

BOOKNEWS from

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Happy Valentine's Day to all

Opening Hours M-Fri 10 AM-7 PM; Sat 10 AM-6PM; Sun 12-5 PM

Note: Event times are in Mountain Standard time

Note: The events marked "Live" offer Signed books. The virtual events do so when noted

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.

WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 1 7:00 PM Live
Australia's Jane Harper discusses [Exiles](#) (Flatiron \$27.99)
Federal Investigator Aaron Falk in wine country

TUESDAY FEBRUARY 2 7:00 PM Live
Deborah Royce discusses [Reef Road](#) (Post Hill \$27)
Remarkable thriller based on a true event

FRIDAY FEBRUARY 3 3:00 PM Special Preview Event
Hank Phillippi Ryan discusses [The House Guest](#) (Forge \$27.99)
Two women in a surprising cat and mouse game
Signed books available

SATURDAY FEBRUARY 4 2:00 PM Live Book Launch
Deborah Crombie with Rhys Bowen
Crombie discusses [A Killing of Innocents](#) (Harper \$30)
Scotland Yard's Kincaid and James

MONDAY FEBRUARY 6 7:00 PM Live Book Launch
James Rollins discusses [The Cradle of Ice](#) (Forge \$28.99)
Moonfall #2
Watch this exciting [video trailer](#)

TUESDAY FEBRUARY 7 5:00 PM
Tom Robb Smith with Pat King
Smith discusses [Cold People](#) (Scribner \$28)

WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 8 5:00 PM
Doug Burgess and Mark De Castrique
Burgess discusses [A Legacy of Bones](#) (Poisoned Pen \$16.99)
Mystery set on a private Hawaiian island
De Castrique discusses [Secret Lives](#) (Poisoned Pen \$16.99)
A 2023 Sue Grafton Memorial Award nominee

WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 8 6:30 PM
Kwai Quartey discusses [Last Seen in Lapaz](#) (Soho \$27.95)
Nigerian PI Emma Djan

FRIDAY FEBRUARY 10 7:00 PM
SciFi Friday discusses Kurt Vonnegut's [Slaughterhouse Five](#) (\$7.99)

MONDAY FEBRUARY 13 1:00 PM Live
Special Book Clubs presentation with John Charles
Booklists will be distributed! Refreshments will be served!

Is your book club looking for its next great read? Or, are you just hoping to find one or more terrific titles to add to your TBR stack? John Charles and Joanne Hamilton-Selway have some books for you! These two professional book mavens with a combined total of more than seventy-five years working in public libraries and bookstores will spill the tea on their current favorite picks as well as dish the dirt on what will be some of the most talked about titles of 2023. Join John and Joanne for what promises to be a lively discussion of what is hot – and what is not – in literary world

TUESDAY FEBRUARY 14 4:00 PM US Book Launch
Sydney's Michael Robotham discusses [Lying Beside You](#) (Scribner \$27.99)
British sleuths Cyrus Haven and Evie Cormac return

WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 15 7:00 PM Live
Yasmin Angoe and Gregg Hurwitz
Angoe discusses [They Come at Knight](#) (Thomas & Mercer \$24.95)
Assassin Nina Knight
Hurwitz discusses [The Last Orphan](#) (St Martins \$28.99)
An Orphan X thriller

THURSDAY FEBRUARY 16 1:00 PM
UK's Lexie Elliott discusses [Bright and Deadly Things](#) (Penguin \$27)
A delicious Dark Academic set in an Oxford Colleges' retreat in France
A British Crime Club book of the month

THURSDAY FEBRUARY 16 6:00 PM
Charles Todd discusses [The Cliff's Edge](#) (Harper \$27.99)
A Bess Crawford Mystery
Signed books available

FRIDAY FEBRUARY 17 6:30 PM Live

Daniel Suarez with Pat King

Suarez discusses [Critical Mass](#) (Penguin \$28)

A Delta-V space-tech thriller following [Delta-V](#)

SATURDAY FEBRUARY 18 10:30 AM

Croak and Dagger discuss SJ Bennett's [The Windsor Knot](#) \$16.99)

MONDAY FEBRUARY 20 7:00 PM Live

Mark Greaney with Kyle Mills

Greaney discusses [Burner](#) (Berkley \$29)

The Gray Man

TUESDAY FEBRUARY 21 1:00 PM

Harriet Tyce with Alex Michaelides

Tyce discusses [It Ends at Midnight](#) (Sourcebooks \$27.99)

British legal thriller

TUESDAY FEBRUARY 21 7:00 PM Live Book Launch

Steve Berry discusses [The Last Kingdom](#) (Grand Central \$29)

Cotton Malone in Bavaria

An exclusive picture postcard comes with each of our copies

WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 22 5:00 PM

Brian Andrews and Jeffrey Wilson with Don Bentley

Former SEALS Andrews and Wilson discuss [Dempsey](#)

(Blackstone \$16.99)

THURSDAY FEBRUARY 23 5:00 PM

Kathleen Kent with Dan Fesperman

Kent discusses [Black Wolf](#) (Mulholland \$29)

Our February International Mystery of the Month

Signed books available

THURSDAY FEBRUARY 23 7:00 PM

Hardboiled Crime discusses Dashiell Hammett's [The Dain](#)

[Curse](#) (\$14.95)

FRIDAY FEBRUARY 24 4:00 PM

Rick Bleiweiss with Heather Graham

Bleiweiss discusses [Murder in Haxford](#) (Blackstone \$26.99)

Signed books available

FRIDAY FEBRUARY 24 7:00 PM Live

Walter Mosley with Patrick

Mosley discusses [Every Man a King: A King Oliver Novel](#)

(Mulholland \$28)

MONDAY FEBRUARY 27 7:00 PM Live Book Launch

CJ Box with Nick Petrie

Box discusses [Storm Watch](#) (Penguin \$29)

Joe Pickett

TUESDAY FEBRUARY 28 7:00 PM Live

JT Ellison with Nick Petrie

Ellison discusses [It's One of Us](#) (Mira \$27.99)

Domestic thriller with issues of infertility

OUR FEBRUARY BOOKS OF THE MONTH

British Crime Club One unsigned hardcover or paperback per month

Crombie, Deborah. [A Killing of Innocents](#)

Cozy Crimes Club One unsigned hardcover or paperback per month

Lipman, Eleanor. [Ms Demeanor](#)

First Mystery Club One Signed First Printing per month

Yamashita, Iris. [City Under One Roof](#)

The Crime Collectors Book of the Month Club One Signed

First Printing per month

Harper, Jane. [Exiles](#)

History/Mystery Club One Signed First Printing per month

Lasky, Katherine. [Light on Bone](#)

Notable New Fiction One Signed First Printing per month

Fenkl, Heinz Insu. [Skull Water](#)

International Crime One Unsigned Hardcover or paperback per month

Kent, Kathleen. [Black Wolf](#)

Romance & Relationships One Unsigned Hardcover or 2 paperbacks per month

Lester, Natasha. [The Three Lives of Alix St. Pierre](#)

SIGNED BOOKS

Angoe, Yasmin. [They Come at Knight](#) (Thomas & Mercer \$24.95). "There's nothing ho-hum about Nena Knight, the killer at the heart of Yasmin Angoe's *They Come at Knight*... In one blistering action scene after another, we get to see how good Nena is at what she does." —*NY Times Book Review*. Happy families may be all alike, but the family of Noble Knight, who took Nena in after her birth father was killed, is something else. Noble plays a prominent role in the African Tribal Council; Nena herself, trained as a warrior, heads a Dispatch team of professional assassins targeting anyone who threatens the Council; and Noble's birth daughter, Elin, is pregnant with the baby of Oliver Douglas, whom Nena killed in [Her Name Is](#)

[Knight](#). Now new threats seem to have reached a boiling point. Not only has someone been embezzling from the Council; rumors that someone has infiltrated its ranks and passed information to one of its many enemies are confirmed when the planned assassination of General Konate goes south, leaving most of Nena's Dispatch team dead and Nena herself grieving and struggling to figure out who she can and can't trust. After a mission from Ghana to Gabon to strengthen a crucial alliance leads to more explosive violence, Nena thinks she's plumbed the depths of treachery, but she's only tasted its first fruits. Angoe, who seems to draw inspiration from a combination of Black Panther and Black Widow, keeps the betrayals coming as allies

closer and closer to Nena show their true colors through their attempts to bend the Council to their own nefarious ends. Both titles are also available in paperback (\$15.95 each).

Berry, Steve. [The Last Kingdom](#) (Grand Central \$29). **Our copies come with an exclusive collectible.** And let me tell you, I have visited King Ludwig's palaces including the one in the book, and know the story of his life and mysterious death backwards, not to mention the role of composer Richard Wagner in Ludwig's extravagant reign. The true story is a true gothic, but Berry turns it into a thriller getting this review: In bestseller Berry's high-octane 17th novel featuring Cotton Malone, Malone, a former intelligence officer who worked 12 years with the Magellan Billet, a covert Justice Department unit, and is now living in Denmark, where he owns and operates a rare book shop, comes out of retirement to assist his protégé, Luke Daniels. Daniels has infiltrated a group bent "on doing some bad things to the U.S." that is linked to Bavarian prince Stefan von Bayern. The prince wants Malone and Daniels to visit Bavaria's Herrenchiemsee Palace, built by Ludwig II, the notorious mad king, to search for a valuable document. The document is connected with Ludwig's desire to realize his enigmatic dream of acquiring "the last kingdom"—and to his mysterious death in 1886, supposedly by accidental drowning. Malone soon finds himself shot at and drawn into aiding Daniels further." The reveal of this mysterious document's true nature will be fun for you. It's good to have Cotton back in the field instead of cloistered in his Copenhagen bookshop.

✚Bleiweiss, Rick. [Murder in Haxford](#) (Blackstone \$26.99). A delightful day in 1910 at the Haxford Spring Fair turns horrifying and deadly when a balloonist plummets to the earth from the blue skies above. However unlikely, it's soon discovered that this unfortunate corpse was not done in by his precipitous plunge but instead from an arrow fatally lodged in his chest. Unraveling the twisted web of intrigue that took the man's life requires the expert skills of Haxford's brilliant and sartorially splendid Chief Inspector Pignon Scorbion. But the quirky detective is not alone in this task. Aiding Scorbion in his dogged pursuit of truth and justice are his carefully chosen deputies: six quirky and unconventional thinkers from the town who meet regularly with Scorbion in Calvin Brown's barbershop to unmask ne'er-do-wells and solve local crimes. Since his move to the charming village, the enigmatic detective has also realized his growing dependence upon its bookshop's owner. Lovely and quick-witted Thelma Smith not only helps Pignon with his criminal cases, but she seems well on her way to unlocking the mysteries of his heart. But not everyone in Haxford is so cooperative.... Begin with [Pignon Scorbion and the Barbershop Detectives](#) (\$17.99).

Box, CJ. [Storm Watch](#) (Putnam \$29). When a prominent University of Wyoming professor goes missing, authorities are stumped. That is, until Joe Pickett makes two surprising discoveries while hunting down a wounded elk on his district as an epic spring storm descends upon him. First, he finds the Chinese professor's vehicle parked on a remote mountainside. Then Joe finds the professor's frozen and mutilated body. When he attempts to learn more, his investigation is obstructed by federal agents, extreme environmentalists, and Governor Colter Allen. Meanwhile Nate Romanowski is rebuilding his falconry company—and financing this through crypto mining with the assistance of fellow falconer Geronimo Jones. He's then

approached by a shadowy group of local militant activists that is gaining in power and influence, and demanding that Wyoming join other western states and secede from the union—by force, if necessary. They ask Nate to throw in with them. So the stage is set... will Nate throw in with the gang, or with Joe?

Chakraborty, Shannon. [Adventures of Amina Al-Sirafi](#) (Harper \$30). The bestselling author of [The City of Brass](#) (\$18.99) and its sequels spins a new trilogy of magic and mayhem on the high seas filled with pirates and sorcerers, forbidden artifacts, and ancient mysteries, in one woman's determined quest to seize a final chance at glory—and write her own legend. Amina al-Sirafi should be content. After a storied and scandalous career as one of the Indian Ocean's most notorious pirates, she's survived backstabbing rogues, vengeful merchant princes, several husbands, and one actual demon to retire peacefully with her family to a life of piety, motherhood, and absolutely nothing that hints of the supernatural. But when she's tracked down by the obscenely wealthy mother of a former crewman, she's offered a job no bandit could refuse: retrieve her comrade's kidnapped daughter for a kingly sum. The chance to have one last adventure with her crew, do right by an old friend, and win a fortune that will secure her family's future forever? It seems like such an obvious choice that it must be God's will. Yet the deeper Amina dives, the more it becomes alarmingly clear there's more to this job, and the girl's disappearance, than she was led to believe. Pat King of our staff is a fan of Chakraborty's work.

Christie, Annette. [For Twice in My Life](#) (LittleBrown \$28). Phoenix author Christie pens a new rom-com. Layla's chaotic life transformed when she met Ian Barnett. Ambitious, committed, and thoughtful, Ian has been everything she'd dreamed of, and she knows he'd say the same of her. So when he breaks up with her out of the blue, Layla is stunned. What went wrong? But then, Layla gets a call from the local hospital. Ian's had a biking accident. He's okay, but he needs someone—his someone—to get him home safely. As it becomes clear Ian doesn't remember he ended things, it also becomes clear that the accident has given him a new outlook on life . . . and Layla a second chance to get things right. That is, until Ian's younger brother comes to town. Matt is restless, unpredictable, and threatens to upset the careful balance Layla and Ian have rebuilt. As things get more complicated both at home and at work, Layla realizes she might lose her chance at real love—and real happiness—if she doesn't come clean

Croft, Rachel Koller. [Stone Cold Fox](#) (Penguin \$27). **Publishes February 24, signed here March 2.** Bea, the scheming narrator of screenwriter Croft's lively debut, has learned from the best, a mother who groomed her from childhood how to deceive men. Now Bea, a senior business development director at a major New York City ad agency, wants it all for herself—and she wants it from über-wealthy one percenter Collin Case, an agency client. But two other women shadow Bea's every move as she sinks her nails into Collin's old-money family: Gale Wallace-Leicester, Collin's longtime conniving best friend, who also has designs on the family; and Sylvia Austin, his new inquisitive assistant with nefarious plans of her own. One jaw-dropping bombshell after another emerges during luxurious family gatherings in Greenwich, Conn.; an over-the-top lobster-stuffed and liquor-drenched weekend marriage proposal party at Newport, R.I.; a French-themed bridal shower with "this little perverse sect of

society”; and the extravagant Rainbow Room wedding itself, culminating in totally unexpected revelations from the past. The intricate plot, illuminating backstories, and assorted reprehensible secondary characters expose a devastatingly “pernicious interpretation of love.” This clever tale of jealousy, revenge, deception, and betrayal marks Croft as a writer to watch. *LJ* says, “Croft’s writing is engaging and will keep the reader wondering what will happen to Bea until the end. This is a must-read for fans of Gillian Flynn’s *Gone Girl* or Lisa Unger’s *Confessions on the 7:45*.”

✚Crombie, Deborah. [A Killing of Innocents](#) (Harper \$30). Bestseller Crombie’s skillfully plotted police procedural featuring the husband and wife team of Detective Superintendent Duncan Kincaid and Detective Inspector Gemma James of Scotland Yard perfectly balances the investigative action with the characters’ true to life personal problems. The duo and their colleagues are called to Russell Square, where Sasha Johnson, a trainee doctor at Thomas Coram Hospital, lies dead, stabbed in the chest. The victim’s assailant acted swiftly and efficiently, fading away into the crowd before even she realized she’d been mortally stabbed. Why would anyone want to murder the respected and much loved doctor? The stakes rise after the nurse in charge of Sasha’s ward at the hospital is fatally stabbed in Soho Square. Once again, there are no witnesses. What’s the connection between the two murders? Crombie provides an excellent gallery of suspects and motives amid entertaining interplay, including some friction, among the members of the squad who pursue various threads of a complex investigation. The excellent map of part of London is a plus. This entry can be read as a standalone which makes it perfect for our **February British Crime Club Book of the Month**. *LJ* adds in its Starred Review, “Crombie is as skilled as Louise Penny or J.D. Robb in developing characters while entwining personal lives with riveting police investigations.”

Doolittle, Sean. [Device Free Weekend](#) (Grand Central \$28) **Signed March 1**. This wild and woolly thriller gathers six keyed-up college BFFs for what amounts to a 30th reunion on the private island off Puget Sound owned by social media CEO Ryan Cloverhill, the seventh member of their circle. The first hint of anything wrong for the two married couples and one pair of exes is their host’s stipulation that all devices are to be surrendered on arrival. The second, unmistakable clue, comes when the six guests wake up in Ryan’s luxury compound to find no sign of him, a single blinking touchscreen tablet the only potential means of communication to the outside world, and then suddenly four of them are trapped inside the main building and the remaining two, who had gone outside, hopelessly locked out. They soon discover it’s not a misguided effort by the eccentric mogul to create an escape room experience but something far more dangerous. This circus quickly careens out of the control of its ostensible ringmaster... “Imagine a gritty, hyper-realistic version of *The Glass Onion* chock full of philosophical inquiries about the consequences of social media, and you’re getting close to what Sean Doolittle has pulled off in his latest novel, *Device Free Weekend*. Part techno thriller, part love letter to the 90s”—and IMHO living proof that Agatha Christie can morph into all manner of stories.

Douaihy, Margot. [Scorched Grace](#) (Zando \$27.95). This debut is the first book to publish under Gillian Flynn’s imprint at Zando and will be our **April First Mystery Book of the Month even**

though it publishes in February. Gillian will appear at The Pen with Margot on April 22, whom I met at the Minneapolis Bouchercon. I advise you to order early, and we will charge and hold your copy until their live event. Picture Sister Holiday, a chain-smoking, heavily tattooed, queer nun in a small community of aging sisters in a New Orleans convent, scene of the crime.

Here is one of the Starred Reviews: “Sister Holiday Walsh, the narrator of poet Douaihy’s stunning fiction debut and series launch, calls herself ‘the first punk nun.’ This cursing, chain-smoking queer nun who wears gloves and a heavy scarf to hide her tattoos is unlike any nun encountered on the page or in real life. Yet Holiday is most sincere about her faith in God, her devotion to the Catholic Church, and finding a home among the Sisters of the Sublime Blood in New Orleans. When Saint Sebastian’s School where she teaches is targeted by an arson attack in which a beloved janitor dies, Holiday turns sleuth to find the attacker and save the school, which is in danger of being closed by the diocese. More fires—and deaths—occur as Holiday’s investigation heats up, pitting her against her fellow sisters and staff. Given her background, she becomes a prime suspect. This briskly plotted master class in character development makes the most of its New Orleans setting, “the crucible... of miracles and curses.”

Ellison, J T. [It’s One of Us](#) (Mira \$27.99). Secrets, lies, and DNA strands intertwine in this twisty thriller about the meaning of family and the battle between nature and nurture. Interior designer Olivia Bender has almost everything—a loving husband, Park, a rewarding career, and a beautiful home—but no children. After six miscarriages, she’s not sure she can go through it again. When the police knock on their door, Olivia and Park learn secrets that ignite a firestorm in their lives. Someone in Nashville is killing women, and DNA indicates the suspect is Park’s son. But how? Park soon admits donating to a sperm bank in college. Although horrified about the killings, he is secretly happy he has a child. Teenager Scarlett Flynn runs a chat room for the “Halves,” people whose DNA is related to one man, their biological father. She’s obsessed with trying to find the father she’s wanted her whole life. Now it seems one of the Halves is a murderer. Ellison spotlights the issue of infertility, based on her own experiences, then adds betrayal, obsession, and familial ties that bind to create a tension-filled story with an intriguing theme and her trademark surprise conclusion. Authors like Ruth Ware and Lisa Unger appreciate Ellison’s work, as do I.

Library Reads adds: “J.T. Ellison has written a beautiful story from start to finish. Olivia and Park struggle with infertility. A woman is found dead, and DNA shows the murderer is related to Park. Not only is this a well-done mystery of whodunit, it is also a drama of what happens as a couple deals with loss. Another great book from an incredible author and for fans of *All the Dangerous Things*.”

Fenkl, Heinz Insu. [Skull Water](#) (Spiegel & Grau \$28). Our **February Notable New Fiction Book of the Month** earns this Starred Review—and yes, I am influenced by the joy of Netflix’s fabulous South Korean series, Extraordinary Attorney Woo, and also by my love of Martin Limon’s brilliant thrillers set in 8th Army South Korea’s posting: Fenkl returns a quarter century after *Memories of My Ghost Brother* with a mesmerizing narrative of a boy named Insu, whose mother is Korean and whose father served in the U.S. Army. After moving back to Korea from

Germany in 1974, teenage Insu finds solace with his friends in rebellious acts like ditching school and selling stolen goods on the black market. Then Insu hears an ancient Korean myth from a monk that imbibing water collected from inside a human skull can cure any disease, prompting him to dig up a corpse in order to find skull water to cure his uncle, Big Uncle, a geomancer who suffers from a gangrenous foot and has been exiled to a cave to die. Fenkl elegantly weaves Insu's quest, which doesn't go quite as planned, with a parallel story of Big Uncle in the 1950s during the Korean War. Throughout, the author sustains an otherworldly sense of time and place, and brings to life conceits from Korean folktales ("Past and future—only the words are different, and if one disposes of them, all things become smooth and easy"). It's a lovely achievement.

Greaney, Mark. [Burner](#) (Berkley \$29). Former CIA officer Court Gentry, aka The Gray Man, is sinking the yachts of wealthy criminal Russians on the behalf of an ex-pat Ukrainian oligarch, a freelance job Gentry considers honorable in the face of Moscow's war on Ukraine, but next is locating his lost lover, former SVR operative Zoya Zakharova. In Zurich, Swiss banker Alex Velesky meets with Russian financial planner Igor Krupkin, who wants to strike at Russia because his son died while fighting in Ukraine. Krupkin has two phones loaded with state secrets regarding money that Russia has used to finance secret illegal operations in the West. He wants Velesky, who also hates Russia, to give one phone to the owner of a forensic accounting firm and the other to a shady lawyer so the material can be organized and made public. Gentry and Zoya are hired independently of each other to retrieve the phones. The two plots run parallel until the missions intersect and the two lovers are reunited and face almost impossible odds. Enjoy impressive spycraft and action scenes that are intense without being cartoonish.

Mark appears here with Kyle Mills whose books we will also have in stock.

✚Griffiths, Elly. [The Last Remains](#) (Quercus \$40). This is the last Ruth Galloway for awhile so grab it. When builders renovating a café in King's Lynn find a human skeleton behind a wall, they call for DCI Harry Nelson and Dr. Ruth Galloway, Head of Archaeology at the nearby University of North Norfolk. Ruth is preoccupied with the threatened closure of her department and by her ever-complicated relationship with Nelson, the father of her child. However, she agrees to look at the case. Ruth sees at once that the bones are modern. They are identified as the remains of Emily Pickering, a young archaeology student who went missing in the 1990s. Emily attended a course run by her Cambridge tutor. Suspicion falls on him and also on another course member, Ruth's friend Cathbad, who is still frail following his near death from Covid. As they investigate, Nelson and his team uncover a tangled web of relationships within the student group and the adults leading them. What was the link between the group and the King's Lynn café where Emily's bones were found? Then, just when the team seems to be making progress, Cathbad disappears! I will be zooming with Elly on April 25th to discuss this book and the whole series which is among my very favorites.

Harper, Jane. [Exiles](#) (Flatiron \$27.99). International sensation Harper is back with a new mystery featuring Aaron Falk, the detective from her bestselling novel and major motion picture [The Dry](#) (\$16.99), and from 2018's [Force of Nature](#) (\$16.99). And, how lucky we are to see her again at The Pen, and to get

to explore yet another chapter in her full literary sweep around Australia's regions.

Here's a Starred Review: "Harper's stellar third outing for Falk of the Australian Federal Police's financial division, takes him back to the town of Marralee, the site of a popular food and wine festival. A year earlier, Falk was in Marralee when a tragedy occurred. During that year's festival, 39-year-old Kim Gillespie left the stroller containing her five-week-old daughter in the stroller storage area—and disappeared. Despite frantic searches, Kim never turned up, though her shoe was found in a nearby reservoir, leading to the belief that she drowned there. Falk agrees to revisit the mystery at the behest of Zara, Kim's teenage daughter, and Greg Raco, a friend of Falk. The inquiry suggests a possible link to another unresolved case—the hit-and-run death of accountant Dean Tozer six years earlier, also coinciding with the Marralee festival. Writing at the top of her game, Harper effectively uses whodunit tropes to explore her characters' hidden lives. Readers interested in literate and nuanced mysteries will be eager to see more of Falk."

Holmes, Rupert. [Murder Your Employer: The McMasters Guide to Homicide](#) (Avid Reader Press \$28). **Out Feb. 21, signs here March 9** as he has a play opening in Phoenix on March 10. **It will be our March Crime Collectors Book of the Month.** Maybe you've been part of *The Thursday Murder Club* (by Richard Osman) or enjoyed the literary Easter-eggs in Anthony Horowitz's mystery *Magpie Murders*. If so! It's time to join The McMasters Conservatory for the Applied Arts as designed by Rupert Holmes. It's the diabolical lessons they never taught you in school! Opening to the first page is your admission to a delightful read. "Who hasn't wondered for a split second what the world would be like if a person who is the object of your affliction ceased to exist? But then you've probably never heard of The McMasters Conservatory, dedicated to the consummate execution of the homicidal arts. To gain admission, a student must have an ethical reason for erasing someone who deeply deserves a fate no worse (nor better) than death. The campus of this 'Poison Ivy League' college—its location unknown to even those who study there—is where you might find yourself the practice target of a classmate...and where one's mandatory graduation thesis is getting away with the perfect murder of someone whose death will make the world a much better place to live. A delightful mix of witty wordplay, breathtaking twists and genuine intrigue, *Murder Your Employer* will gain you admission into a wholly original world, cocooned within the most entertaining book about well-intentioned would-be murderers you'll ever read." I am a mad fan of Holmes' books and plays and am delighted he is returning to The Pen after a long absence.

Hurwitz, Gregg. [The Last Orphan](#) (St Martins \$28.99). When Evan Smoak remade himself from an off-the-books assassin for the government as part of the Orphan program to the Nowhere Man, dedicated to helping the most desperate in their times of trouble, Evan found himself slowly back on the government's radar. Having eliminated most of the Orphans in the program, the government will stop at nothing to eliminate the threat they see in Evan. But Orphan X has always been several steps ahead of his pursuers. Until he makes one little mistake.... Now the President, the new one, not the one he offed, has him in her control and offers Evan a deal: eliminate a rich, powerful man she says is too dangerous to live and, in turn, she'll let Evan survive. But when

Evan left the Program he swore to only use his skills against those who really deserve it. Now he has to decide what's more important—his principles or his life. Or...find a third way.

Jones, Stephen Graham. [Don't Fear the Reaper](#) (Gallery \$27.99). Out in February but our **March Notable New Fiction Book of the Month**. In the long-awaited sequel to [My Heart Is a Chainsaw](#) (best-selling author Jones's first novel to feature protagonist Jade Daniels), Jade has to contend with serial killer Dark Mill South, who has escaped from his prison transfer just outside of Proofrock, Idaho. It's a delicate balance to portray a serial killer like Dark Mill, something that Jones does with great aplomb. This villain has been known by many different names, including the Ninety-Eye Slasher and Bowman Butcher. He claims to want to avenge 38 Dakota men, who were hanged in 1862 in his home state of Minnesota in the largest mass execution in U.S. history. Told through alternating points of view, including Dark Mill South's, the novel takes its time building up steam until readers can reunite with Jade, but in the meantime, the narrative is full of pulse-pounding scares and epic slasher scenes that build intensity as the chapters go on. Adrenaline-filled with plenty of shocking moments, the latest from master of horror Jones is an intense, highly entertaining, and deeply personal novel."—*Library Journal* Starred Review

And consider this: "A sequel is rarely ever as good as the original, especially when it comes to horror—and especially when it comes to horror slashers. But leave it to genre master Stephen Graham Jones to once again take your expectations and trope-awareness and kindly slash them in half with a chainsaw. Here is not only a worthy follow-up picking up with our Final Girl Jade Daniels four years after the life-altering events of that book, but it somehow elevates the gritty violence and glorious bloodshed to exorbitant new heights. Compared to the slow-burn of *My Heart is a Chainsaw*, *Reaper* is a raging fire, though it never loses sight of the potent emotional core at its center. You will speed through this 500-page novel and be left with fever dream-esque flashes of killers and carnage...every horror aficionado's perfect nightmare."

Kellerman, Jonathan. [Unnatural History](#) (Random \$28.99) opens at a crime scene: the studio-cum-apartment of photographer Donny Klement, youngest son of elusive multibillionaire Victor Klement. At the time of his death, Donny was putting together a project called the Wishers, for which he had been photographing homeless people, whom he interviewed and then dressed in costumes that aligned with their dream selves, such as those of movie goddesses, Top Gun pilots, intrepid explorers, and ballerinas. Had it been one of these troubled souls who shot Donny in his bed and left him to bleed out? Or does the motive for his death lie in the greed and expectations of the dysfunctional Klement family? Alex, a child psychologist and consultant for the LAPD, and the LAPD's Milo Sturgis discover several suspects with plausible motives, though the solution comes as a bit of a letdown. As usual, the main draw is not the action but the personal relationships. Kellerman, a trained psychologist, brings authenticity to his thoughtful protagonist, as well as a genuine touch of humanity to Alex's friendship with Milo. And as ever in this tremendous series, Los Angeles too is a star.

Kent, Kathleen. [Black Wolf](#) (Mulholland \$29). Patrick writes of our **February International Crime Book of the Month**: Melvina "Mel" Donleavy is a 26 year-old CIA agent with a

particular skill: she is a "super recognizer" with the extraordinary ability to remember every face she sees forever. It is a valuable asset to the agency, who sends her to Minsk, Soviet Belarus, with a top secret mission to investigate rumors that Iran is bargaining to secure nuclear weapons. The year is 1990 and the Soviet Union is crumbling quickly. Minsk is a dangerous place, and a serial killer dubbed "The Svisloch Strangler" preys upon the city's women. Dunleavy comes under the radar of The Black Wolf, the ruthless head of the country's KGB. Kent draws upon her own experience working for the US Department of Defense here, and the result is a compelling novel full of tradecraft that will appeal to fans of Dan Fesperman and John Le Carré." I absolutely loved it, one of the best spy novels I've read since the last Joseph Kanon. And since I am sure Dan Fesperman will love it I've invited him to join our zoom event February 25 with Ken.

Loftis, Larry. [The Watchmaker's Daughter](#) (Harper \$29.99). **Note the special discounted price. This book is Signed for us March 13.** *New York Times* bestselling author and master of nonfiction spy thrillers Larry Loftis writes the first major biography of Corrie ten Boom, a Dutch watchmaker who saved the lives of hundreds of Jews during WWII—at the cost of losing her family and being sent to a concentration camp, only to survive, forgive her captors, and live the rest of her life as a Christian missionary. **Preorder and you will get a 6x9 inch black and white signed art print by artist Dee Deloy, which is being custom drawn to represent Corrie ten Boom and her father in their watch shop.** It includes a poem warning everyone to get their spiritual house in order while there is still time on the clock (the Dutch is translated in the book). This etching, poem, and the top left photo of Casper appear in the book on pages 5-6, with explanation and translation. This artwork and poem was very special to Corrie and she included it in her book about Casper, *Father ten Boom: God's Man*. On the bottom right is the Beje, home of the ten Boom shop and residence.

Makkai, Rebecca. [I Have Some Questions for You](#) (Penguin \$28). **We will have extra signed copies on March 14 after an event with Makkai.**

When Bodie Kane began attending New Hampshire's Granby School in 1991, she was determined to leave her checkered family history back in small-town Indiana. At Granby, Bodie was a theater kid, which turned out to be a solid grounding for her later work as a Los Angeles podcaster preoccupied with the underappreciated women of early Hollywood. Bodie finds herself back at Granby in 2018 for a two-week teaching gig: she's helming a class on film and another on podcasting. Like her Granby peers, Bodie can't forget the 1995 murder of Thalia Keith, a fellow theater kid who was found dead in the campus swimming pool during their senior year. Thalia's body showed signs of injury that suggested more than an accidental drowning, and DNA evidence ultimately sent Granby's Black athletic trainer to jail, where he's serving a 60-year sentence. The details of the case continue to transfix the public and spark heated debate online — especially when it comes to Omar Evans, the school's athletic trainer, who was convicted of Keith's slaying. Years later, when Kane is invited back to the boarding school to teach, she inevitably slides down the rabbit hole of the true crime case, reexamining the death of her roommate, the guilt or innocence of Omar Evans, and whether she knew something all those years ago that could unlock the truth about the slaying. If you enjoyed

Kate Alice Marshall's [What Lies in the Woods](#) (\$28.99 Signed), our January Crime Collectors Book of the Month, this new novel by Makkai is for you. Again, note the central role of podcasting in the investigation.

Library Reads adds: "Engaging story of a boarding school murder being solved 20 years later by true-crime podcast enthusiasts. Or is it a story of memories and how you interact with them, depending on your stage in life and your biases, or one about how as a teen you simultaneously know everything and nothing? Or is it all three? For fans of Jean Hanff Korelitz."

Millard, Candice. [River of the Gods](#) (Doubleday \$32.50). In a belated arrival we now have signed firsts of this harrowing story wherein two Victorians were sent by the Royal Geographical Society to locate the headwaters of the River Nile and claim the prize for England: "A lean, fast-paced account of the almost absurdly dangerous quest by [Richard Burton and John Speke] to solve *the geographic riddle of their era*." —*The New York Times Book Review*. Burton spoke twenty-nine languages, and was a decorated soldier. He was also mercurial, subtle, and an iconoclastic atheist. Speke was a young aristocrat and Army officer determined to make his mark, passionate about hunting, Burton's opposite in temperament and belief. It ended in triumph and tragedy. Burton is one of the most fascinating Victorians—we'd know more of his literary output if his very Victorian wife hadn't burned a lot of his papers.

Mosley, Walter. [Every Man a King: A King Oliver Novel](#) (Mulholland \$28). In this highly anticipated sequel to the Edgar award winner *Down the River Unto the Sea* with Joe King Oliver, friend of the family and multi-billionaire Roger Ferris comes to Joe with an assignment that he's got no choice but to accept, even if the case is a tough one to stomach. White nationalist Alfred Xavier Quiller has been accused of murder and the sale of sensitive information to the Russians. Ferris has reason to believe Quiller's been set up and he needs King to see if the charges hold. This linear assignment becomes a winding quest to uncover the extent of Quiller's dealings, to understand Ferris' skin in the game, and to get to the bottom of who is working for whom. Even with the help of bodyguard and mercenary Oliya Ruez—no regular girl Friday—the machine King's up against proves relentless and unsparing. As King gets closer to exposing the truth, he and his loved ones barrel towards grave danger.

O'Connor, Carlene. [Murder at an Irish Bakery](#) (Kensington \$27). In Kilbane, opinions are plentiful and rarely in alignment. But there's one thing everyone *does* agree on—the bakery in the old flour mill, just outside town, is the best in County Cork, well worth the short drive and the long lines. No wonder they're about to be featured on a reality baking show. All six contestants in the show are coming to Kilbane to participate, and the town is simmering with excitement. Aside from munching on free samples, the locals—including Siobhan—get a chance to appear in the opening shots. As for the competitors themselves, not all are as sweet as their confections. There are shenanigans on the first day of filming that put everyone on edge, but that's nothing compared to day two, when the first round ends and the top contestant is found face-down in her signature pie. The producers decide to continue filming while Garda Siobhan O'Sullivan and her husband, Garda Macdara Flannery, sift through the suspects. Was this a case of rivalry turned lethal, or are their other motives hidden in the mix?

Quartey, Kwei. [Last Seen in Lapaz](#) (Soho \$27.95). When a whirlwind romance leads to a brutal murder and the disappearance of a young Nigerian woman, PI Emma Djan resorts to dangerous undercover work to track her down in Accra. According to her father, Ngozi had a bright future ahead of her when she became secretive and withdrawn. Suddenly, all she wanted to do was be with her handsome new beau, Femi, instead of attending law school in the fall. So when she disappears from her parents' house in Nigeria the middle of a summer night, they immediately suspect Femi was behind it and have reason to believe the pair has fled to Accra. During Emma's first week on the case, Femi is found murdered at his opulent residence in Accra. There are no signs of Ngozi at the scene, and fearing the worst, Emma digs further, discovering that Femi was part of a network of sex traffickers across West Africa. Emma must figure out which of Femi's many enemies killed him, but more urgently, she must find Ngozi!

Rollins, James. [The Cradle of Ice](#) (Forge \$28.99). The motley crew that gathered together in 2021's *The Starless Crown*, where the fantastical creatures and landscapes are imaginative and the plot rockets along, travels to opposite ends of a far-future, post-apocalyptic Earth in their pursuit of long-buried ancient machines that will prevent the coming crash of Moonfall by kicking off a smaller disaster in its place. Nyx and her pirate crew travel to the frozen wastes on the dark side of the world to learn that the empty lands are populated with humans and other creatures who have preserved ancient talents that may save their quest—or doom it. Meanwhile, the exiled prince and his scientific companions pursue hidden knowledge in the dark heart of one empire while another sends armies after both parties in pursuit of a revenge that will only bring destruction. An interesting blend of science and magic, flying ships and prophetic gods, propel this fantasy into epic territories."—*LJ*.

Royce, Deborah Goodrich. [Reef Road](#) (Post Row \$27). In a nod to the true crime that inspired *Reef Road*, Royce probes unhealed generational scars. "In 1948, 12-year-old Noelle Huber was brutally murdered. Seventy-two years later, an obsessed, lonely writer named Noelle (after the murdered girl) stalks Linda Alonso in search of the truth. Noelle is convinced that her namesake was killed by Matthew Huber, her older brother. She latches onto Linda because Linda is Matthew's daughter—Noelle Huber's niece—and inserts herself into Linda's life and befriends her. Noelle wants to know everything about Linda's marriage, her children, and the secrets in her house. Noelle even knows what happens when Linda's husband and children supposedly fly to Argentina, leaving Linda behind—she can't go during the pandemic because she's not an Argentine citizen, unlike her family members. Linda isn't suspicious until Noelle reveals her ties to the long-ago murder. Now, Linda is trapped in Palm Beach, FL, her family is AWOL, and she's being stalked by a writer who believes she knows everything. Inspired by an actual murder, this title by actress and author Royce will be appreciated by fans of psychological thrillers and stories of traumas affecting multiple generations."—Lesa Holstine, our blogger

Ryan, Hank Phillippi. [The House Guest](#) (Forge \$27.99). After every divorce, one spouse gets all the friends. What does the other one get? If they're smart, they get the benefits. Alyssa Macallan is terrified when she's dumped by her wealthy and powerful husband. With a devastating divorce looming, she

begins to suspect her toxic and manipulative soon-to-be-ex is scheming to ruin her—leaving her alone and penniless. And when the FBI shows up at her door, Alyssa knows she really needs a friend. And then she gets one. A seductive new friend, one who's running from a dangerous relationship of her own. Alyssa offers Bree Lorraine the safety of her guest house, and the two become confidantes. Then Bree makes a heart-stopping, tempting offer. Maybe Alyssa and Bree can solve each others' problems. But is anyone really what they seem? It's *Gaslight* meets *Thelma and Louise*.

Scarrow, Simon. [Dead of Night](#) (Headline \$34.99). After Germany's invasion of Poland, the world is holding its breath and hoping for peace. At home, the Nazi Party's hold on power is absolute. One freezing night, an SS doctor and his wife return from an evening mingling with their fellow Nazis at the concert hall. By the time the sun rises, the doctor will be lying lifeless in a pool of blood. Was it murder or suicide? Criminal Inspector Horst Schenke is told that under no circumstances should he investigate. The doctor's widow, however, is convinced her husband was the target of a hit. But why would anyone murder an apparently obscure doctor? Compelled to dig deeper, Schenke learns of the mysterious death of a child. The cases seem unconnected, but soon chilling links begin to emerge that point to a terrifying secret.

Shannon, Samantha. [Day of Fallen Night](#) (Bloomsbury \$35), A prequel to [The Priory of the Orange Tree](#) (\$20) filled with even more dragons, magic, and lore. An epic feminist fantasy series that's a master class in world-building, Melim is a sister of the Priory. For fifty years, she has trained to slay wyrms – but none have appeared since the Nameless One, and the younger generation is starting to question the Priory's purpose. To the north, in the Queendom of Inys, Sabran the Ambitious has married the new King of Hróth, narrowly saving both realms from ruin. Their daughter, Glorian, trails in their shadow – exactly where she wants to be. The dragons of the East have slept for centuries. Dumai has spent her life in a Seikinense mountain temple, trying to wake the gods from their long slumber. Now someone from her mother's past is coming to upend her fate. Then the Dreadmount erupts, bringing with it an age of terror and violence....

Making this a January Library Reads, the librarians say: "Fans of *The Priory of the Orange Tree* will be thrilled to revisit the intricately detailed world Shannon has created. In this standalone prequel, the stories of four women are spun out as the Dreadmount erupts and civilizations crumble. The large cast of characters is deftly handled, and readers will enjoy the fascinating mythology."

✦Todd, Charles. [The Cliff's Edge](#) (Harper \$27.99). "Todd has few peers at both keeping readers turning pages for the reveal and making every character on those pages feel real. Those seeking emotional depth in their mysteries will be richly rewarded"—*PW* Starred Review

Restless and uncertain of her future in the wake of World War I, former battlefield nurse Bess Crawford agrees to travel to Yorkshire to help a friend of her cousin Melinda through surgery. But circumstances change suddenly when news of a terrible accident reaches them. Bess agrees to go to isolated Scarfdale and the Neville family, where one man has been killed and another gravely injured. The police are asking questions, and

Bess is quickly drawn into the fray as two once close families take sides, even as they are forced to remain in the same house until the inquest is completed. When another tragedy strikes, the police are ready to make an arrest. Bess struggles to keep order as tensions rise and shots are fired. What dark truth is behind these deaths? And what about the tale of an older murder—one that doesn't seem to have anything to do with the Nevilles? This book was completed by Caroline and Charles before Caroline suddenly died last year, so you fans should pounce on it and treasure it.

RETROSPECTIVE SIGNED BOOK RAVES

Guinn, Jeff. [Waco](#) (Simon & Schuster \$29.99). The *Wall Street Journal* (*WSJ*) writes a brilliant essay on Guinn's book and one other that is a must read to understand the complete screw up by the government agencies involved and the sociopathic nature of David Koresh. However no one really grasps the psychology of his followers. [Read the article here](#).

Harper, Jordan. [Everybody Knows](#) (Mulholland \$28). *The NY Times Book Review* (*NYTBR*): Hollywood noir doesn't get any darker than Jordan Harper's dazzling novel, where cynicism is rewarded, romance thwarted and redemption narratives undercut at every turn. When the novel opens, fires have erupted in Los Angeles, reddening the night sky as Mae Pruett waits for a celebrity's assistant at the Chateau Marmont's secret entrance on Sunset. Mae is a "black bag publicist," a crisis manager who helps stars spin bad news into — well, if not gold, then at least something no longer resembling straw. The book jacket for "Everybody Knows," by Jordan Harper, depicts the Los Angeles skyline almost completely obscured by red smoke, with a pair of heavily made-up eyes overlaid at the top. Mae handles the job, but not long afterward, someone close to her is murdered. She turns to a former flame, an ex-cop who works as a "fist" in private security, to try to figure out what happened. They're trapped, though, in a system designed to elevate dreams right up until the moment of destruction: "Maybe she's flying. Maybe she's falling. It's hard to tell the difference until you hit the ground."

The *WSJ* raves as well and [its review](#) also covers John Sanford's [Righteous Prey](#) (\$29.95) and Jeffery Deaver, [Hunting Time](#) (\$29.99), both of which we still have Signed.

Perry, Thomas. [Murder Book](#) (Penzler \$27.95). *NYTBR*: With his iconic 1982 debut "The Butcher's Boy," Thomas Perry staked a claim as one of the most accomplished suspense writers around. (Readers not well versed in all things Perry should pick up "Pursuit," "The Old Man" or perhaps one of his Jane Whitefield novels.). His latest, stars Harry Duncan, a cop turned private detective who's been tasked by a U.S. attorney — his ex-wife, as it happens — to investigate a brutal Midwestern crime ring. Though the job begins with a touch of humor when Harry epoxies the criminals' guns to the dashboard and windows of their car, things quickly turn violent. I didn't quite warm to Harry, who feels less fleshed out than the Butcher or the Old Man (funny how in Perry's universe, nicknames give characters more gravitas). Plotwise, though, *Murder Book* offers a master class in the craft of suspense. I add that the use of bird calls is unexpected and truly fabulous.

Yamashita, Iris. [City Under One Roof](#) (Berkley \$27). *NYTBR*: The Alaska town of Point Mettier, the setting for Iris Yamashita's captivating debut, houses all 205 year-round residents — "stragglers, oddballs and recluses" — in a single building,

the “Dave-Co,” which also contains a store, a church and a post office. Anyone who’s read J.G. Ballard’s 1975 dystopian masterpiece “High-Rise” (and if you haven’t, please do!) knows what being cloistered together can do to a group of people. Now add months of icy winter and a tunnel prone to closing during bad weather to the mix, and you’re in for a chilly, treacherous experience. Cara Kennedy, a detective from Anchorage, stops in Point Mettier for a quick investigation into the discovery of some severed body parts. Until, of course, an avalanche blocks the tunnel and strands her there. Cara is hiding devastating personal and professional secrets, not to mention a touch of claustrophobia, all of which complicate her reliability as she works the case alongside the cop Joe “J.B.” Barkowski. Small towns are often filled with “people who might not always get along but who rallied together to protect their own.” But they can also be sinister, dangerous places, particularly when the wind howls and the snow pours down for days, and months, on end.

The *WSJ* concludes its enthusiastic review with: Ms. Yamashita tells her complex story well, alternating between various characters’ points of view and writing in a prose both cinematic and intimate. “At the end of the day,” Kennedy concludes of this ragtag citizenry, “they were a group of people who might not always get along but who rallied together to protect their own. There was something hopeful in that.”

UNSIGNED EVENT BOOKS

Andrews, Brian/Jeffrey Wilson. [Dempsey](#) (Blackstone \$16.99). Perfect for fans of *The Terminal List* and *The Gray Man*, we follow John Dempsey, a Navy SEAL under deep cover in a notorious Russian labor camp. After Task Force Ember’s successful intervention in Ukraine, John Dempsey disappears without a trace—with no notice or explanation given to his teammates. Spotty intelligence eventually places him in Russia where he is rumored to have been captured by the Russian FSB and is now presumed dead. Mourning his loss, Ember is forced to pick up the pieces, restructure, and continue their mission of keeping America safe. As the president’s “go-to” black ops asset, Ember is directed to find and finish off the Russian spymaster Arkady Zhukov and any last remnants of Zeta cell. Unbeknownst to his teammates, Dempsey is very much alive and on mission. At the behest of Vice President Jarvis, he is deep undercover—in the heart of Russia’s nexus of organized crime and politics. For his mission to succeed, he will have to team up with a man who has been his adversary—the one man in all the world he most wants dead.

Burgess, Doug. [A Legacy of Bones](#) (Poisoned Pen \$16.99). A well-placed stick of TNT ignites a full-blown investigation in a provocative murder mystery exploring the racial and cultural divide on a remote Hawaiian island between landed elite and villagers. On Kaumaha Island (est. 1850), the statue of Amyas Lathrop conceals a terrible secret—a legacy of massacres and madness that infects the island itself. Some will go to any lengths to keep it hidden, others to set it free. But which of them would kill? Cultural expert Winnie Te Papa, our very own Ms. Marple, will sift through the pieces to track a ruthless murderer through a tangled maze of family alliances, greedy developers, scholars, protestors, and gangsters. Burgess made his debut with one of the best books we ever published, an atmospheric mystery set in a small Atlantic coastal town that ties into gender identity, aging, murder, as well as pirates! We have a stash of copies under its

original title, [Fogland Point](#), and are making it available to you for \$10 a copy. It drew raves from Michael Koryta, Nick Petrie, Hank Phillippi Ryan. I urge you to grab one.

De Castrique, Mark. [Secret Lives](#) (Poisoned Pen \$16.99). Just announced as a nominee for the 2023 Sue Grafton Memorial Award. Our Lesa Holstine reviews a series start for longtime PPP favorite Mark: When grad student Jesse Cooper hears gunshots, he discovers a fellow boarder, Jonathan Finch, dead in the street. Jesse worries when his 75-year-old landlady and distant cousin, Ethel Crestwater, comes out. He’s shocked though, when she tells him she called 911, but she wants him to film the crime scene while she investigates for evidence before the police arrive. Then she hides Finch’s gym bag in the basement. Jesse knows Ethel’s boarders, including Finch, were Secret Service and FBI. A former FBI agent herself, she has secrets. When Jesse is hit over the head, and the gym bag full of money is stolen, Ethel tells Jesse they can only trust each other. Following another death, Ethel points investigators in the right direction. She’ll use all of her skills and wits, along with Jesse’s knowledge of economics, to track down a killer hidden in plain sight. Add another wise, experienced senior sleuth to a group that includes Richard Osman’s Thursday Murder Club series and even Miss Marple. De Castrique’s (“Blackman Agency Investigations” series) quirky characters and offbeat twists will appeal to Osman’s readers.

Mark is the author of two series I loved publishing: [The Sam Blackman series](#) set in Ashville, NC, with a disabled veteran PI, and the (detective/undertaker) [Buryin’ Barry Clayton series](#) set in Gainesboro, NC. Both series have fabulous characters and unusual, surprising plots plus great local color. We will be getting a batch of both series into inventory soon but meanwhile you can order what we have of both. It pays to check on a storage locker which we have recently done and discovered many more treasures.

✚Elliott, Lexie. [Bright and Deadly Things](#) (Viking \$27). Elliott grew up in Scotland, at the foot of the Highlands. She graduated from Oxford University, where she obtained a doctorate in theoretical physics. As an Oxonian she’s the perfect person to bring a surprising additional campus to light in a delicious Dark Academic set in an Oxford Colleges’ retreat in France. It’s also a Closed Circle mystery structure as the characters are all housed in the chalet which is true Agatha Christie fashion is cut off from the real and internet world by weather. The Chalet des Anglais should be the ideal locale for recently-widowed Oxford don Emily to begin cutting through the fog of her grief. With no electricity, running water, or access by car, the rustic chalet nestled at the foot of the verdant, snow-topped Alps should afford Emily both time and space to heal. Joining her will be a collection of friends from the university, as well as other fellows, graduates, and undergraduates. Something feels off, though—heightening Emily’s existing grief-induced anxiety. Before even making it to the airport, she’s unnerved by a break-in at her home. Once at the chalet, tension amongst the guests is palpable. Her friends and colleagues are behaving oddly, and competition for a newly opened position has introduced a streak of meanness into the otherwise relaxing getaway. As hostilities grow, Emily begins to wonder if the chalet’s dark history has cast a shadow over the retreat.... This gem is perfect for those who liked Ruth Ware’s *It Girl* or Sarah Pearse’s *The Sanatorium*. And it was our January British Crime Book of the Month. I’ll be talking to the author on February 16.

☞Robotham, Michael. [Lying Beside You](#) (Scribner \$27.99). Twenty years after the brutal killing of his parents and little sisters, forensic psychologist Cyrus Haven is called in to profile the killer and help piece together the hours before the disappearance. While Cyrus is on the case, Evie Cormac, a damaged and gifted teenager who is also Cyrus's ward and can tell when someone is lying, is working at a bar where another woman goes missing...and Evie is the only witness. Evie also has an uncanny ability to tell when people are lying. And because lying is as common in Nottingham, England as it is anywhere else, Evie can be an uncomfortable presence. But when a double murder—of an elderly father and his daughter—draws Cyrus into a mystery that deepens as young women go missing, Evie's intuitive skills prove invaluable. Could these two cases somehow be linked? Add to the mix that Cyrus's brother, Elias, has been released from a psychiatric hospital after twenty years for killing Cyrus's parents and young sisters, and he's coming to stay with Evie and Cyrus. These are all pieces to a big puzzle and suspenseful English mystery full of psychological twists and turns. Robotham is at the top of his game. I will check but I believe there is a TV series in the works.

Smith, Tom Rob. [Cold People](#) (Scribner \$28). From the author of [Child 44](#) (\$16) we get a thriller about an Antarctic colony of global apocalypse survivors. The world has fallen. Without warning, a mysterious and omnipotent force has claimed the planet for its own. There are no negotiations, no demands, no reasons given for their actions. All they have is a message: humanity has thirty days to reach the one place on Earth where they will be allowed to exist...Antarctica. *Cold People* follows the perilous journeys of a handful of those who endure the frantic exodus to the most extreme environment on the planet. But their goal is not merely to survive the present.

“A brilliantly conceived postapocalyptic story that tackles a well-worn subject (a desperate race to save humanity) from a new and absolutely captivating angle. Smith's near-future world is wonderfully imaginative and rigorously detailed, the kind of made-up place that feels viscerally real. A real treat.” – *Booklist* Starred Review.

LJ's Starred Review adds. “[In] Booker-longlisted Smith's latest spellbinding novel, well-written characters grapple with their place in this new world order [and] the story takes a heightened, suspenseful turn when the main characters become entangled in a human genetic experiment gone awry. In flawlessly precise prose, Smith's latest combines a number of electrifying sci-fi set pieces with a breathtaking insight into the human instinct to love life and each other, no matter the cost. A speculative masterpiece that will resonate with fans of Emily St. John Mandel, Kazuo Ishiguro, and Jeff VanderMeer.”

☞Tyce, Harriet. [It Ends at Midnight](#) (Sourcebooks \$27.99). Deputy district judge Sylvie, the principal narrator of this tantalizing psychological thriller, wants to focus on securing a position as a Crown Court judge and enjoying her new relationship with Edinburgh chef Gareth. Then Sylvie's best friend, Tess, announces that she has brain cancer and asks Sylvie to help her with two things. The first is giving the bad news to her estranged husband, Marcus, so they can do a 20th anniversary renewal of wedding vows at Hogmanay (the Scottish New Year's celebration), with Sylvie once again standing as sole bridesmaid. The other is finding and making amends to an

old classmate of theirs, Linda, who served time for the death of Sylvie's then boyfriend, largely on the basis of Tess and Sylvie's false testimony. Scenes of tense interactions among Tess, Sylvie, Marcus, and Gareth alternate with Sylvie's recollections of pivotal moments from their school days. Clues to what's really going on are dropped at a perfect pace as Sylvie's distrust of herself and others grows and the plot barrels toward its deadly conclusion at Hogmanay.

BE DARING: TRY A BLIND DATE WITH A BOOK

[A Blind Date with a Book](#) (\$20). We will select it for you suitably packaged. And no, we won't tell you what it is, nor can you pick it out. Trust to our taste. This is fun, we did it a few years ago and somehow didn't get back to it.

VALENTINE READING: FALL IN LOVE WITH...

Carle, Eric. [Love from the Very Hungry Caterpillar](#) (\$8.99). **With your very young reader self.** Ages 3-5.

Clayborn, Kate. [Georgie All Along](#) (Kensington, \$16.95). **Your older self.** “When Georgie suddenly loses her job as a personal assistant, she heads home to her parents to regroup. While there, she comes across a teenage diary and uses it to explore her life. This is a sweet, fun novel about a genuine, competent person trying to discover her true self. For fans of *The Authenticity Project*

Davis, Kenneth C. [Great Short Books](#) (Scribner \$28). Fall in love **with reading** (all over again) with their delightful guide to some of the best short novels of all time. A journey into short fiction designed with our contemporary attention spans in mind, *Great Short Books* suggests fifty-eight excellent short novels, from hard-boiled fiction to magical realism, the 18th century to the present day, *Great Short Books* spans genres, cultures, countries, and time to present an enchanting and diverse selection of acclaimed and canonical novels. An excellent Valentine gift to anyone including yourself.

☞Heyer, Georgette. [The Reluctant Widow](#) (\$18.99). **With romances.** Heyer's Regency romances are the best of this genre and far truer to the real era than say Julia Quinn's Bridgerton series. And here there is a mystery to be solved as well as a difficult and unexpected courtship that begins when Elinor Rochdale boards the wrong coach and ends up not at her prospective employer's home but at the estate of Eustace Cheviot, a dissipated and ruined young man on the verge of death. His formidable guardian and cousin in a move to ditch inheriting the estate proposes that Elinor marry Eustace. By morning she is a rich widow and then the comedy which includes espionage and murder and things that go bump in the night begins. My favorite is [A Civil Contract](#). My late Mother, known as MM, loved [Cotillion](#), and especially Freddy's saturnine father. [Why Shoot a Butler](#) (\$14.99). **With Golden Age Mysteries.** Heyer also wrote some excellent British mysteries. One example, an English Country-House Murder with a twist, is this where the butler is the victim, every clue complicates the puzzle, and the bumbling police are well-meaning but completely baffled. Fortunately, amateur sleuth Amberley is as brilliant as he is arrogant as he ferrets out the desperate killer—even though this time he's not sure he wants to know the truth.... Fans of Ngaio Marsh will be especially pleased with the Heyer mysteries in which her husband, a High Court Judge, helped with the plotting.

Kovacic, Katherine. [Just Murdered](#) (Sourcebooks \$16.99). It's 1960. Phryne Fisher's gone missing in the jungles of Papua New Guinea. Only her pearl handled gun and a note arrive back home in Melbourne. Her long-lost niece, Peregrine, an ex-hairdresser, is now called to Greenwood mansion where she must earn her seat in the Adventuresses' Club. When two dead bodies turn up at the Astor bridal show, she gets her chance. In pure Fisher fashion, Peregrine defies social expectation with outlandish style, discovers her penchant for investigating all while running circles around the police. "A sprightly pace, amusing characters, and vividly rendered Melbourne" that can make you fall in love all over again **with Kerry Greenwood's Miss Fisher Mysteries**.

Robinson, Shauna. [Must Love Books](#) (Sourcebooks \$16.99).

With books. Meet Nora Hughes—a young Black woman who is the overworked, underpaid, last bookish assistant standing. At least for now. When Nora landed an editorial assistant position at Parsons Press, it was her first step towards The Dream Job. Because, honestly, is there anything dreamier than making books for a living? But after five years of lunch orders, finicky authors, and per my last emails, Nora has come to one grand conclusion: Dream Jobs do not exist. With her life spiraling and the Parsons staff sinking, Nora gets hit with even worse news. Parsons is cutting her already unlivable salary. Unable to afford her rent and without even the novels she once loved as a comfort, Nora decides to moonlight for a rival publisher to make ends meet... and maybe poach some Parsons' authors along the way. But when Andrew Santos, a bestselling Parsons author no one can afford to lose is thrown into the mix... This is a treat in many ways. Enjoy. *And for those who love games, especially with a nostalgic vibe:* [Monopoly Scottsdale Edition](#) (\$44.99). The couple that plays together, stays together.... why not tackle this popular game reimagined for Scottsdale?

CLASSICS

Burgess, Gelett. [The Master of Mysteries](#) (Poisoned Pen Press \$14.99). *NYTBR* writes: If Gelett Burgess's name is familiar to readers, it's very likely because of his 1895 nonsense poem "The Purple Cow" (though his claim to fame should probably be that he coined the word "blurb"). Beginning in 1908, Burgess, a poet and humorist, also published stories featuring Astro the Seer — a Sherlock Holmes knockoff in the guise of a mystic, clad in a turban and red silk robes — and his comely assistant, Valeska Wynne. These stories, which were first collected in book form in 1912, are now being reissued by the Library of Congress Crime Classics line edited by Leslie S. Klinger. Several things emerge when reading through all 24 of these tales back-to-back, chiefly Burgess' sense of the ridiculous. He hardly hides from the reader that Astro the Seer, whose real name is Astrogon Kerby, is a full-on charlatan, his public proclamations of clairvoyance a subterfuge for milking the rich of their money. Astro and Valeska are also superior detectives, uncovering mysteries major and minor among the moneyed classes. What's hidden from them — but not the reader — is their growing attraction. The resolution is equal parts dated and sweet, but also earned. I add that this LCC Classic has a really lovely cover.

✎Carr, John Dickson. [The Red Widow Murders](#) (American Mystery Classics \$15.95). They say that Lord Mantling's mansion is haunted — at least, one room of it is. Known as the Red Widow's Chamber, the now-sealed quarters once housed the wife of a guillotine operator in the French Revolution, and, since

her passing, have been host to a century of unsolved horrors, including the death of a man in 1802, the death of a child in 1895, and a number of mysterious mortalities in the years in between. Now, in 1935, eight men and women join at the manor for a sinister experiment to determine the truth behind the haunting once and for all: they each draw a card, and whoever pulls the Ace of Spades must spend a night in that terrifying room. But the challenge turns fatal when the man selected for the task is found poisoned the next morning when the doors are opened. The locked room was guarded all night, so nobody could have entered or escaped; what's more, the deadly toxin could only have entered through a break in the skin, but no wounds were discovered on the body. Is this evidence, at last, of a nefarious spirit at work, or of a diabolical and ingenious killer? Only Sir Henry Merrivale, called in to take note of the night's proceedings, can call it.

There is a hardcover edition: [The Red Widow Murders](#) (Penzler \$25.95).

Gardener, Erle Stanley. [Fools Die on Friday](#) (Hard Case Crime \$14.95) features private eyes Donald Lam (once played by Frank Sinatra!) and Bertha Cool. The case, first published in 1947 under the pseudonym A.A. Fair, begins as Beatrice Ballwin tells the partners she's convinced that her uncle, hard-driving real estate developer Gerald Ballwin, is at serious risk for being poisoned, presumably by his socialite second wife, Daphne. She forks over a generous retainer Donald sniffs at after she leaves because he doesn't think she's really Beatrice Ballwin at all. Inspired by his customary inventiveness, he calls on Daphne himself and promises her lavish exposure to a wave of publicity among the younger set (hint, hint) if she'll only endorse Zesty-Paste anchovy paste, of which he provides her a hearty supply. Donald figures that Daphne's appetite for exposure will put any plans for murder she has on hold. This perfect strategy backfires....

✎Lorac, ECR. [Post After Post-Mortem: An Oxfordshire Mystery](#) (Poisoned Pen \$14.99). We are at Upton House in Oxfordshire, England, home of the Surray family, "whose intellectual attainments are famous." Get-togethers of the Surray family are almost like reciprocal book signings. Prof. John Surray writes academic treatises; his sons, Richard and Robert, maintain their professional standing by writing articles; his daughter Ruth is a successful novelist; and his daughter Naomi, who's just graduated with first-class honors in classics, will surely add to the pile. No wonder Judith Beech, his married daughter, has just burned her own manuscript, which would clearly face stiff competition. But not, as it happens, from Ruth, who's found dead in her bed from an overdose of thalmaine the morning after she hosts a dinner of fellow authors and publishers. Ruth's always kept herself to herself, but it's hard for her family to accept her suicide, and impossible once a letter she posted to Richard hours before her death arrives sounding anything but suicidal. Chief Inspector Macdonald, tasked with peering into Ruth's romantic affairs and professional secrets, offers an object lesson in how to stiffen everyone's back against the police while maintaining the utmost decorum and sympathy. His path is complicated by a fire that nearly destroys Upwood House.... Introduction by British Library Crime Classics series editor Martin Edwards.

✎Sayers, Dorothy L. [Clouds of Witness](#) (Knopf \$11). Lord Peter Wimsey is one of mystery fiction's most enduring and endearing protagonists. In *Clouds of Witness*, the fiancé of Lord

Peter's sister, Mary, is found dead outside the conservatory of the Wimsey family's shooting lodge in Yorkshire. The evidence points to their older brother, Gerald, the Duke of Denver, who is charged with the murder and put on trial in the House of Lords. To clear the family name, Lord Peter and his close friend Inspector Charles Parker scour the lodge's grounds, finding several tantalizing clues, including mysterious footprints, a piece of jewelry, and a cat charm. What do these leads mean, and why are Mary and Gerald suddenly acting so mysteriously? This new edition spurs me to remind you that if you have never read Sayers, now is the time. The earlier Lord Peters lack the depth that this classic Golden Age series develops, particularly in the quartet featuring Lord Peter and Harriet Vane.

COZY UP WITH A COZY

✠Bleiweiss, Rick. [Pignon Scorbion and the Barbershop Detectives](#) (\$17.99). The year is 1910, and in the small and seemingly sleepy English market town of Haxford, there's a new police Chief Inspector. At first, the dapper and unflappable Pignon Scorbion strikes something of an odd figure among the locals, who don't see a need for such an exacting investigator. But it isn't long before Haxford finds itself very much in need of a detective. Luckily, Scorbion and the local barber are old acquaintances, and the barbershop employs a cast of memorable characters who—together with an aspiring young ace reporter for the local Morning News—are nothing less than enthralled by the enigmatic new police Chief Inspector. Investigating a trio of crimes whose origins span three continents and half a century, Pignon Scorbion and his "tonorial sleuths" interview a parade of interested parties, but with every apparent clue, new surprises come to light. And just as it seems nothing can derail Scorbion's cool head and almost unerring nose for deduction, in walks Thelma Smith—dazzling, whip-smart, and newly single. Has Pignon Scorbion finally met his match? For the sequel see Signed Books.

Brannigan, Ellie. [Murder at an Irish Castle](#) (Crooked Lane \$18.99) **will be our March Cozy Crimes Book of the Month.** Rodeo Drive bridal dress designer Rayne McGrath, the heroine of this delightful series launch, learns on her 30th birthday that her boyfriend and business partner, whom she was expecting to propose to her that day, has ditched her and emptied their joint bank account. Rayne's sitcom actor mom insists she leave L.A. and her woes behind and fly to Ireland for the funeral of Rayne's paternal uncle, Nevin, the lord of McGrath Castle in the village of Grathton. On arrival, Rayne is astounded to learn that Nevin's will requires her to stay in Ireland as lady of the castle, much to the fury of Nevin's illegitimate daughter, whom Rayne didn't know existed. The will also requires her to bring the castle into the black and inject new life into Grathton. Rumors that Nevin's death was not an accident put Rayne on the trail of a killer. An appealing protagonist and colorful supporting characters match the imaginative plot making this our **MARCH Cozy Crimes Book of the Month.** Note that Brannigan is another name for author Traci Hall, whose new book is listed below.

Fletcher, Jessica. [Murder She Wrote: Death on the Emerald Isle](#) (Berkley \$27). Plan your March reading ahead with a trip to Northern Ireland with Jessica. Her nephew Grady invites her to spend a few days with his family in an oceanside New York bungalow. She packs her bags and heads down to the city, ready to spend some quality time with Grady; his wife, Donna; and

their young son, Frank. But the morning after Jessica's arrival, Donna finds her boss dead on a tennis court, and Jessica's dreams of a relaxing visit are quashed. Everyone in the small beachside community is a suspect, and the local authorities—headed by an old colleague of Cabot Cove sheriff Mort Metzger—have asked that no one leave town. Will Jessica be able to find a killer and salvage the rest of her trip?

Fluke, Joanne. [Devil's Food Cake Murder](#) (\$14.95). A reprint of a 2014 Hannah Swensen investigation laden as ever with recipes....

George, Emily. [A Half-Baked Murder](#) (\$15.95). 28-year-old Paris-trained pastry chef Chloe Barnes returns home to her idyllic beachside hometown of Azalea Bay, California, following a humiliating breakup with her cheating fiancé. When her much loved grandmother falls ill with cancer, Chloe puts her five-star baking skills to work making cannabis brownies to help Grandma Rose cope with pain. The brownies are such a hit with Grandma Rose and her friends that Chloe's Aunt Dawn proposes the two of them go into business and open a shop selling THC-infused baked goods. Chloe is intrigued, but before she can get Baked by Chloe off the ground, a former high school classmate, Brendan Chalmers, with whom she recently had a frightening run-in, is found stabbed to death. Since the knife has Aunt Dawn's initials on it, she becomes the prime suspect. George checks off all the requisite boxes, including an appealing small-town setting, cute dog, close family, and the possibility of romance on the horizon. Cannabis-infused recipes round out this launch of the Cannabis Cafe series.

Hall, Traci. [Murder at a Scottish Wedding](#) (Kensington \$16.95). Hall's intriguing Scottish Shire mystery opens at Old Nairn Kirk, where Lydia Barron, the best friend of single mom Paislee Shaw, the owner of a specialty sweater and yarn shop in Nairn, is about to marry her old-money love, Corbin Smythe. In the church's dressing room, Lydia panics when she can't find the box containing the heirloom Luckenbooth brooch, a traditional Scottish love token that Corbin has given her. Matron of honor Paislee helps her search to no avail. Shortly before the ceremony, Felice, a Smythe cousin, rushes out of the church and takes a fatal fall down the stairs to the street. Inside Felice's hand is the missing brooch. Intuitive Paislee, an experienced amateur sleuth, thinks Felice's death was no accident and neither is Corbin's subsequent disappearance. Hall expertly juggles multiple story lines, of which the one involving the fraught Shaw family saga. Fans of all things Scottish will have fun.

Handler, David. [The Girl Who Took What She Wanted](#) (Penzler \$26.95). John recommends earlier Handler's as cozies so I dove into it. It's racy, name-dropping, and gives a jazzy, funny take on celebrity, ghostwriting, Hollywood, and the publishing industry. Plus there's Lulu the basset hound. I suspect it's too hard-edged for a real cozy. If you want to stretch your definition, see the Starred Review below in New in Hardcover.

✠Hastings, Anastasia. [Of Manners and Murder](#) (St Martins \$26.99). Set in 1885, this series launch from Hastings (a pseudonym of Connie Laux, author of the League of Literary Ladies series) introduces Violet Manville, who has been living for a year in the London home of her aunt Adelia. Violet's life is upended when her relative admits to being Miss Hermione, the author of the British Empire's most popular agony aunt column. Adelia adds that she's leaving immediately on a journey of

undetermined duration with her lover and insists that Violet take over Miss Hermione during her absence, despite Violet's lack of experience. That new role becomes even more unsettling when Violet reads the letter Adelia wants her to address first, from Ivy, a new bride, who suspects someone will murder her—and Ivy is right, spurring Violet to investigate. I think this is a weak effort lacking the Victorian caliber of say Anne Perry. My advice despite the hype is to skip it.

Hilliard, ME. [Three Can Keep a Secret](#) (Crooked Lane \$28.99). "A small-town librarian continues to demonstrate that the most dangerous homicide zones in America are public libraries." A line that is sadly true in our overheated political climate and includes school libraries, too. Lesa writes, "Greer Hogan has been the reference librarian at Raven Hall Manor for a year now, so she knows the people involved in the day-to-day functioning of the library and the community. Anita Hunzeker, the chair of the library board, is able to get things done, often by bullying others. But Anita is facing a roadblock in her plans to build a new, technologically advanced library. Many of the people in town love the old manor, and the Ravenscroft Trust that financially supports the library might have the final say. However, Anita has been researching the trust and the family. When she's run off the road and killed, Greer is curious because no one in town seems to care about the victim. When a local professor is killed, Greer's pokes into the connection between his work and Anita's research. Maps, rumors, and stories all lead her back to the library, where secrets might be hiding in plain sight. Readers who enjoy the library and community connections in Victoria Gilbert's "Blue Ridge Library" mysteries will want to try this mystery that hints at future answers to the ongoing story line of the murder of Greer's husband." Vicki Delany's Lighthouse Library Mysteries too.

Lipman, Eleanor. [Ms. Demeanor](#) (Harper \$27.99). Our February Cozy Crimes Club Book of the Month is so delightful. What a concept—no worries, there's no overt sex in this sparkling story about an al fresco rooftop hookup that leads an elderly neighbor equipped with binoculars to call the police, sending lawyer Jane into house arrest with an ankle monitor, law license suspension, and put on leave by her Manhattan law firm. Where it goes from there towards new choices, a surprise romance, and lots of foodie stuff is unexpected, clever, and heart warming. Love this one! Perfect for February. There's a paperback edition too.

Pandian, Gigi. [Under Lock & Skeleton Key](#) (\$9.99). There's a company that makes secret staircases? Yes! 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). This was our March 2022 Cozy Crimes Book of the Month.

Popp, Misha. [A Good Day to Pie](#) (Crooked Lane \$29.99). This culinary cozy series has an amusing supernatural twist in that Daisy Ellery can work magic into her pies—honesty, helpfulness, success, even revenge. Her specialty is doling out karma. She runs a side gig selling "murder" pies on the dark web to abused women, though her magic can't kill anyone who doesn't have it coming. When Daisy is invited to participate in a TV baking contest, she's determined to win it on her baking talent alone—no magic allowed. To her surprise, she discovers one of the contest judges is her latest murder pie target. Things take a deadly turn when someone beats Daisy to it and kills the judge before the contest is over. The show must go on, however, and Daisy has to find the killer before the police learn she was hired to deliver justice to the awful judge. It's a fun story but the real joy lies in the recipes (some in the book as well), the baking tips, and the whole environment of competitive baking. I thought Daisy's first outing in [Magic, Lies, and Deadly Pies](#) (\$26.99) was a charmer too.

Rothschild, Peggy. [Playing Dead](#) (Berkley \$27). A doggone good look at dog training and murder. Molly Madison has a way with dogs. Her dog sitting and training services have kept her busy since she left her job as an East Coast police officer and moved to California. Her own current dogs are golden retriever Harlow, an experienced agility competitor, and newly adopted Saint Berdoodle Noodle, whose nose makes him an obvious candidate for the barn hunt event. As she tries out a new training facility, Molly immediately notices tension among the dog owners. Felicity Gaines' agility boxer, Royal, competes against wealthy, snarky Celeste Simmons' boxer, Buster, who keeps edging out Royal. Molly makes a new friend in Felicity when her suggestions immediately shave four seconds off Royal's score. But then Noodle's great nose in barn hunting, where protected rats are hidden in hay bales, turns up Celeste's body on top of a pile of bales, plunging Molly and her new pal into trouble. Although Felicity is the main suspect, pretty much everyone in the dog-training world disliked Celeste—though, as Molly discovers, they didn't dislike her nearly as much as the girls the former Olympian trained for gymnastics and pushed beyond their limits. Start this canine delight with dog wrangler extraordinaire Molly with [A Deadly Bone to Pick](#) (\$17), just out in paperback.

SOME FEBRUARY HARDCOVERS

Despite the length of this Booknews there are at a minimum 49 other hardcovers I have not gotten too. It's overwhelming. The idea is for us all to curate what we do cover, allow for various interests and genres....

Armstrong, Kelley. [Murder at Haven's Rock](#) (St Martins \$27.99). Here's the *PW* Starred Review for Canadian Armstrong's latest: Armstrong's excellent first entry in a Rockton spinoff series finds Casey Butler and her husband, Sheriff Eric Dalton, who met in Rockton, a Yukon town intended to serve as a refuge for those, such as domestic abuse victims, for whom the legal system's

protections were insufficient, resolved to use her substantial inheritance to self-fund construction of a similar community, Haven's Rock, after the ideals of Rockton were compromised. The new venture begins badly. Yolanda, the contractor in charge of the project, calls on Casey and Eric for their tracking skills when two members of her team—Penny, the architect, and Bruno, the engineer—disappear after violating the worksite's prime rule not to wander into the thick neighboring forest. Casey and Eric encounter an unknown person who first flees, and then steals Casey's backpack after she falls into a camouflaged pit. There, she makes a grim discovery—the stabbed corpse of a woman, who Yolanda says is not her missing employee. Armstrong gives her lead a complex mystery to solve, while vividly evoking the eerie isolation of the setting. Paul Doiron fans will be pleased." I've found the Rockton series to be exciting and well crafted in characters and plots.

Bartz, Julia. [The Writing Retreat](#) (Atria \$27). In a variation on Dark Academic, Alex has recently crossed into her 30s. Stuck in long-term writer's block, her dreams of making it as a novelist are just about dead; she holds a thankless and "bleakly underpaid" position in publishing; her sex life is equally bleak; and she still mourns her traumatic friend-breakup with the more successful Wren a year ago. So it feels like a shocking and undeserved honor to be accepted to a fantastically exclusive writing retreat hosted by Roza Vallo, the wildly successful novelist Alex has idolized since she was 12 years old. The catch is that Wren has been accepted, too. Roza's Blackbriar Estate in the Adirondacks in New York is grand, dramatic and supposedly haunted, and the reclusive Roza requires the writers to sign NDAs. Alex's adoration of her enigmatic hero is enormous, and she senses this is her big shot at turning her life around. "Bartz imbues her writing with a shape-shifting momentum: the plot's focus moves from the small, painful dramas of competition and jealousies in friendship into horror and psychological suspense. Blackbriar Estate is both magnetic, in its haunting history and narrative possibilities, and stifling. The world of writing and publishing can be, at turns, solitary, socially supportive, triumphant and backbiting, and *The Writing Retreat* encompasses all these possibilities and more, as it explores friendship and family traumas, artistic crises and human nature. Bartz's debut subverts genre in the interest of entertainment, satire and chilling thrills."—Julia Kastner. Another enthusiast adds, "Roza is a mercurial taskmaster, becoming stranger while the awe the women have for her turns to fear. This is an unusual horror story with many twists and turns."

Beaton, MC. [Death of a Traitor](#) (Grand Central \$27). In the second collaboration between Beaton (1936–2019) and RW Green, Hamish, a police sergeant stationed in the village of Lockdubh but whose "beat covers a vast swathe of rural Sutherland in the far north of Scotland," investigates when Kate Hibbert, a relative newcomer to the village, goes missing. Hamish soon discovers that Kate was not the friendly, helpful neighbor she had pretended to be. Three weeks after the woman's disappearance, Hamish is the first policeman on the scene when her strangled body is found floating in a remote loch. Hamish spots her battered suitcase and pulls it from the water; its contents point to a range of possible suspects in her murder. Pompous, officious Detective Chief Inspector Blair, "an evil scunner" and "a bungling eejit," as well as Hamish's nemesis, provides an

obstacle for Hamish to bump up against. The plot swerves wildly from village foibles and secrets into the world of international espionage.

Beaumont, Jack. [The Frenchman](#) (Blackstone \$27.99). Beaumont reveals a world of international espionage that's at once exhilarating, morally repugnant, and deadly. Earnest Pakistani missile engineer Amin Sharwaz is making daily reports to his supervisor, an imperious figure called the Colonel, from a convention in Singapore. Secretly anxious to finish his project and move his family to Europe, Amin makes the fatal mistake of oversharing with someone he knows as Marcus Aubrac, who works for the French government and has offered to create a new life for him in France if he can share classified information on Pakistani missile development. This Frenchman is actually intelligence operative Alec de Payns. When Alec learns that Amin was tortured and murdered—along with his family—on his return to Pakistan, he's shaken but by necessity compartmentalizes his disquiet. Two years later, a botched assignment in Palermo once more brings the life-and-death realities of his dangerous career into clear focus and leads to a meeting with his boss, Christophe Sturt, at which he lies to protect himself. In the missions that follow, Alec and his team pose as filmmakers and hunt a ruthless terrorist. Beaumont, a former operative with the French foreign secret service, has produced a debut novel long on the procedural nuts and bolts of espionage: There are acronyms, agents with multiple pseudonyms (one wryly known as Shrek), complex professional relationships, and a plot that crisscrosses Europe and Asia with dizzying twists and turns. His savvy focus adds timeliness and a stimulating sense of verisimilitude, rewarding readers who can follow his intricate plot. Simmering beneath it all is Alec's growing desire to leave his dangerous work and lead a normal life with his wife, Romy, and their children.

Bringley, Patrick. [All the Beauty in the World](#) (Simon & Schuster \$27.99). Bringley, working as a writer at *The New Yorker*, is devastated by the death of his brilliant older brother Tom from cancer. Unmoored and seeking escape, he turned away from daily life and sought solace in the most beautiful place he knew: NYC's Metropolitan Museum of Art. And not as a visitor but hiring in as a guard for its treasures. Being a guard can be convivial but also quite private. And it allows spending time with many forms of masterpieces. It's a treat to follow him through the Met and to read how he gradually finds a voice and his tribe in the subculture of museum guards. Ten years on, the rigors of scheduling on family life and more propel him to try something new. One of them being this "empathetic exploration of the workaday culture that makes art visible to all," his first book and one which I, having spent much of my life in museums, read with enthusiasm and increased understanding of their operations and culture.

Carlsson, Christoffer. [Blaze Me a Sun](#) (Hogarth \$28). In February 1986, the Halland police receive a call from a man who claims to have attacked his first victim. I'm going to do it again, he says before the line cuts off. By the time police officer Sven Jörgensson reaches the crime scene, the woman is taking her last breath. For Sven, this will prove a decisive moment. On the same night, Sweden plunges into a state of shock after the murder of the prime minister. Could there possibly be a connection? As Sven becomes obsessed with the case, two more fall victim. For years, Sven remains haunted by the murders he cannot solve, fearing the killer

will strike again. Having failed to catch him, Sven retires from the police, passing his obsession to his son, who has joined the force to be closer to his father. Decades later, the case unexpectedly resurfaces when a novelist returns home to Halland amid a failed marriage and a sputtering career. The writer befriends the retired police officer, who helps the novelist—our narrator—unspool the many strands of this engrossing tale about a community confronting its shames and legacies. This ScandiNoir by Carlsson earned a rave in the *NY Times* and is now a Library Reads selection: “If you love a good Swedish crime novel or are a fan of Stieg Larsson, then this book is for you! A runaway bestseller in Sweden, this is the American debut for the author and a can’t put down thriller that had me guessing until the end.”

In its rave review the *NY Times* adds this: What I most loved is how Carlsson plumbs what can and cannot be known about human lives and criminal investigations. He understands how familial love can blind people to difficult truths, and how “closure” often never happens. “I refuse to die,” the mother of one of the murdered women says. “I just don’t know how to keep on living.” And for extra measure, [read this rave review](#) in the *WSJ*.

Chokshi, Roshani. [The Last Tale of the Flower Bride](#) (Harper \$27.99). In this gothic fairy tale, a poor academic marries a glamorous heiress who makes him vow not to search for her secrets. A fairy-tale scholar known only as “the bridegroom” meets the mysterious, fabulously wealthy Indigo Maxwell-Casteñada when he asks to see a rare book from her family’s private collection. Almost immediately, he and Indigo embark on a whirlwind romance fueled by their mutual love of stories. But despite her passion for him, Indigo keeps the bridegroom at a distance, making him promise never to dig into her past. Then, when Indigo gets word that the aunt who raised her is dying, she and the bridegroom return to her childhood home, the House of Dreams. The mysterious mansion is bursting with Indigo’s secrets, making it harder and harder for the bridegroom to keep his promise.

Library Reads Recommends: “A husband cannot resist prying into his wife’s past when he visits her childhood home. This gorgeously written gothic fairy tale about forbidden knowledge and dangerous love is perfect for fans of Silvia Moreno-Garcia or V.E. Schwab.”

Clark, Cassandra. [Chain of Thorns](#) (McElderry Books \$24.99). Teen readers alert: James and Cordelia must save London—and their marriage—in this thrilling and highly anticipated conclusion to the Last Hours series. Clark is the bestselling author of the Shadowhunters novels. Start with [Chain of Gold](#) and [Chain of Iron](#) (\$14.99 each).

While you are at it pick up Margaret Rogerson’s [Mysteries of Thorn Manor](#) (\$14.99). In this delightful sequel novella to [Sorcery of Thorns](#) (\$17.99)—think “magical library” where an apprentice must battle a powerful sorcerer and sabotage unleashes a dangerous grimoire—Elisabeth, Nathaniel, and Silas must unravel the magical trap keeping them inside Thorn Manor in time for their Midwinter Ball!

Collins, Max Allan/James L. Traylor. [Spillane: King of the Pulps](#) (Penzler \$26.95). The *WSJ* devoted an entire column to this new biography and to Spillane’s revolutionary effect on publishing. And here is a Starred Review with interesting items cited: In 1947, Mickey Spillane (1918–2006) unleashed his hyperbolic private eye and WWII vet, Mike Hammer, on the world with *I,*

the Jury, a revenge saga that featured a major infusion of sexual innuendo and unfettered violence that scandalized not only other mystery writers but also the publishing industry and beyond. In this illuminating biography, the first devoted to Spillane, MWA Grandmaster Collins, a late-life collaborator of Spillane’s, and critic Traylor provide incisive analysis of Spillane’s unique career. Employing exhaustive research and their access to Spillane’s personal archives, the authors move from Spillane’s precocious childhood to his time at comic book publisher Timely writing text fillers; his WWII service as a flight instructor; the epic breakthrough with the Signet/NAL paperback edition of *I, the Jury*; the superstar years of 1948–1953, when each Mike Hammer novel was reprinted in the millions; and his surprise conversion to the Jehovah’s Witness movement. Spillane’s growing appetite for acting and star-making turn in the 1970s as a TV pitchman for Miller Lite beer is recounted in colorful detail, while his long-delayed triumph in being named a Grand Master by his MWA peers in 1995 is quite affecting. The book concludes with several highly informative appendices. The knockout is the one where Collins describes the work Spillane left and Collins’ own work in completing large texts and small entitled “Completing Mickey Spillane.” I greet with skepticism news that a famous author has left “undiscovered work,” but I believe Collins, especially his statement that he is limiting himself to completing what the hugely prolific Spillane left undone.

In another new biography of an author, Mark Dawidziak presents [A Mystery of Mysteries: The Death and Life of Edgar Allan Poe](#) (St Martins \$28.99). Personally I think Poe’s life has been over-plumbed, over-analyzed, and over-published, but Dawidziak examines Poe’s life through “the prism” of his death on October 7, 1849, at age 40. Which is to say throwing ideas as to what happened during the three days leading up to October and what was the cause of death? The idea here is to debunk the myths and sensational theories of how Poe lived, how his contemporaries and those who came later viewed him and his work, and positing a (medical and unprovable) cause of death. So... some suspense here.

Colt, Peter. [The Ambassador](#) (Severn \$30.99). I have not read this but quote the *PW* Starred Review noting it’s nod to Robert B. Parker: “It’s 1985 in Colt’s stellar fourth mystery featuring Boston gumshoe Andy Roark and Gordon Stevenson, the former U.S. ambassador to Laos who during the Vietnam War presided over the secret military campaign in Laos, arranges to meet Roark, who served in Special Forces in Vietnam, at Boston’s Harvard Club, where the working-class Roark feels ill at ease (“I was most definitely not Harvard Club material”). Stevenson has been receiving death threats, apparently from someone who was in Special Forces. Despite his disgust at Stevenson’s role in the conflict, Roark agrees to help, motivated by a desire to prove that someone other than a former comrade-in-arms has been sending the threats. Colt plays with conventions of the subgenre; at one point, Roark explains why his wisecracks, unlike those of Rex Stout’s Archie Goodwin, fall on deaf ears. The page-turning story line, which includes Roark’s relevant memories of the Vietnam War, never flags, and the balance of plot and character is perfect. This continues to be a grittier alternative to Robert B. Parker’s Spenser series.”

Dorsey, Tim. [The Maltese Iguana](#) (Harper \$28.99). After a long and arduous COVID-19 quarantine, Serge A. Storms is fully

vaccinated and ready to hit the road. Along with his condo neighbors, he cooks up a wild plan to celebrate in true Serge fashion: each week, they rent a shuttle van and head out for funky Florida road trips and some serious revelry. Meanwhile, a CIA revenge operation down in Honduras goes very, very wrong. The local liaison hired to help with the mission is the only witness to the disaster, and the CIA quickly sets a black ops contractor on his trail to eliminate him. Forced to flee his home country, the witness lands in Miami with a new identity and passport. But the CIA is still on his tail, pushing him further and further south to the Florida Keys, where he runs into Serge's convoy. With Florida's most lovable serial killer involved, the real party is about to get started...

✦Elliott, Lexie. [Bright and Deadly Things](#) (Penguin \$27). Elliott grew up in Scotland, at the foot of the Highlands. She graduated from Oxford University, where she learned that three of the colleges operate a summer chalet retreat program in France, the background for this our **January British Crime Club Pick**. Yes, it's late because it publishes in February, but it's the best choice. See Unsigned Event Books for a review.

Engberg, Katrine. [The Sanctuary](#) (Gallery \$28.99). Nordic noir fans, you won't want to miss the conclusion to Engberg's Jeppe Kørner and Anette Werner series. The investigators are back for one more case where the clues surrounding a severed corpse in downtown Copenhagen lead Detective Anette Werner to the island of Bornholm, where Jeppe Kørner, on leave from the force to recuperate, just so happens to be spending his winter. All he wanted was to escape the world for a little while, but Kørner comes to realize Bornholm isn't at all the peaceful place he had assumed it would be. In fact, its dark secrets may get him killed. This excellent [Danish series](#) begins with *The Tenant*, *The Butterfly House*, and *The Harbor*.

Giarratano, Kimberly G. [Death of a Dancing Queen](#) (Watkins \$17.99). This adult debut by YA mystery author Giarratano inaugurates Angry Robot's crime fiction imprint, Datura Books. Billie Levine, a 24-year-old New Jersey PI, takes center stage, although she doesn't yet have the lauded reputation her PI grandfather Billy earned before retirement. That's about to change as she's hired by a wealthy college kid to find his missing girlfriend. While also caring for her Alzheimer-afflicted mother, Billie takes on the Jewish mafia, the entitled rich, drug gangs, skinheads and murder-podcasting groupies—plus an irresistible, lawless ex-boyfriend. Publisher Eleanor Teasdale, who read the book “in one sitting,” extols Giarratano's “willingness to be playful with the tropes and rules of the genre and give us a new take on it.” Giarratano deftly twists her plot, nonchalantly drops corpses and shrewdly discloses secrets like a seasoned pro.

Greeley, Molly. [Marvelous](#) (Morrow \$32, another ridiculous price hike I hate to see as it handicaps authors attracting readers). This gem begins in 1547 on the island of Tenerife where young Pedro Gonzalez is constantly ridiculed by his village for the hairy pelt that covers him—today we know this to be a genetic condition called hypertrichosis, or Ambras syndrome. The child is swept up by pirates and ends up at the court of Henri II and Catherine de Medici. Pedro is to amuse the 16th Century court, but he's far from stupid. In time he's wed to a dazzling young woman and theirs is a love story which, per Greeley, recreates the touching and surprising true story behind the Beauty and the Beast

legend. This is a rich and gorgeously written novel fictionalizing historical events and personages in a tumultuous Renaissance era.

Handler, David. [The Girl Who Took What She Wanted](#) (Penzler \$26.95). “Alberta Pryce, Hoag's loyal agent, has a ghost-writing job for her client, who was once considered “the first major new literary voice of the 1980s” but went into a self-destructive spiral under the pressure of trying to write a second book. Nikki Dymtryk, “a spoiled wild child” whose life as a teen is the basis for *Being Nikki*, a hit TV show, decides when the program plateaus to become the bestselling author of a Hollywood romance novel, despite her lack of literary talent. Tempted by a lucrative payday, Hoag travels from New York to California to meet with her, only to be threatened with death if he proceeds further. The bludgeoning murder of someone he meets follows, and Hoag must sort through a variety of suspects before arriving at the gut-punch solution to the crime. The empathetic Hoag's narrative voice compels, and Handler makes his role as an investigator easy to accept. Fans of hard-edged whodunits set in La La Land will be riveted.”—PW Starred Review. I hated putting it down to write this I am so much enjoying reading it.

Johansen, Iris/Roy. [More Than Meets the Eye](#) (Grand Central \$29). Here's another series entry that can be read as easily as a standalone. Bestseller Johansen and son's pulse-pounding ninth Kendra Michaels thriller opens with FBI agents and other law enforcement officers escorting serial killer James Michael Barrett, who has taken a plea deal to avoid the death penalty, to where he buried his first victim two years earlier in a remote area east of San Diego, Calif. As two officials begin to dig, a bomb goes off, killing Barrett and others. The San Diego FBI reluctantly allows consultant Kendra Michaels to assist in its investigation, as she's eager to help after learning that an FBI friend of hers was seriously injured in the blast. With help from Adam Lynch, a former FBI agent now working in black ops, Kendra discovers that Barrett was likely taking orders from some unknown person. Kendra and Lynch come to believe that this person is still out there as the body count rises, along with the suspense. The pair must draw on their entire arsenal of skills to prevent more deaths and expose the bomber.

Kotzwinkle, William. [Bloody Martini: A Felonious Monk Mystery](#) (Berkley \$26.99). A monk is called from his Mexican monastery back to his hometown, where he kicks major ass.”Kotzwinkle's exceptional sequel to 2021's [Felonious Monk](#) (\$18.99) takes Benedictine monk and killer Tommy Martini back to his birthplace of Coalville, to honor the final request of his best friend, Finn Sweeney. Finn's plea—in a frantic voicemail message cut off by a gun shot—is for Martini to find and take care of his wife, Bridget Breen, an old crush of Martini's from their high school days when Martini was captain of the football team. In Coalville, Martini fends off local goons, bought-off cops, and politicians who want him dead—in particular, Brian Fury, the sadistic district attorney who couldn't pin Martini for murder eight years earlier. The trail Martini pursues leads to a child prostitution conspiracy that seems to involve everyone in town. Queenie O'Malley, who admired Martini in high school and drew a cartoon of the football team for the school paper, provides some romantic distraction, even though she's engaged to be married and he's a monk. This wry, extremely funny, character-driven novel will remind readers of classic L.A. noir, though its treatment of relations between men and women has been updated.”—PW Starred Review

Lawson, Mike. [Alligator Alley](#) (Grove \$27). Joe DeMarco likes to call himself a troubleshooter. It sounds better than “bagman” or “fixer.” With more than a decade of troubleshooting under his belt on behalf of John Mahoney, the Speaker of the House, DeMarco has seen his fair share of dangerous situations. When Andie Moore, a 23-year-old working in the DOJ’s Inspector General’s Office, is murdered in cold blood in Florida’s Everglades, it falls on DeMarco to get to the bottom of things. Paired with Emma, an enigmatic, retired ex-spy with seemingly endless connections in the military and intelligence communities, they venture south to the scene of Andie’s murder: Alligator Alley. DeMarco and Emma waste no time in identifying a two suspects—a pair of crooked, near-retirement FBI agents named McIntyre and McGruder. But as they keep digging, it becomes clear that these FBI agents weren’t acting alone.... This is a consistently well plotted series which I suspect has failed to achieve major lift off because the DC swamp portrayed is too close to reality.

Lester, Natasha. [The Three Lives of Alix St. Pierre](#) (Grand Central \$28). John reviews the **February Romance & Relationship Book of the Month**: Alix Pierre is back in Paris, and she can’t wait to start her new job as publicist for Christian Dior, who is busy preparing his debut couture collection. While drumming up interest in the new designer with the fashion press, Alix discovers an informant known as *La Voce*, with whom Alix crossed paths during the war, is still alive. Now in order to bring the traitor to justice, Alix must team up with American newspaper journalist and publishing heir Anthony March. Lester mixes up an intoxicating literary cocktail, whose impeccably researched plot is composed of equal measures of war-time espionage and glamorous fashion spiked with just the right dash of romance.

Maetis, JC. [The Vienna Writers Circle](#) (Mira \$27.99). Spring, 1938: Café Mozart in the heart of Vienna is beloved by its clientele, including cousins Mathias Kraemer and Johannes Namal. The two writers are as close as brothers. They are also members of Freud’s Circle—a unique group of the famed psychiatrist’s friends and acquaintances who once gathered regularly at the bright and airy café to talk about books and ideas over coffee and pastries. But dark days are looming. With Hitler’s annexation of Austria, Nazi edicts governing daily life become stricter and more punitive. Now Hitler has demanded that the “hidden Jews” of Vienna be tracked down, and Freud’s Circle has been targeted. The SS aims to use old group photos to identify Jewish intellectuals and subversives. With the vise tightening around them, Mathias and Johannes’s only option appears to be hiding in plain sight, using assumed names and identities to evade detection, aware that discovery would mean consignment to a camp or execution. Can they keep themselves and their loved ones safe as the SS closes in?

McDaniel, Tiffany. [On the Savage Side](#) (Knopf \$29). Six women—mothers, daughters, sisters—gone missing. When the first is found floating dead in the river, it reveals the disturbing truth of a small Ohio town. Inspired by the unsolved murders of the Chillicothe Six, novelist and poet McDaniel pens a harrowing and haunting novel tells the story of two sisters, both of whom could be the next victims.

Natt och Dag, Niklas. [The City Between the Bridges: 1794](#) (Atria \$28.99). If you like your Nordic Noir dark, and realize it doesn’t have to be contemporary, this series is for you. “Mysteris

don’t come much rawer than Natt och Dag’s gut-wrenching and moving page-turner, his second featuring Stockholm watchman Jean Michael Cardell. Erik Three Roses, an 18th-century nobleman who’s hospitalized, believes himself a murderer. Flashbacks recount how Erik, a younger son with no prospects, fell in love with Linnea Colling, the daughter of one of his father’s tenants. His father strenuously opposed their marriage plans, and Erik was exiled to Saint Barthélemy, a Swedish colony dominated by the slave trade in the Caribbean. Unexpected developments enabled him to return home and wed, but his joy turned to despair when he awoke from his honeymoon night to find his bride torn apart and his own body soaked in her blood, leading to his hospitalization aimed at curing his mental illness believed responsible for the slaughter. In 1794, Linnea’s mother dismisses the theory that her child was mauled by wolves—and she also can’t credit that Erik killed Linnea. Cardell accepts her request to investigate and gets drawn into the heart of human darkness. Natt och Dag expertly combines fully realized, flawed characters with vivid period detail. This tale of the cruelties that people are capable of inflicting on each other will leave few readers unshaken.” Begin with [The Wolf and the Watchman: 1793](#) (\$17).

North, Alex. [The Angel Maker](#) (Celadon \$28.99). When Katie Shaw was 17, she made an innocent decision that proved calamitous: instead of looking after her younger brother, Chris, she spent an afternoon with her boyfriend. As a result, Katie wasn’t on hand when Chris was attacked by a stranger, Michael Hyde, who tried to cut off Chris’s face. Now in her 30s, she feels even more guilt when their mother reports that Chris, who became an addict and petty criminal, has gone missing. This news drives Katie to try to find Chris, despite having given up on their relationship years before when she turned him into the police for theft. Chris is also the quarry of a police detective who met the siblings when Hyde assaulted Chris. Meanwhile, a philosophy professor, a fervent determinist, has his throat slit under circumstances that suggest he expected to be killed; Chris was caught at the scene by security video. That the professor’s murder is also linked to a serial killer known as the Angel Maker adds more complications to an uneven thriller.

Robb, J D. [Encore in Death](#) (St Martins \$29.99). It was a glittering event full of A-listers, hosted by Eliza Lane and Brant Fitzhugh, a celebrity couple who’d conquered both Hollywood and Broadway. And now Eve Dallas has made her entrance—but not as a guest. After raising a toast, Fitzhugh fell to the floor and died, with physical symptoms pointing to cyanide, and the police have crashed the party. From all accounts, he wasn’t the kind of star who made enemies. Everyone loved him—even his ex-wife. And since the champagne cocktail that killed him was originally intended for Eliza, it’s possible she was the real target, with a recently fired assistant, a bitter rival, and an obsessed fan in the picture. With so many attendees, staff, and servers, the NYPD’s Eve Dallas has her work cut out determining who committed murder in the middle of the crowd—and what was their motivation? Plenty of enticing details of life among the theater and movie set make up for a plot that will be familiar to any Agatha Christie reader. This is a compulsively readable futuristic series, but the larger mystery is how is Nora Roberts able to keep up her blistering writing pace?

Roth, Veronica. [Arch-Conspirator](#) (Forge \$19.99). Well I have to quote this amazing PW Starred Review: “Readers who are tapped out on *The Handmaid’s Tale* as a parable for the current cultural moment will celebrate this taut, defiant reenvisioning of Sophocles’ *Antigone*, which brilliantly probes many of the same themes. Bestseller Roth, best known for the YA Divergent series, turns from trilogy sprawl to the confines of novella and expertly meets the demands of the form, offering just enough worldbuilding and keeping a tight focus on her well-drawn characters’ difficult choices. Antigone and her siblings are given refuge by Kreon, who overthrew their father’s government. Not only is it politically expedient for Kreon to keep his dead rival’s children alive, it’s necessary—because this is a postapocalyptic scenario: all genes are compromised, and every “viable womb” is precious to the state. The siblings are ostracized because they were naturally conceived and thus believed to be soulless. Souls can be embodied only by mixing the purified genes of the dead, who are then reborn via the surrogacy of the living. Though believed to be tainted, Antigone and her sister Ismene can still serve as such vessels. But when murder blights their lives again, will Kreon respect the right of Antigone’s beloved dead to be reborn? The plot preserves the shape of the original without ever losing the capacity to surprise and, more importantly, prod reflection and recognition. This powerful tale of reproductive oppression is sure to wow.”

Ruff, Matt. [The Destroyer of Worlds](#) (Harper \$30). Subtitled “A Return to *Lovecraft Country*,” it begins in the summer of 1957. Atticus Turner and his father, Montrose, travel to North Carolina, where they plan to mark the centennial of their ancestor’s escape from slavery by retracing the route he took into the Great Dismal Swamp. But an encounter with an old nemesis turns their historical reenactment into a real life-and-death pursuit. Back in Chicago, George Berry fights for his own life. Diagnosed with cancer, he strikes a devil’s bargain with the ghost of Hiram Winthrop, who promises a miracle cure—but to receive it, George will first have to bring Winthrop back from the dead. Meanwhile, fifteen-year-old Horace Berry, reeling from the killing of a close friend, joins his mother, Hippolyta, and her friend Letitia Dandridge on a research trip to Nevada for *The Safe Negro Travel Guide*. But Hippolyta has a secret—and far more dangerous—agenda that will take her and Horace to the far end of the universe and bring a new threat home to Letitia’s doorstep. Hippolyta isn’t the only one keeping secrets. Letitia’s sister, Ruby, has been leading a double life as her white alter ego, Hillary Hyde. Now, the supply of magic potion she needs to transform herself is nearly gone, and a surprise visitor throws her already tenuous situation into complete chaos. Yet these troubles are soon eclipsed....

Rushdie, Salman. [Victory City](#) (Random \$30) presents an inventive epic about the rise of the fantastical city of Bisnaga and young girl Pampa Kampana, whose grand life story intertwines with the city’s complicated development across the years.

Weber, David et al. [What Price Victory](#) (Baen \$27). The mission: to boldly explore David Weber’s Honorverse, the hugely successful military sci-fi series; to deliver all the action, courage, derring-do, and pulse-pounding excitement of space naval adventure with tales set in a world touched by the greatness of one epic heroine—Honor Harrington. So new Honorverse tales are by Timothy Zahn & Thomas Pope, Jane Lindskold, the

Honorverse Czech translator Jan Kotouč, and Joelle Presby. Plus “First Victory,” an all-new novella by David Weber.

Wilson, Jonathan. [Red Balcony](#) (Shoeken \$27). *Kirkus* reviews: “Set in Palestine in 1933 and based on true events, Wilson’s smart, fast-paced novel focuses on the months following the assassination of Haim Arlosoroff, gunned down on a Tel Aviv beach in June 1933 after he negotiates a controversial agreement with Hitler’s regime that will ease the international boycott against Nazi Germany in exchange for allowing more Jews to flee the country. Ivor Castle, a recent graduate of Oxford and a Jew himself, but one who feels “more at home among the gentiles in the country of his birth than among the Jews of the Promised Land,” is recruited to assist in the defense of two Russians charged with the crime. His work and life quickly become complicated when he embarks on an affair with Tsiona Kerem, a beautiful and enigmatic artist from Jerusalem whose testimony may provide an alibi for his clients. Ivor tries to thrash his way out of an ethical thicket, as the evidence points at one moment to his clients’ guilt and at another to the possibility that Arlosoroff’s killers may have been Arabs, a result eagerly sought by Charles Gross, a fellow Oxford graduate and supporter of the controversial Zionist leader Ze’ev Jabotinsky. Ivor’s position becomes even more perilous when he meets Susannah Green, an attractive young American whose father is working quietly to rescue German Jews. In all his machinations, Ivor also serves as something of a proxy for the complexity of life in a ‘place of violence and blood—or at least, a place of multiple clashing dreams of belonging.’”

OUR FEBRUARY LARGE PAPERBACK PICKS

Black, Cara. [Murder at the Porte De Versailles](#) (\$16.95). Here’s a rave review: “In bestseller Black’s riveting 20th Aimée Leduc investigation, tensions are high in Paris two months after 9/11. Still, life—including a birthday party for PI Aimée’s three-year-old daughter, Chloé—goes on as usual, at least until an explosion at the nearby police laboratory. The horror of that bombing becomes personal as Boris Viard, a lab employee and Aimée’s good friend, becomes a suspect when trace amounts of the explosive are found on him. Meeting resistance every step of the way from the police and Boris’s coworkers, Aimée tries to determine whether the crime might involve one of the unsolved cases of her late detective father. As Aimée wends her way through the darker parts of the City of Light in search of a possible tie to an Iranian terrorist organization, she must also resolve where her relationship with Melac, Chloé’s father, is headed just as another man reenters her life. Rich with detail about life in Paris, this entry illuminates the complications that friends and family can unwittingly create.” Black joins us March 11 at 3:30 PM with her friend Rhys Bowen to discuss a second WWII thriller [Night Flight to Paris](#) (Soho \$27.95).

Bowen, Rhys/Clare Broyles. [Wild Irish Rose](#) (\$17.99). 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.... Rhys and daughter Clare join us March 11 2:00 PM to sign the sequel, [All That is Hidden](#) (St Martins \$26.99).

Carr, Jack. [The Devil's Hand](#) (\$18.99). Alec Christensen has been on a 20-year mission to avenge the death of his fiancée in the 2001 World Trade Center attack. First with military service, then a congressional office, and now as the U.S. president, Christensen finally has access to the classified information he's long sought. He tasks former Navy SEAL James Reece, another warrior hell-bent on revenge, with eliminating the 9/11 conspirators still at large. The terrorists, meanwhile, haven't spent the past two decades resting on their victims' ashes, and are actively planning a far deadlier mission: the release of a biological weapon that will force the president to destroy infected American cities with powerful fuel-air bombs, killing millions. Reece scrambles to identify the bioweapon, even as he's hunted by both enemy assassins and private American mercenaries working for the president's political rival. "Carr delivers engrossing backstory, incorporates current events seamlessly, and never flinches from breathless depictions of violence." Carr debuts his 6th Terminal List thriller here on May 14: [Only the Dead](#) (Atria \$29.99).

When we may also be able to offer entire sets of signed hardcovers.

Cranor, Eli. [Don't Know Tough](#) (\$16.95). 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. Cranor scored some serious praise: Nominated for the Edgar Award for Best First Novel, Nominated for the Lefty Award for Best Debut Mystery Novel, A *NY Times Book Review* Best Crime Novel of 2022, A *USA Today* Best Book of 2022. We will have Signed copies of his April book [Ozark Dogs](#) (Soho \$26.95).

Garrett, Kellye. [Like a Sister](#) (\$17.99). Charging into a new genre, Garrett says "I was fascinated with the idea about how a glam reality star could go from glamming 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.

Hart, Rob. [The Paradox Hotel](#) (\$18). This is a truly excellent book and it was fun to discuss it with Hart last year. Here's a Starred Review: Time travel has been monetized in this stellar SF thriller from Hart. The U.S. government charges the 1% "hundreds of thousands of dollars to see the first-ever public showing of Hamlet or visit the Library of Alexandria," but it's still losing money on the hyperexpensive operation. That leads to a privatization initiative, and several trillionaires arrive at the Paradox Hotel to make their proposal to buy the Einstein Intercentury Timeport. Their presence is a headache for hotel security head January Cole, who's suffering deleterious health side effects from entering the time stream frequently and overwhelming grief from the accidental death of her lover, Mena, a waitress at the Paradox. When January sees a stabbed corpse in a guest room that no one else can see, including her smart-ass AI assistant, Ruby, she endeavors to determine whether there's a real murder to investigate or whether it's an apparition that's a symptom of her illness. The twists keep coming without simplifying January's mental struggles in this impressive melding of creative plotting and three-dimensional characters.

Kistler, Bonnie. [The Cage](#) (\$17.99). An elevator door opens, two women are found inside, one dead from a gunshot, the other alive. Suicide or murder? It doesn't get better than this superb thriller with tripwire suspense, intrigue, and smart women—set in the corridors of international high fashion. If you liked *The Firm*, you will love *The Cage*, a 2022 First Mystery Book of the Month that takes you into the world of HR and a NYC high fashion conglomerate where knives out is the ordinary way of the business day.

Mayne, Andrew. [Sea Castle](#) (Thomas & Mercer \$16.99). I have enjoyed this [Underwater Investigation Unit](#) series a lot, it has some Clive Cussler elements but this Starred review cites Sue Grafton! "The discovery of a naked woman's body on a Fort Lauderdale beach propels Thriller Award finalist Mayne's stellar fourth thriller featuring police diver Sloan McPherson of the Florida Department of Law Enforcement Underwater Investigation Unit. Floating near the corpse is a plastic bag containing women's clothing, but there are no identifying marks. Convinced that the dead woman, eventually ID'd as Nicole Donnelly, was strangled, McPherson decides to pursue the mystery. She approaches Gwen Wylder, an obsessive police detective, who agrees to review the case file if McPherson looks into an unrelated case. Their partnership leads them to conclude that Donnelly's death was one in a series. McPherson, who's determined to get justice for Donnelly, uses unconventional means both to persuade the crotchety Wylder to assist her and to demonstrate that Donnelly had been in the water only a few hours before she was found, a significant fact in reconstructing the events leading to her murder. Mayne combines a brilliant, innovative female lead with a plausibly twisty plot. Kinsey Millhone fans will love McPherson."

Parker, T. Jefferson. [A Thousand Steps](#) (\$18.99). Our longtime friend T Jeff is an inventive writer, winner of three Edgars, and never resting on his laurels but stretching to access different genres, different characters, and varied communities. So here he is in Laguna Beach where the Age of Aquarius is in full swing, Leary is a rock star, LSD is “God.” Newcomers flock seeking peace, love, and enlightenment. And 16-year-old Matt Anthony is just trying to get by. His mom is a stoner, his dad is long departed, his admired older brother is serving in Nam, and his big sister Jazz has just gone missing. Is she just a runaway hippie as the cops clock her, enjoying a summer of love? But wait, there’s another missing girl and she’s found dead on the beach. So Matt, broke, sans driver’s license or any resources, shoulders finding his sister against all the odds. A bonus is the story of Matt’s brother. Parker has always been good at coming-of-age stories, and chronicling 20th Century California into the 21st. We get a new Parker in late April, details to come on our calendar.

Preston, Douglas/Lincoln Child. [Diablo Mesa](#) (\$18.99). “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 *Thunderhead*. It reads like a hybrid of the best from Wilbur Smith and Alistair MacLean, making for flat-out great reading entertainment.”—Jon Land

Silva, Daniel. [Portrait of an Unknown Woman](#) (\$18.99). This new Gabriel Allon isn’t a spy story. It does draw upon the now retired Israeli super-spy’s skill and international contacts, but Silva has taken Gabriel with his family back to Venice where he first met Chiara and where her father is a rabbi. The plan is he will rest up and then return to restoring art under a firm managed by Chiara. But he and his highly honed skill set is summoned into the world of high stakes art, forgeries, finance, and the murder of an elderly French woman whose elegantly written summons to meet her in Bordeaux fails when she is killed in what appears to be a car accident. Silva has clearly had a marvelous time deep diving into the international art world, setting Gabriel to work as a forger in a “it takes a thief to catch a thief” scenario, revisiting Corsica, France, Italy, London, and New York.... And effecting forms of justice that are, how shall I say it, fluid....

Swanson, Peter. [Nine Lives](#) (\$17.99). 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.

SOME LARGE PAPERBACKS FOR FEBRUARY

Baldacci, David. [Dream Town](#) (\$18.99). Aloysius Archer, a decorated WWII vet who works for a detective agency in Bay Town, California, heads to Los Angeles to celebrate New Year’s Eve 1952 with actress and love interest Liberty Callahan. That evening, at a restaurant frequented by such stars as Frank Sinatra and Groucho Marx, Callahan introduces Archer to her friend Eleanor Lamb, a screenwriter working on a script for Bette Davis. After Lamb learns of Archer’s profession, she seeks to hire him because she’s gotten middle-of-the-night-hang-up calls, and someone entered her Malibu home and left a bloody knife in her kitchen sink. Lamb’s fears for her life seem justified when she disappears. Right after Archer finds an unknown man shot to death in her house, someone bludgeons the gumshoe into unconsciousness. The tension rises as his subsequent investigation places his own life in danger. “Baldacci paints a vivid picture of the not-so-distant era . . . The 1950s weren’t the fabled good old days, but they’re fodder for gritty crime stories of high ideals and lowlifes, of longing and disappointment, and all the trouble a PI can handle. Well-done crime fiction. Baldacci nails the noir.”—*Kirkus* Starred Review

Chan, Jessamine. [The School for Good Mothers](#) (\$17.99). “A mother leaves her toddler alone for hours and pays the price for the rest of her life. Chan took me from being a judgmental spectator to understanding how the system is stacked against mothers. *A Handmaid’s Tale* and *1984* for Generation Z.”

Clark, Tracy. [Hide](#) (Thomas & Mercer \$16.99). A serial killer obsessed with redheads stalks the pages engaging in ritual murder in downtown Chicago during broad daylight as Clark kicks off a series starring Detective Harriet Foster, who can tell it will be rough going as soon as she arrives at the first crime scene. Not only because of the killer’s apparent signature — lines of blood-red lipstick drawn around the victim’s wrists and ankles — but also because she’s still working through her own grief and guilt over the suicide of her longtime partner on the force. “There had to have been signs. . . . But Foster had missed every single one, even though she had been trained to lock in, to be observant, intuitive even, to always see three moves ahead.” Unfortunately, Foster’s new partner is a jerk, needling her with boorish racist and sexist comments while failing to pull his investigative weight even as the deaths mount: “A by-the-book cop and a bleeding heart? Boy, did I hit the jackpot,” he sneers at her early on. When Foster gets a tip to look into the behavior of an unstable young man with a violent past, she begins to sense just how deep the levels of depravity will run. Chicagoan Clark, an editor, has won the Sue Grafton Memorial Award and been nominated for others including the Anthony, Edgar, Shamus and the Lefty.

Dahl, Julia. [The Missing Hours](#) (\$16.99). NYU freshman Claudia Castro, the protagonist of this provocative standalone from Edgar finalist Dahl of the Rebekah Roberts series has pretty much sailed through her first 20 years—until the day she wakes up in her nearly deserted dorm during spring break with a black eye, busted lip, bruising hangover, and no idea what happened to her. Too shaken to contemplate facing her family, Claudia uncharacteristically accepts the kindness of fellow student Trevor Barber, a relative stranger from a working-class background. Claudia's starting to get back on her feet when she receives a shattering video showing all too graphically some of what occurred during the time she can't remember, and struggles with whether to go to the police and risk being forever defined as a victim, or seek her own vigilante-style justice with Taylor's help. "A searing tale of sexual assault in the digital age. Dahl is a master at mining the complexities of crime and the urgent issues that arise from it, including the one pulsing at the heart of this harrowing novel: how can victims find justice and reclaim their power when a crime plays out endlessly on the internet? Timely, taut, and gripping—an absolute must-read." —Laura McHugh.

Evanovich, Janet. [The Recovery Agent](#) (\$17.99). 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....

Fay, Kim. [Love & Saffron](#) (\$17). 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.

✦Gramont, Nina de. [The Christie Affair](#) (\$17.99) weaves "a captivating tale around the real life disappearance of mystery

writer Agatha Christie from the point of view of her husband's lover. The story combines dark pasts, dangerous liaisons and unforeseen twists into a masterful work reminiscent of one of Christie's enigmatic works..."—Pam Jenoff

Greenwood, T. [The Golden Hour](#) (\$16.95). Reissue. When she was 13, Wyn experienced a terrible crime. Her assailant was convicted without her testimony. Knowing that her attacker would be imprisoned forever allowed Wyn to reclaim small bits of herself and move on with her life, going to art school and becoming a painter. Twenty years later, she's married to a fellow artist, but after a terrible quarrel with him, she has moved out. Then a woman from an innocence project wins a new trial for Wyn's assailant. The man might be freed, but Wyn still doesn't want to testify. She escapes to a friend's place on an island in Maine, taking her young daughter along. In the house, Wyn finds a box of old, undeveloped film and realizes the photographer was talented. As her own past wounds are reopened, Wyn tries to solve the mystery of that photographer. It is also wonderfully written, evoking a strong sense of place with lush, visually evocative prose

Haigh, Jennifer. [Mercy Street](#) (\$17.99). "Haigh deftly walks across the fault line of one of the most divisive issues of our age, peeling back ideology and revealing what all ideology refuses to recognize: an individual's humanity. . . . Mercy Street argues, both in form and content, that compassion is a powerful counterpoint to the conflict-driven stories that dominate our news cycles, our news feeds and our Netflix queues. In Haigh's world, in other words, mercy may no longer be fashionable, but it sure is necessary." — *San Francisco Chronicle*

Hepworth, Sally. [The Younger Wife](#) (\$17.99). Pamela Aston's two adult daughters, Tully and Rachel, are already reeling at the swiftness of the Melbourne, Australia, homemaker's deterioration with early-onset Alzheimer's when their cardiac surgeon father, Stephen, blindsides them with another bombshell—his plan to divorce Pam, who's soon moved to a nursing home, and marry interior designer Heather Wisher, who's younger than either sister. Further shocks await Rachel, a gorgeous plus-size baker who by her own account eats her feelings, as well as Tully, the always anxious mother of two little boys, as they try to figure out how seriously to take Pam's occasional utterances suggesting that life with Stephen may have had a darker side. Meanwhile, the surprisingly sympathetic Heather starts to question her wedding plans—and possibly her sanity—now that she's living with Stephen full-time. The toxic secrets each woman has been hiding, a surprise romance, and the small fortune Rachel discovers in her mother's hot water bottle nicely complicate the fast-moving plot. This is often funny and affecting, good escape reading although IMHO the basic premise is a sad one. Hepworth joins us live on April 13.

Hilderbrand, Elin. [The Hotel Nantucket](#) (\$18.99). London-based billionaire Xavier Darling buys and lavishly renovates the long-derelict Hotel Nantucket, hoping to win the coveted "Five Keys" rating from an Instagram travel influencer. When he needs a local general manager, he hires Lizbet Keaton, who doesn't have hotel experience but previously ran a successful restaurant for 15 years, until she was betrayed by her business partner boyfriend. Staff shortages at the Hotel Nantucket (perhaps an oblique reference to COVID-era labor shortages) drive Lizbet to hire a raft of

similarly inexperienced workers—disparate characters with slowly revealed backstories and secrets. The hotel turns out to be haunted by the ghost of a young chambermaid who was murdered there a hundred years earlier; to end the haunting, the hotel staff will have to help the ghost get closure. “Beyond the intrigue, readers will learn something of the way a luxury hotel runs, including the long hours and dedication of the staff.”—*LJ*

James, Marlon. [Moon Witch, Spider King](#) (\$18). Sogolon, the antagonist of *Black Leopard, Red Wolf*, tells her side of the story in Booker Prize winner James’s brilliant second Dark Star fantasy, which chronicles Sogolon’s life from childhood through to the search for the lost boy at the center of the first book. Furtive Sogolon, the Moon Witch, manages to live far longer than most expect for a girl of “little use” with no family ties. She witnesses mad kings rise and fall and women suffer at their hands, all while the Aesi, or the king’s chancellor, remains a constant at the right side of the throne. Sogolon becomes a living record of all the kingdom has been through—and to the Aesi, this makes her a threat. Now each works against the other as they try to find the lost boy for their own purposes. If book one centers on the nature of storytelling, this volume turns its focus to memory, archiving, and history.

Jenoff, Pam. [Code Name Sapphire](#) (\$18.99). Hannah Martel created satiric anti-Nazi cartoons that her lover, Isaac, printed in his underground Berlin newspaper. But in 1942, after Nazis kill Isaac, Hannah flees Germany for Havana via passage on the MS Brittany. However, upon arrival, the refugees aren’t allowed to disembark, and with America’s shores closed to them as well, the ship returns to Europe, where some will be allowed to live in Belgium. Hannah ends up living with her cousin Lily Abel and her family, and seeking help from Micheline, 23, who runs a resistance effort to rescue downed Allied pilots and air crew. Hannah finds herself falling for Micheline’s brother, Matteo, who’s involved in his sister’s campaign. In the final act, Jenoff reveals a complex web of connections between the Abels, Matteo, and Hannah.

Katz, Erica. [Fake](#) (\$17.99). Russian oligarch Leonard Sobetsky makes aspiring artist Emma Caan the kind of offer typically associated with a whiff of sulfur: leave Manhattan’s Gemini Reproductions, where she’s one of a stable cranking out (strictly legal) brushstroke-perfect replicas of masterpieces for their owners, to copy exclusively for him and he’ll not only pay handsomely but also give her entrée to the art world’s stratosphere. In a flash, the 26-year-old segues from subways and ramen to Instafamous assistant director at a prestigious gallery, winging on her benefactor’s private jet to a Hong Kong art fair to broker megabucks sales and party epically. All the while, however, she’s anxiously waiting for the other Louboutin to drop—which readers know will happen since this twisty tale, which unspools largely in flashbacks, opens with Emma being grilled by FBI agents concerning her dealings with Sobetsky. “Though a key secondary story line about Emma’s dysfunctional family feels contrived, the author’s exposing of some of the art business’s more egregious manipulations and frauds makes for genuinely captivating entertainment.” It’s a perfect read alongside a Daniel Silva while you are waiting his July Gabriel Allon. Or with his new paperback above.

Labuskes, Brianna. [The Librarian of Burned Books](#) (\$19.99). Inspired by the true story of the Council of Books in Wartime—the WWII organization founded by booksellers, publishers, librarians, and authors to use books as “weapons in the war of ideas”—*The Librarian of Burned Books* is an unforgettable historical novel and love story taking place in 1933 Berlin, 1936 Paris, and 1944 New York where Vivian Childs has been waging her own war: preventing a powerful senator’s attempts to censor the Armed Service Editions, portable paperbacks that are shipped by the millions to soldiers overseas. Viv knows just how much they mean to the men through the letters she receives—including the last one she got from Edward. She also knows the only way to win this battle is to counter the senator’s propaganda with a story of her own—at the heart of which lies the reclusive and mysterious woman tending the American Library of Nazi-Banned Books in Brooklyn. There is a \$30 hardcover—[The Librarian of Burned Books](#)—as well. I am embarrassed to have to quote the prices Harper Collins has raised its books to.

Laestadius, Ann Helen. [Stolen](#) (\$18). Here’s a different kind of Nordic Noir, a thriller laced with an Indigenous culture heritage and climate concerns. On a winter day north of the Arctic Circle, nine-year-old Elsa—daughter of Sámi reindeer herders—sees a man brutally kill her beloved reindeer calf and threaten her into silence. When her father takes her to report the crime, local police tell them that there is nothing they can do about these “stolen” animals. Killings like these are classified as theft in the reports that continue to pile up, uninvestigated. But reindeer are not just the Sámi’s livelihood, they also hold spiritual significance; attacking a reindeer is an attack on the culture itself. Ten years later, hatred and threats against the Sámi keep escalating, and more reindeer are tortured and killed in Elsa’s community. Finally, she’s had enough and decides to push back on the apathetic police force. The hunter comes after her this time, leading to a catastrophic final confrontation. I’ve visited Lapland, admired the Sami, and found this to be an excellent evocation as well as suspenseful story.

Luna, Louisa. [Hideout: An Alice Vega Novel](#) (\$18). Patrick is excited that Alice Vega and Max Caplan return, uncovering a network of white supremacists in their search for a long-lost counter-culture hero. Alice has made a career of finding the missing and vulnerable against a ticking clock, but she’s never had a case like that of Zeb Williams, missing for thirty years. It was 1984, and the big Cal-Stanford football game was tied with seconds left on the clock. Zeb Williams grabbed the ball and ran the wrong way, through the marching band, off the field, and out of the stadium. He disappeared into legend, replete with Elvis-like sightings and a cult following. Zeb’s cold trail leads Vega to southern Oregon, where she discovers an anxious community living under siege by a local hate group called the Liberty Boys. As Vega starts digging into the past, the mystery around Zeb’s disappearance grows deeper, and the reach of the Liberty Boys grows more disturbing.

MacMillan, Gilly. [The Long Weekend](#) (\$17.99). 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 husbands showing up alone raises more questions. The revelation of the real killer's identity, after many red herrings, sets up a suspenseful race to safety.

Neubauer, Erica Ruth. [Danger on the Atlantic](#) (\$16.95). 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). Neubauer takes us all to Istanbul in [Intrigue in Istanbul](#) (Kensington \$27), Signed here on April 2, 2:00 PM.

Parry, H G. [The Magician's Daughter](#) (Red Hook \$18.99). NZ's continues her hot streak of well-researched historical fantasy with this mix of *bildungsroman* and love letter to the 19th-century English canon. Sixteen-year-old Bridget "Biddy" Adler has lived her entire life on the hidden, enchanted island of Hy-Brasil with her adoptive father, the Irish woodmage Rowan O'Connell, and his rabbit familiar, Hutchincroft. Then the British Council of Mages comes after Rowan for stealing magic at a time when the magic-granting schisms have all closed, and the Council wants all magic conserved. Biddy departs the isle for 19th-century London, aiming to set a trap for the Council members—only to be captured by them herself, and told that everything she knows about herself and Rowan is a lie. The novel inexplicably treats Rowan's former fiancée, Morgaine, much more harshly than other, more culpable members of the corrupt Council, creating a weird imbalance in the portrayal of the villains, but the magic system—which posits magic as a nonrenewable resource—works wonderfully as a metaphor for capitalism after 19th-century industrialization. I am a true fan of Parry's skillful, imaginative fiction.

Patterson, James. [3 Days to Live](#) (\$17.99). *3 Days to Live: A CIA-agent bride is on her European honeymoon when she and her husband are poisoned—leaving her seventy-two hours to take revenge* (with Duane Swierczynski). *Women and Children*

First: When a deal goes bad on a tech executive in Washington, DC, he turns an order to kill his family into a chance to relive his military glory days (with Bill Schweigart). *The Housekeepers: A Los Angeles doctor trusts her two housekeepers, but when she's murdered in a botched attempt to steal drugs, the pair of grifters vie to control their former employer's estate—facing off against the Russian mob* (with Julie Margaret Hogben).

Rosenfelt, David. [Citizen K9](#) (\$17.99). 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, Tara. Rosenfelt joins us March 6 with [Good Dog, Bad Cop](#) (St Martins \$27.99).

Seeck, Max. [The Last Grudge](#) (Penguin \$17). An intricate, beautifully written, character-driven page-turner with some shocking twists provides Nordic Noir with a supernatural tinge set in Finland. There are literally thousands of people who might want Eliel Zetterborg dead after he closed a plumbing-materials factory, but there aren't many who could access his apartment. Soon after Joonas Lamberg, his driver and bodyguard, delivers him to his locked and alarmed apartment, Zetterborg calls for help for chest pain, and soon after that, he's found stabbed to death. Since brilliant Helsinki DS Jessica Niemi is out on leave after having barely survived an attack by a witches' cabal, Superintendent Helena Lappi gives the case to her partner, DS Yusuf Pepple, the only one who knows of Jessica's own wealth. As Yusuf follows all the obvious leads, Jessica, who's still haunted by cabal members who escaped, is privately investigating a ritual murder. Among the suspects in Zetterborg's death are Joonas, a disgraced SWAT officer, and even Zetterborg's son, Axel, who may be tired of waiting in the wings. The apartment contains hidden clues in the form of a puzzle and ultraviolet light trails that, once decoded, lead to more puzzles. Yusuf finds that his new authority offers a better relationship with his diverse and clever team but still calls on Jessica for her magical insight. I recommend you begin with [The Witch Hunter](#) and [The Ice Coven](#) (\$17 each).

Segura, Alex. [Secret Identity](#) (\$18.99). 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. Note the illustrations.

Thor, Brad. [Black Ice](#) (\$17). When the hardcover published in July, 2021, I asked Thor for his take: "The Arctic is hot, hot, hot. Russia and China are both competing for dominance there—vying for vast oil, natural gas, and mineral deposits, as well as strategic shipping lanes as the sea ice is turning to slush. The United States is WAY behind the curve and struggling to catch up. There is a new Cold War playing out above the Arctic Circle and I wanted to capture all of the power struggles and brinkmanship taking place, focusing especially on what the Chinese have been up to. Norway, in addition to being a NATO partner, is super sexy and I wanted to unfold a great spy tale across that gorgeous scenery. It's an edge-of-your-seat thriller, wrapped in real life events." I add that once again, in true Thor fashion, he writes a fun, exciting read that will leave you smarter. It's my belief many if not most of us read crime fiction to learn things along with being entertained. Thus we appreciate meticulous research underpinning thrilling action, which Thor consistently delivers. I'm also a fan of the Norwegian ninja in Scot Harvath's life and the landscape for this thriller that is all too timely.

✚Todd, Charles. [A Game of Fear](#) (\$17.99). Ian Rutledge, the psychologically damaged Scotland Yard inspector, who's haunted by the ghost of Hamish, a Scottish soldier whom he was forced to execute for disobeying futile orders during WWI—in reality, this is guilt and PTSD but Hamish allows some powerful interior monologues to color the narrative—has another specter to deal with in 1921. Lady Benton, an Essex widow intent upon preserving the estate of her dead husband and son, has reported seeing one man murder another in her private garden. But the killer appears to be an officer stationed at the air field on her land, a man who died in a car crash nearby. No corpse has been found despite her conviction what she saw was real. Skepticism in the village is rampant, treating her as mistaken at best. Rutledge, reluctantly on the scene, believes she did see something disturbing, and with his usual dogged determination, probes both past and present to get at the truth. The Essex landscape is especially bleak as fits this well plotted story.

Yeatman, Robin. [Bookworm](#) (Harper \$17). Victoria is unhappily married to an ambitious and controlling lawyer consumed with his career. Burdened with overbearing in-laws, a boring dead-end job she can't seem to leave, and a best friend who doesn't seem to understand her, Victoria finds solace from the daily grind

in her beloved books and the stories she makes up in her head. One day, in a favorite café, she notices an attractive man reading the same talked-about bestselling novel that she is reading. A woman yearning for her own happy ending, Victoria is sure it's fate. The handsome book lover must be her soul mate. There's only one small problem. Victoria is already married. Frustrated, and desperate to change her life, Victoria retreats to the dark places in her mind and thinks back to all the stories she's ever read in hopes of finding a solution. She begins to fantasize about nocturnal trysts with café man, and imaginative ways (poisoned pickles were an inspired choice in Jane Smiley's *A Thousand Acres*) of getting rid of the dread husband. It's all just harmless fantasy born of Victoria's fevered imagination and her books—until, one night, fiction and reality blur and suddenly it seems Victoria is about to get everything she's wished for...

OUR FEBRUARY SMALL PAPERBACK PICKS

Baldacci, David. [Mercy](#) (\$9.99). Atlee Pine #4. As the long search for her twin sister, Mercy, reaches its conclusion, FBI agent Atlee Pine, when the truth is finally revealed, will face the greatest danger yet, one that could cost her everything.

Bentley, Don. [Tom Clancy Zero Hour](#) (\$9.99). Jack Ryan Jr. #9. When the severely injured leader of North Korea activates an army of sleeper agents in South Korea, Jack Ryan, Jr., finds his benign trip in Seoul taking a deadly turn when a wave of violence perpetrated by North Korean operatives grips South Korea's capital.

Carson, Scott. [The Chill](#) (\$9.99). A century after an early 20th-century New York community is intentionally flooded to redistribute water downstate, an inspector overseeing a dangerously neglected dam uncovers a prophecy that warns of additional sacrifices.

Cosby, SA. [Razorblade Tears](#) (\$9.99). When his son Isiah and his white husband, Derek, are murdered, ex-con Ike Randolph bands together with Derek's father, another ex-con, to rain down vengeance upon those who hurt their boys while confronting their own prejudices about each other and their own sons.

Ellison, J T. [Her Dark Lies](#) (\$9.99). Disregarding messages from an anonymous texter who claims her fiancé is not the man he pretends to be, Claire travels to Italy for her destination wedding before harrowing discoveries and accidents expose ominous family secrets.

Gerritsen, Tess. [Rizzoli & Isles: Listen to Me](#) (\$9.99). Rizzoli & Isles #13. Boston homicide detective Jane Rizzoli and medical examiner Maura Isles are plagued by the seemingly senseless murder of a widow and nurse, who, as they investigate further, is linked to an open hit-and-run case from months earlier.

Hepworth, Sally. [The Good Sister](#) (\$9.99). Twin sisters who are polar opposites but who are harboring a deep, dark secret about their sociopathic mother must face the consequences of both her actions and their own when one tries to start a family.

Woodward, MP. [The Handler](#) (\$9.99). Forced to be her disgraced ex-husband's handler for extracting a CIA mole from Iran, CIA case officer Meredith Morris-Dale must reach deep within their shared connection as they struggle with CIA political hierarchy, Russian interference and the rogue spy's manipulation to maintain, recover or kill the asset.

SMALL PAPERBACKS FOR FEBRUARY

Berenson, Laurien. [Show Me the Bunny](#) (\$8.99). Melanie Travis #28. When Beatrice Gallagher, the well-respected benefactor of a new women's shelter, is murdered, Melanie Travis discovers that Beatrice wasn't the warm and generous philanthropist she appeared to be and must expose her true nature to identify a vengeful killer.

Byron, Ellen. [Wined and Died in New Orleans](#) (Penguin \$8.99). Vintage Cookbook #2. When a dead body turns up in the magnificent Bon Vee Culinary House Museum in New Orleans, Ricki James-Diaz, as the NOPD zeroes in on the head of the Charbonnet family, known for their valuable French wine, wonders what kind of secret her mentor has bottled up.

Ehrhart, Peggy. [Irish Knit Murder](#) (Kensington \$8.99). Knit and Nibble #9. When 70-something Isobel Lister, a harmless eccentric, is murdered after performing some beloved Irish songs at the senior center celebration, crafting magazine editor Pamela Paterson is on the case, and that means for the killer, the jig will soon be up.

Flower, Amanda. [In Farm's Way](#) (Sourcebooks \$8.99). Farm to Table #3. Organic farmer Shiloh Bellamy gets tangled up in the murder of an ice fishing contestant and must wade through the town's fishy characters to lure the killer to the surface while dealing with her struggling family farm.

Flynn, Laurie Elizabeth. [The Girls Are All So Nice Here](#) (\$9.99). Receiving ominous threats during a 10-year college reunion, Ambrosia and her best friend discover that they are being targeted by an unknown adversary who would exact revenge for a dangerous secret from their past.

Fox, Sarah. [Six Sweets Under](#) (Penguin \$8.99). True Confections #1. Former actress-turned-chocolatier, Becca Ransom, while testing new flavors in preparation for the annual Gondola Races, must prove the innocence of her grandfather, the event's organizer, in the murder of local curmudgeon Archie Smith.

Jackson, Lisa. [Getting Even](#) (Kensington \$9.99). Contains two classic, fan-favorite novels of revenge, obsession and deception in one volume — "Yesterday's Lies" and "Zachary's Law" — in which Lauren Regis, when her ex-husband kidnaps her children, hires unconventional lawyer Zachary Winters, despite the dark rumors surrounding him, to get them back.

Kelly, Diane. [Primer and Punishment](#) (St Martin's \$8.99). House-Flipper #5. When their neighbor's boat in the adjacent slip is blown to bits, sending him to a watery grave, carpenter Whitney Whitaker and her cousin Buck dive into the murder investigation of this man who left many angry ex-wives and enemies in his wake.

Lovering, Carola. [Too Good to Be True](#) (\$9.99). Accepting the proposal of an older, sophisticated man after a whirlwind courtship, a woman struggling with severe OCD throws herself into wedding plans before discovering her fiancé's secret past and deceptive agenda.

Lustbader, Eric Van. [Omega Rules: An Evan Ryder Novel](#) (\$9.99). Evan Ryder #3. When a fellow Parachute agent is assassinated in Vienna, Evan Ryder is sent on a dangerous world-wide hunt for the truth, pitting her against forces so powerful they may go beyond her abilities to annihilate.

Meier, Leslie. [Easter Bonnet Murder](#) (\$8.99). Lucy Stone #28. Part-time reporter, Lucy Stone, investigates when Tinker Cove's retired librarian goes missing after a silly dispute during the annual Easter Bonnet Contest.

Patterson, James. [Death of the Black Widow](#) (\$9.99). A case from his very first night on the job, where a woman bludgeoned her kidnapper and then vanished, still haunts a Detroit detective years later and he discovers he is not alone in his search.