

# Midmonth BookNotes

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## Happy Holidays, Happy Reading!

### Cozy Corner

Bennett, S. J. [A Death in Diamonds](#) (Crooked Lane \$29.99)

Now advised by her father's old courtiers, young Queen Elizabeth II suspects that they may not have her best interests at heart. One of them is trying to sabotage her public appearances: that much she is sure of. When two bodies turn up in Chelsea, the Queen finds herself unwillingly used as the alibi for somebody very close to her. With the reputation of the monarchy at stake, Elizabeth knows she can't face these challenges alone. She needs support from someone she can trust. Therefore, she enlists the help of an ex-code breaker, Joan McGraw, to uncover the truth.

Brannigan, Ellie. [Death at an Irish Wedding](#) (Crooked Lane \$29.99)

Rayne McGrath's plan to save her family's crumbling castle hinges on hosting a celebrity wedding, but the suspicious death of a guest threatens everything. "An atmospheric background and diverse candidates for the killer add up to a fun read."

McKenna, Clara. [Murder at Glenloch Hill](#) (Kensington \$27)

Set in Edwardian Britain, American transplant Stella, and British aristocrat, Viscount "Lyndy" Lyndhurst take

a weekend trip to the Scottish countryside and learn how sinister bad sportsmanship can be when a prestigious golf tournament becomes a deadly game of murder.

Nelson, P.J. [Booked for Murder](#) (Minotaur \$28)

Madeline Brimley left small town Georgia many years ago to go to college and pursue her dreams on the stage. But then she gets word that not only has her beloved, eccentric Aunt Rose passed, but she's left Madeline her equally eccentric bookstore housed in an old Victorian mansion in the small college town of Enigma. When she arrives in her beat-up Fiat to claim The Old Juniper Bookstore, and restart her life, Madeline is faced with unexpected challenges. The gazebo in the back yard is set ablaze and a late night caller threatens to burn the whole store down if she doesn't leave immediately. But Madeline Brimley, not one to be intimidated, ignores the threats and soldiers on. Until there's another fire and a murder in the store itself. Now with a cloud of suspicion falling over her, it's up to Madeline to untangle the skein of secrets and find the killer before she herself is the next victim.

Osler, Rob. [The Case of the Missing Maid](#) (Kensington \$27)

In 1898 Chicago, Harriet Morrow, a determined young woman hired as the first female detective at the prestigious Prescott Agency, must solve the odd disappearance of a maid from a lavish mansion, all while navigating skeptical colleagues and uncover-

ing dangerous secrets hidden within the city's Polish community.

## Historical Fiction, Mysteries, Romance and More

Allain, Suzanne. [The Wrong Lady Meets Lord Right](#) (Penguin \$19)

When Arabella Grant's wicked aunt dies suddenly, both Arabella and her cousin Lady Isabelle cannot help but feel relieved. She'd made their lives miserable, and now Lady Issie is free to read to her heart's content, and Bella is free from taunts about her ignoble birth. Their newfound freedom is threatened; however, when Issie's great-aunt commands her to travel to London for a come-out Issie has never wanted. However, when her great-aunt turns out to be nearsighted and can't tell the noble Lady Isabelle from her commoner cousin Arabella, Issie convinces Bella to take her place. What could possibly go wrong! Then Bella meets the irresistible Lord Brooke, who thinks he is courting Lady Isabelle!

Alers, Rochelle. [Home and Away](#) (Kensington \$17.95) Frustrated with her stagnant career, journalist Harper Fleming moves to Nashville to interview her grandfather about his father's Negro League baseball career, but as she uncovers family history, she finds inspiration to transform her own future.

Armfield, Julie. [Private Rites](#) (Flatiron \$27.99) From the beloved, award-winning author of *Our Wives Under the Sea*, a speculative reimagining of *King Lear*, centering three sisters navigating queer love and loss in a drowning world. Given its source material, it isn't surprising the tale is more than a tad grim and forbidding, but *PW* summed everything neatly up saying the book delivers "well-wrought family drama that is tough to shake."

Armstrong, Jess. [The Secret of the Three Fates](#) (Mino-taur \$28)

American heiress Ruby Vaughn's octogenarian employer and housemate Mr. Owen claims their journey to Manhurst Castle in the Scottish Borders is simply to appraise and acquire illuminated manuscripts for their rare books shop. However, when Ruby discovers there are no manuscripts and receives news of a séance to be held that very night, she begins to grow suspicious

about the true reason why they have come. Then one of the Three Fates (the mediums conducting the séance) is murdered, and Ruby discovers someone is now very determined to keep her from uncovering the truth about what happened to the dead medium.

Cantor, Jillian. [The Greatest Lie of All](#) (Park Row \$18.99)

Fledgling actress Amelia Grant is at rock bottom when offered the opportunity of a lifetime: to star in a biopic about the world-renowned romance author Gloria Diamond, who used her own tragic love story as inspiration for her bestselling books. To prepare for the role, she'll spend a week with Gloria at her secluded Washington estate. It's a chance to get out of LA, away from her cheating ex-boyfriend, and to make her recently deceased mother proud. Amelia's excitement is short-lived, however, once she actually meets Gloria, who is cold, verging on rude and mostly unavailable. If not for Gloria's frustratingly handsome son Will, the visit might be a complete waste of her time. But when Amelia stumbles upon a secret from Gloria's past, she realizes Gloria's life story is more fiction than fact. And as the movie's filming date draws nearer, Amelia must decide how much she's willing to sacrifice to uncover the truth.

Connolly, Lauren. [PS I Hate You](#) (Penguin \$19)

Maddie Sanderson would be proud to honor her older brother's dying wish that she scatters his ashes over eight destinations that the adventurous 29-year-old never got to visit before he died from cancer. But in his will, Josh assigned her an impossible partner to help complete the mission—Dominic Perry. Seriously, if Maddie weren't already at her brother's funeral, she would have killed him for this. Sure, Dom was Josh's life-long best friend. He's also the infuriating man who broke Maddie's heart back when she was naïve enough to give it to him. But since Dom insists on following the rules and Josh didn't leave much room for Maddie to argue the matter, they embark together on a series of farewell trips that span thousands of miles, exploring new places and revisiting their complicated history along the way.

Dahlia, Nora. [Pick-Up](#) (Gallery \$18.99)

Sasha Rubinstein is not on her game. Parenting with an absent (and objectively douchey) ex has never been easy, but, lately, the judgmental side-eye from people at school pick-up feels extra. It doesn't help that some entitled dad—with his perfect t-shirts and

perfectly punchable (yet adorable) face—keeps stealing the last after-school spots and school hoodies out from under her. Ethan Jones is not trying to trip Sasha up... at school or otherwise. In fact, ever since they met (which she promptly forgot), he's been hoping for the exact opposite...or at least to stop thinking about her. When a game-changing job lands them trapped together on an exclusive private island, they resolve to stop sniping at each other and keep things professional. But with tension building between them and the permeating intoxication of island time, temptation blows in on every tropical breeze.

Day, Zuri. [Stuck in the Country with You](#) (Harlequin \$12.99)

Ten years ago, Genesis Washington made a very poor decision. At the time, it seemed great. Fantastic. *Explosive*. But the truth is, your one-night rebound should never be your younger brother's rival. And he definitely shouldn't be someone who allegedly only slept with you to gain the upper hand—even if the sex was amazing. Now Genesis is blindsided when the farm she's inherited just happens to be right next door to Jaxson King, the regrettable one-night stand she's still painfully attracted to. This man has aged like the finest of wines, and what's worse, he's now a thoughtful and responsible father. Good thing Genesis has a (\*cough\* *long-distance* \*cough\*) boyfriend. Well, sort of. It's complicated.

Donovan, Kemper. [Loose Lips](#) (Kensington \$28)  
SIGNED

When it comes to solving murders, Belle Curren is about to find out that the second time is definitely not the charm. Belle, the current *nom de plume* for a ghostwriter of celebrity memoirs, has already had one brush with murder, which she then turned into a best-selling mystery. However, Belle did not expect that by accepting an offer from her old literary enemy and current best-selling self help writer Payton Garrett to teach a class on mystery writing on Payton's "Get Lit" cruise, she once again would become entangled in a murder investigation. The cruise is just getting underway when the first body turns up. Now can Belle identify the killer from a shipboard of suspects before anyone begins to question just how good Belle really is at solving mysteries? After introducing his nameless, amateur sleuth in *The Busy Body*, Donovan brings her back for another fabulously fun round of sharp-witted sleuthing and snappy comebacks. Read-

ers looking for a fresh, modern take on the delights of Golden Age mysteries will want to book a ticket on this endlessly entertaining literary cruise.

Ferguson, Lana. [Under Loch and Key](#) (Penguin \$19)  
Keyanna "Key" MacKay is used to secrets. Raised by a single father who never divulged his past, it's only after his death that she finds herself thrust into the world he'd always refused to speak of. With just a childhood bedtime story about a monster that saved her father's life and the name of her estranged grandmother to go off of, Key has no idea what she'll find in Scotland. But repeating her father's mistakes and being rescued by a gorgeous, angry Scotsman—Lachlan Greer—is definitely the last thing she expects. Ferguson puts a fun spin on the Loch Ness monster with her debut romance.

Holt, Katie. [Not in My Book](#) (Crooked Lane \$19.99)  
When romance novelist Rosie and ex-crush literary fiction writer Aiden must co-write a novel blending genres, the reluctant duo's accidentally steamy novel provides an outlet for their attraction to each other—but will a career-changing opportunity reignite their rivalry and threaten their love story?

Howe, Jenny L. [How to Get a Life in Ten Dates](#) (St. Martin's \$18)

In this charming new rom-com from Jenny L. Howe, Haleigh Berkshire, a young woman who's fed up with dating challenges, agrees to let her family and friends to set her up on ten dates, but gets more than she bargained for when her best friend Jack adds himself to the roster of potential suitors.

Iverson, Chelsea. [The Peculiar Garden of Harriet Hunt](#) (Sourcebooks \$16.99)

Harriet Hunt's father disappeared months ago, leaving her to wander the halls of Sunnyside house, dwelling on a past she'd rather keep buried. She doesn't often venture beyond her front gate, instead relishing the feel of dirt under her fingernails and of soft moss beneath her feet. Consequently, she's been deemed a little too peculiar for popular Victorian society. This solitary life suits her fine, though—because, in her garden, magic awaits. When suspicion for her father's disappearance falls on her, she marries a seemingly charming man, the first to see past her peculiarities, in order to protect herself. It's soon clear, however, that her new husband might be worse than her

father and that she's integral to a dark plot created by the men around her. To free herself and discover the truth, she must learn to channel the power of her strange, magical garden. Think of this as an ingeniously inventive botanical gothic.

Johnson, Debbie. [Statistically Speaking](#) (Harper Muse \$17.99)

On paper, Gemma Jone's life is just like any other successful, single thirty something. Her students adore her. She lives in a cute beachside cottage next door to the world's sweetest neighbor, Margie. And she's definitely caught the eye of Karim, the resident hot PE teacher at her school. But every day of her life, she can't get one thing out of her mind: the baby she gave up for adoption when Gemma was just sixteen years old. This is the year that Baby--the only name Gemma has for her little girl--will turn eighteen. Gemma doesn't know if this will be the year she finds Baby. But maybe, just maybe, it will be the year she finds herself--and finds peace with her life--past and present. And maybe that's what truly counts

Kander, Beth. [I Made It Out of Clay](#) (MIRA \$30)  
Nothing's going well for Eve: she's single, turning forty, stressed at work and anxious about a recent series of increasingly creepy incidents. Most devastatingly, her beloved father died last year, and her family still won't acknowledge their sorrow. With her younger sister's wedding rapidly approaching, Eve is on the verge of panic. She can't bear to attend the event alone. That's when she recalls a strange story her Yiddish grandmother once told her, about a protector forged of desperation...and Eve, to her own shock, manages to create a golem. At first, everything seems great. The golem is indeed protective—and also attractive. But when they head out to a rural summer camp for the family wedding, Eve's lighthearted rom-com fantasy swiftly mudslides into something much darker.

Kane, Darby. [What the Wife Knew](#) (HarperCollins \$18.99)  
Dr. Richmond Dougherty is a renowned pediatric surgeon, an infamous tragedy survivor, and a national hero. He's also very dead—thanks to a fall down the stairs. His neighbors angrily point a finger at the newest Ms. Dougherty, Addison. The sudden marriage to the mysterious young woman only lasted ninety-seven days, and he'd had two suspicious "accidents" during that time. Now Addison is a very rich widow.

As law enforcement starts to circle in on Addison and people in town become increasingly hostile, sides are chosen with Kathryn, Richmond's high school sweetheart, wife number one, and the mother of his children, leading the fray. Despite rising tensions, Addison is even more driven to forge ahead on the path she charted years ago...

Determined at all costs to unravel Richmond's legacy, she soon becomes a target—with a shocking note left on her bedroom wall: *You will pay.*

Krentz, Jayne Ann. [Shattering Dawn](#) (Penguin \$29)  
SIGNED

When PI Gideon Sweetwater disrupts the kidnapping of Amelia Rivers, they escape and return to the ruins of the hotel in the California desert where Amelia lost a night to amnesia before gaining some unusual powers. Now the two are desperately trying to find a way to stop a killer and the people who are conducting illegal experiments with a dangerous drug designed to enhance psychic abilities. Krentz delivers another nerve-chilling blend of suspense and romance enhanced with just the right dash of paranormal thrills. Combine this with her signature dry sense of wit, and you have another terrific read guaranteed to keep you up past your regularly scheduled bedtime.

MacIntosh, Kate. [The Champagne Letters](#) (Gallery \$28.99)

Reims, France, 1805: Barbe-Nicole Clicquot has just lost her beloved husband but is determined to pursue their dream of creating the premier champagne house in France, now named for her new identity as a widow: Veuve Clicquot. With the Russians poised to invade, competitors fighting for her customers, and the Napoleonic court politics complicating matters she must set herself apart quickly and permanently if she, and her business, are to survive. In present day Chicago, broken from her divorce, Natalie Taylor runs away to Paris. In a book stall by the Seine, Natalie finds a collection of the Widow Clicquot's published letters and uses them as inspiration to step out of her comfort zone and create a new, empowered life for herself. But when her Parisian escape takes a shocking and unexpected turn, she's forced to make a choice. Should she accept her losses and return home, or fight for the future she's only dreamed about?

Nelson, Thomas. [The Vanishing of Josephine Reynolds](#) (Harper Muse \$18.99)

After buying her ancestral home, Josephine Reyn-

olds is mysteriously transported to 1927 where she bonds with her great-grandmother Alma, but when she returns to the present and finds history altered, Josephine must race to rewrite the past to save both Alma's life and her own existence. "Fans of time travel will love this imaginative, high-stakes novel, as will fans of *The Great Gatsby*, thanks to the vivid descriptions of the Jazz Age, its parties, music, and dancing, and the way women were fighting for their rights and potential. Part fantasy, part romance, part coming-of-age story, this sweetly told tale of a woman's search for her true self is imbued with Moorman's trademark touch of magic." (*Kirkus*)

Ryan, Renee. [The Last Fashion House in Paris](#) (Harlequin \$18.99)

In the heart of occupied WWII Paris, an elegant fashion house is the unlikely headquarters of a daring resistance network. Behind closed doors, courageous women vie to save loved ones and strangers alike from the Nazis in this powerful story of survival, friendship and second chances.

Shelton, Paige. [Perfect Storm](#) (Minotaur \$28) SIGNED  
Beth Rivers needs to disappear. Her one-time kidnapper, Travis, is on his way to her town in Alaska, and she's losing time to get out quickly. The perfect spot for Beth and her boyfriend, Tex, to hide, presents itself in a camp in the woods, away from Benedict. But when their trip takes them by Blue Mine, a small community that has seen tragedy over the last couple months, plans get diverted. Beth and Tex bring the widow of a recently murdered man back to Benedict, for Police Chief Gril to investigate, only to find that nothing is quite what it seems. When the woman vanishes, Beth must be on the alert for further danger. Who knows what further unwelcome disappearances--or appearances--might be lurking in the unforgiving Alaska storms.

Storey, Kate. [The Memory Library](#) (Avon \$18.99)  
For forty-two years, Sally Harrison has been building a library. Each year, on her daughter's birthday, she adds a new book to her shelves – with a note in the front dedicated to her own greatest work. But Ella – Sally's only child – fled to Australia twenty-one years ago after a heated exchange, and never looked back. And though Sally still dutifully adds a new paperback to the shelves every time the clock strikes midnight on July 11th, her hopes of her daughter ever thumbing

through the pages are starting to dwindle. Then disaster strikes and Ella is forced to return to the home she once knew. She is soon to discover that when one chapter ends, another will soon follow. All you have to do is turn the page.

## Nonfiction

Campbell, Oliia. [Sisters in Science](#) (Park Row \$32.99)  
In the 1930s, Germany was a hotbed of scientific thought. But after the Nazis took power, Jewish and female citizens were forced out of their academic positions. Hedwig Kohn, Lise Meitner, Hertha Sponer and Hildegard Stücklen were eminent in their fields, but they had no choice but to flee due to their Jewish ancestry or anti-Nazi sentiments. Their harrowing journey out of Germany became a life-and-death situation that required Herculean efforts of friends and other prominent scientists. Lise fled to Sweden, where she made a groundbreaking discovery in nuclear physics, and the others fled to the United States, where they brought advanced physics to American universities. No matter their destination, each woman revolutionized the field of physics when all odds were stacked against them, galvanizing young women to do the same.

Cowley, Robert. [The Killing Season](#) (Random \$38)  
A thorough analysis by the founding editor of *MHQ: The Quarterly Journal of Military History* of the First Battle of Ypres in late 1914, highlighting its significance as a turning point in World War I, chronicling the desperate efforts of British, French and Belgian troops that thwarted German advances and ultimately changed modern warfare.

Cuadros, Alex. [When We Sold God's Eye](#) (Grand Central \$32)  
Based on six years of immersive reporting and research, *When We Sold God's Eye* tells a unique kind of adventure story, one that begins with a river journey by Theodore Roosevelt and ends with smugglers from New York City's Diamond District. It's a story of survival against all odds; of the temptations of wealth and the dream of prosperity; of an ecosystem threatened by our hunger for resources; of genocide and revenge. It's a tragedy as old as the first European encounters with Indigenous people, playing out in the present day. But most of all, it's the moving saga of a

few audacious individuals—Pio, Maria, Oita, and their friends—and their attempts to adapt and even thrive in the most unlikely circumstances.

Gilbert, Julie. [Giant Love](#) (Knopf \$35)

Gilbert explores the great American novelist and playwright Edna Ferber, winner of the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction, whose work was made into many Academy Award-winning movies; the writing of her controversial, international best-selling novel about Texas, and the making of George Stevens' Academy Award winning epic film of the same name, *Giant*.

Hasegawa, Tsuyoshi. [The Last Tsar](#) (Basic \$35)

When Tsar Nicholas II fell from power in 1917, Imperial Russia faced a series of overlapping crises, from war to social unrest. Though Nicholas's life is often described as tragic, it was not fate that doomed the Romanovs—it was poor leadership and a blinkered faith in autocracy.

Definitive and engrossing, *The Last Tsar* uncovers how Nicholas II stumbled into revolution, taking his family, the Romanov dynasty, and the whole Russian Empire down with him.

Huges-Hallett, Lucy. [The Scapegoat](#) (HarperCollins \$40)

From the winner of the Baillie Gifford Prize, an extraordinary story of the meteoric rise and fall of King James I's favorite, George Villiers, the first Duke of Buckingham. With a novelist's touch, Lucy Hughes-Hallett transports us into a courtly world of masques and dancing, exquisite clothes, the art of Rubens and Van Dyck, gender-fluidity, same-sex desire, and appallingly rudimentary medicine. Witch hunts coexisted with Cartesian rationality and public opinion was becoming a political force. Falling from grace spectacularly, Buckingham came to represent everything that was wrong with the country.

Hutchison, Patrick. [CABIN](#) (Macmillan \$29)

Wit's End isn't just a state of mind. It's the name of a gravel road, the address of a run-down off-the-grid cabin, 120 shabby square feet of fixer-upper Patrick Hutchison purchased on a whim in the mossy woods of the Cascade Mountains in Washington state. To say Hutchison didn't know what he was getting into is no more an exaggeration than to say he's a man with nearly zero carpentry skills. Well, used to be. You can learn a lot over six years of renovations. *CABIN* is the story of those renovations, but it's also a love

story; of a place, of possibilities, and of the process of construction, of seeing what could be instead of what is. It is a book for those who know what it's like to bite off more than you can chew, or who desperately wish to.

Mensah, Emanuele. [Big Gin](#) (Cider Mill \$39.99)

Nothing communicates elegance and refinement like a Martini. Nothing refreshes on a warm summer day like a Gin & Tonic. It is no accident that gin stands at the center of these iconic cocktails, as its bold, unique character leaves a lasting impression everywhere it appears. *Big Gin* is the definitive exploration into this beloved spirit, tracing its history from London's Gin Craze to the recent renaissance that sparked a worldwide distilling boom.