

BOOKNEWS from

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

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



M IS FOR MOTHER

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.

SATURDAY MAY 2 2:00 PM Live Event

Cozy Con with John

Kiri Callaghan discusses [The Hearth Witch's Guide to Magic & Murder](#) (Sourcebooks \$18.99) Deluxe Edition

NE Carlisle discusses [Hazelnuts & Homicide](#) (Plot Twist LLC \$23.99)

Nicolas DiDomizio discusses [A Murder Most Camp](#) (Sourcebooks \$17.99)

Our copies come with stickers and swag

J. Penner discusses [Death Meets Cute](#) (Sourcebooks \$17.99) Deluxe Edition

Allie Pleiter discusses [Two Purloined Pillows](#) (Kensington \$27)

SUNDAY MAY 3 3:30 PM CLOSED TO SHOPPING

Our Book Launch for Sara Cate with Brittainy Cherry is sold out

But you can order a Signed copy of [The Rule of Three Deluxe Edition](#) (\$18.99) with custom dust jacket while supply lasts

MONDAY MAY 4 4:00 PM Virtual Event

Simon Elegant discusses [City on Fire: A Novel of Hong Kong](#) (Pegasus \$27.95)

Signed books available

Our May First Mystery Subscription Club Pick

MONDAY MAY 4 7:00 PM Live Event

Australia's Candice Fox discusses [Red Belly Crossing](#) (Crooked Lane \$29.99/\$19.99)

Dark deeds by a serial killer, and more, in a small Australian town

TUESDAY MAY 5 4:00 PM Virtual Event

Lesley Stahl and Patrick are our hosts

Patricia Cornwell discusses her memoir [True Crime](#) (Grand Central \$32.50)

Signed copies available

WEDNESDAY MAY 6 7:00 PM Live Event

Chloe Jensen is our host

Andrew Dana Hudson discusses [Absence](#) (Soho \$29)

A debut based on a fascinating vision of a future where people keep "popping"—but perhaps one comes back

FRIDAY MAY 8 7:00 PM Live Ticketed Event

Australia's TL Swan discusses [The Heart You Kept](#) (Keeperton \$18.99)

[Tickets](#): \$20 includes one copy of the book

It starts a new billionaires series "Kings of the Riviera"

Our copies come with a custom dust jacket

SATURDAY MAY 9 10:00 AM Live Event

Local Authors Fair

Support independently published authors

SATURDAY MAY 9 2:00 PM Live Event

Lynn Cahoon discusses [Confessions of an Amateur Sleuth](#) (Kensington \$27)

A bookish cozy crime on Bainbridge Island

The sequel to [An Amateur Sleuth's Guide to Murder](#) (\$17.95)

MONDAY MAY 11 5:00 PM Virtual Event

Iona Bannister discusses [Five](#) (Crown \$28). "Five is wholly original, masterfully plotted, and thrilling. My allegiances switched as swiftly as the London Tube train bearing down on the antiheroes in this story. You know one of them will die, but who do you want to survive?"

Signed books available

MONDAY MAY 11 7:00 PM Live Event

Matt Goldman discusses [Liar's Creek](#) (Minotaur \$31) [Paperback edition](#) (\$19)

Wow, a small town Minnesota drama that really twists the knife
A slow burn thriller that embraces three generations

TUESDAY MAY 12 7:00 PM Live Event

UK's LJ Ross discusses [The Cove](#) (Sourcebooks \$32.99) [Paperback edition](#) (\$18.99)

A London publishing exec escapes a killer to a picturesque Cornwell community, only to discover she hasn't....

First in Ross' Summer Suspense Mysteries

Ross has other series so we are giving away a collection of first chapters of each to everyone who buys *The Cove*

WEDNESDAY MAY 13 12:00 PM Virtual Event

Deb Ledford is our host

Robert Bailey discusses [The Mediator](#) (Thomas & Mercer \$16.99)

A disgraced lawyer facing the legal battle of her life as she tries to redeem herself—and save her son.

WEDNESDAY MAY 13 7:00 PM Live Event

Alex Finlay discusses [The Anniversary](#) (St Martins \$29)

Finlay really sticks in the knife in this one

THURSDAY MAY 14 7:00 PM Live Event

A deep dive into Southwestern landscape and history

Taylor Brown discusses [Wolvers](#) (St Martins \$29)

A magnificent novel set in NM's Gila Wilderness

Our Hardboiled Crime & Notable New Fiction Picks for May

Peter Stark discusses [The Lost Cities of El Norte](#) (Harper \$35)

Coronado's quest for the Cities of Gold and how Indigenous Resistance defeated the Spanish and limited their colonization beyond New Mexico

FRIDAY MAY 15 7:00 PM Live Event

Tori Eldridge discusses [Hawai'i Rage](#) (Thomas & Mercer \$16.99)

Ranger Makalani Pahukula Series #2

Perfect reading for Asian American/Pacific Heritage Month

SATURDAY MAY 16 10:30 AM Live and Virtual Event

Croak & Dagger discusses Elsa Hart's [The Cabinets of Barnaby Mayne](#) (\$24.99)

SATURDAY MAY 16 2:00 PM Live Event

Journalist Jeremy Duda discusses [Murder in the Fourth Estate](#) (Bloomsbury \$40)

The Assassination of Investigative Journalist Don Bolles of the *Arizona Republic* in 1976

SATURDAY MAY 16 7:00 PM Live and Virtual

SciFi Friday meets on a Saturday to discuss Martha Wells' [Witch King](#) (\$18.99)

SUNDAY MAY 17 4:00 PM OFFSITE TICKETED EVENT

Jack Carr discusses [The Fourth Option](#) (Atria \$30)

Tickets: \$35 includes one copy of *The Fourth Option*

If you can't attend you can order a Signed copy the usual way

TUESDAY MAY 19 5:00 PM Virtual Event

Jen Johans is our host

Alison Gaylin signs [Robert B. Parker's Booked](#) (Putnam \$30)

A Sunny Randall mystery skewering the publishing world, such fun

Signed copies available

FRIDAY MAY 22 7:00 PM Live Event

Pat King is our host

Bill Schweigart discusses [Dirty 20](#) (Disney \$18.99)

The Sopranos meets *Dungeons & Dragons* when the son of a crime boss accidentally becomes a crowdfunding superstar

SATURDAY MAY 23 11:00 AM Live Event

The Cookbook Discussion Club discusses Edna Lewis, *The Taste of Country Cooking 50th Anniversary Edition* (\$40)

MONDAY MAY 25

Closed for Memorial Day

WEDNESDAY MAY 27 7:00 PM Live Event

Craig Johnson discusses [The Brothers McKay](#) (Viking \$30)

Wyoming Sheriff Walt Longmire is saddled with murder at the O-Kay Lodge and worse....

Read *The Brothers Karamazov* before the McKays for extra fun

Also learn the history of Clue

THURSDAY MAY 28 5:00 PM Virtual Event

Danielle Postel-Vinay (aka Trussoni) discusses [Murder Most Delicious](#) (Harper \$30)

American sommelier Olivia Beech's new start in Paris is a killer

Our June Cozy Crimes Club Pick and rich with food

THURSDAY MAY 28 7:00 PM Live Event

Hardboiled Crime discusses Richard Stark's [Lemons Never Lie](#) (\$16.99)

Stark is a pseudonym for the late great Donald E. Westlake

FRIDAY MAY 29 7:00 PM Live Event

Caitlin Rozakis discusses [Startup Hell](#) (Titan Publishing \$19.99)

Yay, a contemporary fantasy about a junior sales witch stuck in corporate hell, who has to evade devilish pacts and her kickass, world-saving, demon-slaying mum to save a (surprisingly hot) demon

We have some swag to go with the book

SATURDAY MAY 30 4:00 PM Live Event

Liz Lawson discusses [It Happened One Murder](#) (Poisoned Pen \$32.99) [Paperback](#) (17.95).

SUNDAY MAY 31 2:00 PM Live Event

Jenn McKinlay discusses [The Summer Share](#) (Berkley \$19)

When two misfits discover they've inherited the same beach house, sparks fly

NEW: MONDAY JUNE 1 6:30 PM Live Offsite Event

It's World Outlander Day

Diana Gabaldon is our host

S.D Coverly discusses [The Arcane Arts](#) (Random House Worlds \$30)

"Coverly" is two authors, Dana Schwartz and Dan Frey

"Dark academia, romance and fantasy join forces in a gripping new book."

Free to attend. No Signing Line for Diana but presigned books available

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

[Paperback edition:](#) (\$17.99)

A mystery rom-com set in a NJ beach town to add to your summer reading

SUBSCRIPTION CLUB PICKS FOR MAY

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

Jackson, EA. [Missing](#)

Cozy Crimes Club One Unsigned hardcover or paperback per month

Hackney, Stacy. [The Primrose Murder Society](#) & LJ Ross, [The Cove](#)

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

Hepworth, Sally. [Mad Mabel](#) sold out

First Mystery Club One Signed First Printing per month

Elegant, Simon. [City on Fire: A Novel of Hong Kong](#)

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

Brown, Taylor. [Wolvers](#)

Historical Fiction Club One First Printing per month

Brown, Jennifer N. [The Lost Book of Elizabeth Barton](#)

Historical Fiction Paperback Club One Unsigned paperback per month

Shepherd-Robinson, Laura. [The Art of a Lie](#)

Notable New Fiction Club One Signed First Printing per month

Brown, Taylor. [Wolvers](#)

Romance and Relationships Club One unsigned hardcover or paperback per month

James, Eloisa. [The Last Lady B](#)

SOME SIGNED BOOKS FOR MAY

A note here: All of our Signed Hardcover books are first printings

Andrews, Brian/Jeff Wilson. [Tier One](#) (Blackstone \$29.99). John Dempsey's life—as an elite Tier One Navy SEAL named Jack Kemper—is over. A devastating terrorist action catapults him from a world of moral certainty and decisive orders into the shadowy realm of espionage, where ambiguity is the only rule. His new mission: hunt down those responsible for the greatest tragedy in the history of the US Special Ops and bring them to justice. But how does a man torn between duty and revenge walk the line and preserve his soul? As Dempsey struggles with the games of spies, the case propels him across the globe in a desperate effort to prevent a new, horrifying attack on American soil.

* Bannister, Ilona. [Five](#) (Crown \$28). “Someone will die here this morning, at this suburban train station. It will happen in the next five minutes when the 7:06 to London Victoria arrives. There are five people on the platform. Take note of their positions. The child, the mother, the businessman, the old woman and the gambler. One of them will die despite your growing attachment to them, even though there is probably one you want to get rid of. You don't have to admit who. But perhaps you should ask yourself why one will die? The train has stopped. Someone is dead. Was it who you chose? It wasn't your fault ... So why, dear reader, do you feel so guilty?” Take a ride with the interesting construction of this story. The May Library Reads Pick adds: “Readers are challenged to predict the victim from among a cast of flawed, unlikable characters whose backstories are unexpectedly gripping. This thought-provoking thriller is an ideal book club pick that will spark a different debate for every reader.”

* Brown, Jennifer N. [The Lost Book of Elizabeth Barton](#) (St Martins \$29) is our **May Historical Fiction Pick**. It's much heavier on the Henry VIII era, which our own is increasingly resembling, than the modern track.

“Medieval literature scholar Brown debuts with a captivating dual-timeline mystery inspired by the life, death, and prophecies of a woman who claimed to be a soothsayer during

the reign of Henry VIII. Contemporary American historian Alison Sage has made a groundbreaking archival discovery—she found a manuscript containing the prophecies of a 16th century nun, Elizabeth Barton. Barton's prophecy condemning Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn led to her 1534 execution and the destruction of all copies of her prophecies—or so the world believed. Focusing on the men who used and then abandoned Barton for political gain, Brown dramatizes how Barton, an illiterate servant, was catapulted to the forefront of a seditionist movement.

A complementary narrative follows Sage, whose discovery of a Barton manuscript earns her an invitation to an academic retreat in England near the priory where Barton once lived. The tension ratchets up when Sage's hosts pressure her into leading a “treasure hunt” for 16th-century jewels that might have been hidden in the ruins of the priory. When someone is murdered in the priory's former church, Alison begins to doubt the motives of everyone at the conference. Brown excels at depicting the manipulation of women across the centuries while exhibiting both shrewd mystery-writing skills and a knack for folding deep historical research into a propulsive narrative.”—*PW* Starred Review

Brown, Taylor. [Wolvers](#) (St Martins \$29). Deep in the New Mexico Gila Wilderness an assassin who calls himself Murdoch is relentlessly hunting a she-wolf known for her bravery and resilience. The pack she leads is protected by the federal government. But a secretive right-wing militia group implacably opposed to government meddling, and to wolves, has hired Murdoch, with his expertise in “tracking down wolves or lions or men across high desert and great plains,” to destroy her. This page-turner explores the battle between man, wolf and nature through the perspectives of three characters: gun-for-hire Murdoch stalking a federally protected wolf; a man from a local ranching family with a newfound respect for wolves pushing back; and the she-wolf herself, One-Eleven. Brown's descriptions of the pitiless, dangerous beauty of the natural world, and of man's relationship to it,

show a deep respect for the land and is our **May Notable New Fiction Pick and our Hardboiled Crime Pick**. Plan ahead for Father's Day, or actually the she-wolf exemplifies motherhood so a good choice for Mom too....

Byrne, James. [Storm Warning](#) (St Martins \$29). Out in May, signed here June 3, so this is an early note. Dez is one of our top favorite thriller leads and this is his best yet. "Byrne brilliantly braids plot threads from previous installments into the action, creating a high-octane page-turner that respects its audience's intelligence. Readers will be tempted to devour this in a single sitting." —*PW* Starred Review.

Cahoon, Lynn. [Confessions of an Amateur Sleuth](#) (Kensington \$27). Bainbridge Island bookseller, aspiring author, and amateur sleuth Meg Gates investigates a second murder when she should be working on her book. At the island's writers' group, she meets freelance food critic Lee Anderson, who invites her to join him for dinner at the Local Crab so he won't be suspected of reviewing the place. Lee is a bit of a crab himself and intends to do a hatchet job on the eatery. Instead, someone does a job on the critic—he's found dead by the marina. Now Bainbridge's culinary elite are on the suspect list. With help from her beau, Dalton, and the Mystery Crew at Island Books, Meg dons her sleuthing cap to solve the mystery *du jour*

Carr, Jack/MP Woodward. [The Fourth Option](#) (Atria \$30). Signed here May 17 by Carr—tickets in the calendar listing. Mail orders up to 500 get an extra—a signed bookplate.

Disillusioned by the government and institutions he dedicated his life to serving, former Navy SEAL and CIA ground branch operative Chris Walker is about to end his life when he receives a call that saves it. The wife of a teammate he lost in Afghanistan has now lost her son to the opioid crisis and needs Walker's help. With ambitious FBI agent Jarrett Stanton on his tail, Walker—accompanied by his loyal Belgian Malinois K-9 and using his off-the-grid VW pop-up camper filled with a hidden cache of weapons—takes justice into his own hands, exposing corruption and issuing a long-forgotten brand of lethal outlaw justice. In the tradition of the great "stranger comes to town" Westerns of the past comes a modern interpretation of the mysterious vigilante gunslinger legend.

Connelly, Michael. [Ironwood](#) (Little Brown \$32). Acting on a tip from a confidential informant, Detective Sergeant Stilwell and his Catalina Island deputies watch a plane land in the middle of the night at the Airport in the Sky, a remote airstrip in the mountains. A duffel bag of drugs is dropped and the deputies move in, but things quickly go sideways. While Stilwell chases the fleeing pickup man into the mountainside brush, shots are fired on the runway and the plane flies off.

An internal inquiry follows, putting Stilwell on the bench until he is cleared of responsibility for the disastrous operation. But he is determined to find out who brought deadly violence to his island, and begins his own secret investigation into the drug deal gone wrong. While under orders to remain in the sheriff's substation, he finds in the lost and found a valuable backpack that was never claimed. He traces it to a woman who disappeared while hiking on the island four years ago. But then why was the pack only turned in two months back? Now thoroughly intrigued, he follows the mystery all the way to the LAPD's Open-Unsolved Unit and Detective Renée Ballard.

"Connelly has another great series on his hands with his Catalina novels. Everything fans expect, Connelly delivers. The mysteries are intriguing, the pace is relentless, and Stilwell is a captivating character. Adding Ballard makes a great book stellar." — *Library Journal* Starred Review. And from Booklist, a Starred Review: "Connelly is at his most polished and incisive here, with crackling dialogue, complex investigations, tricky relationships, escalating suspense, and dogged and inspired sleuthing by a principled, rule-breaking hero."

Connolly, John. [River Red with Blood](#) (Hodder \$44). In Maine's rural Kennebec River Valley, the body of a young runaway from a "troubled teens" school has been found in the water, seemingly drowned, while a teenage girl has gone missing, believed dead. Now it is up to one man, private investigator Charlie Parker, to find the connection, and bring two evils—one new and one ancient—to an end.... The UK edition comes with a woodcut map of Charlie Parker's Maine from artist Rob Ryan

No worries: [The US edition](#) (Atria \$30) publishes in June. John can't sign it but he is sending the map. The map will be roughly four times the size of a hardback book, so it can be folded twice and easily inserted, and John will sign each map.

Cornwell, Patricia. [True Crime](#) (Grand Central \$32.50). Cornwell excavates her own life, leaving no stone unturned. "This literary memoir is as good as it gets, with more action and drama than many novels." —*Kirkus*

Coverly, SD. [The Arcane Arts](#) (Random House \$30). Out May 19, Signed for us June 1 by local author Coverly. Diana Gabaldon will host our June 1 event which is also World Outlander Day.

A graduate student and her adviser dive into a taboo branch of magic, igniting a dangerous passion. This is a dark academic Romantasy involving magic and manipulation. "Dark academia, romance, and fantasy join forces in a gripping new book." —*People*

Ambitious and driven, Ellsbeth Storer has long been determined to study the arcane arts, even before the mysterious death of a loved one draws her to prestigious Newlyn University. Professor Thaddeus Rawlins was once the wunderkind of the field, but in the wake of a horrific tragedy that nearly ended his career, he has resigned himself to the boredom of tenure. Yet when the magnetic Ellsbeth enters his orbit, he finds her impossible to resist. He agrees to oversee her pursuit of a taboo thesis topic: the study of writ magic, the illegal power to control and compel others—and a secret obsession of Rawlins's. As student and professor undertake their illicit research, harmless flirtation crosses into more, something dangerous.

Davis, Lindsey. [Murder in Purple and Gold](#) (Hodder \$46). Rome and the Romans are obsessed with chariot racing. Lepo was the rising star of the Purples, a new team created by the psychotic Emperor Domitian with big money backing. Suspicion immediately falls on Lepo's greatest rival, Agathon, a young man emerging from a rival team, the Golds. Convinced of his guilt, a lynch mob is hunting him. The Golds faction hire Flavia to clear their man's name. He appears to have an alibi for the night of the murder but, as Flavia soon finds out, nothing is as it seems in the dangerous and glamorous world of the charioteers

Duda, Jeremy. [Murder in the Fourth Estate](#) (Bloomsbury Academic \$40). The 1976 car bombing death of *Arizona Republic* reporter Don Bolles is examined by fellow journalist Duda who

does a very deep dive into it, citing sources and including a few photos. Lots of Arizona history here. Warning: the type is very small.

Duda can also sign an earlier work: [If This Be Treason: The American Rogues](#) (Lyons \$26.95)

Eldridge, Tori. [Hawai'i Rage](#) (Thomas & Mercer \$16.99). Makalani Pahukula, interpretive ranger for Pu'ukoholā Heiau National Historic Site, craves some rejuvenating hard work on Hawai'i Island. When cousin-in-law Rosie offers Makalani a chance to help at the Hiapo family ranch, it's the perfect opportunity. But something else weighs on Rosie's mind—a suspicious death. Is there a dark history to the Hiapo family? Start this new series with [Kaua'i Storm](#) (\$16.99).

Elegant, Simon. [City on Fire: A Novel of Hong Kong](#) (Pegasus \$27.95). A China Bureau Chief and restaurant investor pens our **May First Mystery Club Pick**.

Hong Kong is a city ablaze—its streets filled with protesters, its government in crisis, its people torn between rage and fear of what defiance might cost. At the center stands Superintendent Killian Tong, once a rising star in the police, now disgraced and haunted by a tragic accident at a protest. Exiled to a remote post, Killian is called back when a dismembered body is uncovered in a landfill. The gruesome murder could be his path to redemption—if he can withstand mounting pressure from superiors desperate to bury the truth, and the even more dangerous fractures within his own family.

This is a dark, hardboiled story and reflects the terrible toll of a repressive, autocratic government on what was once a thriving commercial metropolis. My last visit to Hong Kong will be my last.

Finlay, Alex. [The Anniversary](#) (St Martins \$29). “Two people are forever connected by the events of a single day. Piece by piece, Alex Finlay expertly reveals the secrets and lies that bind them together. Razor sharp, smart, and emotionally charged—it's everything I want in a thriller!”—Ashley Elston

Jules is the high school queen bee in a small Midwestern town when she survives a brutal attack by the elusive May Day Killer—a predator who strikes every May 1st and then vanishes without a trace. Quinn, a boy from the wrong side of the tracks, is arrested the same night after trying to break up a fight and nearly killing someone. By morning, their lives are forever connected. A year later, Jules is haunted by trauma and guilt, tormented by one question: *Why was she spared?* Quinn is newly released from juvenile detention and returns home to devastating news—the unsolved murder of his mother. As the years pass, secrets surface, lies unravel, and the paths of Jules and Quinn draw closer together. Two mysteries edge toward the truth—what really happened the night Jules was attacked, and who murdered Quinn's mother? All the while, the May Day Killer is still out there.... Finlay pulls out all the stops on this one.

Forrester, Andrew. [How The Story Goes](#) (Avon \$28.99 Signed). This is our creative April First Mystery Pick and our top Mother's Day gifting recommendation. See Recommends for M Is for Mother's Day below.

It is, however, not a murder mystery, but the hinge of the story is a death— from cancer—of a brilliant author of a children's fantasy series who has not completed the final book. What if JK Rowling had left Harry Potter unfinished... or for an adult

version, Diana Gabaldon doesn't finish *Outlander*? Shudder.

So who will complete Helen Longacre's manuscript? For her publisher we're talking \$\$\$.

For her grieving husband, a writer of literary mysteries, it's a paralyzing task. But there are two crimes, neither a murder, herein—one actual, one potential.

Fox, Candice. [Red Belly Crossing](#) (Crooked Lane \$29.99). Since a violent confrontation tore apart a family five years ago, brothers and fellow cops Russell and Evan haven't spoken a word to each other. When they're both assigned to the murder of a young journalist in Australia's tiny town of Redbelly Crossing, their paths are forced to cross again. This was supposed to be the week Russell could repair things with his teenage daughter, and instead, he has to drag her on a murderous ride into the middle of snake-infested nowhere. For Evan, this case is exactly what he needed: a high-profile investigation that will give him the chance to rebuild his career after a terrible mistake that nearly ended it. Nothing goes well for anyone engulfed in a very dark family's dynamics.

French, Tana. [The Keeper](#) (Viking \$32). We sold out our original signed stock but then, surprise, came more. This is the final book set in the remote Irish village of Ardnakelty where retired Chicago cop Cal Cooper can't stay retired as he faces a death and a vicious feud.... French's work just got raves in the *NY Times Book Review* but we've been with her all the way from book one.

Gaylin, Alison. [Robert B. Parker's Booked](#) (Putnam \$30). World famous author Melanie Joan Hall asks for Boston PI Sunny Randall's help in tracking down Book Babe, the screen-name of an enormously popular book reviewer, who has trolled her with a deeply insulting one-star review. This usually wouldn't matter except that Book Babe has thousands of followers, and her unwarranted blast has Melanie's publisher threatening to pull all her books. But Sunny's investigation reveals that the reviewer and Melanie have a rich history—richer when Book Babe turns up dead.

Goldman, Matt. [Liar's Creek](#) (St Martins \$31). Another small town mystery (see Fox above) with deep and dark family dynamics. River wood, Minnesota is a scenic town threaded with trout streams carving their way through limestone bluffs. But beneath its picturesque facade, danger runs rampant. Clay Hawkins isn't a stranger to the secrets of his hometown. After twenty years away, Clay has recently returned home from abroad with his twelve-year-old son, and his relationship with his father, the recently replaced sheriff, is as strained as ever. But when Clay's beloved uncle disappears, the three generations of Hawkineses must overturn every stone in Riverwood and confront deep familial wounds to find the one person who brings them together. As danger looms, Clay worries that it might be too late to save his uncle. Goldman writes character-driven plots with total finesse and some degree of optimism. He's a favorite here. [Liar's Creek](#) (\$19) In simultaneous paperback.

Haig, Matt. [The Midnight Train](#) (Canongate \$44). The UK edition, very limited quantity. If you could travel back to a moment in time, when would you go? After a near-fatal heart attack, one man is given the ultimate chance to relive both his brightest moments and his deepest regrets. The US edition: [The Midnight Train](#) (Viking \$30).

Hudson, Andrew Dana. [Absence](#) (Soho Press \$29). I became deeply immersed in Phoenix's debut author Hudson's speculative fiction of a future where people unexpectedly, and randomly, vanish, i.e., "pop." Two rookie agents from the Bureau of Depopulation Affairs are dispatched to small-town Kansas to investigate a woman who claims to have returned from this worldwide epidemic of Spontaneous Human Absence, offering answers that could change everything. Maybe.... Hudson's vision is both gripping and convincing in how it affects every day lives and affairs, echoing how random people and their choices can be, and is recommended to you.

Johnson, Craig. [The Brothers McKay](#) (Viking \$30). When Pepper McKay, one of the most hated men in Absaroka County, is found murdered on his ranch in Crazy Woman Canyon, suspects aren't in short supply. But Sheriff Walt Longmire's attention is on those who had gathered for a family meeting that evening, McKay's very different sons: a smooth-talking charmer, a cosmopolitan journalist, a reclusive monk, and a half-Native ranch hand who keeps the place running. Each had a motive. Each claims he's innocent. Then the case takes a sharp turn....

The real engine behind this story is Dostoevsky's novel *The Brothers Karamazov*, a favorite of Johnson. It was to be the first of a trilogy but the Russian author died shortly after publication so we will never know the full story—which doesn't prevent Johnson from imagining his version. He also drops in some stuff like the history of Clue in a book he clearly had fun writing.

Larsen, Ward. [Tom Clancy Rules of Engagement](#) (Putnam \$32). Coming to us signed by Larsen. The White House is stunned when the Secretary of Commerce is killed in a plane crash in Turkey. President Jack Ryan isn't ready to write this off as a simple accident. Not only has he lost a good friend, but the Secretary was on an important mission: on the surface he was making an appearance at an economic conference, but the CIA was also using the flight as cover to extract an important asset from the Middle East. So bring in Commander Katie Ryan and her team....

Lawson, Liz. [It Happened One Murder](#) (Sourcebooks \$32.99; and \$17.99). *Only Murders in the Building* gets a rom-com twist in this mystery-romance following one woman who will have to pair up with an unlikely ally to solve a murder in their quaint New Jersey beach town. This is Elle Cosimano inspired.

Mosley, Walter. [Ghalen: A Romance in Black](#) (Harper \$30). For nearly 40 years, Walter Mosley has been producing genre-defying books that blend literary fiction and social commentary, and offer unvarnished perspectives on the world. One of America's most popular mystery writers—known for his acclaimed Easy Rawlins series, about a Black hard-boiled private eye and WWII vet—Mosley also writes thrillers, science fiction and fantasy novels, coming-of-age tales, and westerns. "I'm very interested in genre," the author says over Zoom from his home in Santa Monica, Calif. "I just keep coming at them one after another. There are many different ways to tell stories."

Mosley's latest, is a coming-of-age story with a romantic twist—and the author's first foray into the romance genre. It concerns Ghalen, a brilliant young Black man living in Los Angeles, who must navigate family drama, heartbreak, and betrayal as he struggles to become his own person in an unforgiving and violent

landscape. "I wanted to write a book about Black love, and about Black people being in love," Mosley says. "My job is to create characters who are real and believable. And, you know, they don't have to be real, but they do have to be believable."

McKinlay, Jenn. [The Summer Share](#) (Berkley \$19). Signed here May 31 and perfect for kicking off summer reading with a rom-com. When two misfits discover they've inherited the same beach house, sparks fly in Cape Split, NC. We all like how local bestseller Jenn is writing with her usual humor and lively characters in different genres. Remember, it all started with cupcakes and murder.

Penny, Louise/Melissa Fung. [The Last Mandarin](#) (St Martins \$30). Bookplates Signed by Penny.

Here's another speculative thriller based, like Hudson above, on a worldwide cataclysm. It starts with every alarm everywhere suddenly blasting, triggering accidents and panic. How? Who? Why? And What Next? It turns out to be something worse resulting in a worldwide mass of terrible deaths. Can the signals be traced back to China, which too has been badly hit? As worldwide leaders scramble to respond, the US President looks to elderly powerful human rights activist Vivian Li, a veteran of Tiananmen Square, to interpret possible Chinese actions for clues. But it's Vivian's daughter Alice, a first generation Chinese-American food blogger, who takes the lead thanks to an enigmatic email from her suddenly dead friend, a fellow foodie, in Hong Kong. This is fun but disturbing... and a bit like a Clive Cussler crossed with Lisa See.

Pleiter, Allie. [Two Purloined Pillows](#) (Kensington \$27). Signed here at Cozy Con May 2. When 30-something graphic artist Shelby Phillips reluctantly returned to her small hometown outside Asheville, North Carolina to manage her mother's needlepoint shop, she *thought* it was temporary. Now it's another murder, that of a needlepoint designer at the town's first arts festival....

* Ross, LJ. [The Cove](#) (Poisoned Pen \$32.99). If you have a vision of a life spent in a charming though remote Cornish village filled with interesting people and possible romance, this is for you. Gabrielle Adams was enjoying a good life: a promising publishing career, a devoted fiancé, and a future filled with possibilities. Then everything changed. A serial killer targets commuters on London Tube platforms—striking without warning, disappearing without a trace. Gabrielle is the only one to survive being pushed onto the tracks. Struggling to cope with the trauma, she retreats to a quiet coastal village in Cornwall, taking a job running a small bookshop. It's meant to be a fresh start. A second chance. A cozy life. At first, the peaceful town and its rhythms soothe her frayed nerves. But something feels off—and it is. [Paperback edition](#) (\$18.99) **is one of our two May Cozy Crimes Pick.**

I also recommend the first in her original policing series set in various Northern England landmarks: [Holy Island](#) (\$18.99). Good reading for Ann Cleevies fans.

Rozakis, Caitlin. [Startup Hell](#) (Titan Publishing \$19.99). "A hilarious contemporary fantasy about a junior sales witch stuck in corporate hell, who has to evade devilish pacts and her kickass, world-saving, demon-slaying mum to save a (surprisingly hot) demon, and work out how to hit her quarterly target."

Schweigart, Bill. [Dirty 20](#) (Disney \$18.99). *The Sopranos* meets *Dungeons & Dragons* when the son of a crime boss accidentally

becomes a crowdfunding superstar and disrupts business on the streets with his RPG. Bill Schweigart, earlier of *The Fatal Folklore Trilogy*, game masters a crime fiction novel that will make you finally get that THACO LIFE abs tattoo. What fun. Join our host Pat King for this event.

Stark, Peter. [The Lost Cities of El Norte](#) (Harper \$35). In 1540, the grandest exploring expedition ever assembled in the Americas paraded north from the ruins of the Aztec capital Tenochtitlan, a glittering column of 2,000 men heading into the unknown. Their destination was *El Norte Misterioso*—The Mysterious North, present-day United States—where fabulous cities of gold were rumored to shine beyond the horizon. Two years later, survivors began stumbling back, half dead. Lost to poisoned arrows, brutal deserts, starvation, cold, desertion, and countless other hardships, 90% of those who left would never return. Led by Francisco Coronado and backed by the full weight of the Spanish empire, the superpower of its day, they had expected to seize the land, steal its riches, and subjugate its peoples, just as they had so recently done to the mighty Aztec and Inca empires. But instead they encountered the unconquered American West—with no off ramp. And thus Middle America did not become a Spanish colony but was open to westward expansion.

Stockett, Kathryn. [The Calamity Club](#) (Spiegel & Grau \$32). Oxford, Mississippi, 1933. Abandoned by her mother one Christmas Eve, eleven-year-old Meg Lefleur has learned the hard way to rely on no one. Now one of the unadoptable “big girls” at the Lafayette County Orphan Asylum, she fights each day to keep her spirit unbowed. Birdie Calhoun, unmarried and outspoken, has come to Oxford to ask her socialite sister to help the struggling family she’s left behind. But as the Depression tightens its grip, Birdie discovers her sister’s seemingly charmed life is a tapestry of lies. Then, Birdie encounters Charlie, a woman running low on luck with little left to lose. When their fates—and Meg’s—converge, Charlie comes up with an audacious plan to claim what’s rightfully theirs. But—wrong time, wrong place. We may be sold out by the time you read this but the unsigned copy is available.

Stuart, Douglas. [John of John](#) (Grove \$28). Out of money and with little to show for his art school education, John-Calum Macleod takes the ferry back home to the Isle of Harris in the Outer Hebrides to find that little has changed except for him. The community does not accept his sexuality. What he finds are the windswept croft and the two pillars of his childhood: his father John, a sheep farmer, tweed weaver, and lay preacher in the local Presbyterian church, and his maternal grandmother Ella, a profanity-loving Glaswegian whose steady warmth helped Cal weather the sudden departure of his mother. Cal privately wonders if any lonely men might be found on the barren hillsides of home, while John is dismayed by his son’s long hair, strange clothes, and seeming unwillingness to be Saved. But Cal isn’t the only one in the croft house who is keeping secrets, as Booker Prize winner Stuart show us. “The story leans into incredible dialogue and raw, evolving relationships with complicated people readers can’t help but care about.” We have very few copies.

Tyson, Neil DeGrasse. [Take Me to Your Leader](#) (Simon & Schuster \$26). “Ever since childhood,” writes Neil deGrasse Tyson, “I’ve wanted to be abducted by Aliens.” *Take Me to Your Leader* is the culmination of a lifetime of fascination, speculation, and the amassing of scientific data about the possibility of Aliens

visiting Earth. Drawing on a wealth of depictions from history, literature, pop culture, and film, Tyson applies the universal laws of physics to make the case for what Aliens might look like, act like, how they might travel through the universe to reach us, and what they might think of us upon arrival. Should such an event occur, Tyson further offers useful etiquette tips for your first close encounter.

* Waldman, Ayelet. [A Perfect Hand](#) (Knopf \$28). With a nod to Jane Austen but a firm focus on the servant class, this versatile historical romantic drama considers a lady’s maid, the valet she falls for, and the wider world for which she yearns. Alice Lockey, the daughter of a tenant farmer, has done well for herself, working her way up to the position of lady’s maid to Lady Jemima, the silly, indulged elder daughter of a lord. Alice is skilled, intelligent, and eager to learn and to better herself; she hasn’t decided what that will mean but is reluctant to follow her mother’s advice to pursue marriage as a highest aim. Then she meets Charlie, a similarly above-average valet (also having climbed above his humble beginnings) to a viscount. Charlie and Alice tumble into the meager courtship that they can sneak on their half-days off, but they wish for more. Quickly realizing that their employers’ marriage is the only route to their own, they determine to set up Lady Jemima—infatuated with another man, a bit of a rake—and the deeply eccentric Lord Wynstowe. This is a tall order, but the young lovers are highly motivated and well positioned for persuading. Even as their schemes near fruition, however, Alice learns and yearns and grows. A reader (unusual for her class, but encouraged by Lady Jemima’s iconoclastic spinster aunt), she encounters pamphlets by Mary Wollstonecraft and John Stuart Mill. Questions of class reflect directly on her life and Charlie’s; certain versions of feminism seem aimed at her lady’s class rather than her own, but Alice wonders what the suffrage movement might do for even a servant girl. Between sewing ribbons and lace onto her lady’s latest dresses and washing her foul undergarments, running her errands and helping her dress, Alice considers the various lives she might wish for, if she were able to choose for herself.

M IS FOR MOTHER’S DAY

Our [Gift Card](#) remains a classic gift letting Mom choose whatever sort of book she’d like. Can be emailed anywhere so good for the last minute too.

[Poisoned Pen Book Bags](#) (\$15) in cream canvas sporting our logo are great for toting reading and other materials around.

My top New Novels for Mom:

Forrester, Andrew. [How The Story Goes](#) (Avon \$28.99 Signed). This is not just our April First Mystery Pick but our top Mother’s Day gifting recommendation. It also upholds a truth that I, a relic of the Golden Age of crime fiction, believe: a mystery does not have to be a murder mystery. Think of Josephine Tey’s *The Franchise Affair* or *Brat Farrar*. Trollope’s *The Eustace Diamonds*.

Forrester’s debut is not a murder mystery, but the hinge of the story is a death— from cancer—of a brilliant author of a children’s fantasy series who has not completed the final book. What if JK Rowling had left Harry Potter unfinished... or for an adult version, Diana Gabaldon doesn’t finish *Outlander*? Shudder. So for her legions of fans, who will complete Helen Longacre’s manuscript? For her publisher we’re talking \$\$\$\$. For her grieving husband, a writer of literary mysteries, it’s a paralyzing task.

But there are two crimes herein—one actual, one potential. One: MFA dropout Merritt Pryor is working in a bookstore in the small New England town anchoring the action, whose Mom by the way is a champ. Merritt is the victim of grooming by her charismatic author professor who, worse, has written a book about their affair. It's shut down her writing. Can he be held accountable? Second: Helen left direction in her will. There is a contract. Her publisher will break it rather than forego the book, so what legal strategy can be wielded to prevent this?

What this debut offers is an immersive story of storytelling, of grief, of next chapters. And of parenting: a child by Longacre, and an adult by Pryor's mother—hence my recommendation for giving a copy to Mom. It's beautifully, tenderly told, and won my heart as a reader and a mom. And a student of the book world.

* Kaufman, Lynne. [The Oxford Affair](#) (Measure Publishing \$17.95). The author is not Dorothy L. Sayers and this isn't *Gaudy Night*, but Kaufman's charming gem captures a summer session at Oxford in one of its oldest colleges where a murder must be solved perfectly. Based on the author's 35 years of running an American university's (Berkeley) summer course at Oxford for Americans – Note, I attended a session in the 1980s and can vouch for authenticity—she pens a tale of enrolling in a course called The English Detective Story (not offered in my day), college traditions (indeed the food was as terrible as Kaufman denotes), a murder and other crimes, and a gentle romance between the course director and a wealthy enrollee from Atlanta who, having made his millions in restaurants, is determined to upgrade the food to a level commensurate with the quality of the college and the classes. Kaufman gets the oath to get a Bodleian library card right as well as the rules of the Detection Club and much more.

For a mom dreaming of a summer break, this may be her only ticket to Oxford given the current upheaval to travel.

* Walsh, Rosie. [The One Day You Were My Husband](#) (Viking \$30). Here's a beautifully told story that does not go where you might expect. And along with all the surprises befalling Carrie, a brilliant surgeon, we don't lose sight of her love and care for her three-month premature twins as they grow, the boy not yet outgrowing his compromised lungs and asthma. Her husband and her mother do loving care as well. So a chunk of the narrative is about parenting.

But the heart of this emotional thriller lies in Carrie's wedding night on a beach in Thailand where, the ceremony complete, armed men rush in, arrest her groom Johan, and spirit him away. She never sees him again. While she returns to England she eventually meets and marries Robin, gets pregnant, and when the twins arrive gives up surgery to live in the English countryside with her family, supported by Robin who travels for work. Twelve years go by. And then one night by accident while looking for accommodation for a medical conference in Sweden to get her career back on track, she sees a post on-line—Johan has somehow escaped from Thailand and is living in Stockholm with a woman and child. What can, what will, Carrie do. It's shocking, stunning, and believable. I add that I may have missed any mention that she divorced Johan; perhaps she thought she was a widow.

A Starred Review adds, "With breakneck pacing, simmering romantic tension, and jaw-dropping twists, this raucously entertaining domestic thriller stands apart from the crowd.

Two New in Paperback for Mom:

Henry, Patti Callahan. [The Story She Left Behind](#) (\$19) is inspired by a true literary mystery and is 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. Read on, it's wonderful.

Kelly, Martha Hall. [Martha's Vineyard Beach and Book Club](#) (\$20). After Mari Starwood's mother dies of an aneurysm in 2016 Los Angeles, she finds the name and address of famous painter Elizabeth Devereaux among her mother's belongings. Wondering what her mother's connection was to the painter, Mari travels across the country to meet the elderly woman on Martha's Vineyard. There, Elizabeth tells Mari the story of two sisters on the island during WWII—19-year-old aspiring writer Cadence Smith and her 16-year-old sister, Briar, who is obsessed with looking for German U-boats off the New England coast. When Briar spots German U-boats lurking off the island's shores, and Cadence falls into an unlikely romance with a sworn enemy, their quiet lives are officially upended. In an attempt at normalcy, Cadence and her best friend, Bess, start a book club, which grows both in members and influence as they connect with a fabulous New York publisher who could make all of Cadence's dreams come true. But all that is put at risk by a mysterious man who washes ashore—and whispers of a spy in their midst.

Some other ideas:

Aikman, Becky. [Spitfires](#) (\$19.99). They were crop dusters and debutantes, college girls and performers in flying circuses—all of them trained as pilots. Because they were women, they were not allowed to fly for their country when the United States entered the Second World War. But Great Britain was desperate for transport pilots—even American ones and even women. Thus, in 1942, 25 daring young aviators bolted for England, becoming the first American women to command military aircraft. Those fearlessly determined female pilots are the professional forebears of the women who would slowly break down barriers in the U.S. military in the decades that followed . . . And what forebears those women were."—*The Washington Post*

Bastien, Marjolein. [Magical Nature: Coloring Pages for Relaxation and Happiness](#) (\$14.99). The craze for coloring has past but nonetheless this lovely book and its lovely sentiment will work well for Moms.

Smithsonian. [Cabinet of Curiosities II](#) (Andrews McNeal \$40). In collaboration with the Smithsonian comes a book of over 1,000 stickers showcasing incredible photographs and illustrations from the millions of captivating collections housed within the Smithsonian Institution, the world's largest museum and research complex. From Victorian anatomy illustrations to rare animals, scientific oddities to priceless antique jewelry, and everything in between, this beautifully unique book is brimming with an awe-inspired selection of stickers perfect for mindfulness and creative relaxation.

CLASSICS

Berkeley, Anthony. [Not To Be Taken](#) (Poisoned Pen \$15.99). This British Library Crime Classic from 1938 is subtitled *A Puzzle in Poisons* as it was originally serialized as a competition with a prize for the readers that could answer Berkeley's direct challenge of "who was the poisoner?" It remains one of the most fiendish exercises in subtle clue work and detection from the Golden Age of Crime.

John Waterhouse has died of some gastric complication. Exhumed at his brother's request, it transpires that he has been killed by arsenical poisoning, though nobody in the sleepy village of Anneypenny seems to have had a reason to do him ill. Rumors abound of Nazi intrigue and military skullduggery, but whatever the motive, the truth remains; this was murder.

Carr, John Dickson. [The Unexpected Instinct](#) (Crippen & Landru \$22). This new collection reveals Carr's love of historical adventure, fantasy, even satire—and of course, it includes more of his earliest mystery fiction. The reader will encounter among its sixteen selections two newly discovered works, including Carr's long-lost third Sherlock Holmes parody.

Stout, Rex. [How Like a God](#) (Hard Case Crime \$16.99). Unpublished for more than 50 years, this extraordinary novel by Rex Stout, the legendary creator of Nero Wolfe, is a psychological thriller. As William Sidney climbs the stairs, you'll dive deep into his troubled past, uncovering scandalous secrets and deceptions. And all the while, step by creeping step, holding a loaded revolver, he draws closer to a shocking act of violence...At the top of the stairs, a woman he intends to kill. But whom...?

Whitfield, Raoul. [Green Ice](#) (Stark House \$12.99) with a pulp fiction cover. Mal Ourney took the rap for Dot when she drunkenly killed someone while behind the wheel. Now he's out and Dot is the first person to show up at his release. But he wants nothing to do with her, gives her the slip, and later hears that she's been shot. Gambler "Angel" Cherulli is next to go. Then Ourney's friend Donner is killed. It's all connected. The people around Ourney are dropping like flies, and it's obvious that certain folks want something they think he has, something Dot tried to give him. By the time he figures out that there is a handful of emeralds-green ice-involved, Ourney has been threatened, sapped, framed and double-crossed. It's up to him to find the jewels before he becomes the next victim.

COZIES

* Brett, Simon. [A Disorganized Death](#) (Severn House \$29.99). Professional declutterer Ellen Curtis doesn't do house clearances. So when Tamara Nicklin, owner of a local gastropub, asks Ellen to clear her late father's house, she's not interested...even when Tamara admits that the real reason she wants to hire Ellen is to find his missing will. Then Ellen discovers Tamara's husband has plans for the house. Plans Tamara doesn't know about. And it's clear to Ellen that this is the right job for her, after all. Ellen dives in, and what she finds in the dead man's house soon makes her wonder if Tamara's father really fell down the stairs....

Cannon, Jess. [A Zoom with a View](#) (Berkley \$29). Leo can't believe she's back in Blue Oak. Her small, quirky Texas hometown feels suffocating after trying to make it big as an English professor in New York—especially due to her strained relationship with her overly hair-sprayed mother, Karina. But with Leo's career in academia in shambles, at least she's able to work as a photographer for her godmother's real estate business. And her best friend, Emily, is around to help her navigate through the mess—and maybe force her to reconnect with her old high school boyfriend, Mack. But while at work, Leo makes a grisly discovery at one of her godmother's properties: the dead body of rival real estate agent and social media influencer Chaz. Even worse, Leo and Emily have been secretly running a snarky Reddit page making fun of Chaz's cringe-inducing advice and duck-faced selfies. When someone she loves is accused of the murder, Leo finds herself flung headfirst into a dangerous investigation, teaming up with a local detective who is a lot more attractive than she remembered when they were both teenagers!

Davis, Krista. [The Diva Hosts a Murderer](#) (Kensington \$27). Old Town Virginia's entertaining guru and occasional sleuth Sophie Winston – a young Martha Stewart in the making – juggles Fourth of July fireworks, a houseful of guests, and homicide in the latest Domestic Diva culinary mystery. New in paperback: [The Diva Poaches a Bad Egg](#) (\$18.95)

Dutra, Carmela. [Hot Wings and Homicide](#) (Crooked Lane \$29.99). Business at Kluckin' Good is smoking hot. To keep momentum going, Beth and her twin brother, Seth, just scored a prime spot at the Flavors of the Bay Food Festival. For three and a half days, food lovers will flock to the Bay Area's biggest culinary event to enjoy gourmet food trucks, cook-offs, and live music, but this recipe for success is also the perfect setup for murder. When the infamous food critic Brad Dawson—also Beth's ex—turns up dead, the only clue at the scene of the crime is a Kluckin' Good tumbler mug. The timing couldn't be worse. Beth and Brad were seen in a heated altercation, and days prior, witnesses saw Seth punch Brad. Suspicion naturally falls on the twins. With the cops hot on their trail, Beth will have to avoid the flames to clear their names and save her food truck's reputation.

Fletcher, Jessica/Barbara Early. [Murder, She Wrote: Murder Most Trivial](#) (Berkley \$30). Jessica Fletcher and friends Seth Hazlitt and Maureen and Mort Metzger team up for pub trivia and crush the competition, then are stunned to learn that the prize is a chance to appear in a five-day trivia tournament filming in LA. No one expects life-or-death stakes! But on day one of the tournament, a crew member is murdered. Who would benefit from derailing the show? Jessica has to come up with the ultimate answer.

Floriani, Carol. [Invitation to Murder](#) (Crooked Lane \$29.99). After inheriting her mother's printing and party-planning business, Lacey Langdon moves back to her sleepy hometown of Willow Bluffs, perched on New Jersey's Palisades. When her great-aunt, Tessa Langdon Vander Horn, a well-known and beloved soap opera star, sells her nineteenth-century estate and donates ten acres to the development of a community park, Lacey's new venture is put at the helm of the opening ceremony. Then the police crash it with news of a body at the foot of the estate's bluff. Partnering with her former classmate, lawyer Derek Conover, Lacey digs into why a town councilman has been murdered, unearthing old family secrets and modern evildoings. Floriani's debut makes the most of the small town and the sale of an historic estate.

Gray, Kit. [The Black Cat Detectives](#) (Crooked Lane \$29.99). John reviews: "Precocious kittens Bippity, Boppity, and Boop are exceedingly loyal to their human, the twenty-eight-year-old up-and-coming magician Mila. She saved them from starving to death in a dingy Corvin's Crossing alleyway and has been nothing but loving ever since, even though her own life is in shambles. So when Mila's sketchy boyfriend and business manager turns up dead at the end of her big magic show—she's the prime suspect. With evidence mounting, there's nothing stopping the sheriff from hauling away Mila to the human pound. Unless the kittens can solve the crime and clear her name. A cozy debut and the start to what hopefully will be a charming new series!"

Gerber, Daryl Wood. [Murder in a Lavender Daze](#) (Kensington \$18.95). With its soothing décor and tempting treatments, customers are flocking to Emma Brennan's Aroma Wellness Spa and Gift Shop in Camel-by-the-Sea for more than just facials and massages. Lately, Emma has been booking private events, from spa parties to bridal showers and birthdays. Next on her calendar is something really unique: A "Happily Divorced" party. After eight years of marriage, Addison Lacey is divorcing her husband, whom she claims convinced her he was Mr. Nice Guy when he was really Mr. Controlling Guy. To kick off her journey toward becoming a better version of herself, Addison wants to celebrate, big-time. Her wealthy mother, Gianna, a former model turned difficult diva, is footing the bill.... But when Emma goes to Gianna's home to pick up the final payment, she and Addison find her dead in her bed amid the aroma of lavender, with an herbal-infused pillow from the party nearby. Which makes Addison a key suspect....

Haines, Carolyn. [Ode to the Bones](#) (St Martins \$28). Private investigator Sarah Booth Delaney returns to her Mississippi Delta roots, hoping that long drives through cotton fields and the companionship of her dogs will ease her restless spirit. Instead, she's confronted by a ghostly vision of a woman in white on the Tallahatchie Bridge, who disappears before Sarah Booth can investigate further. When the local bank president hires her to find a missing farmer, Danny Anderson, Sarah Booth is forced to shift her focus back to the land of the—hopefully—still living. Danny is about to lose his family's generational farm to foreclosure and is rumored to be entangled in a secret affair with a preacher's wife. As Sarah Booth and her feisty partner Tinkie dig deeper, they uncover a web of gossip, ghost sightings, and a shadowy land buyer snapping up vulnerable farms.

Hollis, Lee. [The Chowder House Murder](#) (Kensington \$27). The first in a brand new, multi-generational cozy mystery series introduces three generations of strong, no-nonsense women who head the Holbrook family seafood dynasty in Downeast Maine... and a murder the Holbrook matriarch and her granddaughter must solve, even as it entangles them in a web of small-town secrets, and a Hatfields and McCoys-level chowder rivalry.

Jalaluddin, Uzma. [Moonlight Murder](#) (Harper \$18.99). When Kausar Khan moved back to Toronto to be closer to her family, she didn't expect to have another murder investigation on her hands so soon—or really *ever*. But when a young man named Qasim is found dead in their Golden Crescent neighborhood, and when she learns he was close to her granddaughter, Maleeha, what's a grandmother to do but try and solve the case? And it's not just her heartbroken granddaughter spurring Kausar to find answers; it's also how the circumstances of Qasim's death remind her of her own teenage son, Ali, and his mysterious death nearly twenty years before. Start this fine series with [Detective Aunty](#) (\$17.99).

Karst, Leslie. [Murder, Local Style](#) (Severn House \$29.99). Retired caterer Valerie Corbin and her wife Kristen are finally settling into life on the Big Island of Hawai'i. Val's even joined the neighborhood orchid society to make some new friends. She says yes when she's asked to step in to cater their latest social event. But what should have been a straightforward gig is soon a dining disaster when the food from the event poisons and kills the society president. As Val herself becomes a suspect, she learns there is a long list of others who might have dunnit.

Lumley, Sam. [Coastal Views to Die for](#) (Kensington \$27). Though sparks flew between travel writer Oliver Popp and extroverted photographer Ricky Warner on their last assignment together, when they're teamed up again for a road trip, they agree to keep things low-key. But that's a little at odds with Oliver's new assignment: finding romance on the Oregon coast. The destination is a picturesque inn overlooking the Pacific. With the crashing waves below, it seems like an ideal spot for dramatic love connections. Curiously, the other guests are innkeeper Mary Alice's large extended family, headed by a fabulously wealthy aunt, with various children, in-laws, husbands and wives, all vying to stay in her good graces...and her will. Then on the first night, settling into their room, Oliver and Ricky make an unsettling discovery: a dead man in their hot tub—one of Mary Alice's tragically unlucky relatives who, from the looks of it, dropped in from the balcony above. The sheriff concludes it was an accident. Considering the circumstances of this odd family reunion, Oliver and Ricky have doubts....

MacRae, Molly. [There'll Be Shell to Pay](#) (Kensington \$18.95) is the first in a charming new series set on a beautiful barrier island off the coast of North Carolina and featuring a widowed folklorist, a seashell shop, and the ghost of an 18th century pirate.

O'Connor, Carlene. [Murder in an Irish Pub](#) (\$18.95) is the new large paperback edition of the 4th in the Irish Village Mystery Series. When competing card sharps stir up Siobhán O'Sullivan's quiet Irish village, a poker tournament turns into a game of Hangman...

* Penney, Elizabeth. [Dungeons and Danger](#) (St Martins \$9.99) is the second in Elizabeth Penney's Ravensea Castle cozy mystery

series set in a haunted castle-turned-B&B in Yorkshire. As Halloween approaches, Ravensea Castle is bustling with excitement as Nora Asquith welcomes guests to her family's newly converted bed and breakfast. A historian studying the movements of the Vikings has traced their exploits to Ravensea. A certain Viking woman, known as the Red Maiden, landed here and the historian believes she buried a treasure hoard before the castle was built. He is hopeful he can find the hoard now. Nora can't help but wonder if the enigmatic castle ghost she's always referred to as the woman in red could be this very Viking? Meanwhile, a team of four ghost hunters is coming to stay at Ravensea for the filming of Britain's Got Ghosts. It proves to be a combustible mix. Start with [Bodies and Battlements](#) (\$9.99).

Postel-Vinay, Danielle. [A Murder Most Delicious](#) (Harper \$30). Wine. Food. Paris. Irresistible, non? And so it becomes our **June Cozy Crimes Pick**. It all begins when American sommelier Olivia Beech, her famous taste destroyed by Covid along with her career as a newly anointed Master Sommelier, accepts a job interview in Paris from celebrity chef Jacques de Bizet. Adrift and depressed she accepts, only to arrive for the interview where Jacques collapses. Poison—and Olivia is the prime suspect! *Quelle horreur*. The [paperback edition](#) is one of our May Paperback Picks as shown below.

PUZZLERS

Moore, Gareth. [The Murder Mystery Club Puzzle Book](#) (Andrews McMeel \$14.99). What fun. The first in a series of puzzle books for those enjoying *Murdle*, *Clue*, and similar challenges. This one teases you with 70 classic murder mystery games in a convenient travel-sized puzzle book!

Or try this hard-hitting companion to Countryman Press's cozy [Whodunit Puzzles](#) (\$14.99) challenging you with 10 cozy crimes.

Feeling darker rather than cozy? Try Moore's [Private Investigator Case Files](#) (Countryman Press \$15.99). In the dark and gritty criminal underworld, puzzling questions need clearheaded answers for 90 investigations. You must analyze each crime scene, identify suspects, question shady characters, and solve the cases in this diabolically delightful collection of brainteasers. Test your wits and prove your mettle against all kinds of puzzles, from cryptograms, hanjie, and logic riddles to number searches, spot-the-difference, and Sudoku. If you've pored over your notes, done all the dirty work that you can, and exhausted every bit of your cunning and intellect, you'll find the answers hidden safely in the puzzle key. But the stakes are high:

WESTERN CRIMES

All proceeds benefit the U.S. Marshals Survivors Benefit Fund, supporting the families of those who gave everything in the line of duty.

[Rough Country](#) (Hat Creek \$16.99). In collection No. 1, this outlaw collection of Western crime fiction brings together hard men, hard choices in new stories by Craig Johnson, Reavis Z. Wortham, John Gilstrap, Kathleen O'Neal Gear, Joe R. Lansdale, and Marc Cameron. Readers will discover a brand-new Walt Longmire story, a hard-edged Arliss Cutter tale, and a gripping Tom Bell adventure, alongside standout work from voices shaping the future of Western crime fiction. Included are established and rising voices like Anthony Wood, James Wade, Jack Stewart, Betsy Randolph, Harry Hunsicker, DP Lyle, Tracy Daugherty, and Matthew V. Clemens.

[Hard Country](#) (Hat Creek \$16.99). In collection No. 2, you get authors C.J. Box, Jonathan Maberry, Jeffery Deaver, Heather Graham, W. Michael Gear, a brand-new Joe Ledger story from Maberry, a sharp-turn Ty Dawson case from Baron Birtcher, and a thrilling Conor Armenta adventure from Jefferson Glass. Plus Johnny Boggs, Larry D. Sweazy, Phillip Thompson, J.B. Stevens, Paul Colt, Phil Mills, Jr., W. Michael Farmer, Mike Blakely, Rik "Yonder" Goodell, and more—each delivering fast-paced, high-stakes stories set in landscapes that feel carved from iron and the same unforgiving edge that makes Western crime so unforgettable.

THE 2026 EDGAR WINNERS (books published in 2025 so now in paperback)

Crais, Robert. [The Big Empty](#) (\$19), winner of the Best Novel Edgar

Kerr, Jakob. [Dead Money](#) (\$18), a 2025 First Mystery Club Pick and winner for Best First Novel by an American Author

Wakefield, Vikki. [The Backwater](#) (Poisoned Pen Press \$17.99), winner of the Best Paperback Original Edgar

Note: Robert and I sold Poisoned Pen Press to Sourcebooks in 2018

Fraser, Caroline. [Murderland](#) (\$21), winner of the best Fact Crime Edgar

NEW IN HARDCOVER

A note here: while all of our Signed books are first printings, we cannot guarantee that some of the unsigned hardcovers we recommend have not moved into reprints or will shortly.

Armstrong, Kelley. [An Ordinary Sort of Evil](#) (St Martins \$29). Armstrong shifts from the Yukon to Victorian Edinburgh in her Rip Through Time series blending a modern day homicide detective Mallory with a new life working with forensics pioneer Dr. Duncan Gray and Detective Hugh McCreadle. Late one night she and Gray are summoned to the home of Lady Adler, a patron of his undertaking business, where Lady Adler's maid is missing. Has she been murdered? Or is the medium holding a séance with the maid's ghost for real? Or a fraud? Armstrong backs up her premise with a detailed portrait of the Scottish city of 150 years ago.

Cantor, Jillian. [The May House](#) (Atria \$29). Three adult sisters inherit a beach house on San Diego's Coronado island from their grandmother on the condition they return every May to spend one week together. And so they do. Then one year Julia, the oldest and most dependable sister, doesn't show. And suddenly Nora and Emily start to question how much they truly know about their sister's life. Told in alternating points of view, spanning from their time together with Grandma Vera as kids into their adult lives, *The May House* explores how a decades—long family secret has unknowingly shaped each sister and, ultimately, how it brings them closer together. It's "The quintessential beach read—women talking, shocking secrets, and a really hot guy." —*Kirkus Reviews*

Crichton, Michael, writing as John Lange. [A Murder in Hollywood](#) (Blackstone \$29.99). While in medical school Dr. Crichton adopted a pen name or two—he won an Edgar for Best Novel in 1969 for *A Case of Need* written as Jeffery Hudson. Blackstone has brought back some of his other early work like this one from 1973 that has never before been published..

In an era when sex and drugs were readily available on any movie set, the perpetually drunk screenwriter writer of the next Western blockbuster, *Bloodrock*, has just been found dead in his Tucson motel bathtub. Now publicist Harvey Jason is desperately trying to keep the project on track while the famed investigator Harlow Perkins, a brilliant and ruthless insurance investigator, suspecting foul play begins to unravel the mystery and hunt the killer down. From scorching-hot desert locations to sleazy motel bars, the members of the cast and crew—each one with a very dark secret of their own—will send this case deeper and deeper before answers are found.

Dinniman, Matt. [A Parade of Horribles](#) (Ace \$32). “Coming in off the back of a complex and scope-changing Book 7 in the Dungeon Crawler Carl universe, this Book 8 reminds readers of the horrible truth of the Dungeon: for all of their drive and cleverness, Carl and Princess Donut are still just a man and his talking cat trapped in an AI-controlled game that is trying to kill them. This interesting shift in scope and pacing reminds readers of the players’ predicament.”

Dunne, Thomas. [Murders and Acquisitions](#) (Blackstone \$29.99). What a terrific and grand scale concept powers this satirical thriller centered on a wealthy family’s power plays including its publishing division following the death of their patriarch, a banker/crime boss. Think the Rothschilds’ generations in high finance crossed with a clan boss patterned after the Mafia. And penned by legendary publisher Dunne in his retirement, a man who knows publishing inside out.

The passing of 95-year-old Werther Maybach Meyer, CEO of media conglomerate Omnium and a “powerful and respected figure in finance, real estate, publishing, and white-collar crime,” dominates headlines. Though Werther’s dealings have set up his surviving family for at least another century, his death stirs up mischief. Despicable Randy Littlewood feels good about his decision to seduce and marry Werther’s granddaughter, Greta Meyer, when she walks away with the biggest share of Omnium. He plans to use Greta’s newfound leverage to catapult himself up the ladder of Manhattan society and take over the company. Greta’s poor cousin, Betty Maybach, who served as Werther’s secretary before his death, opposes Randy’s schemes, but she starts to rethink her relationship to her dead grandfather when she makes some disturbing discoveries in his files. Dunne casts a wide net, complementing the clash between Betty and Randy with the mysterious deaths of several Maybachs across the globe, but he maintains masterful control of the book’s complex plot and tongue-in-cheek tone. What a delight. Recommended now for Father’s Day gifting.

Elan, Portia. [Homebound](#) (Scribner \$28). It’s 1983 and Becks can’t wait to get the hell out of Cincinnati. She’s nineteen, blasting her Walkman, and hiding from the fact that her beloved uncle, the only person who understood her, is dead. But she has work to do: he left her a half—finished game to complete—one last collaboration to find her way out of loneliness. Little does she know that what she is making will echo far into the future and shape the lives of a scientist, a sentient automaton, and a flinty sea captain in ways she cannot imagine. All are bound together by their search for connection—and by a futuristic traveler on a mysterious mission through space.

The Indie Next Pick: “Like all great sci-fi novels do, *Homebound* blends the anxieties around new technology, like

AI, with stirring themes of belonging and hope. This remarkable debut is a perfect read for fans of Becky Chambers and Amal El-Mohtar.”

* Garman, Emma. [The Kindness of Strangers](#) (Summit Books \$28) is a debut set in London, 1953. Jimmy Sullivan lies dying on the drawing room floor while his housemates look on, their lives about to change fore. Deb reviews: It “starts with a classic twist: one of the main characters lies dying, gazing up at a circle of people strangely unmoved by his passing and all involved with his demise. Using the classic flashback technique, Emma Garman slowly reveals the web of deceptions and power plays among the inhabitants of a boarding house that led to poor Jimmy’s demise. The reader jumps from character to character, certain each has done the deed, until they are convinced none of them did. If you love a twisty, period mystery, filled with characters who love, lust, and have dubious morals, this one is for you.”

Hakoda, Kerri. [Cold Case on the Yukon](#) (Crooked Lane \$29.99). For fans of Marc Cameron and Dana Stabenow, Detective DeHavilland Beans is the ticket. He’s back in his Yukon River hometown where a missing person case is active. Beans is on leave from a shooting but he can’t turn down helping his childhood friend and the village’s only police officer Felicia Gunnerson. Was the missing Lloyd Paul from a prominent local family murdered? Answers lie in a time frame spanning WWII to the present day and all the way to San Francisco.

* Hall, Lori Inglis. [The Shock of the Light](#) (Viking \$30). Here’s another fine debut we cannot offer Signed as the author is British. “Hall merges the familiar high-stakes drama of World War II fiction with a less familiar sort of personal drama, turning heroic conventions inside out. Fittingly, her central characters are fraternal twins, the children of a pacifist British don, whose fates will irrevocably diverge when they volunteer to serve their country. Theo Armstrong becomes a pilot in the Royal Air Force while his sister, Tessa, is recruited for a clandestine special ops mission behind enemy lines in France. Theo — although scarred by “the pain, the deaths, the absence of hope” — will return to an agonizingly created semblance of normal life. But Tessa, whose exploits will have readers racing through the first half of the novel, disappears into the void. Despite Theo’s postwar detective work, only the outlines of her final days survive, buried amid rumors of traitorous activity. Why were Tessa’s messages from the field ignored? Why was she held so long by the Germans in Paris, only to die in a concentration camp? Was she betrayed or was she “your rat,” as one man angrily tells Theo, “as guilty of murder as any Nazi”? It’s only decades later, when a young doctoral student’s curiosity is piqued by Tessa’s scant personnel file, that the truth emerges. And with it, a much more intimate secret is laid bare.”—*NY Times*

Hanssen, Tiffany. [My Name Was Gerry Sass](#) (Grove \$27). From its opening pages, public radio host Hanssen’s knockout debut, which orbits around the death of a genteel hit man in the 1980s Midwest, hums with suppressed menace. I will investigate Signed copies, but for now....

Contract killer Gerry Sass lives a quiet life in Mystic, Iowa, with his teenage daughter Early, taking occasional hit jobs from the Chicago mob and laundering the proceeds through the local country music station he owns. That fragile equilibrium shatters when one morning in 1986, two men kidnap Gerry and

kill him in the woods, a murder witnessed by his close friend, Father Dan, a milquetoast Catholic priest who survives the encounter by staying hidden. Fearing her deadbeat mother may be the men's next target, an ill-equipped but relentless Early takes off in Gerry's prized Mustang, hell bent on tracking down the killers and avenging her father's death. Meanwhile, Father Dan's guilt over failing to intervene sparks a reckoning with his lapsed faith and his family's ties to organized crime while the local sheriff attempts to piece together the truth behind Gerry's murder. Fast, funny, and emotionally complex, Hanssen's thriller suggests that guilt and family trauma will catch up to even the craftiest evaders. It's an auspicious first outing

* Harrod-Eagles, Cynthia. [Deadly Force](#) (Severn House \$29.99). Police procedurals are not "in" right now but I find this long, long running series by the prolific and polished Harrod-Eagles deeply satisfying for both the tricky plots and the deeply human coppers who combine patient procedure with intuition to crack their cases. It's refreshing also that DCI Bill Slider, the principal cop, has been happily married to violinist Joanna now for quite a while and his team is a congenial one sparing us angst, drugs, etc. What gets them going here on a city-wide manhunt is when the body of a police officer is found dumped in a London canal. PC Bentley was a quiet bloke but he must have had secrets or something from his past that rose up to bite him. Or he crossed some powerful local. You also get really good tours around London with this series, here out west not far from Heathrow in a lot of open space near a major prison

Another of my favorites in this genre is by author Damien Boyd, a lawyer who brings Avon/Somerset policing to life. He's started a new series set in 1985 with DI Bob Willis called [Deceived by the Light](#) (\$16.99), a serial killer chase. The sequel, [Blast from the Past](#) (\$16.99), moves to 1986 wherein a small boy riding on the last run of an excursion train in 1962 went missing, eventually found dehydrated and starved to death as a captive in an underground bunker. There's no motive, no suspect, which means that Bob, head of the new Cold Case Unit after an operation went terribly wrong, killed his partner, and shattered him, has little to go on but reinterviewing all the original train crew and passengers. But the killer has been waiting for the case to reopen!

* Kemp, LM. [I, Spy](#) (St Martins \$29). This debut is a cracker-jack look at the kind of off-the-books ops agencies that thriller writers love. A former spy, Kendal Carter's been hiding out ever since her cover was blown and her lover was killed. But now her former colleagues have tracked her down and have asked her to complete one more mission—it's never one, is it? She doesn't feel like she has a choice, but how exactly is she going to do this with four-year-old daughter Rosie in tow? Worse, when Rico lures her back into his private spy agency with a cushy assignment to target London's biggest tech firms, using being a mother as cover, it isn't long before Kendal discovers the worst firm has ties to Rosie's exclusive private school. This propulsive yet elegantly written debut (with a plot hole or two) looks inside the shadow world of private spies and counter-measures. But what makes it stand out for me is that London is a main character. Kemp clearly knows the city inside out and takes you along as she dodges and weaves through it. Because London is a star in the story this is our **June British Crime Club Pick**.

Lerner, Ben. [Transcription](#) (Dutton \$25). "The narrator of Ben Lerner's new novel has traveled to Providence, Rhode Island, where he is to conduct what will be the final published interview with Thomas, his ninety-year-old mentor and the father of his college friend Max. Thomas is a giant in the arts who seems to hail "from the future and the past simultaneously" and who "reenchants the air" when he speaks. But the narrator drops his smartphone in the hotel sink. He arrives at Thomas's house with no recording device, a fact he is mysteriously unable to confess. What unfolds from this dreamlike circumstance is the unforgettable story of the triangle formed by Thomas, Max, and the narrator, and an exploration of fathers and sons, male friendship and rivalry, and the challenges of parenting in a burning world. One of the first great novels about the early days of COVID, it is also a brilliant meditation on those technologies that enrich or impoverish our connection to one another, that store or obliterate memory."

* Mackay, Asia. [Self Help for Serial Killers](#) (Random House \$31). Homework. Housework. Homicide. You can do it all! True in [A Serial Killer's Guide to Marriage](#) (\$19) and now once again. Hazel and Fox have it all: two children, a beautiful home, and a late-night habit of eliminating people who deserve it. Yet work-life balance is hard when you want to kill bad men but raise good kids. With a school mum tyrant on Haze's case, and Fox struggling with performance anxiety after a botched kill, things are spiraling. Therapy isn't helping, and bullet journaling has taken on a whole new meaning....But when they accidentally draw a dangerous group to their doorstep, the couple must pull it together—and fast.

* McAllister, Gillian. [Caller Unknown](#) (Harper \$30) is the No. 1 Library Reads Pick for May. Our signed copies all sold out on preorders. You can see why. "Chef Simone comes to Texas from the U.K. to visit her aspiring actress daughter, Lucy. Lucy is kidnapped, and the perpetrators force Simone into trafficking drugs into Mexico for Lucy's safe return. When a confrontation goes wrong, Lucy and Simone are reunited, but are suddenly on the run from the law. The story is breathtaking, and readers will constantly be on edge, wondering if and when the pair will be caught—and what the consequences will be." This is indeed a story about a mother going her full length for her daughter, and in rural Texas and beyond, but Simone has an unusually supportive marriage with Lucy's father Damien, co-owner of their restaurant, and that adds weight, and pleasure, to this new bestseller by Gilly too.

Moore, Rachel. [Safari Murder Party](#) (Penguin \$30). Fletcher Spence is dying for a promotion. And her colleagues are more than happy to oblige. After three years working seventy-hour weeks as assistant to the most terrifying CEO in the magazine world, Fletcher finally finagled a spot on Cartwright Media's annual corporate retreat—a famously luxurious week on the Cartwrights' private island, where promotions are handed out like party favors. And her plan to snag her dream job as a travel magazine photographer was going great...until her boss's dramatic death reveals his last will and testament: Whoever survives the week will inherit the company. So now she's stuck on her billionaire boss's safari park island, surrounded by wild animals and on the run from coworkers who've swapped coffee cups for machetes and briefcases for hunting rifles. To Fletcher's dismay,

her only ally might be her boss's insufferably gorgeous son, Waylon Cartwright. Despite their hostile history, Fletcher is at least 80 percent sure he won't try to kill her this week. Really?

Parks, Alan. [Gunner](#) (Pegasus \$27.95). Set in Glasgow in March, 1942, this brutal story is not for the faint-hearted although it's likely accurate for this city and time period. Former police officer Joseph Gunner is back after being severely wounded at Dunkirk, with nowhere to live and no prospects and a wee morphine habit. He resists when his old boss Drummond pressures him into working the murder of a body found in the flaming wreckage of a German attack—a murdered man concealed among the bombing victims. Gunner has a conscientious objector and communist brother Victor to protect as he lurches along in an investigation constantly thrown off course. Indeed there is a brilliant plot afoot which readers of Ben McIntyre's wartime nonfiction will appreciate. And a sequel called [Deception](#) (\$27.95) will carry it on in September.

Patterson, James. [26 Beauties: A Women's Murder Club](#) (Little Brown \$32) and [Rocket's Red Glare](#) (Little Brown \$30). Two new thrillers.

Perrotta, Tom. [Ghost Town](#) (Scribner \$28). Accomplished novelist Jimmy Perrini looks back on his youth in bucolic Creamwood, N.J., after receiving an invitation to a building dedication ceremony in his father's name. He still hasn't fully processed the tragic summer of 1974, when, at 13, an unexpected death shook him to his core and left his family unmoored (the details come out late in the novel). Left with "an endless bad dream," Jimmy stumbled through the rest of his boyhood, which took another dark turn after he struck up a volatile friendship with Eddie, an older boy who smoked weed and drove a Chevy Vega with racing stripes, and Olivia, a high school valedictorian who introduced him to the mysterious magic of a Ouija board. The story lines run parallel as Jimmy's present-day indifference about returning to Creamwood collides with intense memories of that fateful summer.

Phillips, Gin. [Ruby Falls](#) (Grove \$28) takes place in the caves that still attract tourists to Lookout Mountain, Tennessee. But Phillips sets the action back in the Depression-ravaged early 1930s, when the Ruby Falls tour operator tries a desperate publicity stunt to keep his business afloat: A professional mind reader will lead a small group of witnesses into the miles of passages beneath the falls to locate a hidden hatpin using only his "psychic energy." Unfortunately, one member of the party won't emerge from the clammy, labyrinthine depths. And it's certain this death in the dark wasn't accidental: The murder weapon is a stalactite rammed "right through the Adam's apple." Although Phillips's publisher is billing this as a twist on the locked-room mystery, it's also a clever exploration of the aboveground insecurities that infect these justifiably paranoid spelunkers, who can't escape the fact that "the whole world is a row of dominoes." Survival will require a delicate mix of trust and wariness, not to mention an ability to navigate a torturous route back to the surface. This is not a novel for the claustrophobic.

Pliego, Ande. [The Library After Dark](#) (Random House \$30). Ande Pliego has constructed a bibliophile's haunted house, crawling with secrets. I love the private library Pliego imagines. I had a bit of trouble following the plot.

Aria Stokes is finally feeling settled—she lives in a tiny New York apartment, works as a bookseller at a local shop, and

has even taken a leap of faith in love by indulging her attraction to bookstore regular Jasper. And he seems to already know her so well. As a Valentine's Day surprise, Jasper gets the two of them tickets to an exclusive, after-dark tour of the Daedalus Library—the grandiose establishment famed for its immersive genre-based reading rooms and, more notoriously, its rumored hauntings. While Aria normally loves all things ghastly, this place holds more dark secrets than she'd prefer Jasper to know. Like that the last time she was here, she left a body behind. But when the automatic-door entry malfunctions and Aria, Jasper, and the five other people in their tour group become trapped in the library, they are forced to venture through the storied rooms and hidden passageways of the Daedalus in search of escape . . . and Aria quite literally has nowhere to hide from the shadows of her past. Then the group learns there's a murderer in their midst. Now, as she tries to break out of the library's intricate reading rooms, Aria has to decide who she can trust—and what secrets are best kept buried....

Pressfield, Steven. [The Arcadian](#) (Norton \$29.99). A time-traveling soldier, Telamon, condemned forever to be a mercenary, finds himself in 16th Century Spain where he's drawn into conflict between the Andalusian defenders and invading Portuguese. Our friend David McCloskey, author of *The Persian* and more, calls this a masterful historical epic, intertwining gripping action with profound philosophical reflection on humankind's eternal dance with war, death, hope, and love. Steven Pressfield once again showcases his unparalleled skill at bringing the past to life and giving it meaning in the present. This is a beautiful, moving, and magical story that is also savage and raw. Absolutely not to be missed."

Raphael, Eli. [Night Objects](#) (Grand Central \$29). A debut that Liz Moore calls, "Part mystery, part coming-of-age tale" will keep readers guessing all the way through, but it's the book's emotional center—a daughter in deep mourning for her late mother—that elevates this novel into something truly memorable." There is much to recommend it including the Washington State coastal landscape, but the very slow burn may make you impatient.

Lenny Winter is fifteen years-old when she moves with her mom and stepfather to an aging houseboat in Port Angeles, Washington. She imagines a quiet life spent charting constellations and chasing her dream of becoming an astronomer. Instead, a sudden tragedy shatters her world and catapults her to Blanchard, a renowned boarding school for the Pacific Northwest's elite, where wealth and tradition rule. Blanchard is dazzling, insular—and haunted by its own legends. At its heart lurks the Pascalianum Club, a secret society known to shape the school's greatest and most notorious students, and whose influence stretches far beyond campus walls. Hungry to belong, Lenny is drawn into its orbit, even as she senses that the club feeds on the very vulnerabilities she is desperate to hide. As privilege collides with grief and loyalty warps into obsession, Lenny's choices will lead to an unforgettable reckoning—and a murder investigation that will test every story she tells herself: "It is true that I wished him dead dozens of times. Hundreds, even. But I, Lenny Winter, did not kill that boy." It's a big book, Dark Academic in part, peering into the lives of teenagers desperate to belong.

Ranelli, Alessandra. [Murder at the Hotel Orient](#) (Gallery Books \$30). For fans of *The Maid* and *The Grand Budapest Hotel* comes this atmospheric and sexy debut mystery by an American living

in Vienna and inspired by a real love hotel, which legend claims has existed forever, luring lovers inside for a night of debauchery. In modern Vienna, the infamous Hotel Orient glitters at the heart of the city, luring lovers inside for an evening of debauchery. Behind its velvet curtain, cameras are forbidden, aliases are required, and every guest has something to hide. For those seeking illicit liaisons, Sterling Lockwood is the perfect concierge. Sultry and poised, she's the ultimate keeper of secrets, including her own. But when dawn breaks and two of the anonymous guests are found dead in their suite, Sterling must break the Orient's sacred code of discretion, turning detective to find a killer and clear her own name.). "Sultry, sinister and smart. Sterling Lockwood is going to steal your heart—just don't trust her with it."—Stuart Turton

Roth, Veronica. [Seek the Traitor's Son](#) (Tor Books \$29.99). "A stunning science fantasy novel with a virus that can kill or give superpowers, world-altering prophecies, mysterious aliens, secret dads, surprise romance, and a whole lot of trauma. If you're looking for a chunky book with high stakes, great characters, and a propulsive plot, you're in the right place."

Semple, Maria. [Go Gentle](#) (Penguin \$30). I can state that this is one of the most original voices and stories that I have read in... make that years. No surprise from an author known as a Chaos Agent with a sparkling wit. I love the sharp often snarky humor and dialogue, the vivid portraits of characters and situations I've not encountered before, and a plot about an injury so catastrophic as to upend lives and a path forward offered by our principal point of view narrator Ari who's versed in ethics and the Stoic philosophy. Then comes the dazzling heist involving the Louvre and iconic art and the motives behind it. Plus how great is the idea of a collective formed inside the Ansonia, a landmark NY residential building, where cooperative living offers lifestyles beyond what individual women, and in time maybe a man or two, could afford. You really have to read the novel to embrace the whole. It's a pleasure to read something truly different yet relevant.

Shaffer, Meg. [The Book Witch](#) (Random House \$30). This is a delight for many reasons including a nod to Harry Dresden, Chicago Wizard, and a deep dive into the Nancy Drew world. Plus loads of other story worlds.

Rainy March is a third-generation Book Witch and a proud member of the Ink and Paper Coven. "I'm a Book Witch. I'm here to set the story straight." When Rainy's archenemy X dives into her favorite mystery series with the intent of ruining their storylines forever, Rainy goes after him to protect the page as written. Once the story is set back to rights, Rainy is bound by coven rules to jump back into her world through the portal of her black umbrella (Mary Poppins, hello)—without Duke, the fictional Chicago detective she's fallen for. Rainy tells her readers, "All stories are love stories if you love stories," and any reader worth their salt knows even banned magical interdimensional literary travel is no barrier to true romance. Rainy and Duke find ways to be together again, but their ability to bend and ultimately break key coven rules sends them into a world-jumping, story-hopping romp in which it becomes increasingly unclear whether they are in a romance, a horror, a mystery—or all of the above. And they take you with them. *The Book Witch* is genre bending, clever, and chock-full of nods to tropes, story arcs, and beloved classics. It's a delight.

Sherwood, Kim. [Hurricane Room: James Bond Is Alive](#) (Harper \$30). But barely, after mental and physical torture at the hands of Colonel Mora, the diabolical head of private military company Rattenfänger, Has the unbreakable agent finally been broken? Or is MI6's most lethal spy simply waiting for the right moment to exact revenge? Johanna Harwood, 003, has made it her mission to convince him to trust her again, because MI6 needs their deadliest weapon now more than ever. The Double O division is barely holding on. Conrad Harthrop-Vane, 000, has turned traitor. He has been systematically taking out his fellow agents right under the noses of those in power, and now he has abducted Moneypenny. To make matters worse, he may have had help from inside the organization. Joseph Dryden, 004, is left to hold down the fort in Moneypenny's absence, but enemies are closing in on all sides. Rattenfänger is planning a cyber attack on an unimaginable scale—one that would sever the internet, leaving the Western world at Mora's mercy. It's up to Bond, the rest of the Double O's, and a few other trusted allies to stop this in the conclusion to Sherwood's Double O Trilogy.

* Sullivan, Tim. [The Teacher: A DS George Cross Mystery](#) (Grove \$27). Great news! Sullivan is coming to The Pen on August 25. This is DS George Cross's 6th case releasing in a crash program to get many of this neurodivergent cop's work to you.

Cross is of course one to double check his work so when an elderly schoolteacher living in a village in Somerset is found dead at home, Cross rejects the idea of a fall down the stairs. And he is proved right when the stab wound is discovered. The victim, the reclusive Alistair Moreton, appeared to have someone else in his home in the weeks before his murder although he refused to let anyone in to check on him. So, who decided to teach Alistair a lesson? [Paperback edition](#) (\$17). Note that Damien Boyd, mentioned above, also writes of the Avon and Somerset police.

Strout, Elizabeth. [The Things We Never Say](#) (Random House \$29). The Indie Next Pick: "Another perceptive character study from Elizabeth Strout, this time centered around a Massachusetts high school history teacher who presents an amiable face to the world but is riddled with self-doubt and pessimism."

* Walsh, Rosie. [The One Day You Were My Husband](#) (Viking \$30). A wonderful book on so many levels. While it is fundamentally British the landscapes of the story involve Thailand and Sweden. See my Mother's Day Top Recommended Reads above for this excellent, very surprising, crime novel.

Wells, Martha. [Platform Decay](#) (Tor Books \$24.99). The Murderbot Diaries #8. "Martha Wells always delivers. Getting to meet Three as it comes into itself and watching Murderbot wrestle with its humanity is just a magical ride through what is, essentially, a living nightmare for them."

SOME NOTABLE NONFICTION

Bloom, Harold. [The Man Who Read Everything](#) (Yale University Press \$30). Bringing together a collection of Harold Bloom's letters to and from eight of his favorite contemporary writers, Heather Cass White provides an intimate view of one of the most famous literary critics of the last century. In correspondence with Alvin Feinman, Northrop Frye, A. R. Ammons, John Hollander, James Merrill, John Ashbery, Henri Cole, and Ursula K. Le Guin, we see Bloom developing his groundbreaking theory of poetic influence, transforming himself into a public intellectual, and reckoning with the meaning of his own legacy. While Bloom's

public persona was oracular, sure, and often combative, his letters are inquiring and provisional, revealing his overarching obsession with good writing.

Chernow, Ron. [Mark Twain](#) (\$24). Drawing on Twain's bountiful archives, including thousands of letters and hundreds of unpublished manuscripts, Chernow masterfully captures the man whose career reflected the country's westward expansion, industrialization, and foreign wars, and who was the most important white author of his generation to grapple so fully with the legacy of slavery. Today, more than one hundred years after his death, Twain's writing continues to be read, debated, and quoted. In this brilliant work of scholarship, a moving tribute to the writer's talent and humanity, Chernow reveals the magnificent and often maddening life of one of the most original characters in American history

Harmon, Mark. [The Ghosts of Sicily](#) (Harper \$29.99). It's 1942, and New York City is at war. German U-boats are sinking ships just miles offshore, and Washington, DC, is convinced that waterfront spies are providing intelligence targeting the ships. To thwart the threat, the Office of Naval Intelligence reaches out to those with the most sway along the waterfronts of Brooklyn and Manhattan – the mob. The result will be a triumph for the ONI and one of the most successful and controversial operations in the long history of what we now know as NCIS. War can make for unlikely allies, no?

Macfarlane, Robert. [The Game of Birds](#) (House of Anansi \$35). The aim of the game is to rescue as many birds on the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds endangered list as possible ... in the limited time that is available! It is a game of skill, but also a game of wonder. Players will immerse themselves in the extraordinary art of Jackie Morris and the textual magic of Robert Macfarlane, all brought together by Michael Rieneck, a leading European game designer with over 60 published games to his credit.

McCullough, David. [1776 \(Deluxe Slipcase Edition\)](#) (Simon Schuster \$50). McCullough's 2005 narrative interweaving, on both sides of the Atlantic, the actions and decisions that led Great Britain to undertake a war against her rebellious colonial subjects and that placed America's survival in the hands of George Washington is spruced up for the 250th anniversary this July 4th.

Murphy, Chris. [Crisis of the Common Good: The Fight for the Common Good](#) (Farrar Strauss \$29). The Senator exposes how in his reckoning six different cults have seized hold of American life and paved the way to our current troubles: a cult of profit that punishes workers, a cult of globalism that weakens communities, a cult of technology that turns us against one another and poisons our young, a cult of consumption that undermines citizenship, a cult of credentialism that devalues those without degrees, and a cult of corruption that threatens democracy.

Ries, Eric. [Incorruptible: Why Good Companies Go Bad](#) (Authors Equity \$32). Why do even the best companies drift from their missions, betraying the trust of customers, employees, and investors? Ries argues that the culprit is not simply greed or incompetence, but the way we define profit and structure governance. At its core, the book reframes "profit" as the maximization of human flourishing. Using case studies from startups, established corporations, and public institutions, Ries shows

how organizations can adopt governance structures that resist short-termist pressures and mission drift. Drawing on his own experiences founding the Long-Term Stock Exchange, advising companies like Airbnb, Cloudflare, and GitLab, and working with governments and investors, Ries offers a manual for designing and operating organizations that can resist corruption from the inside out.

Sedaris, David. [The Land and Its People](#) (Little Brown \$30). Sedaris investigates what it means to be a traveler, a brother, a lifelong friend. Trying on the role of caretaker after his boyfriend Hugh's hip-replacement surgery, he both succeeds and fails. He covers ground with his friend Dawn and challenges her to eat a truck tire. A ambivalent Duolingo bot becomes his unlikely confidante as he attempts to describe his family in a foreign language. Ever adding to his list of "Countries I Have Been To," he rides a horse named Tequila in Guatemala, buys a bespoke priest's cassock in Vatican City, and goes on safari in Kenya without taking a single photo. Time takes its toll: scrolling through his address book, he counts those he couldn't bear to outlive, and realizes how many are already gone....and on it goes. It's easy to agree with the lady waving a sign that reads, "Enough Is Enough." And yet, life holds much to delight in: a trip abroad with his sisters, a really excellent reptile video, a pair of well-made cotton under-pants.

Simon, Scott. [Ulysses S Cat and Other Animals I Have Known](#) (Vintage \$24.99). Scott Simon's household does not make much distinction between humans and other animals. Whether two-legged or four-, flesh-covered, fur-covered, feathered, or gilled—everyone is family. Today, Simon lives with the haiku-writing and *absolument charmant* French poodle Daisy and the daringly audacious foster cat Gato Blanco. But that's just the start. Paired with the charming, whimsical illustrations of renowned New Yorker cartoonist Liana Finck, Simon reflects on how pets unlock our hearts and burrow into our lives.

OUR MAY PAPERBACK PICKS

* Archer, Jeffrey. [End Game](#) (\$18.99). What a zinger this the final entry in the William Warwick series is. Only Archer with access to highly placed sources could create a thriller blending mostly real and some imagined security threats to the 2012 Olympics. The glare of the spotlight makes London a target for some of the most dangerous people on earth. And the moment the bid is won, an international conspiracy is set in motion to unleash a devastating attack that will leave the world in chaos. One man stands between triumph and disaster: Commander William Warwick, heading up Scotland Yard's Gold Team for games security. But as he pursues the shadowy organization, he sets off a deadly game of cat and mouse which will take him from the bustling streets of London to the hidden corridors of power. Can Warwick stop the assassin? Archer does not tell us which of the 22 threats he portrays were real (13) and which he imagined (9) which adds an extra dimension to reading this terrific book. It should also create worry about what's in store for the 2028 Olympics in Los Angeles.

Berry, Kristen L. [We Don't Talk About Carol](#) (\$19). Ex-reporter Sydney Singleton, who is in the process of undergoing fertility treatments, already has enough to worry about. Then she discovers the existence of her Aunt Carol, who disappeared in the 1960s along with five more Black girls from her neighborhood, and

becomes fixated on their disappearances. But as she investigates, she worries that her fixation is all too similar to her out-of-control obsession with a kidnapping case that led to an eight-day stay in the psychiatric department of a San Francisco hospital—events that ultimately caused her to leave journalism. Berry pulls these two intertwined narrative threads taut, making for a compulsive debut, our July 2025 First Mystery Pick.

Brennan, Allison. [Beach Reads and Deadly Deeds](#) (\$18.99).

A book-loving accountant who gets ensnared in a murder investigation—an excellent summertime read. After years of dedication to her job at a New York City accounting firm, 29-year-old Mia Crawford is offered a partnership. To sweeten the deal, her employers insist she take a two-week, all-expenses-paid vacation to a private island in the Caribbean. All modest Mia wants is to curl up with a book and, at most, carry on a quick and casual fling. In the resort's gift shop, she spots an intriguing, water-damaged paperback on a table of books left behind by previous guests. After scooping it up, she notices messages scribbled in the margins that allude to some sort of criminal activity. When a guest's body washes up on the beach, Mia fears she's stumbled into something dangerous. As she investigates with the aid of her mysterious notes, she strikes up a romance with resort bartender Jason, and Brennan weaves in the personal dramas of other guests and employees.

* Everett, Emily. [All That Life Can Afford](#) (Putnam \$19). In a way this is Jane Austen adjacent and sparkles while tugging at your heart for a young American woman with zero family support and a dream of living in London. Anna is trying so hard to navigate class, lies, and love amid the city's jet-set elite while slaving to finish her dissertation at Queen Mary College and find a job for a long term visa by teaching SAT prep in fancy boarding schools and tutoring kids from wealthy families. It means living in a horrible flat with roomies, miserable eating, barely making train or Tube fare. When she gets a tutoring job with the wealthy Wilders for young Pippa who aspires to enroll at Columbia, life turns up from a level of survival it's hard to imagine. Except that the Wilders' older daughter Faye is that Austen-kind of female snob and villain who sets out to ruin Anna. Does she succeed? Along the way visit the South of France, Lisbon, and of course, various enclaves of London, as Anna moves towards her Happily Ever After...or not.

Freeman, Brian. [Robert Ludlum's The Bourne Escape](#) (\$19). In this excellent chapter in the Ludlum universe, Jason Bourne is on a boat in the Mediterranean moonlight with his lover, Johanna. He's happy for the first time in years. Then in the next instant, he finds himself floating on wreckage as fire and smoke choke the sky. Johanna is gone. And Bourne finds the darkness of lost memory closing around his mind again. As he did once before, Bourne must piece together the fragments of who he is, even as assassins hunt him across Europe. He teams up with his spy chief, Shadow, who reveals the shocking secret that Bourne's surrogate father – David Abbott, the founder of Treadstone – is alive and missing. Together they must find Abbott before his enemies do. But Shadow is a master of manipulation who won't hesitate to betray Bourne in a game with no obvious winners....

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 [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. "The tension in this atmospheric novel builds like a drumbeat as Hays explores the secrets that lie within a privileged family and keeps readers guessing from one twist to the next. For fans of Lucy Foley.

Miranda, Megan. [You Belong Here](#) (\$19). Miranda has created a Town vs. Gown plot for a small Virginia mountain college town, not Cambridge or Oxford Universities where this kind of thing rages. Nevertheless the social, financial, and aspirational divides are just as sharp. Into this a daughter, Delilah, drags her mother Beckett by secretly applying to Wyatt College and receiving a full scholarship. It also drags Beckett back into her parents' home—they are both retired Wyatt professors—and into memories of a long ago disaster, a fire during her own senior year that left two men dead and her roommate on the run...vanished. Beckett had built a life as a working single mom, a ghostwriter for hire, after shutting down, and out, Delilah's father. Now secret college traditions, buried memories, blame, and Delilah's disappearance are cratering it. And reawakening ghosts Beckett would rather not deal with. This is a story for readers of Stacy Willingham, Ashley Winstead, Ruth Ware...and JT Ellison.

Robecchi, Alessandro. [The Broken Truths](#) (Other Press \$17.99). A mysterious murder in present-day Milan intertwines with a cold case from the 1940s and earns two Starred Reviews: "[An] exquisite whodunit... This is a cut above most murder mysteries." —*Publishers Weekly* (starred review). "This singular and layered tale...compellingly depicts artistic collaboration along with the puzzle of a police procedural...Fans of Georges Simenon's Maigret or Anthony Horowitz's Hawthorne and Horowitz will find much to enjoy in this literary house of mirrors." —*Library Journal* (starred review)

An acclaimed director, Manlio Parrini, decides to return behind the camera. Having abandoned cinema at the height of his success because he found the industry to be "a place without truth," he now, in his 70s, has a special story in mind: a film about Augusto De Angelis, a pioneer of Italian crime fiction in the 1930s. The violent death of De Angelis remains, for Parrini, an worrying unsolved case. Yet just as Parrini finds a producer for his project and begins writing the screenplay with his friend and accomplice Sara De Viesti, another mystery bursts into his life: the murder of the elderly widow Bastoni, who owns the villa next door.

* Robotham, Michael. [The White Crow](#) (\$19) is one of the most knockout plots peopled with brilliant characters I have read. You will delight in the complex characters and layered plotlines. Here's what a Starred Review, agreeing with me, has to say of our July British Crime Book of the Month which has a truly devilish surprise climax: "London Metropolitan Police constable Philomena McCarthy returns in Robotham's rip-roaring

sequel to *When You Are Mine* (\$17.99). When Philomena and her partner catch a glimpse of a barefoot child hiding in a yard in a posh neighborhood, they take the girl to her home and find her mother murdered. A few miles away, a jewelry store is robbed and the owner is forced to put on a suicide vest before the assailants escape. After one of Philomena's colleagues frees him, the store owner asks about his wife, who turns out to be the dead woman Philomena discovered, and the action kicks into high gear. As Philomena, despite her low rank, is drawn deeper into the investigation, evidence emerges that her criminal father—who insists he's gone straight with a legit property development firm—is connected to the jewelry store robbery. Soon, she's forced to decide whether to protect her career or her family. Robotham nimbly balances Philomena's psychological stresses with vigorous action and sharp dialogue. The plot is sleek and elegant, with interlocking story lines that culminate in a big, bloody finale."

Sager, Riley. [With a Vengeance](#) (\$19). Anna Matheson was 16 when one of her railroad tycoon father's trains, which was transporting WWII troops, exploded and killed 37 people, including her brother, Tommy. A dozen years later, in 1954, Anna, the sole surviving member of her family, has managed to lure the six individuals she blames for the tragedy onto an overnight train ride from Philadelphia to Chicago. She hopes that by confronting the dirty half-dozen with smoking guns she's discovered during her investigation, she can elicit confessions before turning them over to the FBI at their destination. A few hours into the 13-hour trip, just after Anna reveals herself and her agenda, one of her suspects keels over. Blindsided, Anna realizes she has effectively trapped herself with desperate people who want her dead—at least one of whom is ready to do the job.

Riley signs his new book [The Unknown](#) (\$32 Deluxe Edition) on August 5 for us. [TICKETS](#): \$35 includes one copy.

* Shepherd Robinson, Laura. [The Art of a Lie](#) (\$18). This superb novel, one my all-time favorites! is **our May Historical Fiction Paperback Pick**, a story showcasing a London of 1749 evolving towards the Regency and Victorian enclaves; a tale folding real-life figures into the plot and highlighting not one amazing cons but two; a story with a Shakespearean finale that leaves you breathless. A literary aspect highlighting (Sir) Henry Fielding, author of *Tom Jones* and pioneer of policing. And delightfully, introducing ice cream! Shepherd-Robinson's prose is superb, bursting with poetic description and immersive period detail, and she sustains suspense without resorting to cheap tricks.

Following the murder of her husband in a violent street robbery, confectioner Hannah Cole is struggling to keep her head above water. The Punchbowl and Pineapple, her stunning shop on Piccadilly, is barely turning a profit, and her suppliers are conspiring to put her out of business. With her inheritance delayed due to bizarre discrepancies in Jonas's accounting, she must earn a living somehow. None other than famed novelist and magistrate Henry Fielding is investigating Jonas's murder, and upon learning that the dead man was an unsavory rogue and a cruel husband, he starts to suspect that Hannah killed him. Even more so when a surprise bank account in Jonas' name and likely illicitly acquired comes to light. Hannah's only ally is the new-to-town William Devereaux, who vows to help her and gives her the exotic idea to serve an Italian delicacy called ice cream.

While Hannah tests recipes and delights patrons in Piccadilly with this new treat, William negotiates with Fielding on her behalf. Gradually, though, Hannah begins to question William's motives. Rightfully

Slocumb, Brendan. [The Dark Maestro](#) (\$19). Once again Brendan melds music and crime. Curtis Wilson is a child prodigy on the cello who received his instrument through a free school program. His father, Zippy, is a low-level drug dealer in Washington, DC, who doesn't have much time for his son. But Zippy's girlfriend Larissa sees and encourages Curtis's musical potential while gifting him the comic books he devours. While, Zippy's boss moves Zippy into a higher but sketchier business position, Curtis earns a spot at Julliard and is becoming known nationwide as a star cellist. Then his father turns state's evidence and the family is moved into witness protection, putting a hold on Curtis's skyrocketing musical career. The family comes together, however, while in hiding to create an online comic book called *The Dark Maestro* as Curtis realizes he'll need to take down the criminals himself, with the help of Zippy, Larissa, and a comic book character he originally created as a child.

Trussoni, Danielle. [The Puzzle Box](#) (\$19). I loved this book so. "You'll hit the ground running in this rip-roaring adventure thriller that sends you across the breadth of Japan in search of ancient answers. Trussoni's novel is an escapist puzzle box of delights: a neurodivergent hero, an unsolvable mystery, and death hanging over every move."—Catherine Steadman. So puzzle master solver Mike Brink on a mission, a tour of Japan, a dive into imperial history, a challenge difficult to meet, and a killer stalker. Do not miss this. It's inexplicable to me anyway why the publisher did not want more of this puzzle master series.

Viertel, JJ. [The Glass Eel](#) (\$16.95). You fans of Tess Gerritsen, Paul Doiron, and Michael Koryta/Scott Carson will find this gem lands you in yet another Maine landscape, Caterpillar Island off the central coast; into another surprising plot that could only happen in Maine; into a cast of colorful locals that seem to sprout there; and be written with understated humor that makes the prose sing. Besides, who knew that a thriving blackmarket for elvers, two-inch long baby eels that can sell for \$2000 per pound and up on the international black market, was a thing?

We begin at 4:15 one April morning when cancer survivor Jeanette King, surviving on her own now picking crab meat, is brought awake by the thrumming of a boat engine where none should be. She motors out to it only to discover it's her ex's lobster boat, no one aboard, but somehow it holds a large tank of elvers. A sort of ne'er do well called Joe arrives on a dinghy, waves her off and motors the big boat away after thrusting an old tackle box at her. He apparently thinks she's working with Simon, the ex. Back home Jeanette discovers the box holds a big stash of cash....and just like that we are drawn into the story of high risk and a criminal ring. Actress Emma Thompson sums this novel up: "It's part *The Overstory*, and then also a bit *Mare of Eastwick*, with a wondrous female lead."

MORE PAPERBACKS FOR MAY

Battles, Brett. [Stuart Woods' Blown Away](#) (\$19). This is a crackerjack thriller starring former CIA op Teddy Fay, reinvented as a Hollywood guy. And he's delighted to join Peter and Hattie Barrington in Palm Springs. But his hope for a relaxing vacation

vanishes when he attends a prominent actor's annual birthday party, where he witnesses a heated squabble between two women, only for one of them to turn up dead the next day. Teddy takes it upon himself to investigate who might be lurking in the shadows and uncovers a web of intrigue involving a sinister plan to take over a cutting-edge energy company. If he doesn't act fast, valuable secrets risk falling into the wrong hands... This is a seriously clever plot. I've said it before: Battles writes Woods as well or better than did Woods. He joins us on June 4 for [Stuart Woods' Blown Away](#) (Penguin \$30).

* Bennett, SJ. [The Queen Who Came in from the Cold](#) (\$19.99). The second in a reboot of Queen Elizabeth II as a crime solver after the monarch died and Bennett changed it up to historical fiction with a young queen. We're in 1957 where the young monarch is finding her way in post-war Europe and hampered by her father's elderly courtiers. Is one of them trying to sabotage her public appearances? Read the superb series reboot in [A Death in Diamonds](#) (\$19.99) to find out, and enjoy the cast, especially ex-code breaker Joan McGraw, also finding her way in the Royal Household after serving at Bletchley Park, and all the protocol. Now it's 1961, the Cold War has heated up, and Joan and the Queen are spending a night aboard the royal train when a sole and unreliable witness declares a brutal murder was spotted from one of the carriages. If there is a victim despite no evidence, could it be the missing photographer friend of Princess Margaret's new husband Anthony Armstrong Jones?

Cameron, Marc. [Dead Line](#) (\$18.95). Wow, while US Marshall Arliss Cutter of Alaska is working a case his past surges into the narrative in such a way that this fast and hard moving book is really an origin story for Arliss. It begins when Cutter and his US Marshal Partner Lola Teariki are at frozen Cheney Lake, finally nearing their prey. He's Butch Pritchard, a killer-for-hire as ruthless as the Anchorage wind, and wanted for the murder of a 25-year-old pregnant woman in Missouri. A cruel hit orchestrated by the victim's husband, Royce Decker, a former member of the St. Louis Metro PD and on the run too. As quickly as Butch is in the Marshals' sight he disappears, abandoning a bear of a partner who's terrified for his life. But it isn't Butch or Royce he's afraid of. If it isn't those two outlaws, then who? And why? Right now, the creep in custody has gone silent and Arliss and Lola soon realize there's more to this manhunt than imagined, and more people at risk.

Catalano, Andrea. [The Lacemaker's Fortune](#) (Lake Union \$16.99). New York City, 1879. Eileen Maguire is a factory lacemaker limited by her humble circumstances and dreaming of a better life. Lawrence Barnard is the sole heir of one of Manhattan's wealthiest families, but his means keep him confined by the expectations of society. When their paths cross one fateful winter night, Eileen and Lawrence become caught under the spell of the charismatic and enterprising Stanley Jones, who extols the boundless opportunities awaiting in the West. The millinery shop Eileen dreams of owning with her sister is possible, as is the freedom to make his own choices that Lawrence so craves. What begins as an idealistic journey westward quickly becomes something unexpected and sinister once the group lands in Leadville, Colorado, a wild silver mining boomtown high in the Rocky Mountains....

Charles, Janet Skeslien. [The Parisian Chapter](#) (Atria \$18). Paris, 1995: It's been five years since Lily Jacobsen and her best friend Mary Louise arrived in Paris from their small town of Froid, Montana. Determined to establish themselves as artists—Lily, a novelist, and Mary Louise, a painter—they share a tiny walkup and survive on brie and baguettes. When Mary Louise abruptly moves out, Lily feels alone in the city of light for the first time and must find a new way to support herself. She lands a job as a programs manager at the American Library in Paris, following in the footsteps of Odile, her beloved French neighbor in Montana who told her stories of heroic World War II librarians when Lily was growing up. Here in the storied halls of the ALP, she meets an incredible cast of characters—her favorite author, quirky coworkers, broke students, trailing spouses, haughty trustees, and devoted volunteers—each with their own stories... and agendas. Lily often seeks solace in the Afterlife, the library's attic that's home to hundreds of unpublished manuscripts, and there, she discovers a box of archives that may be a link to the past including Odile's. This moving, propulsive story offers a panoramic view of a real historic institution, and revisits characters from both of Charles' beloved novels.

Constantine, Liv. [Don't Open Your Eyes](#) (\$19). A woman worries that her confounding nightmares are actually premonitions in this standalone from the sister authors of [The Last Mrs. Parrish](#) (\$16.99). Successful PR agent Annabelle Reynolds has a happy family life and a loving husband, so she's startled when she awakens one morning from a dream about a violent marital spat. Annabelle's husband, James, is a sensitive doctor who rescued her from a toxic relationship with a manipulative professor, so she knows he'd never lay hands on her... Subsequent dreams, including one about a beachside encounter with a handsome stranger, prove eerily prescient, and then Annabelle has a vision of her older daughter, Scarlett, in grave danger. She keeps a close eye on Scarlett while trying to understand who, or what, is penetrating her subconscious.

Cowan, Jon. [Proof](#) (\$19). Why not a legal thriller? As a disgraced lawyer with a drinking problem that he doesn't view as a problem, Jake West is coasting on what's left of his charm and money. He used to be the kind of lawyer who could convince anyone of anything—until he decided to take on his father's biggest client and prove his dad was corrupt. Now Jake finds himself almost at rock bottom, and that's before his ex-best friend is murdered and Jake is accused of the crime. In a desperate bid to save himself, Jake must sober up and search for the real killer, whom he suspects might be hidden in one of the case files of his father's illustrious law firm. As he delves into a labyrinth of lies and corruption, Jake teams up with an eclectic group of equally broken people as they all skirt the law in order to find the proof he needs.

Curtis, Aaron John. [Old School Indian](#) (\$18). In a much heralded debut, we meet Abe Jacobs, a Kanien'kehá:ka from Ahkwesáhsne—or, as white people say, a Mohawk Indian from the Saint Regis Tribe. At eighteen, Abe left the reservation where he was raised and never looked back. Now forty-three, Abe is suffering from a rare disease—one his doctors in Miami believe will kill him. Running from his diagnosis and a failing marriage, Abe returns to the Rez, where he's persuaded to undergo a healing at the hands of his Great Uncle Budge. But Budge—a wry, recovered alcoholic prone to wearing punk T-shirts—isn't all that convincing. And Abe's time off the Rez has made him a

thorough skeptic. To heal, Abe will undertake a revelatory journey, confronting the parts of himself he's hidden ever since he left home and learning to cultivate hope, even at his darkest hour.

Dodd, Christina. [Thus with a Kiss I Die](#) (\$18.95) is book two in Dodd's mysteries featuring Romeo and Juliet's irreverent eldest daughter, Rosie. No, the lovers did not die. And now Rosie, thwarted in her love for Lysander, is unwed at twenty. Trapped. "Then!" she says, "I'm presented with a solution. Escalon's father, Prince Escalus the Elder, appears to me. He tasks that I find his killer. Did I mention Elder is a ghost? Given that I only recently dispatched Verona's first serial killer, I'm less than pleased. Yet Elder promises to unite me with my One True Love, so I gather clues. Meanwhile, revolution threatens, for beneath Verona society's glittering surface lurk dark shadows—and an enemy eager to make me a tragic heroine in my own right...."

Donovan, Kemper. [Loose Lips](#) (\$18.95). The host of the "All About Agatha" podcast injects the spark and fizz of a Golden Age murder mystery into the present-day, as the ghostwriter's skills are put to the test aboard a bestselling author's cruise. Those who can, do. Those who can't, teach. So goes the adage, but sometimes, even a first-rate ghostwriter and successful mystery author needs to make a buck. Even if that means setting foot on a cruise ship, something she vowed she'd never do. To top it off, the "Get Lit Cruise" is being organized by Payton Garrett, a bestselling author—and the ghostwriter's long-time frenemy from back in their MFA days. It's rough seas ahead. This series fits cozy crimes.

Finlay, Alex. [Parents Weekend](#) (\$19). In the glow of their children's exciting first year of college at a small private school in Northern California, five families gather over dinner and cocktails for the opening festivities of Parents Weekend. As the parents stay out way past their bedtimes, their kids—five residents of Campisi Hall—never show up to dinner. At first, everyone thinks they're just being college students, irresponsibly forgetting about the gathering or skipping out to go to a party. But as the hours tick by and another night falls with not so much as a text from the students, panic ensues. Soon the campus police call in reinforcements. Search parties are formed. Reporters swarm the small enclave. Rumors swirl and questions arise. Libby, Blane, Mark, Felix, and Stella—The Five, as the podcasters, bloggers, and TikTok sleuths soon call them—come from very different families. What drew them out on that fateful night? Is there something amiss with them? Or their parents?

* Gaw, Allan. [The Silent House of Sleep](#) (Mysterious Press \$17.99). Police surgeon Jack Cuthbert investigates a bizarre double murder in 1920s London in the brilliant but horrifically graphic first novel from former pathologist Gaw. IMHO only a pathologist could imagine using a murder weapon culled from antiquity that will scar you.

"Cuthbert is called in when a man walking his Labrador spots a bloated hand sticking out of the ground. As Cuthbert excavates the corpse, both he and the police are stunned to find that the body has been placed on top of a second one. The faces of both victims are mangled beyond recognition and there are signs they were tied up before they died. During the autopsy, the state of the corpses reminds Cuthbert of a grisly passage from the *Aeneid* ("The living and the dead at his command / Were coupled, face to face, and hand to hand"), and he offers Scotland Yard his help cracking the case. Flashbacks to Cuthbert's medical school

days and his unrequited infatuation with a male colleague, along with his horrific experiences in the trenches of WWI, deepen the characterization, and Gaw wallops readers with a shocking yet credible twist long after the mystery seems resolved."—*PW* Starred Review. In some ways but much darker this is for fans of Charles Todd or Rennie Airth. Or Patricia Cornwell if unsparing forensics fascinate you.

* Grainger, Peter. [An Accidental Death](#) (Union Square & Co \$17.99). This is the first in the DC Smith/Kings Lake Investigation police procedural series that runs to many books, so try this one and then you can order more. The story opens with the apparently accidental drowning of a sixth form student in the Norfolk countryside. As a matter of routine, or so it seems, the case passes across the desk of Detective Sergeant Smith, recently returned to work after an internal investigation into another case that has led to tensions between officers at Kings Lake police headquarters. As a former Detective Chief Inspector, Smith could have retired by now, and it is clear some of his superiors wish that he would do so. With a new trainee detective in tow, Smith begins to unravel the truth about what happened to Wayne Fletcher. As the investigation proceeds, it becomes obvious that others are involved. In the end Smith operates alone, having stepped too far outside standard procedures to ask for support. The gruff and uncompromising Smith is a copper in the spirit of George Gently and John Rebus—that is, complicated and not cartoonish—and the core investigation spirals into a chilling look at social exile.

Hargla, Indrek. [The Secret of Saint Olaf's Church](#) (Pushkin Press \$18.95). Hurray, a new medieval mystery—for readers of small type so you may want the eBook much as it pains me to say that.

It's set in 15th Century Estonia, mostly Tallinn, dominated by the mighty castle of Toompea and the construction of St Olaf's Church, soon to become the tallest building in the world... and has an apothecary turned sleuth in Melchior. Melchior is a divisive figure in the city: respected for his arcane knowledge and scientific curiosity but also feared for his aura of mystical power. When a mysterious murder occurs in the castle, Melchior is called in to help find the killer and reveals a talent for solving crime. But a serial killer is loose in Tallinn, and Melchior is tested to the limit in a plot with as many twists and turns as the corridors of the castle itself. Melchior uncovers a mystery surrounding St Olaf's church and a secret society that has been controlling the town for years, revealing truths that may spell danger for any who dare to speak them aloud...

Hincenbergs, Sue. [The Retirement Plan](#) (\$18.99). Three best friends turn to murder to collect on their husbands' life insurance policies.... But the husbands have a plan of their own in this darkly funny debut. After thirty years of friendship, Pam dreams of her perfect retirement with Nancy, Shalisa, Marlene, and their husbands—until their husbands pool their funds for an investment that goes terribly wrong. Suddenly, in this witty domestic thriller, their golden years are looking as dreary as their marriages. But when the women discover their husbands have seven-figure life insurance policies, a new dream forms. And this time, they need a hitman. Meanwhile, their husbands are working on their own secret retirement scheme and when things begin to go sideways, they fear it's backfired. The husbands scramble to stay alive...but soon realize they may not be quick enough.... Call it a romp, call it addictive, call it wicked.... Will work for fans of Elle Cosimano and Richard Osman.

Hur, June. [Behind Five Willows](#) (Feiwel & Friends \$20.99). The author of *A Crane Among Wolves* comes a warm and romantic homage to Jane Austen set in historical Korea, about a reader and a writer who secretly fight against government book banning and find themselves irresistibly drawn together. This is called Young Adult but why not try it as an adult reader

Hurwitz, Gregg. [The Delivery: A Novella](#) (Thomas & Mercer \$12.99). Rebecca and Mark Higgins are doing their best to hold their family together. She's healing from the pain of a miscarriage, he's drowning in pressure at work, and their neurodivergent daughter, Maddy, needs all the care she can get. So when a cutting-edge tech company offers the perfect solution, they jump at the chance. And they welcome "Mr. Man"—a humanoid AI companion—into their home. Designed to anticipate their needs, he's like a miracle at first. But then, maybe a nightmare?

* Jewell, Lisa. [Don't Let Him In](#) (Atria \$29.99). Nick Radcliffe is a man of substance and good taste. He has a smile that could melt the coldest heart and a knack for putting others at ease. He's just what Nina Swann needed in her life after her husband's unexpected death. But to Nina's adult daughter, Ash, Nick seems too slick, too polished, too good to be true. Nick tries to dial up the charm in hopes that, by swindling Nina, he can secure a fortune for the one woman he truly loves: his current wife, Martha. Ash, however, is prepared to bring Nick's long con toppling down—even if it means finding his old victims herself. Without telling her mother, Ash begins digging into Nick's past. What she finds is more than unsettling...

Jiyong, Kang. [Mrs. Shim Is a Killer](#) (Harper \$18.99). When a middle-aged widow loses her job at the butcher shop, she's at a loss as to how to provide for her family—until she's offered a position that puts her carving skills to new uses in this bestselling Korean thriller. So when Mrs. Shim answers a vague job ad for the Smile Detective Agency, she expects the job will be some kind of cleaning position. But when they only ask her questions about her experience as a butcher and what she can do with a cleaver, she begins to realize they want her to be an assassin. Too scared not to take them up on their offer, she agrees to the position. And Mrs. Shim soon finds that her new job isn't so different from her old one in the butcher shop, quickly becoming the agency's best contract killer—but her rise to the top hasn't gone unnoticed.

Kenney, John. [I See You've Called in Dead](#) (\$18.99) has a marvelous premise. Bud Stanley is an obituary writer who is afraid to live. Yes, his wife recently left him for a "far more interesting" man. Yes, he goes on a particularly awful blind date with a woman who brings her ex. And yes, he has too many glasses of Scotch one night and proceeds to pen and publish his own obituary. The newspaper wants to fire him. But now the company's system has him listed as dead. And the company can't fire a dead person. The ensuing fallout forces him to realize that life may be actually worth living. As Bud awaits his fate at work, his life hangs in the balance. Given another shot by his boss and encouraged by his best friend, Tim, a worldly and wise former art dealer, Bud starts to attend the wakes and funerals of strangers and gains a new lease on life.

Lamb, Wally. [The River Is Waiting](#) (\$20) is one to buy now for Father's Day to celebrate how a man can grow into being one. Corby Ledbetter is struggling. New fatherhood, the loss of his

job, and a growing secret addiction have thrown his marriage to his beloved Emily into a tailspin. And that's before he causes the tragedy that tears the family apart. Sentenced to prison, Corby struggles to survive life on the inside, where he bears witness to frightful acts of brutality but also experiences small acts of kindness and elemental kinship with a prison librarian who sees his light and some of his fellow offenders, including a tender-hearted cellmate and a troubled teen desperate for a role model. Buoyed by them and by his mother's enduring faith in him, Corby begins to transcend the boundaries of his confinement.

Laurain, Antoine. [Smoking Kills](#) (Pushkin Press \$17.95). "I'd kill for a cigarette." Used to be a common phrase, for some it still is. And in this darkly funny French author's novel, it's actually true. When headhunter Fabrice Valentine faces a smoking ban at work, he decides to undertake a course of hypnotherapy to rid himself of the habit. At first the treatment works, but his stress levels begin to rise when he is passed over for an important promotion and he finds himself lighting up again—but with none of his previous enjoyment. Then he discovers something terrible: he accidentally causes a man's death, and, needing a cigarette to calm his nerves, he enjoys it more than any other previous smoke. So what if...? Thus Fabrice launches into a life of crime, finding ever more original murder methods—including the use of a poisonous Ecuadorean frog.

McDowell, Kara. [The Write Off](#) (Berkley \$19). Arizona author McDowell writes a romance inspired by the Tucson Festival of Books. It's been thirteen years since Mars Darling first met West Emerson on a bench outside their writing class. What started out as a friendly rivalry turned into a best friendship and then, for a brief time, a romance. Now over a decade later, as Mars stands at their college campus as a once-esteemed YA fantasy author, ready to take on a book festival, she comes face to face with West—the muse behind her infamous trilogy's heartthrob hero, the man who betrayed her in the worst way.

"[West and Mars'] chemistry is undeniable, and readers will pine just as hard as they have for a second chance, even as each attempt seems to push them further and further from lovers to enemies. She and he are equally complex, the romance is messy, and the behind-the-scenes world of authors, books, and fandom feels genuine. Mars' backstory and West's betrayal are both heartbreaking and tender, capturing all the emotion of the very best rom-coms. Highly recommended for fans of Emily Henry and Emma Lord."—*Booklist* Starred Review

Moore, Christopher. [Anima Rising](#) (\$19.99) draws on Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* for a tale of *fin de siècle* Vienna. In 1911, painter Gustav Klimt rescues a drowning woman from the Danube canal and brings her back to his studio, where she is cared for by one of his models. The woman has no memory of who she is or how she wound up in the canal. Klimt names her Judith after one of his paintings, and he turns to the world's leading psychiatrist, Sigmund Freud, to help cure her amnesia. When Freud hits a dead end, he taps his colleague Carl Jung, who agrees to hypnotize Judith. The incredible story she narrates under hypnosis involves surviving in the Arctic after being stranded there with exiled mad scientist Victor Frankenstein and his monster and interventions from Raven, an Inuit deity. As Moore delays clarifying whether Judith is telling the truth, his own imagination swings into overdrive.

* North, Alex. [The Man Made of Smoke](#) (\$17.99). I like this new North better than his earlier books, probably because for me it read much more about character than gruesome crimes—not that targeting children isn't heinous. But how this plays out is satisfying. When Daniel Garvie was 12, he narrowly escaped the notorious Pied Piper killer at a highway rest stop before encountering a boy who'd soon become one of the Piper's many victims. Decades later, Daniel has forged a career in criminal psychology and remains obsessed with the case. It also became an object of fascination for Daniel's policeman father, John, who spent much of his retirement trying to crack it. When Daniel learns that John has died by suicide, he returns to the unnamed island where he grew up to follow breadcrumbs his father left behind. As Daniel pieces together John's clues to a new string of murders, he learns that all of the recent victims were present at the same rest stop where he once fled the serial child killer. "North toggles smoothly between Daniel's present-day inquiry, John's sleuthing in the past, and the final days of a young boy named James."

Oates, Joyce Carol. [Fox](#) (\$20) is "a hypnotic journey through the mind of a madman that you'll want to share with everyone you know." Who is Francis Fox? A charming English teacher new to the idyllic Langhorne Academy, Fox beguiles many of his students, their parents, and his colleagues at the elite boarding school, while leaving others wondering where he came from and why his biography is so enigmatic. When two brothers discover Fox's car half-submerged in a pond in a local nature preserve and parts of an unidentified body strewn about the nearby woods, the entire community, including Detective Horace Zwender and his deputy, begins to ask disturbing questions about Francis Fox and who he might really be.

* Pennant, Mel. [A Murder for Miss Hortense](#) (\$18). British playwright Pennant debuts with a lively cozy centered on the indomitable Miss Hortense, a Jamaican nurse who's been living in Birmingham's Bigglesweigh neighborhood since 1960. In the decades since Miss Hortense emigrated from Jamaica, she and her friends and neighbors have started an unofficial investigative service to look into local crimes. One case that has remained unsolved is that of "the Brute," a man who, in 1970, brutally attacked a series of women in Bigglesweigh and left them for dead. Now, in 2000, Miss Hortense's nemesis, Constance Brown, is dead. Authorities believe she died of a heart attack, but Hortense fears murder. Then the body of a mysterious stranger is placed inside Constance's house with a Bible verse taped to it, and Miss Hortense becomes convinced that the Brute has returned. Here's a look at Britain's immigrants, their culture, their trials beyond those of detective fiction, and told in a kind of patois.

Poirier, Gregory. [A Thousand Cuts](#) (Diversion Books \$17.95). Screenwriter Poirier has the gift of the perfect voice for his debut novel as well as the pacing of a fast-moving story led by a former CIA op called Max Starkey who came to grief seven years back when a mission in Laos went sideways. He lost his job and the girl and has avoided Southeast Asia ever since as he now works as a recovery agent for villains seeking stolen goods. But here he is, lured to Bangkok under false pretenses and accompanied by a stunning woman who may be tasked with killing him when he succeeds. We hear from other players in this complex tale including that girlfriend from years back, now married and not

well, and the perps of a coup in the small nation of Suryakan. There are a lot of surprises in store for Max—and for the reader. I am hoping for a sequel soon.

Quinn, Spencer. [Mrs. Plansky Goes Rogue](#) (\$19). First met in the surprising drama [Mrs. Plansky's Revenge](#) (\$17.99), we now find the motorcycle ace, tennis-loving Florida widow, fresh off a surprising tournament win and bonding with her partner Kev Dinardo, witnessing a yacht turn into a fireball off Kev's back dock. Lightning strike? Hmm... Mrs. Plansky didn't see any. Then Kev goes missing and she breaks into his mansion only to find it ransacked. So there's more to Kev than just a great serve. Then Mrs. Plansky's 98-year-old reprobate father who lives in her spare room reveals he has introduced her wayward tennis pro son Jack, met earlier, to Kev.... There are many oddball characters here but my favorite is Fairbanks, the canniest reprobate of all.

Rao, Nilima. [A Shipwreck in Fiji](#) (\$18.95). If you yearn for summer travel why not take a trip to Fiji? Even though it's 1915 you will learn much about this Pacific island as a destination. In the sequel to [A Disappearance in Fiji](#) (\$17.95), Sergeant Akal Singh, an unwilling transplant to Fiji after causing a scandal in Hong Kong, is just starting to settle into his life in the capital city of Suva when he is sent to the neighboring island of Ovalau, once a thriving port, on a series of fool's errands. First: investigate strange reports of Germans, thousands of miles from the front of World War I. Second: chaperone two strong-willed European ladies, Mary and Katherine, on a sight-seeing tour. And third: supervise the only police officer currently on Ovalau, a teenage constable with a penchant for hysterics. Accompanied by his friend Taviti, who is visiting his uncle, the local chief, Akal sets off on these seemingly straightforward tasks. Instead, they become embroiled in a series of local issues: the gruesome death of an unpopular local and the imprisonment of a group of Norwegian sailors in Taviti's uncle's village. To add to Akal's woes, Katherine, the charming aspiring journalist, harbors an agenda of her own.

Schott, Philipp. [Three Bengal Kittens: A Dr Bannerman Veterinarian Mystery](#) (ECW Press \$19.95). I like this Canadian series about a neurodivergent vet practicing in a small town near Winnipeg who despite getting lost in numbers and strict routines manages to solve murders. Great local color. In his fourth investigation with his sniffer dog, Pippin, Dr. Peter Bannerman uncovers suspects, treats animals, tracks a kitten kidnapper, and must solve a locked-room mystery. It is his artistic brother Sam, his maddening opposite, who drags him into a case where an elderly man is found dead in his bed and one of his three Bengal Kittens has mysteriously gone missing. While Sam suffers from some mental health issues, Peter doesn't believe he's a killer, nor does he believe in a killer ghost committing murder inside a locked apartment.... For a treat buy all four of the [Dr. Bannerman mysteries](#).