ple, places, and times, stitched together into a single, emotional story. —Tracy Babias

The Glittering Hour.
By Lona Grey.

Grey’s (Letters to the Lost, 2016) latest novel is an absorbing tale of love, loss, and the ties that bind. In England in 1936, young Alice is sent to her mother’s childhood home while her parents are away. Desperately lonely, Alice is thrilled when letters from her mother, Selina, send her on a treasure hunt around the estate, which allows Grey to reveal Selina’s past in an alternating timeline. Years earlier, Selina, 21, is a London socialite, part of a freewheeling crowd of frequent partygoers. Out one night, she unexpectedly crosses paths with struggling artist Lawrence. Despite being worlds apart in social class, the two are drawn to one another and before long involved in a secret, passionate affair. While Lawrence exposes Selina to the possibilities of a life beyond the parameters of privilege, she still finds herself torn by her family’s expectations. As Alice continues to search for clues from her mother’s letters, further secrets, devastating choices, and heart-breaking truths are revealed. Together, the shifting narratives form a sweeping historical saga that captures the desires and dilemmas of the heart. —Leah Strauss

Lady Clementine.
By Marie Benedict.

Benedict (The Only Woman in the Room, 2019) shines a light on another under-celebrated woman in history, in this case, Clementine Churchill, wife of Sir Winston Churchill. Beginning on Clementine’s wedding day in 1909 and tracing key events in her life for the next 35 years, the book focuses on Clementine’s struggle to be both an emotional and intellectual support to her demanding husband, her mixed feelings about motherhood, and her own strongly held political beliefs, which she was often forced to sideline in service of her husband’s ambition. The first half of the book jumps through key events in the first 30 years of her marriage, including the death of one of her children, and her complicated relationship with Winston, before delving deep into Clementine’s role during her husband’s wartime tenure as prime minister. Although the frequent jumps forward in time occasionally lead to choppy pacing, Benedict’s well-researched, illuminating account of a complex, intelligent woman will undoubtedly be enjoyed by fans of Melanie Benjamin and Nancy Horan. —Martha Waters

The Spoilt Quilt Makes a convincing case that it was even worse for women. Each piece in this 16-story, female-focused anthology packs a punch. The heroines confront death, disease, rape, domestic violence, and poverty, all while living in an era that denies them equal legal status. But that is not to say the main characters lack agency; each woman fights back to the best of her ability regardless of the unfortunate scenario plotted out for her. Some use misdirection (“The Spoilt Quilt”), some use trained skills (“The Well-Witcher’s Daughter,” “Berserket on the Prairie”), some use cunning (“The Hope Chest”), some use pure, unbridled rage (“The Devil’s Rope,” “Abandoned Places”). This collection isn’t necessarily about winners and losers—if it were, many of these women would be failures, and the stories too grim to read. Rather, it’s about personal strength in a time and place when that was often the only resource an individual had in excess. To that end, The Spoilt Quilt provides brief glimpses of optimism in an otherwise overcast world. —Sarah Steers

A Transcontinental Affair.
By Jodi Daynard.

Hattie is on her way to meet her new fiancé in California on the first-ever transcontinental train ride. Unlike other ladies on board, Hattie wears trousers, is interested in the mechanics of the train, and sneaks cigarettes and swigs from a flask in the cooler and uninhabited luggage car. Hattie marches to the beat of her own drummer but still befriends some of the other passengers and thoroughly enjoys the luxurious food offered. Louisa is a governess for a wealthy family and finds herself spending some of her free time with Hattie. While very different, they quickly form a close friendship. Over time, their friendship turns out to be more than that. They share their short time together and experience what love they can. The women have their fair share of challenges and adventure on the ride, with the end of the trip always looming. Will they be able to have a relationship beyond this transcontinental trip? Like the trip itself, the story is a long, slow journey with adventures and tragedies cropping up along the way. —Emily Borsa

When Silence Sings.
By Sarah Loudin Thomas.

Colman Harpe knows to stay out of the generation-long feud between the Harpe and McLean families. But when his cousin is shot dead in the back by a McLean the same week Colman hears the Holy Spirit commanding him to bring God’s word into enemy territory, his resolve is sorely tested. After a failed attempt to run from his calling, Colman finds himself in the care of a mysterious healer and learns about unconditionally enriching the lives of others through his gifts. As the vendetta rages, he must choose what to follow, blood loyalties or the teachings of Jesus Christ. Thomas brings to life a rugged yet faith-based Appalachian drama perilously situated in the crosshairs of feuding families. Set in 1930 West Virginia, this standalone novel draws on themes of mercy, understanding, and loving your neighbor amidst the dangers of lawless vengeance and moonshine runs. Readers will sympathize with Colman’s reluctance to trust the unknown as the families race to a double-cross conclusion. —Kate Campos

Romance

Almost Just Friends.
By Jill Shalvis.

Medical technician Piper Manning is used to caring for others. She was left in charge of her siblings at age 18, and they finally seem to be adults. She is hoping to sell the lake-front property her grandparents left her so she can afford to get her physician’s assistant degree. Camden Reid is back in the coastal town of Wildstone, California, to check on his father after Cam’s brother’s death in a car accident. As he and Piper explore their strong feelings for each other, Cam must also try to manage his grief and Piper has to deal with her siblings. Her brother returns home after kicking a three-year addiction, and her sister has quit college and informed Piper and Cam that she is pregnant with Cam’s brother’s baby. It takes some arguments and a memorable food fight to help start their healing, but ultimately the two families find a way to work together toward a united future. Readers will be very satisfied with the ending of Shalvis’ latest enjoyable Wildstone story, following Rainy Day Friends (2018). —Amy Alessio

Anyone but a Duke.
By Betina Krahn.

Sarah Bumgarten has absolutely no use whatsoever for men. After being publicly humiliated by the man she thought was going to propose to her, Sarah left London and built a new life for herself as the self-appointed steward of Betancourt, her brother-in-law the duke of Meridian’s estate. Sarah discovers, however, that men can be useful when a stranger intervenes after she and her beloved dog, Nero, are attacked by a band of ruffians. Sarah finds herself able to truly express her gratitude when one of the tenants at Betancourt brings the same stranger, now suffering from a gunshot wound, to Sarah for treatment. But while Sarah tends to the stranger’s wounds, she finds herself plagued by the same question she had when she first encountered him: why does he seem so darn familiar? Krahn wraps up her Sin & Sensibility series with another humor-laced historical romance that gets top marks for originality in plotting and for a www.booklistonline.com November 1, 2019 Booklist 29
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