

LOVE READING WITH SUSAN



Susan shares a special moment of her own – and some great reads, too!

Don't you just love those chance encounters that happen in life; the seemingly tiny and insignificant moments that can send your life spinning off in a whole new direction? After all, I did meet my husband in the lift at work! Moments of chance are often used to great effect in fiction and this month there are lots of books out which perfectly tap into my love of fate and destiny.

The Pre-Loved Club by Sue Teddern (Mantle, HB, £16.99.) focuses on two moments that change the course of two people's lives forever when Ned's wife breaks up with him in IKEA, and Gemma finds a pair of woman's sunglasses in the car that aren't hers. Both are catapulted into new lives when they join a support group for single parents and don't exactly hit it off... This relatable and bittersweet novel is sharply observed and full of warmth and humour – another great novel

from the author of *Annie Stanley, All At Sea*.

Many of us will have received a text message at some point that changes everything, whether that's a bombshell announcement, someone from the past reconnecting, or someone new coming into your life. **In *The Weekend Before The Wedding*** by Tracy Bloom (HarperCollins, PBO, £7.99.), it's an unwanted text received on her hen weekend in Spain that throws her wedding into doubt. I loved this sunny setting and the laugh-out-loud hen party capers!

I really enjoy tales of chance encounters where fate brings two unlikely people together, so I loved reading ***The Second Time We Met*** by Frances Mensah Williams (Lake Union Publishing, PB, £8.99.). When Cara is first thrown into the path of Henry, it seems destiny is determined to keep them apart. However, when they bump into

each other at a work event, sparks soon begin to fly, but as the mismatched couple try to stay together, they realise just how different their worlds are – can they really beat the odds to find true love? I adored this heartwarming and life-affirming tale of second chances and love against the odds.

A little bit of magic is a welcome addition to romance novels so I enjoyed reading ***Skip To The End*** by Molly James (Quercus, HB, £16.99) where we discover that protagonist, Amy, has a strange talent – whenever she kisses someone, she sees how their relationship will end. When she drunkenly kisses three men at her best friend's wedding she sees one perfect ending... but she can't remember which ending belonged to which person! Such a great concept for a novel – witty, poignant, and I loved the touch of magic!

So, what are you reading at the moment? What great authors have you discovered recently? Write and let me know! Email me at myweekly@dictmedia.co.uk with Love Reading With Susan in the title bar or catch up with me on twitter @MWFictionEditor



NEXT MONTH – More news, reviews, previews and interviews from the wonderful world of books with our Fiction Editor Susan Watson!

SUSAN'S TOP PICKS FOR THIS MONTH



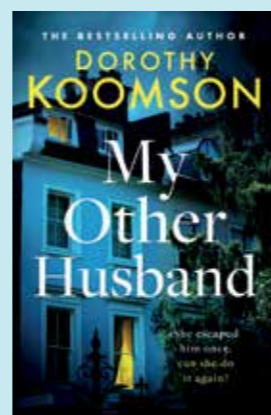
MAGICAL ROMANCE
The Very Secret Society Of Irregular Witches
by Sangu Mandanna

Hodder & Stoughton. HB. £16.99.
As one of the few witches in Britain, Mika Moon has always lived a lonely existence, fearful of people finding out the truth. When she receives an unexpected invitation to teach three young witches, she gets tangled up in the quirky residents' lives at Nowhere House. If you're looking for an uplifting romance, full of heart and magic, this is the one of you!



HISTORICAL FICTION
The Manhattan Girls
by Gill Paul

Avon. PB. £8.99
The 20s are roaring, the jazz is playing and the bootleg gin is flowing in this latest novel from the fabulous Gill Paul. A fictionalised account of famous wit, Dorothy Parker, who tries to navigate a world designed for men. Love, loss and friendship, with Gill's trademark attention to period detail captures the spirit of the era.



CONTEMPORARY THRILLER
My Other Husband
by Dorothy Koomson

Headline. HB. £16.99
Can you ever really escape your past? For bestselling novelist turned scriptwriter, Cleo Forsum, it begins to look increasingly unlikely. As her life unravels, it becomes clear that someone is trying to frame her for murder but she can't tell the truth because then everyone would find out about her "other husband"! Gripping, chilling, and builds to a satisfying conclusion via many twists and shock revelations!



WARTIME SAGA
A Family Secret
by Kitty Neale

Orion, PBO, £7.99
1940 in London, Winnie Berry is at the heart of her community, as landlady of the popular Battersea Tavern. She becomes embroiled in a forbidden relationship with black-market trader, Harry, and is worried about her son who is intent on getting involved with someone he shouldn't, can she really protect those closest to her? Another great saga from the bestselling author.

MY LIFE IN BOOKS

Author **Sharon Dempsey** tells us why she loves crime fiction and how her tastes grew from Enid Blyton to Tana French!

I grew up in Belfast in the 70s and 80s but despite the Troubles, I had a great childhood and books played a massive part in that. I read everything I could get my hands on. We lived near a library and frequented it, along with an excellent rabbit warren of a second-hand book shop. I devoured all the Enid Blyton's books but especially loved *The Famous Five* series, and I credit them with inspiring my love of crime fiction. As I outgrew Enid Blyton, I moved on to the *Across the Barricades* series by Joan Lingard, as well as *All Creatures Great and Small* by James Herriot and the Gerald Durrell Corfu books, *My Family and Other Animals* trilogy. I also loved Judith Kerr's semi-autobiography *When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit* trilogy. I think every young person should read it to understand the devastation of persecution and war.



The biggest influence on my writing has been crime writer Tana French. I love her murder squad series and *Faithful Place* is my favourite. It tells the story of Frank Mackey who finds himself investigating a case in the street where he grew up. The story has lots of long held family secrets that lead to a satisfying conclusion. I loved Tana French's *The Wych Elm* too.

She writes such great complex mysteries. Her latest book, *The Searcher*, is a wonderful novel that proves that literary fiction and genre fiction can go hand in hand.

I also loved Chris Whitaker's *We Begin at the End*. The character of Duchess Day Radley is one that will stay with you long after closing the book.

Occasionally I need a bit of glamour in my life and then I turn to Taylor Reid Jenkins. I loved *Daisy Jones and the Six* and *The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo*. Both books offer pure escapism and are so completely addictive that you won't want to put them down.

***The Paper Palace* by Miranda Cowley Heller, is another book I will be sharing with friends this summer. Mainly set in Cape Cod, it tells the story of the Bishop family and the loves and losses they experience over a lifetime. Totally immersive and beautifully written it is bound to become one that I return to.**

NEW BEST-SELLER

The Midnight Killing
By Sharon Dempsey Avon, PB, £8.99

When the body of architect, James McCallum, is found in the grounds of his former school, DI Danny Stowe and forensic psychologist Rose Lainey suspect foul play behind his apparent suicide. Looking to the past for answers, they are astonished when the trail connects them to a decades old cold case of a missing eight-year-old girl. What was James' connection to the girl? And how did it lead to his death twenty years later?

This is a compelling detective crime thriller set in Northern Ireland and is full of interesting characters that will keep you invested in the excellent plot.

