

Midmonth BookNotes

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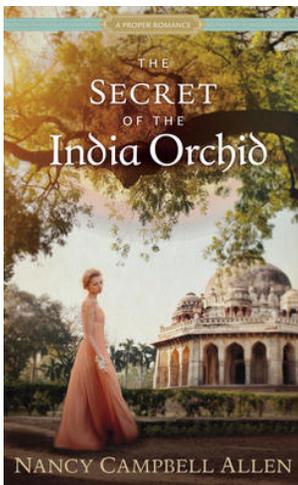
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Dazzling Reads of ALL Types

Abraham, Robert. [Magicians Impossible](#) (St. Martin's \$27.99)

After discovering that he is descended from a line of magical spies, twenty-something bartender Jason Bishop, who is still struggling to come to terms with his estranged father's recent suicide, finds himself dragged into the middle of a centuries-old war involving a shadowy cabal of witches and warlocks, who were responsible for his mother's death years earlier. If you have read all of Ben Aaronovitch's Rivers of London books featuring Peter Grant and Simon R. Green's Secret Histories series with Eddie Drood you may find this debut equally entertaining.



Allen, Nancy Campbell. [The Secret of the India Orchid](#) (Shadow Mountain \$15.99)

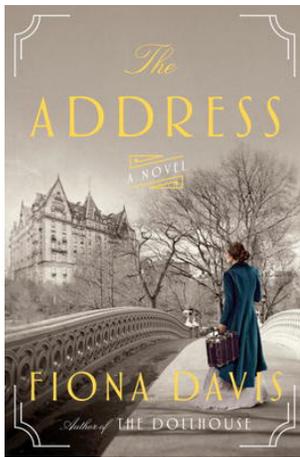
Anthony Blake is in love with his best friend's sister, Sophia Elliot. But his plans to court her are put on hold when he is forced to resume his

role as an undercover spy for the Crown. To protect Sophia, Anthony cuts off all ties to her and exchanges his life as an honorable earl for the façade of a flirtatious playboy. Heartbroken and confused, Sophia travels to India, hoping to find healing in one of the most exotic regions of the British Empire. But the exotic land isn't as restful as she had hoped. Instead, she finds herself embroiled in a mystery of a missing sea captain, a possible murder, and a plot that could involve the prince of India. Miss those marvelous old books by Victoria Holt like *The Pride of the Peacock* and *The House of a Thousand Lanterns*? With its mesmerizing mix of mystery, history, and romance, Allen's latest novel may be the next best thing. Fans of Lauren Willig's *Pink Carnation* series may also want to check this novel out.

Brown, Sandra. [Seeing Red](#) (Grand Central \$27)
Twenty-five years ago, Major Franklin Trapper became a national icon when he was photographed leading a handful of survivors to safety after the bombing of a Dallas hotel. For years, he gave frequent speeches and interviews but then suddenly dropped out of the public eye, shunning all media. Now television journalist Kerra Bailey is willing to use any means necessary to get an exclusive with the Major—even if she has to secure an introduction from his estranged son, former ATF agent John Trapper. Brown's writing career stretches back more than 30 years, but she still is tops when it comes to blending sexy romance and dangerous intrigue.

Dare, Tessa. [The Duchess Deal](#) (Harper \$7.99)

In desperate need of an heir, and therefore a wife, the Duke of Ashbury decides that Emma Gladstone, a vicar's daughter turned seamstress will do, but this seemingly meek girl turns the tables on him when she, after listening to the terms of their arrangement, has a few demands of her own. Dare once again works her own irresistible brand of magic by taking a cast of richly nuanced characters (including an emotionally and physically scarred hero and the feisty heroine who refuses to give up on him), a deliciously clever plot that manages to be both superbly sexy as well as thoroughly romantic, and a generous measure of addictively tart wit.



Davis, Fiona. [The Address](#) (Dutton \$26)

In 1884, Sara Smythe leaves her job as head of housekeeping at a posh London hotel and crosses the Atlantic to take on the position of “manageress” of the new Dakota, the grand apartment building on 72nd Street off Manhattan’s Central Park. The job is demanding, but Sara finds Theodore Camden, the very married architect of the Dakota, to be very helpful, so much so that the two soon become entangled in a romance that threatens both their careers. In 1985, interior decorator Bailey Camden, fresh out of rehab and with no job waiting for her, agrees to oversee the remodeling of her cousin Melissa’s apartment at the Dakota. But as Bailey begins digging into the building’s past, she discovers a personal connection with the past she never could have imagined. The Dakota is one of the most famous buildings in New York City, and its residents have included Lauren Bacall and tragically John Lennon. The Address gives readers an intimate

glimpse into the building’s origins (when it was really considered to be “out in the wilderness”) as well as just how much work went into keeping the place running smoothly. The contrast between life in Gilded Age New York and disco glittery New York of the 1980s is also marvelously entertaining. As with her previous book *The Dollhouse*, Davis effectively uses a dual timeline in the plot of her latest mesmerizing historical novel as readers gradually learn how a murder connects two women living more than one hundred years apart.

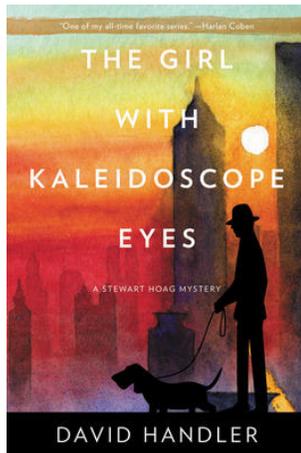
Di Marco, Connie. [All Signs Point to Murder](#) (LittleBrown \$14.99)

Julia Bonatti is alarmed by the astrological signs looming over Geneva Leary’s wedding day, but nobody asked Julia’s opinion and being a bridesmaid means supporting the bride no matter what. Even with the foreboding Moon-Mars-Pluto lineup in the heavens, no one’s prepared for the catastrophes that strike: a no-show sister, a passed-out wedding planner, and a lethal shooting in the dead of night. With anger and grief threatening to tear the Leary family apart, Julia is determined to understand how such a terrible tragedy could have occurred. As she digs deeper into the family’s secrets, her astrological insights lead her to some rather unexpected conclusions. Di Marco also wrote the Soup Lovers mysteries as Connie Archer.

Garrett, Kellye. [Hollywood Homicide](#) (Midnight Ink \$14.99)

Dayna Anderson had a brief fling with fame when she was hired by the Chubby’s Chicken chain to star in their television commercials. Danya thought this and her catch phrase “don’t think so, boo” was going to be her ticket to acting fame until the company told her they were “going in a different direction.” Now Danya does whatever she can to make ends meet. So, when Danya witnesses a hit and run and then later discovers there is a \$1,500.00 dollar reward offered for information about the crime, she figures playing amateur sleuth for the money isn’t the craziest thing she has ever done. Initially, Danya is driven by financial motives to find the killer, but as she gets to know more about the victim, Danya becomes even more motivated to see that

justice is done. And when the killer tries to tie up some loose ends by getting rid of Dayna, all she has to say about that is “don’t think so, boo!” *Hollywood Homicide*, the first in A Detective by Day series, is an absolute hoot! Garrett does a wonderful job bringing her southern California setting to life, and her protagonist Dayna has just enough sass and common sense to carry the day.



Handler, David. [The Girl with the Kaleidoscope Eyes](#) (HarperCollins \$14.99)

Once upon a time, Stewart “Hoagy” Hoag had it all: a hugely successful debut novel, a gorgeous celebrity wife, the glamorous world of New York City at his feet. These days, he scrapes by as a celebrity ghostwriter. And once upon a time, Richard Aintree was the most famous writer in America -- high school students across the country read his one and only novel, a modern classic on par with *The Catcher in the Rye*. But after his wife’s death, Richard went into mourning... and then into hiding. No one has heard from him in twenty years. Until now. Richard Aintree — or someone pretending to be Richard Aintree — has at last reached out to his two estranged daughters. Monette is a lifestyle queen à la Martha Stewart whose empire is crumbling; and once upon a time, Reggie was the love of Hoagy’s life. Both sisters have received mysterious typewritten letters from their father. Hoagy is already on the case, having been hired to ghostwrite a tell-all book about the troubled Aintree family. But no sooner does he set up shop in the pool house of Monette’s Los Angeles mansion than murder strikes. It has been twenty years since celebrity ghostwriter Stewart

Hoag and his companion Lulu last appeared in print. When Handler was asked to write a new adventure for Stewart and Lulu he first deferred the offer since he believed that there was no way to bring the character into the present day since “the modern internet age of 24-hour-a-day Tweets and viral videos had done away with such things as celebrity secrets certainly not the kind of juicy secrets that would make readers keenly interested in a star’s memoir and the failed novelist whose second career was penning those memoirs.” Handler went onto write his Berger and Mitry series, but I for one am thrilled that Handler has brought back Hoagy and Lulu since these books exemplify how important an author’s voice can be to the story. And what a voice Handler has. It is dryly witty and slyly clever making it incredibly easy to see why Handler won both an Edgar award and an American Mystery Award for the Hoagy books.

Jump, Shirley. [Perfect Recipe for Love and Friendship](#) (Grand Central \$14.99)

Bridget O’Bannon is ready for a do-over. After years of pretending she had a happy marriage and denying that she missed the friends and family she’d left behind, she’s headed home to restart her life. But working alongside her family every day at their bakery isn’t as easy as whipping up her favorite chocolate peanut butter cake. Her mother won’t give her a moment’s peace, and her sister Abby is keeping secrets of her own. And there doesn’t seem to be enough frosting in the world to smooth over the cracks forming between them. Bridget can see the recipe for a happy life- including the possibility of a new romance- written out before her, but first she and her family will need to lay bare their secrets and rediscover the most elusive ingredients of all: forgiveness, laughter, and love.

Kinsella, Sophie. [My \(Not So\) Perfect Life](#) (Dial \$17)

When Katie Brenner is fired from her dream job in advertising in London, she’s desperate to get away from her mad boss Demeter, and her crush, Alex, who she thought shared her feelings of adoration but didn’t. Seeking refuge, she goes home to her father’s farm in Somerset to help make her stepmother’s dream of turning their

land into a glamping retreat come true. Applying her savvy marketing smarts, Katie masterminds a glamorous upscale resort. But when Demeter shows up unannounced, with Alex not far behind, Katie is forced to rethink her revenge fantasies and her assumptions about family, love, and office politics and realize how much she may have misjudged everyone--and everything--around her.

Macomber, Debbi. [Any Dream Will Do](#) (Ballantine \$27)

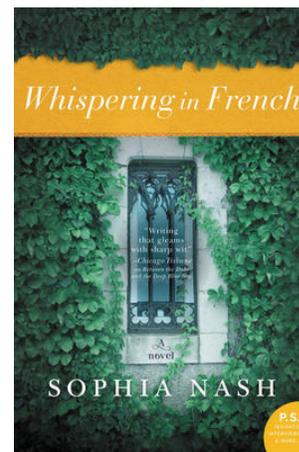
Shay Benson adored her younger brother, Caden, and that got her into trouble. When he owed money, Shay realized she would do anything to help him avoid the men who were threatening him, and she crossed lines she never should have crossed. Now, determined to start fresh, she finds herself in search of a place to stay and wanders into a church to escape from the cold.

Pastor Drew Douglas adored his wife. But when he lost her, it was all he could do to focus on his two beautiful kids, and his flock came in a distant third. Now, as he too is thinking about a fresh start, he walks through his sanctuary and finds Shay sitting in a pew. The pair strike up a friendship—Drew helps Shay get back on her feet, and she reignites his sense of purpose—that, over time, turns into something deeper, something soulful, spiritual, and possibly romantic. Even Drew's two children are taken with this woman who has brought light back into their lives. Perhaps most important, Shay learns to trust again as she, in turn, proves herself trustworthy to her adopted community.

Mallery, Susan. [The Secrets of the Tulip Sisters](#) (Harlequin \$25.99)

Kelly Murphy's life as a tulip farmer is pretty routine up at dawn, off to work, lather, rinse, repeat. But everything changes one sun-washed summer with two dramatic homecomings: Griffith Burnett, Tulpen Crossing's prodigal son, who's set his sights on Kelly and Olivia, her beautiful, wayward and, as far as Kelly is concerned, unwelcome sister. Tempted by Griffith, annoyed by Olivia, Kelly is overwhelmed by the secrets that were so easy to keep when she was alone. But Olivia's return isn't as triumphant

as she pretends. Her job has no future, and ever since her dad sent her away from the bad boy she loved, she has felt cut off from her past. She's determined to reclaim her man and her place in the family whether her sister likes it or not. For ten years, she and Kelly have been strangers. Olivia will get by without her approval now. While Kelly and Olivia butt heads, their secrets tumble out in a big hot mess, revealing some truths that will change everything they thought they knew. Can they forgive each other - and themselves - and redefine what it means to be sisters?



Nash, Sophia. [Whispering in French](#) (Harper \$15.99) How is she supposed to help someone else put the pieces of their life back together again when her own life is a complete shamble? This is what Kate Hamilton wants to know when she arrives in Pays Basque to assess the fate of her family's home Villa Madeleine Marie, and Phillip Soames, an old family friend and neighbor, asks Kate to talk to his great nephew Major Edward Soames. Kate already has her hands full dealing with her recalcitrant grandfather Jean de Roque not to mention sorting out the rift between herself and her daughter Lily to have any time left to counsel a taciturn British Army veteran suffering from PTSD and who knows what else. With *Whispering in French*, RITA award-winning romance writer Nash successfully cracks the code for women's fiction by delivering a superbly written novel rich in unforgettable characters, a beautifully evoked setting, and graceful writing enlivened with equal measures of wry wit and poignant emotion. Put this together with the

snippets of plot narrated by an English hedgehog, which provide just the right measure of Gallic whimsy and gentle charm, and you have a literary *tour de force*.

Overholt, Cuyle. [A Promise of Ruin](#) (Sourcebooks \$15.99)

In early 1900s New York, the formidable crime syndicate known as the Black Hand has been terrorizing the city's Italian community with bombings and kidnappings. When a young Italian girl is found drowned and sexually defiled, Dr. Genevieve Summerford suspects the organization has expanded into forced prostitution, and she won't rest until the trafficking ring is brought to justice"

Phillips, Adam Walker. [The Silent Second](#) (Prospect Park \$15.99)

Chuck Restic has achieved the American dream: a successful career with a large corporation, his own home, and the best health care insurance and retirement package money can buy... but he's crumbling inside. Twenty years in Human Resources have pushed Chuck Restic into an existential crisis. Only when he sets out to find a missing employee from his L.A. firm does he feel alive again. Applying his HR skills and wit to his moonlight detective work, Chuck unravels a web of crooked real estate deals and three murders, staying off a fourth: his own. Anyone who has worked for a large corporation will immediately bond with Chuck Restic. Phillips has the business world down cold and idea of putting Restic in Human Resources is simply inspired since HR staff have access to all kinds of personal information that can prove handy in cracking a case. The story is narrated in Restic's deliciously dry voice, and the characters are quirky but easily relatable. If you miss the wonderful old John Putnam Thatcher mysteries by Emma Lathen or just need a new series that delivers a solidly constructed mystery with an engaging sleuth, don't miss this terrific debut.

Scott, Sophronia. [Unforgiveable Love](#) (HarperCollins \$15.99)

Whatever beautiful, wealthy Mae Malveaux wants in life, she has always gotten with one exception: Frank Washington. After Mae al-

lowed Frank to share her life – and her bed – she expected he would propose, but instead Frank chose to walk away from Mae. So, when Mae hears that Frank is about to marry her cousin Cecily, Mae decides this just won't do. Mae convinces Valiant Jackson to seduce sweet, innocent Cecily and in return, Mae will give Val what he has always desired: one night with her. But what Mae doesn't know is that Val also has another woman in his sights: happily married Elizabeth Townsend. Now between Val's pursuit of Elizabeth and a handsome young musician that draws Mae's attention, Mae's carefully calibrated plans start unraveling in ways she never would have imagined. Inspired by *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, Scott has created a mesmerizing tale of seduction, secrets, revenge and redemption that is played out amidst the fascinating world of Harlem in the late 1940s. Between her beautifully rendered setting and her compellingly complicated characters, Scott's prose positively sings out to readers like a seductive trumpet solo played in a smoky jazz club filled with lost souls.

Skilton, Sarah. [Club Deception](#) (Grand Central \$14.99) Claire Fredericksson is the beating heart of CLUB DECEPTION, LA's most exclusive society of magicians. She's the Queen Bee of Magician WAGs ("Wives and Girlfriends"), and the real genius behind her philandering husband Jonathan's award-winning magic show, but her debilitating stage fright has kept her out of the limelight. Until Claire's life is upended by the arrival of two new women to the closed group of magicians' wives- Jessica, a young trophy wife with a secret; and Kaimi, an art expert looking for the long- lost Erdnase papers by posing as a girlfriend of one of the members. If you are looking for something different to read, this debut book, which is surprisingly sexy but also filled with fascinating details about the craft of magic, by Skilton might fit the bill. Think of it as a mix of Jackie Collins and David Copperfield.

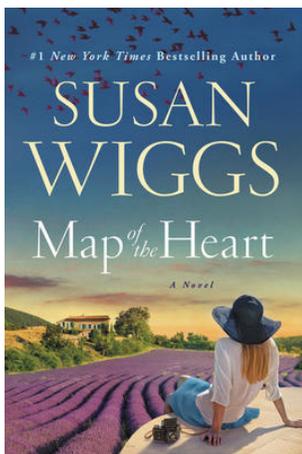
Spindler, Erica. [Other Girl](#) (St Martins \$26.99)

Officer Miranda Rader of the Harmony, Louisiana PD is known for her honesty, integrity, and steady hand in a crisis—but that wasn't always so. Miranda comes from the town of Jasper, a place about the size of a good spit on a hot day,

and her side of the tracks was the wrong one. She's worked hard to earn the respect of her co-workers and the community. When Miranda and her partner are called to investigate the murder of one of the town's most beloved college professors, they're unprepared for the brutality of the scene. This murder is unlike any they've ever investigated, and just when Miranda thinks she's seen the worst of it, she finds a piece of evidence that chills her to the core: a faded newspaper clipping about that terrible night fifteen years ago. The night she'd buried, along with her past and the girl she'd been back then. If you like your romantic suspense on the grittier side, Spindler delivers plenty of spine-tingling chills and sexy thrills.

Steel, Danielle. [Duchess](#) (Bantam \$28.99)

Thrown out of her ancestral home by her brutal half-brothers after the death of their father, Angélique Latham makes her way to Paris, where she takes in abused streetwalkers and transforms them into upper-crust courtesans in an exclusive bordello. Every once in a while Steel does something so outside of her literary wheelhouse, you just have to marvel at her risk-taking.



Wiggs, Susan. [Map of the Heart: A Novel](#) (Harper \$25.99)

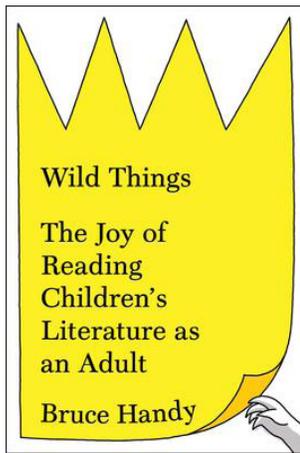
Photographer Camille Adams used to be something of a daredevil. But after her husband Jace's tragic death, Camille traded in the luxury of adrenaline thrills for the practicality of a safe and secure life for herself and her teenage daughter Julie. However, when her father Henry Palmer

unexpectedly receives a trunk filled with items from his family's past in France, Camille surprises herself by agreeing to accompany her daughter and her father on a summer trip to the small town in Provence, where her father grew up. Once there, Camille finds herself turning to history professor Malcolm "Finn" Finnemore for help in putting the pieces of her father's family's past during World War II back together never expecting that Finn will also turn out to play an important part in her future as well. With her latest gracefully written novel, Wiggs delivers the perfect read for women's fiction fans in the form of a superbly crafted story that deftly explores the topics of family, friendship, love, and loss.

Nonfiction

Goldstein, Bill. [The World Broke in Two](#) (Henry Holt \$30)

The World Broke in Two tells the fascinating story of the intellectual and personal journeys four legendary writers, Virginia Woolf, T. S. Eliot, E. M. Forster, and D. H. Lawrence, make over the course of one pivotal year. As 1922 begins, all four are literally at a loss for words, confronting an uncertain creative future despite success in the past. The literary ground is shifting, as *Ulysses* is published in February and Proust's *In Search of Lost Time* begins to be published in England in the autumn. Yet, dismal as their prospects seemed in January, by the end of the year Woolf has started *Mrs. Dalloway*, Forster has, for the first time in nearly a decade, returned to work on the novel that will become *A Passage to India*, Lawrence has written *Kangaroo*, his unjustly neglected and most autobiographical novel, and Eliot has finished—and published to acclaim—"The Waste Land." As Willa Cather put it, "The world broke in two in 1922 or thereabouts," and what these writers were struggling with that year was in fact the invention of modernism. Based on original research, Bill Goldstein's *The World Broke in Two* captures both the literary breakthroughs and the intense personal dramas of these beloved writers as they strive for greatness.



Handy, Bruce. [Wild Things](#) (Simon and Schuster \$26)
“It should go without saying that the best children’s literature is every bit as rich and rewarding in its concerns, as honest and stylish in execution, as the best adult literature – and also as complicated, stubborn, conflicted, and mysterious. Like any worthwhile art, great children’s books are capable of speaking in many different ways to many different readers. You and I might each take something very different away from *Goodnight Moon* or *The Wizard of Oz*, just as we might from *Invisible Man* or *La Dolce Vita*. And what we take away may well surprise or upset us.” This quote is from the introduction to Handy’s marvelously insightful and entertaining look at children’s literature and gives you an idea of just how he will tackle the subject. In *Wild Things*, Handy revisits different classics of children’s books exploring in different chapters such authors and their works as Margaret Wise Brown, Beatrix Potter, Dr. Seuss, C.S. Lewis, L. Frank Baum, and Laura Ingalls Wilder. Handy has some definite opinions about certain books – let’s just say fans of Shel Silverstein’s *The Giving Tree* might want to skip that chapter – but whether you agree or disagree with him on particular titles, Handy is always entertaining.

Korda, Michael. [Alone](#) (WW Norton \$29.95)
Korda, a former editor in chief of Simon & Schuster and author of both novels and non-fiction whose relatives include the British film magnate Alexander Korda and the actress Merle Oberon, focuses on the time period known as the “Phony War” (the winter of 1939-1940 when England held its breath to see if Hitler invade) up to Britain’s retreat from continental Europe at Dunkirk in this combination of memoir and historical survey.

Taylor, Stephen. [Defiance](#) (WW Norton \$28.95)
Born in Scotland in 1772, Lady Anne Barnard lived at the heart of Georgian society. She wrote one of the most popular ballads of her day, captivated Sir Walter Scott with her poetry, rubbed shoulders with the Prince of Wales, dazzled Samuel Johnson with her repartee, and scandalized polite society with her open romantic affairs with several prominent men. When Anne finally did marry it was to a much younger Army officer, Andrew Barnard, which further set the tongues of society gossip wagging. However, Anne proved to be a devoted wife, and she dedicated her life to furthering her husband’s career prospects. When her husband was appointed secretary to the British governor at the Cape of Good Hope, Anne packed her bags and went with him to South Africa, serving as hostess for the governor while also spending much of her free time exploring the region. The couple returned home to England in 1802, but Andrew soon returned to South Africa, where he died. Anne spent the last part of her own life raising Andrew’s daughter Christina, whose mother had been a slave in South Africa, and helping the girl make her debut into society. Using Lady Anne’s own papers, including a six volume never-before-published memoir, Taylor writes about a fascinating lady who defied the conventions of her time in order to live the life she wanted.