

Midmonth BookNotes

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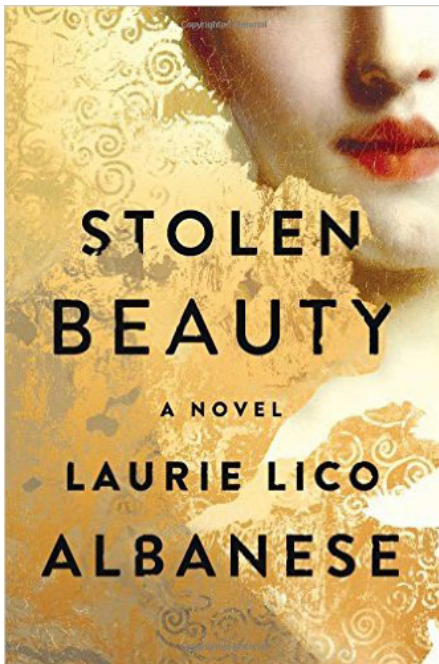
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March Book Madness

For Art's Sake

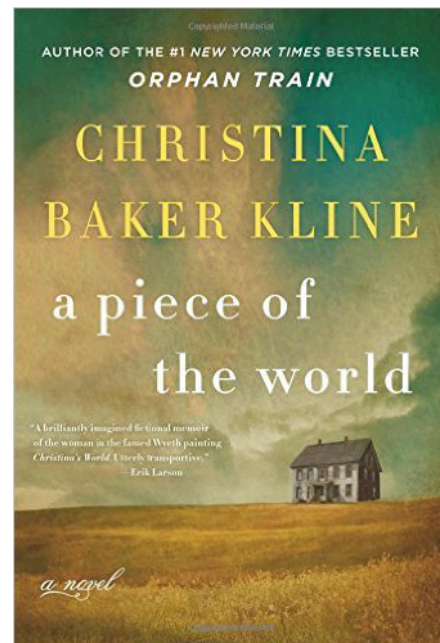


Albanese, Laurie Lico. Stolen Beauty

(Atria Books \$26)

In *fin de siècle* Vienna, beautiful, brilliant, and Jewish Adele Bloch-Bauer finds herself swept up the glittering circle of Secessionist artists and avant-garde collectors orbiting around painter Gustav Klimt. With new advances in art and an openness concerning sexuality gradually breaking through the façade of conventional society in the city, Adele quickly becomes Klimt's muse and so much more. But there is also a darker side to all the new changes coming to Vienna including an increase in anti-Semitism, an ugly side of human nature that warns of even darker days to come. Almost forty years later, Adele's niece Maria Altmann witnesses the full bloom

of that political hatred for anyone of the Jewish faith when the Austrian government surrenders to the Nazis. When her husband is arrested and her parents are forced out of their home, Maria must summon inner resources of courage and resilience she never knew she possessed if she is to have any hope of rescuing her loved ones and saving her aunt's beloved paintings. Anyone who enjoys impeccably crafted historical fiction will savor this beautifully written novel that explores the sacrifices that have been made for love and art.



Kline, Christine Baker. A Piece of the World (HarperCollins \$27.99)

Kline, the author of the surprise #1 *New York Times* best-seller *Orphan Train*, which spent more than 100 weeks on that list, was inspired to

write her latest novel by a woodblock print of Andrew Wyeth's *Christina's World* given to her as child by her father. Kline spent two years writing the story of Christina Olson, the woman who became Wyeth's artistic muse. Christina was born and grew up in the small coastal town of Cushing, Maine. However, a childhood illness left Christina with a disability that combined with bad luck and a lack of family economic resources effectively limit her world to the family farm. However, when her old friend Betsy James suddenly turns up at the Olson farm along with her new beau Andrew Wyeth, everything changes. Wyeth begins coming around to the farm almost on a daily basis to sketch, paint, and chat with Christina forming an unlikely friendship that would ultimately transform both their lives. Kline's prose is as elegantly spare and startlingly luminous as Wyeth's own artwork, and *A Piece of the World* is an unforgettable story about the healing powers of both art and friendship.

Aiken, Joan. [The Five-Minute Marriage](#) (Sourcebooks Casablanca \$8.99)

Desperate to help her ailing mother, Philadelphia "Delphie" Carteret agrees to partake in a sham wedding ceremony to her cousin, Gareth. This fulfills Gareth's obligation to marry before his sick uncle passes, and in exchange Delphie's mother will be guaranteed an annuity for life. The plan is perfect. But perfect plans usually go awry. Not only was the marriage ceremony valid, but Gareth's dying uncle makes a miraculous recovery. An imposter is threatening Delphie's identity and her life, and the whole family is on the brink of scandal. As Gareth and Delphie try to mastermind a way out of this mess, they begin to discover that what's between them may be surprisingly real.

Alcott, Kate. [Hollywood Daughter](#) (Doubleday \$26.95)

Growing up in Hollywood, Jessica Malloy watches as her PR executive father helps make Ingrid a star at Selznick International Pictures. Over years of fleeting interactions with the actress, Jesse comes to idolize Ingrid, who she considered not only the epitome of elegance and integrity, but also the picture-perfect mother, an area where her own difficult mom falls short. However, in

1950, Ingrid Bergman—already a major star after movies like *Casablanca* and *Joan of Arc*—has a baby out of wedlock with her Italian lover, film director Roberto Rossellini. Bergman's "moral" lapse shocked her legions of American fans, and the resulting international scandal robs seventeen-year-old Jesse of her childhood hero. When the stress placed on Jesse's father begins to reveal hidden truths about the Malloy family, Jesse's eyes are opened to the complex realities of life—and love. Alcott, a pseudonym for journalist Patricia O'Brien, has written about old Hollywood before (the fabulous *A Touch of Stardust*), and she knows the literary terrain well. Fans of the Golden Age of movies as well as historical fiction readers will enjoy this emotionally compelling tale.

Bennett, Vanora. [The White Russian](#) (St. Martin's \$25.99)

Evie, a rebellious young American, leaves New York in search of art and adventure in jazz-age Paris, where her bohemian grandmother, long estranged from the rest of the family, lives. But her grandmother's sudden death just after her arrival leaves Evie compelled to carry out her relative's dying wish: to find a man from her past known only as Zhenya. The quest leads Evie deep into the heart of the Russian émigré community. With the world on the brink of war, she becomes embroiled in murder plots, conspiracies and illicit love affairs as White faces Red Russian, and nothing is as it seems. Having studied Russian at Oxford and worked as the Moscow correspondent for the *Los Angeles Times*, Bennett has a remarkable depth of knowledge about Russia and its people, and she was inspired to write her latest compelling historical novel about a young woman searching for her own past by the tales of the nearly 200,000 White Russians who escaped from Russia after the 1917 Revolution and came to France to build new lives for themselves. Just one of the fascinating tidbits I discovered in the book is that you can tell the difference between Soviet and post-Soviet Russians from their older Tsarist emigres by the way their name ends (ov verses off).

Blackwell, Elizabeth. [In the Shadow of Lakecrest](#) (Lake Union \$14.95)

When opportunity – in the person of Matthew Lemont – knocks, Kate Moore immediately throws open the door. Meeting wealthy, handsome Matthew on board the *RMS Franconia* presents Kate with just the ticket she needs to escape a lifetime of drudgery and poverty. Despite the fact that some other people on board the ship warn her that the Lemont family has a somewhat unsavory reputation, Kate does everything she can to nurture their flirtatious first encounter into a surprise, sudden marriage proposal from Matthew. However, upon arriving at Lakecrest, the grand Lemont family estate just outside Chicago, Kate begins to think there might be something to those rumors when she learns that not only did Matthew's aunt Cecily vanish one day, but also that everyone else at Lakecrest seems to be keeping at least one secret from her. Fans of good, old-fashioned gothic romances will be delighted to discover Blackwell's latest expertly crafted novel, which deftly plays homage to the literary grand doyenne of the genre: Daphne Du Maurier's classic *Rebecca*.

Childs, Laura. [Pekoe Most Poison](#) (Penguin \$26)

Indigo Tea Shop owner Theodosia Browning finds herself once again in the middle of a murder investigation when she is invited to a philanthropic "Rat Tea" (an old Charleston custom in which party guests are served refreshments by attendants in rodent costumes) and the hostess' husband is found poisoned. While the actual murder investigation seemed a bit weak to me, fans will find that Childs continues to steep her latest Tea Shop mystery in plenty fascinating Charleston history along with tasty snippets of tea lore.

Cocco, Giovanni and Amneris Magella. [Shadows on the Lake](#) (Penguin \$16)

During the construction of a new road to the Swiss border in the mountains above Lake Como, the remains of a young man are unearthed on the powerful Cappelletti family's property. Police inspector Stefania Valenti, forty-five, divorced with a young daughter, is put in charge of the investigation, which takes her

back to World War II and deep into the history of the region, a place that during the war attracted smugglers, deserters, secret agents, and fleeing Jews. This debut mystery is just the ticket for anyone who loves Michael Dibdin's Aurelio Zen mysteries or Martin Walker's series featuring Benoit "Bruno" Courreges.

Cooper, Marla. [Dying on the Vine](#) (Minotaur \$26.99)

Wedding planner Kelsey McKenna just signed on to a dream gig. She's going to be the "day-of" coordinator at the beautiful Higgens Estate in California wine country. There's only one problem: the wedding was originally planned by Babs Norton, the self-proclaimed Queen of Wine Country Weddings, who the father of the bride has fired. Kelsey decides to clear the air with Babs and make sure there are no hard feelings, but before she can throw herself into executing the perfect wedding, she discovers Babs dead on the floor of his office. Cooper's first Kelsey McKenna mystery *Terror in Taffeta*, is an Agatha award finalist for best first mystery this year.

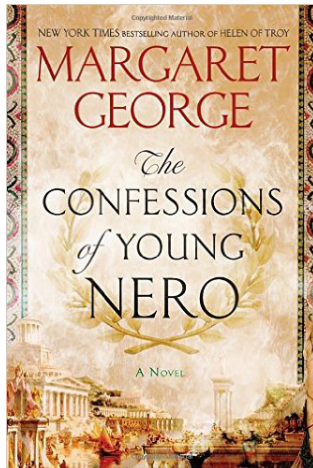
Flanders, Judith. [A Cast of Vultures](#) (Minotaur \$25.99)

In the third witty installment of Flander's superbly written series featuring London-based book editor Samantha Claire, a wild post-launch party culminates in an elaborate mystery involving missing neighbors, suspected arson, and an unidentified murder victim that pits Samantha, Inspector Jake Field, and Sam's goth assistant against dubious adversaries. I really enjoyed the first two books in the Samantha Claire series and found the third to be equally diverting. If you miss the erudite, smartly written mysteries of Sarah Caudwell, Flanders books will be a real treat.

Frampton, Megan. [My Fair Duchess](#) (Avon \$7.99)

It was impossible, unprecedented...and undeniably true. Genevieve is now a "duke", or, rather, a duchess. So what is she to do when the *ton* eyes her every move, hoping she'll make a mistake? Genevieve knows she has brains and has sometimes been told she has beauty, but, out of her

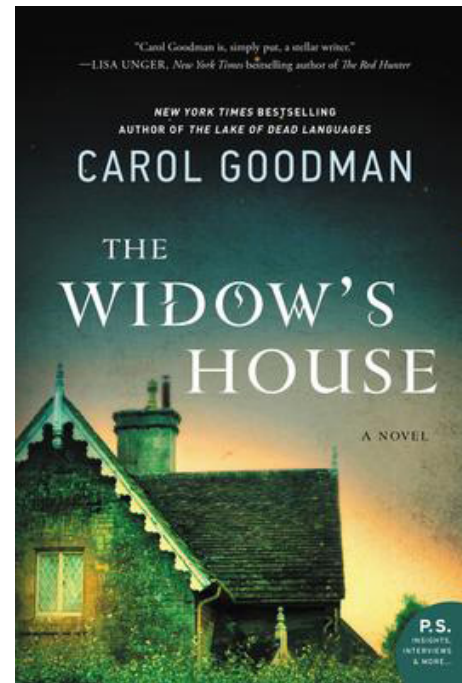
depth, she calls on an expert: Archibald Salisbury, the son of a viscount, war hero, and someone completely proficient in the proper ways of aristocratic society. With shoulders broad enough to lean on, and a wit that matches her own. Archie is supposed to teach her to be a lady and run her estate, but what she really wants to do is unladylike—run into his arms. Frampton puts her own clever spin on *My Fair Lady* in her latest fun and frothy Regency historical.



George, Margaret. [The Confessions of Young Nero](#) (Penguin \$28)

What if all the historical accounts of Nero were wrong? That's the premise of Margaret George's latest enthralling historical novel that chronicles the early years of one of the Roman Empire's most colorful rulers. Born *Lucius Domitius Ahenobarbus* but better known as Nero, this Roman emperor spent his life trying to live down his uncle Caligula's reputation for madness only to earn his own form of notoriety. Margaret George has written a number of best-selling historical novels (most the size of a doorstop) about Elizabeth I, Cleopatra, and Helen of Troy, all of which showcase her flair for combining captivating prose with tons of fascinating research. With *The Confessions of Young Nero*, George wants to revise our opinion of Nero, who gained the throne at the age of sixteen, from that of a vainglorious tyrant who fiddled while Rome burned to that of a ruler, who embraced the arts and understood the power of public opinion. From stuttering, doddering old Claudius to Nero's mother the fiendish Agrippina (who could give Joan Crawford lessons in bad parenting), George treats readers to vivid portraits of all of the important players in Nero's circle while bringing the world of ancient Rome vividly to life. Fans of

Robert Graves' historical novels or readers who are enjoying Lindsey Davis's new *The Third Nero* will want to find time to enjoy this. **P.S.** a second volume by George covering the later years of Nero's life is already in the works.



Goodman, Carol. [The Widow's House](#) (HarperCollins \$15.99)

When Jess and Clare Martin move from Williamsburg, Brooklyn, to their former college town in the Hudson River valley, they are hoping for rejuvenation—of their marriage, their savings, and Jess's writing career. The couple take a caretaker's job at Riven House, a crumbling estate and the home of their old college writing professor Alden Montague, but there is something strange going on at Riven House. Clare begins to the sound of a baby crying at night, and she sees a ghostly figure in the fog at the edge of the estate. As Claire begins researching the history of the area and its Apple Blossom Princesses for her own novel, she discovers she has her own spooky family connection to the Montagues and Riven House. Goodman has always had a fondness for the Hudson River valley as a setting, and she makes wonderful use of it in her latest elegantly written, deliciously gothic novel. If you loved those old marvelously spooky books by Barbara Michaels like *Ammie Come Home* and *House of Many Shadows*, don't miss this stunning book. (But you might not want to read it late at night).

Jaeger, Meredith. [The Dressmaker's Dowry](#) (HarperCollins \$15.99)

In present day San Francisco, journalist turned writer Sarah Havensworth is struggling to complete the novel for which she quit her job. However, when Sarah spots a news headline from 1876 that proclaims "Missing Dressmakers Believed to Be Murdered," she discovers a potential new source of inspiration for her book. Drawing upon her journalistic training, Sarah begins investigating what happened to Hannelore Schaeffer and Margaret O'Brien – the two dressmakers who disappeared – only to discover the heirloom engagement ring given to Sarah by her husband may very well be connected to the crime.

Kleypas, Lisa. [Devil in Spring](#) (Avon \$7.99)

Most debutantes dream of finding a husband. Lady Pandora Ravenel has different plans. The ambitious young beauty would much rather stay at home and plot out her new board game business than take part in the London Season. But one night at a glittering society ball, she's ensnared in a scandal with a wickedly handsome stranger. A cynical rake named Gabriel, Lord St. Vincent, who may prove to be more than her match when it comes to avoiding marriage.



Lipman, Elinor. [On Turpentine Lane](#) (Houghton \$24)

At thirty-two, Faith Frankel has a job: writing institutional thank-you notes for her alma mater

The Everton Country Day School. Faith also has a boyfriend: Stuart Levine, who has gone off on a cross-country walking tour all the while sporting a sandwich board sign that says "free hugs" in both English and Spanish. Faith also has a clueless boss, a mother who lives just a bit too close for comfort, a flirty officemate named Nick Franconi, and a philandering father, who is jumpstarting his art career by creating customized Chagalls. Now Faith has just bought a new home on Turpentine Lane, but her charming little house comes with a few unforeseen features of its own that seem to hint that something shady may have occurred there in the past. While there is a crime – or two – in the latest novel from best-seller Lipman, the real reason to read *On Turpentine Lane* is for the marvelous cast of quirky characters Lipman creates, and the deliciously acerbic wit with which she infuses her writing.

Macomber, Debbie. [If Not for You](#) (Ballantine \$27)

After living in the shadow of her overbearing parents for twenty-five years, Beth Prudhomme is finally taking charge of her own life. After moving from Chicago to Portland, Beth reconnects with her favorite aunt Sunshine and lands a job as a high-school music teacher. The only thing missing in Beth's fabulous new life is a man to love. Then Beth's friend Nichole introduces her to Sam Carney, a tattooed mechanic, who is exactly the kind of man her parents never wanted her to date but who, when tragedy strikes, turns out to be exactly the kind of man Beth needs in her life.

Morton, Mandy. [The No. 2 Feline Detective Agency](#) (Minotaur \$25.99)

If Beatrix Potter wrote a mystery, it might very well read something like *The No. 2 Feline Detective Agency*. Hettie Bagshot thinks her money troubles may be over when she lands her first case for her struggling detective agency. The manager of the Furcross Home for Slightly Older Cats, wants Hettie and her partner Tilly to retrieve the bodies of three former residents of the home, who had been buried in the garden. The trail leads Hettie and Tilly to the Malkin and Sprinkle Department Store, but even after the

bodies are found and safely interred again, there still seem to be a number of questions left unanswered. Can Hettie untangle this case before she and Tilly find themselves in real danger? Morton's debut mystery is the kind of book that you will either love or hate. Barbara was not amused and found it to be lacking in plot and boring (to say the least). I do agree that anyone reading Morton's debut for a tightly knit plot, will definitely be disappointed. However, I did find a certain measure of charm in the book's quirky cat characters and the world the author has created for them.

Roberts, Sheila. [Starting Over on Blackberry Lane](#) (MIRA \$7.99)

Three different friends - Stefanie Stahl, Griffin James, and Cass Wilkes – with home renovation and repair issues pool their resources in order to bid on the professional services of handyman Grant Masters in Roberts' latest warm, funny, and sweetly romantic Icicle Falls novel. If you love Debbie Macomber's books (see above) and haven't yet discovered Roberts equally endearing novels, you are in for a treat.

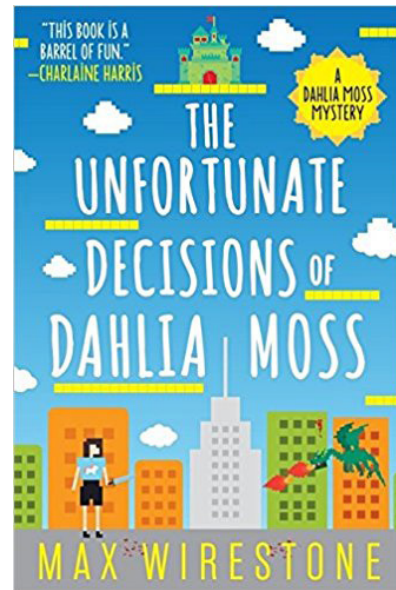
Ryan, Jennifer. [His Cowboy Heart](#) (Avon \$7.99)

After war leaves her battered and bruised, Army soldier Jamie Keller returns home to Montana where she, unable to trust anyone enough to get close, finds herself opening up to Ford Kendrick, the man who let her go—and the man whom she has never been able to forget. Ryan writes with a great deal of honesty about the toll PTSD can inflict on the brave men and women who have served in our military and those who love them.

Terry, Candis. [Perfect for You](#) (Avon \$7.99)

To be honest, until his brother mentioned that his executive assistant Brooke Hastings is "hot as hell," CEO Declan Kincade hadn't really given her a second thought. Now, all Declan can think about is Brooke. But Brooke is the best employee Dec's ever had, and that relationship is too important to jeopardize with a fling. However, when Dec and Brooke end up together on a

business road trip, Dec discovers Brooke is determined to teach her "all work and no play" boss how to cut loose and have some fun.



Wirestone, Max. [The Unfortunate Decisions of Dahlia Moss](#) (Orbit \$14.99)

"Despite living with Charice for a number of months now, she continually found new ways to irritate me. Whenever I recalibrated to her insane whims, she would compensate to keep me equally exasperated. It was a cycle. Ours was not a Betty/Veronica relationship but Bert/Ernie." This snippet from Wirestone's novel gives you an idea of the wonderfully snarky sense of humor that the author imbeds into his writing. The book itself revolves around perpetually unemployed Dahlia Moss, who accepts a job as a "private investigator" and finds herself caught up in a search for a jeweled spear (both digital and physical) that leads her to a group of wacky online gamers and murder. If you wish there were more Spellman Files books by Lisa Lutz, Wirestone's wonderfully wacky novels will definitely fill the gap.

The Suspense is Killing Me

Parks, Brad. [Say Nothing](#) (Dutton \$26)

It's a parent's worst nightmare. Someone has your children and if you don't do exactly as told, you will never see them again. This is exactly what happens to Judge Scott Sampson and his wife Alison when the couple arrive home after

work one night and discover their two six-year-old twins Sam and Emma are missing. The couple soon receive a phone call from the kidnapers, who want Scott to rule a certain way in an upcoming drug case and who warn him to “say nothing” to the police or anyone else. However, this is just the beginning of the Sampson’s nightmare as the couple try everything they can to get their children back. The critics have been raving about Park’s new domestic suspense novel for good reason: it is a nail-biting thriller that is simply impossible to put down. With a sense of pacing that rivals Grisham at his best and a plot riddled with unexpected twists and turns, *Say Nothing* is simply outstanding. Fans of Lisa Gardner and Harlan Coben will not want to miss this.

Rader-Day, Lori. [The Day I Died](#) (Harper-Collins \$14.99)

Anna Winger knows people better than they know themselves with only a glance—at their handwriting. Hired by companies seeking trustworthy employees and by the lovelorn hoping to find happiness, Anna likes to keep the real mess of other people’s lives at arm’s length and on paper. But when she is called to use her expertise on a ransom note left behind at a murder scene in the small town she and her son have recently moved to, the crime inevitably gets under Anna’s skin. Was the child kidnapped from his home by his own mother, trying to save him from his abusive father? Anna is able to discern from the note that no one in the little boy’s family has been safe for a long time. And bringing him and his mother home could be the worst possible outcome for them. Then her son goes missing, too. With two boys gone, Anna’s life is ripped wide open. Now to save her son—and herself—Anna must face all of her fears and mistakes, and the full consequences of setting aside everything and everyone for family. Rader-Day’s latest enthralling suspense novel will have you looking at your own handwriting as well as that of everyone around you in a whole new light.

Stevens, Chevy. [Never Let You Go](#) (St. Martin’s \$26.99)

When Lindsey decided to marry Andrew Nash, she thought it was the best decision she had ever

made in her life. It turned out to be the worst. On paper, Andrew seemed to be perfect: he was handsome, caring, and a hard worker. But soon after their marriage, Lindsey began to notice things. Like how jealous Andrew would get if he thought another man was paying too much attention to his wife. Or just how angry Andrew would get after he had too much to drink. Lindsey hoped things would change when their daughter Sophie was born, but instead it just got worse. Lindsey knew taking Sophie and leaving Andrew was the only thing she could do. But now after ten spending ten years in jail, Andrew is out, and Lindsey thinks he may have found her and Sophie. Stevens, who won the International Thriller Award for her book *Still Missing*, knows a thing or two about how to keep readers on the edge of their seats, and in *Never Let You Go*, she employs a variety of clever literary techniques as well as a few neat plot twists that will have readers constantly guessing as the ultimate fate of Lindsey and her daughter. Fans of Mary Higgins Clark’s early suspense novels or any reader, who never misses a Joy Fielding or Lisa Gardner thriller, will find this to be a complete page-turner.

Webb, Debra. [No Darker Place](#) (MIRA \$9.99)

Detective Bobbie Gentry has one objective: to stop the serial killer who robbed her of her husband, her child and her life. Nick Shade understands Bobbie’s pain and her desire for vengeance. He’s on a mission of his own, and the murderer known as the Storyteller is next on his list. Nick knows that the best way to find his target is to stick close to Bobbie. But as she becomes more and more reckless in her attempts to lure the Storyteller out of hiding, he has to make a choice. Will he protect her from herself even if it means passing up the chance to take out one more monster?

White, Kate. [Secrets You Keep](#) (Harper-Collins \$15.99)

What would you do if you realized that your new husband, a man you adore, is keeping secrets from you—secrets with terrifying consequences? Bryn Harper, an accomplished self-

help author, already has plenty to deal with. She's still recovering from a devastating car accident that has left her haunted by recurring, smoke-filled nightmares. Worse still, she can't shake the ominous feeling her dreams contain a warning. In the beginning, Bryn's husband Guy couldn't have been more supportive. But after moving into a new house together, disturbing incidents occur and Guy grows evasive, secretive. What the hell is going on, she wonders? Then, a woman hired to cater their dinner party is brutally murdered. White is a complete pro at writing domestic suspense with a romantic twist, and her latest compulsively readable novel is filled with plenty of terrific plot twists and turns.

Books for Cooks

Bruni, Frank. [A Meatloaf in Every Oven](#) (Grand Central \$24)

Two *New York Times* journalists – Frank Bruni and Jennifer Steinhauer – bond over their shared love of meatloaf by exchanging recipes via email, phone, text, and instant messaging. The result is a collection of 50 recipes that range from classic takes on meatloaf to inventive takes by celebrity chefs like Mario Batali. Also included are a few recipes for “meatless” loaves as well as accompanying dishes that provide support for your main course of meatloaf.

Clark, Melissa. [Dinner](#) (Potter \$35)

New York Times food columnist and writer Clark wants to change the way you think about dinner. Her new cookbook provides 245 recipes that Clark declares are easy and quick enough to prepare on a weeknight while still satisfying your inner gourmet. In order to do so, Clark is a big proponent of using ingredients like tofu, harissa, and blood oranges that were once considered “exotic” but are now readily available to cooks. Each recipe is a one-pot, one-bowl dish that only needs the addition of a salad and some crusty bread to make it a complete meal. From Sumac Chick with Plums or a vegetable-topped Quinoa

Egg Bowl, now you will no longer have to wrestle with the eternal question of “what am I going to have for dinner tonight.”

Madison, Deborah. [In My Kitchen](#) (Ten Speed \$32.50)

Madison is the country's foremost authority on vegetarian cooking and one of the most trusted voices in home cooking, and now she gifts cooks with her favorite recipes for more than 100 different dishes including Baked Ricotta Infused with Thyme; Shredded Radicchio Salad with Garlicky Vinaigrette; Rice Gratin with Zucchini, Onions, and Cheese; and Steamed Persimmon Pudding with Persimmon Puree.

Stewart, Martha. [A New Way to Bake](#) (Potter \$26)

Those busy elves in Martha Stewart's kitchen have updated and thoroughly tested 130 classic sweet recipes by swapping traditional ingredients like all purpose flour and white sugar for healthier alternatives like whole-grain and nut flours and alternate milks and sweeteners. Headnotes suggest additional variations such as using rice syrup in place of honey to veganize fruit and nut bars. Among the recipes are such tempting treats as blueberry ricotta tart and parsnip-rosemary muffins.

Wells, Patricia. [My Master Recipes](#) (HarperCollins \$35)

For decades Wells has been teaching eager students the secrets of cooking at her schools in Paris and Provence. Now Wells brings all of her extensive culinary knowledge together into a book that clearly illustrates not only the techniques – blanching, searing, steaming, braising, etc. – you need to succeed in the kitchen but also the master recipes – both savory and sweet – that employ these new-won skills. A list of pantry essentials, necessary equipment, sources for finding the best ingredients, and advice on how and when to make easy ingredient substitutions are also included. From Grilled Chicken Under a Brick to Walnut Cake, cooks will find themselves successfully whipping up a variety of dishes with a new-found sense of culinary élan.

Nonfiction

Barron, James. [The One-Cent Magenta](#) (Algonquin \$23.95)

If you thought book collectors were crazy, wait until you read about stamp collectors.

When it was issued in 1856, it cost a penny. In 2014, this tiny square of faded red paper sold at Sotheby's for nearly \$9.5 million, the largest amount ever paid for a postage stamp at auction.

One-cent magentas were provisional stamps, printed quickly in what was then British Guiana when a shipment of official stamps from London did not arrive. They were intended for periodicals, and most were thrown out with the newspapers. But one stamp survived. The singular One-Cent Magenta has had only nine owners since a twelve-year-old boy rediscovered it in 1873 as he sorted through papers in his uncle's house. He soon sold it for what would be \$17 today. (That's been called the worst stamp swap in history.) Among later owners was a fabulously wealthy, eccentric Frenchman who hid the stamp from almost everyone (even King George V of England couldn't get a peek); a businessman who traveled with the stamp in a briefcase he handcuffed to his wrist; and John E. du Pont, an heir to the chemical fortune, who died while serving a thirty-year sentence for the murder of Olympic wrestler Dave Schultz.

Evans, Harold. [Do I Make Myself Clear](#) (Little, Brown \$27)

The right words are oxygen to our ideas, but the digital era, with all of its TTYL, LMK, and WTF, has been cutting off that oxygen flow. The compulsion to be precise has vanished from our culture, and in writing of every kind we see a trend towards *more--more* speed and more information but far less clarity. Evans, a British journalist and editor at the *Sunday Times* from 1967 - 1981, provides practical examples of how editing and rewriting can make for better communication, even in the digital age. Think of this as a handy partner to Strunk and White's classic *The Elements of Style*.

[Isenberg, Noah. *We'll Always Have Casablanca*](#) (WW Norton \$27.95)

Casablanca is "not one movie," Umberto Eco once quipped, "it is 'movies.'" Released in 1942, it won the Oscar for Best Picture, Best Director, and Best Screenplay, and it featured unforgettable performances by Humphrey Bogart, Ingrid Bergman, and a deep supporting cast. Film historian Noah Isenberg's *We'll Always Have Casablanca* offers a rich account of the film's origins, the myths and realities behind its production, and the reasons it remains so revered today. Through extensive research and interviews with filmmakers, relatives of the original cast and crew, and fans, Isenberg explores the transformation of the unproduced stage play into the classic screenplay; the casting decisions and the indispensable role that refugees from Hitler's Europe played in making the film; the impact of the Production Code censors and the war; and the ways the film continues to dazzle audiences and saturate popular culture seventy-five years after its release.

[Miller, Scott. *Agent 110*](#) (Simon and Schuster \$28)

Scott Miller's fascinating *Agent 110* explains how leaders of the German Underground wanted assurances from Germany's enemies that they would treat the country humanely after the war. If President Roosevelt backed the resistance, they would overthrow Hitler and shorten the war. But Allen Dulles's (Agent 110) negotiations fell short. Eventually he was placed in charge of the CIA in the 1950s, where he helped set the stage for US foreign policy. With his belief that the ends justified the means, Dulles had no qualms about consorting with Nazi leadership or working with resistance groups within other countries to topple governments. Miller brings to life this exhilarating, and pivotal, period of world history—of desperate renegades in a dark and dangerous world where spies, idealists, and traitors match wits and blows to ensure their vision of a perfect future.

[Milton, Giles. *Churchill's Ministry of Ungentlemanly Warfare*](#) (Picador \$28)

Six gentlemen, one goal: the destruction of Hitler's war machine. In the spring of 1939, a top-secret organization was founded in London with

the purpose of destroying the Nazi war machine through acts of sabotage. Led by Scotsman Colin Gubbins, a group of five dedicated men - including maverick engineer Cecil Clarke, who built the dirty bomb used to assassinate Reinhard Heydrich and William Fairbairn, an expert in silent killing who trained guerrillas being parachuted behind enemy lines – did their best to rain havoc on the Nazis and in the process helped change the outcome of the war.

Reynolds, Nicholas. *Writer, Sailor, Soldier, Spy* (HarperCollins \$27.99)

While he was the curator of the CIA Museum, Nicholas Reynolds, a longtime military intelligence expert, began to discover tantalizing clues that suggested Ernest Hemingway's involvement in the Second World War was much more complex and dangerous than has been previously understood. *Writer, Sailor, Soldier, Spy* brings to light for the first time this riveting secret side of Hemingway's life – when he worked closely with both the American OSS, a precursor to the CIA, and the Soviet NKVD, the USSR's forerunner to the KGB to defeat Adolf Hitler and the Nazis.

O'shea, Stephen. *The Alps* (WW Norton \$26.95)

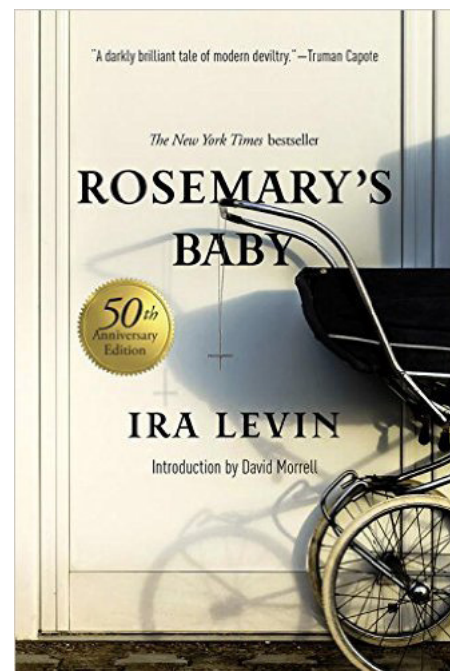
For centuries the Alps have seen the march of armies, the flow of pilgrims and Crusaders, the feats of mountaineers and the dreams of engineers – and some 14 million people live among their peaks today. In *The Alps*, Stephen O'Shea takes readers up and down these majestic mountains, journeying through their 500-mile arc across France, Italy, Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Germany, Austria, and Slovenia. Along the way, he explores the reality behind Hannibal and his elephants' famous crossing in 218 BCE; he reveals how the Alps have profoundly influenced culture from *Frankenstein* to *Heidi* to *The Sound of Music*; and he visits the spot where Arthur Conan Doyle staged Sherlock Holmes's death scene, the bloody site of the Italians' retreat in World War I, and Hitler's notorious vacation house, the Eagle's Nest. Throughout, O'Shea records his adventures with the watch makers, salt miners, cable-car operators, and yodelers who define the Alps today.

Tremlett, Giles. *Isabella of Castile*

(Bloomsbury \$35)

In 1474, when Castile was the largest, strongest, and most populous kingdom in Hispania (present day Spain and Portugal), a twenty-three-year-old woman named Isabella ascended the throne. At a time when successful queens regnant were few and far between, Isabella faced not only the considerable challenge of being a young, female ruler in an overwhelmingly male-dominated world, but also of reforming a major European kingdom riddled with crime, debt, corruption, and religious factionism. Her marriage to Ferdinand of Aragon united two kingdoms and became a royal partnership in which Isabella more than held her own. Their pivotal reign was long and transformative, uniting Spain and setting the stage for its golden era of global dominance. With a job as the Madrid correspondent for *Economist* magazine and his previous book *Catherine of Aragon* (Isabella's most famous daughter), Tremlett knows of what he writes.

Blast from the Past



Levin, Ira. *Rosemary's Baby* (WW Norton \$15.95)

Fifty years ago, Ira Levin wrote *Rosemary's Baby*: a horror/psychological suspense story that became an instant classic and inspired two different movies (as well as a temporary fad for the

pixie cut hairstyle sported by Mia Farrow in the original film). The book centers on struggling actor Guy Woodhouse, who moves into the Bramford, an old New York City apartment building, with his wife Rosemary. The Bramford has a certain ominous reputation, and the average age of its residents is something north of 60 years. Guy falls in love with the place as well as their new neighbors Roman and Minnie Castavet, but Rosemary, as the reader soon discovers, has some reservations about her new home. Shortly after Guy lands a plum Broadway role, Rosemary becomes pregnant – and the Castavets start taking an extra special interest in her welfare. As the sickening, Rosemary becomes increasingly isolated, she begins to suspect her neighbors and their circle of friends are not exactly what they claim to be. Pegasus Books has just published a special 50th anniversary edition of *Rosemary's Baby* with an introduction by author David Morrell. So if you have never read this classic, now's your chance!