

Midmonth BookNotes

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It's Blooming Books!

Cozy Corner

Bernier, Ashley-Ruth M. [The Bush Tea Murder](#) (Crooked Lane \$29.99)

Food journalist Naomi Sinclair doesn't expect a side of murder with her passion fruit juice. But when her return to Saint Thomas heralds a series of troubling cases, ranging from petty theft to cold-blooded murder, that threaten her tight-knit community, that is exactly the kind of unsavory treat she must sink her teeth into. Luckily for her neighbors, Naomi is as adept at solving puzzles as rolling johnnycake dough—a good thing, since her island community, though small, keeps serving up plenty of trouble. The start to a new series set in the US Virgin Islands.

Cambridge, Colleen. [In the Spirit of French Murder](#) (Kensington \$27)

Tabitha Knight has enjoyed an entertaining afternoon in Julia Child's kitchen, but her return home is a bit jarring. As she arrives at her grandfather's mansion, a woman bursts out the door babbling about messages from

spirits and a warning Grand-père must heed. Uncle Rafe angrily sends the woman on her way, and neither man will answer Tabitha's questions. It's not the last she sees of the mysterious visitor. While she's on a date that evening, she's accosted by her again—and learns that Madame Vierca is a medium who claims to have visions of a dark fate that awaits Grand-père, Uncle Rafe and a group of their fellow Resistance fighters from the war known as the Nine Bluets. When members of the Nine Bluets start dying, Tabitha realizes she can't ignore Madame Vierca's frightening predictions.

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

Retired San Diego detective Rick "Chase" Chasen is disappointed that his partner Mike won't be joining him on his tour of the rocky Cornish coast—but like long-distance walks, long-distance relationships can require an occasional break. He still has his friend Billie for company, though, and a few more fellow Americans, from a New Orleans restaurateur to a New York travel writer, joining them

on their jaunt. Despite threats from local landowners about foreign walkers on their property, the tour group continues on with their expedition. Those threats turns out to be a real possibility, however, when the near miss is followed by a suspicious death during a meal break. Did a Cornish property owner take a prank too far? If murder is truly afoot, Chase will have to rely on his investigative wits to trip the killer up.

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

As the sun sets on summer in Eastport, local celebrations are in full swing—and Chocolate Moose Bakery owners Jake Triptree and Ellie White have their hands full supplying the most decadent of desserts for Eastport High School's Class of '97 reunion. Unexpectedly, the gathering includes ex-spouses, Cindy Munson and Terry Lawson, seemingly reunited as a family with their precocious 6-year-old daughter, Ivy. But when Cindy's body is discovered murdered in Lawson's car that night, suspicion immediately falls upon the tech-financier, who was once also Eastport High's most notorious school bully.

Gray, Kit. [The Black Cat Detectives](#) (Crooked Lane \$29.99)

Precocious kittens Bippity, Boppity, and Boop are exceedingly loyal to their human, the twenty-eight-year-old up-and-coming magician Mila. She saved them from starving to death in a dingy Corvin's Crossing alleyway and has been nothing but loving ever since, even though her own life is in shambles. So when Mila's sketchy boyfriend and business manager turns up dead at the end of her big magic show—she's the prime suspect. With evidence mounting, there's nothing stopping the sheriff from hauling away Mila to the human pound. Unless the kittens can solve the crime and clear her name. A cozy debut and

the start to what hopefully will be a charming new series!

Pleiter, Allie. [Two Purloined Pillows](#) (Kensington \$27) SIGNED

It's been a little over a year since Shelby Phillips started managing Nina's Nimble Needle following her office-romance and career implosion, and Shelby's mom has finally handed her the reins—technically, at least. Now, Shelby is excited to oversee two well-known needlepoint designers who will be participating in the town's first two-week-long arts festival. Laura Bitters and Paul Bardo have each stitched up one-of-a-kind pillows that should be big wins for the Nimble Needle at the festival's auction . . . until the pillows vanish amid a sudden string of shoplifting incidents. To add to the knot in Shelby's stomach, Laura proves highly anxious, while Paul is an egomaniac who believes Laura has been stealing his customers for years. But things go from bad to tragic when Laura behaves oddly at the auction dinner, then collapses—dead.

Ramey, Stacie. [Spellbound by Murder](#) (Crooked Lane \$29.99)

When her grandmother suffers a nasty fall and asks for help managing the family business, coffee-addicted single mother Veronica Blackthorne moves her sixteen-year-old rom-com-obsessed daughter to Mystic Hollow, Connecticut. Hoping to save the bookstore from a big-box rival, Veronica enlists her sometimes mentor and sometimes crush, Adam Whitford, a controversial but popular author, as the keynote speaker to kick off a literary festival that will hopefully bring in a new wave of customers. But when Adam turns up dead, all that romantic potential turns into a nightmare as Veronica becomes the prime suspect in his murder. As the local sheriff investigates his murder,

Veronica decides to take matters into her own hands to solve the case and clear her name. The *Gilmore Girls* meets *Charmed* in this delightful new cozy!

Smith, Karen Rose. [If Books Could Kill](#) (Kensington \$27)

Town librarian Mathilda has a troublesome new employee, and after Jazzi spots the two of them arguing at the ice-sculpture festival, Mathilda asks Jazzi if she'd mind discussing her workplace woes over a cup of tea. During the visit, Jazzi also finds out about Mathilda's top-secret stash of valuable first editions. Soon afterward, those rare books have vanished—and Mathilda is dead. As the police check out suspects and a lawyer searches for the next of kin, Jazzi learns that the librarian's life was as mysterious as any crime thriller. She'd left home and changed her name as a teenager, and always seemed a little lonely. Oddly, it's her new employee who seems the most distraught. Can Jazzi close the book on this puzzling murder?

Historical Fiction, Mysteries, Romance, and More

Bear. Lauren J.A. [Aphrodite in Pieces](#) (Penguin \$30)

Two hundred years before the common era, Aphrodite surprises an itinerant sculptor with a shocking request: Hear my story, see me for who I truly am, and carve it into stone. Never before has the goddess posed for her likeness, and as the artist works, she shares pieces of herself. Her greatest triumphs and most grievous mistakes. The truth behind the tales of her beneficence and vengeance. And the one epic romance

that slips through her perfect fingers, time and time again. "Writing in eloquent and elegant prose that Sappho herself would prize, Bear deftly illuminates the endlessly compelling story of one of mythology's most famous figures. Not only are readers treated to an Aphrodite who is flirtatious, funny, and fierce in equal measures, Bear also thoughtfully explores age-old topics such as the meaning and power of beauty, love, and art." (*Booklist*)

Brown, Jennifer. [The Lost Book of Elizabeth Barton](#) (St. Martin's \$29) SIGNED

Historian Alison Sage has made a groundbreaking archival discovery—she found a manuscript containing the prophecies of a 16th century nun, Elizabeth Barton. Barton's prophecy condemning Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn led to her execution and the destruction of all copies of her prophecies—or so the world believed. With Alison's discovery, she is catapulted to academic superstardom and scores an invitation to the exclusive Codex Consortium, a week of research among a select handful of fellow historians at a crumbling manor in England, located next to the ruins of the priory where Elizabeth herself once lived. What begins as a promising conference turns into a nightmare as the eerie house becomes the site of a murder. Suddenly, everyone is a suspect, and it seems that answers lie at the root of a local legend about centuries-old hidden treasure.

Cuevas, Mayra and Maria Marquardt. [How to Fake a Southern Gentleman](#) (Atria \$18)

Proud single mom Holly Simmons and ambitious journalist Luisa Martín Moreno have nothing in common—until Atlanta's most powerful man, Griggs Caldecott Johnson III, turns both their lives upside down. Griggs is threatening Holly's job as the events manager at the hoity-toity Dogwood Hills Coun-

try Club, while Luisa gets fired for trying to expose his scheme to defraud an immigrant family and snatch up their land for a luxury development. Determined to fight back, the women team up to infiltrate Griggs's inner circle. Their secret weapon? Elijah Denvil Sweet, a sexy hustler with a knack for reinvention. With a makeover, etiquette lessons, and a little help from Professor Pridmore—a charming, handsome, and single linguistics professor—Eli transforms into “Tripp,” the kind of Southern gentleman Griggs might just trust. But as the plan takes shape, so do tender and unexpected feelings neither woman saw coming—with the very men helping them get justice.

Garvin, Eileen. [Bumblebee Season](#) (Penguin \$29)

Beekeeper Jake Stevenson should be celebrating. His fledgling honey farm has been inundated with orders. Instead, Jake is worried. He can't seem to hire anyone—with local teens more interested in jobs at Hood River's hip waterfront—and there's no way he can handle the approaching harvest all by himself, no matter how adept he's become at maneuvering among the beehives in his wheelchair. Meanwhile Flaco López, a young migrant from Mexico, is lost on Mount Hood when he stumbles upon Jake's beehives in a high alpine meadow. As Flaco takes refuge on Jake's farm, they begin to form a tentative friendship. And the two soon cross paths with Abigail Plue, a scientist more interested in insects than people, who's on Mount Hood studying a threatened native bumblebee. Then a local rabble rouser begins to rally support to build a commercial hunting camp that would destroy Mount Hood's pristine wilderness—the home of Jake's honeybees and Abigail's beloved bumblebees. Now Jake, Abigail, and Flaco must come together

to protect everything they hold dear.

George, Jessica. [Love by the Book](#) (St. Martin's \$29)

Remy is lucky. Her debut novel, based on her three best friends, became an instant best-seller when it was released, and her agent and publisher are clamoring for a follow-up. But just as Remy's creative inspiration seems to leave her, so too do her friends: one moves to New York, one gets pregnant, and one gets back together with her (awful) boyfriend. After an ill-advised one-night stand complicates matters further, Remy is left deeply alone—and unable to find her next book idea. Simone is successful. A Kindergarten teacher with a passion for kids, and a well-paying side hustle that affords her all the material comforts she desires, she doesn't have time for a robust social life. All Simone needs is her close-knit family—but after the true nature of her work is revealed, they cut her off, and she realizes for the first time just how isolated she is. When Simone and Remy bump into each other (literally) in a bookstore, it isn't exactly soulmates at first sight. Simone is guarded and prickly, Remy is insecure and heartbroken, and each woman is harboring a secret. And yet they might just be the missing piece the other has been searching for—if only they can let each other in. A lovely book about books, reading, the power of friendship.

Green, Jocelyn. [The Manhattan Confessions](#) (Baker \$18.99)

Ivy Malone, a New-York Historical Society librarian, is dedicated to preserving Manhattan's rich history, but when society grand dame Adeline King anonymously reveals her shocking life story, Ivy finds herself holding a highly coveted secret. Burdened with the responsibility of keeping Adeline's identity hidden, the matter grows increasingly com-

plicated when two men claim ties to the elderly woman--one of them accusing Adeline of involvement in a crime. Another dilemma brews when Ivy's Italian cousin, Gina, is detained at Ellis Island for lack of proper documentation. Hoping an immigration service can resolve the misunderstanding, Ivy employs their help but is instead thrust into a dangerous world. With time running out, she must unravel the tangle of secrets that bind together Adeline's past, Gina's freedom, and her own safety. Who can she trust, and how far is she willing to go to protect those she loves?

Horowitz, Anthony. [A Deadly Episode](#) (Harcourt \$32)

Ex-Detective Inspector Daniel Hawthorne is dead. Or, rather, the actor playing him in the film adaptation of *The Word is Murder* is. Rising star David Caine has been stabbed, and it seems that everyone on the set had a motive. Caine had just fired his PA. He had fallen out with his director, slept with the screenwriter, humiliated his co-star and dropped his agent days before he was about to sign a multi-million-dollar deal to appear in the next *Spider-Man* movie. But what if Caine's murderer had made a mistake? What if it was the real Hawthorne who was the intended victim? For it turns out that the brilliant detective may have got it wrong ten years earlier. An innocent man has died in jail. And perhaps someone has decided that Hawthorne must pay the price.

Liese, Chloe. [Happy Ending](#) (Gallery \$18)
Two years ago, after their exes got together immediately following their divorces, Thea and Alex somehow found themselves spinning a spite-fueled story about being old friends and first loves. Two years later, what began as a ruse has grown into real friendship—just friendship, despite what friends and fami-

ly seem to think. But when their exes invite them on a two-week, "two family" beach vacation, Alex and Thea start to wonder if this story they've spun might have gotten away from them, and if it's led them to the last place they ever thought it could: a happy ending.

Martin, Connor. [The Silver Fish](#) (Penzler \$26.95)

Journalist Danielle "Dani" Moreau has spent a lifetime trying to outrun the privilege she was born into. Fresh off a personal tragedy, she lands in Ghana to uncover corruption in the local oil industry. But when she crosses paths with James Aidoo, an idealistic young Ghanaian whose father is a local populist politician, Dani remembers what drew her to journalism in the first place: you go looking for a story, but when the real story appears, it's never the one you expected. Dani soon finds herself chasing a scoop that involves an American operative with a violent past, a Ghanaian double agent, and a fight between the United States and China over one of the world's most dangerous and least-known technologies: fiber optic cables. A terrific espionage debut that pairs up a fast-paced plot, an interesting new setting, and some intriguing details about the global fight to control the cables along the seafloor that carry the world's information at the speed of light from one continent to another.

Moylan, Julie Owen. [Elizabeth and Marilyn](#) (Random \$20)

On a cool early-autumn evening in 1956, a glittering array of stars turns out in London for a Royal Film Premiere, where they will be presented to Queen Elizabeth II—an elegant young mother and wife, gracious and self-sacrificing, who has embraced her patriotic duty despite never expecting to take the throne so soon. Cameras flash, and a crowd surges

forward as a limousine pulls up. Out steps a vision in dazzling gold: the greatest star of the era, Marilyn Monroe. She's a global sensation and money-making machine for Hollywood, with curves that drive men wild and a smile that lets women know she's in on the joke. Finally, the two most famous women in the world will come face-to-face in public for the first time. And the world is watching—unaware that Elizabeth and Marilyn have already had an accidental encounter that has changed their lives.

Novak, Brenda. [Meet Me in Italy](#) (MIRA \$18.99)

In the wake of her debut novel's breakout success—and a very painful public divorce—Charlotte Williams-Jackson has something to prove. With her second novel overdue, she's scrambling to hold it together. But her focus is rocked when she discovers that her childhood wasn't as it seemed—and she has a tween half-sister who's been orphaned in Italy. Alongside her best friend, Sloane, and Sloane's charming brother, Julian, Charlotte ventures to the Amalfi Coast to meet her sister. She would never turn her back on family, especially since this girl doesn't have anyone else, but between her looming deadline and her entire identity being flipped upside down, it's *a lot*. Determined to rebuild her life, Charlotte must confront the relationships she's held dear—and the loss of those she thought she had but didn't—forcing her to question everything she understood about herself and the bonds that shape a family.

O'Leary, Beth. [The Name Game](#) (Penguin \$19) Charlie couldn't be happier to take the job of farm-shop manager on the remote, wild Isle of Ormer. She's grieving, a little lost, and in desperate need of a fresh start. Jones has come out of a difficult breakup and is looking forward to some peace away from the noise

of his city life. Moving to Ormer couldn't have come at a better time. But when Charlie Jones and, ahem, Charlie Jones both turn up at Ormer's one and only farm shop, claiming to have been offered the role of manager, everyone is baffled. How could this have happened? And just who is the real Charlie Jones?

Parmar, Priya. [The Original](#) (Random \$30) When young Katharine Hepburn loses her beloved brother, she makes two decisions: she will become famous, and she will never let anyone hurt her again. Leaving home at twenty-one to pursue an acting career Kate is lured to Hollywood, accompanied by her lover, Laura. Los Angeles in the early 1930s is a town full of secrets and Kate has plenty to hide. Soon she is scooped into the studio system and launched as a star—but stars must play by the rules and Kate, brilliant, bisexual, and strong-willed, refuses to conform. Surrounded by a legendary circle of intimates, including the powerful David and Irene Selznick, charming and romantically conflicted actor Cary Grant, ambitious director John Ford, and millionaire tycoon Howard Hughes, Kate navigates a web of sex, ambition, and betrayal. As her career ascends, she faces an agonizing choice: be the star everyone wants her to be, or risk everything to become the woman she always was.

Penner, J. [Death Meets Cute](#) (Sourcebooks \$17.99) SIGNED

Iris Weyward wants to be bad. Truly bad. Terrifyingly, gloriously villainous. But after helping her sisters unleash a spell to throw the realm into chaos, Iris is left feeling strangely empty—and not at all like the villain of her dreams. So, she sets off for the quiet town of Fraywell to build her wicked legacy along. Things start promisingly: a crooked little cottage, a reputation for curses and potions, and a healthy dose of fear from the locals. But when her ogre bodyguard disappears, Iris

needs new muscle. Good thing a fearsome orc just toppled over in her yard. Naturally, she decides to reanimate him. It's a perfect solution. Only, Talon isn't the brooding warrior she was hoping for. He's gentle. He bakes. Worst of all, he's nice. But Iris can't possibly have a thing for her new employee. She's supposed to be the most wicked witch in town!

Perrin, Kristen. [How to Cheat Your Own Death](#) (Penguin \$28)

When Annie Adams heads to London to visit her famous artist mother, Laura, the last thing she expects to find is a dead body. Least of all for it to be Laura's new protégée, left in an alley with her heart surgically removed from her chest. Annie is no stranger to murder—after all, she's solved a few already. And something about this case feels familiar. She's read about one just like it in the journals of her late great aunt Frances, whose friend Vera was killed in the 1960s in the exact same way. As Annie investigates, threats pile up on Laura's doorstep, and it soon becomes clear that she's next. With her mother's life on the line, can Annie find the killer before it's too late?

Rose, Bellamy. [Pomona Afton Can Totally Catch a Killer](#) (Atria \$18)

Pomona Afton knows how to throw a memorable party. After all, for her twenty-fifth birthday, she hosted a global extravaganza that included a masquerade ball in a Scottish castle, clubbing in Ibiza, and skinny dipping on a private island. So, throwing a gala for her fledgling nonprofit should be a breeze. Unfortunately, she has to navigate the high-stakes (and snobby) world of philanthropy, a beloved boyfriend who just can't seem to fit in, and of course, her dysfunctional family, all while planning a party that won't only affect the future of her charity, but her own future in society. But Pom is no quitter. She pushes forward and perseveres...until, right in the

middle of her party, she discovers the body of one of her biggest donors. Suddenly all her hard work is going up in flames. If she's going to salvage her new life path, she must put on her (incredibly stylish) detective hat again and figure out who wants to bring her down. One more measly little murder mystery shouldn't be that hard, right?

Rowell, Rainbow. [Cherry Baby](#) (HarperCollins \$30)

Everybody knows that Cherry's husband, Tom, is in Hollywood making a movie Tom is the creator of *Thursday*—a semi-autobiographical webcomic that's become an international phenomenon. *Semi-autobiographical*. That means there's a character in this movie based on Cherry . . . "Baby." Wide-hipped, heavy-chested, double-chinned Baby. Cherry never wanted this. No fat girl wants to see herself caricatured on the page—let alone on the big screen. But there's no getting away from it. Baby looks so much like Cherry that strangers recognize her at the grocery store. While her soon-to-be ex-husband is in Los Angeles getting rich and famous and being the internet's latest boyfriend, Cherry is stuck in Omaha. One night, Cherry decides to leave all her problems and ventures out to see her favorite band play her favorite album . . . and someone recognizes her from across the room. Russ Sutton knew Cherry when she was a young art student with a fondness for pin-up dresses and patent leather heels. Before Tom. Russ *knows* Cherry. He *likes* Cherry. And best of all . . . he's never heard of *Thursday*.

Scotch, Allison Winn. [The Insomniacs](#) (Penguin \$30)

In the city that never sleeps, it's not always easy to share what's on your mind with the people who know you best. Huddled in an all-night diner over coffee and pancakes, a lonely middle-aged mom, an injured baseball pro, an

elusive retiree, and a young waitress examine the thoughts that plague them in the middle of the night. Within a few restless months, the group of strangers have become a fragile family. And when one of them goes missing in the dead of night, they're thrust into a propulsive mystery pulled straight from a true-crime podcast. Though ill-prepared and unequipped for the job, they begin to piece together the clues left behind. In chasing down answers, they uncover a reason for their friend's disappearance, and are forced to wrestle with the question of how well you can really know anyone—and once you do, how much are you willing to risk to save them? And in doing so, save yourself?

Smiley, Jane. [Lidie](#) (Knopf \$30)

After her abolitionist husband is murdered in the lawless Kansas Territory, Lidie Newton returns, in mourning, to her hometown of Quincy, Illinois. But her sisters have little comfort to offer, and Lidie is haunted by the memories of her failures—until she takes an interest in her niece, Annie. Beautiful, self-assured, and mischievous, Annie sticks out in Quincy. She becomes an actress at the local theater, and when she is offered the opportunity to perform abroad, she decides to run away. But travel is dangerous for a young unmarried woman, so Lidie, armed with her pistol and her wit, goes with her.

Stein, Charlotte. [While You Were Seething](#) (St. Martin's \$19)

Daisy Emmett has been enemies with famous romance author Caleb Miller since they were in college together, and time hasn't lessened their mutual loathing. So when she agrees to manoeuvre him through a PR disaster of his own making, she knows it's not going to be easy. She just doesn't realize how not easy until they somehow end up trapped in the same

truck, on an endless road trip from one book tour stop to another, bantering and butting heads along the way. Then, even more horrifying: people appear to be mistaking her for the woman he dedicates all his books to. The love of his life, his adored beloved—the one who doesn't actually exist. Now they're trapped into pretending she does and that Daisy is her, each fake kiss and phoney embrace ratcheting up the tension to the point where enemies suddenly seems a lot closer to lovers than either of them would like. Or so they're telling themselves.

Wright, Jaime Jo. [The Bookshop of 99 Doors](#) (Baker \$18.99) In 1888, Minnie Tipton finds herself beset by the dark superstitions that envelop the Pennsylvania mansion her father bought. Convinced the vengeful spirit of a Civil War captain haunts the house and worried by her father's rapidly worsening illness, Minnie delves into the home's fraught past in an effort to bring him peace. Yet the lingering impact of the war and the gruesome tale of murder she uncovers only foster more fear and threaten to unravel Minnie's own sanity. In the present day, Triss Bellamy eagerly steps into the role of bookshop manager in the mansion-turned-museum boasting ninety-nine doors. But Triss's dream job turns into a nightmare when havoc breaks loose with the arrival of her brother's team of self-proclaimed paranormal investigators. Their determination to find a rumored one-hundredth door—a dangerous portal to the madness long said to plague the mansion—results in calamity, leaving Triss no choice but to hunt down the truth or watch her brother slip forever beyond her reach.

Nonfiction

Fehrman, Craig. [This Vast Enterprise](#) (Simon & Schuster \$35)

In 1806, when Meriwether Lewis and William Clark return from their journey—having led the Corps of Discovery across eight thousand miles of rapids, mountains, forests, and ravines—they bring an incredible tale starring themselves as courageous explorers, skilled survivalists, underrated scientists, and peaceful ambassadors. While there is truth in those descriptions, there is also distortion. From one of the most exciting new historians to emerge in the past decade, *This Vast Enterprise* offers a novel take on the expedition: a gripping narrative that draws on lost documents, stunning analysis, and Native perspectives. Craig Fehrman spent five years visiting more than thirty archives, interviewing more than a hundred sources, and collecting oral history passed down over centuries. He came to see that the success of Lewis and Clark depended on much more than just Lewis and Clark.

Graham-Dixon, Andrew. [Vermeer](#) (W.W. Norton \$45)

One spring day in 1683, a notary's clerk in Delft entered the home of the late Magdalena Pieters van Ruijven and stumbled upon one of the wonders of the seventeenth-century world: twenty paintings by Johannes Vermeer. Rather than dispel the mysteries of Vermeer's life, this discovery merely gave rise to more questions: How had this one Dutchwoman come to possess the majority of the master's work? And why have these images—among the most beautiful, even sublime, in the history of art—defied explanation for so long? Following new leads and drawing on freshly uncovered evidence from Dutch archives,

acclaimed art historian Andrew Graham-Dixon fills these long-standing gaps in art history, presenting a dramatic and transformative new interpretation of Vermeer's life and work. Dixon considers Vermeer holistically, placing him in his complex historical, social, religious, political, and artistic context in order to understand what spaces he occupied in his life and how the texture of these spaces inspired his paintings and distinguished him from his artistic contemporaries.

Hepburn, Sean Ferrer and Wendy Holden. [Intimate Audrey](#) (Grand Central \$30)

To those who appreciate her work and legacy, Audrey Hepburn was many things. She was a child survivor of the Second World War. She was a fashion icon who made the little black dress the symbol of elegance that it is today. She played a runaway princess, an eccentric socialite, and a nun struggling with her faith. But perhaps her greatest contribution to the world was as a selfless humanitarian in the final years of her life, proving that fear and trauma can be transmuted into kindness and art. For Sean Hepburn Ferrer, Audrey was also his mother. In *Intimate Audrey*, he candidly recounts how the shy "girl from across the landing" became the star we remember and love today. Featuring never-before-seen photographs and excerpts from her personal letters, this book is an intimate portrait of Audrey: as an icon, as a mother, and as an altruist who drew on her own experience of hunger and suffering to advocate fiercely for children in war-torn and famine-stricken countries.

Lefebvre, Louis. [A Bird's IQ](#) (Greystone \$28)

Surveying a wide variety of birds, including crows, finches, tits, and parrots, Louis Lefebvre, a world-renowned expert in animal behavior, describes the remarkable innovations and problem-solving abilities of species often dismissed as "featherbrains." From crows

using cars as nutcrackers to cockatoos crafting tools, Lefebvre reveals how birds exhibit creativity, social learning, and even cultural transmission—traits once thought to be exclusive to humans and other primates.

Nichols, Bruce. [The Emerson Circle](#) (Simon & Schuster \$32)

In the 1840s, America was a land of utopian promise, and nowhere captured this spirit of possibility better than Concord, Massachusetts. At the heart of this intellectual and cultural revolution was Ralph Waldo Emerson, a national celebrity who brought together a circle of bold and creative free thinkers that included Nathaniel Hawthorne, Margaret Fuller, Louisa May Alcott, and Henry David Thoreau. In *The Emerson Circle*, Bruce Nichols delivers a fascinating narrative of this transformative era, breathing life into the friendships and philosophies that comprised the titanic intellectual energy of this American Renaissance.