

## Convincing novels

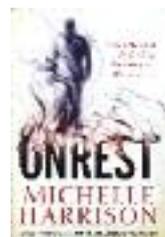
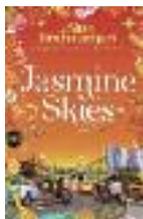
### Jasmine Skies

Written by Sita Brahmachari  
Macmillan (eB) £5.99  
ISBN: 978-1447205180

This sequel to *Artichoke Hearts* continues the story of Mira, now two years older.

Mira is going to visit her mother's cousin's family in India. She knows that her mother and her cousin have been estranged for many years, but does not know why. Getting to the root of this mystery is one of the many things that she wants to do while she is there. Despite the fact that she comes from an Indian family in the UK, the culture shock on her arrival in Kolkata hits her like a sledge hammer, as does the heat! Her eyes are opened wide to so many differences between India and the UK, including the huge gaps in living standards between the different groups in India, attitudes to the poor and disabled, lack of welfare support, and the contrasts in living conditions between rich and poor. She finds it very hard to accept and adjust to life there. It is a fascinating book and very difficult to put down. The descriptions of every aspect of Indian life are so very graphic and colourful that it is easy for the reader to imagine actually being there with Mira, plus, of course, there is the solution to the mystery of the cousin's estrangement!

*Patricia Thompson*



### Unrest

Written by Michelle Harrison  
Simon and Schuster (eB) £6.99  
ISBN: 978-0857070913

After suffering a blow to the head in a hit-and-run car accident, Elliott has been having 'out of body' experiences and is haunted by the ghost of a drowned young woman. He cannot sleep or rest and no one is listening to him. He becomes a tour guide at Past Lives, a collection of ancient buildings open for visitors, which specialises in Paranormal Nights and Elliott is disturbed to find that he is sensitive to the strange atmosphere there. How true are the ghost stories, supposedly linked to the ancient buildings, or is Hodge simply a very clever and manipulative business man? What hold do the young bullies have over the mysterious Ophelia and what did happen to her missing boyfriend? As Elliott tries to get to the truth, he finds himself literally fighting for his own life, as his body is taken away from him. Mystery, murder, romance, intrigue, ghosts and paranormal activities – what more could you want? Michelle Harrison skilfully combines all this with interesting characters that are firmly rooted in

the normal. We are drawn into Elliott's predicament, believing the traumas he is going through, and are anxious that he resolves them. An excellent read!

*Louise Stothard*

### Obsidian Mirror

Written by Catherine Fisher  
Hodder £6.99  
ISBN: 978-0340970089

This powerful and exciting story has touches of Pullman's *His Dark Materials* and the white witch from C.S. Lewis. It is dark and scary with a fast moving narrative and imaginative characters. Jake is expelled from his Swiss boarding school and returns to England to stay with his guardian, the recluse Oberon Venn, at Wintercombe Abbey. Jake suspects Oberon of murdering his father and is determined to discover the truth. He is quickly drawn into an intricate plot of fantasy and nightmares all revolving around the Obsidian Mirror. This is a real page turner for teenagers.

*Ingrid Fox*



### The Traitors

Written by Tom Becker  
Scholastic (eB) £6.99  
ISBN: 978-1407109527

Adam Wilson finds himself captured by the agents of the Dial, a prison both off-world and outside time, set up to punish those teenagers guilty of the crime of betrayal. He is sentenced to a term of 274 years for having kissed his best friend's girlfriend. This original book vividly dramatises issues of betrayal and loyalty. Each character in the Dial has, by definition, betrayed someone, and yet even here there are degrees of treachery. We learn that there is a traitor working for Mr Pitt, a brutal warder, within the ranks of the inmates themselves, betraying the betrayers. We see loyalty at work with Doughnut, the fixer, befriending Adam by bringing him precious chocolate in hospital after he has been beaten up by Mr Pitt. Gradually, Adam wins the trust and loyalty of others through his rebellion against Mr Pitt's harsh regime. Now a hero amongst the inmates, he must decide whether to make his own escape, or stay and destroy the whole system. There are some fine and funny details in this novel, many of them reworkings of real historical material from the Second World War prisoner-of-war camps. Altogether, this is an unusual, yet thoroughly absorbing, read.

*Stella Maden*

### Hollow Pike

Written by James Dawson  
Indigo (eB) £8.99  
ISBN: 978-1780620039

James Dawson's debut novel is a bewitching tale of friends and foes, set against a backdrop of local legend. Lis London has moved from Wales to live with her sister in Hollow Pike in Yorkshire, to escape vicious bullying. She quickly settles into her new school, making several good friends. However, since the move Lis has been plagued by nightmares, in which someone is trying to kill her in the copse that surrounds her new home. Learning that Hollow Pike has a history of witchcraft, Lis wonders if she has made the right move. *Hollow Pike* will captivate readers from the opening page. The story skilfully combines the understandable apprehension of moving to a new school, with a fear of the unknown. The tension builds steadily as Lis becomes convinced of the truth behind the legends, suspecting everyone is hiding something. Dawson has used his experience as a teacher to create truly believable characters, with the school as the main location for the action. The outcome is a real surprise, which is refreshing in these days of supernatural tales for teens. *Hollow Pike* is thrilling throughout with a tremendous climax. Thoroughly recommended!

*Jane Hall*



### Au Revoir Crazy European Chick



Written by Joe Schreiber  
Electric Monkey (eB) £6.99  
ISBN: 978-1405259439

You are well advised to take a deep breath before embarking on this roller coaster of a read. Put all preconceptions to one side, dispel belief and enjoy the ride! It all starts quietly as Perry's mother thought it would be culturally enhancing for the family to host a foreign exchange student. Perry's hopes of an attractive girl in the house are dashed when he meets the plain Gobi in her drab and shapeless clothes. She is easily ignored and it is not until Perry is told he has to take her to the Prom that Gobi's presence affects his life in a most unexpected and dramatic way. The Prom does not go well as Perry gets in a fight with some bullies when they slander Gobi, who is attracting much unwelcome attention in her traditional Lithuanian costume. They leave and somehow Perry finds that Gobi has persuaded him to drive her to New York in his father's precious Jaguar. As they head for the 40/40 Club Perry's

life as he knew it begins to unravel and events take a very strange and dangerous turn. To say any more would spoil the exciting twists and turns of this well written adventure thriller, which has all the ingredients of intrigue, revelations, murder and mayhem. Add to that family deception, shocking truths, cruelty and sadness and you can understand why this unmissable book has to be read in one go. But be warned, it is not for the faint hearted.

*Louise Stothard*

## Skin Deep

Written by Laura Jarratt

Electric Monkey (eB) £6.99

ISBN: 978-1405256728

Jenna doesn't want to be in the car full of drunken teenagers as it's not her kind of thing. But she is there when the car crashes and leaves her best friend dead, and Jenna horribly burned. She used to believe that ugly people did not have feelings and that they did not notice if people stared or if they did, it didn't hurt. Now, Jenna avoids going out, refuses to have a mirror in the bathroom and becomes a grieving recluse, until Ryan shows up! Ryan has his own problems, caring for a bi-polar and unpredictable mother who embraces the lifestyle of a new-age traveller. He encounters prejudice and baseless assumptions, just as Jenna does. Together they find friendship and then love, but the odds are stacked against them even before there is a murder in the village and Ryan becomes a suspect. The strings may be a little too neatly tied for some, but the two damaged, wary teenagers circling around each other, and then clinging together against an uncertain world, has real heart and depth. You may not always be kept guessing, but you'll care about the central characters and you'll want to know how it turns out.



*Yvonne Coppard*

## 15 Days without a Head



Written by Dave Cousins

Oxford (eB) £6.99

ISBN: 987-0192732569

This debut novel is certainly a page-turner and will open your eyes to the plight of many in society. Lawrence, fifteen, lives with his six year old brother Jay and his Mum.

Life is always too much for his Mum and she needs drink to start, end and shore up her day. One day she fails to return home and Lawrence is left to cope. He needs to wash, feed and get Jay to school each day, scraping by on a handful of coins gleaned from searching the house. The mess in the flat is a nightmare with cockroaches breeding cheerfully while a suspicious landlady and noxious neighbour Nelly add to the stress. At school, the

redoubtable Mina enters his life. Warm-hearted, funny, practical and pretty unshockable, she brings food, drink, warmth and commonsense to their predicament. Through the experience, Lawrence develops a firm friendship and love with Mina, a fondness for his brother Jay, and an understanding of the pressures which made his mother twice attempt suicide. A warm, wonderful, human book which will make you laugh, grow indignant and wince for what others have to face daily.

*Tina Massey*

## Starters

Written by Lissa Price

Doubleday (eB) £9.99

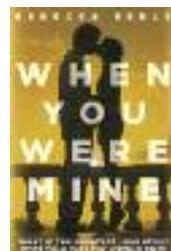
ISBN: 978-0857531353

This is a remarkable novel about a dystopian future where only the very old and the young survive. Everyone else has been wiped out by some kind of germ warfare. Not only do elderly people, 'enders', live to be 150 or 200 years of age, but a private company has set up a rejuvenation programme where they can 'rent' the body of a young person, a 'starter', in order to roll back the years. It may be dangerous, but Callie, fighting to survive without parents or guardian, puts herself forward as a donor, to earn money for her sick brother's medication. This is a powerful novel, with a strong narrative and well drawn characters. Despite the extreme plot, we find ourselves believing in it and in Carrie's situation. Relationships are handled well, and the plot unfolds with pace, drama, and suspense. The final episode becomes very complicated, yet the author manages to bring things to a conclusion, leaving the door open for further adventures in the future. A great idea, well accomplished, making a very satisfactory and mind-stretching read.

*Liz Dubber*



## When You Were Mine



Written by Rebecca Serle

Simon & Schuster (eB) £6.99

ISBN: 978-0857075161

*When You Were Mine* is a sparkling debut novel from Rebecca Serle. Almost everyone knows the story of Romeo and Juliet, but this re-imagining tells it from

the point of view of Rosaline, Romeo's first love. Set in LA, Rob (Romeo) and Rosaline are best friends, just beginning to take their relationship from friendship to romance, when Rosaline's cousin Juliet appears. She is beautiful and intriguing, and Rob is instantly captivated. Rosaline can only watch in dismay as Juliet turns her life upside down. This is a heart breaking story of having and losing love with the characters based on Shakespeare's. However, it takes a while to come to terms with

the fact that, with the play, you never really dislike Juliet, but, in this version, she can seem disagreeable. Fortunately, as Juliet's character develops, you begin to understand her more. The emphasis on wealth and materialism is rather over-bearing until you remember that the original families are powerful and wealthy. The depth of emotion throughout the book is such that although you know how it has to end, you hope it will be different this time. Hopefully this homage to the Bard will encourage readers to read or see the original tale too.

*Jane Hall*

## All These Things I've Done

Written by Gabrielle Zevin

Macmillan (eB) £6.99

ISBN: 978-0330537896

This is a gripping novel set in a dystopian New York in 2083. The heroine, Anya Balanchine, is the teenage daughter of the city's most notorious crime boss, who is arrested for murder. Her Romeo and Juliet style romance with Win, son of the District Attorney, trying to clean up the city, added to the book's appeal. Anya is almost too good to be true, being unfailingly kind to her demented granny, her super-talented younger sister and damaged brother, but, when it counts, Anya is also courageous, intelligent, moral and strong! The book is engrossing and suspenseful, with a wonderful mix of crime, drama and romance. Told by Anya, who focuses on character and action, the style is colloquial making a page-turner for teenagers, but also giving them moral problems to discuss. First in a trilogy, the sequels are eagerly awaited.

*Julia Jarman*



## Slated

Written by Teri Terry

Orchard (eB) £6.99

ISBN: 978-1408319468

Kayla's memories have been wiped by the authorities. She's got a new family, a new school and a

fresh start as a 'slated' teenager. She just needs to obey her parents and teachers and keep her mood levels high, so that her wrist monitor doesn't betray her. But the more she discovers about the world, the more her old 'wiped' memories start to resurface, putting herself and her friends in serious danger. *Slated* is as much a reflection on what it's like to be a teenager as it is a dystopian vision of a near future England. Teri Terry juxtaposes the ordinary everyday struggles of a teen girl made to feel like an infant with the dark dystopian elements of a paranoid, authoritarian state that uses terrorism as an excuse to violate its children's minds. Terry writes with a gripping and exciting fresh voice which makes compulsive reading.

*Benjamin Scott*