

# Midmonth BookNotes

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## A Bounty of Books!

### Cozy Corner

Flower, Amanda. [Not They Who Soar](#) (Kensington \$27)

Katharine Wright, sister of the flying Wright Brothers, attends the 1904 World's Fair in St. Louis with best friend Margaret Goodwin Meacham and stumbles upon a woman who says "aeronautics competition" before dying. Can Katharine now find a way to convince Margaret to help her investigate?

Graves, Sarah. [Death by Chocolate Pumpkin Muffin](#) (Kensington \$27)

One of the sweetest places to visit in Eastport, Maine, is Jacobia "Jake" Tiptree and Ellie White's bakery, the Chocolate Moose, where people treat themselves to the most decadent desserts. Revelers have gathered on the waterfront for a party at local celebrity Hank Rafferty's ramshackle mansion, known as Stone House. The home repair TV show star and his guests await a devilish dessert delivery from Jake and Ellie—who arrive just after Hank's body falls to his death from the house's turret's balcony. It turns out plenty of people had

a motive to want Hank dead. Can Jake and Ellie now sleuth out the real murderer?

Hilton, Kate and Elizabeth Renzetti. [Bury the Lead](#) (House of Anansi \$17.99)

Hilton, Kate and Elizabeth Renzetti. [Widows and Orphans](#) (House of Anansi \$19.99)

Two Canadian authors have teamed up to write the Quill & Packet series. In the first book *Bury the Lead*, Cat Conway has recently returned to Port Ellis to work as a reporter at the *Quill & Packet*. One of Cat's first assignments is to interview legendary actor Eliot Fraser, the lead in the theatre's season opener of *Inherit the Wind*. When Eliot ends up dead onstage on opening night, the curtain rises on the sleepy town's secrets.

In *Widows and Orphans*, the latest in the series, Cat is looking forward to an easy assignment covering a major wellness and self-actualization summit at the Pinerock Resort, featuring Bliss Bondar and Bree Guthrie, creators of the Welcome, Goddess empire and widows with attitude. Cat's mother, Marian Conway, bestselling author and defiantly mediocre parent, is on the agenda—and so, it

turns out, is murder.

These thoughtfully written, cleverly constructed traditional mysteries deliver everything I crave as mystery reader including an engaging cast of characters and a perfectly realized setting while also highlighting the important role small town newspapers play in their communities. If you loved Amanda Cross's beautifully written mysteries, Margaret Maron's incomparable southern mysteries, Nancy Pickard's Jenny Cain books, or the delightfully fun mysteries by Emma Lathen (another smart writing mystery duo), you will not want to miss this brilliant new series.

Jalaluddin, Uzma. [Detective Aunty](#) (HarperCollins \$17.99)

After her husband's unexpected death eighteen months ago, Kausar Khan never thought she'd receive another phone call as heart-breaking—until her thirty-something daughter, Sana, phones to say that she's been arrested for killing the unpopular landlord of her clothing boutique. Determined to help her child, Kausar heads to the Golden Crescent suburb of Toronto for the first time in nearly twenty years. Jalaluddin has written a number of terrific contemporary romances but Detective Aunty, Jalaluddin's debut into the world of mysteries, proves she is equally gifted when it comes to crafting a compelling crime novel with an endearing sleuth, who is every bit as persipacious as Miss Marple at sleuthing out killers.

Penny, Elizabeth. [Bodies and Battlements](#) (St. Martin's \$9.99)

Herbalist Nora Asquith is delighted to welcome Ravensea Castle's first guests to the picturesque village of Monkwell, Yorkshire. After a thousand years of ownership, her family has decided to convert the castle into a bed and breakfast. But when Hilda Dibble, a self-appointed local luminary, is found dead in the

knot garden the next morning, Nora's business is not only at risk—she's a prime suspect. The first in a cozy new series.

Smith, Karen Rose. [Booked for Revenge](#) (Kensington \$27)

Following in her mother Daisy's footsteps, Jazzi Swanson has transformed her rural New York bookshop and tea bar, Tomes & Tea, into a must-stop destination in the lakeside resort town of Belltower Landing, New York, where, in addition to her talent for tea, Jazzi has shown a skill for sleuthing when trouble is brewing. So, when a local bake-off turns deadly and a photographer is found bludgeoned by his prizewinning cake, bookshop owner Jazzi must catch a killer before they strike again.

Austen, Jane. [The Complete Cambridge Jane Austen Set](#) (Cambridge University \$195)

To help you celebrate the 250th anniversary of Jane's birth, Cambridge University Press is releasing this special collection of the six celebrated published novels alongside the unpublished writings, from Austen's youth to her final years. The set is beautifully presented, including illustrations drawn by Austen's sister Cassandra to accompany her childhood piece 'The History of England', as well as Austen's poems, unfinished novels and a selection of letters in which she offers advice on writing fiction. Taken together, the volumes allow the reader to follow Jane Austen's creative development, observe her craft of fiction and experience her world with more clarity than ever before.

Jenner, Natalie. [Austen at Sea](#) (St. Martin's \$29)

In Boston, 1865, Charlotte and Henrietta Stevenson, daughters of a Massachusetts Supreme Court Justice, sail to England to meet Jane Austen's surviving brother Sir Francis and are joined en route by Philadelphia book

dealers Nicholas and Haslett Nelson, Louisa May Alcott, Sarah-Beth Gleason and Justice Thomas Nash for the voyage. It's a voyage and trip that will dramatically change each of their lives in ways that are unforeseen, with the transformative spirit of the love of literature and that of Jane Austen herself. Jenner writes beautifully about the power of books to connect us and the enduring appeal of Jane Austen's novels.

### **Historical Fiction, Mysteries, Romance, and More**

Alexander, Neely Tubati. [Courtroom Drama](#) (HarperCollins \$17.99) SIGNED in June Sydney Parks thinks she might be the first person in the world to look forward to serving jury duty. When Margot Kitsch, an OG cast member of the hit reality show *Authentic Moms of Malibu* is arrested after the untimely death of her cast member husband, Joe, Sydney knows being selected for the jury is the most interesting thing that ever happened to her. However, it doesn't take long for Sydney to realize that being part of a sequestered jury in a high-profile case is not at all what legal dramas had led her to expect—especially when she learns that her childhood best friend, Damon Bradburn, whom she hasn't seen in ten years, is also a jury member. *Legally Blonde* meets *Jury Duty* with a dash of *The Real Housewives* franchises thrown in for good measure in this high-stakes courtroom love story.

Blake, Ashley Herring. [Dream On Ramona Riley](#) (Berkley \$19)

Once upon a time, Ramona Riley was a student at a prestigious art school, with dreams of landing in Hollywood as a costume designer to the stars. But after her father's car accident, she had to quit and return to her small New Hampshire town, Clover Lake, to help

take care of her younger sister. Twelve years later, Ramona is still working at the town's café, all but given up on her dream. But when a big-budget romantic comedy comes to Clover Lake to film, she wonders if this could be her chance. There's only one problem—Dylan Monroe, her first kiss and Hollywood's favorite wild child—is the star.

Bowen, Sarina. [Dying to Meet You](#) (HarperCollins \$18.99)

Rowan Gallagher is a devoted single mother and a talented architect with a high-profile commission restoring an historic mansion for the most powerful family in Maine. But inside, she's a mess. She knows that stalking her ex's avatar all over Portland on her phone isn't the healthiest way to heal from their breakup. The last straw comes when he parks in their favorite spot on the waterfront. In a weak moment, she leashes the dog and sets off to see who else is in his car. Instead of catching her ex in a kiss, Rowan becomes the first witness to his murder—and the primary suspect. Miss Mary Higgins Clark's brand of suspense with a dash of romance? Bowen's latest is equally addictive.

Cain, Lila. [The Blackbirds of St. Giles](#) (Kensington \$28)

In 1780s London, Daniel and his sister Pearl, former slaves seeking freedom after fighting for the British Crown, face betrayal, poverty, and violence in the underground world of St. Giles, where Daniel must fight to protect Pearl from a ruthless gang leader. Dazzling and poignant, *The Blackbirds of St. Giles* propels us into an extraordinary, too long overlooked community and period in history, when the threat of servitude is ever-present, and some ghosts of the past can never be escaped.

Castle, Jayne. [It Takes a Psychic](#) (Penguin \$30)  
SIGNED in June

Renowned para-archeologist Leona Griffin discovers Pandora's Box at an elite collectors' gala and uncovers a deadly cult that forces her into an uneasy alliance with the mysterious Oliver Rancourt. The latest addition to Castle's (pseudonym for *NYT* best-selling author Jayne Ann Krentz) fascinating futuristic world of Harmony is another sleekly plotted, stylishly written blend of suspense and romance with banter worthy of Nick and Nora Charles at their best. And of course, don't forget those devilishly fun dust bunnies.

Center, Katherine. [The Love Haters](#) (St. Martin's \$29)

Video producer Katie Vaughn heads to Key West to profile Coast Guard rescue swimmer Tom "Hutch" Hutcheson, but between his family drama, her escalating lies, and their growing attraction, she must confront her fears and find courage in paradise.

Clarke, Lucy. [The Surf House](#) (Grove \$28)  
High on the cliffs of Morocco, far from the city lights and the souks, stands The Surf House: a sanctuary for travelers chasing sunshine and waves. But the idyll hides a dark mystery. And when Bea washes in, seeking refuge after a dangerous encounter in Marrakesh, she soon gets caught in the current. A woman her age—who stayed in the same area, walked the same beaches, met the same guests—disappeared one year earlier, vanishing without trace. Somewhere inside The Surf House lies the truth—but there'll be a price for uncovering it.

Corrello, Betty. [32 Days in May](#) (HarperCollins \$18.99)

Return to the Jersey Shore with a new romance by *Summertime Punchline* author Betty Corrello in which Nadia Fabiola, who has been

recently diagnosed with lupus, attempts a no-strings fling with former television star Marco Antoniou. *PW* called Corrello's latest an "emotional tour de force" and goes on to say "The romance is passionate and believable, but what truly sets this apart is Corrello's honest and compassionate depiction of the experience of living with lupus. She vividly delineates Nadia's delicate dance between trying to have a normal life and learning to manage her condition."

Duncan, Deidra. [Love Sick](#) (Harlequin \$18.99)  
Love may be the best medicine, but first-year resident Grace Rose isn't prescribing it anytime soon. Not since her ex broke her heart in med school, and especially not since hearing the rumor that she slept her way into the OB-GYN program. (Spoiler alert: So not true.) With her social anxiety already in full spiral, Grace is determined to set the record straight. But after a tense first encounter with fellow resident Julian Santini—with his annoying good looks and witty charm—she realizes that her reputation may never fully recover. Julian didn't mean to offend Grace. After all, he's just as fed up with the toxic "BrOB-GYN" culture as she is. He's got his own drama to triage anyway—like proving that he *earned* his spot in this residency, not simply lucked into it. Still, something about Grace gets under his skin...and not always in a bad way. Duncan draws upon her own medical school experiences and work as an OB-GYN to create a compelling romance that not only delivers plenty of quippy banter and sexual chemistry but also offers insight into the demanding and rewarding world of medicine.

Gamez, Gabriella. [Kiss Me, Maybe](#) (Forever \$17.99)

Librarian Angela Gutierrez has never been kissed. But after posting a video about her late bloomer status and ace identity, she's finally



ready to get some firsts out of the way. Using her new influencer status to come up with a scavenger hunt idea in which the winner earns her first kiss, Angela realizes she may need some help to pull off the event. Enter Krystal Ramirez, hot bartender and Angela's unrequited crush of five years. Despite vowing that romantic love isn't for her, Krystal seems awfully determined to help Angela pull off the scavenger hunt and find true love.

Giddings, Megan. [Meet Me at the Crossroads](#) (HarperCollins \$28.99)

From an award-winning, critically-acclaimed author comes a novel about Ayanna and Olivia, two Black Midwestern teens—and twin sisters, who have different ideas of what may lie in the world beyond. But will their personal bond endure such wanton exploration? And when one of them goes missing, will the other find solace on her own? And will she uncover the circumstances of what truly happened to her once constant companion and best friend?

Goldis, Jaclyn. [The Safari](#) (Atria \$28.99)

When fashion mogul Odelia Babel is murdered on the eve of her wedding during a luxury South African safari, her son becomes the prime suspect - but with his alibi faltering and tensions rising, the entire family must confront deadly secrets before the killer strikes again."Goldis neatly shifts between different characters' viewpoints, creating a closed circle of suspects that could give the greedy, self-centered cast of *Succession* a run for their money. Marry this with a vividly evoked South African setting and a luxe resort right out of *The White Lotus*, and you have the perfect literary treat. Goldis once again deftly tips her literary cap to the Queen of Crime, Agatha Christie, in another cleverly constructed puzzle that brings all the delights of classic Golden Age mysteries into the 21st century." (LJ)

Joseph, Lily. [The Near Miss](#) (Forever \$17.99)

Local reporter Wren just wants a quiet life with no surprises. Sure, her boyfriend Alex is a bit vain and controlling, and maybe their relationship isn't as exciting as it used to be. But excitement is overrated, right? Handyman Nick is keen to keep his head down too, while adapting to the breakdown of his relationship and learning how to be a single father. All he wants is for his business to take off, to see his daughter, and crack on with things. But then, Nick accidentally drops a glass window, which lands mere inches from Wren's head. From there, from electrocutions to car malfunctions, slippages, bookcases and muggings, fate isn't going to leave these two alone. Not until they meet.

Kanter, Melissa. [Friends with Benefits](#) (Celadon \$18.99)

When aspiring Foley artist Evie and her best friend Theo enter a marriage of convenience to solve their financial and healthcare woes, they insist nothing will change, but long-buried feelings and unexpected complications threaten their plan.

Kelhmann, Daniel. [The Director](#) (Simon & Schuster \$28.99)

Fleeing Nazi Germany for Hollywood, acclaimed director G.W. Pabst struggles in obscurity until his return to Austria forces him into a perilous choice when Joseph Goebbels offers him prominence in exchange for complicity with the regime's propaganda machine. A timely historical novel based on a real-world figure that illustrates the danger in giving into authoritative regimes.

Kelly, Martha Hall. [The Martha's Vineyard Beach and Book Club](#) (Random \$30)

In 2016, grieving Mari Starwood visits Martha's Vineyard and uncovers a surprising connection to the Smith sisters, Candence and

Briar, who, during World War II, balanced family struggles, romance, and whispers of espionage while running a farm and forming a transformative book club."Inspired by true events, Kelly's (*The Golden Doves*) new novel explores friendship, family dynamics, and the power of books to unite communities." (*LJ*)

Lamb, Wally. [The River Is Waiting](#) (Simon & Schuster \$28.99)

Corby Ledbetter, grappling with addiction, prison life, and the tragedy that shattered his family, finds unexpected kindness and connection behind bars, as he seeks redemption and hopes for forgiveness from those he's hurt the most.

Lee, Lyla. [Love in Focus](#) (Forever \$17.99)  
When her boyfriend of seven years suddenly breaks up with her, relationship advice columnist Gemma Cho is convinced that real love doesn't exist. As a bisexual woman who's had zero luck with both men and women, she's ready to give up on her own romantic prospects. That is, until she's paired up with world-renowned photographer Celeste Min on a potentially career-saving piece on modern love.

Macdonald, Moira. [Storybook Ending](#) (Penguin \$29)  
In a Seattle bookstore, a misinterpreted note sparks a tangled web of mistaken identities as tech worker April and single mom Laura form an unexpected connection, all while oblivious Westley becomes the unintentional center of their romantic hopes."A perfectly charming read for devotees of the written word and anyone who's ever hoped to find love in a bookstore." (*Kirkus*)

Mack, Catherine. [No One Was Supposed to Die at This Wedding](#) (St. Martin's \$28)  
When a bestselling mystery author Eleanor

Dash attends her best friend Emma Wood's star-studded wedding on stormy Catalina Island, a chilling death ruins the celebration. Because murder seems to follow her every time she goes on vacation, Eleanor now finds herself once again playing amateur sleuth in the hopes of keeping Emma's wedding on track. If you like your contemporary mysteries served up with plenty of acerbic wit, this fun new series from Mack will be just the ticket.

Matthews, Mimi. [Rules for Ruin](#) (Berkley \$19)  
On the outskirts of London sits a seemingly innocuous institution with a secretive aim—train young women to distract, disrupt, and discredit the patriarchy. Outraged by a powerful lord's systematic attack on women's rights in Parliament, the Academy summons its brightest—and most bitter—pupil to infiltrate the odious man's inner circle. A deal is struck: bring down the viscount, and Miss Euphemia Flite will finally earn her freedom. But betting shop owner Gabriel Royce has other plans. The viscount is the perfect pawn to insulate Gabriel's underworld empire from government interference. He's not about to let some crinoline-clad miss destroy his carefully constructed enterprise—no matter how captivating he finds her threats. Matthews launches her new Victorian-set Crinoline Academy series with a delectable mix of danger and desire.

McMorris, Kristina. [The Girls of Good Fortune](#) (Sourcebooks \$17.99)  
A half-Chinese woman passing as white, Celia awakens imprisoned in the Shanghai Tunnels of 1888 Portland, Oregon, and must escape to protect a child and confront dangerous secrets tied to her abduction and a gold miners' massacre.

Merson, K.A. [The Language of Birds](#) (Random \$30)

Seventeen-year-old Arizona's favorite things include cryptography, geocaching, the writings of Jules Verne—and exploring the Sierra Nevada on her Russian Ural motorcycle, with her dog Mojo riding shotgun in his sidecar. She's not, in other words, your average teenager. So when she learns her mother's been kidnapped and finds a cryptic test accompanying the ransom note, she's not just horrified—but electrified. Solving puzzles and cracking codes are what she does best, and she knows exactly how to tackle the challenge the kidnappers are dangling in front of her. What she doesn't yet realize is that she's been enlisted in a treasure hunt, on the trail of an occult, centuries-old secret her father supposedly took to his grave. And if the prize at the end is real, it could shake the world.

Moffatt, Jennifer. [Flirty Dancing](#) (St. Martin's \$18)

Desperate to make it on Broadway, Archer Read takes a last-chance gig at a queer-friendly resort, only to find himself caught between his childhood celebrity crush, Mateo, and his fiery bunkmate, Caleb.

Monaghan, Annabel. [It's a Love Story](#) (Penguin \$19)

Jane Jackson spent her adolescence as “Poor Janey Jakes,” the barbecue-sauce-in-her-braces punch line on America's fifth-favorite sitcom. Now she's trying to be taken seriously as a Hollywood studio executive by embracing a new mantra: Fake it till you make it. Except she might have faked it too far. Desperate to get her first project greenlit and riled up by pompous cinematographer and one-time crush Dan Finnegan, she claimed that she could get mega popstar Jack Quinlan to write a song for the movie. Jack may have been her first kiss—and greatest source of shame—but

she hasn't spoken to him in twenty years. Now in order to reconnect with Jack, Jane must turn to the last man she'd ever want to owe: Dan Finnegan.

Roberts, Adam. [Food Person](#) (Knopf \$28)  
After a public soufflé disaster costs her job at a digital cooking magazine, foodie Isabella Pasternack reluctantly agrees to ghostwrite a cookbook for scandal-ridden actress Molly Babcock, sparking a chaotic journey of culinary devotion, unlikely friendship and second chances. “Roberts' novel is a confection—satisfyingly over-the-top—but with complex notes; he has a true knack for understanding the ways that food rules every aspect of our lives, from the gourmet's obsession to the shame and guilt surrounding indulgence. But even readers who don't know a branzino from bearnaise will find plenty to enjoy here, from the colorful secondary characters to the zippy plot. A debut novel that dishes up one of the most delectable ingredients of all: fun.” (Kirkus)

Roberts, Nora. [Hidden Nature](#) (St. Martin's \$30)

Surviving a near-fatal shooting, injured police officer Sloan Cooper moves back to her quiet hometown and investigates a string of mysterious disappearances across three states. Fans of *Criminal Minds* who like their suspense served up with plenty of twists and turns will love Roberts' latest.

Rosen, Jessie. [All the Signs](#) (Penguin \$19)  
Leah Lockhart is proudly science-minded and woo-woo averse. But the life she's carefully curated is knocked suddenly off course, first by a destabilizing case of vertigo, and then by an astrology reading that claims she's living way out of line with what was

written in her stars. Incensed, Leah sets off on a mission to prove that astrology is bogus by comparing her life to that of her Star Twins around the world—people born under her exact same map of the stars. But her even deeper guides on a whirlwind journey through Venice, Istanbul, New Orleans, and beyond turn out to be three people already in her orbit: the mother she thinks abandoned her, the father she thinks saved her, and the former boy next door whose love could be the path to her truest self.

Ryan, Kennedy. [Can't Get Enough](#) (Forever \$17.99)

Hendrix Barry lives a fabulous life. She has phenomenal friends, a loving family, and a thriving business that places her in the entertainment industry's rarefied air. She's a woman with goals, dreams, ambitions—always striving upward. And in the midst of everything, she's facing her toughest challenge yet: caring for an aging parent. Who has time for romance? Anyway, she hasn't met the man who can keep up with her. Until...him. Tech mogul Maverick Bell is a dilemma wrapped in an exquisitely tailored suit and knee-melting charm. From their first charged glance at the summer's hottest party, Hendrix feels like she's met her match. Only he can't be. Mav may be the first to make her feel this seen and desired, but he's the last one she can have. Forbidden fruit is the juiciest, and this man is off limits if she plans to stay the course she's set for herself.

Solomon, Rachel Lynn. [What Happens in Amsterdam](#) (Berkley \$19)

Dani Dorfman has somehow made it to her thirties without knowing what she wants to do with her life. So when an office romance ends poorly and gets her fired, she applies for a job in Amsterdam, idly dreaming of escaping the mess she's created, but never imagining

she'll actually get it. Except she does. By the end of her first week in Amsterdam, she's never felt more adrift or alone. Then she crashes her bike into her high school ex-boyfriend—and suddenly life is blooming with new opportunities.

Stanley, Jessica. [Consider Yourself Kissed](#) (Penguin \$30)

When she first meets Adam, Coralie is new to London and feeling adrift. But Adam is clever, witty, and (he insists) a quarter inch taller than the average male. His charming four-year-old daughter only adds to his appeal. But ten years on, something important is missing from the life Coralie and Adam have built. Or maybe, having gained everything she dreamed of, Coralie has lost something else she once had: herself. Set against an eventful British decade that included the soap opera of five prime ministers plus the chaos of the pandemic, *Consider Yourself Kissed* puts the subjects of love and family on a grand stage, showing how the intimate dramas in our homes inescapably compete for energy and attention with the shared public dramas of our times.

## Teen Fiction

Albertalli, Becky. [Amelia, If Only](#) (HarperCollins \$19.99)

Amelia Applebaum thinks she is in love with Walter Holland, a moderately famous, chaotically bisexual YouTuber, so she drags her friends, including newly single, always-cynical, guitar-toting best friend Natalie, on a road trip to meet Walter.

Corpora, Michelle Jabes. [His Face Is the Sun](#) (Sourcebooks \$19.99)

Tensions run as hot as the Khamsin winds in the great kingdom of Khetara. Rumors of the pharaoh's mysterious illness abound, and with them, murmurs of rebellion grow. Mean-



while, in the quiet desert, a forgotten oracle begins to unfold, setting a dark prophecy into action and drawing together four strangers: Princess SITA, priestess-in-training NEFF, farmer's daughter RAE, and tomb robber KARIM. Bloodshed is coming. Only together do these four have the potential to save the kingdom from destruction. But when the dust has settled, who will sit on the throne of Khetara? □

Henry, April. [When We Go Missing](#) (Little Brown \$19.99)

After discovering a camera memory card with hundreds of photos of teenage girls, seventeen-year-olds Willow and Dare set out to find some of them who have gone missing.

Hubbard, Matthew. [The Rebel's Guide to Pride](#) (Random \$19.99)

When the mayor of a small Alabama town starts targeting Pride events, bad boy Zeke Chapman begins hosting a series of "Pride Speakeasies" in this joyful queer coming-of-age!

Lee, Sophie. [Eliza, From Scratch](#) (HarperCollins \$19.99)

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.

Snipes, Kevin Christopher. [Don't Let Me Go](#) (HarperCollins \$19.99)

Two star-crossed boys are trapped in a millennium-spanning cycle of reincarnation that always ends in their untimely tragic deaths and the only solution may be to never see each other again.

Soto, Julie. [The Thrashers](#) (St. Martin's \$20) The Thrashers at New Helvetia High are an elite friend group, and after a girl who wanted

to be one of them dies, detectives close in, leaving Jodi Dillon, a Thrasher who feels out of place, deciding whether to betray her friends or protect herself.

## Nonfiction

Aikman, Becky. [Spitfires](#) (Bloomsbury \$31.99) They were crop dusters and debutantes, college girls and performers in flying circuses—all of them trained as pilots. Because they were women, they were denied the opportunity to fly for their country when the United States entered the Second World War. But Great Britain, desperately fighting for survival, would let anyone—even Americans, even women—transport warplanes. Thus, twenty-five daring young aviators bolted for England in 1942, becoming the first American women to command military aircraft.

Bilston, Sarah. [The Lost Orchid](#) (Harvard University \$29.95)

Sarah Bilston unfolds the story of orchid mania, the nineteenth-century craze among European and North American collectors vying to own the world's most coveted flowers. Focusing the hunt for the so-called lost orchid brought from Brazil by a naturalist in 1818, later dubbed *Cattleya labiata* for its purple markings and "pronounced crimson lip, its rarity made it especially coveted, central to a quest that involved explorers, naturalists, businessmen, speculators, reporters, and illustrators; ships and railways; laboratories, herbaria, and auction houses.

Bundles, A'Leila. [Joy Goddess](#) (Scribner \$29.99)

Dubbed the "joy goddess of Harlem's 1920s" by poet Langston Hughes, A'Leila Walker, daughter of millionaire entrepreneur Madam C.J. Walker and the author's great-grandmother and namesake, is a fascinating figure

whose legendary parties and Dark Tower salon helped define the Harlem Renaissance. *Joy Goddess* takes readers inside her three New York homes—a mansion, a townhouse, and a pied-a-terre—where she entertained Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, Paul Robeson, Florence Mills, James Weldon Johnson, Carl Van Vechten, W.E.B. DuBois, and other cultural, social and intellectual luminaries of the Roaring Twenties.

Chernow, Ron. [Mark Twain](#) (Penguin \$45)  
Drawing on Twain's bountiful archives, including thousands of letters and hundreds of unpublished manuscripts, Chernow masterfully captures the man whose career reflected the country's westward expansion, industrialization, and foreign wars, and who was the most important white author of his generation to grapple so fully with the legacy of slavery. Today, more than one hundred years after his death, Twain's writing continues to be read, debated, and quoted. In this brilliant work of scholarship, a moving tribute to the writer's talent and humanity, Chernow reveals the magnificent and often maddening life of one of the most original characters in American history.

Diamond, Hanna. [Josephine Baker's Secret War](#) (Yale University \$35)  
Before the Second World War, Josephine Baker (1906–1975) was one of the most famous performers in the world. She made her name dancing on the Parisian stage, but when war broke out she decided not to return to America. Instead, Baker turned spy for the French Secret Services. In this engaging, deeply researched study, Hanna Diamond tells the full story of Baker's actions for the French and Allied powers in World War Two. Drawing on previously unseen material, Diamond reveals the vital role Baker played throughout the war, from counterintelligence work for the

Allied landings in North Africa to serving in the French Air Force in 1944–45. A woman of color operating in a white male environment, Baker exploited her celebrity to enable her war work across France, Spain, Portugal, North Africa, and the Middle East.

Huckelbridge, Dana. [Queen of All Mayhem](#) (HarperCollins \$28.99)

On February 3, 1889, just two days shy of her forty-first birthday, Myra Maybelle Shirley—better known at that point by her outlaw sobriquet “Belle Starr”—was blown from her horse saddle and killed by a pair of shotgun blasts, delivered by an unseen assailant, only a few miles away from her home in the Indian Territory of present-day Oklahoma. Thus ended the life of one of the most colorful, authentic, and dangerous women in the history of the American West.

Dane Huckelbridge, acclaimed author of *No Beast So Fierce*, probes a life rich in contradictions and intrigue. Why did a woman who had considerable advantages in life—a good family, a decent education, solid marriage prospects, a clear path to financial security—choose to pursue a life of crime?

Rooney, David. [The Big Hop](#) (WW Norton \$29.99)

In 1919, in Newfoundland, four teams of aviators came from Britain to compete in “the Big Hop”: an audacious race to be the first to fly, nonstop, across the Atlantic Ocean. Newspapers around the world reported on the contest, fueled by a £10,000 prize (nearly \$400,000 today) offered by *London's Daily Mail*. Anxious for publicity, British aviation companies pushed pilots and navigators to enter the race, despite the dangers of their still rickety products. In open cockpit biplanes, the teams flew more than 2,000 miles through blinding fog, rain, snow, and treacherous winds. One pair of competitors was forced to

abandon the journey halfway, and two pairs never made it into the air. Only one team, after a death-defying sixteen-hour flight, made it to Ireland.

Willis, Gerri. [Lincoln's Lady Spymaster](#) (HarperCollins \$28.99)

Wealthy Southern belle Elizabeth Van Lew had it all. Money, charm, wit—the most elegant mansion in Richmond. So why risk everything to become a Union spy? The answer was simple: freedom. In this gripping Civil War history, Fox Business's Gerri Willis charts the making of a spymaster genius. Right in the heart of the Confederate capital, Elizabeth played the society lady while building a secret espionage network of slaves, Unionists, and prisoners of war.

Young, Michelle. [The Art Spy](#) (HarperCollins \$29.99)

On August 25, 1944, Rose Valland, a woman of quiet daring, found herself in a desperate position. From the windows of her beloved Jeu de Paume museum, where she had worked and ultimately spied, she could see the battle to liberate Paris thundering around her. The Jeu de Paume, co-opted by Nazi leadership, was now the Germans' final line of defense. Would the museum curator be killed before she could tell the truth—a story that would mean nothing less than saving humanity's cultural inheritance? Based on troves of previously undiscovered documents, *The Art Spy* chronicles the brave actions of the key Resistance spy in the heart of the Nazi's art looting headquarters in the French capital.

Zaleski, Annie. [I Got You Babe](#) (Running Press \$30)

Commemorating six decades since her first #1 hit in 1965, *I Got You Babe* captures Cher's one-of-a-kind life. Written by award-winning writer and editor Annie Zaleski, this

celebration of the fearless, down-to-earth "Goddess of Pop" explores key moments in her life and career in words and photos. Among the topics covered: her 50-year friendship with fellow diva Tina Turner, which began in 1975 when they performed "Shame, Shame, Shame" together, her story of creating a "revenge dress" with designer Bob Mackie for the 1986 Oscars after being snubbed for a nomination for her performance in *Mask*, and the night in 1989 she made the Navy wish it could "Turn Back Time" by arriving at the *USS Missouri* to film her video not wearing the coveralls they expected but a barely-there fishnet bodysuit. Amid these moments are photo after photo of some of the most eye-popping outfits ever worn in life and on stage. As an avid clothes horse who wasn't afraid to wear a see-through dress to the Met Gala in 1974, Cher's many looks will be given their due in this engaging, career-spanning retrospective.