

Midmonth BookNotes

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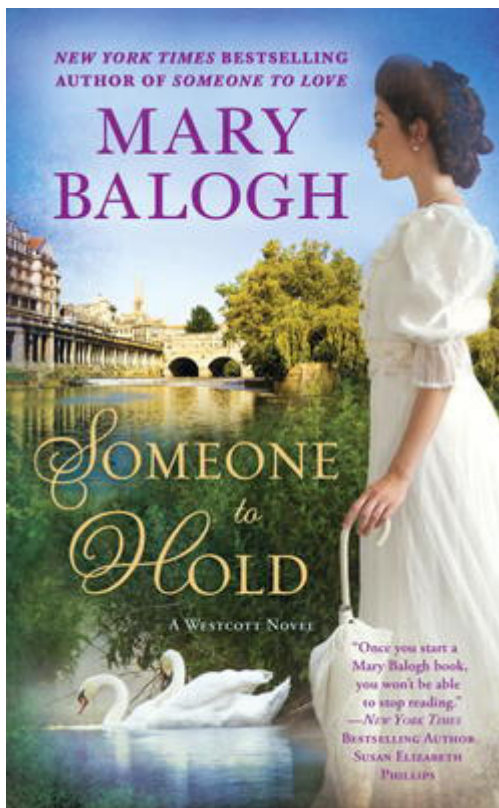
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Literary Valentines



Balogh, Mary. [Someone to Hold](#) (Penguin \$7.99)

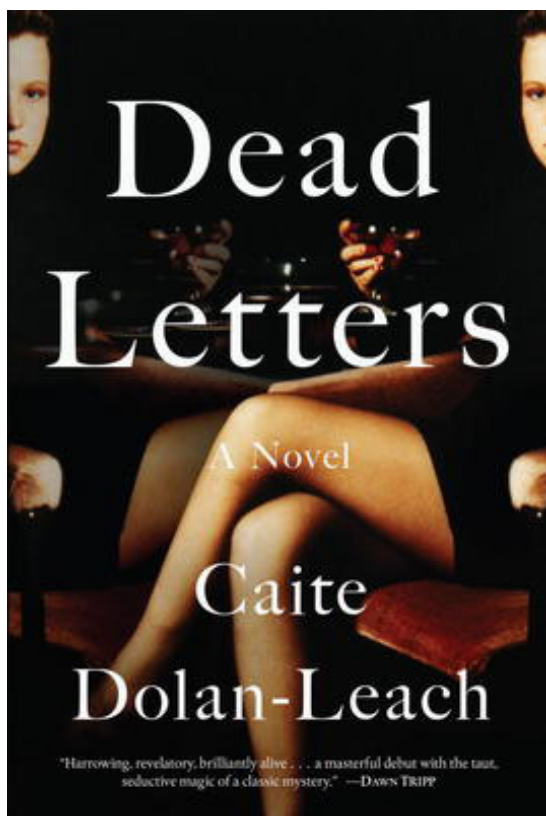
After her father's marriage to her mother is declared to be bigamous, Camille Westcott finds her place in society usurped by her new half-sister Anna Snow. Needing some time to sort things out as well as a quiet place to gain perspective on her new life, Camille unexpectedly leaves London to take a teaching job at the Bath orphanage, where Anna once worked. There Camille unexpectedly bumps into artist Joel Cunningham. Joel can't believe it when he turns up at the orphanage to teach one of his weekly art classes and discovers Camille has taken Anna's place.

How dare this former darling of the ton think she can take his unrequited love's place! However, after Joel is hired to paint Camille's portrait by her grandmother, he not discovers unexpected nuances of character beneath her prickly façade, but also a woman with whom he just might feel comfortable sharing a future. The latest addition to Balogh's Westcott family series is a treasure trove of witty writing and swoon-worthy romance for fans of Regency-set historicals.

Blackwell, Elizabeth. [In the Shadow of Lakecrest](#) (Lake Union Publishing \$14.95)
Desperate to escape the poverty and violence she knew as a child, Kate Moore parlays a chance encounter on a transatlantic ocean liner in 1928 with Matthew Lemont, the handsome heir to a Chicago fortune, into a marriage proposal. However, after exchanging wedding vows, Kate quickly discovers that something isn't quite right with her husband—or her new family. As Mrs. Matthew Lemont, she must contend with her husband's disturbing past, his domineering mother, and his overly close sister. Now isolated at Lakecrest, the sprawling, secluded Lemont estate, Kate searches desperately for clues to Matthew's terrors, which she suspects stem from the mysterious disappearance of his aunt years before. As Kate stumbles deeper into a menacing maze of family secrets, she begins to question everyone's sanity—especially her own. Sounds familiar, right? Set in the 1920s, Blackwell effectively plays up the echoes of Du Maurier's *Rebecca* in her own deliciously gothic tale of love and danger.

Bowen, Kelly. [Between the Devil and the Duke](#) (Grand Central \$5.99)

When club owner Alexander Lavoie catches a mysterious blonde counting cards at his vingt-et-un table, he's more intrigued than angry. Alexander wants more of this beauty-in his club, in his office, in his bed. But first he'll have to devise a proposition she can't turn down. Common sense told her to stay away. But Angélique Archer was desperate, and Lavoie's club offered a surefire way to make quick money-until she got caught. Instead of throwing her out though, the devilishly sexy rake offers her a deal: come work for him. Refusing him means facing starvation, but with a man so sinfully handsome and fiercely protective, keeping things professional might prove impossible.



Dolan-Leach, Caite. [Dead Letters](#) (Random House \$27)

When her twin sister Zelda vanishes right after the barn in which she spent much of her days burns down, everyone except Ava Antipova fears the worst. Even though it has been two years since Ava last saw Zelda, Ava can't believe Zelda is really dead especially once Ava arrives back at the family farm/winery in the Finger Lakes region of New York and begins receiving emailed letters from Zelda inviting her to "play" her

latest game of hide and seek. Now stuck trying to deal with an alcoholic mother slowly slipping away into dementia, a father who traded up for a new and improved second family, and old boyfriend who seems to have been keeping very busy with Zelda while Ava was gone, Ava begins trying to decode the letters Zelda sends in that hopes that she may be able to not only discover exactly what happened to her sister but also what that means for her own future. I was absolutely mesmerized by this stunning debut that brilliantly mixes the fiendishly clever plot twists and can-she-be-trusted kind of narration found in *Gone Girl* and its many recent literary clones with the nuanced characterization and elegant writing style of someone like Donna Tartt. For me this is one of the best books of 2017 so far! P.S. Careful readers will discover that the author also does something quite clever with her chapters that I only caught onto at the very end.

Freeman, Brian. [The Night Bird](#) (Thomas & Mercer \$15.95)

Psychiatrist Francesca Stein has spent years perfecting a treatment process for people who desperately want to forget bad memories. The treatment involves "re-writing" a subject's bad memories so that the subject can get over the past and live their lives free from fear. However, when San Francisco homicide detective Frost Easton discovers that not one but at least two of Frankie's patients have experienced psychotic breaks that led to them killing themselves, he begins to wonder if there might be a flaw in the doctor's treatment approach. When Easton puts this together with reports of a mysterious, masked stranger who has been sending threatening, taunting emails to Frankie, Frost begins to think someone has hijacked Frankie's practice with plans of driving the good doctor to her own death. Freeman won the Thriller award for his book *Spilled Blood*, and he definitely has a knack of crafting books that will have you up long past your regular bedtime (and also checking to be sure the doors to your home are securely locked). If the creepy, masked killer in the plot occasionally seems like they would be more at home in the *Scream* movie franchise, most readers will be willing to go along for the ride since the author has cooked up a truly scary suspense novel with

a wicked twist at the end.

Goodman, Alison. [*The Dark Days Pact*](#) (Penguin \$18.99)

After the scandalous events at her presentation ball in London, Lady Helen has taken refuge at the fashionable seaside resort of Brighton, where she trains as a Reclaimer with the covert Dark Days Club. She must learn to fight the dangerous energy-wielding Deceivers and prepare to face their master, the elusive Grand Deceiver. As she struggles to put aside her genteel upbringing, Helen realizes that her mentor, Lord Carlston, is fighting his own inner battle. Has the foul Deceiver energy poisoned his soul, or is something else driving him towards violent bouts of madness? Either way, Helen is desperate to help the man with whom she shares a deep but forbidden connection. This sequel to *The Dark Days Club* blends fantasy and a magic infused plot with a Jane Austen, Regency England setting. If you love Mary Robinette Kowal's books, you may want to give this equally diverting series a try.

James, Eloisa. [*Seven Minutes in Heaven*](#) (HarperCollins \$7.99)

Eugenia Snowe runs one of the most exclusive and sought-after employment agencies in all of London. Everyone who is anyone wants a Snowe governess as part of their household. Well, everyone brilliant, eccentric inventor Ward Reeve, who bursts into Eugenia's office one day insisting he is not happy with the governess Eugenia sent to take charge of his young half-siblings. Ward demands the very best governess for his wards and as far as he is concerned, that means Eugenia. However, it turns out that what Ward needs is something much more than just a governess, but is Eugenia willing to take on that role as well? Award-winner James delivers plenty of scintillating wit and sizzling sensuality in her latest exemplary Regency-set historical.

James, Vic. [*Gilded Cage*](#) (Random House \$20)

In an alternative present day England, British society is split into two factions: aristocrats with

magical talents and mundane common folk, who are required by law to spend ten years of their lives serving their "betters." The Hadley family believes they have found the best way around their required time when they sign up as group to become servants at Kyneston, the country estate of the powerful Jardine family. However, while most of the Hadleys land positions at Kyneston, sixteen-year-old Luke Haldley finds he isn't needed there, and is instead assigned to Millmoor, Manchester's infamous slave town. James' debut novel, *Gilded Cage*, was a Wattpad sensation, earning more than a quarter million downloads and winning a Watty Award for fantasy. *Gilded Cage* launches a terrific new dark fantasy series that seductively mixes magic, history, romance, and intrigue. If you are loving the new television show *Taboo*, this will be right up your alley.

Jenkins, Beverly. [*Breathless*](#) (HarperCollins \$7.99)

As manager of the Fontaineone hotel, one of the finest hotels in Arizona Territory, Portia Carmichael has respect and stability—qualities sorely missing from her harsh childhood. Rather than jeopardizing this by hitching herself to the wrong man, Portia is content to remain a spinster until Kent Randolph, an old family friend, rides into town. After drifting through the West, Kent's learned the value of a place to settle down, and in Portia's arms he's found that and more. But convincing her to trust him with her heart, not just her passion, will be the greatest challenge he's known—and one he intends to win. Jenkins based the Fontaine Hotel in *Breathless* on the Mountain View Hotel in Oracle, AZ, which was founded by Annie Box Neal and her husband William "Curly" Neal, who were both of African-American and Native-American descent, and their combined hotel and spa catered to wealthy individuals from around the globe as well as European royalty. An illuminating look at the role African-Americans played in the history of the Southwest as well as their part in the struggle for women's suffrage.



Jio, Sarah. [Always](#) (Random House \$27)
When the love of her life – Cade MacAllister – disappeared from her life ten years ago, Kailey Crane never expected to see him again, least of all living on the streets of Seattle as a homeless person. But that is exactly where Kailey discovers Cade when she stops with her fiancé Ryan to give their dinner leftovers to a painfully thin and worn-out man begging on the streets. Despite Ryan’s insistence that she leave things be, Kailey is determined to help Cade, who suffers from memory loss and doesn’t know exactly how he ended up on the streets. However, as Kailey works with Cade to help him regain his memories, she finds herself forced to choose between her past love and her present fiancé. There is an easy grace to Jio’s writing, and her latest emotionally compelling novel takes a poignant look at the plight of the homeless in our country.

Kelly, Michelle. [A Death at the Yoga Cafe](#) (Minotaur \$27.99)
When the mayor of Befrey is found dead, his girlfriend Raquel is the main suspect, and yoga instructor Keeley Carpenter is determined to clear her name, despite being Raquel’s small business rival. I must admit I had a difficult time

cozying up to this mystery. For some reason the author’s voice didn’t connect with me, but that is not to say that it won’t for you. In fact *PW* loves the series and ended their review of this one with “Recipes and yoga positions, as well as an uncomfortable visit from Keeley’s mother, Darla Carpenter, lend spice to this agreeable cozy.”

Kinsella, Sophie. [My Not So Perfect Life](#) (Random House \$28)

When Katie Brenner is fired from her dream job in advertising in London, she’s desperate to get away from her mad boss Demeter, and her crush, Alex, who she thought shared her feelings of adoration but didn’t. Seeking refuge, she goes home to her father’s farm in Somerset to help make her stepmother’s dream of turning their land into a glamping retreat come true. Applying her savvy marketing smarts, Katie masterminds a glamorous upscale resort. But when Demeter shows up unannounced, with Alex not far behind, Katie is forced to rethink her revenge fantasies and her assumptions about family, love, and office politics and realize how much she may have misjudged everyone--and everything--around her. Kinsella made her mark on Chick Lit with her fun and flirty Shopaholic series, and now she is back with another breezy and blithely humorous romance.

Mackintosh, Clare. [I See You](#) (Penguin \$26)
Zoe Walker isn’t crazy; the woman in the newspaper ad really is her. When Zoe picks up the discarded tabloid on the London Tub on her commute home one night, she finds herself idly paging through the newspaper until she comes to the section advertising escorts and dating websites. There Zoe is shocked to find her own picture in one of the ads with a link to a website called [findtheone.com](#). Zoe’s family and friends try to tell her that it is just a coincidence, that it is just someone who looks a little bit like her. Zoe wants to believe them until she discovers that different women’s pictures have been appearing in the same ad, and that these same women have then recently become the victims of an assortment of crimes. MacIntosh’s second superbly crafted thriller is a claustrophobic tale of filled with plenty of crafty twists and clever turns including a killer finale. This one is tailor-made for.

fans of *Gone Girl* and *Girl on the Train*.

Marlowe, Mary Ann. [*Some Kind of Magic*](#) (Kensington \$15)

Biochemist Eden Sinclair has no idea that the scent she spritzed on herself before leaving the lab is designed to enhance pheromones. Or that the cute, grungy-looking guy she meets at a gig that evening is Adam Copeland. As in *the Adam Copeland*—international rock god and object of lust for a million women. Make that a million and one. By the time she learns the truth, she's already spent the (amazing, incredible) night in his bed. Suddenly Eden, who's more accustomed to being set up on disastrous dates by her mom, is going out with a gorgeous celebrity who loves how down-to-earth and honest she is. But for once, Eden isn't being honest. She can't bear to reveal that this overpowering attraction could be nothing more than seduction by science. And the only way to know how Adam truly feels is to ditch the perfume—and risk being ditched in turn. Think of this as a sexy spin on *Love Potion Number 9*.

Messineo, Teresa. [*The Fire by Night*](#) (HarperCollins \$15.99)

In war-torn France, Jo McMahon, an Italian-Irish girl from the tenements of Brooklyn, tends to six seriously wounded soldiers in a makeshift medical unit. Enemy bombs have destroyed her hospital convoy, and now Jo singlehandedly struggles to keep her patients and herself alive in a cramped and freezing tent close to German troops. Half a world away in the Pacific, Kay Elliot first survives the tunnels of Corregidor only to become trapped in a squalid Japanese POW camp in Manila, one of thousands of Allied men, women, and children whose fates rest in the hands of a sadistic enemy. This isn't always an easy book to read since Messineo doesn't gloss over the very real hardships and dangers nurses serving in both U.S. Army theaters during World War II endured. But the author also does a terrific job highlighting the courage and compassion these same women displayed under fire.

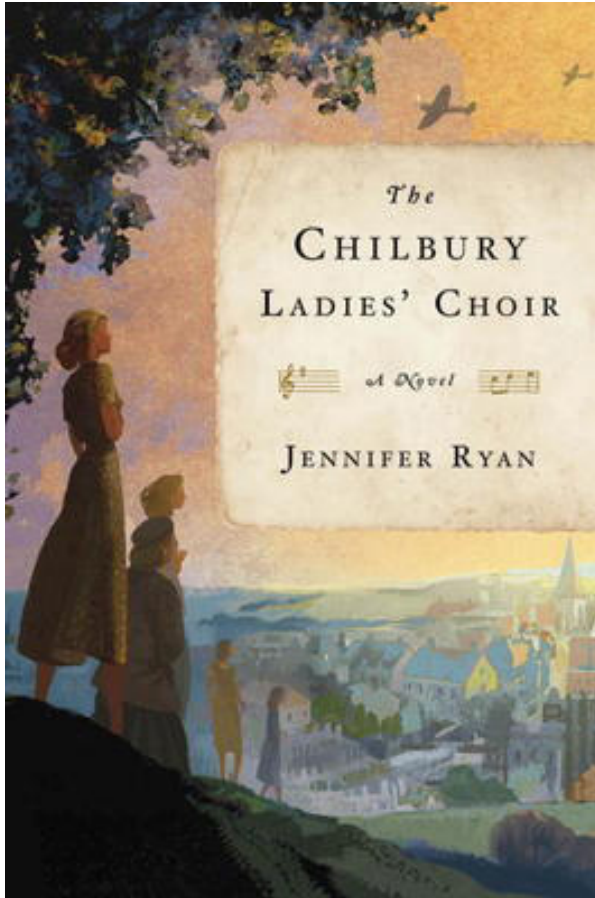
Poeppel, Amy. [*Small Admissions*](#) (Atria \$26)

No one actually said it out loud, but Angela Pearson knows that everyone thinks she ruined her sister Amy's life. Now Angela is doing everything she can to help Kate get her life back on track after Amy turns into a major coach potato when she is dumped by her handsome, French "almost fiancé" Robert. So when Angela stumbles across a job at prestigious Hudson Day School, she does everything she can think of to get Kate to apply. Much to everyone's surprise (most of all Kate's), Kate lands the job in the admissions department, which just happens to be right in the middle of what employees at Hudson refer to as the "dark time," or the height of the admission season. As the process revs up, Kate meets smart kids who are unlikable, likeable kids who aren't very smart, and Park Avenue parents who refuse to take no for an answer. Meanwhile, Kate's sister and her closest friends find themselves keeping secrets, hiding boyfriends, dropping bombshells, and fighting each other on how to keep Kate on her feet. On top of it all, Kate's cranky, oddly charming, and irritatingly handsome downstairs neighbor is turning out to be more than he seems. Poeppel's debut novel is a fun and frothy, chick lit type of romance that will definitely appeal to fans of *Bridget Jones' Diary*, *The Nanny Diaries* or *The Devil Wears Prada*.

Rosenstiel, Tom. [*Shining City*](#) (HarperCollins \$26.99)

Peter Rena is a "fixer." He and his partner, Randi Brooks, earn their living making the problems of the powerful disappear. They get their biggest job yet when the White House hires them to vet the president's nominee for the Supreme Court. Judge Roland Madison is a legal giant, but he's a political maverick, with views that might make the already tricky confirmation process even more difficult especially when a string of seemingly random killings overlaps with Rena's investigation, with Judge Madison a possible target. Talk about timely! With a current Supreme Court nominee going through the confirmation process, Rosenstiel's debut thriller is even more fun to read and that is saying something. If you have Brad Meltzer, David Baldacci, or Joseph

Finder on your must-read list of authors, you may want to give this entertaining thriller a try.



Ryan, Jennifer. [*The Chilbury Ladies Choir*](#) (Crown \$26)

When the vicar of Chilbury announces he is shutting down the church choir since many of its male participants have gone off to war, the women in the village rebel. Empowered by recently arrived music professor Primrose Trent, the music group is reborn as the “Chilbury Ladies Choir.” As the war continues to intrude on their lives, the ladies become equally determined to use their voices to not only lift up their spirits but the hopes of the rest of the residents of the small Kentish village as well. Told through letters, and journal and diary entries of five different women in Chilbury – widowed nurse Mrs. Tilling, scheming midwife Miss Paltry, young Kitty Winthrop and her beautiful, older sister Venetia, and a ten-year-old Czech evacuee – this compelling debut is a poignant take on life on the English home front during World War II. If you loved the recent PBS series *Home Fires* (season 2 is coming this Spring), this will be equally entertaining, but don’t be surprised if you see

this book translated into a PBS production as well since the rights have already been sold to the producers of *Downton Abbey*.

Shelton, Paige. [*Bookman Dead Style*](#) (Penguin \$7.99)

Lights. Camera. Action. Murder? It’s January, and the Star City Film Festival has taken the Utah ski resort town by storm. Movie stars are everywhere, carving fresh powder on the slopes and crossing the thresholds of Bygone Alley’s charming boutique shops—including The Rescued Word, where Clare Henry and her grandfather restore old typewriters and beloved books. So when Hollywood’s hottest superhero, Matt Bane, enters their store to buy some personalized notecards, it’s hard not to be star-struck. But when Clare sees the police leading Matt out of The Fountain hotel in handcuffs only a few hours later, she can’t believe her eyes. The affable actor is accused of killing his sister, but Clare’s convinced he’s completely miscast in that role, leaving her little choice but to play amateur sleuth in order to find the real murderer. Shelton began her *Dangerous Type* series with the terrific *To Helvetica and Back* last year and now continues Clare’s adventures in detection with another marvelously entertaining mystery that effectively uses both its Utah setting and the fascinating world of typewriters to good advantage. Paige will be here Saturday March 18 at 2 PM along with Laura Bradford, Lynn Cahoon and Chevy Stevens for a fun afternoon event so mark your calendars now.

Stachniak, Eva. [*The Chosen Maiden*](#) (Doubleday \$18)

Born on the road to dancer parents, the Nijinsky children seem destined for the stage. Vaslav is an early prodigy, and through single-minded pursuit will grow into arguably the greatest—and most infamous—Russian ballet dancer of the 20th century. His talented younger sister Bronia, however, also longs to dance. Overshadowed by Vaslav, plagued by a body deemed less than ideal and struggling against the constraints of her gender, Bronia will have to work triply hard to prove herself worthy. Bronia’s stunning discipline and mesmerizing talent will eventually elevate her to the highest stage in Russia: the

prestigious, old-world Mariinsky Ballet. But as the First World War rages, revolution sparks in Russia. In her politics, love life and career, Bronia will be forced to confront the choice between old and new; traditional and groundbreaking; safe and passionate. Stachniak has written two other historical novels about Catherine the Great, and she has her Russian setting down pat. Filled with cameo turns by real-life figures like Anna Pavlova, Coco Chanel, and Serge Diaghilev as well as fascinating glimpses of such historical events as the debut of Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*, this is a sumptuous treat for any fan of historical fiction.



Tate, Clover. [Blown Away](#) (Penguin \$7.99) Emmy Adler is finally living her dream. She's moved to the coastal town of Rock Point, Oregon, and is starting a kite business. *Strings Attached* features her own unique designs, inspired by everything from Matisse's colorful cut-outs to Picasso's Cubism. However, Emmy's high spirits take a surprising dive when she unexpectedly stumbles upon a dead man washed up on the beach. The man turns out to be local chef Miles Logan, who just happened to use to date Emmy's best friend Avery. Since the local sheriff seems intent on pinning the blame for Miles murder on Avery, Emmy knows it will be up to her to find the real killer. This debut mystery, which is also the first in the author's new Kite Shop series, was a real treat for cozy mystery fans. The Oregon setting is nicely handled (let's just say mushroom

hunting plays an important part in the plot), the characters are compelling, and what is particularly refreshing is that the protagonist does take time to seriously consider the consequences of her meddling in an official murder investigation (not that it stops her, but still.....

Nonfiction

RESCUING PENNY JANE

One Shelter Volunteer,
Countless Dogs, and the Quest
to Find Them All Homes

AMY SUTHERLAND



Sutherland, Amy. [Rescuing Penny Jane](#) (Harper-Collins \$26.99)

What shelter dogs need is obvious—a home. But how do we find all those homes? That question sends bestselling writer and lifelong dog lover Amy Sutherland on a quest to find the answers in her own volunteer work and beyond. The result is an unforgettable and inspiring trip through the world of homeless dogs and the people who work so hard to save them. Through conversations with leading shelter directors, researchers, trainers, adoption counselors, and

a nuanced, fully informed picture of the rescue world, along with its challenges, champions, and triumphs. In addition to introducing readers to dogs like Alfred, a loony, gorilla-sized Goldendoodle, intent on jumping on absolutely everyone at the shelter; Rugby, the crippled pit bull—mix puppy who was found abandoned on a roadside; and Brody, an overly exuberant and misunderstood German shepherd mix as well as her own adopted dogs: Penny Jane, the terribly skittish stray from a Maine farm who repeatedly pushes Amy's patience to its limits; and Walter Joe, who acts like a rabid dog in the shelter only to become a marshmallow in his new home, Sutherland also delves into the history of rescue dogs, like Sido, the sheltie mix who inspired the no-kill movement; Sadie, the Civil War dog who braved Gettysburg; and Bummer and Lazarus, San Francisco's famous nineteenth-century stray dogs. Even if you are not a dog person, you will find yourself fascinated by this touching, insightful look at the bond between humans and the dogs they love.

