

HEADLINE

AUTUMN 2020 HIGHLIGHTS



FICTION

12 HOURS TO SAY I LOVE YOU by Olivia Poulet and Laurence Dobiesz Headline Review | Sherise Hobbs | April 2020 | Agent: deal direct with authors

What if the love of your life was slipping away and you had only twelve hours to convince them to stay?

An original, high-concept love story from a thrilling new voice, this warm and tender debut novel will break your heart and put it back together again. Perfect for readers of *THE FLATSHARE* and *THE SIGHT OF YOU*.

Following a terrible road accident, a young woman, Pippa, lies in an induced coma. At her bedside, the doctor is talking to her stricken young husband. The first twelve hours, the doctor says, are the most critical, and patients have been known to respond to the voice of their loved ones. So Pippa's husband, Steve, falteringly, begins to speak. He tells Pippa he loves her, that he has always loved her, and why... He tells her how their story began, all those years ago as teenagers. How he's sorry for the recent distance between them... for his betrayal. As the twelve hours pass, Steve tells Pippa things he's never told her, things he should have told her, things he realises he's now desperate for her to know. But is it too late? Is Pippa listening? And if so, can she find her way back to him?

THE DICTATOR'S WIFE by Freya Berry Headline Review | Sherise Hobbs | February 2022 | Agent: James Wills, Watson Little

A magnificent debut novel by an astonishing new talent, *THE DICTATOR'S WIFE* is a sumptuous, darkly gripping tale of power, complicity and the sacrifices women make, set in the immediate aftermath of the fall of a Communist dictator, in a world where nothing is as it appears. Perfect for readers of commercial/literary crossover fiction and for those who loved Paula McLain's *THE PARIS WIFE*.

A young lawyer struggles not to fall under the spell of a bewitching dictator's wife in this tale of female power, mothers and daughters, and whether it is better to remember or to forget.

Laura is a financial crime lawyer, hired to go back to her eastern European home country to defend the woman who tried to ruin her family. Taking on the case, Laura sees an opportunity to make sense of her blighted past and her broken relationship with her mother. But she is distracted – by the dictator's mercurial wife, who is both tyrant and martyr; oppressor and oppressed. Marija has her own agenda, and as Laura is led deeper, and darker, in her investigations of the past she finds herself increasingly entangled in the Black Widow's web.

AN OLIVE GROVE IN ENDS by Moses Mckenzie Wildfire | Ella Gordon | April 2022 | Agent: Anne-Marie Doulton, The Ampersand Agency

'Ends was what we called our neighbourhood. I wasn't sure of the reason why, whether it was because it was where the downtrodden saw the light at the end of the tunnel, or because once you arrived you only left when those in charge wanted to rebrand.'

Sayon Hughes, a young black man living in Easton, Bristol, longs to escape the world in which he was raised, and make a better life with Shona, the strong-minded, strong-willed girl he's always loved. Shona will fulfil her dream of working in music, and he will buy them the beautiful white hilltop mansion he covets in nearby Clifton.

But his ties to his loving but lawless extended family continue to pull him back, and Sayon finds himself increasingly trapped in the cycle of murderous violence and drug-dealing to which he has been drawn to by his unpredictable and fiercely loyal cousin Cuba. One night, Shona's charismatic pastor father witnesses an altercation involving Sayon and Cuba, in which a young man is killed. Soon the pastor begins to exert his own hold over Sayon, and Sayon finds his loyal ties torn. Is it possible to break free of his family and his past? And if he doesn't, does he stand to lose Shona forever?

ALWAYS, IN DECEMBER by Emily Stone

Headline Review | Sherise Hobbs | August 2021 | Agent: deal direct with author

A life-affirming, heartwrenching and unforgettable love story from an exciting contemporary new voice, ALWAYS, IN DECEMBER is perfect for fans of ONE DAY IN DECEMBER, ME BEFORE YOU and THE SIGHT OF YOU.

One winter's night at a postbox in London, two strangers collide. Josie is desperate to forget her past, Max to escape his future. Their chance encounter is set to alter both their lives in the most unexpected of ways...

Josie can't bear to be alone at Christmas. Since that fateful night twenty years ago, she ensures her Decembers are filled with work, friends and fizz – anything to avoid going home to the village where all those painful memories lie. Every year she makes a trip to the post box up the street, to send a letter she knows will never be read.

This year Max can't bear to be with family and friends at Christmas. All he wants is to escape the present and find a place where no one knows him...where he can pretend a very different future lies ahead.

As Josie makes her annual trip to post her Christmas letter, her bicycle collides with a man getting out of a cab – Max. He's alone in the city, in need of a drink, and Josie offers to show him the nearest pub. It's the start of something unexpected, the start of something...wonderful. But five magical days later, Josie realises Max has something to hide, something that will threaten their newfound happiness. What is the secret is Max keeping? And will their relationship survive it?

NON-FICTION

MINI PHILOSOPHY by Jonny Thomson

Wildfire | Alex Clarke | August 2021 | Agent: Charlie Brotherstone, Brotherstone Creative Management

Have you ever paused to wonder what made you choose that pizza slice over another? Or why we sometimes feel a strange urge to jump when we are at the top of a tall building? What would you say if you met your ten-year-old self – and do you think you'd get on? If you've ever reflected on these questions, congratulations: you're a philosopher.

In this thought-provoking collection of 150 mini meditations based on his hit Instagram account, Jonny Thomson tackles the big questions of life, and tells us what the greatest minds of the last 2,500 years have to say about them. Covering everything from Sun Tzu's strategy for winning at board games to why Sartre claimed 'hell is other people'; why De Beauvoir believed the mothering instinct is a myth to why Schopenhauer probably wasn't much fun at parties, these bite-sized essays are a lively, quirky and accessible way in to a fascinating subject.

THE ALMANAC OF (NOT QUITE) EVERYTHING: A COMPENDIUM FOR CURIOUS MINDS

by Jonn Elledge

Wildfire | Alex Clarke | September 2021 | Agent: Antony Topping, Greene & Heaton

Any idea which culture believes that cutting your nails at night could shorten your life? Know what the Oxford Dictionary 'Word of the Year' was in 2015? Hint - not a word ;) Know which countries are the only thirteen never to be colonised by European powers? Interested in which social networks are largest, the most unlikely forms of public transport, or how many animals have travelled to space? (You may have heard of Laika - but Mafusa the rabbit?)

From extinct animals to space-faring ones, from colonised countries to the stars within our system, Almanac weaves its way through words and numbers, science and arts, the spiritual and the secular. Elledge's book could be used as a revision guide for any pub quiz ever - but it also tells stories you don't expect, covering the breadth and depth of the human experience.

WILL THIS HOUSE LAST FOREVER? by Xanthi Barker

Tinder Press | Mary-Anne Harrington | June 2021 | Agent: Milly Reilly, Jo Unwin Literary Agency

'A delicate and engaging story of love and grief... honest and really beautifully written' Cathy Rentzenbrink

When Xanthi Barker's father died when she was in her mid twenties, she could make no sense of her grief for a man who had been absent for most of her life. Her father, Sebastian Barker, had left Xanthi, her mother and her brother to pursue poetry and a new relationship, when Xanthi was a baby. Growing up she had always struggled to reconcile his extravagant affection - the house he built for the family in Greece, rocking horses crafted by hand, an endless stream of poems and drawings and letters - with the fact that he could not be relied upon to show up at parents' evening or to answer the phone sober after 6pm. Though theirs was a relationship defined by departures, he always returned, so why should this farewell be any different, or more final?