



I'd like to introduce you to Donna Everhart (Farmgirl Sister #7913). Donna is the *USA Today* bestselling author of Southern fiction with authenticity and grit, including the Southeastern Library Association Award-winning *The Road to Bittersweet* and her most recent novel, *The Moonshiner's Daughter*. Her fifth novel, *The Saints of Swallow Hill*, comes out January 25, 2022. She lives with her husband in a small town just an hour from where she was born and raised in Raleigh, North Carolina. Please visit her online at DonnaEverhart.com.

Meg

Farmgirl BOOK CLUB

DEC/JAN: The Gift of Being Present

Dear Farmgirl Sisters,
Welcome to the Farmgirl Book Club! If this is your first visit, here's how it works ...

In each issue of *MaryJanesFarm*, we suggest several new books, usually coinciding with a different theme and always the kinds of reads that are fun to share and discuss. You pick whichever one tickles your fancy—whether that's all of them, or just one, or something that's not on the list at all! Then we all get together at [Facebook.com/groups/FarmgirlBookClub](https://www.facebook.com/groups/FarmgirlBookClub) to talk about what we're reading.

Happy reading!

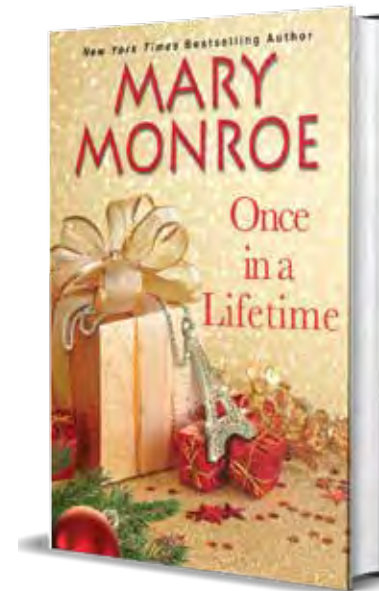
Donna Everhart
Farmgirl Sister #7913

I have to admit, even as I work over my calendar like a complicated geometry equation, trying to figure out how I'm going to fit a very oversized to-do list into the four short weeks between Thanksgiving and Christmas, part of me is still stuck in summer mode. I find myself forgetting the daylight will not, in fact, stretch past 8 p.m., the air is no longer silky and warm, and we most certainly don't have another six months to go before any holiday shopping has to begin. Suddenly, the cold air swoops in, it's dark at 5 p.m., and the holidays are ... *now!*

In these moments, it's all too easy to get overwhelmed by the speed of passing time, the hurry to fit everything in, scrambling from one preparation to the next in the rush to get it all done. I know I'm not alone—especially among my Farmgirl Sisters—in this tendency to take on too much this time of year, filling my plate with so much decorating, cooking, shopping, wrapping, hosting, card sending ... all the "ings"! The holidays come and go in a blurry flash and only afterwards do I realize I've forgotten to enjoy them.

That's why I'm making a commitment—right now in front of everyone—to stop clinging to the last season, stop fretting about the next, and instead, allow myself to cherish the present. For me, that means taking time to slow down and savor the things that feed my soul, whether that's indulging in some homemade treats with my granddaughter, taking a walk with my camera to capture moments of everyday beauty, or, yes, spending an afternoon curled up with a good book.

The five festive novels in this issue will bring a dose of Christmas cheer to your much-deserved quiet time, and I'm excited to discuss them with you online in the Farmgirl Book Club group on Facebook at [Facebook.com/groups/FarmgirlBookClub](https://www.facebook.com/groups/FarmgirlBookClub). Until then, I wish you and your loved ones a merry *and* mindful holiday season that shines brighter than the neighbor's gigantic, carol-blaring, light-flashing, mechanical Christmas yard decorations!

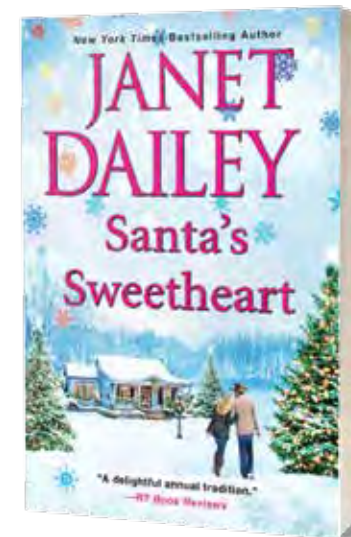


Once in a Lifetime

by Mary Monroe

A touch of holiday magic turns a chain of unexpected events into a year-round gift of love and a second chance at life in this heartwarming tale about an untraditional holiday season gone awry. In a year full of lockdowns, who hasn't dreamed of flying off to a faraway place? That's exactly what free-spirit Vanessa Hays plans when she books her very own Christmas in Paris. But when her passport is accidentally sent to the ever-prudent Judith Guthrie, a small gesture of kindness between

these two completely opposite women results in Vanessa saving the life of Judith's younger brother. An inspiring and earnest story of paying-it-forward, I found that this playful yet thought-provoking novel made me want to give a big hug to those I cherish the most.



Santa's Sweetheart

by Janet Dailey

Janet Dailey brings us to the charming small town of Branding Iron, Texas, a close-knit community where the holidays are a very big deal. But the only thing 6-year-old Maggie wants for Christmas is to find a girlfriend for her widowed dad, the town Sheriff. As she considers the available candidates, she zeroes in on her pretty schoolteacher, Miss Grace, and contrives a plan to get them together. It doesn't matter if Grace isn't looking for a relationship or the grownups soon

realize what Maggie is up to and insist on thwarting her plans. Maggie—and fate—can be very persistent. A heartwarming story filled with hope and holiday joy, *Santa's Sweetheart* is a perfect treat for all the Hallmark Movie fans out there and a sweet reminder that love can rise above all else—especially at Christmas.

Santa Cruise

by Fern Michaels

When four women who were best friends in high school reconnect at their 15-year reunion, they realize that even though their lives have taken them in wildly different directions, there's one thing they do have in common: They're all still searching for Mr. Right. Somehow, when it comes to romance, the success they've achieved in all other areas of their lives has proved elusive. So, when Frankie suggests they spend the holidays together on a weeklong singles' cruise, four tickets aboard the Medallion of the Seas are officially booked. If seven days and nights trapped with hundreds of lonely fish in a singles-cruise dating pool doesn't sound like your idea of Christmas magic, you are not alone! But it sure makes for a sweet, funny, escapist read that will make you grateful for the kinds of girlfriends you can count on.



The Twelve Days of Snowball

by Kristen McKanagh

This whimsical, heartwarming holiday novel is told in part from the perspective of a mischievous, matchmaking bundle of feline fluff named Snowball, and if that doesn't put a smile on your face, I don't know what will! It's Christmastime at the Weber Haus B&B, and Snowball is taking her job as the mountainside inn's official greeter, watcher, and matchmaker very seriously. This year, she's determined to work her magic on the inn's kind new manager, Sophie ... even if it means having to cooperate with her *least* favorite human, Daniel!



Christmas at the Amish Bakeshop

by Shelley Shepard Gray, Rachel J. Good, and Loree Lough

What's more comforting this time of year than the warm smell of cinnamon and gingerbread fresh from the oven? Baking all kinds of holiday cookies is a big tradition in my family, so I really appreciated how this collection of three Christmas stories revolving around a Lancaster County bakeshop truly inspired me to break out the sugar! Each novella features a different woman finding new hope, love, and other Christmas surprises amidst the sweet warmth of homemade holiday baked goods. It's a celebration of the importance of family, the comforts of community, and the special way food can bring people together during this most wonderful time of the year.



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