

Midmonth BookNotes

Volume 12 Issue 12 December, 2022

4014 N. Goldwater Blvd., Scottsdale, AZ 85251

(888) 560-9919 • (480) 947-2974

poisonedpen.com • sales@poisonedpen.com



Happy Holidays, Happy Reading!

Cozy Corner

Blacke, Olivia. [Vinyl Resting Place](#) (St. Martin's \$8.99)

When Juni Jessup and her sisters Tansy and Maggie put all their beans in one basket to open Sip & Spin Records, a record-slash-coffee shop in Cedar River, Texas, they knew there could be some scratches on the track, but no one was expecting to find a body deader than disco in the supply closet.

Herren, T. G. [A Streetcar Named Murder](#) (Crooked Lane \$28.99)

While trying to learn the ropes regarding the antiques business she recently inherited from her late husband's estranged uncle, Valerie Cooper soon has her hands full fending off Collette, a woman who wants to sell the huge old house in the Irish Channel neighborhood Valerie and her husband painstakingly renovated. Valerie isn't interested in selling—but when her best friend Lauren, drags her to a costume party for the women's Mardi Gras club, she stumbles over Collette's body, a

jeweled dagger sticking out of her chest. In a rush of panic, Valerie recognizes the dagger from her shop—and before she knows it, she's become murder suspect number one.

Historical Fiction, Mysteries, Romance and More

Bell, Marcella. [The Rodeo Queen](#) (HQN \$8.99)
Returning to the ring at plea of his old mentor, attorney-at-law – and Closed Circuit contest - Diablo Sosa joins Rodeo Queen Sierra Quintanilla on the road to participate in an once-in-a-lifetime competition that ends in an explosive finale that could very well reveal all the secrets the two have been trying to keep from each other.

Carey, Ella. [From a Paris Balcony](#) (Grand Central \$12.99)

Life hasn't been kind to Sarah West. In one year, she has lost both her parents and her marriage. While sorting through her father's belongings, Sarah discovers a letter referenc-

ing her mysterious ancestor Louisa. There have always been rumors in the family about Louisa's suicide – from a high balcony in Paris – but as Sarah reads the letter, she begins to question everything she has been told about Louisa. Desperately needing a break from her broken heart and home, Sarah books a trip to Paris to find out the truth about Louisa.

Cooper, Sharon C. [In It to Win It](#) (Penguin \$17)
After several failing business ideas, including a professional cuddling service and a short-lived pet motel, entrepreneur Morgan Redford starts a non-profit to help teens aging out of foster care and finds herself competing for real estate space against her ex, real estate developer Drake Faulkner.

Deluca, Jen. [Well Traveled](#) (Penguin \$17)
Introduced to the world of Renaissance Faires, high-powered attorney Louisa “Lulu” Malone, in need of an escape, hits the road with the troupe, only to find herself forced to spend days and nights alongside kilted bad boy Dex MacLean, who teaches her how to trust her intuition and follow her heart instead of her head.

Dumas, Luke. [A History of Fear](#) (Atria \$27.99)
Grayson Hale, the most infamous murderer in Scotland, is better known by a different name: the Devil's Advocate. The twenty-five-year-old American grad student rose to instant notoriety when he confessed to the slaughter of his classmate Liam Stewart, claiming the Devil made him do it. When Hale is found hanged in his prison cell, officers uncover a handwritten manuscript that promises to answer the question that's haunted the nation for years: was Hale a lunatic, or had he been telling the truth all along? *Kirkus* called this debut “a muscular, enigmatic, and devilishly smart read.”

Dykes, Amanda. [All the Lost Places](#) (Bethany House \$16.99)

Discovered floating in a basket along the canals of Venice, Sebastien Trovato wrestles with questions of his origins. Decades later, on an assignment to translate a rare book, Daniel Goodman finds himself embroiled in a web of secrets carefully kept within the ancient city and in the mystery of the man whose story the book does not finish: Sebastien. “With a bit of a *National Treasure* vibe and a unique setting, this will appeal to historical fiction fans who appreciate art, archaeology, and history.” (LJ)

Flynn, Avery. [Witcha Gonna Do?](#) (Penguin \$17)
When she accidentally curses her whole family, a witch with no magical abilities must team up with her know-it-all nemesis, the super-hot jerk she keeps getting set up on dates with, to break the spell and outmaneuver some evil-minded forces bent on world domination.

Friedman, Elyse. [The Opportunist](#) (MIRA \$16.99)

When her wealthy 76-year-old father announces he is marrying his 28-year-old nurse, hardworking single mother Alana Shropshire, ordered by her brothers to make the gold digger go away, is faced with a formidable foe, who refuses to go down without a fight. Reminiscent in the best possible way of those fabulous soaps of the 1980s like *Dynasty* and *Dallas*.

Gable, Michelle. [The Lipstick Bureau](#) (Graydon House \$16.99)

Newlywed Niki Novotná is recruited by a new American spy agency to establish a secret branch in Italy's capital in 1944. One of the OSS's few female operatives abroad and multilingual, she's tasked with crafting fake stories and distributing propaganda to lower the morale of enemy soldiers. Despite limited

resources, Niki and a scrappy team of artists, forgers and others—now nicknamed The Lipstick Bureau—find success, forming a bond amid the cobblestoned streets and storied villas of the newly liberated city. But her work is also a way to escape devastating truths about the family she left behind in Czechoslovakia and a future with her controlling American husband. As the war drags on and the pressure intensifies, Niki begins to question the rules she's been instructed to follow, and a colleague unexpectedly captures her heart. But one step out of line, one mistake, could mean life or death.

Kane, Darby. [The Last Invitation](#) (HarperCollins \$17.99)

Invited to join a secret club of powerful women, the Sophie Foundation, who mete out justice to men who behave very, very badly, Jessa Hall soon realizes the high – and possibly deadly - price of admission not to mention that once in the club, it's almost impossible to get out.

Kapelke-Dale, Rachel. [The Ingénue](#) (St. Martin's \$27.99)

When the family estate is bequeathed to a man she shares a complicated history with, former piano prodigy Saskia Kreis is forced to reexamine her own past—and the romantic relationship that changed the course of her life—for answers. *My Dark Vanessa* meets *The Queen's Gambit* in this new novel of suspense about the bonds of family, the limits of talent, the risks of ambition, and the rewards of revenge.

London, Stefanie. [Pets of Park Avenue](#) (HQN \$15.99)

In desperate need of a canine stand-in for an important photo shoot, Scout Myers, determined to make a name for herself at the talent agency where she works, turns to her

estranged husband for the perfect pup replacement, which leads to unresolved tension and an unexpected second chance at a first love.

Louis, Lia. [The Key to My Heart](#) (Atria \$17.99)
Young widow Natalie Fincher plays music on the London train station's public piano where she can be anonymous until someone begins to mysteriously leave the sheet music for her late husband's favorite songs, leading her on an unexpected journey toward newfound love for herself, for life and maybe, for a special someone.

Malhotra, Aanchal. [The Book of Everlasting Things](#) (Flatiron \$29.99)

When their beloved city is ravaged by Partition, Hindu perfumer Samir Vij and Muslim calligrapher Firdaus Khan, now on opposite sides, their love forbidden, make a series of fateful decisions that will change the course of their lives forever. *PW*, among other review sources, loved this debut novel saying "Malhotra skillfully interweaves Vivek's story—a competent young man in the family textile business who goes off to war and returns irrevocably scarred by battle and a personal tragedy—into Samir's complex trajectory, and beautifully conveys the artistry behind perfumes. What emerges is a transcendent study of the blurring of personal and political, as ordinary people deal with catastrophic historical events."

McMurray, Kate. [Chasing Your Tail](#) (Sourcebooks \$16.99)

When magazine writer Lindsay Somers is assigned a story on the Whitman Street Cat Cafe, she grudgingly agrees, even though her irresistibly charming ex-boyfriend Brad Marks is their new pastry chef. Cute cats and yummy pastries, what more does a romance reader need?

Naigle, Nancy. [The Wedding Ranch](#) (St, Martin's \$16.99)

Ryder Bolt is haunted by the tragic loss of his wife and young son seven years ago. Thankfully, ranching keeps Ryder busy, and spending time with his niece and nephew—whose venue, The Wedding Ranch, has become a popular tourist destination—keeps him from getting lonely. When Ryder meets graphic designer Lorri Walker, who has come to Dalton Mill to escape her own romantic past, love is the last thing they are looking for. But when they're together, smiles come easier and burdens feel lighter, and both are embracing the possibility of something deeper.

Parikh, Amita. [The Circus Train](#) (Penguin \$17)

In 1938, Lena Papadopoulos, the wheelchair-bound daughter of an extraordinary headlining illusionist, must confront her doubts and dare to believe in the impossible – herself - when she is separated from everything she knows during World War II. *Water for Elephants* meets *The Night Circus* in this World War II debut about a magnificent travelling circus, a star-crossed romance, and one girl's coming-of-age during the darkest of times.

Pitzorno, Bianca. [The Seamstress of Sardinia](#) (HarperCollins \$17)

In 1900 Sardinia, an intelligent and ambitious young woman with an impossible dream, becoming the seamstress for a wealthy family, is drawn into a world far different than her own where she observes the town's residents who are not quite what they pretend to be. "Minutely described period clothing and memorable characters conveyed via Maher's seamless translation add to the charm. This sumptuous costume drama has a great deal of heart." (PW)

Porter, Jane. [Once Upon a Christmas](#) (Tule \$19.99)

Lord Alec Sherbourne of Langley Park is no fan of Christmas, but following in his parents' footsteps, he annually donates his impressive 19th century country home to be decorated and opened on December weekends as a community fundraiser. This year, Christmas is complicated by the arrival of a pretty American Cara Roberts, who booked a cottage on his estate—only the cottage is occupied. Forced to take her under his vast roof, he's dismayed when a storm and frozen pipes keep her with him longer than he'd anticipated. Even more worrisome, her presence is making it feel like Christmas for the first time in forever. As these two holiday housemates become friends, is there something more in the Christmas air?

Ryan, Renee. [The Secret Society of Salzburg](#) (Harlequin \$16.99)

When she meets a young English typist while on tour, glamorous Austrian opera singer Elsa Mayer-Braun and Hattie Featherstone forge an instant connection - and a dangerous alliance—using their friendship to form a secret society to rescue as many Jews as possible from Nazi persecution.

Shelton, Paige. [Winter's End](#) (St, Martin's \$26.99)

In Benedict, Alaska, while on the annual Death March—a search of the community for those who might have somehow gotten stuck at home during the winter, Beth Rivers, dealing with her own trauma, is faced with a murder linked to her best friend Orin, who's been acting strangely lately. *Kirkus* called Shelton's latest immersive Alaska Wild entry "An excellent adventure tale set against the stunning backdrop of Alaska."

Smiley, Jane. [A Dangerous Business](#) (Knopf \$28)

From the beloved Pulitzer Prize-winning and best-selling author of *A Thousand Acres*: a mystery set in 1850s Gold Rush California, as two young prostitutes—best friends Eliza and Jean—follow a trail of missing girls. “Eliza and Jean become a formidable duo of amateur sleuths whose deductive skills were gained by reading Edgar Allan Poe (especially “The Murders in the Rue Morgue”). Harnessing Poe’s character Dupin’s “train of logic,” the women suss out the most likely culprit and hatch a cleverly devised trap. The vivid historical details and vibrant characters bring Smiley’s setting to glorious life. This seductive entertainment is not to be missed. “ (PW)

Verant, Samantha. [The Spice Master at Bistro Exotique](#) (Penguin \$17)

When a series of unfortunate events derail the opening her Parisian restaurant, American chef Kate Jenkins gets some help from the self-proclaimed Spice Master of Paris in exchange for working with his son, a world-class chef and total jerk, who, as they spend time together, heats up her kitchen - and her life.

Teen

Ellor, Z.R. [Acting the Part](#) (HarperCollins \$17.99)

Playing a lesbian warrior on a hit TV show, queer actor Lily Ashton orchestrates a fake-dating scheme to save their on-screen love interest from being killed off all while coming to terms with their own gender identity.

Gonzales. Sophie. [Never Ever Getting Back Together](#) (St. Martin’s \$18.99)

Eighteen-year-old Maya Bailey enters a reality dating competition to get revenge on her cheating, royal-adjacent ex-boyfriend, and she ends up falling for another girl on the show—in fact, the girl he cheated on her with.

Green, Simon James. [Heartbreak Boys](#) (HarperCollins \$18.99)

Taking to Instagram to prove to their exes they’re just fine, Jack and Nate take a road trip with Nate’s midlife crisis-bound parents and end up in one hilarious situation after another, leading to an unexpected realization for the new pair of friends.

Jaigirdar, Adiba. [A Million to One](#) (HarperCollins \$17.99)

An acrobat, an actress, an artist, and a thief, four girls who seemingly have nothing in common, work together and plot a heist to steal the *Rubaiyat* off the *Titanic*.

Johnson, Maureen. [Nine Liars](#) (HarperCollins \$19.99)

While studying abroad, intrepid sleuth Stevie Bell is introduced to an unsolved double-murder cold case involving nine friends from Cambridge University and soon discovers the killer hasn’t finished what was started back in 1995.

Nonfiction

Brower, Kate Andersen. [Elizabeth Taylor](#) (HarperCollins \$32.50)

No celebrity rivals Elizabeth Taylor’s glamour and guts or her level of fame. She was the last major star to come out of the old Hollywood studio system and she is a legend known for her beauty and her magnetic screen presence in a career that spanned most of the twenti-

eth century and nearly sixty films. In the first ever authorized biography of the Hollywood icon, Kate Andersen Brower uses Elizabeth's unpublished letters, diary entries, and off-the-record interview transcripts as well as interviews with 250 of her closest friends and family to tell the full, unvarnished story of her remarkable career and her explosive private life that made headlines worldwide.

Gristwood, Sarah. [The Tudors in Love](#) (St. Martin's \$29.99)

The dramas of courtly love have captivated centuries of readers and dreamers. Yet too often they're dismissed as something existing only in books and song--those old legends of King Arthur and chivalric fantasy. Not so. In this ground-breaking history, Sarah Gristwood reveals the way courtly love made and marred the Tudor dynasty. From Henry VIII declaring himself as the 'loyal and most assured servant' of Anne Boleyn to the poems lavished on Elizabeth I by her suitors, the Tudors re-enacted the roles of the devoted lovers and capricious mistresses first laid out in the romances of medieval literature. *The Tudors in Love* dissects the codes of love, desire and power, unveiling romantic obsessions that have shaped the history of the world.

Gutzman, Kevin R.C. [The Jeffersonians](#) (St. Martin's \$37)

Before the consecutive two-term administrations of Presidents Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama, there had only been one other trio of its type: Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and James Monroe. Kevin R. C. Gutzman's *The Jeffersonians* is a complete chronicle of the men, known as The Virginia Dynasty, who served as president from 1801 to 1825 and implemented the foreign policy, domestic, and constitutional agenda of the radical wing of the American Revolution, setting guideposts for later American politi-

cians to follow.

Levy, Buddy. [Empire of Ice and Stone](#) (St. Martin's \$29.99)

The harrowing story of the ill-fated 1913 Canadian Arctic Expedition aboard the ship *Karluq* explains the events leading up to the deaths of over a dozen of the vessel's crew and staff. "Full of evocative descriptions, harrowing action scenes, and incisive character sketches, this is a worthy addition to the literature of Arctic exploration." (*PW*)

Myers, Marc. [Anatomy of 55 More Songs](#) (Grove \$27)

The author of the 2016 smash hit *Anatomy of a Song* and a three-time winner of the Jazz Journalists Association for Jazz Blog of the year, *Wall Street Journal* columnist Myers returns with 55 new oral histories and analyses of iconic songs such as Creedence Clearwater Revival's "Bad Moon Rising," The Beach Boys' "Good Vibrations" and Elton John's "Rocket Man."

Paranque, Estelle. [Blood, Fire & Gold](#)

Drawing on private correspondence and brand-new research, this look at the relationship between Elizabeth I and Catherine de Medici examines their roles as two of the most powerful women in Renaissance Europe. "Paranque's vivid character sketches and lucid explanations of the political and religious stakes involved result in a certifiable historical page-turner." (*PW*)

Rose, Alexander. [The Lion and the Fox](#) (HarperCollins \$28.99)

A master of historical espionage tells the thrilling story of the Confederate spy who, dispatched to a neutral Britain during the Civil War, was pitted against his Union rival at Dickensian port of Liverpool. So kind of like Spy vs.

Spy but set during the American Civil War.

Weir, Alison. [Queens of the Age of Chivalry](#)
(Random \$30)

Packed with dramatic true stories from one of European history's most romantic and turbulent eras, this epic narrative chronicles the five vividly rendered queens of the Plantagenet kings who ruled England between 1299 and 1399.