

HEADLINE

*Fiction
to get you
talking*



SPRING/SUMMER 2026

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WHIDBEY

T. Kira Madden

'A masterpiece' CARMEN MARIA MACHADO

'In the realm of Patricia Highsmith and *Gone Girl*' CHELSEA BIEKER

'A hauntingly original literary mystery. Devastating and deeply human' LUCY ROSE

'This is the book everyone will be talking about' ADAM JOHNSON

You want to know who did it, but that was never the question. Or, it was never the right one.

Birdie Chang doesn't know much about Whidbey Island, only that it is far. On the ferry, she has an unnerving encounter with a stranger, and finds herself telling him everything: how she was sexually abused as a child, how the perpetrator now walks free, how the calls and emails from him haven't stopped and she is

on the run; how she wants to kill him. The stranger poses a shocking question – if she agrees, he will murder the man who hurt her, with no strings attached. She gives him a name.

On the other side of the country, Mary-Beth receives a phone call from the police: her only son has been murdered. What follows is a complex story of three women connected through one man: Birdie, a woman on the run from her past and her abuser; Mary-Beth, the abuser's loving mother; and Linzie, a former reality star turned bestselling memoirist, and another victim of the same man.

Whidbey is a brilliant reimagining of the whodunnit – a searing, propulsive novel that asks who has the real power over a story: the one who lives it, or the one who tells it?



© Shirley Cai

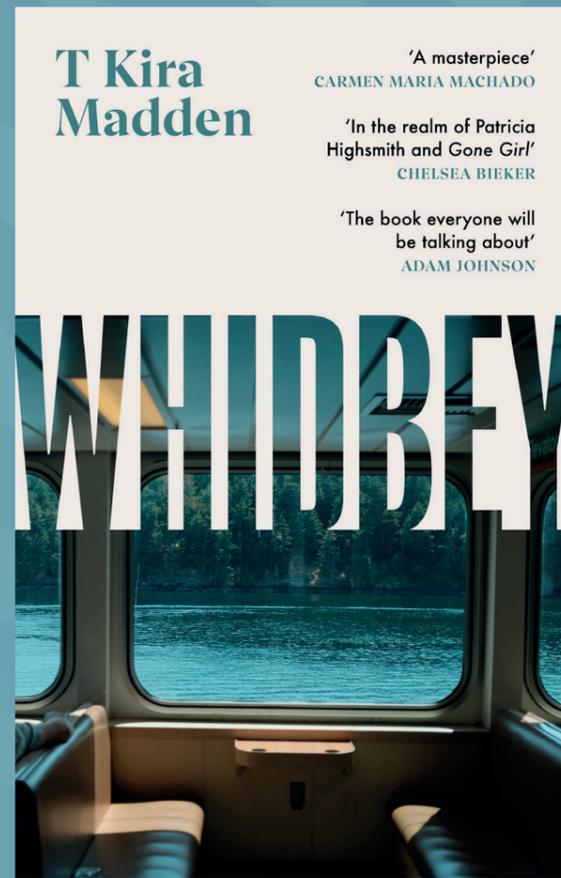
T Kira Madden is a diasporic Kanaka 'Ōiwi (Native Hawaiian) writer and author of the acclaimed memoir *Long Live the Tribe of Fatherless Girls*, which was named a *New York Times* Editors' Choice, as well as a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle John Leonard Prize, and the Lambda Literary Award. Winner of the 2021 Judith A. Markowitz Award, she is an assistant professor at Hamilton College in Creative Writing and Indigenous studies and served as the Distinguished Writer in Residence at University of Hawai'i at Mānoa.

You want to know who did it. You'll know. You'll find out even if the women in the story do not. Even if the women of this story are owed their answers. More than you, they are owed this. But they will never find their answers. They will never find their peace after the war. Women are rarely in receipt of what they are owed. You want to know who did it, but that was never the question. Or, it was never the right one.

'What is the question?' Judge Roberts asked. 1997 in the Broward County Courthouse, one of the small hearings before the medium hearings before the big hearing. Birdie's in her padded blazer from Burdine's, the one she hates, and she has tried to raise her hand. She's been told she shouldn't raise her hand in court – *Remember, this isn't school, instructed her father, there are different rules, you can't talk to Francine the way you usually would* – but Birdie raised her hand anyway, an impulse. What Birdie wanted to ask the judge was: 'Are they allowed to lie?'

They is the front left portion of the courtroom. Calvin and his sleezed-out pin-striped attorney, plus a security guard. Years from now, this attorney will be found naked and waterlogged in his own swimming pool up in Jacksonville, his eyes open, morphine in his system. But right now, he's calling Birdie mentally unsound and untrustworthy. He has spat the word immigrant about Birdie's father, and the Chang family holds *anti-American beliefs*. He has said Birdie is not a *credible witness* – for one, she is nine. Also, when questioned, she could not remember the date of the alleged incident. First, it was end of May. Then April. Chang has pointed directly to Calvin Thomas Boyer as alleged perpetrator in a lineup, but Boyer also resembles River Phoenix, a photo of whom Birdie has in the front slip of her binder at school. Classmates have confirmed this.

Birdie raises her hand.



'What is the question?' Judge Roberts asks. Notably, the judge does not look at her.

Birdie does not, will not, remember this part of the day, the raised hand, the irritated judge, the outburst. There are many things she will forget; it's true she can't always nail down the date, or what she wore that day, or how Calvin asked her over; she's tried to draw the layout of the Boyers' house, though the doors in her mind keep changing.

None of this makes her *untrustworthy* regarding the thing she remembers.

You'll find out even if the women in the story do not

LOVE LANE

Patrick Gale

'Miraculous, mischievous and quietly devastating' RACHEL JOYCE

'A tender, delicately devastating novel' SARAH WATERS

'An engulfing, deeply humane novel about the triumphs and failures of human connection' MARINA KEMP

'There is no judgement here, only humanity. A joy and a lesson for our time' ANN CLEEVES

'An involving story of reconciliation, secrets and compromises, rich in emotional truth and evocative historical detail' CLARE CHAMBERS

'It has the feel of a small-scale epic, filtered through distinct voices, about family and memory, estrangement and homecoming' JAMES CAHILL

'He makes you care about the characters – a deep, moving novel' GEORGINA MOORE

A reunion. A journey. A longing for a place called home...

When veteran Canadian wheat farmer, Harry Cane sails home to an England transformed by two world wars, his arrival triggers unwelcome self-examination for the family he abandoned.

His daughter feels duty bound to take him in but is ambushed by a long buried anger she has never before expressed. Harry's effect on the next generation is less predictable, and enables his granddaughter to deal with an unspeakable trauma, while her gentle husband feels seen for who he truly is.

Can Harry stay and make a new life before it's too late, or will he find himself cast out again, punished for having witnessed and understood too much?



© Jillian Edelstein

Patrick Gale was born on the Isle of Wight and now lives on a farm near Land's End. One of this country's best-loved novelists, his most recent works are *A Place Called Winter*, *Take Nothing With You* and *Mother's Boy*. His BBC 'Queer Britannia' television drama, *Man In An Orange Shirt*, was shown to great acclaim in 2017 and won an International Emmy Award.

He was no longer a letter writer, since he had fewer and fewer people to write to as his years in Canada progressed. One or two friends and acquaintances who had lived in Winter or North Battleford before moving away might write occasionally, and he always wrote back, politely, within a day. Posting or receiving letters involved a trip into town to the post office and he found he didn't often have the time to go expressly, so post-office trips tended to be combined with his weekly trip into Winter with a horse and cart for provisions. There were rarely letters for him, but there were sometimes things he had sent off for through catalogues – seed, spare parts, the warmer socks and underwear he liked. Everybody shopped from catalogues so these deliveries the postmistress would leave, ready to be called for, but personal letters aroused her interest and, if she saw Harry tying up his horse on the street, she might leave her position to call out to him from her door, waving an envelope for all to see.

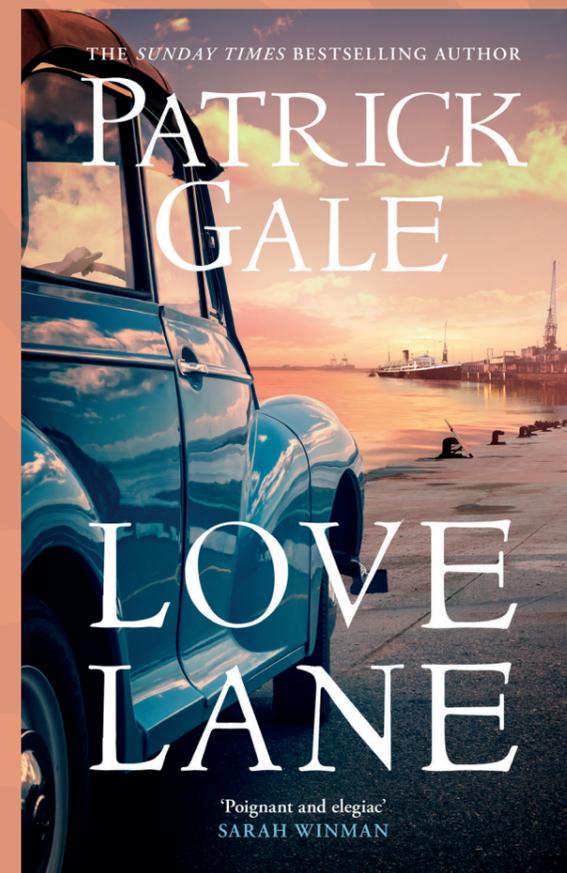
On this occasion, there was even colour in her sallow cheeks.

'Mr Cane!' she called. 'A letter from England. A woman's hand, I think.'

She clearly hoped he would open it on the spot, but it was so long since he had heard from anyone back home, as he still thought of it, that he was frightened of what it might contain. He thanked her, tucked it into his breast pocket without even glancing at the handwriting, and went swiftly about his other business, freshly aware of it whenever he reached for his wallet.

Once home, he set the horse in its paddock with the others, untied the dog, put the kettle on the stove then sat at the kitchen table to take the thing out at last.

The navy-blue handwriting was unfamiliar and extraordinary. It was florid, with deep loops and dots and crosses, a decorative, emphatic hand so far removed from the dutiful copperplate taught in schools that



it spoke equally of flair and independence. He flipped the envelope and saw the return address was from a mansion block in Battersea – not a place anyone he knew would have ventured – but perhaps the war had altered London drastically.

He knew his first wife, Winnie, had long since moved on. He had barely arrived in Winter than her lawyer sent through divorce papers for him to sign, and he hoped she had found lasting happiness. Once settled, he had persisted in sending their daughter, Phyllis, a birthday card every year so she would not think he had forgotten her. He sent them to the only address he had for her: her formidable grandmother's Thames-side villa in Strawberry Hill. He heard nothing back.

The first words he read on opening this letter were Dear Father, and at those his eyes swam with tears so that he had to set the letter down for a moment to blow his nose.

SMALL COMFORT

Ia Genberg

'You know, love is love, he says. But what about the revolution?'

Intricately built and wickedly humorous, these interconnected short stories are all about one thing: money.

From an interview with a child star turned thief to the mysterious death of an employee at a drug manufacturer – or the couple feigning married bliss to keep their inheritance, *Small Comfort* carefully unravels the value we place on both money and people.

What does it really mean to be in debt to someone? How does our financial worth permeate the ways we think and feel? And what do we lose when we supposedly win? *Small Comfort* skewers its characters, slyly implicating the reader along the way.



© Sara Mac Key

Ia Genberg (born 1967) began her writing career as a journalist and published her debut novel *Sweet Friday* in 2012. She went on to write *Belated Farewell* (2013), *Small Comfort* (2018) and *The Details* (2022) — all widely praised by critics and frequently featured on Swedish bestseller lists.

The Details, shortlisted for the 2024 International Booker Prize and winner of the August Prize 2022, has since sold in thirty-nine territories around the world.

The English translation of *Small Comfort* publishes in 2026.

A brilliantly original and thought-provoking novel from the author and translator of *The Details*, shortlisted for the 2023 International Booker Prize.

Praise for *The Details*:

'Miraculous'

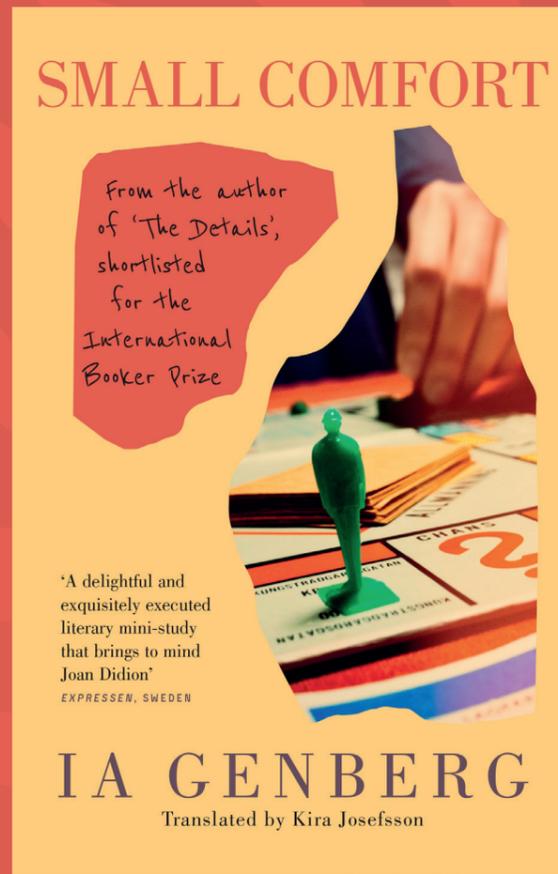
HERNAN DIAZ, AUTHOR OF *TRUST*

'I wish I could write like this'

FREDRIK BACKMAN, AUTHOR OF *A MAN CALLED OVE*

Marriage: entered into on a high, ended in boredom. In between, muddled waters, just like in all marriages with offspring. The arrangement soon turned into a set of transactions, investments in time and chores, debt regulation through sex and favours, interest-carrying duties on a running tab. Nothing wrong with that; it's how it is for everyone. Still, most people prefer to turn a blind eye to the similarities between their own lives and the cuneiform tablets dug up by archaeologists. In contrast to what people thought these would speak of once deciphered – poetry, of course, or even truth; certainly they would contain some wise words about the gods and the meaning of everything – their message proved to be nothing more than laborious notes on debts accrued and settled. The oldest known document in human history is about money: saved, borrowed, held and soon to be recovered credit.

Marriage: a way to push one debt into the future and leave another behind, and then there's the conclusion that anyone who wants to be free of payments should choose solitude. A market is created as soon as the parties realise that their interests are distinct. Trade materialises, and the potatoes – so cheap at the time of harvest – are suddenly terribly expensive in springtime when the stores run dry. Lovers meet or walk side by side during a brief, interest-free forever, but sooner or later they'll find themselves at either side of the negotiating table. A shared currency emerges in the wake of the first gaze, and love's generosity, this primary foundation of the world, slowly turns into a commodity for sale. Happy marriages are just like all the others – just like the unhappy ones – but the currency is always specific. Mine and Cilla's market was standard in size: two kids, two adults. I spent a long time paying off an early infidelity and finally shed my debt by taking on most of the parental leave. The children stepped in as guarantors in their respective moments of birth, stabilising the course. Cilla brought



an early offering that soon transformed into a means of unspoken blackmail: the future inheritance. My artistic talents fell in value as Cilla's career advanced, and was finally reduced to zero in the years after my parental leave, when I didn't achieve shit. This, in turn, created a debt, which I regulated using rents on larger projects in the home. Whenever the general mood fell, Cilla would introduce a stimulus by purchasing last-minute tickets to some sunny holiday spot; an accounting of the debt on my part, repayment on the part of Cilla and the kids, with new opportunities to explore the market's mechanisms as a result.

DEATH'S DAUGHTER

S.A. Barnes

'Action-packed and scorching . . . Paranormal lovers rejoice, your new obsession has arrived!' HANNAH WHITTEN

'Witty, scorching, and action-packed. Barnes totally kills it - pun intended' MELISSA LANDERS

'Darkly original, layered, and full of steam' SOPHIE JORDAN

Time for her to join the family business.

Perfect for fans of *Ninth House*, *Nightshade*, and *Neon Gods*, *Death's Daughter* is a dark, spicy and deliciously autumnal contemporary romantic fantasy in a dark academia setting, in which the only daughter of Death is named his successor, making her both a powerful ally and a massive target, all while she tries to make it through her final year at college . . .

Death has been part of her from the very beginning . . .

Jocasta has carved out a normal life at Beecher University — well, as normal it can be when your name is Jocasta and you are the only child of Death.

Jo has a good job, great friends, and is trying to get over a secret fling with an unbelievably attractive (and unbelievably unavailable) grad student. But she's also lonely.

No one close to her knows the truth about who — or what — she is. Or that she must feed to survive, and she feeds on them — their disappointments, failures, and rejections. It's not a perfect system, but it works. Just.

Until a handsome stranger — and descendant of Lust — shows up on campus and announces that Death has formally named Jo as his successor. Now she's both a powerful ally and a massive threat, and everyone she loves is a target.

But Beecher is the one place that has ever felt like home, and Jo will do anything to protect it. Even if it means becoming the very thing she hates . . .

S.A. Barnes works in a high school library by day, recommending reads, talking with students, and removing the occasional forgotten cheese stick as bookmark. Barnes has published numerous novels across different genres under the pen name Stacey Kade. She lives in Illinois with more dogs and books than is advisable and a very patient husband.



© Mita Duboyiski

At the bar, I raise up on my tiptoes to see over the crowd and follow the direction of Dove's transfixed stare.

Despite the sheer volume of bodies in Happy's, I pick the stranger out almost instantly.

He's leaning against one of the high-top tables by the dartboards, a mug of beer in one hand. Dressed in dark jeans and what looks like an expensive white cable knit sweater, one of those Irish ones, he stands out among students in their puffer jackets and bright purple Beecher sweats like a predator in a herd of unwitting gazelles.

Or el chupacabra in a daycare.

He's handsome, of course. A messy tousle of dark hair, strong brows that might be on the edge of too thick, a square chin straight out of a superhero comic book. It's not his individual features so much as their combination that creates that allure, the charisma that makes it hard to look away from him.

But it's more than just his appearance; it's the semi-circle of people around him, drawing closer every second. Like they're freezing and he's the fire, keeping them alive and warm. He must sense me watching. Because his gaze snaps from his adoring fans straight to me, direct, unflinching. Like he doesn't care who sees him see me. Green eyes meet mine steadily, sending a bolt of attraction zipping down my spine.

Stupid lust magic.

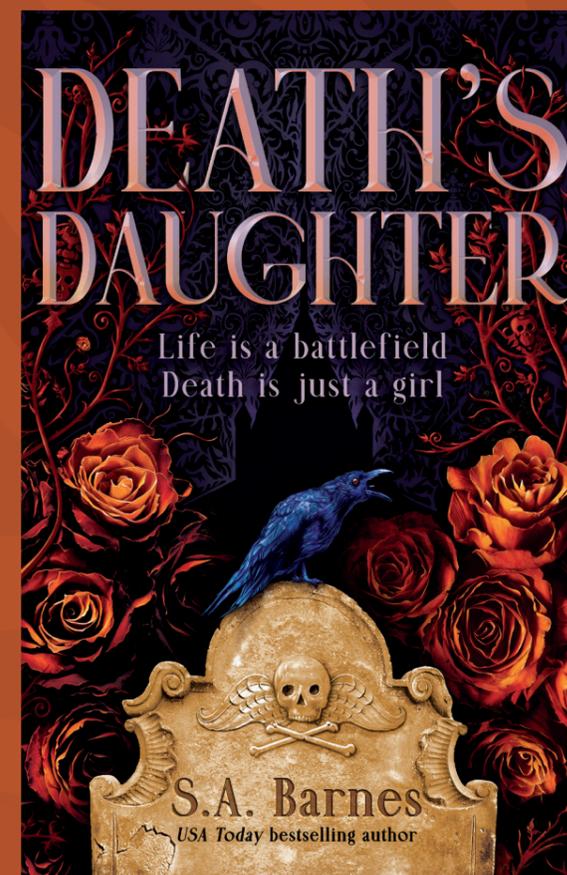
As if he knows what I'm thinking, he winks at me. Then he mouths words, so carefully, so precisely, that I can "hear" him all the way across the room.

"Hello, Death's Daughter."

My breath vanishes like I've been punched in the lungs, and I struggle to inhale.

He knows who I am.

Instantly, I lower myself from my tiptoes to stand flat footed, blending in with the crowd a little more. Bad enough that



he knows I'm like him — a child of the Old Ones — but knowing me is worse, so much worse.

My heart thunders in my chest, like the hoofbeats of panicked horses pounding down the beach. *Okay, okay, calm down.*

This guy can't be here for a territorial dispute. No one has claimed Beecher, the town or campus. No children of who-the-hell-ever anywhere around. Beecher is the magical equivalent of an abandoned house, as far as the Old Ones are concerned. I made sure of that before I confirmed my enrolment freshman year.

*"Hello, Death's Daughter."
My breath vanishes like I've
been punched in the lungs,
and I struggle to inhale.
He knows who I am.*

TEDDY BEARS NEVER DIE

Cho Yeeun

The horrormance genre mash-up you've been waiting for — from the award-winning Korean author Cho Yeeun comes a new novel where a young girl and a teddy bear team up to enact revenge!

When the fledgling coastal town of Yamu is rocked by a mass-poisoning attack at the Seaview Parc, the luxury high-rise meant to revitalise the city, Hwayoung is one of many who lost family members. Except, she has never believed that her mother was poisoned. Now, fuelled by grief and a desire for revenge, Hwayoung spends her time hustling to save every penny and bring those responsible to justice.

Across town, Doha wakes up in a teddy bear and realizes something sinister

has taken his body. When fate brings Hwayoung and Doha together, the two team up for a revenge quest that will shake the city's shiny facade to its rotten core.

This time, revenge is not just personal — it's supernatural.

TRANSLATED FROM THE KOREAN BY SUNG RYU

'The perfect mix of horror and heart'
KYLIE LEE BAKER

'A grotesque, hilarious and heart-felt romp' BITTER KARELLA

'Absolutely singular' MEGAN BONTRAGER

Cho Yeeun has enchanted the literary world since her notable debut which won the Kyobo Book Award, and subsequently published a series of spirited, yet darkly captivating horror/thrillers. Her standout short story collection, *Cocktails, Love, Zombies* not only soared in sales, exceeding 100,000 copies since its 2020 release but also crossed borders, being published internationally in Japan, China and Taiwan. Her first novel to be translated into English was *The New Seoul Park Jelly Massacre* (Honford Star, 2024).



© Hae Ran

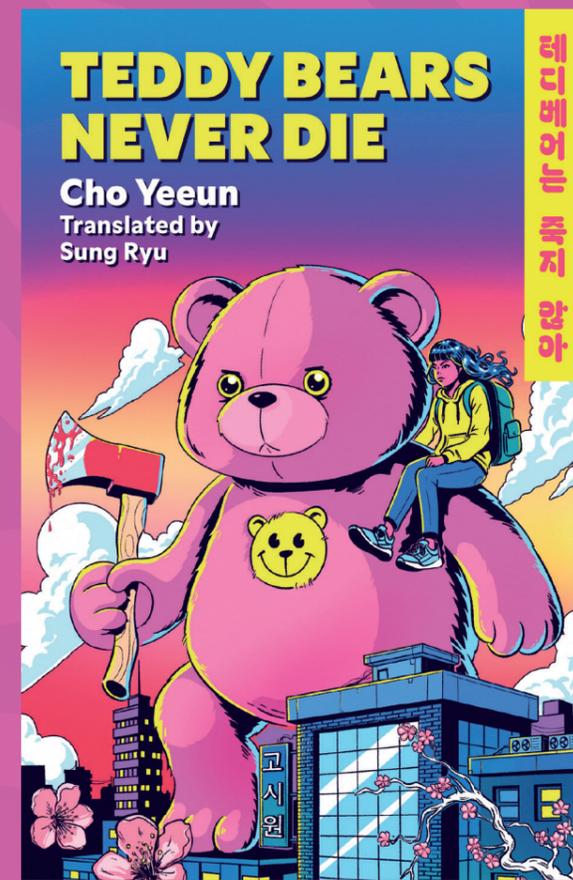
'What makes you think you're not one of us? You're just a loser.'

Hwayoung's comment seemed to backfire as the man's expression soured at once. The word 'loser' seemed to have hit a nerve. She eyed the cockroach spray she'd left on the bedside table. Fuming, the man stomped toward her. Hwayoung bent forward and lunged toward the bed with everything she had. The man — who had the look of a couch-potato gamer and keyboard warrior — clearly hadn't expected her to resist and flinched.

This gave Hwayoung just the opening she needed to snatch the cockroach spray. She grabbed the shopping bag with the iPad box and walloped it across his face, and sprayed. If only she had a lighter. All her housemates smoked except her. Who knew she'd kick herself one day for not smoking? The insecticide hit him straight in the eyes and the man screamed, rolling around the floor. Good. Now she'd break the window with the hatchet and escape. She scrambled to the table covered with tools. But then . . .

The hatchet was gone. It wasn't in his suitcase, either. Hwayoung had definitely seen him take it out — where was it? Her mind buzzed in panic. She couldn't die yet, get butchered in Youngjin's trap. If not the hatchet, she had to find something else hefty enough to break the window. As Hwayoung scoured the room, the man recovered and grabbed a knife in a fit of rage. Rounding on her like the small girl in front of him was the root of all his failure and misery.

Hwayoung spotted a fire extinguisher under the bed. She crouched down, but he caught up with her and raised his knife high over her exposed back. Sensing his movement too late, she turned her head. The tip of the blade caught the incandescent light, glaring down at her. Imminent danger numbed her mind and body. She couldn't move a muscle. She sucked in her breath, shut her eyes. The knife plummeted.



It fell on the fusty strawberry bedding instead of her flesh. Limp. The man gave an ear-splitting scream. Hwayoung cracked open her eyes. The first thing she saw was blood sprayed all over the floor and a growing puddle of crimson. The man, who had been brandishing his knife mere seconds ago, gripped his right calf and thrashed in pain. Blood leaked out from between his fingers. What just happened? Her eyes fell on the discarded hatchet on the ground. As if to prove how deep it had sunk in, the sharp bluish blade was now thoroughly red. Then her gaze landed on the thing behind the hatchet. It was standing. It was . . .

Hwayoung's forever friend, HappySmile Bear.

PHOEBE BERMAN'S GONNA LOSE IT

Brooke Averick

'A ridiculously charming debut'

HANNAH BONAM-YOUNG

'Had me completely charmed from the first page' ANNABEL MONAGHAN

'Heartfelt and funny . . . a love story for the ages — or at least for the anxious' EMILY AUSTIN

'Witty, relatable and unflinchingly honest . . . truly effervescent' LYLA SAGE

From podcaster — and TikTok's favourite romance reader — Brooke Averick, an honest, imperfect, laugh-out-loud funny love story about coming of age and coming apart — perfect for fans of Abby Jimenez, Curtis Sittenfeld and Emily Henry.

All Phoebe Berman has ever wanted is a whirlwind romance. And yet, she keeps getting in her own way. She has no idea what has caused her long and messy history of failed dating attempts — the panic attacks, cold sweats and projectile vomiting.



Brooke Averick is best known for her podcast, *Brooke and Connor Make a Podcast*, where she speaks candidly and humorously about her struggles with OCD, anxiety, and depression, as well as her latest celebrity crushes, all while trying to convince her co-host to appreciate the magic of musical theatre. She's amassed a social media following of over 1.5M across numerous platforms. She studied Early Childhood Education at Boston University, and currently lives in Los Angeles with her two cats, Jonathan and Robert. *Phoebe Berman's Gonna Lose It* is her first novel.

But she does know two things:

1. She's going to be thirty in a month.
2. She's still a virgin. This, though, she's determined to change.

Armed with a romance-novel-inspired to-do list, Phoebe's giving herself thirty days to lose her virginity. No backing out this time.

She's even got some promising options lined up: there's charming new fellow teacher Finn; long-distance texting pen pal Matthew; and, of course, dreamy Jonathan, her long-time best friend and roommate.

With the clock ticking and a checklist as chaotic as her inner monologue, if Phoebe Berman wants to lose it, she might just have to find herself first.

'You know if you keep saying you're going to kill yourself, I'll have to conduct a formal risk assessment, right?'

I've been making a conscious effort to stop, but sometimes the words just slip out. I put my hands out in front of me, an admission of guilt.

'I know, I really am trying to quit. I just can't think of another way to communicate how dire the situation has become.'

After my four years of therapy with Sandy, she's gotten pretty good at figuring out how to talk me off a ledge. *Make one of your lists, Phoebe. Practice your deep breathing, Phoebe. Hold an ice cube in your palm until it melts, Phoebe.*

But not this time. This time, there aren't enough ice cubes in the world.

I take a deep breath, inhaling the ashy remnants of the sage that Sandy used to cleanse the room before our session, and hand her the letter I received this morning.

'Read it and weep,' I tell her, sinking back into the floral upholstery of the couch. When I saw the beat-up edges of the envelope addressed to me in my own teenage handwriting, I knew exactly what was inside.

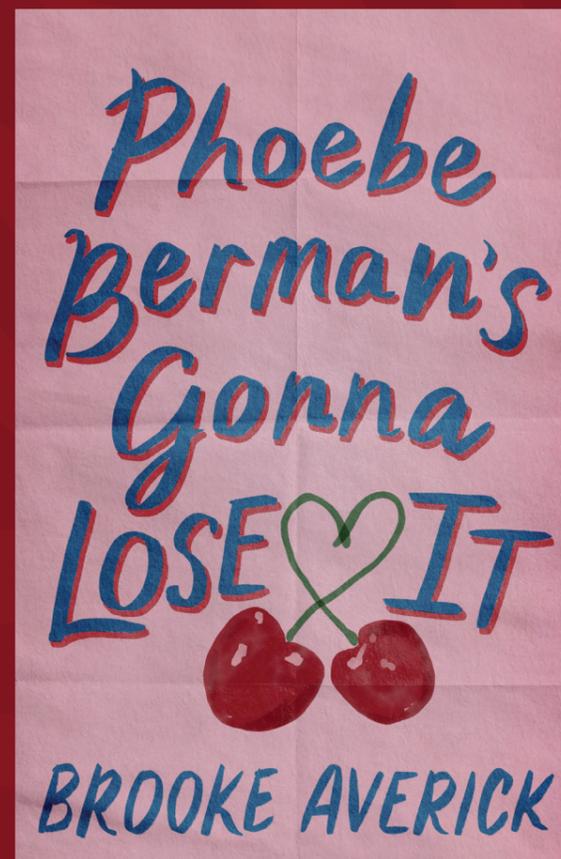
And I wanted to light it on fire.

Sandy's mismatched gold and silver bangles jingle as she unfolds the letter, a single piece of lined paper with a torn left edge. I close my eyes, conjuring up the image of the Twilight-themed notebook I ripped the page out of all those years ago. It was from the Moleskine of a Killer collection, and the iridescent cover would sparkle when it was exposed to direct sunlight. It has, unfortunately, been discontinued.

It doesn't take Sandy very long to read the letter. It's only two sentences, after all.

'What am I looking at here, Phoebe?' she asks.

I take the letter back from her, mesmerized again by the seven words scribbled across



the page. My handwriting was more girlish back then, much rounder and loopier, but it's undeniably mine. The paper has yellowed and wrinkled with age, but the message written in bold black Sharpie is as prominent as ever:

Lose your virginity. That's all I ask.
—PB

'This was a letter I wrote to my future self when I was eighteen,' I start to explain. 'It was our final assignment for twelfth-grade English before graduation: to write a list of goals we hoped to accomplish by the time we turn thirty.'

I know, I really am trying to quit.

LAND

Maggie O'Farrell

'A deep-mapping of a place and its people, a heart-bursting story of resilience and love. *Land* is simply the best novel I've read in years'

LOUISE KENNEDY

'You will never understand how the land remembers, how deep the roots grow.'

A spellbinding story of separation, longing, recovery and survival as a family makes a new home in the aftermath of tragedy.

On a windswept peninsula stretching out into the Atlantic, Tomás and his reluctant son, Liam, are working for the great Ordnance Survey project to map the whole of Ireland. The year is 1865, and in a country not long since ravaged and emptied by the Great Hunger, the task is not an easy one. Tomás, however, is determined that his maps will be a record of the disaster.



© Dasha Tendina

Maggie O'Farrell is the author of *Hamnet*, Winner of the Women's Prize for Fiction 2020, and the memoir *I Am, I Am, I Am*, both *Sunday Times* No. 1 bestsellers. Her novels include *After You'd Gone*, *My Lover's Lover*, *The Distance Between Us*, which won a Somerset Maugham Award, *The Vanishing Act Of Esme Lennox*, *The Hand that First Held Mine*, which won the 2010 Costa Novel Award, *Instructions for a Heatwave*, *This Must Be the Place* and *The Marriage Portrait*, which was shortlisted for the Women's Prize. She recently co-wrote – and co-produced – the film adaptation of *Hamnet* with director Chloé Zhao. It won the People's Choice Award at the Toronto Film Festival and the Golden Globe for Best Motion Picture, Drama. She is also the author of three books for children, *Where Snow Angels Go*, *The Boy Who Lost His Spark* and *When The Stammer Came To Stay*. She lives in Edinburgh.

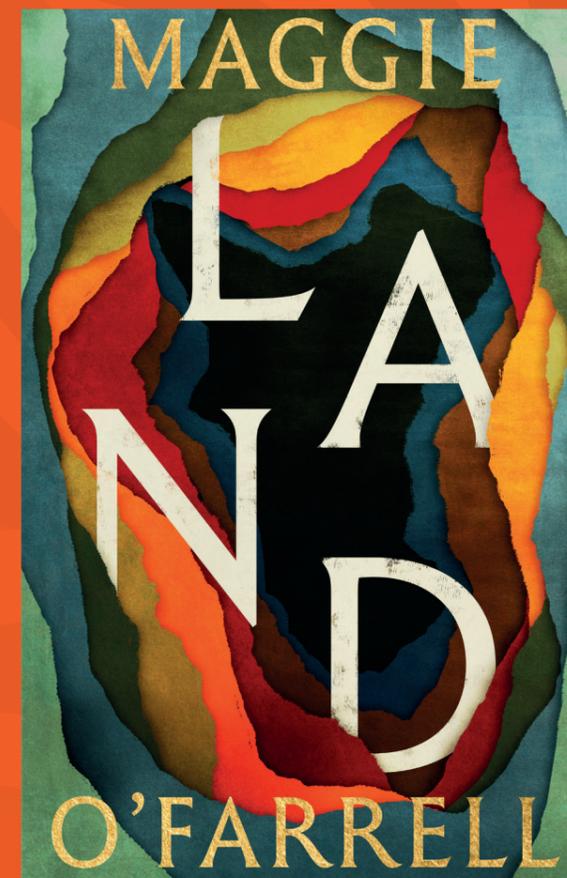
The British soldiers in charge are due to arrive any day, expecting the work to be completed, but Tomás is sent off course by an unsettling encounter in a copse. His life, and those of his family, will never be the same again. Liam is terrified by the sudden change in his taciturn father. What was it that caused such cracks to open in Tomás and how is Liam, aged only ten, going to finish the mapping, and get them both home?

Land is a story of buried treasure, overlapping lives, ancient woodland, persistent ghosts, a particularly loyal dog, and how, when it comes to both land and history, nothing ever goes away.

The widow tuts and clucks. Hadn't she told the man to be careful up there, to not wander from the path, wasn't it said that people had vanished up on that mountainside, never to be found again, but he had looked away and told her not to fret.

She puts the bread into the crock and then the crock into the fire's ashes, and she sets about the boy, stripping him of his sodden clothes. Children are a blessing, a fragile one, she would like to say to the man, have you no sense in that head of yours or is it only learning? She sits the boy before the fire and chafes him with a blanket to get the blood back into his bones. Never mind, she hears herself saying to him, don't you worry now. She sees her very own feet walk over to the cedar chest, which she has not opened for ten years or more, and she sees her hands lifting out clothes: a shirt she had sewn so long ago it was almost hard to believe it had been her who'd laboured on that linen and not some other woman, that she had taken those buttons and stitched them there, and the grey trousers in warm wool. She had spun the raw fleece herself and then given it to the weaver, and hadn't the weaver said it was among the best he'd ever worked on? And from that cloth she had cut and made trousers, measuring the legs and the waist of her eldest, so that they would fit so perfectly, with enough length to allow for growth, for the winter to come and the ones after that, and then in turn to be passed down to the younger ones.

Here they are, the trousers that were never worn, not once, not by any at all, and here she is, touching them with her palms and fingertips again, when she thought she never would: she could not bear to even look at them but neither could she open up the chest and give them away. But here now are the trousers and the shirt, and one of the jerseys she knitted, and she is putting them on to the frozen, pale body of the map-maker's son.



By this time, the bread is ready, and so the widow cuts some for the boy, and he devours it like a dog would a stolen cut of meat, and she has to turn away for a hungry child is a sight past bearing.

“She could not bear to even look at them but neither could she open up the chest and give them away”

MAIN CHARACTERS

Bobby Palmer

'I laughed, I teared up, I couldn't put it down. This is a love story like no other'

'This book gave me genuine joy and broke my heart'

'For fans of *Heartburn*, David Nicholls, Sally Rooney'

'A beautifully written, emotionally rich story that surprised me in the best way'

'These characters live in your head long after you've closed the book'

'Recommended for people watchers'

'So much more than it first appears. The characters are incredibly lifelike and layered'

'I truly felt like I was in the story'

Readers everywhere are talking about *Main Characters*, the highly anticipated novel about love, friendship, dysfunctional families and life-changing connections. This is a love story, told by everyone but the main characters.

When Clara and Seb meet in a quiet corner of London, it's the start of something. She wants to be a director. He's an actor, unsure what he wants from life.

Their connection is magnetic. Everyone can see that falling in love looks something like this. But when Clara casts Seb in the film that will make her name, what should be the happiest time of their lives ends with a gut-wrenching betrayal.

Some love stories are bigger than just two people. This one is told through the eyes of friends, flatmates, exes and strangers who see all the sides of Seb and Clara, from their first date to the moment they fell apart.

Everyone has their version of events. But only Clara and Seb can decide how their story ends.

'Moving, funny, wise and beautifully written. I love the idea of people's lives crossing over, the impressions we get from what we see and hear. If you love a smart, poignant, funny, gripping book, you will love this.' JOANNA CANNON

Bobby Palmer is both an author and journalist. His critically acclaimed debut novel, *Isaac and the Egg*, was a Waterstones Paperback of the Year in 2022; his second novel *Small Hours* was published in 2024. Bobby co-hosted the podcast Book Chat with Pandora Sykes and his writing has appeared in *GQ*, *Esquire*, *Men's Health*, *Cosmopolitan* amongst others. He lives with his family in Sussex.



© Nina Palmer

He's looking at her, but she's not looking at him.

She sits on a flat stone bench in the corner of Golden Square, a sketchbook balanced in her lap. A pocket universe in the centre of Soho. Though everyone else is enjoying the late spring sun, which filters through the trees and glints off high windows, she sits in a patch of shade as if she alone exists in a different season. The photographer imagines that she lives like this: in opposition. She'd look like an Old Hollywood actress, if it weren't for the hoodie and the leather jacket and the thoroughly modern scowl. Her fingers are black with ink, or charcoal. He's too far away to tell.

He plays with the zoom, the focus. Through this viewfinder, he can see his whole life laid out before him like developing photographs hanging from pegs on a line. He allows himself to imagine her in one, her eyebrows darker than her hair, freckles dusting the bridge of her nose. The girl stares silently towards the centre of the square. A statue of some king or another. Covered in moss, its face eroded by the rain. It could be anyone. But she isn't looking at the statue. She's looking at the man beneath it.

There's something statuesque about him, too, something that invites looking. He sits almost at floor level, on a low stone wall in front of the flowerbeds. From the angle of his knees, it's clear that he's tall. Broad-shouldered, too, with a tanned forehead over which falls a tangle of thick, dark hair. He has tattoos on his arms, hints of more where the neckline of his T-shirt meets his chest. Beneath a pair of heavy black headphones, his face is serious. His jaw is flexing. He's eating a sandwich, thick and Italian, cured meat and sliced cheese squeezed between two towering slices of focaccia. For every bite he takes, he tears off another and feeds it to his dog.

The photographer sweeps his viewfinder back to his subject, finds a hint of humour in that furrowed brow. She's enjoying

main characters

'Gorgeous, clever, utterly addictive'
PANDORA SYKES

'An epic, heart-wrenching love story'
KATE SAWYER

'Unique, gripping and beautifully written'
JOANNA CANNON



bobby palmer

the scene, and so she begins to draw, committing it to paper. Once her sketch is done, she'll approach the man with the dog, cause him to lower his headphones. All that is to come. For now, the photographer watches her watching, one hand gliding across the page, the other tucking hair behind ear, hair behind ear.

It could be anyone. But she isn't looking at the statue. She's looking at the man beneath it.

LAURA CLARK IS AWAY FROM HER DESK

Helen Russell

A relatable, sharp and hilarious coming-of-middle-age novel, perfect for fans of *Confessions of a Forty-Something Fk-Up*, *Where'd You Go, Bernadette?* and *Fleishman Is in Trouble*.**

Who is Laura Clark?

To her colleagues, she's an invisible forty-something HR manager, emailing about lift repairs and quietly stocking the meeting-room snacks.

To her golf-obsessed husband and selfie-obsessed teenage daughter, she's the reliable constant — dinner on the table, mess cleaned away, needs met without thanks.

To her elderly mother, she's a patient ear for endless complaints.

Laura Clark is the woman everyone relies on. And barely anyone sees.

But one day Laura puts on her 'out of office' message — and doesn't come back. And soon, everyone's formerly ordered lives quickly begin to descend into all-out chaos.

Where has Laura gone?

Has something terrible happened to her?

Or has she — unthinkably — decided to finally give her own life the finger?

To find out, the people in her life must realise that, maybe, they never really knew Laura Clark at all . . .



© Simon Meyer

Helen Russell is a bestselling author, journalist and speaker. Former editor of *marieclaire.co.uk* turned Scandinavia correspondent for *The Guardian* whose first book, *The Year of Living Danishly*, became an international bestseller, optioned for television. She's the author of six books, translated into 21 languages.

Helen now writes for magazines and newspapers globally, including *The Times* and *The Sunday Times*, *The Telegraph*, *The Independent*, *National Geographic*, *Wall Street Journal*, *The Observer*, *Metro*, *Grazia*, *Stylist* and *Stella*. She's spent the last twelve years studying cultural approaches to emotions and speaks about her work internationally for organisations including Google, Novo Nordisk and LEGO.

Laura wasn't there. The Laura-shaped form that normally occupied the second desk from the left was noticeable by its absence and a sand timer lay in shards on the carpet tiles. Two problems that hadn't been factored into Ian's to-do list. He'd launch a thorough investigation into the smashed sand timer in due course, though he doubted it would be missed. The new initiative from upstairs whereby everyone had to talk for five minutes about what they were working on had never been popular. But vandalism was something else!

For now, Ian erected a yellow folding safety sign that read *Caution Wet Floor* on one side and *Cleaning In Progress* on the other. There wasn't an option for *Everything's Covered In Hazardously Sharp Sand*, so Ian hoped the universal warning symbol would do. The Imerco policy handbook clearly stated that: 'All accidents and near-misses must be reported to the Health & Safety Officer immediately'. But since Ian held this office, in addition to his contracted role of HR executive, he wrote down the incident in a red logbook and emailed maintenance. *For all the good that would do*. This left Laura.

Had she mentioned anything about today? Upstairs were big on punctuality. 'Employees must arrive on time and ready to work,' Ian had read on day one — and no one had to explain the rules twice to Ian. Never had. His school report, aged nine, had described him as an old soul and little had changed twenty years later. Office absences had to be recorded at least one hour before the start of the office day (item 2.3 in the policy handbook). There was nothing in his inbox. And Laura was nowhere to be seen. Instead, a woman with dark hair scraped back into a ponytail was looming into view above Ian's halfheight partition wall.

'Morning, Ian!'

Ian could only nod in response.

'Have you seen Laura?' Chloe was asking.



'No, sorry Chloe,' said Ian. He realised he'd been holding his breath and so finally exhaled. Chloe was clutching a fishbowl full of tiny, coloured sachets.

'Why have you got a bowl full of teabags?' asked Ian, throat still tight.

'They're speciality teas. For visitors. New rule from upstairs.' Chloe flicked her false eyelashes to the floor above. 'He says,' she squinted at her monitor to read: 'The company will provide standard bags but if you want herbals or . . .'. Chloe gestured to the label she'd made with the office Dymo that read: *Speciality Teas*. 'Then staff are requested to buy their own.'

Ian let out a sort of strangled whistle. Chloe glared at him. Ian popped a Smint in his mouth.

THE COMEBACK

Mel Giedroyc

The show-stopping new novel from the *Sunday Times* bestselling author and widely beloved Mel Giedroyc.

Sometimes life surprises you with an encore...

Twenty years ago, aspiring performer Gill Piper boarded a bus out of Leatherhead with a spring in her step and stars in her eyes. Things didn't quite pan out...

Back home again, Gill finds much has changed. Young Lights, the youth theatre group which coaxed her out of her shell, is no more. The theatre itself, once the heartbeat of the community, now feels like a has-been; Gill can relate.

When Gill learns the theatre is approaching its hundredth year, she decides to put on a spectacular anniversary show to give it a comeback and unite the town. She has just eight weeks, but if she can persuade some shy newcomers to step into the spotlight, it might just be possible.

But Gill hasn't counted on self-appointed Artistic Director and diva extraordinaire Carla Keswick, who declares war. Can Gill and her unlikely company of amateurs defy Carla's dirty tricks, and prove it's never too late for a curtain call?

Praise for Mel Giedroyc's

The Best Things:

'I enjoyed it HUGELY. A real treat'

MARIAN KEYES

'A brilliant cast of characters and properly funny!'

GRAHAM NORTON

'A warm contemporary fable bursting with colourful characters and comic energy'

DAILY MAIL

'Exactly like Mel herself: engaging, uproarious and gleeful. A stonking good read'

JO BRAND

'A warm look at a family and what really matters in life. Brimming with hilarious scenes, it is also a redemptive book, and one of hope'

WOMAN & HOME

Mel Giedroyc has been entertaining the nation for over thirty years. A comedian, writer, actor and presenter, Mel is also known for her work alongside Sue Perkins, such as multi Bafta-winning *Great British Bake Off* (BBC) and *Light Lunch* (Channel 4). Mel has written two non-fiction books and has appeared in sitcoms and panel shows, as well as on radio and on stage, in Stephen Sondheim's Olivier Award-winning *Company* in the West End and in *Starter for Ten* at Bristol's Old Vic. Mel lives in London with her husband and two daughters. Her debut novel *The Best Things* was a *Sunday Times* hardback bestseller.



© Laurie Fletcher

Prologue

19 December 1985

Eleven-year-old Gill Piper waited in the wings like a coiled spring, taking a last nervous sip from her box of lemon drink. She could hear the audience whooping as the Good Fairy finished up her family-friendly striptease. Gill felt as if every breath of her life had been leading up to this moment, her first appearance in an Edith Evans Theatre pantomime: *Babes in the Wood*, starring Leatherhead's very own Carla Keswick as the Good Fairy, with her husband Peter Lassiter as the Evil Giant. Gill shifted from one foot to the other. A good two inches taller than the rest of the Babes Yellow Team, she smiled encouragingly at the youngest, who blinked through thick-lensed glasses.

'I need to go wee,' said the little Babe, on the verge of tears.

As Gill bent down to give her words of succour, she heard her musical cue and was hit by a shard of adrenaline. The Babe in need would have to wait, it was time for Gill's big entrance. Gill launched herself onstage with all the power that her flapping plimsolls could muster. She was hit by a sudden wall of heat, light, and laughter and became aware of a dark amorphous mass of clapping in the far-off. As the Giant stumbled past her, Gill clocked a smell akin to her dad's drinks cabinet.

The Edith Evans was rammed to the rafters, baying for its Good Fairy. Carla smiled, blooming like a passion flower in the warmth of their applause, and started to do a pert cancan. Drilled to perfection, her Babes in the Wood ran to encircle her, but Gill's rictus smile faded as she felt dampness on her left thigh. Lost in the moment, she'd been unaware that her drink was still clutched in her hand as she ran onstage. Now half its contents had drenched her leggings, and probably the floor around her.

THE BRAND NEW NOVEL

COVER TO BE REVEALED

The Comeback

Mel Giedroyc



Her cheeks burned vermilion under the yellow face paint. This was against every rule she'd learned in the theatre group. She tried to conceal the box behind her back. She badly wanted to cry but feared any more unruly liquid. In the heat of shame, her vision prickly, she watched as Carla can-canned in slow motion before slipping, screaming and twisting heavily to the floor. The Good Fairy had hit the deck. The theatre fell, like a collapsing accordion, into a gradual and agonising hush.

In that moment it seemed to Gill as if it were just her and Carla onstage, underneath a searing spotlight. Carla turned from her agony and fixed Gill with a look of pure granite. Under the hot lights, Gill felt a chill go through her. Everyone knew Carla Keswick never forgave. And never forgot.

THE TROUBLE WITH SISTER FRANCIS

Matt Coyne

A heart-warming sophomore novel from the *Sunday Times* bestselling author of *FRANK AND RED*.

1981. Richie, Bennett, Kenny, and Stan are four best pals from the Whittle council estate, with not much to do but get up to no good. After a run-in with the local bullies, they find unexpected refuge in the crumbling boys' club at the local church.

The Blessed Assumption Boys Club is run by Sister Francis: a swearsy, chain-smoking and unlikely nun . . . and the most remarkable person any of them will ever meet.

Set against the backdrop of early '80s Britain, *The Trouble with Sister Francis* is a funny, heartwarming and heartbreaking story of unlikely heroes, quiet rebellions, fierce loyalty and unexpected hope.



© Emily Goldie Photography

Matt Coyne is from Sheffield, South Yorkshire. In September 2015, his life was turned upside down by the arrival of his son, Charlie. Three months into parenthood, he took to social media to write about his experience as a clueless first-time dad. Within days, his post about surviving the early months of parenthood was shared by millions around the world.

Following this, Matt created his popular blog *Man vs Baby*, which now has more than 500,000 followers. He is the author of two *Sunday Times* bestselling books — *Dummy* and *Man vs. Toddler* — both based on *Man vs Baby*, and has written for *The Guardian*, *Telegraph*, *Private Eye* and *GQ*.

The Trouble with Sister Francis is Matt's second novel, following his acclaimed, award-winning debut *Frank and Red*.

Matt lives in Sheffield with his son Charlie, his partner Lyndsay and a Jack Russell terrier with 'issues' called Popcorn.

And at the centre of it all, a long-forgotten journal that might just change everything.

Praise for *FRANK AND RED*:

'A lovely feel-good treat' *THE TIMES*

'Simply perfect' *DAILY MIRROR*

'Hilariously funny . . . and beneath it all really quite lovely' *METRO*

'Brilliant, just brilliant' *HUFFINGTON POST*

Debut of the Year *WOMAN AND HOME*

A *Prima* Book of The Year

It's hard to gauge how old somebody is when you're eleven. At that age, everybody over thirty looks to have one foot in the grave; anybody over forty has two feet in it and at fifty you're waist deep. It's even harder to tell how old somebody is when all you can see of them is their face framed in a wimple. But the nun seemed to be at least as old as my Grandad Bob. So it was with surprising agility that she jumped down from the driver's seat of the van and onto the pavement.

It was even more of a surprise to find she was immediately followed by a large German Shepherd, which bounded across from the passenger seat and through the open driver's door to land at her side.

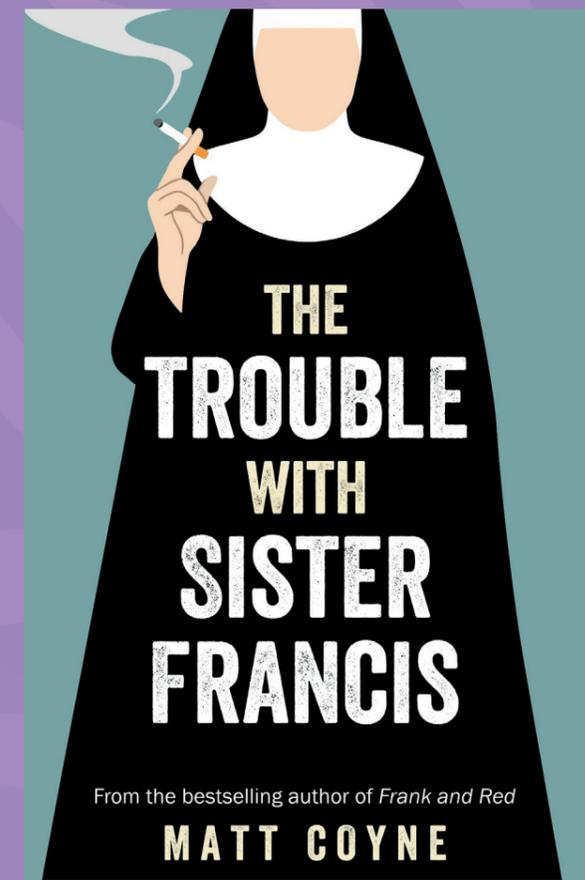
The dog, cheerfully panting, immediately began sniffing the grass at the pavement edge as the nun straightened the front of her black, floor-length vestments and dusted off a little ash. The smoke from the cigarette that was dangling from her lips was making her squint and she took one last drag before dropping it and crushing it underfoot. Looking up and down the street, she then leaned back into the van to retrieve something from the dashboard. A handful of yellow papers.

She didn't seem to notice that we were there – the four boys observing all this, from the other side of the waist-high chain-link fence.

'What the bloody hell?' Kenny said under his breath.

The rest of us just watched, dumbfounded. I don't think any of us had ever seen a real-life nun before. Apart from on TV or maybe in films, and it was difficult to imagine this one joyously spinning in the Swiss mountains.

She tucked the papers under one arm and again reached back into the minibus, this time to retrieve a roll of Sellotape. Then, taking one of the sheets, she set the rest on the ground at her feet. Holding the page against the lamp post, she found the end



Final cover to be revealed

of the roll of tape with her teeth and then wrapped it twice and three times around the post to hold it in place.

Satisfied that the poster was securely stuck, she ran her palm down her handiwork and then vanished the tape into her habit before bending to pick up the pile of remaining papers.

Just as a slight breeze caught them.

Even from a distance you could tell she was annoyed. Some people have that aura when they're exasperated; you can see it, feel it. Right then, though, we didn't need to see an aura. You could hear the nun cursing under her breath. She had an Irish accent, and it sounded like she was casting spells, with muttered mysticals of 'feck' and 'shite'. She only stopped when she saw the four of us gawping at her.

UNDER STORY

Chloe Benjamin

What if tomorrow was already written, but yesterday was yours to change?

At an isolated research station in Antarctica, biologist Laurel Salter washes dishes for a living ten hours a day, six days a week. She tells no one why she left her career, or why her marriage ended.

But even in this remote outpost, Laurel can't outrun her past. When a strange light appears across the ice and draws a group of physicists to McMurdo, her former husband, Eli, won't be far behind.

Laurel is captivated by the Arc: its surreal glow; the way it seems almost alive. And though Eli is reluctant to test her wildest theory, Laurel is convinced that the Arc leads down a rabbit hole, and into a world they can barely imagine. Can she persuade him to risk everything to fix the burden that hangs between them — to turn back the clock and live their story a second time?

And this time, live it differently.

Once read, never forgotten, *Under Story* is a genre-defying exploration of the promise of this life, what might lie beyond it, and how far we would go for more time with the people we love.



© David Entloe

Chloe Benjamin is the author of the *New York Times* bestseller *The Immortalists*, and *The Anatomy of Dreams*. *The Immortalists* was a Barnes & Noble Discover Great New Writers selection, a *Library Reads* favourite, a #1 Indie Next pick, and a *Washington Post*, *Entertainment Weekly* and NPR Best Book of 2018. Her work has been translated into 30 languages. She lives in the San Francisco Bay area with her husband.

Unlike igloos, which are made of snow blocks, the quinzee — first built by Native people in the planet's northern forests — is a mound of compacted snow with a chamber inside. Gavin hands out duffel bags, each of which contains a sleep kit, and tells the Campers to form small groups. Laurel, Charlie, and Louis pile their duffels and pack snow on top. While the quinzee hardens, they crowd over the camp stove to make freeze-dried chili and hot water bottles. After dinner, they extract the duffels and use shovels to enlarge the hollow. Two hours later, wet and bone-tired, Laurel and Charlie admire their work.

'Don't get too excited,' Louis says. 'It feels like sleeping inside a refrigerator.'

They wriggle through the opening. Inside, the walls are wavy as meringue. The ceiling is too low for them to sit, so they lie down to trade galley gossip. Light leaches through the ice, bathing the quinzee in strange, perpetual dusk. It reminds Laurel of a cave. Despite the refrigeration, heat spreads through her chest, and the walls feel even closer than they are.

'I'll be back,' Laurel says, and then she crawls outside. She wants to be in open space. She needs to see the Arc.

She isn't the only one. At least a dozen other Campers have spread across the snow. Some lean against their quinzees; others sit cross-legged on the ground. Even the ecologist has joined them.

Rustling noises come from Laurel's quinzee, followed by a thud.

'Owie,' Louis says, snaking through the hole with his hot water bottle.

Charlie follows. 'Claustrophobic?' she asks.

Laurel nods. That's close enough. Charlie and Louis come to sit on either side of her, and together they look at the Arc.

It calls up the rainbows Laurel saw as a child: bright half-rings hung high, as if conjured by invisible magicians. Those summer days were drowsy and fairy-like, mossy green

CHLOE BENJAMIN



trees and benevolent shadow, a feeling of gilded fertility: the whole orchard glowed. Rain, when it came, was warm and fleeting. Sound acquired strange qualities, so that someone on the next farm over seemed to be speaking into her ear.

Yet the Arc is its own phenomenon. There is the strangeness of the shape, not a line but a dome — and then there's what it does to her. When Laurel focuses like this, she almost feels that she can see inside it, as though the Arc is a shell enclosing some uncanny tissue. It seems to pulse, even to breathe. In her it sparks what science used to: a hungry, looming excitement.

She wants to be in open space. She needs to see the Arc.

THE BESTSELLER

Jenny Knightsby

**YOU TOLD HER YOUR DARKEST SECRETS.
NOW MILLIONS WILL READ THEM . . .**

Couples therapist Helena Salve knows that client confidentiality is the number one unbreakable rule of her job. But the constant stories of coercive control and threat she hears from her client Belle about her dangerous husband have been wearing her down. One night over too many glasses of wine, she tells her best friend Tala everything that Belle has told her.

The problem is, Tala is a down-on-her-luck novelist who is looking for an idea for her new thriller.

Months later, Tala is excitedly telling Helena that her publisher is saying this is going to be her biggest book ever. The story is Belle's story. Not only is Helena's job on the line, but if Belle's husband is as dangerous as she says, her life is too . . .

Why would Tala do this to Helena? She knows what's at stake.

Your friends are meant to protect you . . . aren't they?



Jenny Knightsby is a hospital doctor based in West London. *The Bestseller* was shortlisted for the Lucy Cavendish Fiction Prize 2024 and is Knightsby's debut novel.

'So,' Helena hesitated, keeping her voice neutral, 'he made you . . . taste it?'

A little furrow appeared between Belle's brows, just momentarily, but then she laughed, and Helena liked the way it sounded: low and musical.

Helena often considered a session ineffective if the client did not cry. It meant they were either intellectualising to avoid pain, or she – the therapist – was asking the wrong questions. But with Belle, the laugh felt complicated. Warm and unsettling at the same time.

Belle shifted in the soft blue couch cushions and Helena watched her new client move. The chunky gold Dior bracelet falling up her thin wrist as she leaned forward to the glass table, pushing the unused box of Kleenex aside to reach for her glass of water.

'Of course he didn't make me *taste* it.'

Belle flicked her blonde hair back and took a drink. It was warm, the air barely shifting through the open first-floor window of Helena's office, but Belle's skin was matte and dry. She looked so perfect, on the surface.

Helena studied faces, movements, inflections. She worked hard to understand the nuance of word choice or to infer the meaning of a muscle twitch. This observation and interpretation did not come naturally to her, as she knew it did to other therapists. For Helena this process was not intuitive, but deliberate and effortful.

She approached it like a science. Accumulating thousands of pieces of information; as though filling a container in the room that only she could see.

'It was my mistake. I shouldn't have bought mandarin hand soap,' Belle said, with the air of clarifying a small misunderstanding. 'I forgot he doesn't like soaps made from fruits.'

Helena waited. A client usually revealed more filling a silence than answering a question.

'He says if something is a food, you eat it,' Belle added. And then, more softly: 'I didn't mean he made me eat it.'

THE BESTSELLER

JENNY KNIGHTSBY

You told her
your darkest
secrets.

COVER
TO BE
REVEALED

Now
millions will
read them . . .



Helena wrote 'mandarin' on the pad she held in her lap. She never took many notes. Her memory – for facts – was flawless. She just needed a tool to break the emotional charge, to give herself time to formulate. Something subtle in the way Belle's gaze flickered; Helena wasn't sure she believed her. But it was too early to challenge. Not in the first session.

Time for a new tack.

'Belle, why did you come to therapy today?'

'My sister suggested it.'

'It sounds like your sister cares about you deeply.'

Belle only nodded.

'Your sister worries about you. About your relationship with your husband?'

'Yes.'

'So, you came to appease her?'

Belle looked back at Helena contemplatively, as though considering this possibility for the first time. Then she smiled slightly. And there was something wryly playful behind the smile that intrigued Helena.

'Maybe I came to prove her wrong.'

IN THE SHADOW OF THE SOLSTICE

Meg Clothier

A devastating feminist reimagining of Arthurian legend set in the dark and dangerous years after the Romans left Britain.

Nin is joining the gilded world of her sister's husband – a powerful man known only as the Bear. It's midwinter and there's victory to feast. And where better than at the Hall high above the mists of the Lake?

Why is the Lake so unsettled?

The bonds of love and ambition once united the Family. But as night falls and the shadows lengthen, dark secrets and unruly passions threaten to rip it apart.

What is the strange crying only Nin can hear?

Torn between loyalty and desire – between rage and fear – Nin must fight to the death to uncover a terrible truth.

Who will live to see the sun rise?



Meg Clothier studied Classics at Cambridge, sailed from England to Alaska, and worked as a journalist in London and Moscow. She now lives and writes in Somerset. *In the Shadow of the Solstice* is her fourth novel.

Praise for Meg Clothier:

'A wonderfully rich and absorbing tale'
OBSERVER

'Expertly crafted and beautifully told'
JENNIFER SAINT

'What an extraordinary book'
HARRIET TYCE

'A ravishing, erudite feminist hijack of Renaissance Florence' ALICE ALBINIA

'Mysterious, bewitching and beautiful'
ELIZABETH LEE

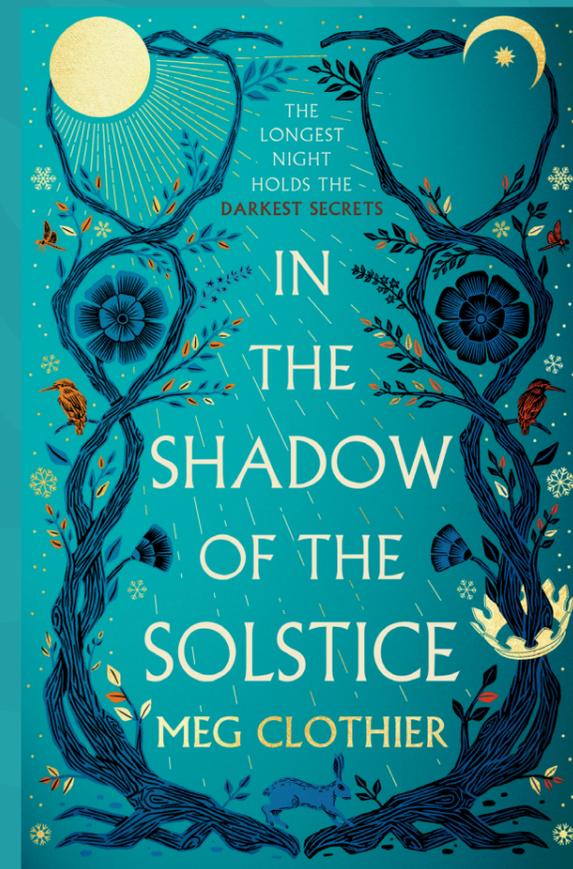
'Brutal and haunting' MELISSA FU

Nin looked at the mule. The mule looked at her. The rest of them had took off but she was fearful of those horses on that narrow causeway. They were tall and they tossed their heads and they stamped their feet. Nin and the mule they the two of them agreed to give them some little space. Wait a moment. All right maybe two –

But look. That's funny. See the last ripples from those stones. Looks like they're still rippling. Aren't they rippling longer than they ought? Godsake Nin how long are ripples meant to ripple? See. All gone. No more ripples. Just the smooth dark skin of the Lake and three six nine swans drifting by on the edge of sight.

All of a sudden Nin felt watched. Have you felt that shift? From seer to seen. One moment she was looking down at the Lake and then it was like the Lake was looking back. But it wasn't the Lake was it Nin? Not really. It was just the shadow of your own face in the water. Your own face fractured and piecemeal. This Nin shook her head left right. That Nin did the same. This Nin tilted her head like to ask, Are you like me? Are you meek and mannerful and mild? That Nin tilted her head too but she didn't give no reply.

There was no no wind now – only a cold feeling on the back of her neck – and yet there was shuddering and quiverings where there ought to be stillness. The waters gulped and slapped. Nin took a hurried step back. Were there Things in the Lake? Did they swim down from the rivers or in from the sea or up from some deeper darker place? Or did they just hide under the Hill and come slithering out at night? Godslove don't think about Things. Damp such thoughts. Tamp them down. The Gigants are asleep. The Drakons are flown. There are no Things. Not if you're Anointed. If you're Anointed there's only the One God and He doesn't truck with no Lakes. He's up there up in heaven above. Praise His name and His kingdom and His power. He feeds us. He forgives us.



This world is His. All His. Always and evermore. Over you go – quickly now. Night's rolling up. Come on Mule. Off we go.

But the mule he had other ideas. The mule he wouldn't budge. Nin tugged him and thumped him. She strained and she sweated. But as you know it's easier to knock a Gigant out cold than it is to shift a mule as doesn't want to shift.

“This world is His. All His. Always and evermore.”

THE WINE-DARK SEA

Victoria Hislop

Beloved, bestselling author Victoria Hislop explores the turbulence of the post-war era in Greece in this unforgettable and riveting new novel that will delight those fans who cherish *The Island* and *The Figurine*.

During three years of brutal civil war in Greece, thousands of children were caught in the chaos that swept across the country. Huge numbers were orphaned, many found themselves imprisoned alongside their mothers and others were left to fend for themselves. *The Wine-Dark Sea* follows the travails of a mother, searching for both a daughter who has been kidnapped and taken behind the Iron Curtain and a boy who, unbeknown to her, has been sold into adoption.

It's time to discover why 10 million readers worldwide love Victoria Hislop:

'Glorious Greek setting and rich historical detail' *WOMAN & HOME*

'She brings Greek history to compelling life' *THE SUNDAY TIMES*

'Fascinating and moving . . . Hislop writes unforgettably' *THE TIMES*



© Bill Waters

Victoria Hislop is the multi-million copy bestselling author of ten books, including *The Island*, *The Return*, *The Thread*, *The Sunrise*, *Those Who are Loved*, *The Last Dance and Other Stories*, *Cartes Postales from Greece* and *One August Night*. Victoria's most recent novel, *The Figurine*, topped the UK TCM as the biggest selling single edition in the country for two consecutive weeks in 2024.

Her books have been translated into forty languages and Victoria was executive producer on the adaptations of three of her novels for Greek television.

Victoria divides her time between England and Greece and in 2020 was granted honorary citizenship by the President of Greece. She is Vice President of the British School at Athens, is on the British Committee for the Reunification of the Parthenon Marbles and also on the Advisory Board for the Parthenon Project.

She is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature and holds Honorary Doctorates from the Universities of Patra and Sheffield. In 2025, she was awarded the Byron Medal for Philhellenism at the Athens Academy and became the first woman to become an honorary member of the Society of Greek Writers.

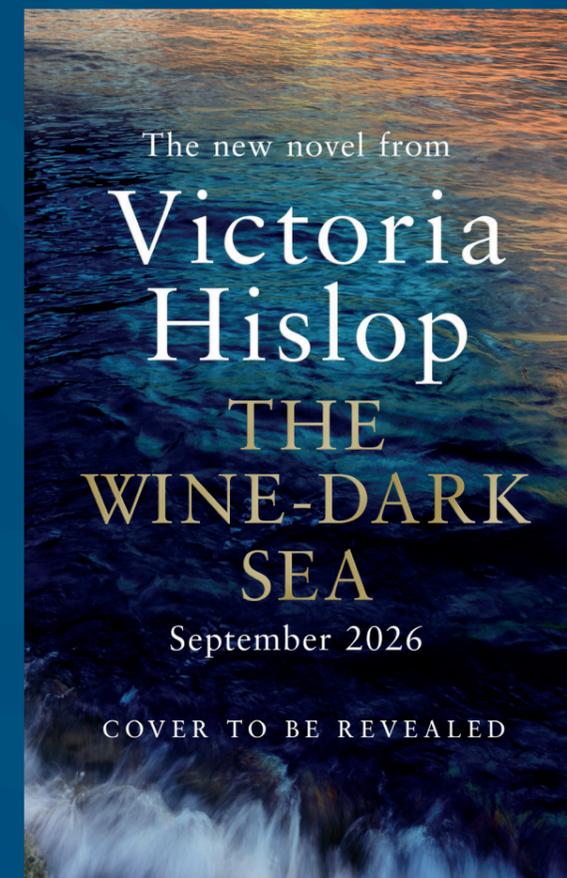
In every town where they stopped to refuel, they were subject to mocking jeers from local people and abuse from the soldiers. At those times, the back of the truck felt like a haven to Fotini, somewhere she and her baby were protected. She preferred to stay put to feed her baby in peace, stretching out her legs in front of her. On occasions when she did get out, she saw nothing but devastation: buildings, roads and bridges blown up by the Nazis or by the Greeks themselves.

Several days on, they found themselves on the edge of a city. Though it was hard to see much through the slats of the truck, they could make out an urban sprawl with huge areas of what seemed like shacks and for many kilometres no fields or forests at all. Though there was a smog of diesel over everything, there were new smells too, none of them fragrant: acrid odours of industrial burning and sour cooking oil.

'Athens?' suggested one woman. 'Have they brought us all the way to Athens?' There were many tears during the journey as the women lamented the separation from their children. Until now, some of them had remained optimistic and they had given hope to the others but now hope vanished.

Already Kalopetra seemed further away than the moon. If they were in Athens, thought Fotini, how would she ever retrace her path to Kalopetra? She felt the truck slow down and stop.

Everyone was quiet for a moment, straining their ears to listen to the voices outside. Then they were on the move again only to be thrown forward a moment later, as though brakes had been deliberately slammed on for their discomfort. The back of the truck was lowered and they were ordered down, now finding themselves in a huge courtyard surrounded on all sides by four-storey buildings. Some of them had crenellations, like the picture of a castle she had once seen.



'Write your names here,' one of the soldiers commanded, handing one of the women a battered notebook and pencil. It was hastily passed to the one woman among them who could write easily and fluently, and she scribbled names down as the women called them out.

At those times, the back of the truck felt like a haven to Fotini, somewhere she and her baby were protected.

GALINDA

Gregory Maguire

Gregory Maguire returns to the land of Oz with the eagerly awaited origin story of Galinda, the pink-clad, effervescent and popular Good Witch.

Who was Glinda the Good Witch before she floated down in her bubble to greet Dorothy? Who was Glinda before she became Elphaba Thropp's magnetic and popular roommate at Shiz University?

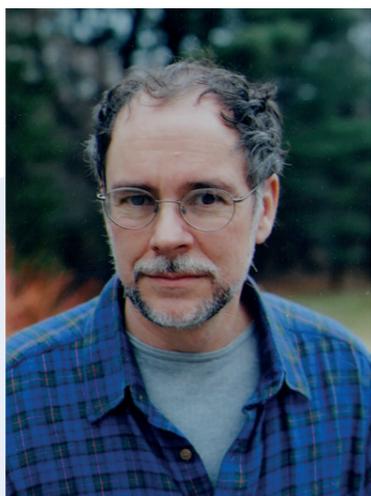
Well, before then, she was Galinda. With a 'ga'.

The youngest of four children in a high-born family down on their luck, Galinda is both pampered and ignored. Her

natural grace promises to elevate her in the district dance competitions – but these efforts distract her from seeing the growing resentments of local merchants who disapprove of her family and their business.

But as her father deftly pivots around the snares and nets laid for him by his rivals, Galinda begins to dance toward a life that might lift her above her proud, if hardscrabble, childhood.

Galinda reveals the girl behind the bubbly, shallow cliché – offering fans of *Wicked* their first glimpse into the heart of a beloved and iconic character.



Gregory Maguire is a bestselling author who has earned rave reviews and a dedicated following for *Wicked*, the first novel in the Wicked Years quartet that was adapted into the stage musical phenomenon and two award-winning, record-breaking movies. He received his doctorate in English Literature from Tufts University and has taught at several colleges in the Boston area. He served as an artist-in-residence at the Blue Mountain Center, the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum and the Hambridge Center. Gregory has lived in Dublin and London, but now makes his home near Boston, Massachusetts.

A girl in her attic aerie, doing herself up in slats of dusty summer light.

'Licorice, these ribbons aren't a toy, I'm trying to get them to hang straight. You stay where you are. And don't even think of scratching your sister. No one wants to see your claws. Mama has to get ready for her class. Listen to Mama when she's talking to you.'

Queen Licorice yawned, her teeth like tiny fish ribs. Boredom's a sign of status. Salmonella, snug next to her, flailed her salmon-colored tail. Crimped by a run-in with a ferret, her tail raised a permanent question mark. This identified the orange tabby as a dolt, perhaps unfairly. She hadn't yet shown signs of a feverish intelligence. Still, she was young. You never know. 'Stop peering at me. You're making Mama nervous.' Galinda glanced in the mirror. The listless ribbons, stubbornly off-center. She pivoted a shoulder, waiting for that fleeting blush of satisfaction.

She wasn't going to get it downstairs. Mumsy was out, off and away with the fairies. Papa was pacing the ground floor, impatient to get his luncheon launched. Grandmama supervised the rolling out of the crust. The new kitchen girl was approaching it all wrong. 'You have no feel for it,' the old woman told Dyra. 'Your mother failed to train you properly. You have to roll on the diagonal. Put your shoulders into it if you want to break up the lard. Lead with your dominant hand.'

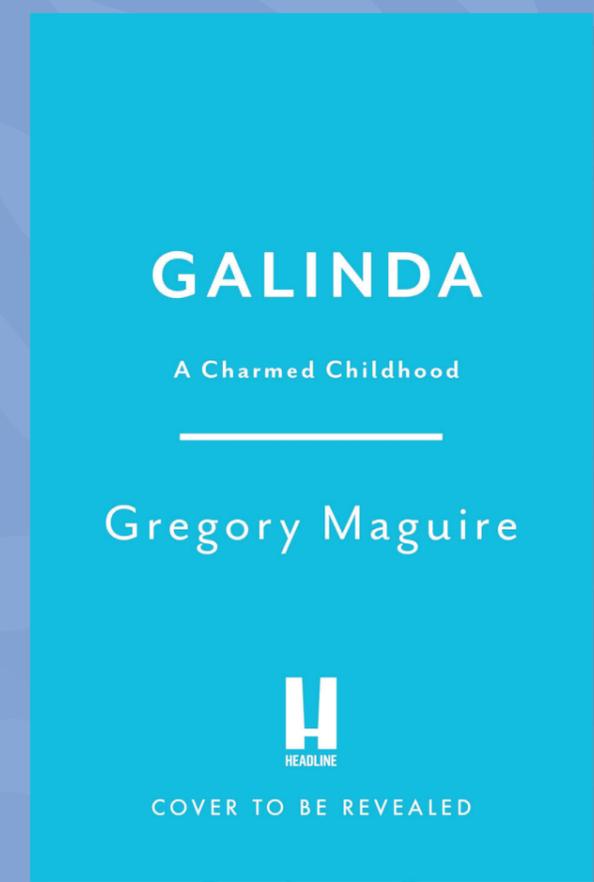
The girl looked unglued at the reference.

'The one you write with,' said Grandmama.

'I don't write. I'm from the child stables,' replied Dyra. In the corner of her mouth she was worrying a hank of hair. She smelled of the smokehouse.

'I ain't had training from nobody.'

Grandmama rapped a wooden spoon upon the hob to underscore her annoyance. 'Proof that ignorance begins at home.'



Galinda's father swooped into the kitchen, sampling tidbits. 'I always thought it was corruption that begins at home,' he said, pinching his mother's bum. Grandmama turned to slap him, but affectionately. Her hand made a floury cloud upon his cheek.

And don't even think of scratching your sister. No one wants to see your claws.

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