

Midmonth BookNotes

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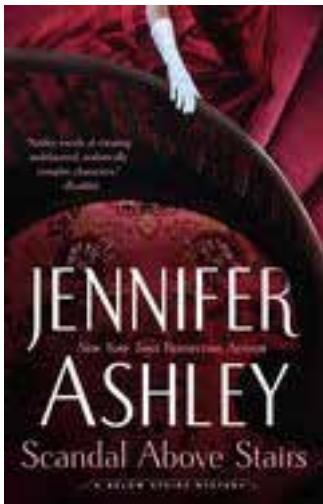
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Cool Reads for a Hot Month

Authors coming soon to the Poisoned Pen

Ashley, Jennifer [Scandal above Stairs](#) (Berkley \$15)



When Kat Holloway's employer asks for help in clearing her friend's name of theft, Kat trades her kitchen for the homes of Mayfair's wealthiest families. Soon antiques are disappearing not only from the extravagant households of connoisseurs and collectors, but from the illustrious British Museum. As the thefts increase in frequency, Kat calls upon her friend Daniel McAdam, who has already set himself up in a pawnshop on the Strand as a seedy receiver of stolen goods. When a man is murdered in the shop,

Kat must use all of her wits to see that the thieves are caught and justice is done. Award-winning Ashley introduced Kate in *Death Below Stairs*, and her sophomore effort with Kate is every bit as good. Told from the deliciously dry viewpoint of Kate, both books are an entertaining mix of fascinating domestic details a la Mrs. Beeton and amateur sleuthing in the Anne Perry manner.

Carlisle, Kate [Buried in Books](#) (Berkley \$25)

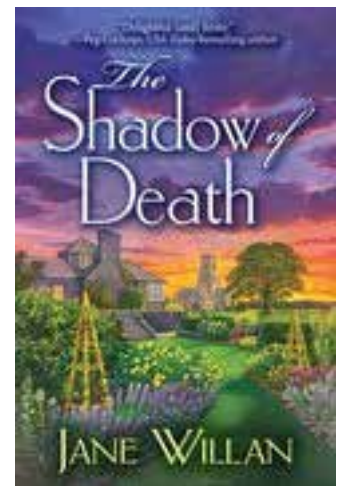
While they were attending graduate school a decade ago, Brooklyn Wainwright, Heather Babcock, and Sara Martin were the best of roommates as well as being the best of friends. The trio were so close, that they earned the nickname "the Three Musketeers" from their fellow students. Then Heather's boyfriend at the time – Rod Martin– dumped her in favor of going out with Sara, and things were never the same between the friends. So, when Brooklyn discovers both Heather and Sara (as well as Sara's now husband



Rod) are all attending the annual librarian's convention in San Francisco, she is more than a little concerned. When they both show up at her surprise bridal shower, Brooklyn is sure drama will ensue. But she's touched when the women seem willing to sort out their differences and gift her rare copies of *The Three Musketeers* and *The Blue Fairy Book*. Of course Brooklyn being Brooklyn, it isn't long before she stumbles across a dead body. And of course, Brooklyn being Brooklyn, that body would have some connection to a book. Everything readers love about Carlisle's fun and flirty Bibliophile series is part and parcel of her latest featuring Brooklyn and her main squeeze sexy British security expert Derek Stone. Throw in a rapidly upcoming wedding date and a helpful (read lovingly meddling) mother and mother-in-law, and you have the perfect breezy, cozy mystery for the dog days of summer.

Willan, Jane [The Shadow of Death](#) (Crooked Lane Books \$26.99)

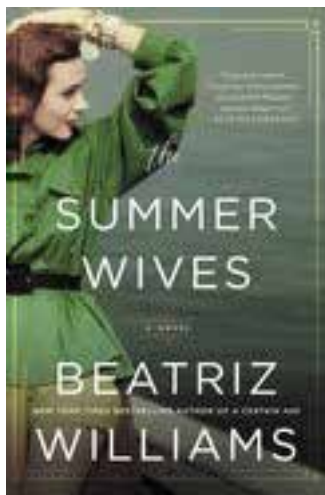
The sisters of Gwenafwy Abbey have cherished their contemplative life—days spent in prayer, reflection, tending the Convent's vegetable gardens and making their award-winning organic cheese, Heavenly Gouda. Life seems perfect, except for Sister Agatha, a die-hard mystery fan who despairs of ever finding any real life inspiration for her own novel. That is, until the Abbey's sexton is found dead under an avalanche of gouda. Despite the reservations of the local constable, Sister Agatha is convinced it's murder and the game is afoot. I absolutely adored this delightful debut mystery. From the charming Welsh village setting to the irrepressible Sister Agatha and her sprightly religious cohorts, everything about Willan's mystery is done to perfection. And the icing on the literary cake are the deft nods Sister Agatha includes in the story to her own favorite mystery writers and books. If you loved Dorothy Gilman's classic *A Nun in the Closet* or are fans of cozy mysteries of M.C Beaton, Carol Ann O'Marie,



Monica Quill or C.C. Benison, you cannot afford to miss out on this exceptional debut.

Williams, Beatriz. [The Summer Wives](#)

When celebrated movie star Miranda Thomas arrives back on Winthrop Island eighteen years after she left, nothing is the same. Greyfriars, her stepfather's once elegant estate, is now being run by Miranda's mother as an "artist's colony" in order to make ends meet. Miranda's once vivacious stepsister Isobel Fisher is now a somber shadow of her former self, and Miranda is about to meet her teenage half-brother Hugh for the first time. If this isn't enough to take in, Joseph Vargas, the son of a local lobsterman and the first boy to ever break Miranda's heart, has just escaped from prison, where he has spent the last eighteen years serving time for murder. The real question, however, is will Miranda's return to Winthrop Island stir up new interest in events that almost everyone else would prefer remain quietly buried in the past? In the latest binge-worthy addition to her loosely connected



Schuyler family novels, Williams deftly fashions an unforgettable, almost operatic story brimming with enough secrets, scandals, and seduction to give *Peyton Place* a good run for its money. At the same time Williams' lush, evocative prose would make Daphne Du Maurier green with envy. Put both these elements together with a splendidly nuanced cast of characters and a cleverly conceived and brilliantly executed plot that neatly shifts between three different historical time periods (each one rendered perfectly down to the last detail), and you have all the necessary ingredients for this year's most superbly satisfying summer read.

New Fiction, Mysteries, and Romance

Andrews, Mary K. [Beach Town](#) (\$9.99)

Given a last chance to salvage her career after being wrongly blamed for property damage, movie location scout Greer Hennessy confronts environmentally-minded mayor Eben Thibadeaux in a sleepy Florida Gulf Coast community. Andrews is known and loved for her breezy, summer beach reads like this one (and the title below).

Andrews, Mary K. [Save the Date](#) (\$9.99)

A Savannah florist is about to score the wedding of a lifetime—one that will solidify her career as the go-to-girl for society nuptials. Ironically, Cara Kryzik doesn't believe in love, even though she creates beautiful flower arrangements to celebrate them. But when the bride goes missing and the wedding is in jeopardy, Cara must find the bride and figure out whether she believes in happily-ever-after endings after all.

Bradford, Laura. [Portrait of a Sister](#) (Kensington \$15.95)

All of her life Katie Beiler has done her best to follow the rules of the Amish faith. Even when it hasn't been easy for her as is the case with Katie's gift for drawing. Because her religion frowns on Katie's attempts to practice her drawing, Katie must work at

her art late at night and then hide her efforts in her bedroom. What is even more difficult to process is that according to her faith, Katie must accept that fact that her mother is dying as being a part of "God's will." However, when Katie's twin sister Hannah, who left her family before becoming baptized as an Amish and now lives as an Englisher, returns home for their mother's funeral, Katie slowly finds herself beginning to question many of the choices she has made in life. Bradford, the author of several notable mystery series including one set in the Amish world, writes with great sensitivity about love, loss, faith, and family in this quietly powerful novel. In addition to expertly capturing the old-fashioned appeal of the Amish way of life, Bradford gifts *Portrait of a Sister* with an engaging protagonist, whose endearing efforts to find her own path in life rings true. Sweetened with just the right dash of romance, this thoughtful book is both emotionally moving and truly memorable.

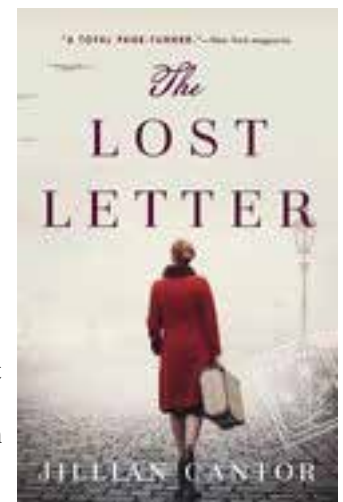


Brock, Amber. [Lady Be Good](#) (Crown \$26)

Kitty Tessler, the winsome, clever and socially ambitious daughter of self-made hotel and nightclub tycoon Nicolas Tessler, stages an affair with Max, a member of a band in order to escape a forced engagement to Andre, the unexciting second-in-command of her father's hotel empire. The only problem is that socially obsessed and status conscious Kitty never expected to fall in love with plain old Max, or the world to which he introduces her.

Cantor, Jillian. [Lost Letter](#) (\$16)

1989 is not turning out to be a good year for Katie Nelson. Her father's rapidly declining memory and health has forced Katie to move him into an assisted living facility, and now Katie's husband Daniel, who also happens to be her boss at the newspaper where Katie works, wants a divorce. When Katie takes her father's stamp collection to appraiser Benjamin Grossman, she gets another surprise. One of the letters in the collection dates back to World War II. Not only was the letter never delivered to its recipient, the stamp on the envelope is quite unusual. As Benjamin and Katie try to find out more about the stamp and the person who sent it, they discover the letter will ultimately lead them to a connection to Katie's family neither one ever would have expected. The lost art of stamp engraving as well as the power of a handwritten letter to change a life play important roles in Cantor's latest emotionally engaging novel, which stands out for its vivid depiction of history and its excellent characterization.



Carr, Robyn. [Newcomer](#) (\$7.99)

Thunder Point Deputy Sheriff “Mac” McCain’s romance with a fellow parent of an adolescent, Gina James, is in jeopardy when his ex-wife storms back into town.

Carr, Robyn. [Summer in Sonoma](#) (Mira \$15.99)

Cassie has sworn off men after yet another bad date though, deep down, she’s still looking for Mr. Right. Julie married her high school sweetheart too young and now wonders how her life became all about leaky faucets and checkbook balances. Marty’s firefighter husband takes her for granted, and with her marriage on the rocks, an old flame begins to look mighty tempting. Beth is a busy doctor trapped in a body that’s betrayed her yet again and she’s becoming a difficult patient and a secretive friend. Best friends since the seventh grade, these four women will now discover if the bond that has united them all these years will see them through the summer.

Carr, Robyn. [Summer That Made Us](#) (Mira \$8.99)

Returning to her childhood summer home to rebuild her life after losing her job, a television talk-show host is flooded with memories of the summers she spent with her sisters and cousins before a tragic event that they seem to remember quite differently.

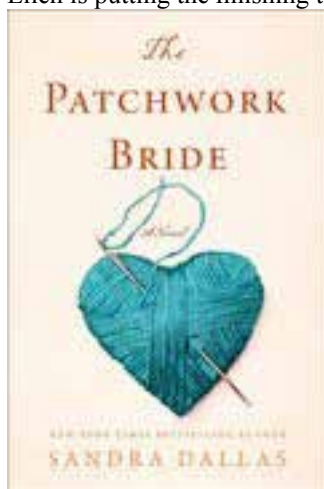
Center, Katherine. [How to Walk Away](#) (St Martins \$26.99)

When an accident on what was supposed to be the happiest day of her life lands her in the hospital with a very uncertain future, Margaret Jacobsen struggles to come to terms with family secrets, heartbreak and starting over before discovering love in an unexpected place. If you loved Jo Jo Moyes *Me Before You* (and you have stockpiled plenty of Kleenex at home) this is the perfect summer read that quietly and powerfully celebrates the idea of living life to its fullest.

Dallas, Sandra. [Patchwork Bride](#) (St Martins \$26.99)

Ellen is putting the finishing touches on a wedding quilt made from scraps of old dresses when the bride-to-be—her granddaughter June—unexpectedly arrives and announces she’s calling off the marriage. With the tending of June’s uncertain heart in mind, Ellen tells her the story of Nell, a Kansas-born woman who goes to the High Plains of New Mexico Territory in 1898 in search of a husband. Working as a biscuit-shooter, Nell falls for a cowboy named Buddy. She sees a future together, but she can’t help wondering if his feelings for her are true. When Buddy breaks her

heart, she runs away. In her search for a soul mate, Nell will run away from marriage twice more before finding the love of her life. It’s a tale filled with excitement, heartbreak, disappointment, and self-discovery—as well as with hard-earned life lessons about love. No one writes quite as movingly or as powerfully about women and the west like Sandra Dallas, whose *The Persian Pickle Club* is still one of the best historical novels I have ever read.



Davis, Krista. [The Diva Cooks Up a Storm](#) (Kensington \$26)

When Sophie Winston’s neighbor Hollis Haberman informs her that he believes he is being poisoned, Sophie wants Hollis to go directly to the police. Instead, Hollis wants Sophie to do some unobtrusive sleuthing with regards to the matter since the primary suspect is Hollis’ new trophy wife. Before Sophie can do much of anything about the matter, Hollis winds up being poisoned at a pop-up gourmet dinner planned by Sophie. Now Sophie must widen her investigative net to include Hollis’s neighbors and co-workers not to mention his ex-wife and his son. The latest in Davis’ “Domestic Diva” series is another tasty treat for fans of culinary cozies.

Dunnett, Kaitlyn. [Crime and Punctuation](#) (Kensington \$26)

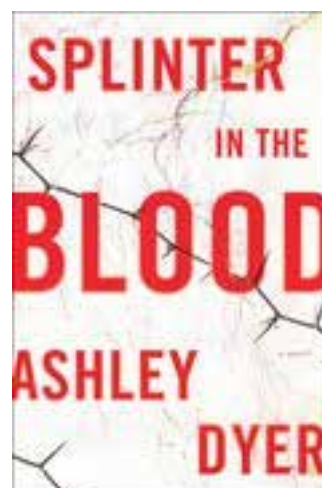
Recently widowed and recently retired Mikki Lincoln has just sunk a good portion of her available cash flow into buying her childhood home in Lenape Hollow. So, opening her own freelance editing business seems like a good way to increase her monthly income. The ink is just drying on Mikki’s new business cards when novice writer Tiffany Scott turns up wanting to hire Mikki to edit her first novel. As Mikki reads through Tiffany’s manuscript, she

discovers the book is based on criminal events that were rumored to have taken place in the small town in the Catskills. So when Tiffany turns up dead, Mikki is positive the drowning was no accident leaving Mikki to wonder if this is how Jessica Fletcher got her start. Dunnett is a pseudonym for mystery novelist Kathy Lynn Emerson, author of the popular Lady Susanna Appleton Elizabeth mysteries.



Dyer, Ashley. [Splinter in the Blood](#) (HarperCollins \$26.99)

When DS Ruth Lake finds her partner DCI Greg Carver shot in his home, the first thing she does is remove both the gun that shot Greg as well as the secret notes he had been compiling on their latest case: the Thorn Killer. Then, after thoroughly cleaning up the crime scene, Ruth calls in the incident. Now as Greg slowly recuperates in the hospital and struggles to regain his memory; Ruth clandestinely tries to track down a serial killer, who has already slowly poisoned five women by using a thorn to tattoo elaborate designs on his victim’s bodies. But given what she has done, can Ruth really be trusted to find the Thorn Killer? Dyer is the pseudonym for the UK literary duo of Margaret Murphy, a Crime Writers Association Dagger winner, and Helen Pepper, a forensic scientist and crime scene manager. Together these two writers have come up with one of the most stunning mystery debuts of the decade.



From the novel's smartly conceived and brilliantly executed plot, which is chockful of ingenious twists and unexpected turns, to its superbly nuanced cast of characters, including the frightfully clever Thorn Killer, who could give Hannibal Lector a run for the money when it comes to generating chills, readers will find it to be simply impossible to put down this riveting British police procedural until the book's spectacularly satisfying conclusion. Fans of Elizabeth George, Denise Mina, and Val McDermid will not one to miss this exceptional mystery.

Freeland, Liz. [Murder in Greenwich Village](#) (Kensington \$15.95)

Twenty-year-old Louise Faulk has fled Altoona, Pennsylvania, to start a life under dizzying lights of New York City. In a city of endless possibilities, it's not long before the young ingénue befriends a witty aspiring model and makes a splash at the liveliest parties on the Upper East Side. But glitter fades to grit when Louise's Greenwich Village apartment becomes the scene of a violent murder and a former suitor hustling for Tin Pan Alley fame hits front-page headlines as the prime suspect.



Gable, Michelle. [Book of Summer](#) (\$16.99)

For the first time in four years, physician Bess Codman visits Cliff House, the compound her great-grandparents built almost a century before, but due to erosion, the once-grand home will soon fall into the sea. Bess must now put aside her complicated memories in order to pack up the house and deal with her mother, a notorious town rabble-rouser, who refuses to leave. It's not just memories of her family home Bess must face

though, but also an old love that might hold new possibilities. In the midst of packing Bess rediscovers the forgotten family guest book. Bess's grandmother and primary keeper of the book, Ruby, always said Cliff House was a house of women, and by the very last day of the very last summer at Cliff House, Bess will understand the truth of her grandmother's words in ways she never imagined.

Harper, Molly. [Ain't She a Peach](#) (Gallery \$16)

Lake Sackett's new sheriff Eric Linden and the eccentric town embalmer and county coroner Frankie McCready team up to investigate a series of mysterious break-ins and end up spilling secrets they thought were buried forever. This is the second installment in Harper's "Southern Eclectic" series that began with *Sweet Tea and Sympathy*. Think Fannie Flag. Hilarious and charming but with a bit more kissing and romantic whatnot.

Hoang, Helen. [Kiss Quotient](#) (Berkley \$15)

Stella Lane thinks math is the only thing that unites the universe. She comes up with algorithms to predict customer purchases—a job that has given her more money than she knows what to do with, and way less experience in the dating department than the average thirty-year-old.

It doesn't help that Stella has Asperger's and French kissing reminds her of a shark getting its teeth cleaned by pilot fish. Her conclusion: she needs lots of practice—with a professional. Which

is why she hires escort Michael Phan. The Vietnamese and Swedish stunner can't afford to turn down Stella's offer, and agrees to help her check off all the boxes on her lesson plan. This hot debut romance by Hoang has been racking up the review stars including one from *Library Journal* that said "A compulsively readable erotic romance that is equal parts sugar and spice."

Hughes, Anita. [California Summer](#) (\$16.99)

Leaving her cheating husband, an independent Hollywood filmmaker decides to spend the summer at her parents' estate in Montecito, where she meets interesting locals who inspire her to open a fish taco restaurant using a secret recipe from college.

Hunting, Helena. [I Flipping Love You](#) (St. Martin's Press \$7.99)

As she and her sister get their lives and finances back on track through real estate and flipping houses, Rian Sutter meets her match in Pierce Whitfield, a down-on-his-luck lawyer who is her unexpected competition—and her Mr. Right. Hunting is the latest hot (in every sense of the word) flavor in romance fiction, and this contemporary romance, which switches narrative voice back and forth between the heroine and the hero, certainly showcases her talent for creating engaging characters as well as delivering an abundance of red-hot sensuality. Not really my cup of tea, but if you like steamy love stories, this will definitely be the ticket.

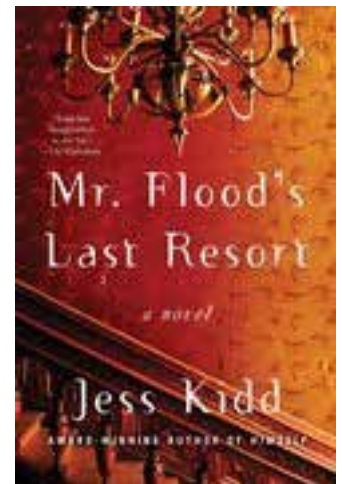
James, Eloisa. [Too Wilde to Wed](#) (Harper \$7.99)

Returning home from war two years after being rejected by Diana Belgrave, Lord Roland Northbridge Wilde is shocked to discover that not only is Diana working as a governess for his half-sister in one of his family's homes, she has brought her two-year-old son with her. Now winning Diana back becomes North's primary goal in life. But while he has had plenty of experience successfully mounting military campaigns, North discovers doing battle for Diana's affections may require a completely different set of tactical skills. *Too Wilde to Wed*, the latest in James' Wildes of Lindow Castle Georgian-set series, is another triumph of sophisticated wit and sparkling sensuality.

Kidd, Jess. [Mr. Flood's Last Resort](#) (Atria \$26)

Maud Drennan is a dedicated caregiver whose sunny disposition masks a deep sadness. A tragic childhood event left her haunted, in the company of a cast of prattling saints who pop in and out of her life like tourists. Other than visiting her agoraphobic neighbor, Maud keeps to herself, finding solace in her work and in her humble existence—until she meets Mr. Flood.

Cathal Flood is a menace by all accounts. The lone occupant of a Gothic mansion crawling with feral cats, he has been waging war against his son's attempts to put him into an old-age home and sent his last caretaker running for the madhouse. But Maud is this impossible man's last chance: if she can help him get the house in order, he just might be able to stay. So the unlikely pair begins to cooperate, bonding over their shared love of Irish folktales and mutual dislike of Mr. Flood's overbearing son. Kidd's second



novel is the very definition of “quirky.” Or, perhaps as it is labeled by *Library Journal* “magic Irish realism.” Either way, it is ultimately an uplifting story that is a perfect example of the literary trend for “feel good fiction” that seems to have been started by Fredrik Backman’s novel *A Man Called Ove*.

Kwan, Kevin. [Rich People Problems](#) (\$16.95)

Rushing to the deathbed of his grandmother, Nicholas Young encounters a massive clan eager to claim a share of the family fortune, win the hearts of loved ones, destroy each other’s reputations, and outmaneuver professional rivals. Kwan hit it big with his first novel *Crazy Rich Asians* (which debuted on the big screen this year), and his latest is another acerbic look at the life (and lifestyles) of the super rich. Or in other words what is now a trending new fiction genre: “rich lit.”

McMillan, Terry. [I Almost Forgot About You](#) (\$9.99)

When Dr. Georgia Young decides to make some major changes in her life by quitting her job and moving, she finds herself on a journey that may include a second chance at love. The end of the PW review of McMillan’s latest perfectly captures the appeal of this amazing author’s writing “There’s no better guide than McMillan for this excursion through early-, middle-, and old-age crises, and no better creator of female characters who refuse to give up on dreaming, or looking back to find the way forward in their noisy, messy, joyous lives.”



Nash, Charlotte. [Paris Wedding](#) (Harper \$15.99)

A free trip to Paris is a free trip to Paris, right? This is the logic that allows Rachel West to talk herself into attending her ex-boyfriend Matthew Grant’s Paris wedding. Of course, Rachel also believes that if she attends the wedding and sees Matthew getting married to someone else, she’ll know that he’s gone and it’s finally over between them. By convincing her best friend Sammy to accompany her, Rachel thinks she has planned for everything. Then Rachel,

armed with a hand-sewn array of clothes she crafted for herself, arrives in the City of Light and sees Matthew, and suddenly all her carefully crafted plans start unraveling. This American debut by best-selling Australian author Charlotte Nash is an absolute knockout! Not only does Nash capture the luminous magical qualities of Paris, she writes with equal grace about the spare beauty of the Australian countryside. This is an unforgettable novel about family and friendship, love and loss, as well as the art of sewing. In an interview with *BookPage*, Nash had this to say about the art of writing and that of sewing. “Sewing is a more unforgiving mistress than writing, just by nature of form. Words can be cut and trimmed and re-seamed without leaving needle marks (at least, they can now, in the post-typewriter age...pause for nostalgia if longhand is your thing), and without having to waste ruined fabric. I’ve done a heap of this kind of unpicking with my words. Despite hopes that I would find writing easier the more I did, each book has been more trouble than the last. With some books, I think there is not a stitch of the first draft left.”

While I can’t comment on the quality of the author’s own sewing, I can say *Paris Wedding* is impeccably crafted.

Orenstein, Hanna. [Playing with Matches](#)

Sasha Goldberg has a lot going for her: a recent journalism degree from NYU, an apartment with her best friend Caroline, and a relationship that would be amazing if her boyfriend Jonathan would ever look up from his BlackBerry. But when her dream career falls through, she uses her family’s darkest secret to land a job as a matchmaker for New York City’s elite at the dating service Bliss. Miss *Sex in the City*? This fun and flirty debut just may be the next best thing.

Pearson, Allison. [How Hard Can It Be?](#) (MacMillan \$27.99)

Kate Reddy had it all: a nice home, two adorable kids, and a good husband. Then her kids became teenagers (read: monsters). Richard, her husband, quit his job, taking up bicycling and therapeutic counseling: drinking green potions, dressing head to toe in Lycra, and spending his time—and their money—on his own therapy. Since Richard no longer sees a regular income as part of the path to enlightenment, it’s left to Kate to go back to work. Pearson introduced readers to Kate Reddy in *I Don’t Know How She Does It?* a *New York Times* bestseller with four million copies sold around the world, and which has been called “the definitive social comedy of working motherhood” (*The Washington Post*). *How Hard Can It Be?* is equally entertaining. The author’s musings on being an older woman in the workplace (where new and shiny is initially valued more than old and wise) are right on the mark, and her delightfully dry sense of British humor is a real kick.

Perri, Camille. [When Katie Met Cassidy](#) (Penguin \$25 Signed)

Twenty-eight-year-old New York lawyer Katie Daniels finds her life upended when she is dumped by her fiancé, but a new friendship with Cassidy Price, a self-assured and sexually promiscuous woman, changes everything Katie thought she knew about sex and love. Perri hit it big with her debut novel *The Assistants*, and her sophomore literary effort is gaining plenty of accolades including this from *Kirkus* “Katie’s admission that “the rest is me trying to understand” her initial feelings toward Cassidy is a small taste of the honest conversations about female identity and sexuality included throughout. The cast of supporting characters and the rambunctious Greenwich Village bar scene are added bonuses. A romance with a big heart and refreshing perspective.”



Roberts, Nora. [Come Sundown](#) (\$17.99)

When danger lurks in the mountains around Bo’s idyllic ranch and resort in western Montana, she turns to new hire Callen Skinner after they discover her estranged aunt badly injured and another woman is murdered. *PW*’s review of this recent paperback release of Roberts captures her literary appeal perfectly “what makes this novel most engaging is Roberts’s ability to suffuse her story with rich details of one family’s life, as well as sizzling doses of romance and mystery.”

Shalvis, Jill. [Rainy Day Friends](#) (HarperCollins \$26.99)

Six months after Lanie Jacobs' husband's death, it's hard to imagine anything could deepen her sense of pain and loss. But then Lanie discovers she isn't the only one grieving his sudden passing. A serial adulterer, he left behind several other women who, like Lanie, each believe she was his legally wedded wife. Desperate to make a fresh start, Lanie impulsively takes a job at the family-run Capriotti Winery. At first, she feels like an outsider among the boisterous Capriottis. With no real family of her own, she's bewildered by how quickly they all take her under their wing and make her feel like she belongs. Especially Mark Capriotti, a gruffly handsome Air Force veteran turned deputy sheriff who manages to wind his way into Lanie's cold, broken heart—along with the rest of the clan.

Shepard, Sara. [The Elizas](#) (Atria \$26)

Unable to get anyone to believe that she was pushed before she was rescued from the bottom of a hotel pool, rising author Eliza Fountain struggling with suicidal depression and memory loss begins to question her sanity as elements from her debut novel begin to mix up with events in her real life. The best-selling author of *Pretty Little Liars* takes a shot at the unreliable narrator novel with this tricky tale of truth and consequences. The chapters alternate between Eliza's efforts to discover exactly what happened to her at the hotel and excerpts from her novel *The Dots*. Probably not for every reader's tastes – the heroine got to be a bit much for me after awhile and long-time fans of suspense novels may piece together the ending before the final pages – but an interesting millennial take on domestic suspense nonetheless.

Spillane, Mickey and Max Allan Collins. [Killing Town](#) (Titan \$22.99)

No one in the landscape of mystery was tougher than hard-drinking and hard-hitting Mike Hammer. Now Max Allan Collins (an award-winning mystery novelist in his own right) has taken the pages of a brittle manuscript of the first Mike Hammer novel Mickey Spillane wrote and then put aside in a drawer and completed it as a gift to mystery fans on the occasion of the 100th birthday of Spillane. In the novel, Mike Hammer steals a ride on a train upstate to Killington. But he is welcomed by a nasty surprise: he is accused by police of raping and murdering a young woman near the freight yards. Roughed up by the cops and facing a murder charge, Hammer's future looks bleak. Only a beautiful blonde, Melba Charles--daughter of powerful Senator Charles--might possibly save him... if he pays the price. But why would Melba help save a man she has never met? And, more to the point, where is the real murderer?

Taylor, Ann Kidd. [Shark Club](#) (Penguin \$16)

One summer day on the beach in Florida, two extraordinary things happen to Maeve Donnelly. First, she is kissed by Daniel, the boy of her dreams. Then, she is bitten by a blacktip shark. Eighteen years later, Maeve has thrown herself into her work as a world-traveling marine biologist discovering more about the minds of misunderstood sharks. But when Maeve returns home to the legendarily charming and eccentric Hotel of the Muses where she was raised by her grandmother, she finds more than just the blood orange sunsets and key lime pies she's missed waiting for her. Set against the intoxicating backdrop of palm trees, calypso bands, and perfect ocean views, *The Shark Club* is a story of the

mysterious passions of one woman's life: her first love and new love; the sea and sharks that inhabit it.

Tunncliffe, Hannah. [French Wedding](#) (\$16)

A French Wedding is a delicious novel about six college friends reuniting on the coast of Brittany to celebrate one of their own's fortieth birthday. Add sumptuous food plus plenty of wine, and the table is set for tricky romantic entanglements, fiery outbursts, and a range of secrets.

Ware, Ruth. [The Death of Mrs. Westaway](#) (Gallery \$26.99)

If anyone had the skills to turn up at a strange house and claim a woman she'd never met as her grandmother, it is Harriet "Hal" Westaway. The letter from a lawyer saying Hal's grandmother Hester Westaway had passed away and Hal had been named in her will could not have come at a better time. Hal had only just been eking out a living as a tarot card reader in Brighton, and the money she had precipitously borrowed to help tide her over was past overdue with a very persistent loan shark. So the idea that she might be able to claim a few thousand quid seems like a lifesaver. The only problem is that Hal is pretty sure that she is in no way related to Hester Westaway no matter what the lawyer says. However, the years Hal has spent telling fortunes and learning to "read" her customers will definitely help out. All Hal has to do is pretend to be the person this letter claims she is. No one will really get hurt, after all, since it is probably only a small bequest. However, when Hal arrives at Trepassen House in Cornwall, she discovers she has not only inherited more than she every dreamed but also some very deadly problems. Barbara thinks Ware's *Lying Game* was her best book yet, but I would have to disagree with that assessment. Good as all of Ware's previous three novels have been, I thought *The Death of Mrs. Westaway* was absolutely stunning. In many ways the book reminded me of Agatha Christie's *Pocketful of Rye* with its dysfunctional family living in an estate that has seen better days and bitterly squabbling over an inheritance, and the plot of Ware's latest is filled with plenty of delicious Christie-esque twists and turns (pay special attention to names – a favorite Christie trick). Put this together with an expertly evoked Cornish setting, and an engaging heroine/sleuth and you have the makings of novel that will definitely keep you up long past your regularly scheduled bedtime.

Weir, Alison. [Jane Seymour: The Haunted Queen](#) (Random House \$28)

Compelled by her ambitious father to live at court as lady-in-waiting to beloved fellow Catholic Katherine of Aragon, Jane Seymour is horrified when Henry VIII shunts the queen aside to pursue Anne Boleyn, whose failure to rapidly produce a male heir causes Jane herself to be targeted by the king's obsessive desire for a son. Acclaimed author and historian Alison Weir continues her epic Six Tudor Queens series with this third captivating novel, which brings to life Jane Seymour, King Henry VIII's most cherished bride and mother of his only legitimate male heir.



Weisberger, Lauren. [When Life Gives You Lululemons](#) (Simon-Schuster \$26.99)

Emily Charlton, the beleaguered assistant-turned-successful Hollywood image consultant, teams up with a former ace lawyer-turned-Greenwich stay-at-home mom to retain the services of an A-list model and politician's wife. Weisberger gained literary fame with her debut novel *The Devil Wears Prada*, and her latest picks up one of the secondary characters – Emily Charlton one of Miranda Priestly's assistants – as the protagonist for this look at the luxe side of life.

White, Karen. [Dreams of Falling](#) (Penguin \$26)

For some time Larkin Lanier has been having mysterious dreams of falling, but she has no idea what those dreams might mean. So when Larkin receives a call that her mother Ivy has disappeared, she drops everything and heads back home to South Carolina. Together with two old family friends Ceecee and Bitty, Ivy searches for any clues as to where her mother might have gone. When the group discovers a spool of gold foil ribbon in Ivy's kitchen, it leads them to the old Carrowmore Estate, a dilapidated old rice plantation that belongs to the Darlington family, and now in some way Larkin, since her mother Ivy's mother was Margaret Darlington. Upon arriving at the estate, Larkin discovers that her mother has fallen through the rotten floor boards in the house. While everyone waits to see if Ivy will recover from the coma she is in, Larkin finds herself sorting through decades' worth of secrets that have bound Ivy, Ceecee, and Bitty together. Once again White perfectly captures the sultry, languid charms of the South while at the same time delivering a mesmerizing plot filled with an abundance of unexpected twists and turns.

Wiggs, Susan. [Between You and Me](#) (Harper \$26.99)

Caleb Stoltz promised his late brother he would raise his now orphaned niece and nephew in the Amish faith. However, when Caleb's nephew Jonah is involved in a dangerous farm accident, Caleb goes against the advice of the Amish elders in Middle Grove and has Jonah air evacuated to the nearest hospital in Philadelphia. Dr. Reese Powell is poised to join the medical dynasty of her wealthy, successful parents. Bold, assertive, and quick-thinking, she lives for the addictive rush of saving lives. When a shocking accident brings Caleb Stoltz into her life, Reese is forced to deal with a situation that challenges everything she thinks she knows—and ultimately emboldens her to question her most powerful beliefs. Wiggs' latest emotionally rich novel offers a thoughtful look at faith and family. To Wiggs' credit she doesn't sugarcoat the Amish or their way of life, but instead portrays them with realistic strengths and flaws just like everyone else in the world.

YA Fiction

Donne, Alexa. [Brightly Burning](#) (HMH \$17.99)

Two hundred years after a super-volcano causes an ice age on Earth, making the planet uninhabitable, seventeen-year-old mechanic Stella Ainsley accepts a position as governess on the *Rochester*, a private space ship orbiting the moon, falls in love with the ship's reclusive captain, befriends the secretive crew, and uncovers a plot that threatens the most vulnerable populations of the fleet. Donne both gives a creative nod to Charlotte Bronte and her masterwork *Jane Eyre* while at the same time taking the story off in a intriguing new direction.

Hand, Cynthia et al. [My Plain Jane](#) (HarperCollins \$17.99)

Jane Eyre gets another marvelous makeover in this irreverent mix of romance, comedy, and supernatural mayhem. You may think you know the story. Penniless orphan Jane Eyre begins a new life as a governess at Thornfield Hall, where she meets one dark, brooding Mr. Rochester—and, Reader, she marries him. Or does she? Prepare for an adventure of Gothic proportions, in which all is not as it seems, a certain gentleman is hiding more than skeletons in his closets, and one orphan Jane Eyre, aspiring author Charlotte Bronte, and supernatural investigator Alexander Blackwood are about to be drawn together on the most epic ghost hunt this side of *Wuthering Heights*.

Murphy, Julie. [Dumplin'](#) (HarperCollins \$9.99)

Dubbed “Dumplin'” by her former beauty queen mom, Willowdean has always been at home in her own skin. With her all-American-beauty best friend, Ellen, by her side, things have always worked . . . until Will takes a job at Harpy's, the local fast-food joint. There she meets Private School Bo, a hot former jock. Will isn't surprised to find herself attracted to Bo. But she *is* surprised when he seems to like her back. Instead of finding new heights of self-assurance in her relationship with Bo, Will starts to doubt herself. So she sets out to take back her confidence by doing the most horrifying thing she can imagine: entering the Miss Teen Blue Bonnet Pageant—along with several other unlikely candidates—to show the world that she deserves to be up there as much as any twiggy girl does. Brimming with heartfelt humor and Southern charm, this empowering novel has a remarkable heroine, whose message “be comfortable with the person you are” can't be said enough. Is it any surprise this has been snapped by Hollywood and is scheduled to soon be a motion picture?

Murphy, Julie. [Puddin'](#) (HarperCollins \$17.99)

Millie Michalchuk has gone to fat camp every year since she was a little girl. Not this year. This year she has new plans to chase her secret dream of being a newscaster—and to kiss the boy she's crushing on. Callie Reyes is the pretty girl who is next in line for dance team captain and has the popular boyfriend. But when it comes to other girls, she's more frenemy than friend.

When circumstances bring the girls together over the course of a semester, they surprise everyone (especially themselves) by realizing that they might have more in common than they ever imagined. This companion novel to Murphy's *Dumplin'* is another literary triumph. Among the plethora of review accolades the novel accrued was a starred review from *Kirkus*, which weighed in with “Murphy's plot brims with unlikely friendships, irresistible romance, fabulous fat acceptance, and a kick-ass ending.” So true!

Siobhan, Vivian. [Stay Sweet](#) (Simon and Schuster \$17.99)

Summer in Sand Lake isn't complete without a trip to Meade Creamery—the local ice cream stand founded in 1944 by Molly Meade who started making ice cream to cheer up her lovesick girlfriends while all the boys were away at war. Since then, the stand has been owned and managed exclusively by local girls, who inevitably become the best for friends. Seventeen-year-old Amelia and her best friend Cate have worked at the stand every summer for the past three years, and Amelia is “Head Girl” at the stand this summer. When Molly passes away before Amelia

even has her first day in charge, Amelia isn't sure that stand can go on. That is, until Molly's grandnephew Grady arrives and asks Amelia to stay on to help continue the business...but Grady's got some changes in mind... Delicious ice cream and sweet romance. What could be a better reading combination this hot summer?

Nonfiction

Banks, Jeffrey. [Norell](#) (Rizzoli \$65)

Norman Norell (1900–1972)—the first American designer to employ couture techniques, refined workmanship, and luxurious fabrics—made dresses, coats, and suits that critics deemed “the equal of Paris,” earning him the sobriquet “the American Balenciaga” and forever changing perceptions about New York’s Seventh Avenue garment industry. Norell showed the world that American design could climb to great heights by producing collection after collection that was both elegant and practical. He singlehandedly shaped the character of the ready-to-wear industry and served as a role model to younger generations of American designers. Early jobs included creating costumes for film and stage and outfits for the stars themselves, as well as working for fashion entrepreneur Hattie Carnegie. Norell brought to the world a lean sophistication and American glamour in his daytime suits, jersey separates, swing coats, and his shimmering sequined “mermaid” dresses. Clients included Lauren Bacall, Babe Paley, Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, Lena Horne, Dinah Shore, Marilyn Monroe, and Lady Bird Johnson. Norell was the first thoroughly modern American designer—and his dresses are still prized by stylish women today. This gorgeously illustrated look at Norell’s high couture creations is a must have for any fashionista.

Brower, Kate Anderson. [First in Line](#) (HarperCollins \$28.99)

John Nance Garner, FDR’s first vice president, famously said the vice presidency is “not worth a bucket of warm piss” (later cleaned up to “warm spit”). But things have changed dramatically since then as Brower, the author of the *New York Times* bestsellers *First Women* and *The Residence*, now sets her literary sights on the men who are next in line to the most powerful office in the world—the vice presidents of the modern era—from Richard Nixon to Joe Biden to Mike Pence. In interviews with more than two hundred people, including former vice presidents, their family members, and insiders and confidants of every president since Jimmy Carter (but notably not Mike Pence. Hmmm wonder why he declined to talk?), Brower pulls back the curtain and reveals the sometimes cold, sometimes close, and always complicated relationship between our modern presidents and their vice presidents.

Sampson, Fiona. [In Search of Mary Shelley](#) (WW Norton \$28.99)

The facts of Mary Shelley’s life are well known. Her mother, celebrated women’s rights advocate Mary Wollstonecraft, died soon after Mary’s birth. Her father, William Godwin, raised Mary in a house full of radical thinkers, poets, and philosophers. At the age of seventeen, Mary eloped with romantic poet Percy Shelley. The couple traveled across Europe for the next few years. At the age of nineteen, Mary wrote *Frankenstein* while staying with her husband and some literary friends in Switzerland when one of the friends – Lord Byron – challenged the group to write a ghost story. Now as we celebrate the 200th anniversary of the publication of *Frankenstein* in 1818, prize-winning poet Fiona Sampson has written a biography that finally answers the question of how it

was that a nineteen-year-old came to write a novel so dark, mysterious, anguished, and psychologically astute that it continues to resonate with readers two centuries later.