

Books to beguile with style

Boxing Day is for napping, sipping single-malt Scotch, nibbling very good chocolate, and, in the best of all possible Christmas worlds, not getting out of your dressing gown all day. Above all, it's about being quiet—not playing asinine party games or going out for a brisk walk. If your challenge is how to convey this message to everyone who's sharing the roof you're under, one sneaky way is to give the entire clan books so engrossing that they dive into them first thing and only quit for the cold turkey.

FOR YOUR MULTIPLY PIERCED COUSIN IN HER FIRST APARTMENT “At the end of the day, if in doubt, paint it black and slap a skull on it.” Nope, this is not Martha Stewart talking. But then, Martha would probably not suggest painting all your walls in Benjamin Moore's Exotic Red, tossing purple velvet cushions on the floor, or deliberately picking drippy, not dripless, candles. In his spookily subversive do-it-yourself book, *Paint It Black: A Guide to Gothic Homemaking* (WeiserBooks, \$20.95) author Voltaire describes and demonstrates how to transform even the most normal living space into spooky surroundings with gothic baby dolls,

black candelabra, and dead things.

FOR YOUR COOL BRO AND HIS PARTNER Right now they're stuck in a one-bedroom developer special. What they really yearn for is a Kits Edwardian, so give them *William Morris and the Arts and Crafts Home* (Chronicle Books, \$54) in which art historian Pamela Todd recounts the life of the multitalented man whose design guidance still works today. “All rooms ought to look as if they were lived in, and to have, so to say, a friendly welcome for the incomer,” he wrote, and the full-colour photos of his own homes show exactly what he meant: simple-lined furniture, textiles that are complex in pattern but still easy to live with, and nothing that (Morris's most famous maxim) was neither beautiful nor useful. Case studies demonstrating how Morris's décor approach works in today's homes elevate this book way beyond a generously illustrated biography. Including a sample of authentic William Morris fabric or wallpaper would be kind so, after the bookshop, head next to Victoria-based www.charlesrupert.com/ and order one on-line.

FOR YOUR MOM BECAUSE SHE DESERVES IT Life must have been

tough for Californian writer Gina Hyams as she dragged her progressively more toned and smoothed bod from one spa to another, 20 in all, starting in Mexico and ending at B.C.'s own Clayoquot Wilderness Resorts. She took photographer Cesar Rubio along, and their stops are chronicled in *Pacific Spas: Luxury Getaways on the West Coast* (Chronicle Books, \$29.95). The prose rarely rises above PR-speak—this is still dream fodder. One last thought: since this is your mom we're talking about, maybe suggest the rest of the tribe chip in for a gift certificate for a real spa getaway.

FOR YOUR SISTER-IN-LAW WHO LIVES FOR SEX AND THE CITY RERUNS Why give her a single pair of Blahniks (maybe the \$800 tab has something to do with it) when you can let her fantasize about the 165 styles shown, often larger than life, in *Blahník by Boman: Shoes. Photographs. Conversation* (Chronicle Books, \$115). The designerchat reads like a script for a camp movie. Advise her to skip it (or read it aloud) and focus instead on the witty photographic alliances of shoes and settings: a black-edged clear-plastic ankle boot stands in front of a chest X-ray; a bewitching purple shoe is a “vase” for a bouquet of lilacs; gold crocodile needle heels rest in the jaws of a real crocodile. You get the picture.

FOR YOUR AUNT WHO'S PLANNING A HOME RENO From pocket doors to “floating” shelves and a window-spanning dish rack for privacy, *Inside the Not So Big House* (The Taunton Press, \$49.95) by Sarah Susanka and Marc Vassallo is less concerned with the how-tos than the why-tos of incorporating its space-saving and -creating ideas. Twinned with/without shots reveal how, for instance, curving the edge of a desk area visually widens a nar-

CHIC OF THE WEEK > BY ANGELA MURRILLS

Make mincemeat of your gift list this Saturday (December 3) on the lawn of the Vancouver Art Gallery (750 Hornby Street) at the first annual Discover, Shop, and Celebrate Local marketplace. The brainchild of BALLE BC, the daylong event brings together 80 Lower Mainland vendors of furniture, art, photography, and, as they say, much more. There will be fashion aplenty with Bodacious, Mala Kuja, Twigg and Hottie, and Venus & Mars just some of the names moving downtown for the 11 a.m. kickoff. A fashion show at 1 p.m. showcases local and sustainable clothing, and there will be live music, too.

Fashion Plate
Angela Murrills

