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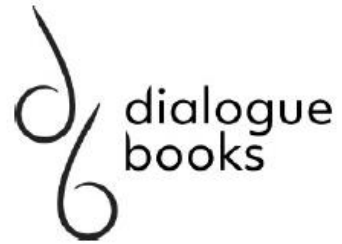
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Fiction List, January 2022

OUR IMPRINTS



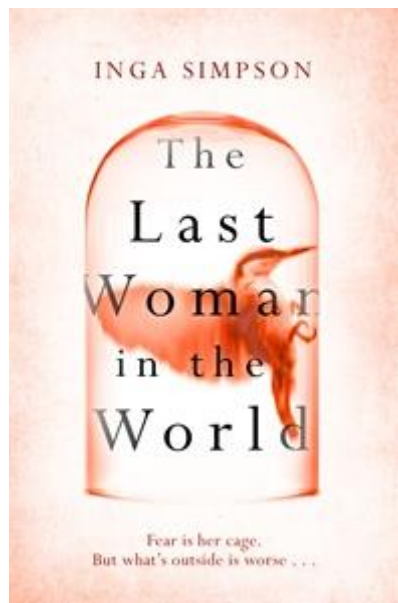
Arranged by publication date

Titles in capitals were published by Little, Brown Book Group; titles in italics were not.

THE LAST WOMAN IN THE WORLD by Inga Simpson

Literary | February 2022 | Sphere | 352 pp

From highly acclaimed author Inga Simpson - twice nominated for Australia's most prestigious literary award - comes a stunning and terrifying novel. A woman must face her worst fears to survive and even find beauty in a world under attack.



Fear is her cage. But what's outside is worse...

It's night, and dust swirls against the walls of Rachel's home in the Australian bush. Her fear of other people has led her to a reclusive life as far from them as possible, her only occasional contact is with her sister.

A hammering on the door. There stand a mother, Hannah, and her sick baby. They are running for their lives from a mysterious death sweeping the Australian countryside - so soon, too soon, after everything.

Now Rachel must face her worst fears to help Hannah, search for her sister, and discover just what terror was born of us - and how to survive it.

Simpson's page-turner [...] makes us see the world anew as it meditates on the importance of companionship – the *Guardian*

For fans of *Birdbox*, *Leave the World Behind*, and *A Quiet Place*, this remarkable, terrifying literary horror thriller holds a mirror up to the changed

world we live in today.

Inga Simpson began her career as a professional writer for government before gaining a PhD in creative writing. In 2011, she took part in the Queensland Writers Centre Manuscript Development Program and, as a result, Hachette Australia published her first novel, *Mr Wigg*, in 2013. *Nest*, her second novel, was published in 2014, before being longlisted for the Miles Franklin Literary Award and the Stella Prize, and shortlisted for the ALS Gold Medal. Her third novel, the acclaimed *Where the Trees Were*, was published in 2016. She won the final Eric Rolls Prize for her nature writing and completed a second PhD, exploring the history of Australian nature writers. While finishing the first draft of **THE LAST WOMAN IN THE WORLD** she was evacuated twice as bushfires engulfed surrounding settlements. She lives alone near the coast among trees.

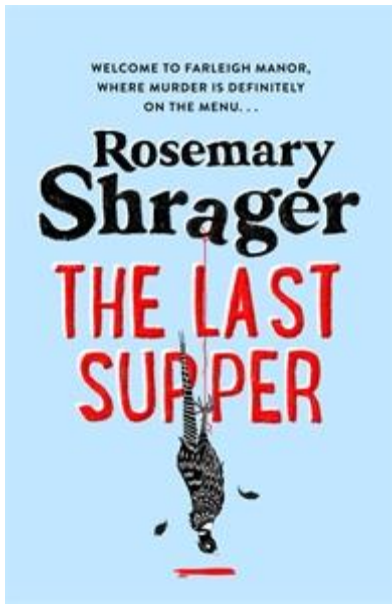
THE LAST SUPPER by Rosemary Shrager

Cosy crime | February 2022 | Constable | 288 pp

An irresistible debut novel (the first in a series) where cosy crime and cookery collide

Prudence Bulstrode, once doyenne of the celebrity chef TV circuit, has left London behind for a peaceful retirement in the country... and walks straight into a murder case.

When an old television rival, Deirdre Shaw, is found dead in the rhubarb patch at the Cotswolds manor house where she was catering for a prestigious shooting weekend, Prudence is asked to step into the breach. Prudence is only too happy to take up the position and soon she is working in the kitchens of Farleigh Manor for the fairly ghastly, posh Rupert Prendergast and his utterly ghastly wife. Prudence's useless teenage niece, Suki, joins her.



But Farleigh Manor is the home to secrets, both old and new. The site of a famous unsolved murder from the nineteenth century, Farleigh Manor has never quite shaken off its sensational past. It's about to get a sensational present too. Because, the more she scratches beneath the surface of this manor and its guests, the more Prudence becomes certain that Deirdre Shaw's death was no accident. She's staring in the face of a very modern murder.

The second novel in this series, **PROOF IN THE PUDDING**, will be published in February 2023, and the third, **TOO MANY COOKS**, in February 2024.

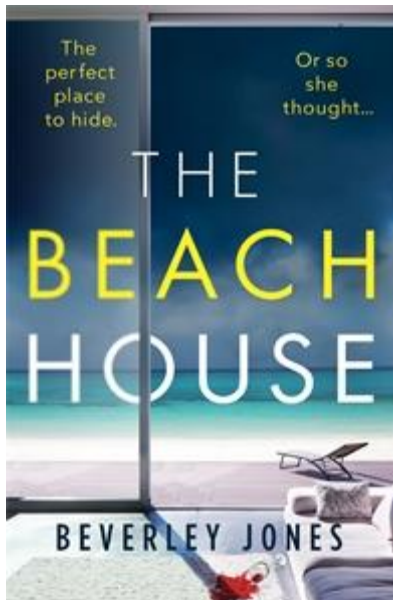
Rosemary Shrager is one of Britain and America's national treasures. She began her cookery career working for Pierre Koffmann at Chelsea's La Tante Claire and Jean-Christophe Novelli, gradually discovering her passion and talent for teaching. Thus her cookery school at Amhuinnsuidhe Castle off the Scottish coast was born, and in 2003 she moved to Swinton Park, a beautiful castle hotel in North Yorkshire, where for nearly a decade her courses for home cooks were a sellout. She is the star of television series such as the cult series *Ladette to Lady* (ITV) and *Rosemary, Queen of the Kitchen* (Discovery). In 2007, her television career took a great leap forward when she became ITV's *Alan Titchmarsh Show*'s resident cook. More recently she

has appeared in - and won! - *I'm a Celebrity*, *The Real Marigold Hotel*, *The Big Family Cooking Showdown* for the BBC and for Netflix, *The Best Leftovers Ever*. Coming later this year is *Five Go Fishing*, on Channel 5. Find out more here - <https://www.rosemaryshrager.com/about>

THE BEACH HOUSE by Beverley Jones

Suspense | April 2022 | Constable | 272 pp

A gripping suspense novel that transports you to the beautiful Pacific Northwest coast. The perfect psychological thriller for fans Liane Moriarty's *Big Little Lies* and T. M. Logan's *The Holiday*.



The beach house was perfect place to hide. Or so she thought . . .

When Grace Jensen returns to her home one day, she finds a body in a pool of blood and a menacing gift left for her.

The community of Lookout Beach is shocked by such a brutal intrusion in their close-knit neighbourhood - particularly to a family as successful and well-liked as the Jensens - and a police investigation to find the trespasser begins.

But Grace knows who's after her. She might have changed her name and moved across the world, deciding to hide on the Oregon coast, but she's been waiting seventeen years for what happened in the small Welsh town where she grew up to catch-up with her. Grace might seem like the model neighbour and mother, but nobody in Lookout Beach - not even her devoted husband Elias - knows the real her. Or how much blood is on her hands.

Beverley Jones is a former journalist and police press officer, now a novelist and book obsessive. She was born in a small village in the valleys of South Wales, north of Cardiff, and started her journalism career with Trinity Mirror newspapers before

becoming a broadcast journalist with *BBC Wales Today*.

She has worked on all aspects of crime reporting, producing stories and content for newspapers and live TV. She also worked as a press officer and, later, media manager for South Wales Police, participating in criminal investigations, security operations, counter terrorism and emergency planning for the 2012 Olympics. Perhaps unsurprisingly she channels these experiences of true crime, and her insight into the murkier side of human nature, into her dark, psychological thrillers.

ORIGINAL SINS by Caroline England

Suspense | June 2022 | Piatkus | 304 pp

A new dark psychological suspense by the bestselling author of BETRAY HER and MY HUSBAND'S LIES. From the Top Ten ebook bestselling author, Caroline England's newest thriller will have you hooked from the first page to the last jaw-dropping twist.

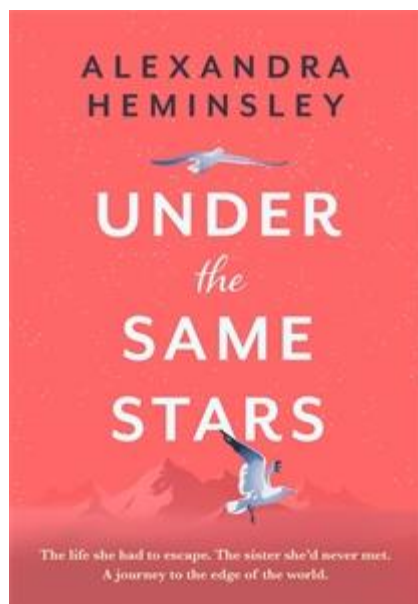
Praise for Caroline England: *Stunning . . . dark undercurrents and sinister twists* – Amanda Robson; *In the very top tier of psychological thrillers* - M W Craven; *The duchess of dark domestic noir strikes again* – Helen Fields; *Powerful . . . psychological menace and dramatic plot twists* - *Daily Mail*; *A twist that I didn't see coming!* - T M Logan; *Kept me gripped* B A Paris; *Incredibly twisty . . . deliciously satisfying* – Claire Allan; *A taut, tantalising thriller* – Sheryl Browne; *Truly terrific!* Martina Cole

Caroline England was born and brought up in Yorkshire and studied Law at the University of Manchester. She was a divorce and professional indemnity lawyer before leaving the law to bring up her three daughters and turning her hand to writing. She lives in Manchester with her family. To find out more, visit her website www.carolineenglandauthor.co.uk

UNDER THE SAME STARS by Alexandra Heminsley

Contemporary book club | July 2022 | Sphere | 400 pp

A beautiful and moving tale of sisterhood and wilderness: two sisters who have never met before battle to survive a winter on a remote and dangerous Norwegian island



Clara Seymour is trying to find her feet in London, living away from home for the first time. Brought up by her domineering mother, treasuring time with her adoring father, Clara and her world are brought to a standstill when her dad abruptly dies. Then, a mystery comes to light in a letter from him.

As I am sure you are aware that before I met your mother I had a previous marriage. But what I am not sure we have ever discussed is that we had a daughter.

So begins a journey of discovery that takes Clara to remote Norway and a landscape as brutal as it is beautiful, a voyage as fraught with personal and emotional danger as the sheer cliffs and torrid seas she must cross to find out who her father really was - and find the sister she's never met.

Alexandra Heminsley is author of three books about women, bodies and sport, including bestselling memoir *Running Like a Girl*, which has now been published in thirteen countries, and the forthcoming *Some Body to Love*. She also co-wrote Judy Murray's bestselling and William Hill Sports Book of the Year nominated *Knowing the Score*.

After working in publishing for six years, she became a freelance journalist, broadcaster and author in 2004. Alongside projects under her own name, she continues to work on major ghostwriting projects. After eight years as the books editor at *Elle*, and ten years at BBC Radio 2's *Claudia Winkleman Arts Show*, she now reviews books for *Grazia*. She continues to write features and interviews for the nationals including the *Guardian*, *Telegraph* and *The Times*, as well as women's magazines such as *Vogue* and *Kinfolk* magazine.

TRESPASS by Clare Clark

Literary thriller / book club | August 2022 | Virago | 320 pp

A brilliant and hugely topical psychological suspense novel about the ultimate trespass. A young woman discovers that the man she shared her life with was an undercover cop.

When Tess is in her late teens she falls into environmental activism - and the arms of an older charismatic protester. Passionate and politically engaged, the two of them are happy until Tess's unexpected pregnancy causes increasingly explosive rows.

A week before their baby, Mia, is born he vanishes. He never comes back. Tess and Mia believe they are all each other needs until, aged twelve, Mia starts asking questions about her father. Tess has questions of her own. As the facts slowly emerge, it becomes clear that he is not the man they both thought he was. They must face the horrible truth: he was never an activist. He was an undercover cop.

Dramatic, multi-plotted, page-turning, this brilliant psychological suspense explores what happens when every certainty is taken away.

Clare Clark is the author of five highly acclaimed historical novels, including *The Great Stink*, *Savage Lands* (both longlisted for the Orange Prize) *The Nature of Monsters* and *IN THE FULL LIGHT OF THE SUN* (Virago). Born in 1967, she graduated from Trinity College, Cambridge with a double first in History, and now lives in London with her husband and two children.

MONOCHROME by Jamie Costello

YA thriller | September 2022 | Atom | 200 pp

A gripping and prescient debut thriller set in a world drained of its colour, in which a group of young people must fight against the forces that threaten the natural world, and their very lives.

Sixteen-year-old Grace awakes one morning to find the sky leaden, the sun a huge ball of ash, the clouds like threatening rubble, and reports of unexplained accidents occurring on roads and rail. These are the hallmarks of an apocalyptic movie, but it quickly becomes apparent that everything, to the rest of her family, seems normal; Grace is one of only a handful of people in the country who are seeing the world in shades of grey.

Soon, however, the whole of society is in the grip of the Monochrome Effect, or 'greyout', which eliminates the ability of humans and animals to see colour.

When Grace starts to experience intermittent 'colour episodes', she is asked to join a government-run study with other teens who have seen flashes of colour since the Monochrome Effect began. She is told that she will be helping find a cure; be part of something that could save the world. But the reality is much more sinister, complex and dangerous than she could ever have imagined - colour vision is now currency, and to those in power, it's worth the ultimate price...

Jamie Costello lives in London. Under her own name, Laura Wilson, she is the author of six educational books on historical subjects for children, and thirteen critically acclaimed psychological thrillers, including the DI Stratton series. Her books have been shortlisted for many awards, including the Crime Writers' Association Gold Dagger, and she has won both the CWA Historical Mystery Award and the French Prix du Polar Européen. She was the Programming Chair for the Harrogate Crime Writing Festival in 2009, and co-programmes the Killer Women Crime Writing Festival. She is also the *Guardian's* crime fiction reviewer.

THE TOLL HOUSE by Carly Reagon

Ghost story | October 2022 | Sphere | 260 pp

A superbly chilling debut novel, perfect Halloween book: a terrifying original ghost story for fans of *The Haunting of Hill House* and Susan Hill, which Little, Brown won in a fierce-three-way auction.

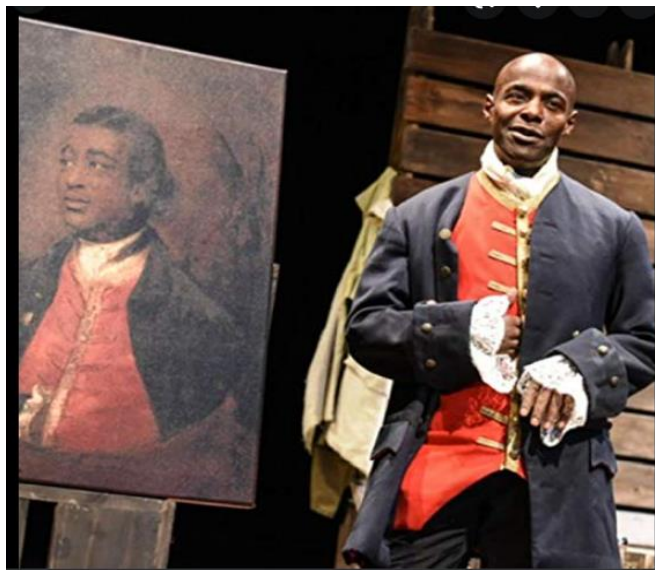
Kelda has found the perfect home for her and her son, Dylan: an old toll house, still full of period features, and situated in haunting rural beauty. When Dylan uncovers a death mask hidden in the walls, a series of inexplicable events unfold. Kelda can't shake the feeling of being watched. Dylan insists he sees figures in his room at night. As Dylan's behaviour becomes increasingly erratic, Kelda begins investigating the house's disturbing history. And only then does she realise how much danger she is really in. As they begin to piece together the dark events that took place in the house in the 1800s, the reader is drawn into the fevered mind of the man who witnessed them first-hand two centuries previously.

Carly Reagon completed a six month course at Curtis Brown Creative and was shortlisted for the Lucy Cavendish College Fiction Prize in 2019. Her writing is inspired by her love of the Welsh countryside where she lives with her husband and three children. She works as a senior lecturer at Cardiff University, is a keen runner and singer, and has an interest in anything historic.

THE SECRET DIARIES OF CHARLES IGNATIUS SANCHO by Paterson Joseph

Historical, black history | October 2022 | Dialogue | 352 pp

This is a poignant, funny, charming novel, absorbing novel, as well as a social document about a Great Black Briton, and is an eye-opener on to Black lives in 18th century England



This is an illuminating and original novel, based on the real life of Black writer and composer Charles Ignatius Sancho. It charts his life as a little-known maverick in Regency London, and gives voice to a man who had much to say, and makes visible a world that has always been there for people to discover, if only they choose to look. Born in 1729 on a slave ship, Ignatius spent his first two years as an enslaved boy on the island of Grenada. His owner brought him to England where he worked as a servant as a child in Greenwich before working for the Duke of Montagu. By 1773, Sancho was married, and, with his wife, owned a shop in Greenwich. The shop became a meeting place for some of the most famous writers, artists, actors and politicians of the day. Because of his financially-independent householder status, Sancho was eligible to vote and in 1774, he became the first Black person to vote in parliamentary elections in Britain. After his death in 1780, his letters were published which became an immediate bestseller. Five editions of the book were published and his

writing was used as evidence to support the movement to end slavery. This novel is based on the letters.

Paterson Joseph is writer and actor on stage and screen, with TV roles including *Peep Show*, *Doctor Who*, *Green Wing* and most recently BBC One's *Noughts & Crosses*. He wrote and starred in the play *Sancho - An Act Of Remembrance* in 2018. The image above is taken from this.

THE SECOND STRANGER by Martin Griffin

Thriller, suspense | January 2023 | Sphere | 320 pp

A pulse-racing locked-room thriller set in the remote Scottish Highlands, where icy temperatures and a terrible blizzard prevent any escape

In the remote highlands of Scotland, Remie Yorke begins her last night shift at the MacKinnon Hotel. She has booked a one-way flight tomorrow and she's never coming back. Or so she thinks.

Then Storm Ezra hits. The roads are unpassable, the phone lines are down and visibility is poor. As the icy temperatures plummet further, an injured man stumbles into the hotel from the blizzard. PC Don Gaines was in a horrific accident on the mountain road and none of his colleagues made it out alive. But there is one other survivor: a dangerous prisoner who is now at large and could be heading their way.

Then a second injured visitor arrives, also introducing himself as PC Don Gaines. Both men are strangers. Both claim to want to protect Remie and the hotel's remaining guests. Both are convincing.

Remie doesn't know who to trust. She must endure a deadly night before dawn breaks, and if she doesn't succumb to the cold, one of these men will kill her first.

Martin Griffin is an exciting new voice in the crime genre. Before turning his hand to writing, he was a deputy headteacher and a doomed singer who was once asked to support *The Fall* on tour, a gig he had to decline having only composed two good songs. He lives in Manchester with his wife and daughter. His second suspense novel will be published in February 2024.

THE WITNESS by Alexandra Wilson

Thriller, suspense | February 2023 | Sphere | 368 pp

The remarkable debut thriller by prominent young mixed-race British barrister and author Alexandra Wilson is a unique, twisty and shocking novel for the 21st century

She saw it all. But she can never tell. A young Black man is arrested for murder. The case against him is strong - a mum and a businessman work saw him standing over a body in a park, a knife still in hand.

But his up-and-coming barrister, Rosa - a black woman who is herself fighting prejudice - knows how people prejudice, but most of all, she knows the accused: he's a friend of her younger brother, and this kid... he's a good boy, wouldn't ever have done this. So she begins to dig...

As Rosa discovers secret upon terrible secret, she moves closer to finding a testimony that could win the case - or bring the whole establishment down on her. **THE WITNESS** is a frightening thriller about how we judge, and is the start of a new series.

Alexandra Wilson is junior barrister. She grew up in Essex and is the eldest of four children. Her mother is White British, her father is Black British and her paternal grandparents were born in Jamaica and came to England as part of the Windrush generation. She studied at Oxford and was awarded two prestigious scholarships, enabling her to research the impact of police shootings in the US on young people's attitudes to the police. She was awarded the first Queen's scholarship by the Honourable Society of the Middle Temple, a scholarship awarded to students showing exceptional promise in a career at the Bar. Alongside her paid law work, she helps to facilitate access to justice by providing legal representation for disenfranchised minorities and others on a pro-bono basis.

OBSESSED by Liza North

Thriller, suspense | February 2023 | Constable | 320 pp

A stunning debut psychological thriller about desire, jealousy and the far-reaching consequences of betrayal

One more night together. Then I'll end it . . .

Laura has everything she ever wanted: an adoring husband, beautiful children, a happy home. Then one day, at her daughter's nursery, someone walks back into her life who she knows will shatter everything.

Alexis was her first love. A love so exhilarating, it is impossible to resist. But as they rekindle their passionate affair, Laura knows it's only so long before the dark events in their past catch up with them.

Liza North is an academic, writer, and former journalist. She has a BA from Oxford University and a PhD in Philosophy from University College London, and has written for the *Financial Times* and *Guardian*. A keen cyclist, walker and lover of fancy gin, she lives in Edinburgh with her husband and two daughters.

BECAUSE SHE LOOKED AWAY by Alison Bruce

Crime | March 2023 | Constable | 352 pp

A brilliant new crime novel from the author of the critically acclaimed DC Gary Goodhew series set in Cambridge

Fifteen-year-old Bethany Trent vanishes without a trace from a sunny Cambridge park, and for the next four years her sister Claire holds onto the hope of finding her alive, fighting to keep the case in the public eye. But when Claire inherits her mother's house, she discovers a body in the garden which the police had already searched.

Meanwhile, detective Ronnie Blake reluctantly relocates to Cambridge to live with her brother Alex. Although she prefers to work alone, she is put in charge of the small but disorderly missing persons' team which first investigated Bethany's disappearance. As Ronnie begins to uncover the clues in the original case notes and the secrets kept by Bethany's family, she realises that the killer is playing a complex and deadly game. Ronnie needs to use her wits and unite her dysfunctional team to discover why Bethany had to die.

Praise for Alison Bruce - 'Alison Bruce always delivers. Her latest is **tense, twisty, terrific**' Ian Rankin; '[Bruce] has written a **superior thriller, full of suppressed menace**' *The Times Crime Club*; '**A powerful and absorbing story** [...] A writer at the top of her game' Elly Griffiths; '**Unpredictable, challenging and compelling**' Sophie Hannah; 'Alison Bruce has long been **one of the most adroit crime fiction practitioners**' Barry Forshaw, *Financial Time*; 'As always, Bruce produces a **rewarding read**' *The Times*; '**One of our most interesting crime writers**' *Daily Mail*

Alison Bruce is the author of nine crime novels and two non-fiction titles. Her first novel, *CAMBRIDGE BLUE* (2008), was described by Publishers Weekly as an 'assured debut' and introduced both detective, DC Gary Goodhew, and her trademark Cambridge setting. She went on to write six further novels in the DC Goodhew series before writing the psychological thriller *I DID IT FOR US* (2018). She has also written two true crime books and a selection of short stories. In 2013 and 2016, she was short-listed for the Crime Writers' Association Dagger in the Library Award. She was awarded a first in BSc (Hons) in Crime and Investigation at Anglia Ruskin University, Cambridge which included subject areas such as: crime scene investigation, policing practice, major investigations, mass fatality incidents, fire investigation, forensic pathology and forensic anthropology.

Untitled novel by Celia Walden

Suspense | April 2023 | Sphere | 400 pp

Everyone knows Sam, the IT guy. Everyone loves him. But does anyone really notice him?

Sam has been the IT guy for the residents of Addison Square for as long as anyone can remember. When Jason's Wife cuts out and his wife Amelie smashes her iPhone, it's Sam who comes to the rescue. When the square's oldest resident, Sylvia, loses her husband, it's Sam who promises to wipe clean and dispense of his old devices. Charlotte – the square's committee head - couldn't have planned the London garden square's lavish bicentenary party without Sam's help. He's in their computers, tablets and iPhones; inside their homes, lives and heads: a life-saver when needed, but otherwise invisible - and instantly forgotten.

But Sam has had enough of being ignored until he's needed. He stokes the friendship between Amelie and the 'house husband' across the square. He takes remote control of her phone and sending through invitations for playdates, then, drink dates. As his little virtual 'nudges' build their own momentum and an affair blossoms, Sam grows bolder in his puppeteering. When Charlotte's son becomes involved in an extremist online forum, Sam intervenes.

The more strings Sam pulls, the more he *can* pull. Only these aren't virtual characters he's toying with but real lives, and as his string-pulling builds to a snapping point on the night of the square's bicentenary party, Sam's puppeteering results in... well, you had better read the book.

Celia Walden is known for her wide-ranging articles, opinions and commentaries on everything from current affairs to health, fashion and motoring. She is a columnist for the *Daily Telegraph*, and has written for *Glamour*, *GQ*, *Elle*, *Porter Magazine*, *Harper's Bazaar*, Net-a-Porter's *The Edit*, *Grazia*, *Stylist*, *Standpoint*, *The Spectator* and *Russian Vogue*. Born and brought up in Paris, she studied at the University of Cambridge. She and her husband, Piers Morgan, divide their time between London and L.A. Her first novel, *PAYDAY*, was published by Sphere in 2021.

THE RED BIRD SINGS by Aoife Fitzgerald

Historical fiction | April 2023 | Virago

Dear friends,

I can't remember a meeting quite like it. I presented THE RED BIRD SINGS, hoping that a couple of people may have had time to read a little of the 97,000-word manuscript over the weekend. I loved it, but would anyone else fall for the clever Gothic tricks, the menacing tension, the bravura ghostly climax?

I was blown away. After my breathless pitch, there was a moment's pause, and then everyone began speaking. They loved it. They compared it to huge bestsellers. They had stayed up all night. They talked of their favourite characters, the most exciting moments, pressed their hands to their ears if they hadn't yet reached the end.

In the afternoon, I spoke with Aoife Fitzpatrick, and for the second time I was knocked off my feet, by her intelligence, the fire she had for her subject, the stories behind her research. Not only that – the idea for her next book was deliciously compelling, one that I cannot wait to read.

I'm thrilled that Virago is selling world rights in THE RED BIRD SINGS. A heart stopping Gothic suspense, it nods back to our favourites like Sarah Waters' FINGERSMITH and Margaret Atwood's ALIAS GRACE and looks to a future star of historical fiction with a powerful feminist vision. It tells an important story with page-turning tension; it portrays historic women with no two-dimensional feistiness but with tenderness and profound insight. We'll be publishing in spring 2023 as our major debut lead.

And the story behind the novel is just as fascinating. Taking a real court case from 1897 West Virginia as its starting point, it dramatises the first time the testimony of a ghost was admitted as evidence in an American murder trial. Fitzpatrick brings it to life in the voices of two women with a haunting power and desperate tension.

I wish you goosebumps. I wish that tears come to your eyes as you read that moment with the letter, and that moment in the courtroom. And I wish you the same breathless rush as you pitch THE RED BIRD SINGS to your teams and feel with all your heart, like I did, that this book has to be yours.

Best wishes,

Rose Tomaszewska
Editorial Director, Virago

I KNOW WHO YOU WERE by Steven Savile

Thriller | April 2023 | 320 pp | Sphere

Everyone has a past, but not everyone has a past which justifies disappearing without telling your husband...

Alex and Morven have been happily married for ten years and have an adored daughter, Poppy. A very normal life, until one day Morven never reaches her corporate retreat, and her car is found abandoned. Concern mounts, the police are called in... and then Morven's mobile is found with the message 'I know who you were' left on it. And it becomes apparent that Morven's disappearance was planned by Morven herself, to prevent those closest from finding out the truth about her...

Steven Savile won the International Media Association of Tie-In Writers award for his novel, *Shadow of the Jaguar*, and the inaugural Lifeboat to the Stars award for *Tau Ceti* (co-authored with International Bestselling novelist Kevin J. Anderson), and has been nominated for the British Fantasy Award on many occasions. Writing as Matt Langley his young adult novel *Black Flag* was a finalist for the People's Book Prize 2015. His novel *Silver* was one of the Top 30 bestselling books of 2011 (Bookseller) and he's published a number of original novels with St Martins (*Glass Town*, *Coldfall Wood*, *White Peak*), and with Titan (*Parallel Lines*, *Murder at Sorrow's Crown*), Akashic Books (*Sunfail*), Severn House (*The Memory Man* and *The Black Shepherd*). Savile lives in Sweden and works for an enormous Chinese gaming company.

KHANS by Shehan Karunatilaka

Literary fiction | April | 320 pp | Fleet

A satirical ensemble comedy about advertising, commerce and the lengths we go for meaningless pursuits.

Set in 2008, before the end of the Sri Lankan civil war, and just after the birth of social media and the smartphone, KHANS is a satirical ensemble comedy about advertising, commerce and the lengths we go for meaningless pursuits. The story is centered around an iconic Colombo dive bar and the infantile industry types who come there to drink, plot and pontificate.

Karunatilaka has a real lightness of touch. He mixes humour and violence with the same deftness with which his protagonist mixes drinks - Tishani Doshi on Chinaman, the Observer; The strength of the book lies in its energy, its mixture of humour and heartwrenching emotion, its twisting narrative - Kamila Shamsie on Chinaman, the Guardian; Bristling with energy and confidence, a quixotic novel that is both an elegy to lost ambitions and a paean to madcap dreams - the Sunday Times on Chinaman; Karunatilaka's first book, Chinaman, won the Commonwealth Book Prize, the DSC Prize for South Asian Literature and the Gratiaen Prize.