

# Midmonth BookNotes

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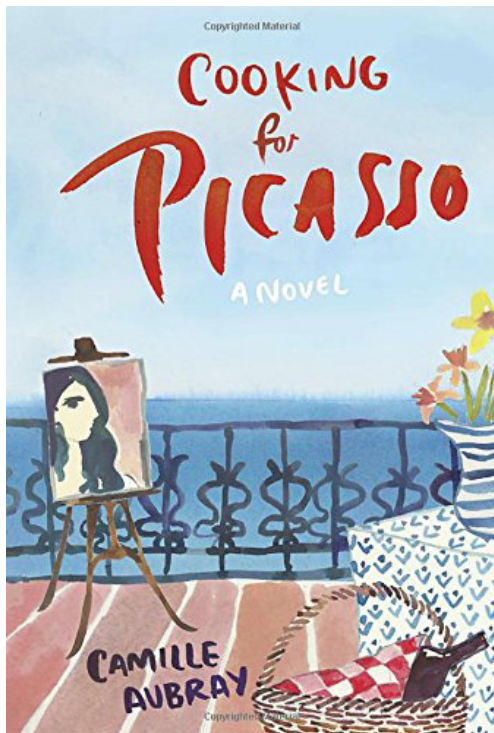
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## An Amorous August



*Aubray, Camille. [Cooking for Picasso](#)* (Ballantine \$27)

The French Riviera, spring 1936. Seventeen year old aspiring chef Ondine Belange knows that working in her family's café in Juan-les-Pins means doing any number of odd jobs but her latest task is really unusual. A mysterious new resident of the village has requested that every day someone from the café deliver lunch to his villa and then serve it to him there. What Ondine doesn't know until she arrives at the villa is that the café's new customer is none other than Pablo Picasso. New York City, present day. Hollywoodmakeup artist Celine has just arrived home to celebrate the holidays with her family when her mother Julie gives her a notebook filled with

recipes and remembrances of Celine's grandmother Ondine. As Celine goes through the notebook, she discovers that not only did Ondine cook for Picasso, she also posed for a painting by the legendary artist, and that the painting may still exist hidden among Ondine's possessions. Celine immediately books a trip to the Riviera ostensibly to take a cooking class, but with the real intent of finding her grandmother's painting. Aubray, who wrote a series of delightful contemporary mysteries as C.A. Belmond (*A Rather Lovely Inheritance*, etc.) was inspired by a real incident in Picasso's life when he disappeared from Paris and retreated to a small village on the French Riviera in order to escape his turbulent love life. With its dual timeline plot, strong suspicion of romance, and a generous measure of mystery, *Cooking for Picasso* will definitely appeal to fans of Beatriz Williams's historical novels as well as anyone who loved Michelle Gable's *I'll See You in Paris*. And the book's beautifully realized French Riviera setting and mouthwatering descriptions of food and wine make it equally appealing to readers of Peter Mayle's novels.

*Brown, Alex. [The Secret of Orchard Cottage](#)* (Harper \$14.99)

Still emotionally recovering from husband's death, April Summers decides a visit her great aunt Edith in Tindledale might be just the thing to help her get back into the game of life. However, once April arrives in the small village, she is surprised to discover both Edie and her cottage seem more than a bit worse for wear. What is even more worrisome is that Edie keeps confusing April with Edie's older sister Winnie,

who disappeared from sight during World War II. With two new tasks to keep her busy – reviving the orchard and unraveling the mystery of Edie’s missing sister – April, with the help of some of the residents of Tindledale slowly starts peel away the layers of neglect that have settled over Orchard Cottage, but can her great-aunt’s home work its magic on April as well? I love this series by Brown set in the friendly village of Tindeldale. The stories are sweet and cozy and the very definition of a “gentle read.” Think of Brown’s books as the literary equivalent of a warm cup of cocoa or a modern update on the classic Miss Read books.

*Brown, Eleanor. [Light of Paris](#)* (Putnam \$26)

Trapped in an unhappy marriage, Madeleine decides to take a break from the constant scrutiny of her controlling husband by visiting her mother in Magnolia. Once there, Madeleine discovers her mother plans on selling the family home, and while helping pack up her belongings, Madeleine stumbles across some diaries written by her grandmother Margie in the attic. The free-spirited woman who visits Paris in 1924 in the diaries is nothing like the staid and proper grandmother Madeline knows. This in turn inspires Madeline to create her own “Parisian” summer by re-embracing her love of painting, connecting with a circle of artistic friends, and flirting with a chef, who feeds both her body and her soul.

*Byrne, Kerrigan. [The Highlander](#)* (SimonSchuster \$7.99)

Known as the “Demon Highlander,” Lieutenant Colonel Liam Mackenzie has drawn upon the barbaric strength of his Highland ancestors to defeat all of his foes on the battlefield. But when an English governess calling herself Miss Philomena turns up to take care of his children, Liam finds himself facing his most cunning opponent ever.

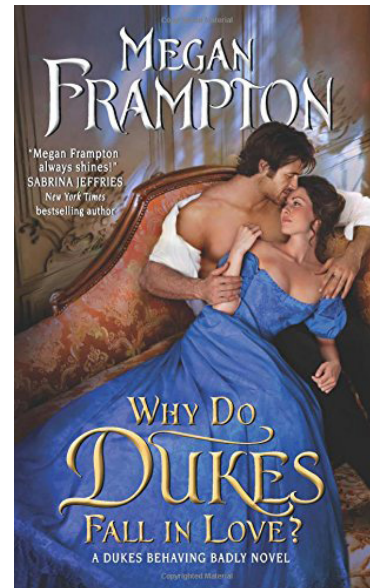
*Carr, Robyn. [Swept Away](#)* (Mira \$15.99)

When she stumbles upon the dead body of her wealthy boyfriend’s wife, Jennifer Chaise escapes to a nearby town, where she takes a job as a waitress and meets the man of her dreams, forcing her to make a difficult and possibly deadly decision. Originally published as *Runaway Mistress* back

in 2005, Carr’s publishers have brought this back into print in a new trade paperback format with a new title.

*Chiaverini, Jennifer. [Mrs Grant and Madame Jule](#)* (\$16)

In this trade paperback reprint of Chiaverini’s latest hardcover historical novel, the author explores the complicated relationship between Missouri belle Julia Dent and her slave Julia (known as Jule). When Julia marries Ulysses S. Grant, she takes Jule along with her as the couple forge a new life together first during the tumultuous years of the Civil War and later during Grant’s tenure as President. But Jule wants more from life than just being Julia’s maid and confidant, so when the opportunity to break free presents itself, Jule seizes the chance to make a new life for herself.



*Frampton, Megan. [Why Do Dukes Fall in Love?](#)* (Harper \$7.99)

There really is a shortage of good servants! At least this is what Michael, the Duke of Hadlow, is beginning to believe after interviewing and then summarily dismissing fourteen candidates for the position of his personal secretary. So when the Quality Employment Agency sends a perfectly suited person for the position to Michael, he is more than thrilled. The fact that the candidate – one Mrs. Edwina Cheltam – is a woman, matters less to Michael than Edwina’s ability to take accurate dictation and do sums without the aid of her fingers and toes. Michael is positive he can keep

things between himself and his new employee on a strictly professional basis, but that is before Michael gets a chance to really spend some time with Edwina and realizes he is slowly falling in love with his new employee. Frampton is one of the new stars of historical romance.

*Fremantle, Elizabeth. [Sisters of Treason](#) (\$15.99)*

Early in Mary Tudor's turbulent reign, Lady Catherine and Lady Mary Grey are reeling after the brutal death of their elder seventeen-year-old sister, and the succession is by no means stable. Neither sister is well suited to a dangerous career at court. Flirtatious Lady Catherine, thought to be the true heir, cannot control her compulsion to love and be loved. Her sister, clever Lady Mary, has a crooked spine and a tiny stature in an age when physical perfection equates to goodness – and both girls have inherited the Tudor blood that is more curse than blessing. For either girl to marry without royal permission would be a potentially fatal political act. It is the royal portrait painter, Levina Teerlinc, who helps the girls survive these troubled times. She becomes their mentor and confidante, but when the Queen's sister, the hot-headed Elizabeth Tudor, inherits the crown, life at court becomes increasingly treacherous for the surviving Grey sisters. Ultimately each young woman must decide how far she will go to defy her Queen, risk her life, and find the safety and love she longs for. If you love Philippa Gregory's historical fiction, Fremantle's novels are a real find.

*French, Kat. [One Hot Summer](#) (Harper \$14.99)*

Alice McBride's husband Brad is super famous, totally gorgeous . . . and having an affair with his co-star. And now it's splashed across all the newspapers. After kicking Brad out, Alice decides to rent out her beloved home for the summer. And the last person she expects to arrive at Borne Manor is a sexy cowboy called Robinson. Country music star Robinson has had his own share of heartache, and he's come to Borne Manor to escape from it all. Neither Alice nor Robinson are looking for romance, but the spark between them can't be ignored.

*Gibson, Rachel. [Just Kiss Me](#) (Harper \$7.99)*

While spending her teenage years cleaning homes for a living in Charleston, Vivian Leigh Rochet promises herself that some day she will be a big movie star just like her namesake. Now a famous actress, Vivian returns home to Charleston where she immediately bumps into Harrison Whitley-Shuler, scion of one of the town's wealthiest families. For Harrison, Vivian was always the girl who got away, but now that she is back does Harrison really want to revisit his romantic past?

*Griffin, Casey. [Must Love Wieners](#) (St Martins \$7.99)*

With three different part-time jobs, veterinary school student Piper Summers is only just scraping by financially. So when Piper loses two of her sources of income, she is really in a money pickle until billionaire CEO Aiden Caldwell offers a job walking his newly adopted dachshund. But is Aiden really only looking for a dog walker or is he interested in offering Piper a completely different position? This charming debut will have dog-lovers happily wagging their own reading tails.

*Harms, Kelly. [The Matchmakers of Minnow Bay](#)*

(St Martins 25.99)

When a downturn in her circumstances forces her out of her apartment, a young artist discovers a lost letter revealing that her impulsive Vegas marriage is still valid and embarks on a journey to reconnect with her husband in his small-town, off-the-grid community.

*Holliday, Lucy. [A Night in with Marilyn Monroe](#) (Harper \$15.99)*

Libby Lomax is finally putting the pieces of her life back together after her affair with hotter-than-sin but totally caddish actor Dillon O'Hara fizzles out. Libby has new – much nicer – boyfriend and she is ready to help her best friend Ollie with the grand opening of his new restaurant. Then Marilyn Monroe suddenly turns up on the "special" sofa in Libby's flat all prepared to offer Libby advice on dating. Given Marilyn's own experiences with men, Libby is initially some

what reluctant to accept her words of wisdom on dating, but, on the other hand, what does Libby have to lose? Holliday introduced Libby with the book *A Night in with Audrey Hepburn* and next year will deliver *A Night in with Grace Kelly*. (Can you sense the theme here?) Fun and funny, British-flavored chick lit for readers of Sophie Kinsella or Marian Keyes.

**Hood, Ann.** [\*The Book That Matters Most\*](#) (Norton \$25.95)

After her twenty-five year marriage suddenly implodes, Ava North joins a local library book group partly for the literary discussions but mainly for the companionship. This year each of the participants must share the book that matters most to them. As Ava hunts for the novel that kept her going through a childhood trauma, she discover the same book now will help her deal with her daughter Maggie, whose relationship troubles in Paris are threaten to destroy her. Hood writes with great insight about how books can bring us together as well as their power to comfort us and help clarify problems in our lives. If you loved Karen Joy Fowler's *The Jane Austen Book Club* or Gabrielle Zevin's *The Storied Life of A.J. Fikry*, Hood's latest will be right up your literary alley.

**Jordan, Sophie.** [\*Hell Breaks Loose\*](#) (Harper \$7.99)

Shy and awkward, First Daughter Grace Reeves has always done what she's told. Tired of taking orders, she escapes her security detail for a rare moment of peace. Except her worst nightmare comes to life when a ruthless gang of criminals abducts her. Her only choice is to place her trust in Reid Allister, an escaped convict whose piercing gaze awakens something deep inside her. Reid is nothing like her other captors. Jordan writes hot and sexy romances with the ultimate testosterone-rich, bad boy heroes.

**Macomber, Debbie.** [\*Sweet Tomorrows\*](#) (Ballantine \$26)

After Mark Taylor's departure from Cedar Cove nine months ago, Rose Harbor innkeeper Jo Marie Rose finds herself testing the dating waters once again while at the same time forging a friendship with one of her new boarders, schoolteacher Emily Gaffney, who is staying at the inn while searching

for a home of her own. Macomber brings her Rose Harbor series to a satisfying conclusion with this sweet tale of love and hope, healing and friendship.

**Meadows, Rae.** [\*I Will Send Rain\*](#) (Holt \$26)

If only it would rain. That is the thought on the minds of every resident of the town of Mulehead, Oklahoma in 1934. The Bell family is already struggling to make their farm a success, and now with no rain but an endless amount of dust, it seems hopeless. Annie Bell finds herself thinking more and more about the flirtatious hints the town's mayor keeps dropping. Samuel Bell seeks answers for the drought in the Bible, which somehow leads him to begin building a boat in his barn. The Bell's teenage daughter Birdie becomes caught up in the throes of her first love affair with the son of a neighboring farmer, and young Fred Bell struggles with a lung ailment that is exasperated by all the dust. Every day, the family looks to the horizon in the hopes of spotting the slightest hint of rain only to see the seemingly never-ending promise of yet another dust storm. Bleak? Yes. Heartbreaking? Well, of course. But Meadow's latest historical novel is so beautifully written, you simply can't stop reading it. With is richly nuanced characters and vividly evoked Midwestern setting, this is historical fiction of the highest caliber.

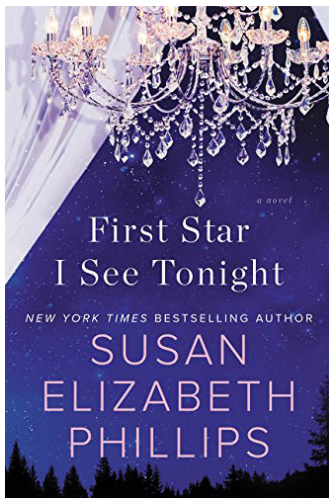
**Moriarty, Liane.** [\*Truly Madly Guilty Signed\*](#) (Flatiron \$26.99)

Sam and Clementine have a wonderful, albeit, busy life: they have two little girls, Sam has just started a new dream job and Clementine, a cellist, is busy preparing for the audition of a lifetime. If there's anything they can count on, it's each other. Clementine and Erika are each other's oldest friends. A single look between them can convey an entire conversation. But theirs is a complicated relationship, so when Erika mentions a last minute invitation to a barbecue with her neighbors, Tiffany and Vid, Clementine and Sam don't hesitate. Having Tiffany and Vid's larger than life personalities there will be a welcome respite. Two months later, it won't stop raining, and Clementine and Sam can't stop asking themselves the question: What if we hadn't gone? I absolutely hated Moriarty's *The*

*Husband's Secret* when it came out and swore I would never read another book by this author again. Well, so much for that literary vow. I have to admit that I was mesmerized by *Truly, Madly, Guilty* and the manner in which the novel explores parenting, marriage, and friendship, and how guilt and resentment can slowly erode all of these building blocks in life. There is almost a claustrophobic feel to the story and the pacing is definitely on the glacial side, but I now see why so many readers have fallen for Moriarty's books.

*Novak, Brenda. [The Secrets She Kept](#)*  
(Mira \$26.99)

In denial about his mother's death, ruled a suicide, Keith returns to Fairham Island to reinstate the family business empire and search for his mother's killer, in a follow-up to the *New York Times* best-selling *The Secret Sister*.



*Phillips, Susan. [First Star I See Tonight](#)*  
(Harper \$26.99)

Cooper Graham has cracked her cover! That is the first thing private investigator Piper Dove thinks when the former Super Bowl winning quarterback has her hauled into his private office at the swanky Chicago nightclub he now owns. However, despite his best efforts to get Piper to reveal who paid her to tail him, she remains mum. Impressed by her professional integrity, Cooper decides to hire Piper to do some security work at his nightclub with the idea that the more time they spend together, the easier it will be for him to get Piper to talk. After all, Cooper is used to getting his way with women. But then again, Piper isn't one of Cooper's typical "fans."

Writing with a deceptively easy sense of grace that is equally enhanced with her distinctively dry sense of wit, Phillips continues her popular Chicago Stars series with another irresistibly sexy love story that is guaranteed to hit every romance reader's sweet spot. This really is one of the best contemporary romances of the year!

*Pilcher, Rosamund. [Coming Home](#)*  
(\$16.99)

In 1935, Judith Dunbar is left behind at a British boarding school when her mother and baby sister go off to join her father in Singapore. At Saint Ursula's, her friendship with Loveday Carrey-Lewis sweeps her into the privileged, madcap world of the British aristocracy, teaching her about values, friendship, and wealth. But it will be the drama of war, as it wrenches Judith from those she cares about most that will teach her about courage...and about love. The re-issuing of Pilcher's engrossing women's fiction novels continues.

*Reichert, Amy E. [Luck, Love & Lemon Pie](#)*

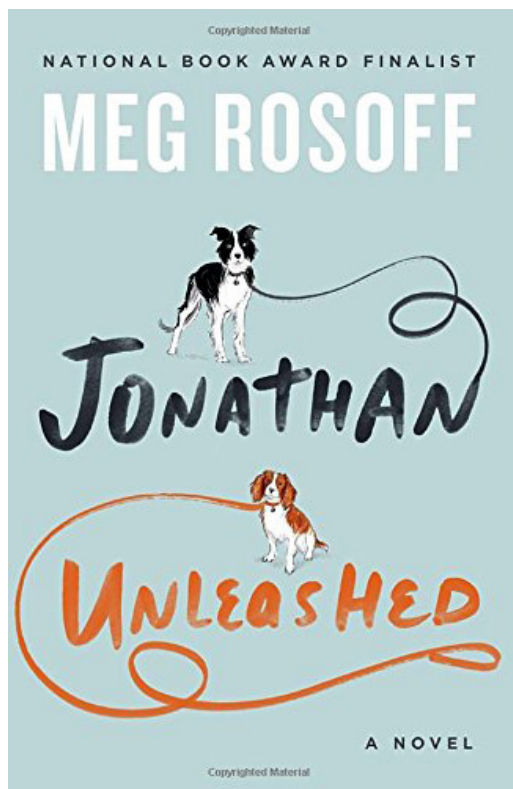
(Gallery \$16)

Afraid that her marriage is imploding, Milwaukee-area wife and mother M.J. Boudreaux hopes to reconnect with her casino-obsessed husband Chris by taking up poker. However, when MJ discovers she has a real talent for the game, she ends up spending more time at the poker table and less with her family than she first envisioned. After a number of big wins, MJ finds herself in Las Vegas, where she is pulled into the orbit of a sexy poker star forcing MJ to finally choose between her old life and a new one that could be in the cards.

*Rosen, Jane L. [Nine Women, One Dress](#)*  
(Knopf \$24.95)

Natalie is a Bloomingdale's salesgirl mooning over her lawyer ex-boyfriend who's engaged to someone else after just two months. Felicia has been quietly in love with her happily married boss for twenty years; now that he's a lonely widower, she just needs the right situation to make him see her as more than the best executive assistant in Midtown Manhattan. Andrea is a private detective specializing in gathering evidence

on cheating husbands—a skill she unfortunately learned from her own life—and can't figure out why her intuition tells her the guy she's tailing is one of the good ones when she hasn't trusted a man in years. For these three women, as well as half a dozen others in sparkling supporting roles—a young model fresh from rural Georgia, a diva Hollywood star making her Broadway debut, an overachieving, unemployed Brown grad who starts faking a fabulous life on social media, to name just a few—everything is about to change, thanks to the dress of the season, the perfect little black number everyone wants to get their hands on. Think of this as an adult spin on the popular *Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants* books.



*Rosoff, Meg. [Jonathan Unleashed](#)*  
(Penguin \$25)

Jonathan Trefoil's boss is unhinged, his relationship baffling, and his apartment just the wrong side of legal. His girlfriend wants to marry someone just like him—only richer and with a different sense of humor. He doesn't remember life being this confusing, back before everyone expected him to act like a grown-up. When his brother asks him to look after his dogs, Jonathan's world view begins to shift. Could a border collie and a cocker spaniel hold the key to life,

the universe, and everything? Their sly maneuvering on daily walks and visits to the alluring vet suggest that these two dogs really do know what is best for Jonathan. Rosoff's first novel *How I Live Now*, won the Printz Award and was short-listed for the Orange Prize, and since then her other books have been awarded or short-listed for the Carnegie Medal and the National Book award among others. Rosoff's latest comic novel is a charmer brimming over with a wry sense of wit and a sharp understanding of the many potential potholes that litter the road to adulthood. And honestly, the dogs completely steal the show!

*Spindler, Erica. [The First Wife](#)*  
(\$7.99)

After a whirlwind romance, Bailey Browne moves to her husband's horse farm in Louisiana, but as Bailey begins to settle into her new life, she finds herself troubled by the rumors about the suspicious death of his first wife as well as the disappearances of other women in the area. Think a modern take on *Rebecca* set in the South.

*Staub, Wendy Corsi. [Blue Moon](#)*  
(Harper \$7.99)

Annabelle Bingham knows the mansion at 46 Bridge Street is a steal for a very good reason: it was one of the three "Murder Houses" used by the Sleeping Beauty Killer a century ago. However, given their house-hunting budget—limited to say the least—and the absence of any other affordable, decent family homes in Mundy's Landing, Annabelle and her husband Trib decide to buy the mansion recently owned by Augusta Purcell. Despite the fact that the town is gearing up to celebrate the centennial of the three Sleeping Beauty Murders, Annabelle is positive that she and her husband and their young son Oliver can avoid any curiosity seekers, who might decide to camp outside their new home. What Annabelle didn't take into account is that mixed among the harmless tourists is someone who plans on celebrating MundyPalooza by recreating the Sleeping Beauty Murders right down to the last detail. Staub's new series is domestic suspense very much in the manner of early Mary Higgins Clark.

*Ward, J R. [The Angels' Share](#)*

(NAL \$28)

In Charlemont, Kentucky, the Bradford family is the crème de la crème of high society—just like their exclusive brand of bourbon. And their complicated lives and vast estate are run by a discrete staff who inevitably becomes embroiled in their affairs. This is especially true now, when the apparent suicide of the family patriarch is starting to look more and more like murder. No one is above suspicion—especially the eldest Bradford son, Edward. The bad blood between him and his father is known far and wide, and he is aware that he could be named a suspect. As the investigation into the death intensifies, he keeps himself busy at the bottom of a bottle—as well as with his former horse trainer's daughter. Meanwhile, the family's financial future lies in the perfectly manicured hands of a business rival, a woman who wants Edward all to herself. Miss all those glitz and glam novels that Judith Krantz and Judith Michaels used to write with plots stuffed to the gills with sex, scandals, and secrets? Then you will definitely want to scoop up the latest entry in Ward's Bourbon Kings series.

*Wells, Robin. [The French War Bride](#)*

(Berkley \$16)

At her retirement home in Wedding Tree, Louisiana, ninety-one-year-old Amelie O'Connor is in the habit of leaving her door open for friends. One day she receives an unexpected visitor—Kat Morgan, the ex-fiancée of her late husband, Jack. Kat and Jack were high school sweethearts who planned to marry when Jack returned from France after World War II. But in a cruel twist of fate, their plans were irrevocably derailed when a desperate French girl overheard an American GI's confession in a Parisian church. Now, Kat wants to know the truth behind a story that's haunted her whole life. Finding out how Amelie stole Jack's heart will—she thinks—finally bring her peace. World War II settings and France have been popular recently in women's and historical fiction (no doubt in part due to the success of Kristin Hannah's *The Nightingale*).

*Wiggs, Susan. [The Family Tree Signed](#)*

(Harper \$25.99)

Annie Rush knows she has a great life. Her cable cooking show, *The Key Ingredient*, is a big ratings hit. Viewers not only love the show's sexy celebrity chef host (Annie's husband Martin Harlow) but they adore his perky co-host Melissa Barrett. Then one day Annie receives some unexpected personal news that she knows will definitely change her and Martin's future for the better. Annie rushes to the set of the show to share everything with Martin only to find her husband is taking a "private meeting" with Melissa in his trailer. Hurt and betrayed by what she discovers, Annie rushes off the set only to suffer a tragic accident that puts her in a coma. One year later, Annie wakes up in her old hometown of Switchback, Vermont. Now with some help from an old book of recipes written by her beloved Nona, Annie not only tries to put the pieces of her life back together again, she must also decide if she wants to take a second chance at love with her old high school sweetheart Fletcher Wyndham. Wiggs is one of the brightest stars in the romance and women's fiction firmament, and her latest novel beautifully showcases her flair for crafting richly nuanced characters as well as coming up with an emotionally engaging storyline.

*Williams, Beatriz. [Along the Infinite Sea](#)*

(\$16)

When readers last met Pepper Schuyler in the pages of *Tiny Little Thing*, the youngest of the Schuyler daughters was struggling with how to deal with the soon-to-be-noticeable effects of a romantic fling with a married politician while she worked at restoring a 1936 Mercedes-Benz Special Roadster, which she found abandoned in a shed. Now Pepper figures that the money she earns from auctioning the car will solve all her problems. However, it turns out the anonymous buyer of the car, Annabelle Dommerich, actually has a past connection with the roadster that stretches back to World War II and is tied to a love so strong it has withstood the decades. Two women with past secrets find an unexpected friendship with each other as well as the strength to face their futures in the latest spellbinding novel from *New York Times* bestseller Williams, who is unrivaled when it comes to deftly weav

ing together two different storylines into one completely mesmerizing tale. Readers who relish impeccably crafted historical novels sweetened with a generous splash of danger and romance will not want to miss this captivating book.

*Winter, Jessica. [Break in Case of Emergency](#) (Knopf \$25.95)*

The financial meltdown of 2008 forces aspiring artist Jen to accept a job at a feminist nonprofit foundation led by Leora Infinitis, a wealthy actress and celebrity philanthropist. However, instead of a nurturing and welcoming work environment, Jen finds herself battling with backstabbing co-workers and dealing with an egomaniac boss while at the same time struggling to keep her marriage from unraveling. Winter acerbically skewers the idea of celebrity do-goodism while at the same time exploring the nature of female friendship both in and out of the workplace in this entertaining, if slightly sour, novel.

## Cozy Corner

*Andrews, Donna. [Die Like an Eagle](#) (St Martins \$25.99)*

As Team Mom for her sons' youth baseball team, the Caerphilly Eagles, Meg Langslow is more than willing to go to bat against Biff Brown, the tyrannical president of the county's Summerball Youth Baseball League. Meg knows from her own experience as the special assistant to the mayor of Caerphilly, that getting Biff to complete a job – he currently has several county construction projects to complete – is next to impossible, but that doesn't mean Meg is going to let him run roughshod over the Eagles. However, when Biff's look-alike half-brother is found dead in one of the porta-pottys on the baseball field, Meg begins to wonder exactly how many people Biff has ticked off since she is certain he was supposed to be the intended murder victim. Multiple Agatha-winner Andrews takes on America's favorite pastime in the 19<sup>th</sup> installment in her long-running series featuring the long-suffering Meg Langslow and her extended quirky family, and the result is another laugh-out-loud cozy that deftly skewers some of the craziness that

occurs when parents become too involved in their children's sporting events.

*Ballard, Mignon. [Miss Dimple and the Slightly Bewildered](#) (St Martins \$25.99)*

When Elderberry's favorite first grade teacher Miss Dimple Kilpatrick and her friend Virginia, Elderberry's town librarian, finds a young woman seemingly camping out on the porch of the library, they are, of course, concerned. Since October nights can get cold, Miss Dimple invites the young woman, who says her name is Dora, to come back with her to the rooming house where she lives. There Miss Dimple and her friends outfit Dora with a warm coat and a hot meal, but before they can find a place for Dora to stay the night, she disappears. When Dora is found dead the next day at the local Presbyterian church, Miss Dimple finds herself teaming up with Augusta Goodnight, the enigmatic young woman who suddenly turned up and is filling in for the cook at the rooming house, in order to find out who exactly Dora was and who would want to kill her. In her latest uber-cozy historical mystery, Ballard introduces her long-time sleuth Miss Dimple to her other series detective Augusta Goodnight while she expertly weaves in the lives of the small town's other characters with some fascinating details about life during WW II on the home front. The resulting story is a bit like Susan Wittig Albert's *Darling Dahlia's* series or Carolyn Hart's *Letter From Home* with a dash of the show *Touched by an Angel*.

*Berenson, Laurien. [Live and Let Growl](#) (Kensington \$25)*

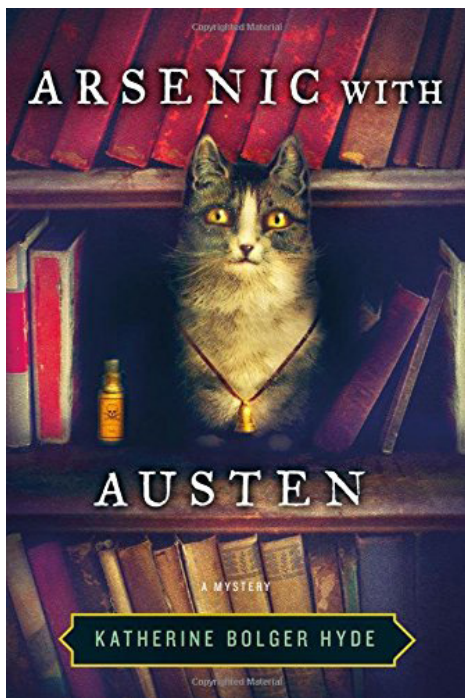
In the latest Melanie Travis Canine mystery, Melanie and her aunt Peg are going to the horses rather than their usual dogs when Peg inherits a race horse. Deciding to combine a trip to Kentucky to see her new acquisition with some judging time the Kentuckiana Dog Show Cluster, Peg convinces Melanie to come along with her. However, their trip takes an unexpected detour when an old friend of Peg's from the dog show circuit winds up dead, and Melanie and Peg find themselves playing amateur detectives in Dixie.



*DiSilverio, Laura. [The Readaholics and the Gothic Gala](#)*

(Berkley \$7.99)

Coordinating the town of Heaven's Celebration of Gothic Novels event is lots of fun for Amy-Faye Johnson until the dead body turns up at the gala masquerade party being held at the country club. The three authors involved in the event all claim not to have known the victim, but someone must have had a reason for killing him. Now Amy-Faye and the other members of her book discussion group decide they will have to dig a bit deeper into these writers' pasts to see if someone might not have a skeleton in their literary closet. I especially enjoyed the intriguing snippets of information about gothic novels and gothic authors DiSilverio deftly incorporated into the plot of her latest Readaholics mystery, and any of the books in this engaging series are perfect for cozy fans who like literary-laced mysteries. DiSilverio will be at the Poisoned Pen on Saturday September 17<sup>th</sup> at 2 PM so mark your calendars now.



*Hyde, Katherine. [Arsenic with Austen](#)*  
(St Martins \$24.99)

Literature professor Emily Cavanaugh expected to inherit a few books from her great-aunt Beatrice Runcible, but when Emily arrives in the small coastal town of Stony Beach, she discovers Beatrice has left her more than half the town as well as her home and a big chunk of change.

However, a few people in town think that Beatrice's death might not have been the accident it seemed to be leaving Emily –with some help from her old high school sweetheart Sheriff Luke Richards – no other choice but to investigate. This debut mystery has a lot of things going for it including a nicely developed small town setting, a soupcon of literary references, and a charming second chance at romance between two over fifty protagonists. The premise of a heroine receiving an unexpected inheritance and sweetly romantic tone of the book in some ways reminded me of Nancy Atherton's Aunt Dimity books, so if you enjoy that series, this might be a great new author for you to try.

*Ferris, Monica. [Knit Your Own Murder](#)*  
(Berkley \$25.95)

After a difficult businesswoman is poisoned during a fundraiser organized by the Monday Bunch and some other local knitters, Betsy Devonshire finds herself taking a break from running her knitting shop in order to untangle a complicated murder plot and find the real killer in the latest entry in Ferris' Needlecraft Mystery series.

*Moose, Ruth. [Wedding Bell Blues](#)* (St Martins \$24.99)

Everyone in the small town of Littleboro is talking about Crazy Reba's upcoming "wedding" to "God," but when bed and breakfast owner Beth McKenzie finds Reba standing over a dead body saying she killed God, Beth realizes the nuptials are definitely going to be postponed. Moose won the Malice Domestic best first traditional mystery novel competition for *Doing It at the Dixie Dew*, and the second in this wacky Southern series will equally delight readers who like their cozy mysteries jam-packed with quirky characters and brimming over with outlandish humor. To get an idea of the flavor of this series (and to decide if they really are for you), imagine Joan Hess' Maggody books with a pinch of Donna Andrews and a smidgeon of Anne George thrown in for good measure.

## The Suspense Is Killing Me

*Robinson, Lee.*

[Lawyer for the Cat](#)

(St Martins \$24.99)

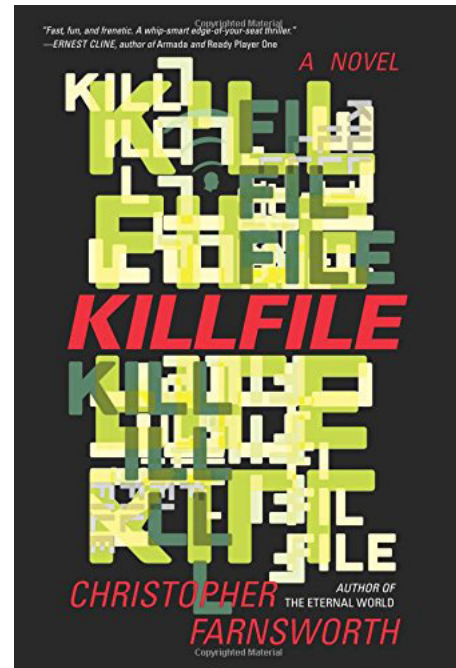
After agreeing to represent Beatrice, a black cat who's the beneficiary of a multi-million dollar trust and a plantation, Sally Baynard must put her wit, charm, and brains to the test, choosing among three colorful potential caregivers while dodging the former owner's angry son. Meanwhile, Sally must juggle the demands of the court with those of her aging mother and make a decision about Tony, her veterinary boyfriend who wants to get more serious. Robinson introduced Sally in *Lawyer for the Dog*, and her latest might be just the ticket for anyone who liked Nancy Martin's *Miss Ruffles Inherits Everything*.

*Saunders, Kate.*

[Secrets of Wishtide](#)

(Bloomsbury \$16)

Our July History/Mystery Pick in hardcover. As a widow living in "reduced circumstances," Letitia "Letty" Rodd is always delighted when her barrister brother Frederick Tyson has a little freelance job for her since it means a bit more money in her coffers. Frederick's latest assignment for Letty involves Charles Calderstone, the son of the wealthy and well-respected Sir James Calderstone. Charles has fallen for the widowed Helen Orme, a woman, who his father believes is too good to be true (or, in other words, a gold-digging hussy). Now disguised as the family's new governess, Letty must discover if Helen might have a skeleton or two in her past. It's a job that Letty initially believes requires nothing more than "a little genteel probing and perhaps a modicum of eavesdropping." However, Letty's latest assignment quickly becomes much more complicated when bodies start turning up. *The Secrets of Wishtide*, the first in a new Victorian-set series, is one of the best mysteries I have read this year! Filled with wonderfully realized characters and just the right dash of dry humor, Saunders new series is off a terrific start.



*Farnsworth, Christopher.* [Killfile](#) (Harper \$25.99)

Most people would think that being able to read another person's mind would be a blast. For John Smith, it is more like a never-ending headache. Constantly having to tune out what everyone around you is thinking is completely draining, which is why when John's latest client – billionaire software inventor Everett Sloan – offers him as his fee a private island, where he can live in solitude, John is more than happy to undertake the job. All John has to do see whether one of Everett's former employees Eli Preston stole the algorithm that Everett originally came up with for his company. If Eli does have the mathematical formula, all John has to do is steal it back and then erase Eli's memory so that he is not able to duplicate it again. Sounds simple, right? It is until Eli's bodyguards suddenly start shooting at John that he realizes his latest case might not be the piece of cake his employer told him it would be. Farnsworth is the author of the wildly imaginative "President's Vampire" trilogy as well as *The Eternal World*, and his latest high-concept thriller is a blast. The way the author let the book's antagonist use the data mining capabilities his company developed to make the hero's life a living hell was especially imaginative (and,

in all probability, is something that is entirely possible today). This fast-paced and often funny (in a darkly acerbic way) thriller is tailor made for fans of James Rollin's Sigma Force books or Preston and Child's Pendergast series.

*Lapena, Shari. [The Couple Next Door](#)*  
(Putnam \$26)

It was just for a few hours, and they would be right next door. That is how Anne and Marco Conti rationalized their decision to leave their baby daughter Cora at home while they attend a dinner party thrown by their next-door neighbors Cynthia and Graham. In addition to keeping their baby monitor on, Anne and Marco take turns going back home every half hour to check on Cora. It will be okay, the couple tell themselves until Anne takes her turn checking up on Cora and discovers her baby is missing. Lapena's debut is another literary contender poised to take the coveted place of Gillian Flynn's and Paula Hawkins's best-selling novels on the *NYT* best-seller list, and it succeeds on many levels for fans of psychological suspense. The author throws a few neat twists into her plot, and she skillfully manages to make the reader suspect the credibility as well as the true motives of almost every character in the book (the fact that the reader really doesn't like any of the main characters is another story altogether). I must admit that I would have been happy if they author had ended her story a couple of pages before the book's shocking conclusion. To the author's credit, she sets up what happens in the end early on in the story so that the poetically just conclusion to the novel isn't coming right out of left field, but for me, it was just one twist too many. Your reading mileage, however, may vary.

*Paris, B.A. [Behind Closed Doors](#)*  
(STM \$25.99)

Everyone thought Grace and Jack Angel had the perfect marriage. Everyone was wrong. When Jack began courting Grace, she thought she had hit the matrimonial jackpot. Jack was handsome, successful, and he promised Grace that her younger sister Millie, who suffers from Down's syndrome, would always have a place in their home after she finished school. It is only after their wedding ceremony while Grace and

Jack are honeymooning in Thailand that Grace begins to realize what a monster she married. Paris' debut is definitely cut from the same cloth as *Gone Girl* and *The Girl on the Train*, but unlike some recent lackluster contenders to become the next "Girl" book, Paris delivers a bone-chillingly suspenseful plot and a heroine with whom readers can really empathize. If you are waiting for the hot, new psychological suspense read of the summer, *Behind Closed Doors* is it.







