

BOOKNEWS from

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FALL INTO GOOD 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.

MONDAY OCTOBER 2 7:00 PM Live Book Launch

And our 34th Birthday Party

John Sandford discusses [Judgment Prey](#) (Putnam \$29.95)

Lucas and Virgil – it was a lot of fun. You can watch it [HERE](#) on your smart TV or your device or computer. John was his usual unorthodox self and we open on a story he's telling about the Texas setting for a book that went wrong....

WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 4 5:00 PM

David McCloskey discusses [Moscow X](#) (Norton \$30)

A spy story taking it to Russia

Paul Vidich discusses [Beirut Station: Two Lives of a Spy](#) (Pegasus \$27.95)

Signed copies available for both titles

THURSDAY OCTOBER 5 5:00 PM

Katharine Schellman discusses [Murder at Midnight](#) (Crooked Lane \$30.99)

Regency Mystery

Signed books available

SATURDAY OCTOBER 7 2:00 PM Live

Jenn McKinlay discusses [Sugar Plum Poisoned](#) (\$8.99)

A Cupcake Bakery Mystery

Jacqueline Snowe discusses [Snowed in for Christmas](#) (Grand Central \$16.99)

MONDAY OCTOBER 9 5:00 PM

Nelson and Alex DeMille discuss [Blood Lines](#) (Scribner \$29.99)
Signed books available

RESCHEDULED: TUESDAY OCTOBER 10 12:00 PM

Donna Leon discusses [Wandering Through Life, A Memoir](#) (Grove \$26)

Unsigned books in stock now

TUESDAY OCTOBER 10 2:00 PM

Gary Phillips and Patrick

They discuss [The Unvarnished Gary Phillips, A Mondo Pulp Collection](#) (Three Rooms Press \$17)

TUESDAY OCTOBER 10 5:00 PM

Richard Chizmar with Michael Koryta

Chizmar discusses [Becoming the Boogeyman](#) (Gallery \$28.99)
Signed books available

WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 11 5:00 PM

Michelle Wildgen discusses [Wine People](#) (Zibby Books \$27.99)

Signed hardcover in stock

Paperback [Wine People](#) (\$17.99)

THURSDAY OCTOBER 12 TIME"

Baron Birtcher discusses [Reckoning](#) (iBook \$20.99)

Oregon Sheriff Ty Dawson

James L. Thane discusses [A Shot to the Heart](#) (Moonshine Cove \$18)

A war of wills between two women, one of them a killer

SATURDAY OCTOBER 14 Live

Teen Tea with Pat King

Sara Ella discusses [The Looking Glass Illusion](#) (Enclave \$24.99)

Candace Kade discusses [Enhanced](#) (Enclave \$24.99)

MONDAY OCTOBER 16 5:00 PM

Richard Armitage discusses [Geneva](#) (Pegasus \$27.95)

Our October First Mystery Book of the Month

Signed copies have sold out

TUESDAY OCTOBER 17 5:00 PM

Join two publicists from Berkley as they preview Fall Romance titles with John

WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 18 7:00 PM Live

Lev AC Rosen discusses [The Bell in the Fog](#) (Tor \$27.99)

1952 San Francisco PI Evander Mills

THURSDAY OCTOBER 19 12:00 PM

Tim Johnston with Karen

Johnston discusses [Distant Sons](#) (Algonquin \$29)

A perfect read for fans of Cormac McCarthy or Dennis Lehane

THURSDAY OCTOBER 19 7:00 PM

Hardboiled Crime discusses [Three Aces](#) from the Stark House Crime Classics (\$19.95)

FRIDAY OCTOBER 20 7:00 PM Live

Danielle Valentine discusses [Delicate Condition](#) (Sourcebooks \$27.99)

Ashley Winstead discusses [Midnight is the Darkest Hour](#) (Sourcebooks \$27.99)

⌘ = British PW=Publishers Weekly LJ=Library Journal

FRIDAY OCTOBER 20

SciFi Friday discusses T. Kingfisher's [A House with Good Bones](#) (Tor \$26.99)

SATURDAY OCTOBER 21 10:30 AM

Croak & Dagger discusses Sarah Pearse's [The Sanatorium](#) (\$17)

SUNDAY OCTOBER 22 2:00 PM Live

Historicon

Tasha Alexander discusses [Cold Highland Wind](#) (St Martins \$28)

Lady Emily and family investigate in Scotland

Stephanie Barron discusses [Jane and the Final Mystery](#) (Soho \$27.95)

The Jane Austen Series concludes (sob)

CS Harris discusses [Who Cries for the Lost?](#) (Berkley \$28)

Sebastian St. Cyr Regency Series

Boyd and Beth Morrison discuss [The Last True Templar](#) (Zeus \$29.99)

English Knight Gerard Fox's 2nd Tales of the Lawless Land medieval adventures

MONDAY OCTOBER 23 7:00 PM Live

Jack Reacher Book launch

Andrew Grant discusses [The Secret](#) (Random \$28.99)

TUESDAY OCTOBER 24 7:00 PM Live

The Dogs Have It

Paula Munier discusses [Home at Night](#) (St Martins \$29)

Mercy Carr and her dog Elvis

Spencer Quinn discusses [Up on the Woof Top](#) (Forge \$27.99)

A Chet and Bernie Christmas mystery

WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 25 6:00 PM Live

Jack Carr introduces debut author **Jim Shockey**

TICKETED LIVE EVENT

[One ticket \\$32 admits one](#) (one copy of Shockey)

[Two tickets \\$36 admits two](#) (one copy of Shockey)

They discuss Shockey's debut [Call Me Hunter](#) (Atria \$27.99)

THURSDAY OCTOBER 26 7:00 PM Live

Robert Dugoni discusses [One Last Kill](#) (Thomas & Mercer \$16.99)

The 10th for Seattle's Tracy Crosswhite celebration

FRIDAY OCTOBER 27 5:00 PM

Lisa Unger discusses [Christmas Presents](#) (Penzler \$23.95)

Signed books available

SATURDAY OCTOBER 28 6:00 PM Live

David Baldacci discusses his work and his forthcoming new novel [The Edge](#) (Grand Central \$29.99)

You may buy and have *The Edge* inscribed but we have to take it back until November 14

David will sign any books purchased at the event. You may also bring no more than two personal books for signing

OUR OCTOBER BOOKS OF THE MONTH

We select a book and charge it to you. Free shipping. It's a treat each month, for you or as a gift.

Email Karen@poisonedpen.com to join

British Crime Club One Unsigned hardcover or paperback per month
TBD

Cozy Crimes Club One Unsigned hardcover or paperback per month
Falco, Michael. [Murder in an Italian Village](#)

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

First Mystery Club One Signed First Printing per month
Armitage, Richard. [Geneva](#) (Signed copies sold out)

Hardboiled/Noir Club One Signed First Printing per month
TBD

History/Mystery Club One First Printing per month
Mukerji, Ritu. [Murder by Degrees](#)

Historical Fiction Paperback Club One Unsigned paperback per month
TBD

Notable New Fiction One Signed First Printing per month
Scalzi, John. [Starter Villain](#)

International Crime One Unsigned Hardcover or paperback per month
TBD

Romance and Relationships One unsigned hardcover or 2 paperbacks per month
Fraser, Jackie. [The Beginning of Everything](#)

SOME SIGNED BOOKS FOR OCTOBER

Alexander, Tasha. [A Cold Highland Wind](#) (St Martins \$28). The beauty of the Highlands has always appealed to Lady Emily Hargreaves. So in the summer of 1905, Lady Emily, husband Colin Hargreaves, and their three sons eagerly embark on a family vacation at Cairnfarn Castle, the Scottish estate of their dear friend Jeremy, Duke of Bainbridge. But a high-spirited celebration at the beginning of their stay comes to a grisly end when the duke's gamekeeper is found murdered on the banks of the loch.

Handsome Angus Sinclair had a host of enemies: the fiancée he abandoned in Edinburgh, the young woman who had fallen hopelessly in love with him, and the rough farmer who saw him as a rival for her affections. But what is the meaning of the curious runic stone left on Sinclair's forehead? Clues may be found in the story of Lady MacAllister, wife of the Laird of Cairnfarn Castle, who in 1676 suddenly found herself widowed and thrown out of her home. Her sole companion was a Moorish slave girl who helped her secretly spirit her most prized possessions—a

collection of strange books—out of the castle. Hmm...is witchcraft, a 17th Century Scottish obsession, in play twice?

Armitage, Richard. [Geneva](#) (Pegasus \$27.95). A bold and unpredictable debut thriller set in the biotech world (and deceptive beauty) of Switzerland, by acclaimed actor Richard Armitage. Nobel Prize-winning scientist Sarah Collier has taken a step back from work to spend more time with her family, including her father, who is suffering from Alzheimer's and needs special care. Sarah has started to show tell-tale signs of the disease, too. When Sarah's husband, a neuroscientist, introduces her to the work of Mauritz Schiller, his achievements could save Sarah's life. But, there's all kinds of interest, from wealthy investors to controversial bloggers. Sarah feels threatened, and doesn't know who to trust. And is she ever right! **Our signed copies include those for the October First Mystery Club and have sold out—if you join this club of 30+ years standing at The Pen, you wouldn't miss debut fiction like this.**

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. Just 3 unclaimed copies left.

Ashley, Kristen. [Rock Chick Collectors Edition](#) (\$400 with free shipping within the US).

Baldacci, David. [The Edge](#) (Grand Central \$29.99). **Signed for you, and personalized if you wish, on October 28 but then held until its November 14 on sale date.** When CIA operative Jenny Silkwell is murdered in rural Maine, government officials have immediate concerns over national security. Her laptop and phone were full of state secrets that, in the wrong hands, endanger the lives of countless operatives. In need of someone who can solve the murder quickly and retrieve the missing information, the U.S. government knows just the chameleon they can call on. Yes, The 6:20 Man is back, dropped by his handlers into a small coastal town in Maine to solve the murder of a CIA agent who knew America's dirtiest secrets—can Travis Devine uncover the truth before his time runs out?

Barron, Stephanie. [Jane and the Final Mystery](#) (Soho \$27.95). As one who has read Barron's Jane Austen mysteries from the beginning, I'm sad to offer this last in series to you. Jane had too short a life and so the series' end was inevitable. And it of course takes her to Winchester where she died in 1817, a setting which allows Barron to dig into the cruelties (and rewards) of the English public school system. I agree completely with this Starred Review: "Suffering from an unknown ailment and determined not to brood on the ravages of her declining health, Jane agrees to investigate the case of 16-year-old Winchester College student William Heathcote, a friend of her nephew, Edward. Relentlessly mocked at school because of his stutter, William stands accused of knocking his chief tormentor, Arthur Pendergast, on the head and sending him into a canal where he

drowned. Another student swears Arthur intended to expose William's illicit alliance with a local girl and William killed him to protect the lady's reputation. To make matters worse, William refuses to reveal his whereabouts on the day Arthur died. Jane's investigation uncovers a dark plot to frame William and foment rebellion at the school. Barron expertly underscores the purposeful cruelty and classism of English public schools in Austen's time, which existed strictly to harden the future leaders of the Empire, and elicits deep emotion out of Jane's struggles against her own mortality. This is a fitting send-off for a beautifully realized series." [Here's a link to the whole.](#) With Regency fiction on the rise again, don't miss all the Being a Jane Austen Mysteries.

You can read an excellent article about Barron [HERE](#).

Birtcher, Baron. [Reckoning](#) (Open Road \$35.99). As lawman, rancher, and Korean War veteran, Ty Dawson has his share of problems in the southern Oregon county he calls home. Despite how rural it is, Meriwether can't keep modernity at bay. The 1970s have changed the United States—and Meriwether won't be spared. A standoff looms when the US Fish & Wildlife Service seeks to separate longtime cattleman KC Sheridan from his water supply—ensuring the death of his livestock. If that's not enough trouble, a Portland detective is found dead in a fly-fishing resort cabin. Though the Portland police, including the victim's own partner, are eager to write off the tragedy as a suicide, Ty has his own thoughts on the matter—as well as evidence that points to murder. His suspicions soon mire him in a swamp of corruption that threatens nearly everyone around him. Turns out that greed and evil are contagious—and they take down men both great and small.... Patrick is a longtime fan of Birtcher's work and will be hosting his live event.

Carlisle, Kate. [The Twelve Books of Christmas](#) (Penguin \$27). Lesa recommends: San Francisco book-restoration expert Brooklyn Wainwright and her security-agent husband, Derek Stone, face a locked-room murder mystery during the Christmas holidays in Scotland. Their dear friend Claire in Loch Ness, Scotland, plans to marry the laird of the castle on New Year's Day, and they want Brooklyn and Derek as witnesses. And while they're visiting, she hopes Brooklyn will be able to solve a little mystery – twelve very rare, very important Christmas books have gone missing. Once in Scotland, Brooklyn starts working on the mystery of the missing books. But, when one guest is poisoned and another is killed, Brooklyn and Derek must race to find a killer and book thief. You who like bibliomysteries should make time for this popular cozy [Bibliophile Mystery](#) series.

Carr, Jack. [First Five Terminal Lists](#) (Atria \$150 free shipping within the US)

And [All Six Terminal Lists](#) (Atria \$180 with free shipping within the US).

Note that these are not all first prints. Also [individual titles](#) can be signed on October 25 but they do not come with free shipping.

Child, Lee/Andrew. [The Secret](#) (Random \$28.99). Lord, can it be #28 for Jack Reacher? I well remember Lee coming to the store with the first. It's 1992 and Reacher is still in the Army. Eight respectable, upstanding people have been found dead across the United States. These deaths look like accidents and don't appear to be connected until one body—the victim of a fatal fall from

a hospital window—generates some unexpected attention. That attention comes from the Secretary of Defense, who promptly calls for an interagency task force to investigate. Jack Reacher is assigned as the army's representative. Reacher may be an exceptional soldier, but sweeping other people's secrets under the carpet isn't part of his skill set...or not yet.

Chizmar, Richard. [Becoming the Boogeyman](#) (Gallery \$27.99). A riveting, sequel to the 2021 thriller [Chasing the Boogeyman](#) (\$17.99) is a tale of obsession and the adulation of evil, exploring modern society's true-crime obsession with unflinching honesty, sparing no one from the glare of the spotlight. "The author again brings a metafictional approach to the serial killer thriller. Decades after the first book's Boogeyman killings in Edgewood, Md., journalist and horror writer Rich—who is closely patterned on Chizmar—finds a garbage bag filled with human remains while walking his dog. They belong to Annie Riggs, the sole survivor of the Boogeyman's 1980s killing spree, and Rich, who became a key figure in that investigation, is thrust back into the spotlight. As media attention about a potential copycat killer starts to overwhelm Rich and threaten his marriage, more girls begin to disappear; when their bodies are found, each is missing an ear. Reluctantly, Rich investigates once again."—*PW*

Cooper, Anderson. [Astor: The Rise and Fall of an American Fortune](#) (Harper \$32.99). 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. This unconventional, page-turning historical biography features black-and-white and color photographs. It makes an excellent gift.

Cornwell, Bernard. [Sharpe's Command](#) (Collins \$46)—still no confirmation. We are holding your orders in case it does publish.

DeMille, Nelson/Alex. [Blood Lines](#) (Scribner \$29.99) features the return of Army CID Special Agents Scott Brodie and Maggie Taylor. Five months after their last assignment, they are reunited in Berlin and tasked with investigating the murder of one of their own, an accomplished counterterrorism agent whose body was found in the heart of Berlin's Arab refugee community. The two discover that that the murder was merely the prelude to a much more sinister future event, and they must unravel the mystery in order to stop it.

Dugoni, Robert. [One Last Kill](#) (Thomas & Mercer \$16.99). We're holding a party for Bob in honor of the 10th Tracy Crosswhite novel, the series that made him a bestseller. Dugoni brilliantly folds murders past and present into his heroine's earlier cases and her troubled history as the Seattle cop draws a long dormant serial killer out of hiding. After thirteen victims, the Route 99 SK stopped hunting and the trail went cold, stirring public outrage. Now, nearly three decades after his first kill, Tracy is expected to finally bring closure to the victims' families and redeem

the Seattle PD's reputation. Even if it means working with her nemesis, Captain Johnny Nolasco, who was the lead detective of the original task force. Now *The Seattle Times* is about to begin marking the 25th anniversary of a series of strangulations that mysteriously ended two years after it began without a single arrest. Questions are: Why did he (presumably the perp was a male) shift from prostitutes to middle-class family women with his 10th through 13th victims? Why did he carve a set of angel's wings onto the shoulder of every one of them? And why did the killings cease as suddenly as they'd started? Recognizing that Weber has staked her out as the sacrificial lamb if she doesn't produce results and that Nolasco will be as careful to avoid sharing the blame if the pair strike out as he will be to hog the credit if they find something, Tracy begins poring over the old records and quickly realizes... well, read it to learn what. You can [order all 10 of Tracey's cases](#) but give us some lead time to get them to the store by October 26.

Evanovich, Janet. [Dirty Thirty](#) (Atria \$29.99). And here is another series we've followed from the beginning with [One for the Money](#) (\$9.99) to this Plum, number 30. Once again, Janet has graciously agreed to sign our copies.

Stephanie Plum, Trenton's hardest working, most underappreciated bounty hunter, is offered a freelance assignment that seems simple enough. Local jeweler Martin Plover wants her to locate his former security guard, Andy Manley (a.k.a. Nutsy), who he is convinced stole a fortune in diamonds out of his safe. Stephanie is also looking for another troubled man, Duncan Dugan, a fugitive from justice arrested for robbing the same jewelry store on the same day. With her boyfriend Morelli away in Miami on police business, Stephanie is taking care of Bob, Morelli's giant orange dog who will devour anything, from Stephanie's stray donuts to the upholstery in her car. Morelli's absence also means the inscrutable, irresistible security expert Ranger is front and center in Stephanie's life when things inevitably go sideways. And he seems determined to stay there. To complicate matters, her best friend Lula is convinced she is being stalked by a mythological demon hell-bent on relieving her of her wardrobe. An overnight stakeout with Stephanie's mother and Grandma Mazur reveals three generations of women with nerves of steel and driving skills worthy of NASCAR champions.

Griffith, Nicola. [Menewood](#) (Farrar Strauss \$35). Tip-ins. Making a much-anticipated return to the world of [Hild](#) (\$18), *Menewood* transports readers back to seventh-century Britain, a land of rival kings and religions poised for epochal change. Hild is no longer the bright child who made a place in Edwin Overking's court with her seemingly supernatural insight. She is now eighteen, honed and tested, the formidable lady of Elmet, now building her personal stronghold in the valley of Menewood. But old alliances are fraying. Younger rivals are snapping at Edwin's heels. War is brewing—bitter war, winter war. Not knowing whom to trust, Edwin becomes volatile and recalls his young advisor to court. There Hild begins to understand the true extent of the chaos ahead—and realizes she must navigate it. Griffith earlier wrote some nifty mysteries including 1998 First Mystery Book of the Month *The Blue Place*.

Harrow, Alix E. [Starling House](#) (Tor \$28.99). Tip-ins. This Gothic fantasy by the author of [The Ten Thousand Doors of January](#) (\$19.99) and [Once and Future Witches](#) (\$19.99) is one of the most anticipated fall books. Opal is a lot of things-orphan,

high school dropout, full-time cynic and part-time cashier-but above all, she's determined to find a better life for her younger brother Jasper. One that gets them out of Eden, Kentucky, a town remarkable for only two things: bad luck and E. Starling, the reclusive nineteenth century author of *The Underland*, who disappeared over a hundred years ago. All she left behind were dark rumors-and her home. Everyone agrees that it's best to ignore the uncanny mansion and its misanthropic heir, Arthur. Almost everyone, anyway. Opal has been obsessed with *The Underland* since she was a child. When she gets the chance to step inside Starling House-and make some extra cash for her brother's escape fund-she can't resist. But sinister forces are digging deeper into the buried secrets of Starling House, and Arthur's own nightmares have become far too real. As Eden itself seems to be drowning in its own ghosts, Opal realizes that she might finally have found a reason to stick around. And now she'll have to fight. Welcome to Starling House: enter, if you dare.

Jiles, Paulette. [Chenneville](#) (Harper \$30). Tip-ins. Union soldier John Chenneville suffered a traumatic head wound in battle. His recovery took the better part of a year as he struggled to regain his senses and mobility. By the time he returned home, the Civil War was over, but tragedy awaited. John's beloved sister and her family had been brutally murdered. Their killer goes by many names. He fought for the North in the late unpleasantness, and wore a badge in the name of the law. But the man John knows as A. J. Dodd is little more than a rabid animal, slaughtering without reason or remorse, needing to be put down. Traveling through the unforgiving landscape of a shattered nation in the midst of Reconstruction, an undeterred John braves winter storms and confronts desperate people in pursuit of his quarry.

Lethem, Jonathan. [Brooklyn Crime](#) (Harper \$29.99 Tip-ins) takes Lethem back to the place where he grew up. About Brooklyn, crime and writing. Two literal crimes, perpetuated by children, are at its heart. But the larger crime it explores is, essentially, gentrification, the way families were pushed out of that street, out of that neighborhood, out of the city. Who did the pushing, and why, and how did they justify it. These are things most of us who live in New York still grapple with today. And as such I think this is an absolutely relevant and powerful and important novel. Takes place over 50 years. Two crimes by children lies at its heart but the main crime is gentrification. "A blistering book. A love story. Social commentary. History. Protest novel. And mystery joins the whole together: is the crime 'time'? Or the almighty dollar? I got a great laugh from it too. Every city deserves a book like this." — Colum McCann

Lahiri, Jhumpa. [Roman Stories](#) (Knopf \$27). Tip-ins. The first short story collection by the Pulitzer Prize-winning author since the earlier collection and #1 bestseller *Unaccustomed Earth*: Rome — metropolis and monument, suspended between past and future, multi-faceted and metaphysical — is the protagonist, not the setting, of these nine stories.

⌘ Marston, Edward. [The Danger of Defeat](#) (Allison & Busby UK \$35). February 1918. Detective Inspector Harvey Marmion and Detective Sergeant Joe Keedy are pulled from their beds to attend a sinister siege involving three burglars where one policeman has already been shot dead. Attempts at talking the men in the house into surrender are met with stony silence so the police proceed to batter down the door and Keedy bravely leads the way. A gunshot is heard.

Keedy is hit. As Keedy is rushed to hospital, Marmion is on the trail of the men who fled the scene and startling revelations emerge.

McCloskey, David. [Moscow X](#) (Norton \$30). Love this Starred *PW* Review. I am late getting Signed Books set up by the author of [Damascus Station](#) (\$17.95) so please be patient.

"Former CIA officer McCloskey serves up another entertaining espionage caper. Disgraced CIA case Officer Artemis Aphrodite Procter sees a way to get back into her superior's good graces with a scheme to turn Russian private banker and intelligence officer Anna Andreevna Agapova into a spy for the U.S. and to use her key position to destabilize Putin's regime. To recruit her, Procter selects Max Castillo, whose cover involves running his family's horse-breeding operation, and Hortensia Fox, a London-based lawyer who helps the rich hide their assets. The stakes are high for all involved, as Max suggests they offer Anna his mother's most prized horse to sweeten the deal, and things become complicated when Max and Sia fall in love. Standing in the way of their operation is Konstantin Konstantinovich Chernov, a Javert-like Russian intelligence officer. McCloskey mixes the tradecraft of John le Carré with the glitz of Sidney Sheldon and the effervescence of Dashiell Hammett's *The Thin Man* to produce a narrative filled with double- and triple-crosses enriched by pitch-perfect insider details, such as the paperwork Max and Sia must submit to the CIA before they can consummate their affair. This sparkling work of escapism contains a smattering of real-world jitters." I add that the opening scene in a small Russian city proves that anything can become a weapon!

McGuire, Sean. [Sleep No More](#) (Astra \$28). Our Science Fiction Selector Pat King scored a few signed copies of the 17th novel in the Hugo-nominated, bestselling October Daye urban fantasy series. October is very happy with her life as the second daughter of her pureblood parents, Amandine and Simon Torquill. Born to be the changeling handmaid to her beloved sister August, she spends her days working in her family's tower, serving as August's companion, and waiting for the day when her sister sets up a household of her own. Everything is right in October's Faerie. Everything is perfect. Everything is a lie.

McKinlay, Jenn. [Sugar Plum Poisoned](#) (Berkley \$8.99). This holiday season, things are heating up for the bakers at Fairy Tale Cupcakes (an imagined Scottsdale business). Up-and-coming singing sensation Shelby Vaughn hires her old friend Angie and the rest of the bakery crew to supply cupcakes for the VIP guest lounge every night for her two week concert dates. Although Mel overhears Shelby in a heated argument with her manager, they continue their jobs, until the manager is found dead. All suspicions lead back to Shelby, although everyone in the bakery crew and Shelby's backup dancers were dressed in similar costumes to the bit of fabric held by the victim. Mel and Angie are determined to prove their friend's innocence. Here's a [link to the whole series](#).

Morrison, Boyd/Beth. [Last True Templar](#) (Head of Zeus \$29.99). Brother and sister Morrison once again combine their expertises—he an engineer and the co-author of several Clive Cussler adventure thrillers, she a noted medievalist who works at the Getty—to produce a second "perilous quest" novel set in the 14th Century. This time excommunicated English knight Gerard Fox and the resourceful maiden Willa (who rejected a cloistered

life for one with Fox) are in Tuscany. It's 1351, the world still terrified by the Black Death. And in a small village where two parties meet to conclude a banking deal, everyone is terrified by a brutal ambush. Everyone but Gerard and Willa. They rescue Luciana Corosi, daughter of a man who thought of himself as the Last Templar, a man killed at the public execution of the order's last Grand Master as ordered by a corrupt king and a weak pope. Did Domenico Ramberti successfully conceal the Templars' treasure? Was the key to its whereabouts one Ramberti's daughter, this Luciana, could decipher if indeed she worked out that her husband was a bad actor, the very man who murdered her father? So, think Dan Brown crossed with Clive Cussler many centuries ago in a well researched adventure.

Note: by accident I ordered the series start, [The Lawless Land](#) (\$29.99), in hardcover for our October 22 Historicon event. So we'll discount it to \$19.99).

Mosley, Walter. [Touched](#) (Grove \$26). Tip-ins. Intergalactic visions, deadly threats, and explosive standoffs between mostly good and completely evil converge in a dystopian fantasy that could only be conceived by the inimitable Walter Mosley. Martin Just wakes up one morning after what feels like, and might actually be, a centuries-long sleep with two innate pieces of knowledge. Humanity is a virus destined to destroy all existence. And he is the Cure. Expansive and innovative, sexy and satirical, *Touched* brilliantly imagines the ways in which human life and technological innovation threaten existence itself. Mosley writes all kinds of books and thus has all kinds of publishers. It's been a real pleasure to follow him on his literary path.

Mukerji, Ritu. [Murder by Degrees](#) (Simon & Schuster \$27.99). This thoughtful and well researched debut by a practicing internist is our **October Historical Fiction Book of the Month**. Set in Philadelphia, 1875, the story follows a pioneering woman doctor who investigates the disappearance of a young patient. It's the start of term of Woman's Medical College of Pennsylvania where Dr. Lydia Weston, professor and anatomist, continually must defend the validity of women in the profession. When the body of young chambermaid Anna Ward is dredged from an inlet of the Schuylkill River, she is ruled a suicide. But Anna was a patient and Lydia does not believe she would kill herself.

Lesa, mystery reviewer for *Library Journal (LJ)*, awards this a Star saying: "... When Anna's body is fished from the river, a suspected suicide, Lydia can't believe it. Inspector Thomas Volcker doesn't believe it either. Despite police reluctance to work with a woman, Lydia insists on helping with Anna's autopsy and the case of her murder. Anna's diary entries show a woman trying to better herself, but in the last weeks of her life those entries take a disturbing turn. As a woman who fights daily against male attitudes of superiority and who herself struggled to improve her conditions, Lydia is determined to find answers for Anna. On the surface, this debut by Mukerji, herself a medical doctor, appears to be a mystery about the death of a working-class servant, but it's much more, as it examines women's rights, social conditions, and medicine in Philadelphia just a decade after the Civil War. Fans of Maddie Day's "Quaker Midwife" series will appreciate this detailed historical mystery."

Munier, Paula. [Home at Night](#) (St Martins \$29). Lesa our blogger, now retired from her library post, will be reviewing more often for The Pen. Here she recommends Munier's new mystery: It's Halloween in Vermont in the fifth Mercy Carr mystery. Mercy's

small cabin is too small for five humans, two dogs, and a cat. She needs more room – and she knows just the place: Grackle Tree Farm, with thirty acres of woods and wetlands and a Victorian manor to die for. They say it's haunted by the ghosts of missing children and lost poets and a murderer or two, but Mercy loves it anyway. Even when her dog Elvis finds a dead body in the library. When a masked man attacks Mercy, Captain Thrasher, and Elvis, she and Elvis manage to run him off, but Thrasher is left fighting for his life. Mercy is on crutches, and Elvis on the mend, but she, Troy and their two dogs must track down the masked murderer in a county overflowing with leaf peepers, Halloween revelers, and treasure hunters.

Quinn, Spencer. [Up on the Woof Top](#) (Forge \$27.99). Oh joy, a Christmas mystery for Chet and Bernie. In their 14th adventure, the dog and the detective meet famous Christmas-mysteries writer Dame Ariadne Carlisle at a book signing and are contacted by her soon after. Rudy, one of the nine reindeer who roam Kringle Ranch, Ariadne's estate in the mountains, has disappeared, and Chet and Bernie are the perfect detectives to find him. The duo learns about the author's friends and hangers-on, as well as her tragic past in this small mountain town. As they search the estate, the two detectives find the body of Ariadne's personal assistant at the base of a cliff from which he has presumably fallen. When they learn it is also the site of a tragedy from Ariadne's youth, they wonder if it was an accident and if the two events are connected. With a Christmas deadline approaching, Chet and Bernie face dangers both natural and manmade to solve a case that becomes ever more complicated.

Rosen, Lev AC. [The Bell in the Fog](#) (Forge \$27.99). Rosen's first in series, [Lavender House](#) (\$17.99) "is a new take on a Golden Age crime novel. Its 1950s setting is richly cinematic, with gin martinis, bananas foster and a fantastic mid-century soundtrack... Everything about the crime — the perpetrator, the victim, the motive — has a deeper meaning." —*Washington Post*. Well we here agree that it's an exceptional book, a kind of Agatha Christie set in a country house north of San Francisco. I agree with this comment from *PW*: "Andy is an appealing—if melancholy—protagonist, and Rosen's candid portrayal of the casual cruelties perpetrated on queer people in the 1950s provides a novel and edifying foundation for a traditional mystery." Andy is gay, and so are the female residents of Lavender House.

Now Andy, who was fired from the SFPD when his superiors learned he was gay, is still struggling to find clients for his private detective agency. One afternoon, James Morris, a captain in the Navy and Andy's former lover, walks into his office. Though Andy is still scarred by their breakup (James left seven years earlier without saying goodbye), the PI can't afford to turn down work, and soon learns that James is being blackmailed with explicit photographs after a tryst with a young man named Danny. With his Navy career in the balance, James asks Andy to retrieve the photos and negatives for him. Andy's search takes him on a dizzying tour of San Francisco's gay and lesbian clubs, but Danny is nowhere to be found, and flashes of Andy's own past threaten to muddy the investigative waters.

Rosenfelt, David. ['Twas the Bite Before Christmas](#) (St Martins \$26). Professionally retired lawyer Andy Carpenter is attending the Tara Foundation annual Christmas party when homicide cops crash the party and arrest Derek Moore, one of the charity's best volunteers to foster dogs. Spurred to action as usual when a dog

or dog person is in trouble, and by having to take in two dogs being fostered by Derek, Andy soon discovers that Derek is really Bobby, a man in Witness Protection who gave evidence against his former gang. The cops believe Bobby killed one of them. But Bobby has built a new life, a new business, and overcome being a foster failure. So....

✂ 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.

Shockey, Jim. [Call Me Hunter](#) (Atria \$27.99). This debut thriller is truly original in premise and format. I'm not sure I can describe it for you so first, Gregg Hurwitz: "My hat's off to Jim Shockey. One of the world's greatest hunters spins a tale of pursuit of a different stripe—a fascinating descent into the world of priceless art and artifacts and the brilliant savant child born to identify them. Throw in a passel of psychopathic killers and a shadowy organization bent on obtaining these objects at any cost and you have the making of a first-rate thriller."

Or Jack Carr, our October 25 evening's host for Shockey, who says: "If you think you know Jim Shockey from his award-winning shows on television, think again. *Call Me Hunter* proves Jim is more than one of the world's most respected hunters and outdoorsman. Much more. He is a man of letters. Astoundingly original, relentlessly paced, and purely authentic in a way that only Jim could deliver, Shockey's debut thriller exceeds all expectations. It will leave you breathless and wondering if the story that just consumed you was written on a foundation of more than mere whispers of the truth."

Since Jack is the host this is a Ticketed Event at The Pen so everyone will have a seat.

Snowe, Jacqueline. [Snowed in for Christmas](#) (Grand Central \$16.99). Fans of Christina Lauren and Maggie Knox will adore this fun and festive romcom featuring a grumpy/sunshine duo who find themselves stuck together over the holidays, where the weather outside is frightful – but inside, things are heating up in this sexy holiday story. Extra good news: Snowe is a local author.

Thane, James L. [A Shot to the Heart](#) (Moonshine Cove \$18). At 35, Cyndi Parker is nearing the end of her shelf life as a sexy convention model. Determined to enjoy a life of ease and luxury, she seduces and marries Terry Martin, a wealthy widower thirty years her senior. Fifteen months later, she coldheartedly murders Terry in a manner that will make it appear that he has died naturally of a massive stroke. The scheme should net Cyndi an inheritance approaching ten million dollars, but it doesn't account for Terry's daughter, Laura, a cardiologist who knows more than a little about strokes and who is convinced that Cyndi has

murdered her father. Laura begins to build a case against Cyndi, but Cyndi is executing a long and carefully calculated plan....

Unger, Lisa. [Christmas Presents](#) (Penzler \$23.95). This novella is not a Christmas cozy but instead is written with Unger's trademark twisty suspense as a true crime podcaster opens up a cold case. Madeline Martin has built a life for herself as the young owner of a thriving business, The Next Chapter Bookshop, despite her tragic childhood and now needing to care for her infirm father, the former sheriff. When Harley Granger, a failed novelist turned true crime podcaster, drifts into her shop in the days before Christmas, he seems intent on digging up events that Madeline would much rather forget. She's the only surviving victim of Evan Handy, the man who was convicted of murdering her best friend Steph, and is suspected in the disappearance of two sisters, also good friends of Madeline's, who have been missing for nearly a decade. It's an investigation that has obsessed her father right up until his stroke took his faculties. That's the set-up. Read it for more.

Valentine, Danielle. [Delicate Condition](#) (Sourcebooks \$27.99) "is the feminist update to *Rosemary's Baby*—a twisty, page-turner with unsettling details and crackling writing that's also a timely critique of sexism in modern medicine." — Andrea Bartz. Anna Alcott is desperate to have a family. But as she tries to balance her increasingly public life as an indie actress with a grueling IVF journey, she starts to suspect that someone is going to great lengths to make sure that never happens. Crucial medicines are lost. Appointments get swapped without her knowledge. Cryptic warnings have her jumping at shadows. And despite everything she's gone through to make this pregnancy a reality, not even her husband is willing to believe that someone is playing twisted games with her. Then her doctor tells her she's had a miscarriage—except Anna's convinced she's still pregnant despite everything the grave-faced men around her claim. She can feel the baby moving inside her, can see the strain it's taking on her weakening body. Vague warnings become direct threats as someone stalks her through the bleak ghost town of the snowy Hamptons. As her symptoms and sense of danger grow ever more horrifying, Anna grows both increasingly desperate, and determined.... There's lots of media buzz about this book which is a *Good Morning America* Buzz Pick.

And for Teens, [How to Survive Your Murder](#) (\$11.99).

Vidich, Paul. [Beirut Station: Two Lives of a Spy](#) (Pegasus \$27.95). A stunning new espionage novel by a master of the genre follows a young female CIA officer, Analise, whose mission to assassinate a high-level, Hezbollah terrorist reveals a dark that that puts her life at risk. As her plan to locate the terrorist is put into action, she begins to suspect Mossad has a motive of its own. Told by the CIA to drop it, she becomes the target, and can't trust the CIA, Mossad, or the Lebanese government to protect her.

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).

Winkler, Henry. [Being Henry: The Fonz and Beyond](#) (Celadon \$30). A memoir. Probably Tip-ins.

Winstead, Ashley. [Midnight is the Darkest Hour](#) (Sourcebooks \$27.99). Winstead is a lovely prose stylist as she goes deep into love and lust, small town corruption, dark deeds and dark impulses served up with evangelical Christianity. We're in Louisiana for this “dark romantic gothic tale of a swampy Southern town with too many bad men and too much fear of the devil”—CrimeReads. Winstead lives to explore dark themes and does them well, her point of view feminist.

Here's the *LJ* Starred Review (not by Lesa): “Timid Ruth Cornier grew up in the shadow of her overzealous evangelist father in middle-of-nowhere Bottom Springs, LA, where congregants and nonbelievers alike are controlled by preacher Cornier's decrees, including what books can be held in the library and school. Ruth learns to pilfer from donation boxes at the library before forbidden books can be disposed of. She rescues a copy of *Twilight* and keeps it close. With a teenager's naive desire for romance, she finds herself in a dangerous situation with a drifter. Beautiful Everett, son of the town drunk, rescues her, and they become inseparable. Six years later, when a skull is found in the swamp, Ruth worries. Then a second skull is found. Preacher Cornier proclaims that Everett is responsible, that he's the evil reincarnation of the Low Man, a beautiful demon based on an old superstition popular in the town. Now the town's librarian, Ruth wants to clear Everett, who just wants to escape the witch hunt.” But I add it's much more complex than that and not everyone is who they seem. Wait to read the Afterword when Winstead has much of interest to say about why and how she wrote this.

SIGNED FOR YOUNG ADULTS

Ella, Sarah. [The Looking Glass Illusion](#) (Enclave \$24.99) is the perfect second half of this amazing duology after [The Wonderland Trials](#) (\$22.99). Sara Ella exquisitely combines the feel and tone of both the beloved Disney adaptation of *Alice in Wonderland* as well as Lewis Carroll's original, and then she mixes it flawlessly with her own story and voice and world to create the perfect Wonderland!

Kade, Candace. [Enhanced](#) (Enclave \$24.99). A university freshman straddles the line between two worlds in a futuristic dystopian Beijing. It's 2124. In the Asian Federation's New Beijing Metropolis, a post-Genetic Revolution world sees those who can afford it living genetically engineered lives as the Enhanced, with modified attributes that determine their high social status. Seventeen-year-old Lee Urban was born a Natural in the dangerous Outskirts, without any genetic modifications, adopted by an affluent Enhanced family from the Metropolis, and forced to hide the truth about her DNA her whole life. Now, her dream to become an Artisan is predicated on her gaining a high enough social credit score and surviving unscathed the perils of attending Peking University without revealing that she is faking being an Enhanced. But as a mysterious hacker threatens to out her...

UNSIGNED EVENT BOOKS

Johnston, Tim. [Distant Sons](#) (Algonquin \$29). If you are missing Cormac McCarthy, step right up for this one. Karen is a fan and will be zooming with Johnston. What if Sean Courtland's old Chevy truck had broken down somewhere else? What if he'd never met Denise Givens, a waitress at a local tavern, and gotten into a bar fight defending her honor? Or offered a ride to Dan Young, another young man like Sean, burdened by secrets and just drifting through the small Wisconsin town? Instead, Sean enlists Dan's help with a construction job in the basement of a local—the elderly, reclusive Marion Devereaux—and gradually the two men come to realize that they've washed up in a place haunted by the disappearance of three young boys decades earlier.

Michael Koryta sums it up beautifully: “...an intricate, haunting novel sure to resonate with fans of Dennis Lehane, Peter Heller, and James Lee Burke. Johnston's plot is tense and his pacing swift, but he's after bigger game here, with questions of identity, intentions, and legacies merging in a tale that will linger long after it is finished. He's also one of the finest prose stylists in the game, stacking polished sentences with a master's touch.” And Janelle Brown is spot on, calling it “a mystery about a serial killer, yes, but it's also not that at all: It's a heartbreaking story about family, failure, and the fallout from violence. Tim Johnston has crafted a riveting novel that takes us into struggling blue collar America, and locates the hope hidden inside devastating loss. A beautiful book.” — Janelle Brown

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.

Our zoom event has been postponed from October 2 due to technical difficulties and is now October 10 at 12 PM PDT. Donna apologizes to all.

Phillips, Gary. [The Unvarnished Gary Phillips](#) (Three Rooms Press \$17). A Mondo Pulp Collection. Aztec vampires, astral projecting killers, oxygen stealing bombs, undercover space rangers, aliens occupying Los Angeles, right wing specters haunting the 'hood, masked vigilantes, and mad scientists in their underground lairs plotting world domination populate the stories in this rip-snorting collection. Patrick will have a lot of fun discussing this with Gary. And it fits into the next section of books.

GET AN EARLY START ON HALLOWEEN READING

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.

Due, Tananarive. [The Reformatory](#) (Saga Press \$28.99). Ready for a ghost story? If anywhere in the world is haunted, it's a reform school of the Jim Crow South. When author Tananarive Due learned of the tragedy of one of her ancestors at such a school (Dozier School for Boys, in fact), she researched until she reached the records' intentional dead ends. That's where this story picks up: twelve-year-old Robert Stephens Jr. gets sent to the reformatory in Gracetown, Florida. For nothing. It's 1950, and even though the school is segregated, Robbie sees haints of all types—though most of them are the spirits of boys like him. His family works to free him from the outside, and he works to free himself of the school, its terrifying abomination of a warden, and the ghosts themselves.

Hand, Elizabeth. [A Haunting on the Hill](#) (Little Brown \$29.99). Nothing compares to Shirley Jackson... unless it returns to the world of Shirley Jackson. This novel is the first one to return to Hill House (the best haunted house in the world, that is). Holley Sherwin and her girlfriend Nisa retreat Hill House in a month-long writing mission... and as with its source material, longing, isolation, and shifting planes of unimaginable terror abound.

Hawk, Shane, ed. [Never Whistle at Night](#) (Knopf \$17). Many Indigenous people believe that one should never whistle at night. This belief takes many forms: for instance, Native Hawaiians believe it summons the Hukai'po, the spirits of ancient warriors, and Native Mexicans say it calls Lechuza, a witch that can transform into an owl. But what all these legends hold in common is the certainty that whistling at night can cause evil spirits to appear—and even follow you home. This sterling story collection comes from an equally sterling roster of authors: Norris Black • Amber Blaeser-Wardzala • Phoenix Boudreau • Cherie Dimaline • Carson Faust • Kelli Jo Ford • Kate Hart • Shane Hawk • Brandon Hobson • Darcie Little Badger • Conley Lyons • Nick Medina • Tiffany Morris • Tommy Orange • Mona Susan Power • Marcie R. Rendon • Waubgeshig Rice • Rebecca Roanhorse • Andrea L. Rogers • Morgan Talty • D.H. Trujillo • Theodore C. Van Alst Jr. • Richard Van Camp • David Heska Wanbli Weiden • Royce Young Wolf • Mathilda Zeller

Lozano, Brenda. [Witches](#) (\$16.96). A young journalist whose investigation of a murder leads her to the most legendary healer in all of Mexico, from one of the most prominent voices of a new generation of Latin American writers. Paloma is dead. But before she was murdered, before she was even Paloma, she was a traditional healer named Gaspar. Before she was murdered, she taught her cousin Feliciano the secrets of the ceremonies known as *veladas*, and about the Language and the Book that unlock their secrets. Sent to report on Paloma's murder, Zoe meets Feliciano in the mountain village of San Felipe. There, the two women's lives twist around each other in a *danse macabre*. Weaving together two parallel narratives that mirror and refract one another, this extraordinary novel envisions the healer as storyteller and the writer as healer.

McMahon, Jennifer. [My Darling Girl](#) (Gallery \$28.99). McMahon turns to a psychological thriller embracing the holidays. Alison has never been a fan of Christmas. But with

it right around the corner and her husband busily decorating their cozy Vermont home, she has no choice but to face it. Then she gets the call. Mavis, Alison's estranged mother, has been diagnosed with cancer and has only weeks to live. She wants to spend her remaining days with her daughter, son-in-law, and two granddaughters. But Alison grew up with her mother's alcoholism and violent abuse and is reluctant to unearth these traumatic memories. Still, she eventually agrees to take in Mavis, hoping that she and her mother could finally heal and have the relationship she's always dreamed of. But when mysterious and otherworldly things start happening upon Mavis's arrival, Alison begins to suspect her mother is not quite who she seems. And as the holiday festivities turn into a nightmare, she must confront just how far she is willing to go to protect her family....

Morgyn, Ava. [The Witches of Bone Hill](#) (St Martins \$18). Add this to your spooky reads pile. Scandinavian magic. Runes. Hauntings. Murder. Sexy tattooed love interest. What better for Halloween?

Nesbø, Jo. [The Night House](#) (Knopf \$28). The Norwegian novelist makes a first foray into horror with a slim three-part story. "14-year-old Richard Elauved, sent to live with his aunt and uncle after his parents' deaths, feels trapped in sleepy, rural Ballantyne. He quickly earns a reputation as the angry city kid who lashes out at the slightest provocation. When a classmate goes missing, all eyes are on Richard, who was the last person to see him alive. What Richard can't get anyone to believe is that Tom was sucked into the receiver while making a prank call in a telephone booth on the edge of the woods. After another classmate disappears, Richard discovers a house in the forest that holds a dark past. With help from his friend Karen and the local librarian, Richard must prove his innocence—though he may not be as reliable a narrator as he seems. Nesbø deftly guides readers on a journey much larger than many will expect from the slim volume. Reminiscent of Joe Meno's *The Boy Detective Fails*, initial expectations of genre, setting, and mood are subverted as a simple horror novel unfolds into a story that encompasses grief, mid-life crises, and more. Give this one to fans of Grady Hendrix or adults nostalgic for the "Goosebumps" series."—LJ

Peele, Jordan, ed. [Out There Screaming](#) (Random \$30) presents all-new horror stories by Black writers. Featuring an introduction by Peele, it's "a master class in horror, and—like his spine-chilling films—its stories prey on everything we think we know about our world . . . and redefine what it means to be afraid." Featuring stories by: Erin E. Adams, Violet Allen, Lesley Nneka Arimah, Maurice Broaddus, Chesya Burke, P. Djèlí Clark, Ezra Clayton Daniels, Tananarive Due, Nalo Hopkinson, N. K. Jemisin, Justin C. Key, L. D. Lewis, Nnedi Okorafor, Tochi Onyebuchi, Rebecca Roanhorse, Nicole D. Sconiers, Rion Amilcar Scott, Terence Taylor, and Cadwell Turnbull.

Rasschi, Sara/Beth Revis. [Night of the Witch](#) (Sourcebooks \$18.99). For Young Adult readers. Fritzi is a witch. The lone survivor of a brutal attack on her coven. Otto is a hexenjäger. He's plotting revenge against the people who tore apart his family. When Fritzi and Otto are unexpectedly thrown together, their reluctant truce is fueled by their common enemy—and their growing attraction in "a tale full of history, love, witchcraft, and war that will have you gripping your book." —Jennifer L. Armentrout.

Taub, Melinda. [The Scandalous Confessions of Lydia Bennet, Witch](#) (Grand Central \$29). Taub provides a witchy reimagining of Jane Austen's classic *Pride and Prejudice*, told from the perspective of the youngest Bennet sister—that would be Lydia. The story retains the original's broad outlines. But there's weirdness just underneath. Lydia's beloved sister Kitty is a barn cat. Mr. Wickham is a demon. And the delectable Mr. Darcy—well, he's a little uptight about witchcraft.... Jane Austen riffs continue in varied forms, underlining how timeless are her novels. Take the stories in the spirit intended.

A FEW NEW HARDCOVERS

With 297 new releases dropping this week, I can only get to a few besides our fabulous collection of signed books. I'll do a longer October Booknews next week,

But meanwhile, here are a few obvious titles:

Andrews, Donna. [Let It Crow, Let It Crow](#) (St Martins \$27). Meg has been roped into participating in a weaponsmithing competition, a Forged in Fire wannabe organized by a blacksmith friend. Meg originally turned down an invitation to participate, but the night before the filming starts, someone attacks Faulk, her blacksmithing mentor, breaking his arm and eliminating him from the contest before it begins. Meg agrees to step in as his replacement to keep the project from failing. She's not thrilled that the filming will take place during December – Christmas is already a crazy time for her. Since the competition is taking place on Ragnarshjem, the picturesque estate that her friend Ragnar, the retired heavy metal drummer, is turning into a Goth castle, Meg won't have to spend Christmas alone and gets to bring Michael and her twin sons with her. So Meg joins the cast, to the dismay of several old-school blacksmiths. And then....

Arceneaux, Danielle. [Glory Be](#) (Pegasus \$26.95). A debut cozy that forms a vivid contrast to the Ashley Winstead dark thriller set in small town Louisiana reviewed in Signed Books.

Here's a Starred Review: "Arceneaux's delightful debut cozy introduces Glory Broussard of Lafayette, Louisiana, a self-described 'old, fat, black woman' whose weeks revolve around churchgoing and her gig as a small-time bookie. One Sunday, while she's crunching numbers at her usual table in CC's Coffeehouse, Glory strikes up a conversation with police officer Beau Landry, whom she used to babysit. Partway through their chat, he's called to a crime scene at the home of Amity Gay, an activist nun and Glory's best friend. Glory insists on coming along, and when they arrive, the pair finds Amity strangled by her habit—one end is knotted around her neck, the other tied to a doorknob. The police are quick to declare it a suicide, but Glory's not convinced. Determined to find justice, she employs the help of her daughter, Delphine, a high-powered New York City lawyer, and launches an investigation that takes them through Lafayette's elite circles in search of answers. Arceneaux successfully avoids a mountain of cozy clichés—no bookshops, baked goods, or love interest for Glory—and works potent critiques of Southern racism into her well-oiled plot."

✎ Brett, Simon. [Mrs. Pargeter's Patio](#) (Severn House \$3.99). Ordered Upon Request. When widow Mrs. Pargeter decides to have her morning coffee on the patio of her mansion in Chigwell, her intention is to admire her beautiful garden in peace and quiet. Little does she expect one of the patio's paving slabs to crack

in two, depositing her on the ground—and revealing a human skull with a neat hole in the middle of its forehead! Enjoy a new chapter in a long-running humorous British cozy series.

Broder, Melissa. [Death Valley](#) (Scribner \$27). The #1 Indie Next Pick for October begins when a woman arrives alone at a Best Western seeking respite from an emptiness that plagues her. She has fled to the California high desert to escape a cloud of sorrow—for both her father in the ICU and a husband whose illness is worsening. What the motel provides, however, is not peace but a path, thanks to a receptionist who recommends a nearby hike. Out on the sun-scorched trail, the woman encounters a towering cactus whose size and shape mean it should not exist in California. Yet the cactus is there, with a gash through its side that beckons like a familiar door. So she enters it. What awaits her inside this mystical succulent sets her on a journey. As the woman walks, she contemplates the natural world, the ties that bind us to the ones we love, the nature of God. She watches lizards and rabbits; she talks to rocks. She comes to a fork in the trail: One route leads back to her life in LA; the other leads deep into the ruthless desert. Which will she take? "If this all sounds a bit woo woo, a taste of Burning Man with a touch of Siddhartha, fear not: This is Broder, the poet, essayist, novelist, and author of some of Twitter's most viral *bons mots* as @sosadtoday."

Clare, Cassandra. [Sword Catcher](#) (Random \$30). In the vibrant city-state of Castellane, where the rich get richer and the poor get the usual treatment. Orphaned Kel, for instance, is raised to be a "sword catcher"—a body double for the royal heir, should assassins get any ideas. Kel's friend Lin is one of the Ashkar, an oppressed group of magic wielders. The two outcasts stumble into trouble when they cross the underworld boss known as the Ragpicker King.... This starts an epic fantasy series.

Eng, Tan Twan. [The House of Doors](#) (Bloomsbury \$28.99). The Booker Prize-shortlisted author of *The Garden of Evening Mists* bases a new novel on actual events. We are in the Straits Settlements of Southeast Asia, circa 1921. Looking for literary inspiration, British novelist Somerset Maugham visits old friends Robert and Lesley Hamlyn—and finds the story of a lifetime. Eng's epic saga of shady relationships and Chinese revolutionaries ponders the ultimate nature of love, exploring complex issues of race, gender, sexuality, and storytelling.

Falco, Michael. [Murder in an Italian Village](#) (Kensington \$27). I selected this our **October Cozy Crimes Book of the Month** in large part because it's so much fun to spend time (again for me) in Positano. Widowed B&B owner Bela Bartolucci discovers a body in one of her bedrooms before opening day... Her late husband, Carlo, dreamed about when he concocted the romantic idea to start a bed and breakfast on the breathtaking Amalfi Coast. With the grand opening of Bella Bella approaching six months after Carlo's tragic death, Bria and her eight-year-old son Marco brace for a bittersweet new beginning by the sea. They are not prepared for the dead man nor for the police who suspect everyone at Bella Bella.... This series start is perfect for fans of Mario Giordano and Lorenzo Carcaterra!

✎ Galbraith, Robert. [The Running Grave](#) (Mulholland \$32.50). JK Rowling writing as Galbraith presents the 7th in the Cormoran Strike novels. The private eye is contacted by a worried father whose son, Will, has gone to join a religious cult in the depths of the Norfolk countryside. The Universal Humanitarian Church

is, on the surface, a peaceable organization that campaigns for a better world. Yet Strike discovers that beneath the surface there are deeply sinister undertones, and unexplained deaths. In order to try to rescue Will, Strike's business partner, Robin Ellacott, decides to infiltrate the cult, and she travels to Norfolk to live incognito among its members. But in doing so, she is unprepared for the dangers that await her there or for the toll it will take on her....

Gorman, Amanda. [Something, Someday](#) (Penguin \$18.99). For children, a new picture book by presidential inaugural poet Amanda Gorman and Caldecott Honor-winning illustrator Christian Robinson. "You're told that This won't work, But how will you know If you never try?"

Grisham, John. [The Exchange](#) (Knopf \$29.95). Grisham's annual fall legal thriller returns us to Mitch McDeere, the hero of [The Firm](#) (\$10.99), Grisham's 1991 breakout book. What happened to Mitch and Abby after they exposes the crimes of Memphis Law Firm Bendini, Lambert & Locke and fled the country? Here is the answer.... Publication date is October 17.

Knoll, Jessica. [Bright Young Women](#) (Scribner \$27.99). Knoll—author of [Luckiest Girl Alive](#) (\$17.99) and the writer behind the Netflix adaptation starring Mila Kunis—delivers a wicked punch of a thriller. The book opens on a Saturday night in 1978, hours before a soon-to-be-infamous murderer descends upon a Florida sorority house with deadly results. The lives of those who survive, including sorority president and key witness, Pamela Schumacher, are forever changed. Across the country, Tina Cannon is convinced her missing friend was targeted by the man papers refer to as the All-American Sex Killer—and that he's struck again. Determined to find justice, the two join forces as their search for answers leads to a final, shocking confrontation. You will discern that Knoll is mirroring Ted Bundy and his real-life crimes in this unnerving story at a time when serial killer thrillers are making a comeback. Here's an astute comment: "By focusing on the women affected by her Ted Bundy stand-in instead of the nuances of his criminal psychology, Knoll movingly reframes an American obsession without stripping it of its intrigue." This is a powerful book with cover art to match that I find off-putting rather than enticing...but we all have our personal tastes in book packaging.

Woods, Stuart/Brett Battles. [Obsession](#) (Putnam \$29). Tech billionaire Carl Novak is only just starting his own production company, so he has no reason to know that Billy Barnett, the producer of *Storm's Eye*, is actually Teddy Fay, a former CIA agent who also moonlights as Oscar-winning actor Mark Weldon. But it's a lucky thing for him that Teddy's on hand when Carl's wife, Rebecca, is kidnapped by Croatian gang leader Zoran Janic, since Teddy's even more at home hunting down vermin like Janic than he is in the Hollywood scene. Janic claims he's holding Rebecca for a hefty ransom, but Carl thinks he's really out for bloody revenge, since he's convinced that Carl was responsible for his brother's death. That means both high stakes and a short timeline.

A FEW LARGE OCTOBER PAPERBACKS ... more to come

Thanks to Lesa for these commentaries

Albanese, Laurie Lico. [Hester](#) (\$19). Who is the real Hester Prynne? Isabel Gamble, a young seamstress sets sail from

Scotland in the early 1800s with her husband, Edward, fleeing for a fresh start in the New World. Only days after their arrival in Salem, Edward abruptly joins a departing ship as a medic, leaving Isabel penniless and alone in a strange country. When she meets a young Nathaniel Hawthorne, the two are instantly drawn to each other: he is a man haunted by his ancestors, who sent innocent women to the gallows – while she is an unusually gifted needleworker, troubled by her strange talents. Meticulously researched yet evocatively imagine, *Hester* is a timeless tale of art, ambition, and desire that examines the roots of female creative power and the men who try to shut it down.

✦ Alexander, Tasha. [Secrets of the Nile](#) (\$18). In a brilliant homage to Agatha Christie, critically acclaimed author Tasha Alexander sends Lady Emily to Egypt during British colonial rule to investigate a crime that leads back to the era of the Pharaohs. Lady Emily and her husband, Colin Hargreaves, have joined his formidable mother on a holiday to visit the exotic treasures of Egypt. Their host, Lord Bertram Deeley, is a renowned amateur British collector of antiquities, but on the first night of their journey, he suddenly collapses after offering a welcome toast, a victim of the lethal poison cyanide. Emily and Colin's investigation soon reveals that even his closest friends had reasons to want their host dead. A key clue may lie with several ancient sculptures. In an unforgettable finale, Emily and Colin gather their fellow travelers together to unmask a killer.

Berry, Steve. [The Last Kingdom](#) (\$17.99). Here's the latest Cotton Malone adventure, in which the discovery of a lost historical document challenges the global might of the United States. Eccentric to the point of madness, in the years before King Ludwig II of Bavaria died, he engaged in a worldwide search for a new kingdom. Cotton Malone's protégé has managed to infiltrate a renegade group on trail of a 19th century deed that proves Ludwig's long-rumored search bore fruit. The document, coveted by the United States, China, and Germany, could not only secure Bavaria's independence, but change the balance of power in the modern world. In a race across Bavaria for clues hidden inside Ludwig's three fairy tale castles, Cotton battles an over-growing list of deadly adversaries all intent on finding the last kingdom.

✦ Bryce, Denny S. [The Other Princess](#) (Harper \$19.99). A stunning portrait of an African princess, Sarah Forbes Bonetta, raised in Queen Victoria's court and adapting to life in Victorian England, based on Bonetta's real-life story. Rescued from enslavement at seven years old, and presented to Queen Victoria as a "gift", the story moves from West Africa to Windsor Castle to Sierra Leone, to St. James's Palace, and the Lagos Colony. It's a sweeping saga of an African princess in Victorian England and West Africa as she searches for a home, family, love, and identity.

Claire, Ann. [Last Word to the Wise](#) (Random \$17). The Christie sisters, Ellie and Meg, and their bookshop cat, Agatha, flirt with coldhearted crime when bookish matchmaking turns into a date with death. The sisters' cousin signs them up for a matchmaking service based on bookish taste. Meg's date charms her, but she's stood up for a second date. Her date had a good reason for ghosting her. He's been murdered. As the last known person to see him alive, Meg becomes a prime suspect. Ellie and Meg can't afford to leave any page unturned in looking for a killer.

De Castrique, Mark. [Dangerous Women](#) (Poisoned Pen \$16.99). Lesa recommends: In a case deciding the future of clean energy, everything hinges on how the chief justice of the Supreme Court will lean. This urgent, cleverly plotted high stakes thriller is set in motion by a botched attack on two law clerks, leaving one dead and the other in a coma. The ensuing cover up leaves a string of bodies and too many players at cross-purposes. It also leaves Chief Justice Clarissa Baxter with a target on her back. Enter retired FBI agent-turned-boardinghouse landlady, Ethel Fiona Crestwater (legend) and her double-first-cousin-twice removed Jesse Cooper (sidekick). Together the unlikely duo will face malicious back-stabbing political sycophants, conniving lobbyists, and a motivated assassin.

Hall, Emylia. [The Harbour Lights Mystery](#) (Thomas & Mercer \$16.99). As The Shell House Detectives try to solve a family mystery, their investigation runs dangerously close to a murder case. Are the two linked? It's December in Cornwall, and a body is found during the illumination of Christmas lights in Mousehole harbour. The murder victim is a local chef, and there's no shortage of people who might have wanted him dead. Ally Bright calls on ex-cop Joyden, but he wants to leave the investigation to the local police, until a letter in the victim's pocket draws them into a seemingly unconnected family mystery. Who among the close-knit community has reason to kill, and how far will they go to protect themselves?

Irving, John. [The Last Chairlift](#) (\$22.99). John Irving's fifteenth novel is part ghost story, part love story, spanning eight decades of sexual politics. In Aspen, Colorado, in 1941, Rachel Brewster is a slalom skier at the National Downhill and Slalom Championships. She finishes nowhere near the podium, but she manages to get pregnant. Back home, in New England, she becomes a ski instructor. Years later, Rachel's son, Adam, goes to Aspen looking for answers. In the Hotel Jerome, where he was conceived, he will meet some ghosts, not the first or last ghosts he sees.

Klavan, Andrew. [A Strange Habit of Mind](#) (\$17.95). English professor and ex-spy Cameron Winter confronts a Big Tech billionaire to solve the suspicious suicide of a former student. Just before the young man died, he reached out to his former teacher with two words, "Help me." Winter, who has the ability to imagine himself into a crime scene, to reconstruct it mentally and play through various possible cause and outcomes to understand exactly what took place. He begins to suspect the suicide was the result of a carefully-engineered plot, put in motion by a powerful businessman.

McCarthy, Cormac. [The Passenger](#) (\$18). The story of a salvage diver who is haunted by loss, scared of deep waters, and pursued for a conspiracy he can't understand. It begins in 1980 Pass Christian, Mississippi, at 3:00 AM.

McFadden, Freida. [The Locked Door](#) (Sourcebooks \$17.99). A twisty psychological thriller from the *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Housemaid*. While eleven-year-old Nora Davis was up in her bedroom doing homework, she had no idea her father was killing women in the basement. Until the day the police arrived at their front door. Decades later, Nora's father is spending his life behind bars, and Nora is a successful surgeon. Nobody knows about her past, and she'll do anything to keep

it that way. Then one of her young female patients is murdered, killed in the same unique and horrific manner that her father used to kill his victims. Somebody knows who Nora is. Somebody wants her to take the fall for this unthinkable crime. But she's not like her father. The police can't pin anything on her. As long as they don't look in her basement...

Rader Day, Lori. [The Death of Us](#) (Harper \$18.99). A chilling suspense novel in which the discovery of a submerged car in a murky pond reveals betrayals and family secrets that will tear a small town apart. One rainy night fifteen years ago, Ashley Hay stood on Liss Kehoe's front porch and handed over a brand-new baby Allan. She was never seen or heard from again. Liss has raised Callan as her own, but she's always wondered whether Ashley is still out there somewhere. After all these years, Ashley's car has been found in the quarry pond on Kehoe property. But, the discovery of the pond dredges up more questions than answers. As tensions rise, Liss must fight to protect her family and keep her own secrets hidden – or risk losing everything she loves.