becomes fully evident by the powerful, jaw-dropping end, and she skillfully instills fear in the reader even with innocuous phrases. Agent: Veronique Baxter, David Higham Associates (U.K.). (Jan.)

The Ghost Shift

John Gapper. Ballantine, \$26 (320p) ISBN 978-0-345-52792-9

In Gapper's uneven thriller set in contemporary Guangdong, China, 23-year-old police detective Song Mei investigates the suspicious death of a young woman who worked at Long Tan Technology, which makes smartphones and tablets for an Apple-like company. Mei is shocked to discover that the victim is her twin sister, whose existence she was unaware of. The complex, confusing backstory reveals that both girls were abandoned at birth and that Mei was adopted by American parents. Gapper (The Fatal Debt) takes his time building to the main action, which involves Mei infiltrating Long Tan to find out what happened to her twin and what's going on in the factory, particularly the super-secretive "ghost shift" of the title. At this point, the narrative becomes palpably and cinematically suspenseful, and the reader gets a compelling portrait of industrialized China. But the thrills of this well-written, often intelligent book are just too slow in coming. Agent: David Kuhn, Kuhn Projects. (Jan.)

Viking Bay: A Kay Hamilton Novel M.A. Lawson. Penguin/Blue Rider, \$26.95 (352p) ISBN 978-0-399-16574-0

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The risky exploits that got Kay Hamilton fired from the DEA catch the eye of the mysterious Callahan Group, led by rumpled Thomas Callahan, in Lawson's well-paced follow-up to 2013's Rosarito Beach. Lured by a generous salary, Kay helps the Callahan Group broker a deal for U.S. access to lithium deposits, negotiating with an Afghan governor and his beautiful, liberal-minded daughter. But when the deal goes explosively wrong, Kay begins trawling the murky underbelly of the Callahan Group to find out who betrayed them, putting herself and her teenage daughter at risk. Lawson's knowledge from a career as a senior executive for the U.S. Navy gives muscle to a plot bound by the obscure intentions and covert operations of intelligence work,

though the finale reveals the traitor's rather weak motivations. Kay's tendency to act before she thinks keeps the plot whizzing along. Some readers may see her as pure male fantasy: a curvy blonde who's gutsy, irresistible, and sexually free. Agent: David Gernert, Gernert Company. (Jan.)

The Devil You Know

Elisabeth de Mariaffi. S&S/Touchstone, \$24.99 (320p) ISBN 978-1-4767-7908-9

Set in and around Toronto in 1993, Canadian author de Mariaffi's artful first novel chronicles the efforts of journalist Evie Jones to track down the man who murdered a friend of hers, 11-year-old Lianne Gagnon, in 1982. Robert Nelson Cameron was identified as a suspect but never caught. Jones researches the killer through old newspaper articles using the nascent Internet, aided by her cautiously flirtatious friend, David Patton. Since Lianne's death, Evie has suffered from some form of post-traumatic stress; the man she often sees at her apartment window could be real or the product of an overheated imagination. When Evie points out to her mother, Annie, that women read more true crime than men, Annie replies the reason is not entertainment but survival: "It's so we learn how to get away." Hooked readers will silently implore Evie to refrain from entering a basement or a cabin in the woods in pursuit of a story-and a killer. Agent: Samantha Haywood, Transatlantic Literary Agency (Canada). (Jan.)

The Picture from the Past

Paul Halter, trans. from the French by John Pugmire. Locked Room International (www.lockedroominternational.com), \$19.99 trade paper (180p) ISBN 978-1-502301-81-9

Halter (*The Tiger's Head*) nearly intertwines three distinct plot lines in this absorbing entry in his long-running crime series featuring Dr. Alan Twist. In 1959 Essex, England, Twist and Chief Insp. Archibald Hurst of Scotland Yard find the gruesome remains of the third victim of a killer who dissolves his victims' corpses in acid. Meanwhile, Londoner John Braid, a man who lies to his wife about his employment, is obsessed with a photo used for a banal romance novel's cover. The image depicts a "perfectly ordinary street. A row of modest brick houses, a small shop with

its owner at the door." Under hypnosis, John mutters something about a "few notes of music," a "mauve flower," and death, leaving the reader to puzzle out the connection with a narrative set some years before the main action involving three men in black and a locked-room murder. The fair-play resolution will delight fans of impossible crimes. (Jan.)

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Thief: A Robin Monarch Novel

Mark Sullivan. Minotaur, \$25.99 (336p) ISBN 978-1-250-05231-5

Early in Sullivan's exciting third Robin Monarch novel (after 2013's Outlaw), the latter-day Robin Hood burgles the Greenwich, Conn., mansion of billionaire Beau Arsenault during a Christmas party. Once Arsenault identifies the escaped thief, the mogul takes his revenge by arranging the kidnapping of Sister Rachel Diego del Mar from her medical clinic in a Buenos Aires slum. Monarch pulls out all the stops to save Sister Rachel, who once rescued him from a dead-end life in the Brotherhood of Thieves. In action spanning the globe, three of Monarch's associates stalk Swiss banker Tristan Hormel in Europe; Claudio Fortunato, his oldest friend, hunts for clues in Buenos Aires; and Monarch joins scientist Estella Santos and her crew on a journey up the Amazon in search of a tribe that may hold the secret to human longevity. Two old enemies seek to beat Monarch to this prize. Sullivan puts a fresh spin on a familiar premise. Agent: Meg Ruley, Jane Rotrosen Agency. (Dec.)

Woman with a Gun

Phillip Margolin. Harper, \$26.99 (304p) ISBN 978-0-06-226652-1

Bestseller Margolin (Worthy Brown's Daughter) stumbles with this overly complicated whodunit. At an exhibit of Kathy Moran's photographs at Manhattan's Museum of Modern Art, budding novelist Stacey Kim is transfixed by a picture of a woman standing on a beach in a white dress, holding a gun. Stacey decides to ditch her East Coast life and travel to Palisades Heights, Ore., where Kathy took the photo and now lives. Flash back to 2005, when Kathy snapped the picture after coming upon newlywed Megan Cahill, whose millionaire husband, Raymond, was shot to death hours after