Midmonth BookNotes

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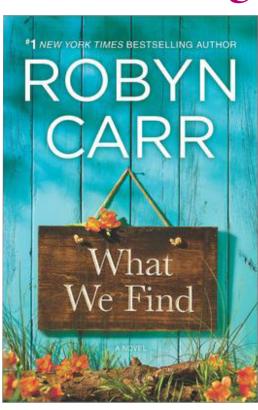
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A Bibliographic Bounty



Carr, Robyn. What We Find Signed (Mira \$26.99)

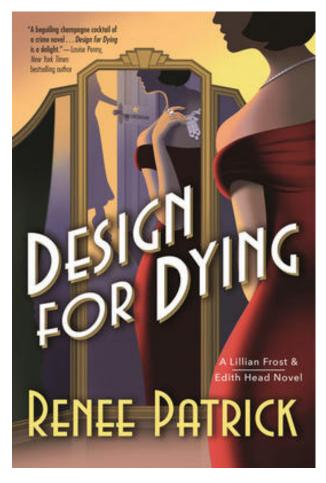
Desperately needing a break from all the professional and personal challenges life has thrown at her, Denver neurosurgeon Maggie Sullivan decides to take a complete break from everything and heads to Sullivan's Crossing to spend some time with her father Sully. However, once Maggie arrives in the small town in the Colorado Rockies, her plans for some quiet downtime are upended when Sully suffers a heart attack. Fortunately, Sully undergoes a successful bypass operation, but taking care of both the store and

her father is going to be a big commitment for Maggie. Can she trust Cal Jones, who is camping nearby be fore tackling the Continental Divide Trail, to help out with everything? In her compelling hardcover debut for MIRA, Carr tackles some tough emotional subjects with a deft literary touch as her protagonist navigates life's twists and turns with the help of friends and family. Carr will be visiting the Poisoned Pen on Thursday May 5th at 2 PM for tea and a talk about her new book, which is her first in a new series. Can't make the event? Call or order online ahead of the program, and Robyn will be delighted to personalize and/or sign a copy for you (and don't forget Mother's Day is just around the corner!).

Ballis, Stacey. Wedding Girl (Berkley \$16) High-profile Chicago pastry chef Sophie Bernstein had the perfect fairy-tale wedding planned until her sommelier fiancé decided to play the role of the villain by eloping with another woman. Now out of a job and with wedding bills to pay, Sophie moves in with her grandmother Bubbles and gets a part-time job in the local Jewish bakery ready to start life over from scratch. Ballis is the Queen of Culinary Romances, so if you enjoy your contemporary love stories served up with a generous portion of yummy recipes, dig in.

Beazley, Lisa. <u>Keep Me Posted</u> (NAL \$26) There is no one in the world Cassie Sunday feels closer to than her sister Sid, but Sid, who is currently living in Singapore, believes Cassie spends

more time chatting with her friends on Facebook than she does with her. So Sid, who isn't a fan of any type of social media, comes up with an idea that she believes will bring the two of them back together: for one year, the two sisters will communicate through good, old-fashioned snail mail. Somewhat to her own surprise, Cassie discovers not only does she love getting letters from Sid; she enjoys pouring her heart and soul out to her sister on paper. But when Cassie's attempts to preserve the letters between her and Sid goes dreadfully awry, their attempt at restoring communication in their relationship just might break down permanently. Beazley does a nice job ruminating on the powerful bond between sisters, and her thoughts about the simple power of a letter may just have anyone addicted to texting and tweeting rethinking their preferred method of communicating with the people in their lives.



Patrick, Renee. <u>Design for Dying Signed</u> (Tor \$24.99)

Like a million fresh-faced and bright-eyed girls across the country, Lillian Frost came to Hollywood believing she was destined to become a

star. After a plethora of unsuccessful auditions, Lillian decides a career change might be in order if she still wants to eat at least one square meal a day. So now Lillian pushes hats and foundation garments at Tremayne's department store for a living, and this is where she receives an unexpected visit from the Los Angeles Police Department in the persons of Detectives Hansen and Morrow. It seems the police have identified the body of the "Alley Angel," a woman dressed in a silk gown and draped in shimmering jewels, as being Lillian's old roommate Ruby Carroll. Since Lillian immediately recognizes the gown as being one from the wardrobe department at Paramount Pictures, she finds herself teaming up with Edith Head, the defacto person in charge of costumes at the studio, to find the real killer. Lillian is a terrific new sleuth with an addictively acerbic sense of wit (I can just picture Rosalind Russell playing her), and combined with the cool, competent Edith Head (who won 8 Academy Awards over the course of her long career), they make the perfect detective team. I gobbled up this wonderfully entertaining debut which is chockfull of entertaining tidbits about the Golden Age of Hollywood as well as cameo appearances from everyone from Barbara Stanwyck to Bob Hope. The authors (Renee Patrick is a pseudonym for a husband and wife writing team) will be appearing at the Poisoned Pen on Tuesday May 3rd at 7 PM. Don't miss what promises to be a fun evening filled with fascinating facts about the movie biz.

Bell, Lenora. <u>How the Duke Was Won</u> (Harper \$7.99)

For Charlene Beckett it is the opportunity of a lifetime. All Charlene has to do is pretend to be her legitimate half-sister Lady Dorothea while attending a weekend house party thrown by James, the newly minted Duke of Harland, and Dorothea's mother will give Charlene the money she desperately needs to rescue her mother and her younger sister from living in the house of ill repute in which they currently reside. However posing as Dorothea proves a bit more difficult than Charlene first imagined when she realizes she is falling for the man her half-sister is supposed to marry. Imagine *The Bachelor* set in Regency England and you have an idea of the prem

ise behind this delightfully fun and sexy debut by Bell, who won the Romance Writers of America's Golden Heart award. If you enjoy other historical romance writers like Eloisa James and Tessa Dare, Bell is a new author to add to your list.

Colgan, Jenny. <u>Summer at Little Beach</u> Street (Harper \$14.99)

Polly Waterford loves living with her pet puffin in a lighthouse on a tiny island off the southern coast of England. The Little Beach Street Bakery where she works is thriving, and her cute beekeeper boyfriend are just the icing on the cake of her life. But Polly's plans to purchase the bakery from its owner hits an unexpected snag and then Polly discovers herboyfriend is keeping secrets from her. Suddenly, Polly's life isn't the piece of cake she once thought it might be!

Donovan, Kemper. Decent Proposal (Harper \$25.99)

When attorney Elizabeth Santiago first hears about the proposal, she immediately thinks it sounds too good to be true. An anonymous benefactor promises to pay Elizabeth a half a million dollars if she agrees to spend at least two hours a week for one year meeting and just talking with a man she has never met before: Hollywood film producer Richard Baumbach. However, since Elizabeth pretty much lives for work (they don't call her La Maquina at her law firm for nothing), the idea of doing something that is not directly connected to billable hours is not without its own appeal. Richard, who has yet to carve out a name for himself in the movie business, doesn't care if the deal sounds crazy, he can definitely use \$500,000.00 himself. So Elizabeth and Richard agree to meet, but as the weeks go by, the two discover some unexpected side effects of their new "business arrangement." The publisher is giving this debut novel –which is a fun romantic comedy with a nice twist at the end – a big push.

Flower, Amanda. Crime and Poetry (NAL \$7.99)

When Violet Waverly's grandmother Daisy leaves a message that she is at death's door, Violet drops everything to come back home to

the small town of Cascade Springs. Once Violet discovers Daisy fibbed to her to get Violet back home so she would takeover running Charming Books (the family's small bookstore), she is determined to pack her bags and head back to Chicago. However, when her grandmother's new gentleman friend Benedict Raisin is found the next morning murdered with Daisy's scarf wrapped around his throat, Violet realizes she may have to stay in Cascade Springs just a bit longer. Flower also writes the Amish Quilt Shop mysteries as Isabella Allen, launches a new series set in a small town near Niagara Falls, N.Y. that is just brimming with cozy charm. There is a bit of whimsical magic to the story – the books in Charmed Books reveal things to the owners by opening themselves to a certain passage of text and the springs in the village are reported to have certain "special" properties –but it is all done with a light touch.

Gaston, Diane. <u>Bound by One Scandalous Night</u> (Harlequin \$6.50)

Lieutenant Edmund Summerfield knows he and Lady Amelie Glenville exist in two different worlds. Amelie is part of the glittering ton while Edmund is the illegitimate son of an aristocrat now serving as a soldier in the British Army. However, Edmund's and Amelie's worlds intersect late one night in Brussels when Edmund spots a very alone and very frightened Amelie being attacked by a drunken stranger, Edmund does what any gentleman would do and escorts Amelie back to her hotel, but before the two part, they give into temptation and spend one passionate night together. However, three months later, when a wounded Edmund bumps into Amelie in London, he discovers Amelia has been left with a very permanent reminder of their night together. In the latest book in her "Scandalous Summerfields" series, Gaston seamlessly weaves realistically imperfect, richly layered characters into an impeccably researched historical setting. The result is a poignant, compelling love story that is both true to the period and completely satisfying as a romance as well.

Griffin, Laura. <u>Deep Dark</u> (Picador \$7.99) Laney Knox, a hacker for the Delphi Center cyber investigation unit, is happy to help Austin Police Detective Reed Novak with his latest case which involves a murder linked to an online dating site. Once Laney begins her investigation, she discovers some unnerving similarities between the current murder case and the brutal attack that happened to Laney several years earlier. Griffin writes sexy romantic suspense in the style of Nora Roberts.

Hamilton, Jane. Excellent Lombards (Grand Central \$26)

For young Mary Frances "Frankie" Lombard, there is no place on earth like her family's apple orchard. Frankie plans on spending her entire life here taking over caring for the 400 acres of trees from her father when he finally retires. But Frankie soon discovers that our lives don't always follow the path we think they will. Hamilton has a very distinctive writing voice that some readers just adore and others just don't get (I must admit I belong to the latter category). But if you enjoyed her previous novels like the Oprah pick *The Book of Ruth* or you are in the mood for a beautifully written coming of age tale, this may be perfect for you.

Kearsley, Susan. Named of the Dragon (Sourcebooks \$16.99)

Literary agent Lyn Ravenshaw decides accompanying one of her authors on a trip South Wales may offer the distraction she needs from the night-mares she still experiences after losing her baby five years earlier. But when Lyn arrives at Castle Farm, she meets a young widow, who is convinced that Lyn's dreams have sent her there for a reason. Now with the help of a brooding playwright, Lyn must sift through ancient prophecies and Celtic legends if she wants to help the woman save her own young infant before time runs out forever.

Kelk, Lindsey. <u>Always the Bridesmaid</u> (Harper \$14.99)

Not only does Maddie's best friend Lauren want both her and Sarah to be her bridesmaids, she expects Maddie to help her plan her wedding. After all Maddie works for a wedding planner so putting together the perfect wedding in three months for Lauren should be a snap, right? Of course, the fact that Maddie is also trying to help Sarah get through her impending divorce, get over her own old boyfriend who ditched her in favor of another woman, and deal with the boss-fromhell at the same time shouldn't be a problem at all. *Always the Bridesmaid* is the perfect book for anyone, who loved *Bridget Jones' Diary* or can't get enough humorous chick lit served up with a sassy British accent.

Kelly, Martha H. <u>Lílac Gírls</u> (Ballantine \$26)

Kelly uses three different narrators to tell this remarkable tale that was inspired by a real-life World War II heroine. The first protagonist is American socialite Caroline Ferriday, who works for the French consulate in New York City trying to help displaced refugees as well as coordinating war relief efforts sent back to France. The second narrator is Polish teenager Kasia Kuzmerick, who joins the Polish Resistance after the Germans brutally crush her hometown. Herta Oberheuser, a German medical student finishing up her studies in Berlin, is the third narrator, and she can't understand why her father and others might find Hitler's new regime a tragedy of epic proportions. Eventually Herta and Kasia meet up at the notorious concentration camp Ravensbruck, where Herta is in charge of the terrible medical experiments being done on prisoners . Meanwhile back in New York, Caroline deals with a painful love affair with a married Frenchman while being assigned the duty of keeping track of those being held in German concentration camps. World War II continues to be in vogue with historical fiction writers, but Kelly puts her own strong stamp on this trend with a compelling, at times heart-breaking, story. Lilac Girls is not always an easy read since it doesn't play down the horrors those trapped in German concentration camps endured, but it also highlights the considerable acts of bravery and heroism that ordinary people displayed during the war.

McDonald, Anne. <u>The Oxford Inheritance</u> (Harper \$25.99)

Cassandra "Cassie" Blackwell didn't come to Oxford because she had always dreamed of one day studying at the British university. Cassie had

come to Raleigh College at Oxford to find out the truth about her mother. Three years ago, a battered manila envelope addressed to Cassie's now long deceased mother turned up outside her mailbox. Among the items inside the envelope was a photo of her mother with another girl and two boys dressed in Oxford robes and a note saying "You can't hide the truth forever. Please come back and end this for good." Now Cassie is determined to find out the truth about her mother's past no matter whom she must lie to or whom she must cross in order to do so. Sometimes you miss a book when it first comes out as is the case with me and *The Oxford Inher*itance. But I am delighted that I finally did catch up with this superiorly crafted novel of suspense into which MacDonald takes a plot centered around a centuries' old secret society supposedly founded by Raleigh and his cohorts and then mixes in a splash of the supernatural, a dash of romance, and a generous helping of dry wit before setting everything against a beautifully realized Cambridge setting.

McKevett, G A. <u>Killer Reunion</u> (Kensington \$25)

Former cop turned private investigator Savannah Reid is just settling into newly married life with her hubby Detective Sergeant Dirk Coulter when she receives an invitation to attend her high school reunion back in McGill, Georgia. Savannah isn't thrilled with the idea of revisiting her high school days –especially since she was ostracized by most of the popular girls in school -but going back to McGill will give her the chance to visit with her family including her beloved Granny Reid. However, when Jeanette Parker, the Queen Bee of the McGill mean girls, ends up murdered and Savannah is cast in the role of primary suspect, she begins to wonder if she shouldn't have just stayed home. McKevett writes with a sassy sense of humor and there are plenty of quirky southern characters in the 21st addition to her long-running series.

Meacham, Leila. <u>Titans</u> (Grand Central \$26) It's the beginning of the 1900s and oil is about to put Texas on the map when Samantha Gordon, heiress to Las Tres Lomas cattle ranch, and Nathan Holloway, a poor farm boy, discover they

share the same birth father: oil tycoon Trevor Waverling. The two will find their lives and fortunes forever tied together as they struggle to make their mark on the petroleum industry in the grand state of Texas as well as navigate the shifting tides of love and loss that fate sends their way. Meacham hit it big with her debut novel Roses, which was another sprawling family saga about two powerful Southern families and their hold on the cotton and timber industries. I loved *Roses*, which some critics compared to Gone with the Wind, for its sweeping storyline and larger-than-life characters, and Titans has a similar sense of appeal. So if you need a good doorstop of a historical novel in which to lose yourself for days (or you find that you just miss Dallas), Ms. Meacham has got you covered.

Moran, Jan. Winemakers (SimonSchuster \$15.99)

In 1950s San Francisco, Caterina Rosseta has been keeping a secret she dreads telling from her mother, but when she unexpectedly inherits a cottage in Italy from her grandmother, Caterina sees a chance to temporarily escape from her problems. However, once Caterina arrives in Italy, she soon discovers her mother has been keeping a few secrets of her own. Now everything her mother has worked so hard to achieve in the Napa Wine Valley as well as the Caterina's own relationship with the man she loves could be destroyed in one fell swoop.

Quick, Amanda. <u>Til Death Do Us Part</u> (Berkley \$26.95)

Someone has been leaving little presents - memento mori items engraved with her initials - for Calista Langley, but unfortunately, these are not exactly the type of gifts a woman really wants. Going to the police is not really an option for Calista since there is technically nothing threatening about the gifts, and Calista doesn't really want to create any type of scandal that might reflect badly on her own business, an "introductions agency" for respectable gentlewomen and gentlemen. So when mystery writer Trent Hastings, whose sister Eudora is a client, offers to help Calista with her little problem, she doesn't see what she has to lose. With her usual deliciously dry sense of wit and creative flair for

plotting, Quick fashions another winning mix of dangerous thrills and sexy chills. I especially enjoyed the all-too-real asides Trent and Calista share about the life of an author and the process of writing a popular series (some inspired no doubt by Quick's own experiences).

Quindlen, Anna. <u>Millers Valley</u> (Random \$28)

The Millers have lived in Miller's Valley for hundreds of years, but that is all about to change for Mary Margaret "Mimi" Miller and her family. The federal government has decided that the small Pennsylvania town where they live would be better off as a reservoir, and soon everyone will be forced to vacate the place they call home whether they like the idea or not. This is a quietly powerful coming of age tale that traces Mimi's life as a teenager in the 1960s through the following decades as she grows up, marries, and establishes her own family. Pulitzer prize-winning Quindlen writes with simple grace and powerful insight about the ties that hold a family together as well as the pressures that can tear them apart forever.

Roberts, Nora. Obsession (Berkley \$28) When Naomi saw her father Thomas Bowes

sneaking out of the house late one summer night in Pine Meadows, West Virginia,, she thought he might be hiding her birthday present. So Naomi decided to follow him into the woods, where she observed her father furtively slipping into an old, abandoned house. What Naomi discovered there that night was certainly a surprise: her father had imprisoned a young woman in the root cellar and from the evidence around, she isn't his first victim. Natalie helped the girl escape and then helped the authorities see to it that her serial killer father was put in jail for life. Now nearly twenty years later, Naomi is a successful photographer, and she has just found her dream house in the small town of Sunrise Cove, Washington. But just as Naomi starts putting down roots and forging a relationship with Xander Keaton, her past comes back to haunt her in the form of a stalker, who is obsessed with Thomas Bowes and his crimes. Roberts' latest is another seamless blend of sexy romance and spine-tingling suspense.

Rogan, Charlotte. <u>Now and Again</u> (Little-Brown \$27)

After Maggie Ryan, a secretary at a munitions plant, discovers evidence of a cover-up in her boss's desk that one of the weapons the company manufactures can injure soldiers using it, she makes a decision that will irrevocably change her life. Meanwhile an Army Captain Penn Sinclair tries to atone for the damage his orders may have done to some of his men, who served in Iraq, by working together with three surviving soldiers to reveal some of the harsher truths about that war. As with her first novel, The Lifeboat, Rogan isn't afraid to delve into some complex philosophical and moral topics, which make her books a good choice for anyone who likes a novel that makes you think (or as we used to call these books at the library: high fiber fiction).

Romain, Theresa. <u>Fortune Favors the</u> <u>Wicked</u> (Kensington \$7.99)

Charlotte Perry, a former London courtesan now living with her vicar father in the country, and Benedict Frost, a retired, sight-impaired British Navy Lieutenant, decide to team up to find a fortune in missing gold coins lost by the Royal Treasury in this lively, sexy start to Romain's new "Royal Rewards" series of Regency-set historical romances. What I love most of all about all of Romain's books is that she is willing to take chances with her characters, and she doesn't just deliver the cookie-cutter beautiful lady/handsome lord type of Regency storylines you can find in some other historical romances.

Ross, Ann B. <u>Miss Julia Inherits a Mess</u> (Mulholland \$26.95)

Miss Julia is flabbergasted when she receives a call from Mattie Freeman's attorney informing her that she has been named executrix of Mattie's estate since Julia hardly knew her. Fortunately, while Julia is sorting through the mess of items left by Mattie, she discovers some pieces that may be valuable enough to help her fulfill the bequests Mattie made to her favorite charities and friends, but the arrival of young man claiming to be Mattie's great-nephew could very well complicate matters. While there is a slight thread of mystery woven into the plot of the latest Miss Julia novel, these novels are really all about the

characters. So if you enjoy a gentle read type of book with a small town Southern setting, this may hit the spot.

Sittenfeld, Cur. <u>Eligible a Modern Retelling of</u> (Random \$28)

Sisters Liz Bennet (a magazine editor) and Jane Bennet (a yoga instructor) come back home from New York City to Cincinnati to help take care of their recently hospitalized father in this modern take on Jane Austen's classic *Pride and Prejudice*. Once the sisters arrive at the family home, they discover their mother is all atwitter with the news that Dr. Chip Bingley (who starred on a recent season of the hit reality television show *Eligible*) has moved into the neighbor and has brought his friend Dr. Fitzwilliam Darcy along with him. Sittenfeld deftly rings some clever contemporary changes on many of the pivotal plot points in Austen's original storyline as well as capturing some of the cool, ironic wit of Austen displays in her own writing.

St James, Simon. <u>Lost Among the Living</u> (NAL \$15)

Three years after her husband Alex died in Germany during World War I, Jo Manders manages to eke out a living working as a paid companion to Alex's aunt Dottie Forsyth. After traveling through Europe with Dottie, the two return home to the Forsyth family estate, Wych Elm House, where Dottie's troubled daughter Francis committed suicide several years ago. As Jo settles into her new work routine at Wych Elm House, she not only discovers some startling secrets about Alex but also finds that someone – or something – is trying to tell her more about Francis's death. Imagine a combination of Henry James The Turn of the Screw, Mary Stewart's The Ivy Tree, and Susan Kearsley's Mariana, and you will get some idea of the literary flavor of this book. St. James is a marvel at subtly mixing spooky suspense, a dash of horror, light romance, and an impeccably crafted historical setting into one spellbinding story

Thomas, Rosie. <u>Iris and Ruby</u> (Overlook \$27.95)

British author Thomas chronicles the romantic adventures of three generations of women in this

colorful, exotically set tale that won the best book of the year from the British Romantic Novelists Association. The book opens with Ruby Black, who is running away from troubles at home in England, arriving in Cairo to visit her grandmother Iris, whom she hasn't seen in years. After a somewhat rocky start, the two form an unexpected bond as Ruby helps Iris record her memories of her years living in the city during World War II when she fell in love with Captain Xan Molyneux only to lose him to the war. Thomas writes entertaining family sagas/romances very much in the vein of Barbara Taylor Bradford.

Wiggs, Susan. Starlight on Willow Lake (Mira \$7.99)

Working as a caregiver for the Bellamy family is going to give Faith McCallum the opportunity to rebuild her shattered life as well as take care of her two daughters. However, not only is Faith's new client, tart-tongued Alice Bellamy, a handful, Faith finds herself falling for Alice's son, the jet-setting Mason, who it seems can't wait to get away from the family homestead.

Children's Fic and YA Lit

Cavallaro, Brit. <u>A Study in Charlotte</u> (Harper \$17.99)

This start to a new trilogy features the teen descendants of Sherlock Holmes and John Watson. Londoner Jamie Watson isn't initially thrilled about being stuck at Sherringford, a tony Connecticut boarding school, especially since it is also the home of moody and brilliant Charlotte Holmes. Still considering exactly who their great-great-great grandfathers were, Jamie has hopes that he and Charlotte might at least be friends. When a classmate who has been accused of sexually assaulting Charlotte, winds up murdered in a setting right out of "The Adventure of the Speckled Band" and Charlotte is being framed for the crime, Jamie discovers that there is no better time for the two to team up and put their inherited deductive skills to good use.

Fox, Janet. <u>Charmed Children of Rook-skill</u> (Mulholland \$16.99)

While London suffers under the Blitz, Katherine,

Robbie, and Amelia Bateson are sent by their mother to Scotland to attend a private school in Rookskill Castle. The castle is rumored to be haunted by ghosts as well as being a magnet for dark magic, but Kat believes there is a more modern danger present: the headmistress, Lady Eleanor, is hiding a Nazi spy. But Kat and her siblings soon discover Lady Eleanor is a formidable adversary and the rumors of magic at Rookskill Castle may be all too true.

Parks, Kathy. <u>Lifeboat Clique</u> (Harper \$17.99) The publisher of this teen novel has been promoting it as a cross between Mean Girls and The *Life ofPi*, and honestly, they are not that far off the mark. Denver and Abigail once were BFFs, but now they are no longer speaking to each other. Abigail is one of the popular kids at high school while Denver is one of school's untouchables. So when dreamy heartthrob Croix invites Denver to an after-hours party being thrown at an empty mansion in Malibu, Denver thinks it must be a joke. But Croix insists he is really into Denver, so she shows up at the party only to have it turn out to be a complete disaster (literally). An earthquake triggers a freak tsunami that hits Malibu and washes a good chunk of the beach – including the mansion in which the teens are partying – out to sea. By some miracle, Denver eventually finds herself stuck in a rowboat with Abigail, two other girls at the top of the high school popularity food chain, and surfer/ musician Trevor. The real question is whether this group can learn to work together to survive or will it be everyone for themselves? Parks writes with a wonderfully snarky sense of humor as well as a keen sense comic timing as she explores the power of cliques as well as the true value of friendship in this wildly entertaining, if at times dark, novel.

Nonfiction

Spoto, Donald. <u>Gírls Got to Breathe</u> (Univ CO \$35)

Spoto has authored a number of biographies of Hollywood stars (including Grace Kelly) as well as a notable book about filmmaker Alfred Hitch cock so he is definitely working in his literary wheelhouse with this biography of actress Teresa Wright. Oscar-nominated Wright was best known for her parts in a number of different films of the 1940s including The Best Years of Our Lives and Mrs. Miniver. One of her more famous performances came as the suspicious niece of the charming serial murderer in Alfred Hitchcock's Shadow of a Doubt, and Spoto was introduced to Wright while he was working on his Hitchcock book. A friendship was quickly established and after her death, Wright gave Spoto access to all of her own correspondence and personal papers. The result is a fascinating look at a genuinely nice actress who was dedicated to her craft and who managed to turn in some stellar performances while avoiding the diva-like temper tantrums and destructive personal vices that plagued some of her colleagues.