

BOOKNEWS from

ISSN 1056-5655, © The Poisoned Pen, Ltd.
Volume 34, Number 4
March Booknews 2022
sales@poisonedpen.com tel (888)560-9919
http://poisonedpen.com

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



MARCH IS WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

There are numerous titles sprinkled through this Booknews highlighting it

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.

THURSDAY MARCH 3 1:00 PM

Lauren Kate with John Charles

Kate discusses [By Any Other Name](#) (Berkley \$16)

A delightful rom com

Signed bookplates available

THURSDAY MARCH 3 6:00 PM

Sara E. Johnson and Frederick Weisel

Johnson discusses [The Bone Track](#) (\$15.99)

Weisel discusses [The Day He Left](#) (\$16.99)

Signed bookplates available for both titles

SATURDAY MARCH 5 2:00 PM Live

Rhys Bowen and Claire Broyles discuss [Wild Irish Rose](#) (St Martins \$26.99)

Molly Murphy returns with this mother and daughter writing duo
Signed books available

SUNDAY MARCH 6 4:00 PM Virtual National Book Launch

Brad Meltzer discusses [The Lightning Rod](#) (Harper \$28.99)

Escape Artist #2

Signed books available. **Our copies come with a personal letter to Poisoned Pen customers from Brad which is very special**

SUNDAY MARCH 6 5:30 PM (7:30 ET)

James Patterson with Dolly Parton

They discuss [Run, Rose, Run](#) (Little Brown \$30)

The purchase of a copy from The Pen gives you a link to this virtual program

Link will be emailed to you on Friday March 4, the cut off day to order

MONDAY MARCH 7 Live 6:00 PM Virtual National Book Launch 7:00 PM

CJ Box discusses [Shadows Reel](#) (Putnam \$28)

The purchase of a copy of *Shadows Reel* from The Pen gets you a ticket. But as some of you will want to bring ONE partner, we may fill up fast. So we can do a spillover program at 7:45ish
6:00 PM. We will do the signing line first, and then the scheduled talk at 7:00 PM.

A second show if needed is at 7:45ish with the signing line to form afterwards. This will be determined by how fast the store fills up for the first show. We will appreciate your patience if you end up waiting.

TUESDAY MARCH 8 4:30 PM

David Rosenfelt discusses [Citizen K9](#) (St Martins \$27.99)

Some of the Andy Carpenter series crew with Simon the dog
Signed books available

TUESDAY MARCH 8 6:00 PM

Roy Johansen discusses [Killer View](#) (Grand Central \$30)

Signed books available

WEDNESDAY MARCH 9 1:00 PM

Sarah Weinman with Patrick, our true crime ace

They discuss [Scoundrel](#) (Ecco \$28.99)

WEDNESDAY MARCH 9 7:00 PM Live

Photo show of Greenland included

Erica Ferencik discusses [Girl in Ice](#) (Gallery \$27)

Our March Notable New Fiction Book of the Month
Signed books available

THURSDAY MARCH 10 1:00 PM

The UK's SJ Bennett with Lesa Holstine

Bennett discusses [All the Queen's Men](#) (Harper \$27.99)

British cozy

THURSDAY MARCH 10 5:00 PM

Brendan Slocumb with Tess Gerritsen

Slocumb discusses [The Violin Conspiracy](#) (Doubleday \$28)

Our February First Mystery Book of the Month

Signed books still available

THURSDAY MARCH 10 7:00 PM Live

Philip Margolin discusses [The Darkest Place](#) (St Martins \$27.99)

Robin Lockwood legal thriller

Signed books available

FRIDAY MARCH 11 2:00 PM Live

Beatriz Williams discusses [The Wicked Widow](#) (\$16.99/\$27.99)

Signed)

Wicked City #3

Signed books available

SATURDAY MARCH 12 10:00 AM Virtual National Book Launch

Donna Leon discusses [Give Unto Others](#) (Grove \$27)

Commissario Guido Brunetti

Signed books available

From Here all events are listed in PDT

MONDAY MARCH 14 7:00 PM Live

Jance discusses [Nothing to Lose: A JP Beaumont Novel](#) (Harper \$28.99)

This marks the 40th anniversary of JP Beaumont's first appearance
Signed books available

TUESDAY MARCH 15 12:00 PM Virtual National Book Launch

Martin Walker discusses [Bruno's Challenge: And Other Stories](#) (Knopf \$27)

Special recipe card included

TUESDAY MARCH 15 5:00 PM

Harlan Coben discusses [The Match](#) (Grand Central \$29)

The Boy from the Woods now grown up

Signed books available

WEDNESDAY MARCH 16 7:00 PM

Tod Goldberg and Dane Bahr

Bahr discusses [The House Boat](#) (Catapult \$26)

Signed copies available

Goldberg discusses [The Low Desert: Gangster Stories](#) (Catapult \$16.95)

THURSDAY MARCH 17 2:00 PM

Simone St. James with John Charles

Canadian St. James discusses [The Book of Cold Cases](#) (Berkley \$27)

Signed bookplates available

THURSDAY MARCH 17 4:00 PM

St Patrick's Day celebration with Carlene O'Connor

O'Connor discusses [Murder on an Irish Farm](#) (Kensington \$26)

Signed books available

THURSDAY MARCH 17 5:00 PM

Peter Swanson discusses [Nine Lives](#) (Harper \$27.99)

Signed books available

FRIDAY MARCH 18 7:00 PM

SciFi Friday discusses Ryka Aoki, [Light from Uncommon Stars](#) (Forge \$25.99)

SATURDAY MARCH 19 10:30 AM

Croak & Dagger discusses Lucy Foley's [The Hunting Party](#) (\$16.99)

SUNDAY MARCH 20 2:00 PM

John Scalzi with Pat King

Scalzi discusses [The Kaiju Preservation Society](#) (Forge \$26.99)

Signed books available

MONDAY MARCH 21 6:00 PM Virtual National Book Launch

Jacqueline Winspear discusses [A Sunlit Weapon](#) (Harper \$27.99)

Maisie Dobbs

Signed books available

TUESDAY MARCH 22 1:00 PM

The UK's Jayne Cowie with Karen

Cowie discusses [Curfew](#) (Berkley \$17)

TUESDAY MARCH 22 6:00 PM

Janet Evanovich discusses [The Recovery Agent](#) (Atria \$28.99)

Signed books available

THURSDAY MARCH 24 12:00 PM

Denmark's Sara Blaedel discusses [A Harmless Lie](#) (Dutton \$26)

THURSDAY MARCH 24 3:00 PM

Stewart O'Nan with Michael Koryta

O'Nan discusses [Ocean State](#) (Grove \$27)

Our April Notable New Fiction Book of the Month

Signed books available

THURSDAY MARCH 24 7:00 PM

Hardboiled Crime discusses Patricia Highsmith, [Ripley Under Ground](#) (\$15.95)

MONDAY JANUARY 28 6:00 PM Virtual National Book Launch

Lisa Scottoline discusses [What Happened to the Bennetts?](#)

(Putnam \$28)

Signed books available

TUESDAY MARCH 29 5:00 PM

Ellen Crosby discusses [Bitter Roots](#) (Severn \$28.99)

A Wine Country Mystery

Signed books available

TUESDAY MARCH 29 7:00 PM Virtual National Book Launch

John Lescroart discusses [The Missing Piece](#) (Atria \$27)

San Francisco's Dismas Hardy

Signed books available

WEDNESDAY MARCH 30 7:00 PM Live

Peng Shepherd discusses [The Cartographers](#) (Harper \$27.99)

Explore the world of maps & the NY Public Library

Signed books available

THURSDAY MARCH 31 5:00 PM

Erica Ruth Neubauer discusses [Danger on the Atlantic](#)

(Kensington \$26)

Jane Wunderly 1920s Mystery

Signed books available

THURSDAY MARCH 31 6:30 PM

Joshua Hood with Mark Greaney

Hood discusses Robert Ludlum's [The Treadstone Transgression](#)

(Putnam \$28)

Signed copies available

OUR MARCH BOOKS OF THE MONTH

British Crime Club One unsigned hardcover or paperback per month

Lloyd, Sam. [The Rising Tide](#)

Cozy Crimes Club One unsigned hardcover or paperback per month

Pandian, Gigi. [Under Lock & Skeleton Key](#)

First Mystery Club One Signed First Printing per month

Li, Grace D. [Portrait of a Thief](#)

The Crime Collectors Book of the Month Club One Signed First Printing per month

Meltzer, Brad. [The Lightning Rod](#)

History/Mystery Club One Signed First Printing per month

Quinn, Kate. [The Diamond Eye](#)

Notable New Fiction One Signed First Printing per month

Ferencik, Erica. [Girl in Ice](#)

International Crime One Unsigned Hardcover per month

Engberg, Katrine. [The Harbor](#)

SIGNED BOOKS SO FAR FOR MARCH (Tip-ins and Bookplates noted)

Bahr, Dane. [The Houseboat](#) (Catapult \$26). Patrick reviews: “Minneapolis Police detective Edward Ness is called in to Oscar, Iowa to investigate the strange death of a local high school senior, Billy Rose, who was murdered while camping with his girlfriend, who survived the attack. This kind of thing simply doesn’t happen in Oscar, Iowa, a town “about as plain as a white wall,” especially in 1960. Ness, whose own wife and young boy were killed several years back, possesses a special investigative skill set and he immediately dials in on Rigby Sellers, an eccentric local character who lives in a dilapidated houseboat on the Mississippi River with a bunch of stolen mannequins. Bahr combines a naturalist’s eye for description with a healthy sense of the macabre. This impressive debut reminded me a bit of Nic Pizzolatto, and perhaps Harry Crews at his best.”

Bowen, Rhys/Claire Broyles. [Wild Irish Rose](#) (St Martins \$26.99). New York, 1907: Now that she’s no longer a private detective—at least not officially—Molly Murphy Sullivan, mother and wife and also coping with a resident mother-in-law, is not completely content with a domestic role. She misses investigating while recognizing she can embarrass her career police officer husband Daniel. One freezing day Molly decides to accompany friends to Ellis Island to help distribute clothing to immigrants in need. This journey quickly stirs up memories for Molly. When you’re far from home and see people from your country, every face looks like a family member—and one looks like a dead ringer for Molly herself. That evening Daniel is late returning home. He comes with a tale to tell: there was a murder on Ellis Island that day, and the main suspect is that spitting image of Molly, one Rose McSweeney. The circumstances are eerily similar to when Molly herself arrived on Ellis Island and was falsely accused of a crime, so she resolves to clear Rose’s name despite Daniel’s opposition.... Our copies will be signed by both mother and daughter.

Box, CJ. [Shadows Reel](#) (Putnam \$28). A day before the three Pickett girls come home for Thanksgiving, Joe is called out for a moose poaching incident that turns out to be something much more sinister: a local fishing guide has been brutally tortured and murdered. Meanwhile, Joe’s wife, the director of the county library, finds a rare Nazi artifact left on the library’s doorstep: a photo album that once belonged to a high-ranking Nazi officer. She learns that during World War II, several Wyoming soldiers were in the group that fought to Hitler’s Eagles Nest retreat in the

Alps—and one of them swiped it. Did another take this one and keep it all these years? When a close neighbor is murdered, Joe and Marybeth face new questions: Who is after the book? And how will they solve its mystery before someone hurts them...or their girls? Meanwhile, Nate Romanowski is on the hunt for the man who stole his falcons and attacked his wife. Using a network of fellow falconers, Nate tracks the man from one city to another, eventually grasping the true threat his quarry poses. Bonus: we get to meet a promising new character, rough-hewn falconer Geronimo Jones, who, CJ promises me, will be back since he comes close to stealing the book.

Coben, Harlan. [The Match](#) (Grand Central \$29). Wilde, first met in Coben’s [The Boy from the Woods](#) (\$9.99), is a man who knows next to nothing about his true identity or of his family. All he knows is that he was discovered as a small child, living feral in the Ramapo Mountains of New Jersey. Now the adult Wilde, after months away, has returned to the Ramapo Mountains in the wake of a failed bid at domesticity that confirms what he’s known all along: He belongs on his own, free from the comforts and constraints of modern life. Suddenly, a DNA match on an online ancestry database brings Wilde closer to his past than he’s ever dreamed, and finally gives Wilde the opening he needs to track down his father. But meeting the man brings up more questions than answers. So Wilde reaches out to his last, most desperate lead, a second cousin who disappears as quickly as he resurfaces, having experienced an epic fall from grace that can only be described as a waking nightmare. The aging Hester Crimstein has a role here along with her late life romance Oren. *The Match* addresses reality shows, celebrity culture social media influencers, online trolls and bullies—hence we are introduced to The Boomerangs—and of course, DNA genealogy databases and genetic testing.

Connolly, John. [Shadow Voices: 300 Years of Irish Genre Fiction. A History in Stories](#) (Hodder \$60). **Signed. Numbered. Comes with a nifty set of period postcards and a book bag with facsimile signatures of some Irish authors like Swift.**

Thieves. Vampires! Murderers. Lovers. Detectives. Gangsters Aliens. Spectres. Monsters. Fairies. They’re all here. Gulliver. Dracula. Narnia. Connolly has his usual marvelous time exploring story and legend and explores what we think about fiction itself. What does “genre” mean? Where did the term “bestseller” come from? And why do we care? Where are the women’s voices? So much here.... A book you can dip into again and again. A fabulous gift too. We have a limited number of this specially packaged gem which sold out in a flash in the UK.

Crosby, Ellen. [Bitter Roots](#) (Severn \$28.99). The marriage of Lucie Montgomery, owner of the Montgomery Estate vineyard in Virginia, to winemaker Quinn Santori has been planned to the last detail by Francesca Merchant, who runs the retail side of the business. Their attention is diverted from the nuptials by a plot of Cabernet Franc grapes that are dying of unknown causes. Lucie and several other vineyard owners are furious with Jackson Landau, Eve Kerr, and Dr. Richard Brightman, who developed, heavily promoted, and sold the failing vines but deny any responsibility. Lucie calls in her own expert, Josie Wilde, who's sure the vines are suffering from black goo. Only a few very wealthy owners, like Lucie's new neighbor, former NBA star Sloane Everett, can shrug off the threat of bankruptcy. The beautiful Eve tries to charm the distraught owners, but Landau digs in, blaming the problem on climate change. Seeking peace, Quinn tries to meet with Eve, a fellow Californian, but meanwhile, a vicious storm hits the area, ruining the wedding and leaving the place with no power. But the ill wind does blow some good, uncovering a crucial clue to a murder. "Crosby's reliable character-driven Wine Country series more offers a good mystery and relevant social commentary." And she always does her homework about viniculture which is fascinating!

Evanovich, Janet. [The Recovery Agent](#) (Aria \$28.99). **Tip-ins plus a custom book mark.** As a recovery agent, aka insurance fraud investigator, Gabriela Rose is hired to seek out lost treasures. If you've lost something, she can get it back. She can be hired by individuals and companies seeking lost treasures, stolen heirlooms, or missing assets of any kind. She's reliable, cool under pressure, and well trained in weapons of all types. But what happens when Gabriela is tasked with a job that involves her own family? Inspired by an old family legend about the long-lost treasure of her pirate ancestor, Blackbeard, Gabriela sets off for the jungles of Peru in pursuit of the Ring of Solomon and the lost treasure of Lima at the behest of her grandmother. The old woman wants to use any proceeds from the sale of the treasure to help rebuild the little town of Scoon, S.C., which has been devastated by a recent hurricane. But when family is involved, much more is at stake, especially when her ex-husband Rafer shows up. Because the key diary is found on his property, Rafer insists he should be part of Gabriela's expedition....

Ferencik, Erica. [Girl in Ice](#) (Gallery \$27). Val Chesterfield is a linguist trained in dead Nordic languages. Her twin brother Andy is a climate scientist stationed on a remote island off Greenland's barren coast. When Val is told that Andy has died of an assumed suicide, having wandered unprotected into 50 degrees below zero weather, she suspects foul play. Then Andy's fellow researcher Wyatt discovers a young girl frozen in the ice who thaws out alive. And she's speaking a language no one understands. A Starred Review for our **March Notable New Fiction Book of the Month** calls this an "exemplary thriller" where Val, "despite her fears of travel, accepts an invitation from expedition leader Wyatt Speeks to travel to the Arctic to see whether she can decipher the child's language, unknown even to the region's indigenous people. Wyatt and his team are hoping the ice cores they're studying can offer answers that could avert a climate disaster at a time when sudden, freezing storms are occurring with increasing frequency worldwide. Val's moving struggles to communicate with the girl alternate with her investigation into Andy's death, which she suspects was a homicide. Trenchant details about cata-

strophic climate change bolster a creative plot featuring authentic characters, particularly the anxious, flawed Val. Ferencik outdoes Michael Crichton in the convincing way she mixes emotion and science."

The March Indie Next Pick says, "I knew little about linguistics or the Arctic until I read Erica Ferencik's fascinating book. Her style is fast, impossible to put down, and the landscape is beautifully written." And an interview asks her, how did you create the language Sigrid uses? "I immersed myself in the sounds and cadences of the living Nordic languages to get a feel for inflection and tone. I also dove into recordings of Old Norse, the main language of the Vikings, in order to create morphemes, or units of meaning that sounded Nordic, but that were just slightly distinct from known languages, so I could create Sigrid's unique tongue. I survived an extremely challenging childhood, and so I have ready access to dread, to feeling trapped, to planning creative ways to survive. In short, my fight or flight hormones are quite close to the surface. I'm a sucker for stories of survival where the setting is an element to be reckoned with." Also, katabatic winds are real; in Greenland they're called *pitraqs*: brutally strong winds generated by radically different air temperatures, often barreling down the slopes of mountains or glaciers.

Fowler, Karen Joy. [Booth](#) (Putnam \$28). **Tip-ins.** *Kirkus* reviews: "Ostensibly about the family of Shakespearean actors best known for their connection to Lincoln assassin John Wilkes Booth, Fowler's novel explores tensions surrounding race, politics, and culture in 19th-century America. Given his upbringing in a vegetarian, strongly anti-slavery, highly literate, freethinking household that even today would be labeled bohemian, how did John become a pro-slavery, pro-secessionist fanatic capable of terrorist murder? And how did his actions affect his surviving family?... As the Booths' story unfolds, Fowler inserts major national events into the narrative, like the Dred Scott case and John Brown's uprising, along with key moments in Lincoln's life showing his humanity as well as his public nobility. The historical context she offers is of a pre-Civil War America of deep moral divides, political differences tearing close families apart, populism and fanaticism run amok. The similarities to today are riveting and chilling."

✱Griffiths, Elly. [The Locked Room](#) (Quercus UK \$45). Our copies are finally here! Ruth Galloway is in London clearing out her mother's belongings when she makes a surprising discovery: a photograph of her Norfolk cottage taken before Ruth lived there. Her mother always hated the cottage, so why did she keep a picture of the place? The only clue is written on the back of the photo: Dawn, 1963. Ruth returns to Norfolk determined to solve the mystery just as COVID and lockdowns are surfacing. Ruth and her daughter are quickly locked down in their cottage, attempting to continue with work and home-schooling. Happily, the house next door is rented by a nice woman called Zoe, who they become friendly with while standing on their doorsteps clapping for caregivers. DCI Nelson, meanwhile, is investigating a series of deaths of women that may or may not be suicide. When he links the deaths to an archaeological discovery, he breaks curfew to visit the cottage where he finds Ruth chatting to her neighbor whom he remembers as a caregiver who was once tried for murdering her employer. Only then her name wasn't Zoe—it was Dawn!

Griffiths does an ace job incorporating the early stages of Covid, that is the spring of 2020, into this novel. While the murder plot and motive are weaker than her usual high standard, she is masterful at recreating the slowly spreading alarm and disbelief followed by rueful acceptance of how life changed on a dime and for that alone this new chapter in Ruth's life is well worth reading.

✂ Hallett, Janice. [The Twyford Code](#) (Viper \$36). We have just a few of this twisty mystery by the author of February's British Crime Club Book of the Month [The Appeal](#) (\$27.99). The plot is once again elaborate filled with rabbit holes and traps, and much of the narrative is presented as transcripts because the narrator, newly released after a prison term, has had a difficult history with dyslexia. It is at its heart a treasure hunt. Recommended only to those who have a real command of British speech and idiom. In fact, those who do can challenge themselves!

✂ Hannah, Sophie. [The Couple at the Table](#) (Hodder \$40). Just 3 left in stock. 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. So who might be trying to warn you?

Havill, Steven. [No Accident](#) (Poisoned Pen \$15.99). **Signed here on April 5.** Posadas County Undersheriff Estelle Reyes-Guzman is at the Broken Spur Saloon, where local hothead Johnny Rabke has thrown a billiard ball at a visiting bar patron up from Mexico and knocked him unconscious. While sorting things out with the witnesses and managing the back-talking Rabke, Estelle learns that her younger son, Carlos, has been in a bicycle accident in Briones, California. Estelle and her husband rush to the scene where they discover that Carlos has been badly injured and his girlfriend, Tasha Qarshe, was thrown from the tandem bicycle they were riding together. When it's revealed that the pickup truck that hit the couple was stolen and had deliberately driven back over Carlos, Estelle realizes that the hit-and-run was intentional, and she begins to investigate with the help of a fingerprint expert from the San Francisco PD. The tension rises as Estelle investigates.... 25th in this fabulous New Mexico-based series, one of my all time favorites.

Hood, Joshua. [The Treadstone Transgression](#) (Putnam \$28). Continuing the Robert Ludlum universe. The CIA has a source in the Haitian National Bank who can provide proof of corruption at the top of the American intelligence community. The evidence is on a hard drive in the bank's main office. What should be a simple smash and grab mission is blown wide open when a powerful element in Haitian intelligence is threatened by the breach. The CIA team's only hope for survival is a speedy extraction. None of this matters to Adam Hayes. Currently, the most pressing issue on his mind is planning his son's upcoming fifth birthday party. After years of operating in the world's most dangerous spots for Treadstone, he's ready to call it quits, but the feeling isn't mutual. Levi Shaw, Treadstone's director, calls Hayes back for one more job. "It's a walk in the park. You

don't even have to go in with the strike team. I just need you to set up the safe house. You'll be home in time to pick up the birthday cake." But nothing is ever easy where Treadstone is concerned. When the mission is blown, only Hayes is left alive, and everyone, it seems, is determined to correct that oversight. Hood's earlier Ludlums are [The Treadstone Resurrection](#) and [The Treadstone Exile](#) (\$9.99 each).

Jance, JA. [Nothing to Lose: A JP Beaumont Novel](#) (Harper \$28.99). This 25th Beaumont investigation marks 40 years since JP first appeared in print, and the 32nd year he has done so at The Pen. This is a terrific story—a cold case that JP takes on as it involves the long missing younger son of his former partner at Seattle PD Homicide, Sue Danielson, who was murdered by her jealous husband. JP was able to talk her two boys to safety but arrived too late to save Sue. That tragic night has haunted him all these years. The older son, Jared, now ordained as a priest, comes to Beau saying Chris' and his maternal grandmother is dying and hopes to connect with the missing Chris soon. So JP goes from a freezing and snowy Bellingham, Washington, North to Alaska, to both Anchorage and then down to Homer. Along the way he calls in help from other professionals who rally to help JP's quest in large part because it honors Sue, and he meets a truly wonderful character who calls herself Twink as short for Twinkle. She's a real keeper so I'm hoping there will be a new opportunity to bring her back. The case has many moving parts even though it has long been a cold trail, and I really enjoyed watching the team piece clues together to nail a despicable villain. Fans of Dana Stabenow's Kate Shugak series will enjoy this fast paced read which works as a standalone—there is no need to have ever read a JP Beaumont before to enjoy this one.

Johansen, Roy. [Killer View](#) (Grand Central \$28). Private investigator Kendra Michaels was blind before a revolutionary surgical procedure gave her sight. Now Kendra uses her razor-sharp senses to solve crimes, and in *Killer View*, she teams up with her friend Jessie Mercado to solve a baffling case. In this propulsive series spinoff, PI Jessie takes center stage. Michaels, "a San Diego music therapist whose powers of observation made her a go-to consultant in several high-profile law enforcement investigations," introduces Jessie to a new client, Owen Blake, the co-owner of an incarceration consultancy, which handles financial and personal needs for people who are heading to prison or serving time. (Which is a fascinating premise, one I've never thought about, but sure, rich people have a lot of stuff). Blake's partner, Carl Ferris, has disappeared, and he wants Jessie to find him. Though she suspects that Blake may be hiding something, she nonetheless agrees to take his case. She's assisted by her new boyfriend, "the hottest actor on the planet," who decides to put the skills he has honed working on Marvel Superhero flicks to good use. Kendra also lends a hand. When the first person Jessie questions about Ferris is murdered and she too is attacked, she realizes there's much more at stake than a missing person. Relentless action and dastardly villains keep the pages turning. Johansen, who usually collaborates with mother Iris Johansen, delivers the goods.

Johnson, Sara E. [The Bone Track](#) (\$15.99). **Signed bookplates.** I had a lot of fun editing this 3rd New Zealand-based investigation by American forensic investigator Alex Glock for it takes me back to, and you to, the Milford Track leading to the South

Island's Milford Sound. Alexa is actually doing a vacation hike with her visiting brother Charlie, a geotech engineer. Their bare bones trek earns scorn from Luxe Tours travelers enjoying upscale lodges and fabulous food (hard not to find in NZ). But then a series of events including discovering a skeleton and a helicopter attack push the Glocks into Pompolona Lodge with the Luxe party which shortly includes a murder victim: Dr. Diana Clark, an Auckland orthopedist. This leads to a fly-in by police and it goes from there.... Start this colorful series with [Molten Mud Murder and The Bones Remember](#) (\$15.99 each).

Kate, Lauren. [By Any Other Name](#) (Berkley \$16). **Signed Book-plates.** What she doesn't know about love could fill a book. With a successful career as a romance editor, and an engagement to a man who checks off all ninety-nine boxes on her carefully curated list, Lanie's more than good. She's killing it. Then she's given the opportunity of a lifetime: to work with world-renowned author and her biggest inspiration in love and life—the blockbuster seller Noa Callaway. All Lanie has to do is cure Noa's writer's block and she'll get the promotion she's always dreamed of. Simple, right? But there's a reason no one has ever seen or spoken to the mysterious Noa Callaway. And that reason will rock Lanie's world. "Most readers won't be surprised to discover the reason Noa is so reclusive, but this doesn't take away from enjoying the slow burning central relationship. Kate surrounds both Noa and Lanie with well-drawn friends and family who add welcome backstory and create a sense that these are two people with full lives outside of each other meeting in the middle. The result is both smart and adorable."—*PW* Starred Review, echoing my own enjoyment.

Li, Grace D. [Portrait of a Thief](#) (Dutton \$26). *Ocean's Eleven* meets *The Farewell* in this lush, lyrical heist novel inspired by the true story of Chinese art vanishing from Western museums. The prose is elegant and themes along with thrills include diaspora, the colonization of art, and the complexity of the Chinese American identity. Across the Western world, museums display priceless pieces of art looted from other countries. Will Chen plans to steal them back. A senior at Harvard, Will fits comfortably in his carefully curated roles: a perfect student, an art history major and sometimes artist, the eldest son that has always been his parents' American Dream. But when a shadowy Chinese corporation reaches out with an impossible—and illegal—job offer, Will finds himself something else as well: the leader of a heist to steal back five priceless Chinese sculptures, looted from Beijing centuries ago. His crew is every heist archetype one can imagine—or at least, the closest he can get. Plus each has their own complicated relationship with China and the identity they've cultivated as Chinese Americans, yet when Will asks them to join in, none of them can turn him down. Because if they succeed? They earn fifty million dollars—and a chance to make history. But if they fail, it will mean not just the loss of everything they've dreamed for themselves, and for their families, but yet another thwarted attempt to take back what colonialism has stolen. I wish I could discuss here how this plays out but it's brilliantly done. And you get to spend time in some great museums (remember *Topkapi*?). With poetic language, a fun, commercial hook, and a plot that spans the Western world, here is our **First Mystery Book of the Month for March** although it may not arrive until early April.

Leon, Donna. [Give Unto Others](#) (Grove \$27). **Tip-ins for the Switzerland-based author.** The specter of Covid-19 hangs over Venice in bestseller Leon's low-key 31st outing for Italian police detective Guido Brunetti. Well-to-do Elisabetta Foscari, who was a neighbor of Brunetti when they were teenagers, is concerned about her daughter, Flora, a veterinarian. Flora's accountant husband, Enrico Fenzo, has been acting strangely, and Signora Foscari fears "he's doing something bad." Rather than suggesting she hire a private investigator, Brunetti agrees to break the rules and put his career in jeopardy to help her. At first, Brunetti suspects one of Enrico's clients may be threatening him in some way. When Flora's veterinary clinic is vandalized, the case begins inching in a more sinister direction. The usual snippets of history, philosophical musings, and clear-eyed comments on Italian behavior and culture, plus talk of flagging tourism and closing businesses, contribute to the plot which as is often true with Leon is more about corruption than justice. The UK edition: [Give Unto Others Signed](#) (Hutchinson \$45).

Lescroart, John. [The Missing Piece](#) (Atria \$27). Some exonerated criminals are actually guilty. No one mourned when San Francisco DA Wes Farrell put Paul Riley in prison eleven years ago for the rape and murder of his girlfriend. And no one is particularly happy to see him again when he's released after The Exoneration Initiative uncovered evidence that pinned the crime on someone else. In fact, Riley soon turns up murdered, surrounded by the loot from his latest scam. But if Riley was really innocent all along, who would want him dead? To the cops, it's straightforward: the still-grieving father of Riley's dead girlfriend killed the former prisoner. Farrell, now out of politics and practicing law with master attorney Dismas Hardy, agrees to represent the defendant, Doug Rush—and is left in the dust when Rush suddenly vanishes. At a loss, Farrell and Hardy ask PI Abe Glitsky to track down the potentially lethal defendant. The search takes Glitsky through an investigative hall of mirrors populated by wounded parents, crooked cops, cheating spouses, and single-minded vigilantes. As Glitsky embraces and then discards one enticing theory of the crime after another, the truth seems to recede ever farther... So far that he begins to question his own moral compass in this "superb thriller from a veteran crime writer"—Jeffery Deaver. 19th in a series Lescroart never fails to shake up and change up....here using a multiple narrators to create a kaleidoscope of the story.

Margolin, Phillip. [The Darkest Place](#) (St Martins \$27.99). Robin, a well-respected Portland, Oregon, defense attorney, heads home to Elk Grove, "a very conservative farming community in the Midwest," after a personal tragedy. Cloistered with her grief, Robin begins to revive when a local lawyer asks for her help with an unusual case. Marjorie Loman is accused of kidnapping the baby for whom she was a surrogate and assaulting the adoptive parents. Working on her defense, Robin discovers that Marjorie has an arrest warrant back in Oregon in connection with the torture and murder of her husband, Joel, with whom she was involved in a contentious divorce and who had wiped out their joint bank accounts. Joel also had been embezzling millions from his company and was being threatened by gangsters...

Meltzer, Brad. [The Lightning Rod](#) (Harper \$28.99). **Our copies come with a letter Brad has written just for you Poisoned Pen customers.** This book marks Brad's 25th publishing anniversary,

so it is very special to launch his book! He was here 25 years ago with his debut, [The Tenth Justice](#) (\$9.99).

Brad reports, “Since WWI, the US government has had a painter on staff, who paints disasters as they happen, from storming the beaches of Normandy to 9/11. When I heard about these ‘war painters,’ I thought it was such a crazy job, I said, ‘I want to meet him.’ And they said, ‘Her. You want to meet *her*.’ Right there, Nola was born. Zig is the side of me that believes that people are good. It’s a hard side to maintain these days. But it’s a side worth fighting for.”

“At the start of bestseller Meltzer’s exciting sequel to 2018’s [The Escape Artist](#) (\$15.99), a masked gunman fatally shoots Lt. Colonel Archie Mint along with the thief who by chance was trying to rob Mint’s house in Elmswood, Pennsylvania. Mortician Jim “Zig” Zigarowski, who’s still grieving for his 12-year-old daughter who died in an accident years earlier, has left the Air Force to work privately in Pennsylvania. A former colleague from Dover Air Force Base persuades him to prepare Mint’s body for an open casket funeral. Zig is surprised on meeting the widow that she was unaware her husband worked at Dover. Zig later learns Mint was involved in a top-secret military unit, and maybe wasn’t all hero. Zig’s search for answers reunites him with Nola Brown, who was once the Army’s artist-in-residence and whose resourcefulness and kick-ass style help the pair decipher the links between the murders and dark government secrets. Not to overlook the fact that Nola, survivor of a traumatic childhood whose estranged twin brother has a big role here, has secrets of her own. “Zig Zigarowski and Nola Brown are quirky, stubborn, daring, and above all seem real. Brad Meltzer has done an exceptional job of building a twisting, turning non-stop thriller with two of the most unique characters in modern fiction.” Here is our **March Crime Book of the Month**.

Montgomery, Jess. [The Echoes](#) (St Martins \$27.99). This is an excellent historical series bringing Middle America again to life. As July 4, 1928 approaches, Sheriff Lily Ross and her family look forward to the opening of an amusement park in a nearby town, created by Chalmer Fitzpatrick—a veteran and lumber mill owner. When Lily is alerted to the possible drowning of a girl, she goes to investigate, and discovers schisms going back several generations, in an ongoing dispute over the land on which Fitzpatrick has built the park. Lily’s family life is soon rattled, too, with the revelation that before he died, her brother had a daughter, Esme, with a woman in France, and arrangements have been made for Esme to immigrate to the U.S. to live with them. But Esme never makes it to Kinship, and soon Lily discovers that she has been kidnapped. Not only that, but a young woman is indeed found murdered in the fishing pond on Fitzpatrick’s property, at the same time that a baby is left on his doorstep. As the two crimes interweave, Lily must confront the question of what makes family? Virtual event is April 4.

Neubauer, Erica Ruth. [Danger on the Atlantic](#) (Kensington \$26). Jane Wunderly and her sometime investigative associate, Redvers Dibble, seek to uncover the identity of a German spy on a 1926 voyage from Southampton to New York aboard the *Olympic*, the *Titanic*’s sister ship. Jane is soon embroiled in the case of the rich Vanessa FitzSimmons, who claims her new husband has disappeared. Though ship officials state that no such person is aboard and cast doubt on Vanessa’s sanity, Jane suspects that Vanessa is being gaslighted, pursues inquiries with

Vanessa’s erratic maid, and is distressed when Vanessa is drugged and someone is murdered. Jane and Redvers hunt for a code book, contend with obstructive crew members, dance despite Jane’s two left feet, and confront that most fearsome challenge: the passenger who never stops talking. As Jane and Redvers attempt to chart the direction of their personal and professional partnership, readers will find much to enjoy. The winning team of the smart, compassionate Jane and the resourceful Redvers is guaranteed to please series fans and draw in some new ones who followed their adventures first in Egypt at the Pyramids in [Murder at the Mena House](#) and then in England in [Murder at Wedgefield Manor](#) (\$15.95)..

O’Connor, Carlene. [Murder on an Irish Farm](#) (Kensington \$26). Garda Siobhán O’Sullivan and her fiancé, DS Macdara Flannery, about to say their “I Do’s” when Siobhán’s eldest brother bursts into the church in Kilbane, County Cork, to announce he’s discovered a skeleton in a slurry pit. The couple postpones their wedding as investigating the case soon takes priority after Siobhán’s new neighbor, Gladys Burns, realizes the body is that of Tommy Caffrey, her fiancé, who stood her up at the altar 50 years earlier. Siobhán and Macdara discover that Gladys as well as her family members had many bones to pick with the deceased ne’er-do-well. Each clue leads to more revelations from the past, and the family’s complex relationships seem to hold the key to the crime. When a second body appears, and suspects begin pointing fingers at each other, Siobhán and Macdara realize no one’s telling the truth. The quaint Irish setting and facts about falconry boost the well-paced plot... here is a cozy just the ticket for St. Patrick’s Day reading. In fact the whole [Irish Village Mystery](#) series is perfect.

O’Nan, Stewart. [Ocean State](#) (Grove \$27). There’s no mystery about what happens in this beautifully rendered and heartbreaking story from O’Nan, our **April Notable New Fiction Book of the Month**. In the opening pages, teenager Angel Oliviera murders another teen, Birdy Alves. O’Nan explores what led up to the killing and paints an intimate canvas of a small Rhode Island town in 2009. “When I was in eighth grade my sister helped kill another girl. She was in love, my mother said, like it was an excuse.” So the story opens. If this were a murder mystery, the killer’s identity is immediately known. But it’s not the crime itself that occupies the novel’s spotlight so much as the challenges faced by its four women, closely connected but very different. Angel is a popular high school student. Carol, her mother, is a nurse and stressed-out single mother, a bit preoccupied by her dating woes. Marie is Angel’s younger sister, forever watching other people’s lives as if they were movies and waiting for hers to begin. Birdy is Angel’s classmate. They both want the same boy, a rich kid who inevitably will leave their small town behind. Angel is his girlfriend of three years, Birdy his secret. O’Nan presents the four women’s perspectives in turn, so that readers watch them build and crescendo to a violent crime and then tumble through its aftermath. O’Nan evokes *Ocean State*’s setting, the blue-collar Rhode Island town of Ashaway, with equal care as the shimmering prose: perhaps unbeautiful, but rendered with detail and tenderness. O’Nan’s greatest accomplishment is in the compassionate portrayal of characters who are each guilty of smaller and larger wrongs.

Pandian, Gigi. [Under Lock & Skeleton Key](#) (St Martins \$26.99). **Signed bookplates plus recipe cards from the author.** There’s a

company that makes secret staircases? Yes! So our **March Cozy Crimes Book of the Month** begins a new series from “the queen of the locked-room mystery” and whimsical confections. Tempest Raj returns to California after her popular magic show in Vegas came to an early and disastrous end. She hails from a long line of stage magicians but doesn’t believe in the curse that is said to fall on the eldest child in each generation—she believes that her show was sabotaged by her former stage double, Cassidy. Though she resists, every day brings her closer to the inevitable: working for her father’s company. Secret Staircase Construction specializes in bringing the magic of childhood to all by transforming clients’ homes with sliding bookcases, intricate locks, backyard tree houses, and hidden reading nooks. When Tempest visits her dad’s latest renovation project, her former stage double is discovered dead inside a wall that’s supposedly been sealed for more than a century. Fearing she was the intended victim, it’s up to Tempest to solve this seemingly impossible crime. But as she delves further into the mystery, Tempest can’t help but wonder if the Raj family curse that’s plagued her family for generations—something she used to swear didn’t exist—has finally come for her. This “Secret Staircase” series starter is a fresh and magical locked-room mystery filled with fascinating and likable characters, incredible settings, and Tempest’s grandfather’s home-cooked Indian meals (recipes included).

Quinn, Kate. [The Diamond Eye](#) (Harper \$27.99). Our **March Historical Fiction Book of the Month** is fiction but based on a real life person, a sniper from the Ukraine! What could resonate more for Women’s History Month plus the situation the Ukraine faces?

A librarian tending a young son in often snow-blanketed Kiev, Mila Pavlichenko finds her life upended when Hitler’s forces invade the Soviet Union. She’s estranged from her husband, Alexei, a surgeon whom she met when she was 15, who fathered her son. When the Germans invade Russia, Mila, who’s already trained at a marksmanship school, enlists in the army, is assigned sniper duty, and earns the nickname “Lady Death” for her high number of kills. In battle, Mila is steadfast about completing her missions with her partner, Kostia, and also finds time to write letters to Slavka. In 1942, Soviet leaders send Mila with a delegation to Washington, D.C., to meet with President Roosevelt in a bid to seek American support. The trip has its highs and lows, as Mila unexpectedly develops a friendship with Eleanor Roosevelt, but faces a threat from a misogynistic male marksman who sends her threatening notes. Stephen Hunter fans will think of his brilliant thriller [Sniper’s Honor](#) (\$9.99) which I highly recommend as a companion read.

Rosenfelt, David. [Citizen K9](#) (St Martins \$27.99). Former police officer Corey Douglas his K-9 partner, Simon Garfunkel, have recently retired from the police force. But not from investigation. Douglas, the narrator of Edgar finalist Rosenfelt’s winning third K Team novel, tackles a cold case involving two of his high school classmates who disappeared seven years earlier during their 15th reunion. One of the classmates, Chris Vogel, had ties to drugs and organized crime, while the other, Kim Baskin, seemed to barely know Vogel, though witnesses saw them leave the reunion together. Their car was found abandoned a few miles from the event with the only clue being a playing card left in the glove compartment. Corey and his fellow team members soon discover a rash of murders around the country where playing

cards were also left behind, though nothing else seems to link the crimes or the disappearance. The no-nonsense Corey has a dry sense of humor, and the interplay between him and his colleagues complements a twisty plot whose threads tie together in an exciting finale. Corey’s perspective on Andy Carpenter, who plays a minor role, is fun for you fans of that popular series, and Simon takes center stage from Andy’s beloved Golden. Rosenfelt consistently entertains with tricky plots and humor although he doesn’t shy away from the dark side of crime.

Scalzi, John. [The Kaiju Preservation Society](#) (Forge \$26.99). In this unusual pandemic novel, a standalone, a young person—whose gender is never specified—is given a unique, literally out-of-this-world opportunity to escape the Covid-19 lockdown. COVID-19 has devastated New York City. The only job Jamie can find is delivering food, until he begins to work for a secret NGO preserving large animals. What Jamie didn’t know is just how large—the animals in question are Kaiju, gigantic creatures from an alternate universe that are both dangerous and endangered. Unfortunately, other organizations have found a way to slip into this universe behind the Kaiju Preservation Society, which may ultimately pose a threat to Earth.

Kirkus adds this: “Sure, it bubbles with the banter and snarky humor readers expect from this author. But it’s also a blunt and savage swipe at tech-bro/billionaire culture, the Trump administration, and the chaos and tragedy that result when powerful and rich people set themselves against science and scientists in order to profit from disaster....” And Library Reads enthuses: “As the Covid-19 pandemic spreads across the U.S Scalzi has taken creatures portrayed as monsters in the movies and made us care, with plenty of his usual wit and humor. For fans of *Jurassic Park*, *Devolution*, and Jeff VanderMeer.”

Scottoline, Lisa. [What Happened to the Bennetts?](#) (Putnam \$28). At the outset of this heart-wrenching novel from the always amazing Scottoline, Jason and Lucinda Bennett, while driving home to Philadelphia with their son, his older sister, 15-year-old Allison, and their dog, are forced to stop by two men in a truck. When the dog jumps at the men, Allison is accidentally shot, and the two flee. Allison dies at the hospital, where the Bennetts learn that one of their assailants later fatally shot the other, who turns out to have been the son of the head of a criminal network that distributes and sells opiates in Pennsylvania. Early the next morning, two FBI agents bundle the Bennetts off to a safe house in Delaware, where they’re to stay before entering the witness protection program. “Scottoline piles on the pathos with repetitive memories and musings among the surviving family members until Jason finally decides to take back control of his life, and what started as an examination of the profound pain of losing a child morphs into a high-speed, action-packed thriller where conspiracy theories multiply.” Library Reads adds, “With enough red herrings to fill a smorgasbord, this book about grief, corruption, and family will appeal to fans of Iris Johansen, John Grisham.”

Shepherd, Peng. [The Cartographers](#) (Harper \$27.99). From the author of [The Book of M](#) (\$16.99), a highly imaginative thriller about a young woman who discovers that a strange map in her deceased father’s belongings holds an incredible, deadly secret—one that will lead her on an extraordinary adventure and to the truth about her family’s dark history. “Disgraced cartographer Nell Young, the protagonist of this extraordinary mystery, was

fired by her father, Daniel Young, a cartographic scholar in the New York Public Library's map division, after they argued over a map. Seven years later, Daniel dies in his office, apparently of natural causes. In a hidden compartment in his desk, Nell finds the map they argued over, a decades-old gas station road map of New York. She suspects the map is somehow related to his death, which she's sure is a case of foul play. She seeks help from her ex, who now works for the tech giant Haberson, whose eccentric leader, William Haberson, wishes to map the entire world and all knowledge within it. Gradually, Nell connects with the talented cartographers who were friends of her father and long-dead mother years before. They tell her of their last summer together and warn her of the threat from a member of their group obsessed with Nell's mother, who died in a house fire. Possessed of a questing intellect and a determined stubbornness, Nell proves smart enough to solve the various riddles she faces. Shepherd's convincing blend of magic from old maps with the modern online world both delights and thrills."

If you are a fan of Fiona Davis' [The Lions of Fifth Avenue](#) (\$17), this deep dive into another department of the NY Public Library on Fifth will delight you.

St James, Simone. [The Book of Cold Cases](#) (Berkley \$27).

Signed Bookplates for this Canadian author. By day in 2017, Shea Collins is a receptionist, but by night she runs the true crime website, the Book of Cold Cases. One morning at work, Shea recognizes one of the patients as Beth Greer, an elusive, affluent woman who was a suspect in the Lady Killer murders in 1977. Two Claire Lake men were shot in cold blood, and though a witness saw Beth fleeing the scene, she insisted she was innocent and was acquitted at trial. Since the crimes are still unsolved, Shea gets Beth's permission to interview her. They often meet at Beth's mansion, where Beth reveals her side of the story through vivid flashbacks involving her troubled adolescence and adulthood. Meanwhile, Shea becomes increasingly uneasy in the house and suspects it may be haunted....

Swanson, Peter. [Nine Lives](#) (Harper \$27.99). Swanson neatly riffs on Agatha Christie's classic [And Then There Were None](#) (\$15.95) in this taut thriller. Nine Americans from across the country each receives an envelope in the mail from an unknown sender containing only an identical list of nine names, including their own. The similarity of the list and Agatha Christie's novel is not lost on Kennewick police detective Sam Hamilton. Although he doesn't know who's behind the targeted murders, he suspects the link between the nine is something close to home. Swanson introduces readers to the nine people on the roster—a stressed suburban father, an aspiring actor, a singer-songwriter, a resort owner, a retired businessman, a rich man's mistress, an English professor, an oncology nurse, and FBI agent Jessica Winslow. We get a glimpse of each around the time they receive the list. None of the nine knows the others, and they seemingly have nothing in common, not even their locations or occupations. Although most initially dismiss the correspondence as junk mail, the people on the list begin to die. Winslow too begins to probe whether the eight besides herself are all targets of a killer. Swanson radically transforms the setting from Christie's isolated island with its closed circle of suspects, to the entire continental U.S.

Walker, Martin. [Bruno's Challenge and Other Stories](#) (Knopf \$27). **A recipe card from Walker for a dish not in the book comes with our copies.** Fans of Walker's novels set in the little

French market town of St. Denis will savor this inviting story collection featuring Bruno Courrèges, the town's genial chief of police whose career is moving up. As St. Denis is in the Périgord, the culinary heartland of France, a thread of gastronomy and bonhomie plays a significant part in all 14 tales. Walker smoothly integrates recipes into the text, beginning with the title story, which finds Bruno throwing together a golden wedding anniversary feast for friends on short notice and includes easy to follow instructions on how to prepare *Poulet à l'estragon*. Prehistoric cooking methods figure in "Boeuf Neanderthal," as Bruno prepares a menu for the *Société Historique et Archéologique du Périgord*. "The Green Army" describes biodynamic viticultural techniques, and "Sugar Lumps" reveals the proper way to drink absinthe. The area's rich history and traditions are explored at every turn. Any crimes are relatively minor—nasty anonymous letters, spates of vandalism—and are resolved by cooperation, conviviality, and Bruno's clever intervention. Featured meals in the collection include a fatty Christmas goose, a savory nettle soup with *crème fraîche*, and a fluffy quiche Lorraine.

This is one of our bestselling series ever and will have a new Bruno investigation out in August when we hope Walker will return to The Pen.

Weisel, Frederick. [The Day He Left](#) (\$16.99). **Signed bookplates.** Here's a Starred Review from *PW*: "At the start of Weisel's excellent sequel to 2021's [The Silenced Women](#) (\$16.99), Annie Behrens, an alcoholic nurse, is awakened by a call one morning from the Santa Rosa, Calif., middle school where her husband, Paul, teaches English to say he hasn't shown up. When Annie tries to phone Paul, she notices Paul left his cell phone at home, along with his lesson plans. That afternoon, Annie reports Paul missing to the police. Lt. Eddie Mahler, a member of the Santa Rosa PD Violent Crimes Investigation team, interviews Annie, who has no idea why her husband has disappeared. Mahler notices Annie has been drinking and wonders whether Paul was fleeing a dysfunctional marriage, and evidence surfaces suggesting Paul may have had inappropriate relationships with female students. The search for the truth leads to some surprising answers.

The VCI team members aren't cynical, wise-cracking super cops; on the contrary, they're troubled individuals who accept that "people are complex" and capable of all kinds of foolish, noble, and destructive actions. Weisel does a terrific job blending police procedural with character study." I think these are two outstanding police procedurals with excellent characters reminding me of Ed McBain's 88th Precinct series.

✱Wingate, Marty. [The Librarian Always Rings Twice](#) (Berkley \$26). We have a few signed copies left. It's always a treat to visit the lovely and historic city of Bath. And to spend time in Lady's Fowling's glorious library of Golden Age mysteries. We have a kind of lost heir plot here, which is difficult to do today but works. And a bit of a literary treasure hunt. The real hook in this book is for those who are fans of Daphne DuMaurier and of her novel *Frenchman's Creek* in particular. Test yourself on it. If you have missed reading this cozy literary series then order all of the [First Edition Library Mysteries](#).

✱Winspear, Jacqueline. [A Sunlit Weapon](#) (Harper \$27.99). In 1942, ferry pilot Jo Hardy is delivering a Spitfire to Biggin Hill Aerodrome in southeastern England. In a moment of high

spirits, Jo decides to bend the rules with a little stunt flying. Her joyful moment is interrupted by a bullet striking the plane, fired by a civilian below. She later learns that another ferry pilot has also died flying the same route, and her fiancé was killed in the area a year previously. When she discovers coded material in a nearby barn, she heads straight to Maisie Dobbs. They learn that the unidentified shooter was firing from a farm, and when Jo visits the scene, she finds a Black American private, Matthias Crittenden, bound and gagged in one of the buildings. Despite that condition, Crittenden is suspected of being involved in the disappearance of a fellow private and is taken into military custody. Maisie's probing uncovers some coded messages at the spot where Crittenden was held captive, which her husband, Mark Scott, an American political attaché, discloses these events may have compromised First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt's upcoming diplomatic mission to the UK.

The [Maisie Dobbs series](#) is all in print in case you are new to it.

UNSIGNED EVENT BOOKS

Blaedel, Sara. [A Harmless Lie](#) (Dutton \$17). Copenhagen police detective Louise Rick is vacationing in Thailand when her father calls from Denmark to say her brother, Mikkel, is close to death after a suicide attempt, which may have been prompted by Mikkel's wife, Trine, abruptly leaving him days earlier. Back in her hometown of Osten, Louise comes to realize Trine's departure may not have been voluntary—and the police begin to suspect Mikkel was involved in Trine's disappearance. Meanwhile, Louise learns that the body of Susan Dahlgaard, a schoolmate of Trine's who vanished 25 years earlier at age 14, has been found in a remote cave. Journalist Camilla Lind, Louise's best friend, uncovers multiple tragedies when she looks into Susan's case. "Blaedel does a good job depicting abnormal psyches and, through harrowing flashbacks, the cliquish cruelty of adolescent girls." And of course, as with Engberg below, author of our International Crime Book of the Month, Denmark is a main character in the series.

✚Bennett, SJ. [All the Queen's Men](#) (Harper \$27.99). Author Ruth Ware says this is "[A] pitch-perfect murder mystery... If *The Crown* were crossed with Miss Marple..., the result would probably be something like this charming whodunnit." Queen Elizabeth II once again assumes a Nero Wolfe-like role while her faithful assistant private secretary, former army officer Rozie Oshodi, handles the legwork and any necessary fisticuffs. What starts off as an investigation into how a favorite painting belonging to Her Majesty has ended up in the Ministry of Defence's collection of maritime art soon leads to the discovery of an insidious poison pen campaign against female palace employees and a long-standing fraud scheme. Murder inevitably follows. I shy away from anything dealing with living members of the Royal Family, but this book has an excellent plot garnished with nifty bits of history and protocol, and presents a charming portrait of the Queen.

PW adds, "Set in the autumn of 2016, the brouhaha surrounding Brexit and the U.S. presidential race provides an invigorating backdrop, allowing for appearances by Prime Minister Theresa May and commentary on the intrusive nature of the press. Highlights include the breakfast table talk between the queen and Prince Philip and, of course, references to the monarch's beloved corgis. Bennett respectfully portrays the queen while providing

edifying details of palace life. Dog lovers and Anglophiles will rejoice. Our own Lesa Holstine is a series fan and the host to Ben-net. Start this series with [The Windsor Knot](#) (\$16.99).

Cowie, Jayne. [Curfew](#) (Berkley \$17). Think *The Handmaid's Tale* but with the women in charge, set in a world where all men are electronically tagged and placed under strict curfew, and the murder investigation threatening to undo it all. It's a near-future Britain in which women dominate workplaces, public spaces, and government. Where the gender pay gap no longer exists and motherhood opens doors instead of closing them. Where women are no longer afraid to walk home alone, to cross a dark parking lot, or to catch the last train. Where all men are electronically tagged and not allowed out after 7 p.m. But the curfew hasn't made life easy for all women. Sarah is a single mother who happily rebuilt her life after her husband, Greg, was sent to prison for breaking curfew. Now he's about to be released, and Sarah isn't expecting a happy reunion, given that she's the reason he was sent there.

Goldberg, Tod. [The Low Desert: Gangster Stories](#) (Catapult \$16.95). Here is a collection of contemporary crime writing set in the critically acclaimed Gangsterland universe, a series called "gloriously original" by *The New York Times Book Review*. The spare, stylish stories from a master of modern crime fiction assemble a world of gangsters and con men, of do-gooders breaking bad and those caught in the crossfire. The uncle of an FBI agent spends his life as sheriff in different cities, living too close to the violent acts of men; a cocktail waitress moves through several desert towns trying to escape the unexplainable loss of an adopted daughter; a drug dealer with a penchant for karaoke meets a talkative lawyer and a silent clown in a Palm Springs bar. Witty, brutal, and fast-paced, these stories expand upon the saga of Chicago hitman-turned-Vegas-rabbi Sal Cupertine—first introduced in *Gangsterland* and continued in *Gangster Nation*—while revealing how the line between good and bad is often a mirage.

Patterson, James/Dolly Parton. [Run, Rose, Run](#) (Little Brown \$30). First, Parton wrote 12 songs especially for the book. Then, when we meet Annie Lee, she is on the run, hitchhiking to Nashville to escape some mysterious nightmare situation. Standing in the rain, she starts singing to herself: "Is it easy / No it ain't / Can I fix it? / No I cain't." This will become "Woman Up (and Take It Like a Man)," one of the songs she debuts in a roadside dive called the Cat's Paw, begging a place on the stage and playing a borrowed guitar before slinking off to sleep in a public park. But she has already been noticed by Ethan Blake, a handsome Afghanistan veteran-turned-Nashville session player and secret songwriter—"Demons, demons, we've both had enough of our own / Demons, demons, we don't have to fight them alone." He will take word of this tiny, skittish prodigy to his boss, the beloved Ruthanna Ryder, who has stepped back from a mega-career after personal tragedy—and who happens to own the Cat's Paw. Ruthanna, who recalls the great Parton in coiffure, jewelry, generosity, and business know-how, sees her former self in AnnieLee—"Big dreams and faded jeans / Fit together like a team"—and immediately goes to work to help her climb the slippery ladder of stardom. But between AnnieLee's durn pride and the vicious, violent marauders who are on her tail, it won't be easy. "The fairy-tale characters and details of the country-music scene are so much fun you won't mind the silly plot," says *Kirkus*.

For access to the March 6 5:30 PM MST event with Parton and Patterson buy a copy from The Pen and we will send you the link on Friday March 4.

Weinman, Sarah. [Scoundrel](#) (Ecco \$28.99). “In this mesmerizing account, Weinman does a masterly job resurrecting a stranger-than-fiction chapter in American criminal justice. In 1957, unemployed veteran Edgar Smith was arrested for bludgeoning 15-year-old Victoria Zielinski to death in Mahwah, N.J. Smith, who testified in his own defense at his trial, was sentenced to death. In 1962, after conservative intellectual William F. Buckley learned Smith was an admirer of Buckley’s magazine, National Review, Buckley began corresponding with Smith, leading to an unlikely friendship and financial support for legal efforts to spare Smith’s life. Smith, who published both a book about his case and a mystery novel from behind bars, pleaded guilty to second-degree murder during a retrial, and in 1971 he was released for time served. In 1976, Smith stabbed a woman nearly to death in California. (During his testimony at the subsequent trial, he admitted to killing Zielinski.) Weinman’s dogged research, which included correspondence with Smith, who died in prison in 2017, and a study of Buckley’s papers, enable her to craft a deeply unsettling narrative about how a clever killer manipulated the justice system to his benefit. This instant classic raises disturbing questions about gullibility even on the part of the very bright.”—PW Starred Review

MORE RAVES FOR THESE SIGNED BOOKS

Fay, Kim. [Love & Saffron: A Novel of Friendship](#) (Viking \$25). Joan Bergstrom, 27, sends a fan letter and some saffron to magazine columnist Imogen Fortier, 59. Joan, a nascent newspaper food writer, lives in Los Angeles and has fairly adventurous taste buds for the era. Since Imogen, who lives on an island near Seattle, often mentions clams in her column, Joan suggests that Imogen try mussels flavored with saffron and vermouth. Thus begins a years-long friendship-by-correspondence between the two women, which will see them through the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Kennedy assassination and their own personal triumphs and tragedies. In this sweet, slender novel, Fay uses vibrant food descriptions to connect her two main characters and to assist them in coping with the dire news of an alarming era. As Imogen and Joan exchange recipes for *carne asada* and jerk chicken, they also begin to swap stories about their personal lives; and each helps the other’s relationships and personal growth. Perfect for those burned out by current news cycles, *Love & Saffron* is a gentle escape to the past, and also a reminder both that others have survived “unprecedented times,” and that deep connections can be made even when people are physically separated.

Gran, Sara. [The Book of the Most Precious Substance](#) (Dreamland Books \$18.95). “In this erotically charged thriller, a financially strapped bookseller’s hunt for a rare book of magic spells puts her in a dangerous conflict with the world’s most powerful people. Lily and her husband, Abel, are successful writers until Abel contracts an illness that forces Lily to sell first-edition antique books to pay for his treatments. She’s thrilled when another bookseller offers to split a million-dollar commission if Lily helps him find an elusive book called *The Book of the Most Precious Substance*. Before Lily can begin her search, her colleague is killed, leaving Lily without the

name of the rich potential buyer. Lily enlists her well-connected friend Lucas to help her find both the buyer and the book. Their quest turns unexpectedly sexual in nature, with elements of black magic, and results in a dangerous international chase for a manuscript that doesn’t want to be found—and seekers who will pay any price for it. How far would some people go for unlimited wealth and power? Why are immense riches and influence not enough for some? Gran (the Claire DeWitt series) poses answers to these questions, particularly when Lucas asks the owner of a copy of the rare book, “You have money. You have power. What did you want that you didn’t have?” and the owner replies, “Everything.” Some of the characters may be insatiable, but readers will find *The Book of the Most Precious Substance*’s ending immensely satisfying.”—Paul Dinh-McCrillis

Greaney, Mark. [Sierra Six](#) (Berkley \$28). Court Gentry, the Gray Man himself, is back in splendid form, though not the way we’re used to seeing him. That’s because Sierra Six is an origins tale, taking Gentry back to his titular roots working for a shadowy group that lends the book its title. Then we’re whisked forward 10 years into the present, at the point he realizes his first terrorist “kill” is very much alive. That leads the unfalteringly dedicated Gentry to question both his loyalties and his place in a deadly community where you’re not supposed to look back. The fresh take on the series’ form brings a whole new dimension to the Gray Man, taking him to a near-existential crisis of conscience akin to British spy Alec Leamus in the John le Carré classic, *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold*. Greaney writes with a bracing confidence, challenging himself

Hurwitz, Gregg. [Dark Horse](#) (St Martins \$28.99). More and more, thrillers have come to resemble old Westerns, with a lone gunman riding in from nowhere to dispense justice. Lee Child may well have ushered in that trend with his now iconic Jack Reacher, but Gregg Hurwitz isn’t far behind, as beautifully exemplified in *Dark Horse*. Hurwitz’s Reacher is Evan Smoak, aka Orphan X, who was literally bred to be a government assassin. Now that he’s on his own, Smoak has rechristened himself the “Nowhere Man” and has taken on the role of protector and avenger. Dark Horse finds him helping the kind of ambiguous figure you see on TV shows like *Ozark* and *Breaking Bad* known as Aragon Urrea, who deals drugs throughout South Texas but is also a community activist and philanthropist. When the Mexican cartels he despises kidnap his teenage daughter, he turns to Smoak for help and the bodies start piling up. The perfectly paced and beautifully structured Dark Horse is like a Reacher tale on steroids. The action set pieces are masterworks of form and function, and Smoak has evolved into the quintessential lone gunman, not a lot of bark but a whole lot of bite.

Petrie, Nick. [The Runaway](#) (Putnam \$20 special price). Peter Ash might well be the best thriller protagonist you’ve yet to hear of. To find out why, look no further than *The Runaway*. The seventh thriller to feature Ash finds the PTSD-riddled special ops vet still seeking his place in the world, traveling America’s highways and backroads in a fashion that would make Lee Child’s Jack Reacher proud. And like Reacher, wherever Ash lands, trouble awaits. This time his landing spot is rural Nebraska where he comes upon a stranded female motorist who happens to be pregnant. Her ex-husband, it also happens, turns out to be on her trail and certain to take offense at Ash’s efforts, even more so because the woman is a witness to something her ex-husband will stop at

nothing to prevent from being revealed. There's a lot to like about *The Runaway*, starting with the beautiful contrast between the wide-open setting and claustrophobic predicament in which Ash finds himself. This is a deeply personal tale with Ash trying to save himself along with his charge. A stunning triumph of a tale in all respects.

Speaking of Reacher, we also offer a special price for the latest Lee Child, *Reacher 25, Better Off Dead* (\$20), taking place around Tucson and cowritten with Child's brother Andrew.

Preston, Douglas/Lincoln Child. [Diablo Mesa](#) (Grand Central \$29). Signed by both authors and includes a trading card set featuring archaeologist sleuth Nora Kelly and FBI Agent Corrie Swanson. "Leave it to Doug Preston and Lincoln Child to mine fresh, original material from a tired trope. The stellar duo takes us to Area 51 where conspiratorial doings of an earthbound nature are afoot. Convinced that terrible truths are buried there, Jeff Bezos-and-Richard Branson-like billionaire Lucas Tappan commissions an exhaustive archaeological dig to find alien secrets long rumored to be hidden on the grounds. But archaeologist Nora Kelly finds human remains instead — murder victims, in fact, which leads to FBI special agent Corrie Swanson taking things from there. Swanson's investigation reveals deadly secrets, all right, that turn out to be even more dangerous than invaders from Mars. *Diablo Mesa* is thriller-adventure writing of the absolute highest order that takes Preston and Child back to their high-concept roots in books like *Mount Dragon* and *Thunderheart*. It reads like a hybrid of the best from Wilbur Smith and Alistair MacLean, making for flat-out great reading entertainment."—Jon Land

CLASSICS

Lorac, ECR. [Two-Way Murder](#) (Poisoned Pen \$14.99). It is a dark and misty night—isn't it always?—and bachelors Nicholas and Ian are driving to the ball at Fordings, a beautiful concert hall in the countryside. There waits the charming Dilys Maine, and a party buzzing with rumors of one Rosemary Reeve who disappeared on the eve of this event the previous year, not found to this day. With thoughts of mysterious case ringing in their ears, Dilys and Nicholas strike a stranger on the drive back home, launching a new investigation and unwittingly reviving the search for what really became of Rosemary Reeve. Written in the last years of this Golden Age of Mystery author's life, this previously unpublished novel is a tribute to Lorac's enduring skill for constructing an ingenious puzzle, replete with memorable characters and gripping detective work.

Scarlett, Roger. [Cat's Paw](#) (American Mystery Classics \$15.95). Martin Greenough's walled-off mansion is the last remaining holdout in the Boston parkland known as the Fenway—and the fact that it eluded condemnation by the city is a testament to the elderly bachelor's great wealth. Childless and nearing the end of his life, he surrounds himself with only his cat, his servants, and a friend, Mrs. Warden—to say nothing of the circle of extended family members whose lives he both subsidizes and rules from afar, the nieces and nephews who all seem to be more fond of Uncle Mart's money than they are of his character. On the eve of his birthday, Greenough requests the presence of his heirs at his home, insisting that he has something important to discuss. Before that discussion can take place, though, the man is mur-

dered in his study. In one way or another nearly everyone there would benefit by his death, and none gathered seem terribly upset by it, so finding the culprit is no easy task for Inspector Kane of the Boston PD. But as he untangles the threads and unburies dark family secrets, the discovery of a bizarre clue might hold the key to solving the crime presented in this classical "closed circle" mystery. Scarlett, the joint pseudonym of Dorothy Blair (1903–1976) and Evelyn Page (1902–1977), penned this ingenious whodunit first published in 1931.

FOR ST. PATRICK'S DAY

*There are many authors' works to recommend including that of Maeve Binchy, Benjamin Black/John Banville, and Patrick Taylor. Also the [Sister Fidelma medieval Ireland mysteries](#) by Peter Tremayne (we have a few)...and if you can find them the truly fabulous *Superintendent McGarr mysteries* by the late Bartholomew Gill. And the *Matt Minogue mystery series* by John Brady. Plus the now dated *The Marching Season* by Daniel Silva and some of the thrillers by the late Jack Higgins.*

Banville, John. [Snow](#) (\$16.99). This one-off by Banville (who abandoned his crime alias Benjamin Black) is a terrific Irish country house murder, classic in form. Detective Inspector St. John Strafford has been summoned to County Wexford to investigate a murder. A parish priest has been found dead in Ballyglass House, the family seat of the aristocratic, secretive Osborne family. The year is 1957 and the Catholic Church rules Ireland with an iron fist. Strafford—flinty, visibly Protestant and determined to identify the murderer—faces obstruction at every turn, from the heavily accumulating snow to the culture of silence in the tight-knit community he begins to investigate. As he delves further, he learns the Osbornes are not at all what they seem. And when his own deputy goes missing, Strafford must work to unravel the ever-expanding mystery before the community's secrets, like the snowfall itself, threaten to obliterate everything.

Bowen, Rhys/Claire Broyles. [Wild Irish Rose](#) (St Martins \$26.99). Good news, the Molly Murphy mysteries featuring a turn-of-the-20th-Century Irish immigrant to New York gets new life as Bowen's daughter picks up the baton. See Signed books for more. And if you missed the [Molly Murphy Mysteries](#), you can order them now.

Berry, Flynn. [Northern Spy](#) (\$17). Not out alas until April 5 but do order it now. A producer at the BBC and mother to a new baby, Tessa is at work in Belfast one day when the news of another raid comes on the air. The IRA may have gone underground in the two decades since the Good Friday Agreement, but they never really went away, and lately bomb threats, security checkpoints, and helicopters floating ominously over the city have become features of everyday life. As the news reporter requests the public's help in locating those responsible for the robbery, security footage reveals Tessa's sister, Marian, pulling a black ski mask over her face. The police believe Marian has joined the IRA, but Tessa is convinced she must have been abducted or coerced; the sisters have always opposed the violence enacted in the name of uniting Ireland. And besides, Marian is vacationing on the north coast. Tessa just spoke to her yesterday. When the truth about Marian comes to light, Tessa is faced with impossible choices.... The hardcover was in the Top Ten 2021 Mysteries/Thrillers on most lists and a Reese's Book Club Pick. Also ours at The Pen.

Bruen, Ken. [Callous](#) (Mysterious Press \$14.99). Kate Mitchell's in the process of kicking her heroin addiction—with the help of alcohol—when a letter arrives informing her that her aunt in Ireland has passed away and bequeathed her a home near the ocean. This could be the start of a new and better life for Kate, far away from Brooklyn, where she and her surviving brothers are each struggling with their own dark pasts. But Aunt Mary didn't die peacefully—quite the opposite. The pair of thugs responsible for her murder had plans for her house: namely, turning it into a lovely seaside meth lab. One of Mary's killers, however, finds his focus shifting when he spots a photo of the dead woman's American niece, who bears a striking resemblance to the late opera singer Maria Callas, the beloved object of his obsession. When Kate and her brothers arrive to claim her inheritance, they're going to find something other than a piece of paradise... “Nobody writes like Ken Bruen, with his ear for lilting Irish prose and his taste for the kind of gallows humor heard only at the foot of the gallows.” —*The New York Times*

I favor Bruen's remarkable series for Irish cop Jack Taylor, set also in Bruen's Galway. Start with [The Guards](#) (16.99).

Connolly, John. [Shadow Voices: 300 Years of Irish Genre Fiction, A History in Stories](#) (Hodder \$60). **Signed. Numbered. Comes with a nifty set of period postcards and a book bag with facsimile signatures of some Irish authors like Swift**The Irish author takes you through 300 years of Irish genre fiction, introducing you to a fabulous variety of authors with extracts of their work. This is a great literary discovery opportunity and it comes specially packaged from the UK. Those of you who read Connolly as well as Ken Bruen, Tana French, Adrian McKinty, Stuart Neville and such modern writers should revel in this journey through an Irish past.

Deibel, Jennifer. [A Dance in Donegal](#) (Revell \$15.99). All of her life, Irish-American Moira Doherty has relished her mother's descriptions of Ireland. When her mother dies unexpectedly in the summer of 1920, Moira decides to fulfill her mother's wish that she become the teacher in Ballymann, her home village in Donegal, Ireland. After an arduous voyage, Moira arrives to a new home and a new job in an ancient country. Though a few locals offer a warm welcome, others are distanced by superstition and suspicion. Rumors about Moira's mother are unspoken in her presence but threaten to derail everything she's journeyed to Ballymann to do. Moira must rely on the kindness of a handful of friends—and the strength of Sean, an unsettlingly handsome thatcher who keeps popping up unannounced—as she seeks to navigate a life she'd never dreamed of...but perhaps was meant to live. “Deibel's exemplarily executed debut is a touching tale of love and forgiveness that also beautifully captures the warmth and magic of 1920s Ireland. The author's flair for vivid characterization is especially striking in Moira, whose realistic struggles with her faith give her memorable depth and relatability.”—*Booklist*

French, Tana. [In the Woods](#) (\$18). The first in the internationally bestselling Dublin Murder Squad series (and a 2007 First Mystery Book of the Month) is, as the *NY Times* calls it, “Required reading for anyone who appreciates tough, unflinching intelligence and ingenious plotting.” As dusk approaches a small Dublin suburb in the summer of 1984, mothers begin to call their children home. But on this warm evening, three children do not return from the dark and silent woods. When the police

arrive, they find only one of the children gripping a tree trunk in terror, wearing blood-filled sneakers, and unable to recall a single detail of the previous hours. Twenty years later, the found boy, Rob Ryan, is a detective on the Dublin Murder Squad and keeps his past a secret. But when a twelve-year-old girl is found murdered in the same woods, he and Detective Cassie Maddox, his partner and closest friend, find themselves investigating a case chillingly similar to the previous unsolved mystery. Now, with only snippets of long-buried memories to guide him, Ryan has the chance to uncover both the mystery of the case before him and that of his own shadowy past. We recommend [all of French's work](#), in this series, or outside it. The most recent is [The Searcher](#) (\$18).

Hardiman, Rebecca. [Good Eggs](#) (\$17.99). The Indie Next Pick: “Filled with warmth and hilarity, this book reads like a mix of *The Unlikely Pilgrimage of Harold Frye* and a Maeve Binchy novel. The Irish setting is especially welcome on this side of the pond, and of the three plotlines following different generations, the absolute best paints 83-year-old pistol of a grandma Millie as a delightfully quirky and determined soul. A charming, offbeat novel—perfect to savor as we emerge from this particular winter.”

Howard, Catherine Ryan. [56 Days](#) (Blackstone \$24.99 Signed). This is the only novel set in the current pandemic that I've enjoyed and in fact the structure of the story, where two people, Ciara and Oliver, barely acquainted decide to ride it out together in Oliver's apartment in Dublin, demands the lock-down. We recommend [Ryan's other novels](#) as well.

McDermid, Val. [Still Life](#) (\$17). This gloriously plotted and paced police procedural featuring Glasgow's Karen Pirie begins with a body found near Edinburgh in the Firth of Forth but segues to Ireland for some great action that includes a historic disappearance, art forgery, and secret identities—that seems to orbit around a painting copyist who can mimic anyone from Holbein to Hockney. Meanwhile, a traffic crash leads to the discovery of a skeleton in a suburban garage. The whole is marvelous but the scenes where Pirie runs her basically undercover investigation in Ireland are the highlight.

McKinty, Adrian. [The Cold, Cold Ground](#) (\$15.95). 1981, Northern Ireland. Belfast at the height of the Troubles, brilliantly rendered. Hunger strikes, riots, power cuts, a homophobic serial killer with a penchant for opera, and a young woman's suicide that may yet turn out to be murder: on the surface, the events are unconnected, but then things—and people—aren't always what they seem. Detective Sergeant Duffy is the man tasked with trying to get to the bottom of it all. It's no easy job—especially when it turns out that one of the victims was involved in the IRA but was last seen discussing business with someone from the loyalist Ulster Volunteer Force. Add to this the fact that, as a Catholic policeman, it doesn't matter which side he's on, because nobody trusts him, and Sergeant Duffy really is in a no-win situation. Order the rest of the [Sean Duffys](#) too.

McTiernan, Dervla. [The Ruin](#) (\$16). This first for Detective Cormac Reilly is a bestseller here at The Pen. When Aisling Conroy's boyfriend Jack is found in the freezing black waters of the river Corrib in Ireland, the police tell her it was suicide. She throws herself into work, trying to forget—but Jack's sister Maude reappears in Ireland after years abroad, determined

to prove Jack was murdered. Meanwhile, Detective Cormac Reilly, who was recently transferred to Galway from his squad in Dublin, is assigned to dig into a cold case from twenty years ago—the seeming overdose of Jack and Maude’s drug and alcohol addled mother. Other detectives are connecting Jack’s death to his mother’s, and pushing Reilly to arrest Maude, and fast. But instinct tells him something isn’t quite what it seems... This unsettling small-town noir draws us deep into the dark heart of Ireland, where corruption, desperation, and crime run rife... We recommend [more of Cormac](#)—his second case *The Scholar* won a Thriller Award. And McTiernan joins us on May 10 with TJ Newman to sign her big new book, [The Murder Rule](#) Harper (\$27.99).

Meier, Leslie. [Irish Parade Murder](#) (\$8.99). When a Tinker’s Cove, Maine, corrections officer is sent to a fiery death during the St. Patrick’s Day parade, part-time reporter (and sometimes sleuth) Lucy Stone is tasked with clearing the name of her professional rival. This is a very long-running cozy series often linked to holidays.

Murphy, Catie. [Dead in Dublin](#) (\$7.99). Ferrying tourists around Dublin for the Leprechaun Limo Service makes quite a change after years in the military. Still, Megan Malone is enjoying her life in Ireland. She likes the scenery, the easy pace, the quirky, quick-witted locals. Everything—except having one of her clients drop dead at the statue of fabled fishmonger, Molly Malone. Most restaurant critics notch up their share of enemies. Elizabeth Darr, however, was a well-loved international star. She and her husband, Simon, had just had dinner when Elizabeth collapsed, and spoiled seafood is the first suspect. The restaurant’s owner, worried her business is doomed, begs Megan to look into it. Between her irate boss and a handsome Garda who’s both amused and annoyed by her persistence, Megan has her hands full even before she’s cajoled into taking care of two adorable Jack Russell puppies—IMHO possibly one of the highest energy canines there is. There are two more of Murphy’s [Dublin Drive cozy series](#) to order as well.

Neville, Stuart. [The House of Ashes](#) (Soho \$27.95). Sara Keane’s husband, Damien, has uprooted them from England and moved them to his native Northern Ireland for a “fresh start” in the wake of her nervous breakdown. Sara, who knows no one in Northern Ireland, is jobless, carless, friendless—all but a prisoner in her own house. When a blood-soaked old woman beats on the door, insisting the house is hers before being bundled back to her care facility, Sara begins to understand the house has a terrible history her husband never intended for her to discover. As the two women form a bond over their shared traumas, Sara finds the strength to stand up to her abuser, and Mary—silent for six decades—is finally ready to tell her story... Through the counterpoint voices—one modern Englishwoman, one Northern Irish farm girl speaking from half a century earlier—Stuart Neville offers a chilling and gorgeous portrait of violence and resilience

Also by Neville: [The Ghosts of Belfast](#) (\$16.95). John Connolly calls this first of Neville’s Belfast Novels, winner of the *LA Times* Book Prize, “One of the best Irish novels, in any genre, of recent times.” Northern Ireland’s Troubles may be over, but peace has not erased the crimes of the past. Gerry Fegan, a former paramilitary contract killer, is haunted by the ghosts of the twelve people he slaughtered. Every night, at the point of

losing his mind, he drowns their screams in drink. But it’s not enough. In order to appease the ghosts, Fegan is going to have to kill the men who gave him orders. From the greedy politicians to the corrupt security forces, the street thugs to the complacent bystanders who let it happen, all are called to account. But when Fegan’s vendetta threatens to derail a hard-won truce and destabilize the government, old comrades and enemies alike want him dead.

Don’t overlook [The Traveller and Other Stories](#) (\$16.95), a darkly compelling collection of Northern Irish Noir which concludes with his long-awaited novella, “The Traveller,” the companion piece to *The Ghosts of Belfast* and *Collusion*.

O’Connor, Carlene. [Murder on an Irish Farm](#) (Kensington \$26). Garda Siobhán O’Sullivan and her fiancé, DS Macdara Flannery, about to say their “I Do’s” when Siobhán’s eldest brother bursts into the church in Kilbane, County Cork, to announce he’s discovered a skeleton in a slurry pit... See Signed books for more. And order [all of this cheerful cozy series](#) that begins with *Murder in an Irish Village* and binge read on March 17.

O’Connor, Nuala. [Nora: A love Story of Nora and James Joyce](#) (Harper \$16.99). O’Connor expands on her Granta award-winning short story, “Gooseen” in this poignant, comprehensive portrait of Galway gal Nora Barnacle as a young woman, mother, and literary inspiration for the Molly Bloom character in *Ulysses*....

O’Rawe, Richard. [Northern Heist](#) (\$17.99). “O’Rawe channels both Elmore Leonard and Guy Ritchie in this heist thriller full of sharp twists and gritty dialogue, emerging with a style all his own. His reimagining of the real-life bank heist feels so authentic readers will hope he has a strong alibi. Ken Bruen fans won’t want to miss this one.” —*PW* Starred Review

Silver, Josie. [One Night on the Island](#) (Ballantine \$17). “Best-seller spins gold from the story of two lost souls whose paths cross on a remote Irish island. London dating columnist Cleo Wilder is sent on assignment to Salvation Island to “self-couple,” à la the actor Emma Watson. Her plans are derailed by Boston photographer Mack Sullivan, who’s visiting the island as part of a break from his tattered marriage—and who intends to stay in his family’s lodge, not knowing that Cleo has rented it. Things get off to a rocky start, with both of them determined to depose the other from the property. Neither gives in and, when a storm hits and ferry service to the island is suspended, they have no choice but to cohabitate. Mack and Cleo’s nuanced characterizations allow readers to readily connect with their dilemmas and reasonings, and as they grow closer, the narrative showcases their sometimes winding path to genuine happiness. Laughter is abundant, owing mostly to the island’s eccentric residents, but Silver also tackles some heavier topics including divorce, identity, singlehood, and fatherhood. This celebration of unexpected love will leave readers thoroughly satisfied.” —*PW* Starred Review

And two in the Akashic Urban Noir series

Bruen, Ken, ed. [Dublin Noir](#) (\$15.95). Stories by: Ken Bruen, Eoin Colfer, Jason Starr, Laura Lippman, Olen Steinhauer, Peter Spiegelman, Kevin Wignall, Jim Fusilli, John Rickards, Patrick J. Lambe, Charlie Stella, Ray Banks, James O. Born, Sarah Weinman, Pat Mullan, Gary Phillips, Craig McDonald, Duane Swierczynski, Reed Farrel Coleman, and others

McKinty, Adrian/Stuart Neville, eds. [Belfast Noir](#) (Akashic \$16.95). Stories by: Lee Child, Steve Cavanagh, Glenn Patterson, Eoin McNamee, Garbhan Downey, Alex Barclay, Brian McGilloy, Ian McDonald, Arlene Hunt, Ruth Dudley Edwards, Claire McGowan, and more

COZY CRIMES

Graves, Sarah. [Death by Chocolate Chip Cupcake](#) (Kensington \$26). The departure of summer tourists from Eastport, Maine, has brought the Chocolate Moose bakery's business to a standstill. Tired of fretting about the costs of keeping the bakery open during the winter, Jacobia "Jake" Tiptree and her business partner, Ellie White, think they might be hallucinating when a limousine pulls up outside their store. Even more surprising is the passenger inside: film legend Ingrid Merryfield, long gone from the silver screen. Even more surprising is the news that Ingrid, a long-ago resident of Eastport, has purchased the Cliff House of evil repute and plans to reside there. For her first party, Ingrid wants Jake and Ellie to provide the desserts. When a storm traps partygoers at the Cliff House, Jake and Ellie are going to need all their snooping skills to save the day—and themselves—as the body count rises faster than yeasty dough. Despite an overly convoluted plot, this cozy, with its down-to-earth heroines and wry observations about life in Maine, makes for delicious reading. And who can resist a mouthwatering recipe for chocolate pizza?

James, Miranda. [Hiss Me Deadly](#) (Berkley \$26). This Cat in the Stacks cozy features a troubled soul in high school, an outsider who dropped out to become a major music star. Coming back to Athena to work for two weeks with students in the college music department, Wil is now the big man on campus. Not everyone is happy to have him back, however. Some are protesting his music on moral grounds, and Wil and his entourage have been the target of several acts of petty harassment. At first they're easy for Wil to shrug off, but the incidents escalate and become more troubling. When one of the band members is killed Charlie worries that Melba, now deeply involved with the man at the center of the attacks, could be in deadly danger. It's up to Charlie and Diesel to find out who hates Wil Threadgill enough to silence his songs.

Lee, R.J. [The King Falls](#) (Kensington \$15.95). King Kohl, scion of the Kohl and Son real estate firm, has a reputation for loving three things: the ladies, closing on properties, and playing bridge. Still, when he invites Wendy, the president of the Rosalie, Mississippi, Country Club Bridge Bunch, to a small, exclusive bridge party, her investigative instincts as a reporter for the Rosalie Citizen are on the alert. In fact, King means to use the occasion to make a surprising announcement to his selected guests. But before he can lay his cards on the table, tragedy strikes.

After receiving a mysterious message to hurry to King's home, Wendy almost collides with the man's real-estate rival, running out the front door insisting he found King dead when he arrived. Not just dead, it turns out, but murdered—crowned with one of his own award plaques. Is the rival as guilty as he looks? 4th in a contract bridge based cozy series.

MacRae, Molly. [Argyles and Arsenic](#) (Pegasus \$26). "American Janet Marsh and her crew of fellow expats at the combination bookstore/tearoom Yon Bonny Books have already proven themselves adept investigators of suspicious goings-on in their little Highland town of Inversgale. In fact, they have such a

reputation that the locals have christened them SCONES—Shadow Constabulary of Nosy, Eavesdropping Snoops. So when Wendy Erskine, director of Inversgale's history museum, dies of arsenic poisoning at Violet McAskill's grand Fairy Flax Hall decluttering party, Constable Norman Hobbs asks the group to do a little unofficial detecting on the q.t. He's been sidelined on the investigation since his grandmother is one of the suspects. MacRae revels in clever wordplay and banter, but the meandering murder investigation is hard to follow, and the reveal seems like an afterthought. Cozy lovers who come for the atmosphere and the camaraderie will enjoy themselves. What's not to like about a knitting competition, Scottish scenery, books, and scones?"—*PW* on the 5th in the [Highland Bookshop Mysteries](#).

Manansala, Mia P. [Homicide and Halo](#) (Berkley \$16). In her follow up to [Arsenic and Adobo](#) (\$16), things are heating up for Lila Macapagal. She "is still working through the repercussions" of solving a murder and avoiding her own a few months earlier. Not in her love life, which she insists on keeping nonexistent despite the attention of two very eligible bachelors. Or her professional life, since she can't bring herself to open her new café after the unpleasantness that occurred a few months ago at her aunt's Filipino restaurant, Tita Rosie's Kitchen. No, things are heating up quite literally, since summer, her least favorite season, has just started. To add to her feelings of sticky unease, Lila's little town of Shady Palms has resurrected the Miss Teen Shady Palms Beauty Pageant, which she won many years ago—a fact that serves as a wedge between Lila and her cousin slash rival, Bernadette. But when the head judge of the pageant is murdered and Bernadette becomes the main suspect, the two must put aside their differences and solve the case.

Manansala references her own "mental health issues that a worldwide pandemic brought about," channeling those challenges into helping Lila and her family heal. Food is the balm: Lila's aunties are always ready with deliciously nourishing meals and Lila herself finally reclaims her baking mojo. The extended family's Filipina American heritage becomes a bottomless vat of strength from which to rise. And for salivating readers, Manansala even appends tempting recipes at book's end. Dig in!

Meier, Leslie. [Easter Bonnet Murder](#) (Kensington \$26). Now that publisher Ted Stillings has merged Tinker's Cove's *Pennysaver* with the nearby *Gilead Gabber* to create the regional *Courier*, Lucy Stone's been hoping to cover bigger stories. Still, when she's asked to cover the annual Easter bonnet contest at Heritage House, the local senior living facility, she's happy to oblige. For one thing, her dear friend Miss Julia Ward Howe Tilley is at Heritage House recovering from a nasty bout of pneumonia. For another, Bev, Dorothy, and Bitsy, the three residents who corner her on her visit to Miss Tilley, remind her how important it is not to neglect the surviving members of the Greatest Generation. But when she gets a frantic phone call from Geri Mazzone saying that her mother, Agnes Neal, has disappeared from Heritage House, Lucy begins to scent trouble. Agnes is one of the youngest of the residents and certainly one of the sharpest. She spent years as a war correspondent covering the most dangerous conflicts across Europe. Now in her 70s, she doesn't need any care—she just got sick of taking care of her house and likes the bird-watching trails. Easter bonnets give Lucy a good cover story for her investigation, and Miss Tilley provides her with eyes and ears on the premises.

Pandian, Gigi. [Under Lock & Skeleton Key](#) (St Martins \$26.99). **Our copies come with Signed bookplates plus recipe cards.** There's a company that makes secret staircases? Our **March Cozy Crimes Book of the Month** is a "Secret Staircase" series starter with a fresh and magical locked-room mystery filled with fascinating and likable characters, incredible settings, and Tempest's grandfather's home-cooked Indian meals (recipes included). Fans of Agatha Christie and John Dickson Carr will enjoy this fresh take on a locked-room mystery.

St. Anthony, Joyce. [Front Page Murder](#) (Crooked Lane \$26.99). A WWII series debut. Irene Ingram has written for her father's newspaper, the *Progress Herald*, ever since she could grasp a pencil. Now she's editor in chief, which doesn't sit well with the men in the newsroom. But proving her journalistic bona fides is the least of Irene's worries when crime reporter Moe Bauer, on the heels of a hot tip, turns up dead at the foot of his cellar stairs. An accident? That's what Police Chief Walt Turner thinks, and Irene is inclined to agree until she finds the note Moe discreetly left on her desk. He was on to a big story, he wrote. The robbery she'd assigned him to cover at Markowicz Hardware turned out to be something far more devious. A Jewish store owner in a small, provincial town, Sam Markowicz received a terrifying message from a stranger. Moe suspected that Sam is being threatened not only for who he is...but for what he knows.... So Irene searches for clues when she's not covering locals in uniform, victory gardens, and scrap drives....

Sutanto, Jesse Q. [Four Aunties and a Wedding](#) (Berkley \$26). "The Chan family is back! Meddy Chan is getting married, and the wedding planners are perfect—instead of having Ma and the aunts cater to her wedding, Meddy wants them to enjoy the day as guests. As a compromise, they find the perfect wedding vendors: a Chinese-Indonesian family-run company just like theirs. Then Meddy overhears the wedding photographer talking about murdering someone at the reception. Her aunties spring into action, setting into motion a series of madcap misadventures intended to save Meddy's special day. A charming combo of close-knit family, humor, and light mystery; great for fans of Mia P. Manansala and Jade Chang.

Wesley, Valerie Wilson. [A Fatal Glow](#) (Kensington \$15.95). Wesley, author of the Tamara Hayle series, is now at work on a new series, cozier and more paranormal-tinged, which began last year with [A Glimmer of Death](#) (\$15.95) featuring the sleuthing adventures of Black realtor-turned-caterer Odessa Jones. "Jones really needs her new gig, working for a rich businessman, to boost her part-time cooking career to full-time heights. But the businessman in question gives off vibes so malevolent that she can't help picking up on them. Still, there is 'no whiff of nutmeg, the usual warning that death is heading my way,' to alert her that he is about to fall down dead in the middle of brunch. That family secrets will be uncovered and nefarious motives exposed is a given. Jones — as well as the reader — will need to be guided by intuition to solve this particular mystery."—*NYT Book Review*

ON READING AND WRITING

Bell, Matt. [Refuse to Be Done: How to Write and Rewrite a Novel in Three Drafts](#) (Soho \$15.95). Many bookshelves sag under the weight of creative writing instruction manuals, but few are as engaging—In little more than 150 pages—as Matt Bell's. A professor of creative writing at Arizona State University and the

author of three novels, Bell has written an enthusiastic and highly practical guide to completing this challenging artistic effort successfully. The subtitle of Bell's book is a bit misleading, but only in the sense that he's not suggesting it's realistic to expect to create a publishable novel in a mere three drafts. Instead, what he advocates is a three-step process that will help any writer, from novice to experienced author, proceed in an orderly way that's designed to result in a finished product that represents the author's best work.

Ferrante, Elena. [In the Margins: On the Pleasures of Reading](#) (Europa \$20). "In these four pitch-perfect essays, the doyenne of Italian literature pores over her toolbox, discovering that reinvention is the name of her game... An essential read for all aspiring writers."—*Oprah Daily*. All four offer candid reflections on Ferrante's development as a writer. Growing up in what she calls a "literary patrimony," she at first tried to imitate men's works. Gradually, she realized that, as a woman, her challenge was "to learn to use with freedom the cage we're shut up in." Among the many writers who have shaped her work, Ferrante cites Virginia Woolf, who inspired her to think about her authorial self as a plurality, and Gertrude Stein, whose book *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* deftly subverted the autobiographical genre. "A vivid and concise introduction to effective writing for students and professionals alike... This book is a true treasure and could provide an important guide for other marginalized writers looking for their own voices."—*New York Journal of Books*

Nafisi, Azar. [Read Dangerously: The Subversive Power of Literature in Troubled Times](#) (Dey Street \$26.99). The author, an immigrant from Iran and professor of literature, of *Reading Lolita in Tehran* returns with a guide to the power of literature in turbulent times, arming readers with a resistance reading list, ranging from James Baldwin to Zora Neale Hurston to Margaret Atwood. What is the role of literature in an era when one political party wages continual war on writers and the press? What is the connection between political strife in our daily lives, and the way we meet our enemies on the page in fiction? How can literature, through its free exchange, affect politics? Some author's subversive works have landed them in danger. Drawing on her experiences as a woman and voracious reader living in the Islamic Republic of Iran, her life as an immigrant in the United States, and her role as literature professor in both countries, she crafts an argument for why, in a genuine democracy, we must engage with the enemy, and how literature can be a vehicle for doing so. Nafisi structures her book as a series of essays to her father with whom she used to discuss this broad topic.

And a novel:

Maher, Kerri. [The Paris Bookseller](#) (Berkley \$26). 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.

SOME MARCH HARDCOVERS

There are 109 new hardcovers listed by staff in our software for March but obviously many more titles than that will publish. I can't include them all let alone read them all so here's what we can cover. Please order anything you do not see via our Webstore – we can get you any book in print. Thank you.

Banwo, Ayanna Lloyd. [When We Were Birds](#) (Knopf \$27). In the old house on a hill, where the city meets the rainforest, Yejide's mother is dying. She is leaving behind a legacy that now passes to Yejide: one St Bernard woman in every generation has the power to shepherd the city's souls into the afterlife. But after years of suffering her mother's neglect and bitterness, Yejide is looking for a way out. Raised in the countryside by a devout Rastafarian mother, Darwin has always abided by the religious commandment not to interact with death. He has never been to a funeral, much less seen a dead body. But when the only job he can find is grave digging, he must betray the life his mother built for him in order to provide for them both. Yejide and Darwin will meet inside the gates of Fidelis, an ancient and sprawling cemetery, where the dead lie uneasy in their graves and a reckoning with fate beckons them. The Indie Next Pick calls this debut set in Trinidad a "powerful observations and her tender and mysterious writing on death reminded me of Steinbeck and of Valerie Perrin's [Fresh Water for Flowers](#) (\$16.95)—wholly unique, breathtaking, and beautiful from start to finish." I add that Perrin's debut is one of my all time favorite mysteries.

Bova, Ben. [Sam Gunn, Jr.](#) (Blackstone \$29.99). Intergalactic explorer, venture capitalist, and Casanova Sam Gunn may be gone, but his legacy lives on in his son, Sam Gunn, Jr. In his first-ever adventure, Sam Gunn Jr. sets off to fulfill his father's left-behind mission of interplanetary enterprising. He soon learns his father's shoes are tough to fill, but he is up for the task. Junior takes a journey through the stars, falling in love with beautiful women and leaving his unique mark everywhere he ventures. Soon, however, this trip through the universe takes a dangerous turn when Junior lands on Saturn and learns about a recent scientific discovery that will change everything, possibly forever. Will he be able to save the universe and live up to his father's name? This is the final novel completed by Bova who died in 2020.

ByeongMo, Gu. [The Old Woman with the Knife](#) (\$19.99). A sixty-five-year-old female assassin faces an unexpected threat in the twilight of her career—this is an international bestseller and the English language debut from an award-winning South Korean author. Kirkus reviews: "Hornclaw is an aging "disease control specialist" who's built a 45-year-long career on eliminating targets her agency's clientele deem "vermin" without asking any

questions—usually with a poisoned knife. Now her increasingly fragile health and the emotional ripples from an unexpected connection she makes with a doctor and his family threatens her plans for a leisurely retirement. Despite the peculiar objective of her work, Hornclaw must also navigate the mundane annoyances of corporate life, including bureaucracy, dismissive younger colleagues, and petty disagreements with management. The realistic detail with which Gu describes the agency's day-to-day operations prevents the novel from veering into a melodramatic blood bath, as do the novel's incisive observations about the harsh economic and social realities of modern Korean society, including economic recession, poverty among senior citizens, and the effects of the lingering American military presence. Behind the skillfully rendered (if occasionally drawn-out) fight scenes, Gu poignantly animates the desperate circumstances that motivate these characters to turn to contract killing in the first place."

Clark, Andrea Yaryura. [On a Night of a Thousand Stars](#) (Grand Central \$28). Anywhere from 9,000 to 30,000 people disappeared without a trace during Argentina's Dirty War in the 1970s. Called the *desaparecidos* (the Disappeared), the children of these missing parents are the subject of this debut novel where a young couple confronts the start of the war and a daughter searches for...what?...twenty years later. Footage from Clark's documentary project on the children of the Disappeared in Argentina is [available to watch here](#)—providing an emotional look at the heartbreak and resilience behind the novel.

Cranor, Eli. [Don't Know Tough](#) (Soho \$24.95). Trent Powers, the hero of Cranor's arresting debut, and his family move from California to Denton, Arkansas, where Trent has been hired to coach the Pirates, the town's high school football team. The Pirates make it to the playoffs, though things sour when star player Billy Lowe, who shares a trailer with his single mother, hits rich kid Austin Murphy too hard in practice, putting the coach in a bind on whether to play or bench Billy and placing him at odds with his wife, who's desperate to get back to California. Meanwhile, home life in the Lowes' trailer falls apart when Billy knocks out Travis Rodney, his mother's abusive boyfriend. The discovery of Travis's rotting body a week later raises the stakes. Cranor builds tension by shifting between third person and Billy's first-person account as the idealistic Trent contends with some powerful locals whose values are at odds with his own. Evocative prose is a plus ("Arkansas hills produce crazy like the Earth's mantle produces diamonds: enough heat and pressure to make all things hard"). Readers will be curious to see what Cranor does next.

Engberg, Katrine. [The Harbor](#) (Gallery \$28). Copenhagen serves as a favorite character in this series. Double burdens plague the Copenhagen Police Investigations Unit: a teenage boy from a wealthy family is missing, and a dead man's body is found at an incineration plant. Is there a connection? Did the boy run away? A cryptic typewritten note left for his parents suggests that the boy has been kidnapped. The family has received threatening letters before, but after 10 years together, fussy budget detective Jeppe Kørner and his temerarious partner, Anette Werner, have learned to look hesitantly at obvious conclusions. Engberg reliably showcases Copenhagen's attractions throughout the series, and in *The Harbor* shines a light on Thorvaldsens Museum, named for the Danish sculptor—although it's Ireland's

Oscar Wilde who plays a more critical role. As ever, Kørner's and Werner's personal lives provide supplemental drama in this our **March International Crime Book of the Month**.

"Engberg is an international best-selling author, and *The Harbor* showcases her considerable narrative gifts. Her characters are complex and prone to making bad but understandable personal decisions. Her writing is crisp and efficient; the pace, while brisk, still leaves room for third-act surprises. Reading Engberg feels like reading early Jo Nesbø, getting in on the ground of a major crime-writing career."—*NYT Book Review*. Note that we will also be talking to Danish author Sara Blaedel for more of Danish mystery in March.

Finlay, Alex. [The Night Shift](#) (St Martins \$27.99). The pseudonymous Finlay's strong sophomore effort after [Every Last Fear](#) (\$9.99) opens on New Year's Eve 1999 at a Linden, N.J., Blockbuster Video store, where the manager and three teenage employees are murdered; only a fourth employee, Ella Monroe, survives. The chief suspect, high school student Vince Whitaker, disappears. Fifteen years later, the words the killer whispered as he stabbed Ella, "Goodnight, pretty girl," still haunt her. When the Linden high school principal asks Ella, now a therapist, to counsel student Jessica Duvall, the only survivor of a copycat crime at a local ice cream store, she reluctantly agrees to do so. Thrust back into her nightmare, Ella struggles to help Jessica, who's fixated on the Blockbuster slayings. When Jessica is charged with the ice cream store murders, her public defender has reason to conceal his own ties to Whitaker. Meanwhile, as an FBI agent and a Linden police officer investigate, small-town secrets from the past and the present start to emerge.

Garrett, Kellye. [Like a Sister](#) (LittleBrown \$28). Charging into a new genre, Garrett says "I was fascinated with the idea about how a glam reality star could go from glamping it up in Hollywood to dying on a street corner in the Bronx." When the body of disgraced reality TV star Desiree Pierce is found on a playground in the Bronx the morning after her 25th birthday party, the police and the media are quick to declare her death an overdose. It's a tragedy, certainly, but not a crime. But Desiree's half-sister Lena Scott knows that can't be the case. A graduate student at Columbia, Lena has spent the past decade forging her own path far from the spotlight, but some facts about Desiree just couldn't have changed since their childhood. And Desiree would never travel above 125th Street. So why is no one listening to her? Despite the bitter truth that the two haven't spoken in two years, torn apart by Desiree's partying and by their father, Mel, a wealthy and influential hip-hop mogul, Lena becomes determined to find justice for her sister. Patrick and I are eager to read this and say more.

✠Gordon-Smith, Dolores. [The Chapel in the Woods](#) (Severn \$28.99). "British author Gordon-Smith's thrilling 11th Jack Haldean 1920s mystery takes novelist and amateur sleuth Haldean to Croxton Abbas, Sussex, where a 17th-century privateer built a fine house, Birchen Bower, as well as a chapel to contain the remains of his wife, an unhappy Peruvian princess who, locals say, haunts the woods in the form of a jaguar. After a rich Canadian couple, Tom and Rosalind Jago, buy Birchen Bower and show up to take possession, they discover that Derek Martin, their advance man, has vanished along with his wife—along with the Jago jewels that the Martins were entrusted with. More alarmingly, in the middle of a village fete, another man, the Jagos' caretaker, is

found dead in the chapel—and the wounds look like they were inflicted by a jaguar. Haldean is soon investigating the grisly killing, and the suspense ratchets up any time he or anyone else goes near the chapel, located in a thick forest filled with animal screams. The surprising revelations just keep coming." This is a real treat for those who enjoy Agatha Christie village murders but it's very slow paced, and very British.

✠Harkin, Jo. [Tell Me an Ending](#) (Scribner \$27). What if you once had a painful memory removed? And what if you were offered the chance to get it back? Set in the town of Crowshill, near London, *Tell Me an Ending* boldly imagines an eerily plausible present where people with unwanted memories can have them deleted by a secretive British tech company named Nepenthe. Harkin's intriguing debut features multiple interconnected narratives nestled within the larger whole, as well as characters whose memory deletions send them traveling across the globe in search of answers to missing pieces of their lives. Nepenthe's premise is deceptively simple: a PTSD sufferer or someone struggling with a distressing experience can have that traumatic memory erased in a safe and highly effective manner, deleting only the targeted memory and leaving everything else intact. The technology, it turns out, is not foolproof. Central to the story is the enigmatic Noor, a socially awkward Nepenthe psychologist with a tea addiction, who suspects her boss and mentor, Louise, is in violation of company policy. As Noor investigates Louise's actions, she is drawn into a horrifying cover-up at Nepenthe.

✠Harrison, Cora. [Spring of Hope](#) (Severn \$28.99). The prologue of Harrison's superior fourth Gaslight mystery teaming novelists Wilkie Collins and Charles Dickens, a melancholy letter written by Collins on his deathbed in 1889, sets the stage for flashbacks to 1859. In the wake of the Great Stink of 1858, during which an overwhelmed London sewer system combined with a heat wave to create a persistent foul odor in the metropolis, civil engineer Joseph Bazalgette, a friend of Dickens, is tasked with addressing the problem. But murder interferes, as Collins relates in his letter. During an exhibition of Bazalgette's proposed solution at a gathering attended by notables who include MP Benjamin Disraeli, a man, unidentified in the prologue, is killed in an explosion that sends metal fragments flying. Collins and Dickens, present at the gathering, come to believe the death was no accident and partner up to seek a murderer. Amid clever plot twists, Harrison maintains suspense as the action builds up to the fatal explosion, leaving readers in suspense as to who is killed and why. Collins and Dickens subsequently investigate. Victorian whodunits don't get much better than this.

Hendricks, Greer/Sarah Pekkanen. [The Golden Couple](#) (St Martins \$28.99). Risk taking has helped make Avery Chambers... the hottest mental health professional in Washington, D.C., but her maverick approach, at times incorporating techniques more typically employed by PIs (like tailing patients to check up on them), does have its dangers. Already on edge after making a whistleblower call to the FDA concerning a pharmaceutical company's malfeasance, the recent widow starts to experience unsettling events, like what looks to be a professional break-in of her home, around the time she begins treating lawyer Matthew Bishop and his wife, boutique owner Marissa. Avery senses there's much more going on with this power couple than their stated infidelity issue—but can even someone as resourceful as Avery get to the bottom of a relationship stretching back to the

pair's teens, and to the murder of Marissa's best friend back then, in time to avert disaster? The Indie Next Pick: "This dynamic duo did not disappoint with another twisty psychological domestic thriller. I love the psychological, unconventional approach Avery has with clients. Sometimes the unconventional way can lead to dangerous results." I add that the *Kirkus* reviewer has a caveat: "There's a thin line between gaslighting characters and gaslighting readers, and this novel crosses it." Not every twisty-plotted book is convincing.

✦Hill, Susan. [A Change of Circumstance](#) (Overlook \$27). The death of a young man from a heroin overdose drives a new investigation for DCS Simon Serrailler of the Lafferton, England, police. Serrailler's search for the identity of the victim draws him into a sordid world where lonely children are groomed and used as drug mules. Harrowing scenes focus on the home lives of an 11-year-old and a 14-year-old, both girls. Meanwhile, Cat Deerbon, Serrailler's physician daughter, becomes overly involved in the lives of her patients. Cat is also worried about her son's romantic relationship, the health of her little dog, and the painful leg injury of her husband, a chief constable. Serrailler does his own fair share of pondering whether he's ready to allow a woman to share his life. This one in a strong British series may be more like a soap opera than a crime novel but... who cares?

✦Lloyd, Sam. [The Rising Tide](#) (Scarlet \$25.95). Our **March British Crime Book of the Month** is unusual (and terrifying) in conception, and heart-stoppingly evocative of Britain as an island, highlighting its stormy relationship with the sea and the skills and traditions of its coastal communities. We are in Skentel, a small fishing village on the coast of Devon. Lucy Locke and her husband Daniel have thriving businesses, a little son together with Lucy's daughter Billie. They live in a large but nearly ruined home that feels like a protective fortress. Lucy has managed to make her business, the Drift Net—a combination live-music venue, gallery space for local artists, and eatery—a mainstay in her community. And then one dreadful day when a once-in-a-lifetime storm is bearing down, the family yacht turns up missing. As do Daniel, Billie, and Fin. Suddenly Lucy's unexpected storybook life, earned after many hard years, faces total implosion. The community rallies to the sea search despite the dangers. Detective Abraham Rose arrives—he's a fascinating character. And a new narrator intrudes, one bent on *Katharsis*... but why? And why target Lucy? Lloyd's blend of the power of the natural world and the complexities of human behavior is powerful if often overwrought but it's not the story that drew me, it's the community of Skentel and the power of the sea.

Luna, Louisa. [Hideout](#) (Doubleday \$27). Wealthy Anton Fohl asks Sacramento Valley private eye Alice Vega to find Zeb Williams, a man Fohl's wife dated during college who disappeared in 1984 at the end of the Big Game between Cal and Stanford. With seconds left in the fourth quarter and the score tied, Cal kicker Zeb was supposed to attempt a field goal, but instead he picked up the football and ran toward the wrong goal and out of the stadium, heading for parts unknown. Vega travels to Ilona, Ore., the last place Fohl says Zeb was seen. In Ilona, she meets schoolteacher Cara Simms, a target of harassment and vandalism, who confirms that Zeb lived there for a short while a few years earlier. When the town's "ethically challenged sheriff" proves less than interested in investigating the crimes against Cara, Vega noses around and unearths a local branch of a white

nationalist network, with which Zeb was apparently involved. Vega's PI partner, Max Caplan, lends support, but it is the no-nonsense Vega who carries the day.

✦MacMillan, Gilly. [The Long Weekend](#) (Harper \$27.99). Ruth, Jayne, and Emily, the protagonists of this well-crafted thriller, arrive one Friday at Dark Fell Barn, a guesthouse in the north of England, without their husbands, tight-knit school friends who were delayed at the last minute. Not joining the group is another friend, recently widowed Edie, who leaves a note at the barn informing the three women she has killed one of their husbands. With no cell service and a powerful storm trapping them, the three vacillate between panic and assuring themselves it's a mean prank from the manipulative Edie while hiding secrets of their own: physician Ruth has slid into alcoholism since giving birth, former military intelligence analyst Jayne has PTSD, and much younger Emily grapples with her traumatic childhood. Ruth's disappearance early the next morning and one of their husband's showing up alone raises more questions. The revelation of the real killer's identity, after many red herrings, sets up a suspenseful, prolonged but never bloated race to safety. Macmillan effectively shifts perspectives in this twisty, complicated puzzle."—PW

McCaw, Robert. [Treachery Times Two](#) (Oceanview \$27.95). The 4th case for Detective Koa Kane starts off with a bang as Hawaii experiences some seismic activity due to an active volcano on the island, which unearths graves in an isolated cemetery. However, when Kao and his team arrive to investigate the situation, they come across the fresh, mutilated corpse of a woman who, it seems, is not a local. The victim in question has been shot multiple times, but it's not clear if it happened before or after her death, and her fingertips are missing, leaving her identity somewhat of a mystery. The search for the identity of this Jane Doe quickly unfolds into an espionage adventure that is reminiscent of something out of a spy novel. Paradise turns into a nightmarish playground for Kao and his team as they follow up leads and find a complex mystery at the heart of the crime. The FBI eventually also becomes involved, which quickly turns a simple police procedural into a clever, twisty thriller. Try all four [Koa Kane Mysteries](#).

✦Perks, Heidi. [The Whispers](#) (Gallery \$27). The discovery of an unidentified body on a beach in Clearwater, England, kicks off a muddled thriller. I never could get the character dynamics straight, especially the foursome of school mums. Grace Goodwin left Clearwater at 17 when her family moved to Australia. Now, 19 years later, she has returned with her young daughter, while her husband continues his job in Singapore. Feeling lonely, she longs to reconnect with Anna Robinson, her best friend from childhood. However, Anna has found a small group of best friends, and, try as she might, Grace just doesn't fit in. After a drunken girls' night out at the pub, Anna goes missing, and Grace seems to be the only one who believes that harm may have come to her. With each passing day, Grace's anguish rises. Who is lying? Who in fact is a reliable narrator?

Pitoniak, Anna. [Our American Friend](#) (Simon & Schuster \$27.99). If ever there was a *roman à clef* this is it—a spy thriller crossed with a fictional biography of a First Lady—clearly Melania Trump. This is far less amusing than it was when I first read it before Russia invaded the Ukraine.

“Over the course of the novel, Pitoniak will gradually unspool the story of journalist Sofie Morse [who covered the scandalous first term of scandal-ridden President Henry Caine but is now hiding out in Split, Croatia with her husband Ben] as well as that of President Caine’s Moscow-born, Paris-raised, former-model wife, Lara, the beautiful, stylish, and self-possessed yet maddeningly (to the press and public) elusive first lady who has enlisted Sofie to write her biography. Pitoniak’s characters may sound familiar, but the author takes them in imaginative directions as she explores and expands upon their memories and motives and the moments in which, as they weigh individual sacrifice for greater good, their decisions change the trajectories of their lives. And although the book traffics in espionage-saga tropes—Cold War! Spies! Murder! Clandestine meetings! Secret signals! Hidden drops! The KGB! The CIA! They’re all here!—and Pitoniak ultimately wraps things up perhaps too prettily, it’s fun to pick up the clues and piece together the truth about Lara Caine, Sofie, and those with whom they interact as we toggle between exotic locales—Moscow, Paris, New York City, and Washington, D.C., in addition to Split—and the 1970s and present day. This lively political thriller mulls love, loyalty, and the rewards of playing the long game.”—*Kirkus Reviews*

Puhak, Shelley. [The Dark Queens](#) (Bloomsbury \$30). Here two queens engage in the cutthroat world of statecraft at the dawn of the Middle Ages. A thousand years before the famous family rivalry of Queen Elizabeth I of England and Mary, Queen of Scots, two sisters-in-law and queens in Merovingian France, whose histories were absorbed into legend, fought a civil war. After their deaths, Brunhild’s and Fredegund’s stories were retold during the Carolingian dynasty as a cautionary tale about women meddling in statecraft. Although the accomplishments of both women were minimized, pieces of their legend live on in opera, in Shakespeare and in today’s fantasy novels. Puhak, whose nonfiction work has been published in the *Atlantic* and *Best American Travel Writing*, unearths the real women and traces how their stories were used. She also imagines what it might mean if girls found them featured more prominently in their textbooks.

Runcie, James. [The Great Passion](#) (Bloomsbury \$28). Leipzig, 1726. Eleven-year-old Stefan Silbermann, a humble organ-maker’s son, has just lost his mother. Sent to Leipzig to train as a singer in the St Thomas Church choir, he struggles to stay afloat in a school where the teachers are as casually cruel as the students. Stefan’s talent draws the attention of the Cantor—Johann Sebastian Bach. Eccentric, obsessive and kind, he rescues Stefan from the miseries of school by bringing him into his home as an apprentice. Soon Stefan feels that this ferociously clever, chaotic family is his own. But when tragedy strikes, Stefan’s period of sanctuary in their household comes to a close. Something is happening, though. In the depths of his loss, the Cantor is writing a new work: the Saint Matthew Passion, to be performed for the first time on Good Friday. As Stefan watches the work rehearsed, he realizes he is witness to the creation of one of the most extraordinary pieces of music that has ever been written.

Scarrow, Simon. [Blackout](#) (Kensington \$27). Horst Schenke, the protagonist of this exceptional mystery set in 1939 Berlin, became a respected Kriminalpolizei inspector after a near-fatal accident six years earlier ended his career as a racing driver. His

decision not to join the Nazi party has stymied any hopes for advancement, but his distance from the party leads to his being tapped to investigate a high-profile homicide. Once-prominent film star Gerda Korzeny, ex-mistress of Josef Goebbels and wife of the Nazi attorney “who rewrites certain laws to make the party’s actions legal,” was found near some railroad tracks, her skull crushed by a single blow. Korzeny’s possessions were undisturbed, and her state of undress suggests she was resisting a sexual assault. Schenke’s role is to reduce the prospects of friction between Nazi factions and to serve as a scapegoat if things go south. Scarrow plausibly conveys the complexities of his hero’s efforts to do an honest job of seeking justice while serving under a corrupt and criminal regime. Fans of Philip Kerr’s Bernie Gunther will hope for a sequel.

Segura, Alex. [Secret Identity](#) (Flatiron \$27.99 with illustrations). A young Cuban-American woman has moved from Miami to New York with dreams of becoming a comic book writer. When the book begins, it’s 1975 and Carmen Valdez is working at Triumph Comics, a company that churns out books in the shadow of Marvel and DC. Carmen is a talented writer, but she’s stuck in an administrative role, making copies and fetching lunch for Triumph owner and editor-in-chief Jeffrey Carlyle. When a junior editor named Harvey Stern recruits Carmen to help him create a new superhero series for the company, she jumps at the chance. There’s an enormous catch, though: Carlyle has already nixed the idea of Carmen writing comics for him, so Harvey will take full credit until he decides the time is right to reveal that Carmen is his co-writer. If the arrangement sounds dodgy, it gets worse. The series they create, about a female superhero known as the Legendary Lynx, is a hit, but Harvey is murdered before he comes clean about Carmen’s role. Carmen sets out to find his killer and claim some part of the character she helped create—a quest that’s complicated when her ex-girlfriend arrives from Miami and inserts herself in Carmen’s rapidly spiraling life. “Segura’s infectious passion for superheroes shines in this page-turning mix of murder mystery and coming-of-age story.”—*PW Starred Review*.

Serle, Rebecca. [One Italian Summer](#) (Atria \$27). When Katy’s mother dies, she is left reeling. Carol wasn’t just Katy’s mom, but her best friend and first phone call. She had all the answers and now, when Katy needs her the most, she is gone. To make matters worse, their planned mother-daughter trip of a lifetime looms: to Positano, the magical town where Carol spent the summer right before she met Katy’s father. Katy has been waiting years for Carol to take her, and now she is faced with embarking on the adventure alone. But as soon as she steps foot on the Amalfi Coast, Katy begins to feel her mother’s spirit....Here is the #1 Indie Next Pick for March: “*One Italian Summer* is pure magic. Rebecca Serle marvelously creates a literary world that feels full and alive, like I can catch a flight with Katy and experience Italy alongside her. This treasure of a book is sure to delight readers.”

Sten, Camilla. [The Resting Place](#) (St Martins \$27.99). Eleanor has prosopagnosia, or face blindness, which prevents her from recognizing the person she witnesses murder her grandmother, Vivianne. Months later, still undergoing therapy for trauma caused by the experience, Eleanor learns she has inherited Solhögå, her grandmother’s manor house located in isolated Swedish woodlands, and she—along with her long-standing boyfriend, Sebastian; a hostile aunt, Veronika; and the estate’s

lawyer, Rickard—gather at Solhøga to sort out the details. Almost immediately, increasingly ominous incidents begin to occur: the groundskeeper who was supposed to meet them is missing, Eleanor sees a mysterious figure lurking on the grounds after dark, and unexplained accidents take place. It soon becomes clear that what's going on is tied to Vivianne's hidden past. Suspense builds steadily as a body is discovered and a winter storm traps the party. Sten first published [The Lost Village](#) (\$17.99).

Stringfellow, Tara M. [Memphis](#) (Random \$27). Summer 1995: Ten-year-old Joan, her mother, and her younger sister flee her father's explosive temper and seek refuge at her mother's ancestral home in Memphis. This is not the first time violence has altered the course of the family's trajectory. Half a century earlier, Joan's grandfather built this majestic house in the historic Black neighborhood of Douglass—only to be lynched days after becoming the first Black detective in the city. Joan tries to settle into her new life, but family secrets cast a longer shadow than any of them expected. As she grows up, Joan finds relief in her artwork, painting portraits of the community in Memphis. One of her subjects is their enigmatic neighbor Miss Dawn, who claims to know something about curses, and whose stories about the past help Joan see how her passion, imagination, and relentless hope are, in fact, the continuation of a long matrilineal tradition. Unfolding over seventy years through a chorus of unforgettable voices that move back and forth in time, *Memphis* paints an indelible portrait of inheritance, celebrating the full complexity of what we pass down.

Taylor, D.C. [LA Burning](#) (Crooked Lane \$27.99). Cody Bonner, the vulnerable, tough-minded protagonist of this stunning thriller from Taylor, rejected the decorative social role intended for her as a movie star's daughter and instead slid into addiction and crime as a teen. After serving six years in prison for a bank robbery, she's now intent on solving the murder of her identical twin, Julie, a lawyer whose body was found on a Malibu beach two years earlier. While she's gathering information from her high school friends who are now showbiz execs, her attention is drawn to Harry Groban, her mother's powerful agent, who has allegedly sexually abused young women. When she learns that Julie had been investigating Groban, she begins feverishly planning her revenge. But she hasn't been paying enough attention to a determined LAPD lieutenant, who's out to nail her for the bank robberies she got away with. As the action builds relentlessly to an apocalyptic conclusion in the heart of a Southern California wildfire, Taylor reveals how complex human motivation can be. He's upped his game with this frightening, exciting eye-opener told in propulsive prose.

✱Walsh, Rosie. [The Love of My Life](#) (Penguin \$28). Emma loves her husband Leo and their young daughter Ruby: she'd do anything for them. But almost everything she's told them about herself is a lie. And she might just have got away with it, if it weren't for her husband's job. Leo is an obituary writer; Emma a well-known marine biologist. When she suffers a serious illness, Leo copes by doing what he knows best – researching and writing about his wife's life. But as he starts to unravel the truth, he discovers the woman he loves doesn't really exist. Even her name isn't real. When the very darkest moments of Emma's past finally emerge, she must somehow prove to Leo that she really is the woman he always thought she was...But first, she must tell him about the other love of her life. Emma loves her husband Leo and their young daughter Ruby: she'd do anything for them. But almost

everything she's told them about herself is a lie. And she might just have got away with it, if it weren't for her husband's job. Leo is an obituary writer; Emma a well-known marine biologist. When she suffers a serious illness, Leo copes by doing what he knows best – researching and writing about his wife's life. But as he starts to unravel the truth, he discovers the woman he loves doesn't really exist. Even her name isn't real.

When the very darkest moments of Emma's past finally emerge, she must somehow prove to Leo that she really is the woman he always thought she was.... But first, she must tell him about the other love of her life.

OUR MARCH LARGE PAPERBACK PICKS

This list is so outstanding you could spend all of March just with this collection

Ames, Jonathan. [A Man Named Doll](#) (\$15.99) is “a smart, sharp, and stylish noir for the modern day. In his cinematic tour of Los Angeles that is both gritty and gorgeous, Ames has delivered a novel that is both current and timeless and has introduced a sleuth who fits all the old traditions while creating his own. Crime at its finest!” —Ivy Pochoda. L.A. PI Hank “Happy” Doll (Happy is his real name; his parents “didn’t think it was a joke”) meets an old friend—Lou Shelton, an ex-cop who once saved Doll’s life—who needs a huge favor: a kidney. He wants to buy one of Doll’s. That evening, Doll, at his second job handling security for a massage parlor, shoots and kills a meth-head freak who goes after one of the masseuses, then attacks Doll with a knife. Later, Shelton appears at Doll’s door, shot and near-dead, and hands Doll a diamond. The people who shot Shelton are now after Doll, who becomes enmeshed in a scheme, in which Doll and his sometime girlfriend, Monica Santos, are meant to be victims. While the macabre seriousness of the crimes and the narrator’s good-nature and sardonic humor might seem to be at odds, Ames makes it work through assured plotting, superb local color, and excellent prose. Readers will happily root for Doll, a good detective and a decent human, in this often funny and grisly outing.”—*PW* Starred Review

Andrews, Alexandra. [Who is Maud Dixon?](#) (\$16.99) is so much fun! And delivers such a twist (I half saw it). It's a book about writers and identities and wickedness. “Identity theft takes on a new meaning in this fresh and arresting thriller, a Hitchcockian mashup about egos in every sense of the word. Here are a couple of interview questions and Andrews’ answers: “What sparked the idea for your book? AA: Perhaps not surprisingly, given the subject matter of my novel, the idea was sparked by two literary preoccupations: rereading *The Talented Mr. Ripley* and watching the world obsess over the true identity of Elena Ferrante. But on a more basic level, I just set out to write the kind of book I wanted to read: fast-paced and fun without ever underestimating the reader’s intelligence. GR: What’s your definition of a perfect mystery? AA: The perfect mystery is one that convinces you that you know what’s going to happen, only to take you entirely by surprise. And if we’re really aiming for perfection, let’s throw in sharp dialogue, multifaceted characters, and a richly drawn setting as well. Oh, let’s go wild: a sense of humor, too.” AA concludes by listing her favorite authors: Patricia Highsmith, Gillian Flynn, Jane Harper, Joseph Kanon, Sarah Waters, Eric Ambler, and John LeCarré. Which tells you all you want to know about this debut that was a First Mystery Book of the Month last March.

Barr, Lisa. [Woman on Fire](#) (\$16.99). Is it a crime if you steal from a robber? That is the heart of the plot. Ambitious fledgling reporter Jules Roth lands a job working for her personal hero, investigative journalist Dan Mansfield, who appreciates the young woman's moxie. He invites her to join his small team, which is attempting to track down *Woman on Fire*, the last work of German Expressionist Ernst Engel, who was murdered in 1939. Dan is pursuing the painting on behalf of his good friend, famed shoe designer Ellis Baum, whose mother posed for the masterpiece. Young Ellis had seen the painting being taken from his home by a Nazi officer, and now, as he's nearing death, longs for it to be returned to his family. Jules and the team aren't the only ones lusting after the elusive picture, which is now worth millions. Ruthless Margaux de Laurent, considered the most important gallerist in the world, will stop at nothing to possess it. The action leaps between art capitals in the United States and Europe, intermingling the action-packed present day with thrilling episodes from the 1930s and 1940s that reveal *Woman on Fire*'s turbulent history. I admit I am a sucker for art crime and the fate of masterpieces and of course for the book about Klimt's *The Lady in Gold* and Helen Mirren movie *Woman in Gold*.

Brown, Sandra. [Blind Tiger](#) (\$17.99). The year is 1920 when Thatcher Hutton, a war-weary soldier, jumps from a moving freight train and lands in Foley, Texas, the state's Moonshine Capital. As luck would have it—or perhaps “unluck”—a local woman goes missing on the same day. Being the new guy in town, Thatcher is Suspect Number One in her abduction. Meanwhile, widowed Laurel Plummer is hoping for a fresh start when she dives into the regional moonshine industry—and the good ol' boys aren't happy about it. As violence erupts, Laurel and Thatcher—now a deputy—find themselves on opposite sides of a savage moonshine war. Brown gives us a crooked sheriff, a notorious cathouse madam, a sly bootlegger, feuding moonshiners, and of course, in true Sandra Brown fashion, a smoldering romance. She is also attuned to the different ways people face adversity, some triumphing, some despairing.

Note: We have a few Signed Firsts left at a special price: [Blind Tiger](#) (\$20).

Charles, Janet Skeslien. [The Paris Library](#) (\$17.99) brings to life the true story of the American Library in Nazi-occupied Paris during its war on words. “A testament to the power of literature and literary places to bring people home, even during our darkest, most hopeless, and divided times,” says the Indie Next Pick. Structured in two tracks, 1939 Paris and 1983 Montana, it is a tale for lovers of books and libraries as well as the ever burgeoning WWII fiction genre. It brings to life the true story of the heroic librarians along with its interwoven narrative of a bereft teenager in 1980s Montana who finds a kindred spirit in her mysterious, reclusive, and book-loving French neighbor. Charles herself writes: “I wrote this novel as a love letter to libraries, to bookstores, and to book people. In these difficult days, we need the sanctuaries of bookshops and libraries more than ever.”

✱Harris, CS. [What the Devil Knows](#) (\$17). Harris pits her aristocratic sleuth, Sebastian St. Cyr, against a killer possibly connected to a notorious real-life series of murders. In 1814, St. Cyr is consulted by magistrate Sir Henry Lovejoy after Lovejoy's colleague, Sir Edwin Pym, is found dead in a London alley, his throat slit and his head bashed in. The m.o. matches the recent

death of a seaman. The slaughter of a high-ranking official and nobleman is unsettling enough, but the two killings also resemble the horrific Ratcliffe Highway murders of 1811, which claimed seven lives in two households and terrified the city. While sailor John Williams was charged with those homicides, he apparently hanged himself while awaiting trial, and doubts linger as to whether he was guilty. That history leads St. Cyr to reinvestigate the proof against Williams, even as his father-in-law, Lord Jarvis, the real power behind the throne, insists that the inquiry be circumscribed to avoid agitating an already restive population. Harris makes good use of the available evidence concerning the historical crimes, crafting a clever and suspenseful plot. You longtime crime readers will remember PD James teamed up with TA Critchley to write a true crime take on the Ratcliffe Highway Murders in [The Maul and the Pear Tree](#).

Harris joins me April 4 with her new St. Cyr mystery: [When Blood Lies](#) (Berkley \$26 Signed).

Katsu, Alma. [Red Widow](#) (\$17). Lyndsey Duncan, one of two female CIA officers at the center of this quiet but gripping espionage thriller more in the spirit of the late John Le Carré than, say, Alex Berenson, has just returned to CIA headquarters in Langley, Virginia, her reputation tainted by an affair she had with a British intelligence officer in Lebanon. Nonetheless, she's assigned to check out rumors of a mole in the CIA's Moscow operation. Lyndsey's investigation eventually leads her to analyst Theresa Warner, who's still reeling from the apparent death of her husband, an agency spy handler who disappeared in Russia two years earlier while on a mission. Will a suspicious Theresa discover that her husband is still alive, in a Russian prison, and the CIA has been lying to her? And if so, what is she to do? “Katsu, a former intelligence analyst, captures the thorny but oddly intimate alliance between two CIA officers who share an adversarial relationship with their employer, while providing an intriguing look at the day-to-day office politics and jostling that goes on behind Langley's walls. Best known for her novels of psychological terror, Katsu shows a sure hand at a new genre.” I am very impressed, being also a fan of Joseph Kanon's wonderful work. Alan Furst, too. This is Katsu's 6th novel and she is under contract to write another—such excellent news. I love the way she draws upon her career in intelligence to craft this elegant and ultimately poignant and human story of spy tradecraft.

Leon, Donna. [Transient Desires](#) (\$17). Can it be the 30th for Commissario Guido Brunetti? Yes. And it reflects the Venetian policeman's weariness with his job and his city. The focal point is the culture of the Giudecca, its insularity, and a kind of local boss with an iron grip that may be hard to break. It begins when two young American tourists are dropped off at the hospital's dock, one of them seriously injured. Cameras reveal two young men in a boat (naturally) ferried the women there. They are soon identified as a well-to-do young lawyer and his childhood friend, a boatman. Patient and persistent inquiry ensues, ringing in the coast guard and naval commandos, leading to a rousing finale.

Leon joins me from Switzerland on March 12 10:00 AM MST for the national launch of the new Brunetti [Give Unto Others](#) (Grove \$27 Signed tip-ins). The UK edition: [Give Unto Others](#) (Heinemann \$45)

Mackintosh, Clare. [Hostage](#) (\$16.99). “A 20-hour, nonstop plane flight from London to Sydney provides the claustrophobic backdrop for this terrifying thriller from bestseller Mackintosh.

Flight attendant Mina Holbrook trades shifts to join the crew of World Airways Flight 79, preferring to contend with sometimes demanding business class passengers than to face her rapidly deteriorating marriage to police detective Adam Holbrook. Mina is sure Adam has been sleeping with their Ukrainian au pair, who recently quit her job caring for their five-year-old daughter, Sophia. A few hours into the flight, Mina receives a note demanding she help an unknown terrorist group divert the plane. If Mina refuses, Sophia will die. What starts as a domestic drama focused on the Holbrooks' marital problems becomes the airborne equivalent of a classic country house mystery. The suspense builds as Mina, whose co-workers think she's shirking her duties, tries to determine who among the 353 passengers are part of the terrorist plot. Surprising twists propel the story to an unexpected finale. Mackintosh has raised her game with this one."—*PW*. I add that she serves up an extra twist which is most pleasing.

McDermid, Val. [Still Life](#) (\$17). This gloriously plotted and paced police procedural featuring Glasgow's Karen Pirie begins with a body found near Edinburgh in the Firth of Forth but segues to Ireland for some great action that includes a historic disappearance, art forgery, and secret identities....

O'Rawe, Richard. [Northern Heist](#) (\$17.99). "O'Rawe channels both Elmore Leonard and Guy Ritchie in this heist thriller full of sharp twists and gritty dialogue, emerging with a style all his own. His reimagining of the real-life bank heist feels so authentic readers will hope he has a strong alibi. Ken Bruen fans won't want to miss this one." —*PW* starred review

Reich, Christopher. [The Palace](#) (\$16.99). Something of a modern Renaissance man, reformed thief and Marseilles gangster Simon Riske blends a criminal youth with more socially acceptable adult activities and, in addition to his day job as a restorer of world-class sports cars, markets himself as a high-end fixer. When the novel opens, he is engaged in stealing back a Monet first stolen from the Rijksmuseum. Predictable complications arise. Riske is asked to mediate the release of Rafael de Bourbon, an old friend who is being held by Thai officials on questionable charges, but before he can secure the man's freedom, de Bourbon and several others are killed in a shootout. It turns out Rafa was privy to a large-scale swindle involving the sovereign wealth funds of several nations, and he was killed to preserve the secrets of the swindle. Riske naturally decides to pursue justice for Rafa and to uncover the swindle, partly to benefit Rafa's wife, who once had a thing with Riske. And—there's more. Super fun. Order [all 3 Risks](#). Reich will join us sometime in April to sign his 4th, [Once a Thief](#) (Little Brown \$28).

Sten, Camilla. [The Lost Village](#) (\$17.99) "draws you in with its spooky premise—the disappearance of an entire town—but great atmospherics and unexpected twists keep you turning the pages. For fans of haunted reality TV shows, Scandinavian thrillers, and all things relentlessly creepy." —Alma Katsu. Alice Lindstedt is a documentary filmmaker chasing the story of Silvertjärn, a remote Swedish village whose residents vanished without a trace in 1959. Alice has assembled a small crew that will spend five days filming there, in the hopes of getting material that will inspire investors to fund the project. As soon as they arrive, however, a series of unexplained occurrences make it clear that Alice and company aren't alone in Silvertjärn. Someone (or something) is keeping tabs on them. Whatever it is, it's not happy they're in town.

Willig, Lauren. [A Band of Sisters](#) (\$16.99). Prolific author and historian Willig smelled drama" when she read about Smith College alumnae who volunteered to aid civilian victims in World War I France. *Band of Sisters*, based on letters from these 18 women, pays faithful homage to their bravery as well as their friendship. "It was like college again—college with the threat of impending destruction, that was," Kate Moran thought as the Smith College Relief Unit left a war-weary Paris for the rubble of the French countryside and their assigned village, Grécourt. Memories of July's festive dockside sendoff in New York had faded as fast as their smart gray uniforms soiled in the mud. With Kate and her former roommate Emmie Van Alden as the novel's lead protagonists, the women's talents and personalities emerge. A harrowing denouement leads to a postwar epilogue, a well-deserved farewell to the brave "Smithies." Prepare to fall in love with these intrepid women and all their faults and foibles.

SOME LARGE PAPERBACKS FOR MARCH

The publisher's name indicates a paperback original. Dates do shift unexpectedly so we appreciate your patience

✱Candlish, Louise. [The Heights](#) (Atria \$17). At the start of this mesmerizing psychological thriller, lighting consultant Ellen Saint is working with a new client on a London warehouse conversion when she spots a person she recognizes on the roof of a nearby building. That man, Kieran Watts, however, has been dead for more than two years—or so Ellen thought, because she, along with her ex-significant other, Vic Gordon, contracted with someone to kill him. The murder-for-hire scheme was revenge against the "monster who destroyed" her life when Vic's and her 19-year-old son, Lucas, died in a car accident, for which she blames Kieran, the car's driver. The current sighting resurrects devastating memories and provokes Ellen, who fears for her new family, to try again to kill Kieran. Obsession, deception, betrayal, and injustice follow. Chapters from Vic's point of view, from both past and present, help build tension. In the end, the narrative threads cross in a heart-stopping confrontation that tests Ellen's lifelong phobia for high places.

Cleave, Paul. [The Quiet People](#) (Orenda \$15.95). Writers Cameron and Lisa Murdoch, the couple at the center of this superior thriller set in Christchurch, New Zealand, have jokingly boasted that they'd be able to outsmart the police, based on their cleverness in plotting bestselling crime fiction. Then their seven-year-old son, Zach, whose problems dealing with frustration make him a handful, goes missing the morning after he said he planned to run away. The Murdochs call the police, but the authorities soon come to believe that the disappearance was involuntary, and Cameron and Lisa become suspected of killing their child, who was both a financial and emotional burden. The pressures increase when a disgraced journalist and would-be novelist, who once accused the Murdochs of stealing a story line, goes public with allegations that Cameron abused Zach and out-of-context video interview clips that present the two as conscienceless fiends. Sections from Cameron's perspective humanize him even as Cleave keeps readers guessing as to the Murdochs' culpability and Zach's fate. The psychological depth of the leads bolsters the complex plot. This merits comparison with the work of Patricia Highsmith

Dray, Stephanie. [The Women of Chateau Lafayette](#) (\$17). "Stephanie Dray's latest is a masterpiece, braiding three stories

into a single tale of courage, humanity, and women triumphing in the face of overwhelming odds. Three heroines with seemingly nothing in common—a French Revolution Founding Mother struggling to preserve her family, a World War I socialite turned passionate activist, and a World War II orphan pulled into the French Resistance—turn out to have everything in common as they struggle through the chaos of three separate wars to forge a united legacy. —Kate Quinn

Galligan, John. [The Nail Knot](#) (Gallery \$18). From the author of the Bad Axe County thrillers comes his first novel in the Fly Fishing Mystery series about a wayward fisherman, Ned “Dog” Oglivie, who finds himself in the middle of a small-town murder investigation. When the going gets tough, Ned “Dog” Oglivie goes fly fishing. Driven by tragedy to turn his back on human society, the Dog is on a quest to trout-fish himself into oblivion all across America. Plying the back highways of the country in an old RV, provisioned with a supply of peanut butter sandwiches, bad cigars, and a loaded pistol (for when the money runs out), the Dog rolls into little Black Earth, Wisconsin, intending to fish the yellow sally stonefly hatch...and stumbles upon a body instead. Who killed Jake Jacobs, a fellow fly fisher who was trying to save Black Earth Creek? Why was he disfigured in such a peculiar way? Why does the Dog even give a damn? By caring about the death of a stranger, can the Dog recover his own life? An excellent read for fans of Keith McCafferty.

Greenidge, Kaitlyn. [Libertie](#) (\$16.95). The Indie Next Pick: “*Libertie* is an immersive novel and profound meditation on freedom — born free or formerly enslaved, in America, Haiti, or Liberia — while up against grief, sexism, racism, colorism, or classism. A much-needed inspiration!”

Hilliard, M E. [The Unkindness of Ravens](#) (\$16.99). “Greer Hogan, the smart, self-reliant narrator of Hilliard’s first-rate debut and series launch, used to be an executive at a New York City cosmetics firm, until she realized that she needed a change. ‘So, I went to the place where I always felt safe and happy—the library. More precisely, library school.’ She has recently taken her first job as a librarian in the small town of Raven Hill, where her only friend is Joanna Goodhue, with whom she went to college. The library is housed in Raven Hill Manor, a gothic pile “full of small mysteries and historical oddities.” One night, while insuring that no stray patrons are still on the premises at closing time, Greer discovers Joanna’s lifeless body. Did Joanna fall and hit her head? Everyone, including the police, wants the death ruled an accident. But Greer disagrees and brings her skills as a keen observer to her investigation, tipping off readers when all the clues are in place with more finesse than Ellery Queen. Her carefully doled out backstory actually explains her need to solve the murder. This superior cozy should win Hilliard plenty of fans.”—*PW*

Hirahara, Naomi. [An Eternal Lei](#) (\$17.99). By October 2020, travel restrictions have eliminated the tourism industry on Kaua‘i, and Leilani Santiago’s hopes of marketing her original shave-ice flavors beyond Hawaii have been dashed. She’s diverted from worries about her own future when an unconscious woman washes ashore on Waimea Bay. Before administering CPR, Leilani removes a lei from the woman’s body that reveals blistering on her chest and back. Leilani preserves the lei, which turns out to have a link to her best friend, Courtney Kahuakai, and Courtney’s family’s flower business. The woman is taken to

a hospital, where she’s put into a medically induced coma. The police identify her as Yumi Hara, a Japanese travel agent who recently broke quarantine. At her peril, the ever curious Leilani looks into how Yumi ended up on the beach. A murder raises the ante in this sequel to [Iced in Paradise](#) (\$16).

Holton, India. [The League of Gentlewomen Witches](#) (Berkley \$16). “In this sequel to [The Wisteria Society of Lady Scoundrels](#) (\$16)—a *NY Times* Notable Book of 2021—Charlotte is one serious witch who knows via prophecy that she will one day lead the Wicken League. But when a handsome Irish pirate catches her eye, she may bring the wrath of the entire clan of witches down on her. Filled with wit and an intriguing enemy-to-lovers romance. For fans of Jane Austen and Evie Dunmore,” says Library Reads. I can’t attest to these comparisons being true.

Jones, Stephen Graham. [My Heart Is a Chainsaw](#) (\$16.99)” is a painful drama about trauma, mental health, and the heartache of yearning to belong...twisted into a DNA helix with encyclopedic Slasher movie obsession and a frantic, gory whodunnit mystery, with an ending both savage and shocking. Don’t say I didn’t warn you!” —Christopher Golden

Lansdale, Joe R. [Born for Trouble: The Further Adventures of Hap & Leonard](#) (Subterranean \$16.95). “You could call *Born for Trouble* a collection of stories. But that’s like calling *Paradise Lost* by Milton a poem. *Born for Trouble* is a road map through 20th-century crime fiction, and your guides are two of the greatest, most intriguing characters ever created, Hap and Leonard. Rambunctious, complex, and endlessly fascinating, these two best friends offer a clear yet sometimes painful view of America in general, and East Texas in particular.” —S.A. Cosby. 2022 Edgar nominee.

Larson, Erik. [The Splendid and the Vile](#) (\$20). The life and times of Winston Churchill may be among the most well-trod ground in historical nonfiction, but perennial bestseller Larson makes it feel fresh, with new sources, a tight focus and a propulsive storytelling instinct. Hitler, initially reluctant to wage war on Britain, was incensed by Churchill’s refusal to negotiate peace. In preparation for an amphibious assault across the English Channel, he ordered the destruction of the Royal Air Force. Bombings in London and Berlin soon escalated into massive attacks against British civilians, the Blitz. Larson depicts Churchill as an indomitable leader, inspiring a fighting spirit in his cabinet and the public. Yet Churchill’s family, staff and colleagues sometimes suffered under his constant demands or were plagued by personal problems of their own. Larson blends domestic drama with the destruction of cities to riveting effect using previously unpublished sources.

Mayne, Andrew. [Sea Storm](#) (Thomas & Mercer \$15.95). Love this Starred *PW* Review: “Thriller Award finalist Mayne’s pulse-pounding third Underwater Investigation Unit thriller opens with police diver Sloan McPherson and her partner, Scott Hughes, speeding in their rescue boat toward a cruise ship in distress off the Florida coast. The ship is listing, smoke is coming out of the portholes, and there’s an explosion on the bridge. Once aboard, Sloan and Scott help get passengers and crew to safety. Early speculation is a terrorist attack, but no one claims credit. When the FBI takes over, the UIU is pushed aside, but Sloan and Scott continue to look into a local ecoterrorist. Nothing, however, adds up: evidence is contradictory, suspects go missing then

turn up dead, and purported thieves repeatedly try to board the stranded ship. As the UIU tries to determine why, powerful foes target the group, putting its future in doubt. The fast-paced plot is filled to the brim with fascinating characters, and the locale is exceptional—both above and below the waterline. One doesn't have to be a nautical adventure fan to enjoy this nail-biter." True enough. Order all [three Underwater Investigation Units](#) for great escape reading.

McKenzie, Catherine. [Six Weeks to Live](#) (\$17). Jennifer Barnes never expected the shocking news she received at a routine doctor's appointment: she has a terminal brain tumor—and only six weeks left to live. While stunned by the diagnosis, the forty-eight-year-old mother decides to spend what little time she has left with her family—her adult triplets and twin grandsons—close by her side. But when she realizes she was possibly poisoned a year earlier, she's determined to discover who might have tried to get rid of her before she's gone for good. But with her daughters doubting her campaign against their father, Jennifer can't help but wonder if the poisoning is all in her head—or if there's someone else who wanted her dead. So, family drama mixed with whodunit, if anyone....

Parry, HG. [A Radical Act of Free Magic](#) (\$17.99). In the second chapter in the Shadow Histories, The Concord has been broken, and a war of magic engulfs the world. In France, the brilliant tactician Napoléon Bonaparte has risen to power, and under his command, the army of the dead has all but conquered Europe. Britain fights back, but Wilberforce's own battle to bring about free magic and abolition has met a dead end in the face of an increasingly repressive government. In Saint-Domingue, Fina aids Toussaint Louverture as he navigates these opposing forces to liberate the country. But there is another, even darker war being fought beneath the surface: the first vampire war in hundreds of years. The enemy blood magician who orchestrated Robespierre's downfall is using the French Revolutionary Wars to bring about a return to dark magic. Recommended to readers of [Jonathan Strange and Mr. Norrell](#) (and why was there never a Season 2 to finish the story?).

Patterson, James/Maxine Paetro. [21st Birthday](#) (\$17.99). In the 21st Women's Murder Club investigation, Detective Lindsay Boxer takes a vow to protect a young woman from a serial killer for long enough to see her twenty-first birthday.

Sears, Michael. [Tower of Babel](#) (\$16.95). Queens, New York—the most diverse place on earth. Native son Ted Molloy knows these streets like the back of his hand. Ted was once a high-powered Manhattan lawyer, but after a spectacular fall from grace, he has found himself back on his home turf, scraping by as a foreclosure profiteer. It's a grubby business, but a safe one—until Ted's case sourcer, a mostly reformed small-time conman named Richie Rubiano, turns up murdered shortly after tipping Ted off to an improbably lucrative lead. With Richie's widow on his back and shadows of the past popping up at every turn, Ted realizes he's gotten himself embroiled in a murder investigation that tours you all around Queens.

Robuck, Erika. [Sisters of Night and Fog](#) (Penguin \$17). Two women risk it all to help the French Resistance. Former American teacher Virginia d'Albert-Lake lives in France with her French husband, Philippe. Together they endure the German occupation, and Virginia refuses to return to the U.S. despite pleas from

her mother. French-speaking Englishwoman Violette Bushell marries French Legionnaire Étienne Szabo after a whirlwind courtship in London. After Étienne leaves to fight the Germans in Egypt, Violette joins the Special Operations Executive and Virginia and Philippe join the Resistance. Virginia and Violette meet when they are arrested and taken to Fresnes Prison near Paris, and their bond strengthens as they endure the hardships of imprisonment and, later, life at the Ravensbrück concentration camp, where Violette inspires heroic efforts in support of their fellow prisoners. Robuck lures the reader into the mud and the muck alongside the protagonists as they face the dangers and destruction wrought by the conflict.

Stonex, Emma. [The Lamplighters](#) (\$17). British author Stonex's spectacular debut wraps a haunting mystery in precise, starkly beautiful prose. In 1972, a boatman arrives at the desolate Maiden Rock lighthouse off the coast of Morte Haven, Cornwall, to pick up one of its three keepers for a scheduled break. Instead, he finds the trio—principal keeper Arthur Black; Black's junior, Bill Walker; and third-in-command Vincent Bourne—gone. The tower is locked from the inside, the log chronicles strange storms that never happened, and the clocks are stopped at 8:45. Twenty years later, a writer determined to crack the unsolved mystery contacts the women the lighthouse keepers left behind. Stonex balances the everyday with the horrific, highlights the damage that isolation can visit (as we have learned over the past two years), and presents a believable, chilling solution.

Stuart, AM. [Evil in Emerald](#) (Berkley \$17). I really enjoyed the way Stuart recreated the world of Edwardian-era Singapore in [Singapore Sapphire](#) and [Revenge in Rubies](#) (\$16 each). Now Harriet Gordon takes on a new role. Between working at her brother's school and typing up Inspector Robert Curran's police reports, Harriet has little time for personal pursuits and she has been enjoying the rehearsals for her role in the Singapore Amateur Dramatic and Musical Society's latest production – *Pirates of Penzance*. But Harriet quickly discovers tensions run deep within the theatre company and when the leading man is found murdered, suspicions abound, exposing scandalous behavior as well as some insidious crimes. Inspector Curran once again turns to Harriet for help with this difficult case, but his own life begins to unravel as a mysterious man turns up on his doorstep claiming to know more about Curran's painful past than he himself does.

Ward, Annie. [The Lying Club](#) (\$16.99). An office assistant at a fancy private school in Colorado, Natalie has nothing in common with wealthy school moms Brooke, a controlling heiress, and perpetually worried Asha—except that all three are attracted to the school's dashing young assistant athletic director, Nicholas. What's that got to do with two deaths at the school that eventually overturn the entire community?

Wendig, Chuck. [The Book of Accidents](#) (\$18). Much acclaimed literary horror sure to wow fans of Stephen King. Here's the *LJ* Starred Review: "How do we cope with a world damaged beyond repair? Do we abandon it in hopes that a new world fares better? Or do we fight for what's good beneath the wounds and scars? Nate and Maddie Graves reluctantly return to their hometown, in the hopes of giving their son Oliver an opportunity to start over. Nate and Maddie are chased by their dark pasts, and that darkness is seemingly pursuing Oliver too. Thankfully, Oliver's new friend

Jake seems poised to protect him. But Jake has secrets and some darkness of his own. Wendig's latest is a bold, impressive novel with fierce intelligence and a generous, thrumming heart; this is the author writing at the height of his powers. It's intimate and panoramic. It's humane and magical. It's a world-hopping, time-jumping ride that packs a deep emotional punch. Wendig blends horror, fantasy, and small-town family drama in an ambitious epic that spans both a multitude of worlds and the interior expanse of the human heart."

Westlake, Donald E. [Call Me a Cab](#) (Hard Case Crime \$14.95). Can a novel of suspense be successful if there is no murder, no crime? Here Westlake responds You Bet as he tells us about a NYC taxi driver hired to drive a gorgeous dame all the way across America to Los Angeles—where she has a life-forming decision to make. How we miss Westlake, such a master of so many forms.

White, Loreth Anne. [The Patient's Secret](#) (Thomas & Mercer \$12.95). Inspired by real events, this exceptional psychological thriller centers on therapist Lily Bradley and her psychology professor husband, Tom, who live with their two children in Story Cove, British Columbia. When Tom finds the body of a female jogger on the beach, a broken string of beads in her hand, Sgt. Rue Duval, the lead police investigator on the Jogger Killer case, believes the woman could be the serial killer's latest victim. Rue identifies the deceased as a single mother whose 16-year-old son, Joe, recently started a relationship with the Bradleys' 12-year-old daughter, Phoebe. Tom and Lily suspect each other of hiding secrets related to the murder and mutually agree to protect their secrets, determined to preserve their family. Meanwhile, the number of suspects grows as the police search for a match to the broken strand of beads. White does a superb job keeping the reader guessing as she peels back the layers of a seemingly perfect family to reveal the shocking truth. Scary that this fiction rises from a true crime.

Wilkerson, Toby. [A World Beneath the Sands](#) (\$18.95). From the decipherment of hieroglyphics in 1822 to the discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb by Howard Carter and Lord Carnarvon a hundred years later, the uncovering of Egypt's ancient past took place in an atmosphere of grand adventure and international rivalry. This immensely readable true deep dive into the Golden Age of Egyptology is fascinating and will delight fans of Elizabeth Peters' [Amelia Peabody](#) series, Steven Saylor's [Novels of Ancient Rome](#) #14 and #15, and Dana Stabenow's [The Eye of Isis](#) mysteries. Even *Downtown Abbey* fans will enjoy a look at Lord Carnarvon who owned Highclere where *Downtown* was filmed.

Wortham, Reavis Z. [The Texas Job](#) (Poisoned Pen \$15.95). Tracking a murderer clear across the state, Tom lands in the boomtown of Kilgore, known historically as "the most lawless town in Texas." The discovery of oil in 1931 has turned the sleepy farm community into a den of murder and corruption. The throes of an oil boom sets up an "unpretentious, gonzo (PW)" universe of ruthless capitalists carpetbaggers, swindlers, rough necks, and prospectors blindly chasing high hopes blatantly ignoring authorities and decimating Native populations. Powerful interests vie to rule the space where motives are always crossed. Some players are so powerful that even a Texas Ranger is expendable if he gets in their way. "As Texas Ranger Tom Bell moves center stage, a reader imagines Gary Cooper walking real

slow down a dusty street...the unkillable Ranger goes from hero to superhero." — *Booklist*

OUR MARCH SMALL PAPERBACK PICKS

Brennan, Allison. [Tell No Lies](#) (\$9.99). Quinn and Costa #2. Detective Kara Quinn and FBI special agent Matt Costa team up to investigate the unsolved murder of a college activist whose demise may be linked to a high-stakes crime organization in the Southwest desert.

Cameron, Marc. [Bone Rattle](#) (\$9.99). Arliss Cutter #3. Pulled from their duties to keep track of sequestered jurors in a high-profile trial involving a massive drug conspiracy, Arliss Cutter and Deputy Lola Teariki realize that they are dealing with something much bigger, and darker, than a simple drug trial when the prosecuting attorney is murdered."Cameron draws on his own service as a deputy federal marshal in Alaska and his expertise in tracking down people, and he does a good job balancing the multiple plotlines as well as characterization and action." (*PW*)

Cole, Alyssa. [When No One is Watching](#) (\$9.99). Finding unexpected support from a new friend while collecting stories from her rapidly vanishing Brooklyn community, Sydney uncovers sinister truths about a regional gentrification project and why her neighbors are moving away. This is a terrific and timely story.

Dodd Christina. [Wrong Alibi](#) (\$9.99). Sentenced to life in prison for a murder she did not commit, eighteen-year-old Evelyn escapes and works under an alias at a wilderness camp, where her chance at revenge is complicated by a former employer's mysterious connections.

Hamilton, Glen Erik. [Island of Thieves](#) (\$8.99). Van Shaw #6. Hired to evaluate the safety precautions around an art collection of business tycoon Sebastian Rohner, Van Shaw finds himself the prime suspect after a dead body is found on the estate. "Hamilton's fast-paced plot never loses its way despite numerous jaw-dropping twists. Fans of Jeffery Deaver and Jeff Lindsay will be enthralled." (*PW*)

Koryta, Michael, ed. [When a Stranger Comes to Town](#) (\$9.99) This story collection from Mystery Writers of America features tales of terrifying encounters with strangers from a variety of popular mystery and crime fiction authors including Michael Connelly, Dean Koontz, Joe Hill and Attica Locke.

Matthews, Jason. [The Kremlin's Candidate](#) (\$9.99). In the final, thrilling installment of the Red Sparrow Trilogy, Russian counterintelligence chief Dominika Egorova and her lover, CIA agent Nate Nash, must find a Russian agent about to be appointed to a very high office in the US government.

Moss, Korina. [Cheddar Off Dead](#) (St Martins \$8.99). Cheese Shop #1. Everything goes wrong at Willa Bauer's newly-opened, French-inspired cheese shop in Sonoma Valley, Curds & Whey, when the local food critic is discovered stabbed to death there, making her the prime suspect.

MARCH SMALL PAPERBACKS

Baker, Bree. [Pleading the Fish](#) (Sourcebooks \$8.99). Seaside Café #7. Everly Swan's wedding plans are upended by the appearance of a dead body, which means Everly will not only have to run her teashop and find just the right wedding dress, she'll have to catch a murderer before she can walk down the aisle.

Bentley, Don. [Tom Clancy Target Acquired](#) (\$9.99). Jack Ryan Jr. #8. Taking on a cushy assignment in Israel at the request of Ding Chavez, Jack Ryan Jr. finds himself the target of trained killers after he helps protect a woman and her young son from a very determined killer.

Coco, Nancy. [A Matter of Hive and Death](#) (Kensington \$8.99). Oregon Honeycomb #2. To catch the killer of a bee wrangler, honey shop owner Wren Johnson sets the town abuzz when she launches her own investigation all while the town is flooded with UFO festival attendants who swarm her with conspiracy theories.

Gerritsen, Tess. [Thief of Hearts and Beneath the Badge](#) (Harlequin \$6.99). Reissue. Reformed cat burglar Clea Rice has witnessed enough crimes to put her on the straight and narrow. But little does she suspect that her search for justice will land her in the arms of wealthy English gentleman Jordan Tavistock. Also includes Beneath the Badge by Rita Herron

Harris, Sherry. [Three Shots to the Wind](#) (Kensington \$8.99). Sea Glass Saloon #3. When her ex-fiancé arrives in Florida, determined to win her back, and winds up dead instead, saloon owner Chloe Jackson must clear her new boyfriend's name of murder when he becomes the prime suspect. *Kirkus* called this "an enjoyable cozy read with plenty of suspects, romance, and a beachy vibe."

Hollis, Lee. [Poppy Harmon and the Pillow Talk Killer](#) (Kensington \$8.99). Desert Flowers #3. Cast in her first role in decades, retired-actress-turned-private investigator Poppy Harmon investigates the murder of a social-media influencer whose demise stirs up memories of a serial-killer case from Poppy's time as a young actress.

James, Miranda. [What the Cat Dragged in](#) (\$8.99). Cat in the Stacks #14. Librarian Charlie Harris and his faithful feline companion, Diesel, have inherited Charlie's grandfather's house, along with a deadly legacy: a decades-old crime scene.

King, Stephen. [Cell: A Novel](#) (\$9.99). Reissue. Mayhem and violence are unleashed around the world when a pulse from a mysterious source transforms all cell phone users into savage, unthinking, homicidal maniacs, and only a small band of "normies" who somehow avoided the technological attack can stop the rampage.

Loudon, Margaret. [Peril on the Page](#) (Berkley \$8.99). Open Book #3. While putting the final touches on her new book, American Gothic novelist Penelope Parish, along with the quirky citizens of Chumley, investigates the murder of an author inside the bookshop.