

BOOKNEWS from

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The Belated March Booknews....

I include events already held as we still have Signed Books from them to offer you
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.

March is Women's History Month so I have made some Subscription Club Picks
to highlight women's stories as well as stocking lots of others

MONDAY MARCH 2 7:00 PM Live Event

James Rollins discusses [Trust No One](#) (Harper \$32)
A thriller based in history and a modern academic course in
witchcraft....and an ancient book
Our copies come with an exclusive second dust jacket

TUESDAY MARCH 3 7:00 PM Live Event

Deanna Raybourn discusses [A Ghastly Catastrophe](#) (Berkley \$30)
A Veronica Speedwell Victorian Mystery

WEDNESDAY MARCH 4 7:00 PM Live Event

Alexandra Potter discusses [So, I Met This Guy](#) (Zibby Books \$17.99)
Two women bond for a wild European chase from the glitz and
glamour of Monte Carlo to the souks of Tangier after a scammer
I love this book, it's fun and highlights empowering women

THURSDAY MARCH 5 7:00 PM Live Event

Will Dean discusses [Adrift](#) (Atria \$29)
An American Midwest suspense novel
Danielle Girard discusses [Pinky Swear](#) (Atria \$28)

SUNDAY MARCH 8 2:00 PM Live event

Rhys Bowen and Clare Broyles discuss [Vanished in the Crowd](#)
(St Martins \$28)
A Molly Murphy Mystery

THURSDAY MARCH 12 7:00 PM Live

Erica Ruth Neubauer discusses a series start set in Wisconsin,
[Two Bodies Are Better Than One](#) (Thomas & Mercer \$16.99)
and a new Jane Wunderly 1927 mystery [Vengeance in Venice](#)
(Kensington \$27)
Nick Petrie discusses [The Dark Time](#) (Putnam \$30)
A Peter Ash thriller set in Seattle with June and Lewis as backup

FRIDAY MARCH 13 7:00 PM Live Event

Elle Cosimano discusses [Finlay Donovan Crosses the Line](#) (St
Martins \$28)
To rescue her nanny and partner-in-crime Vero

SATURDAY MARCH 14 10:00 AM Live Event

Local Authors Fair
Support Local Independently Published Authors

MONDAY MARCH 16 7:00 PM Live Event

Naomi Hirahara discusses [Crown City](#) (Soho \$29.95)
A Japantown Mystery
Sujata Massey discusses [The Star from Calcutta](#) (Soho \$29.95)
A Perveen Mistry Mystery

TUESDAY MARCH 17

Wishing you a happy St. Patrick's Day

TUESDAY MARCH 17 Live Book Launch

Sandra Brown discusses [Bloodlust](#) (Grand Central \$30)
Another combustible thriller/romance by legendary bestseller
Brown

WEDNESDAY MARCH 18 5:00 PM Virtual Event

Deborah Goodrich Royce discusses [Best Boy](#) (Post Hill Press \$28)
Signed books available

SUNDAY MARCH 22 2:00 PM Live Event

Australia's Benjamin Stevenson discusses [Everyone in This
Bank Is a Thief](#) (Harper Collins \$30)
Another baffling and clever locked room mystery with ten players

TUESDAY MARCH 24 7:00 PM Live Event

Kat Rosenfield discusses [How to Survive in the Woods](#) (Harper
Collins \$30)
Set in the treacherous final stretch of the Appalachian Trail –
Maine's Hundred Mile Wilderness

WEDNESDAY MARCH 25 5:00 PM Virtual Event

Yosha Gunasekera discusses her debut [The Midnight
Taxi](#) (Berkley \$19)
Set in NYC and a perfect book for March as Women's History
Month

SATURDAY MARCH 28 4:00 PM Live Event

Rebecca Jenshak discusses [Lucky Shot](#) (Podium Publishing
\$19.99)
A Hockey Romance for Sports Romance enthusiasts

OUR SUBSCRIPTION CLUB PICKS FOR MARCH

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

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

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

British Crime Club One Unsigned hardcover or paperback per month

Philipson, Rebecca. [How to Get Away with Murder](#)

Cozy Crimes Club One Unsigned hardcover or paperback per month

Konishi, Masateru. [My Grandfather, The Master Detective](#)

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

Adams, Taylor. [Her Last Breath](#)

First Mystery Club One Signed First Printing per month

Moldover, Joseph. [To the End of Reckoning](#)

Hardboiled/Noir Club One Signed or unsigned hardcover or paperback per month

Swinson, David. [From the Dust](#)

Historical Fiction Club One First Printing per month

Benedict, Marie. [Daughter of Egypt](#)

Historical Fiction Paperback Club One Unsigned paperback per month

Nix, DJ. [The Shakespeare Secret](#)

Notable New Fiction Club One Signed First Printing per month

Serle, Rebecca. [Once and Again](#)

Romance and Relationships Club One unsigned hardcover or paperback per month

Holguin, Ana. [Second Chance Duet](#)

SOME SIGNED BOOKS FOR MARCH

Adams, Taylor. [Her Last Breath](#) (Harper \$30) is our **March Crime Subscription Club Pick**. This one is so full of danger, adrenaline, and twists it left me breathless. Here's a reminder why in a *NY Times Review*:

“A young woman, drifting in and out of consciousness, is pinned on her stomach in a tomblike crawl space deep inside a pitch-black underground cave. Not that I'm here to tell anyone how to spend their free time, but surely the characters in Adams's unnerving thriller could have avoided this awful situation by electing not to blithely rappel into a local attraction known, unappealingly, as the Devil's Staircase. But never mind. Here we are. Two friends, Tess DeWater and Allie Merritt, entered this nightmarish labyrinth and now only Tess has emerged, barely. In the hospital, she's suffering from a concussion, a ruptured eardrum and numerous sprains, lacerations and welts. 'Presumably, these injuries weren't caused by the cave alone,' Detective Layla Washington thinks, before beginning to interview the traumatized Tess.

Tess's wild story involves, among other things, the sudden appearance of a violent man wielding a gun inside the cave. It's not clear at first how it all adds up. Though Washington is a skilled interrogator, she's nearing the end of her career, and her colleagues suspect that memory lapses are impeding her work. What secrets are buried inside Allie and Tess's complicated history, and can Washington ferret them out? With cunning pacing and carefully distributed revelations, Adams expertly explores the power dynamics of female friendships, the slippery nature of memory and the foolishness of caving as a leisure activity, particularly in a place where one section is nicknamed 'Worse Than Death.'”

Aster, Alex. [Starside \(Deluxe Limited Edition\)](#) (Harper \$34). In her first adult fiction the author of the Lightlark bestsellers pens a Romantasy. Hundreds of years ago, a brutal war split a land in two. Starside is the realm of magic and immortals—the descen-

dants of the gods, living in a power-rich paradise. Stormside is where mortals fight for scraps of that magic. Every fifty years, the gates between them open, and fifty challengers are allowed to journey across Starside on a deadly quest to access a pool of magic that can heal, grant wealth, or extend life. Everyone has their reasons for entering, but Aris has only one: vengeance. As a child, a goddess set fire to her village, killing her family. Aris isn't after the gods' magic—she's going to kill them. “If *The Hunger Games* was a dark fairy tale. Get ready to be transported into a dazzling world where love is a death sentence and the romances between competitors are even fiercer than the curses plaguing the islands.”—Adam Silvera

Benedict, Marie. [Daughter of Egypt](#) (St Martins \$29). *Downton Abbey* (tangentially thanks to the real owners of the estate) and the legend of King Tut's tomb discoverer Howard Carter are part of the background of Benedict's latest look at history and remarkable women combined with a stirring plot. Fiona Davis also touched on the Pharaonic ruler Hatshepsut in 2025's [The Stolen Queen](#) (\$29) which I highly recommend.

What do we have here? In the 1920s, archeologist Howard Carter and Lord Carnarvon of Highclere Castle made headlines around the world with the discovery of the treasure-filled tomb of the boy Pharaoh Tutankhamen. But behind it all stood Lady Evelyn Herbert—daughter of Lord Carnarvon—whose daring spirit and relentless curiosity made the momentous find possible. Nearly 3,000 years earlier, another woman defied the expectations of her time: Hatshepsut, Egypt's lost pharaoh. Her reign was bold, visionary—and nearly erased from history. When Evelyn becomes obsessed with finding Hatshepsut's secret tomb, she risks everything to uncover the truth about her reign and keep valued artifacts in Egypt, their rightful home. But as danger closes in and political tensions rise, she must make an impossible choice: protect her father's legacy—or forge her own.

“As a historian and Egyptologist, I thought I knew

these women and their worlds, but Benedict has imagined them as never before.... These women are brought to life in vibrant color, under the blazing sun in the land of Egypt. This is a deep and touching story full of love, disappointment, happiness, and tragedy. It is a delightful and evocative journey from start to finish.”—Kathleen Sheppard, author of [Women in the Valley of the Kings](#) (\$31), also highly recommended.

Bowen, Rhys/Clare Broyles. [Vanished in the Crowd](#) (St Martins \$28). Can it be the 22nd Molly Murphy mystery? I remember the first so well. Two million visitors come to New York City to witness the Hudson-Fulton celebration in 1909, marking the 300th anniversary of Henry Hudson’s discovery of the Hudson River. Parades, exhibitions, carnivals, and a marvelous display of the wonders of the latest invention—electricity—across the city make for two straight weeks of celebrations, which Molly and her family, along with their friends Sid and Gus, are excited to enjoy. But Molly is secretly dealing with financial troubles. She is too proud to ask her friends for a loan, but when they want to hire her as a detective she jumps at the chance. Sid and Gus are hosting fellow Vassar graduates to take part in one of the parades but one of the women, a brilliant scientist, never shows up. Nobody knows where she is, including her husband. Is she trying to run away from her life or is it something more sinister?

Cosimano, Elle. [Finlay Donovan Crosses the Line](#) (St Martins \$28). Life just got a whole lot harder for Finlay. Her nanny and partner-in-crime, Vero, has been extradited from Virginia to Maryland, where she’s facing criminal charges for a theft she swears she didn’t commit. A prisoner to an ankle bracelet as she awaits her trial, Vero is forced to live with her overbearing mother and nosy aunt. Threatening messages keep arriving on her mother’s door, demanding Vero “turn over the money ... or else.” And if she doesn’t figure out who really stole her former sorority’s treasury funds, her next home might be a prison cell. But proving her innocence might be an impossible feat. Vero was the treasurer of her sorority when the money went missing—one of the only people who had access to the cash. And her alibi is a date who ghosted her....

Dean, Will. [Adrift](#) (Atria \$29). 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.

Note: at his March 5 event he revealed that he wrote a separate novel for the UK edition, one with a UK location, UK speak, UK design, etc. I have ordered the [UK paperback edition](#) thus, not Signed, for those who might want, like me, to compare the two.

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: “Steepled 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.”

Hirahara, Naomi. [Crown City](#) (Soho \$29.95). Pasadena, 1903: Eighteen-year-old Ryunosuke “Ryui” Wada staggers off the boat from Yokohama, Japan, ready to reinvent himself after the untimely deaths of his parents. Though battling loneliness and culture shock, Ryui does his best to settle into his work as an art dealer’s apprentice while adjusting to his new home. From his enigmatic photographer roommate, Jack, to the beautiful seamstress living downstairs, Ryui finds himself surrounded by colorful characters and unbelievable opportunities and is soon utterly swept up in all “Crown City” has to offer. But tensions are seething under Pasadena’s bustling prosperity....

Jensen, Danielle L. [The Traitor Queen \(Deluxe Edition\)](#) (Random House \$35) is the second novel Bridge Kingdom Romantasy series. A queen now in exile as a traitor, Lara has watched as Ithicana is conquered by her own father, helpless to do anything to stop the destruction. But when she learns her husband, Aren, has been captured in battle, Lara knows there is only one reason her father is keeping him alive: as bait for his traitorous daughter. And it is bait she fully intends to take. Risking her life on the Tempest Seas, Lara returns to Ithicana with a plan not only to free its king but to liberate the Bridge Kingdom from her father’s clutches....

Showing you the lengths to which publishers will go for the Romantasy boom, here’s what the Deluxe Edition entails: Designed sprayed edges; A deluxe jacket with new cover art; A full-color illustrated book case with new character art; An interior black-and-white map (included in previous volumes; Designed endpapers; A spine design that will stretch across future deluxe hardcover editions in the series. My question is why can’t they stretch to making mystery and thrillers well designed? And the answer is sales numbers.... Right now it’s a Romance book era.

Jones, Tayari. [Kin: A Novel](#) (Knopf \$30). Vernice and Annie, two motherless daughters raised in Honeysuckle, Louisiana, have been best friends and neighbors since earliest childhood but are fated to live starkly different lives. Raised by a fierce aunt determined to give her a stable home in the wake of her mother’s death, Vernice leaves Honeysuckle at eighteen for Spelman College, where she joins a sisterhood of powerfully connected Black women and discovers a world of affluence, manners, aspiration, and inequality. Annie, abandoned by her mother as a child and fixated on the idea of finding her and filling the bottomless hole left by her absence, sets off on a journey that will take her into a world of peril and adversity, as well as love and adventure, culminating in a battle for her life.

Kingfisher, T. [Wolf Worm](#) (Tor \$29.99). Tip ins for this Gothic. Sonia Wilson is a talented scientific illustrator—but she is only able to follow her dream because of her father’s reputation as a renowned scientist. Such is the lot in life for a woman in science in 1899. And after his death, she is left without work, prospects,

or hope. So when the reclusive Dr. Halder offers her a position illustrating his vast collection of insects, Sonia jumps at the chance to move to his North Carolina manor house and put her talents to use. Once there though, she encounters dark happenings in the Carolina woods, and even darker questions come to light, like what happened to her predecessor? Why are animals acting so strangely, and what is behind the peculiar local whispers about “blood thieves?”

Margaret, Joanna. [The Daughters](#) (Penzler \$26.95). **Our copies come Signed and with a complimentary enamel pin for the first purchasers.**

This well done Gothic is framed by a three-centuries earlier murder disguised as a witch hunt and a deeply felt small town setting. It’s an excellent read for Women’s History Month as the modern women are empowered as the older one was not.

Reeling from the dual deaths of her estranged father and ex-fiancé, Genevieve Tompkins has dropped out of her PhD program in New York City and is looking for a chance to start over in Wilton Springs, a faded Victorian spa town in upstate New York. Utilizing her background as an archivist, she is hired to catalogue the papers of the prominent Wilton family, who trace their lineage back to the founders of the town. But as she digs into their records, Genevieve discovers that the family’s pharmaceutical business and their personal lives have been fraught with a history of tragedy. She also uncovers a series of disturbing disappearances and suspicious deaths among the women of the town. Three centuries earlier, Wilton Springs was the site of a brutal witch trial—a fact which someone has gone to extreme lengths to erase from historical record. As Genevieve explores the connections between the current disappearances and the town’s ugly past, she becomes entangled in a very modern conspiracy, where the line between superstition and reality begins to blur in horrifying fashion....

Massey, Sujata. [The Star from Calcutta](#) (Soho \$29.95). India, 1922: Perveen Mistry, the only female lawyer in Bombay, has secured her biggest client yet: Champa Films, a movie studio run by director Subhas Ghoshal and his wife, Rochana, the biggest name in Indian cinema. In the public eye, Rochana is notorious for her beauty and her daring stunts—behind the scenes, she has recently left the studio in Calcutta that made her famous, and the studio owner is enraged by what he claims is a breach of contract. Rochana needs Perveen’s legal help to extricate Champa Films from the impending controversy. To study Rochana’s glamorous world, Perveen attends a special screening and brings her film fanatic best friend, Alice Hobson-Jones. But in the aftermath of the event, one of the guests is found dead, and to make matters worse, Rochana has disappeared. To protect her clients, Perveen begins to investigate the developing murder case, peeling back the glitz to reveal a salacious web of blackmail, deceit, and romantic affairs....

Moldover, Joseph. [To the End of Reckoning](#) (Mysterious Press \$26.95). Criminal psychologist Moldover makes our March First Mystery Club Pick (note: we get it a month early) with this humane mystery about a stage actor investigating a murder alongside his ailing father. Lukas Moore, 23, has given up the lead in a Broadway revival of *A Streetcar Named Desire* to care for his psychiatrist father, Richard, who’s recovering from a traumatic brain injury after a car accident. Lukas’s return to his hometown of Faith, N.Y., coincides with a memorial service for Dr. Jason

Grant, one of Richard’s young colleagues. Grant was last seen a year ago; some of his possessions were found on the shore of a lake upstate, and though his body never turned up, most locals believe he died by suicide. Richard, though, suspects foul play, based in part on a half-remembered conversation he had with Jason about a strange research proposal shortly before he disappeared. With his memory failing but his talent for close observation as sharp as ever, Richard enlists Lukas to help investigate Jason’s death in a case that winds up cutting uncomfortably close to home. Moldover draws even minor supporting characters in three dimensions, making the elegant core mystery much more satisfying than the average whodunit. I add that this is one of the most original narrative voices I have read—Just Go With It.

Neubauer, Erica Ruth. [Two Bodies Are Better Than One](#) (Thomas & Mercer \$16.99). Until 1989, the wildest thing to happen in the sleepy town of Sheboygan Bay was surfers catching waves on frigid Lake Michigan. Then one summer morning, Lorraine Highsmith wakes up to find a corpse on her lawn. Detective Michaela “Mike” Zenoni is on the case immediately, eager to make a name for herself in a male-dominated precinct. And Lorraine is close behind—as the local advice columnist, she’s always looking for a scoop. What they don’t know is that Lorraine once had ties to the mob, and those connections could be coming back to haunt her. A recent transplant to Wisconsin, she keeps her past shrouded in mystery, and she’d like to keep it that way. Mike might be working with her to find the killer, but Lorraine knows that alliances can change on a dime. She needs to get ahead of this story... no matter who’s trying to put an end to hers.

Neubauer, Erica Ruth. [Vengeance in Venice](#) (Kensington \$27). Since Erica Ruth is here March 12 with Nick Petrie we hope to get her 1927 Jane Wunderly (and Redvers!) mystery, 7th in this clever romantic series, here for her to sign as well.

The pair are in Venice for their honeymoon, a dream destination for a couple who met in the Mena House in Giza. Invited to a fancy party at Clara Morton’s palazzo on the Grand Canal, where the eccentric hostess dressed as Medusa features tarot card readings, her pet cheetah, and... a corpse. It’s Clara’s ex, murdered in the garden. And fingers point to the tarot reader, but she isn’t the only partygoer with a motive....

Petrie, Nick. [The Dark Time](#) (Putnam \$30). Our April Crime Club Pick is stunning, both in the plot which we must hope will remain the stuff of fiction although it could be all too real as a dystopian threat, and in the actions of the characters. This is Petrie at his absolute best which I thought after reading his second for Peter Ash, [Burning Bright](#) (\$16) with its incredible opening chase scene, could not be topped.

Katelyn Thorsen, known as KT to her friends and enemies, is an independent journalist who receives a very specific death threat. Fortunately, Peter Ash has arrived in Seattle to protect KT at the request of his girlfriend, June Cassidy. From the moment of his arrival, he’s thrown into a maelstrom of violence trying to protect KT and her daughter and discover the source of the death threat. Even after June and Peter’s best friend Lewis show up to help, this challenge may prove overwhelming....

Potter, Alexandra. [So, I Met This Guy](#) (Zibby Books \$17.99). When a romantic fraudster scams Maggie, a 49-year-old gallery owner, out of her life savings, junior reporter Flick decides that exposing the love bomber may be just the career break she needs.

The two unlikely allies go on a wild European chase from the glitz and glamour of Monte Carlo to the souks of Tangier—where unexpected twists, hidden secrets, and hard truths are revealed. And, as an unlikely friendship begins to blossom, they not only work to catch a con man, but, in the process, find themselves. Highly recommended and great fun.

* Raybourn, Deanna. [A Ghastly Catastrophe](#) (Berkley \$30). Victorian iconoclasts Veronica Speedwell and her lover Stoker are practically dying for a new adventure, but when their wish is granted, they find themselves up against a secret society and a darkly seductive duo. When the corpse of an entitled young man is found entirely drained of blood in a carriage next to Highgate Cemetery, Veronica's interest is piqued. And then a second victim is found, his death made to look like a suicide—and Veronica and her intrepid beau Stoker know the hunt is on. The two men share one link: they were both members of a society so secretive that only a singular mention of it can be found anywhere. Thirsty for more clues, Veronica and Stoker hear that a young Romany boy may know more about their first victim, and the only way to the boy is through an old acquaintance of Stoker's, Lady Julia Brisbane. Lady Julia and her dashing husband, Nicholas, occasionally track down murderers and are only too happy to help. But as it becomes clear that the secret society is a dangerous sect looking to entice immortality seekers, Veronica and Stoker find themselves ensnared by a decidedly more sinister couple. Still, sinister is nothing new to our duo.

Rollins, James. [Trust No One](#) (Harper \$32). Wow, we sold out the first 500 but nailed a few dozen copies now back in stock. All of them come with the alternate cover wrap so you get the original in red and the extra in yellow.

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,

Rosenfield, Kat. [How to Survive in the Woods](#) (Harper \$30). Amity Gage's *Heartwood* was a terrific book about a woman lost on the Maine leg of the Appalachian Trail, and so much more. Here we get a thriller also set in Maine's Hundred Mile Wilderness—the treacherous final stretch of the storied Appalachian Trail—an addictive tale of passion, betrayal, control, and what it means to survive. This one is dark indeed.

Royce, Deborah Goodrich. [Best Boy](#) (Post Hill Press \$28) delves into the cost of burying secrets to preserve a carefully constructed life. Viveca Stevenson has it all: a handsome and successful husband, an adorable ten-year-old son, and a coastal dream house in Greenwich, Connecticut. She has a solid group of girlfriends and is content with the afterglow of the film career

she's left behind. But when a threatening letter arrives—from a man she does not remember—it cracks open a part of her past she thought was buried for good. A terrifying chain of events is set in motion, forcing Viveca to confront what happened on a shattering Halloween night in high school when she had a different name, a different face, a different voice. Who is the man contacting her now and was he really the best boy on her most famous film, *Misty*? Why can't she remember him—or that night.

“Deborah Goodrich Royce writes with the cutting clarity of a glittering diamond. Bringing readers deep into the mind and voice of leading lady Viveca Anders, Royce delivers a nuanced drama over multiple timelines and wrestles with the weight of secrets—those we keep from others, but especially those we keep from ourselves. At times dark, at times laugh-out-loud funny, this is a dishy and deeply textured read that will have you racing through the pages to figure out what happened, and what happens next.” — Allison Pataki

Serle, Rebecca. [Once and Again](#) (Atria \$27). In recognition of March as Women's History Month this is our Pick for **Notable New Fiction**, an unforgettable tale of a family of women with an astonishing gift: the ability to redo one moment in their lives. “[A] poignant reflection on the price of a person's decisions, and how far someone will go to save the ones they love... Deeply and surprisingly moving.” — *Kirkus*

The women of the Novak family were each born with a gift: they can, just once, turn back time. Lauren has known since she was fifteen that her mother Marcella saved Lauren's father from a deadly car accident. Dave is alive and happy, and out on the Malibu waves. But ever since, Marcella, her power spent, has lived in fear of what she won't be able to reverse. Her own mother, Sylvia, is her polar opposite: a free-spirited iconoclast with a glamorous past she only hints at. Lauren has spent her life waiting for her own catastrophe to strike. Then one summer, Lauren's husband takes a job in New York and she moves back to Broad Beach Road, back into her childhood home on the shores of Malibu. Lauren looks forward to surfing with her dad again and perhaps repairing an unspoken fracture in her relationship with her mother. What she doesn't expect is for the boy next to door to return home—Stone, Lauren's first love, who broke her heart nearly a decade before. As Lauren falls into familiar patterns, with her family and, more dangerously, Stone, she finds herself thinking about all the choices, large and small, that have brought her to this moment. And wondering, finally, if one of them should be undone. So—how many of us would like a do-over? Just one. In part I think it depends on how satisfied you are with the life you've got.

Sierra, Tracy. [Warning Signs](#) (Viking \$30). I didn't do justice to this book signed here on February 24 so here is a new review:

“If you're a sensitive 12-year-old boy reeling from the untimely death of your mother, you should avoid going skiing with your cruel, mendacious father and the rich men he's trying to inveigle into investing in his dodgy business. ‘You be seen but not heard, right?’ the father, Bram, tells the son, Zach, whom he's using as a prop to present this nakedly transactional trip as a father-son bonding adventure. As the men brag and name-drop — ‘When did Buffett start going?’ says one, as a way to show how long he's been attending an annual masters-of-the-universe finance conference — Zach finds a diamond earring lodged in the floorboards. Does it have something to do with Ginny, Bram's

assistant, who was meant to tidy up but apparently never arrived at the cabin? Things turn even more ominous when the group sets off on skis and promptly triggers an avalanche.

Suffice to say that not everyone escapes this book alive, and that not all the deaths are caused by dangerous snow conditions. But what could have been a pure tale of icy survival is enhanced by the thoughtfulness with which Sierra approaches Zach's painful past and confused present. "She made you such a baby," Bram spits at his son, speaking of Zach's dead mother. "I told her you wouldn't be able to survive the real world." Zach is about to prove him wrong."

Siger, Jeffrey. [A Study in Secrets](#) (Severn \$29.99). In stock now but not Signed Until June due to illness. Reserve now or buy and bring it in to be Signed

The master of the Greek thriller does something new. The first in the brand-new Redacted Man mystery series set in NYC featuring Michael, a Sherlock Holmes-worthy sleuth with a George Smiley secret-agent past who lives in an elegant townhouse at number 221 and has a devoted housekeeper in Mrs. Baker....

Michael is a true gentleman who, since retiring from the intelligence services, lives a quiet, comfortable life. Practically a recluse and partially handicapped, he spends his days imagining the lives of the anonymous people he watches in the park beneath his windows. He takes great care never to get involved in the lives of those he observes until....one day he watches a girl sit in the park at dawn. Always alone. Always watchful. And when the sun rises, she vanishes, as if she were never there. One day her routine changes—and Michael realizes she faces terrible danger. For reasons unclear even to himself he makes an uncharacteristic decision to abandon his solitude and help her. Soon, Michael finds himself confronting the New York City underworld in an unexpected search for a priceless missing treasure. He'll have to rely upon all the tricks of his former trade and resurrect long neglected relationships if he's to keep not just himself, but his new friend, alive.

Stedman, M L. [A Far Flung Life](#) (Scribner \$30). Here is that same question Searle explores, if differently: When we do something that can't be undone or mended, how do we go on living? How do we find our North Star when there is no right answer? Remote Western Australia, 1958: here, for generations, the MacBrides have lived on a vast sheep station, Meredith Downs. It is a million acres, an ocean of arid land. On an ordinary day, on a lonely road, under the unending blue sky, patriarch Phil MacBride swerves to avoid a kangaroo. In seconds the lives of the entire MacBride family are shattered. And we go from there along with Matt, the youngest MacBride, is plunged into a moral and emotional journey for which there is no map, no guide.

Stevenson, Benjamin. [Everyone in This Bank Is a Thief](#) (Harper \$30). Ten heists. Ten suspects. A murder mystery only Ernest Cunningham can solve. As he says, "I've spent the last few years solving murders. But a bank heist is a new one, even for me. I've never been a hostage before. The doors are chained shut. No one in or out. Which means that when someone in the bank is murdered, everyone is a suspect. Turns out, more than one person planned to rob the bank today. You can steal more from a bank than just money. Who is stealing what? Are they willing to kill for it? And can I solve the crime before the police kick down the door and rescue us?" The Australian master of the locked-room mystery is back... For his first appearance here.

* Todd, Charles. [A Day of Judgment](#) (Penzler \$28.99). July, 1921: England is suffering a heat wave and the coast of Northumberland, just across the border from Scotland, is filled with holiday-makers bird watching and enjoying the beaches. Pilgrims also come to visit the home of Saints Cuthbert and Aiden—the founders of Christianity in England—located on the "Holy Island" of Lindisfarne, accessible by a causeway at low tide. When the murdered body of a local man washes ashore just south of Lindisfarne, the government and the Church of England are concerned about protecting both the reputation of the Church and the sacred sites that are a destination for hundreds of pilgrims at this time of year. With his ability to move in the highest social and political circles, Rutledge is sent by Scotland Yard to solve this crime and dispel any association with the Church. And animosity towards Germany still runs high even years after the war. This, combined with a constabulary in the process of being consolidated to form a countywide police force, with local militias still wielding a great deal of power, means Rutledge must tread with care....It's good to see Charles, half of the original team writing as Charles Todd, carrying on since the death of his mother Carolyn, one of my very favorite people and authors.

MARCH IS WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

We have a large number of contemporary memoirs and biographies to choose from

Here are some earlier books to consider if you missed them

Hollingsworth, Mary. [Catherine de Medici](#) (Pegasus \$35) is a biography of a French Queen worth reading as is the absorbing, amazing portrait of Russian Empress [Catherine the Great](#) (\$20) by Robert K. Massie. Talk about seizing power where you find it....

* Howe, Emily. [The Painter's Daughters](#) (\$18.99). Peggy and Molly Gainsborough—daughters of one of England's most famous portrait artists of the 1700s and the frequent subject of his work—are best friends struggling to live up to the image of the perfect world he creates. They spy on their father as he paints and rankle their mother as she manages the household. But there is another reason they are inseparable: from a young age, Molly periodically experiences bouts of mental confusion, even forgetting who she is, and Peggy instinctively knows she must help cover up her sister's condition. When the family moves to Bath, it's not so easy to hide Molly's slip-ups. There, the sisters are thrown into the whirlwind of polite society, where the codes of behavior are crystal clear. Molly dreams of a normal life but slides deeper and more publicly into her delusions. Peggy knows the shadow of an asylum looms for women like Molly, and she goes to greater lengths to protect her sister's secret. But when Peggy unexpectedly falls in love with her father's friend, the charming composer Johann Fischer, the sisters' precarious situation is thrown catastrophically off course.

Lewis, Damien. [Agent Josephine](#) (\$21.99). American Beauty, French Hero, British Spy.... And a Black woman, highly paid and glamorous, taking on a dangerous role to fight Nazi fascism. Brava.

* Kelly, Julia. [The Dressmakers of London](#) (Gallery Books \$18.99). London. Among the enormous range of women's stories set in WWII, both true and fiction, is this one with a focus on fashion. When their mother leaves estranged sisters her London

dress shop as a joint inheritance and Izzie gets called up to the Women's Royal Navy Service, Sylvia, married to a wealthy doctor, steps in to run the business and finds herself relishing the sense of purpose and accomplishment it brings. As Izzie's military service opens her eyes to life beyond London, the sisters begin exchanging letters, tentatively opening up to each other about their hopes, fears, and old wounds from the years they spent apart. Kelly stitches numerous period details into her narrative, including meticulous information about pleats, buttons, and other aspects of fabric rationing. Sylvia's idea for a fashion show featuring London designers and the new "utility clothing" brings the sisters closer, even as they share difficult memories that threaten their fragile new bond. While the dresses will be a treat for fashion lovers, the heart of the novel is its sensitive exploration of the tangled relationship between the sisters and the fresh beginnings that lie ahead for them both.

Kreft, Vanda. [Expect Great Things](#) (Algonquin Press \$29). It's a safe bet that most of the secretaries on the TV series *Mad Men* would have attended the Katharine Gibbs School in New York City. The iconic institution was in its heyday in the 1950 and '60s synonymous with supplying secretaries—always properly attired in heels, ladylike hats, and white gloves—to male executives. Kreft digs deep into this fun and fascinating social history of the famed Katharine Gibbs School, which from the 1910s to the 1960s, trained women for executive secretary positions but surreptitiously was instilling the self-confidence and strategic know-how necessary for them to claim equality, power, and authority

* Romney, Rebecca. [Jane Austen's Bookshelf](#) (Simon & Schuster \$29.99). A longtime dealer in rare books who has made regular appearances on the TV show "Pawn Stars" and who knows her Richardson from her Fielding, Romney had come to believe that Austen was, if not unique among women writers of her time, certainly superior — that her place in the canon must rest at least partly on the relative inferiority of her peers. Then she read Frances Burney, and realized how many writers had not just influenced Austen — but been great in their own right. Upon discovering just how little she knew of those female writers who informed Austen's own work — having tacitly fallen into what Katha Pollitt calls "the Smurfette principle," in which a single archetypal female fills a sort of quota — Romney acts. She amasses the titular collection while using her knowledge of book selling to explore exactly how all these women fell from the canon. Read this long review in the [NY Times Book Review](#).

And I remind you of the past November's new study by Devoney Looser entitled [Wild for Austen, a Rebellious, Subversive, and Untamed Jane](#) (\$30) and her earlier [Sister Novelists](#) (\$30 Signed) which aligns with Romney's work by recounting the Porter sisters who paved the way for Jane and for the Brontës.

Wilkinson, Alissa. [Joan Didion and the American Dream Machine](#) (Liveright \$29.99). Joan Didion opened *The White Album* (1979) with what would become one of the most iconic lines in American literature: "We tell ourselves stories in order to live." Today, this phrase is deployed inspirationally, printed on T-shirts and posters, used as a battle cry for artists and writers. In truth, Didion was describing something much less rosy: our human tendency to manufacture delusions that might ward away our anxieties when society seems to spin off its axis. Nowhere was this collective hallucination more effectively crafted than in

Hollywood. In this riveting cultural biography, *New York Times* film critic Alissa Wilkinson examines Joan Didion's influence through the lens of American mythmaking.

CLASSICS

* Carnac, Carol. [Murder As a Fine Art](#) (Poisoned Pen \$15.99). This 1953 classic featuring Julian Rivers of Scotland Yard by Carol Carnac (a pen name of Edith Caroline Rivett, who also wrote under the name E. C. R. Lorac) was first published in Britain by Collins, London, for The Crime Club. This British Library Crime Classic edition features includes an introduction by CWA Diamond Dagger and Edgar Award-winning author Martin Edwards. A gigantic marble bust stood on a pedestal at the head of the staircase. "I've often wondered if it would topple off with a little encouragement," said Pompfret. "It'd be a wonderful sight to see it bounce down the stairs. It must weigh several tons..." When a civil servant at the newly formed Ministry of Fine Arts is found crushed beneath a monstrous marble bust after dark, it appears to be the third instance in a string of fatal accidents at the department. Already disturbed by rumors of forgeries and irregularities in the Ministry's dealings, Minister Humphrey David is soon faced with the possibility that among his colleagues is a murderer—though how the bust could have been made an instrument of death is a masterstroke of criminal devilment. Taking charge of the case, Inspector Julian Rivers of Scotland Yard enters a caustic world of fine art and civil service grievances to unveil a killer hiding in plain sight.

* Christie, Agatha. [The Murder at the Vicarage](#) (Clyde \$17.99). The first Miss Marple, and the funniest of all the Christies. It's fun to reread or give someone as a starter. This is yet another edition of many, but new this month.

Golding, William. [Free Fall](#); [The Inheritors](#); [Pincher Martin](#); [The Spire](#) (Penguin \$19 each). Reissues of novels by England's Golding, born in 1911 and educated at Oxford, who first wrote [Lord of the Flies](#) (\$18), then these, and was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1983.

Hitchens, Dolores. [Cats Don't Need Coffins](#) (American Mystery Classics \$15.95). When sisters Rachel and Jennifer Murdock receive a letter from Miriam Hamilton, the daughter of the man who, decades earlier, swindled their father, inviting them to her luxurious home and offering financial amends, the sisters accept and head off with their beloved cat, Samantha, in tow. Shortly after they arrive, they meet their host—or rather, her body. Miriam has been murdered in her bed, and two things become clear: their invitation came with strings attached, and around the many corners of Miriam's capacious home, strange things are afoot. Hardcover edition: [Cats Don't Need Coffins](#) (\$25.95)

Thompson, Jim. [Jim Thompson: Five Noir Novels of the 1950s and 1960s](#) (Library of America \$45): *A Hell of a Woman / After Dark, My Sweet / The Getaway / The Grifters / Pop. 1280*. Consult our noirist Patrick, Patrick@poisonedpen.com, for further information.

COZIES

Braun, Lilian Jackson. [The Cat Who Could Read Backwards](#) (Penguin \$19) is a reissue of the first “Cat Who” series. I could put it in Classics too—it first published in 1966—and there is a Mystery Writers of America Award named in honor of Braun. The human series lead is Jim Qwilleran, the feline lead is his Siamese Koko. The story kicks off with a stabbing in an art gallery, vandalized paintings, a fatal fall from a scaffolding—this is not at all what Qwilleran expects when he turns his reporter talents to art. But Qwilleran and his newly found partner, Koko the brilliant Siamese cat, are in their element—sniffing out clues and confounding criminals intent on mayhem and murder. “This riveting beginning to the Cat Who series is the perfect cozy mystery for cat lovers to start sleuthing!”

Cahoon, Lynn. [An Amateur Sleuth’s Guide to Murder](#) (\$18.95). Meg Gates dropped out of college to work for a tech startup that failed—and her fiancé just took her bridesmaid to Italy on what was supposed to be Meg’s honeymoon. At twenty-six, Meg has taken the ferry ride of shame from Seattle back to Bainbridge Island to live with her family. At least she has her rescue cocker spaniel, Watson, by her side. But it’s Meg who could use a rescue—and she’s hoping it will come in the form of a part-time gig doing research for a bestselling mystery writer. That’s when the light bulb goes on: Meg will write her own guidebook—a manual on criminal investigation. But before she can impress her new boss with her pet project, the author’s agent is found dead on the rocks beneath the author’s Gothic mansion....Starts a series.

Fox, Hattie. [Baking Up a Murder](#) (Crooked Lane \$29.99). Solvang is a charming town in California dedicated to all things Danish. I used to love to visit it. It’s a great cozy setting. When her beloved grandfather dies, pastry chef Madeline quits her high-brow job at a renowned LA restaurant to take up her grandfather’s mantle and keep his bakery running alongside his widow, her big-personality Grandma Ruth. For Madeline, bringing her passion for French pastries to Solvang is her biggest baking challenge yet. In an effort to connect with the locals, In an effort to connect with the locals and convince them that an éclair is just as good as a spandauer, Madeline enters a local baking competition. Despite her triumphant win, things go terribly wrong when a jilted competitor accuses Madeline of cheating and Grandma Ruth gets very publicly protective of her granddaughter. Then that competitor is found dead outside the bakery with Grandma Ruth standing over the body.... Paperback: [Baking Up a Murder](#) (\$19.99).

* George, Nicholas. [A Crushing Walk in Cornwall](#) (Kensington \$27). And here is another great setting for a cozy, a new chapter in the “Walk Through England” series. For retired San Diego detective Rick “Chase” Chasen, week-long walks in the English countryside are an enjoyable new pastime. Chase is disappointed that his partner Mike won’t be joining him on his tour of the rocky Cornish coast—but he still has his friend Billie for company, though, and a few more fellow Americans, from a New Orleans restaurateur to a New York travel writer, joining them on their jaunt. When the group hears before their departure that local landowners have been sabotaging the trail with booby-traps, their walk leader dismisses it as rumor. When one of them nearly plunges to her death during a visit to a 16th-century castle, then

another near miss occurs. Is a murderer truly afoot? Start this series with [A Deadly Walk in Devon](#) followed by [A Lethal Walk in Lakeland](#) (\$17.95 each).

Graves, Sarah. [Death By Chocolate Pumpkin Muffin](#) (\$18.95). One of the sweetest places to visit in Eastport, Maine, is Jacobia “Jake” Tiptree and Ellie White’s bakery, the Chocolate Moose, where people treat themselves to the most decadent desserts. As Eastport says farewell to Halloween and ushers in winter with the unique confectionaries found only at the Chocolate Moose, revelers have gathered on the waterfront for a party at the ramshackle mansion of local celebrity Hank Rafferty. The home repair TV show star and his guests await a devilish dessert delivery from Jake and Ellie—who arrive just after Hank’s body falls to his death from the house’s turret’s balcony... in the latest in a long-running cozy series.

Hannah, Darci. [A Spirited Supper at Dundoon Castle](#) (Kensington \$27). When chef Bridget “Bunny” MacBride got a role on the reality show Food & Spirits, she thought “spirits” meant cocktails. Instead, she’s cooking up dinners meant to tempt the departed to appear. And to her surprise, they do. It comes in handy to have a grandma who’s friendly with the elderly owners of a haunted Scottish castle. During Bunny’s childhood she heard all about Dundoon’s bloody history and the “ghostly piper” who roamed the grounds. When Bunny serves a feast fit for a 17th century king, including lamb chops with plenty of fresh herbs, she heads outdoors for the ghost hunt, she encounters another perished piper...surely the victim of a modern killer.

Konishi, Masateru. [My Grandfather, The Master Detective](#) (Penguin \$29). Our **March Cozy Crimes Club Pick**, lovingly translated from the Japanese by Louise Heal Kawai, centers on a schoolteacher and her grandfather. He suffers from dementia, but as a former member of the Waseda Mystery Club, he retains a sharpness that helps the pair solve everyday mysteries. From impossible locked room murders to confounding missing persons cases, the grandfather-granddaughter duo “weave stories” to get to the bottom of every mystery. But all the while, an insidious shadow from Kaede’s past slowly closes in on her. Steeped in references to classic crime from Christie to Chesterton to Poe, *My Grandfather, the Master Detective* plays with the genre, capturing readers’ imagination in this Tokyo-set escapist mystery. Its charming characters and affectionate focus on relationships echo heartwarming Japanese titles such as *Before the Coffee Gets Cold*. Konishi strikes a balance between the cozy mystery genre and the Japanese (and Korean) comfort novels in translation that are having a moment on the bestsellers’ lists . . .

* Mara, Blake (aka Mara Timon). [The Dog Park Detectives: Murder Is Never Just a Walk in the Park](#) (Gallery Books \$17.99). When friends Louise and Irina find a dead body in the local park whilst walking their dogs, they are soon drawn into the mystery of who murdered local entrepreneur Phil Creasey. Phil used to be a member of their dog walking community – nicknamed ‘the Pack’ – until the death of his cockapoo, and the Pack feel they owe it to Phil to investigate his death. But with Louise and Irina leading the charge, it isn’t long until they’re neck-deep in local gangs, stolen motorcycles and a disturbing string of poisonings. Have the Pack bitten off more than they can chew, or can they follow their noses and solve the crime? “More good dogs than

I've ever seen in a single book! Oh, and a grisly, puzzling murder to solve, with lots of twists and red herrings. But really, I'm here for the pooches, and you should be too."—Antony Johnston

Mathews, Lisa Q. [Buried in Shamrocks](#) (Crooked Lane \$19.99). Kate and her daughters, Maeve and Bliz, are back in Shamrock, Massachusetts, and Kate faces a big decision: Should they move back to their hometown for good? As she contemplates the idea, all the businesses in town, including her family's B&B, the Buckley House, are busy preparing for the annual Great Shamrock Fair in hopes of luring back tourists after a murder during St. Patrick's Week. But when Kate's ex, Ian, arrives in town from Ireland to perform with his band at the festival and his new fiancée, Fallon, is found dead at the fairgrounds, Kate has some tough choices to make.... [Hardcover Edition](#) (\$29.99).

Meier, Leslie. [The Easter Egg Murder](#) (Kensington \$27). With Easter falling on April 5, it's not too early to pick up a triple-threat holiday-themed cozy with Easter stories by Meier, Lee Hollis, and Peggy Ehrhart.

And for March, a Lucy Stone Tinker's Cove, Maine, investigation: [The Irish Parade Murder](#) (\$8.99).

* Miller, CL. [The Antique Hunter's Murder at the Castle](#) (Atria \$29) finds Freya, Aunt Carole, and friends searching for a missing colleague in picturesque Scotland. Hot on the heels of an art forger, a member of the Lockwood Antique Hunter's Agency disappears while investigating an isolated castle deep in Scottish countryside. Freya and Aunt Carole race to her last known location and arrive in the wintry, snow-covered Scottish Borders. At the castle, they discover that a murdered laird in the vegetable garden and his priceless collection of silverware has been stolen. Local police believe Freya's missing team member was involved with the robbery and murder...but where is she now? As a snowstorm descends on the castle, Freya and Carole call in back-up to help uncover what happened that fateful night. Yet each question is met with more mystery,

O'Connor, Carlene. [Murder at an Irish Session](#) (Kensington \$27). As pregnant Siobhán O'Sullivan awaits bringing her new life into the world, she's bringing new life to her village of Kilbane in County Cork, Ireland, with a music and matchmaking festival. While renowned matchmaker Liam Noone plays Cupid with his Lucky Book, music—and hopefully love—will fill the pubs and the autumn air. Turning over his precious Lucky Book to Siobhán for safekeeping, Liam takes the stage to introduce matched musician couples who will kick off the festival in the town square. Suddenly all goes black. When the lights come back on, the matchmaker has met his maker, impaled through the heart with an arrow made from the sharpened bow of a bass. This charming Irish cozy series has long been popular here at The Pen.

Pleiter, Allie. [Two Purloined Pillows](#) (Kensington \$27—will be Signed here May 2 at our annual Cozy Con). It's been a little over a year since graphic artist Shelby Phillips started managing Nina's Nimble Needle following her office-romance and career implosion, and Shelby's mom has finally handed her the reins—technically, at least. Next, Shelby is excited to oversee two well-known needlepoint designers who will be participating in the town's first two-week-long arts festival. Laura Bitters and Paul Bardo have each stitched up one-of-a-kind pillows that should be big wins for the Nimble Needle at the festival's auction . . . until the pillows vanish amid a sudden string of shoplifting

incidents. To add to the knot in Shelby's stomach, Laura proves highly anxious, while Paul is an egomaniac who believes Laura has been stealing his customers for years. But things go from bad to tragic when Laura behaves oddly at the auction dinner, then collapses—dead.

Meet Shelby in [One Sharp Stitch](#) (\$27 Signed or \$17.95).

Ramey, Stacie. [Spellbound By Murder](#) (Crooked Lane \$29.99). When her grandmother suffers a nasty fall and asks for help managing the family business, coffee-addicted single mother Veronica Blackthorne moves her sixteen-year-old rom-com-obsessed daughter to Mystic Hollow, Connecticut. Veronica is ecstatic to return to New England, but when she arrives, she quickly finds out that Mystic Hollow Books, her grandmother's pride and joy, needs more than a little TLC. Hoping to save the bookstore from a big-box rival, Veronica enlists her sometimes mentor and sometimes crush, Adam Whitford, a controversial but popular author, as the keynote speaker to kick off a literary festival that will hopefully bring in a new wave of customers. But when Adam turns up dead, all that romantic potential turns into a nightmare as Veronica becomes the prime suspect in his murder. But remember—this is a magical bookshop run now by three generations of women....

Sanders, Angela M. [A Whiff of Murder](#) (Kensington \$27). Some people read auras—a light or color that surrounds others, revealing their character or emotions. Lise Bloom reads ribbons—of fragrance, that is. Whether she's around old friends or new, fragrance often unfurls from them—an ability called "clairalience." Hoping to gain insight into her gift, Lise works at the Lucky Lotus, a New Age shop. Unfortunately, the oils the owner, Dyann, concocts, nauseate Lise and impede her sense of scent. Worse, the shop feels more like wealthy Dyann's hobby than a spiritual place, thanks to her toxic love-torment relationship with her ex-husband, Richard. Dyann is so pleased with her latest vengeful scheme that she shares it with Lise and gleefully remarks that when Richard finds out, he'll kill her. For Lise, it's the last straw. Persuaded to quit by her caring, colorful crew of housemates, Lise emails Dyann a resignation letter. But when she goes to the store the next morning, she detects a fetid odor she doesn't recognize—and discovers a spilled bottle of Mayan ceremonial liqueur . . . beside Dyann's dead body. In her rush to call the police, Lise doesn't notice that Dyann's half-completed reply to Lise's resignation email is on the monitor of her desktop computer—making her the prime suspect.

Smith, Karen Rose. [If Books Could Kill](#) (Kensington \$27). "A bookstore owner has apparently learned a lot from her mother's talent for crime-solving.... Fans of the popular Tea Garden series will love this spinoff and its feisty heroine." —*Kirkus Reviews*. Town librarian Mathilda has a troublesome new employee, and after Jazzi spots the two of them arguing at the ice-sculpture festival, Mathilda asks Jazzi if she'd mind discussing her workplace woes over a cup of tea. During the visit, Jazzi also finds out about Mathilda's top-secret stash of valuable first editions. Soon afterward, those rare books have vanished—and Mathilda is dead. As the police check out suspects and a lawyer searches for the next of kin, Jazzi learns that the librarian's life was as mysterious as any crime thriller.

SOME MARCH HARDCOVER FICTION

Arnott, Elizabeth. [The Secret Lives of Murderers' Wives](#) (Berkley \$30). It's 1966 and you are navigating a new and all too public life as the wife of a convicted and confessed serial killer. In Berryville, California, the Bay Area. Speaking about it in an effort to prevent more women from becoming victims although it wracks you. You also meet Elsie and Margot, also wives of convicted killers, each trying to forge a new path despite public contempt and outrage, even incredulity. And then a string of new local killings commences and these three women, underestimated and shamed, but shrewd and experienced, decide to catch this killer. Who he turns out to be...well you have to read this novel to find out. And to applaud how hard it is for these women to again some agency in their lives against the backdrop of our cultural obsession with serial killers going way back, to say Jack the Ripper. Arnott has earlier written historical fiction as Lizzie Pook.

Cavanagh, Steve. [Two Kinds of Stranger](#) (Atria \$29). Unorthodox NYC attorney Eddie Flynn, a con man at heart and in action, is tested by a new client, social media influencer Elly Parker whose bizarre story we learn before she turns to Eddie. Moving forward after she discovers her husband of not long in bed with her purported best friend and accidentally not just videoing them in bed but posting it, she continued with her crusade to improve the world through small acts of kindness. And it's this that saves her from a killer con but not from being arrested for the double murder of husband and friend. Clearly she needs Eddie Flynn to sort this out. And this puts Eddie on the path to exposing a killer who is a master manipulator with a surprise agenda and is already steps ahead. Note: Don't cheat by looking up the ending but it is both complex and satisfying. Cavanagh really is a master plotter but strong on characterizations too, plus good dialogue.

Crawford, Frances. [A Bad, Bad Place](#) (Soho \$28.95). A 12-year-old girl makes a horrifying discovery in this haunting debut set in 1979 Glasgow, Scotland. The action opens with young Janey Devine following her dog into a side street, where she comes across the mutilated remains of Samantha Watson, the 22-year-old daughter of a local crime boss. Janey reports her find to police and tries to return to normal life in the hardscrabble Glasgow neighborhood of Possilpark, but anxiety about the killer is never far from her mind. The police, who are confounded by the crime, offer little help, leaving it up to Janey's lone family member, Grandma Maggie, to help her move on. Janey, however, has a secret: she knows something about the murder that she kept from police, a detail that eats at her and fuels her desire for justice. Crawford shrewdly toggles between Janey's viewpoint and her grandmother's as the hunt for the killer slowly unfolds, capturing the fading innocence of a young girl and the complex social dynamics of a struggling but close-knit community. This debut novel from an author in her 60s is remarkable.

Dallas, Sandra. [The Hired Man](#) (St Martins \$28). 1937. It's been seven years since the dust storms started in Colorado. Folks can barely remember a time when the clouds were filled with rain instead of dirt, and when the fields were green instead of brown. High school student Martha Helen Kessler and her family are luckier than most; they still eke out a living from the land. Even so, evidence of the Dust Bowl's grim impact on families is evident everywhere. When Martha Helen's compassionate

mother insists they take in Otis Hobbs, a handsome drifter who saves a local boy from a vicious storm, she quickly discovers a darker side to their rural community. Suspicion, jealousy, and prejudice grip their neighbors – and emotions reach a frenzy after Martha Helen's best friend, Frankie, disappears and is then found murdered. Ultimately, Martha Helen is forced to make sense of her conflicting feelings and loyalties in another chapter of Dallas' trademark focus on the lives of women thrust into tough choices.

Erdrich, Louise. [Python's Kiss: Stories](#) (Harper \$32) is a collection of stories written by this Pulitzer Prize winner over 20 years. Bonus: the text is accompanied by specially commissioned artwork by Aza Erdrich Abe—an intimate and revelatory creative collaboration between mother and daughter.

Freece, Hannah. [Tell Me a Story](#) (Library of Congress \$26.95). Nonfiction about fiction so I include it here as inspiration to read, reread, or read to a child—and because I once was a librarian there.

The fourth book in the library's Collection Close-Up series presents selections from the vast holdings of the nation's largest library, spanning 18th- and 19th-century instruction books—*The New England Primer*, *The Slave's Friend*, *The Cherokee Primer*—to 20th- and 21st-century storytellers such as Kwame Alexander, Grace Lin, Yuyi Morales, Kadir Nelson, and Chris Raschka. Instead of a comprehensive overview, Freece aimed to create an inclusive volume that represented “cultural touchstones” and the complexity of America. Some of her choices are familiar—*The Runaway Bunny* and *Make Way for Ducklings*—while others are deeper cuts, such as Pura Belpré's 1932 *Pérez and Martina: A Portorican Folk Tale*, illustrated by Carlos Sanchez; and Japanese American author Taro Yashima's 1953 *The Village Tree*.

Freece chose to include Ezra Jack Keats's *The Snowy Day*, which she said is “rightfully lauded for being a positive portrayal of a Black child as the protagonist. That's a big deal, but there's all these other stories of African American children in children's books long before that,” including Langston Hughes and Arna Bontemps's 1932 *Popo and Fifina*; Effie Lee Newsome's 1940 *Gladiola Garden*, illustrated by Lois Mailou Jones; and Gwendolyn Brooks's 1956 poetry collection *Bronzeville Boys and Girls*, illustrated by Ronni Solbert, all of which are featured in *Tell Me a Story*. “Wherever I could, I tried to take what seemed to me as the conventional wisdom and see what else I could find in our collections that might offer another facet of that story.”

French, Tana. [The Keeper](#) (Viking \$32). The apparent suicide of a young woman with a bright future tears apart the bucolic Irish village of Ardnakelty—as well as the painstakingly constructed new life of Chicago transplant Cal Hooper—in French's final suspense novel featuring the ex-policeman. Still regarded as an outsider despite living in Ardnakelty for three years and being engaged to local widow Lena Dunne, Cal has little desire to dust off his detective skills. However, with Lena feeling guilty about missing any warning signs when Rachel Holohan dropped by hours before her death, and Cal's teenage foster daughter, Trey Reddy, convinced there was foul play, he gets sucked in anyway. He's stunned when his discreet inquiries into Rachel's life, beyond the well-known details of her imminent engagement to wealthy Ardnakelty heir Eugene Moynihan, ignite a dangerous

firestorm. Dense with detail as the November drizzle that shrouds the Irish landscape, the serpentine final 100 pages are nail-biting, and you can again enjoy Ardnakelty's quirky cast of characters.

Harding, Robyn. [Strangers in the Villa](#) (Grand Central \$29). Sydney Lowe's life in New York is shattered when her husband, Curtis, admits to a meaningless affair with a client. Begging for forgiveness and vowing to prove his devotion, Curtis suggests the couple retreat to a remote hilltop house in Spain to repair their marriage. High above the Mediterranean, Sydney and Curtis are working on the isolated property and their relationship when a pair of Australian travelers turns up at their door in dire need of help. Lonely for companionship and desperate for free labor, Sydney and Curtis invite the attractive young couple to stay. Oops....

I am a fan of Robyn's earlier work and am awaiting a copy of this one, an entry in the dazzling remote locations genre, and described by author fan Darby Kane as "expertly wrapping the sun-drenched beauty of Spain with an undercurrent of malice in this twisted tale of betrayal and revenge about a marriage in freefall. Filled with destructive secrets and shocking revelations, this utterly compelling thriller lures you in, makes you believe, before delivering its devilishly explosive ending."

Henderson, Alice. [Storm Warning](#) (Harper \$30). This exciting series featuring wildlife biologist Alex Carter is a favorite and reminds me of Nevada Barr's Anna Pigeons, also favorites. Here Alex is in lush, tropical Hawaii, assigned to protect and study hawksbill turtles, under threat from global warming, poaching, and the fragility of their nests. Her dreams of relaxing on the Big Island are upending by the approach of a massive hurricane which also propels armed thieves onto the beach where Alex and volunteers are trying to move turtle eggs away from the storm surge. A gunman takes a volunteer hostage, moving to a nearby paleontology museum. Who are these criminals and what is their agenda? And can Alex scramble to protect both people and turtles?

* Jackson, EA. [Missing](#) (Atria \$28). Out now but this excellent debut will be our **May British Crime Club Pick**—members get free shipping. Nonmembers will want to buy it now.

Jackson's perceptive debut introduces Martha Allen, a Scotland Yard detective who's plunged back into a case that's stayed with her for three decades. On an August night in 1990, five-month-old Bella Carpenter was reported missing from her London hotel room. Allen, then a newly minted detective inspector on the Metropolitan Police Force, was assigned to the case, and no leads emerged until her sharp-eyed subordinate, detective constable Manley Desbury, noticed that Bella's father was only pretending to cry during a press conference. Spurred by Allen's suspicion that Bella was dead before she disappeared, the detectives investigated the couple but failed to turn up anything conclusive. Eventually a teenager named Nell Beatty returned Bella to the police, and senior officers played it up as a triumphant resolution—even though Nell disappeared through a station window before she could be questioned. In the present, Nell's body is found on a bench in Bristol, prompting Allen and Desbury to revisit Bella's case off the books. Jackson gets the pace and details of a high-pressure investigation just right, mixing plodding procedural work and bolts of inspiration for a bracingly realistic depiction of crime-solving.

Keir, Linda. [I Did Not Kill My Husband](#) (Blackstone \$29.99). Here's another nail biter about an influencer whose rags-to-riches story with her plastic surgeon husband Karl heavily posted evaporates when Karl is murdered. All evidence points to Cara and her platform as a gold-digger, Karl's business struggles, and a major life insurance policy. But Cara didn't do it. Sentenced and en route to a California maximum security prison, a flooding, a catastrophic crash to the armored transportation vehicle, and the wildfire the accident sparks lets Cara flee into the Sierra Nevada's armed only with a cell phone belonging to an injured young woman. Local Sheriff Jordan Burke, first responder, is in hot pursuit, spurred by a need for a win to help his reelection chances. But an unexpected mob of podcasters, internet sleuths, and murderers plus his political opponent both thwart him and highlight every mistake. Meanwhile Cara is on a journey of discovery both personal—who is she without millions of followers—and who killed Karl? Soon everyone is questioning what really happened. Great chase scenes and driving suspense propel this but the characters are what hold you.

Mack, Timothy David. [All the Tea in China](#) (Blackstone \$29.99) should be a theme park ride. Timothy David Mack's second novel launches at breakneck speed and dares you to hold on. I was whisked from the jungles of South America to the palaces of Imperial China, surviving a kidnapping, a pirate mutiny, and a fort collapsing under a barrage of cannon fire—all before part two. The Duke of Devonshire has given Major William Gunn one last chance to save his daughter's life. All William needs to do is the impossible. He must travel to China—where merely setting foot on shore is a death sentence for a European—then find a way to break into the impenetrable Forbidden City and steal tea from the Dragon Throne itself. American frontiersman Nathaniel Bidwell would never let William face this perilous journey alone. He owes his friend a life debt, which he hopes to finally repay. But just after glimpsing China's shores, their mission takes an unexpected turn, and they find themselves ensnared in a conspiracy to overthrow the emperor. Their only hope lies in finding an ancient treasure—and in order to do so they must form an uneasy alliance with the notorious and formidable pirate queen, Lin Mai. To recover the treasure, the unlikely trio must learn to work together to capture and sail the fastest ship on earth. All the world's a stage for their incredible adventures, shared with Lin Mai, a redoubtable Chinese pirate queen.

Madden, T Kira. [Whidbey](#) (Harper \$30). This provocative whodunit intertwines the lives of a woman on the run, a former reality TV star, and a grieving mother following the murder of the man who connects them all. It's a powerful exploration of trauma that asks who truly owns a story—the one who lived it, or the one who tells it?

Martin, Alice. [Westward Women](#) (St Martins \$29) is "a warmly engaging parable about young women who become 'infected' with a mysterious virus that leads them to abandon their homes and travel westward—to uncertain destinies. Set in America in the waning years of the Vietnam War, ending in near-contemporary times, *Westward Women* has an air of prophecy enhanced by its close attentiveness to the intimate lives of girls and women. An audacious first novel to set beside Margaret Atwood's provocative first novel *The Edible Woman*." —Joyce Carol Oates"

Olson, Karen E. [A Defiant Woman](#) (Pegasus \$27.95). Eight years ago, Nan Tudor escaped her husband, billionaire businessman Hank Tudor, afraid for her life and leaving a dead body behind—but in doing so, she abandoned her three-year-old daughter, Lizzie. Still wracked with guilt for that decision, she is living a quiet life as a restaurant cook in France with her son when she receives a mysterious text: “We have your daughter.” Lured back to the scene of the crime on Martha’s Vineyard by a threat against Lizzie’s life, Nan believes the kidnapper is exacting revenge against her, stopping at nothing to do so—and discovers that she and her daughter may not be the only targets. Kate Tudor—Hank’s sixth and latest wife—is also on the island and drawn into the kidnapper’s elaborate web of retaliation. Keeping their alliance secret from Hank, Hank’s fixer Thomas Cromwell, investigator Steve Gardiner, and reporter Tom Seymour, the two women find themselves in a race against time to rescue Lizzie.

“Mapping Olson’s sprawling cast onto their 16th-century inspirations is wicked fun for readers and Nan (the series’ Anne Boleyn) proves a particularly fascinating protagonist. There are enough surprises and Easter eggs on offer to leave readers primed for the next installment. It’s royally amusing.”—*PW*. I urge you to read the series start too: [An Inconvenient Wife](#) (\$27)—no paperback edition.

Papantonio, Mike. [A Death in Arcadia](#) (Arcade \$32.99). A corrupt Congressman, Bob Minds, and his shady colleague, Skyler Bannock, are “fixers” for Phoenix Industries, the parent company of Camp B and other child “protective” services facilities that do anything but that. Minds and Bannock resort to nefarious crimes to make Phoenix’s problems go away, including bribery, intimidation, and even murder. And then there’s Skyler’s brother, Midas, a killer straight out of a nightmare, who does the team’s dirtiest work—which is the murder of fifteen-year-old Trayvon Clapper at Camp B in Florida. His fringe-living mother and boyfriend come to the firm of Bergman-Deketomis to file a lawsuit against the facility which puts the lawyers including Deke Deketomis and his daughter in real jeopardy.

Pataki, Allison. [It Girl](#) (Random House \$30). A novel based on a true story and a harbinger of the 21st Century’s obsession with fame. “A scintillating, fictionalized tale of one of America’s first models and superstars. Readers will cheer for Evelyn as she navigates the path from childhood hardship through rising stardom and the sexism and misogyny of the entertainment industry to standing on her own two feet. Inspired by true stories, *It Girl* is a powerful tale of female empowerment and friendship, immaculately researched and beautifully told. In crafting it, Pataki shines brighter than ever!”—Pam Jenoff

Patterson, James/Viola Davis. [Judge Stone](#) (Little Brown \$32). The most respected citizen in Union Springs, Alabama (population 3,314), is Judge Mary Stone. She holds two responsibilities sacred: running her family farm and presiding over her courtroom. It’s there she draws the most controversial case in the history of the South. Criminally, it’s open-and-shut. Ethically, there is no middle ground. Essentially, it’s a choice between life and death. No judge can satisfy everyone. It would be dangerous to try. But Judge Stone is willing to fight for true justice....

Perry, Thomas. [Tree of Light and Flowers](#) (Mysterious Press \$27.95). I have been too sad to pick up the last book by our dear friend Tom who died unexpected last September at the age of

78. While he won numerous awards including the Edgar and the Hammett, for many of his fans his Jane Whitefield series is the one they most cherish. So it’s fitting that his last gift to us is a new adventure for Jane.

Tom’s longtime fan, critic Tom Nolan, reviews: “Jane Whitefield accepts a pair of dangerous assignments in *The Tree of Light and Flowers*. Now a wife and mother, Jane resides in upstate New York and makes a living rescuing imperiled citizens and providing them with new identities. Jane’s latest clients are a young woman from Oklahoma who fled after killing a man who assaulted her, and a Chicago resident whose boss tried to kill him once he discovered his employer was running weapons. Of greater concern to Jane is the fact that she herself is being pursued by Magda Kaprovna, a criminal spirited out of prison and ordered by her gang lord to capture Jane (who escaped a previous encounter with Magda) and deliver her alive.

Perry has written a fine capstone for his own career as well as his courageous character’s. Jane, a Seneca woman, is influenced by tribal teachings. ‘You’ve taken on too much,’ a spirit warns her in a dream. ‘You said yes too many times.’ Reader concern for Jane, her family and her clients raises the suspense level. Magda asks her handler how long she must hunt the elusive and formidable Jane. ‘Until you find her,’ he says. ‘Or she finds you.’”

Phillips, Rob. [Stakeouts and Strollers](#) (St Martins \$28) is Rob Phillips’ 2024 Minotaur Books/Malice Domestic Best First Mystery Novel award-winning debut combining humor and high stakes. Charlie Shaw is low on sleep. And cash. Otherwise, life is going pretty well for the ex-crime reporter: he’s happily married to his college sweetheart, he’s a first-time dad to the most adorable baby girl in existence, and he’s making ends meet as a rookie PI. But when Charlie meets Friday Finley, a frightened sixteen-year-old runaway on a stakeout-gone-wrong, his world gets a little more complicated. Friday is looking for her estranged father Shawn, an unreliable alcoholic who left when she was young—and who also happens to be her only shot at avoiding the foster care system since her mother’s death a few weeks earlier. At first, Charlie believes the man is simply hiding out somewhere, avoiding his responsibilities as usual, but the more he investigates, the more unsettling—and dangerous—Shawn’s disappearance becomes....

“A fast-paced page-turner with equal amounts of dry wit and heart fueling PI Charlie Shaw and his determination to get to the truth, *Stakeouts and Strollers* reads like a twenty-first century *Rockford Files*, with a side of new-dad exhaustion increasing the humor and tension. Phillips’s debut does not disappoint, and I’m already looking forward to more!” —Celeste Connally

* Philipson, Rebecca. [How to Get Away with Murder](#) (St Martins \$29) is our **March British Crime Club Pick**, a debut you won’t want to miss. I like EA Jackson’s, above, also out now, but it will be our May BCC Pick. Still, March is a hot month for British crime.

Why did I choose Philipson’s book? First, as ever, it’s the voice. The voice of Scotland Yard DI Samantha Hansen, at the end of her tether on a forced leave recovering from a breakdown at work. And the voice of the author of Denver Brady, self-styled serial killer and the author of self-help book *How to Get Away with Murder*. He claims to be the most successful SK of our time, detailing his methodology, which is why no one has

ever heard of him. A copy of the book is found in the backpack of a teenager murdered in a local park. Sam jumps at the chance to come back to work this case, prove she's got what it takes in a patriarchal chain of command in policing. As she progresses, the book and its contents go viral. Can Denver Brady—or someone else—get away with murder? Do not sneak a peek at how this twisty procedural plays out, enjoy the revelations and surprises as Philipson means you to.

Reid, Andrew. [The Survivor](#) (St Martins \$29). A Scot now living in Sweden writes a thriller endorsed by David Morrell, Mark Greaney, Nick Petrie, and Don Bentley among others. It introduces Ben Cross who thinks his day can't get worse when security walks him out on his first day on a new job in NYC. He's wrong. On the subway headed uptown he gets a message from a killer with one body down who then pointedly kills another as Ben and the killer get off the train. Ben wasn't picked at random by the killer—he has a secret history. Meanwhile the NYPD's Kelly Hendricks is on punishment duty with the transit police. The first one on the scene after the first murder, she gets on the train which, now hijacked, heads from South Ferry to 181st with the secret to the killer hidden in Ben's own history.... Clearly I will have to read this to say more.

Rose, Karen. [Family Lies](#) (Penguin \$30). The 4th in Rose's The San Diego Case Files series dives back into the McKittrick family. As an infant, Kit McKittrick's foster sister Akiko was abandoned at a firehouse. Now 32, Akiko has received an unsettling phone call from a woman who says that she knew her birth mother but refuses to divulge any details except in person. Akiko is nervous but also thrilled at the prospect of finally learning about her blood relations. Kit has a bad feeling about this and insists on accompanying Akiko to meet the woman. Sure enough, as they stand on Mary Sherman's doorstep, shots are fired and Kit is hit...and inside the house is a corpse: Mary Sherman herself. Although she's on medical leave and forbidden to work the case, Kit, along with police psychologist Sam Reeves, undertakes a covert investigation into the mysterious Mary Sherman....

Steck, Ryan. [Ted Bell's Monarch](#) (Penguin \$30 or paperback \$19). Following a successful but costly mission to destroy an enemy outpost in Antarctica, Alex Hawke is looking forward to some quiet time at Teakettle Cottage, his home in Bermuda, along with his family. Then former Chief Inspector of Scotland Yard Ambrose Congreve calls him with stunning news. Just days away from a controversial vote threatening to tear the United Kingdom apart at the seams, King Charles has disappeared while vacationing at Balmoral Castle. The prime minister believes she can keep the news quiet for no more than 72 hours. After that, Britain will be plunged into chaos. So here is Hawke's new mission: find and rescue the missing monarch.

* Sullivan, Tim. [The Politician](#) (Grove \$27). The 4th for ace puzzle-solving DS George Cross, a misfit in the police but brilliant, is a simultaneous hardcover/paperback release series we recommend in either edition you choose.

Tom Nolan, an enthusiast for Sullivan like me, reviews: "The crime at hand is the murder of Peggy Frampton, a former mayor of Bristol killed in her bedroom one night while her husband was out of town. A superintendent assigned to the case gives George free rein to pursue his theories. The victim, who had recently established herself as a blogger, was an

opinionated person who 'could start a fight in an empty online forum,' quips one officer. Did Peggy spark the violent ire of someone she harshly criticized in her role of 'agony aunt'? Or might her opposition to the building of an expensive real-estate development have prompted her death? George has another puzzle to solve once he receives a visit from the mother he hasn't seen since he was 5 years old. He's always believed she deserted him and his father because she was unwilling to care for a special-needs son. But that is not the case, she insists, challenging George to discover her real reason. His approach to his mother's secret is as methodical as his unraveling of Peggy's murder."

Swinson, David. [From the Dust](#) (Little Brown \$30). Longtime Swinson fan Patrick chooses sterling rural noir as our **March Hardboiled Crime Club Pick** wherein a sterling rural noir where a small community is tested by murders. Murders plural. Graham Sanderson thought he'd left it all behind. His years as a Washington, DC, homicide detective, his tragically dead wife, pain, violence. Taking over his father's house in the remote Finger Lakes region of rural New York, and looking after his shut-in brother, Tommy, seemed like a respite. That is, until the first body is found. The chief of the town's small police jurisdiction, who is also a family friend, asks for Graham's assistance. Graham's instincts immediately kick in and he soon discovers there's more to the area—the people, its brutally quiet, sophisticated hierarchies—than he or his family ever knew. In the end the question is: What do you finally stand for when you've got nothing left to lose?

Unger, Lisa. [Served Him Right](#) (Park Row (\$30). Ana Blacksmith has gathered her closest friends and sister Vera for a brunch to celebrate her recent breakup from her boyfriend Paul. But when shocking news about Paul arrives, all eyes fall upon her. Suspicions only intensify when Ana's best friend falls deathly ill after the brunch. But Ana is not the only one who had a score to settle with Paul. As the investigation unfolds, rumors of a secret network that uses ancient methods to obtain justice begin to emerge. It's urgent for Ana to sort this out before a long-buried history comes to light. I haven't read this so that's a bare bones synopsis you fans can fill in.

Welsh Huggins, Andrew. [The Delivery](#) (Penzler \$26.95). Here's what to read while awaiting the next Jack Reacher. For the first in series, see some March paperbacks below where you will meet Mercury Carter, former cop, postal inspector, and now a freelance mailman, one with a spotless record whether it's moving jewelry, pets, paper...to a designated destination. Mercury is in great shape, handy with weapons, good at improvising, and fearless. His current delivery is leading him to Providence, RI, when he comes across a wreck in a downpour. As he moves to rescue her, a man with a gun appears, warning Carter off. Fat chance. And this starts off a plot laced with grifters, stolen IDs, a missing young addict, a clever fraud nearing its end game, a cohort of bad guys, and through it all, Carter's drive to complete his delivery, now turned into two. While much is improbable it's fun to watch....I say "watch" because the action is made for TV although the characters are rich, not thin.

SOME MARCH NONFICTION

Eaves-Egenes, Megan. [Nightfaring: In Search of the Disappearing Darkness](#) (Grand Central \$30). Follow a travel journalist and dark sky advocate around the globe as she seeks out dark places in our ever-brightening world.

Ephron, Nora. [Someday This Will Be a Funny Story](#) (Knopf \$20) is a collection of quotes about everything that matters—love and heartbreak, good food and good company, aging well and writing well—from the late writer and humorist.

Fotuhi, Majid. [The Invincible Brain](#) (Harper \$32). A leading neuroscientist at Johns Hopkins University unveils a groundbreaking glimpse into the remarkable, resilient brain, and offers a science-backed plan to unlock its true potential with lifestyle changes over a 12 week period. Very useful in regard to the Kendi book below.

Kendi, Ibram X. [Chain of Ideas: The Origins of Our Authoritarian Age](#) (Random House \$35). How does authoritarian thinking develop and how harmful misinformation continues to shape today's political system... "Kendi reveals the mechanics behind the myth, and why confronting it is now a democratic necessity."—Oprah Daily

McCommons, James H. [The Feather Wars](#) (St Martins Press \$33) is an incredible story about how disparate characters—progressive politicians, free-thinking society belles, nature writers and artists, bird-loving U.S. presidents, gunmakers, business titans, and brave game wardens—came together to save hundreds of species of birds. Heroes, martyrs, villains, and conflicted do-gooders—the early bird conservation movement had them all. Together they transformed how Americans thought and cared about birds, forever altering the American landscape. When I was very young my uncle gave me a boxed set of John Jay Audubon's prints, a big force here—I recommend you look upon his work digitally or however.

Oppenheimer, Mark. [Judy Blume: A Life](#) (Penguin \$35). Her influential novels turned classics—including *Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret*; *Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing*; *Deenie*; and *Summer Sisters*—touched the lives of tens of millions of readers. For more than fifty-five years her work has done something revolutionary: it rewired the world's expectations of what literature for young people can be—frank, candid, earthy, and unafraid to show the messier sides of humanity. But little is known about the real woman behind the iconic persona, and the unlikely journey of her literary ascension, until now.

Oppenheimer met with Blume and her third husband, George Cooper, who agreed to be interviewed and to help facilitate other interviews. The book wouldn't be a collaboration — "This was never an authorized biography," Oppenheimer said — but Blume promised to share notes she had made for a memoir and to answer questions via email, on the phone and in person. Oppenheimer says he wouldn't have written the book otherwise. Why didn't Blume herself, now age 88, write it? For a long and thoughtful article in the *NYTBR* about how the whole project went and the finished book, leaving Blume cool and not participating in publicity, go [HERE](#). And think about what is the role not of a ghost writer but of a biographer.

Sandstrom, Dr Gillian. [Once Upon a Stranger: The Science of How "Small Talk" Can Add Up to a Big Life](#) (Harper \$29.99).

Do you ever feel lonely, even in a crowd? Do you feel anxious or worried about what others think of you, or struggle to make friends? You are not alone. But the truth is, opportunities for positive connection and community are all around you. Discover how making connections with strangers leads to positive shifts in our everyday lives. by talking to strangers, we can unlock more joy, curiosity, and goodwill every day. All these are excellent reasons to come to events and discussion clubs and browse The Pen as you make connections with fellow readers.

Shipnuck, Alan. [Rory: The Heartache and Triumph of Golf](#) (Atria \$32.50). The PGA Tour, currently reinventing itself, has had all the drama of a thriller ever since the Saudis came up with massive funding for their own league. Rory McIlroy has been a PGA Stalwart, finally won a Master's, has weathered up and downs, and always plays competitive if sometimes unlucky golf, clearly loving the game.

Williams, Terry Tempest. [The Glorians](#) (Grove \$28) introduces us to the Glorians. They are not distant deities, but the ordinary, often overlooked presences—animal, plant, memory, moment—that reveal our shared vulnerability and interconnectedness with the natural world. The Glorians can be as small as an ant ferrying a coyote willow blossom to its queen or as commonplace as the night sky. But what they can collectively show us—about the radical act of attending to beauty and carrying forward against all odds—is immense. Journeying through encounters with the Glorians in the red rock desert of Utah during the pandemic to Harvard University where she teaches in the Divinity School, Williams weaves a story of astonishing personal and societal insight.

OUR MARCH PAPERBACK PICKS

Child, Lee/Andrew. [Exit Strategy](#) (\$20). Jack Reacher will make three stops today. Not all of them were planned. First—a Baltimore coffee shop. A seat in the corner, facing the door. Black coffee, two refills, no messing around. A minor interruption from two of the customers, but nothing he can't deal with swiftly. As he leaves, a young guy brushes against him in the doorway. Instinctively Reacher checks the pocket holding his cash and passport. There's no problem. Nothing is missing. Second—a store to buy a coat. Nothing fancy. Something he can ditch when he heads to warmer climates. Large enough to fit a man the size of a bank vault. As he pulls out his cash, he finds something new in his pocket. A handwritten note. A desperate plea for help. Third—impressed by the guy's technique and intrigued by the message, Reacher makes it his mission to find out more... We still have a few [Signed Firsts](#) (\$30).

Currie, Ron. [The Savage, Noble Death of Babs Dionne](#) (\$20). Pushcart Prize-winning author Ron Currie turns his pen to hard-boiled crime. Babs Dionne, proud Franco-American, doting grandmother, and vicious crime matriarch, rules her small town of Waterville, Maine, with an iron fist. She controls the flow of drugs into Little Canada with the help of her loyal lieutenants, girlfriends since they were teenagers, and her eldest daughter, Lori, a Marine vet struggling with addiction. When a drug kingpin discovers that his numbers are down in the upper northeast, he sends a malevolent force, known only as The Man, to investigate. At the same time, Babs's youngest daughter, Sis, has gone missing, which doesn't seem at all like a coincidence. In twenty-four hours, Sis will be found dead, and the whole town will seek shelter from Babs's wrath.

“Terrific in-your-face crime story, featuring the unlikeliest drug family you’ve ever met. It’s like the second coming of Elmore Leonard.” —Stephen King. CJ Box agrees.

* Dukess, Karen. [Welcome to Murder Week](#) (\$18). An unexpected ticket for a “murder week” in England’s Peak District upends the quiet routine of optician Cath who’s leading a humdrum predictable life in Buffalo. Out of the blue, Cath’s estranged mother, a chronic “bolter,” has died, leaving nothing but a pair of tickets she had purchased to a weeklong British murder mystery party in a rural village. Unable to secure a refund in what is a Willowthrop fundraiser, Cath decides to go. Her shared accommodation in a Willowthrop cottage teams her up with Wyatt Green, who’s at a crossroads in his marriage, and Amity Clark, a divorced romance writer struggling with writer’s block, to try and win the contest. In the process, she unearths previously unknown details about her mother’s past, and falls for sexy bartender Dev Sharma, who’s staffing the party. This debut is not so much about the village’s scripted murder mystery as it is an enjoyable sojourn through the Derbyshire countryside with (mostly) booklovers who enjoy discussing their favorites while parsing clues—delightful for you, too. And more crucially, while the details (and humor) of Willowthrop’s murder plot will doubtless appeal to fans of Agatha Christie and *Midsomer Murders*, the novel’s depth goes far beyond a whimsical murder-solving romp.

Gunasekera, Yosha. [The Midnight Taxi](#) (Berkley \$19). This unusual debut is narrated by a 28-year-old Sri Lankan taxi driver struggling to support herself and her parents in NYC where they are all still grieving the loss of Siritwathi’s brother. One night Siritwathi picks up public defender Amaya Fernando, herself Sri Lankan, late at the courthouse and drives her home to Brooklyn, bonding a bit on the way. Siritwathi lacks confidence and is subject to panic attacks although she’s gained street smarts and taxi-driver smarts over the past few years. And she’s addicted to true crime podcasts which she listens to at low volume on her phone while driving. However nothing prepares her for the fare she picks up after Amaya, a man heading for JFK. There are traffic issues despite the late hour, he insists on keeping the rear window down, and when she arrives at the terminal, and he doesn’t move to get out of the cab, she discovers him dead in the back seat, stabbed in the chest by a silver knife.

She panics, she calls Amaya, she’s the inevitable suspect in the murder. And as such she is rudely introduced to the city’s cops, cells, and justice system.... Eventually, bailed by a friend, with a grand jury date looming, she and Amaya and her family have just five days to find out who did kill the midnight passenger. The author writes knowledgeably of the NY justice system and movingly of the lives of long-time immigrants, so this is a timely story and one that will have a sequel.

* Harris, CS. [Who Will Remember](#) (\$19). The cold, rainy London summer of 1816 provides an atmospheric backdrop for the latest investigation conducted by aristocratic sleuth Sebastian St. Cyr. It begins when a young man named Jamie summons St. Cyr to a ruined chapel on Saville Street, where the murdered Lord Preston Farnsworth hangs upside down in the position of the Le Pendu tarot card. In life, Farnsworth was a mercurial character, described by some as profoundly moral and by others as embittered and licentious. He also happens to be the husband

of Lady Tess, who left him seven years ago to live with St. Cyr’s friend, Hugh. When Hugh is accused of killing Farnsworth, an initially ambivalent St. Cyr decides to look into the case. As ever, enjoy the series’ trademarks—brisk pacing; well-wrought descriptions of Regency London. This is a superb historical series—I live for each new chapter in the lives of Sebastian, his amazing wife Hero, his surgeon friend who doubles as a kind of coroner, and their difficult relatives.

Candace will sign the sequel, [When the Wolves Are Silent](#) (Berkley \$30), set in 1816 London, for us in April.

Henry, Patti Callahan. [The Story She Left Behind](#) (\$19) is inspired by a true literary mystery, and so beautifully written it’s a joy to read for the language alone. But throw in a legendary book and its lost potential sequel, a lost mother, and a daughter’s far ranging search for them both—as I said, perfect for Mother’s Day. There’s also a created language, the perils of early fame, and very probably some neurodivergent elements to what’s lost. The story begins in 1927 when the magical childhood of eight-year-old Clara Harrington abruptly ends when her mother, the author Bronwyn Newcastle Fordham, disappears sailing off the coast of North Carolina. Bronwyn had sparked a national sensation by writing a book in an invented language when she was just twelve. By 1952, Clara is an illustrator raising her own daughter, Wynnie. When a stranger named Charlie Jameson contacts her from London claiming to have discovered a handwritten dictionary of her mother’s lost language. Clara is skeptical. Compelled by the tragedy of her mother’s vanishing, she crosses the Atlantic with Wynnie only to arrive during one of London’s most deadly natural disasters—the Great Smog. With asthmatic Wynnie in peril, they escape the city with Charlie and find refuge in the Jameson’s family retreat nestled in the Lake District. I’ll leave it there but you should not!

“Brilliant, riveting, so beautifully written, impossible to put down. I wanted to know, needed to know, about the strange manuscript left to a daughter, and the odyssey it sent her on.” — Louise Penny

* Kidd, Jess. [Murder at Gulls Nest](#) (\$19) is a series launch for a nun who forsakes her vows to search for a former novice. In 1954, Sister Nora Breen’s friend and former trainee, Frieda Brogan, abruptly stops sending her letters. Frieda’s last known address is the Gulls Nest, a forlorn boarding house in the charming seaside town of Gore-on-Sea, and a frightened Nora asks to be released from her monastery after 30 years to track Frieda down. Nora takes a room at the Gulls Nest, ingratiates herself with its ragtag collection of boarders, and soon realizes she’s not the only one concealing a secret past. As she starts to dig into Frieda’s stay there, other boarders begin to die under unusual circumstances, making her wonder whether Frieda might have met a similar fate. At first a thorn in the side of Detective Inspector Rideout, who’s assigned to investigate the deaths, the intelligent and outspoken Nora gradually gains the policeman’s respect. Elegant prose, vivid characterizations, and a fascinating protagonist made this a 2025 British Crime Club Pick.

McKinty, Adrian. [Hang on St Christopher](#) (\$19.99) is set in 1992 and tells us the latest for DI Sean Duffy of Belfast. It’s all around terrific and sees Sean and his family moving across the sea to Scotland, whence he commutes to Belfast. But start with [The Cold, Cold Ground](#) (\$19.99) and then segue to [The Detective Up Late](#) (\$16.99), the 2023 Sean Duffy that sets up the new book.

Phillips, Maha Khan. [The Museum Detective](#) (\$19.95). Here's a wow! The landscape of the Indus River Delta at Karachi and extensions into Pakistan is beautiful and worth exploring. For another the history behind the mummy that is discovered in a cave in Balochistan during a narcotics raid is that of the ancient Persian Empire of the Achaemenid Dynasty whose capital is at Persepolis. And third, the shrewd Karachi museum curator Gulfsa Delani is a wonderful, shrewd character. There is a lot of excitement over the mummy, maybe a Persian princess? But as evidence mounts Gul begins to wonder if instead it is the remains of someone close to her. All in all I find myself agreeing with author SJ Rozan that "Phillips's Karachi is a place I didn't know, of damp alleys and grand homes, overworked cops and underfunded museums. The workaday world of archaeologists was also unfamiliar. But the crimes—corruption, murder, vicious contempt for good people—are universal. Gul Delani is a force to be reckoned with as she refuses to give in and go along. I was so glad to have her as a guide through the world of *The Museum Detective*." Those of you like me who enjoyed Lindsay Jayne Ashford's [The Woman on the Orient Express](#) (\$14.95), Agatha Christie, the Wooleys and Max Mallowan and archaeology of ancient Ur in Mesopotamia, will eat this excellent book up.

Rozan, SJ. [The Railway Conspiracy](#) (\$19.95) is a fiendishly clever second whodunit featuring Tang Dynasty magistrate Judge Dee. In 1924, Judge Dee returns to London from China and meets with his friend, Professor Lao She, just in time to tackle a pair of cases with international ramifications. The two must use all their powers of deduction—and kung fu skills—to take down a sinister conspiracy between Imperial Russia, Japan, and China in a rollicking new mystery set in 1920s London. The follow-up to [The Murder of Mr. Ma](#) (\$18.95), this historical adventure-mystery is perfect for fans of Laurie R. King and the Guy Ritchie Sherlock Holmes films. "A glorious mash up of fan fiction, kung fu prowess and droll social commentary."—*The New York Times Book Review*

Sullivan, Emily. [A Death on Corfu](#) (\$17.95). Our April 2025 Historical Fiction Pick in hardcover is a charming tale reminding me of PBS' *The Durrells* set on Corfu, and starts slow but picks up engagingly. Nice humor too. And ultimately sets up a sequel. Minnie Harper isn't used to putting herself first. Not after she moved away from England only to be left raising two children alone on the Greek Island of Corfu following her husband's unexpected death. But with her daughter begging to be sent to school abroad and her son grasping at his own independence, Minnie realizes she must brace for the next stage of her life. When famous mystery author Stephen Dorian settles into a neighboring villa to escape writer's block and hidden scandals, she is intrigued at first by the handsome Londoner—until he proves to be a bad tempered boor. Determined to avoid him, Minnie is shocked when he, desperately behind his deadline offers her a well-paid job as his typist. Before Minnie can fully regret her decision to take the job, she makes a horrifying discovery: as young maid has been murdered, and local authorities aren't moving fast enough to bring justice to the terrible crime. So what if....?

* Sullivan, Tim. [The Politician: A DS George Cross Mystery](#) (Grove \$17). Sullivan's triumphant fourth whodunit featuring George Cross of the Avon and Somerset police finds the neurodivergent sleuth investigating the suspicious death of an

ex-mayor. Cross is called in after Peggy Frampton, the former mayor of Bristol, is found bludgeoned to death in her bedroom. His colleagues, including his boss, DCI Ben Carson, are sure that Frampton was the victim of a burglary turned violent, but Cross thinks otherwise, citing the absence of aspirated blood near Frampton's head as evidence that she was methodically choked before being bludgeoned. On his own, Cross researches the politician's many enemies—including a real estate developer whose project she'd thwarted—for clues about who had motive to kill her. In the process, he finds tantalizing leads buried in the controversial advice blog Frampton launched after leaving politics. Sullivan puts more suspects into the mix than in previous entries, encouraging readers to flex their armchair sleuthing skills, and he continues to mine charming comedy from Cross's literal-mindedness (when meeting Frampton's husband, Cross's partner advises him to offer condolences rather than "comment on how much shorter than his wife the man is"). [This series](#) only gets better as it goes.

Taylor, Brad. [Into the Gray Zone: A Pike Logan Novel](#) (\$19.99). Drawing on over two decades of service as a U.S. Army Special Forces Lieutenant Colonel, including eight years within Delta Force, Taylor delivers an authentic, unflinching portrayal of how battles are fought—and won—in the ambiguous space between peace and war. As the world grapples with proxy wars, economic aggression, and cyber threats, Taylor's work hits at the heart of these realities. While on a routine security assessment in India, Taskforce operator Pike Logan foils an attempted attack on a meeting between the CIA and India's intelligence service. Both government agencies believe it's nothing more than a minor terrorist attack, but Pike suspects that something much more sinister is at play. After another terrorist operation at the Taj Mahal, he begins to believe that outside powers are attacking India in the gray zone between peace and war, leveraging terrorist groups for nothing more than economic gain. But the separatists conducting the operations have their own agenda. After a massive slaughter and kidnapping of hostages during an elaborate Indian pre-wedding party, two global powers are destabilized, and only Pike Logan and his team can de-escalate the tension by rescuing the captives as they race against the clock.

Brad brings us the sequel, [Shadow Strike](#) (Morrow \$32) on April 27. Our copies will include an exclusive photo of a key scene in the book.

Welsh-Huggins, Andrew. [The Mailman](#) (\$16.95). What if Jack Reacher delivered your mail? Mercury Carter is a deliveryman and he takes his job very seriously. When a parcel is under his care, he will stop at nothing to deliver it directly to its intended recipient. Not even, as in the current case, when he finds a crew of violent men at the indicated address that threaten his life and take the woman who lives there hostage. That's because Carter has special skills from his former life as a federal agent with the postal inspection service, skills that make him particularly useful for delivering items in circumstances as dangerous as these. After Carter dispatches the goons sent to kill him, he enters a home besieged by criminals—but the leader of the gang escapes with attorney Rachel Stanfield before the mailman can complete his assignment. With Rachel's husband Glenn in tow, Carter takes off in pursuit of the kidnapper and his quarry, hunting them across Indiana, up to Chicago, and into small-town Illinois. Along the way, he slowly picks off members of the crew and uncovers a

far-reaching conspiracy and a powerful crime syndicate, all in service of his main objective: to hand the package over to Rachel. Carter has never missed a delivery and isn't about to start now. The sequel can be found in *Some March Hardcover Fiction* above.

Willig, Lauren. [The Girl from Greenwich Street](#) (\$18.99). Lesa reviews: Just before Christmas in 1789, Elma Sands walked out of her cousin's boardinghouse in New York City and was not seen again. Her cousins thought she was leaving to marry Levi Weeks, a carpenter who boarded there. But then Levi showed up that night, asking about Elma. It wasn't until January that Elma's body was found in the Manhattan Well. Handbills circulated, and a mob called for the arrest of Levi Weeks, accusing him of killing Elma. After his arrest, Levi's influential and wealthy brother Ezra hires Aaron Burr and another prominent New York attorney to defend Levi. Politics and jealousy won't allow Alexander Hamilton to stay out of the trial. He insists on serving as part of the defense. In the sensational two-day trial, Hamilton and Burr compete for the public's attention while attempting to save Levi's life.

Historical personalities bring this real story to life in a riveting account of the first U.S. murder trial for which there is a transcript. The author of the 'Pink Carnation' series and many thoughtful historicals leans on that transcript for the trial testimony in a gripping novel that will appeal to true-crime buffs, those interested in Hamilton and Burr, and historical mystery fans."

SOME MARCH PAPERBACKS

Allegri, Adriana. [The Sunflower House](#) (\$19). In a sleepy German village, Allina Strauss's life seems idyllic: she works at her uncle's bookshop, makes strudel with her aunt, and spends weekends with her friends and fiancé. But it's 1939, Adolf Hitler is Chancellor, and Allina's family hides a terrifying secret—her birth mother was Jewish, making her a Mischling. One fateful night after losing everyone she loves, Allina is forced into service as a nurse at a state-run baby factory called Hochland Home. There, she becomes both witness and participant to the horrors of Heinrich Himmler's ruthless eugenics program. How can she save some of the children from the Nazis' Lebensborn Program, and how can she survive?

* Barron, Stephanie. [Jane and the Man of the Cloth](#); [Jane and the Wandering Eye](#) (\$20 each). Reissues of Barron's wonderful groundbreaking mysteries featuring Jane Austen as sleuth. The stories take place in gaps in the actual historical record but are thoroughly researched and faithful to the characters and the era.

Bowen, Rhys/Clare Broyles. [Silent As the Grave](#) (\$19). This Molly Murphy mystery steps into the world of early filmmaking and Thomas Edison's power grab. The sequel, [Vanished in the Crowd](#) (St Martins \$28 Signed by both authors), moves Molly and cast to 1909 and historic events in NYC involving suffragists.

Brannigan, Ellie. [Murder at an Irish Castle](#) (\$22.99). Rayne McGrath who hits her 30th birthday thinking her bridal wear designer business on Rodeo Drive and her engagement promise a secure future, one she'll love. And then boom, it all goes bust. Bust just in time for her to be pressured into flying to Ireland where her Uncle Nevin's will comes as a new surprise. He's left her the run-down family castle and worse, if she can't turn its finances around the whole village will go under too. And wait—maybe

Uncle Nevin was murdered. It's not the set up that's wildly original, it's the solutions to the various vexing problems including his death that make this a standout.

Bruen, Ken. [Galway's Edge](#) (\$16.95). Former Garda, now PI, Jack Taylor is hired by a special envoy from the Vatican to dissuade Galway clergyman Kevin Whelan from joining a vigilante organization. Edge is a local group whose nominal mission is to administer justice when the law fails. In reality, its members use that aim as a smokescreen for all manner of shady dealings. Jack agrees to warn Whelan, but soon after they meet, the priest is found dead. Then two other Edge members are killed, suggesting that someone—possibly a powerful financier named Benson—is trying to hijack Edge for his own purposes. While Jack pursues Benson, a number of other matters demand his attention. Jack's last case is [Galway Confidential](#) (\$16.95). My favorite remains the first: [The Guards](#) (\$16.99).

Cambridge, Colleen. [A Fashionably French Murder](#) (\$17.95). American expat Tabitha Knight has found a new life in postwar Paris, along with a delightful friend in aspiring chef Julia Child. The two join a mother-of-the-bride for a private showing at an exclusive fashion atelier, Maison Lannet. It turns out bespoke dresses are one of a kind so the American mom is out of luck. But when Tabitha returns later that evening to search for a lost glove, she finds the lights still on—and the couturier dead, strangled by a length of lace. The shop manager suspects that a jealous rival—perhaps Dior himself—committed the crime. There's a lot of post-war fashion and more to be found here.

Fay, Kim. [Kate & Frida](#) (\$18). Sometimes a book can change your life as this love letter to bookshops and booksellers shows. Twenty-something Frida Rodriguez, daughter of Love & Safron's own Joan Bergstrom, comes to Paris in 1991, relishing the city's butter-soaked cuisine and seeking her future as a war correspondent. But when she writes to a bookshop in Seattle, she receives more than just the book she requests. A friendship begins that will redefine the person she thought she wanted to become. Seattle bookseller Kate Fair is transformed by Frida's free spirit, spurred to kiss her handsome coworker, to believe in herself as a writer, and to find beauty even in loss. Through the most tumultuous years of their young lives—personally and globally—Kate and Frida's friendship sustains and nourishes them as they show each other how to overcome self-doubt and thrive.

Graham, Heather. [The Murder Machine](#) (Mira \$18.99). This state-of-the-art smart home has everything: a next-generation entertainment system, an ultramodern kitchen where every appliance is online and even a personal AI to control it all. Now it's also a crime scene, complete with a dead body. Standing above its owner's lifeless corpse, FBI agent Jude Mackenzie is faced with the daunting task of discovering if and how the woman was killed by her own home.

Hays, Katy. [Saltwater](#) (\$19). Following up her debut in [The Cloisters](#) (\$17.99), one of our 2022 First Mystery Picks, Hays takes readers to the island of Capri off the coast of Italy, where the wealthy and private Lingate family return each year, despite the tragic death of matriarch Sarah, wife of Richard, back in 1992. Did Sarah fall from the cliff accidentally or did she jump? Or was she pushed? For daughter Helen, those questions are a side note to plans she's made for this year's visit to the island. All her life she has been suffocated by her family's power, money,

and obsession with keeping up appearances. Now, having formed a friendship and alliance with her uncle's assistant, Lorna, she thinks she's found a way out. But the plan hinges on reminding everyone of Sarah's death and threatening to expose long-buried secrets. Once the plan is in motion, they lose control of the players with deadly effect.

Heath, Brianna. [Robbie McNeil's Hit](#) (Poisoned Pen \$17.99). Heath's inventive debut centers on a charming contract killer who gets pulled into a dangerous job. Robbie McNeil has settled down in a "worn-out" Indiana city, where she runs a karaoke bar with her best friend and roommate, Dee Machado. The two are also hired assassins; Robbie—who's been carrying out hits for 11 years to pay the bills—specializes in making her murders appear accidental. She dreams of staging an original musical, the expense of which leads her to accept a lucrative job offer despite her misgivings when the client provides scant details about the target. Robbie learns only that she's supposed to find and kill Xavier Landerman, which she soon discovers is a fake name. As she pulls at the thread of who Xavier might be and who might want him dead, she fears she may finally be in over her head. Wry prose ("Robbie McNeil did not kill a single person for the first eighteen years of her life. After that, available records weren't quite as clear") and a fair-play but hard-to-solve mystery make this sing. Admirers of Rob Hart's Assassins Anonymous will be impressed

* Horowitz, Anthony. [Marble Hall Murders](#) (\$19.99). Editor Susan Ryeland has left her Greek island, her hotel and her Greek boyfriend, Andreas, in search of a new life back in England. Freelancing for a London publisher, she's given the last job she wants: working on an Atticus Pünd continuation novel called *Pünd's Last Case*. Worse still, she knows the new writer. Eliot Crace is the troubled grandson of legendary children's author Miriam Crace who died twenty years ago. Eliot is convinced she was murdered—by poison. To her surprise, Susan enjoys reading the manuscript which is set in the South of France and revolves around the mysterious death of Lady Margaret Chalfont, days before she was about to change her will. But when it is revealed that Lady Margaret was also poisoned, alarm bells begin to ring. The more Susan reads, the clearer it becomes that Eliot has deliberately concealed clues about his grandmother's death inside the book. I believe this chapter in this meta-fiction series has already played on TV.

Kelly, Diane. [The Barn Identity](#) (St Martins \$9.99). The eighth in the House-Flipper mystery series set in Nashville, where the real estate market is to die for. In Nashville, carpenter Whitney Whitaker is ecstatic when the owner of an antebellum livery stable approaches her about rehabbing the barn and offers Whitney free rein with the design. While unproven, it's rumored that the building once served as part of the Underground Railroad. The project presents a unique opportunity to work on a site of significance and help preserve history, and she convinces her cousin to take a chance on the old property. When a local journalist reporting on the renovation is found dead on the property, investigators suspect he might have been murdered for any one of several exposés. But which? And by whom?

Lumley, Sam. [How to Have a Killer Time in DC](#) (\$18.95). "Fasten your seatbelts! When a fussy autistic travel writer and a dashing photographer collide in DC, they crash headlong into a

murder case—and into each other. Buckle up for a ride filled with danger, intrigue, and unexpected gay romance in the cutthroat world of self-driving cars!" —Lee Hollis on what you could call a cozy debut.

Sager, Riley. [Home Before Dark](#) (\$15) is a reissue of a 2020 ghost story by Sager who visits us August 5 with his new chiller [The Unknown](#) (Dutton \$30) in a deluxe edition. Order early so you don't miss out.

Thornton, J R. [Lucien](#) (Harper \$18.99). Even among the wit and wealth of Harvard's freshman class, there's something special about Lucien Alexandre Orsini-Conti, the charismatic enigma at the heart of this addictive novel. Lucien is precisely the sort of person who exacerbates the imposter syndrome of his randomly assigned roommate, Christopher Novotny, an awkward Baltimore scholarship student who's rich only in artistic talent. But Lucien takes Christopher under his wing, rebranding him as the more sophisticated-sounding "Atlas." Soon he's lending Atlas his bespoke wardrobe, giving him a glimpse of a glittering social world he never dreamed existed, and even orchestrating his campaign to join the exclusive Hasty Pudding Club. When Atlas finds himself in dire financial straits, Lucien manipulates him into painting a forgery that he offers to sell to a Boston gallery for a hefty cut. As cracks form in Lucien's fabulous facade and the pair's lives spiral out of control, Thornton's well-oiled plot threatens to tip into melodrama. He saves the day with granular detail about life in the Ivy League and keen observations on the elaborate yet empty gestures of Lucien's social circle. The result is a wild ride readers won't soon forget. [READ an article](#) by Thornton listing 5 campus novels that inspired his book.

White, Kate. [I Came Back for You](#) (Thomas & Mercer \$16.99). Ten years after her daughter, Melanie, was murdered, Bree Winter is finally moving on with a new love, a new home, and a new beginning. Then a deathbed confession from the convicted killer throws Bree's life into a tailspin all over again. He readily confesses to murdering four girls. But not Melanie. At first, Bree and her ex-husband don't buy a word of it. Until inconsistencies about the crime emerge. So does the dreadful feeling that the monster who shattered Bree's family isn't lying. The only way she can get to the truth is to power through the trauma and return to the town in upstate New York where Melanie's life came to a brutal end. As Bree begins to dig through Melanie's past, what she discovers calls into question everything she has believed—about the crime and about Melanie herself.