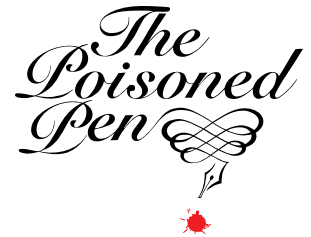


# BOOKNEWS from

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## MORE OF A FABULOUS FEBRUARY

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.

### SATURDAY FEBRUARY 2:00 PM

**The Jungle Red Bloggers Valentine Party**  
**Rhys Bowen, Lucy Burdette, Deborah Crombie, Hallie Ephron, Jenn McKinlay, Hank Phillippi Ryan, Julia Spencer-Fleming**

Join us for recommendations for Valentine reading

### SATURDAY FEBRUARY 13 3:00 PM

**Sarah Pearse in conversation with Jayne Anne Krentz**  
**Pearse** discusses [The Sanatorium](#) (Viking \$27)  
[The Sanatorium](#) (Bantam \$36) is our February First Mystery Book of the Month Signed UK edition  
Gothic thriller set in the Swiss Alps. Order early as we will not reorder

### SATURDAY FEBRUARY 13 4:15 PM

**Charles Todd** discusses [A Fatal Lie](#) (Harper \$28.99)  
DI Ian Rutledge begins an investigation in Wales  
Signed books available

### MONDAY FEBRUARY 15 6:00 PM

**Mark Greaney 20<sup>th</sup> book birthday party**  
**Special Guests**  
**Greaney** discusses [Relentless](#) (Berkley \$28)  
The 10<sup>th</sup> Gray Man thriller and Greaney's 20<sup>th</sup> book  
Signed books available

### TUESDAY FEBRUARY 16 7:00 PM

**JA Jance** discusses [Missing and Endangered](#) (Harper \$28.99)  
Joanna Brady/Bisbee  
Signed books available

### WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 17 5:00 PM

**Allison Epstein in conversation with Susanna Calkins**  
**Epstein** discusses her debut, [A Tip for the Hangman](#) (Doubleday \$26.95)  
Christopher Marlowe, Elizabethan spy and much more...  
Our February Historical Fiction Book of the Month  
Signed books available

### THURSDAY FEBRUARY 18 7:00 PM

**Hardboiled Crime** discusses Arnold Han's [3 Steps to Hell](#) (Stark House \$23.95)  
Contains *So I'm a Heel*, *Flint*, *The Big Out*

### FRIDAY FEBRUARY 19 7:00 PM

SciFi Friday discusses Alix Harrow's [The Ten Thousand Doors of January](#) (\$16.99)

### SATURDAY FEBRUARY 20 10:30 AM

**Croak & Dagger** discuss Louise Penny's [Bury Your Dead](#) (\$17.99)

### SUNDAY FEBRUARY 21 2:00 PM Live Book Launch

**Joanne Fluke** discusses [Triple Chocolate Cheesecake Murder](#) (Kensington \$27)

Minnesota baker Hannah Swensen

At 2:30 PM join us in our parking lot for a masked and distanced signing

The program will be virtual and not open to the public  
Signed books available

### MONDAY FEBRUARY 22 1:00 PM

**Iceland's Yrsa Sigurdardottir in conversation with Karin Slaughter**  
No book, just fun

### TUESDAY FEBRUARY 23 1:00 PM

**Russ Thomas in discussion with Andrew Child (Grant)**  
**Thomas** discusses [Nighthawking](#) (Putnam \$26)  
Sheffield DS Adam Tyler  
Our British Crime Book of the Month  
Signed UK edition available in April

### TUESDAY FEBRUARY 23 6:00 PM Virtual Book Launch

**Steve Berry** discusses [The Kaiser's Web](#) (St Martins \$28.99)  
Signed books with custom insert available

### WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 24 7:00 PM

**Joe Ide in conversation with Patrick**  
**Ide** discusses [Smoke](#) (LittleBrown \$27.99)  
LA's IQ  
Signed books available

### THURSDAY FEBRUARY 25 1:00 PM

**Alexis Landau** discusses [Those Who Are Saved](#) (Putnam \$27)

### THURSDAY FEBRUARY 25 6:30 PM

**Charlaine Harris in conversation with Pat King**  
**Harris** discusses [The Russian Cage](#) (Saga \$27.99)  
Signed books available

### FRIDAY FEBRUARY 26 6:00 PM

**Charles Finch** discusses [An Extravagant Death](#) (St Martins \$27.99)  
Signed books available

**SATURDAY FEBRUARY 27 1:00 PM**

**[AAUW East Mesa Branch Luncheon featuring Kent Krueger](#)**

as speaker

\$5 per ticket for admission, part of which goes to the AAUW Scholarship Fund

Sign up [HERE](#)

**MONDAY MARCH 1 7:00 PM Virtual Book Launch**

**CJ Box** discusses [Dark Sky](#) (Putnam \$27.99)

Joe Pickett

Signed books available. Personalizations possible

**TUESDAY MARCH 2 6:00 PM Victorian Crime**

**Tasha Alexander and Deanna Raybourn in conversation**

**Alexander** discusses [The Dark Heart of Florence](#) (St Martins \$27.99)

Lady Emily

**Raybourn** discusses [An Unexpected Peril](#) (Berkley \$26)

Veronica Speedwell

Signed books available for both

**SIGNED BOOKS**

Alexander, Tasha. [The Dark Heart of Florence](#) (St Martins \$27.99). Lady Emily and her intelligence agent husband, Colin Hargreaves, travel to Florence to investigate a break-in at the Palazzo di Vieri, the home of Colin's daughter, along with Emily's friend Cécile du Lac, an elegant Parisian with a passion for champagne and bohemian sensibilities. Meanwhile, the body of an informant associated with Darius Benton-Stone, Colin's fellow agent, has been discovered broken and bleeding in the palazzo's courtyard. While Colin and Darius investigate, Emily and Cécile, kept out of the men's confidence, keep themselves busy visiting the sights and doing some digging of their own into the dead man's background. They also discover that the Palazzo di Vieri is believed to contain a secret treasure. Could the man have been searching for it? The story tick tocks from 1903 to 15<sup>th</sup> Century Florence when the Medicis reigned and Savonarola rose, linking the quests rooted in the occupants of the palazzo. "Alexander effortlessly slips an enormous amount of Florentine history into a narrative that offers a loving portrait of the city and just the right amount of dashing derring-do." I'm glad that Alexander is advancing slowly from the Victorian into the Edwardian era.

Berenson, Alex. [The Power Couple](#) (SimonSchuster \$28). Rebecca and Brian Unsworth appear to have it all. A nice house in the suburbs of Washington, DC. Two well-behaved, healthy teenage children. Important government jobs—Rebecca working in counterterrorism for the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Brian serving as a coder for the National Security Agency. Their lives stand to improve even more as Brian, in his off-hours, has just developed and sold a highly profitable app. However, the Unsworths' marriage isn't as perfect as it seems. After two decades together, they've drifted apart, talking little and having sex even less. Seeking to revive their strained relationship, they decide for their twentieth wedding anniversary to take their two kids, Kira and Tony, on a European getaway. They have a blast...until one night in Barcelona.... Our **February Crime Book of the Month** is both a welcome return to fiction for the Edgar winner and *NY*

*Times* reporter and presents a plot that truly surprised me. Wow! Kudos to you if you figure it out. I don't want to say much for fear of spoilers and I urge you not to read reviews as everything said will be one.

Berry, Steve. [The Kaiser's Web](#) (St Martins \$28.99). A secret dossier from a World War II-era Soviet spy comes to light containing information that, if proven true, would not only rewrite history — it could impact Germany's upcoming national elections and forever alter the political landscape of Europe. Two candidates are vying to become Chancellor. One is a patriot having served for the past sixteen years, the other a usurper, stoking the flames of nationalistic hate. Both harbor secrets, but only one knows the truth about the other. They are on a collision course, all turning on the events of one fateful day — April 30, 1945 — and what happened deep beneath Berlin in the Führerbunker. Did Adolph Hitler and Eva Braun die there? Did Martin Bormann, Hitler's close confidant, manage to escape? And, even more important, where did billions in Nazi wealth disappear to in the waning days of World War II? The answers to these questions will determine who becomes the next Chancellor of Germany. This premise allows Berry to tour you around the globe with Cotton Malone, from Bavaria to the Chilean Lake District which is still a Bavarian enclave, on to South Africa and then into secret vaults in Switzerland.... With the rise of the right in Germany and elsewhere, and the possibility of Merkel's retirement, this is both historical and timely. Our copies come with a custom insert.

Box, CJ. [Dark Sky](#) (Putnam \$27.99). National book launch. CJ is signing this at The Pen so inscription requests are welcome. When the governor of Wyoming gives Joe Pickett the thankless task of taking a tech baron on an elk hunting trip, Joe reluctantly treks into the wilderness with his high-profile charge. But as they venture into the woods, a man-hunter is hot on their heels, driven by a desire for revenge. Finding himself without a weapon, a horse, or a way to communicate, Joe must rely on his wits and his knowledge of the outdoors to protect himself and his companion. Meanwhile, Joe's closest friend, Nate Romanowski, and his own daughter Sheridan learn of the threat to Joe's life and follow him into the woods... "Into the woods" is a Brothers Grimm trope repeated by many authors before Box like Tana French and Harlan Coben.

⌘Epstein, Allison. [A Tip for the Hangman](#) (Doubleday \$28). In her debut, our **February Historical Fiction Book of the Month**, Epstein pens a vivid, unforgettable hero in "Kit Marlowe, Elizabethan playwright-turned-spy always sprinting one step ahead of disaster and talking a blue streak as he does so. Recruited by Elizabeth I's spymaster to infiltrate the cabal of Mary Queen of Scots, Kit finds his conscience tested to the limit even as his heart yearns for an unattainable beloved. *A Tip for the Hangman* is simultaneously moving, unsettling, hilarious, and tragic—a debut that will linger long after the last page is turned." —Kate Quinn, author of *The Alice Network*. I've always been fascinated with Christopher Marlowe and his early, questionable death, even visiting the Thames-side tavern where purportedly it happened. MI5 has its origins in Sir Francis Walsingham's spy network set up under Elizabeth I. Did Marlowe play a part?

✂Finch, Charles. [An Extravagant Death](#) (St Martins \$29). Set in 1878, Finch's entertaining 14th mystery featuring Charles Lenox (after 2020's *The Last Passenger*) finds Lenox, "probably the preeminent detective in all of England, professional or amateur," dealing with the consequences of his exposure of three Scotland Yard chief inspectors being behind an armed robbery and numerous other crimes. The scandal imperils Benjamin Disraeli's government, and the politician implores Lenox to travel to the U.S. during the trial and allow his testimony to be provided in written form to minimize press sensationalism. Lenox reluctantly agrees, but demands full access to the file on the case of Harold Wallace, who was stabbed to death in his home a few blocks away from Lenox's own London residence. Lenox has doubts that the man charged with the crime, Wallace's butler, is guilty. Upon the investigator's arrival in the States, his skills are called upon by William Stuyvesant Schemerhorn IV of Newport, R.I., after an 18-year-old girl, whom his son had been courting, was found dead on a beach, apparently from a head wound. Finch effectively juggles the various plot threads, but there are two compelling reasons to dig into this story. One is the detailed, affectionate, yet almost satirical look at Newport and the artificiality of the super rich and their "cottages" and social whirl. The other is the effect this has on a Lenox approaching fifty and examining his life through an outsider, not an insider, lens. It's a good way to return from the prequel trilogy that ended in 2020.

Fluke, Joanne. [Triple Chocolate Cheesecake Murder](#) (Kensington \$27). Our copies come, some of them anyway, with a recipe card in addition to the recipes in the book. Joanne is signing at The Pen so inscription requests are welcome. Hannah Swensen's up to her ears with Easter orders rushing in at The Cookie Jar, plus a festive meal to prepare for a dinner party at her mother's penthouse. But everything comes crashing to a halt when Hannah receives a panicked call from her sister Andrea—Mayor Richard Bascomb has been murdered and she's the prime suspect. Even with his reputation for being a bully, Mayor Bascomb—or "Ricky Ticky," as Hannah's mother likes to call him—had been unusually testy in the days leading up to his death, leaving Hannah to wonder if he knew he was in danger. Meanwhile, folks with a motive for mayoral murder are popping up in Lake Eden. Was it a beleaguered colleague? A political rival? A jealous wife? Or a scorned mistress? As orders pile up at The Cookie Jar—and children line up for Easter egg hunts—Hannah springs into investigation mode....

Frey, Dan. [The Future Is Yours](#) (Del Rey \$27). "Let me tell you about your future: You're going to love this book. A fascinating premise, brilliantly executed. *The Future Is Yours* is a thrilling sci-fi adventure you simply can't put down and a masterful modern take on the epistolary novel."—Sylvain Neuvel. If you had the chance to look one year into the future, would you? For Ben Boyce and Adhi Chaudry, the answer is unequivocally yes. And they're betting everything that you'll say yes, too. Welcome to The Future: a computer that connects to the internet one year from now, so you can see who you'll be dating, where you'll be working, even whether or not you'll be alive in the year to come. By forming a startup to deliver this revolutionary technology to the world, Ben and Adhi have made their wildest, most impossible dream a reality. Once Silicon Valley outsiders, they're now its hottest commodity. The device can predict everything perfectly—from stock market spikes and sports scores to political

scandals and corporate takeovers—allowing them to chase down success and fame while staying one step ahead of the competition. But the future their device foretells is not the bright one they imagined. Ambition. Greed. Jealousy. And, perhaps, an apocalypse. The question is—can they stop it? Told through emails, texts, transcripts, and blog posts, this bleeding-edge tech thriller, our **February SciFi/Fantasy Book of the Month**, chronicles the costs of innovation and asks how far you'd go to protect the ones you love—even from themselves. May be sold out.

Greaney, Mark. [Relentless](#) (Berkley \$28). CIA operative Zach Hightower is trailing his target, a traitorous former NSA computer scientist, in a Caracas marketplace when he's grabbed by thugs from Venezuela's intelligence service. On learning of the failed mission, the CIA deputy director for operations rousts Zach's partner, CIA contract killer Court Gentry (aka the Gray Man), from his hospital bed, where he's recovering from a chest wound, and sends him to finish the job. Gentry takes on a long list of bad guys, including a group of American mercenaries working for the spy organization of the United Arab Emirates, a rogue international intelligence firm, and a Russian super agent who may be the only assassin in the world who could go one-on-one with Gentry and come out on top. Readers won't be wrong to suspect that Gentry, despite being at half strength, will prevail. Vivid action scenes spark the narrative.

✂Griffiths, Elly. [The Night Hawks](#) (Quercus \$45). In her last investigation, archaeologist Ruth Galloway gave up her attempt at a new life in Cambridge, and a new relationship. Now she's back in North Norfolk where a group of metal detectorists, are searching for buried treasure when they find a body on the beach. At first Nelson thinks that the dead man might be an asylum seeker but he turns out to be a local boy, Jem Taylor, recently released from prison. Ruth is more interested in the treasure, a hoard of Bronze Age weapons. DCI Nelson at first thinks that Taylor's death is accidental drowning, but a second death suggests murder. Nelson is called to an apparent murder-suicide of a couple at the isolated Black Dog Farm. Local legend talks of the Black Shuck, a spectral hound that appears to people before they die. Nelson ignores this, even when the owner's suicide note includes the line, 'He's buried in the garden.' Ruth excavates and finds the body of a giant dog. All roads lead back to this farm in the middle of nowhere, but the place spells serious danger for anyone who goes near. Ruth doesn't scare easily. Not until she finds herself at Black Dog Farm....

Note that Griffiths standalone [The Postscript Murders](#) (Houghton \$25), wonderfully comic and focused mainly on Brighton, is our **March British Crime Book of the Month**. A virtual event with her will be March 5 1:00 PM. Any club member who bought the now sold-out signed UK edition should contact Karen for an alternate selection for March.

Harper, Jane. [The Survivors](#) (LittleBrown UK \$45). These are surely UK tip-ins since Harper is an Australian author. We have Signed bookplates for the US edition: [The Survivors](#) (Flatiron \$27.99). The Indie Next Pick: "Jane Harper returns with another atmospheric psychological suspense novel, this time set on the Tasmanian coast. Harper's landscapes are tangible, exquisitely drawn, and as important to her stories as any character. The laid back and beautiful — but slightly run-down — beach town of Evelyn Bay is the star. Though there is a new body and an old mystery here, the novel focuses more on the inner conflicts, guilt,

and secrets of its characters — a close group of lovers, friends, and family who are all holding back parts of their past. Reading the book was like watching the waves lap at the mouths of dark caves from a Tasmanian beach. An excellent escape!”

Harper is the international bestselling author of *The Dry*, *Force of Nature* and *The Lost Man* (my personal favorite). She is an ace at the interplay of landscapes with fraught family relationships. Having been done out of my 80<sup>th</sup> birthday cruise to Tasmania and the Antarctic by COVID, I am excited to visit it with Harper.

Harris, Charlaïne. [The Russian Cage](#) (Saga \$27.99). A young gunslinger in an alternate America, Lizbeth (aka Gunnie) Rose faces down the Holy Russian Empire. She’s accustomed to working dangerous but impersonal protection jobs, but now she puts it all on the line to save the man she loves after she receives a coded letter from her preteen sister, Felicia, telling her that the wizard Eli Savarov, the man Gunnie loves, has been imprisoned by the Holy Russian Empire. Gunnie immediately sets out from Texoma to save him. Upon arriving in the HRE, she finds that Eli’s arrest is largely political, and to save him she’ll have to work together with Felicia, Eli’s friend Felix, and Eli’s family. The plan they land on requires Gunnie to involve herself in the HRE’s politics, which means casting aside her comfortable boots and jeans in order to blend in with royal family.

✂Herron, Mick. [Slough House](#) (Murray \$38). Revenge, betrayal, and gallows humor abound in the seventh installment of Herron’s ripping good series of spy novels. This time out, MI5’s disgraced spies are being hunted by Russian assassins and there’s no one they can trust to help them. Plus they are being downsized and worse. Herron’s deft plotting and taut writing make his books the best spy thrillers being published today. John Sandford is a serious fan. *Booklist* chimes in: “Combining some of the cleverest dialogue in the genre with unexpected bursts of violence, Herron brings to the spy novel—not known in the post-Bond era for its sense of humor—an Elmore Leonard–like ability to make us laugh and cry almost simultaneously.” And Ann Cleeves expresses my view of this chapter in the *Slough House* saga: “This is a darker, scarier Herron. The gags are still there but the satire’s more biting. The privatization of a secret service op and the manipulation of news are both relevant and horribly credible.” I believe Herron settles deeper into the mantle of the late John Le Carré—and there is a TV series coming. Actually a British critic calls Herron’s work “Carry On Le Carré.”

Here are a few comments from Herron: Question: In your new novel, *Slough House*, your focus is on the privatization of national security. MI5 is on sale to the highest bidders, including multimillionaires and media moguls looking to politicize government information. Is this happening? Is this something you think Britons should be worried about? Answer: If it’s not already happening, it probably will be soon. But that’s my take on the situation having finished the book; at the time of writing, I wasn’t aiming to deliver a warning or make a prediction. When plotting a novel, I simply look at what’s going on in the world and slightly bend it to my own use for British spies...

Hood, Joshua. [Robert Ludlum’s Treadstone Exile](#) (Putnam \$28). Hood’s fast-paced sequel to 2019’s *Robert Ludlum’s The Treadstone Resurrection* (\$9.99) finds Adam Hayes, a former operative for Treadstone, a CIA unit that “turned him into a government-sanctioned assassin,” in Ceuta, Spain, where he’s

feeling proud of himself for not having killed anyone in 152 days. He’s left his wife and child behind in America and gone on the run after the U.S. government declared him *persona non grata*. In Ceuta, he becomes involved in a smuggling ring, and the no-kill record is soon broken. Meanwhile, Andre Cabot, the founder and CEO of a cybersecurity firm, is in financial difficulty, and decides to steal his way back into solvency. Hayes lands right in the middle of Cabot’s plans and must be dealt with. Never mind clichéd prose (“get the hell out of Dodge”), a surfeit of backstory, and voices in the heads of Hayes and other characters that yammer at them in italics. Few thriller fans will be able to resist as the author hauls them by their necks down many rough roads while Hayes mows down the opposition. Hood is a master of action.

Hurwitz, Gregg. [Prodigal Son](#) (St Martins \$27.99). Extreme action melded with in-depth character studies punctuate Hurwitz’s absorbing sixth Orphan X thriller featuring Evan Smoak, who was abandoned as a baby, then, as a child, recruited into the secret Orphan Program, where he was trained to be an assassin. Leaving the Orphans, Evan reinvented himself as the Nowhere Man, a crime-fighting vigilante for ordinary people in need. Now retired, Evan wants to lead “an ordinary life, whatever that was.” And here he Evan meets a dose of the ordinary with the arrival of Veronica LeGrande, who claims to be his long-lost mother. The skeptical Evan comes to believe Veronica as she recounts details about the circumstances of his birth. Veronica wants a favor: help Andrew Duran, a down-on-his-luck, minimum-wage guard at an impound lot who witnessed a murder. Evan is soon embroiled in a conspiracy involving innovative military technology—and targeted by brother and sister killers. *Prodigal Son* spins on sharp, over-the-top action with a sense of believability, including Evan’s high-tech weapons, surveillance toys and his state-of-the-art condo. Evan’s mad martial-arts skills give him the edge in any fight, no matter how many opponents he faces, but he is no superhero, often getting hurt. Our copies will arrive from Hurwitz about February 3. Six copies left as I wrote this.

Ide, Joe. [Smoke](#) (LittleBrown \$27.99). Isaiah “IQ” Quintabe is driving north from his home in Long Beach, where he’s had enough of dealing with violent crime. He stops in Coronado Springs, a town near Lake Tahoe, where he ends up renting a one-bedroom house. His peaceful existence is interrupted by Billy Sorensen, an escapee from a neuro-psych facility who breaks into his house to steal food. Billy claims that a serial killer, known as AMSAK because his 17 victims were dumped near the Sacramento and American rivers, is headed to Coronado Springs—and that he knows AMSAK’s identity. Reluctantly, Isaiah investigates... “Ide has displayed a rare ability to mix dark comedy and gut-churning drama...mixmaster Ide’s compulsion to blend light and dark (Isaiah’s confrontation with the serial killers, while gruesome, takes the form of ‘a slapstick movie shot in a burning insane asylum’) affects the two plots in surprising ways, again producing an emotion-rich form of character-driven tragicomedy, but one in which peril forever loiters in the shallows.” —*Booklist*

Jance, JA. [Missing and Endangered](#) (Harper \$28.99). When Jennifer Brady returns to Northern Arizona University for her sophomore year, she quickly becomes a big sister to her new roommate, Beth Rankin, a brilliant yet sheltered sixteen-year-old freshman. For a homeschooled Beth, college is her first taste of both freedom and unfettered access to the internet, and Jenny is

concerned that she is too naive. With Beth at war with her parents, Jenny asks to invite Beth home for Christmas, and Jenny's mom, Cochise County Sheriff Joanna Brady, says yes. After all, what could go wrong? Within hours, however, Joanna's department is sucked into a complex officer-involved shooting that places two vulnerable young children in jeopardy. Then when Beth disappears, Joanna finds herself in a case fraught with landmines. With her own daughter's well-being at stake, the seasoned sheriff knows there's no room for the slightest mistake as hope ticks away for a fragile young girl who has gone missing, and is surely endangered.

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 ten years back 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.... Many threads pull a layered story along to several unexpected results.

Kellerman, Jonathan. [Serpentine](#) (Ballantine \$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." And delivered bit by bit, one thing uncovering or suggesting another... inexorably. The pacing is very fine.

Koryta, Michael. [Never Far Away](#) (LittleBrown \$28). Koryta, our second Writer in Residence (after Charles Finch), wrote the screenplay for his May release movie *Those Who Wish Me Dead* starring Angelina Jolie here at The Pen. And here he is with a new thriller that is another candidate for the screen: A woman fakes her own death with the help of the hit men hired to kill her. The novel follows Nina Morgan, who acted to protect her husband and two small children. Ten year later she finds herself widowed.

Posing as her children's aunt, Nina goes on the lam with her kids—now 13-year-old Hailey and 11-year-old Nick—and aims to start a new life in Maine. The plot involves a larger conspiracy centered around a Blackwater-like agency. The opening is a zinger and the book delivers on its promise.

Quartey, Kwei. [The Missing American](#) (Soho \$27.95). This 2020 series start for Emma Djan set in Accra, Ghana, is a 2021 Edgar nominee. We sold out of a recent batch of signed firsts but have restocked. Vividly invoking the noisy world of Accra, Ghana, Quartey has created a delightful character in Emma Djan, and a satisfyingly twisty mystery in the January 2021 sequel, [Sleep Well, My Lady](#) (\$27.95). Fans of Andrea Camilleri or Colin Cotterill are sure to enjoy Quartey's talented writing which is, as our video interview on January 25 shows, applauded by Michael Connelly. Check out the [video](#) or the [podcast](#).

Qui, Xiaolong. [Becoming Inspector Chen](#) (Severn \$29). Qiu deepens his Dalgliesh-like series lead in his superior 11th novel featuring Shanghai policeman and poet Chen Cao. Chen's latest investigation embarrassed the Beijing Communist Party leadership, and he's fallen out of favor. Despite suspecting that he'll soon lose his chief inspector position, Chen's curious about a new case involving an anti-party poem posted on the country's most popular social media platform, which reminds him of a previous inquiry. Flashbacks detail Chen's first case, which centers on an old gourmet's murder and involves "a piece of blood-speckled gauze, and a gray lizard with a strange name he failed to recollect." That intriguing plotline is enhanced by an account of Chen's painful childhood as the son of an academic deemed hostile to Mao's regime and the events that led to Chen's joining the Shanghai PD. While series fans will be delighted at the background Qiu provides, this is an accessible starting point for newcomers interested in a dogged, honest cop who must battle his own government to do his job.

✚Raybourn, Deanna. [An Unexpected Peril](#) (Berkley \$26). *Kirkus* reviews: "Why is lepidopterist Veronica Speedwell bored with life in London? After all, she and her love, the Hon. Revelstoke Templeton-Vane, better known as Stoker, are living on a lovely estate while they work on a vast collection of objects of natural history and help design an exhibit to honor Alice Baker-Greene, an intrepid mountaineer and feminist, who died in a climbing accident in the tiny country of the Alpenwald. Princess Gisela of the Alpenwald herself comes to open the exhibit. All goes smoothly until Stoker finds Alice's climbing rope among the exhibition items and notices that it wasn't frayed but cut with a knife, turning her fatal accident into murder. Veronica, who'd met and admired Alice, is keen to investigate, but Stoker's not interested in expanding their case files. Their differences are rendered moot when members of the Alpenwald delegation beg Veronica to pose as the wayward Princess Gisela, who often goes off on little trips on her own, in order to avert the scandal that would surely arise if she did not show up for her engagements. The two women look remarkably alike because both are related through Queen Victoria's large family, Veronica as the unacknowledged daughter of Prince Bertie. Now that she has entree to all the Alpenwalders, Veronica, her boredom decisively ended, sets to work sleuthing with the reluctant Stoker. Their discoveries soon put them at odds with a clever killer. This well wrought and entertaining [Veronica Speedwell series](#) is best read in order.

Rice, Luanne. [The Shadow Box](#) (Thomas & Mercer \$24.95). I repeat my recommendation for this suspenseful novel by Rice set along Connecticut's wilderness and coast (think Old Lyme and such) for two reasons. One, it's a strong story that tours you through compelling landscapes and homes. I love the way an old structure thwarts a murder at the outset. And two, the publisher went all in and in addition to creating the dust jacket, covered the boards with a colorful and arresting depiction of a shadow box. It's gorgeous. Front and back. A real boon to any collector. I featured a photo of the two covers in our [Instagram account](#).

Saunders, George. [A Swim in a Pond in the Rain](#) (Random \$28). Tip ins. If you've been whiling away the pandemic reading, here's a chance to take a literary deep dive into those Russian masters you've always wanted to try—Chekhov, Turgenev, Tolstoy, and Gogol—or have tried. “One of the most accurate and beautiful depictions of what it is like to be inside the mind of a writer that I've ever read.”—Parul Sehgal, *The New York Times*

Stabenow, Dana. [Spoils of the Dead](#) (Zeus \$29.95). Dana, referred to as Dana Stab-me-now by the *Sunday Times* (London) which gave this new Liam Campbell a rave, gets another one from *The New York Journal of Books*: “The author, Alaska born, brings authenticity to her stories. She also has a crackling, sometimes snarky, writing style that pulls readers in and adds moments of both levity and gravitas to her tales. The Liam Campbell series is generally lighter in tone than the Kate Shugak series but it never ignores the hard core of Alaskan reality. Readers from ‘Outside’ can't avoid learning about the climate, the cultures, and the economic realities of the 49th, and largest, U.S. state. Kudos to the author for making the environment as much a part of the story as its characters. They are inextricably intertwined. And a caveat to readers of any Dana Stabenow novel: One can never be sure what the ending will be.”

For those who missed the [first four Campbells](#), we have the UK paperbacks (\$15.95 each) which Dana has signed.

Stabenow, Dana. [No Fixed Line](#) (Zeus \$29.95). Kate Shugak #22 in case you missed it. It is New Year's Eve, nearly six weeks into an off-and-on blizzard that has locked Alaska down, effectively cutting it off from the outside world. But now there are reports of a plane down in the Quilak Mountains. With the NTSB (National Transportation Safety Board—responsible for investigating aviation incidents) unable to reach the crash site, ex-Trooper Jim Chopin is pulled out of retirement to try to identify the aircraft, collect the corpses, and determine why no flight has been reported missing. But Jim discovers survivors: two children who don't speak a word of English. Meanwhile, PI Kate Shugak receives an unexpected and unwelcome accusation from beyond the grave.

Tarkington, Ed. [The Fortunate Ones](#) (Algonquin \$26.95). After fatherless Charlie Boykin, who lives on the wrong side of 1980s East Nashville with his cocktail waitress mother, wins a scholarship to a private school, he becomes ensconced in the upper crust society of posh neighboring town Belle Meade. Befriended by golden boy and fellow freshman Arch Creigh, also fatherless, Charlie is introduced to a world of privilege and is soon caught up in a love triangle with Arch's girlfriend, Vanessa. Charlie never feels truly at home among his wealthy peers, though his friendship with Arch continues through college and beyond, when he helps Arch with his political career after Arch marries Vanessa. Tarkington frames the story with middle-aged Charlie's present-

day narration, in which he learns that Arch, now a U.S. senator, has died by suicide. While there's no shortage of melodrama, the author skillfully unpacks Charlie's uneasy feelings. “Ed Tarkington's wonderful second novel feels like a fresh and remarkably sure-footed take on *The Great Gatsby*, examining the complex costs of attempting to transcend or exchange your given class for a more gilded one. Tarkington's understanding of the human heart and mind is deep, wise and uncommonly empathetic. As a novelist, he is the real deal. I can't wait to see this story reach a wide audience, and to see what he does next.” —Paula McLain. Kevin Wilson, author of *Nothing to See Here*, adds, “There's a sharpness to Ed Tarkington's view of the world, an exacting truthfulness of how things work, but he marries it to such an open-hearted and resonant humanity in his writing that it's hard not to place him easily in the company of Pat Conroy and Alice McDermott. In *The Fortunate Ones*, Tarkington examines privilege and friendship with that same incredible perspective, and he helps us see the difficulties of trying to hold onto yourself even as you want so badly to be transformed. An amazing, thought-provoking novel by one of our most generous writers.” With *The Great Gatsby* entering in the public domain this January, here is a splendid narrative with parallels (although wholly original) set in a different time and landscape—and our **February Fantastic New Fiction Book of the Month**.

✠Todd, Charles. [A Fatal Lie](#) (Harper \$28.99). Inspector Ian Rutledge remains out of favor with his jerk of a superior at the Yard, Chief Super Markham, and so in a cold spring of 1921 draws assignment to an odd case at the famed Telford-built aqueduct carrying narrowboats via a narrow indeed channel across a Welsh valley on 126 foot pillars. A body has been found in the River Dee below by a lad out with his fishing pole, a body clearly fallen from the aqueduct's great height. Suicide? Accident? No. Rutledge quickly determines the man had been pushed off the tow path. His total lack of ID suggests murder. But who is he? Some intelligent examination of the corpse leads Rutledge to a small community where the man and his wife, Ruth, ran a failing pub. No one had missed Sam as he was thought to be in nearby Shrewsbury negotiating for supplies. And probably still on the hunt for the couple's three year old daughter, Tildy, who went missing a year ago. Now Rutledge has two lines of investigation to work, with a little backup back at the Yard from Gibson. Weeks elapse as he motors all over northern Wales seeking answers while unearthing betrayals large and small....

#### UNSIGNED EVENT BOOKS

Charles, Janet Skeslien. [The Paris Library](#) (Atria \$28). Inspired by the true story of the librarians who risked their lives during the Nazis' war on words: a story of courage and betrayal inspired by real-life defiance in Occupied Paris, perfect for fans of *All the Light We Cannot See*, *The Book Thief* and *The Guernsey Literary & Potato Peel Pie Society*, or *The Lions of Fifth Avenue* and *Sarah's Key*. Structured in two tracks, 1939 Paris and 1983 Montana, it is a tale for lovers of books and libraries as well as the ever burgeoning WWII fiction genre, and is the No. 1 Indie Next Pick for February (we will have signed bookplates for the US edition): “I can't think of a more perfect novel to recommend to book lovers than *The Paris Library*! Not only does it bring to life the true story of the heroic librarians of the American Library in Nazi-occupied Paris, its interwoven narrative of a bereft teenager in 1980s Montana who finds a kindred spirit in her mys-

terious, reclusive, and book-loving French neighbor is a feat of extraordinary storytelling. *The Paris Library* is a testament to the everlasting power of literature and literary places to bring people together and be a home for everyone, even during our darkest, most hopeless, and divided times.” Charles herself writes: «I wrote this novel as a love letter to libraries, to bookstores, and to book people. In these difficult days, we need the sanctuaries of bookshops and libraries more than ever.»

✦Dean, Abigail. [Girl A](#) (Viking \$27). See Signed Books too. Lex Gracie doesn’t want to think about her family. She doesn’t want to think about growing up in her parents’ House of Horrors. And she doesn’t want to think about her identity as Girl A: the girl who escaped, the eldest sister who freed her older brother and four younger siblings. It’s been easy enough to avoid her parents—her father never made it out of the House of Horrors he created, and her mother spent the rest of her life behind bars. But when her mother dies in prison and leaves Lex and her siblings the family home, she can’t run from her past any longer. Together with her sister, Evie, Lex intends to turn the home into a force for good. But first she must come to terms with her siblings—and with the childhood they shared. What begins as a propulsive tale of escape and survival becomes a gripping psychological family story about the shifting alliances and betrayals of sibling relationships. “The height of a pandemic might not be the ideal time to read a novel about six English children held captive at home and abused by their deranged parents. But put your fears aside or you’ll miss out on a stunning debut...”—*Washington Post*. Don’t say I didn’t warn you.

Fitzek, Sebastian. [The Package](#) (Zeus \$27.99). A huge seller in his native Germany for his psychological suspense, Fitzek offers you one. Emma’s the one that got away. The only survivor of a killer known in the tabloids as “the hairdresser” – because of the trophies he takes from his victims. Or she thinks she was. The police aren’t convinced. Nor is her husband. She never even saw her tormentor properly, but now she recognizes him in every man. Questioning her sanity, she gives up her job as a doctor in the local hospital and retreats from the world. It is better to stay at home. Quiet. Anonymous. Safe. No one can hurt her here. All she did was take a parcel for a neighbor. She has no idea what she’s let into her home. But you do, gradually. The structure of the narrative is unusual but it pulls together in the end with its betrayals and twists.

Harper, Jane. [The Survivors](#) (Flatiron \$27.99). Signed bookplates. See Signed Books for a review of the UK edition. Jane is a *New York Times* and *Sunday Times* bestseller, and has won numerous top awards including the Australian Book Industry Awards Book of the Year, the Australian Indie Awards Book of the Year, the CWA Gold Dagger Award for Best Crime Novel, and the British Book Awards Crime and Thriller Book of the Year. Her books are published in more than 36 territories worldwide, with [The Dry](#) (\$15.99) in production as a major motion picture starring Eric Bana. Jane worked as a print journalist for thirteen years both in Australia and the UK, and now lives in Melbourne.

Landau, Alexis. [Those Who Are Saved](#) (Putnam \$27). As a Russian Jewish émigré to France, Vera’s wealth cannot protect her or her four-year-old-daughter, Lucie, once the Nazis occupy the country. After receiving notice that all foreigners must report to an internment camp, Vera has just a few hours to make an impos-

sible choice: Does she subject Lucie to the horrid conditions of the camp, or does she put her into hiding with her beloved and trusted governess, safe until Vera can retrieve her? Believing the war will end soon, Vera chooses to leave Lucie in safety. She cannot know that she and her husband will have an opportunity to escape, to flee to America. She cannot know that Lucie’s governess will have fled with Lucie to family in rural France, too far to reach in time. And so begins a heartbreaking journey and separation, a war and a continent apart. Vera’s marriage will falter under the surreal sun of California. Her ability to write—once her passion—will disappear. But Vera’s love for Lucie, her faith that her daughter lives, will only grow. As Vera’s determination to return to France and find Lucie crystallizes, she meets Sasha, a man on his own search for meaning. She is stronger with Sasha than she is alone...but will they be enough?

Pearse, Sarah. [The Sanatorium](#) (Viking \$27.99). Set in the eerie and isolated Swiss Alps at Le Sommet, a luxurious, 5-star resort built on the site of an abandoned tuberculosis sanatorium, *The Sanatorium* beautifully balances a heart-pounding plot with intriguing, three-dimensional characters. Le Sommet is the last place that Elin Warner wanted to be. She’s taken time off from her job as a police detective, so when her estranged brother, Isaac, and his fiancée, Laure, invite her and her partner, Will, to celebrate their engagement at the hotel, Elin really has no reason not to accept. Arriving in the midst of a threatening storm, Elin immediately feels on edge—there’s something about the hotel that makes her nervous. And when they wake the following morning to discover Laure is missing, Elin must trust her instincts if they hope to find her. With the storm closing off all access to the hotel, the longer Laure stays missing, the more the remaining guests start to panic... but no one has realized yet that another woman has gone missing in this locked-room mystery debut, the Reece Witherspoon Pick for February.

The action takes place in the (real) ski resort town of Crans-Montana where Pearse has a home. “I was really enthused by this isolated setting and using it as a way of heightening tension. I was also inspired by the fact these sanatoria were often based in remote, high altitude locations not only for health reasons of being at altitude but in order to stop the spread of infection. I really wanted to use this isolation to put my characters under pressure.”

✦Thomas, Russ. [Nighthawking](#) (Putnam \$26). **This is the Unsigned US edition and our February British Crime Club Book of the Month.** I normally try not to select two in a row by one author for a club, but this is so good I can’t resist... plus I keep on the hunt for UK books that are NOT domestic suspense. **If you prefer the Signed UK edition out in April and belong to the club please let Karen know so we can select something else for you.**

“The discovery of a young woman’s body buried in the sprawling Botanical Gardens of Sheffield, England, drives Thomas’s outstanding sequel to 2020’s *Firewatching*, which introduced DS Adam Tyler. The victim—a Chinese national studying botany at the local university—was found with ancient Roman coins on her eyes, historically valuable artifacts worth a lot of money. Tyler, struggling to get the wreckage of his personal life in order and still obsessed about finding out the truth of his father’s alleged suicide, offers little help as the brunt of the work falls to Tyler’s newly promoted protégé, Detective Constable

Mina Rabbani, who realizes quickly that the case involves much more than a simple buried body. Thomas adeptly develops his diverse cast, but the novel's real power lies in its intricate structure—the mystery surrounding the body is impressively deep, the various levels of tension are relentless, and every chapter ends with a narrative punch to the face. This police procedural is virtually unputdownable.”—*PW* Starred Review

## OUR FEBRUARY BOOKS OF THE MONTH

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

Berenson, Alex. [The Power Couple](#)

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

Thomas, Russ. [Nighthawking](#)

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

Cosimano, Elle. [Finlay Donovan is Killing It](#)

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

Tarkington, Ed. [The Fortunate Ones](#)

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

Pearse, Sarah. [The Sanatorium](#)

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

Epstein, Allison. [A Tip for the Hangman](#)

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

Raman, RV. [A Will to Kill](#)

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

Frey, Dan. [The Future Is Yours](#)

## BEST OF 2020

I've looked at many a list. This one from the [Reading List Council](#) looking at genre fiction is excellent for those preferring entertainment and excitement and escape over agenda. I recommend you look through it.

## CLASSICS

Hopkins, Pauline. [Of One Blood: Or, The Hidden Self](#) (The Haunted Library \$14.99). When medical student Reuel Briggs reluctantly attends a performance by the beautiful singer Dianthe Lusk, he can't help but fall for her. The very next day, their paths cross again when Dianthe's train crashes. To bring her back from the brink of death, Reuel draws on an eerie power he can't quite name. Soon, the two are engaged, and Reuel sets off on an archeological expedition to Africa to offset his debts before the wedding. But, in Ethiopia, unexpected danger and terror force him to confront the truth about his lineage, his power, and the history that lives in his very blood. First serialized in *Colored American Magazine* in 1902, this narrative exemplifies Pauline Hopkins's incisive writing and interrogates issues of race and history that remain urgent today. This edition is presented by the Horror Writers Association and introduced by award-winning author Nisi Shawl. Includes notes, biographical information about the author, discussion questions for classroom use, and suggested

further reading from Leslie S. Klinger et al. **This is an excellent book to read during February, Black History Month.**

✠Lorac, ECR. [Checkmate to Murder](#) (Poisoned Pen \$14.99).

On a dimly foggy night in Hampstead, London, a curious party has gathered in an artist's studio to weather the wartime blackout. A civil servant and a government scientist match wits in a game of chess, while Bruce Manaton paints the portrait of his characterful sitter, bedecked in Cardinal's robes at the other end of the room. In the kitchen, Rosanne Manaton prepares tea for the charlady of Mr. Folliner, the secretive miser next door. When the brutal murder of 'Old Mr. F' is discovered by his Canadian infantryman nephew, it's not long before Inspector Macdonald of Scotland Yard is called to the scene to take the young soldier away. But even at first glance the case looks far from black-and-white. Faced with a bevy of perplexing alibis and suspicious circumstances, Macdonald and the C.I.D. set to work separating the players from the pawns to shed light on this toppling of a lonely king in the dead of night. Another fine Golden Age British Library Crime Classic.

✠Symons, Julian. [The Progress of a Crime](#) (Poisoned Pen \$14.99). Introduction by Martin Edwards who now occupies the chair of the Detection Club once occupied by Symons. Based on a real case and exhibiting characteristically thorough research and skillful plotting, Julian Symons' phenomenal 1960 novel is a searing drama of wrongful accusation, gripping police work and a sharp portrait of small-town tensions. This edition also includes the short story "The Tigers of Subtopia." A confrontation during a dance between a gang of young hooligans and landowner James Corby in the English village of Far Wether drives this taut mystery from MWA Grand Master Symons (1912–1994). "After vowing to return, the gang members show up on Guy Fawkes Night when the residents of Far Wether burn an effigy of a legendary wicked local, Squire Oldmeadow, and set off fireworks. The night ends tragically with Corby's fatal stabbing. Overheard cries of "Get him, King" before the murder lead the police to Jack Garney (aka King), the head of a group of coworkers in a canning factory. After Scotland Yard gets involved, Garney and a follower, Les Gardner, are charged with killing Corby and a related murder. Much of the action focuses on their trial, which is viewed from the perspective of journalist Hugh Bennett, who identified Gardner as being present on the fatal night. "Symons excels at conveying the wide impact Corby's murder has on multiple people. Fans of realistic, downbeat crime fiction will welcome this British Library Crime Classic."

## NEW IN HARDCOVER

Adams, Hope. [Dangerous Women](#) (Berkley \$26). Adams' debut transforms an actual 19th-century sea voyage into a striking personal drama, grounding historical mystery in real history. In April 1841, a transport ship sets sail from London with 180 women convicted of minor crimes aboard. During the three-month voyage to the penal colony in Van Diemen's Land (now Tasmania), the ship's matron, Kezia Hayter, chooses a group of convicts to sew a presentation quilt. Near their destination, someone stabs one of the quilters, Hattie Matthews, and it becomes clear that another member of the group has secretly stolen the place of another woman on the ship in order to flee from justice for a much more serious crime. Evocative sketches of those on board reveal the realities of poor women's lives with a gently feminist, but still



comfortably period, aesthetic, as do the difficulties that Kezia has in having her insights respected by the men investigating Hattie's stabbing. The romance that develops between Kezia and the ship's captain comes off as blandly inevitable, but the undercurrent of gossip around the relationships the other women pursue is much juicier.

Bear, Greg. [The Unfinished Land](#) (Houghton \$26) offers an historical fantasy about a shipwreck survivor in an unknown land. Reynard, a young apprentice, seeks release from the drudgery of working for his fisherman uncle in the English village of Southwold. His rare days off lead him to strange encounters—not just with press gangs hoping to fill English ships to fight the coming Spanish Armada, but strangers who seem to know him—one of whom casts a white shadow. The village's ships are commandeered, and after a fierce battle at sea, Reynard finds himself the sole survivor of his uncle's devastated hoy. For days he drifts, starving and dying of thirst, until he is rescued by a galleon, also lost—and both are propelled by a strange current to the unknown northern island of Thule. Here Reynard must meet his destiny in a violent clash between humans and gods.

Coker, Margaret. [The Spymaster of Baghdad: A True Story of Bravery, Family and Patriotism in the Battle against Isis](#) (Harper \$28.99). The *PW* Starred Review: "Journalist Coker debuts with a fascinating, character-driven chronicle of the battle against al-Qaeda and ISIS in Iraq. She centers her account on Abu Ali al-Basri, leader of an elite Iraqi intelligence unit known as 'the Falcons,' and two young men under his command. Framing the book with the joint Iraqi-American raid that resulted in the death of ISIS mastermind Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi in 2019, Coker follows brothers Harith and Munaf al-Sudani as they endure family strife, the fall of Saddam Hussein, and the violence of the post-invasion insurgency before finally settling into vital roles on al-Basri's spy team. Coker juxtaposes their heroic journey with the descent of Abrar al-Kubaisi, a young Sunni woman whose despair over the American occupation of Iraq led to her radicalization by ISIS. Coker ties the threads of the narrative together in a gripping and well-crafted conclusion worthy of a spy novel. Though she paints a vivid and harrowing picture of the fallout from the Iraq War, it is Coker's focus on the resilience and bravery of Iraqis who are leading the fight to rebuild their country that lifts this book above other accounts of the war on terror. The result is a dramatic and edifying must-read for espionage fans and anyone interested in Middle Eastern affairs."

De Rosnay, Tatiana. [Flowers of Darkness](#) (St Martins \$27.99). A woman wrestling with writer's block turns to a Parisian residency to get her creative juices flowing, with grim consequences. Alone in her swanky, if temporary, apartment, Clarissa can't escape the feeling that she's under surveillance. She pulls her granddaughter in to help her, but soon comes face to face with the secrets of her own past, in this tense thriller."

Duchovny, David. [Truly Like Lightning](#) (Farrar \$28) takes a bucking ride through the 21st-century American West, ranging from Hollywood to religious fervor out in the desert. Former stuntman Bronson Powers has left Los Angeles to embrace the Mormon faith, forging a life with three wives and 10 children on a vast tract of land near Joshua Tree, California. But a snake comes into this Eden in the form of ambitious young developer Maya Abbadessa. Determined to buy a portion of the Powers

plot, Maya schemes to put the homeschooling Bronson in a bind with the state's board of education. Three of his children end up placed in a San Bernardino public school. The youngest, 11-year-old Hyrum, is troubled, as is his mother, Mary, Bronson's third wife. Having chosen to stay with the children, Mary quickly reverts to her old caffeinated, self-medicated ways of coping. Things spiral out of control, epically and violently, after Hyrum is beaten by a group of kids in a school parking lot, and Bronson, swept up in the righteousness of his faith, takes the boy's fate, and the law, into his own hands. Here's a tall tale just waiting for film rights to be auctioned given the actor's chops.

Fergus, Charles. [Nighthawk's Wing: A Gideon Stoltz Mystery](#) (Arcade \$24.99). Here's novel for Patrick and me to read when it arrives. It's now 1836 in the fast-growing town of Adamant. The young Pennsylvania Dutch sheriff Gideon has a new case when a beautiful woman—suspected of witchcraft and residing in a nearby German settlement—is murdered. Suffering from a head injury after a fall off his horse, Gideon can't recall anything that happened at the time of the woman's death. As flashes of memory return, he realizes that not only did he know the victim, he was with her the night she died. As Gideon delves into the investigation, he must include himself in the list of suspects. When Gideon uncovers another dead body, he's launched on a path to discover the truth, no matter the outcome. Gideon's estranged wife, True, has her own reluctant methods of investigation. Gifted with unwelcome powers of second sight, True realizes that her husband's life is in danger—and puts her own life on the line to save him. The publisher says this is "For Fans of Madeline Miller and Geraldine Brooks, and Historical Mysteries Involving Witchcraft, Second Sight, and Amish, Mennonite, and Pennsylvania Dutch Communities." Others add comparisons to Michael Connelly or to Lee Child if Reacher could operate in 1836.

I missed Fergus' debut. "Imbued with Michael Connelly's gumshoe skills and the vivid historical descriptions of Charles Frazier, [A Stranger Here Below](#) (\$16.99) is a stark procedural set in the backwoods of Pennsylvania circa 1830. Charles Fergus displays a deft touch in detailing the rough and tumble life of everyday 19th-century America." – Brad Smith

Graves, Sarah. [Death by Chocolate Snickerdoodle](#) (Kensington \$26). Here's a cozy with edge. The annual Cookie-Baking Contest is just a few days away, and Jacobia "Jake" Tiptree and Ellie White, the owners of the Chocolate Moose bakery in Eastport, Maine, plan to enter, but they're sidetracked by the hatchet murder of town curmudgeon Alvin Carter. The two ladies have developed a reputation as snoops, but they have good reason to get involved this time, since a loyal friend of theirs, Billy Breyer, who did yard work for Alvin and found the body, is the Eastport police chief's prime suspect. Jake and Ellie, who are sure Billy is innocent, come to realize plenty of others might have had it in for Alvin, including Billy's ramrod-stiff great-aunt, who spent a lot of time arguing with Alvin. More crimes occur, including a shooting, and a dangerous wildfire seems to be a case of arson directed at the bakery partners.

✻Gregory, Susanna. [The Clerkenwell Affair](#) (LittleBrown \$26.99). Gregory's 14<sup>th</sup> Century mysteries set in post-Black Death Cambridge are wonderful. This series is rooted in 17<sup>th</sup> Century London, again post Plague. In the spring of 1666 everyone's first reaction to a sudden death at the palace of White Hall is that the plague has struck, but the killing of Thomas Chiffinch was

by design, not disease. Chiffinch was holder of two influential posts—Keeper of the Closet and Keeper of the Jewels—and rival courtiers have made no secret of their wish to succeed to those offices. To Thomas Chaloner, ordered to undertake the investigation, such avarice gives a whole host of suspects an ample motive for murder. The same courtiers are at the heart of the royal entourage endorsing the King's licentious and ribald way of life, and Chaloner has some sympathy with the atmosphere of outrage and disgust at such behaviour. London's citizens, already irked by the wealthy fleeing to the country at the outbreak of the plague, have scant patience with the Court on its return. The city is abuzz with rumors of dissent and rebellion, fuelled by predictions from a soothsayer in Clerkenwell of a rain of fire destroying the capital on Good Friday. Chaloner initially dismisses such talk as nonsense, but as he uncovers ever more connections to Clerkenwell among his suspects, he begins to fear that, come Easter Day, the King and his Court really might find themselves the focus of yet another rebellion. Reading about a long ago pandemic after the fact may be easier than reading about COVID in fiction.

Hannah, Kristen. [The Four Winds](#) (St Martins \$28.99). Unsigned but with Signed bookplates. In its Starred Review, *PW* writes, Hannah brings Dust Bowl migration to life in this riveting story of love, courage, and sacrifice. In 1934 Texas, after four years of drought, the Martinelli farm is no longer thriving, but Elsa is attached to the land and her in-laws, and she works tirelessly and cares for her children, 12-year-old Loreda and seven-year-old Anthony. Her husband, Rafe, has become distant and something of a hard drinker, and after he abandons them, Elsa reluctantly leaves with her children for California with the promise of steady work. Her dreams of a better future are interrupted by the discrimination they face in the unwelcoming town of Welty, where they are forced to live in a migrant camp and work for extremely low wages picking cotton. When Elsa's meager wages are further reduced and she has the opportunity to join striking workers, she must decide whether to face the dangers of standing up for herself and her fellow workers. Hannah combines gritty realism with emotionally rich characters and lyrical prose that rings brightly and true from the first line ('Hope is a coin I carry: an American penny, given to me by a man I came to love'). In Elsa, a woman who fiercely defends her principles and those she loves, Hannah brilliantly revives the ghost of Tom Joad. "

Hewson, David. [The Garden of Angels](#) (Severn \$28.99). Paolo Uccello, the dying patriarch of the House of Uccello, renowned Italian fabric weavers, has a story to tell his 15-year-old grandson, Nico, of his youth in Nazi-occupied Venice. Flashback to 1943. Paolo, then 18 and the newly orphaned owner of the failing family business, agrees to shelter 21-year-old Giovanni "Vanni" and 23-year-old Micaela "Mika" Artom, Jewish brother and sister partisans on the run from the Gestapo. Paolo in return asks for their help to finish weaving a commission for an important client arriving for a large gathering of Nazi VIPs. When Mika learns the client is Salvator Bruno, the infamous "Jew hunter" responsible for her own parents' deaths, she makes contact with local Resistance fighters and joins their mission to attack the celebration. Paolo finds himself emotionally and physically drawn to Vanni and will go to extraordinary lengths to protect him. A late-page revelation, meanwhile, will have readers gasping in surprise, and Hewson expertly balances tense action and thoughtful emotion in a character-driven WWII thriller. Ordered Only Upon Request.

Hobson, Brandon. [The Removed](#) (Ecco \$26.99). As #ownvoices calls to more readers, here is an acclaimed new novel by National Book Award finalist Hobson. I gave my Reading Copy to Patrick. Meanwhile here's a Starred Review: Hobson "depicts a Cherokee family's grief and resilience 15 years after a police officer unjustly kills one of the family's three children in Quah, Oklahoma. Maria Echota, a retired social worker in her 70s, battles depression and watches as her adult children struggle and her husband, Ernest, develops Alzheimer's. Their oldest, 31-year-old Sonja, works at Quah's public library, and they fear she's taken an unhealthy fixation on Vin Hoff, a younger white man. Edgar, the youngest, lives in Albuquerque and is addicted to meth. The family's plan to reunite for an annual bonfire to celebrate Cherokee independence in Quah—an event always shaped for them by memories of Ray Ray, who was killed the same day at 15 after a cop wrongly believed Ray Ray had shot a gun—are complicated when Edgar won't answer the phone. Instead, he's taken a train to the mysterious Darkening Land, where the spirits of David Foster Wallace and Jimi Hendrix appear, leaving the reader to wonder if Edgar has died as well. There's hope, though, as Maria and Ernest's foster child, Wyatt, stimulates Ernest's decaying mind, reminding him of Ray-Ray—and Sonja's obsession with Vin turns out to be part of a wonderfully twisted plan to heal her grief. The alternating first-person narration is punctuated by the powerful voice of Tsala, a family ancestor who died before he was forced onto the Trail of Tears. Hobson is a master storyteller and illustrates in gently poetic prose how for many Native Americans the line between this world and the next isn't so sharp."

Iczkovits, Yaniv. [The Slaughterman's Daughter](#) (Pantheon \$28.99). It's the late 19<sup>th</sup> century in czarist Russia. Given her reputation as a *vilde chaya* (wild animal), Fanny Keismann isn't like the other women in her shtetl in the Pale of Settlement—certainly not her obedient and anxiety-ridden sister, Mende, whose "philosopher" of a husband, Zvi Meir, has run off to Minsk, abandoning her and their two children. As a young girl, Fanny felt an inexorable pull toward her father's profession of ritual slaughterer and, under his reluctant guidance, became a master with a knife. And though she long ago gave up that unsuitable profession—she's now the wife of a cheese maker and a mother of five—Fanny still keeps the knife tied to her right leg. Which might come in handy when, heedless of the dangers facing a Jewish woman traveling alone in czarist Russia, she sets off to track down Zvi Meir and bring him home, with the help of the mute and mysterious ferryman Zizek Breshov, an ex-soldier with his own sensational past. In its Starred Review, *Kirkus* writes, "Occasionally a book comes along so fresh, strange, and original that it seems peerless, utterly unprecedented. This is one of those books."

Loftis, Larry. [The Princess Spy: The True Story of World War II Spy Aline Griffith, Countess of Romanones](#) (Atria, \$28). When Aline Griffith was born in a quiet suburban New York hamlet, no one had any idea that she would go on to live "a life of glamour and danger that Ingrid Bergman only played at in *Notorious*" (*Time*). As the US enters the Second World War, the young college graduate is desperate to aid in the war effort, but no one is interested in a bright-eyed young woman whose only career experience is modeling clothes. Aline's life changes when, at a dinner party, she meets a man named Frank Ryan and reveals how desperately she wants to do her part for her country. Within a few weeks, he helps her join the Office of Strategic Services—

forerunner of the CIA. With a code name and expert training under her belt, she is sent to Spain to be a coder, but is soon given the additional assignment of infiltrating the upper echelons of society, mingling with high-ranking officials, diplomats, and titled Europeans, any of whom could be an enemy agent. Against this glamorous backdrop of galas and dinner parties, she recruits sub-agents and engages in deep-cover espionage to counter Nazi tactics in Madrid. Even after marrying the Count of Romanones, one of the wealthiest men in Spain, Aline secretly continues her covert activities—it all resembles a James Bond film, but it's true.

Nelson, James Carl. [The York Patrol](#) (Morrow \$28.99). It's now over a century since the October 8, 1918, American Expeditionary Force show of extreme valor in the Great War. 13 men earned Medals of Honor. But Sergeant Alvin York, a poor farmer from backwoods Tennessee, became the legend, celebrated in books, magazines, a blockbuster biopic starring Gary Cooper as York—a celebrity he didn't really want. Historian Nelson looks at the scope of events in the Argonne Forest that day and at the other men and at what came after for York, shining a spotlight on courage and sacrifice. The *NY Times* wrote a full page review of this work that reminds us that the soldiers who fought in both World Wars were mostly ordinary people but equipped with a tougher physical and mental mindset than we might find generally true today.

Neuvel, Sylvain. [A History of What Comes Next](#) (Tor \$24.99). Wow, it's rare that I would recommend a novel on the basis of Further Reading (amazing history, Germans, Russians, 1940s rocketry, the possible murder of Stalin, Beria the monster, climate change, Operation Paperclip, Russian space dogs (true), the OSS....) and the super Playlist (each chapter title is a song). In fact there is so much to the story—and told in only 302 pages—in this first in Neuvel's new Take Them to the Stars series that while it may be out in February, it's our **March SciFi/Fantasy Book of the Month**. What we have a first-contact thriller, women down the ages—99 identical generations of mothers—making the supreme sacrifice, dueling with men, all great characters, stirring events... Showing that truth is stranger than fiction, Neuvel weaves a sci-fi thriller reminiscent of Blake Crouch and Andy Weir, blending a fast moving, darkly satirical look at 1940s rocketry with an exploration of the amorality of progress and the nature of violence. Speaking of Weir, his May release [Project Hail Mary](#) (\$28.99) will come with a nifty badge and be our May SciFi/Fantasy Book of the Month.

Reynolds, Allie. [Shiver](#) (Putnam \$27). Here is another alpine mystery by another British writer (see Sarah Pearse in Unsigned Event Books, and recall Ruth Ware's *One by One*). It seems nothing good can happen in an abandoned ski resort during a snowstorm. In this gripping debut thriller by British writer Reynolds, five former competitive snowboarders gather for a reunion weekend at Le Rocher, a secluded spot in the French Alps. They haven't seen each other in more than a decade, but old wounds remain fresh: last time they were at Le Rocher to train for an elite competition, fellow snowboarder Saskia Sparks mysteriously vanished. Each member of the group had a complicated relationship with the hyper-aggressive and possibly sociopathic Saskia—particularly Milla, who serves as the story's no-nonsense narrator and whose drive to win sometimes overrides her basic morality. As the off-season weather turns increasingly hostile, it doesn't

take long for the group to realize they've been lured to the resort by someone who knows their secrets—and isn't afraid to seek revenge. Trust among the group withers, and Milla longs for the intimacy she experienced with her former friends as she tries to uncover who could have murdered Saskia, all while concealing her own role in the crime.

An ex-freestyle snowboarder who spent several years traveling internationally, Reynolds writes with the same fast-paced intensity of an energy drink-fueled trip down the slopes. Alongside its central mystery, *Shiver* offers an intimate look at the convoluted relationships of athletes who excel at a sport most people are too cautious even to attempt—including what happens when the truth becomes inescapable, both because of the blizzard and other equally unpredictable forces.

Simon, Clea. [A Cat on the Case](#) (Polis \$26). Becca Colwin is working at Charm and Cherish, a New Age shop in Cambridge, Massachusetts. It's the perfect place for the aspiring witch detective, even if she doesn't really have magical powers, as her three talking cats—Laurel, Clara, and Harriet—know. One day, a woman stops by the shop and accidentally leaves behind a violin case containing a “very old instrument.” The search for the violin's owner leads Becca and her coven of two other aspiring witches, along with her skeptical best friend, into a complicated case involving theft and other crimes. Meanwhile, Becca is in danger of losing her apartment when the building goes condo. The three witchy cats, each with its own distinct personality, do what they can to help Becca, in addition to discussing such matters as how they fit into Becca's life and their own hierarchy. Fans of feline cozies will be charmed.

Singh, Nalini. [Quiet in Her Bones](#) (Berkley \$26). When socialite Nina Rai disappeared without a trace, everyone wrote it off as another trophy wife tired of her wealthy husband. But now her bones have turned up in the shadowed green of the forest that surrounds her elite neighborhood, a haven of privilege and secrets that's housed the same influential families for decades. The rich live here, along with those whose job it is to make their lives easier. And somebody knows what happened to Nina one rainy night ten years ago. Her son Aarav heard a chilling scream that night, and he's determined to uncover the ugly truth that lives beneath the moneyed elegance...but no one is ready for the murderous secrets about to crawl out of the dark. “New Zealand noir” is the name Singh gives her particular brand of thriller, and it seems fitting.... Full of dark secrets, and even darker motivations, below the veneer of “moneyed elegance,” this sounds like a delicious read, the perfect thriller for the weekend.” It also is perfect reading for fans of [Sara E. Johnson's](#) *The Molten Mud Murders* and *The Bones Remember* (\$15.99 each), both forensic mysteries set in NZ, the first in Rotorua, the second on Stewart Island.

Truman, Margaret. [Margaret Truman's Murder on the Metro](#) (Forge \$27.99). I enjoyed this review from *PW*...truth is, Truman never wrote a single one of “her” books. Instead they were all written by the late Donald Bain who also penned the hit *Coffee, Tea, or Me* and its successors under a different pen name. Anyway, “This strong relaunch of the Margaret Truman franchise from Jon Land opens with a drone attack on Caesarea, Israel, that kills dozens of beachgoers. A week later, in Washington, D.C., Vice President Stephanie Davenport dies of an apparent heart

attack at her official residence. The next morning, former State Department agent Robert Brixton narrowly escapes a suicide bombing in the Metro. Brixton, moved by his daughter's death in a similar attack five years earlier, sets out to solve the mystery of the subway bombing. In the process, he meets Secret Service agent Kendra Rendine, who believes Davenport was murdered. As their two investigations start to overlap, Brixton and Rendine come across an ex-Mossad agent whose search for the perpetrator behind the drone attack seems to connect with their own. The trail eventually leads to villainy in the ranks of America's upper political hierarchy. The suspenseful plot and well-developed characters will keep readers turning the pages to the satisfying ending. Land is a worthy successor to Truman."

✠Tudor, CJ. [The Burning Girls](#) (Random \$27). An unconventional vicar moves to a remote corner of the English countryside, only to discover a community haunted by death and disappearances both past and present—and intent on keeping its dark secrets. If you think this is some kind of village cozy or an Agatha Christie sort of mystery, you have not read Tudor whose thrillers are dark and brutal. So, welcome to Chapel Croft. Five hundred years ago, eight protestant martyrs were burned at the stake here. Thirty years ago, two teenage girls disappeared without a trace. And two months ago, the vicar of the local parish killed himself. Rarely have the secrets of an English village been used to greater effect than in this tautly suspenseful mystery from Thriller Award-winner Tudor. When the Rev. Jack Brooks, a widow with a 14-year-old daughter, Flo, is ordered to fill a sudden vacancy in Chapel Croft, Jack learns that the Sussex village is famous for the burning of its martyrs in the reign of Mary I, two of the victims having been young girls. But it's not so clear what happened to two teenage girls who disappeared from Chapel Croft 30 years earlier, in 1990, never to be heard from again. Once Jack discovers that her predecessor killed himself, the menace stalking the village becomes a palpable threat. Shifting points of view bring into play a secret from Jack's past—that threat is added to the escalating dangers in Chapel Croft....

Vidich, Paul. [Mercenary](#) (Pegasus \$25.95). When Moscow CIA station chief George Mueller's cover is blown, top-secret asset GAMBIT requests a specific new case officer, and the CIA pulls Aleksander Garin out of retirement and sends him off to Moscow. As an active CIA agent, Garin attempted to exfiltrate a senior Soviet military defector in an operation that went seriously wrong, and this previous failure colors his presence there now. But Garin believes his presence in Moscow will go unnoticed by the KGB, and in his cover as a human rights investigator, he cultivates a few Muscovite contacts, including an urbane KGB official, while prepping GAMBIT for his defection. GAMBIT, meanwhile, has come to the attention of the leader of a separate KGB directorate. The old regime is faltering, and the KGB leaders are jockeying for advantage; Garin perceives an opportunity to create suspicion within the KGB, deflecting attention from the hunt for GAMBIT. A love interest develops, connected to Garin's past, which itself holds some surprises...." CrimeReads call this "an insightful and thought-provoking story about the attempted exfiltration of a KGB man from 1980s Moscow. Vidich's characters are always rich, well-developed, and just on the border of unknowable, a perfect balance of shifting identity and allegiance."

Youers, Rio. [Lola on Fire](#) (Morrow \$27.99). Any book recommended to me by Michael Koryta is a book I read. And this

one... wow. Gonzo action well describes it, as Joe Hill avers. Youers, a Canadian who was an Arthur Ellis Award finalist (the Canadian Edgar, named for Canada's hangman), is a fantasy and thriller writer. And here, he thrills. Brody Ellis is a guy out of luck and out of cash. He'd be OK on his own but he cares for his sister Molly who needs medication and Brody to pay their rent. So in desperation he decides to heist a convenience store. It goes... well... on his way out he bumps into a girl and somehow loses his wallet, putting him squarely at the scene, no? But as he waits for the cops he gets a call. It's Blair, the girl, and she's got his wallet. And she'll give it back only if he steals her late mother's diamonds from her wicked stepmother. What's he to do? What he finds at the house when he enters is a gruesome crime scene and a security camera. OK, he's been framed...and put into the path of notorious mobster Jimmy Latzo. Where does it go from there? Where it goes is in the path of notorious enforcer Lola Bear, a terrifying figure.... This is non-stop action all the way, but with real characters, not action figures. "Youers balances frenetic action with heartfelt character interactions. Fans of full-throttled cinematic action-fests of the *Long Kiss Goodnight* variety are in for a treat."

#### MORE FEBRUARY LARGE PAPERBACK PICKS

Neubauer, Erica Ruth. [Murder at the Mena House](#) (\$15.95). An exotic trip back in time to 1920s Egypt, with a cast of winning characters right out of the Golden Age of crime fiction forms this charming adventure cum murder mystery debut set in a luxury hotel at the foot of the great pyramids. Gigolos, card sharps, smugglers, rich aunts, and one achingly handsome romantic interest surround our plucky, irresistible, complex heroine, the young widow Mrs. Jane Wunderly. Jane, released from marriage to a sadistic Brit killed in the Great War, is leery of any relationship. Her wealthy aunt has financed their visit to the Great Pyramids but presents some puzzling behavior. As do many of the guests when the brazen young daughter of one, a British Colonel, is shot to death in her bed. Perhaps most puzzling is the enigmatic Mr. Redvers...and Jane's reaction to him—she has vowed never to remarry after her horrific first experience. But.... Jane's aunt, an outspoken Bostonian, has some secrets in her past that may escape silence.

Reichs, Kathy. [A Conspiracy of Bones](#) (\$16.99). Temperance Brennan is stressed. Following her boyfriend's marriage proposal, she's finally agreed to move in with him. Her mother is planning the mother of all weddings. And her beloved boss has died a tragic death. His replacement still smolders over Tempe's criticism of her from years earlier and exiles Tempe from the lab. Then a friend tips off Tempe that a mutilated corpse has been found. Identity unknown. Cause of death unclear. Though the body lacks a face, hands, and organs, her new boss refuses to ask Tempe for a consult. Tempe vows to discover the truth, but the clues she discovers are disturbing and confusing. Was the faceless man a spy? A trafficker? A target for assassination by the government? And why was he carrying the name of a child missing for almost a decade? Reichs shakes this long series up in various intriguing ways!

Silva, Daniel. [The Order](#) (\$17.99). Gabriel Allon has slipped quietly into Venice for a much-needed holiday with his wife and two young children. But when Pope Paul VII dies suddenly, Gabriel is summoned to Rome by the Holy Father's loyal

private secretary, Archbishop Luigi Donati. A billion Catholic faithful have been told that the pope died of a heart attack. Donati, however, has two good reasons to suspect his master was murdered. The Swiss Guard who was standing watch outside the papal apartments the night of the pope's death is missing. So, too, is the letter the Holy Father was writing during the final hours of his life. A letter that was addressed to Gabriel. "*While researching in the Vatican Secret Archives, I came upon a most remarkable book...*" The book is a long-suppressed gospel that calls into question the accuracy of the New Testament's depiction of one of the most portentous events in human history. For that reason alone, the Order of St. Helena will stop at nothing to keep it out of Gabriel's hands. A shadowy Catholic society with ties to the European far right, the Order is plotting to seize control of the papacy. And it is only the beginning. As the cardinals gather in Rome for the start of the conclave, Gabriel sets out on a desperate search for proof of the Order's conspiracy, and for a long-lost gospel with the power to put an end to two thousand years of murderous hatred.

Williams, Beatriz/Karen White/Lauren Willig. [All the Ways We Said Goodbye](#) (\$16.99). The Paris Ritz has welcomed visitors for centuries, including Aurelie, Daisy, and Babs, each in her own time and with her own worries. In 1914, Aurelie and her American mother are living at the Ritz while they watch the Great War encompass the city and country they love. In 1942, Daisy isn't living with her grandmother anymore but she visits often, even though she'd rather not get caught up in her Resistance efforts. In 1964, Barbara has traveled from England to help a virtual stranger discover the identity of La Fleur, a member of the French Resistance. Babs has only seen this name once, at the bottom of a love letter she hid from her future husband, and she too would like to know more about this woman. All three of these 'team W' writers create engaging characters and complex relationships while setting a tone that matches the story's time period. Long-time fans will enjoy references to previous works by the authors (and newcomers will be grateful for the discovery of three new authors to follow. The twist at the center of the story is worth the price of admission on its own. A great choice for anyone looking for clever historical fiction with plenty of drama, action, and surprises in every chapter."—*LJ*

### SOME NEW LARGE PAPERBACKS

Blacke, Olivia. [Killer Content](#) (Berkley \$16). Small-town Louisiana girl Odessa Dean is enjoying her summer in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, cat-sitting for her aunt and waitressing at a local bookstore-cum-cafe. But when her co-worker Bethany ends up dead (coinciding with a flash mob in a nearby park), Odessa can't believe it was an accident. In Blacke's charming debut mystery, Odessa roams Williamsburg in her signature cowboy boots, looking for clues and getting into plenty of trouble. A dedicated true-crime podcast listener, Odessa soon discovers that real-life sleuthing is hot, boring, even grungy work (as when she digs through the garbage in search of Bethany's cell phone). Her co-workers—an eclectic bunch—are mostly helpful and kind, though most of them don't share her suspicions of foul play. (A handsome NYPD detective seems to be equal parts frustrated and amused by Odessa's crime-solving attempts.) Odessa's amateur investigation leads her to multiple Brooklyn tropes, such as consignment shops, the local soap-making scene, the nearby dog park and a chef who moonlights as a beekeeper

(with 3D printed hives). Blacke gently skewers the stereotypes while writing about the city and her characters with real affection. Odessa is an appealing narrator, though she's perhaps a bit too trusting for her own good. When many of the slightly zany characters visit her building for an informal wake in Bethany's honor, the details of the crime may finally come to light. Fast-paced and funny, with a vivid setting and plenty of sass, Blacke's first mystery is as engaging as its heroine.

✠Cooper, Helen. [The Downstairs Neighbor](#) (Putnam \$17). 17-year-old Freya Harlow fails to return home to her parents' Kingston, England, apartment. When the police ask Freya's parents, Paul and Steph, if they have any enemies who might want to harm Freya, each has a secret unbeknownst to the other, and each believes theirs holds the key to their daughter's disappearance. While Paul unearths painful memories of his past undercover police work, Steph often travels to a nearby town, and begs their downstairs neighbor, Emma Brighton, not to tell anyone about her whereabouts. Meanwhile, Emma's apartment is vandalized, and the police repeatedly question Freya's driving instructor, who lives below Emma, since he was the last person to see Freya. A second plot, set 25 years earlier, involves a teenage girl who suspects her mother's boyfriend is abusive and dangerous. Readers will enjoy trying to figure out how the two story lines are connected. "Fans of British mysteries will love this debut... It is difficult to put down. This is one that readers may not figure out fully, if at all, in advance of the denouement, but the author ties all the secrets together in a most satisfying reveal."—*Library Journal* (starred review)

Del Toro, Guillermo/Chuck Hogan. [The Hollow Ones](#) (\$16.99). "This horrifying series launch from Del Toro and Hogan introduces occult investigator John Blackwood, who maintains a mailbox in Manhattan's financial district, the repository for desperate requests for help. When FBI agent Odessa Hardwicke and her partner, Walt Leppo, visit the Montclair, N.J., home of a graft inquiry target, disgraced politician Cary Peters, the pair finds him in the midst of a murderous rampage in which he fatally stabs his estranged wife and two sons. Walt manages to take a knife from Peters, but then the FBI agent inexplicably attacks Peters' surviving child, a nine-year-old girl, stabbing her in the shoulder before Odessa shoots him dead. Afterward, she thinks she sees some presence leave Walt's corpse. The traumatized Odessa, after being placed on restricted duty, takes a retired agent's suggestion to write Blackwood for help understanding what she thought she saw. Blackwood responds, revealing that Walt was possessed by a violent supernatural entity known as a Hollow One, and the two set out to catch it before it can kill again. The authors keep the tension high throughout." This Starred review suggests this is a book for fans of Preston and Child's Agent Pendergast.

✠Ellis, Bella. [The Diabolical Bones](#) (Berkley \$16). In the sequel to *The Vanished Bride*, Emily, Charlotte, and Anne Brontë are again acting as detectives, investigating mysterious happenings in their Yorkshire village. Drunk and raving neighbor Clifton Bradshaw has banned the sisters from his house after the discovery of a child's skeleton walled up in his deceased wife's quarters. The rooms have been sealed for 13 years, and Bradshaw's son, Liston, manages to spirit the remains to the Brontës. When a friend of the family, a woman with some medical knowledge, determines that the child was malnourished and ill, the sisters suspect murder. Often chaperoned reluctantly by their brother, Branwell, the

sisters interview weavers, witches, and orphans to learn more about Bradshaw's secrets. Charlotte, dazzled by the tempestuous and daring Lady Catherine, is also blind to her new friend's willful ways and dark motivations. All three sisters put themselves in danger as they try to stop the unknown monster preying upon local children. Ellis does a great job re-creating the village of Haworth, England, and its peoples, hinting how the daily lives of the Brontës might have inspired their most well-known works. As the creepy plot builds toward a satisfying solution, Ellis succeeds in making the sisters plausible investigators. A diverting read for fans of literary detective fiction.

Ellroy, James. [Brown's Requiem](#) (\$17). A reissue from early Ellroy in a large format: the original was a small paperback (mass market in publisher parlance). Fritz Brown is an ex-alcoholic PI with a taste for classical music who gets by as a repo man. But he finds himself in the rough when he takes the case of a trigger-happy golf caddie who wants to destroy the older man who stole his sister's affection. As he tries to unravel this complex case with echoes from the distant past, Fritz Brown plunges into the seedy underbelly of L.A., where the hazards include arson, incest, and murder. *Brown's Requiem* is, in the author's own words, "a righteous private-eye novel: fast, profane, densely plotted."

Grisham, John. [Camino Winds](#) (\$18). An odd assortment of mystery and crime authors, some of them felons themselves, discover one of their colleagues has been murdered during the fury of a massive hurricane—the perfect crime scene. Since officials are preoccupied with the aftermath of the storm, the authors set out to solve the mystery themselves....

Kent, Kathleen. [The Burn](#) (\$16.99). Detective Betty Rhyzyk is up against a string of mysterious assassinations, an increasingly reckless partner, and her worst fear—desk duty—when she decides to go rogue...heading straight into the dark underworld of Dallas's most dangerous drug cartel. At home, she struggles to connect with her loving wife, Jackie. At work, someone has been assassinating confidential informants. To make matters worse, Betty's partner seems to be increasingly dependent on the painkillers he was prescribed for injuries he sustained narrowly rescuing her. Betty's at the point of breaking when she decides to go rogue, on a chase that will lead her to the dark heart of a drug cartel terrorizing Dallas, and straight to the crooked cops who plan to profit from it all. Patrick recommends Kent to you.

Lee, R.J. [Cold Reading Murder](#) (Kensington \$15.95). Bridge expert and investigative reporter Wendy Winchester knows a thing or two about navigating life along the Mississippi River. Wendy, daughter of Police Chief Bax Winchester, has married cop—Detective Ross Rierson. It was a beautiful wedding, and the newlyweds are in bliss—even if they do have to postpone their Hawaiian honeymoon for now. In the meantime, Wendy is teaching a group of newbies the game of bridge so they can join the Rosalie Country Club Bridge Bunch. Following a night of bridge practice and cold readings by their clairvoyant host, Aurelia is found dead in her riverside mansion by Wendy, a suicide note and cocaine residue by her corpse. The scene seems phonier than Aurelia's act.... 3<sup>rd</sup> in the Bridge to Death cozies.

Mayne, Andrew. [Black Coral](#) (Thomas & Mercer \$15.99). Sloan McPherson and the Underwater Investigation Unit have discovered a van at the bottom of a murky Florida pond. Sealed inside the watery tomb are the bodies of four teenagers who disappeared

thirty years ago after leaving a rock concert. To authorities, it looks like a tragic accident. To Sloan, it looks like murder. Every piece of evidence is starting to connect to a string of cold case vanishings throughout Florida. Clue by clue, Sloan navigates the warm, dark waters where natural predators feed, knowing that the most dangerous one is still above the surface—nesting and dormant. But when a fresh young kill is found in the Everglades, Sloan fears that her investigation has reawakened a monster. How can she catch someone who's a genius at hiding in plain sight? By acting as prey. The dangerous gambit is working—only too well. She's being lured into a deception of the madman's own design. Has Sloan set a trap for a serial killer? Or has he set one for her?... No, no word on a new Doc Ford by Randy Wayne White as yet.

McMahon, John. [The Evil Men Do](#) (\$17). Best First Novel Edgar nominee McMahon—[The Good Detective](#) (\$17), a 2019 Surprise Me Book of the Month—presents book two. Having survived his tempestuous debut, P.T. Marsh, of Georgia's Mason Falls Police Department, is back for more—including some residue from that first case that just won't go away. Dispatched like an errand boy to wealthy real estate mogul Ennis Fultz's home to find out why he hasn't joined his bridge buddies, Mayor Stems and interim police chief Jeff Pernacek, for their monthly game, Marsh and his partner, Remy Morgan, find Fultz dead in his bed. It turns out that his passing, devoutly longed for by so many of the people he'd crushed or outwitted on his way to the top, was helped along by the strategic dose of nitrogen somebody substituted for the oxygen he inhaled regularly, especially when he was expecting particular demands on his virility. Marsh and Morgan quickly focus on two candidates who might have made those demands....

McPherson, Ben. [Love and Other Lies](#) (Morrow \$16.99). A fictionalized version of terrorist Anders Breivik's slaughter of 77 people at a Norwegian summer camp in 2011 provides the backdrop for this stunning psychological thriller from McPherson. British journalist Cal Curtis, who's based in Oslo, and his Norwegian wife, Elsa, have been happily married for 17 years. They have raised their teenage daughters, Alicia and Victoria, by a code of stringent moral honesty, but their Scandinavian ideals of fairness, openness, and freedom begin to collapse when Alicia disappears from her summer camp outside Oslo during a terrorist attack. Cal is hopeful that Alicia's alive, but why is Victoria holding back something about her sister from her parents? Meanwhile, Bror, Elsa's former lover and the leader of a far-right quasi-religious cult, criticizes the way Black police chief Ephraim Tvist is handling the investigation, causing Cal to suspect Tvist's competence and motives. McPherson dramatically highlights the tensions between Norway's native and immigrant populations as the plot builds to a devastating conclusion.

Nemens, Emily. [The Cactus League](#) (\$17). "Here's the thing about baseball, and all else," says the narrator in this novel's first chapter, "everything changes." Nemens delivers an engaging, eccentric cast of players, coaches, families, and others who inhabit the world of baseball—including a wise, witty, and somewhat omniscient sportswriter-narrator." [Nemens] works within the quirky register of the heart, writing about one of her great passions: baseball. She crafts a humorous and emotional novel about a star outfielder, and the coaches, fans and criminals who inhabit the same off-kilter world." —*The Wall Street Journal*. "[A] quirky first novel . . . [The Cactus League] showcases a

fascinating gallimaufry of characters who swirl around the edges of the springtime ritual. Nemens finds a kind of attenuated hope along with melancholy in these sharply etched character studies that “end not with ‘out three’ but ‘out maybe.’” —*Booklist* Starred Review. “[An] insightful debut... each character is brought to life in convincing detail.” —*PW*

Phillips, Scott. [That Left Turn at Albuquerque](#) (\$16.95). Financially strapped Southern California attorney Douglas Rigby has stolen thousands from the account of his sole client, aged former TV producer Glenn Haskill, and is desperate to find some way of replacing the funds before his theft is detected. His initial plan—to profit from a drug deal with a gang known as the Devil’s Hammers—fails after his less-than-sharp go-between hands over the product without getting the agreed-upon cash in return. That screw-up leads to violence and only places Rigby further behind the eight ball, even as his real estate broker wife, who knows what’s going on and has made few recent sales, fears that losing their home will make her a pariah in her field. Rigby comes up with another scheme, centered on art fraud that would also victimize Haskill....

Robuck, Erika. [The Invisible Woman](#) (Berkley \$15.99) delivers an edge-of-the-seat WWII spy story based on the life of OSS agent Virginia Hall. In March 1944, the American operative slips into Nazi-occupied France to organize and arm a resistance group called the Maquis before the D-Day invasion. Ahead of her mission, Virginia, who has a prosthetic leg, is informed by her London-based handlers that her life expectancy is six weeks. Even so, she must be extra careful. The Germans have already distributed wanted posters for the “Limping Lady” and have been looking for her for two years, since the Lyon network she headed was betrayed by a double agent. Now, on her current mission, she has a score to settle with those who plotted to betray her. The Germans grow more vicious after D-Day, as Allied troops, with help from the Maquis, liberate French towns. Robuck vividly captures Virginia’s internal struggle over her obligation to help win the war and her desire for revenge. Skillfully weaving events from the agent’s past with the tension-filled days and nights of 1944, Robuck creates an indelible portrait of an unforgettable hero.

Rosenfelt, David. [The K Team](#) (\$16.99). Here’s a new series about a dynamic new investigative team featuring a determined former cop and his loyal German Shepherd. Corey Douglas and his K-9 partner, Simon Garfunkel, have recently retired from the police force. Not ready to give up the life yet, they come up with a proposal for fellow former cop, Laurie Carpenter, and her investigating partner, Marcus. Laurie and Marcus – who help out Laurie’s lawyer husband Andy on cases – have been chafing to jump back into investigating on their own, so they are in. They call themselves the K Team, in honor of Simon. Their first job as private investigators comes to them from Judge Henry Henderson, who’s known as a very tough but fair judge, and they’ve all come up against him in court at one time or another. Though it’s hard to believe, Judge Henderson is being blackmailed and extorted, and he doesn’t want to involve the police.... You can see this is written in the Andy Carpenter NJ universe. And the sequel publishes in April: [Animal Instinct](#) (St Martins \$28.99 Signed).

Rotenberg, Robert. [Downfall](#) (\$16). For decades, the Humber River Golf Course has been one of Toronto’s most elite clubs.

All is perfect in this playground for the rich, until homeless people move into the pristine ravine nearby, and tensions mount between rich and poor and reach a head when two of the squatters are brutally murdered. The killings send shockwaves through the city, and suspicion immediately falls upon the members of the club. Protests by homeless groups and their supporters erupt. Suddenly the homelessness problem has caught the attention of the press, politicians, and the public. Ari Greene, now the head of the homicide squad, leaves behind his plush new office and, with his former protégé Daniel Kennicott in tow, returns to the streets to investigate. Meanwhile, Greene’s daughter, Alison, a dynamic young TV journalist, reports on the untold story of extreme poverty in the city. With all the attention focused on the murders, pressure is on Greene to find the killer—now

Saenz, Eva Garcia. [The Water Rituals](#) (Vintage \$16.95). A pregnant woman has been murdered in a brutal, ritualistic way: burned, hung, and then placed upside down in a Bronze Age cauldron in Basque country. When Inspector Unai López de Ayala, known as “Kraken,” of Vitoria, discovers the victim is his first love, Ana Belén Liaño, memories of their time together come flooding back, and with them reminders of a dark secret long buried. Then the killer strikes again, enacting the same ritual against a second expectant parent. Kraken knows he must confront his past in order to unmask this fiend. And there’s no time to waste, because Deputy Superintendent Díaz de Salvatierra has just found out she’s carrying a child. And the father could very well be Kraken himself... Book two in the White City Trilogy after [The Silence in the White City](#) (\$16.95).

Smith, Alexander McCall. [Your Inner Hedgehog](#) (\$16). Professor Dr. Dr. Moritz-Maria von Igelfeld and his colleagues at the University of Regensburg’s Institute of Romance Philology pride themselves on their unwavering commitment to intellectual excellence. They know it is their job to protect a certain civilized approach to the scholarly arts. So when a new deputy librarian, Dr. Hilda Schreiber-Ziegler, threatens to drag them all down a path of progressive inclusivity, they are determined to stop her in the name of scholarship—even if that requires von Igelfeld to make the noble sacrifice of running for director of the Institute. Alas, politics is never easy, and in order to put his best foot forward, von Igelfeld will be required to take up a visiting fellowship at Oxford and cultivate the attentions of a rather effusive young American scholar.

White, Christian. [The Wife and the Widow](#) (\$17.99). A tragedy and longtime secrets bring together two women from different backgrounds in this stellar family drama from Australian author White. Wealthy stay-at-home mom Kate Keddie is the widow of the title, a designation she receives shortly after waiting in vain at the airport with her 10-year-old daughter for her husband, John, to return to Melbourne following a business trip to London. Kate soon learns that John never made the trip, and that he quit his health-care job three months earlier without telling anyone; then his body washes up on Belport Island, where the Keddies have a vacation home. Supermarket clerk and amateur taxidermist Abby Gilpin is the wife of the title, who lives with her two sulky teenagers and her husband, Ray, a caretaker for the unoccupied holiday houses on Belport Island. Superior plotting buoyed by strong characters fuel the women’s separate investigations as Kate looks into John’s activities and Abby wonders why Ray is distant and sad. A clever twist near the end upends the plot’s trajectory.

## OUR FEBRUARY SMALL PAPERBACK PICKS (repeated)

Baldacci, David. [A Minute to Midnight](#) (\$9.99). Atlee Pine #2. FBI Agent Atlee Pine's life was never the same after her twin sister Mercy was kidnapped—and likely killed—thirty years ago. Now, after a lifetime of torturous uncertainty, Atlee's unresolved anger finally gets the better of her on the job, and she finds she has to deal with the demons of her past if she wants to remain with the FBI.

Bentley, Don. [Without Sanction](#) (\$9.99) Matt Drake #1. Matt Drake, an operative struggling with PTSD in the aftermath of a mission gone wrong, is forced to confront his biggest failure in order to prevent an ISIS splinter cell from creating a weapon of mass destruction. *Kirkus* concluded their rave review with "This is a novel with an emotional core, and that may be what makes it stand out from other thrillers of a similar ilk. A page-turner with the kind of small details that lend it authenticity."

Castillo, Linda. [A Simple Murder](#) (St Martins \$9.99). A Kate Burkholder Short Story Collection. Together for the first time in print, this collection of six short stories, starring chief of police Kate Burkholder, includes "A Hidden Secret," in which Kate is called in to investigate the case of an abandoned baby left on the Amish bishop's front porch.

Cussler, Clive/Graham Brown. [Journey of the Pharaohs](#) (\$9.99). Numa Files #17. Kurt Austin and the NUMA crew race to identify a link between an ancient Egyptian treasure, a 1927 daredevil aviator's disappearance and the sinking of a modern fishing trawler to prevent a scheme by a cutthroat arms dealer. *Kirkus* said "This is fast-paced, nonstop fun. Cussler fans will gobble it up."

Foley, Lucy. [The Hunting Party](#) (\$9.99). A group of thirty-something Oxford friends celebrate New Year's Eve in the Scottish Highlands as a historic blizzard hits, trapping and isolating them, only to discover one of them is a murderer. *PW* was just one review source that loved this debut saying "Foley spins her story skillfully through multiple narrators, and if she's less sure-handed with character, this still makes for a cracklingly suspenseful story for a long winter's night."

Fox, Candice. [Gone By Midnight](#) (\$9.99). When Sara Farrow's son goes missing from a locked hotel room, she frantically turns for help to Crimson Lake's unlikeliest private investigators—disgraced cop Ted Conkaffey and convicted killer Amanda Pharrell. *PW* ended their review with "Quirky, no-nonsense characters complement the suspenseful plotting, which includes a multitude of twists. Readers will look forward to seeing more of Ted and Amanda."

Hannah, Darci. [Murder at the Beacon Bakeshop](#) (Kensington \$8.99). Beacon Bakeshop #1. With her Memorial Day opening marred by a protest group and the murder of her ex-fiancé's girlfriend, Lindsey, who converted an old run-down lighthouse into a bakery café, must save her business and herself when she is named the prime suspect. *Kirkus* had this to say "Red herrings, romance, and yummy recipes combine in this charming new series."

Ricciardi, David. [Black Flag](#) (\$9.99). Jake Keller #3. When two American ships are captured by Somali pirates, CIA agent Jake Keller goes undercover as a rival to lure out the gang's mastermind, an unconventional plan that is complicated by Keller's

growing feeling for a Greek shipping heiress. *PW* again about the latest in this terrific new testosterone series "The complicated plot and furious action build to a final, head-snapping twist. Ricciardi has hit his stride with this outing"

Rose, Karen. [Say No More](#) (\$7.99). In this follow-up to *Say You're Sorry*, cult escapee Mercy Callahan teams up with homicide detective Rafe Sokolov to track down the leader of the twisted cult that would reclaim her dead or alive. *PW* ended their starred review with "While violence and sexual assault mark this as not for the faint of heart, readers looking for high-octane romantic suspense won't be able to resist."

Thompson, Victoria. [Murder on Pleasant Avenue](#) (\$7.99). Gaslight #23. When Gino Donatelli is wrongly implicated by the police in a brutal murder, Frank and Sarah navigate long-simmering precinct resentments to uncover the truth. The latest in Edgar-award nominated Thompson's series is the just the ticket for fans of Anne Perry's Thomas and Charlotte Pitt mysteries.