

Best Reads 2022

Each year, Colby Community Library Director Vicky Calmes compiles a list of favorite books. The list for 2022 contains her top fiction reads, from 40th favorite counting down to #1 best choice.

40. The Boys from Biloxi by John Grisham

Keith Rudy and Hugh Malco grew up in Biloxi in the sixties and were childhood friends. As teenagers, their lives took them in different directions. Keith's father became a legendary prosecutor, and Keith went to law school. Hugh's father became the "Boss" of Biloxi's criminal underground, and Hugh preferred the nightlife and worked in his father's clubs. The two families were headed for a showdown, one that would eventually happen in a courtroom.

39. The Blame Game by Sandie Jones

As a psychologist specializing in domestic abuse, Naomi has found it hard to avoid becoming overly invested in her clients' lives. After helping Jacob make the decision to leave his wife, Naomi worries that she has taken things too far. Then, Jacob goes missing, and her files on him vanish. As the police start asking questions about Jacob, Naomi's own dark past emerges, and as the truth comes to light, it seems that it is not just her clients who are in danger.

38. Horse by Geraldine Brooks

A discarded painting in a junk pile, a skeleton in an attic, and the greatest racehorse in American history: from these strands, a sweeping story of spirit, obsession, and injustice is braided. Based on the remarkable true story of the record-breaking thoroughbred, Lexington, *Horse* is a novel of art and science, love and obsession, and the depth of racism.

37. Mean Streak by Sandra Brown

Dr. Emory Charbonneau, a pediatrician and marathon runner, disappears on a mountain road in North Carolina. By the time her husband Jeff, miffed over a recent argument reports her missing, the trail has grown cold. Fog and ice encapsulate the mountainous wilderness and paralyze the search for her. While police suspect Jeff of "instant divorce," Emory, suffering from an unexplained head injury, regains consciousness and finds herself the captive of a man whose violent past is so dark that he will not even tell her his name. She is determined to escape him and willing to take any risks necessary to survive.

36. An Honest Lie by Tarryn Fisher

When Rainy reluctantly agrees to a girls' weekend in Vegas, she is prepared for an exhausting parade of shots and slot machines. After a wild night, her friend Braithe does not come back to the hotel room; then, Rainy gets the text message, sent from Braithe's phone: someone has her. Rainy knows it is her they really want, and Rainy knows why.

35. The Wrong Victim by Allison Brennan

A bomb explodes on a sunset charter cruise out of Friday Harbor at the height of tourist season and kills everyone on board. Now this fishing and boating community is in shock and asking who would commit such a heinous crime—the largest act of mass murder in the history of the San Juan Islands. Was the explosion an act of domestic terrorism, or was one of the dead the primary target? That is the first question Special Agent Matt Costa, Detective Kara Quinn, and the rest of the FBI team need to answer, but they have few clues and no witnesses. As Matt and his team get closer to answers, they find one of their own caught in the crosshairs of a determined killer.

34. French Braid by Anne Tyler

The Garretts take their first and last family vacation in the summer of 1959. They hardly ever leave home, but in some ways, they have never been farther apart. Mercy has trouble resisting the call of her aspirations to be a painter, which means less time keeping house for her husband, Robin. Their teenage daughters, steady Alice and boy-crazy Lily, could not have less in common. Their youngest, David, is already intent on escaping his family's orbit for reasons none of them understand. Yet, as these lives advance across decades, the Garretts' influences on one another ripple through each generation.

33. The Violin Conspiracy by Brendan Slocumb

Growing up black in rural North Carolina, Ray McMillian's life is already mapped out. Ray has a gift and a dream—he is determined to become a world-class professional violinist, and nothing will stand in his way. When he discovers that his beat-up, family fiddle is actually a priceless Stradivarius, all his dreams suddenly seem within reach, and together, Ray and his violin take the world by storm. On the eve of the renowned and cutthroat Tchaikovsky Competition—the Olympics of classical music—the violin is stolen with a ransom note for five million dollars left in its place. Without it, Ray feels like he has lost a piece of himself. As the competition approaches, Ray must not only reclaim his precious violin but prove to himself—and the world—that no matter the outcome, there has always been a truly great musician within him.

32. City of the Dead by Jonathan Kellerman

Los Angeles is a city of sunlight, celebrity, and possibility. The L.A. often experienced by Homicide Lt. Detective Milo Sturgis and psychologist Alex Delaware, however, is a city of the dead. As the psychologist and the detective explore L.A.'s meanest streets, they peel back layer after layer of secrets and encounter a savage, psychologically twisted, almost unthinkable motive for violence and bloodshed.

31. The Maid by Nita Prose

Molly Gray is not like everyone else. She struggles with social skills and misreads the intentions of others. Her gran used to interpret the world for her, codifying it into simple rules that Molly could live by. Since Gran died a few months ago, Molly has been navigating life's complexities alone. She throws herself with gusto into her work as a hotel maid. Then, Molly's orderly life is upended the day she enters the suite of the infamous and wealthy Charles Black, only to find it in a state of disarray and Mr. Black dead in his bed. Before she knows what is happening, Molly's unusual demeanor has the police targeting her as their lead suspect.

30. Take Your Breath Away by Linwood Barclay

One weekend, while Andrew Mason was on a fishing trip, his wife, Brie, vanished without a trace. Now, six years later, Andy has finally put his life back together. He sold the house he once shared with Brie and moved away. Truth to tell, he was not sad to hear that the old place was razed and a new house built on the site. He is settled down with a new partner, Jayne, and life is good; however, Andy's peaceful world is about to shatter. One day, a woman shows up at his old address, screaming, "Where's my house? What's happened to my house?" Then, just as suddenly as she appeared, the woman—who bears a striking resemblance to Brie—is gone. Could Brie really be alive after all these years?

29. The Second Life of Mirielle West by Amanda Skenandore

Based on the true story of America's only leper colony, this book brings vividly to life the Louisiana institution known as Carville, where thousands of people were stripped of their civil rights, branded as lepers, and forcibly quarantined throughout the entire 20th century. For Mirielle West, a 1920's socialite married to a silent film star, the isolation and powerlessness of the Louisiana Leper Home is an unimaginable fall from her intoxicatingly chic life of bootlegged champagne and the star-studded parties of Hollywood's Golden Age. When a doctor notices a pale patch of skin on her hand, she is immediately branded a leper and carted hundreds of miles from home to Carville, taking a new name to spare her family and famous husband the shame that accompanies the disease. At first, she hopes her exile will be brief, but those sent to Carville are more prisoners than patients and their disease has no cure. Instead, she must find community and purpose within its walls, struggling to redefine her self-worth while fighting an unchosen fate.

28. The Ursulina by Brian Freeman

The mythical beast goes by many names. Bigfoot. Sasquatch. Yeti. In Black Wolf County, he is called the Ursulina. To Deputy Rebecca Colder, the beast is no myth. A serial killer has taken on the identity of the monster. With each body left behind, there is a chilling message written in blood: "I am the Ursulina." In this gripping follow-up novel to his bestseller *The Deep, Deep Snow*, Brian Freeman takes us on Rebecca's dark journey to reveal the truth about the Ursulina...a journey that ultimately leads to an excruciating choice that will change her life forever.

27. Women of the Copper Country by Mary Doria Russell

In July 1913, twenty-five-year-old Annie Clements had seen enough of the world to know that it was unfair. She has spent her whole life in the copper-mining town of Calumet, Michigan, where men risk their lives for meager salaries and had barely enough to put food on the table and clothes on their backs. The women labor in the houses of the elite and send their husbands and sons deep underground each day, dreading the fateful call of the company man telling them their loved ones are not coming home. When Annie decides to stand up for herself and the entire town of Calumet, nearly everyone believes she may have taken on more than she is prepared to handle. In Annie's hands lie the miners' fortunes and their health, her husband's wrath over her growing independence, and her own reputation as she faces the threat of prison and discovers a forbidden love. On her fierce quest for justice, Annie will discover just how much she is willing to sacrifice for her own independence and for the families of Calumet.

26. The Ways We Hide by Kristina McMorris

Raised amid the hardships of Michigan's Copper Country, Fenna Vos has learned to focus on her own survival, even now, with the Second World War raging in faraway countries. Though she performs onstage as the assistant to an unruly escape artist, behind the curtain she is the mastermind of their act. After all, her honed ability to control her surroundings and elude entrapments, physical or otherwise, reliably suppresses the traumas of her youth. For all her planning, however, Fenna fails to predict being called upon by British Intelligence. Tasked with creating escape tools to thwart the Germans, MI9 seeks those with specialized skills for a war nearing its breaking point. Fenna reluctantly joins the unconventional team as an inventor. When a test of her loyalty draws her deep into the fray, she discovers no mission is more treacherous than escaping one's past.

25. The Magnolia Palace by Fiona Davis

Eight months since losing her mother in the Spanish flu outbreak of 1919, twenty-one-year-old Lillian Carter's life has completely fallen apart. For the past six years, under the moniker Angelica, Lillian was one of the most sought-after artists' models in New York City, with statues based on her figure gracing landmarks from the Plaza Hotel to the Brooklyn Bridge. With her mother gone, a grieving Lillian is rudderless and desperate—the work has dried up and a looming scandal has left her entirely without a safe haven. So when she stumbles upon an employment opportunity at the Frick Mansion—a building that, ironically, bears her own visage—Lillian jumps at the chance. The longer she works as a private secretary to the imperious and demanding Helen Frick, the daughter and heiress of industrialist and art patron Henry Clay Frick, the more deeply her life gets intertwined with that of the family—pulling her into a tangled web of romantic trysts, stolen jewels, and family drama that runs so deep, the stakes just may be life or death.

24. Remember Me by Mario Escobar

Historians refer to the Spanish Civil War as one of the bloodiest wars of the twentieth century. In 1937, at Mexico's request and offer, nearly 500 children from Spain—remembered as Los Niños de Morelia—were relocated via ship to Mexico to escape the war's violence. These children traveled across the sea without their families and were expected to return at the war's end. No one could have foreseen another world war was on the way or that Franco's regime would prevent the children from coming home. These enduring conflicts trapped the children in a country far from their homeland; many never made it back.

23. The Ones We Leave Behind by Deanna Lynn Sletten

1955 – Anna Bergman Craine's life changes in an instant when she commits a crime of passion and is sentenced to life in prison. Leaving behind two young children, she is left alone in the world, never to hear from family or friends again. Decades later, she is set free, and finds she has a family that has chosen to forget her. What caused this beautiful, intelligent, young woman to commit such a drastic deed that would pull her away from everyone she loved?

2020 – Diane Martin is shocked to learn that not only is her maternal grandmother alive, but she has just been released after decades in prison. Against her aging mother's wishes, she visits the older woman and soon hears a tale of the events that led up to that tragic day in 1955. Diane realizes that her own life has mirrored that of her grandmother's tale.

22. Find Me by Alafair Burke

She calls herself Hope Miller, but she has no idea who she actually is. Fifteen years ago, she was found in a small New Jersey town thrown from an overturned vehicle, with no clue to her identity. Doctors assumed her amnesia was a temporary side effect of her injuries, but she never regained her memory. Hope eventually started a new life with a new name in a new town that welcomed her, yet always wondered what she may have left behind—or been running from. Now, fifteen years later, she is leaving New Jersey to start over once again. Then, Hope vanishes without a trace—the only lead a drop of blood found where she was last seen. Even more ominously, the blood matches a DNA sample with a connection to a notorious Kansas murderer.

21. Rock Paper Scissors by Alice Feeny

Things have been wrong with Mr. and Mrs. Wright for a long time. When Adam and Amelia win a weekend away to Scotland, it might be just what their marriage needs. Self-confessed workaholic and screenwriter Adam Wright has lived with face blindness his whole life. He cannot recognize friends or family or even his own wife. Every anniversary the couple exchange traditional gifts—paper, cotton, pottery, tin—and each year Adam's wife writes him a letter that she never lets him read. Until now. They both know this weekend will make or break their marriage, but they did not randomly win this trip. One of them is lying, and someone does not want them to live happily ever after.

20. The Golden Couple by Greer Hendricks

Wealthy Washington suburbanites Marissa and Matthew Bishop seem to have it all—until Marissa is unfaithful. Beneath their veneer of perfection is a relationship driven by work and a lack of intimacy. She wants to repair things for the sake of their eight-year-old son and because she loves her husband. Enter Avery Chambers. Avery is a therapist who lost her professional license. Still, it does not stop her from counseling those in crisis, though they have to adhere to her unorthodox methods. The Bishops are desperate. When they glide through Avery's door and Marissa reveals her infidelity, all three are set on a collision course because the biggest secrets in the room are still hidden, and it is no longer simply a marriage that is in danger.

19. The Tobacco Wives by Alele Myers

Maddie Sykes is a seamstress who has just arrived in Bright Leaf, North Carolina—the tobacco capital of the South—where her aunt has a thriving sewing business. After years of war rations and shortages, Bright Leaf is a prosperous wonderland. When a series of unexpected events thrusts Maddie into the role of lead dressmaker for the town's most influential women, she scrambles to produce their ornate gowns for the biggest party of the season. She soon learns that Bright Leaf is not quite the carefree paradise that it seems: A trail of misfortune follows many of the women, including substantial health problems. Although Maddie is quick to believe that this is a coincidence, she inadvertently uncovers evidence that suggests otherwise.

18. A Christmas Memory by Richard Paul Evans

It is 1967. For young Richard, it is a time of heartbreak and turmoil. Over the span of a few months, his brother, Mark, is killed in Vietnam; his father loses his job and moves the family from California to his grandmother's abandoned home in Utah; and his parents make the painful decision to separate. With uncertainty rattling every corner of his life, Richard does his best to remain strong—but when he is run down by bullies at his new school, he meets Mr. Foster, an elderly neighbor who chases off the bullies and invites Richard in for a cup of cocoa. Richard becomes fast friends with the wise, solitary man who inspires Richard's love for books and whose dog, Gollum, becomes his closest companion. As the holidays approach, the joy and light of Christmas seem unlikely to permeate the Evans home as things take a grim turn for the worse. Just when it seems like he has nothing left to lose, Richard is confronted by a startling revelation.

17. The Housekeeper by Joy Fielding

Jodi Bishop knows success. She is the breadwinner as a top-notch real estate agent. Her husband, Harrison, had big dreams, but now he is a middling writer who resents his wife's success. Jodi's father, Vic, now in his late seventies and retired, is a very controlling man. Things changed when his wife, Audrey, developed Parkinson's ten years ago, and Vic retired to devote himself to her care. While still reasonably spry and rakishly handsome, Vic is worn down by his wife's deteriorating condition. Exhausted from trying to balance her career, her family, and her parents' needs, Jodi starts interviewing housekeepers to help care for Audrey and Vic. She settles on Elyse Woodley, an energetic and attractive widow in her early sixties, who seems perfect for the job. While Vic is initially resistant, he soon warms to Elyse's sunny personality and engaging ways. She shuts Jodi out. Audrey's condition worsens—rapidly. Who is this woman suddenly wearing her mother's jewelry? What is she after? How far will she go to get it?

16. The Fire and the Ore by Olivia Hawker

1856. Three spirited wives in nineteenth-century Utah; one husband. Three women—once strangers—come together in unpredictable Utah Territory. Hopeful, desperate, and willful, they will allow nothing on earth or in heaven to stand in their way. Following the call of their newfound Mormon faith, Tamar Loader and her family weather a brutal pilgrimage from England to Utah, where Tamar is united with her destined husband, Thomas Ricks. Clinging to a promise for the future, she abides an unexpected surprise: Thomas is already wedded to one woman—Tabitha, a local healer—and betrothed to still another. Orphaned by tragedy and stranded in the Salt Lake Valley, Jane Shupe struggles to provide for herself and her younger sister. She is no member of the Mormon migration, yet Jane agrees to marry Thomas. Out of necessity, with no love lost, she too must bear the trials of a sister-wife. When the US Army's invasion brings the rebellious Mormon community to heel, Tamar, Jane, and Tabitha are forced to retreat into the hostile desert wilderness with little in common but the same man—and the resolve to keep themselves and their children alive.

15. Lost Girls of Willowbrook by Ellen Marie Wiseman

Sage Winters always knew her sister was a little “different,” even though they were identical twins. They loved the same things and shared a deep understanding, but Rosemary—awake to every emotion, easily moved to joy or tears—seemed to need more protection from the world. Six years after Rosemary's death from pneumonia, Sage, now sixteen, still misses her deeply. Their mother perished in a car crash, and Sage's stepfather, Alan, resents being burdened by a responsibility he never wanted. Despite living as near strangers in their Staten Island apartment, Sage is stunned to discover that Alan has kept a shocking secret: Rosemary did not die. She was committed to Willowbrook State School and has lingered there until just a few days ago when she went missing. Sage knows little about Willowbrook. It has always been a place shrouded by rumor and mystery, a place local parents threaten to send misbehaving kids. With no idea what to expect, Sage secretly sets out for Willowbrook, determined to find Rosemary. What she learns, once she steps through its doors and is mistakenly believed to be her sister, will change her life in ways she never could have imagined.

14. The German Wife by Kelly Rimmer

Berlin, 1930. When a wave of change sweeps a radical political party to power, Sofie von Meyer Rhodes's academic husband benefits from the ambitions of its newly elected chancellor. Although Sofie and Jürgen do not share the social views growing popular in Hitler's Germany, Jürgen's position with its burgeoning rocket program changes their diminishing fortunes for the better. Sofie watches helplessly as her beloved Berlin begins to transform, forcing her to consider what they must sacrifice morally for their young family's security and what the price for their neutrality will be. Twenty years later, Jürgen is one of the many German scientists offered pardons for their part in the war and taken to America to work for its fledgling space program. For Sofie, this is the chance to exorcise the ghosts that have followed her across the ocean and make a fresh start in her adopted country. Her neighbors are not as welcoming or as understanding as she had hoped. When scandalous rumors about the Rhodes family's affiliation with Hitler's regime spreads, idle gossip turns to bitter rage, and the act of violence that results will tear apart Sofie's community and her family before the truth is finally revealed.

13. The Good Son by Jacquelyn Mitchard

Stefan was just seventeen when he went to prison for the drug-fueled murder of his girlfriend, Belinda. Three years later, he is released to a world that refuses to let him move on. Belinda's mother, once Thea's good friend, galvanizes the community to rally against him to protest in her daughter's memory. The media paints Stefan as a symbol of white privilege and indifferent justice. Neighbors, employers, even some members of Thea's own family turn away. Meanwhile, Thea struggles to understand her son. At times, he is still the sweet boy he has always been; at others, he is a young man tormented by guilt and almost broken by his time in prison. As his efforts to make amends meet escalating resistance and threats, Thea suspects more forces are at play than just community outrage. If there is so much she never knew about her own son, what other secrets has she yet to uncover—especially about the night Belinda died?

12. The Match by Harlan Coben (Read "The Boy From the Woods" first.)

Wilde has grown up knowing nothing of his family and even less about his own identity. All he knows is that, as a young child, he was found living a feral existence in the Ramapo mountains of New Jersey. He became known simply as Wilde, the boy from the woods. Now, Wilde has had a hit on the DNA website he has been researching: a 100% match with his father. They meet up, and Wilde soon realizes that his father does not even know he had a son and is as mystified as Wilde is by his existence. Undaunted, Wilde continues his research for his family on DNA websites where he becomes caught up in a secret group committed to exposing anonymous trolls. Then, one by one, members of this group start to die, and it soon becomes clear that a serial killer is targeting this secret community and that his next victim might be Wilde himself.

11. Debra Webb Trilogy

(1) Trust No One by Debra Webb

It is the worst possible time for Detective Kerri Devlin to be involved in an all-consuming double-homicide case. She is locked in a bitter struggle with her ex-husband and teenage daughter, and her reckless new partner (Falco) is anything but trustworthy. Still, she has a job to do: there is a killer at large, and a pregnant woman has gone missing. Just as answers come into view, the case twists, expands, and slithers into Devlin's personal life. There is a much more sinister game at work, one she does not even know she is playing.

(2) Gone Too Far by Debra Webb

As veteran detectives of the Birmingham Police Department, Devlin and Falco have seen it all. So when the city's new hotshot deputy district attorney turns up dead as part of a double homicide, the partners immediately get to work. This is no ordinary case; Devlin and Falco quickly link the murdered DDA to one of their own: former BPD detective Sadie Cross. Sadie's fractured memory is yet another puzzle to decipher, as she only recalls bits and pieces of her violent past...a past that may hold clues to the motive behind the murders.

(3) Can't Go Back by Debra Webb

Detectives Devlin and Falco arrive at the scene of a double homicide to discover that nothing makes sense. A woman and her child are dead, and though the husband says he killed them, the evidence says otherwise. Why would a man confess to unspeakable murders he did not commit? What starts as an open-and-shut case explodes into a web of new leads. Devlin and Falco get to work tracking down every single one—including a disturbing connection between the murders and Falco's dark past. Falco knows the incident from eight years ago will jeopardize the partnership he has built with Devlin, both on and off the job.

10. The Librarian of Saint-Malo by Mario Escobar

Saint-Malo, France: August 1939. Jocelyn and Antoine are childhood sweethearts, but just after they marry, Antoine is drafted to fight against Germany. As World War II rages, Jocelyn uses her position as a librarian in her town of Saint-Malo to comfort and encourage her community with books. Jocelyn begins to write secret letters smuggled to a famous Parisian author, telling her story in the hope that it will someday reach the outside world. France falls and the Nazis occupy Jocelyn's town, turning it into a fortress. The townspeople try passive resistance, but the German commander ruthlessly begins to destroy part of the city's libraries. Books deemed unsuitable by the Nazis are burnt or stolen, and priceless knowledge is lost. Risking arrest and even her life, Jocelyn manages to hide some of the books while desperately waiting to receive news from Antoine, now a prisoner in a German camp. Jocelyn's mission unfolds in her letters: to protect the people of Saint-Malo and the books they hold so dear.

9. The Second Husband by Kate White

Recovering from the unsolved murder of her first husband, Derrick, Emma Hawke has built a new life with Tom, a handsome, successful, and loving widower who finally makes her feel safe again. Then, one day a police detective shows up at their house on the Connecticut shore, asking questions about Derrick's death. Emma was sure she had been cleared in the days after the tragedy. So why is law enforcement taking another look now and questioning the timing of her relationship with Tom? She had not even met him until after Derrick's death. Emma is shocked to discover that, in fact, she and her second husband attended the same business dinner two months before Derrick's murder. Did Tom, unbeknownst to Emma, spot her there? Could he have set his sights on her and devised a plan to make her his wife?

8. Dovetails in the Tall Grass by Samantha Specks

As war overtakes the frontier, Emma's family farmstead is attacked by Dakota-Sioux warriors. On that same prairie, Oenikika desperately tries to hold on to her calling as a healer and follow the orders of her father, Chief Little Crow. When the war is over and revenge-fueled war trials begin, each young woman is faced with an impossible choice. In a swiftly changing world, both Emma and Oenikika must look deep within and fight for the truth of their convictions—even as horror and injustice unfolds all around them. Inspired by the true story of the thirty-eight Dakota-Sioux men hanged in Minnesota in 1862—the largest mass execution in US history—Dovetails in the Tall Grass is a powerful tale of two young women connected by the fate of one man.

7. The Life She was Given by Ellen Marie Wiseman

On a summer evening in 1931, Lilly Blackwood glimpses circus lights from the grimy window of her attic bedroom. Lilly is not allowed to explore the meadows around Blackwood Manor. She has never even ventured beyond her narrow room. Momma insists it is for Lilly's own protection, as people would be afraid if they saw her. On this unforgettable night, Lilly is taken outside for the first time and sold to the circus sideshow. Barlow Brothers' Circus is just another prison for Lilly, but in this brutal world, Lilly discovers strength, friendship, and a rare affinity for animals. Soon, Lilly is no longer a sideshow spectacle but the biggest attraction...until tragedy and cruelty collide. More than two decades later, nineteen-year-old Julia Blackwood has inherited her parents' estate and horse farm. For Julia, home was an unhappy place full of strict rules and forbidden rooms, and she hopes that returning might erase those painful memories. Instead, she becomes immersed in a mystery involving a hidden attic room and photos of circus scenes featuring a striking young girl. It will fall to Julia to learn the truth about Lilly's fate and her family's shocking betrayal and find a way to make Blackwood Manor into a place of healing at last.

6. The Detective Max Rupert Series (Books 1-5) by Allen Eskens

This is my favorite new series author of 2022. Start with these titles; then read his other ones listed under #5.

(1) The Life We Bury by Allen Eskens

College student Joe Talbert's writing assignment for an English class is to interview a stranger and write a brief biography of the person. With deadlines looming, Joe heads to a nearby nursing home to find a willing subject. There he meets Carl Iverson, a dying Vietnam veteran and convicted murderer. With only a few months to live, Iverson has been medically paroled to a nursing home, after spending thirty years in prison for the crimes of rape and murder.

(2) The Guise of Another by Allen Eskens

Who was James Putnam? Answering that question may mean salvation for Alexander Rupert, a Minnesota detective whose life is in a serious downward spiral. A Medal of Valor winner, Alexander is now under subpoena by a grand jury on suspicion of corruption. He has been reassigned to the Frauds Unit, where he is shunned by his fellow detectives, and he fears his status-seeking wife may be having an affair. When he happens across a complex case of identity theft, Alexander sees an opportunity to rehabilitate his tattered reputation. The case explodes into far more than he could have expected, putting him in the path of trained assassin Drago Basta, a veteran of the Balkan wars who has been searching for "James Putnam" for years. As his life spins out of control, Alexander's last hope may be his older brother, Max, a fellow police detective who steps in to try to save his brother from the carnage his investigation has let loose.

(3) The Heavens May Fall by Allen Eskens

Detective Max Rupert and attorney Boady Sanden's friendship is being pushed to the breaking point. Max is convinced that Jennavieve Pruitt was killed by her husband; Ben Boady is equally convinced that Ben, his client, is innocent. As the case unfolds, the two are forced to confront their own personal demons. Max is still struggling with the death of his wife, and the Pruitt case stirs up old memories. Boady has not taken on a defense case since the death of an innocent client, a man Boady believes he could have saved but did not. Now he is back in court, with student Lila Nash at his side, and he is determined to redeem himself for having failed in the past. Vividly told from two opposing perspectives, the truth about the stunning death of Jennavieve Pruitt remains a mystery until the very end.

(4) The Deep Dark Descending by Allen Eskens

A homicide detective hunts down his wife's killers while struggling between his thirst for revenge and a twinge of conscience forbidding him to take the law into his own hands. Homicide Detective Max Rupert never fully accepted his wife's death, even when he believed that a reckless hit-and-run driver was to blame. Haunted by memories both beautiful and painful, he is plagued by feelings of unfinished business. When Max learns that, in fact, Jenni was murdered, he must come to terms with this new information. Struggling to balance his impulses as a vengeful husband with his obligations as a law enforcement officer, Max devotes himself to relentlessly hunting down those responsible. For most of his life, he has thought of himself as a decent man. Now, he is so consumed with thoughts of retribution that he finds himself questioning who he is and what he stands for. On a frozen lake at the US-Canadian border, he wrestles with decisions that could change his life forever, as his rage threatens to turn him into the kind of person he has spent his entire career bringing to justice.

(5) Shadows We Hide by Allen Eskens

Joe Talbert, Jr. has never once met his namesake. Now out of college, working as a cub reporter for the Associated Press in Minneapolis, he stumbles across a story describing the murder of a man named Joseph Talbert in a small town in southern Minnesota. Full of curiosity about whether this man might be his father, Joe is shocked to find that none of the town's residents have much to say about the dead man other than that his death was long overdue. Joe discovers that the dead man was a loathsome lowlife who cheated his neighbors, threatened his daughter, and squandered his wife's inheritance after she, too, passed away—an inheritance that may now be Joe's.

5. Nothing More Dangerous, The Stolen Hours, Forsaken Country by Allen Eskens (stand-alones)

Nothing More Dangerous: After fifteen years of growing up in the Ozark hills with his widowed mother, high-school freshman Boady Sanden is beyond ready to move on. He dreams of glass towers and cityscapes, driven by his desire to be anywhere other than Jessup, Missouri. The new kid at St. Ignatius High School, if he is not being pushed around, he is being completely ignored. Then, Thomas Elgin moves in across the road, and Boady's life begins to twist and turn. Coming to know the Elgins, a black family settling into a community where notions of "us" and "them" carry the weight of history, forces Boady to rethink his understanding of the world he has taken for granted.

The Stolen Hours: Lila Nash is on the verge of landing her dream job—working as a prosecutor under the Hennepin County Attorney—and has settled into a happy life with her boyfriend, Joe Talbert. When a woman is pulled from the Mississippi River, barely alive, things in the office take a personal turn. The police believe the woman's assailant is local photographer Gavin Spenser, but the case quickly flounders as the evidence wears thin. The more determined Lila is to put Gavin behind bars, the more elusive justice becomes. Battling a vindictive new boss and haunted by the ghosts of her own unspeakable attack, which she has kept a dark secret for eight long years, Lila knows the clock is ticking down.

Forsaken Country: Max Rupert has left his position as a Minneapolis homicide detective to live in solitude. Mourning the tragic death of his wife, he is also racked by guilt—he alone knows what happened to her killer. Then, the former local sheriff, Lyle Voight, arrives with a desperate plea: Lyle's daughter, Sandy, and his six-year-old grandson, Pip, have disappeared. Lyle's certain Sandy's ex-husband Reed is behind it, but the new sheriff is refusing to investigate. When Max reluctantly looks into their disappearance, he becomes convinced something has gone very wrong.

4. The Overnight Guest by Heather Gudenkauf

True crime writer Wylie Lark does not mind being snowed in at the isolated farmhouse where she has retreated to write her new book. It would be perfect, if not for the fact that decades earlier, at this very house, two people were murdered in cold blood and a girl disappeared without a trace. As the storm worsens, Wylie finds herself trapped inside the house, haunted by the secrets contained within its walls and haunted by secrets of her own. Then, she discovers a small child in the snow just outside. After bringing the child inside for warmth and safety, she begins to search for answers. Soon, it becomes clear that the farmhouse is not as isolated as she thought, and someone is willing to do anything to find them.

3. One Step Too Far by Lisa Gardner

Enjoy a thrilling new novel that sends Frankie Elkin into the woods in search of a lost man—and the shocking truth about why he went missing in the first place. Elkin, who readers first met in *Before She Disappeared*, learns of a young man who has gone missing in a national forest. Law enforcement has abandoned the search, but a crew of people led by the young man's father are still looking. Sensing a father's desperation, Frankie agrees to help but soon sees that a missing person is not all that is wrong here. When more people start to vanish, Elkin realizes she is up against something very dark—and she is running out of time.

2. What Happened to the Bennetts? by Lisa Scottoline

Jason Bennett is a suburban dad who owns a court-reporting business, but one night, his life takes a horrific turn. He is driving his family home after his daughter's lacrosse game when a pickup truck begins tailgating them. Suddenly, two men jump from the pickup and pull guns on Jason, demanding the car. A horrific flash of violence changes his life forever. Later that awful night, Jason and his family receive a visit from the FBI. The agents tell them that the carjackers were members of a dangerous drug-trafficking organization and now Jason and his family are in danger. The agents advise the Bennetts to enter the witness protection program right away, and they have no choice but to agree. Taken from all they know, trapped in an unfamiliar life, the Bennetts begin to fall apart at the seams.

AND THE #1 BOOK FOR 2022 IS...

1. The Last House on the Street by Diane Chamberlain



When Kayla Carter's husband dies in an accident while building their dream house, she knows she has to stay strong for their four-year-old daughter. The trophy home in Shadow Ridge Estates, a new development in sleepy Round Hill, North Carolina, will always hold tragic memories. When she is confronted by an odd, older woman telling her not to move in, she almost agrees. It is clear this woman has some kind of connection to the area...and a connection to Kayla herself. Kayla's elderly new neighbor, Ellie Hockley, is more welcoming, but it is apparent she, too, has secrets that stretch back almost fifty years. Is Ellie on a quest to right the wrongs of the past? Does the house at the end of the street hold the key? Told in dual time periods, *The Last House on the Street* is a novel of shocking prejudice and violence, forbidden love, the search for justice, and the tangled vines of two families.