

From the Stacks
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Quite a few books I have read lately have strong female perspectives in tense, high-stakes stories. These books have been of different genres but each explores secret identities, moral or personal dilemmas, certainly resilience under pressure, and a definite act from the lead character. Together, they highlight women who are not merely reacting to circumstances but shaping the outcome through courage and determination. This common thread creates a compelling reading experience, drawing the reader into stories where strength and vulnerability exist side by side.

James Patterson is known for his best-selling novels, and he also brings new authors to readers. *Judge Stone* is a Patterson collaboration with actress, Viola Davis. In Union Springs, Alabama (population 3,314), no one is more admired than Judge Mary Stone. She is devoted to two things above all else: her family farm and justice. In her courtroom, she faces the South's most controversial case, legally clear, but morally a stark choice between life and death. Though no judge can satisfy everyone, Judge Stone stands firm, risking everything to deliver justice for her community.

Marie Benedict's *Daughter of Egypt* is a dual time-line historical fiction with suspense and impeccable research. In the 1920s, the discovery of King Tutankhamun's treasure-filled tomb made global headlines, but Lady Evelyn Herbert, daughter of Lord Carnarvon, played a vital, often overlooked role. Nearly 3,000 years earlier, Hatshepsut, a bold and visionary female pharaoh, ruled Egypt before her legacy was nearly erased from history. Driven to find Hatshepsut's lost tomb, Evelyn risks everything to uncover the truth and keep the artifacts in Egypt, but rising danger forces her to choose between preserving her father's legacy or claiming her own.

In *Bloodlust*, Sandra Brown delivers a gripping, signature tale of sexy suspense about a detective pursuing justice for his murdered wife, aided by a psychotherapist while struggling to resist a powerful attraction to her. Two years after his wife's brutal murder, Detective Mitch Haskell is consumed with revenge against Roland Malone, a deadly enforcer, and Oz, the elusive kingpin behind the crime. His obsession sends him spiraling, straining relationships and forcing him into therapy with Dr. Dylan Reede. As Mitch closes in on the criminals, Dylan becomes entangled in the case and their growing attraction risks not only their careers, but also their lives, placing them directly in Oz's crosshairs.

A peaceful getaway turns into a nightmare when Courtney Gray finds her brother and sister-in-law dead and her niece missing at their lakeside cottage. As secrets unravel

within her family and the quiet town, suspicion grows: is Reese a victim or something far more troubling? Racing for answers, Courtney digs deeper, but the truth becomes harder to trust with every step closer to it. *It's Not Her* by Mary Kubica is a smart, twisty suspenseful tale with glimpses into the family before and after a tragedy.

Thomas Perry's final novel, *The Tree of Light and Flowers*, is a tightly paced action thriller marked by his signature precise storytelling and keen attention to detail. After a violent crash forces the early birth of their long-awaited baby, Jane Whitefield's brief peace is shattered. Soon, her past resurfaces, pulling her back into the dangerous work of helping people vanish and start over. As allies and enemies alike converge on her home, Jane becomes a target herself now fighting not just to save others, but to protect her husband and newborn, using every skill she has to survive.