

Midmonth BookNotes

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Books Make the Best Gifts!

Cozy Corner

Carlisle, N.E. [Hazelnuts and Homicide](#) (Plot Twist \$23.99)

In the quirky coastal town of Hazelton, Oregon, Bonne Annee's literary supper clubs combine novels, recipes, and community spirit until one tragic evening turns her latest event into a crime scene. Determined to clear her name, she dives into a tangled web of tampered ingredients, hidden secrets, and holiday rivalries that could ruin more than her business. With her loyal Bernedoodle Oscar and a cast of warmhearted friends, Annee must solve the case before Hazelton's first Christmas market and her reputation are completely cooked. The start of a new cozy series.

McKenna, Clara. [Murder at Cottonwood Creek](#) (Kensington \$27)

Far from England and their beloved Morrington Hall, Viscount "Lyndy" Lyndhurst and his American wife, heiress and equestrian Stella Kendrick—now Lady Lyndhurst—find fossils and murder in Montana. No one is above suspicion—a rival paleontologist up to some skullduggery, members of their own crew, even Lord Atherly himself. Stella and Lyndy must keep digging to unearth the clues that will expose a killer in their midst—before more bones must be buried.

Point, Rosie A. [Murder Among the Stacks](#) (Adams \$15)

Abby Jones has it all figured out: moving to Cranberry Creek will give her the fresh start she needs. From opening her brand-new bookstore on Main Street to learning to love her busybody landlady, Myrna, to spending her time on her favorite cozy hobby (word searches!), Abby has her hands full. But when a famous author is mysteriously murdered at her bookstore's opening event, her new future is at stake. It's up to Abby, with the help of some new friends, to solve the case. The start to a cozy new series which combines a puzzling mystery with themed word search puzzles to create an interactive and charming whodunit experience.

Point, Rosie A. [Murder by Muffin](#) (Adams \$15)

Life at Cranberry Creek is settling down for Abby Jones. Her bookstore business is booming the drama around her opening event is finally starting to fade, and she's even started to make friends with some of the locals, including her Main Street neighbors at the local bakery. But when the bakery owner Rose is accused of poisoning a restaurant critic with her famous blueberry muffins, Abby knows there's more to this case than meets the eye—and she's determined to clear her friend's name or die trying.

Historical Fiction, Mysteries, Romance and More

Alexander, Lexi. [Dead Set on You](#) (Crooked Lane \$19.99)

As workaholic Evie Pope nears thirty, she's determined to slow down and start enjoying the "life" part of work-life balance. With a major promotion—and the financial security that comes with it—on the horizon, she might finally have her chance. But when she wakes up as a spirit in her work rival's apartment and learns her body is stuck in a coma, her plans are officially DOA. Being a spirit is bad enough. Discovering that Rafael Vela—the man who used to be her friend and is now her biggest rival—is the only person who can help her? It's a special kind of purgatory. In no position to negotiate, she strikes a desperate deal: He gets the promotion if he helps reunite Evie's spirit with her body.

Ballard, Falon. [Something Wicked](#) (Penguin \$32)
The Uprising has overthrown Avon's monarchical rulers, and a decree has been issued. Candidates for the first presidential election will be selected by the completion of a special task: to kill the former monarch of their home province. Callum, the son of the recently dethroned king, is determined to be in the running. But coming to terms with patricide will require the help of Lady Caterine, a gifted courtesan at La Puissance, Avon's premiere sex club.

Chilton, L.M. [Everyone in the Group Chat Dies](#) (Gallery \$19)

From the breakout author of *Swiped* comes a compulsively readable, surprisingly funny, and genuinely thrilling pageturner about a TikTok true crime investigator, a '90s serial killer that may not be as dead as everyone would like, a text thread from hell, and long buried secrets that just won't stay in the grave where they belong. "Chilton offers a sharp, fast-paced, modern twist on the classic murder mystery. Perfect for fans of *Only Murders in the Building* or *Bodies, Bodies, Bodies*, plus anyone who has ever felt trapped in a group chat from hell." (LJ)

Connolly, Lauren. [Love in Plane Sight](#) (Penguin \$19)
With her brother's grumpy best friend—and her longtime nemesis George Bunsen—as Beth Lundberg's flight instructor, her pilot lessons could be a plane disaster or their first-class ticket to forever happiness. However, the more time they spend navigating the sky, the more the turbulence between George and Beth dissipates. But Beth has seen the burning wreckage that comes from mixing business with pleasure—plus, she's been keeping a secret that, once revealed, will send all her relationships into a tailspin. Can she really take a risk on romance when her pilot career isn't even off the ground?

Dara, Maxie. [A Grim Reaper's Guide to Cheating Death](#) (Penguin \$19)

Nora Bird works for S.C.Y.T.H.E., which might seem odd for someone as terrified of death as she is. But ever since her parents died in an accident when she was six, she's been obsessed with avoiding risk, and what better place to learn how to cheat death than the company that employs the nation's grim reapers. The work enables Nora to learn all about the myriad ways you can kick the bucket, which is comforting. Then one day a file crosses her desk with a name she recognizes: her twin brother Charlie's. "A long list of suspects, a dark sense of humor, and surprisingly weighty meditations on mortality carry the day. It's a killer good time." (PW)

Davids, Nadia. [Cape Fever](#) (Simon & Schuster \$27)
The year is 1920, in a small, unnamed city in a colonial empire. Soraya Matas believes she has found the ideal job as a personal maid to the eccentric Mrs. Hattingh, whose beautiful, decaying home is not far from The Muslim Quarter where Soraya lives with her parents. As Soraya settles into her new role, she discovers that the house is alive with spirits. While Mrs. Hattingh eagerly awaits her son's visit from London, she offers to help Soraya stay in touch with her fiancé Nour by writing him letters on her behalf. So begins a strange weekly meeting where Soraya dictates and Mrs. Hattingh writes—a ritual that binds the two women to one another and eventually threatens the sanity of both. "A tense, atmospheric gothic thriller...This novel will remind readers that our world has been interconnected for a long time, and that the powerful affect those less so, even when there are oceans between them. This beautifully assured novel interweaves the ghostly

and the historical until both feel simultaneously real and imagined.” (*Kirkus*)

Donovan, Bryn. [Her Time Traveling Duke](#) (Penguin \$19)

Rose Novak, a free-spirited museum employee who dabbles in magic, has had her share of disappointments. So when she tries a little spell for a romance with an “old-fashioned gentleman,” she doesn’t really expect it to work...especially *literally*. And yet Henry Leighton-Lyons, the duke from a painting she admired at the museum is now standing in her apartment, demanding to know who abducted him.

Eden, Lucy. [The Love Audit](#) (Grand Central \$17.99)

There are three things that PR strategist Jasmine Morgan knows for sure: One, she’s damn good at her job. Two, she’ll do whatever it takes to save her team from looming layoffs. And three, Derek Carter will always be her archnemesis—even if the man is *ridiculously* fine. Unfortunately, she and Derek end up on competing projects in Miller’s Cove, a small town highly suspicious of corporate outsiders. To gain the trust of the locals, she’ll have to ditch her blazer and pose as a “honeymooning couple” with her mortal enemy.

Frick, Kit. [Friends and Liars](#) (Atria \$18)

It’s been five years since heiress Clare Monroe tragically died on New Year’s Eve at her family’s opulent Italian palazzo. Since that time, her college friends have harbored a dark secret—their lies and betrayals led to Clare’s untimely death. What happened that fateful night was a horrible accident, but Luca, Harper, Sirina, and David are guilty, nonetheless. And their desperate decision to conceal the truth destroyed their once-close bond. Now, the estranged friends are each the recipient of an invitation from the Monroes to return to the lakeside palazzo for a long-overdue memorial for Clare. Accepting the Monroes’ invitation means playing with fire, but they can hardly refuse.

Hadlow, Janice. [Rules of the Heart](#) (Henry Holt \$29.99)

England, 1794. Now in her thirties, Lady Harriet Bessborough, already the veteran of several liaisons, finds herself pursued by a much younger man. This

isn’t unusual in her circle, where married women often take younger lovers. No one minds much, provided they follow the rules of the game: Don’t embarrass your husband, maintain complete discretion at all times, and never ever make the mistake of falling in love. So when Harriet meets Lord Granville—brilliantly handsome, insistently ardent, and twelve years younger than her—she’s confident she can manage their affair. Until she finds herself falling uncontrollably under his spell. As she’s plunged into an all-consuming passion, Harriet’s worldliness and sophistication desert her. With each besotted step, she finds herself edging ever closer to exposure and ruin. She knows she should leave Granville but can’t bring herself to do it—she loves him far too deeply now to escape the scandal that threatens to engulf her.

Harrison, Margaret. [The Library of Fates](#) (Graydon House \$30)

The Library of Fates was designed to show you who you are—and who you could become. Its rarest book, *The Book of Dark Nights*, holds a secret: when you write an intimate confession on its pages, you’ll receive a prediction for your future, penned in your own handwriting. For Eleanor, whose childhood was defined by a senseless tragedy, the library offers a world where everything makes sense. She’s spent most of her life there as an apprentice to the brilliant librarian, showing other people how to find the meaning of their lives in stories. But when her mentor dies in a freak accident and *The Book of Dark Nights* goes missing—along with the secrets written inside—Eleanor is pulled out of the library and into a quest to locate it with the last person she expects: the librarian’s estranged son, Daniel, who Eleanor once loved.

Kelly, Lee and Jennifer Thorne. [My Fair Frauds](#) (Harper \$18.99)

The Grand Duchess Marie Charlotte Antonie of Württemberg—a turmoil-plagued Germanic nation with closely guarded emerald mines—has taken Gilded Age high society by storm. Little does the upper crust know that Württemberg’s mines are a sham and its “deposed duchess” is actually a con woman named Alice, a fallen woman out for revenge against the five ruthless robber barons who destroyed her father and left her family in shambles. Alice’s long investment con finally clicks into place when she meets a scrappy

magician's assistant named Cora, a drifter who has lofty aspirations of her own, a malleable young lady who proves the perfect debutante pawn to lure in Alice's final, and otherwise unattainable, target. With the help of insider and society maestro Ward McAllister, among others, Alice and Cora launch into the social season of 1884, scheming their way through grand balls, private dinners, and opera nights, ensnaring Alice's targets one by one. But as they hurtle toward their ultimate swindle, a sprawling orchestrated scheme at their fabricated embassy to rob their targets blind, pressures close in from all sides. Mutiny within the ranks, hidden moles, crises of conscience. This sting is sure to be the event of the season. Or else ruin Alice and Cora both.

Lea, Amy. [The Bodyguard Affair](#) (Penguin \$19)
Andi Zeigler lives a double life. By day, she's the no-nonsense, steadfast personal assistant to the Prime Minister of Canada's wife. By night, she slips out of her heels and writes romance novels under a top-secret pen name. But when her steamiest book, *The Prime Minister & Me*, unexpectedly becomes a bestseller, rumors of a real-life affair between her and the PM start swirling out of control. Enter Nolan Crosby, the PM's new close protection officer (aka bodyguard) – and Andi's failed one-night stand from three years ago. Nolan's in town very temporarily to care for his mother, who's battling early-onset Alzheimer's. But when the scandal erupts, Andi ropes him into a fake-dating plan. As loyal employees, they'll pretend to date for the summer, just long enough to put the scandal to bed and save their boss's reputation. However, Andi and Nolan discover that keeping their romance strictly fictional might be easier said than done.

McKenzie, Elizabeth. [Bed Chemistry](#) (Crooked Lane \$19.99)
When chemistry teacher Ashleigh Hutchinson is fired from her job without notice, she signs up to participate in a month-long sleep study, which will pay her enough to cover rent while she job hunts. It seems easy enough—until she walks into the clinic and finds herself staring right into the gorgeous eyes of Xander Miller, the only man to have ever tempted her to abandon her no relationships rule. When Xander and Ashleigh realize the study is only looking for couples, they agree to pretend to be together—which means sleeping in the same bed every night for the next few

weeks. How hard can it be to keep their cool under the covers?

Moss, Tara. [The Italian Secret](#) (Penguin \$30)
Sydney, 1948. Billie Walker, returned from a stint as a wartime investigative journalist, uncovers a dusty box in her father's old office whose contents—correspondence with a woman on the other side of the world—just might explain how they all are connected. Plunged into a perilous search that will take her onto the first postwar luxury passenger ship to sail across the ocean to Italy, Billie finds herself up against a dangerous adversary—someone with a mysterious grudge against her family—as she races to uncover the secrets her father left behind. And as the trail leads her towards two women whose histories may be entwined with her own, she realizes that her father's Italian secret just might upend everything she thought she knew.

Murrin, Orlando. [May Contain Murder](#) (Kensington \$28)
While his flooded house undergoes repairs, chef-turned-writer Paul Delamare has been offered an accommodation upgrade—an all-expenses-paid trip aboard a private super yacht in the company of Xéra, one of his dearest friends. Paul will help Xéra work on her memoirs as *Maldemer* glides its sumptuous way to the Caribbean. The scenery is stunning, the luxury is unparalleled, and the food...well, at least the dishes that Paul is roped into preparing are delicious. The hired chef, meanwhile, seems completely out of her depth. She's not the only one. Much as Paul adores Xéra, a Parisian socialite who he was introduced to by his late lover, Marcus, he has little in common with the other guests, a motley crew consisting of Xéra's new husband and his grasping family. When Xéra's priceless new necklace goes missing, Paul falls under suspicion. But there's far worse in store, as one of the passengers is found dead in mysterious and grisly circumstances. The stormy weather matches the threatening mood onboard, and as *Maldemer* veers off course, every semblance of order goes with it.

Patrick, Phaedra. [The Time Hop Coffee Shop](#) (Park Row \$18.99)
Greta Perks was once the shining star of the iconic Maple Gold coffee commercials, the quintessential

TV wife and mom. Now fame has faded, her marriage is on the rocks, her teenage daughter has become distant and Greta's once-glittering career feels like a distant memory. When Greta stumbles upon a mysterious coffee shop serving a magical brew, she wishes for the perfect life in those past Maple Gold commercials. Next thing she knows, Greta wakes in the idyllic make-believe town of Mapleville, where the sun always shines and the aroma of freshly brewed coffee and second chances fill the air. Given the opportunity to live the life she dreamed, Greta is determined to rewrite her own script. But can life ever be like a coffee commercial? And what will happen when Greta has to choose between perfection and real life, with no turning back?

Reeves, Amy Carol. [How to Grieve Like a Victorian](#) (Harlequin \$18.99)

Dr. Lizzie Wells, professor of British literature and bestselling author, is not okay. She wasn't consulted when her beloved husband died unexpectedly, so she's going to grieve however she damned well chooses. Keeping a lock of his hair in a choker around her neck and donning widow's weeds. You bet. Notifying colleagues and students that she will only accept paper letters instead of email. Why not? Very nearly kissing her late husband's best friend, Henry. Unfortunately, er...yes. So when she's offered a trip to London, Lizzie grabs it. What better place to escape, heal, and be reborn than in the same city where Queen Victoria famously mourned her beloved Prince Albert? Encouraged by new friends to be bold, have champagne and oysters before noon, and celebrate the beauty and the messiness of life, Lizzie begins to embrace it all. Still, there's that almost kiss with Henry she just can't forget. Their cross-Atlantic 'check-ins' turn into FaceTime hangouts and their friendship evolves into something more. When Henry shows up in London, Lizzie fears she's falling in love with him... Will she bravely embrace this second chance, too?

Riley, Lia. [The E.M.M.A. Effect](#) (HarperCollins \$18.99)
Harriet Smythe's AI was supposed to create sports legends—not encourage her crush on her best friend's totally off-limits, hot younger brother. But when funding runs dry, she has no choice but to enlist Gale Knight as her test subject. The same Gale she's been secretly crushing on for years. The player who follows her every instruction with a knowing smirk that

threatens to short-circuit her carefully maintained system. Everything changes when The E.M.M.A. determines that finding Gale's perfect match is essential to his peak performance. Even worse? According to its data, that match is Harriet.

Thompson, Marielle. [The Curse of the Cole Women](#) (Crooked Lane \$19.99)

For generations, the Cole women have lived as outcasts, maintaining a lighthouse on a small island off the coast of New Hampshire. Ever since their ancestor was accused of witchcraft and cast into the sea hundreds of years prior, the islanders have ostracized the Coles, distrusting their rumored magic and their control of the lighthouse. Despite their mistreatment, the Cole women are compelled to remain on the island because they know that if a Cole woman does not light the beacon on Juniper Island, anyone who is out at sea will be drowned. Out of guilt and obligation, the Cole women live out their solitary lives on the island, knowing someday their recompense for protecting the people from the sea will be to die in the sea themselves. Told in three interwoven timelines in the late twentieth century, *The Curse of the Cole Women* unravels the lives of three women who struggle with their relationships with each other as they contend with the reality of their fates—is it truly a curse, or is it generational madness that drives Cole women to the sea?

Turhan, Yigit. [Their Monstrous Hearts](#) (MIRA \$28.99)

A mysterious stranger shows up at Riccardo's apartment with some news: his grandmother Perihan has died, and Riccardo has inherited her villa in Milan along with her famed butterfly collection. The struggling writer is out of options. He's hoping the change of scenery in Milan will inspire him, and maybe there will be some money to keep him afloat. But Perihan's house isn't as opulent as he remembers. The butterflies pinned in their glass cases seem more ominous than artful. Perihan's group of mysterious old friends is constantly lurking. And there's something *wrong* in the greenhouse. As Riccardo explores the decrepit estate, he stumbles upon Perihan's diary, which might hold the key to her mysterious death. Or at least give him the inspiration he needs to finish his manuscript. But he might not survive long enough to write it.

Wibberley, Emily and Austin Siegemund-Broka. [Seeing Other People](#) (Penguin \$19)

Morgan is being ghosted by her ex. No, really. It's sad

Zach died and became a ghost. But Morgan and Zach only ever went on the one date, and now she's being haunted by him. Zach has no desire to spend eternity with Morgan, but he can't recall his past and doesn't know how to move on. At a support group for humans and their haunters, Morgan and Zach run into Sawyer, whose fiancée-turned-ghost has started to fade. Unlike Morgan, Sawyer isn't ready to part ways with his ghost. Although they face opposite issues, Morgan and Sawyer decide to work together to solve their problems. As Morgan and Sawyer try to solve their paranormal conundrums together, they find something even more surprising—a tender, growing affection between them that threatens any unfinished business they're seeking to close. The ghosts of their past might be there in spirit, but the connection between Morgan and Sawyer is as alive as anything they've ever felt.

Teen

Churchill, Marisa. [Secrets, Spells, and Chocolate](#) (Page Street \$18.99)

Sylvie Jones has been dreaming of attending her mom's alma mater, Brindille School of Culinary Arts and Magic, since she was old enough to reach the stove. Unfortunately, her last name has a horrible stain on it, something that could destroy her dream. So when Sylvie is given the chance to prove her skills and put an end to the rumors that her mother cheated her way to victory at the most prestigious magical cooking competition, The Golden Whisk, she takes it. But the opportunity may not be all that it's cracked up to be. If Sylvie truly wants to make her own mark and earn a place at Brindille, she needs to uncover the truth about what happened all those years ago.

Garber, Romina. *The Last Vampire*
Pride & Prejudice meets *Crave* when Austen-loving Lorena Navarro attends a new boarding school expecting to find her own Mr. Darcy, but accidentally awakens the world's last vampire instead!

Johnson, George M. and Leah Johnson. [There's Always Next Year](#) (Farrar, Straus and Giroux \$19.99)
Andy was supposed to shed her too-serious student

journalist persona and reinvent herself on New Year's Eve. Instead, she puked on her crush, dropped her phone in a fish tank, and managed to get her car stolen. Now, she only has the first day of the year to stop the gentrification that's threatening her family's business, right her wrongs from the night before, and figure out why she feels so drawn to Dominique, the electric new-girl-next-door.

Leno, Katrina. [Persephone's Curse](#) (St. Martin's \$20)
Are the four Farthing sisters really descended from Persephone? This is what their aunt has always told them: that the women in their family can trace their lineage right back to the Goddess of the Dead. And maybe she's right, because the Farthing girls do have a ghost in the attic of their New York City brownstone—a kind and gentle ghost named Henry, who only they can see. When one of the sisters falls in love with the ghost, and another banishes him to the Underworld, the sisters are faced with even bigger questions about who they are. If they really *are* related to Persephone, and they really *are* a bit magic, then perhaps it's up to them to save Henry, to save the world, and to save each other

Nonfiction

Ackmann, Martha. [Ain't Nobody's Fool](#) (St. Martin's \$30)

From her impoverished childhood in the Smoky Mountains to international stardom as a singer, songwriter, actress, businesswoman, and philanthropist, *Ain't Nobody's Fool* is a deep dive into the social, historical, and personal forces that made Dolly Parton one of the most beloved and unifying figures in public life and includes interviews with friends, family members, schoolmates, Nashville neighbors, members of her band, studio musicians, producers, and many others. It also sheds light on her family's hardscrabble life. More than anything, Martha Ackmann's fresh new take on this superstar proves Dolly Parton knows just who she is and she ain't nobody's fool.

Chang, Julie. [Fly Wild Swans](#) (HarperCollins \$35)
The magnificent follow-up to the best-selling *Wild Swans*, *Fly, Wild Swans* chronicles Jung's journey

and that of her family, along with that of China, as it rose from a decrepit and isolated state to a world power challenging American dominance. During those decades, although she lives in the West, Jung's life intertwines with her native land in unexpected ways, a rare relationship made more complex because all her books are banned there. Her family story mirrors the ups and downs of China's transformation, right up to today, as it enters another watershed. Chairman Xi Jinping's attempt to return China to the anti-American Maoist past has a devastating impact on Chang's life: She is unable to go to her mother's deathbed. *Fly, Wild Swans* is Jung's love letter and emotional tribute to her extraordinary mother. Profoundly moving, it is filled with drama, love, curiosity and incredible history—both personal and global. Told in Jung's clear, honest and compelling voice, it is memoir writing at its best.

Rosen, Kenneth R. [Polar War](#) (Simon & Schuster \$29) Russian spies. Nuclear submarines. Sabotaged pipelines. Undersea communications severed in the dark of night. The fastest-warming place on earth—where apartment buildings, hospitals, and homes crumble daily as permafrost melts and villages get washed away by rising seas—the Arctic stands at the crossroads of geopolitical ambition and environmental catastrophe. In *Polar War*, Kenneth R. Rosen takes readers on an extraordinary journey across the changing face of the far north. Through intimate portraits of scientists, soldiers, and Indigenous community leaders representing the interests of twenty-one countries across four continents, he witnesses firsthand how rising temperatures and growing tensions are reshaping life above and below the Arctic Circle. He finds himself on the trail of Navy SEALs training for arctic warfare, embarks on Coast Guard patrols monitoring Russian incursions, participates in close-quarter-combat training aboard foreign icebreakers in the Arctic sea ice, and visits remote research stations where international cooperation is giving way to espionage and the search for long-frozen biological weapons.