

Midmonth BookNotes

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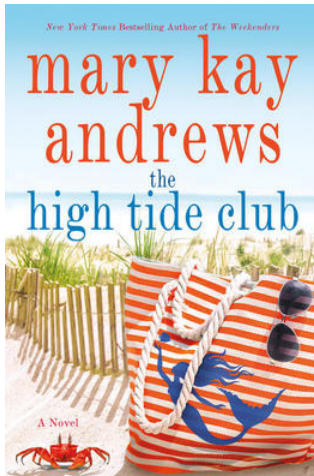
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Marvelous May 2018

Andrews, Mary Kay. [The High Tide Club](#) (St Martins \$27.99).



Unexpectedly hired by eccentric millionaire Josephine Bettendorf Warrick from her vast barrier island home, young attorney Brooke Trappnell learns the story of the new client's now-deceased circle of friends, her determination to protect the land from developers, disturbing clues about a long-unsolved murder and her ambitious plans for heirs and descendants. Andrews continues to perfect her formula for writing easy, breezy beach reads, and her latest is the perfect choice for anyone looking to while away some down time by the pool.

Balogh, Mary. [Someone to Care](#) (Berkley \$7.99).

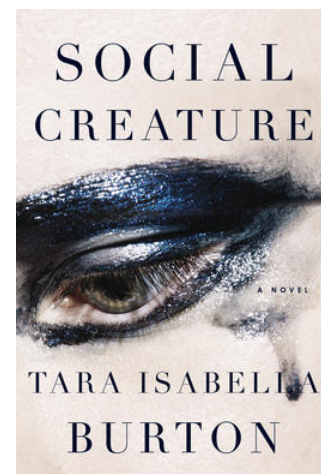
Defying convention and running off together, Viola Kingsley, once the Countess of Riverdale, and the Marquess of Dorchester embark on a grand adventure, but soon discover that severing

the ties of respectability is no easy task and that pleasure can ensnare you when you least expect it. Balogh is known and loved for her impeccably crafted romances as well as her ability to offer readers something more than the tried and true Regency plotline, and her latest is a beautiful example of this as she skillfully explores a romance between an older couple.

Brenner, Jamie. [The Husband Hour](#) (Little, Brown \$26)

When a young widow's reclusive life in a charming beach town is interrupted by a surprise visitor, she is forced to reckon with dark secrets about her family, her late husband, and the past she tried to leave behind.

Burton, Tara Isabella. [Social Creature](#) (Doubleday \$26.95)



Louise Wilson has spent her life living quietly on the fringes of society, but Louise is tired of

blending into the background. So, when Louise meets beautiful, wealthy, eccentric Lavinia Williams, she thinks she may have found her ticket into the glittering world of upper-class life in New York City. From entre into private opera boxes to Shakespearean masked balls, Louise can't get enough of the high life that Lavinia takes for granted. Then there are the closets of dresses and the best champagne money can buy. Louise thinks she is doing okay faking it with Lavinia, but Louise is perpetually terrified that somebody is going to see beneath the rich girl mask she wears and spot the poor girl she really is. Louise is willing to do whatever it takes to keep Lavinia happy, but when Lavinia tires of her and decides it is time for a new companion, Louise takes some serious steps to ensure that she remains a part of the new life to which she has become accustomed. Imagine Patricia Highsmith's *The Talented Mr. Ripley* set in 21st century New York with a cast of soulless yet social media obsessed twenty something characters right out of *Bright Lights, Big City*, and you have some idea of the literary flavor of this dark debut.

Cantor, Joanna. [Alternative Remedies for Loss](#) (Berkley \$26).

Still reeling from her mother's death, Olivia Harris is trying to move on into adulthood without her mother to guide her when she makes a shocking discovery that will change everything she thought she knew about her family and her own place in the world.

Cleverly, Barbara. [Fall of Angels](#) (Soho Press \$26.95)



When Detective Inspector John Redfyre accepted a free ticket to the annual St. Barnabas College Christmas Concert from his aunt Hetty, he never expected it would lead him to two different criminal investigations. First when the concert's talented – and female – trumpeter June Proudfoot suffers an almost fatal fall from the choir loft at the end of the program, Redfyre finds himself appointed the task of discovering who among the Cambridge community is so scandalized by the idea of an independent female musician that they are willing to try and kill her in order to silence her. On the very same night, another young woman's body is discovered floating in the river nearby, and Redfyre must find out who killed the woman, and if her connection to a group of forward-thinking females may provide the motive to the murder. Cleverly, author of the Joe Sandilands series, launches a superbly entertaining new mystery series set in 1920s England that is tailor-made for anyone who misses the Lord Peter Wimsey books by Dorothy L. Sayers. From the book's beautifully evoked Cambridge setting to flirtatious banter between Redfyre and Earwig Stretton, a now all grown up and terrible attractive childhood acquaintance of Redfyre's, Cleverly delivers all of the erudite and oh-so-civilized pleasures of Sayer's Golden Age mystery masterpieces.

Colgan, Jenny. [Endless Beach](#) (Harper \$15.99).

Leaving her glum career in London to open a cafe by the sea on the beautiful Scottish island of Mure, Flora is astonished when her adorable if difficult boss, Joel, follows her and initiates a promising new romance that is overshadowed by local superstitions. Colgan's cheeky and fun British novels are the very definition of feel-good reads.

Frank, Dorothea. [By Invitation Only](#) (Harper \$27.99).

A young woman from Chicago falls for the owner of a farm on Johns Island, a lush low country paradise off the coast of South Carolina, and trades the bustle of cosmopolitan city life for the vagaries of a small Southern community.

Franson, Sally. [A Lady's Guide to Selling Out](#) (Random \$27).



Casey Pendergast's best friend Susan thinks she is a sellout ever since Casey traded her degree in English and love of literature for a job creating advertising campaigns for People's Republic Advertising. Casey just thinks Susan jealous because she can now afford to eat out and pay her rent on time. And, truth be told, Casey is using the writing skills she acquired in college every time she comes up with a good "story" for their latest client's product. In fact, Casey is so good at discerning her client's core stories, that her picky boss Celeste has just given her a top-secret new assignment. Celeste wants Casey to use her ability to "connect" with writers to scout out some big-name authors and see just what it would take financially for these authors to agree to endorse certain products. At first it seems like fun as Casey pairs up a impecunious literary novelist with a high-end brand of fountain pens and a noted short-story author with a line of women's plus-size clothes. But when Casey finds herself falling in love with one of her "authors," she suddenly can no longer ignore just what she is asking these writers to do as well as what her success is doing to her. The publisher has been lauding this snappy debut as the next *The Devil Wears Prada*, and the book's protagonist does struggle with some of the same moral dilemmas at work. But Franson brings her own acerbically addictive sense of wit to the party, and that combined with a few, well-placed jabs at the world of publishing and writing, make this a treat in its own right.

Gable, Michelle. [The Summer I Met Jack](#) (St Martins \$27.99).

Gable bases her latest compelling novel on the real-life affair between John F. Kennedy and Alicia Corning Clark. In the early 1950s, Polish émigré and artist Alicia Darr takes a job working as a housekeeper for the Kennedy family at the home in Hyannis Port, MA. Soon Alicia and congressman JFK are in love, but their plans to marry are thwarted by Jack's father, who refuses to allow his son to marry Alicia because she is Jewish. After a move to Hollywood and several marriages – including one to the heir to the Singer Sewing Machine fortune – Alicia heads for Rome, where she once again unexpectedly meets up with her one true love JFK. Fans of Beatriz Williams superbly crafted historical women's fiction novels will want to add Gable's latest to their must-read lists.

Ginder, Grant. [The People We Hate at the Wedding](#) (Flatiron \$16.99).

A fractured family from the Chicago suburbs reluctantly gathers in London to attend an eldest daughter's wedding to an upper-crust Englishman, an affair that exposes secrets, triggers riotous culture clashes and tests the bonds of both families. This has some fun moments if you can get past the somewhat acerbic – some might say bitter - overall flavor of the story.

Harrison, Lisi. [The Dirty Book Club](#) (\$16).

M.J. Stark, a successful but lonely woman who relocates to California in the aftermath of a betrayal, receives an invitation from an older neighbor to join a secret erotic book club.

Koslow, Sally. [Another Side of Paradise](#) (HarperCollins \$26.99)

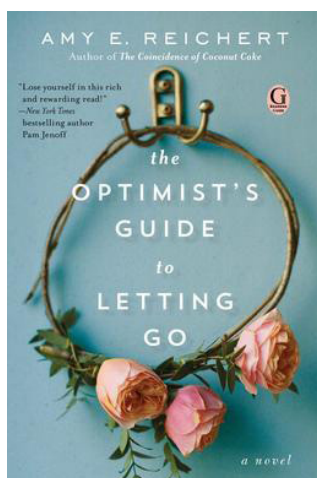
In 1937 Hollywood, gossip columnist Sheilah Graham's star is on the rise, while literary wonder boy F. Scott Fitzgerald's career is slowly drowning in booze. But the once-famous author, desperate to make money penning scripts for the silver screen, is charismatic enough to attract the gorgeous Miss Graham, a woman who exposes

the secrets of others while carefully guarding her own. A notorious drunk famously married to the doomed Zelda, Fitzgerald fell hard for his “Shielah” (he never learned to spell her name), a shrewd yet softhearted woman—both a fool for love and nobody’s fool—who would stay with him and help revive his career until his tragic death three years later. Working from Sheilah’s memoirs, interviews, and letters, Sally Koslow revisits their scandalous love affair and Graham’s dramatic transformation in London, bringing Graham and Fitzgerald gloriously to life with the color, glitter, magic, and passion of 1930s Hollywood.

Monroe, Mary Alice. [Beach House Reunion](#) (Gallery \$26).

Three generations of the Rutledge family gather at Primrose Cottage - their historic beach house in Charleston, South Carolina - where they find love, strength, and forge new bonds. A major supporter of her local SC ecology in real life, Monroe integrates plenty of details about the role of sea turtles play in the natural life of coastal South Carolina in her latest nourishing and nurturing women’s fiction novel.

Reichert, Amy E. [The Optimist’s Guide to Letting Go](#) (Gallery \$16).



After her mother, Lorraine, has a stroke, food-truck owner, obsessive list-maker, eternal optimist and recent widow Gina Zoberski, while dealing with her rebellious daughter, stumbles upon a family secret Lorraine’s kept hidden for years—one that helps her learn to let go as she seeks the truth. No one blends food and family

together quite so successfully as Reichert, and her latest engaging novel provides a welcome measure of literary balm for our world-weary souls.

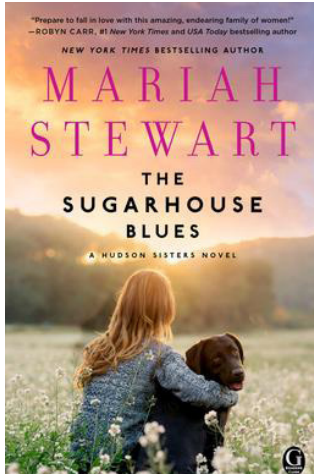
Roberts, Nora. [Shelter in Place](#) (St Martins \$27.99).

It was a typical evening at a mall outside Portland, Maine. Three teenage friends waited for the movie to start. A boy flirted with the girl selling sunglasses. Mothers and children shopped together, and the manager at the video-game store tending to customers. Then the shooters arrived. The chaos and carnage lasted only eight minutes before the killers were taken down. But for those who lived through it, the effects would last forever. In the years that followed, one would dedicate himself to a law enforcement career. Another would close herself off, trying to bury the memory of huddling in a ladies’ room, hopelessly clutching her cell phone--until she finally found a way to pour her emotions into her art. But one person wasn’t satisfied with the shockingly high death toll at the DownEast Mall. And as the survivors slowly heal, find shelter, and rebuild, they will discover that another conspirator is lying in wait--and this time, there might be nowhere safe to hide. The brutal and eye-opening opening chapters of Roberts’ latest thrilling novel of suspense should be required reading for anyone who doesn’t think we need some sane measures of gun control in our country.

Stewart, Leah. [What You Don’t Know About Charlie Outlaw](#) (Putnam \$26).

After her boyfriend, Charlie Outlaw, flees to a remote island to escape his newfound fame, actress Josie Lamar copes with the loss of her own fame twenty years after starring in a cult TV show and sets out to revive her career and win Charlie back. To be honest, I lost interest early on in this novel, but other review sources have been wild about it including PW, which ended their rave with “Stewart skillfully creates multifaceted characters, and she shows a very human side of what’s often thought of as a vapid profession. In particular, readers who have had any sort of celebrity crushes will find this endearing and satisfying.”

Stewart, Mariah. [Sugarhouse Blues](#) (FreePress \$16).



Allie, Des, and Cara, each having her own reasons for wanting a share of their father's estate, meet in the grand Victorian home in which he grew up, only to be greeted by another secret he purposely hid from them: his sister Bonnie. The women reluctantly band together to take on Fritz's challenge, working with a local contractor to begin the renovations financed by an account Fritz had set up for the task. While the restoration appears to go smoothly at first, it soon becomes apparent that the work will be more extensive than originally thought, and Des, elected to handle the money, needs to find ways to stretch out the remaining savings while searching for new sources of funding.

Teller, Danielle. [All the Ever Afters](#) (HarperCollins \$26.99)

Almost everyone knows the story of Cinderella. Or do we? Teller uses the viewpoint of Agnes, Cinderella's "wicked" stepmother to give a different slant on the famous fairy tale. A peasant born into serfdom, Agnes is separated from her family and forced into servitude as a laundress's apprentice when she is only ten years old. Using her wits and ingenuity, she escapes her tyrannical matron and makes her way toward a hopeful future. When teenaged Agnes is seduced by an older man and becomes pregnant, she is transformed by love for her child. Once again left penniless, Agnes has no choice but to return to servitude at the manor she thought she had left behind. Her new position is nursemaid to Ella,

an otherworldly infant. She struggles to love the child who in time becomes her stepdaughter and, eventually, the celebrated princess who embodies everyone's unattainable fantasies. The story of their relationship reveals that nothing is what it seems, that beauty is not always desirable, and that love can take on many guises. Fans of Gregory Maguire's books (*Wicked*, et. Al) will find this to be equally diverting.

Thayer, Nancy. [Nantucket Wedding](#) (Ballantine \$27).

It's summer on Nantucket and Alison is finally engaged to the love of her life. Things would be perfect--if only she could make peace between her daughters. Felicity, wild at heart yet a loving mother to her own children, and Jane, the extremely organized and high-earning businesswoman, arrive on the island hoping to get through these next few weeks without ruining their mother's big day. But when Felicity's husband reveals a long-term affair and Jane falls for her soon-to-be step-brother, everyone gets way more drama than they bargained for.

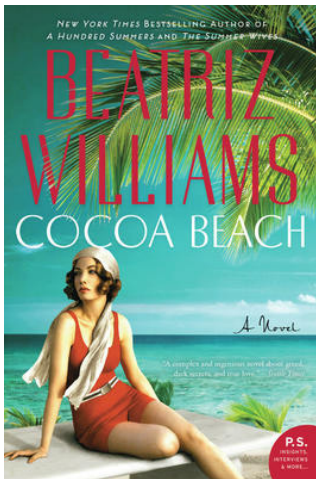
Wallace, Auralee. [Down the Aisle with Murder](#) (St. Martin's Press \$7.99)

Some wedding stories are so bizarre that you can't even make them up. Take Erica Bloom's latest case of an Otter Lake bride whose BFF is MIA at the time she's supposed to perform her duties as maid of honor. . only to be found DOA. Erica and her security team—minus her beloved Grady, who's on vacation, trying to stay out of town business and has a no-nonsense sheriff covering for him—have followed every possible lead to find out what really happened to the young woman. Is her death the result of a bachelorette party gone wildly wrong? Or did someone with cold feet snap—and turn into a cold-blooded killer? These are the questions that must be answered for the nuptials, which at the eleventh hour receive a dramatic makeover, to go off without a hitch...before 'til death do us part. The latest in Wallace's Otter Lake series is another engaging mix of humor and mystery with a generous dollop of romance.

Wiggs, Susan. [Map of the Heart](#) (\$7.99).

Accompanying her aging father on a trip to his native France, a widowed photographer is led by his memories of World War II to unexpected revelations about their family's history at the same time she bonds with a handsome American historian.

Williams, Beatriz. [Cocoa Beach](#) (\$15.99).



In the early days of Prohibition, the newly widowed Virginia Fitzwilliam arrives in the tropical boomtown of Cocoa Beach, Florida, to settle her husband's estate--and discover the true cause of his death. Williams has gained a solid reputation with readers for her gracefully written historical fiction, and *Cocoa Beach* is an excellent example of her ability to flawlessly marry a finely-honed plot rich in unexpected twists and turns with a full cadre of richly nuanced characters, who will keep readers engaged from the book's first page to its stunning conclusion. Readers who enjoy novels with a strong sense of place and time will especially savor Williams's latest masterwork as she whisks them from World War I France to misty Cornwall and then onto sun-drenched Florida. As an added bonus, fans of classic gothic romances by authors such as Daphne Du Maurier and Mary Stewart will especially appreciate the clever manner in which Williams remixes and re-masters many of the ingredients – including the ancestral estate, the heroine torn between the love of two men, and a romantic plot generously seasoned with intrigue and secrets - of these novels by transporting the story to Prohibition-era Florida. Don't forget to

mark your calendars as Williams will be back at the Poisoned Pen on Saturday July 14th at 2 PM with her latest stunning historical *The Summer Wives*.

Nonfiction

Meacham, Jon. [The Soul of America](#)
(Random House \$30)

Our current climate of partisan fury is not new, and in *The Soul of America* Pulitzer Prize-winning Meacham shows us how what Abraham Lincoln called the “better angels of our nature” have repeatedly won the day. Painting surprising portraits of Lincoln and other presidents, including Ulysses S. Grant, Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Harry S. Truman, Dwight Eisenhower, and Lyndon B. Johnson, and illuminating the courage of such influential citizen activists as Martin Luther King, Jr., early suffragettes Alice Paul and Carrie Chapman Catt, civil rights pioneers Rosa Parks and John Lewis, First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, and Army-McCarthy hearings lawyer Joseph N. Welch, Meacham brings vividly to life turning points in American history. He writes about the Civil War, Reconstruction, and the birth of the Lost Cause; the backlash against immigrants in the First World War and the resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s; the fight for women's rights; the demagoguery of Huey Long and Father Coughlin and the isolationist work of America First in the years before World War II; the anti-Communist witch-hunts led by Senator Joseph McCarthy; and Lyndon Johnson's crusade against Jim Crow. Each of these dramatic hours in our national life have been shaped by the contest to lead the country to look forward rather than back, to assert hope over fear—a struggle that continues even now.