

## Book Group Collection 2016

### **Addison, Corban**

#### **Garden of burning sand, The**

On a dark night in Lusaka, Zambia, a young girl is brutally assaulted and left for dead. Her identity is a mystery. Zoe Fleming, a human rights lawyer, is determined to find the perpetrator. Also investigating is Joseph Kabuta of the Zambian police. At first they are reluctant to work together, their cultures and upbringings radically different. Their task is not only to help the girl recover, but also to ensure justice doesn't fail her again.

### **Anderson, Lin**

#### **Paths of the dead**

When Amy MacKenzie agrees to attend a meeting at a local spiritualist church, the last person she expects to hear calling to her from beyond the grave is her son. The son whom she'd only spoken to an hour before. Then the body of a young man is found inside a Neolithic stone circle high above the city of Glasgow and forensic scientist Rhona MacLeod is soon on the case. The hands have been severed and there is a stone in the victim's mouth with the number five scratched on it. DI Michael McNab is certain it's a gangland murder, but Rhona isn't convinced. When a second body is found in similar circumstances, a pattern begins to emerge, of a killer intent on masterminding a gruesome Druidic game that everyone will be forced to play . . .

### **Askew, Claire**

#### **This changes things (NF)**

This changes things is Claire Askew's first full collection, coming after years of work in Scotland's flourishing poetry and spoken word scene. Her poems focus on the lives and experiences of women - particularly the socially or economically marginalised - at pains both to empathise and to recognise the limits of this empathy. They embody a need to acknowledge and challenge the poet's privileged position as documenter and outsider, a responsibility to the poem's political message and to that message's human subject. This changes things draws much of its strength from this exploration of inbetweenness. Claire Askew's purposeful deployment of objects, lighting effects and liminal spaces implicates her reader in the poem's argument, holds up a mirror and asks us to pay attention. The book's romantic relationships, depictions of frustrated travel or social mobility, are bound up in its awareness of the systems of power that permit no true state of innocence. Even the final poem, 'Hydra' - with its celebration of the body and its senses - cannot ultimately allow us off the hook.

### **Ansara, Aziz**

#### **Modern romance (NF)**

For years, American comedian Aziz Ansari has been aiming his comic insight at dating and relationships, and in *Modern Romance*, he teams up with award-winning sociologist Eric Klinenberg to investigate love in the age of technology. They enlisted some of the world's leading social scientists, conducted hundreds of interviews, analyzed the behavioural data, and researched dating cultures from Tokyo to Buenos Aires to New York City. The result is an unforgettable picture of modern love, combining Ansari's irreverent humour with cutting-edge social science.

## **Bakewell, Joan**

### **Stop the clocks (NF)**

Joan Bakewell has led a varied, sometimes breathless life: she has been a teacher, copywriter, studio manager, broadcaster, journalist, the government's Voice of Older People and chair of the theatre company Shared Experience. She has written four radio plays, two novels and an autobiography - *The Centre of The Bed*. Now in her 80s, she is still broadcasting. Though it may look as though she is now part of the establishment - a Dame, President of Birkbeck College, a Member of the House of Lords as Baroness Bakewell of Stockport - she's anything but and remains outspoken and courageous. In *Stop the Clocks*, she muses on all she has lived through, how the world has changed and considers the things and values she will be leaving behind.

*Stop the Clocks* is a book of musings, a look back at what she was given by her family, at the times in which she grew up - ranging from the minutiae of life such as the knowledge of how to darn and how to make a bed properly with hospital corners, to the bigger lessons of politics, of lovers, of betrayal. She talks of the present, of her family, of friends and literature - and talks too of what she will leave behind. This is a thoughtful, moving and spirited book as only could be expected from this extraordinary woman.

## **Campbell, Barney**

### **Rain**

Barney Campbell's *Rain* is a searing debut that reads like a British *Matterhorn*. "A wonderfully achieved, enthralling and moving novel of war. Its authenticity is as telling as it is terrifying." "No better on-the-ground description of Britain's war will ever be written. *Rain* is what *Chickenhawk* or, more recently, *Matterhorn* was to Vietnam. It's unputdownable, except for when the reader needs to draw breath or battle a lump in the throat." Corporal Thomas (my acting sergeant since Adams died) and I have to go down the line of the boys as they're checking their kit before we go out. Some of them are crying, not bawling just weeping gently but still steadfast; others are just pumped to the max, bouncing their heads up and down like they're listening to trance music, just amped about getting the rounds down. Those are the ones I'm most worried about; how they're going to cope with being back home is beyond me. Tom Chamberlain was destined to be a soldier from the moment he discovered a faded picture of his father patrolling the streets of Belfast. With the war in Afghanistan at its savage peak, Tom is dispatched from home in the dead of an anonymous September night, a blood tribute leaving without fanfare. Full of eagerness, but wracked by self-doubt, he must discover who he is and what he is capable of. But as the bonds with his comrades grow, home - and the loved ones left behind - seems ever more remote from the surreal violence and exhilaration of war. Drawing on the author's own experience, *Rain* is the most powerful, vivid and affecting portrait of the Afghan frontline to have yet emerged - a novel of war that will take its place among the classics from previous generations. "Rain is not merely good, it's remarkable. Powerful, at times unbearably harrowing, it captures both the fear and exhilaration of men pushed to breaking point.

## **Celestin, Ray**

### **Axeman's jazz, The**

*Celestin* smartly evokes the atmosphere of 1919 New Orleans, and a city dominated by music and the mob.

Inspired by the serial killer thought to have been responsible for 12 murders in New Orleans between 1918 and 1919, Ray Celestin's first novel, *The Axeman's Jazz* initially stays close to the known facts and includes a letter, published in the newspapers at the time, which was supposedly sent by the original Axeman. The writer, who, like the author of the famous 1888 "Jack the Ripper" letter, gives his address as "Hell", promises to claim his next victim at a specific date and time but says that he will spare those "in whose home a jazz band is in full swing". As with the Ripper, the real killer's identity remains unknown, and Celestin has three characters struggling to work out who he or she might be. Detective lieutenant Michael Talbot heads the official investigation; his former partner, Luca d'Andrea, recently freed from prison for corruption, is tasked by the mafia to discover whodunit; and 19-year-old Sherlock Holmes fan Ida Davis, a secretary for the Pinkerton Detective Agency, decides to branch out on her own.

### **Cleeves, Anne**

#### **The moth catcher**

Life seems perfect in Valley Farm, a quiet community in Northumberland. Until a shocking discovery. The owners of a big country house have employed a young ecologist named Patrick to look after the place while they're away. But Patrick is found dead by the side of the lane into the valley. DI Vera Stanhope arrives on the scene with her colleagues. When they look round the attic of the house - where Patrick has a flat - she finds a second body. All the two victims have in common is a fascination with moths.

As Vera is drawn into the claustrophobic world of this increasingly strange community, she realises that there may be deadly secrets trapped here...

### **Cumming, Alan**

#### **Not my father's son – Scottish author (NF)**

Alan Cumming grew up in the grip of a man who held his family hostage, someone who meted out violence with a frightening ease, who waged a silent war with himself that sometimes spilled over onto everyone around him. That man was Alan's father, Alex Cumming.

Alex was the dark, enigmatic heart of Cumming family life. But he was not the only mystery. Alan's maternal grandfather, Tommy Darling, had disappeared to the Far East after the Second World War. The last time Alan's mother saw her father she was eight years old. When she was 13, the family was informed that he had died in an accidental shooting.

Curious to explore this second mystery, Alan committed to filming an episode of the BBC's *Who Do You Think You Are?* Then out of the blue, his father, who Alan and his brother had not seen or spoken to for more than a decade, called. He had a secret he had to share, one that would shock his son to his very core and set in motion a journey that would change Alan's life forever.

At times suspenseful, at times deeply moving, but always brave and honest, *Not My Father's Son* is a powerful story about embracing the best aspects of the past and triumphantly pushing the darkness aside.

### **Dahl, Arne**

#### **Bad blood**

Detective Paul Hjelm and his team receive an urgent call from the FBI. A murderer whose methods bear a frightening resemblance to a serial killer they believed long dead is on his way to Sweden. For years the FBI hunted the so-called 'Kentucky Killer', their agents haunted by the terrible injuries he inflicted on his victims through his signature device: a weapon that squeezed the vocal cords shut.

Has he somehow returned from beyond the grave to torture a new generation, or do they have a copy-cat on their hands? And what do they want in Sweden? If they are to capture the killer, the team must collaborate with their colleagues in the FBI on a desperate hunt that will take them from rain swept city streets to deserted Kentucky farmhouses, and will push them to the limits of their endurance.

### **Doerr, Anthony**

#### **All the light we cannot see**

A beautiful, stunningly ambitious novel about a blind French girl and a German boy whose paths collide in occupied France as both try to survive the devastation of World War II, from the highly acclaimed, multiple award-winning Anthony Doerr.

Marie Laure lives with her father in Paris within walking distance of the Museum of Natural History where he works as the master of the locks (there are thousands of locks in the museum). When she is six, she goes blind, and her father builds her a model of their neighbourhood, every house, every manhole, so she can memorize it with her fingers and navigate the real streets with her feet and cane. When the Germans occupy Paris, father and daughter flee to Saint-Malo on the Brittany coast, where Marie-Laure's agoraphobic great uncle lives in a tall, narrow house by the sea wall.

In another world in Germany, an orphan boy, Werner, grows up with his younger sister, Jutta, both enchanted by a crude radio Werner finds. He becomes a master at building and fixing radios, a talent that wins him a place at an elite and brutal military academy and, ultimately, makes him a highly specialized tracker of the Resistance. Werner travels through the heart of Hitler Youth to the far-flung outskirts of Russia, and finally into Saint-Malo, where his path converges with Marie-Laure.

### **Duffy, Carol Ann**

#### **Love poems**

Carol Ann Duffy is a poet who covers the stormy waterfront of desire, devotion and despair... from distant yearning to wild new passion through absence, boredom and infidelity, to break-ups, grief and solitude. As always, she manages the rare feat of building on traditions, forebears, allusions with stirring and shaking the emotions with muscular and unpretentious force.

### **Galloway, Janice**

#### **Jelly Fish**

In this sparkling and powerful new selection, Janice Galloway takes on David Lodge's assertion – "Literature is mostly about having sex and not much about having children, life's the other way round", and scent-marks her multi-layered fiction with what she believes to be the greater truth. Razor sharp tales of two of the most powerful human experiences from one of our country's best loved and most acclaimed authors.

### **Gawande, Atul**

#### **Being mortal (NF)**

It is also a call for a change in the philosophy of health care. Gawande writes that members of the medical profession, himself included, have been wrong about what their job is. Rather than ensuring health and survival, it is "to enable well-being." Medical professionals are the ones who are largely in control of how we spend our "waning days," he writes, yet they are focused on disease, not on living. "Medicine has been slow to confront the very changes that it has been responsible for — or to

apply the knowledge we have about how to make old age better.” The experts quoted here argue that doctors should not only treat disease but also concern themselves with people’s functional abilities, and that most medical trainees should learn about geriatrics. On the one hand, Gawande is swayed by the paleontologist Stephen Jay Gould’s essay “The Median Isn’t the Message.” After receiving a cancer diagnosis with a median survival of only eight months, Gould observed that some patients survived well beyond the eight month median. He became one of them, living some 20 years after experimental treatment, and dying from an unrelated cancer. Gawande writes: “There is almost always a long tail of possibility, however thin. What’s wrong with looking for it? Nothing, it seems to me, unless it means we have failed to prepare for the outcome that’s vastly more probable.” And, he argues, our medical culture does just that.

### **Hawkins, Paula**

#### **Girl on the train**

Rachel catches the same commuter train every morning. She knows it will wait at the same signal each time, overlooking a row of back gardens. She's even started to feel like she knows the people who live in one of the houses. 'Jess and Jason', she calls them. Their life - as she sees it - is perfect. If only Rachel could be that happy. And then she sees something shocking. It's only a minute until the train moves on, but it's enough. Now everything's changed. Now Rachel has a chance to become a part of the lives she's only watched from afar. Now they'll see; she's much more than just the girl on the train...

### **Henderson, Smith**

#### **Fourth of July Creek**

After trying to help Benjamin Pearl, an undernourished, nearly feral 11-year-old boy living in the Montana wilderness, social worker Pete Snow comes face-to-face with the boy's profoundly disturbed father, Jeremiah. With courage and caution, Pete slowly earns a measure of trust from this paranoid survivalist itching for a final conflict that will signal the coming End Times. But as Pete's own family spins out of control, Pearl's activities spark the full-blown interest of the FBI, putting Pete at the centre of a massive manhunt from which no one will emerge unscathed. In this shattering and iconic American novel, Smith Henderson explores the complexities of freedom, community, grace, suspicion, and anarchy, brilliantly depicting our nation's disquieting and violent contradictions. *Fourth of July Creek* is an unforgettable, unflinching debut that marks the arrival of a major literary talent.

### **Holt, Jonathan**

#### **Abomination, The**

They found the woman's body on the steps of a church, washed up by Venice's winter tides. A tattoo on her wrist matched graffiti in an abandoned hospital, not used since the Second World War. It's Captain Kat Tapo's first murder case, and she'll do anything to get to the truth. But as the hunt for the killer intensifies, she discovers secrets from Italy's dark wartime past that will put her in great danger...

Want to hear Venice's secrets?

## **Hughes, Kathryn**

### **Letter, The**

Tina Craig longs to escape her violent husband. She works all the hours God sends to save up enough money to leave him, also volunteering in a charity shop to avoid her unhappy home. Whilst going through the pockets of a second-hand suit, she comes across an old letter, the envelope firmly sealed and unfranked. Tina opens the letter and reads it - a decision that will alter the course of her life forever....

Billy Stirling knows he has been a fool, but hopes he can put things right. On 4th September 1939 he sits down to write the letter he hopes will change his future. It does - in more ways than he can ever imagine....

The Letter tells the story of two women, born decades apart, whose paths are destined to cross and how one woman's devastation leads to the other's salvation.

## **Jefferies, Dinah**

### **Tea planter's wife, The**

Nineteen-year-old Gwendolyn Hooper is newly married to a rich and charming widower, eager to join him on his tea plantation, determined to be the perfect wife and mother.

But life in Ceylon is not what Gwen expected. The plantation workers are resentful, the neighbours treacherous. And there are clues to the past - a dusty trunk of dresses, an overgrown gravestone in the grounds - that her husband refuses to discuss.

Just as Gwen finds her feet, disaster strikes. She faces a terrible choice, hiding the truth from almost everyone, but a secret this big can't stay buried forever . . .

## **Mackintosh, Clare**

### **I let you go**

On a rainy afternoon, a mother's life is shattered as her son slips from her grip and runs into the street . . .

I Let You Go follows Jenna Gray as she moves to a ramshackle cottage on the remote Welsh coast, trying to escape the memory of the car accident that plays again and again in her mind and desperate to heal from the loss of her child and the rest of her painful past.

At the same time, the novel tracks the pair of Bristol police investigators trying to get to the bottom of this hit-and-run. As they chase down one hopeless lead after another, they find themselves as drawn to each other as they are to the frustrating, twist-filled case before them.

## **Mandel, Emily St John**

### **Station eleven**

Lilia Albert has been leaving people behind for her entire life. She spends her childhood and adolescence travelling constantly and changing identities. In adulthood, she finds it impossible to stop. Haunted by an inability to remember her early childhood, she moves restlessly from city to city, abandoning lovers along the way, possibly still followed by a private detective who has pursued her for years. Then her latest lover follows her from New York to Montreal, determined to learn her secrets and make sure she's safe. Last Night in Montreal is a story of love, amnesia, compulsive travel, the depths and the limits of family bonds, and the nature of obsession. In this extraordinary debut, Emily St. John Mandel casts a powerful spell that captures the reader in a gritty, youthful

world charged with an atmosphere of mystery, promise and foreboding where small revelations continuously change our understanding of the truth and lead to desperate consequences. Mandel's characters will resonate with you long after the final page is turned.

### **Manning, Sarra**

#### **You don't have to say you love me**

Sweet, bookish Neve Slater always plays by the rules.

And the number one rule is that good-natured fat girls like her don't get guys like gorgeous William, heir to Neve's heart since university. But William's been in LA for three years, and Neve's been slimming down and reinventing herself so that when he returns, he'll fall head over heels in love with the new, improved her.

So she's not that interested in other men. Until her sister points out that if Neve wants William to think she's an experienced love-goddess and not the fumbling, awkward girl he left behind, then she'd better get some, well, experience.

What Neve needs is someone to show her the ropes, someone like Max. Wicked, shallow, sexy Max. And since he's such a man-slut, and so not Neve's type, she certainly won't fall for him. Because William is the man for her... right?

### **Marsons, Angela**

#### **Silent scream**

Even the darkest secrets can't stay buried forever.

Five figures gather 'round a shallow grave. They had all taken turns to dig. An adult-sized hole would have taken longer. An innocent life had been taken, but the pact had been made. Their secrets would be buried, bound in blood.

Years later a headmistress is found brutally strangled, the first in a spate of gruesome murders that shock the Black Country.

But when human remains are discovered at a former children's home, disturbing secrets are also unearthed. DI Kim Stone fast realizes she's on the hunt for a twisted individual whose killing spree spans decades.

As the body count rises, Kim needs to stop the murderer before they strike again. But to catch the killer, can Kim confront the demons of her own past before it's too late?

### **May Peter**

#### **Firemaker, The**

Campbell is on a six-week lecture trip at the University of Public Security in Beijing. She has fled to China to escape from a broken heart and a shattered life. Li is a newly promoted detective, walking in the footsteps of an uncle who was a near legend in the Beijing police force.

Li's uncle, now retired, prefers to play chess in the park and dispense his wisdom in Chinese riddles, and the young detective is forced reluctantly to turn for help to the experienced Margaret Campbell whose expertise is burn victims.

On the night that the scientist is burned to death, there are two other murders in the city. It soon becomes clear that all three are linked.

From the moment Campbell conducts the autopsy on the government scientist, her future and Li's become as inextricably linked as the murders they are investigating. And as, together, they peel back

layer upon layer of obfuscation, the terrible truth they finally uncover sets them on a terrifying course they could never have imagined.

### **McEwan, Ian**

#### **Children act, The**

Fiona Maye is a High Court judge in London presiding over cases in family court. She is fiercely intelligent, well respected, and deeply immersed in the nuances of her particular field of law. Often the outcome of a case seems simple from the outside, the course of action to ensure a child's welfare obvious. But the law requires more rigor than mere pragmatism, and Fiona is expert in considering the sensitivities of culture and religion when handing down her verdicts. But Fiona's professional success belies domestic strife. Her husband, Jack, asks her to consider an open marriage and, after an argument, moves out of their house. His departure leaves her adrift, wondering whether it was not love she had lost so much as a modern form of respectability; whether it was not contempt and ostracism she really fears.

She decides to throw herself into her work, especially a complex case involving a 17-year-old boy whose parents will not permit a lifesaving blood transfusion because it conflicts with their beliefs as Jehovah's Witnesses. But Jack doesn't leave her thoughts, and the pressure to resolve the case - as well as her crumbling marriage - tests Fiona in ways that will keep listeners thoroughly enthralled until the last stunning page.

### **McIlvanney, William**

#### **Docherty**

Tam Docherty's youngest son, Conn, is born at the end of 1903 in a small working-class town in the west of Scotland. Tam will stop at nothing to make sure that life and the pits don't swallow up his boy, the way it did him. Courageous and questioning, Docherty emerges as a leader of almost unshakable strength, but in a close-knit community tradition is a powerful opponent.

### **Mytting, Lars**

#### **Norwegian wood (NF)**

Chopping and stacking wood is a pastime where the world makes sense once more. Because our relationship to fire is so ancient, so universal, it seems that in learning about wood, you can also learn about life.

And who better to impart this wisdom than an expert from Scandinavia, where the extreme climate has obliged generations to hone and share their skills with tools, wood and heat production. Lars Mytting has distilled the wisdom of enthusiasts, from experienced lifelong growers, stackers and burners to researchers and professionals of combustion and tree culture.

Part guide to the best practice in every aspect of working with this renewable energy source, part meditation on the human instinct for survival, this definitive handbook on the art of chopping, stacking and drying wood in the Scandinavian way has resonated across the world.

Whether you are a seasoned woodcutter, or your passion is yet to be kindled, Norwegian Wood is the perfect fireside read.

## **Neville, Stuart**

### **Ratlines**

Ireland 1963. As the Irish people prepare to welcome President John F. Kennedy to the land of his ancestors, a German national is murdered in a seaside guesthouse. Lieutenant Albert Ryan, Directorate of Intelligence, is ordered to investigate. The German is the third foreigner to die within a few days, and Minister for Justice Charles Haughey wants the killing to end lest a shameful secret be exposed: the dead men were all Nazis granted asylum by the Irish government in the years following World War II.

A note from the killers is found on the dead German's corpse, addressed to Colonel Otto Skorzeny, Hitler's favourite commando, once called the most dangerous man in Europe. The note simply says: "We are coming for you."

As Albert Ryan digs deeper into the case he discovers a network of former Nazis and collaborators, all presided over by Skorzeny from his country estate outside Dublin. When Ryan closes in on the killers, his loyalty is torn between country and conscience. Why must he protect the very people he fought against twenty years before? Ryan learns that Skorzeny might be a dangerous ally, but he is a deadly enemy.

## **North, Freya**

### **Way back home, The**

One summer, something happened that changed everything forever...

Born and brought up in an artists' commune in Derbyshire, Oriana Taylor had freedom at her fingertips in a home full of extraordinary people. The Bedwell brothers, Malachy and Jed, shared their childhood and adolescence with Oriana.

In the rambling old house and tangled grounds, their dreams and desires could take wing unchecked. But too much freedom comes at a price. Something happened the summer they were fifteen. And now, having been gone eighteen years, Oriana is back.

This is their story.

## **Owen, Amanda**

### **Yorkshire shepherdess (NF)**

Amanda has been eagerly watched by millions of viewers of ITV's The Dales living and working at Ravenseat, a hill farm of 2000 acres which she shares with 900 sheep, seven children, four dogs and one husband. Not to mention chickens, pigs, cows, horses, an uncontrollable goat and a vole who has taken up residence in the sitting room. It's a far cry from her childhood in industrial Huddersfield. A delightful memoir.

## **Pedersen, Michael**

### **Play with me (NF)**

'Michael's poems are so physical you can almost touch the images in them. Fabulously sensual and alive. I adore poetry like this' --Stephen Fry. 'If you like poetry that is cool, smart, hilarious and quirky and can just suddenly rip your heart out, Michael Pedersen is your man' --Irvine Welsh.

'Michael throws open the gates to the kingdom and all the words are singing. He knows deeply that life is nothing without play. And everything is play to him - pain and love and fun and thought and memory. Michael makes them all majestic and beautifully honest. How exciting to come across a

writer with such vigour' --Ewen Bremner. If you like poetry that is cool, smart, hilarious and quirky and can just suddenly rip your heart out, Michael Pedersen is your man' --Irvine Welsh

**Ross, L J**

### **Holy island**

Det.Ch.Insp Ryan retreats to Holy Island seeking sanctuary when he is forced to take sabbatical leave from his duties as a homicide detective. A few days before Christmas, his peace is shattered and he is thrust back into the murky world of murder when a young woman is found dead amongst the ancient ruins of the nearby Priory. When former local girl Dr Anna Taylor arrives back on the island as a police consultant, old memories swim to the surface making her confront her difficult past. She and Ryan struggle to work together to hunt a killer who hides in plain sight, while pagan ritual and small-town politics muddy the waters of their investigation. Murder and mystery are peppered with a sprinkling of romance and humour in the fast-paced crime whodunit set on the Northumbrian island of Lindisfarne, cut off from the English mainland by a tidal causeway.

**Russell, Helen**

### **Year of living Danishly, The (NF)**

Given the opportunity of a new life in rural Jutland, Helen Russell discovers a startling statistic: Denmark, often thought of as a land of long dark winters, cured herring, Lego and pastries, is the happiest place on earth. So, what's their secret? Helen decides there's only one way to find out: she will give herself a year there, trying to uncover the formula for Danish happiness. From childcare, education, food and interior design to SAD and taxes, The Year of Living Danishly records a funny, poignant journey, showing us what the Danes get right, what they get wrong, and how we might all benefit from living a little more Danishly ourselves. A lovely mix of English sensibility and Danish pragmatism.

**Sarginson, Saskia**

### **Without you**

Suffolk, 1984. When 17 year old Eva goes missing at sea, everyone presumes that she has drowned. Her parents' relationship is falling apart, undermined by guilt and grief. But her younger sister, Faith, refuses to consider a life without Eva; she's determined to find her sister and bring her home alive. Close to shore looms the shape of an island – out of bounds, mysterious and dotted with windowless concrete huts. What nobody knows is that inside one of the huts Eva is being held captive. That she is fighting to survive and return home. A blend of mystery, thriller and emotional family drama, Without You will leave you unsettled, even as it touches your heart.

**Sendker, Jan-Philipp**

### **Whispering Shadows**

Paul Leibovitz - once a successful journalist, loving father and husband - is bereft and alone after the death of a child. But following a chance encounter in Hong Kong with fellow American Elizabeth, whose son has disappeared, Paul decides to investigate. Along with a detective friend, he risks everything and crosses the border to mainland China, there descending into the criminal underworld where he must confront the dark secrets and corruption hidden beneath the veneer and wealth of the new China. Whispering Shadows is the absorbing tale of one man's search for redemption in a rapidly changing country where the ghosts of the past threaten to engulf the present.

## Simons, J David

### Exquisite sense of what is beautiful

J. David Simons pulls off an extraordinary trick in 'An Exquisite Sense of What Is Beautiful': the history of post-war Japan; the labyrinth of blame and shame from imperial war atrocities to the gratuitous horror of Nagasaki; Japan beating the West at its own military-industrial game all encapsulated in a subtle, seductive love story. 'An Exquisite Sense' is in the tradition of Graham Greene or our own William Boyd, taking in great sweeps of history without ever losing sight of the personal, the telling detail. Simons clearly knows Japan and, like his hero Edward, has glimpsed, in the cracks between the ancient and über-modern, the East/West schizophrenia, the soul of the place. **An accomplished and compelling novel by a storyteller at the top of his game, An Exquisite Sense Of What Is Beautiful lives up to its ambitious title**, delivering a story that is both delicate in its detail and politically robust. --Chris Dolan, author of Redlegs and Ascension Day.

## Simpson, Catherine

### Truestory

Alice's life is dictated by her autistic son, Sam, who refuses to leave their remote Lancashire farm. Her only time 'off' is two hours in Lancaster on a Tuesday afternoon - and even that doesn't always pan out to be the break she needs. Husband Duncan brings Larry, a rootless wanderer, to the farm to embark on a money making scheme they've dreamed up. Alice is hostile but Larry beguiles Sam with tales of travel in the outside world and, soon, Alice begins to fall for him, too. By turns blackly comic, heart-breaking and heart-warming, Truestory looks at what happens when sacrifice slithers towards martyrdom. By turns happy and sad, ultimately it is a tale of hope.

## Tyler, Anne

### Spool of blue thread, A

"It was a beautiful, breezy, yellow and green afternoon..." This is the way Abby Whitshank always begins the story of how she and Red fell in love that summer's day in 1959. The whole family on the porch, half listening as their mother tells the same tale they have heard so many times before. From that porch we spool back through the generations, witnessing the events, secrets and unguarded moments that have come to define the family. From Red's father and mother, newly arrived in Baltimore in the 1920s to Abby and Red's grandchildren carrying the family legacy boisterously into the twenty-first century – four generations of Whitshanks, their lives unfolding in and around the sprawling, lovingly worn Baltimore house that has always been their home.