

BOOKNEWS from

ISSN 1056-5655, © The Poisoned Pen, Ltd.

Volume 38, Number 1

January Booknews 2026

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

http://poisonedpen.com

4014 N. Goldwater Blvd.

Scottsdale, AZ 85251

480-947-2974



JANUARY 1
Happy New Year
We are closed to celebrate
Store Hours

M-F 10 AM-7 PM Sat 10 AM-6 PM 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 JANUARY 4 4:00 PM Virtual Book Launch

Brad Meltzer discusses [The Viper](#) (Harper \$32)

Escape Artist Series #3

Signed books available

MONDAY JANUARY 5 6:00 PM Virtual Book Launch

Allison Montclair discusses [Fire Must Burn](#) (Seyvern House \$29.99)

A jaw-dropping twist and sophisticated character development mark Montclair's exciting seventh mystery featuring Iris Sparks and Gwen Bainbridge, proprietors of London's Right Sort Marriage Bureau

Signed books available

MONDAY JANUARY 5 7:00 PM Virtual Book Launch

SJ Rozan discusses [First Do No Harm](#) (Pegasus \$27.95)

A Lydia Chin/Bill Smith Mystery set at River Valley Hospital during a nurses' strike

Our **January Cozy/Traditional Mystery Pick**

Signed Books available

TUESDAY JANUARY 6 1:00 PM Virtual Book Launch

Laura Dave with Riley Sager

Dave discusses [The First Time I Saw Him](#) (Scribner \$29)

Dave's heart-pounding sequel to [The Last Thing He Told Me](#) (\$17.95)

Signed books available

TUESDAY JANUARY 6 6:00 PM Virtual Preview

Douglas Preston and Lincoln Child discuss [Pendergast: The Beginning](#) (Grand Central \$30)

Signed by both authors. Books go on sale January 27 with an exclusive souvenir from the book: a party invitation. The recto will be the formal invitation itself, and the verso stamped with "From the archives of AXL Pendergast" and with Constance Greene's psychotic scrawled signature below.

WEDNESDAY JANUARY 7 6:00 PM Virtual Book Launch

Robert Dugoni discusses [Her Cold Justice](#) (Thomas & Mercer \$28.99)

Seattle attorney Keera Duggan

Signed copies available

WEDNESDAY JANUARY 7 7:15 PM Virtual Event

Candace Robb discusses [A Lion's Ransom](#) (Seyvern House \$29.99)

The 16th for 14th Century York's Owen Archer, a king's man

Signed books available

THURSDAY JANUARY 8 6:00 PM Virtual Event

Amy Pease discusses [Wildwood](#) (Atria \$28)

The sequel to her 2024 First Mystery Pick [Northwoods](#) (\$17.99)

Signed books available

SATURDAY JANUARY 10 10:00 AM Live Event

Local Author Fair

Support local independently published authors

SATURDAY JANUARY 10 4:00 PM Live Event

Come for the Gothic

Rachel Hawkins discusses [The Storm](#) (St Martins \$29)

Hawkins also writes as Erin Sterling, [The Ex Hex](#) (Harper \$18.99)

Jayne Ann Krentz discusses [The Shop on Hidden Lane](#) (Berkley \$30)

SUNDAY JANUARY 11 4:00 PM Live Event

A Monster of Florence Party

Douglas Preston discusses his non-fiction hit [The Monster of Florence](#) (\$19.99) with a slide show illustrating the research he did

in Italy with Mario Spezi, and his other books including [Best True Crime Stories of the Year 2025](#) (Crime Ink \$17.95), edited by Doug

He will also personalize copies of *Pendergast*, *The Beginning* for anyone purchasing the book at this event, and discuss the book.

You must be there in person for the personalization

MONDAY JANUARY 12 7:00 PM Live Book Launch

John McMahon discusses [Inside Man](#) (St Martins \$29)

The sequel to 2024's [Head Cases](#) (\$19)

TUESDAY JANUARY 13 7:00 PM Live Double Book Launch

May Cobb discusses [All the Little Houses](#) (Sourcebooks \$27.99)

Texas mean moms and mean girls

Ashley Winstead discusses [The Future Saints](#) (Atria \$29)

Our **January Notable New Fiction Pick** is a love story, but not the one you're expecting.

THURSDAY JANUARY 15 7:00 PM Live Event

Sophie Hannah with Jenn McKinlay

Hannah discusses [No One Would Do What the Lamberts Have Done](#) (Sourcebooks \$32.99/\$17.99)

And she also signs [The Last Death of the Year](#) (Harper \$30), the latest Hercule Poirot Mystery she writes for the Christie Estate

FRIDAY JANUARY 16 7:00 PM Live Event

Rob Hart and Jeff Rake discuss [Detour](#) (Random House Worlds \$30)

Starts a space adventure thriller series

SATURDAY JANUARY 17 10:30 AM Live & Virtual Event

The Croak and Dagger Club discusses Fuminora Nakamura's [The Thief](#) (\$16.95)

SUNDAY JANUARY 18 4:00 PM Virtual Book Launch

Jim Butcher discusses [Twelve Months](#) (Ace \$30)

Dresden Files #18 for the Chicago Wizard Harry Dresden
Signed books available

MONDAY JANUARY 19 6:00 PM Virtual Event

Jenna Blum with Karen Odden

Blum discusses [Murder Your Darlings](#) (Harper \$30)

Our truly remarkable **January Crime Book Pick** set in the bookworld

Signed books available

TUESDAY JANUARY 20 6:00 PM Virtual event

Matthew Quirk discusses [The Method](#) (Harper \$32)

Actress Anna Vaughn, spy

Signed books available

THURSDAY JANUARY 22 7:00 PM Live Event

Malcolm Kempt discusses [A Gift Before Dying](#) (Crown \$28)

Our **January First Mystery Subscription Club Pick**

The Canadian author makes a special trip to The Pen

FRIDAY JANUARY 23 7:00 PM Live and Virtual

SciFi Friday discusses Matt Dinniman's [Dungeon Crawler Carl](#) (\$30)

SATURDAY JANUARY 24 11:00 AM Live Event

The Cookbook Club discusses Eden Grishpan's [Tahini Baby](#) (\$35)

Vegetarian recipes

Bring a dish from the book to share

SUNDAY JANUARY 25 2:00 PM Live Book Launch

Allison Brennan's 20th Anniversary Party

It's Allison Brennan's 20th Anniversary! Come and celebrate with the Poisoned Pen. Her first book *The Prey* was released in January of 2006 ... and [Make it Out Alive](#) (Hamish Hamilton \$30) marks her 51st book in twenty years. Join us for a sweet treat, a toast to 20 more years of thrillers, door prizes, and a fun discussion about how to survive and thrive as a writer. Every attendee will receive a special thank you gift!

TUESDAY JANUARY 27 7:00 PM Live Event

A mini Historicon with host Dianne Freeman

Jennifer Ashley discusses [A Silence in Belgrave Square](#) (Berkley \$19)

A Below the Stairs Victorian Mystery and [Eloise and the Queen](#) (JA \$29.99), [Paperback](#) \$14.99), starting a series about Queen Elizabeth I

Rob Osler discusses [The Case of the Murdered Muckraker](#)

(Kensington \$27)

Harriet Morrow #2 in 1898 Chicago

WEDNESDAY JANUARY 28 7:00 PM Live Book Launch

Mike Lawson discusses [The Asset](#) (Grove Atlantic \$27)

A Joe DeMarco thriller

THURSDAY JANUARY 29 7:00 PM Live Event

Hardboiled Crime Club discusses Geoffrey Homes' [Build My Gallows High](#) (\$15.95)

FRIDAY JANUARY 30 7:00 PM Live Event

Don Winslow discusses [The Final Score](#) (Harper \$30)

A collection of six previously unpublished short novels

OUR SUBSCRIPTION CLUB PICKS FOR JANUARY

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

Bell, AD. [The Bookbinder's Secret](#)

Cozy Crimes Club One Unsigned hardcover or paperback per month

Rozan, S J. [First Do No Harm](#)

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

Blum, Jenna. [Murder Your Darlings](#)

First Mystery Club One Signed First Printing per month

Kempt, Malcolm. [A Gift Before Dying](#)

Hardboiled/Noir Club One Signed First Printing per month

Kempt, Malcolm. [A Gift Before Dying](#)

Historical Fiction Club One First Printing per month

McLain, Paula. [Skylark](#)

Historical Fiction Paperback Club One Unsigned paperback per month

Parris, Rachel. [Introducing Mrs. Collins](#)

Notable New Fiction Club One Signed First Printing per month

Winstead, Ashley. [The Future Saints](#)

Romance and Relationships Club One unsigned hardcover or paperback per month

Krentz, Jayne Ann. [The Shop on Hidden Lane](#)

SIGNED BOOKS FOR JANUARY

Blum, Jenna. [Murder Your Darlings](#) (Harper \$30). Wow. This is not only a witty send-up of the publishing industry but features a bookseller in a major role and superb writing. I was riveted to our **January Crime Club Book of the Month**.

Author Sam Vetiver, forty and divorced, is on her way to the last stop of an exhausting book tour for her fourth novel while the deadline for her still unwritten fifth one looms, the book she just can't get started. Fed up with the stress of publishing, Sam declares she'd give up writing if she had someone to share her life with. When she arrives home in Boston at the end of the tour, she receives a long, flattering email from bestseller William Corwyn, a 60-something novelist lauded for his female-centric blockbusters. William at first seems like a dream come true—until Sam learns about his obsessive stalker, whom William has dubbed the Rabbit due to her pronounced overbite. Effortlessly toggling perspectives between the Rabbit, Sam, and William, Blum gradually complicates her portrait of the savior and the stalker until the novel starts to incur a body count. Funny, surprising, and razor-sharp about the book business's ruthlessness, this adds up to a captivating tale of love, death, and revenge, as well as the price of creativity.

Brennan, Allison. [Make it Out Alive](#) (Hanover Square \$30). Three newlywed couples have disappeared from an exclusive resort in Florida, only to turn up dead soon after. With the location and the similarities between the female victims as their only leads, it's up to the FBI Mobile Response Team to catch a serial killer before anyone else ends up dead. And they have the perfect bait—Detective Kara Quinn, who bears an uncanny resemblance to the targeted women. Undercover as newlyweds pretending to enjoy their honeymoon, Kara and FBI Agent Matt Costa set a flawless trap. When their plan works and they arrest the predator, Matt sends the rest of the team home so he and Kara can have the weekend for some much-needed R&R. But on Monday morning, the couple doesn't show up to work, and the MRT learns they never checked out of their hotel. As their team tries to find them, Matt and Kara learn the truth—the killer wasn't acting alone. Kidnapped and forced into a twisted escape room, will they make it out alive?

This is a special book for Allison marking her 20th publishing anniversary. Join us January 27th afternoon for a party.

Butcher, Jim. [Twelve Months](#) (Ace \$30). When the lights go out in Chicago, anything can happen. Harry Dresden, the city's only professional wizard, has always managed to save the day. After Harry and his allies narrowly managed to keep Chicago from being razed to the ground like Beirut, ghouls are running rampant, taking out innocent civilians. In the battle, Book #18, Harry lost people he cared about. And that's the kind of loss that takes a toll. Harry being Harry, he's doing his level best to help the city and his friends recover and rebuild—and it's not just the current lack of electricity making it tough. It's a heavy load, and he needs time. But time is one thing Harry doesn't have. Plus Harry's brother is dying, and Harry doesn't know how to help him. And last but certainly not least, the Winter Queen of the Fae has allied with the White Court of vampires—and Harry's been betrothed to the seductive, deadly vampire Lara Raith to seal the deal. It's been a tough year. Is there enough left of Harry to save Chicago once again?

"The high-stakes plotlines keep the pages turning as rapidly as ever, but this installment's greatest strength lies in its exploration of Dresden's mental state as his resilience is tested as never before."—*PW*. "Series fans will be intrigued by the new characters and changes in Harry's life as Butcher deftly explores the impacts of loss and grief."—*Booklist* Starred Review

Cobb, May. [All the Little Houses](#) (Sourcebooks \$27.99). "Mean girls, and meaner moms; it's *Dynasty* meets *Desperate Housewives* meets Jeneva Rose." Library Reads adds, "Cobb's latest gasp-out-loud read doesn't disappoint, bringing readers back to the East Texas town of Longview, where wealth, booze, secrets, sex, and very bad—some might even say murderous—behavior abound. Readers will not be able to take their eyes off this propulsive thriller." I add that unlike her twisted characters, May is an absolute sweetheart and we are excited for her first live visit.

It's the mid-1980s in the tiny town of Longview, Texas. Nellie Anderson, the beautiful daughter of the Anderson family dynasty, has burst onto the scene. She always gets what she wants. What she can't get for herself... well, that's what her mother is for. Because Charleigh Andersen, blond, beautiful, and ruthlessly cunning, remembers all too well having to claw her way to the top. When she was coming of age on the poor side of East Texas, she was a loser, an outcast, humiliated, and shunned by the in-crowd, whose approval she'd so desperately thirsted for. Now, when a prairie-kissed family moves to town, all trad wife, woodworking dad, wholesome daughter vibes, Charleigh's entire self-made social empire threatens to crumble. Who will be left standing among all the mean moms and mean girls in this intricate tale of secrets and lies?

The author of TV hit [The Hunting Wives](#) (\$19) has signed all of her books for us but bad luck has kept her from actually doing so at The Pen. So this time on January 13, in a double book launch with Ashley Winstead, May comes to us a week before publication date to talk and sign. Ask for your book to be dated.

Dave, Laura. [The First Time I Saw Him](#) (Scribner \$29). Dave's heart-pounding sequel to [The Last Thing He Told Me](#) (\$17.95) picks up five years after artist Hannah Hall's husband, Owen, disappeared and left her to care for his surly teenage daughter, Bailey, in Southern California. In the interim, Hannah and Bailey have forged a close relationship, and worked toward repairing Bailey's connection with her maternal grandfather, Nicholas, whose involvement with a crime syndicate sent Owen on the run. The women's stability is disrupted when Owen reappears at one of Hannah's art exhibitions and slips a message into her pocket warning her that she and Bailey are in danger. For reasons Hannah doesn't understand, a deal brokering their safety has fallen through, and the women are forced to flee. Meanwhile, chapters following Nicholas and Owen reveal that the men have spent the last five years working to orchestrate an elaborate compromise with Nicholas's former colleagues that guarantees their family's permanent freedom. The pacing is brisk from the very first page, with Dave nimbly juggling multiple perspectives and timelines en route to a finale that provides readers with satisfying answers to their questions.

Douaihy, Margot. [Divine Ruin: A Sister Holiday Mystery](#) (Gillian Flynn Books \$28). Our copies come with a bookplate Signed by Douaihy and Gilliam Flynn. And Margot adds: “Pre-order DIVINE RUIN from the retailer of your choice, upload your receipt to [sisterholiday.com](#), and I’ll mail you an exclusive companion zine made I made just for you. This I’ll zine is full of heart, fight, & punk verse... a stubborn DIY manifesto that can fit in your pocket. A riot grrrl hymnal, if you will.”

“It’s the last couple of weeks of the school term in New Orleans, and Sister Holiday is preoccupied with preparing for her final vows while winding up her music classes. Then one of her favorite students dies of a fentanyl overdose at school, then more, leaving Sister desperate to stop this drug epidemic, made more difficult by her need to face her own past with addiction. In her quest her partner in PI, Magnolia Riveaux, is an ally while her sisters and some parents are not. Douaihy brings us right into sultry New Orleans and ramps up the tension.”

Dugoni, Robert. [Her Cold Justice](#) (Thomas & Mercer \$28.99). In a quiet South Seattle neighborhood, a suspected drug smuggler and his girlfriend are murdered in their home. When a young man named Michael Westbrook is accused of the brutal double homicide, his uncle JP Harrison turns to Keera Duggan to defend him. JP is Keera’s trusted investigator, and he desperately needs Keera to save his nephew against escalating odds. The evidence is circumstantial—Michael worked with one of the victims, drugs were found in his possession, and he bolted from authorities. Ruthless star prosecutor Anh Tran has gotten convictions on much less. With the testimony of two prison informants, the case looks grave. But Keera never concedes defeat. To free her client, she must dig deep before Tran crushes both of them. As the investigation gets more twisted with each new find, Keera is swept up in a mystery with far-reaching consequences. This case isn’t just murder. It’s looking like a conspiracy.

Estleman, Loren D. [Man One](#) (Severn \$29.99). We are always delighted to see a new investigation for Detroit PI Amos Walker—here, his 33rd! The PI novel is rare at the moment so you fans of PI and Procedurals will likewise be delighted to see this one coming out.

Young widow Sage Holland doesn’t look like a murderer—and that’s because she isn’t one. The beautiful dame has driven non-stop from her home in frozen Alaska to seek out the services of private investigator Amos Walker, bringing not just the ice and snow with her. Sage has a stalker: her late-husband’s vengeful brother, who’s determined to make her pay for a crime she didn’t commit. Someone killed David, but it wasn’t her. Walker is no fool. He knows not to take the words of husky-voiced, sorrowful women at face value. But Sage is in sore need of protection, and Walker’s hunt for clues on Detroit’s wintry streets soon leads to far more dead bodies than expected.

* Feeney, Alice. [My Husband’s Wife](#) (Flatiron \$28.99; [Signed UK Edition](#) MacMillan \$36). Imagine coming home from a run and being replaced. This is what happens to Eden Fox ... or does it? Eden, an artist on the brink of her big break, sets off for a run before her first exhibition. When she returns to the home she recently moved into, Spyglass, an enchanting old house in Hope Falls, nothing is as it should be. Her key doesn’t fit. A woman, eerily similar to her, answers the door. And her husband insists that the stranger is his wife. Someone is lying. Six months earlier, a reclusive Londoner called Birdy, reeling from a life-

changing diagnosis, inherits Spyglass. This unexpected gift from a long-lost grandmother brings her to the pretty seaside village of Hope Falls. But then Birdy stumbles upon a shadowy London clinic that claims to be able to predict a person’s date of death, including her own. Secrets start to unravel, and as the line between truth and lies blurs, Birdy feels compelled to right some old wrongs. And so ...

Freeman, Brian. [Robert Ludlum’s the Bourne Revenge](#) (Putnam \$32). Freeman’s rip-roaring eighth Jason Bourne adventure kicks off eight years before the present day, when Bourne, on a Treadstone mission, witnesses Chinese assassins committing a murder and then loses four days of short-term memory. Now, Shadow—Bourne’s former partner and the current head of Treadstone—wants him to undergo regression therapy. Shadow explains that the Chinese have a powerful agent in the U.S., and the only thing Treadstone knows about him is his code name, Bai Ze. Using AI software, Shadow has learned that, during the four-day gap in Bourne’s memory, he crossed paths with Bai Ze in the small town of Fish Creek, Wisconsin. Soon, Bourne is back in the Midwest trailing his quarry and trying to stay alive as he puzzles out the mystery of his amnesia. Aiding him in his search is Wisconsin journalist Laney Reese, who’s guarding a game-changing secret of her own. Sleek, action-packed, and just steamy enough, this is espionage fiction at its most fun.

Hannah, Sophie. [No One Would Do What the Lamberts Have Done](#) (Sourcebooks \$32.99). It might be true that no one would do what the Lamberts have done, but it’s equally true that the Lamberts have, in fact, done it. It’s just not entirely clear what exactly “it” is, which forms the crux of Hannah’s puzzling and clever murder mystery as she explores just how far a family might go to protect one of their own—Champ, the family dog, accused by the neighboring Gavey family of biting a Gavey child. Lambert pet-obsessed matriarch Sally refuses to believe this, so the family takes Champ and goes on the run.

Then Detective Connor Chantree is in receipt of... something. A document? A manuscript? A book, perhaps, or a “spruced-up rectangularized heap” of a story he’s managed to assemble out of the box of “maimed and defeated pages” he’s been sent by an unknown person. Whatever “it” is, it offers new details into the closed case of Tess Gavey, the teen whose autopsy “ruled out any deliberate action,” though her death remained something of a mystery even to the detectives assigned to it months earlier. The rest of the story is presented within this frame, presumed to be the content of those mysterious pages. Written almost entirely by an unidentified narrator (yet another puzzle to solve within the novel), the pages tell the story of “the Lambert-Gavey War” and the gruesome and shocking way it ended.

Note: Sophie can sign copies of her latest Hercule Poirot Mystery: [The Last Year of the Death](#) (Harper \$30), when she is here on January 15. This 6th chapter sees Poirot working a chilling murder investigation on a Greek island

Hart, Rob/Jeff Rake. [Detour](#) (Random House Worlds \$30). Signed here by both authors on January 16.

Ready for a high stakes sci-fi thriller? When devoted family man Ryan Crane thwarts an assassination attempt on a billionaire with presidential aspirations, he earns the chance of a lifetime: a seat as one of a handful of civilians joining three astronauts on the first manned mission to Saturn’s moon Titan. The experimental spacecraft condenses the journey to a two-year

expedition, and when the crew returns, they are hailed as heroes. Just when their space adventure seemingly ends, it shockingly begins. Ryan and the other civilian astronauts discover the Earth they've returned to is not the home they left behind, and they're left questioning everything and everyone they know. The crew must uncover what happened during their journey—and decide how far they're willing to go to return to their normal lives.

Hawkins, Rachel. [The Storm](#) (St Martins \$29). A woman returns to the Alabama tourist town where she was humiliated decades earlier in this sleek suspense novel. In 1984, Landon Fitzroy, political hopeful and son of Alabama's governor, died under mysterious circumstances in the Alabama tourist town of St. Medard's Bay. His mistress, 19-year-old Lo Bailey, was accused of killing him, but a highly publicized trial acquitted her of wrongdoing—though that hardly stopped the rumor mill. Now, 41 years later, Lo returns to St. Medard's Bay with writer August Fletcher in tow. The pair take up residence at the Rosalie Inn, now run by Geneva—the daughter of Lo's childhood friend, Ellen—who starts to suspect that Lo might be more interested in revenge than correcting the record in print. Hawkins toggles back and forth between Lo's return to St. Medard's Bay and the days leading up to Landon's death, marking each timeline with the name of a contemporaneous hurricane. She shrewdly orchestrates the plot twists in each story line, folding in letters, emails, newspaper articles, and excerpts from August's unfinished manuscript to raise new questions and ratchet up suspense.

Hawkins also writes as Erin Sterling and can sign [The Ex Hex](#) (Harper \$18.99)

Kempt, Malcolm. [A Gift Before Dying](#) (Crown \$28). This stunning debut from criminal lawyer Kempt, our January First Mystery Pick, finds Sgt. Elderick Cole exiled to the remote Arctic hamlet of Cape Dorset after making critical mistakes in a sensitive murder case on the Canadian mainland. Estranged from his ex-wife and daughter, Cole waits for the outcome of a civil lawsuit that will decide his fate back home. Having grown up in Newfoundland, the policeman is no stranger to harsh conditions, but even he is ill-prepared for the severe cold and relentless darkness of an Arctic winter. As the novel opens, Cole discovers the body of a young Inuit girl named Pitseolala he'd been trying to shield from the harsh social conditions of the Arctic, including rampant substance abuse and high suicide rates. Though it appears Pitseolala died by hanging herself, Cole suspects otherwise, as does the girl's 10-year-old brother, Maliktu, who says he's being visited by Pitseolala's ghost. As Cole investigates—against the wishes of fellow officer Veronica Aningmiug and many community members—the case takes a major toll on his physical and mental health, offering uncomfortable parallels to his home life as he becomes obsessed with making things right. From the opening pages, Kempt's remarkably assured narrative evokes a mythic atmosphere, and the author, who spent years living in the Arctic, infuses his haunting tale with vivid sensory details that bring the frigid landscape to life. It's a knockout.

Koontz, Dean. [The Friend of the Family](#) (Thomas & Mercer \$28.99).). Dean tells me that "The finished book has part-break art, decorative boards, and a pretty cover. I know people will like it as an object. I just hope they like it as much for the story, which is close to my heart." A short blurb says, "A girl liberated from a carnival sideshow discovers her mysterious purpose in a moving novel about family, sacrifice."

Krentz, Jayne Ann. [The Shop on Hidden Lane](#) (Berkley \$30). John reviews: For generations, the Harper and Wells families have argued over the proper use of their psychic powers, but given their shared efforts to protect a long-buried secret, eventually a professional détente was reached between them. This peaceful co-existence could be shaken up, however, when Luke Wells hires Sophy Harper to find his missing uncle, and Sophy discovers that not only has her aunt Bea been sleeping with Luke's uncle, Bea has disappeared too! Krentz flawlessly fashions a stellar standalone addition to her original Jayneverse world of books that delivers everything her readers crave most including a propulsively paced, paranormal-spiced plot, plenty of snappy banter between her two fascinating protagonists (consider them a 21st century version of Nick and Nora Charles), and a clever canine with charm to spare.

Lafferty, Paula. [The Once and Future Queen: Deluxe Limited Edition](#) (Erewhon Books \$32). The Lives of Guinevere #1 published in late December. Paula joins us February 25 for a live event and signing. Our supply is limited so we urge you to preorder now.

Here's the Indie Next Pick for this fantasy: "I raced through this book. I cared for the characters, and I cared about their lives. I was devastated to learn it was the beginning of a trilogy! How will I live with the suspense until #2?"

Lawson, Mike. [The Asset](#) (Grove Atlantic \$27). The idea of a DC fixer is increasingly non-fiction. But the Joe DeMarco series has had a long run so stick with him as he tangles with a suspected double agent who's trying to take down a U.S. Senator

In the middle of the night, on a winding road in a suburb outside of Washington D.C., a homeless veteran is killed in a hit-and-run—a tragedy that barely catches the attention of the media and police. Days later, John Mahoney, the former Speaker of the House, is confronted by Diane Lake, an ex-CIA agent turned political researcher with a knack for digging up unsavory intelligence on some of D.C.'s biggest players. Diane is there with a gift for Mahoney: the news that Lydia Chang, the wife of one of his biggest rivals, Senator McMillian, might be working undercover as a Chinese agent. Knowing it's too early to get the FBI involved, Mahoney does the only thing left to do. He calls in Joe DeMarco. His fixer might not have the title of political researcher, but he's no stranger to digging up dirt either. DeMarco soon learns that the situation is more nuanced than it appears, because Chang is being blackmailed by a Chinese operative who has gotten his hands on a cell phone video showing Chang's daughter Jenny, a freshman at Georgetown University, killing a man in a hit-and-run. As DeMarco tries to sort fact from fiction, he learns that Lake maintains a strong relationship with a New York billionaire who has a burning of Senator McMillian....

McLain, Paula. [Skylark](#) (Atria \$30). McLain returns to Paris, the setting of her most celebrated novel, to intertwine two eras of upheaval with masterful precision for our **January Historical Fiction Pick**. In shimmering prose rich with sensory detail, McLain reveals how beauty and memory can be weapons of resistance, and how acts of defiance can echo across generations.

Winding through the vast network of tunnels below Paris, readers witness the combined stories of a 17th-century prison break and a WWII physician's role in the French Resistance. In 1664, Alouette Volland falls in love with Étienne Duchamp, a mason who is working on expanding the city's catacombs. But their

relationship stalls when Alouette's efforts to free her wrongfully imprisoned father land her in Salpêtrière asylum. After hatching an escape plan, Alouette and some of her fellow prisoners descend into the tunnels below the asylum. In a parallel narrative, psychiatrist Kristof Larsen bonds with his Jewish neighbors during the German occupation of Paris when he helps with the birth of their youngest child. After the family is arrested by the Nazis and their teenage daughter, Sasha, is freed, Kristof helps Sasha and other Jewish teenagers navigate the tunnels to get away from the Germans. McLain expertly juxtaposes the courageous actions of both Alouette and Kristof as they seek freedom for themselves and others and embrace the challenges and dangers of the subterranean maze. Fans of stirring historicals won't want to miss this.

McMahon, John. [Inside Man](#) (St Martins \$29). 2024's [Head Cases](#) (\$19) introduced us to FBI Agent Gardner Camden, an analytical genius with an affinity for puzzles. He also has a blind spot on the human side of investigations, a blindness that sometimes even includes people in his own life, like his beloved seven-year-old daughter Camila. Gardner and his squad of brilliant yet quirky agents make up the Patterns and Recognition (PAR) unit, the FBI's hidden edge, brought in for cases that no one else can solve. PAR's latest case involves a militia group stockpiling weapons. When their confidential informant in the case is killed, it quickly becomes clear that the militia did not kill him. As the squad looks into the evidence surrounding his murder, an unidentified man is caught on camera with their informant. This mystery man's picture is connected to another case at the FBI, an unsolved series of murdered women, buried in the ground in north Florida. Could they have uncovered a serial killer? And if so, what is his connection to their C.I.? As PAR juggles an investigation into both the dead women and the militia, they enroll a new informant, only to find the case escalating in dangerous ways.).

Meltzer, Brad. [The Viper](#) (Harper \$32). Don't turn your back on The Viper in *Escape Artist #3*. Andrew Fechmeier is a master at hiding. He'd better be—he's spent decades concealing a secret that could get him killed. So when he's diagnosed with a terminal disease, he heads for the local funeral home carrying the blue suit he eventually wants to be buried in. But what no one knows is that Fechmeier secretly tucked something inside, turning the suit into a final, untraceable hiding spot. It's a perfect plan. Then Andrew is gunned down by an unknown assailant. Wasting no time, the cunning but unconventional Roddy LaPointe opens an investigation into Fetch's murder, and recruits help from his friend, the brilliant "Zig" Zigarowski. But it doesn't take long for Zig to discover the real reason Roddy cares so much about this case: Fetch's death is tied to Roddy's mother, who was murdered decades earlier. As the relentless killer closes in, Roddy's twin sister—the enigmatic and volatile Nola Brown—starts investigating for herself, uncovering a sinister plot that reveals their mother's dark history, the true identity of her killer, and the shocking secret behind her death.

"This 3rd adventure for Zig and Nola is Meltzer at his finest, with a tightly constructed conspiracy, colorful characters, a deeply evil villain, and the kind of satisfying payoff that leaves the reader with a pounding pulse and a grin on their face."—*Booklist*

* Montclair, Allison. [Fire Must Burn](#) (Severn House \$29.99). The owners of The Right Sort Marriage Bureau are back, and

more determined than ever to bring love matches to the residents of Post-WWII London . . . so something as trivial as being dragged into a spy mission isn't going to stop them!

London, 1947. After recent events detailed in [An Excellent Thing in a Woman](#) (\$16) have left the normally steadfast Iris Sparks thoroughly shaken, she's looking forward to some peace. With The Right Sort doing well, she and business partner Gwen Bainbridge are due a holiday. Until Iris's former boss enlists their help for a secret mission. Iris, who left British intelligence after the war, is being recruited for her Cambridge connection to one Anthony Danforth. She hasn't seen Tony in almost ten years, yet she and Gwen must manipulate him into hiring their marriage service. Tony's suspected of being a Soviet operative, and an undercover agent posing as his perfect match could discover the truth. Despite her reluctance at being dragged back into the world of espionage, Iris agrees. After all, Tony was once a very good friend. If he's innocent, she'll happily prove it. If not? Well, no one ever said being a spy was easy...

Those who enjoy reading Kerry Greenwood's Phryne Fisher Mysteries, and Dorothy Sayers and Ashley Weaver will adore this warm and witty historical mystery! The nature of the investigations changes book to book but the fidelity to actual history, the clever and twisty plotting, the British voice and the humor remain constants. This is one of my very favorite British crime series.

Osler, Rob. [The Case of the Murdered Muckraker](#) (Kensington \$27). Osler's delightful follow-up to [The Case of the Missing Maid](#) (\$27 or \$17.99), a 2024 Historical Fiction Pick, again finds PI Harriet Morrow solving crimes for the Prescott Agency, a rival to the Pinkertons, in 1898 Chicago. When journalist Eugene Eldridge is murdered, word gets out that he'd been investigating a powerful politician for corruption. On flimsy evidence, police officers arrest Lucy Fara, an impoverished mother of four, for Eldridge's death. As Harriet goes undercover to infiltrate tenement buildings, politicians' offices, and swanky hotels, she slowly pieces together clues that exonerate Lucy. Harriet, a lesbian and one of the country's very few female detectives, reflects frequently on the complexities of her situation vis-à-vis Chicago's laws and social mores, making this as much a story of a gay woman's desire for acceptance as it is a mystery. Osler treats both story lines with care, setting them against a vividly rendered urban backdrop of scoundrels and industrialists, private clubs and beneficent groups trying to help immigrants find their place. This historical color never slows the pace, however, and Osler's trademark blend of humanity and wry humor is on full display. It's a top-notch sequel.

Pease, Amy. [Wildwood](#) (Atria \$28). Pease impresses with her gritty second mystery featuring mother-son law-enforcement duo Marge and Eli North. Marge, who's the sheriff of Sherman County, Wisconsin, calls in Eli, her sole deputy, after a woman named Ronnie asks for the police's help finding her friend Trinity Campanella. When Ronnie stopped by Trinity's trailer to borrow her car, she found it empty, the bedroom splattered with enough blood to signal that Trinity may have been murdered. The Norths search the trailer, finding Trinity's concealed drug kit and the business card of a healthcare CEO inside one of her bras. The investigation takes a turn when the feds inform the Norths that Trinity was an informant for the FBI and the DEA in their case against attorney Charles Dawson, the owner of several rehab

facilities, who's involved in a plot to distribute fake medication laced with synthetic opioids. Trinity was tasked with developing a romantic relationship with Dawson to pump him for information, but the more the Norths dig, the less clear everyone's loyalties become. As in her 2024 First Mystery Pick [Northwoods](#) (\$17.99), Pease elevates her plotting with rich atmosphere and well-shaded characters. Recommended to fans of William Kent Krueger.

Preston, Douglas/Lincoln Child. [Pendergast: The Beginning](#) (Grand Central \$30). Signed by both authors and with an exclusive extra. If you attend Doug's event January 11 at 4 PM he will personalize your book(s). You must be there in person for this.

In the opening, Pendergast gets into a fancy reception by pickpocketing the invitation from the woman in front of him at the entry line to the reception. Then, when the woman can't find her invitation, he graciously gives her his own—and both are let in. He asks to have the invitation back as a 'souvenir' once they are inside. The extra will be that souvenir—the invitation. The recto will be the formal invitation itself, and the verso stamped with "From the archives of AXL Pendergast" and with Constance Greene's psychotic scrawled signature below.

It only took six months for the life of Special Agent Dwight Chambers to crumble around him. First, he lost his partner, and then, tragically, his wife. Returning to work at the New Orleans Field Office, Chambers is dismayed to find himself saddled with mentoring a brand new FBI agent—a certain A. X. L. Pendergast. As Chambers tries to pull himself together, his enigmatic and exasperating junior partner pulls an outrageous stunt that gets both of them suspended. Pendergast welcomes the banishment, because it gives him the opportunity to investigate a peculiar murder in Mississippi that has captured his fancy. Chambers grudgingly goes along. What starts off as a whimsical quest swiftly turns into a terrifying pursuit, as Chambers and Pendergast uncover a string of grisly, ritualistic killings that defy any known serial killer profile. Thanks in large part to Pendergast's brilliance and unorthodox methods, they solve the case and find the killer... and that is when the true horror begins.

Preston, Douglas. [Extinction](#) (Tor \$29.99). If you missed this fabulous series start last April, to be continued with co-author Aletheia Preston his daughter, with [Paradox](#) (\$30) debuting here on April 21, (preorder now, there's a nifty special extra for those who buy from The Pen), here's your chance to get Signed copies of *Extinction* in hardcover or paperback. It is a gem, set in rural Colorado with a premise that science is making real: cloning extinct animals. The paperback [Extinction](#) (\$19.99) can also be Signed. AND Doug will also sign [Best True Crime Stories of the Year 2025](#) (Crime Ink \$17.95), edited by Doug

Quirk, Matthew. [The Method](#) (Harper \$32). Anna Vaughn is a B-list actor slumming it in TV action dramas. She knows how to handle fake guns and pull her punches, but when her friend Natalie doesn't return from a night of bar-hopping in New York City, she vows to use her fists for real. Her doggedness attracts the attention of FBI agent Kevin Matthews, who's also looking for Natalie and agrees to give Anna a crash course in personal protection if she'll help the Bureau with its investigation. Soon, Anna is kicking and head-butting her way through an underworld of paid muscle, creepy hit men, and Arab oligarchs with bizarre sexual fixations like Crown Prince Aslan, who hails from a coun-

try called the Republic. Just as Anna is about to rescue Natalie, it dawns on her that Matthews may not be who he claims. The story moves with the exuberance Quirk is known for.

Robb, Candace. [A Lion's Ransom](#) (Severn House \$29.99). Once upon a time, inspired by *The Name of the Rose* and the *Brother Cadfael Series* by Ellis Peters, there were many medieval mysteries. Happily, Candace has kept her excellent series set in 14th Century York powered by Welshman Owen Archer and his apothecary wife going and now, in Book #16, it's 1377. A costly lion created by the goldsmiths of York as a gift for King Richard's coronation is stolen. The desperate guildmaster begs Owen Archer to find it. But Owen has other troubles plaguing him. The French and Spanish navies are attacking English ports and boarding merchant ships. As the king's man in the north, Owen is hunting spies, and in a city on edge every foreigner is suspect. Especially when a body is found in the river Ouse.... Candace's work is known for her scholarship which does not drown out her characterizations and plots. Severn House has brought the entire [Owen Archer Series](#) into print in paperback so you can have the pleasure of bingeing your way through it.

Rozan, S J. [First Do No Harm](#) (Pegasus \$27.95). With River Valley Hospital in the midst of negotiations to avert a nurses' strike, a wealthy benefactor is set to give a large donation to honor of the Chief of Emergency Medicine: Dr. Elliott Chin, the brother of private investigator Lydia Chin. Before the donation can be finalized, Sophia Scott, a nurse helping to negotiate with management to prevent a nurses' strike, is murdered. A morgue assistant is arrested and although he denies even knowing the victim his father and brother, both doctors at the hospital, are quick to urge him to take a plea. Another negotiating committee member abruptly resigns and a senior biomedical technician disappears. An officially off-limits section of the hospital basement turns out to be a hotbed of unauthorized—and in some cases criminal—activity. Hired by the arrested man's lawyer, Lydia Chin and her partner Bill Smith start to dig into the events and personnel at the hospital. Among the union disputes, blackmail, thefts, lies, and a detective who really, really doesn't like them, one thing becomes clear: the dictum to "First Do No Harm" is not in effect at River Valley. "Rozan keeps everything moving along with a lot more efficiency and sympathy than either the NYPD or the hospital staff, and the final scene that follows makes the whole trip worthwhile."— *Kirkus Reviews*

While this is more a traditional mystery than a cozy it is our **January Cozy Crimes Pick**. Why? "Throughout 16 books in a series that started in 1994, Rozan's characters have bonded and grown, and readers are treated to a seemingly effortless flow of banter and deduction. They are in a class by themselves."— *Booklist* Starred Review

Saunders, George. [Vigil](#) (Random House \$28). A ghost attempts to guide an unrepentant oil executive toward redemption and the afterlife in the staggering latest from Saunders after *Lincoln in the Bardo*. The story takes place over the course of one night, when the spirit of Jill Blaine descends to Earth and takes on human form at the home of K.J. Boone, her latest "charge." As opposed to the hundreds of others Jill has visited at the end of their days, the terminally ill Boone is uninterested in finding peace or reckoning with his misdeeds. Instead, he revels in his accomplishments. A fiery French colleague of Jill's shows up to help, repeatedly crying "*Quelle horreur!*" as he tries to convince

Boone of the devastating effects of climate change by showing him specimens of endangered bird species felled by wildfire smoke. As more of Boone's transgressions are revealed, Jill decides she hates him, and the novel barrels into gleefully absurd territory while posing weighty questions about salvation and justice and whether they're even feasible. Saunders has outdone himself with this endlessly irreverent work of art."—*PW*

Sayles, John. [Crucible](#) (Melville House \$32.99). Oscar-nominated filmmaker Sayles publishes his third sweeping and immersive historical fiction focused on Henry Ford, the Elon Musk of his day (and not a nice man), whose rise to overlord of the auto industry encouraged him to become the czar of Detroit. Truly everything comes around again!

Here's a summary of the sweep of the story: Already the gateway for illegal Canadian liquor during Prohibition, the Motor City becomes a crucible for American class conflict during the Great Depression, with an army of laid off Ford workers drifting into the ranks of the burgeoning union movement — Henry Ford's worst nightmare. To keep the hundreds of thousands still employed by him in thrall, the man who was formerly 'America's favorite tycoon' recruits black laborers migrating from the deep South to serve as 'strike insurance', and gives Harry Bennett, pugnacious as he is diminutive, free reign over the legion of barroom brawlers and ex-cons who make up the company's 'Security Department'. The Model T mogul has also bought a sizable chunk of Brazil's Amazonian rainforest, vowing to grow his own rubber for tires, but stubbornly refusing to include a botanist in his troop of would-be jungle tamers. As a series of biological plagues descend on the Fordlandia plantation, the racial melting pot he has created in Detroit begins to boil over, and not even the Sage of Dearborn can control the forces that have been unleashed.

I point out that legendary author Loren Estleman publishes a new Amos Walker, Detroit private eye, story this month, opening a window into the modern city.

Winslow, Don. [Final Score](#) (Harper \$30). "This is a collection of six previously unpublished short novels, and they are, every one of them, superb.... These stories spotlight the things Winslow is known for: vividly realized characters, morally ambiguous situations, pitch-perfect dialogue, and stories that pull us in and refuse to let us go. The author has published some astonishingly good fiction—and the tales in *The Final Score* are among his best work. . . . It's great to have this exceptional crime writer back in action." — *Booklist*. Stephen King calls it "The best crime fiction I've read in twenty years." There is exciting movie news at last for Winslow as well:

This includes the short novel "Collision" which has been [purchased by Amazon in major film deal](#) with Oscar nominee Jake Gyllenhaal to star and produce.

The *CRIME 101* feature film, based on Winslow's short novel of the same name, lands in theaters globally February 13th, 2026 from Amazon MGM Studios, and stars Chris Hemsworth, Mark Ruffalo, Barry Keoghan, Halle Berry, and Monica Barbaro. Trailer [HERE](#). Available on January 13: [CRIME 101 movie tie-in](#) (\$18.99).

Winstead, Ashley. [The Future Saints](#) (Atria \$29). This is a love story, but not the one you're expecting. When record executive Theo meets the Future Saints, they're bombing at a dive bar in their hometown. Since the tragic death of their manager Ginny in

a surfing accident, the band has been in a downward spiral and Theo has been dispatched to coax a new—and successful—album out of them, or else let them go. Immediately, Theo is struck by Hannah, the group's impetuous lead singer, who's gone off script by debuting a whole new sound, replacing their California pop with gut—wrenching rock. When this new music goes viral, striking an unexpected chord with fans, Theo puts his career on the line to give the Saints one last shot at success with a new tour, new record, and new start. But Hannah's grief over losing her sister Ginny has larger consequences for the group, and her increasingly destructive antics become a distraction undermine Theo at every turn. Winstead raises the stakes when the band receives five Grammy nominations and an invitation to perform at the ceremony; readers will fly through the pages to find out whether Hannah will manage to tame her demons in time.

Winterson, Jeanette. [One Aladdin Two Lamps](#) (Grove \$28). A woman is filibustering for her life. Every night she tells a story. Every morning, she lives one more day. Winterson cracks open the legendary story of Shahrazad in *One Thousand and One Nights* to explore new and ancient questions. Who should we trust? Is love the most important thing in the world? Does it matter whether you are honest? What makes us happy? In her guise as Aladdin—the orphan who changes his world—Winterson asks us to reread what we think we know. To look again. Especially to look again at how fiction works in our lives, giving us the courage to change our own narratives and alter endings we wish to subvert. As a young working-class woman, with no obvious future beyond factory work or marriage, Winterson realizes through the power of books that she can read herself as fiction as well as a fact: "I can change the story because I am the story."

CLASSICS

* Christie, Agatha. [Cat Among the Pigeons](#); [The Clocks](#) (Harper \$18.99). Two more "authorized" republications of Hercule Poirot investigations.

Farnsworth, Ward. [The Socratic Method, A Practitioner's Handbook](#) (David R. Godine Publisher \$18.95). About 2,500 years ago, Plato wrote a set of dialogues that depict Socrates in conversation. The way Socrates asks questions, and the reasons why, amount to a whole way of thinking. This is the Socratic method—one of humanity's great achievements. More than a technique, the method is an ethic of patience, inquiry, humility, and doubt. It is an aid to better thinking, and a remedy for bad habits of mind, whether in law, politics, the classroom, or tackling life's big questions at the kitchen table. Drawing on hundreds of quotations, this book explains what the Socratic method is and how to use it.

Hurston, Zora Neale. [The Life of Herod the Great](#) (Harper \$19.99). In a never before published novel, Hurston, in the 1950s, as a continuation of *Moses, Man of the Mountain*, penned a historical novel about the infamous Herod the Great. In Hurston's retelling, Herod is not the wicked ruler of the New Testament who is charged with the "slaughter of the innocents," but a fore-runner of Christ—a beloved king who enriched Jewish culture and brought prosperity and peace to Judea.

Lorac, ECR. [Murder in Vienna](#) (Poisoned Pen \$15.95). This exceedingly rare mystery, first published in 1956, returns to print with the British Library Crime Classics for the first time since its original appearance. On a bright autumn morning, Superintendent

Macdonald boards the plane bound for Vienna to visit his old friend Dr. Natzler. His detective's eye notes some unusual passengers including Elizabeth Le Vendre, new secretary to the diplomat Sir Walter Vanbrugh—but this is supposed to be a holiday. After arriving with the Natzlers and crossing paths with Elizabeth again, Macdonald settles into the trip as best he can, determined to relax for once. But when Elizabeth is reported missing and a string of violence and murder encircles Vanbrugh and Natzler's social set, Macdonald's short-lived stint as a tourist comes to an end—and the race to stop a killer on the loose begins.

* Sayers, Dorothy. [Strong Poison](#) (\$12). January would be an excellent time to reread—or encounter—Lord Peter Wimsey's meeting with Harriet Vane, the start of a four book romance embraced by mystery lovers for decades. It's worth digging up the TV series starring Edward Petheridge as the aristocratic and formidable amateur sleuth, a different man than the somewhat silly twat Lord Peter at first appeared to be in the novels. That role was played by the actor Ian Carmichael.

COZIES

Chow, Jennifer J. [Tell-Tale Treats](#) (St Martins \$9.99). A group of high school alumnae reunite years later and reserve rooms at Pixie Inn for an extended retreat. As part of their pampering package, Felicity delivers a scrumptious assortment of enchanted pastries, including her new almond cookies. But is Felicity to blame when the queen bee of the group is found drowned in her bathroom after eating Felicity's cookies?

Cullen, Michelle L. [A Field Guide to Murder](#) (Crooked Lane \$19.99). Retired and recovering from a fractured hip, anthropologist Harry Lancaster is at loose ends. Like Jimmy Stewart in *Rear Window*, he spends far too much time looking through binoculars at his fellow residents in the quiet neighborhood of Lakeview Estates. When his neighbor Sue Daniels calls Harry and begs for help, he and his caregiver Emma Stockton rush to her home and find her dead. Harry has witnessed Sue's bizarre behavior, including her insistence that she's seen Emma somewhere before, so he refuses to accept the official conclusion that she accidentally overdosed on one of her medications. Instead, he throws himself into investigating, looking into Sue's conflicts with neighbors while Emma assists him to ensure he doesn't jeopardize his recovery. Harry's crotchety charm and Emma's patient companionship make a good partnership in a debut that is charming but labors under overexplaining.

* Delany, Vicki. [The Devil in the Details](#) (Crooked Lane \$29.99). Amazingly this is the 11th Sherlock Holmes Bookshop Mystery with Gemma Doyle. And it takes place on the birthday of her partner in crime Jayne and on that of the Great Detective. All head to the Blue Water Café where things go bad quickly when the exes of Jayne and her fiancé join the part along with other unruly guests. To escape Gemma and Jayne take a break on the deck and spot the body of one of the revelers floating below in the ocean. Is Jayne's fiancé Andrew a suspect? Hmm... Detective Ryan Ashburton is taking a hard look.

Fox, Sarah. [Definitely, Maybe Not a Detective](#) (Random House \$18). A fake detective agency becomes all too real in this sweet series launch from Fox (the Magical Menagerie Mysteries). Following her brother's death from cancer, Emersyn Gray, 28, desperately needs cash to support her seven-year-old niece, Livy. So, she agrees to a friend's plan to threaten Emersyn's

ex-boyfriend with counterfeit PI business cards and recover the money he stole from their joint bank account. When the superintendent of Emersyn's New York City apartment building—a cheap, seniors-only spot—is murdered, however, her fellow residents link Emersyn to the business cards she'd accidentally dropped in the stairwell, and seek her help proving the innocence of a neighbor who was arrested for the crime. With the aid of a handsome stranger named Wyatt and an aspiring teen gumshoe who lives in the building, Emersyn successfully converts her fake PI business into a real one. None of the building's residents is above suspicion, including Emersyn, whom police suspect of using her sleuthing to cover up her own guilt. Taking more than a dash of inspiration from *Only Murders in the Building*, Fox successfully combines kooky characters, a simmering romance, and a solid whodunit plot. Cozy mystery fans will be charmed.

Gilbert, Victoria. [A Deadly Clue](#) (Crooked Lane \$29.99). Gilbert follows up *A Killer Clue* with a lively third adventure for 62-year-old personal librarian Jane Hunter, who works for the wealthy and reclusive Cameron Clewe at his sprawling estate near Winston-Salem, N.C. The action kicks off when Jane retrieves a box of books Cam purchased at the estate sale of the prominent Stewart family. Among the rare, pristine editions, she finds a well-thumbed copy of Daphne du Maurier's *My Cousin Rachel*, which contains an ominous note tucked between its pages: "If you receive this, alert the authorities." The note appears to be from Kimberly Stewart Ward, whose death was ruled a suicide, leading Jane and Cam to do some digging. When someone else connected to the family dies in the present, Jane and Cam become targets in the Stewarts' bid to maintain their fortune, power, and political clout. Meanwhile, Cam continues his quest to find his biological father. Gilbert's leads remain winningly eccentric and winning, and a subplot about Cam's assistant who pines for him in secret infuses the action with a welcome dash of romance. It's an entertaining romp.

Moorman, Jennifer. [The Charmed Library](#) (Harper \$18.99). A cozy, Hallmark—esque rom—com invites you to escape to a world where words come alive and book boyfriends leap off the page. The public library in Blue Sky Valley, North Carolina, is a haven for readers. But it's also unlike any other. In this library, fictional characters step off the page into real life. Assistant librarian Stella Parker has no idea. Still reeling from her father's death and—more recently—a breakup, she hasn't noticed. All she knows is she's stuck in a job she's overqualified for and stumped about what to do with her life. Words matter to Stella. For as long as she can remember, she's seen them. Words appear—in varying colors and fonts—rising from surfaces, bouncing over objects, and even wiggling out of people. Words give her insight into emotions and untold stories. But the words change for Stella after she burns her journal. Suddenly they're demanding, urgent—and painful. Then Stella stumbles upon strange characters in the library after hours. One is an oddly familiar World War II soldier who introduces himself as Jack—Jack Mathis, the main character from her favorite book. A fictional hero and Stella's first crush. Much too quickly, Stella is faced with the reality that all stories must end, and magic comes at a price. The characters who visit the library can only stay for fourteen days. And Jack's time is almost up.

Onhwa, Lee. [A Midnight Pastry Shop Called Hwawoldang](#) (William Morrow \$21.99) is another entry in a cozy world from Japan for readers of *Before the Coffee Gets Cold*, *The Dallergut Dream Department Store*, and even *The Midnight Library*. Twenty-seven-year-old Yeon-hwa has inherited a neighborhood bakery from her grandmother. Curiously, her grandmother's will spells out two conditions: Yeon-hwa must keep the shop going for at least another month and only open it to customers from 10 PM until midnight. Yeon-hwa soon learns that the Hwawoldang—the name means “flower moon temple”—is not an ordinary dessert shop. The customers who arrive late at night are spirits, there to attend to unfinished business before being reincarnated. The sweets they crave hold some deep significance in their earthly lives, and they expect Yeon-hwa to meet their requests, as her grandmother did. With each customer who arrives, Yeon-hwa learns which special desserts live in their memories and will help them on their way. Aided by the shop's resident black cat, Yeon-hwa learns how to find closure for her customers—and begins to unravel her own family's secrets as well.

Sylva, Jessie. [How to Lose a Goblin in Ten Days](#) (Orbit \$18.99). In the mood for a cozy fantasy? Opposites attract when a halfling and a goblin vie for ownership of a forest cottage in Sylva's utterly enchanting Romantasy debut. Halfling Pansy Underburrow inherited the house from her grandmother and sees renovating it as an opportunity to assert her independence from her overbearing family and conservative community. Goblin Ren Woodward has been the cottage's caretaker since their family laid claim to the seemingly abandoned property 20 years prior and needs the space to grow the crops upon which their clan depends. With halflings and goblins historically at odds, the two agree to cohabitate; the first to leave forfeits all claims to the cottage. Initially they each do all they can to drive the other out, but the two find an uneasy truce while adding their individual touches to the cottage, with Ren sharing their botanical expertise and Pansy sharing her culinary passions. Mutual appreciation blooms into friendship, then romance. However, their respective clans may not be ready to accept their interspecies relationship.

NEW IN HARDCOVER

Anappara, Deepa. [The Last of Earth](#) (Random House \$29). We are in 19th-century Tibet following an Indian schoolteacher employed by the British Empire and an English explorer venturing into a forbidden kingdom. Their paths intersect amid political intrigue, cultural tensions and the stark challenges of a remote, mountainous landscape. With its focus on imperial dynamics, personal ambition and the encounters between local and foreign perspectives, the book is positioned as a compelling addition to 2026 historical fiction books for readers drawn to richly detailed, adventurous narratives. For fans of Eliot Pattison, winner of the 2008 Best First Novel Award for *Skull Mantra*, and Barbara Cleverly and MM Kaye.

Austin, Emily. [Is This a Cry for Help?](#) (Atria \$28). “How will Darcy — a public librarian — manage to reckon with her own personal woes when access to the written word hangs precariously in the balance? A wonderful, hopeful fiction for our trying times,” says the Indie Next recommendation. Library Reads unsurprisingly makes this its number one pick for January: “After she learns of the death of her ex-boyfriend, librarian Darcy has a mental breakdown and takes a leave from her job at

a public library. With time, therapy, and support from her wife, Darcy returns to work while coping with guilt and book-banning protests. This reflective, heartwarming, and character-driven read delves into grief and identity with care and humor.”

* Bell, AD. [The Bookbinder's Secret](#) (St Martins \$29). Set in early 20th-century Oxford, the novel follows a young bookbinder drawn into a web of intrigue when a rare manuscript vanishes from the university library. As she navigates academic rivalries, secret societies and hidden romances, the story weaves together scholarship and suspense with careful period detail. It's a slow start here and some may find it a bit of a slog, but this debut is notable for its immersive depiction of university life, its elegant handling of mystery and romance, and its classic historical style.

Indie Next finds that our **January British Crime Club Pick** is “A 50-year-old love story written down on thin pieces of paper hidden behind the end papers of six old leather-bound books. Wonderful characters and a plot you can't put down make this pure blissful reading perfection.” Library Reads adds, “Lily is in limbo. She loves books and her binding trade, but her father is distant and her employer seems not to value her. Her life is turned upside down when she is given a burned book and the secrets it holds. This is truly a wonderful read full of mystery, love, and intrigue.”

Braude, Mark. [The Typewriter and the Guillotine](#) (Grand Central \$32). This true account flashes warnings for today. In 1925, the Indianapolis-born Janet Flanner took an assignment to write a regular ‘Letter from Paris’ for a lighthearted humor magazine called *The New Yorker*. She'd come to Paris to with dreams of writing about “Beauty with a Capital B.” Her employer, self-consciously apolitical, sought only breezy reports on French art and culture. But as she woke to the frightening signs of rising extremism, economic turmoil, and widespread discontent in Europe, Flanner ignored her editor's directives, reinventing herself, her assignment, and *The New Yorker* in the process. While working tirelessly to alert American readers to the dangers of the Third Reich, Flanner became gripped by the disturbing crimes of a serial killer who embodied all of the darkness she was being forced to confront. Eugen Weidmann, a German con-man and murderer, and the last man to be publicly executed in France—mere weeks before the outbreak of WWII. Flanner covered his crimes, capture, and highly politicized trial, seeing the case as a metaphor for understanding the tumultuous years through which she'd just passed and to prepare herself for the dangers to come.

Collins, Max Allan. [Return of the Maltese Falcon](#) (Titan \$27.99). Collins had made much of his career a devotion to past masters, most in the hardboiled tradition. And, say, Eliot Ness' career. And Mickey Spillane's. Now he turns to Hammett. Hammett only wrote one novel about detective Sam Spade: *The Maltese Falcon*, perhaps the most famous private eye story ever told. But the case was never really solved – the priceless golden, bejeweled bird that men and women had been dying to possess turned out to be a fake. So Collins reunites all the surviving members of the original cast alongside femme fatales, crooked collectors, and greedy gangsters for one more thrilling, deadly chase through the streets, wharves, morgues, bars, and back alleys of 1920s San Francisco – and finally answers the question, Whatever became of the Maltese falcon...? In my experience many people know the story of the Falcon from the movie, or movies, rather than reading the book. Bogart led an iconic cast.

Crouch, Sarah. [The Briars](#) (Atria \$29). Game warden Annie Heston seeks a fresh start in the misty forests of Washington State in the haunting latest from Crouch after [Middletide](#) (\$17.99). Following a bad breakup, Annie has relocated to the small town of Lake Lumins. Her first job tracking a cougar for local sheriff Jake Proudly takes a grim turn when Annie discovers the body of a young woman near the town's central lake. Though the cause of death initially appears to be an animal attack, the coroner's report soon reveals the girl was strangled. Annie's subsequent investigation leads her to Daniel Barela, a reclusive 22-year-old who owns land near the lake. Their cautious friendship deepens as Daniel confides in Annie that his real name is Nico, and he faked his death as a teenager to escape an abusive stepfather who accused him of attempted murder. When a second killing rocks Lake Lumins, suspicion falls on Daniel, especially after Annie finds his belongings at the scene, but the truth is much more complicated. Crouch takes a character-first approach to this crackling regional mystery, grounding the intrigue in Annie's emotional wounds before tying everything together in a tense, emotional conclusion.

* Doherty, Paul. [The Meadows of Murder](#) (Severn \$29.99). A new investigation for London's medieval sleuth Brother Athelstan. It's 1383. William the weaver bursts into Brother Athelstan's church, desperately seeking sanctuary. His crime? The bloody murder of a vicious loan shark. Athelstan takes him in, but a short while later William lies dead in the locked church. Who would take revenge for the death of a universally hated man – and how did they commit an almost impossible crime? Athelstan's investigations are complicated by news of the murder of an eminent member of the Guild of Fishmongers, an ominous message left on his corpse. More deaths quickly follow. Athelstan and his old friend, the coroner Sir John Cranston, realize they have a serial killer on their hands. But when their investigations lead to the small priory of St South's, which hides a shocking secret, Athelstan starts to realize there's much more at stake than catching a twisted killer....

Elston, Ashley. [Anatomy of an Alibi](#) (Penguin \$30). Elston scored a bestseller with 2024's [First Lie Wins](#) (\$19). Here we get a new switched identity plot involving two Louisiana women—Camille who is living the high life while Aubrey makes out by working at bar—who hatch a plan to switch identities in order to spy on Ben Bayliss, the rich and controlling husband of Camille. Aubrey is Camille's stand in. She spends an evening very visibly sipping Negronis at Chantilly's Bar. Her stake? She believes Ben knows something about the night that ruined her life. It's only going to be an identity swap for 12 hours, but by morning Ben is found murdered and only one of them, Aubrey, has an alibi, although they both need it. Now what? Maybe unearthing those skeletons in the closet?

Emanuel, Ezekial. [Eat Your Ice Cream](#) (Norton \$28.99). While many are adopting diet and drink and exercise pledges for January, the start of a new year and maybe a new lifestyle, physician Ezedial "argues that life is not a competition to live the longest and that "wellness" shouldn't be difficult; it should be an invisible part of one's lifestyle that yields maximum health benefits with the least work. Dr. Emanuel cuts through the noise with wit and good humor, giving readers just what they need: simple, high-impact, evidence-based guidelines on such issues as alcohol consumption, food and nutrition, exercise, sleep, mental acuity, and social engagement. Resisting the tide of the latest trends to

extend life at all costs, *Eat Your Ice Cream* reveals that many of the tools for a long, healthy and meaningful life are already within reach."

As many of you knew I am perking along at 85 and recommend that keeping reading, staying engaged with ideas and stories and a community of readers, a walk a day and some sense about diet works well. Much of it for me is just fortunate genes.

Grippando, James. [The Right to Remain](#) (Harper \$30). For the 20th novel in the Miami defense attorney Jack Swyteck series, Jack faces a new problem. His client, Elliott Stafford, indicted for murder, has gone silent. Not just silent in asserting his Fifth Amendment right against self-incrimination—Elliott refuses to speak. He won't talk to the judge, his girlfriend, or even the attorney fighting for his life. There seems to be no medical or psychological reason for his silence. He has, as Jack puts it, "chosen to become his own worst enemy." To some, it's an act of protest against a broken criminal justice system. Jack doesn't buy it. Undeterred by the hoopla and calls to walk away, he keeps his client and tries his best to save Elliott from himself. As he digs for facts, Jack discovers a much more disturbing reason for Elliott's silence. Virtually everything Elliott told Jack before the indictment is proving false, including Elliott's criminal history, family turmoil, and secret past. As Jack plunges deeper, he comes to believe that Elliott isn't trying to hide his own guilt. He may be protecting someone else....

Guterson, David. [Evelyn in Transit](#) (Norton \$29.99). Evelyn Bednarz has always been a misfit. She's easily bored, unsuited to life at school, asks odd questions about faith and time, sees through conventions others take for granted. Seeking to be true to herself, she hitchhikes across the American West taking odd jobs. In distant Tibet, another life unfolds as remote from Evelyn's as can be, and yet, strangely linked—as she'll discover when a trio of Buddhist lamas show up at her door to announce that her five-year-old son Cliff is the seventh reincarnation of the illustrious Norbu Rinpoche, recently deceased. The lamas' visit sets off a family crisis and a media firestorm over Cliff's future.

"Guterson delivers a soulful and gentle meditation on the meaning of life and the lengths some of us will go to find purpose. What Evelyn ends up choosing for her young son is practically beside the point. Her charming large heartedness and open mind win the reader over anyway... reflective yet laugh-out-loud funny."—*Booklist Starred Review*

Hoover, Colleen. [Woman Down](#) (Alyson \$28.99). Her words used to set the page on fire. But a viral backlash over her latest film adaptation forced Petra Rose to take a hiatus, resulting in missed deadlines and an overdue mortgage. Branded a fraud and fame—hungry opportunist, she learned the hard way what happens when the internet turns on you. And she's been uninspired to write ever since. Now, with her next suspense novel outlined and savings nearly gone, she retreats to a secluded lakeside cabin, hoping to find inspiration. It's Petra's last—ditch attempt to save her career—and herself. Detective Nathaniel Saint arrives with disturbing news, his presence igniting a creativity in her she thought long since burned out. Petra's words return in a rush, and her fictional cop character begins to mirror the very real cop who's becoming her muse. Soon their "research" sessions blur the lines between fantasy and reality.... Paperback edition: [Woman Down](#) (\$16.99).

Ibañez, Isabel. [Graceless Heart](#) (Saturday Books \$31). As a sculptress, Ravenna Maffei has always shaped beauty from stone but she has a terrible secret. Desperate to save her brother, she enters a competition hosted by Florence's most feared immortal family, revealing a dark power in a city where magic is forbidden. Now a captive in the cutthroat city of Florence, Ravenna is forced into a dangerous task where failure meets certain death at the hands of Saturnino dei Luni, the immortal family's mesmerizing but merciless heir. But as he draws her closer, Ravenna realizes the true threat lies beyond Florence's walls. The Pope's war against magic is closing in, and Ravenna is no longer just a prisoner but a prize to be claimed.

The Indie Next Pick: "Ibañez has come into her own with this book. An adult debut with a stunning mix of history and fantasy, with a slow burn enemies-to-lovers romance. Perfect for readers who enjoyed *The Familiar* by Leigh Bardugo."

Idov, Michael. [The Cormorant Hunt](#) (Scribner \$29). In his follow up to [The Collaborators](#) (\$18.99), a 2024 First Mystery Club Pick, comes the second in an unusual spy trilogy that is powered more by character dynamics and sharp dialogue than action. Disheartened CIA officer Ari Falk, now hiding in the Republic of Georgia, is hailed as a hero by some and branded a traitor by others after blowing the lid off a massive conspiracy. But his quiet exile is shattered when a mission arises—one perfectly suited for someone as jaded and unpredictable as him. Idov thrusts us into a modern era of geopolitical conflict, where a hot war in Europe and shadowy political schemes set the stage for danger at every turn. Enter Asha Tamaskar, a brilliant, neurodivergent CIA officer with her own secrets, and Felix Burnham, a chilling antagonist with radical alliances that could change the global balance of power. Bonus: From Tbilisi to Prague, Andorra to Bethesda, Idov crafts vivid, authentic settings.

Kovacs, Christina. [Watch Us Fall](#) (Simon Schuster \$28). The author of 2017 First Mystery Club Pick *The Cutaway* returns with a work of psychological suspense that follows four best friends who get embroiled in the investigation of a reporter. Lucy and her three best friends share a glamorous but decaying house in the heart of Georgetown. They call themselves "the Sweeties" and live an idyllic post-grad lifestyle complete with exciting jobs, dramatic love lives, and, most importantly, each other. But when Addie, the group's queen bee, discovers that her ex-boyfriend Josh has gone missing, the Sweeties' worlds are turned upside down. In the days leading up to his disappearance, Josh, a star investigative journalist from a prominent political family, was behaving erratically—and Lucy is determined to find out why. All four friends upend their lives to search for him, but detectives begin to suspect that the Sweeties might know more than they're letting on. As the investigation unfolds, Lucy's obsession with the case reaches a boiling point, and with it, her own troubling secrets begin bubbling to the surface of her carefully curated life.

Kelly, Pat. [Rifle Season](#) (Atria \$28). This debut has high action, a wilderness setting great for fans of CJ Box, and a lead character acclaimed as the best gamed hunter in Colorado but sidelined by an accident that tags him with an involuntary manslaughter conviction. His skills and prowess as a tracker are of no use to the trash pickup gig he's assigned. Then as he flounders in a haze of tequila and marijuana two strangers seek him out to escort them up the mountains on the opening day of Colorado's rifle season. It seems an ordinary gig, but it moves Mace Winters from

unwitting to unwilling accomplice in a deadly game. This may be our February First Mystery Club Pick if we can get Kelly to sign his book.

Knausgaard, Karl Ove. [The School of Night](#) (Penguin \$32). "There is nothing in contemporary publishing to remotely compare to Knausgaard's Morning Star series. Knausgaard has always been brilliant on families and the domestic, on the minutiae of the everyday and the quiet, lonely rituals and habits of personality. But in combining this with elements of genre and even pulp fiction—crime-thriller, horror and the occult, he has unleashed something entirely new, an antic and almost dangerously immersive reading experience that will completely take over your life. The first of the series set in London, 1885, and the first to follow a single character throughout, *The School of Night* is by turns bleak, funny and horrifying, but never less than utterly captivating. Knausgaard seems to have struck on an endlessly generative seam, resulting in an almost deranged hypergraphia, and there appears no limit to where he may take us next." —Martin MacInnes, the Booker longlisted author of *In Ascension*

Mara, Andrea. [It Should Have Been You](#) (Viking \$30) delivers a rattling domestic thriller set in the glossy South Dublin neighborhood of Oakpark. At the outset, exhausted schoolteacher and new mother Susan O'Donnell accidentally sends a snarky text meant for her sisters to a WhatsApp group used by her entire housing estate. The message—which insinuates that snobby queen bee Celeste Geary's husband, Warren, is cheating on her with a "PR Girl"—immediately sends a shockwave through the neighborhood, but a mortified Susan hopes the whole thing will blow over quickly. Instead, it leads to several acts of shocking violence. By the end of the novel, four people are dead, and most Oakpark dwellers—including brooding bartender Venetia and Susan's sister, Greta—have been swept up in at least one scandal they've tried to keep buried. Mara sets a relentless pace from the moment Susan sends her fateful text message. Readers will hold their breath as the plot's puzzle pieces click into place, exhaling only after the absurdly satisfying finale.

McConigley, Nina. [How to Commit a Postcolonial Murder](#) (Knopf \$26). "When their uncle arrives from India, two sisters' adjustment to a dual culture life in small-town Wyoming in the mid-1980s becomes complicated. This debut hits on touchy subjects with grace, as the sisters choose to fight instead of being silent victims. Those of us who spent many hours at teen sleepovers will delight in the nostalgia scattered amidst the actual crime and justice served." Plus for Box and Johnson fans, here's a new look at Wyoming!

* Montgomery, Ross. [The Murder at World's End](#) (Harper \$30). *Knives Out* meets *Downton Abbey*! Why world's end? This first adult novel for Montgomery takes place on a remote tidal island in Cornwall as Halley's Comet approaches earth. Despite the regularity of this event, on May 18, 1910, as the comet is but twelve hours away, the Viscount of Tithe Hall fears the apocalypse and orders the entire edifice sealed with wood and cotton batting: windows, doors, chimneys, key holes, by nightfall, effectively walling every family member, guest, and servant into separate rooms. And so it is done. The next morning the Viscount is discovered dead in his sealed study—creating a locked room puzzle. Suspicion falls on the newest servant, Stephen Pike, fresh out of

Borstal for a crime he didn't commit. Stephen may be railroaded again unless the profane octogenarian family matriarch emerges from seclusion and allies with Stephen to solve it.

Patterson, James/Susan DiLallo. [The Invisible Woman](#) (Little Brown \$30). Elinor Gilbert was once a young woman with a thriving career at the FBI. Now decades past solving crimes with the bureau, she is personally and professionally forgettable. Which is exactly what her former FBI boss needs. He disguises Elinor as a middle-aged nanny, and casts her as an agent on the inside of his investigation into a New York art dealer suspected of ties to organized crime. But as Elinor pushes toward the truth, her superpower— anonymity—morphs into a fatal flaw: the more the invisible woman integrates into her “host” family, the more dangerously memorable she becomes.

Rader-Day, Lori. [Wreck Your Heart](#) (St Martins \$29). Former foster kid Dahlia “Doll” Devine is not expecting a new half-sister to show up at the pub where she performs with her country music band. When a dead body is found outside the pub, Dahlia gets pulled into the investigation. “Full of witty banter, fabulously fleshed out side characters, and a mystery that had my brain spinning until the very end, *Wreck Your Heart* is a love letter to found family, country music, and the power of vulnerability.”

Romano Lax, Andromeda. [What Boys Learn](#) (Soho \$29.95). An Illinois woman suspects her troubled son of foul play. After 17-year-old Sidney Mayfield dies of an apparent suicide in the suburbs of Chicago, her hotheaded father blames high school counselor Abby Rosso for missing the warning signs. Then Sidney's best friend, Izzy Scarlatti, turns up dead in a motel, and the authorities begin to suspect that both girls were murdered. Meanwhile, Abby tries not to worry when she finds women's underwear hidden among the belongings of her lonely teen son, Benjamin. But Benjamin is caught stealing Izzy's diary, and police learn he sent the girl threatening texts before she died. Though Benjamin maintains his innocence, Abby has her doubts, particularly given her brother's psychopathy. Desperate for—and terrified of—the truth, Abby sends Benjamin to a psychologist and launches her own investigation into the girls' deaths. “Cartoonish villains and an overcomplicated backstory somewhat diminish the story's impact, but on balance, Romano-Lax delivers a tense, twist-riddled exploration of toxic masculinity, parental insecurity, and generational trauma.”

Sheinmel, Alyssa. [Such Sheltered Lives](#) (Atria \$28). This adult fiction debut is both mesmerizing and horrifying... horrifying to me at any rate as I read it while the news was breaking over the murders of the Reiner dad and mom by their addicted son Nick, parents and siblings whose lives were hostage to Nick's addictions. It feels like Sheinmel is writing a train wreck, and setting it in the destination trope of a remote rehab center. Yet if you persevere it's more than that, and surprising. Plus the acute danger of an eating disorder is made vivid.

Tucked among the pristine beaches and lavish manors of the Hamptons sits Rush's Recovery, a rehabilitation center where ultra-high net worth clients can seek treatment away from prying eyes and paparazzi. The center's latest guests have just arrived: Lord Edward of Essex, a British aristocrat fighting his black-sheep status and a painful addiction; Amelia Blue Harris, the daughter of a 90s rock legend struggling with an eating disorder; and Florence Bloom, a pop star trying to lay low after her latest

tabloid scandal. Each has been promised the highest standard of care, from daily therapy and a live-in chef to acupuncture sessions and a personal care manager, available 24/7. Just so long as they stay in their private cottages and never interact with the center's other guests. But these three self-destructive B-listers have no intention of playing by the rules. A body is discovered. And secrets uncovered. Nothing can stay buried.

Singh, Nalini. [Such a Perfect Family](#) (Berkley \$30) comes in hot and never lets up in this exhilarating standalone thriller about a man whose string of dead lovers starts arousing suspicion. When Tavish Advani arrives at his new wife Diya's family's home in New Zealand, he finds that an explosion has left the residence in flames. Diya herself is barely alive on the ground outside, her body crisscrossed with stab wounds. Before passing out, she whispers a cryptic message to Tavish about a woman he's never heard of named Annie. While Diya is in a coma, Tavish tries to figure out who Annie might be, and whether finding her might help explain the destruction at Diya's house. When the police get hold of Tavish and question him about the circumstances of the blaze, he starts to fret that the authorities will find out about the recent death of another ex-lover, who perished in a car crash in California, leaving behind a son who was convinced that Tavish was involved and that he wanted her money. Singh shrewdly toys with readers' expectations en route to some truly bombshell revelations. Even genre veterans are likely to be fooled by this devilish puzzler.

Sotto Yambao, Samantha. [The Elsewhere Express](#) (Random House Worlds \$32.99). Step on board the train that may take you to your life's purpose in this wistful, Ghibli-esque fantasy from the bestselling author of [Water Moon](#). “This enchanting, whimsical fantasy is a warm hug for the soul. A magical train that appears to those who are lost is absolutely charming, and creativity shines in the descriptions of the train's wondrous cars, from lily-pad picnics to jellyfish swimming through clouds. A journey not just through a magical world, but also of self-discovery, hope, and finding one's sense of purpose.” If “spicy” Romantasy is big for escape reading on a grand scale, comfort Romantasy is having a big moment too.

This deluxe first edition hardcover includes: • Intricately designed sprayed edges • Interactive endpapers with a scene you can color in • A full-color illustrated book case beneath the jacket

St James, Simone. [A Box Full of Darkness](#) (Penguin \$30). John reviews: Violet Esmie doesn't want to go home again. Eighteen years ago, Violet's youngest brother Ben disappeared. One minute Violet, her sister Dodie, and her brother Vail were playing hide and seek with Ben, and the next minute, no trace of Ben could be found. Soon after this traumatic event, Violet, Dodie, and Vail all left their upstate New York hometown with no intention of ever coming back. However, now all three Esmie siblings are returning to Fell, and the reason is simple. Ben's ghost has left them a message that simply says “Come Home.” Adeptly alternating viewpoints between Violet, Dodie, and Vail, St. James perfectly captures the mix of annoyed snarkiness, competitive rivalry, and unconditional love that can exist between siblings while simultaneously dialing up the supernatural spookiness that has infected each of their lives in different ways. From the book's chillingly creepy setting (which previously appeared in the author's *The Sun Down Motel*) to nerve-jangling plot that effectively borrows from a mix of genres to James' writing itself,

which shimmers with a dazzlingly sharp sense of wit, everything about St. James' latest is done to perfection.

Taff, Rachel. [Paper Cut](#) (Harper \$30). The lie on which a woman has built her brand—and her life—threatens to implode in Taff's searing debut. Honestly I haven't decided whether to go for Signed copies for February.

Conflicting pressures converge on Los Angeles author Lucy Golden as the 20th anniversary of the murder trial that made her famous approaches. Then 16 years old, and already in the spotlight as the daughter of celebrity photographer Diana Golden, Lucy escaped a murderous California cult and confessed to killing its leader. Months after her acquittal, she published *Rattlesnake*, a searing memoir of her experience that's now considered a feminist classic. On the one hand, Lucy craves the attention that an anniversary edition of *Rattlesnake* coupled with a proposed documentary by hunky filmmaker Isaac Coleman could generate. On the other, she's terrified of the skeletons Isaac promises to unearth if she puts herself in front of the camera. Ultimately, she agrees to participate. Once filming gets underway, however, her increasingly triggering days of shooting intertwine with hypervivid memories of that traumatic summer to reveal dark truths about her relationship with her mother. But what this book is really about is the dark side of creativity and the toxic call of fame. "As tightly coiled as a rattlesnake about to strike, Taff's screen-ready exploration of art, celebrity, and exploitation makes for stay-up-all-night reading. It's a knockout."

Yang, Alice Evelyn. [A Beast Slinks Towards Beijing](#) (William Morrow \$30). For readers of historical fiction here is a debut, a dark family saga rendered in folklore and prose of three generations who have navigated the occupation of Manchuria, the Cultural Revolution, and present day China. At the center is Qianza whose father disappeared when she was just eleven and one day much later returns fragile and with tales of bloody days as a Red Guard and of his mother's youth under the Japanese. To go with Qianza has to contend with fox spirits, a jackalope stalker, an albino hare, and a sinister prophecy—all ending for her in 2017 Manhattan having jumped around in time and between China and the US.

OUR JANUARY PAPERBACK PICKS

Boyle, William. [Saint of the Narrows Street](#) (\$20.95). Patrick reviews: "Boyle's rapidly become one of my favorite writers. As with Pelecanos and his DC-set novels, Boyle dissects America through the microcosm of one neighborhood in Brooklyn. The insular pull of the neighborhood, that sense that many of his working class characters feel trapped and yearn to escape (this runs through all of the books) leads to a lot of desperate schemes that usually don't work out so well. His new novel, his most ambitious to date, centers on one young woman's accidental killing of her abusive husband, her tragic mistake of covering up the crime, and the ramifications of this act of desperation played out over decades. Things get especially interesting when the young son grows up and becomes obsessed with finding his father. If you don't know Boyle's work start here."

Cavanagh, Steve. [Witness 8](#) (\$20). 22-year-old maid Ruby Johnson's financial troubles have reduced her to working in the kinds of Upper West Side homes she once lived in. Unassuming, she sees everyone's dirty secrets from the inside of their beautiful, renovated brownstones. But when Ruby witnesses

a murder, she has wicked plans in mind that begin when she recognizes an unnamed man gun down one of the residents on the street. Ruby retrieves the gun the killer abandoned in a garbage can and uses it to frame Dr. John Jackson, one of her employers, for the crime, then takes credit for tracking him down. Jackson retains street-wise con man turned attorney Eddie Flynn to fight the ensuing murder charge—a difficult proposition, considering Ruby managed to plant his fingerprints on the gun. Meanwhile, Flynn tries to dodge a hit put out on him by an unknown enemy, which draws out-of-town gunmen to New York once Flynn's mob boss friend ensures that no one local accepts the contract.

Finder, Joseph. [The Oligarch's Daughter](#) (\$19.99). Finder here demonstrates that he's not only a thriller writer but well versed in bad actors and bad deeds in business as well as politics. Paul Brightman is living under an assumed name in a small New Hampshire town when a Russian operative tries to kill him. Six years earlier, despite warnings from well-meaning friends, he married a beautiful photographer whose Russian father had amassed a fortune through questionable business dealings. Although Paul planned to keep his father-in-law at arm's length, he became immersed in a dangerous world, with the FBI hounding him to become an informant against the family of the woman he loves. In the present day, forced into survival mode, he takes to the woods, racing to stay one step ahead of the ever-present threat of a million-dollar bounty on his head. His only way out is to unravel a decades-old conspiracy. This isn't a standard political thriller plot but, as I already noted, tangles the characters in financial schemes as did, say, the best of Christopher Reich.

Gardner, Lisa. [Kiss Her Goodbye](#) (\$19.99). For her fourth mission finding missing people no one is looking for, Frankie Elkins shakes off a promising relationship and heads to Tucson. Recent Afghan refugee and young mother Sabera Ahmadi was last seen exiting her place of work three weeks ago. The local police have yet to open a case, while her older, domineering husband seems unconcerned. At the insistence of Sabera's closest friend, Frankie, unable to resist a mission, agrees to take up the search just in time for a video of Sabera to surface—showing her walking away from the scene of a brutal double murder. Frankie quickly notes there's much more to the Ahmadi family than meets the eye. The father Isaad is a brilliant mathematician, Sabera a gifted linguist, and their little girl Zahra has an uncanny ability to remember anything she sees. Which given everything that has happened during the girl's short life, may be a terrible curse. When Isaad also disappears under mysterious circumstances and an attempt is made on Zahra's life, Frankie realizes she must crack the code of this family's horrific past. Enjoy the boa constrictor and an iguana.

* Halls, Stacey. [Mrs. England](#) (Mira \$18.99). Here's a delight for historical fiction fans, what appears to be a slightly tinged Gothic wherein a young Norland nanny trained in London who refuses for reasons we gradually learn to emigrate with a family that loves her, ends up taking a hasty post in West Yorkshire mill country in a house with four children, light on staff, with an unusually involved father and a mostly secluded mother. It's 1904 and family structures are Edwardian. As are the roles of servants. How the story of nanny Ruby May and her family, and that of Mr. and Mrs. England and their families, unfold create the plot and several slowly revealed surprises. The detail is well rendered

and the setting atmospheric. The details of the Norland training remind me of, for example, the secretarial agency that employed Harriet Vane in Dorothy L. Sayers' *Strong Poison* (see Classics).

(Norland College is a British higher education provider based in Bath, Somerset, not London. The college is real and specializes in childcare, and is widely known for its prestigious training of nannies, nursery nurses and other childcare professionals, who are employed worldwide.)

Hillerman, Anne. [Shadow of the Solstice](#) (\$18.99). Hillerman nimbly juggles several investigations in her latest for Navajo investigators Joe Leaphorn, Jim Chee, and Bernadette Manuelito. When a man's battered body is discovered at an old uranium ore processing facility in the small community of Shiprock, New Mexico, Lieutenant Chee investigates how and why the victim ended up in the restricted area. Meanwhile, officer Manuelito arrives at the enclave of a cult whose stated mission is to save the planet, though she suspects a more sinister undercurrent to their beliefs. Another story line finds Manuelito's younger sister, Darleen, looking into the disappearance of one of her home health clients and the elderly woman's teenage grandson. To top it all off, the entire police department is on edge, gearing up for a visit from U.S. energy secretary Savanah Cooper. Hillerman neatly entwines the disparate plot strands, but the real draw is the kindness, quiet intelligence, and strong moral compass of the novel's central characters. The TV series *Dark Winds* is drawn from the Hillermans' books.

Hurwitz, Gregg. [Nemesis](#) (\$19). Tommy Stojack might be Evan's best friend in the world. He's a gifted gunsmith who has created much of Evan's own weapons and combat gear. But now, he has apparently crossed one of Evan's hardest lines and their argument explodes into open warfare. Now Evan has no choice but to track and face down his only friend. In the meantime, Tommy has left town in order to honor his own promise to help a dead friend's son. While Tommy is fighting to save the son with everything he's got, Evan arrives with vengeance in mind. But as deadly as the former Orphan X is, there is an even more dangerous threat about to arrive on the scene.... Truly Evan is never able to escape his past. And Hurwitz throws in a curve ball as to Evan's future.

Kellerman, Jonathan. [Open Season](#) (\$9.99). The body of an aspiring actress is found dumped near a hospital emergency room. She's been drugged and murdered and the motive for the callous crime remains maddeningly out of reach. Until, a prime suspect materializes. Another Hollywood hopeful. Only to be shot dead by a sniper using a weapon that turns out to have been catalogued in a previous murder. And another, before that. It's not long before more bodies begin piling up. What makes the murderous spree baffling for both psychologist Alex Delaware and the LAPD's Milo Sturgis is the apparent lack of connection among the victims. Is this the work of a random thrill killer, the toughest of all cases to unravel? This is aces, a wild ride through the city. Don't miss it.

Kerr, Jakob. [Dead Money](#) (\$18). Kerr puts his background as a lawyer and tech executive to good use in his impressively unpredictable debut, which was our February 2025 First Mystery Club Pick. Mackenzie Clyde, an attorney from humble beginnings, now works as an investigator for Hammersmith, one of San Francisco's hottest venture capital firms. When Trevor Canon, head of tech startup Journy, is discovered dead

in his office and the SFPD fail to make headway on the case, the founder of Hammersmith—whose firm made a \$5 billion investment in Journy—uses his influence to bring in the FBI. Mackenzie joins FBI agent Jameson Danner, the son of a U.S. senator, in leading the investigation, and the pair soon discovers that, before Trevor's death, he inserted a clause into his will freezing his assets (including Hammersmith's investment) until his murderer is caught. It gradually becomes clear that only a Journy executive would have had the access necessary to kill Trevor, but each one has an airtight alibi—except for the chief technology officer, who's just disappeared.... And then Kerr takes the narrative on a series of hairpin turns before arriving at a jaw-dropping finale.

* McAllister, Gillian. [Famous Last Words](#) (\$18.99) has a particularly stressful story proposition. You're a happily married London wife and mother. Imagine you've just dropped off your daughter at the nursery when you discover that your husband is part of a hostage situation in the city. Then imagine your surprise when you discover your husband isn't a hostage. He's the gunman. It gets worse. Seven years later, Adam's betrayal rears its ugly head again. Will Cam turn to amateur sleuthing to revisit this horrendous situation, or put everything behind her and find closure? McAllister uses her standard smooth and emotional style to make sure all the puzzle pieces click together. This is a fabulous, astonishingly plotted and compellingly written story.

McMahon, John. [Head Cases](#) (\$19). In a new series start, investigative savant Gardner Camden tracks a vigilante who targets serial killers. Camden—a member of the FBI's Patterns and Recognition team—has history with the vigilante's first victim, Ross Tignon, whom the investigator suspected of three murders in Florida a decade earlier. Though Camden believed Tignon died in a fire seven years ago, he'd instead moved to Texas, where a killer caught up with him. Before the team can make much progress on the Tignon case, rumors start swirling that their unit might be dissolved. Then another suspected serial killer turns up dead. With pressure boring down from all sides, the team comes to believe that the murderer has privileged information about unsolved serial killer cases—meaning that a member of the FBI is likely involved. McMahon introduces several clever wrinkles to this classic cat-and-mouse setup, while making the socially awkward Camden and his colleagues three-dimensional. For the sequel see Signed Books.

* Smith, Sally. [A Case of Mice and Murder](#) (\$16). At last, the paperback of the 2024 debut by UK barrister Smith, one of the gems of that year and one followed up with a sequel getting raves from me and other reviewers like Tom Nolan in the *Wall Street Journal*.

We are in May, 1901, London inside the Inner and Middle Temples where the Lord Chief Justice has been murdered. The reluctant sleuth is the Temple's brainiest and most reclusive barrister, under pressure from the Treasurer (i.e. Chairman) who threatens to turf him out of his decades-long home. In addition, our reluctant sleuth Gabriel Ward is enmeshed in a copyright case over a beloved and bestselling children's book featuring a mouse: *Millie, the Temple Church Mouse*. Smith, herself a barrister working in London's Temple complex, an ancient privilege where the police have to be invited in to investigate, writes a sly murder scene and investigation populated with eccentric men of law and their circle of women that reminds me of the marvelous [myster-](#)

[ies of Sarah Caudwell](#) now reprinted and well worth your time to read or reread. I love the wit and erudition of both authors as well as the remarkable worlds of the Temple and for Caudwell, Oxford as well.

Stabenow, Dana. [Abduction of a Slave](#) (\$18.99). Cleopatra has found her most able and trusted agent in Tetisheri, her Eye of Isis. And generally keeps Sheri near at hand. So when Tetisheri asks permission to visit the Kingdom of Cyrenaica, she is surprised – and suspicious – when her queen grants her leave from Alexandria. A middleman in Cyrenaica has ceased communication and Tetisheri's uncle, a master trader, is on a mission to find out why. But there are others in Cyrenaica with hidden agendas: Julius Caesar's spies, Caesar's sworn enemy Mettulus Scipio, and the ever duplicitous King Juba I. Tetisheri soon realizes why Cleopatra consented to her mission, for Cyrenaica is a web of intrigue that also includes Pompey's widow and an army readying to take on the might of Caesar, who is massing his legions in Sicily. With war on the horizon, Tetisheri's skills will be stretched to the limit as she also tries to decipher a murder mystery and possible fraud. The battle scene is amazing...and harrowing.

Thor, Brad. [Shadow of Doubt](#) (\$19) sends US asset Scot Harvath of the private intelligence Carlton Group back to Norway on what should have been R&R after his mission in the Ukraine detailed in 2023's [Dead Fall](#) (\$18.99). But it's not to be. First Harvath subdues a crazed passenger on his flight to Oslo. Then he's hijacked by the CIA at the airport with intent to blackmail him into spying on his fiancée, Sølvi, a Norwegian Intelligence officer currently charged with debriefing a Russian defector. Why? The CIA is justly alarmed over a Russian nuclear threat situated in Belarus. Next, Sølvi and the defector barely escape assassination from a supposedly safe house, bringing Harvath into her op despite his refusal. Meanwhile a French intelligence agent is killed in Paris, also the result of a security leak. So we have Norway, France, and the US on one hand and Russia and Belarus on another, all playing high stakes and in some cases treacherous games. There are magnificently choreographed action scenes, intense personal relationships, and devious plots to enjoy in this outstanding series entry.

Turow, Scott. [Presumed Guilty](#) (\$19.99) revisits a 77-year-old Rusty Sabich from the perspective of being himself 75 and I ask, how much of himself has he put into Sabich in a book that is both a legal thriller and a reflection on aging, a long eventful life, and a future, as well as what a swath of America—Midwestern America through the lens of a fictional county lying somewhere between Chicago, Wisconsin, and Minnesota—has become in his lifetime? Questions like what would things look like if a white couple in such a place adopted a Black baby who would grow up forever an outsider? How does the legal system tilt towards presuming such a man guilty of a shocking crime? How do later marriages and blended families work? There is a lot to unpack here.

Wade, Kevin. [Johnny Careless](#) (\$17.99). *Blue Bloods* showrunner Wade makes a splashy debut with this stirring procedural about a veteran cop's probe into the death of his former best friend. After a traumatizing case, Jeep Mullane leaves the NYPD to become the chief of a new police department in the wealthy part of Long Island where he grew up. While Jeep investigates a rash of car

thefts, his colleagues discover a faceless male corpse on a beach in the small town of Bayville. The dead man bears a tattoo that identifies him as Johnny Chambliss, Jeep's best friend from high school. Horrified, Jeep begins poking around Johnny's affluent family for answers and stumbles onto a frightening web of corruption. Wade smoothly toggles between Jeep's present-day investigation and his friendship with Johnny, shedding light on their class differences and the events that led them to lose touch in adulthood. Wade's gift for suspense is as well honed as one would expect from his film and TV credits—the real surprise is his character work, which goes deep enough that readers will find themselves thinking about Jeep and Johnny long after they've turned the final page. Haunting and heartbreaking, this is a winner." –*PW* Starred Review

Wendig, Chuck. [The Staircase in the Woods](#) (\$17). Four friends are haunted after another climbs a mysterious staircase and never comes down. Years later, they decide to rescue the boy they lost. What they find is a haunted house preying on their personal nightmares. "A coming-of-age story reminiscent of *Stranger Things* and *It*—plus all the perfect scary things that Wendig is known for." The hardcover was a very big seller here last April.

MORE JANUARY PAPERBACKS

Angoe, Yasmin. [Behind These Four Walls](#) (Alyson \$16.99). Isla Thorne had a rough start in life. Orphaned young, she spent her formative years in a group home where she met her best friend, Eden Galloway. At sixteen, they decide to run away to LA...but Eden never makes it. It's been ten years since Eden vanished. And Isla's determined to find her. She begins at the last place Eden visited: the Corrigan mansion in Virginia. Eden claimed to have unfinished business there. Posing as an aspiring journalist, Isla insinuates herself into the wealthy family's home and begins searching for the truth. The more she digs, the more Isla discovers Eden isn't who she thought she was. Was she even a victim, or did Eden plan this all along?

Bennett, Robert Jackson. [A Drop of Corruption](#) (\$20). In the canton of Yarrowdale, at the very edge of the Empire's reach, a Treasury officer has disappeared into thin air—vanishing from a room within a heavily guarded tower, its door and windows locked from the inside. To solve the case, the Empire calls on its most brilliant and mercurial detective, the great Ana Dolabra. At her side, as always, is her bemused assistant Dinios Kol. Ana soon discovers that they are investigating not a disappearance but a murder—and one of surpassing cunning. "This Holmes and Watson-like investigative duo are compelling to follow, and the truly epic fantasy world where the series is set, with its falling empire, corrupt politics, and magic pharmacopeia engineered from monster blood, takes the familiarity of mystery and creates a truly fantastic fever-dream of a world and a story."—*Library Journal* Starred Review

Bernet, Katie. [Beth Is Dead](#) (Simon Schuster YA Publishing \$19.99). Having written to you about Jane Austen adjacent books in December, I now note a book written for Teens by reimagining *Little Women* for today. I'm not a big fan of reimagined fiction but this novel, adding a murder mystery plot to the classic March family story by Alcott, is well done. Aspiring author Jo has a huge social media following. Artist Amy is desperate to study in Europe but needs money from her aunt that

has been earmarked for Beth. Meg has a questionable boyfriend. And Beth, Beth is dead. The March patriarch is missing having published a controversial bestseller about his daughters. Neighbor Theodore Laurence has been attached to two of the sisters. How will this play out?

Berry, Steve. [The List](#) (\$18.99). A standalone novel in the vein of John Grisham, even David Baldacci, draws upon Steve's years practicing law in St Mary's, Georgia, a company town. That paper mill is long gone. Here we have, after a ten-year self-imposed exile as a prosecutor in Atlanta, Brent Walker is returning home to Concord, a quaint town in central Georgia nestled close to the Savannah River. Two years ago, his father died, and now Brent, hired by Southern Republic Pulp and Paper Company as its assistant general counsel, is returning to care for his ailing mother. For decades, Southern Republic has invested heavily in Concord, creating a thriving community where its employees live, work, and retire. It all looks serene and thriving. But it isn't, thanks to the list....

Bischoff, Sash. [Sweet Fury](#) (\$18) will interest any F. Scott Fitzgerald fan: obsessive love, misogyny, deceit, revenge — dig in. Then there's the film industry background, the probing of Hollywood's dark underbelly. Margot Livesey says, "I love what it reveals about contemporary mores, about our love of cinema and the way we still too often judge women as either heroines or victims." Thirty-something movie star Lila Crayne has long dreamed of starring in a feminist retelling of F. Scott Fitzgerald's *Tender Is the Night*. She's finally made it happen, with her fiancé, Kurt Royall, as director. In preparation for the role, she undergoes psychotherapy with Jonah Gabriel, claiming Kurt is abusing her. Jonah, who met Lila while they were students at Princeton, has a long-standing obsession with her, which threatens his relationship with his fiancée, Maggie. Lila, meanwhile, will stop at nothing to make the film about 'female empowerment,' and she manipulates those working on the film, including the screenwriter, to tell the story the way she wants it. As Jonah fantasizes about saving Lila, Kurt and Maggie begin piecing together competing and distorted versions of the truth, as Maggie secretly reads Jonah's notes from his sessions with Lila, and Lila threatens to spill the beans about Kurt's alleged abuse. Bischoff reveals one surprising secret after another, all the way until the bombshell final twist.

* Boyd, Damien. [Blast from the Past](#) (Thomas & Mercer \$16.99). I am a fan of UK lawyer Boyd's briskly paced, no-nonsense procedurals as will be any of you who watch British cop shows like *Blue Lights*.

It is 1986. Assigned to a new Cold Case Unit, retired Detective Inspector Mungo 'Bob' Willis has reopened the investigation into the 1962 disappearance of a nine-year-old boy. Paul Bromfield was snatched from one of the last steam trains from Evercreech Junction to Burnham-on-Sea and later found dead in an abandoned bunker. A day at the seaside turned to tragedy. And a child's name everyone remembers. The killer has been watching—waiting for this moment. When another child vanishes and chilling messages begin to arrive, Bob finds himself caught in a dangerous game. With time running out, he must decipher clues that have been hidden in plain sight for decades; clues that point to the lasting fallout of a forgotten nightmare.

Cole, Kamilah. [An Arcane Inheritance](#) (Poisoned Pen Press \$18.99 Deluxe Edition). The Indie Next Pick says, "I absolutely

devoured this. A twisty, mysterious novel full of magic, intrigue, friendship and an enemies-to-maybe lovers romance. Cole pulls back the sheen of college grandeur to expose the darkly racist and elitist underbelly."

Gaylin, Alison. [We Are Watching](#) (\$18.99). Meg Russo and her husband, Justin, own a bookstore in the small town of Elizabethville, N.Y. The couple lives a quiet life with their 18-year-old daughter, Lily, a musician intent on following in the footsteps of her off-the-grid grandfather, who achieved minor rock stardom years earlier. While driving to Ithaca, N.Y., to move Lily into college, the family gets in a nasty car crash; Justin dies, and Meg, who was behind the wheel, blames herself. Back in Elizabethville, she finds the bookshop vandalized and videos across the internet accusing her and her family of practicing Satanism. Quickly realizing that she, Justin, and Lily have become the targets of a QAnon-like conspiracy cult, Meg wrestles with revealing secrets she's been hiding from her daughter for decades, including the story behind a book Meg published when she was a teenager, and details about Lily's grandfather. Gaylin matches her lucid, propulsive prose with crackerjack plotting.

Gervais, Simon/Ryan Steck. [The Second Son](#) (Thomas & Mercer \$16.99). Soldier-turned-sommelier Chase Burke may have traded his rifle for bottles of wine and some peace, but then his intelligence analyst brother is killed in a covert op gone wrong and branded a traitor and a brutal ambush at the restaurant where Chase works leaves the woman he is romantically involved with—a congresswoman—clinging to life. Scrambling to clear the family name and protect his secret love, Chase teams up with NYPD Detective Alice Doyle, a single mother fighting battles of her own. Together they uncover a powerful criminal syndicate whose unscrupulous influence sweeps the globe—and strikes close to home. I like this concept of soldier-turned-sommelier and report that several thriller writers recommend this book.

* Godfrey, Jennie. [The List of Suspicious Things](#) (Sourcebooks \$17.99). Twelve-year-old Miv is panicking. Life has been complicated since her mom got sick, and now her dad is talking about wanting to move their family away from the town Miv has lived in her whole life—because of the murders. Young women are dying, everyone is afraid, and no one knows who the culprit might be. But as far as Miv is concerned, leaving Yorkshire and her best friend Sharon simply isn't an option, no matter the dangers lurking round their way; or the strangeness at home that started the day Miv's mum stopped talking. So the two girls decide to investigate by making a list of suspicious things and inevitably get in way over their heads. The Indie Next Nomination says, "A perfect blend of a fascinating and heartstring pulling coming-of-age with a gripping mystery. It's the kind of book that grabs you early and doesn't let go."

Hendrix, Grady. [Witchcraft for Wayward Girls](#) (\$19). "A beautifully haunting, thought-provoking story about societal views and motherhood that dabbles with witchcraft. There are moments where you laugh, feel scared, and even cry. That's the beauty of this book: everything comes with a price."

Israel, Steve. [The Einstein Conspiracy](#) (Compass Rose \$23.95). Hitler's obsession with Einstein is the impetus for this historical thriller. Based on actual events, *The Einstein Conspiracy* pits two FBI agents against a cunning undercover operative on a mission to

abduct Albert Einstein, who Hitler believes holds the key to building the atomic bomb. Agents James Amos and Harry Weiss plunge into a showy, surreal America where Nazi rallies take place in the iconic Madison Square Garden, and small, once quaint villages have transformed into mini fascist utopias; appearances are not only deceiving, but deadly. The Einstein Conspiracy is a gripping historical thriller, rich in chilling detail and haunting reminders of a moment in American history when the line between foreign enemy and domestic threat was perilously thin.

* La Plante, Lynda. [The Scene of the Crime](#) (Zaffre \$21.99). Introducing CSI Jessica Russell in the first of a new forensic thriller series. The husband of a prominent and infamously ruthless barrister is found in horrific condition after a robbery and brutal assault. Now in a coma, a major investigation is launched using the newly formed, experimental Metropolitan Police Serious Crime Analysis Unit. Jessica Russell is an experienced CSI with degrees in psychology and criminology with an exceptional Masters in Investigative psychology and behaviour analysis. But Jessica's first job as team leader of MSCAN is entirely new to her: to bring together a team of three trusted officers. Between them, the team has dealt with every kind of murder and major crime scene.

Lynda's original script for the much-acclaimed *Prime Suspect* won awards from BAFTA, Emmys, British Broadcasting and Royal Television Society as well as the 1993 Edgar Allan Poe Award. And created an iconic role for Helen Mirren.

Marrs, John. [Dead in the Water](#) (Thomas & Mercer \$16.99). What if you found life flashing before your eyes—including terrifying scenes you don't remember? When Damon survives a near-drowning, his life flashes before his eyes. Every memory is crystal clear—except one. A dead boy. A face he can't place. A moment he doesn't remember living. At first he tells himself it's a trick of the mind. But everything else he saw was real. So why not this? With his waking life stalked by the disturbing scene, confusion quickly turns to obsession. Desperate for answers, Damon digs into his fractured past, and becomes convinced that the only way to remember...is to die again. And again. And again. When he meets a perfect stranger who's all too willing to help, the stage is set for his dice with death.

Mosley, Walter. [Been Wrong So Long it Feels Like Right](#) (\$19.99). Patrick writes, "I really admire what Mosley is doing with these Joe King Oliver books. In the third installment, the former NYC police officer turned private investigator is given a special task by his 90+ year-old grandmother: she wants Oliver to find his father so she can see him one last time before she dies. The last time Oliver saw his old man was when he was a child and his father incarcerated. Meanwhile, Oliver takes another case to find a woman and her child who fled from her husband in California. A terrific read and classic Mosley."

Roberts, Nora. [Shadowed Vows](#) (\$19.99) is a reissue. Bailey James wakes up with a bag full of cash, a gun, and a glittering blue diamond, but no memories. She must be running from something, but she doesn't know what. Desperate for help, she heads to the first detective office she can find and hopes that PI Cade Parris is someone she can trust. Bailey doesn't have much of a choice if she wants to find answers. As they struggle to reclaim her identity, can Bailey convince Cade that she's not a criminal... and deserving of his love?

Rose, Karen. [Knife in the Back](#) (\$19). Officer Naomi Cranston was framed for stealing cocaine from the evidence locker and coerced—through threats to her young son—into not fighting the charges. After five years in prison, she has tried to put the ordeal behind her, but the crooks who framed her have returned, this time demanding she move drugs along with her flower shop's deliveries. They threaten her son once again, but this time she's not capitulating quietly. She hires Broussard Investigations to protect her and her son, to prove her innocence, and to put the real bad guys away. As a former cop, Burke Broussard is well aware of the corruption in the New Orleans police department. He had always believed Naomi Cranston to be guilty and isn't inclined to take her case. Until he sits down to listen to her side of things.

Rother, Caitlin. [Hooked](#) (Thomas & Mercer \$16.99). When investigative reporter Katrina Chopin and surfing homicide detective Ken Goode lock eyes, there's an immediate attraction. Sparks fly as they bond over cocktails, sharing their common experiences of being orphans and losing loved ones to suicide. But the next time they meet, it's from opposing sides of a high-profile case. Two biotech execs, whose company is developing a groundbreaking sexual enhancement drug, turn up dead in the wealthy seaside enclave of La Jolla Farms, where Goode can readily see that the forensic evidence doesn't add up. As they work their own angles, sometimes together and sometimes at odds, their growing attraction threatens to cost them their jobs—and their lives.

Spotswood, Stephen. [Dead in the Frame](#) (\$18). Bisexual sleuth Willowjean "Will" Parker must clear her boss, Lillian Pentecost, of a phony murder charge in 1940s New York City. After returning from an idyllic vacation with her girlfriend, Parker finds Pentecost being led from her home in handcuffs. The senior detective has been charged with killing wealthy eccentric Jessup Quincannon, a collector of memorabilia connected with infamous murders. Quincannon died during one of his notorious Black Museum soirées, where his crime-obsessed acquaintances gather to discuss the art of murder; Pentecost was invited to the event and feared the topic of conversation would be the brutal murder of her own mother. Motive and opportunity point to Pentecost as Quincannon's killer, and she's sent to the NYC Women's House of Detention to await trial. Will, meanwhile, is certain of her mentor's innocence, and pokes around some of Manhattan's most unsavory upper-crust circles to prove it.