

HAPPY NEW YEAR
FROM

The Reading House

January - March 2022

0116 497 1233

INTRODUCING CHRIS McDONALD



Chris McDonald grew up in Northern Ireland before settling in Manchester. He is the author of the DI Erika Piper series and The Stonebridge Mysteries. Chris is also a full-time teacher, husband, father and a regular voice on The Blood Brothers Podcast.

What is it about cosy crime that attracts both readers and writers time and again?

Cosy crime, to me, is easy reading. You know that there isn't going to be blood and gore, and with that comes an element of safety. Good, in all probability, is going to triumph over evil. I also think that the humour involved gives it a feel-good factor. After a long day at work, curling up with a book and catching up with characters who feel like friends is like a safety blanket.

Tell us about the Stonebridge Mysteries.

Stonebridge is a small (fictional) town on the north coast of Northern Ireland. Most of its inhabitants are friendly, happy people. Most

of them...Because bad things happen even in the happiest of places. It's a good thing, then, that Adam Whyte and Colin McLaughlin call Stonebridge home. Armed with an encyclopaedic knowledge of detective shows, a misplaced sense of confidence and a keen desire to see justice done, these two are the closest thing the town has to saviours. Which isn't that reassuring...

What makes Ireland a good setting for a crime novel?

I think Northern Ireland has a lingering association with the Troubles. It was a dark time and has a reputation as a scary place. I think that, while it's important to acknowledge that, it's also important to me that people know how stunningly beautiful it is. There are so many beaches, the people are super friendly, and the music scene is amazing. I loved growing up there, and I want the world to know it's a great place. It's an interesting thing to play with – nice scenery mixed with dastardly deeds.

If you had a day to show us around Stonebridge, where would you take us?

Oh man! We'd start with a sausage baguette from the local café and then I'd take you to the beach and we would build some sandcastles. Then, we'd head to the Ramore (which is real and my favourite restaurant in the world) and have a burger, chips and their famous honeycomb cheesecake. After that, we'd head to a bar by the seaside and enjoy some live music. We'd also go and see Colin at work. That way, you'd get to meet Barry and the gang.





“Since starting at the Oxford studios last year, it’s been hugely exciting to follow our books on their journey to publication. So, I couldn’t think of a better way to ring in the new year than by sharing some of our newest releases with you here...”

Shake off the post-Christmas blues with a trip to the Italian Riviera in **J.P. O’Connell**’s dazzling *Hotel Portofino*, which is soon to be an ITV drama. For those who wish to stay a little closer to home, *A Wedding at Hedgehog Hollow* and *A Spring Surprise for the Cornish Midwife* offer the perfect cosy escapes to the Yorkshire Wolds and the Cornish coast. Fans of classic mysteries are spoiled for choice with six short story collections from the British Library Tales of the Weird series, and historical crime listeners will enjoy releases from **Jim Eldridge**, **Mike Hollow** and **Edward Marston**. *The Couple at the Table* by **Sophie Hannah** and *Definitely Dead* by **Kate Bendelow** are great picks for anyone looking for fast-paced thrillers, while family saga enthusiasts have releases from **Katie Flynn**, **Rosie Hendry** and **Emma Hornby** to look forward to.

Audio releases from TV favourites **Matt Baker** and **Rosemary Shrager** are sure to appeal to listeners, and large print offerings include new titles from contemporary fiction icons **Alexander McCall Smith** and **Sally Rooney**.

In addition to these releases, we are thrilled to embark on a new partnership with **VERVE Books** (more information on p.11) and look forward to sharing the exciting titles this collaboration brings. Finally, we thank you for your continued support and wish you all the very best for the year ahead.

Ella Thomson

Publishing Assistant



KATIE FLYNN THE ROSE QUEEN

1938. Cadi is crowned Rose Queen in the annual Rose Fete, but she is desperate to leave the Welsh mining community where she grew up. When war is declared, Cadi sees her chance and leaves for Liverpool. But city life doesn't bring the opportunities she'd hoped for, and Cadi finds her worlds colliding...

Read by Anne Dover
February 2022
12hrs 30mins

£31.49



GRACIE HART THE BAKER'S GIRL

Meg just wants to keep her family together, and it is up to her to support them. She knows how to bake, and desperation leads her to Ted Lund – the miserly owner of a local bakery. He offers her a job, but his charity ends there. Despite her mistreatment though, Meg can see what the bakery might be. Can she turn the shop around?

Read by Colleen Prendergast
January 2022
7hrs 20mins

£26.49

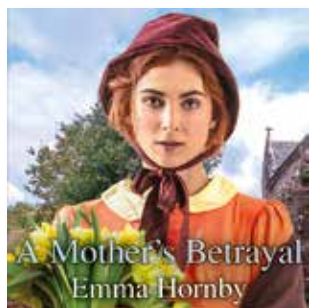


ROSIE HENDRY THE MOTHER'S DAY VICTORY

Norfolk, 1940. As war rages on, the residents of Great Plumstead are doing all they can to help the war effort. When a young German girl seeks refuge at the local hall, many welcome her with open arms, while others treat her with suspicion. But when the government try to send her back, it'll take the whole community to keep her safe from war.

Read by Patience Tomlinson
March 2022
10hrs 15mins

£29.49

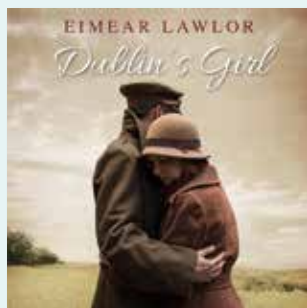


EMMA HORNBY A MOTHER'S BETRAYAL

Manchester, 1867. Mara has married into the O'Hara family, and her stepson Conrad is a brute and a criminal who makes Mara's life a misery. But then Conrad is accused of a crime he didn't commit, and Mara is the only one who can prove his innocence. Will Mara clear Conrad's name, or will she have the courage to break free from her stepson's villainy?

Read by Julia Franklin
March 2022
8hrs 55mins

£28.49



EIMEAR LAWLOR DUBLIN'S GIRL

1917. After moving to Dublin to start secretarial college, Veronica is soon caught up in the danger of those fighting for Ireland's independence. But when she is tasked with earning the affections of handsome British soldier, Major Harry Fairfax, to gather intelligence for Sinn Féin, it isn't long before Veronica's loyalty to her countrymen and her feelings for Harry are in conflict...

Read by Deirdre O'Connell
January 2022
10hrs 55mins

£28.49



FENELLA J. MILLER THE OFFICER GIRL IN BLUE

1942. Charlotte Fenimore hadn't planned to fall in love with Dan Chalmers, a wounded hero of Dunkirk who believed no woman would ever look at him again. DI Chalmers is in London to arrest a gang of dangerous East End criminals – and his involvement with Charlotte brings her into serious danger. In a time of war, with danger around every corner, can their relationship survive?

Read by Annie Aldington
February 2022
8hrs 55mins

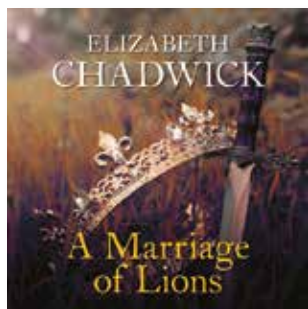
£27.49



JO BARTLETT
A SPRING SURPRISE FOR THE
CORNISH MIDWIFE

Midwife Jess knows she'll never have a baby of her own, so she decides to foster. When she finds a new-born baby on her doorstep, Jess cares for the precious babe day and night. She desperately wants to reunite mum and baby, but knows that when the day comes, her own heart will shatter.

Read by Emma Powell
January 2022
10hrs 20mins

£29.49

ELIZABETH CHADWICK
A MARRIAGE OF LIONS

England, 1238. Raised at the court of King Henry III, young Joanna of Swanscombe's unexpected inheritance and arranged marriage to the King's half-brother William immediately stoke the flames of political unrest. William is forced to run for his life, and Joanna is left with only her wit and courage to outfox their enemies and prevent them from destroying her husband, her family, and their fortunes.

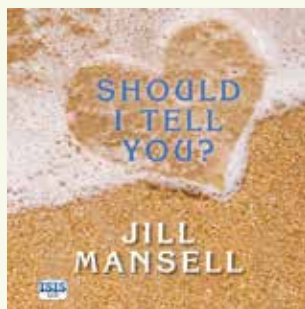
Read by Helen Stern
January 2022
16hrs 55mins

£33.49

CHARLOTTE BETTS
LETTING IN THE LIGHT

Cornwall, 1914. Edith and Pascal, her faithful lover of two decades, are planning to leave their beloved Spindrift artists' community and finally be together. But under the shadow of war, the community struggles to eke out a living. When it's all over, will they survive an unexpected threat?

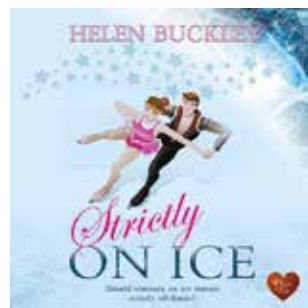
Read by Emma Powell
March 2022
11hrs 10mins

£30.49

JILL MANSELL
SHOULD I TELL YOU?

Amber, Lachlan and Raffaele met as teenagers in the seaside home of kind-hearted foster parents. Now, as adults, their bond is stronger than ever. But Amber has a secret – she's in love with Lachlan. Raffaele has his own dilemma. And now their widowed foster dad Teddy thinks he's found love again. Against a backdrop of sparkling seas, the unexpected is always around the corner.

Read by Katherine Press
February 2022
11hrs 15mins

£30.49

HELEN BUCKLEY
STRICTLY ON ICE

Skating champion Katie Saunders still hasn't forgiven her former skating partner and ex-boyfriend, Alex Michaelson, for the accident that shattered her Olympic dreams. Desperate for cash, she reluctantly takes part in a new TV skating show. She is partnered with an infamous love rat rugby player, and one of the judges is none other than Alex Michaelson himself...

Read by Laura Kirman
January 2022
7hrs 40mins

£26.49

J.P. O'CONNELL
HOTEL PORTOFINO
SOON TO BE AN ITV DRAMA

Hotel Portofino has only been open a few weeks, but already the problems are mounting for its co-proprietor Bella Ainsworth. She's short of staff and her high-class guests are hard to please. The hotel demands all of Bella's resources, energy, and focus, but she has her own family to worry about too...

Read by Esther Wane
February 2022
7hrs 30mins

£26.49



JESSICA REDLAND
A WEDDING AT HEDGEHOG HOLLOW

Life at Hedgehog Hollow is never dull, but disaster strikes when Samantha checks the rescue centre's bank account and discovers it has been emptied. Meanwhile Phoebe is desperate to escape the shadow of her family, infamously known for their attacks on the centre.

Read by Kitty Kelly and Emma Swan
January 2022
11hrs 25mins **£30.49**



PAIGE TOON
SOMEONE I USED TO KNOW

When Leah, George and Theo's lives collide, the trio form a bond they believe to be unbreakable. Years later, shocking news brings Leah back to Yorkshire, with her baby daughter in tow. Theo isn't with them – and George has unexpectedly returned. After half a lifetime, have they healed the scars of their pasts? And will coming home set their hearts in a different direction?

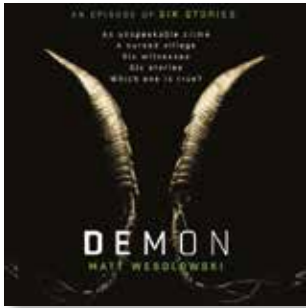
Read by Heather Long
January 2022
8hrs 25mins **£26.49**



THE BRITISH LIBRARY TALES OF THE WEIRD SERIES

Rediscover forgotten strange and ghostly stories from the late 19th and early 20th centuries with these short story collections from the British Library.

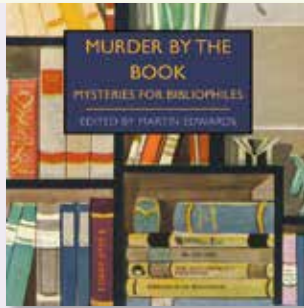
Read by Julia Franklin, Jeff Harding, Ben Onwukwe, John Telfer & David Thorpe
February 2022
Pricing from **£27.49**



MATT WESOLOWSKI
DEMON

In 1995, twelve-year-old Sidney Parsons was savagely murdered by two boys his own age, who were imprisoned until their release in 2002. Online journalist Scott King investigates the lead-up and aftermath of the killing, but soon becomes a target himself. It becomes clear that whatever drove those two boys to kill is still there, lurking, and the campaign of horror has just begun...

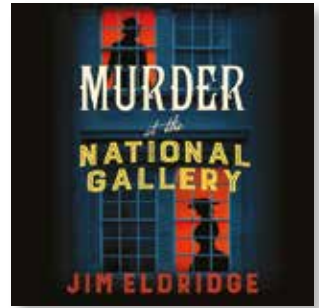
Read by Simon Mattacks et al
January 2022
8hrs 20mins **£27.49**



EDITED BY MARTIN EDWARDS
MURDER BY THE BOOK

There is no better hiding place for clues – or red herrings – than inside the pages of a book. With Martin Edwards as librarian and guide, delve into an irresistible stack of tales perfect for every book lover and armchair sleuth.

Read by Julia Franklin, Jeff Harding, Ben Onwukwe, John Telfer & David Thorpe
March 2022
8hrs 35mins **£27.49**



JIM ELDRIDGE
MURDER AT THE NATIONAL GALLERY

London, 1897. The capital is shocked to learn that the body of a woman has been found at the National Gallery, eviscerated in a manner all too reminiscent of Jack the Ripper. The dead woman had links to artist Walter Sickert who was a suspect during the Ripper's spree of killings. Sickert insists that he is innocent but who would want to frame him?

Read by Peter Wickham
February 2022
8hrs 40mins **£27.49**



BELLA ELLIS
THE RED MONARCH

The Brontë sisters' first poetry collection has just been published when Anne receives a letter from her former pupil Lydia Robinson. Lydia has eloped with a young actor, Harry Roxby, but he has become embroiled with a criminal gang and is in terrible danger. The sisters agree to help, but soon come face to face with a terrifying adversary... The Red Monarch.

Read by Kristin Atherton
February 2022
10hrs 25mins

£29.49



CHRIS MCDONALD
THE CURIOUS DISPATCH OF DANIEL COSTELLO

On the morning of Sam and Emily's wedding, the best man is found dead. Something doesn't seem right to groomsman Adam Whyte and armed with an encyclopaedic, but ultimately ridiculous, knowledge of television detective shows, Adam and his best friend Colin, set out to uncover what happened.

Read by Stephen Armstrong
January 2022
2hrs 55mins

£22.49

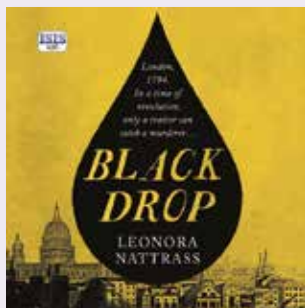


MIKE HOLLOW
THE PIMLICO MURDER

Armistice Day 1940. A young man has been found in an Anderson shelter in Pimlico, battered about the head with two white poppies in his pocket. As the investigation delves into the man's background, Blitz Detective John Jago and his assistant DC Craddock find themselves knee-deep in Pimlico's shady underworld. It will take all their skills to uncover the truth behind the pacifist's brutal death.

Read by Simon Mattacks
January 2022
9hrs 15mins

£28.49

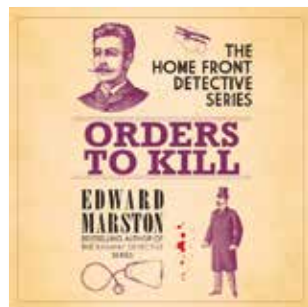


LEONORA NATRASS
BLACK DROP

1794. The streets of London are filled with rumours of revolution. Laurence Jago – clerk to the Foreign Office – discovers the body of a fellow clerk, supposedly a suicide. The dead man is blamed for the leak of a highly sensitive document, but Laurence is certain of his friend's innocence, and that he was murdered. Can Laurence find the true culprit without incriminating himself?

Read by David Thorpe
January 2022
11hrs 5mins

£28.49



EDWARD MARSTON
ORDERS TO KILL

December 1917. Dr George Tindall's blood-covered body is found sprawled across the floor. Detective Inspector Harvey Marmion and Sergeant Joe Keedy's investigation takes them out of London, and on the trail of three different women as it emerges that Dr Tindall was not a respectable local GP after all, but a bigamist whose third wife had some very interesting connections in the crime fraternity.

Read by Gordon Griffin
January 2022
9hrs 40mins

£27.49

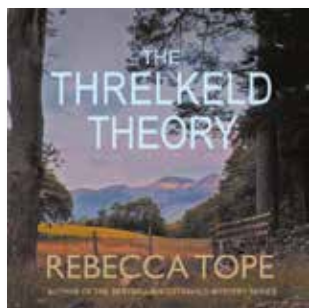


ROSEMARY SHRAGER
THE LAST SUPPER

When an old television rival, Deirdre Shaw, is found dead at Farleigh Manor house where she was catering for a prestigious shooting weekend, Prudence is happy to step in. But the manor has old secrets, and the more Prudence scratches beneath the surface, the more she thinks Deirdre Shaw's death was no accident. She's staring in the face of a very modern murder...

Read by Rachel Atkins
March 2022
7hrs 45mins

£26.49

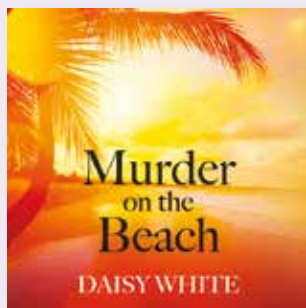


REBECCA TOPE
THE THRELKELD THEORY

Persimmon 'Simmy' Brown's wedding day to Christopher Henderson in the pretty Lake District village of Threlkeld passes off without calamity, until a young man is found nearby, possibly the victim of a vicious attack. Was it an accident or something far more sinister? Speculation is rife as to what precisely happened and a chilling suspicion develops into a theory that might be impossible to prove.

Read by Julia Franklin
March 2022
8hrs 20mins

£27.49



DAISY WHITE
MURDER ON THE BEACH

Chloe Canton has settled into life on the island, so she is delighted when her friend Maria asks her to help with a celebrity wedding. But then a body is found floating in the crystal ocean waters. As other events continue to shock the bride and groom-to-be, Chloe finds she herself drawn into a celebrity mystery that will rock the tranquil island to its core.

Read by Charlotte Stevens
January 2022
7hrs 30mins

£26.49

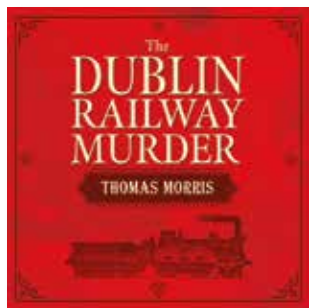


MATT BAKER
A YEAR ON OUR FARM

HOW THE COUNTRYSIDE MADE ME
Away from hosting our favourite television programmes, Matt Baker is often in the company of a whole host of wildlife in his farm's ancient woodland. Now, following the ever-changing seasons, Matt takes us on a journey through the natural year and offers insight into how the power and beauty of the countryside can be an inspiration and source of joy for all of us.

Read by the Author
January 2022
7hrs 30mins

£26.49



THOMAS MORRIS
THE DUBLIN RAILWAY MURDER

A thrilling and perplexing investigation of a true Victorian crime. Dublin, November 1856. The chief cashier of the Broadstone Railway Terminus is found dead. Five suspects are arrested then released, with every step of the case followed by the press. But then a woman comes forward, claiming to know the murderer...

Read by Brendan Dempsey
February 2022
12hrs 10mins

£31.49

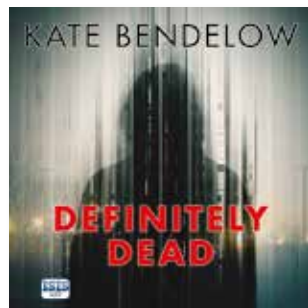


SOPHIE HANNAH
THE COUPLE AT THE TABLE

You're on your honeymoon at an exclusive couples-only resort. You receive a note warning you to 'Beware of the couple at the table nearest to yours'. At dinner, five other couples are present, and none of their tables is any nearer than any of the others. So who might be trying to warn you? And who might be about to commit the perfect impossible murder?

Read by Julie Maisey
March 2022
11hrs 20mins

£30.49

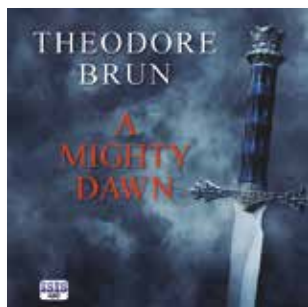


KATE BENDELOW
DEFINITELY DEAD

Maya Barton has just embarked on her dream job as a scene of crime officer. When she attends her first death, the post-mortem deems it to be non-suspicious. But despite the lack of evidence, she suspects a crime has been committed. Can Maya catch a killer and escape from her troubled past, or will the skeletons from her closet come back to haunt her?

Read by Annabelle Indge
February 2022
9hrs 30mins

£28.49

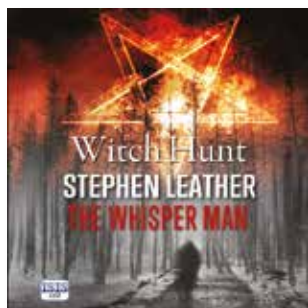


THEODORE BRUN
A MIGHTY DAWN

Hakan, son of Haldan, swears loyalty to his father in fire, in iron, and in blood. But when a terrible tragedy befalls Hakan's household, he is forced to leave his world behind and pledge his sword to a new king. Whispers of sinister forces in the north pull Hakan onwards, but does he have the strength to do battle with such dark foes?

Read by Simon Mattacks
February 2022
16hrs

£34.49



STEPHEN LEATHER
WITCH HUNT/THE WHISPER MAN

Two Jack Nightingale novellas. Witch Hunt: When a serial killer starts killing victims using Witchfinder methods of execution, Nightingale realises that the killer is on a mission of historic revenge. The Whisper Man: Something has come from the bowels of Hell to wreak havoc in the world, and only Nightingale can stop it.

Read by Paul Thornley
March 2022
8hrs 50mins

£27.49



MICHAEL JECKS
THE MOORLAND MURDERERS

1556. Jack Blackjack spends the night at a tavern, agrees to a game of dice – and ends up accused of murder. Jack realises that the only way to clear his name is to unmask the real killer, but his attempt to find answers stirs up a hornet's nest of warring factions within the town, and events soon spiral out of control...

Read by Kris Dyer
March 2022
9hrs

£28.49

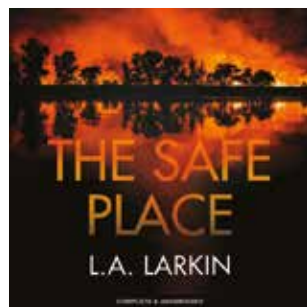


BEEZY MARSH
QUEEN OF THIEVES

1946. Alice Diamond, the Queen of the Forty Thieves, takes slum girl Nell under her wing as a weapon against Billy Sullivan's Soho gang. But the more she is exploited by both Alice and Billy, the more Nell's hunger for revenge grows. Will she prevail in carving out her own path to power and riches...and crown herself the Queen of Thieves?

Read by Rachel Atkins
January 2022
9hrs 50mins

£28.49

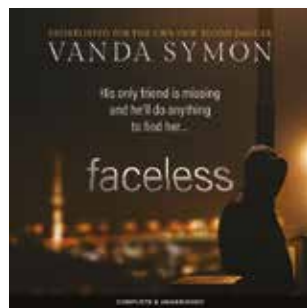


L.A. LARKIN
THE SAFE PLACE

Eagle Falls is a sleepy town threatened by huge wildfires. But when a family dies in a house blaze, it's suspected to be the work of an arsonist... Former firefighter Jessie Lewis and retired FBI agent Ruth Sullivan both find themselves on the trail of the arsonist – and tangled up in the web of lies that runs through Eagle Falls.

Read by Regina Reagan
February 2022
10hrs 40mins

£29.49



VANDA SYMON
FACELESS

Worn down by a job he hates and a stressful family life, Bradley picks up a teenage escort and commits an unspeakable crime. Max has one friend, and she's gone missing. In order to find her, Max is going to have to call on some people from his past, and reopen wounds that have remained unhealed for a very long time...

Read by Toby Webster
March 2022
9hrs 30mins

£28.49

**S.J. BENNETT****THE WINDSOR KNOT**

The morning after a soiree, Queen Elizabeth is shocked to discover that one of her guests has been found dead. When the police begin to suspect her servants of murder, Her Majesty knows they are looking in the wrong place. For the Queen has been living a double life. Away from the public eye, she has a brilliant knack for solving crimes. Can the Queen catch the killer?

Mystery

January 2022

300pp

£22.99**CATHERINE MILLER****THE ARCHERS: HOME FIRES AT AMBRIDGE**

When a prominent villager dies, the main beneficiary's name is a mystery. The name is hidden within a locked box and the villagers must uncover the password to find out the name. So when five people are sent a packet of seeds, the mystery deepens – could it be a clue? Can they work together to discover who is set to inherit?

Historical Fiction

March 2022

414pp

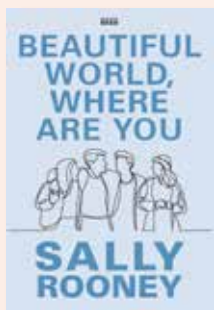
£21.99**KATIE FLYNN****OVER THE RAINBOW**

Olivia Campbell lives in fear of her abusive father. Longing for affection, she begins a relationship with Ted but her family forbids them from seeing each other. When war comes, Olivia looks to escape her unhappy life and join the WAAF. Soon Olivia meets Ralph, and all thoughts of Ted are brushed aside. Until he returns to her life with some shocking news that turns her world upside down...

Family Saga

January 2022

414pp

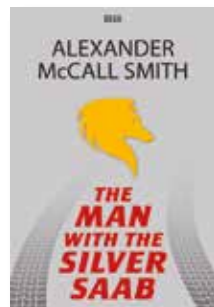
£22.99**SALLY ROONEY****BEAUTIFUL WORLD, WHERE ARE YOU**

Eileen slips back into flirting with Simon. Alice, Felix, Eileen and Simon are still young – but life is catching up with them. Are they standing in the last lighted room before the darkness, bearing witness to something? Will they find a way to believe in a beautiful world?

Literary Fiction

January 2022

354pp

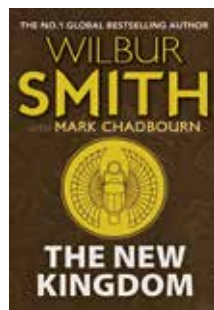
£21.99**ALEXANDER MCCALL SMITH****THE MAN WITH THE SILVER SAAB**

Detective Ulf Varg is a man of refined tastes. So when an art historian visits the Department of Sensitive Crimes to report a series of bizarre acts that have been committed against him, Ulf and his team swing into action. It's clear that someone is out to tarnish his reputation. Meanwhile, Ulf is also weathering personal issues, which spiral out of control, and lead to him being investigated himself...

Mystery

February 2022

276pp

£21.99**WILBUR SMITH & MARK CHADBOURN**
THE NEW KINGDOM

As the favoured son and ruler-in-waiting, Hui's fate is set. But behind the façades an evil is plotting. Craving power, Hui's stepmother orchestrates the downfall of Hui's father. Determined to seek vengeance for his father's death, Hui swears his allegiance to the Hyksos. Through them he learns the art of war. But soon Hui finds himself in an even greater battle...

Adventure Suspense

February 2022

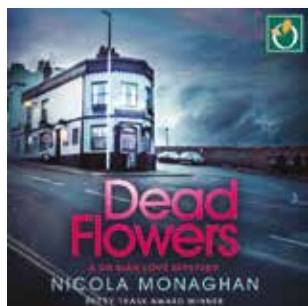
444pp

£22.99

INTRODUCING VERVE BOOKS

We are thrilled to announce a new partnership for 2022!

We have partnered with VERVE Books, the sister company of Oldcastle Books, to publish all of their titles in audio. They publish women writers of commercial fiction across all genres but focuses on crime and thriller writing. Look out for the following first releases in February 2022!

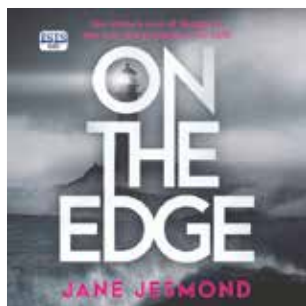


NICOLA MONAGHAN
DEAD FLOWERS

She doesn't trust the police. She used to be one of them. Hardened by ten years on the murder squad, DNA analyst Dr Sian Love has seen it all. So when she finds human remains in the basement of her new home, she knows the drill. Except this time it's different. This time, it's personal...

Read by Kitty Kelly
February 2022
8hrs 40mins

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