

# BOOKNEWS from

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Memorial Day Booknews 2023  
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## Happy Memorial Day

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

Note: Event times are in Pacific Daylight 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.  
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### THURSDAY JUNE 1 6:00 PM Live

**Elevengedden with Pat**

**A SciFi/Fantasy Meet and Greet with short author talks & signings**

Alexandra Bracken, Wesley Chu, Delilah Dawson, Evelyn Skye, Michael Stackpole, Amy Trueblood, Kiersten White, Joanna Ruth Meyer, Sara Elia

### SATURDAY JUNE 3 6:00 PM Live

**Jo Nesbø** discusses [Killing Moon](#) (Knopf \$29)

A Harry Hole Oslo investigation

### SUNDAY JUNE 4 1:00 PM Live

**Megan Abbott** discusses [Beware the Woman](#) (Putnam \$28)

Suspense permeates Michigan's Upper Peninsula

### MONDAY JUNE 5 4:00 PM

**James Patterson** discusses [Cross Down: An Alex Cross and John Sampson Thriller](#) (LittleBrown \$29.99)

Signed bookplates available

### MONDAY JUNE 5 7:00 PM Live

**Mike Maden** discusses [Clive Cussler Fire Strike](#) (Putnam \$29.95)

An Oregon Files thriller

### TUESDAY JUNE 6 5:00 PM

**Daniel Weizman with Patrick**

**Weizman** discusses [The Last Songbird](#) (Melville House \$17.99)

A debut LA Noir

### TUESDAY JUNE 6 6:15 PM

**Julia Bryan Thomas with Lauren Willig**

**Thomas** discusses [The Radcliffe Ladies Reading Club](#)

(Sourcebooks \$16.99)

It all begins at Radcliffe College, 1955

### WEDNESDAY JUNE 7 4:00 PM

**Kate Khavari** discusses [The Botanist's Guide to Flowers and Fatality](#) (Crooked Lane \$27.99)

Signed books available

### WEDNESDAY JUNE 7 5:30 PM

**Vicki Delany** celebrates her 50<sup>th</sup> book

Delany as Eva Gates discusses [Death Knells and Wedding Bells](#) (Crooked Lane \$28.99)

A Lighthouse Library Cozy Mystery

### THURSDAY JUNE 8 5:00 PM

**Eliza Jane Brazier** discusses [Girls and Their Horses](#) (Berkley \$27)

Enter the glamorous, dangerous world of show jumping  
Signed books available

### THURSDAY JUNE 8 7:00 PM Live Book Launch

**Isabella Maldonado** discusses [A Killer's Game](#) (Thomas & Mercer \$16.99)

FBI Agent Daniela Varga

### FRIDAY JUNE 9 7:00 PM Live Book Launch

**Maxym M. Martineau** with John

Martineau discusses [Shadows of the Lost](#) (Sourcebooks \$16.99)

Starts a new Adult Fantasy series

### MONDAY JUNE 12 1:00 PM

**Fiona Davis** discusses [The Spectacular](#) (Dutton \$28)

Suspense among the 1956 Rockettes at Radio City  
Our Signed copies come with an exclusive insert

### MONDAY JUNE 12 5:00 PM

**Polly Stewart with Megan Miranda**

**Stewart** discusses [The Good Ones](#) (Harper \$29.99)

A modern Southern Gothic

Signed books available

### OUR JUNE BOOKS OF THE MONTH

**British Crime Club** One Unsigned hardcover or paperback per month

Mead, Tom. [The Murder Wheel](#)

**Cozy Crimes Club** One Unsigned hardcover or paperback per month

Page, Katherine Hall. [The Body in the Web](#)

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

Trussoni, Danielle. [The Puzzle Master](#)

**First Mystery Club** One Signed First Printing per month

Berry, I S. [The Peacock and the Sparrow](#)

**History/Mystery Club** One First Printing per month  
See, Lisa. [Lady Tan's Circle of Women](#)

**Historical Fiction Paperback Club**

Larsen, Samantha. [A Novel Disguise](#)

**Notable New Fiction** One Signed First Printing per month  
Törzs, Emma. [Ink, Blood, Sister, Scribe](#) (Harper \$29.99)

**International Crime** One Unsigned Hardcover or paperback per month

Smith, Martin Cruz. [Independence Square](#)

**Romance & Relationships** One Unsigned Hardcover or 2 paperbacks per month

Higgins, Kristan. [A Little Ray of Sunshine](#)

### REPEAT REVIEWS

Cline, Emma. [The Guest](#) (Random \$28). Tip-ins. Set in the Hamptons, a smoldering, quintessentially American tale that explores desire and deception from the point of view of a 22-year-old escort named Alex. The story opens in late August, when Alex has fled danger in New York City to find refuge in the Hamptons. We follow her with a mixture of thrill and dread as she lurks around the island, appearing wherever hosts are too polite to question her presence.

Lavalle, Victor. [Lone Woman](#) (Random \$27). Sci-fi and fantasy lovers will enjoy LaValle's latest novel, which strays from his typical urban settings and ventures into the Great Plains. The story's heroine, Adelaide Henry, sets out from Southern California in 1915 to live in Montana, lugging a trunk that contains a literal demon. LaValle adroitly intertwines the eerie fairy tale with early-20th-century historical realism and "a focus on marginalized women in the American West who are finding ways to do more than just survive it."

Klingborg, Brian. [The Magistrate](#) (St Martins \$28) Signed. Brian Klingborg's books featuring Inspector Lu Fei has quickly become one of the most exciting and original series going today, all the reasons for which are on keen display. The setting is China, specifically the northern part of the country which is Lu Fei's jurisdiction as a Deputy Chief Inspector. This time out, the stalwart detective finds himself investigating a series of interconnected sordid events from political corruption, to a gangster's murder, to human trafficking. Of course, in China rubbing powerful people the wrong way can get you killed or imprisoned. But that hasn't stopped Lu Fei in the past and it's not going to stop him now. Not since Martin Cruz Smith introduced Arkady Renko in *Gorky Park* or Jane Tennison first appeared in *Prime Suspect*, has an author exhibited so much mastery of a foreign country and its justice system. That makes *The Magistrate* not only a superb, nail-biting and beautifully conceived mystery-thriller, but also a primer on the inner workings of Chinese government and civil society.

Lehane, Dennis. [Small Mercies](#) (Harper \$29.99). Signed. Lehane's latest novel visits a setting similar to that of his powerful [Mystic River](#) (\$16.99). The story takes place in Boston

in 1974, when a federal judge has ordered the busing of students to desegregate the city's public high schools. The suspenseful story tracks a fearless mother's search for her missing daughter. Lehane's sociological precision gives this book a gravitas seldom found in crime novels. Marty Butler is a thinly veiled stand-in for Whitey Bulger who found that busing "gave Whitey a large population of poor, unemployed teenage dropouts, a lucrative market for the drugs he brought in and a source of recruitment for all the Southie-based criminal enterprises..." And in our zoom conversation Lehane dwelt upon the ingrained and immutable racism of Mary Pat Fennessy whose teenage daughter, all she has left of her family, has gone missing.

Vergheese, Abraham. [The Covenant of Water](#) (Grove \$32). Signed 2<sup>nd</sup> prints. This Oprah Pick bestseller is a rich, heartfelt novel, a lavish smorgasbord of genealogy, medicine and love affairs, tracing the evolution of a family in Kerala, South India, from 1900 through the 1970s. The family's dark secret? "In every generation ... at least one member has drowned unexpectedly" — even though those who sense they are afflicted with "The Condition" try their utmost never to get wet. Inspired by a 187 page illustrated document created by Vergheese's mother for her granddaughter, the book contains a series of small drawings, pencil sketches, by a cousin, that beautifully enhance the story.

### SIGNED BOOKS FOR EARLY JUNE

Abbott, Megan. [Beware the Woman](#) (Putnam \$28), the newest literary thriller from Edgar Award-winning author Abbott, is a true Gothic set in Michigan's Upper Peninsula which, in its way, is not unlike the classic genre landscape of Cornwall. And it's riddled with hormones and questions about women's bodies (control) for second-grade teacher Jacy is experiencing her first pregnancy. In its way this tense tale ties to that of Lisa See's magnificent novel reviewed below despite the 600+ years difference and thousands of miles span in locations.

Newlyweds and soon-to-be parents Jacy and neon-signmaker Jed couldn't be happier. They've embarked on a road trip to the UP to visit Jed's father, the retired Dr. Ash. His isolated "cottage" is idyllic and run tightly by the enigmatic Mrs. Brandt. All is idyllic until things take a turn for the terrifying when Jacy

is struck by a mysterious illness that renders her housebound. As she recuperates, whispers about Jed's long-dead mother and complicated Ash family history surface and Jacy begins to feel trapped in the cottage, her every move surveilled, her body under the looking glass. Are her fears real, or is it paranoia, or cabin fever, or—as is suggested to her—a stubborn refusal to take necessary precautions? The dense woods surrounding the cottage are full of dangers (love the mom and her kits), but are the human more predatory? Reviewer Jon Land finds this to be “a superb psychological thriller in all respects, evoking comparisons to nightmarish tales by the likes of Lisa Gardner and Harlan Coben. But there are also echoes of Daphne du Maurier and even Stephen King here, with Lacy serving as a narrator whose reliability is in question.”

Berry, I.S. [The Peacock and the Sparrow](#) (Atria \$28). Berry's stint as a CIA officer lends a palpable veracity to this outstanding debut thriller, our **June First Mystery Book of the Month**. However I chose this not merely insure genre variety, although that is always a goal for this club, but because the prose is absolutely elegant and delicious, as noted in the Starred Review below. Additionally I had the fun of looking up all sorts of words, got a geography lesson about Bahrain, its importance to the US (the Fifth Fleet is headquartered there), and felt like I was in the grip of John Le Carré for story. It's truly hard to believe this is a first novel.

“In 2012, 52-year-old CIA veteran Shane Collins is assigned to Bahrain's capital city of Manama during the Arab Spring uprisings there. His career is circling the drain, but his young station chief, Whitney Mitchell, is a star on the rise. In order to collect information that proves Iran is fueling the local revolution, Collins has riskily embedded a local agent in a volatile rebel group. Then Collins attends a gala where he's struck by a massive mosaic and again by the beautiful artist who created it, Almaisa. Shane begins a lengthy pursuit of Almaisa, and before long, he's juggling new love, a budding conscience about his work, and bloody complications with his revolutionary informant. The plot's many twists will captivate readers, and Berry's gorgeous prose is its own reward, with echoes of Le Carré and Graham Greene: ‘Wind whistled through the fortress like the laughing dead.’ This auspicious first outing marks Berry as a writer to watch.” Amen.

Brazier, Eliza Jane. [Girls and Their Horses](#) (Berkley \$27). Set in the glamorous, competitive world of show jumping, a novel about the girls who ride, their cutthroat mothers, and a suspicious death at a horse show. In fact, “horse mothers” put stage mothers to shame in this wildly entertaining thriller from a rising star we've recommended before.

Texas transplants Heather and Jim Parker buy a \$28 million house in Southern California, and arrive at the nearby Rancho Santa Fe Equestrian Center at the top of the heap. Heather will do anything to help her young teen daughter Maple win the annual horse show, including engaging in full equine combat with top “barn mom” Pamela and her vicious daughter, Vida. Meanwhile, rumors swirl around Kieran Flynn, the equestrian center's charming owner and head trainer, and his “implausibly handsome” intern. Suspicious accidents pile up gradually—a horse spooked by spilled soda, a cut stirrup—until somebody winds up dead. “Brazier cleverly heightens suspense by declining to reveal the victim's identity until late in the novel,

stacking motives and suspects before she finally hits readers with the gruesome murder. Her characterization impresses, too: the horses emerge as distinctive personalities in their own right as the author nimbly juggles the humans' scandalous backstories. This is a sparkling addition to Brazier's impressive career.”—*PW* Starred Review

✠Cornwell, Bernard. [Uhtred's Feast](#) (Collins \$46). For those fans of Cornwell's remarkable action historicals who have seen this novel advertised for now, our copies will not come from London until October when he is there to sign the postponed [Sharpe's Command](#) (\$46) in its special Collector's Edition as well. So please order your copy and wait patiently... it's hard, but it's the best we can do to get these to you in the fall.

Davis, Fiona. [The Spectacular](#) (Dutton \$28). **Our copies will come with an exclusive extra created just for The Pen.** Davis has made an impressive career crafting novels of suspense around major New York cultural and physical landmarks. Here she takes on Radio City Music Hall in, at the outset, 1956, as another young woman seeks the empowerment to fulfill her dreams. Nineteen-year-old dance teacher Marion, feeling trapped by her straitlaced father and her upcoming engagement to what will clearly be a company man, impulsively auditions for the Rockettes and is soon “flung into a sequined world of grueling rehearsals, stage glitter, and four shows per day. When an anonymous bomber targets Radio City Music Hall, Marion's glittering new life reveals a dangerous dark side and she is flung into the search for a killer—but how can a kick-line dancer help save the city she loves? *The Spectacular* dazzles from start to finish.” —Kate Quinn

Evans, Mary Anna. [The Traitor Beside Her](#) (Poisoned Pen \$16.99). **Out June 6, Signed June 17.** Lesa reviews: After an abbreviated training period, 21-year-old Justine Byrne is given her first undercover assignment during World War II. She's to work as a secretary at the site of a massive cryptanalysis operation run by the Army in Washington, DC. She's also told not to trust anyone. There's a traitor in the department who's responsible for blowing up a bridge in Europe and killing a family and a number of Allies. Posing as Samantha Ogletree, a minister's daughter, Justine will attempt to root out the spy—but her cover is blown when a family friend recognizes her ....

Just in: The *Washington Post* includes this in “[Five Inspiring Historical Novels](#)” thus: “Mary Anna Evans sets her cinematic novel in Arlington Hall, a former women's college in Virginia where female code breakers worked during World War II. Using their knowledge of languages, math and science, these women decrypted enemy messages and are believed to have helped coordinate the D-Day attacks. Evans, who co-edited a book about Agatha Christie, lays out a Christie-inspired closed-room mystery set against the backdrop of the code breakers' work. Government agents Justine Byrne, a math prodigy, and Georgette Broussard, who speaks fluent Choctaw, infiltrate Arlington Hall as they investigate who there is passing messages to America's enemies. Ferreting out a traitor is a common trope, but Evans's characters are vividly drawn, elevating this story and its revelations about women's little-celebrated contributions to the war effort.” Evans began her WWII mysteries with [The Physicist's Daughter](#) (\$16.99).



Haven, Josh. [The Siberia Job](#) (Penzler \$26.95) is based on true events which will amaze you as this tricky plot rooted in the Soviet Union of over 30 years ago seems as if it could only be complete fiction. Nelson DeMille agrees with me: “*The Siberia Job* is one of the most original, well-written, and best-plotted post-Cold War stories I’ve read in years. Should be required reading for Washington’s policy makers. A ground-breaking novel that redefines the conventional action/adventure, chase and escape genre.” Martin Cruz Smith is in, adding, “A terrific post-Soviet thriller, distinguished by its portrayal of the wild potential of 1990s Russia and the subversion of that potential into pure corruption, the consequences of which continue to reverberate in the present day.”

After the demise of the Soviet Union, the newly-established Russian government privatized its industry by issuing vouchers to all of its citizens, allowing them the chance to be shareholders in the country’s burgeoning businesses. The slips are distributed among the population and auctions are arranged where they can be exchanged for actual shares. For the country’s rural populations living in abject poverty, the vouchers appear to be little more than pieces of paper, totally separated from the far-off concept of potential future fortunes. But for Texas businessman John Mills and his Czech companion, Petr Kovac, the seemingly-valueless chits suggest a lucrative potential, worth much more than what the current owners are willing to sell them for. They travel to the furthest, coldest reaches of the country to acquire vouchers for the country’s national oil company, Gazneft, roving from town to town with suitcases full of cash. But they quickly learn that the plan has complications — for example, the fact that the auctions at which these vouchers are traded for actual shares have been planned at the most remote, inaccessible locations possible to deter outsiders from buying in. And when the Russian mafia and the oligarchs in charge of Gazneft catch wind of their successes, the stakes become suddenly more deadly.

Haven is the author of 2022 First Mystery Pick [Fake Money, Blue Smoke](#) (signed sold out) and as JH Gelernter is the author of [Hold Fast, Captain Grey’s Gambit](#) (\$25.95 each), and coming in August, [The Montevideo Brief](#) (Norton \$28 SIGNED). This latter is one of my favorite series, featuring Britain’s Captain Thomas Grey during the Napoleonic Wars and a sure thing for fans of Bernard Cornwell and Patrick O’Brian. We’ll set up a date to speak with Haven about both summer books and his past work.

Heaberlin, Julia. [Night Will Find You](#) (Flatiron \$27.99). Pat and the Croak & Dagger Book Discussion Club could not stop raving about [We Are All the Same in the Dark](#) (\$17), Heaberlin’s last novel. Now she pairs a scientist and a reluctant psychic to find a girl who went missing long ago. Vivvy Bouchet, daughter of a known psychic, was ten when she saved a boy’s life by making an impossible prediction. Now she’s an astrophysicist in Texas, devoted to science, but the boy she saved has become a cop who continues to believe she can see things no one else can. When he begs for help on the high-profile cold case of a kidnapped girl, Vivvy steps back into the ocean of voices that once nearly drowned her. She is forced to team up with detective Jesse Sharp, a skeptic of anything but fact. When Vivvy becomes the target of a conspiracy theorist podcaster, she fights back with both her scientific mind and her inexplicable gifts, hoping to lure a kidnapper, find a child who haunts her, and lay some of her own ghosts to rest. This is out June 20 but because it is shipped to the author may arrive early...or late.

⌘Khavari, Kate. [The Botanist’s Guide to Flowers and Fatality](#) (Crooked Lane \$27.99). 1920s London isn’t the ideal place for a brilliant woman with lofty ambitions. But research assistant Saffron Everleigh is determined to beat the odds in a male-dominated field at the University College of London. Saffron embarks on her first research study alongside the insufferably charming Dr. Michael Lee, traveling the countryside with him in response to reports of poisonings. But when Detective Inspector Green is given a case with a set of unusual clues, he asks for Saffron’s assistance. The victims, all women, received bouquets filled with poisonous flowers. Digging deeper, Saffron discovers that the bouquets may be more than just unpleasant flowers—there may be a hidden message within them. Loved Saffron’s debut in 2022 Historical Mystery Pick [A Botanist’s Guide to Parties and Poisons](#) (\$17.99).

Maden, Mike. [Clive Cussler Fire Strike](#) (Putnam \$29.95). I’ve always liked Maden’s style and his command of military and operations tech. He outdoes himself here from the opening action scene where the Oregon Files lead actor Juan Cabrillo infiltrates a seemingly impregnable “held for ransom” headquarters in Tajikistan to rescue a CIA asset (a scene straight out of a Daniel Craig James Bond movie), to a penetration of the deep Amazon rainforest to find a genetically pure pod of natives, to extracting an Israeli undercover operative in Kenya, and more as Cabrillo finds himself on the trail of a deadly international plot. A Saudi Prince seeks to unleash a deadly assault on U.S. forces, sparking a new war in the Middle East and ultimately destroying Israel. And the Oregon team, who are essentially mercenaries for hire but always in US interests, continue to an abandoned monastery in Eritrea before a final showdown in the mountains of Yemen. It’s a broad stage, strewn with high tech, and a load of fun. In short, an ideal summer read. And no need to have read the earlier entries in this series so a good gift for Dad if he likes high action adventure.

Madsen, Jenny. [Thirty Days of Darkness](#) (Orenda UK \$36). Note: For some reason our software only shows this link to the unsigned US November edition. Just ignore that and click to order. We will redirect it to the autographed UK edition.

A Danish literary author is challenged to write a crime novel in thirty days, travelling to a small village in Iceland for inspiration, and then a body appears in a darkly funny, twisty debut thriller, first in a new Nordic Noir series. Copenhagen author Hannah is the darling of the literary community and her novels have achieved massive critical acclaim. But nobody actually reads them, and frustrated by writer’s block, Hannah has the feeling that she’s doing something wrong. When she expresses her contempt for genre fiction, Hanna is publicly challenged to write a crime novel in thirty days. Scared that she will lose face, she accepts, and her editor sends her to Húsafjöldur – a quiet, tight-knit village in Iceland, filled with colorful local characters – for inspiration. But two days after her arrival, the body of a fisherman’s young son is pulled from the water ... and what begins as a search for plot material quickly turns into a messy and dangerous investigation....

Maldonado, Isabel. [A Killer’s Game](#) (Thomas & Mercer \$16.99). Phoenix author Maldonado goes wild. Ever wanted to try out an escape room but been stopped by your own claustrophobia? Here’s the perfect substitute. Alertly spotting the fatal poisoning in progress of Nathan Costner, chief of staff to Senator Thomas

Sledge, on a New York street, FBI agent Daniela Vega pursues the assassin but loses him in the crowd. Luckily, he's soon identified anyway as Gustavo Toro, a killer for hire whom Dani's boss, Special Agent in Charge Steve Wu, nabs and cuts a deal with that depends on Toro's passing Dani off as his romantic and professional partner when he reports back to his paymaster, Col. Xavier Treadway, who's said that he needs him for a big new operation. There's a new operation all right, but it's one in which Treadway is just another pawn, not a king. Someone calling himself Nemesis has lured 12—with the addition of Dani, 13—killers into a vast and isolated structure rife with dangers and promised that only one of them will make it out alive. "This was not entertainment," Dani tells herself. "People's lives were at stake." But she's doubly wrong!

Martineau, Maxym M. [Shadows of the Lost](#) (Sourcebooks \$16.99). An here is another Phoenix author making an adult high fantasy debut: "Martineau spins off her YA "Beast Charmer" series with a new adult romantic fantasy exploring duty and comfort in one's own skin. Gaige, a former Charmer, was raised from the dead, giving him an assassin's control of shadows but cutting off access to his tamed magical beasts. Kost, leader of the assassins, had Gaige raised because he couldn't face his own undeath without him. A depressed Gaige now refuses to use his new magic, but Kost knows that wild shadows could mean death for everyone around them. A series of wild-beast attacks on local villages every time Gaige uses his shadows confirms their fears, but there may be darker forces at play. This is a fast-paced, queer, enemies-to-lovers romance with intense worldbuilding, but it tends to skim the characters' deep shame and loss to get to the steamy scenes and mystery. There are also point-of-view shifts, mainly to set up relationships for future sequels. Recommended for fans of Sarah J. Maas and Scarlett St. Clair."—LJ

Nesbø, Jo. [Killing Moon](#) (Knopf \$29). Brilliant rogue police investigator Harry Hole is back, this time as an outsider assembling his own team to help find a serial killer who is murdering young women in Oslo. Two girls have disappeared and been found murdered, and one of the suspects is a well-known real-estate magnate. Katrine Bratt wants to bring in one of Norway's foremost serial killings expert, but the idea of collaborating with Harry Hole is out of the question for the chiefs of police. The real-estate magnate on the other hand wants to hire Harry as a private investigator to clear his name from the case. Harry is in LA working on drinking himself to death, but...

Patterson, James. [Cross Down](#) (LittleBrown \$29.99). Bookplates signed by Patterson. The brilliant crime-solving duo of Washington, DC's Metro PD and the FBI has a proven MO: Detective Alex Cross makes his own rules. Detective John Sampson enforces them. When military-style attacks erupt, brutally sidelining Cross with a grave injury, Sampson is sent reeling. The patterns are too random—and Sampson's friend, his partner, his brother, have told him "Don't trust anyone." As a shadow force advances on the nation's capital, Sampson alone must protect the Cross family, his own young daughter, and every American. Written with Brendan DuBois.

Qiu, Xiaolong. [Love and Murder in the Time of Covid](#) (Severn \$31.99) is a provocative and timely story with a whodunit kicker. A collection of recent deaths near the hospital leads Chen to believe there's a serial killer on the loose. But first, we

find Chen Cao, once the chief inspector of the Shanghai Police Bureau, languishing as the director of the Shanghai Judicial Reform Office. In the middle of the Lunar New Year celebration, he finds himself stranded on a dark subway car, the first of the day's indignities. Then he gets a telephone call from government authorities telling him to get a Covid test because he was seen on the street near a hospital. Chen is chilled at the realization that he was caught by a surveillance camera. The pandemic has pushed China toward even stricter regulations, echoing Nineteen Eighty-Four's Big Brother in a motif threaded through the novel. As his title's nod to Gabriel García Márquez already hints, Qiu's 13th Inspector Chen mystery is both more literary and more political than earlier books in the series. Relevant literary references, quotations, and poems are peppered generously throughout, from Dante to Doctor Zhivago to Yeats to Animal Farm to several Chinese poets. This structure allows Qiu "to view the Covid pandemic through a haunting literary lens." A poet himself, Washington University Professor Qiu is an amazing writer I have loved reading from his debut in the Anthony Award winner *Death of a Red Heroine*.

See, Lisa. [Lady Tan's Circle of Women](#) (Scribner \$28). **Publishes June 6, signed here June 24. Please order your Signed First early. This is our June Historical Mystery of the Month** (Remember, See's first three novels were all murder mysteries). See bases this novel on the writings of a Ming Dynasty female physician and will immerse you once again in a fascinating bygone culture. I read it in one sitting and can't begin to detail all the features See weaves into this incredible story. They include family structures (wives and concubines), pregnancy and childbirth, other medical issues, travel, a real crime, and a shocker See tells me she is incredibly proud of. Plus for those who loved her mega-bestseller [Snow Flower and the Secret Fan](#) (\$17), foot-binding is revisited in its cultural and medical and sexual aspects. The Indie Next Pick: "Another incredible historical fiction by Lisa See! I was jetted back to 15th-century China, where I knew little of foot binding and a woman's role in medicine. See dives deep into a perfect mix of historical facts and mesmerizing story."

Smiley, Jane. [The Questions That Matter Most](#) (Harper \$28). Tip-ins. This is not a novel. The Pulitzer winner and observer of the craft of writing here gathers essays (and two stories) "composed with wit, enthusiasm, expertise, and candor [...] Smiley's agile, seemingly blithe inquiries are wryly incisive, ethically rigorous, and propelled by her profound passion for literature as an endless source of illumination and liberation."

Soule, Charles. [The Endless Vessel: Reading, Writing and the Exercise of Freedom](#) (Heyday \$28). Tip-ins. A few years from now, in a world similar to ours, there exists a sort of "depression plague" that people refer to simply as "The Grey." No one can predict whom it will afflict, or how, but once infected, there's no coming back. A young Hong Kong based scientist, Lily Barnes, is trying to maintain her inner light in an increasingly dark world. The human race is dwindling, and people fighting to push forward are increasingly rare. One day, Lily comes across something that seems to be addressing her directly, calling to her, asking her to follow a path to whatever lies at its end. Is this the Endless Vessel to happiness? She leaves her life behind and sets out through time and space to find out.

Stewart, Polly. [The Good Ones](#) (Harper \$29.99). In this debut, a classic Southern Gothic tale, a young mother vanishes from her Appalachian hometown leaving little more than rumors and blood-stained carpets in her wake. Her overeducated and true-crime obsessed childhood friend is left to uncover what really happened in this stylish and totally compelling mystery that is as concerned with finding a missing woman as it is with challenging our assumptions about motherhood.

Törzs, Emma. [Ink, Blood, Sister, Scribe](#) (Harper \$29.99). “There is magic of all kinds on each page of *Ink Blood Sister Scribe*: grisly body horror magic; romantic, confectionary fairy tale magic; and the binding, consuming magic of family and what it means to belong. I am still under its spell!” In Törzs’ spellbinding fantasy debut, our **June Notable New Fiction Book of the Month**, Esther gallivants around the world, her sister Joanna shelters in place to keep the family’s collection of magical books out of the wrong hands. However, the wrong hands are far sneakier than Joanna could ever imagine, and a series of betrayals push the sisters back together. With a band of misfit toys, Esther and Joanna discover answers they never knew they needed. “Follow where this novel leads and you will be lost in a bewitching spell, a book of magic about books of magic, and the people who reel from reading them. Go beyond the magic and you’re left with a heartbreaking tale of family where truth blurs with lies, and blood isn’t thick enough.” — Marlon James. “*Ink Blood Sister Scribe* is so many things at once: an adventure, a puzzle, a twisty thriller, and a tender romance. It’s a magical book about the magic of books; I adored it.” — Alix E. Harrow

Trussoni, Danielle. [The Puzzle Master](#) (Random \$27). OMG, puzzles, codes, conspiracies—our **June Crime Collectors Book of the Month** is a literary *Da Vinci Code*—like thriller. A traumatic football injury in high school changed the life of Mike Brink, causing acquired savant syndrome, a rare medical condition where the person obtains extraordinary intellectual abilities. Since that time, Mike has become a genius at puzzles and has devoted himself to puzzle creation and mathematics. This ability envelops him in a centuries-old puzzle that holds a secret that could change humankind. He is on borrowed time to solve the mystery and save the life of the mysterious woman he loves. The adventure takes him from a New York prison, to a rare-book library, to the very height of the high-tech world of cybersecurity. “This page-turner incorporates motifs of religion, security, meaningfulness, and loss into a mystical narrative that traverses different centuries focused on the same puzzle quest.”—*LJ*. The author lives in Mexico but we are catching her while she is in NY to sign our copies for you.

Urrea, Luis Alberto. [Good Night, Irene](#) (Little Brown \$29). Inspired by his mother’s service with the Red Cross during World War II, Pulitzer Prize finalist Luis Alberto Urrea has written a stunning historical epic. He “transports readers to the Western Front of WWII in his stunning latest. Irene Woodward, a tough New Yorker, covers up the bruises received from her abusive fiancé with concealer and sweaters, throws her engagement ring down the drain, and joins America’s war effort as a member of the Red Cross Clubmobile. Tasked with high expectations—keep driving and keep smiling—Irene is sent to England alongside Dorothy Dunford, who, much like Irene, is looking for an escape from her life. The two become fast friends while serving coffee and doughnuts and trying to comfort the soldiers, a nebulous

task defined in the chaste terms of the day. As the U.S. efforts advance, Irene fears she has lost Dorothy, who’s become like a sister, after they are separated in an accident; eventually, she goes home to New York to rebuild a life marred with survivor’s guilt and shell shock...Urrea bookends the wrenching narrative with a surprising discovery 50 years later. It’s a moving and graceful tribute to friendship and to heroic women who have shouldered the burdens of war.”—*PW* Starred Review

## UNSIGNED EVENT BOOKS

Gates, Eva (Vicki Delany). [Death Knells and Wedding Bells](#) (Crooked Lane \$28.99). Librarian Lucy and Connor planned for the perfect Outer Banks wedding—and that’s exactly what they got. Aside from typical rumblings of familial tensions, the late spring weather allowed for a beautiful day, the food was delicious, and everyone had a good time, until one of the guests goes missing. Before Lucy can look forward to the rest of her life in Nags Head and the work she does at the Bodie Island Lighthouse Library, she gets a phone call from her boss, Bertie James. Eddie, Bertie’s friend, never made it back home after the reception. Initially, Lucy doesn’t think anything of it. Then a guest is found dead in a closet. With the Classic Novel Reading Club reading the Selected Works of Edgar Allan Poe—Lucy wonders if the master of the macabre can assist her investigation....

Higgins, Kristan. [A Little Ray of Sunshine](#) (Berkley \$28 or \$18). John reviews our **June Romance & Relationship Book of the Month**: Life is filled with surprises. At least, that is what Cape Code bookstore owner Harlow Smith discovers when, eighteen years after she gave up her newborn baby for adoption, her now teenage son Matthew Rohan Patel walks into Open Book with the goal of getting to know her. Richly imbued with Higgins’ zingy sense of wit, featuring a cozy New England bookstore, and populated with an engaging cast of characters (including the adorable dog Oliver Twist), *A Little Ray of Sunshine* celebrates the importance of family and friendships in life while also offering an insightful examination as to what it really means to be a mother. No author can deftly pivot between moments of heartbreak, humor, and hope quite like Higgins, whose latest delightful novel is both entertaining and enlightening in equal measures.

☞Mead, Tom [The Murder Wheel](#) (Penzler \$28). Our zoom event with Mead and Martin Edwards is July 13 1:00 PM PDT, but meanwhile this fiendish locked-room puzzler is our **June British Crime Book of the Month**. In London, 1938, young and idealistic lawyer Edmund Ibbs is trying to find any shred of evidence that his client Carla Dean wasn’t the one who shot her husband dead at the top of a Ferris Wheel. But the deeper he digs, the more complex the case becomes, and Edmund soon finds himself drawn into a nightmarish web of conspiracy and murder. Before long he himself is implicated in not one but two seemingly impossible crimes. First, a corpse appears out of thin air during a performance by famed illusionist “Professor Paolini” in front of a packed auditorium at the Pomegranate Theatre. Then a second victim is shot dead in a locked dressing room along one of the theatre’s winding backstage corridors. Edmund is in exactly the wrong place at the wrong time, and attracts the suspicion of Scotland Yard inspector George Flint. Luckily, conjuror-turned-detective Joseph Spector is on the scene. Only Spector’s uniquely logical perspective can pierce the veil of



deceit in a world of illusion and misdirection, where seeing is not always believing. In their starred review, Publishers Weekly says, “Mead plays scrupulously fair with his readers, going so far as to include footnotes that identify which prior pages displayed clues in plain sight. Lovers of John Dickson Carr’s puzzle mysteries will hope Mead has many more Spector tales up his sleeve.”

Thomas, Julia Bryan. [The Radcliffe Ladies Reading Club](#) (Sourcebooks \$16.99). In 1955, Tess, Caroline, Merritt, and Evie, four young women from very different backgrounds, are assigned to be roommates for their freshman year at Radcliffe College. When Tess, a bookish English major, stumbles on Alice Campbell’s recently opened Cambridge Bookshop, she asks her roommates to join the store’s monthly book club with her. Selecting books with challenging themes, Alice sparks introspection and a lively discussion of women’s issues, and eventually becomes a trusted ally during difficult times. Each of the five main characters possesses a distinct personal history and viewpoint, realistically blending or clashing depending on the topic, and all struggle with the gender expectations of the era. Readers may be inspired to pick up the classic novels discussed by the book club—in fact, this is a great choice for book clubs and will include a reader’s guide and interview with the author. We thought it would be fun for Lauren Willing, champion of the Smith college women, to discuss this with Thomas as she does on June 6.

Weizmann, Daniel. [The Last Songbird](#) (Melville House \$17.99). Los Angeles Lyft driver Addy Zantz, the narrator of this first mystery, is trying to reignite his songwriting career when one of his regular fares, aging music legend Annie Linden, is found dead on Hermosa Beach. Grief-stricken at the loss of not just his favorite passenger but his sole artistic supporter, Addy becomes ensnared in the investigation. Police charge Linden’s recently fired former assistant with the singer’s murder and pin Addy as an accessory. In an attempt to clear his name, Addy begins tracking down the people closest to Linden, including exes, lovers, and old mentors, hoping to unravel her complicated past and shine a light on her secrets before it’s too late. Weizmann seamlessly weaves vibrant L.A. music industry personalities into the suspenseful plot. “A moving noir cruise through Los Angeles... In hard-boiled language with an added layer of humor and psychological insight, Weizmann tells a tale reliant on the thrill, and pathos, of popular music... At turns thrilling and poignant, this is fine, thoughtful entertainment.” — *Kirkus* Starred Review

## PATTERSON AND THE PEN

What fun is this? James Patterson/Maxine Paetro’s [The 23<sup>rd</sup> Midnight](#) (\$29.99 with Signed Bookplate) devotes a page or two to The Poisoned Pen in Chapter 56. An attention-seeking copycat is recreating murders by a famous killer from the Women’s Murder Club’s past—with devastating new twists. I wrote Jim a thank you. As shown above, he and I will be discussing his new book on June 5 [Cross Down](#) (LittleBrown \$29.99). Signed Bookplates for that one too.

## A FEW EARLY JUNE HARDCOVERS

I am devoting this *Booknews* largely to the excellent surge of paperbacks (publishers are thinking Beach or Vacation or Hammock reading....). So the upcoming Mid-June Booknews will focus on Unsigned Hardcover covers giving me some chance of reading or leafing through the more than 127 we’ve noted (and there are plenty more)

Abdel Gawad, Aisha. [Between Two Moons](#) (Knopf \$28). The *PW* Starred Review: “A young Muslim woman comes of age in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn, during a period of heightened anti-Arab prejudice in Gawad’s astonishing debut. The story unspools in 2014 on the cusp of Ramadan, as college-bound 17-year-old Amira Emam contends with a series of ruptures in her family life. Her “party girl” twin sister, Lina, frequents a local nightclub with her boyfriend and often calls Amira in the middle of the night for rides home from, among other spots, a seedy motel in New Jersey. The twins’ older brother, Sami, meanwhile, returns after a six-year prison sentence for a drug-related conviction, and she worries his return will affect the family’s equilibrium. After a police raid on a local café, the neighborhood wonders why its proprietor, Abu Jamal, was arrested, and tensions intensify when a mosque is vandalized and an 80-year-old imam is attacked. Then Sami begins meeting with various Muslim community members, and his reasons for doing so lead to a surprising twist... he author does a knockout job developing the characters, and is especially convincing in conveying Amira’s conflicted feelings about Sami’s return and sketching the contours of the close-knit neighborhood.”

Abrams, Stacey. [Rogue Justice](#) (Doubleday \$29) opens with Avery Keene in the cross hairs of the right-wing media machine, her professional and romantic lives stuck in the wrong gear. The NY Times reviews: “Avery is minding her own business at a legal conference when another law clerk hands her a burner phone and flees. She sprints after him, only to hear the pop-pop-pop of gunfire: “Her stomach heaved and her hand clutched spasmodically. She’d just witnessed an execution. Then she remembered the phone in her hand. A phone from a dead man. A phone that was spewing out geospatial data every second.” You or I would drop the phone, but Avery does not; her curiosity leads her into a thicket of blackmailed judges, secret court rulings and all kinds of existential threats.”

Allende, Isabel. [The Wind Knows My Name](#) (Random \$28) transports us to two dark periods in history: Nazi-occupied Vienna in 1938 and the current dire situation at the border between the United States and Mexico. Samuel Adler was part of the lifesaving Kindertransport that escorted Jewish children out of Europe into foster homes in Britain. At age 5, like thousands of other children, he makes the journey without his parents, who later die in the Holocaust. Seven-year-old Anita Díaz crosses into the United States with her Salvadoran mother in 2019. They hope for asylum but are immediately separated, and Anita finds herself alone at a detention camp in Nogales, Arizona. Both stories are rich enough to carry the weight of one novel but Allende expertly intertwines them. Employing her signature touch of magical realism, she wraps us in a compassionate story.

Beutner, Katharine. [Killingly](#) (Soho \$27.95). 1897: Bertha Mellish, “the most peculiar, quiet, reserved girl” at Mount Holyoke College, is missing. As a search team dredges the pond where Bertha might have drowned, her panicked father and sister arrive desperate to find some clue to her fate or state of mind. Bertha’s best friend, Agnes, a scholarly loner studying medicine, might know the truth, but she is being unhelpfully tightlipped, inciting the suspicions of Bertha’s family, her classmates, and the private investigator hired by the Mellish family doctor. As secrets from Agnes’s and Bertha’s lives come to light, so do the competing agendas driving each person who is searching for

Bertha. Could she still be alive? This is based on the unsolved real-life disappearance of a Mount Holyoke student that Beutner crafts into unforgettable historical portrait of academia, family trauma, and the risks faced by women who dared to pursue unconventional paths at the end of the 19th century. Readers of Donna Tartt and *Dark Academics*, take note.

✦Buckley, Fiona. [The Net of Steel](#) (Severn \$31.99). Ordered Upon Request – Severn is primarily a library publisher in the US. I have been a fan for this excellent Tudor series from the very beginning. And here we are at book 22. Ursula Standard, who's undertaken many dangerous missions as a spy for Queen Elizabeth I, her half sister, never imagined that her past could put her friends and relatives in danger. The resourceful lady-in-waiting is rattled by enemies from her past. At the outset, Ursula is riding high in her late-Tudor milieu: she's a landowner and happy grandmother on excellent terms with the queen. Shortly after her Uncle Herbert's funeral, though, people close to Ursula start turning up dead: Herbert's wife appears to poison herself and a friend is killed in a mysterious riding accident. As Ursula and her 18-year-old son, Harry, grapple with their shock and grief, evidence emerges that the deaths might be connected, and someone with a vendetta against Ursula for her activities on behalf of the queen might have even more ominous crimes planned. The pacing is superb, with twists and betrayals keeping the action at a boil. While the sheer number of characters accumulated over this long series may prove daunting at times, lovers of Tudor fiction will enjoy the carefully researched details of daily life woven into the suspense.

Casati, Costanza. [Clytemnestra](#) (Landmark \$26.99). Agamemnon's murderous wife joins the ranks of classical women being reimagined in contemporary fiction. Indie Next says, "If you think you know Clytemnestra's story, this book will surprise you. The emotional impact sneaks up on you like a summer storm—the world grows darker until lightning strikes! Brutal, visceral, layered, and so well-researched."

Chang-Eppig, Rita. [Deep As the Sky, Red As the Sea](#) (Bloomsbury \$28.99). Here's another debut earning a Starred Review (and it has a really arresting cover): "Chang-Eppig debuts with a rollicking 19th-century adventure on the South China Sea. During a botched raid on a Portuguese merchant ship, pirate Cheng Yat, captain of the Red Banner Fleet, is killed by sailors who "had come prepared for war." In the aftermath, his wife, Shek Yeung, fears for her standing among her fellow outlaws. Cheung Po, Yat's adopted son, is the fleet's legal heir, and Yeung worries Po may take the opportunity to wrest control away from her. She convinces Po to marry her and agrees to bear him a son, believing their alliance is the only way to ensure the fleet's survival. Meanwhile, rumors circulate that the emperor has brought in a specialist to extinguish the threat of piracy. What follows is a bold and bloody showdown between the government and the pirate queen. The prose is lyrical ("Typhoons and cannonballs cared nothing for the complicated little folded cranes of feeling that beat their wings in the heart") and the plot is clever and serpentine, exploring questions of power, violence, gender, and fate. This is not to be missed."

Cosby, SA. [All the Sinners Bleed](#) (Flatiron \$27.99). When Titus Crown returns to Charon County, the racism of the current police force motivates him to run for sheriff — the first Black sheriff in

the county's history. But when he is just a year into the position, his deputies shoot and kill a Black man, sending Titus on a righteous search for answers. The violence he unearths, however, runs far deeper than he expected. As Titus strives to catch a killer hiding in plain sight, he must also save himself from being consumed by the community he's sworn to defend.

Delury, Jane. [Hedge](#) (Zibby Books \$26.99). Forty-year-old garden historian Maud wants a divorce; she separates from her husband by taking a garden restoration job in another state. Keeping the separation and her budding romance with a colleague from her two daughters creates a thorny situation when Maud's depressed and emotionally unstable teenager Ella learns of her mom's deception and acts out. The novel's pace, which starts leisurely, starts careening when a crisis with Ella turns Maud's life, and priorities, upside down. As Ella starts self-harming, the family attends counseling to confront this issue, and Maud desperately tries to restore her turbulent relationship with her daughter while her relationship with her husband turns ugly. "By the time Maud slowly starts to lay a groundwork for her new single life, readers who enjoy themes of women's lives and relationships will be fully invested in her journey."

Dubus, Andre, III. [Such Kindness](#) (Norton \$29.95) is "a heartrending account of one man's desperate quest to retain his sense of goodness under the long shadow of the financial crisis. Fifty-four-year-old carpenter Tom Lowe is near rock bottom. Before the housing crash of 2008, Tom had taken out an adjustable-rate mortgage to finance the construction of a home for his wife and young son. But ballooning mortgage payments, a roofing accident, and a painkiller addiction left him broke in more ways than one. Now, he's divorced and living alone in subsidized housing. He wants to visit his son, Drew, at college in Amherst, but his car gets impounded for expired plates. To get it back, he begrudgingly lists his carpentry tools for sale on Craigslist, but someone steals them first. The nonlinear narrative of Tom's ups and downs finds him at one point entertaining a scheme cooked up by his neighbor and only friend, Trina, to steal the credit cards of an elderly woman in their complex, but Tom waffles, earning sour looks from Trina and leading to more soul-searching on his part. As in Dubus' previous work, the author poignantly portrays his protagonist's search for redemption, and shows how precarious situations can make people especially vulnerable. There's a natural free association to the prose, with Tom's stray thoughts generally leading him to regrets over "reach for more" than a "two room life," or wistful memories of Drew before the family fell apart. This is a stirring addition to Dubus' formidable oeuvre."—PW Starred Review

Goldberg, Paul. [Dissident](#) (Farrar \$28). "*Crime and Punishment*—f or the Jews!" Michael David Lukas calls it "a murder mystery, a love story, a diplomatic thriller, and a glimpse into a pivotal moment in Soviet history. But most of all it is a joy. An incandescent conjuring of Moscow in the 1970s full of dark humor, vodka, smoked fish, and choices no one should be forced to make."

Grissom, Kathleen. [Crow Mary](#) (Atria \$28.99). Grissom offers an ambitious account of bravery and initiative inspired by the true story of a Crow woman who married a white man in late-19th-century Montana. Goes First is happy as a teenager, learning from her mother and grandmother how to pray, build a sweat lodge,



and tan hides, and picking up English from her Métis grandfather. When Goes First is 16, the man she's meant to marry is killed in a buffalo stampede, and she agrees to marry 34-year-old white fur trader and whiskey seller Abe Farwell, who gives her people guns for protection against enemy Sioux, Cheyenne, and Arapaho. For their wedding ceremony, she's renamed Mary, and Abe brings her to Fort Benton, Mont., where she befriends a Métis woman who helps her deal with culture shock. Think of *My Antonia* by Willa Cather.

Harmel, Kristin. [The Paris Daughter](#) (Gallery \$28.99). The friendship between two American expats in WWII Paris leads to life-altering events in the powerful latest WWII story from Harmel, author of *The Forest of Vanishing Stars*, *The Book of Lost Names*, and similar. It's 1939, and Elise LeClair, an American artist married to French artist Olivier, is pregnant with their first child and has newly befriended Juliette Foulon, an American bookseller who is expecting her third child with her husband, Paul. After the Germans invade and LeClairs' daughter, Mathilde, is born, Elise begs Olivier to keep a lower profile with his work with the Resistance, but in 1941 he's arrested and beaten to death by the Nazis. His art dealer tells Elise the Germans are looking for her, forcing her to flee and leave Mathilde with Juliette. After the war, Elise finds the Foulons' bookstore reduced to rubble, and she learns that only Juliette and her youngest child Lucie survived the Allied bomb that killed Paul, their two older children, and Mathilde. Overcome with guilt, Elise struggles to move forward as an artist. Years later, Elise tracks down Juliette and Lucie in New York City, where her effort to seek closure is particularly wrenching...

Hendricks, Jaime Lynn. [I Didn't Do it](#) (Penzler \$26.95). If you've ever attended a books conference (thriller, mystery, romance, etc) then this irony-laden story of authors competing for awards, agents, and fame at Murderpalooza, an annual New York City conference for writers of genre fiction, will resonate. Or perhaps keep you from signing up to one such as the May 31-June 3 Thrillerfest in NY or the late August San Diego Bouchercon. Actually there is a literary or mystery conference practically every weekend in widespread locales. Hendricks briskly lays out the ambitions and relationships within the group leading to a murder, or.... A well constructed plot and pot shots taken at writers' anxieties and unchecked egos propel you through her tale. I personally thought the final twist, while underscoring all that, was one destructive act/irony too many. Still in her third suspense novel Hendricks lays bare all kind of writerly insecurities and egos.

Iggulden, Conn. [Empire: A Novel of the Golden Age](#) (Pegasus\$26.95). You enthusiasts of epic historical fiction will be pleased to see that Pegasus is bringing back Iggulden to US publishing. Join Pericles, the lion of Athens, on his journey to secure the fate of the Athenian empire.

Johansen, Iris. [The Survivor](#) (Grand Central \$29). When archeologist Riley Smith comes to ask Eve Duncan for help, Eve has to say no. Traveling halfway around the world on a dangerous quest is not her expertise as a forensic sculptor. But Eve is intrigued by the prospect of an isolated island that holds a secret locked in time. Traveling to Southeast Asia, Riley is aware of the threat from treasure hunters who are already searching and have no qualms about killing to get what they want. When she

successfully evades them and finds the perfectly preserved body of a female warrior, it is just what she needs to entice Eve to help unlock the mystery. As these two strong women seek answers about this extraordinary past life, Riley makes a living, breathing discovery that will change history—if she lives long enough to share it with the world.

Marshall, Jeannie. [All Things Move](#) (Biblioasis \$25.95). What better way to spend some time this summer than in Learning to Look in the Sistine Chapel, the inspiration—and structure—for “this deeply contemplative account of life, family, art, and appreciation”?

Medina, Nick. [Sisters of the Lost Nation](#) (Penguin \$27). A young Native girl's hunt for answers about the women mysteriously disappearing from her tribe's reservation leads her to delve into the myths and stories of her people, all while being haunted herself, in this poignant debut.

Rao, Nilima. [A Disappearance in Fiji](#) (Soho \$25.95). Lesa reviews: “[Australian] Rao's debut mystery relates the little-known story of Indians who were indentured in Fiji. In 1914, young Indian police sergeant Akal Singh is assigned to British colonial Fiji as punishment for misdeeds in Hong Kong. He's assigned the case of an indentured Indian servant who disappeared from a plantation. Normally this sort of disappearance would not be scrutinized, but two events prompt the inspector-general to investigate: first, a Catholic missionary told the newspaper that Kunti, the missing woman, was kidnapped; second, the delegation for Indian Relations with Fiji is visiting, and they are interested in how the British police treat a crime against an indentured servant. Akal knows the case is either a chance to redeem himself for his actions in Hong Kong or to become a scapegoat.... The Punjabi Sikh Akal Singh and the mystery of colonial Fiji will appeal to fans of Abir Mukherjee's mysteries set in India. In its Starred Review *Booklist* compliments “An insightful, determined main character, the unearthing of the wrongs of indentured servitude, and a compelling plot make this a promising start to a new series. Fans of Harini Nagendra's *The Bangalore Detectives Club*,, also about the wrongs inflicted under British colonialism, should love this mystery.”

Wimmer, Chris. [The Summer of 1876: Outlaws, Lawmen, and Legends in the Season That Defined the American West](#) (St. Martins \$30) chronicles an eventful period in the history of the American frontier. Wimmer, creator of the “Legends of the Old West” podcast points out where legends in frontier mythology can overlap.

Pair this with Will Grant's *The Last Ride of the Pony Express* (Little Brown \$30). For some reason this isn't listed in our software but add it to any order in the comments field. Journalist Grant debuts with a thoughtful and entertaining account of his five-month trip along the length of the 19th-century overland mail route from St. Joseph, Mo., to Sacramento. Launched in 1860, the Pony Express consisted of a series of way stations spread across 2,000 miles and spaced 10 to 20 miles apart, between which horseback riders carried mail in a relay system. Retracing this route with two horses, Badger and Chicken Fry, Grant evocatively describes the Great Plains of Nebraska, the sagebrush steppe of Wyoming, the Great Basin of Utah, and other geographic landmarks, and reflects on the damage “inflicted” on the western landscape by “modernization.”

He takes note of family farms abandoned in the face of industrial agriculture's ascendancy and Las Vegas' campaign to purchase "all the water in northern Arizona," but also finds rewarding connections with farmers, cattlemen, amateur historians, migrant sheep herders, and others he meets along the trail. "

Woods, Stuart/Brett Battles. [Near Miss](#) (Putnam \$29). It is now revealed that Battles, a writer I much admire and hosted here often until he took to self-publishing so he could write faster, is the new author of series written by the late Woods. And he begins with NY lawyer-to-the-stars Stone Barrington, a man who loves women, houses, boats, movies (thanks to his son), and challenges. Barrington is enjoying some downtime in Manhattan when a chance encounter introduces him to a charming new companion. Too bad she also comes with the baggage of a persistent ex-boyfriend intent on retribution. As Stone skillfully dodges each disturbance, it becomes clear that there's an even more treacherous game being played behind the scenes. When long-standing grudges resurface, Stone is brought back into the orbit of some familiar enemies....

## CLASSICS

Carr, John Dickson. [The Seat of the Scornful](#) (Poisoned Pen \$14.99). The British Library Crime Classics reprints one of Carr's few novels not to include one of his signature locked rooms or impossible murders, first published in the U.S. in 1942 as *Death Turns the Tables*.

Aglow at her marriage proposal from nightclub partner Anthony Morell, Constance Ireton has finally screwed up the courage to introduce Morell to her father, dour Justice Horace Ireton, leaving the two men alone to get acquainted. Predictably taking against the suitor who has a shady past and who he thinks can't hold a candle to barrister Frederick Barlow, a friend of Connie's from childhood, the judge asks how much he'll need to pay Morell to send him packing. They agree on a sum and arrange to meet at Ireton's home the following evening to hand off the cash. When a plea for help to the telephone exchange brings the police, they find Morell shot dead with a most surprising item in his pocket and the judge nearby. The case against Ireton is so strong that his old acquaintance Dr. Gideon Fell, who just happens to be on hand, announces that the question Inspector Graham must answer is not "Whodunit" but "Did he, or didn't he?" As Martin Edwards observes in his introduction, Carr is less interested here in presenting an impossible scenario than in plumbing the moral question of whether murder is ever justified.

Kendrick, Baynard. [Blind Man's Bluff](#) (American Mystery Classics \$15.95). Following the loss of his sight in World War I, ex-intelligence officer Duncan Maclain honed his other senses and, with the help of his two German Shepherds, became one of the most successful and well-known private investigators in New York City, picking up on the unseen clues that often slip beneath the visual surface. The Miners Title and Trust is typically dead quiet, having gone bankrupt. Then, late one evening, the bank's blind president, Blake Hadfield, plummets eight stories to his death in the building's lobby. The only witnesses are the security guard and Blake's estranged wife, who were both on the first floor. Blake's son, Seth, is found drunk and dazed on the eighth floor, making him the prime suspect in what the police believe to be murder. That's when Harold Lawson and Sybella Ford call upon Captain Maclain for help. Maclain doesn't think the

banker's death was a suicide or an accident. He believes someone else was in the building — and when more murders follow, he suspects the villain is still at large.

## AND FOR SHERLOCKIANS...

Goldberg, Leonard. [Blue Diamond: A Daughter of Sherlock Holmes Mystery](#) (\$18). The year 1917 finds Joanna Holmes Watson in a battle of wits with thieves who've pinched the world's second-biggest diamond and something even more valuable. It's bad enough that someone's sneaked into the South African governor general's suite at the Windsor Hotel and made off with a blue diamond of historic dimensions. What's much worse is that the robbers, who seem to specialize in looting London penthouses, have also absconded with a military document that could decisively affect the course of the Great War. Inspector Lestrade, son of the inspector constantly one-upped by Sherlock Holmes a generation ago, brings Sir Charles Bradberry, the Scotland Yard commissioner himself, to Holmes' daughter, Joanna, who's married to Dr. John Watson Jr., to entreat her to take the case. And she does....

Goldberg will sign the next Daughter of Sherlock Holmes Mystery, [The Wayward Prince](#) (St Martins \$28), for us in July. It's smart to order your copy now.

## TWO EARLY JUNE BRITISH COZIES

*You can see that my prediction of more senior sleuths, and the influence of Richard Osman and the Thursday Murder Club series, is creating a Thing.*

Chapman, Julia. [Date with Evil](#) (Pan \$17.99). We have begun to stock some British paperbacks and here is one from the Dales Detective Series. It too reflects the Richard Osman influence. The Bruncliffe Dales Detective Agency is inundated with cases. Many are mundane like inheritance quarrels, but in time Delilah Metcalfe—one partner in London helping the Met Police clear his name, the other distracted by her brother's insistence the family farm is haunted—comes to realize that a network of evil has been infiltrating the Dales town over the past decade. How can it be exposed?

Thorogood, Robert. [Death Comes to Marlow](#) (Sourcebooks \$16.99) follows up 2021's [The Marlow Murder Club](#) (\$16.99) with another brisk and breezy cozy featuring 78-year-old Judith Potts, who creates crosswords for national newspapers, and her friends Suzie and Becks. Judith is surprised when Sir Peter Bailey—the head of one of the town's most preeminent families—asks her to attend a garden party at his home the day before his wedding to his live-in nurse. There, the champagne-sipping guests suddenly hear a tremendous crash and, rushing into the house, find Sir Peter crushed beneath a fallen bookcase. As the only key to the room is in the dead man's pocket, the police are quick to assume the death was accidental. Judith does not agree. But how will she and her friends prove that someone had committed murder inside a locked room? With quiet help from a police sergeant and their own wits, the women start parsing clues to home in on the killer. Thorogood's characters are vivid and companionable, the dialogue sparkles with wit, and the plot gives armchair detectives a fighting chance to solve the mystery.

*And out mid-month:*

Hall, J M. [A Spoonful of Murder](#) (Avon \$16.99). A new Eldersleuth cozy takes you to Yorkshire (think *All Creatures Great and Small* rather than Peter Robinson). Every Thursday, three retired school teachers have their ‘coffee o’clock’ sessions at the Thirsk Garden Centre café. But one fateful week, as they are catching up with a slice of cake, they bump into their ex-colleague, Topsy. By the next Thursday, Topsy’s dead. The last thing Liz, Thelma and Pat imagined was that they would become involved in a murder. But they know there’s more to Topsy’s death than meets the eye – and it’s down to them to prove it.

Here is the sequel: [A Pen Dipped in Poison](#) (\$16.99). Retired schoolteachers Liz, Pat and Thelma are back at their usual table at the Thirsk Garden Centre café with a brand-new mystery to solve. Curious white envelopes have been delivered to friends and neighbors. Inside are letters revealing the deepest secrets they have tried to hide. As one by one, careers are ended, marriages destroyed and no one is beyond suspicion, the three friends decide enough is enough. They must take matters into their own hands before more damage is done. But as they work to uncover the truth, they begin to wonder just how far someone will go to silence this poison pen...

#### THE SOLE EARLY JUNE SMALL PAPERBACK

Chow, Jennifer J. [Hot Pot Murder](#) (Penguin \$8.99). Thanksgiving dinner at the Asian American Restaurant Owners Association in West LA leaves the often squabbling members grappling with a murder. Yale Yee isn’t a member, but her restaurateur father is. So she and her cousin, Celine, who’s visiting from Hong Kong, pitch in to help with dinner and with investigating the electrocution of the AAROA President Jeffery....

#### JUNE HISTORICAL FICTION PAPERBACK BOOK OF THE MONTH

*We urge you to sign up for this new book club. So many excellent historicals are publishing as paperback originals and it’s criminal to miss them.*

✎Larsen, Samantha. [A Novel Disguise](#) (Crooked Lane \$19.99) is an amusing cross-dressing 18th Century librarian mystery, a cross between a cozy and Choderlos de Laclos’ *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* (1782) which I read in French at Stanford. Do not confuse it with the Netflix film of the same name. Ignore the terrible cover, this mystery is just a gem for its characters, the Upstairs/Downstairs cast, the depiction of how powerless a woman of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century would be unless she daringly seizes an unexpected chance. There are books! There are plenty of different cuisines. And a murder (actually two). Plus a possible romance. This is a series start that will get little attention unless someone (like me) actually reads it! Future selections may turn on early Egyptology, the 1715 handover from the Stuarts to the Hanoverians, a young Napoleon’s incursion into Italy.... I will strive to vary dates and countries.

*Earlier gems I would have selected for this Club:*

Billier, Diana. [Hotel of Secrets](#) (St Martins \$17.99) transports readers to sparkling 19th century Vienna for a unique and wonderful tale of intrigue and espionage. Maria Wallner, manager of her family’s Hotel Wallner, is thrilled when the Wallner is chosen to host the famed Hotelkeepers’ Ball and boost its revenues. Meanwhile, American Secret Service agent

Eli Whittaker is in Vienna on a tip about American codes being stolen and sold—and Maria is among his suspects. When Maria is repeatedly targeted by a mysterious attacker, however, Eli’s first instinct is to keep her safe, throwing his carefully ordered investigation into chaos. As the pair grows closer in the dramatic run-up to the ball, Eli wrestles with the possibility of Maria’s involvement in code stealing—until his primary focus becomes their mutual attraction. Billier’s eclectic cast brings the refreshing setting to vibrant life while the intriguing mystery and mounting passion between the leads unite to keep the pages turning.

✎Stokes-Chapman, Susan. [Pandora](#) (Harper \$17). Wow, how I love this novel which combines some of the fun elements of an Elizabeth Peters’ Amelia Peabody archaeology mystery with a 1799 London antiques/jewelry shop on the decline from its former fame under the management of now-orphaned Dora Blake’s adventurous and scholarly parents. Novice jewelry designer Dora hopes to learn her craft well enough to restore the shop and her fortune. But then Dora’s odious uncle, Hezekiah, perforce her guardian who runs the business, behaves suspiciously when a mysterious Greek vase is delivered....

✎Winters, Mary. [Murder in Postscript](#) (Berkley \$17). Anyone who has watched *Bridgerton* will see the inspiration here for the widowed Countess Amelia Amesbury, aka Lady Agony, advice columnist for 1860 London’s popular penny weekly. Under this pen name Lady Amesbury dishes on fashion, relationships, manners, and well, gossip, although she has a sound moral compass. When a lady’s maid writes to ask Lady Agony’s advice whether to air her belief that her late mistress has been murdered rather than died while sleepwalking (or suicide?), and then is found dead at their appointed rendezvous, the countess resolves to solve the case (both cases) herself. To her aid come both her best friend and (naturally) a handsome (and single) Marquis. So, mystery, murder, investigation, romance....

*Even a great story collection:*

Edwards. [Murder by the Book](#) (Poisoned Pen \$14.99). With Martin Edwards as librarian and guide to another British Library Crime Classic, delve into an irresistible stack of bibliomysteries, where “golden age–inspired puzzle masters [are] doing what they do best: bringing together readers, books, and felonies [in] perhaps the single best collection yet in this blue-chip series. There is no better hiding place for clues—or red herrings—than inside the pages of a book. But in this world of resentful ghost writers, indiscreet playwrights, and unscrupulous book collectors, literary prowess is often a prologue to disaster. Readers should be warned that the most riveting tales often conceal the deadliest of secrets. Featuring much-loved Golden Age detectives Nigel Strangeways, Philip Trent, Detective Chief Inspector Roderick Alleyn, and others, a bookish puzzle threatens an eagerly awaited inheritance; a submission to a publisher recounts a murder that seems increasingly to be a work of nonfiction; an irate novelist puts a grisly end to the source of his writer’s block.

#### SOME EARLY JUNE LARGE PAPERBACK PICKS

✎Cartmel, Andrew. [Paperback Sleuth: Death in Fine Condition](#) (Titan \$16.95) is a “darkly funny series kickoff centered on London bookseller Cordelia Stanmer, a former addict who has fallen in love with vintage paperbacks and has no scruples about how she’ll feed her growing collection. Cordelia often forges author signatures to jack up a book’s resale value and offers



bribes to church sale organizers for a first crack at rare volumes. While picking up weed at her dealer's house one afternoon, she glimpses a photo of a bookcase stuffed with rare crime novels and resolves to find out where the photo was taken, break in, and steal as many of the beautifully illustrated editions as she can. Her scheming hits an unexpected snag when she successfully makes away with the volumes—only to realize she's just robbed one of London's most notorious criminals, who sets out for revenge. Cordelia is a memorable, devilish antihero, and Cartmel's delightfully dexterous plotting bodes well for a sequel."—*PW* Starred Review

Chen, Kirstin. [Counterfeit](#) (\$18.99). A con artist story, a pop-feminist caper, a fashionable romp. "If you appreciate a good caper, you'll want to pick up Kirstin Chen's novel about two Asian American women who turn a counterfeit handbag scheme into a big business. The book is written as a confession, which helps readers get to know protagonists Ava and Winnie, and how their lives detoured toward crime. *Counterfeit* is fast-paced and fun, with smart commentary on the cultural differences between Asia and America." — *Time*

Connelly, Michael. [Desert Star](#) (\$18.99). A year has passed since LAPD detective Renée Ballard quit the force in the face of misogyny, demoralization, and endless red tape. But after the chief of police himself tells her she can write her own ticket within the department, Ballard takes back her badge, leaving "the Late Show" to rebuild and lead the cold case unit at the elite Robbery-Homicide Division. First priority for Ballard is to clear the unsolved rape and murder of a sixteen-year-old girl. Harry Bosch has been working a case that haunts him—the murder of an entire family by a psychopath who still walks free. Ballard makes Bosch an offer: come volunteer as an investigator in her new Open-Unsolved Unit, and he can pursue his "white whale" with the resources of the LAPD behind him. Both cases require deep dives into the past; both lead to great action scenes; and, as always, Connelly displays his encyclopedic knowledge of the latest forensics.

Crosby, Ellen. [Multiple Exposure](#) (\$17.95). These are the things photojournalist Sophie Medina will swear to be true about her husband, oil executive and covert CIA operative Nick: He is an honorable, trustworthy, and loyal friend; an American patriot who would die for his country; and a loving husband. He is also—according to his MI6 handler—a murderer. They say the wife is always the last to know. When Nick is kidnapped from their London home, only to be spotted in Russia months later, his bosses are convinced he's turned traitor. Russian-born Nick is not the only thing that's vanished—so have top-secret papers about an oil discovery that could destabilize the market and spark war. Sophie trusts Nick, but when she moves back to her hometown of Washington, DC, she's not so sure about his CIA colleagues. I suggest reading this before you read the stupendous new Sophie Medina thriller [Blow Up](#) (Severn \$31.99 SIGNED) which is just terrific—and with an ethically questionable Supreme Court Justice at its heart.

Diaz, Hernan. [Trust](#) (\$17). The new Pulitzer Prize winner for fiction along with Barbara Kingsolver is out in paperback. "A buzzy and enthralling tour de force... a glorious novel about empires and erasures, husbands and wives, staggering fortunes and unspeakable misery... Mostly, though, *Trust* is a literary

page-turner, with a wealth of puns and elegant prose, fun as hell to read."—*Oprah Daily*. "Ingenious...challenges conventional story lines of another favorite American theme: capitalism and the accumulation of vast wealth... Diaz employs his inventive structure to offer intriguing insights into the hidden roles played by subservient women." —*Minneapolis Star Tribune*

Doiron, Paul. [Hatchet Island](#) (\$18). The *PW* Starred Review: "Edgar finalist Doiron's exceptional 13<sup>th</sup> mystery takes Maine Game Warden Mike Bowditch and his significant other, biologist Stacey Stevens, to Baker Island after Stacey receives a request for help from her college roommate and former colleague, Kendra Ballard, who's been working on the island as the project manager for the Maine Seabird Initiative's restoration efforts there. Kendra is worried about her boss, Maeve McLeary, who hasn't been heard from for several days. That disturbing silence comes shortly after Maeve incurred the wrath of local lobstermen by successfully backing a proposal to close part of the Gulf of Maine to their boats to protect endangered whales. The restoration project has since been receiving anonymous threats, and someone shot up its observation blinds. Kendra's fears of violence prove justified as Bowditch soon has two murders on the island to solve.... The author is especially good at conveying the island's creepy atmosphere, and the taut plot features numerous shocking twists while further developing an already complex lead. Doiron is writing at the top of his game."

I am a real fan, and Doiron is perfect for CJ Box readers! You've time to order the whole Mike Bowditch series before Paul arrives at The Pen on June 25 1:00 PM with book #14, [Dead Man's Wake](#) (St Martins \$29).

DuBois, Amanda. [Deliver Them from Evil](#) (Girl Friday Books \$16.95). Seattle attorney Camille Delaney is cash-strapped and struggling to balance the demands of her new solo legal practice with raising her three daughters. But when an emergency C-section goes wrong and a baby dies in the delivery room, the mother, Helene Anderson, shows up at Camille's office asking for help. Facing the challenge of a legal system where child-loss verdicts are limited by the dollar value placed on a child's life, Camille considers a quick settlement for the family. But Helene insists: her child's life had value, and Camille needs to prove it in court. Which takes us into one of the most original motives for murder, and thus investigation, I can remember reading. Only DuBois, formerly a lawyer and a registered nurse, could have created this harrowing story. I missed her debut, [The Complication](#) (\$26.95), which weirdly only has a hardcover edition to date while *Deliver Them* is a paperback original. I've ordered *The Complication* to see what we have missed.

✂Jewell, Lisa. [The Family Remains](#) (\$17.99) is Jewell's only sequel to an earlier book, the big 2020 hit [The Family Upstairs](#) (\$17). Early one morning on the shore of the Thames, DCI Samuel Owusu is called to the scene of a gruesome discovery. When Owusu sends the evidence for examination, he learns the bones are connected to a cold case that left three people dead on the kitchen floor in a Chelsea mansion thirty years ago. Rachel Rimmer has also received a shock—news that her husband, Michael, has been found dead in the cellar of his house in France. All signs point to an intruder, and the French police need her to come urgently to answer questions about Michael and his past that she very much doesn't want to answer. After fleeing London 30 years ago in the wake of a horrific tragedy, Lucy Lamb is

finally coming home. While she settles in with her children and is just about to purchase their first-ever house, her brother takes off to find the boy from their shared past whose memory haunts their present. As they all race to discover answers to these convoluted mysteries, they will come to find that they're connected....

Kelly, Lee. [The Antiquity Affair](#) (Harper \$17.99). 1907: The dawn of Egyptology is a time of imperialism and plunder, opulence and unrest, and Dr. Warren Ford, esteemed archaeologist, is the man of the hour. His daughters—intellectual Lila, on the eve of her debut as a Manhattan socialite, and nonconformist Tess, who dreams of following in his footsteps—have always lived in his shadow, and their lives couldn't feel more different. But when a secretive organization seeks to find a lost relic, the Serpent's Crown, legendary for its dangerous power, it isn't Dr. Ford they turn to—it's his two remarkable daughters. Rumored to reside in the mysterious Tomb of the Five Ladies, the Serpent's Crown will only be found by solving a seemingly impossible riddle that will open the tomb—and the organization believes that one of the Ford daughters holds the key to deciphering the code. What was supposed to be an elegant debutante ball for elder sister Lila quickly turns sinister when Tess is kidnapped and put on a ship across the Atlantic. When Lila and her father realize that Tess's life is in danger, they must act quickly to track her down and stop the Serpent's Crown from falling into the wrong hands. A race for the Crown begins, with Lila and her father in hot pursuit of the organization and Tess. **This may be the July Historical Fiction Pick but I must read it first.**

King, Laurie R. [Back to the Garden](#) (\$18). Nominated (so far) for the *Los Angeles Times*' Book Prize and Left Coast Crime's Best Historical Mystery, a 50-year-old cold case is at the heart of this mystery about an influential family and an elusive serial killer called The Highwayman. The Gardener family has a long and legendary history in California, but when a skull is recovered during some renovation work, it raises questions about what really happened at the palatial Gardener Estate one summer in the 1970s when the counter culture was high. Most of the narrative is thus historical, but in the present, Inspector Raquel Laing takes up the case, unearthing family secrets as she searches for the answers that might lead her to a killer.... It's unusual for an author of historical fiction to have lived the period, but in her youth, King absolutely did, so her narrative rings with authenticity. Plus Raquel is a terrific new character we hope to see again. Meanwhile King is working on a new Mary Russell and Sherlock Holmes.

Quinn, Spencer. [Bark to the Future](#): (\$18.99). Bernie Little, owner of the Little Detective Agency, and his canine partner and the series' narrator, Chet, are driving home to the Valley (somewhere in the American west but really an imagined Scottsdale) when Bernie stops the car to slip a few dollars to a homeless man standing by a freeway exit ramp. Bernie is shocked to realize that the man is Rocket Saluka, who played on Bernie's high school baseball team. Bernie takes Rocket to a burger place, where Rocket shows Bernie a switchblade, his "most valuable possession." Afterward, Bernie drops off Rocket at the exit ramp. When Bernie later hears Rocket has gone missing, Bernie traces his presence to a homeless encampment, where Chet digs up the knife in the man's tent. With this as their only clue to his whereabouts, the duo set out on a trail that leads them back to Bernie and Rocket's alma mater and into a web of crimes that

culminates in murder. This entry offers a tidy mystery, a good dollop of action, and a rumination on life after high school—who could ask for more? Chet, with his innate doggie wisdom, is sure to inspire loyal fans and seduce new readers. But we here at The Pen, an inspiration for the books' locale, need no seducing to one or our most popular series. You can order [all the Chet and Bernies](#)... enjoy. A new one will be out in October.

Rekulak, Jason. [Hidden Pictures](#) (\$17.99). ). Edgar-nominated for beloved *The Impossible Fortress* and also the editor behind *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, Rekulak returns with a thriller that is original, heart-wrenching, surprising, uplifting—and fabulously illustrated with drawings that say what words cannot for five-year-old Teddy, the child at the heart of the story. How I love this book even though I should have seen what was right before me all along before coming to the ending.

The narrator is Mallory Quinn, a young woman fresh out of rehab after her life took an unexpected bad turn, and determined to stay clean and forge a future. Her counselor arranges a summer job as a live-in nanny for Ted and Caroline Maxwell's son Teddy. At the interview Caroline, a doctor at the VA specializing in treating trauma and addiction, is welcoming but Ted is so not. To her surprise Mal gets the job, her own cottage on the extensive grounds situated in the affluent hamlet of Spring Brook, NJ. And a shy acceptance by Teddy who presents her with a drawing. It contains a disturbing image, a menacing figure called Anya. But before long Teddy draws happier pictures and he and Mal bond, but a current of unease flows....there was a long-ago murder in the cottage and explosive emotions emanate from Teddy's parents. Just wow!

Rothchild, Sascha. [Blood Sugar](#) (\$18). Ruby Simon wants you to know she is not a sociopath. The three people she's killed all deserved it. The first was the school bully who mercilessly bullied Ruby's sister. When Ruby was five, she drowned him in the ocean: The second was a friend's drunken father who attacked 16-year-old Ruby in the kitchen while her friends were upstairs at a slumber party. The third was a court-mandated patient — Ruby was a mental health professional by that time — of such surpassing obnoxiousness that Ruby figured she had to at least try to remove her rotten soul from this planet. But that was it, just those three, which is why it's so exasperating that a Miami police detective is trying to lock her away for a death she had nothing to do with. All right, yes, it's her husband, but he was a diabetic and he died in his sleep, and she really doesn't think they can pin it on her, but if they decide to go digging around in her past ... She wouldn't murder the man she loved. Would she?

#### AND EARLY JUNE LARGE PAPERBACKS

Andrews, Brian/Jeffrey Wilson. [Sons of Valor III: War Machine](#) (Blackstone \$18.99). For you military fiction fans, this duo will be taking over the Jack Ryan, Sr., franchise as Marc Cameron steps aside. Meanwhile they are writing about an op team called Tier One and here a shootout in Dubai has left Hamza al-Saud dead and elevated brilliant aeronautical engineer Qasim Nadar to hero status in England, everyone assumes the terrorist threat from al Qadar has been eliminated. Everyone except JSOC counterterrorism analyst Whitney Watts. But when she decides to help MI6 penetrate Nadar's secret network, Watts gets a little too close to the truth and finds herself in a deadly situation where not even her teammates from Tier One can save her.

☞Barton, Fiona. [Local Gone Missing](#) (\$18). Elise King is a successful and ambitious detective—or she was before a medical leave left her unsure if she'd ever return to work. She now spends most days watching the growing tensions in her small seaside town of Ebbing—the weekenders renovating old bungalows into luxury homes, and the locals resentful of the changes. Elise can only guess what really happens behind closed doors. But Dee Eastwood, her house cleaner, often knows. She's an invisible presence in many of the houses in town, but she sees and hears everything. Local conflicts boil over when a newcomer who wants to put the town on the map throws a giant music festival. After a man disappears the first night of the festival, Elise steps into action....

Boyle, TC. [I Walk Between the Raindrops: Stories](#) (\$17.99). In the title story, a woman sits down next to a man at a bar and claims she has ESP. In "Thirteen Days," passengers on a cruise line are quarantined, to horrifying and hilarious effect. And "Hyena" begins simply: "That was the day the hyena came for him, and never mind that there were no hyenas in the South of France, and especially not in Pont-Saint-Espirit—it was there and it came for him." A virtuoso of the short form, T.C. Boyle returns with an inventive, uproarious, and masterfully told collection. It will make an excellent gift for Dad.

Bushnell, Jeremy P. [Relentless Melt](#) (McSweeney \$18.99). It is 1909 when a young woman's fancy turns to detective work. But how to do it when the only place to learn is the YMCA's Evening Institute for Younger Men? In disguise, of course. Artie Quick—an ambitious, unorthodox and inquisitive young Bostonian—wants to learn about crime. By day she holds down a job as a salesgirl in women's accessories at Filene's; by night she disguises herself as a man to pursue studies in Criminal Investigation at the YMCA's Evening Institute for Younger Men. Eager to put theory into practice, Artie sets out in search of something to investigate. She's joined by her pal Theodore, an upper-crust young bachelor whose interest in Boston's occult counterculture has drawn him into the study of magic. Together, their journey into mystery begins on Boston Common—where the tramps and the groundskeepers swap rumors about unearthly screams and other unsettling anomalies. Will Theodore ever manage to pull off a successful spell? Is Artie really wearing that men's suit just for disguise or is there something more to it? And what chance do two mixed-up young people stand up against the greatest horror Boston has ever known?

Castillo, Javier. [The Snow Girl](#) (Grupo Editions \$16.95). The English translation of Spanish mega-seller Castillo. This book inspired the Netflix series and has sold over 1million copies. I am not enraptured with the writer's style but it may be the translation, one can never be sure. The story is set in NY, 1998, when three-year-old Kiera Templeton, witnessing the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade with her family, disappears. No trace of her can be found, not even her body. Skip to 2003, her 8<sup>th</sup> birthday, when her still distraught parents Aaron and Grace receive a VHS tape showing, in one minute, a video of Kiera playing in a room. Miren Triggs, a journalism student, begins a parallel investigation to law enforcement and learns that her own life, too, is full of uncertainties and is transformed by her quest. And Castillo leaves an opening for a new Miren story (sorry, a little spoiler there).

Chafe, Perry. [Closer to the Sea](#) (Simon Schuster \$17.99). **From the writer and producer of the hit TV shows *Republic of Doyle* and *Son of a Critch*, a poignant debut** coming-of-age story, part literary mystery, and part suspense thriller. In 1991, on a small, isolated island off the coast of Newfoundland, twelve-year-old Pierce Jacobs struggles to come to terms with the death of his father. It's been three years since his dad, a fisherman, disappeared in the cold, unforgiving Atlantic, his body never recovered. Pierce is determined to save enough money to fix his father's old boat and take it out to sea. But life on the island is quiet and hard. The local fishing industry is on the brink of collapse, threatening to take an ages-old way of life with it. The community is hit even harder when a young teen named Anna Tessier goes missing. With the help of his three friends, Pierce sets out to find Anna, with whom he shared an unusual but special bond. They soon cross paths with Solomon Vickers, a mysterious, hermetic fisherman who may have something to do with the missing girl. Their search brings them into contact with unrelenting bullies, magnificent sea creatures, fierce storms, and glacial giants. But most of all, it brings them closer to the brutal reality of both the natural and the modern world.

Chiaverini, Jennifer. [Switchboard Soldiers](#) (\$19.99) is a novel about "one of the great untold stories of World War I—the women of the U.S. Army Signal Corps, who broke down gender barriers in the military and battled a pandemic as they helped lead the Allies to victory. "An eye-opening and detailed novel about remarkable female soldiers. . . Chiaverini weaves the intersecting threads of these brave women's lives together, highlighting their deep sense of pride and duty."—*Kirkus Reviews*

Cooper, Glenn. [The Lost Pope](#) (Grand Central \$18.99). If you suffer nostalgia for *The DaVinci Code* and the tsunami of DaVinci Clones that followed, this is for you. Cal Donovan, a theology professor at Harvard, receives an urgent message from a former graduate student, Samia Tedros. Now a museum conservator in Cairo, Samia has discovered a miraculous fragment of papyrus with three unknown lines from the Gospel of Mary Magdalene so explosive that a wealthy man is willing to kill to ensure no one ever sees it. At the Vatican, another drama is developing. The new Pope has defied centuries of tradition and appointed a nun, Sister Elisabetta Celestino, as his secretary of state. Powerful insiders are outraged that a woman now sits as the second most influential person at the Vatican, and they plot to destroy her. When Samia shows up at Cal's doorstep in the dead of night, he is drawn into a deadly competition to possess a papyrus with the power to rescue Sister Elisabetta and change the course of Christianity. This is also a fun read for fans of Steve Berry.

El-Wardany, Salma. [These Impossible Things](#) (\$17.99). In London in the early 2000s, three lifelong friends are about to graduate from university and have to make decisions about their professional and—more importantly, from this novel's point of view—personal lives. Malak, Kees, and Jenna are all on the verge of adulthood as they struggle to be good Muslim women yet wanting to follow their dreams. "El-Wardany's sparkling, incisive debut uses the conventions of romantic comedy to explore the social and personal tensions faced by young Muslim women in contemporary Britain....the book doesn't shy away from more serious issues, including rape, domestic violence, and unwanted pregnancy."



Harris, Charlaine. [The Serpent in Heaven](#) (\$17.99). Series heroine Lizbeth Rose lets go of the reins for the fourth Gunnie Rose alternate history which sees Lizbeth's half sister, Felicia, taking over as narrator. Rescued by Lizbeth and her partner, Eli, from a life of poverty in Mexico, Felicia is initially thrilled to find a home—and regular food—at the Rasputin School for Grigoris in the Holy Russian Empire, even though her spot there hinges on her being a regular blood donor to the tsar. As one of the few living descendants of Rasputin, her blood alone may heal what ails the ruler. Her peaceful new life is interrupted, however, when she's kidnapped. She escapes her abductors—only for the school to be attacked in their attempts to get her back. Felicia's responding fury causes magic more powerful than she knew she had to explode from inside her. And then....

✂Jones, Sandie. [The Blame Game](#) (\$18). Psychologist Naomi Chandler specializes in domestic abuse cases in an English seaside resort town. She dedicates herself to helping her clients beyond the bounds of her profession—much to her husband Leon's dismay. When a client, Jacob, claims his wife wants to kill him, she offers him refuge at the Chandlers' bungalow—neglecting to tell Leon. Does her interest in Jacob go beyond the professional? Leon thinks so, and apparently so does someone else. After Jacob's file disappears from her office—and an awkward meet up with him at a bar—Naomi realizes Jacob might not be the only one in danger. Odd things are happening, signs from her dark childhood are popping up. Soon afterward, Jacob disappears, leaving Naomi trapped in a cat-and-mouse game—with whom? Reviews for this are mixed but I'd say fans of Lisa Jewell should pay attention to this.

Koepp, David. [Aurora](#) (\$18.99). Astronomers learn that “a giant cloud of solar plasma drenched with magnetic field lines” will strike Earth in less than a day and cause a devastating global blackout. It's up to the states to shut down transformers to significantly mitigate the impact of the solar strike. Inevitably, the governors resist such a move. With cell towers and electrical lines down, the President can't even communicate with anyone not within shouting distance. The ordinary people who must deal with the extraordinary circumstances include Aubrey Wheeler, of Aurora, Illinois, a single mom; 88-year-old retired college professor Norman Levy, a neighbor of Wheeler's; and Patrick Brady, the loyal assistant to a billionaire with some eccentric ideas for surviving the blackout. Koepp's imaginative plotting will keep readers turning the pages to learn the fates of characters they readily become invested in. Michael Crichton fans will love this. I did.

McDermott, Alice. [Child of My Heart](#) (\$18). The beautiful child of older parents, raised on the eastern end of Long Island, Theresa is her town's most sought-after babysitter—cheerful, poised, an effortless storyteller, a wonder with children and animals. Among her charges this fateful summer is Daisy, her younger cousin. While Theresa copes with the challenge presented by the neighborhood's waiflike children, the tumultuous households of her employers, the attentions of an aging painter, and Daisy's fragility of body and spirit, her precocious, tongue-in-check sense of order is tested as she makes the perilous crossing into adulthood. “We have echoes and stirrings of Hardy, Shakespeare, Dickens, James, Beatrix Potter, Christina Rossetti... [Theresa] is a vessel containing a multitude of heroines, a transcendence of ethereal beauties who loved and live in the minds of their readers and inventors.” —*Chicago Tribune*

✂Rickman, Phil. [The Fever of the World](#) (\$17.95). Another in our British imports provides a welcome visit with diocesan exorcist Merrily Watkins of the Welsh Border Country where once Brother Cadfael investigated crimes. Diana Gabaldon and I praise Rickman who is “supremely skillful at teasing out the menace that lies behind English folk customs and legends and weaving them into a compelling contemporary narrative.”—*Mail on Sunday*. Wordsworth, England's most famous 18<sup>th</sup> Century poet, once thought of himself as a modern druid and found his deepest inspiration on the banks of the River Wye, where Celtic magic can still be found and an old darkness lingers. Now, as the world is at the mercy of the coronavirus pandemic, diocesan exorcist Merrily Watkins learns that the ghosts of the lower Wye Valley still need some attention as does the curious death of an estate agent being investigated by David Vaynor who, before joining the police, studied Wordsworth.

Schellman, Katharine. [Last Call at the Nightingale](#) (\$18). Vivian Kelly, the courageous protagonist of this excellent series launch set in 1924 Manhattan, shares a tenement apartment with her older sister, Florence. “Florence is serious and practical, but Vivian is a regular at the Nightingale, a speakeasy owned by Hux, and often comes home at dawn before having to toil as a seamstress all day. When Vivian and Bea find a dead man in the alley behind the club, they wonder if he was a bootlegger, but Hux forbids them to talk about it. After the cops raid the speakeasy, Hux bails Vivian out of jail. In return, Vivian agrees, after the cops find the victim's wallet with his ID in it, to spy on the dead man's family to determine whether they can help find the killer. Schellman vividly evokes Jazz Age Manhattan as Vivian proves to be a most imaginative sleuth.”—*PW Starred Review*. I missed this one last June but look forward to reading this June's [The Last Drop of Hemlock](#) (St Martins \$28).

✂Skelton, Douglas. [An Honourable Thief](#) (\$17.99). Here's an early Georgian era mystery—so early that a missing document from the death bed of the dying Stuart Queen, Anne, purportedly her will naming her half brother, James, known as the Old Pretender, the throne rather than her distant cousin George on Hanover, is the crux of the plot. We meet Jonas Flynt, a gambler, thief, killer, and ex-soldier who is a reluctant member of the Company of Rogues, a shady intelligence op run by a ruthless spymaster. Verifying its existence, chasing it down, takes Jonas from London to a chaotic Edinburgh where he finds more engaged in the same quest. Secrets will come to light about the crown and about his own past....

On order in UK hardcover, the next Jonas Flynt, [A Thief's Justice](#) (Canelo \$25).

✂Willberg, TA. [Marion Lane and the Raven's Revenge](#) (Park Row \$18.99). London, 1960. Marion Lane, apprentice detective at the elusive Miss Brickett's Investigations & Inquiries, is determined to prove herself worthy of an official Inquirer badge. But when her close friend's girlfriend is targeted by a dangerous gang leader and asks for help, Marion cannot say no. Just when Marion thinks she has the situation under control, Darcy disappears and the agency receives a package containing a dead raven. Everyone is puzzled by what the threat could mean, but Marion recognizes it as the same calling card left on her mother's doorstep just before she died. This is the 3<sup>rd</sup> in the Marion Lane series described by Stuart Turton as “This is what would happen if a trainee James Bond was asked to solve an Agatha Christie mystery, and it's brilliant.”