



## A Quiet Kind of Thunder

Written by Sara Barnard  
Macmillan £7.99 ISBN: 978-1509810987

Growing up, fitting in and making friends is never easy, but for Steffi, who is a selective mute, life is extra hard. Steffi dresses to be invisible and dreads meeting new people, but when she is asked to help new pupil, Rhys, who is deaf, a whole new world opens up for her. The

characters in this sensitively crafted novel are well portrayed, which immediately creates an empathy with the reader. Steffi is shy and anxious, which manifests itself in a crippling inability to speak. Although at ease within her family, she finds starting sixth form difficult. Steffi is surprised to find Rhys funny and confident, not caring whether she speaks or not as they can communicate in other ways. This is a delightful love story which marks all the ups and downs, misunderstandings and discoveries about another person which are part of first love and a burgeoning sexual relationship. The bond between Steffi and Rhys has unusual dynamics and difficulties as they make a place for themselves in a hearing and speaking world.

Louise Stothard

## Letters to the Lost

Written by Brigid Kemmerer  
Bloomsbury £7.99 ISBN: 978-1408883525

The lives of two young people, Juliet and Declan, become intertwined in this gripping read. Juliet always wrote letters to her mother when she was alive, but when she starts writing letters to her dead mother, leaving them by her graveside, she never dreams that someone else will read them. On the day she opens her own letter to find a reply pencilled along the bottom, she doesn't quite know how to react. Whilst completing court-ordered community service, Declan finds Juliet's letter and recognises someone who feels the same pain and heartache he does. So, begins a difficult, heart-breaking romance full of hidden identities and broken trust, though ultimately, a glimmer of hope. Of course, the idea of people who hate each other falling in love isn't a new one, but Brigid Kemmerer has given this story a modern, edgier update, with the teens' backstories becoming more important than their developing romance. Enthralling, with some unexpected twists to keep the reader guessing right until the end.

Rebecca Watts



## Saint Death

Written by Marcus Sedgwick  
Orion £10.99 ISBN: 978-1444000528

Life on the Mexican border is cheap, very cheap. This is the land ruled by drug cartels where desperate people gamble with their lives trying to reach El Norte, America, longing for freedom and the chance of a

decent life. Arturo has lived in a shelter on the edge of the desert for most of his life. Now, his friend, Faustino, is in serious trouble. He needs money, being in debt to some *bad* people. Arturo is his last hope. Perhaps, he can win the money back in a game of cards. Arturo believes that everything will be alright, because Holy Death, Santa Muerte, will protect them. But Saint Death destroys lives rather than protecting them, so what possible chance can Arturo have? Can anyone cheat death? Marcus Sedgwick challenges us to consider this thought-provoking question in a novel which is timely, topical and, ultimately, a gritty portrayal of life in a world where criminals rule.

Richard Monte

## Release

Written by Patrick Ness  
Walker £12.99 ISBN: 978-1406331172

A beautifully written, relevant and challenging read for young adults, which will not disappoint fans of Patrick Ness. We follow a summer's day in the life of Adam as he struggles to understand and accept his sexual orientation. He battles to make sense of his teenage life – his feelings, his family, his friendships, his relationships, his place in the world. At the same time, we follow the day's momentous journey for a ghost inhabiting the spirit Queen, the latter's fate being entwined with that of the survival of humanity. Characters are well-drawn, and through a mixture of witty dialogue together with searing, and sometimes, painful honesty, readers will care deeply about the characters in both interconnected storylines. In both plot and style, readers will be challenged and respected, with explicit gay sex scenes being tenderly written.



Diane Gaunt



## Optimists Die First

Written by Susin Nielsen  
Andersen £12.99 ISBN: 978-1783445073

Since the tragic death of her baby sister, for which she feels guilty, Petula sees danger everywhere. She is obsessively focused on the awful things that can happen even if that means living a life beset by fear, anxiety and grief. Then, she meets Jacob. He has survived a different life disaster but still manages to be confident and optimistic. Slowly, he has a positive impact on the lives of Petula and the others in the therapy group, but as Petula finds herself falling in love with Jacob, she has to decide if she can be brave enough to believe in love and if it can help set her free. This beautifully written story is honest, thought-provoking, life-affirming and a truly wonderful read. Believable and well-developed characters each cloak themselves in a mask to hide the demons they are battling. The ending is satisfying and hopefully grounded in realism. Susin Nielsen is a very skilful writer and this title will help to promote discussion and openness about mental health issues.

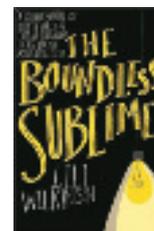
Annie Everall

## The Boundless Sublime

Written by Lili Wilkinson  
Allen & Unwin £6.99 ISBN: 978-1743369265

Australian writer Lili Wilkinson evokes every possible human emotion in this first-person narrative about grief, isolation, vulnerability and a consequential propensity towards danger - in this case 'The Boundless Sublime' cult. It seems

perfectly conceivable that Ruby would be drawn to a place outside her usual experience when she is so lonely and hurting. She is reeling in her confusion and turmoil after Anton's death and the havoc wrought on both her and her mother and father. There is much that is terrifying in this novel, especially that deluded people will prey on the innocent, both mentally and physically, and that when we are low we are most likely to make perilous decisions. This extremely powerful novel contains sex and violence, warning that extreme situations can scar indefinitely and that "if any person, living or dead, claims to hold all the answers you seek, know he is a charlatan".



Gill Roberts