

BOOKNEWS from

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A FESTIVE NOVEMBER

Please note that the Government Shutdown may impact these events and we will have to shift to virtual or reschedule
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.

SUNDAY NOVEMBER 2 4:00 PM Virtual

Jesse Kellerman discusses [Coyote Hills](#) (Random House \$30)
written with his father Jonathan
Clay Edison now a PI works a horrendous case from Oakland to San Francisco
Books Signed by Jesse are in stock

MONDAY NOVEMBER 3 7:00 PM Live Book Launches

Jess Armstrong discusses [The Devil in Oxford](#) (St Martins \$28)
Ruby Vaughn #3 set at Oxford
Our November Historical Fiction Club Pick
Charles Finch discusses [The Hidden City](#) (St Martins \$28)
Victorian gentleman sleuth Charles Lenno

TUESDAY NOVEMBER 4 7:00 PM Live Event

Andrew Child and Tasha Alexander discuss their work
Andrew Child's new book is [Exit Strategy](#) (Random House \$30)
Reacher!
Tasha Alexander discusses [The Sisterhood](#) (St Martins \$29)
Lady Emily in Edwardian London links to Boudica in Roman Britain

WEDNESDAY NOVEMBER 5 5:00 PM Virtual Event

Alex DeMille discusses [The Tin Men](#) (Simon Schuster \$29)
Special Agents Scott Brodie and Maggie Taylor
Signed books available next week after the first batch sold out

THURSDAY NOVEMBER 6 7:00 PM Live Event

Vanessa Lillie discusses [The Bone Thief](#) (Penguin \$30)
The sequel to 2023 First Mystery Pick [Blood Sisters](#) (\$19)
Cherokee archaeologist Syd Walker in Rhode Island
Eliana Ramage discusses [To the Moon and Back](#) (Atria \$30)
A Cherokee woman is hell bent to become an astronaut
Our November Notable New Fiction Event

FRIDAY NOVEMBER 6:30 PM Live Ticketed Event

L J Shen with Sara Cate
Shen discusses [Bad Bishop](#) (Sourcebooks \$19.99)
The Deluxe Edition with an art work piece
Society of Villains #1
[Tickets](#): \$20 Will Call Only—admits one with one copy of the book
Shen will personalize that book
She will sign but not personalize two brought from home or any backlist bought at the event

SATURDAY NOVEMBER 8 4:00 PM Virtual Event

Andrea Catalano discusses [The First Witch of Boston](#) (Lake Union \$16.99)
A novel based on the true story of Margaret Jones, the first woman to be found guilty of witchcraft in 17th Century Massachusetts
Our November Historical Fiction Paperback Pick

SUNDAY NOVEMBER 9 2:00 PM Live Christmas Party

Ellen Byron discusses [Crescent City Christmas Chaos](#) (Severn House \$29.99)
Vintage Cookbook Mystery #4
Karen Schaler discusses [A Ruff Royal Christmas](#) (Hawktale \$29.99)
A romcom from the author of Netflix's *A Christmas Prince*
Jacqueline Snowe discusses [Date Night in December](#) (Grand Central \$17.99)

MONDAY NOVEMBER 10 7:00 PM Live Book Launch

T Jefferson Parker discusses [Wild Instinct](#) (St Martins \$29)
Introducing Orange County Sheriff Department's Lew Gale

TUESDAY NOVEMBER 11 7:00 PM Offsite Event

Janet Evanovich discusses [The King's Ransom](#) (Atria \$30)
Gabriela Rose, recovery agent extraordinaire
Alex Evanovich discusses [Keeper Chance and the Dubious Doppelganger](#) (Simon Schuster \$18.99). For ages 10+ the second in the Evil Villains International League Series. Super sly, super fun.

Location: Scottsdale United Methodist Church 4140 N Miller Road Scottsdale 85251

Free to attend. Entrance to the signing line only with the purchase of either book from The Poisoned Pen. You may bring 3 personal books. No streaming of this event.

WEDNESDAY NOVEMBER 12 7:00 PM Live Event

Eli Frankel discusses [Sisters in Death: The Black Dahlia, The Prairie Heiress, and Their Hunter](#) (Kensington \$29)

An award-winning producer, true-crime researcher, and Hollywood insider finally solves the greatest—and gruesome—murder of Elizabeth Short just before its 80th anniversary

THURSDAY NOVEMBER 13 5:00 PM Virtual Event

Lev AC Rosen discusses [Mirage City](#) (St Martins \$28)
Evander Mills this time mostly in 1950s Los Angeles
Signed copies available

THURSDAY NOVEMBER 13 7:00 PM Virtual Event

Andrew Gulli, Jeffery Deaver, and Walter Mosley discuss [Best of "The Strand Magazine": 25 Years of Twists, Turns, and Tales](#) (Blackstone \$29.99)

FRIDAY NOVEMBER 14 1:00 PM Virtual Event

Sheila O'Malley with our Jen Johans discusses [Frankenstein: Written and Directed by Guillermo del Toro](#) (Insight Editions, \$75.00).

A lavishly illustrated coffee table book celebrating the art and making of Guillermo del Toro's *Frankenstein*

SATURDAY NOVEMBER 15 10:00 AM

Local Author Fair

Support independently published authors

SATURDAY NOVEMBER 15 10:30 AM Live and Virtual Event

Croak and Dagger discusses Tess Gerritsen's [The Spy Coast](#) (\$16.99)

MONDAY NOVEMBER 17 1:00 PM Virtual Event

The UK's Peter James discusses [The Hawk Is Dead](#) (Pan Macmillan \$27.99)

A case for Detective Superintendent Roy Grace of the Brighton UK PD

MONDAY NOVEMBER 17 7:00 PM Live Event

Double Thriller Treat

Ryan Pote discusses his thriller debut [Blood and Treasure](#) (Penguin \$30)

Our December First Mystery Club Pick

Canada's Steve Urszenyi discusses [Blood Oath](#) (St Martins \$29)
Alex Martel #3

TUESDAY NOVEMBER 18 7:00 PM Live Event

The Jungle Reds convene with host **Jenn McKinlay**

Rhys Bowen discusses [From Cradle to Grave](#) (Berkley \$30)

Her Royal Spyness Lady Georgiana Rannoch

Julia Spencer Fleming discusses [At Midnight Comes the Cry](#) (St Martins \$29)

Reverend Clare Fergusson and her husband Russ van Alstyne

WEDNESDAY NOVEMBER 19 7:00 PM Live Event

Mike Maden discusses [Clive Cussler Quantum Tempest](#) (Penguin \$32)

Juan Cabrillo and the crew of the *Oregon*

THURSDAY NOVEMBER 20 7:00 PM Live Event

Celebrating Jane Austen with acclaimed scholar **Devony Looser**

Looser's new book is [Wild for Austen](#) (St Martins \$30)

Lots of Austen adjacent books on hand as well

ALSO NOVEMBER 20 7:00 PM Live Event

Hardboiled Crime discusses Margaret Millar's [Beast in View](#) (\$14.95)

The Club meets in our Anne

FRIDAY NOVEMBER 21 7:00 PM Live and Virtual Event

SciFi Friday discusses Samantha Harvey's [Orbital](#) (\$17)

SATURDAY NOVEMBER 22 11:00 AM Live Event

The Cookbook Club discusses Muhammad Abdul-Hadi's [We The Pizza](#) (\$32.99)

Bring a dish from the book to share

MONDAY NOVEMBER 24 5:00 PM Virtual Event

Mike Lupica discusses [Robert B Parker's Showdown](#) (Penguin \$32)

Spenser!

Signed books available

CLOSED FOR THANKSGIVING

SATURDAY NOVEMBER 29 10 AM-6 PM

Small Business Saturday

Come for Community, Shopping, Treats

Spend \$100 or more and get a \$20 Gift Card

AND

From 10:30 AM to Noon author **Pasha Westbrook** will sign copies of [Braided Roots](#) (Scholastic \$19.99), a poetic debut picture book for Ages 4-8 about honoring one's roots and the unbreakable bond of familial love, and spotlighting Native American Heritage Month and Thanksgiving, brought to life with enchanting illustrations by Madelyn Goodnight.

OUR SUBSCRIPTION CLUB PICKS FOR NOVEMBER

We select a book and charge it to you. Free shipping to US Customers.

It's a Book in a Box treat each month. We do ask that you sign up for a minimum of 3 months.

To join, gift, or request information please email sales@poisonedpen.com

British Crime Club One Unsigned hardcover or paperback per month

Sullivan, Tim. [The Dentist](#)

Cozy Crimes Club One Unsigned hardcover or paperback per month

Townsend, Peggy. [The Botanist's Assistant](#)

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

Evanovich, Janet. [The King's Ransom](#)

First Mystery Club One Signed First Printing per month

Kashino, Marisa. [Best Offer Wins](#)

Hardboiled/Noir Club One Signed or Unsigned First Printing per month

Lehane, Con. [The Red Scare Murders](#)

Historical Fiction Club One First Printing per month

Armstrong, Jess. [The Devil in Oxford](#)

Historical Fiction Paperback Club One Unsigned paperback per month

Catalano, Andrea. [The First Witch of Boston](#)

Notable New Fiction Club One Signed First Printing per month

Ramage, Eliana. [To the Moon and Back](#)

Romance and Relationships Club One unsigned hardcover or paperback per month

Palmer, Iva-Marie. [Christmas People](#)

FIRST, PUZZLEMAN IA

For those who love Scrabble, Crosswords, Wordle, Spelling Bees, Logic Questions, and Murdle!

The New York Times, [Puzzle Mania!](#) (\$38). A collection that transforms your favorite digital games into a beautifully designed book that's perfect for solo play, family game night, or gifting to puzzle-obsessed friends. Gorgeous color and clever layouts.

SECOND, A PRESTON PREVIEW

Preston, Douglas. [The Monster of Florence](#) (\$19.99) and [The Best True Crime Stories of 2025](#) (Crime Ink \$17.95). The Netflix Series ripping off Doug's account of Italy's worst serial killer, a case yet to be solved and which nearly got him arrested researching it along with a local reporter in Florence, and the True Crime collection he edits, will both be discussed and Signed on January 11 at 4:00 PM. Doug is bringing photographs and his passion to this program. I mention it now as many of you have asked about his book

The Monster. We will have plenty of both in stock for the event when he can also personalize copies of the January 29 release of [Pendergast: The Beginning](#) (Grand Central \$30) signed by Doug and Lincoln Child.

SIGNED BOOKS

* Alexander, Tasha. [The Sisterhood](#) (St Martins \$29) is the new Lady Emily mystery set in 1907 London with a real kicker of a solution to the murder. Horrifying, actually. And truly surprising. The action kicks off at the engagement ball for the Incomparable of the Season when the bride to be collapses and dies. A toxic beverage is identified. There are various suspects. Lady Emily and her husband, Colin, a mysterious agent of the Crown, are ordered by King Edward to investigate. This leads them to a centuries old tomb in central London with a link to the warrior queen Boudica who led a rebellion against the Roman occupiers... and eventually to a killer. The twin narratives are well balanced as we see how Society's expectations for women are being challenged while back in Britain young Boudica as seen through the eyes of a friend is facing an increasingly oppressive occupation and must choose resignation or opposition. Also her friend has difficult choices of her own to make. This is a particularly thoughtful as well as suspenseful narrative addressing issues with increasing contemporary relevance. You can read it if you've not read the [Lady Emily series](#) before.

Andrews, Brian/Jeffrey Wilson. [The Adversary](#) (Blackstone \$28.99). The 9th in the Tier One Thriller series will be Signed here by both authors on December 4 when they will also unveil their ambitious new military fiction imprint for themselves and other

authors. They will also sign a new Jack Ryan, Sr.: [Tom Clancy Executive Power](#) (Putnam \$32).

For John Dempsey, it's a time of uncertainty. As a new administration tries to piece together who was behind the assassination of an American president, Task Force Ember is a team without a target. Newly minted POTUS Kelso Jarvis is haunted by strange dreams of a house on fire, and Dempsey's son, Jake—who has begun his own journey as a SEAL—can't escape the ghost of the father he believes to be dead. But when a routine intelligence-gathering mission in Taiwan goes horribly wrong and one of Ember's own is captured, the team must race to the rescue. The big question: does tomorrow's adversary lie across the Taiwan Straits, or within themselves. Paperback: [The Adversary](#) (\$19.99).

* Armstrong, Jess. [The Devil in Oxford](#) (St Martins \$28) is the third in the Ruby Vaughan series described as "The literary equivalent of catnip for historical mystery readers who like their crime fiction served with up with a soupçon of gothic spookiness, a hint of romance, and a generous splash of wit." In short, our **November Historical Fiction Pick**.

If someone were to ask American heiress Ruby Vaughn how exactly the occult came to play such a large role in her life, she would immediately point to her octogenarian housemate and

employer, Mr. Owen. Together, the pair run a rare book shop in Exeter. Mr. Owen's penchant for arcane, unusual—and occasionally illegal—books has been known to get Ruby into her fair share of trouble. And after the last year, she is looking forward to spending a quiet holiday in picturesque Oxford while Mr. Owen attends the annual meeting of his antiquarian society. Secretly, Ruby is also looking for a holiday from her confounding feelings for Ruan Kivell, the intriguing folk healer Pellar that she met in Cornwall. When Mr. Owen secures two tickets to an upcoming exhibition of artifacts amassed by disgraced scholar Julius Harker, Ruby reluctantly agrees to attend. The evening turns out to be more eventful than either of them bargained for. Harker's dead body is discovered amongst the collection, his business partner is hastily arrested, and Ruan arrives...

Baldacci, David. [Nash Falls](#) (Grand Central \$30). Starts a series, or, one hopes, a duology. Nash is the smart CEO at Sybaritic Investments, where his innate skills and dogged tenacity earned him the top spot. Despite never going on grand adventures, and always working too many hours, he has a happy and upscale life with his wife and daughter. However, following his estranged Vietnam-veteran father's funeral, Nash is unexpectedly approached by the FBI in the middle of the night. Their ask: to become their inside man to expose an enterprise that is laundering large sums of money through Sybaritic. At the top of this illegal operation is Victoria Steers, an international criminal mastermind that the FBI has been trying to bring down for years. Nash has little choice but to accept the FBI's demands and try to bring Steers and her partners to justice. But when the devious Steers discovers that Nash is working with the FBI, she turns the tables on him.... An earlier reviewer appreciates "Lots of interesting 'action' related things in this book including how to completely disguise yourself, the art of tattooing, and how to cheat the government out of millions, if not billions, of dollars in income."

Blake, Olivie. [Girl Dinner](#) (Tor \$29.99). Every member of The House, the most exclusive sorority on campus, and all its alumni, are beautiful, high-achieving, and universally respected. After a freshman year she would rather forget, sophomore Nina Kaur knows being one of the chosen few accepted into The House is the first step in her path to the brightest possible future. Once she's taken into their fold, the House will surely ease her fears of failure and protect her from those who see a young woman on her own as easy prey. Meanwhile, adjunct professor Dr. Sloane Hartley is struggling to return to work after accepting a demotion to support her partner's new position at the cutthroat University. When she becomes The House's academic liaison, she and Sloane get drawn into arcane rituals and learn deadly costs of living well. "A darkly satirical novel exploring power, lust, and a sinister wellness trend among wealthy women: eating your fill. Blake's sharp prose delves into the complexities of femininity and societal expectations." Our few signed copies have hot pink sprayed edges and other charms.

* Bowen, Rhys. [From Cradle to Grave](#) (Berkley \$30). Lady Georgiana "Georgie" Rannoch is just like any other new mother, balancing responsibilities of being 34th in line for the British throne and solving the shocking deaths of several young men. Unfortunately she's been saddled with the strict nanny foisted upon her by her meddlesome sister-in-law. In search of a new nanny, Georgie travels to London to see her old friend ZouZou only to find her about to depart for a funeral, after the unexpected

death of a young man in her social circle. It quickly becomes clear there's more than one mysterious death around town, when another friend reveals he's also just returned from the funeral of a school friend, who seemingly died in a boating accident. But when word arrives that the son of family friend has also died tragically and unexpectedly, Georgie is certain it can't be a coincidence. Yet the victims don't seem to have any connection to one another. ZouZou shares Georgie's suspicions that the deaths were not an accident and begs Georgie to solve the case. As Georgie delves deeper, she can't help worrying that her own husband, Darcy, may be next.

We are sold out of the marvelous [Mrs. Endicott's Splendid Adventure](#) (\$28.99), spanning 1937 to 1945 as three aging Englishwomen, very different, heist a car and whirl away to France, landing in a small fishing village near Marseilles where much unexpected happens. Rhys can sign more copies on November 18. Meanwhile we have the [Unsigned paperback](#) (\$16.99).

Byron, Ellen. [Crescent City Christmas Chaos](#) (Severn \$29.99). "A parental visit, a catfight among holiday parade royalty, a string of thefts, and of course a murder add spice to Miracle "Ricki" Fleur de Lis James-Diaz's New Orleans Christmas. Tending to Miss Vee's vintage shop inside the historic Bon Vee Culinary House Museum is a congenial gig, especially since Ricki, adopted as a child, learned she's a cousin to Bon Vee's blue-blooded owner, Eugenia Charbonnet Felice. She's happy to have Eugenia's granddaughter Olivia as a helper, and she's thrilled when Olivia's chosen to lead the Krewe of Gaia as its queen in the annual holiday parade. Life gets a little more complicated when Ricki's adopted parents turn up to help her boyfriend, chef Virgil Morel, film a holiday cooking show. Ricki's mom reveals a grudge against former co-worker Phyllis Gibbs, who terrorizes her neighbors in fancy Peony Place, and who's universally hated by her colleagues at high-priced Crescent City Concierge Care. Phyllis is promptly murdered, leaving a slew of suspects. But Det. Nina Rodriguez is too busy tracking a robber dressed as Mr. Bongle (a knockoff version of NOLA's legendary mascot, Mr. Bingle) to focus on finding Phyllis' killer. So Ricki takes on that chore herself."—*Kirkus Reviews*

Child, Andrew. [Exit Strategy](#) (Random House \$30). Jack Reacher will make three stops today. Not all of them were planned. First—a Baltimore coffee shop. A seat in the corner, facing the door. Black coffee, two refills, no messing around. A minor interruption from two of the customers, but nothing he can't deal with swiftly. As he leaves, a young guy brushes against him in the doorway. Instinctively Reacher checks the pocket holding his cash and passport. There's no problem. Nothing is missing. Second—a store to buy a coat. Nothing fancy. Something he can ditch when he heads to warmer climates. Large enough to fit a man the size of a bank vault. As he pulls out his cash, he finds something new in his pocket. A handwritten note. A desperate plea for help. Third—impressed by the guy's technique and intrigued by the message, Reacher makes it his mission to find out more....

Cohen, Adam. [Captain's Dinner](#) (Authors Equity \$32). On May 19, 1884, the yacht *Mignonette* set sail from England on what should have been an uneventful voyage. When their vessel sank in the Atlantic, Captain Thomas Dudley and his crew found themselves adrift in a tiny lifeboat. As days turned to weeks, they

faced an unthinkable choice: starve to death or resort to cannibalism. Their decision to sacrifice the youngest—17-year-old cabin boy Richard Parker—ignited a firestorm of controversy upon their rescue. Instead of being hailed as heroes and survivors, Dudley and his crew found themselves at the center of Regina v. Dudley and Stephens, a landmark murder trial that would establish the legal precedent that necessity cannot justify murder—a principle that continues to shape Anglo-American law today. I add that bestseller Yann Martel's *The Life of Pi* makes a compelling companion read.

DeMille, Alex/Nelson. [The Tin Men](#) (Simon Schuster \$29). The DeMilles horrify by digging into AI and robotics. To wit: seven-foot-tall killer robots known as D-17s that malfunction during military testing in the Mojave Desert and crush the skull of an Army computer scientist in the rip-roaring latest collaboration between Nelson DeMille, who died in 2024, and his son, Alex. Before the head-smashing incident, a Ranger regiment had been supplying troops for training battles with the robots, but the so-called “tin men” proved faster and more capable than their human counterparts, beating the soldiers in every simulation. Superstar Army criminal investigators Scott Brodie and Maggie Taylor are assigned to figure out what went wrong with the futuristic machines and whether it might indicate a dangerous flaw in their software. Brodie and Taylor are characteristically unrelenting in their probe, turning up evidence that the D-17s have developed capabilities that even their inventors and programmers don't know about, which could prove disastrous to U.S. military operations. The DeMilles kick the action into high gear early on and don't let up until they arrive at an exhilarating clash between a 60-robot contingent and terrified human forces.

We miss Nelson terribly but Alex is proving he can carry the weight on his own. More Signed copies on their way.

Evanovich, Alex. [Keeper Chance and the Dubious Doppelgänger](#) (Simon Schuster \$18.99). For ages 10+ the second in the Evil Villains International League Series. Super sly, super fun. It seems that Showboater—a sequin-shedding Elvis impersonator with the superpower of going unnoticed (“the more flamboyant he was, the more he disappeared”)—has vanished, along with a certain very important file. Now, the rival Evil Villains International League and the Heroic Elite Reconnaissance Organization are anxious to get him, or at least the file, back. As it turns out, they aren't the only ones. Tongue resolutely in cheek, Evanovich pits 16-year-old E.V.I.L. trainee Keeper Chance, his technologically adept best friend, Toby, and other parties (loyal allies or otherwise) against agent-for-hire Ditto. But Ditto is frustratingly able to stay a step ahead, thanks to both his own “doppelgänger” ability and a supportive trio of teenagers who can manipulate time in various ways. The ensuing hilarious misadventures add to the pleasure of watching the antics of superheroes with evocative monikers like Chaos and Joy Sucker (though the most fearsomely powerful of all is Toby's mom) while contemplating the curiously narrow ethical gap between the tale's villains and heroes.

Evanovich, Janet. [The King's Ransom](#) (Atria \$30). Our **November Crime Club Book of the Month** is enormous fun—I feel this is a time when fun is sorely needed—and seriously constructed as a big heist story with solid history behind it, history of the Rosetta Stone and of Egyptian artifacts—perfect timing as the Grand Egyptian Museum just fully opens by the pyramids at Giza. Even more delightful is the way Evanovich deconstructs

the heist of the Stone at the British Museum, and tracks the fate of the stolen golden sarcophagus of a Pharaonic Royal Family member. Plus you get to spend quality time in London, Paris, Cairo, and Milan.

I think it levels up from [The Recovery Agent](#) (\$17.99) without losing the verve (and skills) of the highly successful recovery specialist Gabriela Rose. There's a minimum of sex and a maximum of her skill set on display. The premise, that her ex's cousin Harley, a hapless but charming guy, and clueless, who's been set up to take the hit as head of a private bank that insured some treasures like the Rosetta Stone without resources to pay out claims should the treasures be lost, stolen, or destroyed, is ridiculous on its face but ultimately the whole makes criminally good sense. In short, I recommend *The King's Ransom* as perfect escape reading wherein you learn some interesting things and experience some travel along with a clever heist story.

I agree with the close of this Starred Review: “Their pursuit takes them to London, Cairo, Paris, Athens, and Milan, each of which Evanovich renders with dazzling precision. Gabriela, meanwhile, is an ideal action protagonist: resourceful, daring, shrewd, and sexy. The result is a swift and enjoyable adventure,” says *Publishers Weekly*.

* Finch, Charles. [The Hidden City](#) (St Martins \$28). At last, Victorian sleuth Charles Lennox is back on a case, another top notch puzzle filled with endearing characters. It's 1879, and Lennox is convalescing from the violent events of his last investigation. But a desperate letter from an old servant forces him to pick up the trail of a cold case: the murder of an apothecary seven years before, whose only clue is an odd emblem carved into the doorway of the building where the man was killed. When Lennox finds a similar mark at the site of another murder, he begins to piece together a hidden pattern which leads him into the corridors of Parliament, the slums of East London, and ultimately the very heart of the British upper class. At the same time, Lennox must contend with the complexities of his personal life: a surprising tension with his steadfast wife, Lady Jane, over her public support of the early movement for women's suffrage; the arrival of Angela Lennox, a mysterious young cousin from India, with an unexpected companion; the dizzying ascent of his brother, Sir Edmund Lennox, to one of the highest political posts in the land.... This remains one of my very favorite historical mystery series. Why: “Finch offers a delightful mélange of crisscrossing subplots rooted in contemporaneous issues including colonialism, women's suffrage, and poverty, and ensures that each thread enhances rather than distracts from the main mystery. Charles, meanwhile, remains a winning protagonist: intelligent and kind but never dull.”

Harrow, Alix E. [The Everlasting](#) (Tor \$29.99). Indie Next calls it “at once an epic, expansive journey through time, exploring the nature of nationalism, propaganda, the power of storytelling, and a deeply personal, searingly intimate love story.”

Kashino, Marisa. [Best Offer Wins](#) (Celadon \$27.99), the No. 1 Indie Next Pick, is our **November First Mystery Club Pick** written by a longtime journalist covering the real estate market for the *Washington Post* and *Washingtonian* magazine. One wonders what real life events spurred her to write this debut centered on Margo, a “character as vicious and conniving as the jilted lover played by Glenn Close in *Fatal Attraction*.” Alex Michaelides reports “This is a tale of blackest comedy, spiraling obsession

and ultimate horror. By turns laugh-out-loud funny and appalling, Marisa Kashino asks how far you would go to secure your dream house, then goes several steps further than you would ever dare.”

Eighteen months and 11 lost bidding wars into house-hunting in the overheated Washington, DC suburbs, 37-year-old publicist Margo Miyake gets a tip about the perfect house, in the perfect neighborhood, slated to come up for sale in one month. Desperate to escape the cramped apartment she shares with her husband Ian — and in turn, get their marriage, plan to have a baby, and whole life back on track — Margo becomes obsessed with buying the house before it’s publicly listed and the masses descend (with unbeatable, all-cash offers in hand). A little stalking? Harmless. A bit of trespassing? Necessary. As Margo infiltrates the homeowners’ lives, her tactics grow increasingly unhinged—but just when she thinks she’s won them over, she hits a snag in her plan.

Kellerman, Jonathan/Jesse. [Coyote Hills](#) (Random House \$30). Signed by Jesse. I am a fan of the Clay Edison thrillers penned by father and son Kellerman and set in Alameda County, originally in Berkley where Clay was with the Coroner’s Office. Now he’s gone out on his own as a private investigator with a focus on low-stakes embezzlements and the like, not homicides... until PI Regina Klein calls him with a mystery only he can solve. The son of a wealthy couple has washed up dead on the shores of San Francisco Bay with drugs in his system and a head injury. The police are calling it an accident. But the parents are adamant something’s not right—and they are right. I thought this story was going in one direction that included a complex assessment of where bodies could enter the waters of San Francisco Bay, but gradually it turned into something else which, frankly, I found horrifying although I learned a new vocabulary. Jesse, an author, playwright, and poet, fuses his voice and his affection for northern California with bestseller Jon’s vibe into a true third voice for this series.

Lillie, Vanessa. [The Bone Thief](#) (Penguin \$30). In Lillie’s potent sequel to [Blood Sisters](#) (\$19), a 2023 First Mystery Club Pick, Cherokee archaeologist Syd Walker probes a constellation of cases rooted in centuries-old tensions between Native Americans and European colonizers. After her boss retires and she’s promoted within the Rhode Island Bureau of Indian Affairs, Syd receives a startling voicemail on her predecessor’s phone: “We found the remains at the back of the camp.” The caller, it turns out, works at Camp Quahog, a summer camp run by the Founders Society, whose members trace their ancestry back to the *Mayflower*. Syd heads to the camp and identifies the remains as those of a female baby who died 300 years earlier. Then the remains vanish, and Syd learns that it’s just the latest in a series of similar disappearances. Meanwhile, a young Native woman—and former BIA intern—named Naomi is reported missing. As Syd investigates the thefts and tries to track down Naomi, she uncovers dark secrets about the Founders Society that suggest foul play. Lillie goes even deeper and darker than she did in the previous installment, folding powerful questions about who gets to write history into a crackling mystery plot.

* Looser, Devoney. [Wild for Austen](#) (St Martins \$30). We are planning an evening discussing Jane Austen with ASU’s acclaimed scholar Looser on November 20, 7:00 PM. Do come if you are a fan of Austen or Regency era stories.

Thieves! Spies! Abolitionists! Ghosts! If we ever truly believed Jane Austen to be a quiet spinster, scholar Devoney

Looser puts that myth to rest (as did Stephanie Barron in her brilliant mystery series with Jane as sleuth). All six of Austen’s completed novels are examined here, and Looser uncovers striking new gems therein, as well as in Austen’s juvenilia, unfinished fiction, and even essays and poetry. Looser also takes on entirely new scholarship, writing about Austen’s relationship to the abolitionist movement and women’s suffrage.

Extra: Unsigned [Ladies in Waiting](#) (Gallery \$19), eight authors have come together with wildly imaginative reboots of the lives of several of Jane Austen’s minor characters. Written with plenty of love and wit, these clever stories star everyone from *Pride and Prejudice*’s snobbish Caroline Bingley to the modern descendant of *Sense and Sensibility*’s Eliza Williams and much more. Blurring genres and having fun giving them happy endings are Adriana Trigiani, Sarah MacLean, Eloisa James, Elinor Lipman, Audrey Bellezza, Karen Dukess, Emily Harding, Nikki Payne, and Diana Quincy

Lupica, Mike. [Robert B Parker’s Showdown](#) (Penguin \$32). Vic Hale isn’t anyone’s idea of a father figure. He is one of the biggest – and loudest — podcasters in the nation and got there by spewing overheated rhetoric that’s reviled by some but loved by even more. His particular brand of “entertainment” is so successful, he’s about to sign the biggest contract in the history of online broadcasting. Vic’s riding high...until he gets a visit from Spenser, who specializes in bringing guys like Hale back down to Earth. Spenser is there on behalf of Daniel Lopez, a young man who believes Hale may be his father. It’s a potentially explosive revelation for a man in the podcaster’s position and it might even be enough to blow up his massive new deal. That could explain the bodies that start popping up – bodies connected in one way or another with the mystery surrounding Daniel’s birth.

Maden, Mike. [Clive Cussler Quantum Tempest](#) (Penguin \$32). Juan Cabrillo and the crew of the *Oregon* face a ghost ship, deadly assassins and a threat from Cabrillo’s own past. There’s a tempest brewing in Central America. A government crackdown on cartels leaves most of the drug lords locked up in an impregnable prison. In response, Amador Fierro, a brilliant, tech-savvy crime boss forges the seven largest cartels into an allegiance called La Liga. If they are to defeat the U.S. led offensive, they will need a powerful weapon. Thus is born Project Q: an Artificial General Intelligence computer that, when finished, will grant Fierro such overwhelming control of America. Chairman Juan Cabrillo and the crew of the *Oregon* are the only ones standing in his way, but they have their own problems. While two members of the team are unreachable in the Darien Gap searching for an Iranian Quds Force base, the *Oregon* crew have a mole in their midst!

* McDermid, Val. [Silent Bones](#) (Sphere UK \$46). When torrential rain causes a landslide on a motorway in Scotland, it reveals a crime scene: someone hid a body in the tarmac eleven years before. Journalist Sam Nimmo had been the prime suspect in the murder of his fiancée when he disappeared, and now DCI Karen Pirie and her Historic Cases Unit must find out who buried him, and why. Meanwhile in Edinburgh, new evidence reopens a closed case and the accidental death of a hotel manager starts to look like murder. But what did Tom Jamieson’s book club have to do with his demise—and what will they do to keep their secrets? Karen and her team begin to untangle a web of lies, one which connects their murder cases with Scotland’s rich and powerful. They will be tested to their limits—and possibly beyond.

Parker, T. Jefferson. [Wild Instinct](#) (St Martins \$29). I have been a fan and supporter of three-time Edgar winner T Jeff's work for decades. In fact *Silent Joe* is one of my top ten favorite mysteries. I admire the way he fearlessly embraces new characters and unusual landscapes for his brilliant books. And here we have a former Marine sniper now in his early forties and serving as a detective in the Orange County Sheriff's Department. Lew Gale not only has skills amassed in the military but he's a member of the Acjacheme tribe, whose lands center on Mission San Juan Capistrano and is a tribe that has no formal recognition from the US. His mother's people have lived on this land for five generations. His Hispanic father left wife and family years back. So Lew has a lot of baggage but a lot going for him as a cop. I like it that he does basket weaving to relax as taught to him by his highly skilled mother.

So we open on the discovery of a body apparently killed by a mountain lion. Certainly eviscerated. Lew and his terrific tracking dog Knight go after the lion but never get a shot—a good thing as it turns out that Bennet Tarlow, scion of a family of uber rich developers in this area east of Laguna Beach and upstanding man about town, died of two bullets to the brain, not by lion. Lew has a new partner in Daniela Mendez who has her own baggage including a teenage son by a father she can't acknowledge. (You may object to the way she tracks the boy fearing he's falling into serious trouble....) Daniela is a good partner for Lew. While the case unfolds slowly with a number of side bars, our duo moves relentlessly forward towards not so much a surprise in the killer but a real surprise in the motive.

This is a captivating read, benefiting from Parker's laudable prose and skillful deployment of the unexpected. It's also perfect for Native American Heritage Month but that, I'm guessing, is more accidental than intentional. T Jeff likes to delve into different histories and landscapes and people of his native turf to serve up always satisfying stories. I'm hoping we will see more of Lew and Daniela.

Pote, Ryan, [Blood and Treasure](#) (Penguin \$30). A debut thriller making our **December First Mystery Club Pick**: "Evoking equal parts Clive Cussler and Tom Clancy, this novel is high-speed, high-stakes, and relentlessly entertaining." —Mark Greaney. Both Dirk Cussler and Mike Maden praise it, Mike calling it a "gut-punching, white-knuckled techno-thriller ride in a big adventure that catapults from the cold void of space to the deserts of the ancient prophets. Piloted by several fresh and original characters, Ryan Pote's debut novel pushes the story's airframe to its max in a series of rivet-busting plot twists more harrowing than an Immelmann turn in a helicopter. Strap in, hold on, and grit your teeth as you careen toward the sudden impact of the climactic ending."

The International Space Station suddenly loses contact with Earth. When a NASA tech devises a way to restore the feed, the images that come through are unfathomable: a scene of terrible violence, the crew unresponsive, droplets of blood hovering in zero gravity. But which of the astronauts on board would have done such a thing? And why? Off the coast of Mozambique, former special ops pilot and current treasure hunter Ethan Cain sees something he can't believe: an object shot out of the heavens plunging deep into the Indian Ocean. When he goes to investigate, it becomes even less intelligible. A space capsule has crashed into the sea, and inside is a woman—alone, unconscious, and injured. Ethan knows he must save her. What

he doesn't know is who she is, how she got there . . . or why she's the only survivor of a killing spree conducted 254 miles up in the sky.

Ramage, Eliana. [To the Moon and Back](#) (Atria \$30). A debut heralding one young woman's relentless quest to become the first Cherokee astronaut that will irrevocably alter the fates of the people she loves most makes our **November Notable New Fiction Pick**. Steph Harper is on the run. When she was five, her mother fled an abusive husband—with Steph and her younger sister in tow—to Cherokee Nation, where she hoped they might finally belong. In response, Steph sets her sights as far away from Oklahoma as she can get, vowing that she will let nothing get in the way of pursuing the rigorous physical and academic training she knows she will need to be accepted by NASA, and ultimately, to go to the moon. Spanning three decades and several continents, we follow her turbulent journey, along with the multifaceted and intertwined lives of the three women closest to her.

Reichs, Kathy. [Evil Bones](#) (Scribner \$27.99). Small creatures—a rat, a rabbit, a squirrel—have been turning up throughout Charlotte, North Carolina, mutilated and displayed in a bizarre manner. But one day, as Tempe is relaxing at home alongside her aimless, moody great-niece Ruthie, she's diverted by a disturbing call. The perp is upping the ante. This find could be human. Tempe visits the scene and discovers that the victim is a dog. Someone's pet. As one who has always found animal cruelty abhorrent, Tempe agrees to help apprehend the person responsible, and she acquires an equally outraged ally in semi-retired homicide detective Erskine "Skinny" Slidell. Needing a better understanding of possible motives, Tempe seeks input from a forensic psychologist. The doctor has no definitive answer but offers several possibilities, warning that the escalating pattern of aggression suggests even more macabre discoveries—and a shift in the perp's focus to humans. And then it happens—a woman is found disfigured and posed in a manner that mimics the animal killings.

Our Signed copies should appear in late November; virtual event with Kathy on December 2 at 6:00 PM MST.

Rinker, Sherri Duskey. [Steam Train, Dream Train: Next Stop, Christmas](#) (Chronicle Books \$18.99). For ages 3-5 and so cute!

Rosen, Lev AC. [Mirage City](#) (St Martins \$28). It's hard to believe we are at Book 4 of an impactful, enjoyable series that began in 1950s San Francisco with [Lavender House](#) (\$18.99)—a PP Staff favorite. This Christie-like mystery introduced us to what life was like for gay people in the era—plus it presented a terrific puzzle.

Here's a Starred Review for *Mirage City* where we encounter motorcycle gangs and the Mattachine Society: "The fourth installment in Rosen's series featuring gay ex-cop turned private investigator Evander Mills marries the rousing action of a well-built procedural with fascinating tidbits of queer history. In 1950s San Francisco, an anxious member of the local chapter of the Mattachine Society, one of the first gay rights organizations, comes to Mills' office above a gay bar and asks him to track down three members who've stopped attending meetings following a rift within the national organization. Evander heads to his hometown of L.A. to check out the group's new headquarters and look into a secret gay biker club's possible involvement with the case. Once there, he's unable to avoid his estranged mother, whose new nursing job seems to be tied up in the investigation. Rosen has a blast toying with the conventions of L.A. noir, but this is more than pale Raymond Chandler pastiche—it's a smart,

gimmick-free puzzle that stands on its own. The real magic, though, is in Rosen's depiction of the struggles and triumphs of midcentury queer life."

In an interview Rosen comments: "Getting to take the tropes of noir and then put this twist on them is a delight. Being queer in the '50s itself was a very noir experience: the world closing in, having to hide from the authorities, always feeling like you're being persecuted—because you are." Read [the whole interview](#) here.

Shen, L.J. [Bad Bishop Deluxe Edition](#) (Sourcebooks \$19.99). The Society of Villains #1 is "a dark mafia romance." Copies signed here on November 7 come with designed ages and a colorful art print.

Spencer Fleming, Julia. [At Midnight Comes the Cry](#) (St Martins \$29). As Christmas time in Millers Kill approaches, Reverend Clare Fergusson and her husband Russ van Alstyne—newly resigned from his position as chief of police—plan to enjoy it with their baby boy. But when a beloved holiday parade is crashed by white supremacists, Clare and Russ find themselves sucked into a parallel world of militias, machinations and murder. But a total of five people becomes ensnared including a police officer, a novice lawyer, and a NY Forest Ranger, leading them to the forbidding High Peaks of the Adirondacks. As the December days shorten and the nights grow long, a disparate group of would-be heroes need to unwind a murderous plot before time runs out. Here's a Christmas season thriller signed for us on November 18 alongside Rhys Bowen's new Her Royal Spyness mystery.

Urszenyi, Steve. [Blood Oath: An Alex Martel Thriller](#) (St Martins \$29). In the heart of Africa, CIA Special Agent Alexandra Martel's safari with her father spirals into a deadly game of betrayal when he is kidnapped by rebels. Suddenly, her peaceful Serengeti vacation transforms into a desperate race against time. As the general is held by local rebels, Russian mercenaries and Chinese MSS operatives descend on East Africa, all hunting the military secrets locked in her father's mind. Alex assembles an elite team to navigate the treacherous terrain, but complications arise when her CIA boss, Caleb, shows up unexpectedly, stirring feelings she's tried to bury since her husband's death. As competing forces close in, Alex uncovers betrayals stretching from the Serengeti to the highest levels of global intelligence.

"*Blood Oath* is as unforgiving as the African savanna—raw, relentless, and charged with danger at every turn. Steve Urszenyi delivers a high-stakes, high-speed thriller packed with pulse-pounding action and puts us back in the field with one of the genre's most unforgettable heroes—Special Agent Alex Martel. This is smart, razor-sharp storytelling." —Brad Thor Westbrook, Pasha. [Braided Roots](#) (Scholastic \$19.99). A poetic debut picture book for Ages 4-8 spotlights Native American Heritage Month and Thanksgiving. As a young girl's father lovingly yet painstakingly braids her hair, he weaves a story about the strength and resilience of their ancestors, Freedmen who walked the Trail of Tears from Mississippi to Oklahoma. It's a tale about endurance, history, and love, with beautiful, sweeping illustrations by Madelyn Goodnight. Westbrook is a Chickasaw and Choctaw Freedman descendant living here in Arizona. Come and meet her on Small Business Saturday from 10:30 to 12:00 PM.

CLASSICS

Bradbury, Ray. [Fahrenheit 451 \(Deluxe Slipcase Edition\)](#) (Simon Schuster \$45). A gift suggestion.

Carr, John Dickson. [The Burning Court](#) (American Mystery Classics \$15.95). When Edward Stevens, an editor at Herald and Son's publishing house, learns of the mysterious events that befell his neighbor's rich uncle, he shrugs off their seemingly supernatural circumstances. He's a logical man and doesn't give much credence to claims of a ghostly figure visiting the man before his death, or the witch's ladder discovered under his pillow. But as suspicions of strange murder begin to creep in, it becomes harder for Stevens to ignore their eerie potential. His neighbor breaks into the cement-sealed crypt where his uncle is buried, only to learn that the corpse has vanished. Witness testimony further implicates the intrusion of the spirit world and unsettling echoes of the past into the present push things even further past Stevens' understanding of reality. Will the events be logically explained, or is there something unexplainable at work? Hardcover edition: [The Burning Court](#) (Penzler \$25.95)

Darien, Georges. [Thief](#) (New American Library \$19.95). Made into a 1967 film by Louis Malle and never before available in English, this classic of anarchist literature follows a once well-to-do young man forced into an itinerant life of crime in the Belle Époque era.. Georges Randal is the titular thief, a young Frenchman of good family who, having been deprived of his inheritance by a conniving uncle, takes to a life of crime. Moving between London, Brussels, and Paris, in a world of hookers, drifters and grifters, revolutionaries and politicians, bankers and thieves, he is in a position to reveal modern society in all its teeming corruption. Like everyone else in this decadent society, he is a trafficker and exploiter—and a wounded soul. At least, however, he has the courage of his disaffection, his fury warmed by self-hatred. And he does seem a somewhat distant cousin of Robin Hood, targeting the wealthy and helping the needy when the opportunity arises. Darien is a pseudonym for an anarchist activist.

Darwin, Charles. [On the Origin of Species](#) (Arcturus \$29.99). This UK import comes as a beautiful sprayed edges edition, another gift suggestion.

* Freeman, R Austin. [Mr. Pottermack's Oversight](#) (Poisoned Pen \$15.99). This British Library Crime Classic of 1930 comes with a stunning autumnal cover although the story begins in July when a man in prisoner's garb stumbles through rough country making for the coast. And he finds a bather's clothes, changes, and becomes Mr. Pottermack. Can he avoid discovery to escape the hangman's noose. But the suspicions of the fiercely forensic Dr. Thorndyke are aroused and the cat and mouse game is afoot as we follow both detective and suspect in their battle to root out—or bury—the damning truth

Simenon, Georges. [The Madman of Bergerac](#) (Picador \$16) and [The Misty Harbor](#) (Picador \$16). Inspector Maigrets #15 and #16.

COZIES

Byron, Ellen. [Crescent City Christmas Chaos](#) (Severn \$29.99). "A parental visit, a catfight among holiday parade royalty, a string of thefts, and of course a murder add spice to Miracle "Ricki" Fleur de Lis James-Diaz's New Orleans Christmas. See Signed Books for more.

Cahoon, Lynn. [Merry Murder Season](#) (Kensington \$18.95). Jill King's store, Coffee, Books, and More, is co-sponsoring a charity dart tournament on Thanksgiving weekend with Chip's Bar, where toys and cash will be collected. She and new husband, Greg, will be competing as well—that is, if Greg's brother and his girlfriend don't ruin the evening. But the event leads to something much worse than a family squabble when the bar owner is found dead the next morning after being used as a human dartboard. Jill and police-detective Greg both aim to find the killer—difficult since the place was packed with a rowdy crowd of locals and a platoon of stuffed-animal-toting, very competitive motorcyclists. And with the night's big haul of cash donations left untouched, what could possibly be the motive for this murder?

Goldenbaum, Sally. [Gull & Bones](#) (Kensington \$27). Long-time resident Angus McPherron has a very special birthday coming up—his 100th! Known as the “old man of the sea” by Sea Harbor residents, he's lived in town all his long life and has shared plenty of colorful tales of the area. Back in town to fill a much-needed nursing position at the free clinic, Charlie Chambers, Izzy Perry's brother, is staying in one of the handful of cottages Angus owns. The yarn shop owner is thrilled he's in town—though she'd like to know more about his mysterious roommate, Annie Smith. Still, she's grateful that each morning Charlie checks Angus's vitals and makes sure he takes his meds. But the old man soon dies in his sleep. When his closest friend, Father Northcutt, is found on the floor of Angus's cottage, unconscious from a deadly blow to his head, Angus's death is examined more closely, and soon is a suspected homicide. so the knitters delve into Angus's history....

Manansala, Mia P. [Death and Dinuguan](#) (Penguin \$19). This Tita Rosie's Kitchen Mystery once again offers a story plus more delicious Filipino and Filipino fusion recipes. It's jumping the season to Valentine's Day in Shady Palms. The latest addition to the town's culinary scene is Choco Noir. But underneath this sweet surface a bitter undercurrent attacks women owned businesses and puts one entrepreneur in a coma. Once again Lila Macapagal's boyfriend Jae Park and his brother team up with the Brew-ha Café to put a stop to it.

Point, Rosie A. [Murder Among the Stacks](#) (Adams Media \$15). Abby Jones has it all figured out: moving to Cranberry Creek will give her the fresh start she needs. From opening her brand-new bookstore on Main Street to learning to love her busybody landlady, Myrna, to spending her time on her favorite cozy hobby (word searches!), Abby has her hands full. But when a famous author is mysteriously murdered at her bookstore's opening event, her new future is at stake. It's up to Abby, with the help of some new friends, to solve the case. A cozy mystery story combined with themed word search puzzles invites you to solve the case as you encounter clues.

Townsend, Peggy. [The Botanist's Assistant](#) (Penguin \$19). John makes our **November Cozy Crimes Pick**: “Life has taught Margaret Finch the importance of paying attention. This is why Margaret knows there is something odd when she drops by Dr. Jonathan Deaver's office and discovers his dead body. Why is there an empty Diet Coke bottle in the office when Dr. Deaver never drank the stuff? What happened to the cocktail glass that should have been by the bottle of whiskey Dr. Deaver enjoyed on special occasions? The campus police may rule Dr. Deaver

died as the result of his heart defect. However, Margaret is not convinced of this theory, which means it is now up to Margaret to draw upon her scientific training and find out who killed her boss. Readers enamored with Nita Prose's endearingly offbeat sleuth Molly Gray will be equally smitten with the delightfully quirky Margaret Finch while those who miss the botanical mysteries of Rebecca Rothenberg will find much to appreciate in Townsend's cleverly crafted, science-centric puzzler. Written with a delectably deadpan sense of humor and graced with an exceptionally entertaining cast of characters, this is a blooming treat for fans of cozy and traditional mysteries alike.”

NEW IN HARDCOVER

Baldree, Travis. [Brigands & Breadknives](#) (Tor \$28.99). Return to the cozy fantasy world of the Legends & Lattes series with a new adventure featuring fan-favorite, foul-mouthed bookseller Fern. Baldree “blows up the expected premise in the opening chapters and allows our hero to set out on her own (however accidentally) into an adventure filled with thrills, laughs, friendship and real maturity.”

* Bennett, SJ. [The Queen Who Came in from the Cold](#) (Crooked Lane \$29.99). While I didn't care for Bennett's series featuring the mature Queen Elizabeth II, I loved her pivot after Elizabeth died to 1957 where the young monarch is finding her way in post-war Europe and hampered by her father's elderly courtiers. Is one of them trying to sabotage her public appearances? Read [A Death in Diamonds](#) (\$19.99) to find out, and enjoy the cast, especially ex-code breaker Joan McGraw, also finding her way in the Royal Household after serving at Bletchley Park, and all the protocol. Now it's 1961, the Cold War has heated up, and Joan and the Queen are spending a night aboard the royal train when a sole and unreliable witness declares a brutal murder was spotted from one of the carriages. If there is a victim despite no evidence, could it be the missing photographer friend of Princess Margaret's new husband Anthony Armstrong Jones?

Bo-Reum, Hwang/Shanna Tan. [Every Day I Read](#) (Bloomsbury \$27.99). 53 Ways to Get Closer to Books provides many quiet moments for introspection and reflection, encouraging book-lovers to explore what reading means to each of us. While this is a book about books, at its heart is an attitude to life, one outside capitalism and climbing the corporate ladder. Lifelong and new readers will take away something from it, including a treasure trove of book recommendations blended seamlessly within. “A sweet, thoughtful meditation on books and what they mean to us.”

* Boyd, William. [The Predicament](#) (Grove \$28). Mistake-prone amateur spy Gabriel Dax romps through two minor international crises of the early 1960s in Boyd's shrewd latest espionage tale after his acclaimed [Gabriel's Moon](#) (\$18). A professional travel writer with no training in spycraft, Dax works for MI6 unofficially, under the auspices of his sometime-girlfriend, agent Faith Green. Though he'd prefer to withdraw to his cottage in East Sussex and continue working on his new book about the great rivers of the world, Dax is sent to Guatemala in March 1963 to check on the political rise of a labor leader trying to unseat the country's CIA-backed military government. Things quickly get hairy: Dax is threatened, then stabbed, by thugs who oppose his sniffing around. He recovers in England before Faith sends him to Berlin to check out reports that assassins may be targeting

President John F. Kennedy during a weeklong visit. Dax bumbles his way through that mission, helping thwart disaster via a string of accidentally heroic acts inspired by his instincts as a writer. “Readers will be charmed by Dax’s tendency to fail upward, and Boyd smoothly incorporates real history into his wildly entertaining plot.”

Braithwaite, Oyinkan. [Cursed Daughters](#) (Knopf \$29). The author of the unorthodox and compelling hit [My Sister the Serial Killer](#) (\$17) returns with a story centered on a young woman’s escape from a troubling family legacy that hangs in the balance in this satirical drama fueled by romance and otherworldly intrigue set in Lagos, Nigeria. The women of the Falodun family have struggled under a curse for five generations. The malediction was originally placed on their beguiling ancestress Feranmi by her husband’s scorned first wife, who warned that Feranmi’s female descendants would never find lasting love. The curse seems to be working. The Falodun ancestral home is a refuge for those heartbroken by absconding husbands and weak-willed lovers, or charismatic Monife, the pivotal center of *Cursed Daughters*, her failed relationship with Kalu has as much to do with the curse as her fear of it. Heartbroken over Kalu’s betrayal, Monife drowns and then is buried on the very day her cousin gives birth to Eniiyi. Eniiyi’s startling resemblance to Monife leads to superstitious chatter about reincarnation, and her childhood is weighed down by the haunting shadow of her dead aunty. As a college graduate, Eniiyi pursues a career as a genetic counselor. “Curse or not, when love comes for Eniiyi, it does so with a force that leaves her smitten and leads to a long overdue collision course with mysteries from Monife’s past. The fallout is devastating yet Braithwaite’s masterful conclusion finds hope in the enduring power of love.”

Clines, Peter. [God’s Junk Drawer](#) (Blackstone \$29.99). Forty years ago, the Gather family—James, his daughter Beau, and his son Billy—vanished during a whitewater rafting trip and were presumed dead. Five years later, Billy reappeared on the far side of the world, telling an impossible tale of a primordial valley populated by dinosaurs, aliens, Neanderthals, and androids. Little Billy became the punch line of so very many jokes, until he finally faded from the public eye. Now, a group of graduate astronomy students follow their professor, Noah Barnes, up a mountain for what they believe is a simple stargazing trip. But they’re about to travel a lot farther than they planned ... Noah—the now grown Billy Gather—has finally figured out how to get back to the valley. Accidentally bringing his students along with him, he’s confident he can get everyone back home, safe and sound. But the valley is a puzzle—one it turns out Noah hasn’t figured out—and they’ll need to solve it together if there’s any chance of making it out alive. “Pulling from Earth’s past, future, and beyond, Peter Clines has created a complex, dangerous world, navigated by a dynamic ensemble cast, and a story that is as thrilling as it is funny and heartfelt.”

* Connally, Celeste. [Revenge, Served Royal](#) (St Martins \$28) begins in the kitchens of the plucky sleuth’s London mansion in September, 1815, when Lady Petra Forsyth and some of the ton descend upon Windsor Castle for a week of royal celebrations. The cook, Mrs. Bing, has herself received an invitation from Queen Charlotte to spend a week at Windsor Castle competing against nine other cooks in a baking competition for the royal couple’s 54th wedding anniversary. Lady Petra comes as one of

the judges. Nearly 150 guests arrive to board at the castle, with hundreds of others lodging at two nearby royal residences. When one of Lady Petra’s fellow judges is found dead, chauffeur Oliver Beecham—brother of Lady Petra’s faithful maid—is accused of the crime. Certain of Oliver’s innocence, Lady Petra vows to ferret out the true culprit among the guests. “Connally adorns the plot’s standard cozy beats with a few exciting fistfights and a dash of heart-fluttering romance.”

De Castrique, Mark. [Desperate Spies](#) (Severn House \$29.99). Badass 75-year-old retired FBI agent Ethel Fiona Crestwater is back, stalking mobsters, dodging bullets, and pulling off Bond-worthy moves as she tracks down missing state secrets in this fun and pacy new installment in the Secret Lives mystery series. Eighteen years ago, a Russian gangster posing as a FedEx driver shot and killed young Kathy Bagatelos, the daughter of mob lawyer Tony Bagatelos, wounding veteran FBI agent Ethel Fiona Crestwater in the process. Ethel retired shortly afterward but unofficially remained in the spy game. The old case comes up during a meeting at Pentagon City Mall among Ethel; her double-first-cousin-twice-removed and protégé, American University computer science student Jesse Cooper; and her friend Cassandra Crawford, an FBI agent. Ethel had instructed Jesse to tail CiCi without revealing who she was, as part of his spycraft training. Once the exercise ends and the three sit down for tea, CiCi confides that Tony, who regularly keeps Ethel in the loop with intel, is her confidential informant. Meanwhile, the recent release from prison of vengeful Russian mobster Mikhail Golubev has put a target on Ethel’s back. That’s more than personally dangerous, for much of CiCi’s success comes from Ethel’s maneuvers. When Tony is murdered, Ethel immediately begins investigating. Enjoy the droll dynamic duo as they once again prove their mettle.

Farley, CJ. [Who Knows You by Heart](#) (Harper \$30). “This brilliant book is the novel we urgently need right now. In an addictively readable way, it weaves together insights about love, race, gender, and work in the era of Big Tech. This is the first great AI novel of our time, and it is unlikely to be surpassed anytime soon.” — Walter Isaacson

Forsyth, Frederick. [The Revenge of Odessa](#) (Penguin \$32). The late Forsyth plus Tony Kent present the sequel to *The Odessa File* – I don’t know if barrister and boxer Kent will continue to write in the Forsyth world. But here the authors give Peter Miller, now a retired journalist, a new life fifty years after he revealed the secrets of Odessa, an underground cabal of former Nazis angling to regain power. Peter, whose son and daughter were killed in a “car accident” has been caring for his grandson. And George Miller has become a fearless journalist of the digital world. Odessa has thrived as well, morphing into Medusa nurturing Germany’s far right. What if it wants to go a step further—to the West Wing? What, I add, if it has?

Goldberg, Tod. [Only Way Out](#) (Thomas & Mercer \$28.99). Goldberg (the Gangsterland series) riffs on a familiar setup in this twisty and inventive crime thriller. Unscrupulous Oregon cop Jack Biddle is indebted to criminals for hundreds of thousands of dollars. While hiding out in a remote mountain town, he spots a van and decides to shake down the passengers for the money he needs. Before he can get to the vehicle, however, it skids on black ice and crashes into a ravine. When Jack reaches the scene,

he finds the decapitated body of the driver, Robert Green, and millions of dollars in valuables including diamonds and cash. Jack is unaware that Robert was desperate to pay off his own debts, and looted 324 safety deposit boxes from the law firm where he worked to finance a new life in South America for himself and his criminal sister, Penny. Robert's disappearance alarms Penny, who finds out that Jack has the loot—but both of them have bigger problems when a dangerous third party comes after the stash. With comic flair, shocking violence, and a capacity for surprise, this recalls the noir-tinged films of the Coen brothers.

Green, Amy K. [Haven't Killed in Years](#) (Viking \$30). No one is supposed to know harmless office worker Gwen Tanner is the vanished daughter of serial killer Abel Haggerty. Marin Haggerty was only a child when they arrested her father. Ripped from her home and given a new identity, Marin disappeared. Twenty years later, Gwen Tanner keeps everyone at a distance, preferring to satirize the world around her than participate in it. It's for her safety—and theirs. But when someone starts sending body parts to her front door, the message is clear: I Know Who You Are. To preserve her secrets, Gwen must hunt down the killer, a journey which immerses her in the twisted world of true crime fandom and makes her confront her past once and for all. Does the apple fall far from the tree? Green captures the loneliness of being the child of a notorious serial killer.

Gudenkauf, Heather. [The Perfect Hosts](#) (Park Row \$30). A gender reveal party for 200 turns deadly when the celebratory explosive misfires. See more in *New in Large Paperbacks*. Heather joins us in late February and can sign copies then.

* James, Peter. [The Hawk Is Dead](#) (Pan Macmillan \$27.99). For the 21st investigation of Brighton's Superintendent Roy Grace (excellent TV on Apple), James puts Queen Camilla on a train heading to a charity event in Sussex when it is derailed. Despite a sniper taking out an aide, Grace is not convinced the Queen was the intended target of the sabotage. Then comes a second death....

Irving, John. [Queen Esther](#) (Simon Schuster \$30). Revisiting the orphanage from *The Cider House Rules* we meet Esther, one of a delightful collection of characters.

* Kelly, Vanessa. [Murder at Donwell Abbey](#) (Kensington \$27). This latest Regency-era mystery finds Jane Austen's clever Emma Knightley (*née* Woodhouse) as an amateur sleuth, navigating shocking changes in her family. Emma's spirits are elevated after she and husband George Knightley host a joyful holiday celebration at the Hartfield estate. But it's instantly a bitter January when her father makes an unexpected announcement—he and Miss Hetty Bates have decided to marry. Not only must Emma relinquish her role as mistress of the household, but also accept the reality that the excitable Miss Bates will become her stepmother. More unwanted news arrives during an extravagant betrothal ball at Donwell Abbey, the grand Knightley estate where Emma and George will soon permanently reside. Nearly every villager in Highbury revels in the dazzling affair—except Emma's hardworking lady's maid, Prudence Parr. To Emma's horror, Prudence is found dead, sprawled across the stones of the library terrace... The woman's tragic fall is quickly ruled a terrible accident and whispers circulate around personal troubles leading up to her untimely demise. But Emma's instincts tell her that something far more sinister is at play.

Lee, Alissa. [With Friends Like These](#) (Atria \$27). A debut in the Dark Academic world where a group of Harvard alums have played a secret game for decades but as the stakes rise, deadly consequences emerge from old lies. Ambitious futures, peers who pushed each other toward their absolute best, and an education that would open doors for the rest of their lives. And though they started out as roommates, Sara, Bee, Dina, Allie, Wesley, and Claudine soon became family. Twenty years later, five of the roommates still indulge in a secret tradition they've kept alive since their campus days: the Circus, a harmless elimination-style “killing” game played across the private rooms and hidden alleys of New York City. The game is a nod to their younger selves and a tribute to the sixth roommate they lost too young. But this year, Sara wants out of the game—until she discovers there is a small fortune awaiting the winner of this final round. As the Circus unfolds, Sara begins to suspect that the others aren't playing by the rules, and as the danger turns real and the old friends start pointing fingers, she discovers secrets that could kill.

Lehane, Con. [The Red Scare Murders](#) (Soho \$28.95) is set in the thick of the McCarthy era. WWII veteran Mick Mulligan had it all—a successful career as a Hollywood cartoonist, a comfortable salary, a lovely family—until he was blacklisted by the House Un-American Activities Committee. After losing his job and his wife, Mick fled to New York City and reinvented himself as a private investigator. His latest case lands him in a simmering cauldron of social unrest that could boil over at any moment. A year ago, Black cabbie and Communist Party member Harold Williams was convicted of murdering wealthy white taxi company owner Irwin Johnson. Harold is scheduled to be executed in just two weeks, but labor leader Duke Rogowski hires Mick to look into the case with hopes that he might exonerate Williams. A skeptical Mick digs in, soon discovering that the list of Harold's enemies is long, and coming around to the idea that the cabbie may, in fact, be a patsy. Lehane's pacing and hardboiled dialogue are hard to beat, and he makes the jittery paranoia of the period jump off the page. Fans of James Ellroy will get a kick out of our **November Hardboiled Crime Club Pick**.

Liu, Ken. [All That We See or Seem](#) (Saga Press \$30). Award-winning author Ken Liu returns with his first sci-fi thriller in a brand-new series following former “orphan hacker” Julia Z as she is thrust into a high-stakes adventure where she must use her AI-whispering skills to unravel a virtual reality mystery, rescue a kidnapped dream artist, and confront the blurred lines between technology, selfhood, and the power of shared dreams. Julia, who gained notoriety at fourteen as the “orphan hacker,” is trying to live a life of digital obscurity in a quiet Boston suburb. But when a lawyer named Piers—whose famous artist wife, Elli, has been kidnapped by dangerous criminals—barges into her life, Julia decides to put the solitary life she has painstakingly created at risk as she can't walk away from helping Piers and Elli, nor step away from the challenge of this digital puzzle. Elli is an oneirofex, a dream artist, who can weave the dreams of an audience together through a shared virtual landscape, live, in a concert-like experience by tapping into each attendee's memories and providing an emotionally resonant narrative experience. While these collective dreams are anonymous, Julia discovers that Elli was also dreaming one-on-one with the head of an international criminal enterprise, and he's demanding the return of his dreams in exchange for Elli. This is an interesting sci-fi thriller concept.

* MacMillan, Gilly. [The Burning Library](#) (Harper \$30), I tried to get into this but while I can see that Gilly put her heart into it, it doesn't work for me. We have two competing organizations of ruthless women engaged in rivalry over a medieval manuscript (in fact, the Voynich manuscript which has in real life so far defied translation). Each group is bent on amassing power for women. And won't stop at murder. The first is that of a woman in possession of a scrap of embroidery and working to decipher it on one of Scotland's remote Western Isles. Dr. Anya Brown, who succeeded in translating a cryptic folio, is handpicked for a post at the Institute of Manuscript Studies at St. Andrews where her skill at deciphering ancient texts will be critical to either group's mission. Meanwhile DC Clio Spicer of the Yard begins her own investigation into the death in Scotland. This is an ambitious book that misses its mark.

Margolin, Phillip. [False Witness](#) (St Martins \$29). Portland attorney and bestseller lawyer Margolin introduces a new character in defense attorney Karen Wyatt. She had put a target on her back by exposing corruption in the cop shop and the DA's office while working to exonerate a client. And was disbarred on fake charges. Now reinstated she's keen to find out who set her up, but the perps are either dead or in WitSec. And she has a troublesome new client who is either guilty of a heinous murder...or set up. Once upon a time a thriller featuring corrupt officers of the court and a Congressman would have been hard to swallow but today it's been normalized.

Masa, Ilana. [Beings](#) (Bloomsbury \$28.99) spins an affecting tale of aliens, alienation, and archives. It's anchored by the workday assignments and converging obsessions of an assistant at a library, known only as the Archivist, who begins reading a manuscript about real-life interracial couple Barney and Betty Hill. In 1961, the Hills claimed to be abducted by aliens in the New Hampshire woods upon returning from their honeymoon in Canada, unintentionally birthing the alien abduction narrative. The manuscript, held in the library's Queer Writers Archive, embellishes the story of the media-shy couple, who gained notoriety among UFO followers. The Archivist also reads letters addressed by lesbian Phyllis Egerton, who left her homophobic mother in 1962 New Hampshire to start a new life as a proofreader at a Boston newspaper and aspired to become a science fiction author, to her estranged girlfriend. The material gives the Archivist solace as they deal with chronic pain from a genetic disorder and angst at a world that doesn't always accommodate their gender nonconformity. Moreover, the story of the Hills reminds the Archivist, who also hails from New Hampshire, of their own close encounter with aliens as an elementary school student in 1996. The interconnected narratives reveal the power of stories and archival material to reach across time and help an isolated person find themselves.

Meyer, Marissa. [The House Saphir](#) (Feiwel and Friends \$19.99) is the tale of Bluebeard as it's never been told before. Mallory Fontaine is a fraud. Though she comes from a long line of witches, the only magic she possesses is the ability to see ghosts. She and her sister have maintained the family business, eking out a paltry living by selling bogus spells to gullible buyers and conducting tours of the infamous mansion where the first of the Saphir murders took place. Mallory is a self-proclaimed expert on Count Bastien Saphir, aka Monsieur Bleu, who brutally killed three of his wives more than a century ago. But she never

expected to meet Bastien's great-great grandson and heir. Armand is handsome, wealthy, and convinced that the Fontaine Sisters are as talented as they claim. The perfect mark. When he offers Mallory a large sum of money to rid his ancestral home of Le Bleu's ghost, she can't resist. But when murder again comes to the House Saphir, Mallory finds herself at the center of the investigation—and she is almost certain the killer is mortal. For Teens but why not Adults?

Mukherjee, Abir. [The Burning Grounds](#) (Pegasus \$28.95). Delighted to see this Starred Review for a fine British author: "Mukherjee's talent for elevating genre tropes suffuses the stellar fifth installment of his 1920s-set Wyndham and Banerjee mystery series (after *The Shadows of Men*). It's been three years since British detective Sam Wyndham helped his onetime partner, Indian investigator Surendranath Banerjee, flee India after being falsely accused of attempted murder. The men have since fallen out of touch, owing in part to the painful dissolutions of their respective romantic relationships. They reunite, however, when wealthy British philanthropist J.P. Millick is found with his windpipe slit in an area of Calcutta used to build funeral pyres. Though Wyndham strained relationships with his colleagues on the Imperial Police Force after he helped Banerjee flee prosecution, military intelligence chief Dawson puts him in charge of investigating Millick's death and lures Banerjee back into the fold with a promise to track down his missing cousin, Dolly, if he cooperates. Mukherjee depicts the former partners' uneasy reunion with tenderness while peppering the core whodunit plot with a string of ingenious red herrings."—PW

O'Nan, Stewart. [Evensong](#) (Grove \$28) follows The Humpty Dumpty Club, a group of women of a certain age who band together to help one another and their circle of friends in Pittsburgh as they face the challenges of their golden years.

Patterson, James. [Return of the Spider](#) (Little Brown \$30). *Along Came a Spider* won Patterson and Edgar as it introduced Detective Alex Cross; the "human superhero" versus Gary Soneji; the "most deliciously wicked character." But apparently that wasn't their first meeting.... Police discover that Soneji kept a murder book, *Profiles in Homicidal Genius*, detailing his transformation from substitute teacher to hardened serial killer—including clues that imply missteps that Alex Cross may have made a rookie homicide detective. Now, Alex must retrace the steps of that long-ago investigation and face...the Return of the Spider.

Rushdie, Salman. [The Eleventh Hour: A Quintet of Stories](#) (Random House \$28) looking at "life's final act" with stories that span the three landscapes of his work—India, England, and America—as told by a sterling cast.

* Seddon, Holly. [59 Minutes](#) (Aria \$29). What would you do if an alert signaled that, thanks to an incoming nuclear missile and lack of secure shelter, you and yours have 59 minutes to live? That's what three women in the south of England face. Will they connect with their loved ones in time? And could they navigate survival if it is an option? With nuclear testing in play, one hopes this thriller remains in the realm of fiction.

* Smith, Sally. [A Case of Life and Limb](#) (Bloomsbury \$28.99). Joy, the sequel to the delightful clever [A Case of Mice and Murder](#) (Bloomsbury \$28.99), a debut taking us into the London Temple grounds (law courts) of 1901 London where the Lord

Chief Justice is eccentrically murdered and the lawyer forced to investigate when he's rather be pursuing his copyright case over a children's book with a magical mouse lead does the job.

Now we are at Christmas Eve, 1901, and yet another murder besets the ancient enclave. And again Gabriel Ward, KC, is tagged to solve it (with the cooperation of Constable Wright of the City of London Police who don't have jurisdiction but can be invited to assist). It begins when a severed hand arrives in the post of Temple Treasurer Sir William Waring. Is it personal to Sir William? As more parcels arrive—one with fatal consequences—Gabriel realizes that it is not Sir William who is the target, but the Temple itself. But Gabriel is also hard at work on a thorny libel case involving London's most famous music hall star, Topsy Tillotson, and its most notorious tabloid newspaper, the *Nation's Voice*.

* Stonex, Emma. [The Sunshine Man](#) (Penguin \$30). Birdie Keller wakes one freezing January morning to the news she's been waiting eighteen years to hear. Jimmy Maguire, the man who killed her sister, has been freed from jail. She leaves for London with a pistol and a plan: to find this man and make him pay. But every story has two sides. Jimmy can sense he's being hunted. He knew Birdie a long time ago, in a life she'd sooner forget, and he isn't the only one with something to hide. So the two circle each other in a heart-stopping game of cat and mouse....

Summers, Georgia. [The Bookshop Below](#) (Redhook \$29). This dark fantasy about the magic of books renders an enchanting world of self-sabotage, romance, deadly ink magic, and dearly beloved bookstores in her sophomore novel, *The Bookshop Below*. London was once full of shops where books and the magic they held could be exchanged for the priceless: self-extracted teeth, a lock of hair, a firstborn child. In contemporary times, the force that imbues books and bookshops with their power, through the particular magical workings of booksellers, is fading. Now Cassandra, a disgraced former bookseller, is drawn back into the life that exiled her, just in time to die along with the world she reveres—or, perhaps, to save it.

Suthammanont, Victor. [Hollow Spaces](#) (Counterpoint \$28). A debut legal thriller has won terrific praise as ambitious, gorgeously rendered, highly readable...and far too timely for comfort."—Lori Rader-Day, *Chicago Review of Books*. The *NY Times* adds, "Suthammanont unspools [the mystery] with gorgeous precision. The heart of *Hollow Spaces* lies in the way children repeat their parents' mistakes—and the not-so-casual racism in privileged spaces." The only Asian American partner at a prestigious law firm sees his professional and personal life demolished when he is put on trial for murder. Three decades later, his children reunite to uncover the truth and try to salvage what remains of their family. I have ordered a copy to read and will then say more.

Turnbull, Cadwell. [A Ruin, Great and Free](#) (Blackstone \$29.99). Here is the concluding book of the Convergence Saga, a contemporary urban fantasy trilogy set in a world where creatures from myth and legend have come out from the shadows. It has been nearly two years since the anti-monster riots. The inhabitants of Moon have been very fortunate in the intervening months. Inside their hidden monster settlement, they've found peace, even as the world outside slips into increasing unrest. Monsters are being

hunted everywhere, forced back into the shadows they once tried to escape from. Other secret settlements have offered a place to hide, but how long can this half-measure against fear and hatred last? Over the course of three days, we will find out. Our Pat King is a serious fan of Turnbull so I've ordered a copy for him to read and report.

NONFICTION FOR NOVEMBER

Berkus, Nate. [Foundations: Timeless Design](#) (Simon Element \$45). "Part design toolbox, part portfolio (including plenty of never-before-seen rooms), this latest opus imparts his hard-earned wisdom, helping readers earn the foundational knowledge that no design school can match."—*House Beautiful*

Gardner, Mark Lee. [Brothers of the Gun: Wyatt Earp, Doc Holiday and a Reckoning in Tombstone](#) (Penguin \$35). A deep dive into their friendship.

Gladstone, Malcolm. [Revenge of the Tipping Point](#) (\$21.99). Malcolm Gladwell returns for the first time in 25 years to the subject of social epidemics and tipping points, this time with the aim of explaining the dark side of contagious phenomena and the rise of a new and troubling form of social engineering.

Isaacson, Walter. [The Greatest Sentence Ever Written](#) (Simon Schuster \$20). The legendary biographer deep dives into the creation of one of history's most powerful sentences: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness." How would he feel about this at this moment?

Kuehn, Christine. [Family of Spies: A World War II Story](#) (Celadon \$29.99). The truth remained buried for decades — until one letter changed everything. With all the trappings of a Le Carré spy thriller, Kuehn's deeply researched history tells the story of her grandfather Otto Kuehn, the patriarch of a Berlin family sent to Honolulu to spy for the Nazis. After the Kuehns began feeding information about U.S. Navy ships to the Japanese from their cottage overlooking Pearl Harbor, well, you know what happened next. But Kuehn, who learned about her grandfather's involvement only as an adult, brings the reader along with her as she uncovers this family secret.

Last, Natan. [Across the Universe: The Past, Present and Future of the Crossword Puzzle](#) (Knopf \$29). Natan Last's erudite, thoughtful debut, *Across the Universe*, investigates the origins, cultural influence, and often tricky politics of the crossword puzzle. Spanning more than a century, from the first "Word-Cross" puzzles appearing in the New York World in 1913 to the proliferation of modern-day digital puzzles, Last's account explores the path crosswords took to become a well-established linguistic and cultural art form. Thoroughly researched and delightfully nerdy, this cultural history is packed with quirky personalities and bursting with cleverly constructed clues. "Crossword puzzles are quantum, always two things at once," Last says, noting the crossword's surface appeal (dad jokes, puns, pop-culture references) and its deeper linguistic and political ramifications. He cites various incidents—even a few legal ones—predicated on crossword clues and content, and considers whether the crossword should be seen as reflecting culture or shaping it (or both). *Across the Universe* is a linguistic treat for crossword devotees and anyone who loves a bit of witty wordplay. So, Wordle fans, this too is for you.

McCartney, Jennifer. [Cocktails for the Apocalypse](#) (Countryman Press \$18.99). Recipes with 50 illustrations may be for those with a sense of humor. This volume “contains the secrets to survival in unprecedented times. These new (and classic) cocktails from best-seller McCartney will help readers remember to enjoy what we’ve got and laugh when we need to. Recipes include the Martian Martini, to welcome our new overlords; the Virtual Cosmo, since remote work is the new hell reality; and the Nuclear Sunrise, so you get plenty of tequila to enjoy while soaking up the radiation poisoning.”

McGrath, Tim. [Three Roads to Gettysburg](#) (Penguin \$38). A revelatory account of the Battle of Gettysburg, where George Meade, Lincoln’s unexpected choice to lead the Union army, defeated Robert E. Lee and changed the course of the Civil War

Moore, Stephen L. [Fighting Fifteen: The Navy’s Top Ace and the Deadliest Hellcat Squadron of the Pacific War](#) (Penguin \$34). Here is the action-packed tale of VF-15, the elite group of U.S. Navy “top gun” pilots that destroyed more enemy planes than any other Pacific War squadron. Recommended to readers of Jack Stewart.

Nguyen, Joseph. [The Overthinker’s Guide to Making Decisions](#). (Authors Equity \$22). Ideally from a place of clarity instead of chaos. “Your brain is wired to overthink decisions—not because something’s wrong with you, but because you care deeply about making the right choice.” If you’ve ever found yourself trapped in endless loops of “what if,” analyzing every option to exhaustion, or seeking everyone’s advice while still feeling lost... this book is your way out.

Rankin, William. [Radical Cartography](#) (Viking \$40). How changing our maps can change our world, an exploration of how maps shape our understanding of the world, and navigating it. Over 150 full-color maps. GPS is great for travel, especially in urban areas, but for an overall picture of an area I still prefer a printed map.

Van Dyke, Dick. [100 Rules for Living to 100](#) (Grand Central \$28). On the eve of his 100th birthday (shades of Jack Benny and Betty White), optimist Van Dyke is still dancing. Here he reveals his secrets not just to aging but to doing so purposefully and with joy.

Winchester, Simon. [The Breath of the Gods](#) (Harper \$35). Winchester likes to paint a big picture and here he takes on “the history and future of the wind.” Malevolent force? Or the savior of our planet through clean power? Think on this: In 2022, a report was released by atmospheric scientists at the University of Northern Illinois, warning that winds—the force at the center of increasingly dangerous natural events—are expected to steadily increase in the years ahead, strengthening in power, speed, and frequency.

MEMOIRS/BIOS

Atwood, Margaret. [Book of Lives: A Memoir of Sorts](#) (Knopf \$35).

Booker, Cory. [Stand](#) (St Martins \$30). Whatever your politics, admire his 25-hour speech on the Senate floor, a remarkable test of preparation, endurance, and a vision.

Cher. [Cher: Part One: The Memoir](#) (Harper \$21.99)

Dylan, Bob. [Point Blank](#) (Simon Schuster \$45) is the first major publication of Bob Dylan’s artwork in over a decade, featuring nearly 100 never-before-seen drawings.

Goddard, Todd. [Devouring Time: Jim Harrison, A Writer’s Life](#) (Blackstone \$28.99). Harrison (1937-2016) wrote 21 books of fiction, 14 books of poetry, and revitalized the novella. Patrick is a great admirer of his work. “For all his notoriety as a writer of prose, however, poetry remained his first and longest-abiding love. He cherished his geographic remoteness from what he called the “dream coasts” of New York City and Los Angeles, preferring to hunt, fish, and drink in the backwoods bars of Michigan, Arizona, and Montana.” Based on more than one hundred original interviews and drawing upon Harrison’s collected papers, *Devouring Time* is the first and only literary biography of this admired and influential author.

Landau, Jon. [The Bigger Picture: My Blockbuster Life](#) (Disney \$28.99). Written as the late Academy Award-winning film producer battled cancer and came to terms with his terminal diagnosis, and began to problem solve to present everything he learned behind the camera as a legacy. Foreword by James Cameron.

Obama, Michelle. [The Look](#) (Crown \$50). First Ladies are influencers. As the first Black First Lady, Obama used fashion to draw attention to her message. Beautifully illustrated with more than 200 photographs, including never-before-seen images, this is a stunning journey through Michelle Obama’s style evolution, in her own words for the first time.

Parton, Dolly. [Star of the Show: My Life on Stage](#) (Clarkson Potter \$55)

Smith, Patti. [Bread of Angels: A Memoir](#) (Random House \$30)

OUR NOVEMBER LARGE PAPERBACK PICKS

Armstrong, Jess. [The Secret of the Three Fates](#) (\$19). Following her gothic historical mystery debut, [The Curse of Penryth Hall](#) (\$19) set in post-WWI Cornwall and evocative of Rebecca DuMaurier’s work, American heiress Ruby Vaughan and her octogenarian employer Mr. Owen of the Exeter rare book shop journey to Manhurst Castle in the Scottish Borders to appraise and acquire illuminated manuscripts. When Ruby discovers there are no manuscripts and receives news of a séance to be held that very night, she begins to grow suspicious about the true reason why they have come. The Great War left grieving families willing to sacrifice anything for the chance to say goodbye to a lost loved one. Mr. Owen is no exception. He is desperate to speak to his son, but he doesn’t want to face the spirits alone. When the séance—hosted by a trio of mediums billing themselves as The Three Fates—goes awry, Mr. Owen’s secrets begin to unravel....

Barrett, Kerry. [The Bookshop of Secrets](#) (Harper \$18.99). In a bookshop nestled in the sprawling streets of Lisbon, a shopkeeper leads a double life... Looking for a new start after her father’s death, Lara Hope arrives in Lisbon in search of a family she’s never met. As war storms across Europe, Lara finds solace and belonging in her landlady’s tranquil bookshop in one of the most beautiful corners of the city. But when she witnesses a customer secretly swapping a book, she realizes the bookshop is not all it seems. Lara is plunged into a labyrinthine world of mystery and facades, encountering new friends, an unexpected romance, and even royalty... Is she prepared to risk it all for this new life?

Coleman, Reed Farrel. [Blind to Midnight](#) (\$18.99). Detective Nick Ryan doesn’t wear a uniform, but he is the most powerful cop in New York. He has cars, safe houses, money, and weapons hidden all over the city. Nearly 3,000 New Yorkers died on 9/11.

But in the entire city on that tragic day, only one murder actually took place. Now, over two decades later, Detective Nick Ryan must dig beneath the official report—and into his own past—to find the truth. Working again for the mysterious power broker “Joe,” Nick finds a link between an airman, a billionaire, a trove of Nazi gold, and a crew of killers, but gets sidetracked when his dear “uncle” Tony and Tony’s wife are murdered in a professional hit. Is he for once outgunned?

* Griffiths, Elly. [The Man in Black](#) (\$18.99) is wonderful! In bite-sized tales Griffiths is able to explore what some of her fictional creations such as Ruth Galloway, Harbinder Kaur, and Max Mephisto might have done outside of the novels. I was so happy to spend more time with Ruth and Nelson, whom I really miss.

Gruley, Brian. [Bitterfrost](#) (\$16.99). Thirteen years ago, former ice hockey star Jimmy Baker quit the game after almost killing an opponent. Now, as the Zamboni driver for the amateur team in his hometown of Bitterfrost, Michigan, he’s living his penance. Until the morning he awakens to the smell of blood.... Jimmy soon finds himself arrested for a brutal double murder. The kicker? He has no memory of the night in question. And as the evidence racks up against him, Jimmy’s case is skating on thin ice. Could he have committed such a gruesome crime? His defense attorney Devyn Payne and prosecuting detective Garth Klimmek race to uncover the truth while Jimmy wonders if he could have killed not one, but two?

Hamilton, Steve. [An Honorable Assassin](#) (\$18.99). Nick Mason was released from federal prison to a second life as an unwilling assassin, serving a major Chicago crime lord until the day he finally won his freedom. But that freedom was a lie. Now Mason finds himself on a plane to Jakarta, promoted to lead assassin for a shadowy global organization. This time, there’s only one name on his list: Hashim Baya—known as the Crocodile—international fugitive and #1 most wanted on Interpol’s “Red Notice” list. Baya is the most dangerous and elusive criminal Mason has ever faced. Then, for the first time in his career, Mason fails his mission—Baya gets away alive. To save himself, his ex-wife, and his daughter, Mason must zero in on hunting down the target on his own. But Mason isn’t alone in his search—for Interpol agent Martin Sauvage, apprehending Baya has become a personal vendetta. Sauvage is a man just as haunted as Mason. And just as determined. Hamilton offers a vivid and informative picture of the world’s largest city (Tokyo is second).

* Herron, Mick. [Down Cemetery Road](#) (Soho Press \$19.95 Deluxe Edition). I loved this debut by Mick from 2004 when we imported Signed UK editions. It has many of the elements of the Slow Horses spy series but is set in Oxford and is more of a traditional mystery. Currently it is being brilliantly brought to life by Emma Thompson and cast on Apple TV and I urge you to watch it for the twisty, trademark Herron story and for the views of Oxford. I am often asked how did I know to grab and promote the first novel of an author such as Herron, now a Diamond Dagger winner and bestseller thanks to the *Slow Horses* TV with Gary Oldman? And my answer is Voice. If I love the voice, and strong plot helps, then I go for it. The plot pits an arm of the British government against some of its citizens as it tries to clean up a failed op. Now you can see if you agree with me. This is a terrific gift idea for mystery fans on your list.

Lindqvist, John Ajvide. [The Writing in the Water](#) (Crossing \$16.99) pokes fun at the publishing industry in this offbeat series launch that teams cop-turned-author Julia Malmros with expert hacker Kim Ribbing. Malmros has had commercial and critical success writing novels featuring detective sergeant Åsa Fors, which brings her an invitation to continue Stieg Larsson’s Millennium series. Despite months of effort and the publisher’s assurance that Malmros’s manuscript is “superb,” they demand a different plot, prompting an angry Malmros to back out of the deal. Her only consolation is the relationship she’s developed with Ribbing, an enigmatic hacker she interviewed while shaping her version of the Lisbeth Salander character. Their dynamic shifts when, while the pair are having drinks, Ribbing hears machine gun fire, and they rush to the scene of a massacre committed by two men in a passing boat. Among the dead are Malmö’s childhood friend, Olof Helander, whom she becomes determined to avenge. Lindqvist plays the book’s metafictional notes softly enough that they never become distracting, and the chemistry between his leads is electric.

Mejia, Mindy. [A World of Hurt](#) (\$17). For the nerve-shredding sequel to [To Catch a Storm](#) (\$18), Mejia shifts her focus from psychic PI Jonah Kendrick to his college friend, Iowa City cop Max Summerlin, and Kara Johnson, the lover of Kendrick’s late niece, Celina. Max is eager to get back in the field following gunshot wounds he sustained while breaking up an opioid ring run by Sam Olson. Max gets his chance when he’s tapped to join a task force looking for a hit man who’s been killing people connected to Olson’s operation. But he is deflated to learn he’s been recruited as a liaison for Johnson, who ran drugs for Olson before becoming an informant. Johnson, born with a condition that makes her unable to feel physical pain, is grieving the loss of Celina, whom Olson killed after she took the fall for Johnson’s informing. The oddly matched pair each learns from the other as they run at Olson and the hit man targeting him.

Moore, Liz. [The God of the Woods](#) (\$19). Indie Next calls this bestseller “the best kind of twisty story — not everyone is who they say they are, not everyone can be trusted, and everyone has something to hide. A missing person tale unlike any other.” So true, and it takes place over time and in a remote camp and is amazing.

Townsend, Peggy. [The Botanist’s Assistant](#) (Penguin \$19). “Readers enamored with Nita Prose’s endearingly offbeat sleuth Molly Gray will be equally smitten with the delightfully quirky Margaret, while those who miss the botanical mysteries of Rebecca Rothenberg will find much to appreciate in Townsend’s cleverly crafted, science-centric puzzler... with a delectably deadpan sense of humor and graced with an exceptionally entertaining cast of characters.”—*Library Journal* Starred Review. And our own Jenn McKinlay adds, “a feel-good mystery with real emotional depth. Research assistant Margaret Finch is precise, private, and wonderfully complex. Her journey from life in the shadows to determined amateur sleuth is as compelling as the murder she sets out to solve. A delightfully satisfying read from start to finish.” And our **November Cozy Crimes Pick**.

Wink, Callan. [Beartooth](#) (\$19). Two brothers in dire straits, living on the edge of Yellowstone, agree to a desperate act of survival after a shadowy out-of-towner called the Scot appears—dressed in a kilt and with a mysterious young woman in tow. He makes the brothers a proposition that is both lucrative and a federal

crime—removing resources from Yellowstone National Park, a scheme that becomes more appealing when their long-gone mother shows up, raising troubling questions about the past. Fans of CJ Box should give this a whirl.

AND TWO WE MISSED EARLIER

Burke, James Lee. [Clete](#) (\$18). Somehow we missed Dave Robicheaux #24 coming in paperback last May, so....

Emerson, Roberta. [Exposure](#) (\$18.95). And another paperback we missed listing when it came out. Patrick is a particular fan of this second stunner by Navajo writer Emerson. In the follow-up to [Shutter](#) (\$16.95), nominated for various awards, Navajo forensic photographer Rita Todacheene grapples with a fanatical serial killer—and the ghosts he leaves behind.

MORE LARGE PAPERBACKS

Adams, Ellery. [The Little Lost Library](#) (\$17.95) is the 2024 entry in the Secret, Book and Scone Society series. Big clues come in small packages as North Carolina's Miracle Books owner Nora Pennington and the Secret, Book, and Scone Society swing into action when an elderly Miracle Springs resident, Lucille Wynter, arranges for Nora to deliver an order of books to her creepy, crumbling Southern Gothic mansion on the outskirts of town, Nora doesn't expect to be invited in. An agoraphobe, Lucille doesn't leave Wynter House. But when Lucille doesn't come to the door to collect her books, Nora begins to worry....

Borison, BK. [Good Spirits](#) (Avon \$18.99). Indie Next recommends: "Being haunted by the Ghost of Christmas Past, who just happens to be a rugged Irish sailor with a mustache? All too charming. This book evokes all the cozy Hallmark movie feelings, and will leave you sparkling." It also is a special edition with festive stenciled edges and interior cover artwork!

Bruen, Ken/Jason Starr. [Supermax: The Max and Angela Trilogy](#) (Titan \$19.99) is described as "a pitch-black crime comedy composed of three newly collected cult novels that present a bloody, bawdy odyssey of drug dealing, adultery, and murder for fans of Elmore Leonard, Carl Hiaasen, and Bret Easton Ellis's *American Psycho*."

* Cambridge, Colleen. [Murder Takes the Stage](#) (\$18.95). Phyllida Bright—amateur sleuth and Agatha Christie's esteemed housekeeper—discovers a killer stalking the stages of London's illustrious theaters. Phyllida a bit out of her depth. Not only must she grapple with a limited staff, but Phyllida also has to rein in a temperamental French cook who has the looks of Hercule Poirot, but none of the charm.

Catalano, Andrea. [The First Witch of Boston](#) (Lake Union \$16.99). Massachusetts Bay Colony, 1646. Thomas and Margaret Jones arrive from England to build a life in the New World. Though of differing temperaments, cautious Thomas and fiery Margaret, a healer, are bound by a love that has lasted decades. With a child on the way, their new beginning promises only blessings. But in this austere Puritan community, comely faces hide malicious intent. Wrong moves or words are met with suspicion, and Margaret's bold and unguarded nature draws scorn. Soon, Margaret is mistrusted as more cunning woman than kind caregiver. And when personal tragedies, religious hysteria, and wariness of the unknown turn most against her, even the devotion Margaret and her husband share is at risk. The novel is inspired by actual

diary entries and court records. Recommended to fans of Ariel Lawhon and our **November Historical Paperback Fiction Pick**.

* Connally, Celeste. [All's Fair in Love and Treachery](#) (\$19). 21 June, 1815. London may be cheering the news of Napoleon's surrender at Waterloo, but Lady Petra Forsyth has little to celebrate after discovering that the death of her viscount fiancé three years earlier was no accident. Instead, it was murder, and the man responsible is her handsome, half-Scottish secret paramour Duncan Shawcross—yet the scoundrel has disappeared, leaving only a confusing riddle about long-forgotten memories in his wake. So what's a lady to do when she can't hunt down her traitorous lover? She concentrates on a royal assignment instead. Queen Charlotte has tasked Petra with attending an event at the Asylum for Female Orphans and making inquiries surrounding the death of the orphanage's matron. What's more, there may be a link between the matron's death and a group of radicals with ties to the aristocracy...

Dann, Thomas. [Midnight in Memphis](#) (Crooked Lane \$19.99). "Former attorney Dann debuts with a captivating historical thriller that finds 1950s Memphis at a potential turning point after the death of Edward Crump, a corrupt politician who puppet-mastered municipal elections and shaped organized crime for decades. Though hopes for the upcoming mayoral election are high, white homicide detective Burdett Vance, who made it his mission to challenge the 'Crump Machine,' is skeptical things will change. Meanwhile, Vance is assigned to work an ominous murder case with Black officer Eustace Johnson. The decaying corpse of a white woman was found floating in the Mississippi River; stuffed inside a pair of stockings tied around her neck was a bottle containing a note: 'No more lynchings. Time for pay-back.' Fearing that more white women might be targeted, Vance's bosses throw their weight behind the investigation, and the stakes increase when Vance's ex-lover becomes the killer's next target. Dann smartly uses Vance and Johnson's fraught partnership to highlight the racial tensions of the early civil rights era, and his prose is a cut above similar fare."—*PW*

* DuMaurier, Rebecca/Stephen King. [After Midnight](#) (Scribner \$33). 13 of her iconic Gothic tales including "The Birds" with black and white images throughout. "A marvelously dark, unsettling collection. Tales of nature gone rogue, of morals gone askew, of the blurring of the line between the homely and the uncanny. I loved it." —Sarah Waters

Erdrich, Louise. [The Mighty Red](#) (\$19.99). "A stunning look at small town life. A beautiful look at a place and a way of life that is harmful to those that live it. Erdrich draws you right into the hearts and souls of her characters and their surroundings."

Freeman, Brian. [Robert Ludlum's The Bourne Vendetta](#) (\$19). A hacked database known as the Files has upended the intelligence community. Careers are being destroyed. Dirty deals are showing up on the front page. Assassinations are spreading from Europe to the U.S. The new head of Treadstone sends Jason Bourne on a mission to find out who has the Files and get them back – or destroy them. But Bourne isn't alone in this race. The Chinese want the Files. So do the Russians. And the only woman who may be able to help him is a treacherous spy known as Johanna – Bourne's former lover – who sees the Files as the key to her own vendetta against Treadstone. Bourne has a rule for friends and enemies alike: Trust no one. That rule may be the only thing that will keep him alive. A strong plot here, and pace.

Gudenkauf, Heather. [The Perfect Hosts](#) (\$18.99). Madeline and Wes Drake have invited two hundred of their closest friends and family to their sprawling horse ranch for the most anticipated event of the year: a “pistols and pearls” gender reveal party so sensational it is sure to make headlines. But the party descends into chaos when the celebratory explosive misfires, leaving one woman dead and a trail of secrets. As the aftershocks of the bloody party ripple across the small town, Agent Jamie Saldano is brought on the scene to investigate.

Simultaneous hardcover: [The Perfect Hosts](#) (Park Row \$30). Can be signed in late February when the Crooked Book Club convenes again here.

Haddon, Mark. [Dogs and Monsters: Stories](#) (\$18). Haddon, author of that classic [The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time](#) (\$16), presents “eight mesmerizingly imaginative, deeply-humane stories that use Greek myths and contemporary dystopian narratives to examine mortality, moral choices and the many variants of love.”

Hillier, Jennifer. [Creep](#) (\$19). A popular psychology professor in Seattle, Sheila’s an expert in human behavior and a well-liked educator, but nobody knows she’s a recovering sex addict in therapy—and she needs it to stay that way, or she could lose everything. Graduate student Ethan Wolfe is impossible to resist—brilliant, charming, and seductive as hell. He’s also Sheila’s teaching assistant, and thirteen years her junior. Ignoring the risks, they begin an illicit affair that lasts three months until Sheila finally puts a stop to it. But Ethan can’t move on so easily—after all, he didn’t pursue his professor for as long as he did without plans of his own. When the body of one of Sheila’s students is discovered floating in Puget Sound—a young woman Ethan was rumored to have dated—it’s clear that the graduate student has secrets of his own.

Hurst, Daniel. [The Doctor’s Wife](#) (\$17.99). My husband is a doctor. He’s smart and charming and everybody trusts him. Except me. On the surface, it looks like I have it all—the perfect marriage, the perfect husband, the perfect life. But it’s far from the truth. Doctor Drew Devlin is not the respectable figure he makes out to be. The reason we moved to this beautiful, old property with a gorgeous view of the sea was because we needed to put our past behind us. It should’ve been a fresh start for us both. Except I’ve discovered my husband has been lying to me again. But he’s underestimated me. I’ve had plenty of time, in this big, isolated house, to think about all of his mistakes. And my husband has no idea what’s about to happen next...

Jane, Emily. [American Werewolves](#) (Hyperion \$18.99). A fantabulous pop star, a glitter wolf, an epic journey, and some unlikely friends who team up to defeat the venture capitalist werewolves!

Kelk, Lindsey. [Christmas Fling](#) (Harper \$18.99). Laura was all set for a quiet solo Christmas—just her, a bottle of wine, and flat-sitting for a stranger. But when the stranger’s parents mistake her for his mystery girlfriend, she’s swept off to the snowy Scottish Highlands with Callum and his whole family. Between the cozy sleeper train, charming pubs and breathtaking views, this could be the no-strings-attached Christmas of Laura’s dreams. Or...? I put this in for Outlander fans.

Moehling, Joshua. [A Long Time Gone](#) (\$17.99). Ben Packard was just a boy when his older brother disappeared. Ben watched him walk out the back door of their grandparents’ house and into

the cold night. His brother was never seen again. Decades later, Deputy Packard finds himself with too much time on his hands. A shooting has him on leave and under investigation, and all he can do is dwell on the past. For the first time in years, new information about his brother has surfaced that may lead them to the location of a body. Then he stumbles on a separate, suspicious death. A tenuous connection exists between the two cases, and as Packard starts to dig, he meets fierce resistance from friends and foes alike who want him to stand down.

Mosse, Kate. [The Map of Bones](#) (\$18.99). Mosse is a master of the big historical and long family sagas. Here is the conclusion to her Joubert Family Chronicles following *The Burning Chambers*, *The City of Tears* and *The Ghost Ship*. Begin in Olifantshoek, Southern Africa, 1688. Suzanne Joubert, a Huguenot refugee from war-torn France, journeys to the Cape of Good Hope in search of her notorious cousin, Louise Reydon-Joubert – who vanished without trace half a century ago. Franschhoek, Southern Africa, 1862. Nearly six generations later, Isabelle Joubert Lepard follows in her footsteps, determined to investigate the lives of her ancestors – and to honor their memory – only to discover that the evils of the past, though hidden, are far from buried.

Murphy, Emily Bain. [The Ivory City](#) (Little Brown \$18.99). The St. Louis World’s Fair, 1904: A miniature city of palaces and pavilions that becomes a backdrop for romance, betrayal—and murder. Cousins Grace and Lillie have been best friends since birth, despite Grace’s vastly inferior social status ever since her mother married for love instead of wealth. When Lillie invites Grace to the biggest event of the century—the legendary World’s Fair, also known as “The Ivory City”—Grace hopes her fortunes might be about to change. But when a member of their party is brutally killed at the fair, and suspicion falls on Lillie’s brother Oliver, Grace must prove Oliver’s innocence before her beloved cousins’ family is ruined forever. Along the way, she’ll discover that the city’s wealthy elite—including Oliver’s handsome but irritable friend Theodore—aren’t quite who they appear to be.

Patterson, James. [Merry Christmas, Alex Cross](#) (\$13). It’s Christmas Eve and Detective Alex Cross has been called out to catch someone who’s robbing his church’s poor box. That mission behind him, Alex returns home to celebrate with Bree, Nana, and his children. The tree decorating is barely underway before his phone rings again—a horrific hostage situation is quickly spiraling out of control. So away from his own family he risks all to save another one.

Pham, Jacquie. [Those Opulent Days](#) (Grove Atlantic \$17). A debut from Australia. Duy, Phong, Minh, and Edmond have been best friends since childhood. Now, as young men running their families’ formidable businesses, they make up Saigon’s most powerful group of friends in 1928 Vietnam’s elite society. Until one of them is murdered. In a lavish mansion on a hill in Dalat, all four men have gathered for an evening of indulgence, but one of them won’t survive the night. Toggling between this fatal night and the six days leading up to it, told from the perspectives of the four men, their mothers, their servants, and their lovers, an intricate web of terror, loyalty, and well-kept secrets begins to unravel. As the story creeps closer to the murder, and as each character becomes a suspect, the true villain begins to emerge: colonialism, the French occupation of Vietnam, and the massive economic differences that catapult the wealthy into the stratosphere while the poor starve on the streets.

Phillips, Louise. [Nina](#) (Union Square \$17.99). On the eve of her sixty-first birthday, Elizabeth Harte decides to run away from home, where she is living with her daughter and son-in-law. Elizabeth has experienced deep trauma in her life, including the disappearance of her daughter Nina twenty-five years ago, leaving her feeling trapped and lost. She is determined to find her daughter in order to make amends with her past. She soon crosses path with a young autistic girl called April. Meanwhile, disgraced detective Nick is revisiting a series of cold cases for the Irish police. His father worked Nina's case back in the day, and came up empty-handed, and in despair, took his own life. Soon, young women start to go missing and are found murdered, with a pattern emerging. When Elizabeth reaches out to Nick to discuss her daughter's vanishing, he realizes his cold cases are a crucial lead to stopping this killer from striking again.

Plantinga, Adam. [Hard Town](#) (\$19.99). When a plea for help sends a retired Detroit cop to the small desert town of Fenton, Arizona, he finds himself uncovering secrets that want to stay hidden and questioning his own moral compass. First there's the large, overly equipped public safety team complete with specialized tactics and sophisticated weaponry. Then there's the unusual financial boosting of failing small businesses by the U.S. government. And finally, there's a man with no name who seems to have an unprecedented control over the town. Argento finds himself unraveling not just the truth behind the disappearance of a family, but a conspiracy that's taken a whole town to cover up. But Fenton is going to push him further than he's ever had to go.

Powers, Richard. [Playground](#) (\$19.99). A random groups meet on the history-scarred island of Makatea in French Polynesia, whose deposits of phosphorus once helped to feed the world. Now the tiny atoll has been chosen for humanity's next adventure: a plan to send floating, autonomous cities out onto the open sea. But first, the island's residents must vote to greenlight the project or turn the seastealers away. Set in the world's largest ocean, this awe-filled book explores that last wild place we have yet to colonize. Longlisted for the 2024 Booker Prize and recipient of many raves and Best Book selections.

Quinn, Cate. [The Bridesmaid](#) (\$17.99). When a celebrity bridesmaid is murdered weeks before an exclusive society wedding, forensic attorney Holly Stone is drafted as an unlikely undercover replacement. As she works to unpick the lives of the notoriously private Kensington family, glamour-averse Holly discovers a new worst enemy in bridezilla Adrianna. Heir to a multimillion dollar fortune, Adrianna is set on throwing the event of the decade, and she won't let anything get in her way. But beneath the veneer of poise and sophistication, Adrianna and her bridesmaids have secrets worth killing for. And one will strike again.

Tolkien, Simon. [The Palace at the End of the Sea](#) (Thomas & Mercer \$16.99). New York City, 1929. Young Theo Sterling's world begins to unravel as the Great Depression exerts its icy grip. He finds it hard to relate to his parents: His father, a Jewish self-made businessman, refuses to give up on the American dream, and his mother, a refugee from religious persecution in Mexico, holds fast to her Catholic faith. When disaster strikes the family, Theo must learn who he is. A charismatic school friend and a firebrand girl inspire him to believe he can fight Fascism and change the world, but each rebellion comes at a higher price, forcing Theo to question these ideologies too.

Yagisawa, Satoshi. [Days at the Torunka Café](#) (Harper \$17.99). A new entry in the feel good stories from Japan. Here the author of the [Morisaki Bookshop](#) novels sets one at a quiet Tokyo café where customers find unexpected connection—and everyday miracles. I wish I could have found it tucked away on a narrow side street in this incredibly crowded and busy second largest city in the world where an oasis would be super welcome.

NOVEMBER SMALL PAPERBACKS

Clark, Mary Higgins. [Just Take My Heart](#) (\$10.99) Reissue. Criminology professor Emily advocates on behalf of a dangerously ill friend from childhood whose life can be saved by a heart transplant from an injured mutual friend, a situation that turns deadly when Emily discovers that the injured friend was not hurt accidentally.

Evanovich, Janet. [Now or Never](#) (\$10.99). Stephanie Plum \$31. With her personal life in turmoil, New Jersey bounty hunter Stephanie Plum navigates danger and intrigue in a high-stakes case that could change her life.

Greaney, Mark. [Midnight Black](#) (\$10.99). Gray Man \$14. The Gray Man, aka assassin Court Gentry, must face miles of frozen wasteland and the Russian police state to free his lover, ex-spy Zoya Zakharova, from Penal Colony IK22.

Macomber Debbie. [Mistletoe & Mischief](#) (Mira \$10.99). Celebrate the holiday season in Cedar Cove with two novellas: A Cedar Cove Christmas and 1225 Christmas Tree Lane.

McLachlin, Beverley. [Proof](#) (Simon Schuster \$10.99). Defense attorney Jilly Truitt defends a high-profile mother accused of kidnapping her own child.

Penney, Elizabeth. [Vows and Villainy](#) (St Martins \$9.99). Cambridge Bookshop #5. All goes awry with the Shakespeare-themed wedding maid of honor Molly Kimball planned for her best friend Daisy and her fiancé Time when Sir Nigel Peck, a famous actor with a checkered past and present-day misdeeds, is found floating dead in the moat with flowers strewn around him, à la Ophelia.

Preston, Douglas. [Angel of Vengeance](#) (\$10.99). Pendergast #22. FBI Special Agent Pendergast and Constance Greene take a final stand against New York's deadliest serial killer: Pendergast's own ancestor...and Constance's greatest enemy.