

Midmonth BookNotes

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New Year, New Books

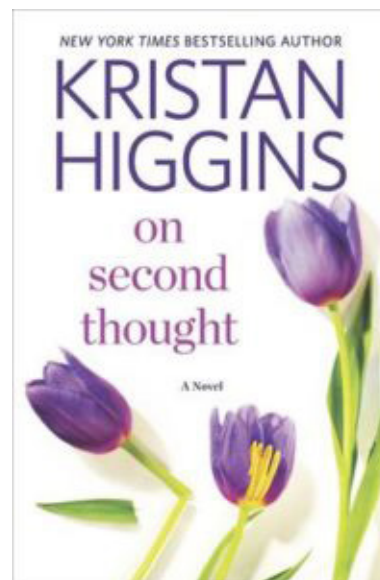
Brown, Holly. [*This is Not Over*](#) (Harper \$25.99)

All Dawn wanted was to stay in a beautiful beach house with her husband, to live like money's no object, for just one long weekend. Then Miranda, the home's owner, has to send an e-mail like this, full of lies and the suggestion that Dawn's so dirty, she needs to throw out her sheets. Someone needs to teach Miranda a lesson. So, Dawn decides to leave a little review of Miranda's hospitality on her favorite site. Miranda cannot believe it. Yes, she may be a doctor's wife, but she needs the rental money from the beach house desperately. Someone needs to teach this Dawn a lesson. Two very different women with one thing in common: Each one knows she's right, and each is determined to win this battle of words and wills and (eventually) worse. Neither will yield, not before they've dredged up hidden secrets, old hurts, and painful truths that threaten to shatter the foundations of their lives. Because it's never really just about the sheets, is it? Brown's third psychological thriller aptly illustrates how social media can rule (and wreck) an individual's life. Then again, these two women seem perfectly capable of ruining their lives even if all they had at their disposal was snail mail.

Dugoni, Robert. [*Trapped Girl*](#) (Alyson \$15.95)

When a woman's body is discovered submerged in a crab pot in the chilly waters of Puget Sound, Detective Tracy Crosswhite finds herself with a tough case to untangle. Before they can identify the killer, Tracy and her colleagues on the Seattle

PD's Violent Crimes Section must figure out who the victim is. Her autopsy, however, reveals she may have gone to great lengths to conceal her identity. So who was she running from? *Trapped Girl*, the latest in Dugoni's Tracey Crosswhite, series is a superbly crafted procedural mystery. Just when you think you may have figured out exactly what happened, Dugoni comes up with another clever plot twist that takes the action spinning off in a completely different direction. I found the whole thing to be completely enthralling, and I am not the only one. *PW* gave *Trapped Girl* one of its coveted stars and the almost always cranky *Kirkus* ended their review with "his best book to date."



Higgins, Kristan. [*On Second Thought*](#) (HQN \$15.99)

Less than five months after she married Nathan, Kate Coburn wished she had never met him. If Kate had never met Nathan, she never would have fallen in love with him. And if Kate

had never fallen in love with Nathan, she now would not be so completely devastated by Nathan's accidental death. The minute Ainsley O'Leary saw Eric Fisher in college, it was love at first sight. Eric was Ainsley's first boyfriend and over the next decade, the couple built a life together. Ainsley always expected at some point that Eric would officially propose, and the party Ainsley coordinates celebrating Eric's successful fight against cancer seems like the perfect opportunity. However, Ainsley is shocked when instead of getting the ring she expects, Eric publicly dumps her. Now Kate and Ainsley - two half-sisters who never really were that close before - find themselves unexpectedly turning to one another for comfort and support as they try and put the pieces of their lives back together. Higgins' latest superbly written women's fiction novel is both heartbreaking and hopeful in just the right measures. Higgins doesn't shy away from some of the serious events many readers will face at some point in their lives, but she does so with an exquisite sense of grace and sensitivity. Of course, the whole thing is also injected with Higgins' deliciously wry sense of humor making *On Second Thought* a must read for the author's multitude of fans as well as anyone craving an emotionally satisfying book with richly nuanced characters. Kristan Higgins will be making her first appearance at the Poisoned Pen on Tuesday February 8th at 2 PM for "tea, treats, and a talk." Kristan is as charming and funny in person as are her books, so you won't want to miss out on this opportunity to meet her and get a signed copy of *On Second Thought*.

Kelk, Lindsey. [We Were on a Break](#) (Harper \$14.99)

Somehow Olivia Addison's dream vacation with her boyfriend Adam Floyd turned into a nightmare. Liv thought Adam was going to propose to her while they were in Mexico. After all, Liv's best friend Cassie (who is married to Adam's brother Chris) told her that Adam had bought a ring. However, on their last day down south, Adam picked a fight with Liv and any thought of a proposal went right out the window. When a very grumpy and very drunk Adam dropped Liv off back at her home in Long Harrington, he mumbled something about "needing a break."

The next day a much more sober and somewhat more contrite Adam apologized to Liv, but by then Liv had decided maybe the two of them really did need some time apart. Now the question in Long Harrington is if the little British village's "it" couple will ever get back together again or not? Kelk's wonderfully funny contemporary romances are brimming with cheeky charm. If Beth Kendrick wrote her books with a British accent, the end result would be something like Kelk's novels.

Kilpack, Josi S. [Lady of the Lakes](#) (Shadow \$15.99)

Long before he was a celebrated novelist and poet, Walter Scott was a young man in love. Kilpack's latest historical novel focuses on a nineteen year old Scott, who is instantly smitten with Williamina "Mina" Blesches the moment he encounters Mina attending church in Edinburgh. However, the time that they can spend together over the next four years is limited since Mina and her family reside much of the year at their home in the Scottish Highlands. Mina eventually falls for Walter's good friend William Forbes. While vacationing in the Lake Country, a now broken-hearted Walter meets Charlotte Carpenter, a woman who couldn't be more different from Mina. Walter is immediately captivated by Charlotte, but can he risk losing his heart once again?

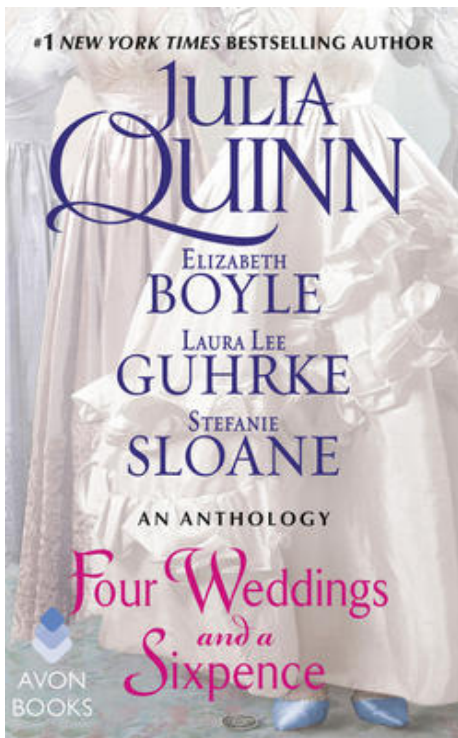
Macomber, Debbie. [Sweet Tomorrows](#) (\$7.99)

Jo Marie Rose begins dating again after Mark's departure and forges a close bond with heart-broken boarder Emily, whose desire to focus on adopting a child is challenged by an unexpected relationship in this heartwarming conclusion to Macomber's popular Rose Harbor series.

Moriarty, Nicola. [Fifth Letter](#) (Harper \$26.99)

Joni, Deb, Eden, and Trina have been best friends since high school, sharing a bond that has seen them through their teenage years and into adulthood. But now, time and circumstance is starting to pull them apart as careers, husbands, and babies get in the way. As their yearly vacation becomes less of a priority - at least for three of

the women—how can Joni find a way to draw the four of them back together? However, when a wine-filled vacation game involving the confessions of dark secrets gives way to about deeply held resentments, Joni begins to wonder if the women’s friendship can really be mended after all. If the last name Moriarty sounds familiar to you, there is a good reason. Nicola Moriarty is the sister of best-selling Australian author Liane Moriarty (whose most recent book *Big Little Lies* is slated for a new HBO production this year). I was underwhelmed by *Fifth Letter*, but then again, I am not a big fan of Liane’s novels either (don’t even get me started on *The Husband’s Secret*). However, if you do enjoy Liane’s brand of women’s fiction, you might want to give *Fifth Letter* a whirl. \



Quinn, Julia. [Four Weddings and a Sixpence](#) (Harper \$7.99)

Four friends from Mrs. Rochambeaux’s Gentle School for Girls find an old sixpence in their bedchamber and decide that it will be the lucky coin for each of their weddings. Julia Quinn’s prologue “Something Old” introduces her heroine Beatrice Heywood and the premise for *Four Weddings and a Sixpence*. In “Something New” by Stefanie Sloane, Anne Brabourne must marry before her twenty-first birthday, which means she really needs the magical sixpence to send her

a husband a.s.a.p. In “Something Borrowed” by Elizabeth Boyle, Cordelia Padley invents a fiancé to keep her family from pestering her to wed, but now Cordelia must “borrow” a man in order to convince everyone she wasn’t fibbing. In “Something Blue” by Laura Lee Guhrke, a mysterious rake steals the sixpence from Elinor Davenport to keep her from marrying the wrong man. “And a Sixpence in Her Shoe” by Julia Quinn wraps everything up with the story of bluestocking Beatrice Heywood, whose belief in the powers of science is sorely tested by a “magical” coin that keeps trying to pair her up with an annoyingly sexy physics scholar. One of the great things about a collection like this is that it allows readers to sample different authors’ writing without having to commit to a full book. However, each of the stories in this stellar book are so good, that readers will find themselves adding the entire quartet of authors to their must-read list.

Reay, Katherine. [A Portrait of Emily Price](#) (Thomas Nelson \$15.99)

All of her life, Emily Price has been good at “fixing” things. Now Emily’s ability to put things back together and repair objects that seem to be permanently damaged, makes her an excellent art restorer. Emily’s latest assignment takes her to Atlanta, where she finds herself falling for chef Ben Vassallo, who is in town from Italy visiting family. After a whirlwind romance, Emily accepts Ben’s marriage proposal and winds up going back to Italy with him. Once there, however, Emily finds herself struggling to fit in with Ben’s family. Then when a long-hidden secret resurfaces and the tightly-knit family starts unraveling, Emily must decide where she really belongs. Writing a thoroughly romantic yet sweet love story isn’t easy, but Reay has proven herself to be unrivaled at that particular literary challenge. All four of her novels are thoughtful, compelling books, whose realistically flawed characters ring true. As an added bonus, Reay includes plenty of fascinating tidbits about art and the restoration of paintings into the plot of *A Portrait of Emily* as well as some intriguing recommendations of superior Italian and art mysteries cleverly given out by assorted characters in the story.

Robbins, Emily. [Word for Love](#) (Riverhead \$27)

It is said there are ninety-nine Arabic words for love. Bea, an American exchange student, has learned them all: in search of deep feeling, she travels to a Middle Eastern country known to hold the “The Astonishing Text,” an ancient, original manuscript of a famous Arabic love story that is said to move its best readers to tears. But once in this foreign country, Bea finds that instead of intensely reading Arabic she is entwined in her host family’s complicated lives--as they lock the doors, and whisper anxiously about impending revolution. And suddenly, instead of the ancient love story she sought, it is her daily witness of a contemporary Romeo and Juliet-like romance--between a housemaid and policeman of different cultural and political backgrounds--that astonishes her, changes her, and makes her weep. But as the country drifts toward explosive unrest, Bea wonders how many secrets she can keep, and how long she can fight for a romance that does not belong to her.

Roberts, K T. [Blind Retribution Signed](#) (Montlake \$12.95).

When a car bomb explodes, taking with it the wife of a prominent heart surgeon, NYPD detective Maxine Turner is sure she has arrested the right suspect—until Cory Rossini, a private investigator, begins muddying the waters. Max already has enough to deal with: her longtime partner is retiring, her latest case is suddenly anything but simple, and she now has a troubling attraction to a man who is proving to be annoyingly persistent. Having taken on the task of proving his friend’s innocence, Cory isn’t about to drop the ball—no matter how distractingly beautiful he finds the detective assigned to the investigation. When his sleuthing turns up other homicides connected to the cardiology department, including a young woman whose throat has been slit, he convinces Max that they should work together. And as they delve further into the vicious murders, they search for the one lead that will steer them straight to a killer.

Rodale, Maya. [Lady Claire is All That](#) (Harper \$7.99)

In the third of her fun and frothy Keeping Up

With the Cavendishes series, Rodale takes her inspiration from the classic 1990s teen movie *She’s All That*. Claire Cavendish knows she bores men to death with her constant talk about mathematical equations, which is why she is incredibly surprised when Lord Fox – the most sought after bachelor in the *ton* – can’t seem to get enough of her company. Ever since his fiancée jilted him, Fox has yet to recover his social standing. So when his best friend bets Fox that he will not be able to turn a boring bluestocking like Claire into a social sensation, Fox sees the chance to win back his reputation. The only thing Fox didn’t calculate on was that by spending all this time with Claire, he might actually start to fall in love with her.

Shalvis, Jill. [Accidentally on Purpose](#) (HarperCollins, \$7.99)

Elle Wheaton’s priorities: friends, career, and kick-ass shoes. Then there’s the muscular wall of stubbornness that’s security expert Archer Hunt—who comes before everything else. No point in telling Mr. “Feels-Free Zone” that, though. Elle will just see other men until she gets over Archer. As far as Archer’s concerned, nobody is good enough for Elle. But when he sets out to prove it by sabotaging her dates, she gets mad—and things get hot as hell. Now Archer has a new mission: prove to Elle that her perfect man has been here all along. Shalvis’s new San Francisco set Hearbreaker Bay novels are tons of fun for romance readers, who like their contemporary romances served up with plenty of smoking-hot sensuality and sassy wit.



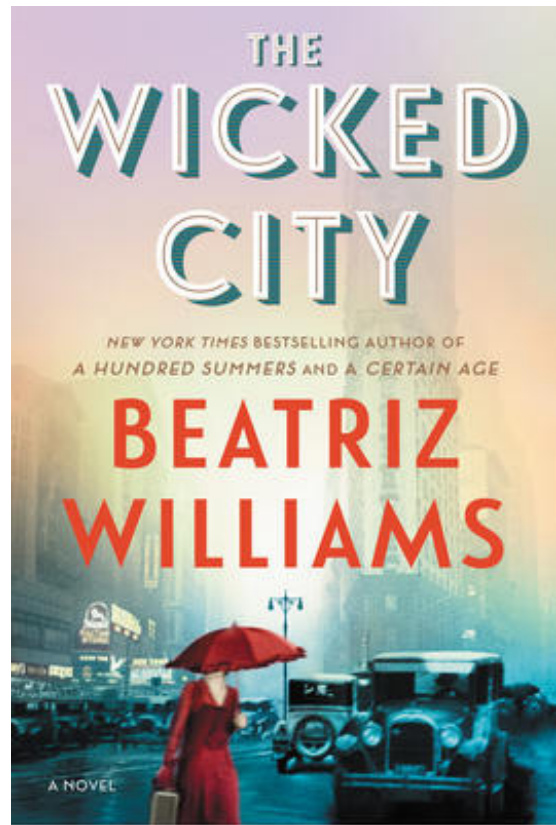
Swanson, Peter. [Her Every Fear](#) (HarperCollins \$26.99)

Let’s be honest: having your boyfriend kidnap

you and almost kill you would give anyone anxiety attacks. So Kate has a very good reason behind her fears. However, Kate is trying to piece together a normal life again. So, when her distant cousin Corbin Dell suggests the two temporarily swap apartments, Kate surprisingly agrees. For six months, she will live in Corbin's place in Boston while he moves into Kate's place in London. However, the very day Kate arrives in America and shows up at Corbin's apartment building, she discovers his next door neighbor, Audrey Marshall, has just been murdered. What is even worse, the police seem to think that Corbin may know something about the crime. Swanson's latest suspense novel is a lot like Dr. Frankenstein's monster. A bit of *Rear Window*, a smattering of *The Talented Mr. Ripley*, and a generous dash of *Gone Girl* all stitched together into one suspense novel. While Swanson is a talented writer, in the end for me, the sum of *Her Every Fear* was lesser than all its assorted literary parts.

Williams, Beatrice. [A Certain Age Signed](#) (\$15.99).

Inspired by Richard Strauss' *Der Rosenkavalier*, Williams cleverly constructs a beguiling novel about the very wealthy and very married Theresa Marshall, who falls in love with the much younger Captain Octavian Rofrano, a former aviator in World War I and now a junior bond salesman on Wall Street. Of course, divorce is out of the question for Theresa despite the fact that Octavian (or "The Boy" as she likes to call him) desperately wants to marry her. But the two muddle along with their affair until Theresa's bachelor brother Ox asks her a favor. Family tradition dictates Ox needs a cavalier to present his offer of marriage (and the family diamond ring) to his prospective fiancée Miss Sophie Fortescue. Theresa enlists Boy in the role of cavalier, but when he meets Sophie, Octavian immediately falls for the unconventional ingénue. Now what is a lady to do when her lover falls for her soon-to-be sister-in-law? Williams effortlessly and artfully transposes Strauss's tale to the glittering setting of New York City in the 1920s, and the result is a stellar tale of romance, passion, secrets, and scandal with a nice tie-in to the author's Schuyler family characters.



Beatriz Williams. [The Wicked City](#) (Harper \$26.99) Set in 1920s New York City, *Wicked City* focuses on Geneva "Gin" Kelly, who spends her days earning a living working in the typing pool at Sterling Bates and her nights knocking back drinks with her new swain Billy Marshall at Christopher's Club, a speakeasy in the basement of her Greenwich Village Apartment building. Everything is swell until Revenue Agent Oliver Anson shows up one night with a business proposition for Gin. Oliver wants Gin to help him bust up Duke Kelly's – Gin's Stepfather – Appalachian bootlegging operation. While there is no love lost between Gin and Duke, Gin is reluctant to become involved in Oliver's plan until something forces her into accepting Oliver's challenge. Eight decades later, forensic accountant Ella Hawthorne moves into Gin's old apartment at 11 Christopher Street after she discovers her husband keeping company with a working girl. Not only does Ella find herself hearing strains of jazz late at night in her apartment building, her new business assignment sends her to Sterling Bates, where she finds herself becoming even more entangled in Gin's life. In her latest impeccably crafted, elegantly written novel, Williams mixes up a potent literary cocktail composed of a cast of compelling characters, an

engaging plot spiked with plenty of danger, and an expertly constructed historical setting richly embellished with fascinating period details. Williams then serves up this addictively readable libation, which packs a potent punch, with a generous splash of sexy romance and a few nice twists of sharp humor. While *The Wicked City* is the first in a new series for Williams, long-time fans of the author's Schuyler family will be please to see how she works in a connection to those books as well. Exhilarating, escapist fun for anyone who enjoys historical fiction/women's fiction.

Cozy Corner

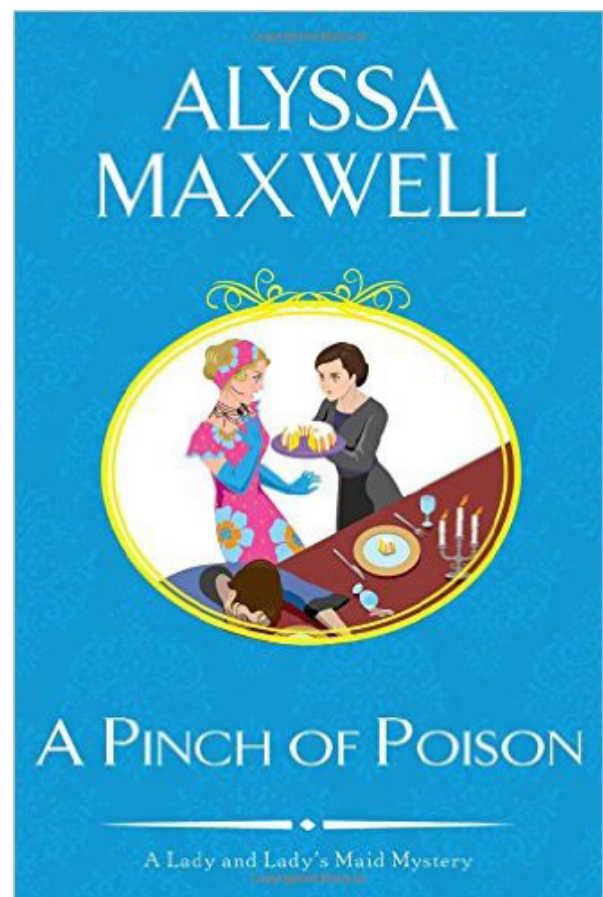
Kappes, Tonya. [A Ghostly Reunion](#)
(HarperCollins \$7.99)

Leopards really don't change their spots. At least this is what Emma Lee Raines believes is the case with her old high school nemesis Jade Lee Peel. Ten years ago, Jade Lee tried to steal away Emma's boyfriend Jack Henry Ross, and now that Jade Lee is back in town for their high school reunion, the former pageant queen is making every attempt to come between Emma and Jack all over again. So, when Jade Lee is unexpectedly found dead, Emma is not exactly heartbroken to say the least. However, since Emma has not only been gifted with the ability to see, hear, and talk to ghosts, but to also help them pass on to their next stop, she isn't exactly through with Jade Lee yet. In fact, the only ways Emma will be able to get Jade Lee out of her life (and away from Jack Henry) is if she figures out who killed her in the first place. The latest in Kappes' Ghostly Southern series is plenty of fun for fans of light paranormal mysteries of readers who enjoy southern-set mysteries with plenty of zingy humor and zany characters.

MacRae, Molly. [Plaid and Plagiarism](#)
(Pegasus \$25.95)

Janet Marsh is really looking forward to her new life in Inversgail. Along with her friends Christine Robertson and Summer Jacobs, Janet and her daughter Tallie plan on opening a book store – Yon Bonnie Books – as well as a bed and breakfast in the small Scottish village, which is known

for its annual literary festival. Of course, starting any new business is never easy! Janet's move into her house has been delayed due to vandalism; she's convinced the vandal is Una Graham, an advice columnist for the local paper who's trying to make a name for herself as an investigative reporter. Then, when the women go to look for clues that might tell them to who is guilty, they find Una Graham's corpse (murder!) in Janet's garden shed. Constable Hobbs answers their emergency call. He's calm and quietly pleased, as he's never had a murder case. Then the contents of a dozen or so garbage bags are discovered behind the bookshop. The letters inside are nasty. They explain in minute detail how and when each of the recipients has hurt Una. The more the women discover out about Una, the more suspects they find for her murder! MacRae, who has also written the Haunted Yarn Shop mysteries, starts her new Highland Bookshop series off on a high note.



Maxwell, Alyssa. [A Pinch of Poison](#)
(Kensington \$25)

Good deeds build good character, and good character is what the Haverleigh School for

Young Ladies is all about. Lady Phoebe—with the tireless assistance of her loyal maid Eva—has organized a luncheon at the school to benefit wounded veterans of the Great War, encouraging the students to participate in the cooking and the baking. But too many cooks do more than spoil the broth—they add up to a recipe for disaster when the school’s headmistress, Miss Finch, is poisoned. Miss *Downton Abbey*? Maxwell’s new A Lady and a Lady’s Maid mysteries may just help with your Edwardian aristocratic family withdrawal symptoms since Lady Phoebe and Eva are cut from the same cloth as Lady Mary and her devoted maid Anna. I loved the first book [Murder Most Malicious](#), and thought *A Pinch of Poison* was even better. Brimming with period charm, memorable characters, a nicely executed plot, and just a hint of romance, this is definitely going to give Carola Dunn’s Daisy Dalrymple series and Catriona McPherson’s Dandy Gilver books a good run for their money.

Orgain, Diana. [Trigger Yappy](#) (Minotaur \$25.99)

Maggie Patterson is really looking forward to start her new job with a Pacific coast cruise line when her sister Rachel winds up in the hospital with a bad case of food poisoning. Now Maggie is temporarily stuck managing Wine and Bark: her sister’s bar in the small town of Pacific Cove, CA. Even though she is not a dog-lover herself, Maggie figures she can handle a few days of serving up drinks and appetizers to the “Yappy Hour” crowd of dog-owners and their pets at the bar. However, when Maggie overhears an argument between her friend Yolanda and Bonnie, owner of Chic Chickie (a shop specializing in chicken embellished fashions), and Bonnie later turns up dead, Maggie finds herself planning on spending even more time in town since she is now becomes tangled up in the subsequent murder investigation. Readers who enjoy Donna Andrews’ Meg Langslow mysteries will find *Trigger Yappy*, the second in a new series by Orgain, has a similar mix of quirky characters and wacky (some might say over the top) humor. A bit too cute for my reading tastes, but your literary mileage might differ.

Ancient Times

Everitt, Anthony. [The Rise of Athens](#) (Random House \$35)

Filled with tales of adventure and astounding reversals of fortune, *The Rise of Athens* celebrates the city-state that transformed the world—from the democratic revolution that marked its beginning, through the city’s political and cultural golden age, to its decline into the ancient equivalent of a modern-day university town. Anthony Everitt constructs his history with unforgettable portraits of the talented, tricky, ambitious, and unscrupulous Athenians who fueled the city’s rise: Themistocles, the brilliant naval strategist who led the Greeks to a decisive victory over their Persian enemies; Pericles, arguably the greatest Athenian statesman of them all; and the wily Alcibiades, who changed his political allegiance several times during the course of the Peloponnesian War—and died in a hail of assassins’ arrows. Here also are riveting you-are-there accounts of the milestone battles that defined the Hellenic world: Thermopylae, Marathon, and Salamis among them. An unparalleled storyteller, Everitt combines erudite, thoughtful historical analysis with stirring narrative set pieces that capture the colorful, dramatic, and exciting world of ancient Greece. Everitt deftly walks the line between an engaging, accessible account of Athenian history and a scholarly exploration of the city-state without missing a beat.

Guild, Nicholas. [Spartan Dagger](#) (Tor \$27.99)

On a cold night, at the outskirts of a peasant village, two Spartan youths wait to perform an ancient rite of passage. A family--father, mother, and their son--approaches, unarmed and defenseless. The young men step into the moonlight and claim their manhood by killing the adults. The boy escapes. The Spartans have no idea how terrible an enemy they have called forth. Nothing could have prepared them for the boy, Protos, whose name means “destined,” whose cunning and inborn skill with weapons renders his enemies almost defenseless, and whose heart knows no pity. The Spartans have oppressed his people for centuries, and to break

their power is to free all those they hold in subjection. As Protos grows to manhood, he begins to understand that his private war against his parents' murderers is also a struggle for liberation. If you enjoy Wilbur Smith's historical novels set in ancient times, Guild's books are equally entertaining.

Hauser, Emily. [For the Most Beautiful](#) (Pegasus \$25.95)

In this fascinating, lyrically written debut novel, the first in her Golden Apple Trilogy, Hauser takes a look at the Trojan War through the viewpoint of two different women. Krisayis is the ambitious, focused daughter of the High Priest of Troy, who is in love with Prince Troilus. Newly married Briseis is a loyal and passionate princess of Pedasus. The two women find their lives intersecting when both become caught up in the ancient power struggles that will determine the fate of Troy. Hauser is a classicist, researcher, and author, who is currently completing her PhD in Classics at Yale University, and she was awarded the University of Cambridge Chancellor's Medal for Proficiency in Classical Learning. The author expertly uses her extensive academic background in classical history to create a marvelously entertaining novel that not only delivers all the bloody action, life-changing passion, and meddling gods of the original *Iliad*, but also offers readers an insightful take on just what it was like to be a woman during the tumultuous era.

Plutarch [The Age of Caesar](#) (Norton \$35)
Classics scholar James Romm selected five men - Pompey, Caesar, Cicero, Brutus, Antony - profiled by Plutarch in his work *Parallel Lives* for this new translation of Plutarch's biographies by Pamela Mensch, who perfectly captures the flavor of Plutarch's original works while making the lives and times of these famous figures from Roman history accessible to modern day readers. From Caesar's rise to power against Cicero's efforts to maintain the Republic to the tragic love between Antony and Cleopatra, it's all here in vivid techno-color details along with a substantial introduction and foreword that explore both Plutarch himself as a historical figure and the basic history of the republic's fall. Fans of Steven Saylor's historical mysteries will find this makes

an excellent companion to those novels as well as a good introduction to the times.

Nonfiction

Gary, Amy. [In the Great Green Room](#) (Flatiron Books \$26.99)

Margaret Wise Brown wrote some of the most beloved children's books in the history of publishing including *The Runaway Bunny* (which, since its publication in 1942 has sold more than seven million copies) and the iconic *Goodnight Moon*. Now Gary brings readers a biography of this fascinating woman, who tragically died in 1952 when she was only 42. Gary's biography has its origins in 1990 when Gary met with Brown's sister, who showed her an unopened trunk in the barn of her Vermont farm that contained a biographer's treasure trove of Brown's diaries, letters, poems, songs, and unpublished manuscripts. Gary spent the next 25 years absorbing Brown's literary legacy and in the process acting as Brown's editor by seeing several of the author's previously unpublished stories into print. All the while, Gary got to know the fun-loving, passionate, brilliantly original woman, who wrote such wonderful children's picture books yet always yearned to crack the adult market.

Granger, Susan. [150 Timeless Movies](#) (Hannacroix Creek Books \$19.95)

Need something good to watch this weekend? Film critic Granger, whose father was director S. Sylvan Simon (*From Here to Eternity*) and whose stepfather was MGM producer Armand Deutsch, talks about 150 of the movies that have intrigued her the most. From classics like *Battleship Potemkin* (1925) and *Gone with the Wind* (1939) to *Bridge of Spies* (2015) and *Zootopia* (2016), Granger shares her insights as to exactly why these movies are so unforgettable.

Blast from the Past

Dunning, John. [Booked to Die](#) (Scribner \$17)

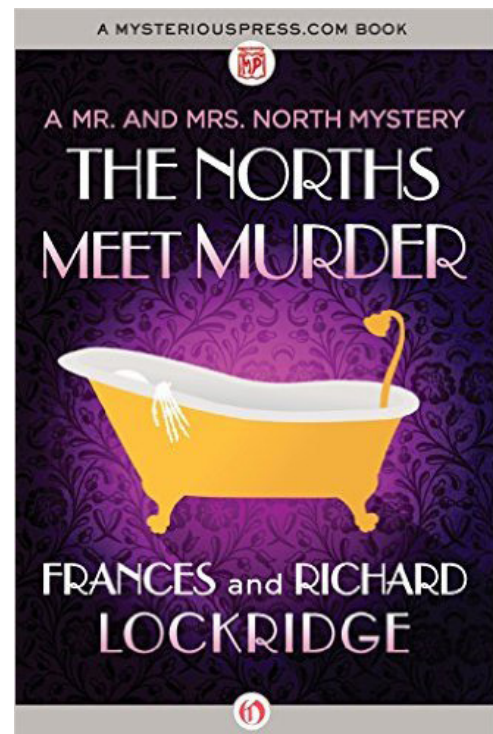
Denver homicide detective Cliff Janeway may not always play by the book, but he's an avid collector of rare and first editions. Bobby Westfall

is a local bookscout, a gentle and quiet man who has sold enough valuable books to keep himself and his cats fed and housed. When Bobby is murdered, Janeway would like nothing better than to rearrange the suspect's spine. But the suspect, local lowlife Jackie Newton, is a master at eluding the law, and Janeway's wrathful brand of off-duty justice costs him his badge. Turning to his lifelong passion, Janeway opens a small bookshop—all the while searching for evidence to put Newton away. When prized volumes in a highly sought-after collection begin to appear, so do dead bodies. Now Janeway's life is about to change in profound and shocking ways as he attempts to find out who's dealing death along with vintage Chandlers and Twains. When Dunning's first book featuring Janeway was published, it became a sensation with mystery readers, causing many of them to catch the "collecting" bug, Now 25 years after it was first published by Scribners, a new trade paperback edition of this classic mystery is available, but don't say we didn't warn you about wanting to "invest" all your spare change in mysteries! (P.S. when *Booked to Die* was published in 1992, Barbara not only encouraged all her customers to snap up a copy but provided them with bookplates signed by Dunning as well. So if you are one of those lucky few, congrats on a smart purchase!)

Fair, A.A. [The Knife Slipped](#) (Titan Books, \$9.95)

One of the best-selling authors of all time, Erle Stanley Gardner's greatest creations include crusading attorney Perry Mason (star of more than eighty novels, a long-running TV series and a number of TV movies) and writing as A.A. Fair, the hardboiled detective team of Bertha Cool and Donald Lam, who appeared in more than two dozen adventures of their own. An attorney himself, Gardner also founded the Court of Last Resort, a group that investigated criminal cases they believed had ended in wrong convictions. *The Knife Slipped* was intended to be the second book featuring Cool and Lam, but it was turned down by Gardner's publisher at the time. Undeterred, Gardner threw the manuscript in a drawer and went on to write 28 more adventures for the unlikely partners in detection. Now, Hard Case Crime has brought *The Knife Slipped*

officially into print, and fans of old-school, hard-boiled detective novels are in for a rare treat. The novel opens with Edith Cunner and her mother making an appointment with "B. Cool, Investigations" because they are the only detectives in town willing to take cheating spouses cases. Bertha assigns Donald to follow Edith's husband Eben, and Donald quickly discovers that not only is Eben stepping out on his wife, he is up to his eyebrows in political chicanery. Which, as far as Bertha is concerned, means an even bigger payday for the firm! With big-boned, tight-fisted Bertha Cool Gardner created one of the most memorable characters in mystery fiction: a woman, who refused to play one of the two usual roles – secretary with a heart of gold or duplicitous slut – assigned to females in the hard-boiled school of detective fiction. Working together with her "brainy little runt" of a partner Donald, Bertha delivers plenty of wise-cracks, snappy quips, and mercenary tidbits of wisdom that ensure readers new to the duo will soon find themselves trying to track down their subsequent adventures.



Lockridge, Frances. [The Norths Meet Murder](#) (Mysterious Press.Com/Open Road \$13.99)

If Pamela North hadn't decided to hold a party upstairs in the empty apartment in their building, the body probably would not have been

discovered for weeks. Instead, while Pam and her husband Jerry are working out the logistics of where to put things, they stumble across a dead man in the tub. He has been bludgeoned, stripped naked, and left to rot. The party is most certainly off! Though they should know better, Mr. and Mrs. North can't resist getting involved in NYPD Lieutenant Bill Weigand's investigation, and before they know it, the couple find themselves right in the thick of things. The husband and wife writing team of Frances and Richard Lockridge were extremely popular in the 1940s and 1950s. First introduced to readers in a series of short stories in *The New Yorker*, the detecting couple of Pam and Jerry North would go on to star in twenty-six novels, which in turn inspired adaptations for Broadway (the play ran for 162 performances), radio, film (the movie starred Gracie Allen), and television. The North books are definitely old-school puzzle types of mysteries, and Pam and Jerry prove to be an engaging pair of sleuths, who are more than happy to help the police track down murders in between knocking back martinis. (And let's just say in between the Norths and assorted police officials, the characters in this book could open their own chapter of AA). Written with a generous dash of dry wit and set in the fascinating world of 1940s and 1950s New York City, the North mysteries are great fun for fans of traditional, Golden-Age crime novels.

Rosenbaum, David. [Zaddik](#) (Felony & Mayhem \$14.95)

Dov Taylor, an unhappy former cop, is summoned by a local rabbi to help recover the "Seer's Stone" a 72-carat diamond stolen from the Hassidic community. The diamond was intended to be the dowry that united two feuding clans, but now it is gone, and three members of the Hasidic community have been ritualistically murdered. Why Dov? Some hundred-odd years ago, his ancestor was a famous Polish mystic revered for his ability to detect the truth, and the rabbi believes this ancestry might help Dov see what others cannot. This is a very unusual job for Dov, but it's not like he has a lot going on in his life. This extraordinary, deeply unusual mystery was shortlisted for the Edgar in 1994, and it is filled with fascinating details about the history

and beliefs of the Hassidic faith as well as intriguing bits of intel about the diamond business.

