

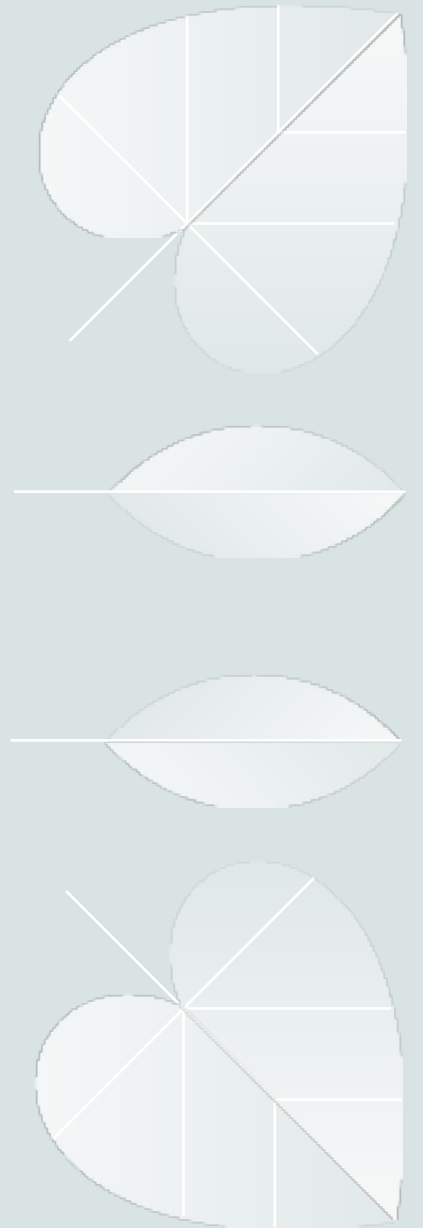
Mystery Genres Explained

May 1, 2024



Fictional Mystery

- A genre of literature whose stories focus on a puzzling crime, situation, or circumstance that needs to be solved. The term comes from the Latin *mysterium*, meaning “a secret thing.”
- Mystery novels feature stories in which the protagonist investigates a crime or unusual circumstance, usually but not always murder. They do so by interviewing suspects or witnesses and reviewing evidence, like the scene of the crime or items left behind by the culprit.
- The sleuth could be a professional detective, or they could be an amateur that uses seemingly unrelated skills from their personal or work lives to solve crimes.

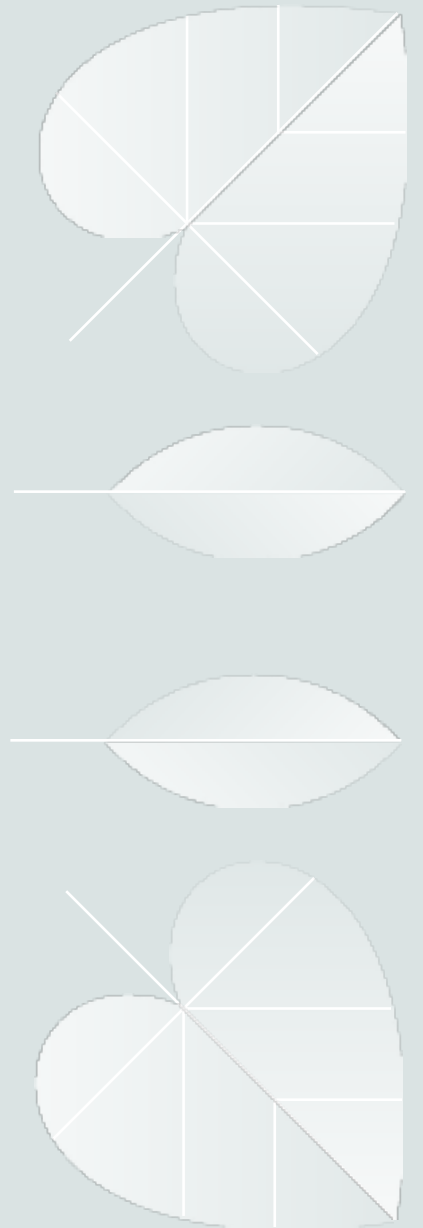


Some of the Many Mystery **Themes**

- Cozy
- Gothic
- Holidays
- Humor
- Paranormal
- Pets
- Romantic
- Sci-Fi
- Spies
- True Crime

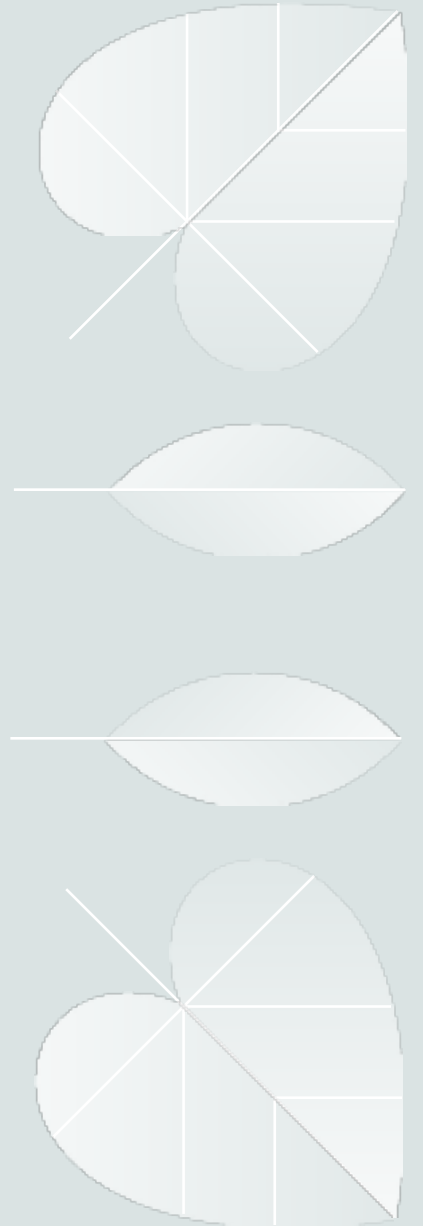
Mystery or Thriller?

A traditional **mystery** novel follows a detective of some sort, either amateur or professional, while they attempt to solve a crime. The reader usually follows the detective, discovering clues along with the characters. Mystery is riddled with questions, unclear villain, unclear motives, secrets, and a page-by-page discovery. The detectives themselves are not usually in any real danger from the antagonist, and are often completely disconnected from the crime.



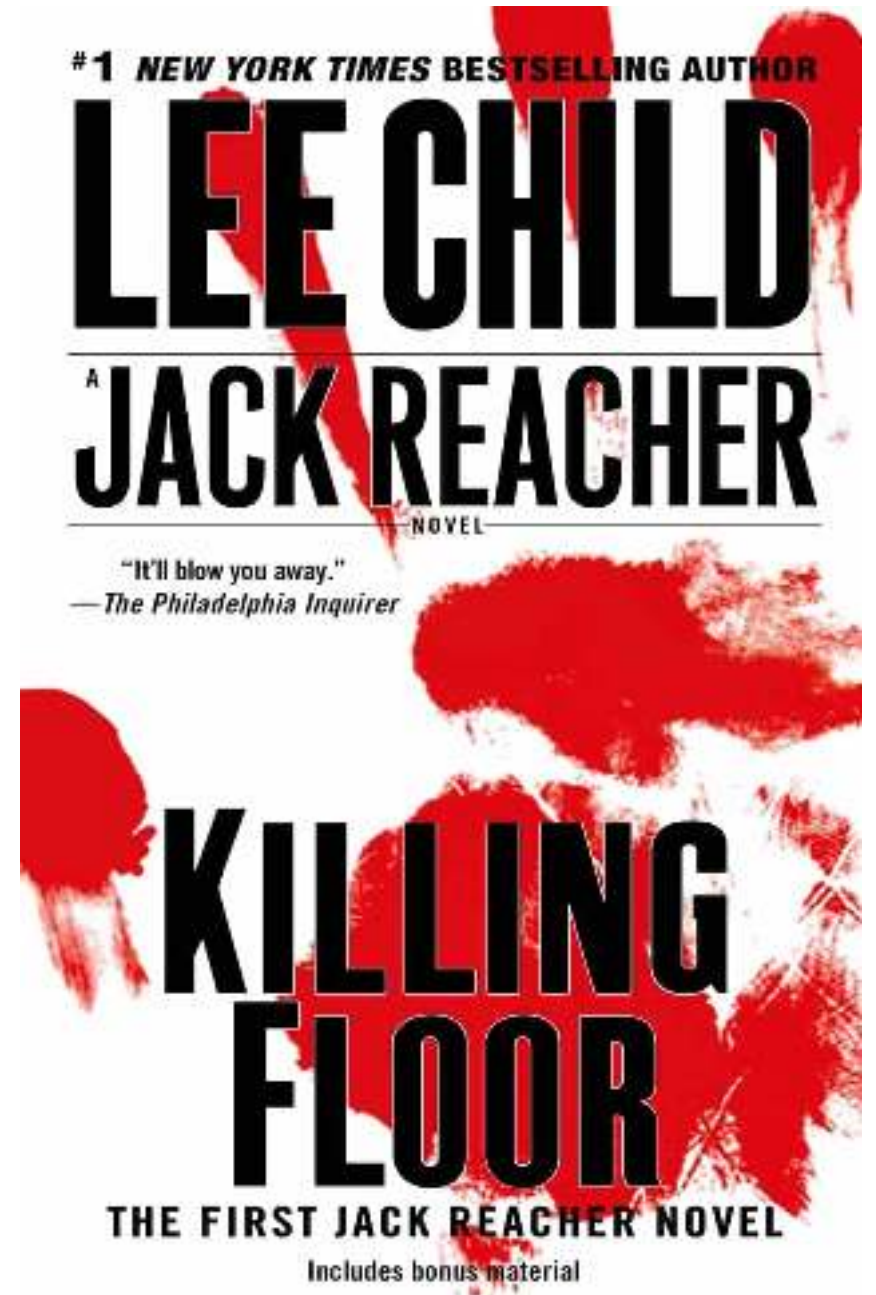
Thriller / Suspense

Thrillers take the basic tenets of a mystery novel and add an element of danger to the protagonist, who may or may not be a detective in the traditional sense. The action is high-octane and fast-paced. Often this sub-genre's heroes are not trained detectives but do have some specialized knowledge.



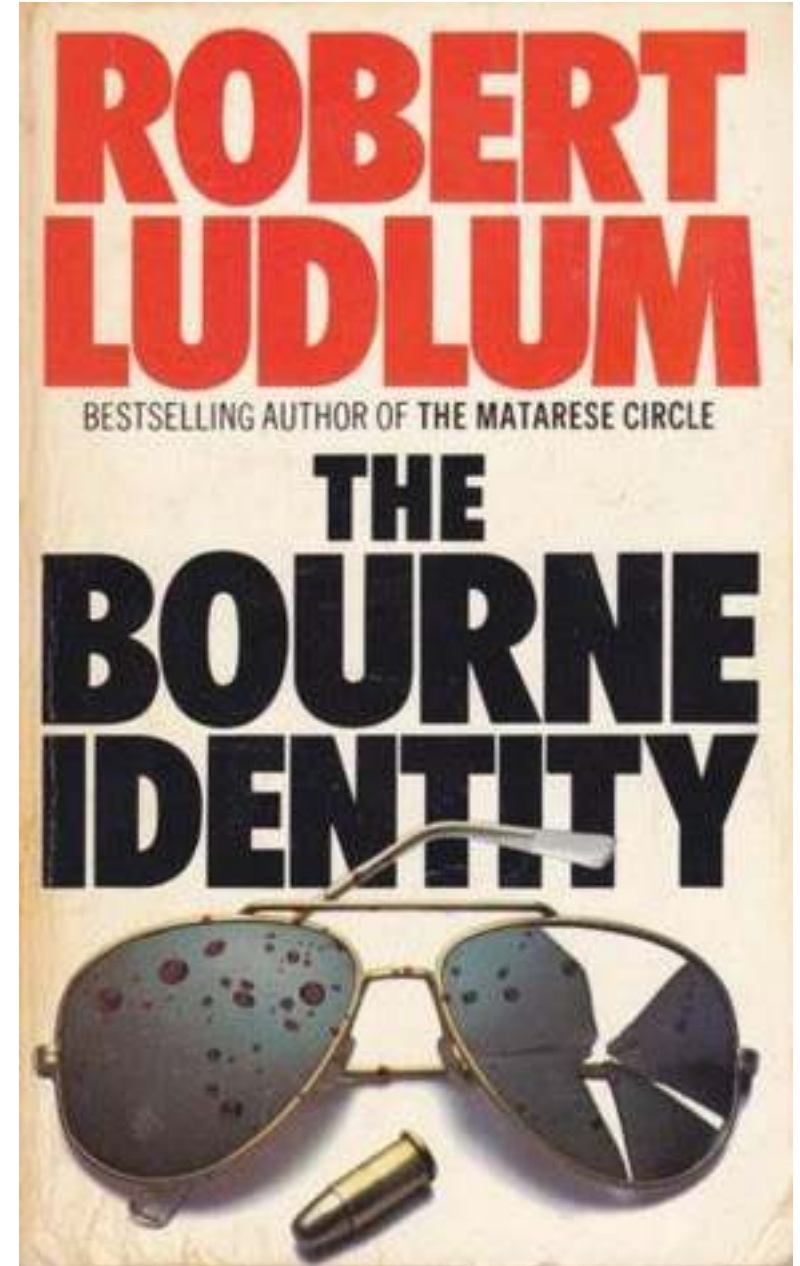


The Killing Floor by
Lee Child
(Jack Reacher)



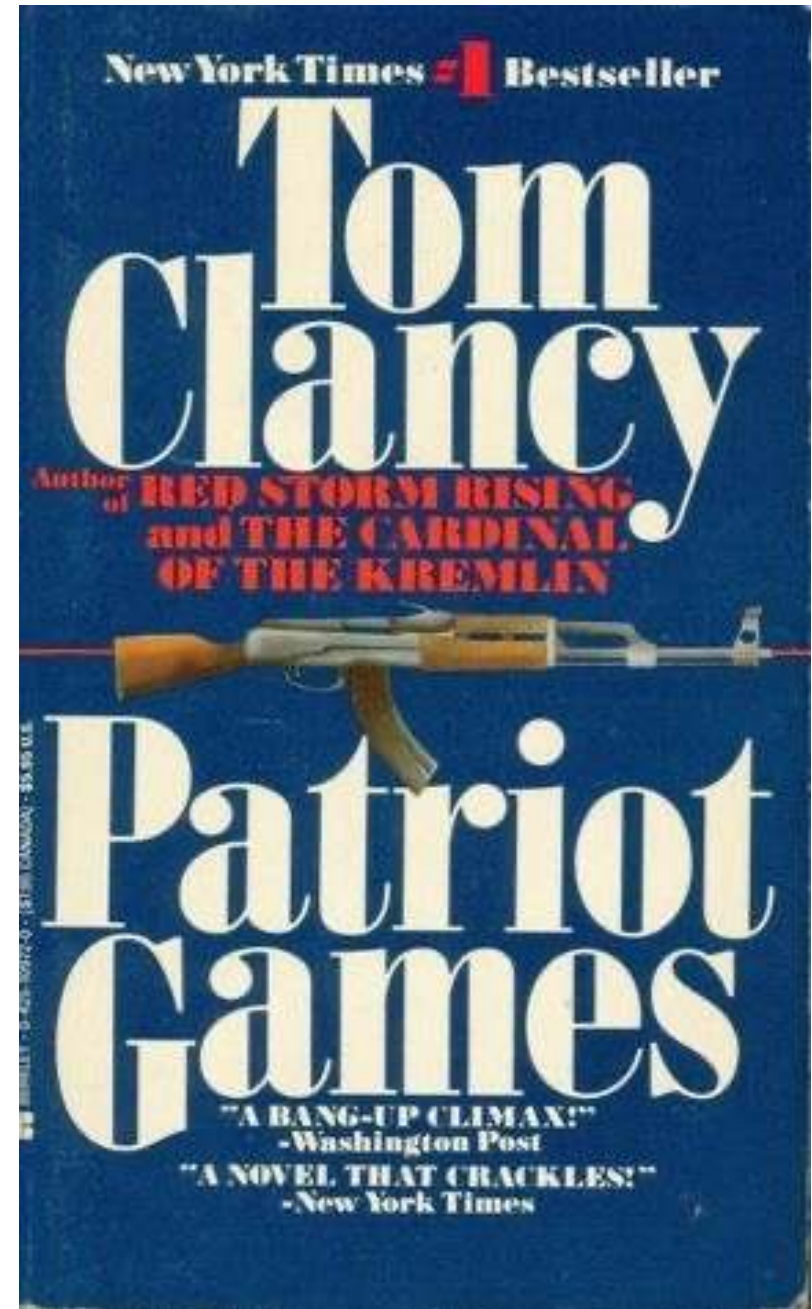


The Bourne Identity
by Robert Ludlum
(Jason Bourne)





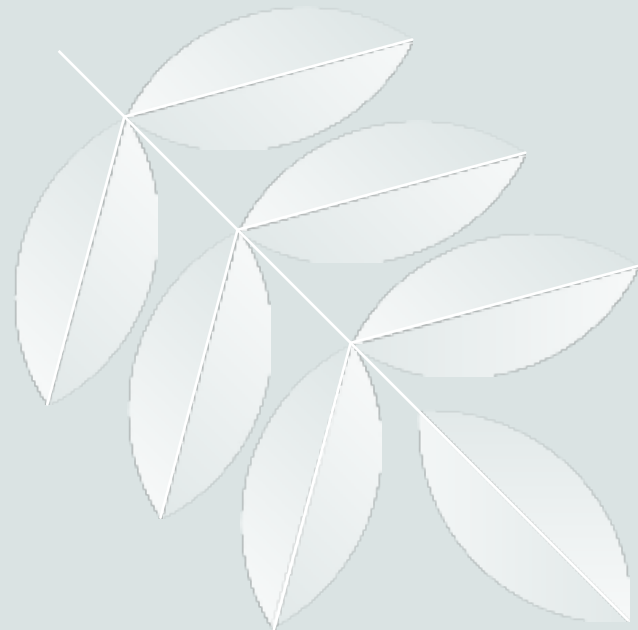
Patriot Games by
Tom Clancy
(Jack Ryan)





Classical or Traditional Mysteries

In these mysteries there is a crime committed, usually a murder, in a closed social setting. For example, a small village, university, or club. The murder is solved by a professional or amateur detective by asking questions and finding clues. The murder is solved and the murderer caught by the end of the story.



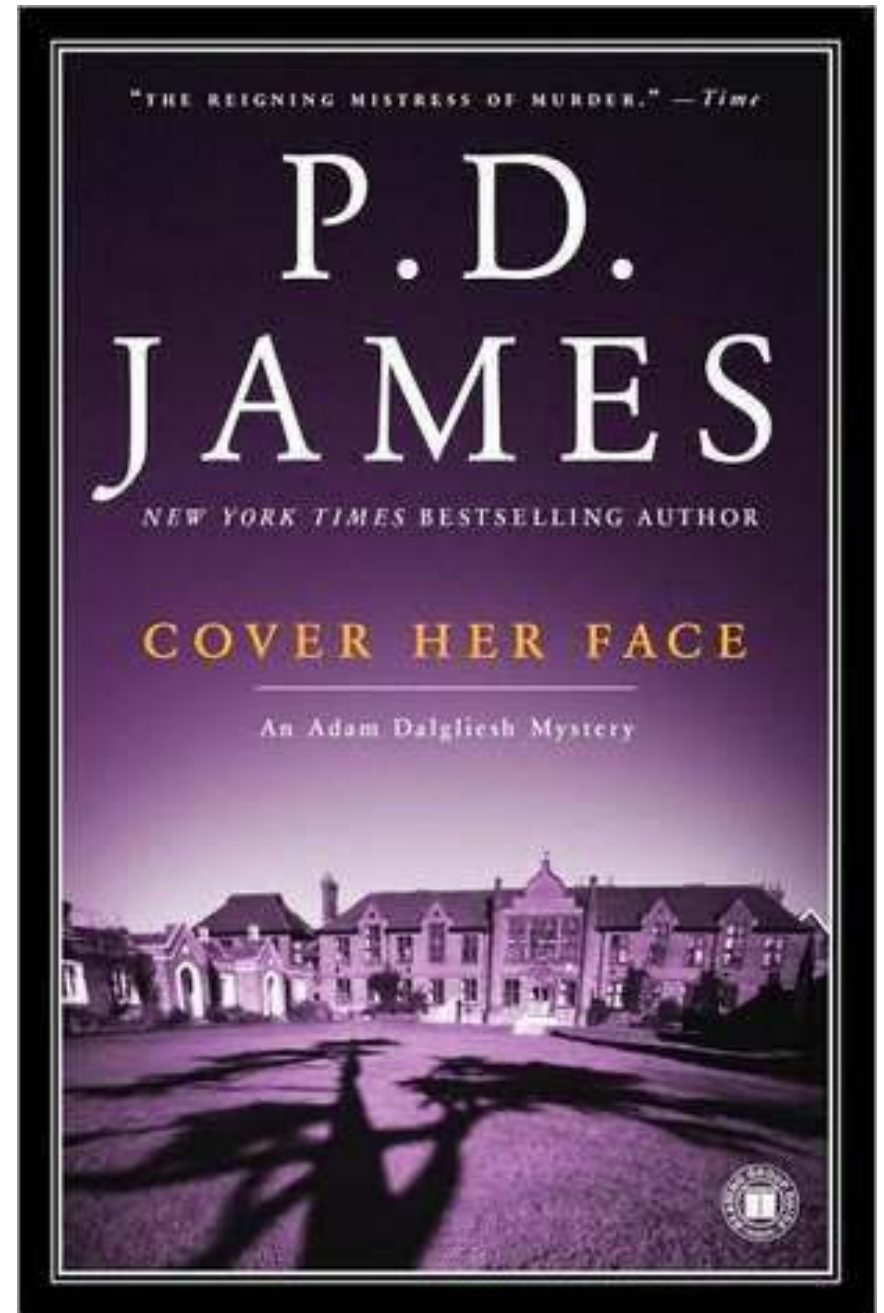


The 13 Problems by
Agatha Christie
(Miss Marple)





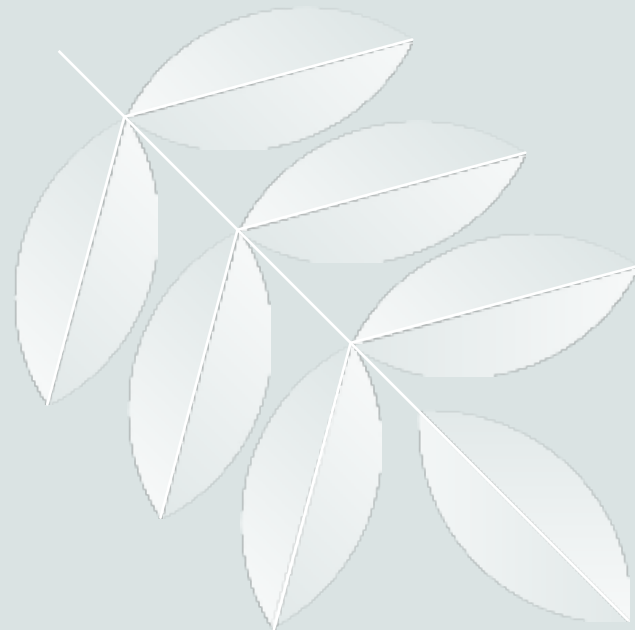
Cover Her Face by
P.D. James
(Adam Dalgliesh)





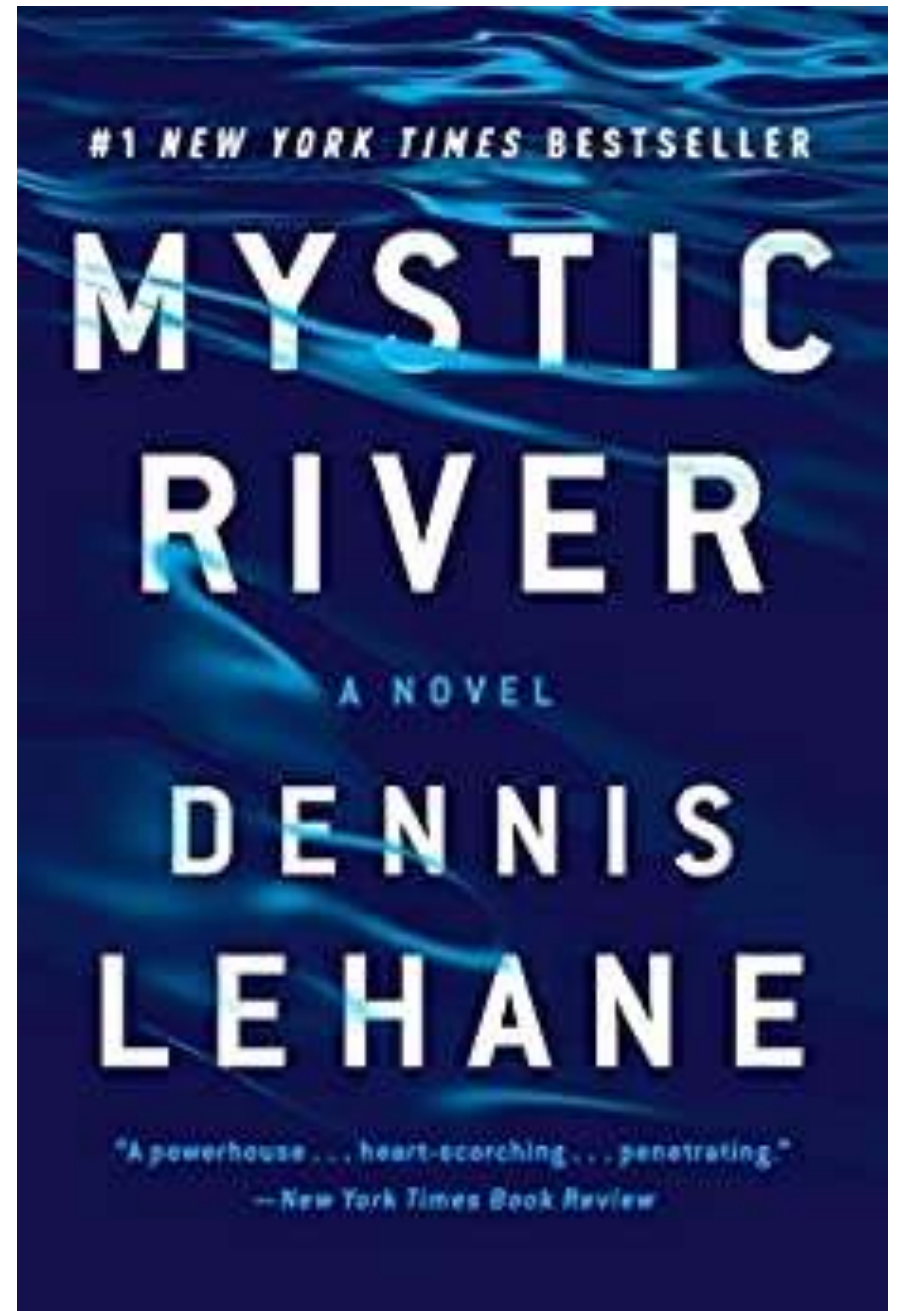
Police Procedurals

These are mysteries that focus on the police investigation and follow a police detective and the steps they take to solve a crime from discovery to arrest.



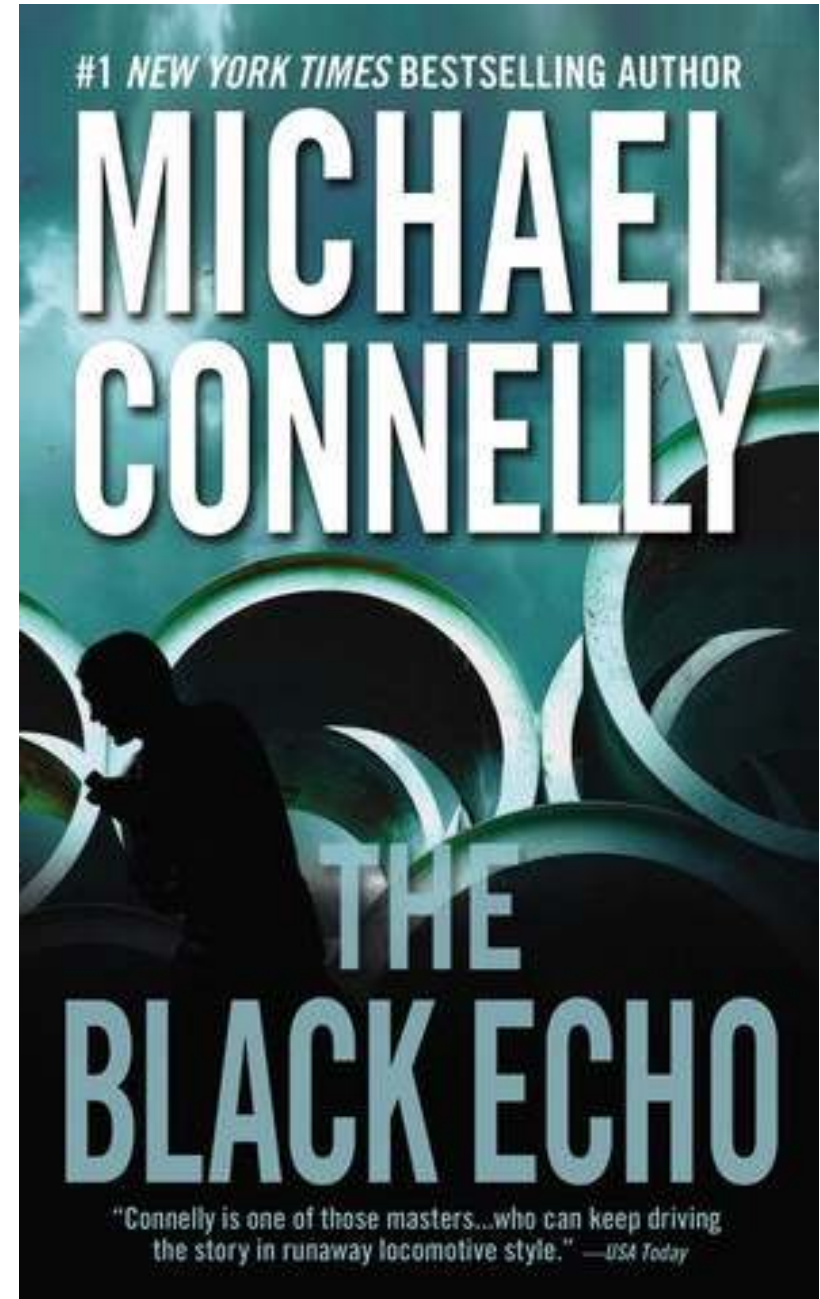


Mystic River by
Dennis Lehane



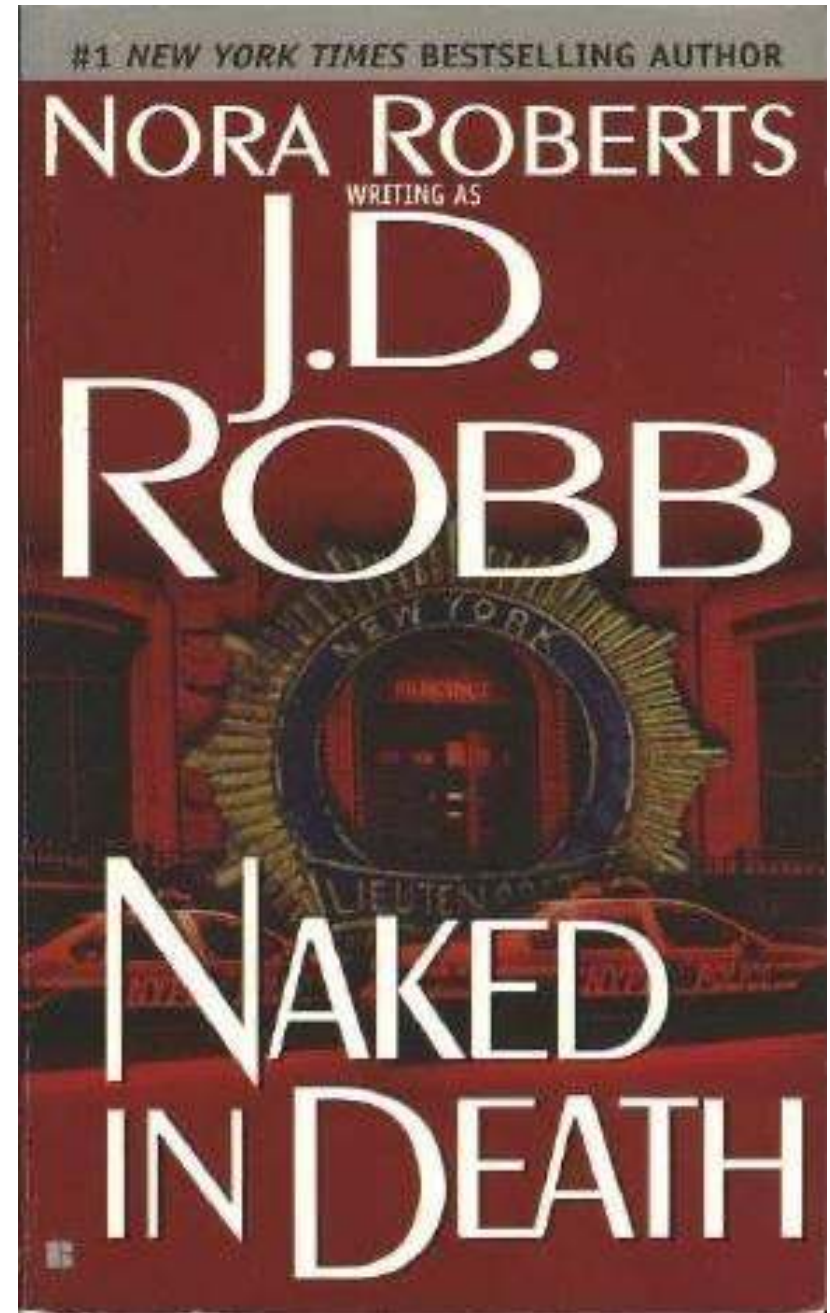


The Black Echo by
Michael Connelly
(Harry Bosch)





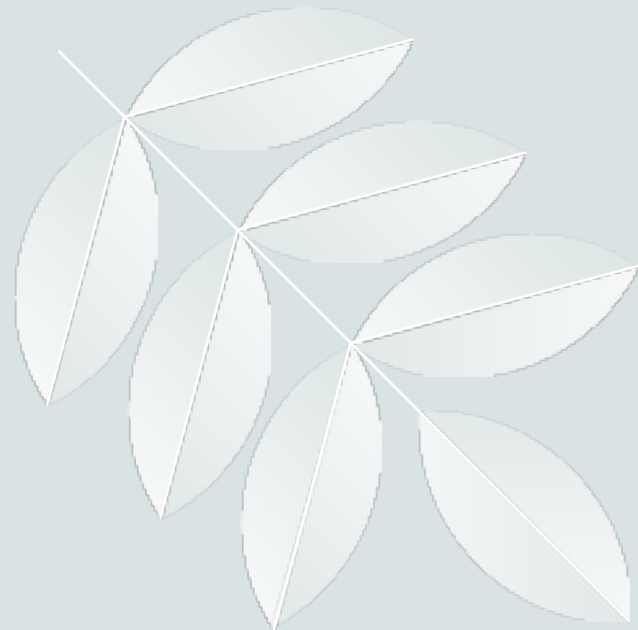
Naked in Death by
J.D. Robb
(Eve Dallas)





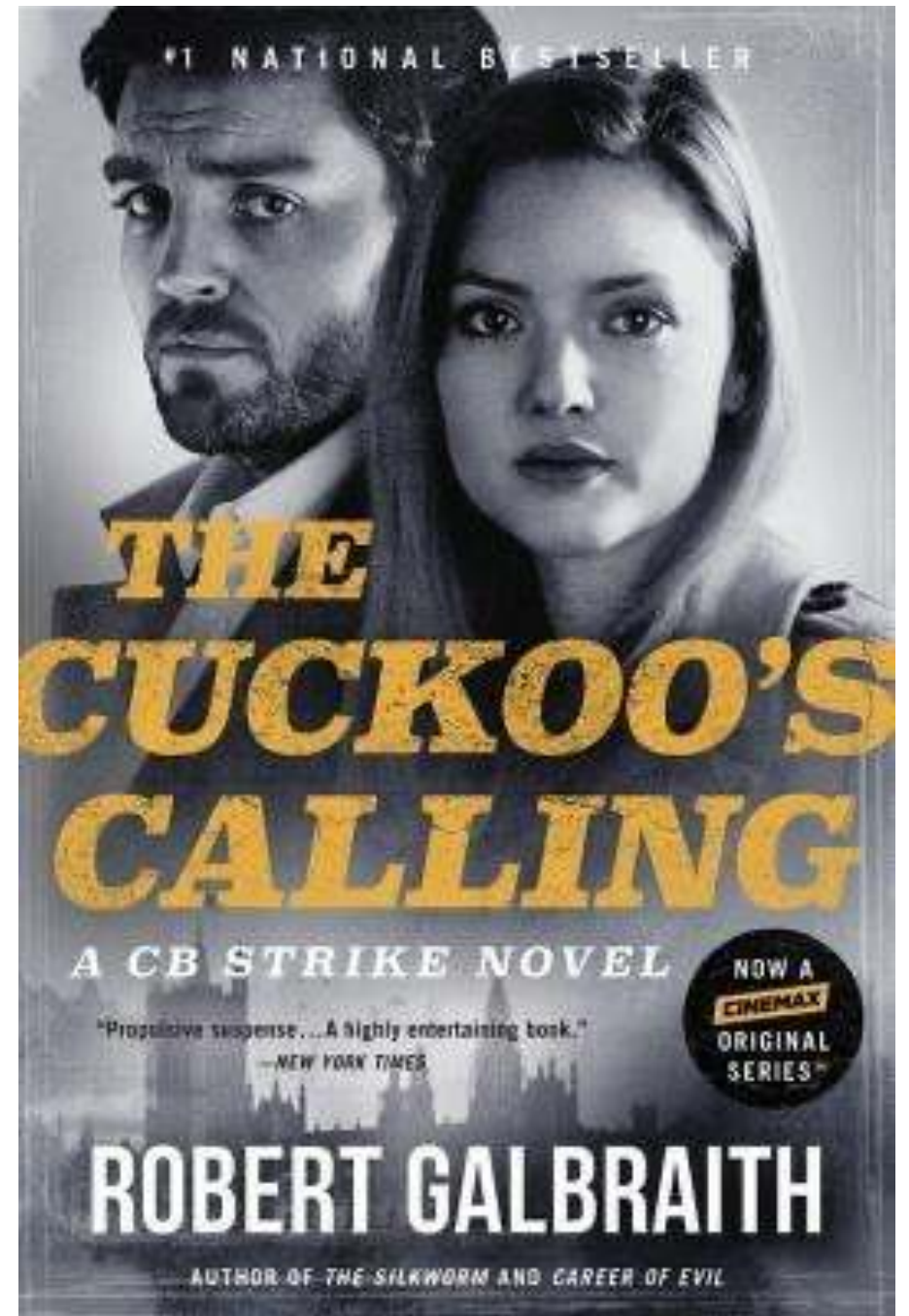
Gumshoe/Private Detective Mysteries

Novels in this category focus on the professional investigator. There are no amateurs here. He or she is tough, experienced, and often an ex-cop or ex-military.



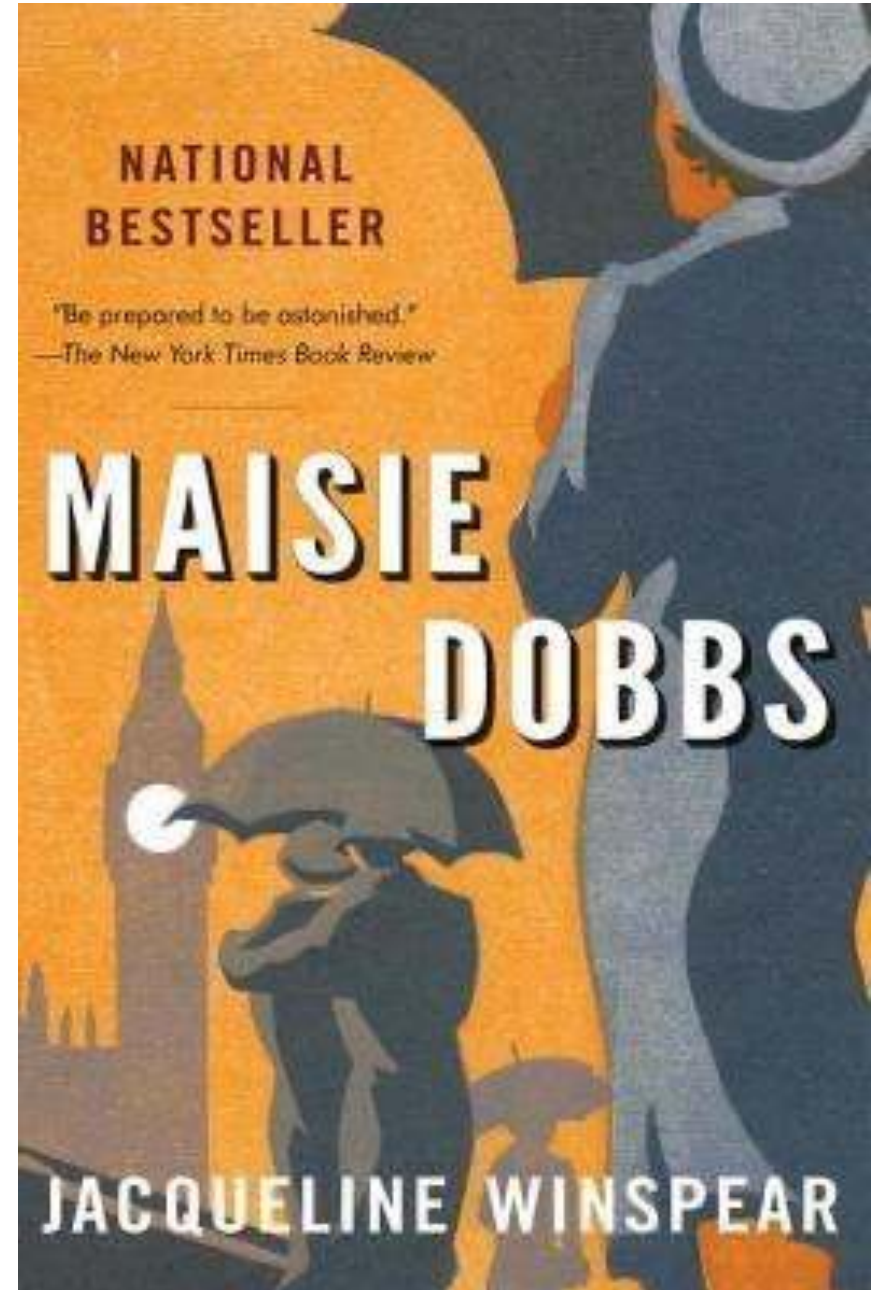


The Cuckoo's Calling
by Robert Galbraith
(Cormoran Strike)



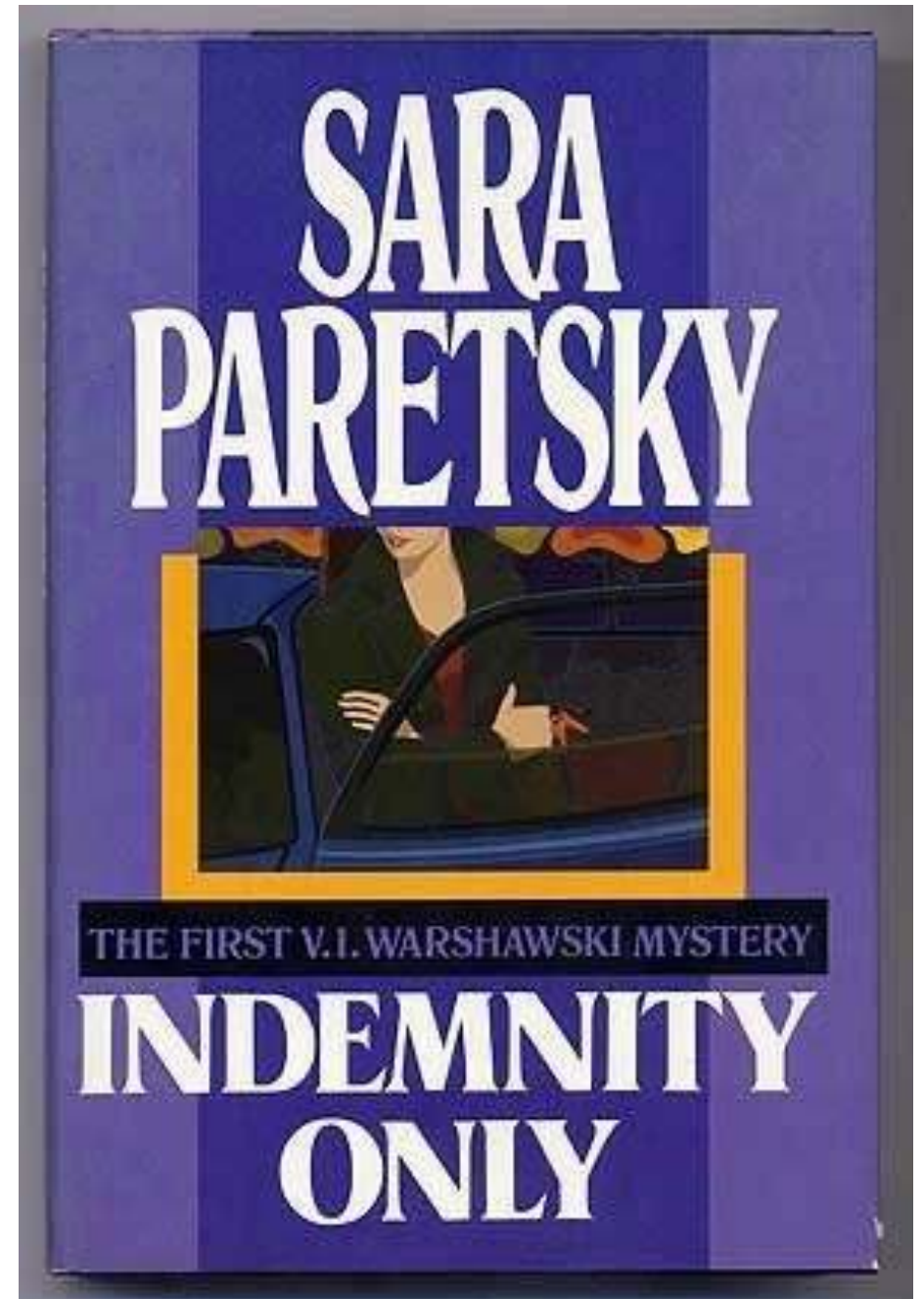


Masie Dobbs by
Jacqueline Winspear





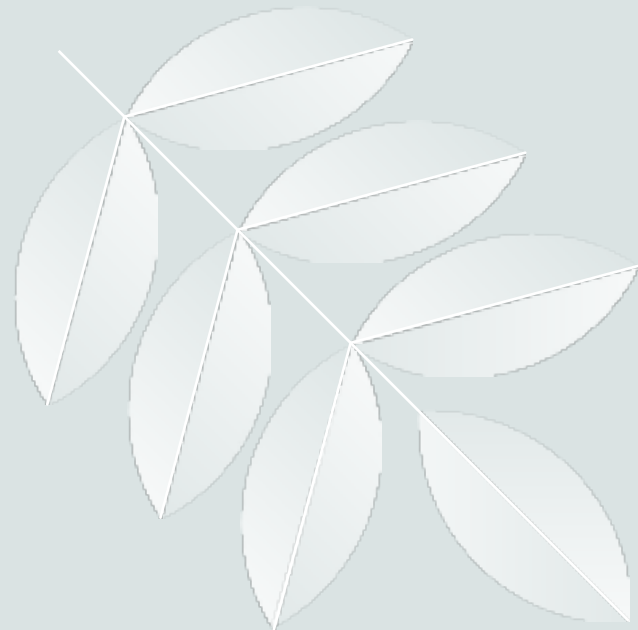
Indemnity Only by
Sara Paretsky
(V.I. Warshawski)





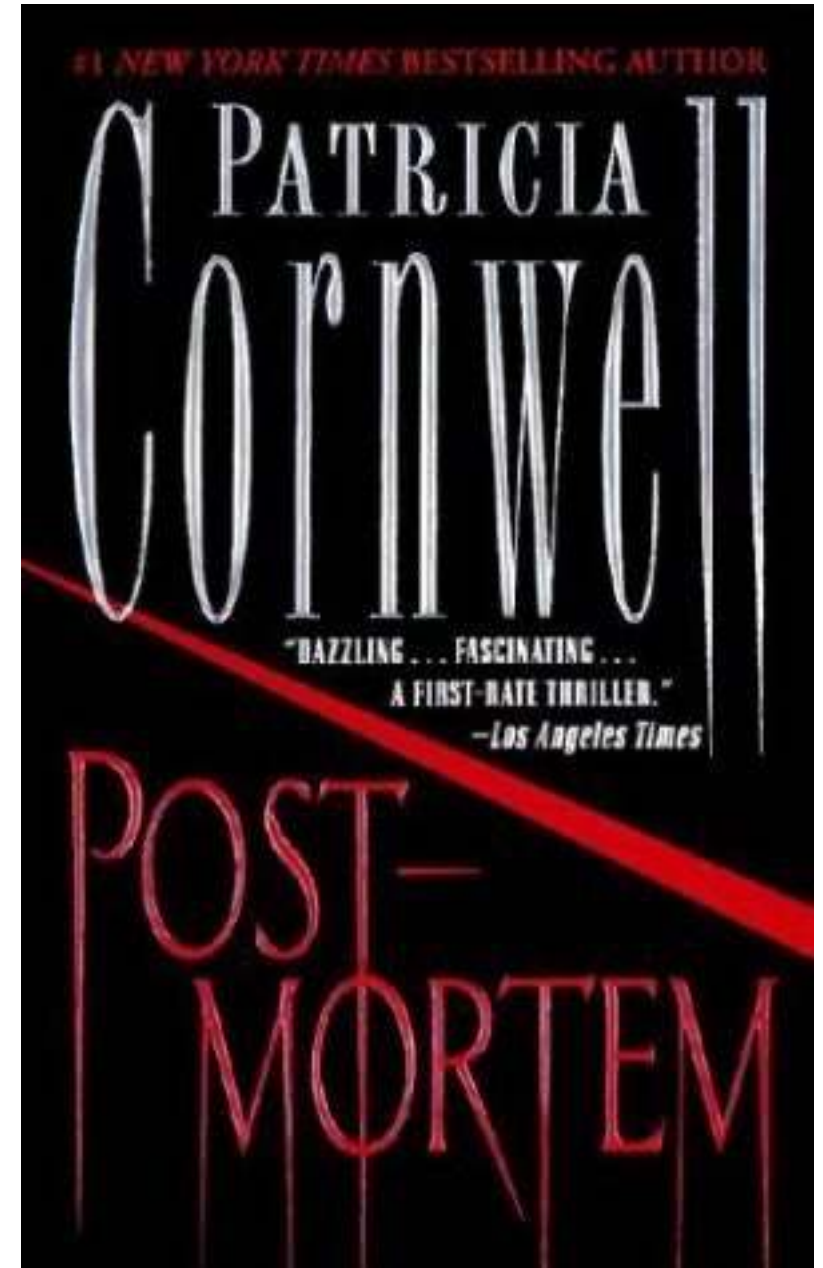
Subgenera: Forensic Mysteries

More recent procedurals will include the latest scientific forensic technology.





Postmortem by
Patricia Cornwell
(Kay Scarpetta)





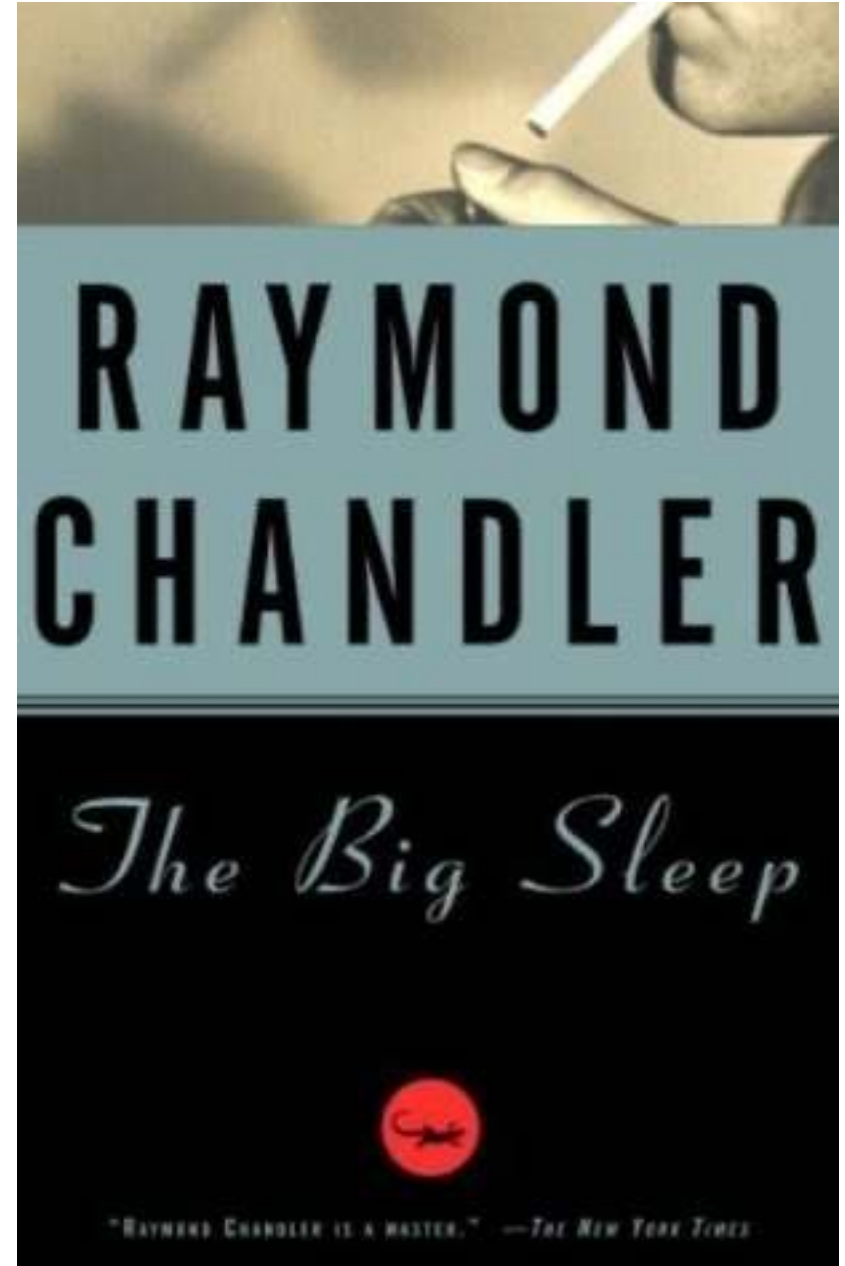
Subgenera: Hardboiled Mysteries

Popularized in pulp fiction magazines during the 20s and 30s while the Mob was in power, these stories usually deal with criminal activity on the streets of a modern urban environment. They use violence, sex, and confrontation in stark language and often through an unemotional narrator like a private detective.





The Big Sleep by
Raymond Chandler
(Philip Marlowe)





A is for Alibi by
Sue Grafton
(Kinsey Millhone)

