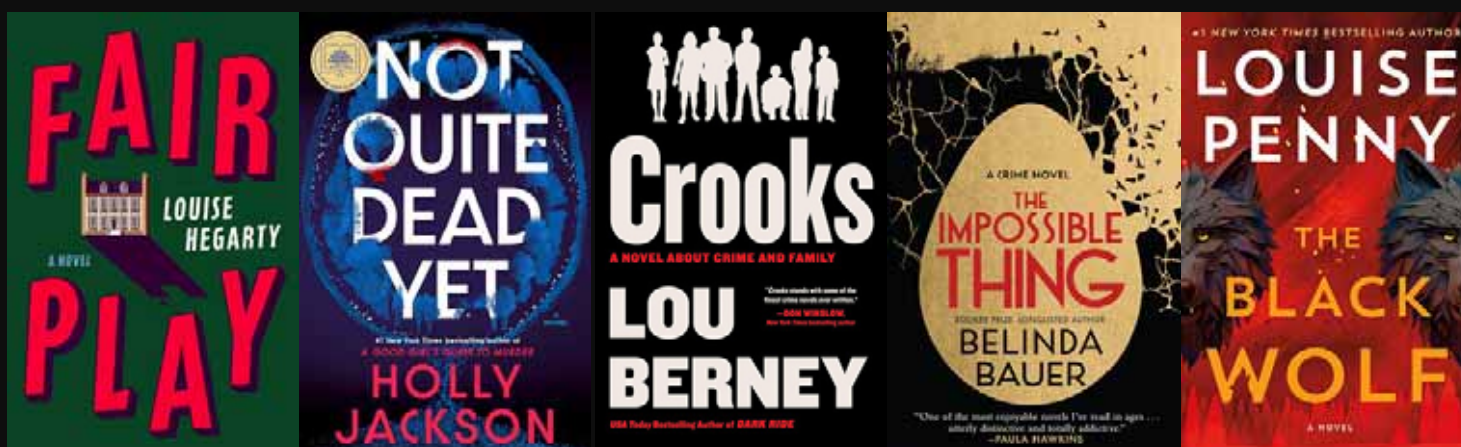


Deadly Pleasures *Mystery Magazine*



The Best of the Best 2025 *Critics' Choice*



The Quest to Find the Best of the Best for 2025

Another year and another bunch of great mysteries and thrillers. As often stated, the primary purpose of *Deadly Pleasures Mystery Magazine* is to find the best mysteries, crime novels and thrillers of the year and to make you aware of them. There are so many books in the genre published each year that we all need help sifting the wheat from the chaff. That's what we do for you each year.

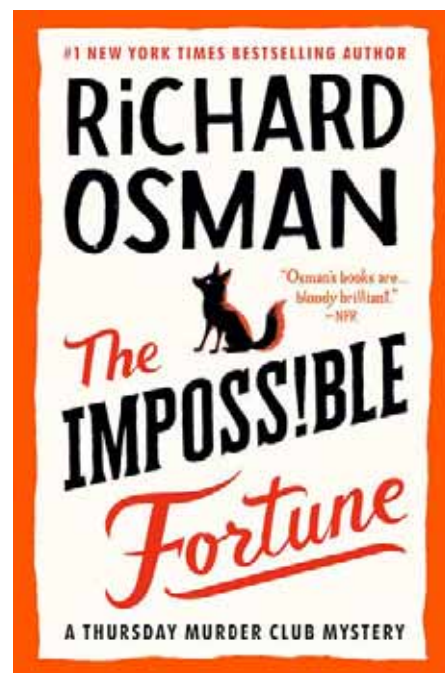
There didn't appear to be any diminution of the number of psychological/domestic suspense novels, but there did seem to be an evident uptick in the number of traditional mysteries published. Also there seems to be a blending of the line between mystery/crime fiction and horror fiction. A few titles that I would consider horror fiction have made it onto best mysteries of the year lists.

This year I was able to accumulate 89 "Best" lists, down a bit from last year's 107 lists. There just didn't seem to be the same enthusiasm that I witnessed last year. Many lists were shorter than normal. I don't know if that was reflective of the overall quality of the 2025 offerings or that the critics didn't read as many books in 2025 as they did in 2024. I certainly didn't experience any trouble in finding excellent mysteries and thrillers to read in this year's crop.

Not all lists are equal. I personally give most credence to the lists generated by the *Deadly Pleasures* (Barry Award Committee) Staff. Their expertise is unparalleled.

The list that appears on pages 18-19

is the result of my efforts – the Best of the Best of 2025. This year the "race" for the top spot was fairly close. S. A. Cosby's **KING OF ASHES** wound up a few mentions ahead of the second place novel, **THE IMPOSSIBLE FORTUNE** by Richard Osman. I quite liked **THE IMPOSSIBLE FORTUNE**, but I didn't care for the characters and some of the uncomfortable situations in **KING OF ASHES**, despite it being well written. My personal favorite, **LEO** by Deon Meyer, didn't fare nearly as well, with only 6 mentions.



The top psychological suspense novels of the year are **DON'T LET HIM IN** by Lisa Jewell and **NOT QUITE DEAD YET** by Holly Jackson.

The best traditional mysteries are **THE IMPOSSIBLE FORTUNE** by

Richard Osman, **THE IMPOSSIBLE THING** by Belinda Bauer and **MARBLE HALL MURDERS** by Anthony Horowitz. Louise Penny refers to herself as a traditional mystery writer so we should probably add **THE BLACK WOLF** to the list also.

Surprises to me:

1. **FAIR PLAY** by debut author Louise Hegarty made a strong showing coming in tied for 6th place. I had never heard of the novel, so there goes my reputation.

2. A strong showing by Dan Brown for his **THE SECRET OF SECRETS**, garnering 12 mentions. He usually doesn't do that well.

3. **THE DOORMAN** by Chris Pavone had 9 mentions and that caused me to read the book (review in my column) and I was very impressed.

4. I suspect that the fact that Michael Connelly had two books published in 2025 worked against him. One got 10 mentions and the other 9 mentions and seemed to cancel each other out. He probably would have been higher up the list with only one 2025 book.

It is self evident that the two biggest factors of a book getting on a best list are: 1. a critic reads the book, and 2. the book is good. Unfortunately all the critics posting best of the year lists of crime fiction and thrillers have not read all of the books listed on the Best of the Best list (myself included). In many cases, I suspect that the critic has only read a handful of them. But it is not a perfect world and one works with what one has.

This process provides great input to the Barry Award Nominating committee members.

There are a lot of excellent mysteries published in Australia, New Zealand, Canada, the U.K., Ireland, Europe, South Africa and elsewhere in the world that can and should be of interest to the American mystery and thriller fans -- if they are exposed to them. That's what we try to do in *Deadly Pleasures* -- alert you to good reading no matter where the books are written or published.

Experts' Lists

Best Mysteries of 2025

Deadly Pleasures Staff

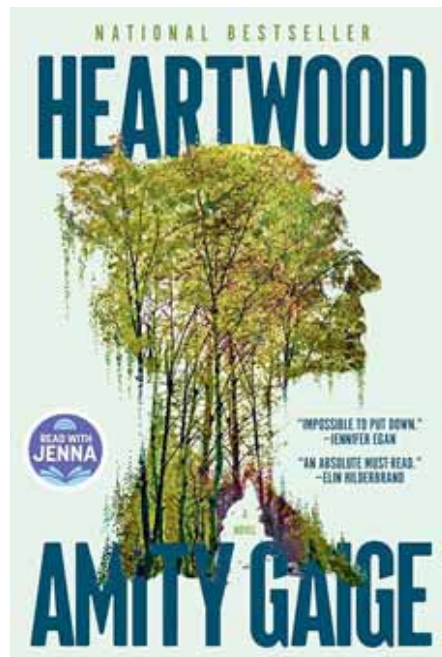
Jeff Popple

LEO, Deon Meyer
 THE WHITE CROW,
 Michael Robotham
 HANG ON ST. CHRISTOPHER,
 Adrian McKinty
 THE POET'S GAME, Paul Vidich
 MISCHANCE CREEK, Garry Disher
 (Aust)
 UNBURY THE DEAD, Fiona Hardy
 (Aust)
 MARBLE HALL MURDERS,
 Anthony Horowitz
 GUNNER, Alan Parks
 SOFTLY CALLS THE DEVIL,
 Chris Blake (New Zealand)
 THE PROVING GROUND,
 Michael Connelly
 CLOWN TOWN, Mick Herron
 BURIED ABOVE GROUND,
 Mike Ripley
 DUST, Michael Brissenden (Aust)
Debuts
 DEAD MONEY, Jakob Kerr
 STILLWATER, Tanya Scott (Aust)

Meredith Anthony

GALWAY'S EDGE, Ken Bruen
 A VOICE IN THE NIGHT,
 Simon Mason
 THE IMPOSSIBLE THING,
 Belinda Bauer
 THE WHITE CROW,
 Michael Robotham
 THE GRAVE ARTIST, Jeffery Deaver &
 Isabella Maldonado
 A SONG FOR KATY SHAYNE,
 Jim Fuselli
 THE POTENCY OF UNGOVERN-
 ABLE IMPULSES, Malka Older
 SILENT BONES, Val McDermid
 CLOWN TOWN, Mick Herron
 THE HALLMARKED MAN,
 Robert Galbraith

ECSTASY, Ivy Pochoda
 WE ARE ALL GUILTY HERE,
 Karin Slaughter
 THE BLACK WOLF, Louise Penny
 KING OF ASHES, S. A. Cosby
 THE LANGUAGE OF THE BIRDS,
 K.A. Merson
 THE GOOD LIAR, Denise Mina
 THE IMPOSSIBLE FORTUNE,
 Richard Osmond
 EXIT STRATEGY,
 Lee Child and Andrew Child
 EVERYBODY WANTS TO RULE THE
 WORLD, Ace Atkins



Larry Gandle

THE HUMAN SCALE,
 Lawrence Wright
 WITNESS 8, Steve Cavanagh
 KING OF ASHES, S. A. Cosby
 DEATH OF US, Abigail Dean
 HEARTWOOD by Amity Gaige
 THE DREAM HOTEL, Laila Lalami
 WILD DARK SHORE,
 Charlotte McConaghy
 THE SAVAGE, NOBLE DEATH OF

BABS DIONNE, Ron Currie
 KILL YOUR DARLINGS,
 Peter Swanson
 STILLWATER, Tanya Scott
 THE WIDOW, John Grisham

"Mystery" Mike Bursaw

(Barry Award Nominating Committee)
 APOSTLE'S COVE,
 William Kent Krueger
 HUMAN REMAINS, Jo Callaghan –
 U.K. only
 EDGE OF HONOR, Brad Thor
 THE PROVING GROUND,
 Michael Connelly
 THE FINAL VOW, M. W. Craven
 TWO KINDS OF STRANGER,
 Steve Cavanagh – U.S. in 2026
 QUANTUM OF MENACE,
 Vaseem Khan -- U.K. only
 WOLF SIX, Alex Shaw

Mike Dillman

(Barry Award Nominating Committee)
 MIDNIGHT BLACK, Mark Greaney
 THE WHITE CROW,
 Michael Robotham
 UNTOUCHABLE, Mike Lawson
 THE OLIGARCH'S DAUGHTER,
 Joseph Finder
 BURN AFTER READING, Catherine
 Ryan Howard – U.K. only
 DON'T LET HIM IN, Lisa Jewell
 PARENTS WEEKEND, Alex Finlay
 THE DAUGHTER, T. M. Logan – U.K.
 WITNESS 8, Steve Cavanagh
 THE CHEMIST, A. A. Dhand -- U.K.
 GUESS AGAIN, Charlie Donlea
 TWO KINDS OF STRANGER, Steve
 Cavanagh -- U.S. in 2026
 THE INHERITANCE, Trisha Sakhlecha
 THE VANISHING PLACE, Zoe Rankin

Ayo Onatade

(Barry Award Nominating Committee)
 KING OF ASHES, S. A. Cosby
 QUANTUM OF MENACE, Vaseem
 Khan – U.K. only
 THE MIDNIGHT KING,
 Tariq Ashkanani
 CLOWN TOWN, Mick Herron
 THE DARKEST WINTER,
 Carlo Lucarelli – 2026 title in U.S.
 MIDNIGHT STREETS, Phil Lecomber

THE PROVING GROUND,
Michael Connelly
MURDER TAKES A VACATION,
Laura Lippman
THE GOOD LIAR, Denise Mina
STRANGE PICTURES, Uketsu
MOSCOW UNDERGROUND,
Catherine Merridale – U.K. only
THE ART OF A LIE,
Laura Shepherd Robinson

Honorable Mention

HANG ON ST. CHRISTOPHER,
Adrian McKinty
MURDER AT WORLD'S END,
Ross Montgomery – 2026 title in U.S.
THE GOOD NAZI, Samir Machado de
Machado – U.K. only
THE BURNING GROUNDS,
Abir Mukherjee

Robin Agnew

GLORY DAZE, Danielle Arceneaux
A DEATH IN DIAMONDS, S.J. Bennett
JUST ANOTHER DEAD AUTHOR,
Katarina Bivald
I DIED FOR BEAUTY, Amanda Flower
THE LIST OF SUSPICIOUS THINGS,
Jennie Godfrey
THE FROZEN PEOPLE, Elly Griffiths
MARBLE HALL MURDERS,
Anthony Horowitz
MAKING A KILLING, Cara Hunter
AN EXCELLENT THING
IN A WOMAN, Allison Montclair
NO COMFORT FOR THE DEAD,
R.P. O'Donnell
THE CASE OF THE MISSING MAID,
Rob Osler
AT MIDNIGHT COMES THE CRY,
Julia Spencer-Fleming
HUNTER'S HEART RIDGE,
Sarah Stewart Taylor
THE BOTANIST'S ASSISTANT,
Peggy Townsend
NO. 10 DOYERS STREET, Radha Vatsal

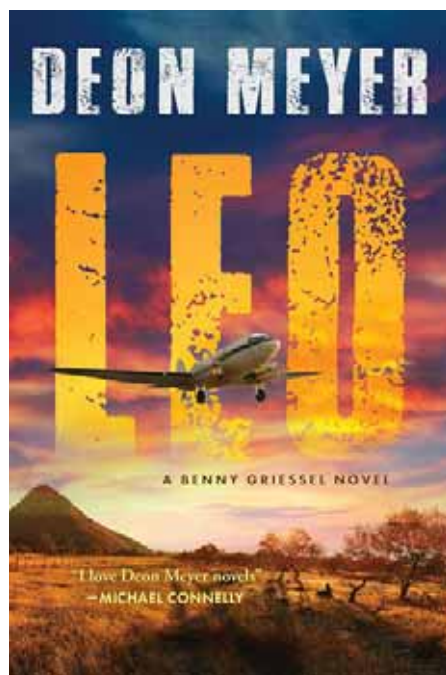
Ali Karim

EVERYBODY WANTS TO RULE THE
WORLD by Ace Atkins
13 HILLCREST DRIVE,
Gerald Pietevich
KILL YOUR DARLINGS,
Peter Swanson
THE WHYTE PYTHON WORLD
TOUR, Travis Kennedy

BROKEN, Jón Atli Jónasson
NEVER FLINCH, Stephen King
THE SAVAGE, NOBLE DEATH OF
BABS DIONNE, Ron Currie
THE OLIGARCH'S DAUGHTER,
Joe Finder
MURDER TAKES A VACATION,
Laura Lippman
THE NOTE, Alafair Burke

George Easter

LEO, Deon Meyer – Top Pick
CROOKS, Lou Berney
HANG ON ST. CHRISTOPHER,
Adrian McKinty
HEARTWOOD, Amity Gaige
THE WHITE CROW,
Michael Robotham
WITNESS 8, Steve Cavanagh



MARBLE HALL MURDERS,
Anthony Horowitz
THE IMPOSSIBLE THING,
Belinda Bauer
THE PROVING GROUND,
Michael Connelly

THE GOOD LIAR, Denise Mina
SILENT BONES, Val McDermid
THE DOORMAN, Chris Pavone

Crime Novels published

only in the U.K.

THE BROKEN RIVER, Chris Hammer
A VOICE IN THE NIGHT,

Simon Mason
HUMAN REMAINS, Jo Callaghan
THE DAUGHTER, T. M. Logan
THE RED SHORE, William Shaw
THE FINAL VOW, M. W. Craven

Debuts

STILLWATER, Tanya Scott
THE VANISHING PLACE, Zoe Rankin
THE DENTIST, Tim Sullivan – first
U.S. publication in 2025

Thrillers (Action and Espionage)

MIDNIGHT BLACK, Mark Greaney
CLOWN TOWN, Mick Herron
WOLF SIX, Alex Shaw – U.K. only
THE PERSIAN, David McCloskey
THE PROTOCOLS OF SPYING,
Merle Nygate – U.K. only

Maggie Mason

TWO TRUTHS AND A MURDER,
Colleen Cambridge
FIVE GOLDEN WINGS,
Donna Andrews
THE PROVING GROUND,
Michael Connelly
THE 9MM MURDERS, Steve Packwood

Ted Hertel

KING OF ASHES, S. A. Cosby
THE IMPOSSIBLE THING,
Belinda Bauer
APOSTLE'S COVE,
William Kent Krueger
CROOKS, Lou Berney
STILLWATER, Tanya Scott
I BECOME HER, Joe Hart
KAPLAN'S PLOT, Jason Diamond
THE MYSTERIOUS CASE OF THE
MISSING CRIME WRITER,
Ragnar Jonasson
THE PROVING GROUND,
Michael Connelly
THE WHITE CROW,
Michael Robotham
THE MUSEUM DETECTIVE, Maha
Khan Phillips Kevin Burton Smith

Craig Sisterson

KING OF ASHES, S. A. Cosby
NIGHTSHADE, Michael Connelly
BROKEN FIELDS, Marcie R. Rendon
BEARTOOTH, Callan Wink
CITY OF DESTRUCTION,,
Vaseem Khan
THE BUREAU, Eoin McNamee – U.K.

THE PROVING GROUND,
Michael Connelly
EL DORADO DRIVE, Megan Abbott
SON,
Thomas Enger & Johana Gustawsson
Australian/New Zealand
WHEN THE DEEP DARK BUSH
SWALLOWS YOU WHOLE, Geoff Parks
LUCKY THING, Tom Baragwanath

Hank Wagner

REACHER: THE STORIES BEHIND
THE STORIES, Lee Child
CRY HAVOC, Jack Carr
THE GUN MAN JACKSON
SWAGGER, Stephen Hunter
WHAT THE NIGHT BRINGS,
Mark Billingham
CROOKS, Lou Berney
ONLY WAY OUT, Tod Goldberg
HATCHET GIRLS, Joe R. Lansdale
WHAT ABOUT THE BODIES,
Ken Jaworski
UNTOUCHABLE, Mike Lawson
FALLEN STAR, Lee Goldberg
FRIENDS HELPING FRIENDS,
Patrick Hoffman
COLD BURN, A. J. Landau
STILLWATER, Tanya Scott
NIGHTSHADE, Michael Connelly
WRECKAGE, Peter Straub

Kevin Burton Smith

UNTOUCHABLE, Mike Lawson
NEVER FLINCH, Stephen King
MURDER TAKES A VACATION,
Laura Lippman
NIGHTSHADE, Michael Connelly
HATCHET GIRLS, Joe R. Lansdale
GALWAY'S EDGE, Ken Bruen
BOYSTOWN, John Shannon,
NORTH COUNTRY, Matt Bondurant
OUT OF ALCATRAZ, Christopher
Cantwell & Tyler Crook
PICKET LINE, Elmore Leonard

Other Experts

Oline Cogdill

Nationally Syndicated Reviewer
Florida Sun Sentinel
Barry Award Nominating Committee
EL DORADO, Megan Abbott
THE PROVING GROUND,

Michael Connelly
CROOKS, Lou Berney
TOO OLD FOR THIS,
Samantha Downing
THE BONE THIEF, Vanessa Lillie
KING OF ASHES, S. A. Cosby
THE TROUBLE UP NORTH,
Travis Mulhauser
THE GIRL IN THE GREEN DRESS,
Mariah Fredericks
THE OLIGARCH'S DAUGHTER,
Joseph Finder
THE NOTE, Alafair Burke
LOW APRIL SUN,
Constance E. Squires
MISSISSIPPI BLUE 42, Eli Cranor
HEAD CASES, John McMahon
WE DON'T TALK ABOUT CAROL,
Kristen L. Berry
FLORIDA PALMS, Joe Pan
THE VANISHING PLACE, Zoe Rankin



Sarah Weinman

Mystery Reviewer
The New York Times
DEAD IN THE FRAME,
Stephen Spotswood
AT MIDNIGHT COMES THE CRY,
Julia Spencerr-Fleming
VERA WONG'S GUIDE TO
SNOOPING, Jesse Q. Sutanto
GLORY DAZE, Danielle Arseneaux
NOTES ON SURVIVING THE FIRE,

Christine Murphy
HISTORY LESSONS, Zoe B. Wallbrook
HER ONE REGRET, Donna Freitas
DEATH TAKES ME,
Cristina Rivera Garza
HEARTWOOD, Amity Gaige
HOLLOW SPACES,
Victor Suthammanont

Sarah Lyall

The New York Times
Best Thrillers
THE DOORMAN, Chris Pavone
A BEAUTIFUL FAMILY,
Jennifer Trevelyan
THE IMPOSSIBLE THING,
Belinda Bauer
YOUR STEPS ON THE STAIRS,
Antonio Munoz Molina
VENETIAN VESPER, John Banville
DISSOLUTION, Nicholas Binge
THE VANISHING PLACE, Zoe Rankin
THE GOOD LIAR, Denise Mina
THE PREDICAMENT, William Boyd
THE IMPOSSIBLE FORTUNE,
Richard Osman

Laura Wilson

The Guardian
CLOWN TOWN, Mick Herron
THE IMPOSSIBLE THING,
Belinda Bauer
THE GOOD LIAR, Denise Mina
THE CONFESSIONS,
Paul Bradley Carr
THE WINTER WARRIORS,
Olivier Norek
THE GHOSTS OF ROME,
Joseph O'Connor
THE BUREAU, Eoin McNamee
THE DEATH OF US, Abigail Dean
FAIR PLAY, Louise Hegarty
STRANGE PICTURES, Uketsu

Barry Forshaw

The Financial Times
KILL YOUR DARLINGS,
Peter Swanson
THE GOOD LIAR, Denise Mina
KING OF ASHES, S. A. Cosby
THE BURNING GROUNDS,
Abir Mukherjee
MAKING A KILLING, Cara Hunter

Adam LeBor

Financial Times

Best Thrillers

THE POET'S GAME, Paul Vidich
APPOINTMENT IN PARIS,
Jane Thynne
MOSCOW UNDERGROUND,
Catherine Merridale
RED WATER, Jurica Pavicic
THE PROTOCOLS OF SPYING,
Merle Nygate

Joan Smith and Mark

Sanderson

The Times

Joan Smith's Picks

RED WATER, Jurica Pavicic
THE DEAD HUSBAND COOKBOOK,
Danielle Valentine
THE TOKEN, Sharon Bolton
THE DAY OF RECKONING,
Nina Bhadreshwar

Mark Sanderson's Picks

MURDER MINDFULLY, Karsten Dusse
A VOICE IN THE NIGHT,
Simon Mason
PAPERBOY, Callum McSorley
A SCHOOLING IN MURDER,
Andrew Taylor

James Owen and John

Dugdale

The Times Best Thrillers

James Owen's Picks

CLOWN TOWN, Mick Herron
RED STAR DOWN, D. B. John
THE SEVENTH FLOOR, David McCloskey – 2024 title in U.S.

John Dugdale's Picks

NOT QUITE DEAD YET, Holly Jackson
THE DEATH OF US, Abigail Dean
PRESUMED GUILTY, Scott Turow

Jake Kerridge

Daily Telegraph

THE KILLER QUESTION,
Janice Hallett
THE PREDICAMENT, William Boyd
OUR BEAUTIFUL MESS, Adele Parks
THE WATERFALL, Gareth Rubin
BENBECULA, Graeme Macrae Burnet

THE PROTOCOLS OF SPYING,
Merle Nygate

THE MURDER AT WORLD'S END,
Ross Montgomery -- 2026 in U.S.

QUANTUM OF MENACE,
Vaseem Khan

THE HALLMARKED MAN,
Robert Galbraith

PAPERBOY, Callum McSorley
NO. 2 WHITEHALL COURT,
Alan Judd

COME IN AND SHUT THE DOOR,
Chris Petit

10 MARCHFIELD SQUARE,
Nicola Whyte

THE BUREAU, Eoin McNamee
FAIR PLAY, Louise Hegarty

THERE WILL BE BODIES,
Lindsey Davis

SLEEPER BEACH, Nick Harkaway
MARBLE HALL MURDERS,
Athony Horowitz

THE MAID'S SECRET, Nita Prose
THE MYSTERY OF RAKE HALL,
Maureen Paton

MURDER ON LINE ONE, Jeremy Vine

Tom Nolan

The Wall Street Journal

THE DROWNED, John Banville
THE ALASKA SANDERS AFFAIR,
Joël Dicker

THE HUNTER, Tana French
CLOSE TO DEATH,
Anthony Horowitz

THE STARS TURNED INSIDE OUT,
Nova Jacobs

THE SEQUEL, Jean Hanff Korelitz
TELL ME WHO YOU ARE,
Louise Luna

THE HOLLOW TREE, Philip Miller
THE DEVIL RAISES HIS OWN,
Scott Phillips

A TALENT FOR MURDER,
Peter Swanson

Karen MacPherson

The Washington Post

Best Mysteries

THE BLACK WOLF, Louise Penny
THE IMPOSSIBLE FORTUNE,
Richard Osman

THE KILLING STONES, Ann Cleeves
THE BONE THIEF, Vanessa Lillie

THE DENTIST, Tim Sullivan
DETECTIVE AUNTY,
Uzma Jalaluddin

THE GAME IS AFOOT, Elise Bryant
GUILTY BY DEFINITION, Susie Dent

THE HIDDEN CITY, Charles Finch
MURDER TAKES A VACATION,
Laura Lippman

Stephanie Merry

The Washington Post

THE ASCENT, Allison Buccola
DEAD MONEY, Jakob Kerr

HEARTWOOD, Amity Gaige
KING OF ASHES, S. A. Cosby

NOT QUITE DEAD YET,
Holly Jackson

THE NOTE, Alafair Burke
A THOUSAND NATURAL SHOCKS,
Omar Hussain

THE VANISHING PLACE,
Zoe Rankin

WE LIVE HERE NOW,
Sarah Pinborough

WHAT KIND OF PARADISE,
Janelle Brown

Best Audiobook

DON'T LET HIM IN, Lisa Jewell
THE IMPOSSIBLE THING,
Belinda Bauer

THE QUEENS OF CRIME,
Marie Benedict

Declan Burke

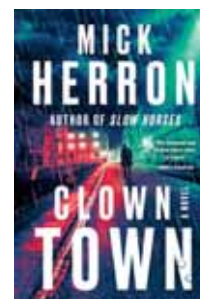
MURDER AT GULL'S NEST, Jess Kidd
AFTER THE PARTY, Sharon Dempsey

NIGHTSHADE, Michael Connelly
THE FROZEN PEOPLE, Elly Griffiths

THE ONE YOU LEAST SUSPECT,
Brian McGilloway

SOME OF THIS IS TRUE,
Michelle McDonagh

SLEEPER BEACH, Nick Harkaway
CLOWN TOWN, Mick Herron



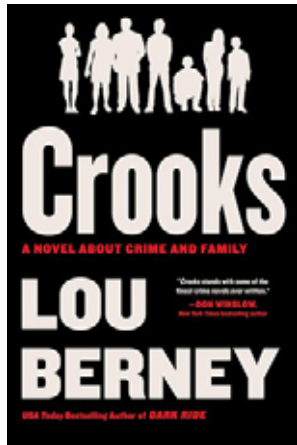
Booksellers' Lists

Best Mysteries of 2025

Amazon

(www.amazon.com)

THE INTRUDER, Freida McFadden –
#1 Pick of Amazon Editors
KING OF ASHES, S. A. Cosby
THE IMPOSSIBLE FORTUNE,
Richard Osman
WHAT A WAY TO GO, Bella Mackie
DEAD MONEY, Jakob Kerr
CROOKS, Lou Berney



THE BLACK WOLF, Louise Penny
SEVEN REASONS TO MURDER
YOUR DINNER GUEST, K. J. Whittle
WE ARE ALL GUILTY HERE,
Karin Slaughter
THE SECRET OF SECRETS,
Dan Brown
THE OLIGARCH'S DAUGHTER,
Joseph Finder
THE HALLMARKED MAN,
Robert Galbraith
GONE BEFORE GOODBYE, Reese
Witherspoon & Harlan Coben
SHE DIDN'T SEE IT COMING,
Shari Lapena
FEVER BEACH, Carl Hiaasen
THE DOORMAN, Chris Pavone
STRANGERS IN TIM, David Baldacci
GUILTY BY DEFINITION, Susie Dent
NEVER FLINCH, Stephen King
NO BODY NO CRIME, Tess Sharpe

Barnes & Noble

(www.barnesandnoble.com)

THE SECRET OF SECRETS,
Dan Brown
THE WIDOW, John Grisham
THE INTRUDER, Freida McFadden
GONE BEFORE GOODBYE, Harlan
Coben & Reese Witherspoon
THE IMPOSSIBLE FORTUNE,
Richard Osman
THE BLACK WOLF, Louise Penny
THE MAN WHO DIED SEVEN
TIMES, Yasuhiko Nishizawa
MURDER BY CHEESECAKE,
Rachel Ekstrom Courage
NOT QUITE DEAD YET, Holly Jackson
CLOWN TOWN, Mick Herron
THE PERSIAN, David McCloskey
KING OF ASHES, S. A. Cosby
THE MISSING HALF, Ashley Flowers
GUILTY BY DEFINITION, Susie Dent
WITH A VENGEANCE, Riley Sager
PICKET LINE (The Lost Novella),
Elmore Leonard
HOW TO SEAL YOUR OWN FATE,
Kristen Perrin
THE LIVING AND THE DEAD,
Christopher Carlsson

Waterstones

U.K. Bookstore Chain

Detectives & Cosy Crime

THE IMPOSSIBLE FORTUNE,
Richard Osman
THE MURDER AT WORLD'S END,
Ross Montgomery
THE LONG SHOE, Bob Mortimer
THE KILLER QUESTION,
Janice Hallett
THE HALLMARKED MAN,
Robert Galbraith
NEVER FLINCH, Stephen King
END GAME, Jeffrey Archer
ACTUALLY, I'M A MURDERER,
Terry Deary

THE BURNING GROUNDS,
Abir Mukherjee
TWO KINDS OF STRANGER,
Steve Cavanagh
THE PROTEST, Rob Rinder
10 MARCHFIELD SQUARE,
Nicola Whyte

A CASE OF LIFE AND LIMB,
Sally Smith

THE MYSTERIOUS CASE OF THE
MISSING CRIME WRITER,

Ragnar Jonasson

THE KILLING STONES, Ann Cleeves

NIGHTSHADE, Michael Connelly

THE LAST DEATH OF THE YEAR,

Sophie Hannah

GUNNER, Alan Parks

HOTEL UKRAINE, Martin Cruz Smith

THIS IS NOT A GAME, Kelly Mullen

LITTLE RED DEATH, A. K. Benedict

MURDER MOST HAUNTED,

Emma Mason

MURDER AT THE BLACK CAT

CAFÉ, Seishi Yokomizo

THE SAMURAI DETECTIVES,

Volume 1, Shotaro Ikenami

DEATH AT THE WHITE HART,

Chris Chibnall

MARBLE HALL MURDERS,

Anthony Horowitz

DEATH IN THE ARCTIC, Tom Hindle

THE FROZEN PEOPLE, Elly Griffiths

Thrillers & Espionage

THE SECRET OF SECRETS,

Dan Brown

NOT QUITE DEAD YET, Holly Jackson

EXIT STRATEGY, Andrew Child

STRANGE PICTURES, Uketsu

WOLF HOUR, Jo Nesbo

IT SHOULD HAVE BEEN YOU,

Andrea Mara

SHE DIDN'T SEE IT COMING,

Shari Lapena

DON'T LET HIM IN, Lisa Jewell



THE MAN WHO DIED SEVEN
TIMES, Yasuhiko Nishizawa
THE VIPERS, Katy Hays
THE COMPOUND, Aisling Rawle
A SCHOOLING IN MURDER,
Andrew Taylor
WE ARE ALL GUILTY HERE,
Karin Slaughter
THE ART OF THE LIE,
Laura Shepherd-Robinson
THE IMPOSSIBLE THING,
Belinda Bauer
VICTORIAN PSYCHO, Virginia Feito
THE WOMAN IN SUITE 11,
Ruth Ware
THE CUT, Richard Armitage
THE WASP TRAP, Mark Edwards
BROKEN COUNTRY, Clare Leslie Hall
THE NEW NEIGHBOURS,
Claire Douglas
CLOWN TOWN, Mick Herron
TRAITOR'S LEGACY, S. J. Parris

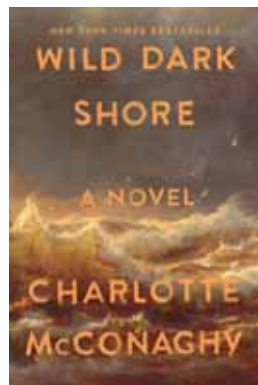
Rakuten Kobo

(www.kobo.com)

KING OF ASHES, S. A. Cosby
– Top Pick
NOT QUITE DEAD YET, Holly Jackson
THE IMPOSSIBLE FORTUNE,
Richard Osman
STRANGE PICTURES, Uketsu
THE BLACK WOLF, Louise Penny
THE GHOSTWRITER, Julie Clark
VERA WONG'S GUIDE TO
SNOOPING, Jesse Q. Sutanto
DEAD MONEY, Jakob Kerr
THE MISSING HALF, Ashley Flowers
THIS BOOK WILL BURY ME,
Ashley Winstead

In the Fiction list:

WILD DARK SHORE,
Charlotte McConaghy – Top Pick



Publications' Lists

Best Mysteries of 2025

Kirkus

MARGUERITE BY THE LAKE,
Mary Dixie Carter
KING OF ASHES, S. A. Cosby
FOG AND FURY, Rachel Howzell Hall
CLOWN TOWN, Mick Herron
DETECTIVE AUNTY, Uzma Jalaluddin
MURDER TAKES A VACATION,
Laura Lippman
THE MAN WHO DIED SEVEN
TIMES, Yasuhiko Nishizawa
BURIED ABOVE GROUND,
Mike Ripley
THE DARK MAESTRO,
Brendan Slocumb
THE DENTIST, Tim Sullivan
THE LIBRARIANS, Sherry Thomas

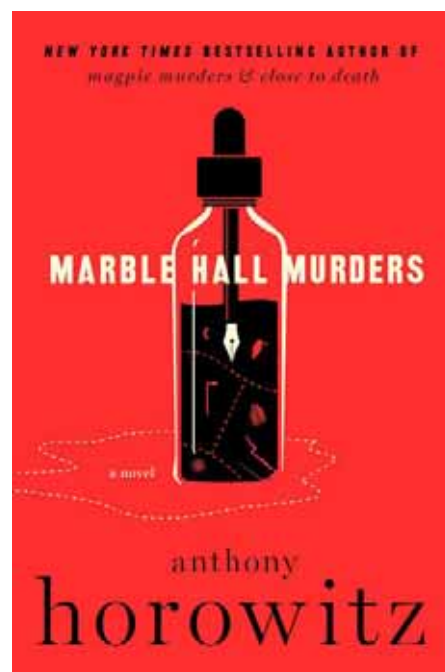
Publishers Weekly

CAPE FEVER, Nadia Davids
CROOKS, Lou Berney
THE DOORMAN, Chris Pavone
FEVER BEACH, Carl Hiaasen
THE HUMAN SCALE,
Lawrence Wright
LISTEN, Sacha Bronwasser
A MURDER IN PARIS, Matthew Blake
SAINT OF THE NARROWS STREET,
William Boyle
SOFT BONES, Jennifer Givhan
THE SAVAGE, NOBLE DEATH OF
BABS DIONNE, Ron Currie
WE DON'T TALK ABOUT CAROL,
Kristen L. Berry
YOU STEPS ON THE STAIRS,
Antonio Munoz Molinan

Library Journal

Liz French, Senior Editor
KING OF ASHES, S.A. Cosby
THE IMPOSSIBLE FORTUNE,
Richard Osman
THE FROZEN PEOPLE, Elly Griffiths
TOO OLD FOR THIS,
Samantha Dowling
DETECTIVE AUNTY, Uzma Jalaluddin

HER ONLY REGRET, Donna Freitas
EVERYONE WANTS TO RULE THE
WORLD, Ace Atkins
SHIPWRECK IN FIJI, Nilima Rao
Kevin Howell, Assistant Editor
NEVER FLINCH, Stephen King
MARBLE HALL MURDERS,
Anthony Horowitz



Neal Wyatt, Executive Editor
A CASE OF MICE AND MURDER,
Sally Smith
A CASE OF LIFE AND LIMB,
Sally Smith
THE POTENCY OF UNGOVERN-
ABLE IMPULSES, Malka Older
A DEATH IN DIAMONDS,
S. J. Bennett
A FASHIONABLY FRENCH MURDER,
Colleen Cambridge
THE BLONDE WHO CAME IN FROM
THE COLD, Ally Carter

**New Zealand's LISTENER
Magazine**

A BEAUTIFUL FAMILY,
Jennifer Trevelyan
BEARTOOTH, Callan Wink
CARVED IN BLOOD, Michael Bennett
CLOWN TOWN, Mick Herron
DUST, Michael Brissenden
THE GOOD FATHER,
Liam McIlvanney
HOOKED UP, Fiona Sussman
THE IMPOSSIBLE THING,
Belinda Bauer
KING OF ASHES, S.A. Cosby
PARIAH, Dan Fesperman
THE PREDICAMENT, William Boyd
THE PROTOCOLS OF SPYING,
Merle Nygate
SEE HOW THEY FALL, Rachel Paris
SOFTLY CALLS THE DEVIL,
Chris Blake

Elle

NEEDY LITTLE THINGS,
Chanelle Desamours
ALL THE OTHER MOTHERS HATE
ME, Sarah Harman
THE MAID'S SECRET, Nita Prose
FAIR PLAY, Louise Hegarty
JULIE CHAN IS DEAD, Liann Zhang
RIDDLE OF THE JEWELLED CIPHER,
L. J. Alson
MARBLE HALL MURDERS,
Anthony Horowitz
THE DARK MAESTRO,
Brendan Slocumb
THE DOORMAN, Chris Pavone
THE LAST FERRY OUT, Andrea Bartz
THE GHOSTWRITER, Julie Clark
KING OF ASHES, S. A. Cosby
MURDER TAKES A VACATION,
Laura Lippman
THE HOUSE ON BUZZARDS BAY,
Dwyer Murphy
DON'T LET HIM IN, Lisa Jewell
EL DORADO DRIVE, Megan Abbott
THE WOMAN IN SUITE 11,
Ruth Ware
WE ARE ALL GUILTY HERE,
Karin Slaughter
THE GRAND PALOMA RESORT,
Cleyvis Natera
CLOWN TOWN, Mick Herron
GRAY DAWN, Walter Mosley
THE KILLER QUESTION,
Janice Hallett
THE IMPOSSIBLE FORTUNE,

Richard Osman
OXFORD SOLU CLUB, Jinwoo Park
THE SCAMMER, Tiffany D. Jackson
WILD ANIMAL, Joel Dicker
THE BONE THIEF, Vanessa Lillie
A CASE OF LIFE AND LIMB,
Sally Smith
BEST OFFER WINS, Marisa Kashino

AudioFile Magazine

Best Mystery & Suspense Audiobooks

THE BUSINESS TRIP, Jessie Garcia
HOMEMAKER,
Ruthie Knox & Annie Mare
NEVER FLINCH, Stephen King
SOUTH OF NOWHERE,
Jeffery Deaver
THE SUMMER GUESTS,
Tess Gerritsen
A TRUE VERDICT, Robert Rotstein

The Daily Mail

THE SECRET OF SECRETS,
Dan Brown
THE DOGWALKERS' DETECTIVE
AGENCY, Michael Hogan
THE KILLING STONES, Ann Cleeves
THE PROVING GROUND,
Michael Connelly
Debut
THE COMPOUND, Aisling Rawle

Marie Claire

by Nicole Briesse

THE INHERITANCE, Trisha Sakhlecha
THE CRASH, Freida McFadden
THE FAMILY INSIDE, Katie Garner
GOOD DIRT, Charmaine Wilkerson
TELL ME WHAT YOU DID,
Carter Wilson
NOTHING EVER HAPPENS HERE,
Seraphina Nova Glass
THE GIRL YOU KNOW,
Elle Gonzalez Rose
THE LAST WORDS, Gillian McAllister
COUNT MY LIES, Sophie Stava
WE WERE WARNED, Chelsea Ichaso
YOU KILLED ME FIRST, John Marrs
ALL THE OTHER MOTHERS HATE
ME, Sarah Harman
THE MISSING HALF, Ashley Flowers
THE LAST FERRY OUT, Andrea Bartz
DON'T LET HIM IN, Lisa Jewell
THE WOMAN IN SUITE 11,
Ruth Ware

OUR LAST RESORT,
Clemence Michallon
THE LAKE ESCAPE, Jamie Day
THE DEAD HUSBAND COOKBOOK,
Danielle Valentine
THE KILLER WEDDING, Joan O'Leary

Ottawa Citizen

THE BLACK WOLF, Louise Penny
GUILT BY DEFINITION, Susie Dent
THE BONE THIEF, Vanessa Lillie
THE HIDDEN CITY, Charles Finch
DETECTIVE AUNTY, Uzma Jalaluddin
THE IMPOSSIBLE FORTUNE,
Richard Osman
THE DENTIST, Tim Sullivan
THE KILLING STONES, Ann Cleeves
THE GAME IS AFOOT, Elise Bryant
MURDER TAKES A VACATION,
Laura Lippman

Real Simple

THE BREAK-IN, Katherine Faulkner
HEARTWOOD, Amity Gaige
THE PARIS EXPRESS,
Emma Donoghue
BEAUTIFUL UGLY, Alice Feeney
ALL THE OTHER MOTHERS HATE
ME, Sarah Harman



THE SAVAGE, NOBLE DEATH OF
BABS DIONNE, Ron Currie

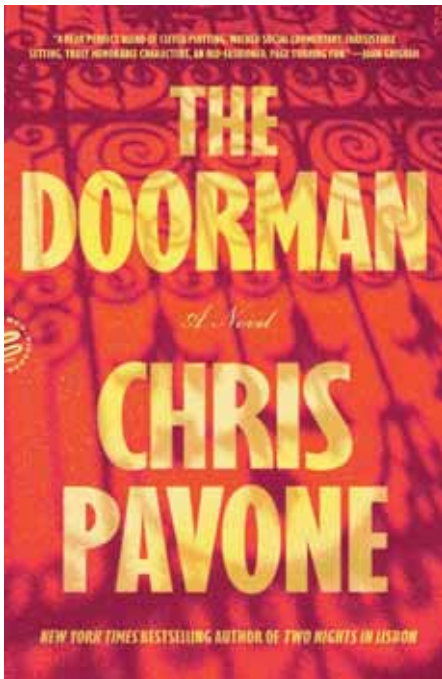
The Christian Science

Monitor

VERA WONG'S GUIDE TO
SNOOPING, Jesse Q. Sutanto
THE DREAM HOTEL, Laila Lalami
THE IMPOSSIBLE FORTUNE,
Richard Osman
A CASE OF MICE AND MURDER,
Sally Smith

The Globe and Mail

A SCHOOLING IN MURDER,
Andrew Taylor
DETECTIVE AUNTY, Uzma Jalaluddin
KARLA'S CHOICE, Nick Harkaway --
2024 title in U.S.
KING OF ASHES, S. A. Cosby
LEO, Deon Meyer
NIGHTSHADE, Michael Connelly
THE ARIZONA TRIANGLE,
Sydney Graves
THE BLACK WOLF, Louise Penny
THE DOORMAN, Chris Pavone



THE DROWNED,
John Banville -- 2024 title in U.S.
THE HITCHHIKERS, Chevy Stevens
International Fiction
THE COMPOUND, Aisling Rawle
THE DREAM HOTEL, Laila Lalami
WILD DARK SHORE,
Charlotte McConaghy

Time Magazine

CURSED DAUGHTERS,

Oyinkan Braithwaite
DEAD MONEY, Jakob Kerr
THE DREAM HOTEL, Laila Lalami
KING OF ASHES, S. A. Cosby
OTHER PEOPLE'S HOUSES,
Clare Mackintosh
VICTORIAN PSYCHO, Virginia Feito
WILD DARK SHORE,
Charlotte McConaghy

Times Now News

(www.timesnownews.com)

BEAUTIFUL UGLY, Alice Feeney
DISSOLUTION, Nicholas Binge
DON'T LET HIM IN, Lisa Jewell
NIGHTSHADE, Michael Connelly
SUCH QUIET GIRLS, Noelle Ihli
THE FIRST GENTLEMAN,
James Patterson & Bill Clinton
THE MAN MADE OF SMOKE,
Alex North
THE SECRET OF SECRETS,
Dan Brown
WITH A VENGEANCE, Riley Sager
YOU ARE FATALLY INVITED,
Ande Pliego

The Buzz Magazine

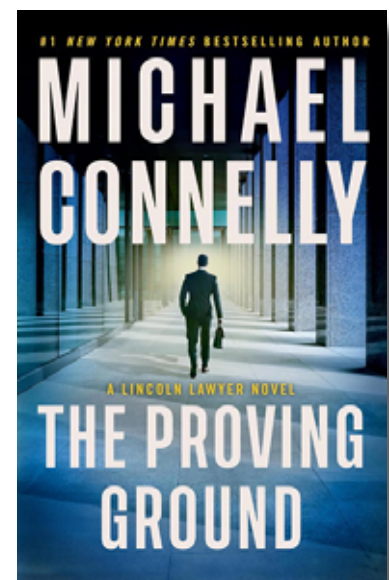
(thebuzzmagazines.com)

THE BACKWATER, Vikki Wakefield
BEST OFFER WINS, Marisa Kashino
CULPABILITY, Bruce Holsinger
DEAD MONEY, Jakob Kerr
DEPARTURE 37, Scott Carson
DISSOLUTION, Nicholas Binge
THE GHOSTWRITER, Julie Clark
HEARTWOOD, Amity Gaige
THE IMPOSSIBLE FORTUNE,
Richard Osman
THE IMPOSSIBLE THING,
Belinda Bauer



THE KILLER QUESTION,
Janice Hallett
MRS. SPY, M.J. Robotham
THE QUIET LIBRARIAN,
Allen Eskens
SPLINTER EFFECT,
Andrew Luddington
WE DON'T TALK ABOUT CAROL,
Kristen L. Berry
WELCOME TO MURDER WEEK,
Karen Dukess
THE WHYTE PYTHON WORLD
TOUR, Travis Kennedy

The Toronto Star



THE PROVING GROUND,
Michael Connelly
WHAT ABOUT THE BODIES,
Ken Jaworowski
SON,
Johana Gustawsson & Thomas Enger
WHAT THE NIGHT BRINGS,
Mark Billingham
ONE DARK NIGHT, Hannah Richell
THE DARK WOLF, Louise Penny
DON'T LET HIM IN, Lisa Jewell

The Indian Express

by Paromita Chakrabarti

THE IMPOSSIBLE FORTUNE,
Richard Osman
FAIR PLAY, Louise Hegarty
HER ONE REGRET, Donna Freitas
KILL YOUR DARLINGS,
Peter Swanson
THE GOOD LIAR, Denise Mina

Websites' Lists

Best Mysteries of 2025

The Rap Sheet

J. Kingston Pierce,

Webmaster/Blogmaster

THE NAMING OF THE BIRDS,
Paraic O'Donnell

VICTORIAN PSYCHO, Virginia Feito
MURDER AT GULL'S NEST, Jess Kidd
MARBLE HALL MURDERS,

Anthony Horowitz

HOTEL UKRAINE, Martin Cruz Smith
THE ART OF THE LIE,

Laura Shepherd-Robinson

THE GIRL IN THE GREEN DRESS,
Mariah Fredericks

THE RUSH, Beth Lewis

THE DENTIST, Tim Sullivan

GUILTY BY DEFINITION, Susie Dent
SMOKE IN BERLIN, Oriana Ramunno

Peter Handel

THE WASP TRAP, Mark Edwards

PRO BONO, Thomas Perry

PARIAH, Dan Fesperman

VENETIAN VESPERS, John Banville
KILL YOUR DARLINGS,

Peter Swanson

FAIR PLAY, Louise Hegarty

KILLER POTENTIAL, Hannah Deitch
THE MAILMAN,

Andrew Welsh-Huggins

Steven Nester

EVERYBODY WANTS TO RULE THE
WORLD, Ace Atkins

CROOKS, Lou Berney

KARMA DOLL, Jonathan Ames

THE GET OFF, Christa Faust

PRO BONO, Thomas Perry

Jim Thomsen

CROOKS, Lou Berney

EL DORADO DRIVE, Megan Abbott
WHAT ABOUT THE BODIES,

Ken Jaworowski

SILENT CREEK, Tony Wirt

FRIENDS HELPING FRIENDS,

Patrick Hoffman

YOU WILL NEVER SEE ME,

Jake Hinkson

HEARTWOOD, Amity Gaige

THE LENGTH OF DAYS, Lynn Kostoff
MURDERAPOLIS, Anthony Neil Smith

Note: the lists of Ali Karim and Kevin Burton Smith can be found on the DP Contributors' lists.

Audible

([audible.com](https://www.audible.com))

Best Mysteries & Thrillers

THE MISSING HALF, Ashley Flowers

THE PERFECT DIVORCE, Jeneva Rose

THE WIDOW, John Grisham

KING OF ASHES, S. A. Cosby

WE DON'T TALK ABOUT CAROL,

Kristen L. Berry

THE SECRET OF SECRETS,

Dan Brown

WE ARE ALL GUILTY HERE,

Karin Slaughter

DON'T LET HIM IN, Lisa Jewell

GONE BEFORE GOODBYE, Harlan

Coben & Reese Witherspoon

BEAUTIFUL UGLY, Alice Feeney

Tertulia

([tertulia.com](https://www.tertulia.com))

EL DORADO DRIVE, Megan Abbott

KING OF ASHES, S. A. Cosby

MURDER TAKES A VACATION,

Laura Lippman

THE WOMAN IN SUITE 11,

Ruth Ware

MAKE ME FAMOUS, Maud Ventura

YOUR STEPS ON THE STAIRS,

Antonio Munoz Molina

THE TENANT, Freida McFadden

OUR LAST RESORT,

Clemence Michallon

THE MISSING HALF, Ashley Flowers

COUNT MY LIES, Sophie Stava

FAIR PLAY, Louise Hegarty

FAMOUS LAST WORDS,

Gillian McAllister

HEARTWOOD, Amity Gaige

SAINT OF THE NARROWS STREET,

William Boyle

SALT WATER, Katy Hays
ALL THE OTHER MOTHERS HATE
ME, Sarah Harman
THE HAUNTING OF ROOM 904,
Erika T. Wurth
BEARTOOTH, Callan Wink
THE NOTE, Alafair Burke
BLOOD TIES, Jo Nesbo
SWEET FURY, Sash Bischoff
THE THREE LIVES OF CATE KAY,
Kate Fagan
BEAUTIFUL UGLY, Alice Feeney
THE CRASH, Freida McFadden
HUMAN SCALE, Lawrence Wright
THE SAVAGE, NOBLE DEATH OF
BABS DIONNE, Ron Currie

Goodreads Choice Awards

([goodreads.com](https://www.goodreads.com))

Mystery and Thriller

NOT QUITE DEAD YET,

Holly Jackson --Winner

HEARTWOOD, Amity Gaige
THE TENANT, Freida McFadden
BEAUTIFUL UGLY, Alice Feeney
THE WIDOW, John Grisham
KING OF ASHES, S. A. Cosby
GONE BEFORE GOODBYE, Reese
Witherspoon & Harlan Coben
DON'T LET HIM IN, Lisa Jewell
THE PERFECT DIVORCE, Jeneva Rose
THE MISSING HALF, Ashley Flowers
YOU KILLED ME FIRST, John Marrs
VERA WONG'S GUIDE TO
SNOOPING (ON A DEAD MAN),
Jesse Q. Sutanto
FORGET ME KNOT, Stacy Willingham
THE CRASH, Freida McFadden
THE INTRUDER, Freida McFadden
THE IMPOSSIBLE FORTUNE,
Richard Osman
WE ARE ALL GUILTY HERE,
Karin Slaughter
FAMOUS LAST WORDS,
Gillian McAllister
THE SECRET OF SECRETS,
Dan Brown
THE GHOSTWRITER, Julie Clark

Historical Fiction

STRANGERS IN TIME, David Baldacci

NPR

([npr.org](https://www.npr.org))

HEARTWOOD, Amity Gaige

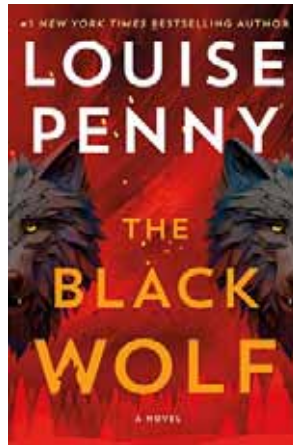
THE PRINCESS AND THE P.I.,
Nikki Payne
OLD SOUL, Susan Barker
THIS BOOK WILL BURY ME,
Ashley Winstead
THE NAMING OF BIRDS,
Paraic O'Donnell
ALL THE OTHER MOTHERS HATE
ME, Sarah Harman
ELITA, Kirsten Sundberg Lunstrum
THE EXPERT OF SUBTLE REVI-
SIONS, Kirsten Menger-Anderson
FAIR PLAY, Louise Hegarty
SAINT OF THE NARROWS STREET,
William Boyle
WHAT WE CAN KNOW, Ian McEwan
THE SECRET ROOM, Jane Casey
THE MANOR OF DREAMS,
Christina Li
KING OF ASHES, S. A. Cosby
CODED JUSTICE, Stacey Abrams
VANTAGE POINT, Sara Sligar
THE LIBRARIANS, Sherry Thomas
THE INHERITANCE, Trisha Sakhlecha
THE NOTE, Alafair Burke
DARKENBLOOM, Eva Menasse
THE TROUBLE UP NORTH,
Travis Mulhauser
BEAUTIFUL UGLY, Alice Feeney
KILLER POTENTIAL, Hannah Deitch
THE TOKYO SUITE,
Giovana Madalosso
THE IMPOSSIBLE FORTUNE,
Richard Osman
MARBLE HALL MURDERS,
Anthony Horowitz
EL DORADO DRIVE, Megan Abbott
THE COMPOUND, Aisling Rawle
CULPABILITY, Bruce Holsinger
THE THREE LIVES OF CATE KAY,
Kate Fagan
NOT QUITE DEAD YET, Holly Jackson
WILD DARK SHORE,
Charlotte McConaghay
WHEN THE WOLF COMES HOME,
Nat Cassidy
BLOOD IN THE WATER,
Tiffany D. Jackson
THE NIGHT BIRDS,
Christopher Golden
THE POSSESSION OF ALBA DIAZ,
Isabel Canas
ALL OF US MURDERERS, K. J. Charles
KILLING STELLA, Marlen Hauhofer
JULIE CHAN IS DEAD, Liann Zhang
THE PAYBACK, Kashana Cauley

LAY YOUR ARMOR DOWN,
Michael Farris Smith
WITCHCRAFT FOR WAYWARD
GIRLS, Grady Hendrix
YOUR STEPS ON THE STAIRS,
Antonio Munoz Molina
PICKS & SHOVELS, Cory Doctorow
AUDITION, Katie Kitamura
THE BUFFALO HUNTER,
Stephen Graham Jones
THE STALKER, Paula Bomer
CLOWN TOWN, Mick Herron
SECRET LIVES OF THE DEAD,
Tim Lebbon
DEATH OF AN AUTHOR,
Knedi Okorafor
THE SAVAGE, NOBLE DEATH OF
BABS DIONNE, Ron Currie

BookPage

(bookpage.com)

ALL OF US MURDERERS, K. J. Charles
FLASHOUT, Alexis Soloski
LISTEN, Sacha Bronwasser
THE BLACK WOLF, Louise Penny



HOT WAX, M. L. Rio
SALTY, Kate Myers
THE MAN WHO DIED SEVEN
TIMES, Yasuhiko Nishizawa
THE SAVAGE, NOBLE DEATH OF
BABS DIONNE, Ron Currie
THE MARIGOLD COTTAGES MUR-
DER COLLECTIVE, Jo Nichols
THE WOLF TREE, Laura McCluskey

Booklist Queen

(booklistqueen.com)

FAMOUS LAST WORDS,
Gillian McAllister
DON'T LET HIM IN, Lisa Jewell

NOT QUITE DEAD YET, Holly Jackson
EVERYONE IS LYING TO YOU,
Jo Piazza
COUNT MY LIES, Sophie Stava

CrimeReads

(crimereads.com)

Best Crime

WE ARE WATCHING, Alison Gaylin
KING OF ASHES, S. A. Cosby
THE SEARCH COMMITTEE,
Jose Skinner
EL DORADO DRIVE, Megan Abbott
RUTH RUN, Elizabeth Kaufman
KILL YOUR DARLINGS,
Peter Swanson
BEST OFFER WINS, Marisa Kashino
THE SLIP, Lucas Schaefer
LEVERAGE, Amran Gowani
CROOKS, Lou Berney
WITH A VENGEANCE, Riley Sager
FRIENDS HELPING FRIENDS,
Patrick Hoffman
DON'T LET HIM IN, Lisa Jewell
THE HOUSE ON BUZZARDS BAY,
Dwyer Murphy
DARK MAESTRO, Brendan Slocumb
MURDER TAKES A VACATION,
Laura Lippman
DARKENBLOOM, Eva Menasse
MISSISSIPPI BLUE 42, Eli Cranor
DON'T FORGET ME, LITTLE BESSIE,
James Lee Burke
THE FAVORITES, Layne Fargo

Best Espionage

OXFORD SOJU CLUB, Jinwoo Park
CLOWN TOWN, Mick Herron
THE POET'S GAME, Paul Vidich
PARIAH, Dan Fesperman
THE OLIGARCH'S DAUGHTER,
Joseph Finder
MRS. SPY, M. J. Robotham

Best Psychological Thrillers

I MAKE MY OWN FUN, Hannah Beer
THE NEW YEAR'S PARTY,
Jenna Satterthwaite
CLAY, Franck Bouysse
BEST OFFER WINS, Marisa Kashino
THE DEATH OF US, Abigail Dean
LOVE YOU TO DEATH,
Christina Dotson
THE INFLUENCERS,
Anna-Marie McLemore
SO HAPPY TOGETHER, Olivia Worley
SUMMERHOUSE, Yigit Karaahmet

THE GRAND PALOMA RESORT,
Cleyvis Natera
ALL THE OTHER MOTHERS HATE
ME, Sarah Harman
THE UNDERSTUDY, Morgan Richter
DON'T LET HIM IN, Lisa Jewell
HER ONLY REGRET, Donna Freitas
THE SCAMMER, Tiffany D. Jackson

Best Traditional

FAIR PLAY, Louise Hegarty
MURDER TAKES A VACATION,
Laura Lippman
THE IMPOSSIBLE FORTUNE,
Richard Osman
MARBLE HALL MURDERS,
Anthony Horowitz
IN DEADLY COMPANY, L. S. Stratton

Best Debut

IF THE DEAD BELONG HERE,
Carson Faust
THE SLIP, Lucas Schaefer
THE SNARES, Rav Grewal-Kok
WE DON'T TALK ABOUT CAROL,
Kristen L. Berry
FLORIDA PALMS, Joe Pan
BEST OFFER WINS, Marisa Kashino
THE MUSEUM DETECTIVE,
Maha Khan Phillips
LEVERAGE, Amran Gowani
JULIE CHAN IS DEAD, Liann Zhang
THE FACT CHECKER, Austin Kelley
RUTH RUN, Elizabeth Kaufman
BOOM TOWN, Nic Stone
HOLLOW SPACES,
Victor Suthammanont
HISTORY LESSONS, Zoe B. Wallbrook
FIREWEED, Lauren Haddad

Best Noir

SAINT OF THE NARROWS STREET,
William Boyle
KING OF ASHES, S. A. Cosby
EL DORADO DRIVE, Megan Abbott
THE FELON'S BALL, Polly Stewart
GRAY DAWN, Walter Mosley

Best Legal Thrillers

THE NOTE, Alafair Burke
PRO BONO, Thomas Perry
THE SILVER STATE, Gabriel Urza
PRESUMED GUILTY, Scott Turow
HOLLOW SPACES,
Victor Suthammanont

Best History Mysterics

THE BETRAYAL OF THOMAS TRUE,
A. J. West
THE POSSESSION OF ALBA DIAZ,
Isabel Canas

THE ART OF THE LIE,
Laura Shepherd-Robinson
WOMAN IN THE WALLPAPER,
Lora Jones
THE BLACK BIRDS OF ST. GILES,
Lila Cain
VICTORIAN PSYCHO, Virginia Feito
THE QUEEN OF FIVES, Alex Hay
THE BUFFALO HUNTER HUNTER,
Stephen Graham Jones
THE ENTIRELY TRUE STORY OF
THE FANTASTICAL MESMERIST
NORA GREY, Kathleen Kaufman
A SHIPWRECK IN FIJI, Nilima Rao
ALL OF US MURDERERS, K. J. Charles
MIRAGE CITY, Lev AC Rosen
THE DIRECTOR, Daniel Kehlmann
THE BELLES, Lacey N. Dunham
HOUSE OF MONSTROUS WOMEN,
Daphne Fama

Best International Crime

DEATH TAKES ME,
Cristina Rivera Garza
THE MAN WHO DIED SEVEN
TIMES, Yasuhiko Nishizawa
OROMAY, Baalu Girma
OUR CITY THAT YEAR,
Geetanjali Shree
TOKYO EXPRESS, Seicho Matsumoto
MADE ME FAMOUS, Maud Ventura
RED WATER, Jurica Pavicic
THE LIVES AND DEATHS OF VERO-
NIQUE BANGOURA,
Tierno Monenembo
DARKENBLOOM, Eva Menasse
SEESAW MONSTER, Kotaro Isaka

Marilyn's Mystery Reads

by Marilyn Brooks

(marilynmysteryreads.com)

HAVOC, Christopher Bollen
CHAIN REACTION, James Byrne
EDGE, Tracy Clark
HER MANY FACES, Nicci Cloke
TOO OLD FOR THIS,
Samantha Downing
MISTRESS OF THE ART OF DEATH,
Ariana Franklin (2007 title)
THE QUEEN OF FIVES, Alex Hay
NEMESIS, Gregg Hurwitz
THE DEEPEST FAKE, Daniel Kalla
MIDNIGHT BURNING, Paul Levine
HANG ON ST. CHRISTOPHER,
Adrian McKinty
HOTEL UKRAINE, Martin Cruz Smith

THE MAILMAN,
Andrew Welsh-Huggins

DeadGood Books

(www.deadgoodbooks.co.uk)

THE SUMMER GUESTS,
Tess Gerritsen
MARBLE HALL MURDERS,
Anthony Horowitz
DON'T LET HIM IN, Lisa Jewell
EXIT STRATEGY,
Lee and Andrew Child
THE IMPOSSIBLE FORTUNE,
Richard Osman
THE NEW NEIGHBOURS,
Claire Douglas
THE SECRET OF SECRETS,
Dan Brown
IT SHOULD HAVE BEEN YOU,
Andrew Mara
GONE BEFORE GOODBYE, Harlan
Coben and Reese Witherspoon
FAMOUS LAST WORDS,
Gillian McAllister
NOBODY'S FOOL, Harlan Coben
THE PROTEST, Rob Rinder

Shereads

(shereads.com)

Best Mystery, Thriller & Suspense

BEAUTIFUL UGLY, Alice Feeney
COUNT MY LIES, Sophie Stava
CULPABILITY, Bruce Holsinger
FOG AND FURY, Rachel Howzell Hall
HEARTWOOD, Amity Gaige
KING OF ASHES, S. A. Cosby
NOT QUITE DEAD YET, Holly Jackson
THE COMPOUND, Aisling Rawle
WE ARE ALL GUILTY HERE,

Karin Slaughter

Other Categories

WILD DARK SHORE,
Charlotte McConaghy
DON'T LET HIM IN, Lisa Jewell
THE IMPOSSIBLE FORTUNE,
Richard Osman
THE SECRET OF SECRETS,
Dan Brown
JULIE CHAN IS DEAD, Liann Zhang

Crime Fiction Lover

Contributors'

Best 5 Crime Novels

(crimefictionlover.com)

Erin Britton

THE KING'S AGENT, Rosemary Hayes
MURDER AT THE BLACK CAT
CAFÉ', Seishi Yokomizo
HELLE'S HOUND, Oskar Jensen
THE KILLER QUESTION,
Janice Hallett

STRANGE PICTURES, Uketsu

Sonja van der Westhuizen

WHITE KING, Juan Gomez-Jurado
SUMMERHOUSE, Yigit Karaahmet
THE SHADOW OF THE NORTHERN
LIGHTS, Satu Ramo
RED TIDE, Irma Venter
SAINT OF THE NARROWS STREET,
William Boyle

DeathBecomesHer

A NOVEL MURDER, E. C. Nevin
THE SILENT ONES, Anna McPartlin
BLACK WATER RISING, Sean Watkin
CLOWN TOWN, Mick Herron
THE NANCYS AND THE CASE OF
THE DISAPPEARING NECKLACE,
R. W. R. McDonald

Paul Burke

HER SISTER'S KILLER,
Mari Hannah
SON,

Johana Gustawsson and Thomas Enger
QUANTUM OF MENACE,
Vaseem Khan

GUNNER, Alan Parks

– 2026 title in U.S.

THE HOUSE AT DEVIL'S NECK,
Tom Mead

Vicki Weisfeld

KILLER POTENTIAL, Hannah Deitch
THE FINAL SCORE, Lori Roy
THE PROTOCOLS OF SPYING,
Merle Nygate
SILENT BONES, Val McDermid
THE TIGER AND THE BEAR,
Philip Lazar

Crime Fiction Lover

BROKEN, Jon Atli Jonasson
MARBLE HALL MURDERS,
Anthony Horowitz
THE BURNING GROUNDS,
Abir Mukherjee
SMALL FIRES, Ronnie Turner
THE IMPOSSIBLE THING,
Belinda Bauer

Sharon Richardson

THE INHERITANCE, Trisha Sakhlecha
THE CURE, Eve Smith
THE GOOD LIAR, Denise Mina

THE NANCYS AND THE CASE OF
THE MISSING NECKLACE,
RWR McDonald
THE BLACK WOLF, Louise Penny

Air Mail

(airmail.news/books)

by **Lisa Henricksson**

KING OF ASHES, S. A. Cosby
THE SAVAGE, NOBLE DEATH OF
BABS DIONNE, Ron Currie
THE KILLER QUESTION,
Janice Hallett
DEATH AT THE WHITE HART,
Chris Chibnall
THE DIARY OF LIES, Philip Miller
THE DOORMAN, Chris Pavone
THE BLACK WOLF, Louise Penny
LEO, Deon Meyer
THE GOOD LIAR, Denise Mina
THE MYSTERY OF THE CROOKED
MAN, Tom Spencer

Bibliolifestyle

(bibliolifestyle.com)

Thriller Books, Suspense & Mysteries

TELL ME WHAT YOU DID,
Carter Wilson
A KILLING COLD, Kate Alice Marshall
CLOSE YOUR EYES
AND COUNT TO 10, Lisa Unger
THE RETIREMENT PLAN,
Sue Nincenbergs
SOMEONE KNOWS, Vi Keeland
I DID WARN HER, Sian Gilbert
THE BREAK-IN, Katherine Faulkner
NOBODY KNOWS YOU'RE HERE,
Bryn Greenwood
THE HITCHHIKERS, Chevy Stevens
WITH FRIENDS LIKE THESE,
Alissa Lee
THE GOOD LIAR, Denise Mina

Bookreporter Reviewers'
Favorites

Kate Ayers

THE TIN MEN,
Nelson DeMille & Alex DeMille
HEAD CASES, John McMahon
TELL ME WHAT YOU DID,
Carter Wilson
THE DOORMAN, Chris Pavone
THE IMPOSSIBLE FORTUNE,
Richard Osman

Curtis Edmonds

LETHAL PREY, John Sandford

Megan Elliott

EL DORADO DRIVE, Megan Abbott

Pamela Kramer

WE ARE ALL GUILTY HERE,
Karin Slaughter
THE BLACK WOLF, Louise Penny
FEVER BEACH, Carl Hiaasen

Bronwyn Miller

WILD DARK SHORE,
Charlotte McConaghy
EVERYONE IS LYING TO YOU,
Jo Piazza

Rebecca Munro

COUNT MY LIES, Sophie Stava
WILD DARK SHORE,
Charlotte McConaghy
WITCHCRAFT FOR WAYWARD
GIRLS, Grady Hendrix

L. Dean Murphy

MIDNIGHT BURNING, Paul Levine
THE GIRL IN THE GREEN DRESS,
Mariah Fredericks

THE BLACK HIGHWAY, Simon Toyne
RIVER OF LIES, James L'Etoile
GUMSHOE AFTER MIDNIGHT,
Rob Leininger

A MURDER IN ZION, Nicole Maggi

Ray Palen

FAIR PLAY, Louise Hegarty
DON'T LET HIM IN, Lisa Jewell
KING OF ASHES, S. A. Cosby
WITCHCRAFT FOR WAYWARD
GIRLS, Grady Hendrix
THE SECRET OF SECRETS,
Dan Brown

THE PROVING GROUND,
Michael Connelly
THE LAST DEATH OF THE YEAR,
Sophie Hannah
THE HOUSE AT DEVIL'S NECK,
Tom Mead

NEVER FLINCH, Stephen King
DON'T TELL ME HOW TO DIE,
Marshall Karp

KILL YOUR DARLINGS,

Peter Swanson

WE ARE ALL GUILTY HERE,

Karin Slaughter

WHAT THE NIGHT BRINGS,

Mark Billingham

Robert Ludlum's THE BOURNE VEN-
DETTA, Brian Freeman

HANG ON ST. CHRISTOPHER,
Adrian McKinty

Norah Piehl

HISTORY LESSONS,
Zoe B. Wallbrook

Stuart Shiffman

THE SILVER STATE, Gabriel Urza
PRESUMED GUILTY, Scott Turow

Philip Zozzaro

DEATH AT THE WHITE HART,
Chris Chibnall
MISSISSIPPI BLUE 42, Eli Cranor
EL DORADO DRIVE, Megan Abbott
CROOKS, Lou Berney

Five Books

(fivebooks.com)

THE UNQUIET GRAVE,
Dervla McTiernan
A VOICE IN THE NIGHT,
Simon Mason
THE WOMAN WHO LAUGHED,
Simon Mason
FINLAY DONOVAN DIGS HER OWN
GRAVE, Elle Cosimano
THE IMPOSSIBLE FORTUNE,
Richard Osman
DEATH IN THE ARCTIC, Tom Hindle
THE CUT-THROAT TRIAL, The Secret
Barrister writing as S. J. Fleet
THE CURE, Eve Smith

Indigo

(indigo.ca)

THE TENANT, Freida McFadden
THE SECRET OF SECRETS,
Dan Brown
THE BLACK WOLF, Louise Penny
NOT QUITE DEAD YET, Holly Jackson
FINAL ORBIT, Chris Hadfield
WHISTLE, Linwood Barclay
WE HAD A HUNCH, Tom Ryan
NO ONE IS SUPPOSED TO DIE AT
THIS WEDDING, Catherine Mack
JULIE CHAN IS DEAD, Liann Zhang
WITCHCRAFT FOR WAYWARD
GIRLS, Grady Hendrix

OverDrive

(overdrive.com)

HEARTWOOD, Amity Gaige
KING OF ASHES, S. A. Cosby
SHADOW TICKET, Thomas Pynchon
THE MAN WHO DIED SEVEN
TIMES, Yasuhiko Nishizawa
THE DOORMAN, Chris Pavone
VICTORIAN PSYCHO, Virginia Feito

THE DREAM HOTEL, Laila Lalami
CURSED DAUGHTERS,
Oyinkan Braithwaite

Stevereads

by Steve Donohue

(openlettersreview.com)

APOSTLE'S COVER,
William Kent Krueger
DEAD LINE, Marc Cameron
HOTEL UKRAINE, Martin Cruz Smith
MIDNIGHT BLACK, Mark Greaney
NIGHTSHADE, Michael Connelly
TOMLINSON'S WAKE,
Randy Wayne White
RETURN TO SENDER, Craig Johnson
SILENT HORIZONS, Chad Robicheaux
Ted Bell's MONARCH, Ryan Steck
TINY WILD THINGS,
Danielle M. Wong

Stop, You're Killing Me!

(stopyourekillingme.com)

by Lucinda Surber

Best Debut Mysteries

BURN IT ALL, Maggie Aufferth
TWE DON'T TALK ABOUT CAROL,
Kristen L. Berry
I FOUND A BODY, Becky C. Brynolf
GUILTY BY DEFINITION, Susie Dent
THE BUSINESS TRIP, Jessie Garcia
LEVERAGE, Amran Gowani
ALL THE OTHER MOTHERS HATE
ME, Sarah Harman
FAIR PLAY, Louise Hegarty



THE RETIREMENT PLAN,
Sue Hincenbergs
A THOUSAND NATURAL SHOCKS,
Omar Hussain
DEAD MONEY, Jakob Kerr

A KILLER WEDDING, Joan O'Leary
THE VANISHING PLACE, Zoe Rankin
STILLWATER, Tanya Scott
THE MYSTERY OF THE CROOKED
MAN, Tom Spencer
JOHNNY CARELESS, Kevin Wade
HISTORY LESSONS, Zoe B. Wallbrook
JULIE CHAN IS DEAD, Liann Zhang

Bolobooks

(www.bolobooks.com)

by Kristopher Zgorski

QUANTUM OF MENACE,
Vaseem Khan – U.K. only
THE BLACK WOLF, Louise Penny
THE BURNING GROUNDS,
Abir Mukherjee
CROOKS, Lou Berney
THE GIRL IN CELL A, Vaseem Khan
THE GIRL IN THE GREEN DRESS,
Mariah Fredericks
HEAD CASES, John McMahon
HOME BEFORE DARK,
Eva Bjorg Aegisdottir
THE PASTOR'S WIFE, LynDee Walker
UNDER THE SAME STARS,
Libba Bray
THE BETRAYAL OF THOMAS TRUE,
A. J. West
DEATH ON THE ISLAND, Eliza Reid
WHISKEY BUSINESS, Adrian Andover

Novel Suspects

(novelsuspects.com)

by Lauren Shade

SALT BONES, Jennifer Givhan
GRAY DAWN, Walter Mosley
KING OF ASHES, S. A. Cosby
NOTES ON SURVIVING THE FIRE,
Christine Murphy
BEST OFFER WINS, Marisa Kashino
THE SLIP, Lucas Schaefer

MSN

by Karen MacPherson

THE BLACK WOLF, Louise Penny
THE BONE THIEF, Vanessa Lillie
DETECTIVE AUNTY, Uzma Jalaluddin
THE DENTIST, Tim Sullivan
THE GAME IS AFOOT, Elise Bryant
GUILTY BY DEFINITION, Susie Dent
THE HIDDEN CITY, Charles Finch
THE IMPOSSIBLE FORTUNE,
Richard Osman

THE KILLING STONES, Ann Cleeves
MURDER TAKES A VACATION,
Laura Lippman

The Independent

(<https://www.independent.co.uk/>)
by Eleanor Harvey

THE FROZEN PEOPLE, Elly Griffiths
FAIR PLAY, Louise Hegarty
NOT QUITE DEAD YET, Holly Jackson
THE KILLER QUESTION,
Janice Hallett

MISS WINTER IN THE LIBRARY
WITH A KNIFE, Martin Edwards

Honourable Mentions

ACTUALLY, I'M A MURDERER,
Terry Deary

BEAUTIFUL UGLY, Alice Feeney
THE MYSTERIOUS CASE OF THE
MISSING CRIME WRITER,
Ragnar Jonasson

Pile By the Bed

(pilebythebed.com)

EDEN, Mark Brandi
THE IMPOSSIBLE THING,
Belinda Bauer

THE HOLLOW GIRL, Lyn Yeowart
UNBURY THE DEAD, Fiona Hardy
THE ART OF THE LIE,
Laura Shepherd-Robinson

Honourable Mentions

SKULL RIVER, Pip Fioretti
THE WHITE CROW,
Michael Robotham

THE SEVENTH FLOOR,
David McCloskey – 2024 title in U.S.
GUIDE ME HOME, Attica Locke –
2024 title in U.S.
STILLWATER, Tanya Scott

An Post Irish Awards

Andrea Mara, IT SHOULD HAVE
BEEN YOU – Winner

TWO KINDS OF STRANGER,
Steve Cavanagh
BURN AFTER READING,
Catherine Ryan Howard
THE SECRET ROOM, Jane Casey
THE KILLING SENSE, Sam Blake
THE STRANGER INSIDE,
Amanda Cassidy
FAIR PLAY, Louise Hegarty
THE STOLEN CHILD,

Carmel Harrington

Jordy's Book Club

DEAD MONEY, Jakob Kerr
WE ARE ALL GUILTY HERE,

Karin Slaughter
TOO OLD FOR THIS,

Samantha Downing
WE ARE WATCHING YOU,

Alison Gaylin
KING OF ASHES, S. A. Cosby
HEAD CASES, John McMahon
THE INHERITANCE, Trisha Sakhlecha
THE GHOSTWRITER, Julie Clark
DON'T LET HIM IN, Lisa Jewell
THIS BOOK WILL BURY ME,
Ashley Winstead

Lesa's Book Critiques

THE MAILMAN,
Andrew Welsh-Huggins
BONDED IN DEATH, J. D. Robb
THE DENTIST, Tim Sullivan
THE SNOW LIES DEEP, Paula Munier

News18

(www.news18.com)

NIGHTSHADE, Michael Connelly
BEAUTIFUL UGLY, Alice Feeney
DON'T LET HIM IN, Lisa Jewell
DISSOLUTION, Nicholas Binge
SUCH QUIET GIRLS, Noelle W. Ihli

The i Paper

THE IMPOSSIBLE THING,
Belinda Bauer
CLOWN TOWN, Mick Herron
A NEIGHBOUR'S GUIDE TO
MURDER, Louise Candlish
THE DAY OF THE ROARING,
Nina Bhadreshwar
SHADOW TICKET, Thomas Pynchon
BOLEYN TRAITOR, Philippa Gregory
KILL YOUR DARLINGS,
Peter Swanson
THE DEATH OF US, Abigail Dean
ALL THE OTHER MOTHERS HATE
ME, Sarah Harman
THE SECRET OF SECRETS,
Dan Brown
QUANTUM OF MENACE,
Vaseem Khan
THE WIDOW, John Grisham
A MURDER FOR MISS HORTENSE,

Mel Pennant

WHAT THE NIGHT BRINGS,
Mark Billingham

Thrillerbooks

Top 20 Crime, Mystery and Thriller
Fiction

ALL THE OTHER MOTHERS HATE
ME, Sarah Harman
SO FAR GONE, Jess Walter
THE COMPOUND, Aisling Rawe
NIGHTSHADE, Michael Connelly
THE WHITE CROW,
Michael Robotham



LEO, Deon Meyer
HANG ON ST. CHRISTOPHER,
Adrian McKinty
MARBLE HALL MURDERS,
Anthony Horowitz
THE UNQUIET GRAVE,
Dervla McTiernan
UNBURY THE DEAD, Fiona Hardy
BROKE ROAD, Matthew Spencer
A SPY AT WAR, Charles Beaumont
MELALEUCA, Angie Faye Martin
DUST, Michael Brissenden
THE CUT, Richard Armitage
BEAUTIFUL UGLY, Alice Feeney
THE KILLER QUESTION,
Janice Hallett
THE PREDICAMENT, William Boyd
BLOOD RIVAL, Jake Arnott
THE MURDER AT WORLD'S END,
Ross Montgomery – 2026 title in U.S.

Women.Com

(www.women.com)

SUCH QUIET GIRLS, Noelle W. Ihli

THE WIDOW, John Grisham
 THE INTRUDER, Freida McFadden
 THE IMPOSSIBLE FORTUNE,
 Richard Osman
 NOT QUITE DEAD YET, Holly Jackson

Libraries

Chicago Public Library (chipublib.bibliocommons.com)

ANGEL DOWN, Daniel Kraus
 THE BLACK WOLF, Louise Penny
 CLOWN TOWN, Mick Herron
 CROOKS, Lou Berney
 THE DARK MAESTRO,
 Brendan Slocumb
 DEAD MONEY, Jakob Kerr
 THE DENTIST, Tim Sullivan
 DETECTIVE AUNTY, Uzma Jalaluddin
 THE EL, Theodore C. Van Alst
 FEVER BEACH, Carl Hiaasen
 FOX, Joyce Carol Oates
 THE GHOSTWRITER, Julie Clark
 HEARTWOOD, Amity Gaige
 HOLLOW SPACES,
 Victor Suthammanont
 HOTEL UKRAINE, Martin Cruz Smith
 THE HUMAN SCALE,
 Lawrence Wright
 THE IMPOSSIBLE FORTUNE,
 Richard Osman
 THE IMPOSSIBLE THING,
 Belinda Bauer
 THE INTRUDER, Freida McFadden
 KING OF ASHES, S. A. Cosby
 LISTEN, Sacha Bronwasser
 MURDER TAKES A VACATION,
 Laura Lippman
 THE PROVING GROUND,
 Michael Connelly
 SALT BONES, Jennifer Givhan
 THE SAVAGE, NOBLE DEATH OF
 BABS DIONNE, Ron Currie
 SHADOW TICKET, Thomas Pynchon
 WE ARE ALL GUILTY HERE,
 Karin Slaughter

New York Public Library (www.nypl.org)

FAIR PLAY, Louise Hegarty
 HEARTWOOD, Amity Gaige
 KING OF ASHES, S. A. Cosby
 VANTAGE POINT, Sara Sligar

Iowa City Public Library

THE NAMING OF THE BIRDS,
 Paraic O'Donnell
 THE IMPOSSIBLE FORTUNE,
 Richard Osman
 VERA WONG'S GUIDE
 TO SNOOPING, Jessie Q. Sutanto
 SALTWATER, Katy Hays
 THE AMALFI CURSE, Sarah Penner
 DEPARTURE 37, Scott Carson
 STRANGE HOUSES, Uketsu
 LEO, Deon Meyer
 NOT QUITE DEAD YET, Holly Jackson
 DON'T LET HIM IN, Lisa Jewell

Los Angeles Public Library

ALL OF US MURDERERS, K. J. Charles
 THE BUSYBODY BOOK CLUB,
 Freya Sampson
 HUMAN SCALE, Lawrence Wright
 KAPLAN'S PLOT, Jason Diamond
 KING OF ASHES, S. A. Cosby
 MIRAGE CITY, Lev AC Rosen
 THE PROVING GROUND,
 Michael Connelly
 SHADOW TICKET, Thomas Pynchon
 STRANGE PICTURES, Uketsu
 VICTORIAN PSYCHO, Virginia Feito
 WILD DARK SHORE,
 Charlotte McConaghy
 WITCHCRAFT FOR WAYWARD
 GIRLS, Grady Hendrix

Wellington City Libraries New Zealand

THE IMPOSSIBLE FORTUNE,
 Richard Osman
 THE IMPOSSIBLE THING,
 Belinda Bauer
 NEVER FLINCH, Stephen King
 THE GOOD FATHER,
 Liam McIlvanney
 CLOWN TOWN, Mick Herron
 THE PREDICAMENT, William Boyd
 THE GOOD LIAR, Denise Mina
 THE KILLER QUESTION,
 Janice Hallett
 THE UNQUIET GRAVE,
 Dervla McTiernan
 KING OF ASHES, S. A. Cosby
 THE GHOSTS OF ROME,
 Joseph O'Connor
 FINLAY DONOVAN DIGS HER OWN

GRAVE, Elle Cosimano
 STRANGE PICTURES, Uketsu
 THE CONFESSIONS,
 Paul Bradley Carr
 FAIR PLAY, Louise Hegarty
 HOOKED UP, Fiona Sussman
 SOFTLY CALLS THE DEVIL,
 Chris Blake
 THE HALLMARKED MAN,
 Robert Galbraith
 THE PROTOCOLS OF SPYING,
 Merle Nygate
 DUST, Michael Brissenden
 BEARTOOTH, Callan Wink
 THE WINTER WARRIORS,
 Olivier Norek
 A VOICE IN THE NIGHT,
 Simon Mason
 DEATH TAKES ME,
 Cristina Rivera Garza
 KILL YOUR DARLINGS,
 Peter Swanson

Indianapolis Public Library

WITCHCRAFT FOR WAYWARD
 GIRLS, Grady Hendrix
 VICTORIAN PSYCHO, Virginia Feito
 THE IMPOSSIBLE FORTUNE,
 Richard Osman
 THE TENANT, Freida McFadden
 THIS BOOK WILL BURY ME,
 Ashley Winstead
 CROOKS, Lou Berney
 WE DON'T TALK ABOUT CAROL,
 Kristen L. Berry
 THE QUIET LIBRARIAN,
 Allen Eskens
 NOT QUITE DEAD YET, Holly Jackson
 WITH A VENGEANCE, Riley Sager
 WE ARE ALL GUILTY HERE,
 Karin Slaughter



The Best of the Best

2025



No one compiling the aforelisted 89 “Best” lists has read every mystery, crime novel and thriller published in 2025. Hence, the lists are opinions based on the limited number of books each expert has read this past year, combined with personal tastes. In other words, these lists are very subjective. So where can we find objectivity?

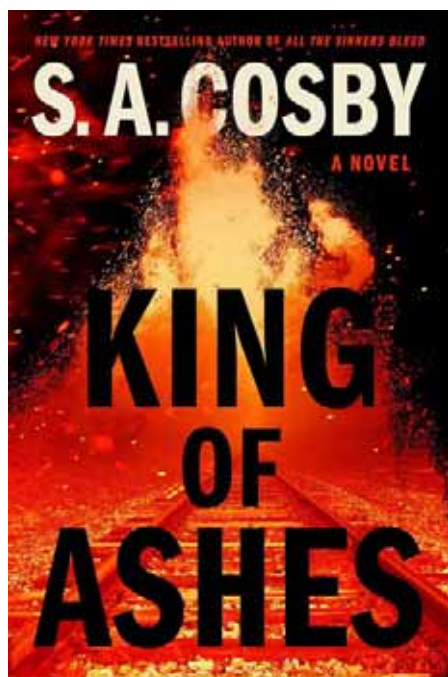
The more agreement (consensus) we can find among the lists, the more objective conclusions can be drawn about which novels are the Best of 2025.

So the following is a list of the number of appearances particular novels made on the 89 “Best” Lists, most of which you find on the preceding pages. These are the Best of the Best.

Compilation of Best Lists of 2025 Appearances

32

KING OF ASHES, S. A. Cosby



27

AN IMPOSSIBLE FORTUNE,
Richard Osman

18

CLOWN TOWN, Mick Herron

DON'T LET HIM IN, Lisa Jewell

16

HEARTWOOD, Amity Gaige

15

FAIR PLAY, Louise Hegarty –
Debut Novel
THE BLACK WOLF, Louise Penny

14

NOT QUITE DEAD YET, Holly Jackson
THE IMPOSSIBLE THING,
Belinda Bauer

13

CROOKS, Lou Berney

12

MARBLE HALL MURDERS,
Anthony Horowitz
THE SECRET OF SECRETS,
Dan Brown
WE ARE ALL GUILTY HERE,
Karin Slaughter
THE GOOD LIAR, Denise Mina
MURDER TAKES A VACATION,
Laura Lippman

10

THE SAVAGE, NOBLE DEATH OF
BABS DIONNE, Ron Currie
BEAUTIFUL UGLY, Alice Feeney

THE PROVING GROUND,
Michael Connelly
KILL YOUR DARLINGS,
Peter Swanson

9

NIGHTSHADE, Michael Connelly
ALL THE OTHER MOTHERS HATE
ME, Sarah Harman
EL DORADO DRIVE, Megan Abbott
THE DOORMAN, Chris Pavone
DEAD MONEY, Jakob Kerr
THE KILLER QUESTION,
Janice Hallett

8

WILD DARK SHORE,
Charlotte McConaghy
STRANGE PICTURES, Uketsu
THE DENTIST, Tim Sullivan

7

STILLWATER, Tanya Scott
WE DON'T TALK ABOUT CAROL,
Kristen L. Berry
DEATH BY DEFINITION, Susie Dent
DETECTIVE AUNTY, Uzma Jalaluddin
THE WHITE CROW,
Michael Robotham

6

LEO, Deon Meyer
HANG ON ST. CHRISTOPHER,
Adrian McKinty
THE NOTE, Alafair Burke
THE GHOSTWRITER, Julie Clark
THE MAN WHO DIED SEVEN
TIMES, Yasuhiko Nishizawa
THE PROTOCOLS OF SPYING,
Merle Nygate
THE MISSING HALF, Ashley Flowers
THE WIDOW, John Grisham
BEST OFFER WINS, Marisa Kashino
THE VANISHING PLACE, Zoe Rankin
THE COMPOUND, Aisling Rawle
JULIE CHAN IS DEAD, Liann Zhang

5

A VOICE IN THE NIGHT,
Simon Mason
THE PREDICAMENT, William Boyd
THE HALLMARKED MAN,
Robert Galbraith
THE BURNING GROUNDS,

3

**Edgar Award Nominees on
Best of the Best 2025 Lists**

Larry Gandle asked me to report on how many mentions on the best of the year lists that the Edgar Award nominees got. Here's that report:

Best Novel

THE BIG EMPTY,
Robert Crais -- 0
FAGIN THE THIEF,
Allison Epstein -- 0
THE DREAM HOTEL,
Laila Lalami -- 5
WILD DARK SHORE,
Charlotte McConaghy -- 8
HARD TOWN,
Adam Plantinga -- 0
THE INHERITANCE,
Trisha Sakhlecha -- 5
PRESUMED GUILTY,
Scott Turow -- 3

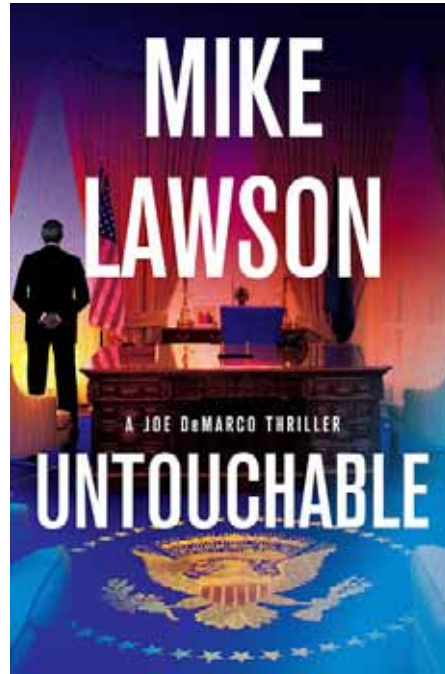
Best First Novel

By An American Author

KILLER POTENTIAL,
Hannah Deitch -- 3
ALL THE OTHER MOTHERS HATE
ME, Sarah Harman -- 9
DEAD MONEY,
Jakob Kerr -- 9
JOHNNY CARELESS,
Kevin Wade -- 1
HISTORY LESSONS,
Zoe B. Wallbrook -- 4

Best Paperback Original

LISTEN,
Sacha Bronwasser -- 3
THE SIDEWAYS LIFE OF DENNY
VOSS, Holly Kennedy -- 0
BROKE ROAD,
Matthew Spencer -- 1
THE BACKWATER,
Vikki Wakefield -- 1
ONE DEATH AT A TIME,
Abbi Waxman -- 0



UNTOUCHABLE, Mike Lawson
SILENT BONES, Val McDermid
THE MAILMAN,
Andrew Welsh-Huggins
GRAY DAWN, Walter Mosley
PRO BONO, Thomas Perry
THE MAID'S SECRET, Nita Prose
PRESUMED GUILTY, Scott Turow
THE POET'S GAME, Paul Vidich
SHADOW TICKET, Thomas Pynchon
AT MIDNIGHT COMES THE CRY,
Julia Spencer-Fleming
LISTEN, Sacha Bronwasser
WITNESS 8, Steve Cavanagh
TWO KINDS OF STRANGER,
Steve Cavanagh -- 2026 in U.S.
EXIT STRATEGY, Lee & Andrew Child
MISSISSIPPI BLUE 42, Eli Cranor
THE HIDDEN CITY, Charles Finch
SALT BONES, Jennifer Givhan
LEVERAGE, Amran Gowani
MIDNIGHT BLACK, Mark Greaney
FRIENDS HELPING FRIENDS,
Patrick Hoffman
SUCH QUIET GIRLS, Noelle Ihli
THE MYSTERIOUS CASE OF THE
MISSING CRIME WRITER,
Ragnar Jonasson
MURDER AT GULL'S NEST, Jess Kidd
IT SHOULD HAVE BEEN YOU,
Andrea Mara
THE GRAND PALOMA RESORT,
Cleyris Natera

Abir Mukherjee

THE FROZEN PEOPLE, Elly Griffiths
SAINT OF THE NARROWS STREET,

William Boyle

THE HUMAN SCALE,

Lawrence Wright

HOTEL UKRAINE, Martin Cruz Smith

COUNT MY LIES, Sophie Stava

VERA WONG'S GUIDE TO

SNOOPING, Jesse Q. Sutanto

THE KILLING STONES, Ann Cleeves

THE DREAM HOTEL, Laila Lalami

FAMOUS LAST WORDS,

Gillian McAllister

THIS BOOK WILL BURY ME,

Ashley Winstead

THE INHERITANCE, Trisha Sakhlecha

THE INTRUDER, Frieda McFadden

THE BONE THIEF, Vanessa Lillie

GONE BEFORE GOODBYE,

Coben & Witherspoon

THE DEATH OF US, Abigail Dean

QUANTUM OF MENACE,

Vaseem Khan

THE OLIGARCH'S DAUGHTER,

Joseph Finder

4

HEAD CASES, John McMahon
EVERYBODY WANTS TO RULE THE
WORLD, Ace Atkins
WHAT THE NIGHT BRINGS,
Mark Billingham
TOO OLD FOR THIS,
Samantha Downing
THE GIRL IN THE GREEN DRESS,
Mariah Fredericks
HER ONLY REGRET, Donna Freitas
FEVER BEACH, Carl Hiaasen
THE TENANT, Frieda McFadden
YOUR STEPS ON THE STAIRS,
Antonio Munoz Molina
THE MURDER AT WORLD'S END,
Ross Montgomery -- 2026 in U.S.
WITH A VENGEANCE, Riley Sager
THE ART OF THE LIE,
Laura Shepherd-Robinson
THE DARK MAESTRO,
Brendan Slocumb
HOLLOW SPACES,
Victor Suthammanont
HISTORY LESSONS, Zoe B. Wallbrook
THE WOMAN IN SUITE 11,
Ruth Ware



Editor's Message



What's Not in this Issue. One of my challenges, as I start a new year, is coming up with an initial list of best books for the Deadly Pleasures Best of the Year list. So instead of publishing a very short list in this, the first issue of the year, I've decided to hold off until the next issue. In its place I've included in this issue the Most Anticipated Mysteries of 2026 list that I posted on the website, with a few additions. It has 300+ titles compared to 200 last year. That will also take the place of our normal Sneak Previews and New in the U.K. columns for this issue. Everything will return to normal in Issue 111. There are a lot of lists in this issue, but mystery readers like lists – right?



My Delightful Luncheon with Elizabeth Heider. Back in October of last year I found out through e-mail correspondence that one of my favorite new writers, Elizabeth Heider, would be in Utah visiting her family, so we set up a time to meet for lunch. I rarely get to meet one on one with writers except at Bouchercon, so this was a real treat for me.

What transpired was a delightful hour+ of lively conversation -- she with her enthusiasm as a new mystery writer (and long-time mystery reader) and me with my fervor for all things mystery. We soon found out that our tastes in mystery reading are quite similar. I probably overdid it a bit (you think?) with my recommendations for books for her to read, but I couldn't help myself.

I had already intended to do an Introducing... article on her and her two books. So see pages 21-23 herein for more about this amazing writer, with her incredible educational and professional background.

Elizabeth will be back visiting family at some future date and we plan to meet up again. Can't wait. In the meantime, I highly encourage you to read her two books (the new one is out February 17.) You'll thank me.

My Computer Crash Turned Out To Be a Blessing in Disguise. Do you ever delay the inevitable? I knew that my computer was old and that it was starting to show it. But it had everything I needed to put out this magazine. I knew I would have to get a new computer pretty soon and go through the perceived ordeal of installing newer versions of much-used programs. (When a computer program does everything I need it to do, I don't believe an updated version of that program is a good thing -- at least not for me. Often there are too many changes and a steep learning curve to learn the new version.) But I kept putting it off, saying, "Well, I'll do it after the next issue." On February 2, 2026 my computer all but died. R.I.P. faithful companion of 10, these many years.

After a few hours of mourning, it was back to business: I had a week before I needed to get this current issue out. By Wednesday night I had a new computer with all my needed data from my old one (including my file for this issue which was 85% done). And when I hooked up my monitors and turned on the computer, everything worked! Even the newer version of my page layout program was close enough to my older version as to calm my fears. So onward and upward with a faster machine and unlimited storage space.

I wonder how many issues of *DP* my new computer will produce in the future? I hope it's a lot. I will continue to publish as long as I am physically and mentally able. It's what I love to do. And right now I'm feeling great!

A Brief Note on Publication

Dates. In the review columns most of us include publication dates of the books reviewed. If a book is published in the current year, just the month is indicated. If published in a prior year, just the year is indicated.

New Review Columns. With Ted Hertel's retirement from reviewing, I was looking for new reviewers. I found both a new one and an old one. See their columns herein.

Lou Jacobs used to review for the *Mystery and Suspense Magazine* which has apparently ceased publication. Lou's background: Lou has been a neurosurgeon for 40 years and is now semi-retired. He has read widely across many fiction genres. His philosophy: Setting aside time to read is as essential as exercising.

And out of the blue came Ted Fitzgerald -- an old contributor to *DP* and recipient of the Don Sandstrom Award for Life Achievement in Mystery Fandom. He knows way more about mystery and crime fiction than I will ever learn.

So welcome Lou and welcome back, Ted.

Introducing ... *Elizabeth Heider*

by George Easter



The Nikki Serafino Mystery Series Set in Naples, Italy

The Books

MAY THE WOLF DIE (2024)

Nikki Serafino is an investigator in Naples, Italy who works as a liaison between local police and American soldiers based nearby.

She and her friend, police detective Valerio Alfieri share ownership of a boat and they are enjoying an afternoon at a nearby bay when Nikki discovers the body of a man in the water. The deceased turns out to a U.S. Navy captain. The autopsy reveals foul play.

Another body of a U.S. serviceman turns up in short order and as Nikki investigates further, it appears that both men were involved in extra-curricular criminal enterprises.

Elizabeth Heider writes with the assurance of a veteran. I quite liked this debut mystery, the main character and the Naples setting.

CHILDREN OF THE SAVAGE CITY

(February, 2026)

A peaceful evening mass at the historic Chiesa del Gesù Nuovo is shattered when a young au pair is killed in one of the cathedral's quiet chapels. The daughter of the US Ambassador sees it happen—but she'll speak only to one person: Nikki Serafino.

Shaken by betrayal in her last high-profile case, Nikki has retreated

from the relentless vigilance that once defined her work as liaison between Italian police and the US military. Withdrawn and mistrustful, she works her shifts, cares for her aging family, teaches self-defense classes, and avoids entanglement. But this case threatens her self-imposed invisibility—drawing her into a web of lies and resurfacing old wounds and buried loyalties. The murder investigation leads Nikki and her friend, Naples officer Valerio Alfieri, into a shadow architecture of power: built to protect the guilty and hide their secrets at any cost.

Elizabeth Heider is great at the big three: setting, plot and characterization. I rate the series between an A and an A-.

The Author In Her Own Words

I'm originally from South Jordan, Utah, the second of six children. We were all unrepentant bibliophiles, and I've written stories for as long as I can remember.

I graduated high school early and, at 16, entered the University of Utah's Actor Training Program where I performed Shakespeare, Chekhov, Marlowe, and Mamet. After a year of theater studies, I switched fields and completed a Bachelor's degree in physics. In 2000 I started graduate school at Tufts University where I earned a physics Master's degree and PhD, doing research at the Fermilab National Particle Accelerator Laboratory and at a high-field magnet laboratory.

After school, I worked for eight years

as a civilian researcher for the U.S. Navy where I wrote and ran wargames, assessed at-sea exercises, and deployed for weeks and months at a time aboard Naval warships. I lived and worked in Naples, Italy for three years, did research in 15 African countries, and trained troops in Senegal, Gabon, and Cameroon. At the invitation of the Admiral of the Royal Danish Navy and the Admiral of the Royal Netherlands Navy, I conducted assessments and mission support in those countries. In 2014, INTERPOL brought me to their headquarters in Lyon France to present a workshop and lecture at their fingerprint conference.

In 2016 I moved to the Netherlands to work as a scientist for the European Space Agency's Human Spaceflight program. I supported the research on the International Space Station. In 2023 I became a Technical Program Manager for Microsoft's Artificial Intelligence Science Research Laboratory, A4Science. I also moonlight as a consultant for the commercial spaceflight industry.

I've always processed my experiences through writing. Fiction is particularly helpful because it helps me identify and tell the emotional truth of a situation while keeping my analytical proclivities at bay. My attempts at nonfiction become very academic -- replete with facts and analyses, but absent the emotional and spiritual elements that are often the most essential parts of narrative truth-telling.

My short fiction earned recognition in the Santa Fe Writer Awards and the New Century Writer Awards. Other writing credits include a play produced at the University of Utah, numerous

research papers, a chemistry patent, and wargames written for the Navy and other US government agencies. My original research and writing about Navy programs in Africa was used in US Department of State Congressional testimony. I authored a comic series developed by the European Space Agency, and (for the better part of a decade) my science writings were regularly read by astronauts aboard the International Space Station.

I live in The Hague where I bicycle across the dunes, make wine from the grapes in my garden, and skate on frozen canals.

Author Q&A

Your background plays a major role in your fiction. How did your experience as a military analyst shape *CHILDREN OF THE SAVAGE CITY*?

CHILDREN OF THE SAVAGE CITY emerged from lived experience – the years I spent in Naples, the time I spent at sea, and the insight I gained from working inside large hierarchical institutions. I’ve learned a lot about systems, power, and survival.

I hold a PhD in physics and spent nearly eight years working as a civilian analyst for the U.S. Navy. My role at the Center for Naval Analyses required full immersion in military life — including war games, intelligence briefings, and deployments aboard U.S. naval vessels. In 2009, I deployed for twelve weeks aboard the *USS Nashville*, an aging amphibious transport ship on its final mission before decommissioning. We traveled down the West African coast, working with regional navies. The ship itself was in crisis: we suffered repeated engineering failures. While docked in the polluted lagoon of Lagos, Nigeria, our intake pumps drew in so much debris that the water systems failed. We had to be towed forty miles out to sea so divers could clear the ship’s intakes. That deployment was intense, and left a permanent mark.

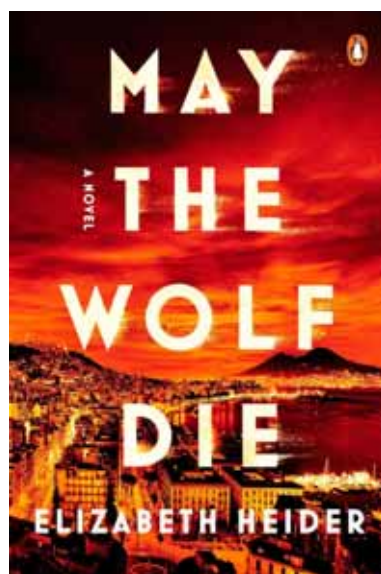
I was stationed in Naples from 2010 to 2013, working on the Navy’s *Africa Partnership Station* mission. That time deepened both my understanding of the

city and the shadow networks that move beneath the surface of official systems.

The novel also draws from what I’ve witnessed inside institutions. I’ve seen brilliant minds and extraordinary competence. I’ve also seen arbitrary rules, strategic silences, and the subtle ways people shape themselves to power. At their worst, organizations protect the wrong people, and punish those who speak out.

I’ve known people like Nikki and Valerio: wounded and loyal, trying to navigate broken systems without becoming broken themselves.

The story is fictional, but its emotional architecture comes from lived experience. The characters carry pieces of people I’ve known: the kind, the competent, the deluded, the evil, the brave. I understand the brutality, the



code-switching, and the cost of staying human inside systems that reward detachment.

This book is my attempt to bear witness to those systems. And to the people who survive them.

What drew you to Naples as a setting — and how does the city itself function in the story?

When I was stationed in Naples, I fell deeply in love with the city. It’s an overwhelming place – gorgeous and radiant, and also feral. The beauty, almost too much to take in, coexists with darkness. The streets are chaotic, and the Camor-

ra mafia rules large swaths of life. My stay in Naples was during a period of intense personal grief, and the beauty and warmth became an antidote for pain. The city’s chaos matched my own. I wanted to capture something of this in my books.

From a story-telling perspective, I loved basing these books here. There’s something very intimate about Naples. It’s a big city, but also has the types of personal relationships you might find in a small town.

The word “Savage” in *CHILDREN OF THE SAVAGE CITY* doesn’t mean primitive. It means ruthless. The city is both Naples, in all its contradiction and corruption, and a stand-in for any place where unchecked power feeds on complicity.

What compelled you to write this book?

I wrote this book to expose how institutions fail to protect, and how the vulnerable are often exploited instead. Wealth and power shield perpetrators – and rotten systems are supported by complicity, silence, and fear. Unfortunately, this has become even more relevant since I wrote the book; we see it play out in our newsfeeds every day.

At the heart of the novel is a disturbing question: *What if abuse isn’t a side effect of power, but its method of consolidation?*

This was shaped by a hypothesis that gained traction after Jeffrey Epstein’s arrest and death. That his horrific crimes were systematically built as leverage.

CHILDREN OF THE SAVAGE CITY explores this dynamic. Blackmail isn’t some incidental residue of exploitation, it’s the point. The more monstrous the secret, the greater its power.

By embedding this idea in a crime narrative, I wanted to explore what non-fiction often can’t: the emotional toll of systemic evil, and the ways that silence and willful blindness perpetuate harm.

Nikki Serafino is a complex and emotionally layered lead. What was most important to you in writing her character this time around?

It was important to me that I stayed emotionally in touch with Nikki and

authentic to her emotional journey.

Nikki is someone who can never really go home. Although physically rooted in Naples, she lives in a perpetual sense of exile – after sudden losses propelled her to leave the city for nearly a decade. Now that she's returned, her relationship with the city is an uneasy one, and she's made psychological adaptations to survive the danger.

At the beginning of *May the Wolf Die*, she believed that vigilance and discipline could avert catastrophe. But by the end of that book, the system she had carefully constructed to maintain control had unraveled. When we meet her again in **CHILDREN OF THE SAVAGE CITY**, Nikki has taken refuge in invisibility. Self-erasure has become her armor against an unbearable truth: that people she loved (and maybe still loves) did real, permanent harm. Nikki's response to these betrayals is to disappear. Not literally – but a psychological retreat – in order to avoid the grief she can't yet bear.

Her journey through the novel is a transformation: from distance and detachment into grief. This happens through action: witnessing, remembering, and choosing to engage – even as the danger and stakes intensify.

You've said this book is about 'compassion as resistance.' What do you mean by that?

In systems where corruption hides itself inside institutional procedure, intellect and logic and will never be enough to crack the case. Instead, every real breakthrough in this book comes through intimacy and compassion.

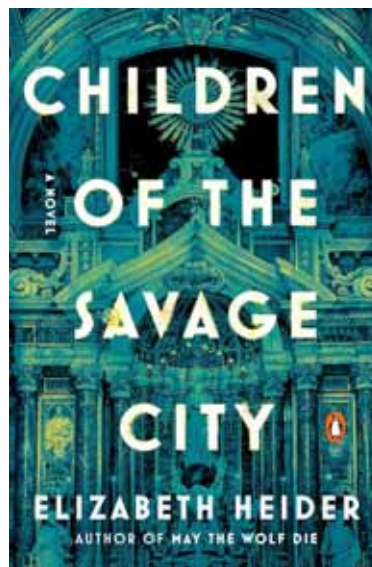
Despite its darkness, **CHILDREN OF THE SAVAGE CITY** is ultimately a story about compassion and connection, and a rejection of transactional relationships. The novel explicitly rejects the idea that vulnerability is weakness. Instead, it proposes that compassion is the only viable antidote to institutional rot.

We live in frightening times. And when we feel unsafe, we can become paralyzed or filled with rage. This is a natural response to fear – but I think that corrupt systems rely on our fear,

and actively feed it. So, when we decide to act with compassion and to connect with others, we drain the power from the corrupt systems. This is an act of courage and resistance.

What books or writers influenced your work on this novel?

John Le Carré always serves as my touchstone for complex, human, character-driven fiction, and an unflinching examination of corrupt bureaucracies. I adore his work – and aspire to one day be half the writer he was. Stieg Larson's writing was also foundational for me. **THE GIRL WITH THE DRAGON TATOO** was a revelation – and I return to his *Millenium* trilogy at least once every year or two. I also love the work of Jo Nesbø whose dark and intelligent



noir always grips me. And I also love Tana French and Dervla McTiernan. And in terms of character and structure, Robert Galbraith's *Cormoran Strike* series is unmatched. Every new book is a masterclass in writing and I'm madly in love with Cormoran and Robin.

I also like to root my work in real-world operations, and Ben MacIntyre's books are excellent exposes of the intelligence community – I read **THE SPY AND THE TRAITOR** this year and found it excellent. Also Sonia Purnell's **A WOMAN OF NO IMPORTANCE** was deeply influential for me. And Roberto Saviano's compelling journalistic pieces about Naples (e.g.

Gomorrah) and Elena Ferrante's writings – especially the Neapolitan Series gives such radically valuable insights into local culture and history.

Is CHILDREN OF THE SAVAGE CITY part of a series — and do readers need to have read MAY THE WOLF DIE first?

The story stands alone and you should be able to read **CHILDREN OF THE SAVAGE CITY** without reading **MAY THE WOLF DIE** first. The book continues the arc of investigator Nikki Serafino -- a woman navigating betrayal, silence, and the long path back to emotional visibility. I intend the book as part of a seven-book arc planned for Nikki and Valerio.

What's next for Nikki Serafino — or for you as a writer?

Nikki has a big journey ahead of her. She's started to understand the truth about her mother's legacy, and every step along her path is preparation to face a shadowy malevolent force that we begin to glimpse in this book.

What surprised you most while writing this book?

I think I've been most surprised (in a good way) by how much my parents love my books. They're my parents, so it's wonderful that they support me. But this goes way beyond parental pride. They have personal relationships with Nikki and Valerio. And my mom listens to Simon Vance's reading while she goes to sleep at night. They talk to me about the characters like they're real people. This has been surprising -- and very moving for me. Sometimes, my mom gets worried about Francesca and Gianni's kids, while in the next breath reminding us both that they're fictional.

If readers take away one lasting feeling or question from CHILDREN OF THE SAVAGE CITY what do you hope it is?

I want people to feel hopeful. I want them to feel empowered, and to realize that it is through individual acts of courage and principle and connection that we keep the darkness at bay.

Most Anticipated Mysteries of 2026



You should all be able to find numerous titles to fit your tastes in the following list of 2026 novels. Of course, many titles have yet to be announced. No Harlan Coben, Robert Galbraith, Laura Lippman, Chris Whitaker, Mick Herron, Richard Osman or Chris Whitaker announced yet – to name a few.

Which books am I most looking forward to reading? Michael Connelly's **IRONWOOD** heads my list. The new Jussi Adler-Olsen (**NO SONG FOR THE DEAD**) is a Department Q novel even though I thought that series had ended with the last book.

In 2019 Søren Svestrup wrote **THE CHESTNUT MAN**. It won the Barry Award for Best First Novel. Svestrup is finally coming out with the sequel – **HIDE AND SEEK**.

I've become a big fan of the Tim Weaver books from the U.K. **THE LOST WOMEN** comes out March, as does Simon Mason's **THE DANGEROUS STRANGER**. Jo Callaghan's fourth title **BODY OF LIES** is out in April in the U.K., but sadly it is billed as the last in the Kat and Lock series.

It caught me by surprise when I read about David Heska Wanbli Weiden finally publishing a sequel to his excellent **WINTER COUNTS** (Barry Award Winner). **WISDOM CORNER** will be published in July.

It's been a long 3-year wait, but we'll finally get the latest Box 88 spy thriller from Charles Cumming in July – **ICARUS 17**.

In 2024 I was greatly impressed by Stella Sands' **WORDHUNTER** (Barry Award Nominee) and a sequel, **CODE-BREAKERS** will be out in August.

In 2026 we get not one – but two

Mike Lawson novels. The first is **THE ASSET** (Joe DeMarco), which I've already read and enjoyed. Then I was surprised to see a standalone **McKENNA'S GUY** in July, which I'm putting on my Best of 2026 list.

September brings a new Michael Robotham (**TELL ME SOMETHING TRUE**), which is always a treat for me.

We should all be glad that Atlantic Crime is publishing all eight of the DS Cross novels by Tim Sullivan this year (one was published in late 2025). They were previously published in the U.K. to great acclaim. I plan to read all of them – 3 down, 5 to go.

I have already read 26 of the 2026 titles listed below and have enjoyed most of those I have read. Reviews to follow.

Titles of novels published only in the U.K. **appear in red**.

Debut novels are indicated by *** preceding the title.

The novels that I have already read **appear in blue**.

I'm pretty confident that you won't find a better preview of 2026 Mystery, Crime and Thriller fiction anywhere else. Enjoy.

January, 2026

BEHIND THESE FOUR WALLS,

Yasmin Angoe

(January 1)

Isla Thorne had a rough start in life. Orphaned young, she spent her formative years in a group home where she met her best friend, Eden Galloway. At sixteen, they decide to run away to LA...but Eden never makes it. It's been ten years since Eden vanished. And Isla's determined to find her. **Amazon Editors Pick**

TO KILL A COOK, W. M. Akers

(January 3)

Nobody in Manhattan eats better than Bernice Black. It's 1972, and she is the city's busiest restaurant critic, juggling her fiancé and his two young sons with demands of fine dining. Bernice talks fast, walks faster, has a razor-sharp wit and no patience for anything--or anyone--that gets in her way. When she stops by the famed restaurant of her favorite chef and mentor, Laurent Tirel, early one morning, she stumbles across a horrific scene in the kitchen: Laurent's severed head, perfectly preserved in a flawless mold of jellied aspic.

I DID NOT KILL MY HUSBAND,

Linda Keir

(January 3)

LA lifestyle influencer Cara Campbell is living the rags-to-riches dream with her plastic surgeon husband, Karl, and posting all about it on social media. But her happily ever after evaporates when she's given a life sentence for murdering Karl during a romantic getaway. All evidence points to her, and her platform—as an unabashed gold digger—makes her look guilty as hell.

RETURN OF THE MALTESE FALCON, Max Allan Collins

(January 6)

Mystery Writers of America Grand Master Max Allan Collins (author of *Road to Perdition*) brings closure to this crime classic, reuniting all the surviving members of the original cast alongside femme fatales, crooked collectors, and greedy gangsters for one more thrilling, deadly chase through the streets, wharves, morgues, bars, and back alleys

of 1920s San Francisco – and finally answers the question, Whatever became of the Maltese falcon...? **Publishers Weekly Starred Review**

FIRST DO NO HARM, S. J. Rozan
Lydia Chin/Bill Smith #16
(January 6)

With River Valley Hospital in the midst of negotiations to avert a nurses' strike, a wealthy benefactor is set to give a large donation to honor of the Chief of Emergency Medicine: Dr. Elliott Chin, the brother of private investigator Lydia Chin. Before the donation can be finalized, a member of the nurses' negotiating committee is found murdered. **Library Journal & Booklist Starred Reviews**

THE FIRST TIME I SAW HIM,
Laura Dave
Hannah Hall #2
(January 6)

Five years after her husband, Owen, disappeared, Hannah Hall and her stepdaughter, Bailey, have settled into a new life in Southern California. Together, they've forged a relationship with Bailey's grandfather Nicholas and are putting the past behind them. But when Owen shows up at Hannah's new exhibition, she knows that she and Bailey are in danger again. Hannah and Bailey are forced to go on the run in a relentless race to keep their past from catching up with them. **Amazon Editors Pick**

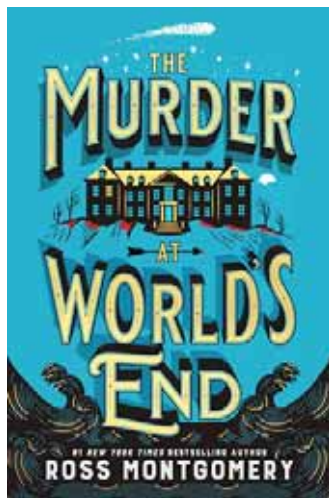
WILDWOOD, Amy Pease
Northwoods #2
(January 6)

Deputy Sheriff Eli North has spent the last year getting his life back together. He hasn't touched a drop of alcohol, he's working through his PTSD from his military deployment, and he's repairing his most important relationships. When an undercover informant disappears and all signs point to murder, Eli must expose the dark underbelly of his idyllic Wisconsin small town while safeguarding his newfound stability. Then, with the unexpected arrival of FBI Agent Alyssa Mason, Eli and his mother, the sheriff, are pulled deeper into a violent criminal network built on the backs of

the lost and forgotten.

THE METHOD, Matthew Quirk
(January 6)

Actress Anna Vaughn is fearless—on screen, at least. She tends to play doomed brunettes with a badass streak, and has put in countless hours training for parts and learning how to fight, shoot, and drive like a pro. She likes to believe she is as tough as her characters, but off-camera she leads a far quieter life: trying to keep her acting career alive so she can take care of her younger sister. When her best friend Natalie, her rock, disappears after a night out with a mysterious new man, the signs point to foul play and a circle of spies operating in Manhattan. Anna must use all the tricks she's learned for her roles to hunt for her missing friend.



*****THE MURDER AT WORLD'S END**, Ross Montgomery
Stockington & Pike #1
(January 6)

Cornwall, 1910. On a remote tidal island, the Viscount of Tithe Hall is absorbed in feverish preparations for the apocalypse that he believes will accompany the passing of Halley's Comet. The Hall must be sealed from top to bottom—every window, chimney, and keyhole closed off before night falls. But what the pompous, dishonest Viscount has failed to take into account is the danger that lies within... By morning, he will be dead in his sealed study, murdered by his own ancestral crossbow. **Publishers Weekly Starred Review**

WRECK YOUR HEART,
Lori Rader-Day
(January 6)

Dahlia "Doll" Devine had the kind of hardscrabble beginning that could launch a thousand broken-hearted country songs, but now she's the star of her own stage at McPhee's Tavern. She's part of Chicago's – yes, Chicago's – country music scene, until her boyfriend Joey ups and goes, taking the rent money with him. **Publishers Weekly, Library Journal Starred Reviews & Amazon Editors Pick**

THE STORM, Rachel Hawkins
(January 6)

St. Medard's Bay, Alabama is famous for three things: the deadly hurricanes that regularly sweep into town, the Rosalie Inn, a century-old hotel that's survived every one of those storms, and Lo Bailey, the local girl infamously accused of the murder of her lover, political scion Landon Fitzroy, during Hurricane Marie in 1984. When Geneva Corliss, the current owner of the Rosalie Inn, hears a writer is coming to town to research the crime that put St. Medard's Bay on the map, she's less interested in solving a whodunnit than in how a successful true crime book might help the struggling inn's bottom line. But to her surprise, August Fletcher doesn't come to St. Medard's Bay alone. With him is none other than Lo Bailey herself.

*****THIS SIDE OF GONE**,
Saundra Mitchell
Vinnie Taylor #1
(January 6)

Vinnie Taylor isn't a cop anymore. Once a decorated detective, Vinnie left behind a 25-year career in a blaze of scandal—working undercover to bust a sex trafficking ring in her own Homicide Unit. Nearly beaten to death by her former colleagues to prevent her testimony, Vinnie has found peace in the small town of Wills Harbor, Maryland. Or so she thought. When a local teenager goes missing and nobody in town seems concerned besides the girl's best friend, Vinnie can't help but take the case. **PBO**

THE VIPER, Brad Meltzer
Zig & Nola #3
(January 6)

Andrew Fechmeier is a master at hiding. He'd better be—he's spent decades concealing a secret that could get him killed. So when he's diagnosed with a terminal disease, he heads for the local funeral home carrying the blue suit he eventually wants to be buried in. But what no one knows is that Fechmeier secretly tucked something inside, turning the suit into a final, untraceable hiding spot. It's a perfect plan. Until Fetch is brutally murdered by a mysterious killer who will stop at nothing to find the priceless object hidden in the suit.

DEFINITELY MAYBE NOT A DETECTIVE, Sarah Fox
Wyatt Investigations #1
(January 6)

Emersyn Gray is definitely not a detective. Really, she's an unemployed twenty-eight-year-old raising her beloved niece in the only place she can afford after her ex-boyfriend ran off with her life savings: a run-down, seniors-only apartment complex that was desperate for tenants. But never fear—her wild best friend has the perfect plan to get Emersyn back on her feet and stick it to her thieving ex: scare him into returning her money by hiring a private investigator to prove he stole it. PBO

FIRE MUST BURN, Allison Montclair
The Right Sort Marriage Bureau #8
(January 6)

London, 1947. After recent events have left the normally steadfast Iris Sparks thoroughly shaken, she's looking forward to some peace. With The Right Sort doing well, she and business partner Gwen Bainbridge are due a holiday. Until Iris's former boss enlists their help for a secret mission. Iris, who left British intelligence after the war, is being recruited for her Cambridge connection to one Anthony Danforth. She hasn't seen Tony in almost ten years, yet she and Gwen must manipulate him into hiring their marriage service.

THE RECKONING, Kelli Stanley

Renata Drake #1
(January 6)

Renata Drake steps off a Greyhound bus and into small-town Garberville, hoping to disappear. She checks the papers. She's not headline news. Not yet. But she's made a mistake. The FBI have the cannabis-producing "Emerald Triangle" town—and its corrupt residents—in their sights. Even worse, a teenage girl is missing, and when she turns up dead, the third in three years, it's clear a serial killer is living among them. Renata knows about murdered girls and the burning desire for justice—and for revenge. Her younger sister Josie is gone, and now, so is the man who killed her. Renata didn't stay in Washington, D.C. to be arrested for executing a murderer, and she shouldn't stay here either.



BITTER FALL, Bruce Robert Coffin
Detective Justice #2
(January 13)

On a moonless stretch of backcountry road, Detective Brock Justice stares down at a crime scene that refuses to play by the rules. A woman lies dead, the apparent victim of a lethal roadside crash – until a stab wound is found hidden beneath her clothing. Two causes of death. Zero easy answers. Reunited with his partner, Detective Chloe Wright, Justice begins pulling at threads too many people want left alone. The victim had secrets – the kind worth killing for. And each suspect carries enough bag-

gage to sink a body in Moosehead Lake. An ex-boyfriend with a violent past. A married fitness trainer with too much to lose. A combat veteran living off the grid, haunted by ghosts of his own.

IT SHOULD HAVE BEEN YOU, Andrea Mara
(January 13)

You press send and your message disappears. Full of secrets about your neighbors, it's meant for your sister. But it doesn't reach her – it goes to the entire local community WhatsApp group instead. As rumor spreads like wildfire through the picture-perfect neighborhood, you convince yourself that people will move on, that this will quickly be forgotten. But then you receive the first death threat. The next day, a woman has been murdered. And what's even more chilling is that she had the same address as you – 26 Oakpark – but in a different part of town. Did the killer get the wrong house? It won't be long before you find out...

DIVINE RUIN, Margot Douaihy
Sister Holiday #3
(January 13)

It's a steamy, restless end of the school year in New Orleans. Sister Holiday is finishing her music classes and preparing for her permanent vow ceremony, a pivotal moment in her journey of faith. But when one of her favorite students is found dead of a fentanyl overdose, Sister Holiday and her partner-in-PI, Magnolia Riveaux, are determined to track down the drug dealers. **Publishers Weekly Starred Review**

YOU'LL NEVER FORGET ME, Isha Raya
(January 13)

Struggling actress Dimple Kapoor wouldn't call herself a murderer, per se—she'd prefer the term "opportunist." Years ago, she did what had to be done to get herself out of a bad situation. And now, after accidentally killing her Hollywood rival, Irene Singh, at a party, she's simply seizing the chance to nab her dream leading role and resuscitate her career in the process. There's only

one problem: Someone else at the event witnessed the crime . . . and caught it all on camera.

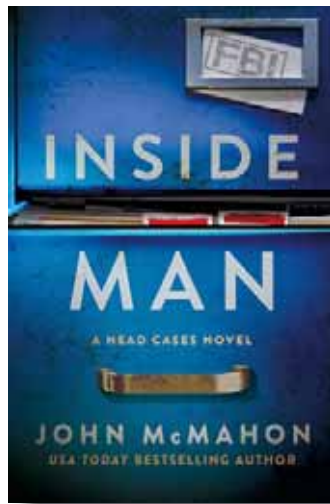
Library Journal Starred Review & Amazon Editors Pick

THE CYCLIST, Tim Sullivan
DS Cross #2
(January 13)

DS George Cross has unique and unmatched talents. He uses a combination of logic, determination and exacting precision to get answers where others have failed for families who have long given up hope. So when a ravaged body is found in a local demolition site, it's up to Cross to piece together the truth from whatever fragments he can find. From the faint tan lines and strange scars on the victim's forearms, Cross meticulously unravels the young man's life, delving into the world of amateur cycling, an illicit supply of performance enhancing drugs, jealousy, ambition and a family tearing itself apart.

ANATOMY OF AN ALIBI,
Ashley Elston
(January 13)

Everyone at Chantilly's Bar noticed out-of-towner Camille Bayliss. Red lips, designer heels, sipping a Negroni. But that woman wasn't Camille Bayliss. It was Aubrey Price. Camille Bayliss appears to have the picture-perfect life; she's married to hotshot lawyer Ben and is the daughter of a wealthy Louisiana family. Only nothing is as it seems: Camille believes Ben has been hiding dirty secrets for years, but she can't find proof because he tracks her every move. Aubrey Price has been haunted by the terrible night that changed her life a decade ago, and she's convinced Benjamin Bayliss knows something about it. Living in a house full of criminals, Aubrey understands there's more than one way to get to the truth—and she may have found the best way in. Aubrey and Camille hatch a plan. It sounds simple: For twelve hours, Aubrey will take Camille's place. Camille will spy on Ben, and the two women will get the answers they desperately seek.



INSIDE MAN, John McMahon
Head Cases #2
(January 13)

PAR's latest case involves a militia group stockpiling weapons. When their confidential informant in the case is killed, it quickly becomes clear that the militia did not kill him. As the squad looks into the evidence surrounding his murder, an unidentified man is caught on camera with their informant. This mystery man's picture is connected to another case at the FBI, an unsolved series of murdered women, buried in the ground in north Florida. Could they have uncovered a serial killer? And if so, what is his connection to their C.I.? **DP**

CONTEMPT OF COURT,
Jake Needham
Charlie Trust #2
(January 20)

Charlie Trust is a thirty-five-year-old burnout lawyer squatting in a friend's Malibu beach house. Then the friend who loaned him the house asks for a little favor. Talk with Emma Scott, a woman trapped in a divorce from one of Hollywood's most powerful television producers. Just one conversation. Just some friendly advice. But it turns out that Emma Scott isn't just looking for casual advice. She's sitting on five boxes of financial records that could destroy her powerful television producer husband. When she disappears, Charlie finds that he can't disentangle himself from her messy situation. **DP**

MY HUSBAND'S WIFE,
Alice Feeney
(January 20)

Eden Fox, an artist on the brink of her big break, sets off for a run before her first exhibition. When she returns to the home she recently moved into, Spyglass, an enchanting old house in Hope Falls, nothing is as it should be. Her key doesn't fit. A woman, eerily similar to her, answers the door. And her husband insists that the stranger is his wife. One house. One husband. Two women. Someone is lying. **Booklist Starred Review (for audiobook)**

*****HOW TO COMMIT
A POSTCOLONIAL MURDER**,
Nina McConigley
(January 20)

Summer, 1986. The Creel sisters, Georgie Ayyar and Agatha Krishna, welcome their aunt, uncle and young cousin—newly arrived from India—into their house in rural Wyoming where they'll all live together. Because this is what families do. That is, until the sisters decide that it's time for their uncle to die. According to Georgie, the British are to blame. And to understand why, you need to hear her story. She details the violence hiding in their house and history, her once-unshakeable bond with Agatha Krishna, and her understanding of herself as an Indian-American in the heart of the West. **Publishers Weekly, Kirkus and Library Journal Starred Reviews & Amazon Editors' Pick**

*****A GIFT BEFORE DYING**,
Malcolm Kempt
(January 20)

After a botched high-profile murder investigation, Corporal Elderick Cole is exiled to the remote, rugged landscape of Nunavut, a vast territory in the Arctic Circle known for its untamed beauty, frigid temperatures, and endless winter nights. With his family having severed all ties, Cole waits out the result of a civil lawsuit alone—the wrong verdict could end what's left of his flailing career. His bleak existence takes a sinister turn when he discovers the hanging body of Pitseolala, a troubled Inuit girl

whom he had sworn to protect. Her death dredges up demons he thought he'd buried along with the scars of a fractured marriage and the aching divide between him and his estranged daughter. **Publishers Weekly Starred Review & Amazon Editors' Pick**

THE ROOM IN THE ATTIC,

T. M. Logan

(January 20)

Adam and Jess move into a new house—a rambling Victorian villa at the very top of their price range—with their three young children. Before long Adam discovers a door hidden behind a fitted wardrobe, concealing a secret room. Inside Adam discovers a collection of forgotten items: a wallet, an expensive watch and an old mobile phone. Jess thinks they should throw them away. But Adam resists. He is fascinated by these items and how they came to be inside the hidden room. But like the house, Adam has his secrets too. And soon he will find himself setting in motion a series of events that will place his family in terrible danger.

SUCH A CLEVER GIRL,

Darby Kane

(January 20)

Fifteen years ago, the Tanner family vanished without a trace, leaving behind a chilling scene: half-eaten meals, a bloodstain by the door, and a smoldering fire consuming their business across town. The once-vibrant home stands untouched, a haunting relic of the past. As rumors fade into local folklore, the mystery of their disappearance seems destined to remain unsolved—until Aubrey Tanner returns.

DEAR DEBBIE, Freida McFadden
(January 27)

Debbie Mullen is losing it. For years, she has compiled all of her best advice into her column, Dear Debbie, where the wives of New England come for sympathy and neighborly advice. Through her work, Debbie has heard from countless women who are ignored, belittled, or even abused by their husbands. And Debbie does her best to guide them in the right direction. Or at

least, she did. These days, Debbie's life seems to be spiraling out of control. She just lost her job. Something strange is happening with her teenage daughters. And her husband is keeping secrets, according to the tracking app she installed on his phone. Now, Debbie's done being the bigger person. And now it's time for payback against all the people in her life who deserve it the most.

Booklist Starred Review



PENDERGAST: The Beginning,

Preston & Child

(January 27)

Prequel. It only took six months for the life of Special Agent Dwight Chambers to crumble around him. First, he lost his partner, and then, tragically, his wife. Returning to work at the New Orleans Field Office, Chambers is dismayed to find himself saddled with mentoring a brand new FBI agent—a certain A. X. L. Pendergast. As Chambers tries to pull himself together, his enigmatic and exasperating junior partner pulls an outrageous stunt that gets both of them suspended. Pendergast welcomes the banishment, because it gives him the opportunity to investigate a peculiar murder in Mississippi that has captured his fancy. Chambers grudgingly goes along. **DP**

THE BOURNE REVENGE,

Brian Freeman

(January 27)

Shadow – the head of Treadstone – has found evidence of massive Chinese espionage activity in the U.S. The spy

running the operations is a shadowy American known only by the codename Bai Ze. No one knows who he is, but when Shadow consults the Files – the hacked AI database she stole from the Chinese – she discovers that Jason Bourne encountered Bai Ze during an operation eight years earlier. The trouble is, Bourne doesn't remember him. As Bourne hunts for the elusive spy, he meets a reporter named Laney Reese who shares his strange affliction: eight years ago, Laney lost her entire memory, too. For Bourne, that can't be a coincidence. He's convinced that whatever happened to both of them is at the heart of the Chinese espionage operation.

MAKE IT OUT ALIVE,

Allison Brennan

Quinn & Costa #7

(January 27)

Three newlywed couples have disappeared from an exclusive resort in Florida, only to turn up dead soon after. With the location and the similarities between the female victims as their only leads, it's up to the FBI Mobile Response Team to catch a serial killer before anyone else ends up dead. And they have the perfect bait—Detective Kara Quinn, who bears an uncanny resemblance to the targeted women.

HER COLD JUSTICE,

Robert Dugoni

Keera Duggan #3

(January 27)

In a quiet South Seattle neighborhood, a suspected drug smuggler and his girlfriend are murdered in their home. When a young man named Michael Westbrook is accused of the brutal double homicide, his uncle JP Harrison turns to Keera Duggan to defend him. JP is Keera's trusted investigator, and he desperately needs Keera to save his nephew against escalating odds. The evidence is circumstantial – Michael worked with one of the victims, drugs were found in his possession, and he bolted from authorities. Ruthless star prosecutor Anh Tran has gotten convictions on much less. With the testimony of two prison informants, the case looks

grave.

THE CORMORANT HUNT,

Michael Idov
Ari Falk #2
(January 27)

Disheartened CIA officer Ari Falk, now hiding in the Republic of Georgia, is hailed as a hero by some and branded a traitor by others after blowing the lid off a massive conspiracy. But his quiet exile is shattered when a mission arises—one perfectly suited for someone as jaded and unpredictable as him. **Kirkus Starred Review**

THE BONE GARDEN,

Simon Beckett
Dr. David Hunter #7
(January 29)

Driving through the mountains in a fierce winter storm, David Hunter is forced to seek shelter at a remote village. But a one-night stop-over at the dilapidated Hillside House becomes deadly after a gruesome discovery in the depths of the surrounding forest. With communications down and the only road washed out by the storm, Hunter is unsure who - if anyone - he can trust. And as long-buried secrets of a feud amongst the locals begin to emerge, he knows that whatever dark past the isolated community might be hiding, there's no one he can call on for help.

This time he's on his own. Seventh in the series featuring forensic anthropologist Dr. David Hunter.

February, 2026

READ BETWEEN THE LIES,

Jesse Q. Sutanto
(February 1)

Fern's dream of becoming a published author is finally coming true. After years of rejection, her debut novel has sold, and she's ready to join the supportive online community of fellow debuts. But when she discovers her high school bully, Haven, has landed a major book deal and will be debuting alongside her, old wounds reopen.

TARGET ECHO, Alex Shaw

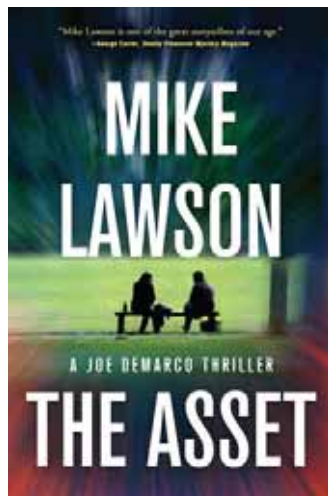
Wolf Six #3
(February 2)

Elite Ukrainian assassin Ruslan Akulov, aka Wolf Six, is a ghost. A weapon for hire forged in the fires of conflict and tempered by experience. Known by both the underworld and international intelligence agencies, he works alone, guided only by the next mission and his unwavering commitment to his personal kill code.

So when a routine contract in Argentina turns from simple to chaotic in the squeeze of a trigger, Akulov is thrown into a complex web of deceit and dangerous tests of loyalty. Akulov had heard of the French intelligence operative Sophie Racine - her reputation and skills are world-class, but when her business becomes his problem, Wolf Six must quickly learn to work with others.

WOLF HOUR, Jo Nesbo
(February 3)

A detective and a crime writer conduct parallel investigations, six years apart, into a series of puzzling murders.



THE ASSET, Mike Lawson
Joe DeMarco #19
(February 3)

Former Speaker of the House John Mahoney is approached by Diane Lake, an ex-CIA agent with a gift for Mahoney: she reveals that the wife of one of his biggest rivals in the U.S. Senate has a wife (Lydia Chang) who may be passing top secret information to the Chinese. Mahoney has two choices: 1. forward this information on to the FBI and pos-

sibly destroy the Senator's reputation, or 2. put his fixer Joe DeMarco on it to verify if the allegations are true. Mahoney chooses the latter, and DeMarco wonders if his boss has an ulterior motive. It doesn't take DeMarco long to discover that Lydia Chang is being blackmailed with a disturbing video of her daughter, a young Georgetown University student.

THE EXES, Leodora Darlington
(February 3)

Natalie has only ever wanted to find "the one." The perfect man, the happy family she never had. But each time she thinks she is finally getting somewhere, she's bitterly disappointed. Another red line through a list of exes. Then along comes James—wonderful, handsome James—and Natalie thinks her luck has finally turned. Maybe he's the one for her. Maybe he's the one she's been waiting for all along. Maybe he won't wind up dead.

THE PATIENT, Tim Sullivan
George Cross #3
(February 3)

DS George Cross can be rude, difficult, and awkward with people. But his unfailing logic and dogged pursuit of the truth means his conviction rate is the best on the force. Now, this unusual detective is met with an even more unusual case. When a young woman is found dead, the Bristol Crime Unit is quick to rule it a suicide: the woman had a long history of drug abuse. But her mother is convinced it was murder: her daughter had been clean for years and making strides in a new therapy program. As an outsider himself, DS Cross is drawn to cases involving the voiceless and the dispossessed. He is determined to defy his bosses and re-open the investigation.

THE FLACK, Brad Parks
(February 3)

Curt Hinton and Angel Reddish are like a Hollywood buddy flick come to life: former college roommates turned lifelong best friends who always have each other's backs. So when Angel offers Curt the chance to leave his job at a failing newspaper and take a lucrative

position as head of corporate communications at Balco, the Bay Area Logistics Company, Curt takes the leap.

Nothing bad can happen with Angel at his side. That illusion is shattered on Curt's first day at Balco, when he learns that Angel was killed the night before during a carjacking.

MURDER IN THE READING ROOM,

Con Lehane

42ND St. Library #6

(February 3)

Raymond Ambler, crime-fiction curator at New York City's prestigious 42nd Street Library, doesn't consider it a big deal when he misses a call from visiting professor Robin Cartwright . . . until she turns up dead in a hotel room.

JIGSAW, Jonathan Kellerman

Alex Delaware #41

(February 3)

This one looked like a slam dunk: a young woman found dead at her kitchen table, DNA on cigarette butts linking quickly to an ex-boyfriend with a criminal record. Or so homicide lieutenant Milo Sturgis thought. Then everything changed and a quick close turned into a mind-bending whodunit. That's when Milo called in psychologist Alex Delaware, his best friend and a long-term consultant on "those cases." The ones that are different.

IN HER DEFENSE,

Philippa Malicka

(February 3)

As a sensational celebrity libel trial unfolds, a young woman at the periphery secretly wields the power to make or break the case. But with her own hidden past, will she dare to speak up?

IT'S NOT HER, Mary Kubica

(February 3)

Courtney Gray's peaceful vacation turns into a nightmare when she discovers her brother and sister-in-law dead in their lakeside cottage. Her niece Reese is missing. Her nephew Wyatt is asleep upstairs—unharmed. As police swarm the quiet resort, dark truths about Courtney's family—and the town itself—begin to surface. Is Reese a victim... or the

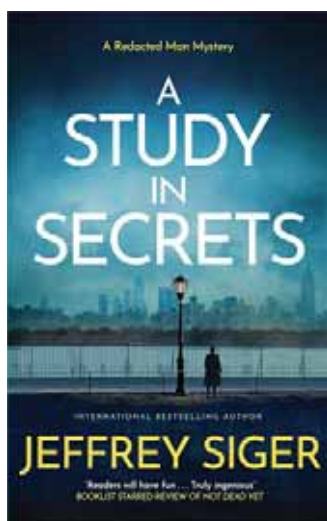
killer?

MAN ONE, Loren D. Estleman

Amos Walker

(February 3)

Young widow Sage Holland doesn't look like a murderer—and that's because she isn't one. The beautiful dame has driven non-stop from her home in frozen Alaska to seek out the services of private investigator Amos Walker, bringing not just the ice and snow with her. Sage has a stalker: her late-husband's vengeful brother, who's determined to make her pay for a crime she didn't commit. Someone killed David, but it wasn't her.



A STUDY IN SECRETS,

Jeffrey Siger

Redacted Man #1

(February 3)

Michael A lives a quiet, comfortable life since his retirement from the intelligence services. Practically a recluse, he spends his days imagining the lives of the anonymous people he watches in the park beneath the window of his elegant New York townhouse – number 221 – his every need tended to by his housekeeper, Mrs. Baker. For weeks, a girl has sat in the park every morning at dawn. Always alone. But one day her routine changes – and Michael realizes that she faces terrible danger. He makes an uncharacteristic decision to abandon his solitude and help her. Soon, Michael finds himself plunged into the New York underworld.

*****HOW TO KILL A GUY IN TEN**

DATES, Shailee Thompson

(February 6)

When Jamie Prescott and her best friend Laurie attend a speed-dating event, Jamie expects to meet a roster of mediocre men and indulge in some street food afterwards. She doesn't expect one of her dates to have his throat slit at their table during a blackout. After the lights come back on and there are more bodies on the floor, it becomes clear that dating can be a very dangerous pastime. **Kirkus, Publishers Weekly & Library Journal Starred Reviews**

WHAT EVIL HIDES,

Rachel Amphlett

Kay Hunter #15

(February 6)

A man's body is found in a Kentish hop field, his brutal death marked by horrific injuries. As Detective Kay Hunter begins to investigate, the case quickly reveals itself to be anything but routine. The local farming community is tight-lipped, the victim's background is unclear, and the evidence uncovers a trail of conflicting stories and long-held secrets.

ANTIHERO, Gregg Hurwitz

Orphan X #11

(February 10)

Once a black ops assassin for the government known as Orphan X, Evan Smoak broke with the program and went deep underground, using his operational rules and skills to help the truly desperate with nowhere else to turn. When Luke Devine, one of the most powerful men in the world, has a psychological crisis, Evan flies to the East Coast to help him. While there, he learns of a young woman who was kidnapped off the New York City subway, clearly in danger and in need of aid. With no name and few clues, Evan and his team track down the missing woman, who was assaulted and abandoned.

THE FINAL PROBLEM,

Arturo Perez-Reverte

(February 10)

June, 1960. Rough weather at sea

leaves a group of strangers stranded on the idyllic Greek island of Utakos, all guests of the only local hotel. Nothing could prepare them for what happens next: Edith Mander, a quiet British tourist, is found dead inside a beach cabana. What appears at first glance to be a clear suicide reveals possible signs of foul play to Ormond Basil, an out-of-work but still well-known actor who in his glory days portrayed the most celebrated detective of all time. Accustomed to seeing him display Sherlock Holmes' amazing powers of deduction on the big screen, the other guests believe that the actor is the best equipped to uncover the truth.

**Kirkus & Publishers Weekly
Starred Reviews**

THE HADACOL BOOGIE,

James Lee Burke
Robicheaux #25
(February 10)

When a cloaked, disfigured man leaves a dead woman in a garbage bag on Dave Robicheaux's property, he knows his world and family are about to change. With Valerie Benoit, a detective new to the Iberia Parish Sheriff's Department who is grappling with sexist and racist harassment from their colleagues, and the volatile but fiercely loyal Clete Purcel, Dave embarks on an investigation that brings him into the most dangerous moments of his career and threatens the lives of Valerie and his daughter Alafair. **Library Journal
Starred Review**

WARNING SIGNS, Tracy Sierra
(February 10)

A father-son ski weekend becomes a desperate fight for survival.

Christopher Farnsworth, **Robert B. Parker's BIG SHOT**
(Jesse Stone)
(February 10)

Police Chief Jesse Stone finds himself in the crosshairs of a rich hedge fund manager dead set on making Paradise Jesse's personal hell.

*****THE JILLS,** Karen Parkman
(February 10)

Virginia is a Jill—a cheerleader for

the NFL's Buffalo Bills—living the life of her dreams: she spends her weekdays practicing, her weekends cheering, and her nights hopping between bars and clubs with her teammates, including the fearless, charismatic Jeanine, whose friendship has given Virginia confidence in spades and helped her forget her troubled past with her estranged sister, Laura. One Sunday, Jeanine fails to show up for a game, and calls and texts to her go unanswered. Virginia embarks on an investigation into Jeanine's disappearance, aided by a network of Jills, ex-boyfriends, seedy fixtures of Buffalo's criminal underground, and unexpected figures from her past. **Publishers Weekly Starred Review**

*****THE MIDNIGHT TAXI,**

Yosha Gunasekera
(February 10)

Siriwathi Perera never expected to be a taxicab driver in New York City, struggling to make ends meet and still living with her parents at twenty-eight. The true-crime podcasts that keep Siri company as she drives don't do much to make up for the legal career she imagined for herself, or the brother she's grieving. When public defender Amaya Fernando gets into her cab, they make a quick connection through their shared Sri Lankan roots. Siri, whose social circle is limited to her grade-school best friend, Alex, thinks things might finally be looking up with this new potential friendship. But she's suddenly dropped into her own true crime when she discovers her next passenger murdered in the backseat, and she has to call Amaya sooner than she'd expected. **Publishers Weekly Starred Review**

THE KILLING TIME, Elly Griffiths
Ali Dawson #2—U.K. only so far
(February 12)

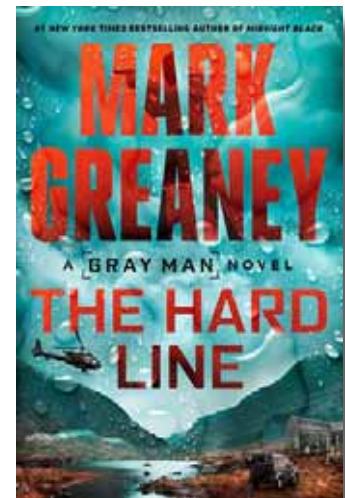
Ali Dawson is a police detective who leads a unit that investigates cases so cold her team must travel to the distant past to solve them. But Ali and the team haven't been allowed to time-travel ever since their technical expert, Jones, got stuck in Victorian London, never to be seen again.

To distract herself from meaningless

tasks, Ali decides to look into a present-day case - an apparent suicide of a young man who fell to his death from a high building. She believes the death is linked to a psychic medium called Barry Power, who convinced the boy he could fly.

UNDERDOGS, Stephen Leather
(February 12 U.K. - May 12 in U.S.)

Once a fearless SAS hero, Andy 'Deadman' Bird now battles the harsh streets of London after a catastrophic mission stripped him of his hearing, career, home and marriage. His only solace is Tyson, his fiercely loyal and battle-tested dog. When fate thrusts them into the path of a chilling alleyway murder, Andy and Tyson become the next targets. Who are these relentless hunters, and what dangerous secrets are they willing to kill for? Desperate and cornered, Andy reaches out to his former brothers-in-arms - a team who owe him their very lives.



THE HARD LINE, Mark Greaney
Gray Man #15
(February 17)

Somewhere at the top of the US Intelligence apparatus, security experts and intelligence operations worldwide are threatened. It starts with a blown safe house in Tunis. Then Court himself barely escapes from an ambush in the jungles of Nicaragua. Now key members of the U.S. counterintelligence community are being assassinated in their own neighborhoods. With the feds compromised, it's up to Court and his team to

stop the hit squads.

CROWN CITY, Naomi Hirahara
Japantown #2
(February 17)

Pasadena, 1903: Tensions are seething under Pasadena's bustling prosperity. Ryui is the victim of an anti-Japanese attack, and a painting is stolen from the studio of Toshio Aoki, Pasadena's most successful Japanese artist, who then hires Ryui and Jack to investigate.

THE DEVIL'S BIBLE, Steve Berry
Cotton Malone #20
(February 17)

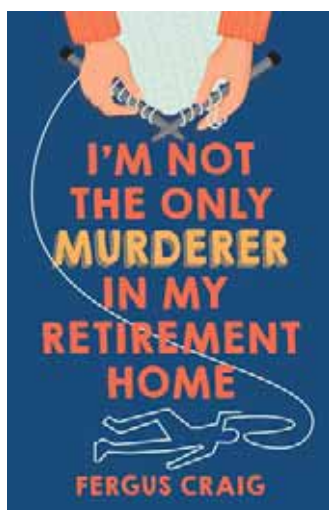
Former Justice Department operative, Cotton Malone, is called to Sweden when the younger sister of King Wilhelm I is kidnapped. The ransom demand? Hand over an 800-year-old book, the Codex Gigas—the largest illuminated medieval manuscript in the world. Claimed as war loot from Bohemia in 1648, it's been kept in Stockholm for nearly 400 years. Along the way it also acquired another more mysterious moniker ... The Devil's Bible. Now the Czech Republic wants the codex back, and Sweden has agreed to return it, but forces are at work to stop that deal from happening.

HER LAST BREATH,
Taylor Adams
(February 17)

After years of excuses, Tess has finally agreed to go caving with her best friend Allie. Their lives have diverged sharply since high school—Allie is a self-made travel influencer, while Tess is a shy (and claustrophobic) legal assistant. As Tess and Allie descend into the depths, they realize they're not alone. A stranger who claims to be a fellow caver harasses them. Confident, Allie insults the guy—and he retaliates. Soon, Tess is trapped inside a narrow crawl space hundreds of feet underground, fighting to stay alive.

CHILDREN OF THE SAVAGE CITY,
Elizabeth Heider
Nikki Serafino #2
(February 17)
A peaceful evening mass at the

historic Chiesa del Gesù Nuovo is shattered when a young au pair is killed in one of the cathedral's quiet chapels. The daughter of the US Ambassador sees it happen—but she'll speak only to one person: Nikki Serafino. Shaken by betrayal in her last high-profile case, Nikki has retreated from the relentless vigilance that once defined her work as liaison between Italian police and the US military. Withdrawn and mistrustful, she works her shifts, cares for her aging family, teaches self-defense classes, and avoids entanglement. But this case threatens her self-imposed invisibility—drawing her into a web of lies and resurfacing old wounds and buried loyalties.



I'M NOT THE ONLY MURDERER IN MY RETIREMENT HOME,

Fergus Craig
(February 17)

Carol is delighted to be leaving her tiny prison cell behind to take her place in a luxury retirement home. She's hoping her past as a serial killer won't come to light so she can make a few friends and find some murder-free hobbies. But it's not long before a fellow resident—who happens to be a former police commissioner—drops dead, and Carol's true identity is leaked—making catching up over daily activities of bingo and baking rather awkward. Just her luck, Carol soon realizes that the victim wasn't the only former law enforcement officer at Sheldon Oaks—it's filled to the brim with former cops, barristers, and gov-

ernment representatives, her newfound friends included. And everyone thinks Carol's guilt is a no-brainer, but she is ready to prove them dead wrong...without killing anyone, for once. **Publishers Weekly & Kirkus Starred Reviews**

*****WORSE THAN A LIE**,
Ben Crump
(February 17)

It's the night of November 4, 2008. America's first Black president has just been elected. And fifty-three-year-old Hollis Montrose—a Black ex-police officer from the suburbs of Chicago—has become the latest victim of a brutal attack. Hollis is shot ten times by four white men, but miraculously survives. But somehow Hollis winds up in jail, accused of a crime he didn't commit. Beau Lee Cooper was born serious, as if on an urgent mission with little time to waste. Raised in the tumultuous world of 1970s Texas, he always dreamed of becoming a lawyer and fighting for what's right, ever since he was a little boy reading *To Kill a Mockingbird*. And now, ten years into running his own law firm with his best friend and partner in crime, Nelson "Nellie" Rivers, and his suave right-hand-man, Brent "Cape" Capers, he feels he's finally making a difference. When Beau Lee learns about Hollis's situation, he's determined to help.

ADRIFT, Will Dean
(February 17)

Peggy and Drew are both aspiring writers who have moved to an isolated canal boat with their fourteen-year-old son. When Drew becomes jealous of Peggy's success, he moves the boat further from civilization. The more isolated they are, the worse things get and when Drew's gaslighting becomes too much, Peggy finally has had enough.

CARNEY, A. F. Carter
Delia Mariola #5
(February 17)

Baxter's a city on the move. You can't drive along a single street without running into a construction project. Captain Delia Mariola understands all of this, and the Baxter Police Depart-

ment is prepared to battle against the city's drug dealers, pimps, and stick-up artists. The department began recruiting shortly after the Nissan contract was awarded, which began the city's rapid transformation, but the commission vetting new hires rushed to bring in almost anyone with a law enforcement background. Men and women were added as fast as they applied, creating a vortex that perfectly suited a group of ex-cops from Missouri as corrupt as they are brutal..Delia's not afraid—she's got Tom Carney, an undercover cop who is giving her good intel on the **Publishers Weekly Starred Review**

WHEN I KILL YOU, B. A. Paris
(February 17)

Nell Masters thinks she has a stalker. From silent calls to her office to the mysterious bouquet of flowers with no card, she believes this is connected to a secret she's been hiding from everyone, including her new partner Alex. But Alex is also hiding secrets of his own. Fourteen years ago, Nell was known as Elle Nugent and was the last person to see Bryony Sanders getting into a strangers car. When Bryony was found murdered, Elle was sure the perpetrator was Brett Parker, a man she accused. Now, in present time, Nell questions if this is related to that event or if this is much, much worse.

*****A SOCIOPATH'S GUIDE TO A SUCCESSFUL MARRIAGE,**

M. K. Oliver
(February 17)

Being good might be its own reward, but Lalla can't pretend she hasn't missed the adrenaline rush that comes with transgressing. And, as a wife and mother, she's already an expert multitasker. So disposing of a body, framing a friend, and being the world's best homemaker should be easy to achieve. **Kirkus Starred Review**

THE CROSSROADS, C. J. Box
Joe Pickett #26
(February 24)

Marybeth Pickett gets the call she has always dreaded: her husband Joe is in critical condition with a gunshot

wound to the head. Joe was found in his pickup at Antler Creek Junction, a cross-roads connecting three ranches. Each road leading to a dangerous family. Each family with a different bone to pick with the local game warden. Marybeth and the new sheriff assume that Joe was ambushed by one of the families, but they have no idea which one since Joe didn't say where he was going or why. With Joe unconscious and fighting for his life with Marybeth at his side, Sheridan, April, and Lucy split up and investigate each of families.



PINKY SWEAR, Danielle Girard
(February 24)

Lexi thought she knew everything about Mara Vannatta. Best friends since middle school, they drifted apart after a tragedy derailed their senior year. But when Mara shows up on Lexi's doorstep sixteen years later fleeing an abusive husband, Lexi takes her in without question. Lexi's own marriage has been strained by her desire to have a baby, and when Mara offers to become her surrogate, their friendship feels stronger than ever. But four days before the due date, Mara disappears.

WHAT HAPPENED THAT NIGHT,
Nicci French
Maud O'Connor #3
(February 24)

Tyler Green, convicted of murdering his friend Leo at a student house party in 1993, has been released after almost three decades in prison. He has always

protested his innocence. On a warm evening in London, Tyler summons eight of his university friends who were present on that fateful night. Is it just a reunion -- or something else? With wine—and accusations—flowing liberally, the reunion descends into violent chaos, and one friend will end the night with their throat slit in the upstairs bedroom...the same way that Leo's was in 1993. **Library Journal Starred Review**

BOOKING FOR TROUBLE,
Jenn McKinlay
Library Lover #16
(February 24)

Just off the shores of the coastal Connecticut town of Briar Creek are two small islands, which library director Lindsey Norris visits with her new book-boat, inspired by the bookmobiles she's seen traveling across the country. Nothing, not even the infamous feud between the families who own the Split Islands, can stop Lindsey from getting books into the hands of readers. But when Lindsey and her boat captain husband, Mike Sullivan, discover a body on the rocky outcropping of one of the islands, Lindsey's new library venture quickly becomes a murder investigation.

TRUST NO ONE, James Rollins
(February 24)

The ritualistic murder of a British professor at the University of Exeter points to a startling cast of suspects: his own students. All are enrolled in a post-graduate program covering the history of witchcraft, folklore, and spiritualism. All evidence points to Sharyn Karr—an American student. Prior to the professor's death, he had thrust a centuries-old book upon her. It appears to be the handwritten and encrypted diary of an eighteenth-century mystic and occultist, the Comte de Saint-Germain. The professor begged her to keep the text safe, ending with a warning: Trust no one.

BLOOD RELAY, Devon Miheuah
(February 24)

Choctaw Detective Perry Antelope has been with her partner, Sophia Burns, for only six months. Perry is a seasoned investigator while the

ex-Olympian shot putter Sophia is a former street-smart police officer. Together, they are an intrepid pair with an established record of success. But when Perry and Sophia are called to investigate the disappearance of Dels Billy, a beloved women's Indian Horse Relay rider, they quickly realize that it's not as cut-and-dry as anything they've faced before.

THE HARVEY GIRL, Dana Stabenow
(February 24)

1890. The New Mexico Territory is a lawless frontier where criminals steal money and land with impunity. Everyone wears a six-gun and is ready and willing to draw it. In the new city of Montaña Roja, Fred Harvey's growing empire is threatened by the robberies plaguing his newest Harvey House restaurant. To get justice, he needs a skilled detective to go undercover and procure answers to questions the law will not ask. The assignment falls to Clare Wright, a young Pinkerton agent.

A WHIFF OF MURDER,
Angela M. Sanders
(February 24)

Some people read auras—a light or color that surrounds others, revealing their character or emotions. Lise Bloom reads ribbons—of fragrance, that is. Whether she's around old friends or new, fragrance often unfurls from them—an ability called “clairalience.” Hoping to gain insight into her gift, Lise works at the Lucky Lotus, a New Age sho, where, one morning, she finds the owners dead body.

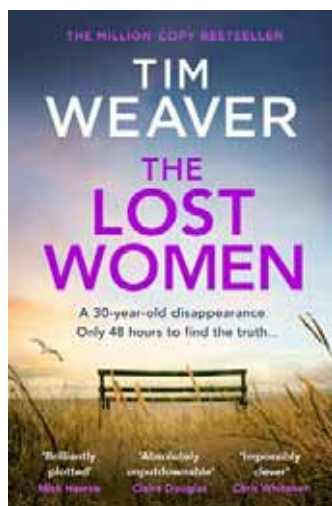
THE GIRLS BEFORE,
Kate Alice Marshall
(February 24)

Audrey is a search and rescue expert who never stopped looking for her ex-best friend, Janie, who disappeared when they were teenagers. Janie used to love the local legend of a forest witch who saves girls from bad men, but Audrey knows now that for every one saved, there's always another one lost. When she stumbles upon evidence in the forest that a teenage runaway might have actually been kidnapped from land belonging to the town's most prominent

family, she will have to dig through decades of secrets to reveal the biggest one of all: what happened to the girls before.

*****HOW TO GET AWAY WITH MURDER**, Rebecca Philipson
(February 24)

Detective Inspector Samantha Hansen has been on leave for six months, recovering from a breakdown she suffered at work, but when a fourteen-year-old girl is murdered in a local park, Sam jumps at the chance to return to the job and prove that she's still got what it takes to be the Yard's most successful homicide detective. One of the case's only leads is a copy of a self-help book found in the victim's backpack called *How To Get Away With Murder* by a man named Denver Brady. **Kirkus Starred Review**



THE LOST WOMEN, Tim Weaver
David Raker #14
(February 26)

Before he was a missing persons investigator, David Raker was a journalist – and there's one story that still haunts him. *The Lost Women*. Eighteen years ago, on the Cornish coast, three women were filming a documentary about a missing student...until they vanished too. With no bodies and no leads, the disappearances remain unsolved.

THE WEEKEND, T. M. Logan
(February 26)

When a group of friends rent a converted farmhouse in the Yorkshire Dales, they have little idea that this one

weekend may change the course of their lives forever. While out on a walk, a storm descends and the friends take shelter in the mouth of an old lead mine. Inside, they discover a backpack filled with more money than they've ever seen. Of course, they agree, they will hand the money to the police at the first opportunity. But as the storm continues and time passes, some of the party begin to think again.

March, 2026

THE TREE OF LIGHT AND FLOWERS, Thomas Perry
Jane Whitefield #10
(March 3)

A violent car crash brings on the premature birth of the baby that Jane Whitefield and her husband have hoped for, but it also shatters the period of calm in their lives. Within weeks, Jane's peaceful time as a new mother in a safe, harmonious home starts to revert to her harrowing previous life. She had spent over a decade rescuing and sheltering people from dangerous foes, taking them to new locations, and teaching them to live under new identities. It was something that she'd hoped to never have to do again. But there are still people who are determined to capture the woman who makes people disappear so they can force her to reveal where their potential victims are now. **Library Journal Starred Review**

RUBY FALLS, Gin Phillips
(March 3)

An historical mystery set almost entirely underground at the onset of the Great Depression, about the discovery of a 150-foot waterfall in the middle of a mountain, the unthinkable crime that happens in the caves, and a woman who's never felt more alive. **Kirkus, Booklist & Publishers Weekly Starred Reviews**

THE SECRET LIVES OF MURDERERS' WIVES, Elizabeth Arnott
(March 3)

Beverly, Elsie, and Margot are not your average housewives. They are all wives of convicted killers. During the sun-drenched summer of 1966, the

three women form an unlikely friendship after the discoveries of their husbands' brutal crimes. With their exes—some of California's most infamous murderers—dead or behind bars, they are attempting to forge a new future for themselves. They know people look at them and think only one thing: How could they not have known what their husbands were doing? And yet when a string of local killings hits the news, the three women—underestimated, overlooked, shrewd—decide to get to work. After all, who better to catch a killer than those who have shared their lives and homes with one?

THE POLITICIAN, Tim Sullivan
DS Cross #4
(March 3)

DS George Cross loves puzzles – he's good at them – and he immediately spots one when he begins investigating the death of former mayor Peggy Frampton. To most, the crime scene looks like a burglary that went horribly wrong. But George can see what others can't: This was murder.

After her political career ended, Peggy became a controversial blogger whose forthright opinions attracted a battalion of online trolls. And then there's her family: an unfaithful husband and a gambling-addicted son. With yet more enemies in her past, the potential suspects are unending.

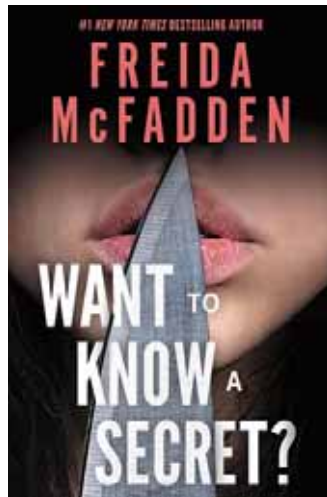
Cross must unpick the never-ending list of seedy connections to find her killer – but the sheer number of suspects is clouding his usually impeccable logic.

FINDING THE BONES,
Natalie Conyer
Australia/New Zealand only – so far
(March 3)

Sydney, 1980s: Belle Fitzgerald, young, rich and spirited, lives in Kings Cross, the city's bohemian heart. When she learns of plans to demolish her street and evict its residents, she commits to fighting the development, even though this brings her up against the Cross's crime lords and their servants, the notoriously corrupt local cops. Recklessly, dangerously, against her better judgment, she embarks on a passionate

affair with one of those cops, Sergeant Stanton Rose. Then Belle goes missing. Her disappearance becomes one of the nation's great mysteries.

Sydney, today: Stanton Rose, retired, is an Australian icon, celebrated for his undercover work in the Cross. Jackie Rose, his daughter, has followed in his footsteps. She's a homicide detective, uncompromising and ambitious. When Belle Fitzgerald's bones are discovered, Jackie is given the very cold and very public case.



WANT TO KNOW A SECRET?,
Freida McFadden
(March 3)

Influencer and baking sensation April Masterson knows the secret to the perfect gooey brownies. Or how to make key lime squares that will melt in your mouth. But if you keep watching her offline, you may find out some other secrets about April. Secrets she'd rather you didn't know.

Like... Where did her son go when he snuck out late at night? What was she doing with the local soccer coach behind fogged windows? And what's buried in her backyard?

THE STAR FROM CALCUTTA,
Sujata Massey
Purveen Mistry #5
(March 3)

India, 1922: Perveen Mistry, the only female lawyer in Bombay, has secured her biggest client yet: Champa Films, a movie studio run by director Subhas Ghoshal and his wife, Rochana, the

biggest name in Indian cinema. In the public eye, Rochana is notorious for her beauty and her daring stunts—behind the scenes, she has recently left the studio in Calcutta that made her famous, and the studio owner is enraged by what he claims is a breach of contract. Rochana needs Perveen's legal help to extricate Champa Films from the impending controversy.

A GHASTLY CATASTROPHE,
Deanna Raybourn
Veronica Speedwell #10
(March 3)

Veronica and Stoker are practically dying for a new adventure, but when their wish is granted, they find themselves up against a secret society and a darkly seductive duo

*****A BAD, BAD PLACE**,
Frances Crawford
(March 3)

Glasgow, 1979: If it hadn't been for her wee stupid dog, Sid Vicious, twelve-year-old Janey Devine might never have stumbled upon the corpse of Samantha Watson. And then maybe she'd still be able to sleep at night. And maybe her nana wouldn't be so worried all the time. And maybe Billy "The Ghost" Watson, a notorious gangster, wouldn't be on her tail—for it's Billy's daughter who was left for dead on those train tracks, and now Billy wants answers. While Janey swears she can't remember the details of that morning, the cops think she's hiding something—and indeed, there's something she knows that she's not quite ready to tell anyone, not even her nana, who won't rest until this whole thing is behind them.

STRANGERS IN THE VILLA,
Robyn Harding
(March 3)

Sydney Lowe's life in New York is shattered when her husband, Curtis, admits to a meaningless affair with a client. Begging for forgiveness and vowing to prove his devotion, Curtis suggests the couple retreat to a remote hilltop house in Spain to repair their marriage. High above the Mediterranean, Sydney and Curtis are working on the isolated

property and their relationship when a pair of Australian travelers turns up at their door in dire need of help.

THE DARK TIME, Nick Petrie
Peter Ash #9
(March 10)

Katelyn Thorsen, known as KT to her friends and enemies, is an independent journalist who receives a very specific death threat. Fortunately, Peter Ash has arrived in town to protect KT at the request of his girlfriend, June Cassidy. From the moment of his arrival, he's thrown into a maelstrom of violence trying to protect KT and her daughter and discover the source of the death threat. **DP**

A DAY OF JUDGMENT,
Charles Todd
Inspector Rutledge #
(March 10)

July, 1921: England is suffering a heatwave and the coast of Northumberland, just across the border from Scotland, is filled with holiday-makers bird watching and enjoying the beaches. Pilgrims also come to visit the home of Saints Cuthbert and Aiden—the founders of Christianity in England—located on the “Holy Island” of Lindisfarne, accessible by a causeway at low tide. When the murdered body of a local man washes ashore just south of Lindisfarne, the government and the Church of England are concerned about protecting both the reputation of the Church and the sacred sites that are a destination for hundreds of pilgrims at this time of year. With his ability to move in the highest social and political circles, Rutledge is sent by Scotland Yard to solve this crime and dispel any association with the Church. **Publishers Weekly Starred Review**

SERVED HIM RIGHT, Lisa Unger
(March 10)

Ana Blacksmith has gathered her closest friends and sister Vera for a brunch to celebrate her recent break-up from her boyfriend Paul. But when shocking news about Paul arrives, all eyes are on Ana, the angry ex with a bad reputation. Suspicions only intensify when Ana's best friend falls deathly ill

after the brunch.

*****THE PIE & MASH DETECTIVE AGENCY**, J. D. Brinkworth
(March 10)

Jane Pye and Simon Mash are a millennial couple with a little extra time on their hands. Jane was recently let go from her position as a back-end programmer, having never been quite sure what that meant. And Simon's career as a corporate collaboration consultant seems to be less collaborating and more scrolling the internet in search of matching velour tracksuits and well-balanced charcuterie boards. When they sign up for a private detective class on a whim, they quickly realize they've bitten off more than they can chew.



THE DANGEROUS STRANGER,
Simon Mason
DI Ryan Wilkins #5
(March 12)

On a warm and pleasant evening in Oxford, rioters outside a hotel full of asylum seekers set a young refugee on fire. The city -- the country -- convulses in shock. Is this who we are? It's international news of the very worst kind, and the Chief Constable demands immediate and exemplary action in bringing the perpetrators to justice. The detectives leading the investigation fill him with misgivings, however: DIs Ryan and Ray Wilkins (no relation), one Oxford-educated, the other Oxford-trailer park. He doesn't understand why they work together. 'Do they even get on?'

'Somehow that doesn't seem necessary,' their Superintendent replies.

REAPER, Vanda Symon
City of Shadows #2
(March 12)

Max Grimes is homeless, living on the streets of Auckland – among the forgotten, the invisible. But now someone is hunting the homeless, killing them one by one. No one cares. Except Max.

Trying to put his shattered life back together, Max is pulled into a deadly game when a face from his past reappears, reopening wounds he thought were long buried. As whispers of a Grim Reaper spread terror through the city, Max must race against time – not only to find the killer, but to outrun the ghosts chasing him.

EVERYONE IN THIS BANK IS A THIEF, Benjamin Stevenson
Ernest Cunningham #4
(March 17)

I've spent the last few years solving murders. But a bank heist is a new one, even for me. I've never been a hostage before. The doors are chained shut. No one in or out. Which means that when someone in the bank is murdered, everyone is a suspect. **THE BANK ROBBER, THE MANAGER, THE SECURITY GUARD, THE KID, THE FILM PRODUCER, THE PRIEST, THE RECEPTIONIST, THE PATIENT, THE CAREGIVER, ME.** Turns out, more than one person planned to rob the bank today. You can steal more from a bank than just money.

*****MY GRANDFATHER, THE MASTER DETECTIVE**, Masateru Konishi
(March 17)

To solve real-life mysteries, Kaede turns to her beloved grandfather, who retains a keen sharpness of mind despite his dementia, and who was once a key member of The Waseda Mystery Club. From impossible locked room murders to confounding missing persons cases, the grandfather-granddaughter duo "weave stories" to get to the bottom of every mystery. But all the while, an insidious shadow from Kaede's past slowly closes in on her.

THE ANTIQUE HUNTER'S MURDER AT THE CASTLE, C. L. Miller
(March 17)

Hot on the heels of an art forger, a member of the Lockwood Antique Hunter's Agency disappears while investigating an isolated castle deep in Scottish countryside. Freya and Aunt Carole race to her last known location and arrive in the wintry, snow-covered Scottish Borders.

At the castle, they discover the body of a murdered laird in the vegetable garden and that his priceless collection of silverware has been stolen. Local police believe Freya's missing team member was involved with the robbery and murder...but where is she now?

THE HIDING SEASON, Ava Glass
(March 17)

After a painful divorce, Maya Landry is in desperate need of a fresh start, which she finds deep in the Rocky Mountains of Montana. Maya's relieved when she's hired as a summer keeper of billionaire-owned ski lodges left empty after snow season ends, and her new life of peace and isolation is going exactly as hoped . . . until she stumbles across a dead body on the living room floor of one of the lodges. There's no cell service on the resort, and by the time she's able to find a signal and call the police, the body is gone. In fact, there's no evidence a body was ever there at all.

FINLAY DONOVAN CROSSES THE LINE, Elle Cosimano
(March 17)

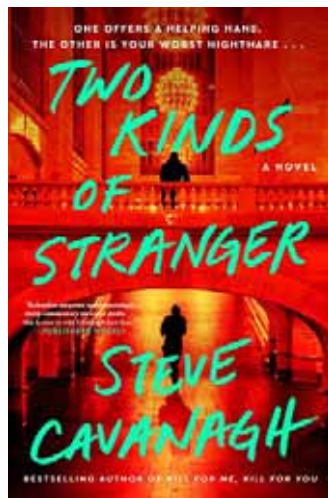
Finlay Donovan's nanny and partner-in-crime, Vero, has been extradited from Virginia to Maryland, where she's facing criminal charges for a theft she swears she didn't commit. Threatening messages keep arriving on Finlay's mother's door, demanding Vero "turn over the money . . . or else." And if she doesn't figure out who really stole her former sorority's treasury funds, her next home might be a prison cell. **Publishers Weekly Starred Review**

MISSING, E. A. Jackson
(March 17)

A detective returns to a thirty-year-old case—an infamous disappearance in London—that has haunted her entire career and now may jeopardize her future.

BLOODLUST, Sandra Brown
(March 17)

Two years ago, Detective Mitch Haskell lost his wife to a vicious act of retribution, and has since attributed her murder to two men: Roland Malone and the unidentified mastermind of the crime known only as Oz. Malone, a ruthless executioner and drug dealer who fronts as a restaurant owner, neutralizes so cleanly that he doesn't leave a trace. And he performs his handiwork at the biddings of Oz, the faceless kingpin of a drug trafficking operation whose name alone evokes terror. Obsessively vowing to avenge his late wife's murder, Mitch has been on a downward spiral, jeopardizing his closest relationships and drinking excessively to numb his pain.



TWO KINDS OF STRANGER,
Steve Cavanagh
Eddie Flynn #9
(March 24)

Social media influencer, Elly Parker, had the perfect life, that is until she discovered her husband had been having an affair with her best friend. But as hurt, betrayed, unmoored as Elly is, she has made it her mission to help others in need. Even strangers. When Elly meets a man on the steps to the subway platform, crutches in one hand and a yellow

suitcase by his feet, she can't help but feel sorry for him. Just as he planned. This small act of kindness sets off a change of events more terrifying than anything she ever could imagine. To survive, Elly will need to convince the world what happened to her was real. She needs a lawyer who can bend the rules to find the truth. Eddie Flynn and his team must find the stranger with the yellow suitcase.

THE DELIVERY,
Andrew Welsh-Huggins
Mercury Carter #2
(March 24)

Merc Carter is not your typical deliveryman. A former postal inspector, he specializes in moving sensitive or dangerous packages—of all sorts—from point A to B. And sometimes he needs his gun to do so. Carter's current mission leads him to Providence, Rhode Island, but his delivery is interrupted when he comes across a woman badly injured in a car wreck in the pouring rain. Then a man with a gun appears warning Carter away from the scene and Carter leaps into action, disarming the attacker and rescuing the crash victim. Just as Carter thinks the danger has passed, he discovers a deeper mystery stemming from the crash.

ENEMY OF MY ENEMY, Alex Segura
Daredevil Marvel #2
(March 24)

When reports come in that the Kingpin and a police officer have been killed and that Frank Castle (aka the Punisher) has turned himself in for it, Matt Murdock senses holes in the narratives the media and the streets are quick to run with. Both criminals have been Matt's nemeses when he dons the cowl of the Daredevil, and there's no denying that New York is better off without its Kingpin and with the Punisher behind bars. And yet . . . while the Punisher is a murderous vigilante, he doesn't kill cops. And he doesn't turn himself in.

FROM THE DUST, David Swinson
(March 31)

Graham Sanderson thought he'd left it all behind. His years as a Washington,

DC, homicide detective, his tragically dead wife, pain, violence. Taking over his father's house in the remote Finger Lakes region of rural New York, and looking after his shut-in brother, Tommy, seemed like a respite. That is, until the first body is found. The chief of the town's small police jurisdiction, who is also a family friend, asks for Graham's assistance. Graham's instincts immediately kick in and he soon discovers there's more to the area – the people, its brutally quiet, sophisticated hierarchies – than he or his family ever knew.

Publishers Weekly Starred Review

SORRY FOR YOUR LOSS,

Georgia McVeigh
(March 31)

Meet Iris: a dark soul with a propensity for obsession, still reeling from a recent loss, who relies on a local grief group to keep her grounded and out of trouble. And now meet Jack: a cagey widower who shows up at a meeting one night and jolts both of them back to life. From the moment Jack first takes a shabby plastic chair in the circle, he is positively dashing. And Iris can't help but feel that fate has brought them together. But their chance encounter sends them racing through a series of hairpin twists where nothing is as it seems and no one plays by the rules.

Ted Bell's WARMONGER, Ryan Steck
Alex Hawke #14
(March 31)

Lord Alexander Hawke's hunt for the Warmonger—a shadowy figure orchestrating chaos across the globe—is put on hold so that he may undertake an urgent mission for the Crown. His assignment: Travel to Russia, escorting the lovely Dr. Ariadne Silk; confront his archnemesis, Vladimir Putin; and recover a secret document that threatens to shake the British monarchy to its core.

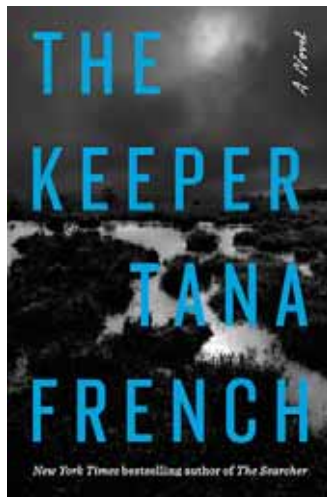
THE MOST MYSTERIOUS BOOKSHOP IN PARIS, Mark Pryor
(March 31)

Hugo Marston has led an exciting life as an FBI profiler and the US embassy's head of security, but now he's ready to embrace a quieter existence as a book-

seller in the Marais district of Paris. His former employer, however, has other plans for him. A prominent American citizen is the COO of a boutique chocolate emporium in Paris, where they've received a mysterious and threatening note. A blackmailer who goes by the name The Shadow wants half a million euros or else their "darkest secret will be revealed."

*****A GOOD PERSON**, Kirsten King
(March 31)

Lillian and Henry have been enjoying each other's company, especially in bed. Even though Lillian's best friend calls it a "situationship," Lillian is determined to lock Henry down—and she has a plan. She'll be the best, most accommodating version of herself until he falls in love with her. But when Henry blindsides Lillian with a breakup, Lillian exacts revenge by performing a drunken hex on him. Lillian expects Henry to come crawling back to her. What she doesn't quite anticipate is becoming a prime suspect in his murder case when he's found dead.



THE KEEPER, Tana French
Cal Cooper #3
(March 31)

Sweet, loving Rachel Holohan was about to be engaged to the son of the local big shot. Instead, she's dead in the river. In a close-knit small Irish town, a death like this isn't simple. It comes wrapped in generations-old grudges and power struggles, and it splits the townland in two. Retired Chicago detective

Cal Hooper has friends here now, and he owes them loyalty, but his fiancée Lena wants nothing to do with Ardnakelty's tangles. As the feud becomes more vicious, their settled peace starts to crack apart. And when they uncover a scheme that casts a new light on Rachel's death and threatens the whole village, they find themselves in the firing line.

KILLING ME SOFTLY, Sandie Jones
(March 31)

Charlie and Freya used to be the picture-perfect couple. They had it all . . . until one night a devastating accident tears their lives apart, and they're awoken by police at their door, asking whether they are aware that their car had been involved in a hit and run.

VENGEANCE IN VENICE,
Erica Ruth Neubauer
Jane Wunderly #7
(March 31)

Venice, 1927: As romantic as it is mysterious, the Floating City is a dream destination for the newlyweds Jane and Redvers, but they'll soon discover the twisting canals hide more mystery than they expected. It begins when they are invited to an elaborate party at Clara Morton's stunning palazzo on the Grand Canal. The affair is as eccentric as the hostess, who is dressed as Medusa, and features everything from snakes to her pet cheetah to tarot card readings. The fete also features a fresh corpse—Clara's ex-husband, found dead in the garden with marks around his neck.

April, 2026

THE EDGE OF DARKNESS,
Vaseem Khan
Malabar House #6
(April 7)

India, 1951. After wilfully ignoring orders, Persis Wadia, India's first female police detective, is exiled from Bombay to the wild and mountainous Naga Hills District. As India's first post-Independence election looms, and tensions rise across the country, Persis finds herself banished to the Hotel Victoria, a crumbling colonial-era relic, her career in

tatters. But when a prominent politician is murdered in his locked room at the Victoria, his head missing, she is thrust back into the fray.

*****THE ENDING WRITES ITSELF,**

Evelyn Clarke

(April 7)

Arthur Fletch, one of the world's bestselling novelists, is a reclusive genius known for his iconic protagonists and fiendish twists. When six struggling authors are invited to spend a weekend on his private Scottish island, they arrive to discover a shocking secret: Arthur Fletch is dead . . . and his last book is unfinished. Desperate to publish the novel, Fletch's agent and editor have summoned these writers in the hope that one of them will imagine a worthy ending for this final book. To sweeten the deal, they are offering an irresistible prize: in addition to ghost-writing the last chapter—for a mind-boggling sum—they will also help the lucky writer successfully re-launch their own career, guaranteeing future bestsellers. The catch: the writers have just seventy-two hours to finish Fletch's magnum opus. It's the perfect plot. All it needs is a killer ending.

REVENGE PREY, John Sandford

Davenport #36

(April 7)

Leonard Summers is a former high-ranking Russian intelligence officer who defected to the U.S. after providing critical information about Russian spies in U.S. government service. Leonard, his wife Martha, and son Bernard have spent the past year holed up in a CIA facility near Washington. After the CIA makes a deal with the U.S. Marshal Service's Witness Protection Program (WPP), Leonard's family is transported to Minneapolis. The Summers are received at their destination by Lucas Davenport and fellow marshal Shelly White. Unbeknownst to them, the WPP group has been tracked by a Russian hit team.

THE MONK, Tim Sullivan

DS Cross #5

(April 7)

DS George Cross has always wondered why his mother left him when he was a child. Now that she is back in his life, he suddenly has answers—but this unexpected reunion is not anything he's used to dealing with. So when the body of a monk is found savagely beaten to death in a woodland near Bristol, Cross is eager to throw himself into the case.



GUNNER, Alan Parks

(April 7)

March 1941. Joseph Gunner is back on the streets of Glasgow after being wounded on the front lines in France. Keeping the pain in his leg at bay with the help of morphine, Gunner, a former detective, is hoping to lie low as the Luftwaffe begins bombing Glasgow. But when he runs into his old boss Drummond, he is persuaded to help examine a body found in the wreckage. When it turns out to be that of a German, mutilated to disguise his identity, Gunner reluctantly agrees to investigate. **DP**

THE DEAD CAN'T MAKE

A LIVING, Ed Lin

Taipei Night Market #5

(April 7)

Ed Lin's Night Market series returns, with its Joy-Division-loving, record-collecting drummer as he runs a food stand in Taipei's popular Night Market and solves crimes in his spare time.

AGNES SHARP AND THE WED-

DING TO DIE FOR, Leonie Swann

(April 7)

The octogenarian housemates at Sunset Hall are busy preparing for the wedding of one of their own, the blind and blushing bride Bernadette, but as the big day approaches, they must fend off a mysterious killjoy from the past. With some assistance from a private investigator, Agnes digs into the case of the poison-pen letter, determined to ensure the wedding goes off without a hitch . . . aside from the bodies they've already had to hide from the bride.

THE GIRLS TRIP, Ally Condie

(April 7)

Hope, Ash, and Caro met at an online book club. Over the past two years, they've been there for each other in every way—except in person. When each of their lives reach a crossroads, they decide to meet in real life at the gorgeous Sonnet Resort at Eden National Park. Hope, an actress, has become entirely too famous and needs to get away from it all. Ash, a successful online entrepreneur, isn't sure what has happened to her marriage. Caro, a doctor, has lost a patient and doesn't know if she wants to carry on or start all over. And none of them are telling each other the full story.

*****THE SILVER FISH,** Connor Martin

(April 7)

Journalist Danielle "Dani" Moreau has spent a lifetime trying to outrun the privilege she was born into. Fresh off a personal tragedy, she lands in Ghana to uncover corruption in the local oil industry. But when she crosses paths with James Aidoo, an idealistic young Ghanaian whose father is a local populist politician, Dani soon finds herself chasing a scoop that involves an American operative with a violent past, a Ghanaian double agent, and a fight between the United States and China over one of the world's most dangerous and least-known technologies: fiber optic cables.

STAGED EVIDENCE,

Traci Hunter Abramson

Pen & Dagger #2

(April 7)

When Tessa Seidel delivers costumes to a Manhattan television studio late at

night, she expects an empty set—not a murder scene. After stumbling upon a woman's body and nearly being attacked by a man fleeing the scene, Tessa escapes with no idea who to trust—and a fear that the killer knows who she is. Desperate, she runs to a friend's beach house in the Hamptons, where Broadway playwright Parker Sawyer is retreating to finish his next script. But he knows danger when he sees it and offers to shelter Tessa, even when they find out she is being accused of committing the murder.

LAST ONE OUT, Jane Harper
(April 14)

Ro used to love Carralon Ridge, but that was before her college-age son disappeared while working on an oral history of the town. Upon returning to the fading village for the anniversary of his disappearance, Ro becomes obsessed with finding out what really happened to her son.

HOPE RISES, David Baldacci
Walter Nash #2
(April 14)

Walter Nash, working under the alias of Dillon Hope, is on the road to revenge after becoming an informant for the FBI against a global criminal operation headed up by Victoria Steers. Steers has ripped everything Nash held dear away from him. He has nothing left to lose and with long, rigorous training under his belt the gentle and sensitive Nash has transformed into something he never thought he'd be: a physically imposing man with lethal skills. And now he has only goal left in life: taking down Victoria Steers.

Robert B. Parker's BOOKED,
Alison Gaylin
Sunny Randall #13
(April 14)

World famous author Melanie Joan Hall asks for Sunny's help in tracking down Book Babe, the screen-name of an enormously popular book reviewer, who has trolled her with a deeply insulting one-star review. This usually wouldn't matter except that Book Babe has thousands of followers, and her unwarranted

blast has Melanie's publisher threatening to pull all her books.

POMONA AFTON CAN TOTALLY CATCH A KILLER, Bellamy Rose
(April 14)

Pom finds herself in the middle of a murder mystery that threatens her up-and-coming charity foundation and—worst of all—her romantic life. PBO

WHEN THE WOLVES ARE SILENT,
C. S. Harris
St. Cyr #21
(April 14)

London, 1816: When a notorious young aristocrat is burned alive on a windswept hill popular with neo-Druids, former cavalry officer Sebastian St. Cyr, Viscount Devlin, finds himself plunged into a murder investigation shadowed by tales of ancient human sacrifices and long-buried secrets.



DEATH TIMES SEVEN, Anne Perry
Daniel Pitt #7
(April 14)

1913: Junior attorney Daniel Pitt must step in for his friend, fellow attorney Toby Kitteridge, whose parents have been brutally attacked. Toby's mother is dead and his father, a village vicar, is barely alive. With Toby returning to the family home in rural Ipswich, struggling with grief and disbelief, Daniel remains in London to substitute for Toby and defend Peter Ward, on trial for the sexual assault and murder of a young woman.

HOLLYWOOD PAYBACK,
Jon Lindstrom
(April 14)

Twenty years ago, Jake Ferguson threw his life away. Now Jake's reentering society—coming home to an LA he no longer recognizes and to a life that has lost all meaning. Then he meets Carla, a waitress who understands him better than he expects, and he begins to believe deliverance may be possible after all. Until one night, a murder is committed right in front of him, and Jake knows he's been set up.

*****MURDER MINDFULLY**,
Karsten Dusse
(April 14)

Criminal defense lawyer Björn Diemel has been given an ultimatum: repair his work-life balance, or his wife will leave him—and take their daughter. He reluctantly starts a mindfulness course, and to his surprise, it's a revelation. He becomes calmer, happier, and more focused as he starts to understand what's really important in life. When his worst client, brutal crime boss Dragan Sergowicz, tries to interfere with his precious family time, Björn discovers that even murder can be a mindfulness exercise to protect his peace.

THE INSOMNIACS,
Allison Winn Scotch
(April 14)

In the city that never sleeps, it's not always easy to share what's on your mind with the people who know you best. Huddled in an all-night diner over coffee and pancakes, a lonely middle-aged mom, an injured baseball pro, an elusive retiree, and a young waitress examine the thoughts that plague them in the middle of the night. Within a few restless months, the group of strangers have become a fragile family. And when one of them goes missing in the dead of night, they're thrust into a propulsive mystery.

SPIES AND OTHER GODS,
James Wolff
(April 14)

The Head of British Intelligence is having a bad day. Only six months off

retirement and Sir William Rentoul is wondering if he'll make it that far, what with the sudden descent of a brain fog dense enough to turn every day into a series of small humiliations. To make matters worse, when parliamentary researcher Aphra McQueen is brought in to investigate an internal complaint, she discovers something horrifying: the murder of nine Iranian dissidents. The elusive assassin, nicknamed CASPIAN, kills across borders, forcing intelligence services throughout Europe into an alliance. Their only lead? An unsuspecting dentist in the UK.

LIAR'S CREEK, Matt Goldman
(April 21)

Clay Hawkins isn't a stranger to the secrets of his hometown, Riverwood, Minnesota. After twenty years away, Clay has recently returned home from abroad with his twelve-year-old son. His relationship with his father, the recently replaced sheriff, is as strained as ever. But when Clay's beloved uncle disappears, the three generations of Hawkinses must overturn every stone in Riverwood and confront deep familial wounds to find the one person who brings them together.

SHADOW STRIKE, Brad Taylor
Pike Logan #20
(April 21)

After its proxies are devastated and its offensive capability pummeled in the latest war in the middle east, a rogue group of Iranian regime officials create a brazen plot to strike back at their hated enemies once and for all. And there's only one assassin with the skills to pull it off: Abdul Rahman, known in the shadows as the Ghost. When a routine prison transfer is ambushed, the Ghost escapes and is given the assignment. The only Operator who can hunt him down is the man who stopped him before: Pike Logan.

THE SECRETS OF THE ABBEY,
Jean-Luc Bannalec
Brittany #11
(April 21)

Summer in Brittany has carried merrily into October, bringing warm,

sunny days and balmy nights. For Commissaire Georges Dupin and his team, it also brings a heavy blow. Second inspector Kadeg's aunt has passed away after being struck by a series of omens of death. And when Kadeg travels to the former abbey where his aunt lived, he's attacked and critically injured.

TO THE END OF RECKONING,
Joseph Moldover
(April 21)

Twenty-three-year-old Lukas Moore has returned to his hometown of Faith, New York, and left his burgeoning acting career behind to care for his father. Dr. Richard Moore is a psychiatrist known for being nearly as misanthropic as he is brilliant, but a recent traumatic brain injury has left him dependent on his begrudgingly attentive son and has changed his worldview in unexpected ways. Attuned to the slightest detail, Dr. Moore now sees mysteries where other people see settled facts—nowhere more so than in the disappearance of his former colleague and neighbor Dr. Jason Grant.

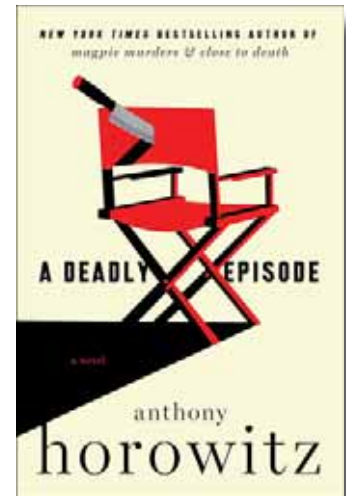
MAD MABEL, Sally Hepworth
(April 21)

Elsie Mabel Fitzpatrick is eighty-one years old. She's lived on her idyllic street, Kenny Lane, for sixty years--longer than anyone else. Aside from being a curmudgeon who minds everyone else's business, few would suspect that Elsie has a past that she has worked exceedingly hard at concealing. Because when it comes to murder, no one ever suspects little girls or old ladies. And Elsie Mabel Fitzpatrick, once a little girl and now an old lady, has a strange history of people in her life coming to a foul end.

BODY OF LIES, Jo Callaghan
Kat & Lock #4
(April 23)

DCS Kat Frank returns to work at the Future Policing Unit after a tragic loss, only to find herself thrust into a new high-profile case. On the night of Halloween a local MP is found murdered, with a taunting message written in binary code that seems to target Kat specifically: Catch me if you can. The

victim's anti-AI sentiments suggest a political motive, and as Kat investigates with her partner AIDE Lock – the world's first AI detective – she finds herself once again battling her own prejudices about the technological future he represents. But when a cyberattack takes out the National Grid, Kat and Lock have to race against the clock to track down the hacker before thousands die. (Described as the last of the Kat & Lock series.)



A DEADLY EPISODE,
Anthony Horowitz
Hawthorne & Horowitz #6
(April 28)

Ex-Detective Inspector Daniel Hawthorne is dead. Or, rather, the actor playing him in the film adaptation of *The Word is Murder* is. Rising star David Caine has been stabbed, and it seems that everyone on the set had a motive.

A VIOLENT MASTERPIECE,
Jordan Harper
(April 28)

Jordan Harper returns to the underbelly of Los Angeles, following a live-streamer, a lawyer and a woman who caters to the superrich as they navigate an amoral and dangerous world.

ONE SECOND AWAY, Rick Mofina
(April 28)

One sunny day in California, Jessie is hugging her nine-year-old son, Dylan, goodbye at the airport. He's travelling by himself, all the way across the country, to visit his father, Jessie's soon-to-be

ex-husband, and his grandparents. Her heart breaks, but she puts on a brave face and gives her son one last wave as a flight attendant leads him away.

Several hours later, Jessie gets a frantic call from Dylan's grandmother in New York. Dylan is missing.

THIS WEEKEND DOESN'T END WELL FOR ANYONE, Catherine Mack
(April 28)

Eleanor Dash can never catch a break. Not only has she had to solve two real-life murder plots in the past year, but both times it was when she was meant to be on vacation. Now she's finally got a ticket to a relaxing weekend?an all-inclusive resort at the Bahamas where she's speaking at a conference for murder mystery writers?but she arrives to find a body on the floor of her hotel room. Because of course she does.

CLAWED AND DANGEROUS, Rita Mae Brown & Sneaky Pie Brown
Mrs. Murphy #34
(April 28)

The leaves have fallen in Crozet, Virginia, and with a sudden downpour of cold rain, autumn gloom has settled. But Harry and her best friend, Susan, are determined to cheer up the town, and with the help of a kind local doctor, they just might succeed. Not only is Dr. Anglin kind and generous, he's also the owner of multiple properties, and he agrees to let Harry and Susan use one of his homes to throw a spooky Halloween bash. Harry and Susan quickly bury themselves in the flurry of planning: witches, ghosts, and headless horsemen abound. But around town, things grow even spookier when a local towns person turns up dead.

FAIR CHASE, Travis Mulhauser
(April 28)

There hasn't been a gray wolf in Michigan's lower peninsula in over 100 years, but when one migrates onto the Sawbrook family's vast acreage, the small community of Cutler finds itself in the throes of a panic. The state wants the wolf moved, the locals and the developers want it dead, and the Sawbrooks see its return as a decisive victory in their

battle to preserve the natural world in northern Michigan.

HOW TO CHEAT YOUR OWN DEATH, Kristen Perrin

Castle Knoll #3
(April 28)

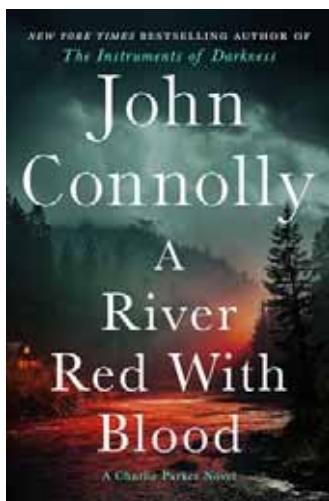
When Annie Adams heads to London to visit her famous artist mother, Laura, the last thing she expects to find is a dead body. Least of all for it to be Laura's new protégée, left in an alley with her heart surgically removed from her chest.

REDBELLY CROSSING,

Candice Fox
(April 28)

Since a violent confrontation tore apart a family five years ago, brothers and fellow cops Russell and Evan haven't spoken a word to each other. When they're both assigned to the murder of a young journalist in the tiny town of Redbelly Crossing, their paths are forced to cross again.

May, 2026



A RIVER RED WITH BLOOD,

John Connolly
Charlie Parker #23
(May 5)

In a darkly brilliant thriller set in Maine's rural Kennebec River Valley, the body of a young runaway from a "troubled teens" school has been found in the water, seemingly drowned, while a teenage girl has gone missing, believed

dead. Now it is up to one man, private investigator Charlie Parker, to find the connection, and bring two evils—one new and one ancient—to an end.

FIVE, Ilona Bannister
(May 5)

Ilona Bannister's Five introduces readers to five seemingly random people waiting for a train. But these are not just any five people. From the beginning we know that one of them is going to die soon. Very soon. In five minutes the next train to London will arrive, killing one of them. But before this happens you will learn their stories.

*****I, SPY**, L. M. Kemp
(May 5)

Kendal Carter is out in the cold and she wouldn't have it any other way. It's been four years since her daughter Rosie was born and Kendal has kept her miles away from The Game. But when their hiding place is discovered and danger comes too close, Ken is forced to turn to her longtime friend and ex-handler Rico. Whisking them to London, Rico offers them a luxury safe house in an area with good schools. How can she resist? But there's a catch, of course. Rico wants Kendal to come back to work for his espionage agency Bon Temps.

THE GREAT HOUSES OF PILL HILL, Diane Josefowicz
(May 5)

A locked-room mystery following an unconventional woman who makes miniatures of murder scenes and finds herself entangled in a real one when the client of her dream job turns up dead.

CALLER UNKNOWN, Gillian McAllister
(May 5)

There is nothing that Simone won't do for her daughter, Lucy. The two have always been close, and with Lucy about to leave home for university, they depart the UK for a vacation to Texas to spend some quality time together. But when Simone awakens on their first morning in the desert, Lucy is gone, missing from their rental cabin. In her place is a cell phone, and a voice on the other line is-

sues a shocking ransom demand. Don't tell the police. Come to this location. And be prepared to do a deal...

THE CONFESSION ARTIST,

Christine Carbo

(May 5)

A killer dubbed the Confession Artist is posting sketches of potential victims on social media. And paranoia spreads as strangers across the nation admit to their sins – fearing the consequences: You have six days to confess or die. Then former cop and first-year PI Crosbie Mitchell sees a sketch that bears a striking resemblance to her. How can that be? She's a nobody from Flathead Valley, Montana. Crosbie dismisses it as an unnerving coincidence. If not for one unmistakable detail that makes the threat hard to ignore. When the FBI is contacted, they are convinced that Crosbie is the next target. So is she.

CITY ON FIRE, Simon Elegant

(May 5)

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

MOONLIGHT MURDER,

Uzma Jalaluddin

Detective Aunty #2

(May 5)

When Kausar Khan moved back to Toronto to be closer to her family, she didn't expect to have another murder investigation on her hands so soon—or really ever. But when a young man named Mateen is found dead in their Golden Crescent neighborhood, and when she learns he was close to her granddaughter, Maleeha, what's a grandmother to

do but try and solve the case?

SLASH, Gavin Strawhan

Honey Chalmers #2

Australia only

(May 5)

Ex-police sergeant Honey Chalmers as she navigates a dangerous missing person case involving a murder suspect, dangerous gangs, and her own past trauma.

REVERSE, Steven F. Havill

Posadas County #28

(May 5)

Recovering from a near-death collision with a giant elk, Undersheriff Estelle Reyes-Guzman is back to finish her last month at the Posadas County sheriff's office. It's supposed to be a quiet road to retirement, until a body is found at the bottom of a water-filled quarry. The barely alive figure of the grandson of the wealthiest man in town also lies further down the ravine.

RAT RACE, Callum McSorley

Alison McCoist #3

(May 7)

DCI Alison McCoist is up to the oxters in Glasgow's shadiest police unit, with a list of guilty secrets growing longer by the day. Fran Forbes has just bolted from the scene of a gangland massacre with only a shite-stained tracksuit and a memory stick full of crypto-currency to his name. Ally is tasked with looking into this latest underworld rammy and ends up working with some bampots even dodgier than her polis pals. Can she keep Fran from being turned into mince by a Russian OCG and finally free herself from the fankle of police corruption she's caught in?

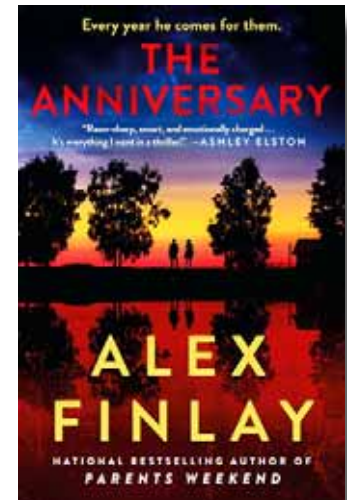
QUITE UGLY ONE EVENING,

Chris Brookmyre

(May 7)

Reporter Jack Parlabane thrives on chasing stories in unlikely places, and where could be less likely than a fan convention on a cruise liner celebrating a contentious Sixties TV series? But unlike the media family exploiting their show's renewed relevance, he's not there

to stoke controversy: he's there to solve a murder. Already in deep water with his employer, Jack desperately needs a win, and solving this decades-old mystery could be it. Problem is, he's in the middle of the Atlantic, and someone onboard has already killed once to keep their secret.



THE ANNIVERSARY, Alex Finlay

(May 12)

In 1992, two seventeen-year-olds' lives change forever. Quinn Riley, the boy from the wrong side of town, is arrested for trying to break up a fight and almost killing someone. Jules Delaney survives a brutal attack from a serial killer dubbed the May Day Killer. A year later and Jules is reeling with survivor's guilt as Quinn is released from juvenile detention and looking to solve the murder of his mother. Every May 1st following for a decade, their lives intertwine again as they both look for answers and the May Day Killer is still on the loose.

***A VERY VEXING MURDER,

Lucy Andrew

Harriet Smith #1

(May 12)

This debut whodunit that reimagines Harriet Smith, the gullible sidekick of Jane Austen's *Emma*, as a spitfire con woman, hired to break off an engagement and uncover a murderer in the genteel village of Highbury.

UNDERDOGS, Stephen Leather

(May 12)

Once a fearless SAS hero, Andy

'Deadman' Bird now battles the harsh streets of London after a catastrophic mission stripped him of his hearing, career, home and marriage. His only solace is Tyson, his fiercely loyal and battle-tested dog. When fate thrusts them into the path of a chilling alleyway murder, Andy and Tyson become the next targets. Who are these relentless hunters, and what dangerous secrets are they willing to kill for? Desperate and cornered, Andy reaches out to his former brothers-in-arms – a team who owe him their very lives. But as they unravel a sinister web of organised crime and deadly political plots, who will be saving who this time?

RED VERDICT, James Comey
Nora Carleton #4
(May 12)

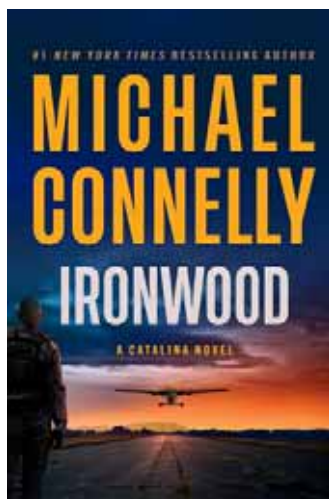
Nora Carleton is hitting her stride as Deputy US Attorney for the Southern District of New York when a high-stakes counterintelligence case pulls her into a deadly game with global implications. A Russian-style hit on an executive at an American drone manufacturer sends a chilling message—but what exactly is it? Was the victim a Russian mole or just a convenient target?

THE LAST MANDARIN,
Louise Penny & Mellissa Fun
(May 12)

Alice Li, a first-generation Chinese-American, is an erstwhile food blogger who has lived in the shadow of her mother, Vivien Li. A Chinese dissident who escaped China after Tiananmen Square, Vivien is now a globally recognized human rights activist and passionate advocate for a free and democratic China. When security and fire alarms go off simultaneously all around the world, setting off a panic, the signal is traced back to China. As world leaders scramble to respond, Vivien and Alice are called to the White House in hopes Madame Li can decode the Chinese intentions.

THE ONE DAY YOU WERE MY HUSBAND, Rosie Walsh
(May 19)
Carrie and Johan marry on a beach

in Thailand only months into their whirlwind romance. Carrie, a British surgical intern, is too happy to care that she's being impulsive. But as the wedding festivities stretch into the night, a group of armed men suddenly swarm the beach, taking Johan away. She never sees him again.



IRONWOOD, Michael Connelly
Stilwell #2
(May 19)

Detective Sergeant Stilwell knows that his posting on Catalina Island is no paradise, but to most residents, it seems blissfully separated—by twenty-two miles of ocean—from the troubles of Los Angeles County. But now a threat is coming to his safe haven. Acting on a tip from a confidential informant, Stilwell and his deputies watch a plane land in the middle of the night at the Airport in the Sky, a remote airstrip in the mountains. A duffel bag of drugs is dropped and the deputies move in, but things quickly go sideways. An internal inquiry follows, putting Stilwell on the bench until he is cleared of responsibility for the disastrous operation. But he is determined to find out who brought deadly violence to his island, and begins his own secret investigation into the drug deal gone wrong. He soon crosses paths with Renee Ballard and they join forces.

HAWAII RAGE, Tori Eldridge
Ranger Makalani Pahukula #2
(May 19)
A suspicious death on a Kohala

Mountain ranch draws ranger Makalani Pahukula into a tangled family tree in an emotional and suspenseful adventure by the bestselling author of the Lily Wong series.

HURRICANE ROOM, Kim Sherwood
James Bond
(May 19)

Agent 003, Joanna Harwood, has finally found James Bond after years of searching. All she has to do is get him out of Russia alive and convince him to trust her again.

THE KINGPIN, A. A. Dhand
Idris Khan #2
(May 21)

Idris Khan is no longer the man he used to be. How can he be? Murder changes people – and it has changed him. Once a respected pharmacist, Idris now walks a fine line between survival and destruction. He craves something normal in a world gone to hell – but then Zidane, his estranged brother, walks through the door. Freshly released from prison, Zidane's presence is radioactive. Truths are laid bare. New alliances are formed. And Zidane has an offer for Idris that could blow his whole world apart: he wants them to take over the entire drug trafficking network in Leeds and Bradford, and rule together.

THE BROTHERS MCKAY,
Craig Johnson
Longmire #22
(May 26)

When Pepper McKay, one of the most hated men in Absaroka County, is found murdered on his ranch in Crazy Woman Canyon, suspects aren't in short supply. But Sheriff Walt Longmire's attention is on those who had gathered for a family meeting that evening, McKay's very different sons: a smooth-talking charmer, a cosmopolitan journalist, a reclusive monk, and a half-Native ranch hand who keeps the place running. Each had a motive. Each claims he's innocent.

STORM WARNING, James Byrne
Dez Limerick #4
(May 26)
Dez Limerick has his considerable

skills pushed to the limit when, to rescue a friend, he has to get to—and get into—a state of the art facility on full lockdown, with considerable forces determined to stop him.

THE FOURTH OPTION,

Jack Carr & M.P. Woodward
(May 26)

Disillusioned by the government and institutions he dedicated his life to serving, former Navy SEAL and CIA ground branch operative Chris Walker is about to end his life when he receives a call that saves it. The wife of a teammate he lost in Afghanistan has now lost her son to the opioid crisis and needs Walker's help. Thrust into a conspiracy that goes deeper than he ever imagined, Walker must go up against the system and the very Constitution he once swore an oath to support and defend in order to find justice for his friend's widow.

MURDER BY DESIGN,

Lee Goldberg
Edison Bixby #1
(May 26)

Edison Bixby is wealthy, handsome, and, due to a traumatic brain injury, impulsively rude. He's also a brilliant insurance investigator who solves baffling crimes by figuring out how the design of the man-made world around us makes them possible. Enter Wally Nash: a struggling actor hired to keep Bixby from offending everyone he meets. Their first case together looks like a simple accident. Caroline Crowley took a nasty fall down a staircase at a shopping mall in front of dozens of witnesses. Video clearly shows the deadly misstep. But Bixby is certain she was murdered by design, subtly manipulated into causing her own demise. The mall itself made the crime intentional, if not inevitable.

THE ARCHITECT, John Katzenbach
(May 26)

Just two weeks before her final architecture exams, Sloane Connolly receives this cryptic handwritten note from her estranged mother. When her calls go unanswered, Sloane returns to her hometown in northwest Massachusetts to discover that her mother has

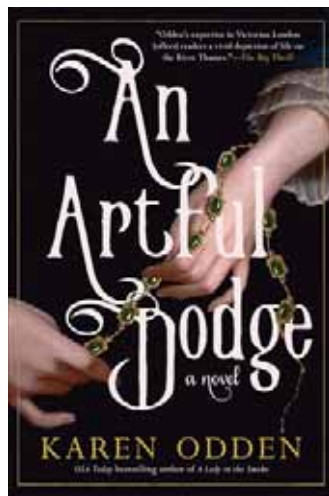
vanished.

June, 2026

THE DOG WALKERS' DETECTIVE AGENCY, Michael Hogan

(June 2)

When Charlie Boardman and his beloved Staffordshire bull terrier, Ruby, stumble across a corpse in the woods, the sleepy English coastal town of Framstone is rocked by the discovery that the local pub landlord has been murdered.



THE ARTFUL DODGE,

Karen Odden
Kit Jameson #1
(June 2)

London, 1879: Kim Jameson has stolen gems, purses, and hearts—but can she steal her life back from the thieving ring that's claimed it? Victorian London comes to vivid life in this riveting heist novel about an all-female thieving gang and one young woman's heroic plan to escape a life of crime.

DEATH AT THE CASTLE GATES,

Nick Oldham
Jessica Raker #3
(June 2)

With her colleague Dougie Doolan's health rapidly failing, former firearms officer Sergeant Jessica Raker takes on his hunt for local crook Rory Walton. Not only is Rory the suspected arsonist behind a house fire that claims the life of a young mother, but he and his brother are also burgeoning rivals to the Ribble

Valley's crime supremo, Mags Horsefield. As Jess strives to bring Rory to justice, she is drawn into a deadly web of deceit and corruption.

Stuart Woods' DEEP WATER,

Brett Battles
Stone Barrington #67
(June 2)

When Stone Barrington meets one of his clients, Trenton Sidney, for a sunset drink on Trenton's new yacht, the last thing he expects is to be a victim of a shipwreck. As one of the four survivors of the sinking, Stone finds himself diving straight back into work. His first task? To reach out to the beneficiaries in Trenton's will.

THE SHARK, Emma Styles
(June 2)

At the height of Australian summer, a serial killer dubbed The Shark stalks a beachside suburb, targeting young female swimmers whose bodies are later found on the shoreline. Disempowered and angry at the failures of the police to protect them, two young women—Raych and Carmen—are hell-bent on revenge. Raych has lost someone and will go to any length to discover what happened to her, while Carmen suspects her own disturbing connection to the killer.

THE BOOKSELLER, Tim Sullivan
DS Cross #7

(June 2)

When the body of a bookseller is discovered lying in a pool of blood in his Bristol bookshop, the police have one question: How did the man meet such a violent, murderous end in this peaceful place? Detective Sergeant George Cross has a knack for dismissing red herrings: He goes by the cold hard facts, and nothing else. But with a concerning development in his personal life, Cross is hopelessly distracted. He needs to rely on those around him: an entirely foreign concept.

THE ARISTOCRACY,

Patrick Worrall
(June 4)

Darren Sinfield, the most notorious inmate at Lower Marston maximum-security prison, has gone over the wall and is thought to be holed up in nearby Avonford, a decaying town with a squalid underbelly. The intelligence officer tasked with hunting him down, Declan Rennard, was an Avonford man himself back in the day. But times have changed. He used to know where the bodies are buried. Now he's in danger of becoming one of them. To catch a criminal, Dec is going to have to start thinking like one and that means entering his own dark history to engage in a twisted game of cat and mouse with a man who plays it better than anyone.

SOLITARY AGENTS,

David Goodman
(June 4)

Jamie Tulloch and Sam Li never intended to be spies. Jamie, a former exec at a tech company, found himself caught up in a mission and discovered a taste for the secret world while Sam, a burnt-out corporate lawyer, was unexpectedly talent spotted by MI5. When both are plunged into covert training, they find themselves pitted against each other for their final evaluation - Exercise Red Poacher. Every year, MI6 trainees must evade capture, infiltrate sensitive sites and report back with the right intel, while their peers at MI5 try to stop them. But things take a sinister turn when they witness the apparent murder of one of their fellow recruits. Is it all part of the exercise? Or is someone trying to weaponise this game of spies into something far more deadly?

OUT OF THE ASHES,

M. J. Arlidge
Helen Grace #14
(June 4)

As her best friend fights for her life, DI Helen Grace hunts her attacker in unfamiliar territory. Under pressure as never before, Helen knows that this time everything is on the line. Her boss has told her that failure is not an option, whilst the Dutch underworld will stop at nothing to protect one of their own. But for Helen this mission is personal. Which is why she has vowed to catch the

desperate fugitive or die trying

EVERYTHING SHE DIDN'T SAY,

Jane Casey
(June 4)

A woman is found in bloodstained clothes on the lonely coast of County Mayo. At first, she won't speak. Then a name comes: Ruth. And a story about her missing friend: Maura. Ruth says she and Maura were staying in a clifftop house together. But there's no trace of her there. Nothing but a pool of blood. Ruth says Maura was paranoid before she disappeared. But the locals say they only ever saw one woman. Ruth says all she wants is to make sure Maura is safe.

But someone is dead, someone is a killer, someone is lying. Ruth says she's being honest, but are the answers in everything she didn't say?

THE BREAK-UP RETREAT,

Camilla Sten
(June 9)

Isobel Anderssen has heard rumors. Nestled deep in the Swedish woods, there is a retreat. Primarily aimed at helping women who have gone through devastating break-ups, the Himlafall Clinic is meant to heal your mind and help you move on. But sometimes people are never heard from again.

THE MOST DANGEROUS MAN,

Jack Murphy
(June 9)

Staff Sgt. Jeremy Lopez is a US Army Ranger serving in the highly secretive Regimental Reconnaissance Company, providing support on covert missions in West Africa. When Lopez accepts the wrong drink in the wrong bar from the wrong woman, her face is the last thing he remembers before waking up in a locked, dirty cell. It soon becomes clear that this is no government facility—this is a holding cell for an elite hunting party, and Lopez has been chosen as their next quarry.

THE FINE ART OF LYING,

Alexandra Andrews
(June 9)

It was Clare Bast's love of art that saved her from a bleak, predictable

life in upstate New York, and drew her to the cultured world of Manhattan's Upper East Side where she met Jed, her doting, affluent husband. When the well-connected wife of Jed's new boss introduces her to influential friends—a curator here, a gallerist there, an aficionado abroad—Clare feels an essential part of herself coming alive again. And when she discovers that an important work painted by the subject of her unfinished dissertation is hanging in the brownstone of a seductively attractive dealer, she believes fate is leading her where she belongs . . . until she finds herself at the scene of a gruesome murder and a stolen masterpiece.

THE MAN WHO LED A DREAM LIFE,

David Handler
Stewart Hoag #17
(June 9)

Stewart Hoag and his new bride dive into married life with the discovery of a murdered millionaire in this mystery from early in the crime-solving career of the author-sleuth.

SHADOW OF MADNESS,

D. V. Bishop
Cesare Aldo #6
(June 11)

Travelling north into the hills above Florence, investigator Cesare Aldo seeks answers about his past. The trail leads him to Ospedale de' Pazzi, a secure institution for the criminally insane. Soon after arriving, a blizzard engulfs the area, trapping Aldo and his companion, Doctor Saul Orvieto. Even more alarming, their cart driver is found dead. It looks like he fell over a nearby cliff in the whiteout – but Aldo suspects foul play.

HEMLOCK BAY,

Martin Edwards
Rachel Savernake #5
(June 16)

When crime-beat journalist Jacob Flint receives a visit from a fortune teller who insists he's had a vision of a murder soon to occur in Hemlock Bay, Jacob consults with Rachel to get her take on the man's outlandish claim. Rachel is so intrigued, she rents a cottage at the seaside resort where an artist she

admires also happens to be spending the summer. Meanwhile, mild-mannered accountant Basil Palmer is en route to Hemlock Bay, determined to murder a man he's never met – a man he holds responsible for his beloved wife's death six months prior. Could this be the murder foretold by the fortune teller? PBO

SOMEBODY WORTH KILLING,

Jessica Payne
(June 16)

Nadia Davis is living the dream as a successful working mom with a career she loves, two adorable little girls, and a devoted husband who has no idea that she's secretly a hired assassin and psychopath who kills certified bad guys. So when Nadia finds out she's been "mommy tracked" by her assassin's agency and is no longer getting the bigger, more exciting jobs, she demands an important mark...somebody worth killing.

SELF-HELP FOR SERIAL KILLERS,

Asia Mackay
(June 16)

In this rollicking sequel to *A SERIAL KILLER'S GUIDE TO MARRIAGE*, two (mostly) reformed serial killers discover something more deadly than murder: Living in suburbia.

RESTLESS BONES,

Gillian French
Shaw Connolly #2
(June 16)

In *Restless Bones*, a missing woman's body is finally found—along with a single, suspicious fingerprint. While untangling that puzzle, Shaw gets pulled into a web spun by Anders Jansen, the man who murdered her sister and is now confessing to two other killings.

A MURDER IN SPRINGTIME,

Martin Walker
Bruno #19
(June 16)

A newcomer to St. Denis is found dead at the home of one of Bruno's best friends—and for once, Bruno feels as though he is too close to the case to investigate, until it becomes clear that he's the only person who can solve the crime.

CHOKES POINT,

Brad Thor
Scot Horvath #25
(June 16)

While all eyes are on Taiwan, China makes a stunning move against Thailand. Using a series of proxies, it plunges the country into chaos, looking to capture a narrow, but critical piece of land, which will give it the upper hand over the United States and help the Chinese Navy dominate both the Indian and Pacific Oceans. With the new American president unwilling to openly commit troops or intelligence personnel, Scot Harvath and his team are called into service.



THREE HITMEN AND A BABY,

Rob Hart
Assassins Anonymous #3
(June 16)

When Valencia receives troubling news that her brother has gone missing, she wants to rush off to LA to find him. But she can't bring her baby girl, Lucia. Enter the other members of Assassins Anonymous—Mark, Astrid, and Booker, who offer to watch the toddler while she's gone. After all, they're three of the deadliest, most highly skilled people on the planet; what could go wrong?

MURDER AT THE SPIRIT LOUNGE,

Jess Kidd
Nora Breen #2
(June 16)

When Dolores Chimes, a famous medium, arrives in Gore-on-Sea, even surly Detective Inspector Rideout is lured in by her promises of messages

for the afterlife. But after a reading goes disastrously wrong, Dolores loses her life—and the six sitters at the séance with her fall victim to supernatural deaths themselves in the days following the nightmare of a reading.

SOMEONE ELSE'S HUSBAND,

Kimberly McCreight
(June 16)

Frankie Callahan's dream of artistic success is within reach, with her career-making exhibition at a celebrated New York gallery only weeks away. If all goes well, the show will leave her financially independent, free of the tainted money that ties her to a past—and a man—she's desperate to escape. To mark the end of this chapter, she is going to climb Kilimanjaro. But when she learns she's the sole female accompanying a group of male friends, Frankie realizes that nothing about the trip will be as she expected. She certainly hasn't counted on meeting anyone like the very charismatic, very rich, very married Richard Falk. By the time the group descends—with one fewer than when they began—they have lost more than they ever could have imagined.

THE DEFENSE,

Rob Rinder
Adam Green #4
(June 16)

As MP-turned-wellness-guru Adrian Wells lowers himself into the architectural copper tub to showcase his miracle product in front of countless influencers, it soon becomes clear that something is amiss. The bath salt has been poisoned. And now Adrian is dead. His long-suffering assistant Jules is the prime suspect. Barrister Adam Green is tasked with Jules's defence, and he quickly realises that there were many more people with a score to settle against Adrian.

THE BUTLER,

Clare Mackintosh
(June 16)

in his twenty-five years of service, Baxter – with a spotless reputation as a polished, well-mannered butler?has never run into any issues catering to the ultrawealthy. Until now.

Baxter's latest assignment is at Villa Sérénité, where Alec Prescott is hosting a colorful cast of characters, including his ex-wife, his much younger lady friend, and some Hollywood hotshots, after the Cannes Film Festival. But it doesn't take long for a week of sun, wine, and a family birthday celebration to devolve into bickering and backstabbing. And soon, secrets aren't the only thing floating to the surface. PBO

A BITTER CUT, Anna Lee Huber
Lady Darby #14
(June 23)

Lady Kiera Darby plans to spend the summer reconnecting with friends and family in anticipation of the betrothal of her beloved brother. But when a future in-law is implicated in a murder, the season takes a deadly turn.

FEAR THE REAPER,
David Housewright
Rush Mackenzie #23
(June 23)

Once a police detective in St. Paul, Minnesota, Rushmore McKenzie, after becoming an unexpected millionaire, now is an unlicensed private investigator, doing the occasional investigative favor. Off on a weekend getaway to northwestern Wisconsin, McKenzie, with a group of five, including his childhood friend and current police detective Bobby Dunston, stop off at a local winery. A man walks up carrying an AR-15, which he raises, props the butt against his shoulder, and sights down the barrel. But before he can do anything, Bobby Dunston yells 'gun' and he and McKenzie take the man down.

WHISPER CREEK,
Allison Brennan
(June 23)

On top of the usual farming hardships, a series of recent storms has left the region partly flooded, and as the heavy rain begins again one morning, all the members of the McKenna family jump into action to protect their land and animals. Ellen McKenna's oldest son discovers an injured dog – and the dog leads him to a man barely clinging

to life, the apparent victim of a brutal home invasion.

NINE LIVES, Catherine Steadman
(June 23)

Reeling from a very recent divorce, Frankie has moved into a glamorous London neighborhood. This is a new chapter in her life. She's decided to put down roots with the beautiful Persian cat she left her marriage with named Blue. When Blue returns one night from slipping into places he shouldn't Frankie's gets very concerned. Two words are roughly scratched into his collar: HELP ME.



IT COULD HAVE BEEN HER,
Lisa Jewell
(June 23)

Jane Trevally is walking her dogs on her country estate one May afternoon when a small white dog appears. The teenaged girl that had been staying nearby with the dog is nowhere to be found, and Jane decides to return it to his registered owner hours away in London, in the deepest backwaters of Hampstead. But when Jane arrives, she is immediately unsettled—because she has a dark history with this house. The man who answers the door tells her the dog, Hugo, must have been stolen from the Heath, but Jane very much doubts that is true. Through the window, she catches a glimpse of a haunted-looking woman, not the missing girl she'd hoped to find.

A TWIST IN THE RIVER,

Stig Abell
Jake Jackson #4
(June 23)

When young nurse Claire Davidson goes missing on the riverbank, the only clues left behind are her phone and shoes. A mystery that sweeps the nation. People disappear all the time, but this case sparks an online frenzy. PBO

STORM TIDE, Paul Doiron
Mike Bowditch #16
(June 30)

When the magnificent home of entrepreneur Brian Malloy mysteriously goes up in flames, Maine game warden Mike Bowditch tries to pull Malloy's burning body from the fire but is too late. Malloy was suspected of murdering his young, illegitimate son. Now it looks like someone else has delivered a verdict. Miles away, on a lonely stretch of icy railroad track, the body of Axl Deming, once accused of a brutal rape, is found literally cut in half. Though the two murders seem unrelated, a cryptic text from an unknown number draws Bowditch to the scene--and hints at a chilling connection.

THE NEIGHBORS ARE WATCHING,
Aggie Blum Thompson
(June 30)

When Caren teams up with a new neighbor who is desperate to figure out who murdered his best friend last year, they start to uncover what Eastbrook has tried to forget. But in a place where appearances are everything, their search for the truth means not only shattering carefully curated perfection ? but putting themselves squarely in the cross-hairs of a killer. PBO

July, 2026

DECEPTION, Alan Parks
Joseph Gunner #2 – U.K. only
(July 2)

The plot centers on detective Joseph Gunner, who investigates the murder of a Japanese intelligence officer, uncovering a traitor within the British Secret Service and a conspiracy that threatens to expose secrets before the attack on

Pearl Harbor.

WISDOM CORNER,

David Heska Wanbli Weiden
Virgil Wounded Horse #2
(July 7)

Virgil Wounded Horse is desperately trying to escape his past as a hired vigilante on the Rosebud Indian Reservation. But when a legendary figure from the reservation is murdered, he's forced to return to the job. Making matters more complicated, threats are coming from the Pine Ridge 705—a street gang from a neighboring reservation who want to expand their reach into Rosebud—and Mitch Gagnon, a shady politician who will stop at nothing to gain more power.

DEAD MEN DON'T PLAY FETCH,

David Rosenfelt
Andy Carpenter #33
(July 7)

It's defense lawyer Andy Carpenter's dream to retire. That goal is once again thwarted when he gets a call from Lou, an old friend who he simply cannot refuse, asking for a favor. Lou runs a rehab center, and when one of his patients, a homeless vet, is charged with first degree murder, he needs Andy's help. And of course, Andy will also be called on to care for the accused's dog, but that's okay, what's one more dog?

McKENNA'S GUY, Mike Lawson
(July 7)

When an intruder with murderous intent breaks into Roger Smith's modest home one night, the big brute gets more than he bargained for, ending up a bloody corpse staining Roger's carpet.

Washington DC Detective Grace Lillenthal is summoned to the crime scene and marvels at the outcome. Why would anyone want to kill gray-haired Roger Smith? He's the picture of respectability--a widower devoted to his family, an amateur painter, and a civil servant who works at the Government Printing Office. When asked why he'd be a target, a clearly shaken Roger claims to be baffled. But instinct tells Grace there's more to Roger's story.

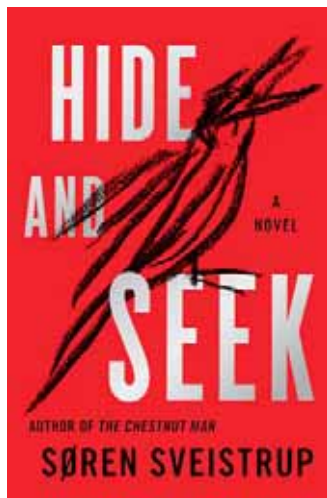
THE MAN, Laura Sims
(July 7)

A 1960s housewife turned amateur photographer begins to fear for her life when she notices the dark silhouette of a man in the background of her self-portraits.

WE WILL SEE YOU BLEED,

Ron Currie
Babs Dionne #2
(July 7)

At the center of the novel is Babs Dionne. She leads the union local and she is trying to keep the community from tearing itself apart. She is also trying to keep a promise she made to herself as a teenager: never again resort to violence after one terrifying, life altering moment. – a prequel.



HIDE AND SEEK, Soren Sveistrup
Naia Thulen/Mark Hess #2
(July 7)

A woman begins receiving a string of anonymous text messages, repeating a familiar childrens nursery rhyme. Then she disappears. Detectives Naia Thulin and Mark Hess are searching to find the missing woman, but when they uncover links to a decades-old cold case, their investigation takes a terrifying turn. Sequel to the Barry-Award-winning **THE CHESTNUT MAN**.

PRETTY DEAD THINGS,
Kelsey Cox
(July 7)

Secrets emerge as a Texas beauty pageant turns deadly.

THE SPIRIT GUIDE, Bridget Walsh
Variety Palace #3
(July 7)

Detective duo Minnie Ward and Albert Easterbrook return for another exciting case to uncover the dark secrets at the heart of Victorian London's spiritualist scene. This time, an investigation into two mysterious deaths leads this famed detective duo to the doors of the Spirit Sisterhood, a female-only spiritualist group that facilitates communion with the souls of the dead. And recently several of its visitors have been found dead themselves. PBO

JANUARY AND JULY, Jeff Abbott
(July 7)

A disgraced intel officer anxious to redeem herself after a disastrous mission, January Holte vows to uncover the identity of a traitor who is selling her agency's secrets. The few clues she's found have led her to a sleepy river town: Lethey, Texas--and Bill Connors, the one man who might know the truth. July Whitlock, a rookie bodyguard, searches for his one and only client, who has suddenly disappeared. He too follows a trail to Lethey to find his missing protectee--Bill Connors. But Bill's friends and enemies in Lethey have secrets of their own.

THE MYSTERIOUS AFFAIR OF JUDITH POTTS, Robert Thorogood
Marlow Club #5
(July 7)

Someone is killing celebrities in Marlow. First, it's a famous soccer player. Then, a bestselling thriller writer. When two shocking deaths rock their quiet riverside town, Judith, Suzie, and Becks – the unstoppable Marlow Murder Club – must untangle a dangerous web of blackmail and scandal to catch a killer.

A NEIGHBOR'S GUIDE TO MURDER, Louise Candlish
(July 7)

It's rare for a room to open up in London's storied Columbia Mansions, and lonely Gwen is thrilled when her neighbor's new subletter, Pixie, brings a

friendly breath of fresh air to its stuffy halls. Their unexpected bond soon becomes the bright spot in Gwen's quiet life. But Gwen can't help noticing cracks beneath Pixie's cheerful surface—especially when it comes to her questionable financial arrangement with her live-in landlord, Alec. As suspicions mount, Gwen's protective instincts go into overdrive, triggering a dangerous chain of events no one is prepared for.

HELPLESS, Jessica Knoll
(July 7)

Twelve years ago, Faye Heron broke her college boyfriend's heart. When a former and beloved college professor suddenly passes away, Faye is now face to face with Henry Spalding again for the first time in twelve years. Both have their own separate lives and partners, but the spark is still there. An innocent drink ends up with Henry drugging and kidnapping Faye, holding her hostage in his mountain cabin.

THE HAUL, Gary Phillips
(July 7)

After decades of close calls, O'Conner—the former “Warlord of Willow Ridge”—spends most of his time in semi-retirement, running his legitimate businesses and playing pickleball. Except for his longtime girlfriend, no one in his wealthy suburb is the wiser to his double-life. But O'Conner's past refuses to stay there, and when he is approached with a job he can't resist, he agrees to mastermind his biggest score yet: a multi-million-dollar raid of a tech billionaire's secret bunker, which is hidden underneath his newly constructed basketball arena.

BLOOD ENEMY, Douglas Jackson
Warsaw Quartet #4)
(July 9)

June 1944. When a Wehrmacht war crimes investigator and his escort are killed in an ambush, it looks like an opportunistic act of resistance by the Armia Krajowa, but Jan Kalisz of the Warsaw Kripo has his doubts. Fortunately, with the Red Army just a few hundred kilometres away, Kalisz's boss,

Hauptsturmführer Hoth finds his faith in the Führer waning, and lets his Polish detective investigate. The hunt for the real killers takes Kalisz first to a battered Berlin and then within reach of the Russian guns, but the answer lies with a key witness who's now in a concentration camp. At Auschwitz-Birkenau, Kalisz is reacquainted with his former colleague, Doctor Josef Mengele



THE PINNACLE, Abir Mukherjee
(July 14)

Washed-up American heart throb George Abercrombie hates India, even from his apartment on the 68th floor of Mumbai's grandest luxury skyscraper. He hates the noise, he hates the heat, and just maybe he's grown to hate his wife, the newest queen of Bollywood, Sweetie Sahota, decades his junior. So when George wakes from a drunken stupor (free whiskey, for which he's the national spokesperson) to find his wife murdered in their bedroom, he knows quite well just how badly he's cooked. But where is her computer, her cellphone, and where has his personal assistant gone?

HOT GIRL MURDER CLUB,
Ashley Winstead
(July 14)

Ten years ago, aspiring singer-actress Scout Sage lost the only thing that mattered: her sister, Georgia. Ever since Georgia's mysterious death at a Hollywood party, Scout's done her best to honor her memory, clawing her way through the industry and collecting a

network of climbers along the way, fellow hot girls in stilettos with cutthroat ambition, a new Hollywood order. But when a slew of targeted murders makes headlines across L.A., all pointing to Scout as the killer, she turns overnight from a mid-tier pop star into the world's most famous (alleged) murderer.

THIS CHANGES EVERYTHING,
Lisa Scottoline
Julia #2
(July 14)

A woman risks her life and her sanity to solve the murder of her best friend's grandmother in a secretive town simmering with danger.

*****KILLER VIBES**, Jack Friday
(July 14)

Meet Peter Key: self-proclaimed “laziest private investigator in Texas” (it's harder than it looks), unapologetic bisexual, dedicated stoner, and the surprised recipient of a windfall inheritance from an uncle he barely knew. Peter's life was a mess before, but now? as the owner of a dilapidated house in one of the most desirable neighborhoods in Austin? he has a mountain of debt to deal with and pressure to sell from every side. But Peter doesn't like to be pushed around. And when he discovers a bag full of cash, he starts to suspect his uncle's death wasn't an accident. He soon finds himself pulled into a lethal game where not everybody plays by the rules.

THE DEATH ROW CLUB,
V. A. Vazquez
(July 14)

A woman invited to an annual weekend getaway for the adult children of serial killers...but when one of the participants ends up dead, they begin to wonder if someone among them might be carrying on gruesome family traditions.

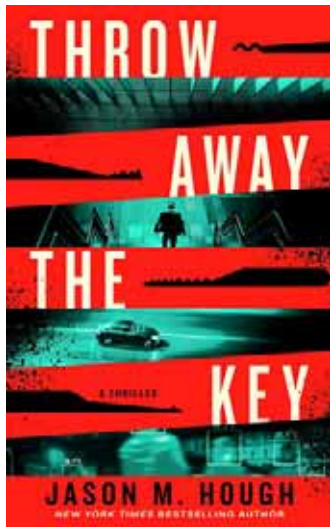
THE LIGHTNING GIRL,
Sam Ripley
(July 14)

A woman searches for answers about a decades-old missing persons case.

UNRELIABLE NARRATOR,

Araminta Hall
(July 14)

Hope's 23-year-old younger self lands the job of her dreams working for author Ambrose Glencourt at his Somerset home, Shadowlands. Here, she's quickly drawn into an exotic bohemian world which revolves around the author, his wife Delia and honorary son, Tom. However, things do not go to plan, disaster strikes and the fatal secret is buried deep. Hope shuts herself off from the world as a form of punishment but also to protect Ambrose, who is known as Rosie. Ten years on, Hope remains isolated and lonely, she's shut down but she's safe and has kept her promise. To her shock and horror it seems that Rosie hasn't, as it's the subject of his latest book. Her journal from the time tells her version and his novel tells his – so who is the unreliable narrator?



THROW AWAY THE KEY,
Jason M. Hough
(July 14)

Lars Bergman is no ordinary janitor. He's the CIA's locksmith. Formerly part of the CIA's infamous Surreptitious Entry Team, Lars is now responsible for every padlock, safe, and secure door across the CIA headquarters. He's never met a lock he couldn't pick...except one, which he tried and failed to open during a botched mission in Warsaw at the end of the Cold War. Cruising toward retirement, Lars's life is upended when a senior CIA official dies and he's called upon to open the safe in her office.

Inside the safe is a clue only Lars would notice, left by someone he'd worked with in his heyday. As he investigates, Lars soon realizes that his failed Warsaw operation has come back to haunt him and perhaps give him another chance at picking the one lock that's ever eluded him.

THE NOVEL DETECTIVE,
Teresa Dovalpage
(July 14)

2020: Teresa, a Cuban-born mystery writer now living in America, gets an unexpected call from her childhood best friend, Estrella, inviting her to Havana. Estrella is determined to get answers about a case that has haunted them both for decades: the purported murder-suicide of a teacher and a student at their high school. Though Teresa doesn't quite understand why Estrella is taking the story so personally, she's along for the ride, as she always wanted to write a novel about this case, but never got to—because it lacked the proper ending.

RANSOM,
Daniel Silva
Gabriel Allon #26
(July 16)

The art restorer and retired spy searches for a missing British socialite and uncovers dark secrets about her billionaire husband.

THE DEPTHS, Yrsa Sigurdardottir
Black Ice #3
(July 16)

A human skull unearthed on the outskirts of Reykjavík. A neighbourhood dispute turned deadly.

A daughter, trapped at sea, looking for answers. What police officers Týr and Karó don't know is that these events are all linked through a terrible tragedy, many years ago, when a trawler caught fire on the waves, the crew trapped inside.

THE BURNING TIDE,
William Shaw
Eden Driscoll #3
(July 16)

When a man knocks on his door desperate for help, claiming someone is

trying to kill him, ex Met detective Eden Driscoll leaps at the chance to solve a mystery. But before he can ask more questions, the stranger disappears. His cry for help came too late – that same night a house along the coast is burnt to the ground. Fire officers discover a man's remains among the rubble.

ICARUS 17, Charles Cumming
Box 88 #4
(July 17)

A threat to the lives of his wife and daughter in London forces elite intelligence agent Lachlan Kite to move his family to safety. Meanwhile Kite's former girlfriend, Martha Raine, comes to him with a plea for help. Her twenty-year-old son, Max, has vanished without trace in Greece. Can Kite help to find him?

COOL MACHINE,
Colson Whitehead
Ray Carney #3
(July 21)

A wild march into 1980s New York. As Ray Carney dives into the proverbial 'one last job', Pepper takes an odyssey through the downtown club scene, and a sliver of redemption is sought through family ties.

THE TALKING BONE,
Rene Denfeld
(July 21)

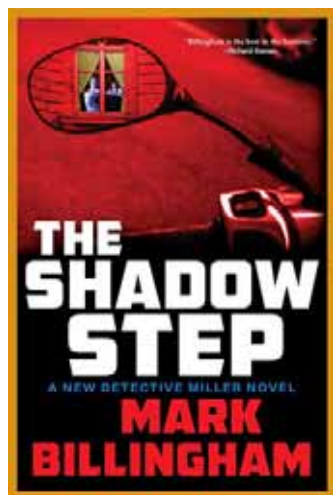
Ruby Spencer is known as "the exonerator." Her job as an investigator is to free innocent men from death row, and she's good at what she does. What many people don't know is that she spends her time finding missing women, too. The orphaned daughter of an orphaned mother, Ruby feels a natural affinity for those who have been mistreated by the world at large. Her newest case takes her to Georgia, and involves a man set to be executed in two weeks. What begins as a routine exoneration unexpectedly sends Ruby down a winding path.

NO PRISONERS, Ellis Blake
(July 21)

Hannah Lyon is a brilliant, celebrated physicist, employed by a think tank outside of Albuquerque to question the

very nature of how the world works. And her husband is missing.

But not only is she struggling to cope with his sudden, baffling disappearance, no one believes her when she insists that Adam would never just leave. He was a loving husband, but more than that, a devoted father. He would never leave their young son Joe behind. Detective Aloysius Hunt assures Hannah they're doing everything they can to find Adam, but Hannah doesn't trust him. Lou Hunt has done nothing but stone-wall her at every turn. With no help from the authorities, Hannah is on her own to find Adam and bring him home, but uncovering the truth means revealing dark secrets in her husband's past, and her own. Secrets better left buried.



THE SHADOW STEP,

Mark Billingham
Detective Miller #3

(July 21)

DS Declan Miller is a magnet for strange cases, but an innocent man confessing to the crime? That's a first. Things rapidly escalate when the murder that isn't really a murder attracts the unwanted attention of a drug Queenpin, a deranged ex-squaddie, and a lovesick gangland enforcer. And when a real murder follows – and a student is kidnapped – all evidence points back to the same innocent man.

PROMISE ME NEVER,

Liv Constantine

(July 21)

Aspiring writer Savannah's scheme

to meet superstar horror novelist Bennett Bryson turns out better than she ever imagined: not only does her charming and handsome literary idol offer to read her work, he is instantly smitten with her. After a whirlwind romance, Savannah says "yes" to marriage, and the two settle into Bennett's secluded upstate home. But just as Savannah thinks she has it made, cracks appear in her perfect new life. Bennett's behavior becomes dark and controlling: he criticizes Savannah's writing, dictates her permitted activities, and spends most of his time locked in his office, forbidding her from entering.

THREE REASONS FOR REVENGE,

Dervla McTiernan

(July 21)

Alexis Turner walks into the police station to report an assault. By the end of the day, she is nowhere to be found. Soon after she disappears, three identical packages arrive at three very different doors: a respected psychologist's home, a socialite's mansion, and a struggling single father's run-down apartment. Inside, each gift is perfectly tailored to its recipient — and each will tear apart the life of its intended victim. Detective Sergeant Judith Lee is smart and experienced, but this is no ordinary case. Someone with intimate knowledge of their targets is orchestrating these attacks. Someone who knows exactly how to hurt each victim where they're most vulnerable. And she's convinced that somehow, it connects back to Alexis Turner.

GETTING AWAY WITH MURDER,

Shari Lapena

(July 28)

Jill and Ted adore their New York brownstone the way others adore their children. They have carefully, expensively, made every inch of it their own. It reflects who they are, their status and tastes. With the grand mahogany staircase and state-of-the-art kitchen, it is the stuff of glossy magazines and real-estate dreams. It is their sanctuary. So when Ted's inheritance runs out and he makes a bad investment, they panic. How can they protect their beloved

home and enviable lifestyle? The answer is obvious. Or at least, it is obvious to Jill and Ted. The death of one wealthy family member—from whom they stand to inherit millions—could solve all their problems

*****THE NIGHT HUNTER,**

Natalie Moss

(July 28)

In a remote corner of the South African bush, two sisters reunite to bury a family secret once and for all, but when they're stranded among the wild animals, they find a predator far more dangerous waiting for them in the shadows.

BACK TRACK, Mark Cameron

Arliss Cutter #8

(July 28)

1977. D Wayne Cutter is a former U.S. Army Green Beret, part-time horseshoer, and a full-time Texas deputy sheriff with a second grandchild on the way when a quiet Sunday morning ends in murder and a manhunt. The theft of five million dollars in diamonds from an armored truck leaves two guards dead, one outlaw tracked down and taken out by Cutter, and another, Ricky Lee Pink—two-hundred-forty pounds of teenage rage—sentenced to life. The diamonds were never recovered. And Pinky never forgot that heist gone violently wrong.

2026. Following in the righteous footsteps of his late grandfather, Deputy U.S. Marshal Arliss Cutter gets word that Pinky has been granted release. Nursing a grudge for decades, Pinky vows to avenge the murder of his criminal mentor and find the whereabouts of the stolen gems that he believes is a buried Cutter family secret.

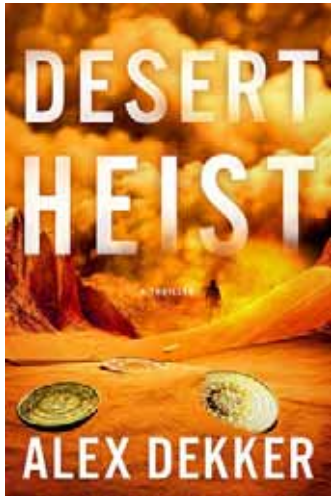
THE DOCTOR'S WIDOW,

Daniel Hurst

(July 28)

I loved my husband, Doctor Drew Devlin, but he betrayed me. And now he's dead. As I put the key in the lock and open the door to the luxurious new home I've purchased with Drew's life insurance money, I'm certain the worst days are behind me. My secret is safe,

and I can't wait to enjoy my new wealth and freedom. Then I meet handsome Roger. I wasn't looking for a relationship but as we spend our evenings drinking wine on my sunny terrace, I realise he's just what I need right now. Roger is nothing like Drew, he's spontaneous and romantic. And most of all, he's honest. He thinks I'm a rich, lonely woman. He's wrong of course, there's so much more to me.



DESERT HEIST, Alex Dekker
(July 28)

Nate Wilde is a former Green Beret and aspiring Harvard archaeologist. Leaving the military after a catastrophic deployment that ended with most of his team dead or injured, he chooses to pursue his passion for history. When his dissertation proposal to search for the legendary lost city of Ubar in Saudi Arabia is rejected by the Harvard examining committee and his expedition permit is denied by the Saudi government, Nate resolves to continue his research by any means necessary. And the only path left to him is to enter Saudi Arabia's Empty Quarter through war-torn Yemen, the same sands where his brothers lost their lives years ago.

BUYER BEWARE,
Catherine Ryan Howard
(July 28)

When Ellie moves to 1 Delaney Row, she hopes to find a fresh start—a place where no one knows her name, her history, or her secrets. But what she doesn't know is that her new home is already

hiding someone else's secrets—and the people determined to keep them are watching her. As Ellie starts to unravel the house's disturbing backstory, coming closer to the shocking mystery at its center, she unwittingly puts herself on a deadly collision course not just with her new home's history, but with her own as well.

BROKEN PROMISES,
Stephen Leather
Spider Shepherd #23
(July 30)

London is under siege - not by criminals, but by a new breed of vigilantes. Cops, crooks, and businessmen alike are taking the law into their own hands, punishing those they feel have escaped justice. Streaming their crimes online while wearing latex masks of famous politicians, they gain millions of viewers, and an unstoppable sense of power. When judges and lawyers become their targets, the country teeters on the edge of chaos. The police are powerless. There's only one man who can stop the spiral . . . Dan "Spider" Shepherd.

CRASH, Belinda Bauer
(July 30)

When the engine of a 737 tears itself apart at Los Angeles Airport, Tom Patrick is in the wrong place at the wrong time - playing poker at a nearby casino. He's been losing at cards and probing pipeline leaks ever since his big mouth led to his fall from grace as the National Transportation Safety Board's top air-crash investigator. Now he can't wait to come in from the cold. Sidelined by the official investigation, Tom starts to dig anyway. And when another 737 crashes for what looks like similar reasons, it's clear that something could be terribly wrong with the world's most popular passenger jet.

ONE OF US IS GUILTY,
Steve Cavanagh
(July 30)
Eddie Flynn #10
No plot summary available

PROBABLE CAWS, Donna Andrews
Meg Langslow #39
(August 4)

Meg Langslow is trying to protect some endangered horses when a body is discovered.

LONG NIGHT MOON,
Brian Panowich
(August 4)

Martin "Cookie" Cook Junior has been living like a ghost. Ever since he was released from a twelve-year prison sentence for drug addiction, he's been haunted by his past. He's become a recluse, only trusting a small circle of people into his life. But he would do anything for them so when his father is accused of sexually assaulting a young woman at a club, he runs to the rescue. The local police deputy is willing to turn a blind eye if Cookie helps him out with a suspicious errand, but when it turns out to be a setup with terrible consequences, Cookie turns to Georgia Bureau of Investigations agent Dane Kirby for help.

A STRANGER IN CORFU,
Alex Preston
(August 4)

On the Greek island of Vidos the past lingers like salt in the air. The inhabitants—former members of MI6—are sent here to be forgotten, exiled: either too damaged or too compromised to be allowed to live freely. For years, residents make the best of their fate—old enemies reconcile, long-lost friends swim together in the warm sea, and estranged lovers share a bed once more. But secrets bind tightly. And when one of their own washes up dead, alliances fracture and a tide of suspicion begins to rise.

YOU'LL BE SORRY, Lisa Gardner
(August 4)

A newlywed couple buys a remote, abandoned lodge with a dark history, only to uncover a decades-old mystery involving a missing family and a series of hidden bodies, forcing them to confront secrets of their own and the secrets of the small town.

August, 2026

THE WOMAN IN WHITE,

Sarah Pekkanen

(August 4)

In 1964, four remarkable young women at a prestigious university became the subjects of parapsychology experiments by a visionary scientist. On the cusp of a historic breakthrough, the women mysteriously vanished and the program was erased from history. Decades later, Riley Bell, newly divorced and desperate for a fresh start, accepts a caretaker job for an elderly widow named Betty. Riley steps into a home that is frozen in another era - no microwave, television, or cell phones, and Betty has never heard of the internet. Why has Betty lived in such profound isolation for so many years, and why does she need Riley now?

THE LAST ENCORE,

Rebecca Heath

(August 4)

It's been eighteen years since the accidental explosion that killed The Cedrics Band lead singer Jonny Rake, and a special documentary is bringing the rest of the band back to play together for the first time. With Jonny's daughter, Monet, stepping into her father's role, and a private island secured as the perfect reunion backdrop, it's set to be a special occasion. But everyone remembers what happened on that fatal night differently, and as questions are asked about the band's rise and sudden tragic fall, not everyone likes the answers. Old wounds reopen and tempers flare... Then a body is found.

THE UNKNOWN, Riley Sager

(August 4)

Struggling actress Marin Keane is shocked when she lands a role in a major motion picture about the unsolved mystery of New Avalon, an island on sprawling Lake Faraday in Vermont. She's even more surprised when she learns that the role requires a weeklong research trip to that very spot. Because New Avalon isn't your ordinary island. A century ago, it was a commune for spiritual mediums—until they all vanished in 1926.

**THE BLUE FLAME,**

George Pelecanos

Derek Strange #6

(August 4)

The neon "Strange Investigations" sign may be flickering in disrepair outside his office, but private investigator Derek Strange is still accepting new cases. When a flashy drug lawyer hires him to prove an alibi for an accused murderer, Strange can't help getting drawn into the darkness.

TIME TO BURN, Ellery Lloyd

(August 4)

This is a gripping mystery about time travel tourism and the dangerous consequences which ensue when the privileged make the past their playground.

ALL WE HIDE, Robyn Gigl

(August 4)

When Lieutenant Lauren Kelly is exiled to the Homicide Cold Case Unit at the DA's office, she knows her superiors are sticking her there as punishment until she can quietly retire. That way, no one can claim they discriminated against the only trans detective in Donn County. Even though Lauren has enough on her plate already—a teenage daughter struggling with Lauren's transition, an ex-wife Lauren hasn't gotten over, a former detective father with Alzheimer's—she starts looking into the murder of Sherry Darling, a trans sex worker and Lauren's former high school classmate.

ONE GOOD EYE, Kevin Wade

Jeep Mullane #2

(August 11)

As a hurricane makes landfall on Long Island's Gold Coast, local Police Chief Jeep Mullane responds to a plea for help at the estate of his longtime friend Jenny Racine, where she has been violently assaulted in a home invasion.

BRIMSTONE HOLLOW,

Archer Sullivan

Annie Gore #2

(August 11)

Katie May has been estranged from her father – one of Appalachia's last infamous snake handling preachers – for twenty years. But when Katie finds out he's been fatally bitten, and a funeral was held within twenty-four hours, she questions whether someone deliberately rushed the process.

THE SECRETS WE HIDE,

Karin Slaughter

North Falls #2

(August 11)

Sheriff Emmy Clifton and her sister, ex-federal agent Jude Archer, investigate a brutal attack that shatters their town's fragile peace. But the deeper Emmy digs, the more dangerous it gets.

THE ENIGMA CHALLENGE,

S. C. Godfrey

(August 11)

Zoe Wilder has the unflashy, solitary life of an academic, studying ciphers in literature at a California university. When her research takes her to a cryptology conference in Madrid, she's not expecting to kick off the Enigma Challenge, a clandestine puzzle competition few dare to enter. The Enigma Challenge is an infamous competition with impossibly high stakes: lose, and your identity is wiped forever. It doesn't take long for Zoe to realize that she's in over her head.

DARK HARBOR,

Bruce Robert Coffin

Brock Justice #3

(August 11)

Detective Brock Justice never imag-

ined the glittering coastal town of Bar Harbor would be his next battleground. When multimillionaire Granville Warren and an unidentifiable burglar turn up dead in a mansion break-in gone awry, the evidence points straight to Granville's much younger wife, Lily. Her self-defense claim raises more suspicion than sympathy, and Brock must untangle a crime scene awash in contradictions.

THE TAILOR, Tim Sullivan
DS George Cross #8
(August 11)

A bespoke tailor boards the 9:26 train from Bristol to London. Before it even reaches Bath, his body is found slumped lifeless in the toilet. The police initially assume it's a robbery. But the truth is more complicated than that. Why was the man found with a plastic bag over his head? Why was his throat cut in such a savage way? DS George Cross realizes that this was no mugging—it was an organized hit.

CODEBREAKERS, Stella Sands
Wordhunter #2
(August 11)

Steamy, seedy, swampy south-central Florida once again serves as the backdrop for the unlikely duo of loquacious, tattooed, trash-talking Maggie Moore and laconic Detective Silas Gabriel Jackson—linguistic genius and genius detective, respectively. Now operating their own agency and using their extraordinary skills in forensic semiotics (her), and good old-fashioned observation (him), the pair decode clues embedded in words and symbols to uncover a sadistic criminal who preys upon unsuspecting men.

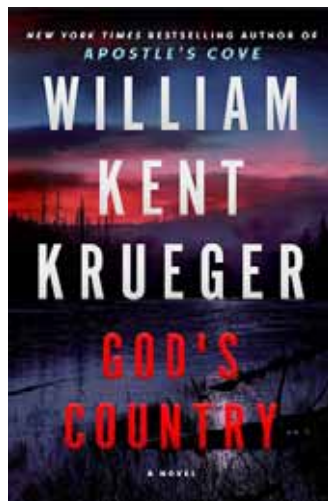
FOR SERVICES RENDERED,
Will Thomas
Cyrus Barker #17
(August 18)

In 1896, Dr. Sun Yat-Sen, would-be reformer and revolutionary, turns up in London, running away from China's Imperial Qing Secret Service, who has placed a substantial bounty on his head for his political activities. Captured by

those agents, he's imprisoned in the Chinese Embassy until he can be smuggled back to China to face execution. In the meantime, private enquiry agents Cyrus Barker and Thomas Llewelyn receive the unbelievable news that Sebastian Nightwine is both alive and in London. Not just that, it seems he's taking action against Barker and his close associates. At the same time, they've been hired to find this missing Sun Yat-Sen.

THAT NIGHT, Gillian McAllister
(August 18)

On vacation in Europe, Frannie makes two urgent phone calls. One to her sister, and one to her brother. The siblings come running, and they find their sister covered in blood, kneeling over an unmoving body. There's been an accident: Frannie has hit a man with her car, and she needs their help. They bury the body, and they make a promise. They'll never tell anyone. But when the police come calling, the siblings' lies start to spiral.



GOD'S COUNTRY,
William Kent Krueger
Cork O'Connor #22
(August 18)

Cork O'Connor, preparing for a family trip into the Boundary Waters, is troubled by ominous visions about his future. Ignoring the warnings, he uncovers signs of violence while searching for his missing friend, Cordell Bishop. Soon, he is forced to negotiate with dangerous criminals, the Kennedy brothers, who are seeking their late father's

hidden stash. Facing escalating danger and difficult choices, Cork grapples with his darkest instincts as he helps others escape and eventually takes justice into his own hands.

BLOOD, RUST AND STEEL,
Stuart MacBride
Roberta Steel #2
(August 18)

Acting Detective Inspector Roberta Steel has never been shy, but she's finally retiring. After thirty years of policing Aberdeen's underbelly, she's all set for her twilight years to feature gardening gloves, afternoon tea, crosswords puzzles, and shouting at the telly. So when a body turns up in a wheelie bin, it looks like an excellent way to round off her career and go out with a bang.

HEART OF GLASS,
Jennifer Hillier
(August 25)

A serial killer recants his long-ago confession regarding a small-town high school girl—and her then-best friends are forced to confront what really happened that night and what's happening now.

*****THE CAMINO**, Anya Niewierra
(August 25)

Forty-four-year-old chocolatier Lotte Bonnet has been living happily in South Limburg for years with her husband Emil, a former refugee from Bosnia. But when Emil unexpectedly dies by suicide while walking the Camino de Santiago, or Way of Saint James, Lotte is devastated.

Shocked and confused, Lotte resolves to follow Emil's exact path on the Camino one year later, hoping for answers, or at least insights into what could have compelled him to take his own life.

THE SILENT APPEAL,
Janice Hallett
Fairway Players #2
(August 25)

The Fairway Players put on Agatha Christie's play *The Hollow* and find themselves embroiled in murder, blackmail, and betrayal once again.

THE OPPOSITE OF MURDER,

Sophie Hanna
(August 25)

Jemma Stelling walks into a police station and confesses – not to a murder she's committed, but to the one she's terrified she might. Jemma can't stop herself from thinking about murdering her stepmother, Marianne Upton. The only way to stop herself might be to confess before she snaps and does the unthinkable. But while Jemma is still giving her statement, a call comes in: Marianne has just been found stabbed to death, killed in exactly the way Jemma described.

NOT A WORD, Linwood Barclay
(August 25)

Every family has secrets, but when Reece visits his parents' home he's shocked to find his father and a woman he assumes is his mother in bed. Dead. At first glance it looks like a murder-suicide perpetrated by his father, but on closer inspection there's clearly more to the story. For starters, inconsistencies in the crime scene suggest his dad may not have shot himself.

THE SHADOW FRIENDS,

Tess Gerritsen
Martini Club #3
(August 25)

When a renowned disease expert and Russian defector dies mysteriously during a global affairs conference in Purity, Maine, the tight-knit band of former spies in the Martini Club once again sees their quiet coastal retirement interrupted by international intrigue. And when a housekeeper at the conference hotel is found murdered, Ingrid Slocum sees chilling links to a disastrous mission that nearly killed her three decades ago.

AND THEN THERE WERE BUN,

Vivien Chien
Noodle Shop #13
(August 25)

With the help of Lana's parents and close friends, Megan packs the family restaurant with a guest list that includes friends—both old and new—to help celebrate her best gal's birthday. But when one of their guests brings an unsavory

plus one that Lana just happened to date back in her college days, tensions build between her old beau and her current boyfriend, Detective Adam Trudeau. After a heated exchange of words between the two men, the evening returns to the smooth and enjoyable party that Megan had originally hoped for. But relief is short lived when Lana's ex is found in the dumpster outside of Asia Village.

BEHIND EVERY FACE,

Charlie Donlea
(August 25)

Andi Vonn isn't in Harmony Falls by choice. She's been given a new identity through the Witness Protection Program while she waits to testify against her powerful former employer. Her fiancé, Lucas, was killed before he could do the same, and the explosive case is making national headlines. Andi has no faith that the FBI will keep her safe.

OVERKILL, J. A. Jance

Ali Reynolds #18
(August 25)

Chuck Brewster, the former business partner of Ali Reynolds's husband B. Simpson, once carried on an affair with Clarice, B.'s first wife. So when he's found murdered with Clarice standing nearby covered in blood, it seems an open and shut case.

INVITATION FROM A DICTATOR,

Rory Clements
(August 27)

No plot summary available.
September, 2026

THE PARKWOOD MURDERS,

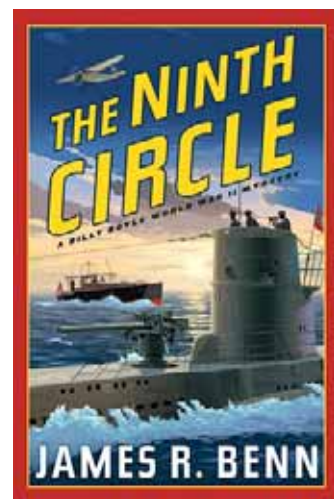
Chris Chibnall
Nicola Bridge #2
(September 1)

When a body is discovered early one morning in the Parkwood Holiday Village's wave pool, Detective Nicola Bridge is faced with an investigation like no other: hundreds of suspects, but seemingly no witnesses.

MOTHER DAUGHTER SISTER STRANGER, Hank Phillippi Ryan

(September 1)

Eliza Ramsey and her sister Bea are the sole survivors of the fiery plane crash that killed their parents – and share a bond they vow is unbreakable. But now, eleven years later, on the exact anniversary of the tragedy, Bea fails to retrieve her pre-teen daughter from a sleepover at Eliza's. Eliza knows her sister would never leave her precious Piper behind – even in her care – and fears the worst. Piper is confused at her mother's absence. Her father, Bea's recent ex, is out of town and uninterested in Bea's whereabouts. Police are dismissive. But Eliza is terrified. Especially as it becomes clear that Bea might have planned her own disappearance.

**THE NINTH CIRCLE,**

James R. Benn
Billy Boyle #21
(September 1)

January, 1945: If Billy Boyle thinks a summons to Havana will give him a chance to sip a cold Hatuey under the Caribbean sun, the tropical fantasy is dead on arrival. Within hours of landing, Billy and his partner-in-crime-solving, Lieutenant Piotr Kazimierz, are assigned to investigate the murder of a Navy intelligence officer. But as the men wait for an informant at a beachside bar, a bomb goes off—and they narrowly escape with their lives

COLD SUNSET, William Boyd

Gabriel Dax #3
(September 3)

The novel follows Gabriel Dax as he's tasked with delivering a drawing to a defector, Kit Caldwell, who fears the KGB and wants out, forcing Dax to navigate a web of deception with his handler, Faith Green.

NO SONG FOR THE DEAD,

Jussi Adler-Olsen
Dept Q #11
(September 8)

Former head of Department Q Carl Mørck has retired. That was the plan, at least. So when he comes across a disturbing audio recording, he turns it over to his former colleagues, who are struggling to keep the old department up and running on their own. That is until a new transfer unexpectedly arrives—Helena Henry, a Frenchwoman who throws herself into the investigation with gusto . . . but who may also have secrets of her own.

ONE SPLIT SECOND,

Robert Dugoni
Tracy Crosswhite #12
(September 15)
No plot summary available.

TRUTH TO POWER, S. A. Cosby

Luke Cage – Marvel Crime #1
(September 22)

With advanced cybernetics showing up in the possession of low-level criminals, Luke Cage is hired to investigate a factory manufacturing medical devices in rural Virginia. Leaving Jessica Jones during a delicate moment in their relationship, he makes plans to travel south but is devastated to learn that a cousin who scoped out the plant for him has been found dead. The police report states it was an accident. But Luke has long known that official words are just that: words.

IT'S NOT WHAT YOU THINK,

Clare Mackintosh
(September 22)

Nadeeka is certain Jamie is having an affair. She knows the tell-tale signs. She's been here before. When Jamie claims to be at work late, she knows he's lying. He's with another woman, and she's determined to catch him in the act. But

when Nadeeka arrives home to confront him, Jamie can't explain himself. The house has become a crime scene. Jamie is dead.

TELL ME SOMETHING TRUE,

Michael Robotham
(September 29)

Arlo Hackett returns home after a 12-year prison sentence for a crime his brother was accused of, faces a hostile community and uncovers buried truths about the past.

THE DYING LIGHT,

Ann Cleeves
Two Rivers #4
(September 29)

A scorching heatwave marks the start of the summer in Devon. Detective Matthew Venn is called in to investigate a puzzling death, when the body of a young woman, Lottie, is found in the swimming pool of a luxurious holiday home. The girl's best friend, Hannah, whose family owns the house, is missing. The girls had arrived in Devon a few days ahead of the family to celebrate the end of their school exams, and had managed to make waves during their short time there; they disrupted the folk music festival at the neighboring farm, with Lottie posting incendiary videos on social media mocking what she snobbishly considered to be a parochial community.

October, 2026

PETRIFIED DREAMS,

Joe R. Lansdale
Hap & Leonard #15
(October 6)

No plot description available. Billed as the last in the Hap & Leonard series.

HOME FOR THE HOMICIDES,

Elle Cosimano & Hannah Morrissey
Holly & Mark #1
(October 13)

Welcome to Christmas, a town so cozy and charming it could be the backdrop of a Hallmark movie, where crime is never in season and it's the holidays all year round. So when a tourist is

found stabbed to death by an icicle in the middle of the town nativity scene, the local police are out of their depth.

JAY TO THE WORLD,

Donna Andrews
Meg Langslow #40
(October 13)
No plot summary available.

1999, Val McDermid

Allie Burns #3
(October 20)

we reunite with journalist and sleuth Allie, whom McDermid checks in with every 10 years as she faces down both criminals and the ever-changing media landscape.

SPLIT SCREEN, Lee Goldberg

Eve Ronin #7
(October 20)

An actress who plays Eve in a TV show is shot, leading Eve to suspect the attack was meant for her.



THE MAN WITH THE GOLDEN COMPASS, Vaseem Khan

Q
(October 22)

Fresh from successfully reinvestigating his childhood friend's mysterious death, Q is hired as a civilian contractor by the police in his sleepy hometown to look into the unsolved murder of tech millionaire turned online antique dealer, Laurence Noble. Six months ago, Noble was tortured and killed, a circular object made of gold and inscribed with mysterious runes found in his pocket. As Q investigates, he finds himself dragged into a chilling conspiracy where past and present meet in a way he could not possibly have imagined.

DEATH ON THE ROYAL YACHT,

S. J. Bennett

Her Majesty the Queen #6
(October 29)

It's 1966 and Queen Elizabeth II is touring the Caribbean aboard the Royal Yacht Britannia. Her schedule is measured in ten-minute increments for five weeks, and nothing can afford to go wrong. But something does. Early in the trip, the Queen's new diary secretary, Pamela Sinclair, is found dead in her cabin. Rumours abound about how she died, but the truth is, nobody really knows. However, this time, suspicion falls on the Queen's longstanding confidante, Joan McGraw.

November, 2026**CLEAR WATER,**Gabrielle Lucille Fuentes
(November 3)

Alma Figueroa, recently furloughed from her job as a paralegal and still trying to find her footing after a divorce, is driving home one night when a girl dressed in white appears out of nowhere. Afraid that the girl is injured, Alma takes her to the hospital. The girl is unharmed, but won't speak and has no identification. Alma is determined to help her, but then the girl disappears without a trace.

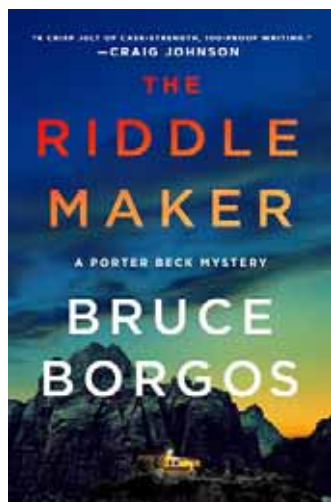
BAD COMPANY, Sara Paretsky
(November 10)

Former CIA agent Lily Sedako is drawn back into a dangerous world after receiving a mysterious package that threatens to expose her past in Central Asia.

THE BODY IN THE BATH,Ragnar Jonasson
Helgi Reykdal #3
(November 10)

When Bergþóra Úlfssdóttir, Helgi's ex-girlfriend, is found dead in her home just before Christmas, Helgi is brought onto the case—but this time, he's a suspect of her murder, given his complicated relationship with Bergþóra. The timing is suspicious: just before her own

death, Bergþóra fatally hit Helgi's new girlfriend, Anita, with her car, ruining the future he'd hoped to build with her. Meanwhile, Helgi has also been looking into the disappearance of Hulda Hermannsdóttir; the woman who'd held his office before him supposedly died of suicide but Helgi remains unconvinced.

**THE RIDDLE MAKER,**Bruce Borgos
Porter Beck #4
(November 17)

Nevada sheriff Porter Beck receives an anonymous riddle leading him to a body hidden for decades, leading Beck and his team in a chase to unravel riddles that will help them uncover and stop a long-time serial killer.

TWO DEAD WOMEN,Phillip Margolin
(November 17)

A lawyer who was set-up, imprisoned, and disbarred, only to be vindicated and reinstated, is determined to find out who set her up and cover their tracks with a trail of dead bodies

THE COLLATERAL HEART,Jeffery Deaver
Lincoln Rhyme #17

A terrible arson in Manhattan burns an old building to the ground. Amelia Sachs—criminalist Lincoln Rhyme's wife and crime scene investigator extraordinaire—manages to save a victim from a fiery death. And in doing so she makes an eerie discovery. The arsonist has left a package of clues that might

hint as to their motive and where they will strike next.

THE CRUSADER, Ajay Chowdhury
Kamil Rahman #2

Detective Sergeant Kamil Rahman is riding high on newfound fame and a thrilling new case: the mysterious death of the Deputy Governor of the Tower of London. Meanwhile, ex-partner Anjoli's luck is about to change too. Her struggling detective agency has been asked to investigate a series of death threats targeting a high-profile, and controversial, climate activist.

December, 2026**BERLIN CHECKMATE,**James Naughtie
Will Flemmyng #4
(December 3)

It is 1989 and although the Wall is still the Iron Curtain, the end game of the Cold War has begun. Confident that one of his own agents can provide priceless intelligence from the other side, Will Flemmyng throws himself into the climactic struggle between East and West. But fate takes a hand. A sworn enemy in the East has evidence from the Nazi era that could destroy Flemmyng and his family, and he lays his trap.

News -- Just In**WATCH THE QUIET SNOW**by Mick Herron
The Slough House Novellas
October, 2026

The collection includes previously published novellas: *The List*, *The Drop*, *The Catch*, *The Last Dead Letter* and *Standing By the Wall*. I've read most of these already. So I guess this means that there will be no 2026 novel from Mick Herron? Que lastima! Let's hope I'm wrong.

Letters



Rachel Amphlett

I have just discovered *Deadly Pleasures* after a writing buddy, Alex Shaw, mentioned the magazine on his Facebook profile earlier this week, and just had to write to tell you that I'm also an enormous fan of *NERVE* by Dick Francis. [Ed. Note: the book that hooked my on mysteries.]

My grandad had most of his books on his shelf (alongside Alistair McLean, Jack Higgins (whose *EAGLE HAS LANDED* was loaned to me by my grandad at the age of 11 and ultimately kickstarted my discovery of other great thrillers), and *NERVE* was an early read around the same time that I discovered on that bookshelf (and a further copy at my parents' house!).

I have often cited *NERVE* in interviews, and went on to read all of Dick's books during my teenage years, with *ODDS AGAINST*, *SMOKESCREEN* and *IN THE FRAME* also being firm favourites.

Trivia twist: my dad used to be Dick Francis's postman, and when I met Felix at CrimeFest in 2018, he kindly signed his latest book so I could gift it to my dad, writing "to my postman" under his signature!

Dick Francis's books – and the Berkshire Downs where I grew up – have been an influence on my own writing too, with my book *HER FINAL HOUR* set on the gallops where racehorses are still trained to this day.

I shall now be an avid subscriber to the magazine, and look forward to reading more about your favourite books.

[See reviews of Alex Shaw's and Rachel Amphlett's recent books in the U.K. review column *herein*]

Susanne Kirk Tomlinson

Another fine issue. I was so pleased

that you remembered Bob Barnard at Bouchercon. And your memorial for Tom Perry was much appreciated. Both Bob and Tom were such fine human beings. You may recall that I published [Thomas Perry's] *THE BUTCHER'S BOY* (and *METZGER'S DOG*). Two of my favorites. I continue to enjoy old age and retirement but not the part that involves saying goodbye to beloved partners in crime. Thanks, again. May you continue to thrive.

My response: You edited/published some great books at Scribner's (now Scribner)! I miss our annual catch-up at Bouchercon. I still remember our discussion of *TRIAL OF PASSION* by William Deverell. You wanted to acquire it (the American publishing rights), but were voted down. Terrific book. I'd be interested in hearing your views on the current state of mystery crime publishing.

Susanne's response: I'm too far removed from mystery publishing to have valid views. Publishing's obsession with romance/fantasy saddens me. It sells. I don't have an instinct for it. I feel very fortunate to have been a part of the mystery-publishing world in what was perhaps its heyday. We saw the introductions of mystery conventions, mystery bookstores, and many mystery publications. Most of the stores and publications are now gone (with the great exception of *DP*). I'm relieved that I'm not an editor or mid-list author today, but I wish them well in what seems to me to be a daunting environment. This makes me feel so-o-o old. Thanks for all you do.

Kim Hays (from Switzerland)

It took me a while to give the new issue of *DP* a thorough read, but now

that I've done it, I can tell you how much I enjoyed it. The reviews – especially yours, since we have similar tastes in crime fiction, but everyone else's too – are so helpful to me.

I've read all of the Karen Pirie novels, for example, but somehow I missed that there's a new one. And I'm so glad to have all the recommendations to help me pick my books for the months to come! Always fun to compare and contrast the various "best of" lists.

Many thanks for including *SPLINTERED JUSTICE* on your 2025 list. It really means a lot to see it there on p. 22! I don't have a fifth book in the series coming out in 2026 because I'm working on getting *PESTICIDE* translated and finding a German-language publisher for the quartet. We'll see what happens.

Serena Curry

I wanted to say thank you for your list, "George Easter's Best Mystery and Thriller Fiction of 2025" on the *Deadly Pleasures* website.

My father, Steele Curry, shared his love of reading mysteries (and old issues of *Deadly Pleasures*) with me. Since his passing, my book shelf has been growing sparse. I was delighted to find your list and so pleased that I recognized a few of the authors as favourites my dad had recommended to me in the past. I am happy to say that my library has now been re-stocked and I can't wait to read my way through your list.

I was wondering, will you be attending Bouchercon this year? I am really looking forward to it (and excited it will be in our home city of Calgary). I will be attending not just as a major mystery reader and fan but also as a fledgling author. I wrote my dad a mystery before he passed and he loved it (although I admit, his opinion was most likely biased!). I have started to query publishing agents and will do my best to network while I'm there as well.

I wish you well and will keep an eye out for you if you are attending. I look forward to starting my subscription to *Deadly Pleasures* and keeping my library stocked! [Ed. Note: See you there!]

Associate Editor's Message



As a physician, I was recently introduced to AI technology at my clinic. Using an iPad mini, I can record a conversation between myself and my patient. The patient can fully discuss, not only their condition related to my specialty, but can discuss anything else that bothers them.

Usually, I am most focused on what I am treating, letting the other symptoms go by the wayside. We could talk about weather or sports or even books. It doesn't matter because everything is recorded. After the encounter is complete, I can press a button entitled 'scribe' and in just a few minutes a beautiful, coherent and well-written note appears in the chart. All the ancillary conversation unrelated to medicine is eliminated. Even the symptoms I do not normally note appear in the paragraph. I am given the chance to correct any minor mistakes and I approve it. The note is beautifully written, way better than my two index fingers would normally type. It just strikes me that this is the way of the future. AI is here to stay and if used judiciously, can make a huge difference in the world.

However, I have been reading about the abuse of using AI in certain situations such as writing books. I have heard there are people cranking out three books a day using AI. I really can't imagine these are better books than talented writers are publishing. I definitely do fear that as AI improves, it will be possible to 'write' a book in the style of your favorite author. For example, someone might be able to write a PI novel just like Raymond Chandler, or a detective novel like Michael Connelly, or a thriller like Lee Child (he has enough trouble getting his brother Andrew to write like him) or even an Agatha Christie novel like the master herself. I am not sure what the future will bring us, but we are moving into a new era that might very well see the end of the publishing world

as we know it today.

Another topic that is of some concern is the end of the mass market paperback. As a reader growing up in the 1960s and '70s, there was always the hardbacks coming out in the bookstores first and those of us who could not afford the price of a hardback either reserved the book in the library (which could take months to get a copy), or, one could wait until about a year later when the mass market paperbacks were released. These are the cheaper books on circular racks at newspaper stands or the books that would dominate bookstores. I used to love them. It was the primary form of the books I read. Now, with the dominance of ebooks and audiobooks, it is a different world. In fact, ninety percent of the books I read are ebooks or audiobooks. They are just so much more portable. There is even talk about eliminating the hardback format in favor of the trade paperback. Yes, times are a changin'.

There was an editorial in the New York Times bemoaning the fact that so many people are discarding books that they have had their whole life. Books that, as a whole, can define who a person is over the course of their lifetime. The author argued that we should keep these books even if we will not read them again. I will admit there are books that I have had since I was a teenager and a couple that were given to me when I was a child. These books mean a lot to me. But we reach a point in life that we need to begin parting with our possessions unless we want our children to be saddled with the task of cleaning things out. My late mother-in-law left the task of cleaning out her apartment to her children when she recently passed away. I helped my wife and I will admit it was a huge undertaking. I do not want to do that to my children. So, I will say goodbye to many books that have been with me for as long as I could remember.

However, there will be some that are staying. No doubt!

David Headley, of Goldsboro Books in London, wrote an interesting article this month bemoaning the fact that literary snobbery is killing the smaller independent bookstores in England. He mentions that the bookstores feature the 'proper' literary books in the front windows and the entry tables. The popular fiction is relegated to spines out on the shelves. Customers are made to feel embarrassed by purchasing popular fictional titles by, say, Dan Brown, John Grisham, Lee Child, Robert Galbraith, Coleen Hoover etc. Instead, they feel compelled to bring to the counter the latest Salmon Rushdie, Ali Smith, Julian Barnes, Martin Amis, etc. (all great writers but they may not write entertaining and light reading). Instead, they order the popular fiction titles online. I am not sure that is the case in the United States. The few independent bookstores I have visited feature both popular and literary books. Of course, anybody reading any book should never feel embarrassed as there seems to be fewer and fewer readers in the world with all of the varied modes of entertainment competing with the simple book – not to mention what seems to be everyone's favorite pastime – staring at your phone

We are about to get the Edgar shortlists of the Mystery Writers of America. Once again, I am not looking forward to reviewing the Best Novel and Best First categories. As a whole – of late, the lists have been mediocre. There are a couple of excellent books among them, but the majority are just B or C books, IMHO. If I decide not to review them, this would be the first time in thirty years. Therefore, it would take a lot of seemingly uninteresting titles to make a decision to choose not read them. The Best First Novel written by an American category I have found to be particularly awful except for one or two excellent exceptions. As a compromise, I might just read and review the Best Novel Category. George has suggested I read the Barry Best Novel shortlist. Perhaps another comparison between the two Best Novel categories might be considered. We shall see.

A Visit From the Book Broad

Meredith Anthony



RED SKY MOURNING

By Jack Carr

Atria, 2024, \$29.99

Rating: B

First line: Commander Liu Zhen of the People's Liberation Navy had given his crew the order to change course four days earlier.

Veteran thriller writer (pun intended—he's an ex-Navy SEAL) Jack Carr delivers another delicious doorstopper. **RED SKY MOURNING** (pun intended) is a good international action thriller, this time focused on the uneasy China-America rivalry and using the fate of Taiwan as a jumping off point.

This is the seventh book in the James Reece series, each set against conflicts in Afghanistan, Russia, Africa, the Middle East, and Washington, DC. This time, Carr concentrates on China as a super-enemy and AI as the battleground of choice. There are also two competing sentient supercomputers, male and female, one of which is a petulant little bitch who will only talk to James Reece. Reece, on the other hand, hears competing voices of his own, in his head, helpfully set in italics.

Carr combines familiar thriller tropes in fresh ways: imminent global annihilation, only one man can save the world, implacable enemies, this time it's personal, loyalty vs betrayal, family is everything, and revenge served cold. All present and accounted for.

The writing is good, the action fast and deadly. Carr, like many of his fellow military thriller writers, has a tic, a tendency to revel in the details, particularly of weaponry. The brand names and specs of each gun or knife or scope or vehicle is doted on in a way that remind-

ed me of the pathological brand coding of male haberdashery in Brett Easton Ellis's **AMERICAN PSYCHO**. I think authors do that in these testosterone-fueled tomes to distract from the fact that, at bottom, the story itself is just the tiniest bit silly.

One troubling trend is that thriller protagonists no longer can be counted on to take the high road. It used to be a given that the hero could hurt or maim or kill in a fair fight or against daunting odds. But once the action is over, they take the high ground and do not look for payback. Here, anything goes. Retaliation? Fine. Torture? Sure. Assassination? Yep.

And let's look for a moment at the metadata. The edition I read had over 500 numbered pages. Included is a preface (13 pages), AND a prologue (31 pages), an epilogue (5 pages), an author's note (6 pages), a glossary (9 pages), and a voluminous acknowledgements section

(12 pages). I have seen college textbooks with fewer bona fides. Methinks the gentleman protests too much.

NOTE TO WOMEN:

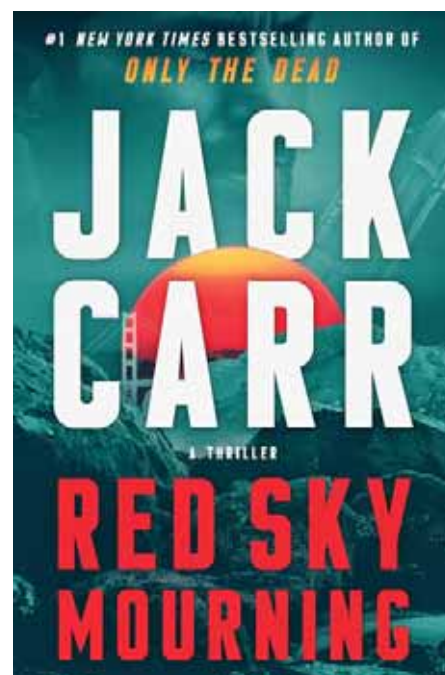
Sure, James Reece is fit and smart and cute, but do not date him. Women in his life don't tend to last. In the unlikely event that they survive at all, they will likely face a long and painful rehab. For god's sake, girls, look elsewhere. He's sexy but he's not worth a ruptured spleen.

Reviewer's Note: I have long thought that the books on the polar opposite ends of the mystery/suspense spectrum, namely cozies and action thrillers, are in fact very, very similar. Both sub-genres are highly formulaic. They both feature resourceful main characters with specific skills who lend themselves to a long series of novels. In the cozy, the main character's skill set is likely to include heightened intuition and quilt-making. In the global action thriller, it is more frequently heightened threat assessment and eye-gouging. But the gist is the same. In both, the main character goes to an interesting part of the world, reluctantly becomes involved in a situation, and eventually prevails. The settings change and the antagonists and crimes are varied, but the story line remains eerily the same.

Go ahead, compare the James Reece books to **MURDER SHE WROTE** or **THE NUMBER ONE LADIES' DETECTIVE AGENCY**. You'll see that I'm right. Precious Ramotswe may not save the world, but she might just save a small village or an orphan. Face it, Jessica Fletcher is just James Reece in a tasteful dress and sensible shoes.

LEVERAGE

By Amram Gowani



Atria, August 2025, \$28.99

Rating: B

First line: The figurative bloodbath turned literal when my cubemate Keith, prone to stress-induced nosebleeds, sneezed on my monitor.

LEVERAGE by Amram Gowani is a mostly excellent debut novel, a financial thriller firmly set in our troubled times. Slap-dash and exhilarating, it is a deep dive into the bro-speak, balls-to-the-wall turmoil of 2015-2016 hedge fund finance. It's a gonzo look at high-stakes, high-octane, anything-goes market mayhem. Part **BONFIRE OF THE VANITIES**; part **AMERICAN PSYCHO**; all **BARBARIANS AT THE GATE**. Throw in what I assume is an obscure reference to the hip-hop collective, the Wu-Tang Clan (its nine members with four-chambered hearts making up 36 chambers--each chapter in the book is a numbered chamber) and you have the gangsta rap novel, **LEVERAGE**.

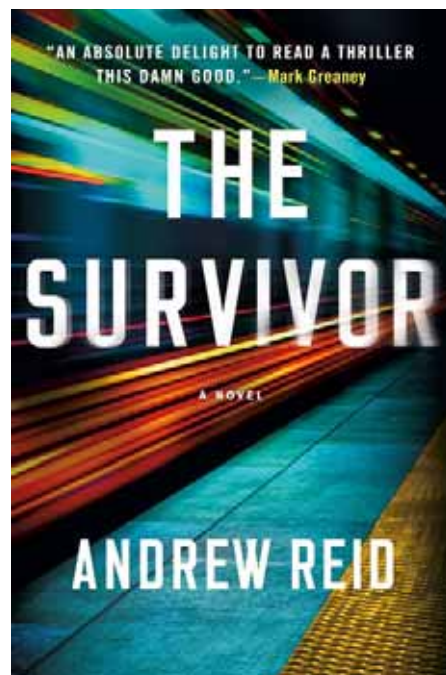
Ali "Al" Jafar works in finance. His blithely racist colleagues call him Aladdin, Habib, Lion King, and sometimes Al-Qaeda. He has no family except his distant mother. He has no love interest and few friends. But he is smart and has worked hard and has landed a job with San Francisco hedge fund Prism Capital, run by notorious billionaire Paul Kingsley and his mini-me son, Brad. When one of Al's top performing stocks suddenly plummets, Prism Capital loses hundreds of millions.

Ali, who managed the ill-fated investment, is sure he will be fired, but Paul offers him a deal. If he can make back the lost money in three months, he can keep his job. Knowing it's impossible, Al knows he will have to turn to illegal means to meet the demand. He dives into the world of insider trading, an *Eyes Wide Shut* universe that opens its doors to him. He takes advantage of an opportunity, and his success rattles him.

The breakneck pace and overheated prose continue until the book's third and final section. Like the Wu-Tang Clan, identities are blurry, no one is who

they appear to be. Most of them go to jail. The gun clicks on an empty chamber. All the air goes out of the gonzo balloon in a complete plot reversal that ushers in a drab, moralistic and unsatisfying ending. When the main character starts laboriously considering all the methods of suicide that are available to him, you know that the book, like the protagonist, is in trouble. But I loved the crazy first two thirds. What a wild ride.

Read it if you're cool enough.



THE SURVIVOR

By Andrew Reid

Minotaur, March 2026, \$29.00

Rating: A

First line: At the entrance to the subway station, the stairs lead down from the street until they are swallowed by darkness.

Set during one day on a New York subway train, **THE SURVIVOR** is a terrific debut thriller by Andrew Reid. (He had another novel published in the UK, but this is his American debut.) A real thrill ride! Taut and propulsive, **THE SURVIVOR** hurtles down the track and you will hang on for dear life.

Adam Crane is already having a bad day. He'd just been hired by a firm in the Financial District, but when he

reports for work on his first day, he finds himself already summarily fired. No explanation. In shock, he leaves and catches the 1 train at Rector Street, heading north. His phone pings and the messages start. The first one tells him that if he ignores instructions, someone will die. He ignores the message. At the next station, a man exiting the train is shot dead on the platform. Inside the train a transit cop tries to intervene.

As Adam is given instructions and performs a series of tasks, a series of flashbacks illuminate Adam's troubled past. The violence escalates. The train is commandeered. And Homeland Security takes over the incident.

As the plot coalesces, the suspense ratchets up. And up.

When I finished the book and my heart rate returned to normal, I watched the 2009 remake of *The Taking of Pelham 123*, an excellent subway thriller with Denzel Washington and John Travolta. **THE SURVIVOR** is a great, solid update. Bravo.

Highly recommended.

EXIT STRATEGY

By Lee Child and Andrew Child
Bantam, November 2025, \$30.00

Rating: A

First line: Nathan Gilmour knew things that other people did not.

EXIT STRATEGY is classic Jack Reacher. A gust of fresh air at a time when so crime fiction comes tricked out with all sorts of unnecessary trappings, **EXIT STRATEGY** is a welcome return to straightforward thrillers where wrongs need to be righted, and we know just the man to do it. Without embellishments or complications, this refreshingly direct thriller moves like a freight train.

The traditional components of the Reacher universe are all in place: a random American city, a telling detail, a puzzling plea for help, a complex crime, Jack Reacher. Reacher lands in Baltimore to see a band he likes. He goes to a coffee shop and happens to spot a scam in progress. An old couple is being duped out of their savings and Reacher,

being Reacher, foils the crime. He also finds a note clearly meant for someone else, asking for help. Reacher being Reacher decides to step in.

From these beginnings, we find a bigger conspiracy, a private army, and a world-changing scheme. Reacher, being Reacher, goes to town.

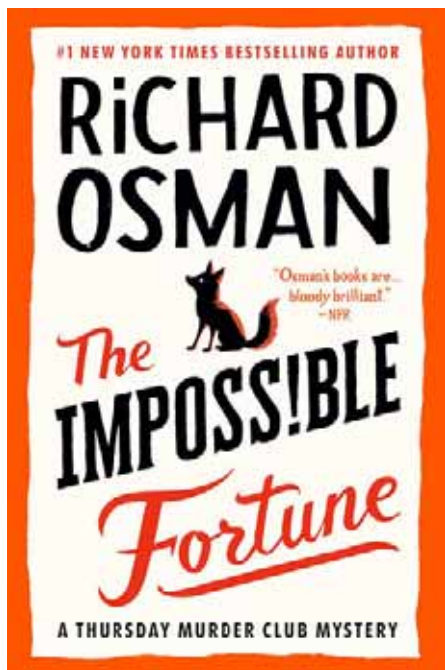
Although the plot is complicated, Reacher's responses are crystal clear. He solves one problem at a time. He uses force when necessary; strategy when needed; brains always. The novel's pace is like Reacher himself: unhurried but relentless.

A great read. Don't miss it.

THE IMPOSSIBLE FORTUNE

By Richard Osmond
Viking, 2025, \$30.00

Rating: A



First line: They show you how to make bombs on the internet.

The latest entry in the Richard Osmond's excellent Thursday Murder Club series, **THE IMPOSSIBLE FORTUNE**, is a delicious addition to this beloved series.

The four aging sleuths are nominally retired, but, as usual, hard at work. Joyce's daughter is getting married. Finally, Elizabeth, still mourning her

late husband, is in attendance along with Ron and everyone's favorite therapist, Ibrahim. When a wedding guest is killed by a car bomb and Nick, the best man, goes missing, the team leaps into action. Well, they don't actually leap, but they do get moving. Nick had asked Elizabeth for help before he vanished.

A convoluted plot involves a fortune in bitcoin, a well-fortified vault, and a drug kingpin (queenpin?), Connie Johnson, who is mentoring a young woman with promising criminal tendencies. Ron's precocious grandson, Kendrick, is also a material help in unraveling the mystery.

Charming, absorbing, and funny, these books are not to be missed. The TV adaptation with Helen Mirren, Celia Imrie, Pierce Brosnan and Ben Kingsley is also wonderful.

I CAME BACK FOR YOU

By Kate White
Thomas & Mercer, January, \$28.99
Rating: A

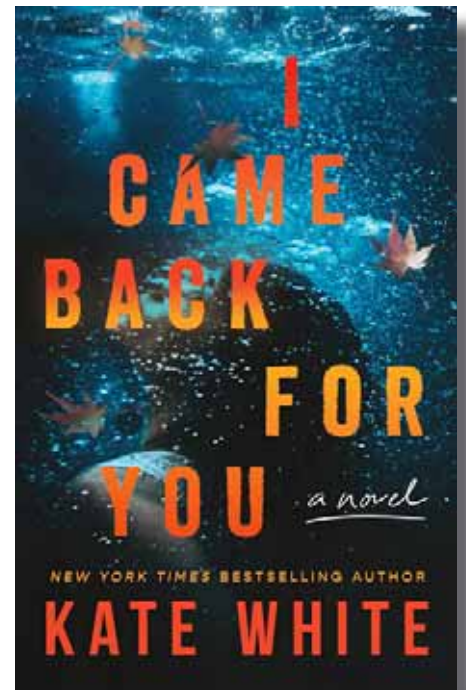
First line: When Sebastian explains one morning that he needs to go away for a few days and asks if I'll mind staying here alone, I tell him not to worry, that I'll be fine.

Kate White's latest excellent domestic suspense thriller, **I CAME BACK FOR YOU**, is built on a thought-provoking premise. Bree Winter, a divorced woman, making a new life with her second husband in a new country, is forced to revisit her traumatic past. Her daughter, Melanie, had been murdered when she was a promising young college student. A serial killer had been caught and convicted and jailed for the killing.

Now, years later, Bree finds that the serial killer, dying of cancer, has released a statement. He confessed to a string of murders, even telling the authorities where the bodies of two of his victims could be found. But he denies killing Melanie.

Bree's estranged husband, Logan, convinces her to go back to the college town and try to find answers. Bree reluctantly agrees.

An unlikely team of amateur sleuths,



prickly divorcees Bree and Logan reinvestigate their daughter's murder. They uncover troubling new information and must confront their own pasts. They also uncover new information about their daughter. And real and present danger.

Deeply satisfying, this psychological thriller addresses issues about relationships, families, and emotional health.

Recommended.

I BECOME HER

By Joe Hart
Thomas & Mercer, August 2025, \$16.99
Rating: C-

First line: Sometimes I ask myself where it started.

Joe Hart's psychological suspense novel, **I BECOME HER**, is the story of a perfect marriage. Until it isn't. Told in first person chapters by Imogen, the wife in question, and sometimes by a shadowy figure called Sierra, who isn't clearly placed in the narrative for some time. There are a few chapters told from the POV of Lev, the husband, but they are told in a close third person. Fine. Fair enough.

But is it just me, or are we all tired of the gaslighting husband, the self-doubt-

ing wife, and the narrative where she ignores all the signs and signals and only finds her courage to fight back at the very end? Isn't it time to retire that old trope?

Hart works hard to make us believe, along with Imogen, that she has found the perfect man and made the perfect marriage. Imogen is smart, well-bred, well-educated and has a serious job. Her deep vein of paranoia is explained by her cold, narcissistic mother and spineless father. Hart even owns up to the irony of Imogen having a career in risk management. But when you paint a woman as gaslighting victim, you have to work hard to make us accept that she stays put. Here, Hart struggles to keep Imogen simultaneously smart but also dumb.

I just didn't buy it. You can't have it both ways.

And even if you can overlook the clues and ignore the evidence, the whole enterprise just lands differently today. We used to sympathize with the poor damsel in distress, and then applaud when she finally finds her way out of the maze. Today, we're more inclined to read a few pages and say, "Bitch, what's up with that? How about we put on our big girl pants and just leave, already."

EVERYBODY WANTS TO RULE THE WORLD

By Ace Atkins

William Morrow, December 2025,
\$30.00

Rating: B+

First line: He'd only been in Rome for a week when he walked into the Hotel Ambasciatore, found a bank of pay phones across the broad lobby, and dialed a number he'd memorized for the American embassy.

Ace Atkins' **EVERYBODY WANTS TO RULE THE WORLD** is a big, silly, lovable Cold War thriller set in that notorious hotbed of Russian/American intrigue: Atlanta, Georgia.

All-American boy, 14-year-old

Peter Bennett is doing fine. His single mother is a secretary at Scientific Atlanta and Peter fills his time with school, friends, TV, and pulp fiction. His hormones are just kicking in and girls occupy his mind, as well.

Smart and observant, Peter deduces that his mom's new boyfriend is a Russian spy and enlists the help of the reluctant Dennis X. Hotchner, a broken down, one-eyed, alcoholic writer, and Hotch's sidekick, an enormous former Atlanta Falcon player who performs in drag under the stage name Miss Jackie Demure. Meanwhile a real Russian spy defects in Rome and demands to be brought to Atlanta to reconnect with his lost love. And the local FBI office is investigating the murder of another woman who works at Scientific Atlanta. All these paths inevitably cross.

Mayhem ensues. Action and chases. Plot twists aplenty. The Gipper, Ronald Reagan, makes a cameo. You'll never think of sleepy, sedate Atlanta the same way again.

Perhaps not quite as tightly plotted and wonderful as Aktins' last novel, **DON'T LET THE DEVIL RIDE**, but amazingly good all the same. A must read.

THE SECOND SON

By Simon Gervais and Ryan Steck
Thomas & Mercer, 2025, \$16.99

Rating: B

First line: As the turbine engines of the Colombian Aerospace Force Sikorsky UH-60A Black Hawk began to spool up, Michael Burke closed his eyes and tried not to think about the list in his pocket.

Why is it that books/plays, whose plots are driven by crazed older women, are always titled with the woman's male offspring? OEDIPUS? HAMLET? And now, **THE SECOND SON**. Did Shakespeare think he couldn't sell a play called "Gertrude"?

Written by veteran thriller writers Simon Gervais and Ryan Steck, **THE SECOND SON** is a fast-paced, quirky,

slightly incoherent story of international intrigue, paid assassins, intrepid cops and a sommelier. A sommelier? Right?

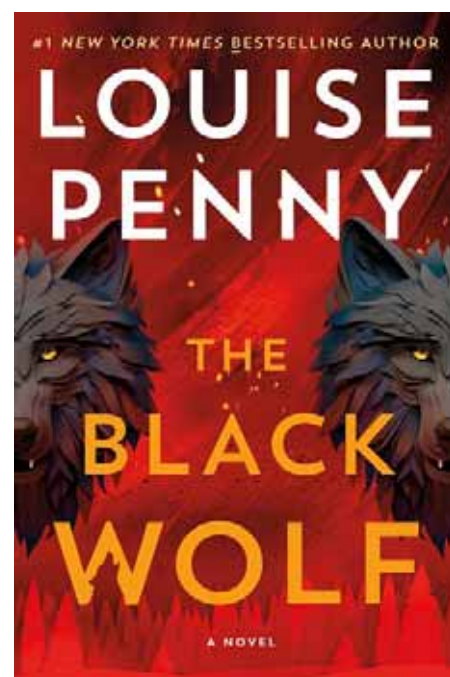
Straining credibility, the hero is a former military man turned wine expert who languishes in the shadow of his older brother. He sets the plot in motion when he thwarts the attempted kidnapping of a U.S. Congresswoman, his would-be love interest, at the swanky Manhattan restaurant where he works. Mixing gangs, hit men, dirty cops, criminal masterminds, and high-placed government officials, the novel careens around trying to hit all the bases.

The writing is good, the pace is brisk, the body count high, and the action credible. On the other hand, there are too many characters and too many back stories. Too many red herrings, too many silly twists. I'll forgive the prologue (a prologue? Seriously?). But not the awkward, unnecessary epilogue that teases the series to follow.

Serious thriller lovers will want to get in on the ground floor of a promising new series, even if the first one is flawed.

THE BLACK WOLF

By Louise Penny



Minotaur, November 2025, \$30.00

Rating: A

First line: “We have a problem.”

Louise Penny’s epic Armand Gamache series continues brilliantly with **THE BLACK WOLF**, the sequel to last year’s **THE GREY WOLF**, a mini-series within the twenty-book series.

Canadian author Penny keeps the Gamache series fresh by giving us two types of books. Some deal with the microcosm of the village of Three Pines where the inhabitants all know each other but each has secrets as well. These books might be mistaken for cozies, except that the psychological element is sharply defined, and the issues are dark and frequently violent. But Penny also writes books in which her protagonist, Armand Gamache, must involve himself in plots that have national consequences in Canada and sometimes beyond. These books are genuine thrillers, with high stakes and complex geopolitical ramifications.

Luckily, I love both types of books. And the mix of intimate and global plots keeps the series fascinating.

THE GREY WOLF and **THE BLACK WOLF** definitely fall into the thriller category. In **THE GREY WOLF**, Gamache uncovered a plot to poison Montreal’s water system, which would kill hundreds of thousands. Tragedy was averted by a very close margin. In the new book, **THE BLACK WOLF**, Gamache realizes that a larger threat still looms. Canada’s sovereign status itself is threatened.

I don’t want to spoil a delicious, twisty, and slow-to-unravel plot, but I want to point out a feature I loved. Louise Penny inserted a brief Author’s Note at the beginning of the novel. It informs the reader that she wrote the book in 2024, turning in the final draft in September, right before the U.S. presidential election. She says, “Imagine my surprise in January 2025 when I started spotting headlines that could have been ripped right from the book.”

A must read.

KING OF ASHES

By S.A. Cosby
Flatiron Books, 2025, \$28.99

Rating: B+

First line: He dreams of his mother.

S.A. Cosby’s latest, **KING OF ASHES**, is an amazing thriller set in and around a Virginia small town crematory. To paraphrase Chekhov, if you show a crematory in the beginning, it’s going to get some use.

Successful Atlanta financial adviser, Roman Carruthers, returns to the small city he grew up in. His father was in an accident and is hospitalized and in a coma. Roman’s sister, Neveah, is running the family crematory business almost single-handed. Their feckless brother, Dante, isn’t much help. In fact, Dante is a drinker, an addict, and a gambler and has run up a sizable debt to a local criminal gang. While Roman has been away, two brothers, Torrent and Tranquil, have all but taken over the town. Drugs, prostitutes, gambling, they control it all.

It’s up to Roman to use his brains and his considerable skills to save Dante from the retaliation of the local gang. It doesn’t help when Roman starts dating the murderous brothers’ beautiful sister. In the meantime, the mystery of their beloved mother’s disappearance during their childhood looms large. The whole town suspects that their father murdered her and disposed of her body using the family crematory.

Every story thread eventually comes together in a big set piece that is as good as I’ve read in years. Delicious!

A must read. Not as perfect as **RA-ZORBLADE TEARS** but close.

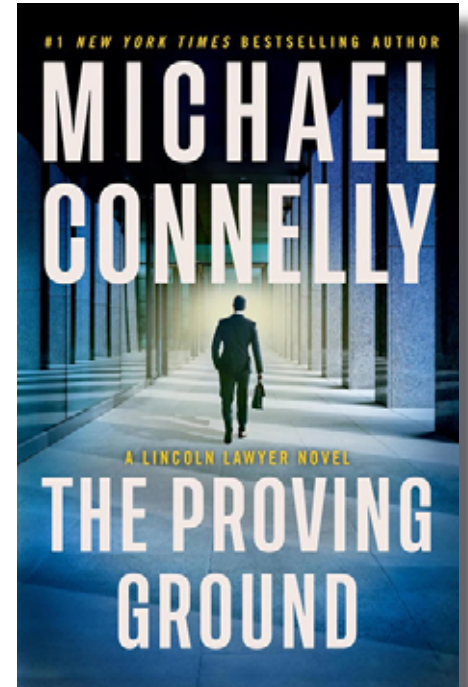
THE PROVING GROUND

By Michael Connelly
Little Brown, October 2025, \$32.00

Rating: A-

First line: To some it’s a stage.

Michael Connelly’s new Lincoln Lawyer novel, **THE PROVING GROUND** is a classic courtroom thriller. Micky Haller, who is now taking civil cases instead of criminal ones, already has the case when the book begins, and we see it through to



its conclusion. It’s a refreshing change from the bells and whistles that have become *de rigeur* in today’s mystery novels.

The title, as well as the first line of the novel, refers to the area in a courtroom in front of the jury box. To some, it’s a stage. To Micky Haller, it’s the proving ground. It’s where an attorney, delivering an opening statement and, later, a summation, speaks directly to the jury. No matter how many witnesses are questioned and how much evidence is introduced, it is up to the attorneys to put the case together and present a narrative that either proves the case or leaves it open to doubt.

Haller is representing the family of a teenage girl who was killed by her 16-year-old ex-boyfriend. The civil suit

is against Tidalwaiv, an artificial intelligence company that produced a chat bot who told the boy that it was okay to kill the girl.

One of the great things about this particular series, alone among the exceptional arcs of Bosch and Ballard, is that Haller is not as scrupulously moral. He does not automatically take the high ground. His flawed outlook lends humanity and, often, a touch of humor to the complex legal maneuverings he engages in. But beneath Haller's striving in a dog-eat-dog world, lies a heart of gold that so often shines through the bleak and sleazy affairs he's involved in. Nowhere is that more true than here.

Bravo.

One note, I'm in the unfortunate camp of those who cannot fully engage with the well-made Lincoln Lawyer TV series. The setting is impeccable, the secondary cast is exceptional, and the lead is charming and relatable, but for some of us, once we have seen Matthew McConaughey in the title role, we cannot love another. Sorry. Go back and watch the 2011 McConaughey film. Amazing.

ARTIFICIAL TRUTH

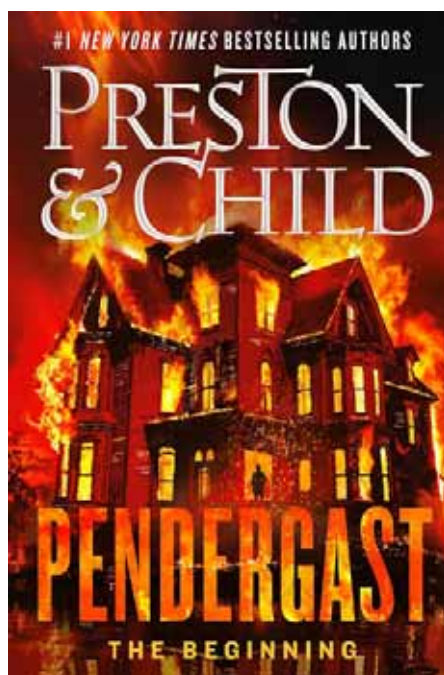
By J.M. Lee, translated from the Korean by Sean Lin Halbert
Amazon Crossing, 2025 (English language edition), \$16.99

Rating: C

First line: Death certificates prove two things.

J.M. Lee's **ARTIFICIAL TRUTH** is a tech-based thriller which veers into sci fi and horror. With so many of today's thrillers investigating – or at least name-checking – AI, it's hard to know whether to characterize them as reality based or next gen. This particular entry posits a tech genius, KC Kim, who invented a SimCity-style environment called Alegria where millions of people find lives that are more fulfilling than the real world.

When KC develops an intractable cancer that all his billions can't beat,



he races to finish the nearly sentient AI that he has chosen to replace him.

After KC's death, his widow, Minju, grieves his loss, but eventually moves on and remarries. For a while she is happy, except for a few strange occurrences. Eventually, she begins to suspect that her dead husband is still pulling the strings and that her life is not quite her own.

Can a smart, determined woman prevail when billions of dollars' worth of high tech mumbo jumbo are arrayed against her?

For me, the novel is a near miss. The issues raised are valid and interesting, but the execution is a bit flat. It may be a translation problem, but I think it goes deeper. Psychological thrillers set in a tech-based future are necessarily tricky. Read this one if you're collecting AI inflected adventures.

PENDERGAST: THE BEGINNING

By Doug Preston and Lincoln Child
Grand Central, January, \$30.00

Rating: A

First line: It was a sweltering October morning when Austin Landry and the rest of the crew drove through the gates of Savior's Rest Cemetery, the rust-black of the wrought iron spikes

almost invisible under a coating of lichen and moss.

The brilliant team of Doug Preston and Lincoln Child have gone back to the beginning of Pendergast's strange and wonderful saga. Not an origin story, rather it gives us an early episode when Pendergast, already an FBI agent, solves a grisly crime spree in New Orleans. It actually ends when he meets D'Agosta who will be his partner in so many adventures.

The plot begins when novice agent Pendergast is teamed with veteran agent Chambers and immediately gets them both in trouble with their superiors. Told to pick a cold case and pursue it, they investigate a strange killing that turns out to be part of a well-disguised series. Their pursuit of the serial killer takes them from the swamps of Mississippi to the moneyed precincts of New Orleans. Equal parts opulent and macabre, the setting is integral to the mysterious milieu that Pendergast seems to thrive on.

The great thing that differentiates these excellent novels from other thrillers is the handling of the perfect mix of realism and the supernatural. The elements of the otherworldly never overpower the well-grounded procedural endeavors. For those of us who are not huge fans of sci fi or horror, this makes these novels accessible and enjoyable.

A must read for fans of the Pendergast series, and an excellent starting point for readers just discovering this amazing body of work.

NOTE: Of the 14 books I read and reviewed for this issue, an astonishing number of them invoke tech innovations from Jack Carr's sentient AI adversaries vying for global domination in **RED SKY MOURNING**, to Richard Osmond's hilarious virtual Bitcoin fortress, to J.M. Lee's virtual afterlife, to Michael Connelly's all-too-real murderous chatbot, these books are exploring tech in novel (pun intended) ways.

The Jacobs Report

Lou Jacobs



THE CORMORANT HUNT

by Michael Idov

Simon & Schuster, \$29.00, January

Ari Falk #2

Rating: A

Michael Idov, noted novelist, director and screenwriter delivers his second cinematic spy thriller (after **THE COLLABORATORS**). Steeped in realistic, relevant international plots with fresh vibrant multi-dimensional millennial characters taking center stage. His portrayal of international spy craft is amplified by his witty and sarcastic dialogue. This novel finds the morally complex CIA operative, Ari Falk, forced out of his self-imposed exile in the Republic of Georgia. He felt disillusioned after suffering the fall-out from uncovering the hidden CIA conspiracy involving his boss, Rex Harlow. Any necessary backstory is seamlessly woven into this intriguing narrative. His friend and previous asset, Allen Keegan, the founder and brains behind the “whistle-blowing” podcast, “Flea-Collar” is assassinated along with several staff members of Radio Free Europe in Prague. Suspicion is cast upon him as well as the CIA. He is flushed out of hiding by the new Deputy Director of Covert Activities, Asha Tamaskar. After a brief contentious meeting he is cajoled into taking a new and obviously dangerous mission on behalf of his old bosses. Hints abound suggesting an underlying mutual romantic attraction.

He is tasked to infiltrate a multinational extremist group operating under the aegis of the slippery charismatic leader, Felix Burnham (alias Philip Brenner, of East German parentage.) Burnham has crafted his charisma, as a natural born cult leader, into forming

a vast geopolitical enterprise that can shape and alter geopolitical alliances. Russian backing is a probability. Falk positions himself to be recruited on the basis of his status as a disgruntled and disgraced CIA operative.

Idov excels at exploring the themes of betrayal and extremism, with scintillating and sarcastic prose. Realistic episodes of globe-trotting conflicts in ever-changing authentic world settings are on full display. The intrigue and suspense is agonizingly escalated as the consequences of relevant international issues are explored. All the elements of great storytelling are here.... conflict, crisis, chaos and ultimate resolution into a present day meaningful and relevant denouement. Idov masterfully weaves together a globe-trotting adventure, laced with authentic tradecraft. This propulsive thriller is accented with humor and a touch of romance and culminates in a twisty satisfying denouement.



This immensely entertaining yarn is not to be missed. I could easily see Ari Falk as Mick Herron’s character River Cartwright in **SLOW HORSES**.

This series is billed as a trilogy, with one more novel to go.

EVERYBODY WANTS TO RULE THE WORLD

by Ace Atkins

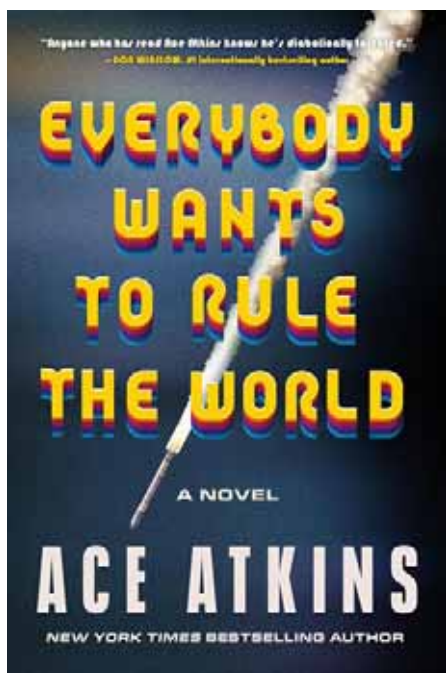
Morrow, \$30.00, December, 2025

Rating: A

Ace Atkins masterfully pens another historical crime thriller laced with possible geopolitical implications. The atmospheric setting is 1985 Atlanta. The city is swarming with spies and the Russian “illegals” program is in full swing. They’re living next door to you. President Reagan, the year before, announced his initiation of the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) in an attempt to make nuclear weapons obsolete. He envisioned a spaced based net using lasers and satellites to blanket the United States, making it impermeable to inter-continental ballistic missiles from our potential adversaries like Russia. Reagan theorized that this would end the pact of Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD). The press debunked this program and nicknamed it “Reagan’s Star Wars” program. But, how did Russia envision this potential resistance to their threat? Atkins theorizes its potential implications.

The story is set into motion with the defection of Vitaly Yurchenko of the KGB First Directive. This love-sick traitor is milked by the C.I.A. for all possible relevant data, relating to Russian spying and their reaction to SDI. Vitaly, as expected, is playing both sides of the fence in this Cold War dance. Does he really want to hook up with an old flame or is there something more sinister and treacherous in his plans? The story is told in multiple view points by a cast of wacky colorful, and yet believable characters... many bigger than life.

Peter Bennett, a fourteen-year-old, is a typical teen with bedroom walls covered with concert and movie posters. He is obsessed with the notion that his mother, Connie, is dating a Russian spy, Gary Powers. Peter has been told that



his father died in the Vietnam War. His mother has had a seemingly endless stream of boyfriends, but he finds the latest extremely odious. The police have no patience for his prattle and he is forced to enlist the aid of the hack pulp writer, Dennis X Hotchner. Peter has enjoyed Hotch's string of pulpy "Bud Everett" crime thrillers, starring Bud and his side-kick Brutus, and is aware of his working at a local bookstore. Hotch has also recently written a magazine article referring to the presence of Russian's living amongst us. Hotch becomes reluctantly interested in helping Peter. Hotch has a close friend and comrade, Jackie Johnson, who is an ex-Atlanta Falcons tight end, presently working as a drag queen performer, named Jackie Demure. This certainly mirrors the crime solving duo in his hackneyed pulp novels. Hotch and Jackie become deeply embroiled in the layered plot as they launch their investigation. They trip over threads of circumstances that link Peter's mom, Connie, to the murder of Jenny Buckner, a secretary and friend who also works at Scientific Atlanta. Jenny is known to have had top level security clearance in this company that has multiple government contracts. A critical CD stuffed with information is

missing.

Also involved in this densely layered plot are the viewpoints of Sylvia Weaver, a no nonsense FBI intelligence officer and Daniel Rafferty, FBI agent with previous connections to Vitally, and who is leading another "Walter Mitty-like" life with exotic pole dancer, "Miss Trinity Velvet." Not to be forgotten is the Russian assassin, Lisica, aka "The White Fox", who lives hidden in the US as part of the Russian "illegals" program.

Multi-award winning novelist Ace Atkins utilizes his past experience as a crime reporter to provide a twisted and complex narrative that has "ripped from the headlines" appeal. His dialogue illustrates his skillful knowledge of language as he weaves these multiple colorful characters together in an amusing symphony of corruption, loyalty, and exploration of the dark side of human behavior. Atkins latest will certainly add a cadre of avid followers to his ever-expanding oeuvre.

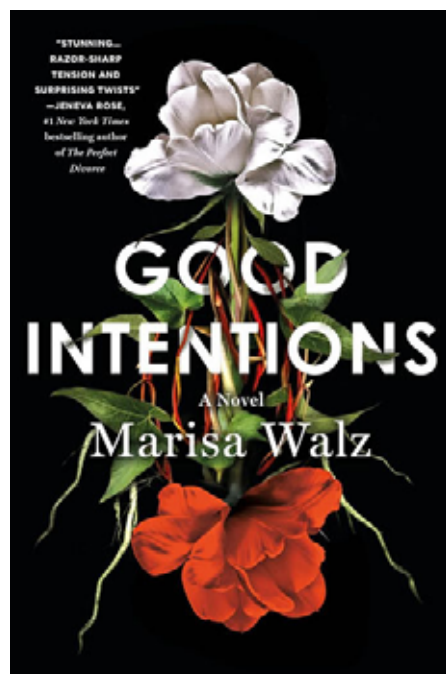
GOOD INTENTIONS

by Marisa Walz

St. Martin's Press, \$29.00, February

Debut Novel

Rating: B



This debut psychological suspense novel will captivate the reader, while causing a visceral dislike for the main protagonist. This is an experience tantamount to being unable to look away from a horrendous accident. Cady has it all! She is a successful high-end event planner, with a very successful real estate developer husband, and an ever expanding social calendar. She rushes to the hospital after being called that her twin sister, Dana has been in an accident. In the waiting room of the ER, she briefly encounters Morgan, a mother who is acutely grieving for the loss of her son in a bicycle versus auto accident. Rather than concentrating on her own grief for the sudden loss of her beloved confidante, she pours herself into empathy for Morgan. These supposedly good intentions turn into an obsession as she virtually stalks Morgan in an attempt to get close to her. Cady's quest for connection and control quickly spirals out of her control. Each poor choice leaves the reader begging for her to stop. Her controlling intense actions cannot be justified by a rationale being.

Marisa Walz pushes the suspense inexorably forward as Cady's life spirals out of control. A lot of unraveling occurs inside the head of this unreliable and rather unlikable woman. Our empathy for her circumstances is strained to death as her actions become more and more erratic.

Walz's prose and plotting flow effortlessly in this intense page-turner. An ever expanding feeling of dread is inevitable. The themes of obsession and grief are expertly explored with a feeling of escalating dread until the extremely unexpected ironic denouement.

After this wonderful debut, I have added her to my favorite author list.

EDGE

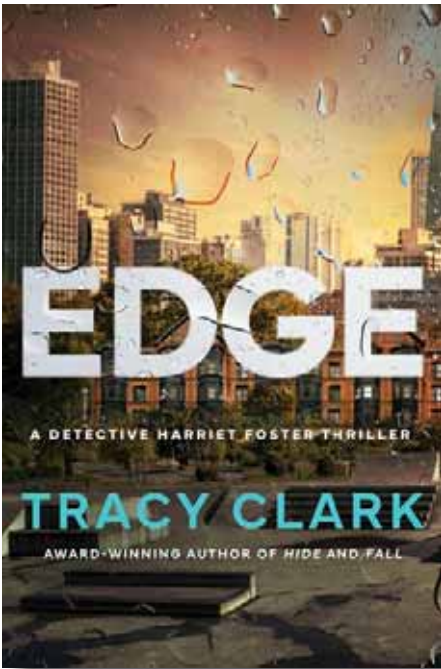
by Tracy Clark

Thomas & Mercer, \$16.99,

December, 2025

Detective Harriet Foster #4

Rating: B



Multi-award winning novelist Tracy Clark delivers a gritty, street-savvy police procedural following the career of her whip-smart and empathic Black female detective, Harriet “Harri” Foster. Although this is the fourth foray into the enduring tales of Harri, it is easily enjoyed as a standalone as Clark seamlessly supplies the necessary backstory.

On her day off, Harri is strolling down by the Lakeshore early in the morning, only to come upon a disturbing tableau. She notices two inert figures strewn on the lakefront sand. She climbs the fence to find a cold, inert young adult male, along with an equally young woman with a faint pulse. Her quick actions result in the hospitalization and eventual recovery of the woman. She is quickly embroiled in the investigation of the apparent overdoses. The found blue bag with the cryptic “E” quickly leads to the presence of a new “tainted” opioid on the streets. Four other victims are soon identified: a young mother struggling with postpartum blues and three men from a late night poker game. Ella Burns is the survivor and remains evasive during intense questioning. Her lifestyle and attire at college is way above what is reasonable for

one of her modest means. Harri found \$400 in her wallet when she found her comatose on the beach. Harri and her partner, Vera, will tenaciously connect the dots to the Gamon Crime family.

What sets this novel apart from others is Clark’s superlative mastery of dialogue that propels the narrative, as suspense and intrigue escalate. Multiple layered characters are effortlessly developed – both crime perpetrators and law officers. Plotting smoothly flows as Harri and Vera search for the origin of the Edge to eliminate the street threat. The plot becomes twisted and convoluted the closer Harri comes to unraveling the nature of the crime family’s far-reaching involvement in the community.

Clark, a native Chicagoan, expertly utilizes the Windy City setting as an important construct in the developing narrative. The pulse and sounds of the city amplify the burgeoning tension and action. Clark’s background in the newspaper business fosters the feel of “ripped from the headlines” importance. Now that I’ve discovered Clark’s oeuvre, I certainly will download the first three entries in this excellent series.

THE PROVING GROUND

by Michael Connelly

Little, Brown, \$32.00, October, 2025

Mickey Haller #8

Rating: A

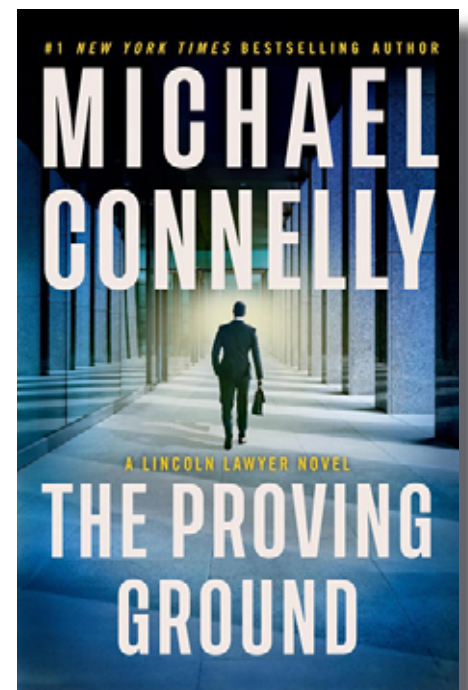
Michael Connelly never ceases to amaze in his captivating Lincoln Lawyer series. He masterfully merges a legal courtroom thriller with an intriguing investigative narrative. He brings together two of his iconic characters: Mickey Haller, known as “The Lincoln Lawyer,” and Jack McEvoy, the renowned investigative journalist, who initially appeared in **THE POET**. This gem explores the mostly unregulated AI business and its lack of sufficient guardrails.

Haller agrees to represent Brenda Randolph, whose teenage daughter, Rebecca, was murdered by her ex-boy-

friend after he consulted his AI avatar, Brenda cannot be bought off by the tech company, TidalwAIv, and desires a public apology, and acceptance of responsibility for this heinous act. The tech company presents Mickey with an avalanche of discovery material in the hope of confounding him.

Enter Jack McEvoy, the renowned journalist who is aware of the situation and is planning to write a book on the dangers of unregulated AI. Mickey accepts his offer of exclusive access to the case in exchange for sifting through the massive discovery dump in search of a “smoking gun.”

Connelly expertly weaves a complex narrative filled with twists and unexpected revelations.



The suspense and intrigue intensify as the courtroom drama escalates. Connelly skillfully blends authentic detective work with legal drama, creating a riveting story that compels the reader to turn the pages eagerly in search of the ultimate resolution. This five-star gem stands strong on its own. Connelly is truly a master of contemporary crime thriller with this character-driven plot, while exploring the relevant present day concern over unbridled AI development.

Neither Tarnished Nor Afraid

Kevin Burton Smith



A few books and a graphic novel that got to me this time, for various reasons. It's been a helluva winter. So far...

THE RETURN OF THE MALTESE FALCON

by Max Allan Collins

Cry havoc and let slip the dogs of public domain...

2026 looks to be a banner year for the expiration of numerous crime and mystery classics copyrights, including titles by Agatha Christie, Carolyn Keene, Ellery Queen, John Dickson Carr, Earl Derr Biggers, and Dorothy L. Sayers, among others. The big one, though, for those of us who follow the Shamus Game, is undeniably **THE MALTESE FALCON** by Dashiell Hammett.

You may have heard of it.

Slipping into public domain, of course, means that there's already a deluge of ripoff reissues, as well as numerous "re-imaginings" by an array of mostly dubious writers and equally dubious publishers.

Fortunately, much of their thunder has been stolen by an honest-to-goodness sequel by Shamus Award winning Max Allan Collins, somebody who can actually write, and who actually gives a good goddamn about the original novel which introduced hard-boiled San Francisco private eye Sam Spade.

It was Hammett's original 1929 novel (serialized in *Black Mask* the previous), and Collins' realization that Spade and Al Capone were contemporaries that inspired him to begin his own acclaimed Nate Heller series of historical private eye novels, and in many ways this seems less like the milking of a cash cow than an act of genuine tribute, gratitude and respect. Maybe even love.

Of course, in Hammett's original, Spade becomes entangled with a Miss Wonderly (aka "Brigid O'Shaughnessy"), a seductive but truth-challenged woman, in a complicated and ultimately deadly hunt for a priceless jeweled-encrusted statue of a falcon that's been smothered in black enamel to conceal its true worth. In short order, though, a detective is murdered, and Spade makes the acquaintance of jovial master criminal Casper Gutman, his gunman (and possible lover) Wilmer Cook, and weaselly art dealer Joel Cairo, who are all after the "dingus"... If these characters, not one of them trustworthy, don't ring a bell, STOP right now.

Go find Hammett's original novel and read it. Then come back here, and find out how Collins thinks it all ends. You won't be disappointed, and the narrative threads are flawless.



Return picks up just days after the events in the original, with Christmas just around the corner, and Gutman's daughter Rhea hiring Sam to continue the quest for the black bird. Soon enough, familiar faces start popping up: Spade's ever-loyal secretary Effie Perrine, his former lover Iva Archer, O'Shaughnessy and Wilmer all make appearances. But now there are others interested: Chicago mobster Dixie Monohan, Brigid's kid sister Corrine Wonderly, and Stewart Blackwood of the British Museum who's claiming legal ownership of the statue. But they all want it.

And Spade, being as slick as spit and twice as slippery, all too happily plays them all off against each other, collecting a retainer and/or the promise of a reward from anyone he can. There's plenty more treachery to come, of course, and a few more murders (I expected nothing less), and Spade wraps it all up with, yes, a gathering of the suspects — a trick Hammett himself was rather fond of, using it in both **THE MALTESE FALCON** and **THE THIN MAN**.

Along the way, Collins convincingly apes Hammett's taut, terse prose style, tossing in a few Chandler-worthy similes for fun, and continuing — with masterful spunk and determined spirit — the impressive snarl of lies, betrayal and deception Hammett started almost a century ago.

Well done, Max.

THE ADVENTURES OF MAX SPITZKOPF

by Yoyné (Jonas) Kreppel

Translated by Mikhl Yashinsky

At first I thought it was a joke. Certainly the over-boiled publisher's

hype for this recent collection suggested that somebody's tongue (possibly Mel Brooks?) was firmly in somebody's cheek.

Billed as "the Yiddish Sherlock Holmes" we're told that Max Spitzkopf was "bold as a lion (who takes) the wildest risks.... the legendary private eye, undefeated foe of villains, and passionate defender of the Jewish people. No matter how hopeless or dangerous the case, when the investigatory profession's greatest artist is summoned, justice is assured."

Oy vey...

But no. It's all true. Max Spitzkopf was a fictional detective back around the turn of the century (the last one!), who appeared in the fifteen tales collected here (and possibly more are out there), published as pamphlets in German and Yiddish, and only recently rescued from obscurity by tiny White Goat Press.

Spitzkopf, aided by his trusty muscular sidekick Fuchs, employs plenty of disguises and his equally trusty revolver, boldly taking on criminals of all stripes, from thieves to terrorists, and performing all sorts of derring-do on the streets of Galicia, then part of Poland.

Sadly, it turns out that Max was no Sherlock, and Kreppel was no Conan Doyle. This is dime store pulp, with most of Max's cases actually solved not by shrewd detective work, but by action-packed coincidence and rootin' tootin' deus ex machina blind luck. Not sure, either, if the eyeball-rolling dialogue is due to over-enthusiastic translation or not (it often reads like silent film dialogue cards).

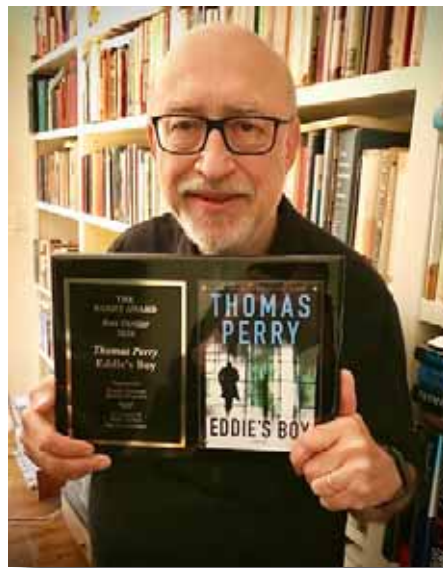
Still, for all their historical significance, these are just fun, cheesy adventures, pleasantly full of early twentieth century derring-do (Guns! Horses! Automobiles! Fisticuffs!) and delicious plot twists.

Like potato chips, betcha can't eat just one.

THE TREE OF LIGHT AND FLOWERS

by Thomas Perry

The tenth and final Jane Whitfield novel by the late Thomas Perry is both



thrilling (that's ta given), and a surprisingly emotional and wrenching farewell — a parting gift featuring one of crime fiction's all-time great original characters, by one of its most noted and creative practitioners.

Perry, of course, was the amazingly consistent, award-winning writer who gave us **THE BUTCHER'S BOY**, **METZGER'S DOG**, **THE OLD MAN**, **HERO** and numerous other acclaimed thrillers, as well as the Whitfield series. A young Seneca woman from Deganawida, a small town in upstate New York, Jane calls herself a guide, and since her novel debut in **VANISHING ACT** (1994), she has used both her mad high-tech skills and her Native American heritage to lead dozens of clients away from those who would do them harm (usually criminals, abusive spouses or, occasionally, the law) and towards hopefully safer lives.

Sure, she occasionally bends (okay, breaks) the law, but Jane considers herself — and her clients — to be the good guys. She sticks to a strict code of conduct, and she has to believe in her "runners," as she calls them. But make no mistake — she can more than handle herself, and she can be as coldly brutal as Jack Reacher in pursuit of her goals if she has to.

"When you hit somebody with a truck," she tells us, matter-of-factly, "you might not see everything happen, but you hear it, and feel it. And then

there's blood and broken bones."

She is, simply, one of the most complex and compelling heroines in the entire crime fiction universe, right up there with Lisbeth Salander.

She's been at it a long time, though — maybe too long. She's married now, to Carey McKinnon, a local doctor, and they have a newborn, May Dawn. Domestic life beckons, and Jane is ready to embrace it. She's long strived to live under the radar, and she's kept her head down. But despite her best efforts, her reputation — or perhaps her legend — has spread.

Claire, a young Seneca teenager accused of murdering the man who tried to rape her, shows up asking for help. She's soon followed by Brian, a middle-aged man on the run from his former employer, a dealer in illegal arms, who fears Brian may testify against him.

But Jane's also made some real enemies over the years, including a ruthless Russian killer, Magda Kaprovna, with whom she's previously crossed swords. Magda's intent on capturing Jane and torturing her into revealing the identities and whereabouts of those she's helped disappear, hoping to sell the info to the highest bidder.

Suddenly, it's not just Claire and Brian but Jane and her family who must become runners. And as the wolves gather for the final showdown, we're treated to one final blast of suspense, and one final moment of heroic defiance that serves as a fitting tribute to both Jane and her creator.

R.I.P., Thomas.

George's Take: It's sad to think that this is the last book from Thomas Perry (unless he had another in the pipeline when he recently passed away).

It was fitting that he wound up this successful series so well with a tale well told. **Rating: A-**

THE LOST COAST AND OTHER SHARON McCONE STORIES

by Marcia Muller

Too often overshadowed by her prolific husband and fellow author Bill Pronzini, as well as Sue Grafton and Sara Paretsky who followed closely on

her heels, Edgar Grand Master Marcia Muller nonetheless deserves a big honking spot of acclaim in the Shamus Game for the creation in 1977 of one of the very first truly liberated and modern female private eyes, Sharon McCone. McCone was the real deal, an idealistic young woman who'd gone through the social and political upheavals of the sixties (Berkeley!), working initially as the in-house detective for the hippie-dippyish San Francisco legal co-op All Souls, and coming out the other side as a hard-working, hardcore professional. Over sixty or so novels and short stories, Muller has allowed McCone to grow, personally and professionally, keeping her a real and engaging hero — never perfect, but always striving to remain true to her ideals, and always refreshingly down-to-earth, tackling her cases in a pragmatic, step-by-step fashion.

This satisfying collection, purportedly rounding up the “best” of the stories, stretches from “Deceptions” way back in the eighties to 2024’s “Scamming the Scammers,” traces McCone’s journey, with the mysteries always compelling and the characters always deftly drawn. Most of the tales weave in and out of McCone’s journey through life (mentioning but not dwelling on

the mending of fences with her sometimes estranged family, the tracking down of her birth parents, her eventual departure from All Souls to form her own detective agency, her marriage to dashing, high-flying Hy Ripinsky — the Mr. Big of P.I. fiction, and her earning a pilot’s license). Those stories are more fully covered in the novels.

No, these are small — but no less engaging tales. Hy doesn’t even figure much in most of these stories, and that’s fine with me. He seems like a nice enough guy, but honestly? Sharon works best on her own, telling her own stories, and there are some pretty great ones here, including outlier “The Holes in the System” from 1996, which is narrated — for a change — by Sharon’s BFF and assistant Rae Kelleher. But my favorites mostly have Sharon spinning her own tales, always off somewhere it seems, flying solo (sometimes literally), on behalf of a client, relying on her laptop, a gun and her wits, working the clues and following the breadcrumbs.

No big, earth-shattering wham-bangs or flashy scenery-chewing drama in these tales, maybe, although several boast a more-than-clever twist or two. Nope, McCone is simply on a case; just a professional doing her job. And doing it well. Sorta like her creator.

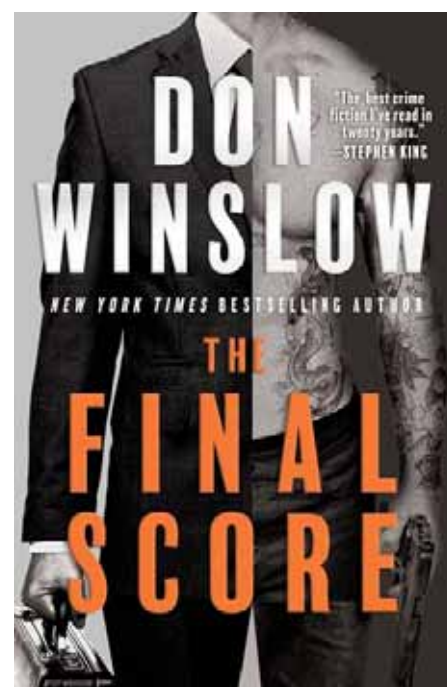
Like I said, refreshing.

THE FINAL SCORE

by Don Winslow

No slouch himself, Winslow also knows how to string words together, as evidenced by this collection of six brand new novellas, romping all over the crime fiction playground. Small stories, maybe, but they’re writ large.

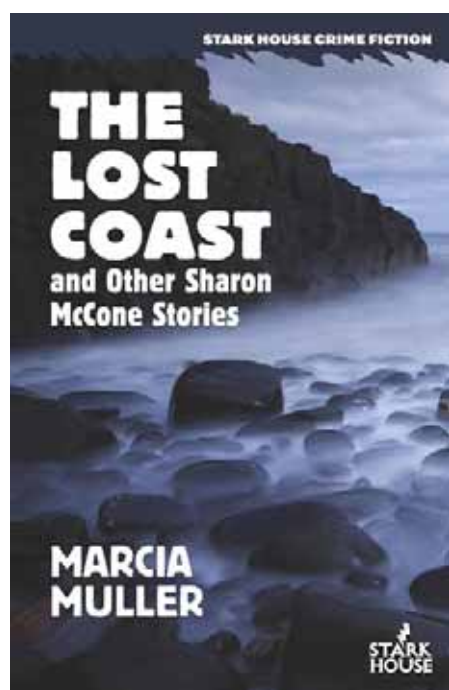
The book kicks off in fine fashion, as the author plays with expectations of the heist genre, flipping it into — of all things — an action flick-adjacent love story. John Highland, an aging thief who’s already penitentiary bound, decides to use his last weeks of freedom for a “Final Score.” He’s facing maybe twenty-five years Federal time, after a botched armored car robbery, and is out on bond only until his official sentenc-



ing in a few weeks. With time running out, he intends to empty the seemingly impenetrable vault of The Castle, a casino out in the middle of nowhere, east of San Diego. As one of his hastily assembled crew asks, “Are you out of your fucking mind?”

The O Henry-like “The Sunday List” follows ambitious working-class kid Nick McKenna, who tools around Rhode Island in his rusted out 1962 Corsair for struggling Tillman’s Package Store, delivering booze to thirsty Rhode Island drinkers in the 1970s on Sundays, skirting the state’s dry laws. Nick has his eyes on college, viewing it as his only way out from a dead-end job, or even worse: Vietnam. But life doesn’t always turn out the way Nick expects.

“Collision Course” is another mother of a tale: a there-but-for-the-grace-of-God cautionary heartbreaker that charts the epic downfall of the enviously successful and happy Brad McAlister, an upright, five-star family man, hotel manager and corporate rising star. All systems are go and a world-changing promotion is in the works when his personal and professional life are blown apart thanks to one brief, tragic mistake. Suddenly Brad has nowhere to go but down down down. The decades-long aftermath will grab you by the throat.



"True Story," meanwhile, spun out completely in dialogue, tries to lighten the mood. It finds two (allegedly) wise guys discussing the sad but true story of fellow reprobate Lenny over breakfast at a diner. It's a slog, though — humorous at first, as the two lunkheads continually confuse nicknames and backstories of various fellow wise guys (Lenny the Barber or Lenny No Socks? Louie Cacciatore or Louie Doughnuts? Drywall Pete or Ball Peen Pete?), and wander off on tangents, loop-the-loop digressions and the occasional friendly breaking of balls, but it goes on too long; an almost endless take on Abbot and Costello's "Who on First?" dressed up as a scene from *The Sopranos*. The final twist hits the spot, but I'm not sure it was worth the walk.

Far better is "The Lunch Break," which features the return of Winslow's much loved series character, surfer private eye Boone Daniels. Along with his Dawn Patrol surfing buddies, Boone is hired to bodyguard (and babysit) Brittany McVeigh, a spoiled young actress. Conniving and barely controllable, she's a "drunken, drug-addled, promiscuous little diva" — an almost unmanageable, cartoonish piece of work. But she can act. Whether she can act like an adult, though, is another question. It's all fun, fun, fun, until someone actually tries to kill her. Long time fans will rejoice.

But my personal favorite is the harrowing, noirish and unforgettable "The North Wing," which finds us in Rhode Island once more, this time in a tale that plays out like a long lost cut from Springsteen's *Nebraska*. In 2021, Doug Pritchett is a straight-arrow patrolman with dreams of making detective, a stand-up guy who truly believes "man turns his back on his family, he just ain't no good." But that's put to the test when Doug's loser young cousin, Chrissy, drives head-on into another car, killing the driver, a popular young university student named Sarah Gaines; a member of a wealthy local family. Chrissy, as usual, was shit-faced, and with two previous DUIs behind him, the sentence is harsh — ten years. But Doug knows Chrissy won't make it.

"Five-six, a buck thirty, no street smarts at all, he'll be a pass around pack. Hell, he even has a girl's name. They'll rape him in his cell, in the showers, in the hallways, on the yard. He'll be a rolling mumbling head case inside a month."

And so Doug makes a deal. It's a nasty and bleak choice whose dark conclusion slams down like a hammer on a drum.

Throughout this collection, Winslow — who a few years ago threatened to give up fiction — dishes out dialogue that burns true, muscular storytelling, and characters confronted with hard choices that peer into the abyss, reminding us there ain't no easy way out.

OUT OF ALCATRAZ

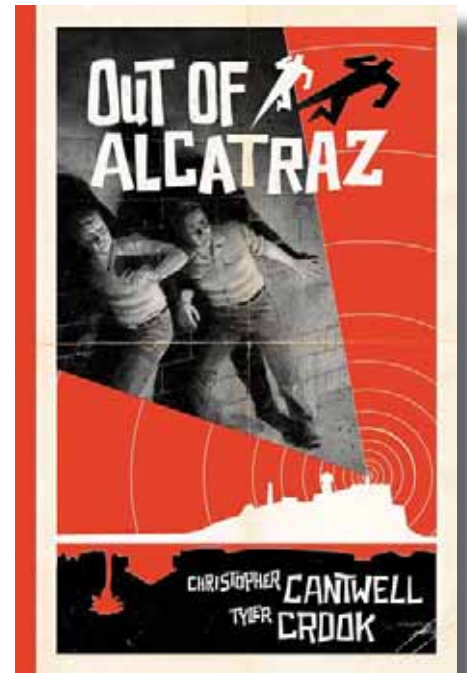
by Christopher Cantwell
and Tyler Crook

Speaking of no easy ways out, this collection of the recent mini-series, presented as a graphic novel, is also pretty nifty, focussing not on someone entering prison, but someone exiting. A bleak, moody and oddly poignant yarn, it audaciously imagines the adventures of convicted felons Frank Morris and brothers John and Clarence Anglin in the aftermath of their notorious real-life 1962 escape from Alcatraz Federal Penitentiary. Of course, all three were presumed to have ended up food for the crabs in icy San Francisco Bay (their bodies were never recovered), but what if Frank and Clarence actually managed to make it ashore?

Presented by Eisner-nominated writer Cantwell and artist Crook, this could have been just another noir wallow dressed up in period drag, but there's bigger game being hunted here, conjuring up an almost cinematic widescreen approach (some of the panels and imaginative layouts by Crook are to die for). Supposing the hot-tempered Frank and the quietly naive Clarence have not only survived the frigid waters (John, we're told, didn't make it), but have hook up with their outside contact, a nameless and perpetually pissed-off young woman who's supposed to shepherd them

cross-country north to Canada, where freedom of some kind awaits them.

But as the trio stumbles from one close encounter to another, they discover that escape isn't necessarily freedom. The nationwide manhunt, in fact, may be the least of their problems, as the uneasy alliance between the three



threatens to shatter, awash in suspicions, differing agendas, long-simmering resentments and biases, betrayals and, yes, violence. After all, Frank and Clarence, while not serial killers or anything, were not in prison for being nice guys.

And it's definitely not a nice world they've escaped to. Along the way they have to deal with everything from horny gas station attendants and overly curious tractor salesmen to crooked lawmen and conflicted government agents hot on their tail, in a society in flux, reeling under the burden of its own prejudices. Frank and Clarence may have escaped prison, but not their own skins, and the bitter, despairing conclusion suggests we're all prisoners of one sort or another, no matter what side of the bars you're on.

See you next time, if you make it out.

Novels of Sensation and Other Stuff

Hank Wagner



THE MALTESE FALCON

by Dashiell Hammet
Alfred A. Knopf, 1930, \$2.00

RETURN OF THE MALTESE FALCON

by Max Allan Collins
Hard Case Crime, January, \$27.99

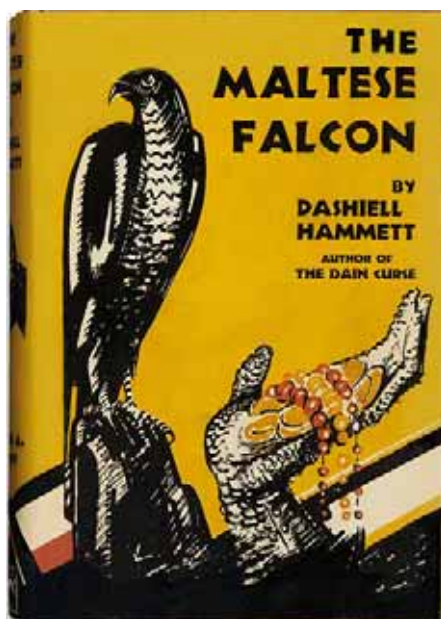
At the beginning of December, I re-read Dashiell Hammet's 1930 classic **THE MALTESE FALCON**, enjoying it immensely, despite my familiarity with both the novel and the film. Andrew Klavan has called it "an almost perfect mystery, just iconic," and I heartily agree. It's a book that always entertains and enthralls, rewarding reading and re-reading.

Why the re-read? Well, it was inspired by a reading of the sequel, **RETURN OF THE MALTESE FALCON**, penned by no less a light than MWA Grand Master Max Allan Collins.

Collins' story opens two weeks after **FALCON** closes (December, 1928) as Spade's Girl Friday, Effie Perine, announces a potential client, a Miss Smith, who later claims to be Rhea Gutman, daughter of the late, unlamented Casper Gutman (a.k.a. "The Fatman"). As is traditional, a skeptical Marlowe hears her out, and agrees to her request: find the real Maltese Falcon. Gutman frames it as fulfilling her father's legacy. The jaded Knight Errant Spade sees it as tying up myriad loose ends.

Thus begins Spade's second quest to find the fabled Black Bird, which requires reviewing the facts and most importantly, the dramatis personae involved in the prior case. Corpses litter the landscape, including Miles Archer, Floyd Thursby, Captain Jacobi, and Casper Gutman. A pair, the effeminate criminal Joel Cairo and femme fatale

Brigid O'Shaughnessy (alias Miss Wonderley, alias Miss LeBlanc), have been incarcerated. Other bad actors, such as the unfortunate Wilmer Cook, remain at large. Other characters continue business as usual, like Lt. Dundy and Spade's pal Tom Polhaus. Finally, some who were merely mentioned in **FALCON**, like Chicago gambler Dixie Monahan, the Russian General Kemidov, and "Miss Wonderley's" sister Corrine appear in the flesh in **RETURN**. The stolid, sarcastic Spade asks his questions, and is deprived of consciousness a couple of times, but ultimately finds his answers by book's end.



Rating: THE MALTESE FALCON
A+

Rating: RETURN OF THE MALTESE FALCON: A

NIGHTSHADE

by Michael Connelly
Little, Brown, May 2025, \$30.00

Connelly introduces a new character here, Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department Detective Sergeant Stilwell, who has been relegated to Catalina Island after an unfortunate dustup at his old job. The story begins as a woman's body, weighted down by an anchor, is discovered in the harbor. Stilwell doggedly pursues the truth surrounding the circumstances of the victim's demise, uncovering unexpected levels of corruption and deceit.

I don't think I have to sing Connelly's praises to any regular readers of *Deadly Pleasures*. You only need to read a single one of his books, whether it features Harry Bosch, or Renee Ballard, or Mickey Haller (a.k.a. The Lincoln Lawyer) to know you're in the hands of a master storyteller. That he's created yet another winning protagonist comes as no surprise to this Constant Connelly Reader. I will say that this book became very important to me on a personal level, as I was in quite the reading slump a few weeks back; my reading stamina had plummeted to alarming depths. It only took a few pages of *Nightshade* to cure my malaise. My thanks to Mr. Connelly for coming through for me yet again.

Rating: A

INTRODUCING THE SCARLET SCRAPER

by Leonard Apa
Running Wild Press, September 2025,
\$21.95

INTRODUCING THE SCARLET SCRAPER is set on the World II American homefront, circa 1943. It tells the story of young Thomas Malloy, who sadly learns life is cruel and unfair when his parents are murdered by two thugs. Barely escaping a similar fate,

Thomas wanders the city in a daze, unable to find someone who can help. He's almost out of hope when he runs into The Scarlet Scrapper, his costumed hero from the radio, at a publicity event, and desperately begs him for protection. Thomas doesn't know that the costumed figure before him is actually troubled veteran Frank Hodge, who merely voices the character on the popular radio show. In spite of the self-doubt that plagues his every waking moment, Hodge empathizes with the boy and agrees to help. Doing so, he awakens something buried deep inside, embarking on a perilous journey of self-discovery and retribution, tapping into his inner hero.

Apa's worthy debut should appeal to a wide audience, but especially to fans of the iconic hero of old-time radio and the classic pulps, The Shadow. It uses all the tropes of those genres to great effect, winning readers over with its portrayal of a reluctant hero's journey to find his true calling. It reminded me of Alex Segura's recent works, namely **SECRET IDENTITY** and **ALTER EGO**, in that it can get a bit "Meta," at times, moving back and forth from excerpts from classic Scarlet Scrapper radio scripts to "real" events, with each reality subtly commenting on the action in the other. It's a neat little book, well-written and well-crafted, well worth your time.

Rating: B+

WRECKAGE

by Peter Straub, Introduction by Susan Benjamin, and Emma Straub

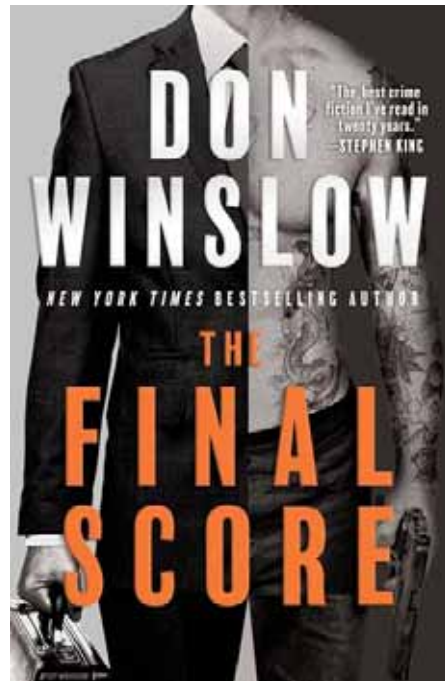
WHAT HAPPENS IN HELLO JACK

by Peter Straub, Subterranean Press, 2025, \$225

These two books, published simultaneously as a handsome boxed set by the estimable Subterranean Press, represent the last, alas incomplete, works by the great Peter Straub, author of the horror classic **GHOST STORY**, and **KOKO**, **THE THROAT**, and **THE HELLFIRE CLUB**, among many other worthy novels and short stories. Thoroughly entertaining in their own right (**WHAT HAPPENS** is an outline of **HELLO JACK**, eventually retitled **WRECKAGE**, with **WRECKAGE** being an incomplete

manuscript of Straub's novel in progress), they represent important artifacts, providing tantalizing glimpses of the author's creative process, even as he struggled with the onerous health issues that brought about his retirement from writing in 2022. Although incomplete, even at 150,000 words, **WRECKAGE** is quintessential Straub, full of flourishes long time fans will no doubt revel in. It was an extreme pleasure to watch Straub doing what he loved, riffing away like the jazz greats he so admired, even though it made me grieve his loss all over again. RIP, Maestro.

Rating:(both books): A



THE FINAL SCORE

By Don Winslow

Morrow, January 2026, \$30.00

The subtitle of this stellar collection is **SIX SHORT NOVELS**, but that's not right; I guess "**FIVE LONGISH SHORT STORIES AND A NOVELLA**" doesn't quite have the same ring to it. Regardless, all six stories worked for me, especially the final two, "Lunch Break," detailing the trials and tribulations of a harried security team charged with protecting a difficult starlet, and "Collision," a story whose execution and tone brought to mind the Stephen

King prison classics "Rita Hayworth and Shawshank Redemption" and **THE GREEN MILE**. Winslow is a fine writer, and **THE FINAL SCORE** shows him operating at the peak of his formidable powers.

Rating: A

I'M STARTING TO WORRY ABOUT THIS BLACK BOX OF DOOM

By Jason Pargin

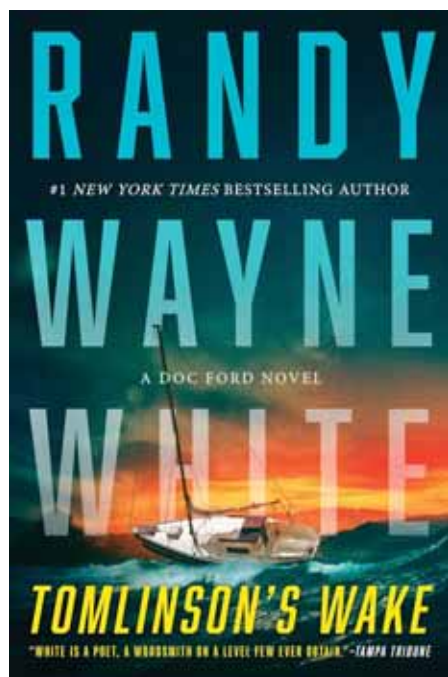
St. Martins, 2024,, \$30.00

The misogynistic content provider Abbott Colburn and the opinionated Ether (yes, just Ether, like Cher, or Oprah) "meet cute" at the outset of this terrific, suspenseful road novel when she contacts him, ostensibly to engage him in his capacity as a Lyft driver, but instead asks him to haul an ominous, mysterious trunk from Los Angeles to Washington, DC. She can't reveal what's inside, but insists the box has to arrive in the Capitol by Monday, July 4th. He reluctantly agrees, persuaded by the opportunity to earn a sizable fee, and, as a bonus, to piss off his overbearing father Hunter, the actual owner of the enormous Lincoln Navigator that Abbott uses to earn a living. But Abbott has little idea of what he's actually got himself into, as he's pursued/followed/dogged throughout his incredible journey by the aptly named Hunter, an ornery miscreant named Malort, retired FBI agent Joan Key, the minions of Ether's mysterious employer, and offbeat denizens of the Internet, intent on proving the myriad conspiracy theories they all hold so dear.

Featuring a MacGuffin that's in plain sight from the very outset, Pargin's eighth novel (among others, he penned the infamous "John Dies at the End" series under his pseudonym, David Wong) this book is a winning mashup of *It Happened One Night*, *North by Northwest*, and any number of buddy movies and rom coms. It also takes a painstaking and thorough look at modern society, offering an oftentimes scathing view of America in the first quarter of the 21st century. Well-written and extremely engaging, it hurtles along at breakneck speed until its surprising

finale, providing plenty of thrills, chills, and spills along the way.

Rating: A-



TOMLINSON'S WAKE

By Randy Wayne White

Hanover Square Press, 2025, \$29.99

After Marion "Doc" Ford traces his best friend, the ne'er do well Zen Buddhist boat bum/hipster Tomlinson, to Honduras, he discovers that his battered pal is being pursued by "human traffickers, gangbangers, a shaman, and a pickle-ball playing shrink." His buddy also tells him that he's already been dead once this month, but was resurrected by a Curandero, a one-armed, extremely charismatic twelve-year-old boy who might be a long-lost descendant of Mayan kings.

As you may glean from the paragraph immediately above, White gives you a whole lot of exposition to digest within the first chapters of the book (the 28th Doc Ford adventure, by my count) before plunging Ford and Tomlinson on a memorable adventure along the Mosquito Coast. No worries, however, as everything (well, mostly everything) seems to sort itself out by novel's end. White continues to impress; every new Doc Ford story is a cause for celebration. And, don't you just love the title? It tells

you everything you need to know about the book itself, while also making a keen literary allusion, adding an ironic subtext to the story.

Rating: B+

COLD ZERO

By Brad Thor with Ward Larsen
Atria/Emily Bestler Books, February,
\$30.00

Another book with a prominent MacGuffin is Brad Thor and Ward Larsen's *COLD ZERO*, wherein the United States, China, and Russia become involved in the pursuit of the lone prototype of a game changing piece of technology known as *Tianhau* in Chinese, or *Sky Fire*, in English. Developed by the Chinese, but hijacked by Americans, the laptop containing the program is stranded in the frozen Arctic, the plane it was on having fallen victim to cyber sabotage. It's now a race against time to see which great power will secure the tech (either purposefully or merely by happenstance), even as the lucky survivors of the crash struggle to stay alive in the hostile wasteland.

A modern techno-thriller sporting a Jack London-esque "To Build a Fire" vibe, the book presses all the right buttons, sporting a great plot, memorable characters, and crisp, clean, propulsive



writing. Thor and Larsen (a former U.S. Air Force fighter pilot and current airline captain) make a great team: as the publicity material accompanying my ARC states, *COLD ZERO* is "...everything that Brad Thor fans expect from one of his thrillers, plus the raw authenticity and technical expertise from someone who's lived it." It will keep you on the edge of your seat, even while you add layers of clothing to ward off the chills you will no doubt vicariously experience.

Rating: B+

CWA Diamond Dagger Winner 2026

Mark Billingham



On hearing of this honor, Mark said the following: "Presuming this is not an administrative error, I could not be more thrilled or honoured. To be added to a list that features most of my literary heroes is fantastic. That so many are also friends is the icing on the cake and, for me, a mark of how very special the crime-writing community is."



The Cozy - Traditional *Mystery Cafe'*

Robin Agnew Reviews



A FIELD GUIDE TO MURDER

by Michelle L. Cullen
Crooked Lane, Hardcover \$29.99/
Paperback \$19.99, January
Debut
Rating: A-

This is a perfectly charming novel with enough quirky characters to make it a standout debut. Roughly following the "Thursday Murder Club" scenario in which retirees in a closed community solve crimes, it features widower Harry Lancaster, who has recently suffered a hip injury. He's forced to temporarily hire a younger in-home caregiver. Emma, who, having burned out on critical care nursing, sees helping people like Harry as her next step. The setting is a small community of mostly retirees, and, with many hours to kill, Harry spends many of them looking out his large front window at the comings and goings in the neighborhood.

One day he gets a call from his neighbor Sue, who asks him to call 911 and utters the word "poison" before the line goes dead. He and Emma race over to Sue's only to find her close to death on her kitchen floor. When she passes shortly thereafter, the police rule it an

accident, but, unconvinced, the two of them pursue their own investigation, with Harry's sketchy neighbors and plenty of suspicious local activities providing more than enough fuel to keep the sleuthing humming.

The introduction of the nicely varied group of neighbors serves also to introduce and deepen their personalities and traits, every single one becoming vivid to the reader, no small accomplishment with such a large cast. We get to know the churchgoer, the Indian couple who worked in tech, the chef/artist, the philanderer, and the inappropriate couple. The only thing they have in common is that none of them seemed to have liked Sue, who evidently had her nose in everyone's business, and not in a good way.

When there's another shooting the detective in charge begins to take Harry and Emma's observations more a little more seriously, though he still

begs them to butt out. It is no spoiler to say that they do not, but rather bring their own expertise to the table with even more enthusiasm. Emma is, of course, a trained nurse and Harry, a retired anthropologist who has worked with USAID and whose connections in Washington come in handy during their investigation, with the deep background he's able to obtain pushing the case ahead.

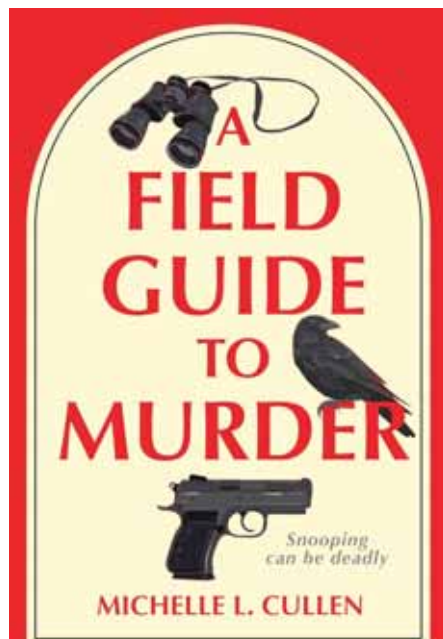
Newbie author Cullen makes good use of traditional detective tropes including red herring(s) and pulls a good surprise ending out of her bag of tricks. Harry and Emma are also fleshed out as characters, managing to bring out the best in each other. Harry still mourns his recently deceased wife of 50 years but is beginning to think he should use the time he has left more constructively, while Emma is bound to an engagement she's not so sure of.

This book brought to mind my first delighted reading of Charlotte MacLeod's classic *Rest You Merry*, featuring my very favorite kind of sleuth, amateurs who utilize their own unique expertise to solve the case. Like MacLeod, Cullen seems to have a winning, gently humorous manner of telling a compelling story. This is a very strong first outing and I look forward to a long lived series, and happily a sequel entitled *A Field Guide to Death and Deceit* is scheduled for September.

CRIME RANGOON

by Vivien Chien, Minotaur, \$9.99,
December, 2025
Noodle Shop #12
Rating: B+

The heroine of the fun, bouncy series is Lana Lee, the owner (along with her family) of a restaurant in the Asia Village neighborhood of Cleveland. Lana is browsing in her favorite local bookstore one day when the owner mentions that her employee has quit without warning, leaving her shorthanded for an important upcoming event with a popular writer. Lana, a big fan, happily offers to help, and the owner assigns her to act as her assistant (mainly monitoring the signing line and opening the books to



the right page to be signed).

Lana is so excited that she recruits her somewhat brash and slightly loud buddy Kimmy to help at the register, as she has her own shop in the market and is experienced at handling a crowd. As signing day dawns and Lana and Kimmy arrive at the mall, they are shocked to see the number of people waiting for the event. The bookstore owner is initially overwhelmed, but soon the team gets down to work, the talent arrives, and the signing begins.

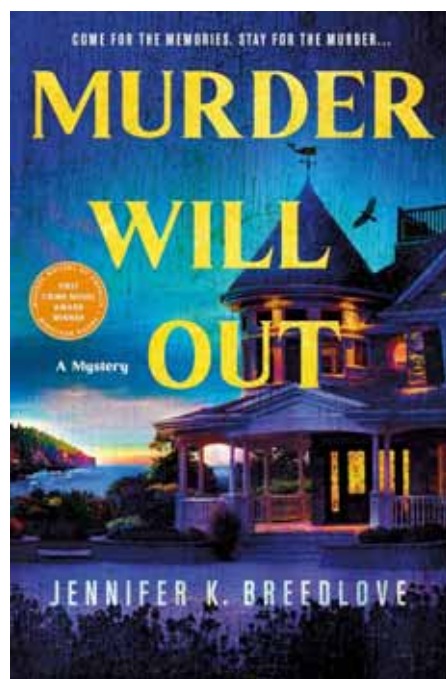
It goes well and the writer patiently works her way through a long line despite feeling slightly faint in the middle of the event, but as everything wraps up, disaster strikes when the author is discovered dead in the mystery aisle. Lana, the one to find her, is deeply disturbed, especially as her latest book somehow precisely describes the manner of her own future death. In response, Lana, her roommate Megan, Kimmy, and Lana's boyfriend, Adam Trudeau (who naturally happens to be a cop) band together to figure out exactly what happened.

To her shock, Adam invites Lana to be a part of the investigation, and she happily agrees, though it makes her quite nervous just to listen in on an interrogation. There seem to be plenty of suspects, but the women and Adam eliminate them one by one, leaving only a seemingly insolvable puzzle.

Of course it's not, but it does take some clever sleuthing and deductive reasoning on Lana's part to finally unmask the killer. These books are so much fun because the characters are interesting and pleasantly quirky, while remaining supportive of each other. Lana, far from a hardboiled investigator, is quite relatably freaked out when she discovers a dead body. Adam is simply a regular, decent guy and while he gets annoyed by Lana's and her friend's involvement at times, he also learns to appreciate it. Another standout is the fairly unusual setting of Cleveland, as well as the gentle portrayal of an appealingly supportive local Asian community. To top it off, Lana

also has one of the cutest dogs in mystery fiction, Kikko the black pug.

Books like this one are the reason I read and enjoy cozies. The people are interesting and nice to each other, functioning in a recognizable contemporary environment, all animated by and wrapped in an engaging mystery.



Although I can't guarantee your appetite won't be whetted by the alluringly described food, there's nothing quite so delicious as a good cozy, and the recipe in this one is top notch.

MURDER WILL OUT

by Jennifer K. Breedlove
Minotaur, \$28, February
Debut

Rating: A

I flat out loved this book, the very worthy winner of the Minotaur Books/Mystery Writers of America First Crime Novel award. Set in coastal Maine on Little North Island, the story opens with organist and grad student Willow Stone returning to Little North for the funeral of her godmother, Sue. Due to a family quarrel, they hadn't seen each other in many years, though Willow always loved Sue and could never understand why her family

stopped seeing her. She finally receives a letter inviting her back to the island for Sue's wedding, but unfortunately, by the time Willow receives it she finds herself attending her funeral instead.

At the time of her death, Sue had been living in the allegedly haunted Cameron house. It had been an unexpected legacy after the death of the previous owner and she'd been fixing the old place up slowly but surely. Willow meets Sue's fiancée, Rina, before the funeral at the cottage that used to be Sue's home, where Willow spent many summers, now operating as an Airbnb. Rina seems bristling with resentment and hostility as she hands over the keys, and it's only with great reluctance that Willow attends the after funeral reception at Rina's pottery shop.

Willow is quickly buttonholed by the island blowhard, but it's the local curmudgeon, the last living Cameron, who begs her to accompany him up to the old family home which he's inherited. Unfortunately, he passes out when they arrive and Willow leaves to call an ambulance, but not before meeting one of the resident ghosts. Cameron House seems to be full of them, but it takes a minute for Willow to realize that, although supernatural, they are not a product of her imagination.

While this sounds like a YA novel, the emotions and connections could not be more adult, and, as in real life, one quarrel or resentment may be tamped down only for another to flare up, making this novel into a masterclass on human miscommunication and misunderstanding. Luckily, even in the middle of it, Willow is not alone, and when she gets back to the cottage after taking the curmudgeon to the hospital, she finds the cottage full of pasta, wine, women and, best of all, a friendly corgi. The other women urge Rina and Willow to clear the air (they do) and when Rina is later arrested, they form a loose sleuthing alliance, headed by Willow and the town librarian to clear her name.

Between them, they begin to untangle the ties connecting Sue to the

Cameron House and family, with the ghosts providing help to the investigation by offering advice and guidance to Willow at crucial moments. I usually dislike any actual supernatural element in mysteries, but the great Barbara Michaels could pull it off, and so, it turns out, can newbie author Jennifer Breedlove, displaying a deft and careful hand with the spirits who are a necessary part of the plot.

This book is old fashioned in the best possible way, a classic coming of age/young woman finding her way into a community story, and the ghosts in the story have a classic, Victorian feel to them that I really enjoyed. The community Willow discovers and comes to rely on is also a pretty common cozy element, but here it seems just right and quite believable that Willow is able to bond with like minded women in a now unfamiliar place where she once spent her summers as a child.

The solution is tricky, well laid out, and emotional, the final pages of the book moving me to tears. The setting is well done and not heavy handed, though the vivid Maine island atmosphere certainly enhances the tale at different parts. **MURDER WILL OUT** has plenty of the ingredients of a great read, including a fascinating central character, humor, pathos and even a good scare or two. Who could ask for anything more? I could! This excellent installment merely whetted my appetite for more of Willow's adventures.

Library Journal Starred Review

NO ONE WOULD DO WHAT THE LAMBERTS HAVE DONE

by Sophie Hannah

Sourcebooks, \$32.99, January

Rating: C+

Even though I really wanted to like this book, I have to say I ended up being a little disappointed. I've enjoyed other Sophie Hannah novels and think her Poirot iterations are quite clever, but this effort didn't quite gel for me. I doggedly kept reading because I quite naturally wanted to find out just



what the heck was happening despite the confusing, too clever narrative structure. Nothing is quite clear until the very end of the novel, which has a worthy golden age style reveal though, unlike golden age novels, matters remain a bit murky even after the closing revelations.

First off I'll say that I didn't particularly care for any character except for Champ, the dog, basically an innocent bystander in the proceedings, though he powers the machinations of the plot. Events begin with a policeman coming to the door of the Lamberts' house, trying to determine the whereabouts of the Lamberts' dog, the aforementioned Champ, at the moment a neighbor girl was bitten. This is all it takes for dog "mum" Sally Lambert to carreen (in my opinion) completely off the rails.

To Sally, dogs are as important as people, and her fairly recently deceased first canine, Furbert, is still memorialized, with his own room and crate in it just in case his spirit wants to come and go. It's not a surprise, then, that after the inquiry, Sally Lambert feels it's imperative that she must flee town with her dog, with or without her human husband and two human children. While the rest of her family certainly doesn't want the police to seize Champ and put him down, they are skeptical of this sudden escape plan.

When asked by Sally, a neighbor, Corinne, immediately offers to whisk her and the family away. Corinne is well acquainted with domestic conflict as she was the cause of the Agatha Christie book group in town breaking apart, resulting in hurt feelings on all sides. She's firmly in Sally's corner,

often to the annoyance of husband, Mark, who loves Champ but has a more sensible view. If they can prove where Champ was at the time of the alleged bite, he will be exonerated, but for Sally any possibility of losing her dog is unacceptable, no matter how remote.

The book is pieced together with narratives from Sally and a policeman who has restored a mysterious dirty and disordered manuscript that seems to be about the case, also containing bits and pieces of family conversations, newspaper articles and poems.

He gives it to his boss to read. As the story proceeds, the reader learns more (but not quite enough) about the Lamberts' feud with their neighbors the Garveys, the people who claimed Champ bit their daughter. Sally repeats, over and over, that Champ is not "bitey" and indeed he seems to be a sweet and peaceful dog, but it's hard to trust anything this book has to say, as there's always a different point of view being presented from one source or another. The reader is required to do some heavy lifting in order to piece things together from a flurry of different, often conflicting, points of view.

As one of those readers, I don't mind doing a little work, and I've greatly enjoyed similarly complex books by Janice Hallett and Anthony Horowitz, but I do mind when the final puzzle pieces don't quite fit together. I think what Hannah was ultimately getting at was the ridiculously aggressive polarization that exists in society today, with no one seeming able to even consider another point of view, all of it made worse by social media (which plays a large part in Champs' fate). If I read the book right, the final twist is quite dark, so the other issue I had with it was a tonal one. Did Hannah intend to write a cozy? A noir thriller? I'm not sure she ever decided herself. **NO ONE WOULD DO WHAT THE LAMBERTS HAVE DONE** is a very intelligent novel written by a very intelligent writer who sometimes, in my opinion, tends to overthink a little, with this book being a case in point.

Deadly Pleasures

George Easter



CROOKS

by Lou Berney
Morrow, \$30.00, 2025

Rating: A

Meet the Mercurio family:

Buddy, a low-level mobster wanting to make a big score

Lillian, his beautiful wife with similar tendencies

Their five children:

Jeremy, a handsome free spirit

Tallulah, the fearless daredevil

Ray, a hulking presence but considered not too quick witted

Alice, the smartest, who, as a teenager, renounces a life of crime

Piggy, the runt of the family – too nice and honest to fit in

As the story progresses we get to spend time with each of the children as they lead their adult lives. You might think that with their upbringing that they would follow their parents' example, but, with the exception of Jeremy, the children choose a different path, with heartwarming results.

Lou Berney has written seven novels and has already, in his relatively short career, won three Barry Awards. He's an astonishingly good writer and **CROOKS** was a pure joy to read.

THE ASSET

by Mike Lawson
Atlantic Crime, \$27.00, February
Joe DeMarco #19

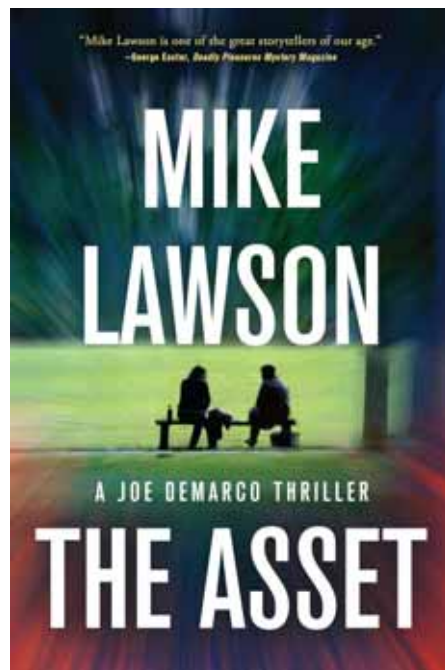
Rating: A

Former Speaker of the House John Mahoney is approached by Diane Lake, an ex-CIA agent with a gift for Mahoney: she reveals that the wife of one of his biggest rivals in the U.S. Senate has a wife (Lydia Chang) who may be passing

top secret information to the Chinese.

Mahoney has two choices: 1. forward this information on to the FBI and possibly destroy the Senator's reputation, or 2. put his fixer Joe DeMarco on it to verify if the allegations are true. Mahoney chooses the latter, and DeMarco wonders if his boss has an ulterior motive.

It doesn't take DeMarco long to discover that Lydia Chang is being blackmailed with a disturbing video of her daughter, a young Georgetown University student.



DeMarco tries to find a way to resolve this problem without destroying the lives of the Senator and his family.

There are a handful of authors whose books are not only must-reads, but must-reads the minute I get a hold of them. I'm usually content with reading 5 or 6 books at a time, switching between them for variety's sake. But

when I get a new Mike Lawson book, I sit down and read it exclusively until I finish. In this case, it took less than a day to accomplish that. You should be able to figure from that my opinion of Mike Lawson's superior writing/story-telling chops.

A NOBLE SIN

by Andrew Bridgeman
Mission Point, \$16.95, 2025
Emma Noble #2

Rating: A-

The book opens with an exciting scene in which FBI agent Emma Noble saves an endangered woman when there is a traffic jam on I-95. But that's just the beginning to this fast-paced tale.

When a string of murders point to Emma's father Sam, famed CIA operative, now turned college professor, Emma is practically the only person who believes in his innocence. But Sam hasn't done his cause any favors by disappearing.

But the dogged and highly intelligent Emma is determined to find out the truth no matter whom it may hurt.

Andrew Bridgeman is a very talented thriller writer, who handles realistic action, suspense, danger and deadline with aplomb. He deserves a wide readership.

AFTER THAT, THE DARK

by Andrew Klavan
Mysterious Press, \$26.95, 2025
Cameron Winter #5

Rating: A-

Against all odds, Cameron Winter is falling in love. After finally working up the courage to contact the attractive therapist Gwendolyn Lord, he finds himself immersed in a passion that feels heaven-sent. When Gwendolyn tells him about a true-life "locked room mystery," Winter feels compelled to investigate.

In Tulsa, Oklahoma, a solid citizen named Owen McKay suddenly went mad and killed his wife and child. Locked in a padded cell and monitored on video, he was nonetheless discovered dead from a projectile fired into his head. As Winter begins to ask ques-

tions, he finds Tulsa officials have been intimidated into silence by a killer who once tried to attack Winter during his days as a government assassin. What's more, another mysterious death, just like McKay's, has taken place in Connecticut. And both murders seem linked to a sinister billionaire who once clashed with Winter's old mentor, the Recruiter.

Edgar-Award winning Andrew Klavan (now a popular political podcaster as well) has honed his writing chops over a 45-year writing career. And it shows in this well-crafted and ingeniously plotted mystery. This novel works well as a standalone.

THE DOORMAN

by Chris Pavone
MCD, \$30.00, 2025

Rating: A

I read this because it got so many mentions on year-end Best of 2025 lists. And I'm glad I did.

Chicky Diaz is everyone's favorite doorman at the Bohemia, the most famous apartment house in the world, home of celebrities, financiers, and New York's cultural elite.

Up in the penthouse, Emily Longworth has the perfect-looking everything, all except her husband, whom she'd quietly loathed even before the recent revelations about where all the money comes from. But his wealth is immense, their prenup is iron-clad, and Emily can't bring herself to leave him. Yet.

And downstairs in 2A, Julian Sonenberg – who has carved himself a successful niche in the art world, and led a good half-century of a full and satisfying, cosmopolitan life – has just received a devastating phone call that does nothing at all to alleviate his sense that, probably for better and worse, he has aged out and he's just not that useful to anyone any more.

Meanwhile, gathered in the Bohemia's bowels, the building's almost entirely Black and Hispanic, working-class staff is taking in the news that just a few miles uptown, a Black man has been killed by the police, leading to a demonstration, a counterdemonstration, and a

long night of violence across the tinder-box city.

As Chicky changes into his uniform for tonight's shift, he finds himself breaking a cardinal rule of the job: tonight, he'll be carrying a gun, bought only hours earlier, but before he knew of the pandemonium taking over the city. Chicky knows that there's more going on in his patch of sidewalk in front of the Bohemia than anyone's aware of. Tonight in the city, enemies will clash, loyalties will be tested, secrets will be revealed – and lives will be lost.

I was impressed by the author's attention to detail – especially in describing, with great insight, the lives of the wealthy who live in the Bohemia and the poor who work there. It does take a while for a crime to occur, but when it does – what a crime! Certainly one of the best crime novels of 2025.

HEARTWOOD

by Amity Gaige
Simon & Schuster, \$28.99, 2025

Rating: A

Another book I read because of how often it appeared on Best of 2025 lists. I thought it was literary fiction, but it turned out to be an action thriller with refined prose as an added bonus.

In the heart of the Maine woods, an experienced Appalachian Trail hiker goes missing. She is forty-two-year-old Valerie Gillis, who has vanished 200 miles from her final destination. Alone in the wilderness, Valerie pours her thoughts into fractured, poetic letters to her mother as she battles the elements and struggles to keep hoping.

At the heart of the investigation is Beverly, the determined Maine State Game Warden tasked with finding Valerie, who leads the search on the ground. Meanwhile, Lena, a seventy-six-year-old birdwatcher in a Connecticut retirement community, becomes an unexpected armchair detective. Roving between these compelling narratives, a puzzle emerges, intensifying the frantic search, as Valerie's disappearance may not be accidental.

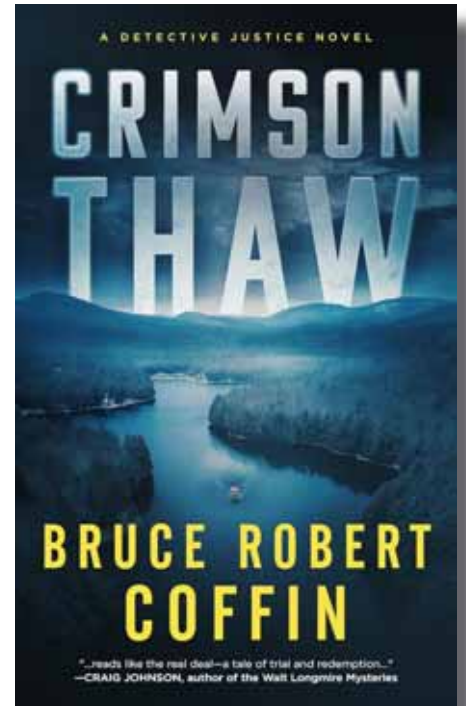
This is a book for everyone no matter what your reading tastes are.

If you know someone who likes to read fiction, but doesn't care for mysteries, put this book in their hands.

CRIMSON THAW

by Bruce Robert Coffin
Severn River, \$18.99, 2025
Detective Justice #1

Rating: B+



When Maine State Police Detective Brock Justice and his partner try to take down known-criminal Terry Kirke, things go badly wrong and Justice finds himself disgraced and banished to a remote station in the far north of the state. His new police colleagues are less than thrilled to now be working with him – and that includes his relatively inexperienced partner Chloe Wright and his new boss Lieutenant Penelope Cumberland.

His first assignment: investigate the discovery of a body and a submerged snowmobile in a pond near the town of Blue Hill. These types of cases are usually due to drunken misbehavior, but this one is clearly murder because the body is handcuffed to a very expensive snowmobile. The first order of business is to identify the corpse, which is not easy since it has been submerged for several months.

During the ensuing investigation, Justice and his newbie partner encounter an interesting array of characters: a drug-dealing biker gang, the town doctor, a politically savvy sheriff and Justice's estranged father.

With everyone seemingly against him, Justice perseveres with the bulldog tenacity of a good detective to find the truth.

The long-time detective, now turned crime writer, Bruce Robert Coffin, writes with authenticity and creative storytelling. His John Byron police detective series is one of my favorites, so I'm glad to see him back writing about what he knows best – detective fiction.

THE PERSIAN

by David McCloskey
Norton, \$29.99, 2025

Rating: A

This story is told through the eyes of the three major characters:

Kamran ("Kam") Esfahani is of Iranian parentage and is practicing dentistry in Stockholm when he is recruited by Mossad to go back to Iran and be a spy for them. Why does he do this? Partly to earn enough money to buy a house in Southern California and partly to get back at the Iranian regime for confiscating his family home because his father was a Jew. His assignments become increasingly more dangerous as time goes on.

Arik Glitzman is the chief of the Caesarea Division of the Israeli Mossad, tasked with the gathering of intelligence on Iranians who are plotting the deaths of Israelis and then to eventually kill them.

Roya Shabani is the widowed wife of an Iranian scientist who was developing stealth capabilities for Iranian drones when he was murdered by operatives of Mossad. Out of pity for her situation, her husband's uncle arranges for her to work in a secretarial/office manager position for the organization her husband worked for.

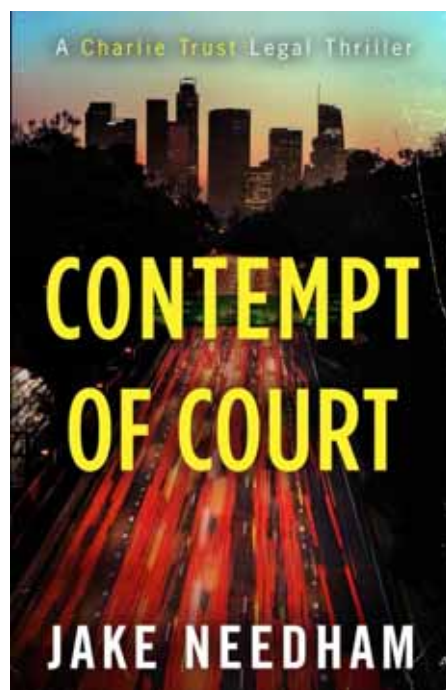
An elaborate operation is undergone to recruit Roya to spy on those in her office. She is persuaded to do so, believing there is a person in the office feeding

intelligence data to the Israeli Mossad. Kam, in the guise of an Iranian secret service agent, is Roya's contact.

Kam is exposed as an Israeli agent during a daring raid and is thrown into a prison where he is isolated and tortured for three years. There he is forced to write and re-write his interactions with Mossad. We the readers are privy to some of these writing, which flesh out the story.

THE PERSIAN is set before the events of the October 7 Massacre committed by Hamas, and as such, is a much simpler story. The Israeli 9/11 hadn't happened yet. Nor had the Iranian nuclear capabilities been severely diminished.

Nevertheless, David McCloskey packs an awful lot into his narrative. Some may find the book too information-rich. I did not. **THE PERSIAN** shows not only how Israeli and Iranian intelligence networks operate, but also a realistic view of what a spy's life might look like.



CONTEMPT OF COURT

by Jake Needham
Half Penny, \$17.99, January
Charlie Trust #2

Rating: B+

1992 Los Angeles. Life couldn't be

much better for attorney Charlie Trust. He has left his hated divorce practice on the East Coast and moved into a primo beach property in Malibu that is owned by a good friend who just wants Charlie to look after the property (rent-free). Charlie supports this care-free lifestyle with a small inheritance from his mother. To top it off, he gets to cruise around town in a 1969 Mustang convertible.

But into this Eden, comes Satan and his apple in the form of a request by his benefactor to simply look over some financial papers of a friend who is going through a difficult divorce. What seemed simple on its face turns complex and violent when his "client" ("she's really not a client – I haven't agreed to take on her case.") disappears and Charlie receives a court order to turn over the papers or face a contempt of court finding.

As an attorney myself, I was surprised to find the legal maneuverings of this novel quite fascinating. There isn't what I call a "happy ending" to the story, but that is often the case with Jake Needham's novels that reflect real life where not everything is wrapped up with a neat bow.

The final chapter of **CONTEMPT OF COURT** portends the new direction that Charlie Trust's life is going to take and I certainly want to be along for the ride to see what happens next.

INSIDE MAN

by John McMahon
Minotaur, \$29.00, January
Head Cases #2

Rating: A-

The FBI's Patterns and Recognition Unit (PAR) is a squad of brilliant but quirky social misfits who have innate abilities to see things that other more "normal" agents would miss. When the FBI encounter mind-boggling puzzles to solve, they send in PAR.

Here is the team:

Gardner Camden – team leader. He has an eidetic memory with an affinity for solving riddles, puzzles and codes.

Joanne "Shooter" Harris – Camden's current partner. She can track and shoot anything and anyone (former

member of the Olympic shooting team).

Richie Brancato – a rookie straight out of the academy. Grandson of the former FBI director.

Cassie Pardo – mentor to Richie and a brilliant mathematician.

There are two main storylines in the plot. One is finding out more about a right-wing militia group who are stockpiling weapons for an unknown purpose.

The other is the discovery of a pattern of murders that sends the team in search of a serial killer who is murdering women across state lines.

This is a nice follow-up to **HEAD CASES**, the first in the series. John McMahon sets out to entertain and to surprise and he succeeds at both. I'm a fan and look forward to the next in the series.

THE PREDICAMENT

by William Boyd

Atlantic Crime, \$28.00, 2025

Gabriel Dax #2 (of a trilogy)

Rating: A-

The time is 1963.

Some spies are laser-focused and some are reluctant. But most spies take their responsibilities more seriously than Gabriel Dax, that is, until matters become life and death ones and he has no choice. By day, Gabriel is a writer of idiosyncratic travel books, by night a double agent for MI6 and (so they think) the KGB. He often thinks of getting out of the espionage business, but seems to get drawn back in for one reason or another – not the least of which is that he is love (or at least, in lust) with his MI6 boss, Faith Green.

In **THE PREDICAMENT**, Gabriel is sent to Guatemala to interview an influential presidential candidate who is in hiding. The candidate is assassinated and Gabriel wonders if he unwittingly was used as a pawn to get at the candidate.

While there in Guatemala, he meets some characters he will later encounter when he is sent to Berlin to root out would-be assassins bent on ending JFK's life.

The book is written in a pleasant,

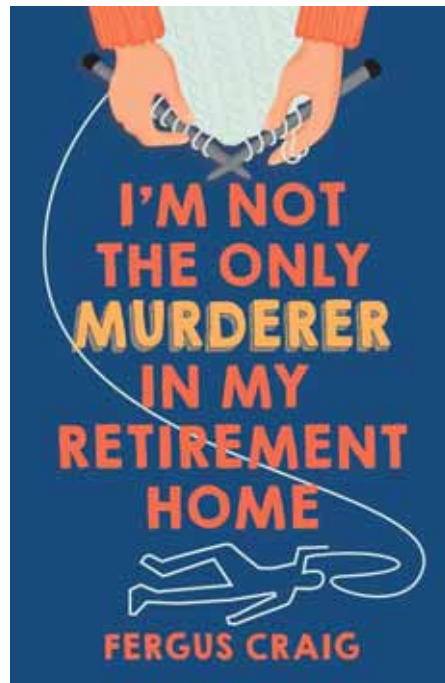
meandering, what-happens-next style. At 255 pages, it is an easy, enjoyable read. I would not place it at the top of this year's espionage novels, like Mick Herron's **CLOWN TOWN** or David McCloskey's **THE PERSIAN**, but I would recommend it to spy fiction fans who are looking for a pleasant diversion.

I'M NOT THE ONLY MURDERER IN MY RETIREMENT HOME

by Fergus Craig

Berkley, \$30.00, February

Rating: B+



After serving a 30-year prison sentence for murder, Carol, now 75, plans to live a quiet life in a luxury retirement home. She's hoping to keep her past as a serial killer a secret so she can make a few friends and find some murder-free hobbies. Unfortunately, when a fellow resident turns up dead, and Carol's past is exposed, she must solve the murder to prove she didn't do it -- this time... all while living among former cops, barristers, and government officials who are very sure she did.

This light-hearted mystery borrows a lot of its framework from Richard Osman's **THE THURSDAY MURDER CLUB** series. A retirement community with four senior citizens who form a social group to solve a murder mystery.

Sound familiar? But despite its derivative nature, **I'M NOT THE ONLY MURDERER IN MY RETIREMENT HOME** proved to be a pleasant, enjoyable and easy read. Oh, did I mention? It has quite a surprise ending.

For Richard Osman avid fans, it may serve as way to spend some time in the one-year interval between each Osman novel.

THE CYCLIST

by Tim Sullivan

Atlantic Crime, \$17.00, January

DS George Cross #2

Rating: B+

DS George Cross is considered socially awkward and often rude and unfeeling due to the Asperger's Syndrome he suffers from. But on the plus side he is a dedicated and exceptional detective, with the highest case closed rate of anyone on the force. So his bosses and colleagues have learned over time to cut him some slack.

In his latest case Cross and his partner DS Ottey (black, single mother of two) are investigating the murder of a young man whose body was found in a deserted garage. The body turns out to be that of Alex Paphides, a restaurant part owner and an amateur cyclist.

A number of possible lines of enquiry open up including his use of performance enhancing drugs, his relationship with a 16-year-old girl and his desire to expand his restaurant business.

The mystery elements kept my interest, but it is the quirky and unpredictable actions of George Cross that really entertained and will keep me coming back for more. And I won't have to wait long as Atlantic Crime will publish the remaining six novels in the series in 2026.

THE DELIVERY

by Andrew Welsh-Huggins

Mysterious Press, \$26.95, March

Mercury Carter #2

Rating: B

We were introduced to Mercury ("Merc") Carter in last year's **THE MAILMAN**. The former postal inspec-

tor has created a niche business in a personal delivery service which guarantees delivery of important and/or valuable items and people. Merc has never failed to deliver and is obsessed with keeping that record pristine.

His current delivery has taken him to Providence, Rhode Island, but his trip is interrupted when he comes upon a road accident in a pouring rain. He sees a badly wounded woman and goes to help but is warned off by a man with a gun. No stranger to dangerous situations and not one to be intimidated, Merc disarms the man and rescues the woman. In dealing with the aftermath of the accident, Merc finds himself embroiled in a mystery involving a web of criminal activity.

Mercury is just like the reader – just wanting to figure out what is going on. The plot meanders a bit and I have to admit I grew a little impatient for “the big reveal.”

I liked **THE DELIVERY**, but not as much as the first in the series. However, I will continue to read the series because Mercury Carter is such an interesting character.

ILLUSION OF TRUTH

by James L'Etoile

Oceanview, \$19.99, January

Emily Hunter #3

Rating: B+

As a series of explosions rock Sacramento, Detective Emily Hunter is particularly affected when her love interest Sgt. Brian Conner is badly hurt in the first explosion – while responding to a false call. It becomes clear that police personnel are the targets of these bombings. And it is up to Emily and her partner Javier to find the connection between the victims, which will lead to an understanding of the motivation of the perpetrator.

The character development of Detective Hunter is strong and well-rounded. She is involved in three threads. The first is her relationship with her partner, both professional and personal. The other two threads affect her ability to perform her job. One is that she was about to move in with Sergeant Connor. But as

a result of his injuries, his personality has shifted – and Emma doesn't know where to take the relationship from here. The other is her mother's dementia, as Emma is designated to make the medical decisions for her mother's care. In other words, Emma has a lot going on.

But detect she must and detect she does -- with eventual success.

This is the first novel by James L'Etoile that I have read. It was engaging enough that I'll look for his books in the future.

THE HARD LINE

by Mark Greaney

Berkley, \$31.00, February

Gray Man #15

Rating: A-

Court Gentry (The Gray Man) is asked to join a secret intelligence group by his former boss Matt Hanley. Their mission is to find out who in the upper echelons of government is leaking classified information to America's enemies.

Court's first mission is to go to Nicaragua to rescue an imperiled intelligence asset. The pick-up mission goes horribly wrong due to leaked information and Court encounters two Chinese soldiers and barely makes it out alive with the asset.

Meanwhile, the leaker is revealed to

the reader. It is the wealthy and influential James Westwood who has his eye on the U.S. presidency and has cut a deal with the Chinese for their help in attaining that goal. It's up to Gentry and his teammates to identify Westwood and foil his plans.

Two side plots: 1. Two dangerous men with reasons to hate Court have come to the U.S. to find and kill him. 2: Zack Hightower, Court's right-hand man, has gone to Boulder, Colorado to check on the well-being of his ex-wife and daughter who are in the Witness Protection Program. He gave up all rights to his daughter years ago and she doesn't know him and would not be able to recognize him. When Zack discovers that her life is in danger, he steps in, as any good father would.

Mark Greaney is my favorite action thriller writer. He really knows how to get my heart rate elevated. **THE HARD LINE** is full of vividly described action scenes and page-turning plot lines. Not all of Greaney's books get an A rating from me, but boy do they entertain!

CARNEY

by A. F. Carter

Mysterious Press, \$17.95, February

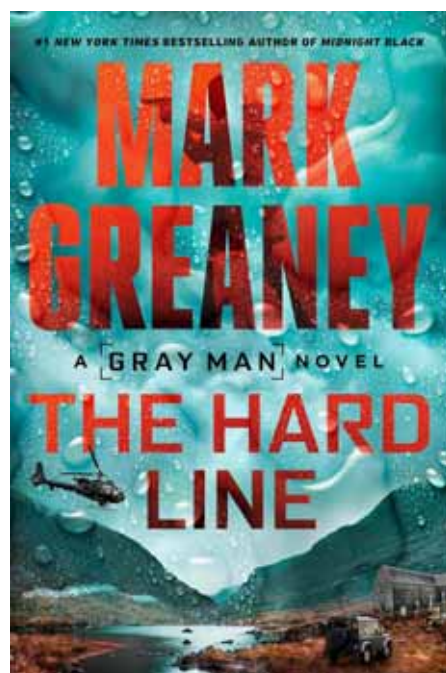
Delia Mariola #5

Rating: B+

I've kept up with this series and have now read all five of its books. The setting is Baxter, a midwest city (in an unmentioned state), which is going through a dramatic revival with the building of a Nissan auto plant. But the uptick in economic opportunities has also led to more crime, which is police Captain Delia Mariola's problem to deal with.

The Baxter Police Department has had to expand quickly and the vetting has been slipshod. So a group of corrupt ex-cops from Missouri manages to get hired without anyone looking into their shady past. Championed by Bute Stafford, candidate for mayor, these crooked cops aim to run the Baxter P.D. and, through it, the entire city.

But Delia gets wind of this development and hires an experienced undercover cop Tom Carney to keep her and



the police commissioner apprised of what the crooked cops are doing. Carney performs this duty quite well, but as time goes on, the reader wonders if Carney also has his own agenda to follow.

CARNEY centers more around problem solving than finding a murderer or detailing police procedure. This is an excellent series and one that I will continue to follow. I've grown quite accustomed to Baxter and its police Captain Mariola. The situations that the author creates in each book are fascinating and easy to dive into. If you are interested in reading more about Baxter, I would recommend that you start with the first of the series, **THE YARDS** (2021).

I've been told that A. F. Carter is a pen name for veteran crime writer Stephen Solomita.

FROM THE DUST

by David Swinson

Mulholland Books, \$30.00, March

Rating: B+

David Swinson brings back a character, Graham Sanderson, from a prior book, **CITY ON EDGE** (2021). But in **FROM THE DUST**, Graham is no longer a 13-year-old kid in 1972 Beirut, but a retired Washington, D.C. homicide detective who has returned to his hometown in upstate New York. Time has moved on. His father has recently died and David has moved into his father's house to care for his agoraphobic younger brother Tommy and recover from the death of his beloved wife.

But soon after arriving in town, a string of murders occur and he volunteers his services to the town's police chief, who is also a family friend. What follows is pretty standard police procedure – nothing that you wouldn't find in other well-written police detective novels. And therein lies my disappointment. I am a big fan of David Swinson's Frank Marr series (**THE SECOND GIRL**) that was so creative and shocking in its telling that **FROM THE DUST** came off pretty bland by comparison. Good, but not great.

THE DARK TIME

by Nick Petrie

Putnam, \$30.00, March

Peter Ash #9

Rating: A-

His reporter girlfriend June asks Peter to protect her mentor/friend Katelyn Thorsen ("KT") from a credible death threat. In her independent journalism work, KT has apparently stumbled upon a story that someone doesn't want published. Upon his arrival, Peter encounters a maelstrom of violence trying to protect KT and her daughter and discover the source of the death threat.

Even after Peter's best friend Lewis arrives in Seattle to help, this challenge

may be too much for them. They appear to be up against a well-funded, well-organized survivalist cult.

Danger and mayhem ensue, as one would expect in a Nick Petrie thriller.

Peter remains a compelling series lead, driven by a strong moral compass. The now familiar cast of side characters add warmth, humour and real depth. They now feel like an established team rather than supporting players, which gives the story additional heft.

Barry-Award-winning Nick Petrie makes the seemingly outlandish plot lines plausible and seemingly over-the-top actions scenes realistic in portrayal. He is one of the best thriller writers in today's market.

Agatha Award Nominations 2026



Crime Jazz

Ted Fitzgerald



I've been away from reviewing (in *Deadly Pleasures* and other outlets) and active participation in the mystery community for several years due to job demands and other issues. With retirement, I now have a chance to read more and read wider and get back to giving out my unsolicited opinion to the unsuspecting reader.

When Ted Hertel (formerly Ted the Elder, now Ted the Timeless) told me he was relinquishing his *DP* column and suggested George could use another Ted in the lineup, I asked George and he said "Of course!" and, of course, reminded me of the deadline. So, here am I. Thanks, George!

The past few years have brought changes to mystery/crime fiction, most notably the breadth and diversity of new writers, settings and voices. I've always believed the best crime fiction, whether through plot, character, ingenuity or freshness, takes readers to places they've never been. It's an exciting time to dive back into the pool. But established authors who are still writing, and writing well, should not be ignored. I hope I don't sustain whiplash from turning my eyes back and forth between the older and the newer. Let's get at it, starting with the old and the new all at once . . .

THE RETURN OF THE MALTESE FALCON

By Max Allan Collins

Hard Case Crime, \$27.99, January

Anyone who's read Dashiell Hammett's *THE MALTESE FALCON* (or seen John Huston's film adaptation) and enjoyed San Francisco PI Sam Spade's futile quest for the bejeweled "dingus" and his mortal fencing with such conning reprobates as Casper Gutman,

Joel Cairo, Wilmer Cook and the walking Venus Flytrap calling herself Brigid O'Shaughnessy has no doubt wondered what happened after the illusions were undraped and Spade "sent over" a certain someone and been tempted to conjure their own solution. The lapsing of the novel's copyright now places it in the public domain, freeing writers and publishers to follow that understandable urge.

It's fitting that Hard Case Crime and MWA Grand Master Max Allan Collins be the first out of the box to do so. Set a week or so after the original's conclusion, *THE RETURN OF THE MALTESE FALCON* finds Rhea Gutman, Casper's comely, young (very young) daughter, convinced that the shadowy Colonel Kemidov still has the original and is in San Francisco. She hires the Tenderloin Templar to once and for all find the real Falcon. As in the

original, she is not the detective's only client, with Joel Cairo, a fugitive Wilmer Cook, Brigid's sister, Corrine, a Chicago associate of the late, unlamented Floyd Thursby and a representative of the British Museum all elbowing in. (And, yes, Brigid and Iva Archer put in appearances. The gang's all here, except for the late unlamented fat man.).

As Collins notes in his afterword, this story is meant to be a continuation, not a sequel, to the original. As such, he moves things along briskly, presenting characters whose motives and identities are fluid, a strong sense of place and applying a narrative voice similar but not identical to Hammett's in order to avoid pastiche while, in his own words "allowing some of my native style to creep in while honoring the original's.". Don't skip Collins' afterword: It answers questions readers may have about his approach and doesn't give away any secrets in the plot. You'll need to read the book to learn the Falcon's ultimate fate but it's not revealing anything away to say that the title has a double meaning.

THE MALTESE FALCON

By Dashiell Hammett

Illustrated, with a coda

by Mark Coggins

Poltroon Press, \$30.00, January

Beginning now, we'll probably see as many editions of Hammett's classic novel as there are editions of the works of Jane Austen, Charles Dickens or Seneca on sellers' shelves. Poltroon Press' handsome, fresh out of the box hardbound edition, cleanly printed and packaged, is a fine start, especially for those who have seen John Huston's movie but never read the novel. This edition flows from the novel into two atmospheric short stories by veteran private eye writer and photographer Mark Coggins. The stories capture the crisp style and objective surface viewpoint of Hammett's novel and lead to two different conclusions, completely different from that of in *THE RETURN OF THE MALTESE FALCON*, but equally satisfying. This volume also includes chapters prefaced by Coggins' sharp, moody photographs of the novel's various locations, such as

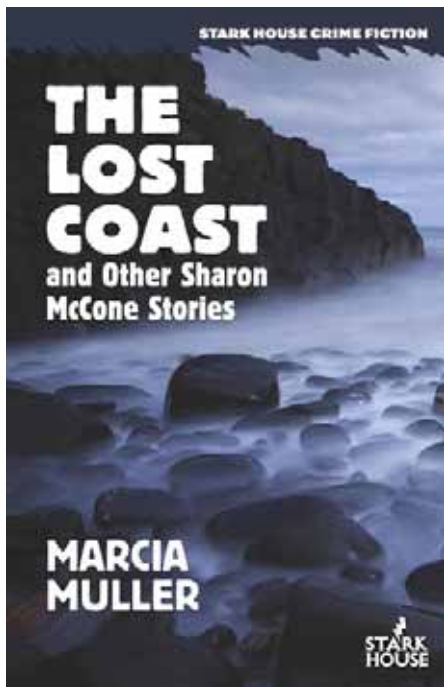


John's Grill and the apartment at 891 Post St. #401 which housed both Sam Spade and Dashiell Hammett, plus a Dell Mapback style back cover showing the locations in the novel and a succinct introduction California Detective Fiction Collection curator Randal S. Brandt. This edition along with Collins' continuation shows that Mrs. Spade's (and Mr. Hammett's) child is in good hands.

THE LOST COAST AND OTHER SHARON MCCONE STORIES

By Marcia Muller

Stark House, \$15.95, January



It's hard for some of us to believe that it's been almost a half-century since Marcia Muller introduced the San Francisco-based private investigator Sharon McCone, her character and individuality still impressive after 36 novels and numerous short stories.

With such longevity comes the risk that Sharon McCone and her creator may be unknown to newer readers or taken for granted by older readers, elbowed out by the search for the next big author or trend. Which makes **THE LOST COAST**, Stark House Press' curated collection of 16 short stories featuring McCone and some of her cohorts a timely reminder for fans and

an introduction for those unacquainted with the writer Sue Grafton dubbed the "founding mother" of modern private eye fiction and her pioneering character.

The stories cover the progress of McCone's career, from her start as the lone investigator for All Soul's Legal Cooperative in Bernal Heights to helming her own large security firm located off the Embarcadero, through cases and adventures, risks, relationships, family upheavals and personal growth. Together and individually, they illustrate the strengths, empathy and professionalism of character and creator. The stories also show off Muller's strength as a storyteller: vivid descriptions of urban neighborhoods and rural nature, weather and mood; empathetic limning of varied personalities; storytelling brisk and measured and clear as glass; all presented with a narrative voice marked by intelligence, compassion and competence.

If you haven't read a Sharon McCone story or novel in a long time, get reacquainted. If you've never read one at all, don't waste a minute. Start with **THE LOST COAST** and go from there. There's a lot more for you to enjoy.

THE WATER LIES

By Amy Meyerson

Thomas & Mercer, \$28.99 (HC),
\$16.99 (TP), January

Imagine you're Tessa Irons, a mother pregnant with your second child, enduring a public meltdown by your toddler son in a Venice Beach, California, coffee shop, when he recognizes a woman you've never seen and greets her by name ("Gigi!") in baby-speak. The woman ignores you both but the encounter is unnerving. Who is this stranger and how and why does young Jasper Irons know her? The first question is answered when the body of the woman, Regina Geller, is found in the canal on which Tessa and her doting husband Gabe, a fertility doctor, live. Barb Geller, Regina's mother, is also asking questions, chiefly how did her daughter, who embraced sobriety after a long struggle, come to die in an inebriated state? Barb flies to California to

find out, meeting and allying fitfully with Tessa, even as the police ignore them and friends and neighbors attempt to dissuade them. Eventually, a piece of information surfaces that throws things into a new light, validating Tessa's and Barb's concerns and moving them into physical danger.

Alternating between Tessa's and Barb's points of view, **THE WATER LIES** is thickly plotted parable of motherhood in all its forms and strengths and resiliency, with even the uninitiated (read male) reader relating to the two protagonists and being drawn in by the slowly unraveling mystery. Author Amy Meyerson, herself a mother of two, is particularly effective in charting Tessa's conflicting and evolving states of mind. There are moments when Tessa, Barb and the reader wonder if her questing disquiet is based in fact or emotion stemming from her pregnancy but Meyerson skillfully guides us through their growing and ultimately validated realization that something is indeed wrong and dangerous. It's clear that Meyerson wants to prompt conversations about motherhood – the book includes a discussion guide and is being pitched to book clubs – and she gives readers a lot to ponder and a lot to enjoy.

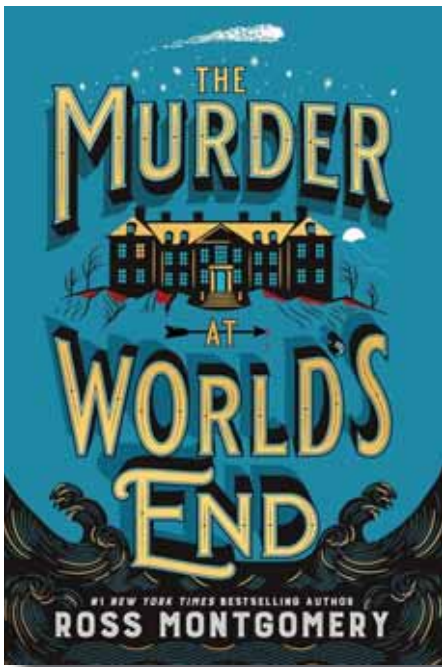
THE MURDER AT WORLD'S END

By Ross Montgomery

William Morrow, \$30.00, January

Much of the world went looney with the return of Haley's Comet in 1910, fearing poisonous atmospheres and world-altering chaos. Among the benighted is Lord Stockingham-Welt, the Viscount of Tithe Hall (AKA World's End), an ancestral manse located on an isolated tidal island in Cornwall. Steven Pike, an innocent ex-con summoned to work as a servant at the behest of a secret benefactor, finds the entire staff of the great house following the Viscount's frantic instructions, sealing every conceivable portal – doors, windows, chimneys, keyholes – against the comet's alleged noxious vapors.

Steven's reception is rocky and he's soon dispatched to care for the obstreperous



erous, foul-mouthed elder aunt, Miss Decima Stockingham. Soon enough, the Viscount is murdered in a locked room, a crossbow's arrow through his eye, the same cause of death that claimed his father's life a generation earlier. Steven, who discovered the body, falls under suspicion from the gentry, the staff and Jarvis, a popinjay of a Scotland Yard inspector, whose Clouseau-level obtuseness never lets the facts get in the way of a half-baked theory. Pressed, Steven forms an alliance with the formidable Miss Decima, an unexpected student of science and human failings, and Temperance, a maid with unexpected skills and gumption, to ferret out exactly what, why and by whom the killing was done.

Author Ross Montgomery, in his first adult novel, combines a locked room mystery, old dark house setting, the weight of past sorrows and misdeeds, tension, disillusionment, a dash of deriding-do and welcome humor in a speedy and enjoyable telling that successfully balances suspense and sarcasm. **THE MURDER AT WORLD'S END** both pokes fun at the eccentricities of the entitled and lays bare the human consequences of aristocratic disregard. A job well done.

THE LOCK AND THE KEY

By Frank Gruber
Film Noir Classics #12
Stark House Press, \$15.95, 2025

As part of its *Film Noir Classics* series, Stark House has reprinted pulp master Frank Gruber's 1948 novel, **THE LOCK AND THE KEY** (filmed in 1956 as *The Man in the Vault*), a clever and brisk variation on the bank robbery caper, in which Tommy Dancer, a dissatisfied veteran and talented locksmith in post-WWII Los Angeles, is recruited by an unsavory character to use his skills to access one particular safe deposit box in a busy downtown bank, said box containing lots of cash. As often happens in such "perfect" capers, greed, passion, sex and fear all complicate things. Tommy falls for the wrong woman (or maybe the right woman for him), bristles at his patron's demands and begins to get ideas about grabbing the swag for himself. He's presented in practical terms, a man trying to solve problems they arise. There's a lot of driving through L.A.'s neighborhoods, evoking the city's size and variety and its car culture (one suspects Gruber either knew the streets from experience or had a street map by his typewriter). The result is a well-paced, well-realized



and entertaining caper.

VICE TRAP
By Elliott Gilbert
Black Gat #67

Stark House Press, \$12.99, 2025

Fasten your seat belts, kids!! Despite its generic title, 1958's **VICE TRAP** is a propulsive caper, told in hipster patois, of an ex-con blackmailed by a cooked cop and old nemesis into fencing stolen goods and eventually robbing a bank. Like the hopped-up car the protagonist drives, this tale burns rubber and doesn't let up. Among the fastest 171 pages you may ever read. Elliott Gilbert is not well known and apparently published few books. It would be nice if Stark House were able to reprint another of his PBOs, the temptingly and perfectly titled **DON'T PUSH ME AROUND**.

SWITCHEROO

By Emmett McDowell Black Gat #68
Stark House Press, \$12.99, 2025

As the title might suggest, 1954's **SWITCHEROO** is Ace Double veteran Emmett McDowell's apparently humorous nudge at Mike Hammer, Shell Scott and other two-fisted, hard charging, brutally effective he-men sleuths of the 1950s. For Louisville, Kentucky based PI Jaimie MacRae is none of those things. Approaching forty, lacking feminine companionship, torturing himself by reading novels (during office hours, yet) about "private eyes" too busy jumping in and out of beautiful women's beds to follow their cases, he responds by tossing the offending volume across the office bullpen and immediately pitching Miss Maggie Ives, the agency's prim secretary, for a date. He soon involves them both in a search for a missing heiress who may not be missing, various gangsters, wiretapping and other assorted shenanigans, including discovering a body and getting sunburned and shot at. It's fast-moving fun, especially when Jaimie tries to be an Alpha Male and doesn't quite make it. By book's end, we – and Jaimie – realize that while he thinks he wants to be a rule-breaking wolf, he's really a pussycat at heart.

HISTORICAL EMPORIUM

Robin Agnew



FIRE MUST BURN

by Allison Montclair
Severn House, \$29.99, January
Sparks & Bainbridge #8
Rating: A

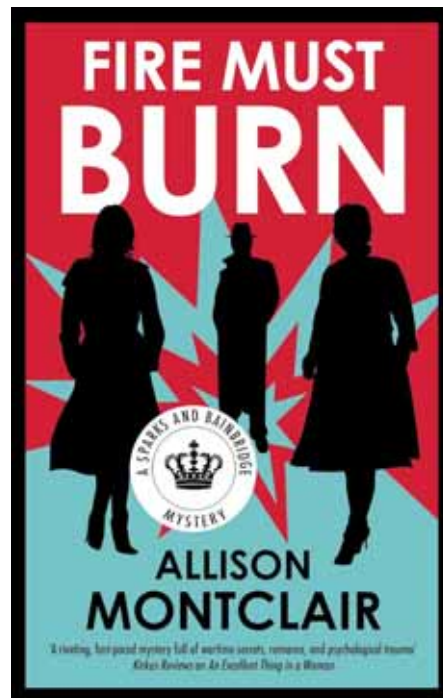
I just love this series. It has two wonderful main characters, spectacular plotting, and, in post war London, a fascinating time period and setting, making it simply one of the best contemporary traditional detective series out there. In this outing, our two heroines, Iris Sparks and Gwen Bainbridge, are tasked by English government intelligence to assign a woman through their marriage bureau (The Right Sort) to act as an agent as a means to discover if a certain diplomatic employee is loyal to their government or perhaps another.

The suspect, Tony Danforth, was an old classmate and friend of Iris's at Oxford. Naturally, she has mixed feelings about this assignment, but owes a debt to the intelligence corps that she and Gwen must pay. As she renews her relationship with Tony, who has been out of the country for some time, her doubts increase, escalating further when she and Gwen meet the agent intended for the project.

Iris doesn't approve of the brash young blonde agent, but her introduction to Tony is set up anyway, and the first date starts well, only to end very badly. The investigation takes an unexpected swerve into Iris' past, zeroing in on a terrible incident back in the 30s during a house party at which she and Tony were guests. They still aren't quite sure what happened back then, only that the mysterious incident was followed by an equally mysterious suicide.

As Gwen and Iris search for a solution, they can never rule out hostile

Soviet involvement, but there's also that incident from the past, and they untangle family threads, attempting to find some kind of solution. Montclair spools out her story brilliantly, capitalizing on the pair's smarts and innate bravery in the face of danger, keeping the reader in the dark about the motives of everybody else.



What makes the fabric even more complex are the divided loyalties involved – to betray the government or an old friend – and the question of whether it will even be possible to discover the truth of the matter. The solution couldn't be more ingenious and unexpected, worthy of Ngaio Marsh herself. Montclair conducts it all beautifully, composing variations of her own on the motifs of the golden age, while still developing and deepening her series characters. In **FIRE MUST BURN** she

has produced a completely masterful work.

THE MURDER AT WORLD'S END

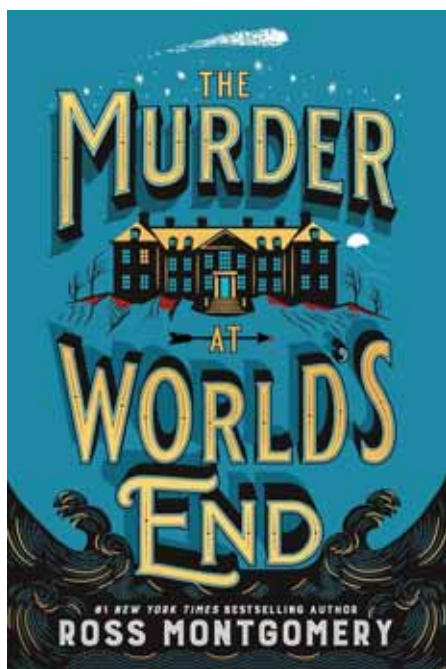
by Ross Montgomery
William Morrow, \$30, January
Series debut
Rating: B+

In 1910 many people thought that poison gases in the tail of the soon to be arriving Halley's Comet would mean the end of the world, providing a memorable milieu for this clever mystery set in England. At Tithe Hall in remote World's End, the Lord of the manor, Viscount Stockingham-Welt, is so convinced of the coming apocalypse that he's filling his house full of guests (as well as servants) and sealing them in their rooms to prevent entry of poisonous gasses. Into this "Masque of the Red Death" steps Stephen Pike, recently released from prison, thinking he's secured a job as a second footman.

The butler appears to have not been notified of his arrival, but because Stephen has been endorsed by a family member, he takes him on, not least because there's a massive amount of work involved in sealing off the house. As the newest employee, the unpleasant job that falls to him is securing the crazy auntie, the fearsome Lady Decima, in the attic (actually the nursery) and spending the night with her.

While Decima is indeed as opinionated and profane as advertised, she's no dummy, and far from a bore. Scientifically trained, she scorns her nephew's fear of the comet and demands that Stephen wheel her outside to view it and take notes. After the rest of the house is locked up that's exactly what they do, enjoying a view of a comet that no one would see again until 1986. When Stephen finally gets her back inside, he falls into an exhausted sleep, only to be awakened by the butler demanding he begin unsealing the rooms.

He starts with the Viscount's, and, seeing bloody cotton wadding protruding under the door, enlists the first footman to help him break it down, only to find Stockingham-Welt's corpse within. Somehow the man has been shot



through the eye with a crossbow, most probably with the missing bolt from on a nearby suit of armour, setting up a classic locked room conundrum. With everyone sealed in their rooms (except Stephen and Decima) how was the Viscount murdered inside his own locked chamber? And why are all his fish dead?

These questions are supposed to be answered by the detective who arrives punctually, immediately concluding that an ex-con like Stephen must be the guilty party. Disgusted, Decima decides that she and Stephen will instead lead their own parallel investigation, assisted by housemaid Temperance. The trio uses rational and scientific deduction to eliminate suspects, but as first one promising theory and then another are disproven, they become discouraged, even as the bonds between Decima and Stephen grow.

There are several other deaths before they are finally able to come up with a common solution. The pairing of these two well drawn, contrasting personalities is one of the strengths of the novel, as are the evergreen golden age tropes and old school methods of detection. Although set in 1910, it doesn't have the stodgy feel of some historical novels, instead relying on

the depiction of social classes and the appearance of Halley's Comet to serve as a fascinating backdrop to a snappy story. A fun read, **THE MURDER AT WORLD'S END** is an extremely promising first in a series outing.

George's Take: I too enjoyed this debut novel with its interesting glimpse at historical events and eccentric characters. I was a little surprised by Decima's f-bombs, but overall the book was well written. **Rating: B+**

THE LIST OF SUSPICIOUS THINGS
by Jennie Godfrey, Sourcebooks/Landmark, \$17.99, December, 2025

Debut

Rating: A

While not exactly a mystery, this book certainly contains plenty of crime. In it Jennie Godfrey introduces Miv, a 12 year old character as memorable (and perhaps more rooted in reality) than the similarly precocious Flavia DeLuce. She lives in 1970s Yorkshire, with her Dad, her Auntie Jean, and her mother, who spends most of her time in her room and doesn't speak. Miv is pretty much left to her own devices, but is happy enough hanging out with her best friend, Sharon.

Margaret Thatcher has just been elected and the hunt for the Yorkshire Ripper is in full swing, and although Miv and Sharon are somewhat insulated from the stories about his crimes, the news coverage is gradually becoming unavoidable. The boys at her school even play a game called "Ripper chase."

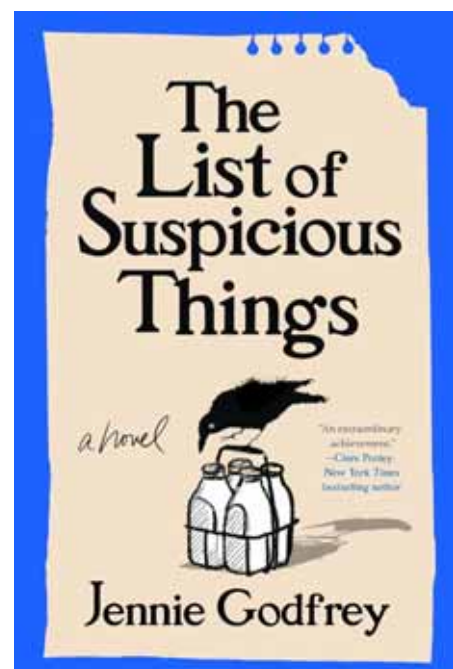
As the author herself grew up in Yorkshire, and her father actually knew Peter Sutcliffe, the Ripper, the details in this book are extremely specific and create an intense and memorable setting. For a 12 year old trying to figure out where she fits in the world, childhood is a different deal with the Ripper distracting everyone, and children like Miv and Sharon were left on their own, able to get up to whatever they want to, told only to come home

before dark.

Miv's Dad has said he might move the family away because of the danger of the Ripper so she decides she had better catch him herself. She and Sharon begin to make lists of suspicious things, focusing on different people, neighbors and teachers. In their tight community everyone knows one another, everyone goes to church together, and most of the adults work in the same places.

Miv encounters many things in this book, including adultery, alcoholism, pedophilia, domestic abuse and racism, the latter being most prominent. Everyone shops at the local market owned by Omar, a widowed Pakistani, who lives there with his son Ishtiaq, and the three children become friends, allowing the girls to witness the taunts of the skinheads (or the "shaved men" as Omar thinks of them) and their ominously constant threats of violence.

Of all Godfrey's incredibly vivid



characters, Omar was perhaps my favorite, but her creations also include a bullying teacher, a drunken vicar, a librarian with odd bruises who the girls have a kind of crush on, a lonely old man, and many more, including, of course, Miv. Her friendship with Sharon is almost a character in itself, as

12 turns to 13, and make-up, boys, and all that accompanies puberty begins to affect their bond.

The lists Miv makes are obviously not going to catch the Ripper, but her observations about local people who have “suspicious” things happening to or around them allow her to examine those suspicions more closely. She solves her little mysteries, figuring out that the bullying teacher has gotten divorced, the sweet librarian is being beaten by her husband, and Omar misses his wife and is trying as hard as he can to keep Ishtiaq safe.

If you lived through the 70s at all, this book will transport you right back there, but the setting itself is so specific, that it becomes Miv’s experience and not simply a mirror of your own. The poverty of Miv’s family and of their neighbors is accepted by all of the community who simply make do, helping each other through traumas and joys. Despite the hardship of their lives, there’s a real community in this slice of Yorkshire, which makes the Ripper killings even more horrific.

While this all sounds quite grim, and many things in this book are, it’s Mia’s tenacity, bravery and smarts that make it a standout. She is no cutesy kid, but a credible 12 year old, with a 12 year old’s somewhat skewed, or simple lack of, perspective. The author deftly weaves some heartbreaking tragedies into the life of the story, while still providing optimism and hope. The character of Miv will definitely stay with me for quite awhile, as will the book that brought her to life.

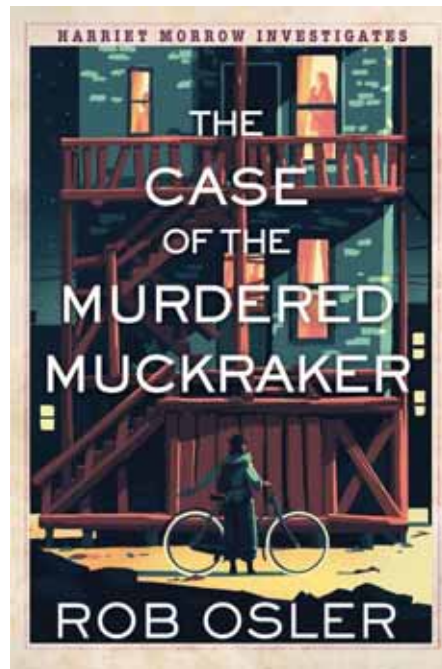
THE CASE OF THE MURDERED MUCKRAKER

by Rob Osler

Kensington, \$27, January
Harriet Morrow # 2

Rating: A

It’s rare that I like the encore more than the first book in a series, but Rob Osler has pulled it off with the second in his series about Harriet Morrow, a fledgling private detective in turn of



the century Chicago. I liked the first book very much, but in this one, Osler delves even deeper and more expansively into Harriet’s character. She’s an LGBTQ woman at a time when such things hardly had a name and she’s not sure what to do about it, though she enjoys wearing men’s clothes and does seem to have a potential girlfriend in mind. Unbelievably, in her era cross dressing was an offense that could bring a fine or jail time or both, so she mostly confines herself to wearing men’s more comfortable shoes and practical hats. She vastly prefers trousers for bicycling around town (and who can blame her?) but is forced to make do.

She’s young, and as the only woman in her agency, still feeling her way through an investigation, she’s relying on a sympathetic colleague for advice. The pool of female secretaries seems to resent the fact that a woman has risen above them to her position, but Harriet remains persistent, powering through many uncomfortable or dangerous situations, resembling another fearless fictional Chicago investigator of our time, V.I. Warshawski, who also keeps working despite discomfort and injury.

Since their parents are both dead, Harriet lives with her 16-year-old

brother, and has found a spiritual auntie of sorts in the cranky Pearl, who she met in the first book (*The Case of the Missing Maid*). Pearl, while difficult with many, is fond of Harriet and her brother, Aubrey, and they have dinner most Sunday nights at her house.

The case Harriet takes on in this novel is just as the title describes – a muckraking journalist has been found murdered in a tenement, and the police have simply arrested the woman who lived in the closest apartment, taking her children away to orphanages in the bargain. Harriet feels two strong motivations, wanting to find the killer as well as getting the woman out of jail and reuniting her with her children.

She goes undercover at a local settlement house (what we might think of as a homeless shelter today), which allows her to go to the tenement where the murder took place as their representative. All that’s there is grinding, hopeless poverty and unhelpful neighbors who can only expect a morsel and a bed to sleep in at the end of the day.

Determined, Harriet peels away the layers of the tenant’s lives, as well as digging into some of the same corrupt politics the muckraker was looking into. Being Chicago, where crooked aldermen seem to have been the norm time out of mind, there’s plenty to investigate. She’s also exposed to the various progressive movements around the city as she continues her investigation.

The skillful Osler brings bygone Chicago to vivid life, examining a slice of time and a group of people not often portrayed in mystery fiction. He writes with sensitivity about Harriet’s quest for identity, to a point where I shed a tear or two as I read. Not to mention the fact that the plot is pretty great too, complex without being confusing, and dealing with the issues of the time, all the while illuminating the story with his wonderfully delineated characters, providing a great second step in what is developing into truly remarkable series.

Lookin' For A Few Good Books

Larry Gandle



THE INTRUDER

by Freida McFadden
Poison Pen Press, \$27.99

Rating: B

Casey is renting a cabin in the wilderness. A storm is coming in and she is worried about whether her roof will hold. A neighbor offers to give her shelter but she refuses. As the storm comes in, she notices a light in the storage shed where there is no light. When she goes out and opens the door, she discovers a young girl covered in blood and holding a knife. Because she is so young, Casey decides to let the girl get shelter in her cabin. As she seeks answers in the girl's possessions, Casey soon realizes she may have placed herself into danger and must try to figure out a way out of it.

I actually listened to the book on Amazon audiobooks. I definitely have some difficulty listening to fictional audiobooks as my mind tends to wonder if the plot is not riveting. This one I had no trouble following. It certainly is a compelling listen. The plot is suspenseful and moves swiftly. However, it is a silly and quite unrealistic story and could not truly take it seriously. In spite of that, it managed to keep my interest for hours. As a result, the book is recommended for pure entertainment. The reason I decided to read this book is that it has been selected by Amazon books as a best mystery book of 2025. I definitely do not agree with this designation.

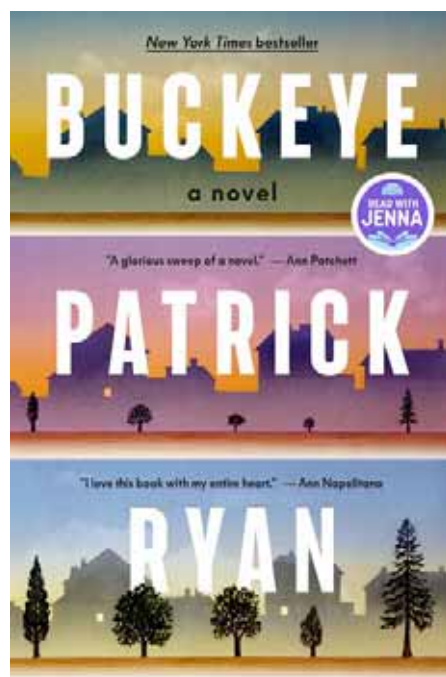
BUCKEYE

by Patrick Ryan
Random House, \$30.00

Rating: A+

Note- this book is not crime fiction but it is my favorite book I read last year!

This sprawling novel takes place in Bonhomie, Ohio from the 1920s to the 1970s. It is the story of two families living through three major conflicts and a relationship that defines them for years. There is so much in this book as the characters live through the times. They are a troubled cast of characters with so many deep-rooted complexities causing a problem with all their relationships until the end where redemption might lift its head.



Many describe this book as one of those old-fashioned family epics that so dominated the literary landscape back in the middle of the last century. How the families cope with their time lends a strong sense of conflict and suspense keeping the reader's interest throughout. The conclusion is quite bittersweet and will elicit an emotional response in the reader. This is easily the best book I read

in the last year and, as such, is highly recommended.

HOLLOW SPACES

by Victor Suthammanont
Counterpoint, \$28.00

Rating: B+

John Lo's life comes apart when he is placed on trial for murder. He is a lawyer in a prestigious law firm when he is arrested and tried for the murder of a female associate who he was having an affair with. He is acquitted but that is just the start of his slow cycle downwards. This has a devastating impact on his family including his wife and two young children, Hunter and Brennan. Now, thirty years later they are adults and while caring for their dying mother decide to pursue the truth wherever it leads them. After all, if their father was innocent, somebody else committed the murder. However, discovering the truth might be quite dangerous.

This book is heavily character driven. It is an examination of how this self-centered act of infidelity can affect the lives of family members for the rest of their lives. The plot is quite riveting but is relatively slow paced as the two siblings try to pick up the pieces of a broken childhood. There are some plot points that come off as artificial and actually quite silly but as a whole the book works well. This is one of the New York Times top 100 books of the year and it stands out as a well written crime fiction novel. It is recommended.

THE IMPOSSIBLE THING

by Belinda Bauer
Atlantic Monthly, \$27.00

Rating: B+

In 1926, on the cliffs of Yorkshire, several groups of men extract large colorful eggs from the multitude of nests there. On one small ledge a young girl manages to get a very rare red egg. It will change her life.

In the present, in Wales, Patrick Fort discovers his friend Nick and Nick's mother bound and gagged in their own home. It turns out they found the red egg in their attic and Nick placed an ad on Ebay to sell it. It was stolen by two men wearing masks. Patrick and Nick decide to find out who stole the egg and why. They soon discover themselves in the midst of some really rough people all over some highly prized eggshells.

I very much value uniqueness in a novel especially in the so very formulaic crime fiction genre. This tale is very unique. There are some really bad characters who would have little issue with seriously injuring others in the name of obsession and greed. The plot moves at a rapid rate alternating between 1926 and today. Slowly answers come and things make more sense. Characters are well constructed and realistic. The conclusion is clever and neatly ties up loose ends. The writing is quite exquisite describing the locales. A strong recommendation.

THE SECRET OF SECRETS

by Dan Brown
Doubleday, \$38.00

Rating: B

Robert Langdon is in Prague to accompany his girlfriend, Katherine Solomon where she is to deliver a lecture on human consciousness. They soon find themselves embroiled in a dangerous situation where the CIA is attempting to destroy every copy of a manuscript of a book Katherine is about to publish. They have no idea as to why. When a colleague of Katherine is discovered dead in her lab, they realize their lives may very well be in danger.

Dan Brown is living off the success of **THE DA VINCI CODE**. Not one of his other books has stoked the public interest as that one did relating to Jesus and the Bible. This one is no exception. There is so much technical jargon on

human consciousness and what happens when we die that it all sounds like theoretical nonsense. There is way too much of that material in a book that is expected to be a high impact thriller. There certainly are the hallmarks of a Dan Brown thriller- the propulsive plot, occasionally slowed down by the scientific theories on human consciousness. Characters are over the top and so often unrealistic. And finally, as with each book, it reads as a travelogue teaching the reader about a particular location- in this instance, Prague. Art history is copiously discussed. Overall, the book is a fun read but because of its length, it cannot be called a quick read. After reading so much literary fiction, this book served as an excellent break.

TOKYO EXPRESS

by Seicho Matsumoto
Modern Library, \$18.00

Rating: B-

This is the debut effort of this author first published in 1958. It has now been reissued. A young couple is found dead on a beach. They seem to have committed suicide together using cyanide in orange juice. Yet, on investigation, there does not appear to be any evidence they were in a relationship. The dead man has been implicated in a corruptions scandal. Toriegai Jutaro, the seasoned local detective, as well as, Kiichi Mihara, a detective from Tokyo find the situation suspicious. They use train schedules, and timelines to eventually solve the case.

This is a slight book unique in that it tells the story in a straightforward manner with the investigation centering on timetables and whether the suspect could have been somewhere when he claims he was not. The book reads quickly and is of historic value in that it is said to have set off the popularization of Japanese mysteries.

THE WIDOW

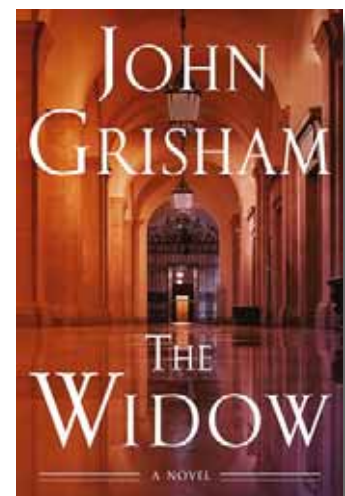
by John Grisham
Doubleday, \$32.00

Rating: A

Simon Latch is a small-town lawyer

in rural Virginia in a failing marriage and financially strapped. An elderly widow, Eleanor Barnett, walks into his office looking to create a new will. She claims to have a large fortune that her late husband left her. She wants to leave nothing to her stepsons. Simon realizes he could make a lot of money in fees and decides to keep her situation quiet while he attempts to take advantage of her. He takes her out to lunches in the best restaurants in the area and, surprisingly, she never offers to pay. One night, Eleanor gets into an accident and, while hospitalized, she dies. Simon soon finds himself accused of murder and the evidence against him looks bad. Knowing he is innocent, he must use whatever resources he can get to find the real killer.

John Grisham is one of the most popular writers of legal thrillers in the world. The quality of his work is usually at a high level but, as with any prolific writer, there are definitely some ups and downs. This particular book is definitely one of his better works and will remind the reader what he can accomplish as an author. The characters are carefully created as is the world around them. The plot is compelling, but this is primarily a character-driven novel. It is difficult to put down. I listened to this book on audio and the narrator, Michael Beck, is superb at vocally creating the rich characters in the book. It made my long commutes something to look forward to. The resolution and solution are clever and will not let the reader down. Highly recommended.



Down Under Crime



Jeff Popple Reviews

THE FIRST LAW OF THE BUSH

by Geoff Parkes
Penguin, \$A34.99
Rating: B+

Geoff Parkes' **THE FIRST LAW OF THE BUSH** is a good follow-up to his strong 2025 debut, **WHEN THE DEEP, DARK BUSH SWALLOWS YOU WHOLE**.

His new book is set ten years after the first, and finds young lawyer Ryan Bradley back in the remote New Zealand rural town of Nashville. Hired to seek compensation for the death of a local resident, Ryan finds himself caught up something a lot nastier and more dangerous than he ever envisaged.

Once again Parkes impresses with his portrayal of time and place, and his characters have a depth to them that is often missing in crime fiction. The pacing, however, is slow and it takes some patience to work through the early stages of the book. Once underway, the pace picks up and the book moves steadily to a powerful conclusion. An evocative and engaging novel.

DARK DESERT ROAD

by Tim Ayliffe
Echo, \$A34.99
Rating: A

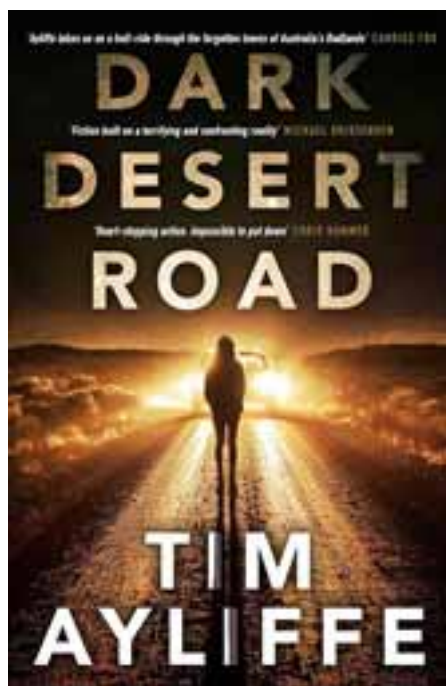
Tim Ayliffe's **DARK DESERT ROAD** gets Australian crime fiction off to a strong start in 2026.

Moving away from his series about journalist John Bailey, **DARK DESERT ROAD** introduces a new central character in the form of burnt-out police officer Kit McCarthy.

Damaged by the horror of working a

large child pornography case, and under investigation for using too much force during the arrest of a violent drunk, Kit has been ordered to take time off work. Any respite is short lived, however, when she gets a frantic cry for help from her estranged identical sister. Billie has been living off the grid with her young son and her American ex-marine husband in a sovereign citizen camp in outback New South Wales and is now in trouble. As Kit searches for Billie others are also in pursuit.

Using shifting viewpoints and a judicious use of flashbacks, **DARK DESERT ROAD** is a well-structured crime thriller that starts at a brisk pace and then ups the ante as the story races towards its blood soaked climax. The mix of drugs, political conspiracy and religious extremism gives the plot a real contemporary urgency, and Ayliffe's portrayal of the religious far-right in Australia and America is compelling



and believable. As well, the rundown towns where Billie is hiding out, are vividly described and the characters have a good gritty feel to them.

In all, **DARK DESERT ROAD** is an outstanding crime novel that entertains while raising legitimate concerns about the rising threat of sovereign citizens and religious extremism. A great read.

THE FIRST LAW OF THE BUSH

by Geoff Parkes
Penguin, \$A34.99
Rating: B+

Geoff Parkes' **THE FIRST LAW OF THE BUSH** is a good follow-up to his strong 2025 debut, **WHEN THE DEEP, DARK BUSH SWALLOWS YOU WHOLE**.

His new book is set ten years after the first, and finds young lawyer Ryan Bradley back in the remote New Zealand rural town of Nashville. Hired to seek compensation for the death of a local resident, Ryan finds himself caught up something a lot nastier and more dangerous than he ever envisaged.

Once again Parkes impresses with his portrayal of time and place, and his characters have a depth to them that is often missing in crime fiction. The pacing, however, is slow and it takes some patience to work through the early stages of the book. Once underway, the pace picks up and the book moves steadily to a powerful conclusion. An evocative and engaging novel.

KILL YOUR BOSS

by Jack Heath
Allen & Unwin, \$A34.99
Rating: A-

Detective Sergeant Kiara Lui has just broken up a loud brawl between two local troublemakers in front of the public library in rural New South Wales town of Warrigal, when a man inexplicably plummets from the roof of the building onto the bike rack in front of her. The dead man is Neville Adams, the unpopular head of library services. Adams is not well liked by his staff, or the borrowers, and as Kiara investigates, she comes to realise that there are a lot of people who wanted the librarian dead, and for good reason.

Jack Heath takes the classic murder mystery scenario of unpopular victim and limited number of suspects and adds his own unique style, and some great twists. Skilfully alternating between the investigation, and events prior to Adams' death, **KILL YOUR BOSS** is a fast moving tale that smoothly glides its way through unexpected turns and some surprisingly dark moments. The various characters are nicely limned, and relatable, and Kiara is a marvellous creation, full of uncertainty and astute reasoning. As in his previous books, Heath is also very good at mixing tension with dark humour, and there are some marvellous lines and several amusing conversations.

The story grips from the opening pages and Heath keeps a tight hold on our attention until the end. Some parts of the outcome are guessable, but Heath skilfully keeps the identity of the killer well-hidden until the final pages. Very enjoyable.

SOFTLY CALLS THE DEVIL

by Chris Blake

Echo, \$A34.99

Rating: A

New Zealand crime fiction is really going through a boom period, with a host of good authors, such as Gavin Strawhan, Michael Bennett and Tom Baragwanath, emerging in recent years. Another author to watch out for is Chris Blake (aka Nathan Blackwell), whose **SOFTLY CALLS THE DEVIL** is a stand-out read.

Matt Buchanan used to be a hotshot



detective in Auckland, but after some hard times he is now the sole constable for a small, isolated settlement on New Zealand's rugged west coast. He enjoys the pace of the job and has earned the trust of the locals. But when Buchanan's much-loved predecessor, Gus, is found killed by a single shot to the head, things begin to unravel. Another death occurs, and Buchanan has to work out the connection between the killings and an old murder-suicide.

SOFTLY CALLS THE DEVIL is a slow burn of a crime novel, with Blake taking his time in establishing the rhythm and character of Haast and its inhabitants, and gradually unveiling the demons that led Buchanan to the settlement. About a third of the way in the pace picks up, and the tension quickly mounts from there as old secrets are revealed.

Good use of short chapters keeps the story ticking along at a steady rate and the book certainly goes down some unexpected paths. Blake's rich descriptions of the New Zealand countryside add to the pleasure, and he manages to convey both the beauty and the spookiness of the deep bush. The book is also enhanced by the authentic police detail that Blake, a former police detective, brings, and his ability to evoke small town dynamics.

There is plenty of twisting and turning towards the end and the final bloody climax certainly packs a wallop. In all, an impressive addition to the growing canon of good Kiwi crime fiction.

George Easter Review

OFF SEASON

by Clive Fleury

Coffeetown Press, \$19.70,

Kindle, \$6.99, 2024

Sydney Detective Ramesh Ryan #1

Rating: A-

The story opens with a humiliating court defeat of Detective Ramesh Ryan's case against a high profile drug dealer. Ryan's boss uses this loss as an excuse to ship Ryan off to Barton, a small coastal town, for an indefinite period. This town is supposedly a quiet place, especially off-season, with one cold case from fifteen years ago being the only thing that Ryan could perhaps investigate. But Ryan's arrival in Barton coincides with an unusual spate of crime, and suddenly the police department is alive with activity. Throw into the mix some missing drugs that more than one dealer wants to get their hands on, and there's plenty to keep the reader engaged.

OFF SEASON is set in Australia, but it could have been set anywhere in the world. It read like a British police procedural. I asked our Australian correspondent, Jeff Popple, about the author and to my amazement, he had never heard of Clive Fleury (and he knows everything about Aussie crime fiction). I certainly hope that Fleury becomes better known because he is quite talented. A sequel, **ALL OR NONE**, was published in November, 2025.

Craig Sisterson Reviews

THE FIRST LAW OF THE BUSH

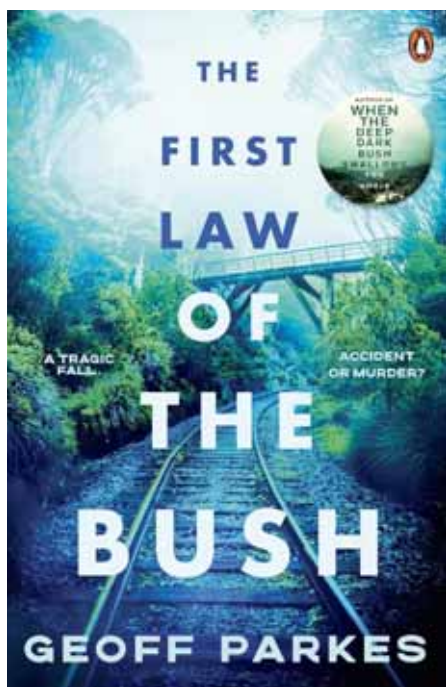
by Geoff Parkes

Penguin Australia, \$34.99 AUD,

January

Rating: A-

Last year, Melbourne-based sports



columnist Geoff Parkes became another terrific, very strong voice to join the boom in Australasian crime writing in recent years, thanks to his superb debut **WHEN THE DEEP DARK BUSH SWALLOWS YOU WHOLE**, set among the sheep farms and shearing sheds of 1980s rural New Zealand. Now he returns to his home region of the King Country with an intriguing sequel.

A decade on from the events of the first book, former shearing gang member Ryan Bradley has finished his university studies, become a practising attorney, and now returned to the remote small country town of Nashville, trying to make a go of a local law practice. Business may not be booming, yet, but Ryan is still facing plenty of demands: the mayor wants him to toss his hat in the ring for local politics, Ryan's girlfriend Crystal wants to start a family, and widow Carol Dickinson wants Ryan to take on the government and the rail company in a seemingly hopeless case after she was denied any payment for her rail worker husband Bill's death while on the job the year before.

But why are Carol's old friends shunning her, and why do Bill's long-time pals and rail colleagues Gav and Wati seem reluctant to help? Wasn't Bill a good mate? Why is the local baker doing night-time deliveries far out of town?

Then a local policeman, Ryan's friend, goes missing.

Parkes once again drops readers into an evocative tale of small-town secrets, alliances, and betrayals. He brings the 1990s rural setting vividly to life, while using alternating perspectives (Ryan's, and several townsfolk) throughout **THE FIRST LAW OF THE BUSH**. There's a strong sense of authenticity – while Parkes lives in a large cosmopolitan city now, he grew up in such areas. While the sequel may not surpass his debut, it's certainly another strong read that shows no signs of any sophomore slump. Hopefully Parkes is a rural noir author here to stay, as he has something to say.

SUCH A PERFECT FAMILY

by Nalini Singh

Penguin, \$30 USD, January

Rating: A-

Driving back to the Prasad family home overlooking Lake Tarawera on New Zealand's spectacular volcanic plateau, with wedding cake samples on the passenger seat, financial whiz Tavish Advani is feeling hopeful. He sees a bright future ahead with his beloved, Diya, and he's hoping those pesky LAPD questions about dead past lovers are fading in the rearview. But when he arrives at his fiancée's family home, he finds smoke, fire, chaos. Later, Diya lies in a coma in the local hospital's ICU. There are charred bodies in the Rotorua morgue. Who could have done this?

Why was Diya mumbling 'Ani' as she lay bleeding out from stab wounds in Tavish's arms?

Auckland storyteller Nalini Singh is renowned as a global Queen of Paranormal Romance, with a long string of New York Times bestsellers packed with archangels, changelings, and psychics. But in recent years she's also dived into the murky waters of human-focused mysteries and thrillers. On that front, **SUCH A PERFECT FAMILY** may be her best yet, a twisting tale taking readers from Rotorua to the south Pacific islands of Fiji as Tavish tries to uncover anything about 'Ani', and more importantly to find some way to point to someone other than himself as the

culprit, before the New Zealand Police and a story-chasing media lock in on his own chequered past. Meanwhile, in California, LAPD Detective Callum Baxter continues to investigate the deaths of Tavish's past lovers.

Interspersing Tavish's dubiously reliable narration with Baxter's case notes – two determined, even obsessed, men at odds – Singh masterfully ratchets the tension, blending psychological thriller and murder mystery elements into a very good read likely to keep readers guessing right to its strong finish. Further enhanced by insights into the pressures of immigrant life, along with Singh giving us taste of her own Fijian-Indian heritage, **SUCH A PERFECT FAMILY** offers something a little different in a growing ocean of domestic noir and psychological thrillers. A page-whirring read, well worth a look.

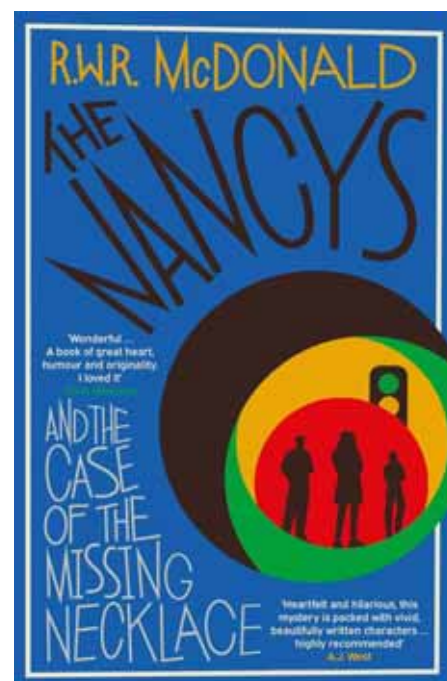
THE NANCYS AND THE CASE OF THE MISSING NECKLACE

by R. W. R. McDonald

Orenda Books, \$16.99 USD, 2025,

Rating: A

Delightful, charming, heartfelt, exuberant; they're not usually the words that come top of mind when musing on a crime novel, but they absolutely fit for **THE NANCYS AND THE CASE**



OF THE MISSING NECKLACE, which has an adolescent heroine but is very much an adult mystery novel (not a young adult or juvenile mystery). There's just something *je ne sais quoi* about this debut that makes it quite different to much of the great rural and small-town crime writing coming out of Australia and New Zealand in recent years. While it has some of the quirky local characters and secrets-behind-closed-doors you'd expect with 'rural noir', there's a different energy and tone, delightfully so.

At its heart, and the book has a big one, **THE NANCYS AND THE CASE OF THE MISSING NECKLACE** centres on the misadventures of an unlikely investigating trio and the colourful South Otago townsfolk they encounter along the way. Tippy Chan is an eleven-year-old Riverstone local delighted by a visit from her beloved Uncle Pike, a Sydney hairdresser who could be Santa's body double. Pike has returned to 'the town that style forgot', with his fashionista boyfriend Devon in tow, to look after Tippy while her mother goes on a cruise. It's been a tough time for the Chan family, with Tippy's father passing away in the past year and more stress heaped on her mother, who could do with a good break.

Tippy loves her uncle's old Nancy Drew books, and when her best friend falls off a bridge and then her teacher's body is found near the town's only traffic light, the trio see a chance to solve a mystery for real. At the same time they're juggling other local adventures, including a surprising makeover of a glum teenage neighbour for a local show, and Pike dealing with his past history in the town.

Overall, **THE NANCYS AND THE CASE OF THE MISSING NECKLACE** is a real delight, a charming mystery that is much more than charm, packed with lovably unruly characters and chaotic events and perfectly seasoned with humour and heart. First-time novelist McDonald has opened his account with a real belter, a unique and enthralling tale. Terrific debut; I'm looking forward to more in the series.

ITW Thriller Award Nominations 2026

Winners will be announced at ThrillerFest XXI (May 5, 2026)

Best Series Thriller

CHAIN REACTION, James Byrne
THE BIG EMPTY, Robert Crais
HEAD CASES, John McMahon
THE TOURISTS, Christopher Reich
TERMINAL MOONLIGHT,
Vincent Zandri

Best Standalone Thriller

CROSS MY HEART, Megan Collins
ZIGZAG GIRL, Ruth Knafo Setton
THE BURNING LIBRARY,
Gilly Macmillan
THE LOCKED WARD,
Sarah Pekkanen
SO HAPPY TOGETHER,
Olivia Worley

Best Debut Thriller

DEATH AT THE WHITE HART,
Chris Chibnall
PARTY OF LIARS, Kelsey Cox
COUNT MY LIES, Sophie Stava
HISTORY LESSONS,
Zoe B. Wallbrook
JULIE CHAN IS DEAD, Liann Zhang

Best Audiobook

KING OF ASHES, S. A. Cosby
THE WASP TRAP, Mark Edwards
BEST OFFER WINS, Marisa Kashino
WHEN DEVILS SING, Xan Kaur
THE CHEATER'S WIFE,
CN Mabry & N'Dia Rae
THE WHITE CROW,
Michael Robotham

Other Categories

Best YA Thriller
Best Short Story

Lefty Award Nominations 2026

Winners will be announced at Left Coast February 26, 2026

Best Mystery Novel

Lou Berney, CROOKS
Claire Booth,
THROWING SHADOWS
Tracy Clark, EDGE
Leslie Karst,
WATERS OF DESTRUCTION
James L'Etoile, RIVER OF LIES
Gigi Pandian,
THE LIBRARY GAME

Best Debut Mystery

Adrian Andover,
WHISKEY BUSINESS
Kristen L. Berry,
WE DON'T TALK
ABOUT CAROL
Laurie L. Dove,
MASK OF THE DEER WOMAN
Sue Hincenbergs,
THE RETIREMENT PLAN
Marisa Kashino,
BEST OFFER WINS
Diane Schaffer, MORTAL ZIN

Best Humorous Mystery Novel

Ellen Byron,
SOLID GOLD MURDER
Jennifer J. Chow,
STAR-CROSSED EGG TARTS
Elizabeth Crowens,
BYE BYE BLACKBIRD
Catriona McPherson,
SCOT'S EGGS
Cindy Sample, ALL'S FAIRE IN
LOVE AND MURDER

Best Historical Mystery

Cara Black, HUGUETTE
Mariah Fredericks, THE GIRL IN
THE GREEN DRESS
Dianne Freeman, A DAUGHTER'S
GUIDE TO MOTHERS
AND MURDER
Claire M. Johnson, CITY LIGHTS
Laurie R. King,
KNAVE OF DIAMONDS
Rob Osler, THE CASE OF THE
MISSING MAID

DP Calendar



February 26 -- March 1, 2026

Left Coast Crime

San Francisco, California

Guests of Honor: Robin Burcell, Gary Phillips, Randal Brandt

Website: <https://leftcoastcrime.org/2026/>



Capital Crime

London, England

Details to Follow

Website: <https://www.capitalcrime.org/capital-crime-26>



May 5-9, 2026

ThrillerFest XXI

New York City, NY

Guests of Honor: Lisa Scottoline, Harlan Coben, Douglas Preston, Rachel Howzell Hall, Luis Alberto Urrea

Website: thrillerfest.com



October 21-25, 2026

Cross-Border Crimes

Bouchercon

Calgary, Canada

Guests of Honor: Louise Penny, Kathy Reichs, Abir Mukherjee, Mark Greaney, Jennifer Hillier, Vicky Delaney, P.J. Vernon

Website: bouchercon2026.com

April 24-26, 2026

Malice Domestic 38

Bethesda, Maryland

Guests of Honor: Annette Dashofy, Jacqueline Winspear, Ellen Byron

Website: www.malicedomestic.net/



July 23-26, 2026

Theakston Old Peculier Crime Festival

Harrogate, England

September 18-20, 2026

Bloody Scotland



September 1-5, 2027

Bouchercon 2027

Washington, D. C.

Guests of Honor: S. A. Cosby, Martin Edwards, Laura Joh Rowland, Laura Lippman, George Pelecanos, Barbara Neely, Art Taylor

Website: bouchercon2027.com

June 18-20, 2026



WWW.BOUCHERCON2026.COM



GET YOUR
PASSPORTS
READY!



CALGARY, ALBERTA

GUESTS OF HONOUR

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT GUEST: LOUISE PENNY

CROSS BORDER GUEST: KATHY REICHS

INTERNATIONAL GUEST: ABIR MUKHERJEE

AMERICAN GUEST: MARK GREANEY

CANADIAN GUEST: JENNIFER HILLIER

COZY GUEST: VICKI DELANY

KIDS' GUEST OF HONOUR: KEVIN SANDS

TOASTMASTER: P.J. VERNON

FAN GUEST: STEELE CURRY (POSTHUMOUS)

OCTOBER 21-25, 2026



U.K. *Reviews*



Ali Karim Reviews

UNLUCKY FOR SOME

by Tom Wood

Sphere, November, 2025

Victor #13

Rating: A-

“Under the Radar” is the phrase that comes to mind when considering the plot for this thriller, which actually sums up the author as well. Though, prolific under his own name and the T.W. Ellis moniker – I am surprised that his “Victor the thinking man’s assassin” novels are not as well-known as they should be. Perhaps his latest offering will rectify this injustice. It can be read as a stand-alone action tale without the baggage of backstory, though readers familiar with the series will find this latest instalment revelatory.

The novel is set in the icy Scandinavian territories. The title refers to the problems faced by Victor, who becomes wounded and forced to go ‘Under the Radar’ in Malmö. The Coastal Swedish city becomes a dangerous location for Victor as he needs to lie low, as he recovers from his injuries.

But we’re ahead of ourselves.

Initially, Victor is installed to penetrate a crime family headed by Jorund Hakansson. He encounters a colleague of his handler ‘Lambert’, the mysterious weapons procurer ‘Scragg’. Then there is the dangerous trade in rare ‘Heavy Metals’, and counterfeit machinery.

The action is brutal, with short chapters that make the reader tear through the narrative – which also makes one ponder about what really lies beneath the shadows of an industrial city and the true cost of a green agenda.

There is the Port of Malmö, the

secondary characters, the weaponry aesthetics that all form an arachnid’s web around Victor as he realises that the dying Hakansson is far from done.

Apart from the criminal family, there are dangerous politics and international mercenaries including the legendary sniper Celeste Perrot; Lukas Draeger, the man tasked with impersonating Jorund’s son Gustavus; Renegade US Ranger Ezra Greer – and soon Victor learns that there is a seven-figure bounty on his head. Rusty shipping containers, disused chemical plants, deserted warehouses, oil tankers and the detritus of decaying docklands become a dangerous backdrop for this game of *cat-and-mouse*.

Then there’s the Persian Leila Farahani who Victor and Scragg realise may be a cog in the Rare-Earth Metals smuggling, or perhaps not? Trust becomes rarer than the Osmium that is



sought, and the mission to take down the Hakansson crime family may be just a veneer or mirage.

And so the tortuous tale makes the reader ponder beneath the ricocheting bullets from the MP7’s as the narrative reaches its climax as Victor ponders -

“Memory is a distraction. Distractions will get you killed.”

These thrillers by Tom Wood are extraordinary and this latest edition is his most engaging.

THE FRIEND OF THE FAMILY

by Dean Koontz

Thomas & Mercer, \$28.99, January

Rating: B+

Set in a time of social upheaval during the lead up to America’s entry into the Second War; it’s the authors array of vividly realised characters that make this uplifting historical narrative special.

Koontz’s tale commences in 1930 with a teenage girl Alida, one of the attractions of the *Ten-in-One* show at McKinsey’s Travelling Carnival. The girl has a beautiful face, but beneath her shoulders lies hideous body deformations akin to the British human exhibit John Merrick [aka *The Elephant Man*]. Alida is exploited by being paraded nearly naked by the odious Forest ‘Captain’ Farnham for the amusement of the curious and the uncouth. Alida escapes the indignities she is forced to endure by her voracious appetite for books, especially Dickens.

The opening is reminiscent of William Lindsay Gresham’s **NIGHTMARE ALLEY** as the *Carnival* backdrop gives way to the *Speakeasy*. While displaying Alida to a more refined voyeur at an exclusive *Speakeasy* ‘Blue Mood’ in San Diego, Captain Farnham is confronted by Loretta and Franklin Fairchild, young Hollywood film producers who are bridging the gap between silent films and the talkies. The couple soon force a deal with Captain Farnham, and buy Alida’s freedom from his clutches. It becomes obvious to the reader, that we’ve not heard the last of Forest ‘Captain’ Farnham as the Fairchild’s depart with Alida to their mansion - Bramley Hall

[aka 'The Bram'].

The skill Dean Koontz has weaving a large array of characters into an engaging narrative [but ensuring each stands erect and distinct on the page] is truly extraordinary. It makes for astonishing readability and perverse curiosity as the pages turn as if by automation.

We meet Loretta and Franklin's three children, Isadora, Gertrude and Harry. 'The Bram' is complete with loyal staff, each with interesting backstories; the Cook Luigi, the Groundsman Reinhardt, the Major-domo Julian and his wife House-keeper Victoria, her Maids Lynette, Harmony, and Anna-May as well as the children's teacher Miss Blackthorn. And what would a Koontz novel be without a canine companion? This time it's Rafael.

The characters develop in-concert with the events [and history] that unspool as the novel is propelled into the 1940s. We learn of the Stock market crash and the great depression that followed, the San Francisco earthquake, the Spanish Flu, the dark side of the emerging Californian film industry [aka *Hollywood Babylon*], the pseudoscience Eugenics, troubles brewing in Europe [and the Pacific] and much else as **THE FRIEND OF THE FAMILY** Alida Farnham is formally adopted into the Family becoming Adiel Fairchild.

Koontz illustrates his love of books and reading throughout the narrative as well as genuinely positive messages about overcoming the adversities in life. At times that the exposition is somewhat heavily applied, but it's required for the story-telling to remain smooth and does not reduce the propulsive nature of the tale.

There is charm, as well as melancholia and melodrama throughout the proceedings - but *above-all-else* this novel is a page-turner with heart.

If you are suffering from a 'reading slump' or hooked on an addictive 'doom scrolling' cycle on your Smartphone - **THE FRIEND OF THE FAMILY** is the antidote, because as a novel **THE FRIEND OF THE FAMILY** is a hell of a thing.

THE BUREAU

by Eoin McNamee

Rating: B

Readers may be more familiar with the author's pen name John Creed, which he uses for his thriller writing. His real name Eoin McNamee is reserved for his literary work, which like his John Creed novels are often set in and around the border between Northern and Southern Ireland. When McNamee explores the downfall of Paddy and Lorraine Farrell in **THE BUREAU** - I am reminded of a line from Dennis Lehane - "In Greek tragedy, they fall from great heights. In noir, they fall from the curb."

Eoin McNamee's latest work is set in what some term the 'bandit territory' between Drogheda / Dundalk and Southern Ireland's capital Dublin; historically in Ireland's recent past.

The novel opens with the deaths of Paddy and Lorraine. It is unclear if the bodies found in their upstairs bedroom were from a murder-suicide pact or a revenge killing. Then McNamee, retells the story of their lives, and the setting up of an *under-the-counter* Bureau de Change, which will lead to the couple's shotgun deaths.

The author weaves memorable characters deftly into the narrative such as dodgy police inspector Owen Corrigan, Gangsters like Dominic and Mary McGlinchey, with Paramilitary and Irish Republican types into the lives of the two main couples 'Paddy and Lorraine' and 'Brendan and Jean'.

The plot is replete with border smuggling, money laundering, financial crimes and shady lawyers. Though the pace is slow, the dialogue and characters colourfully engaging - thus allowing the reader to savour this literary work of noir crime-fiction. The bank robbery of Travellers Cheques from the American Express office in Grafton Street Dublin is written with an authentic eye, as it couples the kidnapping of the Manager from his home in a vivid flourish.

Because of the detail in the narrative, I was unsurprised to discover this work of fiction was based on True-Crime, namely family history from Eoin McNamee ["*The Bureau started when I came*

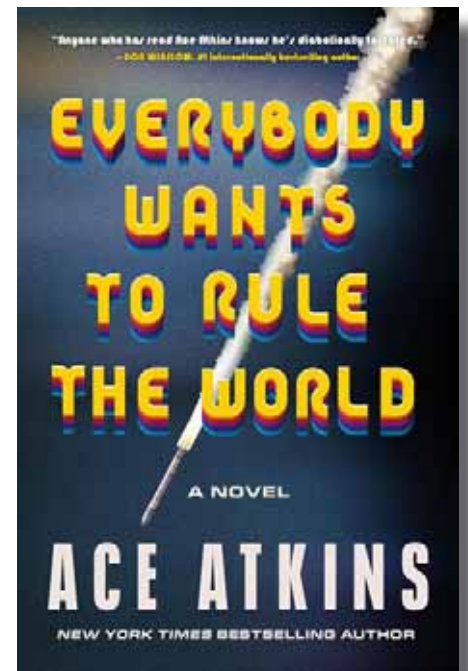
across a letter to my father written from Cork prison: Dear Brendan, I thought I'd drop you a few lines as its Sunday here and we have time on our hands ..."]

EVERYBODY WANTS TO RULE THE WORLD

by Ace Atkins

Morrow, December 2025, \$30.00

Rating: A



Sometimes black humour is the only way to cope with the horrors of a possible nuclear war. Ace Atkins delivers laughs aplenty that overlay a terrifying cold war thriller. Readers who grew up in the 1980s will smirk at many of the popular culture references that Atkins peppers in this page-turner.

The novel elegantly traverses the American cities of Atlanta and Washington. The year is 1985 where the Cold-War will reach its icy conclusion in Geneva. America and Russia's Nuclear Arms Race pivots on a meeting between Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev. The veracity of the *so-called* American 'Star Wars' program [S.D.I.] will be determined at that meeting. The conclusion will be an escalation or a de-escalation of the nuclear stockpile as each side will decide if 'Mutually Assured Destruction' is likely or does America's Strategic Defence Initiative give Washington the upper-hand?

A deadly game of cat-and-mouse is in play as the Geneva Meeting looms heavily on both the Russian and American secret services.

Atkins peppers his hefty thriller with an oddball assortment of players.

Centre-stage is 12-year-old Peter Bennett the sole child of Connie Bennett a secretary at Cable TV manufacturer Scientific Atlanta. When Jennifer Buckner a fellow worker is discovered murdered, questions are raised as Scientific Atlanta may also be covertly working with the American Government, deploying the Cable TV work as a ruse. Local Federal Investigators Sylvia Weaver and her partner Irv Ravetch are assigned to investigate the *goings-on* at Scientific Atlanta.

Atkins' narrative weaves a 'coming-of-age' strand, with Peter Bennett thinking that his mother Connie's boyfriend [the amusingly named body-builder Gary Powers] is a Russian sleeper-agent.

Other strands include Vitaly Yurchenko [the love-sick Deputy Director of the KGB], who defects in Rome and who is escorted to a Washington safe-house by a cabal of preppy CIA Agents.

Then there's Dan Rafferty [aka Winfield Legate], an FBI official, though married to Delores [who he shares five children] is actually in love with pole-dancer Trinity Velvet [aka Wanda Tarpley].

Peter Bennett's suspicions lead the twelve-year-old to former journalist turned pulp writer Dennis X. Hotchner [aka 'Hotch'] and his muscle-bound side-kick, the cross-dressing drag queen Jackie Demure [aka Jackie Johnson]. Like the plot from one of Hotch's 'Bud and Brutus' detective noirs, Atkins' novel ducks and weaves as the narrative strands converge. Soviet agents Dmitri Kostov and Anatoly Zub are despatched, but all the while [in the shadows] lies Lisica 'the White Fox'.

The complexity and darkness of the narrative are balanced by equal doses of gentle humour and farce that stricate the novel, making it very moving and at times tragically sad. But it is thought-provoking at all times.

Not unlike the recent Travis Kennedy comedic thriller [THE WHYTE

PYTHON WORLD TOUR], Atkins' latest is equally life affirming.

A wonderful book filled with weird insights.

Jeff Popple Reviews

THE LODGE

by Paul Finch

Thomas & Mercer, £8.99

Rating: B+

Paul Finch's **THE LODGE** is an enjoyable wild ride of a story, that also raises interesting questions about society's preoccupation with serial killers and the glorification of violent murder.

The book opens in good fashion with a group of true crime fanatics on a Murder Tour through a remote part of north-west England. The tour is run by Liz and Nick who seem to have finally found their niche with the weekend long celebration of grisly deeds. The bus tour visits various historical crime sites, as well as a creepy cottage containing serial killer memorabilia. The highlight of the Murder Tour is an evening at the recently opened Black Tarn Lodge, which seems to offer everything for 'dark tourists'. Not only is it a magnificent Gothic mansion nestling deep in the remote Forest of Bowland, it also once belonged

to deceased horror legend Edgar Allan Poe, and is now filled with costumes and mementoes from his many movies. Offering an elegant dinner and the screening of a legendary lost film, it's the ideal way to complete the Tour. Until night falls, a thick fog isolates the house and the guests start disappearing.

After a leisurely start, the pace really picks up once the bus reaches the Lodge and the truth about those on the tour is revealed. The violence comes thick and fast in the second half of the book and there is a cinematic feel to the violence as the unlucky guests are dispatched in increasingly gruesome ways. The frequently shifting point of view works really well, and helps to ramp up the tension as the guest numbers decline.

The person behind the killings is not hard to identify, but there are enough other surprises to keep it entertaining, especially over the exciting final chapters. Also adding to pleasure is the creepy Gothic vibe of the Lodge, and the various snippets about horror movies and serial killers. There is also some interesting reflections on dark tourism and why we are fascinated by evil.

Some suspension of disbelief is necessary, but it is worth it.

A DEATH IN GLASGOW

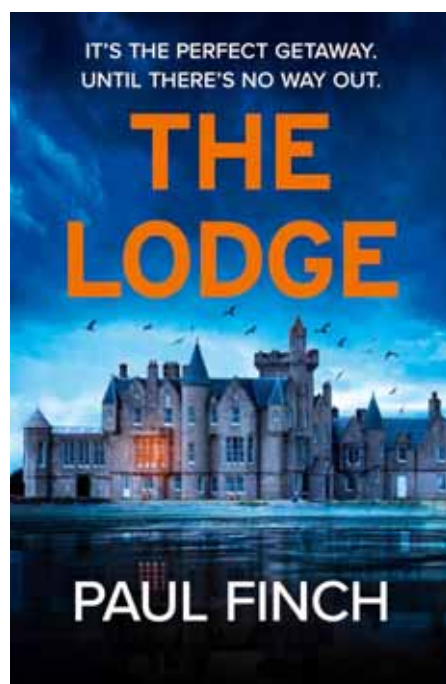
by Eva Macrae

Century, £16.99 – January

Rating: B+

A DEATH IN GLASGOW is the start of a new series by Eva Macrae, who is better known as the author of the DI Shona Oliver novels under her real name of Lynne McEwan.

After a brief Prologue, **A DEATH IN GLASGOW** opens with the discovery of a young woman's body on the tracks at Glasgow Central Station. The transport police are quick to rule it a suicide, but the mother of the victim, Holly, is not so convinced that she killed herself. Sergeant May Mackay isn't either, especially when she finds a return ticket in Holly's coat pocket. Why would she buy a return ticket if she was going to end her life? Despite the directions from her superiors, May works away at the case with the assistance of a rogue



transport police officer. Through Holly's dodgy, and violent, boyfriend the pair discover links to a major drug gang, and gradually find themselves caught up in something very nasty.

A DEATH IN GLASGOW is a well-crafted police procedural that steadily draws you in and keeps you interested. The beginning is a bit of a slow burn, but once underway the tension rises and the final sections are quite suspenseful. Eva skilfully broadens the story out from its initial focus, but brings it back to Holly's death to deliver a good surprise or two at the end.

May is a credible and interesting character who is dealing with her own tragedy, which colours her dealings with Holly's mother and helps her to see the truth. She is believably tough when she has to be, but also very fragile at times. She is very convincing. The other characters also have a gritty, plausible feel to them and Eva's use of local slang and phrases helps to build the sense of place. The book is rich in atmosphere, and the storyline is drawn from everyday experiences in Glasgow.

A solidly entertaining police novel.

George Easter Reviews

QUANTUM OF MENACE

by Vaseem Khan
Zaffre, £20.00, 2025
Q #1

Rating: B+

Here we find a melding of the world of Ian Fleming's James Bond with the environment of the traditional mystery set in small-town Great Britain.

Our protagonist Major Boothroyd, known to all of us as Q, has been summarily dismissed from his long-held position in British Intelligence as a developer of clever weapons and technologies to keep agents safe and alive.

Q returns to his home town of Wickstone-on-Water and is adrift as to what to do with his life. But soon he is looking into the suspicious death of his childhood friend, renowned quantum computer scientist Peter Napier.

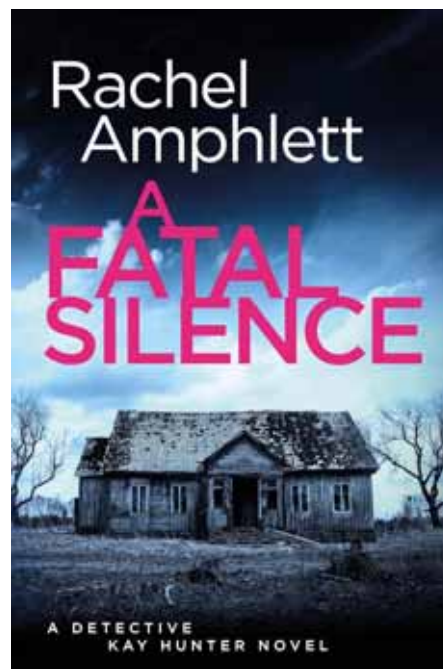
The police consider the death an accident and aren't interested in investigating it further. Not so Q, who soon discovers that Napier's ground-breaking work may have attracted sinister forces. . . Can Q decode the truth behind Napier's death, even as danger closes in?

Q must use the ingenuity that he used to engage in making clever weapons and escape measures to do something quite different – detect. And he proves quite good at it.

I've enjoyed Vaseem Khan's other series and will follow this one as well. There is a Q sequel, **THE MAN WITH THE GOLDEN COMPASS**, coming out in the U.K. in October, 2026.

A FATAL SILENCE

by Rachel Amphlett
Saxon, \$13.99, February, 2025
Detective Kay Hunter #14
Rating: A-



When the body of a young woman (with her fingertips removed) is discovered at the site of an outdoor music festival, Detective Kay Hunter's is immediately faced with a formidable investigation. First off, the crime site is a mess (a nightmare for the forensic specialists) and it is impossible to interview all of those in attendance.

Next there is finding out who the vic-

tim is – which proves quite challenging. There is the killer who seems to have left no trace as to his/her identity.

As the investigation proceeds with baby steps, it is clear that Kay Hunter is an excellent leader and she has a willing and able team to back her up. If you like books with a lot of police procedure and good detection, then this series is for you.

I came to find out about this Aussie/British writer through thriller writer Alex Shaw (see below) and you can read an interesting e-mail she sent me in the Letter column herein. When I looked into her background a bit more, I was astounded to find that she has written a whopping 51 books – all since 2011! It just goes to prove that there are some really good writers out there that somehow have gone under my radar. It's always nice to have them brought to my attention so I can let you know about them as well.

KILL CODE

by Alex Shaw
Boldwood Books, \$14.59, August, 2025
Wolf Six #2
Rating: A-

I'm glad to have met Alex Shaw at last year's Bouchercon. As a result of that meeting, he sent me an electronic copy of the first in the Wolf Six series, which I reviewed in the last issue. I like action thrillers with sympathetic characters and realistic action and that's just what I have found in this excellent series.

Ruslan Akulov (known to many as Wolf Six) tries to abort a mission to assassinate members of a crime family when innocent people get in the way. But his one-time partner Martin Basson ("Bang Bang"), goes through with the hit and a number of bystanders are also killed. That doesn't sit well with Akulov, who now considers Basson a sworn enemy.

But before he can do anything about it, Akulov wakes up on a plane (with no memory of how he got there) that is plummeting to the water below. And against all probability he survives – only to be arrested by a local sheriff, accused

of two murders that, for once, he didn't commit. The local law enforcement are tied into a shadowy organization known as the Syndicate, which is determined to protect its interests at any cost.

As Akulov is able to remember more about the circumstances prior to the crash, he recalls that his last mission in Canada was as a black asset for the CIA.

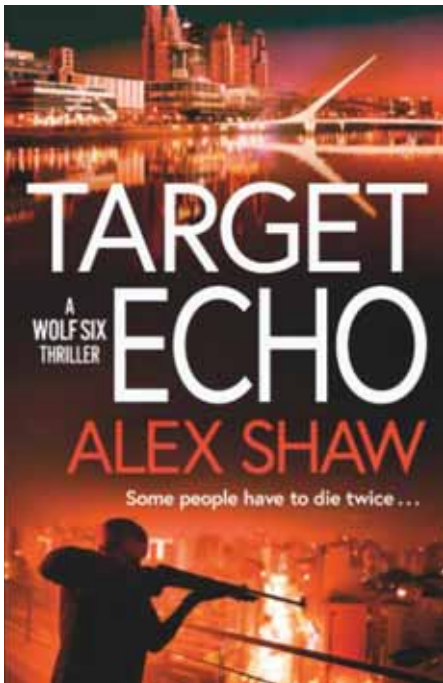
Little known to him sitting in jail, there are forces mounting to kill him unless two CIA agents arrive in time to save him.

There is a lot going on in this novel but Alex Shaw handles all the elements well without causing confusion.

Good job, Alex.

TARGET ECHO

by Alex Shaw
Boldwood Books,
Kindle, \$4.99, February
Wolf Six #3
Rating: A-



When a routine contract in Argentina turns from simple to complex in the squeeze of a trigger, Akulov is thrown into a complex web of deceit and dangerous tests of loyalty.

Along the way he encounters one of his old colleagues whom he believed to be dead – another former Wolf, whose family has been kidnapped to force him

to do something he doesn't want to do. Of course, Akulov jumps in to help.

And a chance encounter on a train brings him in contact with French intelligence operative Sophie Racine, who quickly becomes an ally.

At stake is a planned terrorist attack by an old Basque terror movement, which has new legs.

Shaw's antihero/assassin series is a winner on all counts. His books are now must-reads for me. In this one, I really enjoyed the inclusion of Sophie Racine, a character just as strong as Akulov. I was pleased to find out that she appeared as the main character in one of Alex Shaw's previous books (**TRAITORS** – 2021), which I now plan to read.

Keep 'em coming, Alex. And in the meantime, I'll go back and read some of his previous works.

THE PROTOCOLS OF SPYING

by Merle Nygate
No Exit Press, \$17.26, 2025
Eli Amiran #3
Rating: A-

The Hamas attack on Israeli settlements on October 7, 2023 was just as devastating and life-changing to the Israeli people as the 9/11 attacks were to the American people. **THE PROTOCOLS OF SPYING** deals with the aftermath of 10/7 on the main characters of the novel, and, in particular, the head of Mossad in London, Eli Amiran.

There are two plot strands running parallel for most of the storyline before finally coming to resolution together. In the first Eli recognises that there will be a hostage for prisoner swap with Hamas that should release one of the more moderate Palestinians (from an Israeli prison), who is seen as a potential West Bank Nelson Mandela. If Mossad can get an asset close to this man, they may be able to influence future Palestinian policy more towards peace. They identify their ideal candidate, but it will fall to British asset Petra to get him inside.

The second strand arises because of the reshuffles required by the internal state of emergency. Yuval, who is hated by Eli, temporarily gets into a position

of power and with the Prime Minister's blessing, plans a hit on behalf of an American, in order to curry favor with presidential candidate Trump. This is seen as too dangerous a plan by Eli at a time when there is a battle for the moral high ground.

Merle Nygate's novel has captured the world of spying as well as any contemporary spy novelist. Her world view is quite similar to esteemed espionage writers such as Charles Cumming, David McCloskey and Peter Visich. It was a pleasure to read this tightly woven novel and I plan to go back and read the first two in the series.

THE UNQUIET GRAVE

Dervla McTiernan
Self-published, \$15.00, 2025
Cormac Reilly #4
Rating: A-

I'm a big fan of this series which began with the Barry-Award-winning **THE RUIN**, one of my all-time favorite mysteries. Two more in the series followed and then the author decided to try her hand at psychological suspense and I despaired that Dervla wouldn't write any more Cormac Reilly police detective novels. Then **THE UNQUIET GRAVE** was announced – but no U.S. publisher. It looked like it would only appear in Dervla's adopted country Australia. But I found a copy on Blackwell's website (no longer listed) and bought it. I'm still puzzled why no American or British publisher picked up this title. It's every bit as good as her other work. ???

DS Cormac Reilly is assigned the case of a recently discovered dead body in a bog. When the body is found to have been wearing underpants, it is determined that this is not an archeological find, but one that died in the recent past. Who does the body belong to and who killed him are the questions to be answered.

As the investigation progresses, Cormac is interrupted by his former lover Emma (now great with child) to help her find her husband who has disappeared in France.

If that isn't enough to deal with, he has been offered a new job heading

up an Internal Affairs division, but he doesn't know whether he wants to spend all of his time investigating colleagues. Also, his highly valued police partner Peter has just told him of his intention to move to Australia.

And then there's the whole subplot surrounding the crooked cyber expert Carl Rigney and his scheme to subvert the Irish Lottery which goes disastrously awry. Whew! There's a lot going on in **THE UNQUIET GRAVE**, but Dervla McTiernan handles all of the plot lines deftly. Please, more Cormac McCarthy.

Craig Sisterson Reviews

A BAD, BAD PLACE

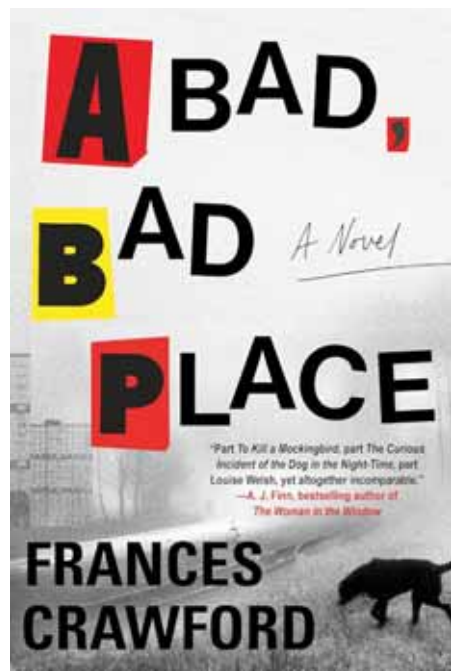
by Frances Crawford

Soho Crime, \$28.95, March

Rating: A

The gritty streets of Glasgow have been well trodden in the recent decades of crime and thriller fiction. Just skim any bookseller or library shelves and grab something with Mina, Brookmyre, Welsh (Louise or Irvine), Parks, Morrison, or McIlvanney (William or Liam) on the spine and you're likely in for a cracking great read. Ditto Craig Russell's Lennox series, or award-winning newer voice Callum McSorley. To that fine list we can now add Frances Crawford, thanks to this impressive debut.

A BAD, BAD PLACE centres on twelve-year-old Janey Devine and her nana Maggie, living in Possilpark in 1979. A rough area in north Glasgow that gets a whole lot rougher for the pair after Janey discovers the body of a young woman, Samantha Watson, by the railway tracks while out walking her 'wee stupid dog' named Sid vicious. Sleepless nights, police questioning, playground teasing; Janey's life is upturned. She swears she can't remember the details of that morning, but Janey's not telling the whole truth. And it's not just the police wanting answers; Samantha's father is notorious local gangster Billy 'the Ghost' Watson.



Fear, gossip, and danger. What secret is Janey keeping?

First-time novelist Crawford, who herself grew up in Possilpark in the 1970s, creates a wonderfully evocative sense of time and place. Humour and local vernacular pepper **A Bad, Bad Place**, a gritty yet heartfelt tale of a kid and her nana, just trying to survive in a place most wouldn't choose. Like Jacqueline Bublitz's terrific **BEFORE YOU KNEW MY NAME**, Crawford takes readers into a crime story through the perspective of the person who finds the body, rather than the cops trying to find the killer. And while Janey is an adolescent protagonist, this is not YA, but a decidedly adult crime novel, ala the terrific **BLACKLANDS** by Belinda Bauer or Edgar Award-winning **THE LAST CHILD** by John Hart.

Crawford brings a voice and perspective all of her own, soaking readers in the setting in characters. While we're barely into 2026, I have a feeling that **A BAD, BAD PLACE** may in the months to come feature in plenty of conversations about the year's best debuts. Lingers long after the final page.

THE KILLER QUESTION

by Janice Hallett

Atria Books, \$30 USD, 2025

Rating: B+

Former journalist and British government speechwriter Janice Hallett burst onto the mystery scene during the pandemic with *The Appeal*, a modern take on the classic 'puzzle-style' murder mysteries of Agatha Christie and Ngaio Marsh, and others, with an epistolary twist. Told via letters, emails, and messages, readers were invited to solve the mystery alongside two lawyers looking for 'the real killer' among many case documents.

She's continued the 'found documents' format through a string of British bestsellers, and now in her fifth novel **THE KILLER QUESTION**, it is WhatsApp messages and group texts, transcripts of police recordings, and emails pitching a true crime documentary to Netflix that contain the clues, suspects, and red herrings. Along with sheets from a weekly quiz night at 'The Case is Altered', a local village pub down a quiet country lane run by former coppers Mal and Sue Eastwood.

But who killed the man in the orange puffy jacket whose body emerged from the nearby river, after he was thrown out of a quiz night by Mal for being a notorious quiz cheat? And who are the Shadow Knights, the mysterious team of seemingly elite quizzers who've turned up out of nowhere and start winning every week, really upsetting some of the locals who take their 'fun quiz' very seriously? What twists does the person pitching the Netflix show have up their sleeve, to entice the sale?

With **THE KILLER QUESTION**, Hallett crafts another pleasing brain-teaser. Anyone familiar with pub quizzes will find themselves grinning at some of the personalities, and the way quizmasters and contestants can battle it out over 'correct' answers. While there may be some pacing and other wobbles among an otherwise enjoyable read, and at times the conceit threatens to overwhelm our connection to characters, Hallett deftly brings her mystery all together very cleverly at the end.

Table of Contents

Quest for Best Mysteries	2
Best of 2025	
Experts' Lists	3
Booksellers' Lists	7
Publications' Lists	8
Websites' Lists	11
Best of the Best 2025	18
Edgar Nominations	19
Editor's Message	20
Introducing...Elizabeth Heider	21
Most Anticipated Mysteries 2026	24
Letters	59
Associate Editor's Message	60
Reviews	
Meredith Anthony	61
Lou Jacobs	67
Kevin Burton Smith	70
Hank Wagner	74
Cozy/Traditonal Cafe'	77
George Easter	80
Ted Fitzgerald	86
Robin Agnew/History Mystery	89
Larry Gandle	92
Down Under Crime	94
CWA Diamond Dagger	76
Agatha Award Nominations	85
Thriller Award Nominations	97
Left Award Nominations	97
DP Calendar	98
Bouchercon 2026	99
Reviews From the U.K.	100



Editor/Publisher
George A. Easter
george@deadlypleasures.com

Associate Editor
Larry Gandle
LGandle@aol.com

Contributors
Mary Mason
Jeff Popple
Ted Fitzgerald
Lou Jacobs
Ali Karim
Meredith Anthony
Robin Agnew
Hank Wagner
Craig Sisterson
Kevin Burton Smith



Subscription Rates

Sample Free (see website)
1 year digital (four issues) \$10.00

Make checks (U.S. funds only)
payable to George Easter or
Deadly Pleasures and send to
George Easter -- DP
1718 Ridge Point Dr.
Bountiful, UT 84010
PayPal payment is also accepted
at george@deadlypleasures.com