

# BOOKNEWS from

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## MAY SHOWERS OF BOOKS AND AUTHORS

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.

Note that we have opened a [YouTube channel just for John Charles'](#) many author interviews, most of which do not appear in our regular calendar but are supplemental and varied. Watch at your leisure.

### THURSDAY MAY 2 7:00 PM Live

Will Thomas discusses [Death and Glory](#) (St Martins \$28)  
Victorian sleuths Barker & Llewelyn

### SATURDAY MAY 4 Jack Du Brul 5:00 PM Live

Du Brul discusses [Clive Cussler The Heist](#) (Putnam \$32)  
An informal streaming chat at 5:00. Fans, feel free to drop in at 4:30 or from 5:30 to 6:00 PM and get a book signed

### SUNDAY MAY 5 2:00 PM Live

#### Cozypalooza with Five Authors

Colleen Cambridge. [Murder Most French](#) (Kensington \$27)  
Nicholas George. [Deadly Walk in Devon](#) (Kensington \$27)  
Erica Ruth Neubauer. [Secrets of a Scottish Isle](#) (Kensington \$27)  
Sheila Roberts. [The Best Life Book Club](#) (Mira \$18.99)  
Paige Shelton. [Poison Pen](#) (St Martins \$27)

### MONDAY MAY 6 5:00 PM NOW VIRTUAL

#### Mark Sullivan with Gregg Hurwitz

Sullivan discusses [All the Glimmering Stars](#) (Thomas & Mercer \$28.99)  
Signed books available

### TUESDAY MAY 7 5:00 PM

Jayne Castle (Jayne Ann Krentz) discusses [People in Glass Houses](#) (Berkley \$29)  
Signed books available

### TUESDAY MAY 7 7:00 PM Live Ticketed Event

#### Piper CJ with Sara Cate

Piper discusses [The Deer and the Dragon](#) (Sourcebooks \$18.99)  
Cate discusses [Highest Bidder](#) (Sourcebooks \$17.99)  
Location: The Poisoned Pen  
[Tickets](#): \$21 includes one *The Deer and the Dragon*

### WEDNESDAY MAY 8 4:00 PM

Clea Simon discusses [Bad Boy Beat](#) (Severn \$29.99)  
Meet a rookie Boston reporter

### WEDNESDAY MAY 8 7:00 PM Live

Lawrence Goldstone discusses [Imperfect Union](#) (Academica \$29.99)  
How Errors of Omission Threaten Constitutional Democracy

### THURSDAY MAY 9 5:00 PM

Harlan Coben discusses [Think Twice](#) (Grand Central \$29.99)  
Signed books available

### THURSDAY MAY 9 6:30 PM

Linwood Barclay discusses [I Will Ruin You](#) (Harper \$29.99)

### SATURDAY MAY 11 2:00 PM Live

Ellen Crosby discusses [Dodge and Burn](#) (Severn House \$29.99)

### TUESDAY MAY 14 4:00 PM

Ashley Weaver discusses [Locked in Pursuit](#) (St Martins \$28)  
Electra MacDonnell  
Signed books available

### WEDNESDAY MAY 15 7:00 PM Live

#### Poet Dorothy Chan with Richard Siken

Chan discusses [Return of the Chinese Femme](#) (Deep Vellum \$17.95)  
Her 5<sup>th</sup> collection celebrating queerness and Asian immigrant identity

### FRIDAY MAY 17 7:00 PM

SciFi Friday discusses Mary Robinette Kowal's [The Spare Man](#) (\$19.99)

### SATURDAY MAY 18 10:30 AM

Croak & Dagger discusses David J Gatward's [Grimm Up North](#) (\$14.99)

### MONDAY MAY 20 7:00 PM Live

Graham Moore discusses [The Wealth of Shadows](#) (Random \$29.99)  
Our May Crime Book of the Month

**TUESDAY MAY 21 7:00 PM Live**  
**Matt Goldman** discusses [Still Waters](#) (Forge \$29.99)

**WEDNESDAY MAY 22 7 PM Live**  
**Stuart Turton and Ruth Ware**  
**Turton** discusses [The Last Murder at the End of the World](#) (Sourcebooks \$27.99)  
**Ware** discusses [One Perfect Couple](#) (Gallery \$28.99)

**THURSDAY MAY 23 12:00 PM**  
**Jaclyn Goldis** discusses [The Main Character](#) (Atria \$28.99)

**THURSDAY MAY 23 5:00 PM**  
**Daniel Weizmann with Patrick Weizmann** discusses [Cinnamon Girl](#) (Melville House \$19.99)

**THURSDAY MAY 23 7:00 PM Live**  
**Andrews & Wilson** discuss [Tom Clancy Act of Defiance](#) (Putnam \$32)  
Their first for Jack Ryan, Sr.

**SATURDAY MAY 25 11:00 AM**  
**The Cookbook Club** discusses Marcella Hazen's [Essentials of Classic Italian Cooking](#) (\$40)  
Bring a recipe from the book to share

**SATURDAY MAY 25 12:30 PM Live**  
**Tom Straw** discusses [The Accidental Joe: The Top Secret Life of a Celebrity Chef](#) (Random \$30)

**SATURDAY MAY 25 3:00 to 5:00 PM Live**  
**Pen America/Society of Professional Journalists**  
A Panel: Reporters and The Pen  
Arizona Journalists Who Became Authors

**Jeremy Duda**  
**Christina Estes**  
**Richard Rules**  
**Maren Showker**  
**Terry Greene Sterling**

**MEMORIAL DAY MAY 27 4:00 PM Live**  
**Craig Johnson** discusses [First Frost](#) (Viking \$29.99)  
Walt Longmire  
Location: Scottsdale United Methodist Church, 4140 N Miller Road, Scottsdale  
Free to attend

**WEDNESDAY MAY 29 7:00 PM Live**  
**Brian Panowich** with Patrick  
Panowich discusses [Nothing But the Bones](#) (Minotaur \$28)

**THURSDAY MAY 30 7:00 PM**  
**Hardboiled Crime** discusses Gil Brewer's [Satan Is a Woman/13 French Street](#) (Stark House \$19.95).

**SATURDAY JUNE 1 2:00 PM Live**  
**Kristan Higgins and Jenn McKinlay**  
**Higgins** discusses [Look on the Bright Side](#) (Berkley \$30)  
**McKinlay** discusses [Love at First Book](#) (Berkley \$18)

**TUESDAY JUNE 4 7:00 PM Live**  
**Jacqueline Winspear** discusses [The Comfort of Ghosts](#) (Soho \$29.95)  
Maisie Dobbs

#### OUR MAY BOOKS OF THE MONTH

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

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

**British Crime Club** One Unsigned hardcover or paperback per month  
Fletcher, Susan. [The Night in Question](#)

**Cozy Crimes Club** One Unsigned hardcover or paperback per month  
Aubray, Camille. [The Girl from the Grand Hotel](#)

**The Crime Collectors Book of the Month Club** One Signed First Printing per month  
Moore, Graham. [The Wealth of Shadows](#)

**First Mystery Club** One Signed First Printing per month  
Solvinic, Nicola. [The Hunter's Daughter](#)

**Hardboiled/Noir Club** One Signed First Printing per month  
Panowich, Brian. [Nothing But the Bones](#)

**History/Mystery Club** One First Printing per month  
Robert Dugoni discusses [A Killing on the Hill](#)

**Historical Fiction Paperback Club** One Unsigned paperback per month  
Heath, Virginia. [All's Fair in Love and War](#)

**Notable New Fiction** One Signed First Printing per month  
Reichl, Ruth. [The Paris Novel](#)

**Romance and Relationships** One unsigned hardcover or paperback per month  
Roberts, Sheila. [The Best Life Book Club](#)

## SOME NEW AWARDS WINNERS

### [Edgar Allan Poe Awards](#) (click for the whole list)

*Best Novel:*

James Lee Burke, [Flags on the Bayou](#)

*Best First Novel:*

IS Berry, [The Peacock and the Sparow](#)\*

*Best Paperback Original:*

Jesse Q Sutanto, [Vera Wong's Unsolicited Advice for Murderers](#)

*Best Short Story:*

Linda Castillo, "Hallowed Ground"

*Sue Grafton Award:*

Linda Castillo, [An Evil Heart](#)

*Mary Higgins Clark Award:*

Lina Chern, [Play the Fool](#)

*Lilian Jack Braun Award:*

Danielle Arceneaux, [Glory Be](#)

### LA Times Book Prize for Mystery

Ivy Pochoda, [Sing Her Down](#)

#### [Lefty Awards](#) (Left Coast Crime Convention)

*Lefty for Best Humorous Mystery Novel*

Wendall Thomas, [Cheap Trills](#)

*Lefty for Best Historical Mystery Novel*

Naomi Hirahara, [Evergreen](#)

*Lefty for Best Debut Mystery Novel*

Nina Simon, [Mother-Daughter Murder Night](#) \*

*Lefty for Best Mystery Novel*

Tracy Clark, [Hide](#)

\* 2023 First Mystery Book of the Month

## COZY PALOOZA SIGNED BOOKS

Cambridge, Colleen. [A Murder Most French](#) (Kensington \$27). Julia Child is taking cooking classes at Le Cordon Bleu, and when a master sommelier gives a lecture about the best of French wines, Julia invites her American neighbor Tabitha Knight to come with her. As she wanders around the old building in search of the "necessary" before the presentation begins, a young boy approaches Tabitha with a rare, expensive wine to give to the speaker. She delivers the precious wine to the delighted presenter, who uses it to begin his talk. Unfortunately, after one healthy swallow, the poor man keels over, dead. *Sacré bleu!* Tabitha and Julia have unfortunately already encountered one murder since they've been in Paris in [Mastering the Art of French Murder](#) (\$17.95), and Tabitha's also a devoted reader of Agatha Christie mysteries. She and Julia immediately suspect the speaker was poisoned with cyanide because of the horrible way he died.

⌘ George, Nicholas. [Deadly Walk in Devon](#) (Kensington \$27). After a long career as a detective in San Diego, Rick "Chase" Chasen has traded in his badge for a change of scenery in the coastal comforts of Devon, England, until his historic sightseeing is interrupted by the deadly fall off a cliff by wealthy and obnoxious Ronald Getz. Chase, whose investigative instincts remain sharp, knows Gretz's death was no accident. While helping the police investigate, he discovers that members of the tour group all had motives to murder Gretz.

Neubauer, Erica Ruth. [Secrets of a Scottish Isle](#) (Kensington \$27). Isle of Iona, 1927: Cast away on a remote locale, Jane Wunderly's latest is a wild adventure on a Scottish island that includes a mysterious cult and a murder. Her assignment to vet Robert Nightingale, a cult leader who's proposed himself to the British government as a possible agent, depends on concealing her identity and blending in at an occult gathering. Posing as a new initiate to the Order of the Golden Dawn, Jane soon decides that Nightingale would make a terrible spy. Instead, she takes more time to investigate the cult and its followers, which include several women and the Irish poet William Butler Yeats.

Not even her fiancé, Redvers, can be too close as Golden Dawn begins to split into two rival factions, and information comes in from the nearby Isle of Mull.... This entertaining series focuses on intriguing landscapes and of what traveling the world in the 1920s may have been like. Start at the beginning in Egypt and carry on through the English countryside, an Atlantic crossing, and then Istanbul by [clicking here to order](#).

Roberts, Sheila. [The Best Life Book Club](#) (Mira \$18.99). Karissa Newcomb, ready for a new start in a new neighborhood, as far away as she can get from Seattle, where her husband cheated on her with the neighbor who was supposed to be her best friend. She even has a new job as an assistant at a small publishing company right in Gig Harbor. Her new boss seems like a bit of a curmudgeon, but a job is a job, she loves to read, and the idea of possibly meeting writers sounds fabulous. Soon she finds she's not the only one in need of a refresh. "Don't we all want to become the heroine of our own story? Well, welcome to The Best Life Book Club. In a charming setting on an island off the Northwest coast, a set of characters so vivid we want to be their best friends, and a story that keeps us turning the pages. When Karissa, Alice, Margot and Josie discover the power of books and story to change their lives, they must decide whether to take the chance for something new: cue laughter, tears and love..."—Patti Callahan Henry on our **May Romance & Relationships Book of the Month**.

Shelton, Paige. [Poison Pen](#) (St Martins \$27). Several weeks after the death of Queen Elizabeth II, Delaney Nichols is still feeling sad, but an unexpectedly diverting adventure begins when her boss, Edwin MacAlister—owner of the Cracked Spine bookstore in Edinburgh—asks her to research a rare and valuable object that an old friend recently discovered on her property. When Delaney's friend Elias drives her to the estate of Jolie Lannister, a large gothic mansion reminiscent of horror films, she's shocked by the clutter inside. Jolie's lawyer, Bowie Berry, is there with an auctioneer she hired on her own initiative to inventory the

house and possibly sell some of the contents. The object Jolie has kept hidden in a garden shed, seems to be a medieval Crusader sword covered in grime and rust. Near it they find the body of auction house assistant Alban Dunning, killed with a garden rake. Delaney texts Inspector Winters, the friend she's worked with on several murder cases, and soon her expertise and desire to help Jolie have her deeply involved.

### MORE SIGNED BOOKS FOR MAY

Andrews, Brian/Jeffrey Wilson. [Tom Clancy Act of Defiance](#) (Putnam \$32). US intelligence is reporting turmoil in the Russian navy. Their deadliest submarine, the *Belgorod*, has unexpectedly launched, and taken along with it a long list of questions. Who authorized the departure? What mission is it on? And, most disturbing of all, what weapons do the giant doors on the sub's bow hide? It's been four decades since a similar incident with the Soviet sub, *Red October*, ended happily, thanks to a young CIA analyst named Jack Ryan. Now, President Jack Ryan finds himself with fleets of ships, squadrons of jets, and teams of SEALs at his command, but what he doesn't have is insight into the plans of the *Belgorod*'s commander ...."Forty years after Tom Clancy's genre defining debut novel, *The Hunt for Red October*, a new Russian submarine is moving west... Gripping and powerful, Act of Defiance is Andrews and Wilson at their best! A fitting tribute to the master."—Jack Carr. We're delighted to welcome the pair of Navy veterans whose writing team takes up the Jack Ryan, Sr., mantle from Marc Cameron.

Andrews, Mary Kay. [Summers at the Saint](#) (St Martins \$29) Tip-ins. I miss Andrews's mysteries written as Kathy Trochek. Here she is mixing mystery and romance in a perfect summer read that "details one woman's mission to ensure her late husband's legacy. Four years after Traci Eddings' husband, Hoke, died in a plane crash, she struggles to keep afloat the Eddings family's long-running St. Cecelia resort hotel on an island off the Georgia coast. As employees leave for better opportunities, Traci hires a new executive chef and gets her niece, Parrish, to run the front desk, further straining her contentious relationship with her entitled brother-in-law, Ric, who's trying to cut Traci out of his father's will. Then tragedy rocks the hotel staff when someone close to Traci is murdered. As she works to keep guests happy during a police investigation, the hotel's landscaper, Whelan, a former P.I., mounts an investigation of his own. Mutual attraction ignites between Traci and Whelan even as he unearths some unusual information about a decades-old drowning death at the Saint that tore apart Traci and her former best friend, Shannon. Andrews's expert exploration of complex family dynamics, hidden secrets, and class divisions in a small resort town add authenticity to the gripping mystery and swoony romance."—*PW* Starred Review

Castle, Jayne (Jayne Ann Krentz). [People in Glass Houses](#) (Berkley \$29). Adopting her Castle literary alter ego, Krentz takes readers back to the entrancing and otherworldly realm of Harmony. John reviews: When her sister Leona vanishes, along with the rest of the Hollister expedition team, while exploring Harmony's underworld, Molly Griffin goes to the person who may have answers: Joshua Knight. Unfortunately, Joshua, the only member of the team to make his way back above ground, has no memory of what happened. Fortunately, Molly has a solution to that problem: she will use her psychic gifts as a dream walker to help Joshua regain his memory if he helps her find

Leona. The latest entry in Krentz's fascinating futuristic romantic suspense Harmony series ticks all the boxes for readers with its intrigue-infused, adrenaline-laced plotting; plenty of simmering sexual chemistry and witty banter, and a pair of protagonists, who could give Sam Spade and Brigid O'Shaughnessy a run for their money. [Sweetwater and the Witch](#) (\$8.99) came in 2023.

Clavin, Tom. [Throne of Grace](#) (St Martins \$30) Tip-ins. Clavin and Bob Drury present an explosive true saga of the legendary adventurer Jedediah Smith and the Mountain Men who explored the American lands purchased by President Thomas Jefferson.

Coben, Harlan. [Think Twice](#) (Grand Central \$30). Three years ago, sports agent Myron Bolitar gave a eulogy at the funeral of his client, renowned basketball coach Greg Downing. Myron and Greg had history: initially as deeply personal rivals, and later as unexpected business associates. Myron made peace and moved on – until now, when two federal agents walked into his office, demanding to know where Greg Downing is. According to the agents, Greg is still alive—and has been placed at the scene of a double homicide, making him their main suspect. Shocked, Myron needs answers. Myron and Win, longtime friends and colleagues, set out to find the truth, but the more they discover about Greg, the more dangerous their world becomes.

Comey, James. [Westport](#) (Penzler \$30). "Former FBI director Comey follows up *Central Park West* with an entertaining second whodunit featuring former assistant U.S. attorney Nora Carleton, now employed as general counsel for Saugatuck Associates of Westport, Connecticut. Saugatuck, the largest hedge fund in the world, is known for its rigid moral principles. Recently, however, COO Helen Carmichael has been casting doubt on that reputation, sharing concerns with Nora that someone may be leaking the company's secrets. When Helen is brutally murdered and the scene staged so Nora appears to be the primary suspect, she fears the allegations of a corporate mole were true. Facing a murder charge, Nora reaches out to her old friend Benny Dugan, a mafia investigator with the U.S. attorney's office, and her former boss, Carmen Garcia, for help. In the process of clearing her name, they find that Helen made enemies too numerous to count and may have been less of a friend to Nora than she appeared. Comey's done a fine job of polishing his dialogue... delivering a sufficiently crowd-pleasing blend of financial thriller and Agatha Christie-esque whodunit."

Connolly, John. [Instruments of Darkness](#) (Hodder UK \$44). A Starred Review praises this "rattling latest case for Charlie Parker where the Maine PI wrestles with potentially paranormal forces as he tries to determine if a young mother killed her own child. Charlie's friend, attorney Moxie Castin, has recently taken on the case of Colleen Clark, whose two-year-old son, Henry, vanished from his bed in the middle of the night. After Colleen's husband suggested to the police that she might have abducted Henry, authorities found a blanket soaked with the boy's blood hidden in her car. Moxie retains Charlie to help ferret out the truth and, after interviewing Colleen at length, he teams up with psychic Sabine Drew, who contacted police after she heard a boy's cries from beyond the grave. Together and apart, the detective and the psychic explore multiple leads, including one that points to the woman Colleen's husband was sleeping with. Meanwhile, sections describing a supernatural force emanating from a house deep within the Maine woods hint that something otherworldly



might be interfering with the case—and with the operations of a white nationalist militia called the Stonehurst Foundation, whose members are ramping up for violence in Portland. It's a lot of plates to spin, but Connolly pulls the whole thing off without a hitch.

Signed US edition: [The Instruments of Darkness](#) (Atria \$29.99). In theory we have special silver bookmarks to go with.

Crosby, Ellen. [Dodge and Burn](#) (Severn House \$29.99). Sophie Medina once jetted around the world at a moment's notice for the International Press Service, but she left that job to be closer to her family in Washington, D.C., after her CIA agent husband was murdered. She still takes private gigs such as the one she's pressured into for billionaire art and antiques collector Robson Blake, who wants her to photograph a rare patent apparently prepared by Thomas Jefferson that he stumbled across while browsing used books. Sophie agrees, and promises to turn over all her work to Blake once it's complete. The commission takes a deadly turn when Sophie discovers Blake dead in his home with one of his valuable antiques missing, and herself viewed as the killer. In the attempt to clear her name, she uncovers secrets about her own lineage that cause her to believe someone in her family may have set her up. At her trademark polished and brisk pace, Crosby excels at touring you around DC landmarks and history and into Virginia as she does in her wine mysteries. You should read [Blow Up](#) (\$18.99), the lead-in to this tale, first, as well as the earlier [Multiple Exposure](#) (\$17.95) and [Ghost Image](#) (\$17).

Du Brul, Jack. [Clive Cussler The Heist](#) (Putnam \$32). With no reading copy in hand I quote this *PW* rave: "Du Brul's dizzying latest Isaac Bell swashbuckler finds the intrepid detective under fire from a barrage of potentially connected crises. The year is 1914, and Bell is attending a meeting of the newly minted Federal Reserve onboard a yacht with his father, Ebenezer, and President Woodrow Wilson. Shortly after Wilson is called away on an emergency, a mysterious aircraft attempts to bomb the boat. Bell shoots at the bomber until it flees and plans to begin an investigation into the incident. But first, he's pulled into two seemingly unrelated cases. Socialite Jackson Pickett—a friend of Bell's boss, Joseph Van Dorn—has been arrested for the murder of his wife, heiress Fedora Scarsworth-Pickett. Then the Federal Bureau of Engraving is robbed to the tune of nearly a billion dollars. Finding the money and ferreting out the cause of Fedora's death takes plenty of first-class sleuthing...Here's hoping the series has more adventures like this one in store."

Finlay, Alex. [If Something Happens to Me](#) (St Martins \$28). A thriller with a great twist and a ruthless body count, publishes May 28, Signed here on June 10. Do preorder so we will have enough copies for his event.

Goldman, Matt. [Still Waters](#) (Forge \$29.99). Goldman never disappoints with his skill at turning what appears to be ordinary domestic drama into jolting suspense. And usually featuring Minnesotans, people so nice they could be Canadians. "My Mother has taken a few tumbles. And be warned. She's in a particularly bad mood today." "I live in New York, said. Liv. "A difficult Minnesotan in a foul mood is your average maitre d'." "I live in Los Angeles," said Gabe. "We call them producers." However nice this mix of Minnesotans, buried secrets lurk behind friendly faces. The action takes place first in Chicago and then in the family-owned resort up on Leech Lake where Liv, Gabe, and

their now murdered brother Mack Ahlstrom grew up. Ahlstroms, the resort, has grown, and grown up-market too, along with the small town nearby. Both are fertile ground for conflict and for unearthing buried truths. As ever, they are truly surprising. [Paperback edition](#) (\$18.99).

Goldstone, Lawrence. [Imperfect Union](#) (Academica \$29.99). May 8. In this new and original study of the origins of the United States Constitution, award winning scholar Lawrence Goldstone demonstrates that what was left out of the document by the Framers is of equal importance to what was included. I said no politics for us this year but this is not that and a deeper understanding of our Constitution is of benefit to everyone.

"In this engaging and insightful book, Lawrence Goldstone shows how the Constitution, which Americans venerate so much, is incomplete and partial. Taking us on a tour of the text and our shared history under it, *Imperfect Union* shows how things the Constitution overlooks have sowed two centuries of dissension and today threaten to undermine our republic. Wonderfully written and thoughtfully critical, *Imperfect Union* is a valuable contribution to our understanding of how the Constitution works – and how it doesn't."—Adam Winkler

Haddish, Tiffany. [I Curse You with Joy](#) (Diversion Books \$28.99) Tip-ins. Unfiltered essays by the comedian.

Hallberg, Garth Risk. [The Second Coming](#) (Knopf \$32) Tip-ins. When thirteen-year-old Jolie Aspern drops her phone onto the subway tracks in 2011, her estranged dad, Ethan, seems like the furthest thing from her mind. A convicted felon and recovering addict, Ethan has long struggled to see beyond himself. But then a call from New York makes him fear his daughter's in deeper trouble than anyone realizes. And believing he's the only one who can save her, he decides to return home. So begins the journey that will, in time, push Jolie and Ethan—child and adult, apart and together, different yet the same—out past their depths.

Hanson, Hart. [The Seminarian](#) (Blackstone \$26.99). Lesa reviews Hanson's second thriller, this time set in Venice Beach, California: Xavier "Priest" Priestly is a former seminarian turned licensed legal investigator. His best friend Dusty Queen, a stuntwoman who moonlights as a bodyguard, has been mooning over an escort, Nikki Celeste, and Nikki's disappearance forces Dusty to hire Priest to find her. Priest is attacked with a stun gun and left in the trunk of his car after being injected with several drugs. When he comes to enough to talk with the police, he only remembers a woman in a blue wig. The searches for Priest's attacker and Nikki are sidetracked when Tarquin, a 12-year-old boy shows up, claiming Priest is his father; friends insist they can see the family resemblance. When Priest sends Tarquin back to his grandfather in Vegas, everyone in Priest's life disapproves, from Dusty to Priest's fishing buddy to his lawyer. It's going to take some lying and fast work to find Nikki, the attacker, and bring Tarquin home, but smart-alecky Priest is up to it. The creator and writer of the TV show *Bones* introduces a wacky cast of characters in his second fast-paced, action-packed novel 2017 First Mystery Club Pick *The Driver*." I add that *The Driver* was less unfiltered.

Higgins, Kristan. [Look on the Bright Side](#) (Berkley \$30). In a welcome to romantic June (she signs June 1), "Higgins proves her mastery of the romance genre in this emotional tour de force. Lark Smith fell in love with her late fiancé, Justin, in

kindergarten. Now, seven years after his death, she doesn't believe she'll ever love again and pours all her passion into her work as an oncology resident. That's why she's so disappointed when she's demoted to the ER due to her overly emotional reaction to the death of her favorite patient. So when universally despised surgeon Lorenzo Santini (aka Dr. Satan) asks her to pose as his girlfriend at a family wedding to placate his grandmother, Lark reluctantly agrees in exchange for 25 grand and Santini's promise that he can get her back in oncology. While Dr. Satan lives up to his nickname, Lark falls in love with his welcoming Italian family—especially his brother Dante, who has a surprising tie to her past. Braided into this central romance plot are the stories of Lark's mother, Elsbeth, and her landlady, Joy. When Elsbeth discovers that her husband has had an emotional affair, Joy, who's spent a lifetime recovering from her father's psychological abuse, offers her a place to stay and the women heal together. Higgins balances tear-jerking moments with happiness and hope."—*PW* Starred Review

Iles, Greg. [Southern Man](#) (Harper \$36). Tip-ins. Iles, being treated for a dangerous illness, steps into no less dangerous territory. Fifteen years after the events of the *Natchez Burning Trilogy*, Penn Cage is alone. Nearly all his loved ones are dead, his old allies gone, and he carries a mortal secret that separates him from the world. But Penn's exile comes to an end when a brawl at a Mississippi rap festival triggers a bloody mass shooting—one that nearly takes the life of his daughter Annie. As the stunned cities of Natchez and Bienville reel, antebellum plantation homes continue to burn and the deadly attacks are claimed by a Black radical group as historic acts of justice. Panic sweeps through the tourist communities. But what might have been only a regional sideshow of the 2024 Presidential election explodes into national prominence, thanks to the stunning ascent of Robert E. Lee White, a Southern war hero who seizes the public imagination as a third-party candidate. Dubbed "the Tik-Tok Man," and funded by an eccentric Mississippi billionaire, Bobby White rides the glory of his Special Forces record to an unprecedented run at the White House—one unseen since the campaign of H. Ross Perot. To triumph over the national party machines, Bobby evolves a plan of unimaginable daring. Read it to discover what that will be....

Ignatius, David. [Phantom Orbit](#) (Norton \$29.99). *Washington Post* columnist Ignatius writes fine, low action, character driven spy thrillers which I find akin to the work of Joseph Kanon. Here he expands that universe with a nifty concept that is prescient as well: major powers jockeying for dominance in space. It follows Ivan Volkov, a Russian student in Beijing, who discovers an unsolved puzzle in the writings of the 17th-century astronomer Johannes Kepler. Becoming an unlikely scholarship winner in astronomy at Beijing's Tsinghua University, Volkov takes the puzzle to Professor Cao Lin, a senior scientist in the Chinese space program, and declares his intention to solve it. The puzzle holds untold consequences for space warfare. While at Tsinghua Volkov briefly romances American student Edith Ryan. He then returns to Moscow, marries, fathers a son who grows up to become a Russian prosecutor, and draws on his research with Cao Lin to become a major figure in Russia's satellite warfare program. But his personal life craters and he manages to reconnect with Edith—now a CIA analyst—to warn the U.S. of dangerous tactics being utilized by Russian forces that could

pose a global threat. "Ignatius alternates chapters between Ivan, Cao Lin, Edith, and Ivan's son, Dmitry, patiently knitting together their storylines until the high-stakes espionage plot achieves liftoff. This is contemporary cloak-and-dagger intrigue at its finest."

Jean, Emiko. [The Return of Ellie Black](#) (Simon & Schuster \$27.99). **AAPI**. Ellie Black, emaciated and traumatized, is found in a Washington state forest two years after she was kidnapped from a parking lot near her hometown. Who took her and how she escaped confound police detective Chelsey Calhoun because Ellie is evading her questions. The toll her disappearance takes on her parents and high school boyfriend is acutely painted with heartbreak and the anguish that comes with not knowing whether Ellie is alive. Chelsey, who is of Japanese heritage adopted into a white family, carries a double load of challenges as she fends off sexism and racism on the job and in her community while working the case. Like Jessica Knoll, whose crime novels also revolve around missing girls, Jean focuses less on sensationalizing predators and more on the tragedy of a "frenzy of missing girls. They do not give answers. They do not speak of what has come to pass. They whisper: Find us. Please." Jean, who has written young adult fiction and the novel *Mika in Real Life* (2022), has written an impressive crime novel here with an unexpected ending and a cadre of heroic female characters. It's a perfect read for AAPI Month.

Johnson, Craig. [First Frost](#) (Viking \$29.99). It's the summer of 1964, and recent college graduates Walt Longmire and Henry Standing Bear read the writing on the wall and enlist to serve in the Vietnam War. As they catch a few final waves in California before reporting for duty, a sudden storm assaults the shores and capsizes a nearby cargo boat. Walt and Henry jump to action, but it's soon revealed by the police who greet them ashore that the sunken boat carried valuable contraband from underground sources. The boys, in their early twenties and in the peak of their physical prowess from playing college football for the last four years, head out on Route 66. The question, of course, is how far they will get before the consequences of their actions catch up to them—the answer being, not very. Back in the present day, Walt is forced to speak before a Judge following the fatal events of The Longmire Defense. With powerful enemies lurking behind the scenes, the sheriff of Absaroka County faces another pivotal moment, and decision, in his life.

July, Miranda. [All Fours](#) (Penguin \$29) Tip-ins. For the narrator, a "semi-famous" bisexual woman artist in her mid-40s living in Los Angeles, it's only by haphazard chance that she's fallen into a traditional straight marriage and motherhood. When the narrator needs to be in New York for work, she decides on a solo road trip as a way of forcing herself to be more engaged with her life. She makes it all of 30 minutes when, for reasons she doesn't quite understand, she pulls over in Monrovia. After encountering a man who wipes her windows at a gas station and then chats with her at the local diner, she checks in to a motel, where she begins an all-consuming intimacy with him. For the first time in her life, she feels truly present. But then she must go home and figure out how to live the rest of a life "that she—that any woman in midlife—has no map for. "July's novel is a characteristically witty, startlingly intimate take on Dante's "In the middle of life's journey, I found myself in a dark wood"....

Kwon, R O. [Exhibit](#) (Penguin \$28) Tip-ins. **AAPI**. “Kwon’s follow-up to *The Incendiaries* provides a glimpse inside the lives and marriage of Philip and his artist/photographer wife, Jin. After the two meet ballet dancer Lidija at a party, Jin and Lidija forge a friendship that deepens as Jin confides the difficulties in her marriage. Jin and Lidija soon begin an affair, with Lidija as the dominatrix in their BDSM relationship. Interspersed within this story are chapters that eerily relay the words of a Korean *kiaseng* (akin to a geisha), telling of her enslavement at the age of six and later of her own desires with a woman lover. Kwon specifically touches upon the fetishized perception of Asian women in society and, as in her previous novel, dissects the lives of a couple in conflict, where a third party becomes a divisive threat. She explores themes of traditional and nontraditional love, marriage, and parenthood. Race, culture, and identity are also addressed, especially when readers later learn that Philip’s birth name was Felipe, and he grew up speaking Spanish. Fragmented chapters, as is Kwon’s style, might make this novel a challenging read for some, but the work offers much for book groups and individuals to ponder.”—*LJ*

MacNeal, Susan Elia. [The Last Hope](#) (Random \$29). **Publishes May 28, Signed here on June 6, 7:00 PM**. “In the gripping swan song for the bestselling Maggie Hope series, MacNeal weaves fascinating bits of real-life espionage into her intrepid British spy’s final mission. In January 1944, Maggie receives an assignment from Kim Philby, the head of the Iberian Section of MI6. Her mission is to go to Spain, where German physicist Werner Heisenberg, winner of the 1932 Nobel Prize, will be lecturing at the University of Madrid. Based on the contents of that lecture, Maggie is to determine how close the Nazis are to developing an atomic bomb, and to assassinate Heisenberg if necessary. That’s not her only mission: at the same time, Coco Chanel, who saved Maggie’s life during a 1941 mission in Paris, wants the British spy to serve as a go-between for herself and Winston Churchill. First, however, Maggie must suss out where exactly the fashion designer’s loyalties lie. MacNeal avoids playing too fast and loose with the historical record, proving that truth—including Chanel’s ties to both the Nazis and the British royal family—really is stranger than fiction. It all makes for a marvelously high-stakes adventure,” says *PW*. Can’t wait!

McKinlay, Jenn. [Love at First Book](#) (Berkley \$18). Signing with Higgins June 1, the multi-genre-producing McKinlay gives you romance. Emily Allen, a librarian on Martha’s Vineyard, has always dreamed of a life of travel and adventure. So when her favorite author, Siobhan Riordan, offers her a job in the Emerald Isle, Emily jumps at the opportunity. After all, Siobhan’s novels got Em through some of the darkest days of her existence. When Em arrives in the quaint Irish village where her favorite novelist lives, the last thing she expects is to fall for the author’s prickly son... until their story becomes one for the books.

Moore, Graham. [The Wealth of Shadows](#) (Knopf \$29.99). “Based on astonishing true events, both a gripping, cinematic story of wartime subterfuge, and a powerful reminder of how even the most unlikely people can become resistance fighters during times of crisis.”—Flynn Berry. Yes, there are so many amazing things about our **May Crime Book of the Month** it’s difficult to list them. The economics behind the rebirth of Germany and the Nazi war machine, the role of John Maynard Keynes in nearly thwarting isolationist America’s aid to Europe, the role of the

Treasury Department’s rogue operators and the complicity of FDR in trying to funnel arms and funds despite Congress (sound familiar?), the crucial role of the US dollar, and finally the quiet and patient work of one man, a real person, Ansel Luxford, who stayed out of the limelight his entire life. . . . “Fascinating and compulsively readable. Featuring an unlikely and unsung hero who outthinks some of the world’s greatest financial minds, the novel is also a deep meditation on the nature of money, a dramatic and eye-opening explanation of what really triggered our entry into World War II, and a powerful depiction of the people and forces that changed global finance forever.” All this in a character-driven, low action thriller by bestseller and screenwriter (*The Imitation Game*, etc) Moore who has signed his debut *The Sherlockian* and every other book with The Pen. Additionally, I picked it because of the deep parallels to what’s going on today.

Panowich, Brian. [Nothing But the Bones](#) (Minotaur \$28). Patrick reviews the **May Hardboiled/Noir Book of the Month**: I’ve been a big fan of Panowich’s work ever since his first novel, *Bull Mountain*. He’s steadily built a name for himself with a group of gritty, poetic southern noirs, and now he takes readers back in time with a prequel. Clayton Burroughs is not yet sheriff, his dad Garrett the reigning crime boss of Bull Mountain. “Nails” McKenna is one of Garrett’s enforcers, a physically imposing hardcase with a difficult family background. When McKenna witnesses a young woman being abused by a man in a bar, he steps in to help and ultimately the man ends up dead. McKenna is forced on the run, and Dallas, the damaged woman he just rescued, goes along with him. If you haven’t read Panowich, this is a great place to start.

Parsons, Bob. [Fire in the Hole!](#) (Forefront Books \$29). Born in the tough town of East Baltimore to parents who were inveterate gamblers, billionaire philanthropist Bob Parsons’ early years were marked by hardship and financial struggle. While he vowed his own children would never lack for anything, never did he imagine the wealth he would one day amass as the founder of Parsons Technology, GoDaddy, PXG Golf, and YAM Worldwide. In his first book, a memoir, the extraordinary entrepreneur recounts the exploits of his youth, his hellish days at the mercy of Catholic school nuns, his harrowing tour of combat duty in Vietnam as a US Marine, his pioneering contributions to the software and internet industries, and his latest ventures in power sports, golf, real estate, and marketing. Along the way, we witness his remarkable resilience as he copes with his mother’s mental illness and his father’s struggles, battles PTSD resulting from both his childhood and war traumas, and mounts a quest to find new and effective treatments for himself and others who suffer from this affliction

Solvinic, Nicola. [The Hunter’s Daughter](#) (Dutton \$28) is our **May First Mystery Book of the Month**. Why? “Solvinic delivers a terrific thriller that readers will find hard to believe is her first novel. . . . A mix of Karen Dionne’s *The Marsh King’s Daughter* and Thomas Harris’s *The Silence of the Lambs*, this impressive novel spotlights the difficulty of escaping a troubling past. Add some supernatural elements, and the result is a tale to remember.”—*Library Journal* Starred Review.

Anna Koray, a detective in the Midwestern Bayern County Sheriff’s Office, kills someone in the line of duty and, while recuperating, begins to experience the return of locked-



away memories. Anna has long lived under an assumed name to escape her past, as her father, Stephen Theron, was a notorious serial killer known as the Forest Strangler (the Forest God is called Veles) and her mother put her up for adoption and disappeared into WitSec. When Anna should be on leave from work, she can't help herself from investigating a mysterious death with parallels to her father's style of displaying his victims' bodies. Anna's father has been executed years ago for strangling 27 women, but whoever is responsible for the new spate of murders count seems to know way too much about her father's MO for it to be a coincidence. Though Anna, who carries the same DNA variant as Stephen, has started a new life, her search for answers puts her future in jeopardy.

Straw, Tom. [The Accidental Joe: The Top Secret Life of a Celebrity Chef](#) (Regalo Press \$30). No, this is not a memoir, it's a debut culinary espionage travel thriller with an abrasive narrator. "Sebastian Pike is a wonderful addition to the annals of amateur sleuths of the crime/spy genre. Wisecracking and wounded, his clear, innocent voice carries a deep understanding of the world we know and, more importantly, the world that we suspect. *The Accidental Joe* is a Hitchcockian spy story: surrounded by more spies than he knows, Pike is the ultimate amateur, a chef-provocateur for a cable TV reality show balancing a tower of *croquembouche* in the South of France amidst a dizzyingly fast-paced mission filled with assassins and betrayals."—Walter Mosley. SJ Rozan is also on board saying, "Great action, clever tradecraft, behind-the-scenes TV production, and food porn, all offered up by one of the most appealing narrators I've come across in years. I hope Tom Straw is intending this to be a series because I'm already on line for the next one."

Sullivan, Mark. [All the Glimmering Stars](#) (Thomas & Mercer \$28.99; [Unsigned paperback](#) (\$16.99)). Once again Sullivan fashions masterful and moving fiction out of a true story. Anthony Opoka and Florence Okori are coming of age in Uganda in the 1990s. Outstanding students, they believe in being good humans before they are kidnapped and forced into the fanatical Lord's Resistance Army. In a legion of young recruits, no one gets closer than Anthony to powerful messianic warlord Joseph Kony and his darkest secrets. To stay sane as he spirals through chaos, Anthony clings to his childhood lessons about being a good human. Florence's upbringing grounds her, too, helping her keep her dreams alive even as she's pulled deeper into the insanity of Kony's war. At the lowest points of their lives, certain they'll never go home, Anthony and Florence meet by chance, fall in love, and begin to dream of surviving their captivity. They devote their lives to helping their fellow child soldiers escape bondage and return to their families and redemption by following the stars.

"Set amid the harrowing chaos of Joseph Kony's cult like regime and his abducted children turned soldiers, an extraordinary narrative of love and unwavering resilience emerges. The intertwined journey of Anthony Opoka and Florence Okori stands as a luminous symbol of hope. Their love becomes a refuge, a testament to the human spirit's endurance."—Jamie Ford

✦ Thomas, Will. [Death and Glory](#) (St Martins \$28). I think of Will's long running series as a cross between Conan Doyle and Anne Perry in terms of the characters and the various landscapes of London the novels embrace. Victorian landscapes. I say Sherlock Holmes because Cyrus Barker is a Holmes like

character although far more robust, and Thomas Llewelyn is something like Watson. Will's interest is diving into aspects of history, some global, rather than the purely British. Here he comes up with an ingenious plot set in 1894 involving four officers from the Confederate army—General James Woodson, Brigadier David St. Ives, Colonel Zebedee Beaufort, and Captain Manuel Cortes—who have left the far-flung places in Latin America where they've been soldiering on to ask enquiry agents Cyrus Barker and Thomas Llewelyn to wangle them an audience with Prime Minister Lord Rosebery. Granted 15 minutes, they waste no time in demanding that England fulfill an 1865 treaty that promised to deliver the Confederacy an ironclad warship. "Things can't possibly go well for the Crown whether it grants or denies the request, since the nation will either be breaking faith with its most hallowed diplomatic practices or ratifying the Confederacy as a going concern in 1894. Barker and Llewelyn can't ignore the genie they've helped escape from the bottle, and in short order they accompany St. Ives, a notorious sensualist, to some of London's most tawdry fleshpots, dig up information they hope can impugn all four of the envoys-come-lately, and follow up hints that link the treaty to both the recent murder of former U.S. senator turned Confederate diplomat Jubal Slidell, the last survivor of the real-life seizure of two Confederate officers from *HMS Trent* during the war, and two wildly unlikely historical figures who are supposed to have died long ago.

Turton, Stuart. [The Last Murder at the End of the World](#) (Sourcebooks \$27.99). Turton is, as his admirers well know, an unclassifiable but always elegant and gripping storyteller. Here he imagines a future world and populates it with an array of marvelous characters—and gives them a murder to solve to save it. It's the top Library Reads Pick for May: "After a deadly fog decimates most of humanity, the small population that's left lives on an island. As one villager begins investigating a murder, what once seemed like utopia begins to reveal dark secrets that no one could have predicted. Turton raises tantalizing social questions, presents an inventive world structure, and keeps readers intrigued and surprised throughout the novel."

Ware, Ruth. [One Perfect Couple](#) (Gallery \$28.99). British bestseller Ware is a master of the enclosed space (think Christie's *And Then There Were None*) structure for her twisty thrillers. Here it's Ever After Island in the remote Indian Ocean. Virologist Lyla is in a bit of a rut. Her post-doctoral research has fizzled out, she's pretty sure they won't extend her contract, and things with her boyfriend, Nico, an aspiring actor, are dicey. When Nico pressures her to try out for the cast of a new reality TV show, *One Perfect Couple*—contestants can only be couples—she reluctantly gives in. A whirlwind audition process later, Lyla find herself whisked off to a tropical paradise with Nico, which proves to be no paradise and what with the storm and the killer on the loose, also proves the real stakes for the contestants are life or death. I agree with a reader who says, "The reality show premise allows the reader to brainstorm ways Lyla might strategize to make Nico's dreams come true while honoring her own ticking clock agenda. Later her strategy shifts to survival and figuring out who is friend and who is foe."

✦ Weaver, Ashley. [Locked in Pursuit](#) (St Martins \$28). When Electra Weaver, a thief with locksmithing talents now working for British military intelligence, reads a newspaper account of a robbery at a diplomat's dinner party, she suspects it may



be connected to one of her previous missions. She brings her suspicions to her handler, Major Gabriel Ramsey—one of her two love interests, a hot guy rigidly devoted to duty—and together they discover that the Nazis are tearing through London and Portugal in search of a map that identifies the location of a tungsten mine they need to manufacture munitions. To foil the Germans' plans, Ellie joins forces with her second love interest, forger Felix Lacey. The relationships in this relatively low key series are what draw you in, as well as the backstory of whether Ellie's mother murdered her father, rumored to have worked with the Germans, in WWI.

Wolf, Sara. [Heavenbreaker](#) (Entangled \$32.50). **Not Signed** but an example of the gorgeous editions the publisher of Rebecca Yarros is putting out with stunning end papers and sprayed and stenciled edges. They are works of art. As for the story, it's described as "a seamless, captivating blend of *Ender's Game*, *Pacific Rim*, and the knights of King Arthur with its own innovative twists and sublimely crafted sci-fi world. A brutal, sharply gripping, full-tilt ride that will become your new obsession." And has earned Starred Reviews across the board including this from *Kirkus*: "While the SF elements... are brilliantly done, it's the insightful characterization and emotional vulnerability of Synali that powers this story. Her pain, incendiary anger, self-doubt, and ultimate courage will resonate with more than a few readers... Synali could be the next Katniss Everdeen." Start your teen on collecting beautiful books (and reading them) and as more are coming, start your own addition to your library.

And another like this from Entangled is Mai Corland, [Five Broken Blades \(Deluxe Limited Edition\)](#) (\$32.99), a series start. It's the season for treason... The five most dangerous liars in the land have been mysteriously summoned to work together for a single objective: to kill the god king Joon. He has it coming....

## CLASSICS

✦ Ferguson, John. [Death of Mr. Dodsley](#) (Poisoned Pen \$15.99). British Library Crime Classics editor Martin Edwards introduces a fair play, double twist mystery where a beloved London bookseller with a passion for rare books is found shot to death in his locked bookshop. Mr. Richard Dodsley, owner of second-hand emporium on Charing Cross Road, has been found murdered in the cold hours of the morning. He'd been shot in his own office, where few clues remain besides three cigarette ends, two spent matches, and a few books on the shelves which have been rearranged. In an investigation spanning the secondhand bookshops of London and the Houses of Parliament, Ferguson's series sleuth MacNab, is at hand to assist Scotland Yard

✦ Giroux, EX. [Death for a Dancer/A Death for a Doctor](#) (Felony & Mayhem \$28.95 pbk). London barrister Robert Forsythe's cased 3 and 4 in one volume. Blackmailer Katherine St. Croix is found dead in the Japanese temple on Amyas Dancer's estate and barrister Robert Forsythe is called in to crack the case. And who would kill the village sawbones, nice Dr. Foster, not to mention his pretty wife? Enjoy a pair of English village mysteries.

Latimer, Jonathan. [The Fifth Grave: The Unexpurgated Text](#) (Stark House \$11.99). Karl Craven is a P.I. who hits town on a simple but well-paying job. He's been hired to get a young woman out of a local religious cult. He's also looking for his

partner. Then he finds out that his partner's been murdered. Nor does it look like Penelope has any intention of leaving the cult. So all Craven has to do is rescue the girl and find out who killed his partner. But in a city this corrupt, he also has to stay one step ahead of a shady police chief and a vicious gangster. Then he meets Princess, a sexy bit of blonde poison... The cover art is similar to that featured in Hard Case Crime editions.

✦ Lorac, ECR. [Death of an Author](#) (Poisoned Pen \$15.99). This British Library Crime Classic is so good I repeat urging you to try it. Vivian Lestrage—celebrated author of the popular mystery novel *The Charterhouse Case* and total recluse—has apparently dropped off the face of the Earth. After he was reported missing by his secretary Eleanor, whom Inspector Bond suspects to be the author herself, crime and murder are afoot when Lestrage's housekeeper is also found to have disappeared. Bond and Warner of Scotland Yard set to work to investigate a murder with no body and a potentially fictional victim. Introduction by Martin Edwards.

Patrick, Q. [SS Murder](#) (American Mystery Classics \$15.95). A Golden Age Mystery set aboard a luxury liner during the Golden Age of nautical travel is a nice lead in to summer. Cub reporter Mary Llewellyn is on a soothing sea cruise to help her recover after a minor operation. Her fellow passengers are pleasant enough, gathering to play a friendly game of bridge to pass the time. But the game turns considerably less so when a wealthy businessman samples a cocktail—and ends up dead at the table. The news that someone onboard dumped a fatal dose of strychnine into the man's drink sends a ripple of panic through the voyagers. All too soon, it becomes clear that the murder was not an isolated incident when another passenger is shoved overboard during a storm. Determined to stop a murderer, Mary decides to do some snooping above and below deck. Fun Fact: the author is a shared pseudonym used by Sweeney Todd author Hugh Wheeler and his lover Ricky Webb.

## GIFTS FOR MOM

**Don't forget the [Poisoned Pen Gift Card](#).** It's flexible and can be for any dollar amount or for a specific book that might deliver late or not yet be published. **For the Mother's Day image card, please request it at checkout**

Also signing Mom up for a [Book of the Month Club](#) that shows her your love every month for as long as the membership last. Email [Karen@poisonedpen.com](mailto:Karen@poisonedpen.com) to enroll her and we will send an acknowledgement. It's not too late to catch the May Club selections. The titles are listed above right after the Events roster, and they are a terrific batch of Picks.

*Cards...if they arrive in time, in store only for now*

Mulberry Note Cards (\$6.99 each). These stunning handmade Mulberry paper note cards from Laos are made with real flowers. Each folding note card comes with an extra piece of Mulberry paper for writing a message to include inside the card, and an envelope also made with Mulberry paper. The set is protected by a clear plastic sheath for shipping and display. They are completely organic and can be recycled (if Mom doesn't want to cherish hers).

*Books... Any of the cozies noted below for May 5's Cozypalooza*  
Bradley, Kaliane. [The Ministry of Time](#) (Avid Reader \$28.99). If Mom is an *Outlander* fan, there's nothing new but Diana will

sign her books. Browse them [HERE](#). But, here's a debut by a British author that is exciting. "If you're a fan of *Outlander*, spy novels, time travel books, or just really innovative and fun storytelling, *The Ministry of Time* is definitely for you." —*Town & Country*. It's part time travel romance, part spy thriller and 100% "multi-faceted joyride." A recently established government ministry is gathering "expats" from across history to establish whether time travel is feasible—for the body, but also for the fabric of space-time.

A civil servant is offered big bucks and is tasked with working as a "bridge": living with, assisting, and monitoring the expat known as "1847" or Commander Graham Gore. As far as history is concerned, Commander Gore died on Sir John Franklin's doomed 1845 expedition to the Arctic, so he's a little disoriented to be living with an unmarried woman who regularly shows her calves, surrounded by outlandish concepts such as 'washing machines,' 'Spotify,' and 'the collapse of the British Empire.' But with an appetite for discovery, a seven-a-day cigarette habit, and the support of a charming and chaotic cast of fellow expats, he soon adjusts. Over the next year, what she initially thought would be, at best, a horrifically uncomfortable roommate dynamic, evolves into something much deeper. By the time the true shape of the Ministry's project comes to light, the bridge has fallen haphazardly, fervently in love, with consequences she never could have imagined.

✦ Goodman, Alison. [The Benevolent Society of Ill-Mannered Ladies](#) (Penguin \$17). This has become our bestselling historical mystery in paperback, just delightful. In 1812, Lady Augusta "Gus" Colebrook and her twin sister Julia are 42. They are considered spinsters, lucky to have their own income and their own household. Despite their status in society, Gus is bored. After a successful retrieval of letters for a friend threatened with blackmail, she has an idea: Why shouldn't she and Julia have adventures while helping other women?

Heath, Virginia. [All's Fair in Love and War](#) (St Martins \$18). A "Fabulous start to a fun new series, delightfully delicious, and a really funny, emotional read. See our May Large Paperback Picks for more on our **May Historical Paperback Book of the Month**.

Karber, GT. [Murdle Volume 3](#) (St Martins \$16). Deductive Logico is ready to kick back and relax on his long-awaited vacation...but murder doesn't take time off. In *Murdle: Volume 3*, these clever and hilarious mini-mystery puzzles will challenge you to find whodunit, how, where, and why. Use your skills of deduction to solve each mystery one by one. Reveal the mastermind behind the SPY secret agency and discover the secret location of TekTopia. Uncover the truth about the evil AI supercomputer MORIARTY before it's too late! Packed with illustrations, codes, and maps, and brimming with wit and intrigue, *Murdle: Volume 3* is a thrilling casebook for the armchair detective in everyone. Or, give Mom [the whole set of 3 volumes](#).

Prasad, Aarathi. [Silk: A World History](#) (Harper \$32.50). In a gorgeous history that spans continents and millennia, a Next Big Idea Book Club Must-Read, Prasad weaves together the complex story of the queen of fabrics. Explorers and scientists, including groundbreaking women who pushed the boundaries of societal expectations, dedicated—even sacrificed—their lives to investigate the anatomy of silk-producing animals.

They endured unbelievable hardships to discover and collect new specimens, leading them to the moths of China, Indonesia, and India; the spiders of Argentina, Paraguay, and Madagascar; and the mollusks of the Mediterranean. Rich with the complex connections between human and nonhuman worlds, *Silk* not only peers into the past but also reveals the fiber's impact today, inspiring new technologies across the fashion, military, and medical fields, and shows its untapped potential to pioneer a more sustainable future. This book is truly amazing!

Tan, Amy, et al. [The Backyard Bird Chronicles](#) (Knopf \$35), a memoir, is additionally a gorgeous, witty account of birding, nature, and the beauty around us that hides in plain sight. "The drawings and essays in this book do a lot more than just describe the birds. They carry a sense of discovery through observation and drawing, suggest the layers of patterns in the natural world, and emphasize a deep personal connection between the watcher and the watched. The birds that inhabit Amy Tan's backyard seem a lot like the characters in her novels." —David Allen Sibley, from the foreword

### COZY CRIMES

Aubray, Camille. [The Girl from the Grand Hotel](#) (Blackstone \$26.99). The author of [Cooking for Picasso](#) (\$18) has fun bringing you into the glamorous world of the first (and doomed) Cannes Film Festival and the deadly atmosphere of Europe on the brink of war. The narrative features movie stars, spies, Nazis, mystery, and intrigue, and it all takes place at the Grand Hôtel du Cap des Rêves in 1939. Notable appearances in the novel include Marlene Dietrich, F. Scott Fitzgerald, the Kennedys, James Cagney, Mae West, Gary Cooper, George Raft and Norma Shearer. So spies, but also murder. It's a bit of a stretch for a cozy but there's no overt sex or violence, the hotel itself is a main character as is running it in the proper way, and I like the way the lives of the characters play out. Most of all it drops you into a glamorous time on the French Riviera, so perfect for our **May Cozy Crimes Book of the Month**. I did consider Ann Claire's series debut noted below, for our May Pick but while the landscape and vibe are delightful the mystery is weak. Still, why not spend time on the gorgeous Côte d'Azur in May?

Berenson, Laurien. [Peg and Rose Stir Up Trouble](#) (Kensington \$17.95). Greenwich, Connecticut, seniors Peg and Rose becomes partners at a bridge club where most of the players are retired. Then one is murdered. "This spin-off from Berenson's Melanie Travis mysteries (Melanie is Peg and Rose's niece) combines well-delineated but very different senior protagonists with details of raising, showing, and judging show dogs, especially poodles. The resolution of the long-standing feud sets the table for future outings starring cases for the sisters-in-law turned sleuths." —*Booklist*

Carcattera, Lorenzo. [Nonna Maria and the Case of the Lost Treasure](#) (Random \$28). Back in action on her beloved Italian island of Ischia, amateur detective Nonna Maria uses her grandmotherly wiles to prevent the killing of a *Carabinieri* Captain and to help lead a young woman to her late grandfather's hidden treasure. I love it that Carcattera who used to write tough NY cop/criminals thrillers has shifted into a charming amateur sleuth series—literary cozies says one fan. "The novel is best enjoyed for its history and culture. Carcattera takes us back centuries to the Cemetery of Dead Nuns, where the

bodies of nuns of a certain order were left in seated positions on stone 'death chairs.' He introduces us to the Mourners, a group of women formed in 1943 who lost husbands and sons in the Allied bombings of Italy. As for the hundreds of cases of wine supposedly hidden in the caves—"That's my idea of a lost treasure," says Nonna Maria."

Claire, Ann. [A Cyclist's Guide to Crime & Croissants](#) (Kensington \$27) is an escapist new cozy mystery series starring Chicagoan Sadie Green, American expat-turned-bike tour company owner in Southern France, a nice fit for readers of ML Longworth's wonderful Provençal mysteries. Sadie bought a sight-unseen French bicycling tour company, Oui Cycle, that turns "Non" when her former boss visits and is murdered. "Storybook villages, delicious French cuisine, a mysterious gendarme, and murder. An original new voice in mysteries, Ann Claire hits all the right notes with scents, scenery, the people, and the fantastic food. Intriguing characters will keep you wondering as they bicycle through charming towns to the brilliant conclusion. Warning: you'll want to stock up on French cheeses and croissants!"

If you want to step into romance in Southern France, here's a lovely novel: Birkelund, Elizabeth. [A Northern Light in Provence](#) (Random \$29). A woman proficient in French leaves her coastal Greenland village to translate the works of a renowned Provençal poet and finds her life irrevocably changed, in this tender and romantic novel set in a French village. "A charming and beautifully written novel about self-discovery, the power of language, and yes, love!"—Sara Gruen, author of *Water for Elephants*

Davis, Krista. [The Diva Goes Overboard](#) (Kensington \$27). In Old Town Alexandria's unlikeliest match, Natasha Smith's free-spirited mother, Wanda, is engaged to notoriously pompous antiques dealer, Orson Chatsworth—leaving Natasha to plan the entire wedding, beginning with an elaborate engagement party with the aid of entertainment ace Sophie Winston. When the groom collapses, it seems as if a heart attack is to blame. You mystery fans know better.... This new Domestic Diva cozy includes delicious recipes, fabulous decorating tips, and easy entertaining hacks!

Erickson, Alex. [A Pose Before Dying](#) (Kensington \$17.95). From the bestselling author of the Bookshop Café Mysteries, the first in an exciting new series featuring a young female entrepreneur who's just opened her dream business – a yoga studio filled with adorable, adoptable cats! If only helping humans fund balance and felines find homes didn't also require she investigate the purrfect murder... Love the cover art and the cat.

Freeman, Dianne. [A Newlywed's Guide to Fortune and Murder](#) (\$16.95). American-born widow Frances Hazelton, Countess of Harleigh, finds her wedding and honeymoon disrupted when two American robber baron families come to London to mingle with the English upper crust. Their rivalries are vicious. The daughter of one is invited to attend the nuptials by Frances' brother Alonzo while her mother invites one of the other. Murder ensues and Alonzo is the chief suspect. This is a new chapter in an award-winning historical cozy series.

Haines, Carolyn. [Lights, Camera, Bones](#) (St Martins \$28). In #27 for Southern PI Sarah Boot Delany, the Delaney Detective Agency gets a taste of the spotlight when they are called to a case

on a movie set in Greenville, MS, right on the Mississippi River. Marlon Brandon, heir to a wealthy and influential political family, has brought a film crew to town to film a drama about the 1927 flood that submerged a great deal of Greenville. Marlon wants the world to know the story of the flood-and the heroic role the Brandon ancestors played in rescuing dozens of local residents from drowning. Or at least that was the plan until he disappeared. If this weren't concerning enough, the situation appears even direr when a severed foot is discovered in the Mississippi River, and clues indicate that Marlon may have fallen victim to a freak bull shark attack....

✦ January, Ava. [The Mayfair Dagger](#) (Crooked Lane \$29.99). London, 1894. Albertine Honeycombe never wanted a husband and certainly not the one with fifteen children that her cousin, Aubrey, is trying to marry her off to. She reinvents herself as Countess Von Dagga, a private detective aiding the upper echelons of women in society. As the Countess, she is a married woman, with a conveniently absent husband who doesn't exist, which allows her far more freedom than being single. When Lord Grendel, from whom she has recovered blackmail letters, is murdered, Albertine is suspect number one—having been the last person to see him. And when the Duke of Erleigh comes looking for her husband, Albertine also becomes the prime suspect in her fictional husband's death.

Lourey, Jess. [May Day](#) (\$16.99). Reissued from 2006, the first in Lourey's Murder by the Month Mysteries. It's delightful, set in rural small town Battle Lake, Minnesota, and capturing its ethos perfectly. A reluctant Miranda James has moved there, jobless and homeless and lover-less to take a job in the library. A bonus is a part time gig as an on-call reporter for the weekly newspaper. She meets a handsome archaeologist in town to survey a big farm for a potential theme park development. Jeff is handsome and kind and sexy. And very soon dead on the floor of Miranda's library.... A low-key charmer for you that John and I recommend.

McCown, Marjorie. [Star Struck](#) (Crooked Lane \$31.99). I loved Final Cut, a 2023 Cozy Crimes Club Pick featuring Hollywood costumer Joey Jessup, for its insider look at how movies are made. I hope this sequel is as good. For her latest gig, Joey is sourcing 1930s looks for a period drama starring A-list actors Gillian Best and Andrew de Rossi. Near set one day, Joey witnesses a young woman flee across a busy L.A. street, only to be mowed down and killed by a silver SUV that quickly drives away. While trying to ascertain who the victim was fleeing from, and why she was so terrified, Joey learns that the SUV belonged to Best. Her suspicions ratchet up another level when Best's disgruntled former assistant is found dead of an apparent suicide after a fight with her old boss....

Page, Katherine Hall. [The Body in the Web](#) (\$18.99). Faith Fairchild joins the rest of the world in lockdown mode when reality flips in March 2020. As the pandemic spreads, Faith and her family readjust to life together in Aleford, Massachusetts. Her husband, Tom, continues his sermons from Zoom; their children are doing remote learning at home. Faith is happy to have her family under the same roof and grateful for her resilient community. Town halls remain lively and well-attended, despite residents joining from their living rooms. It is at one of these town hall zooms that scandal breaks out as damaging images suddenly flash upon everyone's screens. Claudia, local art teacher



and Faith's dear friend, is immediately recognized as the woman who has been targeted. When Claudia is later discovered dead, Faith, with the help of her friends, journeys deep into the dark web to unravel the threads of Claudia's mysterious history.... Felicitations to Page, 2024 Mystery Writers of America Grand Master.

Popp, Misha. [The Last to Pie](#) (Crooked Lane \$29.99). The pies are deadlier than ever in this third in the Pies Before Guys series when Daisy receives a request for revenge against an abusive cop. She's at work doing what she does best: making pies and killing guys. And it's about to get more dangerous than ever. Daisy knows the statistic—domestic violence perpetrated by cops is rampant. It was only a matter of time before she was called in to help. But when this request arrives in her inbox, it isn't accompanied by the required referral and that makes Daisy nervous. Is this really a woman trapped in a violent relationship, or is it a shady cop trying to uncover Daisy's side hustle?

✦ Seales, Julia. [A Most Agreeable Murder](#) (\$18). When a wealthy bachelor drops dead at a ball, a young lady takes on the decidedly improper role of detective in this debut Regency comedy of manners and murder. This edition includes a reader's guide and a sneak peek at Beatrice Steele's return in *A Terribly Nasty Business* (no date yet set).

Thorne, Rebecca. [Can't Spell Treason without Tea](#) (Bramble \$19.99 paperback). In the tradition of *Legends & Lattes* comes a cozy fantasy steeped in sapphic romance about one of the Queen's private guards and a powerful mage who want to open a bookshop and live happily ever after...if only the world would let them. Library Reads recommends by saying, "This book is so cozy, readers will want to snuggle under a heap of blankets with a delicious cup of tea. Kianthe and Reyna were the perfect opposites-attract couple—determined to make things work no matter the obstacles. Lots of humor with a serious amount of heart." This is a series start by a local author possibly republished from its 2022 published edition.

#### NEW IN HARDCOVER

*May is Asian American Pacific Islander Heritage Month so I have included some relevant fiction marked AAPC*

Armstrong, Kelley. [Disturbing the Dead](#) (St Martins \$28). A time-traveling detective probes the death of a Victorian Egyptologist. The evening gathering at the home of Sir Alastair Christie is surely the talk of Edinburgh. But Mallory Atkinson's interest in the event is more professional than social. Since the 21st-century police detective awoke from a murderous attack to find herself inserted into the body of a 19th-century housemaid working for the Gray family, Mallory has tried ceaselessly to fit into their unconventional Victorian household. Duncan Gray is a doctor who's prohibited from practicing medicine because of his annoying habit of digging up graves, so he's currently serving as the city's undertaker. His oldest sister, Lady Annis Leslie, has been invited to the party Sir Alastair is having to show off his latest find—an Egyptian mummy, which he's planning to unwrap—and she invites Duncan; their sister, Isla; and Mallory to join her. Though, unlike her employers, Mallory knows what's inside a mummy's bandages, she can't pass up the invitation. Alas, the body exposed in the course of unwrapping turns out to be not a long-dead Egyptian, but Sir Alastair himself.

Barclay, Linwood. [I Will Ruin You](#) (Harper \$29.99). Instructor Richard Boyle successfully talks a former student in a dynamite vest out of carrying out his planned grudge killings only to see him trip over a shoelace as he turns to go and blow himself up. The attacker's parents sue Richard, charging he didn't do enough to save their son. Richard is not on the greatest terms with parents, who are already unhappy with him for teaching their kids about cannibalism via Cormac McCarthy's novel *The Road*. But this turns out to be the least of Richard's worries after another one-time student, a misfit drug dealer looking to capitalize on Richard's celebrity, demands \$10,000 not to tell everyone that the teacher fondled him as coach of the wrestling team. Richard's desperate efforts to avoid the false charge only draw him in deeper, eventually linking him to a murder and threatening his marriage. "I think the only thing we can accuse Richard of is being an idiot," says his sister-in-law, a police officer. The immensely clever and talented Barclay takes on book censorship and both school and gun violence and forges them into another of his amazing thrillers.

Beagle, Peter S. [I'm Afraid You've Got Dragons](#) (Saga Press \$26). I've been a sucker for Beagle ever since I read his bestseller *The Last Unicorn* 50 years ago in Library School. And now he again delivers a rip-roaring standalone fantasy that was first announced in 2007. The kingdom of Bellemontagne's resident dragon exterminator, Gaius Aurelius Constantine Heliogabalus Thrax, who just goes by Robert and harbors a secret disdain for his profession, is summoned to the castle by King Antoine to clear the place of dragons in preparation for Prince Reginald Krije of Corvinia's presentation at court. The prince wishes to ask Bellemontagne's Princess Cerise for her hand in marriage, but first he must convince his father, King Krije, of his merits as successor... To prove his worth, he hopes to slay a truly impressive dragon and enlists Robert's assistance. "Together, Robert, Cerise, and Reginald set out on an expedition to find a worthy beast, facing unexpected dangers and interpersonal conflict along the way. The resulting adventure offers surprises and humor aplenty alongside a hefty dose of classic dragon lore." So this one is for the ages—YA and up.

Bennett, Michael. [Return to Blood](#) (Atlantic \$27). **AAPC**. Maori detective Hana Westerman has quit the Auckland Criminal Investigation Branch to return to her rural hometown of Tata Bay and live with her father, Eru. When Hana's 18-year-old daughter, Addison, discovers a woman's skeleton in the sand dunes near their new home, Hana is drawn back into detective work. The deceased, Kiri Thomas, is a 17-year-old Maori woman with a history of drug addiction who went missing four years earlier. Almost immediately, Hana thinks of her high school acquaintance, Paige Meadows, who was strangled and buried in the same dunes more than 20 years ago. A Maori man was tried and convicted for Paige's murder. Was he guilty? Meet Hana in NZ's Bennett's excellent [Better the Blood](#) (\$17).

Bradley, Kaliane. [The Ministry of Time](#) (Avid Reader Press \$28). "If you're a fan of *Outlander*, spy novels, time travel books, or just really innovative and fun storytelling, *The Ministry of Time* is definitely for you." —*Town & Country*, 45 Must-Read Books of Spring 2024. It's "Part time travel romance, part spy thriller and 100% "multi-faceted joyride." An employee of the Ministry of Time becomes a "bridge," helping Victorian arctic explorer Commander Graham Gore adjust to modern life after being



rescued from the lost Franklin expedition of 1845. But as she begins to grow closer to him, she finds herself wondering who she can trust, what the real reason for pulling people out of time may be, and whether her life might be in danger. If they work together, the bridge must finally reckon with how—and whether she believes—what she does next can change the future. The author lives in London.

✦ Buckley, Fiona. [To Seize a Queen](#) (Severn \$29.99). Pirates in Penzance? Queen Elizabeth's half-sister and secret agent Ursula Blanchard takes on a dangerous new mission involving mysterious disappearances, a Cornish man who escapes a slave vessel bound for Constantinople, murders in the duchy, and a possible heist of the Queen herself who is scheduled to go on her annual progress there. Ordered Upon Request.

Chang, Abraham. [88 Love and the Divine Burden of Numbers](#) (Flatiron \$29.99). **AAPI.** Young Wang has received plenty of wisdom from his beloved uncle: don't take life too seriously, get out on the road when you can, and everyone gets just seven great loves in their life—so don't blow it. This last one sticks with Young as he is an obsessive cataloger of his life: movies watched, favorite albums....all filtered through Chinese numerology and superstition. He finds meaning in almost everything, for which his two best friends endlessly tease him. But then, at the end of 1995, when Young is at New York University, he meets Erena. She's brilliant, charismatic, quick-witted, and crassly funny. And Number 6.... For something different, try this love letter to Western pop culture, Eastern traditions, and being a first-generation New Yorker.

Charles, Janet Skeslien. [Miss Morgan's Book Brigade](#) (Atria \$28.99) is based on the true story of Jessie Carson. In January, 1918, Jesse, a librarian for the New York Public Library, accepts an invitation from Anne Morgan, the daughter of J.P. Morgan and founder of the American Committee for Devastated France ("CARD," after the French name), to help establish a library for civilians living near the front lines in northern France. Overcoming worries that she won't be up to the task, Jessie devotes herself to distributing books, especially to local children. A parallel narrative set in 1987 follows aspiring author Wendy Peterson, whose day job involves scanning old documents into the NYPL's microfiche system. When Wendy comes across a box of CARD records, she's instantly intrigued by the women who volunteered for the organization and determines to tell their story. Wendy's interest is especially piqued by Jessie, as it's clear from the records that she didn't return to the NYPL after the war. Charles packs Jessie's story with emotion, particularly in scenes where the librarian shares a French copy of her beloved *Anne of Green Gables* with a French girl, and when she takes comfort in her own love of reading during moments of despair. Bibliophiles and those who believe in the ability of books not only to inspire, but also to rescue and restore are in for a treat as they were with Charles' bestselling debut [The Paris Library](#) (\$17.99). NOTE: Janet may be able to sign copies for us this summer.

Chase, Nolan. [A Lonesome Place for Dying](#) (Crooked Lane \$29.99). The voice of Ethan Brand is what drew me to this novel set in sleepy Blaine, Washington, right on the Canadian border above Bellingham, who is hit with a murder on his first day on the job as the town's new Police Chief. He's a big guy with a partial foot prosthetic earned in Afghanistan and an easy manner

eschewing violence as his default despite grief in his personal life and plenty of people including in his own department who resent his promotion to Chief. The woman dead by the railroad tracks is tough to identify as is any motive for her killing—although drugs, larceny, human trafficking and more are on the table in this cross-border corridor. Eventually Ethan finds his way professionally. Recommended to readers of Kent Krueger, Craig Johnson, and those who enjoy small town policing.

Doquang, Mailan. [Blood Rubies](#) (Penzler \$26.95). This debut takes you to Bangkok and into a jewel heist—Burmese blood rubies—which tweaks wealthy smuggler Charles Lemaire. His goons chase after Rune Sarasin, our thief, and her stunning boyfriend Kit. But alas his teenage sister Madee has gone missing and the rubies are lost in the slum where they search for Madee. Then Lemaire catches up to our thieves and demands the rubies or no more Kit. So Rune has to recover the jewels, figure out what happened to Madee, and.... Lots of action; I can see this as a movie.

Fforde, Jasper. [Red Side Story](#) (Soho \$29.95). The long-awaited follow-up to the bestselling *Shades of Grey*—in an EXCLUSIVE EDITION for North American readers, complete with a never-before-published short story. "Cleverly constructed, with engaging characters and lots of good jokes, this sparkling *Wizard of Oz*-inspired fantasy is...one of the quirkiest dystopias ever imagined." —*The Guardian*.

Welcome to Chromatacia, where life is strictly regulated by one's limited color perception. Civilization has been rebuilt after an unspoken "Something that Happened" five hundred years before. Society is now color vision—segregated, everything dictated by an individual's visual ability, and governed by the shadowy National Color in far-off Emerald City. Twenty-year-old Eddie Russett, a Red, is about to go on trial for a murder he didn't commit, and he's pretty certain to be sent on a one-way trip to the Green Room for execution by soporific color exposure. Meanwhile, he's engaged in an illegal relationship with his co-defendant, a Green, the charismatic and unpredictable Jane Grey. Negotiating the narrow boundaries of the Rules within their society, they search for a loophole—some truth of their world that has been hidden from its hyper-policed citizens.

✦ Fletcher, Susan. [The Night in Question](#) (Union Square \$28.99). Our **May British Crime Book of the Month** gets several Starred Reviews and much love from me. It's especially good for fans of Frederick Backman, Richard Osman, etc. "Fletcher expertly intertwines two mysteries in this eloquent and astute tale set in a British assisted living facility. The first mystery concerns Renata Green, manager of Babbington Hall, a retirement residence in the Oxfordshire countryside. Renata's fall from her office window is witnessed by 87-year-old Florrie Butterfield, who roams the facility's grounds in her wheelchair and is 'as deaf as a saucepan without her hearing aids.' Residents suspect Renata jumped in a suicide attempt that has left her comatose, but Florrie, who chatted with Renata earlier in the day and found her to be uncharacteristically cheery and outgoing, believes she was murdered. So the octogenarian sets about investigating with the help of fellow resident and former schoolteacher Stanhope Jones. As they gather clues, Fletcher lights the fuse on the second mystery: who is Florrie, anyway? Fletcher points those questions in poignant directions, providing her unforgettable protagonist with resonant lessons about mending the past, all

while maintaining satisfying tension in the central whodunit. This gloriously uplifting mystery will stay with readers long after they've turned the final page." I truly loved this book—and it is as British as it gets. It's a slow read, enjoy every page.

Goldis, Jaelyn. [The Main Character](#) (Atria \$28.99). In exchange for \$100,000, individuals agree to answer personal questions, undergo psychological evaluations, and have their lives probed by Ginerva Ex's private investigators. Her "latest, and finest, main character," Rory, has recently been fired from her job as a news anchor for running an error-ridden story. In addition to providing Rory with the standard stipend, Ginerva has invited her on an extravagant train trip across Italy aboard the Orient Express. Rory's elation turns to bafflement, however, when she discovers they'll be joined by her ex-fiancé, her brother, and her best friend. As Goldis gradually reveals the secrets of each person in Rory's orbit, Ginerva's unorthodox writing methods start to look more and more sinister.

Iggulden, Conn. [Nero: A Novel](#) (Pegasus \$27.95). For you fans of the Ancient Roman world, the start of a new trilogy that finds Empress Agrippina and her young son, Nero, fending off ambitious rivals while shaping their own destiny.

King, Stephen. [You Like it Darker: Stories](#) (Scribner \$30). It's short fiction in a collection of mostly never-before-published material.

Kunzru, Hari. [Blue Ruin](#) (Knopf \$28). Kunzru's seventh novel takes on the excessive and rapacious tendencies of the art world. It's narrated by Jay, who in the early days of the Covid-19 pandemic is in ill health, getting by delivering groceries in upstate New York. His route takes him to an estate that's coincidentally occupied by Alice, a former flame, and her husband, Rob, Jay's one-time art school rival. Alice, fearful of infection—or of stoking old drama—hides him in a barn while his health improves. In the weeks that follow, Jay recalls the messiness of their relationships three decades prior. Alice, stuck managing Rob's studio, is reminded of the freer life she used to lead with Jay, while Rob, a successful painter, reveals himself to be a consummate art monster, cheating on Alice and spending too much of their money on lavish, boozy parties. Then Rob's gallerist, Marshal, learns of Jay's long-running self-documentation project, *Fugue....* "Kunzru cannily withholds a few details about this dynamic, but from the start the novel is a study of the complications of art making, money, and identity—and racism, fickle opportunity, and what it means to actually earn a living."

Kwan, Kevin. [Lies and Weddings](#) (Doubleday \$29). **AAPI.** Arabella Leung is doing everything she can to match her son Rufus to a very wealthy titled woman in this romp around the world with controlling parents, one of whom is desperately matchmaking to save the family estate. "Readers who love high entertainment and the bad behavior of the haves and the have-even-mores will devour this wild ride" which will capture fans of *Crazy Rich Asians*.

McCarthy, Rebecca. [Norman Maclean: A Life of Letters and Rivers](#) (University of Washington Press \$29.95). "A profoundly intimate glimpse into the life of an enigmatic man who became most notable for his exquisitely rendered novella, *A River Runs Through It*. . . The witness McCarthy presents is supplemented by meticulous research, letters, and interviews that capture a well-rounded portrait of Maclean."

☞ Mukherjee, Abir. [Hunted](#) (LittleBrown \$30). "Wyndham & Banerjee Mysteries" series author Mukherjee's stand-alone is a winning narrative that explores not only the danger of terrorist actions but also their complex motives. The story begins with a bang. Yasmin trusted Jack when he told her that the bomb he was planting in a shopping mall wouldn't hurt innocent people, but the resulting carnage is horrendous and leaves even FBI agent Shreya Mistry aghast. Shreya ventures into the unstable mall and uncovers clues to the possible identities of bombers. While she pursues leads and irritates her supervisors, Sajid Khan, the father of a suspected terrorist, is abducted and brutally interrogated in London; his captors demand to know where his daughter is. Meanwhile, Greg, a wounded veteran and ex-convict, has gotten involved with a group of people plotting actions that will have grave implications for the country and the entire world. "The diverse, well-drawn cast, clever investigative work, and breakneck pacing easily carry readers through the novel's many-tentacled plot. With this pulse-pounding thriller, Mukherjee proves he's just as good at mining the present for suspense as the past." —*PW*

Nagendra, Harini. [A Nest of Vipers](#) (Pegasus \$26.95). "It's 1922, and the city of Bangalore is preparing for a visit from the Prince of Wales. Given that royal visits to Bombay and Calcutta during the previous year were "marked with riots and arson," British authorities have already begun cracking down on activists advocating for Indian independence. Amid that tension, Kaveri attends a street magic show with her friend, Anandi. When a man in the crowd locks eyes with Anandi and mimes slitting his throat, she refuses to acknowledge that she knows the man. After the performance is over, Kaveri and Anandi find him dead from a broken neck, and Anandi admits he's her estranged husband, Pawan. With Anandi arrested as the most obvious suspect, Kaveri and her husband, Ramu, set out to clear their friend's name. As they dig deeper into the dysfunctional couple's past, they stumble on a plot that could pose greater danger to the visiting prince than any political protest. Nagendra is in peak form here, expertly mining the era's political frisson for top-shelf suspense. Fans of Abir Mukherjee's Wyndham and Banerjee series will devour this." —*PW* Starred Review.

The story also takes us into the world of *jadoo*—Indian street magic—with sleight-of-hand magicians, snake charmers, and rope tricks. Kaveri and Ramu continue their sleuthing, with help from the Bangalore Detectives Club, amidst the growing rumblings of Indian independence and the backdrop of female emancipation, well worth reading alongside Sujata Massey. The first in this series, [The Bangalore Detectives Club](#) (\$16.95), is a gem. The second has no paperback so far.

Nichols, Peter. [Granite Harbor](#) (Celadon \$29). In scenic Granite Harbor, Maine, life has continued on-quiet and serene-for decades. That is until a local teenager is found brutally murdered in the Settlement, the town's historic archaeological site. If a dark serial killer thriller is your jam, look no further. "A failed novelist turned detective investigates his first murder case in a small town. A serial-killer thriller to make you shudder. It's grisly, unsettling, and dark—and also a beautifully written, deeply felt, and moving tale of family relationships. I loved it." —Alex Michaelides

Patterson, James/Maxine Paetro. [The 24th Hour](#) (LittleBrown \$30). SFPD Sergeant Lindsay Boxer, Medical Examiner Claire Washburn, Assistant District Attorney Yuki Castellano, and

crime writer Cindy Thomas gather at one of San Francisco's finest restaurants to celebrate exciting news: Cindy is getting married. Before they can raise their glasses, there's a disturbance in the restaurant. A woman has been assaulted. Claire examines the victim. Lindsay makes an arrest. Yuki takes the case. Cindy covers it. The legal strategy is complicated by gaps in the plaintiff's memory—and the shocking reason behind her ever-changing testimony.

Pelecamos, George P. [Buster: A Dog](#) (Akashic Books \$19.95). Pelecamos breaks new literary ground with the story of a dog's life—from the dog's perspective—on the streets of Washington, DC. A strong and proud boxer, he spends his early days with a loving family in a public housing complex in the city. Abruptly, he is taken away by an abusive, alcoholic man, plunging Buster into a challenging, nightmarish existence. Over the course of his life, he will experience homelessness, tragedy, a harrowing stay in a shelter, and acts of kindness, including his adoption by an older gentleman grieving the death of his wife. Along the way, Buster befriends other dogs and witnesses the best and worst aspects of humanity.

Romano-Lax, Andromeda. [The Deepest Lake](#) (Soho \$26.95). An anguished mother whose daughter has gone missing, presumed drowned, in a bottomless lake in Guatemala can't accept that her daughter is gone despite the massive search she and her ex mounted. So grieving Rose goes undercover to a writing retreat hosted by a charismatic memoirist, her daughter's literary hero, to uncover what she can. Does the glamorous workshop package hide some dangerous truths? Is Lake Atitlán in fact a place where traumatized women come to tell their stories and heal, or one where deeper injuries are inflicted. There's a good voice here, actually more than one, and a layered story. Recommended.

Roth, Veronica. [When Among Crows](#) (Tor/Forge (19.99)). Fantasy continues to grip readers. Here's a contemporary one recommended by Library Reads: "This painful and fascinating (but ultimately hopeful) urban fantasy set in Chicago is a packed novella steeped in Slavic folklore. Dymitr is on a quest to retrieve a guarded plant that might relieve the demon Ala of a deadly curse so he can bargain with her for a hint on how to seek an audience with Baba Yaga herself."

✦ Shenje, Kuchenga. [The Library Thief](#) (UK edition \$29.99). In this gorgeously packaged debut Florence, the rebellious daughter of a Manchester bookbinder, is ejected by him from her family home but takes the tools of the trade along. She ends up on the doorstep of Lord Belfield, an aristocrat in need of a restorer for the books in his library. When Florence finds the half-burned diary of Belfield's dead wife, which suggests a troubled marriage, she begins investigating Lady Belfield's drowning, which was presumed to be an accident. As she digs into the background of Lady Belfield's devoted maid, Florence is sent down a path that leads not only to discovering her true identity as a white-passing Black woman but also to uncovering the seamy underbelly of the social mores of Victorian England aristocracy. Containing scenes of assault and unplanned pregnancy, this debut gut-wrenchingly shines a light on LGBTQIA+ love (Sapphic) and people of color in Victorian England. The [US edition](#) (\$29.99) is differently packaged; I prefer the UK.

Simon, Clea. [Bad Boy Beat](#) (Severn \$29.99). *Boston Standard* journalist Kelton is desperate for a big story. As a new reporter

Em covers the police beat, which has her responding to every crime that comes across the newsroom scanner. Despite the drudgery and the largely nocturnal hours, it's a beat that suits her—especially with her affinity for the low-level criminals she regularly interacts with and what she considers a healthy skepticism for the rules. But she's sick of filing short news briefs about random street murders that barely merit a byline, and when she sets out to cover yet another shooting of a low-level dealer, she begins to wonder if these crimes are somehow connected. With not much to go on but her instincts, Em sets out to uncover the truth behind these sordid crimes. But the more she investigates and uncovers a pattern, the more she digs herself into a deep, dark hole.... Zoom event May 8 5:00 PM PDT. Ordered Upon Request.

✦ Simonson, Helen. [The Hazelbourne Ladies Motorcycle and Flying](#) (Random \$29) delivers a thoughtful and witty tale of British men and women adjusting to a new normal after WWI. Spunky and observant Constance Haverhill worked as an estate manager during the war. Now, she's reduced to serving temporarily as a lady's companion for Mrs. Fog, who is recuperating from influenza in a hotel in the seaside resort town of Hazelbourne. Here, Constance meets free-spirited spendthrift Poppy Wirrall and her attractive and morose brother, Harris, who lost his leg while flying a plane in the war. Constance, timid at first, gets involved with Poppy's effort to provide local women with jobs as motorcycle drivers for sidecar-riding passengers. "Simonson neatly interweaves multiple plotlines involving the chauvinistic and condescending local gentry, the travails of a German waiter scorned because of his nationality, and the bad behavior of visiting Americans. Readers are in for a treat."—PW  
Zyzak, Magdalena. [The Lady Waiting](#) (Penguin \$28). "The *White Lotus* meets *The Talented Mr. Ripley* in this high-spirited novel of a stolen Vermeer, a Polish transplant in LA, and the charismatic couple who seduce her into a misguided international heist that proves to be one part art heist, one part love triangle, and one part education of a felon. I can't read everything published each month but this caught my eye.

#### OUR MAY LARGE PAPERBACK PICKS

Abbott, Megan. [Beware the Woman](#) (\$18) is a true Gothic set in Michigan's Upper Peninsula which, in its way, is not unlike the classic genre landscape of Cornwall. Newlyweds and soon-to-be parents Jacy and neon-signmaker Jed embark on a road trip to the UP to visit Jed's father, the retired Dr. Ash. His isolated "cottage" is idyllic and run tightly by the enigmatic Mrs. Brandt. Soon things take a turn for the terrifying when Jacy is struck by a mysterious illness that renders her housebound. As she recuperates, whispers about Jed's long-dead mother and complicated Ash family history surface and Jacy begins to feel trapped in the cottage. How reliable a narrator is she?

Barry, Dave. [Swamp Story](#) (\$18.99). Pulitzer Prize-winning columnist/author and actual Florida Man Dave Barry returns with a caper full of oddballs and more twists and turns than a snake slithering away from a gator. It's refreshing to read Barry's take on the Sunshine State as compared to the Florida figuring in the news. The cast includes two very bad brothers, the owners of a bait shop, a drug lord, a craven lawyer, a politician, a swamp denizen, a heroine and hero—not to mention gold ingots, a wild boar, a python and of course an alligator. It begins when Ken



Bortle of Bortle Brothers Bait and Beer hatches a scheme to lure tourists to his failing store by making viral videos of the “Everglades Melon Monster.” What could go wrong?

Brazier, Eliza Jane. [Girls and Their Horses](#) (\$18). Set in the glamorous, competitive world of show jumping, a novel about the girls who ride, their cutthroat mothers, and a suspicious death at a horse show. In fact, “horse mothers” put stage mothers to shame in this wildly entertaining thriller from a rising star we’ve recommended before. It begins when Texas transplants Heather and Jim Parker buy a \$28 million house in Southern California, and arrive at the nearby Rancho Santa Fe Equestrian Center at the top of the heap. Heather will do anything to help her young teen daughter Maple win the annual horse show, including engaging in full equine combat with top “barn mom” Pamela and her vicious daughter, Vida. Meanwhile, rumors swirl around Kieran Flynn, the equestrian center’s charming owner and head trainer, suspicious accidents pile up gradually—until somebody winds up dead.

✎ Heath, Virginia. [All’s Fair in Love and War](#) (St Martins \$18) “Fabulous start to a fun new series, delightfully delicious, and a really funny, emotional read. Governess Georgie has been hired last minute by a naval captain who has been entrusted with the care of his flighty sister’s three children (who are hellions!) Georgie and Harry butt heads from the start over different views of childcare and learning and ~order~ but they slowly start to warm to each other. And how. Full of shenanigans, (mis)quotes of military leaders, and a scruffy and hilarious dog named NORBERT. And so have fun with our **May Historical Paperback Book of the Month**.

Holmes, Rupert. [Murder Your Employer](#) (\$18). Join The McMasters Conservatory for the Applied Arts as designed by Rupert Holmes where the diabolical lessons they never taught you in school are offered! “Who hasn’t wondered for a split second what the world would be like if a person who is the object of your affliction ceased to exist? But then you’ve probably never heard of The McMasters Conservatory, dedicated to the consummate execution of the homicidal arts. To gain admission, a student must have an ethical reason for erasing someone who deeply deserves a fate no worse (nor better) than death. The campus of this ‘Poison Ivy League’ college—its location unknown to even those who study there—is where you might find yourself the practice target of a classmate...and where one’s mandatory graduation thesis is getting away with the perfect murder of someone whose death will make the world a much better place to live. A delightful mix of witty wordplay, breathtaking twists and genuine intrigue, *Murder Your Employer* will gain you admission into a wholly original world.

Kim, Angie. [Happiness Falls](#) (Random \$18). AAPI. A biracial Korean American family in Virginia has lives upended when their beloved father and husband 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. “We didn’t call the police right away.” 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 with secrets.

Krueger, William Kent. [The River We Remember](#) (\$18.99). 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.

✎ Mason, Tim. [The Nightingale Affair](#) (\$19.99). Mason’s title for his second Victorian detection after [The Darwin Affair](#) (\$16.95) arises not from the bird but from the pioneer in health care Florence, whose volunteer service in the 1853-56 Crimean War laid much of the foundation for battlefield care and for nursing. London, 1867. Field is working as a private investigator when his latest case reawakens a past one. Tory MP William Hythe-Cooper has hired Field to prove his wife, Susan, is having an affair with political rival Jeremy Sims. After Field spots Sims fleeing the flat he reserved for his and Susan’s trysts, he finds Susan’s strangled corpse in the flat with a piece of red fabric stuffed in her mouth. This was also the trademark of a serial killer known as the Beast of the Crimea who targeted nurses working under Florence. Field was dispatched to Crimea to catch him—and he did. But this new murder leads Field to wonder whether he’s dealing with a copycat or with the original killer

McKinty, Adrian. [The Detective Up Late](#) (\$16.99). This is billed as Belfast cop Sean Duffy’s Last Case, which is not as sinister as it sounds as Duffy and family are just relocating across the sea to Scotland. We meet Catholic Sean and Protestant Beth in Jerusalem, New Year’s Eve, 1989. A group of Irish Protestants have come to celebrate the Second Coming. DI Sean just wants the 1980s to be over, and to move into part time work at Carrickfergus Station by spending seven days a month there, commuting from Scotland. A phone call about a missing girl ensnares him into working her case before he leaves...and a merry chase it becomes into the world of the travelers, informers, the IRA, and more. McKinty’s voice for this series is superb and his mix of humor and horrible is perfect.

✎ Perry, Anne. [The Fourth Enemy](#) (\$18). Barrister Daniel Pitt is thrown into the prosecution of a powerful man accused of a swindle that will remind readers of much more recent times than 1912. Already thrown off balance by the retirement of his father-in-law, senior partner Marcus Ford Croft; his replacement by Gideon Hunter KC; and the elevation of his own brilliant but untried friend Toby Kitteridge to head of chambers, Daniel is knocked off his feet by Hunter’s determination to lead the prosecution of wealthy, socially connected Malcolm Vayne, whose advanced views on women’s suffrage have won him admirers even more numerous than the investors whose money his Big Ben Investments has lost. Convinced that Vayne has been



running a Ponzi scheme dependent on endless waves of new investors to pay off the old, Hunter presses Daniel to serve as his junior counsel on the case. The trial is a disaster and a witness is murdered.... Let's wish Daniel and his family a good send off.

Pochoda, Ivy. [Sing Her Down](#) (\$18). The 2024 winner of the *LA Times* Book Prize for Mystery is “a pulse-pounding western with a devastating message about the oft-forgotten explosions made by women the world tries hard not to see.” Patrick reviews: “Pochoda’s latest is a dark, uncompromising tale about violence and obsession, a deft synthesis of classic noir and western conventions, and much more... Florence ‘Florida’ Baum and Diosmary ‘Dios’ Sandoval are two inmates doing time in an Arizona prison when they are suddenly released early due to COVID. Dios thinks she knows the truth that Florida hides behind, the facade of innocence that conceals something much darker. Determined to unleash her former cellmate’s true nature, Dios obsessively tracks Florida to Los Angeles, where the two embark on a collision course with fate. Told from multiple, all-female POVs, including a homicide detective named Lobos and multiple inmates. “At its core are two women, one of whom is determined to force the other to acknowledge her true self. *No Country for Old Men* meets *Killing Eve*.”

Powers, Kevin. [A Line in the Sand](#) (\$18.99). “A riveting powerhouse of a book pits two small town cops—and a mysterious Iraqi interpreter whose secrets have already gotten a lot of people killed—against corruption and violence at the highest levels of government. A spellbinding and totally original thriller; Kevin Powers has reinvented himself as novelist yet again.” To my regret I did not read this fabulous book until too late to do anything with it. Don’t miss the paperback.

Sager, Riley. [The Only One Left](#) (\$18). *At seventeen, Lenora Hope Hung her sister with a rope...* A haunted house looms large in this hair-raising Neo-Gothic thriller about a young caregiver assigned to work for a woman accused of a savage 1929 Lizzie Borden-like massacre. The narrative unfolds inside a crumbling mansion with an unfortunate appellation: Hope’s End. The infamous Hope Family Murders are only remembered as a schoolyard chant. Lenora Hope, the only family member to survive the murders, was always suspected of carrying out the deed — she maintained her innocence, though, and the police were never able to prove her guilt. Six decades later, it’s 1983 and the case lives on in whispered retellings and morbid schoolyard chants. Lenora is in her 70s, wheelchair-bound and living out her remaining days in her family’s crumbling seaside mansion. Enter Kit McDeere, who arrives at the mansion as a caretaker for Lenora. When Lenora, who communicates by tapping out sentences on a typewriter, signals she’s ready to tell her story, Kit agrees to help. Leonora’s first message: “I want to tell you everything.” Oh, dear. It’s impossible to discuss this novel without spoilers. So think *Fall of the House of Usher*, *The Brontës*, *Rebecca*, *Lizzie Borden*, and *Anna Quindlen’s* best book... what a mix.

Williams, Beatriz. [The Beach at Summerly](#) (\$18.99) takes readers back to a mid-century rich with secrets and Cold War intrigue. Williams says she based the story on no single person or incident during the Cold War but on a range of them. But one is loosely modeled upon Ursula Kuczynski of the GRU. Being Williams she frames this 1946-56 mix of family secrets, social divides,

romances/sex, women with or seeking agency, found families as we would say today, and treason on Winthrop Island in Long Island Sound, a fictional enclave introduced earlier in her *The Summer Wives* and inspired by actual Fishers Island, a summer retreat for wealthy Easterners but year-round residence for the islanders. And imagines that a Soviet spy could well operate safely off the Sound’s eastern edge. Lord, they smoke a lot—it’s easy to forget how much smoking was a part of the social fabric. Emilia, known as Cricket, is a complex lead character.

#### NEW IN LARGE PAPERBACKS

✚ Archer, Jeffrey. [Traitor’s Gate](#) (\$18.99). 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.

Berest, Anne. [Postcard](#) (\$18.95). Winner of France’s Choix Goncourt Prize, the book tells the story of 20<sup>th</sup> Century Parisian culture and a Jewish family devastated by the Holocaust and partly restored through the power of storytelling.

Bowen, Sarina. [The Five Year Lie](#) (Harper \$18.99). “A five-year-old mystery and the best kind of love story are at the core of Sarina Bowen’s twisty narrative which explores one woman’s race toward the truth after receiving a text from her deceased ex. But this is more –it explores themes of loyalty and family, motherhood, and the tragedy of having to say goodbye too soon. Romance novelist Bowen debuts an engaging and fast-paced thriller about the abuse of technology.

Box, C J. [Out of Range](#) (\$12.99). A reissue of a 2005 Joe Pickett thriller.

Broder, Melissa. [Death Valley](#) (\$17). 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. One route leads back to her life in LA; the other leads deep into the ruthless desert.

Brown, Graham. [Clive Cussler Condor’s Fury](#) (\$19). 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. And then....

✦ Cartmel, Andrew. [Vinyl Detective: Noise Floor](#) (Titan \$16.99). Lambert Ramkin, aka Imperium Dart, techno trickster and ambient music wizard of the 1990s, has gone walkabout, disappearing from his rather palatial home in Kent. This isn't the first time he's pulled a vanishing act, but he's never been gone so long before and his wife — wives, actually; it's complicated — are worried and hire the Vinyl Detective to find the old rascal. They theorize that wherever the missing man is, he won't be able to resist turning up at a record fair somewhere in search of 12-inch white label acid house singles, which he collects compulsively. And no one knows the world of record fairs better than the Vinyl Detective.

✦ Clements, Oliver. [The Eyes of the Queen](#) (\$17.99). The rivalry between Elizabeth I and Mary, Queen of Scots, drives the pseudonymous Clements's twisty, fast-paced debut and series launch set in 1572 England. Elizabeth's spymaster, Francis Walsingham, loses possession of a secret document in a double cross perpetrated during the mayhem of the St. Bartholomew's Day massacre in Paris. Whoever owns the document could presumably change the balance of power in Europe, with Protestant Elizabeth and Catholic Mary on opposite sides. As the plots and counterplots rage, trusting the wrong person can easily get someone killed. Back in England, Walsingham turns to John Dee, real-life erudite scholar, astrologer, and occultist, to get the document back. Clements "revisits familiar territory—the network of 'intelligencers' with which Francis Walsingham protected Elizabeth I from plotters near and far—and imbues it with taut, made-for-the-movie-theater tension and delicious, snickering-from-the-back-row wit."—*NYTBR*. See also Fiona Buckley's new hardcover above, the latest in an entire series about a QEI intelligencer.

Freeman, Brian. [Robert Ludlum's The Bourne Defiance](#) (\$19). From the glacial waters of Alaska to a sexy nightclub in the Bahamas, Treadstone agents are being hunted down and murdered. Someone high up in the U.S. government will stop at nothing to cover up a secret Treadstone mission from the past known as *Defiance*. With a team of killers hot on his trail, Jason Bourne chases the mystery of *Defiance* around the world. But as he closes in on the shocking truth, Bourne realizes that one man holds the key—his archenemy, the assassin known as Lennon

Goldman, Matt. [The Shallows](#) and [Still Waters](#) (\$18.99). I am so glad that two more books in the fabulous Nils Shapiro, Twin Cities PI, reissue. But start with [Gone to Dust](#) (\$18.99) with its brilliant forensics premise, and then [Broken Ice](#) (\$18.99). Honestly, binge these for summer reading or buy a set for Mom or Dad to enjoy. For Goldman's latest, a standalone also set in Minnesota, see Signed Books.

Harmel, Kristin. [The Paris Daughter](#) (\$17.99). It's 1939, and Elise LeClair, an American artist married to French artist Olivier, is pregnant with their first child and has newly befriended Juliette Foulon, an American bookseller who is expecting her third child with her husband, Paul. After the Germans invade and LeClairs' daughter, Mathilde, is born, Elise begs Olivier to keep a lower profile with his work with the Resistance, but in 1941 he's arrested and beaten to death by the Nazis. His art dealer tells Elise the Germans are looking for her, forcing her to flee

and leave Mathilde with Juliette. After the war, Elise finds the Foulons' bookstore reduced to rubble. Then what?

Heaberlin, Julia. [Night Will Find You](#) (\$18.99) pairs a scientist and a reluctant psychic to find a girl who went missing long ago. Vivvy Bouchet, daughter of a known psychic, was ten when she saved a boy's life by making an impossible prediction. Now she's an astrophysicist in Texas, devoted to science, but the boy she saved has become a cop who continues to believe she can see things no one else can. When he begs for help on the high-profile cold case of a kidnapped girl, Vivvy steps back into the ocean of voices that once nearly drowned her. She is forced to team up with detective Jesse Sharp, a skeptic of anything but fact. When Vivvy becomes the target of a conspiracy theorist podcaster, she fights back with both her scientific mind and her inexplicable gifts, hoping to lure a kidnapper, find a child who haunts her, and lay some of her own ghosts to rest..

Hoffman, Alice. [The Invisible Hour](#) (\$17) is about choices good and bad, parenting good and bad, found family good and bad. As a result of her grandparents' and her mother Ivy's choices or lack thereof, Mia Jacobs is born into and becomes trapped as a young woman in an oppressive western Massachusetts cult. Mia finds her escape in books—specifically, Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*—and in the discovery that time may be more fluid than anyone imagined. Here's your chance to fall in love with Hawthorne

Howard, Catherine Ryan. [The Trap](#) (\$16.99). One year ago, Lucy's sister, Nicki, left to meet friends at a pub in Dublin and never came home. She was the third Irish woman to vanish inexplicably in as many years near the Wicklow Mountains. The agony of not knowing what happened that night has turned Lucy's life into a waking nightmare. So, she's going to take matters into her own hands. Angela works as a civilian paper-pusher in the Missing Persons Unit, but wants nothing more than to be a fully-fledged member of An Garda Síochána, the Irish police force. With the official investigation into the missing women stalled, she begins pulling on a thread that could break the case wide open—and destroy her chances of ever joining the force. Howard bases this powerful, suspenseful story on the real disappearance of Irish women in the area.

Kingfisher, T. [A House with Good Bones](#) (\$18.99). In the mood for a North Carolina Gothic? Sam Montgomery's excited for this rare extended visit to her mom's home, and looking forward to nights with just the two of them, drinking boxed wine, watching murder mystery shows, and guessing who the killer is long before the characters figure it out. But stepping inside, she quickly realizes home isn't what it used to be....

Lee, Geum-yi/An Seonjae. [Can't I Go Instead?](#) (\$18.99). **AAPI**. The story follows the lives of the daughter of a Korean nobleman and her maidservant in the early 20th century. When the daughter's suitor is arrested as a Korean Independence activist, and she is implicated during the investigation, she is quickly forced into marriage to one of her father's Japanese employees and shipped off to the United States. At the same time, her maidservant is sent in her mistress's place to be a comfort woman to the Japanese Imperial army. Years of hardship, survival, and even happiness follows. In the aftermath of WWII, the women make their way home, where they must reckon with the tangled lives they've led, in an attempt to reclaim their identities.... A good read for fans of Lisa See.

Michallon, Clemence. [The Quiet Tenant](#) (\$18). The entire town feels sorry for Aidan Thomas when his wife dies. But the mysterious woman staying in the house Aidan shares with his teenage daughter has seen a very different side of him... and knows her every move has life-or-death stakes. This was quite a 2023 hit but maybe I can only take on a few serial killer books a year. I definitely dislike sadism. Maybe the idea of years spent surviving in sickening conditions captive in a shed is just repulsive.

Newman, T J. [Drowning: The Rescue of Flight 1421](#) (\$18.99). *Kirkus* finds Newman's second thriller to be "A spectacular aviation thriller that readers will be relieved to know is fiction. Just off the coast of Hawaii, Flight 1421's engine explodes minutes after takeoff with 99 souls aboard. With no controls, the pilot makes an emergency landing into the Pacific with inevitable but disastrous results. The survivors are left with a Hobson's choice: escape the airplane and hope the burning jet fuel on the ocean's surface doesn't kill them, or stay in the fuselage and probably drown when it sinks. Twelve passengers and crew remain alive in the Airbus, including Will Kent and his 11-year-old daughter, Shannon. On a nearby island, Will's soon-to-be-ex-wife Chris learns about the crash and decides to help in the rescue efforts"—fortunately she has what it takes at hand. Newman made a blockbuster debut in [Falling](#) (\$17.99). Expect major motion pictures. And two more airplane thrillers from the former flight attendant.

Patterson, James. [Cross Down](#) (\$19.99). The forceful crime-solving duo of Washington, DC's, Metro PD and the FBI has a proven MO: Detective Alex Cross makes his own rules, Detective John Sampson enforces them. When military-style attacks erupt, brutally sidelining Cross, Sampson is sent reeling. The patterns are too random—Sampson's friend, his partner, his brother—have told him. Don't trust anyone. As a shadow force advances on the nation's capital, Sampson alone must act....

Pekkanen, Sarah. [Gone Tonight](#) (\$19). Catherine Sterling's personal and professional worlds are beginning to collide: she's a nurse who cares for patients with Alzheimer's disease, and her mother is starting to show classic symptoms. The two live together, making the forgetfulness hard to miss, with Ruth Sterling looking very confused when recent events are discussed and forgetting words—calling ice cubes "water squares," for example. Ruth is reluctant to get any scans that could confirm the likely diagnosis—her mother died of Alzheimer's, she says, and she knows what's ahead. But then Catherine makes a discovery that causes her to doubt that her mother's problems are real....

Rao, Nilima. [A Disappearance in Fiji](#) (\$16.95). **AAPL**. 25-year-old police sergeant Akal Singh was a rising star in Hong Kong until an embarrassing debacle led to his transfer to—in his words—the "godforsaken island" of Fiji in 1914. He does not hit it off with his new superior, Inspector General Thurstrom, and anticipates receiving only inconsequential assignments. The disappearance of a missing indentured worker on a sugar plantation at first raises little interest, but then newspapers start claiming the woman was kidnapped; the publicity forces Thurstrom to send Singh out to investigate. He arrives at the plantation of Henry Parkins and finds that its overseer, John Brown, is also missing. Parkins and his wife suggest that Brown and the woman, Kunti, were lovers who ran away together,

but after talking with other workers, Singh becomes convinced there's something more sinister at play. And....

Sandford, John. [Judgment Prey](#) (\$19). 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 often wonder how Sandford conceives his horrifying but immensely satisfying plots.

✂ Seales, Julia. [A Most Agreeable Murder](#) (\$18). When a wealthy bachelor drops dead at a ball, a young lady takes on the decidedly improper role of detective in this debut Regency comedy of manners and murder. This edition includes a reader's guide and a sneak peek at Beatrice Steele's return in *A Terribly Nasty Business* (no date yet set).

Wexler, Django. [How to Become the Dark Lord and Die Trying](#) (\$19.99). Pat King recommends Wexler. Here *Groundhog Day* meets *Guardians of the Galaxy* in Wexler's laugh-out-loud fantasy tale about a young woman who, tired of defending humanity from the Dark Lord, decides to become the Dark Lord herself.

White, Kate. [The Last Time She Saw Him](#) (Harper \$18.99). As Kiki Reed heads out to a party at a friend's house in the Connecticut countryside, she's more than a little nervous. Her ex-fiancé Jamie, a great guy who just wasn't "the one," will be attending, and she hasn't seen him since she broke his heart a few months earlier. But when they come face to face, their exchange is brief and pleasant, which is a huge relief. Then, as the party is winding down, a noise pierces the night. The last few guests run outside to find Jamie inside his car, dead from a gunshot wound. The police think he took his own life, but Kiki doesn't believe it....

#### OUR MAY SMALL PAPERBACK PICKS

Berry, Steve. [The Last Kingdom](#) (\$10.99). Cotton Malone #17. When his protégé infiltrates a renegade group intent on winning Bavarian independence from Germany, with everything hinging on a lost 19th-century deed that is the legal title to lands that Germany, China and US want, Cotton Malone battles an ever-growing list of deadly adversaries, all intent on finding the last kingdom.

Byrne, James. [Deadlock](#) (\$9.99). Dez Limerick #2. Dez travels to Portland to help his friend Riziah Swann uncover the truth after her business journalist sister was attacked and seriously injured and her apartment was ransacked.

Castillo, Linda. [An Evil Heart](#) (\$9.99). Kate Burkholder #15. Painters Mill Police Chief Kate Burkholder investigates the



violent, cross-bow shooting death of a hardworking, engaged young Amish man as her own wedding date draws near.

✦ Elliott, Lauren. [A Limited Edition Murder](#) (Kensington \$8.99). Beyond the Page Bookstore #10. While bookstore owner Addie Greyborne is in England, a first edition of Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* leads to a murder on the moors.

Griffin, Laura. [Liar's Point](#) (Penguin \$9.99). Texas Murder Files #5. When a killer targets her beloved hometown of Lost Beach, Texas, detective Nicole Lawson, with no one believing her theories, puts aside her feelings for Emmet Davis, her fiercest rival—and the man she's been secretly in love with for years—to work together to solve this case.

Parker, T Jefferson. [The Rescue](#) (\$9.99). Rescuing Felix, a Mexican street dog, from a Tijuana animal shelter, journalist Bettina Blazak discovers Felix is a former DEA drug-sniffing dog, who has led a very colorful, dangerous and profitable life, which draws her into a deadly criminal underworld from which she and Felix may not return.

Rollins, James. [Tides of Fire: A Sigma Force Novel](#) (\$10.99). Sigma Force #17. When the Titan Project, an international research station off the coast of Australia, is attacked, setting in motion a large-scale geological disaster, Sigma Force races against time to stop the world from burning, uncovering something that will shake the very foundations of humanity.

Sandford, John. [Dark Angel](#) (\$10.99). Letty Davenport #2. Letty Davenport, the tough-as-nails adopted daughter of Lucas Davenport, takes on an undercover assignment that brings her across the country and into the crosshairs of a dangerous group of hackers.

## MAY SMALL PAPERBACKS

Barrett, Lorna. [A Questionable Character](#) (\$9.99). Booktown #17. The murder of a contractor at a construction site threatens to derail several major projects, including Tricia Miles' new building, and now she must investigate to find the killer.

Brown, Sandra. [Seeing Red](#) (\$10.99). Reissue. When her interview with Major Franklin Trapper, who led survivors of a bombing to safety twenty-five years earlier, goes wrong, Kerra Bailey joins forces with his estranged son John to uncover the truth about the event.

Graham, Heather. [Death Behind Every Door](#) (Mira \$9.99). Blackbird Files #1. Posing as a tourist, an FBI special agent visits a Scottish castle that's been turned into a bed and breakfast to infiltrate a society of twisted killers named after the man believed to be America's first serial killer.

Hollis, Lee. [Murder at the Spelling Bee](#) (Kensington \$8.99). Maya and Sandra #4. Hired by the concerned parents of a 12-year-old spelling bee champ in the making when he receives threatening notes, P.I. partners and moms Maya and Sandra are instead faced with murder when the spelling bee moderator is found dead, and they must find the culprit before someone else gets stung.

Iles, Greg. [The Devil's Punchbowl](#) (\$10.99). Reissue. Penn Cage #3. A deep river pit in Natchez, Mississippi, reputed to be the hiding spot for Jean Lafitte's hidden treasure and a dumping ground for numerous murder victims, becomes the site of a dangerous showdown for Penn Cage.

Jackson, Lisa. [Chosen to Die](#) (\$9.99). Reissue. Alvarez and Pescoli #2. Amid the merciless winters of Grizzly Falls, Montana, detectives and friends Selena Alvarez and Regan Pescoli face off against a ruthless serial killer determined to make Pescoli his next victim.

Johnstone, William W. [Not My Home](#) (Kensington \$8.99). When wealthy professionals fleeing the crime-ridden blue states take over their peaceful small town, bringing corruption and crime with them, former army sergeant and lifelong townie Gus Fuller dusts off his uniform to go up against a predatory media mogul who turns Main Street into a war zone.

Murphy, Nora. [The Favor](#) (St Martins \$9.99). Even though they've never met, Leah and McKenna lead parallel lives, trapped in marriages where their "perfect" husbands are not what they seem. Leah, deciding to keep an eye out for McKenna, intervenes one night, irrevocably changing both of their lives.

Ross, Barbara. [Torn Asunder](#) (Kensington \$8.99). Maine Clambake #12. Julia Snowden and her family's coastal Maine clambake business, Morrow Island is a perfect spot for a wedding—and a Snowden Family Clambake. Julia Snowden is busy organizing both—until a mysterious wedding crasher drops dead amid the festivities.

Strawser, Jessica. [Not That I Could Tell](#) (St Martins \$9.99). An innocent weekend get-together of women friends turns sinister when the group discovers on Monday morning that one of their number has gone missing, a disappearance that places the woman's husband under suspicion and forces two of the women to reckon with personal secrets.