

# BOOKNEWS from

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## FALL INTO BOOKS...

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. You also can listen to our [Podcasts](#) on [Google Music](#), [iTunes](#), [Spotify](#), and other popular podcast sites.

We launched a Summer Giveaway Campaign offering 10 \$100 gift certificates to spend at The Poisoned Pen. Enter for a chance to win and let all your friends know!

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### MONDAY SEPTEMBER 11 7:00 PM Live

**Don Bentley and Kyle Milles** (the Vince Flynn Series handover)  
Bentley discusses [Tom Clancy Weapons Grade](#) (Putnam \$29.95)  
Milles discusses [Vince Flynn Code Red](#) (Atria \$29.99)

### WEDNESDAY SEPTEMBER 13 6:00 PM

**Charlaine Harris** discusses [All the Dead Shall Weep](#) (Saga Press \$28.99)

### THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 14 1:00 PM

**KJ Dell'Antonia with John Charles**  
Dell'Antonia discusses [Playing the Witch Card](#) (Berkley \$17)

### FRIDAY SEPTEMBER 15 7:00 PM

**SciFi Friday** discusses Lee Martinez's [Gil's All Fright Diner](#) (\$19.99)  
Click on the link to see the great cover art

### SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 16 10:30 AM

**Croak & Dagger** discusses Emylia Hall, [The Shell House Detectives](#) (\$16.99)  
A Cornish Coast Cozy

### SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 16 2:00 PM Live Book Launch

**Deb Ledford** discusses [Redemption](#) (Thomas & Mercer \$16.99)

### SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 17 2:00 PM Live

**Tori Eldridge** discusses [The Ninja's Oath](#) (Polis \$27.99)  
Lily Wong on a mission to Shanghai

### MONDAY SEPTEMBER 18 5:00 PM

**Lou Berney with Patrick**  
Berney discusses [Dark Ride](#) (Harper \$30)  
Signed books available

### MONDAY SEPTEMBER 18 7:00 PM Live

**John Scalzi with Pat King**  
Scalzi discusses [Starter Villain](#) (Forge \$28.99)  
What if you were to inherit a supervillain business?

### TUESDAY SEPTEMBER 19 7:00 PM

**JA Jance** discusses [Blessing of the Lost Girls](#) (Harper \$29.99)  
A Joanna Brady and Walker Family Series

### WEDNESDAY SEPTEMBER 20 7:00 PM Live

**Lee and Tod Goldberg with Patrick**  
Lee discusses [Malibu Burning](#) (Thomas & Mercer \$28.99)  
Series start and our September Crime Book of the Month  
Tod discusses [Gangsters Don't Die](#) (Catapult \$28)

### FRIDAY SEPTEMBER 22 6:00-7:30 PM

**WriteNOW! 2023 Anthology Launch Party**  
[Free Tickets](#) to the Party are required from Desert Sleuths, not from The Pen  
And are found on the Desert Sleuths Conference Registration Page

### THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 28 7:00 PM

**Hardboiled Crime** discusses Robert Wilson's [A Small Death in Lisbon](#) (\$9.99),  
One of the truly great WWII spy stories tied to a later murder

### FRIDAY SEPTEMBER 29 7:00 PM

**TICKETED** virtual event one signed book per ticket  
**VE Schwab with Peng Shepherd**  
Schwab discusses [The Fragile Threads of Power](#) (Tor \$29.99)  
**Check with us on Live Event tickets in case of cancellations**

### MONDAY OCTOBER 2 12:00 PM

**Donna Leon** discusses [Wandering Through Life, A Memoir](#) (Grove \$26)  
Unsigned books in stock now

### MONDAY OCTOBER 2 7:00 PM Live Book Launch

**And our 34<sup>th</sup> Birthday Party—with cake!**  
**John Sandford** discusses [Judgment Prey](#) (Putnam \$29.95)  
Lucas and Virgil – and there will be two kinds of cake!

### OUR SEPTEMBER BOOKS OF THE MONTH

We select a book and charge it to you. Free shipping. It's a treat each month, not just on Father's Day.

Email [Karen@poisonedpen.com](mailto:Karen@poisonedpen.com) to join

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

Cleeves, Ann. [The Raging Storm](#)

A procedural set in Devon

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

Carter, Ally. [The Blonde Identity](#)

A sweet & sexy cozy spy story

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

Goldberg, Lee. [Malibu Burning](#)

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

Chua, Amy. Chua, Amy. [The Golden Gate](#)

**Hardboiled/Noir Club** One Signed First Printing per month

Goldberg, Tod. [Gangsters Don't Die](#)

**History/Mystery Club** One First Printing per month

Benn, James R. [Proud Sorrows](#)

A WW2 British country estate murder

**Historical Fiction Paperback Club** One Unsigned paperback per month

Rosenberg, Rebecca. [Madame Pommery](#)

The 19<sup>th</sup> Century woman who created Brut Champagne

**Notable New Fiction** One Signed First Printing per month

Kim, Angie. [Happiness Falls](#)

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

Eldridge, Tori. [The Ninja's Oath](#)

**Romance and Relationships** One unsigned hardcover or 2 paperbacks per month

Hawkins, Karen. [The Secret Recipe of Ella Dove](#)

### SOME SIGNED BOOKS FOR SEPTEMBER

⌘ Archer, Jeffery. [Traitor's Gate](#) (Collins UK \$39). The ancient Tower of London is home to the most valuable jewels on earth. But once a year, the Metropolitan Police must execute the most secret operation in their armory when they transport the Crown Jewels across London. For four years, the Yard's Chief Superintendent William Warwick – together with his second-in-command Inspector Ross Hogan – has been in charge of the operation. And for four years it's run like clockwork. But this year, everything is about to change. Because master criminal Miles Faulkner has set his heart on pulling off the most outrageous theft in history – and with a man on the inside, the odds are in his favor.

Armentrout, Jennifer L. [Fall of Ruin and Wrath](#) (Tor \$27.99). Tip-ins. A compelling first book in a new fantasy series begins when, after growing up in an orphanage, Calista made a deal with Claude, the Baron of Archwood. In exchange for his protection and a place in his court, Calista agrees to use her magical abilities to gather information for him. Her intuition is so powerful that she's compelled to follow its directives, and she can also divine a person's future by touching them, skills unusual in a lowborn human. Calista values the safety and security of this arrangement even though she has the uneasy feeling that her skills have made her a pawn in a political game she doesn't understand. One night, she overhears a strange conversation about an immortal being in trouble, and her intuition forces her to investigate.

⌘ Benn, James R. [Proud Sorrows](#) (Soho \$27.95). Visit a Norfolk village set alongside the fabled Wash tidal basin in November, 1944. US Army investigator Billy Boyle is there on leave where the plan is that his lover, Diana Seaton, will join him at Seaton Hall where her father Sir Richard, a navy man who lost an arm in WWI, resides. The leave is disrupted when a downed German plane resurfaces from the Wash and salvagers discover the body of a posh villager in the cockpit. How the blazes? Two

German bodies remain, but where is the pilot? And is there some kind of espionage in play? Billy's usual team of Kaz, Kaz's sister rescued with Diana from a Nazi camp and recuperating, and Mike is on hand. The policeman in charge is surprisingly grim, uncooperative, and resentful when Billy is assigned by Headquarters to investigate..... So for you **Historical Book of the Month** members—this is our September selection—or any Billy fan like us, here's a kind of wartime Agatha Christie country house murder for you. Real British history buffs will recognize early what other role the Wash plays.

If you have missed this series it's there for bingeing and highly recommended: [order them here](#).

Bentley, Don. [Tom Clancy Weapons Grade](#) (Putnam \$29.95). Former helicopter ace and SWAT Team member Bentley brings it all into play in stunning high action at the conclusion of this full throttle thriller. I think Don has done a superb job writing Jack Ryan, Jr. He's moving on to take over Vince Flynn from Kyle Mills (see below) and they pair up to do the Flynn handover here at The Pen on September 11. Jack Jr. will get a new chronicler (I can't yet reveal who but maybe Don can by the 11<sup>th</sup>). But here we have Jack in country on a mission.

The quiet of a Texas night is shattered by the sounds of screeching brakes, crumpling metal and, most shockingly, rapid gunfire. The auto accident Jack thought he witnessed turned out to be a professional hit. Jack may be too late to save the victim, but he can go after the hitters. He's got just one lead—a meeting the victim was going to. When Jack shows up instead, he's drawn into the seedy underbelly of a small, Texas town and the cold case of a college student who vanished from its streets. Jack is left with nothing but questions. Who wants it to look like the victim was drunk? Why does someone want an innocent witness killed? And most of all, what's a team of South African hitmen doing in the Lone Star State?

I am an admirer of the Jack Jr. thrillers written earlier by Mike Maden so [click here](#) and you can order all those by Mike and by Don.

Berney, Lou. [Dark Ride](#) (Harper \$30) centers on 23-year-old slacker Hardy Reed, whose conscience thrusts him into a dangerous investigation. “In an unnamed Midwestern city, Hardy—whose bare-minimum work ethic has earned him the nickname “Hardly”—passes his days getting stoned with friends after shifts at an amusement park. That changes one day when he sees two kids on a bench with what appear to be cigarette burns. He’s horrified, and despite his typically listless demeanor, attempts to stir up an investigation. When he speaks to Child Services, he’s rebuffed by the overwhelmed workers whose caseloads are outpacing their capacities. Haunted by the notion that the children remain at risk, Hardy attempts to save them on his own. As he gathers allies, he learns that the children’s father is an attorney and a violent drug dealer, and that finding justice might be even more dangerous than he expected. Hardy is a memorable hero with an extremely satisfying arc, and Berney draws the supporting players with equal care, wringing pathos from their interplay as much as the heartbreaking premise. Few readers will finish this unmoved.”—*PW* Starred Review

“Poor Hardly Reed! There he is, just peacefully floating through life on a marijuana cloud, working in a rundown amusement park, when he encounters two kids he suspects are being abused. For once in his life he realizes he can’t stand by and do nothing. Obsession leads him down a heart-wrenching and twisting path, populated by a richly drawn cast of weird and lovable characters and dangerous scenarios.”—Lisa Unger.

Brown, Graham. [Clive Cussler’s Condor’s Fury](#) (Putnam \$29.95). Danger abounds in the 20th ocean adventure in Cussler’s NUMA Files series. Kurt Austin and Joe Zavala find trouble in the seas near Nassau. There, the National Underwater and Marine Agency training ship Edison responds to a mayday call from the MV Heron saying that they’re under attack. The ship at first appears to be empty, but once the rescuers explore inside, a group of crazed men attacks them. The crazies are victims of Martin Colon, formerly of Cuban Intelligence and now VP of Ostrom Airship Corporation. The guy’s a bad dude with a serious grudge against the United States. He and his henchmen have injected the Heron’s crew with tiny microchips, electromagnetic sensors half the size of an average grain of pollen. If you get jabbed with this, your brain imprints and blindly obeys the first voice you hear. And if you’re told to kill your friends, you’ll kill them if you can. So now that Colon has successfully tested the weapon on individuals, he’s ready to go big time. And what better device for spreading the dust-sized chips in the billions than to disperse them from his luxury airship the Condor?”—*Kirkus Reviews*

✦ Brown, Millie Bobby. [Nineteen Steps](#) (Harper \$28.99). Here’s a debut inspired by true family events. It’s 1942, and London remains under constant threat of enemy attack as the Second World War rages on. In the Bethnal Green neighborhood, Nellie Morris counts every day lucky that she emerges from the underground shelters unharmed, her loving family still surrounding her. Three years into the war, she’s grateful to hold onto remnants of normalcy—her job as assisting the mayor and nights spent at the local pub with her best friend. But after a chance encounter with Ray, an American airman stationed nearby, Nellie becomes enchanted with the idea of a broader world. Just when Nellie begins to embrace an exciting new life with Ray, a terrible incident occurs during an air raid one evening, and the consequences are catastrophic. As the truth about that night is

revealed, Nellie’s world is torn apart. But then.... Brown is the actress who plays Enola Holmes. These are tip-ins and honestly I can’t guarantee Brown is the author or wrote with someone. Publishers don’t tell us.

✦ Cambridge, Colleen. [Murder by Invitation Only](#) (Kensington \$27). When Agatha Christie becomes busy in London, she asks her housekeeper Phyllida Bright to accept a social invitation on her behalf. Phyllida will be summoned to Beecham House as a guest to participate in a staged murder mystery party, playing the part of suspect in the fictional slaying of Clifton Wokesley. Shortly after she arrives, however, Clifton is actually stabbed to death, and Phyllida once again finds herself thrust into the position of amateur sleuth. With the help of research Christie conducts in London, Phyllida sets out to find Clifton’s killer, turning up motives from the Wokesleys’ assembled guests including hopes for an inheritance and anger over a failed business venture.

Chua, Amy. [The Golden Gate](#) (St Martins \$28). This time here’s a review for our **September First Mystery Book of the Month** from Oline H. Cogdill in the [South Florida Sun Sentinel](#). “The trifecta of history, race and classism converge in the fiction debut of Amy Chua, best known for nonfiction works that include *World on Fire* and *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother*.” Chua centers *The Golden Gate* around 1944 Berkeley, Calif., when WWII brought a time of social upheaval, acerbated by issues we still grapple with such as immigration and homelessness. Chua uses real historical people such as Margaret Chung, the first Chinese woman to become a physician in the United States, and the Chinese first lady Madame Chiang Kai-shek, while fictionalizing other real-life figures such as politicians. Historical details of San Francisco and California are weaved throughout the plot, enhancing the action. *The Golden Gate* is written as a vintage mystery that echoes Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler with a more modern sense of character development and action.

Berkeley Homicide Detective Al Sullivan is having a drink in the upscale Claremont Hotel when rich businessman with political ambitions William Wilkinson is murdered in a suite. Evidence suggests one of wealthy socialite Genevieve Hopkins Bainbridge’s three granddaughters may have been the killer. Sullivan’s investigation takes him from the highest and lowest echelons of San Francisco society, which includes Asian gangsters and the politics of Madame Chiang Kai-shek, who for a while lived in the San Francisco area during WWII. Chua delves deep into her characters and their motives, all of whom are, in their own ways, outsiders, even the wealthy ones. Sullivan has learned to navigate among different strata of society, often keeping his heritage of being part Mexican quiet.” I add to Oline’s review that the resolution is one I did not, nor likely will you, even imagine coming.

✦ Cleeves, Ann. [The Raging Storm](#) (St Martins \$29). **Our signed copies come with a zinger of a map of Devon while supplies last.**

This third for Devon Inspector Matthew Venn, he of considerable personal baggage, is a true puzzler. There’s a big cast despite how tiny the bleak seaside village of Greystone is, and no obvious motive for the killing of a celebrity traveler/explorer past his prime who rented a very basic cottage to await a mysterious visitor. Jem Roscoe, sailor, legend, national treasure, has ended



up dead in dinghy rocking off Scully Cove, there to be discovered by the village's lifeboat crew in rough seas. Roscoe, though a Devon man, had no obvious connection to Greystone. Venn, on the other hand, holidayed there as a child being raised in the Barum Brethern, a religious sect he abruptly departed years ago. And some of the locals still belong to the Brethern. As Venn and his team investigate, a second death occurs, staged to look like an accident but not fooling Venn. There's a lot more going on including fundraising for a child with a fatal illness. It's unlikely you will figure out what's behind the crimes until Cleeves reveals all.

Cooper, Anderson. [Astor: The Rise and Fall of an American Fortune](#) (Harper \$32.99). I believe these are not tip-ins. See review below in Bios and Memoirs.

Eldridge, Tori. [The Ninja's Oath](#) (Polis \$27.99). Our **International Crime Book of the Month** gets this intriguing review: "Chinese Norwegian ninja Lily Wong embarks on a thorny rescue mission in her action-packed fourth adventure. Wong's honorary uncle, Lee Chang, the former chief enforcer of the Shanghai Scorpion Black Society, has asked for the budding ninja's help. His 12-year-old grandniece, Chyou, has disappeared, and Wong, whom Chang recently helped in a bloody battle against Hong Kong's triads, defers her return to Los Angeles to head to Shanghai and aid in the search. Wong—who tries her best to keep her considerable combat skills a secret from family and friends—has experience in rescue and protection from her time working with a refugee organization. Her efforts to find Chyou are complicated by tensions between Chang and Chyou's grandfather, Qiang, who is convinced the girl has been abducted by his estranged brother's "criminal friends." Meanwhile, Wong fears the child may have been targeted by sex traffickers. The stakes are raised even higher when another of Chang's family members vanishes before Chyou can be found. Eldridge excels at orchestrating thrilling martial arts fights, and at brisk plotting that mostly dodges predictability."

Ellroy, James. [The Enchanters](#) (Knopf \$29) is a descent into the conspiracy hellhole of Hollywood in the early 1960s. Within the dirty fun of Ellroy's fiction, all sorts of lines continue to blur. There is little distinction between characters taken from so-called real life and inventions from the novelist's fevered imagination. Marilyn Monroe, JFK, Jimmy Hoffa, and J. Edgar Hoover were all real people, of course, before they became Ellroy characters. So was protagonist Freddy Otash, the rogue cop who subsequently dug up dirt on celebrities for the scandal-sheet Confidential, though he has become better known as a figure in Ellroy's fiction. As for the lines between good and bad and innocent and guilty, they simply don't exist here. The cops are as crooked as the crooks, maybe more so, and guilt is a matter of degree.... The climax might well leave the reader as breathless as Ellroy's prose."

☒ Feeney, Alice. [Good Bad Girl](#) (Flatiron \$28.99). British author Feeney is a master of the twist in psychological suspense plots... her last, [Daisy Darker](#) (\$17.99), was also a stunning Cornish Gothic. This new chiller begins with a baby stolen from a stroller while her ambivalent mother's back was turned for an instant. The woman acknowledges to herself, "I will never see her again and it is all my fault...I know who has stolen her. And I know why." Leaving you hanging there, Feeney jumps 20 years to the present and introduces a cast of several women whom we gradually see are interconnected as she "defly explores mother-

daughter relationships and the secrets they sometimes hold" as various crimes unfold.

Goddard, Robert. [The Fine Art of Uncanny Predictions](#) (Transworld UK \$39). Umiko Wada never set out to be a private detective, let alone become the one-woman operation behind the Kodaka Detective Agency. But so it has turned out, thanks to the death of her former boss, Kazuto Kodaka, in mysterious circumstances. Keen to avoid a similar fate, Wada chooses the cases she takes very carefully. A businessman who wants her to track down his estranged son offers what appears to be a straightforward assignment. Soon she finds herself pulled into a labyrinthine conspiracy with links to a 27-year-old investigation by her late employer and to the chaos and trauma of the dying days of the Second World War. As Wada uncovers a dizzying web of connections between then and now, it becomes clear that someone has gone to extraordinary lengths to keep the past buried. Soon those she loves most will be sucked into the orbit of one of the most powerful men in Tokyo. And he will do whatever it takes to hold on to his power...

Goldberg, Lee. [Malibu Burning](#) (Thomas & Mercer \$28.88). Our **September Crime Book of the Month** combines real suspense, police and fire investigations, terrific pacing, expert dialogue, and a satisfying conclusion to the duel played out between a cop and a criminal. It's certainly a timely read. It begins when master thief Danny Cole is nabbed by US Marshal Andrew Walker after Danny fleeces a cartel boss for big bucks. Danny gets a choice: sit in prison, or volunteer for California's convict firefighting program. He and the team live in a low security camp in the woods, basically on call. When a fire rages near Malibu, Danny's best crew friend is killed when a luxury home owner diverts the fight to his property. Danny is not a guy to let this go. Eight years later he's served his time and is ready with a plan to avenge his friend and pillage mansions vacated during or by wildfires. Walker by now has joined the LA County Sheriff's arson squad. The pace here is terrific as crooks and cops make you root for both as Goldberg spins out his complicated con. I loved this, but I'm a sucker for heists. I'm not alone: "...a fast-paced, over-the-top caper that entertains while keeping readers guessing." —*LJ Starred Review*. Megan Abbott echoes Mark Greaney: "By turns tense and rambunctious, wildly entertaining, and breakneck-paced, Lee Goldberg's splendid *Malibu Burning* is pure storytelling pleasure from beginning to end."

It comes in a paperback too: [Malibu Burning](#) (\$16.99).

Goldberg, Tod. [Gangsters Don't Die](#) (Catapult \$28). Serious fan Patrick writes, "Goldberg's marvelous Chicago-hitman-turned-rabbi Sal Cupertine returns in the satisfying and darkly funny conclusion to his Gangsterland Trilogy. Cupertine is anxious to get out of the life once and for all, but his sketchy cover as Rabbi David Cohen is falling apart and his family is in the WitSec program and may be in danger. Mobsters have long memories, and Cupertine's nemesis Peaches Pocotillo (who has recently taken control of the Chicago mob) has a score to settle. In order to truly disappear, Cupertine needs to confront his past, including the decades-past death of his own gangster father, Dark Billy Cupertine. This is one hell of a book. Don't miss it!"

Groff, Lauren. [The Vaster Wilds](#) (Penguin \$28). This historical fever dream of a novel follows the flight of a servant girl through the Colonial American wilderness, red in tooth and claw. The

murky circumstances of her journey from England to an imagined Jamestown colony in America and then into the wilderness are slowly shaded in through dreams, fevers, and memories. Groff revels in this primal place, detailing the myriad brutalities and iniquities of an unforgiving colonial-era wild (society included). In one moment, all is goop and grime and gruesomeness, while the next might trace the grace and beauty of the natural world. The novel's structure is lightly Odyssean, as the young girl encounters everything from bears to Jesuits to smallpox, and while hers is fundamentally a journey from rather than toward, it's toward an unknown future. It's also the story of one resourceful girl in the wilderness.

Harris, Charlaïne. [All the Dead Shall Weep](#) (Saga Press \$28.99). In Texoma, part of an alternate-history United States, Lizbeth Rose awaits her half-sister Felicia and her husband Eli's younger brother, Peter, as they arrive from San Diego, where there were kidnapping and murder attempts on Felicia. Since the seat of the Holy Roman Empire, was not safe enough from Felicia's Mexican relatives, Lizbeth and Eli are determined to protect Felicia and Peter at home. But then some news arrives that means Eli and Peter are heading back to San Diego, and their enemies have plans of revenge and death that will either kill them or destroy everything they have together. Devious plans, family sadness, and a surprising twist will change their futures—if they survive. Harris's intriguing setting of a fractured United States with magical families and gunslingers propels this series.

✂ Herron, Mick. [The Secret Hours](#) (Soho \$27.95). The opening chase scene alone is worth the price of this standalone story that retains the snark of the Slough House series regarding the British Intelligence services. Most of all I enjoyed Herron's pokes at Boris Johnson (unnamed, but you know it's him). The present ties into an MI5 Mission in Cold War Berlin. Admire how First Desk, a woman who renders toothless an inquiry established by a vindictive prime minister that has dragged on for years, outplays everyone. The Soho edition with tote bag has sold out. We have an unsigned US edition available or the Signed UK edition, [The Secret Hours](#) (\$42), does not.

Jance, JA. [Blessing of the Lost Girls](#) (Harper \$29.99). Jance began her Walker Family mysteries with [Hour of the Hunter](#) (\$9.99), still my favorite of all her books and a paperback bestseller here at The Pen. She drew upon her own first marriage and life as a writer, and on her time in Sells among the Tohono O'odham to craft it. Over time the Walkers ran into Sheriff Joanna Brady and here is another crossover between the series as a hunt for a serial killer unfolds. Here's an enthusiastic review:

“A prologue, set in July 2022, identifies drifter Charles Milton as the murderer of six people. The action then flashes back to 2019, when Milton abducts Rosa Rios from a bar in Tucson, Ariz., before strangling and stabbing her to death. Arizona sheriff Joanna Brady and her daughter, Jennifer, who knew Rios, take notice, and since Rios was Native American, her disappearance also attracts the attention of Dan Pardee, an investigator for the Department of the Interior's new unit for cases involving Indigenous victims (and son-in-law of Brandon Walker). Milton's efforts to disguise Rios's body...delay authorities' progress in identifying her. When successful, Dan, Joanna, and Jennifer all set out to track down the person responsible. It's a testament to Jance's talents that she gives away the killer's identity and fate at the book's outset, yet still manages to wring heart-stopping

suspense from the central investigation. Nearly four decades into her career, Jance is still finding new ways to thrill her readers.” Indeed, she's a marvel I've worked with for more than 30 years.

Johnson, Craig. [The Longmire Defense](#) (Viking \$28). ). Back in Absaroka County and on the job, healing up from the events of [Hell and Back](#) (\$18) up in Montana, Sheriff Walt Longmire responds to a 911 call that a woman is lost in the Bighorns. The search area recalls a story his father told him about an elk hunt he went on as a teen with his own father, Lloyd. During the hunt, the state accountant, Big Bill Sutherland, was shot and killed, and his murder is still unsolved. When Walt finds the missing tourist, he also finds a buried, custom-made .300 H&H Magnum that was probably Big Bill's murder weapon. And its owner proves to be Walt's grandfather Lloyd, then the sheriff. And a man so tough on Walt that Walt has never gotten past their adversarial relationship although—a plot point—Lloyd forced Walt to learn to play chess. This truly cold case heats up as Walt discovers who else was on the fatal hunting trip with Big Bill. As memories both propel and disorient him—could Lloyd Longmire have been a murderer as clues suggest?—pressure comes down to forget the old case. There's a big cast here, familiar and new: the women in Walt's life; lawmen; Wyoming officials; and some surprises. Johnson truly scores delving into Walt's past—even his future; his family's past; and a sharply etched cast of bad actors. I loved it. You will too. You can start here if you are new to Walt, as there are no dangling loose ends to the case. Or delight in this new view of a treasured character.

Kim, Angie. [Happiness Falls](#) (Hogarth \$28). In her second novel after the runaway success of her Edgar Award-winning debut [Miracle Creek](#) (\$17), Kim portrays a Korean American family in crisis when the beloved father goes missing. Mia, the irreverent, hyperanalytical twenty-year-old daughter, has an explanation for everything—which is why she isn't initially concerned when her father and younger brother Eugene don't return from a walk in a nearby park. They must have lost their phone. Or stopped for an errand somewhere. But by the time Mia's brother runs through the front door bloody and alone, it becomes clear that the father in this tight-knit family is missing and the only witness is Eugene, who has the rare genetic condition Angelman Syndrome and cannot speak. What follows is both a ticking-clock investigation into the whereabouts of a father and an emotionally rich portrait of a family whose most personal secrets just may be at the heart of his disappearance. Kim turns the missing-person story into something wholly original, creating a family who must go to remarkable lengths to truly understand one another. This is a splendid **September Notable New Fiction Book of the Month. And all of our copies come with a special double-sided print courtesy of Hogarth.**

FYI, as noted by the Mayo Clinic, “Angelman Syndrome is a genetic disorder. It causes delayed development, problems with speech and balance, intellectual disability, and, sometimes, seizures. People with Angelman Syndrome often smile and laugh frequently, and have happy, excitable personalities.”

Krueger, William Kent. [The River We Remember](#) (Atria \$28.99). Krueger writes, “The story opens on Memorial Day in 1958 when the body of Jimmy Quinn, Black Earth County's leading citizen, is found floating in the Alabaster River, nearly naked and dead from a shotgun blast. This story is absolutely a compelling

mystery; the question at its heart is who killed Jimmy Quinn. But it's so much more than just a mystery. It deals with the devastating effects of war on the human spirit. It explores the darkness of racism and bigotry. And maybe most important of all, it asks the question: How do we heal from the wounds delivered by the battles we fight in this life?"

Kent thinks of this as completing a trilogy begun with (Edgar winner) [Ordinary Grace](#) and [This Tender Land](#) (\$17), stories that take him outside his beloved Cork O'Connor series.

Ledford, Deborah J. [Redemption](#) (Thomas & Mercer \$16.99). After four women disappear from the Taos Pueblo reservation, Deputy Eva "Lightning Dance" Duran dives into the case. For her, it's personal. Among the missing is her best friend, Paloma, a heroin addict who left behind an eighteen-year-old son. Eva senses a lack of interest from the department as she embarks on the investigation. But their reluctance only fuels her fire. Eva teams up with tribal police officer and longtime friend Cruz "Wolf Song" Romero to tackle a mystery that could both ruin her reputation and threaten her standing in the tribe. And when the missing women start turning up dead, Eva uncovers clues that take her deeper into the reservation's protected secrets. Fresh and ferocious Native American deputy Eva 'Lightning Dance' Duran never lets up in her quest woven through the Taos Pueblo land.

Mason, Daniel. [North Woods](#) (Random \$28). Tip-ins. The story of a house, the humans who inhabit it, the ghosts who haunt it, and the New England forest encompassing them all. We travel from precolonial times through the present day and beyond, from the perspective of a single house in Western Massachusetts. As the often-tragic tales of its various residents are recounted, Mason employs an array of literary styles and genres, including the Indigenous-abduction narrative, folk ballads, letters, true-crime pulp journalism, insect erotica, and contemporary speculative fiction. Beginning with young lovers running away from their Puritan community, the novel visits (among others) an obsessive apple cultivator and his eccentric twin daughters, a landscape painter whose friendship with a writer blossoms into forbidden love, a phony clairvoyant who for the first time detects real spirits, and a man with schizophrenia who is aware of the ghosts inhabiting the property. Throughout, and especially during times when the house lies vacant, the natural history of the land over time is compellingly portrayed. I have always loved [The Source](#) (\$21), Michener's most focused on a single space, Tell Makor, and am eager to read *North Woods*.

Mills, Kyle. [Vince Flynn Code Red](#) (Atria \$29.99). Damian Losa, a billionaire Mexican crime lord, wants a favor. Rapp owes him a debut of honor. The Syrian government appears to have created a highly addictive new narcotic that it plans to distribute throughout Europe. It's a major threat to Losa's business and he's determined to send someone to keep him on top by any means necessary. Rapp is the perfect choice for the mission. Not only does he have extensive experience operating in the Middle East, but he's also entirely expendable. As he crosses into war-torn Syria, Rapp quickly discovers a shocking truth. The new drug isn't being produced by Damascus to prop up the government's collapsing finances. Instead, it was created by Russia's asymmetrical warfare unit, not for profit but as a weapon against the West.

The playing field for international thrillers has shifted back towards Russia. While Syria is the main theater here, a

Russian general muses, "Russia had been revealed for what it was: a starving old woman lashed by the Siberian wind." And Rapp observes, "The Russians aren't people who play to win. They play to make everyone else lose." Which seems to me to be eminently true given current news.

✘ Osman, Richard. [The Last Devil to Die](#) (Viking UK \$45). It's rarely a quiet day for the Thursday Murder Club. Shocking news reaches them—an old friend has been killed, and a dangerous package he was protecting has gone missing. The gang's search leads them into the antiques business, where the tricks of the trade are as old as the objects themselves. As they encounter drug dealers, art forgers, and online fraudsters—as well as heartache close to home—Elizabeth, Joyce, Ron, and Ibrahim have no idea whom to trust. With the body count rising, the clock ticking down, and trouble firmly on their tail, has their luck finally run out?

Riordan, Rick. [Percy Jackson and the Olympians: The Chalice of the Gods](#) (Disney \$19.99). Tip-ins. For the Young Reader but hey, why not refresh your own knowledge of the ancient gods as the original heroes from *The Lightning Thief* reunite to perform three quests. The goal: to get Percy three recommendations for college.

Sandford, John. [Judgment Prey](#) (Putnam \$29.95). Alex Sand was spending the evening at home playing basketball with his two young sons when all three were shot in cold blood. A wealthy federal judge, there's no short list of people who could have a vendetta against Sands, but the gruesome murders, especially that of his children, turn their St. Paul community on its head. Sand was on the verge of a major donation to a local housing charity, Heart/Twin Cities, and with the money in limbo, eyes suddenly turn to his grieving widow, Margaret Cooper, to see what she might do with the money. Margaret, distraught over the death of her family, struggles to move forward, and can't imagine how or why anyone would target her husband. With public pressure mounting and both the local police force and FBI hitting dead end after dead end, Lucas Davenport and Virgil Flowers are called in to do what others could not: find answers. Infuriatingly, each potential lead is flawed. I love Lucas and Virgil and am delighted they team up in an expert procedural... Lucas' 33rd investigation.

Scalzi, John. [Starter Villain](#) (Forge \$28.99). "Combining the sarcastic humor of Scalzi's *Redshirts* with an origin story for James Bond-like supervillains operating with the competence-porn-level efficiency and work ethic of *Hench* by Natalie Zina Walschots, this story of snark with a heart reminds readers that the logical conclusion of 'dogs have owners, cats have staff' is that cats are management and never let anyone forget it. Readers of humorous fantasy are sure to love Scalzi's latest as much as those cats; it's also for those who enjoy seeing superhero stories folded, twisted, and mutilated and anyone wishing for a righteous villain lair surrounded by intelligent sharks." I add to this *LJ* Starred Review that the cover art featuring a feline is fabulous.

Just in, the October Indie Next Pick underlining why this will be our **October Notable New Fiction Book of the Month**: "Scalzi makes the absurd feel completely normal. Charlie is a down on his luck guy who gets thrust into the world of super villains and genetically-engineered cats. Fans of the spy genre will love the subverted super villain clichés."

Schwab, V E. [The Fragile Threads of Power](#) (Tor \$29.99). Although our live event for Schwab is sold out, and the virtual



ticket only comes with the purchase of this book, you can order a signed copy while stock lasts.

“Schwab revisits the world of the Shades of Magic series—where multiple alternate Londons feud with one another—in the action-packed start to a new spin-off series. The lives of Kell Maresh, Delilah Bard, Alucard Emery, and King Rhy Maresh have changed much in the seven years since *A Conjuring of Light* concluded. When Rhy’s life is threatened, it will take the abilities of all to find his would-be assassins. Meanwhile, Schwab introduces Tesali “Tes” Ranek, whose talent for fixing things comes from her rare ability to see threads of magic and manipulate them to her will. Tes uses this skill to earn a living but keeps her powers a secret by inventing a powerful man to whom she claims to be merely an apprentice. When she’s presented with a piece of technology that could turn the tide of power in Red London, her world begins to waver—as do the walls keeping Grey London, White London, and Black London at bay. Schwab cleverly builds on her existing worlds, introducing new threats and expanding the magic system. The new characters captivate and the plot twists shock.”

✦ Schellman, Katharine. [Murder at Midnight](#) (Crooked Lane \$30.99). In her delightful fourth Regency mystery featuring feisty widow Lily Adler, Lily is attending a Christmas ball in 1816 England. Lily has brought along her late husband’s mother, Lady Adler, and his brother, Sir John, to Mrs. Grantham’s annual yuletide celebration in Hertfordshire. Also in attendance are Jack Harley and Matthew Spencer, both of whom harbor feelings for Lily. After much dining, dancing, and gossiping, the festive evening takes a turn when a terrible snowstorm hits, forcing the guests to stay at the house overnight. In the morning, someone is found shot to death in the poultry yard. Potential motives for the murder abound, including fraud, blackmail, theft, and romantic jealousy. Mrs. Grantham, who has heard murmurings about Lily’s success at solving crimes, asks her to quietly investigate. It’s an Agatha Christie set-up for a Christmas-time story. Zoom event is set for October 5.

Simon, Nina. [Mother-Daughter Murder Night](#) (Morrow \$29.99). By the time you read this our August First Mystery Book of the Month will be revealed as the September Reece’s Book Club Pick. And an Indie Next Pick. I didn’t know any of that when I negotiated our signed copies. What I had was a feeling of here is a stronger version of *Where the Crawdads Sing...* and a memory that while I liked *Crawdads* well enough to make it an August 2018 First Mystery Book of the Month, and we had Delia Owens here at The Pen to sign our copies, I did not anticipate its runaway success. If I had I’d have had a thousand copies for her signing.

Anyway here’s the same love of a special environment, Elkhorn Slough, a marshland on the mid-California coast. Single mom Beth and her teenage daughter Jack dwell there in a pretty rickety shack. Beth is a nurse who cares for the locals including an elderly rancher with property that could become a high-end development. Enter Lana, Beth’s mother, a truly original, fabulous, character, used to the high life in real estate in LA. But she’s fallen on hard times which include a stage 4 cancer diagnosis. And arrives to move in with Beth and Jack just as Jack discovers the body of naturalist Ricardo Crux floating in the slough. Suspicion falls heavily on Jack so Lana swings into action.

Among the raves other than my own I like this one: “Nina Simon’s *Mother-Daughter Murder Night* is the rarest of novels. A lively and tender story of family that Simon deftly transforms into an edge-of-your-seat murder mystery set against the polarizing backdrop of land conservation—no novel has ever made family drama (or murder) this much fun. One part *The Maid* and one part family drama à la *The Nest*, *Mother-Daughter Murder Night* is a resounding and impressive triumph. I fell in love with Jack, Lana, and Beth immediately, and so will you.” — Katy Hays, author of *The Cloisters*

Smith, Zadie. [Fraud](#) (Grove UK \$42). It is 1873. Mrs. Eliza Touchet is the Scottish housekeeper—and cousin by marriage—of a once-famous novelist, now in decline, William Ainsworth, with whom she has lived for thirty years. Mrs. Touchet is a woman of many interests: literature, justice, abolitionism, class, her cousin, his wives, this life and the next. But she is also skeptical. She suspects her cousin of having no talent; his successful friend, Mr. Charles Dickens, of being a bully and a moralist; and England of being a land of facades, in which nothing is quite what it seems. The “Tichborne Trial”—wherein a lower-class butcher from Australia claimed he was in fact the rightful heir of a sizable estate and title—captivates Mrs. Touchet and all of England. Is Sir Roger Tichborne really who he says he is? Or is he a fraud? Mrs. Touchet is a woman of the world but can she see what is fraud and what is not?

The Indie Next Pick: “Zadie Smith is a literary genius. The last time I stopped to marvel at the beauty of a book’s writing was in the Neapolitan novels. This has the same notes of immersive world building and rich, complex characters” [Read this interview](#) with Smith, it’s well worth your time. Unsigned US Edition: [The Fraud](#) (Penguin \$29).

Walker, Joss (JT Ellison). [The Keeper of Flames](#) (Two Tales Press \$28.99). Jayne Thorne, CIA Librarian, first met in the exciting and imaginative [Tomb of the Queen](#) (\$18.99), followed by the also wonderful [Master of Shadows](#) (\$28.99 Signed).is back for another exciting mission. Also it comes with a magnificent design for the hardcover itself underneath the dust jacket. Such a treat.

OK, who can resist this? A lost fire goddess. An arrogant new ally. And a secret magical society on the brink of extinction. All Jayne Thorne wants to do is work with her sister to track down their missing father. But instead, she is tasked with another assignment from the CIA: go to Rome and acquire a necromantic grimoire linked to a lost fire goddess. As Jayne struggles to work with her new partner, a smug and infuriating magician who knows exactly how to push her buttons, she realizes this mission may reveal clues to her father’s whereabouts. Worse, the deadly terror organizations have caught wind of this powerful grimoire, and their dark magic has created all manner of terrifying new obstacles for Jayne to overcome. When she realizes their enemies are closing in on these hunted magicians—and targeting her sister, too—she must expand her magical abilities, trust in her partner, and risk her life for the truth... or else the power of the fire goddess could wind up in the wrong hands. Note: There is a paperback, unsigned: [The Keeper of the Flames](#) (\$15.99).

Weissman, Joshua. [Joshua Weissman: Texture Over Taste: An Unapologetic Cookbook](#) (DK \$35). Building meals from scratch means never having to say you’re sorry in this bold collection from Weissman (The Slim Palate). Riding the latest wave of celebrity cheldom with some 5.5 million TikTok followers,

the author brings his confident approach and opinionated outlook (“Pork chops are very important to me, and they should be important to you”) to print with more than 100 recipes. Weissman’s agenda to “stop putting the past on a pedestal” needs no apology and is well supported in this work, which encourages readers to develop their own sense of cooking intuition while maintaining a grasp of the basics. The first 80 pages are devoted to foundational recipes, including soup stocks and sandwich spreads, pickles, jams, and a bounty of breads. The remaining pages go about utilizing them in a variety of fairly complex entrées. This treat pairs well with the wine industry depiction in Wildgen, below.

Wildgen, Michelle. [Wine People](#) (Zibby Books \$29.99). If the rarefied world of wine experts interests you (also the foodie world that goes with), this novel of the rivals contending for top spots in a wildly successful boutique NY wine importer, built from the ground up by its charismatic and controlling founder who now hints he may be retiring, is for you. It’s a cutthroat world. Two very different women compete among the men, neither of whom is entirely sure they want the prize, but neither willing to step back. So they join forces but how shaky will their bond be? “A riveting, behind-the-scenes portrait of a high-drama industry, from the chateau to the corner office...pour a glass and dive in.”—Oprah Daily on our August Notable New Fiction Book of the Month,

It comes in a simultaneous paperback too: [Wine People](#) (Zibby Books \$17.99). And I’m scheduling a zoom with Wildgen sometime in October. This is an excellent book to give as a gift with the holidays coming up.

#### UNSIGNED EVENT BOOKS

Dell’Antonia, KJ. [Playing the Witch Card](#) (Penguin \$17). Three generations of witches summon their powers from tarot cards or, in some cases, cookies. “Dell’Antonia perfectly captures life in a small town in this delightful family saga. ... It feels strange to say that a book about witchcraft and magic that won’t take no for an answer is ‘cozy’ but I really did get cozy vibes from this book! It put me in a fall, pumpkin-spice sort of mood.” We’re in Kansas, where Flair’s takeover of her grandmother’s bakery is a strictly no-magic operation—until the innocent batch of Tarot card cookies Flair bakes for the town’s Halloween celebration unleashes the power of the family deck, luring Flair’s unpredictable mother to town, tempting Flair’s magic-obsessed daughter, and bringing back Flair’s first love while ensnaring her ex in a curse she can’t break. Let me add that I was and am nuts for 2022’s [In Her Boots](#) (\$17), a gem set in Vermont.

Leon, Donna. [Wandering Through Life, A Memoir](#) (Grove \$26). As she enters her 80s, my longtime friend and fellow octogenarian Leon, author of the magnificent Commissario Guido Brunetti series, recounts her adventurous life that began quietly on a farm in New Jersey. In time she got a taste for the classical music and opera that would enrich her life. She also developed a yen for adventure. In 1976, she made the spontaneous decision to teach English in Iran, before finding herself swept up in the early days of the 1979 Revolution. After teaching stints in China and Saudi Arabia, she finally landed in Venice. And then came [Death at La Fenice](#) (\$17.99), a fabled debut. Leon and I will discuss this wonderful book on October 2 at 12:00 PM PDT.

#### CLASSICS

Farr, Sebastian. [Death on the Downbeat](#) (Poisoned Pen \$14.99). A British Library Crime Classic of unusual composition. During a performance of Strauss’ tone poem “A Hero’s Life,” the obnoxious conductor, Sir Noel Grampian, is shot dead in full view of the Maningpool Municipal Orchestra. He had many enemies, musicians and music critics among them, but to be killed in mid flow suggests an act of the coldest calculation. Told through the letters of Detective Inspector Alan Hope to his wife, he puzzles over his findings, and other documents such as the letters of members of the orchestra and musical notation holding clues to the crime. This addition to the Crime Classics series is an immersive musical mystery, featuring diagrams of the orchestra arrangement and four pages of musical notation with relevance to the plot. First published in 1941 but out-of-print since, this is by a lost writer of the genre, Sebastian Farr (a pseudonym for Eric Walter Blom), a prolific Swiss-born and British-naturalized music lexicographer, music critic and writer.

I add this should be a must-read for those who, like me, loved Donna Leon’s debut in [Death at La Fenice](#) (\$17.99) where a conductor is offed at Venice’s fabled opera house. Speaking of Leon, her memoir is out mid September and I will zoom with her about her life on October 2 at 1:00 PM

O’Brien, Geoffrey. [Crime Novels of the 1960s: Nine Classic Thrillers](#) (Library of America 2 volumes \$80). In the 1960s a number of gifted writers—some at the peak of their careers, others newcomers—reimagined American crime fiction. Here are nine novels of astonishing variety and inventiveness that pulse with the energies of that turbulent, transformative decade. Each volume features an introduction by editor O’Brien (*Hardboiled America*), newly researched biographies of the writers and helpful notes, and an essay on textual selection:

Fredric Brown’s *The Murderers* (1961), a darkly comic look at a murderous plot hatched on the hip fringes of Hollywood.

Dan J. Marlowe’s terrifying *The Name of the Game Is Death* (1962), about a nihilistic career criminal on the run

Charles Williams’ *Dead Calm* (1963), a masterful novel of natural peril and human evil on the high seas.

Dorothy B. Hughes’s *The Expendable Man* (1963), an unsettling tale of racism and wrongful accusation in the American Southwest.

Richard Stark’s taut *The Score* (1964), in which the master thief Parker plots the looting of an entire city with the cool precision of an expert mechanic.

Margaret Millar’s *The Fiend* (1964), which maps the interlocking anxieties of a seemingly tranquil California suburb through the rippling effects of a child’s disappearance.

Ed McBain’s classic police procedural *Doll* (1965), a breakneck story that mixes murder, drugs, fashion models, and psychotherapy with the everyday professionalism of the 87th Precinct.

Chester Himes’ *Run Man Run* (1966), a nightmarish tale of racism and police violence that follows a desperate young man seeking safe haven in New York City while being hunted by the law.



Patricia Highsmith's ultimate meta-thriller, *The Tremor of Forgery* (1969), a novel in which a displaced traveler finds his own personality collapsing as he attempts to write a novel about a man coming undone.

### A FEW MEMOIRS AND BIOGRAPHIES

Beard, Mary. [The Emperor of Rome](#) (Norton \$37.95). In her international bestseller [SPQR](#) (\$17.95), Mary Beard told the thousand-year story of ancient Rome. Now she shines her spotlight on the emperors who ruled the Roman Empire, from Julius Caesar (assassinated 44 BCE) to Alexander Severus (assassinated 235 CE).

Cooper, Anderson. [Astor: The Rise and Fall of an American Fortune](#) (Harper \$32.99 SIGNED). Here is the history of a legendary American family, the Astors, and how they built and lavished their fortune. The story of the Astors is a quintessentially American story—of ambition, invention, destruction, and reinvention. From 1783, when German immigrant John Jacob Astor first arrived in the United States, until 2009, when Brooke Astor's son, Anthony Marshall, was convicted of defrauding his elderly mother, the Astor name occupied a unique place in American society. The family fortune, first made by a beaver trapping business that grew into an empire, was then amplified by holdings in Manhattan real estate. Over the ensuing generations, Astors ruled Gilded Age New York society and inserted themselves into political and cultural life, but also suffered the most famous loss on the *Titanic*, one of many shocking and unexpected twists in the family's story. In this unconventional, page-turning historical biography, featuring black-and-white and color photographs

Daugherty, Tracy. [Larry McMurtry: A Life](#) (St Martins \$35). In over forty books, in a career that spanned over sixty years, Pulitzer Prize winner Larry McMurtry staked his claim as a superior chronicler of the American West, and as the Great Plains' keenest witness since Willa Cather and Wallace Stegner. Daugherty traces his origins as one of the last American writers who had direct contact with this country's pioneer traditions.

Faust, Drew Gilpin. [Necessary Trouble: Growing Up at Midcentury](#) (Farrar \$30). Coming of age in a conservative Southern family in postwar America, a world of polarized national alliances, nuclear threat, and destabilized social hierarchies.

Grush, Loren. [The Six: The Untold Story of America's First Women Astronauts](#) (Scribner \$32.50). The Indie Next Pick: "*The Six* introduces us to the *real* first women astronauts, who faced incredible scrutiny. The awesomeness of space exploration, the Challenger tragedy, the unreasonable press questions — experience it all with this accomplished group."

Guo, Xiaolu. [Radical: A Life of My Own](#) (Grove \$27).

Heughan, Sam. [Waypoints: My Scottish Journey](#) (\$18.99). Jamie of *Outlander* takes us into the Highlands in this memoir.

Isaacson, Walter. [Elon Musk](#) (SimonSchuster \$35). Do I need to say anything?

Jonas, Brothers. [Blood: A Memoir by the Jonas Brothers](#) (Harper \$28.99).

Leon, Donna. [Wandering Through Life: A Memoir](#) (Grove \$26). Written as the author of the Commissario Guido Brunetti series set in Venice turns 80. See Unsigned Event Book above.

McCrae, Shane. [Pulling the Chariot of the Sun: A Memoir](#) (Scribner \$27). An unforgettable memoir by an award-winning poet about being kidnapped from his Black father and raised by his white supremacist grandparents. This is a horrifying narrative but a salute to resilience and survival.

McConnell, Evelyn. [The World According to Joan Didion](#) (Harper \$26.99).

### DO YOU LOVE OLD FASHION BRITISH MYSTERIES?

*Note: Severn House is a UK publisher that produces quality books primarily for the library market but we can order them. They are pricey but a good value. We order them thus Upon Request rather than randomly stocking them.*

*Thomas & Mercer's UK arm publishes a few series in paperback we can buy. I adore the TE Kinsey series, now numbering ten.*

Adams, Jane. [The Room with Eight Windows](#) (Severn \$31.99). It's 1930 and a depressed (retired) former DCI Henry Johnstone, his body battered but his mental powers undiminished, has a gig cataloging the library of the late scientist Sir Eamon Barry. The work is in Barry's crumbling mansion in a room where eight very tall windows let in the worst of the South Coast's constant wind. But Henry has disappeared—we have a glimpse of the attack prompting it—and his formidable sister Cynthia, who arranged the Barry job, has to call in Mickey Hitchens, Henry's bagman (see *Endeavor* to know what a bagman is), to help find Henry. Now a DI himself, Mickey, charged with whipping new sergeant Bexley Tibbs into shape, eventually revisits a very cold murder in St. John's Wood outside a home where the inhabitants had vanished. Adams came strongly into the mystery world in 1995 with a much praised debut called *Greenways* and has been writing ever since.

Kinsey, TE. [A Fire at the Exhibition](#) (Thomas & Mercer \$16.99). Mysteries set at the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century when Britain was still Gilded are elegant yet poignant as we know 1914 is going to detonate a way of life. Lady Hardcastle, widow and retired intelligence agent, and her companion Flo, whose guise as a lady's maid conceals martial arts and other skills, retired to the village of Littleton Cotterell in Gloucestershire near Bristol. Over the course of nine investigations they have earned the respect and collaboration of constabulary from Bristol as well as the locals. And here is the 10<sup>th</sup> which begins with an exhibition of a fabulously bound and bejeweled Shakespeare and local art including a valuable landscape by an artist just becoming recognized. A fire breaks out, the book and the painting disappear in the panic, a racing bicycle is stolen (there's a race set to go from the village to Berkeley Castle which Lady H and Flo, new to cycling, enter in the leisure group, and in time, one of the cyclists is found murdered. Neighbors the Farley-Strouds, living in the Grange nearby and increasingly impoverished, need the painting to raise funds to maintain their estate. It's indeed a complex plot with many strands and just when you think it can't possible make sense or come together, Kinsey brings it off. Rife with humor and local history, this series is a favorite with me. Here is a [link to all 10](#) of the Lady Hardcastle investigations.

I add that a lot of time is spent at the Dog and Duck and an astonishing amount of food and drink at all hours is consumed. There is always an illuminating author's note at the end to guide you between the real and the fictional bits.

Malliet, GM. [Death in Print](#) (Severn \$31.99). Who doesn't want to spend time in, dream of, Oxford? Morse, Sayers, Ware, Finch, have left a mark on many of us. University of Oxford tutor and bestselling author Jason Verdoordt has it all: acclaim, women, money... and an enemy or two. When he's found dead at the bottom of the stairs during a celebratory reception at St. Rumwold's College, many wonder if seething jealousy of his literary success has turned someone's mind to murder. Detective Chief Inspector Arthur St. Just becomes inescapably drawn into an investigation that takes him down the historic streets of Oxford and into the hallowed halls of its university. Alongside his fiancée, crime fiction writer Portia De'Ath, he uncovers several motives for murdering the celebrated but insufferable Jason—whose next novel may be a threat to many in his orbit—and no shortage of suspects who are nursing a grudge from the first novel.

Ripley, Mike. [Mr. Champion's Memory](#) (Severn \$31.99). I have earlier recommended this latest title in Ripley's marvelous continuations of Margery Allingham's sleuth Albert Champion, whose background is obscured but definitely Upper Crust. Mr. Champion is a Golden Age Sleuth but he's aged into 1972. And his nephew Christopher (Mr. C and his wife Lady Amanda are childless), who is in public relations, is having trouble managing an important client, construction king Sir Lachlan McIntyre. Sir Lachlan who made a killing in the war, is now in line for a life peerage, but he will be shot down as a prime suspect in the murder of journalist David Duffy. After a visit up the M1 Motorway to Sir Lachlan's home and principal place of business, Duffy has been found shot dead in his car on a lay by. Why was Champion's name found on in Duffy's notebook under the heading 1932? It's a crafty plot with an unusual setting and some well-researched history. Like every author in this grouping, Ripley is an elegant writer with an erudite, often sly, humor.

### SOME SEPTEMBER COZIES

Andrews, Mary Kay. [Bright Lights, Big Christmas](#) (St Martins \$24). Honestly I am not up for Christmas novels as early as September. With Thanksgiving coming the third week in November, that's my season. However, as publishing grows more than even like the fashion industry, working a season ahead, here's one to buy and perhaps shelve for a bit. With wit, wisdom and the occasional tangle of tinsel, North Carolina native Kerry Tolliver reinvents her life as she sells Christmas trees from a beloved camper in the glittering heart of New York City. Grab the eggnog and the cookies and cozy up in Greenwich Village.

Bailey, Maggie. [Seams Deadly](#) (Crooked Lane \$28.99). Recently divorced Lydia Barnes is making a new start in a small town, working at a quilting shop by day and sewing her own clothing by night. After an awkward first date with her neighbor ends in a fist bump, she brings him some brownies, only to find him dead at his desk, fabric shears sticking out of his neck. With police suspicion on her, it's up to Lydia to find the culprit amongst her new neighbors before she's the next victim. Here's a start to a fabric arts-themed cozy series.

Berenson, Laurien. [A Furry Little Christmas](#) (Kensington \$12.95). Connecticut's Melanie Travis and her brood of Standard poodles once again finds surviving the holiday season deadlier than expected in a repackaging of "Wagging Through the Snow" and "Here Come Santa Paws."

Delany, Vicki. [Have Yourself a Deadly Little Christmas](#) (Crooked Lane \$30.99). It's the beginning of December in Rudolph, New York, America's Christmas Town, and business is brisk at Mrs. Claus's Treasures, a gift and décor shop owned by Merry Wilkinson. The local amateur dramatic society is intensely preparing a special musical production of *A Christmas Carol*. Tensions come to a head when a member of the group is found dead shortly after a shopping excursion to Mrs. Claus's Treasures. Everyone in the cast and crew is a potential suspect, including Aline, Merry's mother, and Merry's shop assistant Jackie O'Reilly, who was desperate for a starring role. It could be curtains for Christmas unless....

Hollis, Lee. [Christmas Mittens Murder](#) (Kensington \$26). See my thoughts on Christmas mysteries in September above. Lee Hollis headlines a new Christmas collection alongside authors Lynn Cahoon and Maddie Day with three cozy mysteries featuring handknit mittens made for murder....

Howell, Dorothy. [Hanging By a Thread](#) (Kensington \$27). After setting up a small sewing studio in quaint Hideaway Grove, Abbey Chandler is focused on finding crafty, creative ideas to build up her clientele. Some of the independent shops in this sleepy town are barely hanging on financially—and that includes Sarah's Sweets, Abbey's aunt's bakery. The shop's advantage—aside from the deliciousness of its products—is the fact that it's the only bakery in the area. But it looks like that's about to change. The second wife of a wealthy businessman wants her own bakery—and money is no object. When murder unravels the plans for the competing shop, Aunt Sarah is an immediate suspect....

Manansala, Mia P. [Murder and Mamon](#) (Penguin \$17). A pair of new arrivals spells trouble for the indefatigable Filipina foodies of Shady Grove, Illinois. For a review see Some Large September Paperbacks.

Rue, Gretchen. [Death by a Thousand Sips](#) (Crooked Lane (\$30.99). Phoebe Winchester is back on the case in Raven Creek, Washington, when a body is discovered at an estate sale. A cozy in the Witches' Brew mystery series, perfect for fans of Laura Childs and Cleo Coyle.

### HORRORS!

#### *Getting a jump on Halloween Reading*

Armstrong, Kelley. [Hemlock Island](#) (St Martins \$29). Horror is truly making a comeback. Laney Kilpatrick has been renting her vacation home to strangers. The invasion of privacy gives her panic attacks, but it's the only way she can keep her beloved Hemlock Island, the only thing she owns after a pandemic-fueled divorce. But broken belongings and campfires that nearly burn down the house have escalated to bloody bones, hex circles, and now, terrified renters who've fled after finding blood and nail marks all over the guest room closet, as though someone tried to claw their way out...and failed. When Laney shows up to investigate with her teenaged niece in tow, she discovers that her ex, Kit, has also been informed and is there with Jayla, his sister

and her former best friend. Then Sadie, another old high school friend, charts over with her brother, who's now a cop. There are tensions and secrets, whispers in the woods, and before long, the discovery of a hand poking up from the earth. Then the body that goes with it... But by that time, someone has taken off with their one and only means off the island, and they're trapped with someone—or something—that doesn't want them leaving the island alive.

Awad, Mona. [Rouge](#) (Simon Schuster \$28). From the critically acclaimed author of *Bunny* comes a horror-tinted, gothic fairy tale about a lonely dress shop clerk whose mother's unexpected death sends her down a treacherous path in pursuit of youth and beauty. Can she escape her mother's fate—and find a connection that is more than skin deep?

Gran, Sara. [Come Closer](#) (\$17). Demonic possession or psychic break? One of *Esquire's* Top 50 horror novels of all time delves deep into the terrifying consequences of losing control. A recurrent, unidentifiable noise in her apartment. A memo to her boss that's replaced by obscene insults. Amanda—a successful architect in a happy marriage—finds her life going off kilter by degrees. She starts smoking again, and one night for no reason, without even the knowledge that she's doing it, she burns her husband with a cigarette. At night she dreams of a beautiful woman with pointed teeth on the shore of a blood-red sea. The new voice in Amanda's head, the one that tells her to steal things and talk to strange men in bars, is strange and frightening, and Amanda struggles to wrest back control of her life. This new edition of the cult classic features a brand new post-script by Gran and a "Are You Haunted?" questionnaire

Grecian, Alex. [Red Rabbit](#) (Tor \$28.99). Our old friend of Victorian fiction has turned to an intriguing blend of supernatural horror and the Western. Sadie Grace is wanted for witchcraft, dead (or alive). And every hired gun in Kansas is out to collect the bounty on her head, including bona fide witch hunter Old Tom and his mysterious, mute ward, Rabbit. On the road to Burden County, they're joined by two vagabond cowboys with a strong sense of adventure – but no sense of purpose – and a recently widowed schoolteacher with nothing left to lose. As their posse grows, so too does the danger. Racing along the drought-stricken plains in a stolen red stagecoach, they encounter monsters more wicked than witches lurking along the dusty trail. But the crew is determined to get that bounty, or die trying.

Harrison, Rachel. [Black Sheep](#) (Penguin \$27). A cynical twentysomething must confront her unconventional family's dark secrets in this fiery, irreverent horror novel from the author of *Such Sharp Teeth* and *Cackle*. Nobody has a "normal" family, but Vesper Wright's is truly...something else. Vesper left home at eighteen and never looked back—mostly because she was told that leaving the staunchly religious community she grew up in meant she couldn't return. But then an envelope arrives on her doorstep. Inside is an invitation to the wedding of Vesper's beloved cousin Rosie. It's to be hosted at the family farm. Have they made an exception to the rule? It wouldn't be the first time Vesper's been given special treatment. Is the invite a sweet gesture? An olive branch? A trap?

Kakimoto, Megan Kamalei. [Every Drop is a Man's Nightmare: Stories](#) (Bloomsbury \$27.99). An Indies Introduce title: "Overflowing with female sexuality and Hawaiian mythology,

*Every Drop is a Man's Nightmare* punches out one fearless story after the next. Kakimoto gives us a raw Hawai'i, one that exists far from the colonized romanticism often promoted.

Kane, Paul, et al. [In These Hallowed Halls: A Dark Academia Anthology](#) (Titan \$26.95). A beguiling, sinister collection of 12 dark academia short stories from masters of the genre, including Olivie Blake, M.L. Rio, Susie Yang....

King, Stephen. [Holly](#) (Scribner \$30). When Penny Dahl calls the Finders Keepers detective agency hoping for help locating her missing daughter, Holly is reluctant to accept the case. Her partner, Pete, has Covid. Her (very complicated) mother has just died. And Holly is meant to be on leave. But something in Penny Dahl's desperate voice makes it impossible for Holly to turn her down. Mere blocks from where Bonnie Dahl disappeared live Professors Rodney and Emily Harris. They are the picture of bourgeois respectability: married octogenarians, devoted to each other, and semi-retired lifelong academics. But they are harboring an unholy secret in the basement of their well-kept, book-lined home, one that may be related to Bonnie's disappearance. And it will prove nearly impossible to discover what they are up to: they are savvy, they are patient, and they are ruthless. Holly must summon all her formidable talents to outthink and outmaneuver the shockingly twisted professors.

Orlando, Carissa. [The September House](#) (Penguin \$27). A woman is determined to stay in her dream home even after it becomes a haunted nightmare in this compulsively readable, twisty, and layered debut novel. When Margaret and her husband Hal bought the large Victorian house on Hawthorn Street—for sale at a surprisingly reasonable price—they couldn't believe they finally had a home of their own. Then they discovered the hauntings. Every September, the walls drip blood. The ghosts of former inhabitants appear, and all of them are terrified of something that lurks in the basement. Most people would flee. Margaret is not most people.

Palahniuk, Chuck. [Not Forever, But for Now](#) (Simon & Schuster \$26.99). In this horror satire, the worst atrocities in human history are just family tradition. Otto and Cecil are two fun-loving, privileged brothers who enjoy nature shows, playing with their pony, and killing the help. Do they have what it takes to step up and run the family business?

### SOME MORE SEPTEMBER HARDCOVERS

*Remember you can access and order many more titles of the over 1200 released each month by going to our collection [HERE](#)*

✘ Beaton, MC/RW Green. [Dead on Target: An Agatha Raisin Mystery](#) (St Martins \$27). Between eavesdropping on family arguments, trying her hand at archery, and watching police detective John Glass, her current boyfriend, fill in as a Morris dancer, Agatha finds the Carsely Village Fete vastly amusing. Her former lover Sir Charles Fraith is on hand, accompanied by Sir Godfrey Pride, whose land is the setting for the fete. Pride, who's rude and crude, claims an interest in Agatha's skills as a detective, and they plan on a future meeting. Agatha is pleased that her first attempt at archery goes well, but when a lost puppy leads her to discover Pride dying from an arrow wound, she immediately becomes a suspect to bumbling DCI Wilkes, who can't stand her. Meanwhile, Agatha's old friend Roy Silver has become entangled in a business deal with Pride and gangster



Freddy Evans. “A twisty tale packed with Cotswold trivia and the feisty detective’s ongoing romantic problems.”

✦ Bennett, SJ. [Murder Most Royal](#) (Harper \$27.99). Bennett keeps Queen Elizabeth detecting in this cozy series by keeping it, here, in 2016. Shortly after the royal family arrives for a Christmas gathering at Sandringham Estate, a severed hand washes up on a nearby beach. With a glance at the police photos, the Queen identifies the victim—based on his distinctive signet ring—as Edward St. Cyr, a boyhood friend of Prince Charles. The personal connection draws her into the investigation, assisted by her faithful secretary, former army officer Rozie Oshodi. As Rozie and the Queen dig deeper, they stumble on long-buried family secrets they’ll have to bring to light if they want to catch a killer. True to cozy form, Bennett tosses a number of frothy detours into the mix—organic farming tips, a fox hunt, and a trip to the Royal stables among them—but none detract from the sturdiness of the core mystery. Bennett is excellent at capturing the Queen’s poise and patience as she sifts through layers of protocol, and there’s plenty of fun to be had in eavesdropping on imagined conversations among the real-life royals—particularly Prince Philip, who was not one to mince words.—*PW*. There’s plenty of nostalgia to be had, too.

Clark, Eliza. [Penance](#) (Harper \$30). From the author of the cult hit *Boy Parts* comes a chilling, brilliantly told story of murder among a group of teenage girls. On a beach in a run-down seaside town on the Yorkshire coastline, sixteen-year-old Joan Wilson is set on fire by three other schoolgirls. Nearly a decade after the horrifying murder, journalist Alec Z. Carelli has written the definitive account of the crime, drawn from hours of interviews with witnesses and family members, painstaking historical research, and most notably, correspondence with the killers themselves. The result is a riveting snapshot of lives rocked by tragedy, and a town left in turmoil. But how much of the story is true?

Crichton, Michael. [The Venom Business](#) (Blackstone \$24.99). Although Crichton died in 2008, his daughter (who writes the Introduction) and others keep his ideas alive. I’ve no idea if this is any good but it’s certainly good for the nostalgic. Charles Raynaud has found the perfect cover for his smuggling operation running out of Mexico, because how many customs agents are going to want to inspect a carton of venomous snakes? When Raynaud runs into his old Yale buddy Richard Pierce, a chance to play bodyguard feels like even easier money. Pierce has a large inheritance coming, but a series of thwarted attempts on his buddy’s life makes Charles begin to smell a rat. Who’s really trying to kill whom? And why is Charles starting to believe that he’s the real target?

Enright, Anne. [The Wren, The Wren](#) (Virago \$27.95). Nell McDaragh never knew her grandfather, the famed Irish poet Phil McDaragh. But his love poems seem to speak directly to her. Restless, full of verve and wit, twenty-two-year-old Nell leaves her mother Carmel’s home to find her voice as a writer and live a life of her choosing. Carmel, too, knows the magic of her Daddo’s poetry—and the broken promises within its verses. When Phil abandons the family, Carmel struggles to reconcile “the poet” with the man whose desertion scars Carmel, her sister, and their cancer-ridden mother. *The Wren, the Wren* brings to life

three generations of women who contend with inheritances—of abandonment and of sustaining love that is “more than a strand of DNA, but a rope thrown from the past, a fat twisted rope, full of blood.”

Eskens, Allen. [Saving Emma](#) (LittleBrown \$28). When Boady Sanden first receives the case of Elijah Matthews, he’s certain there’s not much he can do. Elijah, who believes himself to be a prophet, has been locked up in a psychiatric hospital for the past four years, convicted of brutally murdering the pastor of a megachurch. But as a law professor working for the Innocence Project, Boady agrees to look into Elijah’s file. When he does, he is alarmed to find threads that lead back to the death of his colleague and friend, Ben Pruitt, a man shot to death four years earlier in Boady’s own home. Ben’s daughter, Emma, has lived with Boady and Boady’s wife Dee ever since that awful night. Now fourteen years old, Emma has been growing distant, and soon makes a fateful choice that takes her far from the safety of her godparents. Desperate to bring her home, and to free an innocent man, Boady must do all he can to investigate Elijah’s case while fighting to save the family he has deeply come to love.

✦ Follett, Ken. [Armor of Light](#) (Dutton \$38). Over thirty years ago, Ken Follett published his most popular novel, [The Pillars of the Earth](#) (\$22), a novel I recall him saying at a Thrillerfest that his publisher and agent begged him not to write. Now comes a new dawn for Kingsbridge, England, where progress clashes with tradition, class struggles push into every part of society, and war in Europe engulfs the entire continent and beyond. The Spinning Jenny was invented in 1770, and with that, a new era of manufacturing and industry changed lives everywhere within a generation. A world filled with unrest wrestles for control over this new world order: A mother’s husband is killed in a work accident due to negligence; a young woman fights to fund her school for impoverished children; a well-intentioned young man unexpectedly inherits a failing business; one man ruthlessly protects his wealth no matter the cost, all the while war cries are heard from France, as Napoleon sets forth a violent master plan to become emperor of the world.

Fountain, Ben. [Devil Makes Three](#) (Flatiron \$30.99). “Fountain’s first novel since his bestselling Billy Lynn’s *Long Halftime Walk* is a sprawling, fierce exploration of violence and corruption in the Caribbean. In 1991, when Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide is deposed by a military junta, American expat Matt Amaker and his Haitian partner, Alix Variel, see their scuba diving tourist business dry up and turn to recovering brass cannons from a shipwrecked conquistador galleon. Alix’s occasional lover, Audrey O’Donnell, is an undercover CIA agent helping to expedite the smuggling of arms into the country. Meanwhile, Matt’s lover, Misha (who is also Alix’s sister), forgoes her education at Brown in order to work as a clerk at an overburdened medical clinic in Port-au-Prince, which is short of drugs due to the American embargo. Matt and Alix are arrested by the new government as terrorists and thrown into jail. But corrupt General Romeo Concers shows Matt a way out by underwriting his dive to locate the remains of Columbus’s flagship, the Santa Maria. With differing and often conflicting agendas, Matt, Audrey, and Misha end up on a collision course as personal morality collides with political expediency....” —*Kirkus Reviews*

Gay, Ross. [The Book of \(More\) Delights: Essays](#) (Algonquin \$28). The Indie Next Pick: “Oh, to have delights again! No one writes about the dearness of our human frailty with the generosity and good humor of Ross Gay.”

Goldfarb, Ben. [Crossings: How Road Ecology Is Shaping the Future of Our Planet](#) (Norton \$30) is truly one of the defining books of the environmental canon, calling attention to a hugely important and all-too-easily ignored issue. Called “a marvel” by the Whiting Foundation, *Crossings* defines road ecology and explains why we should care

Jonasson, Ragnar. [Reykjavik: A Crime Story](#) (St Martins \$28). See Signed Books for a review. I am working to schedule a zoom with Ragnar mid October.

Hare, Louise. [Harlem After Midnight](#) (Berkley \$27). 2022 Cozy Crimes Book of the Month [Miss Aldridge Regrets](#) (\$17) introduced Lena Aldridge solving a murder aboard the *Queen Mary*. Now arrived in 1936 New York, Hare digs deeper into Lena’s story, including how her parents met and the struggles her father faced as a Black musician trying to make it big. After her harrowing journey across the Atlantic, English-born Lena feels lonelier than she expected. She has no one and nowhere to go. Luckily, the intriguing musician she met on the ship, Will Goodman, has offered her a place to stay in Harlem. Soon Lena is welcomed into the fold of Will’s family and friends and begins to feel like she belongs. But when a body of a woman who looks just like Lena falls from a window, it seems like death has other plans. As a multiracial woman, who is often perceived as white, Lena is able to blend in more but still can relate to her father’s trials. Lena is a likable, brave straight talker. This story is “most notable for its keenly observed portrait of the intricately layered Black society that flourishes in Harlem.”

Knoll, Jessica. [Bright Young Women](#) (Simon Schuster \$27.99). It’s 1978, and a serial killer is spreading terror throughout the country, from the Pacific Northwest to Florida. Two women are determined to stop him. Inspired by the real-life case of the “All-American Sex Killer,” the new novel from the author of *Luckiest Girl Alive* aims to flip the usual serial killer story upside down. Knoll’s book focuses on the women involved—victims, survivors, and investigators—and turns a bright light on the utter banality of evil.

Littlewood, Fran. [Amazing Grace Adams](#) (Harper \$27.99). The Indie Next Pick: “A moving novel about a mother grappling with a past tragedy and oncoming perimenopause. Estranged from her daughter and with a pending divorce, she fights back and shows her family who she really is and how she will not give up on them. Or herself.” This novel is also a #ReadwithJenna Book Club Pick. This may not spur you to read it, or any book that is a Pick other than ours, but I feel I should mention them.

Matlin, Lisa M. [The Stranger Upstairs](#) (Random \$28), A therapist and self-help writer with all the answers, Sarah Slade has just bought a gorgeous Victorian in the community of her dreams. Turns out, you can get a killer deal on a house where someone was murdered. Plus, renovating Black Wood House makes for great blog content and a decent distraction from her failing marriage. Good thing nobody knows that her past is just as filthy as the bloodstain on her bedroom floor. But the renovations are

fast becoming a nightmare. Sarah imagined custom avocado wallpaper, massive profits, and an appreciative husband who wants to share her bed again. Instead, the neighbors hate her guts and her husband still sleeps on the couch. And though the builders attempt to cover up Black Wood’s horrifying past, a series of bizarre accidents, threatening notes, and unexplained footsteps in the attic only confirms for Sarah what the rest of the town already knew: Something is very wrong in that house.

March, Nev. [The Spanish Diplomat’s Secret](#) (St Martins \$29). It’s 1894, and the HMS *Etruria*, a “floating fortress,” has an international guest list on its journey from Boston to Liverpool. Former Indian soldier and occasional sleuth James Agnihotri, aka Jim O’Trey, senses mystery and tension beneath the surface of the passengers, as does his wife Lady Diana Framji (theirs is a complex mixed marriage, but a happy one). His suspicions are confirmed when, shortly after he receives a note from the Spanish gentleman, who identifies himself as J. Nepomuceno and requests a meeting with Jim, the man is found garroted in his stateroom. Fearing that the ship will be detained in Liverpool until the killer is found, Captain Hawley requests Jim’s assistance in solving the crime. I admire this series but found this entry unevenly drawn. Yet the history behind it is sure to surprise and please you historicals fans.

McDowell, Marta. [Gardening Can Be Murder](#) (Timber Press \$29). This book is dangerous. With their deadly plants, razor-sharp shears, shady corners, and ready-made burial sites, gardens make an ideal scene for the perfect murder. But the outsize influence that gardens and gardening have had on the mystery genre has been underappreciated. Now, Marta McDowell, a writer and gardener with a near-encyclopedic knowledge of the genre, illuminates the many ways in which our greatest mystery writers, from Edgar Allen Poe to authors on today’s bestseller lists, have found inspiration in the sinister side of gardens. From the cozy to the hardboiled, the literary to the pulp, and the classic to the contemporary, *Gardening Can Be Murder* is the first book to explore the mystery genre’s many surprising horticultural connections. Meet plant-obsessed detectives and spooky groundskeeper suspects, witness toxic teas served in foul play, and tour the gardens—both real and imagined—that have been the settings for fiction’s ghastliest misdeeds. A New York Times bestselling author herself, McDowell also introduces us to some of today’s top writers who consider gardening integral to their craft, assuring that horticultural themes will remain a staple of the genre for countless twisting plots to come.

✘ Meyer, Margaret. [The Witching Tide](#) (Scribner \$28). For readers of Margaret Atwood and Hilary Mantel, an immersive literary debut inspired by historical events—a deadly witch hunt. East Anglia, 1645. Martha Hallybread, a midwife, healer, and servant, has lived peacefully for more than four decades in her beloved seaside village of Cleftwater. Having lost her voice as a child, Martha has not spoken a word in years. One autumn morning, a sinister newcomer appears in town. The witchfinder, Silas Makepeace, has been blazing a trail of destruction along the coast, and now has Cleftwater in his sights. His arrival strikes fear into the heart of the community. Within a day, local women are being captured and detained, and Martha finds herself a silent witness to the hunt. Powerless to protest, Martha is enlisted to search the accused women for “devil’s marks.” She is caught between suspicion and betrayal; between shielding herself

or condemning the women of the village. In desperation, she revives a wax witching doll that belonged to her mother, in the hope that it will bring protection. But the doll's true powers are unknowable, Martha harbors a terrible secret, and the gallows are looming....

✦ Osman, Richard. [The Last Devil to Die](#) (Viking \$28). The world of antique collecting seems pretty safe, right? Dusty old lamps? Eccentric shop owners? So it's rarely a quiet day for the Thursday Murder Club of the Coopers Chase retirement community. Shocking news reaches them—an old friend has been killed, and a dangerous package he was protecting has gone missing. The gang's search leads them into the antiques business, where the tricks of the trade are as old as the objects themselves. As they encounter drug dealers, art forgers, and online fraudsters—as well as heartache close to home—octogenarians Elizabeth, Joyce, Ron, and Ibrahim have no idea whom to trust. Osman's series has been a real catalyst to the senior sleuths movement.

Patterson, James. [23 1/2 Lies](#) (Grand Central \$29). Three books in one. 23 1/2 LIES. Lindsay Boxer's estranged father is gunned down execution-style, and her investigation uncovers life-altering truths. (with Maxine Paetro). *FALLEN RANGER*: To Rory Yates, being a Texas Ranger means absolute loyalty to the badge. But he's put through the ultimate test when an armored car robbery suspect might be an ex-Ranger gone rogue. (with Andrew Bourelle). *WATCH YOUR BACK*: When a starving artist is paid to expose his client's cheating wife, can he paint the picture that will save his own life? (with Loren D. Estleman—one of our favorite authors). Also available as [23 1/2 Lies](#) (\$18.99).

Patterson, James/Mike Lupica. [12 Months to Live](#) (LittleBrown \$30). Tough-as-nails criminal defense attorney Jane Smith is hip-deep in the murder trial of the century. Actually, her charmless client might've committed several murders. She's also fallen in love with a wonderful guy. And an equally wonderful dog, a mutt. But Jane doesn't have much time. She's just received a terminal diagnosis. Jane Smith has a year to live, unless they kill her first.

✦ Penrose, Andrea. [Murder at the Merton Library](#) (Kensington \$27). Distraught head librarian at Oxford's Merton College Library Neville Greeley summons his family friend the Earl of Wrexford to Oxford with a cryptic letter. Shortly before Wrexford arrives, however, a mysterious stranger stabs Greeley to death at his desk. After Wrexford discovers Greeley's body, he launches an investigation in London, where his Countess, Charlotte, known to a select few people as satirical cartoonist A.J. Quill, is looking into a mystery of her own: a suspicious fire has destroyed the laboratory of inventor Henry Maudslay, who was on the cusp of building a ship that could cross the ocean powered by steam rather than sails. British naval operatives, German researchers, and Russian spies were all keenly interested in Maudslay's research, but who would want to stop it? Maybe the French? And new question: did a British traitor set up the French ambush that killed Wrex's brother, Thomas? One likely clue is a stolen manuscript that may be involved in the struggle between moneyed interests and foreign powers to bring the steamship to life. This is an outstanding entry in Penrose's Regency series.

✦ Perry, Anne. [The Traitor Among Us](#) (Random \$28). I am continually sad to list books by Perry when for decades they

were always Signed for us by her. We miss her. As she worked far ahead this may not be the last book by the late author. It continues the adventures of Elena Standish who has transitioned in the 1930s from photographer to MI6 agent. Here we get a country house set up.

Not far from the sprawling grounds of Wyndham Hall, the body of longtime MI6 agent John Repton is found, shot dead by a single bullet. The corpse's proximity to the estate sends ripples of concern through the intelligence community: Repton was killed while surveilling the members of a household with alleged ties to Fascists who threaten the security of the country, as Hitler's influence spreads across Europe. Elena is assigned the case, thanks to her new connection to the Wyndham family: Her older sister, Margot, is being courted by Lady Wyndham's brother. Elena and colleague James Allenby secure an invitation to the estate where they must covertly investigate while protecting Margot from what may be dangerous future relatives. Elena is torn, for her widowed sister has finally found happiness after years of sorrow, and having to take down the Wyndhams would destroy Margot's new relationship.

Phillips, Jayne Anne. [Night Watch](#) (Knopf \$28). Exquisite attention to detail propels a superb meditation on broken families. Her setting here is equally striking: the Trans-Allegheny Lunatic Asylum in rural West Virginia. It's 1874 when 12-year-old ConaLee and her mute mother, Eliza, are delivered to the asylum by an abusive man known to ConaLee as Papa, who has sold off the pair's possessions. Papa assures ConaLee that the asylum will cure Eliza; before he departs, he also reveals he is not ConaLee's father. Mother and daughter are welcomed by night watchman O'Shea, a Union Army veteran who lost his eye in battle. As her health improves, Phillips oscillates between 1874 and 1864 to fill in narrative puzzles, explaining Eliza's quiet nature, the origins of Papa in their lives, the identity and fate of ConaLee's real father, and O'Shea's injury. A profound sense of loss haunts the novel.

Randall, Breanne. [The Unfortunate Side Effects of Heartbreak and Magic](#) (\$18.99). For fans of *Practical Magic* and *Gilmore Girls*, a debut novel that explores the shields we build around our hearts to retain our own magic. Sadie Revelare has always believed that the curse of four heartbreaks that accompanies her magic would be worth the price. But when her grandmother is diagnosed with cancer with only weeks to live, and her first heartbreak, Jake McNealy, returns to town after a decade, her carefully structured life begins to unravel. With the news of their grandmother's impending death, Sadie's estranged twin brother Seth returns to town, bringing with him deeply buried family secrets that threaten to tear Sadie's world apart. Their grandmother has been the backbone of the family for generations, and with her death, Sadie isn't sure she'll have the strength to keep the family, and her magic, together.

Rash, Ron. [The Caretaker](#) (Knopf \$28). Set in Rash's beloved midcentury Appalachia, a nimbly plotted, suspenseful romance with a twist—its titular hero is the third wheel. Blackburn Gant is by habit, inclination, and necessity a loner. Disfigured (as he sees it) by polio and abandoned by his family members, who've moved to Florida, Blackburn has taken work, permanently it seems, as live-in caretaker of a mountain cemetery near Blowing Rock, North Carolina. When his closest friend, Jacob Hampton, gets drafted into the Korean War, Gant assumes



responsibility, too, for protecting and tending to Jacob's pregnant wife. Background: Naomi Clarke, only 16, is an outlander from distant Tennessee who came east to work as a hotel maid; she's ill-educated (but working diligently on that so that she can write better letters), without means, friends, or support. When she and Jacob—scion of the town's most prominent family, shopkeepers revered for their generosity with credit during the Depression—met and fell in love, Jacob's family disowned him, and now they refuse to have anything to do with Naomi....

Robb, J D. [Payback in Death](#) (St Martins \$30). Lord, 27<sup>th</sup> in the Eve Dallas "In Death" Series. How does Robb, aka Nora Roberts, keep up the pace? Speaking of pace, these are really fast-paced thrillers. The futurist NYPD's Lt. Eve Dallas is just home from a long overdue vacation when she responds to a call of an unattended death. The victim is Martin Greenleaf, retired Internal Affairs Captain. At first glance, the scene appears to be suicide, but the closer Eve examines the body, the more suspicious she becomes. An unlocked open window, a loving wife and family, a too-perfect suicide note—Eve's gut says it's a homicide. After all, Greenleaf put a lot of dirty cops away during his forty-seven years in Internal Affairs.

Rum, Etaf. [Evil Eye](#) (Harper \$30) profiles Palestinian American artist (and mom!) Yara Murad, as she tries to navigate tradition, liberation, and very possibly a family curse. Rum also explores how childhood trauma can echo through multiple generations. It's literary fiction straight from the front lines of 21st-century life.

✦ Shepherd-Robinson, Laura. [The Square of Sevens](#) (Atria \$29.99). Cornwall, 1730: A young girl known only as Red travels with her father making a living predicting fortunes using the ancient Cornish method of the Square of Sevens. Shortly before he dies, her father entrusts Red's care to a gentleman scholar, along with a document containing the secret of the Square of Sevens technique. Raised as a lady amidst the Georgian splendor of Bath, Red's fortune-telling delights in high society. But she cannot ignore the questions that gnaw at her soul: who was her mother? How did she die? And who are the mysterious enemies her father was always terrified would find him? The pursuit of these mysteries takes her from Cornwall and Bath to London and Devon.

The Indie Next Pick: "Come for the orphaned, Dickensian fortune teller in 18th-century Cornwall and stay for a sweeping epic of Georgian high society, mystery, and divination. Deeply researched and intricate, this is outstanding historical fiction."

Zhang, C Pam. [Land of Milk and Honey](#) (Penguin \$27). A smog has spread. Food crops are rapidly disappearing. A chef escapes her dying career in a dreary city to take a job at a decadent mountaintop colony seemingly free of the world's troubles. There, the sky is clear again. Rare ingredients abound. Her enigmatic employer and his visionary daughter have built a lush new life for the global elite, one that reawakens the chef to the pleasures of taste, touch, and her own body. In this atmosphere of hidden wonders and cool, seductive violence, the chef's boundaries undergo a thrilling erosion. Soon she is pushed to the center of a startling attempt to reshape the world far beyond the plate.

## OUR SEPTEMBER LARGE PAPERBACK PICKS

✦ Cumming, Charles. [Judas 62](#) (\$17.95). The past comes calling. After a lifetime working with BOX 88, the transatlantic counterintelligence agency so covert that not even the CIA knows of its existence, master spy Lachlan Kite has made plenty of enemies. And now, as the director of the outfit's operations in the UK, one of those past enemies has him in their sights.... "The first Kite novel [Box 88](#) (\$17.95) was excellent, but this is even better—an elegant exposition of what being a spy in the field actually feels like and the fear it can instill in even the most hardened operator. Superbly constructed, it never hurries, but evokes the world of espionage in a way the late John LeCarre would have much admired."—*Daily Mail*

Jones, Stephen Graham. [Don't Fear the Reaper](#) (\$18.99). Jade Daniels and her encyclopedic knowledge of slasher films return for another blood-soaked romp in Jones's superb sequel to [My Heart Is a Chainsaw](#) (\$17.99). It's been four years since Jade—now going by Jennifer—survived the Independence Day Massacre that devastated her hometown of Proofrock, Idaho. Jennifer is trying to put her traumatic past behind her when Dark Mill South, a legendary hook-handed serial killer, escapes captivity on the outskirts of Proofrock during a once-in-a-century winter storm. When gruesomely gutted bodies pile up around town, Jennifer's reflexes and genre savvy kick in and she must once again rally her friends and the local authorities, while using her familiarity with cinematic slaughter to save them all from victimhood. The only problem, as she deduces from the killer's unstoppable onslaught, is that "he knows all the same movies we do." For more new Horror, see that section above.

Leon, Donna. [Give Unto Others](#) (\$17). Somehow I missed this paperback last spring but luckily books never spoil with aging.... "The book is steeped in a gray, murky atmosphere as Leon describes the pandemic-related devastation of Venice's tourist-dependent economy—a devastation that mirrors Brunetti's inner turmoil as he tries to determine where his loyalty lies in the increasingly disturbing—and puzzling—investigation. "Leon's thirty-first novel in the Brunetti series is about human weakness of all kinds: drugs, dementia and dietrologia or, to put it another way, the need to know. Isn't that why we read mystery novels? There has always been another reason to read Leon: the sheer elegance and wit of her prose. Virtually every page contains a sentence that demands to be quoted."

Lovett, Charlie. [The Enigma Affair](#) (\$17.99). Wow. How much fun is this? A hired assassin whose life takes a turn. A librarian with a special wartime skill set—who is a target, but of whom? A group of Germans in Munich extending WWII to the present. A woman working at Bletchley who can use Enigma and the Bombe to decode. A British collector of Nazi artifacts to his own peril. And three American veterans with a mission. Key to this plot are a coded message, wartime documents, Heinrich Himmler's library, medieval scrolls, a book scam, a treasure hunt, and actual and attempted murder. And did I mention betrayals? The lovely Lovett has penned earlier books all revolving around books and libraries. Here is a worthy addition to his work, so much fun I gulped it down in one sitting. And as usual the plot is based at least in part on real people and events. Don't miss this one. The publisher likens it to Indiana Jones, so catch the movie too.

Lovesey, Peter et al. [School of Hard Knox](#) (Crippen & Landru \$22). Lovesey says, “I usually write some short stories between novels. The next to appear in print will be “Knox Vomica”: in a collection called *School of Hard Knox*, announced by Crippen & Landru to coincide with Bouchercon, the World Mystery Convention, in San Diego at the end of this past August. Each story is inspired by one or more of Father Ronald Knox’s “Ten Commandments” for detective story writers, originally published almost a century ago, in 1924. My contribution is a departure for me, written entirely in verse.”

McDermid, Val. [1989](#) (\$17). The sequel to 2021’s [1979](#) (\$17) finds Allie Burns, now a seasoned journalist, removed from her investigative post at Glasgow’s *Clarion* by its narcissistic owner to a post in Manchester, England. Resentful, she begins to rethink her future in journalism. After one of her best friends needlessly dies of AIDS, Allie determines to reveal what pharmaceutical companies are withholding from dying patients desperate for a drug that will prevent HIV from turning into AIDS. When Allie hears about labs in East Berlin having success with new drugs, she flies to West Germany to interview a scientist she thinks can help her. Colin Corcoran gets Allie past the East Berlin checkpoints and into the offices where classified information is stored. The catch is that she must swap identities with Colin’s girlfriend so the girlfriend can escape East Berlin. Then Allie is caught by the fearsome Stasi police....

Rosen, Lev AC. [Lavender House](#) (\$17.99). Think a country-house Christie whodunnit with a locked room aspect in this remarkable mystery, just a step past cozy It is set in 1950s San Francisco, where a P.I. is hired by a woman who needs to know the truth about the death of her wife. When he discovers their home is a protective haven for a found family of queer couples, it opens his eyes. Our former SFPD Inspector Evander Mills who has lost his job, his apartment, everything, is debating suicide himself when a very wealthy woman appears wishing to hire him to discover who murdered her wife, a soap company heiress and genius (there is a lot to learn here about the soap industry, amazing). Pearl brings Andy to the secluded Lamontaine estate, where he plumbs the question, could one of the “family” residing there be responsible for Irene’s death? What makes this a standout is not the plot but the vivid depictions of the characters’ personal struggles and the depiction of a San Francisco that not much later became a center of gay liberation.

O’Connor, Carlene. [No Strangers Here](#) (\$16.95). Think *All Creatures Great and Small* with Murders: “In a tight-knit Irish town, the body of Johnny O’Reilly, the town’s richest man, is found staged on a local beach. The only clues are black stones spelling out “Last Dance,” a tarot card, a syringe containing veterinary euthanasia medication, and small footprints leading away from the scene. Recently transferred DI Cormac O’Brien, ignorant of the local lore and characters, is dependent upon longtime DS Neely for context. The O’Reilly family is determined to point O’Brien in the direction of local veterinarian Dr. Wilde, due to longstanding family grudges. Alerted to the situation by a friend and former police officer, Wilde’s daughter Dimpna, also a veterinarian, reluctantly returns home after a long absence to find her father not only a suspect in a murder, but also sadly losing his memory and incapable of maintaining his practice. She steps into his practice and the murder investigation.

Sandford, John. [Righteous Prey](#) (\$18). Sandford has had a rollicking good time with this joint investigation by US Marshal Lucas Davenport and Minnesota BCA agent Virgil Flowers, not quite a father and son scenario, more like two bros, since Virgil is always his own man as they buck various law enforcement agencies including their own in an unusual case. This novel also showcases some of Sandford’s best prose spiced with lively humor (Ok, and a body count).

It opens with a brutally executed murder of a vicious predator on the streets of San Francisco. We quickly learn that behind it is The Five, a highly organized group of mega-wealthy vigilantes, who meet on the dark web and keep their identities secret from each other. Bored and thrill seeking, but also motivated by disgust for the worst of society—rapists, murderers, and thieves—The Five issue a press release: their objective is “to murder people who need to be murdered.” Then they do....

Teschner, John. [Project Namahana](#) (\$18.99). Teschner’s exceptional debut, a hard-edged eco-thriller, matches strong characters with a bold plot that fulfills its potential. Micah Bernt, who left the U.S. Army under a cloud, somehow avoided serious punishment, despite being charged with maltreating detainees, assault, and indecent acts. He’s trying for a new start in the jungles of Kaua’i. Then his landlord turns up dead in the ocean, apparently an accidental drowning victim. Moniz’s death may be linked to another tragedy—the recent drowning of three local boys. Bernt’s unofficial investigation alternates with a look at corporate farming injurious to Hawaii and in particular the covert machinations of Benevolent Seed, a powerful international corporation... The investigation doesn’t pull punches and is true to the book’s spirit of portraying a less-than-postcard-perfect image of Hawaii. Douglas Preston gives this a rave as did I making it a 2022 First Mystery Club Book of the Month, never expecting the tragedy striking the islands, particularly Maui, so recently.

Unger, Lisa. [Secluded Cabin Sleeps Six](#) (\$18.99). “This has family drama, secrets and great characters,” said the 2022 Indie Next Pick. Three couples, some of whom are members of a wealthy but troubled Florida family, will gather for Christmas in 2017. Mako, a tech mogul, surprises his sister, Hannah, and the others with gifts of a genetic testing kit. The next day, the group leaves for the weekend at a luxurious cabin deep in the Georgia woods, complements of the demanding Mako. So right here we know we’re in a kind of country house crime scene, no? And unusual Christmas gifts foreshadow what may come. At the cabin, Hannah feels something sinister, and when her friend Cricket arrives with boyfriend Joshua, Hannah thinks she recognizes Joshua, though they’ve never met. In its way this is an Agatha Christie Modern in its plot structure, crossed with *Gone Girl*. “For fans of creepy, cunning locked-room thrillers based on controversial social norms.”

Winslow, Don. [The Trail to Buddha’s Mirror](#) (\$16.95). When this 2nd Neal Carey published it propelled me to Hong Kong so evocative was Winslow in Neal Carey’s time there. So I can’t resist recommending this 30th Anniversary Edition with a new introduction by the author. Robert Pendleton is a chemical genius with a fertilizer worth a fortune to whoever controls the formula. Not surprisingly, the Bank, his notoriously exclusive backer, wants to keep an eye on its investment. But so does the CIA. And

the Chinese government. And a few shadier organizations. So when Pendleton disappears from a conference in San Francisco, along with all of his research, Neal Carey enters the picture. Neal knows the Bank is calling in its chips in return for paying his grad school bills. He thinks this assignment will be a no-brainer until he meets the beguiling Li Lan and touches off a deadly game of hide-and-seek that will lead him from San Francisco's Chinatown to the lawless back streets of Hong Kong, and finally into the dark heart of China. You can start the Carey's with last month's republication of his debut, [A Cool Breeze on the Underground](#) (\$16.99).

### SOME SEPTEMBER LARGE PAPERBACKS

Backman, Fredrik. [The Winners](#) (\$19.99). The Indie Next Pick; "I savored every page, every word of this well written story of a hockey community; love, death, marriage, human nature, and all for the love of Hockey. Fredrik Backman will take you out of the cold and into your heart."Kuang. Finishing a book like this is equal parts pleasure and pain: pleasure in reading something so striking and beautiful juxtaposed by the pain of it ending. Few books have brought tears to my eyes; Kuang's *Babel* is now numbered among them."

✎ Benedict, Marie. [The Mitford Affair](#) (\$16.99). The six sisters born to Lord and Lady Redesdale led lives you couldn't make up as they dominated the English social scene between the two World Wars. Benedict focuses on Diana and Unity who got sucked into radical Fascism and Hitler's ambitions, and how she imagines their sister, the novelist Nancy, struggled with loyalty to country or to family. My favorite sister is the youngest, Deborah, who married a Devonshire and ended up the Duchess when her husband unexpectedly inherited the Dukedom. She did a superb job as custodian of Chatsworth and its glorious gardens, so well worth a visit.

Carr, Jack. [In the Blood](#) (Atria \$17). In the 5<sup>th</sup> in the Terminal List thrillers, a Mossad operative known to former Navy SEAL James Reece is killed in a plane explosion (she herself had just completed a targeted assassination), but searching for the culprit might mean Reece walking into a trap—as if that will stop him.

Connolly, John. [The Furies](#) (\$18.99). In *The Sisters Strange*, an old foe returns to Portland, Maine. But in the years between his visits, Raum Buker has changed. Charlie Parker remembers a dishonest, malicious man, but this version of Buker is different: strange and hunted, drawing blood each time he claws at the newly tattooed pentagram on his arm. None of this matters to Charlie, not until he's hired by Will Quinn, a local lumberman, to look into Buker and what he wants with the Strange sisters. It should have been a simple case. But a dark power is moving toward Maine in search of Raum Buker and leaving a trail of bodies in its wake.

Dicker, Joel. [The Enigma of Room 622](#) (\$19.99). Swiss author Dicker drew the spotlight with [The Truth About the Harry Quebert Affair](#) (\$20), a 2014 First Mystery Club selection. Once again the framing story is about a writer, one Joel, whose mentor is Bernard de Fallois, Dicker's publisher for *Harry* who died in 2018. So this is meta fiction built around a fight for the top job at a Geneva private bank where, since its founding in 1702, the reins have been handed from Ebenezer father to son—and the connection this may have to a murder in room 622 of the famed

luxury Hotel de Verbier high in the Swiss Alps. When Joel and his guest, the mysterious Scarlett, check in and head to the 6<sup>th</sup> floor, they realize there is no Room 622. Meanwhile the drama of characters related to the bank twists and turns among key players.

Doolittle, Sean. [Device Free Weekend](#) (\$17.99). Ryan Cloverhill, founder and CEO of the world's most popular social media platform, invites his six best friends from college to his home on his private island near Puget Sound. For Stephen, Emma, Perry, Will, Beau, and Lainie, day one is just what the doctor ordered: amazing food, many drinks, lots of laughter, and a sunset cruise around the island aboard their host's custom Van Dutch 55. Day Two, however, takes a bewildering turn when the six hung-over guests wake up to find that their host has disappeared, along with all connection to the mainland. Here we have a version of *And Then There Were None* as if Elon Musk devised it.

Engberg, Katrine. [The Sanctuary](#) (\$17.99). In the conclusion following [The Harbor](#) (\$17.99) to the police procedural series featuring Engberg's Danish detectives Jeppe Kørner and Anette Werner, Kørner is on leave, working as a lumberjack on Bornholm Island; Werner, his partner, is tackling the case of a severed body found in two old suitcases in Copenhagen; and writer Esther de Laurenti, is on Bornholm to research a famous female anthropologist. Interspersed in Esther's story are old letters written by the anthropologist. It all comes together....

Eskens, Allen. [Forsaken Country](#) (\$17.99). The way Itasca County Sheriff Tate Bolger tells it, there is no case. Sandy Voight withdrew most of her savings from her bank account, packed up her 6-year-old son, Pip, and all their belongings, and took off for parts unknown, leaving David Haas, her live-in lover, to come home from work to find her gone. She might have been afraid of Reed Harris, her violently abusive ex-husband, but Reed clearly didn't have anything to do with her disappearance because he has a perfect alibi. Sandy's father, Lyle Voight, doesn't believe a word of this. So Lyle looks up Max, who's been living in an isolated cabin trying to come to terms with his complicated feelings about killing the man who murdered his wife in [The Deep Dark Descending](#) (\$15.95). Max isn't eager to rejoin the human race, let alone get involved in another case, but soon enough he and Lyle are on the trail of two men who've taken custody of Pip....

Glass, Ava. [The Traitor](#) (Random \$17). I thought Glass' espionage debut [Alias Emma](#) (\$17) was sharp and enjoyable. It was nominated for the British Steel Dagger. This follow up... not so much; Russian oligarchs have become stock characters. After a numbers analyst for MI6 is found horribly murdered in his apartment, Emma Makepeace is one of the agents assigned to investigate. The victim is the son of a lord, and Emma's doubly secret agency boss Ripley is under a lot of pressure to solve the case. Emma soon realizes that the dead man was working on a closed case involving chemical weapons, wealthy Russians, and a possible double agent in British intelligence service. In order to uncover the traitor and stop the further sale of chemical weapons, Emma goes undercover on a yacht belonging to a Russian oligarch. And is out of her depth.

✎ Hunter, Cara. [Murder in the Family](#) (Harper \$18.99). A British bestseller makes her US debut. It was a case that gripped the nation. In December 2003, Luke Ryder, the stepfather of acclaimed filmmaker Guy Howard (then aged 10), was found dead in the garden of their suburban family home. Luke Ryder's



murder has never been solved. Guy Howard's mother and two half-sisters were in the house at the time of the murder—but all swear they saw nothing. Despite a high-profile police investigation and endless media attention, no suspect was ever charged. But some murder cases are simply too big to forget... Now comes the sensational new streaming series *Infamous*, dedicated to investigating—and perhaps cracking—this famous cold case. The production team will re-examine testimony, re-interview witnesses, and once again scour the evidence. The family will speak. The key players will be reunited—on camera. The truth will come out. Are you ready to see it?

Kaner, Hannah. [Godkiller](#) (Harper \$18.99). “Witty, dark, and highly entertaining. Kaner has started a world filled with possibilities and populated it with characters you can love and care about. Its blend of *American Gods* with a more traditional fantasy setting lends it a folkloric quality that makes it feel both cozy and slightly ominous.” As a new Indie Next Pick: “In a world scarred by warring gods and brutal battles, a godkiller sets off on a quest with an unlikely crew. This is immersive, diverse, and full of rage against the world and those who ruined it. This book doesn't relent.”

Koontz, Dean. [The Other Emily](#) (\$16.99). Successful California novelist David Thorne has been haunted for 10 years about the fate of the woman he loves. Twenty-five-year-old Emily Carlino disappeared one dark and stormy night (this story has plenty of those), and Thorne suspects the worst. Meanwhile, Ronald Lee Jessup is in prison for the abduction, torture, rape, and murder of young women. He claims to have abducted 14 more than police know about, but he won't divulge their names. Thorne visits him in prison under the pretense of writing a book, but he really wants to know if the “homicidal psychopathic sentimentalist” killed Emily. Then a dead-on Emily look-alike shows up in Thorne's life, identical right down to the golden birthmark below her navel. Dig into hair-raising suspense laced with horror and a generous mixture of romance.

Manansala, Mia P. [Murder and Mamon](#) (Penguin \$17). A pair of new arrivals spells trouble for the indefatigable Filipina foodies of Shady Grove, Illinois. Lila Macapagal should have enough on her hands with her partnership in the Brew-ha Cafe. Her godmothers April, Mae, and June, the Calendar Crew, are opening a new laundromat next door to June's dry-cleaning service. It's scheduled to open the day of the town's big spring clean. While Lila and her aunties are at a morning chamber of commerce meeting, someone smashes up the laundromat and graffiti's it with “Mind Your Business.” The Calendar Crew has certainly stirred up trouble with their gossip, but who would go to the lengths of vandalizing their new business? “The mystery, as in Lila's first three cases, is so consistently upstaged by the frenzy of delectable dishes lovingly prepared and consumed at Tita Rosie's Kitchen, which Lila's grandmother owns, and the neighboring Brew-ha Cafe run by Lila and her friends Elena Torres and Adeena Awan, that readers will be doubly surprised at the surprise unmasking. Sorry, other food cozies. You can't hold a candle to this mouthwatering franchise.”—*Kirkus Reviews*

☒ Mantel, Hilary. [Learning to Talk: Stories](#) (Holt \$16.99) is a collection of loosely autobiographical stories that locates the transforming moments of a haunted childhood from the late two-time Booker Prize author of the *Wolf Hall* Trilogy.

Matsuda, Aoko. [Where the Wild Ladies Are](#) (\$16.95) is a collection of feminist retellings of traditional Japanese folktales... humans live side by side with spirits who provide a variety of useful services—from truth-telling to babysitting, from protecting castles to fighting crime.

McFadden, Freida. [The Coworker](#) (Sourcebooks \$17.99). McFadden has become a bestseller with her novel [The Housemaid](#) (\$12.99). Dawn Schiff is an oddball. At least, everyone thinks so at Vixed, the nutritional supplement company where Dawn works as an accountant. She never says the right thing. She has no friends. And she is always at her desk at precisely 8:45 a.m. So when Dawn doesn't show up to the office one morning, her coworker Natalie Farrell—beautiful, popular, top sales rep five years running—is surprised. Then she receives an unsettling, anonymous phone call that changes everything... It turns out Dawn wasn't just an awkward outsider.... Say “Vixed” and I immediately thought of Goop and its culture of competitive self-care and improvement.

Musso, Guillaume. [The Stranger in the Seine](#) (Little Brown \$17.99). On a winter night in Paris, a young woman is pulled naked out of the Seine. She has amnesia and bears no identifying marks apart from two peculiar tattoos. She is rushed to the infirmary of Paris police headquarters, but only a few hours later, she disappears. DNA analysis reveals her identity. She is the famous pianist Milena Bergman. But that's impossible, because Milena died in a plane crash more than a year ago. Raphael, Milena's former fiancé desperate for answers, and Roxane, a cop hell-bent on proving herself after a recent fall from grace, spearhead the investigation. Their quest to uncover the truth quickly reveals secrets long buried, a web of impostors, and danger lurking in plain sight. Nevertheless, they are determined to get to the center of this mystery: How can a person be both dead and alive at the same time?

Penzler, Otto. [Mysterious Bookshop Presents the Best Mysteries of the Year 2023](#) (Penzler \$17.95) including tales by Andrew Child, Jeffrey Deaver, and T.C. Boyle. Amor Towles is the guest editor.

Preston, Douglas/Lincoln Child. [The Cabinet of Dr Leng](#) (\$18.99). Astoundingly, FBI Special Agent Pendergast's war Constance Greene has found a way back to the place of her origins: New York City in the late 1800s. She leaps at the chance to return...although it means leaving the present forever. Her goal: to prevent the events that led to the deaths of her sister and brother. But Manhattan's most infamous serial killer, Dr. Enoch Leng, lies in wait, ready to strike at the slightest provocation. Meanwhile, in contemporary New York, Pendergast feverishly searches for a way to reunite with Constance—but will he discover a way back to her before it's too late? Note: We have 3 copies of the [hardcover Dr. Leng](#) (\$30) with the special trading card insert signed by Doug.

Rendon, Marcie. [Sinister Graves](#) (\$16.95). College student Cash, an Ojibwe who was separated from her family when she was three, is continuing to serve as the unofficial assistant of Wheaton, the sheriff of Minnesota's Norman County, who rescued her from the foster care system. When flood waters on the Red River float the body of an unidentified Native American woman into Ada, Minnesota, the coroner determines that she was smothered to death. The coroner shows Wheaton and Cash an

item he found on the body: a torn page from a hymnal with words in both English and Ojibwe. Cash later learns of the victim's possible connection to another dead woman, who attended an unusual fundamentalist church run by the charismatic Pastor John Steene. Despite being warned to stay away from Steene, Cash seeks him out, determined to get to the truth. Rendon deepens the complex character of her eccentric Native American lead, who believes she can read minds and has revelatory out-of-body experiences. Lisbeth Salander fans will be eager to see more of Cash.

✦ Wells, Christine. [The Royal Windsor Secret](#) (Harper \$18.99). Readers of British historical fiction know well that Bertie, Prince of Wales, was a womanizer with many a mistress. Wallis Simpson overshadows such women in Edward VIII's life but Wells draws upon his 1920s career to imagine he might have had an illegitimate daughter...or might not. The principal interest of this novel for me is Cleo's upbringing at Shephard's Hotel in Cairo, immortalized for many of us in Elizabeth Peters' Amelia Peabody adventures, and the ex-pat life depicted. Eventually she is sent to London to make her debut, but she'd rather learn to design jewelry for Cartier. Wells is blunt in describing the life of the successful courtesan in an age before tabloid newspapers and now, social media; Regency readers may fancy a look at it about a century later.

Wendig, Chuck. [Wayward](#) (Random House Worlds \$20). Here is the sequel to *Wanderers*, the instant classic that "takes science, politics, horror, and science fiction and blends them into an outstanding story about the human spirit in times of turmoil, claiming a spot on the list of must-read apocalyptic novels" (NPR) Five years ago, ordinary Americans fell under the grip of a strange new malady that caused them to sleepwalk across the country to a destination only they knew. And they were followed on their quest by the shepherds: friends and family who gave up everything to protect them. Their secret destination: Ouray, a small town in Colorado that would become one of the last outposts of civilization. Because the sleepwalkers were only the first in a chain of events that led to the end of the world—and the birth of a new one. The survivors, sleepwalkers and shepherds alike, have a dream of rebuilding human society. But how?

#### OUR SEPTEMBER SMALL PAPERBACK PICKS

Berry, Steve. [The Omega Factor](#) (\$9.99). While in Belgium, UNESCO investigator Nicholas Lee, whose job it is to protect the world's cultural objects, stumbles upon a priceless artifact that plunges him into a bitter conflict, forcing him to confront a modern-day religious crusade intent on eliminating a shocking truth from humanity's past.

Carlisle, Kate. [The Paper Caper](#) (\$8.99) Bibliophile #16. During the Mark Twain Festival, wealthy media mogul Joseph Cabot runs a citywide contest based on *The Prince and the Pauper*, giving one lucky lookalike access to his wealth for a few days, which leads to murder, and Brooklyn Wainwright must quickly solve this case before another murder becomes front-page news.

Engberg, Katrine. [The Harbor](#) (\$10.99) Korner and Werner #3. When a 15-year-old boy goes missing, leaving behind a strange note, detectives Jeppe Kørner and Anette Werner become trapped in a web of lies that could prevent the boy from ever being found.

Hill, Joe. [The Heart-Shaped Box](#) (\$9.99) Reissue. A collector of obscure and macabre artifacts, from a cannibal cookbook to a used hangman's noose, unscrupulous metal band musician Judas Coyne is unable to resist purchasing a ghost over the Internet, which turns out to be the vengeful spirit of his late girlfriend's stepfather.

Jewell, Lisa. [The Family Upstairs](#) (\$10.99). Discovering the identity of her birth parents and her inheritance of a valuable mansion, 25-year-old Libby makes horrifying discoveries about the massacre and disappearances of her biological family.

Willingham, Stacy. [A Flicker in the Dark](#) (\$9.99). Twenty years after her father was arrested as a serial killer, Louisiana psychologist Chloe Davis becomes alarmed when local teenage girls once again go missing and she begins seeing parallels that may or may not be there.

#### SEPTEMBER SMALL PAPERBACK PICKS

Abbott, Jeff. [Traitor's Dance](#) (\$9.99) Sam Capra #6. While running his collection of bars and nightclubs around the world and trying to be a good suburban dad, undercover agent Sam Capra must track down the last American traitor, while facing a threat born of long-ago secrets that could change his and his son's lives forever.

Andrews, Donna. [Dashing Through the Snowbirds](#) (\$9.99) Meg Langslow #32. After forcing employees to work through the holidays in Wales, an inconsiderate boss turns up murdered with too many possible suspects, leaving Meg Langslow to follow the clues to a clever killer.

Brennan, Allison. [Seven Girls Gone](#) (\$9.99) Quinn and Costa #4. Arriving in St. Augustine, Louisiana, to quietly assist police detective Beau Hebert, who is investigating the disappearance and deaths of seven women, LAPD detective Kara Quinn and team leader Matt Costa must not only solve multiple murders but expose deep-seated corruption that extends far beyond this small bayou town's borders.

Crais, Robert. [Racing the Light](#) (\$9.99) Cole and Pike #19. When Adele Schumacher arrives in his office with a bag of cash, bizarre tales of government conspiracies and a squad of professional bodyguards, Elvis must find her missing son, a controversial podcaster, before someone else does, bringing him and Joe face-to-face with corrupt politicians and vicious drug cartels.

Erickson, Alex. [Death by Peppermint Cappuccino](#) (Kensington \$8.99) Bookstore Café #12. When a shop owner who'd been price-gouging his customers is found dead after receiving a mysterious gift, bookstore-café owner Krissy Hancock, to save the holiday—and other shop owners, must quickly wrap up this case and catch a killer who's on Santa's naughty list.

Faulkner, Katherine. [Greenwich Park](#) (Pocket \$10.99). Helen innocently befriends Rachel at a prenatal class despite the woman's unbecoming behavior and has no idea her new friend has ulterior motives and is on a vindictive mission to ruin the lives of her extended family.

Graham, Heather. [Blood Moon: The Rising Series: Book 2](#) (\$9.99). After winning a major battle against alien invaders Alex and Sam let a mysterious book guide their steps as they fight to save humanity.

Johansen, Iris. [Captive](#) (\$9.99) Eve Duncan #29. Jane MacGuire is on the run after her MI6 agent partner Seth Caleb runs afoul of an international crime lord and she is targeted.

Kelly, Sofie. [Whiskers and Lies](#) (Penguin \$8.99) Magical Cats #14. When her friend Georgia's former mother-in-law is found dead after they had an altercation, librarian Kathleen Paulson and her intrepid magical cats must save her from a wrongful arrest and make sure the right criminal is booked.

Moss, Korina. [Case of the Bleus: A Cheese Shop Mystery](#) (St Martin's \$8.99) Cheese Shop #4. Gathering together with her old colleagues to honor her former boss, the late cheese legend, Max Dumas, Willa Bauer is stunned when Max's will only holds one cryptic clue, resulting in murder as everyone tries to get their hands on the secret recipe for his custom award-winning Church Bleu.

O'Connor, Carlene, et al. [Christmas Scarf Murder](#) (\$8.99). They're coziest of wintertime accessories...unless, of course, they become accessories to murder! USA Today bestselling author Carlene O'Connor teams up with Maddie Day and Peggy Ehrhart for a holly jolly Christmas collection of seasonal stories, as their beloved series sleuths each solve cases revolving around hand knit Christmas scarves.

Perry, Carol J. [Now You See it](#) (Kensington \$8.99) Witch City #13. Dubbed WICH-TV's new "Historical Documentary Chief Executive," newly married Lee Barrett finds her first project, the brand-new Salem International Museum, taking a murderous turn when the driver of a truckload of antiquities turns up dead, forcing her to use her psychic gifts to catch a killer.

*Keep an eye peeled for a series of recorded chats, mostly with John Charles, that post on Facebook and YouTube and in podcasts and often on our home page.*