

Midmonth BookNotes

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4014 N. Goldwater Blvd., Scottsdale, AZ 85251

(888) 560-9919 • (480) 947-2974

poisonedpen.com • sales@poisonedpen.com



New Year, New Books!

Cozy Corner

Delany, Vicki. [The Incident of the Book in the Nighttime](#) (Crooked Lane \$29.99)

Gemma Doyle, visiting London for her sister's wedding, finds her ex-husband Paul Erikson dead in his bookstore, leading her and her friend Jayne Wilson on a dangerous investigation through London and Yorkshire to uncover the truth behind Paul's mysterious rare book and his killer.

George, Nicholas. [A Lethal Walk in Lakeland](#) (Kensington \$27)

Former San Diego detective Rick "Chase" Chasen has found a welcome change of pace on walking tours in the British countryside. But England's green and pleasant land can hide all kinds of surprises—including murder. George "delivers the goods here, with top-notch detective work and a delightfully cozy atmosphere. Armchair sleuths will be thrilled." (Kirkus)

Gilbert, Victoria. [Schooled in Murder](#) (Crooked Lane \$29.99)

At Clarion University in Virginia, Jen Dalton's

student Mia has a confrontation with a professor who turns up dead, so Jen investigates with cafeteria manager Christine Kubiak, campus psychologist Zachary Flynn, and librarian Brianna Rowley to clear Mia and discover the real murderer.

Historical Fiction, Mysteries, Romance and More

Adams, Sarah. [Beg, Borrow, or Steal](#) (Random \$18)

Romance writer Emily Walker finds herself in a love-hate relationship with her neighbor and former nemesis, Jack Bennett, when he threatens to expose her secret identity.

Arsen, Isa. [The Unbecoming of Margaret Wolf](#) (Penguin \$30)

Margaret Shoard, a rising Shakespearean actress battling a public breakdown and unconventional marriage to her best friend Wesley, follows him to a New Mexico desert production led by eccentric director Vaughn Kline, where deceit and an affair threaten to tear their lives and love apart.

“The demands and compulsions of theater life create a satisfying backdrop for historical fiction that works as a page-turner. The play’s not the only thing here; Arsén’s players intrigue as well.” (Kirkus)

Balogh, Mary. [Remember When](#) (Penguin \$29) When Clarissa Ware returns to Ravenswood after living a society life as the Dowager Countess of Stratton, she reconnects with widowed village carpenter Matthew Taylor, and their summer friendship deepens into romance.

Bischoff, Sash. [Sweet Fury](#) (Simon & Schuster \$27.99) SIGNED

Lila Crayne is America’s sweetheart: she’s generous and kind, gorgeous and magnetic. She and her fiancé, visionary filmmaker Kurt Royall, have settled into a stunning new West Village apartment and are set to begin filming their feminist adaptation of Fitzgerald’s *Tender Is the Night*. To prepare for the leading role, Lila begins working with charming and accomplished therapist Jonah Gabriel to dig into the trauma of her past. Soon, Lila’s impeccably manicured life begins to unravel on the therapy couch—and Jonah is just the man to pick up the pieces. But everyone has a secret, and no one is quite who they seem. Bischoff’s splendid debut is filled with delicious twists and turns.

Buchanan, Amy. [Let’s Call a Truce](#) (St. Martin’s \$18)

Left widowed with grieving kids and back in a career stunted by years as a stay-at-home mom, Juliana feuds for two years with condescending yet attractive coworker Ben, until they are brought together for a career-making project and their lives become intertwined.

Casati, Constanza. [Babylonia](#) (Sourcebooks \$27.99)

Born to a woman scorned by Aphrodite and raised as an orphan on the outskirts of an empire, Semiramis was never meant to hold power, but that does not mean she was not made for it. From the author of the bestselling *Clytemnestra* comes another intoxicating excursion into ancient history, painting the brutal and captivating empire of gods and men, and the one queen destined to rule them all.

Connor, Erin. [Unromance](#) (Grand Central \$17.99)

After a bitter breakup, jaded romance novelist Sawyer Greene agrees to help recently dumped TV heartthrob Mason West ruin romance by playing out every rom-com trope to desensitize him, but as they enact swoony scenarios, their no-love, no-sex pact starts to unravel.

Deveraux, Jude. [Order of Swans](#) (MIRA \$30) Kaley Adams travels to friend Jobi’s island home, but she awakens on the plane in the birthplace of fairytales, and when the king asks Kaley to find the prince, she must rely on fairytale knowledge and her handsome guide to survive this new world.

Garcia, Jessie. [The Business Trip](#) (St. Martin’s \$29)

On a plane, two women, business traveler Stephanie and abuse survivor Jasmine, unknowingly share a connection as they begin sending identical, increasingly erratic texts about the same man, Trent McCarthy, before both vanish, prompting an urgent investigation into their disappearance and the sinister manipulations at play.

Gaylin, Alison. [We Are Watching](#) (HarperCollins \$30) SIGNED

After losing her husband in a tragic car accident, Meg Russo reopens her bookstore, only to face escalating threats from conspiracy

theorists obsessed with an apocalyptic novel, forcing her to confront sinister secrets tied to her family and uncover the truth behind her husband's death. Gaylin deftly integrates a timely topic - the rise of conspiracy theories and how social media can be wielded as a weapon – into the storyline of her latest white-knuckle suspense novel.

Jane, Emily. [Here Beside the Rising Tide](#) (Disney \$17.99)

A bestselling author, Jenn Lanaro, returns to Pearl Island with her kids, only to encounter her childhood friend Timmy, still only 10 years old, who enlists her help to save the world amidst mysterious coastal events.

Konen, Leah. [The Last Room on the Left](#) (Penguin \$30)

Kerry, a struggling writer with a crumbling life, takes a caretaker job at a remote Catskills motel to finish her book, but when a snowstorm traps her with a frozen corpse, she must unravel a deadly game of survival — or risk losing her mind and her life. An ingeniously plotted suspense novel that reads a little bit like *The Shining* with all the jaw-dropping twists of *Gone Girl*.

Larsen, Melissa. [The Lost House](#) (Minotaur \$28)

Agnes returns to her ancestral home in Bifröst, Iceland, to investigate her grandfather's alleged involvement in a 40-year-old double murder while grappling with her own trauma and participating in a true crime podcast, only to find herself entangled in new mysteries when a local girl goes missing.

Liese, Chloe. [Once Smitten, Twice Shy](#) (Penguin \$19)

In a reimagining of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, heartbroken Juliet and shy Will aren't looking for love, but when Will must marry for

the sake of the family business, they agree to practice romance, but practicing to perfection leads to an irresistible attraction

Mackay, Asia. [A Serial Killer's Guide to Marriage](#) (Random \$30)

Hazel and Fox, former vigilante killers turned suburban London parents, are adjusting to a quiet life with their baby until Hazel's boredom leads to an impulsive murder, threatening to unravel their carefully constructed family facade."Mackay brilliantly exaggerates the stifling aspects of parenthood through the eyes of her charismatic killers, wringing both laughs and pathos from her deliciously outlandish premise. This is sensational." (PW)

Mackenzie, Kat. [Work in Progress](#) (HarperCollins \$18.99)

Desperate for a fresh start after losing her job and fiancé, Alice impulsively joins a UK literary bus tour, only to find herself surrounded by lively octogenarians and a handsome, infuriating Scottish driver. "Anglophiles and armchair travelers will adore this." (PW)

Maynard, Janice. [The Southern Charmer](#) (Harlequin \$18.99)

When a guy leaves your best friend at the altar, you should hate him. Avoid him. You definitely shouldn't fall for him...right? But when Gabby Nolan runs into her BFF's ex, Jason Brightman, eighteen months after the wedding that wasn't, one thing is certain: the secret crush she had on him in college—the one Gabby worked hard to bury—is still very much alive and kicking.

McBreen, Heather. [Wedding Dashers](#) (Penguin \$19)

Stuck in London with a canceled flight to her sister's wedding in Ireland, Ada unexpectedly vents her frustrations to a handsome stranger at a bar, only to discover he's the wedding's

notorious best man, Jack.

Meadows, Jillian. [Give Me Butterflies](#) (Harper-Collins \$17.99)

A swoony, steamy, STEM romance in which two curators at a science museum—a handsome but grumpy astronomer and an anxious but sunshine-y entomologist—realize they are the perfect match.

Moke, Jenny Elder. [She Doesn't Have a Clue](#) (Minotaur \$17)

On a private island off the Seattle coast, best-selling mystery author Kate Valentine reluctantly attends her ex-fiancé's nuptials while juggling her latest manuscript, but when the bride is poisoned, she teams up with another past love to uncover the killer among the guests."The dialogue sparkles and the eccentric characters will delight readers. For fans of the movie *Knives Out* and those who zipped through Jesse Q. Sutanto's *Dial A for Aunties*. (LJ)

Murrin, Orlando. [Knife Skills for Beginners](#) (Kensington \$28)

Covering for friend Christian Wagner at Chester Square Cookery School in London, Paul Delamare enjoys imparting wisdom to students until someone is found killed with Paul's knife, and Paul must discover the killer before he gets butchered. "There are many culinary mysteries, but this character-driven series opener is a cut above the rest." (Kirkus)

Reyes, Sonora. [The Proposal](#) (Grand Central \$17.99)

Best friends Alejandro and Kenny fake an engagement to secure Han a green card, but as their wedding date approaches and their undeniable chemistry intensifies, the line between pretense and reality begins to blur, forcing them to question whether their bond could be more than just a charade

Rosen, Renee. [Let's Call Her Barbie](#) (Penguin \$19)

When Ruth Handler walks into the boardroom of the toy company she co-founded and pitches her idea for a doll unlike any other, she knows what she's setting in motion. It might just take the world a moment to catch up.

In 1956, the only dolls on the market for little girls let them pretend to be mothers. Ruth's vision for a doll shaped like a grown woman and outfitted in an enviable wardrobe will let them dream they can be anything. As Ruth assembles her team of creative rebels—head engineer Jack Ryan who hides his deepest secrets behind his genius and designers Charlotte Johnson and Stevie Klein, whose hopes and dreams rest on the success of Barbie's fashion—she knows they're working against a ticking clock to get this wild idea off the ground.

Sakhlecha, Trisha. [The Inheritance](#) (Penguin \$29)

The Agarwal family gathers on a private Scottish island for a reunion where patriarch Raj plans to announce his company's succession, but as long-held secrets, personal betrayals, and simmering tensions rise, the reunion takes a deadly turn, leaving someone murdered in their wake.

Segura, Jo. [Temple of Swoon](#) (Penguin \$19)

Dr. Miriam Jacobs embarks on an expedition to find the mythical Lost City of the Moon, determined to prove herself, while journalist Rafael Monfils secretly aims to thwart the team's progress to protect his mother's legacy, but their growing connection complicates their mission amid dangers in the Amazon."A frothy read for someone looking for a Lara Croft-esque rom-com." (Kirkus)

Simpson, Rosemary. [Death Takes the Lead](#) (Kensington \$27)

When a series of mysterious deaths plagues a new Scottish play, heiress and lawyer Prudence MacKenzie and her partner ex-Pinkerton Geoffrey Hunter are called in to perform an investigation at one of Broadway's most stunning theatres. The latest in Simpson's impeccably researched and superbly written series set in America's Gilded Age.

Stars, Holly. [Murder in the Dressing Room](#) (Penguin \$19)

When Misty Divine's drag mother, Lady Lady, is found dead in her dressing room beside a poisoned box of chocolates and the performers are suspected by police, Misty must solve the crime before the culprit strikes again."With lovable characters, lively dialogue, and dry humor ("It was a Wednesday night, hence the title of the chapter"), Stars concocts a winning formula. It's a glittering good time." (PW)

Underhill, Edward. [The In-Between Bookstore](#) (HarperCollins \$28)

When Darby, a nearly 30-year-old trans man, returns to his Illinois hometown after losing his job, he steps into his old high school bookstore and slips back in time, coming face-to-face with his pre-transition teenage self, offering him a chance to change the past and confront old wounds.

Vastj, Alexandra. [Earl Crush](#) (St. Martin's \$18)

A wallflower heiress, Lydia Hope-Wallace, proposes a marriage of convenience to the unsuspecting Earl of Strathranoch, only to find herself becoming entangled in his family's espionage secrets and experiencing a passion neither can resist."Serious subjects, like the Highland Clearances and a potential political assassination, lurk in the background, but much of the foreground action has the feel of

a caper, rife with lighthearted misunderstandings and clever set pieces. Meanwhile, when Lydia and Arthur finally give into their intense attraction, showers of sparks fly. This is a winner." (PW)

Walsh, Jenni L. [Ace, Marvel, Spy](#) (Harper Muse \$18.99)

Tennis champion Alice Marble's world unravels after her husband's death in World War II, but when the U.S. Army recruits her to spy under the guise of tennis exhibitions, she seizes the chance to avenge him and faces her greatest challenge.

Warren, Tiffany L. [The Unexpected Diva](#) (HarperCollins \$19.99)

Born into slavery and raised in Philadelphia's Quaker community, Elizabeth Taylor Greenfield's life is upended when her adoptive mother dies, but a chance performance launches her into fame as "the Black Swan," a celebrated yet controversial opera singer navigating the dangers of 19th-century America and beyond.

Wilson, Carter. [Tell Me What You Did](#) (Sourcebooks \$17.99)

Poe Webb, host of a popular true crime podcast, invites people to anonymously confess crimes they've committed to her audience. She can't guarantee the police won't come after her "guests," but her show grants simultaneous anonymity and instant fame—a potent combination that's proven difficult to resist. After an episode recording, Poe usually erases both criminal and crime from her mind. But when a strange and oddly familiar man appears on her show, Poe is forced to take a second look. Not only because he claims to be her mother's murderer from years ago, but because Poe knows something no one else does. Her mother's murderer is dead because Poe killed him.

Yang, Jane. [The Lotus Shoes](#) (Park Row \$28.99)
In 19th-century China, Little Flower, a maid-servant with bound feet and a rare talent for embroidery, navigates life under the cruel daughter of the Fong family, but when scandal casts them both into the Celibate Sisterhood, her newfound status attracts deadly risks and tests of loyalty.

“Yang’s expert plotting and nuanced historical details result in an exceptional story that enchants from the first page to the last.” (PW)

Teen

Braun-Arnold, Lily. [The Last Bookstore on Earth](#) (Random \$19.99)

Seventeen-year-old Liz Flanner, holed up in an abandoned bookstore in suburban New Jersey since the first Storm wreaked havoc on civilization, finds herself at odds with Maeve, a potentially dangerous out-of-towner who breaks into the bookstore as another Storm approaches.

Carni, Kellyn. [Ricochet](#) (CamCat \$19.99)

Anastasia Romanov and her younger brother Alexei escape their family’s execution when a bullet strikes Anastasia’s garnet necklace, transporting them to a parallel universe. This alternate Russia is a second chance. Anastasia wants to save her family, Alexei wants the throne, and they plan to travel the infinite multiverse to find a world in which both are possible.

Cavalancia, Kaitlyn. [Mystery Royale](#) (Disney \$19.99)

Sixteen-year-old Mullory Prudence is competing in a game of Mystery Royale at Stoutmire Estate for a chance to win an inheritance and

discovers the prize is a recluse’s illusionary magical properties and must now untangle a twisted family web of secrets in order to emerge the winner.

Cotter, Erin. [A Traitorous Heart](#) (Simon & Schuster \$21.99)

In 1572 France, seventeen-year-old Jacqueline “Jac” d’Argenson-Aunis navigates forbidden love, political intrigue, and a secret society of spies while matchmaking for her former lover and a despised king, as she uncovers hidden truths and unexpected feelings amidst the chaos of a nation on the brink of war.

Goodman, Jessica. [The Meadowbrook Murders](#) (Penguin \$19.99)

It’s Amy and her best friend Sarah’s first week of senior year at Meadowbrook Academy, but after Sarah and her boyfriend are murdered in their dorm room and Amy becomes a suspect, the school newspaper editor Liz seeks to uncover the truth.

Raughley, Sarah. [The Queen’s Spade](#) (Harper-Collins \$19.99)

Nineteen-year-old Sarah, a princess of the Egbado Clan until the British Crown kidnapped her, wants revenge against her godmother, Queen Victoria, so she aligns herself with a crime lord, in a historical thriller inspired by true events.

Rhodes, Jewell Parker. [Will’s Race for Home](#) (Little Brown \$17.99)

During the land rush of 1889, African American Will and his father journey from Texas to Oklahoma, racing thousands of others to stake their claim.

“Ripe with historical facts and moments of high tension, this adventurous story reflects on the aftereffects of violence on soldiers and what life looked like for Black citizens following the conclusion of the Civil War. It’s an em-

powering read that never loses sight of Will's profound exploration of adolescence." (*PW*)

Nonfiction

Barraclough, Eleanor. [Embers of the Hands](#) (WW Norton \$32.99)

In imagining a Viking, a certain image springs to mind: a barbaric warrior, leaping ashore from a longboat, and ready to terrorize the hapless local population of a northern European town. Yet while such characters define our imagination of the Viking Age today, they were in the minority. Instead, in the time-stopping soils, water, and ice of the North, Eleanor Barraclough excavates a preserved lost world, one that reimagines a misunderstood society. By examining artifacts of the past—remnants of wooden gaming boards, elegant antler combs, doodles by imaginative children and bored teenagers, and runes that reveal hidden loves, furious curses, and drunken spouses summoned home from the pub—Barraclough illuminates life in the medieval Nordic world as not just a world of rampaging warriors, but as full of globally networked people with recognizable concerns.

Gareth, Harney. [A History of Ancient Rome in Twelve Coins](#) (Atria \$29.99)

This accessible historical account traces ancient Rome's rise to power through the stories of twelve remarkable coins, revealing how Romans used currency to immortalize their gods, emperors and conquests, connecting modern readers with the empire's epic past.

Masters, Molly. [Bibliotherapy](#) (HarperCollins \$17.99)

Through turbulent times, stories keep us afloat. Books, particularly, console and guide

us, feed our souls, and open our eyes to worlds, possibilities and experiences we may never have considered before. Many of us have been self-medicating with books for years without identifying the practice as 'bibliotherapy'. This carefully curated collection will help you to identify the right reads for the right time. Whether you are in the throes of first love or the depths of heartbreak, embarking on a new beginning or questioning which path to take, use this guide to lose yourself in literature and find yourself anew, and discover the books that will always matter to you.

Winkler, Kate. [The Sinners All Bow](#) (Penguin \$30)

On a cold winter day in 1832, Sarah Maria Cornell was found dead in a quiet farmyard in a small New England town. When her troubled past and a secret correspondence with charismatic Methodist minister Reverend Ephraim Avery was uncovered, more questions emerged. Was Sarah's death a suicide... or something much darker? Determined to uncover the real story, Victorian writer Catharine Read Arnold Williams threw herself into the investigation as the trial was unfolding and wrote what many claim to be the first American true-crime narrative, *Fall River*. The murder divided the country and inspired Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*—but the reverend was not convicted, and questions linger to this day about what really led to Sarah Cornell's death. Until now. In *The Sinners All Bow*, acclaimed true-crime historian Kate Winkler Dawson travels back in time to nineteenth-century small-town America, emboldened to finish the work Williams started nearly two centuries before. Using modern investigative advancements—including "forensic knot analysis" and criminal profiling (which was invented fifty-five years later with Jack the Ripper)—Dawson fills in the gaps of

Williams's research to find the truth and bring justice to an unsettling mystery that speaks to our past as well as our present, anchored by three women who subverted the script they were given.