

BOOKNEWS from

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BE OUR VALENTINE...

AUTHORS ARE SIGNING...

Some Events will be webcast on Facebook Live

Check out our new [YouTube Channel](#)

SATURDAY FEBRUARY 1 2:00 PM Publication Party

Rhys Bowen signs [Above the Bay of Angels](#) (Lake Union \$24.95/\$14.95)

TUESDAY FEBRUARY 4 7:00 PM

Douglas Preston signs [Crooked River](#) (Grand Central \$29)

Lincoln Child presigns and joins in by Skype

Our copies include an exclusive photo of Lincoln on a Florida beach as well as an additional chapter for 2019's [Verses for the Dead](#)

THURSDAY FEBRUARY 6 7:00 PM

Charles Todd signs [A Divided Loyalty](#) (Harper \$28.99)

Inspector Ian Rutledge in Avebury

SATURDAY FEBRUARY 8 2:00 PM Mystery Tea

Parada del Sol traffic has to be dodged until noon

Allison Brennan signs [The Third to Die](#) (Mira \$26.99)

Christina Dodd signs [Strangers She Knows](#) (Harper \$27.99/\$16.99)

Paige Shelton signs [Thin Ice](#) (St Martins \$26.99)

SUNDAY FEBRUARY 9 3:00 PM

Kevin Hearne signs [A Blight of Blackwings](#) (Del Rey \$28.99)

Seven Kennings Epic Fantasy series

TUESDAY FEBRUARY 11 7:00 PM

Double Book Launch

Robert Dugoni signs [A Cold Trail](#) (Thomas & Mercer \$15.95)

Detective Tracy Crosswhite

Kate Winkler Dawson signs [American Sherlock](#) (Putnam \$27)

THURSDAY FEBRUARY 13 7:00 PM

Jenn McKinlay signs [Buried to the Brim](#) (Berkley \$7.99)

Hat Shop Mystery #6

A prize will be awarded for the Best Hat

SATURDAY FEBRUARY 15 2:00 PM

Pancakes Served with the Mystery by renowned local chef Lee Goldberg

Author Lee Goldberg signs [Lost Hills](#) (Thomas & Mercer \$24.95)

SUNDAY FEBRUARY 16 2:00 PM British Tea

Charles Finch signs [The Last Passenger](#) (St Martins \$27.99)

Charles Lenox prequel #3

MONDAY FEBRUARY 17 7:00 PM Book Launch

Meg Gardiner signs [Dark Corners of the Night](#) (Blackstone \$26.99)

A serial killer thriller...and more

Tess Gerritsen signs [The Shape of Night](#) (Ballantine \$28)

A cookbook writer, a ghost, and maybe a serial killer

TUESDAY FEBRUARY 18

Scott Carson signs [The Chill](#) (Atria \$27)

A terrific, chilling supernatural story (this is really Michael Koryta)

WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 19 7:00 PM

Jack Carr previews [Savage Son](#) (Atria \$28) launched here April 13; James Reece

Mark Greaney signs [One Minute Out](#) (Berkley \$28)

The Gray Man

SATURDAY FEBRUARY 21 2:00 PM

Simone St. James signs [The Sun Down Motel](#) (Berkley \$26)

MONDAY FEBRUARY 24 7:00 PM

Joshua Hood signs [Robert Ludlum's The Treadstone](#) (Putnam \$27)

TUESDAY FEBRUARY 25 7:00 PM Book Launch

Cake & Crime – Oh My!

Joanne Fluke signs [Coconut Layer Cake Murder](#) (Kensington \$27)

Arcadia Farms caters the cake

WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 26 7:00 PM

Steve Berry signs [The Warsaw Protocol](#) (St Martins \$28.99)

Cotton Malone in Poland and Belgium. Our copies come with an exclusive postcard featuring Steve and a precious relic

THURSDAY FEBRUARY 27 7:00 PM

Susan Elia MacNeal signs [The King's Justice](#) (Bantam \$27)

Maggie Hope WWII spy

Karen Odden signs [A Trace of Deceit](#) (Harper \$16.99)

Victorian art world murder

SATURDAY FEBRUARY 29 10:30 AM

A Book Club Signing—Read the Book before you come or risk total spoilers

This is a book for fans of Tarryn Fisher

Vanessa Lillie signs [Little Voices](#) (Thomas & Mercer \$15.99)

Those who attend will be offered a free book by another author

FRIDAY FEBRUARY 28 7:00 PM**James Sallis and Three Legged Dog Play****SATURDAY FEBRUARY 29 2:00 PM**

Graham Moore signs [The Holdout](#) (Random \$28)

A jury trial and the aftermath 10 years later

MONDAY MARCH 2 7:00 PM 20th Book Party for Joe Pickett

[Tickets Required](#): \$32 includes one copy \$36 includes one copy, admits two

Location: Ina Levine Jewish Community Campus 12701 N. Scottsdale Rd. Scottsdale 85254

CJ Box signs [Long Range](#) (Putnam \$28)

Joe Pickett #20!

Can't attend? Order in the usual way at the \$28 price

FEBRUARY DISCUSSION CLUBS

Please buy your copy from The Pen. Anyone welcome but remember you risk spoilers if you don't read the selection in advance.

Coffee & Crime: Saturday February 8 10:30 AM

Fair, AA [Erle Stanley Gardner]. [Turn on the Heat](#) (\$9.95)

SciFi Friday: Saturday February 15 7:00 PM

Ellis, Warren. [Crooked Little Vein](#) (\$14.99)

Croak & Dagger: Saturday February 22 10:30 AM

Perez-Reverte, Arturo. [The Flanders Panel](#) (\$15.95)

Hardboiled Crime: Thursday February 20 7:00 PM

Post, Steph. [Lightwood](#) (\$15.99)

FEBRUARY EVENT BOOKS

Berry, Steve. [The Warsaw Protocol](#) (St Martins \$28.99). Best-seller Berry once again shows there's no working author more skilled at combining thrilling adventure with engrossing historical detail. Ex-operative Malone is in Bruges, Belgium, for an antiquarian book fair when he stumbles onto the theft of a religious artifact, one of a string of international burglaries of the Arma Christi, seven holy relics of the Passion of Christ. Stephanie Nelle, head of the Magellan Billet, Cotton's former Justice Department agency employer, and Tom Bunch, a feckless adviser to corrupt U.S. president Warner Fox, task Cotton with stealing one of the remaining relics as the entrance fee to an exclusive illicit auction of Soviet-era material intended to blackmail Poland's president. Cotton, a reluctant but stalwart hero, is thrust into a deadly bidding war that could disrupt the fragile power balance between America and Russia. "Berry seasons the plot with fascinating lore and vivid locations, as informative as any textbook. If only textbooks were this exciting." Our copies come with a photo of the relic and of Berry and wife suited up to explore the salt mine at Wieliczka which is a key landscape of this timely thriller. Fans of James Rollins will enjoy a little treat hooked to the President of Poland in the story. Order earlier [Cotton Malone thrillers](#).

Bowen, Rhys. [Above the Bay of Angels](#) (Lake Union \$24.95/\$14.95). Our heroine, a young woman of good family forced into servant's work by her alcoholic father, learns basic cooking skills for an exacting employer who exploits her. A street accident kills a young woman who, as she dies, thrusts a letter at Bella Waverly. It confirms employment in the kitchens at Buck-

ingham Palace. Desperate to escape her position, Bella assumes the identity of Helen Barton from Yorkshire and bluffs her way into the Queen's employment. As she is a good cook and learns quickly, another break brings her to Victoria's attention. When the queen, who loves her food and is by now as wide as she is tall, elects to visit the Riviera for a health break, Bella is taken along as part of the royal household. And again, despite blackmail by Helen Barton's scummy brother and a death in the royal household, Bella's life changes again. This is a terrific book for foodies, royal watchers, cozy fans, and readers of historical fiction—and thus it is our **February Cozy Crimes Book of the Month**.

Box, CJ. [Long Range](#) (Putnam \$28). A grizzly attack kicks off the 20th Joe Pickett. Joe is asked to join a rescue effort for the victims but then a survivor tells a bizarre story. Maybe the grizzly is being framed? Then Joe is jerked away by a shooting on his own turf: a prominent local judge was not hit by the sniper but his wife is severely wounded. And then Nate Romanowski, new father, is suspected of the crime....

Brennan, Allison. [The Third to Die](#) (Mira \$26.99). Detective Kara Quinn, on leave from the LAPD, is on an early morning jog in her hometown of Liberty Lake when she comes upon the body of a young nurse. The manner of death shows a pattern of highly controlled rage. Meanwhile in DC, FBI special agent Mathias Costa is staffing his newly minted Mobile Response Team. Word reaches Matt that the Liberty Lake murder fits the profile of the compulsive Triple Killer. It will be the first case for the MRT. This time they have a chance to stop this zealous if elusive killer before he strikes again. Brennan, author of several different series including the Lucy Kincaid books, launches a new series that *PW* says "Fans of Jeff Abbott and Karin Slaughter will find hard to put down." And Brennan has moved to metro Phoenix, adding to our author community here.

Carson, Scott. [The Chill](#) (Atria \$27). "Wow! This is one terrific horror/suspense/disaster novel. Characters you root for and a story that grips from the first page." —Stephen King. We know that Michael Koryta has always shown a passion for ghosts, the supernatural, and special landscapes to match. So here he is as Scott Carson in the ancient forests of New York at the Chleauwau-Reservoir, part of the water system feeding NYC downstream. The town of Galesburg was destroyed in the creation of the dam/reservoir, forcing out the families who'd lived on the land for generations. Some of them did move away and on. And others...they didn't move at all. So a century later, today, an elderly grandmother commits a shocking act, a relative working in the construction of a third massive tunnel in NYC has questions, and Aaron Ellsworth, booted from the Coast Guard, decides to swim in the dangerous reservoir waters. After cutting his foot badly, he gets angry at a state dam inspector who tries to help him. Aaron hits the inspector with a bottle, knocking him into the water, where he drowns. This triggers a cascade of events. The neglected dam is dangerously weak, and it becomes clear the townspeople had not evacuated their home without a strategy....

"Carson suspends disbelief through plausible characterizations and convincing descriptive passages, especially of the water tunnel system that feeds New York" says a Starred Review. Those who read Linda Fairstein's terrific thriller *Bad*

Blood with its scenes in Water Tunnel #3 will lap this up. Gothics are making a big comeback and here is an outstanding example: “The year’s best spine-tingler is already here. *The Chill* is a good old-fashioned ghost story, meticulously researched and brilliantly executed. If you’ve ever wished for a cross between ‘Chinatown’ and ‘The Fog,’ Scott Carson has answered your dark prayers...” —John Connolly. Michael Connelly adds, “Horror has a new name and it’s Scott Carson. *The Chill* is an eerie dive into the murky depths of the supernatural. A story that has you looking back over your shoulder on every page.”

Speaking of **Linda Fairstein** her books are all available now digitally on amazon.com. Read up on them [HERE](#).

Dawson, Kate Winkler. [American Sherlock](#) (Putnam \$27) is the story of the birth of modern forensic science, as told through the life of the man known at the time as the “American Sherlock Holmes,” Oscar Heinrich. With his brilliance, and his commanding presence in both the courtroom (where he was the nation’s first expert witness) and at crime scenes, Heinrich spearheaded the invention of an astounding array of new forensic tools that became staples of 20th century police investigation: blood spatter analysis, ballistics, lie detector tests, and the use of fingerprints as courtroom evidence. Heinrich captivated America’s attention during the height of Prohibition, an era in which sensationalized crimes met the systematic study of evidence. Set in the Bay Area during the height of Prohibition when there was an 80% increase in crime, the book features high-profile cases such as the 1925 Bessie Ferguson cold case—which takes Heinrich from the salt-water marshes in El Cerrito to Bay Farm Island to his own crime lab in the basement of his home on Berkeley’s Oxford Street—and one of the most controversial cases of Heinrich’s career, the sensationalized 1933 murder trial of Stanford academic David Lamson.

Note: If you are interested in the history of forensics, Bruce Goldfarb delves into “The Untold Story of Frances Glessner Lee and the Invention of Modern Forensics” in [18 Tiny Deaths](#) (Sourcebooks \$25.99). Lee, teaching at Harvard Medical School despite heavy odds as WWII progresses, created miniature teaching rooms: The Nutshell Studies of Unexplained Death, 20 true crime scene dioramas recreated in minute detail at doll-house scale, used for training homicide investigators. Read more about her [HERE](#) and take the VR tour of The Nutshell Studies. Hers is a fabulous story I highly recommend both for science and for her courageous knocking down of barriers...and enhancing your reading of crime fiction.

Dodd, Christina. [Strangers She Knows](#) (Harper \$27.99/\$16.99). Dodd concludes her Cape Charade trilogy with a nail-biter of a tale that has her series protagonist Kellen Adams, along with her husband Max Di Luca and their young daughter, taking a family “vacation” on Isla Paraiso, the Di Luca family’s private island off the coast of Northern California in an effort to escape Mara Philippi, an obsessed serial killer who has a score to settle with Kellen. John Charles add, “Throw a spooky, old, gothic family mansion on the island and a plot thread that goes back to World War II and you have all the ingredients for an addictive, compulsively readable tale.” We have a limited supply of the hardcover.

Dugoni, Robert. [A Cold Trail](#) (Thomas & Mercer \$15.95). A Starred Review: “Thriller Award–finalist Dugoni’s impressive seventh Tracy Crosswhite mystery finds Seattle homicide detective Tracy and attorney husband Dan back in Cedar Grove, Wash.,

where they both grew up and where Dan has taken on a complex case against Cedar Grove’s mayor and a group of investors trying to revitalize the downtown area. The case puts Dan at odds with many of the townsfolk, and when Tracy gets involved in a fatal arson case, she’s soon ruffling feathers as well. The arson victim was not only the police chief’s wife but a reporter looking into a 1993 cold case, the murder of teen Heather Johansen. Heather was killed two years before Tracy’s younger sister, Sarah, and their deaths are hauntingly similar. Worse, Tracy learns Heather was last seen on a dark country road headed to the Crosswhite house. Dugoni weaves a compulsively readable tale of love, loss, and greed. Readers will look forward to the further exploits of his sharp-witted detective.” Order [earlier cases for Tracy](#) and binge read.

Finch, Charles. [The Last Passenger](#) (St Martins \$27.99). Set in 1855 London, this third prequel to the Charles Lenox Victorian crime series takes the aristocratic sleuth to a crime scene at Paddington Station, where a conductor on the train from Manchester has found a man’s bloody corpse. The killer insured that identifying his victim would be a tall order by not only emptying the dead man’s pockets but also taking the time to cut out all the labels from the man’s clothing. While the police attribute the killing to an ongoing gang war in Manchester, Lenox pursues a different tack after realizing that the conductor lied about missing a bus ticket home in his statement to the authorities. Other evidence, such as the conductor’s not wearing a uniform, suggests that he was an imposter not employed by the railway. Finch effectively integrates the politics of the time, including pre–Civil War tensions in America, and his insertion of subplots regarding his lead’s romantic life doesn’t distract from the clever murder puzzle. A treat for fans of Anne Perry, Tasha Alexander, and our own Karen Odden who will converse with Finch. If you have somehow missed him start with the three prequels: [The Woman in the Water](#); [The Vanishing Man](#) (\$17.99 each); and this new novel. Or read the very first Lenox, [A Beautiful Blue Death](#) (\$9.99).

Fluke, Joanne. [Coconut Layer Cake Murder](#) (Kensington \$27). First, I emphasize that Arcadia Farms is catering this 20th Anniversary event with its unsurpassed coconut cake! Second, data shows that since the series debut in 2000 Fluke has developed over 600 recipes included in her books and baked over 600,000 chocolate chip cookies for her fans, plus other yummys. Third, Hannah has been vacationing in sunny California when murder hastens her back to Eden Lake, Minnesota, and The Cookie Jar bakery. Her sister Michelle’s boyfriend, Detective Lonnie Murphy, has become the prime suspect after he drove a drunk home from the bar only to find her dead the next morning in her bedroom, murdered while he slept on her couch. Lonnie’s memory of the night is impaired, leaving Hannah a challenge heightened by the fact that two cops, one Lonnie’s brother, the other his partner, have been taken off the case.... Enjoy the over 20 original recipes which include cookies and sweets but some protein too. No Keto diet for Hannah’s circle.

Gardiner, Meg. [Dark Corners of the Night](#) (Blackstone \$26.99). He appears in the darkness like a ghost, made of shadows and fear—the Midnight Man. He comes for the parents but leaves the children alive. “Gardiner has mastered the art of the serial-killer saga without an ounce of fat. Los Angeles may not have snow at Christmastime, but it’s got the next best thing: a stone-cold

serial killer who provides FBI behavioral analyst Caitlin Hendrix with her third, and perhaps most chilling, adversary.” What kind of person breaks into houses when the whole family is home, executes both parents, but leaves the children alive to live with their nightmares? Only someone, as Caitlin tells her boss, CJ Emerich, who has “deliberately created surviving witnesses.” The *Midnight Man*’s spree—he’s escalating—ranges across scattered suburban homes in Los Angeles County. Which provides an opportunity for mapping him using nifty tech. Then Caitlin catches her first real lead. Hannah Guillory, a plucky sixth grader, finds the *Midnight Man* attempting to break into her house, rouses her parents to call 911 before he gets inside, and then gives the task force assembled to catch him a description of the UNSUB—unknown subject—and his car that’s just detailed enough to suggest something truly shocking, and readily identifiable, about him.... “Determined that she won’t be outmaneuvered by a killer who’s dramatically stepped up the pace of his murderous attacks, breached his self-imposed limits, and now threatens her star witness with abduction and worse, Caitlin hunkers down to catch a quarry whom she says is ‘like nothing I’ve ever dealt with’—as if she doesn’t know that descriptions like that just set the bar even higher for the inevitable sequel,” says *Kirkus* of our **February Crime Collectors Book of the Month**. A bit snarky but readers must hope it’s true. Tense and impactful, Edgar Award winner Meg Gardiner’s latest UNSUB thriller is pulse-pounding, filled with action and forensics and vivid characters.

Gerritsen, Tess. [The Shape of Night](#) (Ballantine \$28). With reference to my comments under the Scott Carson review above and the resurgence of the Gothic thriller, here is another superior example by, like “Carson,” an author who is better known for her hard-hitting crime novels featuring investigators Rizzoli and Iles, etc. So first, since setting is crucial to a Gothic, Gerritsen takes us to a 19th Century mansion on a remote Maine coast that was built one Captain Jeremiah Brodie, tragically lost at sea. Looking for a retreat in which to work and heal from a very bad decision that led to tragedy, Boston food writer Ava Colette travels to Tucker Cove, Maine, where she rents Brodie’s Watch for the summer, almost against her better judgment, but settles in as no other rental is available. Soon her nights are interrupted by visions of Jeremiah’s ghost, who appears to be as real as if he were a flesh and blood man. Meanwhile, she begins to wonder about a series of mysterious if apparently natural deaths in the town—and why the last renter left the house so abruptly. After learning more about the house’s history and its previous inhabitants, she consults a ghost hunter, whose team discovers some disturbing things about paranormal presences at Brodie’s Watch. The stakes rise when Ava figures out that a killer must be a very real menace. One Starred review ends, “This magnetic haunted house story will keep readers riveted from the very first page.” This gem published last fall but Gerritsen was traveling and thus joins us on February 17 with Meg Gardiner for a remarkable double event.

Goldberg, Lee. [Lost Hills](#) (Thomas & Mercer \$24.95). Deputy Eve Ronin is a newly-minted homicide detective with the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department. Yes, she’s capable and she wanted the job — but she knows (and her colleagues know) that the department hired her to buff its troubled image after a video of her arresting a famous actor went viral. Ronin’s first case gives her a chance to prove herself: Someone has murdered a mother and her two children in their home. The floor and walls of the

house are covered in blood, but the bodies are missing. With the help of her partner, who is about to retire, Ronin must find the killer and the bodies while battling everyone who resents her, raging fires that threaten to consume Los Angeles, her mother, and her own insecurities. Goldberg, a two-time Edgar Award winner, is at the top of his game. The prose is lean and the pacing is superb. There is no filler here; every sentence earns the space it occupies on the page. The dialogue is never boring and always helps push the action forward. Conversations between Ronin and her disappointed mother “are as sad as they are hilarious; embodying the broken dream aesthetic of the many who never made it in Hollywood. There are a lot of series out there, but Eve Ronin and Goldberg’s fast-paced prose should put this one on the radar of every crime fiction fan.”—NPR. In an Afterword, no peeking!, Goldberg suggests he was inspired by a real life case.

Greaney, Mark. [One Minute Out](#) (Berkley \$28). In this remarkable ninth Gray Man novel, Courtland Gentry—the Gray Man—takes on the Consortium, an international sex slave cartel, the existence of which he stumbles on while committing a hit on a Serbian strongman. A former CIA employee, Gentry fell out of favor to the point that the agency was trying to kill him, and after getting that misunderstanding straightened out, the agency is still kind of trying to kill him, though he works as an off-the-books assassin in a secret CIA program called Poison Apple. Never mind his official status. What’s important is that he’s probably the greatest assassin in the world, and those who oppose him usually end up dead. In this case, he decides to defy his bosses and hunt down the men who are part of the Consortium, running his own op with no help other than that from Talyssa Corbu, a junior analyst for Europol, whose sister the sex traffickers have captured. As always, Gentry is up to the task. Spy thriller fans will be enthralled

Hearne, Kevin. [A Blight of Blackwings](#) (Del Rey \$28.99). “If you’re looking for some entertainment before some new *Game of Thrones* returns to television, this could be the series you need to read.”—*Newsday*. It began with 2018’s [A Plague of Giants](#) (8.99) and continues here with this trio: Daryck is from a city that was devastated by the war with the Bone Giants, and now he and a band of warriors seek revenge against the giants for the loved ones they’ve lost. Hanima is part of a new generation with extraordinary magical talents: She can speak to fantastical animals. But when this gift becomes a threat to the powers-that-be, Hanima becomes the leader of a movement to use this magic to bring power to the people. Koesha is the captain of an all-female crew on a perilous voyage to explore unknown waters. Though her crew is seeking a path around the globe, Koesha is also looking for her sister, lost at sea two years ago. But what lies beyond the edges of the map is far more dangerous than storms and sea monsters....

Hood, Joshua. [Robert Ludlum’s The Treadstone Resurrection](#) (Putnam \$27). Adam Hayes, a graduate of the under-the-radar CIA black ops Treadstone, was first seen in Robert Ludlum’s Jason Bourne series. Like Bourne, Adam Hayes wants to forget his violent past and sink into obscurity, but that’s not going to happen once Hayes gets dragged into a mission by Nick Ford, an old agent friend from his Treadstone days who is trapped in a fire fight in rural Venezuela. Shortly before Ford is shot dead, he sends Hayes an email with a picture showing CIA agent Jefferson Gray in an aircraft hangar with Colonel Carlos Vega, the head

of Venezuela's secret police. Vega is involved, as is Grey, with the president of Venezuela, Eduardo Díaz, in a drug smuggling scheme. The plot moves from one violent confrontation to another "through a catalog of modern weaponry" in the vein of Tom Clancy. In fact, Hayes himself is a weapon and this semibionic warrior can be fascinating to follow through the many long, intricate action scenes. This starts a Ludlum series spinoff so presumably Hayes survives....

Lillie, Vanessa. [Little Voices](#) (Thomas & Mercer \$15.99). Devon Burges is in the throes of a high-risk birth when she learns of her dear friend's murder. The police quickly name another friend as the chief suspect, but Devon doesn't buy it—and despite her difficult recovery, she feels impelled to investigate. Haunted by postpartum problems that manifest as a cruel voice in her head, Devon, caring full time for her baby, exhausted, is barely getting through each day. Yet her instincts are still sharp, and she's bent on proving her friend's innocence. This well wrought tale of suspense has such a kicker of an ending that instead of the usual book signing format **we're asking you to buy the book early and read it so we can discuss the story as a whole. Those who attend will be offered a free book by another author.**

MacNeal, Susan Elia. [The King's Justice](#) (Bantam \$27). Over the course of eight books Maggie Hope, American expat, has progressed from the post of [Mr. Churchill's Secretary](#) (\$16) in 1940 to spy, and barely survived her training. Now Maggie's 9th outing has its start in December of 1942 when she's taking a much-needed break from spying to defuse bombs in London. But Maggie herself is an explosion waiting to happen. Traumatized by her past, she finds herself living dangerously—taking huge risks, smoking, drinking, and speeding through the city streets on a motorcycle. The last thing she wants is to get entangled in another crime. Still, a stolen Stradivarius, one of the finest violins ever made, is a difficult lure to resist. Who knew investigating its fate would lead her to a serial killer on the loose in London, targeting Conscientious Objectors? There appears to be a link between the robbery, the murders—and her past. With England putting abolishing the death penalty on hold during wartime, the stakes are high...and rising. One feels that Maggie's arguments re capital punishment are those of MacNeal. If you have not read the series this is a good time to order the [Maggie Hope Mysteries](#) and begin.

McKinlay, Jenn. [Buried to the Brim](#) (Berkley \$7.99). Hat Shop Mystery #6. London's most refined canines and their humans are gearing up for the Pets and Wellness Society's annual dog show—and Betty Wentworth, favorite aunt to Scarlett's fiancé Harrison and proud owner of corgi front-runner Freddy, knows that this could be their year with the right edge. Never one to turn away a corgi in need, Scarlett convinces her milliner cousin, Vivian, to design matching hats for dream team Betty and Freddy as they compete for Best in Show. It's a tail wagging good time until the dog-food sponsor of the event is found dead and Betty is the prime suspect. Vivian and Scarlett agree to enter the competition in Betty's place and help Harrison catch the real killer before Betty is collared. **A prize will be awarded for the Best Hat.**

Moore, Graham. [The Holdout](#) (Random \$28). Fifteen-year-old Jessica Silver, heiress to a billion-dollar fortune, vanishes on her way home from school. Her teacher, Bobby Nock, is the prime suspect. It's an open and shut case for the prosecution, and a

quick conviction seems all but guaranteed. Until Maya Seale, a young woman on the jury, persuades the rest of the jurors to vote not guilty: a controversial decision that will change all of their lives forever. Ten years later, one of the jurors is found dead, and Maya is the prime suspect. The real killer could be any of the other ten jurors. Is Maya being forced to pay the price for her decision all those years ago? "Plunge a syringe filled with adrenaline into the heart of *Twelve Angry Men* and you've got *The Holdout*," says AJ Finn of our March Crime Collectors Book of the Month as he signs it February 29.

Preston, Douglas/Lincoln Child. [Crooked River](#) (Grand Central \$29). Let me say first this book is a must read for any fan of Randy Wayne White and Doc Ford whose new thriller, [Salt River](#) (Putnam \$28 SIGNED), is reviewed below. What a zinger this is from the opening scene where two children are shelling (gathering them) on a Sanibel Island beach and espy tennis shoes floating onto the sand—shoes each filled with a severed human foot. Then the Sanibel police chief has to take drastic action to preserve evidence (most of you will hate this!). Then a team of investigators gathers under the leadership of a Coast Guard commander who develops a theory that, no surprise, is challenged by Agent AXL Pendergast, still in the area after the events in [Verses for the Dead](#), who sets up his own line of inquiry. Roger Smithback of the *Miami Herald* meanwhile is trying his every ploy for a scoop, Pendergast's ward Constance takes an active role dressed in organdy, and the aforementioned police chief, Perelman, who switched gears from studying to be a rabbi to law enforcement officer, bemusedly cooperates with the unorthodox FBI Agent. All this in the first 50 pages. Bonus: the writing about Sanibel, Captiva, and the Florida coast is lyrical. Did I mentioned a Coast Guard op off the shores of a dreaded Cuban prison that is first terrifying and then hilarious? Our copies come with an exclusive postcard and an extra chapter for *Verses for the Dead*.

Shelton, Paige. [Thin Ice](#) (St Martins \$26.99). Taking a break from her earlier cozies as well as her Scottish Bookshop series (new one signed May 16), Shelton turns her hand to suspense with the first in a new series set in Alaska featuring Beth Rivers. Known to the world as thriller author Elizabeth Fairchild, Beth had become the subject of a fanatic's obsession. After being held in a van for three days by her kidnapper, Levi Brooks, Beth managed to escape, and until he is captured, she's got to get away. Cold and remote, Alaska seems tailor-made for her to hideout. Beth's new home in Alaska is sparsely populated with people who all seem to be running or hiding from something. This series compares to that of Kelley Armstrong where the community for those on the run is in the Yukon. It's hard to find a place to disappear today and thus a challenge to authors.

St. James, Simon. [The Sun Down Motel](#) (Berkley \$26). John Charles reviews: No one knows quite how to send a shiver down a reader's spine quite like Simone St. James. In her latest spooky novel of suspense, Carly Kirk arrives in Fell, N.Y. determined to find some answers about her aunt Viv Delaney's mysterious disappearance from the area 35 years earlier. Taking a job as the night clerk at the Sun Down Motel, where her aunt worked before she went missing, seems like a good place to start until Carly discovers Fell has a surprisingly high crime rate for such a small town. St. James effectively uses the dual time line of her plot to keep readers on edge while skillfully deploying her signature literary mix of mysterious chills, supernatural thrills, and a dash of

romance. Not since the Bates Motel opened up for business has there been a scarier place to stay than the Sun Down Motel.

Todd, Charles. [A Divided Loyalty](#) (Harper \$28.99). Avebury, so mysterious with its ancient ring of standing stones. Especially with the body lying at the foot of one. Inspector Ian Rutledge, still in the black books of his superior, is handed this case instead of a day of leave. His fellow copper Brian Leslie had previously been dispatched to this investigation in Wiltshire where we saw he was shocked to recognize the dead woman. Hoping his reaction went unnoticed, he felt he could solve the case. When he failed, Rutledge took over, leaving Rutledge in the thankless job of reviewing Leslie's work and moreover, questioning it. The investigation entails a visit to Shropshire. As ever Todd does a fine job limning the landscape of the crimes. And we see Rutledge struggling with his personal life as well....

OUR FEBRUARY BOOKS OF THE MONTH

British Crime Club One unsigned hardcover or paperback per month

Jan: Airth, Rennie. [The Decent Inn of Death](#)

Cozy Crimes Club One unsigned hardcover or paperback per month

Bowen, Rhys. [Above the Bay of Angels](#)

First Mystery Book of the Month Club One Signed First per month

Wegert, Tessa. [Death in the Family](#)

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

Gardiner, Meg. [Dark Corners of the Night](#)

Historical Fiction Club One Signed First per month

Hornby, Gill. [Miss Austen](#)

Fantastic New Fiction One Signed First per month

Cummins, Jeanine. [American Dirt](#)

SIGNED BOOKS

Cummins, Jeanine. [American Dirt](#) (Flatiron \$27.99). The #1 Indie Next Pick for our **February Fantastic New Fiction Book of the Month**: "*American Dirt* is a beautiful, heartbreaking odyssey, a vivid world filled with angels and demons, one I only wanted to leave so I could get my heart out of my throat. Cartel violence sends a mother and her son careening north from Acapulco toward the relative safety of the United States, and every moment of their journey is rendered in frantic, sublime detail. Danger lurks around the corner of every paragraph, but so do humanity, empathy, and stunning acts of human kindness. You will feel the toll of every mile, the cost of every bullet, and the power of every page. A wonder."

"A literary thriller chronicling the migration of a mother and her young son. Under threat, Lydia and Luca leave their middle-class life in Acapulco and begin a traumatic journey to the border, evading cartels, thieves, corrupt police, and others forced into malevolent behavior by extreme violence and poverty." For readers who enjoyed *The Other Americans* (Laila Lalami) and *And the Mountains Echoed* (Khaled Hosseini). "I strive to write page-turners because I love to read them, and it's been a long time since I turned pages as fast as I did with *American Dirt*. Its plot is tight, smart, and unpredictable. Its message is important and timely, but not political. Its characters are violent,

compassionate, sadistic, fragile, and heroic. It is rich in authenticity. Its journey is a testament to the power of fear and hope and belief that there are more good people than bad." —John Grisham, endorsed by Stephen King.

There is controversy raging as to whether Cummins is the one to tell this story, she not being Mexican nor a migrant, which is part of a whole thing about who can tell stories and "cultural appropriation," heightened by this book being an Oprah and a Barnes & Noble Pick and perhaps misrepresented by its publisher who has canceled her book tour in favor of "town halls." I say that fiction is fiction and not limited by anything but an author's imagination.

✦Foley, Lucy. [The Guest List](#) (Collins \$32). On a remote island, guests gather for the wedding of the year – the marriage of Jules Keegan and Will Slater. Old friends. Past grudges. Happy families. Hidden jealousies. Thirteen guests. The wedding cake has barely been cut when one of the guests is found dead. And as a storm unleashes its fury on the island, everyone is trapped. All have a secret. All have a motive. One guest won't leave this wedding alive.... From the author of the smash bestseller [The Hunting Party](#) (\$16.99) due out in March in paperback. "I didn't think Lucy Foley could top *The Hunting Party*, but she did! I loved this book. It gave me the same waves of happiness I get from curling up with a classic Christie. A remote, atmospheric island, a wedding no one is particularly happy to be at, old secrets – and a murder. The alternating points of view keep you guessing, and guessing wrong. I can't wait for her next book."—Alex Michaelides, author of [The Silent Patient](#) (\$16.99 March), a 2019 British Crime Book of the Month

✦Griffiths, Elly. [The Lantern Men](#) (Quercus \$44). Dr. Ruth Galloway has a new job, home and partner, and is no longer North Norfolk police's resident forensic archaeologist. That is, until convicted murderer Ivor March offers to make DCI Nelson a deal. Nelson was always sure that March killed more women than he was charged with. Now March confirms this, and offers to show Nelson where the other bodies are buried—but only if Ruth will do the digging. Curious, but wary, Ruth agrees. March tells Ruth that he killed four more women and that their bodies are buried near a village bordering the fens, said to be haunted by the Lantern Men, mysterious figures holding lights that lure travelers to their deaths. Is Ivor March himself a lantern man, luring Ruth back to Norfolk? What is his plan, and why is she so crucial to it? And are the killings really over?

Gruley, Bryan. [Purgatory Bay](#) (Thomas & Mercer \$24.95). Twelve years after a young woman's family is killed by the mob, she orchestrates an ambitious revenge plot. Jubilee Rathman is a straight-A student and star soccer goalie destined for Princeton—until her family is brutally murdered. Twelve years later, she lives in a virtual fortress on Purgatory Bay near Bleak Harbor. In her crosshairs is former reporter Michaela "Mikey" Deming, who Jubilee believes got her family in trouble with the Detroit mob. As retribution, Jubilee kidnaps Mikey's sister and daughter, and that's just the start in her ruthless quest for justice. Bleak Harbor police chief Katya Malone, still reeling from her failure to find a kidnapped boy, leads the investigation. She's determined to keep history from repeating, but Jubilee is more cunning than Malone can imagine. All Mikey and Katya can do is follow Jubilee's dangerous trail of clues. But in Bleak Harbor, nothing is what it seems, and no one can be trusted in this hard driving thriller.

“Mikey’s decision to take responsibility for her actions and stop being afraid is one of these, as is the power of compassion to combat violence. Give up all suspension of disbelief; this is one crazy ride.”

✦Hannah, Sophie. [Haven’t They Grown](#) (Hodder \$39). All Beth has to do is drive her son to his Under-14s away match, watch him play, and bring him home. Just because she knows that her former best friend lives near the football ground, that doesn’t mean she has to drive past her house and try to catch a glimpse of her. Why would Beth do that, and risk dredging up painful memories? She hasn’t seen Flora Braid for twelve years. But she can’t resist. She parks outside Flora’s house and watches from across the road as Flora and her children, Thomas and Emily, step out of the car. Except... Flora looks the same, only older—just as Beth would have expected. It’s the children that are the problem. Twelve years ago, Thomas and Emily Braid were five and three years old. Today, they are still five and three. They are Thomas and Emily without a doubt—Beth hears Flora call them by their names—but they are no older no taller. They haven’t changed at all. Why haven’t they grown? I found this one by Hannah to be hard going.

✦Hickson, Joanna. [Lady of the Ravens](#) (Collins \$34.99). Elizabeth of York, her life already tainted by dishonor and tragedy, her little brothers vanished into the Tower, now queen to the first Tudor king, Henry the VII. Joan Vaux, servant of the court, straining against marriage and motherhood and privy to the deepest and darkest secrets of her queen. Like the ravens, Joan must use her eyes and her senses, as conspiracy whispers through the dark corridors of the Tower. Through Joan’s eyes, tour the squalid streets of Tudor London, the whispering walls of its most fearsome fortress and the glamorous court of a kingdom in crisis

✦Hornby, Gill. [Miss Austen](#) (Century \$32). Why did Cassandra Austen burn a treasure trove of letters written by her sister, Jane Austen – an act of destruction that has troubled academics for centuries? England, 1840. For the two decades following the death of her beloved sister, Jane, Cassandra Austen has lived alone, spending her days visiting friends and relations and quietly, purposefully working to preserve her sister’s reputation. Now in her sixties and increasingly frail, Cassandra goes to stay with the Fowles of Kintbury, family of her long-dead fiancé, in search of a trove of Jane’s letters. Dodging her hostess and a meddling housemaid, Cassandra eventually hunts down the letters and confronts the secrets they hold, secrets not only about Jane but about Cassandra herself. Will Cassandra bare the most private details of her life to the world, or commit her sister’s legacy to the flames? The narrative moves back and forth between the vicarage and Cassandra’s vibrant memories of her years with Jane, interwoven with Jane’s brilliantly reimagined lost letters. Based on a literary mystery that has long puzzled biographers and academics, our **February History Book of the Month** is not a murder mystery but not all mysteries have to have one.

Good news for Austen fans: Stephanie Barron has agreed to write another book in her Jane Austen mystery series.

Kellerman, Jonathan. [The Museum of Desire](#) (Ballantine \$30). Lieutenant Milo Sturgis, an unusual rules-bending cop who is gay in a paramilitary organization like the LAPD, has solved a lot of murder cases. On many of them—the ones he calls “different”—he taps the brain of brilliant psychologist Dr. Alex Delaware

whose case load never stops him from attending ea crime scene. They are a strong team as well as deep friends. Which is good because the horrendous murder scene they face when called to a Bel Air mansion rented out as a party house would test anyone. Four bodies have been slaughtered and posed inside a stretch limo (the driver is also a victim). The victims seemingly have no connection to each other and each has been killed in a different manner. Who are they? Why were they killed? Will this lead to who did it? I’ll say this, Kellerman not only leads you on a real dance but he delivers a knockout punch to wind the case up. Bravo.

Kent, Kathleen. [Burn](#) (Mulholland \$28). Patrick writes, “One of the freshest characters in contemporary crime fiction, Kent’s protagonist Detective Betty Rhyzyk is a sort of classic iconoclast, a tough-talking Brooklyn cop relocated to the sprawl of modern Dallas (or, The Big D, as it is called). In 2017’s [The Dime](#) (\$16.99), Rhyzyk was taken hostage by an apocalyptic cult called The Family and barely lived to tell the tale. Now Kent shows us the psychological damage that persists as Rhyzyk tries to readjust to her old life. She’s back at work as a narcotics detective, but she’s teetering on the edge, obsessed with chasing down leads of the cult leader, who’s in the wind, and squaring off against a drug cartel that has been terrorizing Dallas. The setup might be a familiar one, but Kent’s masterful writing and insightful exploration of character elevates this way above the rest.”

✦Monroe, J S. [The Other You](#) (Zeus \$39). Kate used to be good at recognizing people. So good, she worked for the police, identifying criminals in crowds of thousands. But six months ago, a devastating car accident led to a brain injury. Now the woman who never forgot a face can barely recognize herself in the mirror. At least she has Rob. Kate met him just after her accident, and he nursed her back to health in his high-tech modernist house on the Cornish coast. When she’s with him, the nightmares of the accident fade, and she feels safe and loved. Until, one day, she looks at Rob anew – and knows, with absolute certainty, that he has been replaced by an impostor. Is she right? Have her old recognition skills returned? Or is it all in her damaged mind? From the author of 2017 First Mystery Book of the Month [Find Me](#) (\$15.99).

Nemens, Emily. [The Cactus League](#) (Farrar \$27). “Here’s the thing about baseball, and all else,” says the narrator in this novel’s first chapter, “everything changes.” Nemens delivers an engaging, eccentric cast of players, coaches, families, and others who inhabit the world of baseball—including a wise, witty, and somewhat omniscient sportswriter-narrator.”[Nemens] works within the quirky register of the heart, writing about one of her great passions: baseball. She crafts a humorous and emotional novel about a star outfielder, and the coaches, fans and criminals who inhabit the same off-kilter world.” –*The Wall Street Journal*. “[A] quirky first novel . . . [The Cactus League] showcases a fascinating gallimaufry of characters who swirl around the edges of the springtime ritual. Nemens finds a kind of attenuated hope along with melancholy in these sharply etched character studies that “end not with ‘out three’ but ‘out maybe.’” –*Booklist Starred Review*. “[An] insightful debut... each character is brought to life in convincing detail.”—*PW*

Post, Steph. [Holding Smoke](#) (Polis \$26). Patrick writes, “The concluding volume in her terrific Judah Cannon trilogy, Post’s new novel chronicles the inevitable showdown between the

Cannon clan and Sister Tulah Atwell, the psychotic Pentecostal preacher responsible for Judah's father's death. Post is a brave new writer who takes the reader on an unforgettable journey deep into the rural swamplands of Florida, replete with a healthy dose of southern gothic. With a dash of Harry Crews and a bit of Flannery O'Connor, this up and coming writer has staked out her own claim. I turned Michael Connelly on to this outstanding Floridian's work a few years ago and he's become a fellow enthusiast. Read books one and two: [Lightwood](#) (\$15.99) and [A Walk in the Fire](#) (\$28 Signed; \$16).

Wegert, Tessa. [Death in the Family](#) (Berkley \$26). In the 1990s I was a fan of Stephen F Wilcox's mysteries like *St. Lawrence Run* set in the Thousand Islands region of Upper New York State bordering Canada. In that book there was a grand old mansion called Castle House. Those of you who saw *Knives Out* with Daniel Craig *et al* get the idea. So I am delighted to return to this special landscape with Wegert's debut, our **February First Mystery Book of the Month**, and to say that it too has a grand mansion as the setting for an updated Country House Murder.

Thirteen months ago, former NYPD detective Shana Merchant barely survived being abducted by a serial killer. Now hoping to leave grisly murder cases behind, she's moved with her fiancé, the psychiatrist treating her, to the Thousand Islands to reboot, but takes a job with the Jefferson County Bureau of Criminal Investigation. Detection remains her thing. And the sheriff responds to a call by sending her and fellow investigator Tim Wellington to an isolated private island owned by the wealthy Sinclair family. Jasper Sinclair is missing. As a nor'easter bears down on her new territory, Shana and Tim arrive to find blood in Jasper's bedroom and a house full of Sinclair family and friends on edge. While Tim guesses they're dealing with a runaway case, Shana is convinced that they have a murder on their hands. As the gale intensifies outside, she starts conducting interviews and discovers the Sinclairs and their guests are crawling with dark and dangerous secrets—so Agatha Christie! Trapped on the island by the raging storm with only Tim whose reliability is thrown into question, the increasingly restless suspects, and her own trauma-fueled flashbacks for company, Shana will have to trust the one person her abduction destroyed her faith in—herself—to see the investigation through.

White, Randy Wayne. [Salt River](#) (Putnam \$27). Leo Alomar, a shady IRS agent, accuses Doc, a Florida marine biologist, of living above his means. Alomar has figured out that Doc has been selling gold that he retrieved from the waters off the Bahamas, old Spanish coins melted down into mooring anchors. The IRS agent promises to make any tax problems from the unreported income go away if Doc will reveal where more such treasure might lie. Meanwhile, Doc's eccentric friend, Tomlinson, a small-time ganja merchant and Zen Buddhist, finds his past has returned to haunt him as well. Years earlier, Tomlinson was a sperm donor, and some of his adult biological children are trying to arrange a reunion, an effort that places lives in danger.

REPEAT REVIEWS

Hauty, Chris. [Deep State](#) (Atria \$27 Signed). On the surface, Hayley seems to be a wide-eyed true believer of the president's absolute power. But first-time novelist Hauty makes her a formidable, cagey adversary to anyone who stands in her way. Jealous of attention paid to Hayley by Hall and Monroe, the other interns

and staff repeatedly try to sabotage her but fail miserably. When the mercenaries hired to carry out the assassination come after her to stop her meddling, she always manages to elude them. *Deep State* lets readers think they know what's going on, right up until a jaw-dropping finale.

I've been spending a lot of time in author interviews discussing how the military man, usually a former vet, has replaced the private eye. Reacher's influence, but it's really all the same thing, a man with a mission and loyal to it and a person, or persons, at risk. Think Hurwitz's Orphan X, FINDER's Nick Heller, Petrie's Peter Ash.... Listen to the [podcast with Gregg Hurwitz](#) for more.

Montgomery, Jess. [The Hollows](#) (St Martins \$27.99 Signed). Sheriff Lily Ross is called out of her home late at night to investigate a mysterious death. The body of an elderly woman – barefoot and in her nightgown – is found battered near the Moonvale Hollow Tunnel – a stretch of railroad track once used by abolitionists to ferry escaping slaves to freedom. Set in 1926 in the western foothills of the Appalachian Mountains in south-eastern Ohio, *The Hollows* is much more than a murder mystery. It weaves racial integration, labor organizing in the Appalachian coal mines, prohibition and women's rights throughout the narrative, set against an authentic backdrop crafted by Montgomery's careful attention to historic detail. Lily Ross, a fiercely independent young widow who has assumed the county's sheriff position left vacant by her husband's death. Inspired by Maude Collins, Ohio's first woman sheriff – appointed in 1925. Lily seeks the aid of her friend Hildy and of the skills of Marvena Whitcomb, a moonshiner and union organizer who also made her debut in [The Widows](#) (\$9.99). Like Sheriff Ross, Marvena Whitcomb defies convention. She advocates for safe working conditions for coal miners, eschews social mores about marriage and supports racial integration in a county where many are secret KKK supporters. Set just six years after women gained the right to vote, Lily and Marvena are more the exceptions to the rule than the norm.

Parker, Ann. [Mortal Music](#) (Sourcebooks \$26.9/\$15.99 Signed). "Set in 1881, Parker's exuberant sixth Silver Rush mystery [A Dying Note](#) (\$15.99) brims with fascinating period details, flamboyant characters, and surprising plot twists...Parker leaves the reader longing to see what Inez will get up to next." –PW. And here in *Mortal Music* is the answer. By 1881 San Francisco was transforming into the "Paris of the West." Robber barons have put up mansions on Nob Hill. The elegant Palace Hotel welcomes wealthy guests. Society is eager to patronize the arts, music, and the opera. The city is expanding outward while rough neighborhoods like the Barbary Coast still flourish. And San Francisco is a magnet for immigrants of all ranks and stripes.

Petrie, Nick. [The Wild One](#) (Putnam \$26 Signed). The personal issues with Peter Ash, coping not just with PTSD but what to do with his life if not defined by missions, and if missions for whom and why?, are cogent for the series and absorbing. But even if you haven't read Peter and don't care about all that this is one to grab since it's a view of Iceland and Icelanders, "those damned Vikings," that you don't get from reading books by actual Icelanders like Jonasson, Sigurdson, and Indridason. I like the view of cultures presented by outsiders along with those written by insiders. Our copies come with an interview with Nick about why Iceland and much more which is insightful and fun.

Rose, M.J. [Cartier's Hope](#) (Atria \$27). This is a repeat of a review in the January BookNotes by John Charles. I include it in part to encourage any of you who do not read the BookNotes to start doing so as John covers books I miss, provides insights that are different, and it's fun to read.

Determined to make her mark in Gilded Age New York, heiress turned journalist Vera Garland investigates the curse swirling around jeweler Pierre Cartier's recently acquired Hope Diamond. Vera is particularly interested in the rumor that Cartier is trying to manipulate the value of the diamond by leveraging its notoriety. However, all of Vera's journalistic digging draws the attention of another newspaper publisher, whose blackmailing schemes led to the death of Vera's father. Appealing to young Russian jeweler Jacob Asher for help, Vera is unprepared when she begins falling in love with him; and even more unprepared when she gets caught up in his deceptions and finds herself at risk of losing all she has worked so hard to achieve. Rose has made quite a name for herself with her late 19th and early 20th century historical novels, and *PW* had this to say about her latest: "The narrative cleverly explores highlights of early 20th century history and heaps on plenty of intrigue. Rose irresistibly combines elements of mystery, romance, and historical events in this memorable novel." Readers interested in learning more about the Hope Diamond and the Cartier family will also want to consider Francis Cartier Brickell's recently published, fabulously entertaining history on her family [The Cartiers](#) (Ballantine \$35).

Thynne, Jane. [The Words I Never Wrote](#) (Ballantine \$27.99). Here is one more by John: On a whim, Juno Lambert buys a 1931 Underwood typewriter that once belonged to celebrated journalist Cordelia Capel. Within its case she discovers an unfinished novel that tells the story of Cordelia and her older sister Irene, who married a German industrialist and moved to Berlin in the 1936, and the secret that lies between them. After reading the novel, Juno sets off from New York to Europe, where she resolves to uncover the secret that continued to divide the sisters. In this vivid portrait of Nazi Berlin, from its high society to its devastating fall, Jane Thynne, the widow of author Phillip Kerr, examines the truths we sometimes dare not tell ourselves. Filled with cameo appearances from real-life historical figures such as Martha Dodd and Kim Philby, this is "an engrossing, suspenseful page-turner that defies expectations (*Kirkus*)." I add that it was Phil's passion to collect typewriters.

Williams, Beatriz. [The Wicked Redhead](#) (Morrow \$26.99 Signed). John again: In 1924, Ginger Kelly wakes up in tranquil Cocoa Beach, Florida, having fled south to safety in the company of disgraced Prohibition agent Oliver Anson Marshall and her newly-orphaned young sister, Patsy. But paradise is short-lived. Marshall is reinstated to the agency with suspicious haste and put to work patrolling for rumrunners on the high seas, from which he promptly disappears. Gin hurries north to rescue him, only to be trapped in an agonizing moral quandary by Marshall's desperate mother. In 1998, Ella Dommerich has finally settled into her new life in Greenwich Village, inside the same apartment where a certain redheaded flapper lived long ago...and continues to make her presence known. Having quit her ethically problematic job at an accounting firm, cut ties with her unfaithful ex-husband, and begun an epic love affair with Hector, her musician neighbor, Ella's eager to piece together the history of the mysterious Gin Kelly, whose only physical trace is a series of rare vintage

photograph cards for which she modeled before she disappeared. Williams follows up her 2017 novel [The Wicked City](#) (\$15.99) with another spellbinding dual timeline suspense story.

A SMATTERING OF COMPELLING NONFICTION

Cooney, Kara. [When Women Ruled the World](#) (National Geographic \$16.99). Female rulers are a rare phenomenon—but thousands of years ago in ancient Egypt, women reigned supreme. Regularly, repeatedly, and with impunity, queens like Hatshepsut, Nefertiti, and Cleopatra controlled the totalitarian state as power-brokers and rulers. But throughout human history, women in positions of power were more often used as political pawns in male-dominated societies. Egyptologist Cooney asks why did ancient Egypt provide women this kind of access to the highest political office? What was it about these women that allowed them to transcend patriarchal obstacles? What did Egypt gain from its liberal reliance on female leadership, and could today's world learn from its example?

Hammer, Joshua. [The Falcon Thief](#) (SimonSchuster \$26). A rollicking true-crime adventure about a rogue who trades in rare birds and their eggs—and the wildlife detective determined to stop him. On May 3, 2010, an Irish national named Jeffrey Lendrum was apprehended at Britain's Birmingham International Airport with a suspicious parcel strapped to his stomach. Inside were fourteen rare peregrine falcon eggs snatched from a remote cliffside in Wales. So begins a tale almost too bizarre to believe, following the parallel lives of a globe-trotting smuggler who spent two decades capturing endangered raptors worth millions of dollars as race champions—and Detective Andy McWilliam of the United Kingdom's National Wildlife Crime Unit, who's hell bent on protecting the world's birds of prey.

Harman, Claire. [Murder by the Book](#) (\$16.95). Early on the morning of May 6, 1840, the elderly Lord William Russell was found in his London house with his throat so deeply cut that his head was nearly severed. The crime soon had everyone, including Queen Victoria, feverishly speculating about motives and methods. But when the prime suspect claimed to have been inspired by a sensational crime novel, it sent shock waves through literary London and drew both Dickens and Thackeray into the fray. Could a novel really lead someone to kill? In *Murder by the Book*, Claire Harman blends a riveting true-crime whodunit with a fascinating account of the rise of the popular novel.

Larson, Erik. [The Splendid and the Vile: A Saga of Churchill, Family, and Defiance During the Blitz](#) (Crown \$32). Once again Larson's new book is nonfiction that is as hard to put down as the best fiction. The book recounts the early days of Churchill as prime minister when France fell to Germany and the British Empire stood alone against Hitler.

Least-Heat Moon, William. [O America](#) (University of Missouri \$29.95). As word of the discovery of gold in northern California spreads, an English physician, Nathaniel Trennant, accepts an offer to serve as doctor on a ship carrying immigrants to America. Alongside some two hundred émigrés from northern Europe is a contingent of wealthy British people who call themselves not immigrants, but colonists. With this imported cultural divide, Nathaniel begins a long journey into what he terms the American experiment, one already under the stress of social injustices and economic inequities. Trennant arrives in Baltimore and stumbles onto its slave market, where he witnesses the horrors of human

bondage. One night in a boardinghouse he discovers under his bed a runaway slave. Disturbed and angered by the selling of human lives, he offers to help the young man escape, a criminal action that will put the slave and physician into flight from both the law and opportunistic slave hunters. Traveling by foot, horse, stage, canal boat, and steamer, the two men gradually form a bond as they explore the backcountry and forge a deep friendship as they encounter the land and a host of memorable characters who reveal the nature of the American experiment.

McCrae, Lindsay. [My Penguin Year](#) (Harper \$27.99). For 337 days, award-winning wildlife cameraman Lindsay McCrae intimately followed 11,000 emperor penguins amid the singular beauty of Antarctica. This is his masterful chronicle of one penguin colony's astonishing journey of life, death, and rebirth—and of the extraordinary human experience of living amongst them in the planet's harshest environment. A "remarkable memoir" (*Nature*) of life with an emperor penguin colony, gorgeously illustrated with 32 pages of exclusive photography

McNamee, Roger. [Zucked](#) (\$17) is investor McNamee's "intimate reckoning with the catastrophic failure of the head of one of the world's most powerful companies to face up to the damage he is doing. It's a story that begins with a series of rude awakenings. First there is the author's dawning realization that the platform is being manipulated by some very bad actors. Then there is the even more unsettling realization that Zuckerberg and Sheryl Sandberg are unable or unwilling to share his concerns, polite as they may be to his face." With the emergence of one horrific piece of news after another about the malign ends to which the Facebook platform has been put, to "McNamee's shock, even still, Facebook's leaders duck and dissemble, viewing the matter as a public relations problem. Now thoroughly alienated, McNamee digs into the issue, and fortuitously meets up with some fellow travelers who share his concern, and help him sharpen its focus. Soon he and a dream team of Silicon Valley technologists are charging into the fray, to raise consciousness about the existential threat of Facebook, and the persuasion architecture of the attention economy more broadly – to our public health and to our political order." It's hard to ignore Facebook and its convenience and connections channel, but how to use it wisely requires serious thought and effort.

Meltzer, Brad. [The First Conspiracy](#) (\$17.99). In 1776, an elite group of soldiers were handpicked to serve as George Washington's bodyguards. Washington trusted them; relied on them. But unbeknownst to Washington, some of them were part of a treasonous plan. In the months leading up to the Revolutionary War, these traitorous soldiers, along with the Governor of New York, William Tryon, and Mayor David Mathews, launched a deadly plot against the most important member of the military: George Washington himself. This is the story of the secret plot and how it was revealed. It is a story of leaders, liars, counterfeiterers, and jailhouse confessors that not only reveals George Washington's character, but also illuminates the origins of America's counter-intelligence movement that led to the modern day CIA. Look for Meltzer on a conspiracy to kill Lincoln publishing in May.

Rehm, Diane. [When My Time Comes](#) (Knopf \$25). Through interviews with terminally ill patients, and with physicians, ethicists, spouses, relatives, and representatives of those who vigorously oppose the movement, Rehm gives voice to a broad range

of people who are personally linked to the realities of medical aid in dying. The book presents the fervent arguments—both for and against—that are propelling the current debates across the nation about whether to adopt laws allowing those who are dying to put an end to their suffering. With characteristic even-handedness, Rehm skillfully shows both sides of the argument, providing the full context for this highly divisive issue. With a highly personal foreword by John Grisham.

Russell, Gareth. [The Ship of Dreams](#) (Atria \$30). How is it possible that there is still so much to learn about the 20th century's most famous ship? More than a hundred years after the *Titanic* sank to the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean, Irish author Gareth Russell reveals a treasure trove of new information. Endlessly fascinating, *The Ship of Dreams* uses the sinking of the *Titanic* as a springboard to examine the end of the lavish Edwardian era and the world's sharp turn toward modernity. Focusing on six notable passengers aboard the ship's maiden (and tragically final) voyage, Russell extensively charts the lives and fates of colorful characters such as shipbuilder Thomas Andrews, Jewish American immigrant Ida Straus, silent film star Dorothy Gibson and Lucy Leslie, the Countess of Rothes. Relying on reams of research, Russell also recalls royal spats, sinful romances and gilded extravagance worthy of Downton Abbey as he traces the backstories of his chosen subjects. Along the way, Russell offers a delightful meta-commentary on *Titanic* lore itself, dispelling popular conspiracy theories and reframing infamous moments. Good prep for Alma Katsu's [The Deep](#) (Putnam \$27) coming Signed to us in March.

Vince, Gaia. [Transcendence](#) (Basic Books \$30). Cumulative cultural evolution has proven a game changer in the story of life on Earth. Instead of our evolution being driven solely by changes to environment and genes, culture also plays its part. Cultural evolution shares much with biological evolution. Genetic evolution relies on variation, transmission, and differential survival. All three are there with cultural evolution. The main difference is that in biological evolution, they are operational mostly at the level of the individual, whereas for cultural, group selection is more important than individual selection, as we shall see. It is our collective human culture, even more than our individual intelligence, that makes us smart. We weren't the only human species to go down this evolutionary route—and we will visit our cousins—but we are the only ones to have survived. Hundreds of thousands of years ago, we began to escape our original environmental cradle by using our culture to overcome the physical and biological limitations that trap other species into uncreative lives. Our extraordinary evolution is driven by four key agents, described in the following sections: Fire, Word, Beauty, and Time.

NOTEWORTHY HISTORICAL FICTION

Some of these novels will be reviewed by John in the February BookNotes as well

Abriel, Anita. [The Light After the War](#) (Atria \$27). Based on her mother's true story, Abriel writes an irresistible story of two young BFFs from Jewish Budapest families. Put on a train to Auschwitz with their mothers in 1944, they were pushed off by Vera's mother and hidden away in an Austrian farm. In 1946, with apparently none of their families nor Edith's beloved fiancé surviving, the two nineteen-year-olds make their way to Naples as refugees to forge new lives. Vera gets a job as secretary at the

American delegation to Captain Anton Wight, scion of a hotel family and wishful architect, who is kind to her. Edith, whose interest is fashion, careens from depression to flirtation. A series of events spurs them to sail to New York, then on to Caracas, and finally to Sydney through a world rebuilding and reforming. Abriel brings them warmly to life, their friendship so tested and true through heartbreaks and adventures and finally into unimagined new lives. This is a beautifully told story filled with tragedies and courage and kindness in the midst of horrors that should set an example to us as we face emotional tolls and potential new catastrophes. I add that those familiar with the story of the young Sophia Loren will find the picture of 1946 Naples arresting.

Chiaverini, Jennifer. [Resistance Women](#) (\$17.99). At this novel's center, four women—Mildred Fish, Greta Kuckoff, Sara Weitz, and Martha Dodd—do what they can to help the resistance in Germany. Aspiring author Greta and Sara, a Jewish student of literature, are German nationals; Mildred is an American who married her college sweetheart, German writer/economist Arvid Harnack; and Martha Dodd is the daughter of the American ambassador to Germany. Together, they work to fight the malevolent rise of fascism and risk their lives by pursuing their activities even when under close Gestapo observation, and refusing to expose one another despite torture. “This fictionalized version of real-life heroes is told with prose that ranges from forthright to eloquent, and the focus on the road to war and evolving attitudes regarding fascism and Nazism is exceptionally insightful, making for a sweeping and memorable WWII novel.”

Elon, Emuna. [House on Endless Waters](#) (Aria \$27). Israeli author Elon has written a brave, ultimately wrenching but uplifting story of a renowned Israeli author, Yoel, of a Dutch Jewish family raised by his steely-willed mother never to visit Amsterdam. But in middle age his agent pushes him to return to the city to promote his books. With his wife Bat-Ami he reluctantly does. And she leads them to the Jewish Historical Museum where they stumble upon film footage portraying prewar Dutch Jewry. In a scene of a wedding he recognizes his mother with his older sister Nettie, his father, and an infant who is not Yoel. A call to Nettie extracts some information and it sets Yoel on a quest to learn who he is and the story of his own and his mother's life. It's remarkable and, as with story of the friends in Abriel's novel, both heartbreaking and triumphant. Elon unflinchingly portrays Amsterdam's wartime history, some of which has been seen in the *Diary of Anne Frank*, the lives created by Dutch immigrants to Israel, and the power of secrets to warp lives. Most of all she paints a dazzling portrait of the forging of a writer. A fascinating novel, beautifully written. I've spent a lot of time in Amsterdam and recommend this novel as something of a travelogue as well.

Kelly, Julia. [The Whispers of War](#) (Gallery \$27). Kelly's novel draws from the internment of foreign nationals in Britain. It's 1939 London. Socialite Nora is determined to find her place in the Home Office's Air Raid Precautions Department. Matchmaker Hazel tries to mask two closely guarded secrets with irrepressible optimism, and German expat Marie worries that she and her family might face imprisonment in an internment camp if war is declared. When Germany invades Poland and tensions on the home front rise, Marie is labeled an enemy alien, and the three friends draw together to first protect Marie and then find a solution to her situation. Girl power and friendship is a theme of many of the numerous WWII novels recently published.

Maher, Kerri. [The Girl in White Gloves: A Novel of Grace Kelly](#) (Berkley \$26). Library Reads recommends “An interesting, fictional take on the life of one of America's favorite actresses, Grace Kelly. She struggles to break free from controlling parents and forge her own life. Although she marries her prince, the confinements of her marriage contract assure that she never truly succeeds at happily ever after, dying untimely at only 53. For readers who liked *The Girls in the Picture* (Benjamin) and *A Touch of Stardust* (Alcott).” Library Reads usefully draws comparisons with other novels. Those interested in Kelly's Hollywood circle will enjoy glimpses of their lives, plus you will learn more of the Grimaldis and the Principality of Monaco.

Pataki, Allison. [The Queen's Fortune](#) (Ballantine \$28). Pataki is clearly in thrall to her subject, Desirée Clary, a girl from Marseille who in 1794 at age 16 attracted the notice first of the Joseph Bonaparte and then his brother Napoleone, who courted the young beauty, eventually becoming engaged to marry her in 1795. Possibly in part for her dowry. Ambition soon took the ambitious Corsican soldier away; his character hardened, he in time fell wildly in love with a woman his senior, Josephine de Beauharnais, a widow with two children, and married her. We know that story which ended badly. Meanwhile Desirée's beloved older sister Julie married Joseph and so Desirée is kept in Napoleon's circle. In time one of his officers, a Gascon called Jean-Baptiste Bernadotte, woos Desirée, weds her in 1799, and they weather various events until Bernadotte is offered the role of Crown Prince to Sweden where the childless king is old and ailing. Desirée thus becomes a queen, mother of the royal line still on the Swedish throne today, and like her husband lives into her eighties and dies of old age. It's a remarkable story with a circular ending in that Desirée's son Oscar married Josephine's granddaughter, also called Josephine, Swedish King and Queen in their turn.

I remember being enthralled in my early teens by Annemarie Selinko's bestseller *Desirée*, a more romantic treatment, made into a 1954 film starring Jean Simmons as Desirée and Marlon Brando as Napoleon with Merle Oberon and Michael Rennie. In CinemaScope! Perhaps that earlier story causes me to find Pataki's Desirée rather shallow and self-centered rather than wounded, courageous, and stalwart in her role as wife and queen. Unfortunately Pataki's version appears to be more true to life than the Desirée of Selinko's novel.

☞Phillips, Arthur. [The King at the Edge of the World](#) (Random \$27). Drop back to 1601 as the childless Queen Elizabeth is dying. No heir has been named, in fact it's been a capital crime to even imagine the need for one. The leading candidate, as all readers of PF Chisholm's marvelous mysteries featuring Sir Robert Carey, know, is King James VI of Scotland, son of Henry VIII's sister. Which makes the queen's spymasters nervous as they fear that despite his Protestant faith he's secretly a Catholic like his parents, which will make the religious wars of the 16th Century rekindle with a potential new bloodbath to ensue. So it falls to one Geoffrey Belloc to devise a test to determine James' true soul. Belloc enlists an undercover agent, a Muslim, Ezzedine, who hates being exiled to the cold and wet island and will do anything to return home to Constantinople and his wife and son. A deeply researched and layered novel by the talented Phillips whose work I admire.

Rothschild, Hannah. [House of Trelawney](#) (Knopf \$27.95). Downton Abbey has nothing on 800-year-old Trelawney Castle with its four miles of hallways, a room for each day of the year, and

85 members of staff. But that was in its heyday. Now Kitto, the future 25th Earl of Trelawney, is on his financial uppers, presiding over a freezing, crumbling semi-ruin. His wife, Jane, has sunk her own money into the castle but is still struggling to feed herself, their three children, and Kitto's aging parents, the current earl and countess. Kitto's sister Blaze, a talented stock picker at a London hedge fund, does have some money, but her company has just been bought by ruthless opportunist Thomlinson Sleet, which puts her in jeopardy. The plot starts to move when Jane and Blaze receive letters from their old college friend Anastasia, now dying and asking them to care for her daughter, Ayesha. The banking crisis swallows Kitto's remaining money, and Jane kicks him out. After a family death, Blaze comes to the castle's rescue, although she's distracted by an on-and-off love affair with much nicer hedge fund squillionaire Joshua Wolfe. "Rothschild writes well about these elite milieus, but hers is a broad, pantomime-ish tale best for those who can't resist a stately home, a title, and dysfunctional families."

CLASSICS

Here's a fascinating essay on the appeal of [Locked Room Mysteries](#). Carr loved them but you can find other authors who do in [Miraculous Mysteries](#) (\$12.95), edited by Martin Edwards

Edwards, Martin. [The Measure of Malice](#) (Poisoned Pen \$14.99). In his latest collection of stories for the British Library Crime Classics, editor Edwards combines the well-known (Conan Doyle, Dorothy Sayers) with the obscure (former actor Ernest Dudley) in this impressive anthology of 14 short stories featuring scientific and technical know-how. While "The Boscombe Valley Mystery" is familiar to Sherlockians and more casual fans alike, Edwards's inclusion of it works to effectively contrast the description of Holmes's use of footprints to solve a murder with the more detailed science employed in such entries as R. Austin Freeman's "The Contents of a Mare's Nest." The latter cleverly challenges prototypical forensic scientist John Thorndyke to determine, after a corpse is cremated, whether a man was poisoned. In Dudley's "The Case of the Chemist in the Cupboard," Doctor Morelle, who's based on the director Erich von Stroheim, probes the death of a chemist whose body was concealed in a cupboard, and then vanished. Perhaps first among equals is "The Cyprian Bees" by Anthony Wynne, yet another talent Edwards rescues from obscurity; the plot centers on a woman found dead in London, apparently from a reaction to an ordinary bee sting. Fans of TV's CSI will enjoy seeing the evolution of criminal forensics.

Queen, Ellery. [The Siamese Twin Mystery](#) (\$15.95). When Ellery Queen and his father encounter a raging forest fire during a mountain drive, the only direction to go is up — up a winding dirt road that leads to an isolated hillside manor, inhabited by a secretive surgeon and his diverse cast of guests. Trapped by the fire, the Queens settle into the uneasy atmosphere of their surroundings. Things become even tenser the following morning when the doctor is discovered dead, apparently shot down while playing solitaire the night before. The only clue is a torn six of spades. The suspects include a society beauty, a suspicious valet, and a pair of conjoined twins. When another murder follows, the killer inside the house becomes as threatening as the flames burning outside....

OUR FEBRUARY LARGE PAPERBACK PICKS

Black, Cara. [Murder in Bel-Air](#) (\$16.95). It's still only 1999. Aimée is still wearing high-fashion vintage clothing and scoot-

ing around on her pink Vespa while solving computer security breaches for Leduc Detective — and the odd murder case for her own satisfaction. Here Aimée's in Paris's 12th Arrondissement, not for the opera or for a stroll in the Bois de Vincennes, but to solve the murder of a homeless old woman. Aimée is also in search of her unpredictable American mother, Sydney, who has disappeared after failing to pick up Chloé from her playgroup in Bel-Air. Aimée doesn't need to pack heat on these adventures; the stiletto heels of her Louboutin ankle boots are weapon enough. But something more lethal is called for when Sydney's secretive work as a former C.I.A. operative comes to light, threatening not only Sydney and her professional contacts but also her family, including (gasp!) baby Chloé. The *NY Times* wrote, "The abiding pleasure of this series is the chance to ride with a cabdriver who wants to discuss Sartre or just tearing around Paris on Aimée's pink Vespa, making stops at the Jardin du Luxembourg and the Île Saint-Louis, where Aimée has an apartment. Lucky girl."

Blackwell, Juliet. [The Vineyards of Champagne](#) (Berkley \$16). John writes, "Deep within the labyrinth of caves that lies below the lush, rolling vineyards of the Champagne region, an underground city of women and children hums with life. Forced to take shelter from the unrelenting onslaught of German shellfire above, the bravest and most defiant women venture out to pluck sweet grapes for the harvest. But wine is not the only secret preserved in the cool, dark cellars. In present day, Rosalyn Acosta travels to Champagne to select vintages for her Napa-based employer. Rosalyn doesn't much care for champagne—or France, for that matter. Since the untimely death of her young husband, Rosalyn finds it a challenge to enjoy anything at all. But as she reads through a precious cache of WWI letters and retraces the lives lived in the limestone tunnels, Rosalyn will unravel a mystery hidden for decades...and find a way to savor her own life again. Blackwell is the author of several cozy mystery series as well as a number of France-set novels (*The Paris Key*, etc.) that have proven to be wildly popular with Poisoned Pen readers

✚Cumming, Charles. [The Moroccan Girl](#) (\$17.99). When novelist Kit Carradine is approached by a mysterious man calling himself Robert Mantis, he knows his dearest wish has come true—the British government wants to use him as a spy. Kit's assignment involves traveling to Morocco and slipping a passport to Lara Bartok, formerly involved with a group known as Resurrection. Resurrection started as an international movement against corrupt politicians and mouthpieces, but their actions quickly evolved into terrorism as they began kidnapping and even murdering high-profile right-wing figures. In Morocco, Kit runs into an American agent who could burn him; after Mantis fires him, he continues to look for Bartok, and when he finds her, he has to help her escape from the Russians who are chasing her. The two share several intimate days as they get away to Gibraltar and back to England; once home, Kit must face the fact that no one he has encountered is who they said they were, and the novel ends with a twist and a shootout as old enemies resurface. Early scenes "unfold with an almost old-fashioned slowness, full of allusions to *Casablanca* and Cary Grant, that lends a romantic haze to the very 21st-century spy games..."

Frieswick, Kris. [The Ghost Manuscript](#) (\$17). Rare book authenticator Carys Jones wanted nothing more than to be left alone to pursue her obsession with ancient manuscripts. But when her big-

gest client is committed to an asylum, he gives Carys an offer she cannot refuse. Carys Jones, a Boston rare-book authenticator and protagonist of Frieswick's meticulously researched first novel, is hired by John Harper, the son of a longtime client who's been committed to a psychiatric hospital. In exchange for his entire library of priceless, Dark Age manuscripts, Carys must track the clues hidden in a previously unknown journal. When Carys examines the works, she finds one that isn't in the catalogue. When it becomes clear that someone is prepared to kill for the mysterious manuscript, Carys goes to Wales, the home of her estranged father, to learn its origin. There, she reconnects with her father, hits it off with an attractive Welsh diver, and starts seeing visions of Lestinus, the sixth-century monk who wrote the manuscript. The settings—notably the scenes in Wales—are filled with well-placed details, while the character development, particularly of Carys, a damaged woman who prefers manuscripts to people, keeps the story moving clues. The hunt takes Carys to places she never thought she'd go, physically and emotionally.

✠Gregory, Philippa. [Tidelands](#) (\$17). I was a fan of Gregory's historical fiction before she became immersed in the Tudors and all their wars and drama. So I'm delighted she is starting a new series focused not on the glamour of royals and their courts but on the story of an ordinary 17th Century woman, Alinor, a not quite widow struggling to raise two children in the south coast's marshy landscape. And she's only in her twenties. One day she meets a young priest and in helping him reach the safety of the manor in this midsummer of 1648 when crown and parliament are duking it out for control of England, she gains a slight hold on a way forward. But then, as tides turn, what she grasped slips and we have to wait to see what the next chapter in a planned lengthy series brings. I was immersed in Alinor's story and urge you to grab this and become so too.

James, Marlon. [Black Leopard, Red Wolf](#) (\$18), the latest novel by the Booker Prize winner, could be called an African Game of Thrones. In the first novel in his Dark Star trilogy, myth, fantasy, and history come together to explore what happens when a mercenary is hired to find a missing child. Wrought with blood, iron, and jolting images, this swords-and-sorcery epic set in a mythical Africa is also part detective story, part quest fable, and part inquiry into the nature of truth, belief, and destiny. The Indie Next Pick in part: "James' tale set in a fantastical ancient Africa follows a hunter known only as Tracker as he trails the scent of a lost boy, meeting a shape-shifting leopard along the way. At turns hallucinatory, dreamlike, and nightmarish, *Black Leopard, Red Wolf*'s world envelops the reader in its stink, grime, sweat, and blood. Never has a magical world felt quite so otherworldly and yet frighteningly tactile at the same time. This is literary fantasy as you've never encountered it before and a truly original tale of love, loss, power, and identity."

McMahon, John. [The Good Detective](#) (\$17). Detective P.T. Marsh of rural Mason Falls, Georgia, has promised to help Crimson, a stripper he met at a strip club, whose boyfriend has physically abused her. One evening, he drives over to Crimson's house, where he punches and threatens the boyfriend. When the boyfriend is strangled that same night, Marsh—who's struggling with alcoholism and still reeling from an accident that killed his family—wonders whether in a drunken stupor he might have murdered the guy. Later, when a 15-year-old African-American boy, a Baptist preacher's son, is lynched, the chief suspect turns

out to be the man Marsh may have strangled. Investigating the boy's lynching takes Marsh into an intricate, decades-old conspiracy. "John McMahon is one of those rare writers who seem to have sprung out of nowhere. His first novel which is pretty much perfect, features a decent if flawed hero battling personal troubles while occupied with a murder case of great consequence to his community...Once in a while that fabled Southern lyricism surfaces...but for the most part [McMahon's] writing is painfully, almost unbearably, matter-of-fact..." —*NY Times* on a 2020 Edgar nominee for Best First Novel.

Pavone, Chris. [The Paris Diversion](#) (\$17). This is a book about Paris. Old Paris with its monuments and landmarks, tourist Paris, and today's Paris filled with security personnel and tech, with expectations of threats and worse, a Paris of protests, of mixed cultures and ethnicities, a Paris to be embraced and, almost, to be avoided, and the more poignant with the burning of Notre Dame. On to the plot. Kate Moore of Pavone's Edgar winner (Best First Novel) [The Expats](#) (\$16), a 2012 First Mystery Book of the Month, is back. A CIA agent whose deep cover is that of wife and mother, the expert spy-handler prefers running her agents to domestic life and the hated drop-offs at the snobbish private school. Her shadow world comes alive when sirens wail: a jihadist wearing a bomb is standing in front of the Louvre. But is he indeed a terrorist? (consider the title). And if not, what is going on? We do know that financier Hunter Forsyth believes this single day is about to elevate him to join the uber rich, and that Kate's cash-strapped husband Dexter, clueless about his wife, stands to make, or lose, a fortune in the world of speculative finance. The whole mix of characters is a rich as a French pastry.

✠Raybourn, Deanna. [A Dangerous Collaboration](#) (\$16). When fearless Victorian lepidopterist Veronica Speedwell returns from her several months sojourn in France having deliberately discouraged Stoker from joining her, she's dealing with one man in the sulks and another, his elder brother with the title, enticing her away to an island off Cornwall where a friend is still mourning the disappearance of his bride 3 years past on their wedding night. She has never been found. An irritated Veronica succumbs to the lure of bringing back a very rare glasswing butterfly, found now only on the island, to her London quarters. Stoker refuses the treat but unsurprisingly turns up when it's time to board the small boat for the last leg of the journey. The castle is impressive, the herb garden and glasswings enchanting, and the bride is still missing. And then.... This is a classic country house murder with DuMaurier twists and a true surprise in the end game. 4th in a delightful series. [Order the first 3 Veronicas](#), read the series in order. She signs the 5th on March 11.

SOME COZY CRIMES

Avon, Joy. [In Cold Chamomile](#) (Crooked Lane \$26.99). Former tour guide Callie Aspen and her great-aunt Iphy, who owns the vintage tea room where Callie helps out, is hosting a Valentine's Day celebration in Hearts Harbor, Massachusetts. Everything is going according to plan, until Iphy is startled to see that the singer for the event is her long-lost love, Sean Strong. Iphy has more to worry about after TV celebrity Mr. King, a book appraiser who tries to cheat the locals, is found stabbed to death and Sean becomes the prime suspect. Ignoring the police request to back off, Iphy is determined to clear Sean's name, even at risk to her own life. The tension rises as Callie and her police deputy boyfriend,

Ace Falk, each pursues the murder from a different direction, putting their relationship in peril. Enjoy the surprise ending.

Graves, Sarah. [Death By Chocolate Frosted Donut](#) (Kensington \$26). Pirates have arrived in Eastport, Maine, for the Eastport Pirate Festival. Costumed tourists and townspeople are swash-buckling all over town. Jacobia “Jake” Tiptree and Ellie White, partners in the Chocolate Moose bakery, have survived the kids’ party they threw for the rampaging young scallywags and buccaneers, but an encounter with the supremely unpleasant TV food personality Henry Hadlyme provokes Jake into threatening the man in public, not a good idea as it turns out. Eastport’s police chief, Bob Arnold, inconveniently finds Jake in the bakery’s cellar with a very dead Henry, pierced by a cutlass that belongs to Jake’s husband.... 3rd in the Death by Chocolate Mysteries.

Lang, Essie. [Trouble on the Books](#) (\$16.99). When events turn dangerous in an old smuggling haunt, new bookseller and retired book editor Shelby Cox uses her editorial smarts to save the innocent and capture the guilty. “A smart whodunit featuring a spunky bookseller, a beautiful castle, a remote island in upstate NY, and plenty of twists and turns to keep you reading until you get to the last page. I’m hooked!”—Daryl Wood Gerber on this cozy debut.

Meier, Leslie. [British Murder](#) (Kensington \$12.95). ENGLISH TEA MURDER: A trip to England, sponsored by Winchester College, sounds practically perfect to Lucy Stone—until the tour leader suffers a fatal asthma attack mid-flight. Lucy suspects some very unnatural causes, but luckily, she packed her sleuthing skills. Between stops for afternoon tea, visits to historic sites, and catching up with an old flame, she’s ensnared in a daring scheme. But will it lead her to a criminal mastermind—or ensure that she’s the next victim? In BRITISH MANOR MURDER: Lucy can’t wait to join her friend Sue for a gala hat show at the English country house owned by the Earl of Wickham. But at Moreton Manor, there are secrets—and some unpleasant relatives—lurking among the elaborate chapeaus. When a bludgeoned body is found in a hidden room, Lucy must sift through friends and family foes to find the low-down killer stalking the upper crust, before more blue blood runs red...

Quinn, Holly. [A Crafter Quilts a Crime](#) (Crooked Lane \$26.99) opens on a January night in Heartsford, Wisconsin, during the annual Fire and Ice event, when all the stores stay open until midnight. This year, Samantha “Sammy” Kane, owner of Community Craft, is holding a live mannequin contest in her shop window, but her plans go seriously awry when her first “mannequin,” Wanda Wadsworth, quietly dies in the display window, holding a quilt in her lap. Det. Liam Nash, the aloof widower whom Sammy really wants to know better, is on the case. But when Sammy, her cousin Heidi, and sister, Ellie, pay a condolence call on Wanda’s brother, Jackson, and notice that the design painted on his barn matches one of the blocks on Wanda’s quilt, they decide this is a case for S.H.E., the detective agency the three women formed in childhood. “With a charming small-town setting, recipes, a crosswise romance, plucky amateur sleuths who can’t resist getting involved, and a lovable pooch, this book is just the ticket for lovers of crafting cozies.” 3rd in the Handcrafted Mysteries.

Redmond, Heather. [Journaled to Death](#) (Severn \$28.99). Divorced single mom Mandy Meadows scrapes by working as a

barista and receiving payments from her cousin, Ryan, who rents her basement apartment. At night, she and her teenage daughter Vellum run a successful home business creating journaling content on their popular social media channels. But Mandy’s carefully organized world is about to come crashing down. While filming their latest journaling tutorial, Mandy and Vellum hear a loud noise on the basement stairs, and Mandy is horrified to find Ryan dead on the landing. The police quickly start to treat the death as a murder – with Mandy and Vellum as chief suspects. Starts a Journalist Mystery series. Ordered Upon Request.

SOME NEW BOOKS FOR MARCH

✚Aaronovitch, Ben. [False Value](#) (Daw \$26). Peter Grant, detective and apprentice wizard, solves magical crimes in the city of London. He is facing fatherhood, and an uncertain future, with equal amounts of panic and enthusiasm. Rather than sit around, he takes a job with émigré Silicon Valley tech genius Terrence Skinner’s brand new London start up—the Serious Cybernetics Company. Drawn into the orbit of Old Street’s famous ‘silicon roundabout’, Peter must learn how to blend in with people who are both civilians and geekier than he is. Compared to his last job, Peter thinks it should be a doddle. But magic is not finished with Mama Grant’s favourite son. Terrence Skinner has a secret hidden in the bowels of the SCC. A technology that stretches back to Ada Lovelace and Charles Babbage, and forward to the future of artificial intelligence. A secret that is just as magical as it technological—and just as dangerous. “Aaronovitch showcases a superlative blend of whimsy and grit in the eighth Rivers of London urban fantasy...The suspenseful mystery at the novel’s core is laced with humor and charm. Jim Butcher meets Douglas Adams in this winning series installment.”—*PW* Starred Review of a series I enjoy.

Adiga, Aravind. [Amnesty](#) (Scribner \$26). Over the course of one day, an illegal worker in Australia debates whether to provide key evidence to the police in a murder investigation or remain in hiding. “A man without rights in this world is not freed from his responsibilities.” So thinks Danny, an undocumented worker in Sydney, Australia, upon realizing that he has information about a murder that by all rights should be reported to the police. Adiga follows Danny, a Sri Lankan national, over the course of a day as he bargains with himself and conducts imaginary negotiations for asylum in exchange for helping the police with their investigation. As the minutes tick by—readers see each timestamp—the tension builds toward a resolution that seems anything but preordained. Danny has convinced himself that he can live in Sydney indefinitely. So, the news of a body discovered at a nearby riverbed barely registers until Danny realizes it’s Radha, one of Danny’s former employers. Radha, along with her lover Prakash, discovered Danny’s undocumented status without turning him in. When Danny hears details of Radha’s murder, he suspects her lover is responsible and, unsure of what to do, calls him, hoping to hear some clue in Prakash’s voice as to his guilt or innocence. This call proves to be a grievous error, because Prakash now knows that Danny has suspicions, and threatens to turn him into the police. “If I tell the Law about him, I also tell the Law about myself,” Danny knows. Adiga’s facility for the cadence and vernacular of street talk and self-talk gives voice, literally, to figures that are often unheard.

Ambrose, Marty. [A Shadowed Fate](#) (Severn \$28.99). Here is the

sequel to 2018's [Claire's Last Secret](#) (\$17.95) which finds Claire Claremont, Mary Shelley's stepsister, living in near-poverty in 1873 Florence, Italy, with her niece and grand-niece, though her memories of reckless youthful passion provide solace. Claire has kept her valuable letters from Lord Byron and Percy Shelley, which ruthless men in Last Secret made clear were worth murdering for. Claire's not out of danger yet. Moreover, she's learned that her illegitimate daughter with Byron, Allegra, did not die of disease in a convent as she was told decades ago. Accompanied by friends, Claire embarks on a desperate search for Allegra across Italy, but those offering answers are often not what they seem. The surprising revelations that populate the book, mixed with a mood of regret and wistful longing for dead loves, imbue the story with a seductive power. Ambrose ratchets up the suspense over the fate of Allegra and the truth about mad, bad, and dangerous-to-know Byron.

Armstrong, Kell. [Alone in the Wild](#) (St Martins \$27.99). Cop Casey Duncan and her boyfriend, Sheriff Eric Dalton, are on vacation from their jobs in Rockton—an off-grid sanctuary for those looking to disappear—when they find a woman shot dead in the snow. Clutched to her chest is a newborn, dehydrated but alive. Casey and Dalton bring both to Rockton, where they determine that the victim isn't the child's birth mother. Rockton doesn't allow minors, but its sundry misfits agree to babysit while Casey and Dalton search for answers. Solving the murder should help identify the infant's biological family, but the duo must tread carefully; not all of Rockton's neighbors are good or sane, and the woman might have been warranted in taking the child. The tension rises as Casey and Dalton explore settlements about which Armstrong has previously only hinted, and they confront their own complicated feelings regarding parenthood.

Dana reviews: The best one in the series since the first one. The first chapter, when Casey deals with the baby, is terrifyingly hilarious. Hilariously terrifying? Armstrong is really thinking hard about what happens when people retreat into the wilderness for whatever reason, and what happens after that, and we finally get to meet the other groups out there and get a better handle on the hostiles.

Atkins, Ace. [Robert B Parker's Wonderland](#) (\$17). After a hardcover and small paperback edition, here is a large paperback for a Spenser investigation. A developer is trying to buy up Henry Cimoli's condo on Revere Beach—with a push from local thugs. Soon Spenser and his apprentice, Zebulon Sixkill, are on the trail of a mysterious woman, a megalomaniacal Las Vegas kingpin, and a shady plan to turn a chunk of land north of Boston into a sprawling casino. As alliances shift and twisted dreams surface, the Boston political machine looks to end Spenser's investigation one way or another. Soon to be a Netflix film "Spenser Confidential" starring Mark Wahlberg.

Brown, Eric. [Further Adventures of Sherlock Holmes](#) (Titan \$12.95). A second wave of Martians has come to Earth—the first wave having succumbed to lethal Terran pathogens. The second wave, arriving some five years later, did so with the aid of a cure for the various ills that scuppered their earlier plans—and these Martians claim to have come in peace. Humankind, lulled into a false sense of security, welcomes the Martians who bring with them a host of technological and scientific wonders, and for several years an entente exists between the two races. It is only when Holmes and Watson travel to the Red Planet, ostensibly

to track down the killer of an eminent Martian philosopher, that they learn the truth about the Martians....

Cavanagh, Steve. [Twisted](#) (Flatiron \$26.99). In a note at the start of this clever standalone from Cavanagh of the Eddie Flynn series, the pseudonymous J.T. LeBeau, a bestselling thriller author, warns readers not to "believe a single word you read." Outside an L.A. theater where a memorial service is being held for LeBeau, Paul Cooper waits nervously, intent on shooting one of the mourners. Flash back four months. In Port Lonely on the East Coast, Maria, Paul's wife, who has begun an affair with Daryl Oakes, a waiter at the Coopers' country club, discovers a bank statement revealing that Paul has received \$20 million from LeBeau Enterprises that he has concealed from her. Paul himself seems to be in hiding from a possible murderer. After Maria is brutally attacked and Paul disappears, local law-enforcement suspect Paul is involved in the attack and that Daryl also has a role; in any event, uncovering LeBeau's identity is crucial to cracking the case.

Coulter, Cather. [Labyrinth](#) (\$16.99). Dillon Savitch and his wife, Lacey Sherlock, have special abilities that have served them well in law enforcement. But that doesn't prevent Sherlock's car from hitting a running man after having been struck by a speeding SUV that runs a red light. The runner, though clearly injured, continues on his way and disappears. Not so the SUV driver, a security engineer for the Bexholt Group, which has ties to government agencies. Sherlock's own concussion causes memory loss so severe that she doesn't recognize Savitch or remember their son, Sean. The whole incident seems more suspicious when a blood test from the splatter of the man Sherlock hit reveals that he's Justice Cummings, an analyst for the CIA. Setting the stage for greed, love, and extrasensory abilities to combine in the 21st in a series where psychic powers are key to investigation.

Curtis, Rye. [Kingdomtide](#) (Little Brown \$27.99). The sole survivor of a plane crash, seventy-two-year-old Cloris Waldrip is lost and alone in the unforgiving wilderness of Montana's rugged Bitterroot Range, exposed to the elements with no tools beyond her wits and ingenuity. Intertwined with her story is Debra Lewis, a park ranger struggling with addiction and a recent divorce who is galvanized by her new mission to find and rescue Cloris. As Cloris wanders mountain forests and valleys, subsisting on whatever she can scavenge, her hold on life ever more precarious, Ranger Lewis and her motley group of oddball rescuers follow the trail of clues she's left behind. Days stretch into weeks, and hope begins to fade. But with nearly everyone else giving up, Ranger Lewis stays true until the end. Dramatic and morally complex, here is a story of the decency and surprising resilience of ordinary people faced with extraordinary circumstances.

Daugherty, Christi. [A Beautiful Corpse](#) (\$17.99). With its antebellum houses and ancient oak trees draped in a veil of Spanish moss, Savannah's graceful downtown is famous around the world. When a woman is killed in the heart of that affluent district, the shock is felt throughout the city. But for crime reporter Harper McClain, this story is personal. The corpse has a familiar face. Naomi Scott was just getting started. A law student, tending bar to make ends meet, she wanted to change the world. There are no witnesses to the crime. The police have three suspects: Scott's boyfriend, who has a criminal past he claims he's put behind him, her boss, who stalked another young bartender two

years ago, and the district attorney's son who once dated her and split bitterly. With the whole city demanding answers, Harper unravels a tangled story of obsession and jealousy. But the pressures on her go beyond the murder—among them layoffs at the paper. Best to read [The Echo Killing](#) (\$16.99) for the backstory to this first.

Engberg, Katrine. [The Tenant](#) (Gallery \$27). “No one dies in my building,” insists landlady Esther de Laurenti, but someone has: her 21-year-old tenant Julie Stender. Before Julie's assailant finished her off with a blow to the temple, he stabbed her repeatedly and carved a pattern into her face. Not only has someone died in Esther's building, but the killer seems to have modeled his crime on a story that Esther has been writing. Recently retired from her professorship at the University of Copenhagen, Esther is working on a crime novel in which her young tenant features prominently. The violence in Esther's fiction is the apparent blueprint for Julie's murder, right down to the knife work on her face. Esther has been using Google Docs to share her work with the two other people in her online writing group; might one of them be the killer, or could someone else have read Esther's work in progress? Engberg's plotting is dexterous, and her character-centered storytelling aligns nicely with her unhurried descriptions of Copenhagen. Which, having been there several times, I think is the best feature of this Nordic Noir which registers a different emotional temperature than American crime novels.

Freeman, Brian. [Thief River Falls](#) (Thomas & Mercer \$24.95). Lisa Power is a tortured ghost of her former self. The author of a bestselling thriller called *Thief River Falls*, named after her rural Minnesota hometown, Lisa is secluded in her remote house as she struggles with the loss of her entire family: a series of tragedies she calls the “Dark Star.” Then a nameless runaway boy shows up at her door with a terrifying story: he's just escaped death after witnessing a brutal murder—a crime the police want to cover up. Obsessed with the boy's safety, Lisa resolves to expose this crime, but powerful men in Thief River Falls are desperate to get the boy back, and now they want her too. Lisa and her young visitor have nowhere to go as the trap closes around them while she is still in danger from Dark Star as well.

Gibson, William. [Agency](#) (Putnam \$28). I missed calling this September sequel to *The Peripheral* to your attention. Futurist visionary Gibson writes thrillers influenced by current events. Verity Jane, gifted app whisperer, takes a job as the beta tester for a new product: a digital assistant, accessed through a pair of ordinary-looking glasses. “Eunice,” the disarmingly human AI in the glasses, manifests a face, a fragmentary past, and a canny grasp of combat strategy. Realizing that her cryptic new employers don't yet know how powerful and valuable Eunice is, Verity instinctively decides that it's best they don't. Meanwhile, a century ahead in London, in a different time line entirely, Wilf Netherton works amid plutocrats and plunderers, survivors of the slow and steady apocalypse known as the jackpot. His boss, the enigmatic Ainsley Lowbeer, can look into alternate pasts and nudge their ultimate directions. Verity and Eunice are her current project. Wilf can see what Verity and Eunice can't: their own version of the jackpot, just around the corner, and the roles they both may play in it.

Hamilton, Ian. [Foresight](#) (Anansi \$15.95). 1980: A pivotal year in

modern Chinese history as Premier Deng Xiaoping begins what he intends to be the transformation of China into an economic superpower. The most visible evidence of Deng's policy is the creation of Special Economic Zones, and one has been set up in Shenzhen, next door to Hong Kong and on Fanling's doorstep. Among Triad leaders, Uncle is the only one who recognizes that Deng's intentions could have profound repercussions on their organizations. To protect his gang and their interests, Uncle ventures over the Hong Kong border into the SEZ to set up a manufacturing operation for knockoffs and runs into all kinds of obstacles, mostly human. This is all pre Ava Lee whose next adventure publishes in July.

Heard, Wendy. [The Kill Club](#) (Mira \$15.95). When good people with few resources are put in impossible situations that threaten their lives, what do they do? In Wendy Heard's riveting thriller, they join The Kill Club, in which members agree to murder the troublemakers in one another's lives, leaving no links to the people who need them dead. Jazz does not want to join the club, even though she wants to extricate her diabetic younger brother, Joaquin, from his cruel adoptive mom, Carol. Jazz and Joaquin were separated after Jazz aged out of the foster system, and now she has no rights to him. But the situation becomes urgent when Carol stops giving Joaquin his insulin and removes him from school, believing religion can heal his condition and teach him all he needs to know. Jazz finally accepts the kill club's deal for her to kill a stranger, so that a different stranger would murder Carol before the woman sends Joaquin into diabetic shock. Many of you will recognize the kill club scenario from Adrian McKinty's last summer bestseller [The Chain](#) (\$28), although how kills operate differ.

A note from the author says, “This book is a love letter to the working-class Los Angeles that doesn't always make it into books and movies,” and that love jumps off the page. Jazz lives in a tiny, old apartment and works at Trader Joe's, where she must handle blonde female customers with “the ‘I'd like to speak to the manager’ haircut.” On the streets she encounters many homeless people; Heard ensures they are seen, not invisible. The author also says “the abuse suffered by the members of the titular club are all true stories. This is not La La Land; its people are scrappy and vibrant and heroes of their own lives”

Ho-Kei, Chan. [Second Sister](#) (Grove \$17). A woman's determination to understand her teenage sister's suicide leads her to the mysterious N, whose high-tech savvy and unconventional methods reveal Hong Kong's underbelly. Yes, it's almost two inches thick and more than 500 pages, but Chan Ho-Kei's second thriller “is virtually irresistible, with twisty-turny, didn't-see-that-coming manipulations conveyed through Chan's amalgamation of prose, text streams, e-mails and blog posts complete with belligerent comments. Nga-Yee and Siu-Man are sisters who have only each other left in the world, leaving Nga-Yee to raise Siu-Man on her own. Returning from her librarian job one evening, Nga-Yee is horrified to learn that the bloody corpse on the pavement outside her apartment building is Siu-Man, who apparently jumped from their 22nd-floor window. The quiet Siu-Man had been ferociously cyberbullied after outing a subway groper, but Nga-Yee thought she was doing everything possible to care for her sensitive sister. Devastated and bewildered, Nga-Yee can't accept that Siu-Man chose death. When the police prove unhelpful, Nga-Yee turns to an acerbic, arrogant detective

who calls himself just N. He initially refuses to take Nga-Yee's case with a dismissive, "It's too easy." Her tenacity—including surviving a gangster attack by his side—eventually hooks him to set his unparalleled techno-savvy and unconventional methods to Siu-Man's demise. "Chan presents what initially seems to be a linear mystery—solve the dead girl's murder—and amplifies the thriller into a multi-layered treatise on overcrowded cities and its overlooked citizens (his native Hong Kong earns character status here), the unchecked power of the Internet, the grey ethics of revenge, and the potential limits of morality in business, friendships and even among family members."

Kalla, Daniel. [The Last High](#) (SimonSchuster \$16). Aside from the investigation conducted by the toxicologist and ER doctor and the cop Anton Chen, there are two good reasons to read this. First, Vancouver. We don't get many crime novels set in this amazing city although here it's mostly Vancouver's underbelly rife with illegal drugs. Second, it's a very sharp medical mystery and you will learn a lot from it. Many of us have a casual knowledge of naloxone—some of us, tragically, a closer one—and the opioid/fentanyl crisis, but Kalla brings it home without preaching or judgment. I've always been interested in the nexus between murder and healing you find in hospital thrillers and this is a fine example.

Keller, Tae. [When You Trap a Tiger](#) (Random \$16.99). An uplifting story of a girl discovering a secret family history when she makes a deal with a magical tiger from her grandmother's stories, the Korean version of "Once upon a time..." "An intoxicating mix of folktale, fantasy, friendship, and love (and tigers!)." Ages 8-12 but I plan to read it too.

✂Kidd, Jess. [Things in Jars](#) (Atria \$27). Set in Victorian England, this is one of those weird British crime novels full of fantastical creatures and unlikeable characters. It's a country house structure with a kidnapped "baby" that's been kept in a locked wing and strapped down, an Irish woman detective, a reclusive peer as the father, crooked surgeons and anatomists, etc. It's a Gothic touched with the macabre in the vein of *The Essex Serpent* and its ilk.

Kimani, Peter. [Nairobi Noir](#) (Akashic \$15.95). Racial, religious, and class divides are acutely observed in the 14 new stories from Kenyan writers. In the introduction, Kimani describes the multicultural, "segregated city" of Nairobi as a "concrete jungle" occupied by "the hunters and the herders and the hunted." Throughout the volume, where emphasis is placed on inequality and injustice, government corruption and police brutality are ever-present. Winfred Kiunga explores these themes to good effect in the memorably grim "She Dug Two Graves," in which a grieving woman of Somali heritage seeks vengeance on the deputy police commissioner for her brother's murder. Rasna Warah's moving psychological drama, "Have Another Roti," about bribery and exploitation of the immigration lottery, also focuses on Somali refugees. Other noteworthy stories include Caroline Mose's gripping "Plot Ten," in which a police officer is implicitly responsible for a girl's death, and Ngumi Kibera's satirical "The Night Beat," centering on crooked policemen.

Kubica, Mary. [The Other Mrs.](#) (Park Row \$26.99). For Kubica's fans and enthusiasts of unreliable narrators and family dramas and mental illness. It opens when a Chicago family inherits a home on a Maine island from the doctor husband's sister who ap-

parently committed suicide, leaving a disturbed and angry teenager, Imogen. A neighbor is savagely murdered and the Chicago wife Sadie, a physician, becomes a suspect. Kubica worked too hard for the big reveal but the underlying topic she's addressing is worth studying.

Larkwood, AK. [The Unspoken Name](#) (Tor \$25.99). "*The Unspoken Name* is the gloriously fresh, magnificently epic fantasy I didn't know I needed until I picked it up and couldn't put it down. Larkwood explodes the classic tropes of the genre and takes the reader somewhere completely new. Csorwe is a kickass heroine for the ages. The Serpent Gates #1.

✂Lovesey, Peter. [Bertie and the Seven Bodies](#) (Soho \$16.95). "Mr. Lovesey must have been laughing up his sleeve when he lifted this Ten Little Indians plot from Agatha Christie and handed it to Bertie to make a royal botch of. That we can recognize the mechanics of the story and still enjoy the telling says much of the author's skill at weaving amusing characters and choice scandals into his narrative."—*The NY Times Book Review*. *PW* adds, "Half the fun of this romp lies in watching Bertie invent, then discard, one theory after another; for a while his suspicions even fall on the widowed hostess he wants to bed. The other half comes from Lovesey's light mockery of Victorian manners and sexual mores in a bright, entertaining tale whose bantering tone conceals artful plotting." 2nd in the Bertie trio I love and is being reissued by Soho. Lovesey, 85, continues to amaze with his new mysteries too. Start with [Bertie and the Tinman](#) (\$16.95) or buy [Bertie, The Complete Prince of Wales Mysteries](#) (\$31.95) and enjoy all three in one volume.

Marcantonio, Patricia. [Felicity Carrol and the Murderous Menace](#) (Crooked Lane \$26.99). A bluestocking proves her worth as a detective in a hunt for Jack the Ripper. Felicity Carrol is a wealthy young woman with several degrees and a passion for crime solving. When she receives a letter from the mother of her friend Inspector Jackson Davies, asking her to come visit him as "a matter of life and death," Felicity rushes to his side. Although he had initially ignored her when they met during her first case, Jackson soon came to rely on her scientific knowledge. Now Jackson is worn down with overwork and angst over the unsolved Whitechapel murders, and his health has worsened since he read an article about a seemingly identical murder in Placer, Montana. Determined to help him, Felicity sets off for Montana with her friend and servant Helen Wilkins to determine whether the Ripper has relocated to the United States. Money greases her way...

Onda, Riku. [The Aosawa Murders](#) (Bitter Lemon \$14.95). Japanese author Onda makes her English-language debut with an enigmatic and haunting crime novel. In 1973, 17 people die at the Aosawa villa on the Sea of Japan in the city of K—, including members of three generations of the Aosawa family, after drinking spirits and soft drinks that were delivered to the house as a gift. The massive police inquiry settles on the delivery man as the culprit. He later hangs himself and leaves behind a note confessing to the mass poisoning, which he carried out after he got a "notice that he had to kill the Aosawa family." In 2003, Makiko Saiga, who was a neighbor of the Aosawas and the author of a book about the murders, talks to an unidentified interviewer. That's followed by testimony from other people with a link to the case, including the police detective obsessed with it. Onda's unusual narrative technique, which presents differing perspec-

tives by giving only the responses to the interviewer's questions, enhances the nesting-doll plot. American readers will appreciate why this puzzle mystery won the annual Mystery Writers of Japan Award for Fiction.

Pooley, Clare. [The Authenticity Project](#) (Dorman \$26).

"Sometimes, especially in this digital age, we get caught up in the idea that while our lives are a mess, everyone else has got it together. And maybe — as Clare Pooley here — if we were all just honest about our insecurities and difficulties and worries, it would be easier for people to form stronger bonds. This is a charming book with a sweet love story, but at its heart it's a reminder that we need each other more than we need our phones." For fans of *The School of Essential Ingredients*, *The Unlikely Pilgrimage of Harold Fry*, and *A Man Called Ove*, "offering a sense of hope and respite for people struggling through life in a troubled world

Pinborough, Sarah. [Dead to Her](#) (Harper \$27.99). Marcie Maddox comes from the other side of the tracks, so she knows a good thing when she sees it. Stealing Jason from his first wife and becoming his second wife places Marcie in a rich Savannah social circle. She revels in her role of "sexy young wife," so when Keisha arrives on the scene as the new spouse of widowed and wealthy senior William Radford, the entire social circle is jolted and Marcie is concerned about her status. Directed by Jason to befriend Keisha, Marcie begins to realize that all is not what it seems—and the sparks between Keisha and Jason are hard to miss. But as is typical of Pinborough, all is not as it seems in these relationships. A mix of steamy sex, lies, secrets, betrayals, murder, and a dash of voodoo makes up a domestic thriller in the spirit of BA Paris, Liane Moriarty, etc.

Preston, Lisa. [The Clincher, A Horseshoer Mystery](#) (\$15.99). Rainy Dale is a twenty-something high school-dropout turned farrier (horseshoer) who is haunted by a secret she carries. Estranged from her California D-list actress momma and her ranch hand Texas daddy, she tracked down her childhood horse in small-town Oregon—a land full of cowboys and their horses—then stayed to build a life with her tools, steel, and forge. She's sleeping in a garage and trying not to fall for her landlord, the hapless and hopeful chef, Guy, who is determined to create the perfect soufflé while Rainy would prefer to just stuff her mouth with fuel. Rainy has an uphill battle to prove herself in order to make a living by her trade, especially to her male clients who look down their noses at a female farrier. She finds herself in over her head, however, when one of her clients turns up dead, setting her up as both a suspect and a seeker of the truth. If she plans on setting down roots in her new town. First on a series I enjoyed for the characters and the landscape.

Robb, JD. [Golden in Death](#) (St Martins \$28.99). Pediatrician Kent Abner received the package on a beautiful April morning. Inside was a cheap trinket, a golden egg that could be opened into two halves. When he pried it apart, highly toxic airborne fumes entered his body—and killed him. After the NYPD's Eve Dallas calls the hazmat team—and undergoes testing to reassure both her and her husband that she hasn't been exposed—it's time to look into Dr. Abner's past and relationships. "Hard to believe that this is #50 in the In Death series. Even harder to believe that the stories remain fresh and the characters compelling, but it does not disappoint. There's a satisfying path to solving the very

distressing murders, and particular pleasure in seeing the characters continue to change and grow. Think Lisa Gardner several decades in the future.

Robinson, Kim Stanley. [Three Californias: The Wild Shore, The Gold Coast, The Pacific Edge](#) (Forge \$24.99). Before Robinson terraformed Mars, he wrote three science fiction novels set in Orange County, California, where he grew up. These alternate futures—one a post-apocalypse, one an if-this-goes-on future reminiscent of Philip K. Dick, and one an ecological utopia—form a whole that illuminates, enchants, and inspires—collected here.

Ryan, Annelise. [Dead Ringer](#) (Kensington \$26). Regional mystery fans can visit Sorenson, Wisconsin, in this series led by medicolegal death investigator Mattie Winston. The discovery of an unidentified young woman's body raises questions as carnation petals are found inside the fatal wound. The m.o. is similar to that of several murders from a year ago in nearby Eau Claire, but a man is already in prison for those crimes. Mattie, who's feeling guilty because her testimony as a medical death examiner put an innocent man in prison in an earlier case, despite his subsequent release, is determined not to make the same mistake. She becomes obsessed with discovering whether a copycat killer is at work or the real murderer is still at large and, against the advice of her husband, homicide detective Steve Hurley, wades alone into the dark world of a serial killer. Her investigation is slowed down by marital issues, but she and the killer both prove to be ingenious.

Schneider, Joseph. [One Day You'll Burn](#) (Sourcebooks \$15.99). Detective Tully Jarsdel may not be a typical LAPD cop—but he's the only one who can solve this case. A body so badly burned that it could be mistaken for a movie prop... except for the smell. That's not something the LAPD finds lying on the street every day. And when Detective Tully Jarsdel is called to the scene, it's clear to him that something about the placement of the corpse is intentional, even ritualistic. Jarsdel's former career in academia seems to finally be coming in handy, rather than serving merely as material for jokes from his partner, Morales. But nothing Jarsdel learned in school can prepare him for what's coming...

Sigurdardottir, Yrsa. [The Absolution](#) (St Martins \$28.99). It's the rare author who truly gets better with each new book, but then nothing about Yrsa Sigurdardottir is typical. A director at one of Iceland's largest engineering firms, Yrsa's second job just happens to be as a bestselling crime novelist with a growing international readership and a fantastic movie adaptation of one of her novels, *I Remember You*, under her belt, too. The police find out about the crime the way everyone does: on Snapchat. The video shows a terrified young woman begging for forgiveness. When her body is found, it is marked with a number "2". Detective Huldar joins the investigation, bringing child psychologist Freyja on board to help question the murdered teenager's friends. Soon, they uncover that Stella was far from the angel people claim, but who could have hated her enough to kill? Then another teenager goes missing, more clips are sent to social media, and the body with a "3" is found. Freyja and Huldar can agree on two things at least: the truth is far from simple. The killer is not done yet. And is there an undiscovered body carrying the number "1" out there? If dark, layered, intricate crime novels are your cup of tea, don't miss reading Yrsa.

Simenon, George. [Maigret in Vichy](#) (Penguin \$15). Inspec-

tor Maigret and his wife take a much needed holiday to Vichy, where they quickly become used to the slower pace of life. But when a woman who they regularly pass by on their daily strolls is murdered, Maigret can't help but offer his assistance to the local Inspector, a former colleague of his. Set against a backdrop of gorgeous French countryside, Maigret in Vichy shows that even when our trusty detective is outside his jurisdiction, he is still very much in his element. #68 in Penguin's republication program. Pretty awesome.

Smith, Alexander McCall. [The Department of Sensitive Crime](#) (\$16). Isn't it just like the author of the "No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency" mysteries to offer a gentle parody of Nordic Noir? Led by Ulf Varg, who considers his cases even more important than his dog's happiness, the Malmö Police's Department of Sensitive Crimes considers a back-of-the-knee stabbing, an imaginary boyfriend's disappearance, and possibly supernatural incursions at the local spa.

Steinhauer, Olen. [The Nearest Exit](#) (\$16.99). Another spy comes in from the cold. Milo Weaver, a former field agent with the CIA's clandestine Department of Tourism, returns to action after a stint in prison for alleged financial fraud in this intense sequel to [The Tourist](#) (\$9.99). His handlers want Weaver to pursue a mole rumored to have infiltrated the CIA's black-ops department, but with his loyalty in question, he must first undergo some test missions, one of which is to kill the 15-year-old daughter of Moldovan immigrants now living in Berlin. Such a horrific assignment further weakens Weaver's already wavering enthusiasm for his secret life, and he becomes increasingly preoccupied with reconnecting with his estranged wife and child. When bombshell revelations rock Weaver's world, he vows to somehow put international intelligence work behind him. Can he do so without jeopardizing his and his family's safety? Reissued to herald a new Milo Weaver for March: [The Last Tourist](#) (\$29 Signed).

Vidich, Paul. [The Coldest Warrior](#) (Norton \$25.95). Based on the real-life case of biological warfare scientist Frank Olson, Vidich's lean, crisp third CIA novel recreates, then reimagines, the circumstances of Olson's still-unexplained death. In 1975, 22 years after scientific researcher Charles Wilson plunged to his death from the ninth floor of a Washington, D.C., hotel, agency inspector Jack Gabriel is assigned to re-open the case to determine whether it was a suicide, an accident, or something more sinister. Gabriel runs into resistance from the start. He knows that Wilson was secretly drugged by the CIA as part of the agency's LSD experiments of the time, but had always figured Wilson leapt to his death or accidentally fell. Agents who were involved in the original case, most of whom have risen to positions of power at the CIA, not only won't talk but actively warn him off the case. After a few of them die under suspicious circumstances, Gabriel starts to wonder: did the agency kill one of its own? Vidich, a former media industry executive with no spycraft background, writes with the nuanced detail and authority of a career spook. With this outing, Vidich enters the upper ranks of espionage thriller writers.

Westerson, Jeri. [Sword of Shadow](#) (Severn \$28.99). London, 1396. A trip to the swordsmith shop for Crispin Guest, Tracker of London, and his apprentice Jack Tucker takes an unexpected turn when Crispin crosses paths with Carantok Teague, a Cornish

treasure hunter. Carantok has a map he is convinced will lead him to the sword of Excalibur – a magnificent relic dating back to King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table – and he wants Crispin to help him find it. Travelling to Tintagel Castle in Cornwall with Carantok and Jack, Crispin is soon reunited with an old flame as he attempts to locate the legendary sword. But does Excalibur really exist, or is he on an impossible quest? When a body is discovered, Crispin's search for treasure suddenly turns into a hunt for a dangerous killer. 13th in this medieval series. Ordered upon request.

OUR FEBRUARY SMALL PAPERBACK PICKS

Cameron, Marc. [Open Carry](#) (\$9.99). Skilled tracker U.S. Marshal Arliss Cutter must leave his comfort zone in the Florida swamplands to investigate the murder of a Tlingit Indian girl in the wilds of southeast Alaska. *PW* had this to say about this series launch: "Cameron, who has nearly three decades in law enforcement and a stint as a U.S. marshal, keeps all these plot points delicately balanced and at the same time creates sympathetic heroes, depraved villains, and nail-biting action. Readers will eagerly await his next."

Carr, Jack. [True Believer](#) (\$9.99). A string of horrific terrorist attacks throughout the Western world prompts James Reece's recruitment by the CIA to help turn the perpetrator, a former Iraqi commando, against his masters while also unraveling a geopolitical conspiracy. *Kirkus* concludes, "Carr's second effort is a well-crafted thriller with timely reflections on the increasingly complicated world of international terrorism." 2nd in the Terminal List series.

Chien, Vivien. [Egg Drop Dead](#) (St Martins \$7.99). Noodle Shop #5. It was supposed to be a fancy, intimate dinner party by the pool. Instead, Lana Lee's first-ever catering event turns into full-course madness when a domestic worker is found dead. Is the party's host Donna Feng, the sweet-and-sour owner of the Asia Village shopping plaza where Ho-Lee is situated, somehow to blame?

Dirico, Maria. [Here Comes the Body](#) (Kensington \$7.99). Catering Hall #1. When a bachelor party at her family's catering hall in a bustling Queens neighborhood results in murder and her father is accused of the crime, Mia Carina must use all of her street smarts to keep him out of Rikers Island. *Kirkus* loved this saying the author's "zany cast will have readers wondering whether DiRico's series debut is set in Belle View or Bellevue."

Eaton, JC. [Dressed Up 4 Murder](#) (Kensington \$7.99). Sophie Kimball #6. When her mother's dog sniffs out a dead body in the neighbor's yard, bookkeeper/amateur sleuth Sophie Kimball discovers a link to the Precious Pooches Holiday Extravaganza and must dig up some clues to catch a killer with a penchant for poison. *Kirkus* concluded their review about this local husband and wife authors' popular series with "You can't help but chuckle over all the disasters, but in the end the heroine catches her prey."

Hillerman, Anne. [The Tale Teller](#) (\$9.99). Bernadette Manuelito #5. Investigating the disappearance of a priceless Navajo artifact, retired Tribal Police detective Joe Leaphorn receives a sinister warning at the same time a leading suspect dies under mysterious circumstances. *LJ* said "Hillerman's writing becomes stronger with every new installment in the series, deepening the development of each character. Fans will be intrigued by the intertwining

stories that keep them guessing. The picturesque Southwest, as well as the history of the Navajo, comes through on each page.”

Page, Katherine. [The Body in the Wake](#) (\$7.99). Faith Fairchild #25. Supporting her friends through a less-than-relaxing summer at Penobscot Bay, amateur detective and caterer Faith Fairchild helps prepare for an upcoming wedding before stumbling on a body with a mysterious tattoo and connections far from Sanpere Island. *PW* gave this a star saying, “This long-running traditional mystery series is still as fresh as a cool pitcher of Faith’s strawberry shrub.”

Paris, BA. [The Breakdown](#) (\$9.99). Plagued with guilt for not stopping for a stranded driver who was later reported murdered, Cass struggles with an increasingly compromised memory before she begins receiving silent phone calls she believes are from the killer. *LJ* ended with, “In the same vein as the author’s acclaimed debut, *Behind Closed Doors*, this riveting psychological thriller pulls readers into an engrossing narrative in which every character is suspect. With its well-formed protagonists, snappy, authentic dialog, and clever and twisty plot, this is one not to miss.”

Shelton, Paige. [The Loch Ness Papers](#) (\$7.99). Scottish Bookshop #4. Scrambling to find a last-minute pastor for her wedding, bookseller Delaney Nichols befriends an elderly Loch Ness monster enthusiast whose influence she staunchly defends and investigates when he is wrongly accused of murdering his own nephew. *PW* finds that, “Shelton stocks her tale with appealing characters and intriguing Nessie lore. Cozy fans will be rewarded.”

SOME FEBRUARY SMALL PAPERBACKS

Brecher, Christin. [Murder Makes Scents](#) (Kensington \$7.99). Nantucket Candle Maker #2. Returning home from perfume industry conference in Paris where they witnessed a murder, Stella and her mom, Millie, soon discover that danger has followed them back across the ocean when Stella’s candle store is broken into and Millie is attacked.

Buckley, Julia. [Death with a Dark Red Rose](#) (Berkley \$7.99). Writer’s Apprentice #5. When her friend Belinda goes missing, and the only thing left behind is a red rose, writer’s apprentice Lena London wonders if a strange new corporation that has come to town is involved and soon discovers that the truth is stranger than fiction.

Burns, Catherine. [The Visitors](#) (Picador \$9.99). In this debut by British author Burns, unmarried Marion Zetland lives with her brother John, who keeps making strange trips downstairs to their cellar. Ignoring the screams coming from there isn’t as easy, however, for Marion.

Cole, Stephanie. [Al Dente’s Inferno](#) (Penguin \$7.99). Tuscan Cooking School #1. In Tuscany studying under an acclaimed Italian chef, American chef Nell Valenti discovers that murder is on the menu on the cooking school’s opening night and, to avoid being next on the chopping block, investigates the murder herself.

Collins, Max Allan. [Mike Hammer The Big Bang](#) (\$8.99). Reissue. Hammer, recuperating from a near fatal mix-up with the Mob, disturbs some drug dealers assaulting a young motorbike messenger who was transporting medicine for a hospital. Now Hammer and his beautiful, deadly partner Velda are going to take on the drug racket in New York.

Evanovich, Janet. [The Big Kahuna](#) (\$9.99). Kate O’Hare #6.

Nick Fox and Kate O’Hare have their work cut out for them in a wild adventure that features a stoner, an Instagram model, a Czech oligarch and a missing unicorn. Yes, you heard right, a unicorn.

Griffin, J M. [Who’s Dead, Doc?](#) (Kensington \$7.99). Rabbit rescue and rehab expert Jules Bridge and her black-and-white rabbit, Bun, with whom she can communicate telepathically, must catch a killer who is taking out the competition at a rabbit show.

Hamilton Karen. [Perfect Girlfriend](#) (Grand Central \$9.99). A flight attendant in training, Juliette, young, pretty and driven, will let nothing stand in her way of winning back her ex-boyfriend, a pilot named Nate, and it is only a matter of time before she makes him regret that he ever even left her.

Kashian, Tina. [On the Lamb](#) (Kensington \$7.99). Kebab Kitchen #4. Preparing for the annual Bikers on the Beach gathering, Kebab Kitchen owner Lucy Berberian must get her friend Melanie out of a sticky situation when a local landlord, whom Melanie hated, is found dead after apparently choking on a piece of salt water taffy from Melanie’s candy store.

Koontz, Dean. [The Night Window](#) (\$9.99). Jan Hawk #4. When people under Arcadian control begin showing signs of violent instability, Jane Hawk and her growing band of supporters prepare for an ultimate battle to determine America’s future.

Le Carré, John. A (\$9.99). Reissue. Smuggled into Hamburg, Issa, a young Russian man, forms an alliance with Annabel, a civil rights lawyer, and Tommy Brue, scion of a failing British bank, as they become victims of rival intelligence operations in the War on Terror.

Long, Beverly. [Ten Days Gone](#) (Mira \$7.99). In Baywood, Wisconsin, four women are dead in forty days, each killed ten days apart, and detectives A.L. McKittridge and Rena Morgan, with nothing connecting the victims, must race against time to stop a serial killer before the next body drops

Reichs, Kathy. [Déjà Dead](#) (\$9.99). Reissue. Temperance Brennan #1. In the year since Temperance Brennan left behind a shaky marriage in North Carolina, work has often preempted her weekend plans to explore Quebec. When a female corpse is discovered meticulously dismembered and stashed in trash bags, Temperance detects an alarming pattern, and she plunges into a harrowing search for a killer.

Robb, J D. [Naked in Death: 25th Anniversary Edition](#) (\$9.99). Eve Dallas #1. Eve Dallas, a New York police lieutenant, is in over her head when she breaks the rules and falls in love with Roarke, an Irish billionaire and a suspect in her most recent case.

Souza, Joseph. [Pray for the Girl](#) (\$9.99). Returning home to Fawn Grove, Maine, to finally face her past, Lucy Abbott becomes involved in two murder investigations that, due to her time spent in Afghanistan, she feels connected to and soon discovers the darkness that lurks beneath her hometown.

Weiss, Kirsten. [Pies Before Guys](#) (Kensington \$7.99). Pie Town #4. When a poetry reading at her bakery ends in murder, Pie Town proprietor Val Harris finds herself at the center of another criminal inquiry and must sift through the clues to catch a killer before her reputation crumbles.