

NANOOSE LIBRARY AUGUST 2025 NEW BOOK SYNOPSES

FICTION

David Baldacci

A calamity of souls

Set in the tumultuous year of 1968 in southern Virginia, a racially-charged murder case sets a duo of white and black lawyers against a deeply unfair system as they work to defend their wrongfully-accused black defendants in this courtroom drama.

Nikki Brammer

The collected regrets of Clover

From the day she watched her kindergarten teacher drop dead during a dramatic telling of Peter Rabbit, Clover Brooks has felt a stronger connection with the dying than she has with the living. After her beloved grandfather who raised her dies alone while she is traveling, Clover becomes a death doula in New York City, dedicating her life to ushering people peacefully through their end-of-life process.

Susan Choi

Flashlight

One summer night, Louisa and her father take a walk on the breakwater. He cannot swim. Later, Louisa is found on the beach, soaked to the skin, barely alive. Her father is gone. She is ten years old. Louisa is an only child of parents who have severed themselves from the past. Her father, Serk, is Korean, but was born and raised in Japan; he lost touch with his family when they bought into the promises of postwar Pyongyang and relocated to North Korea. Her American mother, Anne, is estranged from her Midwestern family after a reckless adventure in her youth. And then there is Tobias, Anne's illegitimate son, whose reappearance in their lives will have astonishing consequences.

S.A. Crosby

King of Ashes

Roman Carruthers left his family's crematory business behind in his hometown of Jefferson Run, Virginia. He is enjoying a life of shallow excess as a financial adviser in Atlanta until he gets a call from his sister, Neveah, telling him their father is in a coma after a hit-and-run accident. When Roman goes home, he learns the accident may not be what it seems. His brother, Dante, is deeply in debt to dangerous, criminals and Roman is willing to do anything to protect his family.

Beck Dorey-Stein

Spectacular things

Mia and Cricket have always been close. The gifted daughters of a young single mother, the "Lowe girls" are well-known in the small Maine town they call home. Each sister has a role to fill: the responsible and academically minded Mia assumes the position of caregiver far too young, while Cricket, a bouncing ball of energy and talent, seems born for soccer stardom. But the cost of achieving athletic greatness comes at a steep price.

Allen Eskens

Saving Emma

When Boady Sanden first receives the case of Elijah Matthews, he's certain there's not much he can do. Elijah, who believes himself to be a prophet, has been locked up in a psychiatric hospital for the past four years, convicted of brutally murdering the pastor of a megachurch. But as a law professor working for the Innocence Project, Boady agrees to look into Elijah's file. When he does, he is alarmed to find threads that lead back to the death of his colleague and friend, Ben Pruitt, a man shot to death four years earlier in Boady's own home.

Ian Ferguson

Killer on the first page

The famous are descending on the town of Happy Rock. This time, the stars are not of the screen but of the page. The Happy Rock bookstore, I Only Read Murder, is hosting not only an author festival but a murder mystery festival, with six of the biggest names in crime fiction. New bookstore majority co-owner and former TV star Miranda Abbott loves nothing more than the idea of hosting literary luminaries. Little does she realize the authors are bringing their egos, their professional jealousies, and their personal grudges along with their books. And they all want the first look at a mysterious posthumous manuscript that has been delivered to the bookstore. This festival of rivals goes from bad to worse when one of the authors turns up dead in a locked room with no windows.

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Elly Griffiths

The last remains

When builders discover a human skeleton during a renovation of a café, they call in archeologist Dr. Ruth Galloway, who is preoccupied with the threatened closure of her department and by her ever-complicated relationship with DCI Nelson. The bones turn out to be modern, the remains of Emily Pickering, a young archaeology student who went missing in 2002. Suspicion soon falls on Emily's Cambridge tutor and also on another archeology enthusiast who was part of the group gathered the weekend before she disappeared, Ruth's friend Cathbad. As they investigate, Nelson and his team uncover a tangled web of relationships within the archeology group and look for a link between them and the café where Emily's bones were found.

Jo Harkin

The pretender

Inspired by the true story of the little known Simnel, who was a figurehead of the 1487 Yorkist rebellion and ended up working as a spy in the court of King Henry VII. In 1480, John Collan's greatest anxiety is how to circumvent the village's devil goat on the way to collect water. But the arrival of a well-dressed stranger from London upends his life forever: John is not John Collan, the son of Will Collan, but the son of the long-deceased Duke of Clarence, hidden in the countryside after a brotherly rift over the crown, and because Richard III has a habit of disappearing his nephews. Removed from his humble origins, sent to Oxford to be educated in a manner befitting the throne's rightful heir. He learns the rules of etiquette in Burgundy and the machinations of the court in Ireland, where he encounters Joan, the strong-willed and manipulative daughter of his Irish patrons, a girl imbued with both extraordinary political savvy and occasional murderous tendencies. Joan has two paths available her—marry, or become a nun. Lambert's choices are similarly stark: he will either become King, or die in battle. Together they form an alliance that will change the fate of the English monarchy.

Erum Shazia Hasan

We meant well

It's the middle of the night in Los Angeles when Maya, a married mother of one, receives the phone call. Her colleague Marc has been accused of assaulting a local girl in Likanni, where they operate a charitable orphanage. Can she get on the next flight? When Maya arrives, protesters surround the compound. The accuser is Lele, her former protégé and the chief's daughter. There are no witnesses, no proof of any crime. What happened that night? And what will happen to the orphanage if this becomes a scandal?

Sue Hicenberg

The retirement plan

After thirty years of friendship, Pam dreams of her perfect retirement with Nancy, Shalisa, Marlene, and their husbands—until their husbands pool their funds for an investment that goes terribly wrong, and their dreams of beachfront condos and a sunny, carefree retirement vanish. But when one husband dies in a freak accident, the other three women are shocked to see his widow rebound with a huge life insurance payout and a new life in Florida. In the aftermath, the women discover that their husbands have identical, seven-figure life insurance policies. A new dream forms, and this time, it involves a hitman.

Bruce Hosinger

Culpability

When the Cassidy-Shaws' autonomous minivan collides with an oncoming car, seventeen-year-old Charlie is in the driver's seat, with his father, Noah, riding shotgun. In the back seat, tweens Alice and Izzy are on their phones, while their mother, Lorelei, a world leader in the field of artificial intelligence, is absorbed in her work. Yet each family member harbours a secret that implicates them in the accident.

Holly Jackson

Not quite dead yet

Jet is the daughter of one of the wealthiest families in Woodstock, Vermont. Twenty-seven years old, she's still waiting for her life to begin. On Halloween night, Jet is violently attacked by an intruder and suffers a catastrophic head injury. The doctor is certain that within a week, the injury will trigger a deadly aneurysm. Jet has never thought of herself as having enemies. But now she looks at everyone in a new light: her family, her former best friend turned sister-in-law, her ex-boyfriend. She has at most seven

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days, and as her condition deteriorates she has only her childhood friend Billy for help. But nevertheless, she's absolutely determined to finally finish something: Jet is going to solve her own murder.

Iris and Roy Johansen ***Flashback***

Years after their mother's murder, sisters Chloe and Sloane Morgan go missing, leaving behind a collection of evidence that they've been using to track a serial killer. Extraordinarily observant Kendra Michaels picks up the threads — but can she save the Morgan sisters.

Iris and Roy Johansen ***More than meets the eye***

After scoring a plea deal in a high-profile murder trial, serial killer James Michael Barrett leads a grim parade of law enforcement officers to the body of his last victim. At the alleged burial site, the officers swing their shovels down and are met with a strange metallic sound they weren't expecting. In a blink, a terrific explosion rocks the woods, killing Barrett and most of the officers instantly. The detonation is only the beginning of a shocking case for FBI consultant Kendra Michaels, a string of murders in the style of the very-dead Barrett mysteriously continue, and it becomes clear that he may not have been working alone.

Stephen King ***Never flinch***

When the Buckeye City Police Department receives a disturbing letter from a person threatening to "kill thirteen innocents and one guilty" in "an act of atonement for the needless death of an innocent man," Detective Izzy Jaynes has no idea what to think. Are fourteen citizens about to be slaughtered in an unhinged act of retribution? As the investigation unfolds, Izzy realizes that the letter writer is deadly serious, and she turns to her friend Holly Gibney for help.

Shari Lapena ***She didn't see it coming***

Bryden and Sam have it all: thriving careers, a smart apartment in a luxury condominium, supportive friends and a cherished daughter. The perfect life for the perfect couple. Then Sam receives a call at his office. Bryden who was working from home that day has failed to collect their daughter from daycare. Arriving home with their little girl, he finds his wife's car in the underground garage. Upstairs in their apartment her laptop is open on the table, her cell phone nearby, her keys in their usual place in the hall. Except Bryden is nowhere to be seen. It's as if she just walked out.

Ariel Lawhon ***When we had wings***

The Philippines, 1941. When U.S. Navy nurses Eleanor Lindstrom and Penny Franklin, and Filipina nurse Lita Capel forge a friendship at the Army Navy Club in Manila, they believe they're living a paradise assignment. All three are seeking a way to escape their pasts, but soon the beauty and promise of their surroundings give way to the heavy mantle of war. Caught in the crosshairs of a fight between the U.S. military and the Imperial Japanese Army for control of the Philippine Islands, the nurses are forced to serve under combat conditions and, ultimately, endure captivity as the first female prisoners of the Second World War. As their resiliency is tested in the face of squalid living arrangements, food shortages, and the enemy's blatant disregard for the articles of the Geneva Convention, the women strive to keep their hope and fellow inmates alive.

Claire Lynch ***A family matter***

1982. Dawn is a young mother, still adjusting to life with her husband, when Hazel lights up her world like a torch in the dark. There is the kind of connection that's impossible to resist, and suddenly life is more complicated, and more joyful, than Dawn ever expected. But she has responsibilities and commitments. She has a daughter.

2022. Heron has just received news from his doctor that turns everything upside down. He's an older man, stuck in the habits of a quiet existence. Telling Maggie, his only child—the person around whom his life has revolved—seems impossible. Heron can't tell her about his diagnosis, just as he can't reveal all the other secrets he's been keeping from her for so many years.

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Bianca Marais ***A most puzzling murder***

Destiny Whip is a former child prodigy, world-renowned enigmatologist and very, very alone. A life filled with loss has made her a recluse, an existence she's content to endure until a letter arrives inviting her to interview for the position of Scruffmore family historian. Not only does an internet search for the name yield almost nothing, it's a job she never applied for. After she decodes the invitation's hidden message, the promise of her family secrets being revealed is too powerful a draw for the orphaned Destiny, who soon finds herself on Eerie Island. It's a place whose inhabitants are almost as inhospitable as the tempestuous weather. The Scruffmores themselves turn out to be not much better, a snarled mess of secrets and motives connected by their mistrust for one another. Destiny proves to be just as much an enigma to them as they are to her. While she works to unravel the mysteries hidden throughout the ominous castle, Destiny is certain of two things: one of the Scruffmores is going to die and she's running out of time to stop it.

Marta Molnar ***The secret of sunflowers***

When Hollywood auctioneer Emsley Wilson finds her famous grandmother's diary while cleaning out her New York brownstone, the pages are full of surprises. The first surprise is, the diary isn't her grandmother's. It belongs to Johanna Bonger, Vincent van Gogh's sister-in-law. Johanna inherited Vincent van Gogh's paintings. They were all she had, and they weren't worth anything. She was a 28 year old widow with a baby in the 1800s, without any means of supporting herself, living in Paris where she barely spoke the language. Yet she managed to introduce Vincent's legacy to the world. The inspiration couldn't come at a better time for Emsley. With her business failing, an unexpected love turning up in her life, and family secrets unraveling, can she find answers in the past?

Susin Nielsen ***Snap***

Frances Partridge, fifty-five, is a beloved children's author. Geraint Blevins, forty-one, is an auto mechanic and devoted family man. Parker Poplawski, twenty-three, is just starting her career as a wardrobe assistant on a hit TV show. What do these people have in common? Nothing, until each of them reaches a breaking point and snaps in spectacular fashion. They meet in a court-mandated anger management program. Three very different people, forced to spend a lot of time together, who slowly end up bonding and helping one another in unexpected ways.

Carlene O'Connor ***Some of us are looking***

In late summer, the Dingle peninsula is thronged with tourists drawn to County Kerry. For Irish vet Dimpna Wilde, who has returned to run her family's practice after years away, home is a beautiful but complicated place especially when it becomes the setting for a brutal murder.

Adele Parksville ***First wife's shadow***

When Emma meets Matthew, a kind, handsome widower, he seems to be just what she needs. Yet as their relationship moves fast, Emma's friends worry she might be exploited. She's a rich woman after all. Emma doesn't care Matthew has no money. But as the memory of his perfect first wife hangs over them, Emma does have one tiny doubt. If Matthew's wife hadn't died, he wouldn't be with her. And Emma wonders if she's second best. Can she ever fill the dead woman's shoes?

Nita Prose ***The maid's secret***

Molly Gray's life is about to change in ways she could never have imagined. As the esteemed Head Maid and recently promoted Special Events Manager of the Regency Grand Hotel, good things are just around the corner, including her marriage to Juan Manuel. But Molly's entire existence is upended when a film crew descends upon the hotel to shoot the hit reality TV show Hidden Treasures. On a whim, Molly brings in a shoebox containing a few of her gran's old things for appraisal, and much to everyone's surprise, one item turns out to be a rare and priceless treasure. Instantly, Molly is both a multi-millionaire and a media sensation, until the priceless piece vanishes from the hotel. The key to the mystery lies in the past, in a long-forgotten diary written by Molly's gran. For the first time, Molly learns about Gran's true-to-life fairytale, a young girl to the manor born, the only child of a wealthy magnate. But when Gran falls head over heels in love with a young man her parents deem below her station, her life is thrown into

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turmoil. As fate would have it, the greatest love of Gran's life is someone Molly knows quite well. Together with her friends, Molly combs the past and the present to catch the thief.

David Silva

An inside job

Gabriel Allon has been awarded a commission to restore one of the most important paintings in Venice. But when he discovers the body of a mysterious woman floating in the waters of the Venetian Lagoon, he finds himself in a desperate race to recover a lost masterpiece by Leonardo da Vinci. The painting, a portrait of a beautiful young girl, has been gathering dust in a storeroom at the Vatican Museums for more than a century, misattributed and hidden beneath a worthless picture by an unknown artist. Because no one knows that the da Vinci is there, no one notices when it disappears one night during a suspicious power outage. No one but the ruthless mobsters and money men behind the theft and the mysterious woman whom Gabriel found in a watery grave in Venice.

Tim Sullivan

The cyclist

DS George Cross uses a combination of logic, determination and, often, pedantry 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. He has little to go on, but from the faint tan lines on the ravaged body, and strange scars on his forearms, an identity gradually emerges as that of a male amateur cyclist with a reliance on performance-enhancing drugs. But who is he and what happened that led to his death.

Madeleine Thien

The book of records

Lina and her father have arrived at an enclave called The Sea, a staging-post between migrations. In this mysterious and shape-shifting place, a building made of time, pasts and futures collide. Lina befriends her neighbours: Bento, a Jewish scholar in seventeenth-century Amsterdam; Blucher, a philosopher in 1930s Germany fleeing Nazi persecution; and Jupiter, a poet of Tang Dynasty China. Under the tutelage of these great thinkers, Lina equips herself to face her ailing father's troubling admissions about his role in their family's tragic past.

D.K. Wall

Liars' table

In country stores and diners, old men gather over breakfast and coffee to swap tall tales. The fish are bigger, danger greater, and adventures wilder in the stories told at a Liars' Table. No harm in stretching the truth when nothing exciting happens in their small town. Until someone steals Purvis Webb's car. Life is hard enough with a wife in a nursing home, an estranged daughter and a grandson he didn't know existed. Unable to accept one more indignity, Purvis takes matters into his own hands. His pursuit of the thief leads him to places he never thought he'd go and to decisions he never wanted to have to make.

Jess Walter

So far gone

A few weeks after the 2016 election, at Thanksgiving with his daughter and her belligerent new husband, Rhys Kinnick finally snapped. After an escalating fight about politics, he hauled off and punched him. Immediately horrified by what he'd done, by the state of the world around him, and by his own spiraling mental health, Rhys chucked his smartphone out the car window and fled for a remote cabin in the woods of the Pacific Northwest.

Seven years later, when his grandchildren show up on his doorstep, Rhys barely recognizes them. Their mother has disappeared, and they need a safer place to stay than with their father, who has taken up with a Christian Nationalist militia. So what if Rhys's cabin has no electricity or indoor plumbing, he'll do whatever he needs to for these kids. But when the militia members show up and kidnap the children, Rhys realizes he'll have to re-enter the broken world. With the help of a bipolar retired detective and his caustic ex-girlfriend, Rhys reluctantly heads off on a journey through the rubble of his former life.

Ruth Ware

The woman in suite 11

When an invitation arrives to attend the press opening of a luxury Swiss hotel, owned by reclusive billionaire Marcus Leidmann, it's like the answer to a prayer. Three years after the birth of her youngest

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child, Lo Blacklock is ready to reestablish her journalism career, but post-pandemic travel journalism is a very different landscape from the one she left ten years ago.

The chateau on the shores of Lake Geneva is everything Lo's ever dreamed of, and she hopes she can snag an interview with Marcus. Unfortunately, he proves to be even more difficult to pin down than his reputation suggests. When Lo gets a late-night call asking her to come to Marcus's hotel room, she agrees despite her own misgivings. She's greeted, however, by a woman claiming to be Marcus's mistress, and in life-or-death jeopardy. A pursuit across Europe follows, forcing Lo to ask herself just how much she's willing to sacrifice to save this woman.

Monica Wood

How to read a book

Violet Powell, a twenty-two-year-old from rural Abbott Falls, Maine, is being released from prison after serving twenty-two months for a drunk-driving crash that killed a local kindergarten teacher. Harriet Larson, a retired English teacher who runs the prison book club, is facing the unsettling prospect of an empty nest. Frank Daigle, a retired machinist, hasn't yet come to grips with the complications of his marriage to the woman Violet killed.

When the three encounter each other one morning in a bookstore in Portland—Violet to buy the novel she was reading in the prison book club before her release, Harriet to choose the next title for the women who remain, and Frank to dispatch his duties as the store handyman—their lives begin to intersect in transformative ways.

Liann Zhang

Julie Chan is dead

Julie Chan, a supermarket cashier with nothing to lose, finds herself thrust into the glamorous yet perilous world of her late twin sister, Chloe VanHuusen, a popular influencer. Separated at a young age, the identical twins were polar opposites and rarely spoke, except for one viral video that Chloe initiated. When Julie discovers Chloe's lifeless body under mysterious circumstances, she seizes the chance to live the life she's always envied. Transforming into Chloe is easier than expected. Julie effortlessly adopts Chloe's luxurious influencer life. However, Julie soon realizes that Chloe's seemingly picture-perfect life was anything but. Haunted by Chloe's untimely death and struggling to fit into the privileged influencer circle, Julie faces mounting challenges during a weeklong island retreat with Chloe's exclusive group of influencer friends. As events spiral out of control, Julie uncovers the sinister forces that may have led to her sister's demise and realizes she might be the next target.

NONFICTION

Ann Wolbert Burgess

A killer by design: murderers, mindhunters, and my quest to decipher the criminal mind

Lurking beneath the progressive activism and sex positivity in the 1970-80s, a dark undercurrent of violence rippled across the American landscape. With reported cases of sexual assault and homicide on the rise, the FBI created a specialized team—the "Mindhunters" better known as the Behavioral Science Unit—to track down the country's most dangerous criminals. And yet narrowing down a seemingly infinite list of potential suspects seemed daunting at best and impossible at worst—until Dr. Ann Wolbert Burgess stepped on the scene.

Burgess reveals how her pioneering research on sexual assault and trauma caught the attention of the FBI, and steered her right into the middle of a chilling serial murder investigation in Nebraska. Over the course of the next two decades, she helped the budding unit identify, interview, and track down dozens of notoriously violent offenders. As one of the first women trailblazers within the FBI's hallowed halls, Burgess knew many were expecting her to crack under pressure and recoil in horror—but she was determined to protect future victims at any cost. This book pulls us directly into the investigations as she experienced them, interweaving interview transcripts and crime scene drawings alongside her own vivid recollections to provide unprecedented insight into the minds of deranged criminals and the victims they left behind.

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Glenon Doyle

Untamed

Untamed is both an intimate memoir and a galvanizing wake-up call. It is the story of how one woman learned that a responsible mother is not one who slowly dies for her children, but one who shows them how to fully live. It is the story of navigating divorce, forming a new blended family, and discovering that the brokenness or wholeness of a family depends not on its structure but on each member's ability to bring her full self to the table. And it is the story of how each of us can begin to trust ourselves enough to set boundaries, make peace with our bodies, honour our anger and heartbreak, and unleash our truest, wildest instincts so that we become women who can finally look at ourselves and say: There She Is.

Carol Off

At a loss for words: conversation in an age of rage

As co-host of CBC Radio's As It Happens, Carol Off spent a decade and a half talking to people in the news five nights a week. On top of her stellar writing and reporting career, those 25,000 interviews have given her a unique vantage point on how, in these polarizing years, words that used to define civil society and social justice are being put to work for a completely different political agenda. Or they are being bleached of their meaning as the values they represent are mocked and distorted.

Off explores the mutating meanings and the changing political impact of her six chosen words—freedom, democracy, truth, woke, choice and taxes—unpacking the forces, from right and left, that have altered them beyond recognition. She also shows what happens when we lose our shared political vocabulary. We stop being able to hear each other, let alone speak with each other in meaningful ways. This means we stop being able to reckon with the complexity of the crises we face, leaving us prey to conspiracy theories, autocrats and the machinations of greed.