

Midmonth BookNotes

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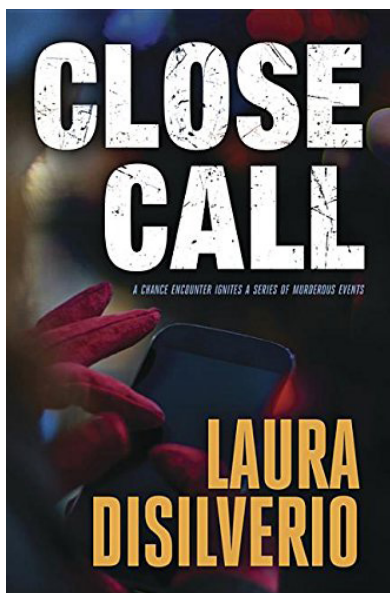
Scottsdale, AZ 85251



A Sizzling September

Authors at the Poisoned Pen

Join Laura DiSilverio and Beth Kendrick at the Poisoned Pen for a fun afternoon talk about their latest books on Saturday September 17th at 2 PM. Laura is the author of a number of different mystery series including the Mall Cop mysteries and the Readaholic mysteries. Her latest book is a stand-alone suspense novel *Close Call*. Beth has written more than a dozen cleverly comic contemporary romances including her recent Black Dog Bay series, of which *Once Upon a Wine* is the latest.



DiSilverio, Laura. [Close Call](#) (\$15.99)

A simple mix-up with cell phones could very well cost Sydney Ellison her life. While picking up dinner for her boyfriend Jason and herself at a popular Washington, D.C. deli, Sydney

mistakenly takes another person's cell phone with her instead of her own. However, before Sydney has even arrived home, the phone rings and a stranger leaves a cryptic message telling the phone's owner that to finish the job on Montoya before the upcoming election and to make it look like an accident. Sydney's own brush with the media fifteen years earlier has left her more than a little gun shy about publicity, so she hesitates bringing the phone and what happened to the attention of the police. But then something terrible happens and Sydney finds herself caught up in killer for hire's sights with no one but her long estranged sister to turn to for help. In some ways *Close Call* is a very clever 21st century take on the classic movie *Sorry, Wrong Number*, and this superbly entertaining, stand-alone thriller from DiSilverio earned a well-deserved starred review from *Library Journal*. Anyone looking for a fast-paced suspense novel with plenty of twists and turns will be delighted to give up a good night's sleep to finish it.

Kendrick, Beth. [Once Upon a Wine](#) (NAL \$15)

Who in the world would buy a winery in Delaware? Apparently Cammie Breyer's Aunt Ginger, is who. At least this is what Cammie discovers after she receives a panicked call from her cousin Kat in Black Dog Bay. It seems Ginger cashed out her retirement account in order to buy the vineyard, and now she needs help getting the business back on track. Since Cammie is the only one in the family with any real experience with wine (and that is really stretching things since Cam

mie's sole professional experiences with *vino* boils down to pushing the stuff to snooty customers in a trendy L.A. restaurant), Ginger desperately wants her to come back home and help out with the new family business. Of course, who is one of the first people Cammie should meet after she sets foot back in Black Dog Bay but local strawberry farmer Ian McKinley, the man who broke her heart back when they were high school sweethearts. Writing with an addictively acerbic sense of wit, Kendrick delivers another winner with the latest installment in her sweet, sassy, and superbly entertaining Black Dog Bay series. P.S. the strawberry wine sounds totally yummy!

More September Titles

Andrews, Brian. [*Tier One*](#) (Amazon \$15.95) This time it's personal. After surviving a terrorist assault at a base in Africa that killed the rest of the members of his team, U.S. Navy SEAL Jack Kemper accepts leadership of Task Force Ember, a top secret government team dedicated to finding terrorists and then eliminating any threat they might pose. So when the task force discovers a new attack on the U.N. building in New York City is in the works, Kemper and his fellow task force members set out to stop it at any cost. Fans of techno thrillers will immediately be able to tell that Andrews and his writing partner Jeffrey Wilson are both U.S. Navy veterans since *Tier One* is jam-packed with plenty of details about special ops work as well as a whole alphabet soup of military acronyms and enough testosterone to power the entire NFL. Fans of Tom Clancy, Stephen Coonts, and Dale Brown will want to check this one out.

Bell, Lenora. [*If I Only Had a Duke*](#) (Harper \$7.99)

After three failed seasons and one disastrous jilting, Lady Dorothea Beaumont has had more than enough of her family's scheming to see her married. Thea won't domesticate a duke, entangle an earl, or vie for a viscount. She will quietly exit to her aunt's Irish estate for a life of blissful freedom. However, when the arrogant, sinfully handsome Garrett, Duke of Osborne,

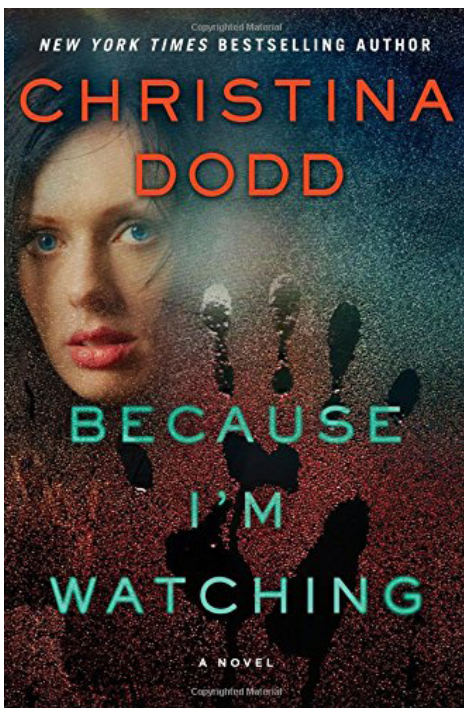
singles her out for a waltz, it throws a serious monkey wrench into Thea's plans to become a social wallflower. Bell is relatively new to romance, but I love her sexy, funny take on some of the classic tropes of the genre. If you like Julia Quinn's Regency-set romances, Bell is a great new discovery.

Carr, Robyn. [*Redwood Bend*](#) (Mira \$7.99) Katie Malone and her two young twin boys' trip to Virgin River takes an unexpected detour when a flat tire leaves the Malone family stranded by the side of road. Fortunately for Katie, Dylan Childress and his motorcycle buddies just happen to be driving by.

Chiaverini, Jennifer. [*Fates and Traitors*](#) (Dutton \$26.95) John Wilkes Booth originally only planned on abducting President Abraham Lincoln and ransoming him for all the Confederate prisoners of war. That plan, however, went tragically awry as any student of American history knows after Booth shot and killed the president at Ford's Theater on April 14, 1865. Chiaverini, who has plenty of experience writing about the American Civil War through her historical novels like *Mrs. Lincoln's Dressmaker* and *Mrs. Grant and Madame Jule*, now tackles how one of the most reviled criminals in U.S. history. Chiaverini explores Booth's life through the viewpoints of four women – his mother Mary Ann, his sister Asia, his "secret fiancée" Lucy Hale, and Confederate war widow Mary Surratt – all of whom loved Booth in their own way for better or for worse. The end result is a meticulously crafted, richly detailed historical novel that offers some intriguing insights into Booth's life and times.

Davis, Fiona. [*Dollhouse*](#) (Dutton \$26) Built in 1922, the Barbizon Hotel for Women was an iconic part of New York City landscape for decades until it was turned into condos at the end of the 20th century. The hotel was designed as a safe residence for professional women and over the course of the years such notables as Joan Crawford, Grace Kelly, and Sylvia Plath lived there. (Plath modeled the Amazon Hotel in her *Bell Jar* after the Barbizon). In Davis' superbly entertain

ing debut novel, journalist Rose Lewin is living at the Barbizon when she meets Darby McLaughlin, one of the 4th floor ladies (older, former residents of the Barbizon, who have been given rent-controlled apartments in the building). Fascinated by the always veiled, always silent Darby, Rose decides to do some investigating only to stumble across a story that could bring her writing career back from the dead. Davis toggles back and forth between 1952 when Darby first arrives at the Barbizon from Ohio to attend secretarial school and the present day as Rose digs into the past and discovers the unlikely friendship between Darby and Esme Castillo, a maid at the hotel. A friendship that ended when Esme fell to her death from one of the upper floors of the Barbizon. Davis' book is a beguiling mix of history, mystery, and a generous dash of romance all rolled into one engaging story. If you enjoy novels by authors like Paula McLain, Melanie Benjamin, or Beatriz Williams, don't miss out on this terrific debut.



Dodd, Christina. [Because I'm Watching](#)
(St. Martins \$26.99)

Best-selling writer Madeline Hewitson knows everyone in the small town of Virtue Falls calls her "Mad Maddie," but Madeline knows she isn't crazy. Instead, Madeline knows someone is trying to drive her insane. Things in her home have been moved around, and Madeline could swear a mysterious stranger, who knows her

deepest, darkest fears and is using this information to taunt her, is stalking her. The strain of constantly having to be on alert, however, is definitely taking its toll, and this, combined with a severe lack of sleep, causes Madeline to accidentally drive her car into the living room of her neighbor - military veteran Jacob Denisov – one day. Madeline quickly discovers that if the residents of Virtue Falls think she is crazy, they obviously have not yet met Jacob. The really crazy thing is that Jacob is the only one who believes Madeline, and he begrudgingly sets out to prove someone is plotting against her. Dodd puts her own scary spin on the classic *Gaslight* scenario in her latest intense, addictively readable suspense novel. The Poisoned Pen has a limited number of signed copies of *Because I'm Watching*, and Dodd has also graciously sent a few lovely lavender sachets to go with her new book for those who may wish one (because if you are being stalked by a fiendishly clever villain, you really need the calming influence of lavender in your life).

Foley, Lucy. [The Invitation](#)
(LittleBrown \$26)

In an attempt to revive his floundering journalism career, Englishman Hal Jacobs accepts an invitation from a friend to an exclusive party given by an Italian *contessa*. However, once Hal arrives at the event, instead of cultivating connections with Rome's movers and shakers, he spends all of his time with a mystery woman named Stella. After one memorable night together, the two part the next morning certain they will never see one another again. A year later, the same Italian *contessa* offers Hal a job writing up the premiere of *The Sea Captain*, a film based on a family story. As part of the job, Hal will be traveling with a group of the *contessa's* friends and others involved in the film on a yacht up the Italian coast to Cannes. Of course, the one thing Hal didn't expect was that one of the passengers on the yacht would be Stella, who just happens to be the unhappily married wife of the American businessman who financed the film. Foley perfectly captures the irresistible flavor of *la dolce vita* lifestyle of Italy in the 1950s as well as the beauty of the Italian coast in her second romantic, if somewhat bittersweet, novel

Gregson, Julia. [Monsoon Summer](#)

(Touchstone \$25.99)

Worn out from her work as a nurse during World War II, Kit Smallwood escapes to Wickam Farm in Oxfordshire where her godmother Daisy is busy setting up a charity that will send European midwives to the Moonstone Home in South India. At Wickam Farm, Kit meets and falls in love with Tomas Thekkeden, an Indian doctor finishing his PhD at Oxford University. Against their parents' wishes, they secretly marry and move to India where Kit plans to run the Moonstone Home. But far from being a romantic adventure, Kit's life in India isn't what she imagined. Her relationship with Tomas and his large, traditional family begins to unravel, her job is fraught with tension, and she is faced with a newly independent India, which now resents England for withdrawing so quickly. Kit tries to form close relationships with her colleagues, but soon learns her limits when her naiveté lands her in a frightening and dangerous situation. If you miss the wonderfully exotic novels of M.M. Kaye or if you are watching (and loving) the new season of *Indian Summers* on PBS, this spellbinding historical novel will be right up your reading alley.

Griffiths, Elly. [Smoke and Mirrors](#)

(Houghton \$25)

DI Edgar Stephens and magician Max Mephisto hunt for a killer during Brighton's holiday season after the gruesome murders of two children found at a crime scene eerily reminiscent of "Hansel and Gretel." Griffiths is also the author of the Ruth Galloway series, and this is the second in her 1950s set Magic Men mysteries. Because of the novel's expertly realized historical setting, the subtly nuanced characters, and the unusual yet totally successful partnership between Stephens and Mephisto, *Smoke and Mirrors* pleasantly reminded me of the *Grantchester* mysteries (both the books and the PBS series).

Guhrke, Laura L. [No Mistress of Mine: An American Heiress](#)

(Harper \$7.99)

Lola Valentine's back in town and Lord Denys Somerton isn't one bit thrilled. Six years ago Lola ended things romantically with Denys because

she knew there is no way an American cabaret dancer from the wrong side of the tracks could ever hope to have a future with a British nobleman. Now Lola is back in London as Denys' new co-owner of the Imperial Music Hall, but she has no intention of picking things up where the two left off. Lola has one single goal in life: to become a dramatic actress. Denys, however, finds his desire for Lola hasn't diminished one whit over the years, but can he persuade her to consider replaying the role of his mistress one more time?

Hewitt, Kate. [Now and then Friends](#)

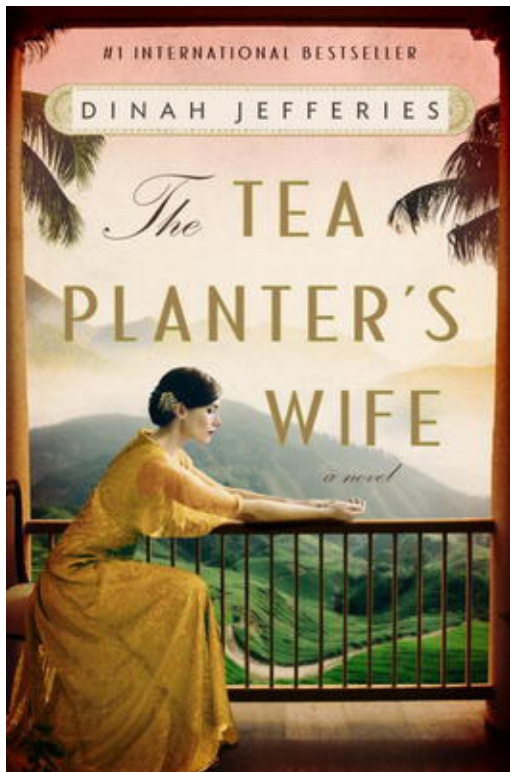
(NAL \$15)

Growing up in the small village of Hartley-by-the-Sea Rachel Campbell and Claire West were the best of friends until one day when Rachel arrived at school and thought Claire had ditched her in order to join the popular girls clique. Now fifteen years later, Claire is back at Hartley-by-the-Sea after her life hits rock bottom. The one thing Claire could really use is a good friend and bumping into Rachel brings back memories of the friendship they once shared. But can Claire find a way to convince Rachel to forget the past and give her another chance? Hewitt, whose books in many ways are the British equivalent of Robyn Carr's geographically connected women's fiction, is a new discovery for me, and I absolutely loved the way she creates a cozy English village type of setting and then populates it with realistically flawed yet totally relatable characters. *Now and then Friends* is a quietly powerful story about friendship, romance, and second chances.

Jackson, Lisa. [After She's Gone](#) (Kensington \$9.99)

Actresses Cassie Kramer and her sister Allie know a thing or two about crazed stalkers since both barely survived an attack by a deranged fan on their mother, a former Hollywood star. Now years later, Allie is a big name actress herself while Cassie is still struggling to make a name for herself in the movie business. So when Allie's body double is shot on the set of latest movie she is filming and Allie turns up missing, everyone begins to wonder if Cassie might have finally snapped and become a crazed stalker herself. Jackson returns to her West Coast series (*Deep*

Freeze, Fatal Burn) with this nail-biting thriller that explores the darker side of sibling rivalry.



Jeffries, Dina. [The Tea Planter's Wife](#) (Crown \$26)

After a whirlwind courtship, Gwen marries Laurence Hooper in England. However once Gwen arrives in Ceylon, she realizes the carefree, romantic man she first met is now a complete stranger. Something other than the day-to-day issues involved in running a tea plantation seems to be burdening Laurence, but he refuses to talk to Gwen about it. What is even more troublesome are the bits of gossip Gwen hears about Laurence's first wife as well as the complete absence of information about her untimely death. As Gwen tries to settle into her life as the new mistress of the plantation, she finds herself stymied by locked doors, trunks of dusty old dresses, and the unexpected discovery of a hidden grave on the estate's ground. British author Jeffries makes her American debut with this mesmerizing historical novel that has been marketed as a worthy successor to *Rebecca*. *The Tea Planter's Wife* definitely shares some literary characteristics with du Maurier's classic novel including a similarly lush writing style and young, naïve heroine, who finds herself now married to man with plenty of secrets. However, Jeffries does come up with plenty of her own inventive

plot twists, and her ability to evoke the beauty and splendor of Ceylon in the 1920s and 1930s is nothing less than magical.

Levine, David D. [Arabella of Mars](#) (Tor \$25.99)

A century after Captain Kidd's first expedition to Mars, Arabella Ashby is set to leave her Martian plantation home for London to learn to be a lady, until her home is threatened and she joins the crew of a Mars Trading Company ship disguised as a boy. This fun and fast-paced mash up of steam punk and science fiction (*a la* Edgar Rice Burroughs and Jules Verne) was chosen as one of *Booklist's* Top Ten Science Fiction and Fantasy debuts for 2016.

Maclean, Sarah. [A Scot in the Dark: Scandal & Scoundrel](#)

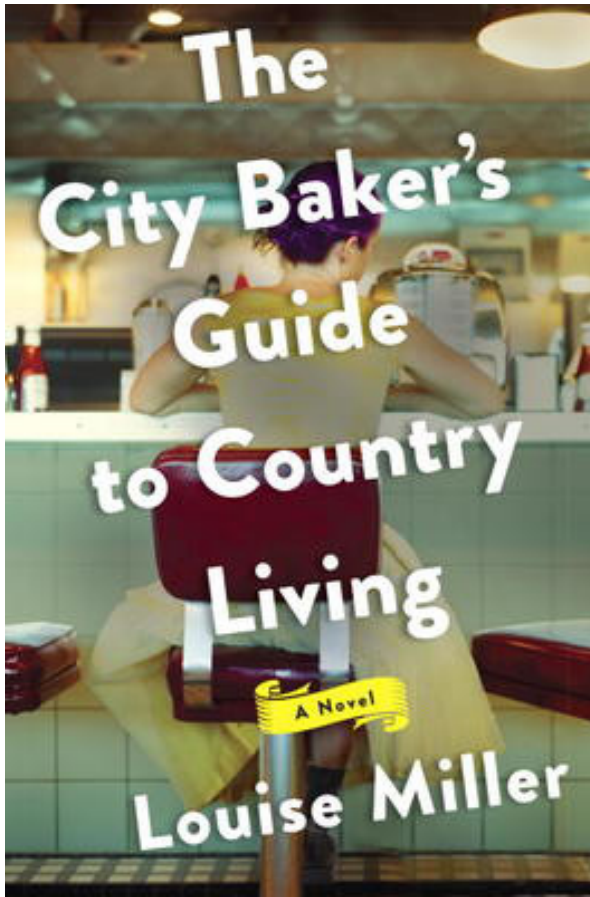
(Harper \$7.99)

Miss Lillian Hargrove thought that she had found true love with up-and-coming artist Derek Hawkins, but it turns out, Derek just wanted to use Lily's face and figure (sans clothing) for his latest painting. With that painting about to be unveiled at the latest Royal Academy show, Lily is facing imminent social ruin when her guardian, Alec Stuart, the new Duke of Warnick, shows up in London to save the day. However, Alec's solution to Lily's problem is to find someone – even himself if it comes down to it – to marry her. But as far as Lily is concerned, this isn't really a solution but just a different kind of problem all together. MacLean's latest *Scandal and Scoundrel* romance is both a lushly sensual and wonderfully witty treat.

Macomber, Debbie. [The Knitting Diaries](#) (\$7.99)

A trio of sweetly satisfying stories about love and knitting is back in print. Includes "Return to Summer Island" by Phoenix area writer Christina Skye in which Caro McNeal returns to Summer Island and finds a new sense of purpose in life when the letters she is exchanging with a marine serving in Afghanistan lead to a possible romance. Susan Mallery's "Knitting is a Passion" features Robyn Mulligan, who is trying to make a fresh start running her grandmother's knitting store in spite of the hot tempered, handsome

man, who has joined the shop's knitting circle. "Knitting is a Way of Life" by Debbie Macomber has young Ellen Roche making a wish that her mother not only will learn to knit but also to find love.



Miller, Louise. [The City Baker's Guide to Country Living](#)

After she nearly torches her Boston place of employment with a flambéed baked Alaska, pastry chef Livvy Rawlings finds herself on a temporary "vacation" from work. With some time on her hands, Livvy with her dog Salty heads off to the small Vermont town of Guthrie to spend some time with her best friend Hannah Doyle. What starts out as a short visit, however, turns into a long-term residency when Livvy accepts a job as the new pastry chef at the Sugar Maple Inn. As big city girl Livvy adapts to small town life, she finds herself gradually falling in love with Guthrie and its quirky inhabitants. In her enchanting debut, Miller writes with warmth and wisdom about love, loss, friendship, and the joys of living in a small town. As an added bonus, the vividly detailed descriptions of the desserts Livvy whips up are simply mouthwatering.

Moran, Michelle. [Mata Hari's Last Dance](#)

(Touchstone \$25)

Known as the "Eye of the Dawn" and the "Star of the East," Mata Hari danced her way across Europe and into the hearts of more than a few people on the eve of World War I. Moran begins her latest historical novel with Mata in jail in 1917 in France on espionage charges telling a reporter her life's story. Fleeing a bad marriage in Java, Margaretha Zelle MacLeod reinvents herself as a dancer trained in the temples of India. Mata's first performance in France in 1905 shocks society (let's just say she didn't spend much money on her costumes) and quickly earns her even more bookings. Thinking of herself as an equal opportunity good-time girl, Mata made "friends" with a number of different wealthy individuals in several different countries. When her latest lover Captain Vadim Maslov, a Russian serving with the French during World War I was wounded in battle, Mata attempted to visit him at the hospital he was at in Germany only to find the French government wouldn't let her leave the country unless she agreed to spy on the Germans. Mata's efforts at espionage ultimately backfired on her when the French arrested her on February 13, 1917 on charges of being a double agent. After a trial, Mata was executed by a firing squad on October 15, 1917. Moran has written a number of excellent historical novels (I especially enjoyed her duet of books about Nefertiti), and her latest literary effort is an intriguing look at the enigma that was Mata Hari.

Morgan, Sarah. [Sunset in Central Park](#)
(Harlequin \$7.99)

Garden designer Frankie Cole didn't have to believe in happy endings to do a great job. Her only responsibility is making sure the flowers for all the events planned by the fledgling company Frankie and her two best friends own are fabulous. However, when Frankie eventually admits to herself that she might have feelings – romantic instead of the platonic friendship ones she keeps telling herself she has – for her best friend Matt Walker, she begins to realize she will have to finally come to terms with her past issues about love and commitment if she wants to have a chance on a romantic future with Matt.

Moyes, Jojo. [After You](#) (\$16)

In this sequel of a sorts to Moyes' best-selling *Me Before You*, Louisa Clark is trying to put the pieces of her life back together again after losing Will Traynor by joining a support group called Moving On. Keep a box of Kleenex nearby, you'll need it.

Neggers, Carla. [Liar's Key](#) (Mira \$26.99)

When retired Special Agent Gordon Wheelock suddenly turns up at her Boston office, art crimes specialist Emma Sharpe knows something is in the works. Gordon informs Emma about the rumors he has heard about some stolen ancient mosaics reported to have last been seen in the company of English art thief Oliver York. Years ago, Gordon and Emma's grandfather, private art detective Wendell Sharpe, spent nearly a decade trying to catch Oliver to no avail. Gordon is positive that Wendell kept some information from him that they could of have used to successfully prosecute Oliver, but Emma refuses to engage in any discussion about the matter with Gordon. However, when a shocking death seems to suggest that Wendell and Oliver might have been conspiring together, Emma has no choice but to get involved, and there is no one other than her fiancé, FBI agent Colin Donovan, that she would rather have by her side. This is the sixth in Negger's series featuring the detecting/romantic duo of Sharpe and Donovan.

Novak, Brenda. [Her Darkest Nightmare](#) (St. Martins \$7.99)

Dr. Evelyn Talbot knows a thing or two about psychopaths. Twenty years ago, Evelyn's high school boyfriend kidnapped, tortured, and killed Evelyn's three best friends. Fortunately, Evelyn managed to escape before she suffered the same fate. That horrific incident prompted Evelyn to begin her life's work studying serial killers in order to try and understand what can turn a person into a cold-blooded killer. Now as the head of Hanover House, a maximum-security prison dedicated to housing serial killers, Evelyn has more than enough subjects to study. But not everyone in the small Alaskan town of Hilltop is thrilled with having Hanover House as part of the landscape, especially when the mutilated

body of a local woman suddenly turns up. *Her Darkest Nightmare* is the first in a new suspense series by Novak, and it scared me silly. If authors like Lisa Gardner are on your favorites list or if you never missed an episode of *Criminal Minds*, this will be right up your alley.

Reilly, Meg Little. [We Are Unprepared](#) (Mira \$15.99)

Moving to the small Vermont town of Isole was supposed to be a fresh start for Ash and his wife Pia. The couple love renovating their farmhouse as well as being able to live "more closely to the land." However, while the couple are on their way back home after a consulting visit with a fertility doctor, they hear some unsettling news on the radio. A combination of freak meteorological events threatens to unleash a series of "super storms" on New England. The threat of the "Storm" also threatens to completely rip apart Pia and Ash's already fragile marriage. Ash is all for working with those residents who want to shore up the town's existing government disaster preparation services while Pia wants to throw her lot in with the local "preppers," who believe in kind of everybody for themselves type of storm preparation mentality. Will this couple's marriage survive the "storm" or will it become just another causality of global warming? With plenty of real world meteorological parallels (the string of supers-sized tornadoes, the rash of excessive heat, etc.) with which to compare, it isn't any wonder that this debut novel has been getting a lot of play with critics and readers. But once again it was the author's voice that tripped me up as a reader. After a couple of chapters, I just didn't care if Ash, Pia, or anyone survived. Your mileage as a reader, however, may vary greatly. And to give the author credit, her book certainly would provide plenty of fodder for a lively discussion by any book group.

Thorne, Sally. [The Hating Game](#) (Harper \$14.99)

Lucy Hutton has a nemesis at work and his name is Joshua Templeman. The two share adjoining desks at Bexley & Gamin Publishing, where they are executive assistants to the two co-CEOs of the firm. Every day Lucy competes with Joshua to see who can win at the "staring game," the

“mirror game,” and the “HR game.” However, when a promotional opportunity opens up at the company, Lucy suddenly finds herself playing a completely different kind of game with Joshua as each of them competes to become the other’s new boss while at the same time trying to forget the steamy kiss they once shared in the elevator. Imagine the cheeky sense of humor from *Bridget Jones’ Diary* crossed with workplace romantic sparring from *The Desk Set* but with more swearing and a lot more sex. That gives you something of an idea of the flavor of this entertaining debut novel by Thorne.

Cozy Corner

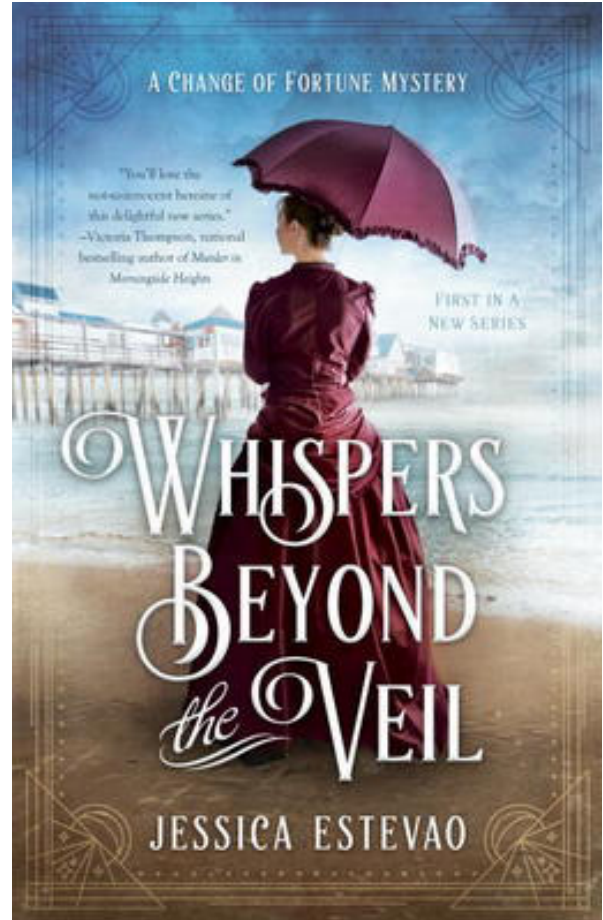
Buckley, Julia. [*Cheddar Off Dead*](#) (Berkley \$7.99)

The Christmas holidays are one of caterer Lilah Drake’s favorite times of the year, until she witnesses the murder of an actor playing the part of Santa Clause. Dealing with local police detective Jay Parker is difficult enough given their past aborted romance, but since Jay believes the killer may attempt to tidy up some loose ends by getting rid of the only witness to the crime (a.k.a. Lilah), he intends on sticking like glue to her side until the murderer is behind bars. I loved *The Big Chili*, the first book in Buckley’s Undercover Dish series, the second was an equally fun treat for cozy fans, who like their culinary mysteries served with a nice side dish of romance. If the thought of reading a Christmas romance while the temperatures are still hovering over the century mark seems a bit much, you can always tuck this one away until we get closer to the true holiday season.

Cahoon, Lynn. [*A Story to Kill*](#) (Kensington \$7.99)

Author Cat Latimer is really counting on the writers retreats she plans on hosting at her new bed and breakfast as becoming another stream of revenue for her. However, when best-selling thriller writer Tom Cook is murdered during Cat’s first retreat, it seems like Cat may have to shut down her business before it even has a chance to become popular. The only hope Cat has is if she, with a little help from her police

chief uncle, can find the murderer before everyone else writes off her new business. *A Story to Kill* is the first in a new series by Cahoon, who delivers everything cozy readers crave including a nicely detailed small college town setting and the requisite romantic interest in the form of Cat’s old high school boyfriend.



Estevao, Jessica. [*Whispers Beyond the Veil*](#)

(Berkley \$15)

After unwittingly becoming involved in the death of a co-worker when one of her father’s miracle cures goes horribly wrong, Ruby Proulx leaves the traveling medicine show circuit and her father behind to head for Old Orchard, Maine, where she hopes to finally meet her maternal aunt Honoria Belden. Honoria is delighted to see Ruby; especially when the medium Honoria booked for the summer fails to show up, and Ruby offers to take her place. Using some of her con artist skills and with a little help from the “voices” she hears, Ruby is able to convince everyone – except a certain suspicious local po

lice detective named Yancy – that she is psychic. However, when a guest at the hotel is found murdered, Ruby is going to need more than just her voices to help her track down the killer. With its wonderfully sharp sense of wit, some great characters, and just a dash of the paranormal, *Whispers Beyond the Veil* is a terrific debut, and the author skillfully weaves late 19th century Americans fascination with spiritualism into the plot. If you loved Deanna Raybourn’s new Veronica Speedwell series or the historical mysteries of Tasha Alexander or Kate Parker, don’t miss this splendidly written book. Estevao also writes the Sugar Grove series as Jessie Crockett.

Grace, Margaret. [Matrimony in Miniature](#)

(Perseverance \$15.95)

Retired English teacher and miniaturist enthusiast Gerry Porter is counting down the days until she marries Henry Baker in the ninth book in Grace’s Miniature Mystery series. But Gerry must put her nuptial plans on temporary hold when a body turns up in the pool at the Bed and Breakfast owned by her friend Nora Michaels. Even though her nephew – homicide detective Skip Gowen – warns Gerry not to get involved, she is positive that he will end up thanking her when she helps him identify the real killer. Grace also wrote the Periodic Table series as Camille Minchino.

Wait, Lea. [Shadows on a Morning in Maine](#)

(Perseverance \$15.95)

In the eight installment of Wait’s Antique Print series, professor and print dealer Maggie Summer has her hands full not only renovating an antiques mall with her long-time boyfriend Will Brewer, but Maggie is also trying to finish up the paperwork for her adoption of young Brooklin Deschaine. However, when someone in the small Maine town of Waymouth begins killing seals and then moves on to murdering a local fisherman, Maggie finds she must put her own life on hold while trying to find the killer. If you enjoy Jane Cleland’s Josie Prescott books and haven’t discovered Wait yet, you may want to put her books on your reading list.

Nonfiction



Bergstein, Rachelle. [Brilliance and Fire](#)
(Harper \$29.99)

After writing a history of shoes (*Women from the Ankle Down*), Bergstein delivers a popular history of diamonds that simply sparkles with wit and intriguing gemology trivia. This fascinating look at the priceless gems covers all aspects of the diamond business from Cecil Rhodes arrival in South Africa and the origins of the De Beers syndicate to the families who created a retail empire in the form of such stores as Tiffany, Cartier, and Van Cleef and Arpels. Bergstein also delves into the marketing of diamonds and how the diamond ring became associated with marriage proposals as well as the origin of the popular advertising campaign that include the now classic marketing tagline “Diamonds Are Forever.” From the efforts to create a real synthetic diamond to the more recent disruptions in the market with the rise of concern about conflict diamonds, it is all here for the reader’s amazement and enlightenment. I especially enjoyed the gossipy account the author provides of the legendary Hope diamond as well as the stories she delivers about such diamond-obsessed collectors as Wallis Simpson and Elizabeth Taylor. *Brilliance and Fire* is the best kind of nonfiction read: both enlightening and entertaining.

Brotton, Jerry. [The Sultan and the Queen](#) (Viking \$28)

After her father Henry VIII decided to trade in his first wife Katherine for a newer model, the Pope not only excommunicated Henry but made his daughter Elizabeth a persona non grata with the rest of Catholic Europe as well by excommunicating her in 1570. With few options open to England for trade and economic development opportunities, Elizabeth decided to form a strategic alliance with Sultan Murad III of the Ottoman Empire. This marked the beginning of an extraordinary partnership between the two nations. By the late 1580s, trade was flourishing as thousands of English merchants, diplomats and sailors made their way throughout the Ottoman world. Back in London, Eastern delights like sugar took the city by storm and Shakespeare served up *Othello* six months after the first Moroccan ambassador visited the city. Brotton's meticulously researched book is a fascinating microhistory that should appeal to anyone interested in Elizabeth and her era. Thriller writer Matthew Reilly also used the Elizabeth/Ottoman convergence in his historical suspense novel *The Tournament*, which takes a young Elizabeth I to Constantinople in 1546 for a visit to the court of Suleiman the Magnificent.

Bruning, John R. [Indestructible](#) (Hachette \$28)

Paul Irvin "Pappy" Gunn was on the fast track in the U.S. Navy as a hot-shot aviator and a fearless pilot when he retired from service to take on the job of starting up the Philippine Air Lines. When the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, Gunn was drafted back into service by the U.S. government and ordered to fly important diplomats out of Manila. But before Gunn could return home, the Japanese had invaded the Philippines and his family had been captured and interred in a prison camp. Gunn spend the next three years of his life on a desperate mission to find a way to free his family. In the process of doing that, Gunn came up with numerous ways to update the U.S.'s military equipment including modifying the B-25 medium bomber into a gunship. *Indestructible* has already been optioned by Hollywood, and it makes the perfect read for World War II fans or anyone who loved Alistair

MacLean's old adventure novels like *The Guns of Navarone* or *Where Eagles Dare*.

Millard, Candice. [Hero of the Empire: The Boer War, A Diary](#)

(Doubleday \$30)

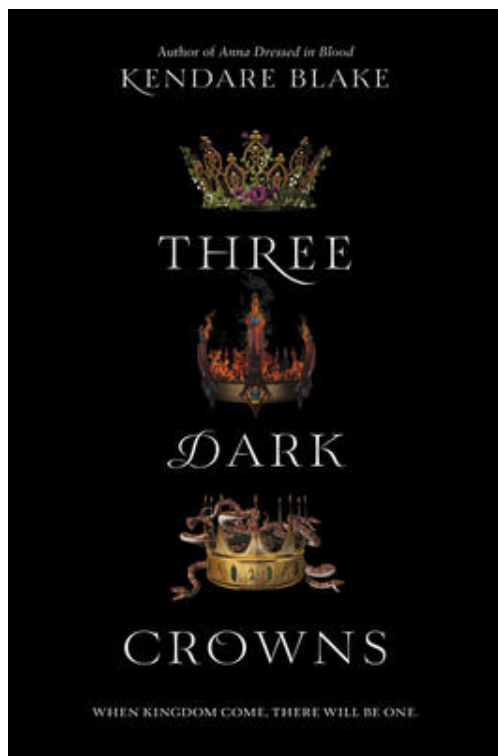
From early on in his political career, Winston Churchill was certain he was destined to one day become prime minister of England. However, Churchill lost his first campaign for parliament, which did not bode well for his political future. Convinced that he needed to gain more battle-field experience to enhance his portfolio, Churchill joined the British Army and served in India and Sudan as well as working as a war correspondent covering the Spanish-American War in Cuba. At age 24, Churchill whipped up enthusiasm in parliament for some type of action to avenge the British defeat in South Africa, which quickly translated into the Boer War. In 1899, Churchill, with his personal valet and assorted trunks packed with luxury foodstuffs and alcoholic beverages, set off for South Africa to report on the war. Less than two weeks after arriving in South Africa, Churchill and the approximately 60 soldiers with whom he was traveling, were taken prisoner when the train on which they were traveling was ambushed. Churchill not only managed to escape, but after arriving home in England, he enlisted in the British Army and went back to South Africa ultimately helping liberate the men with whom he had been imprisoned. Millard's best-selling book *The River of Doubt* was a thrilling account of Theodore Roosevelt's trip with his son down the Amazon River, and her latest is an equally captivating tale about Churchill and his heroic escape from a prisoner of war camp. This is perfect reading for Churchill fans, who want to understand how his early experiences helped shape his character and future political career, as well as being an excellent choice for armchair adventure readers to boot.

O'Neil, Cathy. [Weapons of Math Destruction](#) (Crown \$26)

Whether you are applying for college, taking out a loan, or interviewing for a job, numbers are being crunched somewhere, and it isn't always in your favor. Oneil's latest nonfiction work takes a fascinating look at the "dark side of big data" by

explaining how mathematical models and algorithms are being used to shape our lives often for the worse rather than the better. A professor at Barnard, O'Neil took her mathematical toolkit with her when she moved over to Wall Street to become a quantitative analyst for the hedge fund D.E. Shaw, but the economic collapse of 2008 convinced her to go it alone with the Occupy movement and now with this fascinating book, she shares her knowledge of the power algorithms can wield and how they can be subverted by big business and the government with the general public.

YA Fiction



Blake, Kendare. [*Three Dark Crowns*](#) (Harper \$17.99)

In every generation on the island of Fennbirn, a set of triplets is born: three queens, all equal heirs to the crown and each possessor of a coveted magic. The current crop of queens-in-training includes Mirabella, Katharine, and Arsinoe, but before one of them can become the Queen Crowned, they must first eliminate - as in kill - their sisters. Mirabella is considered to be the odds-on winner in the contest since she is a fierce elemental, able to spark hungry flames or vicious storms at the snap of her fingers. Since the last three queens have all been poisoners - royals

who have been able to ingest the deadliest toxins without blinking - some would argue that Katharine, a poisoner herself, will take the crown. Then there is Arsinoe, a naturalist, with her own support group, who believe with some help her ability to bloom the reddest rose and control the fiercest of lions will ultimately triumph. Last queen standing gets the crown so let the games begin! Dark, intense, bloody, and elegant, *Three Dark Crowns* is all of these things and more as Blake's gracefully seductive prose casts its own potent spell over readers. The author has a real flair for conjuring up a fully-realized, intricately detailed fantasy world as well as a gift for creating a mesmerizing cast of characters. Put this together with all the deadly scheming, plotting, and machinations undertaken by rival factions, and some readers will definitely be reminded of *Game of Thrones*, but *Three Dark Crowns* is an extraordinary reading experience in its own right.

Brignull, Irena. [*The Hawkweed Prophecy*](#) (\$18)

Switched at birth by the scheming witch Raven Hawkweed, Poppy Hooper and Ember Hawkweed are both struggling to adapt to life when they meet by chance in the woods. The two girls quickly become friends as each one shares bits and pieces of their own world with the other. However, just as their friendship is blossoming, the girls' loyalty to each other is tested both by the arrival of a homeless boy named Leo and by their involvement in a prophecy waiting to be fulfilled. This debut by Brignull, a British screenwriter who most recently wrote the new film adaptation of *The Little Prince*, has been getting a lot of critical praise including a rave review from *PW*, which ended by saying "It's a fantasy with the air of a classic, yet one that's also entirely contemporary in its tight focus on identity, friendship, and romance."

Eve, Laure. [*The Graces*](#) (Amulet \$18.95)

Everyone loves the Graces. Fenrin, Thalia, and Summer Grace are captivating, wealthy, and glamorous. They've managed to cast a spell over not just their high school but also their entire town—and their family is rumored to have powerful connections all over the world. If you're not in love with one of them, you want to be them.

Especially River: the loner, new girl at school. She's different from her peers, who both revere and fear the Grace family. River wants to be a Grace more than anything. And what the Graces don't know is that River's presence in town is no accident. The book's publisher has likened this haunting, seductively written novel to the 1996 movie *The Craft* (about a group of high school girls who use witchcraft to get back at their perceived enemies) and in many ways it is an apt comparison. In other ways *The Graces* also reminded me of the Lev Grossman's *The Magicians* as well as Holly Black's addictively dark YA novels *Tithe* and *Black Heart*. Mysterious, intense, and with a wonderful almost Shirley Jackson worthy twist at the end of the story, *The Graces* is a novel you won't soon forget.

