

Midmonth BookNotes

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New Year, New Books

Benedict, Marie. [Carnegie's Maid](#)

(Sourcebooks \$25.99)

Clara Kelley doesn't need the job now so why shouldn't another Clara Kelley take it who does? That is the logic that prompts Clara Kelley, the daughter of a poor Irish farmer, to assume the identity of another Clara Kelley, an experienced Irish maid, when the later Clara dies en route while they two women are traveling to the United States from Ireland. After all, Clara's family back in Ireland desperately needs whatever money Clara can earn, and it isn't like the other Clara is now out of a job. However, serving as a lady's maid to Margaret Carnegie requires skills Clara doesn't initially possess, but she is determined to succeed. Clara's sharp business sense and sense of wit soon bring her to the attention of Margaret's son Andrew. But can any type of relationship between them really transcend the different places in society the two of them occupy? Benedict has flirted with historical fiction before with her novel *The Other Einstein* (about Albert Einstein's first wife), and now she imagines a world in which an Irish lass provides the inspiration and impetus for Andrew Carnegie's later philanthropic endeavors.

Benjamin, Melanie. [The Girls in the Picture](#)

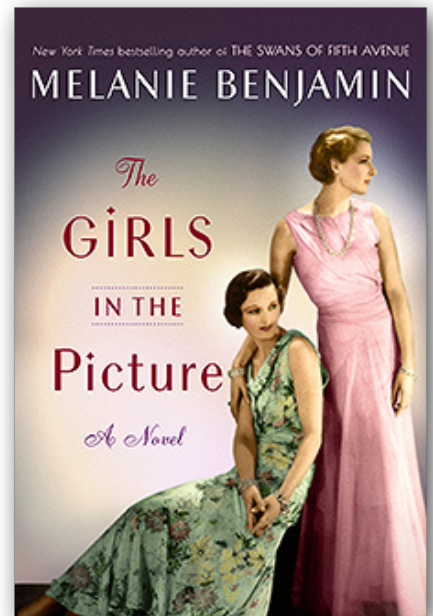
(Bantam Dell \$28)

Originally born Gladys Smith in Toronto, Gladys soon reinvented herself as actress Mary Pickford and after starring in a string of successful silent films, went on to become America's sweetheart.

Mary went onto become the first actor to have her name on the marquee of a movie theater as well as being the first to win an Academy Award for Best Actress in a talkie. After two failed marriages, Marion Benson Owens de Lappe Pike rechristened herself as Frances Marion and began

working as a movie "scenarist." By the end of her career, Frances had won two Academy Awards for her screenplays and had written for not only Mary Pickford, but Jean Harlow, Greta Garbo, Spencer Tracy, Valentino, and Marlene Dietrich. Both women were

driven to succeed in a business dominated by men. New York Times bestselling Benjamin traces the friendship that developed between these two women, who first met in the early 1900s, through the rise of the silent movie era and on into the Golden Age of Hollywood. From Mary's tumultuous marriage to Douglas Fairbanks to Frances's own struggles to balance work and a home life, Benjamin offers a powerful and poignant account



of the role female friendship and female power played in both these women's lives.

Constantine, Lev. [The Last Mrs. Parrish](#)

(HarperCollins \$25.99)

Daphne Parrish has something that Amber Patterson desperately wants: Jackson Parrish. Actually, Amber not only wants Daphne's handsome, rich husband Jackson, she wants Daphne's luxurious lifestyle as well. After all, it really isn't fair that Daphne should have everything in the world she could ever desire, and Amber is forced to eke out a miserable living working in a menial job. Fortunately, Amber has a plan to correct this lifestyle imbalance. Amber begins to slowly insert herself into Daphne's life by pretending to have an interest in the cystic fibrosis foundation Daphne chairs. Soon, Amber is a regular part of the Parrish household allowing her to unleash the second part of her plan: seduce Jackson. But as Amber gets closer and closer to achieving her goal, she doesn't realize that in the end she is really going to get everything she deserves. This stunningly suspenseful novel by two sisters is equal parts *All about Eve* and *The Talented Mr. Ripley* with a little bit of classic Mary Higgins Clark thrown in for good measure, and it has a truly wicked plot twist that should please fans of *Gone Girl* and *The Girl on the Train*.

Duncan, Francis. [Murder Has a Motive](#)

(Sourcebooks \$14.99)

When Mordecai Tremaine emerges from the train station in the village of Dalmering, murder is the last thing on his mind. But he has never been able to resist anything in the way of a mystery—and a mystery is precisely what awaits him in the small hamlet. Rehearsals for the local amateur dramatic production are in full swing, but as Mordecai discovers too soon, the real tragedy is unfolding offstage. The star of the show has been found dead, and the spotlight falls on Mordecai, whose reputation in the field of crime-solving precedes him.

With a murderer waiting in the wings, it's up to Mordecai to derail the killer's performance... before it's curtains for another victim. Sourcebooks began republishing Duncan's Mordecai Tremaine mysteries last month with *Murder for Christmas*. Now they are giving readers the very

first in the series, originally published in Great Britain in 1947, with *Murder Has a Motive*. Fans of Golden Age mysteries will definitely want to snap up both these traditionally plotted treats.

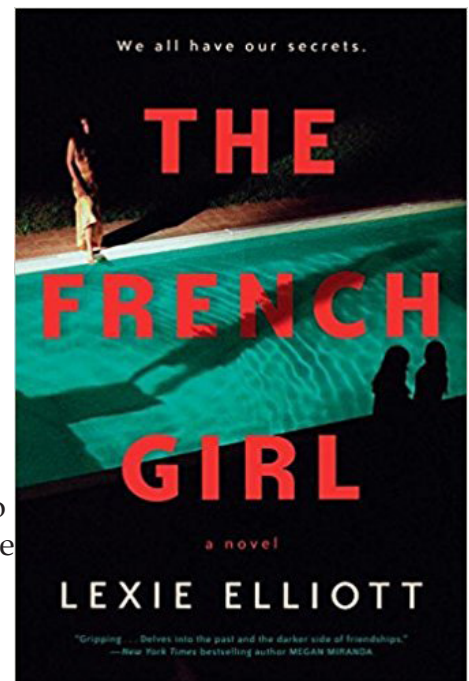
Elliott, Lexie. [The French Girl](#)

(Berkley \$26)

Ten years ago, Kate Channing and five of her friends from Oxford University took off for France to spend a week at a farmhouse in the countryside. Aside from Severine Dupas, the enigmatic mademoiselle living next door, the group had the place to themselves. However, by the end of the week Severine had disappeared as quietly as she arrived, and changing dynamics within the group meant Kate and her friends were more than happy to return home to England. Now a decade later, the six friends have settled into their lives when an investigator for the French police arrives in London with some unsettling news: Severine's body has been found

at the bottom of a well on the farm. The only question Kate now has is are she and her friends helping the inspector with his investigation or are they now suspects in a murder case? Even if you are sick to death of all those psychological suspense novels with "girl" in the title, you

may want to make an exception for this perfectly calibrated debut. Elliott not only delivers the type of easily relatable characters readers crave, but also a sleek and stylishly constructed plot chockfull of twists, turns, deception, and dishonesty. *The French Girl* is perfect escapist reading for fans of Mary Higgins Clark, Paula Hawkins, and Chevy Stevens.



Fellowes, Jessica. [The Mitford Murders](#)

(Minotaur \$25.99)

It's 1920, and Louisa Cannon dreams of escaping her life of poverty in London.

Louisa's salvation is a position within the Mitford household at Asthall Manor, in the Oxfordshire countryside. There she will become nursemaid, chaperone and confidante to the Mitford sisters, especially sixteen-year-old Nancy, an acerbic, bright young woman in love with stories.

But then a nurse—Florence Nightingale Shore, goddaughter of her famous namesake—is killed on a train in broad daylight, and Louisa and Nancy find themselves entangled in the crimes of a murderer who will do anything to hide their secret. Fellowes is the niece of Julian Fellowes (the creator of and writer for the PBS smash series *Downton Abbey*) and she also wrote a book about the making of that television series. So, it isn't surprising that she has a good grasp of the time period, which she uses to great effect in this engaging debut mystery. If you love the Josephine Tey series by Nicola Upson or Tessa Arlen's brilliantly constructed historical mysteries, Fellowes book is equally entrancing.

Gibson, Rachel. [The Art of Running in Heels](#)

(Avon \$7.99)

Lexie Kowalsky thought she was ready to get married in front of millions of people, but at the last minute she fled the set of television's hottest reality show, *Gettin' Hitched*. Wearing a poofy white dress and a pair of five-inch sparkly shoes, Lexie hopped a float plane for Sandspit, Canada. She figured no one would find her there. But she was wrong. Sharing her flight was the Seattle Chinooks biggest star, Sean Knox. Lexie wasn't just a reality-show runaway, she was his pain in the butt coach's daughter. She was chaos and temptation and definitely off limits, but getting her luscious body out of that wedding gown, he couldn't resist getting her in his bed for one amazing night. Then a photo of Sean and Lexi breaks the internet—and suddenly they're both swept up in a crazy plan to spin the whole story. But you can't run from love.

Harper, Molly. [Sweet Tea and Sympathy](#)

(Gallery \$16)

After what became known as the great shrimp and flamingo debacle went viral on the internet and effectively ended her career as an event planner in Chicago, Margot Cary finds herself out of a job and out of options. With

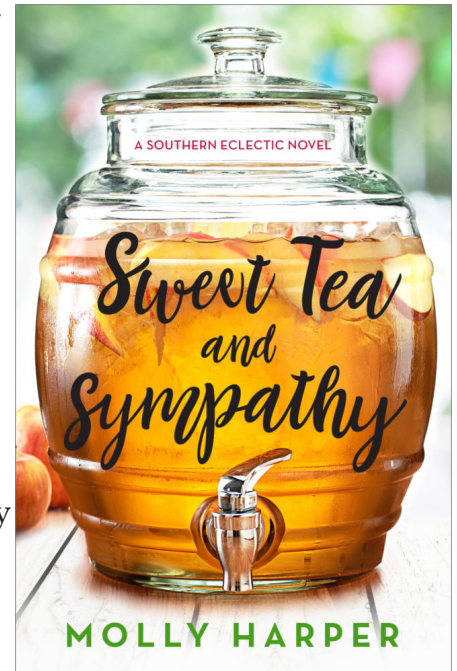
no other place to turn, Margot reluctantly accepts her great aunt Tootie's offer to come and work for the family business – the McCready Family Funeral Home and Bait Shop – in the small town of Lake

Sackett, Georgia. Part of Margot's reluctance to accept the job stems from the fact that her father – whom Margot hasn't seen since she was age – lives in Lake Sackett, but beggars can't be choosers. Margot figures she will just take the job temporarily until she can get back on her feet, but what she doesn't know is that in every small Southern town, there is no such thing as privacy. Especially not when as the town's newest resident, Margot seems to have drawn the interest – or ire depending on the day and time – of the town's most eligible bachelor: elementary school principal Kyle Archer. Sick and tired of all the depressing news that keeps coming every day? Then sit down a spell with Harper's heartwarming and humorous new book, which is just the ticket for anyone who loves the wickedly funny books of Fannie Flagg or Adriana Trigiani.

Harwood, Clarissa. [Impossible Saints](#)

(WW Norton \$25.99)

In 1907 England, village school mistress Lilia Brooke heads for London, where she joins the militant Women's Social and Political Union to advocate for the vote, free unions, and contraception. Meanwhile, Anglican priest Paul Harris aims to become the youngest deal of St. John's



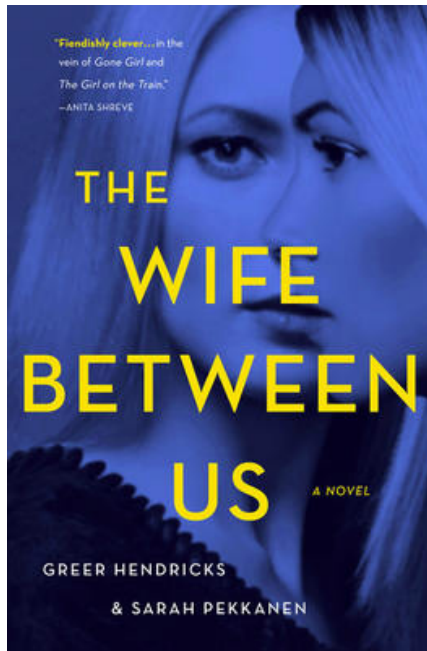
Cathedral. The two strike up a relationship that soon blossoms into attraction, but can any romance survive given the fact that they are on opposite sides of almost every social issue of the day? but these two people on different paths have one thing in common: a tragic affection for each other. This fascinating debut vividly illustrates the tough fight the suffragettes endured – including imprisonment and forced feeding – in order to gain the right to vote.

Hendricks, Greer and Sarah Pekkanen.

[The Wife Between Us](#)

(St. Martin's \$26.99)

It would appear that Vanessa Thompson's ex-husband Richard is trying to replace her with his lovely new assistant Nellie, who seems to be almost a carbon copy of Vanessa. Now Vanessa wants to warn Nellie about Richard before it is too late for her to save herself.



But is Vanessa really trying to help Nellie or is she just trying to get the other woman out of the picture? The veritable flood of psychological suspense novels a la *Gone Girl* continues to dominate the literary market, but every once and a while one surfaces that has real merit. *The Wife Between Us* is exactly that kind of novel. Co-authored by a former book editor and an author, this twisted tale of deceit and deception is perfectly packaged and polished to perfection for your poolside or beach reading this summer. But why wait that long? If you enjoy a fast-paced, escapist novel that succeeds in what it sets out to do – i.e. deliver a plot filled with plenty of unexpected turns – don't hesitate to put this debut on your reading list now.

Krentz, Jayne Ann. [Promise Not To Tell](#)

(Berkley \$27)

The local police believe artist Hannah Brewster committed suicide, but Seattle gallery owner Virginia Troy knows Hannah was murdered because of what Virginia spots in Hannah's last finished piece of art. Hidden in the last painting that Hannah completed are clues that Quinton Kane, a notorious cult leader, may still be alive. As a child, Virginia had her own first-hand experience with Kane and his cult so she is more than determined to find out if he really isn't dead. However, the only person who seems to take Virginia seriously is PI Cabot Sutter, which is not really surprising since Cabot nearly lost his own life twenty-two years ago when Kane set his California compound ablaze. Working together to finally get some answers seems to be a smart idea for both Virginia and Cabot, but neither one expected they might also find an unexpected romance as well. No one knows how to mix danger and desire quite like Krentz, and her latest polished novel of romantic suspense is just the ticket for readers who like their literary thrills served up with a generous dash of dry wit.

Hyde, Katherine Bolger. [Bloodstains with Bronte](#)

(Minotaur \$24.99)

When Emily Cavanaugh offers to host a murder mystery fundraiser at Windy Corner, the mansion she recently inherited from her great-aunt, she never expected she would stumble across a real dead body. The murder victim turns out to be Roman, a young construction worker who had become obsessed with Emily's young housekeeper Katie Parker. While Emily had promised her new beau sheriff Luke Richards she would refrain from any more adventures in amateur sleuthing after her last brush with murder, Emily knows if she doesn't do something, Katie may very well be charged with a murder she did not commit. *Wuthering Heights* and *Jane Eyre* provide the inspiration for Hyde's latest Crime with the Classics mystery, and cozy fans who enjoy small town settings and a refreshingly older sleuth will definitely want to check this terrific new series out.

Lloyd, Catherine. [Death Comes to the School](#)
(Kensington \$25)

It has been three years since Major Sir Robert Kurland and Lucy Harrington, the rector's daughter, became husband and wife. However, two miscarriages over the years have taken a toll on their marriage. What is even worse is that Lucy recently received an anonymous poison pen letter hinting that she has resorted to witchcraft in order to try and conceive. As it later turns out, Lucy is not the only one in village to have gotten a vicious note. When local schoolteacher Miss Broomfield is found murdered at her desk in the village school, Lucy wonders if she might be the one penning the poison pen letters. Filling in for the deceased instructor allows Lucy to do a bit of sleuthing but will Lucy find something that puts her own life in danger? This is the latest in Lloyd's impeccably researched series featuring Robert and Lucy, and it is perfect for anyone who not only enjoys a well-crafted mystery but also readers who miss those old Regency romances by authors like Georgette Heyer, Carola Dunn, and Marian Chesney.

Massey, Sujata. [The Widows of Malabar Hill](#)
(Soho \$26.95)

It hasn't been easy but Perveen Mistry has finally earned her law degree allowing her to work in the family firm. As one of the first female solicitors in India, Perveen can't appear before the bench, but she can help out by working on contracts and other legal documents for her father. While going over a will her father drafted for the recently deceased Mr. Omar Farid, Perveen notices something odd. All three of the late Mr. Farid's widows have signed over their portions of the estate to a charitable trust leaving them next to nothing on which they might live. This combined with something strange about one of the widow's signatures, has Perveen anxious to meet with the women, who live in full seclusion at their home on Malabar Hill. As it turns out, Perveen's suspicions did have some merit when she later stumbles across the body of the widow's new guardian dead on the grounds. If you crave mysteries that transport you to another time and place, you simply have to read this marvelous series debut. Massey elegantly and effectively evokes the culture and customs of

India in 1910s and 1920s while at the same time delivering a fascinating tale about one woman's efforts to earn her place in society still controlled by men.

Raybourn, Deanna. [Traacherous Curse](#)
(Berkley \$26)

If you miss those marvelous old Amelia Peabody books by Elizabeth Peters (and really, who doesn't), you will love Deanna Raybourn's fabulous fun new historical series featuring Victorian adventuress and exotic butterfly collector Veronica Speedwell. In *Traacherous Curse*, Veronica once again finds herself mixed up in danger and intrigue when she investigates the disappearance of her "friend" the Hon. Revelstoke "Stoker" Templeton-Vane old expedition partner: John de Morgan. Morgan has gone missing from an archaeological dig in Egypt that is rumored to be "cursed."

Wilson, Carter. [Mister Tender's Girl](#)
(Sourcebooks \$15.99)

There is one very good reason why Alice Hill hasn't picked up a knife in ten years. Over a decade ago when Alice was just fourteen and living with her family in London, two of her classmates who became obsessed with Mister Tender, a cartoon character created by Alice's father, tried to kill Alice by stabbing her with a knife. Fortunately, Alice survived the attack, but her life was never the same. Now as Alice Gray, the owner of a coffee shop in Manchester, New Hampshire, Alice's one goal is to simply try and get through the day without succumbing to a panic attack when she arrives at work and finds a mysterious package awaiting her. The package not only contains a seemingly impossible piece of

Alice's past, but what is even scarier is the threat to Alice's future it represents. There is a spare and sinuous eloquence to Wilson's writing that perfectly matches his cleverly conceived and brilliantly executed plot, and Alice is an unforgettable, truly fascinating protagonist. *Mister Tender's Girl* is a chillingly suspenseful, darkly intense page-turner with just the right dash of dry wit and a satisfying dollop of the macabre. Just in case, you think I am the only one bowled over by Wilson's superbly crafted novel, here are some snippets from other rave reviews. Library Journal said "The characters are well drawn, the plot hums, the creepiness level is high, and you won't see the ending coming." Kirkus loved the book too ending with "A blazing fast pace and spine-tingling set pieces make the book hum, but it's the character of damaged yet indomitable Alice that drives this razor-sharp thriller. Wilson turns the creep factor up to 11, balancing his prose on a knife's edge. A highly satisfying high-tension thriller." Still not sure if this is for you? The author has provided Poisoned Pen customers with an exclusive sneak peak to the book via the link below:

----->[Sneak Peak](#)

Willig, Lauren. [The English Wife](#)

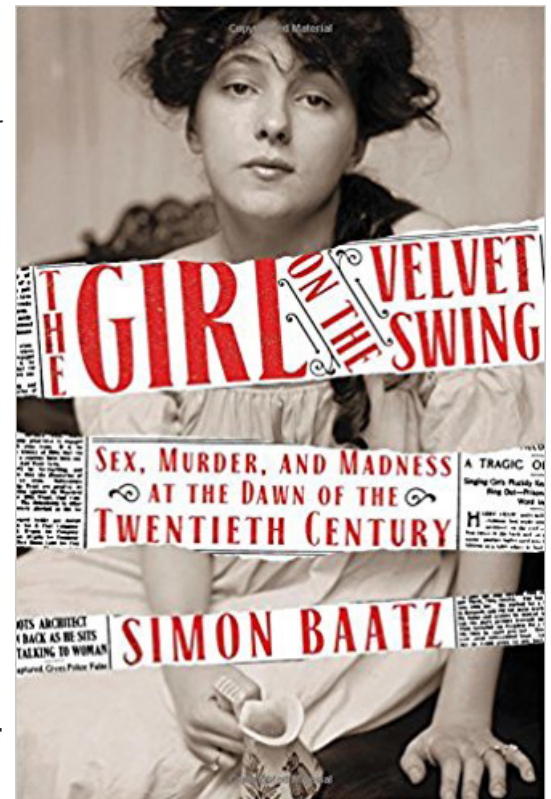
(St. Martins \$26.99)

When Bayard Van Duyvil and his wife Annabelle are found dead on the night of their Shakespeare ball, everyone believes it to be a case of murder/suicide. After the way Annabelle was carrying on with the architect who designed the couple's estate, could anyone really blame Bay for taking matters into his own hands? However, Janie Van Duyvil, Bay's sister, knows this simply can't be true. Teaming up with shabby around the edges journalist James Burke, Janie is determined to discover the truth about what happened and clear her brother's name. Reminiscent of those splendid old gothics written by Barbara Michaels, Willig handles her dual timeline plot in *The English Wife* with perfect aplomb, and her vividly evoked historical setting and mesmerizing plot is more than enough to keep readers enthralled long past their normal bedtimes. Fans of Mary Stewart will also appreciate the graceful literary tip of her cap that Willig gracefully extends to that classic author.

Nonfiction

Baatz, Simon. [The Girl on the Velvet Swing](#)
(Little Brown \$29)

In 1901 Evelyn Nesbit, a chorus girl in the musical *Florodora*, dined alone with the architect Stanford White, the genius behind some of New York's most famous buildings such as The Century Club, in his townhouse on 24th Street in New York. That evening, after drinking champagne, Nesbit lost consciousness and later awoke to find that White had raped her. She told no one about the incident until, several years later, she confided in Harry Thaw, the millionaire playboy who was romantically obsessed with Evelyn and who would later become her husband. Thaw, thirsting for revenge, shot and killed White in 1906 before hundreds of theatergoers during a performance in Madison Square Garden, a building that White had designed. The trial was a sensation that gripped the nation. Most Americans agreed with Thaw that he had been justified in killing White, but the district attorney expected to send him to the electric chair. Evelyn Nesbit's testimony was so explicit and shocking that Theodore Roosevelt himself called on the newspapers not to print it verbatim. The murder of White cast a long shadow: Harry Thaw later attempted suicide, and Evelyn Nesbit struggled for many years to escape an addiction to cocaine. *The Girl on the Velvet Swing*, a tale of glamour, excess, and



and Evelyn Nesbit struggled for many years to escape an addiction to cocaine. *The Girl on the Velvet Swing*, a tale of glamour, excess, and

danger, is an immersive, fascinating look at an America dominated by men of outsize fortunes and by the women who were their victims.

New Year New You

Acuff, Jon. [Finish](#)

(Portfolio \$27)

According to studies, 92 percent of New Year's resolutions fail. Best-selling author and motivational speaker Acuff initially thought the reason many people - himself included - failed to complete a task is that they just didn't try hard enough. It turns out the exact opposite is true. While leading a thirty-day online course on goals, Acuff discovered the biggest obstacle to meeting your goals is not laziness but perfectionism. Rather than risk not completing a task to perfection, many of us will simply quit. So in order to counter this, Acuff developed a number of seemingly counterintuitive strategies that put the fun back into and take the fear out of completing a project.

Ariely, Dan. [Dollars and Sense](#)

(HarperCollins \$27.99)

We think of money as numbers, values, and amounts, but when it comes down to it, when we actually use our money, we engage our hearts more than our heads. Emotions play a powerful role in shaping our financial behavior, often making us our own worst enemies as we try to save, access value, and spend responsibly. In *Dollars and Sense*, bestselling author and behavioral economist Dan Ariely teams up with financial comedian and writer Jeff Kreisler to challenge many of our most basic assumptions about the precarious relationship between our brains and our money. In doing so, they undermine many of personal finance's most sacred beliefs and explain how we can override some of our own instincts to make better financial choices.

Aslan, Reza. [God](#)

(Random \$28)

Aslan, author of the best-selling *Zealot* and CNN host, traces the concept of a divine being over the ages and across religions in this thought-provoking new book. Aslan's premise is that when we cast God in our own human image as so many

religions do, we not only endow this deity with the best of our human traits like generosity but also the worst traits like greed. Aslan's solution is to adopt a broader and more primal concept of spirituality. Whether you believe in one God, many gods, or no god at all, *God: A Human History* will challenge the way you think about the divine and its role in our everyday lives.

Berman, Lea and Jeremy Bernard.

[Treating People Well](#)

(Scribner \$27)

Berman and Bernard both worked in the White House as social secretaries; Berman worked for George W. Bush while Bernard served under Barack Obama. Now the two friends share their stories about what working in the White House was like and what they believe are the key principles to succeeding in life and getting along with others (yes, even those people who might share political views that are 180 degrees from those you yourself might hold) The lessons the two learned from their mistakes turn out to be just as important as they successes they had while working for the two administrations. Now readers can learn exactly what it is needed to "treat others well": a lesson that is desperately needed now more than ever.

Fagan, Chelsea. [The Financial Diet](#)

(Henry Holt \$19)

The Financial Diet actually began as the personal blog of Fagan, now co-founder of a popular website and YouTube channel, who along with her co-author offers guidance on personal finance for readers who might be reluctant to bother with the subject. The two provide details on such topics as how to get good with money in a year, how to talk about awkward money stuff with your friends, and what the hell it means to invest and how to do it. While the book is written in an easy, breezy style that is tailor made for anyone born after 1980, anyone no matter their age who needs help getting their finances under control would find this immensely useful.

Harris, Dan. [Meditation for Fidgety Skeptics](#)

(Speigel & Grau \$26)

ABC News anchor Dan Harris used to think that meditation was for people who collect crys-

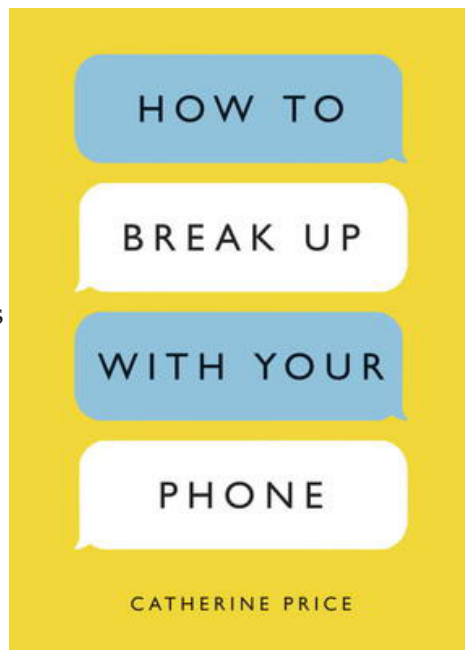
tals, play Ultimate Frisbee, and use the word “namaste” without irony. After he had a panic attack on live television, he went on a strange and circuitous journey that ultimately led him to become one of meditation’s most vocal public proponents. In this fun and engaging guide, Harris, along with his co-author, cover such topics as how to find the time to meditate as well as breathing, sitting, and overcoming the idea that meditation is self-indulgent. The benefits of meditation are many. Science suggests that meditation can lower blood pressure, mitigate depression and anxiety, and literally rewire key parts of the brain, among numerous other benefits. So if you are one of those millions of people who want to try meditating but have yet to give it a chance, this is definitely the guide for you.

Price, Catherine.

[How to Break Up with Your Phone](#)

(Ten Speed \$12.99)

“I think it’s time we took a little break.” This is the conversation many owners of cell phones should be having with their devices. It’s been a decade since smartphones entered our lives, and many people are just now realizing their impact may not be all rainbows and unicorns. Americans check their phones 47 times a day. For people between the ages of 18 and 24, the average is 82. Americans spend more than 4 hours a day on their phones, which amounts to 28 hours a week, 112 hours a month, or 56 full days per year. More than 80 percent of Americans report they keep their phones near them “almost all the time during waking hours.” Nearly 5 out of 10 Americans agreed with this statement “I can’t imagine my life without my smartphone.” However, all this



time we spend on our smartphones comes with a big cost. Our ability to form new memories, focus on a task at hand, and absorb what we are reading are all suffering. Award-winning writer and science journalist Price doesn’t want everyone to ditch their smartphones and go back to using a rotary dial, but she does want us to examine how our relationship with these devices is affecting our lives. Price walks readers through how they can “break-up” with their devices by helping them create a new, healthier relationship with their phones and establish habits and routines that will make these changes stick.

Knight, Sarah. [You Do You](#)

(Little Brown \$19.99)

Being yourself should be easy, yet too many of us struggle to live on other people’s terms instead of our own. Rather than feeling large and in charge, we feel little and belittled. Sound familiar? Bestselling “anti-guru” Sarah Knight has three simple words for you: You Do You.

It’s time to start putting your happiness first--and stop letting other people tell you what to do, how to do it, or why it can’t be done. And don’t panic! You can do it without losing friends and alienating people.

Watkins, Light. [Bliss More](#)

(Ballantine \$24)

Having trouble meditating? The problem may be the way in which you approach the subject. When properly understood and practiced, meditation should feel easy, calming, and comfortable. In Bliss More, maverick instructor Light Watkins provides the tools for making it E.A.S.Y. (Embrace, Accept, Surrender, Yield), dispels the biggest myths and misunderstandings, and shares real-world tips and straight talk for hacking into this ancient practice. The result: a happier and healthier you, inside and out. Watkins also shares candid testimonials from people whose lives have been enriched through his method, and extensive resources for transforming a daily chore into an enjoyable activity. Whether you’re a novice or experienced practitioner, Bliss More will shed light on the path to a clearer mind, better sleep, and more bliss in everyday life.