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JULY 2025 NEW BOOK SYNOPSES

FICTION

Claire Allan

The affair

Sorcha Hannon, survivor of a devastating affair, is the person I want to be. She's found the healing and hope I desperately need to find for myself. Now that Sorcha and I are friends, I am no longer alone. I feel as if I finally belong. There's just one small catch. Sorcha Hannon isn't just a new friend to me, and she certainly isn't a stranger. In fact, I know the ins and outs of her life, and her marriage, almost as well as she does. But if she finds out who I really am, I'll lose everything.

Isabel Allende

My name is Emilia del Valle

In San Francisco 1866, an Irish nun, is left pregnant and abandoned following a torrid relationship with a Chilean aristocrat, gives birth to a daughter named Emilia Del Valle. Raised by a loving stepfather, Emilia grows into an independent thinker and self-sufficient young woman. At the age of sixteen, she begins to publish pulp fiction under a man's pen name. When these fictional worlds can't contain her sense of adventure any longer, she turns to journalism, convincing an editor at the San Francisco Examiner to hire her. There she is paired with another talented reporter, Eric Whelan. As she proves herself, her restlessness returns, until an opportunity arises to cover a brewing civil war in Chile. She seizes it, along with Eric, and while there, begins to uncover the truth about her father and his country.

Kelley Armstrong

Death at a highland wedding

After slipping 150 years into the past, modern-day homicide detective Mallory Atkinson has embraced her new life in Victorian Scotland as housemaid Catriona Mitchel. Although it isn't what she expected, she's has come to love her role as assistant to undertaker Dr. Duncan Gray and Detective Hugh McCreadie. They are on their way to the Scottish Highlands for McCreadie's younger sister's wedding. The McCreadies and the groom's family, the Cranstons, have a complicated history which has made the weekend quite uncomfortable. And then when one of the guests is murdered, they must work fast to uncover the murderer before another life is lost.

Belinda Bauer

The impossible thing

1926. On the cliffs of Yorkshire, men are lowered on ropes to steal the eggs of the sea birds who nest there. The most beautiful are sold for large sums. A small girl, penniless and neglected by her family, retrieves one such treasure. Its discovery will forever alter the course of her life.

A century later in a remote cottage in Wales, Patrick Fort finds his friend, Nick, and his mother tied up and robbed. The only thing missing: a carved case containing an incredible scarlet egg. Doggedly attempting to retrieve it, Patrick and Nick discover the cruel world of egg trafficking, and soon find themselves on the trail of a priceless collection of eggs lost to history.

Lucy Connolly

An Irish bookshop murder

After receiving an unexpected inheritance from their grandfather, Mercy and her twin sister Lizzie are now the proud owners of an antique bookshop in the tiny Irish village of Shamrock Cove. Mercy finds the Judge, a well-respected man who lives next door, dying on his own doorstep. She rushes to help, but with his final words, he accuses Mercy of murder. Most of their new neighbours hear his words and, with suspicion pointing at Mercy, she decides to investigate the case to clear her name.

Jeanine Cummins

Speak to me of home

On her wedding day in San Juan, Puerto Rico in 1968, Rafaela Acuña y Daubón has mild misgivings, but she marries Peter Brennan Jr. anyway. She has no way of knowing how dramatically her life will change when she uproots her young family to the American Midwest. Against the backdrop of her mother's isolation in St. Louis, Missouri in the 1980s, Rafaela's daughter, Ruth Brennan, longs only to belong. Eager to fit in, Ruth lets go of her language, habits, and childhood memories of Puerto Rico. It's not until decades later, when Ruth's own daughter, Daisy, returns to Puerto Rico that her mother and grandmother begin to truly reflect on the choices that have come to define their lives.

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Elinor Florence

Finding Flora

In 1905, Scottish newcomer Flora Craigie jumps from a moving train to escape her abusive husband. Desperate to disappear, she claims a homestead near Alix, Alberta, determined to start a new life for herself. She finds that her nearest neighbours are a Welsh widow with three children; two American women raising chickens; and a Métis woman who makes a living by breaking in wild horses. While battling the harsh environment and draconian local attitudes toward female farmers, the five women grapple with the differences of their backgrounds and the secrets each struggles to keep. When their homes are threatened with expropriation by the hostile federal Minister of the Interior, the women join forces to “fire the heather,” a Scottish term meaning raising a ruckus.

Kristin Harmel

The stolen life of Collette Marceau

Colette Marceau has been stealing jewels for nearly as long as she can remember, following the centuries-old code of honour instilled in her by her mother, take only from the cruel and unkind, and give to those in need. Never was their family tradition more important than seven decades earlier, during the Second World War, when Annabel and Colette worked side by side in Paris to fund the French Resistance. But one night in 1942, it all went wrong. Annabel was arrested by the Germans, and Colette’s four-year-old sister, Liliane, disappeared in the chaos of the raid, along with an exquisite diamond bracelet sewn into the hem of her nightgown for safekeeping. Soon after, Annabel was executed, and Liliane’s body was found floating in the Seine—but the bracelet was nowhere to be found.

Anthony Horowitz

Marble Hall murders

Editor Susan Ryeland has left her Greek island hotel, and her Greek boyfriend Andreas in search of a new life back in England. Freelancing for Causton Books, she’s working on the manuscript of a novel, Pund’s Last Case, by a young author named Eliot Crace, a continuation of the popular Alan Conway series. Susan is surprised to learn that Eliot is the grandson of legendary children’s author Marian Crace, who died some fifteen years ago, murdered, Elliot insists, by poison. As Susan begins to read the manuscript, she is relieved to find that Pund’s Last Case is actually very good. Set in the South of France, it revolves around the mysterious death of Lady Margaret Chalfont, who, though mortally ill, is poisoned, perhaps by a member of her own family. But who did it and why?

Lisa Jewell

Don’t let him in

Nina Swann is intrigued when she received a condolence card from Nick Radcliffe, an old friend of her late husband, who is looking to connect after her husband’s unexpected death. Nick is a man of substance and good taste. He has a smile that could melt the coldest heart and a knack for putting others at ease. But to Nina’s adult daughter, Ash, Nick seems too slick, too polished, too good to be true. Without telling her mother, Ash begins digging into Nick’s past. What she finds is more than unsettling.

Rose Jeneva

The perfect marriage

Sarah Morgan is a successful and powerful defence attorney in Washington D.C. At 33 years old, she is a partner at her firm and life is going exactly how she planned. The same cannot be said for her husband, Adam, a struggling writer who has had little success. He begins to tire of his and Sarah’s relationship as she is constantly working. Out in the secluded woods, at Adam and Sarah’s second home, Adam engages in a passionate affair with Kelly Summers. Then, one morning Adam is arrested for Kelly’s murder. Sarah soon finds herself playing the defender for her own husband, a man accused of murdering his mistress.

Anna Johnston

The borrowed life of Frederick Fife

Frederick Fife was born with an extra helping of kindness in his heart. If he borrowed your car, he’d return it washed with a full tank of gas. The problem is there’s nobody left in Fred’s life to borrow from. At eighty-two, he’s desperately lonely, broke, and on the brink of homelessness. But Fred’s luck changes when, in a bizarre case of mistaken identity, he takes the place of grumpy Bernard Greer at the local nursing home. Now he has warm meals in his belly and a roof over his head as long as his poker face is in better shape than his prostate and that his look-alike never turns up.

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Susan Juby

Contemplation of a crime

Butler Helen Thorpe is not one to judge, but the participants in Close Encounters for Global Healing are astonishingly unpleasant. The five-day program brings together people from across the political spectrum with the goal of helping them bridge their ideological and personal differences. Helen and her employer, Mr. Levine, have come to Side Island to assist David, his youngest son, who is facilitating the course. No rapprochement between the warring, or at least endlessly bickering, parties seems possible. But when something deadly happens, they must learn to work together. First, they have to figure out who among them can be trusted.

Martha Hall Kelly

The Martha's Vineyard beach and book club

2016: Thirty-four-year-old Mari Starwood is still grieving after her mother's death as she travels to Martha's Vineyard. She's come all the way from California with nothing but a name on a piece of paper: Elizabeth Devereaux, the famous but reclusive Vineyard painter. When Mari makes it to Mrs. Devereaux's stunning waterfront farm under the guise of taking a painting class with her, Mrs. Devereaux begins to tell her the story of the Smith sisters, who once lived there. As the tale unfolds, Mari is shocked to learn that her relationship to this island runs deeper than she ever thought possible.

Florence Knapp

The names

In the wake of a catastrophic storm, Cora sets off with her nine-year-old daughter, Maia, to register her son's birth. Her husband, Gordon, a local doctor, respected in the community but a terrifying and controlling presence at home, intends for her to name the infant after him. But when the registrar asks what she'd like to call the child, Cora hesitates. Spanning thirty-five years, what follows are three alternate versions of Cora's and her young son's lives, shaped by her choice of name.

Wally Lamb

The river is waiting

Corby Ledbetter is struggling. New fatherhood, the loss of his job, and a growing secret addiction have thrown his marriage to Emily into a tailspin. And that's before he causes the tragedy that tears the family apart. Sentenced to prison, Corby struggles to survive life on the inside, where he bears witness to acts of brutality but also experiences small acts of kindness and elemental kinship with a prison librarian who sees his light and some of his fellow offenders. Buoyed by them and by his mother's enduring faith in him, Corby begins to transcend the boundaries of his confinement, sustained by his hope that mercy and reconciliation might still be possible.

Lynda la Plante

Dark rooms

Helena Lanark is the only one who knows about the horrors which once occurred in her family's house. The heiress of an immense family fortune, she now resides in a luxurious care home; her mind and memory fading fast. Jane Tennison is leading a murder investigation into the recent brutal death of a young girl, her decomposed, starved body discovered in an old air raid shelter in the garden of the Lanark's now derelict house. Initially the focus is on identifying the victim, until another body is found hidden in the walls of the shelter. As the investigation and search for answers intensifies, Jane travels to Australia where she discovers the dark secret that the Lanark family has kept hidden for decades.

Shari Low

One year after you

For forty years the fabulous Odette Devine has been a beloved matriarchal actress on Scotland's longest-running TV show. Today she is broken, betrayed, and desperate to find out if this is her payback for a lie she told forty years ago.

S.G. MacLean

The bookseller of Inverness

After Culloden, Iain MacGillivray was left for dead on Drumossie Moor. Wounded, his face brutally slashed, he survived by pretending to be dead as the Redcoats patrolled the corpses of his Jacobite comrades. Six years later, with the clan chiefs routed and the Highlands subsumed into the British state, Iain lives a quiet life, working as a bookseller in Inverness. One day, after helping several of his regular customers, he notices a stranger lurking in the upper gallery of his shop, poring over his collection. But

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the man refuses to say what he's searching for and only leaves when lain closes for the night. The next morning lain opens up shop and finds the stranger dead, his throat cut, and the murder weapon laid out in front of him, a sword with a white cockade on its hilt, the emblem of the Jacobites. With no sign of the killer, lain wonders whether the stranger discovered what he was looking for and whether he paid for it with his life.

Charlotte McConaghy ***Wild dark shore***

Dominic Salt and his three children are caretakers of Shearwater, a tiny island not far from Antarctica. Home to the world's largest seed bank, Shearwater was once full of researchers, but with sea levels rising, the Salts are now its final inhabitants. Until, during the worst storm the island has ever seen, a woman mysteriously washes ashore. Isolation has taken its toll on the Salts, but as they nurse the woman, Rowan, back to strength, it begins to feel like she might just be what they need. Rowan, long accustomed to protecting herself, starts imagining a future where she could belong to someone again.

Jan Moran ***Hepburn's necklace***

When costume designer Ariana Ricci leaves her groom at the altar, she takes solace at the Palm Springs home of her theatrical great-aunt. While opening yellowed letters postmarked "Lago di Como, 1952" Ariana discovers relics from her great-aunt's past, including a necklace that Audrey Hepburn gave her during the filming of a movie in Rome. Aching for a fresh start and the chance to resolve an unfinished story, the two embark on a journey to Lake Como, Italy that will illuminate secrets and offer second chances if they are bold enough to seize them.,

Patricia Parsons ***We came from away***

Newfoundland where if you're not an islander, you're a "come-from-away." And if you were born here and left never to return, according to Nora Houlihan, who is about to turn one hundred, you're the worst kind of CFA. But she's about to have a birthday party and demands that her family return. Before the party, though, she wants them to see what they're missing by living in appalling places like Toronto and New York. So she arranges a cross-island tour for them. Under the careful eye of their mysterious tour guide, Gordie O'Brien, Nora's two children, both in their seventies themselves, and their assorted middle-aged children are packed into a truck for a week to put aside their petty family squabbles and their prissy food fetishes, to experience the things that really matter. By the time they reach St. John's to celebrate 100 years of the tactless, obnoxious Nora's life, they have all changed, just not in the way she might have anticipated.

Chris Pavone ***The doorman***

Chicky Diaz is everyone's favourite doorman at the Bohemia, New York City's world-famous home of celebrities, financiers, and the cultural elite. On the worst night in the greatest city on Earth, Chicky Diaz, a doorman at the toniest address in town is drawn into a web of intrigue, robbery, and murder.

Clare Pooley ***How to age disgracefully***

When Lydia takes a job running the Senior Citizens' Social Club three afternoons a week, she assumes she'll be spending her time drinking tea and playing gentle card games. The members of the Social Club, however, are not what Lydia was expecting. From Art, a failed actor turned kleptomaniac to Daphne, who has been hiding from her dark past for decades to Ruby, a Banksy-style knitter who gets revenge in yarn, these seniors look deceptively benign but when age makes you invisible, secrets are so much easier to hide.

Eliza Reid ***Death on the Island***

A group of international players has gathered in a tiny village off the coast of Iceland for a diplomatic dinner. There's Kristján, the mayor reeling from a personal tragedy. Graeme, the ambassador with an agenda to push, together with Jane, his wife, along for the ride on another one of her husband's many business trips. And several others, from Iceland and from abroad, each with their own reason for being there, their own loyalties and grievances. By the end of the night, one of them will be dead. And it will be up to the ambassador's wife, Jane, to figure out how and why.

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Taylor Jenkins Reid

Atmosphere

Joan Goodwin has been obsessed with the stars for as long as she can remember. Thoughtful and reserved, Joan is content with her life as a professor of physics and astronomy at Rice University and as aunt to her precocious niece, Frances. That is, until she comes across an advertisement seeking the first women scientists to join NASA's Space Shuttle program. Suddenly, Joan burns to be one of the few people to go to space. Selected from a pool of thousands of applicants in the summer of 1980, Joan begins training at Houston's Johnson Space Center, alongside a group of fellow candidates. As the new astronauts become unlikely friends and prepare for their first flights, Joan finds a passion and a love she never imagined. In this new light, Joan begins to question everything she thinks she knows about her place in the observable universe.

Gemma Rogers

The neighbour

In need of a fresh start and wanting to distance ourselves from the bad memories of my mother's house, Lauren, my 10-year-old daughter, and I moved to 3 Beech Close. It was to be our refuge after two years of hell nursing my sick mother. Beech Close was a cul-de-sac of six houses situated around a picture-perfect green. It seemed perfect but I had underestimated the secrets that this tight knit community shared. Within hours of moving my next-door neighbour, Valerie, made it abundantly clear we were not welcome. I soon discovered that Valerie hadn't welcomed the previous occupant either and she'd since disappeared without a trace.

Steven Rowley

The Guncle

Patrick, or Gay Uncle Patrick, GUP, for short, has always loved his niece, Maisie, and nephew, Grant. That is, he loves spending time with them when they come out to Palm Springs for weeklong visits, or when he heads home to Connecticut for the holidays. When tragedy strikes and Maisie and Grant lose their mother and Patrick's brother has a health crisis of his own, Patrick finds himself suddenly taking on the role of primary guardian. Despite having a set of "Guncle Rules" ready to go, Patrick has no idea what to expect, having spent years barely holding on after the loss of his great love, a somewhat-stalled career, and a lifestyle not-so-suited to a six and a nine-year-old. Quickly realizing that parenting, even if temporary, isn't solved with treats and jokes, Patrick's eyes are opened to a new sense of responsibility, and the realization that, sometimes, even being larger than life means you're unfailingly human.

Riley Sager

With a vengeance

In 1942, six people destroyed Anna Matheson's family. Twelve years later, she's ready for retribution. Under false pretenses, Anna has lured those responsible for her family's downfall onto a luxury train from Philadelphia to Chicago, an overnight journey of fourteen hours. Her goal? Confront the people who've wronged her, get them to confess their crimes, and deliver them into the hands of authorities waiting at the end of the line. Justice will at last be served.

Freya Sampson

The busybody book club

The five members of the St. Tredock book club disagree on everything, from the books they read to the biscuits they eat. But when one of the group suddenly disappears and a dead body is discovered at his house, these bibliophiles must put their differences aside to solve the mystery.

Jesse Q. Sutanto

Vera Wong's guide to snooping (on a dead man)

Ever since a man was found dead in Vera's teahouse, life has been good. For Vera that is. She's surrounded by loved ones, her shop is bustling, and best of all, her son, Tilly, has a girlfriend. All thanks to Vera, because Tilly's girlfriend is none other than Officer Selena Gray. The very same Officer Gray that she had harassed while investigating the teahouse murder. Then Vera comes across a distressed young woman who is obviously in need of her kindly guidance. The young woman is looking for a missing friend. Fortunately, while cat-sitting at Tilly and Selena's, Vera finds Selena's briefcase. Inside is a file about the death of an influencer, Xander, who also happens to be the friend that the young woman was looking for. Vera is determined to solve Xander's murder. After all, doing so would surely be a big favour to Selena, and there is nothing she wouldn't do for her future daughter-in-law.

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Ocean Vuong ***The Emperor of Gladness***

One late summer evening in the post-industrial town of East Gladness, Connecticut, nineteen-year-old Hai stands on the edge of a bridge in pelting rain, ready to jump, when he hears someone shout across the river. The voice belongs to Grazina, an elderly widow succumbing to dementia, who convinces him to take another path. Bereft and out of options, he quickly becomes her caretaker. Over the course of the year, the unlikely pair develops a life-altering bond, one built on empathy, spiritual reckoning, and heartbreak, with the power to alter Hai's relationship to himself, his family, and a community at the brink.

Ashley Weaver ***One final turn***

Ellie McDonnell is about to embark on her most perilous mission, go to Lisbon, Portugal to save her beloved cousin Toby who has reportedly escaped from a German prisoner of war camp. Toby has been missing since the Battle of Dunkirk and Ellie had all but lost hope in ever seeing him again until Major Ramsey, the British military intelligence officer she had been working closely with over the past few months, shared the news he'd intercepted.

Kate Wells ***Murder on the farm***

Jude Gray never thought she'd find herself widowed and running a working farm full-time, but here she is, living in the small Malvern village her husband Adam spent most of his life in. After a particularly gruelling lambing season, she is looking forward to some time off, but there's no rest for the wicked, especially when she finds the body of one of Adam's oldest friends on her farm. Jude refuses to believe the official line, that Sarah's death was a suicide, and starts an investigation of her own. But as the body count rises, danger creeps ever closer to Malvern Farm.

Iona Whishaw ***The cost of a hostage***

Another in the Lane Winslow series. It's a slow August morning in King's Cove and at the Nelson Police Station. Then Lane receives a call with news that Darling's brother, Bob, has gone missing from a mining camp in Mexico and the police station is visited by the frantic mother of a boy kidnapped from his bedroom. From bustling Mexico City, through the desert and into the mountain range beyond, Darling and Lane's search for Bob puts them out of the realm of the law and at the mercy of a local bandito. While back in the Kootenays, both kidnapper and kid turn up across the lake in Creston and it appears to be case closed until a body is found mangled in the paddlewheel of a ferry boat.

NONFICTION

Omer Arizona ***Brown boy***

In a tough neighbourhood on the outskirts of Toronto, miles away from wealthy white downtown, Omer Aziz struggles to find his place as a first-generation Pakistani Muslim boy. He fears the violence and despair of the world around him, and sees a dangerous path ahead, succumbing to aimlessness, apathy, and rage. However in his senior year of high school, Omer quickly begins to realize that education can open up the wider world. But as he falls in love with books, and makes his way to Queen's University in Ontario, Sciences Po in Paris, Cambridge University in England, and finally Yale Law School, he continually confronts his own feelings of doubt and insecurity at being an outsider, a brown-skinned boy in an elite white world.