

BOOKNEWS from

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AUGUST THROUGH LABOR DAY BOOKNEWS

Opening Hours M-Sat 10 AM-6 PM; Sun 12-5 PM

Note: All the event times are Pacific Daylight 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.

What is the history of The Pen?

[Listen to this UK podcast](#) for some answers. Our thanks to the host and to interviewer author CC Harrison



MONDAY AUGUST 16 1:00 PM

Ireland's Catherine Ryan Howard discusses [56 Days](#) (Blackstone \$28.99)

Signed copies available

MONDAY AUGUST 16 4:00 PM

Richard Chizmar with Michael Koryta

Chizmar discusses [Chasing the Boogeyman](#) (Gallery \$27)

Chizmar's first thriller!

MONDAY AUGUST 16 6:00 PM Book Launch

Jonathan Santlofer discusses [The Last Mona Lisa](#) (Sourcebooks \$27.99)

August Crime Book of the Month

Signed books available

TUESDAY AUGUST 17 6:00 PM Book Launch

Douglas Preston and Lincoln Child discuss [Bloodless](#) (Grand Central \$29)

Agent Pendergast in Savannah

Our remaining copies come with a double-signed bookplate and a set of trading cards for four series characters

WEDNESDAY AUGUST 18 7:00 PM

Ash Davidson discusses [Damnation Spring](#) (Scribner \$28)

Our Notable New Fiction Book of the Month

Signed books available

THURSDAY AUGUST 19 12:00 PM

Johnny Shaw with Gary Phillips and Patrick

Shaw discusses [The Southland](#) (Polis/Agora \$16.95)

THURSDAY AUGUST 19 1:30 PM

Warren Easley and Thomas Kies

Easley discusses [No Witness](#) (Poisoned Pen \$15.99)

Cal Claxton Mysteries

Kies discusses [Shadow Hill](#) (Poisoned Pen \$15.99)

Crime reporter Geneva Chase

THURSDAY AUGUST 19 5:00 PM

Crooked Lane Cozy Con

Elizabeth Blake, [Death and Sensibility](#) (\$26.99)

Lucy Burdette, [A Scone of Contention](#) (\$26.99)

Ellen Byron, [Cajun Kiss of Death](#) (Crooked Lane \$26.99)

Betty Hechtman, [One for the Hooks](#) (\$26.99)

Audrey Keown, [Dust to Dust](#) (\$26.99)

Schellman, Katharine. [Silence in the Library](#) (\$27.99)

FRIDAY AUGUST 20 5:00 PM

Crooked Lane Author Quintet

Kris Calvin. [All that Fall](#) (\$27.99)

Emery Hayes. [Back from the Brink](#) (\$26.99)

Matt Miksa. [13 Days to Die](#) (\$27.99)

Emilyya Naymark. [Hide in Place](#) (\$27.99)

Eric Redman. [Bones of Hilo](#) (\$27.99)

FRIDAY AUGUST 20

SciFi Friday discusses NK Jemison's [The City We Became](#) (\$17.99)

SATURDAY AUGUST 21 10:30 AM

Croak & Dagger discuss Christina Dodd's [The Wrong Alibi](#) (\$17.99)

SATURDAY AUGUST 21

Bookstore Romance Day

SUNDAY AUGUST 23 3:30 PM

James Lee Burke with Dennis Lehane

Burke discusses [Another Kind of Eden](#) (SimonSchuster \$27)

Aaron Holland Broussard

Signed books available

MONDAY AUGUST 23 7:00 PM Live (so far, check back)
William Kent Krueger discusses [Lightning Strike](#) (Atria \$27)
Cork O'Connor prequel
Signed books available
Masks required to attend the live event for your protection and ours

WEDNESDAY AUGUST 25 6:00 PM
Tommy Swerdlow with Patrick Swerdlow discusses his LA Noir [Straight Dope](#) (Stark House \$15.95)

THURSDAY AUGUST 26 7:00 PM
Hardboiled Crime discusses Frederick Lorenz's [The Savage Chase](#) (Stark House \$19.95)

SATURDAY AUGUST 28 4:00 PM
Laurel Woodward discusses her debut [Kitchen Witchery](#) (Llewellyn \$24.99 large paperback)
Unlocking the Magic in Everyday Ingredients

MONDAY AUGUST 30 6:00 PM
Zoje Stage discusses [Getaway](#) (Mulholland \$28)
A terrifying hike into the Grand Canyon thriller
Signed books available

SIGNED BOOKS

Burke, James Lee. [Another Kind of Eden](#) (SimonSchuster \$27). The American West in the early 1960s appears to be a pastoral paradise: golden wheat fields, mist-filled canyons, frolicking animals. But no. It's 1962 in bestseller MWA Grand Master Burke's captivating sequel to 2016's *The Jealous Kind*, and Aaron Holland Broussard, a drifting aspiring novelist, hops off a boxcar near Denver and finds work on a large farm. After the son of a local tyrannical businessman assaults Aaron and some coworkers, Jo Anne McDuffy, a beautiful art student, warns Aaron not to seek revenge. But as much as Aaron, who begins a relationship with Jo Anne, tries to suppress his violent instincts, trouble won't let him be, with local goons and law enforcement harassing him. Meanwhile, a nefarious professor circles Jo Anne with dubious intentions. Suffering nonchemical blackouts and warding off memories of his time in the Korean War, Aaron slowly unravels as the majestic beauty of the west turns into a hellscape of murdered women, cults, and mysterious forces that might not be of this world. Sharp prose and distinctive characters help propel Aaron's journey from earnest farmhand to tormented soul in a world of horrors. Notice that here again a novelist is the focus character! And I add that the first page of this book sums up my own feelings about my generation's place in American history, a time that will not come again.

⌘ Cleeves, Ann. [The Heron's Cry](#) (Pan \$43). North Devon is enjoying a rare hot summer with tourists flocking to its coastline. Detective Matthew Venn is called out to a rural crime scene at the home of a group of artists. What he finds is an elaborately staged murder – Dr. Nigel Yeo has been fatally stabbed. His daughter Eve is a glassblower, and the murder weapon is a shard of one of her broken vases. Dr. Yeo seems an unlikely murder victim. He's a good man, a public servant, beloved by his daughter. Matthew is unnerved, though, to find that she is a close friend of Jonathan,

WEDNESDAY SEPTEMBER 2 5:00 PM
Joanne Schaffhausen discusses [Gone for Good](#) (St Martins \$27.99)
Starts a cop series set in Chicago
Signed copies available

WEDNESDAY SEPTEMBER 2 6:15 PM
Michelle Richmond discusses [The Wonder Test](#) (Grove \$26)
Our September Crime Book of the Month
Signed copies in stock

SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 4 4:00PM
Margaret Mizushima and Scott Graham discusses [Canyonlands Carnage](#) (Torrey House \$16.95)
National Park Mystery #7
Mizushima discusses [Stalking Range](#) (Crooked Lane \$27.99)
Timber Creek K-9 Mystery
Signed copies available

MONDAY SEPTEMBER 6
Closed for Labor Day

his husband. Then another body is found – killed in a similar way. Matthew finds himself treading carefully through the lies that fester at the heart of his community and a case that is dangerously close to home.... 2nd in Cleeves' new Two Rivers series after [The Long Call](#) (\$16.99). Meanwhile *Shetland* and *Vera* are filming for more terrific serial TV.

Coes, Ben. [The Island](#) (St Martins \$27.99). In the 9th mission for CIA operative Dewey Andreas, an outrageous plot has been conceived by Iranian Zakaria Mansour, the "commander general of Hezbollah." His plan: to assassinate the U.S. president during a speech at the United Nations, slaughter thousands in the New York City streets after crippling access to the island, and electronically destroy the Federal Reserve. But first he'll kill CIA operative Andreas in retaliation for derailing Iran's nuclear bomb procurement in an earlier book. If you are looking for a no-brakes pace with little recourse to logic to enliven your August, this is your book.

Coulter, Catherine. [Vortex: An FBI Thriller](#) (Harper \$28.99). It was [The Cove](#) (\$8.99) that started it all back in 1996. And now here is #25 in Coulter's bestselling series featuring Agents Sherlock and Savich. Seven years ago, Mia Briscoe was at a college frat rave with her best friend Serena when a fire broke out. Everyone was accounted for except Serena, who was never seen nor heard from again. Now an investigative journalist covering the political scene in New York City, Mia discovers old photos taken the night of Serena's disappearance, and begins to uncover a sinister string of events going all the way back to that disastrous party. Working with Sherlock, the secrets begin to unravel. But some very powerful—and very dangerous—people will do anything to keep them from learning the truth. CIA Operative Olivia Hildebrandt is a team leader on a mission in Iran to exfiltrate a

betrayed undercover operative. She's nearly killed by an exploding grenade and saved by a team member. But by the time Olivia is released from Walter Reed Hospital, that team member—and a critical flash drive he was carrying—have both disappeared. When she is savagely attacked on her first night home...enter Savich.

Everybody has their favorite book out of the 25, and Coulter has three of which she is particularly fond: *The Target*, *Backfire*, and *Nemesis*. Watch [our zoom conversation](#) to find out why.

Davidson, Ash. [Damnation Spring](#) (Scribner \$28). Read this front cover page review of [Damnation Spring](#) in the *NY Times Book Review*. The Indie Next Pick adds: "With this debut set in a Pacific Northwest logging town, Ash Davidson has immediately established herself as a true writer of the American experience, in all its potential for self-destruction and beauty."

The tale unfolds between 1977 and 1978 and follows the Gundersen family: husband and wife Rich and Colleen; and their kindergartner son, Chub. Rich is a fourth-generation logger who dreams of a less financially burdensome future for his family when, without telling Colleen, he plunks down their savings to buy a ridge near their home in Northern California with a harvestable forest of primordial redwoods. Meanwhile Colleen—who has suffered eight miscarriages before and after Chub's birth and who, as the local midwife, has witnessed a disturbing number of defective births—is listening to an environmentalist friend's warning that the defoliants used by the timber company that employs Rich are leaching lethal toxins into the local water supply.

This debut is our **August Notable New Fiction Book of the Month**. Among its raves are these: "Nowhere else on earth do the trees reach so high as the ancient groves of redwoods that tower over the fog-laced coast of the Pacific Northwest. And in few other settings can a writer erect an overstory so vast, so intricate, so tightly woven that when its readers lean back and gaze into its branches, they are somehow made to feel both diminished and expanded in the very same breath. Like the canopy of an enchanted forest, *Damnation Spring* is draped in a tapestry of shadows dappled with sunlight, mystery pierced through by beams of revelation, and a harrowing natural beauty capable of drawing forth gorgeous, gracefully wrought prose that is soaring, magnificent, and drenched in birdsong." *Kirkus* awards it a Star: "As thoughtfully as Davidson establishes these dilemmas, she's equally skilled at writing an outdoorsy adventure novel, in which logging threatens the lives of workers in a working class community with snapped cables and everybody else via landslides. Thematically, it's a strong work of climate fiction, but it's rooted in age-old man-versus-nature storytelling. An impressively well-turned story about how environmental damage creeps into our bodies, psyches, and economies." The author from Flagstaff will be signing at the store so you may request a date or personalization.

✦ Fowler, Christopher. [Bryant and May London Bridge Is Falling Down](#) (Bantam UK \$40). It was the kind of story that barely made the news. When 91-year-old Amelia Hoffman died in her top-floor flat on a busy London road, it's considered an example of what has gone wrong with modern society: she slipped through the cracks in a failing system. But detectives Arthur Bryant and John May of the Peculiar Crimes Unit have their doubts. Mrs. Hoffman was once a government security expert, even though no

one can quite remember her. When a link emerges between the old lady and a diplomat trying to flee the country, it seems that an impossible murder has been committed. Mrs. Hoffman wasn't the only one at risk. Bryant is convinced that other forgotten women with hidden talents are also in danger. And, curiously, they all own models of London Bridge. With the help of some of their more certifiable informants, the detectives follow the strangest of clues in an investigation that will lead them through forgotten alleyways to the city's oldest bridge in search of a desperate killer. You can't do better for eccentric and witty British mystery than this (other than Ripley's [Mr. Campion's Coven](#) to which I give a rave). And you can start the Peculiar Crime series at any point, like this one.

✦ Gregory, Susanna. [The Chancellor's Secret](#) (Sphere \$48). In 1360, the Great Bridge over the River Cam is close to collapse. To repair it will cost the town and the University dear, especially if its rotten wood is replaced by more durable stone. As arguments rage over raising the money other, equally heated, differences are coming to the boil over the election of a new Chancellor. While the majority supports Brother Michael for the post, at least one of his opponents aims to seize it by fair means or foul. Then the discovery of a body under the bridge and the disappearance of two scholars throw a more sinister shadow over both disputes. Matthew Bartholomew, the University's Corpse Examiner, already has his hands full: due to marry in under a fortnight, he is determined to conclude his teaching duties and deal with an outbreak of the summer flux before relinquishing his official duties. With more deaths, an 'accident' at the bridge and an increasing stench of corruption over the financing of the bridge's repairs, he realizes he owes more to his soon-to-be former colleagues than to his future life as a secular doctor. But will there be enough time for him to unveil the identities of those who seek to undermine both the town and the University?

✦ Harris, Joanne. [A Narrow Door](#) (Orion \$45). It's an incendiary moment for St Oswald's Grammar School in North Yorkshire. For the first time in its history, a headmistress is in power, the gates opening to girls. Rebecca Buckfast has spilled blood to reach this position. Barely forty, she is just starting to reap the harvest of her ambition. As the new regime takes on the old guard, the ground shifts. And with it, the remains of a body are discovered. But Rebecca is here to make her mark. She'll bury the past so deep it will evade even her own memory, just like she has done before. After all...you can't keep a good woman down. I loved Harris' first school mystery, [Different Class](#), also set at St. Oswald's, and can't wait to read this one,

Hirahara, Naomi. [Clark and Division](#) (Soho \$27.95). **Signed bookplates**. Set during WWII, this fascinating standalone from Edgar winner Hirahara (the Mas Arai series) focuses on a Japanese American family, the Itos, who in 1942 are sent with what possessions they can carry from L.A. to the Manzanar internment camp in the California desert. In 1943, elder daughter Rose, a bright and confident young woman, is chosen to be among the first internees to be relocated to Chicago, a move that will pave the way for her family to join her. In 1944, Rose's parents and younger sister, Aki, arrive in the city, only to be informed that Rose has been run over by a subway train at the Clark and Division station, an apparent suicide. Aki refuses to believe this theory and sets out to find her sister's killer and bring that person

to justice. Tantalizing clues emerge in Rose's diary, in reports gathered for the War Relocation Authority, and in Aki's tireless interviews with those who shaped Rose's life in Chicago. Elegant prose matches the meticulous research. This well-crafted tale of injustice isn't just for mystery fans. And it's our **August Historical Fiction Book of the Month**. Signed copies are sold out.

The Indie Next Pick adds: "*Clark and Division* is a propulsive mystery and a heart-wrenching examination of Japanese internment and relocation in the 1940s. Hirahara beautifully weaves history and injustice into this fascinating and compelling crime novel."

✎ Horowitz, Anthony. [A Line to Kill](#) (Century \$45). There has never been a murder on Alderney. It's a tiny island, just three miles long and a mile and a half wide. The perfect location for a brand new literary festival. Private Investigator Daniel Hawthorne has been invited to talk about his new book. The actual writer of the book, Anthony Horowitz, travels with him. Very soon they discover that not all is as it should be. Alderney is in turmoil over a planned power line that will cut through it, desecrating a war cemetery and turning neighbor against neighbor. The visiting authors—including a blind medium, a French performance poet and a celebrity chef—seem to be harboring any number of unpleasant secrets. When the festival's wealthy sponsor is found brutally killed, Alderney goes into lockdown and Hawthorne knows that he doesn't have to look too far for suspects. There's no escape. The killer is still on the island. And there's about to be a second death...

Howard, Catherine Ryan. [56 Days](#) (Blackstone \$24.99). Oliver and Ciara, two young professionals who are new to Dublin, meet in a supermarket just as the pandemic is about to descend on Ireland. The pair hit it off, but fate soon throws them a curveball: to curb the spread of the virus, Ireland's government is instituting a strict two-week lockdown, and socializing with anyone from a different household is off-limits. When Oliver asks Ciara to move in with him for the duration of lockdown, she agrees—it's an opportunity to have him all to herself and get to know him without having to introduce him to her family and friends (or meet his). In fact, Ciara doesn't tell a soul where she'll be spending lockdown, or who she'll be spending it with. Things do not go as planned. At the beginning of the novel, a decomposing body is discovered in Oliver's apartment; how it got there is only one of the mysteries that will unfold over the course of Howard's book, which saves its most devastating reveal for its final pages. The story is teased out in two timelines: the present day, which follows a pair of Gardaí (Irish state police) as they investigate the gruesome discovery, and flashbacks that detail Oliver and Ciara's meeting and courtship. While both are intensely sympathetic characters, it quickly becomes clear that at least one of them is harboring a dark secret.

Howard, a huge bestseller in Ireland, says this of what is inevitably going to be called her pandemic novel: "I heard England's deputy health minister advise new couples to, essentially, break up or shack up in order to adhere to the "no mixing between households rule"—if you didn't already live with someone, you weren't supposed to see them at all during lockdown. And a light bulb switched on in the back of the mind: the couple would meet shortly before the pandemic reached Ireland and decide to move in together when lockdown hit. My 2 km confined me to a part of Dublin city center, which I was seeing in a way that both

terrified me and felt like a privilege—I could use what I was seeing. Ireland entered lockdown 1 on March 27, 2020, and I have a photo on my phone of a document open on my computer on April 17 with 'Untitled Lockdown Novel' as the title—that's how quickly I switched."

Krueger, William Kent. [Lightning Strike](#) (Atria \$27). Aurora is a small town nestled in the ancient forest alongside the shores of Minnesota's Iron Lake. In the summer of 1963, it is the whole world to 12-year-old Cork O'Connor, its rhythms as familiar as his own heartbeat. But when Cork stumbles upon the body of a man he revered hanging from a tree in an abandoned logging camp, it is the first in a series of events that will cause him to question everything he took for granted about his hometown, his family and himself. Cork's father, Liam O'Connor, is Aurora's sheriff, and it is his job to confirm that the man's death was the result of suicide, as all the evidence suggests. In the shadow of his father's official investigation, Cork begins to look for answers on his own.

Kent writes, "This is a very different entry in the series, a prequel. It's set in the summer when Cork is 12 years old and involves two mysterious deaths that cause a clash between the Ojibwe of the Iron Lake Reservation and the white populace of Tamarack County. Cork's father is the county sheriff, and the family finds itself caught in the middle of the racial tensions that arise. I love this story because it's allowed me to explore the relationship between Cork and his father, so important in shaping Cork into the man at the heart of the series." You would do well to order the entire [Cork O'Connor series](#) beginning with *Iron Lake*.

Maldonado, Isabella. [A Different Dawn](#) (Thomas & Mercer \$15.95). When the FBI's Violent Criminal Apprehension Program database detects two murder incidents "staged to look like double murder suicides," FBI special agent Nina Guerrero investigates. The most recent occurred in Phoenix, and the previous one happened four years before in Manhattan, both on February 29. FBI agents soon discover the existence of eight similar crimes at four-year intervals, all involving young couples with an infant or newborn child. Nina and her team travel from the Washington, D.C., area to Arizona, where they look into the first crime in the series, which occurred in Phoenix 28 years earlier. As the agents get closer to finding commonalities among the murders and in particular the significance of leap day, things get personal for Nina as she uncovers clues to the crimes related to her entry into the foster system as a child. Maldonado expertly ratchets up the tension as the pieces of the puzzle neatly fall into place. Meet Nina first in [The Cipher](#) (\$15.95).

✎ McDermid, Val. [1979](#) (LittleBrown UK \$42). McDermid presents the first in a new series. It is the winter of discontent, and reporter Allie Burns is chasing her first big scoop. There are few women in the newsroom and she needs something explosive for the boys' club to take her seriously. Soon Allie and fellow journalist Danny Sullivan are exposing the criminal underbelly of respectable Scotland. They risk making powerful enemies—and Allie won't stop there. When she discovers a home-grown terrorist threat, Allie comes up with a plan to infiltrate the group and make her name. But she's a woman in a man's world... and putting a foot wrong could be fatal.

McKinlay, Jenn. [Wait for It](#) (Berkley \$16). John Charles reviews: When her first ex-husband unexpectedly asks her to marry him again, Annabelle Martin is not about to test the maxim “better luck next time.” Instead, Annabelle accepts her best friend Sophie Vasquez’s job offer and leaves chilly Boston for sunny Phoenix. One perk of Annabelle’s new dream job is getting to live in a charming guest house on the estate of an old friend of the Vasquez family. However, this same perk has a downside in the form of the seemingly endless “tenant rules” her new landlord—obviously a crotchety old codger—keeps leaving on her doorstep. So, of course, it is quite a surprise when Annabelle comes face to face with her landlord—Nick Daire—and discovers he is actually the hot guy she has secretly been ogling. Both fans and readers who are not already smitten with McKinlay’s zingy prose and effervescent wit will soon find themselves happily succumbing to this author’s many literary charms, including the effortless way in which she deftly pivots from moments of comic absurdity to heartfelt emotion without missing a beat.

Mizushima, Margaret. [Striking Range](#) (Crooked Lane \$27.99). Deputy Mattie Cobb is at last on the verge of interviewing John Cobb, the chief suspect in her father’s murder 30 years earlier, in the Colorado state prison where he’s serving time for a recent attempt to kill her and other crimes. Before she can do so, Cobb, who also abducted Mattie at age two and gave her his last name, is found dead in his cell. A book of Timber Creek County hiking trails in the cell has handwritten Xs along one trail. Curious about their significance, Mattie decides to visit the spots indicated. The discovery of the body of a teenager who just gave birth interrupts Mattie’s quest, and she surmises that the killer may have taken the victim’s newborn baby. Her investigations lead her and her valiant German shepherd partner, Robo, into the snowy wilderness and a thrilling face-off with a devious killer. Jolly visits to the office of Mattie’s veterinarian boyfriend, Cole Walker, provide relief from the grim detective work.

Preston, Douglas/Lincoln Child. [Bloodless](#) (Grand Central \$29). Note: we are sold out of double signed copies. **What we can still offer is a set of the trading cards and a double signed book-plate with each of 300 additional copies.** So we’ll start these with the wait list.

On the evening of November 24, 1971, D. B. Cooper hijacked Flight 305—Portland to Seattle—with a fake bomb, collected a ransom of \$200,000, and parachuted into the night, never to be seen again... Maybe. Fifty years later, Agent Pendergast and his partner, Armstrong Coldmoon, take on a bizarre and gruesome case: in the ghost-haunted city of Savannah, Georgia, bodies are found completely drained of blood—sowing panic and reviving the infamous legend of the Savannah Vampire. A case like no other in Pendergast’s career: Through twists and turns, Pendergast and his partner, Agent Coldmoon, race to understand how these murders are connected to the most mystifying hijacking in American history. Pressure to close the Savannah case quickly comes from a boorish U.S. senator, who fears bad press about the crimes will imperil his reelection bid. Pendergast’s ward, Constance Greene, assists by befriending a reclusive hotel owner rumored to have prolonged her life by drinking human blood. How the plane hijacking ties in with the current action will surprise you!

Rankin, Ian/ William McIlvanney. [Dark Remains](#) (Camden \$45). Lawyer Bobby Carter did a lot of work for the wrong type of people. Now he’s dead and it was no accident. Besides a distraught

family and a heap of powerful friends, Carter’s left behind his share of enemies. So, who dealt the fatal blow? DC Jack Laidlaw’s reputation precedes him. He’s not a team player, but he’s got a sixth sense for what’s happening on the streets. His boss chalks the violence up to the usual rivalries, but is it that simple? As two Glasgow gangs go to war, Laidlaw needs to find out who got Carter before the whole city explodes. William McIlvanney’s Laidlaw books changed the face of crime fiction. When he died in 2015, he left half a handwritten manuscript of Laidlaw’s first case. Now, Ian Rankin is back to finish what McIlvanney started.

Richmond, Michelle. [The Wonder Test](#) (Grove \$26). For various reasons this unusual thriller delighted me in similar ways to Korelitz’s *The Plot* (our May Crime Book of the Month which has turned into a mega bestseller and critical darling and long ago sold out in Signed firsts). **So *The Wonder Test* will be our September Crime Book of the Month. However for non-club subscribers we have signed firsts available now. Club members should NOT order it, it will come to you as usual.** It has had various reviews, *NY Times*, etc. I like this one from Tom Nolan in the *WSJ* the best (besides my own):

“Lina Connerly is having an *annus horribilis*: Her father died, her husband died, and she made a terrible blunder in her job as an FBI agent. Craving a break from stress, she goes on hiatus and moves from New York with her 15-year-old son Rory to her dad’s old house in the Northern California town of Greenfield, where things become even more problematic. Kyle, a brand-new Greenfield police officer who was friends with Lina’s father, asks for her help with his first case: the two-week disappearance, then reappearance, of a classmate of Rory’s, who seems to be suffering PTSD but whose parents won’t discuss the matter. His experience is reminiscent of what happened a year before to a pair of twin siblings at the same school. Despite her vow to take a rest from law enforcement, Lina is soon ‘embroiled,’ in the words of a Bureau colleague, ‘in a triple kidnapping case with a side of the seriously weird.’ The oddity seems related to the town’s obsession with an annual exam assessing high-school students’ multi-disciplinary aptitude and knowledge.... Ms. Richmond maintains a creepy sense of dread throughout, even as she explores Rory’s coming-of-age and Lina’s coming-to-terms.” Even better, I did not see the true wonder of the plot twist coming, a twist that owes something to last year’s headlines. Richmond’s tale poses the question: “Is it better to do the right thing for the wrong reason or the wrong thing for the right reason? Using diacritical logic, chart your answer.”

Santlofer, Jonathan. [The Last Mona Lisa](#) (Sourcebooks \$27.99). The real-life theft of Leonardo da Vinci’s *Mona Lisa* from the Louvre on Aug. 21, 1911, by workman Vincenzo Peruggia provides the backdrop for this outstanding caper from Nero Award winner and artist Santlofer.

Santlofer writes, “It’s a mix of fact and fiction that uses a true crime, the 1911 theft of the *Mona Lisa* from the Louvre Museum, as it’s jumping off point. From there, you follow my protagonist, the thief’s great-grandson, a struggling New York artist, in search of a prison diary that holds the key to a long-held secret. It’s a story of art theft and forgery, obsession, family secrets, romance, intrigue, and even murder played against the art and splendor of Florence and Paris, and the dark underbelly of today’s international market for stolen art and what some people will do to get it.”

I like to mix up the kinds of books that we pick for Crime Books of the Month—this caper is the August selection.

Schaffert, Timothy. [The Perfume Thief](#) (Doubleday \$27.95). This buzzed-about World War II novel, set in Nazi-occupied Paris, is one of the *Los Angeles Times*' [10 best books for your summer beach reading](#) with its “intoxicating blend of decadence and intrigue.” And while we may get a few signed copies here in August, it’s our **September Historical Fiction Book of the Month**.

For many gender fluid men and women—such as narrator Clementine—Paris “had been invented for us, inspired by imaginations, but that was before the Nazi occupation. A perfumer, former thief and an American expatriate in her 70s, Clementine easily moves among Paris’s bordellos and cabarets, concocting fragrances based on personal experiences, the memory of an old lover, the ticking of a pocket watch, a field of bluebells. It’s dangerous business, as Nazi soldiers often lounge at the bordellos, giving prostitutes luxuries taken from Jewish shopkeepers who have now disappeared; the Nazis’ largess could—and will—vanish at any moment. Clementine returns to crime when she’s asked to steal the diary of a well-known perfumer that contains formulas that may date back to Cleopatra. The mission is to keep the book from the Nazis, especially bureaucrat Oskar Voss, whose ruthlessness Clementine uses for her own purposes. “For Clementine, perfumes reveal personalities, are useful as codes to military secrets and essential as escapism, allowing one ‘to slip away into tranquility, into that part of your brain where all the awful things get hushed.’ *The Perfume Thief* lyrically savors the myths and lore of fragrance made of whispers, of secrets written in the cream of your coffee, wrapped in a gripping historical mystery.”—Katie Noah Gibson

Schaffhausen, Joanna. [Gone for Good](#) (St Martins \$27.99). It’s hard for me to resist a Chicago landscape for a book—actually I am surprised there are so few. Luckily Detective Annalisa Vega of the Chicago PD, daughter of a retired cop on the force, the strong, multilayered protagonist of this exceptional series launch, brings us a vivid portrait of the city. She is called to a crime scene at the home of Grace Harper, who has been strangled by an ingenious system of knotted ropes. On Grace’s walls are photos of women in similar poses, killed slowly by ropes, all victims of the Lovelorn Killer, who murdered seven women in the late 1990s, then dropped out of sight. His last victim happens to have been Katie, the mother of Annalisa’s childhood friend Colin, who became her lover when they reached their teens, and whom she loves still despite his many years’ absence. The police soon discover Grace was part of a group of amateur sleuths called the Grave Diggers who attempt to solve cold cases. Had Grace come too close to identifying the serial killer, or was she the victim of a copycat? Interspersed with gripping chapters focused on Annalisa’s detective work are extracts from Grace’s journal that offer some tantalizing insights into a murderer’s mind. Excellent fair-play plotting, genuine surprises, and convincing characters also make this a surefire winner. If you are watching *Unforgotten* on PBS you will draw an analogy to the raking up of past secrets and crimes, a question also raised by Martin Walker in his new book *The Coldest Case*, reviewed below.

Stage, Zoje. [Getaway](#) (Grand Central \$28). 2021 is the year of writers making writers protagonists in a wide variety of stories. Novelist Imogen Blum, one of the principals in Stage’s new psychological thriller, is feeling even more introverted and isolated than usual after witnessing a deadly shooting at her Pittsburgh synagogue. Her older sister, Beck, a doctor living in Arizona, proposes a weeklong backpacking trip in the Grand Canyon, like the ones they enjoyed in their youth. Beck invites their childhood friend Tilda Jimenez, whose appearance on American Idol and subsequent stardom as an influencer have led to a six-figure book deal, to join them. Imogen and Tilda, who parted ways in college, haven’t really spoken in 20 years. Tensions and long-repressed resentments flare as they face the dangers of the rocky trails. But their personal differences fade when they realize they’re being stalked and their lives depend on their resourcefulness, courage, and unity. Stage thrillingly describes the perils and the beauty of nature while providing sage advice for hikers—and giving readers palpitations. “Stage’s characters speak to the tensions between women that can arise from the pressure to be constantly nice and docile and never stir up conflict—the burden to mask true feelings, jealousy, long-held resentments—and amps them up. It doesn’t take long for the characters to question their sanity at every turn; soon they find themselves in an even more perilous situation, at the mercy of a dangerous (supernatural?) force.”—*LJ*. The Canyon has been a stage for many a survival tale which this novel from the author of *Baby Teeth* is in part.

Walker, Joss. [Tomb of the Queen](#) (Two Tales Press \$28). Our **August SciFi/Fantasy Book of the Month** caught me with its lead character: Jayne Thorne, CIA Librarian. Who would think that Nashville’s elegant Vanderbilt University library would harbor a secret agent? And indeed Jayne enjoys her quiet life of tea and books...until she finds a spell book in the Vanderbilt archives that accidentally gives her access to a magical dimension. Now she’s hunted by a magic-wielding terrorist group called the Kingdom, and the only way for her to survive is to team up with a secret branch of the CIA. Her first mission: Go undercover at Trinity College Library in Dublin to discover the identity of a Kingdom member and determine if the *Book of Leinster* is actually a magical necromantic grimoire. With the help of a handsome Irish kick boxer, Jayne uncovers the truth of her unexpected spellbook: The Irish manuscript is one of five grimoires that can raise five dead, master magicians, and secure their totems of power. With these totems comes the power to control the world. But the spell book isn’t the only thing with secrets in Jayne’s new life. Danger lurks in every corner and Jayne must rise to meet her fated role... or perish alongside the rest of the world. This paranormal adventure series debut by JT Ellison writing as Walker is perfect for fans of *A Discovery of Witches* or of *Indiana Jones* or the *Gilmore Girls*.

Winstead, Ashley. [In My Dreams I Hold a Knife](#) (Sourcebooks \$26.99). “Winstead’s mordant debut novel is the latest entry in the budding subgenre of ‘dark academia,’ where the crime narrative takes place on a college campus. Jessica Miller’s life is, and always has been, a performance. Duquette University was supposed to be a place of reinvention, somewhere she could transcend her broken, damaged background. At the beginning, surrounded by a group of new friends, that’s what it is. But after

one of those friends, Heather, is stabbed to death, reinvention means something else: burying nasty thoughts, secret shame and the lingering belief that she bears some culpability in what happened. Ten years later, when Jessica returns to Duquette for a college reunion, she finds that Heather's brother, Eric, has become obsessed with his sister's death. 'It's amazing what you can find out when you're a skinny loser,' he tells Jessica and her friends. 'People tell you all sorts of things — student, faculty, detectives. I know so much about each of you. Most of all, I know you're not what you pretend to be. One of you is a monster, hiding behind a mask.' At its heart, Winstead's novel examines what it means to covet the lives of others, no matter the cost."—*NYT Book Review*. Riley Sager is a fan as is Hank Phillippi Ryan. [Watch Hank's wonderful interview with Ashley](#) on our videos page.

OUR AUGUST BOOKS OF THE MONTH

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

Santlofer, Jonathan. [The Last Mona Lisa](#)

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

Hawkins, Paula. [A Slow Fire Burning](#) Signed copies

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

Blake, Elizabeth. [Death and Sensibility](#)

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

Moore, Taylor. [Down Range](#) Signed copies sold out

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

Hirahara, Naomi. [Clark and Division](#) Signed copies sold out

International Crime Book of the Month

Mo, Johanna. [The Night Singer](#)

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

Davidson, Ash. [Damnation Spring](#)

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

Walker, Joss. [Tomb of the Queen](#) Signed

A DUO FOR AVID MYSTERYREADERS

Lehrer, Jonah. [Mystery: A Seduction, A Strategy, A Solution](#) (Avid Reader \$28) explores the psychology behind mystery and suspense. Why does mystery create a mental itch that must be scratched? Lehrer unlocks the secrets of mystery's allure, putting together recent discoveries in the fields of psychology, neuroscience, and anthropology and shining a new light on everything from the formulas of our favorite detective shows to the tricks of successful advertising campaigns and the calculated risks of the stock market.

Rubenstein, Mark. [The Storytellers](#) (Blackstone \$16.99). This is a terrific compilation of interviews with a wide range of crime fiction authors by Rubenstein. They are remarkably candid and informative. I enjoyed browsing through them. "Particularly revelatory are the authors' anecdotes about their previous jobs-as reporters, psychiatrists, veterinarians, and lawyers-and the range of perspectives makes for a breezy introduction to the writing

game. Thriller writers-and fans curious about the process-are in for a treat." Don Winslow adds, "A remarkable collection of interviews with some of the most important writers working in the world today. I loved this book." Me too.

NEW IN HARDCOVERS

✎ Adams, Sara Nisha. [The Reading List](#) (Harper \$27.99). Two lonely characters in contemporary London—and a host of friends and family—learn just how much books, and other people, have to offer. Mukesh is grieving after his wife's death: "Now here he was, alone, still without any clue as to what he should do now she was gone...." He wishes he were as close to his granddaughter, Priya, as she was to her grandmother, but he does not share their love of reading. Then he finds an unreturned library book his late wife loved and gives it a chance. Aleisha, 17, works at the library, but begrudgingly. Her older brother is the reader in the family. Both are slowly being crushed by their mother's oppressive depression; they've lost touch with their friends and even each other, leaving Aleisha alone in the world, traveling between work and home until even the boring local library begins to feel like a sanctuary. In a returned book, she finds a handwritten note that begins, "Just in case you need it," with a list of book titles. Not knowing why, she tucks it away. Out of guilt and boredom, Aleisha begins reading the books on the found list and recommending them to the elderly Hindu man who has tentatively begun to visit her library. Enjoy this tender novel about human connection and community and the healing power of reading, about the support and compassion that all people need at one time or another. It's a very nice gift idea for our current times.

Barker, Pat. [The Women of Troy](#) (Knopf \$27.95). "In Barker's masterly continuation of her fiercely feminist take on Homer's *Iliad* after [The Silence of the Girls](#) (\$16.95), the Greeks drag their wooden horse into Troy and achieve victory after a 10-year siege, but a freak storm prevents their ships from returning home. As time drags on, Briseis, the heroine of the previous installment, struggles to survive as an enemy noncombatant prisoner in the siege camp. A former queen of a Trojan ally, she was kidnapped by Achilles as his prize of honor and turned into his sex slave. But now Achilles is dead and Briseis is pregnant. Handed down to Lord Alcimus as his wife, she spends her days, as soldiers play football with a human head, commiserating with the other Trojan women—Hecuba, Cassandra, Andromache and, of course, Helen, the cause of the war. Briseis shares narrative duties with Pyrrhus, the bloodthirsty son of Achilles, and Calchas, a canny priest of Troy. In a novel filled with names from legend, Briseis stands tall as a heroine: brave, smart and loyal. The author makes strategic use of anachronistic language ("living in the real world," "keep a low profile") to illuminate characters living at the dawn of myth."—*PW*. Madeline Miller fans, take note.

Barnett, Cynthia. [The Sound of the Sea: Seashells and the Fate of the Ocean](#) (Norton \$27.95). This is the August selection for the Atlas Obscura Book Club. Why? Recommended "if your name is Shelly and you're tired of selling your seashells by the seashore, a book all about seashells is perfect for a seaside siesta. Seashells—and the mollusks that grow them—are a potent force in nature and society as shown in this riveting survey." Who can resist a book pitched this clever way?

Bartz, Andrea. [We Were Never Here](#) (Ballantine \$27). This is the August selection for Reese's Book Club. I love why: "Recom-

mended for fans of vindictive women with slightly obsessive female friendships.”

Here’s a review: “Milwaukee resident Emily Donovan, the narrator of this riveting psychological thriller, and her best friend, Kristen Czarnecki, who left Milwaukee 18 months earlier for a job in Australia, reunite in Chile for their annual vacation. The trip turns deadly when Kristen kills a backpacker in self-defense. A similar fatal encounter occurred during an earlier trip to Cambodia, only then Kristen killed to defend Emily. Emily decides she needs to distance herself from Kristen, but the more she tries to do so, the more Kristen tries to stay connected. Kristen moves back to Milwaukee, where she soon starts popping up in places she doesn’t belong—such as Emily’s yoga studio and therapist’s office—constantly reminding Emily of the secrets they share and how they need each other. Bartz does a good job dramatizing the increasingly creepy relationship between the two women as the twisty plot builds to a slightly confusing conclusion.”

Bell, Matt. [Appleseed](#) (Custom House \$27.99) is “woven together out of the strands of myth, science fiction, and ecological warning, as urgent as it is audacious.” It explores climate change, manifest destiny, humanity’s unchecked exploitation of natural resources, and the small but powerful magic contained within every single apple. In eighteenth-century Ohio, two brothers travel into the wooded frontier, planting apple orchards from which they plan to profit in the years to come. As they remake the wilderness in their own image, planning for a future of settlement and civilization, the long-held bonds and secrets between the two will be tested, fractured and broken—and possibly healed. Fifty years from now, in the second half of the twenty-first century, climate change has ravaged the Earth. Having invested early in genetic engineering and food science, one company now owns all the world’s resources. But a growing resistance is working to redistribute both land and power—and in a pivotal moment for the future of humanity, one of the company’s original founders will return to headquarters, intending to destroy what he helped build. A thousand years in the future, North America is covered by a massive sheet of ice. One lonely sentient being inhabits a tech station on top of the glacier—and in a daring and seemingly impossible quest, sets out to follow a homing beacon across the continent in the hopes of discovering the last remnant of civilization.

The Indie Next Pick: “This cross between a Shakespeare drama and a Grimm fairy tale is unsettling, attention-grabbing, and thought-provoking in the way stories do so well when reason often fails. A powerful read!”

Bell, Ted. [Sea Hawke](#) (Berkley \$28). In this new swashbuckler from Bell, MI6 legend and gentleman spy Alex Hawke is due for some downtime after saving the kidnapped heir to the British throne. He’s got a new custom built sailing yacht and a goal: to get closer to his son Alexi during an epic cruise across the seven seas. But fate and the chief of MI6, Lord David Trulove, have other plans. There’s an unholy alliance of nations who are plotting to attack Western democracies. The wily intelligence leader plans to use Hawke to drive a knife into the heart of this conspiracy. From an island base off Cuba to a secret jungle lair deep in the Amazon, on the land and the seas, the master spy and his crew of incorrigibles are in for the fight of their lives—the fight for freedom. Pure escapism for your end of summer.

Blakemore, A K. [The Manningtree Witches](#) (Catapult \$26). The Indie Next Pick finds this to be “A brilliant story set in 17th-century England about a women’s community at the margins of society and the constant dangers of religious fervor. Dark, unsettling, and highly entertaining.” Blakemore, a poet and translator, is a brilliant stylist and infuses her debut novel with elegance even as the story of residents in a small English town in the grip of witch trials and Puritan fever and the grip of the Witchfinder Matthew Hopkins, is so chilling: fear, misinformation, tribalism, scapegoating. . . . So many lost their lives unnecessarily. There are IMHO some pretty chilling parallels to today.

Buxton, Kira Jane. [Feral Creatures](#) (Grand Central \$28). When the world last checked-in with its favorite Cheeto addict, the planet had been overrun by flesh-hungry beasts, and nature had started re-claiming her territory from humankind. S.T., the intrepid crow, alongside his bloodhound-bestie Dennis, had set about saving pets that had become trapped in their homes after humanity went the way of the dodo. That is, dear reader, until S.T. stumbled upon something so rare—and so precious—that he vowed to do everything in his power to safeguard what could, quite literally, be humanity’s last hope for survival. But in a wild world plagued by prejudiced animals, feather-raising environments, new threats so terrifying they make zombies look like baby bunnies, and a horrendous dearth of cheesy snacks, what’s a crow to do? Why, wing it on another big-hearted, death-defying adventure, that’s what! Joined by a fabulous new cast of animal characters, S.T. faces many new challenges plus his biggest one yet: parenthood. Fabulist Buxton began with the big hit [Hollow Kingdom](#) (\$16.99), likewise an Indie Next Pick.

Chazin, Suzanne. [The Fragile Edge](#) (Kensington \$26). Jimmy Vega straddles two worlds—the hardscrabble Bronx where he grew up as the child of a Puerto Rican single mother, and the upscale, mostly white, suburban county where he now serves as a police detective. Yet despite his sense of never belonging, he’s a good and decent cop—even if the multi-million-dollar civil suit he’s facing says otherwise. His own troubles take a back seat when Vega learns that a court officer has just been shot and killed while transporting a controversial judge across the courthouse lot. Vega quickly surmises that the judge was the real target. She’s earned the ire of alt-right hate groups for going soft on undocumented defendants accused of petty crimes. The sole witness to the sniper’s identity is a Guatemalan girl traveling by bus from the border. And now, she’s vanished—melted into a community fearful of the police. Her days are numbered if Vega can’t get to her before the killer does.

Chizmar, Richard. [Chasing the Boogeyman](#) (Gallery \$27). **We have a limited supply of Signed Bookplates.**

Horror fans know Richard Chizmar as the founder of the influential genre magazine *Cemetery Dance*; a prolific author, editor, and anthologizer of short fiction; and, lately, Stephen King’s frequent publisher and co-writer. Thriller fans are about to know him as the author of one of the year’s most inventive, compelling, and moving crime novels. Here Chizmar inserts a gruesome—and entirely fictional—serial-killer narrative into a largely autobiographical coming-of-age story. Set in 1988, the book finds a young Chizmar returning to his family home in Edgewood, Maryland, to spend the summer between his college graduation and his upcoming wedding. Chizmar mostly plans to hole up in his childhood bedroom to write horror stories and

turn out the first issue of *Cemetery Dance*, but fate has something else in mind for him. When teenage girls begin disappearing from their bedrooms and driveways, only to turn up dead and mutilated hours later, Chizmar is drawn into the investigation that quickly consumes his hometown. The book is presented as true crime, complete with pages of photos ostensibly culled from local newspaper coverage of the murders and the personal collections of some of the people involved. (The photos were staged by Chizmar, his son Billy, and a Baltimore production company.) It's a remarkably convincing piece of metafiction; if not for the words "A Novel" tucked beneath the title on the cover, you might be tempted to wonder if a young Chizmar really did go toe-to-toe with a serial murderer. Stranger things have happened.

Claudel, Philippe. [Dog Island](#) (LittleBrown \$27). A BAFTA and multiple mystery award winner, novelist/filmmaker Claudel limns the current refugee crisis, with the inhabitants of backwater Dog Island refusing to disrupt their age-old way of life when three unidentified bodies wash ashore. Nestled in an overlooked part of the Mediterranean, Dog Island is home to a quiet and untouched community that has long lived off its fishing, its vines, and its olive trees, far away from the turmoil its neighbors. Now, witnesses to the bodies the witnesses are faced with an impossible decision: report the discovery and open up the island to grisly inquiries, or conceal the terrible truth? Resolving to preserve their way of life, the mayor and a small group of conspirators resolve on a cover-up. But after they dispose of the evidence, their act of deception continues to haunt them, bringing waves of suspicion and misfortune to the island. A detective arrives from the mainland, making their secret even harder to keep....

Cleveland, Karen. [You Can Run](#) (Ballantine \$27). Part of the job of CIA analyst Jill Bailey, the narrator of this tense spy novel from Thriller Award finalist Cleveland, consists of vetting potential double agents. One morning at CIA headquarters in Langley, Va., she receives a call telling her that her infant son, Owen, is being held hostage. In exchange for his return, she must green light the agency's documentation on a potential Syrian double agent code-named Falcon. With the pressure mounting, Jill does as she is told. Once Owen is safely in her arms, she realizes she's been compromised forever. Impulsively, she resigns her job and persuades her husband to move to Ft. Lauderdale, Fla., where she settles into a reassuring humdrum existence. Four years later, her new life rapidly unravels when she's approached by a journalist who wants "to talk about Falcon." Jill is soon putting her safety on the line to protect her family as former CIAer Cleveland plunges the reader into a terrifying world of shifting alliances, action, and intrigue that fans of strong female characters will relish.

Collins, Megan. [The Family Plot](#) (Atria \$27). Dahlia Lighthouse's parents were obsessed with true crime. They raised her and her twin brother, Andy, on a creepy secluded island, and when Dahlia was sixteen, Andy disappeared. Years later, she returns home after her father's death, where the family makes a horrifying discovery—Andy is already buried in her father's family plot. Theories about drifters and serial killers are tossed around, but the truth behind his death just might hit closer to home. While the rest of Dahlia's family goes about their lives like nothing really happened, Dahlia will work to get to the bottom of her twin's murder.

Cook, Robin. [Viral](#) (Penguin \$27). Unread by me but not well rated. I can see from the description that the narrative is more like nonfiction than a thriller.

Trying to find some normalcy during the Covid-19 pandemic, Brian Murphy and his family are on a summer excursion in Cape Cod when his wife, Emma, comes down with concerning flu-like symptoms. Their leisurely return home to New York City quickly becomes a race to the local hospital as she suddenly begins seizing in the car. At the ICU, she is diagnosed with eastern equine encephalitis, a rare and highly lethal mosquito-borne viral disease seemingly caught during one of their evening cookouts. Complicating the situation further, Brian and Emma's young daughter then begins to exhibit alarming physical and behavioral symptoms, too. Emma's harrowing hospital stay becomes even more fraught when Brian receives a staggering hospital bill full of outrageous charges and murky language. To add insult to injury, his health insurance company refuses to cover any of the cost, citing dubious clauses in Brian's policy. Forced to choose between the ongoing care of family and bills he can never pay, and furious at a shockingly indifferent healthcare system, Brian vows to seek justice, meaning he must uncover the dark side of an industry that has strayed drastically from its altruistic roots.

Cooke, Stephanie. [ParaNorthern: And the Chaos Bunny A-hop-calyse](#) (Houghton \$24.95). Illustrated by Mari Costa for Ages 8-12. The Indie Next Pick calls this an "Absolutely sweet graphic novel about a girl with fledgling magic powers that seem stronger than they should be. With evil bunnies, a wolf girl, a forgetful ghost, and a pumpkinhead looking for some basic rights for pumpkins! Charming and fun and I was smiling the whole time." Think ahead to Halloween. It will be here before you know it.

Elliott, Lexie. [How to Kill Your Best Friend](#) (Berkley \$27). What would you do if you knew, deep down, that your best friend was a sociopath? It opens with a group of friends gathering at the luxury island resort owned by Lissa and her husband. Since their college swim-team days, the group has remained steadfast friends and an integral part of one another's adult lives. But they are not gathering to celebrate; instead, they are mourning the loss of Lissa. Lissa apparently drowned while swimming alone at night, but her body has not been found. Her husband is devastated, but Lissa's best friend Georgie is filled with questions. How could such a strong swimmer drown? Why was Lissa swimming at night? Feeding Georgie's suspicions are memories of Lissa's unnerving behavior during their youthful escapades. Georgie has always been fearful of Lissa's actions. She knows that Lissa has an unwavering sense of right and wrong and that she believes in avenging injustices. Georgie becomes even more disturbed when the resort's guests find warning messages, the workers start disappearing, and someone seems to be trying to prevent Lissa's friends from leaving. Is Lissa really dead, or is something else more insidious going on? "These slyly escalating head games that will make you think twice about booking that next getaway."

Ellis, Mary. [100 Proof Murder](#) (Severn \$28.99). Travel writer Jill Curtis is in Louisville, Kentucky, on the next stop of her bourbon tour assignment, and is keen to explore the local distilleries with her videographer, Michael Erickson – especially since her new beau, Lieutenant Nick Harris, lives in the city. But the night before Jill's first tour at Parker's Distillery, she is shocked to

learn that the master distiller, William Scott, has died suddenly of a heart attack – and even more shocked when she discovers William’s daughter, Alexis, suspects foul play. Ordered Upon Request and hurry while stock lasts. Thank you.

Evans, Sian. [Maiden Voyages](#) (St Martins \$28.99). UK cultural historian Evans intrigued me right away with this deep dive into 20th Century ocean liners. It’s at once for travel buffs (until the 1950s and long-haul airplane flights the only way to cross the Atlantic was by passenger liner) and cruising fans (if only to compare cruise ships with ocean liners), those intrigued by celebrities, and a low-key feminist history for the focus is on the women who sailed on, and those who worked on, the glamorous liners. Evans writes about society figures like Lady Astor, Thelma Furness and her twin Gloria Vanderbilt, the Prince of Wales/Wallis Simpson; about celebrities/movie stars, and other First Class passengers. But she gives careful attention to middle class passengers as well as the migrants, refugees, and others in third class or steerage, and to women who worked on, made careers on, the “company widows” who found a social net on, the liners. There are extensive footnotes and notes, and a bibliography for further reading. I recommend this for browsing, dipping in and out of so many stories, one of which is the young woman from an impoverished Scottish isle who sailed in third class to New York and ended up marrying Fred Trump.

Faye, Lyndsay. [The King of Infinite Space](#) (Putnam \$27) is a lush, magical, queer, and feminist take on *Hamlet* set in modern-day New York City. Ben Dane: brilliant, devastating, devoted, honest to a fault (truly, a fault). His Broadway theater baron father is dead—but by purpose or accident? The question rips him apart. Unable to face alone his mother’s ghastly remarriage to his uncle, Ben turns to his dearest friend, Horatio Patel, whom he hasn’t seen since their relationship changed forever from platonic to something...other. Loyal to a fault (truly, a fault), Horatio is on the first flight to NYC when he finds himself next to a sly tailor who portends inevitable disaster. And who seems ominously like an architect of mayhem himself. Meanwhile, Ben’s ex-fiancé Lia, sundered her from her loved ones thanks to her addiction recovery and torn from her art, has been drawn into the fold of three florists from New Orleans—seemingly ageless sisters who teach her the language of flowers, and whose magical bouquets hold both curses and cures. For a price. On one explosive night these kinetic forces will collide, and the only possible outcome is death. “Readers will be impressed at the variations Faye introduces to the play’s plotline, and Faye’s considerable descriptive gifts are on ample display.”

Feehan, Christine. [Murder at Sunrise Lake](#) (Berkley \$28). It’s hard for me to accept a label for this as “paranormal romance” when I find it’s a tense, scary thriller. I dipped into it by accident and then read straight through it. We’re in California Sierra Nevada backcountry where Stella Harrison is running the Sunrise Lake resort while hiding from past traumas. She isn’t interested in sharing her life with anyone, not even the hot hired handyman, a patient and self-contained guy called Sam who is surprisingly attuned to Stella’s needs. Who is he? Stella has no idea. When Stella has one of her visions of a murder, a fisherman pulled under viciously and drowned, she wants to make a preemptive move, but on whom, where, and even over what? Feehan keeps up the pace while developing her cast. She sure hooked me.

Fielding, Joy. [Cul-de-Sac](#) (Random \$28). A sub-genre of suspense novels are the domestic thrillers. In Fielding’s latest book, five families in a sleepy suburb live on a quiet cul-de-sac. All five families have secrets, all five families have a gun, and by the end of one dark night in July, one of them will be dead. Everyone on the cul-de-sac has a motive for murder, as well as a reason to be murdered. Which one will it be?

Feito, Virginia. [Mrs. March](#) (Liveright \$26). George March’s latest novel is a smash. No one could be prouder than his dutiful wife, Mrs. March, who revels in his accolades. A careful creature of routine and decorum, she lives a precariously controlled existence on the Upper East Side until one morning, when the shopkeeper of her favorite patisserie suggests that her husband’s latest protagonist—a detestable character named Johanna—is based on Mrs. March herself. Clutching her ostrich leather pocketbook and mint-colored gloves, she flees the shop. What could have merited this humiliation? That one casual remark robs Mrs. March of the belief that she knew everything about her husband—and herself—thus sending her on an increasingly paranoid journey that begins within the pages of a book. While snooping in George’s office, Mrs. March finds a newspaper clipping about a missing woman. Did George have anything to do with her disappearance?

The Indie Next Pick: “Virginia Feito has effortlessly updated the comedy of manners in this darkly funny mystery. This book will haunt you until you reach the breathtaking conclusion, and you’ll remember Mrs. March for a long time to come.”

✦ Hawkins, Paula. [A Slow Fire Burning](#) (Penguin \$28). I don’t know about you but I thought Hawkins’ second book after her smash hit [The Girl on the Train](#) (\$16) was disappointing. But this, her third, is well written and exerts a powerful pull with its cast of damaged characters and their secrets. When a young man is found gruesomely murdered in a London houseboat, it triggers questions about three women who knew him. Laura is the troubled one-night-stand last seen in the victim’s home. Carla is his grief-stricken aunt, already mourning the recent death of yet another family member. And Miriam is the nosy neighbor clearly keeping secrets from the police. Three women with separate connections to the victim. Three women who are – for different reasons – simmering with resentment. Interestingly the least sympathetic of them, the most unreliable as a narrator, emerges with the brightest prospects. Read this our **August British Crime Club Book of the Month** not for the plot but for the prose and people. Also for the canal boat landscape; there is a handy map of this part of London included. With so much from the UK targeting the domestic thriller genre, this variation prompted my selection.

Hearne, Kevin. [Paper and Blood](#) (Del Rey \$27). **Our copies come with a signed bookplate from Kevin in Canada**—we are over 400 sold as I write this. In Book Two of the Ink & Sigil Series, which also acts as a continuation of the Iron Druid Chronicles series, Hearne “continues to explore the intersection of the mundane and the divine with his typical mix of humor and adventure. Scottish sigil agent Al MacBharrais receives word that his counterparts in Australia and Taipei have vanished during an investigation in Australia’s Dandenong Ranges. MacBharrais and his hobgoblin assistant, Buck Foi, head to Melbourne, joining apprentice sigil agent Chen Ya-Ping and the immortal Iron Druid, who currently goes by Connor Molloy, on a hike to the missing

agents' last known location. Along the way, they encounter a series of monstrous chimera and magical booby traps that take all their skill to survive—but they still find time to share campfire stories at night. Meanwhile, MacBharrais seeks to dispel the twin curses placed upon him, which all but guarantee that Buck will die within a year. Though the foul-mouthed Buck steals the show, the rest of the cast hold their own—even if Hearne's fans will recognize some eerily familiar patterns in the relationship dynamics." By throwing well-loved characters into a deadly mystery and moving each one's story along, this entertaining installment is demonstrably (here at The Pen as an indicator) a sure-fire hit. [Ink & Sigil](#) (\$16).

Heller, Miranda Cowley. [The Paper Palace](#) (Penguin \$27). "Ensnared in her family's rustic compound on Cape Cod for an annual summer trip, Elle Bishop is at a crossroads, forced to choose between the two great loves of her life. Should she run off with the longtime bestie she's secretly been in love with since they endured a ghastly childhood trauma together? Or stay with her cherished husband, a dashing Brit who's the father of her kids?" —*People*

Heller, Peter. [The Guide](#) (Knopf \$26.99). "Fisherman's noir isn't a genre, but maybe it should be... This is an unconventional mystery, an unconventional romance, and an unconventional adventure, creepy and spiritual in equal measure... The author clearly knows his way around a river; the long, descriptive passages create a vivid sense of place and action... By the time Jack and Alison encounter a young woman running down the road in a hospital gown in a scene right out of the sinister noir *Kiss Me Deadly*, they're in too deep, and they're too curious, to quit the dangerous puzzle before them. You might feel the same. There's danger at the end of the line in this unconventional thriller." —*Kirkus Reviews*

Indridason, Arnaldur. [The Darkness Knows](#) (St Martins \$27.99). The best reason to read this sequel to [The Shadow District](#) (\$19) led by Konrád is for the wonderful descriptions of Reykjavik and the near countryside. I was less grabbed by the slow-moving story and its not very appealing cast. While exploring an Icelandic glacier, a group of German tourists stumble upon the well-preserved corpse of Sigurvin, a young man who disappeared 30 years ago. Konrád, the retired detective who worked the case, gets a call from his friend Svanhildur, a pathologist at the National Hospital, urging him to take a look at the body. A large head wound confirms that the death was most likely murder. Konrád has long believed that Hjaltalín, a man who threatened Sigurvin, was responsible for his death. The suspect was never brought to justice but suffered public infamy. When Hjaltalín, now elderly and frail, is taken into custody, he requests a meeting with Konrád, professes his innocence, and pleads to be exonerated—and then, days later, he dies. Once Konrád reluctantly reopens this cold case, it brings sketchy characters out of the woodwork. I preferred Konrád's first case rooted in WWII and Americans stationed in Iceland.

Isaka, Kotaro. [Bullet Train](#) (Overlook \$28). Set on a bullet train traveling from Tokyo to Morioka (and soon to be a movie starring Brad Pitt), this impressive thriller from Japanese author Isaka (*Remote Control*) races along, like the eponymous train, at a frenetic pace. In the first of multiple story lines, Yuichi Kimura boards the train, armed with a revolver, in search of the person

who pushed his six-year-old son, Wataru, off a roof, leaving the child comatose. When Kimura finds his quarry, the sadistic teen Satoshi Oji, Oji manages to incapacitate the grieving parent with a Taser. Oji, who makes it clear he planted clues to lead Kimura to his location, ties his victim up and threatens to have Wataru killed if Kimura doesn't follow his instructions. Kimura's desperate attempts to save himself and his son alternate with other violent plots, one involving the kidnapping of a crime lord's son, another a missing suitcase stuffed with cash, and a third a snake. Isaka keeps the suspense high throughout. Fans of intricate action fiction will be enthralled.

✦ Jones, Sandie. [The Guilt Trip](#) (St Martins \$27.99). Anyone naïve enough to think that book club selections by Barnes & Noble (just one example; in fact the whole Indie Next List and many book club choices are heavily influenced by what publishers are willing to pay for promotions or by pressure they can exert) are made on literary merit should consider this review of the B&N August Book Club choice. I could not agree more with its take: "In this soap opera masquerading as a suspense novel, two British couples in their 40s—Rachel and Jack, and Paige and Noah—head to Portugal for the wedding of Jack's much younger brother, Will, to the manipulative and impetuous Ali. They all stay at an awe-inspiring cliff-top villa overlooking a fishing village. Deeply insecure Rachel gave up her one true love, Noah, some 20 years earlier, in order to marry and start a family with Jack, a brash record company executive. Noah is now married to Paige, Rachel's best friend. Ali, who once worked for Jack, is seen as a rival by the older women, who are beginning to question their own life choices.... This works well as a *telenovela*, but those looking for a mystery or thrills will be disappointed." There is nothing to discuss but marital infidelity and its consequences.

I add that this book is an example of why I read every British Crime Book of the Month candidate before making a selection, a process that can be slow but results in what I think is the best we can offer you in quality and variety. If I worked off hype Jones might have been the August pick.

Jones, Stephen Graham. [My Heart is a Chainsaw](#) (Gallery \$26.99). Jones made a big splash with [The Only Good Indians](#) (\$16.99) here at The Pen, and elsewhere. He again "expertly mixes the frightening and the funny in this no-holds-barred homage to classic horror tropes written under the heady influence of splatter films. Its outsider heroine is Jade Daniels, an affectionately cheeky 17-year-old high schooler of Blackfoot descent, who finds escape from her dead-end life in rural Proofrock, Idaho, by gorging on a steady diet of slasher flicks. When a spate of bizarre deaths targeting the wealthy residents of Proofrock's newly developed Terra Nova community rocks the town, Jade recognizes all of the elements of her favorite films' formulae at play. Certain that the deaths presage a bloody slaughter, she tries—with little credulity from authorities—to warn the town of what is coming. Jones weaves an astonishing amount of slasher film lore into his novel, punctuating the text with short term papers written by Jade on the history and functions of the genre. Meanwhile, the tension builds to a graphic finale perfectly appropriate for the novel's cinematic scope. Horror fans won't need to have seen all of the films referenced to be blown away by this audacious extravaganza."

✦ Keating, HRF, ed. [Agatha Christie: First Lady of Crime](#) (Pegasus \$26.95). This invaluable anthology of essays by fans from Julian Symons to Sophie Hannah is rereleased and updated

from 1977 and will delight fans of Christie (or British crime) with “a trove of fact, observation, and scintillating conjecture.” I can’t wait to dive into it.

King, Stephen. [Billy Summers](#) (Scribner \$30). Continuing the trend towards crafting writers as protagonists in fiction, here is King. Ex-Army sniper turned hit man Billy Summers, the protagonist of this thriller from MWA Grand Master King, decides his 18th assassination will be his last. Matters get complicated when Billy begins to think the \$2 million payout for the hit is bogus, and when a rape victim whose life he saves becomes his confidante. The novel’s strength is a story within a story: as he preps for months in the small town for the job, Billy, masquerades as a novelist, as his lightly fictionalized autobiography grows more candid as it inches closer to current events.

Kotzwinkle, William. [Felonious Monk](#) (Blackstone \$26.99). Tommy Martini, the quick-tempered 26-year-old narrator of this nimble comic thriller, has spent five years in a Mexican monastery repenting the death of a young man he killed in a barroom fight during college. When word comes that Martini’s retired parish priest uncle, Vittorio, is on his death bed, Martini pays the old man a final visit at his home outside Phoenix, Ariz. After Vittorio dies, his Mafia-connected relatives are surprised and dismayed to learn that he left his considerable assets to Martini. Unbeknownst to them, Vittorio recently facilitated the sale of a pair of churches to a business buying up church real estate and flipping it, while also running a money-laundering scheme for a Mexican cartel. According to the mob goons and cartel assassins who won’t leave Martini alone, Vittorio stole from them, and they aim to collect. Amusing complications arise after Martini, who has taken a chastity vow, meets an attractive female cult leader... Fans of Donald Westlake’s action-packed, screwball crime fiction will hope Martini will be back for an encore. Great title, too!

Lange, Tracey. [We are the Brennans](#) (Celadon \$26.96) is a debut about secrets. “Most obvious are the secrets of the Brennans themselves, which are revealed in chapters written from alternating third-person points of view. Some of these secrets date all the way back to the Westchester County-based family’s roots in Northern Ireland; others are newer. The book derives most of its narrative tension from the omissions and commissions of the Brennan family, but the largest revelation— and the secret at its core — is the way it subverts readerly expectations about the sort of book it is. Though her novel is obviously descended from earlier stories about large Irish American families struggling to do the right thing — a genre established by films like *The Brothers McMullen* and novels like Joyce Carol Oates’s *We Were the Mulvaney*s — Lange seems willing to break this highly specific genre’s traditional promise: that these families do, in their own fumbling way, eventually find their way toward morality. Instead, *We Are the Brennans* leaves its main characters in an interesting state of limbo.”—*NYTBR*

Lunney, Tessa. [Autumn Leaves, 1922: A Kiki Button Mystery](#) (Pegasus \$25.95). Kiki Button, who spied for the Allies during WWI, back in Paris after a trip home to Australia to bury the mother she never really knew. Under the auspices of writing a gossip column for a London newspaper, Kiki hobnobs with displaced princes, communists, and such real-life notables as Ernest Hemingway, Coco Chanel, and Gertrude Stein. Meanwhile, the mysterious Dr. Fox, her former spymaster, blackmails her into

working for him one more time with incriminating photos of a lover of hers who may have spied for the Germans. At the heart of the novel, though, is Kiki’s desire to learn more about her distant mother, who led a much different and more enlightened life when visiting Paris. The key lies in locating a missing diary her mother kept. The many connections to the first book may baffle readers new to the series, but fans of historical spy novels will enjoy getting lost in these richly imagined pages.

✦ Marston, Edward. [Tragedy on the Branch Line](#) (Allison \$25). When Bernard Pomeroy finds a letter slipped under his door in the early hours, he flies into a panic. After dashing off a short note to his friend, he hands it to the porter at Corpus Christi College before hastening on to the railway station and boarding a train leaving Cambridge. However, shortly after disembarking at his destination, the undergraduate lies dead on the platform. Inspector Colbeck and Sergeant Leeming are summoned by the Master of the college to investigate Pomeroy’s untimely demise. With the Boat Race on the horizon, the president of the Cambridge Boat Club believes their Oxford rivals responsible for the death of their cox, who had been heralded in the press for his talent. Yet it seems Pomeroy had ruffled many other feathers in Cambridge.

Maxwell, Alyssa. [Murder at Wakehurst](#) (Kensington \$26). Journalist Emma Cross, a cousin “twice or thrice removed” from Cornelius Vanderbilt II, who has recently died, attends an Elizabethan-themed fete at Wakehurst, the Van Alen family estate in Newport, R.I. The entertainment consists of archery competitions, jesters, actors, and musicians. When a jousting exhibition is announced, Emma, who’s in no mood for partying after Cornelius’s death, has had enough. As she’s walking away from the festivities, she hears the insistent barking of the Van Alen dogs. Following the sound, she finds Judge Clayton Schuyler dead, an arrow protruding from his chest. In the past, Emma has depended on helpful police detective Jessie White in her sleuthing, but Jessie’s replacement, Det. Gifford Myers, tells her to stay out of his investigation. This [Gilded Newport series](#) shows that the 1% were frequently as underhanded and entitled in the Gilded Age as now.

McConaghy, Charlotte. [Once There Were Wolves](#) (Flatiron \$27.99). “Telling of the reintroduction of wolves to the Scottish highlands, *Once There Were Wolves* affirms the importance of our connections to the human and more-than-human worlds that sustain us, worlds we sever at our own peril.” Australian author McConaghy pens a vividly realized story of trauma and the attempted “rewilding” of the Scottish Highlands that makes this the #1 Indie Next Pick for August. When Inti discovers the body of a man she suspects was abusive to his wife (he said she fell off of a horse; she looked like she was beaten up), and who might have been killed either by a wolf or another person, she impulsively buries the body and sets out to solve the mystery of the death, a process complicated by her sexual relationship with the local police chief, as they have a hard time trusting each other, and by an unexpected pregnancy. “The bleak landscape is gorgeously rendered and made tense by its human and animal inhabitants, each capable of killing. Throughout, McConaghy avoids melodrama by maintaining a cool matter-of-factness.”

Miller, Michele Weinstat. [Gone By Morning](#) (Crooked Lane \$27.99). Our blogger Lesa writes: When a bomb explodes in a New York City subway station, it changes the lives of three

women. Ex-madam Kathleen Harris, 68, survives the event and walks home to the apartment building she owns. City Hall press officer Emily Silverman, 26, and her young daughter Skye are tenants in Kathleen's building. As Emily returns home the night of the bombing, she sees a woman getting into a car with a man. When that woman is found murdered, Emily recognizes her from a photo: it's Sharon, a sex worker who once worked for Kathleen. Emily and Kathleen stir up trouble as they investigate Sharon's murder. Soon Kathleen's apartment building blows up, and she, Emily, and Skye barely escape; Kathleen is then arrested for arson, and her bank account is wiped out. Emily's determined to help Kathleen and asks her divorce lawyer mother Lauren Cintron to take her case. Lauren recognizes Kathleen immediately and is reluctant to defend the mother she thinks abandoned her as a child. Emily never knew that Kathleen was her grandmother, who had spent five years in prison for homicide. Emily, Lauren, and Kathleen are so entangled that they pose a threat to a powerful political figure with connections to the subway bomber. Miller's background as a lawyer in New York brings an authenticity to this intense, intricately plotted debut thriller."

Moreno-Garcia, Silvia. [Velvet Was the Night](#) (Dell \$28). This rich story, a neo-noir thriller, is also an excellent history of the 1970s in Mexico. As Moreno-Garcia writes, "My novel is noir, pulp fiction, but it's based on a real horror story." And she includes a playlist. I think it's fascinating. So does this reviewer:

"This seductive neo-noir thriller from Moreno-Garcia who became a surprise bestseller with [Mexican Gothic](#) (\$17)—sees the reissue of two of her previous books, *The Beautiful Ones* and *Certain Dark Things*—and draws on the real-life efforts of the Mexican government to suppress political dissent in the 1970s. ... This is a rich novel with an engrossing plot, distinctive characters, and a pleasing touch of romance. Readers won't be able to put it down."—*PW*. The book follows two young people: Maite, a 30-year-old lovelorn legal secretary, and Elvis, a 21-year-old violence-averse enforcer for a government-sponsored black-ops gang. It's 1971 Mexico City. Both are in search of Leonora, a missing college student—Maite wants her to return to their shared apartment building so she can stop cat-sitting for her; Elvis has been tasked to find her by his mysterious boss, who desperately wants to recover some incriminating photos he believes she has. Maite and Elvis, with their shared love for Frank Sinatra-type crooners, aren't your typical 1970s noir characters. "They're out of date and they're not hip," Moreno-Garcia says.... they exist in a fantasy, romantic world." "[Noir] is psychological," Moreno-Garcia says. "It's about the microscope and it's about people. It's not necessarily about the big stakes or the whodunit." The genre also gives her, in her words, "the capacity to explore characters that have shades of gray."

Mullen, Thomas. [Midnight Atlanta](#) (LittleBrown \$26.99). When Arthur Bishop, editor of Atlanta's leading black newspaper, is killed in his office in 1956, cop-turned-journalist Tommy Smith finds himself in the crosshairs of the racist cops he's been trying to avoid. To clear his name, he needs to learn more about the dangerous story Bishop had been working on. Meanwhile, Smith's ex-partner Lucius Boggs and white sergeant Joe McInnis—the only white cop in the black precinct—find themselves caught between meddling federal agents, racist detectives, and Communist activists as they try to solve the murder. With a young Reverend Martin Luther King Jr making headlines of his own, and tensions

in the city growing, Boggs and Smith find themselves back on the same side in a hunt for the truth that will put them both at risk. Mullen's novels have been praised by Ken Follett and Stephen King—and of course, by Patrick.

Oates, Joyce Carol. [Breathe](#) (Harper \$28.99). "A fever dream [is] unleashed when a woman fails to come to terms with the death of her husband. As the story opens, memoir writer Michaela wills her older, very ill husband, Gerard McManus, a distinguished historian of science, to breathe. Midway through the book, he succumbs to his multiple maladies: pneumonia, lung cancer, and a urethral tumor. Michaela then finds his death impossible to believe, or to accept. Overwhelmed, she drifts and is jerked in and out of reality. Sometimes she is unsure if Gerard is really dead; she sees him in other men, and believes Gerard is compelling her to follow each one. She is terrified by statues of Pueblo gods that decorate the house they'd rented together, yet cannot bear to leave. These gods—and other myths, that of Eurydice and Orpheus for one—inhabit her dreams and obsess Michaela as she spirals into a surreal and open-ended denouement that will be hotly debated by readers. Fecund with fear and anguish, and driven by raw, breathless narration, this hallucinatory tale will not disappoint."—*PW*

Parker-Chan, Shelley. [She Who Became the Sun](#) (Tor \$27.99) is the August selection of the Subtle Asian Book Club. Why? "Fans of *Mulan*, history buffs interested in a reimagining of the rise of the founding emperor of the Ming Dynasty, and a less-comedic-without-the-soccer *She's the Man* because who doesn't love a little sibling swap sprinkled with a case of mistaken identity?" Parker-Chan's fascinating debut, the first in the Radiant Emperor duology, gives the historical Red Turban Rebellion a grimdark fantasy twist.

Patterson, James/JD Barker. [The Noise](#) (LittleBrown \$28). In the shadow of Mount Hood, sixteen-year-old Tennant is checking rabbit traps with her eight-year-old sister Sophie when the girls are suddenly overcome by a strange vibration rising out of the forest, building in intensity until it sounds like a deafening crescendo of screams. From out of nowhere, their father sweeps them up and drops them through a trapdoor into a storm cellar. But the sound only gets worse.... "This is a really entertaining thriller; the authors pull the reader in with a series of intriguing questions, and, as they answer one of them, they pose new ones."

Peace, David. [Tokyo Redux](#) (Knopf \$26.95). It took more than a decade, but Peace has finally published the final volume his crime trilogy that began with *Tokyo Year Zero* (2007) and continued in *Occupied City* (2010). They "blur the distance between real and fictional crime, sanity and madness, duty and dereliction. Peace's aim is to chronicle, in his inimitable, repetition-as-rhythm sentence style, what the American occupation of wartime Japan did to both countries. The answers are dark. This novel structures its true crime — the mysterious, still-unresolved 1949 death of a railroad company president — around three investigators whose connections to the case have persisted for 40 years. They are all haunted by the murder to varying degrees, and as they look for solace in fiction and in procedure, they only become further ensnared in the muck. In his best work, as *Tokyo Redux* is, Peace gazes into the abyss, daring readers to stare alongside him."—*NYTBR*

✎ Pearce, AJ. [Yours Cheerfully](#) (Scribner \$26). After getting in a spot of trouble in [Dear Mrs. Bird](#) (\$17), young journalist and aspiring advice columnist Emmeline Lake is thriving at *Woman's Friend* magazine. In the fall of 1941, Emmy and her colleagues at *Woman's Friend* are doing their bit to help win the war. This means providing recipes, dress patterns and sound advice for their readers, but Emmy thinks they need to do more. When the Ministry of Information asks journalists to help recruit women for war work, Emmy plunges into a series on women working in factories. Her research opens up a few cans of worms, including the lack of childcare for female employees, and sparks some surprising new friendships. As Emmy juggles her new project with other work responsibilities and a blossoming romance, it all becomes a bit much, but it's nothing Emmy and her best friend, Bunty, can't handle. Pearce sensitively explores issues facing women in the workplace, which feel timely despite the 70-year gap between Emmy's story and the present. She also draws a winning picture of wartime romance, but the real stars of *Yours Cheerfully* are Emmy's female friends: the factory workers trying to support their children, the female staff at *Woman's Friend*, and Bunty, who despite her own grief is the model of a stalwart best friend, in a novel that is "witty, charming and full of very British pluck."

Penny, Louise. [The Madness of Crowds](#) (St Martins \$28.99). "Might a post-Covid Canada value individual lives less? That provocative question's at the heart of bestseller Penny's brilliant 17th whodunit featuring Sûreté du Québec Chief Inspector Armand Gamache. Gamache, who has been devastated to learn that nursing homes were abandoned during the pandemic, leaving the vulnerable residents to die alone, is discomfited to be asked to provide security for a lecture by a controversial figure, statistician Abigail Robinson. After analyzing the pandemic's social and economic fallout for the Canadian government, Robinson concluded that the health care system and the economy would be in good shape, if only the elderly and infirm were euthanized so everyone else could have adequate resources. The government disclaimed her findings, but her views have proven disturbingly popular among a segment of the population. Gamache saves Robinson from an assassin's bullet at the talk, but a related murder in his home village of Three Pines follows. Seamlessly integrating debates about scientific experimentation and morality into a fair-play puzzle, Penny excels at placing her characters in challenging ethical quandaries."

Pomare, JP. [The Last Guests](#) (Morrow \$28). After seven years together, Auckland, New Zealand, paramedic Lina Phillips, the narrator of this chilling psychological thriller, and her husband, Cain, a former SAS commando turned fitness coach, have hit a rough patch. Unbeknownst to Cain, Lina is gambling on a plot to save their marriage that could just end up shattering their lives instead. With the couple seriously cash-strapped, Lina reluctantly agrees—perhaps because of guilt over the toxic secret she's concealing from Cain—to his urging to list their remote Lake Tarawera vacation property, her memory-laden childhood home, on the home-sharing platform WeStay. At first it's easy money. But then she starts getting threatening texts from a stalker who seems able to spy on her in real time during the pair's visits to the house—and the cyber-voyeurism prompted terror skyrockets from there.

Riley, Vanessa. [Island Queen](#) (Morrow \$27.99). At 557 pages this is a rich read. I'm a fan of Lauren Willig's [The Summer Country](#) (\$16.99) set in colonial Barbados, and so recommend this novel of real person Dorothy Kirwan Thomas, born in 1846 into slavery on the tiny Caribbean island of Montserrat to an Irish planter father and an enslaved mother. Thomas built a remarkable empire touching Barbados and Domenica as well as Demerara on the South American coast. She is found in the West Indies and in London drawing rooms. Her success is envied, and threatened. This is much too broad a story to summarize so let's just say I recommend it. And the Author's Note and bibliography. It's the full package of historical fiction.

Slimani, Leila. [In the Country of Others](#) (Penguin \$26). In Slimani's third novel — after *Adèle* and *The Perfect Nanny*, which won France's Prix Goncourt in 2016 — Amine, a Muslim Moroccan lance corporal fighting for France in World War II, meets a Frenchwoman named Mathilde when his regiment is stationed in her tiny village near Mulhouse, in Alsace. Charmed by his looks and uniform, she becomes his guide and protector. Love blossoms and they marry, moving to Morocco to begin a new life on Amine's farm. Classic war fiction depicts the struggle for identity and territory along with an interracial marriage amid violence, courage and sacrifice.

✎ Springer, Nancy. [Enola Holmes and the Black Barouche](#) (Wednesday Books \$17.99). This series is intended for Teens but the sensational Netflix adaptation gives it a broader audience. Enola, the much younger sister of Mycroft and Sherlock, has their wits and skills. She's an enterprising sleuth, master of disguise, and fiercely independent—Enola spelled backwards is "Alone." A Miss Letitia Glover arrives on Sherlock's doorstep when he is deeply down and Enola steps up. Miss Glover's twin, Felicity, is reported dead and cremated by her widower the Earl of Dunhench, who sends Letitia Felicity's ashes. Letitia refuses to believe her twin is dead. Enola goes undercover and learns that Felicity was not the first of the Earl's wives to die, and that a mysterious black barouche may play a role in whatever is going on.... The young Viscount Tewkesbury re-enters Enola's life here. Why not order the whole [Enola Holmes series](#) for your teen?

Stevens, Chevy. [Dark Roads](#) (St Martins \$27.99). Hailey McBride, the 17-year-old narrator of part one of this thriller, has been living since her father died with her aunt and police officer uncle, Erick Vaughn, near Canada's reputedly haunted Cold Creek Highway, where an unknown number of young women have disappeared over the decades, the supposed victims of a serial killer. The highway killer myth doesn't scare Hailey as much as the volatile Vaughn's controlling ways and his constant spying on her. She runs away, believing she can use the outdoor skills her father taught her to survive the harsh wilderness. Hailey also hopes people will believe she was the killer's latest victim. A year later, in part two, Beth Chevalier arrives in Cold Creek to attend the annual memorial service for the highway victims, who include her sister. Once Hailey and Beth cross paths, the narrative becomes one of survival.

Tingle, Steven. [Graveyard Fields](#) (Crooked Lane \$27.99) "starts with a bang then reels you into its foggy aftermath: the day-to-day ennui of Davis Reed, a Xanax-numbed ex-PI-turned-aspiring-writer-in-hiding. Reed's self-deprecating humor, eviscerating

descriptions, and punchy jabs of dialogue are so quotable they may as well be trademarked. When Reed's small, nagging fixations finally catapult readers into a surreal, hilarious crime novel, the result seizes the breath between wheezes of laughter. *Graveyard Fields* is a smart, redemptive, and cackle-provoking debut.” —Chris Harding Thornton, author of *Pickard County Atlas*

Trinchieri, Camilla. [The Bitter Taste of Murder](#) (Soho \$27.95). Former Bronx homicide detective Nico Doyle, who relocated to his much-loved late wife's hometown of Gravigna, Italy, a year ago (he was fired from his cop shop so he's mourning that too), investigates the death of unpopular wine critic Michele Mantelli. Mantelli drove a hot sports car and apparently lost control, plunging down a ravine. An autopsy report suggests it was no accident. Maresciallo Salvatore Perillo and his brigadier, Daniele Donato, help sort out the many suspects, who include the victim's soon-to-be ex-wife, an irate husband who threatened to kill him, several vintners, and Nico's landlord. Meanwhile, Nico tests recipes at Sotto Il Fico, his wife's relatives' restaurant, where he enjoys seven-layer eggplant, zucchini lasagna, almond biscotti, and other treats. Though the mouthwatering cuisine at times distracts from the detective work, Trinchieri generally does a good job balancing food with folly as the action builds to an unexpected but satisfying solution. Start with [Murder in Chianti](#) (\$16.95)—and pour yourself a glass to go with.

Wendig, Chuck. [The Book of Accidents](#) (Del Rey \$28.99). Long ago, Nathan lived in a house in the country with his abusive father—and has never told his family what happened there. Long ago, Maddie was a little girl making dolls in her bedroom when she saw something she shouldn't have—and is trying to remember that lost trauma by making haunting sculptures. Long ago, something sinister, something hungry, walked in the tunnels and the mountains and the coal mines of their hometown in rural Pennsylvania. Now, Nate and Maddie Graves are married, and they have moved back to their hometown with their son, Oliver. And now what happened long ago is happening again...and it is happening to Oliver. He meets a strange boy who becomes his best friend, a boy with secrets of his own and a taste for dark magic.

The Indie Next Pick: “Despite the classically creepy content of a true horror tale, I found myself devouring these pages before going to sleep at night and seeking them out again first thing in the morning, nightmares be damned.”

Westgate, Meredith. [The Shimmering State](#) (Atria \$27). A Starred Review: “A dangerous new party drug hits the streets of Los Angeles in Westgate's ambitious debut. Mem, short for Memorex, an experimental, shimmering pill, contains a person's happy memories, which they've selected. While Mem is manufactured to help those with Alzheimer's, trauma, and mental illness, it becomes a hot black-market item thanks to its ability to allow people “to experience a moment as someone else.” Lucien, a flailing photographer, steals his grandmother's Mem pills in hopes of seeing his deceased mother through the grandmother's memories. Sophie, an ambitious ballerina and a waitress at Chateau Marmont, also gets hooked on Mem. Both Lucien and Sophie end up in a rehab facility run by the drug's producers, where they form a deep connection and Lucien feels they've met before. When they're out, they collaborate on a film project inspired by Lucien's grandmother's memory. In chapters alternating before and after the rehab stint, Westgate weaves a tight tale of

relationships and loneliness in a city populated by people always on the hunt for the next big escape. It's a captivating story, one that leaves readers wondering if a life scrubbed of pain and real connection is a life at all.”

Walker, Martin. [The Coldest Case](#) (Knopf \$26.95). **Martin's still in France. But we offer another nifty card insert with a picture of the Chateau on one side and a delicious Bruno recipe straight from the book that Martin has sent us on the other! Here's a new review:**

The Coldest Case, the 16th immersive, charming installment in British journalist Martin Walker's detective series, brings to light new evidence in a seemingly unsolvable murder case. Bruno Courrèges serves as police chief in an idyllic French town. When he visits an archeological exhibit at a local museum, he has a revelatory thought: What if the same artistic skill that brings ancient faces to life could help fellow police officer J-J learn the identity of a long-dead murder victim? While trying to crack this 30-year-old cold case, Bruno discovers possible connections to the East German Stasi and threats to national security that complicate the investigation. As always, Bruno proves to be a level-headed and competent investigator, making him a trustworthy character to follow on this journey. But Bruno also has a softer side. In addition to his gritty career investigating homicides, he enjoys the finer things in life—expensive red wine, exquisitely prepared meals, long walks in the woods with his beloved basset hound. Parts of the book read like a diary of leisure rather than a crime drama, such as when Bruno and his companions go horseback riding past a vineyard on a summer evening and Bruno's “mood eased at the knowledge that these grapes were now being farmed organically.” At times, the sprawling, mouthwatering descriptions of Bruno's meals are more intriguing than the murder investigation...” plus this police procedural series comes “with historical surprises and engaging prose.”

This is our bestselling series in paperback and if you have somehow missed out on Bruno you can improve upon August by ordering the entire [Bruno Chief of Police series](#). They are also great gifts for any reader, even foodies.

Woodward, Laurel. [Kitchen Witchery](#) (Llewellyn \$24.99 large paperback). Featuring a wide variety of recipes, correspondences, and techniques, this practical guide elevates the way you cook and prepare meals. Laurel Woodward shares the magick of everyday things, revealing how each task can become a ritual of creation. Organized by food type, this book teaches the magickal ins and outs of: Wheats and Flours; Beans and Lentils; Nuts and Seeds Oils and Vinegars; Sweets; Spices and Herbs; Vegetables; Fruits Dairy and Eggs; Drinks; Gluten-Free Meals. *Kitchen Witchery* also provides recipes for the seasons and holidays, oil and seasoning blends, and clever ways to turn your pantry items into magickal tools. From homemade hummus to herbal teas and so much more, this book nourishes your practice and shows you the bountiful magick right in your kitchen.

There is a special reason we are featuring this book: ask our staff as we are not making it public.

Woods, Stuart. [Class Act](#) (Putnam \$28). New York attorney Stone Barrington is representing an ex-con just released from Sing Sing with a lot of enemies who are criminals, including Manny Fiore, “the mob's big-time bookie” in Florida. Stone remains on the sidelines until he crosses paths with nightclub singer Hilda Ross,

a hit man's daughter and a mob assassin herself, as becomes clear when she follows orders to gun down Manny after a brief fling with him. Sal Trafficante, Hilda's mob boyfriend, becomes jealous of Stone when Sal realizes Stone is attracted to Hilda. Fearing for his life, Stone takes temporary refuge at his house in England to avoid Sal's wrath. Back in New York, Stone's police commissioner pal, Dino Bacchetti, warns him Hilda is a killer, but the smitten Stone can't resist pursuing her. A lot of people die in the twist-filled ending. The reader must balance Stone's freewheeling sex life and binge buying of upscale life style accessories with scenes of violence. Best read by longtime series fans. Retired NYPD detective Mickey O'Brien plays a key role.

OUR AUGUST LARGE PAPERBACK PICKS

Reviewed in the first August *Booknews*. I would add some of the new titles in this Part 2: judge for yourselves which ones.

Benn, James R. [The Red Horse](#) (\$16.95).
Bowen, Rhys. [The Last Mrs. Summers](#) (\$16).
Box, C J. [Dark Sky](#) (\$17).
Foley, Lucy. [The Guest List](#) (\$16.99).
Greaney, Mark. [Relentless](#) (\$17).
McCafferty, Keith. [The Bangtail Ghost](#) (\$16).
Mizushima, Margaret. [Hanging Falls](#) (\$16.99).
Osman, Richard. [The Thursday Murder Club](#) (\$17).
Pavesi, Alex. [The Eighth Detective](#) (\$17).
Sager, Riley. [Home Before Dark](#) (\$17).
Spotswood, Stephen. [Fortune Favors the Dead](#) (\$16).
Unger, Lisa. [Confessions on the 7: 45](#) (\$16.99).
Winslow, Don. [Broken](#) (\$17.99)

NEW IN LARGE PAPERBACKS

Alderson, Kaia. [Sisters in Arms: A Novel of the Daring Black Women Who Served in WWII](#) (Harper \$16.99). A debut follows two New York City women who join the Army's first all-Black officer candidate school during WWII. In 1942, pianist Grace Steele, 26, fumbles her Juilliard audition after learning that her brother died in the war, then joins the Six Triple Eight Battalion of the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps. Wealthy society reporter Eliza Jones, 23, whose father is the publisher of her newspaper and won't allow her to take on assignments of any substance, also accepts the Army's call. The women forge a rocky friendship while navigating the segregated organization, where tented table cards labeled "Coloreds" are placed on mess tables near the latrines. The company closes ranks when their major is almost court-martialed after "backtalking" a general, and succeed in having the charge dropped. "Descriptions of boot camp and a U-boat chase during their voyage to Europe are standouts before the battalion is charged with a dangerous mission distributing mail to troops in England and France. Though the dialogue can feel underdeveloped, Alderson impresses with her account of trail-blazing Black characters who battle racism and misogyny."

Axelrod, Steven. [Nantucket Penny](#) (Poisoned Pen \$15.99) presents Nantucket Police Chief Henry Kennis with a number of threats on the Massachusetts resort island. Unbeknownst to Henry, two maladjusted young men, inspired by the Nuremberg trials of Nazi leaders after WWII, are planning to abduct, "judge," and execute all the people they imagine tormented them in high school. If Henry is a bit slow to recognize the significance of the wave of disappearances related to this scheme, it may be because he has other matters to distract him. A crazy ex-cop has come to

the island intent on murdering the police chief's mystery novelist fiancée, and an entitled, bigoted rogue cop is trying to incite a racist massacre. These two subplots fizzle out, though Axelrod does a good job making the reader care about their outcomes. Once Henry, a levelheaded, empathetic, and decent lawman, figures out what's behind the disappearances, the action builds to an exciting climax. It's good to order and read this [Nantucket based](#) series from the beginning.

Ayatsuji, Yukito. [The Decagon House Murders](#) (Pushkin Vertigo \$14.95). The members of a university mystery club decide to visit an island which was the site of a grisly, unsolved multiple murder the year before. They're looking forward to investigating the crime, putting their passion for solving mysteries to practical use, but before long there is a fresh murder, and soon the club-members realize they are being picked off one-by-one. The remaining amateur sleuths will have to use all of their murder-mystery expertise to find the killer before they end up dead too. A classic in Japan, available in English for the first time, this is "A hugely enjoyable, page-turning murder mystery with one of the best and most-satisfying conclusions you'll ever read: clever enough that you're unlikely to guess it, but simple enough that you'll kick yourself when it's revealed."

Backman, Fredrik. [Anxious People](#) (\$17). A diverse assortment of Swedes gets caught in an unlikely hostage situation in Backman's witty, lighthearted send-up of contemporary Swedish society. Marin Ireland uses her many theatrical gifts in her fine narration of this bittersweet novel. The listener is treated to an exceptional audio experience in which the narrator plays all the parts with nuance and wit. She modulates her pace and tone as she brings this human comedy to life. At once a send-up of Swedish mores and a deeply humane story of contemporary struggles, this novel has characters galore—a banker with a guilty conscience, a father-and-son police team, an inept bank robber who just wants to make rent, an endearing 87-year-old woman who loves books, among others. Often laugh-out-loud funny, the set piece revolves around the taking of 'the worst group of hostages ever.

Bailey, Robert. [The Wrong Side](#) (Thomas & Mercer \$15.95). The murder of Brittany Crutcher, a senior at Tennessee's Giles County High School, drives Bailey's exceptional sequel to 2020's legal thriller [Legacy of Lies](#) (\$15.95). Charged with the crime is football star Odell Champagne, who was found passed out next to Brittany's body in the back of a school bus, clutching the victim's bloody sweatshirt and with the murder weapon, a broken beer bottle, nearby. The night before the murder, Brittany broke up with Odell, who has priors for theft and juvenile assault. Odell, the son of an alcoholic mother and an absent father, turns for help to lawyer Bocephus "Bo" Haynes, who has consistently watched out for him over the years. Believing in Odell's innocence, Bo agrees to defend Odell, despite knowing that taking the nearly hopeless case could harm his business and make him a pariah in a town whose inhabitants are convinced of Odell's guilt. Bailey expertly ratchets up the suspense as the plot builds to a surprise punch ending. Readers will impatiently await the next in the series.

Beukes, Lauren. [Afterland](#) (\$16.99). Twelve-year-old Miles is one of the last boys alive (think PD James' *The Children of Men*), and his mother, Cole, will protect him at all costs. On the run after a horrific act of violence—and pursued by Cole's own ruthless

sister, Billie—all Cole wants is to raise her kid somewhere he won't be preyed on as a reproductive resource or a sex object or a stand-in son. Someplace like home. To get there, Cole and Miles must journey across a changed America in disguise as mother and daughter. Beukes imbues what could have simply been a sensational feminist, high-stakes thriller with psychological depth and sharp detail. "For those whose taste for dystopian suspense is undiminished, Beukes' tale of a mother and son making their way across a post-pandemic-ravaged landscape is prescient and taut."—Maureen Corrigan, *Washington Post*

✦ Billingham, Mark. [Cry Baby](#) (\$16). In the summer of 1996, two boys run from a playground into the adjoining woods, but only one comes out. DS Tom Thorne takes on a case that quickly spirals out of control when two people connected with the missing boy are murdered. As London prepares to host the European Soccer Championships, Thorne fights to keep on top of a baffling investigation while also dealing with the ugly fallout of his broken marriage. *Cry Baby* is the prequel to Billingham's debut [Sleepyhead](#) (\$15)—which the [London] *Times* voted "one of the 100 books that had shaped the decade"

✦ Blalock, Georgie. [The Last Debutants](#) (Morrow \$16.99). The debutants making their bows to King George VI and Queen Elizabeth stood in a tradition dating back to the 1780s (as fans of *Bridgerton* know). It would be suspended after the 1940 ceremony for the duration of the war. But what were the young women of 1939 expecting with war so ominously looming? The key character here is Valerie de Vere Cole, the niece of Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain who infamously trumpeted "peace in our time." Her parents were useless so Valerie lives at No. 10 Downing Street and sees at firsthand what is coming even as she flings herself into the role of glittering, carefree society woman. In her circle is Eunice Kennedy, daughter of US Ambassador Joe. Other real and fictional characters populate this novel which has an extensive Afterword with Blalock you fans of the Royals and WWII stories will find fascinating.

Bradbury, Ray. [Killer Come Back to Me](#) (\$15.95). Celebrating Ray Bradbury's centennial, an illustrated commemorative collection of his finest crime stories.

Carter, Charlotte. [Coq Au Vin](#) (Vintage \$16). Nanette Hayes' life is finally getting back to normal when her mother calls her with some upsetting news: Nan's beloved bohemian Aunt Vivian has gone missing. Normally this is par for the course with Viv, but this time the circumstances surrounding Vivian's disappearance are rather troubling. Would Nan be up to brushing up on her French language skills and flying to Paris to track her down? Would she ever. Now swanning about her favorite city, Nan has a hard time keeping her attention on the task at hand...especially after she meets handsome violinist Andre, a fellow street musician from Detroit. But trouble has a way of finding Nan, and her search for Vivian lands her in the city's underbelly....

Chambers, Robert W. [The King in Yellow](#) (Poisoned Pen \$14.99). This new edition to *The Haunted Library*, edited by Leslie S. Klinger and Eric J. Guignard, is a book of short stories by American writer Robert W. Chambers, first published in 1895. The book is named after a play with the same title which recurs as a motif through some of the stories. The first half of the book features highly esteemed weird stories, and the book has been described by critics as a classic in the field of the supernatural. There are

ten stories, the first four of which ("The Repairer of Reputations", "The Mask", "In the Court of the Dragon", and "The Yellow Sign") mention *The King in Yellow*, a forbidden play which induces despair or madness in those who read it. "The Yellow Sign" inspired a film of the same name released in 2001.

✦ Douglas, Claire. [Then She Vanishes](#) (Harper \$16.99). In summer 1994, 16-year-old Flora Powell vanishes like smoke from her coastal English village during a fair, and her mother, sister Heather, and Heather's best friend, Jess, must carry on without answers. Twenty-five years later, Jess is again looking for answers when happily married new mom Heather walks into a stranger's Georgian house and shoots an aged mother and her son dead, and then apparently shoots herself, not quite fatally, further devastating her mother and friends. This is a solid British mystery that oddly, reminds me of Kent Krueger's August prequel to the Cork O'Connor series in one way....

Downes, Anna. [The Safe Place](#) (\$16.99). Australian Downes' debut conveys "the modern gothic feel of Ruth Ware and the morally complex family dynamics of Lisa Jewell." An Indie Next Pick. Almost overnight, struggling London thespian Emily Proudman, failing at every audition, goes from being fired from the office temp job that's barely paying her bills to being hired—by the same boss, no less, dashing investment firm CEO Scott Denny—for a gig as housekeeper/personal assistant for his reclusive wife, Nina, and their six-year-old daughter, Aurelia, at the family's estate, Querencia, in the very remote French countryside. She's transported from Soho to Querencia and is initially bewitched by both the unimaginably lush estate and Nina, who's fiercely devoted to a child whose issues seem to go well beyond a supposed extreme sensitivity to sunlight. But as wine-soaked summer weeks pass with Nina remaining as emotionally tightly defended as the gated grounds, the girl either mute or howling during one of her tantrums, and no sign of Scott, even someone as naive as Emily suspects there's something rotten in paradise. At her peril, she starts to snoop. Downes' own experience as an actress plays into crafting her characters, staging the story, blocking scenes. Recommended.

Easley, Warren C. [No Witness](#) (Poisoned Pen \$15.99). In Easley's satisfying eighth mystery featuring Portland, Oregon attorney Cal Claxton, Timoteo Fuentes, a bright and energetic young man Cal has taken a liking to, wants to become a lawyer for the right reason—to change society for the better. So the perpetually under-financed Claxton takes student Timoteo on as a legal clerk by night. When Timoteo's sister, Olivia, is stunningly shot dead from ambush, the Fuentes family begs Cal to help with the investigation because they're uneasy about dealing with the police; Timoteo and Olivia were both relatively safe as Dreamers protected by DACA, but other members of the hardworking family are undocumented and thus in danger of deportation by ICE if they call attention to themselves as witnesses to a crime. Cal must use all his ingenuity to get information from the Latino community, as he learns that a stone-cold cartel hit man is prowling the neighborhood. Meanwhile, the ominous attention of an ICE officer and a predatory financier further, both leveraging the fear of a vulnerable population, complicates the case. And Claxton's elderly neighbor and accountant suffers a stroke. Easley celebrates a loving family's resilience and the power of good people working together. I love this series and recommend ordering all the [Cal Claxtons](#) for a summer binge.

Flagg, Fannie. [The Wonder Boy of Whistle Stop](#) (\$17). Bud Threadgoode grew up in the bustling little railroad town of Whistle Stop with his mother, Ruth, church-going and proper, and his Aunt Idgie, the fun-loving hell-raiser. Together they ran the town's popular Whistle Stop Cafe, known far and wide for its fun and famous fried green tomatoes. And as Bud often said of his childhood to his daughter Ruthie, "How lucky can you get?" But sadly, as the railroad yards shut down and Whistle Stop became a ghost town, nothing was left but boarded-up buildings and memories of a happier time. Then one day, Bud decides to take one last trip, just to see what has become of his beloved Whistle Stop. In so doing, he discovers new friends, as well as surprises.

✦ Gable, Michelle. [The Bookseller's Secret](#) (Graydon House \$16.99). In 1942, London, Nancy Mitford is worried about more than air raids and German spies. Still recovering from a devastating loss, the once sparkling Bright Young Thing is estranged from her husband, her allowance has been cut, and she's given up her writing career. On top of this, her five beautiful but infamous sisters continue making headlines with their controversial politics. Eager for distraction and desperate for income, Nancy jumps at the chance to manage the Heywood Hill bookshop while the owner is away at war. Between the shop's brisk business and the literary salons she hosts for her eccentric friends, Nancy's life seems on the upswing. But when a mysterious French officer insists that she has a story to tell, Nancy must decide if picking up the pen again and revealing all is worth the price she might be forced to pay. Eighty years later, Heywood Hill is abuzz with the hunt for a lost wartime manuscript written by Nancy Mitford. For one woman desperately in need of a change, the search will reveal not only a new side to Nancy, but an even more surprising link between the past and present.... "Gable's witty narrative effortlessly moves between two time periods and is enriched with cameos by historical figures and authentic, memorable characters."

"Michele Gable is a whiz at weaving stories out of romantic interludes, thrilling spy-craft, and mystery. In this latest release, she chooses a famous London book shop for setting, a woman who needs to make a living during WWII, and intrigue that seems to meet her around every corner. Couple that with a dual time-period (the other taking place in our-time Virginia, USA) and it has become a compelling, spine-tingling, brain nudging, thrilling mystery with a book-lover's literary blessing. Historical fiction at its best."

Garza, Amber. [Where I Left Her](#) (Mira \$16.99). "At the start of this stellar psychological thriller, divorcée Whitney drops off her 16-year-old daughter, Amelia, for a sleepover in front of the house of Amelia's friend Lauren. Whitney was hoping to walk Amelia to the door and introduce herself to Lauren's mother, but the moody, distant Amelia wouldn't let her. The next morning, when Whitney arrives to pick up Amelia, the elderly couple who answer the door insist there's no teenager inside and no teenager lives with them. Whitney's subsequent search for Amelia raises issues from Whitney's past, in particular the reasons for her divorce, and she discovers her new boyfriend is not the man she thinks he is. Meanwhile, an initially unidentified teenage girl writes in her diary about a friend named Millie, with whom the girl has an obsessive relationship and who sets her on a path she wishes she hadn't taken. The tension builds as the perfectly orchestrated story lines converge in a truly surprising ending. This is impossible to put down."

Glass, Seraphina Nova. [Such a Good Wife](#) (Graydon \$16.99). New motherhood, infidelity, and a murdered lover set in sweltering New Orleans ... what's not to like? It's about Mel, a devoted mother, diligent caregiver, and committed wife. But there are parts of herself she keeps hidden—particularly, her exhaustion and lack of fulfillment. So when she meets a local author, Luke, at a writers' group, they begin a passionate affair she's desperate to keep hidden. But when Mel finds Luke's dead body in his lavish rented house, she realizes just how high the stakes have become. Not only does she have to keep her affair a secret in order to preserve her marriage, but she desperately needs to avoid being implicated in Luke's death. But who would want to kill him? Who else in her life is keeping secrets? And most terrifying of all, how far will they—and she—go to keep those secrets hidden? Set just outside New Orleans in a sweltering summer, with dark streets and dripping Spanish moss, *Such a Good Wife* is a juicy domestic thriller that asks us just how far we'd go to cover up our biggest sins.

Graham, Scott. [Canyonlands Carnage](#) (Torrey House \$16.95). Graham's seventh popular National Park Mystery offers thrills and spills and an insidiously vindictive killer on a whitewater rafting trip through notorious Cataract Canyon, deep in the red rock heart of one of America's most spectacular national parks. I was asked to read this very early on since I am a fan of archaeologist Chuck Bender, his family, and the investigations in which he becomes entangled in a series of our national parks. I was just in Utah passing down the Colorado Riverway and up into Arches National Park. Canyonlands National Park is in the same spectacular red rock area.

Grant, Rachel. [Dangerous Ground](#) (Amazon \$12.95). "Grant shines in the heart-pounding romantic thriller that opens her Fiona Carver series. Archaeologist Fiona Carver and her crew are headed back to the site of an interrupted dig on remote Chiksook Island, Alaska. Newly joining them is supposed ornithologist Bill Lowell, whom Fiona mentally dubs Hot Bird Man. She has no way of knowing that "Bill" is actually famed wildlife photographer Dean Slater, who's searching for his fraternal twin, Dylan, the crew's missing volcanologist. Dean's suspicions of foul play are quickly borne out when he and Fiona are abandoned by the others, left stranded on the island with a destroyed camp and no food or supplies. With someone working to sabotage them, Fiona and Dean must fight for their lives through extreme conditions—including a harrowing escape from a volcano. Grant makes time for nuanced characterization within the breakneck adventure, taking her protagonists through a series of heart-stopping twists. The story ends on a tantalizing tease of a cliff-hanger, but still doles out just desserts to good guys and bad guys alike."—*PW* Starred Review

Harding, Robyn. [The Perfect Family](#) (Gallery \$16.99). A seemingly perfect family suddenly find themselves on the receiving end of vandalism and violence. Thomas and Viv have everything their neighbors want, but they've certainly never done anything to attract unwanted attention... right?" "Edgy, diabolical and completely suspenseful! The talented Robyn Harding peels back the sleek facade of suburbia to show its disturbing reality—and all the dangerous (and sometimes heartbreaking) secrets that even loving families keep from each other. Incredibly cinematic and jaw-droppingly devious, this book will have you turning the pages as fast as you can." —Hank Phillippi Ryan

✎ Huber, Anna Lee. [Murder Most Fair](#) (Kensington \$15.95). November 1919. A relaxing few weeks by the seaside with her husband, Sidney, could almost convince Verity Kent that life has returned to the pleasant rhythm of pre-war days. Then Verity's beloved Great-Aunt Ilse lands on their doorstep. After years in war-ravaged Germany, Ilse has returned to England to repair her fragile health—and to escape trouble. Someone has been sending her anonymous threats, and Verity's Secret Service contacts can only provide unsettling answers. Even deep in the Yorkshire Dales, where she joins Verity's family for the holidays, Ilse encounters difficulties. Normally peaceful neighbors are hostile, seeking someone to blame for the losses they've endured. When Ilse's maid is found dead, Verity must uncover whether this is anti-German sentiment taken to murderous lengths, or whether there is a more personal motive at work. Could Verity's shadowy nemesis, Lord Ardmore, be involved? Order and enjoy the whole [Verity Kent series](#).

✎ Jakubowski, Maxim. [The Return of Sherlock Holmes](#) (Mango \$18.95). The 15 pastiches in Jakubowski's second anthology of new Sherlock Holmes stories range from traditional depictions to the odd and off-putting. One highlight is Paul A. Freeman's imaginative "Sherlock Holmes and a Case of Humbug," in which the detective doubts Ebenezer Scrooge's change of heart resulted from ghostly visitations and uncovers a violent crime. Another is Eric Brown's eerie "The Curse of Carmody Grange," in which Holmes investigates a disappearance from a sealed room attributed to a centuries-old curse. Recommended only for the truly dedicated Holmes fan.

✎ Johnson, Todd M. [The Barrister and the Letter of Marque](#) (Bethany House \$15.99). In 1818, in a last-ditch effort to save her faltering estate, Lady Madeline Jameson invested in a merchant brig, the *Padget*. The ship was granted a rare privilege by the king's regent: a Letter of Marque authorizing the captain to seize the cargo of French traders operating illegally in the Indian Sea. Yet when the *Padget* returns to London, her crew is met by soldiers ready to take possession of their goods and arrest Captain Tuttle for piracy. And the Letter—the sole proof his actions were legal—has mysteriously vanished. Moved by the lady's distress, intrigued by the Letter, and goaded by an opposing solicitor, plus Tuttle faces the gallows, barrister William Snopes, a seasoned advocate for the underprivileged of London, takes the case. But as he delves deeper into the mystery, he learns that the forces arrayed against Lady Jameson, and now himself, are even more perilous than he'd imagined. I am all in on Regency-era novels. And I agree with this comment pointing you towards its seldom-noted Regency fiction features: "Johnson steeps his story in legal maneuvering, layers of intrigue, midnight chases, and even a hint of romance. While faith elements are subtle, this enthralling novel will appeal to fans of both legal thrillers and historical inspirations."

Kemprecos, Paul. [Killing Icarus](#) (Suspense Publishing \$14.95). Art historian Abi Vickers has hit the wall. Her husband has run off with his secretary leaving Abi to clean up the wreckage left by his bad investments. Her galleries, her reputation and her apartment—everything she holds dear—are ripped from her life by an uncaring legal system. When an old mentor offers her a temporary job and the use of his cottage overlooking Cape Cod Bay, she hopes the sun-drenched scenery that inspired artist Edward Hopper will be the ideal place to pull together the pieces

of her career. She leaves Boston's toney South End for the wind-swept cliffs of Truro but her dreams of peace and tranquility are shattered when she learns that a historic aviation event is about to be reenacted almost at her doorstep. And instead of finding sanity, she wonders if she is going insane, especially when she starts seeing shadows moving across the star-speckled night sky. But it is only after she discovers a deadly World War Two secret in a long-lost Hopper sketch that she realizes the troubles that had plagued her in Boston are child's play compared to the dangers she is about to face.... "It takes a writer of skills and talent to weave an impressive mystery involving Nazis, a famed American artist of the 1930's and 1940's, stolen artwork, a historical glider reenactment, and so much more, but Paul Kemprecos pulls it off with skill and panache. *Killing Icarus* is a stirring tale of secrets and betrayals, of old history coming to life, but more importantly, it's a love letter to the beauty and past of Cape Cod."—Brendan DuBois

Kies, Thomas. [Shadow Hill](#) (Poisoned Pen \$15.99). In Kies' memorable fourth mystery featuring PI and occasional freelance journalist Geneva Chase, Eric Cutter hires Geneva to open a fresh investigation into the shooting deaths of his parents, Julia and Morris Cutter, a retired CEO of CP&G, an oil company. The couple was found dead in their upscale Sheffield, Conn., home in what the police ruled a murder-suicide. Morris was about to present a report subsidized by CP&G to Congress with the purpose of stalling legislation on climate change to allow the company time to roll out an international publicity campaign to sway the public to their view and increase their corporate earnings. Morris's death delayed the report, but the pressure mounts for Geneva to quickly wrap up the investigation. The stakes rise as the report's lead researcher disappears, as does Morris's estranged climatologist daughter, and Geneva unearths secrets both spouses kept from each other and rumors of embezzlement. Complex characters and brisk plotting make this a winner. This gripping and atmospheric series with its determined reporter lead is well worth reading in order. Get all of the hard-hitting, propulsive [Geneva Chase](#) Mysteries starting with the fabulous *Random Road* and disregarding the ghastly dust jacket art for *Graveyard Bay*.

Konen, Leah. [All the Broken People](#) (\$17). Fleeing Brooklyn with little more than a suitcase and her trusty dog, Lucy King heads to rustic Woodstock, New York, eager to lose herself in a quiet life where her past can never find her. But when she meets Vera and John, the alluring couple next door, their friendship proves impossible to resist. Just as Lucy starts to think the worst is behind her, the couple delivers a staggering bombshell: They, too, need to escape their troubles—and the only way they can begin their new life is if Lucy helps them fake John's death. Afraid to lose her newfound support system, Lucy reluctantly conspires with them to stage an "accidental" death on a hike nearby. It's just one little lie to the police, after all, and she knows a thing or two about the importance of fresh starts. But what begins as an elaborate ruse turns all too real when John turns up dead in the woods the morning after their hike. Now, Lucy must figure out who she can trust and who's pulling the strings of her tenuous new life....

Lester, Natasha. [The Riviera House](#) (Grand Central \$16.99). If you enjoyed the movie *The Monuments Men* or other stories about how the Nazis plundered priceless art, particularly under the ae-

gis of Hermann Goering, then this sad engrossing story of young Eliane's quest to circumvent what she could at the Louvre, is for you. It begins in Paris, 1939, where the city and citizens still hope the Germans won't take over. It comes to a head, or rather an end, at a home on the French Riviera. Inbetween, Eliane, whom the Nazis think is merely cataloging the museums treasures, nor can she speak German, smuggles info to the Resistance while not revealing the hiding places of such masterpieces as the *Mona Lisa* (Note: See Jonathan Santlofer's novel *The Last Mona Lisa* reviewed in Signed Books, for an interesting premise) which were evacuated just in time. In the present, Remy Lang, hoping to forget a tragedy, heads to a home she has oddly inherited on the Riviera where she discovered a catalog of artworks stolen during the war.... Fans of *The Rose Code*, take note And Lester has written [three earlier bestsellers](#) about wartime Paris.

Mina, Denise. [The Less Dead](#) (\$16.99). Glasgow doctor Margo Dunlop is grieving the death of her adoptive mother and the breakup of her relationship with the eccentric but affable Joe when she learns she is pregnant. She goes in search of her biological mother and drops right into a nightmare. Months after Margo's birth and adoption, her mother was brutally murdered. Susan Brodie was a 19-year-old sex worker and former junkie, making her one of the "less dead" of the title, victims the police shrug off as disposable. Margo hears the grisly story when she meets her aunt, Nikki, a survivor of the same desperate circumstances that killed her sister. Nikki might be sober now, but she still has an addict's deviousness. She is also sure she knows who murdered Susan...." Mina is matchless at building suspicion and creeping dread. Susan might have been a victim, but the novel is filled with strong, resourceful women." Fans of Mina might want to watch *Scott & Bailey*, a Manchester-based police procedural show of 5 seasons. Where they find some of the cast members I can't imagine.

Mo, Johanna. [The Night Singer](#) (Penguin \$17). "To the list of tenacious Scandi detectives with baggage—among them Henning Mankell's Kurt Wallander and Jo Nesbø's Harry Hole—It's time to add a new name. As the nerve-rattling *The Night Singer* opens, Hanna Duncker has just moved from Stockholm back to Öland, from which she fled 16 years earlier, when her now-deceased father was imprisoned for a notorious murder. On Hanna's first day at her new job with the Kalmar police, word arrives that the body of 15-year-old Joel Forslund has been found by a rest area. Hanna's father's legacy isn't the only facet of her past that she must confront—Joel is the son of her childhood best friend, with whom Hanna has been out of touch since she left Öland to escape the island's ill will toward her. The years haven't diminished at least one person's malice: Hanna begins receiving anonymous threatening phone calls that only heighten her resolve to find out 'what really happened' 16 years earlier. The first of Mo's books to be translated into English, *The Night Singer* offers an unexpected conclusion to its central mystery and leaves Hanna's personal quest tantalizingly unresolved, presumably to be teased in forthcoming titles in the projected Island Murders series. The novel is threaded with chapters from Joel's point of view that outline how he spent the last day of his life, which has the bittersweet effect of keeping him alive on the page and making his final moments, revealed at book's end, all the more crushing. —Nell Beram. "Mo's nerve-jangling English-language debut finds a Swedish detective returning to her hometown after a long absence to work for the

police and confront her father's violent legacy."—*NYT Book Review* on our **August International Crime Book of the Month**.

Speaking of international crime, if you missed it there is a final (sob) episode of *Detective Montalbano*, number 37, to watch on [MHZ-TV](#). If you have never watched this brilliant TV set in Sicily, whether you have read the Andrea Camilleri Montalbano series or not, lucky you – you can dive in at Episode #1.

Parks, Alan. [April Dead](#) (Worldwide \$17). Set in 1974 against the backdrop of British-IRA tensions, Edgar finalist Parks's outstanding (and most violent) fourth outing for Glasgow cop Harry McCoy, with McCoy and his police colleagues checking out what's left of a flat that's been destroyed by a bomb explosion—and of the bomb maker. Could it be the work of the IRA? More bombings follow. Meanwhile, a retired U.S. Navy captain wants McCoy to find his son, who has gone AWOL from a nearby U.S. naval base, and Stevie Cooper, McCoy's boyhood friend who's now an underworld boss just released from jail, involves McCoy in his attempt to beat down a gang takeover. Finally, McCoy investigates a Scottish nationalist movement, which turns out to be abetted by Britain's clandestine Special Branch for its own nefarious purposes. "Tightly plotted and fast-moving, this well-wrought historical thriller also highlights Parks' keen analysis of Scotland's societal traumas, in particular the failure to cope with domestic violence and child abuse. Tartan noir fans won't want to miss this one."

Patterson, James/Chris Tebbetts. [1st Case](#) (\$16.99). Angela Hoot gets kicked out of MIT's graduate school, joins the FBI's cyberforensics unit, and must deal with a messaging app whose beta users are dying without getting killed herself.

✦ Penrose, Andrea. [Murder at Queen's Landing](#) (Kensington \$15.95). A wealthy lord (who also happens to be a brilliant scientist) and a young widow (who secretly pens satirical political cartoons) in Regency London team up to chase down rumors of corruption within the powerful East India Company and the mysterious disappearance of friends

Pepper, David. [The Voter File](#) (\$17). I absolutely loved this debut, a book of the month selection in the 2020 hardcover. This is a genuine thriller with a truly scary scenario, not a political agenda. Yes, it drills into election chaos, and yes, into outside interference in elections, starting in Appleton, Wisconsin (birthplace of Harry Houdini and Edna Ferber, FYI). A young woman temping in a campaign whose job it is to manage the voter file (new to me, and something truly scary in a digital age—Pepper explains it well), has lured a recently fired investigative reporter (from a cable TV gig) to town. Tori Justice (great name, no?) tells Jack Sharpe that there is no way a local judge could have beaten his opponent in the recent election. And explains (to you, too) why. But the bad actors (Russian, naturally, but not all) get wind of the leak and the whole plot rolls into motion on a global scale. It's really clever. And fast paced. And against corporate power, not a particular party. I think it's a book all of us should be reading.

Reed Petty, Kate. [True Story](#) (\$16). A debut novel about the power of stories—and who gets to tell them. 2015. A gifted and reclusive ghostwriter, Alice Lovett makes a living helping other people tell their stories. But she is haunted by the one story she can't tell: the story of, as she puts it, "the things that happened while I was asleep." 1999. Nick Brothers and his lacrosse teammates return for their senior year at their wealthy Maryland high

school as the reigning state champions. They're on top of the world—until two of his friends drive a passed-out girl home from of the team's "legendary" parties, and a rumor about what happened in the backseat spreads through the town like wildfire. The boys deny the allegations, and, eventually, the town moves on. But not everyone....

Scott, EG. [In Case of Emergency](#) (\$17). "When a brilliant but troubled doctor is listed as the emergency contact for a woman found dead—a woman who's a complete stranger—she finds herself the prime suspect in the murder. Razor-sharp narration and witty dialogue keep the pages turning in this fantastic follow-up Scott's breakout sensation *The Woman Inside*."—Wendy Walker

Shaw, Johnny. [The Southland](#) (Polis/Agora \$16.95). Luz works multiple jobs to provide for herself and her teenage son Eliseo. Nadia, a former journalist with PTSD, fled Mexico and tries to stay hidden from the dangerous men that she exposed in Sinaloa. Ostelinda works as a laborer in a garment factory, having been deceived by coyotes and imprisoned in the same building since her arrival. Their lives intersect through terrifying circumstance that clarify and contrast the horrors of existence. When Eliseo goes missing, Luz is lost. She doesn't trust the authorities to help. One wrong move could get her deported. Luz has no option but to investigate her son's disappearance on her own.

Spillane, Mickey. [Murder My Love](#) (Titan \$14.95). The Hard-boiled Mike Hammer is summoned to a meeting with Jamie Winters, United States Senator from New York, and Jamie's lovely, very smart wife, Nicole, considered by many to be the power behind the throne. Winters is being blackmailed, and Hammer is given a list of suspects who may be behind the threats to the Senator's contemplated White House bid. But when the suspects begin to drop like flies, Hammer realizes there is more to this case than just a salacious tape as he is dragged into the cutthroat world of politics. Max Allan Collins has been writing this iconic series since the death of Mickey Spillane.

Staalesen, Gunnar. [Big Sister](#); [Fallen Angels](#); [We Shall Inherit the Wind](#); [Where Roses Never Die](#); [Wolves at the Door](#); [Wolves in the Dark](#) (Orenda \$14.95 or \$15.95 each). Back in the early 1990s when The Pen was new we sold reprints of this sterling Norwegian crime series featuring Bergen PI Varg Veum in little hardcovers. I am so glad that Orenda has reprinted much of the series in paperbacks for Staalesen had earned a reputation as one of the foremost crime writers and certainly as a father of Nordic Noir. Plus I love Bergen, a port I have visited several times.

Swerdlow, Tommy. [Straight Dope](#) (Stark House \$15.95) is an LA noir novel in the tradition of the classic pulp tradition. Based on director and screenwriter Swerdlow's own experience as an ex-addict who struggled with a heroin addiction while simultaneously acting in films such as *Howard the Duck* and *Real Genius* and working as a screen writer for *Cool Runnings* and *Shrek*, *Straight Dope* captures both the gritty under belly of LA as well as its shiny surface

Tuti, Ilaria. [The Sleeping Nymph](#) (\$16.95). A decades-old murder investigation has landed on Superintendent Teresa Battaglia's desk. DNA analysis has revealed that a painting from the final days of World War II contains matter from a human heart. Teresa is able to trace the evidence to Val Resia, one of Italy's most isolated, untouched regions. When Teresa's investigation hits

too close to the truth, a fresh human heart is hung at the valley's entrance, a warning not to cross its threshold. As she hunts a ruthless killer, Teresa must face down her own rapidly deteriorating physical and cognitive abilities, as well as someone she hoped never to see again—a man who has just become her supervisor. It's hard not to love a lead character who is described by the UK's *Financial Times* thus: "Unlike so many female cops (especially on TV), Teresa is not svelte, soignée or young; she is overweight, over 60 and prone to unbuttoned cursing. And she has a secret she is hiding from colleagues: the onset of Alzheimer's. A canvas by a second world war partisan is found to have been painted with the blood from a human heart in a mystery yoking in the horrors of the Nazi era, shamanistic rituals and more contemporary murder." Her debut in [Flowers over the Inferno](#) (\$16.95) was a 2021 Sue Grafton Memorial Award nominee.

Williams, Shanora. [The Perfect Ruin](#) (Kensington \$15.95). Ivy Hill has been in therapy for years trying to restore some normalcy to her shattered existence. Twelve years ago, one person's act destroyed her young life and awakened her desire for revenge; since then, she has searched in vain for the name of the perpetrator. When she learns that the person she's looking for is allegedly Lola Maxwell, widely known as "the richest woman of color to live in Florida," Ivy plots to infiltrate the Miami socialite's life in order to slowly but completely ruin her.

Yang, Susie. [White Ivy](#) (\$17). Ivy Lin is a thief and a liar—but you'd never know it by looking at her. Raised outside of Boston, Ivy's immigrant grandmother relies on Ivy's mild appearance for cover as she teaches her granddaughter how to pilfer items from yard sales and second-hand shops. Thieving allows Ivy to accumulate the trappings of a suburban teen—and, most importantly, to attract the attention of Gideon Speyer, the golden boy of a wealthy political family. But when Ivy's mother discovers her trespasses, punishment is swift and Ivy is sent to China, and her dream instantly evaporates. Years later, Ivy has grown into a poised yet restless young woman, haunted by her conflicting feelings about her upbringing and her family. Back in Boston, when Ivy bumps into Sylvia Speyer, Gideon's sister, a reconnection with Gideon seems not only inevitable—it feels like fate. And leads to.... I gave the hardcover a rave and urge you to read this new paperback edition. "The modern story of clashing cultures and classes already reads like *Crazy Rich Asians* meets Donna Tartt's *A Secret History* meets *Paul's Case*, Willa Cather's classic story of a desperate middle-class climb. But this propulsive debut novel by Susie Yang, is more than plot twists and love triangles. It's also an astute chronicle of cultures, gender dynamics and the complicated business of self-creation in America." — *San Francisco Chronicle*

Young, Heather. [The Distant Dead](#) (\$16.99). Lonely, broken people in a dead-end town are forced to confront the fragility of life and relationships in the aftermath of a horrific death. "A young boy, Sal Prentiss, discovers a burned corpse in the lonely hills of a small Nevada town, soon revealed to be that of Adam Merkel, the middle school math teacher, a new arrival who came—and died—carrying a lot of secrets. Though few mourn his passing, nearly everyone in town seems to be struggling with their own frustrations and losses, from Nora Wheaton, the history teacher who tends her ailing father, unable to confront him about his role in her brother's death years ago, to Sal, who lost his mother to a drug overdose the year before. As each one makes

choices that will direct the courses of their own lives and those of so many others, they also work to find out more about Adam's death and what events had brought him to their town: the intersections of the lives that led to his death. Playing out against the barren landscape of a struggling town, all this drama is worthy of a Greek tragedy..."—*Kirkus Reviews*, also the position Patrick takes on a book he truly recommends.

Yu, Ovidia. [The Cannonball Tree Mystery](#) (LittleBrown \$15.99). This new entry to Yu's charming Crown Colony series is a UK publication so I am skeptical it will arrive in August, the official pub date. Please order and when it shows up, we will sell it.

Has Su Lin summoned a tree demon who is now killing on her behalf? The overpoweringly fragrant flowers, snakelike vines and deadly fruit of the cannonball tree are enough to keep most people away. But when a piece of expensive photographic equipment is found nearby, on closer inspection Su Lin discovers the body of Mimi, her horrible relative who has been trying to blackmail her. Su Lin is not the only one to realize how much easier this death makes things for her in the new normal of life in Syonan (Japanese Occupied Singapore). And then more fortuitous deaths follow. But is someone really killing people on her account? As Su Lin contends with the fear and rancor of those around her, the resentment of former friends and a whistling demon, can she hope not only to survive but untangle the cannonball tree's secrets to prevent further deaths... and possibly turn the tide of the war? "Charming and fascinating with great authentic feel. Ovidia Yu's teenage Chinese sleuth gives us an insight into a very different culture and time. This book is exactly why I love historical novels."—Rhys Bowen.

OUR AUGUST SMALL PAPERBACK PICKS

Alexander, Ellie. [Without a Brew](#) (\$8.99).
Baldacci, David. [Walk the Wire](#) (\$9.99).
Bond, Veronica. [Death in Castle Dark](#) (Berkley \$7.99).
Howard, Catherine Ryan. [The Nothing Man](#) (\$9.99).
Lupica, Mike. [Robert B. Parker's Fool's Paradise](#) (\$9.99).
Parker, T Jefferson. [Then She Vanished](#) (\$9.99).
St James, Dorothy. [The Broken Spine](#) (\$7.99).
Tarantino, Quentin. [Once Upon a Time in Hollywood](#) (Harper \$9.99).
Taylor, Brad. [American Traitor](#) (\$9.99).
Walker, Wendy. [The Night Before](#) (\$9.99).

NEW IN SMALL PAPERBACKS

✦ Archer, Jeffrey. [Turn a Blind Eye](#) (\$9.99) William Warwick #3. Going undercover to expose corruption in the Metropolitan Police Force, Detective Inspector William Warwick is compromised by a high-profile trial and a teammate's romantic relationship with his suspect.

Baker, Bree. [Partners in Lime](#) (Sourcebooks \$8.99). Seaside Café #6. When murder disrupts the Charm's annual outdoor play, iced tea shop and café owner Every Swan must prove her friend Matt's innocence in the crime by opening night.

✦ Beaton, M C. [Hot to Trot: An Agatha Raisin Mystery](#) (\$7.99). Agatha Raisin #31. Jealously investigating an ex's intended, Agatha Raisin crashes the wedding only to become implicated in the bride's murder, a situation that immerses Agatha in the cutthroat equestrian world.

Berenson, Laurien. [Howloween Murder](#) (\$8.99). Melanie Travis #26. When a tenured colleague is accused of poisoning her famous marshmallow puffs to murder an elderly neighbor, Melanie Travis finds her investigation challenged by the boisterous Halloween festivities at Howard Academy.

Colt, Peter. [Back Bay Blues](#) (Kensington \$9.99). This sequel to *The Off-Islander* finds Vietnam veteran-turned-Boston private investigator Andy Roark uncovering connections between a murder and an anti-communist refugee group that is extorting local business owners, including a restaurant owner who risked everything to escape Saigon.

Day, Maddie. [No Grater Crime](#) (Kensington \$8.99). Country Store #9. After a customer is poisoned to death, Robbie Jordan, the owner of Pans 'N Pancakes, must serve up the real killer to keep her business from being closed.

Delaney, Devon. [Double Chocolate Cookie Murder](#) (Kensington \$8.99). Cook-Off #5. When her old high school home economics teacher is murdered, with prizes for the big cookie contest next to his body, Sherry Oliveri must figure out which of the contestants is stirring up trouble.

Eaton, J C. [Railroaded 4 Murder](#) (Kensington \$8.99). Sophie Kimball #8. With her wedding fast approaching, Sophie "Phee" Kimball must solve one more murder before she says "I do" when she, her mother and their beloved Chiweenie, while at a model train exhibit, discover the body of Sun City West's railroad club president.

Erickson, Alex. [Dial 'm' for Maine Coon](#) (Kensington \$8.99). Furever Pets #2. When the would-be owner of her latest rescue, Sheamus, the Maine Coon cat, is murdered, Liz Denton finds the fur flying as she tries to track down the killer and deal with a rival taking a swat at her business.

Kellerman, Faye. [The Lost Boys](#) (\$9.99). Decker and Lazarus #26. Detectives Peter Decker and Tyler McAdams link two suspicious disappearances from an assisted living facility to the case of three missing campers, before the reappearance of a foster son's biological mother upends Decker's home life.

Kelly, Sofie. [A Case of Cat and Mouse](#) (Berkley \$7.99). Magical Cats #12. When a popular reality-show baking competition is filmed in charming Mayville Heights, librarian Kathleen Paulson is tapped as a local expert, but the on-set death of a contestant may foil her feline fur babies Herc and Owen's hopes for a cat-treat challenge.

Levine, Laura. [Killer Cruise](#) (Kensington \$8.99). Jaine Austen #8. Re-issue. While teaching on a swanky cruise, wordsmith Jaine Austen soon discovers that her all-expenses-paid trip to the Mexican Riviera comes with a high price when she is faced with blackmail, a sleazy British dancer, eccentric passengers, and murder.

Olsen, Gregg. [Closer Than Blood](#) (Kensington \$9.99). Re-issue. Overcome by the thirst to kill again, a clever killer, getting away with murder years ago, comes out of hiding and now only one person can stop the killing from starting all over again.

Patterson, James. [Pop Goes the Weasel](#) (\$9.99). Alex Cross #5. Re-issue. Alex Cross's latest investigation into a series of vicious murders turns deadly as his prime suspect, a British diplomat named Geoffrey Shaffer, makes Cross and his fiancée the target of a deadly cabal of killers masterminded by Shaffer.

Regan, Lisa. [Her Mother's Grave](#) (Grand Central \$8.99). When two young boys discover human bones buried beneath a tree in a trailer park, Detective Josie Quinn races to join her team at the scene. But Josie's past crashes into her present when a rare dental condition confirms the bones belong to a teenage foster-child who was murdered thirty years ago.

Rovin, Jeff. [Tom Clancy's OpCenter: God of War](#) (St Martins \$9.99). OpCenter #19. After the devastating outbreak of a killer super virus, the Black Wasp Team must prevent America's enemies from gaining access to the most dangerous weapon the world has ever seen.

Sanders, Angela M. [Seven Year Witch](#) (Kensington \$8.99.) Josie Way #2. When FBI agent Sam Wilfred's soon-to-be ex-wife goes missing and a local architect working at a cursed location is murdered, Josie enlists her witchy insight to clear Sam's name and discover who is drawing up some killer plans.

Smith, Karen Rose. [Murder with Orange Pekoe Tea](#) (Kensington \$8.99). Daisy's Tea Garden #7. Tea shop owner Daisy Swanson is steeped in drama and murder when a lawyer named Hiram, who is representing a fertility clinic in a class-action suit, is found dead and her new friend Piper's husband stands accused of the crime.

Wilton, Traci. [Mrs. Morris and the Vampire](#) (Kensington \$8.99). Salem B&B #5. When a self-proclaimed vampire is murdered during the annual Witch Ball, Charlene has a lot at stake as she tries to solve this strange case with the help of handsome ghost Dr. Jack Strathmore.