

BOOKNEWS from

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

Volume 38, Number 4

February Booknews 2026

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

<http://poisonedpen.com>

4014 N. Goldwater Blvd.

Scottsdale, AZ 85251

480-947-2974



FEBRUARY CELEBRATES ROMANCE

And Black History Too

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.

MONDAY FEBRUARY 2 6:00 PM Virtual Book Launch

Jonathan Kellerman with Patrick

Kellerman discusses [Jigsaw](#) (Random House \$30)

An Alex Delaware Novel

Signed books available

TUESDAY FEBRUARY 3 7:00 PM Live Event

Kaira Rouda with host Olivia Fierro

Rouda discusses [We Were Never Friends](#) (Sourcebooks \$18.99)

SATURDAY FEBRUARY 7 10:00 AM Live Event

Local Author Fair

Support independently published local authors

TUESDAY FEBRUARY 10 7:00 PM Live Event

Christopher Farnsworth discusses [Robert B Parker's Big Shot](#) (Putnam \$30)

A Robert B. Parker's Jesse Stone Novel

WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 11 7:00 PM Live Event

Gregg Hurwitz with host John Sandford

Hurwitz discusses [Antihero](#) (St Martins Press \$30)

An Orphan X novel

THURSDAY FEBRUARY 12 7:00 PM Live Ticketed Event

Brad Thor and Ward Larsen

They discuss their thriller [Cold Zero](#) (Atria \$30)

Location: The Poisoned Pen

Tickets (will call only):

[\\$30 admits one with one book](#)

[\\$35 admits two people with one book](#)

FRIDAY FEBRUARY 13 7:00 PM Live and Virtual Event

SciFi Friday Club hosts author Rosalie Lin and discusses her book [Daughter of Calamity](#) (St Martins \$29)

SATURDAY FEBRUARY 14 4:00 PM Live Event

A Love and Murder Party—Be Our Valentine

Treats. Bring valentines to share with other readers

Susan Elizabeth Phillips discusses [And the Crowd Went Wild](#) (Harper \$30)

Susan Walter discusses [Murder at 30,000 Feet](#) (Blackstone \$29.99)

A locked airplane murder on Flight 868 with nonstop service to San Juan, Puerto Rico

MONDAY FEBRUARY 16 7:00 PM Live Book Launch

Mark Greaney with host Jack Stewart

Greaney discusses [The Hard Line](#) (Berkley \$31)

The Gray Man

TUESDAY FEBRUARY 17 6:00 PM Virtual Book Launch

Steve Berry with host James Rollins

Berry discusses [The Devil's Bible](#) (Grand Central \$30)

Cotton Malone

Signed books available

WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 18 7:00 PM Live Event

Mary Kubica with host Olivia Fierro

Kubica discusses [It's Not Her \(Deluxe Limited Edition\)](#) (Park Row \$30)

THURSDAY FEBRUARY 19 5:00 PM Virtual Event

Jennifer Breedlove with John

Breedlove discusses her award-winning debut [Murder Will Out](#) (St Martins \$28)

Signed books available

THURSDAY FEBRUARY 19 7:00 PM Virtual Event

Caitlin Rother with Patrick

Rother discusses [Hooked](#) (Thomas & Mercer \$16.99)

An investigation with investigative reporter Katrina Chopin and surfing homicide detective Ken Goode

FRIDAY FEBRUARY 20 7:00 PM Live Event**A Trio of Authors from the Creepy Book Club Convention****Kelly Mullen** discusses [This Is Not a Game](#) (Penguin \$29)**Courtney Psak** discusses [The Tutor](#) (\$17.99)**Jennifer Van der Kleut** discusses [The Better Mother](#) (Crooked Lane \$29.99)/ [The Better Mother](#) (Crooked Lane \$19.99)**SATURDAY FEBRUARY 21 10:30 AM Live and Virtual Event****Croak & Dagger Club** discusses Hannah Richelle's [The Search Party](#) (\$17.99)**MONDAY FEBRUARY 23 7:00 PM LIVE OFFSITE BOOK LAUNCH****CJ Box** discusses [The Crossroads](#) (Putnam \$32)

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

Free to attend but admission to the signing line is only for those who purchased a copy of *The Crossroads* from The Poisoned Pen in advance or at the event**TUESDAY FEBRUARY 24 7:00 PM Live Book Launch****Join a duo of authors with Paige Shelton as host****Jenn McKinlay** discusses [Booking for Trouble](#) (Berkley \$30)

A Library Lovers Mystery

Tracy Sierra discusses [Warning Signs](#) (Viking \$30)

A chilling thriller

WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 25 7:00 PM Live Event**Paula Lafferty with Dana Stabenow****Lafferty** discusses [The Once and Future Queen](#) (Erewhon \$32

Deluxe Limited Edition)

The Lives of Guinevere #1

THURSDAY FEBRUARY 26 7:00 PM Live Event**Hardboiled Crime** discussed Hansjorg Schneider, [The Basel Killings](#) (Bitter Lemon Press \$15.95)**SATURDAY FEBRUARY 28 11:00 AM Live Event****The Cookbook Club** discusses Samin Nosrat's [Good Things](#) (Random House \$45)

Bring a recipe from the book to share

SATURDAY FEBRUARY 28 4:00 PM Live Book Launch**Dana Stabenow** discusses [The Harvey Girl](#) (Bloomsbury \$29.99)

Starts an historical series

First 200 to order get a nifty sheet of stickers

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 monthOliver, MK. [A Sociopath's Guide to a Successful Marriage](#)**Cozy Crimes Club** One Unsigned hardcover or paperback per monthConnelly, Lucy. [The Curious Case of the Poisoned Professor](#)**Crime Collectors Club** Book of the Month Club One Signed First Printing per monthWalter, Susan. [Murder at 30,000 Feet](#)**First Mystery Club** One Signed First Printing per monthKelly, Pat. [Rifle Season](#)**Hardboiled/Noir Club** One Signed First Printing per monthCollins, Max Allan. [Return of the Maltese Falcon](#)**Historical Fiction Club** One First Printing per monthStabenow, Dana. [The Harvey Girl](#)**Historical Fiction Paperback Club** One Unsigned paperback per monthChevalier, Jennifer. [The Winter Witch](#)**Notable New Fiction Club** One Signed First Printing per monthLafferty, Paula. [The Once and Future Queen](#)**Romance and Relationships Club** One unsigned hardcover or paperback per monthPhillips, Susan Elizabeth. [And the Crowd Went Wild](#)**SIGNED BOOKS**Adams, Taylor. [Her Last Breath](#) (Harper \$30). Out February 24 but our **March Crime Subscription Club Pick**. This one is so full of danger, adrenaline, and twists it left me breathless.

After years of excuses, Tess has finally agreed to go caving with her best friend Allie. Their lives have diverged sharply since high school—Allie is a self-made travel influencer, while Tess is a shy (and claustrophobic) legal assistant struggling to pay for law school. Maybe she's a little jealous of Allie's globe-trotting life. Who wouldn't be? As Tess and Allie descend into the depths, they realize they're not alone. A stranger who claims to be a fellow caver harasses them. Confident, take-no-shit Allie insults the guy—and he retaliates. Soon, Tess is trapped

inside a narrow crawl space hundreds of feet underground, fighting to stay alive. Twenty-four hours later, a hospitalized Tess recounts her harrowing story. As Tess's tale unfolds, however, Washington notices discrepancies and wonders what the young woman might be hiding. "Adams expertly manipulates readers' expectations, neatly dropping in clues and surprises that cast suspicion in new directions. The result is a visceral tale of daring and deceit that will keep even seasoned suspense fans on their toes." It certainly did mine.

Berry, Steve. [The Devil's Bible](#) (Grand Central \$30). U.S. Justice Department operative Cotton Malone is happily operating a book-store in Copenhagen. Soon, however, he's called back to action

by his old boss and friend Stephanie Nelle. She tells Cotton that Princess Lysa, the sister of Swedish King Wilhelm I, is being held ransom an 800-year-old book, the *Codex Gigas*—the largest illuminated medieval manuscript in the world. Claimed as war loot from Bohemia in 1648, it's been kept in Stockholm for nearly 400 years. Along the way it also acquired another more mysterious moniker ... *The Devil's Bible*. The Swedes believe that Russian agents are behind the kidnapping and plan to give the book to the Czech Republic in exchange for that country's continued efforts to block Sweden from joining NATO. Russia may have gotten inside information about the captive royal from her husband, John Westlake, a suspected Russian sleeper agent. Malone, along with his love interest and former colleague Cassiopeia Vitt, sets out to thwart the extortion scheme, knocking plenty of heads along the way and filled with daring escapes and derring-do.

Box, C J. [The Crossroads](#) (Putnam \$32) begins with an ambush. Joe's wife Marybeth gets a call informing her that a bullet-riddled Game and Fish vehicle, possibly Joe's, was spotted on an isolated road with somebody inside. An anonymous hunter has called it in to the Sheriff's Department. Joe is soon identified as the victim, and his wounds, including a shot to the head, require a Medevac to the trauma center in Montana where the neurosurgeon puts him in a coma. On the scene along with Marybeth are the Picketts' daughter April, who is working with our old friend PI Cassie Dewell, and Cassie herself. In the end April joins her sisters Sheridan and Lucy to find his assailants. We readers know who the shooters are, two dummies for hire, but we all have to learn who hired them, with a focus on three major ranches at the ambush crossroads. As is often true in this series, the nature of Wyoming itself is crucial to the plot.

Breedlove, Jennifer K. [Murder Will Out](#) (St Martins \$28). Breedlove wins the latest First Crime Novel Award sponsored by the MWA and St. Martins/Minotaur with a paranormal-tinted mystery set on an island off the coast of Maine. It is not as cozy as other old houses peopled with a ghost or ghosts stories. Willow Stone, 28, is surprised to receive a letter from her godmother, Sue Davis, after hearing nothing from the older woman for 15 years. Sue's letter asks Willow to return to Little North Island, where Willow spent summers as a child. When a quick internet search reveals that Sue died shortly after writing the missive, Willow feels compelled to head east for her funeral. After arriving on Little North, she's ensnared in long-standing feuds about the ownership of Cameron House, a rambling mansion passed down through multiple generations of the island's founding family until former owner Effie Cameron left it to Sue with the request that she operate it as a historical society. This bequest set many tongues wagging. Now, Sue's death has dug up fresh questions about the mansion's ownership, which intensify when someone in the mix to inherit the property turns up dead. Horrified, Willow works to get to the bottom of the case, receiving unexpected help from the ghosts who haunt the mansion. Breedlove supplies enough suspects, red herrings, and family secrets to keep readers guessing until the final page.

Burke, James Lee. [The Hadacol Boogie](#) (Grove \$30). When a cloaked, disfigured man leaves a dead woman in a garbage bag on Dave Robicheaux's property, he knows his world and family are about to change. With Valerie Benoit, a detective new to the Iberia Parish Sheriff's Department who is grappling with sexist and racist harassment from their colleagues, and the volatile but

fiercely loyal Clete Purcel, Dave embarks on an investigation that brings him into the most dangerous moments of his career and threatens the lives of Valerie and his daughter Alafair. He encounters a local handyman who leaves cryptic notes and warns of the ghosts who roam the shores of the bayou and is targeted by a vicious New Orleans button man and gangsters from the north. Through brilliant prose and a quintessential cast of characters, veteran author Burke weaves a portrait of a gritty, violent Louisiana at the turn of the 20th century.

Dean, Will. [Adrift](#) (Atria \$29). Out mid February but Will visits us from the dark woods of Sweden on March 5. His personal story is amazing and he is dazzling so I urge you to calendar this special occasion. And preorder *Adrift* as we could run short.

Will has made his name as an international star with intensely crafted studies of characters facing creeping dread, isolated, often in hostile environments and facing crimes in the locked-room plot structure. His fans include Lisa Jewell, Ruth Ware, and Janice Hallett. He's also done a series led by Tuva Moodyson, deaf reporter at the local paper, set in Sweden, a bit more traditional. And now here he sets down a pair of aspiring writers on an isolated and somewhat ruinous canal boat with their son who's been bullied because of his small physique and the family's poverty that makes him a target of more affluent students. The father, Drew, is despite all evidence relentlessly determined to write and publish a major book. When Peggy has more success Drew becomes ever more controlling and moves their boat away from the community, further isolating them. Inevitably this spiral becomes too much for Peggy to take and catastrophe builds. This is not an original concept but in Dean's expert hands you can't look away from the building tension and inevitable blow up. What's also different is that Drew started out as a decent guy, not an abuser, which makes it harder to break from him.

Maybe fan Stacy Willingham captures this best: "Steeped in a sense of impending dread, *Adrift* is an astute character study of one family's slow unravel as their houseboat floats further and further away from civilization. Will Dean has mastered the art of chronic unease; I was holding my breath the entire time."

Evans, Marina. [The Cheerleader](#) (Pegasus \$29.95). Signed on January 26 and good reading for the February 8 Super Bowl.

The Dallas Lonestars Cheerleaders are untouchable. They are the epitome of glitz and glamour, reeking of hairspray and perfection. But everything changes when America's Angel and cheerleading captain Jentry Rae Randall is found murdered in the squad's locker room. Filmmaker Nikki Keegan has the opportunity of a lifetime. Brought in to document the Lonestars' potential comeback after four disastrous seasons, Nikki is now perfectly placed to investigate the murder of the team's iconic frontwoman. Nikki turns to cheerleader Shaunette Simmons, the deceased's best friend, for help. As Nikki becomes closer to Shaunette, she suspects that Shaunette is hiding something. But when Shaunette is run off the road and left to die, it's clear that someone else will kill to get to get on the squad. Or....

Farnsworth, Christopher. [Robert B Parker's Big Shot](#) (Penguin \$30). Fresh off an acquittal in a multibillion-dollar fraud case, Ramsey Devlin doesn't think the law applies to him. This becomes apparent when Paradise Police Chief Jesse Stone finds him passed out, drunk, and on the side of the road in a McLaren worth

more than most people's homes. After Devlin takes a swing at him and Jesse swiftly dumps him in the drunk tank, Jesse realizes he's made an enemy. Devlin then makes it his life's mission to use his money and influence to provoke Jesse. And thanks to a few big campaign donations, he's got Jesse's nemesis, Gary Armistead, the mayor of Paradise, on his side. Devlin's even got Molly Crane, Jesse's deputy chief, wanting to act on her violent urges. When Devlin vanishes, and bloodstains are found on the carpet of his monstrous seaside mansion, Jesse finds himself the main suspect in Devlin's disappearance. Suspended from his position as chief, Jesse has to work out what's going on to reclaim his life...and avoid jail time.

Greaney, Mark. [The Hard Line](#) (Berkley \$31). What happens when an apex predator becomes prey? The Gray Man is about to find out. Court Gentry's current family operates out of an office park in Norfolk, Virginia. The Ghost Town is an off-the-books direct action team run by Matt Hanley, former CIA Deputy Director. They take on the jobs the Agency needs handled "discretely," and those jobs are rolling in. Somewhere at the top of the US Intelligence apparatus, security experts and intelligence operations worldwide are threatened. It starts with a blown safe house in Tunis. Then Court himself barely escapes from an ambush in the jungles of Nicaragua. Now key members of the U.S. counterintelligence community are being assassinated in their own neighborhoods. With the feds compromised, it's up to Court and his team to stop the hit squads. But eliminating professional kill teams may be the least of the Gray Man's worries when he finds himself targeted by the legendary assassin codenamed Whetstone—a man driven out of retirement by a very personal quest to rain down hellfire on Court and everyone he's ever loved, starting with the father he hasn't seen in twenty years.

Groff, Lauren. [Brawler: Stories](#) (Penguin \$29). "Thrillingly complex, wickedly strong girls and women populate the worlds of Groff's third story collection. In total command of her characters' nuances and the gray space they find themselves in, Groff shares brief, cryptic yet revealing notes about each story at book's end, for the cherry on top." —*Booklist* Starred Review. We have a limited number of Signed copies.

Hirahara, Naomi. [Crown City](#) (Soho \$29.95). This new Japantown Mystery will be Signed here March 16 with Sujata Massey publishes February 17. Please pick up at the store or preorder to ship to you when Signed.

Hurwitz, Gregg. [Antihero](#) (St Martins \$30). Orphan X, aka Evan Smoak, the former Black ops assassin using his operational rules and skills to help the desperate who have nowhere else to turn, flies to New York City when billionaire Luke Devine (a sort of Elon Musk but maybe nicer, perhaps more powerful) has a psychological break. X is also dealing with the death of his best friend and armorer, Tommy Stojak (see 2025's *X, Nemesis*). Plus in this book's opener he rescues a kid called Lesandro from almost certain death as an innocent bystander in an LA gang war. Switch back to NYC where a young woman is kidnapped off the subway and likely faces brutalizing and death. In his role as the Nowhere Man, X is tasked by a woman who might have saved her, a woman allied with Devine, to rescue the girl without resorting to killing. Can he do that? How to balance protection and vengeance, and deal out justice, with at least a measure of mercy is the conundrum at the heart of this chapter in X's life.

Kellerman, Jonathan. [Jigsaw](#) (Random House \$30). The challenge here for psychologist Alex Delaware, police consultant, and the LAPD's Lt. Milo Sturgis lies in the brutal deaths of three women, three apparently unrelated murders—but are they? The first, that of 31-year-old Sophie, a widow, is discovered strangled at her kitchen table. There is little in the way of violence—Sophie was a fitness enthusiast—and three smoked cigarette butts are sitting in a dish sitting in front of her, no ashtrays in sight anywhere. So the killer must have been the smoker? Her boyfriend? Almost immediately a call comes in about another in-home strangulation, this victim having both her arms severed as well. Shockingly, Martha proves to be a former LAPD Homicide detective, among the first women to get the shield. Her house is a shocker too, a hoarder's lair. Then a few weeks later, Martha's middle aged, developmentally delayed daughter, is found in a landfill, her head bashed in. Can these deaths be deemed merely coincidental? Not with Alex Delaware on the case(s)....

Kelly, Pat. [Rifle Season](#) (Atria \$28). Our **February First Mystery Pick** is just the book you want to read while awaiting the new CJ Box on February 23. Why? "Nature and hunting advocates will devour this book as will fans of fast-paced, explosive, second-chance thrillers."

This debut has high action, a wilderness setting, 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.

Kubica, Mary. [It's Not Her \(Deluxe Limited Edition\)](#) (Park Row \$30). Courtney Gray's peaceful vacation turns into a nightmare when she discovers her brother and sister—in—law dead in their lakeside cottage. Her niece Reese is missing. Her nephew Wyatt is asleep upstairs—unharmed. As police swarm the quiet resort, dark truths about Courtney's family—and the town itself—begin to surface. Is Reese a victim... or the killer? If you love locked room mysteries with true crime vibes, then this one will grip you from the start.

"A family vacation takes a deadly turn and will have you questioning everything and everyone in this chilling, fast-paced thriller. Wickedly smart and incredibly twisted, *It's Not Her* hooked me from the start and never let go!"—Ashley Elston

Lafferty, Paula. [The Once and Future Queen \(Deluxe Limited Edition\)](#) (Kensington \$32). 22-year-old Vera is at a crossroads: waiting tables, grieving her previous relationship, and jogging aimlessly each morning as if toward an uncertain future. Then an odd man shows up at her workplace, insisting that she was once the legendary Queen Guinevere of Camelot, and that her lost memories hold the key to changing both the past and the present. Somehow, it all feels like the direction she's been looking for. But when she asks the mysterious man to tell her more about Lancelot, Arthur, and a faithless queen, he can only say that much of what she's heard about Camelot is wrong. The truth, he claims, is something she must see for herself. After jumping through a portal in Glastonbury's historic center, Vera is not prepared for what she finds. Magic is everywhere, but a curse on the kingdom

means it dwindle every day. She has no idea how to perform a queen's duties. Her fast friendship with Lancelot sets gossip flowing, and the stranger she must call "husband" often refuses to meet her eye. Arthur is a puzzle: cold, forbidding, and, while angry to her face, keeps leaving secret tokens of tenderness in her chambers. Worst of all, Vera's memories—and the answers locked within them—show no signs of returning

"Lafferty successfully weaves together multiple genres in this story of King Arthur's time as seen through the eyes of a modern-day Guinevere. Like Vera, the reader does not have to be an expert on Arthurian legend to follow the story. The fresh takes on legendary characters and propulsive plot twists make this a page-turner that will leave readers hoping for a sequel. An original and fascinating take on the romance of Arthur and Guinevere." —*Kirkus Reviews*

Lasky, Kathryn. [Sacred Light](#) (Severn House \$29.99). I am a serious fan of this series by noted children's author Lasky bringing to life a major artist and a glorious landscape in adult fiction, a good companion to the novels of Tony and Anne Hillerman. New Mexico, 1937. Painter Georgia O'Keeffe is excited for her trip to the intriguing wilderness of the Bisti Badlands—a common site for archaeological excavations, it's a historical place with enchanting desertscape but also perilous natural structures. Her trip is overshadowed by the sad news of her friend and native Juan Nez going missing. No one knows where he is, and it's unlikely he's gotten lost. He knows these lands like the back of his hand. Has something happened to him and, if so, was it an accident, or has a horrible crime taken place? Trying to make sense of the situation, Georgia seeks solace in her art, but soon comes face-to-face with a dangerous reality and an even deadlier disaster.

If you missed earlier books you can catch up with [Mortal Radiance](#) (\$18.99) and [A Slant of Light](#) (\$16.99)

McKinlay, Jenn. [Booking for Trouble](#) (Berkley \$30). Just off the shores of the coastal Connecticut town of Briar Creek are two small islands, which library director Lindsey Norris visits with her new book-boat, inspired by the bookmobiles she's seen traveling across the country. Nothing, not even the infamous feud between the families who own the Split Islands, can stop Lindsey from getting books into the hands of readers. But when Lindsey and her boat captain husband, Mike Sullivan, discover a body on the rocky outcropping of one of the islands, Lindsey's new library venture quickly becomes a murder investigation. At news of the crime, hostilities between the two families are reignited. To salvage her book-boat dream Lindsey must solve/resolve this in the latest Library Lovers Mystery.

Morrow, Bethany C. [The Body](#) (Tor \$27.99). Up for supernatural horror? Mavis broke from her parents' congregation years ago, but she still hasn't recovered. Their impossible expectations and soul-shredding critiques have dug deep into her mind. Now Mavis is afraid she's about to lose the only thing she has: her husband, Jerrod. The man she's always known was too good to be true. No one thinks she deserves him—not even after surviving the serial cheater they wanted her to stick by—and soon they'll all find out they were right. Mavis is already unraveling when a brush with death shows her what real fear looks like. Soon, she's under constant attack from all directions. As the assaults turn increasingly vicious and bizarre, Mavis realizes that Hell isn't reserved for the afterlife....

Mullen, Kelly. [This is Not a Game](#) (Penguin \$29). Kelly joined us in 2025 with this debut set on Mackinac Island. A grandmother and estranged granddaughter who is getting over the heartbreak of not only being dumped by her fiancé, Brian, but also being cut out of the deal for the brilliantly successful video game Murderscape they invented together (with Addie doing most of the heavy lifting) must solve the murder of an island socialite in the woman's home as a big storm rolls in, trapping everyone at the scene. Kelly now returns with the Creepy Book Club for a program February 20 at 7:00 PM. If you missed this one here's your chance to get it Signed.

Phillips, Susan Elizabeth. [And the Crowd Went Wild](#) (Harper \$30). Perfect for Valentine's Day reading. The #1 bestseller celebrates the romance between the Chicago Stars star quarterback and a gorgeous but recently humiliated actress. Dancy Flynn is desperate to find sanctuary far from the crowd. But where can a washed-up sex symbol hide? How about making an unannounced appearance at the secluded lake house of the sweet, sensitive high school boyfriend she hasn't seen in almost twenty years? But Chicago Stars quarterback Clint Garrett is no longer the kid Dancy remembers. Now he's a gridiron superhero, still holding a massive grudge against her for breaking his teenage heart. With no room in his life for either complexity or distractions, he banishes Dancy to a refurbished old railroad caboose tucked away in the woods...and out of his sight. Except Dancy's not good at staying invisible. Her efforts to rebuild her career clash with Clint's desperation to regain his focus, all made more challenging by a rescue dog, a local woman in trouble, a meddling mother, an ex with an agenda...and the sizzle of rekindled emotions.

Quinn, Kate. [The Astral Library \(Deluxe Limited Edition\)](#), (Harper \$32). Have you ever wished you could live inside a book? And what book would you choose? I found myself asking myself that question—choose temporarily? choose to say for good? There are many books posed to Alix, who is selected by the Astral Library as a refugee from her rotten modern life, and she finds no easy answer although Narnia is a top contender. Unfortunately the books she can choose have to be out of copyright... Ok you have to read this and go with the story.

Alexandria "Alix" Watson has learned one lesson from her barren childhood in the foster-care system: unlike people, books will never let you down. Working three dead-end jobs to make ends meet and knowing college is a pipe dream, Alix takes nightly refuge in the high-vaulted reading room at the Boston Public Library, escaping into her favorite fantasy novels and dreaming of far-off lands. Until the day she stumbles through a hidden door and meets the Librarian: the ageless, acerbic guardian of a hidden library where the desperate and the lost escape to new lives...inside their favorite books. The Librarian takes a dazzled Alix under her wing, but before she can escape into the pages of her new life, a shadowy enemy emerges to threaten everyone the Astral Library has ever helped protect. Aided by a dashing costume-shop owner, Alix and the Librarian flee through the Regency drawing rooms of Jane Austen to the back alleys of *Sherlock Holmes* and the champagne-soaked parties of *The Great Gatsby* as danger draws inexorably closer. But who does their enemy really wish to destroy—Alix, the Librarian, or the Library itself? Hint: the library board is made up of the sort of people banning books and purging shelves today, plus a guy who thinks there's no point in a library now that we have the internet.

Rollins, James. [Trust No One](#) (Harper \$32). Publishes February 24, Signed here on March 2, 7:00 PM. Sharyn Karr, an American student of magic and occult science at England's University of Exeter, is studying in the school's library when professor Julian Wright frantically entrusts her with an ancient tome. The book, a locked and encrypted journal from the Count of Saint-Germain, an 18th-century alchemist, supposedly contains the location of the Count's vast treasure, and perhaps even the secret to immortality. When Wright is killed shortly after handing Sharyn the volume, she and four other students are blamed for his murder and go on the run from both law enforcement and a shadowy group called Confrérie des Illuminés that's determined to seize the book. Malick Laurent, member of an opposing group that has sworn to protect the diary, joins the quintet as they're pursued across England and France to the Italian Alps. Solid action and eye-catching historical tidbits enliven the proceedings.

Ross, LJ. [Impostor: An Alexander Gregory Thriller](#) (Poisoned Pen \$18.99). This is the start of a series about a British criminal psychologist who is drawn into a murder investigation in rural Ireland. The author, a self-published phenomenon in the UK, makes her US debut here and there will be a second series featuring Detective Chief Inspector DC Ryan operating in the North of England debuting in April and of interest to fans of Ann Cleeves. The Ryan series, beginning with its debut in *Holy Island*, visits place after place of interest in England, beginning with the Northumberland island of Lindisfarne. So in their way they offer a tour along with the investigations.

To promote *Impostor* we have **Signed Bookplates** and a free reading copy of *Holy Island* to accompany each copy of *Impostor* purchased while supply lasts.

Rouda, Kaira. [We Were Never Friends](#) (Sourcebooks \$18.99). The sorority sisters of Theta Gamma Mu have been summoned to the luxurious Palm Springs vacation home of Roxy Callahan Gentry, the ruthless former sorority president, to celebrate the engagement of her son to scholarship student of old Beth's daughter. But the refurbished 1920s estate is eerily reminiscent of the hotel where tragedy struck during Spring Break twenty-five years ago. Long-simmering tensions and shocking secrets begin bubbling to the surface like bodies...while the weekend was supposed to be about celebrating the future, it's not so easy to bury the past.

Sierra, Tracy. [Warning Signs](#) (Penguin \$30). For her second novel after [Nightwatching](#) (\$18)—don't miss it, here's a chilling gothic thriller set in an eerie, icy landscape getting raves from Jeff Deaver, Linwood Barclay, Lisa Jewell, Flynn Berry.

Twelve-year-old Zach is cautiously optimistic. His father Bram, whose business is in dire need of cash, has put together a father-son backcountry ski weekend to wine and dine his biggest investors. Schooled in outdoor survival by his mother, Zach is eager to prove himself to the hypercritical Bram on this father-and-son ski weekend. But Zach knows to be on high alert around Bram, and he sees the way the group ignores the increasingly threatening conditions. For the first time in his beloved mountains, he is faced with the unknown, convinced that something watches their cabin from the tree line. Something that leaves behind strange tracks and picks its prey clean. As the adults recklessly test the limits of the outdoors, Zach worries he might be in even more danger than he realized. Could the men around him prove more violent than the unforgiving weather, and the strange creature lurking in the dark?

Stabenow, Dana. [The Harvey Girl](#) (Head of Zeus \$29.99) starts a series in 1890 inspired by the legendary Harvey Girls who were able to forge independent lives working for British entrepreneur Fred Harvey, a real visionary who not only helped further open the West but created respectable employment for women and boosted the tourist industry. The action opens with a brutal murder during a robbery on a train of supplies bound for a Harvey House—a chain of Southwestern restaurants and hotels—in the New Mexico Territory. It's the latest in a string of similar crimes, and Pinkerton agent Clare Wright, who's made her name pulling off tricky undercover missions, is assigned to find out who's behind the killings. To do so, she poses as a hostess at a Harvey House in the rough mining town of Montaña Roya. The hours are grueling and surveillance is tight, but Clare manages to find evidence of shady finances before another murder rattles Montaña Roya, making her eager to identify the culprit before her cover is blown. Legendary figures as well as fictional populate the story which demands a sequel. **Our copies of our February Historical Fiction Club Pick come with a colorful Sticker Sheet.**

Thor, Brad/Ward Larsen. [Cold Zero](#) (Atria \$30) **Signed by both authors.** CIA officers Kasey Sheridan and Walter Ho attempt to shield Chinese physicist Dr. Chen Li and his secret weapon from America's enemies.. At the outset, Sheridan and Ho are relaxing with Li on an escape plane after smuggling the scientist out of China with a copy of Sky Fire, his game-changing military software. Then Chinese forces hack Hemisphere Airlines Flight 777 as it crosses the Arctic Circle, and the plane crashes on polar ice. As the 10 survivors attempt to stay alive in a freezing storm, the world's superpowers try to locate the wreckage and secure Li's secret weapon: the Chinese send an ice breaker, the Russians a state-of-the-art submarine, and the Americans a fast attack sub. Sheridan teams up with one of her fellow passengers, a former fighter pilot, to save the injured Chen and keep possession of Sky Fire, while Chinese, Russian, and American spies maneuver in the background. Meanwhile, the elements—and a polar bear—close in. Seamlessly fusing aspects of survival fiction and espionage thrillers, Thor and Larson serve up high-caliber suspense that keeps the pages flying.

van Der Kleut, Jennifer. [The Better Mother](#) (Crooked Lane \$29.99). In this debut, 34-year-old Savannah Mitchell, still recovering from a devastating breakup, has finally managed to put her life back together when she gets the shock of her life—after a brief fling with a man named Max, she is pregnant. When she gets in touch to tell him, he reveals that he's just gotten back together with his former girl friend, Madison, and he will need time to break it to her. Surprisingly, Madison isn't upset—in fact, she's excited, and wants to help. Max insists Madison has the best of intentions, but Savannah finds her efforts—popping by uninvited, demanding lifestyle changes, and pretty much trying to take over the pregnancy—anything but helpful. When Savannah finally stands up for herself, Madison's treatment of her spirals to downright dangerous. All Savannah wanted to do was form a friendly co-parenting relationship with the father of her child—but his girlfriend, and now his mother, obviously have much more sinister plans in mind—plans that do not involve co-parenting. [Paperback](#) (\$19.99)

Walter, Susan. [Murder at 30,000 Feet](#) (Blackstone \$29.99) is, despite its pedestrian title, so compelling a blend of

characterizations and plot threads and individual voices—plus bringing the role of the Federal Air Marshal to attention in a gripping way—that it becomes our **February Crime**

Subscription Club Pick. It's also a love story, more than one story, which works well as it is Signed here on Valentine's Day at our party for you. And Flight 868's pilot, a Navy veteran, reminds me of Captain Sully who landed his stricken plane so memorably in the Hudson. Here it's on tiny Martini Cay in the Turks & Caicos, with a totally inadequate runway and no airport infrastructure. Nor US jurisdiction.

The plot has so many moving parts, so many players, and two victims, one presently dead in the airplane's coach section bathroom and the other a promising member of little Crestwood's high school baseball team killed in an unsolved hit-and-run three years back, that I can see it as a 6 or 8 part drama on Netflix. Almost everyone has a voice: crew, passengers, townspeople, Federal Air Marshal Reynaldo, sure to lose his job with TSA for his affair with a stewardess not on flight 868 from LA to San Juan, Puerto Rico, and FBI Agent Cooper on the ground in Crestwood. The two Federal agents communicate by text during the flight as it hits turbulence, then a lightning strike, then a murder by someone on the plane, then the catastrophic loss of fuel and the forced landing and....

Here's a little essay on why Locked Room (here, Airplane) Mysteries are classic: Locked-room mysteries thrive on the impossible: Crimes committed under circumstances that defy logic, leaving readers to puzzle out how — and why — the seemingly unsolvable happened. This list gathers contemporary and classic takes on the genre, spanning isolated islands, snowed-in hotels, luxury trains, and even off-world colonies. Each story traps characters in a confined space where danger lurks and escape is impossible. Fans of Golden Age classics and modern thrillers alike will find something to savor in these tales of murder, misdirection, and locked doors — where no one gets out until the truth is found ... or the killer strikes again.

MORE VALENTINE BOOKS

In addition to the books recommended in the [Valentine Booknews](#), find it in our Newsletters web page, here's more:

Coombe, Amy. [Stay for a Spell](#) (Ace \$30). Not out until April but I would definitely preorder it now or give a Gift Certificate to someone for it.

Princess Tanadelle desperately wishes she had more time to read and relax instead of performing duties like ribbon cuttings and presenting unicorns, and she gets her wish when she stumbles into a curse and is unable to leave a bookshop in a small kingdom. Suddenly, she finds herself a businesswoman... with a surly teenaged assistant, a bookstore cat with tentacles, and a hunky pirate in too-tight pants who shoplifts from her! Her parents send seven princes to kiss her (isn't that how you break a curse?), but her roaming eyes keep going toward that damn pirate! It's a sweet fairy tale, cozy in all of the right ways,

Dramis, Kate. [The Odds of You](#) (St Martins \$19). A celebrated dystopian writer and a beloved actor fall for each other while navigating the stress of their professions and the personal expectations they have surrounded themselves in. As they engage in the classic will-they-won't-they dance, can they leap toward a future together or will they be stuck settling with that future forever out of reach? Kate Dramis's contemporary romance debut is a

stunner, no other way of looking at it. Seamlessly welding the magic of the love story with an unflinching view on perfectionism, familial expectations, and a homage to Nancy Meyers's The Holiday, The Odds of You offers expansive locales too.

* Page, Libby. [This Book Made Me Think of You](#) (Berkley \$30). When Tilly Nightingale receives a call telling her there's a birthday gift from her husband waiting for her at her local bookshop, it couldn't come as more of a shock. Partly because she can't remember the last time she read a book for pleasure. But mainly because Joe died five months ago.... When she goes to pick up the present, Alfie, the bookshop owner with kind eyes, explains the gift—twelve carefully chosen books with handwritten letters from Joe, one for each month, to help her turn the page on her first year without him. Twelve books. Twelve months. One chance to heal her heart.... "A wonderful, bookish read perfect for any reader who loves books about books. Throw in some grief, a bit of love, an old British bookshop, and you have a warm and hopeful story."

CLASSICS

* Christie, Agatha. [Curtain](#) (\$18.99). Hercule Poirot's last case wherein he apprehends a five-time killer.

* Cooper, Lettice. [Tea on Sunday](#) (Poisoned Pen \$15.99). On a bitter winter's afternoon in London, Alberta Mansbridge sets the table with teacups for nine, mulling over the guests who will be arriving within the hour: her accountant and the ex-jailbird Barry, her nephew and his ghastly new flibberty-jibbet of a wife, the Italian playboy, the family doctor, the manager of her father's company, and dear old Myra, with whom she had so recently fallen out... Alberta returns upstairs to get herself ready. Yet as tea-time draws nigh and the guests' knocking goes unanswered, they soon discover that their host has been murdered—worse still, that the killer must have been one of their trusted number, let in early by Alberta. Faced with eight suspects whose alibis and motives are steeped in mystery, Inspector Corby joins a case in which the truth is trickling away down cold London streets and through the Yorkshire roots of Alberta's past.

First published in 1973, this British Library Crime Classic is introduced by series editor and Diamond Dagger/Edgar/Agatha, etc winner Martin Edwards.

Eberhart, Mignon G. [While the Patient Slept](#) (American Mystery Classics \$15.95). From the moment nurse Sarah Keate arrives at the gloomy mansion of Adolph Federie, she senses trouble afoot, from the mysterious occupants of the house to the penetrating stare of a black cat named Genevieve. But Mr. Federie has just suffered a stroke and needs a live-in aid and Sarah is not one to shirk her duties. When a murder occurs in the same room as her patient, Sarah starts investigating along with the help of a local police officer. But how will she sleep at night knowing she's sharing a house with a killer? This is an early title in the career of a crime writer whose many novels landed on bestseller lists for much of the twentieth century. [Hardcover](#) (\$25.95).

McKay, Randle. [The Baffle Book](#) (\$15.95). Calling all mystery puzzle fans! This is the book that launched the "solve-it-yourself" detective book craze of the 1920s and '30s, spawning numerous imitators (like the [Murdle Series](#) by GT Karber who writes the introduction here) and a four book series of its own. These short crime problems incorporate all of the clues needed to find their solutions, including maps, charts, cryptograms, and additional il-

lustrations—but it's up to the reader to put all of this together and find out whodunit. (Correct answers included at the end of the book). [Hardcover](#): (\$25.95).

COZIES

Asakura, Takuya. [The Vanishing Cherry Blossom Bookshop](#) (Harper \$18.99) is a new example of the healing fiction trend: a bit of magical realism, coffee, books, and a cat, mixed in with people who are looking for emotional guidance in life. Here this haven for book lovers that only appears during the fleeting cherry blossom season. Nestled amidst the bloom of delicate petals, you'll find a sanctuary for those burdened by regrets and past sorrows. Here, Sakura, the mysterious young owner, and her wise calico cat, Kobako, patiently await the arrival of souls in need of solace and healing. Told over four seasons, each visitor to the bookshop holds a book that bridges their past and present, guiding them towards understanding and acceptance. Within the antique charm of the shop and the soothing aroma of freshly brewed coffee, Sakura and Kobako help their guests confront their lingering sadness through the power of stories, enabling them to move forward with renewed hope.

Connelly, Lucy. [The Curious Case of the Poisoned Professor](#) (Crooked Lane \$29.99). Former managing editor for a Texas newspaper, Dr. Gwen Griffith crosses the Atlantic to Dillynaidd, Wales, ready for the next stage of her life as head of the local university's journalism department. She's delighted and happy that her best friend Carolyn, the department head, is a colleague. And more than delighted with her elegant office and upscale living quarters in faculty housing. But unpopular Professor Alice Rice, a woman jealous of her appointment whom Gwen had only just met, dies on her doorstep. The local police detective, Gareth Jones, regards her as a suspect. So Gwen sets to work using her journalistic skills to clear her name, and maybe catch the real killer while trying to survive the freezing winter weather. Here we have a wintry campus crime scenario and a Welsh village so lovingly described...nice for fans of Rhys Bowen's Evan Evans Mysteries and our **February Cozy Crimes Club Pick**.

* George, Nicholas. [A Lethal Walk in Lakeland](#) (\$18.95). Former San Diego detective Rick "Chase" Chasen found a welcome change of pace on walking tours in the British countryside. Chase now has two compelling reasons for returning to England—a group walk along the famed Coast to Coast trail in the picturesque Lake District, and a chance to further his relationship with Mike, the handsome Devonshire coroner he met on his last trip. The walkers, including Chase's dear friend and fellow Anglophile Billie Mondreau, assemble at a Cumbrian hotel and begin their adventure with the traditional "baptism of the boots" in St. Bee's Bay. But they've barely begun traveling eastward with their genial guide than the group dynamic turns unexpectedly rocky. The problem is the Uptons—a wealthy family from Texas whose squabbling antics continually overshadow the bucolic surroundings. Every member of their party cites a different reason for joining the tour, and Chase's instincts tell him they're all lying. Patriarch Brock's heart condition hinders their progress through the Lake District's hills and dales. But that proves the least of their problems when one of the Uptons is fatally poisoned.... This cozy series debuted in 2024 with [A Deadly Walk in Devon](#) (\$17.95).

Gilbert, Victoria. [Schooled in Murder: A Campus Sleuth Mystery](#) (\$19.99). Jennifer "Jen" Dalton is an author and educator at Clarion University in Virginia. She loves her job, but some of her petty coworkers look down on her for writing genre fiction. As members of the English department, they wish to encourage students to pursue higher literary aspirations. When a humiliating confrontation between an uppity professor and one of Jen's students, Mia, escalates, no one thinks much of it. Until his dead body is found along with evidence incriminating Mia. Along with the help of Christine Kubiak, a cafeteria manager; Zachary Flynn, the charming but annoying campus psychologist; and Brianna Rowley, a librarian—Jen must catch the real killer to clear Mia. "Gilbert earns top marks for crafting a clever story with a twisted premise—a murder mystery author who stumbles across a body and must see if she's as good a sleuth in real life as her characters are on the page...."

James, Holly. [The Big Fix](#) (\$18.95). Our March 2025 Cozy Crimes Subscription Club Pick began when bookish Penny Collins reluctantly lets her sister drag her to an estate sale at a neighbor's house. She's hoping for a little diversion rummaging through dusty antiques. Instead, she ends up in a public squabble over candlesticks with the deceased owner's nephew, Anthony—right before a dead body tumbles out of a closet. Penny's plan for the summer involved finalizing tenure at the university where she's a computer sciences professor. Instead, she's suddenly on the run with a man she barely knows, scaling walls, evading bullets, and accidentally stabbing henchmen. It seems the wrong people have got it in their heads that she's Anthony's girlfriend. "Fans of the Finlay Donovan series will adore *The Big Fix*, with its endearing heroine and perfect blend of light-hearted suspense, screwball comedy, and 'hot hitman next door' romance (um, yes please!). James will have you cackling all the way through this madcap romp, as her characters journey from secretly subversive suburban streets to high-end playgrounds for the rich and famous."

Kwan, Katrina. [The Legend of the Nine-Tailed Fox](#) (\$19). If you like your cozy set in a fantasy world, say like that of *Legends and Lattes*, try this adventure merging dragon gods of old and a fox with a demon hunter pursuing her with the indelible threads of fate for soul mates. This might be a bit "spicy" but sometimes a risk is worth it.

* Miller, CL. [The Antique Hunter's Death on the Red Sea](#) (\$19). When a painting vanishes from a maritime museum and a dead body is found nearby, Freya Lockwood and her Aunt Carole of Bath-based Lockwood Antique Hunter's Agency are called to investigate. Following a lead that takes them aboard a glamorous antiques cruise sailing toward the Red Sea in Jordan, they quickly discover that the ship's art gallery is filled with stolen antiquities. Each antique is also listed in Freya's late mentor's journals that detail unsolved cases. Their hunt soon turns deadly when they learn the enigmatic and dangerous art trafficker named The Collector could be on board. How to identify this criminal?

This series began with 2024's [The Antique Hunter's Guide to Murder](#) (\$19).

Pleiter, Allie. [One Sharp Stitch](#) (\$18.95). A cozy series start finds Shelby Phillips returning to excruciatingly harmless Gwen Lake after her graphic arts career—and the office romance blooming

with it—get tossed like rejected design mockups. Her plan is as simple and fool-proof as a tent stitch: manage the family needlepoint shop Nina's Nimble Needle during her parents' RV vacation. It's just a month. It's not as if they're retiring. But the month includes managing a trunk show featuring the work of Gina "Kat" Katsaros, a geeky type Shelby knew in high school, who now makes beautiful needlework designs and craft scissors. It didn't include finding Gina dead with an expensive scissors in her chest....

Smith, Karen Rose. [Booked for Revenge](#) (\$18.95). Jazzi Swanson has transformed her rural New York bookshop and tea bar, Tomes & Tea, into a must-stop destination in the lakeside resort town of Belltower Landing. The Gentleman's Bake-off is not only good for the town's tourism, it's bound to boost business at Tomes & Tea. The celebrity judges of the contest will all be signing their cookbooks at Jazzi's shop. The competition is far from killer, with mostly residents and neighbors vying for bragging rights. But when local photographer Finn Yarrow takes first place he is soon found fatally bludgeoned next to his prizewinning Black Forest Cake....

* Walker, Laura Jensen. [The Alphabet Sleuths](#) (Severn House \$29.99). Walker of the Bookish Baker Mysteries launches an entertaining new cozy series starring a spirited group of California retirees. When 69-year-old Claire Reynolds, a resident of the Cedar Glen Retirement Community in Santa Bonita, happens upon a man violently choking her friend Daphne, she accidentally kills him by whacking him on the back of the head with her gardening shovel. Once the shock of the situation wears off, retired police officer Daphne recognizes her assailant from an organized crime case she worked on years earlier. Instead of calling the authorities, she and Claire recruit their friends in a clique they've dubbed the Alphabet Girls—retired journalist Atsuko and former actor Barbara—to help them dispose of the body. The women wrap the corpse in a blanket and toss him into the water at the bottom of a quarry. Then another resident of Cedar Glen turns up dead, and the Alphabet Girls launch an investigation to figure out what's behind the sudden uptick of violence in their typically idyllic corner of the world. "Walker's feisty, funny, and fully realized seniors easily sit beside the casts of *The Thursday Murder Club* and *The Marlow Murder Club* in the cozy pantheon. Readers will be charmed."

NEW IN HARDCOVER

Akers, W M. [To Kill a Cook](#) (Penguin \$30) delivers a fast-paced and somewhat abrasive mystery centered on 29-year-old New York City food writer Bernice Black. In 1972, long before the word "foodie" has entered the lexicon, Bernice is preparing for an early morning chat with her culinary idol-turned-close friend Laurent Tirel, "the best chef New York had ever seen." After Bernice arrives at Laurent's restaurant before it opens, however, she finds his severed head suspended in aspic on a refrigerator shelf. It's immediately clear to Bernice that the NYPD detective in charge of the investigation is ill-equipped to navigate the ruthless world of fine dining. So, with the specter of impending layoffs at her magazine looming, she decides to solve the case herself and deliver an exclusive investigative piece that could help save her job. Complicating matters is the fact that her fiancé is at work, leaving her to care for his two young boys. She has little choice but to ferry them from one high-profile Manhattan

restaurant to the next on the trail of a killer. Akers's evocation of the grit and glamour of 1970s New York is pitch-perfect, and Bernice is a wonderfully winning protagonist.

Armstrong, Kelley. [First Sign of Danger: A Haven's Rock Novel](#) (St Martins \$29). If ever the saying "It takes a village to raise a child" were true, it's nailed in this latest off-the-grid Yukon town thriller. Without an abundance of backup willing to step in as needed with daughter Rory, age six months, the new parents, Detective Casey Duncan and Sheriff Eric Dalton, would never be able to continue with their jobs (many crime writers duck this by having childless sleuths, or grown up kids). Haven's Rock is a sanctuary town that relies on trusting the inhabitants to keep it secret. When a group of hikers gets too close to the borders, and one is found dead the next day, exposure is feared. Who are these people and why are they so close to Haven's Rock? Only by tracing the hikers' movements, as well as examining the recent behavior of their closest neighbors, the workers of a secretive mining camp, will our duo be able to figure out where the threat is coming from and shut it down before the townspeople safe in their secure new lives are put at risk. IMHO this series is best read from the beginning...and it may be one book away from winding down.

* Beaton, MC/RW Green. [Death of a Groom](#) (Grand Central \$28). It is February and the Scottish Highlands village of Lochdubh is dealing with heavy snow and freezing temperatures. Sergeant Hamish Macbeth can handle the weather, but with a surprise influx of high-society visitors for a Valentine's Day wedding at Tommel Castle Hotel, he has bigger problems. The guest list includes not one, but two women from his own romantic past! And Hamish isn't the only one disrupted by the arrival of the wedding party. The groom—the supposedly suave and sophisticated Darius Palmerston—is involved in a series of incidents in the local pub. Tensions between guests and villagers escalate until, shortly after the lavish wedding ceremony, a body is found in the hotel dining room.

Braude, Mark. [The Typewriter and the Guillotine](#) (Grand Central \$32). Part biography, part true crime narrative, this book "proves that nonfiction is as dramatic, unpredictable, and compelling as any fiction. Braude's book celebrates the great journalist Janet Flanner; evokes the darkness of the wartime world; and exposes the fascinating story of a German con man and serial killer. It's irresistible."—Susan Orlean. I could not resist a double whammy coming-of-age story: of Janet Flanner, an American journalist in Paris in the 1920s; of the *New Yorker*, a brand new magazine, breezy, giddy, lightweight, and attempting to appeal to the man-about-town reader. "Flanner soon finds herself jumping into the deep end, without knowing how deep it is (spoiler alert: as deep as it gets—the rise of fascism, the trial of a murderer); and she convinces the *New Yorker* to jump right along with her. A remarkable book, highly inventive and wildly original."—Lili Anolik

* Coulter, Catherine. [The Heir of Whitestone](#) (Kensington \$30). Here's a wonderful surprise: Coulter goes back to her roots in historical fiction to write a Victorian romantic melodrama kicking off in 1842. Queen Victoria reigns, Buckingham Palace is overrun with rats, and the streets of London are filled with intrigue. Alex Ivanov is a brilliant young innovator, designing cutting-edge train engines. But Alex isn't really Alex Ivanov. As a boy, he

was pulled from the Thames, presumed drowned, with complete memory loss. Rescued and raised by the formidable Ryder Sherbrooke who has adopted some fourteen orphaned children, Alex has thrived. Lady Camilla Rohman is bookish, outspoken, needs glasses. Trapped by a scheming stepmother and a hostile older sister, both determined to get her out of the house by seeing her married off, she is as clever as she is desperate. When fate throws her into Alex's path, their connection is undeniable. Then a visiting vicar identifies Alex as the heir to an Earl who went missing with his younger brother and their tutor eleven years ago. Both Graham, formerly Alex, and Cam are meant for each other, but danger lurks. Someone is determined to kill the lost, now found, heir.... When I say "melodrama" I am not kidding. Signed copies coming.

Cox, Mollie Ann. [The Widow Hamilton](#) (Crooked Lane \$29.99). A young woman is murdered and another goes missing in Cox's inventive second whodunit featuring Alexander Hamilton's wife, Eliza, after the series start in [The Lace Widow](#) (\$19.99). In 1805, more than a year after Alexander's death, Eliza has found friends among her fellow widows at Manhattan's Pearl Street House. As a result, she feels an intense sense of responsibility when Rebecca Dickens, an orphan whom the Pearl Street women took in and trained to make lace, is found murdered in New York's unsavory Water Street district. Meanwhile, Jo Ambrose, another of the widows' charges, has gone missing after setting out to find Rebecca. Drawing on the skills she learned during her previous murder investigation, Eliza carefully examines Rebecca's corpse, uncovering evidence of arsenic poisoning that the coroner missed. Her subsequent digging reveals that Rebecca was ensnared in criminal activity before her death, leading Eliza into dark corners of New York City's underworld as she seeks the truth. Cox combines a remarkable talent for bringing the past to life with well-shaded characterizations.

* Craig, Fergus. [I'm Not the Only Murderer in My Retirement Home](#) (Penguin \$30). British actor, comedian, and mystery novelist Craig delivers a very British whodunit set at a luxury retirement community in the wealthy North London borough of Hampstead. For new arrival Carol Quinn, 75, a former serial killer, the opulence of Sheldon Oaks, with its sauna, pool, and martial arts studio, offers a welcome change from the dusty prison cell she's occupied for the past 35 years. Convicted of seven homicides (and perhaps guilty of a few more), Carol negotiated a reduction in her sentence long ago by revealing where bodies were buried. Now she's hoping her past won't come to light so she can make a few friends and find some murder-free hobbies. But it's not long before a fellow resident—former police commissioner Sir Desmond Crisp—drops dead, and Carol's true identity is leaked. Just her luck, Carol soon realizes that the victim wasn't the only former law enforcement officer at Sheldon Oaks—it's filled to the brim with former cops, barristers, and government representatives, her newfound friends included. For once, she's innocent, so she joins forces with her new friends to clear her name. Either you enjoy heavy British humor, or you don't.

Dinniman, Matt. [Operation Bounce House](#) (Ace \$32). A man must fight for his planet against impossible odds when gamers from Earth attempt to remotely annihilate it. "One of the most interesting takes on colonized planets. What really makes it work are the characters. They're the kind of people you could actually meet, even if humanity did start over on another world."

Haddon, Mark. [Leaving Home: A Memoir](#) (Doubleday \$35). The author of the wonder *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* writes a memoir highlighting how he as a creative sees the world and how that has shaped his vision for his work. Houston, Victoria. [The Wolves Are Watching](#) (Crooked Lane \$29.99). See New in Paperback.

Kingfisher, T. [Nine Goblins, A Tale of High Fantasy and Low Mischief](#) (Tor.com \$24.99). "Here's what you need to know: Goblins are messy and cranky, but they stick together! Wizards are wild! There's an elven veterinarian in the woods! And if you encounter a one-eyed teddy bear, show him respect.

LaMothe, Allison. [Dirty Metal](#) (Flatiron \$29.99). LaMothe resurrects the grungy New York City of the early 1990s in this solid debut thriller centered on a pill-popping tabloid journalist. Parker Snow has been *The New York Street's* crime reporter ("no qualifiers") for seven years, but after she bungles a big story, she's reassigned to the organized crime beat in Brighton Beach, Brooklyn, where she's tasked with investigating gangsters who have moved to the States after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Though Parker takes pains to stay in her lane, she can't repress her curiosity when she discovers the dead body of 20-year-old Carla Russo, who appears to be the victim of a fatal mugging, during a night out. With the cops assigned to Carla's case treating the dead woman as just "another pin in the crime map," Parker starts investigating on her own. She doubles her efforts when another young woman is found dead under near-identical circumstances in Manhattan's Chinatown, raising the prospect that a serial killer might be stalking the streets of New York. LaMothe hits the beats of a satisfying neo-noir—a deliciously dark atmosphere, a wounded hero, a corrupt urban underbelly—with ease.

* Lowkis, Carmella. [A Slow and Secret Poison](#) (Collins \$28.99). 1922, Wiltshire, is the setting for this slowly unfolding Sapphic Gothic: When Vee Morgan accepts the job of gardener at a crumbling stately home in southwest England, she's hoping it's a fresh start. But Harfold Manor is shadowed by its own grief and the memories of long-faded glory, its rooms haunted by the only surviving member of the family, Lady Arabella Lascy. Vee is fascinated by her enigmatic new employer, a woman obsessed with the curse she believes has killed her family one by one and is coming for her next. Her only hope for escape is a local folktale: the elusive dancing hare that gave her ancestor its blessing and the house its name. But even as Vee falls deeper under the thrall of Harfold and Lady Arabella, her own dark past finally catches up to her. Recommended to fans of Sarah Waters with a nod to Shirley Jackson and a reminder that some of the natural world is indeed poisonous.

Marshall, Kate Alice. [The Girls Before](#) (Flatiron \$28.99). Audrey is a search and rescue expert who never stopped looking for her ex-best friend, Janie, who disappeared when they were teenagers. Janie used to love the local legend of a forest witch who saves girls from bad men, but Audrey knows now that for every one saved, there's always another one lost. When she stumbles upon evidence in the forest that a teenage runaway might have actually been kidnapped from land belonging to the town's most prominent family, she will have to dig through decades of secrets to reveal the biggest one of all: what happened to the girls before?

McConigley, Nina. [How to Commit a Postcolonial Murder](#) (Pantheon \$26). A debut fiction that begins with an uncle dead and his tween niece's private confession to the reader—she and her sister killed him, and they blame the British. “A poignant, compelling, and original paean against the long reach of capitalism, colonialism, whiteness, and the patriarchy — and a moving coming of age story about a murdered uncle, a pair of guilty sisters, and *Cosmo* quizzes”—says the Indie Next Pick.

McDermid, Val. [Winter: The Story of a Season](#) (Grove \$22) is a *hygge*-filled journey through winter nights. Val McDermid has always had a soft spot for winter: the bitter clarity of a crisp cold day, the crunch of frost on fallen leaves, and the chance to be enveloped in big jumpers and thick socks. Here she takes us on an adventure through the season, from the frosty streets of Edinburgh to the windblown Scottish coast, from Bonfire Night and Christmas to Burns Night and Up Helly Aa. Recalling in parallel memories from her own childhood—of skating over frozen lakes and carving a “neep” (rutabaga) for Halloween to being taken to see her first real Christmas tree in the town square—McDermid offers a wise and enchanting meditation on winter and its ever-changing, sometimes ephemeral, traditions.

You can listen to NPR talking to Val about this book [HERE](#).

Morrow, Bethany C. [The Body](#) (Tor \$27.99). Thirsting for horror? Here is “A shocking work of anxious mayhem that fans of Weapons should adore. Each time you think you’re safe, Morrow sits you up straight and drags you to the edge of your seat. The Body marries religious and domestic horror beautifully, wearing a bridal veil of trauma as cuts and carnage.”—Hailey Piper

Nesbø, Jo. [Wolf Hour](#) (Knopf \$30). Nordic noir master Nesbø sets his sights on the American Midwest in this exquisitely plotted, darkly funny thriller that tackles gun control, police corruption, and psychological trauma in contemporary Minneapolis. The narrative toggles between two main plotlines. In one, disgraced police detective Bob Oz probes the attempted murder of a crooked gun dealer in 2016, an inquiry that develops into a serial killer investigation as more bodies pile up. In the other, crime novelist Holger Ruch pays a visit to Minneapolis in 2022, hoping to conduct research for his new book about a Midwestern policeman of Norwegian descent. Nesbø constructs poignant parallels between the members of his sprawling cast: for example, Oz’s main suspect, Tomás Gomez, is a former hit man grappling with a family tragedy that mirrors the baggage of Mike Lunde, an overworked taxidermist who proves instrumental in providing Oz with clues. Meanwhile, interspersed among the main story threads are passages from the perspective of a killer who’s simultaneously deranged and frighteningly logical. As the narratives converge and Nesbø reveals the precise nature of Ruch’s connection to the case, readers will have no doubt they’re in the hands of a brilliant storyteller.

Novack, Rebecca. [Murder Bimbo](#) (Atria \$28.99). Is it a spy thriller? Is it a love story? “It’s both and so much more—sharp, surprising, bold, and impossible to put down. Novack’s debut doesn’t miss.”—Isle McElroy. I have mixed feelings about this fairly slim story, constructed in three increasingly unhinged acts, which will remind some readers of *My Sister the Serial Killer*.

Our narrator had a happy childhood until she came out

when a teen as gay to a homophobic mother, but she takes it in stride. In her twenties she accidentally becomes a sex worker to pay the rent and gradually increases her income. She has no hang ups about it. Then she’s shocked when undercover government agents approach her to assassinate a politician known as Meat Neck (?). She only goes through with it when he proves to be a boor and a rapist. And then she flees to a cabin in the woods has only two days, her wits, and a laptop to save her own life. Thus she reaches out to the wildly popular feminist investigative podcaster Justice for Bimbos. When she opens a new email after a time, it’s addressed to her ex and the facts line up differently.

* Oliver, MK. [A Sociopath’s Guide to a Successful Marriage](#) (Atria \$29). Oliver’s amusing debut, our **February British Crime Subscription Club Pick**, is narrated by the ruthless Lalla Rook, a wife and mother who lives in the upper-middle-class London neighborhood of Muswell Hill. Lalla thinks her life would be perfect with four major upgrades: a third child; a promotion to partner for her banker husband, Stephen; a move to the more prestigious neighborhood of Hampstead; and admission for her six-year-old daughter to an elite private school. Lalla also happens to be a sociopath, meaning she has few scruples about eliminating any obstacles that stand in her way. A key example of her capabilities? The dead stranger on her living room floor and the abundant blood spatter she caused from stabbing him seven times after he broke into her house when she was busy planning a party. Much of the action follows from Lalla disposing of the body, coercing an accomplice, and planting evidence to frame someone else and keep her head above water. As she says herself: “The past will come back to haunt you if you don’t smother it with a pillow.” Oliver treads familiar ground, but does so with verve, resulting in a sly and satirical caper that will leave readers grinning.

* Paris, BA. [When I Kill You](#) (St Martins \$29). Nell Masters is certain someone is following her. The hairs on the back of her neck rise when she travels to and from work, there are silent calls to her office, and a huge bouquet of flowers arrives without a card. And Nell has a reason to be looking over her shoulder, because she has a secret that she’s hiding from everyone in her life, including her new partner, Alex. But Alex also has secrets of his own. Fourteen years earlier, when Nell went by the name Elle Nugent, she witnessed a student, Bryony Sanders, getting into a stranger’s car. When Bryony was found murdered, Elle became obsessed with finding the person responsible. She was convinced she knew who it was and her fixation with Brett Parker, the man she accused, led her down a dangerous path... Now, Nell tries to convince herself that this unnerving feeling of being watched is all in her mind. Has someone from her past discovered her new identity? Has the stalker become the stalked? Or is there something even more deadly at play?

Parks, Adele. [Our Beautiful Mess](#) (Park Row \$30). See New in Paperback.

Parlato, Terri. [She Thought She Was Safe](#) (Kensington \$28). After the double blow of divorce and her mother’s death, Emma Shradar receives an invitation to meet her estranged father for the first time. Alex Spencer is a wealthy, renowned author who had a brief fling with Emma’s mom, then disappeared. Now he’d like Emma to come stay at his beautiful home on Cheshire Lake in Maine. The Spencer house is a towering Victorian steeped in history

and lore, from its ornate turret to the little cemetery nestled in adjoining woods. It should be an inspiring place for Emma to finish working on her own novel, especially with Alex's guidance. But when a neighbor is found dead under strange circumstances, the surroundings begin to feel less idyllic and welcoming. Not everyone is happy about Emma's arrival, either—especially not Alex's other daughter, Sunny. There are things Emma keeps to herself about her chaotic childhood and ex-husband, but Cheshire Lake harbors secrets too—some recent, some decades old. What exactly has been going on in this quiet, close-knit community? And how much of it has to do with Emma's arrival? This is an excellent read for fans of Mary Kubica and Megan Miranda.

Perez Reverte, Arturo. [The Final Problem](#) (Little Brown \$29). Two murders, a storm-isolated hotel, and Hollywood gossip propel this irresistible homage to golden-age detective fiction from Pérez-Reverte of the *Captain Alatriste* and other terrific mysteries. Debonair Shakespearian actor Osmond Basil has made a career of playing Sherlock Holmes in a series of successful films. The downside is that the 60-something thespian has been typecast out of the complex villain roles he longs to play. While vacationing at a luxury resort on the Greek island of Ukatos in 1960, Basil becomes stranded with a handful of other guests in the middle of a raging storm. When British vacationer Edith Mander is found hanged from a beach cabana, Basil quickly deduces that she died not by suicide but by murder, and reluctantly takes up the job of finding her killer. He's assisted by Paco Foxa, a dashing Spanish mystery novelist who serves as Basil's Dr. Watson, helping him navigate a series of red herrings as they interview their fellow guests, including an opera diva. Pérez-Reverte delights in the plot's meta conceit without letting it overwhelm the ingenious core mystery.

* Philipson, Rebecca. [How to Get Away with Murder](#) (St Martins \$29). Ready for a serial killer debut? At the outset, Scotland Yard DI Sam Hansen is reluctant to return to work after taking a six-month leave due to sexual harassment from a colleague. Then she happens across the strangled body of 14-year-old Charlotte Mathers under an oak tree on which Charlotte's initials and "DB" are carved inside a heart. "DB," Sam assumes, is Denver Brady, the self-proclaimed "most successful active serial killer in the Western world," who has recently self-published a chilling instructional guide titled *How to Get Away with Murder*. Feeling an unusually strong connection with the victim, Sam returns to the force and asks to be assigned to the investigation. Philipson alternates Sam's increasingly obsessive quest to find Brady with passages from his book, many of which outline murders he's committed in clinical detail. Though the cat-and-mouse game between cop and serial killer is familiar, Philipson's nuanced portrait of her wounded heroine and savvy book-within-a-book narrative structure make this stand out."

Rafferty, Brian. [Hannibal Lecter: A Life](#) (Simon Schuster \$30). This unique biography traces the many lives and crimes of Hannibal Lecter: his disturbing debut in Thomas Harris's 1981 novel *Red Dragon*; his rise to infamy in beloved films like Michael Mann's *Manhunter* and Jonathan Demme's Academy Award-winning *The Silence of the Lambs*; and his unexpected comeback in the cult-hit TV series *Hannibal*. It also dives into the untold life and career of Harris, the secretive bestselling author whose passion for reporting, eye for grisly detail, and connections to the FBI helped birth not only Lecter, but also the modern true-

crime genre. Along the way, *Hannibal Lecter: A Life* documents the many ways Lecter's rise reflected America's ever-growing obsession with real-life serial killers. Rafferty's work draws from unseen archival materials and all-new interviews with crucial figures from Lecter's past—including actor Brian Cox, director Mann, and former FBI special agent John Douglas.

Rai, Shantanu. [The House Call](#) (Crooked Lane \$29.99). This debut set in a Boston medical center pulls no punches as it "exposes the fault lines of modern medicine: where profit trumps healing, doctors lose their calling and duty to care, and everyone else seeks to profit from the breakdown. Shantanu Rai's story reminds us that sometimes it's safer to tell the truth through fiction than to face it in real life. The most dangerous contagions aren't viral. They're human."

Brilliant diagnostician and renowned physician Dr. Sanjay Patel once dreamed of being a doctor at a free clinic, serving those in need. Now he treats billionaires by private jet and gets paid in Gucci totes packed with cash. But when his estranged mentor, Dr. Tom Carpenter, scribbles "Page Dr. Sanjay" on a blank prescription moments before collapsing from a fatal stroke, Sanjay is pulled back to the hospital that nearly ended his medical career, Boston's Mount Beacon Hospital. There, he reunites with cancer researcher Emma Carpenter-Flores, Tom's daughter—and the woman whose heart Sanjay broke a decade prior. Forced to team up, their search unearths a trail of disturbing cases, and as they dig deeper, they find themselves the target of a powerful medical-industrial complex that will stop at nothing to protect its secrets. "With its amazing feats of diagnosis and hair raising thrills, this gripping, masterful tale of healthcare run amok is exactly what the doctor ordered."—Sanjay Gupta

Reynolds, April. [The Shape of Dreams](#) (Knopf \$29) "is a powerful prayer, a novel that indicts the injustice for which there is no quick solution. Centered on three women, this wondrous read is set in Spanish Harlem in the mid-eighties when crack arrived, the Mets won the championship, and a young boy is found beneath a pile of trash, murdered and nearly forgotten. Filled with all that makes a community home, April Reynolds's novel moves at a spellbinding pace, a song of furor and tenderness that will leave its mark."—Walter Mosley

Robb, J D (Nora Roberts). [Stolen in Death](#) (St Martins \$30). This future NYC series is always gripping. A blow to the head with a block of amethyst has left multibillionaire Nathan Barrister dead—while nearby, a vault, its door ajar, sits filled with priceless paintings, jewelry, and other treasures. Lieutenant Eve Dallas's husband, Roarke—who misspent his youth in Ireland as a scrappy thief—recognizes at least two stolen pieces among the hoard. The crime scene suggests a burglar caught in the act. But only one item seems to be missing. Then it's revealed that the vault had actually belonged to the victim's late father—and no one in the household knew it was there until a recent remodeling project exposed it. To protect the family name and business, they explain to Eve, they'd been looking for a way to return the ill-gotten gains anonymously and avoid the police. But now the police are all over their elegant house, and have a bigger, bloodier mystery to solve

Ross, LJ. [Impostor: An Alexander Gregory Thriller](#) (Sourcebooks \$32.99). A series start. See Signed books.

Shimeno, Nagi. [Messenger Cat Cafe](#) (Penguin \$28). After a long life with a loving human family, tabby cat Fuuta has passed into

the afterlife—but he is not as far from his owner Michiru as it seems. Slight openings bridge the divide between the lands of the living and the dead, and they can be traversed. Eager to see Michiru again, Fuuta interviews for a position at Café Pont, a café that exists in the liminal space between the two worlds, known for its unique message delivery service. He must deliver messages to five people on earth in order to see his beloved owner again...if only he can manage to not disrupt the balance of the universe.

Siegel, Natasha. [As Many Souls as Stars](#) (Morrow \$30) is a romantic speculative novel about two women—a witch and an immortal demon—who make a Faustian bargain and are drawn into a cat-and-mouse chase across multiple lifetimes.

Sutanto, Jesse Q. [Read Between the Lies](#) (Thomas & Mercer \$28.99). See Our February Paperback Picks for this zinger being published in both hardcover and paper.

OUR FEBRUARY PAPERBACK PICKS

Gage, Amity. [Heartwood](#) (\$19). This remarkable novel, a May 2025 Notable New Fiction Pick, is a heartstopping wilderness thriller, a kind of novelistic Cheryl Strayed, set in Maine where a woman becomes lost on the Appalachian Trail. The suspense is terrific as we wonder if the people searching for her will find her, and in time. But this is also a deep dive into the characters of the searchers, and of relationships between mothers and daughters. I cannot recommend it highly enough.

Gunasekera, Yosha. [The Midnight Taxi](#) (Berkley \$19). This marvelous debut centers on New York City taxi driver Siriwhathi “Siri” Perera, who picks up a passenger headed to JFK, only to discover once they arrive at the airport that the man has been murdered in her backseat and his backpack has gone missing. Though Siri is innocent, she appears to be the only possible suspect, and is immediately arrested. Unexpectedly bailed out by her wealthy childhood best friend, Siri has five days to discover the truth behind the impossible crime before she goes before a grand jury. With the help of her acquaintance Amaya Fernando, a public defender and fellow Sri Lankan immigrant, Siri tries to piece together the puzzle in a city where the odds are stacked against poor people of color like her. Gunasekera, an attorney with the Innocence Project, pulls no punches when it comes to detailing the hostility Siri faces from law enforcement, but she never loses sight of the brain-teasing fun inherent to the best locked-room mysteries. Meanwhile, Siri herself—an only child who deferred her dreams of law school in order to become the family breadwinner—is a character well worth spending time with.

Henderson, Alice. [The Vanishing Kind](#) (Harper \$18.99). Wildlife biologist Alex Carter’s field work in New Mexico disrupted by a murder. Alex was hired by the Land Trust for Wildlife Conservation to gather data about jaguars in a vast desert reserve in New Mexico in hopes that the federal government will approve the organization’s proposal to reintroduce the endangered animals to their former New Mexico habitats. Soon after she gets started, Alex learns that bureaucratic protocol and potential jaguar attacks are the least of her worries: a white supremacist gang has been terrorizing people of color throughout the region, and trigger-happy Wildlife Services agent Roger Trager is more than happy to shoot the animals she’s studying—and possibly Alex herself. Then a friendly archaeologist working on a dig near Alex’s turf is stabbed to death and Alex, fearful she might be the next victim,

takes it on herself to investigate. Henderson’s evident passion for and expertise in animal science enlivens the clever mystery plot. Current events make the premise that the Feds will help wildlife crossing the border wall implausible but here’s a good read for fans of Paul Doiron even if NM is a long way from Maine.

Knight, Emma. [The Life Cycle of the Common Octopus](#) (\$19). Arriving at the University of Edinburgh for her first term, Pen knows her divorced parents back in Canada are hiding something from her. She believes she’ll find the answer here in Scotland, where an old friend of her father’s—now a famous writer known as Lord Elliot Lennox—lives. When she is invited to spend the weekend at Lord Lennox’s centuries-old estate with his enveloping, fascinating family, Pen begins to unravel her parents’ secret, just as she’s falling in love for the first time. As Pen experiences the sharp shock of adulthood, she comes to rely on herself for the first time in her life. This campus novel filled with college escapades and British literary winks is quietly touching rather than in the Dark Academia fold.

Lasky, Katherine. [A Slant of Light](#) (\$16.99). 1936. Settling in for a harsh winter alone at her house at the Ghost Ranch, painter and occasional amateur sleuth Georgia O’Keeffe makes the most of the weather before a storm rolls in. But when she finds the ideal spot to capture a particularly nice sunset, Georgia discovers a boy – cold, exhausted, and desperate.... Joseph Reyes is a student at St. Ignatius School, and he claims that sinister Sister Angelica and Father Raphael have raped and killed his sister. And she is not the only one who suddenly went missing! Georgia is determined to find out what’s happening at this seemingly peculiar school, but as she investigates she uncovers even more disturbing machinations that link the school to the newly founded Opus Dei institution and its cult-like practices as well as Nazis and hidden spies – not knowing how much she puts herself in danger. I add that Joseph belongs to a southern Arizona tribe and his talent is to run, run like the wind.

Lawson, Mike. [Untouchable: A Joe DeMarco Thriller](#) (\$17). Brandon Cartwright was a rich guy worth a couple billion bucks— inherited, of course—meaning he hadn’t worked a single day in his life. Instead, he knew how to party, and the people he partied with were all sorts of rich and famous: politicians and movie stars and British royalty and Russian oligarchs. So when Brendan Cartwright is executed in his own home, the cops soon conclude that he was most likely killed by one of those rich, powerful partygoers. But when former Speaker of the House John Mahoney emerges from a clandestine meeting with the head of the National Archives, he learns there’s evidence suggesting that the President of the United States was somehow involved with Cartwright’s death. Mahoney needs someone who can investigate from the shadows—and naturally, he puts his fixer, Joe DeMarco, on the case—so, is the President guilty?

Perry, Thomas. [Pro Bono](#) (\$16.95). Perry fan, like me, Dana Stabenow reviews: “Teenaged Charlie Warren rescues—mostly—his mother from a grifter who has married her for her money. Fourteen years later he’s a lawyer in L.A. when another woman who is being robbed of her savings walks into his office, who is then kidnapped outside his office but not for the reason any of them (or you) think. And the chase is on. Charlie is a smart, capable hero whose bullshit detector is better than just about anyone else’s and which keeps him a step and a half ahead of

everyone (who appear to be legion) who is trying to stop him from uncovering their crimes and recovering the money they have embezzled. A thrill-house ride from Perry this outing, who saves the creepiest part for the last chapters.”

The late Perry’s final Jane Whitefield book publishes in March: [The Tree of Light and Flowers](#) (Penzler \$27.95). Tom fist came to The Pen with the first Jane Whitefield so it’s fitting we say goodbye to him and his marvelous work with the last.

* Raybourn, Deanna. [Kills Well with Others](#) (\$19). I am a true fan of Raybourn’s [Killers of a Certain Age](#) (\$17) where you can’t help but fall in love with the four women operatives who worked for The Museum, a secret organization that restores stolen art to their rightful owners. The women, recruited when young and honed to be the best assassins in the world, are so likeable, relatable and so so deadly. And now, aging, so disposable. Only they are not. Someone has killed an assassin, and the death may be connected to a recent security breach. Worst of all, the four women could be targets because of a case in the past when they took out a Bulgarian. Are they targets of the man’s son? They accomplish their goal of killing their target onboard the *Queen Mary 2*, but it only grows more complicated with a web that goes back to World War II and art smuggling. Now, as they hide in plain sight, and travel across Europe and Asia, they attempt to complete a job they started over 30 years earlier.

Scottoline, Lisa. [The Unraveling of Julia](#) (\$19.99). Julia Pritzker is beginning to think she’s cursed. She’s lost her adoptive parents, then her husband is murdered. When she realizes that her horoscope essentially foretold his death, she begins to spiral. She fears her fate is written in the stars, not held in her own hands. Then a letter arrives out of the blue, informing her that she has inherited a Tuscan villa and vineyard—but her benefactor is a total stranger named Emilia Rossi. Julia has no information about her biological family, so she wonders if Rossi could be a blood relative. Bewildered, she heads to Tuscany for answers. There, Julia is horrified to discover that Rossi was a paranoid recluse, who believed herself to be a descendent of Duchess Caterina Sforza, a legendary Renaissance ruler. Stunned by her uncanny resemblance to Rossi, and even to Caterina, Julia is further unnerved when she uncovers eerie parallels between them, including an obsession with astrology. Then events turn deadly in this marriage between a mystery and the Gothic.

Rendon, Marcie R. [Broken Fields](#) (\$19.95). Minnesota, 1970s. It’s spring in the Red River Valley and Cash Blackbear, a young Ojibwe woman and sheriff’s assistant investigator, is doing fieldwork for a local farmer—until she finds him dead on the kitchen floor of the property’s rented farmhouse. The tenant, a Native field laborer, and his wife are nowhere to be found, but Cash discovers their young daughter, Shawnee, cowering under a bed. The girl, a possible witness to the killing, is too terrified to speak. In the wake of the murder, Cash can’t deny her intuitive abilities: She is suspicious of the farmer’s grieving widow, who offers to take Shawnee in temporarily. Cash scours the White Earth reservation for Shawnee’s missing mother, desperate to find her before the girl is put into the foster system Cash knows so well. The threat escalates when another body turns up....

Silva, Daniel. [An Inside Job](#) (\$19.99). The story, which begins in Venice where Gabriel Allon is restoring a magnificent painting and discovers the body of a woman floating in the water nearby,

moves to Rome, more specifically the Vatican, for there may be a stupendous discovery at play, a lost masterpiece. Although Gabriel may be a retired spy he has not lost either his skills or his high level connections. And he crafts a nifty scam in pursuit of justice and the painting. Silva paints a masterly picture of the Vatican and the Curia as well as delving into the life of Leonardo. The movie *The Conclave* pairs with *An Inside Job* in various ways. Both the movie and this novel imagine a perhaps different path for a Pope to take. We will see how the first American pontiff goes.

* Sullivan, Tim. [The Patient: A DS George Cross Mystery](#) (Grove \$17). Sullivan’s third police procedural featuring neurodivergent detective sergeant George Cross is another winner. After noticing the same woman sitting in the reception area of Bristol’s Major Crime Unit for three consecutive days, Cross introduces himself. The woman says that she’s been written off by the authorities for claiming that her daughter, a recovering heroin addict named Flick Wilson, was murdered via an intentional overdose, despite a lack of concrete evidence. Cross is sympathetic, but he initially chalks up her claims to grief over losing her child to addiction. When he learns that Flick died with her two-year-old child in the next room and made no arrangements for her care, though, it arouses his suspicions, and he’s further intrigued when an autopsy reveals that Flick overdosed on medical morphine, which is difficult to obtain on the street. Aiding Cross’s inquiry is retired DCI Esther Moffat, whom he meets while visiting his elderly father in a care home. Sullivan continues to find fresh angles on the ways Cross’s autism makes him socially awkward but professionally successful, and he delivers a crafty solution to the novel’s core mystery. Start this excellent series with [The Dentist](#), a 2025 British Crime Club Pick in hardcover; and [The Cyclist](#) (\$17 each).

Sutanto, Jesse Q. [Read Between the Lies](#) (Thomas & Mercer \$16.99). “*Read Between the Lies* is a dark, delicious takedown of cancel culture and the publishing industry—I read it in two sittings because I had to stop midway and go Google my own name. Highly recommend.”—Mindy Kaling

Fern’s dream of becoming a published author is finally coming true. After years of rejection, her debut novel has sold, and she’s ready to join the supportive online community of fellow debuts. But when she discovers her high school bully, Haven, has landed a major book deal and will be debuting alongside her, old wounds reopen. As the pandemic forces everyone online, tensions escalate in their writing community. While Haven seems to succeed effortlessly, Fern watches her own career crumble. Yet beneath their polished personas lies a darker truth about their shared past—one involving a lost friend, Dani, and secrets neither wants revealed. Fern isn’t the same person Haven bullied all those years ago. She’s learned that the best revenge stories aren’t written—they’re lived. And she’s been plotting this one for years. [Hardcover edition](#) (\$28.99)

Wilkerson, Charmaine. [Good Dirt](#) (\$19). February is Black History Month so here’s an excellent story. On an autumn day in 2000, two armed burglars break into the Freemans’ house to find the children, Baz and Ebby, at home unexpectedly. The encounter results in Baz’s murder; Old Mo is shattered into fragments, and 10-year-old Ebby experiences a trauma that will haunt her for the rest of her life. Wilkerson continues her narrative years later with a different kind of tragedy, as Ebby’s wealthy white fiancé, Henry, fails to show up

for their wedding. Ebby begins to ask questions about Old Mo and the circumstances of its attempted theft, as she reckons with the pain Henry caused her and the lingering trauma from Baz's death. The jar, made under enslavement, holds more history than even Ebby can guess, and Wilkerson reaches back a few centuries to excavate some of that history through the stories of skilled potter Moses, his brother-in-law, Willis, and their descendants.

MORE FEBRUARY PAPERBACKS

Ackerman, Sara. [Shark House](#) (Harper Muse \$18.99). *Hawai'i, 1998*. When a string of rare shark attacks unsettles the once-peaceful Kohala coast, marine biologist Minnow Gray is called in to investigate. Known for her uncanny connection to sharks, she is the island's best hope for uncovering why the attacks are happening—a mystery that has both the local community and the tourism industry on edge—and for determining whether the same great white still haunts the coastline. Witness to an unspeakable tragedy involving a white shark and her own father, Minnow has carried a darkness with her ever since. She knows, deep inside, that unlocking the memories of that long-ago morning is the only way to truly heal. And as she searches for answers, the past and present collide, revealing shocking and unexpected truths that cut deep as the sea itself. The longer she's in Hawai'i, the more she comes to see that her journey here might be as much about finding herself as finding the shark.

Barelli, Natalie. [Finders Keepers](#) (Sourcebooks \$18.99). When Rose discovers her troubled past splashed across the pages of a bestselling book, she knows her carefully constructed life is about to unravel. The author, Emily Harper, claims the story is fiction, but Rose knows better. Desperate to find out how Emily discovered her deepest secrets, Rose ingratiates herself into the author's life, posing as an eager assistant and adoring fan. But as Rose gets closer to the truth, long-buried memories resurface. Slowly, the horrifying events of her teenage years come into focus, revealing that sometimes, the people you trust the most are the ones you should be most afraid of.

Bryce, Denny S. [Where the False Gods Dwell](#) (Kensington \$18.95). Chicago, 1935. Inspired by real-life legendary choreographer Katherine Dunham's groundbreaking expedition into the heart of Caribbean dance culture, this uniquely captivating novel imagines the experiences of three very different women who accompany her, hoping to find their destinies.

Chance, Megan. [The Vermilion Sea](#) (Lake Union \$16.99). Set aboard a 1925 luxury cruise across the Sea of Cortez, the tale begins as an elegant escape filled with glamour, high society and exotic promise. As the boat pushes deeper into remote waters, the veneer of leisure fractures: alliances shift, secrets surface and what seemed like paradise becomes a trap. The novel becomes a slow-burn thriller as passengers—rich, restless and hiding darker impulses—struggle for survival when an unexpected disaster leaves them stranded. It's among those 2026 historical fiction books that may appeal to readers who like historical drama with thriller elements.

Chang, Janie. [The Fourth Princess](#) (Harper \$19.99). Set in 1911 China, the narrative follows a young woman navigating political change, family duty and an atmosphere shaped by superstition and shifting power. The Gothic tone adds tension to a story grounded in a period and setting not often featured in mainstream historical fiction books, offering a focused look at a society on the edge of transformation.

Chevalier, Jennifer. [The Winter Witch](#) (Simon Schuster \$19.99). Two sisters set sail on a bride ship from Normandy hoping to leave a curse behind them and find better lives in the wilds of 17th-century Quebec, only to meet a mysterious witch who forces them to confront family secrets, old superstitions and the lingering threat of a curse. As they navigate the treacherous Atlantic crossing and confront the harsh realities of colonial life, the story explores survival, sisterhood and the challenges of forging a new life in an unfamiliar land.

Collins, Megan. [Cross My Heart](#) (Atria \$19). How far would you go for love? Rosie Lachlan is working at her family's bridal shop after undergoing a life-saving heart transplant. She finds solace through an anonymous service that connects transplant recipients with donors' families and starts corresponding with a man she believes is The One—local bestselling author, Morgan Thorne, whose late wife's heart now beats in her chest. Not everything is as it seems—there are surprises at every corner. Michael Connelly readers will recall a plot basis similar to this.

* Douglas, Claire. [The New Neighbors](#) (Harper \$18.99). When Lena overhears a conversation between her next-door-neighbors she thinks she must have misheard. The Morgans are a kind, retired couple who recently moved to their sleepy suburban street in Bristol where nothing ever happens. But to Lena it sounded very much like they were planning a crime. Her family and friends tell her she must be mistaken. Yet Lena can't stop thinking about that strange conversation. What if they really are about to do something terrible? What if she can prevent it? Will a good deed exorcise her own dark past.

Dunlap, A. Rae. [The Resurrectionist: Deluxe Stenciled Edition](#) (Kensington \$19.95). Edinburgh, Scotland, 1828. James Wiloughby has abandoned his posh, sheltered life at Oxford to pursue a lifelong dream of studying surgery in Edinburgh. The university offers everything James desires—except the chance to work on a human cadaver. For that, he must join one of the private schools in Surgeon's Square, at a cost he cannot afford. In desperation, he strikes a deal with Aneurin "Nye" MacKinnon, a dashing young dissectionist with an artist's eye for anatomy and a reckless passion for knowledge. But James soon realizes he's made a devil's bargain—Nye is a body snatcher. This macabre Gothic debut braids historical, dark academic, horror, and a bit of true crime into its fiction.

Farnsworth, Christopher. [Robert B Parker's Buried Secrets](#) (\$20). Paradise isn't paradise, and the Parker legacy lives on now with Farnsworth. Chief of Police Jesse Stone is on his way home from a long shift when a call comes in for a welfare check on an elderly resident of the wealthy seaside Massachusetts town. Inside a house packed with junk and trash is a man's dead body. It's a sad, lonely end for the hoarder, but nothing criminal—until Jesse finds the photos of murder victims strewn around the corpse which is lying on top of \$2 million in cash. Now Jesse faces danger from an aging mobster and maybe inside his own department where he has made a new hire.... This is a dark book but Jesse is more honest with himself as a cop and as a person.

Fein, Louise. [Book of Forbidden Words](#) (Harper \$18.99). Spanning 400 years, from 16th century France to mid-20th century New York, "Louise Fein crafts a compulsive story of banned books, censorship and secrecy that always feels intimate and relatable. Bold, brave and beautifully told, *Book of Forbidden*

Words is an incredible achievement of imagination and research, reminiscent of Kate Mosse's *Labyrinth*."—Hazel Gaynor. And that's high praise: [Labyrinth](#) (\$17.99), Kate's breakout novel, set in Languedoc, is one of my very favorite historical fictions.

* Fields, Helen. [Watching You](#) (\$18.99). In the city's hospital, renowned surgeon Beth Waterfall is grieving. Her beloved only daughter fell prey to a vicious stalker a year previously—and now he's coming for her too. Edinburgh's police are desperate. After one body comes another, and then another. The brutal deaths are all seemingly unconnected, yet DS Lively and forensic profiler Dr Connie Woolwine know they are dealing with a serial killer—they just need to prove it.

But time is running out, and Beth Waterfall already looks set to be the next victim... "Creepy in the best sort of way. The kind of old school serial killer thriller that has you reading, muttering and gasping the entire way. You will shred your nails until the mind-blowing end."—Lisa Gardner

* French, Nicci. [Tyler Green Will Never Be Free](#) (Harper \$19.99) is a hair-raising locked-room thriller about a group of old university friends with a killer in their midst. lyre Green, convicted of murdering his friend Leo at a student house party in 1993, has been released after almost three decades in prison. He has always protested his innocence. On a warm evening in London, Tyler summons eight of his university friends who were present on that fateful night. Is it just a reunion—or something else? It ends with one friend with their throat slit, just like Leo's was in 1993. Detective Inspector Maud O'Connor gets called to investigate. Whom to believe, especially when the rest of the Metropolitan Police Force, even the Home Secretary, add pressure.... I haven't read a French for some time but this hooks me into ordering one.

Goldis, Jaclyn. [Safari](#) (\$19). Odelia Babel, CEO of a sustainable fashion empire, is about to marry for the second time—to a man twenty-five years her junior. Asher Bach is the thirty-something designer of Odelia's luxury clothing line, the darling of every high-fashion journalist, and madly in love with Odelia. Eager to celebrate her nuptials with her nearest and dearest, Odelia invites her adult children, her daughter-in-law, her grandchild, and her best friend/assistant to an all-expenses-paid luxury safari at Leopard Sands in South Africa, the Babel family's favorite vacation spot. It seems like the perfect trip, but of course, it isn't, beginning with Odelia's murder. Christie wrote plots like this: a wealthy person is poised to change the family dynamics and inheritances. What could go wrong?

Grippando, James. [Grave Danger](#) (\$18.99). Looking for a legal thriller? Try this one from Miami lawyer Jack Swytek. Swytek's new client fled Iran to Miami with her daughter, and has been accused of kidnapping by her husband. The seasoned attorney must not only plan a winning defense. To stop the father from taking the girl back to Tehran, Jack must build a case under international law and prove that returning the child would put her at risk. But everything in this case isn't what it seems, and Jack quickly learns that his client is really the child's aunt and that the biological mother may have been killed by Iran's morality police. But what role did the father play in his wife's death, and why is Jack's wife, FBI Agent Andie Henning, being pressured by her bosses to persuade Jack to drop the case?

Harris, Terah Shelton. [Where the Wildflowers Grow \(Deluxe Edition\)](#) (Sourcebooks \$17.99). Leigh is the last of the Wildes. She knows this because she watched them all die. Grief never truly fades and even as the tragedy haunts her, Leigh carries on, because survival is in her blood. So, when the transport bus taking her to prison careens off the road, killing everyone onboard except her, she does what's in her nature. She survives. While searching for a place to hide, Leigh stumbles upon an unexpected sanctuary: a flower farm in rural Alabama tucked away from the world. What Leigh doesn't expect is the found family there who have built something from the wreckage of their own lives.

Harris "explores the pain of loss and the long—lasting repercussions of trauma through beautiful prose. Set against the backdrop of a flower farm in rural Alabama and aligned with the natural transitions of the seasons, Harris uses the power of community, understanding, and persistent tenderness to guide her protagonist through a journey toward growth and healing that, at long last, enables her to become the person she was meant to be."

— Charlene Carr

Heider, Elizabeth. [Children of the Savage City](#) (Penguin \$20). A peaceful evening mass at the historic Chiesa del Gesù Nuovo is shattered when a young au pair is killed in one of the cathedral's quiet chapels. The daughter of the US Ambassador sees it happen—but she'll speak only to one person: Nikki Serafino. Shaken by betrayal in her last high-profile case, Nikki has retreated from the relentless vigilance that once defined her work as liaison between Italian police and the US military. Withdrawn and mistrustful, she works her shifts, cares for her aging family, teaches self-defense classes, and avoids entanglement. But this case threatens her self-imposed invisibility—drawing her into a web of lies and resurfacing old wounds and buried loyalties. The murder investigation leads Nikki and her friend, Naples officer Valerio Alfieri, into a shadow architecture of power built to protect the guilty.

Houston, Victoria. [The Wolves Are Watching](#) (Crooked Lane \$19.99). It's early September when a competitor in a high school fishing tournament is approached by a stranger who threatens him and his family in an attempt to blackmail him into throwing the first round of the tournament. The boy flees into the woods, where at night he sleeps with wolves watching him from the shadows. When the boy's father asks Sheriff Lew Ferris' deputy, Ray Pradt, for help finding his son as well as the man who threatened him, they're thrown into a world of illegal betting that's more dangerous than either could have imagined. Meanwhile, Lew Ferris learns that a couple who went on a wolf-watching trip has disappeared without a trace, right near an old log cabin that Ray remembers from his childhood.

Ihli, Noelle West. [Run on Red: Deluxe Stenciled Edges](#) (Kensington \$18.95). A rural country road. No cell signal for miles. A terrifying game of cat-and-mouse. By the time Laura and Olivia notice the headlights tailing them through the hills, it's too late. What seems, at first, like a case of road rage quickly unfolds into a heart-pounding chase—and a battle for survival. Who are the men in the truck? What do they want? And can Laura and Olivia outrun—and outsmart—their long enough to call for help, even if it means taking their chances in the hills on foot?

Jackson, AL. [On the Brink of Bliss](#) (Entangled \$17.99). This Deluxe Edition comes with Signed Bookplate and a Sticker sheet

for the 5th Moonlit Ridge sexy Romance about a sizzling single mom, fake marriage, heroine in danger, and a morally gray hero with serious tattoos.

Johnson, Carl Martin. [JJ Tabasco's Do-It-Yourself Detective Agency](#) (Spark Press \$17.99). J. J. Tabasco is not the worst detective on the North American continent, but he's close. An American expat in Cancun, J. J. can't become a licensed private investigator. So he figured out a way to skirt the law with a "Do-It-Yourself" method, instructing clients on how to find the information they need. J. J. is scraping by, until a beautiful woman walks into his office with an envelope stuffed full of hundred-dollar bills. What begins as a simple stalking case becomes much more complicated, though, when he discovers that the beautiful Jayde is trying to find a twenty-five million dollar painting that's gone missing. And there are others sniffing in her tracks, including Kaspar Guzman, who walks his pet iguana on a lead, and Hermione, an octogenarian art thief, who is never without her vicious Chihuahua. While J. J. finds himself tangled in Jayde's quest, Cancun is not short on crime. Members of rival cartel gangs are being targeted by a serial killer and J. J. is conscripted by both cartels to find the culprit.

Katzenbach, John. [Jack's Boys](#) (\$19.99). Known only to each other as Alpha. Bravo. Charlie. Delta. Easy. Connected through a secure internet location, encrypted and concealed, a unique chat room they have named Jack's Special Place in homage to their ultimate model—the one killer they hold in the highest esteem. Whitechapel, London. 1888. The infamous murderer remembered in dark history as Jack the Ripper. And so, they are Jack's Boys. They delight in each other's crimes. They relish in taunting police around the world with odd clues and deep confusion—the modern version of the Victorian—era killer they emulate. While the original Jack sent letters to Fleet Street papers, they send pictures and online boasts and insults. In this fashion, they feed on each other's killings, a private community of death. Arrogant. Conceited. Untouchable. Or so they thought. Until one day they are hacked.... "No one portrays the mind of a sociopathic killer better than John Katzenbach."

Kirk, JD. [A Killer of Influence](#) (DK\$18). Following a convention in the Scottish Highlands, eight social media influencers vanish without a trace, leaving their followers and families in a state of shock, and the police clueless as to their whereabouts. And then, the livestreams begin. Broadcast live from their squalid underground cells, the young influencers are forced into a sadistic battle for survival. With each livestream, their captor pits them against each other in a twisted competition for likes. The influencer with the fewest positive reactions faces a gruesome end live on camera. As the likes increase and the death toll rises, DCI Jack Logan and his team must traverse both the Scottish wilderness and the darkest corners of the internet to try and save the remaining captives. I am not familiar with the [JD Kirk series](#); there are more entries.

McGowen, Claire. [The Other Couple](#) (Thomas & Mercer \$16.99) delivers an enticing tale of murder and troubled marriages set in the Canary Islands. London couple Beth Jones and Vince Castries arrive at a ritzy resort in Tenerife, hoping the sea- and sun-filled setting might help repair their faltering union. Meanwhile, London police detective Alison Hegarty and her husband Tom are staying at the same hotel, intent on enjoying a little relaxation

before the imminent arrival of their first baby, and beautiful Corinna and her partner Joel—half-sneeringly dubbed "The Influencers" by the other guests—seem intent on flaunting their looks and money in front of their followers and fellow guests. When the hotel's sexy lounge singer, Ana Garcia de Vasquez, turns up dead on the beach, one of the guests is arrested by Spanish police, and Alison can't stifle her instinct to investigate. Soon, she casts suspicion on the other main characters, each of whom is hiding secrets that could destroy their relationship. The *White Lotus* influence is strong, but McGowen elevates her novel above copycat territory with sharply drawn characters. It's an effective bit of escapism.

Mirvis, Tova. [We Would Never](#) (\$18.99). No one appears more surprised than Hailey Gelman when she comes under suspicion for the murder of her soon-to-be ex-husband Jonah. Hailey—nicknamed Sunshine by her mother for her bright outlook and ever-present smile—has always tried to do what is expected of her and is regarded as the family peacemaker. But is anyone, including Hailey, who she has always seemed to be? The months leading up to Jonah's death have been fraught, including a bitter separation and a messy custody battle over their young daughter, Maya. When Hailey files a motion to relocate to Florida so she can be near her family, Jonah retaliates and the divorce begins to spiral dangerously out of control. As does Hailey's family. Inspired by a true story, this is "an intellectual mystery—part whodunit, part whydunit, and heavy on the complexities of family dynamics, asking: How far would you go to protect those you love?"—*The Boston Globe*

Morita, Jennifer K. [Ghosts of Waikiki](#) (\$19.99). After the newspaper she works for folds and the freelance assignments no longer pay the bills, Maya Wong reluctantly returns to her native Hawai'i to ghostwrite controversial land developer Parker Hamilton's biography. But when the Hamilton patriarch is found dead under suspicious circumstances, Maya is unwittingly drawn into the investigation. Maya's family and friends aren't happy about her work for Hamilton. And now, with her ex, Detective Koa Yamada, on the case, she's forced to contend with the very person she was determined to avoid. All too soon, Maya is dodging assailants and digging for clues while juggling girls' nights out with her old BFFs and weekly family dinners—and convinced the police are after the wrong man, going after the killer. Recommended to readers of Naomi Hirahara.

Murphy, Nora. [Ours Is a Tale of Murder](#) (Sourcebooks \$17.99). Klara never wanted the house with the white picket fence. Troy never wanted anything else. Nothing is quite right with this happy couple, but isn't every home hiding something? Mary, the mother in the blue house, is cleaning out her son's old room before she sells, haunted by the mistakes of her past and afraid of what her home has become. Henry, freshly laid off and back living with his parents, has plenty of time to watch everyone—especially wives. He knows something is wrong with the couple across the street.... As the three households hurtle toward a violence, Murphy pulls the rug out from under the reader, recasting the entire narrative in a new light. "Few readers will have seen it coming, but they will, in hindsight, be impressed by Murphy's ingenious narrative structure and clever placement of clues."

Oates, Joyce Carol. [Double Trouble](#) (Hard Case Crime \$18.99). Four decades ago, six-time Pulitzer Prize finalist Oates penned

her first novel of psychological suspense under the name “Rosamond Smith.” In the Smith books, Oates explored themes of betrayal and deception, lust and murder, through stories involving twins, doubles, and hidden second identities – initially, keeping her own double identity a secret. Now back in print: pairing two complete novels and two rare, never before collected short stories, from s. Two serial killers – one female, one male – murder in the name of a higher cause.

* Parks, Adele. [Our Beautiful Mess](#) (Park Row \$18.99). Connie can’t wait to have all her daughters back home for Christmas. It’s not just the excitement of the girls being together under one roof; unit student Fran is bringing a new boyfriend to stay. et from the moment she sees Zac, Connie feels a deep unease. Zac reminds her of the worst mistake she has ever made: a man whose charm and good looks nearly destroyed her marriage. Then, Fran announces she’s pregnant. Reeling from Fran’s news and terrified that her past might threaten her family’s future, Connie desperately tries to navigate a path forward. But there’s a much greater menace looming, because she’s not the only one who has something to hide.... UK bestseller Parks is perfect for readers of Lisa Jewell and Liane Moriarty.

Patterson, James/James O. Born. [Paranoia](#) (\$19.99). Recently, too many of the dead have been fellow cops. “I want you to look at these deaths on special assignment,” NYPD Inspector Celeste Cantor says. “Report only to me.” Bennett excels as a solo investigator. But he’s chasing a killer who feeds on isolation... and paranoia.

Potzsch, Oliver. [The Girl and the Gravedigger](#) (\$21.99). Vienna 1894. When the mummified remains of a famed Egyptologist are discovered in the Vienna art museum, Inspector Leopold von Herzfeldt reunites with Augustin Rothmayer, the oddball gravedigger from Vienna’s Central Cemetery, to learn everything he knows about preserving a dead body, information vital to a new investigation. Opening an ancient Egyptian sarcophagus, employees of Vienna’s Museum of Art History have discovered the well- (and quite recently) preserved body of Alfons Strössner, famed professor of Egyptology. Some believe that the professor was the victim of an ancient curse. But neither Rothmayer nor von Herzfeldt give credence to such superstitious rumors. They are certain it was murder. I admire Bavarian Potzsch’s historical fiction, always something different.

Rother, Caitlin. [Hooked](#) (Thomas & Mercer \$16.99). San Diego homicide detective Ken Goode, who spends his free time surfing, and investigative reporter Katrina Chopin, who’s just returned to Southern California after a decade away. At the outset, Ken and Katrina bump into each other at a bar in La Jolla and sparks fly. Their exchange of life stories has barely begun when Ken receives a call about a nearby homicide. He rushes to the exclusive neighborhood of La Jolla Farms, where he finds the dead bodies of Victoria Fontaine and her father, Simon, a prominent plastic surgeon and the head of biotech company Vitaleron. As Ken unearths bizarre inconsistencies in the case’s physical evidence, Katrina starts reporting a story about the killings, which may have something to do with the sexual enhancement drug that Simon was developing. Attempting to suppress their chemistry as they race to solve the case, Ken and Katrina oscillate between helping and hindering each other in the search for clues.

Siegel, Katie. [Out of the Loop](#) (Crooked Lane \$19.99) combines mystery, romance, and time travel into a deliciously entertaining tale. Amie Teller, 28, is a frustrated journalist writing about health and science for an online magazine. More notably, she’s been stuck in a time loop for more than two years, doomed to relive September 17 again and again. One morning, Amie wakes up to find that the calendar has turned to September 18—and her neighbor, bookshop owner Savannah Harlow, has been murdered overnight. When Amie learns that her 50-something neighbor and friend David is being questioned by the police, she’s spurred to investigate, assuming that her familiarity with the events of September 17 will offer her unique insight into the case. To help her sleuthing, Amie recruits David and her ex-girlfriend Ziya, with whom she’s trying to maintain a friendship. Though the chronology initially seems daunting as it dips in and out of Amie’s time loop, Siegel quickly orients the reader, making it possible to settle in for a well-crafted whodunit and a will-they, won’t-they rekindled romance between Amie and Ziya.

Steel, Danielle. [A Mind of Her Own](#) (\$18). Alexandra Bouvier is born in Paris in 1900, at the dawn of a new century. From an early age, she is encouraged to think for herself by her enlightened family: her father, a French doctor; her mother, an American nurse; and her maternal grandfather a highly regarded newspaperman back in the Midwest. Then war erupts. Her parents follow their sense of duty to the front, performing triage at a field hospital and confronting the horrors of poison gas and trench warfare. The merciless fighting, coupled with the fast-spreading Spanish flu, wreaks havoc on the continent, as well as on Alex’s loved ones. By the time she is eighteen, she has suffered unimaginable losses. With her grandfather’s support, she attends the University of Chicago and decides to follow his footsteps into journalism. As a newspaper intern she meets reporter Oliver Foster, who is covering the gang wars sparked by Prohibition. They spark, but fear any attachment. As it turns out, Alex has good reason to be cautious.

Sutton, Lilli. [A Long Dark Night](#) (Park Row \$18.99). After her restaurant closes and she returns to her childhood home, deep in the Alaskan wilderness, chef Nina has one goal: finding a way back out. Her family’s sled-dog business is struggling, and she is alarmed that her brother Grant is working at the nearby oil field. With reason: he witnesses a chilling crime at the drilling site, but wants to ignore it. But Nina can’t let this lie. The opportunity to uncover the truth about the disappearances and protect her family from increasing threats is too important. What starts as an attempt to unravel the mystery leads Nina, Grant, and their loved ones directly into the path of killer opposition.

Thompson, Dean. [Imagine Murder: A John Lennon Mystery](#) (Perfect Bound Books \$19.99). Spring, 1972: it’s the darkest moment of the Vietnam War, with demonstrations across the country. New York City is sliding toward bankruptcy. It’s been nearly two years since the Beatles broke up; John Lennon and Yoko Ono have just established themselves as New York residents and artists. John’s Imagine album hit the charts late the previous year, and he continues to record, but his and Yoko’s newest passion is film: Joko Films, at an undisclosed location in SoHo, opens its doors. There, on the eve of the Watergate break-in, one of Joko’s employees is brutally murdered, and the hunt for the killer, amid a storm of publicity, is on. Conceived and written by Dean Thompson, an

original Joko employee this is the first book in a series, based on the little-publicized New York City world of John Lennon and Yoko Ono.

Unger, Lisa. [Close Your Eyes and Count to 10](#) (\$18.99). Here we go off to a remote island for an extreme game of hide-and-seek in an abandoned hotel. The prize for winning — a million dollars. “Adele Crane’s life was shattered when her seemingly wonderful husband, Miller, vanished along with millions of dollars embezzled from the tech company he founded. Adele has been struggling to make a living and raise her traumatized kids and she’s rebuilt her confidence with half-marathons and an online presence as a health influencer. So, it makes sense to apply for a streaming reality competition for influencers called Extreme Hide and Seek. Contestants are taken to some challenging location, where they hide from the Extreme team. Last one found wins. That’s how Adele finds herself on remote Falcão Island, the site of Enchantments, a luxury resort built in the 1980s but long abandoned and now about to collapse. It’s quickly apparent that the Extreme team itself is on the verge of chaos”...and murder—*Kirkus Starred Review*. Fans of Heather Gudenkauf’s [Everyone Is Watching](#) (\$17.95) will relish this.

Valeri, Isabella. [Letters from the Dead](#) (\$20). An historical fiction debut, now in paperback, focuses on a young heiress who must return home from a decade-long exile to an elite Manhattan boarding school to face the powerful enemies arrayed against her, including some of her own family. Cloistered on a sprawling estate in the Alpine foothills, as the youngest sibling of her generation she had little knowledge of dark forces at work, but now in her twenties she finds her bank accounts abruptly frozen and arranged marriage in store. Plus her most powerful foe may be her own father.