Midmonth BookNotes

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New Year New You New Books

Aikin, Susana. We Shall See the Sky Sparkling (Kensington \$15.95)

In Edwardian London, a proper lady would never dream of being seen on the stage. Lily Throop could care less about propriety when she shocks her father by securing an apprenticeship at London's famous Imperial Theatre. Lily not only begins landing coveted roles but she soon develops a devoted cadre of admirers. However, when her mentor and fellow thespian Herbert Wade betrays Lily, she flees to St. Petersburg with an acting troupe. While in Russia, Lily finds herself not only caught up in the revolutionary furor sweeping the country, but also falling for Sergei Nikolayevich, a Russian count with revolutionary ideals. This remarkable debut novel is tailor made for fans of Paula McLain or Melanie Benjamin's equally enthralling historical novels.

Barron, Stephanie. <u>That Churchill Woman</u> (Ballantine \$28)

In this superbly crafted, fictional portrait of Winston Churchill's scandalous American mother Jennie Jerome, Barron traces the life of the wealthy and

fiercely independent and beautiful New Yorker, who at the age of nineteen, agrees to wed the son of a duke she has only known for three days. Jennie soon not only finds herself swept up in the social circle known as the Marlborough House Set, the men and women who orbit around Bertie, the Prince of Wales, but she also became intimately involved in



British politics by helping her husband rise in Parliament, and playing a pivotal role in her son Winston's public life.

Carr, Robyn. The Family Gathering (Mira \$8.99)

After leaving the military, Dakota Jones visits Sullivan's Crossing to clear his head before moving on to his next adventure, but as he spends time with his siblings and becomes drawn to the simple way of life there, he finds the home and family he has always wanted. Carr's books are always a solid bet for readers but here is LJ's final words "A beautifully crafted plot with multiple story lines, relatable characters, and a setting that makes readers want to head for the Rockies add up to another solid title. Like many of Carr's books, it will appeal to romance and women's fiction fans alike."

Carr, Robyn. The Best of Us (MIRA \$26.99)

Dr. Leigh Culver loves everything about her new practice in Timberlake, Colorado, except for the fact that her beloved aunt Helen, the woman who raised her, still lives back in Chicago. After successfully stepping when Leigh's parents were tragically killed, Helen Culver went on to build a new life for herself as a popular mystery writer. When Helen makes her first visit to Colorado, however, it is like a flashback to the past since it seems Leigh still needs her help, especially when it comes to her love life. But Helen is even more surprised when Leigh takes her to Sullivan's Crossing, and Helen not only finds herself falling in love with the community but also with one resident in particular.

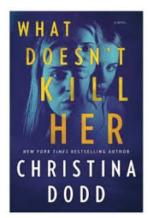
Colgan, Jenny. Amanda's Wedding

(Harper \$15.99)

When their friend and old school mate Amanda announces that she is going to marry Fraser McConnald, Mel and Fran decide they are simply going to have to do something to stop the wedding since, in their opinion, the couple could not be more mismatched. Teaming up with Fraser's totally cute younger brother Angus, the two women, in between sorting out their own romantic misadventures, set out to sabotage the mismatch of the century. British author Colgan is a perennial favorite with fans of sweet contemporary romance, especially her Beach Street and Cupcake Café series, and now her publisher is repackaging and reissuing one of her earliest rom coms.

Dodd, Christina. What Doesn't Kill Her (HQN \$15.99)

Unlikely survivor Kellan Adams, suffering from a year-long gap in her memory, defends herself against an unimaginable menace in order to protect the family she never knew. "Expect the unexpected with Dodd" would be a good mantra for readers since she always comes up with something new and different with each of her books. In the second of her books featuring



Kellan Adams - Dead Girl Running introduced the protagonist to readers - finds Kellan accepting a job transporting a valuable antiquity for verification to a reclusive expert in the Olympic Mountains. The one thing Kellan doesn't expect is that her young daughter Rae would stowaway in order to spend more quality time with mommy.

Finder, Joseph. <u>Judgment</u> (Dutton \$28)

Sharing a one-night stand with a sexy stranger during a moment of weakness, state superior court judge Juliana Brody re-encounters the man during a high-profile sexual discrimination case and discovers that she is now the target of a blackmail conspiracy is threatening her family and her future federal court prospects. Ripped from the headlines certainly applies to Finder's latest addictive page-turner. If you like Grisham's way with the law, you shouldn't miss Finder's flair for putting his protagonists into equally cleverly constructed legal straitjackets.

Galland, N D. On the Same Page

(Harper \$15.99)

Joanna Howes is a Martha's Vineyard native who left the Island at eighteen and moved to New York City to become a writer. Now in her thirties, she reluctantly returns to care for her cranky, injured uncle. Needing income, she freelances for one island newspaper (the one Uncle Hank likes). But that doesn't cover her bills, so she creates an alter ego to write for the rival paper (the one Uncle Hank doesn't like). What I loved most about this quiet yet engaging novel is the strong sense of place with which the author imbues her story, the important role real, old-fashioned newspapers can play in small communities, and the fascinating yet age-old conflict between wealthy out-of-towners and the less than flush year-round-residents who keep things running.

Gamble, Terry. The Eulogist (HarperCollins \$26.99)

In pre-Civil War Ohio, Irish immigrants James, Olivia, and Erasmus Givens must fend for themselves after they lose their mother to childbirth and their father boards a riverboat to New Orleans. In this "sprawling, richly drawn family saga," the author gifts readers with a fascinating look at the Underground Railroad and the abolitionist movement in the Northern United States.

Heger, Amanda. <u>Crazy Cupid Love</u> (Sourcebooks \$7.99)

Eliza Herman (a.k.a. The World's Worst Cupid) has spent her entire life carefully avoiding her calling as a Descendant of Eros. After all, happily-ever-afters are nothing but a myth. But when a family crisis requires her to fill in at the local Cupid-for-hire shop, Eliza finds herself enchanting couples under the watchful eye of her assigned mentor, Jake Sanders...the one man she could never get out of her head. Romance fans who like their love stories laced with a dash of humor and a generous pinch of fantasy will be enchanted with this sparkling start to Heger's "Let's Get Mythical" series.

Hendricks, Greer and Sarah Pekkanen. An Anonymous Girl (SMP \$27.99)

When Jessica Farris signs up for a psychology study conducted by the mysterious Dr. Shields, she thinks all she'll have to do is answer a few questions, collect her money, and leave. But as the questions grow more and more intense and invasive and the sessions

become outings where Jess is told what to wear and how to act, she begins to feel as though Dr. Shields may know what she's thinking...and what she's hiding. This author duo's The Wife Between Us was a smash hit bringing to mind for readers the same combination of unexpected plot twists and unreliable narration that made Gone Girl and The Girl on the Train such big successes. Now they are poised to do so again.

Herbert, A.L. <u>Murder with Macaroni and Cheese</u> (Kensington \$7.99)

Catering her upcoming high-school reunion, soul food restaurateur Halia Watkins is embroiled in the suspicious death of a catty former classmate whose demise is complicated by extramarital affairs, mega-church scandals and sports secrets. Herbert launched her Maryland set new cozy series featuring Halia and her close-knit circle of family and friends with Murder with Fried Chicken and Waffles. The yummy descriptions of the dishes Halia serves (a small sampling of recipes are included) are an added bonus for foodie fans of cozy crime novels.

Heyer, Georgette. <u>These Old Shades</u> (Sourcebooks \$15.99)

Justin Alastair, the notorious Duke of Avon, plucks a red-headed urchin — Leon - with strangely familiar looks from a dark Parisian alley just in time for his long over-due schemes of revenge on the Comte de St. Vire. Among the splendors of Versailles and the dignified mansions of England, Justin begins to unfold his sinister plans -- until, that is, Leon becomes the ravishing beauty Leonie. Sourcebooks continues their re-release of newly packaged Heyer Regencies with the above title and the below one as well.

And The Devil's Cub (Sourcebooks \$15.99)

Dominic Alistair, Marquis of Vidal and fiery son of the notorious Duke of Avon, has established a rakish reputation that rivals his father's, living a life of excess and indulgence. Banished to the Continent after wounding his opponent in a duel, Vidal schemes to abduct the silly aristocrat bent on seducing him into marriage and make her his mistress instead. In his rush, however, he seems to have taken the wrong woman. Determined to save her sister from ruin, virtuous Mary Challoner intercepts the Marquis's advances and throws herself into his path, hoping Vidal will release her upon realizing his error. But as

the two become irrevocably entangled, Mary's reputation and future lie in the hands of a devilish rake, who finds her more fascinating every day.

Hooper, Elise. <u>Learning to See</u> (Harper \$15.99)

Dorothea Lange became famous for her photographs including the iconic pictures she took of American suffering through the Dust Bowl. Now Hooper offers a fictionalized account of the artist's life beginning in 1918, when the fearless twenty-two-year old arrives in bohemian San Francisco from the Northeast, determined to make her own way as an independent woman. Renaming herself Dorothea Lange she is soon the celebrated owner of the city's most prestigious and stylish portrait studio and wife of the talented but volatile painter, Maynard Dixon. However. In the 1930s as America's economy collapses, Dorothea's own marriage begins falling apart and Dorothea must find ways to support her two young sons single-handedly. Determined to expose the horrific conditions of the nation's poor, she takes to the road with her camera, creating images that inspire, reform, and define the era. And when the United States enters World War II, Dorothea chooses to confront another injustice—the incarceration of thousands of innocent Japanese Americans.

Kelly, Julia. The Light Over London (Gallery \$26)

"It was the discovery Cara loved most: digging through the forgotten, the memorialized, the tossed-aside, and the cherished. Uncovering the treasures and trinkets left behind and making sure they had a chance to tell their stories." Unable to confront the challenges in her own life, Cara Hargraves immerses herself in work for her antiques-dealer boss, uncovering relics from the life of World War II British "Gunner Girl" Louise Keene and her complicated relationship with a man named Paul. Kelly skillfully alternates her narrative back and forth between Cara (told in the present) and Louise (1940s) in this "intricate, tender, and convincing tale of war and romance." (PW)

Kendrick, Beth. <u>In Dog We Trust Signed</u> (Berkley \$15)

Part-time dog walker and full time laundry and linen rental business owner Jocelyn Hillier never expected that when cranky, wealthy, and incredibly frugal Mr. Allardyce passed on, he would name her in his will. Jocelyn certainly didn't expect she would become co-trustee overseeing the considerable estate Mr. Allardyce left behind for his three beloved Labrador show dogs. However, living in a mansion in Black Dog Bay does have its benefits for Jocelyn until her late employer's estranged son Liam turns up in the small Delaware seaside town with every intention of



contesting his father's will. Now it seems Jocelyn's life really has gone to the dogs but, truth be told, she really wouldn't have it any other way. Kendrick delivers another winning entry in her humorous and heartfelt Black Dog Bay series (where America goes to get over their romantic breakups) that will just the ticket for anyone who likes their romances served up with plenty of deliciously acerbic wit.

Krentz, Jayne Ann. <u>Untouchable</u> (Berkley \$27)

As a survivor of a fire, FBI consultant Jack Lancaster finds himself uniquely compelled to investigate arson cases, especially cold cases written off as accidents. His almost preternatural ability to get inside the killer's head has garnered him a reputation in some circles--and complicated his personal life. However, the more cases Jack solves, the closer he slips into the darkness. His only solace is Winter Meadows, a meditation therapist. After particularly grisly cases, Winter can lead Jack back to peace. But as long as Quinton Zane is alive, Jack will not be at peace for long. Having solidified his position as the power behind the throne of his biological family's hedge fund, Zane sets out to get rid of Anson Salinas's foster sons, starting with Jack. Kirkus summed up Krentz's appeal quite nicely ending their review with "with a couple to root for, a tiny hint of the supernatural, a page-burning plot, and a vanguished villain (of course!), a sexy, heart-warming romance, and a quick series check-in and wrap-up. Krentz never disappoints, and this one hits the sweet spot."

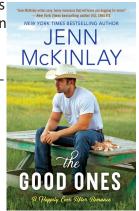
Martin, Kat. <u>The Conspiracy</u> (HQN \$24.99)

When her brother Michael disappears while pursuing his dream of sailing in the Caribbean, Harper Winston is forced to take desperate measures and ask Chase Garrett, the owner of Maximum Security and once her brother's best friend, for help. Chase knows that Harper's father is mixed up in something dangerous, and he suspects Michael's disappearance may have something to do with it. Getting involved with the Winstons goes against everything his professional gut tells him to do, but Chase can't help saying yes when Harper asks him for help. Fast-paced romantic suspense from an author with a reliable track record.

McKinlay, Jenn. <u>The Good Ones</u> (Berkley \$7.99)

Hired by Maisy Kelly to convert her late aunt's Victorian house into a romance bookstore, architect and

single father Ryder Copeland finds his plans of leaving this small town behind thwarted by his attraction to this shy, curly haired professor. McKinlay launches a new contemporary romance series on a high note, with this expertly crafted tale that showcases her flair for creating compelling characters and lively writing seasoned with just the right dash of dry wit. And the icing on this scrumptious



cupcake of a book is the myriad of references to classic and current romance novels and authors that McKinlay deftly slips into the story.

McNaught, Judith. The Sweetest Thing (Gallery \$26)

Corey Foster is the young creative genius and vision behind Foster's Beautiful Living magazine and the enormous Foster lifestyle empire. While her stepsister Diana handles the business side of things, Corey is responsible for the distinctive look of the magazine. She is just beginning work on the pilot episode of their first wedding-based reality TV show when Diana lands the rights for them to film one of the most glamorous weddings of the year. But there's a pretty big catch—the weekend will reunite Corey with an old flame. The one who got away. The one who incinerated her heart several years before.

Pembroke, Ivy. A Dog Called Jack (Kensington \$26)

In this totally charming and wonderfully heartwarming story, a little dog brings together the inhabitants of a street closer together. All day, Jack trots happily between the terraced houses, receiving treats and

toys, offering a tail wag or lick in return. For Sam, a widower recently returned to London, Jack is Christmas Street's unofficial welcoming committee. For Sam's young son, Teddy, the small, scruffy mutt is much more than that—he's a confidante and Teddy's much-needed and so far only friend. But other neighbors also rely on Jack for company, including Bill, the street's oldest, grumpiest resident. Bill remembers when everyone knew and looked out for each other. Now, people live side by side for years, scarcely interacting. Jack—with some help from Sam and Teddy—is starting to change all that.

Postorino, Rosella. At the Wolf's Table (Flatiron \$26.99)

Twenty-six-year-old Rosa Sauer's parents are gone, and her husband Gregor is far away, fighting on the front lines of World War II. Impoverished and alone, she makes the fateful decision to leave war-torn Berlin to live with her in-laws in the countryside, thinking she'll find refuge there. But one morning, the SS come to tell her she has been conscripted to be one of Hitler's tasters: three times a day, she and nine other women go to his secret headquarters, the Wolf's Lair, to eat his meals before he does. Forced to eat what might kill them, the tasters begin to divide into The Fanatics, those loyal to Hitler, and the women like Rosa who insist they aren't Nazis, even as they risk their lives every day for Hitler's. As secrets and resentments grow, this unlikely sisterhood reaches its own dramatic climax, as everyone begins to wonder if they are on the wrong side of history.

Quirk, Matthew. The Night Agent (HarperCollins \$26.99)

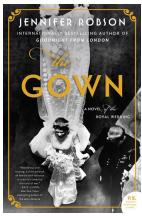
Given what his father was rumored to have done, Peter Sutherland was more than a bit surprised when he lands a job with the FBI as a surveillance specialist. Peter hopes that by scrupulously doing everything by the book, he will never have the same kind of black mark against his professional record that could cost a man his career, his reputation, and eventually his life. Nowhere is Peter more vigilant about following the rules than in the White House Situation Room, where he staffs the night action desk, monitoring an emergency line for a call that has not—and might never—come. Until tonight. When a terrified young woman named Rose calls at 1:05 a.m. saying her aunt and uncle have been murdered and that the killer is now after her, Peter must take the rules into his own hands if he wants to help save

an innocent party and help bring down a traitor in the White House. Propulsive pacing and a plot that eerily echoes what has been going on at the highest level of our own government today add up to a winning thriller for Quirk. One caveat: you will want to start this superb book early in the day since you are not going to want to put it down until you reach its jaw-dropping ending.

Robson, Jennifer. The Gown (Harper \$16.99)

Besieged by the harshest winter in living memory, burdened by onerous shortages and rationing, the people of postwar Britain are enduring lives of quiet desperation despite their nation's recent victory. Among them are Ann Hughes and Miriam Dassin, embroiderers at the famed Mayfair fashion house of Norman Hartnell. Together they forge an unlikely friendship, but their nascent hopes for a brighter future are tested when they are chosen for an once-in-a-lifetime honor: taking part in the creation of Princess Elizabeth's wedding gown. More than half a century later, Heather Mackenzie seeks to unravel the mystery of a set of embroidered flowers, a legacy from her late grandmother. How did her beloved Nan, a woman who never spoke of her old life in

Britain, come to possess the priceless embroideries that so closely resemble the motifs on the stunning gown worn by Queen Elizabeth II at her wedding almost seventy years before? And what was her Nan's connection to the celebrated textile artist and holocaust survivor Miriam Dassin? Robson, who has a doctorate in British Economic and Social



History from the University of Oxford, spent two years researching this fabulous novel including interviewing the last surviving seamstress, who worked on Elizabeth II's wedding gown. In the process, Robson has fashioned a fascinating tale about one of the most iconic wedding gowns of the 20th century and the women behind its creation.

Thorne, Sally. <u>99 Percent Mine</u> (Harper \$15.99)

Thorne wowed romance reader with her sharp and sexy debut The Hating Game, and now she is back with another wickedly funny tale about a twin broth-

er and sister struggling over a legacy they inherit and the sexy best friend coming in between them. When Darcy and Jamie Barrett inherit a tumble-down cottage from their grandmother, they're left with strict instructions to bring it back to its former glory and sell the property. Darcy plans to be in an aisle seat halfway across the ocean as soon as the renovations start, but before she can cut and run, she finds a familiar face on her porch: house-flipper extraordinaire Tom Valeska, her brother's best friend and someone Darcy has been crushing on for years. Suddenly Darcy's considering sticking around to make sure her twin doesn't ruin the cottage's inherent magic with his penchant for grey and chrome. She's definitely not staying because of her new business partner's tight t-shirts, or that perfect face that's inspiring her to pick up her camera again.

Woods, Eva. The In-between Days (Grand Central \$26.99)

After being hit by a bus and suffering a coma, Rosie Cooke is "in between." In between consciousness and oblivion. Life and death. And though some say that when you're near death your entire life flashes before your eyes, Rosie can't remember anything at all—not even how she ended up in a coma. Then something strange starts to happen. Rosie finds herself revisiting scattered moments from her past: a beach vacation, a play rehearsal, the day her brother was born. But why these memories? And what do they mean? As each piece of the puzzle comes into focus, Rosie struggles to face the picture of her life that forms. But with every look backward comes a glimpse of what might be: A relationship with her sister Daisy. The opportunity to pursue her passion. A second chance at love. And Rosie just might discover that she has much to live for. Woods, who writes crime fiction as Claire McGowan, alternates between the voices of Rosie and Daisy in her second women's fiction novel after Something Like Happy, and in the process delivers another compelling story that manages to strike the perfect balance between laughter and tears.

Nonfiction

Hall, Edith. <u>Aristotle's Way</u> (Penguin \$27)

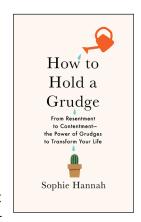
Aristotle was the first philosopher to inquire into subjective happiness, and he understood its essence better and more clearly than anyone since. According to Aristotle, happiness is not about well-being, but in-

stead a lasting state of contentment, which should be the ultimate goal of human life. In expert yet vibrant modern language, Hall lays out the crux of Aristotle's thinking, mixing affecting autobiographical anecdotes with a deep wealth of classical learning. For Hall, whose own life has been greatly improved by her understanding of Aristotle, this is an intensely personal subject. She distills his ancient wisdom into ten practical and universal lessons to help us confront life's difficult and crucial moments, summarizing a lifetime of the most rarefied and brilliant scholarship.

Hannah, Sophie. How to Hold a Grudge (Scribner \$20)

Admit it, unless you are Mother Teresa, at some point in your life (perhaps even now) you have held a grudge. Now British crime novelist Sophie Hannah, author of a dozen contemporary mysteries as well as well as the Agatha Christie estate approved author of three (with more to come) mysteries featuring the iconic sleuth Hercule Poirot, delivers a ground-breaking book in which she posits that grudges are good for us. Hannah believes that if we approach the practice of grudge-holding in an enlightened way, it will do the opposite—we will be-

come more forgiving. Practical, compassionate, and downright funny, How to Hold a Grudge reveals everything we need to know about the many different forms of grudge, the difference between a grudge and not-agrudge (not as obvious as it seems), when we should let a grudge go, and how to honor a grudge and distill lessons from it that will turn us into better, hap-



pier people—for our own benefit and for the sake of spreading good and limiting harm in the world.

Mazzeo, Tilar J. Eliza Hamilton (Gallery \$27)

If you only know Eliza Hamilton (nee Elizabeth Schuyler) from Lin-Manuel Miranda's record-breaking Broadway musical Hamilton, you don't have the full story of this amazing lady. Eliza Hamilton was much more than just the devoted wife of Founding Father Alexander Hamilton. She was a pioneer woman (back when upper state New York really was America's frontier), a loving sister, a caring mother, and in her later years a savvy businesswoman. Through careful

research and a lively writing style Mazzeo, author of such other entertaining nonfiction works as The Widow Clicquot and The Secret of Chanel No. 5, shows why Alexander Hamilton referred to Eliza as the "best of wives, best of women."

Zia, Helen. The Last Boat Out of Shanghai (Ballantine \$27.99)

Shanghai has historically been China's jewel, its richest, most modern and westernized city. The bustling metropolis was home to sophisticated intellectuals, entrepreneurs, and a thriving middle class when Mao's proletarian revolution emerged victorious from the long civil war. Terrified of the horrors the Communists would wreak upon their lives, citizens of Shanghai who could afford to fled in every direction. Seventy years later, members of the last generation to fully recall this massive exodus have revealed their stories to Chinese American journalist Helen Zia, who interviewed hundreds of exiles about their journey through one of the most tumultuous events of the twentieth century.

YA Fiction

Garretson, Dee. All Is Fair (Feiwel & Friends \$17.99)

It's 1918 and Lady Mina Tretheway wants to do her part in war effort, but unlike her father and brother, who are able to assist in the war effort, Mina is stuck sorting out which fork should be used with which dinner course. When Mina receives a telegram that's written in code, she finally has her chance to do something big. She returns to her childhood home of Hallington Manor, joined by a family friend, Lord Andrew Graham, and a dashing and mysterious young American, Lucas. The three of them must band together to work on a dangerous project that could turn the tide of the war. Fans of Jacqueline Winspear and Rhys Bowen's books may want to check out this terrific teen historical novel.

Remmerer, Brigid. A Curse So Dark and Lonely (Bloomsbury \$18.99)

Prince Rhen, heir to Emberfall, has been cursed by a powerful enchantress to repeat the autumn of his eighteenth year over and over. At the end of each autumn, he would turn into a vicious beast hell-bent on destruction. The only thing that can save Rhen is the love of one woman. With her father long gone, her

mother dying, and her brother barely holding their family together while constantly underestimating her because of her cerebral palsy, Harper learned to be tough enough to survive. But when she tries to save someone else on the streets of Washington, DC, she's instead somehow sucked into Rhen's cursed world. Remmerer puts her own twist on the popular Beauty and the Beast tale.

Roehrig, Caleb. <u>Death Prefers Blondes</u> (Fiewel & Friends \$17.99)

By day, teenage socialite Margo Manning tries to keep one step ahead of the paparazzi while basking in the warm rays of the California sun. By night, Margo tries to stay one step ahead of the police as she masterminds a series of high-stakes cat burglaries with a team of flamboyant young men. But then Margo's personal life takes a sudden, dark turn, and a job to end all jobs lands her crew in deadly peril. Overnight, everything she's ever counted on is put at risk. Backs against the wall, the resourceful thieves must draw on their special skills to survive. But can one rebel heiress and four kickboxing drag queens withstand the slings and arrows of truly outrageous fortune?

Van Arsdale, Peternelle. <u>The Cold Is In Her Bones</u> (Margaret K McElderry Books \$18.99)

Milla's whole world is her family's farm. She is never allowed to travel to the village and her only friend is her beloved older brother, Niklas. When a brighteyed girl named Iris comes to stay, Milla hopes her loneliness might finally be coming to an end. But Iris has a secret she's forbidden to share: The village is cursed by a demon who possesses girls at random, and the townspeople live in terror of who it will come for next. Now, it seems, the demon has come for Iris. When Iris is captured and imprisoned with other possessed girls, Milla leaves home to rescue her and break the curse forever. Her only company on the journey is a terrible new secret of her own: Milla is changing, too, and may soon be a demon herself. This darkly suspenseful teen novel is a clever take on the classic myth of Medusa.