

# BOOKNEWS from

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## OUR HAPPY HOLIDAY WISHES TO ALL

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Note: All the times are Scottsdale time

Watch these virtual events on [Facebook Live](#) or on our [YouTube](#) channel and any time thereafter at a time that suits you. You don't have to belong to Facebook to click in.  
You also can listen to our [Podcasts](#) on [Google Music](#), [iTunes](#), [Spotify](#), and other popular podcast sites.

### TUESDAY DECEMBER 1 12:00 PM

Swedish author **Lars Kepler** discusses [Lazarus](#) (Knopf \$28.95)  
Signed bookplates  
Watch it on our [FB Live](#)  
Listen to the [podcast](#)

### TUESDAY DECEMBER 1 6:00 PM Virtual Book Launch

**Thomas Perry** discusses [Eddie's Boy](#) (Grove/Mysterious \$26)  
Michael Shaeffer aka The Butcher's Boy is back  
Signed books in stock  
Watch it on our [FB Live](#) or listen to the [podcast](#).

### WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 2 1:00 PM

**Caz Frear in conversation with Patrick Frear** discusses [Shed No Tears](#) (Harper \$26.99)  
London cop Cat Kinsella  
Signed bookplates

### WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 2 6:00 PM

**SJ Rozan** discusses [The Art of Violence](#) (Pegasus \$25.95)  
PIs Lydia Chin/Bill Smith  
Signed books in stock

### THURSDAY DECEMBER 3 7:00 PM

**Sherlock lives! A conversation with Laurie R. King and Leslie S. Klinger**  
As editors they discuss their new Holmes anthology [In League with Sherlock Holmes](#) (Pegasus \$25.95), stories from multiple authors inspired by the Holmes canon: Martin Edwards, Tess Gerritsen, Joe R. Lansdale, etc.  
Books signed by King in stock with a bookplate signed by Klinger

### FRIDAY DECEMBER 4 4:00 PM

**Jenn McKinlay** hosts **Kate Carlisle and Paige Shelton**  
**Carlisle** discusses [Premeditated Mortar](#) (Berkley \$7.99)  
A Fixer Upper Mystery  
**Shelton** discusses [Cold Wind](#) (St Martins \$26.99)  
An Alaskan thriller; signed copies available

### SATURDAY DECEMBER 5 10:00 AM

**Kensington Cozy Holiday Party**  
**Nancy Coco**, [Have Yourself a Fudgy Little Christmas](#) (Kensington \$8.99)  
**Maya Corrigan**, [Gingerdead Man](#) (Kensington \$8.99)

**Maddie Day**, [Candy Slain Murder](#) (Kensington \$8.99)

**Liz Ireland**, [Mrs. Claus and the Santaland Slayings](#) (Kensington \$15.95)

**Heather Redmond**, [A Christmas Carol Murder](#) (Kensington \$26)

### MONDAY DECEMBER 7 5:00 PM

**James Patterson in conversation with Lee Child**  
**Patterson** discusses two new releases: [The Last Days of John Lennon](#) (Little Brown \$30), true crime, Lennon and his assassin; [Deadly Cross](#) (\$29), Alex Cross #28  
The purchase of **either of the two books** is required to receive an invitation to the event  
Our copies come with a special letter Signed by Patterson exclusively for Poisoned Pen customers

### MONDAY NOVEMBER 7 6:30 PM

**Matt Coyle** discusses [Blind Vigil](#) (Oceanview \$26.99) with Patrick  
PI Rick Cahill  
Signed books available

### TUESDAY DECEMBER 8 5:00 PM Virtual Book Launch

**Jane Cleland** discusses [Hidden Treasure](#) (Minotaur \$26.99)  
Josie Prescott Antique Mysteries... lucky #13  
Our December Cozy Crimes Book of the Month  
Signed books in stock

### WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 9 4:00 PM

**Marty Wingate in conversation with Connie Berry**  
**Berry** discusses [A Legacy of Murder](#) (Crooked Lane \$26.99)  
An English village Christmas Mystery  
**Marty Wingate** discusses [Murder Is a Must](#) (Berkley \$26)  
A First Edition Library Mystery (British)  
Signed books available for Wingate

### THURSDAY DECEMBER 10 5:00 PM

**K'Wan** discusses [Black Lotus 2: The Vow](#) (Akashic \$14.95) and related work with Patrick

### THURSDAY DECEMBER 10 7:00 PM

**Charles Todd** discusses [A Hanging at Dawn](#) (Harper \$11.99), a story of Bess Crawford, her family, and young soldier Simon Brandon in India.

**SATURDAY DECEMBER 12 9:30 AM**

**Tessa Arlen and Rosemary Simpson in conversation with Dianne Freeman**

Arlen discusses [Poppy Redfern and the Fatal Flyers](#) (Berkley \$16).

Simpson discusses [Death, Diamonds, and Deception](#) (Kensington \$26)

Signed books available for Simpson

**SATURDAY DECEMBER 12 3:00 PM**

**The Jungle Reds Christmas Cocktails Party**

Rhys Bowen, Lucy Burdette, Deborah Crombie, Hallie Ephron, Jenn McKinlay, Hank Phillippi Ryan, Julia Spencer-Fleming  
Pour your own favorite drink and join us for a lively chat

**SIGNED BOOKS FOR DECEMBER**

Cleland, Jane. [Hidden Treasure](#) (Minotaur \$26.99). This delightful smart cozy shows off the supremo organizational skills of super successful antiques dealer/appraiser etc Josie Prescott which may depress those of us less gifted in the holiday season. Nonetheless its message is so positive it's our **December Cozy Crimes Book of the Month**. I love the small New Hampshire town where Prescott's flourishes, the on-going cast, the growth and change they experience. But this gem is about gems, specifically about an antique trunk that contains a jeweled box with, inside, a bronze statue of an ancient Egyptian cat (think the cat Bastet from the Amelia Peabody series). Is the box, and are its jewels, the real deal, or fake? And what about the cat? And if the treasure hadn't disappeared from its owner's apartment in the posh local seniors' home—and the owner gone missing—then Josie and her staff could discover all.... Meanwhile there's Gingerbread Victorian remodel underway, an empty nest looming (the chick flying off to the Marines), and.... Full of red herrings, the twisty plot builds to a satisfying conclusion, and descriptions of the authentication process are a bonus.

Coyle, Matt. [Blind Vigil](#) (Oceanview \$26.99). Blinded by a gunshot wound to the face while working as a private investigator nine months ago, Rick Cahill is now sure of only one thing: he has to start a new life and leave his old one behind. He's still trying to figure out what that life is when his onetime partner, Moira MacFarlane, asks for his help on a case she's taken for Rick's former best friend. The case is simple and Moira only needs Rick for one interview, but Rick is wary of waking sleeping demons. Ultimately, he goes against his gut and takes the case which quickly turns deadly. Rick's old compulsion of finding the truth no matter the cost—the same compulsion that cost him his eyesight and almost his life—battles against his desire to escape his past. The stakes are raised when Rick's friend is implicated in murder....

Dodd, Christina. [Wrong Alibi](#) (Harlequin \$28.99). Out December 29, Signed in January for her virtual event January 16 with Jayne Anne Krentz. John reviews: "Tough-as-nails Evelyn Jones knows exactly what it is like to be an invisible woman. After her former employer, Donald White, frames her for murder, Evie is

**MONDAY DECEMBER 14 5:00 PM Virtual Event**

Kristen Ashley discusses [Dream Chaser](#) (Grand Central \$7.99)  
Dream Team #2

Signed books in stock

**THURSDAY DECEMBER 17 7:00 PM**

**Hardboiled Crime** discusses Halley Sutton's [The Lady Upstairs](#) (\$16)

**FRIDAY DECEMBER 18 7:00 PM**

**SciFi Friday** discusses HG Parry's [The Unlikely Escape of Uriah Heep](#) (\$16.99)

**SATURDAY DECEMBER 19 10:30 AM**

**Croak & Dagger Christmas party**

The club discusses Ellie Alexander's [A Cup of Holiday Fear](#) (\$7.99)

headed for a lifetime behind bars until something unexpected happens and she is able to flee. Reinventing herself as Petie, the effective yet enigmatic manager of the remotely located Midnight Sun Fishing Camp, she spends the next decade living under the radar. When Evie learns that White has resurfaced in Alaska, she decides that it's time to settle an old score. As far as Evie is concerned, the best thing about being invisible is that your enemy never sees you coming. Dodd (*Strangers She Knows*, 2019) ingeniously transforms her initially TSTL (Too Stupid to Live) protagonist into a formidable purveyor of vengeance, all while delivering a twist-rich, page-turning plot that is enhanced by a generous serving of deliciously dry wit. As with all her fiendishly clever suspense novels, Dodd's latest should come with a warning label: may cause sleeplessness even after the reader reaches the last page." Recommended to fans of Lisa Jewell, Karin Slaughter, and Sandra Brown. And Nora Roberts.

Drummond, Ree. [Frontier Follies](#) (Harper \$26.99). "A down-to-earth, hilarious collection of stories and musings on marriage, motherhood, and country life from the #1 *New York Times* best-selling author and star of the Food Network show *The Pioneer Woman*. Ree pulls back the curtain and shares her experiences with childbirth, wildlife, isolation, teenagers, in-laws, and a twenty-five-year marriage to a cowboy/rancher."

Evans, Richard Paul. [The Noel Letters](#) (Gallery \$21.95). Our **December Fantastic New Fiction Book of the Month** is, as I try to do every year for this club, a book for book lovers about books. **Plus this beautifully packaged little book is so perfect for a gift all you have to do is slap a bow on it.** The inside pages are lovely too. I thought it would be a Christmas story, maybe with religious themes, but it's really a sharp and often acerbic look at publishing, authors (some behaving badly), the role of an editor, a wonderful community bookstore called Bobbooks, and a bookseller, and his estranged daughter. She's called Noel Book (formerly Post but she's newly divorced). After nearly two decades, Noel, an editor for a major New York publishing house, returns to her childhood home in Salt Lake City to see her estranged, dying father. What she believed would be a brief visit turns into something more as she inherits the bookstore her father fought to keep alive. Reeling from loneliness, a recent divorce, and unanticipated upheavals in her world, Noel begins receiving

letters from an anonymous source, each one containing thoughts and lessons about her life and her future. She begins to reacquire herself with the bookstore and the people she left behind, and in doing so, starts to unravel the reality of her painful childhood and the truth about her family. As the holidays draw near, she receives a revelation that changes not only how she sees the past but also how she views her future. This book-I read every word-is about many things. Memory. Perception. Self discovery. The poison of anger. Forgiveness. "A lovely read that beautifully contrasts the mistruths of memory and the redemptive power of new beginnings." -Booklist

Giovanni, Nikki. [Make Me Rain: Poems and Prose](#) (Harper \$19.99). For more than fifty years, Nikki Giovanni's poetry has dazzled and inspired readers. As sharp and outspoken as ever, she returns with this profound book of poetry wherein she celebrates her loved ones and unapologetically declares her pride in her Black heritage, while exploring the enduring impact of the twin sins of racism and white nationalism. Giovanni reaffirms her place as a uniquely vibrant and relevant American voice.

Goodwin, S.M. [Absence of Mercy](#) (Crooked Lane \$26.99). John picks our **December Historical Book of the Month**. "Given the choice between dealing with his father, the Duke of Kersey, on a daily basis or heading to New York City to train the local police in current investigative techniques, decorated Crimean War hero and current London Metropolitan Police inspector Jasper Lightner opts to put the Atlantic Ocean between himself and his disapproving father. Once Jasper arrives in New York, he quickly finds himself involved in one brutal murder that soon proves to be connected to two other almost identical killings that had been investigated by discredited New York police detective Hieronymus "Hy" Law. Now the two detectives find they must team up if they are to have any hope of bringing the killer to justice. Jasper's cognitive challenges add an extra dimension."

Dana Stabenow adds this review: "I always love a good setting and this has one—New York in 1857 in all its filthy, tumultuous pre-Civil War glory. The story is told mostly through the eyes of a stranger in a strange land, duke's son Jasper Lightner, a proponent of science in detection who has been exiled from practicing in London to training the nascent and utterly corrupt New York City police department. The other narrator is Hieronymus Law, a defrocked NYPD detective Lightner has to rescue from the Tombs, a notorious prison of the times, for punching out his previous boss. The plot is convoluted but holds together to the end and the characters are well drawn and believable, including cameos from historical personages of the day. Although Jasper's man, Paisley, will be everyone's favorite. Looking forward to the next one."

Hart, Matthew. [The Russian Pink](#) (Pegasus \$25.95). I was wild about Hart's 2001 nonfiction gem called *Diamond* for its adventurous expeditions, wealth of knowledge, and true fascination for diamonds: where to find them, how to cut them and bring them to market, how to value them, and the trouble as well as joy they cause. Also the curses that accompany them. It was made into a mini series starring Sir Derek Jacobi and Judy Davis. So I am delighted that Hart has turned his lifetime love of diamonds into a high concept, pulse-racing thriller involving betrayals, murders, high and low level politics, gamesmanship, even a presidential election. And scenes running across the globe including Namibia, Cape Town, the isle of Jersey, Washington DC, and more. I think

we should end the year on if not a high at least a huge fun note and so this debut is our **December First Mystery Book of the Month**.

"A diamond is no one's best friend in this fast-paced debut novel filled with greed, violence, and politics. 'All diamonds are blood diamonds,' begins the tale. 'It's just a question of whose blood.' The 1,512-carat pink rock is barely off a Congo riverbed when the killing begins. Worth hundreds of millions of dollars, the stone eventually ends up adorning the neck of Honey Li, the wife of billionaire and U.S. presidential contender Harry Nash. Meanwhile, protagonist Alex Turner is a Treasury agent working for Special Audits on illegal gem trading by Russian organized crime. He gets help from Slav Lily, an independent diamond trader/thief simultaneously "working for the bad guys, the good guys, and herself. Bad guys home in on Turner's daughter and ex-wife as a way of stopping him, which naturally pisses him off—but will he be able to protect his family? Early on in the story, the Russian mob's brutality becomes crystal clear, with the torture and murder of a woman in Brighton Beach. The author writes with skill, wit, and evident knowledge about the diamond industry.... The *Kirkus* Starred Review concludes, "Top-quality storytelling for thriller fans." A good choice for Jason Matthews readers.

Jonasson, Ragnar. [Winterkill](#) (Orenda \$36). When the body of a nineteen-year-old girl is found on the main street of Siglufjörður, Police Inspector Ari Thór battles a violent Icelandic storm in an increasingly dangerous hunt for her killer ... The chilling, claustrophobic finale to the international bestselling Dark Iceland series. Easter weekend is approaching, and snow is gently falling in Siglufjörður, the northernmost town in Iceland, as crowds of tourists arrive to visit the majestic ski slopes. Ari Thór Arason is now a police inspector, but he's separated from his girlfriend, who lives in Sweden with their three-year-old son. A family reunion is planned for the holiday, but a violent blizzard is threatening and there is an unsettling chill in the air. Three days before Easter, a nineteen-year-old local girl falls to her death from the balcony of a house on the main street. A perplexing entry in her diary suggests that this may not be an accident, and when an old man in a local nursing home writes 'She was murdered' again and again on the wall of his room, there is every suggestion that something more sinister lies at the heart of her death... As the extreme weather closes in, cutting the power and access to Siglufjörður, Ari Thór must piece together the puzzle to reveal a horrible truth ... one that will leave no one unscathed. Chilling, claustrophobic and disturbing, *Winterkill* marks the startling conclusion to the million-copy bestselling Dark Iceland series

✠ Kernick, Simon. [Kill a Stranger](#) (Headline \$36). Matt comes home to find his fiancée missing ...and the body of a woman he's never seen in their bed. To clear his name and save her, he will have to make an impossible choice. Kate has been snatched in the night, by terrifying men who threaten to kill her. To save herself, she will have to do something unthinkable

King, Laurie R/Klinger, Leslie S. [In League with Sherlock Holmes](#) (Pegasus \$26.95). King and Klinger, who both signed this collection, have invited another fifteen masters to this volume in their series. They include award-winning authors of horror, thrillers, mysteries, westerns, and science-fiction, all bound together in admiration and affection for the original stories. Past tales have spanned the Victorian era, World War I, World

War II, the post-war era, and contemporary America and England. They have featured familiar figures from literature and history, children, master sleuths, official police, unassuming amateurs, unlikely protagonists, even ghosts and robots. Some were new tales about Holmes and Watson; others were about people from Holmes's world or admirers of Holmes and his methods. The resulting stories are funny, haunting, thrilling, and surprising. All are unforgettable.

Lethem, Jonathan. [The Arrest](#) (Ecco \$27.99). The arrival of a strange man and an even stranger vehicle upend an isolated community in Lethem's post-apocalyptic Maine. Sandy Duplessis was a successful Hollywood screenwriter whose life, along with everyone else's, was turned upside down by an event called the Arrest. "Without warning except every warning possible it had come." The Internet, television, phones, guns and all other forms of technology stopped working, and wherever people were at the time of the Arrest became their permanent homes. Then comes a shocking arrival: a self-powered vehicle called the Blue Streak. The enormous machine, fueled by a nuclear reactor and capable of traveling over land and water, contains an even bigger surprise: Peter Todbaum, Journeyman's former writing partner, who drove the Blue Streak from Los Angeles to Maine. Bearing stories of his travels across the country, Todbaum holds court for the town's wary residents. For Journeyman and Maddie—who was romantically involved with Todbaum pre-Arrest but fled and never looked back—Todbaum's presence is worrying. What does he want? Find out by ordering our **December SciFi/Fantasy Book of the Month**.

Lindsay, Jeff. [Fool Me Twice](#) (Dutton \$27). Stealing a Fabergé egg. Surviving a double cross. And pulling off a robbery in the heart of the Vatican. This will be the challenge of thief extraordinaire Riley Wolfe's life. It opens in St. Petersburg, where Riley steals the egg—no easy task. Betrayed by the pilot he hired to help him get away, he wakes chained to a rock wall on one of the Kerguelen Islands—the most remote spot on earth—prisoner of top-dog international arms dealer Patrick Boniface who is also a top-notch art collector. He wants Riley to steal Raphael's *Liberation of St. Peter*, a unique challenge since the work is a fresco: stealing it demands stealing a wall of the Vatican. Then Riley is kidnapped from his kidnapper by Bailey Stone, a Perth-based rival of Boniface who demands that Riley pledge his allegiance to him instead. Uncertain who'll be his patron when the dust clears, Riley goes to work, assisted by his friend Monique, a peerless forger, and Betty Dougherty (not her real name), an information professional with a serious grudge against Stone. Not to be outdone, Frank Delgado, the FBI special agent who gave Riley such a hard time in his debut last December, [Just Watch Me](#) (\$17), deals in his Task Force for International Arms Regulation and Enforcement. Worse, he gives Riley a special incentive: a surveillance photograph of Monique, the love of his life, and more important, the art forger he can't pull off any heist without. Can Riley pull this impossible theft off and escape any consequences? Truly Lindsay must be a fan of *Mission Impossible*, no?

✦ McDermaid, Val. [Christmas Is Murder](#) (Sphere \$22). A beautifully packaged collection of short fiction by Val, some of them dark pieces and some of interest to the LBGTQ reader. I love the foil sparking the cover art, so festive.

Patterson, James. [Deadly Cross](#) (Little Brown \$29). Our copies come with a special letter Signed by Patterson exclusively for Poisoned Pen customers plus admission to a special virtual program December 7 with Lee Child.

Kay Willingham led a life as glamorous as it was public—she was a gorgeous Georgetown socialite, philanthropist, and the ex-wife of the vice president. So why was she parked in a Bentley convertible idling behind a DC private school, in the middle of the night, with the man who was the head of that school? Who shot them both, point blank, and why? The shocking double homicide is blazed across the internet, TV, newspapers — and across Alex Cross's mind. Kay had been his patient once. And maybe more. While John Sampson of DC Metro Police investigates the last movements of Christopher Randall, the educator killed along with Kay Willingham, detective and doctor Alex Cross and FBI special agent Ned Mahoney find unanswered questions from Willingham's past, before she arrived in DC and became known in DC society as someone who could make things happen. They travel to Alabama to investigate Kay's early years. There they find a world of trouble, corruption, and secrets, all of them closed to outsiders like Cross and Mahoney. Kay had many enemies, but all of them seemed to need her alive....

Patterson, James. [The Last Days of John Lennon](#) (Little Brown \$30). Our copies come with a special letter Signed by Patterson exclusively for Poisoned Pen customers plus admission to a special virtual program December 7 with Lee Child.

With the Beatles, John Lennon surpasses his youthful dreams, achieving a level of superstardom that defies classification. "We were the best bloody band there was," he says. "There was nobody to touch us." Nobody except the original nowhere man, Mark David Chapman. Chapman once worshipped his idols from afar—but now harbors grudges against those, like Lennon, whom he feels betrayed him. He's convinced Lennon has misled fans with his message of hope and peace. And Chapman's not staying away any longer. By the summer of 1980, Lennon is recording new music for the first time in years, energized and ready for it to be "(Just Like) Starting Over." He can't wait to show the world what he will do. Neither can Chapman, who quits his security job and boards a flight to New York, a handgun and bullets stowed in his luggage. Enriched by exclusive interviews with Lennon's friends and associates, including Paul McCartney

Perry, Thomas. [Eddie's Boy](#) (Grove \$26). While the action begins in and propels us through the present, this is an origin story for The Butcher's Boy showing us how the orphan informally became the ward of a small-town butcher whose sideline was contract killer. Eddie taught Michael Shaeffer both trades and a set of life skills that has allowed Michael to survive for some 30 years in retirement with his aristocratic English wife. He easily defeats the first wave, then the second, in England and on Meg's advice jets to Australia to work out what is going on. That proves even worse so Michael flies to the States. "In the U.S., he seeks out Justice Department bigwig Elizabeth Waring, who once used him as an informant, and suggests a trade for info about his hunters. It soon becomes clear that the likely instigator is a Mafia don Michael helped send to prison years earlier by framing him for a murder. An immensely clever cat and mouse game he engineers involving Waring and various mob factions ensues." Perry won the Best First Novel Edgar for [The Butcher's Boy](#) (\$17) whom he revisits here for the fourth time.

Among the rave and Starred Reviews for *Eddie's Boy* is one from the *Washington Post* that says, "One of Perry's unique talents is his ability to tell what is essentially the same story over and over again, while continually finding ways to make it fresh and absorbing." I asked Tom why so, and why does he not write a continuous series, and he says "it's because I was born with a short attention span. And also as years past questions arise to explore I didn't see earlier." Watch the video or listen to the podcast to explore this further.

Rankin, Ian, ed. [First Edition](#) (The Dome Press \$46). A London bookshop turns 21 and celebrates with a big volume of stories contributed by a wide range of authors including Oyinkan Braithwaite, John Connolly, Katie Fforde, Christopher Fowler, Robert Goddard, Araminta Hall, Ragnar Jonasson, Vaseem Khan, Clare Mackintosh, David Mitchell, Adele Parks, Stuart Turton, SJ Watson.... Many of them have signed the title page of this eclectic collection, but no, I can't read all the signatures.....

Rozan, S J. [The Art of Violence](#) (Pegasus \$25.95). A rewardingly savvy tour of Manhattan's demented art scene is led by PI Bill Smith whose turn it is in this long-running series to be the lead. His partner in all things, Lydia Chin, takes the role every other book. Lucky for her it's Bill this time as Sam Tabor, a recent darling of the art world, is definitely their most wacko client. Recently given a release from prison where he was serving heavy time for stabbing a young woman—he claims he was drugged by the punch served at the fatal party scene. Sam drinks too much. He's wildly unstable. His memory, such as it is, is unreliable. And thus he comes to Bill believing he has killed two women, maybe more, and wants Bill to prove he did it. He's willing to make a preemptive confession of guilt to the NYPD's Angela Grimaldi. You have to go with this set up and ride along with Bill who reluctantly agrees to check into the new murders, with an assist from Lydia. In its Starred Review, *PW* says, "As always, Rozan's intelligent, witty prose is a treat, and she justifies a choice made in the previous book regarding the relationship between her two leads." Don't miss [Paper Son](#) (\$25.95), their last case, led by Lydia and taking the pair to Mississippi—simply brilliant and IMHO one of the best of 2019.

Shelton, Paige. [Cold Wind](#) (St Martins \$26.99). Thriller writer Beth Rivers, on the run from St. Louis after being kidnapped and tortured by an unidentified assailant, is still living in a halfway house for low-level female felons in the small town of Benedict, Alaska. The appearance on the home's doorstep of two little girls, mute and covered in mud, throws Beth's new life into turmoil. When Benedict police chief Gril Samuels, Beth's friend, arrives to take charge of the children, he brings news that the frozen body of a middle-aged woman has been found in the woods. Arson and break-ins follow. Gril welcomes Beth's assistance in figuring out who's committing the crimes and why. Meanwhile, Beth is told by the St. Louis detective following her abduction case that the culprit's identity has been determined, but he's still on the loose in this sequel to 2019's [Thin Ice](#) (\$26.99).

Simpson, Rosemary. [Death, Diamonds, and Deception](#) (Kensington \$26) again brings the Gilded Age to life, as heiress Prudence MacKenzie and ex-Pinkerton Geoffrey Hunter dash down a twisted maze from Fifth Avenue to Five Points in pursuit of stolen diamonds once belonging to Marie Antoinette. Fall 1889: Lady Rotherton has arrived from London intent on chaperoning

her niece Prudence through a New York social season to find a suitable husband. It's certainly not her niece's devilishly handsome partner in Hunter and MacKenzie Investigative Law. Aunt Gillian's eye for eligible suitors is surpassed only by her ability to discern genuine gems from nearly flawless fakes. At the Assembly Ball at Delmonico's, she effortlessly determines that the stones in the spectacular diamond waterfall necklace adorning the neck of the wife of banker William De Vries are fake. Insisting on absolute discretion to avoid scandal, the banker employs Prudence and Geoffrey to recover the stolen diamonds pried out of their settings—priceless stones acquired by Tiffany, originally purchased for Marie Antoinette. Their search for a possible fence rapidly leads to a dead end: a jeweler brutally killed in his shop during an apparent theft. The jeweler's murder is only the first in a string of mysterious deaths, as Prudence and Geoffrey pursue their elusive quarry. But the clues keep leading back to duplicity on the part of the De Vries family.... This [Gilded Age Mystery](#) series is a good one to binge on.

✦ Wingate, Marty. [Murder Is a Must](#) (Berkley \$26). Hayley Burke, curator of Lady Fowling's collection of first edition mysteries, is settling into her position at the First Edition Library in Middlebank House. She's even made progress with Lady Fowling's former secretary, the ornery Miss Woolgar. The women are busily preparing for an exhibition that will showcase Lady Fowling's life and letters. Hayley knows the exhibition is a huge undertaking and decides, against her better judgment, to hire Oona Atherton, her former boss from the Jane Austen Centre to help with the planning. Oona is known for being difficult, but all seems to be going swimmingly until she and Hayley uncover a one-page letter that alludes to a priceless edition of Golden Age classic *Murder Must Advertise*. Oona feels this book could be the focal point of the exhibition and becomes obsessed with finding it. When they find clues that appear to point to the book being somewhere in the First Edition Library, Oona is certain she's unraveled the mystery and texts Hayley the good news, but upon arriving back at Middlebank, Hayley finds her old boss dead at the bottom of the stairs....

#### RESTOCKED:

We ran out of two debuts: Nev March, [Murder in Old Bombay](#) (St Martins \$26.99), and Stephen Spotswood, [Fortune Favors the Dead](#) (Doubleday \$26.95). We often cannot obtain more Signed first prints as the publisher sells out, but here both authors graciously agreed to sign a second shipment. I highly recommend both—supply is limited and the Spotswood may sell out before you read this. We also obtained a few more of John Grisham's [A Time for Mercy](#) (Doubleday \$29.95).

#### A HOLIDAY SPECIAL PRICE

Rollins, James. [Unrestricted Access](#) (Morrow \$19). A book for readers of all stripes as the collection of stories ranges around the world and genres. Plus in addition to the dogs therein, Jim drew a cartoon of a dog in every copy alongside his signature, an extra treat in this hefty hardcover.

#### UNSIGNED EVENT BOOKS

✦ Arlen, Tessa. [Poppy Redfern and the Fatal Flyers](#) (Berkley \$16). Set in 1942, Arlen's enticing second Poppy Redfern Mystery after [Poppy Redfern and the Midnight Murders](#) (\$16) finds Poppy working as scriptwriter for London's Crown Film Unit, a

production company responsible for creating propaganda films. Poppy's first assignment is to write the script for a recruiting film about the Air Transport Auxiliary Flyers (aka Attagirls), an elite unit of civilian women pilots who transport military airplanes to factories and air fields around Britain for use by the air force. When the Attagirls' unit's best pilot dies in an accident while being filmed flying a Spitfire, Poppy is stunned. But when a second pilot soon perishes in a crash, Poppy and her would-be boyfriend, U.S. Army fighter pilot Griff O'Neal, set out to discover who has it in for the ATAs before another flyer can die. Arlen's depiction of the heroic ATAs is a fascinating nod to a little-known aspect of WWII history; each of the women has a fascinating backstory. The pace is leisurely enough to allow for characterizations, landscape, and some fascinating facts. Cozy fans will enjoy spending time with good-hearted, very English Poppy and friends, including her charming corgi.

✦ Berry, Connie. [A Legacy of Murder](#) (Crooked Lane \$26.99). Widowed Ohio antiques dealer Kate Hamilton travels to Finchley Hall, a stately home in Suffolk, to visit her daughter, a student at Oxford who's interning at the home. Kate joins a tour group, whose guide explains that the place "is famous for three things—its fine Tudor brickwork, the magnificent treasure trove discovered here in the early nineteenth century, and... murder." The guide goes on to describe the four unusual murders that have occurred there over the centuries. Then the group reaches Finchley's lake, where the body of one of the interns is floating, and Kate phones her friend DI Thomas Mallory of the Suffolk Constabulary to alert him to the grim discovery. Mallory later interviews a number of convincing suspects with a variety of plausible motives. "This cozy has it all: well-developed characters, clever dialogue, a gentle love story that never slows the mystery plot, and insights into the antiques trade," says one enthusiastic reviewer. I look forward to reading this 2019 release which I missed back then.

Carlisle, Kate. [Premeditated Mortar](#) (Berkley \$7.99). Shannon Hammer is about to embark on one of the biggest projects of her career. Her best friend Jane Hennessey has purchased one wing of the Gables, formerly the old state insane asylum, located on a bucolic hillside two miles northeast of Lighthouse Cove. Jane plans to turn her section into a small luxury hotel complete with twenty ocean-view rooms, a spa, and a restaurant. Shannon is raring to get started on the enormous project and is shocked when a group of unruly protesters shows up at the groundbreaking ceremony and wreaks havoc. She's even more freaked-out when someone pushes her into a pit of bricks in a closed-off room of the asylum. Despite her close call, Shannon wants nothing more than to get back to work...until she finds a body not far from where she was pushed.

✦ Frear, Caz. [Shed No Tears](#) (Harper \$26.99). Signed bookplates. The discovery in a remote area of Cambridgeshire of a missing woman's remains reignites a cold case. In 2012, in what was dubbed the Roommate Case, the confessed killer, Christopher Masters, lured four women to his house by advertising a room for rent and killed three of them. The fourth, Holly Kemp, identified by eyewitness testimony, escaped and went missing...until now, 2018. DI Cat Kinsella and her partner, DS Luigi Parnell, take another look at the Kemp case as her body's been found. Because Kemp was killed in a different manner than the other victims, and her body was found a distance Masters's house, the partners

suspect Masters, who's now dead, might now be Kemp's killer. If not, loaded questions arise which play into Cat's own internal monologue about how to reconcile being a cop with her crook of a father....

Here's the Indie Next Pick for Frear's third British police procedural—if you can call a narrative loaded with ethical challenges a procedural: "Kinsella is whip smart, takes no nonsense, and is a wry-one-liner machine. In their newest case, Kinsella and her partner, Luigi Parnell, find a connection to a serial killer. Christopher Masters was arrested for the kidnapping and murder of four women six years ago. His final victim wasn't found until now, so Kinsella may finally have the evidence to close the case once and for all. But as they dive back into a cold case, they find some troubling issues. As they dig deeper, they head into a rabbit hole they may never be able to get out of. Wonderfully twisty and satisfyingly puzzling, the newest mystery by Frear is a must for all thriller fans."

Kepler, Lars. [Lazarus](#) (Knopf \$28.95). Signed bookplates. Joona Linna, a superintendent with Sweden's National Crimes Unit, who has "solved more complex murder cases than anyone else in Scandinavia," returns to active duty after completing a community service sentence following time in prison for assault. Meanwhile, a suspected grave robber is murdered in Oslo, and in his refrigerator is the skull of Linna's late wife, which the robber apparently dug up in Sweden and brought home to Norway. The dead man has whip marks on his back, injuries similar to those Linna saw on the brother of his dead Hannibal Lecter-like adversary, Jurek Walter, in a previous outing. In Germany, those same injuries show up on the body of another murdered criminal, who made a call to Linna's cell phone shortly before his death. Linna becomes convinced that Walter is still alive and recruiting men across Europe to serve as accomplices in his crimes. Kepler (the pen name of a husband-wife writing team) maintains an almost unbearable level of tension throughout and does an outstanding job of making readers fear that anyone could die a horrible death at any time. Fans of serial killer fiction won't want to miss this one."—*PW*.

K'Wan. [Black Lotus 2: The Vow](#) (Akashic \$14.95). It's been months since Kahllah El-Amin, aka the Black Lotus, hung up her pistols, retired from the murder-for-hire business, and finally found peace. But when a police officer is murdered and a familiar flower is left at the crime scene, all signs point to it being the work of the Black Lotus. Someone is trying to frame her. Things get more complicated when the case is handed to Detective James Wolf, a former adversary who has since become a friend. To clear her name, Kahllah is forced out of retirement and once again must don the mask of the Black Lotus and race against time to catch the real killer.... "Like a cool, hip, and fun evening at a vintage drive-in, *Black Lotus 2: The Vow* takes me back to a time when Jim Kelly, Pam Grier, and Fred Williamson graced the big screen. Throw in some Bruce Lee and a little *The Last Dragon* and you have a hell of a butt-kicking, action-filled ride."—Ace Atkins echoing Patrick who hosts our virtual event with K'Wan. Start with [Black Lotus](#) (\$12.95).

✦ Todd, Charles. [A Hanging at Dawn](#) (Harper \$11.99). There's no Bess Crawford mystery until next August. But what a treat—we get to travel back to Bess' childhood in India because the narrative of this novella carries a young soldier, Simon Brandon, a youth who enlisted under age and is too good to boot out of the

army but needs seasoning, there. The two youngsters, Bess age five and Simon about seventeen, forge a bond as her father's Regiment holds the Khyber Pass on the dangerous Northwest Frontier against all intruders. It's part of that Great Game you can read about in Kipling's *Kim* or MM Kaye's *The Far Pavilions* (do not watch the movie adaptation of the Kaye ever!). Learn much about going for a soldier, about the British Raj and the Indian princes. And how Simon becomes set up for a crime that will result in his hanging unless Bess, Melinda, and Richard Crawford can intervene. The narrative forecasts Bess' determination to serve as a battlefield nurse in WWI, and explains her father's interrupted career, as well as illuminating Simon's story. It's a wonderful chapter in the series and at this attractive price, an excellent gift since a prequel can be read without having read any of the series.

## OUR DECEMBER BOOKS OF THE MONTH

**The Crime Book of the Month** One Signed hardcover First per month

To Be Announced

**British Crime Book of the Month** One unsigned hardcover or paperback per month

Horowitz, Anthony. [Moonflower Murders](#)

**Cozy Crimes Book of the Month** One unsigned hardcover or paperback per month

Cleland, Jane. [Hidden Treasure](#)

**Fantastic New Fiction Book of the Month** One Signed hardcover First per month

Evans, Richard Paul. [The Noel Letters](#)

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

Hart, Matthew. [The Russian Pink](#)

**Historical Fiction Book of the Month** One Signed hardcover First per month

Goodwin, S.M. [Absence of Mercy](#)

**International Crime Book of the Month** One Unsigned hardcover or paperback per month

Aimaq, Jasmine. [The Opium Prince](#)

**SciFi/Fantasy Book of the Month** One hardcover or paperback per month signed when possible.

Lethem, Jonathan. [The Arrest](#)

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## HOLIDAY MYSTERIES FROM DECEMBER 5's COZY CRIMES EVENT

Coco, Nancy. [Have Yourself a Fudgy Little Christmas](#) (Kensington \$8.99). In Coco's eighth Candy-Coated Mystery, Christmas on Mackinac Island brings a flurry of festive activity for fudge shop owner Allie McMurphy—but also a body in a snow bank. With fun recipes, cute pets, quirky characters, and an endearing young protagonist, the Candy-Coated Mysteries serve up the perfect holiday ingredients.

Corrigan, Maya. [Gingerdead Man](#) (Kensington \$8.99). This holiday season Bayport, Maryland, is a dead ringer for Victorian London. Val and her grandfather are taking part in the Dickens of a Holiday festival. Val is hosting a private tea party serving the festival's costumed volunteers, who range from Dickens divas like Madame Defarge and Miss Havisham to Ebenezer Scrooge and old St. Nick himself. But one costumed reveler may have gotten the holidays mixed up. The winner of the creepiest outfit, robed in black with a gift bag covering the head—okay, Ghost of Christmas Present, Val gets it—hands out gingerbread men with white icing skeleton bones. This year's sour Santa has none of the big fellow's mirth but plenty of his appetite, and it's no secret Santa loves cookies. But when the man in red turns blue, Val and Granddad have a cookie-cutter killer to catch before the New Year... Includes delicious five-ingredient recipes!

Day, Maddie. [Candy Slain Murder](#) (Kensington \$8.99). Christmas cheer has sent the griddle into overdrive at Robbie Jordan's popular country store and café. And this year, there's a new seasonal special to feast on: murder... As December sweeps through

South Lick, Indiana, Robbie's life seems merry and bright like the string lights glistening around town. But strange happenings signal a bumpy ride into the holidays. First a man raises eyebrows at Pans 'N Pancakes when he claiming to be the long-lost half-brother of Robbie's assistant. Then a fire destroys the home of a controversial anesthesiologist, exposing skeletal remains in his attic. Helplessly intrigued, all Robbie wants for Christmas is to stop her winter wonderland from becoming a real nightmare. With a decades-old mystery taking shape, can she run as fast as she can in pursuit of a killer who's harder to crack than a stale gingerbread man?

Ireland, Liz. [Mrs. Claus and the Santaland Slayings](#) (Kensington \$15.95). Set at the North Pole, this exceptional series launch from Ireland features such delightful characters as Old Charlie, a snowman; Blitzen, a reindeer descended from the Blitzen of "The Night Before Christmas" fame; and Jingles, the elf steward at frigid Castle Kringle. All of them are potential perps in the murder of Giblet Hollyberry, a notoriously unpleasant elf, but the chief suspect is Nick Claus, the acting Santa of Santaland. Constable Crinkles is soon on the case, along with detective Jake Frost, but it's going to be up to April Claus, Nick's wife, to clear her husband's name. Rumors have circulated since the death of Nick's older brother, Chris Claus, that Nick had something to do with it, because he coveted Chris's job as Santa, and now an elf is dead. April has only a few days to find the killer before Christmas. Meanwhile, she must cope with the quirks of the extended Claus family. This fun, well-plotted mystery is the perfect holiday entertainment.

✎ Redmond, Heather. [A Christmas Carol Murder](#) (Kensington \$26). December, 1835. Nothing says Christmas like caroling outside the counting house of Emmanuel Screws, and nothing dampens the Christmas spirit like having a chained corpse fall from an overhead window to the ground before the eyes of Charles Dickens and his horrified fellow carolers. Soon after the killjoy is identified as Jacob Harley, Screws' partner, his body inside its coffin vanishes from the custody of the undertaker Dawes. But that's the least of Charles' headaches. He's already scrambling to disprove the allegation of serving maid Madge Porter that he fathered Timothy, the son of Madge's late sister, Lizzie. Moved by the holiday spirit and simple humanity, Charles has taken up the infant and placed him with pregnant actress Julie Aga, the wife of his fellow journalist William Aga. His solicitude for the defenseless child is a distinctly bad look for his fiancée, Kate Hogarth, and a worse one for her father, George, who, as editor of the *Morning Chronicle*, holds a great deal of power over his employee's future. When the prospective publisher of *Sketches by Boz* begins to back away from his contract, it seems the only thing that will redeem Dickens is proof that he's not Timothy's father. Oh, and solving what by now is a pair of murders as well."—*Kirkus Reviews*

### CLASSIC BRITISH CRISTMAS CRIMES

Duncan, Francis. [Murder for Christmas](#) (Sourcebooks \$14.99). A 1930s Christmas country house party mystery. Written then when it was not an historical but contemporary to the author. It is definitely a period piece and should be read that way. John Charles adds, "When the party guests of Benedict Grame discover a body, that bears a striking resemblance to Father Christmas, under the tree, it is up to Mordecai Tremaine to find the culprit before

another death occurs. Originally published in the U.K. in 1949, this Golden Age mystery introduces amateur sleuth and former tobacconist Mordecai Tremaine and will definitely appeal to fans of Ngaio Marsh and Agatha Christie."

Edwards, Martin. [The Christmas Card Crime and Other Stories](#) (Poisoned Pen \$14.99). The Starred Review: "Edwards' outstanding third winter-themed anthology showcases 11 uniformly clever and entertaining stories, mostly from lesser known authors, providing further evidence of the editor's expertise. The title tale by Donald Stuart is one of the most memorable, featuring multiple murders in snowbound conditions. Passengers traveling to Cornwall find their trip disrupted by a heavy snowfall that blocks their train, forcing them to make their way to the nearest lodging, a seedy inn, where one of their number is fatally stabbed in the chest with half of a Christmas card grasped in his hand. Writing as Carter Dickson, John Dickson Carr is at his creepiest in a story in which a couple arrives at a country house for a Christmas celebration and are bewildered to find it abandoned apart from an odd woman. The woman explains that there is a tradition to leave the home for an hour on Christmas Eve, derived from an unsolved impossible murder years earlier. This entry in the British Crime Classics series will be a welcome holiday gift for fans of the golden age of detection."

Edwards, Martin. [Crimson Snow: Winter Mysteries](#) (\$12.95). "In this imaginative anthology, Edwards president of Britain's Detection Club has gathered together overlooked criminous gems by such old pros as Edgar Wallace, Margery Allingham, Julian Symons and Michael Gilbert, to name only the most famous. Fans of the world's first consulting detective won't want to miss 'Christmas Eve,' a short play by S.C. Roberts in which the winsome Violet de Vinne consults Holmes and a smitten Watson about the theft of Lady Barton's pearls."—Michael Dirda, *Washington Post*.

Farjeon, JJ. [Mystery in White](#) (\$12.95). A UK bestseller on its rerelease and now available in the US is a classic Christmas mystery akin to the murderous house party of Agatha Christie's *Hercule Poirot's Christmas*. On Christmas Eve, heavy snowfall brings a train to a halt near the village of Hemmersby. Several passengers take shelter in a deserted country house, where the fire has been lit and the table laid for tea – but no one is at home. Trapped together for Christmas, the passengers are seeking to unravel the secrets of the empty house when a murderer strikes in their midst. Farjeon's classic is now republished for the first time since the 1930s with an Introduction by Martin Edwards.

Hay, Mavis Doriel. [The Santa Klaus Murder](#) (\$12.95). Aunt Mildred declared that no good could come of the Melbury family Christmas gatherings at their country residence Flaxmere. So when Sir Osmond Melbury, the family patriarch, is discovered—by a guest dressed as Santa Klaus—with a bullet in his head on Christmas Day, the festivities are plunged into chaos. Nearly every member of the party stands to reap some sort of benefit from Sir Osmond's death, but Santa Klaus, the one person who seems to have every opportunity to fire the shot, has no apparent motive.... "This extremely clever country-house murder mystery is the perfect holiday gift for the avid cozy crime fan. It has an aristocratic setting, a dead earl, and a major suspect ... There are loads of clues, red herrings, and twists in a truly classic Christmas mystery with all the golden age patina."—*Toronto Globe and Mail*

James, PD. [The Mistletoe Murder and Other Stories](#) (\$15). Dana Stabenow writes “Four short stories, two featuring Adam Dalgliesh, and the first and last country house murders in the very best tradition of Golden Age British mysteries. ‘The Boxdale Inheritance’ is a perfectly lovely little piece of bait-and-switch with the only sympathetic portrayal of a blackmailer I have ever read, and in ‘The Twelve Clues of Christmas’ James and Dalgliesh both have their tongues firmly in their cheeks throughout. An excellent stocking stuffer for the lover of classic crime.”

### CONTEMPORARY CHRISTMAS CRIMES

Alexander, Ellie. [A Cup of Holiday Fear](#) (St Martins \$7.99). Ashland, Oregon, looks as pretty as a postcard this holiday season. The halls are decked, stockings hung, and eyes are all aglow—mostly thanks to the buttered rum. Jules Capshaw and her staff at Torte are busier than ever... still, even the town’s most in-demand bakers need to take a break. So Jules invites everyone to celebrate at the local Winchester Inn’s Dickens Feast, a six-course extravaganza with Yorkshire Pudding, Christmas goose, and all the trimmings. But as the weather outside becomes frightful, things inside turn less delightful when one of the guests ends up as dead as Scrooge’s doornail in this Bakeshop Cozy Mystery.

Andrews, Donna. [The Gift of the Maggie](#) (St Martins \$25.99). Ornamental blacksmith/general do-gooder Meg Langslow’s Christmas activities entangle her with a fellow resident of Caerphilly, Virginia, whose domestic life is even more chaotic than hers. Unlike Meg, who’s surrounded by members of her own cheerfully argumentative family as well as the Shiffleys, Caerphilly’s somewhat more benign version of the Snopeses, Harvey Dunlop has chosen to surround himself with stuff—objects of dubious value he can’t bring himself to throw out. So Meg, her friend Caroline Willner, Meredith Flugleman of Adult Protective Services, and other concerned members of Helping Hands for the Holidays have banded together to strong-arm...er...help and encourage him to go through his house with a shovel and relocate his treasures to an empty building. But when Meg shows up at Harvey’s for the main event in the decluttering marathon, her host is unresponsive, brained with a spittoon in his garage. As Harvey hovers between life and death, Meg plunges into his family history to uncover a motive for the murderous attack

Andrews, Mary Kay. [Blue Christmas](#) (\$15.99). A reissue from 2006 highlights Savannah for Christmas. T’is the week before, and antiques dealer Weezie Foley is in a frenzy to do up her shop right for the Savannah historical district decorating contest, which she fully intends to win. Her motif is Graceland Blue Christmas, with lots of tinsel, an aluminum tree, and enough tacky retro doodads to fill the Grand Ole Opry. But no sooner is she certain she’s one-upped the trendy shop around the corner when Weezie notices things going strangely missing from her display. Despite the petty burglaries of her mysterious midnight visitor, Weezie has high hopes this holiday will be magical...and it almost is.

Ashley, Jennifer. [A MacKenzie Clan Christmas](#) (Berkley \$5.99 Signed). The Mackenzie clan has gathered for Hart’s birthday at the sprawling family estate in Scotland. But before the festivities can start, the house is robbed, and thieves make off with an untold fortune in rare art. Ian Mackenzie and his brothers must do what they can to retrieve the family treasure, but Ian is distracted by a family friend who claims he might have the power to “cure”

Ian of his madness forever. The book includes a never before published Mackenzie Christmas novella and, at this low price, is a perfect stocking stuffer.

Berenson, Laurien. [Here Comes Santa Paws](#) (\$7.99). Melanie Travis #24. Crime-solving friends Melanie and Claire dive into the investigation of the death of a mysterious local woman in an affluent Connecticut town just before Christmas.

Delany, Vicki. [Silent Night, Deadly Night](#) (Berkley \$7.99). It’s the week before Thanksgiving, and Merry Wilkinson, owner of Mrs. Claus’s Treasures, is preparing for a weekend reunion of her mother’s college friends. Instead the women prove to be a group of griches hitting Rudolph, the year-round Christmas town. Follow up with [Dying in a Winter Wonderland](#) (Berkley \$7.99). When Luanne Ireland’s fiancé is found murdered at their proposed wedding venue, Merry Wilkinson resolves to restore peace and calm to the community of Rudolph even if it means putting herself in the crosshairs of a killer. Here’s *Kirkus* “Plenty of suspects, likable characters, and lots of possible motives add up to a cheery holiday cozy.”

✦ Dunn, Carola. [Mistletoe and Murder](#) (\$16.99). A reissue for the holidays. In December 1923, the formidable Dowager Viscountess Dalrymple has decided that for Christmas the family will all gather at Brockdene in Cornwall at the invitation of Lord Westmoor. Her daughter will be there just before the holidays working on another article for *Town and Country* about the estate itself. But the family gathering quickly goes awry. Brockdene, it seems, is only occupied by the Norvilles—poor relations of Lord Westmoor—and Westmoor himself won’t be joining them. So daughter Daisy, her husband Detective Chief Inspector Alec Fletcher of Scotland Yard, and their family must spend their Christmas holiday trapped in an ancestral estate with a rich history of lore, ghost stories, rumors of hidden treasure and secret passageways with a family seething with resentments, grudges and a faintly scandalous history. The veneer of civility that pervades the halls of Brockdene, however, begins to wear thin when long-held family secrets threaten to bubble over, and one of the Christmas guests is found savagely murdered. This is a fine series that has evolved over time; it’s nice to go back to an earlier entry.

Farrow, Sharon. [Hollyberry Homicide](#) (Kensington \$7.99). Berry Basket #5. When the set of Oriole Point’s production of *A Christmas Carol* is plagued by strange accidents and then murder, Marlee Jacob, who is playing Jacob Marley, must find the culprit before it’s curtains for someone else.

Fluke, Joanne. [Christmas Cupcake Murder](#) (Kensington \$22.95). Hannah Swensen, owner of the Cookie Jar bakery in Lake Eden, Minn., is baking German chocolate cupcakes when she hears a knock at the door. Outside is a stranger asking for work. Hannah invites the man in, and over coffee the two discover a mutual love of German chocolate cake. The stranger reminisces about how his mother always used to give him an orange when she made him one for his birthday. Recipes follow for German chocolate cake and frosting. The man leaves after doing a few odd chores for Hannah, who later that day finds him lying unconscious in her mother’s storage shed. The doctor who treats the man diagnoses that he has amnesia brought about by a blow to the head. After many more recipes and discussions of food, the stranger’s fondness for oranges provides Hannah with a clue to his fate. As befits a holiday book, there are loads of good recipes.

Fluke, et al. [Christmas Sweets](#) (Kensington \$7.99). Gathered together in one volume are three yuletide tales of mystery, murder, and romance including Fluke's "The Twelve Desserts of Christmas," Laura Levine's "Nightmare on Elf Street," and Leslie Meier's "The Christmas Thief."

✎ Guillory, Jasmine. [Royal Holiday](#) (\$16). Popular stylist Mad-die Forest, heroine of [The Wedding Party](#) (\$15), is heading to England to work with a duchess for Christmas, and she talks her mother, Vivian, into coming along. That way Vivian can leave the country for only the second time in her 50-something years. Much to Vivian's surprise, she loves Sandringham, the royal estate where the duchess is staying for Christmas. And she's even more attracted to Malcolm Hudson, a member of the royal staff, who is tall, handsome and has a fantastic accent. Malcolm, the first black private secretary to the queen, is drawn out of his typical reserve and into conversation with the beautiful, lively Vivian. Sweet and sexy, *Royal Holiday* is a charmingly festive romance, full of vivid details of London tourist spots like Westminster Abbey and the Victoria and Albert Museum. It's refreshing to read a romance novel with a strong, older woman at its center, and readers are sure to fall for Malcolm's charm as easily as Vivian does. With lovely descriptions of the frigid English countryside and the delicious meals that Vivian and Malcolm share, *Royal Holiday* is the perfect tale of courtship to cozy up to with cup of tea." —Jessica Howard

Hallinan, Timothy. [Fields Where They Lay](#) (\$15.95). The halls are decked, the deck is stacked, and here comes that jolly old elf. Junior Bender, divorced father of one and burglar extraordinaire, finds himself stuck inside the Edgerton Mall, and not just as a last-minute shopper (though he is that too). Edgerton isn't exactly the epicenter of holiday cheer, despite its two Santas, canned Christmas music, chintzy bows, and festive lights. The mall is a fossil of an industry in decline; many of its stores are closed, and to make matters worse, there is a rampant shoplifting problem. The murderous Russian mobster who owns the place has decided it takes a thief to catch a thief and hires Junior—under threat—to solve the shoplifting problem for him. But Junior's surveillance operation doesn't go well. It's three days until Christmas and Junior, Hollywood's fast talking fixer for the felonious, is up to his ears in shopping mall Santas, Russian mobsters, desperate holiday shoppers, and ('tis the season) murder.

Haines, Carolyn. [A Garland of Bones](#) (St Martins \$25.99). Sarah Booth Delaney has traded in hosting this Christmas season for a road trip with her besties. Each little Delta town has a special Christmas activity, and Sarah Booth's BFF and detective partner, Tinkie, has arranged to rent a limo for the gang and drive to Columbus, MS, to stay in a B&B. Visions of Christmas shopping, parade floats, and romantic rendezvous are already dancing in their heads. But Christmas cheer soon turns to Christmas fear when, at one event after another, people keep getting hurt. And when the woman who hires Sarah Booth to find the villain behind the so-called accidents is nearly killed with an arrow during a holiday mumming, Sarah Booth knows something more sinister is at work.

Harnetiaux, Trish. [The White Elephant](#) (\$16). What more fun than a Christmas office party that goes horribly wrong? In snowy Aspen, Colorado, where the high-end real estate market is cut-throat and a White Elephant gift exchange can turn competitive

rather than congenial in a heartbeat—especially at Calhoun + Calhoun, Claudine and Henry's agency. Claudine is staging this year's party at Montague House, a listing that could signal a new beginning, or at least enable C+C to hang on. And how fortuitous that pop star Zara, wounded by a spectacular break up, is on her way to Aspen shopping for a vacation home. That's the set up for a debut that begins to slide off the expected track when a strange gift, an antique cowboy statue, appears in the White Elephant exchange, a gift with special meaning to Henry and to Claudine and to no one else. As a major snowstorm maroons the party guests and keeps the law from the scene—so Agatha Christie!—a crazy night plays out. This debut was our December, 2019, First Mystery Book of the Month. Order it for this holiday season if you missed out.

Kashian, Tina. [Mistletoe, Moussaka, and Murder](#) (Kensington \$7.99). Kebab Kitchen #6. When a much-despised caterer is murdered during Ocean Crest, New Jersey's most popular winter event, Lucy Berberian, to save the Kebab Kitchen's Christmas celebration, must get to the bottom of this cold-hearted case.

✎ Kingsbury, Kate. [A Merry Murder](#) (Berkley \$16). It is an Edwardian Christmas, and the Pennyfoot Hotel is all dressed up. But when one of the guests turns up dead, owner Cecily Sinclair Baxter realizes it is not only the Pennyfoot that is back in business—the hotel's Christmas curse is, too... Her chief housemaid Gertie McBride has found a man's body in the hotel laundry room—with a woman's scarf wrapped around his neck and a note in his pocket from the hotel's new maid. Cecily is determined to track down the culprit, but with multiple suspects icing her out of crucial clues, she realizes this killer may be more slippery than most.

Longworth, M L. [A Noel Killing](#) (Penguin \$16). It's a lovely season in the South of France replete with the usual complex family dynamics. Examining magistrate Antoine Verlaque, married at last, and happily, to advocate Marie Bonnet, is resolved to make this a Noel they can both enjoy, even attending the annual packed carol sing at the Cathedral Saint-Sauveur. Then the poisoning of a young man sends the Aix community into a tailspin and creates a list of suspects almost as packed as the carol service....

Maguire, Gregory. [A Wild Winter Swan](#) (HarperCollins \$27.99 Signed) will take readers back to an extraordinarily weird Christmas week for Laura Ciardi, a teenage misfit in 1960s Upper East Side. Bullied by mean girls at school who make fun of her eccentric Italian family, all Laura needs is a one-winged swan boy to fly right from the pages of the Hans Christian Anderson's fairy tale into her window on a particularly harsh winter night. This quirky coming-of-age story will remind young and old alike that an ability to embrace difference will be the salvation of us all.

McKinlay, Jenn. [The Christmas Keeper](#) (Berkley \$7.99). A North Carolina bookstore is the setting for this Christmas romance featuring a lovesick cowboy and the New York City publicist who resists his charms. Their sexual attraction is instant, but as Quino's cheesy sweaters and ever ready mistletoe wear her down, Savy begins to appreciate more than his biceps. "McKinlay once again serves up her signature literary cocktail of sassy humor and sexy romance expertly spiked with a surfeit of small-town charm and holiday cheer."—*Booklist* Starred Review

Meier, Leslie. [Holiday Murder](#) (Kensington \$7.99). This duet of cozy mysteries includes the first Lucy Stone adventure *Mistletoe*

*Murder*, which introduces the plucky Tinker's Cove amateur sleuth to readers when she discovers a body at the famous mail-order company Country Cousins, and *Christmas Cookie Murder*, in which the Tinker's Cove's annual cookie exchange turns murderous.

O'Connor, Carlene. [Murder at an Irish Christmas](#) (Kensington \$26). Levelheaded Gardai Siobhán O'Sullivan is off duty for the holidays, or so she thinks. The six O'Sullivan siblings are spending a snowy Christmas with their oldest brother James's fiancée, violinist Elise Elliot, and her family in a rustic West Cork village, where everyone is looking forward to a sold-out concert by Elise's grandfather, conductor Enda Elliot, and his orchestra. Then Enda is found dead underneath a harp in the concert hall. A broken railing in the second-floor gallery above suggests he may have taken an accidental fall with the harp, but Siobhán suspects foul play. She immediately catches Elise in a lie about Enda, and wonders what else the Elliot family and their friends are hiding. The astute Siobhán wants to learn all she can about Enda's scorned second wife, the much younger violin virtuoso widow, and the adult kids awaiting an inheritance. Fully realized characters enhance this skillfully plotted tale as it builds to a twist ending.

O'Connor Carlene. [The Christmas Cocoa Murder](#) (Kensington \$21.95). Siobhán O'Sullivan's hopes for a quiet Irish Christmas are dashed when the local Santa turns up dead in a carnival dunk tank of hot cocoa. Now instead of hunting down holiday gifts, she's pursuing a heartless killer. Seems the dead Santa was no angel either, stealing neighborhood dogs to guide his sleigh. But was it his holiday antics—or worse—that led to his death by chocolate? Two other novellas, one by Maddie Day, the other by Alex Erickson, round out this holiday-themed volume.

Rosenfelt, David. [Silent Bite](#) (St Martins \$27 Signed). NJ Lawyer Andy Carpenter can finally take a breath; he's back on dry land after a family Caribbean cruise forced on him by his wife, Laurie, to get into the Christmas spirit. Of course the family's first stop is to the Tara Foundation, the dog rescue organization that has always been Andy's true passion. But when Andy arrives, his partner, Willie Miller, needs his help. Willie's old cellmate, Glenn Anson, has been arrested for murder. Andy doesn't necessarily believe in Glenn, but Willie does. And Andy believes in Willie, which is why Andy decides to take the case. Once again David Rosenfelt puts readers in the Christmas spirit in a tale that is equal parts mystery and holiday cheer.

[The Twelve Dogs of Christmas](#) (\$15.99). Rosenfelt saddles Andy with a client who's got only six months to brighten her Paterson, NJ, neighborhood—if a guilty verdict doesn't remove her from her home first. Despite all Andy's coaching and beseeching, irrepressible Martha Boyer, universally known as Pups, is already on record as having threatened Randy Hennessey, the neighbor who filed a legal complaint against her houseful of two dozen rescue dogs, in open court. Andy gets the case dismissed, but before he can begin to gloat properly, Hennessey is dismissed, too—by a handgun that turns up in Pups' basement shortly after a neighbor sees her leaving his house....Rosenfelt's canine-loving hero is always good company—especially when he deals with someone who's gone to the dogs even more completely than him.”—*Kirkus*

[Dachshund Through the Snow](#) (\$16.99). Andy and Laurie have started a new Christmas tradition. Their local pet

store has a Christmas tree, where instead of ornaments there are wishes from those in need. One poignant wish leads Andy to a child named Danny, whose selfless plea strikes a chord. Danny asked Santa for a coat for his mother, a sweater for his dachshund, Murphy, and for the safe return of his missing father. But Danny's father doesn't want to be found, he's on the run after just being arrested for a murder that took place fourteen years ago—a murder that Danny's mother swears he didn't commit.

Soho Crime. [The Usual Santas](#) (Soho \$19.95) With a foreword by Peter Lovesey, this festive anthology contains holiday tales with settings ranging from a Korean War POW camp to a Copenhagen refugee squat, from a palatial hotel in 1920s Bombay to a crumbling mansion in Havana by authors including James R. Benn, Cara Black, Timothy Hallinan, Martin Limon, Ed Lin, Stuart Neville, and Mick Herron.

✚ Upson, Nicola. [The Secrets of Winter](#) (Crooked Lane \$26.99). Upson continues her Golden Age series featuring real mystery writer Josephine Tey of Inverness, Scotland, as her sleuth. Here she Upson imagines Josephine and her lover changing their Christmas in London plans at the behest of the Yard's Archie Penrose, Josephine's childhood friend. Instead they travel to Cornwall to St. Michael's Mount where the Honourable Hilaria St. Aubyn, hoping to bolster the family's finances and thus the upkeep of her family's home, has arranged a party around a famous film star and paying guests. There is much security and secrecy around the star (who is a real one). But there is also what appears to be an accidental death in the small village on the Mount. The only access to it is via a causeway—the tides are terrible—and the arrival of a wild blizzard snows everyone in for a classic country house murder mystery. WWII is moving closer and closer which will change up this fine series from the 1930s into wartime.

## ANTHOLOGIES

Box, CJ, ed. [The Best American Mystery Stories 2020](#) (Houghton \$16.99). The annual volume gets CJ as its editor for a nice run through outstanding new short fiction. “Box's selections are surprisingly sunny considering the monster 2020 has turned into. Many of them celebrate human ingenuity.” The title character in David Dean's “The Duelist” bests a formidable opponent with scant bloodshed. An ambitious woman outwits a sleazy politician in Jeffery Deaver's “Security.” A wily Texas Ranger rescues undocumented immigrants in James Lee Burke's “Deportees.” A budding musician foxes her dead neighbor's rapacious grandchildren in John Sandford's linguistic tour de force, “Girl With an Ax.” Other tales highlight the strength of family ties, like David B. Schlosser's “Pretzel Logic,” Michael Cebula's “Second Cousins,” and Brian Cox's haunting “The Surrogate Initiative.” Family ties don't always mean blood ties. Tom Franklin shows a policeman going to the mat for his late girlfriend's daughter in “On Little Terry Road.” And a surprising stepmom helps Sheila Kohler's worried schoolgirl in “Miss Martin.” As Rick McMahan demonstrates in “Baddest Outlaws,” however, blood is still thicker than water, and a variety of other substances. The good guys aren't always good guys, as Richard Helms suggests in “See Humble and Die.” And the bad guys aren't always bad guys, as Robin Yocum's aging mobster proves in “The Last Hit.” All in all, this year's installment inspires hope that right will triumph, as it does in Pamela Blackwood's aptly named “Justice.”

Danquah, Nana-Ama. [Accra Noir](#) (Akashic \$16.95). This welcome volume in the Akashic noir series, set in Ghana, hits plenty of the expected bleak notes and classical noirish phrasings in its 13 stories. Gbontwi Anyetei's gripping "Tabilo Wu??" contains such memorable lines as "Anybody could burn down a church" while also serving as an almost casual introduction to the nuances of Ghanaian culture ("the barely literates who still insisted on using English"). That doesn't mean there aren't traditional noir tales, notably Adjoa Twum's cocaine-smuggling and murder-filled "Shape-Shifters." Danquah's "When a Man Loves a Woman" opens with the fantastic line, "Every day for the past five days, Kwame had woken up next to a corpse," and delivers a wonderful variant on a spousal murder plot. Anne Sackey's "Intentional Consequences" takes the scorned-woman revenge story in a surprising and witty direction.

Deaver, Jeffery, ed. [Nothing Good Happens after Midnight](#) (Suspense \$18.95). "Most of the 13 all-original tales in this superlative anthology are unified by strange or unpleasant incidences occurring after the stroke of midnight." In contrast, Alan Jacobson's thrilling "12:01 AM," about a kidnapper patterning himself after a serial killer on death row, defies the perception that nothing good happens after midnight, as does John Land's "ATM," a redemption tale of a young man sent on a series of vague quests to improve people's lives. Of special distinction are Linwood Barclay's sublime nail-biter, "Night Shift," about a newspaperman trying to stop a late-night caller from going on a killing spree, and Kevin O'Brien's "Cell Phone Intolerant," a darkly amusing vigilante tale of an anti-cell phone zealot whose crusade to punish inconsiderate people has shocking repercussions. Other standouts include Heather Graham's disquieting spine-chiller, "Midnight in the Garden of Death," in which high schoolers spend the night in a cemetery, and Deaver's supernatural gothic, "A Creative Defense," which underscores the power of music. This volume is guaranteed to keep readers burning the midnight oil well into the wee hours.

Gabaldon, Diana, ed. [The Best American Science Fiction and Fantasy 2020](#) (Houghton \$16.99). Signed by Gabaldon. Gabaldon brings together 20 stories that memorably and creatively explore genre themes. "Up From Slavery" by Victor LaValle pulls off the impressive feat of weaving Lovecraftian elements into the story of a copy editor working on a new edition of Booker T. Washington's memoir of the same name. Charlie Jane Anders's masterful, dystopian "The Bookstore at the End of America" looks at the U.S. political divide through the prism of a bookstore located on the border between blue and red America. The standout is Deji Bryce Olukotun's "Between the Dark and the Dark," a sci-fi story in which crystalline blooms appear on Earth's mountains, triggering disastrous seismic events and forcing a desperate effort to find a new home for humanity. That venture is threatened when the crew of one vessel is discovered to have engaged in cannibalism, leading to calls for the ship's destruction. And, though Matthew Baker's "Life Sentence" remains vague about the details of its science-fictional conceit, it still maintains emotional engagement in its suspenseful account of a man whose memory was wiped after he committed a serious crime. The variety of styles and themes on offer here demonstrate the sustained vitality of genre fiction.

Ivanovic, Milorad et al. [Belgrade Noir](#) (Akashic \$16.95). History haunts Belgrade in this so-so entry in Akashic's noir series. Two of the stronger selections, Muharem Bazdulj's "Black Widow, White Russian" and Vladimir Arsenijevic's "Regarding the Father," each feature young women seeking revenge on Serbian war criminals responsible for the murder of their parents during the region's 1990s ethnic conflicts. Events from WWI are central to Dejan Stojiljkovic's atmospheric "Neon Blues," in which an ex-cop solves the mystery of a century-old death with the help of a stranger who may be a vampire. Contemporary crime is represented by Kati Heikkapelto's "An Ad in Vecernje Novosti," the queasy account of a sexual sadist who takes advantage of a naive middle-aged man and his scheming mother, and by Vesna Goldsworthy's "How to Pickle a Head of Cabbage," about a predatory caretaker who systematically hastens the deaths of her elderly charges in order to inherit their Belgrade real estate. 14 stories, many of them brief.

Lopez-Alt, J. Kenji. [The Best American Food Writing 2020](#) (Houghton \$16.99). "These are stories about culture," writes J. Kenji López-Alt in his introduction. "About how food shapes people, neighborhoods, and history." This year's Best American Food Writing captures the food industry at a critical moment in history — from the confrontation of abusive kitchen culture, to the disappearance of the supermarkets, to the rise and fall of celebrity chefs, to the revolution of baby food. Spanning from New York's premier restaurants to the chile factories of New Mexico, this collection lifts a curtain on how food arrives on our plates, revealing extraordinary stories behind what we eat and how we live.

Sittenfeld, Curtis, ed. [The Best American Short Stories 2020](#) (Houghton \$16.99). A striking and nuanced collection, bringing to life awkward college students, disgraced public figures, raunchy grandparents, and mystical godmothers. To read these stories is to experience the transporting joys of discovery and affirmation, and to realize that story writing in America continues to flourish. Contributors include TC Boyle, Emma Cline, Mary Gaitskill, Elizabeth McCracken, Kevin Wilson, and more.

Wilson, Jason/Robert Macfarlane. [Best American Travel Writing 2020](#) (Houghton \$16.99). "Writing, reading, and dreaming about travel have surged," writes Robert MacFarlane in his introduction. From an existential reckoning in avalanche school, to an act of kindness at the Mexican-American border, to a moral dilemma at a Kenyan orphanage, the journeys showcased in this collection are as spiritual as they are physical. These stories provide not just remarkable entertainment, but also, as MacFarlane says, deep comfort, "carrying hope, creating connections, transporting readers to other-worlds, and imagining alternative presents and alternative futures." Contributors include Heidi Julavits, Yiyun Li, Paul Salpek, Lacy Johnson, Emmanuel Diuma, and more.

## CLASSICS

Downing, Todd. [Vultures in the Sky](#) (American Mystery Classics \$15.95). First published in 1935, this expertly crafted mystery from Downing (1902–1974) focuses on nine passengers aboard a train from Monterrey, Mexico, to Mexico City. The news of an impending rail strike and conjecture about a recent kidnapping case, in which a young boy died, are their main topics of conversation shortly before a man dies mysteriously while the train is

passing through a tunnel. Another traveler is later found dead in her ransacked compartment. U.S. Customs Agent Hugh Rennert takes charge. With a whole slew of possible suspects on board, it's up to this sharp-eyed sleuth to solve the case before they reach their destination. The evocative descriptions of the characters and the Mexican landscape, as well as the creeping claustrophobia and fear that imbue the atmosphere on the train, keep tension high. Think *Murder on the Orient Express* south of the border. Written by mystery author, critic, and scholar of Mexican History and the Choctaw language Todd Downing, the book is, in the words of Kirkus, "a welcome rediscovery." Introduced by James Sallis.

Gardner, Erle Stanley. [Shills Can't Cash Chips](#) (Hard Case Crime \$12.95). From Gardner—during his life, the best-selling American author of all time—comes a lost classic of detective fiction featuring private eyes Donald Lam (once played by Frank Sinatra!) and Bertha Cool. Return to the 1960s in another baffling case for the Cool & Lam detective agency as a simple insurance investigation into a car accident puts Bertha Cool and Donald Lam on the trail of murder. With Donald hip-deep in danger when he poses as an ex-con to infiltrate a criminal gang. "It's Gardner's twistiest caper ever, and a fitting conclusion to Hard Case Crime's revival of this classic (and long unavailable) detective series," says the publisher.

✦ Kelly, Mary. [The Spoilt Kill](#) (Poisoned Pen/British Library \$14.99). First published in 1961, this innovative mystery from Kelly (1927–2017) effectively uses time shifts to create suspense. The owner of a Staffordshire pottery company has hired PI Hedley Nicholson to shadow an employee, designer Corinna Wakefield, because he suspects Corinna of stealing new designs on the behalf of a rival firm. After two weeks keeping an eye on Corinna while posing as a consultant, Nicholson joins a tour she's conducting of the pottery factory. In one building, while the people on the tour are distracted, Nicholson notices a shocked expression on Corinna's face after she raises the trapdoor of a vault that holds liquid clay. Inside is a dead body. Nicholson recognizes the person, whose identity remains a tantalizing secret well into the book. A lengthy flashback charts the events leading up to that grim find, and a final section focuses on the murder and industrial spying. Subtle characterizations enhance the well-crafted plot. This is a superior addition to the British Library Crime Classics series.

MacLean, Alistair. [Athabasca](#) (Harper \$15.99), sabotage set in the desolate frozen wastes of two ice-bound oil fields; [Goodbye California](#) (Harper \$15.99), a criminal fanatic is hell-bent on blasting San Francisco into the ocean. Two more reprints by this action/adventure/suspense master.

## OUR DECEMBER LARGE PAPERBACK PICKS

Cogman, Genevieve. [The Dark Archive](#) (Ace \$16). A professional spy for a mysterious Library which harvests fiction from different realities, Irene faces a series of assassination attempts that threaten to destroy her and everything she has worked for. Irene is teaching her new assistant the fundamentals of a Librarian's job, and finding that training a young Fae is more difficult than she expected. But when they're the targets of kidnapping and assassination attempts, she decides that learning by doing is the only option they have left.... In order to protect themselves, Irene and her friends must do what they do best: search for infor-

mation to defeat the overwhelming threat they face and identify their unseen enemy. To do that, Irene will have to delve deeper into her own history than she ever has before, face an ancient foe, and uncover unsettling secrets.

Dorsey, Tim. [Naked Came the Florida Man](#) (\$16.99). Touring Florida's graveyards with good buddy Colman, Serge A. Storms, "a serial killer with a warped moral streak," visits a forgotten mass grave holding the remains of African Americans killed by the Great Hurricane of 1928. When local children say they've been running from a boogeyman hiding out in the surrounding sugar field, Serge wonders if this could be the notorious Naked Florida Man. Along the way, Serge indulges his desire to harm wrongdoers who are beyond the law's reach by targeting a man who encourages animal cruelty and another who rips off impoverished elderly people. You will enjoy Dorsey's brand of Florida outrageousness if you enjoy gallows humor and can withstand some sadistic methods deployed by Serge.

Harris, Charlaine. [A Longer Fall](#) (\$16.99). Lizbeth Rose is hired onto a new crew for a seemingly easy protection job. She is tasked with transporting a crate into Dixie, just about the last part of the former United States of America she wants to visit. But what seemed like a straightforward job turns into a massacre as the crate is stolen. Up against a wall in Dixie, where social norms have stepped back into the last century, Lizbeth has to go undercover with an old friend to retrieve the crate as what's inside can spark a rebellion, if she can get it back in time. Harris is building the world of this alternate history of the United States, where magic is an acknowledged but despised power.

Macallister, Greer. [The Arctic Fury](#) (Sourcebooks \$16.99). The Indie Next Pick: "Greer Macallister has a proven track record for writing excellent historical fiction. She is at the top of her game in *The Arctic Fury*, in which a dozen women are recruited to journey to the frozen tundra in hopes of finding a lost expedition. Facing a brutal climate, clashing wills, misogyny, and death, these women rise to accept a challenge that no male explorer has been able to accomplish. Macallister has created strong, memorable characters facing unfathomable conditions and choices. Alternating between the arctic journey and a riveting courtroom drama, *The Arctic Fury* is a non-stop thrill."

Eccentric Lady Jane Franklin makes an outlandish offer to adventurer Virginia Reeve: take a dozen women, trek into the Arctic, and find her husband's lost expedition. Four parties have failed to find him, and Lady Franklin wants a radical new approach: put the women in charge. A year later, Virginia stands trial for murder. Survivors of the expedition willing to publicly support her sit in the front row. There are only five. What happened out there on the ice? Library Reads adds, "Virginia Reeve is a take-no-prisoners adventurer and trail guide when she's asked by a mysterious benefactor to lead a group of 12 women to find the lost captain of the shipwrecked vessel the *Franklin*. Not for the squeamish or easily offended, this thrilling read is recommended for those who enjoyed *Into the Wild* and *In the Kingdom of Ice*." We will hold a virtual event for this book in January with photos of our Northwest Passage Voyage.

Little, Elizabeth. [Pretty As a Picture](#) (\$16). Marissa Dahl, an up-and-coming film editor with a flair for faux pas, travels to a small island off the coast of Delaware to work with the legendary—and legendarily demanding—director Tony Rees on a feature film

with a familiar logline. Some girl dies. It's not much to go on, but the specifics don't concern Marissa. Whatever the script is, her job is the same. She'll spend her days in the editing room, doing what she does best: turning pictures into stories. But she soon discovers that on this set, nothing is as it's supposed to be—or as it seems. “A film editor who can't much tell where stories end and life begins, Marissa is also prickly, hyperarticulate, suspicious, neurotic, surprisingly tough and very funny — the ideal narrator for a book that pays homage to Hollywood and classic detective fiction... The book celebrates women who have each other's backs and put their friends ahead of their men. It is also a valentine to the intoxications of filmmaking and film-viewing.” —Sarah Lyall, *The New York Times Book Review* on a book I truly recommend.

Quartey, Kwei. [The Missing American](#) (\$16.95) launches an evocative new series starring Emma Djan, a young cop-turned-private eye in Accra, Ghana. (Quartey, a physician in California, is a Ghanaian native.) She's in search of a widowed American who has vanished after being lured to Ghana by an online scam artist. Meanwhile, Djan also handles the (seemingly unrelated) assassination of an anti-corruption presidential candidate. “The adventures of a tenacious African female sleuth will likely ring bells for fans of Alexander McCall Smith's best-selling Mma. Precious Ramotswe mysteries. *The Missing American's* unflinching portrayal of Ghanaian criminals, their fetish priest handlers and corruption at the highest levels makes this intriguing debut a more bracing antidote to its cozier cousin.”—*LA Times Book Review*

Reid, Kiley. [Such a Fun Age](#) (\$17). Blogger/role model/inspirational speaker Alix Chamberlain is none too happy about moving from Manhattan to Philadelphia for her husband Peter's job as a TV newscaster. With no friends or in-laws around to help out with her almost-3-year-old, Briar, and infant, Catherine, she'll never get anywhere on the book she's writing unless she hires a sitter. She strikes gold when she finds Emira Tucker. Twenty-five-year-old Emira's family and friends expect her to get going on a career, but outside the fact that she's about to get kicked off her parents' health insurance, she's happy with her part-time gigs—and Briar is her “favorite little human.” Then one day a double-header of racist events topples the apple cart... “Reid's debut sparkles with sharp observations and perfect details—food, décor, clothes, social media, etc.—and she's a dialogue genius, effortlessly incorporating toddler-ese, witty boyfriend-speak, and African American Vernacular English.... Charming, challenging, and so interesting you can hardly put it down.”—*Kirkus Reviews*

✦ Robinson, Peter. [Many Rivers to Cross](#) (\$16.99). When Inspector Alan Banks of Yorkshire's Eastvale police force finds a Middle Eastern boy stabbed to death, he knows he's facing a possible hate crime. But the case is endlessly confounded. The boy was stabbed elsewhere—but where?—and the seemingly unrelated death of a heroin addict may not have been an overdose. Meanwhile, a close friend's troubles weigh heavily on Banks....

✦ Todd, Charles. [A Hanging at Dawn](#) (Harper \$11.99). See Unsigned Event Books above for an origin story for Simon Brandon and the family of Bess Crawford.

Torre, AR. [Every Last Secret](#) (Thomas & Mercer \$15.95). Welcome to the neighborhood. Watch your husband, watch your

friends, and watch your back. Cat Winthorpe has worked hard to get what she has: a gorgeous home; social standing; and William, her successful, handsome husband. Then a friendly new couple moves into the estate next door. While cautious, a good neighbor like Cat greets them with open arms and warm hospitality. Neena Ryder isn't a fellow lady of leisure. A life coach with off-the-rack dresses, personal issues, and a husband who hasn't delivered, she's anxious to move up in the world. This beautiful new town is a step in the right direction. It's also making Neena aware of what she doesn't have. Namely, William. When Neena's infatuation escalates into obsession, it's just a matter of eliminating a few obstacles to get the life she wants. The life next door. This is a sophisticated example of domestic suspense with two dueling women and an unexpected outcome that is positive rather than nihilistic. Recommended to fans of this sort of book.

Wegert, Tessa. [The Dead Season](#) (Berkley \$17). Wegert's debut [Death in the Family](#) (\$17) was our February 2020 First Mystery Book of the Month taking former NYPD detective Shana Merchant to her fiancé's sleepy hometown in the Thousand Islands region of upstate New York where she works a kind of country house murder case—only the family drama takes place on a privately owned island. But serial killer Blake Bram, who by abducting Shana caused her flight, is still at large. He issues a challenge when the decades-old skeleton of her estranged uncle is uncovered: return to their mutual hometown in Vermont and solve the case or the blood of the person he kills next will be on her hands. As Shana interviews members of her family and the community, mining for secrets that could help her solve her uncle's murder, she begins to realize how little she remembers of her childhood. And when Bram grows impatient and kidnaps again, leaving a trail of clues Shana alone can understand, she knows his new victim will only survive if she wins the psychopath's twisted game.

## NEW BOOKS FOR DECEMBER

Adams, Ellery. [The Book of Candlelight](#) (\$15.95). As the owner of Miracle Books, Nora Pennington figures all the wet weather this spring is at least good for business. The local inns are packed with stranded travelers, and among them Nora finds both new customers and a new friend, the sixtysomething Sheldon, who starts helping out at the store. Since a little rain never hurt anyone, Nora rides her bike over to the flea market one sodden day and buys a bowl from Danny, a Cherokee potter. It'll make a great present for Nora's EMT boyfriend, but the next day, a little rain turns into a lot of rain, and the Miracle River overflows its banks. Amid the wreckage of a collapsed footbridge, Danny's body lies within the churning water. Nora and the sheriff both doubt the ruling of accidental drowning, and Nora decides it's time for the Secret, Book, and Scone Society to spring into action. Then another body turns up....

Aimaq, Jasmine. [The Opium Prince](#) (Soho \$27.95). A Starred Review: “In 1970, Afghan-born American diplomat Daniel Abdullah Sajadi, the protagonist of Aimaq's stellar debut, is posted to Kabul to head the U.S. poppy eradication efforts in Afghanistan. While driving outside Kabul, Daniel accidentally hits a young girl and kills her. He pays a small fine, but opium kingpin Taj Maleki plays on his guilt and blackmails him into compromising himself and his counterdrug mission. Daniel's haphazard ruse to redirect eradication efforts away from Male-

ki's poppy fields leads to disastrous results. The lives of both men are thrown into peril as tensions rise between Islamic fundamentalists and pro-Communists. Along the way, Daniel learns the harsh truth about his celebrated Afghan war hero father, and risks everything to right the wrongs he set in motion as Soviet influence grows. Aimaq, an adviser on international arms control and foreign affairs, draws heavily on her childhood experiences in Afghanistan to provide glimpses into the complicated political and cultural dynamics of a country that has seen nearly half a century of constant war. Though she has altered some historical details to fit the narrative, her observations provide astonishing context to contemporary global issues such as Islamic extremism and the international heroin trade. Fans of Lauren Wilkinson's Cold War thriller [American Spy](#) (\$17), and I am as serious one, won't want to miss our **December International Thriller Book of the Month**.

Bates, Rob. [A Murder Is Forever](#) (Epicenter Press \$15.95). Diamond District Mystery #1. "Bates's sprightly debut and series launch introduces plucky 38-year-old New Yorker Mimi Rosen, who has been working for two months at her father's diamond business on 47th Street, 'the world's sparkliest flea market.' For onetime reporter Mimi, this new occupation is a major come-down, but being unemployed and broke after an expensive divorce, she had no choice. Then Mimi's cousin Yosef, a diamond trader, is murdered. The police quickly conclude it was a robbery, an occupational hazard for diamond dealers. But Yosef's fiancée isn't convinced, and she begs Mimi to use her experience as a reporter to investigate his death. Bates, who has more than 25 years as a journalist covering the diamond business, easily slips in loads of fascinating information on diamonds and Jewish culture without losing sight of the mystery plot."—PW

✦ Benedict, Marie. [The Mystery of Mrs. Christie](#) (Sourcebooks \$26.99). In December, 1926, Agatha Christie goes missing. Investigators find her empty car on the edge of a deep, gloomy pond, the only clues some tire tracks nearby and a fur coat left in the car—strange for a frigid night. Her husband and daughter have no knowledge of her whereabouts, and England unleashes an unprecedented manhunt to find the up-and-coming mystery author. Eleven days later, she reappears, just as mysteriously as she disappeared, claiming amnesia and providing no explanations for her time away. The puzzle of those missing eleven days has persisted. Much has been surmised and written about this episode in Christie's life in nonfiction and fiction.... I don't agree with the premise the author of this novel devises, one which pulls it into the realm of domestic suspense with its ploys and twists. IMHO Agatha deserves better.

Child, Julia. [People Who Love To Eat Are Always the Best People](#) (Knopf \$18.95). "If you're afraid of butter, use cream." So decrees Julia Child, the legendary culinary authority and cookbook author who taught America how to cook—and how to eat. This delightful volume of quotations compiles some of Julia's most memorable lines on eating—"The only time to eat diet food is while you're waiting for the steak to cook"—on drinking, on life—"I think everywoman should have a blowtorch"—on love, travel, France, and much more. Perfect for Julia fans, home cooks, and anyone who simply loves to eat and drink.

✦ Clare, Alys. [The Outcast Girls](#) (Severn \$28.99). A British author much loved here for her medieval mysteries goes Victorian.

London, 1881. Lily Raynor, owner of the World's End Investigation Bureau, is growing increasingly worried. Work is drying up, finances are tight and she cannot find enough for her sole employee, Felix Wilbraham, to do. So when schoolteacher Georgiana Long arrives, with a worrying tale of runaway pupils, it seems like the answer to her prayers. The case is an interesting one, and what could be less perilous than a trip to a girls' boarding school, out in the Fens? Disguised as the new Assistant Matron, Lily joins the Shardlowes School staff, while Felix—suppressing his worries about his cool, calm employer - remains behind. But there are undercurrents at Shardlowes, and the shadowy, powerful men who fund the school's less fortunate pupils loom larger as Felix's own investigations unfold. Felix can't shake off his fear that Lily is in danger....

Crawford, Isis. [A Catered Book Club Murder](#) (Kensington \$26). "In Crawford's delectable 16th mystery featuring sisters Bernie and Libby Simmons, art restorer Margo Hemsley fails to arrive at A Little Taste of Heaven, the sisters' shop in Longely, N.Y., to pick up the pastry order she was supposed to bring to a book club meeting later that same evening. The next day, Margo's friends Betsy and Tom Glassberg visit the shop. Betsy and Tom, who are worried that Margo has gone missing, ask amateur sleuths Bernie and Libby to investigate, the police having little interest in the case. The Glassbergs also want them to check that two Thomas Eakins portraits Margo was working on restoring for them are in her house. The sisters discover the portraits have vanished along with Margo. Descriptions of mouthwatering baked goods and good-natured banter between the sisters enhance their search for answers. Cozy fans will be tempted to curl up with a hot beverage and a pastry while reading this one."—PW. **Out December 29 and possibly our January Cozy Crimes Book of the Year although those of you wishing to shed calories in January might revolt.**

De León, Aya. [A Spy in the Struggle](#) (Dafina \$15.95). Yolanda Vance is a new FBI lawyer, hired after she refused to go down with the firm she was working for during a raid. But it isn't legal work the FBI wants her for. Instead, they send her undercover into Red, Black, and Green!, a teen activist group the FBI has labeled as extremist. Vance is gonna end up doing a lot of soul searching, and some falling in love, while trying to complete this mission...if it doesn't literally kill her first. For fans of undercover agents/spies, de León pens a social thriller too.

✦ Douglas, Stuart. [Further Adventures of Sherlock Holmes—Sherlock Holmes and the Crusader's Crusade](#) (Titan \$12.95). A nice companion to the King/Klinger Holmes anthology in Signed Books is this new pastiche from Douglas. The last Lord Thorpe, reclusive owner of Thorpe Manor, has died. Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson are invited to the auction at which the estate will be sold off, in hopes Holmes can uncover the whereabouts of the missing De Trop Diamond, a jewel-encrusted gemstone brought back from the Crusades by an earlier member of the Thorpe dynasty—and the source of a legendary curse.

Faber, Michel. [D \(A Tale of Two Worlds\)](#) (Hanover Square \$27.99). Here is "A stunning modern-day Dickensian fable and a celebration of friendship and bravery for freethinkers everywhere, by the acclaimed author of *The Crimson Petal and the White*. Set between England and the wintry land of Liminus, a world enslaved by the monstrous Gamp and populated by fearsome,

enchancing creatures, the tale is told with simple beauty and warmth.”—Library Reads

Fisher, Tarryn. [The Wrong Family](#) (Graydon \$17.99). Juno was wrong about Winnie Crouch. Before moving in with the Crouch family, Juno thought Winnie and her husband, Nigel, had the perfect marriage, the perfect son—the perfect life. Only now that she’s living in their beautiful house, she sees the cracks in the crumbling facade are too deep to ignore. Still, she isn’t one to judge. After her grim diagnosis, the retired therapist simply wants a place to live out the rest of her days in peace. But that peace is shattered the day Juno overhears a chilling conversation between Winnie and Nigel... She shouldn’t get involved. But this could be her chance to make a few things right. Because if you thought Juno didn’t have a secret of her own, then you were wrong about her, too. ““The Crouches are perfect on the outside. In reality, Winnie is controlling, Nigel is tuned out, and confused Samuel is trying to forge his own identity. Juno, a former therapist who has become attracted to the Crouches, gets caught up in their family drama and takes the story in a surprising direction. For fans of Ruth Ware and B.A. Paris.” Vivid prose and well-drawn characters keep the pages turning.

Fleischmann, Raymond. [How Quickly She Disappears](#) (\$16). In 1941, Elisabeth Pfautz feels trapped by the demands of domestic life—keeping a home and teaching her gifted young daughter; a marriage grown cold and loveless; the remoteness and isolation of the Alaskan wilderness; and, most of all, feeling trapped by the haunting memory of twin sister, Jacqueline, who disappeared 20 years earlier. When a stranger named Alfred comes to town, her friends warn her to stay away, but he convinces Elisabeth to let him sleep in her guest room even though her husband is away. Soon, Alfred is arrested for a terrible crime but tells the police he will only speak to Elisabeth. From his prison cell, he tells her he knows what happened to Jacqueline and will divulge the truth if she completes three tasks. As she falls further into his twisted plot, one thing is clear: she’s willing to risk everything, including her family, to find her sister. “This promising, if slightly uneven, debut thriller with a strong sense of place will appeal to fans of Jane Harper’s *The Dry*, and those who wished Kristin Hannah’s *The Great Alone* was a psychological thriller.”—LJ

✦ Fowler, Christopher. [Bryant and May: Oranges and Lemons](#) (Bantam \$28). Our Signed UK edition of the latest for the two aged eccentrics arrived sold out so I missed reading it and must rely on this Starred *PW* review for you:

In Fowler’s outstanding 18th Peculiar Crimes Unit mystery after 2019’s [The Lonely Hour](#) (\$28), budget reductions have led to the disbanding of the PCU, a “specialized London police division with a remit to prevent or cause to cease any acts of public affright or violent disorder,” but not for long. The unit’s two senior detectives, Arthur Bryant and John May, are pressed back into service after the Speaker of the House of Commons, Michael Claremont, is nearly killed when, in an apparent accident, crates of oranges and lemons fell out of a parked van and toppled onto him. That this incident occurred near St. Clement Danes, a London church linked to those fruits in the old English nursery rhyme, leads Home Office higher-ups to fear that Claremont was targeted. Even as Bryant and May try to figure out how the so-called accident could have been planned, more assaults echoing the nursery rhyme occur, all fatal. Fowler again tests his leads with a bizarre series of crimes while devising a satisfying resolu-

tion. This long-running series remains as vital as ever.” Note: I cannot find a paperback edition of *The Lonely Hour*, which is probably another casualty of COVID.

Fox, Sarah. [The Malt in our Stars](#) (Kensington \$26). Rumors of hidden treasure surround the historic Shady Creek Manor during novelist Linnea Bliss’s visit to Shady Creek, Vermont, for an appearance at Sadie Coleman’s book-themed pub, the Inkwell. When Linnea’s assistant, Marcie Kent, takes a fatal fall from a third-story window of the manor, Sadie wonders whether there might be a connection between Linnea and the treasure, and can’t resist doing a little snooping. Meanwhile, a film crew’s equipment is vandalized while they’re in town to do a piece on a local brewer, so maybe that has something to do with Marcie’s death. The pressure is on to solve both mysteries before the upcoming May Day Masquerade hosted by the manor’s owners. Sadie has multiple potential suspects and motives, not to mention a third mystery regarding family heritage. The Inkwell’s charming atmosphere, solid plotting, and several enticing recipes are sure to please cozy fans.

Gilbert, Victoria. [A Deadly Edition: A Blue Ridge Library Mystery](#) (Crippen \$26.99). Amy Webber, director of the Taylorsford, Virginia, public library, and her fiancé, choreographer Richard Muir, are looking forward to getting married, but the couple run into a snag. At a pre-wedding party hosted by well-to-do Kurt Kendrick at his elegant historic home, an unexpected guest shows up—art dealer Oscar Selvaggio, who’s in a battle with Kurt over which of them is going to obtain a Kelmscott illustrated Chaucer edition. When Amy and Richard later come across Oscar’s dead body on Kurt’s property, suspicion immediately falls on Kurt. However, the conniving Oscar made a lot of enemies over the years, so any number of others could have had a motive. Amy has her work cut out for her to catch the culprit before her nuptials. Lively small-town characters, a well-paced plot, and dollops of fascinating art history help make this a winner for cozy fans.

✦ Gregory, Philippa. [Dark Tides](#) (Atria \$28). It’s 1670, two decades after the events of book one in the Fairmile Series, [Tidelands](#) (\$17), and Alinor living as a wharf owner in London with her daughter and granddaughter. Livia, wife of Alinor’s son Rob, arrives at the Reekies’ Wharf with her infant and informs Alinor that Rob has drowned in a Venice lagoon. Alinor, though, has “the sight” and is convinced Livia is lying. The reader quickly becomes certain that Alinor is correct and figuring out exactly what Livia is up to drives the narrative. Watching Livia’s manipulations unfold is fascinating, as she is skilled in using her beauty to manipulate most people. She tells just enough truth, and confesses just enough falsehood, to seem believable, and whenever anyone gets suspicious she uses her sexuality to distract them. Her ability to read the room and gaslight her audience is spectacular. In the narrative’s second half, Alinor’s granddaughter, Sarah, sneaks off to Venice in search of her uncle Rob. Gregory’s depictions of Venice in the era are fascinating, from the canaled landscape to the underground prison, and from the quarantine islands to the network of spies. It is here that Sarah encounters the dashing Felipe and the romance factor heats up. Once Sarah uncovers the truth, she returns to London for the inevitable climactic showdown with Livia. Meanwhile, a parallel storyline follows Alinor’s brother, Ned, who has settled in a colony in New England. This reads almost like a separate, though connected, character-driven novel. Ned is a man caught between his English

upbringing and his preference for the Native American sensibility. As friction between the colonists and the nearby tribes ratchets up, Ned is forced to choose his future. I thought *Tidelands* to be a real delight combining history and suspense and some romance with a terrific woman. Start with it for a real treat.

Haldar, Raj. [No Reading Aloud](#) (Sourcebooks). Sir Francis Bacon. Sir, France is bakin'! What is going on here?! You can't believe everything you hear! A single word can have many different meanings. And sometimes two words that sound alike can be spelled completely differently. Ptolemy the pterodactyl is back to show us all how absurd and fun language can be when homophones, homonyms, and tricky punctuation are at play! No Reading Allowed allows children and their parents to laugh together while also learning something new. Perfect for baby gifts, birthday gifts, teacher gifts, and anyone who finds humor in the absurdity of the English language.

✦ Joyce, Rachel. [Miss Benson's Beetle](#) (Random \$18). It is 1950. London is still reeling from World War II, and Margery Benson, a schoolteacher and spinster, is trying to get through life, surviving on scraps. One day, she reaches her breaking point, abandoning her job and small existence to set out on an expedition to the other side of the world in search of her childhood obsession: an insect that may or may not exist—the golden beetle of New Caledonia. When she advertises for an assistant to accompany her, the woman she ends up with is the last person she had in mind. Fun-loving Enid Pretty in her tight-fitting pink suit and pom-pom sandals seems to attract trouble wherever she goes. But together these two British women find themselves drawn into a cross-ocean adventure that exceeds all expectations and delivers something neither of them expected to find.

Kane, Darby. [Pretty Little Wife](#) (Harper \$16.99). Lila Ridgefield lives in an idyllic college town, but not everything is what it seems. Lila isn't what she seems. A student vanished months ago. Now, Lila's husband, Aaron, is also missing. At first these cases are treated as horrible coincidences until it's discovered the student is really the third of three unexplained disappearances over the last few years. The police are desperate to find the connection, if there even is one. Little do they know they might be stumbling over only part of the truth....With the small town in an uproar, everyone is worried about the whereabouts of their beloved high school teacher. Everyone except Lila, his wife. She's definitely confused about her missing husband, but only because she was the last person to see his body.... Shouldn't a dead husband stay dead?

Kawaguchi, Toshikazu. [Before the Coffee Gets Cold](#) (Hanover Square \$19.99). The Indie Next Pick: "This was the most interesting and wholesome take on time travel I have ever read. Everything in the world is totally normal, but if you sit in a specific seat in a specific cafe in Tokyo, you can travel back in time. There are some rules in order to time travel, but my favorite one? You can only stay in the past for as long as your coffee is warm. This charming and emotional story of four different women teaches about the importance of making the most with the time you're given."

Keillor, Garrison. [That Time of Year: A Minnesota Life](#) (Arcade \$30). Keillor looks back on his life and recounts how a Brethren boy with writerly ambitions grew up in a small town on the Mississippi in the 1950s and, seeing three good friends die young,

turned to comedy and radio. Through a series of unreasonable lucky breaks, he founded *A Prairie Home Companion* and put himself in line for a good life, including mistakes, regrets, and a few medical adventures. PHC lasted forty-two years, 1,557 shows, and enjoyed the freedom to do as it pleased for three or four million listeners every Saturday at 5:00 p.m. Central. He got to sing with Emmylou Harris and Renée Fleming and once sang two songs to the U.S. Supreme Court. He played a private eye and a cowboy, gave the news from his hometown, Lake Wobegon, and met Somali cabdrivers who'd learned English from listening to the show. He wrote bestselling novels, won a Grammy and a National Humanities Medal, and made a movie with Robert Altman with an alarming amount of improvisation. He says, "I was unemployable and managed to invent work for myself that I loved all my life, and on top of that I married well. That's the secret, work and love. And I chose the right ancestors, impoverished Scots and Yorkshire farmers, good workers. I'm heading for eighty, and I still get up to write before dawn every day."

Koudounaris, Dr. Paul. [A Cat's Tale](#) (Holt \$29.99). The first comprehensive history of felines—from the laps of pagan gods to present-day status as meme stars—as revealed by a very learned tabby with a knack for hunting down facts. And Baba the Cat is here to set the record straight. Spanning almost every continent and thousands—yes, thousands—of years, Baba's complex story of feline survival presents readers with a diverse cast of cats long forgotten: from her prehistoric feline ancestors and the ancient Egyptian cat goddess Bastet to the daring mariners at the height of oceanic discovery, key intellectuals in the Enlightenment period, revered heroes from World Wars I and II, and the infamous American tabbies. Baba, a talented model in addition to a scholar, goes beyond surface-level scratches, pairing her freshly unearthed research with a series of stunning costume portraits to bring history to life.

Little, Judith. [The Chanel Sisters](#) (Graydon \$17.99). Before Coco Chanel became an haute-couture icon, she was simply Gabrielle, one of three sisters left at the convent at Aubazine by their peddler father after their mother's death. Though they learned to sew at the convent, Gabrielle and her sisters chafed against the strictures of their new life, longing to leave and make their own way in the world. Antoinette and Gabrielle Chanel know they're destined for something better. Abandoned by their family years before, they've grown up under the guidance of pious nuns preparing them for simple lives as the wives of tradesmen or shopkeepers. At night, their secret stash of romantic novels and magazine cutouts beneath the floorboards are all they have to keep their dreams of the future alive. The walls of the convent can't shield them forever, and when they're finally of age, the Chanel sisters set out together with a fierce determination to prove themselves worthy to a society that has never accepted them. Their journey propels them out of poverty and to the stylish cafés of Moulins, the dazzling performance halls of Vichy—and to a small hat shop on the rue Cambon in Paris, where a business takes hold and expands to the glamorous French resort towns. Then comes WWI, the death of Coco's great love, and the virulence of the family's heritage of tuberculosis. For the Chanels, life was never easy despite the glamour and the fame.

Lush, Tara. [Grounds for Murder](#) (Crooked Lane \$26.99). In Lush's diverting debut, Lana Lewis comes home to the island of Devil's Beach, Florida, to run Perkatory, her family's café, and

recover after losing her reporter's job in Miami and divorcing her philandering husband. Among her problems are the upcoming Sunshine State Barista Championship, where she will have to display top-notch barista skills even though she's a beginner, as well as her employee and championship partner, Fabrizio "Fab" Bellucci, who's dating Lana's high school nemesis, Paige Dotson, and is linked to other jealous women. After Fab decamps for the café owned by Paige's father, Lana's heated confrontation with him makes her the leading murder suspect to the locals when his body turns up outside Perkatory. Lana thinks the police's theory of suicide is unfounded and uses her reporter's skills to uncover Fab's kinky sexual escapades and involvement with shady characters in potentially illegal activities. Lana's voyage of self-discovery, along with her new-agey father, quirky hire Erica, and feisty puppy Stanley, portend future fun for readers.

MacRae, Molly. [Heather and Homicide: The Highland Books](#) (Pegasus \$24.95). Here's a mystery to read while waiting for the next Paige Shelton Scottish Bookshop release."MacRae's delightful fourth Highland Bookshop mystery opens with the arrival of true crime writer Heather Kilbride in Inversgail, Scotland, where she plans to research the recent Murray murder case, which American expat Janet Marsh, Janet's daughter, and Janet's two friends and business partners had a hand in solving. The four women are co-owners of the Yon Bonnie Bookshop, the Cakes and Tales Tearoom, and the Bedtime Stories B&B. Heather, who visits the bookshop, disappears more than once before her dead body turns up on a remote hill outside the town. Janet and her colleagues investigate, helped by Constable Norman Hobbs and frequently hindered by Inspector Russell of the Major Investigation Team. Their genteel interrogations uncover a great many suspects, and the culprit will catch most readers by surprise. Appealing local color, including a dash of Scottish dialect, buoys this easygoing mystery, which is heavy on pleasant conversation and deductive rumination if light on action. Cozy fans are in for a treat." Order [the first three](#) too and binge escape reading during the holidays.

✦ McElwain, Julie. [Betrayal in Time](#) (\$15.95). In her latest Regency era mystery, the authorities ask FBI profiler and time traveler Kendra Donovan, the American ward of the Duke of Aldridge (one of only two people to know she's from the future), to look into the strangling murder of English spymaster Sir Giles Holbrooke, who was found lying naked on the floor of an abandoned London church with his tongue cut out. During the autopsy, bizarre markings slowly appear all over Sir Giles's body, possibly forming a message from the killer. Kendra and her detection team, which includes a Bow Street runner and an irreverent journalist, get on a trail that leads them deep into family jealousies and foreign espionage—and to more ritualistic murders. One of the series' delights is how Kendra, who operates with a shocking degree of independence for a single woman in the era, must repeatedly find ways to use her forensic knowledge and instincts about homicide that don't send polite society reaching for the smelling salts. With perfect pacing, McElwain holds the reader's interest from the first page to the last. Probably best to read the first three [Kendra Donovan Mysteries](#) before this fourth.

McNamara, Frances. [Death on the Homefront](#) (Allium \$18.99). "Set in Chicago in the spring of 1917 as the U.S. prepares to enter WWI, McNamara's outstanding eighth Emily Cabot mystery finds Emily now 47 and her three children grown up: John, her

eldest, is studying medicine; her youngest, Tommy, works at City Hall; and daughter Lizzie is engaged to the scion of one of Chicago's elite families. When a childhood friend of Lizzie's is murdered, the police are quick to arrest a German waiter. Lizzie begs her amateur sleuth mother to find the real culprit. Notable Chicagoans of the day, including sociologist Jane Addams and lawyer Clarence Darrow, fit smoothly into the action. The narrative explores themes that will resonate with readers—notably, jingoism masquerading as patriotism and the gulf between the entitled rich and the dispensable poor. McNamara packs in fascinating and edifying period details while never losing sight of the riveting mystery plot."—*PW*

Melinek, Judy. T.J. Mitchell. [First Cut](#) (\$17.99). This is a terrific series debut for you fans of forensic thrillers such as written by Patricia Cornwell or Kathy Reichs. It's set in San Francisco and features a woman ME who, having she believes messed up in LA, is rebooting her career. But Dr. Jessie Teska quickly finds her superiors urging her to close a case of an apparent overdose while more bodies land on her autopsy table that indicate an elaborate scheme is underway. The issue becomes even more problematic after Jessie discovers that not only was the dead woman pregnant, she was also the deputy chief medical examiner's former nanny. While Jessie's gutsy personality will endear her to readers, it's the meticulous detail that distinguishes this novel; the authors nail the (oftentimes ghastly) daily routines of life as a medical examiner, as Melinek indeed was. Highly recommended.

Miller, Sam. J. [The Blade Between](#) (Harper \$26.99). "A successful 'influencer' photographer returns to the gentrifying hometown that nearly broke him, and all hell breaks loose. *The Blade Between* is as addictive and brutal as it is smart and challenging. Miller unflinchingly confronts the sins of our past and present. The horrors here are rooted in there being no easy answers despite our individual and collective souls being ultimately at stake. Plus whales!"—Paul Tremblay

Moore, Liz. [Long Bright River](#) (\$17). Mickey Fitzpatrick has been patrolling the 24th District for years. She knows most of the working women by name. She knows what desperation looks like and what people will do when they need a fix. She's become used to finding overdose victims: their numbers are growing every year. But every time she sees someone sprawled out, slumped over, cold to the touch, she has to pray it's not her sister, Kacey. When the bodies of murdered sex workers start turning up on the Ave, the Chief of Police is keen to bury the news. They're not the kind of victims that generate a whole lot of press anyway. But Mickey is obsessed, dangerously so, with finding the perpetrator—before Kacey becomes the next victim. Library Reads adds, "A compelling literary police procedural set in an opioid ravaged Philadelphia neighborhood and centered on the relationship between two sisters whose lives have taken opposite paths. Your heart will ache as you grow to love the complex, strong, and incredibly vulnerable characters. For readers of Tana French and Dennis Lehane."

Ochse, Weston. [Bone Chase](#) (Gallery \$26). I think it's a stretch to call this a thriller for fans of James Rollins' Sigma Force, but for escape reading you can venture into a world caught in a giant global conspiracy—literally so since the idea here is that the Nephilim, as in the original Greek translation of the Bible, are not fallen angels but giants, a super race. And discoveries of giant

bones and their cover-ups have been going on for centuries. But—no more. When unemployed mathematician Ethan McCloud receives a mysterious box of evidence from his father along with a desperate plea, he is thrust into a mystery 10,000 years in the making. Why not go along with Ochse for the ride alongside the Council of David and the sinister Six-Fingered Man?

✦ Parris, S J. [The Dead of Winter: Three Giordano Bruno](#) (Pantheon \$25.95). “Fans of Parris’s superior mysteries featuring cleric-turned-sleuth Giordano Bruno, seen most recently in *Conspiracy*, will be delighted by this stellar collection of three novellas from his early years. In “The Secret Dead,” set in 1566 Naples, 18-year-old Bruno has just taken holy orders as a Dominican. After a church official invites him to witness a forbidden autopsy of an unknown pregnant woman who was strangled, Bruno pursues the truth and some form of justice for the forgotten victim. He also tackles whodunits in “The Academy of Secrets,” set in 1568, and “A Christmas Requiem,” set in 1569 Rome; in the latter Bruno finds himself at odds with the church hierarchy, setting up the relationship with it highlighted in the novels. Bruno’s social commentary is a plus; he views Naples as “a city stinking of hypocrisy: kissing in public was illegal, but courtesans were permitted to walk the streets openly, looking for business even in the churches (especially in the churches).” This is an accessible entry point for newcomers.”—*PW* Starred Review. **I recommend the Signed UK Edition [Dead of Winter](#) (\$34) as a better buy.**

Patterson, James/Marshall Karp. [NYPD Red 6](#) (Little Brown \$29/\$17). Reality star Erin Easton’s “Wedding of the Century” may have a cable crew documenting every extravagant bridal detail, but when “Airhead Easton” disappears from the reception, it’s no diva turn. Her dressing room is empty but for a blood-spattered wedding gown and signs of a struggle. Detective Kylie MacDonald of NYPD Red, already on-scene as a plus-one, loops in her partner, Detective Zach Jordan to activate Level One mobilization for this PR nightmare. But when Erin’s “proof of life” video makes it to air — rather than to evidence — every A-lister on the guest list becomes a target of suspicion...or, just a target.

Poyer, David. [Violent Peace](#) (St Martins \$27.99). In 2019’s *Overthrow*, the U.S. won the war against China, but a nuclear strike left more than 10 million Americans “missing and presumed dead.” Now, in a fifth thriller focused on a near future war in the Pacific, U.S. Navy officer Dan Lenson is back in the U.S. trying to find his daughter, Nan, who was working in Seattle on a cure for a virus known as the Chinese flu. The city was mostly obliterated by a megaton-range airburst, but he soon picks up a promising trail. Poyer also follows the fortunes of various supporting characters his fans have come to care about, notably Lenson’s wife, Blair Titus; Cheryl Staurulakis, captain of the USN ship *Savo Island*; machine gunner Hector Ramos; and Navy Master Chief Theodore Harlett Oberg. “Each story is unique, exciting, and often moving. Evocative prose is a plus (“A reluctant pilgrim, he set out to cross a ruined land”), and the ending opens new territory to explore in coming volumes. This is a series like no other in the military thriller genre.” And will surely appeal to readers of Clive Cussler!

Racanelli, Vito. [The Man in Milan](#) (Polis \$26.99). When NYPD detectives Paul Rossi and Hamilton P. Turner begin investigating the Sutton Place murder of an Italian air force pilot, the last thing

they expect is that they will and find themselves sucked into the potential cover-up of the Ustica massacre, the most horrific aviation crime in Italian history, in which all 81 souls on board perished, where Italian President Francesco Cossiga blamed a missile deployed by the French Navy for the disaster. But as they begin investigating, Rossi, recovering from a broken marriage, and Turner, an African-American opera buff, poet, and former lawyer with ambitions to be mayor, come up against NYPD bureaucratic obstacles and stonewalling by the Italian Consulate in NYC. Lieutenant Laura Muro, the policewoman sister of the victim, comes to New York to aid the investigation, but soon the trio find themselves in the crosshairs of the Gladio, Italy’s powerful, shadowy political cabal... This is not dark like *Carcatera*. In fact I thought of Dean Martin’s voice as I read it, proving once again how each of us attributes voice to a writer in our own way.

Savage, Vanessa. [The Woods](#) (Grand Central \$16.99). A young teacher struggles to solve the mystery of her sister’s death while battling hallucinations of her own. Two girls went down to the woods... but only one came back. There’s a lot from Tess’s childhood that she would rather forget. The family moved next door and brought chaos to their quiet lives. The two girls who were murdered, their killer never found. But the only thing she can’t remember is the one thing she wishes she could. Ten years ago, Tess’s older sister died. Ruled a tragic accident, the only witness was Tess herself, but she has never been able to remember what happened that night in the woods. Now living in London, Tess has resolved to put the trauma behind her. But an emergency call from her father forces her back to the family home, back to where her sister’s body was found, and to the memories, she thought were lost forever...

Smiley, Jane. [Perestroika in Paris](#) (Knopf \$26.95). Paras, short for “Perestroika,” is a spirited racehorse at a racetrack west of Paris. One afternoon at dusk, she finds the door of her stall open and—she’s a curious filly—wanders all the way to the City of Light. She’s dazzled and often mystified by the sights, sounds, and smells around her, but she isn’t afraid. Soon she meets an elegant dog, a German shorthaired pointer named Frida, who knows how to get by without attracting the attention of suspicious Parisians. Paras and Frida coexist for a time in the city’s lush green spaces, nourished by Frida’s strategic trips to the vegetable market. They keep company with two irrepressible ducks and an opinionated raven. But then Paras meets a human boy, Etienne, and discovers a new, otherworldly part of Paris: the ivy-walled house where the boy and his nearly-one-hundred-year-old great-grandmother live in seclusion. As the cold weather and Christmas near, the unlikelyst of friendships bloom. But how long can a runaway horse stay undiscovered in Paris? How long can a boy keep her hidden and all to himself?

Tahir, Sabaa. [A Sky Beyond the Storm](#) (Razorbill \$19.99). To thrill your teens, try this. Picking up just a few months after [A Reaper at the Gates](#) (\$11.99) left off... The long-imprisoned jinn are on the attack, wreaking bloody havoc in villages and cities alike. But for the Nightbringer, vengeance on his human foes is just the beginning. At his side, Commandant Keris Veturia declares herself Empress, and calls for the heads of any and all who defy her rule. At the top of the list? The Blood Shrike and her remaining family. Laia of Serra, now allied with the Blood Shrike, struggles to recover from the loss of the two people most important to her. Determined to stop the approaching apocalypse,

she throws herself into the destruction of the Nightbringer. In the process, she awakens an ancient power that could lead her to victory—or to an unimaginable doom....

Tursten, Helene. [Snowdrift](#) (Soho \$27.95). Tursten's spellbinding third crime novel featuring DI Embla Nyström picks up eight days after the end of 2019's [Winter Grave](#) (\$16.95), which closed with Embla receiving a late-night phone call from her childhood best friend, Lollo, who disappeared 14 years earlier. Suspected abductors were Gothenburg gangsters, the Stavic brothers—Milo, Luca, and Kador. When a cousin of Embla's calls for help to solve a murder in one of his rented guesthouses, she's shocked to find the victim is Milo. A second jolt comes when she learns that Luca was killed nearby on the same night. Challenged to solve the murders, Embla anxiously seeks the whereabouts of Kador, who has vanished in Croatia. The stabbing of a teenager at a nightclub thickens the plot. Aided by various police officials, including Irene Huss, Tursten's other series lead, Embla seeks to uncover the truth about what happened to Lollo. "The action includes a spectacular chase sequence, a bombshell twist that turns the cases around, and an explosive firestorm. This stunning page-turner is unarguably the best in the series."

✦ Tyce, Harriet. [The Lies You Told](#) (Grand Central \$28). Sadie Roper, the narrator of this engrossing psychological thriller, returns to her native London, along with her 11-year-old daughter, Robin, after she and her husband break up in Brooklyn. Sadie plans to get back the high-flying criminal barrister career she sacrificed for marriage ten years earlier. But the provisions of Sadie's late mother's will state that she can claim a small inheritance and her childhood home only if she sends Robin to Asham Girls School, the same school Sadie attended, a school where on the playground it's the law of the jungle... Despite the bullying Sadie endured at Asham, she agrees to the will's terms and enrolls Robin. The school is not very welcoming newcomers, her daughter doesn't make any friends yet and the other mothers are as fiercely competitive as their children. Sadie immediately finds herself on the outside as she navigates the fraught politics of the school gate. But the tide starts to turn as Sadie begins to work on a scandalous, high-profile case that's the perfect opportunity to prove herself at work, even though a dangerous flirtation threatens to cloud her professional judgment. And when Liza, queen of the school moms, befriends Sadie, she draws her into the heart of the world from which she was previously excluded. Soon Sadie and her family start to thrive, but.... More than one suspicious death raises the ante as multiple twists keep the pages turning to.... Tyce debuted with [Blood Orange](#) (\$16.99).

✦ Willberg, TA. [Marion Lane and the Midnight Murder](#) (Park Row \$27.99). Marion is a new recruit of a detective agency that works undercover and under the streets of London. When she gets involved in investigating the death of one of their own agents, she is not sure who she can trust, or what forces are working against her. This is a great start to a new series that is perfect for Agatha Christie and Harry Potter fans alike.

Woods, Stuart. [Hush Hush](#) (Putnam \$28). I miss having advance reading copies and here's why: this synopsis from the publisher hardly tells you a thing about the 56<sup>th</sup> Stone Barrington fling. Stone Barrington is settling in for some downtime in New York City when an anonymous enemy makes himself known. This nameless foe's threats hit close to home, and before Stone can

retaliate, the fearsome messages turn into very real consequences. With the help of old friends—and a lovely new tech-savvy acquaintance—Stone sets out to unravel the fatal agenda. But as the web of adversaries expands, Stone realizes that no place is safe, and he'll have to flush out the mastermind to keep himself and his circle safe.

#### OUR DECEMBER SMALL PAPERBACK PICKS

Berry, Steve. [The Warsaw Protocol](#) (\$9.99). Cotton Malone #15. Investigating the thefts of the seven Arma Christi relics from their international sanctuaries, former Justice Department agent Cotton Malone learns that the relics are being demanded by a blackmailer in possession of incriminating evidence against the president of Poland. *PW* concluded their rave review with "Berry seasons the plot with fascinating lore and vivid locations, as informative as any textbook. If only textbooks were this exciting."

Caldwell, Emmie. [A Wicked Yarn](#) (Berkley \$7.99). Craft Fair Knitters #1. When she gets tangled up in the murder of her best friend Belinda's ex-husband, knitting enthusiast Lia Geiger must unravel the clues to prove Belinda's innocence with the help of the Ninth Street Knitters. *Kirkus* gave this cozy the thumbs up saying "Down-to-earth characters and an interesting motive spice up this debut."

Cameron, Marc. [Stone Cross](#) (\$9.99). Investigating a series of death threats against a federal judge in a rural Alaskan community, Deputy U.S. Marshal Arliss Cutter and his partner, Lola Teariki, find the case complicated by suspicious local disappearances and deaths. In this sequel to *Open Carry*, "Cameron populates his suspenseful tale, which builds to a satisfying, if violent, conclusion, with fully realized characters, each with their own believable backstory. Readers can only hope they won't have long to wait for Cutter's third outing. (*PW*)."

Carr, Jack. [Savage Son](#) (\$9.99). James Reece #3. While a woman flees for her life in Siberia and a traitorous CIA officer goes into hiding within the Russian mafia, James Reece slowly recovers from brain surgery, unaware that he has been targeted by dangerous adversaries. Carr is a true rising star in international thrillers and writes with conviction and experience as a former SEAL.

✦ Hawkins, Jennifer. [To Fetch a Felon](#) (Berkley \$7.99). Chatty Corgi #1. Leaving London and her life of high finance behind, Emma and her talking corgi Oliver move to an idyllic village in Cornwall where she hopes to open a tea shop but instead finds herself steeped in a mystery when her disagreeable landlord winds up dead. *Kirkus* said "A promising debut for dog lovers, who'll delight in the clever talking corgi and his charming owner."

Quirk, Matthew. [Hour of the Assassin](#) (\$9.99). Using his elite training as a former Secret Service agent to test security around high officials, Nick implicates himself while trying to prevent a death before uncovering a decades-old conspiracy targeting the Oval Office. Baldacci fans may want to give the equally thrilling, Edgar award-winning Quirk's books a try.

Sanders, Angela M. [Bait and Witch](#) (Kensington \$7.99). Josie Way #1. Hiding out in small-town Oregon after uncovering corruption in the Library of Congress, librarian Josie Way must employ her newfound magic abilities when she discovers a body in the woods along with her true lineage.

✦ Thomas, Will. [Lethal Pursuit](#) (\$9.99). Barker and Llewelyn

#11. Receiving a key to a tunnel beneath Downing Street, private enquiry agents Barker and Llewelyn investigate the murder of a Foreign Office agent while preventing a critical document from falling into the hands of German adversaries.

#### DECEMBER SMALL PAPERBACKS

Alexander, Ellie. [Chilled to the Cone: A Bakeshop Mystery](#) (St Martins \$8.99). Bakeshop #12. When a surprise opportunity to launch a pop-up ice cream shop comes her way, bakeshop owner Jules Montague Capshaw jumps at the chance to showcase Torte's signature iced drinks and cold custards. But before Jules knows it, one of the town's most colorful characters, a street performer known for wearing capes and a cone-shaped hat, turns up dead just as Torte 2.0 is set to open its doors.

Baker, Bree. [Closely Harbored Secrets](#) (Sourcebooks \$7.99). Seaside Café #5. When the body of a member of her aunt's unspoken history group is found at a site supposed to be haunted, Everly Swan suspects foul play despite everyone in town believing a ghost is the culprit.

Brown, Dale. [Eagle Station](#) (\$9.99). When Russia and China forge an unlikely alliance to claim the moon's natural resources, Brad McLanahan and the Iron Wolf Squadron scramble to prevent the construction of a heavily armed moon base.

Burns, V M. [The Plot is Murder](#) (Kensington \$8.99). Mystery Bookshop #1. Preparing for the grand opening of the mystery bookstore that has always been her dream, Samantha Washington diligently pens her own mystery series, only to be implicated in the murder of a shady realtor.

Conte, Cate. [A Whisker of a Doubt](#) (St Martins \$7.99). Cat Café #4. Business at her cat café is booming, and Maddie James's care-taking of a feral cat colony in one of the area's wealthiest communities only helps her bottom line. But tensions between the homeowners and animal activists are escalating to catastrophic levels...and before long a body is found dead in a snowbank.

Craig, Christie. [Don't Look Back](#) (Grand Central \$7.99). Posing as a waitress at the Black Diamond strip club to catch her half-sister's killer, FBI agent Bree Ryan, when her cover is blown, turns to a rule-breaking cop with a knack for solving cold cases for help.

Cussler, Clive. [Serpent: A Novel from the Numa Files](#) (\$9.99). Re-issue Numa Files #1. Kurt Austin, head of an underwater exploration team, rescues a marine archaeologist who was on the verge of recovering a carved stone head that will prove that Columbus was not the first European to discover America.

Hagberg, David. [Crash](#) (\$9.99). When a small group of international business tycoons threaten to obliterate the world economy, only SEC computer expert Cindy David can stop them by teaming up with a former Navy SEAL turned FBI employee to unravel the plot and save the economy from sliding into the Second Great Depression.

Harper, Karen. [Under the Alaskan Ice](#) (Mira \$9.99). This sequel to *Deep in the Alaskan Woods*, finds a young widow assisting a pilot in the wake of a bush plane crash, before an unknown adversary begins sabotaging the pilot's investigation in the Alaskan wilderness.

Harris, Sherry. [Absence of Alice](#) (Kensington \$7.99). Sarah Winston #9. While helping her latest client, Alice, sort through a

fortune in antiques, bargain hunter extraordinaire Sarah Winston must call in the big guns – a former F.B.I. negotiator – when her landlady gets kidnapped.

Jensen, Louise. [The Gift](#) (\$7.99). Given a second chance at life when she receives a donor heart, Jenna uncovers dangerous secrets about a missing girl and her donor's non-accidental death.

Ledwidge, Michael. [Stop at Nothing](#) (\$9.99). Stealing a fortune in cash and diamonds from a Gulfstream jet that has crashed in the Bahamas, an expat diving instructor uses elite skills from his secret former life to outmaneuver the conspirators behind the crash.

Levine, Laura. [Death of a Gigolo](#) (\$8.99). Jane Austen #17. When heiress Daisy Kincaid's much-younger fiancé—a notorious lothario—is murdered right after their engagement is announced, writer Jane Austen must page through the long list of suspects to close the book on a killer.

Martin, Kat. [The Ultimate Betrayal](#) (\$9.99). When her father is implicated in the theft of millions in chemical weapons from a government depot, an investigative journalist risks her life to prove her father's innocence and expose the true culprits.

Pressey, Rose. [Murder Can Haunt Your Handiwork](#) (Kensington \$7.99). Haunted Craft Fair #3. When she arrives at the annual craft fair at the Biltmore Estate with her adorable Chihuahua in tow, Celeste is met with murder and teams up with a pair of handsome detectives and a ghost with a special interest in the case.

Robb, J D. [Shadows in Death](#) (\$8.99). Eve Dallas #51. Spotting an infamous assassin from Dublin among the onlookers at a Washington Square Park murder scene, Lieutenant Eve Dallas and her husband, Roarke, struggle to protect each other when they discover the killer is targeting them.

Smith, Karen Rose. [Murder with Oolong Tea](#) (Kensington \$8.99). Daisy's Tea Garden #6. After Althea, a strict, opinionated teacher who garnered the ire of her colleagues, is found strangled to death, Daisy gets a real education in murder as she sorts through a long list of Athena's enemies to bring a killer to task.

Woods, Stuart. [Bombshell](#) (\$9.99). Teddy Fay #4. Former CIA operative-turned-movie producer Teddy Fay becomes embroiled in two sticky situations involving a vengeful criminal thug and malicious gossip that is overshadowing the career of a rising Centurion star.