

# BOOKNEWS from

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sales@poisonedpen.com tel (888)560-9919  
http://poisonedpen.com

4014 N. Goldwater Blvd.  
Scottsdale, AZ 85251  
480-947-2974



## MORE JANUARY BOOKNEWS....

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

*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.

Mostly large paperbacks as so many published in late December or this month. Some new hardcovers. Two calendar updates

### MONDAY JANUARY 20 7:00 PM LIVE

**Kyle Paoletta with host Phoenix critic Mark Athitakis**

Paoletta discusses [American Oasis](#) (Knopf \$30)

Fascinating study of the arid Southwest as host to cities growing during climate crisis

### TUESDAY JANUARY 21 7:00 PM LIVE

**A Thomas & Mercer Mystery Duo**

Tracy Clark discusses [Echo](#) (\$16.99)

Barbara Nickless discusses [The Drowning Game](#) (\$16.99)

### WEDNESDAY JANUARY 22 7:00 PM Live

**Hardboiled Crime** discusses James Sallis' [Drive](#) (\$14.99). Great movie!

"A perfect piece of noir fiction" – *The NY Times*

### THURSDAY JANUARY 23 5:00 PM VIRTUAL

**Alison Gaylin with Talia Lavin**

Gaylin discusses [We Are Watching](#) (Harper Collins \$30)

Signed books available

Levin discusses [Wild Faith](#) (Grand Central \$30)

### THURSDAY JANUARY 23 7:00 PM LIVE

**Debut author Sash Bischoff** discusses [Sweet Fury](#) (Simon & Schuster \$27.99)

A modern echo of F. Scott Fitzgerald and dark Hollywood

### SATURDAY JANUARY 25 11:00 AM Live

**The Cookbook Club** will receive a visit and talk from the Blue Zones group. The City of Scottsdale is partnering with this group to promote healthy cooking and eating habits based on the Blue Zone diet and discuss [The Blue Zones American Kitchen](#) (National Geographic \$35).

### SATURDAY JANUARY 25 5:00 PM LIVE

**Book Launch**

**Dana Stabenow** discusses [Abduction of a Slave](#) (Head of Zeus \$28.99)

Cleopatra's Eye of Isis copes with fraud and war clouds around Julius Caesar

Our copies come with gorgeous bookmarks and cards of key figures and events in 47 BC Alexandria

### RESCHEDULED: SUNDAY JANUARY 26 2:00 PM LIVE

**Thomas Perry** discusses [Pro Bono](#) (Penzler \$27.95)

Another clever caper...and more

### MONDAY JANUARY 27 7:00 PM LIVE

**All About Agatha's Kemper Donovan** discusses [Loose Lips](#) (Kensington \$28)

A literary cruise nearly swamps the Ghostwriter with intrigue and murder

### TUESDAY JANUARY 28 12:00 PM LIVE

**An Author Afternoon Event**

**Monique Daigneault** discusses [The Survive and Thrive Toolkit for Leaders](#) (Mango Media \$18.99)

This new program is designed to bring you daytime events on diverse subjects

### TUESDAY JANUARY 28 5:00 PM VIRTUAL

**Debut author Kevin Wade** discusses [Johnny Careless](#) (Celadon Books \$27.99)

Our January First Mystery Subscription Club Pick

Signed books available

### WEDNESDAY JANUARY 29 5:00 PM VIRTUAL

**Fiona Davis** discusses [The Stolen Queen](#) (Dutton \$29)

A story of Egyptology (1936/37), an ancient Queen, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art (1978) tied to pioneering women  
Signed books available

### WEDNESDAY JANUARY 29 7:00 PM Live

**John McMahon** discusses [Head Cases](#) (St Martins \$28)

A series start and our January Crime Subscription Club Pick

### THURSDAY JANUARY 30 6:00 PM

**Closing at 6:00 PM for a ticketed special event**

### SATURDAY FEBRUARY 1 2:00 PM LIVE

**James Byrne** discusses [Chain Reaction](#) (St Martins \$29)

A rollicking new thriller for Gatekeeper Dez

## OUR JANUARY BOOK SUBSCRIPTION CLUB PICKS

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

Feeney, Alice. [Beautiful Ugly](#)

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

Osler, Rob. [The Case of the Missing Maid](#)

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

McMahon, John. [Head Cases](#)

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

Wade, Kevin. [Johnny Careless](#)

**Hardboiled/Noir Club** One Signed First Printing per month  
Ames, Jonathan. [Karma Doll](#)

**Historical Fiction Club** One First Printing per month  
Davis, Fiona. [The Stolen Queen](#)

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

Frank, Anita. [The Good Liars](#)

**Notable New Fiction** One Signed First Printing per month  
Bischoff, Sash. [Sweet Fury](#)

**Romance and Relationships** One unsigned hardcover or paperback per month

Krentz, Jayne Ann. [Shattering Dawn](#)

## SIGNED BOOKS

Ames, Jonathan. [Karma Doll](#) (LittleBrown \$28). After narrowly escaping with his life at the hands of a murderous Hollywood pimp, detective Happy Doll, bullet-ridden but healing, has landed on a remote Mexican beach. In a humble shack and with his dog for company, Doll settles into a peaceful idyll of Buddhist study. But then trouble, as it always does, comes to paradise. Doll is the witness to a murder for which he is framed, and now, with an expired passport and the Mexican authorities on his tail, he must sneak across the border back to L.A. by any means necessary, with the goal of bringing the true murderer to justice. But it's not just trouble that expels Doll from paradise! His dark past reaches for him, like a hand from the grave. Which makes it perfect for our **January Hardboiled Crime Book of the Month**.

Bischoff, Sash. [Sweet Fury](#) (Simon & Schuster \$27.99). This debut, our **January Notable New Fiction Subscription Club Pick**, will interest any F. Scott Fitzgerald fan: obsessive love, misogyny, deceit, revenge — dig in. Then there's the film industry background, the probing of Hollywood's dark underbelly. Margot Livesey says, "I love what it reveals about contemporary mores, about our love of cinema and the way we still too often judge women as either heroines or victims." Joyce Carol Oates finds it to be "a wildly imaginative, very dark romance of a kind that would have shocked Fitzgerald, that icon of the Roaring Twenties. Filled with surprises, unpredictable in its denouement, this audacious first novel is a subversive and highly entertaining exploration of the theme of 'romance' itself."

*PW* calls it "a beguiling tale of abuse and ambition.

Thirty-something movie star Lila Crayne has long dreamed of starring in a feminist retelling of F. Scott Fitzgerald's *Tender Is the Night*. She's finally made it happen, with her fiancé, Kurt Royall, as director. In preparation for the role, she undergoes psychotherapy with Jonah Gabriel, claiming Kurt is abusing her. Jonah, who met Lila while they were students at Princeton, has a long-standing obsession with her, which threatens his relationship with his fiancée, Maggie. Lila, meanwhile, will stop at nothing to make the film about 'female empowerment,' and she manipulates those working on the film, including the screenwriter, to tell the

story the way she wants it. As Jonah fantasizes about saving Lila, Kurt and Maggie begin piecing together competing and distorted versions of the truth, as Maggie secretly reads Jonah's notes from his sessions with Lila, and Lila threatens to spill the beans about Kurt's alleged abuse. Bischoff reveals one surprising secret after another, all the way until the bombshell final twist. It's an inspired first outing."

Brennan, Allison. [See How They Hide](#) (Mira \$28.99). Brennan reunites Detective Kara Quinn and FBI special agent Matt Costa. Jane Merrifield, a 22-year-old college senior in Ashland, Oregon, and Robert Benson, a 47-year-old antique store owner in Weems, Virginia, have both had their throats slit and their bodies strewn with hundreds of dried red poppies. Quinn and Costa know they're looking for at least two killers, since the homicides occurred within a three-hour window, but both victims were kind and well-liked, making it difficult to pinpoint a motive. The investigation eventually leads Quinn and Costa to Jane's roommate, Riley Pierce, who has information about an isolated community in the Colorado mountains that might be key to solving the murders. "Fans will appreciate seeing how the relationships between members of Costa's mobile response team evolve, including a softening of the dynamic between Quinn and forensic psychiatrist Dr. Catherine Jones, and the climax is legitimately nail-biting." Brennan became a local author some years ago with a move to Phoenix and will appear in a live event later in 2025.

Burke, Alafair. [The Note](#) (Knopf \$29). When May Hanover—a Chinese American assistant district attorney turned law professor in New York—agrees to spend a long weekend with two old friends in East Hampton, it's a welcome reunion, and for May, a break from prepping for the next semester while planning her wedding to fiancé Josh. The trio first met about 15 years ago at an arts camp, and May has stayed in touch with Lauren Berry, an accomplished Black classical musician. But until recently, she hadn't heard from Kelsey Ellis, the golden-blond daughter of a rich man, since Kelsey married a rising star chef who was subsequently murdered—a death that many online true-

crime aficionados attribute to her. That's not the only scandal in the trio's baggage, secrets that come to light and across a detective's radar when the driver of a car who belligerently stole the women's parking spot as they went for a night out goes missing—and turns into a murder case....

Read an [interview with Alafair](#) on this book and more in *the NY Times Book Review*. And here's a [link to an interview with Alafair](#) about the real life event that inspired this story.

Byrne, James. [Chain Reaction](#) (St Martins \$29). I love having a high action book that is so much fun. Dez Limerick is so good natured and so skilled he's irresistible. I've loved his earlier appearances in [The Gatekeeper](#) (\$9.99) and [Deadlock](#) (\$9.99). Surely there's a movie calling his name. Lesa, our blogger, agrees with me, calling *Chain Reaction* "a fast-paced, explosive thriller with a charming hero, Russian terrorists on U.S. soil, high-stakes money schemes, and a worthy opponent."

She adds: "In his previous life, Dez Limerick was a gatekeeper, trained to covertly open locked doors and keep them open as long as necessary. Now, at 35, he's retired, living in California, and taking occasional gigs as a bass player and pianist. When a friend needs his musical skills, he flies to Newark, NJ, to help a band inaugurate a new convention complex. As Dez explores the Liberty Center, he notices a number of men armed with Russian rifles. He's just settled into a martini bar when there's an announcement that a Russian terrorist group has taken over the convention center, and they'll kill anybody who tries to escape. Dez sees a couple killed before he decides to take on the terrorists. He teams up with a thief, and together they thwart the terrorists' plans. But someone seems to know just what Dez will do. When he recognizes that several victims were not shot with Russian weapons, he turns the information over to the FBI. Will it be enough to stop the plan that's now steamrolling along?"

Clark, Tracy. [Echo](#) (Thomas & Mercer \$16.99). "Chicago detective Harriet Foster still operates in a fog after the deaths of her former partner and her own child. But Harri refuses to allow her pain to subsume her investigative work. The case she's just been assigned will definitely offer distraction: the death of Belverton College student and 'golden boy' Brice Collier, son of the school's biggest donor, found dead near campus. 'Brice died of fatal ethanol intoxication... 'This has happened before. Thirty years ago. Same field. Same cause of death,' says the ME. Though that long-ago death was ruled a hazing accident, it turns out that Brice's father and a friend —Belverton's current president — were implicated in it. Clark's understanding of how the search for justice can be perverted into revenge is acute..."—*NY Times Book Review*"

I add that Chicago native Clark is also the author of the Cass Raines Chicago Mysteries. Clark received Anthony Award and Lefty Award nominations for Cass' series debut [Broken Places](#) (\$18.99).

Davis, Fiona. [The Stolen Queen](#) (Dutton \$29) starts out in Egypt, circa 1936, as a tragedy befalls a young anthropologist in the famous Valley of the Kings. Fast-forward to NYC's posh Met Gala in 1978: It seems an artifact is missing from the Met's collection, and an immortal female pharaoh may be, well, mad about that. Curses! No, literally—curses are involved. The now much older anthropologist and a new Costume Institute intern are about to discover the lethal side of Egyptology. It's also a

splendid read for museum junkies, visitors to NY's Metropolitan Museum of Art, or anyone interested in The Met Gala inaugurated by *Vogue* editor Dianna Vreeland (or seen the film [First Monday in May](#) which is an absolute delight).

"[Davis] knows how to mix the worlds of high glamour and serious intrigue. She's outdone herself with this latest story, which involves a missing Egyptian artifact, a night at the Met Gala with Diana Vreeland, and the possibility of a centuries-old curse being reawakened. You might never look at the first Monday in May the same way again." —*Town & Country*

Donovan, Kemper. [Loose Lips](#) (Kensington \$28). Lesa reviews the second mystery by the host of "All About Agatha" podcast: Under the pseudonym Belle Curren, the ghostwriter wrote *The Busy Body* mystery based on her experiences in Maine. Now, a friend and rival from grad school days, Payton Garrett, invites her to teach mystery writing on a cruise ship, the "Get Lit Cruise" that hosts 300 women and three men. When Payton and her wife experience poisoning symptoms during a dinner, and a staff member dies, Belle and the ship's doctor step up to act as detectives. Looking back at the cruise, Belle has already warned readers there will be three murders on this trip, so it comes as no surprise when there are several more deaths. Despite her deep dive into sidekick territory, it's a shock to Belle when the killer is revealed.... If you missed it last year, [The Busy Body](#) (\$17.95) is a lot of fun to read.

Dugoni, Robert/Jeff Langholz. [Hold Strong](#) (Thomas & Mercer \$28.99). Signed here February 8 5 PM by both authors who anchored this novel in a true story. Sam Carlson is a projectionist in small-town Minnesota, where fantasies unspool in glorious black and white—for him and for his sweetheart, college-bound math whiz Sarah Haber. When the Japanese bomb Pearl Harbor, Sam is sent to the Philippines and captured as a POW. Brutalized but unbroken by the Bataan Death March and POW camps, Sam is one of eighteen hundred starved and weakened prisoners herded into the cargo hold of a barbaric hell ship called the *Arisan Maru*, his survival doubtful. Determined to use her math skills on the home front, Sarah is recruited to Washington, DC, into the covert field of code breaking. When Sarah intercepts a message about a Japanese convoy, the US Navy's mission is clear: sink the *Arisan Maru* and send it to the bottom of the South China Sea. Now, the lives of the two young lovers are about to inadvertently collide in one of the most shocking acts of World War II.

Finder, Joseph. [The Oligarch's Daughter](#) (Harper \$30). **Out January 28, Signed here February 3, our February Crime Subscription Club selection. And our copies come with an exclusive art print designed by Finder** who here demonstrates that he's not only a thriller writer but well versed in bad actors and bad deeds in business as well as politics.

Paul Brightman is living under an assumed name in a small New Hampshire town when a Russian operative tries to kill him. Six years earlier, despite warnings from well-meaning friends, he married a beautiful photographer whose Russian father had amassed a fortune through questionable business dealings. Although Paul planned to keep his father-in-law at arm's length, he became immersed in a dangerous world, with the FBI hounding him to become an informant against the family of the woman he loves. In the present day, forced into survival mode, he takes to the woods, racing to stay one step ahead of the

ever-present threat of a million-dollar bounty on his head. His only way out is to unravel a decades-old conspiracy. This isn't a standard political thriller plot but, as I already noted, tangles the characters in financial schemes as did, say, the best of Christopher Reich's thrillers.

Gaylin, Alison. [We Are Watching](#) (Harper Collins \$30) delivers a timely thriller about the nefarious workings of cults and conspiracy theorists. Meg Russo and her husband, Justin, own a bookstore in the small town of Elizabethville, N.Y. The couple lives a quiet life with their 18-year-old daughter, Lily, a musician intent on following in the footsteps of her off-the-grid grandfather, who achieved minor rock stardom years earlier. While driving to Ithaca, N.Y., to move Lily into college, the family gets in a nasty car crash; Justin dies, and Meg, who was behind the wheel, blames herself. Back in Elizabethville, she finds the bookshop vandalized and videos across the internet accusing her and her family of practicing Satanism. Quickly realizing that she, Justin, and Lily have become the targets of a QAnon-like conspiracy cult, Meg wrestles with revealing secrets she's been hiding from her daughter for decades, including the story behind a book Meg published when she was a teenager, and details about Lily's grandfather. Gaylin matches her lucid, propulsive prose with crackerjack plotting.

Alison's conversation partner for her zoom event is Talia Lavin whose book is titled [Wild Faith](#) (Grand Central \$30).

Krentz, Jayne Ann. [Shattering Dawn](#) (Berkley \$29). John reviews this new entry in the Lost Night Files: When PI Gideon Sweetwater disrupts the kidnapping of Amelia Rivers, they escape and return to the ruins of the hotel in the California desert where Amelia lost a night to amnesia before gaining some unusual powers. Now the two are desperately trying to find a way to stop a killer and the people who are conducting illegal experiments with a dangerous drug designed to enhance psychic abilities. Krentz delivers another nerve-chilling blend of suspense and romance enhanced with just the right dash of paranormal thrills.

\* MacBird, Bonnie. [The Serpent Under](#) (Collins \$36). Sherlockians, alert! The 6<sup>th</sup> Sherlock Holmes Adventure by MacBird enlivens January. Holmes and Watson take on a high profile case at Windsor Castle, a boy drowned in the Serpentine, and a crusading women's rights activist who suspects a traitor in her organization. The cases send them into danger into locales as varied as the Palace itself, a dockland cannery, an arts and crafts atelier, and a Gypsy encampment. But is there peril underfoot as well – right at 221B Baker Street? Unsigned US edition listed below in Some New Hardcover.

Maldonado, Isabella. [A Killer's Code](#) (Thomas & Mercer \$16.99). Maldonado's inspired third adventure for Daniela Vega finds the FBI agent reeling from new developments relating to her father's death. A decade after Dani's testimony put her mother, Camille, in a psychiatric facility for killing her father, evidence has emerged exonerating Camille. As a result, Dani plans to take time off work to repair her and her mother's rocky relationship. Those hopes get dashed when the FBI director receives a flash drive from recently dead hit man Gustavo Toro, whom Dani met while working undercover. In video message on the flash drive, Toro explains that it contains a code that, once deciphered, will reveal who hired him to carry out his killings and offer key evidence in a host of unsolved crimes. Daniela

is roped onto the team tasked with cracking the cipher, and she unravels dark secrets from Toro's past. As in the previous books, Maldonado leverages her law enforcement background to lend the proceedings weight and authenticity, while flashbacks predating Toro's death ratchet up the suspense

McMahon, John. [Head Cases](#) (St Martins \$28). John McMahon made a name for himself with *The Good Detective*, which was one of the *New York Times*' [Top Ten Crime Novels of 2019](#). Now, he's created an underdog ensemble cast for a story told from the point of view of its neurodivergent protagonist. In our **January Crime Subscription Club Book of the Month** investigative savant Gardner Camden tracks a vigilante who targets serial killers. Camden—a member of the FBI's Patterns and Recognition team—has history with the vigilante's first victim, Ross Tignon, whom the investigator suspected of three murders in Florida a decade earlier. Though Camden believed Tignon died in a fire seven years ago, he'd instead moved to Texas, where a killer caught up with him. Before the team can make much progress on the Tignon case, rumors start swirling that their unit might be dissolved. Then another suspected serial killer turns up dead. With pressure boring down from all sides, the team comes to believe that the murderer has privileged information about unsolved serial killer cases—meaning that a member of the FBI is likely involved. McMahon introduces several clever wrinkles to this classic cat-and-mouse setup, while making the socially awkward Camden and his colleagues three-dimensional enough to sustain future installments. “With pulse-pounding action and enough surprises to blindsides even seasoned mystery fans, this is a stunner.”

Morrow, Bradford. [The Forger's Requiem](#) (Grove \$28) opens with a cracker of a scene: An unconscious man wakes up to the horrifying discovery that he has been buried alive. “He was drowning, but in the land, not the sea,” Morrow writes. He escapes, stumbling into a nearby house whose occupants are away. Its elegant printing press and library filled with rare books spur him to remember who he is: Henry Slader, a high-end literary forger and part of a shadowy subculture rife with professional jealousy, personal rivalry and murderous impulses. (The house is owned by his avowed enemy, the possibly insane Will Gardener.) Morrow alternates between Slader's story and the parallel adventures of Nicole, Will's precocious 20-something daughter. She's an adept forger herself. In a book full of blackmail, murder and other misdeeds, forgery turns out to be the most exciting kind of crime, as Nicole embarks on an audacious plot to manufacture a cache of fake letters from Mary Shelley, the author of “Frankenstein,” to her deceased mother, Mary Wollstonecraft, the author of *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. Morrow's book is especially good for *Frankenstein* buffs. I really miss John Dunning and his wonderful books about collectible books and fraudulent corners of that world such as forgery.

Mosley, Walter. [Been Wrong So Long it Feels Like Right](#): (Little-Brown \$29). “Easy Rawlins, Mosley's first detective, is still his best and most iconic; Leonid McGill, his second, is more idiosyncratic but wasn't built for many installments. His latest, Joe “King” Oliver, is back for a third time. It feels like King is still finding his footing, but he's getting there. It helps that the investigation that occupies most of his time in this book is personal: His beloved Grandma B has a malignant tumor and she wants to see her son, Chief — King's estranged father, who's keeping a low

profile after a long prison sentence — once more. “I know how you feelin’,” his grandma tells him. “But this is somethin’ I need. I wouldn’t ask if you wasn’t the only one could help me.” Complicating the task is a work obligation — tracking down a missing heiress — that turns personal. King’s chasing after a father who loved women well but not too wisely, and finds himself in a similar predicament, one that Mosley has captured in almost all of his fiction. At the sentence level, Mosley’s language thrills...” — *NYTBR* helping us celebrate Black History Month this February.

Nickless, Barbara. [The Drowning Game](#) (\$16.99). Sisters Nadia and Cass Brenner are heirs to Ocean House, a decades-old empire that builds superyachts for the rich and powerful: emirs, oligarchs, and titans of industry throughout America and Europe. They’re a next-generation success with the design of their soon-to-be-commissioned megayacht for a Chinese billionaire. But the sisters’ entrée into the coveted Asian market is tragically cut short when Cass falls from a fortieth-floor hotel balcony. A Singapore detective rules suicide. Nadia’s been in the yacht business too long not to be suspicious. Especially when she discovers Cass’s involvement in dangerously illicit activities. Pulled into the same web of betrayal, lies, and secrets that trapped her sister, Nadia may end blowing up her family and get herself killed. This is a corker plus it paints Singapore brightly.

Okorafor, Nnedi. [Death of the Author](#) (Harper \$30) Limited Edition. A book-within-a-book that blends the line between writing and being written, *Death of the Author* is metafiction that manages to combine the razor-sharp commentary of *Yellowface* with the heartfelt humanity of *Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow*” says the publisher.

Osler, Rob. [The Case of the Missing Maid](#) (Kensington \$27). **Our January Cozy Crime Subscription Club Pick** won my heart for two reasons: first, Harriet Morrow is a terrific lead character, and second, Osler brilliantly captures Gilded Age Chicago, a city infrequently depicted in fiction. Here’s rave for this book included in five outstanding Cozy Crimes: “It’s 1898 and Harriet Morrow can’t believe her luck in landing a job as the first female detective at the prestigious Prescott Agency in Chicago. Assigned to find Agnes Wozniak, the missing live-in maid employed by a wealthy neighbor of her boss, Morrow follows clues that take her into the heart of the city’s Polish community and also lead her to places where LGBTQ folks like herself secretly gather. As she gets closer to the truth of what happened to Wozniak, Morrow must depend on her wits and courage — as well as her newly minted shooting skills — to solve the case.” I add that this is not a novel with a sexual agenda.

Paoletta, Kyle. [American Oasis](#) (Knopf \$30). Living in the Southwest means being routinely scolded by outsiders. How can you live in a place so unsustainable? With that kind of politics? With that kind of culture, or, rather, the lack of it? Rarely does a summer pass in my home city without somebody standing up a roundtable with a title like “Should Phoenix Exist?” In his book journalist and Albuquerque native Paoletta does a little bit of scolding, too. Yes, the region’s development outpaces its resources. And it is indeed a gaudy and strange place — he’s not wrong to liken Las Vegas to “a pop-up ad the country didn’t mean to click on.” But Paoletta also understands that we underestimate and segregate the Southwest at our peril. No part of the country is immune from drought or reckless development, which is to

say that the Southwest’s critics are often committing an epic feat of projection. The region is not America’s weird cousin but its starkest mirror. And, if we’re willing to see it clearly, a source for solutions. But making that case means rejecting some of the region’s most familiar origin stories.

[Read more](#) of what Phoenix-based critic Mark Athitakis writes about Kyle’s book in his thoughtful review I’ve just quoted. Mark is our host for January 20.

[The LA Times](#) adds: “But it’s also a guide and a warning. With climate change making more of the country feel like the Southwest, Paoletta wants the reader to understand how the region’s people live in unforgettingly arid terrain — because even if you don’t come to the Southwest, the Southwest will soon be coming to you.”

Patterson, James. [Holmes Is Missing](#) (LittleBrown \$30 with bookplate signed by Patterson). Success has come quickly to Holmes, Marple & Poe Investigations. The New York City agency led by three detectives—Brendan Holmes, “the brain,” Margaret Marple, “the eyes,” and Auguste Poe, the “muscle”—with famous names and mysterious pasts is one major case away from cementing its professional reputation. But as a series of child abductions tests the PIs’ legendary skills, the cerebral Holmes’s absence leaves a gaping hole in the agency roster. Only by closing ranks and solving the mystery within can they recover.

Perry, Thomas. [Pro Bono](#) (Penguin \$27.95). Perry fan, like me, Dana Stabenow reviews: Teenaged Charlie Warren rescues—mostly—his mother from a grifter who has married her for her money. Fourteen years later he’s a lawyer in L.A. when another woman who is being robbed of her savings walks into his office, who is then kidnapped outside his office but not for the reason any of them (or you) think. And the chase is on. Charlie is a smart, capable hero whose bullshit detector is better than just about anyone else’s and which keeps him a step and a half ahead of everyone (who appear to be legion) who is trying to stop him from uncovering their crimes and recovering the money they have embezzled. A thrill-house ride from Perry this outing, who saves the creepiest part for the last chapters.

[Hero](#) (\$16.95), last year’s propulsive LA-based thriller, was named a Best Mystery of the Year by both *Kirkus* and *Booklist*. Many of you will want a new Jane Whitefield from Perry, or perhaps a further *Butcher’s Boy*?

Sallis, James. [Difficult Lives](#) (Soho Press \$15.99) presents Sallis’ seminal biographical essays on crime fiction pioneers Jim Thompson, David Goodis, and Chester Himes restored to print and joined by a handpicked collection of essays, reviews, and introductory writings on noir fiction. At the time of its original publication by Gryphon Books in 1993, *Difficult Lives* was a pioneering work of literary investigation. Sallis’ subjects of Himes, Goodis, and Thompson were as enigmatic as they were out-of-print, and literary scholarship on the subject of their lives and works scant. As the title of the collection indicates, the three men led difficult lives, and although they forever changed the history of crime writing, they all passed in relative isolation. Don’t forget we also have the only Signed copies of Sallis’ short fiction collected in [Bright Segments](#) (Soho \$35).

Sayles, John. [To Save the Man](#) (Melville House \$29.99). We really liked the director/screenwriter/actor/novelist’s last book, [Jamie MacGillivray](#) (\$24 deluxe paperback), an historical epic

sweeping us from Scotland's 1746 Battle of Culloden to the New World, when we did a sparkling conversation with Diana Gabaldon for its release. Here's a blurb from the publisher from his new novel: "In the vein of *Never Let Me Go* and *Killers of the Flower Moon*, one of America's greatest storytellers sheds light on an American tragedy: The massacre at Wounded Knee." See the February Booknews for a Starred Review and news that Patrick hosts a zoom event with Sayles on February 13.

Stabenow, Dana. [Abduction of a Slave](#) (Bloomsbury \$28.99). Cleopatra, seventh of her name, all-powerful ruler of Egypt, has found her most able and trusted agent in Tetisheri, her Eye of Isis. And generally keeps Sheri near at hand. So when Tetisheri asks permission to visit the Kingdom of Cyrenaica, she is surprised – and suspicious – when her queen grants her leave from Alexandria. A middleman in Cyrenaica has ceased communication and Tetisheri's uncle, a master trader, is on a mission to find out why. But there are others in Cyrenaica with hidden agendas: Julius Caesar's spies, Caesar's sworn enemy Mettelus Scipio, and the ever duplicitous King Juba I. Tetisheri soon realizes why Cleopatra consented to her mission, for Cyrenaica is a web of intrigue that also includes Pompey's widow and an army readying to take on the might of Caesar, who is massing his legions in Sicily. With war on the horizon, Tetisheri's skills will be stretched to the limit as she also tries to decipher a murder mystery and possible fraud. The battle scene is amazing...and harrowing.

Tan, Sue Lynn. [Immortal](#) (Harper \$32) revisits the world of her Celestial Kingdom duology in this spellbinding standalone romantasy. Set in the same world as her Celestial Kingdom books, this standalone romantic fantasy from author Sue Lynn Tan introduces a compelling new heroine—the courageous young ruler known as Liyen. Pledged to serve the immortals who protect her kingdom of Tianxia, Liyen runs into trouble when she gets the feels for the legendary God of War. Tan skillfully creates a magic system steeped in Chinese mythology, and the dazzling worldbuilding will be accessible even to those unfamiliar with her prior series. A slow-burning love story, high-flying action scenes, and some unexpected twists make this a stunner."—PW Starred Review

And don't overlook the paperback edition of [Daughter of the Moon Goddess](#) (\$17.99), an epic fantasy inspired by the legend of the Chinese moon goddess, Chang'e, in which a young woman's quest to free her mother pits her against the most powerful immortal in the realm.

Turow, Scott. [Presumed Guilty](#) (Grand Central \$30) revisits a 77-year-old Rusty Sabich from the perspective of being himself 75 and I ask, how much of himself has he put into Sabich in a book that is both a legal thriller and a reflection on aging, a long eventful life, and a future, as well as what a swath of America—Midwestern America through the lens of a fictional county lying somewhere between Chicago, Wisconsin, and Minnesota—has become in his lifetime? Questions like what would things look like if a white couple in such a place adopted a Black baby who would grow up forever an outsider? How does the legal system tilt towards presuming such a man guilty of a shocking crime? How do later marriages and blended families work? There is a lot to unpack here.

In an interview Turow writes: "The inspiration for *Presumed Guilty* is one I carried with me for a long time, although

it's hardly unique to me: the resonance of a situation in which someone you love and trust is accused of a serious crime. The recognition that Rusty would have a role in this kind of drama is of more recent vintage. After going back to Sandy Stern in [The Last Trial](#) (\$16.99, I began to think I might enjoy one more go-round with Rusty Sabich. So Rusty Sabich has turned his back on Kindle County and his former life, in the wake of the events of [Innocent](#) (\$18.99) and his release from prison. Seeking refuge, he has settled in Skageon County, a farming and recreational area two hours north. Although he arrived assuming he was going to live as a kind of numbed recluse, he eventually finds himself, at 70, restored by falling in love with the younger local grade school principal. Thus he is deeply challenged when she calls on Rusty to defend her son Aaron, a baby she and her former husband adopted from a Black family to raise in an almost totally white community, who is accused of his girlfriend's murder."

Wade, Kevin. [Johnny Careless](#) (Celadon Books \$27.99). **Our January First Mystery Pick. It's not too late to sign up for the First Mystery Subscription Club to secure your signed copy. Three months minimum. Six months membership gets a bonus \$30 Gift Certificate to spend as you wish.**

*Blue Bloods* showrunner Wade makes a splashy debut with this stirring procedural about a veteran cop's probe into the death of his former best friend. After a traumatizing case, Jeep Mullane leaves the NYPD to become the chief of a new police department in the wealthy part of Long Island where he grew up. While Jeep investigates a rash of car thefts, his colleagues discover a faceless male corpse on a beach in the small town of Bayville. The dead man bears a tattoo that identifies him as Johnny Chambliss, Jeep's best friend from high school. Horrified, Jeep begins poking around Johnny's affluent family for answers and stumbles onto a frightening web of corruption.

Wade smoothly toggles between Jeep's present-day investigation and his friendship with Johnny, shedding light on their class differences and the events that led them to lose touch in adulthood. Wade's gift for suspense is as well honed as one would expect from his film and TV credits—the real surprise is his character work, which goes deep enough that readers will find themselves thinking about Jeep and Johnny long after they've turned the final page. Haunting and heartbreaking, this is a winner."—PW Starred Review. So say I, too, and also our good friend author John Sandford.

## HEALTH

Smith, Dr. Ian K. [Eat Your Age](#) (Harper \$30). Defy the effects of aging by implementing simple changes at every decade. Whether we like it or not, lots of things change as we age: our joints start to creak, our muscles weaken, and we lose coordination. Our bodies simply don't look or perform the same each decade of life, and our risks for various diseases and medical conditions also increase as the years do. Getting old may be inevitable, but feeling old is not: we can age well and maximize each decade of life if we do the right things at the right time and eat the right foods for our needs. I know Dr. Smith from his fiction but he's converted me to his #1 bestselling books on diet and lifestyle and will be talking about this book with us in February or March.

## CLASSICS

King, Rufus. [Murder by the Clock](#) (American Mystery Classics \$15.95). The body of Herbert Endicott is discovered by his wife at 8:37 PM, dead in his walk-in closet. The circumstances seem suspicious but there is no evidence of foul play, so Lieutenant Valcour, New York's most astute investigator, orders an autopsy on site. The doctor discovers a faint heartbeat and, with an injection of adrenaline, Endicott is alive again. But just a few hours later, he has been shot dead—this time for good. From this puzzling set-up, an atmospheric and tense mystery ensues, with Valcour's research turning up more questions than answers. Before twenty-four hours are up, the solution will be uncovered.

Lorac, ECR. [The Theft of the Iron Dogs](#) (Poisoned Pen \$15.99). Another British Library Crime Classic from Lorac.... First published in 1946 and set in the fell country of Lunesdale over the course of a rainy September, *The Theft of the Iron Dogs* is the very picture of a cozy crime mystery and showcases Lorac's masterful attention to detail and deep affection for both Lunesdale and its residents. While hot on the heels of serial coupon-racketeer Gordon Ginner, Chief Inspector MacDonald of Scotland Yard receives word of an intriguing incident up in Lancashire – the summer cottage of local farmer Giles Hoggett has been broken into, with an assortment of seemingly random items missing which include a complete reel of salmon line, a large sack, and two iron dogs from his fireplace. What first appears to Insp. MacDonald as a simple break-in quickly spirals into a mystery of contested land grabs...and murder.

## MORE NEW HARDCOVERS

Bear, Lauren J. [Mother of Rome](#) (Penguin \$30). Stories of classical Rome contain few details about Rhea Silvia. By adding a new twist to the original myth, Bear constructs a vivid tale of a fierce woman driven by maternal love. Twins Romulus and Remus are the central figures in myths about the founding of Rome. This engaging historical fantasy imagines the life of Rhea Silvia. Being a princess hasn't been perfect. Her mother and brothers have died, so as her father's sole heir, her future betrothal is of vital importance. But a sudden coup makes Rhea's situation even worse: her uncle seizes the throne and declares that she must become a vestal virgin. Determined not to let her uncle decide her fate, Rhea plots with her cousin, Antho, for one night alone in the woods, which she spends with the god Mars. When Rhea becomes pregnant and is sentenced to death, it takes all her wits and bargains with the gods to ensure that her twins are born and survive to found the city that will become an empire.

Bryson, Bill. [A Really Short History of Words Illustrated](#) (Penguin UK \$33). Adapted from *Mother Tongue*, this stunningly illustrated book tells the story of English, from the first words ever spoken to the very first dictionaries. Perfect for ages 8 to 80! Every day, you do something incredible, and I bet you barely ever think about it: you speak. But have you ever wondered why the English language turned out like it did? If so, this is the book for you and for anyone with a love of language.

Buxton, Kira Jane. [Tartufo](#) (Grand Central \$29). The Indie Next Pick: "*Tartufo* is the ideal breakout novel for readers who don't know Kira Jane Buxton. Replace talking crows and apocalyptic futures with a Tuscan village that's seen better days and a truffle of epic proportions.

Collins, Megan. [Cross My Heart](#) (Atria \$28.99). Following a heart transplant, the possibly unhinged main character of Collins's thriller falls for the widower whose dead wife's heart now beats in her chest. But there's a possible hitch in her fantasy of him as her perfect future husband. "His wife's death wasn't an accident," someone has written in the comments to one of his Instagram posts. "This is a curious book: part (possible) murder mystery, part deep dive into out-of-control social media addiction and part sleight-of-hand trick by the author. ... Is it a romantic comedy freighted with darkness or a dark novel leavened by observational humor? You be the judge."

Dawson, Kate Winkler. [The Sinners All Bow](#) (Putnam \$30). Did Nathaniel Hawthorne base *The Scarlet Letter* on the real-life story of the Rev. Ephraim Avery and his young congregant Sarah Maria Cornell, whose gruesome death in 1832 Massachusetts shocked all of New England? So argues Dawson, a prolific podcaster and author, in this true-crime history dissecting the case that led to Avery's trial and acquittal.

Fagan, Kate. [The Three Lives of Cate Kay](#) (Atria \$27.99). "*The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo* meets *First Lie Wins* in this electric, voice-driven debut novel constructed as a fictional memoir by an elusive bestselling author who decides to finally confess her true identity after years of hiding from her past while living under three names." Reese's Book Club has made this the January Pick which means it will rapidly become a bestseller. I have ordered a copy to read so I can't say more for now.

Gamerman, Amy. [The Crazyies](#) (Simon & Schuster \$29.99) tells the story of a wind farm that triggers a 21st century range war between a struggling fifth-generation Montana rancher and the billionaires who've moved in next door. *The Crazyies* is perfect for anyone interested in the American West, the politics of energy and climate, and a great courtroom drama—and clearly for readers of CJ Box.

Genova, Lisa. [More or Less Maddy](#) (Gallery \$28.99). Maddy Banks is an NYU student questioning culture's expectations that she lead a "normal" life when she is diagnosed with bipolar disorder. While navigating a chaotic new reality rocked by destructive manias and debilitating depressions, her relationship with herself and others complicated by stigma and shame, she finds her calling in stand-up comedy and the courage to redefine normal

Goodman, Allegra. [Isola](#) (Random \$28.99). In an author's note following her gripping new novel, Goodman explains that the story originated when, in a children's book about Jacques Cartier, she encountered an aside about one of the explorer's acquaintances: "In 1542, a nobleman named Jean-François Roberval sailed separately with colonists to meet with Cartier in what is now called Canada," she recalls learning. "Roberval brought along his young ward, Marguerite de la Rocque, who annoyed him by having an affair aboard ship. Roberval marooned Marguerite and her lover on an island in the Gulf of Saint Lawrence where she managed to survive for more than two years while fighting off polar bears." Fascinated by this tidbit, Goodman set out to write her version of Marguerite's story.

Grumley, Michael C. [Cold Storage](#) (Forge \$28.99) is an expansive new standalone Grumley's "The Revival" series, exploring humanity's thirst for immortality at any cost. "Grumley tosses a lot of balls in the air, but he juggles them all nimbly,

keeping the plot's many surprises well concealed without sacrificing pace. Blake Crouch fans will love this," says *PW*.

Hendrix, Grady. [Witchcraft for Wayward Girls](#) (Penguin \$30). Neva is only 15 when she's dropped off at the Home for Unwed Mothers to weather the final months of her pregnancy among strangers. In 1970, there's nothing more shameful than being an unmarried, pregnant teenager, and the mistress and doctors of the home, who rename her Fern, treat her like trash. With only the tentative friendships of the other pregnant girls, Fern turns to a book from a traveling library for comfort: How to be a Groovy Witch. The book initially seems silly, but when Fern and her friends try a spell, the magic actually works, giving them a shred of power in their helpless situations. They initially dabble in only minor magic, like a spell to relieve their morning sickness—until.... "There are moments where you laugh, feel scared, and even cry. That's the beauty of this book: everything comes with a price," avers the Indie Next No 1 Pick for January.

Jordan, Amy. [The Dark Hours](#) (Mira \$30). "In 1994, the Irish detective Julia Harte gets assigned to a serial killer case that eats away at her until she retires and leaves Cork for a "secluded village on the east coast of Ireland." There she lives quietly, certain that the nightmares — which swallowed up the life of her detective partner — are finally past. They aren't, of course. In 2024, Julia's former boss calls her with terrible news: Two people have been murdered, their bodies staged just like those of the victims three decades earlier. "It's happening again," he tells her. Julia doesn't want to go back to Cork, but there's no one else who can connect the past with the present in the case, no one who can finally lay all those old demons to rest. Jordan shows how the aftermath of violence affects all those who witness it. She writes Julia with particular fire, bringing us a woman who has chosen invisibility but who cannot escape what once made her visible."—*NYTBR*

Kang, Han. [We Do Not Part](#) (Random House \$28). The South Korean writer comes armed with a pretty sterling résumé. Her debut, *The Vegetarian*, was the first Korean-language novel to win the International Booker Prize, and just last year she became the first Asian woman to receive the Nobel Prize in Literature. Her newly translated novel probes some extremely dark episodes of South Korean history with a story that drifts between a dream country and the waking world.

Knight, Emma. [The Life Cycle of the Common Octopus](#) (Penguin \$29) is "a novel about a first-year college student in Scotland searching for the answers to her family secrets," *Today* said. "This is a book about friendship, motherhood and finding ourselves with mystery and romance at its core."

Koval, Kristin. [Penitence](#) (Celadon \$28.99) is a sprawling suspense story spanning several decades, from Colorado ski country to post-9/11 New York City. Angie and David Sheehan are thrust into crisis when a murder occurs at their home. The event triggers memories of a long-ago tragedy as Koval's characters confront issues of forgiveness, childhood trauma, and the cold realities of the justice system.

MacIntosh, Kate. [The Champagne Letters](#) (Gallery Books \$28.99) "celebrates a strong woman, pouring in journal entries from an 18th-century connoisseur of early champagne with a modern tale of deception, love, and revenge." This is not the first novel to draw upon the life of the Widow Clicquot who loses

her husband in 1805 Reims but pursues their dream of building France's premier house of Champagne. The present-day Chicago divorcée runs away to Paris. In a book stall by the Seine, Natalie finds a collection of the Widow Clicquot's published letters and uses them as inspiration to step out of her comfort zone and create a new, empowered life for herself. But then...she has to make a choice.

Mackay, Asia. [A Serial Killer's Guide to Marriage](#) (Bantam \$30). With more fiction being conceived and written for shock value (taking a clue from mainstream media coverage), here's a review from *PW* for one: "Artist Hazel Matthews and wealthy heir Nathaniel Foxton Cabot, the married protagonists of Mackay's wildly entertaining latest, have spent the last few years traveling across Europe, murdering men who prey on women. Their exploits have earned them the Interpol nickname 'the Backpacking Butcher.' When Hazel becomes pregnant, Fox decides it's time to settle down, and the couple decamps to the London suburbs to raise their daughter. Fox takes a job in an office; Hazel sees her artistic inspiration buried beneath a mountain of diapers and play dates. Restless, she kills a man on her own—one who she believes deserved to die. Soon, however, Hazel learns that one of the mothers from her toddler's playgroup is a cop who's been investigating the case of the Backpacking Butcher, and that this latest kill has put her on Hazel's trail. Mackay brilliantly exaggerates the stifling aspects of parenthood through the eyes of her charismatic killers, wringing both laughs and pathos from her deliciously outlandish premise."

Meade, Amy Patricia. [Death Upon a Star](#) (Severn \$29.99). Ordered Upon Request. Meade delivers a charming, well-plotted series launch set in 1939 Hollywood. Evelyn Galloway has moved from New York to California for a dream job as a script consultant on Alfred Hitchcock's film *Rebecca*. Her first day on set, she meets silent film star John Margrave. Now 46, Margrave has settled comfortably into secondary roles and won the universal respect of his peers—making his murder a considerable shock to Hollywood's elite. Evelyn witnesses someone leaving Margrave's bungalow on the night he's killed and goes to the LAPD with the information. But with reporters parroting studio-approved versions of the truth, and LAPD detectives content to follow suit, Evelyn has no choice but to take things into her own hands. "Meade weaves delightful on-set scenes between Evelyn and Hitchcock into the brisk action, and each red herring feels entirely plausible until it's neatly discredited."

Meltzer, Brad. [The JFK Conspiracy](#) (Flatiron \$29.99). You may think you know about the JFK assassination plot, but it turns out there was more than one. According to this nonfiction thriller, the first attempt on John F. Kennedy's life took place in 1960—about a month before he was sworn in as the 35th U.S. president—and involved a sociopathic postal worker, an old Buick, and an alarming amount of dynamite. Meltzer brings his novelist's skills to a series of books probing historical events and people—this is the latest.

\* Raughley, Sarah. [The Queen's Spade](#) (Harper \$19.99), is a hardcover for Teen readers but works for adults. Inspired by the true story of Sarah Forbes Bonetta, a Yoruba princess kidnapped by the Dahomey king after murdering her parents and gifted to Queen Victoria along with fellow captive Ade after a Royal Navy Captain intervenes. Ade is thrown overboard. Ten years later,



Sally, now age 18 and Victoria's goddaughter, plots revenge. Fury, romance, and twisted secrets take center stage in the 1862 royal court as Sally plots her way to take down the monarchy. Victoria, sensing danger, plays the marriage card—to a Captain Davies who will take the newly weds to Lagos—as a way to block Sally's plans. No slouch, with her freedom in peril, she forms a partnership with an East End crime lord.... The title hooked me and then the story.

Ryan, Annelise. [Beast of the North Woods](#) (Penguin \$28). Rita Bosworth, an employee at Morgan Carter's Door County gift shop, comes to her one morning with a desperate request: Rita's nephew, Andrew, is the prime suspect in the murder of a young man named Brandon Kluver, who was killed in Wisconsin's north woods. The two men had a history of antagonism, and Andrew's account—that Brandon was butchered by the Hodag, a legendary beast with a froglike face, tusks, and clawed feet—is ridiculed by the police. Rita begs skeptical cryptozoologist Morgan to look into it, and she agrees, recalling a recent, unrelated sighting of a creature that resembled the Hodag in the same region. As Morgan prepares to go trudging through the north woods in pursuit of the amphibious menace, she receives anonymous threats attempting to dissuade her from pressing any further, which only increase her sense of urgency. Ryan once again delivers the goods, serving up a cheeky, atmospheric investigation. (The Hodag is a completely fictional creature born out of folktales, local legends, and a prankster's con. The only monster likely to be involved in this death will be of the human variety.)

I'm a fan of Midwestern mysteries so I recommend you start this series with [A Death in Door County](#) (\$17) and [Death in the Dark Woods](#) (19).

Sakhlecha, Trisha. [The Inheritance](#) (Viking \$29) is a thriller about a family reunion where a business tycoon will announce his succession plan. So the Agarwal siblings have gathered on a private island off the coast of Scotland, ostensibly to celebrate their parents' 40th anniversary and learn who will inherit the massive fortune. So Agatha Christie.....

Sligar, Sarah. [Vantage Point](#) (Farrar Straus \$29). Sligar's novel—a modern retelling of Charles Brockden Brown's early American Gothic *Wieland; or The Transformation* (1798)—features an unthinkable rich brother and sister, heirs to a steel fortune, who are haunted by a family curse and by compromising video tapes (possibly faked) that upend the brother's Senate campaign. “At first glance, the Wielands seem to be the perfect affluent New England family marred only by a century-spanning string of deaths occurring in April. Suspicious but entirely damning, right? It's not until ruinous videos starring Clara Wieland, Senate-candidate Teddy Wieland, and his wife Jess begin leaking that the family has to face the possibility that not everything is as idyllic at Vantage Point as it seems. Someone has a bone to pick and in the age of AI and deep fakes, revenge can be especially treacherous.” Read [a long review](#) in the *NY Times Book Review* on this book that concludes “The book ends up a fleet, au courant Gothic thriller, complete with deepfake conspiracies and class commentary.”

Lombao, Samantha Sotto. [Water Moon](#) (Random House \$28.99). A woman inherits an obscure Tokyo pawnshop where you can sell your regrets, and then embarks on a magical quest when a charming young physicist wanders into the shop. The author says,

“What if I told you that I know about a pawnshop where you can sell your regrets? Would you like its address?” It's a promising business idea, clearly. But alas, the shop's new owner Hana Ishikawa has just awoken to find the shop robbed and her father missing. Think of it as cozy fantasy with a mystery center.

I am checking to see if our copies feature an origami that folds into a boat, joining the characters in an enchanting way. The jacket artwork is also printed directly onto the hardcover case underneath.”

\* West, AJ. [The Betrayal of Thomas True](#) (Orenda \$26.99). Part historical thriller, part queer romance, it follows the titular character as he explores the queer underground of 1715 London. Thomas True has arrived on old London Bridge with a dangerous secret. One night, lost amongst the squalor of London's hidden back streets, he finds himself drawn into the outrageous underworld of the molly houses. Meanwhile, carpenter Gabriel Griffin struggles to hide his double life as Lotty, the molly's stoic guard. When a young man is found murdered, he realizes there is a rat amongst them, betraying their secrets to a pair of murderous Justices. Can Gabriel unmask the traitor before they hang?

### MORE JANUARY PAPERBACKS

This is a terrific list which is good news for winter reading. Many count as additions to our January Large Paperback Picks.

Attenberg, Jami. [1000 Words: A Writer's Guide](#) (\$19.99). Attenberg started a kind of writer's boot camp after feeling stymied with anxiety over a blank page. In 2018, the author was facing the stress of a deadline and a lack of creativity. She decided to reach out to a friend for help. They agreed to push each other into producing 1,000 words daily for two weeks. The simple pact proved to be a successful tool for smiting writer's block. And the idea ballooned from there, eventually becoming the online movement #1000WordsofSummer, a literary project and support group for writers and would-be writers to create and maintain creativity throughout the year.

Berry, Steve/Grant Blackwood. [Red Star Falling](#) (\$19.99). Wrapping up his latest assignment for the Magellan Billet, Luke Daniels receives a surprise visit from the head of a former-CIA operation named Sommerhaus—a failed attempt to assemble an espionage network within the Ukraine on the eve of the Russian invasion. Sommerhaus ranks high on Luke's list of painful regrets for it was during this mission that his friend, CIA case officer John Vince, was captured by Russian operatives and supposedly executed. But Luke is provided some shocking news. Vince is alive, in failing health, locked behind the walls of Russia's brutal Solovetsky Island prison, and has a critical message he'll give to no one but Luke. And so....

\* Cleeves, Ann. [A Bird in the Hand](#) (St Martins \$18). Before *Shetland* and *Vera*, Ann Cleeves wrote the George and Molly Palmer-Jones series following mysteries in a birdwatching community—now in print for the first time in the US. Young Tom French is found dead, lying in a marsh on the Norfolk coast, with his head bashed in and his binoculars still around his neck. One of the best birders in England, Tom had put the village of Rushy on the birdwatching map. Everyone liked him. Or did they? George Palmer-Jones, an elderly birdwatcher who decides quietly to look into the brutal crime, discovers mixed feelings aplenty. Still, he remains baffled by a deed that could have been motivated by thwarted love, pure envy, or something else altogether. But as

he and his fellow ‘twitchers’ flock from Norfolk to Scotland to the Scilly Isles in response to rumors of rare sightings, George—with help from his lovely wife, Molly—gradually discerns the true markings of a killer. All he has to do is prove it. I’m sad about *Vera* coming to an end but good for Brenda for walking away in her own time, but enjoying *Shetland* still.

Dahl, Astrid. [The Really Dead Wives of New Jersey](#) (Simon & Schuster \$17.99). Fledgling showrunner Eden Bennett is taking over the reins of the New Jersey–set megahit *Garden State Goddesses* as it enters its third season. To shake things up, she introduces an outsider to the show’s insular Sicilian American cast: her Californian cousin, Hope, who has married into *Garden State*’s central family, the Fontanas, after Eden introduced her to her now-husband. But Eden may have underestimated the passions that hippie-ish Hope would arouse in everyone. At first, the new conflicts make for great TV; then someone gets killed. Frothy, absurd, and as soapy as the shows that inspired this whodunnit by Anna Dorn writing as Dahl.

Duffy, Austin. [Cross](#) (Melville House \$19.99) “impresses with a stunning story of political intrigue in 1994 Northern Ireland. Francie, an elder IRA middleman, is respected for his grasp of the goings-on around his town, making him the ideal handler for a chaotic group of teenage boys tasked with murder. Authorized to kill a British policeman, they complete the mission and show up at the local pub, gloating. Francie quiets them, then gets called to visit his boss, Nailor, a farmer on the edge of town. Nailor wants to discuss the Widow Donnelly, who’s become a nuisance after staging a hunger strike following the disappearance of her son, a suspected informant. What follows is a slow unraveling of the motivations and aims of IRA soldiers, their families, local politicians, and other supporters of the Republican cause, with surprising revelations and dire consequences for those involved. Duffy’s expert plotting is topped only by his atmospheric prose.”—*PW*. Recommended to readers of Adrian McKinty

Elston, Ashley. [First Lie Wins](#) (\$19). Evie Porter (not her real name) is on a job in Louisiana and has successfully convinced her latest mark, Ryan Sumner, to fall for her in a whirlwind romance. All seems to be going well with Evie’s investigation into Ryan’s side business, a trucking company moving black market goods, until Evie meets a woman dating one of Ryan’s friends who introduces herself as Lucca Marino—Evie’s actual name. When imposter Lucca dies in a fiery car wreck and the police question Evie and Ryan as the last people to see her, an outstanding warrant pops for Evelyn Porter’s arrest (though there should be no such history). It’s then that Evie understands that her current job is actually a test from her employer, Mr. Smith, who was unhappy after she busted her last assignment, and the stakes are much higher than she’d anticipated. To keep herself out of jail, Evie must pull in every favor she has accumulated during her career to outwit Mr. Smith. So, can she trust Ryan?

\* Frank, Anita. [The Good Liars](#) (Harper \$18.99). Guilt and grief propel a chilly historical mystery, our **January Historical Paperback Subscription Book Pick**. In the summer of 1914, a boy’s disappearance is overshadowed by looming war. Six years later, Detective Sergeant Verity arrives at Darkacre Hall armed with new evidence regarding the boy’s case – evidence which throws the spotlight firmly upon the once-esteemed Stilwell family. Darkacre’s grandeur has faded, and the Stilwells no

longer command the respect they once took for granted. While brothers Maurice and Leonard carry the physical and mental scars of their war service, Maurice’s wife, Ida, longs for the lost days of privilege and parties. As Verity digs deeper into the events of that final halcyon summer, he uncovers dark secrets with far-reaching consequences. And as he does so, Darkacre Hall becomes an unlikely battlefield – one that not all will survive.

Frick, Kit. [The Split](#) (\$17.99). Sisters Jane and Esme used to be thick as thieves. But as adults, pragmatic, dependable Jane regrets the distance that has grown between them. So when beautiful and impetuous Esme calls Jane during a flash summer storm, announcing she’s left her high society husband, Jane is shocked to learn that her little sister wishes to stay with her. Could this be an opportunity for them to become close again? The only catch: Esme needs a ride from the city to their small Connecticut hometown, and Jane is terrified of getting on the highway.... Here’s “a clever Sliding Doors-style thriller that brilliantly examines how a single decision can derail an entire life, and a compelling family drama exploring the complicated bonds of sisterhood. A good read for the Unreliable Narrator fan.

\* Griffiths, Elly. [The Last Word](#) (\$18.99). I seriously miss the Ruth Galloway series but I’m also taken with Harbinder Kaur, a policewoman who draws unusual cases first in Brighton and then moving up in rank and to London. She has a role in this standalone where we meet the unlikely private detectives duo of Natalka, Ukrainian-born math whiz, and Edwin, English octogenarian, along with Natalka’s partner, Benedict, as they set out to uncover the truth behind three suspicious deaths. Each victim was a writer who attended a writer’s retreat in the quiet English town of Battle. You can never go wrong reading a clever, slyly humorous story by Edgar winner Griffiths.

Hurwitz, Gregg. [Lone Wolf](#) (\$18). Hurwitz brings us [Nemesis](#) (St Martins \$30) on February 12 at The Pen, so here is last year’s Orphan X if you missed it. “Nowhere Man” Evan Smoak comes to consciousness, bloody and broken and barely alive, in a remote part of Texas outside the range of the RoamZone tracker that monitors him. While Evan reestablishes contact with teenage sidekick/protégé Joey and undertakes the goofy but heart-tugging challenge of finding his niece Sofia’s missing dog, Loco, efficient assassin Karissa Lopatina is hard at work, drowning software engineering manager Anwuli Okonkwo in her bathtub, then killing AI expert Dr. Benjamin Hill, whose path happens to have crossed Loco’s. She’s still on the scene when Evan arrives (what are the odds?). Their showdown takes a tragic turn when Hill’s teenage daughter tries to intervene, allowing Karissa to get away and leaving Evan to deal with the police—and make a narrow escape. And then....

Ives, Shannon. [Those Fatal Flowers](#) (Random \$18). “Ives’s fascinating debut sets itself apart from the recent slew of mythological retellings by transporting figures from Roman mythology to the lost colony of Roanoke. In the timeline labeled “Before,” Thelxiope and her sisters are handmaidens to Proserpina, Ceres’s daughter and the goddess of spring. Thelxiope, called Thelia, has a special relationship with Proserpina that grows into a romance. When the women sneak away from Ceres’ home for a tryst, Proserpina is stolen into the Underworld, leaving Thelia and her sisters to face Ceres’ wrath. She transforms them into sirens and traps them on the island of Scopuli. In their new,

monstrous forms, the women spend centuries feeding on the men who shipwreck on the island, sacrificing them to Ceres in hopes of appeasing her. These scenes are intercut with the timeline labeled “Now,” in which Thelia lands in Roanoke hoping to bring help to her sisters. The colony is starving, and Thelia figures out a way to use that to her advantage.... The result is perfect for fans of Madeline Miller and Jennifer Saint.”

Jance, JA. [Cruel Intent](#) (\$18.99). During an all-consuming remodel on her home, the last thing Ali Reynolds expects is a murder investigation. But when the savagely mutilated body of a stay-at-home mom is found, Ali’s contractor Logan is the prime suspect. He swears he has nothing to do with his wife’s murder—but as the investigation progresses, Ali seems to be the only resident in Sedona who believes him. We’ll be looking for a new case for Ali in March.

Johnson, Craig. [The Longmire Defense](#) (\$18). This is one of my favorites for Walt. While responding to a 911 call from a woman lost in the mountains, Longmire spots a 1940s-era rifle stuffed among some nearby rocks. He retrieves it and confirms it’s the same type of weapon that killed Bill Sutherland, Wyoming’s state accountant, in 1948. Sutherland had been hunting elk with a party including Longmire’s grandfather, Lloyd, the state treasurer, the treasurer’s chief clerk, and hunting guide Clarence Standing Bear. Contemporary local reports speculated that Sutherland either took his own life or suffered an accident, but rumors spread that he was intentionally killed by someone he’d been hunting with—possibly Lloyd. Longmire’s discovery spurs him to try to close the cold case and, hopefully, exonerate his late grandfather. “The whodunit, which presents a dizzying number of red herrings, is one of Johnson’s trickiest, keeping readers deliciously off-balance throughout. Series newcomers will have no problem jumping into the action.” We’ll see Walt (and Craig) again in May.

Koontz, Dean. [The Bad Weather Friend](#) (\$16.99). Benny Catspaw’s perpetually sunny disposition is tested when he loses his job, his reputation, his fiancée, and his favorite chair. He’s not paranoid. Someone is out to get him. He just doesn’t know who or why. Then Benny receives an inheritance from an uncle he’s never heard of: a giant crate and a video message. All will be well in time. How strange—though it’s a blessing, his uncle promises. Stranger yet is what’s inside the crate. Note also [The Forest of Lost Souls](#) (\$16.99). Two recent paperbacks by Koontz that somehow I missed. You shouldn’t.

\* McAllister, Gillian. [Wrong Place Wrong Time](#) (\$9.99). It is midnight on the morning of Halloween, and Jen anxiously waits up for her 18-year-old son, Todd, to return home. But worries about his broken curfew transform into something much more dangerous when Todd finally emerges from the darkness. As Jen watches through the window, she sees her funny, seemingly happy teenage son stab a total stranger. She doesn’t know who the victim is, or why Todd has committed such a devastating act of violence. All she knows is that her life, and Todd’s, have been shattered. After her son is taken into custody, Jen falls asleep in despair. But when she wakes up... it is yesterday. Hooked?

McFadden, Freida. [The Crash](#) (Sourcebooks \$17.99). **The first 20 of our copies come with a Signed Bookplate.** McFadden furthers the noble tradition of the snowbound thriller with this story of dubious choices in unfortunate weather. Eight months pregnant and fleeing from her fast-collapsing life, Tegan’s day

can’t get any worse. Until it does. Now she’s stranded in a savage Maine blizzard with a broken ankle. When she accepts help from a mysterious couple, things get worse still.

Moorman, Jennifer. [The Vanishing of Josephine Reynolds](#) (Harper Muse \$18.99). In a bout of grief and depression, 35-year-old widow Josephine Reynolds wishes she had never been born—a wish that changes the course of history. After her sister, Katherine, suggests a fresh start, Josephine buys Carter Mansion, her great-grandmother Alma’s home in Nashville’s historic district, aiming to restore it. She tracks down the house’s original front door and key at a local salvage yard—and, after installing and stepping through the door, finds herself transported back to 1927. As Josephine is swept into the Jazz Age, she meets and bonds with Alma and finds love with a handsome man named Danny. But Josephine soon realizes her careless wish has altered the timeline, and unless she can change history by stopping a police raid on Alma’s speakeasy, her existence in the future will be erased. Points to Moorman for a fascinating concept.

Morrell, David. [The Brotherhood of the Rose](#); [The Fraternity of the Stone](#); [The League of Night and Fog](#) (Ballantine \$19 each). This landmark trilogy is a Jack Carr Book Club selection, in large part because Jack credits David with much of his own wish to become a writer. You can check the two of them out discussing it on the Danger Close podcast end of January.

Patterson, James. [Cross Fire](#) (\$13). Alex Cross is finally going to marry Bree, but the wedding is delayed when snipers begin picking off high-profile characters in Washington. While Cross is jousting with FBI agent Max Siegle, his archenemy Kyle Craig has escaped again and is close at hand. 16th in the series but never fear, there will be a 17th.

Pook, Lizzie. [Maude Horton’s Glorious Revenge](#) (\$18.99). “Maude’s sister, Constance, disguised herself as a man to board a ship bound for the Arctic Circle and never returned. The British Admiralty claims that her sister’s death was an unfortunate tragedy, but Maude suspects foul play, especially after Constance’s journals are passed to her under a table in a macabre bar in Victorian London. Pook’s engrossing historical mystery alternates between Constance’s dispatches from the frigid north and Maude’s search for answers, a perilous inquiry that takes her to grisly places.”—*The Washington Post*

\* Richell, Hannah. [Search Party](#) (\$16.99). A glamping weekend for old friends on the rugged Cornish coast devolves into mayhem and murder. This UK import is a British bestseller, a natural for fans of Lucy Foley and Sarah Pearse. Maybe Ruth Ware.

Rouda, Kaira. [Under the Palms](#) (\$16.99). “Dive into a riveting tale of power, secrets, and betrayal in Rouda’s latest novel, where the opulent world of the Kingsley family becomes a battleground for dark ambitions. With Paige, the new president at the helm, the family’s weekend retreat at a luxurious Laguna Beach resort unravels a perilous game. This gripping, propulsive novel is pure entertainment from beginning to end. A delectable read that I couldn’t put down!” —Jean Kwok

Sammartino, Alexander. [Last Acts](#) (\$17.99). Even though his firearms store is failing, things are looking up for David Rizzo. His son, Nick, has just recovered after a near-fatal overdose, which means one thing: Rizzo can use Nick’s resurrection to

create the most compelling television commercial for a gun emporium the world has ever seen. After all, this is America, Rizzo tells himself. Surely anything is possible. But the relationship between father and son is fragile, mired in mutual disappointment. And when the pair embarks on their scheme to avoid bankruptcy, a high-stakes crash of hijinks, hope, and disaster ensues. Patrick and I were hosts to Sammartino's hardcover launch last year and recommend.

Sayles, John. [Jamie MacGillivray](#) (\$24). It begins in the highlands of Scotland in 1746, at the Battle of Culloden, the last desperate stand of the Stuart 'pretender' to the throne of the Three Kingdoms, Bonnie Prince Charlie, and his rabidly loyal supporters. Vanquished with his comrades by the forces of the Hanoverian (and Protestant) British crown, the novel's eponymous hero, Jamie MacGillivray, narrowly escapes a roadside execution only to be recaptured by the victors and shipped to Marshalsea Prison (central to Charles Dickens's *Hard Times*) where he cheats the hangman a second time before being sentenced to transportation and indentured servitude in colonial America "for the term of his natural life." His travels are paralleled by those of Jenny Ferguson, a poor, village girl swept up on false charges by the English and also sent in chains to the New World. Think of this as a cross between Diana Gabaldon and Charles Dickens. See Signed books for Sayles' new epic.

Sierra, Tracy. [Nightwatching](#) (\$18). As a blizzard rages outside, a woman and her young children try to elude a home invader. It's midnight, and a mother has just gotten her frightened 5-year-old son back to sleep when she hears an unexpected "wheeze of weight" on the stairs. She sees a tall stranger slink onto the landing. He's wearing plastic gloves and his grinning face is uncovered, indicating he doesn't intend to leave evidence or witnesses, and his sneakers are dry despite the storm, suggesting he's planned ahead and expects to stay a while. He misses her watching from the shadows, instead making a beeline for the 1722 New England colonial's modern addition, but that also means he now separates her from her phone, computer, car, and gun. Few options remain, so she scoops up her son, rouses and hushes her 8-year-old daughter, and creeps downstairs.... Sierra's auspicious debut immediately plunges readers headlong into its unnamed protagonist's waking nightmare. This is a terrific book with a fiercely formidable woman at its core. Brava.

\* Stars, Holly. [Murder in the Dressing Room](#) (Penguin \$19). "British playwright and drag queen Stars debuts with a witty murder mystery centered on budding London drag star Misty Divine. A fearless glamazon when she's onstage at the legendary Lady's Bar in Soho, Misty reverts to being average Joe Brown by day, working a dreary hotel job and binge-watching crime shows. One night, Misty's mentor, Lady Lady, is poisoned in her dressing room after appearing onstage in a dress believed to have been worn by Judy Garland and valued at nearly a quarter-million pounds. When the police arrive, they're less interested in finding Lady's killer than in determining how the stolen garment made it from a boutique in South Kensington to a drag club. Realizing the cops are unlikely to conduct much more than a perfunctory investigation, Misty resolves to take matters into her own hands, putting her skills as a couch detective to use within the backstabbing world of London drag."—*PW*

Stevenson, Benjamin. [Everyone on This Train Is a Suspect](#) (\$18.99). The Australian author of the international hit [Everyone in My Family Has Killed Someone](#) (\$18.99) returns with a sequel like "Murder on the Orient Express," except this train, barreling through the Australian desert, is full of crime writers, agents, editors, and fans. So, a locked room...er, train...mystery and on a real train, known as The Ghan, that travels from Darwin in the north to Adelaide in the south. Ernest Cunningham is back, struggling to write his second book. He hits the jackpot, so to speak, when a murder is committed on the train hosting the Australian Mystery Writers Society festival he is attending. He now has his new topic and narrates developments.

Thor, Brad. [Dead Fall](#) (\$18.99) sends US asset Scot Harvath of the private intelligence Carlton Group back to Norway on what should have been R&R after his mission in the Ukraine detailed in 2023's [Dead Fall](#) (\$10.99). But it's not to be. First Harvath subdues a crazed passenger on his flight to Oslo. Then he's hijacked by the CIA at the airport with intent to blackmail him into spying on his fiancée, Sølvi, a Norwegian Intelligence officer currently charged with debriefing a Russian defector. Why? The CIA is justly alarmed over a Russian nuclear threat situated in Belarus. Next, Sølvi and the defector barely escape assassination from a supposedly safe house, bringing Harvath into her op despite his refusal. Meanwhile a French intelligence agent is killed in Paris, also the result of a security leak. So we have Norway, France, and the US on one hand and Russia and Belarus on another, all playing high stakes and in some cases treacherous games. There are magnificently choreographed action scenes, intense personal relationships, and devious plots to enjoy in this outstanding series entry.

Unger, Lisa. [The New Couple in 5b](#) (\$18.99). The always surprising Unger deploys spine-tingling locations with great skill. Here she has created a Manhattan apartment Gothic where New Yorkers Rosie and Chad Lowan have spent most of the first year of their marriage caring for his dying uncle Ivan. Rosie expects Ivan's long-estranged daughter, Dana, to inherit his dreamy Park Avenue apartment, so she's shocked to discover after his death that he's left it to her and Chad. It's a huge boon—Chad is an aspiring actor, and Rosie has published one bestselling true-crime book but is struggling to start a second, so money is always tight. The apartment in the elegant, century-old Windermere is not just a place to live but a multi-million-dollar asset. Until it isn't.... This is an excellent story and truly surprising.

Westlake, Donald E. [The Actor](#) (Hard Case Crime \$16.99) is actually Westlake's never-before-published novel *Memory* now adapted for the screen as *The Actor*. Hospitalized after a liaison with another man's wife ends in violence, Paul Cole has just one goal: to rebuild his shattered life. But with his memory damaged, the police hounding him, and no way even to get home, Paul's facing steep odds – and a bleak fate if he fails....

Willingham, Stacy. [Only If You're Lucky](#) (\$19). Shy, careful Margot, usually relegated to the role of sidekick, is enrolled at a liberal arts college in South Carolina. She has a nice, unadventurous roommate and they lead pretty boring lives, Margot staying within the shell she's built since her high school bestie Eliza died three weeks after their graduation. Eliza was the reason Margot is at this college, adrift. Then one day the

wild child, magnetic, addictive, probably dangerous Lucy Sharpe, suddenly singles Margot out and suggests they spend the summer off campus rooming with three other girls. Oddly Margot and Lucy become close and stick to it. And then by the middle of their sophomore year living together, one of the frat boys from the house next door is murdered. And Lucy Sharpe has disappeared. I'm going to admit that this experience of college is radically removed from my own although the grip of wishing to belong and to rule-busting at this age is not.

Yamashita, Iris. [Village in the Dark](#) (\$19). Alaska in winter, perfect for a January read. Yamashita's riveting sequel to 2023's [City Under One Roof](#) (\$17—a First Mystery Club Book of the Month) sets a chilling murder mystery against the backdrop of the Alaskan wilderness. Detective Cara Kennedy has come to believe that her husband and son died in a natural accident. After Cara discovered and buried the pair's remains in the Talkeetna forest near where they disappeared on a hike, she takes leave to cope with her loss. But when investigators find a series of photographs in a deceased gang member's possession, including an image of Cara and her family, she suspects foul play. Fueled by grief, Cara makes a startling discovery—the people in each of the gang member's photographs are either dead or missing.