

Midmonth BookNotes

Volume 2 Issue 2 February 2025

4014 N. Goldwater Blvd., Scottsdale, AZ 85251

(888) 560-9919 • (480) 947-2974

poisonedpen.com • sales@poisonedpen.com



Fall in Love with a Great Book

Cozy Corner

Beaton, M.C. with R.W. Green. [Death of a Smuggler](#) (Grand Central \$28)

When Hamish Macbeth's newly-assigned constable arrives, he presents Hamish with a surprise and a secret. Getting to the bottom of the secret becomes the least of Hamish's problems when he meets a family, who have a score to settle with a sinister man who has mysteriously gone missing. Discovering a murdered woman's body puts further pressure on Hamish, especially when it becomes clear that the murdered woman and the missing man are linked.

Burns, V.M. [The Next Deadly Chapter](#) (Kensington \$17.95)

Mystery writer and Michigan bookshop owner Samantha Washington is delighted to speak at the local senior center and share her love of mysteries until her talk is interrupted by a man, Oscar Pembroke, claiming women have no business writing mysteries. Things go from

bad to worse, however, when Oscar's dead body turns up in the VIP suite Samantha is staying at for her engagement party, and Sam becomes the police's number one suspect.

Davis, Krista. [The Wagtail Murder Club](#) (Penguin \$30)

Returning to Wagtail, Virginia, innkeeper Holly Miller takes in a black Labrador named Squishy; soon, her reunion with ex-boyfriend Ben and the subsequent suspicious death of an attorney force Holly, along with her family and their loyal butler, to investigate the murder while unraveling Squishy's mysterious past

Maxwell, Alysse. [Two Weddings and a Murder](#) (Kensington \$27)

The blessed day has finally arrived. Phoebe Renshaw and Owen Seabright are to be wed, and lady's maid Eva Huntford could not be more delighted for her lady's happiness. But she is disturbed by one notable absence from the ceremony—her beau, Police Constable Miles Brannock. When Miles finally does appear, breathlessly running into the reception at Foxwood Hall, he brings grim news: he's

found Chief Inspector Isaac Perkins murdered, shot in his home in his favorite parlor chair with his own gun.

Meade, Amy Patricia. [Death Upon a Star](#) (Severn House \$29.99)

In 1939 Los Angeles, Evelyn Galloway starts her dream job as a script supervisor for Hitchcock's Rebecca, but her luck turns when a legendary actor is murdered, and she now must navigate a web of deceit to uncover the truth behind the crime. "Meade weaves delightful on-set scenes between Evelyn and Hitchcock into the brisk action, and each red herring feels entirely plausible until it's neatly discredited. Evelyn is off to a strong start." (PW)

Historical Fiction, Mysteries, Romances and More

Bregman, Jenn. [The Last Hamilton](#) (Crooked Lane \$29.99)

After Elizabeth Walker, heir to the Alexander Hamilton line, is killed in a suspicious accident, her best friend Sarah and grieving husband Ralph discover a conspiracy tied to a secret society founded by Hamilton, and race to uncover hidden truths before a sinister plot ensnares them.

Eckstine, Erin Crosby. [Junie](#) (Random \$30) Sixteen-year-old slave Junie tends to master's daughter Violet at Bellereine Plantation in Alabama, but when Violet's potential marriage leads Junie to commit a desperate act that rouses sister Minnie's spirit, she enlists coachman Caleb's help as horrifying secrets are revealed. "The complex plot and righteous protagonist will keep readers turning the pages. Eckstine evokes the earthly and supernatural to equally powerful effect in this richly

layered tale." (PW)

Epstein, Linda. [The Other March Sisters](#) (Kensington \$28)

This collaborative novel written by a librarian, a literary agent, and an herbalist/witch, gives *all* the "Little Women" the stories they deserve at last, this imaginative historical novel and companion to the much-loved classic draws Meg, Beth, and Amy March from behind the shadow of Jo – Louisa May Alcott's alter-ego and the "author" of *Little Women* – as vibrant and unforgettable characters grappling with societal strictures, queer love, motherhood, chronic illness, artistic ambition, and more.

Forest, Krisina. [The Love Lyric](#) (Penguin \$19) Iris Greene, a widowed mother and director of partnerships at a beauty company, feels lonely despite her success until she encounters pop singer Angel Harrison at her sister's wedding; both secretly harboring feelings for each other, they must navigate professional boundaries while exploring their unexpected connection during a campaign tour.

Franklin, Alice. [Life Hacks for a Little Alien](#) (Little Brown \$29)

Before she thinks of herself as Little Alien, our protagonist is a lonely girl who doesn't understand the world the way other children seem to. So when a late-night TV special introduces her to the mysterious Voynich Manuscript—an ancient tome written in an indecipherable language—Little Alien experiences something she hasn't before: hope. Could there be others like her, who also feel like they're from another planet? Convinced the Voynich Manuscript holds the answers she needs, Little Alien and her best (and only) friend Bobby decide they must find this strange book. Perfect for readers of *Eleanor Oliphant Is Completely Fine* and *Remarkably Bright Creatures*, this is a

charming, witty, and profoundly moving novel about what it feels like to grow up neurodivergent.

Greco, Stephan. [The Last American Heiresses](#) (Kensington \$18.95)

When filmmaker Emma Radetsky begins researching her new documentary about prominent women and their jewelry collections, she's familiar with the lore surrounding both Doris Duke and Barbara Hutton—the couture gowns, exotic homes, and romantic interludes—including sequential marriages to the same notorious playboy. And of course, the priceless jewels they acquire as easily as candy. Yet delving into their backgrounds with the help of one of Doris's closest companions, Oliver Wendell Shaw, Emma encounters a deeper story—of a private game to manipulate the media, and a hidden, life-long kinship between two complex women who understood each other as no one else could.

Hameroff, Lindsay. [Never Planned on You](#) (St. Martin's \$18)

Ali Rubin has a reputation for spontaneity. Like that time she made a drunken bet in London that led to matching tattoos with a stranger. Her *joie de vivre* is one of her best qualities; she lives every day to the fullest and follows her dreams wherever they take her. And now, they're taking her from her career as a chef in New York City back home to Baltimore, where she's interning as a wedding planner. Despite the occasional fantasy about her British tattoo twin, Ali never expected to see Graham again. So no one is more surprised than she is when he turns up in Baltimore, ordering a latte at her favorite cafe. When they reconnect during an enchanting evening together, Ali can't help but wonder if Graham might be her someone special.

Hegde, Swati. [Can't Help Faking in Love](#) (Random \$18)

Determined to avoid showing up single at her cousin's wedding, Harsha hires her barista crush, Veer, as her fake boyfriend only to discover that their playful ruse could lead to real love and self-discovery.

Holmes, Linda. [Back After This](#) (Random \$28)

Podcast producer Cecily Foster reluctantly agrees to host a show documenting her dating life under the guidance of an influencer coach and must reconcile her growing feelings for a kind photographer with her coach's conflicting advice.

Kelly, Julia. [The Dressmakers of London](#) (Gallery \$18.99)

After their mother's unexpected death, Isabelle Shelton and her estranged sister Sylvia inherit the family dressmaking shop, prompting Izzie to reluctantly seek Sylvia's help to save it while aiming to buy her out, leading to letters that explore old wounds and the possibility of reconciliation within their shared legacy.

Kemp, Cathryn. [A Poisoner's Tale](#) (Union Square \$18.99)

Palermo 1632: Giulia is thirteen when she learns her mother's greatest secret: Teofania makes an undetectable, slow-acting, lethal poison—Acqua Tofana—which she uses to free the broken and abused women of Palermo. Now Teofania wants to pass her recipe on to her daughter, and Giulia soon realizes that in a time when women have no voice, justice is sometimes best served in a cup of wine or broth. Years later, within the alleys and shadows of the Eternal City, Giulia forms her own circle of female poisoners, who work together under the guise of an apothecary shop to sell poison to women in need. But even in a time of plague, when death looms over the city, it

doesn't go unnoticed that the men of Rome are starting to fall like flies. And with the newly elected pope determined to rid the city of witches and heretics, Giulia is more vulnerable than ever. How far is she willing to go to continue her mother's legacy?

Knox, Ruthie & Annie Mare. [Big Name Fan](#) (Kensington \$28)

When Bexley Simon and Sam Farmer, two A-list celebrities famous for their on-screen chemistry as TV detectives (think: sapphic Mulder and Scully, or queer Rizzoli and Isles), are reunited to investigate a real-life Hollywood murder, fans who have been 'shipping the leading ladies for years might just get the ending they've always wanted

McAllister, Gillian. [Famous Last Words](#) (HarperCollins \$29.99)

Returning to work, new mom and book editor Camilla Deschamp's life is upended when she learns her husband is the gunman in a London hostage crisis, leaving her to decipher his cryptic goodbye note and make a critical choice. McAllister deftly delivers plenty of unexpected twists in this addictively readable suspense novel that also offers up a paean to power of books and reading.

Moon, Shara. [Let Us March On](#) (HarperCollins \$18.99)

A maid to Eleanor and Franklin D. Roosevelt, Lizzie McDuffie, whose husband is FDR's personal valet, becomes the President's eyes and ears into the Black community, advocating for the needs and rights of her fellow African Americans. A fascinating historical novel based on the real life advocating of Elizabeth McDuffie.

Moyes, Jojo. [We All Live Here](#) (Penguin \$30)
Lila Kennedy juggles a broken marriage, rebellious daughters, a crumbling house, and an

elderly stepfather when her estranged father unexpectedly shows up after thirty-five years, forcing her to confront unresolved feelings and discover unexpected lessons about love and family amidst her chaotic life. "A moving, realistic look at one woman's post-divorce family life that manages to be both poignant and funny." (*Kirkus*)

Naymon, Kate. [You Between the Lines](#) (Grand Central \$17.99)

In a prestigious MFA program, former sorority girl Leigh is determined to prove herself, but when her high school crush-turned-nemesis Will resurfaces - and starts writing intimate poetry about her - their rivalry and unresolved feelings blur, revealing unexpected depth and undeniable chemistry.

Pearce, Daisy. [Something in the Walls](#) (Mino-taur \$28)

In the superstitious town of Bathanel, child psychologist Mina tries to unravel the haunting claims of 13-year-old Alice, only to discover unsettling connections between the town's dark traditions, the girl's behavior, and the shadows of her own past."What begins as a supernatural thriller gradually develops into a thoughtful meditation on grief and group-think, with enough pathos and drama to keep the pages turning. It's a winner." (*PW*)

Pliego, Ande. [You Are Fatally Invited](#) (Random \$30)

At a private-island writing retreat hosted by author J. R. Alastor, Mila del Angél plans revenge but is thrown into chaos when one of the six thriller authors is murdered, forcing her to navigate a deadly game of wits as a storm isolates them and the body count rises. In this addictively readable debut, "Pliego gleefully toys with genre tropes while delivering a slick, satisfying mystery all her own. Seasoned Agatha Christie fans may have quib-

bles about mechanics and motives once the dust settles, but those issues are too minor to detract from the fun. It's a thoroughly enjoyable ride." (PW)

Probst, Jennifer. [To Sicily with Love](#) (Penguin \$19)

After losing her parents and experiencing a public meltdown, Aurora York travels to Sicily to meet her newfound cousin, reconnecting with a vibrant family and a charming Italian man, which leads her to confront her grief as she chooses between her past and a hopeful future.

Quinn, Frances. [The Lost Passenger](#) (Random \$18)

After faking her and her son Teddy's deaths on the Titanic, Elinor Coombes escapes her controlling aristocratic marriage to forge a new life in New York City, where she must navigate the challenges of survival and the haunting secrets of her past in a world that offers both opportunity and danger.

Ray, Cate. [The Younger Woman](#) (Park Row \$18.99)

Be careful what you wish for! Unhappy in her new empty nester life with her husband Fred, Gabby confides her dark wish for his death to a mysterious woman named Ellis, only to discover that Ellis may not be who she claims, plunging Gabby into a dangerous game of deception and revenge.

Robson, Laura. [A Curse for the Homesick](#) (MIRA \$30)

On Stenland, there comes a time known as skeld season: one day, any woman on the island can wake with three black lines on her forehead, the mark of a skeld. Skeld season comes around without warning, and while each window of time lasts only three months, anyone a skeld turns to stone is very much

dead. This is why Tess wants nothing more than to leave the windswept island as soon as she is old enough. The problem is one person keeps calling Tess back to Stenland: Soren, Tess's first and only true love. YA author Robson makes her adult fiction debut with a beautifully poetic and imaginatively plotted love story that also thoughtfully explores grief, family, and friendship.

Saeed, Aisha. [The Matchmaker](#) (Random \$18)
In Atlanta, third-generation matchmaker Nura Khan thrives in her career while navigating her complicated feelings for her pretend fiancé, Azar, but her success is jeopardized when a couple's wedding falls apart, leading to a series of suspicious and threatening events that challenge her safety and her business.

Slator, Annabelle. [The Launch Date](#) (HarperCollins \$18.99)

After being dumped and facing career stagnation, Grace Hastings reluctantly teams up with her rival, Eric Bancroft, to develop a new dating app focused on real-life connections, leading to a series of chaotic and revealing first dates that challenge their perceptions of love and each other.

Spalding, Amy. [On Her Terms](#) (Kensington \$18.95)

Fresh off breaking up with her boyfriend and swerving away from the conventional, TikTok-ready married life she never wanted, Clementine is ready to explore the alternatives. Not that she wants to be single forever, much less die alone. But at thirty-six, it's time for her to experience new things—including in her love life. And though an invitation to a fake relationship to appease family sounds like a recipe for disaster, Clem finds herself saying yes to smart, spirited dog groomer Chloe Lee anyway .

Sullivan, Sophie. [Get Lost with You](#) (St. Martin's \$18)

Jillian Keller, a single mom rooted in routine, and Levi Bright, a chef returning to rebuild his life, reconnect at Get Lost Lodge, navigating past hurts and rekindled feelings in this charming small-town romance.

Swift, Christy. [Celebrity Crush](#) (Grand Central \$17.99)

Determined author Emmy Ellison embarks on a fake dating scheme with her celebrity crush, Jason Connor one of the leadig members of the TV show Lost Star Dance Troupe Saves the Universe, to boost her career and his image, but unexpected feelings complicate their plan as they navigate the pressures of fame.

Tieu, Julie. [The Girl Most Likely To](#) (Grand Central \$17.99)

Rachel Dang, facing unemployment and invited to her high school reunion by her former frenemy Danny Phan, embarks on a night of mishaps that rekindles their past feelings while encountering their quirky childhood friends, forcing them both to confront whether their newfound love is mere reunion nostalgia.

Viel, Neena. [Listen to Your Sister](#) (St. Martin's \$19)

Twenty-five-year old Calla Williams struggles as guardian for 16-year-old Jamie while dealing with The Nightmare, images where both her brothers are killed, so when Jamie's actions spiral out of control, the siblings hide out in a remote cabin where their lives - and reality - hang in the balance."Like a good scary movie, this debut novel never fully explains the monsters within, but sharp portrayals, staccato wordplay, and an absolutely blood-curdling atmosphere ameliorate the frustration of murky explanations for what follows." (Kirkus)

Wibberley, Emily and Austin Siegemund Broka. [Book Boyfriend](#) (Penguin \$19)

Romantasy fan Jennifer escapes to a convention celebrating her favorite series, only to encounter her work nemesis Scott, whose surprising charm and "book boyfriend" transformation spark an unexpected, real-life enemies-to-lovers romance.

Williams, Preslaysa. [A Wedding in the Low-country](#) (HarperCollins \$18.99)

Returning to Charleston after her mother's passing, Avila reconnects with her childhood friend Terence, rekindling unresolved feelings and forcing her to confront her guarded heart and consider a future together with Terence.

Williamson, Jenny. [Enemy of My Dreams](#) (Harlequin \$29)(Roman princess Julia defies her brother's rule and risks everything to forge a steamy, dangerous alliance with Alaric, the ruthless Visigoth warlord, in a high-stakes game of rebellion, desire and betrayal that plays out across Europe.

Teen Fiction

Blake, Elly. [The Forest King's Daughter](#) (Little Brown \$19.99)

Cassia wields a powerful ring that can distort enemies, and after she is abducted by Zeru, who wants the ring back that he gave Cassia years earlier, they travel to a place they thought only existed in storybooks.

Desamours, Channelle. [Needy Little Things](#) (St. Martin's \$20)

Seventeen-year-old Sariyah, who can sense people's immediate needs, must use her ability to solve her friend's mysterious disappearance while dealing with family challenges and avoiding the same danger that befell her

friend.

Hannah, Andrea. [The Wildest Things](#) (St. Martin's \$21)

When her glass coffin shatters, Snow White awakens to a rotting land as the kingdom has transformed into a nightmare, compelling her to search for a way to restore her kingdom to glory, in a sapphic retelling of Snow White

Taylor, Jordyn. [Wicked Darlings](#) (Random \$19.99)

Aspiring journalist Noa gets a lead about sketchy circumstances surrounding her sister's untimely death, prompting her to infiltrate the seedy underbelly of Manhattan high society that entangles her with a close-knit circle of friends and frenemies.

Nonfiction

Brown, Alton. [Food for Thought](#) (Gallery \$28.99)

A collection of personal essays blends humorous and insightful anecdotes from Brown's , creator of the popular food television show *Good Eats*, diverse career, sharing behind-the-scenes stories, reflections on food culture and memorable experiences from his work on television and in the kitchen.

Carver, Courtney. [Gentle](#) (Grand Central \$29)

A guide to overcoming overwhelm and embracing self-compassion through 30 mindful practices that promote rest, simplicity and personal growth, encouraging a slower pace, reduced stress, and more meaningful relationships for lasting joy and balance. Definitely sounds like something we could all use during these turbulent times.

Goldstone, Nancy. [The Rebel Empresses](#) (Little Brown \$35)

From the acclaimed author of *In the Shadow of the Empress* comes the thrilling, "richly detailed, entertaining" chronicle of two of the most influential and glamorous women in nineteenth-century Europe—Elisabeth, empress of Austria, and Eugénie, empress of France—and their efforts to rule amid the scandal, intrigue, tragedy, and violence of their era .

O'Meara, Mallory. [Daughter of Daring](#) (Hannover Square \$32)

This biography tells the story of Helen Gibson, America's first professional stuntwoman, whose daring stunts in early films broke new ground for women in Hollywood, though her contributions were later overshadowed by a male-dominated action film industry.

Tolliver, Juanita. [A More Perfect Party](#) (Grand Central \$29)

In 1972, New York Representative Shirley Chisholm broke the ice in American politics when she became the first Black woman to run for president of the United States. Chisholm left behind a coalition-building model personified by a once-in-an-era Hollywood party hosted by legendary actress and singer Diahann Carroll, and attended by the likes of Huey P. Newton, Barbara Lee, Berry Gordy, David Frost, Flip Wilson, Goldie Hawn and others. In *A More Perfect Party*, MSNBC political analyst Juanita Tolliver presents a path to people-centered politics through the lens of this soiree, with surprising parallels to our current electoral reality.