

Book Group Titles 2022

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Aristide, Oana	Under the Blue
Arriaga, Guillermo	The Untameable
Audrain, Ashley	The Push
Backman, Fredrik	Anxious People
Banwo, Ayanna Lloyd	When We Were Birds
Blake, Olivie	The Atlas Six
Brent, Katy	How to Kill Men and Get Away with It
Bublitz, Jacqueline	Before You Knew My Name
Carson, Jan	The Raptures
Danforth, Emily M.	Plain Bad Heroines
Davies, Abby	Mother Loves Me
Donoghue, Emma	Haven
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Edwards, Emily	The Herd
Follett, Ken	Never
Garner, Alan	Treacle Walker
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Book Group Synopses 2022

Abdullah, Kia - Next of Kin

Leila Syed receives a call that cleaves her life in two. Her brother-in-law's voice is filled with panic. His son's nursery has called to ask where little Max is.

Leila was supposed to drop Max off that morning. But she forgot.

Racing to the car park, she grasps the horror of what she has done.

What follows is an explosive, high-profile trial that will tear the family apart. But as the case progresses it becomes clear there's more to this incident than meets the eye...

A gripping, brave and tense courtroom drama, "Next of Kin" will keep you on the edge of your seat until the final, heart-stopping page.

AlAmmar, Layla - Silence is a Sense

A young woman spends her days watching the neighbours through their windows. She is a refugee, who has seen the failure of the Arab Spring in her homeland and who has been traumatized into silence by her brutal journey from Syria to Britain.

As an outsider, a mute voyeur, she sees everything, she hears everything: the love, the fighting, the families, the secrets, the lies, the sex, the shame. Slowly drawn into the community that surrounds her, she begins to come to terms with all she has lost. After a brutal attack on the local mosque, she realises she is the only witness to the truth behind the violence. But will she finally speak of all she's seen?

"Rear Window" meets "Exit West", this beautifully written novel tells the powerful story of one woman's trauma and her gradual healing.

Aristide, Oana - Under the Blue

A road trip beneath clear blue skies and a blazing sun: a reclusive artist is forced to abandon his home and follow two young sisters across a post-pandemic Europe in search of a safe place. Is this the end of the world?

Meanwhile two computer scientists have been educating their baby in a remote location. Their baby is called Talos, and he is an advanced AI program. Every week they feed him data, starting from the beginning of written history, era by era, and ask him to predict what will happen next to the human race. At the same time they're involved in an increasingly fraught philosophical debate about why human life is sacred and why the purpose for which he was built - to predict threats to human life to help us avoid them - is a worthwhile and ethical pursuit.

These two strands come together in a way that is always suspenseful, surprising and intellectually provocative: this is an extraordinarily prescient and vital work of fiction - an apocalyptic road novel to frighten and thrill.

Arriaga, Guillermo - The Untameable

Yukon, Canada's far north. A young man tracks a wolf through the wilderness. The one his grandfather warned him about.

In Mexico City, Juan Guillermo has pledged vengeance for his murdered brother, Carlos, and for his parents, sentenced to death by their grief... But, in 1960s Mexico, justice is sold to the highest bidder. The Catholic fanatics who killed Carlos are allied to Zunita, a corrupt and influential police commander.

If he is to quench his thirst for revenge, Juan Guillermo will have to answer his inner call of the wild and discover what links his destiny to a hunter on the other side of America.

A gripping coming-of-age thriller of vengeance and destiny set between Mexico City's murderous 1960s underworld and the bleak tundra of Canada's most remote province.

Audrain, Ashley - The Push

Blythe and Violet. Mother and daughter.

It's a bond like no other.

But what if your little angel is a monster?

And what if no one sees it but you?

The Push is an addictive, gripping and compulsive read, asking what happens when women are not believed and challenging everything we think we know about motherhood.

Backman, Fredrik – Anxious People

It's New Year's Eve and House Tricks estate agents are hosting an open viewing in an up-market apartment when an incompetent bank robber rushes in and politely takes everyone hostage.

For Anna-Lena and Roger, busy buying-up apartments to fill the hole in their marriage, it's something else to talk about.

For Julia and Ro, panicky parents-to-be, it's yet another worry.

Lonely bank manager Zara only came here for the view.

While 87-year-old grandmother Estelle seems rather pleased by the company . . .

As the police gather outside, the anxious strangers huddled within try to make the best of a very sticky situation - but could it be that they have a whole lot more in common than meets the eye?

Banwo, Ayanna Lloyd - When We Were Birds

Darwin is a down-on-his-luck gravedigger, newly arrived in the Trinidadian city of Port Angeles to seek his fortune; young and beautiful and lost. Estranged from his mother and the Rastafari faith she taught him, he is convinced that the father he never met may be waiting for him somewhere amid these bustling streets.

Meanwhile, in an old house on a hill, where the city meets the rainforest, Yejide's mother is dying. And she is leaving behind a legacy that now passes to Yejide: the power to talk to the dead. The women of Yejide's family are human, but also not - descended from corbeau, the black birds that fly east at sunset, taking with them the souls of the dead.

Darwin and Yejide both have something that the other needs. Their destinies are intertwined, and they will find one another in the sprawling, ancient cemetery at the heart of the island, where trouble is brewing...

Blake, Olivie - The Atlas Six

Secrets. Betrayal. Seduction. Welcome to the Alexandrian Society.

When the world's best magicians are offered an extraordinary opportunity, saying yes is easy. Each could join the secretive Alexandrian Society, whose custodians guard lost knowledge from ancient civilizations. Their members enjoy a lifetime of power and prestige. Yet each decade, only six practitioners are invited – to fill five places.

Contenders Libby Rhodes and Nico de Varona are inseparable enemies, cosmologists who can control matter with their minds. Parisa Kamali is a telepath, who sees the mind's deepest secrets. Reina Mori is a naturalist who can perceive and understand the flow of life itself. And Callum Nova is an empath, who can manipulate the desires of others. Finally there's Tristan Caine, whose powers mystify even himself.

Following recruitment by the mysterious Atlas Blakely, they travel to the Society's London headquarters. Here, each must study and innovate within esoteric subject areas. And if they can prove themselves, over the course of a year, they'll survive. Most of them.

Brent, Katy – How to Kill Men and Get Away with It

Meet Kitty Collins.

FRIEND. LOVER. KILLER.

He was following me. That guy from the nightclub who wouldn't leave me alone.

I hadn't intended to kill him of course. But I wasn't displeased when I did and, despite the mess I made, I appeared to get away with it.

That's where my addiction started...

I've got a taste for revenge and quite frankly, I'm killing it.

A deliciously dark, hilariously twisted story about friendship, love, and murder. Fans of *My Sister the Serial Killer*, *How to Kill Your Family* and *Killing Eve* will love this wickedly clever novel!

Bublitz, Jacqueline – Before You Knew My Name

This is not just another novel about a dead girl.

When she arrived in New York on her 18th birthday carrying nothing but \$600 cash and a stolen camera, Alice was looking for a fresh start. Now, just one month later, she is the city's latest Jane Doe, an unidentified murder victim.

Ruby Jones is also trying to start over; she travelled halfway around the world only to find herself lonelier than ever. Until she finds Alice Lee's body by the Hudson River.

From this first, devastating encounter, the two women form an unbreakable bond. Alice is sure that Ruby is the key to solving the mystery of her life - and death. And Ruby - struggling to forget what she saw that morning - finds herself unable to let Alice go. Not until she is given the ending she deserves.

Before You Knew My Name doesn't ask whodunnit. Instead, this powerful, hopeful novel asks: Who was she? And what did she leave behind? The answers might surprise you.

Carson, Jan – The Raptures

It is late June in Ballylack. Hannah Adger anticipates eight long weeks' reprieve from school, but when her classmate Ross succumbs to a violent and mysterious illness, it marks the beginning of a summer like no other.

As others fall ill, questions about what - or who - is responsible pitch the village into conflict and fearful disarray. Hannah is haunted by guilt as she remains healthy while her friends are struck down. Isolated and afraid, she prays for help.

Elsewhere in the village, tempers simmer, panic escalates and long-buried secrets threaten to emerge.

Bursting with Carson's trademark wit, profound empathy and soaring imagination, *The Raptures* explores how tragedy can unite a small community - and tear it apart. At its heart is the extraordinary resilience of one young girl. As the world crumbles around her, she must find the courage to be different in a place where conforming feels like the only option available.

Danforth, Emily M. - Plain Bad Heroines

BROOKHANTS SCHOOL FOR GIRLS: Infamous site of a series of tragic deaths over a hundred years ago. Soon to be the subject of a controversial horror movie about the rumoured 'Brookhants curse'.

In the early 1900's, Brookhants students Flo and Clara fell madly in love, brought together by their obsession for a scandalous memoir. A few months later they were found dead in the woods, after a horrific wasp attack, the book lying next to their intertwined bodies. Three more grisly deaths followed before the school was forced to close.

Now, the school's doors are open once more. But as the crew of glamorous young actresses assemble to start filming, past and present begin to blur. And soon it's impossible to tell quite where the curse ends and Hollywood begins...

Davies, Abby - Mother Loves Me

Mirabelle's mother loves her. She's her 'little doll'. Mother dresses her, paints her face, and plaits her hair. But as Mirabelle grows, the dresses no longer fit quite as well, the face paint no longer looks quite so pretty. And Mother isn't happy.

On Mirabelle's 13th birthday, Mother arrives home with a present – a new sister, 5-year-old Clarabelle, who Mother has rescued from the outside world.

Two little girls. But Mother only needs one.

As it dawns on Mirabelle that there is a new 'little doll' in her house, she also realises that her life isn't what she thought it was. And that dolls often end up on the scrap heap...

Donoghue, Emma – Haven

In seventh-century Ireland, a priest has a dream telling him to leave the sinful world behind. Taking two monks with him, he travels down the Shannon in search of an isolated spot on which to found a new place of worship. Drifting out into the Atlantic, the three men find an impossibly steep, bare island inhabited by tens of thousands of birds, and claim it for God. But in such a place, far from all other humanity, what will survival mean?

Downing, Samantha - For Your Own Good

You want the absolute best for your child, and everyone agrees that's Belmont Academy.

At first you were impressed by Mr Crutcher, with his dedication to his students.

But something isn't right at that school.

It starts with small things... A teacher falling sick. Rumours about a former pupil going off the rails. Of course, you never guessed it could end in murder.

And now you have no idea who will be next...

Edwards, Emily - The Herd

Two best friends. One little secret.

Elizabeth and Bryony are polar opposites but their unexpected friendship has always worked. They're the best of friends, and godmothers to each other's daughters - because they both trust that the safety of their children is their top priority.

Little do they know that they differ radically over one very important issue, and when Bryony, afraid of being judged, tells what is supposed to be a harmless white lie before a child's birthday party, the consequences are more catastrophic than either of them could ever have imagined.

Every parent's worst nightmare...

Follett, Ken – Never

Each is a threat to global stability. Each can be overcome with only the highest levels of diplomacy. But when those in charge disagree and refuse to back down, an international chain reaction kicks off with potentially catastrophic consequences: a world edging closer to war . . .

Now three people must work with the utmost skill to stop that from happening:

A spy working undercover with jihadis.

A brilliant Chinese spymaster.

A US president beleaguered by a populist rival for the next election.

The only question is – in a game of brinkmanship, can the inevitable ever be stopped?

Garner, Alan – Treacle Walker

An introspective young boy, Joseph Coppock squints at the world with his lazy eye. Living alone in an old house, he reads comics, collects birds' eggs and plays with his marbles. When, one day, a rag-and-bone man called Treacle Walker appears, exchanging an empty jar of a cure-all medicine and a donkey stone for a pair of Joseph's pyjamas and a lamb's shoulder blade, a mysterious friendship develops between them.

A fusion of myth, magic and the stories we make for ourselves, Treacle Walker is an extraordinary novel from one of our greatest living writers.

Groff, Lauren – Matrix

Born from a long line of female warriors and crusaders, yet too coarse for courtly life, Marie de France is cast from the royal court and sent to Angleterre to take up her new duty as the prioress of an impoverished abbey. Lauren Groff's modern masterpiece is about the establishment of a female utopia.

Halls, Stacey - Mrs. England

West Yorkshire, 1904.

When newly-graduated nurse Ruby May takes a position looking after the children of Charles and Lilian England, a wealthy couple from a powerful dynasty of mill owners, she hopes it will be the fresh start she needs. But as she adapts to life at the isolated Hardcastle House, it becomes clear there's something not quite right about the beau, mysterious Mrs England.

Ostracised by the other servants and feeling increasingly uneasy, soon a series of strange events will force Ruby to question everything she thought she knew...

Harmel, Kristin – The Forest of Vanishing Stars

After being stolen from her wealthy German parents and raised in the unforgiving wilderness of eastern Europe, a young woman finds herself alone in 1941 after her kidnapper dies.

Her solitary existence is interrupted when she happens upon a group of Jews fleeing the Nazi terror. Stunned to learn what's happening in the outside world, she vows to teach the group all she can about surviving in the forest - and in turn, they teach her some surprising lessons about opening her heart after years of isolation.

But when she is betrayed and escapes into a German-occupied village, her past and present come together in a shocking collision that could change everything.

Harris, Nathan - The Sweetness of Water

Landry and Prentiss are two brothers born into slavery, finally freed as the American Civil War draws to its bitter close. Cast into the world without a penny to their names, their only hope is to find work in a society that still views them with nothing but intolerance.

Farmer George Walker and his wife Isabelle are reeling from a loss that has shaken them to their core. After a chance encounter, they agree to employ the brothers on their land, and slowly the tentative bonds of trust begin to blossom between the strangers.

But this sanctuary survives on a knife's edge, and it isn't long before a tragedy causes the inhabitants of the nearby town to turn their suspicion onto these new friendships, with devastating consequences.

Heller, Miranda Cowley - The Paper Palace

On a perfect August morning, Elle Bishop heads out for a swim in the pond below 'The Paper Palace' - her family's holiday home in Cape Cod. As she dives beneath the water she relives the passionate encounter she had the night before, against the side of the house that knows all her darkest secrets, while her husband and mother chatted to their guests inside...

So begins a story that unfolds over twenty-four hours and fifty years, as Elle's shocking betrayal leads her to a life-changing decision.

Henderson, Alexis - The Year of the Witching

Born on the fringes of Bethel, Immanuelle does her best to obey the Church and follow Holy Protocol. It was in Bethel that the first Prophet pursued and killed four powerful witches, and so cleansed the land.

A chance encounter lures her into the Darkwood that surrounds Bethel. It is a forbidden place, haunted by the spirits of the witches who bestow an extraordinary gift on Immanuelle: the diary of her dead mother...

As the truth about the Prophets and their history is revealed, so Immanuelle understands what must be done. For the real threat to Bethel is its own darkness.

Herrera, Adriana – A Caribbean Heiress in Paris

Paris, 1889.

Luz Alana Heith-Benzan, heiress to the Caña Brava rum empire, has sailed all the way from Santo Domingo with one purpose: expanding her family's business.

Enter James Evanston Sinclair, Earl of Darnick. From their first tempestuous meeting, Luz Alana is conflicted - why is this titled, and infuriatingly charming, Scottish man so willing to help her?

Evan might have his own reasons for supporting Luz Alana but every day they spend together makes him yearn for more of her. And with Luz Alana's inheritance dependent on her being married, a marriage of convenience might be the perfect solution.

But when Luz Alana set sail to Paris, she came armed with three hundred casks of rum, her two best friends and one simple rule: under no circumstances is she to fall in love . . .

Jackson, David – the Rule

MY DAD SAYS BAD THINGS HAPPEN WHEN I BREAK IT...

Daniel is looking forward to his birthday. He wants pie and chips, a big chocolate cake, and a comic book starring his favourite superhero. And as long as he follows The Rule, nothing bad will happen. But Daniel has no idea that he's about to kill a stranger.

Daniel's parents know that their beloved and vulnerable son will be taken away. But Daniel didn't mean to hurt anyone, he just doesn't know his own strength. They dispose of the body. Isn't that what any loving parent would do? But as forces on both sides of the law begin to close in on them, they realise they have no option but to finish what they started. Even if it means that others will have to die...

Because they'll do anything to protect Daniel. Even murder.

Jago, Lucy – A Net for Small Fishes

Frances Howard has beauty and a powerful family - and is the most unhappy creature in the world.

Anne Turner has wit and talent - but no stage on which to display them. Little stands between her and the abyss of destitution.

When these two very different women meet in strange circumstances, a powerful friendship is sparked. Frankie sweeps Anne into a world of splendour that exceeds all she imagined: a Court whose foreign king is a stranger to his own subjects; where ancient families fight for power, and where the sovereign's favourite may rise and rise - so long as he remains in favour.

Anne and Frankie dare to seek a little happiness for themselves in this extravagant, savage hunting ground. But as they gain notice, they also gain enemies; what began as a search for love and safety leads to desperate acts that could cost them everything.

Based on the true scandal that rocked the court of James I, A Net for Small Fishes is the most gripping novel you'll read this year: an exhilarating dive into the pitch-dark waters of the Jacobean court.

Jarratt, Laura – Mother

When Lizzie's car crashes with her two daughters inside, she faces a terrible choice. And when she recovers from her injuries, she has to deal with the impact of that tragedy as well as the police investigation into it.

As Lizzie and her family struggle to come to terms with the events of that night, things take an even darker turn. Just what did happen on that remote country road? Who is

responsible? And can the family get through this together... Or will the truth finally tear them apart?

Jestin, Victor – Heatwave

Oscar is dead because I watched him die and did nothing.

It is the end of August and the long summer holidays are drawing to a close. Seventeen-year-old Leonard is on a camping holiday with his family in the South of France. Awkward and ill at ease, he is an outsider who creeps away from parties unnoticed after a couple of drinks.

On the final Friday of the trip, unable to sleep, Leonard goes for a walk and sees one of the boys from the campsite, Oscar, hanging from the rope of a playground swing. Leonard watches as the rope slowly strangles Oscar. Then, unable to think straight, he buries the body in the sand, and returns to his tent.

The next day is the hottest in seventeen years. Disoriented by the oppressive heat, and distracted by his desire for a girl named Luce, Leonard spends the ensuing hours trying not to unravel.

A literary sensation in France, *Heatwave* is an unsettling and evocative novel that examines our darkest impulses.

Jones, Hilary – Frontline

Britain and her allies are engaged in a long war with Germany.

Grace is the daughter of landed gentry, volunteering as a nurse on the Western Front.

Will is the son of a dockworker, driven to enlist by a sense of patriotism and the thrill of adventure.

When their lives collide in a field hospital in France, they form a passionate connection.

This is a sweeping and sumptuous WW1 drama and historical epic, perfect for fans of Ken Follett, Kate Mosse and Jeffrey Archer.

Judd, Alan – A Fine Madness

In Elizabethan England, the Queen's chief spymaster, Francis Walsingham, and his team of agents must maintain the highest levels of vigilance to ward off Catholic plots and the ever-present threat of invasion.

One agent in particular - a young Cambridge undergraduate of humble origins, controversial beliefs and literary genius who goes by the name of Kit Marlowe - is relentless in his pursuit

of intelligence for the Crown. When he is killed outside an inn in Deptford, his mysterious death becomes the subject of rumours and suspicion that are never satisfactorily resolved.

Years later, when Thomas Phelippes, a former colleague of Marlowe's, finds himself imprisoned in the Tower, there is one thing that could give him his freedom back. He must give the king every detail he is able to recall about his murdered friend's life and death. But why is King James so fascinated about Kit Marlowe – and does Phelippes know enough to secure his own redemption?

Keyes, Daniel – Flowers for Algernon

Charlie Gordon, IQ 68, is a floor sweeper and the gentle butt of everyone's jokes - until an experiment in the enhancement of human intelligence turns him into a genius.

But then Algernon, the mouse whose triumphal experimental transformation preceded his, fades and dies, and Charlie has to face the possibility that his salvation was only temporary.

MacBride, Stuart – No Less the Devil

It's been seventeen months since the Bloodsmith butchered his first victim and Operation Maypole is still no nearer to catching him. The media is whipping up a storm, the top brass are demanding results, but the investigation is sinking fast.

Now isn't the time to get distracted with other cases, but Detective Sergeant Lucy McVeigh doesn't have much choice. When Benedict Strachan was just eleven, he hunted down and killed a homeless man. No one's ever figured out why Benedict did it, but now, after sixteen years, he's back on the streets again - battered, frightened, convinced a shadowy 'They' are out to get him, and begging Lucy for help.

It sounds like paranoia, but what if he's right? What if he really is caught up in something bigger and darker than Lucy's ever dealt with before? What if the Bloodsmith isn't the only monster out there? And what's going to happen when Lucy goes after them?

Mackie, Bella - How to Kill Your Family

They say you can't choose your family. But you can kill them.

Meet Grace Bernard. Daughter, sister, serial killer... Grace has lost everything. And she will stop at nothing to get revenge.

When Grace Bernard discovers her absentee millionaire father has rejected her dying mother's pleas for help, she vows revenge and sets about to kill every member of his family. Readers have a front-row seat as Grace picks off the family one by one. The result is as gruesome as it is entertaining, but then Grace is imprisoned for a murder she DIDN'T commit...

Marshall, Heather - Looking for Jane

2017

When Angela discovers a mysterious letter containing a life-shattering confession in a stack of forgotten letters, she begins to look for the intended recipient. Her search takes her to the 1970s and 80s, when a group of daring women operated an illegal underground abortion network known only by its whispered code name: Jane.

1971

As a teenager, Dr. Evelyn Taylor was forced to give her baby up for adoption. Swearing she'll do everything she can to make sure other women have the right to choose, she joins the Jane Network to provide safe but illegal abortions. There, she crosses paths with Nancy, who was told that if she ever found herself 'in a position', she should ask for Jane. Nancy soon becomes the Network's newest volunteer, desperately trying to help others while family secrets threaten everything she knows to be true.

Over the years, Evelyn, Nancy, and Angela's lives intertwine to reveal the devastating consequences that come from a lack of choice, and the buried secrets that will always find a way to the surface...

Menon, Catherine - Fragile Monsters

Mary is a difficult grandmother for Durga to love. She is sharp-tongued and ferocious, with more demons than there are lines on her palms. When Durga visits her in rural Malaysia, she only wants to endure Mary, and the dark memories home brings, for as long as it takes to escape.

But a reckoning is coming. Stuck together in the rising heat, both women must untangle the truth from the myth of their family's past. What happened to Durga's mother after she gave birth? Why did so many of their family members disappear during the war? And who is to blame for the childhood tragedy that haunts her to this day?

In her stunning debut novel Catherine Menon traces one family's story from 1920 to the present, unravelling a thrilling tale of love, betrayal and redemption against the backdrop of natural disasters and fallen empires. Written in vivid technicolour, with an electric daughter-grandmother relationship at its heart, *Fragile Monsters* explores what happens when secrets fester through the generations.

Nkweti, Nana – Walking on Cowrie Shells

In her powerful, genre-bending debut story collection, Nana Nkweti's virtuosity is on full display as she mixes deft realism with clever inversions of genre. In the Caine Prize finalist story "It Takes a Village, Some Say," Nkweti skewers racial prejudice and the practice of

international adoption, delivering a sly tale about a teenage girl who leverages her adoptive parents to fast-track her fortunes. In "The Devil Is a Liar," a pregnant pastor's wife struggles with the collision of western Christianity and her mother's traditional Cameroonian belief system as she worries about her unborn child.

In other stories, Nkweti vaults past realism, upending genre expectations in a satirical romp about a jaded PR professional trying to spin a zombie outbreak in West Africa, and in a mermaid tale about a Mami Wata who forgoes her power by remaining faithful to a fisherman she loves. In between these two ends of the spectrum there's everything from an aspiring graphic novelist at a comic con to a murder investigation driven by statistics to a story organized by the changing hairstyles of the main character.

Pulling from mystery, horror, realism, myth, and graphic novels, Nkweti showcases the complexity and vibrance of characters whose lives span Cameroonian and American cultures. A dazzling, inventive debut, *Walking on Cowrie Shells* announces the arrival of a superlative new voice.

Norman, Charity - Remember Me

A close-knit community is ripped apart by disturbing revelations that cast new light on a young woman's disappearance twenty-five years ago.

After years of living overseas, Emily returns to New Zealand to care for her father who has dementia. As his memory fades and his guard slips, she begins to understand him for the first time - and to glimpse shattering truths about his past.

Are some secrets best left buried?

Oshetsky, Claire - Chouette

When Chouette is born, Tiny's husband and family are devastated by her condition and strange appearance. Doctors tell them to expect the worst. Chouette won't learn to walk; she never speaks; she lashes out when frightened and causes chaos in public.

Tiny's husband wants to make her better but Tiny thinks their child is perfect the way she is. In her fierce self-possession, her untameable will, Chouette teaches Tiny to break free of expectations - no matter what it takes.

Patrick, Phaedra - The Book Share

Liv Green loves losing herself in a good book. But her everyday reality is less romantic, cleaning houses for people who barely give her the time of day. So when she lands a job housekeeping for her personal hero and mega-bestselling author Essie Starling, she can't believe her luck.

When Essie dies unexpectedly, Liv is left with a life-changing last wish: to complete Essie's final novel. To do so, change-averse Liv will have to step away from the fictitious worlds in her head, and into Essie's shoes. As she begins to write, she uncovers a surprising connection between the two women – and a secret that will change Liv's life forever...

Perkins-Valdez, Dolen - Take My Hand

Montgomery, Alabama. 1973. Fresh out of nursing school, Civil Townsend has big plans to make a difference in her community. At the Montgomery Family Planning Clinic, she intends to help women make their own choices for their lives and bodies.

But when her first week on the job takes her down a dusty country road to a tumbledown cabin, she's surprised to find that her new patients are just eleven and thirteen years old. Neither of the Williams sisters has even kissed a boy, but they are poor and Black, and for those handling their welfare benefits, that's reason enough to have the girls on birth control. As Civil grapples with her new responsibilities, she takes India and Erica into her heart and comes to care for their family as though they were her own. But one day she arrives at their door to discover the unthinkable has happened, and nothing will ever be the same.

Inspired by true events and a shocking chapter of American history, *Take My Hand* is a novel that will open your eyes and break your heart. An unforgettable story about love and courage, sisterhood and solidarity, it is also a timely and hopeful reminder that it only takes one person to change the world.

Pride, Christine / Piazza, Jo – We Are Not Like Them

Not every story is black and white.

Riley and Jen have been best friends since they were children, and they thought their bond was unbreakable. It never mattered to them that Riley is black and Jen is white. And then Jen's husband, a Philadelphia police officer, is involved in the shooting of an unarmed black teenager and everything changes in an instant.

This one act could destroy more than just Riley and Jen's friendship. As their community takes sides, so must Jen and Riley, and for the first time in their lives the lifelong friends find themselves on opposing sides.

But can anyone win a fight like this?

We Are Not Like Them is about friendship and love. It's about prejudice and betrayal. It's about standing up for what you believe in, no matter the cost.

Rankin-Gee, Rosa – Dreamland

In the coastal resort of Margate, hotels lie empty and sun-faded 'For Sale' signs line the streets. The sea is higher – it's higher everywhere – and those who can are moving inland. A young girl called Chance, however, is just arriving.

Chance's family is one of many offered a cash grant to move out of London - and so she, her mother Jas and brother JD relocate to the seaside, just as the country edges towards vertiginous change.

In their new home, they find space and wide skies, a world away from the cramped bedsits they've lived in up until now. But challenges swiftly mount. JD's business partner, Kole, has a violent, charismatic energy that whirlpools around him and threatens to draw in the whole family. And when Chance comes across Franky, a girl her age she has never seen before – well-spoken and wearing sunscreen – something catches in the air between them. Their fates are bound: a connection that is immediate, unshakeable, and, in a time when social divides have never cut sharper, dangerous.

Set in a future unsettlingly close to home, against a backdrop of soaring inequality and creeping political extremism, Rankin-Gee demonstrates, with cinematic pace and deep humanity, the enduring power of love and hope in a world spinning out of control.

Rowley, Steven – The Guncle

Patrick, or Gay Uncle Patrick (GUP, for short), has always loved his niece, Maisie, and nephew, Grant. That is, he loves spending time with them when they come out to Palm Springs for weeklong visits, or when he heads home to Connecticut for the holidays. But in terms of caretaking and relating to two children, no matter how adorable, Patrick is, honestly, overwhelmed.

So when tragedy strikes and Maisie and Grant lose their mother and Patrick's brother has a health crisis of his own, Patrick finds himself suddenly taking on the role of primary guardian. Despite having a set of "Guncle Rules" ready to go, Patrick has no idea what to expect, having spent years barely holding on after the loss of his great love, a somewhat-stalled acting career, and a lifestyle not-so-suited to a six- and a nine-year-old. Quickly realizing that parenting--even if temporary--isn't solved with treats and jokes, Patrick's eyes are opened to a new sense of responsibility, and the realization that, sometimes, even being larger than life means you're unfailingly human.

With the humor and heart we've come to expect from bestselling author Steven Rowley, *The Guncle* is a moving tribute to the power of love, patience, and family in even the most trying of times.

Ryan, Shari J. - The Girl with the Diary

Nazi-occupied Prague, 1942: Amelia is hiding in her closet when flashlights blind her and she's captured by the SS. Out on the cobblestone street, her heart shatters as her mother is

shot before her eyes. She is shoved onto a freight train with hundreds of others—hours pass as they travel in darkness.

Arriving in a concentration camp, Amelia fears for her life when she is led to a block by a soldier. He is her enemy, yet he secretly passes her a piece of bread; an act that saves her.

They are meant to despise one another, but Amelia and Charlie are powerfully drawn to each other. Amelia sees how Charlie risks everything to save prisoners from deportation—and she sees the kindness in his eyes.

Amongst so much tragedy, falling in love is a miracle. Yet, one day, Charlie utters those miraculous words. “I’m in love with you. To everyone else, we’re wrong, but what does that matter when nothing in this world is right?”

But under the all-seeing gaze of the guards and endless watchtowers, there is only so long they can keep their secret—and the very act of loving each other endangers their lives. Will they remain loyal to each other in the face of death? And when they finally say goodbye, will it be by choice or by force?

Shipstead, Maggie - Great Circle

From her days as a wild child in prohibition America to the blitz and glitz of wartime London, from the rugged shores of New Zealand to a lonely iceshelf in Antarctica, Marian Graves is driven by a need for freedom and danger.

Determined to live an independent life, she resists the pull of her childhood sweetheart, and burns her way through a suite of glamorous lovers. But it is an obsession with flight that consumes her most.

Now, as she is about to fulfil her greatest ambition, to circumnavigate the globe from pole to pole, Marian crash lands in a perilous wilderness of ice.

Over half a century later, troubled film star Hadley Baxter is drawn inexorably to play the enigmatic pilot on screen. It is a role that will lead her to an unexpected discovery, throwing fresh and spellbinding light on the story of the unknowable Marian Graves.

Skördeman, Gustaf – Geiger

The landline rings as Agneta is waving off her grandchildren. Just one word comes out of the receiver: 'Geiger'.

For decades, Agneta has always known that this moment would come, but she is shaken. She knows what it means.

Retrieving her weapon from its hiding place, she attaches the silencer and creeps up behind her husband before pressing the barrel to his temple.

Then she squeezes the trigger and disappears - leaving behind her wallet and keys.

The extraordinary murder is not Sara Nowak's case. But she was once close to those affected and, defying regulations, she joins the investigation. What Sara doesn't know is that the mysterious codeword is just the first piece in the puzzle of an intricate and devastating plot fifty years in the making . . .

Stonex, Emma - The Lamplighters

Cornwall, 1972.

Three keepers vanish from a remote lighthouse, miles from the shore. The entrance door is locked from the inside. The clocks have stopped. The Principal Keeper's weather log describes a mighty storm, but the skies have been clear all week.

What happened to those three men, out on the tower? The heavy sea whispers their names. The tide shifts beneath the swell, drowning ghosts. Can their secrets ever be recovered from the waves?

Twenty years later, the women they left behind are still struggling to move on. Helen, Jenny and Michelle should have been united by the tragedy, but instead it drove them apart. And then a writer approaches them. He wants to give them a chance to tell their side of the story. But only in confronting their darkest fears can the truth begin to surface...

Towles, Amor – The Lincoln Highway

In June, 1954, eighteen-year-old Emmett returns home to his younger brother Billy after serving fifteen months in a juvenile facility for involuntary manslaughter. They are getting ready to leave their old life behind and head out to sunny California.

But they're not alone. Two runaways from the youth work farm, Duchess and Wolly, have followed Emmett all the way to Nebraska with a plan of their own, one that will take the four of them on an unexpected and fateful journey in the opposite direction - to New York City.

Vaughan, Sarah – Reputation

From the bestselling author of *Anatomy of a Scandal*, now a major Netflix series...

Reputation: it takes a lifetime to build and just one moment to destroy.

Emma Webster is a respectable MP.

Emma Webster is a devoted mother.

Emma Webster is innocent of the murder of a tabloid journalist.

Emma Webster is a liar.

#Reputation: The story you tell about yourself. And the lies others choose to believe...

Walton, Dawnie - The Final Revival of Opal & Nev

Opal is a fiercely independent young woman pushing against the grain in her style and attitude, a Black punk artist before her time. Despite her unconventional looks, Opal believes she can be a star. So when the aspiring British singer/songwriter Neville Charles discovers her one night, she takes him up on his offer to make rock music together.

In early seventies New York City, just as she's finding her niche as part of a flamboyant and funky creative scene, a rival band signed to her label brandishes a Confederate flag at a promotional concert. Opal's bold protest and the violence that ensues set off a chain of events that will not only change the lives of those she loves, but also be a deadly reminder that repercussions are always harsher for women, especially Black women, who dare to speak their truth.

Decades later, as Opal considers a 2016 reunion with Nev, music journalist S. Sunny Shelton seizes the chance to curate an oral history about her idols. Sunny thought she knew most of the stories leading up to the cult duo's most politicized chapter, but as her interviews dig deeper, a nasty new allegation from an unexpected source threatens everything.

Williams, Pip – the Dictionary of Lost Words

In 1901, the word bondmaid was discovered missing from the Oxford English Dictionary. This is the story of the girl who stole it. Motherless and irrepressibly curious, Esme spends her childhood in the Scriptorium, a garden shed in Oxford where her father and a team of lexicographers are gathering words for the very first Oxford English Dictionary. Esme's place is beneath the sorting table, unseen and unheard. One day, she sees a slip containing the word 'bondmaid' flutter to the floor unclaimed. Over time, Esme realises that some words are considered more important than others, and that words and meanings relating to women's experiences often go unrecorded. She begins to collect words for another dictionary: The Dictionary of Lost Words.