

# Midmonth BookNotes

Volume 4 Issue 13 December BookNotes 2017

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## Happy Holidays

### Authors at the Poisoned Pen

Join award-winning authors Jennifer Ashley, Jenn McKinlay, and Paige Shelton for tea, sweet treats, and a lively discussion of their books on Saturday January 6, 2018 at 2 PM.

#### Ashley, Jennifer. [Death Below Stairs](#)

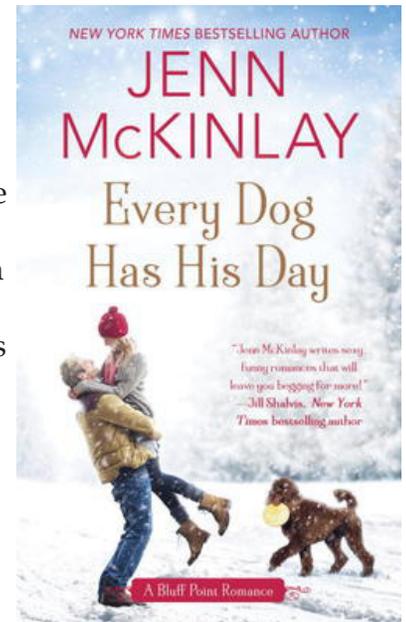
(Berkley \$15)

Here is my Booklist review for Ashley's terrific new historical mystery series "Kat Holloway knows accepting a new position always means making adjustments. A good cook must not only adapt to a new kitchen and new co-workers, but she must also discern the culinary likes and dislikes of the household. While Kate is perfectly willing to cater to the tastes of her new employer Lord Charles Rankin, she does draw the line at dealing with a murder in her kitchen. So, when Kate stumbles across the body of her assistant Sinead in the larder, she decides something must be done. With some help from her old "friend" Daniel McAdam, Kat sets out seeing to it that the justice is served so that she can get back to preparing dinner! New York Times best-selling Ashley first introduced her character of Kat Holloway in a novella *A Soupcon of Poison*. Now Kat is back to launch a top-notch new series that deftly demonstrates Ashley's mastery of historical mysteries by delivering an impeccably researched setting, a fascinating protagonist with an intriguing past, and lively writing seasoned with just the right dollop of dry wit."

#### McKinlay, Jenn. [Every Dog Has His Day](#)

(Berkley \$7.99)

Here is the starred Booklist review of Jenn's latest sparkling contemporary romance "If there is one thing Zach Caine knows, it's women. So far, Zach has been able to successfully sort all of the females in his life into four distinct categories: family, friends, employees, and potential casual hookups. However, when Zach bumps into Jessie Connelly after rescuing her daughters' kitten from his roof, he is puzzled by his reaction to her. Much to his surprise, Zach seems to be seriously smitten with Jessie. Unfortunately, having endured her share of "players" (including her deadbeat ex-husband), Jessie wants nothing to do with Zach. The deliciously sharp sense of wit and flair for perfect comic timing that are part and parcel of



McKinlay's literary DNA are present in full force in *Every Dog Has His Day*, the third superbly satisfying addition to her Bluff Point series. Put this together with the book's engagingly quirky cast of characters, a completely charming small-town setting, and a couple of four-footed characters who significantly up the adorable ante in the story, and you have a contemporary romance that is practically perfect in every way."

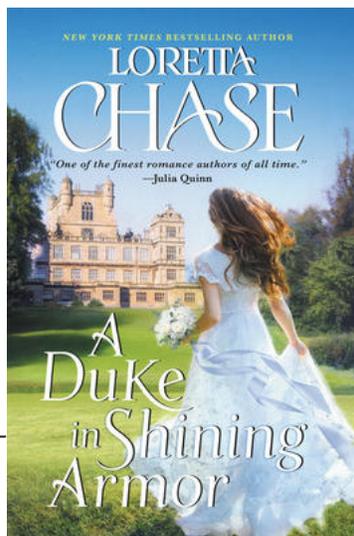
**Shelton, Paige.** [Comic sans Murder](#)  
(Berkley \$7.99)

Finding a ski boot on the slopes isn't an unusual occurrence in Star City, but finding a ski boot with part of a human foot still inside certainly is. Now Clare Henry, co-owner of *The Rescued Word*, finds herself once again involved in a murder investigation when world-famous horror author Nathan Grimes, who is using the equipment in Clare's shop to print a new collection of his poetry, insists on discovering what may have happened to the rest of the skier's body. This is the third terrific addition to Shelton's fun new series set in a small town that may remind some of you of Park City, Utah.

## Historical Fiction, Romance and More

**Chase, Loretta.** [Duke in Shining Armor](#)  
(Harper \$7.99)

It seemed like a good idea at the time. In order to steady her nerves before marrying the Duke of Ashmont, Lady Olympia Hightower adds just a few too many "drops" of brandy to her tea. The next thing she knows, Olympia is squeezing herself through the closest window hell bent on running away from her bridegroom. As the best man, Hugh Philemon Ancaster, seventh Duke of Ripley, now has no choice but to go after Olympia and bring her back, But Hugh never expected that while chasing Olympia down, he



might begin entertaining thoughts of marrying her himself. Chase is the reigning queen of witty historical Regencies, and if you love the acerbic humor of Jane Austen deftly folded into a sigh-worthy love story, don't miss her latest impeccably written romance.

**Chiaverini, Jennifer.** [Enchantress of Numbers](#)  
(Dutton \$27)

The only legitimate child of Lord Byron, Ada Byron King, the Countess of Lovelace, was trained in science and mathematics by her mother from an early age in an effort to keep Ada from following in her troubled father's literary footsteps. When Ada is later introduced into London society as a highly eligible young heiress, she at last discovers the intellectual and social circles she has craved all her life. Little does she realize that her delightful new friendship with inventor Charles Babbage—brilliant, charming, and occasionally curmudgeonly—will shape her destiny. Intrigued by the prototype of his first calculating machine, the Difference Engine, and enthralled by the plans for his even more advanced Analytical Engine, Ada resolves to help Babbage realize his extraordinary vision, unique in her understanding of how his invention could transform the world. All the while, she passionately studies mathematics—ignoring skeptics who consider it an unusual, even unhealthy, pursuit for a woman—falls in love, discovers the shocking secrets behind her parents' estrangement, and comes to terms with the unquenchable fire of her imagination.

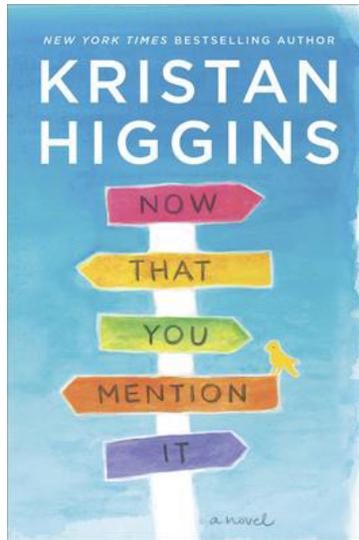
**Hay, Ashley.** [A Hundred Small Lessons](#)  
(Atria \$26)

When Elsie Gormley leaves the Brisbane house in which she has lived for more than sixty years, Lucy Kiss and her family move in, eager to establish their new life. As they settle in, Lucy and her husband Ben struggle to navigate their transformation from adventurous lovers to new parents, taking comfort in memories of their vibrant past as they begin to unearth who their future selves might be. But the house has secrets of its own, and the rooms seem to share recollections of Elsie's life with Lucy.

**Higgins, Kristan.** [Now That You Mention It](#)

(Harlequin \$15.99)

Nora Stuart has Beantown Bug Killers to thank for a second chance at coming to terms with her past. If that exterminator van had not hit Nora as she was jaywalking across the street in Boston, Nora probably never would have gone back home to Scupper Island, Maine. However, since Nora now



needs some considerable time to heal – and given the fact that when she first woke up in the hospital after the accident Nora discovers her boyfriend ER doctor Bobby Byrne flirting outrageously with a hospital resident – taking some time off work and heading back home seems like a good idea. Once Nora arrives on the small island, however, she discovers that many of the residents have not only not forgotten her; they really haven't forgiven her for what she did to the town's golden boy Luke Fletcher fifteen years ago. Higgins has always had the remarkable ability to plumb the breadth and depth of human feelings, and she now puts that literary skill to spectacular use in her latest emotionally engaging novel. Nora's journey back home is chronicled with a deft literary hand, and Higgins' ability to brilliantly mingle heartbreak, hope, and humor into one compelling storyline will have readers sighing happily with satisfaction. Put this together with a marvelously quirky yet easily relatable cast of secondary characters and a charming small town setting, and you have all the necessary ingredients for a truly unforgettable book.

**Hogan, Ruth.** [Keeper of Lost Things](#)

(\$15.99)

Forty years ago, Anthony Peardew's fiancée died on the day he lost one of her keepsakes, and since then he has mournfully acted as the Keeper of Lost Things. Nearing death, he bequeaths his mansion and its contents to his assistant, Laura,

hoping she can return his findings to their rightful owners. Now as the Keeper of Lost Objects, Laura holds the key to Anthony and Eunice's redemption if she can unlock their history and make the necessary connections that will help put their past behind them.

**Kingsbury, Karen.** [In This Moment](#)

(Houghton \$23.99)

Risking his job by organizing an after-school bible-study program to combat local crime and gang activity, Indiana high school principal Wendell Quinn is delighted by the program's positive results, until a complaint renders him the subject of media speculation and a controversial lawsuit. Now Wendell needs the help of Luke Baxter to help him win this battle.

**Lovesey, Peter.** [Beau Death](#)

(Soho \$27.95)

When human remains in 18th-century clothing are discovered at a demolition site, Chief Inspector Peter Diamond eagerly embarks on an effort to prove that a scandal-marked fashion icon from Bath may have had quite a different end than the one popularly believed. If you love the Morse mysteries by Colin Dexter and have not yet discovered the Inspector Peter Diamond books, you are in for a real treat.

**Morgan, Sarah.** [Moonlight Over Manhattan](#)

(\$7.99)

When she becomes a temporary live-in dog sitter for Dr. Ethan Black, Harriet Knight, who is determined to conquer a lifetime of shyness, challenges herself to explore their very unexpected chemistry – and to tell him how she really feels after her dog-sitting duties are over. What could be more romantic than New York City during the holidays?

**Phillips, Adam Walker.** [The Silent Second](#)

(Prospect Park \$15.99)

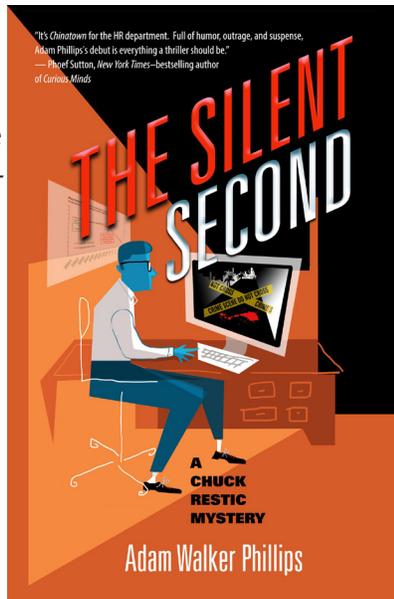
**Phillips, Adam Walker.** [The Perpetual Summer](#)

(Prospect Park \$15.99)

Chuck Restic has achieved the American dream: a successful career with a large corporation, his own home, and the best health care insurance and retirement package money can buy... but he's crumbling inside. Twenty years in Human Resources have pushed Chuck Restic into an

existential crisis. Only when he sets out to find a missing employee from his L.A. firm does he feel alive again.

Applying his HR skills and wit to his moonlight detective work, Chuck unravels a web of crooked real estate deals and three murders, staving off a fourth: his own in the series opener *The Silent Second*. In Restic's second case, *The Perpetual Summer*, a missing teenage girl leads



LA corporate HR exec-turned-private eye Chuck Restic to a high profile fight over a new art museum and a forty-year-old murder that won't stay in the past. Anyone could be behind the teenager's disappearance: her fitness-obsessed mom, switchblade-toting chauffeur, personal life coach, or even the girl herself. I loved this new series, which is not quite cozy but not died-in-the-wool hardboiled either. Think Dilbert crossed with Sam Spade, and that will give you an idea of the literary flavor of this fun new mysteries.

**Roberts, Nora.** [Year One](#)

(St. Martins \$27.99)

Think you know Nora Roberts, the reigning queen of romantic suspense? After reading *Year One*, the first in a new dystopian new trilogy, you may have to revise your literary opinion of this talented author. Roberts has flirted with fantasy before in some of her books, but this is definitely something a bit different. The book opens on a small farm in Scotland, where the MacLeod family is celebrating the holidays. However, when Ross MacLeod shoots a pheasant while out hunting, he has no idea he has just sealed the death warrant for not only himself but more than half the world. Soon one MacLeod family member falls ill with a strange and deadly new disease. While returning home, other members of the MacLeod spread the disease across the country. The virus now known as the Doom kills more than 80% of the world's population. The only people who seem immune are those with

strange new magical abilities. Banding together, a group of "Uncanny's" led by Max Fallon and his lover Lana Bingham set out to find Max's brother and a safe place to live.

**Williams, Beatriz.** [Wicked City](#)

(Harper \$15.99)

*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, longtime 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 Crimes

**Blair, Jamie M.** [Canal Days Calamity](#)

(Llewellyn \$14.99)

Cameron Cripps-Hayman is taken aback when she stumbles upon another murdered neighbor, this time behind her sister's shop, Dog Diggity. The timing couldn't be worse, as there's only a week left before the store's grand opening during Canal Days, the biggest festival of the year.

When the police arrest her handyman, Cameron knows they have the wrong suspect, so she and the rest of the Metamora Action Agency set their sights on cracking the case. They've got one solved murder under their belts—how hard could a second be?

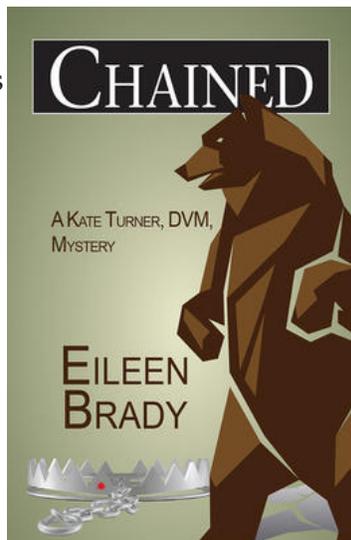
**Brady, Eileen.** [Chained](#)

(PoisonedPen \$15.95)

**Brady, Eileen.** [Chained Signed](#)

(PoisonedPen \$26.95)

While out on a house call, veterinarian Kate Turner's client informs her that her dog has found a bone while out in the woods. The woman thought it might be from a deer, but once Kate sees the bone, she realizes it is from a human. When the police locate the rest of the body, they discover it is Flynn Keegan, a high school senior, who disappeared ten years ago. DNA and a smashed skull prove Flynn was murdered, but with few clues available to the forensic team, the grieving family begs Kate to investigate. Flynn's four old closest friends plead ignorance. Neighbors and teachers remember the charismatic young man but offer no real help. Meanwhile, Kate is juggling her eccentric house call clients, a silly pot-bellied pig wedding and the sudden re-appearance of an old college boyfriend. Anthropologist Jeremy Engels, who returns like Indiana Jones from an African dig, is eager to rekindle their romance and offer his



help. Together, they plan to crash Flynn's high school reunion, a re-creation of his senior prom, and interview his fellow students. Time isn't of the essence with a ten-year-old cold case. Right?

**Burns, VM.** [Plot is Murder](#)

(Kensington \$15) Mystery Bookshop #1.

Samantha Washington has dreamed of owning her own mystery bookstore for as long as she can remember. And as she prepares for the store's grand opening, Samantha finds herself engaged in an ongoing battle with unscrupulous realtor Clayton Parker. However, this turns out to not be such a problem when Clayton is found dead in her backyard. Now in between penning her own cozy mystery featuring quick-witted Lady Penelope Marsh and helping her customers find the perfect read, Samantha must find the real murderer in order to clear her own name.

**Dunnett, Kaitlin.** [X Marks the Scot](#)

(Kensington \$25)

After she hires an archivist to help her research a treasure map that she found at the Chadwick estate in Moosetookalook, Maine, Scottish Emporium owner Lisa MacCrimmon is horrified when the archivist is murdered, and takes it upon herself to find the killer. The 11th addition to Dunnett's series featuring Lisa MacCrimmon is breezy and fun, especially for readers with a ken for all things Scottish.

**Hughes, Mary Ellen.** [A Fatal Collection](#)

(Llewellyn \$14.99)

Devastated when her beloved aunt is found dead just as they are starting to reconnect during a visit to Maryland's quaint Keepsake Cove, Callie Reed investigates mysterious signs and warnings that come to her through her aunt's favorite music box. The author of the best-selling author of the Pickled and Preserved Mysteries launches a new series that is tailor-made for fans of Jane Cleland's Josie Prescott's books.

**Lester, Meena.** [A Hive of Homicide](#)

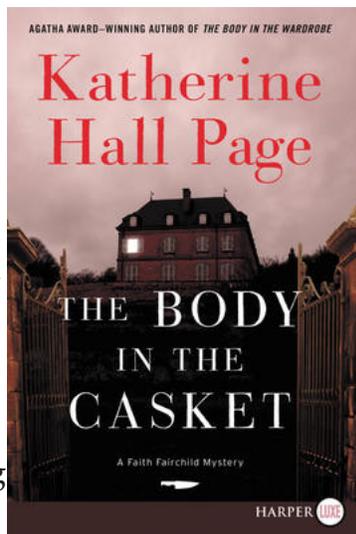
(Kensington \$25)

When Abigail Mackenzie left the police force to become a farmer and beekeeper in beautiful Las Flores, California, she thought her days of criminal investigation were behind her. Abigail's present life is mostly filled with hard work and

happy occasions, including the upcoming event with her friend Paola, a truffle maker, who's renewing her vows with her husband Jake, owner of the Country Schoolhouse Winery. Abby is delighted to provide her trademark lavender honey for the occasion. But after the ceremony, the guests of honor are nowhere to be found. When Abby goes looking for them, she hears a gunshot and discovers Jake dead in his car and Paola injured beside him. Who was the intended target? Jake had a reputation as a busy bee with the ladies. Is it possible that one of his flings, stung by rejection, took revenge? Or could it be sour grapes with one of his colleagues at the winery? If Paola was meant to be the victim, Abby needs to protect her as she searches for the killer.

**Page, Katherine.** [The Body in the Casket Signed](#) (Harper \$25.99)

When legendary Broadway producer/director Max Dane asks Faith Fairchild if she will cater a weekend birthday celebration at his home, Faith initially thought he wanted her for her culinary skills. However, it turns out that Max really wants Faith for her sleuthing skills. Someone has sent Max a casket,



and he is convinced one of the cast or crew of his last musical – and his only Broadway failure - Heaven or Hell is not only responsible but also desperately wants to see Max inside of it. Now Faith must discern who among the guests Max has invited to his weekend party has cast themselves in the role of murderer. Agatha award-winning Page is known for her exemplary traditional mysteries, and *The Body in the Casket*, the 23rd stellar addition to the Faith Fairchild series, is no exception. Hall puts her own clever spin on the traditional English country house party murder by setting the action at Dane's New England estate Rowan House, skillfully introducing a cast of characters, each

of whom has a credible motive for committing murder, and then delivering a cleverly plotted mystery that is worthy of Agatha Christie at her best. As usual the day-to-day dramas of Faith's home life as well as the culinary details involved in catering the event provide a deliciously entertaining contrast to the crime as it unfolds. Traditional mysteries just don't get any better than this.

**Wallace, Auralee** [Ring in the Year with Murder](#) (St. Martins \$7.99)

Erica Bloom is all set to have a great time after arriving at the party to end all parties: a Great Gatsby--themed gala sure to be the talk of Otter Lake, New Hampshire. With her perfectly finger-waved hair, borrowed pearls, and scarlet flapper dress, Erica is determined to be unflappable, despite the presence of her ex, Sheriff Grady Forrester, and his hot date, a bubbly blonde who has a hard time holding her drink. However, in a plot twist as bizarre as a game of Clue, Grady's girlfriend almost drops dead after her drink is poisoned. Who put the killer ingredient in her appletini? Suddenly the tables have turned and the sheriff has become the prime suspect. Now Erica has until midnight to clear the man she still loves—and in so doing just maybe win him back. That's if the killer doesn't pop the cork again... and turn a New Year's smooch into a kiss of death. If you like your cozy mysteries populated with plenty of quirky characters, Wallace's Otter Lake books fit the bill.

## History

**Alford, Stephen.** [London's Triumph](#) (Berkley \$28)

For most, England in the sixteenth century was the era of the Tudors, from Henry VII and VIII to Elizabeth I. But as their dramas played out at court, England was being transformed economically by the astonishing discoveries of the New World and of direct sea routes to Asia. At the start of the century, England was hardly involved in the wider world and London remained a gloomy, introverted medieval city. But as the century progressed something extraordinary happened, which placed London at the center of the world stage forever.

Stephen Alford's evocative, original new book uses the same skills that made his widely-praised *The Watchers* so successful, bringing to life the network of merchants, visionaries, crooks, and sailors who changed London and England forever. In an explosion of energy, English ships were suddenly found all over the world--trading with Russia and the Levant, exploring Virginia and the Arctic, and fanning out across the Indian Ocean. The people who made this possible--the families, the guild members, the money-men who were willing to risk huge sums and sometimes their own lives in pursuit of the rare, exotic, and desirable--are as interesting as any of those at court. Their ambitions fueled a new view of the world--initiating a long era of trade and empire, the consequences of which still resonate today.

**Kix, Paul.** [Saboteur](#)  
(Harper \$27.99)

A scion of one of the most storied families in France, Robert de La Rochefoucauld was raised in magnificent chateaux and educated in Europe's finest schools. When the Nazis invaded and imprisoned his father, La Rochefoucauld escaped to England and learned the dark arts of anarchy and combat—cracking safes and planting bombs and killing with his bare hands—from the officers of Special Operations Executive, the collection of British spies, beloved by Winston Churchill, who altered the war in Europe with tactics that earned it notoriety as the “Ministry of Ungentlemanly Warfare.” With his newfound skills, La Rochefoucauld returned to France and organized Resistance cells, blew up fortified compounds and munitions factories, interfered with Germans' war-time missions, and executed Nazi officers. Caught by the Germans, La Rochefoucauld withstood months of torture without cracking, and escaped his own death, not once but twice. *The Saboteur* recounts La Rochefoucauld's enthralling adventures, from jumping from a moving truck on his way to his execution to stealing Nazi limos to dressing up in a nun's habit—one of his many disguises and impersonations. Whatever the mission, whatever the dire circumstance, La Rochefoucauld acquitted himself nobly, with the straight-back aplomb of a

man of aristocratic breeding: James Bond before Ian Fleming conjured him.

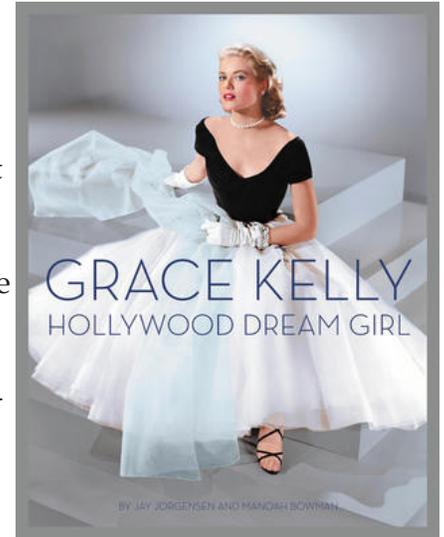
## Hurray for Hollywood

**Bowman, Manoh and Jay Jorgensen.**

[Grace Kelly](#)

(HarperCollins \$45)

“Mr. Hitchcock taught me everything about cinema. It was thanks to him that I understood that murder scenes should be shot like love scenes and love scenes like murder scenes.” — Grace Kelly. No movie star of the 1950s was more beautiful, sophisticated,

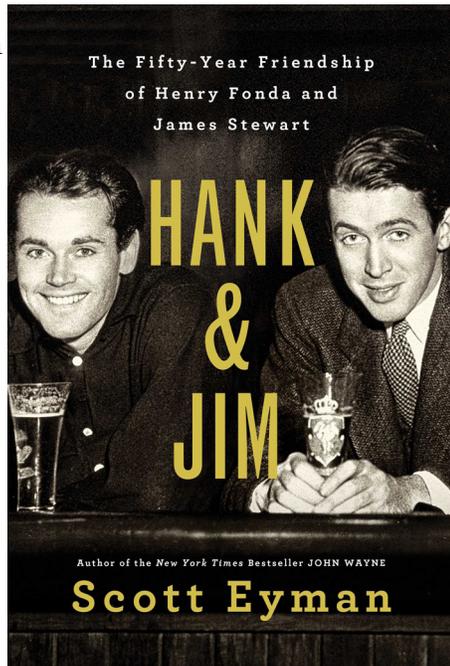


or glamorous than Grace Kelly. Kelly got her start in television but soon segued into films with her breakout performance in *High Noon* (1952) and then collaborating with Hitchcock in *Dial M for Murder* with Ray Milland (1954), *Rear Window* with Jimmy Stewart (1954), and *To Catch a Thief* with Cary Grant (1955). The epitome of elegance, the patrician young blonde from Philadelphia conquered Hollywood and won an Academy Award for Best Actress in just six years, then married a prince in a storybook royal wedding. Today, more than thirty years after her death, Grace Kelly remains an inspiring fashion icon. This dazzling new biography of Kelly's Hollywood career chronicles her years as a cinema star through 400 photographs, including previously unpublished Edith Head and Helen Rose wardrobe sketches, original portraits, scene stills, on-set candid, wardrobe test shots, vintage magazine covers, and rare reproductions of exhibitor's showmanship manuals showing how film studios marketed Grace Kelly as a star—Grace Kelly captures this beloved luminary's eternal beauty as never before, and is a fresh, celebratory look at her remarkable career and her enduring cultural influence.

**Eyman, Scott.** [Hank and Jim](#)

(Simon and Schuster \$29)

Henry Fonda and James Stewart were two of the biggest stars in Hollywood for forty years. They became friends and then roommates as stage actors in New York, and when they began making films in Hollywood, they roomed together again. Between them they made such memorable films as *The Grapes of Wrath*, *Mister Roberts*, *Twelve Angry Men*, and *On Golden Pond*; and *Mr. Smith*



*Goes to Washington*, *Destry Rides Again*, *The Philadelphia Story*, *It's a Wonderful Life*, *Vertigo*, and *Rear Window*. They got along famously, with a shared interest in elaborate practical jokes and model airplanes, among other things. Fonda was a liberal Democrat, Stewart a conservative Republican, but after one memorable blow-up over politics, they agreed never to discuss that subject again. Fonda was a ladies' man who was married five times; Stewart remained married to the same woman for forty-five years. Both men volunteered during World War II and were decorated for their service. When Stewart returned home, still unmarried, he once again moved in with Fonda, his wife, and his two children, Jane and Peter, who knew him as Uncle Jimmy. For *Hank and Jim*, biographer and film historian Scott Eyman spoke with Fonda's widow and children as well as three of Stewart's children, plus actors and directors who had worked with the men—in addition to doing extensive archival research to get the full details of their time together. This is not another Hollywood story, but a fascinating portrait of an extraordinary friendship that lasted through war, marriages, children, careers, and everything else.