

# Midmonth BookNotes

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4014 N. Goldwater Blvd., Scottsdale, AZ 85251

(888) 560-9919 • (480) 947-2974

poisonedpen.com • sales@poisonedpen.com



## Happy Holidays, Happy Reading!

### JANE'S WORLD

Celebrating Jane Austen and her work in December seems completely apropos given that not only is December the month of her birth, but early in 2020 PBS will be debuting their latest costume drama *Sanditon*, which is drawn from Jane's last, uncompleted novel. So, while all you Janeites out there anxiously await your first glimpses of this new miniseries, here are some books to keep you busy.

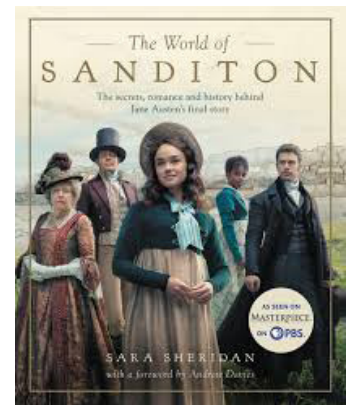
**Austen, Jane and Kate Riordan.** [Sanditon](#)  
(Grand Central \$16.99)

British historical novelist and journalist Kate Riordan was given the task of completing Jane Austen's unfinished classic for the PBS/Masterpiece production. The novel is based on the manuscript Austen wrote in the months before her death as well the script adaptations made for the miniseries by Andrew Davies. *Sanditon* is the story of impulsive, spirited, and unconventional Charlotte Heywood, who finds herself in the would-be-resort of Sanditon, and her subsequent relationship with witty, charming, and rakish Sidney Parker.

**Sheridan, Sara.** [The World of Sanditon](#)  
(Grand Central \$40)

*Sanditon*, the final novel Austen was working on before her death, has been given an exciting conclusion, and will be brought to a primetime television audience on PBS/Masterpiece for the very first time by Emmy and BAFTA Award winning screenwriter Andrew Davies (*War & Peace*, *Mr.*

*Selfridge*, *Les Misérables*, *Pride and Prejudice* – the BBC miniseries version where the sight of Colin Firth emerging from the lake as Mr. Darcy continues to send viewers into squeals of delight). This official companion to the Masterpiece series contains everything a fan could want to know. It explores the world Austen created, along with fascinating insights about the period and the real-life heart-break behind her final story. And it offers location guides, behind the scenes details, and interviews with the cast, along with beautiful illustrations of the interior and exterior settings used in the production.



**Ashford, Jane.** [How to Cross a Marquess](#)  
(Sourcebooks \$7.99).

Five years ago, Fenella Fairclough's engagement to Roger Berwick, the Marquess of Chatton, ended disastrously primarily due to Roger's rakish habits. Now the two are thrown back together when Fenella returns home to England to take care of her father, and finds she must rely on help from the newly widowed Roger when she begins receiving threatening letters from an anonymous assailant. Ashford has been penning Regency romances and historical Regencies for more than three decades, and her impeccably crafted love stories are very much in the spirit of those written by Georgette Heyer.

**Greeley, Molly.** [The Clergyman's Wife](#)  
(Harper \$15.99).

Charlotte Collins, *nee* Lucas, pragmatically chose to marry Hunsford's vicar (and one of her friend Elizabeth Bennet's cast-off suitors) rather than face life of spinsterhood. Now Charlotte quietly sees to her wifely duties of keeping house, caring for their daughter, visiting parishioners, and tolerantly listening to the lectures of her husband and his snobbish patroness Lady Catherine de Bourgh. However, something happens when Charlotte makes the acquaintance of Mr. Travis, a local farmer and tenant of Lady Catherine. For the first time in her life, Charlotte feels appreciated, heard, and seen as being important. But is Charlotte willing to give up the practical life as a clergyman's wife she has crafted for herself for a chance at romantic happiness? This remarkable novel has been garnering considerable praise including this rave from *PW* which concluded "With tight prose and expert characterization (and, sadly, a finale true to those times), Greeley easily draws readers into the world she's created while largely staying true to *Pride and Prejudice's* original plot. Ideal for fans of Austen's work, Greeley's strong debut also stands on its own."

**Leigh, Eva.** [My Fake Rake](#)  
(Harper \$7.99).

Lady Grace Wyatt is content as a wallflower, focusing on her scientific pursuits rather than the complications of society matches. But when handsome, celebrated naturalist Mason Fredericks returns from abroad, Grace wishes, for once, to be noticed as a woman and not just another scientist. Her solution: turn her best friend and professional colleague Sebastian Holloway from bespectacled, bookish anthropologist into a dashing – albeit fake – rake, whom Grace can use to make Mason jealous. There is just one little problem with Grace's scheme; she never expected she would fall in love with Sebastian. Readers who don't take their Regency romances (or themselves) too seriously will have a lot of fun with Leigh's 1980's pop movie culture inspired debut to her Union of Rakes series.



## HISTORICAL FICTION, MYSTERIES, ROMANCES, AND MORE

**Belden, Emily.** [Husband Material](#)  
(Grand Central \$15.99).

Twenty-nine-year-old Charlotte Rosen has a secret: she's a widow. Ever since the fateful day that leveled her world, Charlotte has worked hard to move forward by faithfully data-crunching her way through life, calculating the probability of risk—so she can avoid it. Yet Charlotte's algorithms could never have predicted that her late husband Derek's ashes would land squarely on her doorstep five years later. Stunned but determined, Charlotte sets out to find meaning in this sudden twist of fate, even if that includes facing her perfectly coiffed, and perfectly difficult, ex-mother-in-law—and her husband's best friend, who seems to become a fixture at her side whether she likes it or not.

**Carr, Robyn.** [Best of Us](#)  
(Mira \$8.99).

In the latest installment in Carr's Sullivan's Crossing" series, Dr. Leigh Culver loves practicing medicine in Timberlake, Colorado, after her stressful life in Chicago. The only drawback is she misses her aunt Helen, the woman who raised her. When Helen visits Leigh, she is surprised to find her niece still needs her, especially when it comes to sorting out her love life. But the biggest surprise comes when Leigh takes Helen out to Sullivan's Crossing and Helen finds herself falling for the place and one special person. Helen and Leigh will each have to decide if they can open themselves up to love neither expected to find and seize the opportunity to live their best lives.

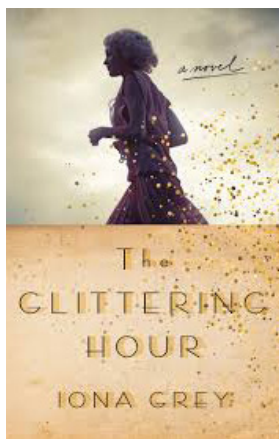
**Clayborn, Kate.** [Love Lettering](#)  
(Kensington \$15.95).

Meg Mackworth's hand-lettering skill has made her famous as the Planner of Park Slope, designing custom journals for her New York City clientele. She has another skill too: reading signs that other people miss. Knowing the upcoming marriage of Wall Street mathematician Reid Sutherland and his polished fiancée was doomed to fail is one thing, but weaving a secret word of warning ("M-I-S-T-A-K-E") into their wedding program is another. Meg may have thought no one would spot it, but she hadn't counted on

sharp-eyed, pattern-obsessed Reid. A year later, Reid has tracked Meg down to find out how she knew that his meticulously planned future was about to implode. But with a looming deadline and a bad case of creative block, Meg doesn't have time for Reid's questions—unless he can help her find her missing inspiration. As they gradually open up to each other, both try to ignore a deepening connection between them. But the signs are there—irresistible, indisputable, urging Meg to heed the messages Reid is sending her, before it's too late.

**Grey, Iona.** [The Glittering Hour](#)  
(St Martins \$28.99).

Selina Lennox is a Bright Young Thing. Her life is a whirl of parties and drinking, pursued by the press and staying on just the right side of scandal, all while running from the life her parents would choose for her.



Lawrence Weston is a penniless painter who stumbles into Selina's orbit one night and can never let her go even while knowing someone of her stature could never end up with someone of his. Except Selina falls hard for Lawrence, envisioning a life of true happiness. But when tragedy strikes, Selina finds herself choosing what's safe over what's

right. Almost a decade later in 1936, Selina's young daughter Alice Carew has been sent to stay with her grandparents while her mother and father Rupert travel to Burma on business. While at her grandparent's estate, a moping Alice, who is desperately missing her mother, finds herself intrigued with the promise of a type of scavenger game using clues sent to her via letters from her mother, who tells Alice that "Blackwood Park might seem an unlikely place to find anything exciting. But old houses hold stories and Blackwood is no exception. It may be silent and empty, but it has it stores of treasures to be discovered and secrets waiting to be revealed."

**Kantra, Virginia.** [Meg and Jo](#)  
(Berkley \$16).

In this charming, modern update of Alcott's immortal novel *Little Women* (coming soon in a new adapta-

tion to a movie screen near you) the titular characters are all grown up and pursuing their own paths in life. After her journalism career takes a sharp nosedive, Jo now struggles to stay afloat financially as a prep cook and a secret food blogger. On the surface, Meg seems to have gotten the life she always wanted with a handsome husband, adorable twin toddlers, and a beautiful house. Quiet Beth is an aspiring musician, and fashion conscious Amy



seems to be realizing her career dreams working in Paris as an intern for Louis Vuitton. However, when their mother Abby's illness brings all of the March sisters back together in North Carolina for the holidays, the Alcott girls discover how the strength of sisterhood and power of family can help them reimagine their dreams. There have been plenty of literary kudos for the latest from North Carolina based Kantra including one from *PW* which said "The imaginative storytelling and sparkling prose make this a winner."

**Macomber, Debbie.** [Window on the Bay](#)  
(\$7.99).

Encouraged by her best friend to start dating again, Seattle intensive care nurse and empty nester Jenna Boltz unexpectedly catches the attentions of her injured mother's stoic surgeon Dr. Rowan Lancaster and rediscovers herself and her passion for life. Macomber's warm and soul nurturing novels are perfect reading during the holiday season (or anytime you might be in the need of a little emotional lift).

**Penney, Elizabeth.** [Hems & Homicide](#)  
(St. Martin's \$7.99)

Iris Buckley is sew ready for a change. After the death of her beloved grandfather, Iris decides to stay in her Maine hometown of Blueberry Cove to help out her widowed grandmother, Anne—and bring her online hand-made apron designs to real-time retail life. Her and Anne's shop, Ruffles & Bows, is set to include all the latest and vintage linen fashions, a studio for sewing groups and classes, and a friendly orange cat. The only thing that they were not planning to have on the property? A skeleton in the basement. Who knew that aprons were the new crafting craze? Well,



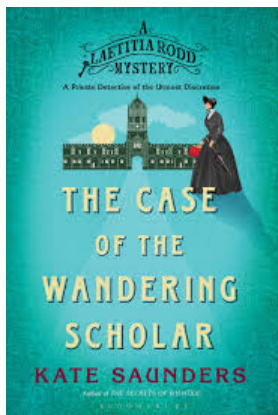
you will after reading this charming new cozy the marks the debut of Penney's Apron Shop series.

**Quick, Amanda.** [Tightrope](#)  
(Penguin \$16)

Amalie Vaughn is used to taking chances. After all, when she was an aerialist in the circus, she regularly worked without a net. But now Amalie may be facing the biggest risk of her life when she uses all of her savings to buy a reportedly "cursed" mansion in Burning Cove in order to turn it into a bed and breakfast. Of course, having her first guest be murdered doesn't help with future bookings, nor does having private investigator Matthias Jones becoming a permanent fixture in her life with his persistent questions about the incident. In her third Burning Cove set book, Quick (pseudonym for *New York Times* best-selling Jayne Ann Krentz) once again stylishly fuses an intriguing 1930s, Hollywood kissed setting with a quicksilver paced plot and then wraps the whole thing up in writing richly imbued with her deliciously tart sense of humor.

**Saunders, Kate.** [The Case of the Wandering Scholar](#)  
(Bloomsbury \$17)

In 1851, private detective Laetitia Rodd is enjoying a well-earned holiday when she gets an urgent request for her services. Mrs. Rodd's neighbor Jacob Welland is a reclusive, rich gentleman dying of consumption, and he wants Mrs. Rodd to find his brother, who has been missing for fifteen years. Joshua Welland was a scholar at Oxford, brilliant, eccentric, and desperately poor when he disappeared from the university. Friends claim to have seen him since, in



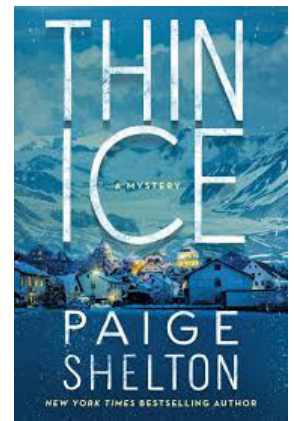
gypsy camps and wandering around the countryside. But the last sighting was ten years before-when Joshua claimed to be learning great secrets from the gypsies that would one day astound the whole world. Mrs. Rodd travels to Oxford and begins to search for the wandering scholar. But as she investigates, Mrs. Rodd discovers something dark-and

extremely dangerous-lurking in the beautiful English countryside. "Charmingly written, combining nods to manners of the time with a bit of modern sass" was

how *Kirkus* summed up this splendid new addition to a wonderful new historical mystery series. Start with [The Secrets of Wishtide](#) (Bloomsbury \$16) which introduces Archdeacon's widow and private investigator Laetitia Rodd, who goes undercover as a governess in order to assist her barrister brother during a case involving the illicit affairs of a nobleman's son.

**Shelton, Paige.** [Thin Ice](#)  
(St. Martins \$26.99)

Beth Rivers is on the run – she's doing the only thing she could think of to keep herself safe. Known to the world as thriller author Elizabeth Fairchild, she had become the subject of a fanatic's obsession. After being held in a van for three days by her kidnapper, Levi Brooks, Beth managed to escape, and until he is captured, she's got to get away. Cold and remote, Alaska seems tailor-made for her to hideout. Beth's new home in Alaska is sparsely populated with people who all seem to be running or hiding from something, and though she accidentally booked a room at a halfway house, she feels safer than she's felt since Levi took her. That is, until she's told about a local death that's a suspected murder. Could the death of Linda Rafferty have anything to do with her horror at the hands of Levi Brooks? Shelton is the author of several popular traditional mystery series including "The Scottish Bookshop" series, and here she takes a new turn into suspense with an addictively readable story that skillfully blends an riveting plot propelled by plenty of icy chills with a compelling cast of characters and a superbly realized Alaskan setting.



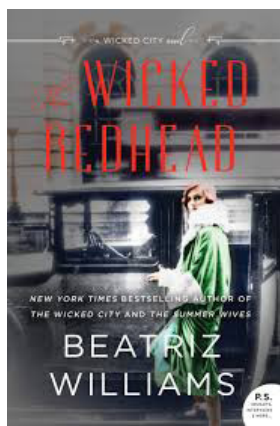
**Singh, Nalini.** [A Madness of Sunshine](#)  
(Berkley \$27).

Returning to her impoverished New Zealand hometown of Golden Cove seven months after her husband's death, pianist Anahera Rawiri bonds with detective Will Gallagher when they two find themselves teaming up to look into the disappearance of a local woman. Singh is known and loved for her paranormal romance series like the *Psy/Changing* series. Here she takes a step in a new direction

creating what *Kirkus* calls “New Zealand gothic, in which nearly every character—including the dense, ferocious landscape—has something to hide, and studying them is nearly as fascinating and compelling as solving the multifaceted mystery.” *LJ* was equally lavish in its praise concluding their review with “fans of both crime dramas and romantic suspense will find this novel hard to put down.”

**Williams, Beatriz.** [The Wicked Redhead](#) (Harper \$16.99).

In 1924, Ginger Kelly wakes up in tranquil Cocoa Beach, Florida, having fled south to safety in the company of disgraced Prohibition agent Oliver Anson Marshall and her newly-orphaned young sister, Patsy. But paradise is short-lived. Marshall is reinstated to the agency with suspicious haste and put to work patrolling for rumrunners on the high seas, from which he promptly disappears. Gin hurries north to rescue him, only to be trapped in an agonizing moral quandary by Marshall’s desperate mother. In 1998, Ella Dommerich has finally settled into her new life in Greenwich Village, inside the same apartment where a certain redheaded flapper lived long ago...and continues to make her presence known. Having quit her ethically problematic job at an accounting firm, cut ties with her unfaithful ex-husband, and begun an epic love affair with Hector, her musician neighbor,



romance. Williams will join her two other “W” writing pals Lauren Willig and Karen White here at the Poisoned Pen on Saturday January 18 at 2 PM for a talk and signing of their latest collaborative literary effort *All the Ways We Said Goodbye*.

**Winters, Rachel.** [Would Like to Meet](#) (Putnam \$16).

If Evie Summers doesn’t find a way to convince her film agency’s biggest client, Ezra Chester, to write the romantic-comedy screenplay he owes producers, her career will be over. Unfortunately, there is one big stumbling block keeping Ezra from completing his next cinematic masterpiece. Ezra thinks rom-coms are unrealistic--and he’ll only put pen to paper if Evie shows him that it’s possible to meet a man in real life the way it happens on the big screen. While Evie might privately share Ezra’s belief that in real life there is no such thing as happily ever after, she is determined to do whatever it takes to save her job . . . even if it means reenacting iconic rom-com scenes in public. Spilling orange juice on a cute stranger? No problem. Leaving her number in books all over London to see who calls? Done. With a little help from her well-meaning friends--and Ben and Annette, the adorable father-daughter duo who keep witnessing her humiliations--Evie is determined to prove she can meet a man the way Sally met Harry. But can a workaholic who’s given up on love find a meet-cute of her very own? This charming and fun debut is just the reading ticket for any fan of movies like *Sleepless in Seattle* or *When Harry Met Sally*.