

BOOKNEWS from

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January Booknews 2022
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WELCOME TO MORE OF JANUARY

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

Note: Event times are Mountain Standard Time

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

MONDAY JANUARY 17 6:00 PM

Stephen Hunter with Jack Carr
Hunter discusses [Tracker](#) (Atria \$28.99)
Bob Lee Swagger
Signed copies available

NEW: TUESDAY JANUARY 18 3:30

Sulari Gentill discusses [Where There's a Will](#) (Poisoned Pen \$15.99). Signed Bookplates available

NEW: TUESDAY JANUARY 18 4:45 PM

Canada's Ian Hamilton discusses [The Sultan of Sarawak](#) (Anansi Press \$15.99) Ava Lee

TUESDAY JANUARY 18 6:00 PM

Lisa Gardner with Caroline Kepnes
Gardner discusses [One Step Too Far](#) (Dutton \$27)
Missing persons tracker Frankie Elkin
Signed copies available

WEDNESDAY JANUARY 19 7:00 PM Live

Nick Petrie discusses [The Runaway](#) (Putnam \$27)
Peter Ash
Signed copies available

THURSDAY JANUARY 20 5:30 PM

Stacy Willingham discusses her debut [Flicker in the Dark](#) (St Martins \$27.99)
January First Mystery Book of the Month
Signed copies available

THURSDAY JANUARY 20 7:00 PM

Rachel Grant and Jayne Ann Krentz
Grant discusses [Crash Site](#) (Montlake \$12.99)
Archaeologist Fiona Carver
Signed bookplates available
Krentz discusses [Lightning in a Mirror](#) (Berkley \$28)
Fogg Lake
Signed copies available

FRIDAY JANUARY 21 12:00 PM

Lars Kepler with Brad Thor
Kepler discusses [The Mirror Man](#) (Atria \$28.95)
Killer Instinct #8

FRIDAY JANUARY 21 5:00 PM Violin Concert Included

Gerald Elias discusses [Cloudy with a Chance of Murder](#) (Level Best Press \$19.50)

FRIDAY JANUARY 21 7:00 PM

SciFi Friday discusses Katherine Addison's [The Goblin Emperor](#) (\$17.99)

SATURDAY JANUARY 22 4:00 PM Live

Spenser #50 Party
Ace Atkins discusses [Robert B. Parker's Bye, Bye, Baby](#) (Putnam \$28)
Signed copies available

MONDAY JANUARY 24 5:00 PM

Eva Jurczyk discusses her debut [The Department of Rare Books and Special Collections](#) (Poisoned Pen \$26.99/\$16.99)
February Cozy Crimes Book of the Month
Signed bookplates available

NEW: MONDAY JANUARY 24 7:00 PM

Eliza Jane Brazier with May Cobb
Brazier discusses [Good Rich People](#) (Berkley \$27)
Signed copies available

TUESDAY JANUARY 25 12:00 PM

Janet Hallett discusses [The Appeal](#) (Atria \$27.99)
January British Crime Club Book of the Month
Signed bookplates available

TUESDAY JANUARY 25 6:00 PM

Lisa Lutz discusses [The Accomplice](#) (Ballantine \$28)
Signed copies available

NEW: WEDNESDAY JANUARY 26 4:30 PM

Stephanie Graves, Laura Joh Rowland, and Rosemary Simpson
Graves discusses [A Valiant Deceit](#) (Kensington \$26)
Olive Bright, Pigeoneer
Rowland discusses [Garden of Sins](#) (Crooked Lane \$26.99)
Sarah Bain, Victorian photographer
Simpson discusses [The Dead Cry Justice](#) (Kensington \$26)
A Gilded Age Mystery
Signed copies available for all three titles

NEW: WEDNESDAY JANUARY 26

A recorded interview with Dean Koontz will post late in the afternoon
Koontz discusses [Quicksilver](#) (Thomas & Mercer \$28.99)
Our January Crime Book of the Month

WEDNESDAY JANUARY 26 6:00 PM

Joanna Schaffhausen and PJ Tracey
Schaffhausen discusses [Last Seen Alive](#) (St Martins \$27.99)
Ellery Hathaway
Tracey discusses [Desolation Canyon](#) (St Martins \$27.99)
LAPD's Margaret Nolan
Signed copies available for both

THURSDAY JANUARY 27 6:00 PM

Marie Benedict discusses [Her Hidden Genius](#) (Sourcebooks \$26.99)
Overlooked heroine of DNA research
Signed copies available and while they last, a scented candle

THURSDAY JANUARY 27 7:30 PM

Hardboiled Crime discusses Dorothy B. Hughes' [Dread Journey](#) (\$15.95)

MONDAY JANUARY 31 6:00 PM

Fiona Davis discusses [The Magnolia Palace](#) (Dutton \$27)
Drama, secrets, murder at NY's Frick Golden Age mansion (museum)
Signed copies available

TUESDAY FEBRUARY 1 5:00 PM

Paul Vidich and David McCloskey
McCloskey discusses [Damascus Station](#) (Norton \$27.95)
A debut CIA thriller set in Syria
Vidich discusses [The Matchmaker: A Spy in Berlin](#) (Pegasus \$25.95)
Signed copies available for Vidich

TUESDAY FEBRUARY 1 6:30 PM Virtual National Book Launch

Brian Freeman discusses [The Ursulina](#) (Blackstone \$28.99)
The sequel to Edgar finalist [The Deep, Deep Snow](#) (\$16.95)
Signed copies available

WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 2 6:00 PM

Remembering Caroline Todd
Charles Todd discusses [A Game of Fear](#) (Morrow \$28.99)
Inspector Ian Rutledge in Essex
Signed copies available

THURSDAY FEBRUARY 3 4:45 PM

Marty Wingate with Lesa Holstein
Wingate discusses [The Librarian Always Rings Twice](#) (Berkley \$26)
Signed copies available

THURSDAY FEBRUARY 3 6:00 PM

Elle Cosimano with Megan Miranda and Ashley Elston
Cosimano discusses [Finlay Donovan Knocks 'Em Dead](#) (St Martins \$26.99)
Here is [the link](#) to upload your preorder receipt and receive a special sticky notepad
Signed copies available

FRIDAY FEBRUARY 4 5:00 PM

Jillian Cantor with Heather Gudenkauf
Cantor discusses [Beautiful Little Fools](#) (Harper \$26.99)
February Notable New Fiction Book of the Month
Signed copies available

SATURDAY FEBRUARY 5 2:00 PM Live

Stephanie Barron discusses [Jane and the Year Without a Summer](#) (Soho \$27.95)
Jane Austen
Signed copies available

OUR JANUARY BOOKS OF THE MONTH

British Crime Club One unsigned hardcover or paperback per month
Robotham, Michael. [When You Are Mine](#)

Cozy Crimes Club One unsigned hardcover or paperback per month
Prose, Nita. [The Maid](#)

Jurczyk, Eva. [The Department of Rare Books and Special Collections](#), becomes our February selection

First Mystery Club One Signed First Printing per month
Willingham, Stacy. [A Flicker in the Dark](#)

The Crime Collectors Book of the Month Club One Signed First Printing per month
Dean Koontz. [Quicksilver](#)

History/Mystery Club One Signed First Printing per month
Mann, Peter. [The Torqued Man](#)

Notable New Fiction One Signed First Printing per month
Rollins, James. [The Starless Crown](#)

International Crime One Unsigned Hardcover per month
Apostol, Gina. [Bibliolepsy](#)

SIGNED BOOKS, Tip-ins, Signed Bookplates

Allende, Isabel. [Violeta](#) (Ballantine \$28). **Tip-ins.** Allende, winner of multiple lifetime achievement awards, Violeta is born into a family boasting five boys just as the 1918 influenza hits her South American homeland. The narrative carries her through 100 years to a new pandemic, encompassing the Great Depression (with her capsized family forced to resettle in her country's remotest reaches), the fight for women's rights, and the rise of dictators, plus love, loss, poverty, wealth, and brimming-

to-the-rim affairs. Formatted as a letter to someone for whom Violeta cared deeply. Allende frames Violeta's life story with two global pandemics, and while Violeta's reflections on Covid-19 feel a little forced, Allende seamlessly ties the rise and fall of Cold War-era military dictatorships throughout Latin America to Violeta's autobiography

Atkins, Ace. [Robert B Parker's Bye, Bye, Baby](#) (Putnam \$28). Spenser #50! A milestone in crime fiction for sure. And

Atkins' 10th and final contribution to its continuation. Here he takes inspiration from politics and postulates a kind of AOC representing Boston. Lacking a reading copy, I quote *Kirkus*: "Spenser is a tough White detective, and his close associate is a tougher Black guy named Hawk. Both are pretty much on the right side of the law, though Hawk has a less-than-heartwarming history with cops. Aides of Massachusetts Congresswoman Carolina Garcia-Ramirez, aka CGR, want to hire Spenser to protect her from troubling death threats as she campaigns for renomination, although she doesn't think it necessary. There's going to be a primary debate, and the word on the Boston street is that someone plans to 'make a run' at CGR immediately afterward. The FBI wants CGR to fire Spenser and Hawk, but she wisely has confidence in the local muscle." Maybe some CGR insider is sharing details of her schedule and placing her in someone's crosshairs....

✦ Barron, Stephanie. [Jane and the Year Without a Summer](#) (Soho \$27.95). Jane Austen is using some of the profits from her novel *Emma* to treat herself and her sister, Cassandra, to two weeks at Cheltenham Spa in Gloucestershire in May 1816. Jane hopes that taking the waters there will alleviate her lassitude, back pain, and "want of spirits." The new acquaintances the sisters meet include a beautiful invalid in her 20s, a heroic naval captain, and an evangelical clergyman ("Repent, Miss Austen—*Prepare*. The end of all things is upon us"), who's accompanied by his impertinent sister ("You do not appear to suffer. You cannot claim ill health," she tells Jane). When one of these sharply defined characters dies of poisoning, Jane once again turns sleuth. The Austen family's financial constraints and Jane's own failing health add verisimilitude to this taut, sometimes perplexing tale of lost opportunity and unfulfilled aspirations. Barron fans will hope Jane, who died in 1817, will be back for one more mystery.

"[Barron] has painstakingly sifted through the famed author's letters and writings, as well as extensive biographical information, to create a finely detailed portrait of Austen's life—with a dash of fictional murder . . . Some of the most enjoyable, well-written fanfic ever created."—*O Magazine*.

Benedict, Marie. [Her Hidden Genius](#) (Sourcebooks \$26.99). Well I remember the sensation when British scientists James Watson and Francis Crick announced the double helix, their discovery of the structure of DNA, in 1953. Here's a description of Watson's book [The Double Helix](#) (\$16.99): "With humility unspoiled by false modesty, Watson relates his and Crick's desperate efforts to beat Linus Pauling to the Holy Grail of life sciences, the identification of the basic building block of life. Never has a scientist been so truthful in capturing in words the flavor of his work." Benedict offers a compelling contradiction.

At the time there were rumors that Watson's "personal account" suppressed the contributions of others to the discovery. Benedict, whose specialty is novelizing surprising facets of influential women's work (Hedy Lamarr, Mitza Maric, Clementine Churchill), reveals the pioneering work of Rosalind Franklin. Always an outsider, cold-shouldered as a woman working in a male bastion in England after more camaraderie in a Paris laboratory, she has a natural genius for physics and chemistry that guides her experiments. When she is assigned to work on DNA she thinks her time has come. Never again will she have to listen to her colleagues complain about her, especially Maurice Wilkins who'd rather conspire about genetics with James

Watson and Francis Crick than work alongside her. Then it finally happens—the double helix structure of DNA reveals itself to her with perfect clarity. But then. . . Like Marie Curie, Rosalind was unwary of radiation, leading to her work ending her life before its time and with credit for her work hidden by the male colleagues who should have celebrated her extraordinary gifts and contributions to molecular biology.

Brazier, Eliza Jane. [Good Rich People](#) (Berkley \$27). The *PW* Starred Review on a super edge if not fiendish psychological thriller: "Lyla Herschel, the principal narrator, suffers from boredom, as does her super wealthy husband, Graham, with whom she lives in a grand house perched on a cliff in the Hollywood Hills. To alleviate their mutual emotional ennui, the couple initiates a dangerous game with the well-to-do tenants they solicit for the guesthouse on their property. Meanwhile, Demi Golding, who's homeless, stumbles into a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to take on the identity of a well-paid director of a tech company. Lyla is happy to accept Demi when she applies to be their new tenant, and she soon becomes unwittingly engaged in Lyla and Graham's nefarious schemes. Brazier plays delicious homage to Richard Connell's *The Most Dangerous Game* and Nathaniel West's *The Day of the Locust* as the action builds to a climactic out-of-control 30th birthday party that involves guests in a battle of "simunition" ('Real guns but fake ammunition'). Along the way, the two women—one trapped in a dead-end marriage, the other in an audacious attempt to improve her social status—bond." *LJ* enthuses: "Full of fast cars, designer clothes, and pulse-racing cinematic thrills." I admit I felt my age reading this.

Cantor, Jillian. [Beautiful Little Fools](#) (Harper \$26.99). Our John Charles reviews: First published in 1925, F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* has been called the "great American novel." Here Cantor offers her own fascinating take on this iconic book using the viewpoints of three different women: Daisy Buchanan, Jordan Baker, and Catherine McCoy. All three are potential suspects in the murder of millionaire Jay Gatsby, who was found shot to death in the swimming pool of his estate in West Egg, N.Y. Detective Frank Charles' only clue that the killer was not George Wilson, a mechanic who had been led to believe that Gatsby was responsible for his wife Myrtle's death, is a diamond hairpin left at the scene of the crime. But to which woman did it belong? Cantor's flair for nuanced characterization shines in this compelling historical novel as she deftly illuminates the lives and loves of this trio of women and how each of their paths intersected with that of the enigmatic Gatsby. From the book's impeccably realized historical setting to the elegant ease of Cantor's writing, everything about this dazzlingly original take on a Jazz Age classic is spot-on.

This book was postponed to February 1 and will be our February Notable New Fiction Book of the Month. The January Indie Next Pick rolls forward: "I love the book and its deliciously vivid characters that retell the Gatsby story. I think it should come with a warning though: Readers Beware: This book is impossible to put down."

Cosimano, Elle. [Finlay Donovan Knocks'Em Dead](#) (St Martins \$26.99). "Fresh from a debut in which she kept getting offered money to kill people who then fortuitously died, novelist Finlay Donovan goes another round with murder most absurd. "Somebody besides Finn must be unhappy with her ex, sod farmer Steven Donovan, because a message-board poster identifying

herself only as FedUp broadly hints that she'd pay \$100,000 to anyone who'd dispose of him. As Finn looks on in virtual horror, another poster, EasyClean, accepts the proposition. Run ragged as she already is by the usual domestic problems—caring for her two small children, juggling hot law student Julian Baker and Nicholas Anthony, the Fairfax County detective who's still interested in her despite what she put him through in [Finlay Donovan Is Killing It](#) (\$17.99)—read it first, struggling to get started on her next suspense novel—Finn tries to rescue Steven, who deserves execration but not execution, by hiring a teenage network expert named Cam to identify EasyClean. When Cam comes up empty, the only other thing Finn can think of is to volunteer to do the hit herself for half the price. Unfortunately, she makes her cut-rate offer using a public Wi-Fi connection, exposing herself and her nanny/sidekick, endlessly resourceful accounting student Veronica Ruiz, to all manner of perils....”

Davis, Fiona. [The Magnolia Palace](#) (Dutton \$27). Here is the captivating story of a missing diamond and the history of New York's Henry Clay Frick House, before and after it became a museum. [The Frick](#) is one of my favorites, embracing a Gilded Age mansion and a superb art collection. Currently, after some disputes over the garden, etc, it is under renovation and the art is temporarily installed in a Brutalist-style building over on Madison. The first Frick mansion is a Victorian located in Pittsburgh which I have visited; the two make an interesting comparison and in part chart the upward movement on the social scale achieved by industrialist Frick, who bought some of his art from the estate of JP Morgan whose Gilded Age Mansion is also a favorite to visit when in New York. Morgan was and remains one of our country's great bibliophiles and collectors.

“Dual timelines seamlessly connect the lives of two women at New York's Frick Collection. In 1919, Lillian Carter (based on the real-life artists' model Audrey Munson) is the supermodel of her day and the muse of classical sculptors; her face and figure grace hundreds of famous statues throughout New York City. When her landlord's wife is murdered, Lillian is sought as a person of interest and hides away by taking a job at the Frick mansion, her career shattered. There she works as private secretary to Helen Clay Frick and lives among the collection's masterpieces, including a portrait of herself. In 1966, British model Veronica Weber comes to the Frick mansion (now a museum) for a photo shoot and ends up being locked in during a storm. [The two timelines meet when Veronica discovers a set of papers in the museum that may provide clues to finding a rare pink diamond owned by Henry Frick, which went missing in 1919. She then asks for help from archivist Joshua Lawrence.] Davis adeptly interweaves two compelling story lines to shine a light on another NYC landmark (after novels set in the Chelsea Hotel and the New York Public Library). This is historical fiction at its best, with well-developed characters, detail, art history, and mystery.”—*LJ* Starred Review. And there are more Stars.

Davis' last, [The Lions of Fifth Avenue](#) (\$17), a similar story structure set at the NY Public Library, was a 2020 Crime Book of the Month or I would make this one our January selection.

Dorsey, Tim. [Mermaid Confidential](#) (Harper \$28.99). “In bestseller Dorsey's delightfully madcap 25th crime novel featuring Serge A. Storms, the vigilante serial killer and his stoner pal, Coleman, take a break from road trips and criminal

pursuits to become responsible tenants at Pelican Bay, a bustling condominium complex in the Florida Keys. But, alas, the condo's fun-loving community spirit has given way to petty squabbles, drunk and disorderly behavior, gun violence, and malicious prank calls to police, with boisterous, disruptive renters causing havoc within the complex. Finding themselves in the thick of things, Serge and Coleman are encouraged to take suitable action against troublesome occupants on behalf of their friendly neighbors. Meanwhile, a blast across from Pelican Bay on a neighboring key, which injures dozens, including members of the infamous Millan cartel, heralds the onset of a turf war between the cartel and the Benzappa family, and a gang of murderous drug smugglers with a treasure map head for the Keys to unearth a hoard of buried cash. The suspenseful, seemingly unconnected subplots imaginatively intertwine as Dorsey brings everything to a suitably vicious and explosive finale. This fiendishly funny adventure is irresistible.”

Estleman, Loren D. [Cutthroat Dogs](#) (Forge \$25.99). What a pleasure to spend time with the talented old pro Estleman, winner of numerous awards for his wide universe of books, including the Shamus for Best Private Eye novel. And that's what we have here, a new PI investigation by Detroit's Amos Walker. He's a cynical guy with a natural buck of authority but good-hearted. 20 years ago a college freshman, April Goss, was found dead in her bathtub. It looked like suicide but some anomalies suggested murder and her boyfriend Dan Corbell was attested, convicted, and incarcerated. Now a chance meeting resulting from Walker taking down a bank robber introduces him to Corbell's sister. She has all along insisted he is innocent, but been brushed off by cops and court. She hires Walker to investigate and he learns that no one is eager to see this cold case reopened. April's father has become a true crime podcaster on the basis of her case, his [Cutthroat Dogs](#) earning top rating. The public defender who represented Corbell has moved on. Corbell himself has lost not only hope but any will to live. So things are urgent. But Walker his little to work with. Still....

Freeman, Brian. [The Ursulina](#) (Blackstone \$28.99). Brrr... .here is the prequel to Edgar finalist [The Deep, Deep Snow](#) (\$16.95), a book that got much love here at The Pen. It's the story of Deputy Rebecca Colder, mother of Shelby Lake, who as a baby was left in a basket for Sheriff Tom Gunn to raise and whose story is related in [The Deep, Deep Snow](#). Now we learn Rebecca's story as she wants to present it to Shelby. And her story involves a beast—call it Bigfoot? Sasquatch? Yeti? Or as it's named in rural Black Wolf County, the Ursulina. But is the beast killing people really a mythical creature? Or is he a serial killer who's masking himself as the monster, leaving with each kill a message written in blood? And what is Rebecca going to do about it?

Gardner, Lisa. [One Step Too Far](#) (Dutton \$27). We met Frankie Fallon last winter in [Before She Disappeared](#) (\$17), a woman whose self-appointed mission is working missing-persons cold cases. That one brought her to Boston. Now she's moved to Wyoming's Shoshone National Forest to insert herself into a search party for Tim O'Day organized for the 5th year by Tim's grieving father. Five years earlier, Tim and four of his best friends set out into the woods for a bachelor party weekend. Tim, the future groom, disappeared without a trace. Every year since, Martin, Tim's father, has guilted the boys into the hunt. This is to be Martin's last attempt. Frankie succeeds in joining when

one of the boys, an alcoholic, is too ill to go. One day into their six-day trek, problems arise. From missing provisions and the sense of being watched, things escalate quickly, and the question becomes: who will survive? “Fascinating details on cadaver dog training, as well as on camping and tracking in difficult terrain, complement the suspenseful journey as it winds toward a surprising conclusion.” Remember, this is a crime novel. And a real page turner (although there’s a step back at the end wrapping up several threads). “An authentic Wyoming setting, a tantalizing mystery, and a Labrador named Daisy. What’s not to like?”—C.J. Box.

Gentill, Sulari. [Where There’s a Will](#) (Poisoned Pen \$15.99).

Signed Bookplates. “Gentill’s witty, rip-roaring 10th mystery featuring Australian portrait painter Rowland Sinclair takes Rowland to Boston, Massachusetts, with his ever-faithful entourage. His flamboyant university friend, Daniel Cartwright, has been murdered, and Rowland has been appointed the sole executor of the man’s considerable estate. Rowland winds up not only investigating his friend’s death but also dealing with Daniel’s angry siblings, who have been left with what they consider to be the paltry sum of \$10,000 each. The bulk of the estate is to go to the mysterious Otis Norcross, whose whereabouts are unknown. The search for Norcross takes Rowland and his crew in some unusual directions, leading to encounters with William Randolph Hearst, Orson Welles, Joseph Kennedy, and Zelda and Scott Fitzgerald. Each chapter begins with an edifying quote from a period publication, and, as ever, Gentill elegantly infuses historically accurate details on the rise of fascism into the text, providing insight that’s relevant to today’s readers. This is historical mystery fiction at its finest,” says the *PW* Starred Review. As the editor of this gem, I completely agree. The quirks and humor with which Gentill laces this [1930s mystery series](#), making them a joy to read, do not smother Gentill’s unflinching portraits of family dynamics, on display here, and Fascism on the rise. I recommend reading them all although you can start here and then go back.

Grant, Rachel. [Crash Site](#) (Montlake \$12.99). **Signed bookplates.** I was absolutely crazy about archeologist Fiona Carver’s first appearance in [Dangerous Ground](#) (\$12.95 Signed bookplate), with its vividly rendered landscape of the Aleutians and a prehistoric village, missing artifacts, and a missing volcanologist whose twin brother, famed wildlife photographer Dean Slater, has bluffed his way onto Fiona’s team with fake credentials to track him down. Fiona and Dean generated lots of sparks and some serious personal heat, but Dean, still deeply grieving his dead young wife, is determined never to risk heartbreak again. Which of course nearly breaks Fiona’s heart.

Ruby Island is part of the Caribbean nation Dominica and leased to a wealthy shipping dynasty that has created a private luxury compound. The lease is nearly expired so Jude Reynolds, heir and CEO of RAM Freight, has hired Fiona and others to document the 17th Century fort and other territory, some of which are caves where indigenous people hid from the incoming European colonizers. This team flies in aboard a helicopter which mysteriously crashes, nearly killing them all. Then Dean unexpected shows up, his mission to photograph the rain forest, the island’s birds, and such, and, it turns out, add spice to the documentary being filmed of the project by reuniting with Fiona who is furious when he shows up on Ruby Island.

It goes from there, laced with fascinating stuff about wildlife photography, archaeology, Caribbean history, villainy (the least surprising part), diving, and romance.... I think of Grant, author of many books, as here writing a kind of modern Mary Stewart romantic suspense with attention to the landscapes but more edge to the characters. Speaking of Stewart, a few of her wonderful books are still available.

✦ Graves, Stephanie. [A Valiant Deceit](#) (Kensington \$26). [Olive Bright, Pigeoneer](#) (\$15.95) introduced us to the plucky young woman living in the little village of Pibley, Hertfordshire, where pigeoneer and amateur sleuth Olive supports the war effort by training her homing pigeons for a clandestine government organization stationed at a nearby manor. Who knew these valiant birds were superb wartime couriers? And recruited for the covert intelligence organization known as Baker Street Her latest assignment, training the pigeons to carry messages for Resistance fighters in Europe, is interrupted when a mild-mannered acquaintance, Lt. Jeremy Beckett, is found dead. The police determine his death was an accident, but things don’t add up—Beckett was carrying a coded message in his pocket and a map of Germany clutched in one hand. Was he a spy? Determined to find the truth, Olive solicits the help of her superior officer, the handsome but prickly Captain Jameson Aldridge. They must overcome their fraught relationship long enough to devise a trap for the real traitor. And I add that Olive has some maturing to do along with her budding romance with Jamie. “Graves’s focus on a fascinating bit of WWII history makes this stand out among lighter wartime mysteries.”

✦ Hallett, Janice. [The Appeal](#) (Atria \$27). **Signed Bookplates.** At the start of British journalist, playwright, and screenwriter Hallett’s ingeniously plotted debut, our **February British Crime Club Book of the Month**, two young lawyers face a Herculean challenge issued by a Queen’s Counsel: blitzing through almost two years of emails, texts, and messages so they can assist with an appeal brief due within days. And the question: is the proper person in prison for the crime(s)? As they read, at first the communications among members of a London area amateur theater group seem unremarkable, even banal. But things get real when troupe leader Martin Hayward shares that his two-year-old granddaughter, Poppy, has been diagnosed with a rare brain tumor—for which the only hope is an astronomically expensive experimental US-produced drug not paid for by the National Health program. Though plans for the show proceed, an urgent appeal to raise funds for Poppy’s treatment takes center stage. As crowd-funded contributions climb and someone ends up dead, Hallett skillfully lays an intricate and twisty trail of bread crumbs that leads to half a dozen suspects, which should delight those eager for the opportunity to sift through the evidence. It’s a challenge for the reader as well for the two young solicitors. As a speed reader I thought I would dislike the story’s structure, but in fact it rocketed along uninterrupted by the various communications. I worked out most of what was transpiring, but Not All! *The Appeal* was a Number One bestseller in the UK for good reason.

✦ Hallett, Janice. [The Twyford Code](#) (Viper \$36). Hallett’s second book publishes in the UK in January and steps into Richard Osman and Alex Pavesi territory. Here is the publisher’s description: Forty years ago, Steven Smith found a copy of a famous children’s book by disgraced author Edith Twyford,

its margins full of strange markings and annotations. Wanting to know more, he took it to his English teacher Miss Iles, not realizing the chain of events that he was setting in motion. Miss Iles became convinced that the book was the key to solving a puzzle, and that a message in secret code ran through all Twyford's novels. Then Miss Iles disappeared on a class field trip, and Steven has no memory of what happened to her. Now, out of prison after a long stretch, Steven decides to investigate the mystery that has haunted him for decades. Was Miss Iles murdered? Was she deluded? Or was she right about the code? And is it still in use today? Desperate to recover his memories and find out what really happened to Miss Iles, Steven revisits the people and places of his childhood. But it soon becomes clear that Edith Twyford wasn't just a writer of forgotten children's stories.... I am told the story's structure may be that of voice mails but cannot confirm.

✦ Hannah, Sophie. [The Couple at the Table](#) (Hodder \$40). You're on your honeymoon at an exclusive couples-only resort. You receive a note warning you to "Beware of the couple at the table nearest to yours." At dinner that night, five other couples are present, and none of their tables is any nearer or further away than any of the others. It's as if someone has set the scene in order to make the warning note meaningless—but why would anyone do that? You have no idea. You also don't know that you're about to be murdered, or that once you're dead, all the evidence will suggest that no one there that night could possibly have committed the crime....

Hunter, Stephen. [Targeted](#) (Atria \$28). In bestseller Hunter's superb 12th Bob Lee Swagger novel, a determined *New York Times* reporter wants to interview Bob, who's 74, about his part in recently bringing down a bad guy known as Juba the Sniper in this sequel to 2019's [Game of Snipers](#) (\$9.99). Bob, who's recovering from a bullet wound in his upper body, declines, but after the reporter publishes an article describing Bob's role, Bob is subpoenaed to testify before a House subcommittee set up for purely political purposes. A confrontational congresswoman, a wily and ancient veteran who's facing a tough upcoming election campaign, leads the hearing, which is convened in a Boise, Idaho, high school auditorium near Bob's home for his convenience. Bob holds his own at the hearing, but eventually the committee charges him with "wanton endangerment." In a battle where "words are bullets," he's on the ropes, until a prison bus commandeered by a Chechen crime family of five, all escaped inmates, crashes the hearing, setting loose wild mayhem. "The suspense rises as Bob must try to save the lives of the very people accusing him of wrongdoing. With this inventive nail-biter, Hunter sets a new bar for both himself and the genre."—*PW* Starred Review. I add that Hunter drops you back over two centuries into Swagger family history during our Revolutionary War that interweaves with the present action and is enormous fun.

Dana Stabenow, a Hunter fan like me, adds: "Hunter starts out this book pissed off at everyone, especially Congress and the media, but by the end he has mellowed a trifle, toward everyone except the media. Again with the Hunterian edge-of-your-seat thrill ride, with excellent villains both Congressional and Chechen, another fascinating peek into Bob Lee's family history, and Bob Lee himself at his rough guy best, proving yet again that we need the rough men and always will."

Jurczyk, Eva. [The Department of Rare Books and Special Collections](#) (Poisoned Pen \$26.99/\$16.99). **Signed bookplates** from the Canadian librarian author. "Who doesn't love a mystery involving rare books and bad librarians?" Liesl Weiss long ago learned to be content working behind the scenes in the distinguished rare books department of a large university, managing details and working behind the scenes to make the head of the department look good. But now when the Department Head is in ICU following a stroke, she becomes the acting Head, despite being on sabbatical with no official responsibilities at the library for a full year. She lacks the safecracking skills needed to determine whether a major acquisition has gone missing from the secure safe in the Head's office. It might have migrated into the stacks by mistake. Or, did someone steal it? Everything was fine in the library until it wasn't and now it's all Liesl can do to not day-drink nor call the cops. Why doesn't she take this obvious action, I ask? "As Liesl's colleague Francis Churchill points out, 'Our entire job is finding information.' Not detection. So the goal is not to upset the donors, plus to navigate department and university politics as Jurczyk consistently subordinates the question of whodunit to the question of how to handle the case. Jurczyk displays a keen satirical eye as she delineates the characters, even the absent Department Head Christopher. *Library Journal*, the natural reviewer for this debut, adds, "Filled with characters that resonate, glimpses into the reality of libraries and academia, and enchanting descriptions of rare books, this debut from a librarian will captivate bibliophiles." *Kirkus* adds, "Toronto librarian Jurczyk's first novel is a valentine to librarians that doesn't shy away from their dark sides."

"Biblio-wrapt" is a new phrase I discovered in the *NY Times* recently, new for bibliophilia, which can tip over into obsession. This is stretching to select Jurczyk's tale for our **February Cozy Crimes Book of the Month** but it ticks most cozy boxes so I did it.

Koontz, Dean. [Quicksilver](#) (Thomas & Mercer \$28.99). This is Koontz and so not a conventional thriller, but it is brilliant on depicting the Arizona landscape (seriously! The paragraph on P. 60 opening Chapter 8 is alone worth your time) and written in needle-sharp prose. It's a parable really. I've decided January 2022 is a good month to stretch the conventional and our minds with it, so this is our **January Crime Book of the Month**. Of all the books I've read for January this one has the winning prose style. You may not agree with all that it contains, but please savor the way Koontz writes the story.

Quinn Quicksilver was born a mystery—abandoned at three days old on a desert highway in Arizona. The names of the three men who pluck him from the roadway and save his life are an immediate clue. Raised in an orphanage run by Poor Clare Catholic nuns, never knowing his parents, never "adoptable," Quinn had a happy if unexceptional life. Until the day of "strange magnetism." It compelled him to drive out to the middle of nowhere. It helped him find a coin worth a lot of money. And it practically saved his life when two government agents from ISA showed up in the diner in pursuit of him. Now Quinn is on the run from those agents and who knows what else, fleeing for his life. During a shoot-out at a forlorn dude ranch outside Wickenburg, he finally meets his destined companions on whatever quest he's on: Bridget Raining, a beauty as gifted

in foresight as she is with firearms, and her grandpa Sparky, a bestselling romance novelist with an unusual past. Bridget knows what it's like to be Quinn. She's hunted, too. The only way they will stay alive is to keep moving. Barreling through the Sonoran Desert and on to Tucson, the formidable trio is impelled by that same inexplicable magnetism toward the inevitable. With every deeply disturbing mile, something sinister is in the rearview—an enemy that is more than a match for Quinn, even as he discovers within himself resources that are every bit as scary. And what sort of relationships can he expect to form with the other sort-of-humans who seem increasingly to be littering the Arizona landscape? If you hunger for an unusual and exceptional literary escape, this is your book! I am so grateful for the opportunity to read it.

Krentz, Jayne Ann. [Lightning in a Mirror](#) (Berkley \$28). Jayne Ann writes to me, “Olivia LeClair likes the concept of speed dating. It's fast and efficient. She's got only one question for each man who sits down at her table: ‘If I disappeared tomorrow would you walk into hell to find me?’ But things have not been going well. Most of the candidates get a deer-in-the-headlights look and move on to the next table as quickly as possible. The exceptions are not promising. One turns out to be a serial killer who targets her. And then there's Harlan Rancourt. Long believed dead, he sits down and says, yes, he would walk into hell to find her because he's looking for the legendary Vortex lab and he's convinced she's the only one who can help him find it. Right answer. Wrong man. Vortex is the code name for a late 20th century government project dedicated to the study of the paranormal. There are those who are willing to kill to protect the secrets of the old lab. Really, what can possibly go wrong?” Well, Jayne Ann certainly knows.

Publishers Weekly adds, “Krentz wraps up her Fogg Lake trilogy in dazzling fashion with this paranormal tour de force...masterfully ratcheting up the tension on the way to a powerhouse finale. Readers will devour this smart, sexy story.’ The first two books in the trilogy are [The Vanishing](#) (\$7.99) and [All the Colors of Night](#) (\$8.99/\$27.99 Signed).” Jayne Ann would like to add that, “contrary to certain rumors, she can finish a series. Sort of. This trilogy is proof. And this book can be read as a standalone.”

Lutz, Lisa. [The Accomplice](#) (Ballantine \$28) opens with Luna and Owen meeting in an intro to ethics class in college. Shortly afterward, Luna, who has epilepsy, has a seizure while sharing her notes with Owen. They are alone, and he cushions her head with his jacket and sticks his fingers in her mouth in the belief that epileptics are at risk of swallowing their tongues—a fallacy for which she later ridicules him. The cement for their bond is thus set, despite the fact that their personalities are wildly different: Luna is guarded, sometimes flippant and mysterious, definitely self-protective, whereas Owen is affable, popular, and privileged, a schmoozing womanizer. The story that develops alternates between Owen and Luna's college days, during which time Owen's ex-girlfriend is found dead, and the present, when Owen's wife is murdered. Luna finds her body and runs to tell Owen before calling the police. Things look fishy. Is it the basic dysfunctionality of the characters responsible, or something more sinister at play? Will their bond stand or break? How dangerous is it for someone to be around them? Lutz has always explored relationship dynamics and unusual family structures, here taking

it to a bond between unlikely friends.

Mitchard, Jacqueline. [The Good Son](#) (Mira \$27.99). **Tip ins.** Limited supply. I've read various reviews. This one from a bookseller resonates: “The story will put the reader on an emotional –not unlike the emotional stress experienced by Thea (Stefan's mom) after Stefan was released from prison for murdering his girlfriend. Lots of unexpected twists to the story. The book is rich with description of characters, emotion, and place. In fact, I think emotion is a heart-thumping character in the story—raw—with edges of hopefulness.”

Petrie, Nick. [The Runaway](#) (Putnam \$27). Peter Ash is a Jack Reacher kind of guy, an Iraq War Marine who suffers from PTSD and choking claustrophobia who finds stepping into danger to defend/rescue someone is a mission that keeps him sane and functional. Along the way he's acquired a friend in Lewis and a true love in freelance journalist June Cassidy, and they are all mobile so they move around with each mission. And here he is in rural Nebraska, powering along in his truck, when he comes across a vacant car and a very pregnant teen. She's 19-year-old Helen Johansen whom we know ditched her dead-end job and life in Coldwater, Montana, when a charming stranger pulls up to fill up with diesel for his rig at the crummy gas station where she works and dreads having to accept the advances of her equally crummy landlord. When Peter meets her Helene has figured out that her rescuer Roy Wiley is not a trucker but both leader of a team of professional break-in artists and a stone killer, and she's made a run for it. Peter offers her a lift and a terrific driving chase ensues across the northern Great Plains, first to escape Roy, and then for Peter to escape Roy when, cornered, Helene pretends to have gone with him unwillingly. It's a look at Middle America from an interesting perspective that shifting points of view—Peter, Helene, Roy, Lewis, June—illuminate. And at a young woman hell-bent on surviving what life has thrust on her including motherhood. You may not agree with her choices, but the key is that she does make them.

Sarah Weinman writes in the *NY Times Book Review*: “Of all the characters vying for Jack Reacher's thriller throne, my current favorite is Peter Ash, the itinerant, PTSD-afflicted war veteran of Nick Petrie's seven-book-strong series. Why is this so? As *The Runaway* amply demonstrates, Petrie has a preternatural talent for ratcheting up suspense, even as he ensures readers continue to care not only about Ash, but about the people he's trying to save as well as the ones he must defend against. Ash can't just abandon Helene, a near-term pregnant woman fleeing her murderous psychopath of a husband, even when all his instincts scream that helping her run away is a terrible idea. It is and it isn't. Helene is a formidable character, one to whom Petrie gives near-equal time, determined to save herself and her unborn child as she eludes a mounting litany of horrors. As with Reacher, we know Ash will live to see another installment — but there's magic in believing he's in true danger, making his ability to prevail feel earned, not given.”

Qiu, Xiaolong. [The Shadow of the Empire](#) (Severn \$28.99). Robert van Gulik's brilliant Judge Dee mysteries, made the more delightful by his wonderful drawings, have long been one of my very favorite series. Set in the imperial Tang Dynasty (618-907), a Golden Age until its fall, they bring that era vibrantly to life while illuminating aspects of China's contemporary culture. Dutch diplomat and sinologist Van Gulik drew upon traditional

Chinese detective stories, particularly an 18th Century *gong'an* novel by an anonymous author, to put a fictional character loosely based on the real-life Tang Dynasty magistrate Di Renjie in the Sherlock seat. Poetry is a facet of Van Gulik's novels so it is great news that award-winning poet and detective novelist Qiu (Shanghai's Inspector Chen series) has penned a Judge Dee investigation. It's more a novella, really, a companion novel to [Inspector Chen and the Private Kitchen Murder](#) (\$28.99, two Signed copies left) and, fabulously, comes laced with Chinese poetry of the Tang era.

Judge Dee is on his way out of the imperial capital, named by Empress Wu as Imperial Circuit Supervisor—a device to remove him from a succession battle between the powerful Internal Minister Wu of her clan and Prince Li, the heir to his late Emperor Father. But he is waylaid by an emissary of Wu who brings Dee a command to investigate a sensational murder. Xuanji, a highly talented and popular poet and courtesan, has been accused of beating her servant Ning to death and burying the body near her home. Strict Confucian Dee moves into a nearby Buddhist temple as his base and learns the locals think Xuanji is possessed by the spirit of a black fox. The poetess claims to have been drunk when committing the crime although originally she professed innocence. Dee believes none of it. “Qiu combines a sophisticated puzzle with appropriate period detail.”

✦ Rowland, Laura Joh. [Garden of Sins](#) (Crooked Lane \$26.99). Sarah Bain, feminist crime scene photographer in the late Victorian Age, and her new husband, Whitechapel Police Sergeant Thomas Barrett, are riding the London underground in November 1890 when their train derails. In helping to rescue the injured from the vividly realized wreckage, they discover a dead woman—dead by strangulation. It's not an ideal crime scene. In time the victim is identified as New Yorker Katherine Oliver, a Pinkerton agent in Britain searching for a vanished American heiress. The photographs on Oliver's state-of-the-art Kodak camera found in her belongings were taken at the Cremorne Gardens, a derelict London pleasure park, and one depicts Prince Eddy, Queen Victoria's libidinous grandson. Bain and Barrett discover that three former circus performers offering new attractions at the Cremorne have falsified their names and histories, while the prince's visits to the site using a false name suggest that scandal awaits the royal family. **I add that this is a surprisingly dark and sexually explicit plot thread.** Rowland ups the ante by having Bain additionally face Barrett's entanglement with his former fiancée and the trial of her father for a rape and murder she worries he did indeed commit. The looming trial frames the story but is not well realized.

Schaffhausen, Joanna. [Last Seen Alive](#) (St Martins \$27.99). For two decades, many people have viewed Ellery Hathaway purely as the sole survivor of serial murderer/kidnapper Francis Coben. Ellery's rescue at age 14 by FBI agent Reed Markham has affected all aspects of her life, from home security measures to her career as a Boston police detective. To try to free herself from her past, she recently ended her eventual romantic relationship with Reed that began the year before. Now, Coben, responsible for the mutilation deaths of at least 17 young women, has a deal—he'll confess where he buried eight other women if Ellery visits him in prison. Ellery agrees, but the meeting has some surprising consequences. “The author highlights Ellery's emotional state and the grief of the families desperate to know what happened to

their loved ones as the suspenseful plot builds to a stunning finale. The chilling Coben, who shows that pure evil can lurk behind a handsome face, makes a memorable villain.” I am not crazy about repeat serial killers or other villains, but Schaffhausen makes it work. This is [a series best read from the beginning](#).

Simpson, Rosemary. [The Dead Cry Justice](#) (Kensington \$26) is a reminder that detection's golden age was golden only for the well-to-do, and not always for them. May 1890: As NYU Law School finally agrees to admit female law students, Judge MacKenzie's daughter Prudence weighs her choices carefully. Chief among her concerns is how her decision would affect the Hunter and MacKenzie Investigative Law agency and her professional and personal relationship with the partner who is currently recuperating from a near fatal shooting. But an even more pressing issue presents itself in the form of a street urchin, who swipes her bag lunch in Washington Square Park and leads Prudence to a badly beaten girl he is protecting. Fearing for the girl's life, Prudence rushes her to the Friends Refuge for the Sick Poor, run by the compassionate Charity Sloan. When the boy and girl slip out of their care and run away, Prudence suspects they are fleeing a dangerous predator and is desperate to find them. Aided by the photographer and social reformer Jacob Riis and the famous journalist Nellie Bly, Prudence and Geoffrey scour the tenements and brothels of Five Points. Their only clue is a mysterious doll with an odd resemblance to the missing girl. Read the [Gilded Age Mystery](#) series in order.

Stabenow, Dana. [Disappearance of a Scribe](#) (Zeus \$29.95). I think of this as *On the Waterfront*, Cleopatra style. In other words the action takes place in Cleo's Alexandria and highlights the role of this great city as a port as well as locus of traffic on the River Nile. This is a book I edited, so to be objective I quote the enthusiastic *PW* review:

“In Edgar winner Stabenow's entertaining second mystery set during the reign of Egyptian queen Cleopatra after 2018's [Death of an Eye](#) (\$15.95), the city of Alexandria is rebuilding from a punishing siege during the recent civil war and is on its way to becoming a client state of Rome. When a body is discovered in the harbor, its feet secured in two amphorae by a rare type of Roman waterproof cement, Cleopatra dispatches her childhood friend Tetisheri—a personal investigator and spy known as the Eye of Isis—to identify the victim and the killer. As she grapples with her new responsibilities (her predecessor was murdered in *Death of an Eye*), Tetisheri must deal with political intrigues, violence, and corruption from the crowded streets to the queen's palace. Stabenow brings Alexandria's Hellenistic period to life while demonstrating that murder, methodical detective work, and politically expedient resolutions that fall short of justice are nothing new under the sun. Best known for her series featuring Alaska investigator Kate Shugak, Stabenow is as much at home in ancient Egypt as she is in the Alaskan wilderness.”

Speaking of Alaska, the Liam Campbell series is a delight. We have Signed copies of his 2021 case [Spoils of the Dead](#) (Zeus \$15 **special price**) and highly recommend it. *The New York Journal of Books*: “The author, Alaska born, brings authenticity to her stories. She also has a crackling, sometimes snarky, writing style that pulls readers in and adds moments of both levity and gravitas to her tales. The Liam Campbell series is generally lighter in tone than the Kate Shugak series but it never ignores the hard core of Alaskan reality. Readers from

'Outside' can't avoid learning about the climate, the cultures, and the economic realities of the 49th, and largest, U.S. state. Kudos to the author for making the environment as much a part of the story as its characters. They are inextricably intertwined. And a caveat to readers of any Dana Stabenow novel: One can never be sure what the ending will be." For those who missed the [first four Campbells](#), we have the UK paperbacks (\$15.95 each).

✦ Todd, Charles. [A Game of Fear](#) (Morrow \$28.99). Ian Rutledge, the psychologically damaged Scotland Yard inspector, who's haunted by the ghost of Hamish, a Scottish soldier whom he was forced to execute for disobeying futile orders during WWI—in reality, this is guilt and PTSD but Hamish allows some powerful interior monologues to color the narrative—has another specter to deal with in 1921. Lady Benton, an Essex widow intent upon preserving the estate of her dead husband and son, has reported seeing one man murder another in her private garden. But the killer appears to be an officer stationed at the air field on her land, a man who died in a car crash nearby. No corpse has been found despite her conviction what she saw was real. Skepticism in the village is rampant, treating her as mistaken at best. Rutledge, reluctantly on the scene, believes she did see something disturbing, and with his usual dogged determination, probes both past and present to get at the truth.

"Todd (the mother-son team of Caroline and Charles Todd) has rarely been better at creating a creepy atmosphere to enhance their nuanced exploration of human darkness. Rutledge remains one of today's most fully rounded mystery leads." Tragically we lost half of the mother-son writing team of Todd when Caroline died unexpectedly last summer. This novel was completed before her death as was one more in the Bess Crawford series. You can read *A Game of Fear* as a standalone with no problem.

Tracy, PJ. [Desolation Canyon](#) (St Martins \$27.99). LAPD Detective Margaret Nolan worked a tough case in 2021's [Deep into the Dark](#) (\$9.99), a Crime Club Book of the Month. She is still carrying guilt from a line-of-duty shooting. Afghan War vet Sam Easton's PTSD is stirred when he hears rifle shots while jogging in Desolation Canyon near Death Valley. Nolan's mother, grieving the combat death of her soldier son, goes on a spiritual retreat at the wilderness compound of the Children of the Desert. Father Paul, the sect's charismatic leader, is so outraged that his consort, Marielle, has fled with their daughter that he recruits a cold-blooded killer, an ex-con who is familiar with Father Paul's earlier criminal identity as Roger "Snake" Jackson—to help recover his "stolen property." That's the set up with the main players, all well realized with their vivid personalities and quirks. So, moving along, Nolan's investigation into a corpse dumped in the swan pond at the Hotel Bel-Air leads her to confront an ex-KGB crime boss and to ponder how the kidnapping of the murder victim's son decades ago could have consequences today. All these plot elements come neatly together as the tension builds along with Father Paul's drug-fueled paranoia and the hunt for Marielle. "Tracy should win new fans with this vivid, twisty crime novel." True, but I'd read Nolan's first case first even though I think this second one ups Tracy's game here. Fans of the Monkeewrench series will be pleased with this new Nolan, one written by PJ after the death of her writing partner mother.

Trigiani, Adriana. [The House of Love](#) (Penguin Young Readers \$17.99). Now that Christmas 2021 is done, turn to Valentine's

Day 2022 and consider an autographed copy of this charmer, illustrated by Amy June Bates, for kids ages 3-7. Mia Valentina Amore wakes up in the patchy old family home in the Blue Ridge Mountains. It's Valentine's Day. And with her mama Mia transforms it into a House of Love festooned with a gumdrop tree, cupcakes, and valentines for all six of her sibs. But wait... there's no valentine for Mia. Did mama forget her in preparing the family's celebration?

Vidich, Paul [The Matchmaker: A Spy in Berlin](#) (Pegasus \$25.95). "Peril came early to the apartment on Bethaniendamm, overtaking the changes that were sweeping through the streets and alleys of a divided Cold War Berlin." It's 1989, and American Anne Simpson works as an interpreter at the Joint Allied Refugee Operations Center in West Berlin, debriefing refugees from Eastern Europe. She's happily married to German piano tuner Stefan Koehler. Then a consular officer informs her Stefan is missing, his wallet found next to a canal. Simpson believed her husband had been in Vienna and Prague tuning orchestra pianos. Her alarm grows when she finds out West German intelligence suspects Stefan is working with the so-called Matchmaker, the head of East German counterintelligence, to provide confidential details about NATO deployments. As Anne tries to ascertain her spouse's fate and the truth of the allegations against him, she learns secrets that change her view of the man she loves. Anne is an interesting woman, hard to like but you have to admire her tenacity as well as her guts as revelations sock her.

Vidich's last spy story, [Mercenary](#) (Pegasus \$25.95), is still available

Willingham, Stacy. [A Flicker in the Dark](#) (St Martins \$27.99). Sometimes I make a First Mystery Book of the Month selection based on the writer's potential as well as the book in question. And also, to be frank, on what I estimate the publisher's level of support will be, as that makes a huge difference to a career trajectory. In short, what's the buzz? Willingham's January debut, an Indie Next Pick too, has all that going for it, so it is our **January First Mystery Book of the Month**.

Chloe was only 12 when her father was arrested for murdering six teenage girls in Breau Bridge, Louisiana. She watched in horrified disbelief, and again when he confessed and took a plea to serve six consecutive life sentences in order to avoid the death penalty. In the wake her mother attempted suicide and her outgoing older brother retreated inside himself. Flash forward to a 32-year-old Chloe who has forged a life as a psychologist in Baton Rouge where her history is unknown. She's prone to self-medicating. She engaged to Daniel Briggs, a pharmaceutical salesman, after a whirlwind romance. Daniel does know her story and gets her apprehension as the 20th anniversary of the murders approaches. Then a 15-year-old girl disappears from her neighborhood, and a few days later, another teen vanishes after visiting Chloe's office. Is there a pattern here? Has a copycat killer arisen? Or...? "Willingham skillfully intercuts Chloe's anxious first-person narration in the present with flashbacks to her childhood, ratcheting up the tension. Atmospheric prose and abundant red herrings amplify the tale's intensity."

✦ Wingate, Marty. [The Librarian Always Rings Twice](#) (Berkley \$26). Hayley Burke, curator for the First Edition Society Library in Bath, England, meets John Aubrey, who claims to be the long-lost grandson of the late Lady Georgiana Fowling, founder of the

society. The skeptical Hayley arranges meetings involving the estate lawyer, society members, and John to determine whether John is an imposter. Charles Henry Dill, Lady Fowling's nephew and heir, is less than thrilled to learn of John's claim, and the two men come to blows. When Milo Overton, an associate of John's who resembles him, is killed, it's unclear whether John was the actual target and Dill committed the crime. *Kirkus* calls this cozy a "Fast-paced and quirky fare for literary sleuths and those who love them." Our blogger, librarian Lesa Holstine, just named the recipient of the Mystery Writers of America's 2022 Raven Award, is your host.

Yanagihara, Hanya. [To Paradise](#) (Knopf \$32.50). **Tip-ins.** Following [A Little Life](#) (\$18), short-listed for the Man Booker Prize and a National Book Award finalist, Yanagihara's new novel tracks themes of love, loss, illness, power, and the unfillable desire for heaven on Earth over three centuries in stories tied together by a townhouse on New York City's Washington Square Park. In an alternate 1893 America, with New York belonging to the more or less freewheeling Free States, the scion of a prominent family prefers a poor music teacher to a more polished suitor. In AIDS-ravaged 1993 Manhattan, a young Hawaiian man living with a controlling older partner quietly suppresses his tattered childhood. And in plague-shattered totalitarian 2093, a troubled woman seeking her missing husband misses the guidance of her powerful scientist grandfather. As with the new Noah Hawley novel [Anthem](#) (Grand Central \$29), I question how many of us want to begin January with novels of hope, wonder, romance, even mystery, rather than with shattering stories like these. It's an individual choice.

UNSIGNED EVENT BOOKS

Elias, Gerald. [Cloudy with a Chance of Murder](#) (Level Best Press \$19.50). "A musical feast for mystery and music lovers."—*Library Journal*. "Brilliant and captivating on every level."—*Booklist*. Violinist, concert master, and author Elias continues his mysteries featuring curmudgeonly violinist Daniel Jacobus. A freak summer storm severs an island music festival in the middle of Utah's Great Salt Lake from the mainland. When one festival administrator, and then a second, is found dead, can Daniel Jacobus solve the murders before his protégée, violinist Yumi Shinagawa, becomes the third victim? "Elias has a nose for creative detail and a refreshing impatience with pomposity. Indulge yourself in his artfulness."—*Kirkus Reviews*

NEW: Hamilton, Ian. [The Sultan of Sarawak](#) (Anansi Press \$15.99). Joy, one of my top favorite series gets a new chapter. I love the financial and political threads, growing more relevant every day. When a fire destroys a lumber warehouse belonging to Ava Lee's company in Kuching, in Sarawak, Malaysia, in Hamilton's exciting 14th novel featuring the forensic accountant turned businesswoman, Ava's initial concern is for the warehouse's manager, Jamilah Daeng, who was badly injured. Her worries increase once she learns the fire was caused by a bombing. She smells something rotten when the police attribute the attack to a radical environmental group opposed to logging on rainforest land belonging to indigenous Malaysians. No one had heard of the group before, and Ava's company didn't buy timber from the rainforest in question. The problem worsens after Jamilah is accused of the attack. Ava's pursuit of the truth places her at odds with the Chong family, who run Sarawak and

whose patriarch is a powerful politician, and she must take bold measures to get justice for Jamilah. Hamilton makes the intricate plot and his larger-than-life characters plausible. Fans of Lisbeth Salander will admire Ava who is stalwart in her roles as daughter, sister, friend, businesswoman, and lesbian in a relationship with a famous Chinese film star who carries her own weight.

NEW: McCloskey, David. [Damascus Station](#) (Norton \$27.95). McCloskey, a former CIA analyst, brings his professional experience to write a debut thriller set in Syria, a theater less familiar to you than other conflict zones. CIA case officer Sam Joseph is the guy, dispatched to Paris to recruit Mariam Haddad, an official in Assad's Syrian Palace. These unlikely allies fall into a most unwise relationship which ups the danger quotient when they enter Damascus to hunt the man responsible for the disappearance of an American spy. The chase after a killer and the uncovering of a dark secret bring them to the attention of Assad's spy catcher Ali Hassan, and his brother Rustum, head of the Republican Guard. As we know the whole Syrian theater has been a disaster, one of the most difficult of CIA assignments along with a so far futile military one. This is a well wrought thriller that informs us about a landscape less familiar than many.

OUR 2022 VALENTINE BOOKS IN A BAG

[2022 Valentine Books in a Bag](#) (\$50)

Three books, a treat, free shipping,

This program was a hit last year so we are assembling a trio of titles to include in one Valentine package. Naturally there will be chocolate too. John has selected one dazzling Victorian high society romp, and I, Nita Prose's *The Maid*, an extraordinary debut reviewed below under Cozy Crimes (but is it one?)—and, it has a flaming red dust jacket, perfect for a Valentine treat.

My other selection is a contemporary romantic suspense set in the Aleutian Islands with an archaeologist, a *Nat Geo* photographer on a secret mission, and more.... If you've read *Dangerous Ground* we will substitute the sequel.

MORE COZY CRIMES

Berenson, Laurien. [Show Me the Bunny](#) (Kensington \$22.95). Melanie Travers agrees to organize Easter festivities at Gallagher House, the new women's shelter opened by the stern former nun, even if it takes all the jellybeans in Greenwich to sweeten the arrangement. No sooner does Melanie arrive to dye multicolor eggs and stuff baskets, than she learns devastating news about Beatrice Gallagher, the respected benefactor of the estate. Beatrice has fallen to her death, and the circumstances are shocking. No one can say why or how charitable Beatrice got pushed into an early grave. Yet for a supposedly warm and generous philanthropist, rumors have her pinned as an overbearing manipulator who used money to control the unfortunate few trapped in her inner circle. Facing an uncertain future as danger lurks around Gallagher House, Melanie and Aunt Rose must tolerate each other's company long enough to investigate....

Collette, Abby. [A Killer Sundae](#) (Berkley \$16). If you scream for ice cream try all three in this [Ice Cream Parlor series](#). See Our January Large Paperback Picks below for more.

Flower, Amanda. [Frozen Detective](#) (Hallmark \$15.99). A wealthy doctor invites many of his associates to spend a week at a giant, luxurious ski villa. Darby Piper, a seasoned private eye, and Tate

Porter, her new partner at the detective agency, are among the guests, going undercover as a romantic couple. They were hired by the doctor's much-younger wife to investigate anonymous threats against her husband's life. But before long, Darby and Tate are investigating a murder even though Darby's jealous ex-boyfriend the cop says they are wasting their time.

Hall, Traci. [Murder at a Scottish Social](#) (Kensington \$15.95). Opening her shop Cashmere Crush and making a new home for herself, her son Brody, Gramps, and their black Scottish terrier Wallace in the beautiful Scottish seaside village of Nairn is a dream come true. So Paislee is happy to give back by donating a luxurious cashmere sweater for an auction to raise money for the Nairn Food Bank. She's less happy to make the acquaintance of a clique of competitive moms at the charity event, who treat a baking contest like it's life or death. It turns out to be the latter for Queen Bee Kristen Buchanan when a peanut-laced shortbread cookie triggers her fatal nut allergy. Who would poison Kristen? How about half the town? But when Paislee's pal Blaise is suspected, the sweater-selling sleuth leaps into action to unravel the mystery.

Prose, Nita. [The Maid](#) (Random \$27). I am so in love with this book. Superb prose, an unusual lead with a special voice and perspective, and a clever plot. It's an unorthodox cozy yet it ticks all the cozy boxes.... And more. Molly's tidy world is thrown topsy-turvy when she cleans the room of the Blacks, a rich and famous power couple, good tippers who frequent posh Regency Grand Hotel. When Molly finds Mr. Black dead, she becomes entangled in a murder investigation where those in her orbit at the hotel suddenly reveal secret, disingenuous motives. Will Molly root out the killer? The story, set over five days in Molly the Maid's life, delivers a delightfully crafted, suspenseful plot and a colorful supporting cast comprised of both the caring and nefarious. However, it's the pure, learning-as-she-goes charm and naiveté of Molly, who is on the spectrum, and follows Gran's rules put in place to help her with social cues, and her inimitable narrative voice—the truth of her lovably eccentric old soul—that you will not soon forget. Plus—it's a locked room mystery and a love story, that is Molly learns to love herself.

Prose threads a steady needle with the intricate plotting, the locked-room elements of the mystery and especially Molly's character. The reader comes to understand Molly's worldview, and to sympathize with her longing to be accepted — a quest that gives *The Maid* real emotional heft.

Prose lives in Toronto so Signed Books are not possible. **Instead it's our Cozy Crimes Book of the Month for January, pushing the Elsa Jurczyk debut listed in Signed Books to our February selection.** I wish I could get early Reading Copies faster. *The Maid* is also one of three titles in our 2022 Valentine Book Bag treat, as noted above.

Scott, Laura. [Tailing Trouble](#) (Crooked Lane \$26.99). Now that Gramps and Ally have solved a murder in [Dogged by Death](#) (\$26.99), he feels free to poke his nose into every local crime, much to the distress of Noah Jorgenson, Ally's detective boyfriend. Since Ally's only recently moved back to her Wisconsin hometown and her veterinary practice is slow, she does grooming, dog walking, and boarding for extra cash. While she's walking her new boarder, standard poodle Domino, he brings her a shoe last seen on the foot of Pricilla Green, the petulant, pierced, inept cleaner at Legacy House, where Gramps lives with three widows vying for his attention. After finding

Pricilla dead in the nearby woods, Ally is reluctantly dragged into investigating by Gramps, who's chomping at the bit to do more detecting.

✦ Wingate, Marty. [The Librarian Always Rings Twice](#) (Berkley \$26). Hayley Burke, curator for the First Edition Society Library in Bath, England, meets John Aubrey, who claims to be the long-lost grandson of the late Lady Georgiana Fowling, founder of the society. Trouble ensues. See Signed Books for more.

NEW IN HARDCOVER

Don't overlook the New Year Booknews for many more books/reviews

✦ Buckley, Fiona. [Shadow of Spain](#) (Severn \$28.99). Occasional secret agent Ursula Blanchard, Queen Elizabeth I's surprise half-sister, is summoned by Her Majesty to a meeting at St. James Palace in the spring of 1588. Should the Spanish follow through on their threat to invade England, Ursula will have an important—and dangerous—role to play. Meanwhile, the queen seeks an alliance with the Duke of Parma, governor of the Netherlands. When Ursula learns that her onetime ward, 20-year-old Mildred Attridge, has eloped with a half-Spanish double agent, Berend Gomez, to Brussels, where the duke has his palace, Ursula has an excuse to go to Brussels and do what she can to serve the queen's interests while looking for Mildred. Does Gomez want to help the queen? And what are his true feelings for Mildred? Buckley is always good at dramatizing the era's politics and at following, sometimes slowing the pacing, the large cast she has assembled over the course of this excellent series of which this is Book #20.

Fortunately Ursula's last case, which takes her into the New Forest and a sedition plot, is now in paperback: [Forest of Secrets](#) (\$17.95). And the episode before: [Scent of Danger](#) (\$17.95), which is set in 1586 and revolves around Mary Queen of Scots. This series began back in the 1560s.

Carter, Andrea. [Murder at Greysbridge](#) (Oceanview Publishing). Carter calls her series focused on Irish solicitor Benedicta "Ben" O'Keefe the Inishowen Mysteries, named after a peninsula in Donegal County that occupies Ireland's northernmost point — an atmospheric setting for a classic whodunit if there ever was one. She knows this territory well. The Irish author lived for a time in real-life Inishowen working as a solicitor. Readers can feel comfortable starting their journeys into Inishowen with this book, even if they haven't read the earlier ones in the series. As the story opens, it's an unusually hot summer in western Ireland as Ben prepares for the wedding of her friend Leah while contemplating a difficult decision: should she accept a tempting job offer from an American law firm? The nuptials are scheduled for the newly restored Greysbridge Hotel, a sprawling, partially restored resort that descendants of the original family owners hope to revive. The guests soon discover the building and surrounding grounds include winding hallways, hidden rooms, possible ghosts and family secrets buried in an isolated cemetery plot. Still, it's a beautiful location for an Irish, late-summer wedding until a young American who is staying at the hotel drowns in full view of the assembled guests. Is it an accident or something more sinister? Then a second death, likely a poisoning, occurs in a hotel room which brings Sergeant Tom Molloy back into Ben's life. This is a dark book, not a Christie kind of country-house murder. I've ordered the three previous [Inishowen Mysteries](#) to read.

Chamberlain, Diane. [The Last House on the Street](#) (St Martins \$27.99). This is a two-track narrative that eventually fuses into one in 2010 and presents a gut-punch portrait of the force of the Klan/deep prejudice in a 1965 rural North Carolina community. Here's a Starred Review which I endorse: "In 2010, North Carolina architect Kayla Carter reluctantly prepares to move into her dream home with her three-year-old daughter, Rainie, after her husband, Jackson, died in a freak accident while building the house. Kayla is approached at her office by a woman named Ann Smith, who claims to be a potential client but unnerves Kayla by talking about Jackson's death, and by telling her she is thinking about killing someone. After moving into the new house, Kayla and Rainie meet neighbor Ellie Hockley, who recently returned to the area to care for her aging mother and ill brother. In a parallel narrative set in 1965, Ellie joins a student group to help register Black voters. She faces danger from the KKK while working alongside other students from Northern colleges and the members of her local Black community in N.C., all of which is exacerbated by her attraction to a Black civil rights activist. As Kayla learns Ellie was once in a romantic relationship with Kayla's father, she uncovers a series of terrible events that occurred in the woods surrounding Kayla's property. Chamberlain ratchets up the tension with the ever-present mystery of what happened to Win, a young Black activist, and the dual narratives merge beautifully before an explosive conclusion." There's a deep look at parenting in this novel as well.

Darnielle, John. [The Devil House](#) (Farrar \$28). "In this riveting metafictional epic, Mountain Goats singer-songwriter Darnielle flays the conventions of true crime to reveal the macabre and ordinary brutality behind sensationalized stories of violence. True crime writer Gage Chandler has spent the last five years living in the "Devil House" in Milpitas, California, where he's been working on a book about an unsolved murder that took place there in 1986, during the height of the Satanic Panic. Interspliced with Gage's investigation are long excerpts from one of his previous books, *The White Witch of Morro Bay*, which recounts the gruesome end for two teenage boys who broke into their teacher's apartment. Gage's multilayered narrative of the Devil House murders slowly builds from conjecture to the victims' ventriloquized voices, lending itself well to Darnielle's themes about the artifice of the genre: "Formalities, when carefully tended, quietly congregate to make form," Gage notes. This masterwork of suspense is as careful with its sharp takes as it is with the bread crumbs it slowly drops on the way to its stunning end. It operates perfectly on many levels, resulting in a must-read for true crime addicts and experimental fiction fans alike."—*PW*

Faulkner, Katherine. [Greenwich Park](#) (Gallery \$27.99). Helen's idyllic life—handsome architect husband, gorgeous Victorian house, and cherished baby on the way (after years of trying)—begins to change the day she attends her first prenatal class and meets Rachel, an unpredictable single mother-to-be. Rachel doesn't seem very maternal: she smokes, drinks, and professes little interest in parenthood. Still, Helen is drawn to her. Maybe Rachel just needs a friend. And to be honest, Helen's a bit lonely herself. At least Rachel is fun to be with. She makes Helen laugh, invites her confidences, and distracts her from her fears. But her increasingly erratic behavior is unsettling. And Helen's not the only one who's noticed. Her friends and family begin to suspect that her strange new friend may be linked to their shared history in unexpected ways.

Golden, Christopher. [Road of Bones](#) (St Martins \$27.99). Bestseller Golden's eerie, inventive latest takes readers on a hair-raising adventure through frozen Siberia. After working on a ghost-hunting TV show, documentarian Felix Teigland is eager for a more substantial project. His new goal is to record daily life along the Kolyma Highway, otherwise known as the Road of Bones, a 1200 mile stretch of Siberian road where winter temperatures can drop as low as sixty degrees below zero. Under Stalin, at least eighty Soviet gulags were built along the route to supply the USSR with a readily available workforce, and over time hundreds of thousands of prisoners died in the midst of their labors. Their bodies were buried where they fell, plowed under the permafrost, underneath the road. It passes through Akhurst, the coldest inhabited place in the world. Teig hires a local Yakut guide to take them to there. But when Teigland and his cameraman, Prentiss, reach Akhurst, they find the settlement abandoned save for a catatonic young girl, and it becomes clear that something is gravely wrong. Desperate to uncover the mystery of Akhurst's abandonment, Teigland and Prentiss are thrown headlong into a tense game of cat and mouse with a mysterious shaman lurking on the edges of the settlement. They have something the shaman wants, and he will stop at nothing to get it. "Golden's prose is taut and undeniably unsettling, exploring the dark recesses of the Siberian landscape. Indeed, the unforgiving environment is just as grave a threat as the shadowy shaman. Golden is writing at the top of his game."

✘ George, Elizabeth. [Something to Hide](#) (Viking \$29). I mentioned this in the *New Year Booknews* but here's a Starred Review for you (again, no Advance Reading Copy forces me to quote): "In bestseller George's superlative 21st novel featuring Acting DCS Thomas Lynley, Lynley and his team, including DS Barbara Havers, look into a particularly sensitive murder case during a London summer "hot enough... to make an iguana sweat." When an undercover officer who was investigating illegal Nigerian "medical services" offered at a women's health clinic in Hackney is found in a coma in her flat, she's taken to the hospital, where she dies. The autopsy reveals that a blow to her head fractured her skull. No one is in the clear as the case widens and the lies pile up. Everyone has something to hide, including the immigrant Bankole family forcing an arranged marriage on their 18-year-old son, Tanimola, and a horrific surgical procedure on their eight-year-old daughter, Simisola, in order to get a 'good bride price.' Established fans will be glad to see Lynley's lifelong friends, photographer Deborah St. James and her husband, Simon, lend support. Racism, sexism, class, blackmail, and cultures clash in explosive ways. This is a memorable addition to a series that has aged well and promises more."—*PW*. I add that Ruth Rendell readers will recall that one of her most arresting novels was titled *Simisola*!

Giovinazzo, Diana. [Antoinette's Sister](#) (Grand Central \$28). Austria 1767: Maria Carolina Charlotte—tenth daughter and one of sixteen children of Empress Maria Theresa of Austria—knows her position as a Habsburg archduchess will inevitably force her to leave her home, her family, and her cherished sister, Antoinette, whose companionship she values over all else. But not yet. The Habsburg family is celebrating a great triumph: Charlotte's older sister, Josepha, has been promised to King Ferdinand IV of Naples and will soon take her place as queen. Before she can journey to her new home, however,

tragedy strikes. After visiting the family crypt, Josepha contracts smallpox and dies. Shocked, Charlotte is forced to face an unthinkable new reality: she must now marry Ferdinand in her sister's stead. Bereft and alone, Charlotte finds that her life in Naples is more complicated than she could ever have imagined. She makes a success of it but when her beloved sister Marie Antoinette is executed and Charlotte snubs the French only to face Napoleon, well.... I put this historical novel in for those who read Nancy Goldstone's 2021 biography [In the Shadow of the Empress](#) (Little Brown \$32) featuring Charlotte, Marie Antoinette, and sibling Maria Christina ruling in the Netherlands. Maria Theresa died before events at the end of the 18th Century overturned Europe and her children.

Hall, Donald. [Old Poets](#) (Godine \$27.95) is a much admired new edition of Hall's collection of intimate portraits of great poets in old age that gives new insight into their work and their lives, and context to the often flawless art created by flawed human beings. *Old Poets* includes essays on Robert Frost, Dylan Thomas, T. S. Eliot, Archibald MacLeish and Yvor Winters, Marianne Moore, and Ezra Pound. Along the way are observations about other poets and the literary cultures that sustained them: Elizabeth Bishop, Robert Bly, Hart Crane, E. E. Cummings, H. D., Wyndham Lewis, Wallace Stevens, Allen Tate, Richard Wilbur, William Carlos Williams, W. B. Yeats, and many others. "If *Old Poets* only preserved Hall's anecdotes and observations, it would be a fascinating document of literary history. But he is also a keen critic, drawing connections between the writer and his or her work." —*Harvard Magazine*

✚ Kelly, Julia. [The Last Dance of the Debutante](#) (Gallery \$27). 1958 was the final year when debutantes were presented at court to the monarch—the end of an era that readers of British historical fiction know well. Lily Nichols makes her tradition-minded mother happy by temporarily putting aside dreams of university. Instead, she joins the gloved-and-gowned young women planning to drop a last curtsy to Queen Elizabeth II. Along the way she meets icy-cool Leana Hartford and career-minded Katherine Norman and learns a secret that could destroy her family. I'd read this less for the plot than for Kelly's evocation of the weight of tradition, the glamorous though long nights, and the pressure these young women feel to impress and make the right match.

Kukafka, Danya. [Notes on an Execution](#) (Harper \$27.99). We open on death row in a Texas prison, where Ansel Packer is scheduled to be executed by lethal injection in 12 hours. However, Packer, who's killed multiple women across the country, including in Texas and New York, isn't worried. That surprising attitude is accounted for by the early revelation that he befriended one of the prison guards and is plotting a last-minute escape. Flashbacks, starting with Packer's birth to a 17-year-old mother in 1973, trace his path from childhood to what seem to be his final hours. He grew up with an abusive father and began killing and mutilating animals when he was three. Those sections alternate with passages from the points of view of his mother, who was also abused, and of a New York State police investigator devoted to getting justice for Packer's victims. Kukafka skillfully uses the second-person present tense to heighten the drama, and toward the end she makes devastatingly clear the toll taken by Packer's killings. Megan Abbott fans will be pleased.

Maheer, Kerri. [The Paris Bookseller](#) (Berkley \$26). Here is a wonderful reminder of the power of literature to change the world. When bookish young American Sylvia Beach opens Shakespeare and Company on a quiet street in Paris in 1919, she has no idea that she and her new bookstore will change the course of literature itself. Shakespeare and Company is more than a bookstore and lending library: Many of the prominent writers of the Lost Generation, like Ernest Hemingway, consider it a second home. It's where some of the most important literary friendships of the twentieth century are forged—none more so than the one between Irish writer James Joyce and Sylvia herself. When Joyce's controversial novel *Ulysses* is banned, Beach takes a massive risk and publishes it under the auspices of Shakespeare and Company. But the success and notoriety of publishing the most infamous and influential book of the century comes with steep costs. The future of her beloved store itself is threatened when *Ulysses*' success brings other publishers to woo Joyce away. Her most cherished relationships are put to the test as Paris is plunged deeper into the Depression and many expatriate friends return to America. As she faces painful personal and financial crises, Sylvia—a woman who has made it her mission to honor the life-changing impact of books—must decide what Shakespeare and Company truly means to her.

"*The Paris Bookseller* is a novel I long to live in, a vivid evocation of the famous female-owned Parisian bookshop Shakespeare and Company which acted as haven and home to the literati of pre-WWII Europe. Heroine and shop owner Sylvia Beach shepherds seemingly all of the great writers of the 20th century with an appealing blend of warmth, wit, frustration, and understanding. Kerri Maheer writes a love letter to books, bookstores, and booklovers everywhere." —Kate Quinn. Patrick and I have both made pilgrimages to this icon of a bookstore.

McHugh, Mandy. [Chloe Cates Is Missing](#) (Penzler \$25.95). What's a mother to do when her daughter, who's been the star of her obsessively curated mommy vlog for nearly 10 years, disappears? Thirteen-year-old Chloe Cates, whom the offline world knows as Abigail Scarborough, is the creation of Jennifer Cates, nee Jen Groff, whose online production of "CC and Me," nourished by commercial tie-ins and Jennifer's boundless appetite for grooming her daughter for stardom, has finally been generating enough income to surpass Jackson Scarborough's salary as associate director of his Albany firm's marketing team. Even before she vanishes from her bedroom one night, leaving her window open and her cell phone behind, Chloe's carefully fictionalized life has been built on papering over her constant resentment of the stage mother from hell. And that's not the only tension that bubbles beneath the domestic surface. Chloe's older brother, JJ, has set her up with her own social media accounts as Abigail. Abby's met a boy online who knows nothing of her avatar. Jackson has skeletons in his own closet. Even Emilina Stone, the police detective assigned to the case, is the last person in the world Jennifer wants to see because the two of them share knowledge of a guilty secret that goes back to their own school days. "Full of disturbing secrets, a supremely dysfunctional family and an unapologetically unlikeable protagonist, McHugh raises important questions around what parents should be allowed to post about their children on social media. Scratch the shiny surface of this perfect family and you'll see the dark secrets lurking beneath the glitter."

Newman, Jay. [Undermoney](#) (Scribner \$30). Former “master-of-the-universe” hedge fund manager Newman spent decades in the cutthroat world of international finance, Newman knows the effects of “undermoney” when he sees them in the headlines. His thriller, about a group of American patriots that hatch a plan to use a pilfered money drop in Syria to propel one of their own into the highest office in the land, is partially based on things he observed or stories he heard while working in global finance. The goal of this fictional unit is no less than the restoration of America’s geopolitical dominance. To do so, however, requires cleaning over a billion dollars—a tricky prospect—which necessitates the takeover of a hedge fund and the cooperation of one of Putin’s most notorious and brutal oligarchs. the real-world phenomenon that he terms “undermoney”—or money paid under the table, under the radar, in amounts that are consistently underestimated for their overwhelming impact on governments, businesses, and consumers. The corruption associated with undermoney is rampant worldwide as illustrated in headlines like: A Zimbabwean tycoon making a fortune off his access to the president and his inner circle... The relatives of a Russian state company’s CEO all get rich... Or when the Chinese push to gain influence in Serbia and Huawei ends up paying large sums to former Serbian state telecom executives through offshore shell companies. Corruption is fed by vast rivers of “undermoney” pouring into the global economy. Lee Child writes that Undermoney “makes your heart beat faster, like a thriller should, but also teaches you something big, which most thrillers don’t.”

Here is further info: Economic leakages from illicit trade—smuggling, counterfeiting, tax evasion, trafficking of humans and wildlife—create an annual drain on the global economy of \$2.2 trillion – nearly 3 percent of the world’s economy. If illicit trade were a country, its economy would be larger than Brazil, Italy, and Canada – and as large as Mexico and Indonesia combined. Illicit trade which includes money laundering consists of both tangible goods—drugs, human beings, weapons, wildlife and timber, fish, antiquities and ubiquitous counterfeits—and intangible goods bought and sold in cyberspace, such as passwords, botnets and malware. These intangible goods, poorly understood by most, cost consumers and organizations billions worldwide in the form of lost identities, funds stolen from bank accounts, computer data accessed and pilfered from private accounts and stolen intellectual property.

Okorafor, Nnedi. [Akata Woman](#) (Viking \$18.99). Here is the third book in a YA Fantasy series that creates “a stunningly original world of African magic that draws on Nigerian folk beliefs and rituals instead of relying on the predictable tropes of Western fantasy novels,” says *Time* magazine, naming the series first, [Akata Witch](#) (\$10.99), one of its 100 Best Fantasy Books of All Time and 100 Best YA Books of all time. Herein Sunny Nwazue has to navigate the balance of her life in American and Nigeria, finally put to the test in a quest that is dangerous and fantastical, aimed at finding a precious object hidden deep in an otherworldly realm...

✎ Prins, Mark. [The Latinist](#) (Norton \$26.95). In this modern retelling of the immortal and dark Daphne and Apollo myth, Tessa Templeton has thrived at Oxford University under the tutelage and praise of esteemed classics professor Christopher Eccles. And now, his support is the one thing she can rely on: her job search has yielded nothing, and her devotion to her work

has just cost her her boyfriend, Ben. Yet shortly before her thesis defense, Tessa learns that Chris has sabotaged her career—and realizes their relationship is not at all what she believed. Driven by what he mistakes as love for Tessa, Chris has ensured that no other institution will offer her a position, keeping her at Oxford with him. Meanwhile, Tessa scrambles to undo the damage—and in the process makes a startling discovery about an obscure second-century Latin poet that could launch her into academic stardom, finally freeing her from Chris’s influence. A warning from *Kirkus*: “The novel’s subdued but pronounced feminist undertones suddenly morph into distasteful and implausible revenge porn.” I never bought into the emotional renderings of his characters by debut author Prins and found the whole a bit too precious for my taste.

Rustad, Harley. [Lost in the Valley of Death: A Story of Obsession and Danger in the Himalayas](#) (Harper \$29.99). This much anticipated biography focuses on American backpacker Justin Alexander Shelter, who disappeared in 2016. Shelter was hiking the Indian Himalayas when he went missing—in a region known as “backpacker Bermuda Triangle”—and Rustad, a journalist, relies on hundreds of interviews, as well as his own trail experience, to build a picture of what might have happened. The author “draws readers into a tale of adventure and tragedy that, despite its dark outcome, is illuminated with a remarkable sense of humanity.”

Rutkoski, Marie. [Real Easy](#) (Holt \$26.99). YA and children’s author Rutkoski makes her adult debut with a haunting crime novel. Victor Amador, a police detective in an unnamed state, is hoping for a quiet overtime shift when he gets a call to investigate a report of an abandoned car in a ditch. When he responds, he finds blood and, eventually, the corpse of a woman who worked at a nearby strip club. The exact cause of death isn’t immediately clear, but the coroner finds date-rape drugs in the woman’s system, and the figure of a crown was carved into the sole of one foot. Amador investigates, with the help of colleague Holly Meylin, who is still traumatized by her infant’s accidental death due to her ex-husband’s negligence. “Rutkoski uses the familiar plot of a police search for a killer targeting women to paint moving portraits of desperate lives on both sides of the law. She’s especially good at making the strippers more than clichés, and for luring in fans of psychologically rich thrillers.”

Tan, Sue Lin. [Daughter of the Moon Goddess](#) (Harper Voyager \$27.99). “Tan’s remarkable debut and duology launch transports readers into a stunning world built from Chinese legend and replete with mythical creatures, magical artifacts, and mortal entanglements. The moon goddess, Chang’e, is imprisoned in her palace where she hides her secret, half-mortal daughter, Xingyin. When Xingyin’s existence is exposed to the Celestial Emperor, she’s forced to flee her home—but rather than laying low, she sets out on a mission to free her mother. She disguises herself in order to navigate the devious workings of the Celestial imperial court, hoping to gain enough status to bargain with the Celestial Emperor himself. Along the way, she becomes companion to the Crown Prince, finds a confidante in the Captain of the Celestial Army, and follows in her mortal father’s footsteps to become a renowned archer. But Xingyin’s coming-of-age adventures inevitably force her to choose between the people she loves and the fate of the world. Tan paints a lush, sparkling world in her inventive reimagining of the age-old Chinese folktale. The result

is a riveting page-turner that will leave fantasy lovers satisfied and eager for more.”—*PW* Starred Review

Young, Erin. [The Fields](#) (Flatiron \$27.99). “The sharp prose and explosive plot immediately drew me in, but the richly textured exploration of life in rural America stayed with me long after I finished. I hope to see more of Sergeant Riley Fisher, the novel’s dynamic female protagonist. This is a classic crime series in the making.” —Cristina Alger.

OUR JANUARY LARGE PAPERBACK PICKS

Collette, Abby. [A Killer Sundae](#) (Berkley \$16). Chagrin Falls, Ohio, is gorgeous in the fall, and Bronwyn Crewse, owner of Crewse Creamery, knows just how to welcome the new season. The Harvest Time Festival. The festival is a chance for residents to welcome a new season with hayrides, hot air balloons, and of course, delicious ice cream treats. But when a festival-goer, a former Festival Queen, gets poisoned, all eyes turn to Bronwyn, and she’ll have to crack the case to clear her name. “What do you get when you put together a tight-knit, slightly quirky family, a delectable collection of ice cream flavors, and an original mystery? A tasty cozy series.” If you scream for ice cream try all three in this [Ice Cream Parlor series](#).

✎ Dean, Will. [The Last Thing to Burn](#) (Atria \$17). I have admired British author Dean’s work for years and am delighted he gets a US publisher for this novel which earns an *LJ* Starred Review among other plaudits: “Trafficked Vietnamese illegal Thanh Dao, the narrator of this outstanding and heart-wrenching thriller from Dean (the Tuva Moodyson mysteries), endures an endless marathon of household labor, as well as just about every type of abuse imaginable, on a remote pig farm in Britain’s Fenlands. About the only spark of hope sustaining the young woman—whom her captor, Lenn, insists on calling Jane, his late mother’s name—is the belief that her younger sister remains free in Manchester, though Lenn has threatened to ensure the sister is deported if Thanh tries to escape or kills herself. The stakes rise when Thanh discovers she’s pregnant and Lenn imprisons a local woman who comes by to inquire about boarding her horse on the farm. As pressure increases from all quarters on Thanh, the tension becomes at times almost unbearable, relieved only by some shocking twists. With his deceptively soft-spoken but steely protagonist, determined to survive against staggering odds, Dean explores the resilience of the human spirit, even in the face of unfathomable evil. This harrowing journey is one worth taking.”

✎ Epstein, Allison. [A Tip for the Hangman](#) (\$17). In a much-lauded debut here and elsewhere, our February 2021 Historical Fiction Book of the Month, Epstein pens a vivid, unforgettable hero in “Kit Marlowe, Elizabethan playwright-turned-spy always sprinting one step ahead of disaster and talking a blue streak as he does so. Recruited by Elizabeth I’s spymaster to infiltrate the cabal of Mary Queen of Scots, Kit finds his conscience tested to the limit even as his heart yearns for an unattainable beloved. *A Tip for the Hangman* is simultaneously moving, unsettling, hilarious, and tragic—a debut that will linger long after the last page is turned.” —Kate Quinn, author of *The Alice Network*. I’ve always been fascinated with Christopher Marlowe and his early, questionable death, even visiting the Thames-side tavern where purportedly it happened. MI5 has its origins in Sir Francis Walsingham’s spy network set up under Elizabeth I. Did Marlowe play a part?

✎ Finch, Charles. [An Extravagant Death](#) (\$17.99). Set in 1878, Charles Lenox, “probably the preeminent detective in all of England, professional or amateur,” is dealing with the consequences of his exposure of three Scotland Yard chief inspectors being behind an armed robbery and numerous other crimes. The scandal imperils Benjamin Disraeli’s government, and the politician implores Lenox to travel to the U.S. during the trial and allow his testimony to be provided in written form to minimize press sensationalism. Lenox reluctantly agrees, but demands full access to the file on the case of Harold Wallace, who was stabbed to death in his home a few blocks away from Lenox’s own London residence. Lenox has doubts that the man charged with the crime, Wallace’s butler, is guilty. Upon the investigator’s arrival in the States, his skills are called upon by William Stuyvesant Schemerhorn IV of Newport, R.I., after an 18-year-old girl, whom his son had been courting, was found dead on a beach, apparently from a head wound. Finch effectively juggles the various plot threads, but there are two compelling reasons to dig into this story. One is the detailed, affectionate, yet almost satirical look at Newport and the artificiality of the super rich and their “cottages” and social whirl. The other is the effect this has on a Lenox approaching fifty and examining his life through an outsider, not an insider, lens. It’s a good way to return from the fabulous prequel trilogy that ended in 2020. I recommend the [entire Charles Lenox series](#), best read in order.

Gentill, Sulari. [Where There’s a Will](#) (Poisoned Pen \$15.99). **Signed Bookplates.** The 10th for Australia’s 1930 Boho Rowland Sinclair and his companions, an artist, a poet, and a sculptress, set in Boston where they have traveled from [Shanghai Secrets](#) (\$15.99). See Signed Books for a rave Starred Review.

Hansen, Joseph. [Fadeout](#) (Soho \$15) with a Foreword by Michael Nava. Published fifty years ago, a time when being gay was illegal in 49 out of 50 states, Joseph Hansen’s first Dave Brandstetter novel shattered stereotypes and redefined the Private Eye novel as we know it. Preceded only by a handful of gay protagonists in crime fiction, Hansen’s Dave Brandstetter, a ruggedly handsome World War II vet with a quick wit, faultless moral compass, and endless confidence, shattered stereotypes and won over a large reading audience, a feat previously considered impossible for queer fiction. Set in the mid-1960s, *Fadeout* centers on the disappearance of a southern California radio personality named Fox Olson. A failed writer, Olson finally found success as a beloved folksinger and wholesome country raconteur with a growing national audience. The community is therefore shocked when Olson’s car is found wrecked, having been driven off a bridge and swept away in a fast-moving arroyo on a rainy night. A life insurance claim is filed by Olson’s widow and the company holding the policy sends their best man to investigate. The problem is that Olson’s body was never found. Not in the car. Not further down the river. As Dave Brandstetter begins his investigation he quickly finds that none of it adds up. I could have put this in Classics but I want to call your attention to its relevancy today.

Johnston, Carole. [Mirrorland](#) (\$17). Cat lives in Los Angeles, far away from 36 Westeryk Road, the imposing gothic house in Edinburgh where she and her estranged twin sister, El, grew up. As girls, they invented Mirrorland, a dark, imaginary place under

the pantry stairs full of pirates, witches, and clowns. These days Cat rarely thinks about their childhood home, or the fact that El now lives there with her husband Ross. But when El mysteriously disappears after going out on her sailboat, Cat is forced to return to 36 Westeryk Road, which has scarcely changed in twenty years. The grand old house is still full of shadowy corners, and at every turn Cat finds herself stumbling on long-held secrets and terrifying ghosts from the past. Because someone—El!—has left Cat clues in almost every room: a treasure hunt that leads right back to Mirrorland. To read this debut is to surrender yourself to going back and forth in the lives of the characters as the house of mirrors where they live(d) shifts.

“Author Johnstone has created a dark, twisting thriller that explores the pitch-black corners of people’s minds; how good and bad, love and hate, terror and joy can co-exist; and how childhood memories can be rewritten with time as the lines between imagination and reality are blurred. Fans of Gillian Flynn’s creeping dread and Liane Moriarty’s nuanced morality and complex relationships should love this book,” says *Kirkus Reviews*. The Indie Next Pick: “You will tie yourself in knots figuring out what’s happening in this story of two sisters growing up with different stories attached to the games they play, stories that take on a life of their own years later as buried memories arise.”

Ide, Joe. [Smoke](#) (\$16.99). Isaiah “IQ” Quintabe is driving north from his home in Long Beach, where he’s had enough of dealing with violent crime. He stops in Coronado Springs, a town near Lake Tahoe, where he ends up renting a one-bedroom house. His peaceful existence is interrupted by Billy Sorensen, an escapee from a neuro-psych facility who breaks into his house to steal food. Billy claims that a serial killer, known as AMSAK because his 17 victims were dumped near the Sacramento and American rivers, is headed to Coronado Springs—and that he knows AMSAK’s identity. Reluctantly, Isaiah investigates... “Ide has displayed a rare ability to mix dark comedy and gut-churning drama...mixmaster Ide’s compulsion to blend light and dark (Isaiah’s confrontation with the serial killers, while gruesome, takes the form of ‘a slapstick movie shot in a burning insane asylum’) affects the two plots in surprising ways, again producing an emotion-rich form of character-driven tragicomedy, but one in which peril forever loiters in the shallows.” —*Booklist*. Patrick in particular recommends [this entire IQ series](#).

Pearse, Sarah. [The Sanatorium](#) (\$17). Set in the eerie and isolated Swiss Alps at Le Sommet, a luxurious, 5-star resort built on the site of an abandoned tuberculosis sanatorium, *The Sanatorium* beautifully balances a heart-pounding plot with intriguing, three-dimensional characters. Le Sommet is the last place that Elin Warner wanted to be. She’s taken time off from her job as a police detective, so when her estranged brother, Isaac, and his fiancée, Laure, invite her and her partner, Will, to celebrate their engagement at the hotel, Elin really has no reason not to accept. Arriving in the midst of a threatening storm, Elin immediately feels on edge—there’s something about the hotel that makes her nervous. And when they wake the following morning to discover Laure is missing, Elin must trust her instincts if they hope to find her. With the storm closing off all access to the hotel, the longer Laure stays missing, the more the remaining guests start to panic... but no one has realized yet that another woman has gone missing in this locked-room mystery debut. The action takes place in the (real) ski resort town of Crans-Montana where Pearse has a home.

⌘ Raybourn, Deanna. [An Unexpected Peril](#) (\$17). Why is lepidopterist Veronica Speedwell bored with life in London? After all, she and her love, the Honorable Revelstoke Templeton-Vane, better known as Stoker, are living on a lovely estate while they work on a vast collection of objects of natural history and help design an exhibit to honor Alice Baker-Greene, an intrepid mountaineer and feminist, who died in a climbing accident in the tiny country of the Alpenwald. Princess Gisela of the Alpenwald herself comes to open the exhibit. All goes smoothly until Stoker finds Alice’s climbing rope among the exhibition items and notices that it wasn’t frayed but cut with a knife, turning her fatal accident into murder. Veronica, who’d met and admired Alice, is keen to investigate, but Stoker’s not interested in expanding their case files. Their differences are rendered moot when members of the Alpenwald delegation beg Veronica to pose as the wayward Princess Gisela, who often goes off on little trips on her own, in order to avert the scandal that would surely arise if she did not show up for her engagements. The two women look remarkably alike because both are related through Queen Victoria’s large family, Veronica as the unacknowledged daughter of Prince Bertie. Now that she has entree to all the Alpenwalders, Veronica, her boredom decisively ended, sets to work sleuthing with the reluctant Stoker. Their discoveries soon put them at odds with a clever killer. This well wrought and entertaining [Veronica Speedwell series](#) is best read in order.

Reynolds, Allie. [Shiver](#) (\$17). In this propulsive locked-room thriller debut, five former competitive snowboarders gather for a reunion weekend at Le Rocher, a secluded spot in the French Alps. They haven’t seen each other in more than a decade, but old wounds remain fresh: last time they were at Le Rocher to train for an elite competition, fellow snowboarder Saskia Sparks mysteriously vanished. Each member of the group had a complicated relationship with the hyper-aggressive and possibly sociopathic Saskia—particularly Milla, who serves as the story’s no-nonsense narrator and whose drive to win sometimes overrides her basic morality. As the off-season weather turns increasingly hostile, it doesn’t take long for the group to realize they’ve been lured to the resort by someone who knows their secrets—and isn’t afraid to seek revenge. Trust among the group withers, and Milla longs for the intimacy she experienced with her former friends as she tries to uncover who could have murdered Saskia, all while concealing her own role in the crime.

An ex-freestyle snowboarder who spent several years traveling internationally, Reynolds writes with the fast-paced intensity of an energy drink-fueled trip down the slopes. Alongside its central mystery, *Shiver* offers an intimate look at the convoluted relationships of athletes who excel at a sport most people are too cautious even to attempt.

⌘ Todd, Charles. [A Fatal Lie](#) (\$16.99). Inspector Ian Rutledge remains out of favor with his jerk of a superior at the Yard, Chief Super Markham, and so in a cold spring of 1921 draws assignment to an odd case at the famed Telford-built aqueduct carrying narrowboats via a narrow indeed channel across a Welsh valley on 126 foot pillars. A body has been found in the River Dee below by a lad out with his fishing pole, a body clearly fallen from the aqueduct’s great height. Suicide? Accident? No. Rutledge quickly determines the man had been pushed off the tow path. His total lack of ID suggests murder. But who is he? Some intelligent examination of the corpse leads Rutledge to a

small community where the man and his wife, Ruth, ran a failing pub. No one had missed Sam as he was thought to be in nearby Shrewsbury negotiating for supplies. And probably still on the hunt for the couple's three year old daughter, Tildy, who went missing a year ago. Now Rutledge has two lines of investigation to work, with a little backup back at the Yard from Gibson. Weeks elapse as he motors all over northern Wales seeking answers while unearthing betrayals large and small....

NEW IN LARGE PAPERBACKS

Don't overlook the New Year Booknews for many more books/reviews

Ashley, Kristen. [The Girl in the Mist](#) (Ashley \$23.99 Signed). A Misted Pines series novel. To escape a deranged fan, actress and author Delphine Larue relocates to a secure lake house in Misted Pines. But Delphine quickly discovers that the sleepy little town is about to experience its own wave of fear when a girl goes missing, and the only one who seems capable of bringing the criminal to justice is Delphine's new neighbor: the enigmatic Cade Bohannon. The first in a new series by a Phoenix author with a strong literary voice and a flair for mixing sexy romance and suspenseful thrills.

Black, Juneau. [Shady Hollow](#) (Vintage Crime/Black Lizard \$16). Shady Hollow, a place where woodland creatures live together in harmony—until a curmudgeonly toad turns up dead and the local reporter has to solve the case. Reporter Vera Vixen is a relative newcomer to Shady Hollow. The fox has a nose for news, so when she catches wind that the death might be a murder, she resolves to get to the bottom of the case, no matter where it leads. As she stirs up still waters, the fox exposes more than one mystery, and discovers that additional lives are in jeopardy. Vera finds more to this town than she ever suspected. It seems someone in the Hollow will do anything to keep her from solving the murder, and soon it will take all of Vera's cunning and quickness to crack the case.

Cantor, Jillian. [Beautiful Little Fools](#) (Harper \$16.99). An imaginative novel of *The Great Gatsby*. See Signed Books for a full review. And Michael Farris Smith's *Nick* below. We are four years away from the 100th anniversary of *Gatsby*; expect to see more riffs and tributes to this American classic. I also recommend Cantor's 2021 novel [Half Life](#) (Harper \$16.99) with its fascinating conception of the life of the brilliant scientist Marie Curie.

Cassidy, Luke. [Iron Annie](#) (Vintage Crime/Black Lizard \$17). A Vintage Crime original offers a "darkly humorous look at life in the criminal underworld of the Irish border from a major new Irish literary voice." Dundalk—The Town, to locals—took Aoife in when she left home at eighteen. Now she's gone from a small-time slinger of hash to a bona fide player in Dundalk's criminal underworld. Aoife's smart, savvy, and cool under pressure. Except, that is, when it comes to Annie. Annie is mysterious and compelling, and Aoife is desperate to impress her and keep her close. Unfortunately, not everyone in The Town shares Aoife's opinion of Annie. So much so that when Aoife's friend and associate, the Rat King, approaches her about off-loading ten kilos of stolen coke, he specifically tells her to keep Annie out of it. Aoife doesn't want to do the job without Annie, though, so she lands on an idea. Annie has contacts in the UK, and sure it'd be better to get the coke as far away from Dundalk as possible. At first, everything goes to plan. But when Annie decides she'd

like to stay in the UK, Aoife makes a decision that changes everything, and finds her whole world turned upside down. Here is another Vintage Crime/Black Lizard original paperback.

Cosimano, Elle. [Finlay Donovan Is Killing It](#) (\$17.99). Wronged wife Patricia Mickler overhears Finlay Donovan, a down-and-out romantic suspense novelist, talking about her next book with her agent in a suburban Virginia sandwich shop. Mistaking Finlay for a killer for hire, Patricia offers the author \$50,000 to kill her no-good husband, Harris. The money is just what Finlay needs to deal with her ex, who's trying to renegotiate their custody agreement. Of course, Finlay has no intention of actually killing Harris, but fate intervenes.... "Part screwball comedy, part morality tale, the amusing *Finlay Donovan Is Killing It* is also a tale about parenting, bad divorces, reinventing oneself, rising above misery and, well, becoming a hit woman. It's a solid, thoughtful and funny yet poignant mystery that never once becomes a one-note story."—*South Florida Sun Sentinel*. It is best to read this adult debut from a well-known YA author before the sequel which is found in Signed Books.

Everhart, Donna. [The Saints of Swallow Hill](#) (Kensington \$15.95). In the dense pine forests of North Carolina, turpentiners labor, hacking into tree trunks to draw out the sticky sap that gives the Tar Heel State its nickname, and hauling the resin to stills to be refined. Among them is Rae Lynn Cobb and her husband, Warren, who run a small turpentine farm together. Though the work is hard and often dangerous, Rae Lynn, who spent her childhood in an orphanage, is thankful for it—and for her kind if careless husband. When Warren falls victim to his own negligence, Rae Lynn undertakes a desperate act of mercy. To keep herself from jail, she disguises herself as a man named "Ray" and heads to the only place she can think of that might offer anonymity—a turpentine camp in Georgia named Swallow Hill. Swallow Hill is no easy haven. The camp is isolated and squalid, and commissary owner Otis Riddle is...frustrated. A Great Depression era novel.

Finnegan, Robert. [The Lying Ladies/The Bandaged Nude/Many a Monster](#) (Stark House Noir \$21.95). I am never certain whether to put the noir republications by Stark House in Classics or here with contemporary works. Patrick and the Hardboiled Crime Club have read various of the novels, usually collected in two or three in a single large paperback volume.

Ferrante, Elena. [The Lost Daughter](#) (\$16). Enjoy the movie adaptation of *The Lost Daughter* directed by Maggie Gyllenhaal and starring Olivia Colman, now in wide theatrical release and streaming on [Netflix](#). Leda, a middle-aged divorcée, is alone for the first time in years after her two adult daughters leave home to live with their father in Toronto. Enjoying an unexpected sense of liberty, she heads to the Ionian coast for a vacation. But she soon finds herself intrigued by Nina, a young mother on the beach, eventually striking up a conversation with her. After Nina confides a dark secret, one seemingly trivial occurrence leads to events that could destroy Nina's family... psychological horror mixes with hope and regret.

Katsu, Alma. [The Descent: Book Three of the Taker Trilogy](#) (\$17.99). Lanore McIlvrae has a final encounter with Adair, her powerful nemesis. Dismayed by Adair's otherworldly powers and afraid of his passionate temper, Lanore has run from him across time, even imprisoning him behind a wall for two centuries to

save Jonathan, her eternal love. But instead of punishing her for her betrayal, Adair declared his love for Lanore once more and set her free. Now, Lanore has tracked Adair to his mystical island home to ask for one last favor. The Queen of the Underworld is keeping Jonathan as her consort, and Lanore wants Adair to send her to the hereafter so that she may beg for his release. Will she honor her promise to return to Adair? Or is her true intention to be reunited with Jonathan at any cost? Katsu, a former CIAer, has embarked upon spy fiction but here is more of her work.

McMahon, Jennifer. [The Drowning Kind](#) (\$16.99). “Sinister shadows abound in McMahon’s supernatural thriller about two sisters, a haunted pool, and a legacy of wishes and sacrifice. As a child, Jackie was often overshadowed by her dazzling older sister. Everything seemed to come easier to Lexie—adventure, friendship, even the love of their family—until, as a teenager, she began to manifest symptoms of “schizoaffective disorder of the bipolar type.” The two girls continued to grow apart; Jackie escaped to the West Coast for college and career. Now their grandmother has died, leaving Lexie her house, Sparrow Crest. Jackie, a social worker, distances herself from her sister for her own mental health, so when Lexie leaves her several manic messages one evening, Jackie ignores the calls only to hear from her aunt the next morning that Lexie is dead, drowned in Sparrow Crest’s pool. Jackie flies back to Vermont and discovers that Lexie was documenting strange occurrences that seemed to center around the pool, which is fed by a mineral spring. Her research into the family history, as well as other deaths by drowning, sparks Jackie’s dread and interest, and she begins to look more deeply into the truth about their family, Sparrow Crest, and the pool that is the dark heart of it all....”—*Kirkus Reviews*

Nakamura, Fuminori. [The Thief \(Deluxe Edition\)](#) (Soho \$16.95). “Fuminori Nakamura’s Tokyo is not a city of bright lights, bleeding-edge technology, and *harajuku* girls with bubblegum pink hair. In Nakamura’s Japan, the lights are broken, the knives are bloodier than the tech, and the *harajuku* girls are aging single mothers turning tricks in cheap tracksuits. His grasp of the seamy underbelly of the city is why Nakamura is one of the most award-winning young guns of Japanese hardboiled detective writing.” —*Daily Beast*. A bookseller adds, “At times the book reads like Albert Camus crossed with Elmore Leonard, yet the narrative voice is distinctly its own.... Descriptions of sleight of hand paired with philosophical musings make for a terrific read and fascinating exploration of what it means to be a criminal.” I love to see Japan producing its Own Voices mystery as it’s been a voracious market for American crime fiction.

✧ O’Donnell, Paraic. [The House on Vesper Sands](#) (\$17.95). London, 1893: high up in a house on a dark, snowy night, a lone seamstress stands by a window. So begins the swirling, serpentine world of O’Donnell’s Victorian-inspired mystery, the story of a city cloaked in shadow, but burning with questions: why does the seamstress jump from the window? Why is a cryptic message stitched into her skin? And how is she connected to a rash of missing girls, all of whom seem to have disappeared under similar circumstances? On the case is Inspector Cutter, a detective as sharp and committed to his work as he is wryly hilarious. Gideon Bliss, a Cambridge dropout in love with one of the missing girls, stumbles into a role as Cutter’s sidekick. And clever young journalist Octavia Hillingdon sees the case as a chance to tell a story that matters—despite her employer’s

preference that she stick to a women’s society column. As Inspector Cutter peels back the mystery layer by layer, he leads them all, at last, to the secrets that lie hidden at the house.

Rosenfeldt, Hans. [Cry Wolf](#) (Hanover Square \$16.99). We meet Hannah Wester, a policewoman in remote Haparanda, Sweden, just as she’s being plunged into utter chaos. The discovery of a dead wolf, whose last meal was a human, sets off a chain of events involving a drug deal turned blood bath, a lethal female assassin and the ultimate mystery: where did the drugs and money disappear to? Our main character has a past of her own, which is ultimately forced into the light. The Haparanda police unit conducts a thorough investigation, but quickly, the situation spirals out of control. The female assassin, Katja, is also looking for the drugs and money, and a number of violent crimes start to pile up. She’s running from her past — as are many of the characters in this story. But will anyone be able to escape their history and stay out of their own way? The first book in a new series by Rosenfeldt, creator of the Emmy-Award winning series *Marcella*, proves that he is the master of creating dark corners woven together by mystery, tragedy and greed. The brutal pasts, deep secrets, and a variety of personalities, relationships and events shape into one smooth read that tells you what happens early on. When will the characters find out?

Osworth, AE. [We Are Watching Eliza Bright](#) (Grand Central \$17.99). Eliza Bright was living the dream as an elite video game coder at Fancy Dog Games when her private life suddenly became public. But is Eliza Bright a brilliant, self-taught coder bravely calling out the toxic masculinity and chauvinism that pervades her workplace and industry? Or, is Eliza Bright a woman who needs to be destroyed to protect “the sanctity of gaming culture”? It depends on who you ask... When Eliza reports an incident of workplace harassment that is quickly dismissed, she’s forced to take her frustrations to a journalist who blasts her story across the Internet. She’s fired and doxxed, and becomes a rallying figure for women across America. But she’s also enraged the beast that is male gamers on 4Chan and Reddit, whose collective, unreliable voice narrates our story. Soon Eliza is in the cross-hairs of the gaming community, threatened and stalked as they monitor her every move online and across New York City. As the violent power of an angry male collective descends upon everyone in Eliza’s life, it becomes increasingly difficult to know who to trust, even when she’s eventually taken in and protected by an under-the-radar Collective known as the Sixsterhood. The violence moves from cyberspace to the real world....

Smith, Michael Farris. [Nick](#) (\$16.99). Before Nick Carraway moved to West Egg and into Gatsby’s periphery, he was at the center of a very different story—one taking place along the trenches and deep within the tunnels of World War I. Floundering in the wake of the destruction he witnessed firsthand, Nick delays his return home, hoping to escape the questions he cannot answer about the horrors of war. Instead, he embarks on a transcontinental redemptive journey that takes him from a whirlwind Paris romance-doomed from the very beginning-to the dizzying frenzy of New Orleans, rife with its own flavor of debauchery and violence. An epic portrait of a truly singular era and a sweeping, romantic story of self-discovery, this rich and imaginative novel breathes new life into a character that

many know but few have pondered deeply. Note: The cover is evocative of the famous original Gatsby cover from 1925.

OUR JANUARY SMALL PAPERBACK PICKS

Box, CJ. [Dark Sky](#) (\$9.99). Joe Pickett #21. Reluctantly accompanying a Silicon Valley tech baron on an elk hunting trip, Wyoming game warden Joe Pickett finds himself defending his high-profile charge from a vengeful sharpshooter. Box assembles an interesting contrast between the realities of wilderness hunting and the cluelessness of the privileged geek squad.

Knoll, Jessica. [The Favorite Sister](#) (\$9.99). When tensions escalate on the set of a reality television program featuring young, ambitious female entrepreneurs, including Brett and Kelly Courtney, two sisters who are no strangers to sibling rivalry, one of them ends up dead. *Kirkus* called this “Dizzying and overwrought but salaciously entertaining nonetheless.”

MacMillan, Gilly. [To Tell You the Truth](#) (\$9.99). The disappearance of her fawningly dependent husband catapults best-selling mystery writer Lucy Harper into dark memories about her brother who went missing under suspicious circumstances thirty years earlier. “This deliciously multilayered tale provides genuine, shocking surprises that culminate in a satisfying and unexpected conclusion. Macmillan is a master of misdirection.” (*PW*)

O’Connor, Carlene. [Murder in an Irish Bookshop](#) (\$8.99). Irish Village #7. The grand opening of a new bookstore in Kilbane becomes the closing chapter of an author’s life—and a whodunit that tests even Garda Siobh an O’Sullivan’s deductive reasoning.

Rose, Karen. [Say Goodbye](#) (\$8.99). Sacramento #3. When the Eden cult’s past victims hunt them down, FBI special agent Tom Hunter, along with a fellow agent and his sister—both escapees of the cult—and his lover, an ex-Army combat medic, risk everything to end Eden and its Pastor once and for all. “Rose has a gift for making readers care deeply about her characters, and she certainly doesn’t disappoint here; Tom and Liza will win readers’ hearts and Hayley steals every scene she’s in. This is a knockout.” (*PW*)

Singh, Nalini. [Quiet in Her Bones](#) (\$9.99). When the bones of missing socialite Meera Rai are discovered in the forest that surrounds her elite neighborhood, her son Aarav is determined to uncover the ugly truth that lives beneath the moneyed elegance – but no one is ready for the murderous secrets that emerge. *PW* summed this up with “Singh sustains tension throughout, delivering a lushly written, multilayered mystery that will keep readers guessing. Susan Isaacs fans, take note.”

JANUARY SMALL PAPERBACK PICKS

Brown, Dale. [Arctic Storm Rising](#) (\$9.99). Nick Flynn #1. Exiled to guard a remote radar post along Alaska’s Arctic Frontier, U.S. Air Force intelligence officer Nicholas Flynn, after an American F-22 collides with a Russian interloper, is ordered to find a missing stealth bomber before the enemy and prevent a potential nuclear holocaust.

Cates, Bailey. [Spirits and Sourdough](#) (Berkley \$8.99). Magical Bakery #10. While investigating the recent murder of a woman whose ghost has been following her, baker Katie Lightfoot, under pressure from the living and the dead, must employ her magical skills to discover why her new husband’s guardian spirit has gone missing.

Chien, Vivien. [Hot and Sour Suspects](#) (St Martins \$8.99). Noodle Shop #8. When a speed-dating contest at Ho-Lee Noodle House results in the murder of a participant, Lana Lee, piecing together the events of that night, delves into the past of this man who has too many scorned lovers and mistreated colleagues to count.

Clark, Mary Higgins. [Where Are the Children?](#) (\$9.99). Reprint Nancy Eldredge leads a quiet life on Cape Cod until a newspaper article and her children’s disappearance bring to light her trial for murder in California.

Doyle, Carrie. [Something’s Guava Give](#) (Sourcebooks \$8.99). Trouble in Paradise #2. Head of her own villa broker agency on the Caribbean island of Paraiso, Plum Lockhart must once again team up with security director Juan Kevin Munoz when the assistant of an old colleague is murdered in the house of a millionaire involved with some shady dealings.

Fluke, Joanne. [Triple Chocolate Cheesecake Murder](#) (\$9.99). Hannah Swensen #29. Racing through springtime orders at The Cookie Jar, Hannah investigates an unexpected number of suspects when her sister, Andrea, is implicated in the murder of Lake Eden’s bullying mayor.

Hood, Joshua. [Robert Ludlum’s the Treadstone Exile](#) (\$9.99). This sequel to *The Treadstone Resurrection* finds Adam Hayes offering passage to a tech baron’s daughter, whose subsequent kidnapping pits the former Operation Treadstone agent against a rogue operative connected to a scheme to steal millions in relief aid.

Jackson, Lisa. [Something Wicked](#) (Kensington \$9.99). Reprint. Eight months into a surrogate pregnancy, Detective Savannah Dunbar assists in the investigation of a double homicide that has taken a personal turn.

Johansen, Iris. [The Bullet](#) (\$9.99). Eve Duncan #28. Eve Duncan puts her happily-ever-after with Joe Quinn on hold when his ex-wife shows up, on the run with enough secrets to get them all killed.

Meier, Leslie. [Irish Parade Murder](#) (\$8.99). Lucy Stone #30. When a brash new reporter is implicated in the murder of a corrections officer, Lucy Stone uncovers a bizarre mystery while interviewing a stranger whose revelations change everything for Lucy’s family.

Mofina, Rick. [Her Last Goodbye](#) (Mira \$9.99). When his wife goes missing, Greg Griffin is the police’s number one suspect, and as investigators discover her troubling secrets, Greg is forced to confront the lies that hold their marriage together—and a dark past that refuses to stay buried.

Mullen, Caitlin. [Please See Us](#) (\$9.99). Two young women become unlikely friends during one fateful summer in Atlantic City as mysterious disappearances hit dangerously close to home.

Pessin, Al. [Shock Wave](#) (Kensington \$8.99). Assigned to infiltrate the cabal of America’s most wanted terrorist, Lieutenant Faraz Abdallah uncovers and sabotages al-Assali’s plans one-by-one until his boss becomes the target, forcing him to take decisive action in a deadly game of international deceit.

Picoult, Jodi. [The Pact](#) (\$9.99). Reprint. The budding romance between two teenage children of two families who have been lifelong friends and neighbors culminates tragically in an abortive suicide pact, leading to a gripping courtroom drama.

Reilly, Linda. [Up to No Gouda](#) (Sourcebooks \$8.99). Grilled Cheese #1. When the town bully goes after her Grilled Cheese Eatery, threatening to close her down after buying the building, and then winds up dead behind her dumpster, Carly Hale, to save her business, must prove her innocence before having a meltdown.