# Afternoon Discoveries: November 12, 2026

Romance, Women’s Fiction, & Historical Fiction

AMONG THE LETTERS
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## Romance, Women’s Fiction, & Historical Fiction

*A shy young man follows his dog into a Pride Night, and a pizza shop’s newest hire sets her hair on fire on her first day. Today’s stories come from Every Day Fiction, Micromance Magazine, CommuterLit, and Historical Snapshots on Substack. A Union soldier loses his best friend at Antietam, a would-be star leaves 1950s Hollywood for a French village, and an army wife reads a*

*warning about bombs. The back shelf holds essays on writing outside trends, a runaway bride in 1958 Turkey, and three classics of courtship. Each piece asks what love makes us brave enough to do.*

*All links in today's edition were checked against the linked publication, magazine, or publisher page on November 12, 2026.*

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# Featured Discovery

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## At the Overcast - Mark Hall

All afternoon, the narrator promises himself he will not go to Pride Night at the Overcast Coffeehouse in Louisville. For twenty-one years he has lived inside assumptions he never examined, until Ethan, the barista in oversized sweaters, appeared like a light in a room he hadn't known existed. His little mountain feist, Sugar, settles the matter by bolting straight into Ethan's arms. Mark Hall, a North Carolina writer of essays and stories, captures the shy courage of a first step with real tenderness. The final scene on a bench under string lights is lovely.

Read "At the Overcast" at Every Day Fiction

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# The Discovery Desk

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## It Happened All in One Shift - Matt McGee

Darby is the Pie Guy, the pizza shop's local celebrity, and he loses his voice the moment Kareen walks in for her first shift. Within hours she drops a forty-pound stack of boxes on his arm, ruins Mrs. Delaney's large pepperoni, and sets her own hair alight in the oven. She quits in tears, and only then does Darby hand her his phone. Matt McGee, a Los Angeles writer and playwright, keeps this Micromance Magazine meet-cute fast and funny. The last line about a helmet earns its grin.

Read "It Happened All in One Shift" at Micromance Magazine

## The Edges of War - Historical Snapshots

Ezekiel is eighteen and eager when he leaves his family's Pennsylvania farm to join the Union Army with his best friend Charles. Charles carries a locket with a photograph of Sarah, the girl he plans to marry under the biggest oak tree in Chester County. Then comes Antietam, the bloodiest single day in American history, and a goodbye in the trampled corn. This historical fiction snapshot from The Historian's Imagination on Substack is told by a survivor who admits that words only circle the truth. It is quiet, grieving, and humane.

Read "The Edges of War" at The Historian's Imagination

## An Old Friend - Rayna Wilson

Elle sits in a coffee shop turning her square-cut diamond and thinking about a man who is not her fiancé. She remembers which side of his face she liked best, a muddy slide down a grassy hill, and a sneezing fit over a dusty dashboard. Neither of them believed love was easy or

lasting, while a mutual friend went on to marry her school crush. Rayna Wilson, an award-winning short story writer, lets the gap between memory and the present do the work. One small word from her fiancé lands like a bruise.

Read “An Old Friend” at Every Day Fiction

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## Haunted Home - Kelly Murashige

Bailey hates Halloween, yet her best friend Rika talks her into testing a theatre troupe’s haunted house before opening night. Paired in the dark with a cute stranger named Jack, she screams and crumples to the floor at the very first dummy. Jack responds by inventing a life for it, a pie-baking grandmother named Mrs. Applebottom, and then a backstory for every ghost that follows. Kelly Murashige, an award-winning YA novelist from Hawaii, writes a sweet and funny romance for Micromance Magazine. The closing invitation is perfectly pitched.

Read “Haunted Home” at Micromance Magazine

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*Thank you for spending some time with this afternoon’s edition. Below this point are six more stories of love, history, and friendship, three essays on craft and research, and three special recommendations from the back shelf.*

*Special Recommendations can be found near the bottom of the article.*

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# More From the Discovery Desk

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## Someone Unforgettable - Historical Snapshots

In 1957 Los Angeles, the narrator shares a crumbling Spanish-style rooming house off Sunset Boulevard with Jean-Marc Beaulieu, an Iowa boy who passes for French. He wants to be someone unforgettable, rehearses Hamlet on the rooftop, and loses a war-picture role to an actor who really is French. One morning he is simply gone, leaving a note in French on his bed. This historical fiction snapshot follows him to a village school in France, where he finally stops performing. It is a gentle portrait of ambition giving way to a truer life.

Read “Someone Unforgettable” at The Historian’s Imagination

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## Past Lives - Martina Kranz

Ethan’s muse has jilted him, so the painter wanders to Past Lives, a New York antique shop, and buys a silver locket holding a portrait of a dark-haired woman. He names her Clara, and each time he opens the locket she appears, along with a chill and a hissing black cat named Spook. Then a deep voice insists that she belongs to someone called James. Martina Kranz turns a ghost story into a romance about setting someone free. The final morning in the studio feels warm and earned.

Read “Past Lives” at Micromance Magazine

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## An October night in Florence - Veronica L.

Days before All Hallows’ Eve, Elena finds a wax-sealed envelope under her door holding a rusted skeleton key and a riddle in Italian. It leads her through emptied alleys to an overgrown cemetery, where Lorenzo, an art restorer who speaks in riddles, waits with a blood-red rose. The key

opens a crypt his family built centuries ago, glowing inside with candlelight. Veronica L., an Italian writer whose first Italian novel appeared in June, delivers a gothic confession with full romantic sweep. Chestnuts, cypresses, and a coming storm set the mood.

Read “An October night in Florence” at Micromance Magazine

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## West Coast Ghost - Maranda Greenwood

The narrator and a friend only ever meet on the West Coast, where everything is quick touches, shared lighters, and dancing before separate flights to Boston and Australia. Between visits the friend becomes a ghost in dreams, a pier spirit who smells faintly of saltwater taffy. Then she arrives on the East Coast in October, buttoned to the chin, for a corn maze and a bonfire as tall as a barn. Maranda Greenwood writes a breathless, longing piece for Micromance Magazine. Watch what happens to the gloves.

Read “West Coast Ghost” at Micromance Magazine

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## The Preciousness of Ordinary Things - Wendy Lathrop

The narrator keeps vigil beside Barbara, a friend of thirty years who shares the narrator’s birthday and is now being consumed by cancer. A refrain of one breath in and one breath out marks every paragraph like a held hand. Small mercies fill the visit, from lavender oil on tired legs to sips of water for a martial arts sister. Wendy Lathrop, who writes prose poems, essays, and stories, published this brief and tender piece in CommuterLit. The goodbye before a 300-mile drive home is quietly devastating.

Read “The Preciousness of Ordinary Things” at CommuterLit

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## Legitimate Target - Gemma Parry-Paxton

On an army base under low mist, a mother washes the dishes in the rare quiet while her baby sleeps. A young soldier, who looks as if he borrowed his father’s beret, pushes leaflets through every letterbox, and she grabs hers before the rattle can wake the child. The leaflet tells residents to check under their cars for bombs. Gemma Parry-Paxton, a UK writer, draws on her own life as an army wife living on base. It is short, plain, and unsettling in the best way.

Read “Legitimate Target” at Every Day Fiction

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# Beyond the First Shelf

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## What Happens When You Don’t Write To Market - Ingrid J. Adams

When Ingrid J. Adams shopped her debut series, publishers asked her to add vampires or move the story to a magic school. She refused, keeping her paranormal romance about a love spanning lifetimes rooted in real places and 1990s nostalgia, from Sydney’s Northern Beaches to New Orleans. In this essay for Women Writers, Women’s Books, she explains founding her own press and finding readers who adore the

series. It is frank, funny, and useful for anyone writing outside trends. Her plan for the next series includes a werewolf or two.

Read “What Happens When You Don’t Write To Market” at Women Writers, Women’s Books

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## The Runaway Bride: The Real Stakes Behind Ayten’s Choice in 1958 Turkey - Denise Derya Brandt

Denise Derya Brandt opens with her mother filling a Turkish hope chest, or çeyiz, for her before she was even born. That memory leads into the research behind her debut novel, Istanbul Dreaming, whose heroine Ayten flees a forced marriage in 1958. Brandt explains how the 1926 civil code required a bride’s free consent, while family honour and gossip still ruled daily life. This guest essay for Sarah Johnson’s Reading the Past on Substack is lucid and personal. It shows how fiction recovers what laws alone cannot.

Read “The Runaway Bride” at Reading the Past

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## From Tragedy to a Book - Catherine McKenzie

Montreal novelist Catherine McKenzie begins by calling writers magpies who steal small pieces of life for later use. When her brother-in-law’s mother was diagnosed with brain cancer and given six weeks to live, McKenzie found herself asking what she would do with the same deadline. Those questions became Six Weeks to Live, a suspense novel about a woman trying to solve her own murder. Her essay for the Quebec Writers’ Federation is honest about the unease of borrowing a real tragedy. It is a thoughtful look at where fiction begins.

Read “From Tragedy to a Book” at the Quebec Writers’ Federation

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## Special Recommendations

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### The Courting of Prissy Strong - L. M. Montgomery

Twenty years ago, domineering Emmeline Strong ended Stephen Clark’s courtship of her timid younger sister Prissy. Now Stephen is a widower walking Prissy home from prayer meeting, and Emmeline locks her away. Rosanna, a sharp-tongued Avonlea neighbour, takes charge of the romance, complete with a red scarf signal tied to a ventilator and a hiding place in the garret. L. M. Montgomery even gives Anne Shirley a small walk-on role. This story from Chronicles of Avonlea is a warm comedy of second chances.

Read “The Courting of Prissy Strong” at Wikisource

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### Her Letters - Kate Chopin

On a rainy afternoon, a woman sensing that her death is near unties a bundle of letters from a secret lover and cannot bring herself to burn them. She wraps the packet with a note asking her husband, with perfect faith in his loyalty, to destroy it unopened. After her death he honours the request and throws the letters into a black river, and the not knowing slowly consumes him. Kate Chopin published this story in Vogue in 1895. Its quiet study of trust, privacy, and grief still unsettles.

Read “Her Letters” at Wikisource

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## On the Western Circuit - Thomas Hardy

On an October evening in Melchester, the London barrister Charles Raye drifts from the dark cathedral close toward the steam roundabouts of a fair. There he meets Anna, a young servant from a village on the Great Plain, and their brief romance continues through letters. Anna cannot write them herself, so her mistress, Edith Harnham, writes them for her and slowly loses her own heart to the correspondence. Thomas Hardy first published this story in 1891. Its ending on a train is among his most quietly cruel.

Read “On the Western Circuit” at Wikisource

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Thank you for spending part of your day among the letters with us.

*Many of today’s pieces turn on courage that arrives late or quietly. A young man walks into a Pride Night, a timid sister finally marries, and an actor stops pretending. Others are about what we keep, from a silver locket to a bundle of letters better left unread. Romance and historical fiction often meet in those small, brave choices. We hope a few of these stories stay with you this week.*

*I hope one of today’s pieces gives you somewhere worth staying for a while.*

*Take care!*