

Midmonth BookNotes

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It's Blooming Books!

Cozy Corner

Cambridge, Colleen. A Fashionably French Murder (SIGNED in May)

American expat Tabitha Knight has found a new life in postwar Paris, along with a delightful friend in aspiring chef Julia Child. After joining Julia for a private showing at an exclusive fashion atelier, Maison Lannet, Tabitha returns later that evening to search for a lost glove. Instead of the glove, Tabitha finds the lights still on—and the couturier dead, strangled by a length of lace. The shop manager suspects that a jealous rival—perhaps Dior himself—committed the crime. Tabitha dismisses that idea, but when another body is found, it's apparent that *someone* is targeting employees of Maison Lannet." Buttressing Tabitha's investigation are witty culinary tips from Julia (including pointers for making crepes "as delicate as a man's ego"), vivid historical tidbits about postwar Paris, and elegant descriptions of couture gowns. Shrewd, fair-play clues and vibrant characters who

continue to evolve as the series progresses are a bonus. This is terrific fun for foodies and Francophiles alike." (PW)

Gerber, Daryl Wood. Essence of Foul Play
Emma Brennan may have her head in a cloud of eucalyptus, but her feet are firmly planted on the ground in breathtaking Carmel, California, as she prepares to open her new spa business, Aroma Wellness. But all the reiki, shiatsu, and massage in the world can't help her relax when she's accused of murder. Gerber spins off a charming new series set in the delightful Carmel location as her Fairy Garden Mystery series.

Meier, Leslie. Bridal Shower Murder
When Hetty Furness, chair of Tinker's Cover Historical Society and a guest at her younger daughter Zoe's bridal shower, is found murdered, Lucy Stone must uncover deadly secrets before the entire wedding is ruined.

Moss, Korina. Bait and Swiss
Cheesemonger Willa Bauer faces a murder mystery in Sonoma Valley when a reporter is found dead at her ex-fiancé's chocolate pop-

up, forcing her and her team to investigate while also balancing personal grudges and the town's ongoing tourism crisis.

Shelton, Paige. *Written in Stone*

When Delaney Nichols wins a special Hidden Door Festival invitation to artist Ryory Ben-nigan's studio, she isn't sure quite what to expect. What she finds is an elusive fellow obsessed with the Picts—complete with his own versions of their blue tattoos and vibrant red hair—recreating the stones they left behind. She also meets a visiting paleontologist, Dr. Adam Pace, from the University of Kansas attempting to sell an artifact that might just explain what the Picts' language really sounded like. Or at least that's what he claimed the artifact was for. However, before the deal can close and Ryory can get a closer look at it, Dr. Pace is found dead. The latest terrific addition to Shelton's award-winning Scottish Bookshop series.

Historical Fiction, Mysteries, Romance and More

Berry, Tamara. *Murder Runs in the Family*

When an impulsive decision forces her to flee her former life carrying nothing but the clothes on her back, Amber Winslow heads to the sunny state of Arizona...and to the luxury accommodations of her grandmother's retirement community. But as soon as she sneaks her things into Seven Ponds—a place she technically doesn't qualify for and definitely can't afford—she finds that her Grandma Jade is about to be arrested for murder. With the help of the other retirees and her grandma's true crime podcast friends, Amber must work to find the real killer.

Bostwick, Marie. *The Book Club for Troublesome Women*

In suburban Virginia of the 1960s, Margaret

Ryan forms an impromptu book club with three neighbors, discovering shared dissatisfaction with societal expectations, as the group bonds over personal struggles, feminist ideas and the transformative power of friendship during a life-changing year. "Although Friedan might raise an eyebrow at the use her book's been put to, readers will cheer for Bostwick's spunky characters." (*Kirkus*)

Currie, Ron. *The Savage Noble Death of Babs Dionne*

In Waterville, Maine, crime matriarch Babs Dionne faces a drug kingpin's enforcer and her youngest daughter's mysterious death, unleashing her fierce determination to protect her family, her empire, and her town from the chaos threatening to consume them. *PW* calls award-winning author and screenwriter Currie's latest dark and brutally realistic crime fiction novel "riveting," and the author has a flair for characterization and dry humor that is quite remarkable. *Kirkus* summed the book up quite brilliantly by saying "Nobody will confuse this for an Anne Tyler novel, but Currie has created a charming community to root for, even if, as the title suggests, all victories here are pyrrhic." Not always an easy read but definitely a memorable one.

Dallas, Sandra. *Tough Luck*

In this homage to *True Grit*, a young woman makes a perilous journey west in 1863 in search of her gold-mining father. After escaping an orphanage, Haidie Richards and her brother Boots journey to Colorado Territory, encountering treacherous challenges, unlikely allies, and the truth about their father, while Haidie devises a daring plan to claim their future. "Full of humor, heart, and hope, this novel is a delight for anyone looking for a Western with a little less grit and a little more gentleness." (*LJ*)

Decos, Lissette. Takes One to Know One

Daniela is risk-averse, blazer-obsessed, and likes to be taken seriously. So when her record label job is on the line, she's prepared to do anything to keep it. Except for working with the genre of music she hates most: reggaeton. It's supposed to inspire sensual hip-swinging dance moves and Dani's hips do not swing—not like that anyway. Out of desperation, Dani lies and says she loves reggaeton. But not only does Dani get to keep her job, she gets a ticket to Puerto Rico . . . on a mission to clean up the scandalous image of international reggaeton singer Rene 'El Rico' Rodriguez.

Enoch, Suzanne. A Duke Never Tells

Before entering into a supremely-advantageous arranged marriage with James Clay, the new Duke of Earnhurst, clever, independent Lady Meg Pinwell has to see if he's really the rake he's rumored to be. But how is a well-bred young lady going to make sure he's the man she wants? With the help of her Aunt Clara, they plan some discreet reconnaissance at the Duke's country estate. Meg will pretend to be her aunt's maid/companion to see the true state of affairs at Earnhurst Manor. But Meg isn't the only one pretending to be someone she isn't: In order to escape Clara (who is surely a marriage hunter!), James has traded places with the excellent Riniken, the former Duke's butler. Soon everyone is falling in love with the absolute wrong person! They say the course of true love never does run smooth... at Earnhurst, it's running amuck!

Florence, Elinor. Finding Flora

Scottish newcomer Flora Craigie jumps from a moving train in 1905 to escape her abusive husband. Desperate to disappear, she claims a homestead on the beautiful but wild Alberta prairie, determined to create a new life for herself. She is astonished to find that her nearest neighbours are also female: a Welsh

widow with three children; two American women raising chickens; and a Métis woman who supports herself by training wild horses. While battling both the brutal environment and the local cynicism toward female farmers, the five women with their very different backgrounds struggle to find common ground. But when their homes are threatened with expropriation by a hostile government, they join forces to "fire the heather," a Scottish term meaning to raise a ruckus.

Getz, Page. A Town with Half the Lights On

For readers of J. Ryan Stradal and *The Music of Bees* (with a dash of FX's *The Bear*) comes a quirky and refreshing epistolary novel about a family of culture-shocked Brooklynites transplanted to Goodnight, Kansas and their fight for their unexpected lifeline: the legendary May Day Diner.

Goldsmith-Thomas, Elaine. Climbing in Heels

Climbing in Heels, Elaine Goldsmith-Thomas's debut novel, is a fictional tale of the rise of three secretaries at the hottest agency in 1980's Hollywood, giving you a glimpse into the boys-will-be-boys club and the women who wanted a seat at a table where they were expected to serve. It's the story of friendship, betrayal, survival, standing up when they pass you by, and saying I won't go when they want you gone. And it's also a story about how some of those women became very much like the monsters who trained them.

Guerrero, Tanya. Cat's People

Núria, a Brooklyn barista and proud cat caretaker, discovers secret admirer notes near her favorite stray, sparking unexpected connections with four quirky neighbors as they unite to care for him and find meaning in their unlikely friendships. "A charming story for animal lovers and readers looking for good in the world or hopeful stories about finding one's

people.” (LJ)

Guillory, Jasmine. Flirting Lessons

When shy, newly single Avery enlists flirty heartbreaker Taylor for flirting lessons, their playful arrangement ignites undeniable chemistry, forcing both women to confront their feelings and risk everything for the chance at something real.

Henry, Emily. Great Big Beautiful Lie

Alice Scott is an eternal optimist still dreaming of her big writing break. Hayden Anderson is a Pulitzer-prize winning human thundercloud. And they're both on balmy Little Crescent Island for the same reason: to write the biography of a woman no one has seen in years—or at least to meet with the octogenarian who claims to be *the* Margaret Ives, the heiress, former tabloid princess, and daughter of one of the most storied (and scandalous) families of the twentieth century. “Flashbacks to Margaret’s glamorous past are threaded throughout the contemporary narrative, offering a candid glimpse into loves and lives lost and serving as a poignant counterpoint to the romance between Hayden and Alice. There’s also plenty of Henry’s trademark wit and even a hint of mystery as the sparring hearts probe the veracity of Margaret’s tales. This is a stunner.” (PW)

Hogle, Sarah. The Folklore of Forever

Paranormal skeptic Zelda Tempest teams up with her charming neighbor Morgan for a ghost-hunting adventure in Moonville, Ohio, uncovering mysterious creatures and unexpected magic that may reignite her creative spark - and transform her beliefs in ways she never imagined.

Holguin, Ana. Up Close & Personal

Jo De La Cruz *should* be on top of the world. As one of spin’s hottest instructors, her work-

outs stream into thousands of living rooms, her waiting list is harder to access than Area 51, and even her hair has its own social media page. But Jo’s struggling from a decade in the spotlight—which is when she meets Silas Anders, the annoyingly handsome journalist who claims her job is just yelling at people from a bike. Now converting a hater is a challenge Jo can’t resist.

Holton, India. The Geographer’s Map to Romance

Geography professors Elodie and Gabriel Tarrant, bound by a failed marriage of convenience, are forced to team up on a high-stakes magical disaster mission in Wales, where perilous conditions - and unresolved feelings - threaten to complicate the fate of England and their hearts.

Hooper, Elise. The Library of Lost Dollhouses

Tildy Barrows, Head Curator of a beautiful archival library in San Francisco, is meticulously dedicated to the century’s worth of inventory housed in her beloved Beaux Art building. She loves the calm and order in the shelves of books and walls of art. But Tildy’s life takes an unexpected turn when she, first, learns the library is on the verge of bankruptcy and, second, discovers two exquisite never-before-seen dollhouses. After finding clues hidden within these remarkable miniatures, Tildy sets out to decipher the secret history of the dollhouses, aiming to salvage her cherished library in the process.

Huynh, Carolyn. The Family Recipe

From the author of the “sharp, smart, and gloriously extra” *Good Morning America* Book Club Pick *The Fortunes of Jaded Women*, a stunning family dramedy about estranged siblings competing to inherit their father’s Vietnamese sandwich franchise and unravel family

mysteries.

Jimenez, Abby. Say You'll Remember Me

There's no such thing as a perfect guy, but Xavier Rush comes disastrously close. A gorgeous veterinarian giving Greek god vibes—all while cuddling a tiny kitten? Immediate yes. That is until Xavier opens his mouth and proves that even sculpted gods can say the absolute wrong thing. Like, really wrong. Of course, there's nothing Samantha loves more than proving an asshole wrong . . . unless, of course, he can admit he made a mistake."The author expertly weaves a beautiful budding romance with real-life struggles: elder care, complicated family dynamics, the stress of veterinarian services, and overcoming mental, emotional, and physical childhood trauma. Jimenez knows just how to tug on the heart-strings." (PW)

Jio, Sarah. Insignificant Others

If you loved Rebecca Serle's *In Five Years* or Josie Silver's *One Day in December*, that latest from *New York Times* bestselling author Sarah Jio will be right up your reading alley. In this escapist timeslip contemporary novel, a young woman finds herself stuck in a "time loop" of one-day relationships with romantic partners from her past.

Kaufman, Amy S. The Traitor of Sherwood Forest

Peasant girl Jane Crowe becomes a spy for the cunning Robin Hood, navigating the dangerous world of noble secrets and outlaws, while questioning his true motives and her own role as his schemes spiral into violence and betrayal.

Kelley, Venessa. When the Tides Held the Moon

The Shape of Water meets *The Greatest Showman* in this beautifully illustrated queer histor-

ical cozy fantasy debut, as young Puerto Rican immigrant Benigno "Benny" Caldera, goes through a journey of love and self-discovery after building an ironwork tank for a merman starring in a Coney Island sideshow act in turn-of-the 20th century New York."The setting is transporting and the romance is heart-rending. It's a triumph." (PW)

Lavine, Victoria. Any Trope but You

Beloved romance author Margot Bradley has a dark secret: she doesn't believe in Happily Ever Afters. Not for herself, not for her readers, and not even for her characters, for whom she secretly writes alternate endings that swap weddings and babies for divorce papers and the occasional slashed tire. When her Happily Never After document is hacked and released to the public, she finds herself canceled by her readers and dropped by her publisher. Desperate to find a way to continue supporting her chronically ill sister, Savannah, Margot decides to trade meet-cutes for murder. The fictional kind. Probably. But when Savannah books Margot a six-week stay in a remote Alaskan resort to pen her first murder mystery, Margot finds herself running from a moose and leaping into the arms of the handsome proprietor, making her fear she's just landed in a romance novel instead.

Lester, Natasha. The Mademoiselle Alliance

Marie-Madeleine Méric is not the kind of woman who stays quietly at her husband's side in 1928 Morocco. Polyglot, pianist, and pilot, she is a woman of many skills, with unconventional interests—like driving in car rallies—that earn her a daredevil reputation. But dabbling in intelligence work to assist her military officer husband and the French government helps her recognize who she is at heart: an adventurer. As Europe teeters on the brink of war in 1936, Marie-Madeleine is living in France, her marriage now in shambles,

when a chance encounter with an enigmatic spy turns her life upside down. He recruits her to help build a resistance network, and she conceals her identity—and gender—as she navigates a perilous double life.

Malone, Nana. Gold Coast Dilemma

During an opulent publishing party, Ofosua Addo crosses paths with Cole Drake for the first time. Their flirtatiously witty exchange culminates in a kiss that etches a permanent mark on both their hearts. But Ofosua is already promised to a man that even her overbearing mother loves. Yet, when her big Ghanaian wedding transforms from a fairy tale into a spectacle, she's thrust into a whirlwind of heartbreak and self-discovery. In the midst of it all, Cole enters her life once again, under circumstances far different from their magical first encounter. Can Ofosua and Cole's rediscovered spark overcome the weight of tradition?

McQuaid, Annie. Crash Landing

Piper Adams is completely, totally, one hundred percent over Wyatt, the former love of her life. At least, that's what she tells herself. After he broke her heart, she stopped taking risks and focused instead on building a perfect—and perfectly safe—life. But bumping into Wyatt at the airport on the way to her best friend's destination wedding wasn't part of the plan. Neither was a canceled flight nor Wyatt's offer of a ride on the tiny plane he's flying to attend the same event. Desperate to make it on time, she accepts his offer, but things go from awkward to full-blown nightmare when their plane crashes in the Caribbean, stranding Piper on a deserted island with the last person she ever wanted to see again.

Miller, Joanna. The Eights

In 1920, four women from different backgrounds - Dora, Beatrice, Otto, and Marianne

- forge an enduring bond as the first female students at Oxford, navigating personal loss, societal expectations, and the lingering trauma of World War I. "Miller supplements her nuanced group portrait with bracing depictions of lingering WWI trauma. It's a memorable tale of a fast-changing world." (PW)

Morelli, Laura. The Keeper of Lost Art

During World War II in a Tuscan villa, young Stella befriends Sandro, an orphaned artist, as they protect hidden masterpieces like Botticelli's *Primavera* amid family tensions, encroaching German troops, and the mounting peril of war.

Morrissey, Bridget. Anywhere You Go

A house swap between small-town Tatum and career-driven Eleanor turns their lives upside down, forcing them to confront buried feelings, family drama and unexpected romance, leading both women to fight for the love and future they truly deserve.

Mullen, Kelly. This Is Not a Game

On stormy Mackinac Island, widower Mimi and her heartbroken granddaughter Addie attend a socialite's charity auction, only to uncover blackmail, murder and a dangerous game that tests their wits as they race to outsmart a killer trapped with them. "Mullen makes the most of her classic setup, playing scrupulously fair with readers while leavening the bloodshed with dashes of wry humor. It's a promising start." (PW)

O'Leary, Beth. Swept Away

Zeke and Lexi go back to his late father's houseboat for a one-night stand, but when a miscommunication means no one tied the houseboat to the dock, they awake miles from shore and are stuck together for days on end. Enough time to get to know each other and possibly fall in love.

Phillips, Maha Khan. *The Museum Detective*

Inspired by a real-life antiquities scandal in Pakistan, this gripping series debut introduces archaeologist Dr. Gul Delani, whose investigation into the discovery of a mummy gets complicated—and personal—when it collides with her years-long search for a missing family member.

Politano, Joanna Davidson. *The Curious Inheritance of Blakely House*

Clockmaker Sydney Forrester inherits the estate of a mysterious industrialist, the estranged uncle she never met. The unusual house, brimming with unfinished inventions of the most clever sort, seems to be trying to tell her something. With the help of an unlikely ally, Sydney works to uncover the secrets of the estate—including who murdered its late owner.

Sperry, London. *Passion Project*

When New York City temp Bennet Taylor, grieving the death her first love, tells Henry Adams she isn't ready to date, he encourages her find her passion. As the two try activities every Saturday, from carpentry to tattooing, Bennet's guarded exterior begins to ebb away.

Walker, Charlie. *Code Word Romance*

Max is just your average girl. She works odd jobs, has a soul-crushing amount of debt, and happens to bear an uncanny resemblance to Europe's youngest female prime minister, Sofia Christensen. Sofia is powerful, beautiful—and unfortunately, someone is trying quite hard to assassinate her. When the CIA approaches Max with a deal, a life-changing amount of money if she pretends to be Sofia on the prime minister's annual Italian vacation, Max packs her bags for the Amalfi Coast. The delicious food, the breathtaking views—this trip would be a dream if it weren't for those pesky assassins and Flynn, the handler

assigned to Max's case. Flynn, who has an unexpected history with Max, from another sun-drenched summer years and years ago.

Waxman, Abbi. *One Death at a Time*

After cranky ex-actress Julia Mann finds a dead body in her pool in Los Angeles, her Gen Z sobriety sponsor Natasha Mason is eager to clear Julia's name and help keep her sober, but all Julia wants is to be left alone. "Full of the witty banter and laugh-out-loud scenarios readers have come to expect from Waxman, this raucous romp around Tinseltown with an odd couple of sleuths will delight readers." (LJ)

Teen Fiction

Ancrum, K. *The Corruption of Hollis Brown*

Hollis Brown feels trapped in his struggling small town but then meets Walt, a spirit adrift for generations, who takes over Hollis' body and mind, but Walt and Hollis start to work together and an unspeakable bond grows between them.

Lawson, Liz. *Murder Between Friends*

Two years ago, the murder of a neighbor tore Grace, Henry and Ally apart when Grace's testimony put Henry's brother, Jake, away for the killing. Now, after Jake's released on a mistrial, the ex-friends must face the past and one another.

*Lee, Sophia. *Eliza, From Scratch**

Eliza Park, an academics-obsessed teen, accidentally ends up in Culinary Arts and finds herself clueless and ultimately rebuilding everything she knew about success, love and what it means to be herself.

Lukens, F.T. *Love at Second Sight*

Fifteen-year-old Cam Reynolds, a human at a paranormal high school, discovers his rare ability to see the future when he has a vision of a murder, prompting him and his friends to

work together to stop the killer before time runs out.

Rosen, L.C. King's Legacy

Tennessee Russo has done more difficult things than this before. He's evaded traps, found lost treasures, become kind of famous, gotten over a bad relationship, and survived all that. Filming a new season of his artifact-hunting reality show for a major international streaming service should be easy, right? His archeologist dad even said Tennessee is in charge of what artifacts they go after. Plus, Ten's awesome best friend (and sometimes more), Gabe, gets to come along on the adventure. But here's the thing: Tennessee wants to hunt down a long-lost gift that King David gave Jonathan

Nonfiction

Atkinson, Rick. The Fate of the Day

Timed to coincide with the 250th anniversary of the beginning of the Revolution, Atkinson's brilliant account of the lethal conflict between the Americans and the British, which focuses on the pivotal middle years of the American Revolution. offers not only deeply researched and spectacularly dramatic history, but also a new perspective on the demands that a democracy makes on its citizens.

Dalrymple, William. The Golden Road

From the largest Hindu temple in the world at Angkor Wat to the Buddhism of China, from the trade that helped fund the Roman Empire to the creation of the numerals we use today (including zero), India transformed the culture and technology of its ancient world – and our world today as we know it. In *The Golden Road*, William Dalrymple draws from a lifetime of scholarship to highlight India's oft-forgotten position as the heart of ancient Eurasia.

Harris, Gardiner. No More Tears

An explosive, deeply reported exposé of Johnson & Johnson, one of America's oldest and most trusted pharmaceutical companies—from an award-winning investigative journalist. “Harris paints the company as an exemplar of the healthcare industry's corruption, contending that it routinely lied to a toothless Food and Drug Administration and effectively paid doctors to prescribe its drugs under the auspices of enlisting their patients in bogus scientific studies. Harris supports his takedown with a mountain of evidence and conveys his findings in scorching prose.” (*PW*)

Klein, Michele Gerber. Surreal

Using previously undiscovered material, *Surreal* tells the riveting story of Gala Dalí, (1894-1982) who broke away from her cultured but penurious background in pre-Revolutionary Russia to live in Paris with both France's most famous poet Paul Éluard and Max Ernst. By the time she met the budding artist Salvador Dalí in 1929, Gala was known as the Mother of Surrealism. She rapidly became his mentor and protector, marrying him in 1934 and subsequently engineering their vast fortune. At a time when artists were celebrities, Gala acted as the ambassador of the Surrealist movement, spreading its popularity across the globe.

Muller, Eddie. Dark City Dames (revised and expanded)

In this revised and expanded edition of his essential volume *Dark City Dames*, Eddie Muller—Turner Classic Movies host and author of *Dark City* and *Noir Bar*—offers a uniquely intimate look at the women who defined film noir, now featuring updated text, photos, and 10 new star profiles.

Wilkinson, Toby. The Last Dynasty

Macedonian in origin and Greek-speaking, the

Ptolemies presided over the final flourishing of pharaonic civilization. Wilkinson describes the extraordinary cultural reach displayed at the height of their power: how they founded new cities, including Alexandria, their great seaside residence and commercial capital; mined gold in the furthest reaches of Nubia; built spectacular new temples that are among the foremost architectural wonders of the Nile Valley; and created a dazzling civilization that produced astonishing works of sculpture, architecture, and literature.