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Charlotte Betts

The Apothecary's Daughter

1665. Susannah Leyton has grown up behind the counter of her father's apothecary shop in bustling Fleet Street. A skilled student – the resinous scents of lavender, rosemary, liquorice and turpentine run in her blood – she has been granted by her father the freedom to pursue her considerable talents. But Susannah is dealt a shocking blow when her widowed father marries again, and her new stepmother seems determined to remove her from the apothecary shop for good.

A proposal of marriage from the charming Henry Savage seems to offer Susannah an escape. But as the plague sweeps through London, tragedy strikes, and dark secrets in her husband's past begin to unfold. It will take all of Susannah's courage and passion to save herself from tragedy.

Katherine Clements

The Crimson Ribbon

Katherine's debut novel is a story of obsession, superstition and hope, set against the radical politics and religious fervour of the English Civil War. It is told through the eyes of Ruth, a servant in the household of Oliver Cromwell, who witnesses the brutal lynching of her mother; and is interwoven with the story of Lizzie Poole, a real-life prophetess, who testifies at the trial of Charles I. Persecuted as a witch, Ruth flees to London, beginning a journey that will take her to the heart of the country's conflict, and teach her the difference between passion and true love. The story was inspired by historical accounts of a mysterious woman, who argued for the life of the King, during the infamous trial that would end in regicide. Pamphleteers of the day suggested that she was a fake, stage-managed by Cromwell and his cronies. We don't know much about Lizzie Poole, who she was, or why she was given a voice during one of history's most shocking prosecutions, but this novel brings her life into sharp focus as it becomes irrevocably intertwined with Ruth's in an unforgettable story of passion and betrayal.

The Silvered Heart

1648: Civil war is devastating England. The privileged world of Katherine Ferrers is crumbling under Cromwell's army and, as an orphaned heiress, she has no choice but to marry for the sake of family. But as her marriage turns into a prison and her fortune is forfeit, Katherine becomes increasingly desperate. So when she meets a man who shows her a way out, she seizes the chance. It is dangerous and brutal, and she knows if they're caught, there's only one way it can end. The mystery of Lady Katherine Ferrers, legendary highwaywoman, has captured the collective imagination of generations. Now, based on the real woman, the original 'Wicked Lady' is brought gloriously to life in this tale of infatuation, betrayal and survival.

The Coffin Path

A hugely enjoyable Gothic treat of novel. The bleak and brooding 17th century moors in Yorkshire form the milieu of Katherine's spine-chilling third novel. Scarcross Hall and the moors are Mercy Boorh and her family's home and lifeblood. Yet beneath tis certainty, small things are beginning to trouble her: three ancient coins missing from her father's study; the shadowy figure out by the gatepost; an unshakeable sense that someone is watching. For fans of Affinity, and Michelle Paver, this will capture your imagination and chill you to the bon. Proofs available. Publication Headline Spring 2018.

Patricia Ferguson (Orange Prize listed author)

The Midwife's Daughter

For a little while, Violet Dimond was the very last of a tradition older than any profession, older than history, older than writing and houses, perhaps older than weapons, older than fire. Then that tradition ended, and no one, not even Violet herself, remarked on its passing. Violet Dimond, the Holy Terror, has delivered many of the town children - and often their children - in her capacity as handywoman. But Violet's calling is dying out as, with medicine's advances, the good old ways are no longer good enough. Grace, Violet's adopted daughter, is a symbol of change herself. In the place where she has grown up and everyone knows her, she is accepted, though most of the locals never before saw a girl with skin that colour. For Violet and Grace the coming war will bring more upheaval into their lives: can they endure it, or will they, like so many, be swept aside by history's tide?

A moving tale of prejudice, struggle, love, tragedy, bravery and the changing lives of women in the twentieth century, *The Midwife's Daughter* grips the reader all the way to its heart stopping conclusion.

Aren't We Sisters?

Following on from *The Midwife's Daughter*, *Aren't We Sisters?* is a gripping novel about buried secrets and unlikely friendship. Norah Thornby can no longer afford to live in her grand family home in the centre of Silkhampton. Unless, perhaps, she can find a respectable lodger. But Nurse Lettie Quick is not nearly as respectable as she seems. What's really going on at the clinic she has opened? And why has she chosen Silkhampton? Meanwhile the beautiful Rae Grainger has found the perfect place to stay, in an isolated house miles away from the town. It's certainly rather creepy, especially at candlelit bedtime, but Rae knows that all she has to do is stay out of sight, until others - paid, professional others - are ready to take her little problem away. Then she can just forget the whole ghastly business ...can't she?

No one guesses, of course, that there's a killer quietly at work in Silkhampton; or that in one way or another all three women are in danger...

George Gould

Mondo Kane

Sharp-talking, existentially troubled Dodger leads a frenzied life as PA and dogs body to one of London's top crime bosses. He dreams of a better, saner existence, but fate has other plans for him. Sent to hire the services of notorious contract killer Bill Kane, little does he suspect that he is about to embark on a wild odyssey through the heart of Rio's favelas and the sizzling backlands of northeastern Brazil. His orders are simple: to help Kane hunt down and kill Captain America, the organisation's double-crossing second-in-command. But where Kane is involved, nothing remains simple for long. The instant they set foot in Rio, the unlikely duo are catapulted into a series of confrontations as bizarre as they are frightening, as comical as they are wired. Kane, who believes he is possessed by the soul of an Oglala Sioux shaman, has declared war on modern society and its evils, with cataclysmic results. But even as the mission spirals out of control, Dodger finds himself little by little beginning to share in Kane's unusual views on life, death and what it means to be human.

Part gangster thriller in the *Get Carter* mould, part wild road-trip romp à la *Fear and Loathing*, this is a thousand-volt, turbo-paced tale that reads like an acid-fuelled rollercoaster ride through a war zone. The story takes you by the scruff of the neck, hurtles you halfway across the world, flips you upside-down, then drops you off at the end, breathless and reeling. And all told in the juiciest slang-and-expletive-filled mutation the English language has spawned in years.

Elizabeth Haynes

Behind Closed Doors

Ten years ago, fourteen-year-old Scarlett Rainsford vanished without a trace during a family holiday to Greece. Not being able to find Scarlett was one of the biggest regrets of DCI Louisa Smith's career and when Scarlett is discovered back in her home town after all this time, Lou is determined to find out what happened to her and why she remained hidden for so long. Was she abducted or did she run away? As Lou and her team delve deeper into Scarlett's past, their investigation throws up more questions than it answers. But as they edge closer to the truth about what really went on behind closed doors, it is more sinister and disturbing than they had ever imagined.

Never Alone

Aiden clearly has secrets, but then so does Sarah, and that's no reason not to respond to his warmth and charm. But something doesn't feel quite right. As the weather closes in, and snowfall blocks the roads, events take a dramatic turn and suddenly Sarah finds herself in terrible danger, unsure of who she can trust.

Human Remains

How well do you know your neighbours? Would you notice if they lived or died?

Elizabeth new novel is a chilling thriller and a hymn to all the lonely people. It preys on our darkest fears, showing how vulnerable we are when we live alone, and how easily ordinary lives can fall apart when no one is watching. Just go home and lock the door...

Revenge of the Tide

Elizabeth Haynes second novel is a taut and gripping murder mystery introducing a compelling new heroine, Genevieve office worker by day and pole dancer by night who finds herself implicated in a mob underworld of murder, corruption and betrayal.

Genevieve has finally escaped the stressful demands of her sales job and achieved her dream: to leave London behind and start a new life aboard a houseboat in Kent. But on the night of her boat-warming party the dream is shattered when a body washes up beside the boat, and Genevieve recognises the victim. As the sanctuary of the boatyard is threatened, and Genevieve's life seems increasingly at risk, the story of how she came to be so out of her depth is unfolded, and Genevieve finds out the real cost of mixing business with pleasure.

Under a Silent Moon

In the crisp early morning hours, the police are called to a suspected murder at a farm outside a small English village. A beautiful young woman has been found dead, blood all over the cottage she lives in. At the same time, police respond to a reported female suicide, where a car has fallen into a local quarry. As DCI Louisa Smith and her team gather the evidence, they discover a link between these two women, a link which has sealed their fate one cold night, under a silent moon.

Michael Irwin

The Skull and the Nightingale

Set in England in 1760, the novel tells the story of Richard Fenwick, orphaned as a boy and looked after by his godfather James Gilbert. Gilbert has provided Fenwick's education and funded him on the Grand Tour. Now that Fenwick is home, Gilbert has an unexpected proposition for him.

Gilbert has led a fastidious and quiet life at his country estate, but now in his advancing years feels an irresistible need to experience, even if only vicariously, the extremes of love, gallantry, adultery and deceit – along with something a little more sinister. Fenwick is to be his agent. With neither money nor prospects, Fenwick has no choice but to accept the offer and the deal is done. But Gilbert's increasingly elaborate and dark human experiments into the workings of human passion

drag Fenwick into a whirlpool of manipulation, betrayal and danger where lives are ruined and tragedy is always one small step away. And when Fenwick falls in love with one of Gilbert's pawns, the stakes rise higher than ever – is it too late for him to escape from the nightmare?

Frances Kay

Micka

Micka loves drawing and wants a pup, but with older brothers into violence and petty crime, and a mother who can't read the notes his teacher sends home from school, neither he nor the pup stand much of a chance. Then a new boy, Laurie, starts at Micka's school. The two boys both have vivid imaginations, but Laurie's fantasies are of magic and revenge, and he soon pulls Micka into a dangerous game where the line between make-believe and real life - and, ultimately, death - is increasingly blurred. Written in direct, uncompromising yet compassionate prose, and with a breathtaking clarity of insight, Micka is an astonishingly assured debut -- and an unforgettable story.

'Micka feels like a book that wrote itself . . . Frances Kay is an accomplished story teller who has found her darkest tale' Anne Enright.

Jane Kerr

The Elephant Walk (Chicken House Books 2017)

This utterly charming and compelling novel set in Scotland and England in 1872 and based on a true story is built from the finest elements of classical story-telling. The arduous all-or-nothing physical quest of a zoo elephant's 200 mile walk from Edinburgh to Manchester mirrors the personal journeys of its wonderfully realized characters, including the young, mute and lonely but resourceful pickpocket Danny, the bold and forthright but emotionally vulnerable Hetty, and the noble but damaged elephant Maharajah. There is danger, drama, mystery, transgression and redemption. This is a potential modern classic of children's fiction.

Set in 1872, it tells the story of the wager between rival menagerie owners James Jameson and Arthur Albright. When Jameson buys the African elephant Maharajah at a bankruptcy auction in Edinburgh his plan to transport the animal by train to his Belle Vue Zoological Gardens in Manchester hits a snag when the elephant destroys the freight carriage. Rashly, Jameson bets Albright that the elephant will walk to Manchester within seven days – the winner will take all of his rival's menagerie of animals. During the excitement of the auction a young, mute pickpocket – known only to us as 'Boy' – is apprehended, losing all his stolen goods and knowing only too well the retribution that awaits him from his violent master Scatcherd. But at a moment of crisis he suddenly discovers some kind of affinity with the distressed elephant and before he knows what is happening he is enlisted to star in the marketing spectacle of the elephant walk, disguised as the Indian 'Prince Dandip'.

As the perilous journey proceeds, Boy meets and befriends the ebullient Hetty and her father, has his life saved by Maharajah, comes up against the sinister Crimple, and nurses a growing suspicion that their progress to Manchester is being followed very closely by someone who does not wish them well.

Claire King

The Night Rainbow

The Night Rainbow is the story of Pea, the world she creates to win back her mother's love, and the stranger she trusts to save them both. She spends the long summer days playing make believe in the meadow behind their house in a sleepy village in Southern France: Maman is too sad to take care of her, she left her happiness in the hospital, along with the baby. Pea thinks she has found the new love she craves in her grown-up friend Claude, and maybe even a new Papa. But one day Claude brings his knife down to the meadow. Can Pea rely on Maman to save her?

Everything Love Is

Moored on his houseboat on the edge of Toulouse, Baptiste Molino helps other people navigate the waters of happiness whilst remaining careful never to make ripples of his own. Unlike those who come to him for help, Baptiste is more concerned with his past than his future: particularly the mysterious circumstances of his birth and the identity of his birth mother whose only legacy to her orphaned son was a violin, a wooden statuette and a word inked into the skin of her arm. However, between Sophie, the young waitress in his local bar who believes it's time for Baptiste to rediscover passion, and his elegant and enigmatic new client Amandine Rousseau, this fragile status quo is now at risk. When the rising tensions on the city streets cause his mysterious past to catch up with him, Baptiste finds himself torn between finally pursuing his own happiness and safeguarding that of the one he loves.

Maria McCann

As Meat Loves Salt

Torn in two by a savage civil war, seventeenth century England was the scene of extraordinary violence. Among the soldiers traveling across the country from one deadly battle to another is Jacob Cullen, a former servant who dreams of baptizing himself with the blood of battle into a new life after the war. Only his burgeoning erotic obsession with a fellow fighter threatens his plans. A dark, erotic tale of passion and obsession, AS MEAT LOVES SALT is a gripping portrait of England best by war, and the harrowing tale of a dangerous man on the edge of madness.

The Wilding

In her second novel Maria McCann returns to 17th Century England, where life is struggling to return to normal after the horrific tumult of the Civil War. In the village of Spadboro Jonathan Dymond, a 26-year old cider-maker who lives with his parents, has until now enjoyed a quiet, harmonious existence. As the novel opens, a letter arrives from his uncle with a desperate request to speak with his father. When his father returns from the visit the next day, all he can say is that Jonathan's uncle has died. Then Jonathan finds a fragment of the letter in the family orchard, with talk of inheritance and vengeance. He resolves to unravel the mystery at the heart of his family - a mystery which will eventually threaten the lives and happiness of Jonathan and all those he holds dear.

Ace, King, Knave

Set in Regency England, Maria's new novel is a dark and disturbing account of a twisted love triangle between two women and the mysterious Mr Zedland, a professional card sharp and the son of a London madam. His true love is Betsy Ann, but he marries Sofia to take her off her father's hands and to secure his own financial future. What follows is a destructive chain of deception and double-crossing, in which no one is quite what they seem, and betrayal emerges as a most powerful challenge to love and loyalty.

Jane Menczer

An Unlikely Agent

Set in London before the First World War, it is narrated by Margaret Trant, who lives with her ailing, irascible mother in a boarding house in St John's Wood. Since the death of her father, Margaret and her mother have fallen on hard times, with only Margaret's meagre salary from Plimpson & Co to keep them afloat. When circumstances force Margaret to leave her employer, she finds herself mysteriously guided into a new position as a secretary in a dingy backstreet shop. But all is not as it seems, and she is in fact working for a highly secret branch of the intelligence service, whose mission is to track down and neutralize the ruthless band of anarchists known as The Scorpions.

Margaret's love of mystery fiction scarcely prepares her for the reality of true criminality, and her journey of self-discovery forms the heart of this remarkable novel, as she discovers in herself resourcefulness, courage, independence and the first stirrings of love.

Barbara Mitchelhill

Run Rabbit Run

When Lizzie's dad refuses to fight in the Second World War, the police come looking to arrest him. Desperate to stay together, Lizzie and her brother Freddie go on the run with him, hiding from the police in idyllic Whiteway. But when their past catches up with them, they're forced to leave and it becomes more and more difficult to stay together as a family. Will they be able to? And will they ever find a place, like Whiteway, where they will be safe again? A novel for children.

The Road to London

Thomas is desperate to join 'the players', he'll do anything to watch them perform, even skip school and risk a caning. But when Thomas's rule breaking gets him in trouble with more than just his school master, he has to flee his home and make his way to London. Here he meets his hero, Shakespeare, and his players. But behind the excitement of the theatres is a grimy world of deception, poison and treason. Will Thomas manage to uncover the plot in time? And will he manage to save Shakespeare from a fate worse than death? A novel for children.

Chris Neilan

Abattoir Jack

At the age of 22, Jack is going nowhere. Stuck in a New Mexico backwater, slicing dead cattle for a living, he is ready to seize any opportunity to make something of his life. So when his workmate Ed tells him about the \$25,000 stashed in a bus station locker in San Francisco, and when he meets and falls for the beautiful De S'anna, a sweet Italian supernova of sweat and lips and purple-black hair, the two events propel him into a journey of love, drugs, madness and determination as he tries to make real those two seductive mirages, the accidental fortune and the perfect love. Christopher Neilan's debut novel is a coruscating tale told in vibrant, visceral prose. Funny, sexy, poetic, thrilling and endlessly inventive, 'Abattoir Jack' is a very impressive achievement.

Joanna Price

A Means of Escape

A grizzly and cold November morning. Detective Sergeant Kate Linton is called on Glastonbury Tor where a young woman has been strangled. Twelve holes are found at the scene, surrounded by wax, evidence of garden flares - the only connection to two other unsolved cases. When another young woman and a TV celebrity go missing, Linton is in a race against time to find the serial killer before he strikes again. But, when her journalist ex-boyfriend is singled out as a chief suspect, Linton feels that events are heading a bit too close to home. A Means of Escape presents an intricate, gripping mystery plot, combined with a focus on the heroine's personal life as she juggles an unwelcome attraction for her good-looking and charismatic superior with her efforts to become closer to her estranged family. A Means of Escape is the first in a series of psychologically driven crime novels.

Eeny Meeny Miny Mo

One murdered celebrity. One improbable suspect. A serial rapist on the loose. Linton and Brown's most complex case yet. When former supermodel, Lauren Hampton, is found suffocated in the drawing room of her Glastonbury mansion, DS Kate Linton and her superior, DI Rob Brown, begin one of the most intricate investigations of their career. Set against the backdrop of a series of vicious rapes, the truth about Hampton's past gradually emerges, along with the clues as to who and why someone may have wanted her dead. Full of twists and turns, suspects and red herrings, this contemporary 'who-dunnit' is as much about resolving the relationship between Linton and her charismatic superior, as it is about solving a crime. Eeny Meeny Miny Moe is the second in the series of mysteries featuring a gutsy new heroine in a one-of-a-kind location.

Simon Rowbottom

Thimblerrigger

Lockton Leather is no ordinary patient. Physically and mentally scarred, he looks back from extreme old age to a remote past as a Thimblerrigger among the criminal underworld of Victorian Liverpool. It was a life fraught with hardship and danger; one which returns to threaten everything he holds dear. But how can this be, when he is telling his story in 1999? Drawn ever deeper into Lockton's life history, Dr Sam Stockwell, the psychologist assigned to work with him, finds it increasingly hard to extricate reality from fiction, till he finally begins to suspect that the old man may actually be telling the truth. Within this framing narrative lies the extraordinarily imaginative and compelling history of a Victorian child, orphaned and drawn into a life of petty crime, as a Thimblerrigger, which leads him into events of shocking darkness, brutality and tragedy. As these terrible events unfold, Lockton's tireless attempts to create a new life of love and happiness are persistently thwarted and he learns the difficulty of escaping from his past, the consequences of evil, and his own fate.

Trisha Sakhlecha

Unravel Macmillan 2019

Set in India and London, UNRAVEL tells the story of British-Indian couple Roy and Mia, who seem to have it all, until a young woman goes missing and with each lie, their meticulously curated life begins to unravel. Narrated in turn by Mia and Roy, their dysfunctional marriage is slowly revealed. We follow their journey as each becomes drawn into a labyrinth of unfulfilled desires, childhood trauma which puts them both at huge risk. It has a pleasing, internal seductive logic and is taut page-turner.

Trisha is working on her second novel, also under contract to Macmillan, again set partially in India which brings a whole new aspect to this area of fiction.

Deborah Swift

The Lady's Slipper

It is 1660. The King is back, memories of the Civil War still rankle. In rural Westmorland, artist Alice Ibbetson has become captivated by the rare Lady's Slipper orchid. She is determined to capture its unique beauty for posterity, even if it means stealing the flower from the land of the recently converted Quaker, Richard Wheeler. Fired by his newfound faith, the former soldier Wheeler feels bound to track down the missing orchid. Meanwhile, others are eager to lay hands on the flower, and have their own powerful motives. Margaret Poulter, a local medicine woman, is seduced by the orchid's mysterious herbal powers, while Geoffrey Fisk, Alice's patron and former comrade-in-arms of Wheeler, sees the valuable plant as a way to repair his ailing fortunes and cure his own agonizing illness. Fearing that Wheeler and his friends are planning revolution, Fisk sends his son Stephen to spy on the Quakers, only for the young man to find his loyalties divided as he befriends the group he has been sent to investigate. Then, when Alice Ibbetson is implicated in a brutal murder, she is imprisoned along with the suspected anti-royalist Wheeler.

As Fisk's sanity grows ever more precarious, and Wheeler and Alice plot their escape, a storm begins to brew, from which no party will escape unscathed. Vivid, gripping and intensely atmospheric, *The Lady's Slipper* is a novel about beauty, faith and loyalty. It marks the emergence of an exquisite new voice in historical fiction.

The Gilded Lily

Winter, 1661. In her short life Sadie Appleby has never left rural Westmorland. But one night she is rudely awoken by her older and bolder sister, Ella. She has robbed her employer and is on the run. Together the girls flee their home and head for London, hoping to lose themselves in the teeming city. But the dead man's relatives are in pursuit, and soon a game of cat and mouse

ensues amongst the freezing warren that is London in winter. Ella is soon seduced by the glitter and glamour of city life and sets her sights on the flamboyant man-about-town, Jay Whitgift, owner of a beauty parlour for the wives of the London gentry. But nothing in the capital is what it seems, least of all Jay Whitgift. Soon a rift has formed between Ella and Sadie, and the sisters are threatened by a menace more sinister than even the law. Set in a brilliantly realised Restoration London, *The Gilded Lily* is a novel about beauty and desire, about the stories we tell ourselves, and about how sisterhood can be both a burden and a saving grace.

A Divided Inheritance

Strait-laced Elspet Leviston had always helped her father in the family business until one day he brings home her cousin Zachary, a man she has never heard of or set eyes on before.

Zachary is a firebrand, and trouble seems to dog his heels, but try as she might Elspet cannot discover anything about his secretive past. Gradually Zachary drives a wedge between Elspet and her father. When Zachary is arrested for brawling, to Elspet's relief her father decides to send him on a Grand Tour of Europe.

But she is not to be rid of him so easily. After her father dies she finds she and the hateful Zachary are tied together by her father's will, and to regain her inheritance she must journey to the Seville where Zachary is training in the mysterious art of Destreza – the sword and the magic circle.

In Seville, Elspet is drawn to the charismatic Senor Alvarez, the fencing master, and becomes close to a Muslim family who live at the swordmaster's house. But Seville is about to be rocked by one of the most brutal and traumatic events of its history. King Felipe III has ordered that the entire Muslim population of Spain must leave or be killed, and the order is to be enforced by Don Rodriguez, rival of Senor Alvarez. Soon Elspet and Zachary are drawn into a battle far bigger than their own fight for their inheritance. A battle that will cost them all their skill, passion and courage.

Pleasing Mr Pepys Deb Willet longs for security and respectability because when she was only twelve years old her mother was thrown out onto the streets because of an adulterous affair. Desperate to escape her domineering Aunt Beth, Deb thinks the post of companion to well-respected Elisabeth Pepys is the answer to her prayers. But Mr Pepys's house is not as safe as it seems. An intelligent girl in Deb's position has access to Pepys's papers, and soon she becomes a target of Abigail Williams, an actress, and spy for England's enemies, the Dutch. The ageing Abigail needs a younger accomplice and blackmails Deb into stealing Pepys's papers. The respectable life Deb longs for slides out of her grasp.

Mr Pepys's obsessive lust for his new maid increases precisely as Abigail and her sinister spymaster become more demanding. Not content with a few stolen papers, they want Mr Pepys's diary. To stay alive Deb must trade her honour for information. But to do so is impossible, for she has fallen in love with handsome curate-in-training, Jeremiah Wells. This is a novel of secrets and lies, and the uneasy power of the written word.