

Carla said: "I liked a few Louise Candlish books and *An Elderly Lady is Up to No Good*. I have read a lot of Scandinavian Noir. Are there other books about older women perhaps behaving a bit badly? I loved *Drive Your Plow Over the Bones of the Dead*!

And this was the response:

Hello Carla,

Thank you for using Your Next 5 Books! You shared that you are looking for more stories with older women behaving badly. Between this information and your list of favorite authors, genres, and titles, I've selected five books I think you'll enjoy. Here is your **list**.

Killers of a Certain Age by Deanna Raybourn - *NoveList* compared this book to *An Elderly Lady is Up to No Good*, "Readers looking for thrilling reads about dangerous older women will enjoy these suspenseful books. *Elderly Lady* is an offbeat collection of short stories about a morally gray octogenarian, while *Killers* is about a quartet of sixty-something retired assassins. -- Tirzah Price." *Booklist's* review reads, "Imagine if the Golden Girls were trained as elite assassins and you'll have some idea of the delights and thrills filling the pages of Raybourn's latest. In 1979, rebellious Billie, proper Helen, practical Mary Alice, and flirtatious Natalie are the first women recruited to join a top-secret, nongovernmental organization known as the Museum, which specializes in hunting down Nazis, sex traffickers, arms dealers, and other bad guys. Now in their sixties, the women are enjoying a retirement cruise. When Billie ducks into a fridge to cool off during a hot flash, she spots a young colleague in disguise, and the women soon uncover a bomb in his room, realizing that their retirement gift is actually a death sentence. But why, after 40 years of loyally serving the Museum, are they now targets? Raybourn has crafted a brilliant crime novel, with wit, intrigue, and heart, in which these bold, aging agents travel through catacombs and luxury spas and keep in contact via menopause apps. Her descriptions about aging are both funny (comparing saggy boobs to melted ice cream) and bitter, as the women recognize that some skills don't come as readily as they once did. But, most of all, this is a fun, exciting romp that celebrates the everlasting bonds of sisterhood."

The Old Woman With the Knife by Pyöng-mo Ku - This book has also been compared to *An Elderly Lady is Up to No Good*, "Readers looking for crime novels with older protagonists will appreciate these engaging, offbeat books about an elderly assassin (*The Old Woman with the Knife*) and serial killer (*An Elderly Lady is Up to No Good*). -- CJ Connor." *Publishers Weekly's* review reads, "At the start of Korean author Byeong-Mo's English-language debut, a gripping and often unpredictable suspense novel, a 65-year-old woman on a crowded Seoul subway train observes a male jerk, upset at having to stand, berate a seated young woman, even after she says that her pregnancy merits a seat. When he disembarks, the older woman follows and fatally stabs him with a knife coated with poison. It turns out this woman, code-named Hornclaw, works for a company offering "disease control specialists," who commit murder for paying clients. Hornclaw's continuing employment is threatened by younger rivals within her company, her declining physical abilities, and a fear that she's now someone else's target. A subtle character portrait is matched by striking prose (Hornclaw "sometimes wonders what difference it makes to take away ten or forty-five years from a life, when the essence of life is continuous loss and abrasion that leaves behind only traces of what used to be, like streaks of chalk on a chalkboard"). Crime fiction readers looking for something a bit different will relish this one."

The Bandit Queens by Parini Shroff - This book immediately came to mind when I thought of literary crime novels with mischievous women. Note, the protagonist isn't what I would call old, being 35, but at

least she isn't in her 20s! Booklist's review reads, "Shroff's debut is a darkly hilarious take on gossip, caste, truth, village life, and the patriarchy. Geeta's abusive drunk of a husband disappeared five years ago, leaving her alone and destitute in a small village in India, where rumor has it that she did him in. Her reputation as a woman who "removed her own nose ring" protects her from various unpleasant attentions, and it's not long before other women in her microloan group seek her assistance removing their nose rings. Inspired by Phoolan Devi, "the Bandit Queen," who fought for the rights of women in India, Geeta engages the help of a handsome widower (and black-market liquor purveyor) and takes on a gangster from whom she steals a dog. Geeta inadvertently manages to facilitate a couple of husband disposals before her own spouse reappears, hoping to reconcile with her. As one of her beneficiaries tries to blackmail her and her long-estranged, childhood best friend becomes a source of support, Geeta endeavors to take her life back. A perfect match for fans of Oyinkan Braithwaite's *My Sister, the Serial Killer* (2018) and clever, subversive storytelling."

Death in Her Hands by Ottessa Moshfegh - NoveList compared this title to *Drive Your Plow Over the Bones of the Dead*, "These offbeat literary novels take the familiar mystery genre heroine, the woman amateur detective, in new directions. Using quirky, isolated main characters, Drive is closer to the traditional mystery, while Death satirizes the genre. -- Michael Shumate." Kirkus' review reads, "A note suggesting a woman has been killed in the woods captures the imagination of an elderly woman, with alarming intensity. Vesta, the extremely unreliable narrator of Moshfegh's fourth novel (*My Year of Rest and Relaxation*, 2018, etc.), is a 72-year-old widow who's recently purchased a new home, a cabin on a former Girl Scout camp. Walking her dog through the nearby woods, she sees a note lying on the ground which says that a woman named Magda has been killed "and here is her dead body," but there's no body there or any sign of violence. Call the police? Too easy: Instead, Vesta allows herself to be consumed with imagining what Magda might have been like and the circumstances surrounding her murder. Whatever the opposite of Occam's razor is, Vesta's detective work is it: After some web searching on how mystery writers do their work, she surmises that Magda was a Belarussian teen sent to the United States to work at a fast-food restaurant, staying in the basement of a woman whose son, Blake, committed the murder. Moshfegh on occasion plays up the comedy of Vesta's upside-down thinking: "A good detective presumes more than she interrogates." But Vesta slowly reveals herself as what we might now call a Moshfegh-ian lead: a woman driven to isolation and feeling disassociated from herself, looking for ways to cover up for a brokenness she's loath to confront. Over the course of the novel, Vesta's projections about Magda's identity become increasingly potent and heartbreaking symbols of wounds from the narrator's childhood and marriage. The judgmental voice of her late husband, Walter, keeps rattling in her head, and she defiantly insists that "I didn't want Walter in my mindspace anymore. I wanted to know things on my own." You simultaneously worry about Vesta and root for her, and Moshfegh's handling of her story is at once troubling and moving. An eerie and affecting satire of the detective novel."

Vera Wong's Unsolicited Advice for Murderers by Jesse Q Sutanto - This is a popular amateur sleuth mystery that has been delighting fans since its release about a year ago. Publishers Weekly's review reads, "At the start of this stellar mystery from Sutanto (*Dial A for Aunties*), 60-year-old, strong-willed widow Vera Wong discovers a body with a flash drive in its hand in her tea shop in San Francisco's Chinatown. Vera contacts the police, but confident she can do a better job at pinpointing the murderer, she snatches the flash drive before their arrival. The authorities identify the victim as 29-year-old Marshall Chen and determine he died from an allergy attack. Convinced the death was no accident, Vera is thrilled to delve into detective work when a handful of people who knew Marshall come into her shop looking for information. The eclectic group includes Marshall's widow, his twin brother, a reporter for BuzzFeed, and the host of a true crime podcast. Seeing them as potential suspects, Vera lures them with

her distinctive teas and cooking, developing genuine friendships with each one, but also easily able to sniff out their lies. The engrossing plot, which is full of laugh out loud humor and heartfelt moments, builds to a satisfying conclusion that will leave readers eager for more Vera. Sutanto has outdone herself with this cozy with substance."

Because several of these are unavailable right now, I also picked out a couple of new Nordic noirs (that aren't in a series) that *are* immediately available.

Dissolved by Sara Blædel - Publishers Weekly's review reads, "Blædel (the Louise Rick series) and Nordbo (the Matthew Cave series) team up for a macabre police procedural set in Nordbo's native village of Tommerup, on the tight-knit Danish island of Funen. Affable police inspector Liam Stark and his brusque middle-aged sergeant, Dea Torp, face a possible missing person case when Claus, the coach of Liam's son's water polo team, demands police mount a search for his vanished wife Charlotte. An enigmatic quotation from the Quran found in Charlotte's bag suggests the involvement of religious extremists, which irks police rookie Nassrin, who's sick of watching fellow people of Arab descent on police surveillance screens. The stakes are raised when new victims start disappearing daily, with enigmatic Quran passages left among their belongings, and Stark and Torp discover horrific video footage depicting some of the crimes. Blædel and Nordbo cast the net of plausible suspects ever wider, maintaining suspense and keeping readers on the edge of their seats as the plot barrels toward a properly nightmarish conclusion. This is a gruesome Scandi noir success."

The Couples Trip by Ulf Kvensler - Library Journal's review reads, "Each year, Anna, Henrik, and Milena take a big hike together in the rugged mountains of northern Sweden. This year, however, Anna and Henrik agree to let Milena's boyfriend, Jacob, come along. Big mistake. Screenwriter/showrunner Kvensler's first effort won the Swedish Academy of Crime Writers' Best Debut of the Year and was short-listed for the Crimetime Award."

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