



### The Survival Game

Written by Nicky Singer  
 Hodder £7.99 ISBN: 978-1444944525

Nicky Singer portrays a harsh world of checkpoints and borders, describes an unimaginable and difficult version of our future and shows humanity at its most challenged with detention centres and rationed food. But, there are always moments of hope. Mhairi is travelling the slow and treacherous journey from Cairo to her family home in Scotland - to her grandmother where life has been good. The horrors of her past and her difficult journey have made her tough and resilient, but, when she takes on the responsibility of a young boy, she discovers that love brings even more challenges. Throughout her journey the voice of Papa reminds her that, "You have to believe in the goodness of people." Beautifully written, with strong believable characters, this story is about survival in every raw sense and will provoke more questions than answers.

*Louise Stothard*

### She, Myself and I

Written by Emma Young  
 Stripes £7.99 ISBN: 978-1847159427

Emma Young sets her YA debut in the fast-moving world of medical science, where impossible things are suddenly achievable. Rosa, eighteen, is saved from a terminal nerve disease by a pioneering surgeon. Her undamaged brain is transplanted into the body of Sylvia, a healthy teenager who died by drowning. Rosa struggles to come to terms with a new, healthy body, after ten years of increasing disease and frailty, and a different face looking back at her from the mirror. Rosa's donor is supposed to be anonymous but a chance encounter compels her to delve into Sylvia's history. This is a convincing, sensitive and sometimes heart-breaking story of individual and family lives torn into fragments and rebuilt in different patterns. Rosa's plight challenges the reader to consider the ethical dilemmas and philosophical questions about what makes a person and where the true self resides. It's an uncomfortable but gripping read.



*Yvonne Coppard*



### Goodbye, Perfect

Written by Sara Barnard  
 Macmillan £7.99 ISBN: 978-1509852864

*Goodbye, Perfect* is an emotionally gripping and thought provoking YA novel. The main events of the book take place over the course of a single week in early summer. Just before the start of GCSE exams, Bonnie, a studious and academically able 15 year old, unexpectedly disappears with an older man. The story is told through the eyes of Bonnie's best friend, Eden, who struggles to comprehend her friend's actions, yet feels compelled to keep her promise not to tell of what she knows. Although it is Bonnie who runs away, this is really Eden's story. Eden's emotional turmoil, her sense of being pulled in opposing directions, and her conflicting loyalties to Bonnie and her own adoptive parents are portrayed with gut-wrenching authenticity. The book is shot through with life-wisdom, for although Eden makes some poor decisions, she is a strong and relatable character who displays an understanding of what's important in life. Serious subjects are dexterously handled. Issues around sexual grooming and consent are sensitively explored, along with themes of academic pressure, adoptive families, loyalty to family and friends, and whether we can truly know others.

*Anne Walker*

### Skylarks

Written by Karen Gregory  
 Bloomsbury £7.99 ISBN: 978-1408883617

Joni works at the library to help with her family's struggling finances. There she meets Annabel who comes from a very wealthy family and attends a private school. Although their financial and family circumstances couldn't be more different, there is a real spark between Joni and Annabel and their relationship gradually deepens. But when the charity that owns Joni's housing estate sells to another company, the residents face eviction and the girls' differences are highlighted. The relationship between Joni and Annabel is sensitively written - you can feel the electricity between them, but they face opposition, not only because of their sexuality, but also because of their class differences. A powerful inequality message runs throughout the book and Karen Gregory accurately portrays the differences between the privileged and the disadvantaged. Joni will hopefully inspire readers to believe that "things can change, if you keep trying".

*Jane Hall*



### Home Home

Written by Lisa Allen-Agostini  
 Papillote £6.99 ISBN: 978-1999776831

Told in the first person, this is a vivid, raw and honest story of teenage mental illness. In just ninety-two pages it explores the isolation and confusion of having a panic disorder and the emotional chaos of manoeuvring through the teenage years. Because Caribbean-born Kayla is clinically depressed and has just attempted suicide her mother sends her away to Canada to stay with her mother's lesbian sister and her partner. In Canada her health improves, she begins to grow stronger emotionally and she also meets the gorgeous Josh. She is helped to understand herself and comes to realise that "Home Home", which is what she calls her Caribbean home, is special because her roots are there as well as her best friend, Akilah, but that Canada, with Auntie Jillian and Julie, is home too. A tremendous short novel which addresses difficult issues with understanding, realism and hope – a hugely relevant read for any teenager and any adult.

*Gill Roberts*

### The Lost Witch

Written by Melvin Burgess  
 Andersen £12.99 ISBN: 978-1783446902

Bea starts to see and hear things no-one else can. Visiting strangers tell her that she is a witch, with strange, special powers, that she is being hunted and that her life is in danger. Her parents think she is suffering from a mental illness. She meets Lars, a gorgeous young skateboarder. But is he what he seems? How can she keep her family safe and learn to use her powers to save rather than to destroy? This dark, brooding, atmospheric story twists and turns, building tension and leading inexorably to the final battle between good and evil. Characters depict an intriguing mix of human frailty and god-like cruelty. Myth and magic, Norse mythology, an underpinning commentary on social realism, and the harsh realities of conflict, superbly entwine. Exquisite prose, interesting concepts of alternative worlds and brilliant imagery are all present in this provocative, engrossing novel of the calibre we have come to expect of Melvin Burgess. A compelling, possibly uncomfortable, read with complex and challenging themes, containing swearing and sexual scenes.

*Annie Everall*

