book of the Month for January is a debut**—and with a strong voice. A different voice. The point I think is we should broaden our range of voices. Peppared with spit-out-your-drink absurdities and killer similes, Mateo Askaripour’s debut novel, *Black Buck*, is an unflinching and satirical look at racism and corporate culture. Written in the form of a how-to manual-cum-cautionary memoir, *Black Buck* is about Darren, a young man from Bed-Stuy who’s «fine doing my own thing» and working at Starbucks, until a tense and unusual exchange leads to a job at a startup called Sumwun. Riotous scenes «straight out of *Any Given Sunday*» and seemingly supernatural portents mark Darren’s transition from slinging coffee to his rapid rise at Sumwun. Despite being the only Black person in a brutal atmosphere, surrounded by co-workers who reek “of old money and blood-splattered gallows,” as well as “privilege, Rohypnol, and tax breaks,” Darren excels professionally. It’s hard to reconcile Darren’s awareness with some of his subsequent deals with devils, yet his messiness is compelling. When it’s not heartbreaking, it’s certainly entertaining. The highs, lows and twists are masterfully dizzying.”—Shannon Hanks-Mackey.

In addition to an Indie Next Pick, this Starred Review adds, “This enthralling satire focuses its lens on corporate America. It follows a young Black man named Darren who manages a Starbucks in midtown Manhattan, until he stumbles into a job at a startup after impressing one of his regular customers. As Darren enjoys a faster life, and bigger paycheck, he also faces microaggressions and casual racism. This winning debut is a brilliantly layered bildungsroman which features a potent blend of heart and dramatic irony.”

Atkins, Ace. [Robert B Parker’s Someone to Watch Over Me](#) (Putnam \$27). 22-year-old Mattie Sullivan, Spenser’s “occasional secretary, part-time assistant and sleuthing apprentice,” needs his help. The younger sister of a friend of Mattie’s, 15-year-old Chloe Turner from the South Boston projects, agreed to give a massage to a man at a swanky Boston club, but when the man began... Chloe fled, leaving her backpack and laptop behind. When Mattie tried to retrieve the backpack and laptop, she was turned away at the club door. Chloe’s disappearance gets Spenser involved. He learns that the pervert’s name is Peter Steiner, a Jeffrey Epstein clone, complete with a female accomplice and a private island in the Bahamas beyond the reach of law enforcement. Spenser devotes himself to taking Steiner down in his usual style: stir things up and see how they fall out.

Casey, Donis. [Valentino Will Die](#) (Poisoned Pen \$16.99). 21-year-old silent movie star Bianca LaBelle, who shot to fame in “a series of wildly popular adventure pictures about the indomitable world traveler, journalist, and sometime spy, Bianca Dangereuse,” is set to embark on a new film, costarring with her good friend Rudy Valentino. The two are having a heart-to-heart one night by her L.A. swimming pool when Rudy tells her he’s received several threatening letters, each with the same message: “Valentino will die.” On a trip to New York, Rudy does indeed become ill, and is hospitalized. Bianca travels to New York to be at his bedside. Still weak, Rudy asks Bianca to find out who might

have poisoned him. Bianca calls on PI Ted Oliver to help, unaware that Ted’s also investigating Rudy on behalf of a gangster known as the Irish godmother. Casey smoothly incorporates real events and people into a plot that’s more thriller than mystery. Lovers of old movies and Hollywood gossip will have fun. More fun if you start with Bianca’s first adventure in [The Wrong Girl](#) (\$16.99).

NEW: Dalton, Julie Carrick. [Waiting for the Night Song](#) (Forge \$26.99). Our **January First Mystery Book of the Month** will appeal with its deep dive into landscape, into friendship forged in childhood magic, and the high price of secrets to readers of Delia Owens’ [Where the Crawdads Sing](#). The lead is Cadie Kessler, a forestry researcher/entomologist, whose theory about the pine beetle predictive value for fires has brought her back to her childhood home in New Hampshire. Here’s one of the rave reviews besides mine: “In Dalton’s stirring debut, an entomologist follows the path of the pine beetle from the Rockies to her New Hampshire hometown where the beetles are destroying the trees, leaving them ripe for forest fires. Cadie Kessler is confident she can wake up others in academia to the imminent devastation from the beetles’ new migration patterns due to climate change. Cadie’s research is interrupted when she receives a text from her estranged childhood friend, Daniela Garcia, warning her the brush clearing launched by Cadie led to the discovery of a dead body that had been buried in the woods 27 years earlier, an unsolved case Cadie and Daniela secretly know a few things about. Dalton slowly teases out the details of who did the killing, who was killed, and why the children helped cover it up in flashbacks involving the girls’ childhood friendship with Garrett Tierney, now deputy police chief, and Daniela’s undocumented Salvadoran parents, who harbor a secret that puts their entire family at risk. While the withholding of information occasionally frustrates, Dalton does a good job describing the danger and intrigue from the children’s point of view. Contemporary ecological and immigration issues compound the well-paced mystery, making for a taut novel that builds suspense to the very end.” Hank Phillippi Ryan adds, “Human nature clashes with Mother Nature in this riveting and heartbreaking coming of age story—gorgeously written, and wonderfully told. With its combination of powerful themes and intensely immersive setting, fans of Delia Owens will swoon to find their new favorite author. A phenomenal debut!”

Beyond the plot, Cadie must decide what she is willing to sacrifice to protect the people and the forest she loves, as drought, foreclosures, and wildfire spark tensions between displaced migrant farm workers and locals. *Waiting for the Night Song* is a love song to the natural beauty around us,

NEW: ⌘ Dean, Abigail. [Girl A](#) (Collins \$36). A debut sold into 27 countries and sparking a lot of conversation. A question for me and other authors is whether it should be marketed as crime. It’s a survivor’s tale: Lexie is Girl A, the girl who escaped, the eldest sister who freed her older brother and four younger siblings. How did they become imprisoned by their parents? What kind of lives can they lead once freed? The father died on the spot in his house of horrors; the constantly pregnant mother went to prison. And now the mother dies and saddles Lexie with a legacy: the family home left to her and her siblings. Which requires Lexie to negoti-

ate with them rather than avoiding her past. That's what kicks the narrative off. There are many questions Dean does not address, leaving the reader to wonder why the kids attending school didn't break for it? Was there sexual abuse and if not, what was the impulse governing the jailer/father? How many of the children fully share the family mythology and will any of them, including Lex, fully break free? You can see this is not a conventional crime novel. Is it a modern Gothic? Does it track with *Girl on the Train* and that sort of book? Is it fair to liken it Gillian Flynn's *Sharp Objects* or Emma Donoghue's *Room*? Caz Frear is joining me in February for a virtual event with Dean and the US edition (unsigned) of [Girl A](#) (Viking \$27).

Dodd, Christina. [Wrong Alibi](#) (Harlequin \$28.99/\$17.99). In a "spine-tingling thriller," an 18-year-old named Evie Jones finds herself reunited with her mother after getting out of a juvenile detention facility. Back in Rockin, Alaska, with her mom and sister, Evie soon finds herself at the center of a homicide tied to her new boss, Donald White, who has hired her as a bookkeeper but really sets her up. After being wrongfully pinned for the crime, Evie goes on the lam—getting reconstructive surgery and taking on a new identity—and tries to find White to clear her name. John gives this a rave review: "No one does high-stakes, high-voltage suspense quite like Dodd."

NEW: Dorsey, Tim. [Tropic of Stupid](#) (Harper \$27.99). Signed tip ins. Once again Dorsey blends "the slapstick humor of the Three Stooges with Sunshine State details that would make a Florida history professor envious. Serge, who has an encyclopedic knowledge of Florida, wants to know more about his own background. So, he buys a DNA service advertised on TV to construct a family tree. Serge and his perpetually stoned friend, Coleman, cruise Florida, meeting far-flung relatives while deciding what to do with the string of guys tied up in their car's trunk. Along the way, Serge, who only kills those he deems deserving (such as those who swindle the vulnerable or disrespect Florida lore), realizes that one of his kin may also be a serial killer. As Serge holds forth on Florida's flora, fauna, parks, and the glories of the TV show 'Sea Hunt', he crosses paths with a Florida Department of Law Enforcement agent investigating serial killers and a predatory lawyer. Though Dorsey lacks Carl Hiaasen's sophistication, he succeeds amid the pratfalls in making Serge a hero,"—*PW*

Gardner, Lisa. [Before She Disappeared](#) (Dutton \$27). Gardner delivers a knockout standalone having interested herself in long-time missing persons and what it takes to work such a case. The heroine if you can call her that is Frankie Elkin, a middle-aged alcoholic whose every day is a challenge to stay dry. Being drunk cost her the one relationship she valued which echoes throughout the story. So she has cut herself loose from all bonds, travels with a backpack, picks up work in a bar where she faces down the demon drink...she's kind of a Jack Reacher but with a specific mission and this one has brought her to a scruffy neighborhood in Boston. The MissPers is Angelique Badeau, a Haitian teenager who vanished from her high school months ago. Frankie has no credentials other than what she's self-taught but she is persistent and thinks outside the box. Inevitably she clashes with the Boston PD when she shoulders into the cold investigation. It goes from there. Frankie is hard to like yet you hope she's on a good path, but can she be? Gardner has always done formidable research for her books. I look forward to diving into it with her in discussing this unusual and compelling almost-procedural.

Goldberg, Lee. [Bone Canyon](#) (Thomas & Mercer \$24.95). Our blogger Lesa Holstine reviews: "Thanks to a YouTube video that went viral, Eve Ronin was promoted to the homicide division of the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, working out of Lost Hills. Eve is the youngest detective there, and resented for it. She knows she's inexperienced, but she has an excellent mentor in her partner, Duncan Pavone, who has less than a year until retirement. Their current case takes them to the fire-blackened Santa Monica Mountains where bones are showing up after the most recent fire. Aided by a forensic anthropologist's findings, Eve and Duncan track the identities of multiple victims. One, Sabrina Morton, disappeared six years earlier after reporting she had been raped. Eve discovers a second rape victim who identifies a tattoo shared by the rapists. Half of the male detectives at the Lost Hills sheriff's station have that tattoo on their calves. The tension ratchets up in this fast-paced police procedural, which addresses sexism, cronyism, and corrupt officers, while also dealing with the investigative process. Goldberg follows *Lost Hills* with a riveting, intense story. Readers of Karin Slaughter or Michael Connelly will want to try this." I recommend reading [Lost Hills](#) (\$24.95 Signed/\$15.95 unsigned) where you first meet Eve.

NEW: Graves, Stephanie. [Olive Bright, Pigeoneer](#) (Kensington \$26). There are several historical novels I enjoyed reading in January. This is the one picked for our **January Historical Fiction Book of the Month** for the verve in the writing and for its exploration of yet another facet of the burgeoning WWII genre: carrier pigeons. These birds, coopted into the war effort, were hardy and amazing heroes, unflinching. Their recruitment and training is highlighted against rural life in a charming English village, the successes and trials of young Olive Bright who longs to contribute to the fight but is stuck helping her dad with his veterinary practice while tending to her much loved racing pigeons. Her best friend George joins the Royal Air Force, leaving her adrift. But she hopes the National Pigeon Service (who knew?) will enlist her Bright's Loft birds and expertise to deliver critical coded messages. Thus Olive is inadvertently thrust into the heart of a baffling murder while tied to a cover organization.... Praised by Rhys Bowen and Susan Elia MacNeal, this charmer provides a needed uplift to January.

Hauty, Chris. [Savage Road](#) (Atria \$27). Hayley Chill, a great name for the protagonist of Hauty's first thriller, [Deep State](#) (\$9.99). Hayley, raised in West Virginia, and recruited into being a covert agent for "a deeper state" (see Orphan X below), is stationed in the White House where she directs an improbable double agent for the US (if I go into this it's a complete spoiler for anyone who has not yet read *Deep State*). And we open this chapter in her unlikely career on a confrontation with a Cuban agent. A series of cyber attacks has rocked the US. NSA fingers Moscow (this is so like real life given current news of Russian hacking), pushing the President towards a devastating war. Can Hayley determine who is the super hacker and head off an immense tragedy? *Deep State* is a fine political thriller; start there.

Hurwitz, Gregg. [Prodigal Son](#) (St Martins \$27.99). Evan Smoak, Orphan X, recruited from a foster home into an ops program darker than black and trained as a government assassin, is out of the Nowhere Man role. In exchange for an unofficial pardon from the President, he must stop his crime fighting vigilante mission anonymously aiding desperate cases. Which means Evan has to do the one thing he's least equipped to do—fit into a normal life.

But in his fortified and well equipped LA penthouse. His bargain is upended by repeated phone calls from Buenos Aires—from a woman claiming to be his birth mother. And she has a Nowhere Man mission for him. The man she asks him to help turns out to be Andre, a kid he knew from childhood when they lived in a Baltimore group home. After witnessing a murder while working at an impound lot, Andre has disappeared, and Smoak soon becomes entangled in a grand-scale conspiracy involving cutting edge military technology. “The pacing is breathtakingly brisk throughout, and the action is relentless, but the real hook is how much Smoak has matured emotionally, particularly in regard to his love interest Mia Hall, a district attorney who lives in Smoak’s building, and Joey, his 16-year-old hacker protégée. This series continues to impress.” This chapter reveals more about Evan’s adoption in to the Orphan Program and his character. And Hurwitz’s explosive ending propels Evan and the reader into.... The [Orphan X series](#) is best read in order.

Kellerman, Faye. [The Lost Boys](#) (Harper \$29.99). Former LAPD detective Peter Decker, now with the police in the “sleepy little college town” of Greenbury, N.Y., has two cases to occupy him. First, 35-year-old Bertram Lanz, who’s cognitively disabled, has gone missing from a field trip arranged by his residential facility, and after extensive searches don’t locate him, Decker fears that Lanz did not lose his way but might well have abducted by someone he knew. Why? When no trace of the man is found, the disappearance quickly becomes an official missing persons case and is assigned to Decker and his partner Tyler McAdams. While combing the woods, searchers discover the remains of one of three young men who had vanished during a camping trip. And for Decker, personal problems are adding pressure as well. After a ten-year absence, the biological mother of Decker’s and Rina’s foster son, Gabriel, has suddenly appeared in New York, children in tow, wreaking emotional havoc on the young man....

Kellerman, Jonathan. [Serpentine](#) (Bantam \$28.99). Here’s a Starred review of a series that for me has, over the last entries, raised its game. “In Edgar winner Kellerman’s top-notch 36th Alex Delaware novel, a cold case preoccupies the L.A. consulting psychologist and his friend and colleague, Lt. Milo Sturgis of the LAPD: the death of Dorothy Swoboda, whose burned body was found in a car below Mulholland Drive 36 years earlier. Dorothy’s 39-year-old daughter, Ellie Barker, who recently sold her lucrative exercise wear business for millions, remains haunted by the loss of her mother, who abandoned her when she was three. Now Ellie wants an explanation for what one report at the time called a murder and another, a one-vehicle accident. Armed with the thinnest of case files, Milo and Alex uncover a disturbing number of murders that seem related to Dorothy, and they realize that the killing spree might not yet be over. Kellerman maintains pace and suspense through the interactions of the characters—witnesses, detectives, relatives of the victims—all of whom are rendered in striking and precise detail. This entry is pure pleasure, intelligently delivered.”

Krentz, Jayne Ann. [All the Colors of Night](#) (Berkley \$27). John reviews: After her professional reputation as an antiques expert is trashed, Sierra Raines ends up working as an “acquisition and transportation specialist” for a company dedicated to supplying paranormal artifacts to wealthy collectors. North Chastain uses his own unique talents tracking down psychic criminals, but

when an artifact that may be connected to a mysterious government program known as the Bluestone Project, puts North’s father in a coma, North knows he is going to need Sierra’s help in tracking down the artifact. Krentz is at the top of her literary game with this page-turner that seamlessly blends suspense and romance while at the same time also delivering a maximum dose of the author’s deliciously dry sense of wit.

MacBride, Stuart. [The Coffinmaker’s Garden](#) (Collins \$45). As a massive storm batters the Scottish coast, Gordon Smith’s home is falling into the North Sea. But the crumbling headland has revealed what he’s got buried in his garden: human remains. With the storm still raging, it’s too dangerous to retrieve the bodies and waves are devouring the evidence. Which means no one knows how many people Smith’s already killed and how many more he’ll kill if he can’t be stopped. Enter an investigator with nothing to lose. The media are buying for blood, the top brass are after a scapegoat, and ex-Detective Inspector Ash Henderson is done playing nice. He’s got a killer to catch....

Mosse, Kate. [The City of Tears](#) (Pan \$46). In Mosse’s vibrant sequel to 2018’s [The Burning Chambers](#) (\$18.99), the year is 1572 and Minou Joubert (aka Marguerite Reydon-Joubert, Châtelaine of Puiver) is now married to Piet Reydon, a Huguenot soldier, and the mother of two children, Marta and Jean-Jacques. Minou and her family leave the peace and quiet of their estate and head for Paris to celebrate the royal wedding of Charles IX’s sister to Henry III of Navarre. In Paris, they get caught up in the St. Bartholomew’s Day massacre, the slaughter of Protestant Huguenots on the orders of the French king. In the chaos of those dark, dangerous days, seven-year-old Marta goes missing. As the years pass and Marta’s fate remains unknown, Minou faces the uncertainties of life in the midst of religious conflict while dealing with the lethal machinations of her family’s archenemy, ruthless Vidal du Plessis (aka Cardinal Valentin). She eventually flees France, taking refuge in Amsterdam, “her city of tears.” The fascinating historical detail fuels the drama and keeps the plot zipping along. Wilbur Smith fans will want to check this one out. Not to mention readers of Alexandre Dumas *père et fils*, and fans, like me, of Mosse’s marvelous mega-bestseller [The Labyrinth](#) (\$17). I am looking forward to what Brad Meltzer contributes to our conversation on January 25.

Petrie, Nick. [The Breaker](#) (Putnam \$27). At first blush it appears that this thriller for Peter Ash will be predictable, filled with the usual high action from the Iraq War veteran who suffers from PTSD and choking claustrophobia. He, sidekick Lewis, and Peter’s lover the freelance journalist June Cassidy are having a peaceful outdoor coffee near the Milwaukee Public Market one October afternoon when they spot a bearded man heading inside carrying an assault rifle. Looks like a shooter on a crazy mission. But it doesn’t play out that way and soon Peter and Lewis are in pursuit of the gunman who, having snatched an apparent target’s phone, escapes on an electric bike. What the?... Peter is in hiding from the law, especially the FBI, for a murder he didn’t commit, and camouflaged in shaggy hair etc, to avoid security cameras and such. He’s been sticking to tearing down buildings for pay. But now a powerful associate from his past appears with an interest in the gunman’s antics, and an irresistible offer: if Peter and June solve this mystery, Peter’s record will be scrubbed clean. And just like that Peter has a mission, but what’s wonderful is that June muscles into the investigation and the narrative, mak-

ing it as much her book as Peter's. The three end up traversing Milwaukee, not a familiar stalking ground, and what looks like a gunman on the loose plot morphs into a brisk cyber thriller. June comes into her own in a way that bodes well for future developments in this exciting series.

Pinter, Jason. [A Stranger at the Door](#) (Thomas & Mercer \$15.95). I was much taken with Rachel Marin's debut in [Hide Away](#) (\$15.95 Signed), "a wonderful mix of a domestic family saga, a suburban thriller, and a crime novel." —Associated Press. Think Barclay and Coben...and Rachel as a single mother version of Bruce Wayne, aka Batman. Pinter's masterful job of ramping up suspense about the Marin's family past informs Rachel's vigilante role in the small city she's made a new home. And she's turned the role into solving crimes for the local PD as well as establishing a new relationship. Yet when her teenaged son's teacher is murdered, gruesomely, the domino effect topples Rachel's carefully constructed new life. And when her kid is recruited by a shadowy businessman she realizes something very personal has arrived.

Preston, Douglas/Lincoln Child. [The Scorpion's Tail](#) (Grand Central \$29). Signed by both authors for you. Note that any earlier titles by these authors cannot be signed when ordered.

Wow. I love this—a blend of Clive Cussler, Tony Hillerman, and Michael McGarrity. A treasure hunt in a ghost town in the high desert of New Mexico overlooking the dread *Jornado del Muerto* (our copies come with a postcard depicting Preston riding his horse along this infamous highway running from Mexico City to Santa Fe under the Spanish, so dry and dangerous it was often a journey for the dead). Rookie FBI Agent Corrie Swanson, having survived the terrors depicted in series start [Old Bones](#) (\$16.99), is stationed in the Bureau's Albuquerque office. She's called to an old ghost town some hours away where the discovery of bones requires 1. A determination if they are human; 2. An ID; 3. A determination of cause of death. This seemingly routine inquiry quickly escalates when Santa Fe's Nora Kelly, the archaeologist Corrie lures off dig to answer these questions, rules: the bones are human; the man died unusually and in agony; his horse, excavated nearby had been shot, and hidden on the corpse is a 16th Century cross of gold of Spanish workmanship. It's hugely valuable, a real treasure. And there may be more treasures nearby...since a fabled hoard has long thought to have been hidden off the *Jornado* during the Pueblo Revolt. You will not see the cause of the deaths coming although you may early finger the major villain in this glorious adventure. Plus...there's a bit of Pendergast.

This story is close to one of the authors' best, [Thunderhead](#) (\$8), and includes Native American elements Hillerman would love along with the archaeology and politics that surround Nora Kelly.

Prinzini, Bill. [The Paradise Affair](#) (Forge \$24.99). San Francisco, 1898. PIs Sabina Carpenter and John Quincannon takes the married couple to Hawaii in pursuit of Jackson "Lonesome Jack" Vereen and E.B. Nagle (aka Nevada Ned), who duped an Oakland, Calif., businessman into investing thousands in a nonexistent silver mine. Quincannon focuses on tracking down the two grifters, a task that leads him to investigating multiple murders. Meanwhile, Carpenter becomes involved in a howdunit after

Gordon Pettibone, the owner of an import-export bank, is found dead behind a locked door in his study. A loaded pistol next to Pettibone's corpse makes accident or suicide the logical explanation. However, Carpenter probes deeper into both the motive and the execution of the crime.

Quartey, Kwei. [Sleep Well, My Lady](#) (Soho \$27.95). We are excited that Quartey fan Michael Connelly is hosting the conversation. This Starred Review explains Mike's enthusiasm: In Quartey's terrific sequel to 2020's [The Missing American](#) (Signed hardcover firsts as well as the paperback edition), PI Emma Djan takes on a nearly year-old cold case—the murder of high-profile fashion icon Lady Araba in the bedroom of her lush mansion in a gated community known as the Beverly Hills of Accra, Ghana. Lady Araba's aunt doesn't believe her niece's chauffeur, who was convicted for the killing, is guilty. Emma and her colleagues at the Yemo Sowah Agency assume various undercover identities—as housekeeper, cop, construction worker, professor, journalist, interested house buyer—in an effort to narrow the long list of possible culprits, including family members, several lovers, and an alcoholic TV talk show host. Stops at the morgue and a forensic lab, as well as an ongoing search for a unique murder weapon, contribute to the dark atmosphere. Along the way, Quartey skewers Ghanaian politics, religion, and the law. Smooth prose complements the well-wrought plot. This distinctive detective series deserves a long run." Quartey's work brings vivid life to his Ghanaian characters and setting, while reminding us that no matter the location, motivations for murder are the same everywhere.

NEW: Rice, Luanne. [The Shadow Box](#) (Thomas & Mercer \$24.95/\$15.95). When artist Claire Beaudry Chase is attacked by a masked man who leaves her for dead in the garage of the home she shares with her abusive husband, Griffin, she suspects Griffin, a Connecticut state's attorney, is behind the attack, and decides to go into hiding. Griffin, also a candidate for governor, is aware she knows something about a 25-year-old crime that would torpedo his election prospects if made public. Claire, who creates shadow boxes built of driftwood frames filled with natural objects, has just finished a box depicting Griffin's crime [shades of crime scene recreations like his at the Smithsonian], which she leaves for him to find before she vanishes. State police detective Conor Reid later investigates Claire's disappearance, as well as an explosion on the boat of the Chases' neighbors, Sallie and Don Benson, that occurred the same day she went missing. Conor suspects the explosion, which killed Sallie and injured Don, is related. The suspense builds as Claire desperately tries to piece together the extent of the crimes of Griffin and his accomplices. Prepare to be up all night reading.

✦ Rowland, Laura Joh. [Portrait of Peril](#) (Crooked Lane \$26.99). "October 1890. The wedding of London crime-scene photographer Sarah Bain and DS Thomas Barrett is interrupted by the discovery of a body in the crypt of St. Peter's Church. The victim, Charles Firth, has been stabbed in the chest. Sarah's granted a leave of absence by Sir Gerald Mariner, her boss at the Daily World, to investigate. Her team includes street-wise teenager Mick O'Reilly and her closest friend Lord Hugh Staunton, whose homosexuality has estranged him from his family. Firth specialized in photographing ghosts; when Sarah visits his widow, Leonora, she's in the process of contacting the dead. One of her

friends advises her to help Sarah: “We have to rule out the possibility that the killer is human.” As in Sarah’s first four cases, Rowland’s knack for drollery and colorful characters is on full display. Strangely, the Firths are connected to a case Sarah’s been trying to solve for years: the wrongful conviction of her father.... Rowland’s Victorian London is fascinating and her team of irregulars unmatched.”—*Kirkus Reviews* on a book I haven’t been able to read yet.

Schaffhausen, Joanna. [Every Waking Hour](#) (St Martins \$27.99). I was torn between this 4th investigation for Ellery Hathaway, the one victim who escaped serial kidnapper/killer Coben and is now on tryout as a detective with the Boston PD, and the first in a new series by PJ Tracy, below, for our January Crime Book of the Month. They are both excellent, but for you readers a debut is I think a better choice. In fact I recommend reading the first three Hathaways before diving into this one since there are relationship spoilers if you do not. And the relationship between Ellery and FBI Agent Reed Markham, the investigator who liberated her from death’s door at Coben’s hands, is key to propelling the narrative. This book centers on the disappearance of 12-year-old Chloe Lockhart. The daughter of an affluent older father and a busy surgeon mother, she has a nanny. And for a moment the nanny lets Chloe out of her sight. It soon appears there is more to this, especially when Ellery learns that Chloe’s mother had a son with her first husband, and that the son was killed—and his nanny died at the scene. It’s a complicated story with a complex solution. Order [the whole series](#) and binge.

Taylor, Brad. [American Traitor](#) (Harper \$28.99). Pike Logan, the head of the Taskforce counterterrorism unit, and his Taskforce member girlfriend, Jennifer Cahill, are in Australia on vacation. They intend to stay with former Taskforce colleague Dunkin Delmonty, but on arrival they find Dunkin on the run from Chinese assassins. Dunkin recently exposed the schemes of his coworker, a Chinese-American artificial-intelligence specialist, who sabotaged the software of the new F-35 fighter jet and stole the code for the early-warning system protecting Taiwan from Chinese invasion. The attack on Dunkin prompts Pike to call in his Taskforce unit and team with a former Taiwan intelligence to stop war engineered between the island and Li’s China. The action is high and, as a former tactical master like Taylor can envision, the tactics are impressive.”As usual in the Pike Logan series, the spy-craft and related technology are fascinating, the dialogue crackles, and all the players are operating in an international sea of moral ambiguity. Recommend Pike Logan to readers who like their spies tough, smart, and bordering on superhuman.”—*Booklist*. Taylor signs our copies at his home. The purchase gets you’re an invitation to the party his publisher is hosting January 5 and to a later book discussion we will host on zoom at The Pen.

Tracy, PJ. [Deep into the Dark](#) (St Martins \$26.99). We long-timers at The Pen loved the Monkeewrench series written by Tracy and her now deceased mom. So we are thrilled PJ has begun a series on her own that is our **January Crime Book of the Month**. Others agree with me it’s a knockout!

One of them is our very own Lea Holstine: “Sam Easton is a veteran who lost his buddies to an IED explosion in Afghanistan. With burns and scars on half his face, he stands out, and his spirit is broken. His wife, Yuki, left him three months earlier. He’s a barback at the Pearl Club, where Melody Traeger is a bar-

tender. When Ryan, a customer that Melody’s been seeing, hits her, Sam offers her a place to stay. Neither of them has reliable alibis when LAPD detective Margaret Nolan shows up with her partner after Ryan is killed. When another murder occurs, Sam and Melody seek refuge, but their safe harbor becomes a house of terror, and they must draw on their own resources to survive. The author of the award-winning “Monkeewrench” novels launches a new L.A.-based series with an intense, unforgettable novel that focuses on the predators and prey that thrive in the city. The intricately plotted story handles Easton’s PTSD with compassion while revealing his disturbing torment. Three complex characters, Sam, Melody, and Detective Nolan, are introduced in a gripping story for thriller fans.” —*Library Journal* (starred review), Pick of the Month

NEW: ✂ Tudor, CJ. [The Burning Girls](#) (Joseph \$36). When vicar Jack Brooks’ boss asks her to leave St. Anne’s in Nottingham for a more rural placement in the small Sussex village of Chapel Croft, it’s more an order than a favor. She’ll serve as interim vicar until a suitable replacement for the former vicar can be found. Jack’s 15-year-old daughter, Flo, isn’t thrilled to leave the city, but she knows that her mother could use some distance from a horrific tragedy at St. Anne’s that Jack feels largely responsible for. Soon after they arrive at Chapel Croft, however, they learn that their new village has more than its share of weirdness and tragedy. The vicar that preceded Jack allegedly hung himself in the chapel; Merry and Joy, two teen girls, disappeared without a trace 30 years ago; and the village is known for the Burning Girls, aka the Sussex Martyrs, who were burned at the stake in the 16th century. Additionally, Jack keeps finding strange twig dolls on the church grounds and disturbing accounts of exorcisms in her cottage’s cellar. Meanwhile, Flo glimpses strange figures in the graveyard and befriends Lucas Wrigley, a troubled boy with a shady past. Then there are the bodies that keep turning up while dark secrets emerge about a local (and very powerful) family. The author steadily cranks up the scares and the suspense while smoothly toggling between multiple narratives, including one that indicates Jack’s past may be about to catch up with her.”

UNSIGNED EVENT BOOKS

Gosling, Victoria. [Before the Ruins](#) (Holt \$26.99). This debut novel—a mystery harboring a friendship saga—takes the ingredients of the English country house caper and spikes the recipe. It is our **January British Crime Book of the Month**. We have four disaffected teenagers. A deserted manor. A vast supply of drugs. A diamond necklace stolen in 1936 rumored to be buried on the grounds. A further cache of explosive secrets. Gosling’s atmospheric thriller is centered on a fabulous, abandoned estate, where four strangers on the cusp of adulthood once spent a magical summer exploring, bonding, and playing increasingly dangerous games. Decades later, one is missing, and the others must reopen old wounds in order to track down their errant friend. Gosling uses her richly ruinous setting as a jumping-off point to examine class, innocence, morality, and loss. Come for the missing person mystery, stay for the existential ennui. Gosling’s debut is less a mystery than a study in moral disorder, much like the debut of Abigail Dean in *Girl A*, which I review in Signed Books. Valerie Martin says Gosling puts her “in mind of Edward St. Aubyn and Donna Tartt: Dark, fierce, and totally addictive.” Aimee Molloy likens it to the work of Tana French. I can see early Ruth Ware.

Mosse, Kate. [The City of Tears](#) (St Martins \$27.99). See the review above under Signed Books of Mosse's second chapter in superb historical fiction set in 15th Century France and its devastating religious wars.

Siger, Jeff. [Murder in Mykonos](#) (\$12.99). A new edition with a Foreword by Thomas Perry for the first investigation by Greek cop Andreas Kaldis who has been promoted out of Athens, a useful trick for politicians, to serve as the Mykonos Chief of Police. There he is confronted in this tourist haven with the remains of a young woman, ritually bound and buried on a pile of human bones inside a remote church in the mountains. Pressure descends to find her killer before the island's fabled reputation as a tourist playground is jeopardized. The chase is full of action and ancient tropes and spends some time on nearby Delos.

Wagner, David. [Cold Tuscan Stone](#) (\$12.99). Rick Montoya has moved from New Mexico to Rome, embracing the life of a translator. He's settling in to *la dolce vita* when a school friend who is now senior in the Italian Art Squad recruits Rick for an unofficial undercover role. Armed with a list of galleries, suspects, and an expense account, Rick would arrive in Tuscany posing as a buyer for a gallery and spend his days looking at Roman artifacts and sipping wine to flush out burial urn traffickers. But before sunset on Rick's first day in Volterra, a gallery employee dies in a brutal fall from a high cliff. The local Commissario and his team consider Rick an amateur, and worse, a foreigner. And now they suspect him in the dead man's murder.... "Wagner hits all the right notes in this debut. His likable protagonist engages, plus the Italian angle is always appealing. Perfect for readers who enjoy a complex puzzle, a bit of humor, and a fairly gentle procedural. Don't miss this one."—*Library Journal* Starred Review for the first Rick Montoya Italian Mystery, now reissued.

NEW: Wortham, Reavis. [Laying Bones](#) (Poisoned Pen \$15.99). *Booklist* adds to the sterling reviews for this new Red River Texas Mystery: "Wortham returns to 1960s Texas for the eighth Red River mystery. Constable Ned Parker's nephew R.B. is dead, drowned, apparently, in his truck after a road accident. But Ned is not one to take things at face value, and something just doesn't feel right about R.B.'s death. As he investigates, he finds things that make him question some of his core beliefs about his community and himself. Could he really be the target of an elaborate conspiracy involving people he considered friends? Might he be imagining it? The author, who hails from rural Texas, is writing about people and a place he knows very well, and this knowledge shows: his laid-back writing style, robust characters, and dialogue that sounds like it's spoken by actual people combine to tell a story that, even though it features one of the mystery genre's most overused themes (conspiracy), feels completely realistic. Another winner from a writer who seems to produce nothing but winners." Start with the first, [The Rock Hole](#) (\$12.99) with a sterling Introduction by Joe R. Lansdale.

OUR JANUARY BOOKS OF THE MONTH

The Crime Book of the Month One Signed hardcover First per month

Tracy, P.J. [Deep into the Dark](#)

British Crime Book of the Month One unsigned hardcover or paperback per month

Gosling, Victoria. [Before the Ruins](#)

Cozy Crimes Book of the Month One unsigned hardcover or paperback per month

Walker, Laura Jensen. [Hope, Faith & a Corpse](#)

Fantastic New Fiction Book of the Month One Signed hardcover First per month

Askaripour, Mateo. [Black Buck](#)

First Mystery Book of the Month Club One Signed hardcover First per month

Dalton, Julie Carrick. [Waiting for the Night Song](#)

Historical Fiction Book of the Month One Signed hardcover First per month

Graves, Stephanie. [Olive Bright, Pigeoneer](#)

International Crime Book of the Month One Unsigned hardcover or paperback per month

Quartey, Kwei. [Sleep Well, My Lady](#)

SciFi/Fantasy Book of the Month One hardcover or paperback per month signed when possible.

Mass, Sarah J. [A Court of Silver Flame](#)

CLASSICS

✠ Bennett, Margot. [The Man Who Didn't Fly](#) (Poisoned Pen \$14.99). The *PW* Starred Review: First published in 1955, this outstanding mystery from Bennett (1912–1980) poses a genuinely original puzzle. A private plane that was scheduled to transport four men from England to Ireland crashes into the Irish Channel, presumably killing the pilot and the three men seen to board the plane. But in the absence of the passengers' corpses, which of them perished—and who is the title character, the fourth man who for an unknown reason missed the flight? Identifying him falls to an entertaining pair of policemen, Inspector Lewis and Sergeant Young, who work diligently to reconstruct what happened in the face of witnesses whose recollections of what the men on the plane looked like are frustratingly murky. Bennett maintains suspense despite not relying on a familiar whodunit structure. Superior prose (a landlord sits "on a low stool, his great, yellow, rectangular face hanging over the bar like a disfigured moon; occasionally pouring a drink") enhances the crackerjack plot. This superior reissue exemplifies the mission of the British Library Crime Classics series.

✠ Carr, John Dickson. [The Plague Court Murders](#) (Penzler \$15.95) with Introduction by Michael Dirda. Originally published under the Carter Dickson pseudonym, here is the first of the author's Sir Henry Merrivale mysteries, and features one of his most baffling crimes ever — a man found murdered with a dagger in a locked stone hut. Add to that loads of spooky atmosphere — with spiritual mediums, eerie castle walls, and the ominous fear of a plague-era hangman's ghost — and you come out with a novel that shows impossible crime master Carr working at the top of his craft. Fans of puzzling mysteries won't want to miss it!

Fisher, Rudolph. [The Conjure Man Dies, A Harlem Mystery](#) (Detective Club Crime Classics \$15.99). The very first detective novel written by an African-American, set in 1930s New York, and with only Black characters. When the body of N'Gana Frimbo, the African conjure-man, is discovered in his consultation room, Perry Dart, one of Harlem's ten Black police detectives, is called in to investigate. Together with Dr Archer, a physician from across the street, Dart is determined to solve

the baffling mystery, helped and hindered by Bubber Brown and Jinx Jenkins, local boys keen to clear themselves of suspicion of murder and undertake their own investigations. A distinguished doctor and accomplished musician and dramatist, Fisher was one of the principal writers of the Harlem Renaissance, but died in 1934 aged only 37. With a gripping plot and vividly drawn characters, Fisher's witty novel is a remarkable time capsule of one of the most exciting eras in the history of Black fiction. This crime classic is introduced by New York crime writer Stanley Ellin, and includes Rudolph Fisher's last published story, 'John Archer's Nose', in which Perry Dart and Dr Archer return to solve the case of a young man murdered in his own bed.

✦ Kelly, Mary. [The Spoilt Kill](#) (Poisoned Pen \$14.99). This fabulous book won the 1961 Gold Dagger beating out a John Le Carré! But Kelly (1927-2017) then dropped into obscurity. I ate this up from the setting in the Staffordshire Potteries industry—Eritrea where Wedgewood began; Stoke-on-Trent—to the complex characters to the tricky plot that begins when a body is found turning in liquid clay (not dissimilar to bodies found in vats of wine or whiskey in other mysteries) to the unmasking of the industrial espionage agent to the author's musings on a culture of consumption. Plus it's a fine PI story: a pottery company hires Hedley Nicholson to shadow a suspect employee. "Widely heralded as a perfect golden age mystery, this piece of British crime fiction marked a shift in the genre towards mysteries characterized by psychological elements." Honestly it's the best book I've read in ages! It like the Classic by Bennett earned a Starred Review for its December publication.

Dana Stabenow adds, "Mary Kelly's *The Spoilt Kill* beat out John Le Carré's *Call for the Dead* for the Gold Dagger Award in 1961, and now I know why. This book is exquisitely written, with a totally character-driven plot in a fully realized workplace setting (a commercial pottery). The detective is undercover on a case of industrial espionage and the pottery's accountant is found murdered by, well, let's just say by clay. But this is one of those books that is about far more than its mystery... some passages could have been written today and be just as true now as then."

Leblanc, Maurice. [Arsène Lupin, Gentleman Thief](#) (Penguin Classics \$16). Leblanc's creation is everything you would expect from a French aristocrat—witty, charming, brilliant, sly...and possibly the greatest thief in the world. While a detective tries to spoil the fun, Lupin often functions as a kind of Robin Hood, benefiting the poor and innocent. And he can turn detective. Either way his plans evolve into elaborate plots. And the reason to reread Leblanc is that his Lupin is the inspiration for the terrific Netflix series *Lupin* starring Omar Sy. Loved the first episode... and the Louvre plus the Marie Antoinette necklace.

Woolrich, Cornell. [The Bride Wore Black](#) (American Mystery Classics \$15.95) is a real trendsetter for hardboiled mysteries. Woolrich keeps readers in suspense by withholding information. Rather than putting his murderous femme fatale, Julie Killeen, front and center, Woolrich presents the story from the points of view of her male victims. Readers are continually introduced to men who don't seem to deserve to be murdered. There's added suspense when the men are often circled by several women, and readers don't know which one is Julie or when she will strike. Another noir novelty is the introduction of Detective Lew Wagner,

who's trying to figure out the killer's identity and the reasons behind her murderous actions. Most mysteries would put the detective center stage, but Woolrich also places Wagner at a distance to keep readers off-balance and apprehensive. The twist ending is a double sucker-punch when Woolrich reveals something about the victims and Julie. (It also differs from Francois Truffaut's 1967 film adaptation.) And it still packs a wallop with its smoky atmosphere, fascinating characters and clever telling." —Kevin Howell

THE COZIES CORNER

See New in Small Paperback for more new cozies

Adams, Ellery. [Ink and Shadows](#) (Kensington \$26). Nora Pennington, the owner of Miracle Books in Miracle Springs, has a coterie of friends calling themselves the Secret, Book, and Scone Society. Each member's success in overcoming a troubled past has given her the strength and insight to help Nora solve several murders. After Celeste Leopold and her moody daughter, Bren, open a health-food store selling CBD oil in Miracle Springs, they're shunned and verbally attacked by the narrow-minded Women of Lasting Values Society, which also targets Nora's shop for putting a display of books about witches in the window for Halloween. When Bren is found dead in Nora's yard, the only clue is a sheet of paper covered with strange symbols and letters that she left under Nora's doormat. Nora's group springs into action to support Celeste and do some detection. Nora gives the local sheriff a recommendation of an expert to identify the paper, which brings her former college roommate to town, though Nora hasn't seen her since her own life fell apart years earlier. A joyful reconciliation is followed by the identification of the paper as being much older than the ink. Could someone's attempt to create a faux valuable item have served as the motive for murder? "Lovers of reading and strong women will be impressed by this entertaining cozy packed with mystery, romance, and sisterhood." —*Kirkus Reviews*

Burns, V M. [A Tourist's Guide to Murder](#) (Kensington \$15.95). Author, amateur sleuth, and bookstore owner Samantha Washington finds herself on a tragical mystery tour while visiting the land of Miss Marple and Sherlock Holmes. Sam joins Nana Jo and her Shady Acres Retirement Village friends Irma, Dorothy, and Ruby Mae on a weeklong trip to London, England, to experience the Peabody Mystery Lovers Tour. The chance to see the sights and walk the streets that inspired Agatha Christie and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle is a dream come true for Sam—and a perfect way to celebrate her new publishing contract as a mystery author. But between visits to Jack the Ripper's Whitechapel district and 221B Baker Street, Major Horace Peabody is found dead, supposedly of natural causes. Despite his employer's unfortunate demise, the tour guide insists on keeping calm and carrying on—until another tourist on their trip also dies under mysterious circumstances. Now it's up to Sam and the Shady Acres ladies to mix and mingle among their fellow mystery lovers, find a motive, and turn up a murderer...

Childs, Laura. [Egg Shooters](#) (Berkley \$26). Café owner Suzanne Dietz is making a routine trip to the hospital in the Midwestern town of Kindred to deliver a thermos of chili to her physician fiancé, Sam Hazelet, when a gunman shoots up the place. By the time it's over, a security guard is dead, a desk clerk is wounded,

and the killer has escaped with a duffel bag full of drugs. Kindred's finest, Sheriff Ray Doogie and Deputy Eddie Driscoll, arrive soon, and Ray is glad to hear that Suzanne is a witness, though the lawmen are puzzled at how the gunman vanished so quickly. When a second drug theft happens, it doesn't take long for Suzanne to jump right into the investigation with no objections from the sheriff. This latest Cackleberry Club cozy comes with tasty recipes.

Delany, Vicki. [A Curious Incident](#) (Crooked Lane \$26.99). Our blogger Lesa reviews: Gemma Doyle, owner of Sherlock Holmes Bookshop and Emporium, insists she's not a consulting detective. Eleven-year-old Lauren is missing her cat, Snowball. Gemma's dog, Violet, tracks the cat to a neighbor's gardening shed, but Gemma basks in the praise. Just a couple of days later, Lauren is back, offering Gemma \$10 to prove her mother, Sheila, did not kill her rival for the annual trophy from the West London Garden Club. After Sheila's garden was vandalized and she accused Anna, it's natural for the police to view Sheila as a suspect when Anna is killed. Gemma can't stand Sheila, seeing her as self-centered and egotistical, and she tells Lauren the police will find the killer. But even Gemma finds it hard to resist the girl's pleas when she shows up at the bookstore, abandoned by both of her parents. She takes in Lauren and, in typical Gemma fashion, probes in the wrong places until the killer panics and attempts a second murder. Quirky Gemma provides the humor herself in the latest cozy installment in the series. Readers who appreciate Holmes pastiches, this one featuring a woman with Holmes's intellect and lack of emotional intelligence, will enjoy the character-driven story. 6th in a [cozy series](#).

Graves, Sarah. [Death by Chocolate Frosted Doughnut](#) (\$15.95). When a pirate festival blows into Eastport, Maine, Chocolate Moose Bakery owners Jacobia "Jake" Tiptree and her best friend Ellie White expect they'll be busy baking up a storm, but instead they find themselves marooned in a new murder investigation after someone kills celebrity food writer and TV personality Henry Hadlyme in their basement....

McKevett, GA. [Murder at Mabel's Motel](#) (Kensington \$26). 1980s McGill, Georgia, finds Stella Reid preparing for her first date with Sheriff Manny Gilford, much to the amusement of the seven grandchildren she's raising alone. The rare night out for the overworked grandmother is interrupted when Manny is called to investigate an assault on 19-year-old Yolanda Ortez by local lowlife Billy Ray Sonner and his racist gang. The attack was interrupted before the worst could happen, but Manny is anxious to find Billy Ray before he does more damage, or Yolanda's outraged father gets to him. When Billy Ray's ravaged body is discovered at an abandoned motel outside of town, no cause of death is apparent, but the door is duct-taped from the outside. Stella knows only too well that even good people are capable of diabolical acts. McKevett poignantly evokes how difficult and all-consuming raising seven children can be, but in Stella she has created a woman strong and loving enough to do it. This 3rd for Stella is prehistory to the Savannah Reid of San Carmelita, California, series by Reid, wherein Savannah is just one of the pack of unruly kids dumped on grandmother Stella.

St. James, Dorothy. [The Broken Spine](#) (Berkley \$26). Trudell Becket, known to her friends as Tru, finds herself in a bind when her library in lovely Cypress, South Carolina, is turned into a

state-of-the-art bookless "technological center." A library with no books breaks Tru's book-loving heart so she decides to rescue hundreds of beloved tomes slated for the town dump. Under the cover of darkness, Tru, along with her best friends coffee shop owner Tori Green and mysterious bestselling author Flossie Finnegan-Baker set up a secret bookroom in the library's basement and prepare to open it to their most loyal, trustworthy patrons. But as Tru and her crew are putting the finishing touches on their new book room, the town manager, who was behind the big push for the library's transformation, is crushed by an overturned shelf of DVDs, and Tru becomes the prime suspect. John adds, "Having spent more than 30 years working in public libraries, I can attest that the premise of this charming cozy is not so far out there."

Walker, Laura Jensen. [Hope, Faith & a Corpse](#) (Crooked Lane \$26.99). Our **January Cozy Crimes Book of the Month** brings us a series start featuring a clerical sleuth, something we haven't seen in awhile. John reviews: "Hope Taylor, Anglophile, reader, and fan of classic movies, can't wait to start her new job as pastor of Faith Chapel Episcopal Church in the small northern California town of Apple Springs. However, things get off to a rocky start for Hope when Father Christopher, the kindly old rector who hired Hope, is nowhere to be found. What Hope does find is church elder Stanley King, who is dead set against a female pastor, dead in the church's columbarium. Hope is a wonderful addition to the long line of religious sleuths that includes Harry Kemelman's Rabbi Small, Ralph McNery's Father Dowling, Carol Anne O'Marie's Sister Helen, and more recently Jane Willan's marvelous Sister Agatha and Father Selwyn. Don't miss this terrific launch to a new series, which has everything – a charming small-town setting, an endearing cast of quirky characters, lots of tea, and a cute dog – a cozy reader could ever want."

Watkins, Eileen. [Claw & Disorder](#) (Kensington \$15.95). As the owner of the cat boutique and boarding business Cassie's Comfy Cats, Cassie McGlone is as nothing compared to Bernice and Chester Tillman, a needy older couple Cassie's employee, Sarah Wilcox, is helping through her church. When Cassie and Sarah come to the Tillmans' place, it's not even clear how many cats there are inside and out. Plus piles of vintage video games, records, and all manner of stuff fill the place. On the opposite end of the spectrum is Cassie's newest client, Gillian Foster, who's boarding her purebred Himalayan, Leya, while she restores her mid-19th-century house to its former glory, much to the dismay of her husband and teen daughter. Gillian's as obsessed with making everything just so as the Tillmans are with not letting go of anything. Tragedy strikes the Tillmans when Bernice dies unexpectedly overnight, and Chester's habit of propping the back door open for outdoor cats raises the possibility of foul play. Luckily, Cassie has a friend in Detective Angela Bonelli, of the Chadwick PD, who's willing to investigate when her department isn't....

NEW IN HARDCOVER

Audrain, Ashley. [The Push](#) (Penguin \$26). There is nihilistic streak running through new fiction, possibly an extension of the trust-no-one psychological drama. And a subgenre is rising: the bad seed. Here is a debut exemplar. It's written with great skill and earning a lot of attention. I find no one in it to like, always a minus for me, and the second-person voice tiresome. At the heart

of the story is whether Blythe, from a family of failed mothers, is overreacting to the behavior of her daughter Violet from the cradle, rejecting her husband Fox's assertions she is imagining things—or whether Violet is indeed a sociopath. If you liked William Landay's bestseller *Defending Jacob*, then this may hook you. I did like the Landay but am not recommending Audrain despite the plaudits from some other reviewers.

✦ Boyd, William. [Trio](#) (Knopf \$26.95) A producer. A novelist. An actress. It's summer 1968—a time of war and assassinations, protests and riots. While the world is reeling, our trio is involved in making a disaster-plagued, Swingin' Sixties British movie in sunny Brighton. All are leading secret lives. As the movie shoot zigs and zags, these layers of secrets become increasingly more untenable. Pressures build inexorably. The FBI and CIA get involved. Someone is going to crack—or maybe they all will. From one of Britain's best loved writers comes an exhilarating, tender novel—by turns hilarious and heartbreaking—that asks the vital questions: What makes life worth living? And what do you do if you find it isn't?

Brazier, Eliza Jane. [If I Disappear](#) (Berkley \$26). Sera loves true crime podcasts. They give her a sense of control in a world where women just like her disappear daily. Adrift, she fastens on the idea the podcasts are preparing her for something. So when Rachel, her favorite podcast host, goes missing in the wild backcountry of Northern California, Sera knows it's time to act. Rachel has always taught her to trust her instincts. Sera follows the clues hidden in the episodes to an isolated ranch outside Rachel's small hometown to begin her search. She's convinced her investigation will make Rachel so proud. But the more Sera digs into this unfamiliar world, the more off things start to feel. Because Rachel is not the first woman to vanish from the ranch, and she won't be the last... Rachel did try to warn her. This is just one of the January books missing an ARC. If when I get a copy I have more to say, I will in February.

Brown, Rita Mae. [Out of Hounds](#) (Ballantine \$28). With no Advance Reading Copy I have to quote *PW* on a series I enjoy: Jane "Sister" Arnold, the Master of Foxhounds of the Jefferson Hunt, and her friends are now in their 60s and early 70s, but they remain as spry as ever... The nefarious doings begin with the theft of a painting by Sir Alfred Munnings, a real-life English artist known for his horse paintings, from the home of a prominent member of the hunt. Other thefts are soon followed by murders, and Sister and her sweetheart, Gray Lorillard, become the target of a killer. Meanwhile, members of the noisy anti-hunting crowd are out in force making trouble. The mystery plot occasionally peeps through digressions on such topics as the ideal way to organize horse stalls and the evolution of riding habit styles through the centuries. The narrative is fattened by scenes in which talking dogs, horses, cats, foxes, and even birds put in their two cents' worth on the actions of the humans. Animal lovers and those curious about the elite world of fox hunting will enjoy this."

Bruce, Camilla. [In the Garden of Spite](#) (Berkley \$26). Here's another *PW* review, this one Starred: "Bruce takes a mesmerizing look at the murderous career of the real-life 19th-century serial killer Belle Gunness. In 1877, the 17-year-old Gunness is impregnated by a neighbor, Anders, in Selbu, Norway. After she demands marriage, Anders attacks her, causing a miscarriage. Months later, Gunness gets her revenge, fatally poisoning

him. She continues to indulge her violent streak after she moves to Chicago in 1881. Her unhappy marriage to Mads Sorensen ends when she poisons him with a cyanide-laced slice of cake. The widow uses the insurance money she collects to buy a farm in Indiana's LaPorte County, where she adds to her body count, including her second spouse, Peter Gunness. Bruce plausibly reconstructs Gunness' mental state, including her chilling assessment: 'There is nothing unnatural about me.... I am as natural as they come. There are just not many of my kind.' Fans of fictionalized treatments of notorious murderers will be fascinated.

Cornwell, Patricia. [Spin](#) (Amazon \$28.99). In the aftermath of a NASA rocket launch gone terribly wrong, Captain Calli Chase comes face-to-face with her missing twin sister—as well as the startling truth of who they really are. Now, a top secret program put in motion years ago has spun out of control, and only Calli can redirect its course. Aided by cutting-edge technologies, the NASA investigator and scientist turned Space Force pilot sets out on a frantic search for the missing link between the sabotaged rocket launch and her predetermined destiny... a search that someone else seems very interested in stopping. From NASA to the Chase family farm, to the White House to distant orbits of space, Calli plays a high-stakes game of hide-and-seek with a cunning and ruthless adversary. Cornwell introduced Calli, test pilot, quantum physicist and cybercrime investigator who moonlights as a "security guard" for NASA Protective Services, in [Quantum](#) (\$28.99).

Foster, Fiona King. [The Captive](#) (Ecco \$26.99). A family ekes out a precarious but peaceful living on a remote farm in a dystopian future. As is often the case in thrillers, an interloper arrives to disturb the careful balance in the household—in this case, it is an escaped prisoner whose chaotic presence will most likely cause all sorts of revelations to come to the fore. We are in a secessionist rural state that has cut itself off completely from urban centers, where living is hardscrabble and poor but "free," Brooke Holland runs a farm with her husband, Milo, and two daughters. Their life at the fringes of modern society is tenuous—they make barely enough from each harvest to keep going—yet Brooke cherishes the loving, peaceful life they have carved out for themselves. She has even begun to believe she is free from the violent history she has kept a secret from her family. When escaped criminal Stephen Cawley attacks at the farm, Brooke's buried talents surface, and she manages to quickly and harshly subdue him. She is convinced that he has come in retribution for the blood feud she thought she escaped years ago. Brooke sets out to bring Cawley to justice, planning to use the bounty on his head to hide her family far from danger. Fearing that other members of Cawley's infamous family will soon descend, Brooke insists Milo and the girls flee with her, travelling miles on foot across an unforgiving landscape to reach the nearest marshal. Their journey, started at the onset of winter with little preparation, brings already strained family dynamics to the breaking point....

Hawkins, Rachel. [The Wife Upstairs](#) (St Martins \$27.99). This debut is a deliciously gothic contemporary retelling of Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. Down-on-her-luck Jane is living with an odious young man, saving up for a place of her own and an escape from the horrors of her past, when she catches a break and is hired as a dog-walker by several people in a well-to-do neighborhood in Birmingham, Ala. Jane meets Eddie Rochester in a near-miss as he backs out of his driveway; the charismatic, handsome

widower immediately sets to winning her over, even going so far as to adopt a puppy so he can hire her to walk it. When Jane learns that not only is Eddie single but also a widower, readers discover the darker side of her desires and ambitions. “He’s free, she’s gone, and now I have an excuse to see him every week. An excuse to be in that gorgeous home in this gorgeous neighborhood.” Their relationship develops quickly, and despite glimpses of Jane’s darkness, it’s easy to root for her as she describes her hardscrabble life and the ways wealthy women treat someone they view as less-than. But Jane also swipes the occasional piece of jewelry and bit of cash. Readers familiar with *Jane Eyre* will be waiting to learn what happened to Eddie’s first wife....

Holroyde, Claire. [The Effort](#) (Grand Central \$28). This book is the story of a massive comet that threatens to end human existence and those who fight to prevent that catastrophe. Call it a techno-thriller, call it apocalyptic fiction — I call it great writing. This is an important and provocative novel, one that should be read by all who care about the future of the planet and humanity’s role in its preservation. Claire Holroyde is an exciting new voice in modern fiction, and we’re lucky to have this stirring and fully imagined book.”—David Heska Wanbli Weiden

Iggulden, Conn. [The Gates of Athens](#) (Pegasus \$25.95). If you know ancient Greece history you know the Battle of Marathon and the Last Stand at Thermopylae. Here they are both captured by bestselling novelist Iggulden. Under Darius the Great, King of Kings, the mighty Persian army—swollen by 10,000 warriors known as The Immortals—have come to subjugate the Greeks. In their path, vastly outnumbered, stands an army of freeborn Athenians. Among them is a clever, fearsome, and cunning soldier-statesman, Xanthippus. Against all odds, the Athenians emerge victorious. Ten years later, Xanthippus watches helplessly as Athens succumbs to the bitter politics of factionalism. Traitors and exiles abound. Trust is at a low ebb when the Persians cross the Hellespont in ever greater numbers in their second attempt to raze Athens to the ground. Facing overwhelming forces by land and sea, the Athenians call on their Spartan allies for assistance—to delay the Persians at the treacherous pass of Thermopylae....

✦ Kelly, Julia. [The Last Garden in England](#) (Gallery \$28). For harried garden designer Emma Lovell, restoring the grand gardens at Highbury House, Warwickshire, is a dream job: she’s walking in the footsteps of her heroine, Venetia Smith, the garden’s original architect. But as Emma tackles the overgrown plants and other tasks, she also begins unearthing secrets. Kelly weaves together Emma’s present-day story with Venetia’s time at the garden in 1907, as well as the lives of three women during World War II. Kelly tells her story in three timelines and five narrative voices, using the garden to bind them together. Her characters share a fierce determination to lead their own lives, no matter what society thinks: Venetia faces serious prejudice as a female landscape designer, but her striking garden rooms at Highbury House reflect her skill. Diana Symonds, the widowed owner of the house in the 1940s, struggles to mother her son and deal with the exigencies of having wounded soldiers on the premises. Beth Pedley, a shy land girl, begins to find a community in Highbury, and Stella Adderton, a young cook, dreams of travel and a professional career. In the present day, as Emma fights to keep her business afloat, she makes some discoveries that throw new light on the choices made by all four women, and that may help illu-

minate her own way forward. Lushly described, with complex relationships and plenty of romance, Among earlier historical hits by Kelly is [The Light over London](#) (\$16.99).

Mannion, Una. [A Crooked Tree](#) (Harper \$27.99). The opening scene of this debut “will strike fear into the hearts of any former children whose had-it-up-to-here parents ever threatened to kick them and their squabbling siblings out of the car. Driving at twilight one day, Faye Gallagher, a widowed mother of five, actually does it: She stops the car five miles from home and leaves her 12-year-old daughter, Ellen, by the side of the road. Darkness sets in; the hours pass. Why hasn’t Ellen come home? That single shocking moment reverberates through the book, bringing unexpected consequences for the family and their neighbors. The menace in this moody, meticulously plotted debut lies not in preposterous plot twists, but within the mysteries of dysfunctional families, close-knit neighborhoods harboring dark secrets and adolescents’ imperfect, and sometimes disastrous, understanding of the world of adults. Living by Valley Forge Mountain in Pennsylvania, Libby takes refuge in the woods and in particular the crooked tree at the heart of a secluded spot she and her best friend, Sage, call the Kingdom. There she escapes her dysfunctional life with an overtaxed mother who offers little in the way of solace or supervision as...The plot unfurls slowly.”—*NY Times*.

“As the plot swirls towards a showdown, Mannion deftly weaves the varied plot threads into a magnificent whole. Like the crooked tree near the fort built with her best friend, Libby’s mettle is bent and tested by forces spinning out of control as she tries to keep her family safe. A tale of trust, friendship and valor set against a backdrop of wicked apprehension, Mannion’s work is spectacularly accomplished. —Lauren O’Brien. I add this is a clear illustration of how difficult it is for children to go against the will of a parent, a theme explored in Abigail Dean’s debut *Girl A*.

✦ Maxwell, Alyssa. [A Sinister Service](#) (Kensington \$26). “Set in 1920, Maxwell’s enjoyable sixth a Lady and a Lady’s Maid mystery takes Lady Phoebe Renshaw, her three siblings, and her maid, Eva Huntford, to Staffordshire, the hub of England’s thriving porcelain trade. Phoebe and her siblings are visiting the prestigious Crown Lily factory to commission a tea set for their grandparents’ anniversary when the company’s head designer, Ronald Mercer, is found dead in a grinder. The murder gains personal significance for the Renshaws with the arrest of Mercer’s son, who was at Eton with Phoebe’s brother, until the boy’s father forced him to withdraw and learn the pottery trade. Another suspect is Percy Bateman, Lily’s junior designer, who coveted the victim’s position. As part of the sleuthing effort, Eva becomes a part-time apprentice to Lily’s head of china painting, Moira Wickham, who resented Mercer’s refusal to let a woman design. Distinctive characters complement the well-crafted plot. Maxwell brings the era’s class and gender constraints to life in this intelligent historical.”—*PW*. Note that Staffordshire and the world of the potteries is the setting for the terrific British Crime Classic by Mary Kelly, [The Spoilt Kill](#) (Poisoned Pen \$14.99), highly recommended by Dana Stabenow and me.

Murphy, Stacie. [A Deadly Fortune](#) (Pegasus \$25.95). The 1893 world of the infamous lunatic asylum on Blackwell’s Island comes alive in frightening and horrific detail as a string of murders for profit is discovered. Murphy probes the dark side

of Gilded Age New York and the even darker side of life at the insane asylum. Plucky Amelia Matthew rises to the considerable challenges that surround her, uncovering increasingly dangerous secrets that point to the presence of a murderer in the asylum. Amelia, who becomes an accidental patient, has a special gift that both helps and complicates her search for the truth, making her a unique heroine

Nimura, Janice P. [The Doctors Blackwell: How Two Pioneering Sisters Brought Medicine to Women and Women to Medicine](#) (Norton \$27.95). A penetrating biography follows two trailblazing sisters who made inroads in medicine and in the 19th century. While the elder Elizabeth became the first woman to receive a medical degree in the U.S., her younger sister, Emily, followed her older sister into the practice of medicine. We said the author, a historian, winningly details “the lives of two ambitious figures who opened doors for many who came after them.”

North, Anna. [Outlawed](#) (Berkley \$26). The day of her 1894 wedding, 17 year old Ada’s life looks good; she loves her husband, and she loves working as an apprentice to her mother, a respected midwife. But after a year of marriage and no pregnancy, in a town where barren women are routinely hanged as witches, her survival depends on leaving behind everything she knows. She joins up with the notorious Hole in the Wall Gang, a band of outlaws led by a preacher-turned-robber known to all as the Kid. Charismatic, grandiose, and mercurial, the Kid is determined to create a safe haven for outcast women. But to make this dream a reality, the Gang hatches a treacherous plan that may get them all killed. And Ada must decide whether she’s willing to risk her life for the possibility of a new kind of future for them all. Featuring an irresistibly no-nonsense, courageous, and determined heroine, *Outlawed* dusts off the myth of the old West and reignites the glimmering promise of the frontier with an entirely new set of feminist stakes The Indie Next Pick finds it to be “about the many different ways to be whole and to own your power, even in a world that tries to hold you down. It’s an exciting and extraordinary novel.”

O’Donnell, Paraic. [The House on Vesper Sands](#) (Tin House \$26.95). I quoted the Indie Next Pick in the New Year’s Booknews. Here is a Starred Review that I echo: “1893 London is abuzz with stories about the Spiriters, a shadowy group allegedly led by the wealthy Lord Strythe that’s said to steal the souls of working-class women. One winter night, seamstress Esther Tull jumps to her death from a window in Strythe’s home trying to escape from her usual work stitching intricate white gowns to the measurements of women she never sees. After Inspector Cutter of New Scotland Yard unsuccessfully seeks Strythe for questioning about Tull’s death, Cutter connects the case to the plight of former millinery worker Angela Tatton, who speaks deliriously about dark air and brightness and is confined to a hospital. Rev. Herbert Neuilly, who lives in the same boarding house as Cutter, had ministered to Tatton and other poor, sickly, young women. Neuilly, like Strythe, has gone missing, and his nephew, Cambridge divinity student Gideon Bliss, arrives in London concerned for him. Cutter brings Bliss along when he travels to Vesper Sands, the home of Strythe’s only living relation, hoping Strythe is hiding there. There they face mortal danger before learning the truth about the Spiriters. Making smart use of classic gothic imagery, O’Donnell excels at concocting eerie scenes.

Yet he’s also very funny, particularly in exchanges between the profane Cutter and the verbose but perceptive Bliss. Fans of Sarah Perry (not to mention Dickens and Wilkie Collins) will be captivated by this marvelous feat.” If O’Donnell were not in Ireland I’d have snagged signed copies for this must for readers of Victorian-era fiction.

Patterson, James/James O. Born. [The Russian](#) (LittleBrown \$27.99). Already alarmed that young women in New York are being murdered in callously distinctive ways, Det. Michael Bennett is horrified to learn that similar cases are surfacing in Atlanta and San Francisco. And now the killer is gunning for Michael, just as he should be tying his tie in anticipation of his wedding.

Also out: [Till Murder Do Us Part](#) (Grand Central \$29), true crime thrillers.

Pearson, Bradford. [The Eagles of Heart Mountain](#) (Atria \$28). The never-before-told tale about a World War II incarceration camp in Wyoming and its extraordinary high school football team—for fans of *The Boys in the Boat* and *The Storm on Our Shores*. In the spring of 1942, the United States government forced 120,000 Japanese Americans from their homes in California, Oregon, Washington, and Arizona and sent them to incarceration camps across the West. Nearly 14,000 of them landed on the outskirts of Cody, Wyoming, at the base of Heart Mountain. Behind barbed wire fences, they faced racism, cruelty, and frozen winters. Trying to recreate comforts from home, many established Buddhist temples and sumo wrestling pits. Kabuki performances drew hundreds of spectators—yet there was little hope. That is, until the fall of 1943, when the camp’s high school football team, the Eagles, started its first season and finished it undefeated, crushing the competition from nearby, predominantly white high schools. Amid all this excitement, American politics continued to disrupt their lives as the federal government drafted men from the camps for the front lines—including some of the Eagles. As the team’s second season kicked off, the young men faced a choice to either join the Army or resist the draft. Teammates were divided, and some were jailed for their decisions. Pearson’s story “honors the resilience of extraordinary heroes and the power of sports.”

Raman, RV. [A Will to Kill](#) (Polis \$26) is “a modern-day take on the classic locked-room murder mystery, transported to a remote mansion high in the hills of southern India—and our **February International Crime Book of the Month**. ‘People drown in rivers, fall down stairs, have heavy objects fall on them, die of suffocation in airless rooms or dungeons, and even get scared to death.’ Here at the possibly haunted Greybrooke Manor in Nilgiris, a dozen guests have gathered at the invitation of Bhaskar Fernandez, an eccentric patriarch whose squabbling extended family is tediously dependent on his largesse. Bhaskar is convinced that someone is trying to kill him and has included on his guest list Harith Athreya, a canny private detective charged with looking into a series of suspicious incidents. To disincentivize any would-be killer, Bhaskar has drawn up two wills allowing for two different possibilities: one if he dies of natural causes, the other in the case of his murder. (Bhaskar is a lover of mysteries and enjoys his little games.) The roads are rendered impassable by a landslide. The lights go out. Greedy relatives and hangers-on circle like so many piranhas. And before we know it, there is indeed a murder — but instead of Bhaskar, the victim is a guest, an artist

with a murky past whose body is found, improbably, slumped in his host's motorized wheelchair. Who did it? And who killed the second victim, not long after? There seem to be several crimes going on at once, and a lot to pay attention to: an art scam, a drug ring, the falsification of identities, not to mention a spot of adultery. But Athreya is a fine detective with a curious mind, a cool eye for the chance detail, a skill in synthesizing disparate threads and a talent for resisting the insults of the requisite police officer assigned to the case."—*NY Times*.

Some of you will recognize that taking a Christie-style mystery to India is not new. Arjun Gaiind did it well in the Edwardian era [A Very Pukka Murder](#) (\$18.99).

Reynolds, Allie. [Shiver](#) (Putnam \$27). In this propulsive locked-room thriller debut, a reunion weekend in the French Alps turns deadly when five friends disc. When Milla accepts an off-season invitation to Le Rocher, a cozy ski resort in the French Alps, she's expecting an intimate weekend of catching up with four old friends. It might have been a decade since she saw them last, but she's never forgotten the bond they forged on this very mountain during a winter spent fiercely training for an elite snowboarding competition. Yet no sooner do Milla and the others arrive for the reunion than they realize something is horribly wrong. The resort is deserted. The cable cars that delivered them to the mountaintop have stopped working. Their cell phones—missing. And inside the hotel, detailed instructions await them: an icebreaker game, designed to draw out their secrets. A game meant to remind them of Saskia, the enigmatic sixth member of their group, who vanished the morning of the competition years before and has long been presumed dead. Stranded in the resort, Milla's not sure what's worse: the increasingly sinister things happening around her or the looming snowstorm that's making escape even more impossible. All she knows is that there's no one on the mountain she can trust. Because someone has gathered them there to find out the truth about Saskia; that someone has deliberately stranded them at their remote mountaintop resort during a snowstorm. Readers of Ruth Ware will recognize the similarity to her latest [One by One](#) and I can say it forecasts a February debut by Sarah Pearse, [The Sanitorium](#), our First Mystery Book of the Month in the UK. Signed edition, also set high in the Alps. If you think about it this is a perfect translation of the Christie country house murder to an alpine setting.

Roslund, Anders. [Knock Knock](#) (Quercus \$27). "In Roslund's heart-pounding fourth Grens and Hoffman novel (after 2019's *Three Hours* with the late Börge Hellström), a break-in at the Stockholm apartment where every member of the Lilaj family, except five-year-old Zana, was killed 17 years earlier prompts Det. Supt. Ewert Grens to reexamine the case. Grens discovers that Zana's witness protection file has disappeared from a secure police archive just as several criminals are murdered in the same manner as her family. Meanwhile, Piet Hoffman is contacted anonymously by a person who knows all about Hoffman's time infiltrating Stockholm's criminal underworld for the police. If Hoffman doesn't start a gang war and thereby kick start demand for this new player in the weapons smuggling business, he and his family will be killed. Grens and Hoffman combine forces, as Grens senses they're working two ends of the same problem. While the peril that Hoffman faces is palpable, Grens's impending retirement and loss of purpose presents its own existential threat. This terrific mash-up of police

procedural and crime thriller has strongly imagined characters, explosive action, and a twisty plot with an unexpected conclusion. It's a must for Scandinavian noir fans."—*PW*

Ryan, Rachel. [The Woman Outside My Door](#) (Gallery \$27). Dublin housewife Georgina, the heroine of Ryan's confident debut, is mourning her mother's recent death and is going through a rough patch in her marriage when her seven-year-old son, Cody, says he's made a new friend at the park, whom he calls New Granny. When Georgina expresses her concerns to her husband, Bren, he dismisses New Granny as an imaginary friend Cody has created to deal with the grief of losing his real grandmother, and suggests Georgina's own suffering is making her exaggerate the issue. As Cody and New Granny get closer, Georgina becomes certain someone is spying on her and her family. Then the vandalism and strange phone calls start. All the while, Bren continues to tell Georgina she's overreacting and needs to talk to a therapist. Ryan does a good job keeping the reader off balance, wondering whether Georgina is indeed going mad. The tension builds as long-held secrets are revealed. "Ryan draws the reader into not only Georgina's terrifying journey to save her son, but also her marriage and her sanity. Georgina is a fierce, loyal narrator, and the reader won't be able to resist rooting for her success. Seasoned mystery lovers will recognize similarities to B. A. Paris' *The Breakdown* (2017), Mary Kubica's *The Other Mrs.* (2020), and A. J. Finn's *The Woman in the Window*."

Saunders, George. [A Swim in a Pond in the Rain: In Which Four Russians Give a Master Class on Writing, Reading, and Life](#) (Random \$28). The Indie Next Pick: "In this literal master class on literature and writing, Saunders earnestly yet playfully dissects 19th-century Russian short stories to discover how they exude life to this very day, while highlighting methods any aspiring writer can employ. The huge bonus: reading the wondrous stories themselves, and experiencing Tolstoy's authority, Chekhov's humanity, and the joy and glory of Gogol."

Smith, Alexander McCall. [Pianos and Flowers: Brief Encounters of the Romantic Kind](#) (Knopf \$25.95) ventures into the world of heart-to-heart with his fictionalized rendering of photos found in the London Sunday Times. But a picture can go only so far. Who are the people in the image? What are their fears? What are their dreams? In the fourteen delightful tales in this collection, Alexander McCall Smith imagines the lives and loves of some of the everyday people pictured in these twentieth-century photographs. A young woman finds unexpected love while perusing Egyptian antiquities. A family is forever fractured when war comes to Penang, in colonial Malaysia. Iron Jelloid tablets help to reveal a young man's inner strength. And twin sisters discover that it's never too late to forge a new path—even when standing at the altar. There are big stories behind these simple images. Though at first glance they may appear to represent small moments, these photographs in fact speak volumes, uncovering possibilities of love, friendship, and happiness. A nice gift for your Valentine, no?

Stewart, Amy. [Dear Miss Kopp](#) (Houghton \$26) finds the three siblings, based on actual sisters, separated for the first time, though they keep in touch through letters written from May to December 1918, introducing an epistolary turn to the narrative. Constance, the first female undersheriff in the U.S., remains home in New Jersey ferreting out German saboteurs. Fleurette travels across the country entertaining the troops with May Ward

and Her Eight Dresden Dolls, a real-life vaudeville act. Norma, who's stationed in a French village behind the front, trains carrier pigeons to relay military messages for the Army Signal Corps. (The travails of the pigeon service are a source of ongoing humor—refer to Graves' *Olive Bright, Pigeoneer* above in Signed Books as a chapter in WWII.) Meanwhile, a nurse serving with Norma at the American Field hospital becomes involved in the case of the theft of medical supplies. The nurse enlists Norma's help, which may be connected to a spy ring. The tension rises as the 1918 flu pandemic looms large and events move closer to Armistice Day. This has a simultaneous paperback release: [Dear Miss Kopp](#) (Houghton \$15.99).

Thornton, Chris Harding. [Pickard County Atlas](#) (Farrar \$26).

"Past sorrows feed present troubles in a debut novel set in a fictional Midwestern town in 1978. Madson is a farmed-out place of droughts and dust.... Madson's residents are as downtrodden as the topography; they scrape for each dollar, nurse old grudges and hold their grievances close. The town is haunted by the death of seven-year-old Dell Reddick Jr., murdered two decades ago by a farmhand who confessed and then killed himself—but failed to say what he'd done with the victim's body. When Dell Sr. at last memorializes his first son with a headstone on an empty grave, the locals—especially the Reddick family—suffer fresh psychic wounds. Virginia, the boy's bitter, pill-abusing mother, is suddenly nowhere to be found. Her surviving son Paul is a 22-year-old with a history of provoking trouble. Now Paul takes to prowling the grounds of the old home of sheriff's deputy Harley Jensen, whose own mother killed herself by shotgun when Harley was a boy. The third Reddick brother, Rick, paired with Paul in restoring used mobile homes for their penny-pinching father, steals Paul's stash of uppers so he can work faster to try to make ends meet. Ill-advised schemes proliferate.... Meanwhile, Madson is experiencing an offbeat-crime wave. Fires break out in several abandoned farmhouses. Newly deceased citizens have their clothes stolen and burned during their own funerals. "Weirder it is, worse it winds up," warns the sheriff, Harley's dispirited boss. Ms. Thornton is unrelenting in conveying the bleak realities of her closely watched characters: their dangerous misconceptions, their "hostile indifference," their cat-and-mouse games almost sure to turn deadly. 'No accounting for fate,' observes Paul—nor, it seems in this benighted county, much chance to avoid it."—Tom Nolan, *WSJ*. Patrick recommends... I thought of it for the First Mystery Book of the Month but it's too similar to a couple of 2020 selections for this club. I like to give members a variety of stories, landscapes, and characters.

✦ Wein, Elizabeth. [The Enigma Game](#) (Little Brown \$18.99). The Indie Next Pick for this YA entry into the WWII genre: "Elizabeth Wein yet again humanizes history by taking the true story of the Allies capturing the first Enigma machine in World War II and using that background to tell the deeply personal stories of three disparate young people who find each other in the midst of war. With characters familiar and new, Wein's story captures both the danger and turbulence of a world at war, and the moments of happiness that still emerge in spite of that."

Williams, Eley. [The Liar's Dictionary](#) (Doubleday \$26.95). The Indie Next Pick: "*The Liar's Dictionary* is an enormously charming novel about putting the world into words. Its two logophilic heroes, separated by a century, are unforgettable characters; I

loved spending time with these word-curious creations. You'll be utterly transported by this playful and seriously funny book."

Winchester, Simon. [Land](#) (Harper \$29.99). Winchester gracefully blends history, science and an assortment of other disciplines to paint a multifaceted portrait of the complex topic of how humans encounter the some 37-some billion acres that comprise the planet's land surface. Winchester admits he became "transfixedly fascinated with the notion of landownership, and of how such a thing could possibly be," after his first purchase—123 acres of unimproved woodland in upstate New York, in 1999. For all the subject matter his book covers, he is most passionate when it comes to describing how peoples like Native Americans, New Zealand's Maori or Scotland's humble crofters have been ruthlessly ejected from lands they once possessed, though the idea of actual ownership was alien to them. In doing so, he lays bare the injustice of the 1889 Oklahoma land run; the duplicity of the still-disputed Treaty of Waitangi, which established British sovereignty over New Zealand in 1840; and the brutality of the Highland clearances of the 19th century. Winchester is equally instructive when he's describing the massive Dutch project to reclaim land from the North Sea and the catastrophe set off by retired British lawyer Sir Cyril Radcliffe, with his ill-conceived line partitioning India and Pakistan in 1947. He never misses an opportunity to illuminate his diverse subjects with a vivid anecdote—like the curious story of Angle Inlet, an enclave in which 123 people are "marooned inside Canada, yet residents of the U.S. state of Minnesota"—or to personalize them, as he does in the account of the Aramaki family—victims of the Japanese American incarceration during World War II—and their fight to recover their Washington farmland after the war. Whether nations, tribes or individuals are coveting it, fighting over it, losing it or gaining it, land will always possess the power to excite the human imagination. "One couldn't ask for a more accessible or comprehensive treatment of the subject."

✦ Wingate, Marty. [Glamour Girls](#) (Crooked Lane \$27.99). A new entry in the every burgeoning WWII genre, and a good one to read with Graves' [Olive Bright, Pigeoneer](#), our January Historical Fiction Book of the Month reviewed in Signed Books. Ever since she was 10 years old, Rosalie Wright's eyes have been on the skies. But at the age of 18, on the verge of earning her pilot's license, the English farmer's daughter watches her dreams of becoming an aviatrix fly away without her. Britain's entry into World War II brings civilian aviation to a standstill. Then, Rosalie's father dies, leaving her, her mother, and her brothers to run the farm. Everything changes when she learns that the Air Transport Authority is recruiting women pilots to ferry warplanes across Britain to RAF bases. Despite her mother's objections, Rosalie cannot resist the call of her country—and the lure of the skies. During her training on Gipsy Moth aircraft, Rosalie forms a fast friendship with fellow flyer Caroline Andrews. Her trusty Ferry Pilots Notebook by her side, Rosalie delivers to five airfields in a day—while fighting an endless battle against skeptical male pilots and ground crews. Then Rosalie meets gruff pilot Snug Durrant and RAF squadron leader Alan Chersey. Snug is a cynical, wisecracking playboy, and Alan is every WAAF's heart-throb...and Rosalie catches both their eyes....

OUR JANUARY LARGE PAPERBACK PICKS

Bohjalian, Chris. [The Red Lotus](#) (\$16.95). The first time Alexis saw Austin, it was a Saturday night. Not in a bar, but in the emergency room where Alexis sutured a bullet wound in his arm. Six months later, on the brink of falling in love, they travel to Vietnam on a bike tour so that Austin can show her his passion for cycling and he can pay his respects to the place where his father and uncle fought in the war. But as Alexis sips white wine and waits at the hotel for him to return from his solo ride, two men emerge from the tall grass and Austin vanishes into thin air. The only clue he leaves behind is a bright yellow energy gel dropped on the road. As Alexis grapples with this bewildering loss, navigating the FBI, Austin's prickly family, and her colleagues at the hospital, Alexis uncovers a series of strange lies that force her to wonder: Where did Austin go? Why did he really bring her to Vietnam? And how much danger has he left her in? Bohjalian reinvents himself with each new novel, and after 2018's *The Flight Attendant*, slated for a limited HBO series, he's at it again.

Ekbäck, Cecilia. [The Historians](#) (\$16.99). OK, Nordic Noir plus a WWII historical. Two Swedish civil servants uncover a Scandinavian WWII conspiracy in this riveting historical epic. While assisting a team overseeing Sweden's trade negotiations with Nazi Germany in 1943, Laura Dahlgren discovers the body of her best friend, Britta Hallberg, near the University of Uppsala, where they had been graduate students five years earlier. In a parallel narrative, Jens Regnell, secretary to the Swedish minister of foreign affairs, works to help ministry archivist Daniel Jonsson fill in missing phone call records between the minister and his Danish counterpart. After Daniel is found dead of suicide, Jens becomes increasingly paranoid and gives greater credence to a thesis manuscript he received from Britta before she was killed, in which she reported on a secret agreement between Sweden, Norway, and Denmark to maintain their neutrality with Nazi Germany. After Laura's apartment is bombed, she and Jens cross paths and discover a clue about a conspiracy that would tie Britta and Daniel's deaths with the mysterious disappearances of Sami people near an iron mine in the far north. As they get closer to the truth, they face increasing danger. Ekbäck sets out multiple red herrings and intricate plotlines, which create tension on the way to her satisfying ending to the narrative....

✦ Finch, Charles. [The Last Passenger](#) (\$17.99). Set in 1855 London, this third prequel to the Charles Lenox Victorian crime series takes the aristocratic sleuth to a crime scene at Paddington Station, where a conductor on the train from Manchester has found a man's bloody corpse. The killer insured that identifying his victim would be a tall order by not only emptying the dead man's pockets but also taking the time to cut out all the labels from the man's clothing. While the police attribute the killing to an ongoing gang war in Manchester, Lenox pursues a different tack after realizing that the conductor lied about missing a bus ticket home in his statement to the authorities. Other evidence, such as the conductor's not wearing a uniform, suggests that he was an imposter not employed by the railway. Finch effectively integrates the politics of the time, including pre-Civil War tensions in America, and his insertion of subplots regarding his lead's romantic life doesn't distract from the clever murder puzzle. If you have somehow missed him start with the three prequels: [The Woman in the Water](#); [The Vanishing Man](#) (\$17.99 each); and this new novel. Or read the very first Lenox, [A](#)

[Beautiful Blue Death](#) (\$9.99). Finch will sign a return to 1878 London in [An Extravagant Death](#) (St Martins \$27.99) for you and do a virtual event with us February 25.

Gentill, Sulari. [Shanghai Secrets](#) (Sourcebooks \$15.99). I may love this entry in the Rowland Sinclair Mysteries the best. Originally titled *All the Tears in China* (Sulari loves long titles), it takes the wealthy Australian, a kind of Lord Peter Wimsey, and the three members of his bohemian household—to 1935 Shanghai. I loved editing this 9th in the [Rowland Sinclair Mysteries](#). Read them in order, they are a marvelous binge as well as reminding us the 1930s turmoil was not all about Europe.

Here's one of the enthusiastic reviews by someone other than myself: "Set in 1935, Gentill's rousing ninth Rowland Sinclair mystery takes Rowly, on his brother Wilfred's instructions, to Shanghai for trade talks involving the family wool business. "Just listen and be pleasant. For God's sake, don't sign anything," Wilfred tells him, adding, "Take your unemployed lefty friends with you, if you must." Thus self-proclaimed poet Milton Isaacs, landscape painter Clyde Watson Jones, and nascent filmmaker Edna Higgins accompany Rowly to the "Paris of the East," where they rub shoulders with English lawyers, Chinese gangsters, Russian nobility, Japanese businessmen, and Indian taxi drivers. Rowly runs afoul of the police when Alexandra Romanovna, a beautiful Russian dancer, is found with her throat cut in his hotel suite, leaving him with no choice but to investigate. Rowly and his pals soon discover any number of people with motive to murder Alexandra. Eccentric but authentic characters bolster a cracking good plot. Gentill captures in telling detail a political, moral, and cultural milieu." Anne Perry and Rhys Bowen are also fans.

✦ Johnson, Jane, [The Sea Gate](#) (Simon Schuster \$17.99). This well-crafted tale falls both into the rising popularity of the Gothic and of WWII fiction in its backstory. Reeling after her mother's death and her own cancer treatments, London artist Rebecca is at loose ends. Sorting through her mother's unopened mail, Becky finds a letter from an elderly cousin she barely remembers, a woman in Cornwall who seems to be in danger of losing her home. Impulsively, Becky hops a train to Penzance, to find Cousin Olivia Kitto—a tough old bird—in hospital and hiding more than a few secrets. Johnson deftly weaves together Olivia's experiences as a young woman during World War II with Becky's present-day journey of discovery. As Becky begins exploring and renovating Chynalls, Olivia's enormous, dilapidated family home, she finds more questions than answers. Having piqued her readers' curiosity, Johnson begins another narrative, set in the 1940s: that of Olivia's experience as a teenager, left nearly alone at Chynalls while her father fights overseas and her French mother does mysterious war work in London. The appearance of several prisoners of war in the close-knit, all-white village, including a blond Austrian airman and a young Arab man from North Africa, will have devastating consequences for Olivia and her neighbors. With its atmospheric setting, fast-paced dual narrative and vividly eccentric characters, *The Sea Gate* is a juicy novel perfect for fans of Kate Morton and Daphne du Maurier. But it's also an unflinching look at racism and sexism in England during the Second World War, a bittersweet love story and a tribute to unexpected courage under fire

Ide, Joe. [Hi Five](#) (\$16.99). Helping elderly Mrs. Marquez get her dog Pepito back from a neighborhood hoodlum does not satisfy

Isaiah Quintinabe's wish for a higher calling. The traditional notions of success bored him, nor did an upgrade to his place and his lifestyle. He has a girlfriend, Stella, a violinist who rare instrument she saved when it was stolen in Long Beach. But then he spots Grace. Grace—after two years, why is she back? And here is Dodson bringing him a case, a case where Beaumont has been shot and may not make it. Next, Christiana, daughter of the West Coast's biggest arms dealer, Angus Byrne. She's suspect *numero uno* in the murder of her boyfriend. Angus commands IQ prove Christiana innocent or he, Angus, will make sure Stella never plays, or lives, again. The big hitch here for IQ is that Christiana has multiple personalities, five of them. So IQ has to get clues from each to piece together what happened the night of the murder before the cops catch up.... [Order the first three IQs](#) to get up to speed in one of crime fiction's most original and award-winning series and preorder [Smoke](#) (Mulholland \$27.99) for late February.

✎ Pooley, Clare. [The Authenticity Project](#) (\$17). A group of strangers who live near each other in London become fast friends after writing their deepest secrets in a shared notebook. Julian Jessop, a septuagenarian artist, is bone-crushingly lonely when he starts "The Authenticity Project"—as he titles a slim green notebook—and begins its first handwritten entry questioning how well people know each other in his tiny corner of London. After 15 years on his own mourning the loss of his beloved wife, he begins the project with the aim that whoever finds the little volume when he leaves it in a cafe will share their true self with their own entry and then pass the volume on to a stranger... This is a warm and lovely read, perfect for a chilly winter night.

Sallis, James. [Difficult Lives Hitching Rides](#) (Soho \$15.99). At the time of its original publication by Gryphon Books in 1993, *Difficult Lives* was a pioneering work of literary investigation. Sallis' subjects of Himes, Goodis, and Thompson were as enigmatic as they were out-of-print, and literary scholarship on the subject of their lives and works scant. As the title of the collection indicates, the three men led difficult lives, and although they forever changed the history of crime writing, they all passed in relative isolation. The literary detective work Sallis did then has been built upon since but rarely with the same poetry and authorial sympathy. Despite there now existing several works of academic and popular biography on each writer Sallis' novella-length biographies retain the sense of the newly uncovered. Those three pieces, "Jim Thompson: Dime-store Dostoevski," "David Goodis: Life in Black and White," and "Chester Himes: America's Black Heartland" are prefigured by a new introduction by the author as well as the original introduction, "Portable Worlds: The First Paperback Novel." Following *Difficult Lives* is collection of reviews, essays and introductions, selected by Sallis, covering a wide range of crime fiction's most legendary authors and books: Derek Raymond, Jean-Patrick Manchette, Boris Vian, Patricia Highsmith, James Lee Burke, George Pelecanos, Paco Taibo, Shirley Jackson, and more

✎ Thomas, Russ. [Firewatching](#) (\$17). Here is a Starred PW review for our February 2020 British Crime Club Pick: When the remains of Gerald Cartwright, a wealthy, reviled businessman in Sheffield, England, are found bricked up in a wall of the Old Vicarage, Cartwright's home until his disappearance six years earlier, ambitious Det. Sgt. Adam Tyler, the principal investigator in Thomas's excellent debut, is grateful to be assigned the high-

profile cold case. The night of the discovery, Tyler is picked up in a gay bar by an attractive young man, Oscar, who happens to be Cartwright's son and only heir. Meanwhile, arson fires are set around Sheffield, disturbing residents and confounding police. They spark memories for Lilly and her companion, Edna, who were volunteer firewatchers in London during WWII. The pair played a big hand in raising Oscar, who soon becomes the lead suspect in his father's death, after his mother vanished when he was a child. Distinctive characters include feisty Det. Constable Amina Rabbani and fire captain Paul Enfield, who are often at odds with each other. Red herrings and uncovered family secrets abound. This stunning police procedural marks Thomas as an author to watch." Indeed he is. I've invited Andrew Grant who has lived in Sheffield to join me to host Thomas in February for the sequel, [Nighthawking](#) (\$26 unsigned US edition; \$36 Signed UK edition).

Turow, Scott. [The Last Trial](#) (\$16.99). The ominous prologue in which Sandy Stern, an acclaimed defense attorney in his 80s, collapses in a federal courtroom, hovers over the rest of bestseller Turow's impressive legal thriller, his 11th linked to Illinois's fictional Kindle County. In 2019, Stern and his daughter are representing Kiril Palko, a Nobel Prize winner and old friend, who's accused of covering up deaths resulting from the use of Palko's breakthrough cancer treatment and then cashing in stocks before news of the fatalities becomes public. Stern, who has vowed that this will be the last case he handles, is aware that both his body and mind are not what they once were. The twisty plot leaves the question of Palko's guilt unsettled until the very end. Take a deep dive into the legal system with Turow in this page-turner that makes a trial centered on fraud and insider trading fascinating. Turow remains in a class of his own in conveying the subtleties of criminal defense work while also entertaining his readers. This is truly an amazing book! I also remind you that Turow's bestseller *Presumed Innocent* pioneered the current rage for the Trust No One thriller

✎ Weinberg, Kate. [The Truants](#) (\$17). 19-year-old Jessica Walter enrolls at a university in East Anglia to study under prize-winning writer Lorna Clay, best known for *The Truants*, "a book that argues debauchery is fundamental to artistic brilliance. Lorna's current focus is the 'rescue' of Agatha Christie and other female authors who have been 'dismissed from the canon as irrelevant.' The semester starts strong, with Jess impressing Lorna and finding friends who also subscribe to the charismatic professor's hedonistic philosophies. Jess, fellow English major Georgie, South African journalist and visiting fellow Alec, and second-year geology student Nick are initially inseparable, but then triangles form and jealousies flare. When betrayal finally tears the group apart, Jess turns to Lorna for advice and support; as it happens, though, Lorna has secrets and an agenda of her own. Weinberg is adept at place. Her descriptions of the British university, small towns in the countryside and especially the remote Italian island are captivating. Like Christie, she seems to know the value of placing unpredictable characters in exotic settings. "Echoes Donna Tartt's *The Secret History*, Tom Wolfe's *I Am Charlotte Simmons*, Richard Russo's *Straight Man*, and Katie Lowe's *The Furies*. The mystery at the novel's core befits Agatha Christie [and] unravels at a nearly perfect pace... This slow burn of a debut explores the headiness of favoritism and the danger in meeting one's heroes."—*Booklist* Starred Review

JANUARY LARGE PAPERBACKS

Brown, Rita Mae. [Scarlet Fever](#) (\$17). What is it with antiques shop owner Harry Dunbar? First he finds a Louis XV desk just like the one that was stolen from Master of Foxhounds Jane “Sister” Arnold years ago. Then he tells Sister that he’s willing to sell it to her and her partner, retired D.C. accountant Gray Lorillard, for a mere \$20,000, since it’s only an 18th-century replica. Then, before she can make up her mind, he’s found dead at the bottom of the side staircase at Horse Country, Marion Maggiolo’s plush equine-themed gift shop. Did he fall, or was he pushed? That’s the question before the Jefferson Hunt club and a cast that includes “28 foxhounds, 20 horses, 16 foxes, 3 birds, 3 house pets, and 25 humans.” Tally-ho!

Chance, Megan. [A Splendid Ruin](#) (Lake Union \$14.95) is an astonishing beautiful, richly imagined historical novel about class, betrayal, revenge, and the terrible choices a woman must sometimes make to survive in dangerous times. This is a spellbinding page-turner of a book, full of unexpected twists and turns, told in beautiful prose, and set against the devastating backdrop of the Great San Francisco earthquake. In it, Megan Chance gives us a profoundly intimate look at a city—and a woman—in ruins.” — Kristin Hannah. May Kimble knows she should feel fortunate to be welcomed to San Francisco by her wealthy aunt and her family after May’s mother’s sudden death, but she soon has reason to fear that not everyone in her new life has her best interests at heart. When a dastardly betrayal places everything May possesses in jeopardy, the catastrophic 1906 earthquake gives her an unexpected opportunity to save herself. May and her unlikely allies race to get back everything she’s lost while navigating the ruins of the devastated city.

Collins, Max Allan. [Two for the Money](#) (Hard Case Crime \$14.95). You pulp fiction fanciers, alert. They don’t come tougher than Nolan – but even a hardened professional thief can’t fight off the entire Chicago mafia. So when an old friend offers to broker a truce, Nolan accepts the terms. All he has to do is pull off one last heist – and trust the Mob not to double cross him. Fortunately, Nolan has a couple of things going for him: an uncanny knack for survival and an unmatched hunger for revenge....

Dallas, Sandra. [Westerling Women](#) (\$17.99). The wonderful Dallas once again brings girl power to an epic of the West presenting a motley group of women who form a bond traveling to California on the Overland Trail. In 1852 Chicago, Maggie sees a notice posted by a minister offering to lead “moral” women to the western mines of Goosetown in order to find husbands. Having been abused by her husband, Maggie sees the chance for a better life for herself and her four-year-old daughter, Clara. She’s encouraged to join by Mary, a kind and capable woman who becomes one of her closest friends and a leader on the trail. After Mary concocts a story to help her bypass the requirements, Maggie sets off on a taxing journey during which the women are plagued by disease, attacks from Native warriors, and other hardships that bring them together. As trust grows, the others reveal their own agendas for having joined, such as a search for a sibling and a hidden pregnancy. The women learn to shoot, move their wagons through arduous routes, and fight off threats as a community.

Engberg, Katrine. [The Tenant](#) (\$16.99). Need a further fix of Nordic Noir? When a young woman is discovered brutally

murdered in her own apartment with an intricate pattern of lines carved into her face, Copenhagen police detectives Jeppe Korner and Anette Werner are assigned to the case. In short order, they establish a link between the victim, Julie Stender, and her landlady, Esther de Laurenti, who’s a bit too fond of drink and the host of raucous dinner parties with her artist friends. Esther also turns out to be a budding novelist—and when Julie turns up as a murder victim in the still-unfinished mystery she’s writing, the link between fiction and real life grows both more urgent and more dangerous. But Esther’s role in this twisted scenario is not quite as clear as it first seems. Is she the culprit or just another victim, trapped in a twisted game of vengeance? Anette and Jeppe must dig more deeply into the two women’s pasts to discover the identity of the brutal puppet-master pulling the strings....

Jurjevics, Juri. [Play the Red Queen](#) (\$16.95). The late publisher, author, and Viet Nam veteran Jurjevics’ last work is the story of two American GI cops caught in the corrupt cauldron of a Vietnamese civil war stoked red hot by revolution. Viet Nam, 1963. A female Viet Cong assassin is trawling the boulevards of Saigon, catching US Army officers off-guard with a single pistol shot, then riding off on the back of a scooter. Although the US military is not officially in combat, sixteen thousand American servicemen are stationed in Viet Nam “advising” the military and government. Among them are Ellsworth Miser and Clovis Robeson, two army investigators who have been tasked with tracking down the daring killer. Set in the besieged capital of a new nation on the eve of the coup that would bring down the Diem regime and launch the Americans into the Viet Nam War.

Maurensig, Paolo. [Game of the Gods](#) (World \$15.99). In 1930s British India, a humble servant learns the art of *chaturanga*, the ancient Eastern ancestor of chess. His natural talent soon catches the attention of the maharaja, who introduces him to the Western version of the game. Brought to England as the prince’s pawn, Malik becomes a chess legend, winning the world championship and humiliating the British colonialists. His skills as a refined strategist eventually drag him into a strange game of warfare with far-reaching consequences. Inspired by the unlikely true story of chess master Malik Mir Sultan Khan, *Game of the Gods* is a fascinating tale of karma and destiny, by the author of the multimillion-copy bestseller *The Lüneburg Variation* which does not appear to be in print, a shame since chess has become so hot thanks to [The Queen’s Gambit](#) (\$16.95) dramatized on Netflix so well.

Montgomery, Jess. [The Hollows](#) (\$17.99). Set in the fall of 1926 in Bronwyn County, Ohio, Montgomery’s intricate, atmospheric sequel to 2019’s [The Widows](#) (\$9.99), a First Mystery Book selection, finds Sheriff Lily Ross called to investigate the death of an elderly woman who fell from the top of the Moonvale Hollow tunnel into the path of an oncoming train. Was it an accident, or was she pushed onto the tracks by a ghostly figure in white, as the brakeman insists? Lily learns that the victim, Thea Kincaide, was an escaped inmate from the Hollows Asylum for the Insane and a long-lost cousin to her best friend, jail mistress Hildy Cooper, who sometimes looks after Lily’s two young children. In retracing Thea’s path from the asylum to the site of her death, Lily discovers disturbing evidence that an evil spirit from the past is trying to rise again. Realistic characters complement a great sense of place. Montgomery does an admirable job of portraying

brave women such as Lily who must become the support of their families in the face of their own grief after their husbands' deaths. I highly recommend both of these gems.

Niemi, Mikael. [To Cook a Bear](#) (Penguin \$18). This novel set in 1852 in the northern regions of Sweden/Lapland, maybe a bit of Finland, is grounded in the life of Lars Levi Laestadius, a pastor who revivalist movement bearing his name is still active today. He was an avid botanist too, taking his faithful son Jussi on long botanical treks combined with philosophical discussions, reading and writing about spirituality inspired by plants and nature. The fiction here kicks off when a maid goes missing in the deep forest and is found dead. The immediate suspect based on the crime scene is a large predatory bear. The local constable offers a reward for its capture. But then another maid is severely injured and the pastor, accompanied by a runaway Sami (Laplander) boy he mentors, focuses on a probable human agent in their village. The pastor is decreasingly popular among the authorities as his powerful sermons inspire people to choose revival over alcohol, which complicates his quest. This is atmospheric Nordic noir I enjoyed having visited Lapland (reindeer!) on a trip into Northern Sweden and Norway where the clash of traditional with modern culture is on-going.

✦ Oliver, Kelly. [High Treason at the Grand Hotel](#) (Level Best Books \$18.95). I'd call this a British historical cozy as the author takes file-clerk-turned-secret-agent Fiona Figg, a divorcee whose former husband has recently died of mustard gas from the WWI trenches, on a daring assignment to Paris. The target is her nemesis Fredrick Fredricks, who is based on the real life Fredrick Duquesne, a South African soldier of fortune, journalist and spy for the Germans in both World Wars. On the boat train Fiona meets up with a glamorous Lady, later identified as Mata Hari. And in Paris, staying at the Grand Hotel, Fiona, a plain woman who loves a variety of disguises and is addicted to hats, is soon up to her fake eyebrows and wigs with jewel thieves, missing maids, double agents...and treason. She's not a clever woman like Maisie Dobbs but she blunders along with her mission.... This series began with [Betrayal at Ravenswick](#) (\$16.95)

Perrone, Roberto. [The Second Life of Inspector Canessa](#) (Pushkin Press \$16.95). I found this hard going but if you are interested in how the Italian law enforcement cadres work (four major branches), life under the Years of Lead (late 1960s-1980s), political terrorism and such as the Red Brigades, the Mafia, Liguria, and spending some time in Milan, then this story filled with corruption and numerous players is for you.

Petersen, Todd Robert. [Picnic in the Ruins](#) (Counterpoint \$16.95). Competing interests over Native American artifacts and National Park land result in murder, mayhem and all-around insanity in this action thriller set in Utah and Arizona. When artifact collector Bruce Cluff is killed, several maps are stolen from his home. What the maps show and who wants them is the greater plot arc, supported by a series of underlying threads that add to the mystery and lunacy. Sophia Shepard is researching her thesis on the ethics of preserving ancient artifacts ("One person's artifact is another person's ancestor"). Tourist Reinhardt Kupfer, disillusioned with the U.S. and his tour group, departs on his own "quest." Paul Thrift, park ranger and Sophia's semi-romantic friend, takes her on an outing to one of the secret map locations where she learns things she doesn't want to know. Not long after,

they find themselves in a shootout and on the run with Reinhardt. *Picnic* is wildly creative and easily envisioned. The cultural appropriation and preservation lessons are thick, but they come by an honest need to avoid being engulfed by the blackly humorous, action-packed adventure. This fun caper stands up to some needed mindfulness. –Lauren O'Brien

✦ Quinn, Julia. [The Duke and I](#) (Avon \$16.99). The streaming series *Bridgerton*, based on the Regency romance novels by Julia Quinn, premiered on Netflix on December 25, 2020, to rave reviews. It follows the high-society Bridgerton family, a close-knit clan of four daughters and four sons contending with debutante balls and other competitive social obligations of the upper crust. The series was adapted by Chris Van Dusen and produced by Shonda Rhimes. Quinn's first *Bridgerton* book, *The Duke and I*, was published in 2000.

Robson, Jennifer. [Our Darkest Night: A Novel of Italy and the Second World War](#) (Morrow \$17.99). As the Nazis' hold tightens over occupied Italy, life becomes increasingly difficult for Jewish citizens. Antonina Mazin, the daughter of a doctor, is shocked to discover her father has made a plan for her safety: she will travel to the countryside with Nico Gerardi, a young Christian man, and pose as his wife. No one—not even his family—can know the truth. Robson, author of *The Gown; Moonlight over Paris*, etc., weaves a rich, compelling story of danger, sacrifice and steadfast love in her sixth novel, *Our Darkest Night*. Like so many people during wartime, Antonina finds her life changed in an instant: she must bid her father and her invalid mother goodbye, change her name to Nina Marzoli, and leave her beloved Venice behind. Robson vividly renders Nina's fear and disorientation as she accompanies Nico to his family's farm. Once there, she finds a warm welcome from his younger siblings and his widowed father, but his sister Rosa, who runs the household, greets her with suspicion and disdain. Gradually, Nina settles into her new life, learning how to do chores in the house and on the farm. But a local Nazi officer, a man who was once a seminary classmate of Nico, grows suspicious of Nina, and his investigations into Nina's background may put the entire family in peril. Robson has a gift for illuminating the struggles and hopes of ordinary people against a backdrop of life-changing events. Powerful, heartbreaking and full of wise, compassionate characters, *Our Darkest Night* is the story of a woman learning to fight for what—and whom—she loves in the face of great evil. –Katie Noah Gibson. Read Robson as prep for Lisa Scottoline's historical novel debut in [Eternal](#) (Putnam \$28), debuting here on March 20—order your signed copy now.

Stewart, Amy. [Dear Miss Kopp](#) (Houghton \$15.99). See the review under Hardcover. To which I add this: Urged by her sisters to write more than a few lines, Norma begins sharing episodes from French village life--and her roommate, Agnes, a nurse at the local hospital, begins adding notes of her own. When Agnes is accused of stealing medicines and Norma's pigeon program is put on ice, both women take matters into their own hands. Meanwhile, Fleurette is dealing with the vagaries of life on the road--including a parrot named Laura--and Constance is juggling investigative work and training a young female recruit. Stewart captures these real-life sisters and their fictional voices with intelligence, wry humor and biting commentary on the sexism faced by women in and out of the armed forces.

Straley, John. [What Is Time to a Pig?](#) (\$16.95). Sitka's Straley always offers a unique vision of Alaska. Here he skips to 2027. "Straley's delightfully absurd third Cold Storage novel takes place five years after the end of a brief war in which a poorly aimed missile fired by the North Koreans dropped unexploded warheads around southeastern Alaska. None of this means much to Gloomy Knob, who's been incarcerated for seven years in a prison near the town of Cold Storage for his sister's murder, until some well-meaning folks snatch him from an off-site work detail in the mistaken belief that he can locate an unaccounted for nuclear warhead. Though Gloomy is willing to help save Cold Storage and its inhabitants, including his wife, there's one minor problem: he has no idea where the bomb is. Unhinged by his newfound freedom, Gloomy is nearly as unstable as the warhead he has been sprung to find. Desperate to return to prison to continue his sentence, Gloomy begins remembering too much for his own good—and the good of others. Straley upturns the Alaskan landscape like Carl Hiaasen flipped Florida with wildly imaginative stories and droll characters."—*PW*

Waggoner, CM. [The Ruthless Lady's Guide to Wizardry](#) (Ace \$17). Return to the vibrant, Victorian England-inspired world of *Unnatural Magic* for a rollicking standalone fantasy featuring a scrappy but endearing heroine. Dellaria Wells is a no-good guttersnipe who runs petty cons in order to keep a roof over her head and look after her even more no-good mother. She's also an uncommonly talented fire witch. When Delly joins a misfit team of female bodyguards protecting a wealthy woman in the weeks before her marriage, she thinks it will be easy money—until horrifying necromantic mechanical spiders are sent to attack her boss's carriage. The culprit who unleashed them slips through the team's fingers, leading Delly and the other bodyguards on a hunt to bring her to justice (and, more importantly to Delly, to collect the reward money their boss is offering). In between a grisly murder, several extortions and explosions, and encounters with an extremely unsettling zombie mouse, Waggoner finds plenty of room for wry humor and a refreshingly wholesome relationship between Delly and fellow bodyguard Winn Cynallum. With this winning ensemble adventure, Waggoner again proves her skill at crafting immersive, historically flavored fantasy.

OUR JANUARY SMALL PAPERBACK PICKS

Box, CJ. [Long Range](#) (\$9.99). It begins when a retired FBI agent warns the Wyoming Game Warden's longtime falconer friend, Nate Romanowski, that the Mexican drug cartel whose four assassins Nate helped take down in *Wolf Pack* have marked Nate as a target for revenge. The cartel has dispatched Orlando Panfile, an expert marksman, to do the job. Meanwhile, someone takes an astonishing long-range shot at ill-tempered Judge Hewitt in his home that hits Hewitt's wife, leaving her in critical condition. Could it be Panfile? Joe is asked to join the investigation by the new county sheriff, Brendan Kaplow, a guy who'd rather strut than sleuth and seems to be focused on political office. Kaplow find it easier to arrest Nate, a remarkable shooter, than actually investigate, especially after a long-range rifle is discovered hidden in one of Nate's falcon pens. Of course, Joe isn't buying it, and conducts his own unauthorized investigation to help clear Nate. But why does Panfile mount an effort to have Nate freed? Several other odd questions need answering, too. I am impressed with the way Box skillfully elicits sympathy for Panfile, a stone

cold killer if ever there was one. I love Nate trying to be a conventional family man and.... But it's a Box hallmark never to do the obvious!

Cahoon, Lynn. [One Poison Pie](#) (Kensington \$8.99). Kitchen Witch #1. What's a kitchen witch to do when her almost-fiancee leaves her suddenly single and unemployed? For Mia Malone, the answer's simple: move to her grandmother's quirky Idaho hometown and open a new gourmet dinner delivery business. But her first catering job takes a distasteful turn when her client's body is found, stabbed and stuffed under the head table. *Kirkus* concluded their review with "A witchy cooking cozy for fans of the supernatural and good eating."

Coco, Nancy. [Death Bee Comes Her](#) (Kensington \$8.99). Oregon Honeycomb #1. When she stumbles upon the dead body of the cranky queen of the local craft fairs, who is clutching one of her labels, Let It Bee honey boutique owner Wren Johnson, with a little assistance from her cat Everett, sets the town abuzz as she tries to prove her innocence.

Cole, Stephanie. [Crime of the Ancient Marinara](#) (Berkley \$7.99). Tuscan Cooking School #2. Hoping for a fresh start in Tuscany, Italy, farm-to-table cooking school owner Nell Valenti finds her new business in danger when a visitor is poisoned by the top secret marina recipe of a famous chef. *Kirkus* had this to say "unlike those of so many female sleuths, Nell is as sharp as Chef's knives. No bumbling around confronting witnesses, antagonizing the local *carabinieri*, or daring the killer to try to stop her—just some daring leaps of logic based on first-timer Cole's carefully planted clues"

Ferencik, Erica. [Into the Jungle](#) (\$9.99). Taking a job in Bolivia to escape foster care and group homes, Lily apprehensively follows the man she loves into a ruthless, life-threatening jungle region of lawless poachers, bullheaded missionaries, and desperate indigenous tribes. *PW*, among other review sources, gave this a star saying "Ferencik delivers an alternately terrifying and exhilarating tale."

Gaylin, Alison. [If I Die Tonight](#) (\$9.99). When a once-famous 80s pop queen stumbles into a quiet Hudson Valley police station to report a hit-and-run auto theft, the case goes viral on social media, transforming the lives of locals who remember their interactions with the victim and perpetrator in ways that distort popular opinions about what really happened. *Kirkus* concluded their rave review with "This anxiety-fueled stand-alone from Edgar nominee Gaylin (*What Remains of Me*, 2016, etc.) takes the gulf that naturally develops between teenagers and their families and stocks it with sharks."

Howard, Linda. [After Sundown](#) (\$7.99). I thought this March 2020 release in hardcover was fabulous. Don't miss the paperback. When Ben Jernigan, a former Marine turned survivalist Tennessee mountain man, warns Sela Gordon, the owner of a gas station he frequents, of a catastrophic solar storm that will take down the global power grid in less than 24 hours, she doesn't quite believe him, but gathers supplies just in case. When the grid goes down as predicted, Sela and her neighbors are plunged into a new world order. Money has no meaning, gasoline is gold, and people must band together as food and other supplies dwindle. Despite the desperate times, attraction bubbles between shy Sela and reclusive Ben as they work to keep themselves, their families, and their friends safe. As hot romance sizzles between the pair,

steadily mounting panic among those trying to survive the crisis keeps the pages turning in a frightening realistic thriller with great landscape and atmosphere.

O'Connor, Carlene. [Murder in an Irish Cottage](#) (\$8.99). Irish Village #5. In a remote—and superstitious—village in County Cork, Ireland, Garda Siobhán O'Sullivan must solve a murder where the prime suspects are fairies.

White, Randy Wayne. [Salt River](#) (\$9.99). Doc Ford #26. When his reckless bachelor friend reveals that he has fathered numerous children through sperm-bank donations, Doc Ford races to prevent his friend's past misdeeds from turning deadly during an impromptu family reunion.

Winslow, Don. [The Border](#) (\$9.99). Promoted by the DEA after a crucial victory, Art Keller is targeted by the power-hungry traffickers behind an American heroin epidemic in this explosive conclusion to the author's The Cartel trilogy. Winslow's books have landed on the top ten best lists and his latest is no exception *PW* said "With clear-eyed determination and an almost Shakespearean grasp of human nature, Winslow takes readers on an unforgettable journey."

NEW IN SMALL PAPERBACK

Most will publish the end of January

Berenson, Laurien. [Watchdog](#) (\$8.99). Melanie Travis #5 Reissue. The last thing Melanie Travis wants is to become embroiled in yet another of her brother Frank's money making schemes, but when his current brainstorm--remaking an old store in stylish suburban Fairfield County into a trendy coffee bar—results in the murder of wealthy Marcus Rattigan, who's bankrolling the project, Melanie has no choice but to investigate.

Childs, Laura. [Lavender Blue Murder](#) (\$7.99). Tea Shop #21. Attending a traditional English bird hunt, tea-maven Theodosia Browning and her tea sommelier, Drayton Conneley, stumble on the wounded body of their host before suspicious accidents prompt the organization of a séance to expose the culprit.

Collins, Max Allan. [Skim Deep](#) (Hard Case Crime \$10.95). The onetime world-class thief Nolan—now happily gone straight with his own restaurant/nightclub—whisks his longtime lover Sherry off to Vegas for a trip to a wedding chapel and a honeymoon stay. But an eye-in-the-sky security cam at a casino spots Nolan, whose past catches up with him when he's thought to be casing the joint. An old "friend" sees Nolan as the perfect patsy for a scheme to heist the weekly skim haul, and when the former thief's young frequent accomplice, Jon - a musician in the casino's house band - finds the couple mysteriously, suspiciously missing, it's up to Nolan's Best Man to keep wedding bells from tolling a funeral march.

Dobbs, Leighann. [A Whisker in the Dark](#) (Grand Central \$6.99). Oyster Cove Guesthouse #2. After discovering the 300-year-old skeleton of a shipping tycoon in the wall, Oyster Cove Guesthouse owner Josie Waters, with everyone digging up her yard, must save her business - and her reputation - when one of her guests is murdered.

Fluke, Joanne. [Coconut Layer Cake Murder](#) (\$9.99). Hannah Swensen #25. Racing home to wintry Minnesota when her sister's boyfriend, Detective Lonnie Murphy, is implicated in a murder case, Hannah Swensen struggles with Lonnie's foggy memory about driving the victim home.

Graham, Heather. [The Final Deception](#) (Mira \$9.99). In a series fina-

le, criminal psychologist Kieran Finnegan navigates unnerving ties to an escaped killer in the wake of an outbreak of violent murders that FBI agent Craig Frasier believes may be the work of a copycat.

Jewell, Lisa. [The Truth About Melody Browne](#) (\$9.99) Ever since her house burned down when she was a child, Melody Browne has had no recollection of her life before she was rescued from the flames. Now in her early thirties, Melody is a single mother, living in the middle of London when she begins the arduous process of piecing together the real story of her childhood.

Johansen, Iris. [Hindsight](#) (\$8.99). Kendra Michaels #7. Investigating the baffling murders of two staff members at a school for the blind, investigator Kendra Michaels draws on her experience with a former sight disability to uncover a terrifying conspiracy.

Johnson, Craig. [Dark Horse](#) (\$9.99). Walt Longmire #5 Reissue. Believing that confessed murderer Mary Barsad is not guilty of shooting her husband in the head after he set fire to their barn and killed her horses, Sheriff Walt Longmire goes undercover as an insurance investigator and discovers an unfriendly town that has something to hide.

Krueger, William Kent. [Iron Lake](#) (\$9.99). Cork O'Connor #1 Reissue. Cork O'Connor has lost both his wife and his job as sheriff and falls into a profound emotional isolation. As a wild blizzard buries his lakeside town, a despised though influential resident is found dead, and a young Ojibwa Indian boy seems to have left home in a hurry. Cork has never taken Indian legends to heart, but when an old sage warns him that a cruel spirit with a heart of ice is near, all that changes.

Lansing, Kate. [A Pairing to Die For](#) (Berkley \$7.99). Colorado Wine #2. Murder is on the menu when the dead body of a sous chef is found behind her boyfriend Reid's new restaurant, prompting Vino Valentine to take matters into her own hands to prove Reid's innocence.

Linskey, Howard. [Hunting the Hangman](#) (Kensington \$9.99). In 1941, unfailingly dedicated soldiers trained in subterfuge by the British Special Operations, Josef Gabcik and Jan Kubis must assassinate one of the most dangerous men alive - Reinhard Heydrich, the most merciless senior figure in Hitler's inner circle.

Meier, Leslie. [Valentine Candy Murder](#) (Kensington \$8.99) Reissue. Kensington bundles together Meier's *Valentine Murder* and *Chocolate Covered Murder* - two previous Valentine's Day sleuthing adventures for Lucy Stone - into one package. Chocolate sold separately.

Morgan, Alexis. [Death by Intermission](#) (Kensington \$8.99). Abby McCree #4. When murder has a starring role during the town's Movies in Park, and her mother's boyfriend is accused of the crime, Abby must launch her own investigation and shine a spotlight on the real killer.

Patterson, James. [Revenge](#) (\$9.99). Investigating the suspicious suicide of a young woman whose family once employed him as a bodyguard, former SAS soldier David Shelley makes unsettling discoveries that are complicated by the victim's father's thirst for revenge.

Ryan, Sofie. [Undercover Kitty](#) (Berkley \$7.99). Second Chance Cat #8. Hired to look into who is sabotaging cat shows in the state, Sarah, along with Charlotte's Angels, finds things getting hairy when murder enters the competition and must pounce on the killer before it's too late.